



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING SUB-COMMISSION 4 JULY 2006

Report of the Corporate Director for Children & Young People

Fostering Service Report

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Fostering Service continues to provide an annual report for period from 1 April to 31 March and reviews the Statement of Purpose as required by the Fostering Services Regulations 2002. (See Appendix 1)
- 1.2 A monthly highlights report is produced to track key indicators of performance.
- 1.3 To note the work and developments of the Fostering Service as outlined in this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2.1 Background

This report informs the Corporate Parenting Joint Overview & Scrutiny sub-commission, of the activity of Derby City Fostering Service. A report is required annually and this document covers the period from 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2006. It is in the National Minimum Standards that the report will be placed before Members at least annually.

- 2.2 The Fostering Service Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards published under S23(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 outlines the duties and responsibilities of a Fostering Service.

- 2.3 The Fostering Panel met a total of 24 times between 1 April 2005 and 31 March 2006. There have been a number of changes to the Panel since the last report

2.4 The Panel Membership is as Follows

Pat Hill	Retired Senior Social Services Manager	Chair
Mohammed Daullah	Magistrate & Retired Senior Probation Officer	Vice Chair

Joan Webster	Former Chair of Community Health Council	Independent Member
Neil Gorse	Derby Social Services	Deputy Unit Manager – Children's Home
Diane Hidson	Foster Carer for another Authority	Independent Member
Angela Jenner	Former Senior Education Officer	Independent Member
Jane Cupitt/Yvonne Jones	Derby City Council	Children's Social Worker
Judy Ponsford	Derby City Council	Fostering Social Worker
Sara Bolton	Derby City Council	Councillor

The Fostering Panel Adviser is Katie Harris – Head of Service, Adoption and Fostering

The Decision Maker is Keith Woodthorpe – Assistant Director, Children & Young People's Services.

2.5 Placements made April 2005 to March 2006

- During the period the service responded to 224 requests for new foster placements (an increase of 18). The monthly referral rate ranged from 11 requests in October to 26 in March
- Of the children referred
125 were placed with Derby City Carers foster carers
12 children were placed with independent fostering agencies
1 child was placed with another local authority
- Of the remainder 69 requests were withdrawn and the other requests remain outstanding.
- This represents an increase of 21 in-house placements over the year

2.6 Recruitment

- 269 enquiries were received from people interested in finding out about fostering.
- This was a slight reduction on the target of 284 and shows a reduction on previous years.
- 92 people requested a follow up initial visit from a social worker. (Response rate of 34.2% - a slight increase).
- From these 45 applications were accepted and assessments begun, although 12 of these were applications to become support carers, offering respite to existing carers

2.7 Approvals

- 37 carers were approved (an increase of 11) 12 were family and friends approved under Regulation 38 (an increase of 2)
- None the less there has been a net increase in carers of 3 over the year.

2.8 Loss of Carers

- 34 carers ceased to foster during the year. Reason for resignations were as follows:

	<u>2004/5</u>	<u>2005/06</u>
• Work commitments/personal.	4	7
• Transfer to independent fostering agency (IFA).	5	0
• Adopted foster child.	4	2
• Deregistered	1	2
• Retired	0	5
• Moved to be adult carers	0	2
• Residence order granted.	1	6
• Regulation 38 registration no longer required.	4	5
• Regulation 38 placement disrupted	0	1
• Foster child reached 18.	5	3
• Deceased	0	1

- No moves to an IFA, during the year one has moved to Derby from an IFA because they were being under used.

2.9 **Assessments and Trends**

- 26 carers are currently being assessed and trained. 5 of these are Regulation 38 assessments of family and friends.
- Over the year whilst we have increased the rate of approval for carers for younger children we have approved only 3 carers for children over 10 years
- This trend is continuing in our current assessments and remains a significant risk in our ability to reduce the numbers of young people in independent fostering agencies.
- This trend has enabled us to respond to the increase of 52% over 18 months of the demand for placements of children under 5 years old.
- We have increased the number of general carers by 6 over the year as a result of our recruitment strategy

