

<b>Directorate:</b>	Childrens Services
<b>Audit report:</b>	Foster Care Service Arrangements
<b>Dated:</b>	11.03.2015

#### PRIORITY RATINGS

**Priority 1 (high)** - major control weakness requiring immediate implementation of recommendation

**Priority 2 (medium)** - existing procedures have negative impact on internal control or the efficient use of resources

**Priority 3 (low)** - recommendation represents good practice but its implementation is not fundamental to internal control

Para Ref	Recommendation	Priority Rating	Management Action Proposed	Timescale for Action	Officer Responsible	Audit Agree?
5.7	The service should compile a Fostering Risk Register that identifies relevant issues affecting the service and this should be reviewed periodically.	Low	A risk register will be compiled and be reviewed quarterly in the strategic foster care managers meeting. Over-arching governance will remain with CSMT who oversee the Children's Services risk register to ensure there is no conflict or gaps between holding two separate risk registers	31.07.2016	Ian Forbes  Ian Banner	Y

5.17/18	Data for the fostering service should be held centrally, ideally using appropriate software such as LCS, which will enable placement changes to be updated in a timely manner ensuring that all payments can be authorised and paid using Controcc. This will also facilitate renewals of statutory checks such as DBS, Medical checks, Annual Reviews and Unannounced visits to ensure that the service is complying with the Regulations	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updating of placement records will be addressed within the service and regularly monitored</li> <li>There is an issue of compatability between Controcc and LCS whereby children's placements cannot be picked up unless the child is allocated to the LAC team. Many looked after children are allocated within other children's teams such as RAIS or CP and Proceedings. These will therefore always need to be amended manually. The original corporate specification for Controcc set this out and needs amending. It is in a queue for addressing so details of this audit will be forwarded to the relevant IT staff for attention</li> <li>Due to the movement of young people in and out of placements over a two week period there may be up to 50 payments that may require manual adjustment. The issue is therefore to record accurately the reasons for any manual adjustments. If these are subsequently saved to the child's or carers LCS record then there is no need for further manual adjustment. Amendments to the system to allow for this will be requested through IT panel:</li> </ul> <p>The service plan has always been to hold details of such items as DBS and annual reviews on LCS. The service currently monitors these by keeping spreadsheets. Although it is noted that the auditor did not find DBS records for a small number of carers, once these names had been given to the service by the auditor, the service immediately confirmed that all checks were in place. It is accepted that the spreadsheet was not updated in a timely way on this occasion . The Team Managers will monitor closely for future. Ofsted regularly inspect this service area and have not found discrepancies in the past.</p>	<p>Immedia te Timesca les to be confirme d by business analysts.</p> <p>BIG panel 8.3.16 LCS specifica tion and amendm ents for Fosterin g service to be complet ed by agreed date of 31.1.201 7 as per commiss ioning plan Immedia te</p>	<p>Ian Forbes / Penny Mackinn on</p> <p>IT services for LCS changes</p> <p>Kim Evans</p> <p>Julia Bowman (Program me manager for implement ation)</p> <p>Alison Benjamin / Cea Francis</p>	Y
5.19	Appropriate training should be provided to staff on recording of data.	Medium	Training on the use of LCS will be undertaken once the system is fully operational. At the current time all staff undertake basic training on the use of LCS.	Plan for training to be in place by Novemb er 2016.	Training, Julia Bowman, Ian Forbes	Y

5.28	Foster Care agreements and forms should be updated to align with current legislation.	<b>Medium</b>	All foster carers were issued with a new agreement in 2011. A review will be undertaken to check on status of contracts issued. Where new contracts are required this will be issued.	By 30.04.2016  By 31.05.2016	Alison Benjamin/ Cea Francis	Y
5.29	Foster care staff and foster carers to be provided with training on where to access relevant information. Finance staff should also be aware of the policies thereby ensuring the authorisation levels are correct for all transactions.	<b>High</b>	All foster carers have been sent details of how to log onto the new foster carer webpages 'Yammer'. Yammer contains policies, procedures, and details regarding support events and training. This was launched on the 31.01.2016.  Childrens admin finance also have a web page where guidance for finance assistants and social care staff is stored. This will be reviewed urgently to identify any potential gaps	January 2016 Action completed 30.04.2016	Linda Johnson  Kim Evans	Y
Page 55 5.30	Foster carers should be encouraged to familiarise themselves with the policies and guidance available on the foster carers website.	<b>Medium</b>	All foster carers have been sent details of how to log onto the new foster carer webpages 'Yammer'. Yammer contains policies, procedures, and details regarding support events and training. This was launched on the 31.01.2016. Training including induction training also refers to policies and procedures.	January 2016 Action completed	Linda Johnson	Y

