



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Blue Sky Fostering

**Unit 3, Pullman Business Park
Pullman Way
Castleman Crossing
Ringwood
Hampshire
BH24 1HD**

Lead Inspector
Corrie McKeown

Announced Inspection
4th September 2006 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	www.csci.org.uk

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

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

Name of service	Blue Sky Fostering
Address	Unit 3, Pullman Business Park Pullman Way Castleman Crossing Ringwood Hampshire BH24 1HD
Telephone number	0845 6076697
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	www.blueskyfostering.co.uk
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Blue Sky Fostering Limited
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Lysbeth Anne Macrae
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 14th February 2006

Brief Description of the Service:

Blue Sky Fostering is an Independent Fostering Agency based in Ringwood, Hampshire that was registered with the Commission for Social Care on the 5th August 2005. It offers family placements to young people who have a range of complex needs, including young mother and baby placements and short-term breaks for children with disabilities. The Agency provides placements to a number of local authorities; it is steadily expanding and currently has 23 approved carers and 20 young people placed. The fees range from £667 to £1108. Information about the Agency can be obtained from their website or by contacting their office.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection took place over two days with two Inspectors. Four foster homes were visited and interviews were conducted with a Director, who holds responsibility for training, the Registered Manager, two supervising social workers, the recruitment officer and placements officer. Placing social workers and two panel members were contacted by telephone. A variety of documents maintained by the Agency were read and questionnaires received at the last inspection, together with the last report were used for information where no change in circumstances was indicated. All key Standards, together with Standards 4 and 19, were inspected.

This annual inspection was brought forward in time to meet the needs of the regulatory body in preparation for the move to OFSTED. In spite of this, the Agency's managers and staff cooperated fully to assist the inspection process.

What the service does well:

Foster carers are experienced and able to seek medical advice appropriately; health promotion is good, with a healthy lifestyle being encouraged as part of the Agency ethos. The young people are kept safe and provided with stimulating and nurturing care in comfortable homes and evidence showed that some young people, whose development had been delayed, were making good progress. All of the young people are receiving appropriate education and their foster carers provide a range of activities and opportunities to enjoy in their leisure time; they also actively support the young people to use the complaints procedures available to them. Contact with the young people's friends and family is encouraged and skilfully managed by foster carers. The Agency encourages feedback from everyone, responds positively to suggestions made and produces a colourful newsletter to keep everyone informed. Foster carers say they are well supported and that the Agency is managed in a friendly and competent manner.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Clear records are now kept of consultation with the young people by supervising social workers and where possible, the children's register now contains the address of their previous placement. There are procedures in place regarding medical consent and where the correct documentation has not been received from the placing authority, the Agency now ensures that their own consent form is signed in the meantime. These measures meet previous requirements made of the Agency. Since the last inspection the Agency are now supporting a child with disabilities under a short-break scheme and an additional social worker and support worker are being recruited to support the steadily growing number of foster carers.

What they could do better:

The Agency has developed a comprehensive foster placement agreement but this has not been completed for every placement. All foster carers should undertake training in the management of medication as part of their induction programme. Matching considerations are recorded at the time of placement, but do not include details of any shortfalls to be addressed. Risk assessments need to be in place for all the young people and it would be helpful to monitor the incidence of bullying and include an awareness of anti-bullying strategies in the safeguarding training. Links with other professional agencies need to be extended, particularly with respect to black and minority ethnic cultural needs. Evidence needs to be provided that all references have been verified with telephone contact and that original qualification certificates are presented. Supervision of foster carers must include checks on their recording and monitoring of statutory reviews.

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.

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 at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12.

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The health needs of the young people are met and a healthy lifestyle is promoted throughout the Agency.

EVIDENCE:

When placements are made the Agency collects referral information and passes this on to foster carers; much of this information is collated at the placement and 28-day review meetings. A foster placement agreement is then drawn up. This is a comprehensive and useful document, which provides a clear record of the young person's needs, how they are to be met and by whom; however, in some cases it was not fully completed. All young people are registered with local health practitioners and according to the Agency data sheets are given regular check-ups; foster carers record these appointments. A number of the young people were receiving specialist medical attention from consultants and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service(CAMHS), but in one case where a young person was placed outside his home county, access to additional services was proving difficult. The services of the local Looked After Children (LAC) Nurses have also been used and supervising social workers recognise that these contacts could be further developed.

