

Cornerways Fostering Services Ltd

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Unique reference number | SC059535 |
| Inspection date | 25 July 2007 |
| Inspector | Kerry Fell |
| Type of Inspection | Key |

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Address | NAAFI Building Weston Drive The Village Caterham-on-the-Hill Surrey CR3 5XY |
| Telephone number | 01883 331580 |
| Email | fostering@cornerways.org |
| Registered person | Cornerways Fostering Services Ltd |
| Registered manager | Fiona Gail Darlington Black |
| Responsible individual | Vivianne Joan Spence |
| Date of last inspection | 26 June 2006 |

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Outstanding: | this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality |
| Good: | this aspect of the provision is strong |
| Satisfactory: | this aspect of the provision is sound |
| Inadequate: | this aspect of the provision is not good enough |

Service information

Brief description of the service

Cornerways Fostering Agency is an Independent Fostering Agency run by Cornerways Fostering Services Ltd. It is registered to provide care to looked after children and provides long-term, short term and respite placements, which includes emergency admissions. The agency has recently moved premises, and are now based near the centre of Caterham-on-the-hill. The new premises provide a spacious office and separate meeting area within the same building.

Summary

This is a proportionate key inspection for the inspection year 2007/2008. The inspection was announced and commenced on 23 July 2007 during which a full day site visit was undertaken, and a second site visit was undertaken on 25 July 2007. Questionnaires were sent to placing social workers, to the young people via their social workers and to foster carers. Records were reviewed and placements were case tracked during the inspection. Contact was made by telephone with foster carers for two young people. As there are no key standards under economic wellbeing this outcome was not judged on this occasion. Two requirements were made at the last inspection, as follows: National Minimum Standard for Fostering Services 9, that greater use of written risk assessments is required where issues relating to child protection are identified, and National Minimum Standard for Fostering Services 17, that reasons given by the applicants for withdrawing an application to register with another foster agency must be verified with the foster agency. Four recommendations were made at the last inspection, as follows: National Minimum Standard for Fostering Services 6, that the agency must ensure that records of car insurance are kept up-to-date. Brought forward from the Commission for Social Care Inspection, inspection in January 2006. National Minimum Standard for Fostering Services 3, that as part of the agency's quality review system all files should be inspected on a regular basis. National Minimum Standard for Fostering Services 12, that the fostering service must make more formal training available within the individual foster carer's training programme regarding any specific health need which does not fall within the fostering service's foster carer's training package. National Minimum Standard for Fostering Services 9, that the fostering service is advised to reconsider their child protection policy and amend this in the light of government changes and changes to Surrey County Council Child Protection Procedures. National Minimum Standard for Fostering Services 17, that the fostering service should consider using a format for presenting applications to panels, which would assist the authors of reports giving clear information and in panel members being always able to assess the detail of the report easily.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The agency continues to develop, and foster carers are aware of this describing the team as 'never standing still'. The agency takes action to meet requirements and recommendations made. Written risk assessments are held for all children and young people in placement, regardless of whether any risk is identified. Demonstrating that action is taken to identify and minimise these risks. Action is taken to verify why prospective foster carers may have withdrawn applications with other agencies. A quality assurance process has been introduced. The manager reviews all records held, and identifies areas for improvement or review. Updated safeguarding procedures are in place. The agency has developed a consent form that is sent to the placing

authority to ensure that the agency has a clear record agreeing to certain medical treatment. The agency is moving towards the use of Every Child Matters outcomes as the basis to all of their written documents. Review reports demonstrated clearly how these outcomes were being met, and include feedback from other professionals and the children.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Foster carers are satisfied with the level of information provided to them about the children and young people, which enables them to support the children and young people appropriately. The agency requests health information from placing authorities early in the assessment and matching process, and this information is available on the looked after children documentation available on file. Children and young people are registered with the local GP, dentist and optician, and annual health assessments are completed, where the young person is in agreement. Young people have requested that they no longer attend a specific annual assessment. These young people are supported to make appropriate decisions about their lives, but are reminded of the importance of being healthy. A consent form is now sent to the placing authority to ensure the agency has records of signed consent from the relevant person for medical treatment to be provided to the children and young people in placement. A formal quality assurance process is in place to monitor the health care that the children and young people receive between each review. The updated health record supports the foster carers to keep details of these appointments and any medical treatment. Specialist support is available either through referrals made to community teams such as children and adolescent mental health teams, or through services contracted from Cornerways, which includes access to psychological and psychiatric services. The agency has provided family therapy foster families in order to support the continuation of placements. Training is provided to foster carers in the administration of medication, where appropriate, by the community pharmacist. Training is also provided to foster carers in the management of sexual awareness. In order to support foster carers, a speaker from East Surrey Primary Care Trust gave a talk about promoting the health of looked after children at a foster carers group, other specialist talks given at foster carer meetings include sexual health and a dietician. Further guidance is provided to foster carers on health care and their role through training sessions and in the foster carer's handbook.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Safeguarding is a high priority for the agency and its foster carers. Both foster carers and the agency staff place gaining detailed information about the children and young people as essential in order to meet their needs and to protect them from harm. Action is taken in order to seek any missing information. The management and staffing of the agency continues to be experienced and highly qualified, with foster carers speaking highly of the support provided by the team. Where new members of staff are recruited, personnel files evidence that sound recruitment procedures are in place and at least two written references and an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau Check is available. The agency confirmed that all references are verified by telephone. A requirement was made at the last inspection for the greater use of risk assessments where a child protection risk was identified. The agency stated that they complete risk assessments regularly, however they had not previously written formal risk assessments where there was no risk identified. The agency has changed this practice and each child and young person has a risk assessment on file. Conversations with members of staff demonstrate that

