

Liverpool City Council Fostering Service

Inspection report for LA Fostering Agency

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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

Liverpool City Council's fostering service provides a range of placements for children and young people, who are unable to live at home with their families for short or long periods. It is responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are fostered.

The service operates from council offices known as Parklands in Speke, approximately eight miles from Liverpool city centre, however, meetings with foster carers and children, take place in centrally located council premises. A principal officer leads the service and is assisted by three team leaders and approximately 40 social work and support staff. The fostering service works closely with the safeguarding unit and other Local Authority (LA) and health services including education, health and leisure services. The fostering service supports 302 fostering households, who provide a total of 534 approved places for children. At 31 March 2008, 517 children were living in local authority foster placements. Of these, 148 children were living with family and friends carers. An additional 142 children were living with foster carers approved by independent fostering agencies, because their needs cannot be met in-house.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Children are assisted to lead healthy lives, because foster carers receive support and guidance, on promoting good health. Children's individual health needs are identified and they receive the medical attention they need. The service provided to meet the health needs of asylum seeking children is particularly good. However, health records are not always available, when a child moves to new foster carers and this may put the child's health at risk. Foster carers do not routinely inform the service of accidents and illnesses.

Many good systems and routines are in place, to safeguard children and promote their welfare. However, shortfalls in some areas, means that children's safety is sometimes at risk. For example, all the required information is not held on every staff member's personnel file, so the service cannot demonstrate that its recruitment and selection processes are robust. Some children are placed with carers in an emergency and remain in placement, even though the foster carer is not approved and therefore, may not have the skills to look after children in that age range. Children move between short term placements with little preparation and sometimes without any photographs or memorabilia, so that they can get confused about the different families they have lived with.

The service values diversity and promotes equality, so that children's individual needs are met and they learn to respect differences. Their education is promoted and they receive good quality support, to attend school and achieve success.

Contact is promoted and foster carers are informed about the reasons for and value of contact. Shortfalls in providing detailed information, about contact arrangements results in some children having reduced or no contact with family and others having more contact than agreed. Consultation with children is good and they feel they are listened to and their views are respected. The service needs to provide children and young people preparing to leave care with greater support.

The organisation of the service has improved since the last key inspection, with changes made prior to the interim inspection in January 2008, now being embedded within the service. Staff are well led and well managed. Support to carers is good and varied training opportunities are available. The service encourages attendance at training and they are reviewing their practices, to ensure that more foster carers receive training and thereby, have a better understanding of children's needs. The quality of recording is inconsistent and some records are not sufficiently detailed, to demonstrate that the service is meeting the needs of children and foster carers. The children's guide has been reviewed, but remains a lengthy document and in a format aimed at children who are good readers.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were two actions raised relating to the monitoring of the service, following the interim inspection that took place in January 2008. Both have now been met and managers are monitoring the service more effectively and using information obtained, to review and improve the service to children.

There were five recommendations made, in relation to the outcome area Staying Safe. All but one have been addressed. Foster carers understand the policy on restraining children. Documentation relating to children placed on an exemption or an emergency variation has improved, so that it contains all relevant details for the protection of children. Staff and panel members files are much improved, but some continue to have shortfalls. For example, only one reference is taken up on staff, who transfer to the fostering service from within the Local Authority, so the procedures are not as robust as they should be. Temporary Assessment Placements are no longer provided by the service, so that one recommendation is no longer relevant. A recommendation relating to Enjoying and Achieving has been met. A recommendation to review the children's guide and make it more concise and suitable for all children, has been partially met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The fostering service provides carers, who promote the health and well-being of the children in their care. The Looked After Children's (LAC) nurse, is based within the

service and this ensures good liaison with the health service, so that children's and young people's needs are quickly identified and addressed. A high percentage of children receive an annual health assessment, that monitors their emerging health needs. Referral for medical attention is made where necessary, so that children's good health is promoted.

A specialist health advisor works with asylum seeking children, foster carers and immigration, to ensure that the complex and diverse needs of these children are addressed. A 'Healthy Homes' initiative is led by a dedicated health advisor, who provides training to foster carers. This has proved highly effective, in increasing foster carers' awareness of good health promotion.