5.48	All training courses attended by foster carers should be recorded and monitored by the Training and Development Team to ensure that all foster carers remain in compliance with the Fostering Regulations and National Minimum Standards.	<b>High</b>	<p>Courses arranged by HR Training Delivery</p> <p>All courses organised by HR Training Delivery are listed on SAP. Delegate attendance is registered post event on receipt of the attendance list from the course trainer. Foster carers sit outside the 'normal' organisation structure, therefore their accounts are not unique (i.e. no personnel number/SAP number)</p> <p>Learner records are created from delegate attendance lists. Providing the learner has supplied the same details each time new entries will be collated and an event history established. It is possible that a second learner record may be created in the event a delegate was to enter slightly different information. It is possible when requesting data from SAP it may not be 100% exact. The information fields (i.e. specific courses) would need to be drawn down 100% and cross checked manually to identify if a duplicate record may have been made (i.e. Gary Bennett, Garry Bennett)</p> <p>To rectify this situation HR Training Delivery have been working with Training Administration and IMT to register foster carers with unique accounts (as per employee's) in order to ensure both records are more accurate and support direct booking access and cancellation functions (currently carried out manually) In brief due to county council partnerships within ORBIS all major IMT have been put on hold. We have escalated this and an option has been identified at a cost of £90k (approx) making such integration prohibitive at this time.</p> <p>Courses arranged by Fostering Service</p> <p>Records of courses arranged by either the Fostering Service or foster carer will be held on FC records.</p> <p>Action: HR Training Delivery and the Fostering Service has reviewed all routine courses organised by the service. In future all planned events will be registered as events on SAP with delegate attendance registered post event.</p> <p>Note: There maybe some training courses attended by foster carers that are not organised by HR Training Delivery and or the Fostering Service. In such circumstances, these records will be held on LCS and registered on foster carers annual review documentation.</p>	Cea Francis Gary Bennett	31.03.2016 (Measure - Revised framework, SAP entries)	Y
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5.49	A log of completed training and other exercises should be recorded and maintained in LCS. The service should have a clear policy in place to ensure that all foster carers are meeting the minimum training requirements as required by the National Minimum Standards. The consequences of not meeting the criteria should also be clearly set out.	High	<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>Please see above</p> <p>All foster carers are required to undertake training as per their relevant framework. These frameworks are currently under review</p> <p>Foster carers are required to undertake their relevant pre approval and other identified training with CPD training undertaken as part of ongoing development.</p> <p>Foster carers are required to maintain their skills level (linked to payment) each year. Each learning event (training, support group etc) is worth a credit.</p> <p>All foster carer training is recorded on the foster carer annual household review and on the i-drive. The foster carer records are up to date.</p> <p>The plan is that all foster carer training will be duplicated on the LCS system.</p> <p><b>Action</b></p> <p>Gary Bennett to supply a list of all foster carer training Request to be submitted to LCS board to update training profiles.</p> <p>Policy - All training records can be duplicated and entered onto LCS.</p> <p>HR Training Delivery and the Fostering Service will identify if courses and or programmes of learning require an eligibility criteria. This will ensure all foster carers will meet minimum requirements for training before undertaking other learning.</p> <p>Revised Training Frameworks will be issued along with refreshed guidance on credit attainment linked to skills level maintenance.</p>	31.03.20 16 30.04.20 16 31.05.20 16	Gary Bennett Julia Bowman  Service	Y
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5.50	Courses on 'health and hygiene' and 'positive care and control of children, including training in 'de-escalating problems and disputes' should be included on the Training and Development Framework to ensure compliance with Standards 3 and 6 of the National Minimum Standards.	<b>High</b>	<p>The website will be checked to ensure it accurately reflects the courses available.</p> <p><b>Background</b> The following courses are currently provisioned for on the Training and Development Frameworks: 'Health and Hygiene' Safeguarding 1 Safeguarding 2 Safer Caring Health and Safety CSE 'Positive care and control of children' and 'De-escalating problems and disputes' Bereavement loss and change Restorative Approaches Managing Behaviour part 1 Managing Behaviour part 2 Positive Touch and De-escalation Total Respect Know how to communicate effectively</p> <p><b>Actions</b> The current offer and course objectives are being reviewed. Course aims will be mapped against current legislation and policy along with (where required) current working methodology on trauma and attachment, social pedagogy and restorative practice. All areas are provisioned for as individual courses, however the above themes to be integrated into learning.</p>	<p>Frameworks will be reviewed by 25 February which may identify additional training requirements</p> <p>24 March and ongoing review</p>	Cea Francis Gary Bennett	Y
5.51	The Authority should prepare and approve a policy on acceptable measures of control, restraint and discipline of children placed with foster parents, to strengthen compliance with the Fostering Service Regulations.	<b>Medium</b>	The foster carers handbook contains guidance on this area. The service will produce a separate policy to cover practice in more detail. The policy will be aligned with new corporate guidance that is being produced but will be bespoke for foster carers.	31.07.2016.	Alison Benjamin	Y