2.10 **Position as at April 2005**

- 165 carers provide 233 full time placements.
- 97 carers provide 179 long term or time limited placements.
- 55 carers live outside Derby City, they are in London, Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent and Immingham, as well as the surrounding area.
- 17 are “Children First” carers and provide 23 placements for children with disabilities.
- 38 carers offer “Link”, short term or general respite placements at any time. (some carers care for up to 8 children on a periodic basis).
- 21 are Regulation 38 “family and friends” carers offering 27 placements.
- 10 carers are caring for children over the normal fostering limit of 3 children. (a slight rise from a low of 7 in June 2005)

2.11 **Development of the Service**

- Inspection of the service in October 2005 identified continued improvements in the service over the 12 months.

CSCI Inspection

Scale	1	2	3	4
Oct 2003	2	17	11	
Oct 2004	0	5	28	
Oct 2005	0	1	21	2

Where

- 4 = Standard exceeded
- 3 = Standard met
- 2 = Standard almost met
- 1 = Standard not met

- Continued improvements to fostering payments achieved through a further 12% increase in allowances.
- Formulation of new approach to fee payments and contracts prepared for implementation in April 2006.
- We now offer 3 levels of fee of £75, £125 and £175 per week.
- Post approval training is being developed in partnership with stakeholders and other agencies. The appointment of a training officer for the fostering and adoption service has strengthened this focus and increased the take up of training.
- After a period of significant difficulty vacancies within the fostering service have been filled, so that the service has remained staffed at current establishment level.
- Increase in psychology time provided to the fostering service and foster carers on a consultation basis.
- The development of regular support groups for foster carers has also become an integral part of the service.
- The refurbishment of the office at Perth Street as an adoption and fostering centre means that we now have training and meeting rooms available on the premises to be the focus of those training initiatives

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Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1: Statement of Purpose

Derby City Council

Children and Young People's Department

FOSTERING SERVICE

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

June 2006

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INTRODUCTION

The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, issued by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, govern the work of fostering service providers throughout England. These standards will be used in the inspection of fostering agencies and fostering services provided by local authorities.

Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulation 3(1) of the Fostering services regulations 2002 require a fostering agency to produce a Statement of Purpose, which contains a range of detailed information as set out in Standard 1(4).

This statement of purpose has been prepared in accordance with these requirements. It will provide a source of information to all areas of the Children and Young People's department, partner agencies, fostering team staff, foster carers and prospective carers.

The statement will be reviewed no less than annually and amended accordingly.

Derby City Council
June 2006

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE

1 Mission Statement

In line with the department's overall objectives, Derby City Council Children and Young People's Services aims to provide a fostering service for young people which is safe and transparent; a service which meets the needs of children and young people who need to be looked after away from their family, for whatever reason and for whatever length of time is required.

We aim to make the operation of the fostering service clear and understandable to carers, young people and staff, and we welcome consultation and suggestions regarding the continuous improvement of the service to children who are looked after.

We aim to recruit carers within and around Derby City who can meet a range of needs, and to recruit carers who will provide placements which reflect or respect the foster child's ethnicity, culture, religion and language.

We aim to provide a service that will support foster carers in their caring role. This will be provided through appropriate preparation and training, and by the support of a specified, qualified fostering support social worker. Foster carers will also have access to additional support in their task, as detailed under Section 5 of this statement.

We aim to provide:

- A good quality foster care service to the children of Derby City
- A commitment to a child-centred approach
- The maximum stability possible in the lives of young people, to enable them to fulfil their potential in life
- Consideration for the gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, culture, abilities and disabilities of fostered children, when making placement decisions
- 24 hour support and advice for foster carers
- An inclusive, partnership approach which embraces the child or young person, their family, the foster family and any 'professional' person involved in the foster placement.
- A fee paid fostering scheme to support the placement of more challenging children and young people

2 Status and constitution

Derby City Fostering service is an integral part of the Derby City Council Children and Young people's department. As such it is governed by and follows all policies and procedures that apply to the City Council as a whole.

Derby City Fostering service also follows, in line with National Minimum Standards specific, agreed procedures relating to the provision of and support to foster placements, and procedures relating to the recruitment, training, approval, support, and review of foster carers.

