



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Phoenix Community Care

**The E Base
85 Bounces Road
Edmonton
London
N9 8LD**

Lead Inspector
Mr Peter Allcock

Key Announced Inspection
26th June 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

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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 Phoenix Community Care

Address The E Base
85 Bounces Road
Edmonton
London
N9 8LD

Telephone number 020 8887 6888

Fax number

Email address

Provider Web address

Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable) Phoenix Community Care

Name of registered manager (if applicable) Mrs Pauline Ann Hawkes

Type of registration Fostering Agencies

Category(ies) of registration, with number of places

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 12th September 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Phoenix Community Care is an independent fostering agency registered by the Commission for Social Care Inspection in 2004. The agency states its priority as being to place "children who have come to this country seeking asylum and who are under 15".

The agency is owned and managed by Adrian and Pauline Hawkes, husband and wife. The office is located in Edmonton, on a main road and can be reached by British rail or London buses. There is a well-furnished office where training and meetings can take place. The agency has currently four registered foster carers. Besides being a foster agency, PCC is involved in the provision of support to young persons living in the community with support. This part of the service is not registered by CSI but is run through an arrangement between PCC and placing authorities. From discussions it was understood that the registered providers have other business interests such as NVQ training and full time education for children of different ages. The web address of the agency is www.phoenixcommunity.org.uk.

SUMMARY

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

Peter Allcock undertook this announced inspection, with the fieldwork-taking place between 26th July 30th November 2006. Prior to the fieldwork phase, the inspector read the pre-inspection material provided by the agency, and correspondence on file in the Commission for Social Care Inspection office.

The fieldwork phase of the inspection consisted of two days in the office, and inspection activity included the examination of records, and an interview with the responsible person and the agency manager. A meeting of the agencies panel was attended and the inspector took the opportunity to talk to the chair of the panel following the meeting. Two foster carers were visited, and the inspector spoke to the only child currently placed by the agency.

The inspector would like to thank the responsible persons and staff of the agency for their helpful and professional manner in the conduct of this inspection, and was struck by their strong commitment to providing a good quality service, which gives the inspector confidence that the requirements made in this report will be met, and the good practice recommendation acted upon.

What the service does well:

The agency provides carers who care very much about the children and young people placed with them. Children and young people's Education is valued and supported, as are arrangements for contact with children and young people's family and friends. There are opportunities for consultation, which would benefit from further development, and the child visited during this inspection was clearly very happy in his placement, and frequent requests from children in his road to come out and play football suggested that he was well integrated into his local community.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Since the last inspection, the agency has ensured that there are two references on file for all staff, which ensures that all the necessary checks have been undertaken to ensure that staff employed by the agency are suitable people to work with vulnerable children and young people.

What they could do better:

Following this inspection there are a total of six requirements and a good practice recommendation. Whilst the level of supervision and support to foster carers, it is important that this role is undertaken by a qualified social worker. The operational procedures of the agency's panel and child protection procedures would benefit from updating, and appropriate training would enhance the performance of the panel. The final requirement is that reviews must be undertaken and presented to Panel in a timely manner.

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

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Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

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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 from evidence gathered both during and before the visit to this service.

Children and young people are placed with carers who will promote their health and development.

EVIDENCE:

NMS 12 – Health and Development

There are policies and procedures in place setting out the responsibilities of foster carers in promoting the health and welfare of children and young people. Both foster carers visited during this inspection were aware of their responsibilities to ensure registration with a local GP and provide access to regular dental and opticians checks. Both foster carers visited during this inspection were aware of their responsibilities, and the child currently placed by the agency had recently had their annual medical. The child visited by the inspector described how his carers encouraged him to look after himself, and to eat a healthy diet.

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, 30

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made from evidence gathered both during and before the visit to this service.

Children and young people placed by the agency benefit from living with foster carers who are suitable to care for vulnerable children and young people, and to whom they are suitable matched. The child protection procedures do not offer sufficient clarity to guide staff and foster carers sufficiently in the safeguarding of the welfare of children and young people.

Panel members would benefit from training to increase the effectiveness with which it discharges its responsibilities.

EVIDENCE:

NMS 3 – Suitability of Responsible Persons

Documentation held by the Commission for Social Care Inspection as part of the registration process, and staff files held by the agency, contain evidence that demonstrate that the appropriate checks and references have been undertaken to ensure that the persons carrying on and managing the agency, are suitable persons to run a business concerned with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.

NMS 6 – Suitability of Foster Carers

The inspector visited two foster carers, who were providing homely accommodation for young people. Both foster carers confirmed that the agency had given their homes a health and safety inspection as part of her assessment to be a foster carer, and that basic health and safety had been part of their introductory training.

