



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Cornerways Fostering Services Ltd

**Lyttel Hall
Coopers Hill Road
Nutfield
Redhill
Surrey
RH1 4HY**

Lead Inspector
Kerry Fell

Announced Inspection
4th January 2006 09:30

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 Cornerways Fostering Services Ltd

Address Lyttel Hall
Coopers Hill Road
Nutfield
Redhill
Surrey
RH1 4HY

Telephone number 01737 824296

Fax number 01737 824291

Email address fostering@cornerways.org

Provider Web address

Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable) Cornerways Fostering Services Ltd

Name of registered manager (if applicable) Ms Fiona Gail Black

Type of registration Fostering Agencies

Category(ies) of registration, with number of places

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 4th February 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

Cornerways Fostering Agency is a registered fostering service providing care to looked after children and is an Independent Fostering Agency run by Cornerways Fostering Services Ltd.

SUMMARY

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

This was an announced inspection that took place during January 2006. The inspectors visited Foster carers on 19th, 20th, and 25th January, with an additional visit made to specifically meet young people on 2nd February 2006. The inspectors reviewed records and met with Supervising Social Workers and other staff during visits to Cornerways Fostering Agency's office on 4th, 12th, 19th, and 24th January 2006. The fostering panel was observed on 24th January 2006, and feedback was given to the agency on 31st January 2006. The inspectors also attended the foster carers support group and the new carers session.

The inspector's case tracked four foster carers, and met with these foster carers and the children or young people placed with the foster carers at the time of the inspection.

What the service does well:

Foster carers met during the inspection were complimentary about the level and quality of the support provided to them by Cornerways. The Manager is highly qualified and experienced, and the fostering panel were observed to be supportive to prospective foster carers, dedicated and effective. The Independent Chair was also experienced and offered good support to the service if required.

A detailed foster carers handbook was available, and the inspector observed that a sound recruitment procedure was in place.

Children and young people advised the inspector that they felt that they could talk to their foster carers and were happy to raise concerns and requests with them.

What has improved since the last inspection?

All requirements made at the last inspection had been met. A letter had been sent to all foster carers to record sanctions. The complaints procedure had been reviewed and updated. Training in medication had been provided to the foster carers.

A signing in book has been introduced in the office.

What they could do better:

Gaps were observed in information supplied to the service by the placing authority, specifically health information. Cornerways must ensure that this information is available in order to assist matching children and young people

with foster carers. Cornerways must report to the CSCI Surrey Local Office about how this will be achieved.

Records held both at the office and by foster carers varied, Cornerways must review records to ensure that they are being maintained in line with their policy and are up-to-date and signed.

Although better information is held with regard to the process of matching, it was not evident during the fostering panel that prospective foster carers were advised fully about the specific details of the selected matching criteria, this must be done.

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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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

Health and development of children and young people is promoted, however not all health information is available on children's files.

EVIDENCE:

The Foster carers handbook contains a detailed section about promoting health that records the carers responsibility with regard to the foster child's health and record keeping, and also gives information and guidance on childhood illnesses, as well as the promotion of safe sexual health, and how and where support can be obtained for children who smoke, drink alcohol or take drugs.

Looked After Children health reviews were observed on the files held by foster carers, and evidence was also observed on these files of how the foster carers supported the children and young people to access relevant health services as required.

Discussions took place during the inspection about obtaining health records from the placing authorities prior to the placement commencing. Although it is recognised that Cornerways always requests this information, it was evident from files held by Cornerways, and discussions with foster carers that this information was not always forthcoming. The inspectors were advised that this information was always followed up once the placement had begun, however one file sampled still did not contain the health information several months into the placement. Health information must be obtained as a high priority where this is currently unavailable. Cornerways must also report to the CSCI Surrey Local Office, what arrangements they will put in place to ensure that this information is obtained prior to the placement commencing, and where this has not occurred records of the subsequent action taken by Cornerways to obtain this information must be kept on file.

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

The Manager is highly qualified and experienced. The Fostering Agency ensures that foster carers are suitable. The Agency takes care to match children to carers appropriately, however, not all of the local authority referral information was available to do this. Not all foster carers have completed child protection training. Sound recruitment procedures are in place. The fostering panel is efficient and effective.

