



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

Fostering Services

Barnardo`s Brighton & Hove Link Plus

Brighton & Hove Link Plus

55 Drove Road

Portslade

East Sussex

BN41 2PA

14th & 17th January 2005

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Launched in April 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) is the single inspectorate for social care in England.

The Commission combines the work formerly done by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI), the SSI/Audit Commission Joint Review Team and the National Care Standards Commission.

The role of CSCI is to:

- Promote improvement in social care
- Inspect all social care - for adults and children - in the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Publish annual reports to Parliament on the performance of social care and on the state of the social care market
- Inspect and assess 'Value for Money' of council social services
- Hold performance statistics on social care
- Publish the 'star ratings' for council social services
- Register and inspect services against national standards
- Host the Children's Rights Director role.

Inspection Methods & Findings

SECTION B of this report summarises key findings and evidence from this inspection. The following 4-point scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The 4-point scale ranges from:

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

'O' or blank in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

'9' in the 'Standard met?' box denotes standard not applicable.

'X' is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

FOSTERING SERVICE INFORMATION

Local Authority Fostering Service?

NO

Name of Authority

Address

Local Authority Manager

Tel No:

Address

Fax No:

Email Address

Registered Fostering Agency (IFA)

YES

Name of Agency

Barnardo`s Brighton & Hove Link Plus

Tel No

01273 295179

Address

Brighton & Hove Link Plus, 55 Drove Road, Portslade,
East Sussex, BN41 2PA

Fax No

Email Address

Registered Number of IFA

H100000881

Name of Registered Provider

Barnardo`s

Name of Registered Manager (if applicable)

Mrs Georgina Ann Armstrong

Date of first registration

2nd February 2004

Date of latest registration certificate

29th September 2004

Registration Conditions Apply ?

NO

Date of last inspection

8&9/09
2003

Date of Inspection Visit		14th January 2005	ID Code
Time of Inspection Visit		10:00 am	
Name of Inspector	1	Lindy Latreille	143620
Name of Inspector	2	Camilla Wood	078390
Name of Inspector	3		
Name of Inspector	4		
Name of Lay Assessor (if applicable) Lay assessors are members of the public independent of the CSCI. They accompany inspectors on some inspections and bring a different perspective to the inspection process.			
Name of Specialist (e.g. Interpreter/Signer) (if applicable)			
Name of Establishment Representative at the time of inspection		Gina Armstrong Registered Manager	

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(National Minimum Standards For Fostering Services)

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INTRODUCTION TO REPORT AND INSPECTION

Independent and local authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989 as amended.

This document summarises the inspection findings of the CSCI in respect of Barnardo's Brighton & Hove Link Plus. The inspection findings relate to the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services published by the Secretary of State under sections 23 and 49 of the Care Standards Act 2000, for independent and local authority fostering services respectively.

The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation, with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards. The National Minimum standards will form the basis for judgements by the CSCI in relation to independent fostering agencies regarding registration, the imposition and variation of registration conditions and any enforcement action, and in relation to local authority fostering services regarding notices to the local authority and reports to the Secretary of State under section 47 of the Care Standards Act 2000. The report follows the format of the National Minimum Standards and the numbering shown in the report corresponds to that of the standards.

The report will show the following:

- Inspection methods used
- Key findings and evidence
- Overall ratings in relation to the standards
- Compliance with the Regulations
- Notifications to the Local Authority and Reports to the Secretary of State
- Required actions on the part of the provider
- Recommended good practice
- Summary of the findings
- Report of the Lay Assessor (where relevant)
- Providers response and proposed action plan to address findings

This report is a public document.

INSPECTION VISITS

Inspections will be undertaken in line with the agreed regulatory framework with additional visits as required. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000. The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report. The report represents the inspector's findings from the evidence found at the specified inspection dates.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED.

Brighton and Hove Link Plus is a jointly funded project between Brighton and Hove City Council and Barnardo's; providing predominantly short-break foster care to children and young people with disabilities. Brighton and Hove Link Plus has 42 carers with 4 young people receiving full-time care; 3 of whom receive short-term care; and 44 children and young people receiving short-break care.

There are 17 additional carers providing day care. The service is not required to register as a provider of domiciliary care as the day care is provided in the carer's own home. However the service manager is aware that where children are aged less than eight years the carer is required to register with OFSTED as a childminder.

At the time of this inspection Brighton and Hove Link Plus had an experienced Registered Manager and five supervising social workers, an administrator and a secretarial assistant. The agency shares the Brighton and Hove City Fostering Service fostering panel, which has an independent chair. The panel is responsible for approving all foster carers for Link Plus and any changes to carers' approval status.

