



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Heath Farm Family Services

**Heath Farm
Charing Heath
Ashford
Kent
TN27 0AX**

Lead Inspector
Alex Turner

Announced Inspection
3rd July 2006 09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at www.dh.gov.uk or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Every Child Matters, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Heath Farm Family Services
Address	Heath Farm Charing Heath Ashford Kent TN27 0AX
Telephone number	01233 712030
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Heath Farm Family Services
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mrs Janet Margaret Smart
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 14th June 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Heath Farm is an Independent Fostering Agency as defined by the Fostering Service Regulations 2002. At the time of this inspection the agency were able to accommodate a total of 86 placements within 39 approved fostering households. 52 placements had been made leaving 34 vacant places. The agency is based in the area of Ashford. There is a team of permanent full time staff including the service director, the registered manager, supervising social workers with one assistant and administrative and finance personnel. The agency also calls on sessional workers on a needs led basis including independent Form F Assessors. Foster carers receive regular support and supervisory visits. The agency also has a school. The agency is part of the Pan London Contract and has secured the Investors in People award.

The current fees for the service at the time of the visit were as follows

School only fees per term - £9,300.00

Fostering + therapy per week - £1,265.74

Fostering + school + therapy per week - £1,760.95

Emergency placement - £1,760.95 for first 12 weeks

Assessment placement - £1,760.95 for first 12 weeks

Information on the Agency services and the CSCI reports for prospective service users will be detailed in the Statement of Purpose and Service User Guide. The e-mail address of the agency is enquiries@heathfarm.org

SUMMARY

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

The inspection took place over three days. Arrangements were made to visit two foster families. In both instances members of the foster families gave up some time and were accommodating with respect to the inspection process. Time was spent speaking with the manager of the service and a senior practitioner in social work. Preinspection questionnaires were completed and returned by seven foster carers, five social workers, and three children. Information provided by the manager regarding key aspects of the service was also included in the information drawn upon to prepare this report. A broad range of documentation was inspected in relation to the operation of the service. The inspection was concluded with verbal feedback to the fostering service team summarising the preliminary findings of the inspection in relation to each of the standards inspected. The time and cooperation of all those contributing to the inspection is acknowledged and appreciated.

What the service does well:

The work undertaken by the fostering service to promote children's health and education has been commended in this report. Other areas where excellent practice has been noted include promoting contact, preparation for adulthood, ensuring foster carers homes are suitable and the ongoing work to monitor and improve the quality of services provided.

The service has drawn up a detailed programme of development for the next twelve months. The service has demonstrated the ability to critically evaluate its own service provision and take action to build upon existing strengths.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Included in the last inspection report were a number of requirements and recommendations. These were followed up during this inspection and evidence was found to demonstrate action had been taken to address the shortfalls to which they related. Topics addressed included training, documentation, monitoring, budgets, child protection and delegation of duties.

What they could do better:

Included in this report is one recommendation in relation to the details included in the statement of purpose.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

- The fostering service promotes the health and development of children.(NMS 12)

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

Quality in this outcome area is excellent.

The fostering service has promoted the health and development of children & young people.

EVIDENCE:

The practice of the fostering service reflects the principles and aims set out in the statement of purpose with regards to promoting children & young peoples health.

In relation to questions about staying healthy the children & young people responding to pre-inspection surveys expressed an overall level of satisfaction. Children & young people gave a number of examples where they consider their health and wellbeing has been promoted whilst living in foster care i.e. healthy eating, regular physical activities and appointments with health care professionals. Children & young people's health care status is routinely taken into account during matching process. Examples were identified whereby the fostering service has forged professional links and secured services from specialists in child health care provision according to individually assessed needs. Foster carers receive training that covers aspects of this area of practice. The service has established means by which to record the development and progress of children & young people health status throughout their placement. Very importantly the service has carefully considered areas where they could do better in terms of improving outcomes for children & young people in the area of being healthy. The service has set out to the Commission areas in which progression of practice is planned for and anticipated.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following Standard(s):

3, 6, 8, 9, 15 & 30

Quality in this outcome area is good.

The persons carrying on the fostering service are suitable to do so.

The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.

The fostering service matches children & young people to carers appropriately.