The Fostering Panel has its constitution and membership arrangements in accordance with the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

3 Management structure

The Fostering service for Derby City is regarded as a Provider service within the Children and Young People's Department.

The structure is as described below:

Chris Wynn	Derby City Council Cabinet member for Social Care (September 2005)
Keith Woodthorpe	Assistant Director of Social Services Fostering Panel Decision Maker
Katie Harris	Head of Service, Fostering and Adoption
Lynda Stone	Service Manager, Fostering
Sally Penrose	Service Manager, Fostering

The Assistant Director is responsible for the interpretation and implementation of the policies of the City Council in relation to the fostering service. Policies are discussed and their implementation agreed via the mechanism of the Children and Young people's Department's Children's Services Management Group.

The Head of Service is responsible for the ensuring that policies are interpreted correctly by the fostering service, and is responsible for the supervision of the fostering managers. She produces information and progress reports on the service as required, to inform senior management as to the operation of the service and report on issues of concern or shortfall.

The service managers are responsible for the day to day management of the fostering service, the supervision of fostering social workers, the appropriate matching of children to available carers, and dealing with complaints and suggestions at the first level. The service managers also produce monthly reports on the operation of the service, highlighting changes in the number of children looked after, number of carers approved and de-registered, and any developments or shortfalls in the service.

One Service Manager takes lead responsibility for the duty and recruitment aspects of the service and initial training. The second manager takes lead responsibility for the post-approval training and support of carers and for the provision of a short break service to disabled children, and provision of a fostering service to disabled children.

4 Recruitment, approval, review, training and support of foster carers

The procedures followed in the recruitment, assessment and approval of foster carers are as laid out in the foster care procedures manual. In brief, the process is as described below:-

RECRUITMENT

- Recruitment activity is co-ordinated by a Service Manager, Fostering, in conjunction with the Marketing Manager. Recruitment will incorporate all available media, as seen to be appropriate, and will respect issues of confidentiality. Recruitment in Derby city is achieved via advertising and articles on a regular basis in local press
- When an enquiry is received from a person interested in fostering, a Registration of Interest form will be completed, and basic details obtained. Initial queries from enquirers will be addressed.
- Enquirers will be sent, within 3 working days, information about the fostering task in the form of an information booklet, and information as to the allowances payable
- An initial home visit will be arranged with all those who express interest in finding out more about fostering.

ASSESSMENT

- Potential carers complete an application form, and consent forms to enable statutory and personal references, including CRB checks, to be obtained on the applicants and any member of their household aged 10 years or over.
- Foster carers are informed about the assessment and approval process and the requirement to attend a preparation/training course. An assessment agreement form is completed with the carers.
- Assessments should be completed within 6 months from the date of receiving a firm application. Reasons for delay will be recorded.
- Applicants to become foster carers for Derby City will be assessed using a competency-based approach, broadly following the Fostering Network competency assessment model. Amendments to this format have been incorporated into this model, following team discussion, and with the agreement of the Fostering Panel.
- During the assessment, prospective carers will be encouraged to compile a family book, providing information about themselves and their family. This will provide information to the panel and to a child whom it is proposed to place with the carers.
- Applications from relatives or friends to become carers under Regulation 38 of the Fostering Regulations will be completed by social workers from within the Fostering Team. These will follow a format agreed within the fostering service. This format meets the requirements of the Regulation, but does not follow the competency-based model and seeks to respect the special situation of family and friends who wish to be considered as foster carers.
- Preparation/assessment training is provided for applicants, and carers are required to complete this training. Training covers the responsibilities of becoming a foster carer and working in partnership with the Children and Young People's department and the child's family.
- Completed assessments are shared with the applicants – excluding all references – and applicants are invited to make their own comments on the report.
- Referees are advised that any reference on an applicant may be disclosed to the applicant under and within the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

APPROVAL

- The completed assessment report is presented to the Fostering panel, for approval, and the Fostering social worker and the applicants attend the panel for discussion.
- The panel makes recommendations regarding approval, and the panel decision is passed to the Agency decision maker, the Assistant Director, for the final decision. Panel members' views regarding approval are individually minuted in order to record any dissensions from the decision to approve or reject the application.
- Applicants are informed verbally and in writing about the agency decision regarding approval.
- Where approval is not given, the applicants will be informed in writing. They will be informed as to their right to make any representations on the matter to the panel within 28 days.
- Where a decision is taken not to continue with an assessment the applicant will be informed as soon as possible. If they are not in agreement with this decision, they will be invited to make representations to the panel in writing or in person within 28 days. The recommendations of the panel will then be communicated to the panel Decision Maker and the applicant informed in writing of the outcome.

