

Inspection report

Intensive Fostering Services Fostering Service

Goudie Street
Paisley PA3 2LG

Inspected by: Anne Borland
(Care Commission Officer)

Type of inspection: Announced

Inspection completed on: 14 August 2006

Service Number

CS2004082220

Service name

Intensive Fostering Services

Service addressGoudie Street
Paisley PA3 2LG**Provider Number**

SP2004007042

Provider Name

Kibble Education & Care Centre

Inspected ByAnne Borland
Care Commission Officer**Inspection Type**

Announced

Inspection Completed

14 August 2006

Period since last inspection

First inspection

Local Office Address4th Floor
1 Smithhills Street
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Introduction

The Intensive Fostering Service (IFS) provides a fostering service to young males aged from 12 to 18 years and who have a connection with Kibble Educational and Care Centre. The service recruits and supports carers to provide foster care and respite services for young males who, at this point in their lives, cannot live with their birth family. The service is relatively new, albeit the provider, a voluntary agency, has operated for many years and is a well established educational centre which offers residential care and daytime educational support to young males between the ages of 12 and 18 years of age.

The service office is based in the Arran Unit within the grounds of Kibble Educational and Care Centre. The Intensive Fostering Service employs a manager who divides her full time working hours between the day care services and the fostering service, a senior practitioner is employed on a full time basis and has the responsibility for carrying out assessments and supporting approved carers and supervising sessional staff whose services are used, intermittently, as the need arises, to assess potential carers. A part time administrator is also employed by the service. The service is a small service.

At the time of inspection four approved carers were supported by the fostering service and two potential carers were going through the assessment process. Four young people were placed with approved carers in long term placements and two young people were awaiting placements.

The service was registered on the 18th November 2005.

The aims and objectives of the service are to recruit and support foster carers to give young males, who cannot live with their birth families, an opportunity to experience enhanced life experiences by living within a family setting. The service linked closely with the educational services and the school day services. The service considered the carers to be an intrinsic part of a team of professionals who strive to meet the holistic needs of the young people placed. The service recognised the demands which may be placed on carers in meeting the needs of young people who have had disrupted and difficult childhoods and had in place an array of different support systems. Young people had allocated link workers employed in Arran Unit who provided a bridge of communication between the carer, young people and school and regular support team meetings were held. A system of rolling respite was also provided to the young people and carers. On a daily basis young people and carers have access to staff at the service to discuss issues or concerns which may have arisen.

Basis of Report

The inspection was carried out by Care Commission Officers Anne Borland and Suzanne Beard between 14 August 2006 and 3 October 2006. This service was inspected after receiving a Regulation Support Assessment (RSA) to determine what level of support was necessary. The RSA is an assessment undertaken by the CCO which considers: complaints activity, changes in the provision of the service, nature of notifications made to the Care Commission by the service, action taken upon requirements etc.

This service was required to have a medium level of support that resulted in an inspection based on the national inspection themes, the core standards for the inspecting year and any recommendations and requirements from previous inspections, complaint or other regulatory activity. As this was the first inspection by the Care Commission all of these were taken into account.

Before the inspection the fostering service completed an annual return containing information about the service. The service manager also completed a self-evaluation form. In addition, the manager took considerable time to compile a folder containing sample evidence of how the service meets with the National Care Standards for Foster Care and Family Placement Services. These documents were used to inform the inspection process, with the folder, in particular, proving very beneficial to the Officers during the inspection.

In addition, completed questionnaires relating to the service delivery were returned from the following:

- 2 from young people placed with carers
- 2 from children of foster carers
- 3 from foster carers
- 2 from social worker of carers
- 2 from placing social workers
- 6 from fostering panel members

During the inspection the Care Commission Officers met with:

- The manager of the service
- The deputy manager
- 3 young people
- Four carers (two individually and all four at the weekly group support meeting)
- The external manager
- A support worker from Arran Day Care Unit
- Members of the fostering panel, including the chairperson and medical advisor

A telephone interview was also carried out with an assessing social worker who is employed on a sessional basis. One of the Officers observed the fostering panel and later spoke with the panel members as a group.

