

Fostering Solutions (Northern) Ltd

Service name

Fostering Solutions (Northern) Ltd

Service address

Lochside House
3 Lochside Way

Edinburgh EH12 9DT

Type of care service

Fostering Service

Provider name

Fostering Solutions (Northern) Ltd

Service number

CS2005103105

Date of inspection

2 October 2007

Type of inspection

Announced

Care Commission Office

Stuart House Eskmills Musselburgh
EH21 7PB.

Period since last inspection

12 months

Introduction

Fostering Solutions (Northern) is a not for profit agency which provides foster placements for children aged birth to eighteen years. It is an offshoot from Fostering Solutions Ltd. The Service was registered with the Care Commission in November 2005.

Fostering Solutions (Northern) recruits, prepares, supports and trains carer families to provide a fostering service to a range of children throughout Scotland. At the time of the inspection fifteen approved foster carers were looking after fourteen children/young people aged between four and fifteen years.

The Service is based in Edinburgh. The Service is staffed by the Service Manager, one independent consultant and one office administrator recently in post. At the time of the inspection, the Service also employed one social worker on a sessional basis to undertake foster carer assessments. The Service had recruited two permanent social workers in the past year. One had been appointed but did not take up the post. The other left for another post soon after starting with the Agency. Fostering Solutions (Northern) was in the process of recruiting a permanent member of staff at the time of this inspection.

The structure of Fostering Solutions Ltd. was used to provide line management, quality assurance and other central functions.

The stated aims of the Service are:

To provide the highest quality of substitute family care for looked after children in partnership with other agencies, parents, carers and Local Authorities in order to achieve best possible outcomes for looked after children. In addition, we aim to continually develop and improve our services and to never compromise on our own high standards of service, regularly and actively seeking external evaluation .

The inspection was undertaken by Suzanne Beard, Care Commission Officer.

Basis of Report

Before the Inspection

The Annual Return

The service submitted a completed Annual Return as requested by the Care Commission.

The Self-Evaluation Form

The service submitted a self-evaluation form as requested by the Care Commission.

Regulation Support Assessment

This service was inspected after a Regulation Support Assessment (RSA) was carried out to determine the intensity of inspection necessary. The RSA is an assessment undertaken by the Care Commission Officer (CCO) which considers: complaints activity, changes in the provision of the service, nature of notifications made to the Care Commission by the service (such as absence of a manager) and action taken upon requirements. The CCO will also have considered how the service responded to situations and issues as part of the RSA.

This assessment resulted in this service receiving a medium RSA score and so a medium intensity inspection was required as a result. The inspection was then based upon the relevant Inspection Focus Areas and associated National Care Standards for the particular service type and follow up on any recommendations and requirements from previous inspections, complaints or other regulatory activity.

During the inspection process

Staff at inspection

The following were interviewed:

Manager of the Service

Manager of the Service along with the Operations Service Manager

One independent consultant social worker who supported foster carers

Referral Manager along with Operations Administrator.

One placing social worker and one senior social worker for a placing social worker were interviewed by telephone. One children's rights worker was interviewed by telephone.

Evidence

A sample of three foster carers were interviewed (one by telephone).

A total of three young people (one by telephone) were spoken with. They ranged in age from 11 years to 15 years.

The records of the three young people interviewed were inspected as were those of the three foster carers interviewed. A further three foster carer files were inspected in order to evidence specific issues of relevance to the follow up of the requirements and recommendations of the last inspection and information within the Annual Return.

The Care Commission officer also attended a foster carer support group and undertook a group interview with nine foster carers.

The following policies, procedures, guidance and records were seen:

Foster Carer Handbook

Procedure for matching

Assessment of foster carers - competency based assessments

Welcome pack for children and young people

Training calendar for foster carers

Training record for foster carers

Newsletters for foster carers

Newsletters for children and young people in foster care

Annual Questionnaires for foster carers

Annual questionnaires for children and young people in foster care

Service provision reports for Local Authorities

Positive outcomes forms

Referral forms

Management of allegations against foster carers policy

Child protection policy

Anti-bullying policy

Home safety checklist for prospective foster carers

Safe Caring Policy

Complaints policy and procedure

Change of approval policy and procedure.