The foster carers visited had a wide range of experience and expertise in health matters and in some cases had attended specialist courses, in line with the needs of the young people placed with them. The management of medication in one case was poor and training is needed for all foster carers, to ensure consistency in this area (See Standard 19). As part of their induction, foster carers undertake training in health and safety and health promotion, this is supported by information in the foster carers' handbook. All foster carers have a first aid qualification or if newly approved, have a course planned. There are now clear procedures regarding medical consent and where the correct documentation has not been received, the Agency ensures that their

own consent form is signed in the meantime. This meets a previous requirement. When matching young people with appropriate foster carers, the Agency ensures the carer has the necessary skills to meet their health needs and in some placements these skills are of a high calibre. There was good evidence to show that young people whose development had been delayed were making steady progress towards reaching their full potential. One placing social worker fed back in a questionnaire "His developmental catch-up has been excellent whilst living with these foster carers."

Foster carers visited demonstrated their knowledge about how to promote a healthy lifestyle. Training is delivered on this subject, and the young people placed gave good examples in their feedback of receiving a healthy diet, plenty of exercise, staying clean and going to the doctor. Foster carers record regularly how 'Being Healthy' outcomes are achieved, under the Every Child Matters (ECM) headings used in this report. They also attend the young people's statutory Looked After Children (LAC) reviews and offer information regarding their healthcare. Placing Social Workers were generally very positive in their feedback about the management of health needs and of the cases reviewed all were having their needs met.

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 at least once during a 12 month period.

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

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

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Young people are kept safe with a variety of systems and strategies employed by the Agency.

EVIDENCE:

The Directors and Registered Manager are suitably experienced and qualified to run the Agency and have all the required checks and references in place.

The Agency has a range of strategies in place to ensure that their foster carers provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment. Homes are safety checked as part of the initial assessment of foster carers and annually thereafter, and records of these checks were held on file. The homes visited by Inspectors were welcoming and individual in nature. All young people had their own rooms, which contained a range of stimulating toys and equipment and had been decorated to the young people's tastes. In addition to the training already mentioned, foster carers undertake courses in safe caring and behaviour management as part of their induction and ongoing courses. Transport is vetted to make sure that appropriate insurance is in place and that the family vehicles meet safety standards. This is currently being brought up to date to meet recent legislative changes.

Evidence of matching considerations was detailed on file and placement outcomes were good for the young people in all cases tracked. Additional training and information for foster carers to cover any shortfalls in the matching process were not identified on this form, for example to meet the cultural needs of a young person in a trans-racial placement. The questionnaires as a whole show that a large number of the placements made are very successful with comments such as "He has received excellent stimulation, plenty of emotional warmth and has been thoroughly nurtured." The young people are not generally offered a choice of placements by the local authority, but the Agency has produced a DVD and CD rom on most of the family homes, as an introduction for the young people.

The level of incidents, accidents, complaints and allegations are very low, indicating that the young people are kept safe; however some additional safeguards need to be developed. An individual safe caring strategy is in place for each household, detailing any special measures needed to ensure everyone in the house is protected. These are not individualised to the young people placed, as information received from the local authority does not generally include a risk assessment. This and other documents are chased by the Agency, but in the event of this not being forthcoming the Agency must produce its own. This can then be used to inform the safe caring strategy and the foster placement agreement. One risk assessment was viewed on file and following discussions with the Registered Manager a new and workable template was produced. A range of risk assessments are in place regarding the office environment, managing stress and the Agency has begun to put risk assessments in place for outings and activities.

Specific training is offered in safeguarding skills and procedures and working with young people who have been abused. These subjects are included in induction training and in more detail as core-training and advanced courses for staff and foster carers in conjunction with a local authority. All foster carers were clear that corporal punishment is not acceptable, this is stated in the foster care agreement and the young people raised no concerns in this area. No allegations have been made against foster carers and proper procedures are in place to be used when necessary alongside detailed written guidance, which is available to all staff. There are currently no formal procedures in place to monitor the level and frequency of bullying, but the Agency are satisfied that the issue is raised regularly with foster carers in their supervision. A local school was poorly managing one case, which came to light on a home visit, and the foster carers were actively engaged in a complaint regarding this matter, demonstrating their commitment to deal with such issues. The safeguarding training for foster carers needs to include an awareness of anti-bullying strategies. Recording by foster carers follows the ECM (Every Child Matters) heading, 'Staying Safe' and is focussed on how outcomes are achieved.

