



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Fostering People Ltd

**Level 2 Bridgford House
Pavilion Road
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 5JG**

Lead Inspector

Elaine Cray and Mark Ryder

Announced Inspection

8th November 2005

09:30

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SERVICE INFORMATION

Name of service	Fostering People Ltd
Address	Level 2 Bridgford House Pavilion Road West Bridgford Nottingham NG2 5JG
Telephone number	0115 9455445
Fax number	0115 9145303
Email address	info@fosteringpeople.co.uk
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Fostering People Ltd
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Sarah Byatt
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies
No. of places registered (if applicable)	0
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 21st March 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Fostering People Ltd is an independent fostering agency based in Nottingham. The agency recruits and manages foster carers across the East Midlands area in order to provide family placements for children who need to be looked after by local authorities.

The registered manager is supported by a senior manager and there are four full-time and two part-time supervising social workers. The administration services are organised by an office manager and three clerical/administration assistants. The agency also has access to freelance workers to undertake occasional work such as independent reviewing, assessments and direct childcare work.

The agency's Statement of Purpose is to offer emergency, short-term, bridging or long-term placements for children aged between 0 and 19 years old. At the time of this inspection Fostering People listed twenty five approved fostering households and were offering looked after services to forty one children .

Information about this fostering service can be accessed on www.fosteringpeople.co.uk .

SUMMARY

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

This was a planned inspection carried out by two inspectors, Elaine Cray and Mark Ryder. Prior to the three day inspection, the agency's panel process was observed on 11th October 2005 and a pre-inspection visit was made to the agency on the 20th October 2005.

As part of the inspection process questionnaires were sent to various interested parties. At the time of preparing this report, questionnaire responses had been received from 13 foster carers, 21 foster children over the age of 10 years and 22 placing social workers. Administrative staff were asked about the running of the agency and the Independent Reviewing Officer also provided an overview of the care provided to children looked after by the agency's foster carers.

A sample of four carers were tracked which included visiting and speaking with the children and foster carers in their own homes and interviewing the supervising social workers. In addition inspectors reviewed the children's and carer's files. Additionally, the agency had scheduled a training event on one of the inspection days and inspectors were able to talk with a large group of foster carers at the agency's office.

The agency submitted comprehensive paperwork to the Commission for Social Care Inspection prior to the inspection, which has informed this report.

Verbal feedback was given on the 10th November 2005.

This was a positive inspection with only two requirements and one recommendation being identified.

What the service does well:

Inspectors were impressed with the overall quality of the service and positive outcomes for children and young people in foster care. All the young people and the foster carers spoken with were very enthusiastic and positive about their foster care experiences and the support provided by the agency.

During this inspection the manager and staff were observed to work cohesively as a team and to have good knowledge of the strengths of individual carers and of the specific needs of children and young people currently in placement.

The agency has a high expectation of its carers in relation to training and provides good training opportunities, utilising staff skills as well as contracting the services of external trainers.

The manager, staff, recording procedures, file organisation and policies and procedures evidenced a clear and comprehensive understanding and coverage of the Fostering Regulations 2002, the National Minimum Standards and appropriate legislation.

The management of the fostering service was considered very positive. The Responsible Individual and the Registered Manager maintain positive and interactive relationships with staff, foster carers and children being looked after by the agency. There are clear monitoring processes throughout the agency. Foster carers' interviews and questionnaires were very positive about the support of supervising social workers and the overall management of the agency.

Visits to foster homes assessed the home environments as being suitable and appropriate for the young people in placement.

Young people were knowledgeable about the agency's services, the staff who worked there and felt consulted about how the agency works. Young people's questionnaires report a very high level of satisfaction with their fostering experiences.

Outcomes for children's education and achievement opportunities were well developed. The agency responds to the educational and recreational needs of young people in foster care and is keen to celebrate their achievements.

Staff and foster carers provided an excellent understanding of providing a safe environment for young people, the carers and their families. Child protection procedures were promoted throughout the agency's working and there was a good understanding of, and opportunities to develop strategies to manage challenging behaviour and develop the self esteem and worth of young people.

Placing social workers' questionnaires reported a high level of satisfaction with the outcomes for young people, the skills of social workers and the running of the agency.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The agency has improved the organisation of information relating to notifications of significant events to the Commission and continued to develop the running of the agency and the outcomes for carers and children.

What they could do better:

Whilst meeting, and in some cases, exceeding the standards inspected on this visit, the agency needs to ensure that documented parental consent covers when children are taken out of the country. Secondly, there needs to be more written clarity in relation the panel's recommendation for approval and the actual decision to approve by the service provider. Finally, whilst inspectors were impressed with how the agency and foster carers promote education for young people, including repeatedly asking placing social workers for Personal Education Plans, inspectors recommend that the requests for PEP's are recorded.