The Care Commission Officer was also provided with access to Fostering Solutions web site for foster carers and a separate one for children and young people in foster care.

Inspection Focus Areas and associated National Care Standards for 2007/08

All foster care and family placement services will be inspected against the relevant National Care Standards: Foster Care and Family Placement Services 2007/2008 as these Services are relatively new to regulation. The following Standards were taken into account during the inspection to support the inspection focus areas and the follow up on the Service actions in relation to recommendations and requirements made in all regulatory activity since the last inspection.

National Care Standards: Foster Care and Family Placement Services were inspected:

Standard 1: Informing and Deciding

Standard 2: Promoting good quality care

Standard 3: Helping you as an individual

Standard 4: Expressing your views

Standard 13: Management and staffing of the agency.

In addition:

Standard 5: Assessing and Approving Carers

Standard 6: Completing the Application

Standard 8: Practical Help

were added to report on issues followed up from the last inspection.

The Inspection Focus Areas for Foster Care and Family Placement Services were: Child protection and included the Scottish Social Services Council: Staff training plans.

The inspection also took into account:

The Regulation of Care (Requirements as to Care Services) (Scotland) Regulations 2002 SSI 114.
The Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996.

Action taken on requirements in last Inspection Reports

There were five requirements made at the last inspection.

Requirement 1

The assessment of foster carers must ensure that all aspects relevant to the care of children in the looked after system are investigated.

This is in order to comply with: The Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996, Regulation 7(1), Schedule 1 - a requirement to obtain information with regard to prospective foster carers.

Samples of two files of foster carers approved since the last inspection were inspected evidencing that this requirement had been partially met. There was evidence in the files that necessary checks had been undertaken including employers' references, and that personal references were appropriate. The foster carer assessments were based on competencies. On one file, a limited

number of areas for development were identified and on the other file no areas for development had been identified. The Manager of the Service advised that there were plans in place for staff to undertake training in competency based assessments within two months of this inspection.

(See Recommendation 11 in Standard 5 of this report)

Requirement 2

The Service must ensure that a record of all placements with each foster carer is held on their case file.

This is in order to comply with: The Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996 Regulation 18(4)(a) - a requirement to maintain a record of each placement with the foster carer.

There was evidence in files examined that this requirement had been met.

Requirement 3

The complaints procedure provided to foster carers must contain the address of the Care Commission.

This is in order to comply with: SS1 2002/114 Regulation 25(6(a) - a requirement to provide information with regards to the complaints procedure.

There was evidence in a range of written information that this requirement had been met.

Requirement 4

The agency must ensure that all panel members are appraised of Scottish legislation and national care standards.

This is in order to comply with: The Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996, Regulation 5 - a requirement to ensure individual members of the fostering panel have the relevant experience to efficiently discharge the duties of the panel.

Fostering Solutions (Northern) had obtained the service of a legal consultant in Scotland to ensure that their policies and procedures were in line with Scottish legislation. This was an ongoing process.

The fostering panel members had undertaken training in January 2007 and this had included reference to Scottish legislation. This requirement had been met.

Requirement 5

The agency must ensure that all complaints are fully investigated.

This is in order to comply with: SSI 2002/114 Regulation 25(2) and (3) - a requirement to ensure that the complaints procedure is appropriate to the needs of service users and that any complaint is fully investigated.

One complaint had been received in relation to this Service since the last inspection. On examining the record of the investigation of this complaint it was clear that it was investigated fully and therefore this requirement had been met.

Comment on Self-Evaluation

The self evaluation form was completed fully with strengths and areas for development clearly identified. This helped to inform the inspection process.