Children and young people know about healthy eating and the importance of exercise. The service further promotes children's health, by providing free leisure centre passes, to all looked after children within the city. Those children placed with carers outside of Liverpool, do not routinely receive such passes, even though reciprocal arrangements can be made, with neighbouring authorities. Foster carers have access to training in first aid, nutrition and food hygiene, drugs awareness and children's mental health. However, many foster carers have not yet received this training.

Supervising social workers, check that foster carers are promoting children's health, at routine supervisory visits and they assist in obtaining specialist health advice for children and foster carers, where appropriate. Foster carers know they must provide written information about illnesses and accidents. However, they do not routinely do this.

Each child has a health plan, although these vary in detail and are not always available, at the time of a child's placement. For example, foster carers are not always provided with details of a child's immunisation history. Foster carers do not routinely record any health matters relating to a child, in a dedicated health plan, that can move with the child, at the end of the placement. Not every foster carer has written parental consent to non-prescribed medication. The service has developed a new and comprehensive medication policy and is currently training staff and carers in its implementation. Managers are confident that in the future, medical consent will be obtained for all children, wherever possible.

The inclusion of a community paediatrician on the fostering panel, ensures that health matters are given high priority, when matching children to carers and when considering the abilities of prospective carers, to meet children's needs.

An effective partnership with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Looked After Children's (LAC) team, ensures that children who are fostered, receive the mental health care they need. Foster carers have direct access to the CAMHS and the LAC team and they receive advice and support, in caring for children with complex needs. Staff and carers have a better understanding of children's emotional and mental health needs, because they receive training in attachment, child development and sexual abuse from CAMHS and the LAC team.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The service is jointly led by three qualified and experienced managers. They continually review the performance of the service and implement new procedures, that drive up the standard of care. They prioritise children's safety.

Annual health and safety checks, risk assessments on pets and unannounced visits to foster carers' homes, ensures that children live in safe environments and that foster carers are vigilant about providing a safe, secure and nurturing home. Foster homes are well equipped and they comfortably accommodate all who live there. Risk assessments on each child placed, identify any particular safety needs of the child and how these should be addressed. However, these are not always completed at the time of placement.

The system for matching children to foster carers for an emergency or short term placement, includes matching carers' skills and experience, with the identified needs of the child. Exemptions and management variations, to foster carers' approval status are frequently made, to enable children to live locally. The service does not routinely refer carers back to panel, to consider recommending a change in approval status, in these circumstances. This means that children are being looked after by foster carers, who are not recognised as having the skills and experience, to meet their needs.

Children who need permanent foster placements, are carefully matched with carers and comprehensive reports are provided, for panel scrutiny and recommendation. Children have planned introductions, to new permanent carers and benefit from the careful preparation and support provided at this time. In contrast, children moving to short term or emergency placements, do so with little preparation and sometimes very limited information, about the new foster family.

Placing social workers are supported and guided to carry out viability studies, on prospective family and friends carers, within six weeks of a child's placement. Reports are brought to panel for consideration and advice, about the suitability of the placement. Approval is not recommended, until all checks have been completed. This system protects children, at a most vulnerable time and ensures that care plans for court proceedings, include the Local Authority's view on the suitability of the prospective carers. The quality of these assessments varies. The service is pro-active in providing advice and guidance, regarding the assessment process.

Temporary assessment placements are provided by an independent fostering agency, so that children who have had a number of moves can have a period of stability, whilst their needs are assessed and a suitable long term placement is sought. This has proved a positive initiative and has resulted in a reduction in the number of placement moves for these children.

Carers who look after asylum seeking children receive additional training and support, to meet the diverse needs of these children. Treatment foster carers, also receive specialist support and advice from social work and mental health professionals, to assist them in meeting the complex needs of the children they look after, so that very challenging children's placements can be sustained, while they address their emotional and mental health issues.

The quality of information provided to foster carers at the time of a child's placement varies. Placement agreements are not routinely drawn up and sometimes, there are gaps in details provided in LAC documentation. This means that foster carers do not always have the information they need, to provide the best possible care to the child.

Although a system is in place, to assist foster carers to develop their own safe care policy, some foster carers are slow to do this and some have no safe care policy, until several months after a child is placed. Carers receive advice, training and written information, about all aspects of safety, including internet safety. Annual foster carer reviews consider how well the foster home is keeping children safe.

