



Making Social Care  
Better for People

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

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

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

*Lead Inspector*  
Sophie Wood

*Announced Inspection*  
28th November 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](http://www.dh.gov.uk) or obtained from The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

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

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

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

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

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# SERVICE INFORMATION

<b>Name of service</b>	Barnardo`s Apex Project
<b>Address</b>	128 London Road Southborough Tunbridge Wells Kent TN4 0PL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01892 510650
<b>Fax number</b>	
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<b>Provider Web address</b>	
<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Barnardo`s London, East Anglia & South East Region
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Mr Robert Ivan Sharpe
<b>Type of registration</b>	Fostering Agencies
<b>No. of places registered (if applicable)</b>	16
<b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>	

# SERVICE INFORMATION

## Conditions of registration:

**Date of last inspection**      3rd February 2005

## Brief Description of the Service:

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

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

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

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

The agency accommodates children with disabilities, asylum – seeking minors and sibling groups.

# SUMMARY

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

This announced inspection commenced on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2005 and was conducted over a five - day period.

Time was spent interviewing the registered manager and agency staff. Written records were scrutinised, along with other pertinent documentation, such as policies, procedures and monitoring systems. Files pertaining to carers, young people and staff were also inspected.

Carers and young people were visited and interviewed in their own homes and a training session was observed.

Additional information was obtained through receipt of the manager's self – assessment form and pre – inspection questionnaire. Additional questionnaires were also received from carers, young people and placing officers.

Evidence obtained from this inspection demonstrated positive outcomes for young people; placements are carefully matched and carers receive the ongoing training, guidance and support needed to maximise their skills to provide nurturing, appropriate placements for those in their care.

Young people regularly reported that their carers consult them and ask for their opinions.

Quotes within the returned questionnaires from young people included:

"They care about me and help me"

"I don't need to change anything about living here"

"Living here is very good"

Placing Officer quotes included:

"The carers go above and beyond what is expected of foster carers"

"The carers clearly have a long – term commitment to this young person"

"The care provided is of an excellent standard"

All questionnaires received from placing officers stated that young people were being appropriately supported and many went on to commend the work of the carers. When asked about the agency, the majority reported a very positive working relationship, however; a small number commented that they had not received a copy of the agency's statement of purpose or complaint's procedure.

No 'negative' comments were received from the 11 questionnaires received from carers and statements included:

"The support is excellent"

"Excellent staff..... total back up"

"The support is second to none"

"I am proud to be a foster carer for Barnardos"

The agency has worked hard to implement the majority of the requirements and recommendations made from the previous inspection visit. It has also implemented additional improvements to standards, which were already met, demonstrating a desire to continue to build upon current good practice.

This particular visit has produced a small number of requirements and recommendations, which were positively received by the registered manager at the feedback meeting.

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

Children and young people are well – matched; the agency rarely makes emergency placements.

Carers receive the supervision, support and training they need to effectively fulfil their role in providing placements that meet the needs of those accommodated.

Positive and respectful professional relationships exist between the agency staff and carers.

Clear monitoring systems ensure the agency continues to strive to improve upon its current good practice.

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

Details pertaining to the health needs of young people have improved and are better documented.

Consultation processes with carers and other stakeholders have significantly improved.

Greater emphasis has been placed upon developing policies, procedures and training in relation to young people preparing for adulthood / leaving care. Carers have received additional guidance pertaining to record keeping and they are now in receipt of clearly recorded 'unannounced' visits from their supervising social workers.

An interactive CD-ROM, explaining the role and function of the agency, has been developed exclusively for the younger children placed.

Further to a previous inspection requirement, a clear system is now in place with regards the quality assurance monitoring of the agency and the written reports generated from this exercise are being forwarded to the Commission.

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

Personnel information, in respect of the employees of the agency, needs to be transferred from 'Head Office' to this particular office in order that it is fully available for inspection purposes.

A review of some of the records held by the agency would improve upon this aspect.

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

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

# **DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS**

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

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

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

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

Children and young people benefit from having their health needs identified, provided for and monitored.

Young people would enjoy further benefits with 'health promotion' training being provided to their carers.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Through the inspection of files, evidence was found to demonstrate that information pertaining to a young person's medical and general health history is requested from placing agencies at the referral stage. Wherever such information is not forthcoming, it is 'chased'.

The carers interviewed were keenly aware of their own responsibilities in terms of meeting the health needs of those in their care and review meeting minutes held clear information pertaining to health appointments being made and supported. The health needs of young people are also monitored and recorded through the visits conducted by supervising social workers.

Whilst this topic is covered throughout carer induction and ongoing training, it is recommended that further improvements should include:

1. Additional training / guidance with regards 'health promotion' topics,
2. Clearer, separate records indicating that all immunisations and specific health care needs are being recorded / monitored in writing.