PART A SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS

Inspector's Summary

(This is an overview of the inspector's findings, which includes good practice, quality issues, areas to be addressed or developed and any other concerns.)

Brighton and Hove Link Plus is an agency that mainly provides short-breaks for young people with a disability. A small number of young people, with disabilities, are in full-time foster care. For the young people placed on short-break care their daily management, together with educational and health responsibilities remain with their parents. The Registered Manager is concerned that some aspects of the agencies care differs from the required standards for fostering of the National Minimum Standards; and she is in consultation, through the Shared Care Network, with Commission for Social Care Inspection to resolve these anomalies.

Statement of Purpose (Standard 1)

Brighton and Hove Link Plus has a statement of purpose, but the information about the service is captured best in the Annual Report, which is sent to support any enquiry. When an overview of the complaints policy is added the report fully meets the requirements of Standard 1.4. A separate guide for children and young people is available that is child-focused and suitably, illustrated with photographs of children.

Fitness to provide or manage a fostering service (Standards 2 - 5)

Of the 4 standards assessed 2 were met. An experienced manager, who has undertaken further training to complete National Vocational Qualification Level 4, manages the agency efficiently and effectively. The agency's recruitment procedure does include the telephone enquiries, but may not always be noted on recruitment files. Though the agency has a procedure on informing the Commission for Social Care Inspection of significant events it is essential that this is done at the beginning of the procedure; as Inspectors expect to attend strategy meetings.

Securing and Promoting Welfare (Standards 6-14)

Of the 9 standards assessed all were met. The agency invest time and support in the recruitment of their carers. Training is valued though, because most carers work and only have the young people for their short-break visits once or twice a month, attending training can be difficult. Consultation is encouraged between the agency, the parents and the carers. Parents retain all responsibility for their child, and the carers and parents work together to enable the young people to prepare for adult life.

Recruiting, checking, managing and training staff and carers (standards 15-23)

Of the 8 standards assessed and met and 1 exceeded. There is a recruitment procedure in place, except for the follow-up of telephone calls from referees, which the Registered Manager confirmed would be put in place immediately. Staff are well managed, and in turn recruit and support carers and their training. The comments from the Fostering panel that were seen at the inspection were very positive and supportive of the work of the supervising social workers.

Records (Standards 24 and 25)

Of the 2 standards assessed both were met. Record keeping is computerised with a IT package, Livelink. As there have been no complaints there is no record. The Registered Manager was asked to consider whether the agency might be more active in identifying concerns. There are suitable policies on recording and records are kept secure.

Fitness of Premises (Standard 26)

This standard was met. The offices occupy a first storey building above a local authority children's home providing short-term care. Access is via the fire escape and there is no disabled access. The agency does have the use of a meeting room on the ground floor.

Financial requirements (Standard 27-29)

Of the 3 standards assessed all were met. The agency is financially viable and carers' confirmed that their payments were met in a good time scale.

Fostering Panel (Standard 30)

This standard was met. The agency shares a joint panel with Brighton and Hove fostering service. An independent chair chairs the panel. An Inspector will observe the panel in March 2005 and give an account through the report for that service. The evidence, seen at inspection, from the Fostering Panel Advisor identified excellence in the documentation and process of the applications put before the panel.

Short term breaks (Standard 31)

This standard was exceeded. The responses from the carers to the Inspector were very positive in relation to the support received and the relationships with the families whose young people they supported. Parents were informed of the inspection and invited to contact the Inspectors but none did so.

Family and friends as carers (Standard 32)

This standard is not applicable

Reports and Notifications to the Local Authority and Secretary of State

(Local Authority Fostering Services Only)

The following statutory Reports or Notifications are to be made under the Care Standards Act as a result of the findings of this inspection:

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(3) of the Care Standards Act 2000 that the Commission considers the Local Authority's fostering service satisfies the regulatory requirements:

NO

Notice to the Local Authority under section 47(5) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of failure(s) to satisfy regulatory requirements in their fostering service which are not substantial, and specifying the action the Commission considers the Authority should take to remedy the failure(s), informing the Secretary of State of that Notice:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(4)(a) of the Care Standards Act of a failure by a Local Authority fostering service to satisfy regulatory requirements which is not considered substantial:

NO

Report to the Secretary of State under section 47(1) of the Care Standards Act 2000 of substantial failure to satisfy regulatory requirements by a Local Authority fostering service:

NO

The grounds for the above Report or Notice are:

Implementation of Statutory Requirements from Last Inspection

Requirements from last Inspection visit fully actioned?