Approximately, 15% of carers have attended courses in safeguarding children and responding to disclosures and allegations of abuse. A further 35% have completed or are currently undertaking the 'AKAMAS' award, which provides carers with a good insight into safeguarding matters, as well as aspects of good practice in fostering. The service is considering how to ensure more foster carers undertake this training, so that all foster carers know how to protect children, from abuse and exploitation. Courses in behaviour management, have been introduced and selected foster carers have received training in therapeutic crisis intervention, to aid them in dealing with particularly challenging behaviour from children. The policy on physical intervention and behaviour management, is currently under review. All carers know that restraining children is not permitted.

Children said they feel safe in their foster placements. However, some children and foster carers, do not know the complaints procedure.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted, by an effectively and efficiently organised panel. Good quality decisions are made about the approval and review of foster carers and the matching of children with families. Panel members have a wide range of diverse skills and experience and this includes members with expertise in disability, education, children's health and social care. This means that panel members effectively scrutinise potential carers, to ensure they have the skills to meet children's individual needs and development. Children benefit, because legal advice is available at every panel and this ensures that good decisions are made, about children involved in care proceedings and that Local Authority legal representatives are knowledgeable, about children's needs and the quality of their placements. Panel members are recruited from different ethnic backgrounds, that reflect the population of the local area.

Robust recruitment procedures, are aimed at ensuring that staff and carers working for the fostering service are suitable. However, there are some shortfalls in processes

relating to individual staff, so that the service cannot demonstrate, that it routinely explores gaps in staff members' employment history and obtains documentary proof of their qualifications. Also, the service does not routinely obtain two references for staff, who transfer from another post within the Local Authority. These omissions may put children's safety at risk.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Anti-oppressive practice is successfully weaved throughout all aspects of service delivery and training. Equality and diversity are valued and promoted successfully. Council premises are wheelchair accessible and have been adapted, to meet the needs of disabled service users and staff.

Foster carer assessments consider the prospective carers' attitude, to minority groups and their capacity to promote acceptance, tolerance and engagement within a diverse population, so that children in foster care learn to value and respect difference. Consideration is given to children's diverse needs, when placements are made and where shortfalls are identified, plans are made to ensure individual needs can be met in another way. A high priority is given to maintaining children's links with their own culture and familiar society and foster carers are encouraged to maintain such links, in accordance with care plans.

A support group, aimed at providing support to carers of asylum seeking children, has widened to provide support to all carers of black children. It focuses on helping children to deal with oppression, as well as identifying and meeting the diverse social and health needs of individual children. Carers who look after children with disabilities, are linked to the Local Authority 'Fusion' project, which focuses on meeting the particular needs of children with disabilities and supporting their families and carers. This means that children with disabilities, are offered as wide a range of life opportunities as possible.

A training module on valuing diversity, has been established and focuses on the particular needs of children in Liverpool, including children of dual heritage. Foster carers have not yet had the opportunity to attend. There is no training currently available on countering discrimination. The children's guide to the service is available in English and interpreters are available, to translate this and other documents into a child's own language.

Good corporate parenting, ensures that children's education is given a high priority. Foster carers and children, know the value of education and attendance levels for children in foster care are high. Wherever possible, children who move foster placements, continue at the same school. This promotes continuity for children, in their education and friendship groups. Foster placements are extended beyond young people's eighteenth birthday, to enable them to finish their education in a stable placement. Foster carers have the opportunity to attend a training module called 'Education Matters'. An annual achievement award ceremony, recognises the

achievements of children in all aspects of their lives, but in particular in education. This is a well attended and valued event, that promotes children's self worth and a sense of pride in their achievements.

A personal education plan is in place for each child and where needs are identified, additional support is provided, to assist children in achieving their potential. Education is a standing agenda item in foster carer supervision sessions, so that foster carers are assisted to remain focused on children's educational needs and any matters of concern are quickly identified and addressed. Foster carers are not routinely involved in drawing up personal education plans.

Financial support is available to children, to pursue their interests. For example, children are supported to participate in school trips abroad, in the development of skills and hobbies and to purchase specialist equipment, for further education courses. Children receive financial assistance to attend university and extra lessons are provided where needed and wanted. The service insists, that children are not taken on holiday during term times and they provide foster carers with reasonable allowances, to ensure that sufficient funding is available, for holidays at peak times.