5.59	DBS records should be managed centrally using LCS, with the service ensuring that all DBS checks have been completed for foster carers and members of the fostering household aged over 16.	<b>High</b>	<p>The service currently manages all the DBS checks via 2 spreadsheets one in the East and one in the West Team. Records of DBS checks will be checked and corrected as appropriate and evidence of checks will be provided to internal audit. It is accepted that the spreadsheet was not updated in a timely way on this occasion however subsequent to the audit the service has checked and updated the foster carers DBS records.</p> <p>A policy change has been put into place to bring the fostering service in line with National practice – Only Household members over the age of 18 will have a DBS. Handbook to be updated</p> <p>Household members over 18 other than the foster carers will be added to the spreadsheets and the DBS checks receive renewal dates etc..</p> <p>Arrangements to be discussed to include household members on LCS.</p>	29.02.2016 30.04.2016 30.04.2016 31.03.2016	Ian Forbes Alison Benjamin Alison Benjamin LCS development Board – adoption and fostering	Y
5.68	Supervision visits, annual reviews and unannounced visits should be managed centrally using appropriate software to enable the Supervising social workers time to manage and book visits to ensure that they are completed in a timely manner in accordance with statutory regulations.	<b>Medium</b>	<p>Current practice is that all these requirements other than supervision visits are managed through two spreadsheets one in each team. There are plans that this in future will all be managed through LCS.</p> <p>Supervision visits are of various length in line with statutory guidance and regulations. All supervisory visits will include the time of the next appointment.</p>	31.01.2017 31.03.2016	LCS development Board – adoption and fostering  Cea Francis/Alison Benjamin	Y

5.75	Information reported within the Childrens Services directorate should be reported consistently to all areas of the Council.	<b>Medium</b>	Complaints are monitored and held centrally by the Children's Rights Service. The Fostering Service has not always been sighted on compensation payments made when they are made at a later stage of the complaints process and do not directly involve decisions made in the Fostering Service. The Complaints Manager will be invited quarterly to the Fostering Services management meeting to support appropriate sharing of information	On going from 31.03.2016	Ian Forbes	Y
5.86	Records relating to any allegations made against a foster carer should be held on the foster carer's file. It is also recommended as good practice that either a central record is maintained or each team maintain a separate record of current allegations being investigated.	<b>Medium</b>	The Statutory Guidance in Volume 4 of the Care Planning Regulations sets out the requirements in this area. Surrey CC process is for LADO service to keep records This is compliant with the legislation but the service will develop its practice in this area. In addition, all allegations will be held on the foster carers file apart from those of a malicious nature. Currently recording will be made on the I drive and a case note. In the future allegations will be recorded on the allegations tab on LCS	31.03.2016 30.06.2016	Cea Francis/Alison Benjamin  LCS development Board – adoption and fostering	Y
5.87	The Authority should hold universally accessible records for all foster carers and children in care to ensure compliance with statutory guidelines.	<b>High</b>	Improvements to records storage are being addressed through the implementation of LCS for the fostering service – expected date of completion of January 2017.	01.04.2016	Ian Forbes	
5.107	A clear expenses policy should be implemented providing guidance to both foster care staff and foster carers on the expenses that can or cannot be claimed.	<b>Medium</b>	The service needs to be child focused and use appropriate discretion when it makes decisions and payments in this area. It is only emergency placements that deviate from that. The service will update its policy to ensure that there is a clearer audit trail on who and why decisions have been made. This will include the recording of decisions on LCS.	30.06.2016	Kim Evans/Ian Forbes/Angela Mann	Y



