



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Leicester City Council Fostering Service**

**Leicester City Council  
Social Care and Health  
1 Grey Friars  
Leicester  
LE1 5PH**

*Lead Inspector*  
Trisha Gibbs

*Announced Inspection*  
18th September 2006      09:00

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

<b>Reader Information</b>	
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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](http://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](http://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

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<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Leicester City Council
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Mr Mark Tingley
<b>Type of registration</b>	Local Auth Fostering Service

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

**Date of last inspection**      6th June 2005

## Brief Description of the Service:

Leicester City Council Fostering Service is the responsibility of Leicester City Children and Young People's Service and provides family placements for children and young people up to the age of eighteen years. Some young people may continue to be placed within a family placement if their assessment of need and legal status recommends continuing support necessary.

The Fostering Service provides a full range of placements for children and young people from varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds. These include emergency, short and long term placements, a Family Link Scheme, and Contract Care placements. Remand Care is organised in partnership with the Youth Offending Service.

A Service Manager is responsible for the day-to-day management of the service, and overseeing the four fostering teams, each led by a dedicated Team Manager. The teams are organised into the Recruitment and Assessment Team, the Post Panel Team, the Kinship Care Team and the Permanence Team. Within each team there is a Senior Practitioner who undertakes development work in addition to holding a caseload.

Nineteen supervising social workers work within the four fostering teams in addition to the specialist posts i.e. Development Officer, Publicity Coordinator and Enquiry Officer. A dedicated Administrative Team supports the Fostering Service.

The service operates from a central location in Leicester in a building with an attractive reception area, open to members of the public to provide information about fostering and adoption, and to existing foster carers and adopters.

At the time of the Inspection the Fostering Service was supporting 323 children in 244 households.

# SUMMARY

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

This Announced Inspection took two Inspectors 93 hours in total.

For the purpose of this Inspection four foster carers, and the children placed with them were tracked through the inspection of case files, home visits, and discussions with supervising social work staff, Senior Practitioners, Team Managers and the Service Manager. Although the small sample of carers tracked is not representative of the large carer group, (over 240 carers) this provided a 'snapshot' of the service being provided. Two carer files were randomly selected and looked at.

In addition to the above Inspectors met with Commissioning Managers, the Training Coordinator, a member of the RALAC team, the Placement Support Team Manager and Social Worker, the Service Manager Child Protection and an Independent Chairperson from the Child Protection Service. Telephone discussions were held with the Children's Rights Coordinator, a Fostering Panel member and a representative of the local Foster Care Partnership.

The above information provided the Inspection evidence for each Standard. Policies and Procedures, the Carer's Handbook, and other documents have been fully inspected over recent Inspections and were made available for clarification purposes on this occasion.

In addition to the above, Inspectors attended a training session for carers and interviewed the Fostering Panel Chair.

40 questionnaires were sent out to carers, children and placing social workers and 8 to other professionals.

15 questionnaires were returned from carers, 18 from placing social workers, 3 from other professionals who work with the service and 16 from children. Some comments and observations have been incorporated into the report.

## **What the service does well:**

- Managers are proactive in the continuous development of new initiatives to improve the service. The Fostering Service consistently refers to the five key outcomes under Every Child Matters to inform developments, policies and procedures.

- The Fostering Service provides very good information to carers through an excellent Carer's Handbook, and through a commendable, relevant, and varied training and development programme.
- Files are organised and referenced well, and contain very good recording tools. Recording systems for carers are bedding in and ongoing training and supervision supports this.
- The Fostering Service is well integrated with, and actively works in partnership with, colleagues in Children's and Young People's Services to promote better outcomes for Looked After Children.
- The Fostering Service promotes the role and work of the Senior Practitioners to develop and improve practice and standards.
- Fostering staff teams work well with colleagues to consult with and listen to children and young people.
- Children say about their placements 'My carer is the best anyone could have'. 'This is the best place where anyone can stay'. 'I am part of the family and I get treated like everyone else'. 'I want to grow to be happy and healthy'. 'This is the best place, ever'. One social worker commented 'This placement has bought stability to his life'. Another 'Foster carers place an above average focus on her education'. 'Where practically possible children are consulted about their placement' Others commented on the good training and support offered to carers and positive working with supervising social workers.

