



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Barnardo`s Apex Project**

**128 London Road  
Southborough  
Tunbridge Wells  
Kent  
TN4 0PL**

*Lead Inspector*  
Sophie Wood

*Announced Inspection*  
9th January 2007      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

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
Further copies from	0870 240 7535 (telephone order line)
Copyright	This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI
Internet address	<a href="http://www.csci.org.uk">www.csci.org.uk</a>

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

This report is a public document. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the prior permission of the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

# SERVICE INFORMATION

<b>Name of service</b>	Barnardo`s Apex Project
<b>Address</b>	128 London Road Southborough Tunbridge Wells Kent TN4 0PL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 510650
<b>Fax number</b>	
<b>Email address</b>	apex.project@barnardos.org.uk
<b>Provider Web address</b>	www.barnardos.org.uk
<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Barnardo`s London, East Anglia & South East Region
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Mr Robert Ivan Sharpe
<b>Type of registration</b>	Fostering Agencies

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

**Date of last inspection**      28th November 2005

## Brief Description of the Service:

The 'Apex Project', operated through the wider charitable organisation, Barnardos, is registered with the Commission as an independent fostering agency, situated in Southborough, Tunbridge Wells.

According to its statement of purpose, the agency aims to work in a planned and proactive way, therefore, the agency generally does not accept emergency referrals.

'We arrange introductions carefully....and children will only be placed if there is a vacancy with foster carers who it is felt can meet the child's needs'.

The agency encourages and funds post - qualifying courses for its staff and is committed to providing NVQ training for Carers.

The agency accommodates children with disabilities, sibling groups and has a service level agreement with Kent County Council to provide placements for asylum – seeking youngsters.

At the time of this visit, 30 foster carer families were working for the agency and 19 children and young people were in placement.

Fees charged to placing authorities range from £713.00 - £765.65 per week.

# SUMMARY

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

Inspectors Sophie Wood and Lucy Ansell commenced with this inspection on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2007 and spent three days with the agency.

Key personnel, including the registered manager, social workers and administrative staff were interviewed.

Three foster carer families were visited in their own homes and a case tracking exercise was undertaken for each of these and the children / young people placed with them.

Other pertinent documentation was read and additional material, including the manager's pre – inspection documentation helped to formulate the judgements made within the main body of this report.

An excellent response was received from the questionnaires received from foster carers, children / young people and placing authorities.

The agency has continued to provide a high level of service to its carers and children / young people. Many placements are proving to become long – term and placing authorities gave commendable feedback with regards the quality of care being delivered by the social work team and foster carers.

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

An overall strength of the agency is based within its management structure. Led by an experienced and motivated registered manager, an inclusive style of management ensures the staff team feels valued and very much involved with the service delivery. This approach is then delivered to the foster carers, who also feel consulted and valued.

As a relatively small agency, the staff have a good understanding of the support needs of the foster carers and those placed with them. Carers are particularly positive about contacting the office for support, as they know everyone working there.

Careful matching processes ensure that placements are only made based upon sound assessments. The agency very rarely engages with emergency placements.

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

The two requirements made from the previous inspection have been fully implemented.

These related to the keeping of necessary staff personnel information within the branch office, as opposed to the main head office and conducting a review of the contents of the foster care agreement.

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

Specific areas of record – keeping need to be reviewed, such as health records for children / young people and panel meeting documentation.

A variable response from foster carers indicates that a review of training provision would be timely and foster carers should be given support to personalise the current 'generic' safe care policy / procedure of the organisation.

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. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

## **CONTENTS**

Being Healthy

Staying Safe

Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection



# Being Healthy

## The intended outcome for this Standard is:

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

## The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected.

### JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

Quality in this outcome area is good.

Foster carers actively promote the health and development of those in their care, however; the absence of clear recording systems does not do the actual practice justice.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

### EVIDENCE:

As was found at the last inspection, those foster carers interviewed were explicitly clear about their role and responsibility to actively and effectively promote the health and development of those in their care.

Some very good examples were given with regards attending health care appointments, providing teenagers with appropriate advice and guidance and providing a healthy balanced diet.

It was further demonstrated through case – tracking that review meeting minutes showed clear evidence of foster carers providing good support in this area and no concerns were expressed by placing authorities.