View of Service Users

Three young people aged 11 to 15 years were spoken with during the inspection. Generally the views they expressed regarding the Service were positive. One young person commented very positively about the link worker who supported the foster carers. "He is really good. I can speak to him".

Other comments included:

"Yes, he (the link worker) asks me if I am happy here. He speaks to me on my own".

"Yes he asks me how I am - all the time".

"It's good here".

Specific comments have been included in the appropriate National Care Standards.

View of Carers

In general, foster carers were positive regarding the support they received from Fostering Solutions (Northern). Comments included:

"He's is always there for you".

"They always phone you back if you leave a message".

While they were understanding of the Agency's difficulties in filling the link worker vacancy, some foster carers felt this had had a negative impact on them. Some foster carers reported that they had had four/five changes in link worker in two years.

Regulations / Principles

Regulation :

Strengths

Areas for Development

National Care Standards

National Care Standard Number 1: Foster Care and Family Placement Services - Informing and Deciding

Strengths

The Service had a welcome pack for children and young people accessing their service. The information in the welcome packs was separated into children's age groups. The language and style were age appropriate. The welcome packs provided a broad range of information including information in relation to the work the Service undertook, the role of and details about the foster carer, the foster carer's link worker and the child/young person's own social worker, contact with family and other significant people. The welcome pack also included a copy of the National Care Standards and a photo album for the children/young people to use to record their time in the placement. Contact details of other agencies were included, for example Childline, the Care Commission and Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People and reference to independent advocacy services. A range of leaflets were available and could be added to the welcome pack or given to the child/young person in foster care if appropriate, e.g. Talking About Self Harm and R U Worried a guide to what to do when you are feeling worried .

The welcome pack was available on C.D.

The Manager of the Service advised that the welcome pack would be available to children and young people in other languages or Braille if required.

Children/young people interviewed confirmed that they had received a welcome pack when the placement started. They further confirmed that the foster carer's reminded the children/young people about the information throughout the placement. One young person commented: "I thought the welcome pack was good because it explained stuff. I just skimmed it but I know what is in it".

The Manager of the Service confirmed that Fostering Solutions (Northern) recruited a wide variety of foster carers to meet the needs of the children referred. This included advertising in local newspapers, The Manager of the Service advised that discussions took place with referring

authorities regarding the needs of children in general and the needs of specific children and that this influenced the recruitment strategy of the Service.

There was evidence of a robust system for monitoring enquiries from prospective foster carers and followed up by initial visits within timescales. The progress of applications was monitored and discussed at the Regional Development meeting attended by the Manager of Fostering Solutions (Northern).

The Manager of the Service advised that children of foster carers and looked after children were not used for advertising or recruitment.

The Manager of the Service advised that the foster carer handbook was in the process of being updated.

Areas for Development

There was a considerable amount of information in the welcome pack. In discussion with the Manager of the Service it was agreed that consideration would be given to providing important contact details for children and young people in a more concise format which was age appropriate.

The Service had plans in place to include an anti-bullying policy in the welcome pack. This was highlighted in the self evaluation form.

There was no reference in the welcome pack to the aims of the Service, nor to the availability of the most recent Care Commission report.

The Manager of the Service advised that information regarding the children's charter and the framework standards for child protection were discussed at the preparation for foster care training. However, not all foster carers spoken with were aware of these documents.

(See Recommendation 1)

National Care Standard Number 2: Foster Care and Family Placement Services - Promoting Good Quality Care

Strengths

Foster carers seen presented as very caring and strong advocates for the children and young people in their care.

Interviews with children and young people, placing social workers foster carers and staff from Fostering Solutions (Northern) confirmed that, where possible, children and young people had the opportunity to meet with the foster carers and visit the foster carers' home prior to the commencement of a placement. Where appropriate, parents of children and young people were also able to meet with the foster carer and visit their home. One young person commented: "Yes, I got to come for my tea and see my bedroom".

