



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Fosterplus

**Unit C6
Station Yard
Thame
Oxfordshire
OX9 3UH**

Lead Inspector
Lindy Latreille

Announced Inspection
31st July 2006 10:00

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	Fosterplus
Address	Unit C6 Station Yard Thame Oxfordshire OX9 3UH
Telephone number	01844 260075
Fax number	01844 260076
Email address	tracey@fosterplus.co.uk
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Fosterplus
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Tracey Jane Greig
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

1. The registered manager must enrol on a management training course equivalent to NVQ Level 4.

Date of last inspection

N/A

Brief Description of the Service:

Fosterplus is a limited company registered in the UK in 1996. Fosterplus The ethos of the organisation is to support children who are looked after by Local Authorities providing temporary and longer-term placements for children and young people, and when required support contact with parents.

The office is based in Thame, Oxfordshire but the service aims to work with local authorities across a wider region and foster carers have been recruited in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire to facilitate this outcome.

Fosterplus is a member of a joint fostering panel with two local authorities in Bedford and Leicester; this independence contributes to a robust vetting process. The agency is accredited with Buckinghamshire Social Services, West Midlands Consortium and Pan London consortium.

At the time of this inspection the agency had 10 approved carers and 12 young people placed. Fees range between £799.74 and £1561. Information can be found on the service's web page or from the office in Thame.

SUMMARY

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

This was an announced inspection carried out by two Inspectors over three days. Two foster homes were visited and four young people were consulted. Interviews were carried out at the Agency's office and included the Registered Manager, The Regional Manager, the Compliance and Regulations Manager, the Panel Chair, the Education Advisor, the Consultant Clinical Psychologist and two supervising social workers. Documentation was sampled and included foster children's case records, foster carers' files, staff recruitment records, training schedules and general records and information documents. Questionnaires recently distributed by the agency were used for feedback from eleven placing social workers, seven carers' children and twelve foster children together with questionnaires sent by the Commission for Social Care Inspection prior to the inspection from four young people, foster carers and placing social workers. All questionnaires reflected positively on the Agency.

What the service does well:

The service endeavours to provide foster care to enable consistency in family contact and prompt access to education and health. Foster carers demonstrated their contact with the Agency and health and education professionals, to maximise the care and development of the young people. Contact is well managed and supported by the foster carers. There is a planned matching process that considers the strengths of the foster carers and the needs of the young people, which is clearly recorded. The Agency has excellent systems for consultation and achieving feedback from all parties. There are good systems in place that keep young people safe. Carers are well supported. Record keeping is of a high standard. The Agency is well managed and recruits and retains high quality staff.

What has improved since the last inspection?

This is the Agency's first inspection since registration in February 2006.

What they could do better:

Further training and age-appropriate resources should be made available to foster carers to support their appreciation of a range of cultures. Foster carers should be adequately trained in line with National Minimum Standards 17.7 to

include first aid and where appropriate moving and handling. These expectations should be detailed in the individual Fostercare agreements. Carers are not currently asked for feedback on their Panel experience. There is a need, identified by the Chair, to conduct training for the Panel as a whole to explore anti-discriminatory practice and other relevant issues. Personal Educational Plan (PEP) should be in place for all young people.

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 of this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Health needs are identified and followed up with good liaison between the foster carers and medical professionals.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers were clear about their roles in promoting young people's health and well being; but there is no evidence that training has taken place to address healthy life style or health promotion. Information contained within the foster carers handbook supports work in this area. All young people placed with the Agency have been furnished with health passports providing a record of all medical treatments and issues throughout the placement this can transfer with the young person if they move on, to inform the new carers. Two foster families were met and were knowledgeable about the identified needs of the young people placed and felt able to meet them, in some cases with the support of other professionals, eg Incontinence Nurse, Health Visitors, General Practitioners and Hospital Consultants, special needs Dentist and Children and Families Consultation Services to meet emotional needs. This was evidenced through some supervision notes and diary notes completed by the supervising social workers. Minutes of the reviews confirmed that consideration of health needs took place. An independent Clinical Psychologist is now available for specific consultations with reference to children's attachment. The Agency has developed good working relationships with some placing authorities to ensure priority is given to access speedy referrals to specialist services eg occupational and speech therapists and paediatric nurses. There were two examples where the placing authority declined to provide equipment and the Agency purchased the enuretic alarm and dental brace needed. The young people case tracked had recently undertaken medicals and all their identified needs were met. In surveys conducted by the Agency placing social workers raised no health related concerns. Placing social workers reported

