



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Banya Family Placement Agency

**286a-288 Croxted Road
Croxted Mews
London
SE24 9DA**

Lead Inspector
Maggie
Edwards

Announced
20 July 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

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
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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 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

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

Name of service	Banya Family Placement Agency
Address	286a-288 Broxted Road Croxted Mews London SE24 9DA
Telephone number	020 8678 5330
Fax number	020 8678 5343
Email address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Banya Family Placement Agency
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ms Elspeth Devlin
Type of registration	IFA Fostering Agency
No. of places registered (if applicable)	0
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	n/a

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

none

Date of last inspection 11 October 2004

Brief Description of the Service:

Banya Family Placement Agency is an Independent Fostering Agency which is registered as a company with two directors, Paul Soper who is Administration and Finance Director and represents the agency as the Responsible Individual and Nyasha Gwatidzo who takes the lead in developing the service and is panel decision maker. The day to day management of the service is delegated to the Fostering Manager, Ms Elspeth Devlin. Banya provides planned and emergency placements for young people Looked After by local authorities and aims to ensure that, by working closely with the young person's family and placing authority, everyone who comes into contact with that young person promotes their welfare and safeguards their interests.

SUMMARY

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

This inspection was carried out by two inspectors over a total of nine inspector days. The inspectors had individual meetings with the Administration and Finance Director, the Service Director and with the Fostering Manager. They also met with the Human Resources and Administration Manager, the Contracts and Policy Officer and with a group of four supervising social workers. Telephone conversations were held with the Chair of the Panel and with a consultant recently employed by the agency. The inspectors attended a meeting of the panel and carers training and support sessions. Eight carer homes were visited. Children's, carers', staff and panel members' files were seen, as were policy documents and questionnaires from management, carers and young people.

What the service does well:

The agency places emphasis on achieving a nurturing environment for young people by offering a high level of support for carers who are encouraged to feel that they and the young people placed with them part of the 'Banya family'. Visits to carers' homes showed that children were well cared for and appeared happy, relaxed and secure. Inspectors' attendance at carers' support and training sessions showed that these were carried out in a professional but relaxed and friendly manner, with carers at ease with each other and with agency staff. There is good attention to the planning of care of the young people, with supervising social workers showing a willingness to invest time and effort in ensuring that any specialist needs of young people are given close attention.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The Registered Provider has used the services of a consultant to help the agency refine the roles and responsibilities of senior management and clarify the lines of support and accountability within the organisation. New quality assurance and monitoring systems have been introduced to improve the effectiveness of children's files and other records. The Fostertrack IT system has been introduced to further improve the efficiency of record keeping. Panel members have received training. All staff have received training in the relevance and importance of legal requirements relating to the functioning of Independent Fostering Agencies. Refurbishment of the unit of the premises used for training and meeting purposes has been completed to a high standard.

What they could do better:

Whilst acknowledging the progress made in the management and organisation of the agency since the last inspection it is crucial that the service recognises the need to consolidate the improvements which have been introduced and ensures that work continues in those areas which still require improvement.

Attention must particularly be given to ensuring improvements in some aspects of the operation of the panel; swift notification of critical incidents and subsequent investigations; monitoring children's files and safe recruitment practices.

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 or by contacting your local CSCI office.

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Being Healthy

The intended outcomes 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 standard(s) 12

The agency takes steps to ensure that each young person receives health care which is appropriate to their individual physical, emotional and psychological needs.

EVIDENCE:

Children's files contained details of registration with G.Ps, dentists, opticians and official documents from placing authorities which contained information about the young person's health needs. Records showed that this information was used to develop appropriate plans for the health care of young people. One file contained co-ordinated information with respect to the health needs of a young person who suffered from encopresis with evidence of referral to the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. In instances where medical information had not been supplied by a placing authority there were copies of letters from Banya requesting these details.

One of the inspectors visited a carer who was caring for an autistic child. The carer had experience of working with adults with learning disabilities and coped, in a caring and appropriate manner, with the constant demands of the young person throughout the visit. The carer said that they received excellent support from their supervising social worker who had been prepared to educate themselves about autism in order to offer maximum support.

One of the inspectors attended a training session provided by an expert in autism who was also to provide ongoing specialist support to carers who were looking after young people with this condition.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes 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 standard(s) 3,6,8,9,15 & 30

The agency follows procedures designed to ensure that young people in its care are safe and protected from abuse and neglect but there is a need to ensure close attention to the detail of some of the associated administrative processes and to some aspects of panel functioning.