YES

If No please list below

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas not addressed from the last inspection report which indicate a non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

No.	Regulation	Standard	Required actions	

Action is being taken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection to monitor compliance with the above requirements.

COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION (IF APPLICABLE)

(Registered Independent Fostering Agencies only)

Providers and managers of registered independent fostering agencies must comply with statutory conditions of their registration. The conditions applying to this registration are listed below, with the inspector's assessment of compliance from the evidence at the time of this inspection.

Condition	Compliance	YES
NONE		
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Condition	Compliance	
Comments		

Lead Inspector Lindy Latreille **Signature** _____
Second Inspector Camilla Wood **Signature** _____
Regulation Manager Phil Hale **Signature** _____
Date _____

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS IDENTIFIED DURING THIS INSPECTION

Action Plan: The appropriate Officer of the Local Authority or the Registered Person (as applicable) is requested to provide the Commission with an Action Plan, which indicates how requirements are to be addressed. This action plan will be made available on request to the Area Office.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which indicate non-compliance with the Care Standards Act 2000, the Children Act 1989, the Fostering Services Regulations 2002, or the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The Authority or Registered Person(s) is/are required to comply within the given time scales in order to comply with the Regulatory Requirements for fostering services.

No.	Regulation	Standard *	Requirement	

GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THIS INSPECTION

Identified below are areas addressed in the main body of the report which relate to the National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice issues which should be considered for implementation by the Authority or Registered Person(s).

No.	Refer to Standard *	Recommendation Action
1	FS1	To identify and collate complaints and their outcomes.
2	FS3	That telephone contact with referees are made and recorded.
3	FS12	That foster parents are supplied with body maps for recording physical injuries.

* Note: You may refer to the relevant standard in the remainder of the report by omitting the 2-letter prefix e.g FS10 refers to Standard 10.

PART B**INSPECTION METHODS & FINDINGS**

The following inspection methods have been used in the production of this report

Number of Inspector days spent 2

Survey of placing authorities YES

Foster carer survey YES

Foster children survey NA

Checks with other organisations and Individuals NO

• Directors of Social services NO

• Child protection officer NO

• Specialist advisor (s) NO

• Local Foster Care Association NO

Tracking Individual welfare arrangements YES

• Interview with children NO

• Interview with foster carers YES

• Interview with agency staff YES

• Contact with parents YES

• Contact with supervising social workers YES

• Examination of files YES

Individual interview with manager YES

Information from provider NO

Individual interviews with key staff YES

Group discussion with staff YES

Interview with panel chair NO

Observation of foster carer training NO

Observation of foster panel NO

Inspection of policy/practice documents YES

Inspection of records YES

Interview with individual child NO

Date of Inspection 14/01/2005

Time of Inspection 10.00

Duration Of Inspection (hrs) 15

The following pages summarise the key findings and evidence from this inspection, together with the CSCI assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards have been met. The following scale is used to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met by placing the assessed level alongside the phrase "Standard met?"

The scale ranges from:

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

"0" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion.

"9" in the "Standard met?" box denotes standard not applicable.

"X" is used where a percentage value or numerical value is not applicable.

Statement of Purpose

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- There is clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.

Standard 1 (1.1 - 1.6)

There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and of what facilities and services they provide.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Brighton and Hove Link Plus has a statement of purpose and an Annual Report that together details the organisation and the agencies function setting out the aims and objectives of the service. Neither document include an overview of the complaints policy, or information of the Commission for Social Care Inspection's address or telephone number.

There is also a separate colourful children's guide that explains the service in simple language, using photographs and line drawings. The children's guide does not include details of how to make a complaint, or the Commission for Social Care Inspection address.

Fitness to Carry On or Manage a Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is provided and managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience to do so efficiently and effectively and by those who are suitable to work with children.

Standard 2 (2.1 - 2.4)

The people involved in carrying on and managing the fostering service possess the necessary business and management skills and financial expertise to manage the work efficiently and effectively and have the necessary knowledge and experience of childcare and fostering to do so in a professional manner.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The Registered Manager of Brighton and Hove Link Plus holds an appropriate professional qualification and has completed a National Vocational Qualification Level 4 in Management. It was evident from talking to the Registered Manager and her staff, and from observations, that there is sound leadership and effective management of the service.</p>		

Standard 3 (3.1 - 3.4)

Any persons carrying on or managing the fostering service are suitable people to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	2
<p>Inspectors examined a number of staff personnel records as well as talking to staff and the Registered Manager about recruitment practices. All records were in order with details and references including Criminal Records Bureau checks. There was no record of telephone calls being made to follow up the written references given.</p>		

Management of the Fostering Service

The intended outcomes for the following set of standards are:

- The fostering service is managed ethically and efficiently, delivering a good quality foster care service and avoiding confusion and conflicts of role.

