



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

**Five Rivers Consortium (Family Placement)
Limited**

**43A Oxford Street
Ripley
Derbyshire
DE5 3AH**

Lead Inspector
Trisha Gibbs

Announced Inspection
13th June 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

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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	Five Rivers Consortium (Family Placement) Limited
Address	43A Oxford Street Ripley Derbyshire DE5 3AH
Telephone number	01773 745360
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	www.five-rivers.org
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Five Rivers Consortium (Family Placement) Limited
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ms Madeleine Hall
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

1. The Fostering service provides placements for children and young people aged between 0 and 18 at the time of placement.
2. The fostering service provides short, medium and long term placements
3. The range of needs of children placed can include the following categories:
 - Children with Physical disabilities
 - Children with learning disabilities
 - Children with emotional or behavioural difficulties
 - Children with mental disorder
 - Children with present drug dependence
 - Children with present alcohol dependence
 - Children with sensory impairment
4. Within six months of registration the registered manager commences N.V.Q. Level 4 in management (or an alternative management qualification that matches the competencies required by the N.V.Q Level 4.)

Date of last inspection 9th May 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

The fostering service is part of Five Rivers Family Placement Limited, which has eight branches throughout England and Ireland.

The Derbyshire office has been in operation since November 2004, and provides short, medium and long-term placements for children and young people aged between 0 to 18 years and includes parent and baby placements. Placements available are listed above.

At the time of Inspection, the Derbyshire office was providing placements for 7 children and young people, and there were 11 approved foster carers. Placement charges ranged from £460 (one child) to £1350 (parent and children) per week.

The fostering service recruits, registers, and provides ongoing training and support to new and existing carers.

SUMMARY

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

This Inspection was announced and was undertaken by two Inspectors on the first day, and one Inspector the following two days.

As part of the Inspection two carer's and two young people were tracked through the close inspection of their case files and a home visit. The Inspector also met with carers during a training session. The Registered Manager, social worker and administrative worker, were also interviewed. Records were examined and questionnaires were received from foster carer's, young people and Placing Authorities using the service.

The Inspector attended and observed a Fostering Panel in Cheltenham.

Policies and Procedures, the Carer's Handbook and other documents were made available and referred to throughout the Inspection.

What the service does well:

- Provides a small scale, good quality, personal family placement service where staff and carers work well together as a team.
- Prioritises the rights and of children and young people. Promotes Advocacy. Consults with children.
- Invests in carer training that will make meaning of some of the challenges placements might present and enables carers to manage these more appropriately.
- Actively utilises Child Specific Safe Care Policies to assess risk and make placements as safe as possible.
- Maintains clear and efficiently organised children's and carer case files. Recording is of a consistently high standard. Undertakes detailed Assessments of prospective carers.
- Supports carers very well.
- Has in place good systems to monitor and manage the service efficiently.
- Provides a well qualified Fostering Panel.

What has improved since the last inspection?

- Personnel files have been checked to ensure that they contain an explanation for gaps in employment history.
- Signed consent for emergency treatment is now routinely sought at time of referral.

What they could do better:

- The Agency should evidence in writing how it matches children's needs to carer competencies and skills, when matching children to placement, and account how any identified shortfall will be addressed.

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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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

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

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

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

The Health and development of children and young people is positively promoted and given very good attention by the Agency and carers.

EVIDENCE:

Health issues in case files are very well recorded. A section of each child's file is dedicated to Health and Therapy where all Health information and correspondence, including a separate Health Record, is maintained. Evidence of signed Medical Consent is also retained in this section, and this is commendable practice.

Carers complete compulsory Monthly Summaries and these include a report on any Health or Medical issues. These were seen on file. Carer's supervision notes also make reference to the Health of children placed.

Very good Health and Medical guidance is provided to carers in the Carer's Handbook and is supported by a good and relevant training programme, including First Aid training, Sexual Health and Drug Awareness.

Inspectors noted excellent work undertaken by one carer in successfully encouraging a young person to give up smoking. Carers who were visited were very aware of the importance of healthy diets and exercise routines to support children's development. One set of carers was especially conscious of the impact of food colourings and additives on the behaviour of the child placed with them.

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, and 30.

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

The Agency provides very good support, training, and guidance to carers, to assist them to provide children with safe placements, and matches children to placement with care, but needs to evidence how matching is achieved.

EVIDENCE:

The Registered Manager has significant experience and knowledge in the field of Child Care, Child Protection and Fostering, and has recently completed the NVQ 4 Managers Award. There have been no new staff appointed since the last Inspection. Staff personnel files were fully inspected and Standard 15 assessed as met, at the last Inspection.

