



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Sussex Fostering & Childrens Services**

**Cophall Farmhouse  
Bay Tree Lane  
Polegate  
East Sussex  
BN26 6QL**

*Lead Inspector*  
**Paul Taylor**

*Announced Inspection*  
**31st October 2005      10:00**

The Commission for Social Care Inspection aims to:

- Put the people who use social care first
- Improve services and stamp out bad practice
- Be an expert voice on social care
- Practise what we preach in our own organisation

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This is a report of an inspection to assess whether services are meeting the needs of people who use them. The legal basis for conducting inspections is the Care Standards Act 2000 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for this establishment are those for *Fostering Services*. They can be found at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk) or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

*Every Child Matters*, outlined the government's vision for children's services and formed the basis of the Children Act 2004. It provides a framework for inspection so that children's services should be judged on their contribution to the outcomes considered essential to wellbeing in childhood and later life. Those outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a contribution; and
- Achieving economic wellbeing.

In response, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has re-ordered the national minimum standards for children's services under the five outcomes, for reporting purposes. A further section has been created under 'Management' to cover those issues that will potentially impact on all the outcomes above.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

<b>Name of service</b>	Sussex Fostering & Childrens Services
<b>Address</b>	Cophall Farmhouse Bay Tree Lane Polegate East Sussex BN26 6QL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01323 733887
<b>Fax number</b>	
<b>Email address</b>	sfcs_polegate@yahoo.co.uk
<b>Provider Web address</b>	
<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Sussex Fostering & Children's Services Limited
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Mrs Elfriede Benjamin
<b>Type of registration</b>	Fostering Agencies
<b>No. of places registered (if applicable)</b>	0
<b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>	

# **SERVICE INFORMATION**

## **Conditions of registration:**

1. That foster placements be provided for children of both sexes between the ages of 0 - 18 years

**Date of last inspection** 19 July 2004.

## **Brief Description of the Service:**

Sussex Fostering and Children's Services is an independent fostering agency which operates from Cophall Farmhouse on the outskirts of Polegate, East Sussex. The agency was previously known as Banya Eastbourne and was a part of a larger agency which was based in London. Sussex Fostering and Children's Services became independent in 2005 and relocated the office to Cophall Farm. The service is small, it had 13 approved sets of carers during this inspection. The service shares a fostering panel with the Banya Agency based in London.

# SUMMARY

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

Sussex Fostering and Children's Services is a small independent fostering agency that provides very good support to foster carers and young people placed with foster carers. The agency has moved to new premises and changed its name in the last year. The manager is looking to expand the skills and training of the carers so that a greater diversity of placements can be offered. There are no requirements as a result of this inspection and there are only two recommendations.

## **What the service does well:**

Provides good support to carers.

The safety and welfare of children is seen as paramount.

Children's health needs are well met.

Holiday activities are offered to young people in placement.

The staff are well supported and work well as a team.

The small size of the service means that all the children's needs are known to all of the staff.

There is good access to play therapy.

Training is designed to meet individual needs.

There is good financial management.

## **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The new premises are excellent.

Continuous development of carers skills so that more diverse placements can be offered.

Policies and procedures have been updated.

### **What they could do better:**

The system for monitoring records should be more consistently applied.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk) or by contacting your local CSCI office.

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

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# Being Healthy

## **The intended outcomes for these Standards are:**

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

**The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):** 12.

Young people's health needs are conscientiously monitored and expert advice is sought where necessary. The agency has a qualified play therapist on its staff and there is a dedicated therapy room on the premises. The outcome for young people with regards to this standard is good.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Records maintained by both the agency and foster carers were examined. These confirmed that all young people in placement have their health needs monitored and met. All young people in placement are registered with a G.P. and dentist. Additionally there was written evidence of young people having access to specialist services such as psychiatry and play therapy where this was needed.