The evidence obtained throughout the course of this inspection found that the records held in respect of meeting the health - care needs of children do not do justice to the actual practice of carers and agency staff.

# Staying Safe

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

- Any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable. (NMS 3)
- The fostering service provides suitable foster carers.(NMS 6)
- The service matches children to carers appropriately.(NMS 8)
- The fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect.(NMS 9)
- The people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people.(NMS 15)
- Fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively.(NMS 30)

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

**JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):**  
3, 6, 8, 9, 15, 30.

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

## **EVIDENCE:**

All members of staff of the agency possess the qualifications and experience commensurate with their roles and functions. This was demonstrated through the inspection of staff personnel files and training records.

Prospective carers are subject to thorough assessment processes, subsequently followed by detailed annual reviews.

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

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

A detailed recruitment policy and procedure is in place and this describes the selection processes, including references and other checks, which have to be obtained before a candidate can take up their post. Such procedures also apply to prospective Panel members. Upon closer inspection, it was found that some

of the required personnel information is held at the organisation's Head Office, within the Human Resources department. A requirement is made to review the personnel information, in respect of all persons working for the agency, including Panel members and sessional workers, against Schedules 1 and 2 of the Fostering Regulations and to ensure this is held at the agency office for the purposes of inspection.

The Panel continues to operate according to requirements. An experienced independent chairperson is supported by a group of individuals who possess sound and relevant qualifications and experience in various childcare settings. Minutes of previous Panel meetings were scrutinised; these showed evidence of rigorous questioning of assessments and carer annual reviews being held on time. The Panel has access to medical expertise when needed.

# Enjoying and Achieving

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

- The fostering service values diversity.(NMS 7)
- The fostering service promotes educational achievement.(NMS 13)
- When foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child.(NMS 31)

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

**JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):**  
7, 13.

Diversity among carers and young people is actively promoted and celebrated. Young people receive the support they need to realise their academic potential.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The policies and procedures of the organisation pertaining to equal opportunities and anti – discriminatory practice are embedded in the procedures for carer and staff recruitment and the making of placements. Evidence demonstrated that carers are recruited from a range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds; this has led to young people, particularly those from overseas, being placed with carers who are able to promote their identity and heritage from a sympathetic and knowledgeable point of view.

A training session, 'Cultural Awareness' was observed and carers stated, "This was excellent. It really heightens your awareness of the need to understand the backgrounds of children".

This session, delivered by the agency manager, was particularly informative upon the subject, in that the word 'culture' was not simply explored in terms of ethnicity and race. Diversity within families was discussed and this featured lifestyles, disability and economics.

Carers are clear about their own responsibilities to promote the educational achievement of those in their care. This was demonstrated through speaking with individuals and by examining the contents of care files. Those young people who were 'case tracked' were in receipt of educational placements appropriate to meet their needs and it was evident that agency staff attend school reviews and other such meetings as and when this is needed.

This standard carries a recommendation to ensure that information be provided to carers in writing, which clearly outlines where financial responsibility lies in terms of school uniform, trips, etc and that additional evidence be supplied to demonstrate that school placements, including any exclusions are being monitored by the agency.

# **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, 11.**

Where applicable, positive contacts are actively supported and the agency positively seeks to obtain the views of carers, young people and other stakeholders about its ongoing operation.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The agency provides for a high proportion of asylum – seeking young people and this factor introduces obvious difficulties in terms of maintaining contact with family members. However, for those individuals, who do have significant relationships and friendships more locally, appropriate contacts are maintained and carers work hard to support individuals to broaden their own social networks.

Further evidence was seen within other care files to demonstrate that where contact arrangements are identified within the Placement Agreement, these visits are being appropriately supported.

Since the previous inspection, Barnardos as an organisation has completed a lot of work in terms of consultation with its stakeholders. Evidence was seen to demonstrate how this recent drive has been incorporated into this fostering service, for example:

1. Increased advertising to the public, describing the organisation including its work and principle objectives.
2. Fully ensuring that placing authorities be asked for clear feedback about every placement made on their behalf. (Given the evidence seen, it was somewhat surprising to receive comments from two placing social workers stating they had not received copies of the agency statement of purpose and complaint's procedure. This was shared with the manager at the feedback session).

3. Carers positively enthused about the recent 'breakfast' meeting, to which they were all invited to discuss the operation of the agency and to provide their own views and ideas regarding any improvements they thought could be made.
4. Written records demonstrated that young people in placement and the birth children of carers continue to be regularly consulted. This is through conversations with them during support visits to carers and by way of written questionnaires, sent prior to carers' annual review meetings.
5. Further evidence was seen to demonstrate that meetings similar to the carers' forum have been booked for young people in placement and birth children also.