any risks to the child and young person are taken into account during the matching stage. The agency's social workers confirmed that it was essential for children and young people to have their own bedrooms, and that this is checked during the assessment process. Health and safety is promoted through the checks undertaken as part of the assessment process. These are regularly reviewed and at least annually. Health and safety training is provided to potential foster carers before they attend panel for approval. The agency holds copies of foster carers insurance and MOT certificates. A recommendation was made at the last two inspections with regard to the agency keeping this information up to date. The agency endeavoured to do this. The manager recognised from their quality assurance and file checks that this had not been fully achieved, however, action had been taken to resolve this. Therefore no further recommendation will be made. The safeguarding children procedures have been updated as recommended at the last inspection. The agency provides training in safeguarding that foster carers put into practice. Specific training is available in supporting children and young people who have been abused, and foster carers confirmed that if they had concerns or required additional support and information they could turn to the agency staff for assistance. Foster carers were confident about how to respond to concerns or allegations and demonstrated positive attitudes towards working with children and young people who may have been abused. Foster carers attend specialist training in understanding and influencing challenging behaviour. Foster carer's handbooks promote appropriate behaviour management, and provide guidance on acceptable and unacceptable sanctions. Training in physical intervention is available to foster carers who require it. Policies and procedures are in place with regard to the absence of a child or young person, and countering bullying are available. A fostering panel meeting was not attended during this inspection. Minutes of the last two fostering panel demonstrate that the panel continues to be professional and focused about the applications being placed before them. Panel minutes reflected a robust review and assessment of applications.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The agency values diversity and promotes the specific needs of each young person. Foster carers spoke, without prompting, of how they receive training in diversity. The way that foster carers can meet the diverse needs of children and young people is discussed and reported upon during the assessment stage. Review records detail actions taken by foster carers to ensure that these needs are met. Foster carers, with support from the agency, are proactive in requesting specialist support services and assessments to meet the needs of children and young people with disabilities. Feedback from questionnaires completed by children and young people describe how they are supported to take part in after school activities, play schemes, hobbies, holidays and homework. These activities include learning to drive, attending social groups such as scouts and youth clubs, and attending drama workshops. The promotion of education is a strong focus for the agency and the foster carers. The agency is assigning a member of staff to take on the promotion of this outcome as a part of their role; and foster carers spoke enthusiastically about the academic achievements of the children and young people. Young people have been predicted A* grades at GCSE and have won awards. Other young people have gained places at college to continue their studies. Foster carers support the children and young people to make decisions about their lives, and schooling. Young people are supported to move schools, so that their needs are better met. Foster carers where appropriate, attend personal education plan meetings, parents evenings and reviews. Some foster carers have also supported young people through the criminal justice service, attending court with the young people, and supporting them to put strategies in place in order to reduce unwanted or anti-social behaviour that continues to