Standard 4 (4.1 – 4.5)

There are clear procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the fostering service and ensuring quality performance.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

2

Barnardo's has a quality assurance system in place and the Registered Manager of Barnardo's Link Plus provides information to her line manager at head office on a regular basis as well as writing an annual report on the service.

The Registered Manager is responsible for the agency's budget and appropriate financial procedures are in place. There is a conflicts of interest policy in place and both staff and foster carers are aware of the need to declare any conflicts of interest that may arise. There is a system in place for informing the Commission for Social Care Inspection of incidents under Regulation 43 (1) Schedule 8, though this was not used when an allegation against a carer was made and a strategy meeting was held on 08/11/2004. The Registered Manager did confirm to the Inspectors that she had rung the Commission for Social Care Inspection for advice and been assured that she did not have to follow the practice for significant events. The Inspector felt that at the outset the event did warrant informing the Commission as procedures were followed to a strategy meeting.

Number of statutory notifications made to CSCI in last 12 months:

1

Death of a child placed with foster parents.

0

Referral to Secretary of State of a person working for the service as unsuitable to work with children.

0

Serious illness or accident of a child.

0

Outbreak of serious infectious disease at a foster home.

0

Actual or suspected involvement of a child in prostitution.

0

Serious incident relating to a foster child involving calling the police to a foster home.

0

Serious complaint about a foster parent.

1

Initiation of child protection enquiry involving a child.

0

Number of complaints made to CSCI about the agency in the past 12 months:

0

Number of the above complaints which were substantiated:

0

Standard 5 (5.1 - 5.4)**The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.****Key Findings and Evidence****Standard met?****3**

Brighton and Hove Link Plus is a well-managed service. The Registered Manager's role is well defined and the lines of accountability are clear to all staff. A deputy manager has been appointed to take up the position in the latter part of January 2005.

The Registered Manager has no responsibilities outside of Link Plus. As there is now a deputy manager soon to be in place on site this has reassured staff who raised this as an issue at the last inspection.

The agency is looking to offer support for families and carers, from the out of hours Brighton and Hove Fostering Service.

Securing and Promoting Welfare

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The fostering service promotes and safeguards the child/young person's physical, mental and emotional welfare.

Standard 6 (6.1 - 6.9)

The fostering service makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The Lead Inspector selected five carers to visit however only three carers were available and the Inspector spoke to the remaining two carers on the telephone.

Inspectors examined the carers' files as well as those of the children and young people they cared for. Supervising social workers were interviewed. Carers confirmed that the supervising social worker undertakes an annual visit where they inspect the accommodation and carry out a health and safety check. Health and safety is included in the training and preparation for new carers and a health and safety check is completed as part of the assessment process.

Usually children do not share a bedroom, the agency staff are aware of the need to carry out a risk assessment prior to placing children in a shared bedroom.

Standard 7 (7.1 - 7.7)

The fostering service ensures that children and young people, and their families, are provided with foster care services which value diversity and promote equality.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is limited diversity with regard to the racial and cultural make up of carers, as there is generally in the population of Brighton and Hove. However diversity is valued and promoted through training in anti-discriminatory practice and is mandatory for carers.

The majority of carers are recruited specifically to meet the needs of children and young people with disabilities and appropriate services and equipment are provided to carers as required.

Many carers have extensive experience of supporting and working with children and young people with additional needs through work in related settings, such as, special schools and residential care.