Children/young people confirmed that they received some information, usually verbal, regarding the foster carers and their families prior to moving in, even in emergency situations.

Interviews with children and young people, placing social workers, foster carers, staff from Fostering Solutions (Northern) and examination of files confirmed that placement agreement meetings were held either before the commencement of the placement or as soon as possible after the placement started. The placement agreement form had recently been reviewed by a legal consultant to ensure it was in line with Scottish legislation. Fostering Solutions (Northern) had systems in place to monitor that a placement agreement form had been completed for each child in foster care placement.

Examination of foster carer's files confirmed that a general risk assessment was undertaken as part of the fostering assessment process. There was also evidence that these were reviewed as part of the foster carers' annual review. There was evidence of personal risk assessments of children and young people's needs being undertaken in the matching process. Each foster carer was required to develop a Safe Caring Policy and this was reviewed at each new placement or if their own home circumstances changed. This was evidenced in the foster carers files examined. The foster carer handbook included a section on safe caring.

There was evidence from records examined and discussion with children and young people and foster carers that contact between the children and young people and their families and any other significant people was considered at the start of the placement. There was evidence in the link worker's written supervision record of how the foster carer promoted contact arrangements. Contact arrangements were monitored at the Looked After Children's review and records examined confirmed that children's views were taken into account. Young people interviewed confirmed that they were able to keep in contact with significant people in their lives. Comments from young people included: "I can phone my Gran".

There was evidence from records examined and discussion with children and young people and foster carers that the children and young people's health needs were considered and these were recorded in the care plan. Foster carers' supervision records indicated that their link worker monitored the carers' activity in taking a proactive role in the health needs of the children and young people they were looking after. All children and young people spoken with confirmed that they had been registered with a G.P., dentist and an optician. Fostering Solutions (Northern) had a

robust system in place to ensure all foster carers registered the children with health services at the beginning of each placement.

Fostering Solutions (Northern) had recently developed and introduced a Health Record. The purpose of this was to promote the health of the children and young people who were being looked after by ensuring that all relevant medical information was recorded and this record moved with the child if they moved placement.

Fostering Solutions (Northern) held a directory of all the LAC nurses in Scotland and ensured that they were contacted if necessary to support the foster care placement.

Fostering Solutions (Northern) s web site provided foster carers with information which would promote healthy living for children and young people.

Fostering Solutions (Northern) was developing links with educational psychologists and a range of other therapists to support staff, foster carers and children and young people with emotional and mental health issues. This was highlighted in the self evaluation form.

There was evidence from records examined and discussion with children and young people and foster carers that the children and young people s education needs were considered and these were recorded in the care plan. Foster carers supervision records indicated that their link worker monitored the carers activity in taking a proactive role in the education needs of the children and young people they were looking after. Foster carers were expected to keep in regular contact with the children and young people s school, attend meetings and keep birth parents involved where possible. Fostering Solutions (Northern) supported the foster carers to help children and young people maintain a school placement and to support them in returning to school following a period of exclusion.

Fostering Solutions (Northern) were in the process of developing a data base which recorded the educational attendance and achievements of children and young people. This was highlighted in the self evaluation form.

There was evidence from records examined and discussion with foster carers and children and young people that play and leisure activities were considered and recorded in the care plan. Children and young people spoken with confirmed that they were encouraged to take up activities and were able to pursue existing hobbies and interest. One young person stated, I get to do loads.

I m really busy .

Foster carers were encouraged to identify leisure provision and out of school activities in their community. Foster carers were expected to record all the children and young people s pursuits and

activities offered and taken up.

Fostering Solutions (Northern) had organised an outing in the summer for children and young people in foster care placements and foster carers and their families. Fostering Solutions (Northern) and the foster carers had evaluated this and were giving thought to other activities which would bring children and young people together. One young person stated spoken with stated There should be more meetings for children in foster care .