## 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)

**The Commission considers Standards 3, 6, 8, 9, and 15 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

### **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):** 3,6,9,and 15.

The manager and responsible person are well qualified and experienced. Feedback from staff and carers was that they are approachable. The staff who work for the service are also very well experienced and offer very good support to carers. One carer said that 'everyone knows the children, so the office is like a family centre.' There was very good feedback about the approachability of the staff in the office and level of support available if it is needed.

The quality of assessments was good and involved the opinions of placing authorities and birth parents. All young people in placement were appropriately placed. The agency is seeking to expand carers' skills and training so that more diverse referrals can be accepted.

There has been recent child protection training. All carers who met with the Inspectors were aware of their obligations with regards to this issue. There is good liaison with other agencies such as schools and placing local authorities. One of the staff files needs to have the references put in place.

### **EVIDENCE:**

The manager and responsible person are experienced and well qualified. One is a qualified play therapist and the manager has a social work qualification. Additionally, both are undertaking N.V.Q. 4 in Management. They intend to finish this by the end of March 2006.

Samples of assessments were seen of both new foster carers and those in the process of being approved for permanent placements. There were records of

regular contact between carers and supervising social workers and all the homes had been assessed as far as health and safety matters were concerned. All the young people's placements had support in matters of cultural issues where this was an identified need. Placements had been appropriately matched and there had been referrals not accepted because no match had been found. There had been a number of referrals that had been particularly complex and the managers have identified that the training of the carers needs to be extended if some of the more diverse referrals are to be accepted. There had been recent child protection training using an external trainer for the carers and staff. Young people in placement are given the contact telephone numbers of various agencies in their handbooks. There was written evidence of liaison between Sussex Fostering and Children's Services and other agencies such as schools and placing authorities. The agency has a very experienced and qualified staff in key positions such as supervising social workers and senior practitioner. The support staff are offered regular training and supervision. There are team days and regular team meetings which are minuted. Feedback from carers was very good with regards to the level of support and availability of staff. One staff file was examined; this was missing two references although there was a written record that these had been requested. The manager could remember that the references had been received and that they had been satisfactory. The Inspector recommends that the references are found and filed in the staff file.

# 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)

**The Commission considers Standards 7, 13, and 31 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):**

7 and 13.

The small size of the service means that issues of diversity can be addressed and monitored closely. The skills of the staff who work in the agency ensure that support, advice and information is available when it is needed.

The support given to carers and young people in ensuring that school is a valued and positive part of a child's life is a strength of the service. There were examples of very good communication between the agency, carers and schools. The manager and staff take care to ensure that any academic achievements are acknowledged with the children.

## **EVIDENCE:**

There were written records of meetings and liaison between carers and supervising social workers and these meetings covered areas such as diversity and how the carers can be aware of differing needs and backgrounds of young people in placement. As already mentioned in this report, the agency is exploring how more diverse placements can be accommodated by the service and how carers' skills and knowledge can be extended.

There was evidence seen of examples of carers, supervising social workers and placing authority social workers liaising with schools. There was also an example of a carer who has gone into school with her foster child to provide on the spot support for the child in the classroom.

# **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)

## **The Commission considers Standards 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s): 10 and 11.**

There was a very good example seen of a social worker organising a particularly complex series of contact visits on behalf of a placing authority. The Inspectors commend the commitment shown by the social worker responsible. Records seen of supervised contact visits were thorough. There is a pleasant and well-equipped contact venue on the agency premises.

## **EVIDENCE:**

There were examples seen of contact visits being organised by supervising social workers. There were records of supervised visits and guidance in place on how the visits should be monitored. There is also a dedicated room at the agency office for contact visits.

All young people have an information pack given to them when they are first placed with their carers. The information pack gives them advice on who they can talk to about any issues. Children in placement are regularly seen during supervisory visits and when they go to the agency office for appointments such as contact visits or therapy sessions. During school holidays there are weekly activities organised by the agency and these are seen as a good opportunity to seek young people's views on an informal basis. One young person in placement said 'It's our foster agency.'