“they do a good job of helping M with new strategies to cope with her emotional difficulties” and “they genuinely care for J putting her best interests first.” Additional equipment had been purchased in one home visited to ensure the safety of the young person placed with them and the carers demonstrated a keen awareness of his vulnerability. Carers detailed the equipment that had been provided and the swift response of staff to help them meet the needs of the young people. There is a programme of health and safety training on offer and foster carers are finding this useful.

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 of this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Young people are kept safe with a variety of systems and strategies employed by the service.

EVIDENCE:

The Registered Manager is experienced to hold her position, and this was evidenced during interviews at this inspection. As yet she has to complete a Management qualification and is enrolled on an appropriate course to begin in September 2006.

The households visited as part of the inspection were homely, free from avoidable hazards, varied and personalised to meet the needs of the young people placed. The young people said they liked their homes and their bedrooms. The homes are checked for presentation and safety as part of the foster carers' annual review, all of which are presented to Panel. There has been some sharing of bedrooms by same sex sibling groups wishing to do so. Health and safety issues are covered in the preparation training for all carers, who demonstrated this knowledge in discussions held during the home visits. A safe caring agreement is developed with the carers for all young people placed. The foster carers valued their preparation training and found the handbook

useful. Where foster carers are expected to transport the young people, checks are maintained with regard to the vehicles used.

All those consulted as part of this inspection felt confident about matching the needs of the young people with appropriate carers. Feedback from a placing social worker stated, " T felt comfortable with his foster carers from the start he enjoyed his visits with her, she was flexible and able to respond to his needs and wishes." When speaking to the supervising social workers, they were able to detail the specifics of this matching process; which was outlined clearly in the placement agreement. This is a robust document that has been recently improved. The individual needs of the young people were met in all cases reviewed, including the provision of specialised equipment and appropriate activities to develop their skills and self-esteem. Referrals are handled centrally by Fosterplus and they are only accepted after the supervising social worker assesses the viability of match because of their knowledge of the carers, and would consult with the registered manager over any queries. A resource file has been compiled to assist the carers and supervising social workers to meet the needs of young people with dual heritage, but this could be expanded through further training and age-appropriate resources to support their appreciation of a range of cultures.

All carers have received mandatory training in safeguarding procedures but not all are trained in first aid or moving and handling, which could be relevant for foster carers working with young people who have physical disabilities. There is training provided in managing challenging behaviour, which is well received. The foster carers agreements do not specify the mandatory training that carers are expected to follow or the need to update and there has been a poor uptake on training by some foster carers; this was confirmed as being addressed by the agency, which is prepared to take foster carers back to panel on this issue. Safe caring guidelines drawn up jointly by the carers and their supervising social workers were evidenced in the files sampled. No young people consulted said that they were bullied. Overall the number of serious incidents recorded was very low regarding the safety of the young people placed and all were reported by the carers and well recorded. All foster carers agree to comply with the "No Smacking" policy or any other form of corporal punishment. One placing social workers commented " whilst acknowledging that the child has behaviours that put him at risk I am satisfied that the carers take every measure to safeguard him."