## **What has improved since the last inspection?**

- Electronic records for carers have now been developed to match the information maintained on files.
- A Permanence Team, with a dedicated experienced Team Manager has now been established and includes the Family Link Scheme.
- The Commissioning Service Manager and a new Team Manager assess, commission, and monitor the use of Independent Fostering Agency Placements.
- Carer's Professional Development Groups have been set up and are held in carer's own homes and supported by supervising social workers.
- The Placement Support Team is utilised to support placements in crisis and to progress permanency plans.

- A senior practitioner routinely meets with a supervising social worker from the Remand Fostering service to share and update information on practice issues. Other links have been made.
- The Carer Handbook has been updated.
- Foster carer Approval status has been confirmed on Foster Carer Agreements.
- Where relatives are providing respite to carers on continuing basis, full checks are undertaken and a brief assessment is taken to the Fostering Panel.
- Carers approved for Emergency Duty Team placements are approved for these placements only.

### **What they could do better:**

Many of the questionnaires returned by social workers commented that there is a lack of placement choice for children and that 'not enough carers can impact on placement stability'.

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](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office.



# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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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 **good**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The Health and Development needs of children and young people in placement are given very good attention.

## EVIDENCE:

The new BAAF Health Assessment for Looked After Children has been launched and implemented across the Children and Young People's Services. The Looked After Children's Nurse, and General Practitioner employed by the Specialist Community Health Service have consulted with staff, carers and young people in the development of the new system. A Paediatrician now undertakes initial Health Assessments for Looked After Children. Health Visitors and School Nurses cover subsequent reviews. All childcare staff have attended for briefing sessions on the new Health Assessments procedure and the Clayton File, including social workers, carers and administrative staff. Team Managers reported that good outcomes for children have already been identified as a result of the new holistic Assessment. Further assessment induction work is being undertaken.

The use of the Clayton File (health passport) is being actively promoted by the Fostering Service, and systems are in place to ensure that there is a Clayton File for all children in placement. Carers also receive training and support from supervising social workers to assist them in the using this. On two carer visits very good examples were seen of the positive use of the health passport for recording essential appointments and medication administration. One carer was supporting a young person to develop the capacity to administer her own

medication and manage her medical condition. Carers visited showed a good awareness of healthy activities and healthy diets.

Carers are provided with a comprehensive range of health education related workshops, road shows, and training sessions throughout the year. These have recently included courses on Sexual Health, and Paediatric First Aid. The Development Officer for the Fostering Service is meeting with the designated school nurse to look at future joint training opportunities.

Health matters were seen to be very well discussed in Looked After Children's reviews and featured appropriately in supervising social workers recording of carer supervision and contact.

Children commented in the questionnaires about their health; 'My carer helps me to grow and be happy'. 'She makes me brush my teeth regular'. 'I get told to eat healthy stuff'. 'I get good advice about how to be fit and healthy'.

# 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 **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

The Fostering Service works closely with carers to ensure that children and young people are well matched to safe placements.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Carer files looked at provided very good evidence that appropriate checks are routinely undertaken to promote safe placements for children. Supervising social workers confirmed that risk assessments on bedroom sharing, fire plans, family policies, vehicle checks, and health and safety checks are always carried out at time of assessment and thereafter at reviews or if necessary, change of placement.

Excellent comprehensive packs are made up for social workers who are undertaking mainstream or kinship care Form F assessments, and these include the full range of assessment forms and safety pro formas. These were observed to be completed to a very good standard on files looked at. There is a new Health and Safety checklist, which carers now complete and this is

subsequently checked and counter-signed by their supervising social worker, and reviewed at Annual Review.

There was evidence of children being consulted where bedroom sharing was considered necessary and of their views being listened to. One child objected to having to share bedrooms on a twice-monthly basis, and alternatives were being considered at the time of the Inspection. Carers and children are provided with safety awareness information, materials (e.g. fun books) and activities.