Excellent, child specific Safe Care Policies, including, where necessary, a risk assessment, were seen on children's files. These were dated and signed and reviewed, and the Agency is highly commended on prioritising this practice. Carers spoken to during visits and within group discussion were observed to have a very good understanding of Safe Care principles and Child Protection. Comprehensive Health and Safety checks were also seen on file, actively

updated each year. A new Health and Safety check list has been designed for families who live on farms.

The carer's Handbook provides good accessible information about Child Protection procedures and protocols, and carers are encouraged to contact the Agency's out of hours on call support, for advice re Child Protection matters at any time. The Agency provides very good Child Protection training, accessing both the Local Authority provision and that of the NSPPCC.

Very good Form F's were seen on carer's files detailing skills and competencies, plus good LAC and referral form detail outlining children's placement needs. Children and young people tracked were very well matched to their placements. It was evident from discussions with the Registered Manager and Senior Supervising Social Worker that careful consideration is given to appropriately matching children to carers at the time of referral. Whenever possible, introductory visits are carried out and both carers and children consulted about the suitability of the identified placement. The Agency however should provide written evidence as to how children have been matched to placement, indicating how the skill and competencies of the carers identified are sufficient to meet the specific needs of the child, and how any shortfalls will be met.

The Agency does not have a separate Five Rivers Placement Agreement but relies on the LAC admission forms for essential placement information, and is mindful therefore that this must be obtained in order to provide full background information and details of the day-to-day arrangements for the child being placed. There is a comprehensive Five Rivers Contract document that covers financial and business arrangements.

The Agency is introducing 'Family Profiles' booklets for children to look at prior to placement, and these provide photographs and a description of each individual Family and Household where a placement may be available.

Excellent respite packs have been introduced to go out with children when they have a short break with another carer.

Children and young people visited and in questionnaires said how much they liked their foster families. 'I love my (foster) mum and dad'.

Currently the newly and appropriately constituted Fostering Panel in Cheltenham, considers the Ripley office Reviews and Applications. The Panel members were noted to be very well qualified, and included a paediatric nurse, a foster carer and person who had experienced of being looked after within the care system. Although there is no member with educational expertise the Inspector is aware that efforts have been made to recruit such a person. Panel members demonstrated very good insight into the fostering task and into the needs of Looked After Children. The Fostering Panel Chair was suitably

experienced and knowledgeable in the field of childcare. The Agency is reminded to confirm a permanent Vice Chair (currently noted as being 'probable') as soon as possible. Panel members were clear about their role in the monitoring of the quality of Assessments, and in providing feedback to the Agency on quality issues. The Inspector noted that the Agency's Panel Procedures are currently maintained within its Policy and Procedures manual, and as such is not a discreet document. Panel members agreed that a separate document/handbook would be helpful. The Agency is also advised to clarify in its Panel document in more detail, how decision-making is managed when the Panel is in disagreement.

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

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

The Agency and carers provide a very good level of support to promote the educational achievement of children and young people, and to develop their self-esteem.

EVIDENCE:

The Carer's Handbook contains good statements about Diversity and Equal Opportunities. Inspectors noted a very good booklet on Sexual Relationships that included a section on anti-oppressive practice and sexuality. Carers are provided with training to promote awareness about Diversity.

There are currently no black carers within the Derby office although efforts have been made to recruit a more diverse group of carers. Of the current four applications being assessed, one is in respect of a Muslim family. The Registered Manager is very clear about the need to match placements in terms of religious and cultural needs, and how shortfalls should be addressed where families may not be able to meet some of these needs. She is currently looking at the needs of Asylum Seeking Children and attending training on this, and confirmed that carers would be trained to meet the specific needs of this group of children before appropriate placements could be provided.

Inspectors noted the positive social and educational progress made by a child in placement who had a disability, and who was the subject of an Educational Statement, through the good working relationships between the school, the carers, and the Agency. There was a similar positive pattern in a placement tracked where school, carer and Agency were working in partnership to accommodate the educational and behavioural needs of a primary school child. The carers support the child at home with reading and spelling. In another situation the Agency provided a computer for a young person where the placing authority would not do this, to promote his educational studies.

Another young person tracked, who at time of placement had not attended school for one year, had been reintegrated into school with commendable encouragement from her carer and is now taking GSCE's before leaving school and possible going into higher Education.

All children have a Personal Education Plan and these were seen in the Education section of files tracked, along with Education updates in monthly summaries. It was evident that carers participate in professional meetings.

The Manager confirmed that the Agency would provide support to carers if children were excluded from school, according to the specific needs of carer and child, and gave examples of this.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

10, 11

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

Children are appropriately supported to have contact with their family and friends.

The Agency and carers work very well with children and young people to ensure that they are consulted and to ensure that their views and wishes are listened to.