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

## **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)

**The Commission considers Standards 29 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

## **JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):**

14 and 29.

There was a very good example in place of the support and planning given to a young person who was due to leave care. Foster carers are paid promptly and there is clear guidance in place for carers with regards to expenses.

## **EVIDENCE:**

One Inspector met with carers who had one young person in placement who was preparing to leave care. Planning and liaison in that particular case had been thorough involving both the placing and education authorities and a clear plan was in place.

There was unanimous feedback to the Inspectors from carers that they are paid on time. There was a policy and guidance in place regarding what expenses can be claimed and there was further clarification in Foster Forum minutes and team meeting minutes about what expenses can be claimed and in which circumstances.

# Management

## **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)
- 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)

**The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.**

**JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):**  
17,20,21,24 and 26.

There are ample members of staff to ensure that support is available to foster carers. The staff who make up the staff team are well qualified and experienced and receive regular support, training and supervision. There was very good feedback regarding the support offered to carers and the approachability of the staff team at Sussex Fostering and Children's Services. The service offers a variety of training to carers and is exploring further training for carers so that more diverse placements can be offered. There was thorough recording of supervisory visits to carers by social workers. Case

records were thorough. The Inspector recommends that the system in place for monitoring records is more consistently applied. The premises at Cophall Farm are excellent and offer good quality accommodation in very pleasant surroundings.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The small size of the service means that there are ample staff to support foster carers. The social work staff are experienced and qualified and the support staff are in receipt of regular training. Records of supervision were examined and these showed that supervision is regularly carried out and the records are comprehensive. There was positive verbal feedback from members of staff about the quality of communication and teamwork. There was a record of training offered to carers. Records of supervisory visits were examined. There was very positive feedback given to the Inspectors about the quality of support offered to carers and the friendly approach of everyone that works for Sussex Fostering and Children's Services. Support had been available when needed out of hours. The service has an out of hours 'on call' rota for senior members of staff to be available to carers in emergencies. The foster carers forum was due to restart in November 2005 and the carers meet on an informal basis for mutual support away from the premises. There was written evidence of support offered to carers in their dealings with other agencies such as placing and education authorities. All carers who met with the Inspectors reported that they had been sufficiently supported when they had to attend fostering panels. There were records of respite care being arranged where it had been necessary.

Case records were examined and these were thorough and contained a lot of information. There was system in place whereby the regularity of the records being checked and endorsed by senior members of staff could be recorded. This system had not been consistently used.

Cophall Farm is a large detached property set in large grounds. The house was refurbished when Sussex Fostering and Children's Services purchased the property. There are set areas for contact visits, therapy, meetings, offices and staff room. The interior was clean and comfortably furnished.



# SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

**4** Standard Exceeded (Commendable)      **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)  
**2** Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls)      **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>12</b>	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>3</b>	3
<b>6</b>	3
<b>8</b>	3
<b>9</b>	3
<b>15</b>	3
<b>30</b>	X

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>7</b>	3
<b>13</b>	4
<b>31</b>	X

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>10</b>	4
<b>11</b>	4

ACHIEVING ECONOMIC WELLBEING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>14</b>	3
<b>29</b>	3

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>1</b>	X
<b>2</b>	X
<b>4</b>	X
<b>5</b>	X
<b>16</b>	x
<b>17</b>	3
<b>18</b>	X
<b>19</b>	X
<b>20</b>	3
<b>21</b>	4
<b>22</b>	X
<b>23</b>	X
<b>24</b>	3
<b>25</b>	X
<b>26</b>	4
<b>27</b>	X
<b>28</b>	X
<b>32</b>	x

no

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action

### RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Registered Provider/s to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1	FA 24	That the system for monitoring records is more consistently used.
2	FA 15	That the references for the member of staff's file that was examined, are found and put in place.

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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