The foster carers interviewed had not had to request any adaptations to the household for children and young people in placement. However, foster carers and the Manager of the Service confirmed that Fostering Solutions (Northern) would support foster carers with such requests.

The foster carers interview confirmed that Fostering Solutions (Northern) were able to support them in accessing therapeutic or other specialist services if they were required.

Children and young people s achievements were celebrated in the Newsletter. These included foster carers own children. The Agency sends birthday cards to foster carers, their own children and children and young people in foster care.

Where placements started at short notice foster carers stated that whilst they did not always know how long the placement would last they were kept in discussion with this.

Areas for Development

While there was a Safe Caring Policy developed by each foster carer and this was reviewed at each placement, the Service needed to ensure that the policy was in line with their own guidelines. The Manager of the Service advised that following on from recent safe caring training, foster carers had been asked to review their safe caring policy and this will be monitored in supervision.

(See Recommendation 2)

From records examined, there was evidence that foster carers had undertaken a broad range of training in the last year. Fostering Solutions (Northern) had an expectation the foster carers would undertake at least two training courses in one year. Foster carers could select courses from a training calendar in discussion with their link worker. The Service needed to give consideration to identifying core training they considered appropriate for foster carers to undertake post approval. This should include child protection training.

Foster carers were, in general, positive with regards to the training they received. However, some foster carers commented that they would like more in-depth training on certain topics. The Service

needed to give consideration to developing a training programme for foster carers that took recognition of foster carers' experience and length of time they had been foster carers. Furthermore, some foster carers seen were keen to progress their development and understanding through recognised qualifications such as SVQs. The Service needed to give consideration to progressing this.

(See Recommendation 3)

Foster carers advised that they were provided with the opportunity to identify their training needs through a feedback form after attending training. They were not clear what happened to these forms and how this influenced future training. In discussion with the Manager of the Service it was agreed that an explanation would be provided to foster carers regarding Fostering Solutions (Northern).

During the assessment process, foster carers developed a profile of themselves, their home, their family and their lifestyle. This included photographs of the foster carers, their home and their pets. This information was provided for children and young people prior to meeting their foster carers. This was not always shared with children and young people prior to them meeting the foster carers.

The Service needed to give consideration to developing this profile electronically so that it can be provided for children who need to be placed with a foster family at short notice. One young person who did not have the opportunity to meet with foster carers prior to placement stated 'It would have been great to have that. It's scary. You don't know what they are like'. The same young person also commented that the opportunity to telephone the foster carers prior to the start of the placement would also have helped.

(See Recommendation 4)

Examination of the child protection policy highlighted that there was no reference to appropriate phone numbers, arrangements to ensure children and young people had access to independent advice/support, as appropriate and arrangements for policy review.

(See Recommendation 5)

National Care Standard Number 3: Foster Care and Family Placement Services - Helping You as an Individual

Strengths

Discussion with children and young people found that they were positive with regards to the support and care they received from their foster carers. Comments from children and young people included, 'I get everything I need' 'I am in a good routine'. Children and young people were observed to be relaxed and confident and comfortable in their foster homes.

Fostering Solutions (Northern) had a robust system in place for matching the needs of the children with the skills, experience and situation of foster carers. This system was evaluated on an ongoing

basis and improvements made where identified. Fostering Solutions (Northern) were in the process of developing a more robust system for collating information to ensure a positive match for children requiring respite foster care.

At the time of the inspection no foster carers were operating outwith their approval. Records examined confirmed that where foster carers had previously been used outwith their approval, this had been referred to the fostering panel.

Information regarding the care needs of children was referred to within individual care plans and specified particular requirements of individual children. One foster carer provided an example of how she and the young person in placement were supported in assisting with care needs by the LAC nurse.

Foster carers spoken with confirmed that they had taken part in Diversity and Understanding Differences training. The Manager of the Service indicated in the self evaluation form that plans were in place to extend this training to staff and to panel members.