The recruitment procedure is monitored by the Directors and Registered Manager and addresses all the requirements. Evidence needs to be provided that all references have been verified with telephone contact and original copies of qualification certificates are sighted. The Panel and other professionals are similarly checked. All social work staff employed by the Agency are qualified and registered with the General Social Care Council and they are trained and experienced in assessment work. One exception to this is a very experienced assessor who is directly supervised by the Registered Manager.

A Panel with experience in childcare monitors the assessment of potential foster carers; the composition of the panel meets the requirements. The standard of assessments presented to the panel is good, as confirmed by the panel chair and the minutes. There will be whole panel training in October 2006 to consider aspects of anti-discriminatory practice and it was suggested in conversation with the panel chair, that this be extended to raise awareness of the needs of children from black and minority ethnic groups.

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 recognize that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

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

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

7, 13 and 31.

Quality of this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Young people have access to a wide range of activities and opportunities, their educational needs are met, but awareness needs to be raised around young people's cultural needs. The Agency offers short break placements.

EVIDENCE:

The Agency provides basic equal opportunities training for foster carers as part of the induction process and it is incorporated into their on-going training programme. In one case foster carers looking after a young person from a minority ethnic background were not addressing his cultural needs. The matching considerations taken into account in this particular case prioritised other needs and the placement is proceeding well. However, there was no evidence to show that his ethnic needs had been picked up and the Agency suffers from a lack of resources, or access to specialist advice and services in this area. In discussion with the Agency it appears a number of useful contacts are available to them and they will be approached to provide support, training and consultancy to foster carers and the fostering panel; also the Agency are attempting to recruit more foster carers from a range of backgrounds. Good evidence was available to suggest that foster carers provide encouragement and equal access to opportunities and a wide range of activities, in order to develop the young people's talents, interests and hobbies. Some very good examples of this were observed when visiting foster homes. Young people were actively involved in the families' lifestyles and interests and foster carers

commented on how their confidence and self-esteem seemed to grow, alongside developing new skills and taking responsibilities around the home.

Foster carers are active in ensuring appropriate education is provided for all the young people. The Agency uses the consultancy services of an experienced Looked After Children (LAC) Education Advisor who is also a fostering panel member. She provides an advisory service to supervising social workers and carers, when young people are having difficulties. The Agency is in the process of appointing a support worker to promote and support the young people to develop social skills and abilities through activities.

Foster carers skilled in providing care for young people with disabilities are available to offer short-term breaks for families in need of respite. Currently one such placement is working successfully.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

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

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

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

10 and 11.

Quality of this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. There are good systems in place that promote safe contact between young people and their birth families. The Agency enables all parties concerned with the care of the young people to contribute their views, so that positive outcomes are achieved.

EVIDENCE:

Feedback from the young people shows that their foster families welcome their friends and birth family members, where this is appropriate. The foster carers and placing social workers enable contact away from the home, when this is necessary, however risk assessments were not in place to safeguard those involved. The Agency offers training and guidance to support foster carers in this area of work and the recording viewed was of a high standard. All foster carers were clear about their responsibilities regarding contact and Inspectors found evidence of good practice regarding work with birth families.

Feedback is sought from the young people, the foster carers and their children on their experience of fostering; the responses all indicated a high level of satisfaction. Following an outing for foster families to Thorpe Park, one young person offered the suggestion that a summer barbecue be held at his foster home. This took place, was fully funded by the Agency and was very successful. An outing is planned for the children of foster carers and they have chosen a trip to the theatre. The fostered young people are encouraged to attend their Looked After Children (LAC) reviews and notes were found on file, with one exception when no reviews had been held since the placement began in May. This had not been followed up by the Agency. Foster carers reported to the Inspectors that they felt the Agency valued their views; these are often

collected at support meetings where foster carers can discuss issues together with Agency staff. All of the young people said that they knew how to make a complaint. One currently in process was about the local authority regarding a change of placement, which was being questioned by the young person who was in turn being supported by his foster carers. They had enabled him to write a letter to the local authority, Roger Morgan, the Children's Rights Commissioner and Al Aynsley-Green, the Children's Commissioner. One other complaint had been received by the Agency and responded to appropriately.