It was therefore disappointing to find that the two previous recommendations, to provide additional health – related training and to improve upon the health records kept, had not been implemented.

Although the actual outcomes for children and young people remain good, the written evidence is not in place to fully support this, and therefore, these two previous recommendations have now been made as requirements.

# 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, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.**

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

3, 6, 8, 9, 15, 30.

Quality in this outcome area is good.

The service continues to be run by a competent group of suitably qualified professionals and foster carers operate within a framework of clear policies and procedures, which protect vulnerable young people.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The staffing complement of the agency has altered in terms of the loss of one social worker. Other than this, all other personnel remain unchanged and continue to be a long – standing, stable staff group. They each possess the qualifications and experience commensurate with their roles and functions. This was again demonstrated through the inspection of staff personnel files and training records.

Prospective foster carers continue to be subject to thorough assessment processes, which are followed by detailed annual reviews. One area for improvement lies with the writing and implementation of clear and explicit 'safe care' policies. Although guidance is given to foster carers, it would be of

particular benefit for them to use the generic guidance in writing their own, with explicit reference towards their own individual households and circumstances.

Those foster carers interviewed demonstrated a clear understanding of child protection procedures and protocols and agency records supported that all allegations of abuse and neglect are thoroughly investigated.

The length and purpose of placements are clearly communicated to all parties and this results in successful placements being made. Additional evidence further supported that great emphasis is placed upon matching processes and a high number of referrals are routinely 'rejected' if the agency feels it does not have the carers with the 'right' skills to meet the needs of the young person referred, even if it does have vacancies.

A detailed recruitment policy and procedure is in place and this describes the selection processes, including references and other checks, which have to be obtained before a candidate can take up their post. Such procedures also apply to prospective Panel members. The previous requirement made to review the personnel information, in respect of all persons working for the agency, has been fully implemented.

The scrutiny of panel records indicated that the panel continues to operate according to requirements. An experienced independent chairperson is supported by a group of individuals who possess sound and relevant qualifications and experience in various childcare settings. Membership remains stable, the written guidance and protocols in place remain clear and the group has access to medical expertise when this is needed.

# 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.**

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

Quality in this outcome area is excellent.

The children are confident that the agency clearly values diversity among its carers and staff. The young people benefit from a service that promotes educational achievement.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Sound and robust policies and procedures remain in place with regards equal opportunities and valuing diversity. This is demonstrated in practice through the agency's recruitment of foster carers. For a small agency, the cultural and religious diversity among the carers is excellent and this leads directly to support the existence of the service level agreement with Kent County Council in providing well – matched placements for asylum – seeking youngsters. The feedback received from the asylum team was particularly positive about the social worker currently allocated by the agency to deal with such cases; her practice was deemed to be commendable.

Case tracking found excellent sources of evidence to show how all youngsters are being supported to achieve at school / college. At the time of this visit, every child / young person was attending mainstream school or college and

foster carers were explicitly aware of their own roles and responsibilities in this area.

The previous recommendation to improve upon the written information available to foster carers, with regards their own practice and financial responsibilities had been fully implemented.

# **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.**

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

Quality in this outcome area is good.

The children and young people benefit from an agency that promotes contact arrangements.

Consultation processes ensure the views of all stakeholders are listened to.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Clear evidence was seen to demonstrate that children and young people are encouraged to maintain contact with their families and friends. Contact arrangements that had been agreed upon for each individual were included in placement plans. Written guidance and training as part of the choosing to foster course was available for foster carers, covering matters in relation to their role in supporting children to maintain and develop constructive contact with their families and others.

The computer system "Live link" showed clear contact arrangements with all contact that is and isn't permitted, how this is arranged and detail of the actual means of contact. Foster carers support contact in a variety of ways, including telephone calls, letter writing and arranging transport for 'face to face' contact. At this time there was no supervised contact needed for any of the children / young people placed with foster carers. The agency support staff maintain weekly phone contact with the children's social workers and keep them updated on the outcome of all contacts.

The views and opinions of foster carers are routinely sought through the annual review process, support groups, training sessions and supervision visits. The views of foster carers' birth children are also sought to ensure their views are expressed and recorded. This year a fun - day out on a steam train, followed by a day doing artwork of this, then an official showing of the work was held for all birth children to attend. As part of the consultation process and securing the young peoples' views, the agency regularly sends letters and vouchers if achievement is outstanding, to celebrate the young peoples' achievements. There are regular young peoples' fun - days with consultation in the morning and BBQ and fun in the afternoon for all the family. Foster carers and young people also confirmed that supervision visits are routinely conducted when the young people are at home, in order for the supervising social worker to speak with them directly and in private.