The Care Commission Officers examined a range of policies, procedures and records including the following:

- The case files of 3 foster families, which included assessments and other relevant documentation
- The care fostering care standards folder
- Accident and incident recording
- The young persons guide to IFS
- Carers Information pack
- Staff training records
- Assessment reports submitted for consideration at the fostering panel

The Care Commission Officers took all of the above into account and reported on whether the service was meeting the following National Care Standards for Foster Care and Family Placement Services:

Standard 5: Assessing and Approving Carers

Standard 6: Completing the Application

Standard 7: Information and Advice

Standard 11: Reviews

Standard 12: The Fostering Panel

Standard 13: Management and Staffing

The inspection also took into account:

The Regulation of Care (Requirements as to Care Services) (Scotland) Regulations 2002
Scottish Statutory Instrument 114.

The Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996.

Action taken on requirements in last Inspection Report

Not applicable as this was the first inspection of the service.

Comments on Self-Evaluation

The self evaluation highlighted areas of strength which were in keeping with the findings of the officers. The self evaluation lacked detail of areas for development.

View of Service Users

Young people were very positive about their experience of the foster care placements with one young person describing living with carers as being "brilliant" and another described his carer as being "really nice and caring" and his carer's own child as "good fun". The young people confirmed that activities were provided by carers and reflected their preferred interests. All confirmed that their views were sought prior to placement and that they received ongoing encouragement to express their views.

The service makes good use of dvd footage of the carers and their household to give young people the opportunity of 'seeing' the carer prior to formal introductions being made.

The service also provided young people with information packs about the service. The level of decision making the young people have in the process was reflected in one young person's statement that he had "made a good choice" in his carer.

Two of the young people interviewed were unclear about the processes to use if making a complaint and were unaware of the local 'Who Cares?' worker.

The Officers spoke with two carers. Both were extremely happy with the level of support they received from IFS and from Kibble staff describing this as "excellent" and "couldn't be faulted". This was also the view expressed in questionnaires. Carers also described the training offered as being of great quality and beneficial in terms of helping understand the needs of the young people placed with them and assisted in equipping them with the skill necessary to care for the young person. The carers expressed feeling valued in their role as professional carers.

One carer described the assessment process as being intrusive and, at times, difficult however considered that the level of detail gathered about their personal life was essential given the importance of the task they would be undertaking if approved. All were satisfied that they had been fully consulted regarding the completed assessment report and were given the opportunity to express their own views both in the report and at the panel. One carer felt that more background information would have been useful at the time the young person was placed with them.

View of Carers

Refer to section above.

Regulations / Principles

Regulation :

Strengths

Areas for Development

National Care Standards

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

Strengths

The agency used the BAAF assessment and competency framework for assessing the suitability of applicants to undertake the task of fostering. Records showed that applicants had met regularly with the assessing social worker throughout the process.

Carers confirmed that the assessment process involved all members of their household including their own children where relevant. Of the case files sampled by the Officers, it was evidenced that the children of applicants were actively involved in the process of assessment with their views recorded in the assessment report. This included being interviewed with their parents and individual interviews with the assessing social worker.

The service provided excellent opportunities for prospective carers to enhance their understanding of the task of foster caring. These included preparatory training groups which encompassed the Fostering Network "Skills to Foster" training. Other courses are provided routinely such as managing challenging behaviour, food hygiene and safer care. In addition all carers are supported to complete the HNC in Social Care and SVQ3. This training was provided within Kibble school. Children of foster carers also participated in relevant training events.

The service is operated by a team consisting of a service manager, and senior practitioner both of who hold professional qualifications in social work. The manager had extensive experience in the field of foster care and family placement work. The senior practitioner had knowledge and experience of young people who are 'looked after and accommodated'. While the initial assessments of applicants were, in the main, carried out by sessional staff, the ongoing supervision and support is provided by the senior practitioner. In recent months the senior practitioner had increased her role in assessing carers and as a result the reliance on sessional workers had decreased. All sessional workers who carried out the assessments held professional social work qualifications appropriate to the task and experience in family placement work.