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

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

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcomes these Standards are:

- 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

The fostering service provides positive outcomes for young people's continued good health and well being.

EVIDENCE:

Placement plans and review minutes demonstrated a good level of monitoring of health care needs for each young person.

The foster carer agreement clearly describes the expectation that a child's health history is accurately recorded and that each carer has delegated responsibility for arranging health checks and treatments for the child.

Young people expressed positive views about how carers help them stay healthy and look after themselves. For example: "eat fruit and veg and get plenty of exercise ", "staying away from danger, regular check ups and eating healthy", " my foster parents advise me to eat and stay healthy, look after my personal hygiene e.g. clean teeth and shower" and "my foster carers always encourage us to take care of ourselves".

Foster carers spoken with on this inspection and supervising social workers' records provided a good insight into the health needs of young people, including regular health checks, health issues relating to older adolescents' life styles, the medical needs of black children, and liaison with mental health agencies such as CAMHS.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes 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, and 15 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

Staff and foster carers provide an excellent understanding of providing a safe environment for young people. Child protection and robust recruitment, selection and approval procedures are promoted throughout the agency's working. Children and young people are provided with warm, safe and comfortable foster homes with trained and competent carers.

EVIDENCE:

Discussion with the manager, staff, foster carers, young people and inspection of documents clearly evidenced that the protection of young people and adherence to the Child Protection procedures were held as a priority throughout the agency.

All foster carers' files inspected had an individualised "safe caring policy". Visits to foster carers homes and discussion with foster carers and young people showed that the "safe caring" practices were implemented on a daily basis. Young people understood about privacy, expectations about where to get dressed, the help they might need with showering and bathing and respecting other people's space. Additionally, both foster carers and young people understood that they could discuss any concerns with their social worker and supervising social worker. Young people presented as very comfortable in

expressing any concerns to any staff within the agency and clearly knew people by name. All young people spoken with said they felt safe. Foster carers and staff were well versed in child protection procedures and the practical ways in which to maintain the safety of young people in their care.

All current staff are appropriately qualified, experienced and thoroughly recruited. The manager implements a clear and robust staff recruitment and selection procedure and files evidenced that all required information and checks are carried out.

Foster carer files evidenced thorough assessment of foster carers; with in depth assessments, detailed reports for panel, required checks, documented referee interviews and panel approval available for inspection. Documentation, staff interviews and panel observations identified that concerns about the suitability of foster carers are addressed and appropriately dealt with, both from within the agency's own procedures and, where necessary, in conjunction with the placing authorities and the local child protection procedures.

Interviews with the managers and supervising social workers showed a positive awareness of the skills and needs of foster carers and there was a clear process of matching and connecting the assessed needs of children with appropriate carers. Foster carers said that information about planned referrals was generally good and supervising social workers talked about the suitability of placements with the foster carers.

Panel membership was appropriate. The chair has extensive childcare social work experience and had been the Director for Social Services in another local authority. The panel observed for this inspection dealt with foster carer reviews. Detailed reports were provided, the presentation of views was facilitated and foster carers were encouraged to provide their own perspectives. Whilst, on the whole, documentation was very good, there were occasions when foster carers' files did not give a consistent presentation of the recommendation made by the panel to the service provider and the consequent decision made by the service provider.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

Outcomes for children's education and achievement opportunities were promoted and well developed. The agency responds to diversity and individualised needs of young people, including race, culture, sexuality, religion and needs were well met carers. The agency is keen to celebrate the achievements of all young people.

EVIDENCE:

Young people spoken with and additional questionnaires consistently praised the help and support they receive from foster carers with attending school and doing homework.

The agency has a clear commitment to promoting education and opportunities to achieve to young people and this is reflected in the initial terms and conditions presented to foster carers, through supervising social workers' monitoring of placements, the panel's review process and training provided to foster carers.

Documentation evidenced a clear commitment by supervising social workers to ensure that placing social workers provide personal education plans for young people, that foster carers liaise with schools and contribute to the assessment of, planning for and review of young people's education needs and are able to provide young people with support, including appropriate equipment.

Foster carers demonstrated excellent approaches to promoting education, supporting young people at school and at home, liaising with schools and enabling children and young people to embrace opportunities to make progress in all aspects in their lives, including developing social skills, finding new hobbies and building self esteem and confidence.

Discussion with foster carers, interviews with staff and inspection of files evidenced a clear commitment to understanding and responding to the diverse needs of children and young people. The agency has a commitment to providing training on diversity, provides appropriate support to black carers and children, addresses needs in terms of sexuality, needs arising from trans-racial placements and provides a working and caring environment where difference and diversity are acknowledged and nurtured.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

The agency consults with young people and actively promotes contact with young people and their families.