The fostering service protects each children & young person from abuse and neglect.

The fostering panel is organised and exercises its duties with care and attention.

EVIDENCE:

Procedures are in place for the recruitment, selection and employment of all persons working for the purposes of the fostering service and for the approval and review of foster carers. Records documenting the process were sampled. Of the records selected were examples that demonstrated the written procedures have been put into practice. The fostering service has arrangements for regular supervision and support visits to foster carer's homes. The service has used these opportunities to monitor accommodation

standards in addition to their annual review. It is noted that the service has made arrangements to access professional advice and support from specialist advisors in health and safety and the drive to raise standards in this area is commended.

Matches have been achieved by means of information sharing and consideration of factors involved. Records show that all relevant professionals, the child and her/his family and potential carers, their families and other children in placement have been involved in the process. The fostering service has provided figures relating to the longevity of placements – the figures provide a clear indication of the effectiveness of the matching process.

The principles of child protection are well established and embedded in practice. Written procedures and organisational routes relating to child protection have been reviewed since the last inspection and now take into account the distinction between the fostering and educational services. Carers and staff all undertake training that covers child protection. The service has clear grasp of what safe care means and has conveyed this well to carers. The development of individualised safe care guidelines has become routine practice. In the instances where it has been necessary the service has acted appropriately in response to suspicions and concerns.

Recruitment procedures and practice were rated as meeting the standards and regulations at the time of the last inspection. The manager of the service confirmed that procedures and practice remain as they were. Two staff files were sampled. Aside from one minor omission the checks required by the regulations had been completed as required.

During the three days on site the opportunity was taken to attend the fostering panel. The panel was observed in its function considering a new approval and a review of a foster carers approval. The panel was established and carried on in line with the regulations, standards and good practice guidelines. A review of panel minutes indicates this has been consistent over time.

Very importantly the service frequently considers where they could do better in terms of improving outcomes in health for children & young people and steers towards these being attained.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

7 & 13 (NMS 31 not applicable to the service at the time of this inspection)

Quality in this outcome area is good.

The fostering service values diversity.

The fostering service promotes educational achievement

EVIDENCE:

Fostering practice is informed by policies and procedures that are grounded in principles that recognise and value diversity. Recruitment of foster carers is managed such to attract all suitable members of local communities. Identity and background is a factor taken into account during the matching process. Training to work positively with and promote diversity and equality is covered across a range of topics in the programme to develop foster carers

The fostering service has strong links with the organisations school, which is both registered and approved as an educational establishment with OFSTED. Children & young people benefit from this valuable aspect of service provision. Partnership working with mainstream schools to support educational placements was also evidenced in the records made available for inspection. The expectations placed upon foster carers regarding their role in promoting children & young peoples education is clear. Foster carers conveyed an awareness of their role and were able to give examples where they had supported children & young people in this area of life. One young person spoken to described the success he had attained in gaining a place in the local catering college. Education is included as a key item on many agendas

including supervision, quality assurance, and matching and service development. Very importantly the service frequently considers where they could do better in terms of improving outcomes in education for children & young people and steers towards these being attained.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person. (NMS 10)
- The fostering service promotes consultation.(NMS 11)

The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

10 & 11

Quality in this outcome area is excellent.

The fostering service promotes contact arrangements for children & young people.

The fostering service promotes consultation.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service has invested in promoting contact for children & young people. A specific post of contact coordinator has been established. Contact issues are factors taken into account in the referral, matching and placement planning process. A dedicated contact facility is included in the resources made available to people using the service. The fostering service has on occasions made necessary arrangements to organise transport for birth families to attend contact sessions with children & young people being looked after. On other occasions the fostering service has also provided transport to support contact arrangements where long distances have been a factor. Included in documentation sampled were records that demonstrated children & young peoples views regarding contact have been sought. The level of service provision in relation to contact has been rated in this report as exceeding the standards. The fostering service is commended for continuing to identify how practice in this area can be further enhanced and is supported in its endeavours to do so.