REVIEW

- An approved foster carer must be reviewed at least every year.
- Annual Review Reports are prepared according the agreed format for Derby City, and follow the requirements of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations: Vol. 3 - Family Placements.
- The contents of the report are shared with the foster carer before panel. Carers are invited to attend panel and also to contribute their own written comments on their experience of fostering, and on the service they have received from the local authority.
- Reports on foster carers are requested from social workers of children in placement, and any comments from children or their parents regarding the foster placement will be included in the review report.
- In addition to annual reviews, matters reported to the fostering panel include:-
 - any serious concerns raised about the carers
 - any change of approval criteria proposed
 - any placements made outside the normal fostering limit
 - any significant changes in the household circumstances.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

- Pre-approval foster care training is regarded as an essential part of the assessment and preparation process.
- Applicants are advised that their contribution and response to training will be monitored and that it forms part of the assessment process.
- Training covers the essential elements as outlined in the National Minimum Standards and the Fostering Regulations 2002
- Foster carers have access to training provided by the Children and Young People's department for Social Workers and other Social Care staff

- The fostering service now has a training post dedicated to the post approval training and development of foster carers and adopters.
- Derby City provides access to a B tech qualification for foster carers, provided on-line by AKAMAS. This is supported by the fostering training officer.
- Specific seminars and workshops are made available to foster carers on particular topics as the need and resource is identified. e.g. attachment, life story work, drug awareness.
- Foster carers are invited to support groups which are held on a half-termly basis, and focus on different age groupings of children and special interests e.g. disability. Support groups have topics for discussion and speakers as appropriate, and as identified by fostering social workers or carers
- Consultation is available to foster carers, on an appointment system, with a clinical psychologist who has dedicated time for the advice and support of foster children and their carers.
- Additional support is available for carers of sexually abused foster children from the Sexual Abuse unit in Derby. Specialist workers work directly or in a consultation capacity with the problems and behaviours associated with the child who has been sexually abused.
- Derby City fostering social workers provide a 24 hour help and advice service via a dedicated telephone number, to provide consultation and support out of office hours. (This is a separate service to the Children and Young People's Services out of hours emergency service)

5 Fostering services provided

TIME LIMITED PLACEMENTS, INCLUDING EMERGENCY AND BRIDGING PLACEMENTS

Derby City fostering service provides placements for children from 0-18 years, to meet the need for both emergency or planned admissions arising out of the work of the Family Resource workers based at Ashtree House, Social Care Workers in the Reception team based at Rosehill Street, and the Assessment and Care Planning teams based at Stanley Road and at Derby City hospital. N.B. As at June 2006, the department is in the process of re-organisation into multi-disciplinary teams, but the fostering service is to remain as a single service meeting the needs of the area teams.

Foster carers are fully involved in the decision as to the type of fostering they will be approved for, and some carers will be approved for more than one type of fostering. 'Time-limited placements' is the term used in Derby to refer to placements that may last anything from a few days to placements of up to 2 years. The term covers ANY placement designed to be on-going whilst Care Plans are being devised and implemented, and often where Care proceedings are in process.

RESPITE PLACEMENTS

Respite foster carers are approved foster carers who choose to offer placements on a very time-limited basis only. This may be through choice, or because of limitations in their availability. Most Respite carers have full-time jobs.

Respite carers offer placements to parents or carers of children living in the community where their assessed needs indicates a benefit from short breaks away from the family. This may be to relieve family stress, or to do some direct work with a challenging young person. Respite carers also offer short breaks to children cared for by other foster carers.

