



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Barnardo`s Brighton & Hove Link Plus

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

Lead Inspector
Lindy Latreille

Announced Inspection
6th February 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
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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	Barnardo`s Brighton & Hove Link Plus
Address	Brighton & Hove Link Plus 55 Drove Road Portslade East Sussex BN41 2PA
Telephone number	01273 295179
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Barnardo`s London, East Anglia & South East Region
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mrs Georgina Ann Armstrong
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies
No. of places registered (if applicable)	0
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 14th January 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Brighton and Hove Link Plus is a jointly funded project between Brighton and Hove City Council and Barnardo's, providing predominantly short-break foster care to children and young people with disabilities. Brighton and Hove Link Plus had eighty-three (83) individual carers; with 3 young people receiving full-time care who also receive short-term care; and eighty (80) children and young people receiving a mixture of short-break care and day care.

There are twenty-seven (27) additional carers providing day care. The service is not required to register as a provider of domiciliary care as the day care is provided in the carer's own home. However the service manager is aware that where children are aged less than eight years the carer is required to register with OFSTED as a childminder.

At the time of this inspection Brighton and Hove Link Plus had an experienced Registered Manager and 4.5 supervising social workers, an administrator and a secretarial assistant. The agency shares the Brighton and Hove City Fostering Service fostering panel, which has an independent chair. The panel is responsible for approving all foster carers for Link Plus and any changes to carers' approval status.

SUMMARY

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

This was an announced inspection carried out by two Inspectors from 10.00 to 17.45. Prior to the inspection questionnaires were sent to all foster carers and twelve were returned and comments were all of a positive nature. Three visits were made to carers and one coincided with the young person placed for short break being present and her social worker. The Lead Inspector attended the Fostering Panel on 04/01/2006, which was a thorough and robust event. At the inspection interviews were conducted with the Registered Manager, two staff members and a University student in placement. Training records, staff files and inductions and carer's files were read. Three full time foster carers were telephoned after the inspection and were mostly positive in their experiences of the service, one theme that was mentioned by two was the difficulty of getting respite in the holidays and the early completion of that respite due to the residential unit sending the young people home when having to admit an emergency. The Registered Manager felt that the responsibility for the arrangements lay with Brighton and Hove Social Services and that Barnardo's had no influence the residential provision.

What the service does well:

The service provides short breaks for young people with a physical, learning; (severe or moderate), or sensory disability or challenging behaviour. The six monthly report for contract meeting confirmed that sixty-six carers provided a service for eighty young people, which is in excess of the service level agreement. Care includes full time fostering, shared care, overnight, day care, befriending, and care in the children's home. There is a robust training programme that follows a thorough assessment over time. All carers have their Criminal Records Bureau checks renewed every three years and all visitors to the carers home are also checked. Carers felt that they were well supported by their supervising social worker and kept informed of changes, training or other relevant issues. There is a low turnover of staff and only a small number of carers left the service for re-location and family reasons.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The service has appointed a deputy manager, which has been successful. Though most of the carers are white British there has been further recruitment of carers with a wider ethnicity. Closer working of the service with the outreach provision has meant that young people can be provided with a service whilst remaining on the waiting list. There have been an increased number of young people attending their reviews. A consultation group of parents has been formed to discuss policies and procedures and how the service is meeting identified needs. A training need was identified following a piece of work by one of the supervising social workers and whole staff training was carried out

with regional management support. The service is moving closer to a paperless organisation and staff continue to be supported with I.T. training.

What they could do better:

A matrix of staff training would allow an overview that would identify current training achieved. Similarly one for carers, as some carers persistently state that they are not able to attend and at present there is no quick access to this information. The accommodation of the service, provided by Brighton and Hove City Council, is not ideal for a disability service as access is via a fire escape and there is no lift. These factors prevent the service being used as a drop-in. Looked After Children (LAC) documentation is often very late being sent to the supervising social worker. At present most chasing for review reports is done by telephone. If this were carried out by e-mail there could be a copy in the file supporting the quality assurance audit. When the administration of a specific medication requires training it is essential that the competence of the care is current, training has been completed and the date for the review of this procedure. As an external trainer delivers this it is essential that the credibility of the trainer be maintained within the service.

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 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.

The service promotes the holistic health of the young people through the support and training to carers.

EVIDENCE:

Carers confirmed that they felt informed about the young people that were placed with them. As this is a short break service the parents retain the responsibility for actioning health appointments, except for fulltime carers who confirmed that they action this. Consent was in the carer's file when a young person might need the administration of a specific medication. Where specialist training is required the service should clearly document when such training has been completed and when the carers' competence will be reviewed in the future. The LAC informs the carers about changes and copies were appropriate held in the records. A wide range of training supports the carer in their knowledge of health and their supervision and annual reviews give one to one time with the supervising social worker to discuss issues.

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 and 15.

The Registered Manager is experienced with in fostering and considered by staff and foster carers to be effective. Most foster carers have experience of young people with disabilities and provide a positive experience with each short break provided. Supervising social workers are careful in their matching and the outcomes are successful. Robust initial training and clear procedures protect each young person from abuse and neglect. Recruitment of staff to the service is thorough and incorporates their experience in the process. The fostering panel was well organised and thorough providing sound outcomes for young people.