The service provides five short break carers, who are matched to specific children with disabilities. There are a small number of children, who cannot be matched with carers, due to a lack of resources. The service is aware of the need to recruit more short break carers and highlights the need at pre-approval assessment days. Short break carers are trained to meet the complex health needs of these particular children. Good working relationships exist between the service, the carers, the Local Authority social work teams and parents. Children with communication difficulties are assisted to make their views known, through a range of communication techniques.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The quality of contact arrangements are varied. Whilst there are very good arrangements in place for some children, for others, the lack of clarification about contact arrangements, causes anxiety. Contact arrangements have fallen down, when a child has moved placement or a new social worker has been appointed. Sometimes sibling or familial contact has ceased without apparent reason, resulting in unnecessary anxiety and sadness for some children. Supervising social workers are not sufficiently pro-active, in ensuring that contact arrangements are clear and that they meet the needs of each child. The service recognises the importance of contact and runs courses regularly, to ensure that foster carers and staff have the knowledge and information they need, to support children. During the 12 months preceding the inspection, 40 carers and 15 staff completed this training.

The service recognises the positive contribution children and young people can make, to its development and provides opportunities for consultation, with children and young people. Those young people who attend the participation group, have benefited enormously from the opportunity to meet together, to discuss issues and

to influence the service. However, many young people do not know about the participation group and do not have their views represented by the group.

Young people involved in the participation group, have contributed to the fostering team plan and have been trained, to deliver effective presentations and to be involved in the assessment of new carers. They have developed a new children's guide to the service. Some have gone on to paid employment or training within the city council. Through having their views taken seriously, they have developed self esteem and the life skills that prepare them to be active, self assured members of society.

The participation group has been involved in the design of a more child-friendly and better focused questionnaire, for foster children participating in the foster carer review. Although now widely available and in use, some supervising social workers, continue to distribute the former questionnaires.

Children attend their reviews and meetings about their progress and feel they have the opportunity to contribute and their views are listened to. A consistent Independent Reviewing Officer, ensures that issues are followed up from one review to the next and raises concerns, where the implementation of recommendations is delayed. Children know their Independent Reviewing Officer and understand their role. Children feel that foster carers listen to them and support them in making their views known. Foster carers have seen a greater emphasis on consultation with children and young people and believe that the service is good at listening to children.

The service has a service level agreement with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) and children have effectively used NYAS, to assist them in making representation to the Local Authority. Others are not aware of the service and some do not know how to make a complaint.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people's participation group is reviewing the current pathway planning documentation, as the service recognises this is an area for development. Improved working relationships with the leaving care social work team, are impacting positively on the service, so that more young people are being better supported, to prepare for independence. However, some young people continue to receive little preparation. There is a focus on promoting independence, within the team plan and the service routinely discusses this at team meetings, so that children benefit because raised awareness amongst the workforce, leads to a greater emphasis on the need to prepare children and young people adequately. There remains some discrepancy, between the level of financial support awarded to young people, whose social workers and foster carers are pro-active in seeking funding and others who may receive no additional funding, prior to leaving care.

Supervising social workers, report on whether foster carers are meeting children and young people's developmental needs and how they are preparing them, for future independent living. However, records do not demonstrate that young people are getting the support they need. There is no sustained programme of intervention, that ensures children are assisted to develop life skills, in accordance with their age and stage of development. Foster carers and supervising social workers, rely heavily on the role of the leaving care social worker, to prepare young people for independence with limited knowledge and some concerns about the extent of this work. Therefore, the service cannot demonstrate, that young people receive the support they need, to prepare them for leaving care.

Payments to foster carers are made routinely each fortnight. Additional grants are available and foster carers are given written information about how to access these. Despite this, some family and friends carers are unclear about their entitlements.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

A comprehensive Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the service provided. The children's guide has been reviewed and a new one has been developed, in conjunction with the young people's participation group. It provides information on all the topics identified by young people, as being relevant and useful. Although well presented, it is a lengthy and detailed document, which is not suitable for all of the children looked after by the service. Some of the language used in the main body of the document, is not child-friendly. Plans are in place to produce a guide that is suitable for younger children. Not all children and foster carers have received a copy of the children's guide.