SUPPORT FOSTER CARERS

Support foster carers provide planned respite care to named foster carers. They are usually relatives or friends of the foster family and nominated by the carer. The foster children will therefore normally be known to the support carer or will come to develop a relationship with them. The support foster care scheme reduces the need for 'stranger' placements for children in order to achieve respite for the main carer.

Support carers are assessed by a fostering social worker, specifically for the children of a specific foster family and approved by the Fostering panel for that task.

LONG-TERM PLACEMENTS

Derby city operates a policy of trying to achieve permanence through adoption for all children under the age of ten who cannot be rehabilitated home or to a member of their extended family. For older children, where adoption is determined not to be a viable option, long-term fostering may be the Care Plan of choice. The fostering team recruits specifically for children needing long-term care. This could include home-finding for long-term placements for children in time-limited placements, children in residential care and children in agency residential, or fostering placements outside Derby where long-term foster care in the child's home area is indicated. The fostering team also considers requests from existing foster carers who wish to change their approval status to become long-term foster carers.

FEE PAID PLACEMENTS

Some young people can be identified as having particular emotional and behavioural problems, which result in them needing more than average time, effort and skill from their foster carer to manage the challenges they present. A foster carer with the appropriate behaviour management skills and who cares for a child or young person who meets the criteria, may be approved to become a Project foster carer as part of the service's fee paid scheme.

Fees can be paid at one of three levels: the level of fee to be applied to an individual placement will be decided by a sub-panel of the Fostering panel made up of the Head of Service and the service managers. Reports from the fostering social worker and/or child's social worker will be prepared according to the agreed guidelines and criteria applicable to the scheme. The carer will be required to sign a 'contract' as to the services they will provide to the young person.

Where Fee paid status is confirmed, the relevant fee is paid to the foster carer in addition to fostering allowances, in recognition of the extra work involved in caring for the young person.

CHILDREN FIRST PLACEMENTS

The fostering team recruits foster carers to care for children with significant disabilities. Placements made with Children First carers are generally intended to be long-term placements. Children First carers receive a fee (normally equivalent to Fee level 2) in addition to fostering allowances. The children who fall within this scheme will:-

- Have a disability resulting from substantial and permanent impairment of function (this can include substantial physical illness, communication disorder, sensory impairment, learning of physical disability) Children may have associated emotional and behavioural difficulties but these difficulties alone would not make them eligible for this scheme
- Have a Statement of Special Educational Need (children 4-16 years)
- Have a paediatric consultant (children 0-16 years)
- Qualify for at least middle rate DLA
- Be 17 years of age or under at age of referral

A carer approved for this scheme will be approved as a foster carer in the normal way, but receive additional training and information as relevant to their role, and as required by the needs of the individual child placed with them.

LINK CARERS

Children with a disability are defined as 'children in need' under Section 17(10) of the Children Act 1989. Local authorities have an obligation to assess the needs of disabled children and offer relevant services to maintain them within their families and give them the opportunity to access services relevant to their social, emotional, cultural, physical and developmental needs. Derby City operates a Link Care scheme, as part of its strategy to meet this requirement.

Link carers provide a short-break service to children with disabilities, who are assessed as needing this service. Link carers are approved foster carers. In addition, they receive general and specific information and training regarding their role as a Link carer via one-to-one sessions and occasional workshops. They are provided with specific information about the disability of the child they are 'linked' to. Opportunities to gain experience via visits to other services for disabled children within the Social Services department are offered where appropriate. Guidance from relevant health professionals is offered in relation to specific health needs of the child e.g. specialist nurses, Occupational Therapists.

Link carers are matched to a specific child or children and planning meetings are held with the parents to make all the arrangements for the nature of the link e.g. whether day care or overnight, and to share information about the child's needs.

Link Care may be offered to children living with their family, who are not accommodated. The Link service is also offered to carers within the Children First Scheme, to provide their carers with respite care.

Link care may be offered for up to 90 days per year. Typically the Derby city scheme offers one weekend a month, day care and additional sessions during the long summer holiday.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

- ❖ The Fostering service provides a dedicated telephone line for carers out of office hours. This is continuously manned by qualified fostering support social workers, on a rota basis. It provides an advice and consultation service
- ❖ Carers can access the Children and Young People's department's out of hours emergency service (Careline) where necessary, for support and advice e.g. where a child goes missing.