Carers are also provided with very good Child Protection information in the Carer's Handbook, in addition to support and training, and can now access Child Protection training opportunities during the evenings and weekends. One set of carers visited were appropriately supporting a young person through a bullying experience, using materials provided by the supervising social worker.

At time of request for placement a comprehensive assessment of risk is carried out at the duty desk. The referral form has been reviewed and updated and supervising social workers have received training on its completion. Discussion with staff on duty during the Inspection demonstrated that this was considered to be a key tool for matching children to placement.

A new multi agency protocol for Young People Missing from Care has recently been launched (shared with two neighbouring Local Authorities) and representatives from the Fostering Service, and carers attended for this. All carers have been provided with the new protocol, and are offered advice and support to undertake the necessary risk assessments on missing from home incidents, from the foster care support line or Emergency Duty Team.

During the Inspection the record of allegations was looked at. The records were organised and managed efficiently. New draft procedures for responding to allegations across all of the Children's Services are currently being consulted on. Inspectors met with the Service Manager Child Protection and an Independent Chairperson from the Child Protection and Independent Review Service to discuss how allegations and concerns in relation to carers are managed within the CPIRS and noted that tight systems and good working partnerships with other agencies were in place.

The Fostering Service has implemented good processes when matching children to placements. These include a newly drawn up placement form maintained at front of carer files that lists the outcomes for the placed child, under the five Every Child Matters headings. This form by implication must identify how shortfalls will be met. Inspectors were impressed by the use of this form on files tracked. Managers confirmed that this had only just been introduced and would be implemented across the service.

In addition to this excellent Family Profiles are completed for each fostering household and these are used to match with children's profiles on the duty desk. Staff confirmed to Inspectors that adhering to appropriate carer Approval Status was a priority in the matching process. Other good examples of integrated matching systems were noted within the Permanency Team and the Family Link scheme. The Permanency Team work closely with the Adoption Team and have developed systems to prevent drift. A very good 'This is me' document, created by the Children's Disability Team, was used in a case that was tracked. This outlined in excellent detail the very special individual needs of the child who was receiving respite care.

Children were well matched to carers visited. One placement was of an unaccompanied French speaking Asylum Seeking young person, placed with a British family. The carers and the carer's child had gone to commendable lengths to help the young person adapt to a very different culture and were working hard to learn to communicate with her.

Personnel files looked at during the Inspection demonstrated that full recruitment checks, including follow up telephone checks, are routinely carried out for all staff working within the Fostering Service, whatever their position. Delays are followed up and recorded.

It was not possible for an Inspector to attend the Fostering Panel during this Inspection, however four sets of Panel minutes were looked at, the Panel Chair was visited and interviewed, and a Panel member interviewed over the telephone. There is now a new elected member on the Fostering Panel who has previous social work childcare experience.

The Fostering Panel Chair has significant experience of Local Authority Safeguarding Children work and has attended training on the new Adoption legislation and Special Guardianship Orders. Training recently provided to Panel members included that on Attachment, Private Fostering and a briefing update on the Independent Visitor scheme.

# 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, 31**

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Children and young people receive a very good level of support from carers and the Fostering Service to achieve educationally and enjoy leisure activities.

## **EVIDENCE:**

There is an increasingly diverse group of supervising social workers in the Fostering Service reflecting more appropriately the local community and supporting individual carer needs. In one case tracked, Asian carers were about to be allocated a culturally appropriate supervising social worker who would be able to assist their development in their fostering career more fully. Managers reported ongoing active recruitment and approval of carers from diverse backgrounds, although a small number of placing social workers in questionnaires said that finding culturally appropriate placements for children continues to be difficult.

Carer Professional Development groups that take place in carers own homes have included a group for Asian female carers. Managers said that carers are using their own knowledge and skills to support each other to respond appropriately to children's cultural and religious needs. The new Skills to Foster preparation course has a clear framework for looking at Equality and

Diversity with new carers, however there is a stated commitment that all carer training incorporates diversity.