Standard 8 (8.1 - 8.7)		
Local authority fostering services, and voluntary agencies placing children in their own right, ensure that each child or young person placed in foster care is carefully matched with a carer capable of meeting her/his assessed needs. For agencies providing foster carers to local authorities, those agencies ensure that they offer carers only if they represent appropriate matches for a child for whom a local authority is seeking a carer.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>The needs of the child or young person are thoroughly assessed during the referral process and children are matched as far as possible with carers who can meet these needs. Referrals are taken to the panel, which meets monthly. If a placement were needed urgently the match would be agreed by the Registered Manager and taken to panel retrospectively, though this would be unusual.</p> <p>The family of the child to be placed is involved at each stage and there is a process of planned introductions before the child stays overnight with the short break carers. Parents, carers and children are consulted at the Looked After Children (LAC) review as well as the carers' annual review to ensure that the placement is continuing to meeting the needs of the child and all parties are satisfied with the arrangements. Once the match is established the parents and carers usually take responsibility for arranging when the short breaks take place.</p>		

Standard 9 (9.1 - 9.8)		
The fostering service protects each child or young person from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Foster carers are provided with appropriate training in child protection and carers are clear about safe caring and of the particular vulnerability of children and young people with disabilities. Carers are issued with safe caring guidelines.</p> <p>Clear guidelines are in place, and carers sign to confirm, that they will follow the service's expectations on inappropriate forms of punishment and the management of restraint. Carers in their questionnaires confirmed this, and also those visited. Carers are given full and detailed information about the child they provide short break care to, from the fostering service and from the child's parents. The fostering service encourages carers and parents to build close links to ensure that the child's best interests are met.</p>		
Percentage of foster children placed who report never or hardly ever being bullied:	X	%

Standard 10 (10.1 - 10.9)		
The fostering service makes sure that each child or young person in foster care is encouraged to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships as set out in her/his care plan and/or foster placement agreement.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The contact between the carer and the child's family is an integral part of the process and it appears to work well. With regard to the children and young people who are placed on a long-term basis, the contact arrangements were clearly documented. All of the carers visited were caring for children and young people long term and most of the young people had some regular contact with members of their birth family. Responsibility for carrying out a risk assessment with regard to contact lies with the child's placing social worker. Copies of this risk assessment should be held by the fostering agency.		

Standard 11 (11.1 - 11.5)		
The fostering service ensures that children's opinions, and those of their families and others significant to the child, are sought over all issues that are likely to affect their daily life and their future.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
Feedback is sought on an ongoing basis from carers, parents and young people through regular meetings with the fostering service supervising social workers and more formally in the form of a questionnaire at reviews. The children's guide does not provide information about raising concerns or making a complaint.		

Standard 12 (12.1 - 12.8)		
The fostering service ensures that it provides foster care services which help each child or young person in foster care to receive health care which meets her/his needs for physical, emotional and social development, together with information and training appropriate to her/his age and understanding to enable informed participation in decisions about her/his health needs.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
As most of the children receive a short break service, parents retain overall responsibility for the health and well being of their child. Many of the children have a range of health needs and protocols are in place where these are required. It is evident from records examined, and through talking to staff and carers, that there are good links between the fostering agency and health specialists. A nurse consultant sits on the fostering panel and she has key responsibility for all looked after children to ensure their health needs are promoted and met.		

Standard 13 (13.1 - 13.8)		
The fostering service gives a high priority to meeting the educational needs of each child or young person in foster care and ensures that she/he is encouraged to attain her/his full potential.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>Parents retain overall responsibility for their child's education.</p> <p>Where the child is in long term care the Registered Manager explained that the Children's Disability Service do not produce Personal Educational Plan's (PEP) but do provide an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and a copy of this plan should be held by the agency to enable the foster carers to contribute to the delivery of the plan.</p> <p>Brighton and Hove Link Plus has good contact with local special schools and many carers work within these settings.</p>		

Standard 14 (14.1 - 14.5)		
The fostering service ensures that their foster care services help to develop skills, competence and knowledge necessary for adult living.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
<p>This is another area where parents retain responsibility and the standard mainly applies to young people who are in long term care. The majority of young people are unlikely to move on to independent living and are more likely to move on to adult services. In such cases the carers and fostering agency work closely with staff involved in transition planning and supporting the young person in moving on. One of the carers visited has been supported in the process of transferring over to adult services.</p> <p>Brighton and Hove Link Plus carers attend the mainstream Preparation for Adulthood training provided by Brighton and Hove fostering service. It is envisaged that this training will be further developed to accommodate the requirements of Link Plus carers.</p>		

Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people and they are managed, trained and supported in such a way as to ensure the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. The number of staff and carers and their range of qualifications and experience are sufficient to achieve the purposes and functions of the organisation.

Standard 15 (15.1 - 15.8)

Any people working in or for the fostering service are suitable people to work with children and young people and to safeguard and promote their welfare.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

Brighton and Hove Link Plus recruitment policy meets the required standards and regulations. Inspectors examined a number of staff personnel files that confirmed that the recruitment procedures are followed.