Case records evidenced regular supervision meetings with carers and this was confirmed by the carers interviewed. Team support meetings were held with carers weekly. Individual placement progress meetings which include inter-agency representation took place six

weekly.

The foster carers who spoke with the Officers described the support as being excellent. Records confirmed that annual unannounced visits take place in keeping with legal requirements.

The service had policy and procedures, regarding the assessment and approval of foster carers from the stages of initial enquiry to seeking approval at the fostering panel. The functions of the fostering panel are clearly stated. Carers are provided with defined standards of practice in a handbook issued during the assessment process.

The Officers found evidence of a wide range of checks being carried out on applicants during the assessment process and included the following:

- General practitioner's health report
- Enhanced Disclosures (for any member of the household 16 years and older)
- 2 personal references
- Employer reference
- Checks with local authority social work services
- Enhanced disclosure checks on a family friend/relative that the applicant nominates as a support carer to the young person in the foster placement

Details of approved carers were held in the files sampled by the Officers. Records were maintained of those who have relinquished their approval to foster and of all enquiries made to the service by prospective carers and reasons stated for those who withdraw from the process. As yet the service had not withdrawn the approval of any carers.

Areas for Development

The Officers sampled the case files of three applicants and found the assessment reports to be of varying quality in the degree of depth and exploration. In two of the reports the competency based assessments proformas lacked concrete supportive evidence. Evidence appeared to be based on applicants' statements although this was not clearly stated. In addition, the areas for development and action planned sections were left blank. The fostering panel expressed the view that assessments presented to them were inconsistent in quality albeit improvement had been made over the time the service has operated. (see requirement 1)

The service did not have a robust tracking system which would identify which checks were still outstanding, trigger dates to review checks and highlight which checks had been satisfactorily resolved. The service had been without consistent administration support since the service opened which, had been attributed as the main reason for these gaps in the robustness of the system. (see recommendation 1)

The service policy for reviewing foster carers' disclosure checks was stated as being 3 yearly which does not meet with National Care Standards for Foster Care and Family Placement Services. (see recommendation 2)

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

Strengths

The service policy is that applicants are fully involved in the assessment process during the compiling of the report. Records show that applicants met regularly with the assessing social worker and a minute was kept of the discussion held. Applicants were encouraged to read and to contribute to the report prior to presentation to the panel. Assessment reports carry applicants' signatures to confirm reading the report. Carers described workers as being supportive and open during this process.

Carers confirmed their attendance at the fostering panel and of being advised by panel members of the recommendation at the end of the panel hearing. Minutes of panel meetings offer further evidence of this process being followed. The service had policy and procedural guidance which informs the processes which will be followed in the event of appeals against panel decisions. As yet the agency has not had any appeals brought by applicants.

Carers verified that they received letters confirming their approval from the agency decision maker, copies of which are held in case files.

Records evidenced that, in the main, assessments were carried out within six months of the application being received. One assessment exceeded this timescale but the applicant advised the Officer this was as a result of her own work commitments and not due to a delay on the part of the service. Carers also confirmed that they received regular feedback regarding the assessment at frequent intervals throughout the process. This was also evidenced in records kept of meetings held between the assessing social worker and applicant.

Areas for Development

None identified at this inspection.

National Care Standard Number 7: Foster Care and Family Placement Services - Information and Advice

Strengths

Carers had signed agreements confirming the age, sex and number of children who could be placed with them. These records were clear and easily understood. Foster Carers, the assessing social worker and the manager had signed these agreements. The agreement also stated whether the foster carer was approved to provide long term care and/or respite care.

Carers were issued with an extremely robust handbook containing the standards to follow in relation to practice, conduct and procedures to be followed in relation to the young people placed with them. The handbook also detailed the service's responsibilities to the carer in relation to support, training and reviewing of approval.