The fostering service has promoted consultation. Instances where this was evidenced included the process of foster carers annual reviews and children & young peoples statutory reviews. Foster carers supervision notes included a

section where contact / consultation with the children & young people has taken place. Discussions with children & young people, foster carers and staff working for the service corroborated the paper evidence. The fostering service holds stakeholders meetings on a regular basis; children & young people are represented in the membership of attendees. The fostering service also reports that regular events for birth children take place thus providing the opportunity for them to express their views and opinions in an informal setting. In terms of supporting foster carers and staff to develop practice in relation to listening to and acting on children & young peoples views, training that covers this topic was included in the programme of training provided. Information describing how to raise concerns and make complaints about the service is included in the foster carers manual, the statement of purpose and in the children's guide. Documentation relating to a complaint that had been made since the last inspection indicated the complaint had been listened to, considered by an independent social worker and that outcomes were conveyed appropriately.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

14 & 29

Quality in this outcome area is good.

The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.

The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service has worked to ensure young people are well prepared for adulthood. Training is provided to foster carers that are supporting young people moving into independence. The fostering services have worked to ensure that young people aged sixteen plus are linked into relevant services and that they benefit from independence and pathway plans. One instance was highlighted where a young person has continued to receive assistance from the service post 18 in agreement with all concerned. The service has taken action to help foster carers work with the concept of supporting children to manage money. This has involved a consultation exercise with carers and a review of the pocket money arrangements for children & young people being looked after. Links have been established with other community agencies that work with young people helping to build confidence, self-esteem and ability to work and cooperate with others. Once again the service has clearly identified areas where further improvements can be made and has done so in a manner that will enable the implementation of the plans to be measured in future quality assurance reviews.

The service has a written policy regarding foster carers allowances. Information about expenses and allowances is included in the material provided to carers. Feedback from carers indicates that allowances are paid in accordance with written agreements.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, 24 and 32 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

1, 4, 16, 17, 21, 24 & 25 (NMS 32 not applicable at the time of this inspection)

Quality in this outcome area is good.

The fostering service provides accurate and useful information about the service provided.

The fostering service management monitors day-to-day operations and strives to build on and enhance good practice.

Staff are organised and managed effectively.

The number qualifications and experience of staff working for the fostering service is such that the statement of purpose can be fulfilled.

The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.

Case records for children & young people are comprehensive.

Administrative records are maintained as required.

EVIDENCE:

The statement of purpose and the children's guide both provide useful and accurate information about the service. The statement of purpose should be revised to include numbers of complaints and their outcomes.

There is a clear organisational structure to the fostering service that in all its aspects is carried on by people with suitable qualifications and experience. An established team whose roles have been defined manages the administrative and financial aspects of the fostering service. Those working directly with foster carers and children were suitably qualified and experienced in relation to their role and functions. The assessment process for foster carers takes into account and addresses all relevant factors following recognised procedures to do so and as required of this standard. Evidence of full assessments was seen on foster carers files.

The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers. Individual supervision, peer group meetings, and out of hour's assistance are included in these strategies. Evidence was seen and heard of how the agency has supported carers in different situations and given help when it is needed. It was confirmed that the agency's policies and procedures are circulated to carers and staff. Foster carers have reported that they receive a high standard of support and guidance from the operational staff team. Annual review reports are prepared and presented to the fostering panel. Placing Social Workers have confirmed they are kept well informed of events by foster carers and the operational staff.

The fostering service has supplied the commission with an excellent assessment of its overall operation. This compliments and reflects the continuous improvement plan drawn up by the overall service manager. Documentation made available for inspection included much to evidence that the manager has completed the monitoring required by the regulations.

Case records were reviewed and there are policies with regard to record keeping. Carers and young people's files were well organized. Appropriate records were being maintained by the agency. Foster carers visited demonstrated an awareness of the expectations placed upon them in terms of record keeping and had received written guidance, training and supervision covering this area of practice.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
12	4

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	4
8	3
9	3
15	3
30	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	3
13	4
31	N/A

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
10	4
11	4

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
14	4
29	3

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	3
2	X
4	4
5	X
16	3
17	3
18	X
19	X
20	X
21	4
22	X
23	X
24	3
25	3
26	X
27	X
28	X
32	N/A

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

YES

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	FS1	The fostering provider should ensure that the statement of purpose included details of the numbers of complaints and their outcomes.

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