

City of Salford Family Placement Service

Inspection report for LA Fostering Agency

Unique reference number	SC042674
Inspection date	02/04/2008
Inspector	Sarah Oldham
Type of inspection	Key

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Date of last inspection	08/01/2007

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About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good: this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Salford Family Placement Team provides the fostering and adoption service for the City of Salford. It provides short term, long term and permanent placements for children 'looked after' by the City of Salford. It also provides short-term breaks for children with disabilities and children in need.

In addition the service has further developed to include the 3D multi dimensional fostering service. This service will provide support within foster care placements over a time limited period, for young people with complex and behavioural needs. The 3D service has a multi-disciplinary staff team to provide support to young people and their approved carers.

The fostering service has responsibility for recruitment, assessment, approval and support of foster carers coupled with appropriate matching of placements for children accessing the service. The service provides additional resources to foster carers to ensure where possible the placement made is maintained.

It is a centralised based team, located in an office in Little Hulton in Salford. This building also accommodates the Child Protection Unit and the service for the management of the residential children's homes.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced inspection and covered all the key National Minimum Standards (NMS). The 3D multi dimensional foster treatment programme has recently been developed and the service has just commenced recruitment of carers. At the time of the inspection, the 3D programme did not have any young people in placement and therefore was not inspected fully. However, the policies and procedures are in place and the inspector met with the team manager and multidisciplinary staff team. The 3D service will be incorporated in the overall foster care service.

The fostering service is a well managed service that is supporting the carers well and providing good outcomes for the children and young people.

Improvements since the last inspection

The service has developed the Multi- Dimensional 3D foster service that has it's own Statement of purpose but forms part of the overall service. This service will provide up to 20 medium to long term foster placements for children and young people with

complex needs. Staff for the service have been recruited and policies and procedures have been developed.

Allowances for foster carers now meets the national minimum fostering allowance.

A Virtual Head has been appointed to promote the educational needs of children who are looked after by the local authority.

Consultation with children and young people has improved and there is a specific children and young person's group that is involved with discussing some policies and procedures of the service as well as being involved in recruitment and selection of some staff.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people have access to a range of health care services. The authority has a health needs team for Looked After Children (LAC) that includes a consultant paediatrician, health co-ordinator and social inclusion nurse. There is also a children and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) coordinator with lead responsibility for looked after children. All children and young people have an initial health care assessment undertaken by a consultant paediatrician.

The fostering service ensures that foster carers know their role and responsibility expectations in supporting young peoples' health care needs. This is discussed with prospective foster carers at the initial information meeting, during the skills to foster training and detailed in the Foster Carers' Handbook and information pack. Information about the health care needs of individual children and young people is recorded on the Care Plan and Looked After Children documentation. as well as discussed at the placement planning meeting.

The percentage of young people attending their annual health care review has increased to 96%. Those young people who decline to attend their health care reviews have their health care needs assessed in a number of ways including information obtained via questionnaires.

Carers have access to appropriate training and information including a health file. This contains information regarding healthy eating, smoking, personal hygiene, sexual health and alcohol and substance misuse. Sudden infant death (SID) training is planned for new carers.

The 3D multi-dimensional treatment foster care programme has appropriate health care professionals to provide ongoing assessment and support for young people including a psychologist. The service has not got a young person in placement due to the recent approval of the carer and the multi-disciplinary assessment process that is undertaken prior to a young person placed. This includes a comprehensive

assessment of health care needs including physical, emotional and cultural health care.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The management of the fostering service is robust. The senior manager and team managers have the appropriate experience, skills and qualifications to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children and young people placed.

The service has the appropriate systems in place to assess the suitability of foster carers. This includes initial recruitment information provided to potential carers through to the formal assessment process. The process for placing children is good and forms an integral part of practice by the family placement team. Matching is recorded and takes into account the identified needs of the young person and the skills that the carers have to meet those needs. Information is made available prior to the children or young people being placed. When the placement is an emergency placement, the fostering service ensures that as much information as possible is given to the carers and any further information gained is provided.

All foster carers have a health and safety checklist completed to ensure that the home is safe for the young person placed. This is updated on an annual basis or if there has been any change within the accommodation or members of the household. Carers receive announced and unannounced visits from the family placement worker and receive regular supervision although the carers do not receive a copy of the supervision notes. Individual safe care policies are in place for every household and are reviewed as part of the annual review process or if there has been any change to the

Carers receive training in child protection, behaviour management and additional support is available from the Salford Therapeutic Adolescent Resource service for Looked After Children (STARLAC) team. The 3D carers receive training and support from the multi disciplinary team for the 3D programme in accordance with the programme policies and procedures.

Children and young people have a range of support services including access to an independent advocacy and children's rights service. A core group of young people are currently looking at and reviewing health and safety issues in conjunction with the service.

The authority has a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in post who chairs all strategy meetings where there are allegations against carers. Allegations and complaints are managed appropriately and monitored by the senior management team.