EVIDENCE:

The Registered Manager is very experienced, and has just completed a five-year appointment as chair of the Shared Care Network. The regional manager effectively supervises her and is involved in some aspects of staff training. The Registered Manager presents a comprehensive report each six months to the Brighton and Hove City Council and to Barnardo's. She has a Criminal Records Bureau check renewed every three years.

Most of the foster carers recruited have past or present contact with young people with disabilities. A large part of the recruitment is done by word of mouth. The assessment process is thorough and takes place over time. The

prep training meets the needs of the foster carers and gives them the opportunity to socialise with others. Foster carers were positive about the training and the staff who delivered it.

Social workers spoke of their considerations when matching and the outcomes were positive with few breakdowns. They commented that ethnicity was always a factor but the prime need was the foster carers could manage the young people's needs. Feedback from foster carers confirmed that the process of matching was unrushed and child led.

Protection from abuse is managed through careful recruitment, sound assessment and robust prep training. Foster carers commented that training was detailed and gave considerable time to learning and exchange of information. Ongoing training is offered through Brighton and Hove and also Barnardo's. Many of the foster carers have links with education or other services for young people with disabilities and so gain a lot of training through their other employment. At present there is no overview that details the foster carers currency of training except in the annual review. With all the information kept in individual files a quality assurance audit is difficult. Training is offered to foster carers when specific medication is given that requires a current competence. The efficiency of this training and the credentials of the trainer were not able to be established from records.

Experienced temporary staff have been recruited to cover maternity leave. Their records confirmed that good practice in recruitment had been followed. There was evidence of comprehensive induction units in progress; some areas were incomplete as there was uncertainty as to how to complete. Barnardo's were unable to clarify but advice was being sought. There is a low turnover of staff, the last person to leave retired. The service has had student placements throughout the past year and their work has been appropriately supervised.

The fostering panel was attended on 04/01/2006. The administration for the meeting was thorough. The panel was informed from papers sent out earlier, and the chair engaged with all members to gain the most informed view. Difficult decisions were made with due deliberation and the panel were aware of the experience for prospective foster carers and endeavoured to put them at their ease.

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 and 31.

The service promotes diversity through good practice and training to positive outcomes. Foster carers attend the reviews when they are combined with education. Carers have good verbal and written contact with parents and ensure that they are fully informed at all times.

EVIDENCE:

Positive diversity is recognised through recruitment and training of staff and carers. LAC reviews were seen to comment, " the ethnic and racial origins was met in this placement ". Feedback from carers was informed and positive to meet the cultural needs of young people placed. Staff spoke of support to attend a Black Workers Conference.

Most short break foster carers have no contact with education as their care is frequently during weekends or holidays. When a Looked After Children (LAC) review is combined with education then the foster carers will often attend. It is different for the fulltime foster carers who attend everything connected with their young person.

Feedback from short break foster carers confirmed frequent communication with parents with an obvious recognition that the parents remained the main carers who make the decisions about their child's health and education.

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.

Carers ensure positive contact with the young person's parents as require in their foster carers agreement. The service offers consultation at every point of care given or received in an open and transparent manner.

EVIDENCE:

Most of the short break foster carers do not need to action contact with parents as parents may deliver and or collect their young people. However for full time foster carers they are guided by the social worker as to whether contact is appropriate and the manner in which it is carried out. Fulltime foster carers confirmed arrangements for contact and the support needed for the young person to understand how this is significant in their lives.

The young people's views are sought prior to their reviews if they are unable to attend. There is a short break agreement for the young people in pictorial form and the content is appropriate for seeking their views at other occasions. The foster carers contribute their views in their annual review; to which young people and parents contribute also. Parents and foster carers assist in the preparation classes to ensure consistency. A consultation group of parents and foster carers has been set up to discuss policies and procedures and to look at how well the service is meeting identified needs.

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.

Carers receive their due allowances within the time frame.

EVIDENCE:

From the feedback received from carers no one had any issues about payment of allowances or agreed expenses. Foster carers visited were clearly using the allowances for the activities and outings for the young people placed with them.

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):

17,21,24 and 26.

The service is staffed with experienced and qualified staff that manage their work effectively. The support to foster carers is strategic and regular and fulfils the needs of carers. The case records for the young people are comprehensive, informed and current.

EVIDENCE:

The staff team is depleted of local experience as two supervising social workers are on maternity leave. The service has been able to recruit experienced temporary replacements that are moving forward with local knowledge. Both staff commented on the appropriate support that they have received and the open door policy of the Registered Manager, and felt that they are establishing themselves into their positions.

Feedback from carers was most positive around their recruitment, training and ongoing support. All felt able to raise issues of concern, felt that they were informed and involved in the care that they provide for the young people.

Case records are kept securely and current. Carers are informed of relevant information about the young people that they care for. Documentation from LAC reviews should inform the service and the carers so that agreed work with any young people can be carried out in the light of accepted strategies. Carers keep necessary records and these are read at supervisions and annual reviews. Social worker commented on the delay in receiving information at times following the reviews. Social worker should ensure that their requests for information written and copies are kept in the young person's files.

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	2

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

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	3

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	X
23	X
24	3
25	X
26	3
27	X
28	X
32	X

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	FS12	15(2)(c)	That currency of training for the administration of specific medication is held on file.	31/03/06

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	FS9	That a matrix evidences the training of staff and carers.
2	FS21	That Looked After Children (LAC) documentation is requested in writing and a copy held on file.
3	FS12	Where training is provided externally the credentials of the trainer are held on file.

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