EVIDENCE:

No changes have been made to the management of the agency since the last inspection. The Manager is highly qualified and experienced in fostering and adoption and Social Work, and holds the CQSW and a Bphil in Social Work, and has completed a Diploma in Management to Level 5.

One new qualified social worker has been recruited since the last inspection, and the fostering assistant is currently completing a degree course in social work.

Only the files of the staff recruited since the last inspection was sampled. It was evident from these records that all relevant checks had been completed, and references were followed up by telephone.

Those children and young people met during visits to foster carers were happy with the home, and their bedrooms. Specific comments raised during visits to

foster carers have been feedback to Cornerways Fostering Service under separate cover.

One foster carer has a swimming pool in their garden. Arrangements are being made for a cover to be fitted to this pool. This was identified as an ongoing concern at their annual review, however the agency are confident that whilst arrangements are being completed, every step has been taken to ensure the safety of the children and young people placed at the home. Risk assessments were in place, and foster children are not allowed to access this area unsupervised.

Evidence was available on the files held by Cornerways of the foster carers car insurance being checked, however one file sampled during the inspection did not contain information of the renewed insurance that was due in October 2005. The agency must ensure that records of car insurance are kept up-to-date.

The medication training and policy have been satisfactorily updated since the last inspection.

Health and safety and pet risk assessments are completed prior during the assessment period, however some of these risk assessments had not been dated or signed. All records must be signed and dated.

The matching assessments served as part of the applications considered during the panel observed did contain detailed information about the children or young people that the prospective foster carers felt that they could meet the needs of, however, it was evident from statements made during the panel that these criteria had not always been discussed in detail. This must occur.

Discussions took place throughout the inspection about matching decisions for children with specific ethnic, racial, religious or cultural needs. Cornerways endeavours to arrange appropriate matches wherever possible.

Some carers spoken to felt that some assumptions had been made about their ethnic, racial, cultural and religious background, which had had an affect upon the number of placements being made with them, however further discussions with the manager revealed that in most cases the placing authority had been specific about the type of placement to be made.

Discussions with foster carers, and information from children's records demonstrated that the placing authorities did not always provide all of the required information about the child or young person being referred for placement. It is the CSCI's view that appropriate matching cannot be achieved without full and accurate information being made available at referral, therefore Cornerways must report to the CSCI Surrey Local Office how they

will ensure that all of the required information is made available to prospective carers prior to the placement commencing.

All members of staff have completed training in child protection.

Not all foster carers had attended child protection training, although those carers met during the inspection stated that they had received this training.

Safe care guidelines are shared with all potential foster carers, and each foster carer writes safe care rules during the assessment period. Those observed during the inspection were satisfactory, and detailed that corporal punishment was not acceptable.

Appropriate systems are in place to monitor any allegations made by the children and young people; none had been made about foster carers at the time of the inspection.

Procedures are in place with regard to the unauthorised absence of a child or young person, and evidence was available from notifications to the CSCI Surrey Local Office that these had been followed appropriately.

Not all of the Foster Carers had not received specific training in supporting children and young people who may have been abused. This must be made a priority, especially for those foster carers identified during the inspection. However, it is noted that specific support and training had been provided to individual foster carers where this had been identified as essential to meet the immediate needs of a child placed in their care. It has been reported that five Foster Carers had attended a course in March 2005 entitled "Caring for Children who have been Sexually Abused".

Sound recruitment procedures continued to be in place, and all social work staff are appropriately qualified.

Written policies and procedures are available with regard to the roles and responsibility of members of the fostering panel. Cornerways fostering panel includes a GP and an experienced independent chair, and two experienced independent members, one of whom is a foster carer. The Manager no longer acts as the independent decision maker, this role is now taken on by the company director. The inspector met with the independent decision maker, and the independent chair, both were very clear about ensuring the safety and welfare of the children and young people placed with Cornerways foster carers, and were very clear about the action they would take in the event that they were not satisfied with the decision of the panel.