In four cases tracked during the Inspection, there were cultural, religious and/or disability needs to be responded to. In all instances, these needs had been actively considered and accounted for by the service and carers were working hard to sensitively respond to the assessed needs. Interpreters had been used when necessary. In one case carers had supported the young person to find an appropriate place of worship and purchased a bible in her language. In another, carers were positively supporting two young people who had disabilities, to achieve their silver Duke of Edinburgh Awards, having already achieved bronze. The Fostering Service is now in a position to approve additional payments to support children's hobbies and interests and holiday and leisure activities.

Staff from the Fostering Team commented about the positive impact of the new Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children's Team on the service being offered to young people in placement.

Inspectors noted the excellent work being undertaken by the RALAC Team and the development of positive working relationships with the Fostering Service. A whole range of impressive projects, schemes and rapid response initiatives are being undertaken to improve Looked After Children's education. These include direct work with schools and designated tutors, special clubs and support for children at specific Key Stages, attendance monitoring and progress tracking. A pack of good quality children's information books and storybooks is given to all carers to support them to increase children's literacy and numeracy skills and to encourage the use of the library. Free books are also given out at the Christmas party.

The Carer's Handbook provides comprehensive guidance about children in Education and Employment to enable them to understand the school system and inform them about their responsibility to children in placement. Carer Training supports this.

Three of the five children tracked were receiving significant input from their carers, the RALAC Team, the Fostering service, the Behaviour Support Team and the GCSE short course scheme to promote their educational achievement. One young person with a disability had just gained a grade B for Art and wishes to pursue a career as an illustrator. Another very recently placed Asylum Seeking young person had been registered for a summer school course at college and a literacy and numeracy course for this term. She was very proud of her achievements.

Data provided for the purpose of the Inspection indicated that 58.8% of the young people leaving care from the Fostering Service, over the age of 16



gained at least one GCSE at Grade A-G, or GNVQ over the last twelve months. This was reported to be an increase of 70% from last year's figures.

Children's comments in questionnaires about their education included 'I was stuck at school until RALAC got involved'. 'I am always doing homework and course work, especially now I am in year 10'.

The Fostering Service Family Link Scheme is now operating to a new service specification. An improved Short Break Referral meeting system has been implemented which promotes improved matching and identifies the most appropriate respite provision for each child at an early stage i.e. special childminding, residential or family link. There are good working relationships with the Children's Disability Team.

## **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):**

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Children are well supported to have contact with their family and friends where appropriate.

The fostering service and carers work very well with children and young people to ensure that they are consulted and that their views and wishes are taken into account.

### **EVIDENCE:**

Where contacts were taking place in cases tracked, these were being appropriately managed. Contact risk assessments are drawn up from the outset of a placement. Contact training is routinely provided to carers. A new Contact Centre is now available, developed to meet the needs of family groups and can facilitate up to four contact arrangements at any one time. The Fostering Service Team Managers are now authorised to sign approval for contact transport expenses incurred by carers.

The Independent Reviewing Officer seeks children's views about family contact at their LAC reviews and Inspectors noted a good example of a young person's wishes about contact being supported and advocated for by carers.

The Fostering service consults with children about their placements at the time of their foster carer's Annual Review through a colourful leaflet questionnaire.

Carer's own children are consulted too. Children are also consulted when a placement finishes.

There was good evidence in cases tracked, questionnaires returned and households visited that carers listened to children. 'I can make an opinion whenever I need to'. 'My carers listen to what I say, and they listen to my feelings'. The Inspector attended a carer training session 'The Skilful Communicator' designed to raise awareness as to how babies and small children learn to communicate their wishes to adults.

Regular events and activities are set up for children and young people to 'air their views' and to say what they think. The Children's Rights Coordinator gave several examples of these to Inspectors and provided recent colourful copies of the Children's Newsletter. The Newsletter contains contributions from children as well as notice of future events and information about their rights as Looked After Children.