EVIDENCE:

Records show that the majority of staff, carers and panel members had been required to go through appropriate recruitment procedures before being allowed to work for the agency including the carrying out of Criminal Record Bureau checks, requiring written references followed by telephone checks and proof of identity and, where necessary, qualifications. However one supervising social worker had been allowed to start work on the basis of Criminal Record Bureau check from their past employment. Although the staff member subsequently received a clear new check steps must be taken to ensure that this situation is not repeated. Documents show that the agency has correct procedures to be followed in the event of a young person making an allegation of abuse whether against an individual outside the agency or against a member of the service. Carers visited confirmed that they had received training in these procedures and in the emotional and psychological aspects of caring for young people who have been abused. The agency ensures that the Commission is informed in writing following any critical incident. However there is a need to ensure that the Commission is informed orally within 24 hours of

such incidents and is then **promptly** informed in writing of the initial incident and any subsequent developments.

Management try to ensure that young people are matched with a carer whose skills and approval criteria will ensure a successful placement and avoid the risk of breakdown and disruption for the young person.

The inspectors looked in detail at the records of a placement of a child who had particular needs which had led to a previous placement breakdown. It was found that the records did not adequately reflect the detailed consideration which had been given to finding an appropriate alternative carer or the intensive support which was being provided to the child and carer. The agency had worked closely with the placing authority to ensure that the young person who appeared to be happy and settled was receiving specialist help

The agency has arranged relevant training for panel members. The panel observed during this inspection showed significant improvements since the last inspection but there was still a need to attend to some details. The discussions before seeing applicants, the questioning of applicants and the decision making process were all robust. Form F assessments were of a reasonable standards but the panel chair highlighted the fact that there were some gaps in information and confusion with regard to details. Although minutes of past panel meetings were satisfactory, minute taking was seen to be being done in an inappropriately informal style. The Registered Provider has stated their aim of either transferring this role to a suitably qualified administrative professional or providing appropriate training for the current minute taker. Although progress had been made in panel constitution there was still some blurring of roles illustrated by the fact that a senior worker who had been involved in the supervision of a worker carrying out a Form F assessment was a member of the panel and inappropriately took part in the discussions relating to the applicants.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes 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 standard(s) 7 &13. Standard 31 is not relevant to this service.

The agency aims to ensure that young people are provided with services which value diversity. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that each young person receives education which is appropriate to their individual needs and will help them achieve their full potential.

EVIDENCE:

Records show that the agency has referral procedures which, if followed, will ensure that sufficient information is received from the placing authority to ensure that a young person will be placed with carers whose abilities and terms of approval will ensure attention to their individual needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture and disability. However the level of information contained in initial referral forms was inconsistent and, although visits to carers showed appropriate attention to these issues, some spoke of taking referrals of young people for whom there was little initial information. This could reflect the lack of initial information provided by the placing authority. One file in which there were gaps and inaccuracies in the initial information showed, in other sections, close appropriate attention to the needs of the young person following the gathering, at a later date, of the required details.

Children's case files contained good records of education details including Statements of Educational Needs and requests to placing authorities for Personal Education Plans. There were also records in supervising social workers' contact sheets and review documents showing attention to educational matters. It would be helpful if the agency ensured that all

information relating to education was co-ordinated and stored in the education section of each case file. This section was empty in some files examined.

All carers visited were able to demonstrate that the young people in their care were receiving appropriate education including a young child with severe autism.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes 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 standard(s) 10

The agency encourages each young person to maintain family contacts and friendships as set out in their care plan.

EVIDENCE:

Children's case records show that the agency makes sure that appropriate arrangements are made for each young person to have contact with family members and with friends. These decisions are based on information contained in Looked After Children documents from the placing authority which the agency attempts to obtain as soon as possible after placement and which are used as a basis for an initial planning meeting. Records also showed that contact arrangements are considered in review meetings.

Carers visited confirmed that their initial training had emphasised the importance of helping young people maintain contact with family and friends. One couple spoke of the difficulties involved in trying to help the young people in their care to have reasonable contact with a parent whose severe mental health problems and difficulties in communication with the placing authority often resulted in confusion and disruption for themselves and the children. The carers had many years experience and were obviously dedicated to trying to maintain some form of appropriate contact arrangements. Their case file confirmed the information which they gave to the inspector in which they expressed appreciation of the efforts made by their supervising social worker to improve the situation by liaising with the placing authority's social worker. The carers also said that they had received training about mental health from the agency. Which had helped their understanding of the parent's behaviour.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes 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 standard(s) 29

Carers' allowances are paid on time and are reviewed annually. There was some indication that some carers were unclear about how to access payment for emergency purchases which were necessary at the start of some placements.

EVIDENCE:

Documents show that the agency ensures that it carries out an annual review of allowances paid to carers. All carers visited said that they received adequate allowances which were paid regularly.