EVIDENCE:

Family contact arrangements were documented in each young person's file, the Looked After Children (LAC) documentation and the Placement Agreement. The expectation for foster carers to promote such contact is clearly stated in the initial terms and conditions set down between the agency and foster carers.

Foster carers are aware of the importance of appropriate contact between young people and their birth families. Information regarding contact is regularly shared with the social worker and through the childcare review process.

Young people spoken with and who were able to have contact with birth family members were very positive about how family contact is managed; some young people chat to family on the phone, others go on home visits and some family members visit the foster carer's homes.

Young people said that they are asked about how their foster placement is going and sometimes about what the agency is like. Some were not happy with how often their placing social worker visited, but all were reassured by the supervising social worker visits and felt they were regularly asked about how things were going. Young people also receive a letter from the agency before the review of their placement. Letters are also sent to the birth children of foster carer to ask them about their views.

All young people spoken with said that they had received a written guide telling them about Fostering People and they all knew about the complaints process, which was included in the guide, and who they could raise concerns with.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes 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)

The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

Young people are encouraged to develop independent skills and the agency is committed to help and support young people for when they have to leave care. Foster carers receive regular payments.

EVIDENCE:

Discussion with foster carers and young people clearly identified that young people are able to develop different skills, both in terms of emotional maturity, developing social and life skills and managing experiences that help with the transition from adolescence to adulthood and for leaving care to live independently. Young people were pleased with their achievements, including going to college, choosing career paths and learning to drive. Visits to foster homes identified that young people are engaged in helping in domestic tasks and responsibilities, including cooking, going shopping, washing dishes, doing laundry and cleaning chores. Additionally some young people enjoyed budgeting an allowance, doing part time work, arranging travel and balancing their social needs with the wishes of the other members of the foster family, including what time to come in and organising transport.

Unfortunately young people preparing to leave care felt that despite excellent support from their carers and the agency, they are left little choice when to leave their foster family. There was a consistent message that young people felt let down by the Looked After system as leaving home was totally due to age and funding issues and little, if nothing, to do with ability to cope, skills or personal choice. This was the only area of dissatisfaction expressed by young people and there was a clear message that leaving home for fostered young people was not reflective of what happened in other families.

Clear terms and conditions relating to payment are in place and fosters carers confirmed that payments are regular and punctual.

Management

The intended outcomes 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, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

The agency is managed and staffed by a team of qualified and experienced professionals who are dedicated to supervising and supporting carers to appropriately meet the needs of children and young people in placement.

EVIDENCE:

The agency's Statement of Purpose provides full detail of its aims, objectives and working practices and a clear statement of the types of placements provided.

The manager has extensive experience of working within and managing child care services and possesses both social work and management qualifications. Staff and foster carers were extremely positive about the manager's leadership, management and supportive attributes. The manager was able to provide inspectors with an in depth overview of the fostering agency, support mechanisms to foster carers and services provided to young people. There are clear and consistent monitoring systems, including clear identification of roles, responsibilities and conduct for staff and foster carers.

Staffing arrangements were well managed, with a good amount of staff, effectively allocated case and work loads and staff who are qualified, experienced and have appropriate skills and knowledge. Placing social workers were very positive about the running of the fostering agency and the calibre of care provided to young people from the foster carers.

Staff said they were very well supported, with approachable management, good training opportunities and regular supervision ensuring good personal support and effective case management and discussion.

Similarly, foster carers were very positive about the support, training and supervision received from the agency. Foster carer records detailed regular visits by supervising social workers, with a child focused approach to the content of each visit coupled with support and development of the foster carers skills. Training records detailed a variety of training available to foster carers and an excellent attendance rate.

Staff and young people's records were very well maintained, organised and appropriately secured.

Whilst financial records were not viewed on this visit, discussion with the manager indicated that the agency is financially viable and that suitable arrangements for the control and supervision of the agency's financial affairs and powers are in place.

The premises for the agency are well maintained and suitable for the purposes of the agency, including adequate office space, good information and technology equipment, interview room and large meeting/panel room. Adequate insurance and health and safety measures are in place. The management of the agency was efficient and effective.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

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

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	3
9	3
15	4
30	2

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

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

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

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

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
1	24	34(3) Schedule 6.4	Ensure parental consent is extended to when children leave the country.	31/03/06
2	30	28.3	Ensure clarity in documenting the recommendation of the panel and the subsequent decision of the service provider in the foster carer approval process.	31/03/06

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	13	Record requests for Personal Education Plans from placing social workers.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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