5.108	The finance team should ensure that all expenses are appropriately authorised.	High	This will be addressed and the service will ensure that all expenses are appropriately audited	01.04.20 16	Km Evans	
5.109	Controls should be reviewed on SRM and software that is fit for purpose should be implemented to manage foster carers' expense claims.	High	This is part of the ContrOCC project. It is part of the first phase as it was deemed urgent. The configuration has already been done on LCS UG and moved to testing on 18/02/16. Assuming successful, it will be in place from 01/04/16	01.04.20 16	Kim Evans	Y
5.110	Mileage claims should be paid to foster carers at the correct rate of 45 pence per mile to foster carers.	High	This area will be addressed to ensure full compliance. This will be supported through the new ContrOCC configuration where the 45p is preset and finance assistants will just enter the actual miles.	01.04.20 16	Kim Evans	Y
5.111	The service should consider a review of the guidance available on Payments in the Foster Carers Handbook in comparison to actual practice within the service to ensure consistency and prevent inequitable treatment of foster carers.	Medium	An annual meeting (Feb or Mar) between fostering management & finance takes place, where payments & practices are reviewed. Then any changes that arise from this can be posted on the foster carer website with details of their annual uplift. The service will review its payment and expenses policy to take into account the auditors comments.	30.06.20 15	Kim Evans, Angela Mann, Ian Forbes	Y

5.112	Insurance arrangements should be reviewed to ensure that claims are easily facilitated without resulting in undue loss to either the foster carer or the Authority. Foster carers should provide the service with confirmation they have a current insurance policy in place and have informed their insurers that they are approved foster carers. The Authority should ensure that appropriate insurance cover is in place in relation to their role as Corporate Parent thus facilitating any valid claim for damages.	<b>Medium</b>	Foster Carers current insurance arrangements are checked. However the service does need to clarify arrangements have been checked with their insurance company. The service will investigate this area further with input from the foster carers executive committee. There is appropriate cover in relation to the Corporate Policy and membership of Foster Talk.	30.06.2016	Alison Benjamin/ Cea Francis	Y
Page 62 5.121	The foster carers website should provide clear and consistent information about payment structures and payments due to foster carers. A link from each section of the website to the relevant section of the Foster Carers Handbook will enable access to relevant information in a more user friendly manner.	<b>Medium</b>	To be reviewed twice yearly at a meeting between fostering management & finance & foster carers website updated as a result.	30.06.2016 and on going	Ian Forbes/ Kim Evans	Y
5.122	Claims for damage to property caused by children in care should be closely scrutinised possibly by an independent person before any claims are approved.	<b>Medium</b>	All claims against the County policy are checked by Supervising Social Worker. Practice will be improved in this area with the supervising social worker being required to record their findings on LCS as a case note.	30.04.2016	Alison Benjamin/ Cea Francis	Y

5.128	The service should strengthen controls around payments to foster carers ensuring appropriate authorisation. The software used to manage the fostering payments should enable the system to be updated as soon as a placement is confirmed thus enabling the payments to be processed normally.	<b>High</b>	All exceptional payments are reported to the service by finance team. As previously noted, amendments are being requested to Controc and LCS.  The finance policy will be amended to include arrangements for ensuring appropriate authorisation. Decisions will then be included on LCS.	31.03.2016  30.06.2016	Kim Evans  Kim Evans/Ian Forbes/Angela Mann.	Y
5.129	Payments outside of the normal payments system should be discouraged and where necessary must be independently reviewed and authorised.	<b>High</b>	The finance policy will be amended to include arrangements for ensuring appropriate authorisation and will include the recording of decisions on LCS.	30.06.2016	Kim Evans/Ian Forbes/Angela Mann.	Y

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I agree the action above and accept overall accountability for their timely completion. I will inform Internal Audit if timescales are likely to be missed.

The action agreed is / is not satisfactory.

Head of Service:  
Date:

Supervising Auditor:  
Date:

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