Areas for Development

When children and young people were going to respite foster carers from their full time foster carers, information regarding their routine and likes and dislikes was passed on verbally from one carer to another.

(See Recommendation 6)

National Care Standard Number 4: Foster Care and Family Placement Services - Expressing Your Views

Strengths

Information about how to complain to the Agency was provided to children and young people in the welcome pack and to foster carers in their handbook. The welcome pack was available electronically. A recent development was that foster carers and children and young people in foster care had received a password to provide them with access to a dedicated Fostering Solutions web site.

Children and young people were also able to give their views on the service via questionnaires referred to as viewpoint cards .

Foster carers spoken with were clear that they had an advocacy role for the children and young people in their care and were able to provide examples of this. Children and young people spoken with confirmed their awareness of a range of services that could provide independent support and advice. References were made in the welcome pack to children's rights workers and Childline.

Children in foster care were provided with the opportunity to provide feedback on the care they received at the foster carers' annual reviews, at the end of their placement and in questionnaires provided by the Agency.

There was evidence that the Service had provided an interpreting service for a young person in foster care.

Areas for Development

In discussion with the Manager of the Service it was agreed that the service would include the contact details of Who Cares Scotland in the information provided to children and young people. The self evaluation form highlighted that plans were in place to invite Who Cares Scotland to attend a foster carers support group and children's group.

The Service needed to give consideration to developing children's groups as a way of supporting children and young people who are in foster care and the children of foster carers. This was highlighted in the self evaluation form.

(See Recommendation 7)

The welcome pack provided children and young people with information regarding contact details of the Care Commission in relation to complaints. However, children and young people spoken with were not clear about the role of the Care Commission in general and in relation to complaints in particular.

(See Recommendation 8)

In discussion with the Manager of the Service, it was agreed that information provided to children and young people and foster carers would include reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

National Care Standard Number 5: Foster Care and Family Placement Services - Assessing and Approving Carers**Strengths**

Not all aspects of this standard were inspected, only those elements relating to inspection focus areas, recommendations and requirements from the last inspection and associated regulations.

Areas for Development

At the last inspection a requirement was made in relation to the assessment of foster carers and that evidence for competencies was not always robust. At this inspection, two files were examined of foster carers who had been approved since the last inspection. The foster carer assessments were based on competencies. Areas for development, on one file inspected identified only a few areas for development and on the other file no areas for development had been identified. The Manager of the Service advised that there were plans in place for staff to undertake training in competency based assessments within two months of this inspection.

(See Recommendation 9)

National Care Standard Number 6: Foster Care and Family Placement Services - Completing the Application**Strengths**

Not all aspects of this standard were inspected, only those elements relating to inspection focus areas, recommendations and requirements from the last inspection and associated regulations.

Areas for Development

At the last inspection, a recommendation was made that the Service should ensure that information was made available to foster carers with regards to the procedure for appealing against decisions made with regards to their approval. This recommendation remains.

(See Recommendation 10)

National Care Standard Number 8: Foster Care and Family Placement Services - Practical Help**Strengths**

Not all aspects of this standard were inspected, only those relating to issues raised at the last inspection.

At the last inspection, it was identified in the area for development that the out of hours service was provided from the Agency's head office in England. The Service itself identified the need to ensure that this support was effective and it was agreed that this would be monitored at this inspection. There was evidence that on some occasions, link workers provided support to foster carers outwith office hours. This was confirmed by foster carers.

Areas for Development

Some foster carers spoken with commented that they did not always feel that the out of hours team had an up to date and clear picture of their situation and that of the child/young person they were looking after. This had resulted in the foster carers not feeling confident that the out of hours team were able to fully support them and the child/young person in a time of crisis.

(See Recommendation 11)

It was agreed with the Manager of the Service that foster carers would be provided with training on the role of the out of hours team.