Foster carers consulted said that there is a robust assessment and vetting process applied, this was supported by the panel chair. It begins with a comprehensive preparation for fostering course, which includes a residential weekend where carers and their families are observed by experienced staff. This is followed by an induction and training programme, which the foster carers confirmed met their needs. All pre-employment checks including Criminal Records Bureau checks, references, and Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) and Protection of Children and Young Adults (POCA) are

completed for every member of staff according to the Registered Manager, who checks these as part of her monitoring system. A file was inspected and found to be in order. The two supervising social workers consulted are qualified, experienced and registered with the General Social Care Council (GSCC). They demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of the cases they were managing, and were confident of providing positive and safe outcomes for young people. There are no unqualified staff who carry out social work functions.

The Chair of the fostering panel was interviewed and confirmed that the composition of the panel provides a wide area of expertise including, health and education and meets the Regulations. She herself has responsibility for Looked After Children in West Hertfordshire and has made efforts to ensure access to consultants where necessary. Foster carers attend panel where possible; at present they are not asked for feedback on their experience, but the panel intend to do this in the future. All foster carers' annual reviews, five yearly and changes to their approval come to panel, the chair is notified by telephone of all emergency changes, which are subsequently brought to the next panel meeting for ratification. There is a need, identified by the Chair, to conduct training for the panel as a whole, to examine anti-discriminatory practice and other areas; in the past training has been undertaken individually.

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 and 31.

Quality of this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Young people have access to a range of activities and their educational needs are met.

EVIDENCE:

The Agency was registered in February 2006 and to date has ten fostering households, which at present offer little diversity. The outcomes for the young people currently placed are good and the carers have a range of skills to meet their needs. The Agency provides single carers and couples, some with specific experience to work with young people with special needs, including short and long term placements. In all cases permanence is considered at reviews. A resource file for foster carers working with young people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds is provided, but in one home visited further resources are needed to be made available to reflect the dual heritage of young people.

The families visited clearly catered for the individual needs of the young people in their care, liaising well with other health and educational professionals. Feedback from one placing social worker commented, " The carers have a high level of commitment- they are professional and child focused" The Registered Manager together with the Fosterplus Education Adviser provided information about the young people's education and progress. All of them are currently in school and receiving full-time education, which is appropriate to their needs. In some cases Personal Educational Plans (PEP) are not made available by the

placing social worker and in this instance Fosterplus will provide notes of the meeting if it has been attended by the Fosterplus Education Advisor. In cases where this has not been attended, Fosterplus will request a copy from the placing social worker. Where these requests have been made they are documented on the file. Educational achievement is also monitored at statutory LAC reviews. The provision of education for the young people visited was good; they had not had their learning disrupted unnecessarily and were all enjoying attending. Carers confirmed that they have close links with the young people's teachers, attending parents' evenings and events. All the feedback received from placing social workers indicated that the carers' support for education was good. The Agency is currently reviewing the educational support available when young people are out of school, in order to better support carers in this situation. Currently all homes have Internet access and the Education Adviser is able to provide them with worksheets and other age-appropriate resources.

The Agency does not provide Short Break placements.

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 and 11.

Quality of this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. There are good systems in place that promote contact and enable all parties to contribute their views regarding the care of the young people, so that positive outcomes are achieved.

EVIDENCE:

Feedback from the young people indicated that their foster families welcomed their friends and family members, where this was appropriate; also that foster carers supported safe contact outside the home, for example one meeting took place in the family centre with supervision. Comments received by the Agency " The carers have accommodated a difficult contact situation" and " they provide a great deal of support following contact". The fostering service offers training and guidance to support the carers in this area of work; all placing social workers wrote in their feedback that contact was well managed and promoted in their view.