There is a Stand Up Speak Out participation group for LAC aged between thirteen and twenty-one, including care leavers. The group meets each month to discuss services. Staff from the Children's and Young People's Services also attend including from the Fostering Team. The SUSO group have requested that the Fostering Service develop child friendly Family Profiles, with details as specified by them, for all fostering households. These will be sent to their social workers electronically before a new placement so that they can see where they are going before they arrive. Carers and supervising social workers are currently undertaking this task and hope to complete by the end of the year.

There are eleven approved Independent Visitors supported and reviewed by a designated supervising social worker who visit children who do not have family or friends visiting.

# 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**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

Improved support services are offered to Young People reaching independence. Carer allowances are paid promptly, and some additional allowances are made available on occasions.

## EVIDENCE:

In all cases tracked there was good evidence of young people being encouraged to develop independence skills. All had Pathway Plans. One young person was receiving a great deal of emotional support from her carers and their child to adapt to a new language and culture, and to acquire new daily living skills. Although she is over sixteen, she is remaining in placement until she is confident and competent enough to live in a supported accommodation. Part of the work being undertaken with her will be to attend for the Managing Your Own Home programme covering budgeting, cooking and cleaning, applying for work etc. The course is accredited and young people reportedly enjoy this.

Two other young people, who have a disability and receive DLA, had their own bank account and were encouraged by their carer to save. They were supported by a social worker from the new 16+ team. Staff in the Fostering Service spoke positively about the 16+ team, which has replaced the Leaving Care team.

A Care Leaver's Group has been re launched and advertised in the Children's Rights newsletter.

The Fostering Development Officer confirmed plans to work with the 16+ team with regard to the Ready Willing and Able Assessments that are used to prepare young people for leaving care, looking at how carers can more actively be involved in this process. RALAC workers liaise closely with the team to incorporate PEP into Pathway Plans and to develop support packages to support young people to continue in education and work experience. A 16+ worker is attached to RALAC to focus on educational and employment opportunities for Year 12.

The Fostering Service Team Managers now manage the increased Leisure Fund budget to ensure prompt and continuing payments and can sign to authorise expenses for contact facilitated by carers. Inspectors noted in files looked at, that kinship/family carers received a good level of financial support. The Carer's Handbook Guidance on allowances and payments is regularly updated. Fostering Allowances have increased by 5% this year and the Fostering Service Manager confirmed that Cabinet has acknowledged a growth bid for further increase in the Fostering Allowance.

# 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, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25, 32**

Quality in this outcome area is **excellent**. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

A strong, committed and informed Management Team leads the Fostering Service. Very good systems are in place to support children's placements and to promote placement stability.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The Fostering Service Statement of Purpose provides very good detail about the aims and activity of the Fostering Service.

The Children's Guides are colourful, clear, simple and age appropriate. In addition to the Guides appealing storybooks about a fostered teddy bear are available for younger children. Children and young people are also provided with other information e.g. Children's Rights Coordinator contact details, at time of placement.

Staff in the Fostering Service are organised into four task specific teams, each headed by a Team manager to maximise efficiency, however all staff spoken to were able if necessary, to work across the service and confirmed that any Team Manager or the Service Manager could be approached at any time. The new Permanency Team is almost fully staffed and currently supports sixty-six carers working closely with the Child Care Operations and the Adoption Teams. Clear planning systems are followed when children are identified for permanency.

Supervising social workers made reference to good access to training and newly appointed staff were receiving solid induction programmes and a high level of supervision. Practice teachers were committed to providing student placements with good support and a positive introduction into fostering work. Team Managers had all achieved accredited management training.

Inspectors were impressed with the positive developmental work being undertaken by Senior Practitioners in addition to them holding a caseload. The impact of an informed and dedicated administrative team was also acknowledged.

Creative recruitment campaigns continue to be launched to address shortfalls in the service. At the time of the Inspection there had been a shortfall identified in available placements to accommodate babies and a recruitment campaign has been designed to respond to this need.

Since the last Inspection, protocols and systems for the commissioning of Independent Fostering Agency placements have been formalised by the Children's Commissioning Service Manager and recently appointed Team Manager, whose role is to secure, monitor and evaluate these placements. Good checking and matching processes have been developed.