The handbook informed the carer of the procedures which may be followed if an allegation of abuse or neglect is made against them and guidance was in place about the different circumstances in which notifications should be made to the Care Commission and other relevant bodies. These standards are currently being reviewed, to keep abreast with latest research on best practice, with members of the fostering service being consulted as part of

this process. Carers described the handbook as extremely helpful and detailed.

Areas for Development

Carers did not hold a signed supervision agreement. This should be developed to be in line with the policy stated in the Carers Handbook.

The handbook did not fully inform foster carers of the action they should take if a young person accuses them of abusing or neglecting them and although carers could give the Officer a verbal account of the procedure they would use it would be still be pertinent for this to be more clearly stated in the handbook. (see recommendation 3)

National Care Standard Number 11: Foster Care and Family Placement Services - Reviews

Strengths

The service has procedures for reviewing the approval of carers six months after the initial approval and annually thereafter. The Officers found that minutes of panels held provided supporting evidence that this policy is implemented.

The fostering panel's chairperson was independent of the service and had many years experience and knowledge of children who are "looked after and accommodated" and of the skills required to offer such young people support and stability.

The review reports sampled included the training which had been provided to carers and their families and of the frequency and type of support offered. Future training needs were identified. Carers confirmed they were invited to attend fostering panel reviews and are invited to give their views to the panel. Of the review reports sampled all included recommendations regarding the continued approval (or not) and of the number, age and sex of the young person who could be placed with the carer.

In preparation for reviews, carers, in conjunction with supervising social worker, were required to complete a summary sheet of how they would continue to meet the individual needs of the young person placed with them. Those sampled included details about health, educational, emotional and social needs and contact arrangements with the child's family (as appropriate). Prior to the review the service had a policy of consulting relevant parties via questionnaires regarding their view of the carer's abilities. These views were then included in the information presented to the reviewing panel. Officers saw evidence of the views of placing social workers, the views of the child placed and those young people who had been offered respite by the carers.

In the case files sampled, the Officers found a full record was retained of the panel discussion; the views expressed by those in attendance including the foster carer and workers. The recommendation reached at the end of the panel was also recorded.

Areas for Development

Not all review reports submitted to the panel were signed by the foster carer. This should be

addressed.

The standard proforma used to identify how the carer would meet the needs of the child did not include the spiritual or cultural needs of the young person. One of the two summary reports sampled, on the young person, was not fully completed and did not contain the child's religion or date of birth. (see recommendation 4)

There was no evidence that the views of the birth parents of young people were sought to be presented to the review panel. (see recommendation 5)

National Care Standard Number 12: Foster Care and Family Placement Services - The Fostering Panel

Strengths

The panel membership was comprised of people who had a range of experiences and qualifications relating to the needs of young people who are accommodated by the Local Authorities. These included management staff from the social care and teaching staff from the education sectors of Kibble Education and Care Centre, social workers from fostering and adoption services in the host local authority, an experienced foster carer, and General Practitioner. The chairperson had extensive experience as a reporter to the Children's Panel.

The panel had a medical advisor who was been described as "excellent" by her peers in the panel. The professional advisor to the service was the manager who had extensive background knowledge of the needs of vulnerable young people and of fostering provision. The service had an agency decision maker who was independent of the panel.

The panel members impressed as being very committed to the service and positive about the potential for the fostering service to improve outcomes for young people.

The service had written procedures regarding the operations and functions of the fostering panel. Panel members confirmed that they were subject to Disclosure Scotland checks prior to their participation in the panel.

The panel had prepared an annual report which included details of the panel membership, the progress of the service and areas for future development.

Panel members all received training on being a panel member from BAAF. In addition panel members had regular business meetings in which they exchanged ideas and practice issues. Training and development days were held. The service had recently sent a panel member to conference in America which focused on recent research on the impact on children who are fostered. Applicants who attended fostering panels were invited to complete evaluation forms on the performance of the panel.

Prior to the panel, members were provided with reports to facilitate decision making. Decisions made at the panel were recorded, evidence of which was found in carers' files.