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

Diversity is respected by Cornerways, and they endeavour to reflect the diversity of needs of the children referred for placement. Specific training is needed for foster carers who support children with disabilities. Educational achievement is promoted. Short-term placements continue to meet the needs of the young people.

EVIDENCE:

Discussions during the inspection identified that Cornerways endeavours to recruit foster carers to meet the diversity of the children and young people that are referred for placement with Cornerways. Foster carers training and induction covers diversity.

Foster carer records, and records of reviews detailed that the children and young people are supported to attend a range of activities and to take part in hobbies that they enjoy.

It was not evident that foster carers received training in communicating with children who may have communication difficulties, or in the specific needs of children with learning disabilities. This must be arranged for those foster carers who support children and young people with these needs.

Foster carers confirmed that their involvement in promoting the children and young people's educational achievement. All of the foster carers met during the inspection stated that they had liaised with the foster child's school, and where appropriate had attended their educational reviews.

The inspector was advised that provision of areas to study are always discussed when prospective foster carers are being assessed. It is recognised that not all children are provided with study space in their bedrooms; however, Cornerways ensures that the foster carer makes provisions for studying elsewhere in the home. This must be kept under review.

Short-term breaks continue to be offered mainly as a respite provision for children and young people placed with other Cornerways foster carers. The procedures for short-term placements remain the same as for long-term placements, this continues to be appropriate for the placements arranged by Cornerways Fostering 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

Contact with friends and relatives are promoted. Children and young people could discuss concerns and make requests.

EVIDENCE:

Appropriate information was available, with regard to contact, on those files sampled during the inspection. Foster carers gave specific details about how they promoted contact for the children and young people. Examples were also given by foster carers about how they had facilitated changes to contact sessions to ensure that these were positive. Foster carers spoken to during the inspection were dedicated to ensuring that contact occurred and were robust in raising concerns about poor facilitation by placing social workers or contact assistants.

Children and young people met during the inspection also commented about positive promotion of contact with relatives and friends.

Children and young people met during the inspection commented that they felt that they could talk to the foster carers about concerns and things that they wanted, and foster carers were observed responding positively and constructively to requests, especially where requests may have been contentious.

Foster children and the foster carers and their family complete questionnaires about the progress of the placement for the annual review.

Foster carers informed the inspector about the contact that they maintain with relatives and the child's social worker in order to discuss issues that may affect the child's daily life.

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

Foster carers were happy with the financial arrangements.

EVIDENCE:

Details of the fostering allowances are recorded in the foster carers handbook. No concerns were identified about how foster carers received their payments, and examples of monthly payments were provided to the inspectors.

Foster carers were happy with financial arrangements, however the Cornerways must ensure that accurate and detailed information is included in the placement agreement and the Looked After Children documentation about pocket money and allowances, as some sampled were incorrect or incomplete.

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):

4,17,19,21,23,24,25,26,27

Good arrangements are in place for the development of the service. Adequate staffing arrangements are in place. Adequate staffing arrangements continue to be in place. Good arrangements are in place to support foster carers. A training programme is available, low attendance needs to be resolved. Records need to be reviewed to ensure that they are up-to-date and signed. The premises continue to be appropriate. A clear business plan is available.

EVIDENCE:

Good arrangements are in place for the development needs of service. Cornerways is developing this into a formal quality assurance programme. Adequate staffing arrangements continue to be in place.

Recruitment of foster carers currently meets the needs of the service, and the Manager stated that it did reflect the needs of the children and young people referred to Cornerways Fostering Service, although it is noted that the Manager was aware of the importance of diversity in the recruitment of foster carers.

Sound assessment procedures are in place. Cornerways uses the BAAF Form F when reporting to the fostering panel.

A programme of training is available, however attendance at courses has been a problem because of the small number of foster carers. Cornerways Fostering Agency hopes that this difficulty will be resolved once more foster carers are recruited. Medication training has been provided to the foster carers.

Prospective foster carers met during the new carers induction day were complimentary about the training provided.

Details of the management and support of foster carers are available in the foster carers handbook.