Both foster carers visited during this inspection were aware that they could be interviewed or visited as part of the Commission's inspection processes.

NMS 8 – Matching

The registered manager of the agency told the inspector that she would consider carefully the skills and preferences of foster carers as part of the matching process prior to sending information to a placing authority. Where possible the agency would offer a carer of the same cultural background to the child. The inspector saw that one foster family is caring sensitively for a child in a transracial placement, and they have worked hard with the support of the agency to ensure that the child is given a positive understanding of his heritage.

NMS 9 – Child Protection

The agency provides written guidance to foster carers with regard to child protection, procedures for children and young people who are missing from care, bullying, including signs to look for, and managing difficult behaviour.

The child protection procedure requires amendment to ensure that the procedures following an allegation are as set out in the London Child Protection Procedures.

NMS 15 – Suitability of Staff

The inspector read staff files during the inspection, and following a requirement made at the last inspection, all files contained two written references, and an appropriate enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau.

NMS 30 – Fostering Panel

The panel chair is a director of an associate company to that of the agency, and it is recommended that the responsible persons consider the appointment of an independent chair. The vice chair is also a director of the agency. The panel membership includes members with experience of being looked after, as a foster carer, in education and there is also a medical adviser. The panel has met on four previous occasions and the meeting on the 30th October was attended by the inspector, who also read the records of the previous panel meetings.

The agency has a written protocol for the operation of its panel. This document requires a number of revisions as described below:

1. The referral of decisions about which the panel is unable to agree to another agency is appropriate as this could breach matters of confidentiality with regard to foster carers or children and young people.
2. The panel procedures describe how panel recommendations will be notified in writing to foster carers and social workers. Given that the panel makes recommendations, it is more appropriate for the decisions of the agencies decision maker to be notified in writing to the relevant people.
3. The agency must develop a protocol for managing exemptions and the role of the panel in this aspect of their work.

The panel was convened at short notice to consider the annual reviews of two foster carers. These reviews were a year overdue, and a requirement in relation to this is made under national minimum standard 21. Two panel members informed the chair that for various reasons, they had been unable to read the documentation sent out prior to the meeting. There was also no minute taker present. These procedural lapses are disappointing, and the responsible persons must ensure that all panel members are given appropriate training in their responsibilities as panel members.

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, 31

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made from evidence gathered both during and before the visit to this service.

Children and young people benefit from placements with foster carers who promote equal opportunities, value diversity and who will support their educational achievement. Foster Carers benefit from the provision of respite support by the agency.

EVIDENCE:

NMS 7 – Diversity

The agency has a written equal opportunities policy and has been successful in recruiting carers from a diverse range of backgrounds. The inspector visited one placement where carers were providing a home for a child from a different cultural and ethnic background to themselves. The inspector was impressed by the efforts the foster carers had made to ensure that the child had access to information about their culture, the opportunity to make contact with people from his community and to enjoy culturally appropriate food. The inspector noted that the foster carers had taken the trouble to learn a number of phrases of the child's language and that in formal meetings attended by the child an interpreter was provided.

NMS 13 – Education

The responsible persons told the inspector that the agency places a high priority on the education of the young people that it places, and the child currently placed had an up to date personal education plan. The foster carers visited were able to describe how they supported the education of children and young people placed with them by liaising appropriately with schools, and attending meetings and open evenings. One child told the inspector how much he enjoyed playing football at school, and how his foster carer helped him with homework, which he did not enjoy, quite so much.

There is a lecturer on the agency's panel, who can provide an educational perspective on the assessment of new carers, and through the review system, the quality of support for young people's education offered by foster carers.

NMS 31 – Short term Breaks

The responsible persons told the inspector that existing foster carers currently without placements were willing and able to provide respite care for other carers if required. Given that there are currently six approved foster carers and only one child placed, the agency has sufficient resources to provide respite support to foster carers without specifically recruiting respite carers.

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

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made from evidence gathered both during and before the visit to this service.

Children and young people benefit from the maintenance of their important relationships with family and friends through supported contact arrangements, and can feel confident that their views about their day-to-day lives and their future will be listened to.

EVIDENCE:

NMS 10 – Contact

Arrangements for contact are set out in each placement plan, and there was evidence of liaison between the agency and placing authorities to ensure that contact arrangements were maintained. The two foster carers spoken to during this inspection were clear as to the importance of supporting contact arrangements.

NMS 11 – Consultation

The agency has a complaints procedure, which is included in the children and young people's guide. Where appropriate the agency has supported consultation with young people by supplying an interpreter to ensure that their views are fully heard. One child told the inspector that his foster carers often ask him about activities, or his preferred food. Records of regular visits by the agency's support worker demonstrate that he always takes the opportunity to talk to the child alone to ascertain his views.