- ❖ The Children and Young People's department funds dedicated time from a qualified clinical psychologist, to offer advice and support to foster carers and their foster children. This service is based at the Derby City Children's hospital. The psychologist also offers information/training sessions to foster carers in relation to identified need.
- ❖ The Children and Young Peoples' department offer to carers the services of their Child Sexual Abuse Unit. This service offers counselling to children and young people who have suffered sexual abuse, and advice and support to foster carers in managing and supporting the child who has experienced sexual abuse.
- ❖ The Children and Young People's department provides assistance to foster carers in meeting the educational needs of their foster children via the Education of Looked After Children team, dedicated to improving the education and life chances of children who are 'looked after'. This includes the funding of an Educational Welfare Officer specifically for Looked After children. Foster carers can get support in matters relating to their child's attendance and support in school.
- ❖ There is a departmental scheme to offer foster carers financial assistance in relation to the purchase of a larger vehicle, or an extension of their home, to help them care for a number of foster children.
- ❖ A designated nurse for Looked After children is available to Looked After Children 27 hours per week. She offers advice and support to foster carers, to enhance their ability to promote the health of the foster children they care for.

6 Staffing of the Fostering Service

The fostering service is led by a Head of Service, who is Katie Harris. Katie has relevant qualifications for this task viz. - LLB, MA in Social Work, D.M.S., and 29 years experience in the Child Care field.

In addition there are two service managers who have relevant social work qualifications, and a fully qualified team of 15 social workers, both full and part-time.

7 Numbers of foster carers

Derby City seeks to recruit carers to meet the placement requirements for its population of Looked After children. At the end of May 2006 Derby City has:-

166 foster carers, of whom

92 are carers offering time-limited or long-term placements. In addition, 23 carers are approved to offer care to a relative or friend

34 are carers identified as offering placements under the Fee-paid fostering scheme – a total of 66 young people have been assessed as warranting a fee at level 1,2 or3)

A total of 45 carers offer respite placements:

19 carers offer respite placements, 8 of these offering respite alongside mainstream placements.

8 carers have been approved under the new support carer scheme, to support specific carers and their children

- 2 carers offer both respite and link placements.
- 16 carers provide care to disabled children under the 'Link' care scheme.
- 16 carers provide placements for children under the Children First scheme.

During the year April 2005-6, 37 new carers were approved (including 12 Regulation 38 placements). 34 carers ceased fostering – a net gain of 3 carers.
Approximately a third of Derby City foster carers live outside the City boundary.

Demand for placement generally exceeds supply, and therefore placement choice is very limited. Currently 13 children are placed in 10 foster homes over the Normal Fostering Limit. Recruitment is an on-going activity to aim to increase the supply of foster carers and to replace the number of carers who leave the service, whether through retirement, de-registration, or because of recruitment activity by independent fostering agencies.

8 Number of Children and Young People in Foster Placement

There are currently around 232 children and young people placed in foster homes belonging to Derby City and supervised and supported by Derby City Fostering team social workers. In addition, 47 children and young people are currently placed in Independent Fostering Agency placements.
2 young people in placement are asylum seekers

9 Number of complaints and their outcome

There were no complaints about the Fostering service in the Year 2005-6.

Complaints by and about foster carers may be dealt with through the department's Complaints procedures. A system for logging concerns specifically about the fostering service has been operating since June 2003.

For the period April 2005-6, there were 6 complaints against foster carers.

- 1 was a complaint by a child of sexual abuse. This was fully investigated and a risk assessment completed on the carer prior to their approval being continued.
- 2 were complaints of suspected physical abuse, which were investigated and disproved
- 3 were complaints of inappropriate behaviour by foster carers. One was dealt with via child protection procedures, the others by discussion within the fostering service.

No foster carers were de-registered as a result of concerns about their competence. One carer was recommended for de-registration but the decision was referred back to panel by the agency decision maker and the carers' approval continued with strict, revised criteria attached to their registration.

Incidents, accidents, and allegations relating to foster carers are recorded separately on foster carer files and included in Foster Carer Annual Reviews.