get them into trouble. Foster carers also support the children and young people by working within the schools and colleges or assisting at social groups. A quote in a questionnaire received for one annual review praised the commitment and enthusiasm of the foster carers, and called them 'excellent carers'. These sentiments are repeated by the children and young people in placement.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Foster carers promote contact arrangements where appropriate, and raise concerns where contact is not successful or is detrimental to the children and young people. Arrangements for contact are discussed at the time of placement and as an ongoing focus at review meetings. Support is put in place by the agency to ensure that contact meetings are successful. A member of staff is provided at reviews to translate for birth parents, for whom English is not a first language. The agency also uses the services of a foster carer who is a qualified social worker to act as a supervisor at contact meetings. An updated children's guide is available that advises the children and young people of how to raise concerns. Foster carers and the agency describe children and young people's views as being paramount in their care. Both carers and members of staff raise concerns about times when placing authorities have not consulted the children and young people appropriately. The agency also has access to Voice for the Child in Care, that children and young people can access as they wish. Children and young people in placement are supported to make their views known during the foster carers' annual review, and questionnaires are sent to their social workers. Their responses are taken into account by the fostering panel, and are used by the agency to develop their services.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The updated statement of aims and objectives is a detailed document that fully describes the service provided by the agency. It contains all of the information detailed within the National Minimum Standards for fostering agencies. Foster carers speak highly about the support they receive from the agency, saying that they are a 'team that never stand still', and that they provide excellent support and training. Foster carers give feedback about the support that they have received from the agency and how their year has been, at each annual review. This forms part of the agencies quality assurance processes and enables them to develop the service. Additional support is provided through membership to Fostertalk provided by the agency. The agency are also members of the Fostering Network. Staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of the agency, and although busy the social work staff are happy with the workload. Foster carers confirmed that they receive regular supervisory visits and that a member of the agency team is always available to talk to them by telephone. There is a 24 hour duty system in place that foster carers are confident about using. Where there are absences arrangements are made by the agency to ensure that appropriate support and social work cover is available to support the foster carers. Members of staff and advisors are supported to attend a range of specialist courses. Assessments and reviews of foster carers are undertaken by the social work staff employed by the agency. The manager and the panel act as a quality assurance system to ensure that these continue to be thorough and effective. The manager confirmed that action

is taken to verify why applications are withdrawn from other agencies by prospective foster carers, as was required at the last inspection. None of the assessments viewed during the inspection included any withdrawn applications to other agencies. The agency uses the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Form F as the assessment report that they submit to the fostering panel. Reports seen are detailed and easy to use. Review reports are now completed against the five Every Child Matters outcomes, with an additional section on management. These are also detailed easy to use documents and evidence not only how the agency and the foster carers are meeting the foster child's needs, but also how other professionals and the children feel that these are being met. The manager takes an active role in a range of network meetings, and they receive professional supervision from a manager of another fostering agency. The manager provides professional supervision to the social work staff employed by the agency, to ensure that the agency is using current best practice. Training records are available for all foster carers and these are submitted as part of the annual review. Foster carers are keen to attend all training wherever possible. Where any concerns are identified about training needs or the failure to attend training this is raised as a recommendation by the fostering panel at foster carers' reviews or approval hearings. The assessment process continues to be thorough and the Form F reports are detailed. Procedures are available to direct staff how to undertake the assessment process, and a guide is available for prospective foster carers. The agency produces a regular foster carer's newsletter that provides up to date information about courses, meetings, and interesting discussion points that have been raised during support group meetings, keeping foster carers well informed. The agency maintains good records for both the children and young people and the foster carers. Files are in good order, and are monitored by the manager. Policies are available with regard to case recording, and foster carers are aware of the agency's requirements with regard to the records that are to be held within their home. Daily logs are held by foster carers and records of supervision with foster carers evidence that these are monitored by the supervising social worker. Action has been taken to work with foster carers on record keeping to ensure consistency of detail and quality. Records are being written in a format that reflects the Every Child Matters Outcomes, as a result they demonstrate clearly how these are being identified and met for each child and young person. The new formats observed are detailed and easy to use, and well thought out.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Fostering Services Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

| Standard | Action | Due date |
|----------|--------|----------|
|----------|--------|----------|

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for independent fostering agency

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service promotes the health and development of children (NMS 12)

Ofsted considers 12 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable (NMS 3)
- the fostering service provides suitable foster carers (NMS 6)
- the service matches children to carers appropriately (NMS 8)
- the fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect (NMS 9)
- the people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people (NMS 15)
- fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively (NMS 30)

Ofsted considers 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service values diversity (NMS 7)
- the fostering service promotes educational achievement (NMS 13)
- when foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child (NMS 31)

Ofsted considers 7, 13 and 31 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person (NMS 10)
- the fostering service promotes consultation (NMS 11)

Ofsted considers 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service prepares young people for adulthood (NMS 14)
- the fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified (NMS 29)

Ofsted considers none of the above to be key standards to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- there is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives (NMS 1)
- the fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience (NMS 2)
- the fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified (NMS 4)

Annex A

- the fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently (NMS 5)
- staff are organised and managed effectively (NMS 16)
- the fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff (NMS 17)
- the fostering service is a fair and competent employer (NMS 18)
- there is a good quality training programme (NMS 19)
- all staff are properly accountable and supported (NMS 20)
- the fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers (NMS 21)
- foster carers are provided with supervision and support (NMS 22)
- foster carers are appropriately trained (NMS 23)
- case records for children are comprehensive (NMS 24)
- the administrative records are maintained as required (NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose (NMS 26)
- the fostering service is financially viable (NMS 27)
- the fostering service has robust financial processes (NMS 28)
- local authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers (NMS 32)

Ofsted considers 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.