# Achieving Economic Wellbeing

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

- The fostering service prepares young people for adulthood.(NMS 14)
- The fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified.(NMS 29)

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

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

14, 29.

Young people receive the guidance and advice they need to prepare them for semi and independent living.  
Carers benefit from being paid their agreed allowances and expenses on time.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The area of 'Preparing for Adulthood' has been specifically targeted, following the last inspection. This has led to increased training for carers and this is particularly appropriate given the number of 'teenagers' being placed with the agency.

Contents of care files clearly demonstrated that the agency and carers 'chase' placing authorities when needed, to ensure that transitional plans are up to date and regularly reviewed.

One 'new' carer, with an older child placed, spoke very knowledgably in terms of the very practical ways in which she is supporting the individual in her care. This demonstrated a pragmatic, 'common - sense' approach, aimed at developing important life skills that will be of benefit to the individual.

Records indicated that payments to carers are made on time and are correct. This finding was endorsed by those carers interviewed and no negative comments were received about this subject within the returned questionnaires. Further records showed that carers are provided with written information pertaining to allowances payable each year.

# Management

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

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

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

**JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):**  
1, 2, 4, 5, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

The agency provides clear documentation for all interested parties.  
Carers and children benefit from the leadership and work practices of a qualified, motivated team of professionals.  
The quality of support and training for carers enhances the outcomes for children and young people.  
Financial viability offers ongoing security to all concerned.  
Some administrative records would benefit from being reviewed.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The statement of purpose is clear and informative. Written information for children and young people is specifically tailored to be readily understood; for example, older children are given written literature, which is translated where needed and an interactive CD – ROM has been designed for younger children.

Records support that agency staff possess the qualifications and experience commensurate with their roles and responsibilities. Clear lines of accountability, ongoing training opportunities, excellent support mechanisms in terms of supervision and notwithstanding their own motivation and commitment to the work of the agency, identifies the staff team, including administrative workers, as a particular strength of the agency. This aspect was shared with the Regional Director, who was present at the feedback session. The topic of staff retention was also discussed within the context of recognising that agency workers do carry manageable caseloads and are provided with good training opportunities, however; current terms and conditions remain unfavourably comparable to those of other agencies.

Evidence was seen to demonstrate that sound monitoring mechanisms are continuing to be implemented by the manager and area director. The requirement made from the previous inspection, to conduct regular reviews pertaining to the 'quality of care' and to produce a report on findings, has now been fully implemented.

A number of records and other pertinent documentation were inspected. Children's files contain the information required, including placement agreements and evidence of review meetings. Some had information outstanding from the placing authority, although it was evident the agency had 'chased' this and a number held minimal information pertaining to health needs.

Records pertaining to complaints and allegations are securely held and regularly monitored. The detail held was discussed with the manager, with a recommendation made to review the current format used.

Foster Carer Agreements and the Foster Carer Register need minor amendments; the current contents of both documents should be reviewed against the relevant regulations and schedules.

The premises are readily accessible and secure. Financial processes are robust, with accounts subject to regular auditing.

# SCORING OF OUTCOMES

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

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

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

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

BEING HEALTHY	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>12</b>	2

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

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

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

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

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

NO

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

## STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

No.	Standard	Regulation	Requirement	Timescale for action
1	FS15	20 Schedules 1 & 2	<p>The registered person shall not</p> <p>(a) employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so,</p> <p>This applies to any person in a position to have regular contact with children placed by the fostering service.</p> <p>This requirement is made within the context of ensuring that full and complete personnel records, in respect of all workers, including sessional and panel members, be held on the agency premises.</p> <p>An action plan, detailing how this requirement is to be addressed is to be forwarded to the Commission by the date shown opposite.</p>	20/02/06
2	FS25	22 & 31. Schedule 5.	<p>The registered shall review the contents of the Foster Carer Agreement and Foster carer Register in line with the Fostering Services regulations 2002.</p> <p>An action plan, detailing how this</p>	20/02/06

			requirement is to be addressed is to be received by the Commission by the date shown opposite.	

## 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	12	It is recommended that all children's files be reviewed in terms of the current information held pertaining to their health needs and that further training for carers be provided in terms of 'health promotion' topics.
2	13	It is recommended that greater emphasis be placed upon the monitoring of the educational attainment of children placed, including exclusions and that carers be given clear written information pertaining to their own responsibilities, including financial obligations, with regards supporting the educational needs of those in their care.
3	18	It is recommended that the organisation considers the need to review the current terms and conditions of staff, in terms of ensuring long – term retention.
4	25	It is recommended that the format currently used with regards 'logging' complaints and allegations be reviewed, with particular regard paid to the confidentiality of such records.

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