However a carer who had just accepted a placement seemed unsure about how they would cover the cost of the young person's quite lengthy journeys to and from school. A couple, who had worked for the agency for a number of years, said that there had been situations where they had had to make emergency purchases for a newly placed young person although the agency had quickly repaid them. The Registered Provider was able to demonstrate that the service does have procedures designed to ensure that carers can quickly access emergency payments and has stated that regular training will be provided for carers to ensure full understanding of these and all other procedures relating to payments.

Management

The intended outcomes 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 cares 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 standard(s) 2,4,5,16,17,20,21,22,23 ,24 & 26.

The agency is in the process of developing and refining the skills and effectiveness of the management team in order to ensure the ongoing effective organisation of the service.

EVIDENCE:

The Fostering Manager has a social work qualification and NVQ Level 4 in Management. They had extensive relevant statutory childcare experience before joining the agency for whom they have worked for a number of years.

In response to requirements included in the last inspection report for the Registered Provider had employed the services of a consultant. Senior staff were able to show that this has resulted in a redefinition and clarification of the roles and responsibilities of all senior staff and a clearer understanding of the lines of accountability and support within the service. The recent employment of a well-qualified and experienced Human Resources Officer has led to further positive re-organisation including an improvement in the layout of the office and a closer attention to the monitoring of recruitment and personnel processes. Quality assurance documents clearly evident in children's and carers' files showed that the Fostering Services Director has introduced new monitoring systems to improve the efficient maintenance of case records. The training of social work staff in the use of the recently installed Fostertrack IT system was already leading to improved efficiency in recording and in the ability of staff to cross-reference linked areas of work.

Management agreed that a level of confusing mis-filing in some records showed that there is a need for staff to recognise that time set aside for administration is a valuable contribution to ensuring an efficient service for carers and young people.

There were good records showing that staff received regular supervision and appraisal. Recently appointed staff have extensive experience of working in other fostering services including Local Authority settings. The inspectors discussed with management the need to ensure smooth integration of these new staff members into the long-established Banya staff team.

Most carers visited confirmed that they received regular visits and telephone contact from their supervising social workers and that more intensive support is provided when required. Case records did not always reflect the reported level of support although this could have arisen because at the time of the inspection, some supervising social workers had not printed out all up-to-date computer records.

Training schedules and feedback from carers showed that the agency ensures that all applicants to foster must attend a training programme which covers the statutory aspects of foster care as well as the practical, emotional and psychological needs of Looked after young people. Once approved carers are encouraged to attend ongoing training including NVQ Level 3. Approved carers living at some distance from the agency can experience difficulties in accessing training.

Premises are appropriate for the needs of the service and include a recently refurbished unit used for training and meeting purposes.

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>
12	3

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	3
9	3
15	2
30	2

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

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

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

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	X
2	3
4	3
5	3
16	3
17	3
18	X
19	X
20	3
21	3
22	3
23	3
24	3
25	X
26	X
27	X
28	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
1.	7&8	11	The Registered Provider must ensure that the initial referral form in each young person's file contains all the basic information required.	17 th October 2005
2.	9	43	The Registered Provider must ensure that the agency informs the Commission orally within 24 hours of the agency becoming aware of any critical incidents and that the Commission is then promptly informed in writing of each incident and of all subsequent investigations and developments.	17 th October 2005
3.	15	20	The Registered Provider must ensure that no member of staff is allowed to commence employment until the service is in receipt of a new Criminal Record Bureau check for that person.	17 th October 2005
4.	23	17	The Registered Provider must supply documentation to the Commission demonstrating plans made to ensure that approved carers who live at a considerable distance from the agency are enabled to access appropriate training.	10 th November 2005
5.	29	44	The Registered Provider must	31 st

			ensure that all carers receive regular training and advice about the service's procedures for ensuring access to advice and ,if necessary,immediate financial help, in order to cover all costs relating to a newly placed child.	October 2005
6.	22 & 24	35	The Registered Provider must supply documentation to the Commission demonstrating that quality assurance processes relating to carers' and children's files ensure that all visits to carers and contacts with placed children are recorded promptly and accurately.	10 th November 2005
7.	30	26	The Registered Provider must supply the Commission with documentation demonstrating the development of a Quality Assurance form which will ensure that Form F assessments contain full and precise details of all required factual information,	10 th November 2005
8.	30	25	The Registered Provider must supply the Commission with documentation demonstrating steps taken to ensure that panel minutes are completed in a fully formal manner by a suitably qualified and administratively experienced staff member.	10th November 2005
9.	30	24	The Registered Provider must continue to take steps to ensure that there is no confusion of roles for any panel member.	31 st October 2005

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.		

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