The appeals procedure was explained to carers within the foster carers' handbook. Carers

confirmed this was explained also to them at the time of the panel and through the assessment process.

Areas for Development

The professional advisor to the panel was also the manager of the fostering service. The manager also had a role in overseeing the completed assessments reports on prospective carers prior to the submission to the panel for consideration. The manager acknowledged that these dual roles could pose her and the panel some difficulty should a conflict of interests arise. The Officers were in agreement with this concern and were of the view that consideration should be given to formalising alternative arrangements should this situation arise. (see recommendation 6)

The service did not have a written policy on how the panel members were recruited. Discussion with members informed that a range of differing procedures took place in their recruitment. (see requirement 2)

Whilst the documentation presented to the panel is necessarily extensive, it did not contain an index which would have assisted the panel members when referring to specific sections of the reports. This should be reviewed.

At the panel a delay occurred as part of the assessment paperwork had not been included in the papers submitted. The administrative support to the panel and the service had been inconsistent, and the effects of this were evident on the day of the panel. This will be discussed further under the management and staffing standard.

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

Strengths

An audit of the provider's safer recruitment policies and procedures was carried out with one permanent and two sessional staff members' files sampled. The officer found safer recruitment practices in place which included seeking two references, checking the professional qualification and enhanced Disclosure Scotland checks

Staff members who carry out assessments of applicants held professional qualifications in social work. Sessional staff employed to carry out assessment of applicants had relevant experience in the field of fostering and family placement work and held professional social work qualifications. A staff supervision structure was in place with annual appraisals taking account of training and development needs. Staff members who spoke with the Officers described manager as being approachable and readily gave advice and support.

Training records show that staff members undertook a variety of training appropriate to the task of assessing and supporting foster carers. The service had links with the fostering network, and BAAF trainers who offered training based on best practice and recent research. The manager attended an international conference on fostering held in America. Staff from

the service recently held a conference on fostering service with invitations extended to other fostering providers, stake holders and specialised academics in this area of social care.

The service was currently updating the fostering standards and staff procedural guidance to keep abreast with latest research findings and best practice guidance.

The service had excellent systems of communicating with carers. This includes a weekly team meeting with representation from the school staff, carers and the service manager and deputy. Carers completed daily notes on the progress of the young people in placement and completed incident reports as necessary. Case records were kept in an orderly state with all relevant paper work in place. Assessment reports were provided to the panel for approval and annual reports provided to the panel to review the continued registration of carers.

At the onset of the inspection the service did not have a system to log complaints received within the service and of outcomes and/or resolutions reached. However this was addressed satisfactorily during the course of the inspection and no further action will be required in this report.

The service was using innovative ideas to carry out quality assurance. The service had invited a researcher from Stirling University to carry out a study on the impact the fostering service has on the young people placed. All the young people placed with carers approved by the service had participated in this research. The manager advised that when the findings were concluded this would contribute to the development plan for the service. The annual report identified the progress of the service to date and areas for future development. Applicants who attended fostering panels were invited to complete evaluation forms on the performance of the panel. Young people who were placed with carers both in long term placements and respite placements were asked to complete a report on the quality of their experience.

Fully accountable systems were found in place for finances provided to carers and the young people who were placed with them. Receipts were retained as appropriate.

The external manager had an overview of the service in a number of ways. He provided formal supervision to the manager and carried out the annual appraisal. Due to the close proximity of the service to the working base of the external manager, contact with carers and young people was frequent and informal whilst carers were at the school with the young people. The external manager also attended social occasions arranged for the staff team and carers. The external manager investigated complaints made to the service.

Areas for Development

The Officers were advised that the service was in the process of reviewing its child protection procedures so that formal arrangements were in place with the host local authority, to facilitate investigations when children from more than one placing authority were involved.

When carrying out the safer recruitment checks the Officer found that only two of the three staff files held evidence of the social workers registration with the Scottish Social Services Council. (see requirement 3) Additionally the service provider did not have robust processes in place to ascertain the physical fitness of prospective employers. However, the personnel manager advised that the employment application form was being revamped to take account

of applicants' medical fitness. A system for renewal of disclosure checks was also being implemented.