# 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)

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

Quality in this outcome area is **(excellent, good, adequate or poor)**

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

**EVIDENCE:**



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

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

1, 2, 16, 17, 19, 21, 24, 25, 27.

Quality in this outcome area is good.

The agency provides clear documentation for all interested parties.

Foster carers and children / young people benefit from the leadership and work practices of a qualified, motivated team of professionals.

Financial viability offers ongoing security to all concerned.

Some administrative records would benefit from being reviewed and the training programme needs to be further developed.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Written information for all stakeholders is concise, well – written and clear. All children / young people receive their introductory information in a format tailored to suit their own individual needs.

The registered manager is a competent, skilled individual who further benefits through having a dedicated experienced staff team, who are fully able to fulfil their own roles and responsibilities. Lines of delegated responsibilities are clear, as are all management reporting systems.

Sound monitoring processes, operated by the wider organisation ensure good quality assurance mechanisms remain in place and this factor positively impacts upon continued financial viability.

As a charitable organisation, Barnardos continues to use all of its own resources effectively and this includes the deployment of staff. The manager and other members of the team have been undertaking additional work for the wider organisation, however; no negative impact upon service delivery of the fostering service was noted as a result. In fact, those staff members interviewed said they found the additional tasks rewarding and very helpful in terms of their own development needs.

A variable response was received from foster carers with regards the training provision. Whilst some spoke very positively, others were requesting a broader range of topics; this 'mixed' view was further underpinned through the perusal of the training programme. It is recommended this disparity of feedback be further explored by the agency and a requirement has been made to ensure training regarding health matters be further developed.

Through interviewing social workers and foster carers, it was evident that the working partnership and task in hand was fully understood by all parties.

Foster carers felt well – supported and appreciated the guidance and advice

they received. Typed notes of support visits demonstrated that issues / concerns / placement needs and training requirements were being routinely discussed, however; it is recommended that greater emphasis be placed upon monitoring the quality and content of the written records being maintained by foster carers as the quality and content of these was variable. (As has already been suggested, additional guidance regarding the recording of health matters would be particularly beneficial to foster carers).

The improvement of this information would further ensure the better quality of the case records for children / young people held at the office.

Administrative records such as complaints logs, notifications, accidents, etc, were in good order. They were clear, securely held and gave the detail needed. The only difficulty experienced was with regards the written information pertaining to the panel, in that it was difficult to follow and case track specific information, given the current way in which it is held.

# 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>	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>7</b>	4
<b>13</b>	4
<b>31</b>	N/A

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>10</b>	3
<b>11</b>	3

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

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

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
1.	FS12	15	The fostering service provider shall promote the health and development of children placed with foster placements. This requirement is made within the context of needing to improve upon the written records held and to further develop the agency training programme in this area. An action plan, detailing how and when such improvements will be made is to be received by the Commission by the date shown opposite.	08/03/07

### 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.	FS9	It is recommended that the generic guidance used to write and implement 'safe care' policies, be reviewed and

		expanded upon, in that every fostering household is enabled to write and implement their own. Further, this document should be scrutinised at each carer annual review.
2.	FS19	It is strongly recommended that all foster carers be consulted with regards their views upon the current training programme and that subsequent findings be appropriately acted upon.
3.	FS21	It is recommended that specific focus be placed upon the monitoring of records being maintained by foster carers, by the supporting social worker, during support visits.
4.	FS25	It is recommended that the current system in place with regards the storage of records pertaining to panel meetings be reviewed, in order for these to be held in a way that enables case – tracking and cross – referencing.

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

Maidstone Local Office

The Oast

Hermitage Court

Hermitage Lane

Maidstone

ME16 9NT

National Enquiry Line

Telephone: 0845 015 0120 or 0191 233 3323

Textphone: 0845 015 2255 or 0191 233 3588

Email: [enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk)

Web: [www.csci.org.uk](http://www.csci.org.uk)

© This report is copyright Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and may only be used in its entirety. Extracts may not be used or reproduced without the express permission of CSCI