EVIDENCE:

Contact arrangements were noted to be appropriately recorded on children's files. Inspectors were impressed with the work of one carer in helping a young person re-establish a relationship with a parent, which had broken down, and also promoting a more positive relationship with the other parent. Carers spoken to showed good insight into the need for most children and young people to remain in contact with their birth parents, and to be able to talk about them. Very good training is provided to carers to raise awareness about the effects of children's life experiences with their birth parents, and how this impacts on behaviours when they are in placement.

Inspectors observed good examples of Agency workers and carers promoting children and young peoples' self esteem and confidence, through encouragement of small personal achievements and celebration of successes. One LAC review recognises this. 'The Carer works very hard to support X and

the change in her behaviour is for the better, along with an increase in her self esteem, confidence and social networks’.

The Agency has formally consulted children, requesting their views about the service and ideas for future group activities, and there was evidence of children being routinely consulted at the time of carer reviews and at their own LAC reviews.

The Agency actively supports children and young people to advocate for their rights, where it appears that their wishes and feelings are not being taken into consideration or overlooked, within the LAC planning process. Inspectors were given examples of such cases, and advised the Fostering Team about the role of the Placing Authority Children’s Rights Officer in such cases. The Agency is commended for supporting young people to advocate for themselves, and for advocating on their behalf.

The Agency, with the agreement of young people, undertakes consultation with them when leaving care. One young person wrote in a ‘Moving On’ interview with the Agency, ‘my placement with X and X has been the best I’ve had. X takes care of my needs and keeps promises. She never lets me down. She is good about supporting my relationship with my mum. She knows my mum will always be mum.’ All children said in questionnaires that they were given choices and listened to by their carers.

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

Young people are positively supported to prepare for being independent.

Carers receive good allowances to cover the cost of caring for children placed and are paid promptly.

EVIDENCE:

Excellent examples were seen of young people being assisted by carers and the Agency to develop independent living skills. In one case a checklist of skills being acquired for leaving care was signed and dated by the carer. This included Housekeeping and Money Management. The young person also has an appropriate Pathway Plan in place. A new booklet has been developed, but is yet to be introduced, called Promoting Independent Living Skills, especially designed for care leavers. There were two other good examples of young people leaving care, and receiving support from their carers and the Agency to meet their very different needs.

Carers were satisfied that allowances appropriately covered the cost of caring for children and young people in placement, and that payments were prompt. Inspectors advised that the Carer Handbook could usefully provide a breakdown of how carer allowances should be allocated. Carers visited provided a very good standard of living for their placements.

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

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

The fostering service provided by Five Rivers is well managed with good consideration given to the needs of staff, carers and children.

EVIDENCE:

The Five Rivers Statement of Purpose includes the required information detailing children's services provided by the Agency on a national basis, and also includes an insert about the Derbyshire team. Two excellent Children's Guides are produced for two age groups and are colourful, clear and accessible.

The small Derbyshire fostering team meets the needs of carers and children placed very well. The Manager and Senior Supervising Social Worker supervise and support carers and placements, and are both very well qualified and experienced in Child Care and Fostering, and are enabled to attend national and local training to keep in touch with developments and changes in Fostering. Currently there are eleven Approved fostering households, and four new carers are being assessed.

Operational links are now being developed between the Derbyshire team and the new North team. It is envisaged that the teams will increasingly work together to coordinate carer training and support. The Regional Manager for the North now provides monthly supervision and appraisal for the Derbyshire Registered Manager. All Five Rivers Managers attend for a central quarterly meeting.

The Inspector looked at the local monitoring records for incidents, complaints and other reportable events.

Carers reported an excellent level of support, with someone from the Agency always being available should an emergency occur. Inspectors noted that carers are provided with monthly formal supervision session, with typed records of these. Supervision covers placement and carer needs. Annual reviews and unannounced visits are well recorded. A good post approval training programme is being implemented and includes Mother and Baby training, where carers assist in supporting and assessing parenting skills in a mother and baby placements. Completion of the training will inform and support recommendations for change of carer Approval Status. Carers said that training was very good and 'If we want or need a particular training, we will get it'. 'We get excellent in house training, and are offered 24 hour cover by named and known social workers'.

Inspectors noted the good practice of a carer being subject to a new Form F Assessment on the occasion of them becoming a single carer when their partner left.

Children's (and carer) records were very well organised and maintained. They contained essential information and evidence of missing LAC paperwork being pursued, when not provided at time of placement. Referral forms, LAC

reviews, ongoing correspondence, Health and Education documents, and appropriate Safe Care policies were in place. Carers confirmed that they receive training on record keeping. All carers are provided with a lockable box by the Agency, for filing confidential information in.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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	4

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

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

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
1.	FS8	The Agency should evidence in writing how it matches children's needs to carer competencies and skills when matching children to placement, and account how any shortfall will be addressed.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Leicester Office

The Pavilions, 5 Smith Way

Grove Park

Enderby

Leicester

LE19 1SX

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

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