National Care Standard Number 13: Foster Care and Family Placement Services - Management and Staffing

Strengths

Staff interviewed confirmed that they received supervision on a regular basis. A system for staff annual appraisals was in place. There were plans in place for the independent consultant to receive an appraisal. There was evidence that staff training needs were discussed at the annual appraisal.

Fostering Solutions (Northern) had a training plan for staff in place. There was a staff training and development policy statement in place which included the continuous development of staff. The organisation negotiated and facilitated identified training needs with the independent consultant. There were plans in place for staff, including independent consultants and sessional assessors to undertake training in competency based assessments. The self evaluation form highlighted that the Service was reviewing staff training to ensure a more robust and clear structure for all employees.

The Service had a child protection policy in place and this was in the foster care handbook.

The Manager of the Service advised that children and young people were made aware of the child protection policy through discussion with foster carers on issues such as anti-bullying.

A procedure was in place for the management of allegations against foster carers. Fostering Solutions (Northern) provided all foster carers were membership of Fostering Network.

The Service had robust systems in place to canvass the views of foster carers and the children and young people in foster care regarding the service Fostering Solutions (Northern) provided. Feedback from this was provided in newsletters to foster carers and separate newsletters for the children and young people who were in foster care. A foster carer forum had recently been established and provided regional representative foster carers with the opportunity to meet with the directors of the organisation to discuss current issues and develop ideas for improvements to the Service.

Written supervision session records between the foster carer and the Agency clearly defined tasks and who would undertake these tasks. These were followed up at each supervision session. The Service had a robust system in place to monitor supervision sessions.

An Annual Review report was published identifying development plans for Fostering Solutions as a U.K. wide organisation.

Areas for Development

The Service needed to ensure that they were aware of their responsibility to provide staff with opportunities to meet the continuous professional development required for registration with the Scottish Social Services Council. The Manager of the Service advised that this was being considered by the organisation.

(See Recommendation 12)

At the last inspection, the agency had identified the need to ensure that child protection training was updated in the local context for all staff. A recommendation was made at the last inspection to this effect. At this inspection, the manager advised that child protection training for staff was planned for November 2007. This will be monitored at the next inspection.

The Manager of the Service advised that the Service had copies of Local Authority Child Protection Guidelines for some of the local authorities they worked with. The Service needed to ensure that they accessed copies for all the local authorities they worked with.

(See Recommendation 13)

Fostering Solutions (Northern) had experienced some difficulty in recruiting and maintaining new staff. The reasons for these difficulties were outwith Fostering Solutions (Northern) s control. However, this had impacted on some foster carers and extended the roles and responsibilities of the Manager. In discussion, the Manager of the Service indicated that she had felt very well supported by the organisation during this time and systems were put in place to relieve pressure on existing staff. While foster carers spoke very highly of the support they had received from their link workers, some fosters commented that the number of staff changes recently had an impacted negatively on them. The Manager of the Service and the Service Manager - Operations confirmed that they were making every effort to recruit a link worker as soon as possible but they wanted to ensure that he/she was the best person for the post. This will be monitored at the next inspection.

Enforcement

There has been no enforcement action against this service since the last inspection.

Other Information

There were eight Recommendations made at the last inspection.

Recommendation 1

Carers should have access to their assessment report and have the opportunity to attend the fostering panel for any decisions which amend their approval.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 6.1 Completing the Application.

This Recommendation had been met. Records examined confirmed that all changes to approval status are referred to the fostering panel.

Recommendation 2

Information should be made available to foster carers with regards to the procedures for appealing against decisions made with regard to their approval.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 6.3 Completing the Application.

The letter to approved foster carers states that they have 28 days to appeal the decision. However, information regarding the appeals procedure was not available to prospective carers in formation provided to them. This Recommendation had not been met and is referred to in Standard 6 of this report.

Recommendation 3

The Manager should ensure that all safe caring assessments are undertaken as appropriate.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 7.3 Information

and Advice.

There was evidence in files examined that this Recommendation had been met.