The supervision structure had recently been reviewed. Supervision had not been held within the agreed timescales stipulated by the provider's own policy. This should be addressed.

Of the six incident recordings sampled only one had the signature of the senior practitioner. Action to be taken was not specified in four of the six forms. This is not in keeping with the agency's own procedural guidance and should be addressed. (see recommendation 7)

A weakness in the service was the lack of consistent administrative support. This impacted on the adequate preparation of paperwork to the panel and the effectiveness of tracking systems. Both the manager and external manager were aware of the impact this was having on the service and were in the process of resolving this.

Enforcement

There is no enforcement action taking place with this service.

Other Information

This service is a relatively new provision set up in direct response to the unmet needs of the young people residing in the school who had no recent or foreseeable experience of living within a family home situation. Many of the young people had disrupted and chaotic childhood experiences. The understandable symptomatic complex behaviours which resulted from living in adversity were fully understood by the service provider and staff team. In recognising the challenges this may present, the service excelled in the level of supports which were provided to the young people and their carers. This extended to the rigorous standards set in the criteria for becoming carers, the preparatory training and ongoing training opportunities. In providing these fundamental and vital keystones the service was achieving in its aim of improving outcomes for young people and enhancing their life opportunities.

The Officers were heartened to see clear evidence of the 'capturing' and nurturing of the talents and skills recognised in the young people placed with staff and carers fully appreciative of the resilience and self esteem this would build for the future psychological wellbeing of these young men.

Requirements

1. The service requires to improve the quality of the assessment reports to satisfy themselves of the suitability of the prospective foster carer. This is in order to comply with the Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996 regulation 7(1)(e).

Timescale: Within two months of the publication of this report.

2. The service requires to develop and implement a policy and procedure on the recruitment of panel members which takes account of safer recruitment practices to ensure the welfare of service users. This is in order to comply with the Fostering of Children (Scotland) Regulations 1996 regulation 5

Timescale: By March 2007

3. The service provider requires to evidence that social workers employed by the service are registered with the Scottish Social Services Council. This is to comply with Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002 No. 114 The Regulation of Care (Requirements as to Care Services (Scotland) Regulations 2002, regulation 19(2)(d) - Records as amended by Scottish Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 94 The Regulation of Care (Requirements as to Care Services (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2004 regulation 2, Amendment of Principal Regulations.

Timescale : Within two months from the publication date of this report.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 - The service will ensure that all checks carried out on the fitness of individuals are carried out to a satisfactory conclusion. Standard 5.7: Assessing and Approving Carers - National Care Standards: Foster Care and Family Placement Services.

Recommendation 2 - The service should ensure that Disclosure Scotland checks are renewed every 2 years to meet with National Care Standards for Foster Care and Family Placement Services. Standard 5.7: Assessing and Approving Carers - National Care Standards: Foster Care and Family Placement Services.

Recommendation 3 - The carers' handbook should inform carers of the action to take should

a foster child accuse them of abuse or neglect. Standard 7.4: Information and Advice - National Care Standards: Foster Care and Family Placement Services.

Recommendation 4 - The placement reports for young people should be completed to include faith, cultural and spiritual needs and date of birth. Standard 11.4: Reviews - National Care Standards: Foster Care and Family Placement Services.

Recommendation 5 - The views of birth parents and all relevant parties should be sought and presented to review panels. Standard 11.5: Reviews - National Care Standards: Foster Care and Family Placement Services.

Recommendation 6 - The service should explore the possibility of recruiting an advisor to the panel who is independent to the assessment of carers. Standard 12.2: The Fostering Panel - National Care Standards: Foster Care and Family Placement Services.

Recommendation 7 - Incident recordings should be signed by the manager and senior practitioner with action to be taken clearly stated. Standard 13.6 - National Care Standards: Foster Care and Family Placement Services.

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