New monitoring systems introduced following the last key inspection, provide managers with a good overview of how the service is performing and meeting children's needs. Each manager holds responsibility and leadership for different aspects of service delivery, so that children and foster carers throughout the city, receive a consistent service. Regular management meetings, provide for the sharing of information and review of assessment and care practices, so that systems and procedures are continually scrutinised and improved, to provide better quality care for children. Routine monitoring of files, ensures that each foster carer receives the support they need and this identifies any shortfalls in service delivery. This means that children live with foster carers, who receive effective support to look after them.

New documentation has been introduced, to enable foster carers to report notifiable events more easily. Although foster carers know the system, they are not routinely completing these forms so that, for example, accidents to children are not always monitored and the service does not have an accurate picture, of the number and scope of such incidents. The system for monitoring notifiable events collates information, from the workloads of supervising social workers and this does not highlight the number of incidents, involving each particular child or foster carer.

Allegations, complaints, physical interventions and disrupted placements are routinely scrutinised and acted upon. Disruption meetings are chaired independently and consideration is given, to any improvements the service can make, to avoid future placement disruption, for the individual and other children. There is sometimes a substantial delay, in holding a disruption meeting and this means that vital or relevant information, is no longer fresh and may not be explored fully, so that lessons learned may be less useful.

Staff are well managed and supported with clear lines of accountability. Their skills and special interests are recognised and they are enabled to develop specialist areas of expertise, that is valuable to the service and promotes the well-being, of the children using the service. A duty team deals with all incoming work and managers ensure they are kept up to date, by spending time with the duty officer. The team works cooperatively, recognising each others' skills and knowledge base. Support workers and supervising social workers are equally valued and their roles are clear.

Assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are effectively managed and monitored. New enquiries from prospective foster carers are dealt with promptly. Administrative systems, procedures and documentation are in place, to enable the service to meet their function. Staff are familiar with their terms and conditions and the policies and practices of the service.

The service is fully staffed and staff turnover is low because, good terms and conditions are in place and because the staff team appreciate the strategies and policies, aimed at providing good quality care to children. This results in children being looked after by foster carers, who receive continuity of support from staff, who are familiar with the policies and practices of the service and whom they know well. The staff team includes both male and female workers from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, with a range of skills and life experience. By sharing their knowledge and expertise, staff members enhance the ability of the service, to meet children's individual and diverse needs.

Recruitment of carers is ongoing and the strategy is under constant review, aiming to reach all sections of the community. Innovative recruitment drives and advertising campaigns are evaluated, to ensure the best and most effective use of resources. Prospective carers are targeted, to meet the areas of shortfall within the service, for example carers for teenagers and for children with disabilities.

The possibility of a placement with family or friends is explored for children who need to be looked after. Social work teams are trained, provided with written documentation and supported in carrying out viability studies, on family and friends carers. Where the quality of these assessments is poor, the service provides assistance to the social work team, so that their practice can be improved and a more detailed assessment can be achieved. This work is ongoing and a small number of children, are currently placed with family and friends carers, who do not meet the fostering service's standards. The service ensures that the court is informed, when an emergency family and friends placement is deemed not suitable for children, who are going through care proceedings. Some children have experienced delays,

because incorrect information about fostering has been given to potential carers, by social work teams. The service is addressing this and plans to hold an open day, to provide social work staff in the Local Authority, with a better understanding of foster care.

Where children placed with family or friends carers are considered for long term matching, a full and comprehensive assessment of the carers is undertaken and presented to panel, along with an assessment of the child's needs and a matching report. This ensures that children who remain with family and friends carers in the long term, have their needs assessed and appropriately met.

Written, competency based assessments are comprehensive and consider all the qualities needed. Prospective carers attend a series of assessment days, run by experienced social workers and support workers, where their qualities and aptitudes are explored. Both foster carers and young people, who participate in the assessment process, have been well trained to fulfil their role. Their contributions are valued both by the service and by prospective carers, who appreciate hearing the views of those involved in delivering and receiving a fostering service. The service does not proceed with the assessment of prospective carers deemed to be unsuitable from the assessment days.