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):

There are no key standards to assess in this section of the report and no concerns have been raised since the last inspection or in recent reports.

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 recognized 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 recognize the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, 24 and 32 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

4,17,21,23 and 24.

Quality of this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The service operates with a well-qualified team of staff and a range of foster carers that co-operate well to meet the needs of the young people. Case records are of a good standard, but some improvements could be made to the monitoring of the service and the training programme.

EVIDENCE:

The Agency has a clear management structure and staff are clear about their roles. The Agency provides good information to their foster carers and other organisations that work in partnership with them and there are proper financial procedures in place. Some monitoring of the Agency's performance is being formally carried out, such as file checks, but throughout the report a number of areas where closer scrutiny is needed have been identified, for example the foster placement agreements, the management of medication, incidents of bullying and the regularity of reviews.

Staff working for the Agency are suitably qualified and access training to update their knowledge and skills. Foster carers feel that there are adequate staff to meet their needs and the needs of the young people placed. The Agency recognise that a greater number of foster carers with specialist skills is needed to match the needs of the young people referred and targeted recruitment is being carried out, which includes advertising in a range of periodicals and a planned radio campaign. Eleven new prospective foster carers are currently working towards approval and an additional social worker and support worker are being recruited. Nine foster carers have attained NVQ Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People, three have signed up for the same course and a further two have other relevant qualifications.

The strategy for supporting foster carers includes fortnightly visits from a supervising social worker and an on-call service that foster carers feel they can rely on. The visits are recorded on the files of both foster carers and the young people. The supervision notes are offered to all foster carers as a record of their performance. Annual performance reviews have not yet taken place as the service has only been operating since October 2005. Feedback from all foster carers contacted regarding the support they receive was very good, particularly those with less experience, who felt the level of support was excellent and helped them a great deal when they first started. The young people and foster carers receive a newsletter, containing information about the Company, its staff, training and other topical issues; this is designed to keep everyone in a wide geographical area informed and updated. According to the foster carers, working partnerships between placing social workers and the supervising social workers are good.

Within the report some training shortfalls have been identified, anti-bullying strategies, raising awareness of young people from black and minority ethnic groups and the management of medication, although foster carers rate highly the level of training offered. Training is included in the foster care agreement, but it needs to be clear when training is mandatory, where timescales are

applied and when updates are relevant, together with the likely outcome for foster carers who do not attend the required sessions.

Comprehensive case records are maintained for all young people and placing social workers receive monthly updates on their progress. These are under the new ECM headings and detail progress made. The young people are encouraged by their foster carers to view and add a comment. They are also helped to keep a record of their life while fostered. This takes a variety of forms, such as photographs and souvenirs and some foster carers help them to produce interesting memory boxes. Reports are prepared by supervising social workers for LAC reviews, in collaboration with the foster carers and the young people where appropriate. Suitable facilities were used for the storage of records and information. Supervising social workers monitor all aspects of foster carers' performance including recording, but a full checklist is not in place to indicate when this is carried out or any shortfalls identified, this would be helpful when undertaking reviews.

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	2
15	3
30	3

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

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

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

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	X
2	X
4	2
5	X
16	X
17	3
18	X
19	X
20	X
21	4
22	X
23	2
24	3
25	X
26	X
27	X
28	X
32	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	FS9	11(a)	That a risk assessment is drawn up for each young person placed.	30/11/06
2	FS4	11(a)	Monitoring systems must include the completion of foster placement agreements, the incidence of bullying, the regularity of reviews and recording completed by foster carers.	30/11/06
3	FS23	11 (a)	That training in the management of medication is delivered to all foster carers as part of their induction and that anti-bullying strategies and cultural diversity awareness are included in the core-training programme.	30/11/06

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	FS8	That any shortfalls in the matching process are identified and recorded.

2	FS15	That evidence is supplied to show that all references are verified with telephone contact and original qualification certificates are presented.
3	FS17	That training expectations are clearly set out in the foster care agreement.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Hampshire Office

4th Floor Overline House

Blechynden Terrace

Southampton

SO15 1GW

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: 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