The social work team are appropriately qualified and experienced. Some have undertaken training in competency-based assessment, which is the format now used by the service and arrangements are in place for other staff to undertake training when it is available.

At present the agency do not employ unqualified staff. The Registered Manager confirmed that she would be looking to appoint a suitably experienced worker to support the day care service.

Total number of staff of the agency:

9

Number of staff who have left the agency in the past 12 months:

0

Standard 16 (16.1 - 16.16)

Staff are organised and managed in a way that delivers an efficient and effective foster care service.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

There is an effective management structure with clear lines of accountability that ensures a delivery of an efficient and effective fostering service.

As the agency is jointly funded by Barnardo's and Brighton and Hove City Council, and shares the fostering panel chaired by an independent chair, this provides an effective system for monitoring the quality of assessments and reviews of foster carers.

In addition Barnardo's have their own quality assurance system. Staff are managed and supervised by an appropriately qualified and experienced Registered Manager who has access to appropriate professional supervision.

One full time and one part time administrator provide administrative support in the agency.

The administrator has supervisory responsibility for her part-time colleague and has identified that she is in need of training to support this duty. Some additional hours have been provided since the last inspection; and additional hours have been identified and funded for this current year.

Standard 17 (17.1 - 17.7)

The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff and recruits a range of carers to meet the needs of children and young people for whom it aims to provide a service.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

4

The team is fully staffed and is able to fulfil its contract and stated aims and objectives. All children and carers have a named social worker responsible for them. Though there are still 37 children and young people on the waiting list requiring a service and the agency has various strategies for recruiting suitable carers. The agency works closely with Brighton and Hove fostering service. They conduct extensive advertising campaigns. The children and young people already know many current carers as they work at the schools attended by the young people or within the health sector. Inspectors examined a number of assessments and the documentation used for presentation to panel was found to be robust. Neither of the Inspectors attended the joint fostering panel where Brighton and Hove Link Plus present carers for approval. The Lead Inspector for the Brighton and Hove Fostering inspection will attend this joint panel in March 2005 and an account of that visit will be captured in that report. The Inspectors noted that in the last report for Brighton and Hove Link Plus confirmed good practice and evidence seen at the Inspection supported this, with fostering assessments that were full and comprehensive documents with good evidence of a thorough assessment process. The Registered Manager of Brighton and Hove Link Plus undertakes second opinion visits to all carers before their assessments are presented to the fostering panel.

Standard 18 (18.1 - 18.7)

The fostering service is a fair and competent employer, with sound employment practices and good support for its staff and carers.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

Brighton and Hove Plus has sound employment practices with regard to both staff and foster carers. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy in place and carers are expected to have their own insurance policy, household and car, and public liability; and to advise insurers that they are foster carers. Risk assessments are carried out on all high-risk activities undertaken by children when they are with carers, for example horse riding. Whistle blowing policies are in place for staff and carers.

Standard 19 (19.1 - 19.7)		
There is a good quality training programme to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
A range of appropriate training is available for staff through Brighton and Hove City Council, Barnardo's the fostering network and other voluntary sector provision. Training for carers is provided jointly through Brighton and Hove City Council and through the Shared Care Network and Triangle who provide some joint training for carers and supervising social workers.		

Standard 20 (20.1 - 20.5)		
All staff are properly accountable and supported.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
All staff have job descriptions and there are clear and detailed policies and procedures in place to support and guide staff in their work. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Staff are well supported through regular supervision, team meetings and occasional team days.		

Standard 21 (21.1 - 21.6)		
The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.		
Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
The statement of purpose clearly sets out the support arrangements for foster carers and the fostering agency's expectations of carers. Foster carers are provided with a comprehensive information pack on their approval. Carers and supervising social workers are clear about their respective roles. This was confirmed by the foster carers and social workers interviewed and in the questionnaires. Out of hours the emergency duty team provides support, at present, though talks are underway to link with the Brighton and Hove fostering out of hours service. Foster carers spoken to felt this system was adequate for the rare occasion when they had needed to use it though out of hours fostering support would be preferable. All first reviews of carers are presented to the fostering panel, subsequently the reviews go to panel every three years. Reviews are also presented to panel if there are any changes in circumstances or there is a request for a change in the approval.		

Standard 22 (22.1 - 22.10)

The fostering service is a managed one that provides supervision for foster carers and helps them to develop their skills.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

Carers told the Inspectors that they felt well supported by the fostering service. Carers receive regular visits and telephone contact from their supervising social worker; these visits are purposeful and appropriately recorded.