There is a good quality training plan open to all foster carers and staff. Training programmes focus on the particular issues, associated with living in Liverpool. For example, drug awareness courses provide carers with an insight into the family lives and experiences of many of the children needing placements. A high number of children coming into care, are in sibling groups and there is a clear need for sibling placements and good contact arrangements. This is also covered in training. Therapeutic crisis intervention training is provided, for selected carers working with particularly challenging children. Foster carers and residential staff receive this training jointly, so that children moving between foster care and residential care, experience consistent behaviour management techniques.

Foster carers are encouraged and provided with practical support to attend training. It is made clear to them, that the service expects them to develop their skills and knowledge through training. However, training is not mandatory and many choose not to attend, including many family and friends carers. This means that children are being looked after by carers, who are not properly equipped to meet their needs, because they have limited understanding of the issues, that affect children in foster care. In some cases, where there is concern about how a carer's lack of understanding is impacting on a child, supervising social workers deliver training on an individual basis, as part of a supervisory visit.

Training events are held during the school day. This prevents some carers from attending. Foster carers are encouraged to participate in computer based training where appropriate. During the past 12 months, 46 carers (over 12%), have completed the specialist computer based training in fostering, 'AKAMAS' level 3 Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC). This is available to those carers who have completed all foundation and core training modules.

The foster carer handbook is provided, following approval and contains the service's policies and procedures, including information about the complaints and allegations procedures. Not all foster carers are familiar with the contents. The foster care agreement has been reviewed and carers have received and signed the new document, which has been improved to provide more information, about the importance of matching.

Foster carers receive a good level of support and guidance, but this is not reflected in written records, which are often minimal. An out of hours service, provides support in emergency situations and all foster carers can self-refer to the CAMHS and LAC team, who provide a high level of support quickly where necessary. Support groups are available, but most are poorly attended, so foster carers do not benefit from the support of their peers. Not all carers keep daily records or photographic evidence, of a child's stay and this can mean that some children have little information, about a number of foster homes they have lived in, especially for short stays. Inconsistency in the quality of recording, means that neither the children's records nor the foster carer records held by the service, demonstrate the level of work undertaken, to meet the National Minimum Standards (NMS) and the Every Child Matters outcomes.

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
15	ensure that all the information required by Schedule 1 is evident on staff and panel members' files (Fostering Service Regulations 2002, 7 and 20)	31/08/2008
24	ensure that comprehensive foster placement agreements contain all the required information and that they are drawn up at the time of placement (Regulation 34)	31/08/2008
10	be pro-active in ensuring that contact arrangements are clear and meet the needs of the child (Regulation 14)	31/08/2008
1	provide every child with a copy of the children's guide that they can easily understand and provide a copy to each foster carer (Regulations 3 and 4)	31/12/2008
8	ensure that where a child is placed with foster carers for more than 24 hours, the placement is consistent with the terms of the foster carer's approval status and the foster care agreement (Fostering Service Regulations 2002, 33,34).	31/08/2008

Recommendations

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

- consider including someone who has previously been in foster care or whose child has been in foster care as on the fostering panel (NMS 30)
- ensure that foster carers receive written health plans including parental consent to medication at the time of a child's placement (NMS 12)
- ensure that foster carers are ever alert to their duty to notify the service of accidents and illnesses to children in their care (NMS 12)
- ensure all carers develop a safe care policy prior to approval and update it with the arrival of every child (NMS 9)
- ensure recruitment practices are robust in every case (NMS 15)
- provide staff and foster carers with the opportunity to attend training on valuing diversity and countering discrimination (NMS 7)
- enable foster carers to contribute to the personal education plans of the children in their care (NMS 13)
- consider how foster carers can be given better support and direction in their task of helping children to achieve developmental milestones and prepare for future independent living (NMS 14)
- ensure that all children and young people know how to make a complaint or raise a concern (NMS 11)
- make sure that there are clear, detailed contact arrangements set up at the time of each child's placement and ensure that children are encouraged and enabled to maintain contact with family and friends in accordance with the plan (NMS 10)
- improve the quality of recording to provide a more detailed and accurate reflection of work undertaken and outcomes for children (NMS 25)
- consider how to engage more carers in training so they have the skills required to provide high quality care (NMS 23)
- ensure that all foster carers keep a record of significant life events including photographs and memorabilia that can go with the child at the end of the child's stay (NMS 24).