All foster carers met during the inspection were complimentary about the support that they received, and all stated that they could contact Cornerways staff at any time, and were confident that they would receive a response.

Annual review reports for two foster carers were reviewed during the fostering panel attended by the inspectors. The information available was satisfactory.

It was not evident that there was always good communication with the placing social workers. Both foster carers and members of staff identified difficulties with some placing authorities. These concerns were also identified as part of the fostering panel, as a result of a poor response to questionnaires sent out to placing social workers as part of foster carers annual reviews. In light of these concerns, and the support offered by the Independent Chair and Operations Manager to resolve these issues, a report must be submitted to the CSCI Surrey Local Office on what action Cornerways Fostering Agency plans to deal with and resolve ongoing difficulties with placing authorities.

All carers were positive about the recruitment process, and the new carers training.

Foster carers stated that ample training was available, however attendance was a concern.

An ongoing training programme is in place.

Records were sampled for four foster carers and the young people placed with them.

The quality of the records for the children and young people varied, and in some cases information such as health plans and education plans were missing. Please see comments under.... However, it was evident from foster carers records and conversations had throughout the inspection that all information available to Cornerways was passed directly to the foster carer.

As detailed under standard all required information was not always available. Although it is noted that Cornerways endeavours to obtain this information, evidence of this was not available. Copies of written requests for this information must be kept.

Cornerways have written to all foster carers about the recording of sanctions and other information in the child's records. Record keeping guidelines are detailed in the foster carers handbook, and carers receive a copy of the BAAF leaflet about record keeping. However, the level of detail within records was observed to vary, and it was not always clear that the records were being kept in line with Cornerways' policy. Therefore, the policy for record keeping and the quality of records signed off by supporting social workers must be reviewed and shared with foster carers, the outcome of this review must also be reported to the CSCI Surrey Local Office.

Relevant records were available for members of staff, foster carers, foster children, and complaints, notifications and allegations.

Some records remained unsigned and undated, and it was not always evident that action points identified in foster carer supervision notes were highlighted or actioned. Therefore records must be reviewed to ensure that they remain up-to-date and that they are signed, and that any actions identified have clear outcomes.

No changes have been made to the fostering service offices since the last inspection, therefore they continue to meet this standard.

A signing in book has been introduced since the last inspection.

A clear business plan is available for the service, the service have no concerns about their financial viability.

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	2
9	2
15	3
30	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	2
13	2
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	3
5	X
16	X
17	3
18	X
19	3
20	X
21	2
22	X
23	3
24	2
25	2
26	3
27	3
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	Health information must be obtained as a high priority where this is currently unavailable.	31/03/06
2	FS12	34	Cornerways must report to the CSCI Surrey Local Office, what arrangements they will put in place to ensure that this information is obtained prior to the placement commencing, and where this has not occurred records of the subsequent action taken by Cornerways to obtain this information must be kept on file.	31/03/06
3	FS8	33, 34, 40	All criteria for matching must be fully discussed with prospective foster carers.	31/03/06
4	FS8	33, 34, 40	Cornerways must report to the CSCI Surrey Local Office how they will ensure that all of the required information is made available to prospective carers prior to the placement commencing.	31/03/06
5	FS9	12	Specific training in supporting children and young people who may have been abused must be made a priority.	31/03/06

6	FS7	17(1)	Where appropriate, foster carers must receive training in communicating with children who may have communication difficulties, or in the specific needs of children with learning disabilities.	31/03/06
7	FS13	16 (2)(c)	The suitability of study areas must be kept under review.	31/03/06
8	FS21	33,34, 40	A report must be submitted to the CSCI Surrey Local Office on what action Cornerways Fostering Agency plans to deal with and resolve ongoing difficulties with placing authorities.	30/04/06
9	FS25	30	Records must be reviewed to ensure that they remain up-to-date and that they are signed, and that any actions identified have clear outcomes.	31/03/06
10	FS24	30	The policy for record keeping and the quality of records signed off by supporting social workers must be reviewed and shared with foster carers, the outcome of this review must also be reported to the CSCI Surrey Local Office.	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	FS6	The agency should ensure that records of car insurance are kept up-to-date.

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