The agency has started to carry out unannounced visits though Inspectors acknowledged that there are difficulties in managing this as the majority of carers provide short break care at specific times of the week, often weekends. Foster carers can access independent support through the Shared Care Network.

Records of allegations are maintained and monitored and there is a procedure for dealing with investigations into allegations.

The Registered Manager clarified that she rang the Commission for Social Care Inspection to take advice when the allegation was made against a foster carer and was assured that she did not have to report the event as a significant incident. The Inspectors spoke with the Registered Manager at some length and clarified that all events contained in Schedule 8 should be brought to the attention of the Commission for Social Care Inspection, even if subsequently the allegation was not substantiated. It is the intention of the Commission for Social Care Inspection to attend any strategy meeting that is held associated with any regulated service.

Standard 23 (23.1 - 23.9)

The fostering service ensures that foster carers are trained in the skills required to provide high quality care and meet the needs of each child/young person placed in their care.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?****3**

A range of training is available to carers through Brighton and Hove City Council. In addition to in-house training provided by Brighton and Hove Link Plus, and other training providers such as Triangle.

Induction training for new carers is mandatory and specific training is provided to carers as necessary.

Training such as child protection and safe care includes specific training for male carers. The needs of the carer's children are taken account of and specifically addressed in the annual review.

Records

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- All appropriate records are kept and are accessible in relation to the fostering services and the individual foster carers and foster children.

Standard 24 (24.1 - 24.8)

The fostering service ensures that an up-to-date, comprehensive case record is maintained for each child or young person in foster care which details the nature and quality of care provided and contributes to an understanding of her/his life events. Relevant information from the case records is made available to the child and to anyone involved in her/his care.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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The agency has a number of core standards including a standard on recording that clearly details what and how matters should be recorded by supervising social workers. A computerised record keeping system, Livelink, is in place and this appears to be working well.

Carers are clear about the agency's expectations on them with regard to record keeping and storage of information. Brighton and Hove Link Plus keeps detailed records on the children cared for and carers told inspectors they were given enough information and kept up to date. All carers' are supplied with a diary to note their observations. At present there is not a routine of checking this diary information.

Standard 25 (25.1 - 25.13)

The fostering service's administrative records contain all significant information relevant to the running of the foster care service and as required by regulations.

Key Findings and Evidence**Standard met?**

3

The fostering service has good administrative systems and information is stored appropriately and securely. There are separate files for children and foster carers and access to information and the procedure for storing files is detailed in the agency's recording policy. Carers, children and parents are encouraged to contribute to reviews. The Registered Manager carries out periodic audits on files and computer held records.

Number of current foster placements supported by the agency:

42

Number of placements made by the agency in the last 12 months:

60

Number of placements made by the agency which ended in the past 12 months:

12

Number of new foster carers approved during the last 12 months:

7

Number of foster carers who left the agency during the last 12 months:

10

Current weekly payments to foster parents: Minimum £

287

Maximum £

392

Fitness of Premises for use as Fostering Service

The intended outcome for the following standard is:

- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.

Standard 26 (26.1 - 26.5)

Premises used as offices by the fostering service are appropriate for the purpose.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The office premises are above one of the local authority children's homes that provide care to children with learning disabilities.

The offices are accessed through a separate entrance, which is also the fire escape. There is no disabled access to the offices though there is space on the ground floor for meetings if required. The offices are suitable for the purpose though space limited.

Staff remain concerned that they feel that they have not been reassured that all checks are in place as asbestos has been found in the ceiling of the office building. Staff have requested a written health and safety risk assessment from Barnardo's and Brighton and Hove Council. A safety standards audit was completed by Barnardo's last September 2004 and the Registered Manager confirmed that that was satisfactory.

Financial Requirements

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- The agency fostering services are financially viable and appropriate and timely payments are made to foster carers.

Standard 27 (27.1 - 27.3)

The agency ensures it is financially viable at all times and has sufficient financial resources to fulfil its obligations.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Barnardo's and Brighton and Hove City Council jointly fund Brighton and Hove Link Plus. The Registered Manager informed inspectors that funds are now in the Council's main budget and the contract will be automatically reviewed annually.

Standard 28 (28.1 - 28.7)

The financial processes/systems of the agency are properly operated and maintained in accordance with sound and appropriate accounting standards and practice.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	3
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Brighton and Hove Link Plus has an allocated budget and records indicate that this is sufficient to meet the needs of the service. The agency's accounts are appropriately maintained and properly audited.