Recommendation 4

Membership of the fostering panel should be widened to be representative of the local area and of a wider range of users of the Service, particularly those with experience of being in foster care and of fostering.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 12.1 and 12.2 The Fostering Panel.

Fostering Solutions (Northern) had a foster carer on the panel. There were plans in place to identify a young person who had been in foster care to become a panel member. This will be monitored at the next inspection.

Recommendation 5

The Agency should ensure that the medical advisor is available to the fostering panel for approvals which may involve medical issues of significance to approval.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 12.1 The Fostering Panel.

The Manager of the Service and the Operations Service Manager advised that the medical advisor would be able to attend the fostering panel when required to do so.

Recommendation 6

The Agency should ensure that there is a clear procedure to ensure a robust process where the status of foster carers is temporarily changed.

National Care Standards - Foster care and Family Placement Services. Standard 12.5, 12.8 The Fostering Panel and Standard 5.1 Assessing and Approving Carers.

Records examined confirmed that this Recommendation had been met.

Recommendation 7

Child Protection training for all staff should be updated to ensure that this relates to local guidance.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 13.2 Management and Staffing.

This is referred to in Standard 13 of this report.

Recommendation 8

Events of significance should be recorded on files of foster carers.

National Care Standards - Foster care and Family Placement Services. Standard 13.6 Management and Staffing.

Files examined evidenced that this Recommendation had been met.

Requirements

There were no requirements made at this inspection.

Recommendations

1. The Service provider should ensure that reference is made in the information provided for children and young people to the aims of the service and reference is made to a copy of the most recent Care Commission report being available to children and young people. The Service provider should ensure that all foster carers are aware of the children's charter and the framework standards for child protection and consider ways of ensuring the children and young people who are in foster care are made aware of the content of these documents.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 1.1 Informing and Deciding.

2. The Service provider should ensure that the Safe Caring policy is in line with their own policies and procedures.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 2.2 Promoting Good Quality Care.

3. The Service provider should ensure that it identifies core training for foster carers to undertake post approval and ensure that training is appropriate to the skills and experience of the foster carers.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 2.3 Promoting Good Quality Care.

4. The Service provider should ensure that children and young people are provided with appropriate information regarding the foster family prior to meeting them. This should include, where possible, situations where children and young people moved to foster carers at short notice.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 2.1 Promoting Good Quality Care.

5. The Service provider should review its child protection policy to reflect the key areas specified above in respect of child protection.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 2.3 Promoting Good Quality Care.

6. When children and young people are going from their full time foster carer to a respite foster carer, the Service provider should ensure that there is a system in place for children and young people to share information about themselves with the respite foster carer.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 3.1 Helping You As An Individual.

7. The Service provider should give consideration to developing children's groups as a way of supporting children and young people who are in foster care and the children of foster carers.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 4.6 Expressing

Your Views.

8. The Service provider should ensure that children and young people received an explanation of the role of the Care Commission, particularly in relation to complaints.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 4.4 Expressing Your Views.

9. The Service provider should ensure that all foster carer assessments are robust and that foster carers are assessed on their ability to promote the needs of the children and young people in their care.

National Care Standards - Foster care and Family Placement Services. Standard 5:1 Assessing and Approving Carers.

10. The Service provider should ensure that it provides foster carers with information relating to the Agency's appeals procedure against decisions made with regards to the foster carers' approval.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 6.3 Completing the Application.

11. The Service provider should ensure that the information provided to the out of hours team regarding foster carers is up to date and clearly details the situation of the foster carers and child/young person in placement.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 8.2 Practical Help.

12. The Service provider should ensure that they provide staff with opportunities to meet their continuous professional development required for registration with the Scottish Social Services Council.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 13.3 Management and Staffing.

13. The Service provider should have a copy of all the Area Child Protection guidelines for the Local Authorities it works with.

National Care Standards - Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 13.3

Management and Staffing.

Suzanne Beard
Care Commission Officer