The family placement service recruitment and selection process is robust. Staff have the necessary skills, experience and qualifications to undertake their roles and

receive regular supervision and annual appraisals.

The fostering panel membership is effective with a range of professionals who have the necessary skills and experience to understand the needs of the children and young people. The panel chair has a number of years experience as a panel chair and working within social care. Panel minutes inspected contain clear information and the reasons why decisions had been made. However, policies and procedures of the panel are not in place in full. Prospective foster carers are invited to attend panel when their approval is being considered. This enables panel members to discuss their application with them directly and ask further questions regarding the application.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The service provides training for carers on equality and diversity as part of the pre approval training to ensure that carers have a comprehensive understanding and the skills to provide care for individual young people that support the ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background of the young person. Carers recruited to provide care and support for children and young people with disabilities receive additional training to ensure that they have the skills to support the physical needs of the young person. Equality and diversity issues are taken into account as part of the matching process and continues throughout the placement by way of supervision and visits to the carers. The children and young people are consulted on a regular and ongoing basis to ensure that their wishes and views are

Education is given a high priority within the authority. The appointment of a 'Virtual Head' has ensured that the education needs of looked after children are supported effectively. In addition, there is a care and education support team with specific responsibility for the educational needs of looked after children. Individual tuition and support is provided to children and young people, including year 11 pupils sitting GCSE's.

The 3D scheme has a designated teacher to provide ongoing educational support to children placed with 3D carers.

Additional funding is made available to children and young people to enable them to pursue additional interests.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The arrangements for contact are good. The service ensures that the contact arrangements are discussed as part of the matching process and carers are aware of

the importance of contact. Training is provided to carers at the initial preparation training on the role of the carers to support contact for children and young people placed with them. If contact raises any concerns or issues, carers are supported by family placement workers. Contact issues are also discussed via supervision and at statutory reviews. This enables young people and carers to discuss contact arrangements.

Consultation with young people is undertaken in a number of ways including the development of a young persons group that meets with the independent advocacy team. Young peoples views are sought regarding the service and they have been involved in developing policies and procedures. In addition young people have received training regarding recruitment and selection and have been involved in the recruitment of staff to the service.

Young people know how to make a complaint and information is provided to them on how to contact external agencies including Ofsted.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The after care service and the 'Next Step' project support young people from the age of 15 to prepare for adulthood. Carers receive training to assist young people with moving on and adulthood. Young people are supported by being encouraged and supported to participate in planning their independence, this includes the implementation of their pathway plan.

Carers receive regular payments of allowances in accordance with the national minimum rate, this allowance is reviewed on an annual basis. In addition there is a Payment for Skills scheme. This is based on attendance at training and demonstration of core competences. Details of payments are included in the fostering service information and updated on an annual basis. All carers receive this information.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The Statement of purpose has been revised and ratified by the council. This document includes information about the aims and objectives of the service. The 3D service has developed a Statement of Purpose and this has also been agreed. The 3D service is the Multi-dimensional treatment foster care programme for teenagers with complex and challenging needs. The children's guide has been produced in consultation with children and young people. All children and young people have access to this guide.

The service is based in offices at Avon House, Little Hulton. The office space is limited and does not fully meet the needs of the service. There are however, plans to

move to more spacious facilities within the next 12 months.

The agency is well managed and clear lines of accountability are in place. The head of service and the fostering team managers have the appropriate qualifications, experience and skills to ensure that staff are effectively managed and supported. There is a clear commitment to ensuring that staff have access to appropriate training to keep them up to date with current good practice. Regular supervision is also held to enable staff to discuss their current caseloads and any practice issues. Staff demonstrate a clear commitment to supporting carers and to safeguarding children and young people. The case loads are manageable and there are appropriate policies and procedures in place.

The service has continued to recruit carers over the past twelve months, including recruitment of carers for the 3D multi-dimensional foster treatment programme. The standard of assessments are good. There are appropriate systems in place to monitor their quality prior to presentation at the panel.

The foster carers remain satisfied with the level of support that they receive from the fostering service and are aware that if they have any difficulties that they need to discuss out of office hours they are able to contact the emergency duty team. Carers receive regular supervision and have access to support groups and comprehensive training programmes.

The annual review of foster carers ensures that information from a range of sources is gathered, including the young person in placement and their placing social workers. First reviews are taken to the fostering panel.

The records maintained by the fostering team for carers, children and young people are comprehensive and securely stored. The service is in the process of changing records onto a computerised system which all staff will receive appropriate training for. All records are up to date and securely stored.

There is a dedicated family and friends team in place, although there is currently a vacancy within this team. Recruitment is currently ongoing. The assessments for family and friend carers are detailed and includes a viability assessment that is presented at panel. Family and friend carers are able to access training and support as recruited carers.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

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.

Std.	Action	Due date
30	implement and maintain clear procedures for the operation of the Panel.	16/05/2008

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that premises used for the fostering service are suitable for purpose (NMS 26.1)