The Agency is very active in collecting the views of young people, foster carers and placing social workers; these are well recorded and include questions that provide a comprehensive view of their care. The formatting of the young people's questionnaire is very child focussed and accessible. They were signed by the young people or filled in on their behalf by the supervising social workers. The responses in general were very positive for example " I love it" (here), from one young person and when commenting on the welcome pack " I thought it was lovely." In response to the question do you have any ideas for making it better? she replied "envelopes and stamps so you can write to people" and this has been actioned. When asked what is best about fostering

young people responded in surveys sent by Commission for Social Care Inspection "being loved, looked after" and " the whole family and their relatives". Carers' children are also consulted and twice a year they are invited to an activity where they can share their experiences with each other and offer feedback. Evidence was available to confirm that these comments were responded to when necessary. Again the views were generally positive, for example " I used to be very lonely and now I have someone to talk to when Mum is busy. Now it's more fun." Placing social workers were unanimous in their praise for the service and the high standard of reporting and the quality of the staff and staff.

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):

There are no key standards to assess in this section of the report and no concerns were raised.

EVIDENCE:

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):

17,21 and 24.

Quality of this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The fostering service is well managed and supported by good company systems.

EVIDENCE:

The supervising social workers employed by the Agency are suitably qualified and experienced and registered with the General Social Care Council (GSCC). The foster carers reported that there is enough staff available to meet their needs. Placing social workers were complimentary in their feedback regarding the quality of care provided by the foster carers and social work staff, making comments such as "The foster carer and Fosterplus have done an amazing job", "They are very helpful and always on the ball" and "A very professional and supportive organisation." The assessment of foster carers is thorough and the care they provide is of a good standard. They are supported with training but the programme needs to be expanded to fully meet National Minimum Standard 17.7 and include healthy lifestyle and health promotion, sexual boundaries and attitudes, racial, cultural and faith awareness and anti-discriminatory practice. Retention of the workforce is good. The service currently employs 10 foster families with a white British background and a range of experience. They are looking to expand into new areas and widen their range of carers to include those from black and minority ethnic groups and those able to manage teenagers with emotional and behavioural difficulties, to cater for the variety of placements demands.

There is a clear strategy for working with foster carers and this was verified during discussions with the supervising social workers. Foster carers described a high quality of liaison with supervising social workers and its usefulness in supporting them in their tasks; "I can't speak highly enough of the support we get". The Agency has been active in seeking individual external training for experienced foster carers. They are geographically widespread and the Agency is aware that they have not managed to set up support group for carers, but are intending to do so as the service develops. Communication between the foster carers, the Registered Manager, the supervising social workers and the placing social workers is good, according to all those consulted. Support for foster carers is good, including regular supervision and out-of-hours service; the duty social work support service has transferred from a pager system to a direct dial telephone service. Foster carers' reviews are carried out on time and good reports are received from the supervising social workers, the young people and their placing social workers.

Recording by the Agency is of a good standard and routinely monitored by the Registered Manager. Some information needed from the placing social workers is still not in place despite extensive efforts to obtain it. All supervising social workers know to record the request so that this can be monitored. Foster carers are provided with secure filing cabinets for all their records. Records seen were of a good standard. There is a need for the Agency to develop a temporary placement plan based on the extensive verbal information received, to guide carers in the absence of this vital LAC paperwork. Placing social

workers are furnished with detailed monthly reports by the foster carers, which they say are very helpful and of a high standard.

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	2
6	3
8	3
9	3
15	3
30	3

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

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	X
29	X

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

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	FS3	792)(b)(i)	That the Registered Manager achieves a recognised qualification in Management	01/08/07

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	FS6	That the foster carers' agreement details the mandatory training that they are expected to achieve annually.
2	FS7	That more training and resources are provided for foster carers to support a range of cultures.
3	FS17	That foster carers are adequately trained to meet the requirements of National Minimum Standards 17.7 including mandatory first aid, and where appropriate moving and handling.
4	FS1	That the Agency makes positive attempts to recruit mixed heritage foster carers.
5	FS13	That all young people have Personal Educational Plan (PEP) on file or evidence of chasing.
6	FS30	That foster carers are given the opportunity to provide feedback following their attendance at panel.
7	FS30	That training be followed for the whole panel to include

		anti-discriminatory practice.
8	FS24	That the Agency ensures that every young person has a placement plan.

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