Standard 29 (29.1 - 29.2)

Each foster carer receives an allowance and agreed expenses, which cover the full cost of caring for each child or young person placed with him or her. Payments are made promptly and at the agreed time. Allowances and fees are reviewed annually.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

3

The fostering allowance is based on Brighton and Hove fostering service allowances. These were increased significantly in July 2004 and Brighton and Hove Link Plus increased their rates accordingly.

Fostering Panels

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively so as to ensure that good quality decisions are made about the approval of foster carers, in line with the overriding objective to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in foster care.

Standard 30 (30.1 - 30.9)

Fostering panels have clear written policies and procedures, which are implemented in practice, about the handling of their functions.

Key Findings and Evidence

Standard met?

4

Brighton and Hove Link Plus share a joint fostering panel with Brighton and Hove City Council fostering service. The panel is chaired by an independent chair and currently meets all the membership requirements of the regulations. There is also an administrator and a panel advisor who monitors the quality of assessments and ensures the panel is well organised and provided with appropriate detailed information well in advance of the meeting. Brighton and Hove City Council employs the adviser; he is also panel adviser for Barnardo's Link Plus.

There is an information booklet for applicants and foster carers attending panel for the first time and each person attending the panel is asked to provide feedback on the experience. The written outcome from the agency decision maker is sent within a maximum of five days; though the agency decision maker may inform carers by telephone immediately after panel. This standard is robustly actioned by the agency.

Short-Term Breaks

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangement recognises that the parents remain the main carers for the child.

Standard 31 (31.1 - 31.2)

Where a fostering service provides short-term breaks for children in foster care, they have policies and procedures, implemented in practice, to meet the particular needs of children receiving short-term breaks.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?
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This is the primary purpose of Brighton and Hove Link Plus.

All policies and procedures clearly document that parents retain primary responsibility for all aspects of their child's health and educational needs. A newsletter, produced by the agency, confirmed that good liaison exists between the parents, carers and supervising social workers and the recognition that training underpins a professional service.

Family and Friends as Carers

The intended outcome for the following set of standards is:

- Local authority fostering services' policies and procedures for assessing, approving, supporting and training foster carers recognise the particular contribution that can be made by and the particular needs of family and friends as carers.

Standard 32 (32.1 - 32.4)

These standards are all relevant to carers who are family and friends of the child, but there is recognition of the particular relationship and position of family and friend carers.

Key Findings and Evidence	Standard met?	9
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Not applicable.

PART C

LAY ASSESSOR'S SUMMARY

(where applicable)

Lay Assessor _____ **Signature** _____
Date _____

D.1 Registered Person's or Responsible Local Authority Manager's comments/confirmation relating to the content and accuracy of the report for the above inspection.

We would welcome comments on the content of this report relating to the Inspection conducted on 14th & 17th January 2005 and any factual inaccuracies:

Please limit your comments to one side of A4 if possible

Action taken by the CSCI in response to the provider's comments:

Amendments to the report were necessary	YES
Comments were received from the provider	YES
Provider comments/factual amendments were incorporated into the final inspection report	YES
Provider comments are available on file at the Area Office but have not been incorporated into the final inspection report. The inspector believes the report to be factually accurate	NO

Note:

In instances where there is a major difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider responsible Local Authority fostering service Manager both views will be made available on request to the Area Office.

D.2 Please provide the Commission with a written Action Plan by 28th February 2005, which indicates how statutory requirements and recommendations are to be addressed and stating a clear timescale for completion. This will be kept on file and made available on request.

Status of the Provider's Action Plan at time of publication of the final inspection report:

Action plan was required	YES
Action plan was received at the point of publication	YES
Action plan covers all the statutory requirements in a timely fashion	YES
Action plan did not cover all the statutory requirements and required further discussion	NO
Provider has declined to provide an action plan	NO
Other: <enter details here>	

Public reports

It should be noted that all CSCI inspection reports are public documents. Reports on children's homes are only obtainable on personal application to CSCI offices.

D.3 PROVIDER'S AGREEMENT

Registered Person's or responsible Local Authority Manager's statement of agreement/comments: Please complete the relevant section that applies.

D.3.1 I _____ of _____ confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) and that I agree with the statutory requirements made and will seek to comply with these.

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Or

D.3.2 I _____ of _____ am unable to confirm that the contents of this report are a fair and accurate representation of the facts relating to the inspection conducted on the above date(s) for the following reasons:

Print Name _____
Signature _____
Designation _____
Date _____

Note: In instance where there is a profound difference of view between the Inspector and the Registered Provider both views will be reported. Please attach any extra pages, as applicable.

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