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):

29

Quality in this outcome area is adequate. This judgement has been made from evidence gathered both during and before the visit to this service.

The failure to consistently pay carers on time may have a negative impact on the welfare of children and young people whom the agency places.

EVIDENCE:

NMS 29 – Allowances and Expenses

Both the foster carers visited during this inspection told the inspector that there were on occasion delays in the payment of their allowances. The inspector discussed this situation with the responsible persons who explained that they had encountered some difficulties when payments from placing authorities were made late. Whilst the inspector understands that such late payments place particular burdens on very small agencies such as Phoenix, it is important that foster carers are paid on time to avoid a negative impact on their family lives, which in turn could impact on the welfare of looked after children. The responsible persons must therefore ensure that there are systems in place to ensure the timely payment of foster carers allowances.

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):

17, 21, 22, 24

Quality in this outcome area is adequate. This judgement has been made from evidence gathered both during and before the visit to this service.

Children and young people benefit from the care of foster carers who have been rigorously assessed as suitable persons to care for vulnerable children

and young people. Although of good quality, the supervision of foster carers must be undertaken by an appropriately qualified member of staff.

Children and young people may be disadvantaged by the failure to undertake the timely review of their carers, and the absence of case recording guidance to ensure that important events in their lives are appropriately recorded.

EVIDENCE:

NMS 17 - Experience and Qualifications of Staff and Carers

The agency employs a supporting social worker who is currently unqualified, but is studying for the Diploma in Social Work. His work is supervised by an experienced and qualified social worker employed by the agency on consultancy basis.

There is a clearly set out process for the assessment of foster carers based on the British Association of Adoption and Fostering form F, and includes consideration of all the matters set out in national minimum standards 17.6 and 17.7 in considering the suitability of applicants to become foster carers.

NMS 21 – Supporting Carers

The strategy for supporting foster carers clearly describes the support and supervision of carers, but the provision of appropriate training must be developed as a matter of priority over the next year.

As noted under national minimum standard 30, the reviews presented to panel were a year overdue, and the inspector shares the view of the chair of panel that this is not acceptable. It is clear that a lot of work has been done to develop a comprehensive review system, and those presented were of good quality, however the responsible persons must ensure that this situation does not arise again, and that annual reviews are undertaken and presented to panel in a timely manner.

NMS 22 – Supervision of Carers

The agency has a clearly structured Foster Carers Agreement, which includes all the matters set out in Schedule 5, Regulation 28(5)(b) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2001. The agency has provided written information to carers on making complaints or representations.

Both the foster carers spoken to during this were full of praise for the support they received from the social worker employed by the agency, and records seen during this inspection demonstrated that he performs this role with reliability, diligence and skill.

The inspector discussed the implications of national minimum standard 22.3, with the responsible persons, which clearly states that foster carers must be supervised by a suitably qualified and experienced social worker. There is no leeway allowable under this standard, and therefore it is a requirement of this report that the agency ensures that the supervision of foster carers is undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced social worker.

NMS 24 – Case Records

The agency does not have a written policy on case recording, and the responsible persons must rectify this omission as a requirement of this inspection. Both foster carers visited during this inspection were aware of the records they were required to keep. Case records required to be kept by the agency as set out in Schedule 2, Regulation 22 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2001 were seen to be appropriately kept.

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	2

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	2

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	X
2	X
4	X
5	X
16	X
17	3
18	X
19	X
20	X
21	2
22	2
23	X
24	2
25	X
26	X
27	X
28	X
32	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	FS9	12(2)(b)	The responsible persons must amend the child protection procedure to ensure that the procedures following an allegation are as set out in the London Child Protection Procedures.	30/03/07
2	FS30	26	The panel protocols require amendment as set out in the body of this report.	30/03/07
3	FS30	20(3)(b)	The responsible persons must ensure that all panel members are given appropriate training in their responsibilities as panel members.	30/03/07
4	FS29	44(1)	The responsible persons must ensure that there are systems in place to ensure the timely payment of foster carers allowances.	30/03/07
5	FS21	29(1)(2)	The responsible persons must ensure that annual reviews are undertaken and presented to panel in a timely manner.	30/03/07
6	FS22	17(1)	The responsible persons must ensure foster carers are supervised by a suitably qualified and experienced social worker.	30/03/07
7	FS24	22	The responsible persons must	30/03/07

			put in place a policy and procedures on case recording.	
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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	FS30	It is recommended that the responsible persons consider the appointment of an independent panel chair

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1	FS30	It is recommended that the responsible persons consider the appointment of an independent panel chair

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