The Fostering Development Officer continues to coordinate and deliver an excellent varied and relevant training and development programme, accessing and utilising community resources and working alongside e.g. health and education colleagues to offer learning opportunities on an informal and formal

basis. Carers receive bright informal quarterly newsletters that advertise forthcoming events under the five Every Child Matters headings and also provide contact details and links for websites and libraries etc.

In addition to this the Carer's Professional Development Groups have been set up to operate from carer's own homes providing a more informal delivery of training, looking at specific areas of fostering. Carers and staff reported that this project has been a real success, and will definitely continue. Carers are now being provided with their own file to record their training, certificates, newsletters and skill audits. All carers are provided with an annual written training profile. Joint training with social workers, carers and other professionals is promoted.

Carers are provided with good support from the Fostering Service. This was confirmed with carers and staff spoken to, in files looked at and questionnaires returned. Excellent written materials are provided to carers in the updated Carer Handbook and Fostering Resource pack. Carer quotes to Inspectors included 'I have an excellent supervising social worker, who has a good knowledge of my children'. 'I have such good support from my supervising social worker, and access to really helpful training'. 'If my worker is not available I know I can speak to someone else or even the Managers'.

There is an excellent range of recording tools available to supervising social workers and carers to ensure that essential areas of recording are captured. Full packs are made up for staff undertaking Form F assessments, and include the whole range of assessment paperwork necessary to undertake all checks and recording for applications.

The door to the office containing lockable cabinets for carer's files was not lockable however this had been rectified by the conclusion of the Inspection.

Carers are provided with training on recording, and supervising social workers confirmed that work to support and encourage carers to appropriately record placements was ongoing. Some very good carer records were seen.

The issue of some carers not feeling valued or respected by placing social workers was raised in a telephone interview an Inspector held with the representative of the local Foster Care Partnership who reported that while overall the Fostering Service supported carers well, there were still some carers who were experiencing a poor response when trying to contact placing social workers who did not return calls. Some carers felt that they were being treated disrespectfully and that recognition wasn't being given to their roles and responsibilities in caring for Looked After Children. The Fostering Service Manager agreed with Inspectors that he would look into the factual details of this representation and consider with the Foster Care Partnership how the situation could be improved. Some carers reported good relationships with individual placing social workers in questionnaires, while most returns from



placing social workers reported good relationships with carers and fostering teams.

Carers visited had appropriate LAC information available to them and were generally well informed about children in placement. Some were collecting appropriate materials to inform life story work and were going to commendable lengths to do this.

Since the last Inspection an electronic folder has been created for all approved foster carers, in addition to a good range of other folders relating to the Fostering Service. All documents pertaining to carers, excepting for confidential ones, are saved in their folders. Essential fostering information can be easily accessed or isolated swiftly although some files, appropriately, have limited accessibility. All fostering staff receive training on the use of this system. Social workers and Managers described how the system had increased efficiency and communication. The dedicated administrative team have a good knowledge of carers and placements and are valued within the Fostering Service.

The kinship team currently supports fifty carers looking after sixty-six children. Carers have access to all foster carer training and children to children's events and also to the Children's Rights services. A leaflet is being developed for kinship carers. The use of Special Guardianship Orders is now routinely considered at LAC reviews for those children in permanent placements, however staff said that increased SGO assessments had impacted on the work team in terms of time taken to complete.

In one case tracked where a young person was placed with a family member there was very good evidence that potential shortfalls and weaknesses within the placement were being addressed and accounted for and that good additional financial support had been provided when needed. There had been a significant time delay (18 months) between the notification and approval of placement. The Manager confirmed that appropriate checks had taken place, and accounted for the delay, and agreed that this should be more clearly recorded on the file. A high level of recorded contact supported the placement however a formal unannounced visit had not been undertaken but the supervising social worker noted that most of the visits to the family were of this nature since the carer usually forgot she was coming.

A supervising social worker has been appointed within the team to undertake assessments for Private Fostering arrangements.

# 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

<b>BEING HEALTHY</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>12</b>	3

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

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

<b>MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>10</b>	3
<b>11</b>	4

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

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

No

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

### **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

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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