



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## FOSTERING SERVICE

### **Anchor Fostercare Services**

**12 Albany Terrace  
Chatham  
Kent  
ME4 6TH**

*Lead Inspector*  
Justine Williams

*Announced Inspection*  
20th February 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

<b>Reader Information</b>	
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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>	Anchor Fostercare Services
<b>Address</b>	12 Albany Terrace Chatham Kent ME4 6TH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 813414
<b>Fax number</b>	01634 829918
<b>Email address</b>	AnchorChatham@btconnect.com
<b>Provider Web address</b>	
<b>Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)</b>	Dr Alistair John Sutherland
<b>Name of registered manager (if applicable)</b>	Mrs Florence Sutherland
<b>Type of registration</b>	Fostering Agencies
<b>Category(ies) of registration, with number of places</b>	

# **SERVICE INFORMATION**

## **Conditions of registration:**

**Date of last inspection**      7th June 2004

## **Brief Description of the Service:**

Anchor fostercare was established by Florence and Alistair Sutherland, they remain the manager and responsible individual respectively.

The agency is small and aims to grow no larger than that required to support around 20 foster homes, be they foster carers who are couples or single foster carers.

The agency has recently expanded and has adjusted its administrative and social work staff accordingly. The agency employs a range of sessional support staff including play therapists, psychotherapists, etc.

Anchor aims to provide medium to long-term care and is currently working on strategies to support young people into independent living and leaving care.

Anchor provides single and sibling group placements for children and young people up to 18 years of age.

# SUMMARY

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

This announced inspection commenced on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2006 and was conducted over five days, by regulation inspectors Justine Williams and Sophie Wood.

Time was spent in the agency office, interviewing the staff team and scrutinising policies and procedures, and other records. The case files of four carers and those children / young people placed with them were case – tracked and these families were all visited in their own homes.

A panel meeting, and support session for carers was observed.

The inspectors met with four foster carers and the foster children in their care. Personnel files were inspected and other relevant records and monitoring systems were read.

Additional inspection material was gained through the receipt of the manager's pre – inspection documentation and questionnaires received from carers, children / young people, and placing officers.

The overall findings at this inspection were very positive with good outcomes for the foster carers and the children and young people in their care, whilst a number of areas have some room for improvement, the majority of these suggestions have been made as 'recommendations', rather than 'requirements', demonstrating that almost every standard has been fully met or exceeded.

Information received through surveys and comment cards indicated a high level of satisfaction with the services provided.

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

The manager has all the necessary skills to manage the agency in addition the agency is clearly run in a manner which delivers the best possible child care.

The manager is to be commended for her effective leadership.

The agency ensures the children are consulted on all relevant matters and children felt empowered.

Staff felt very well supported, listened to, and valued by the manager.

The agency's matching processes are very good, and are evidenced by the length of the placements of children who have had very difficult and transient previous placements.

The agency is small and has retained close supportive relationships with the carers.

The agency is clearly run with the children's best interests at heart.

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

The statement of purpose and service users guides have been amended and now include comprehensive information about the services Anchor offers. Personnel files now contain 2 written references in line with regulation and to better protect children.

Guidance regarding what constitutes a conflict of interest is now contained within the carers handbook.

Comprehensive training is available to foster carers to enable them to care for children with diverse needs.

Placement plans are comprehensive.

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

Quality assurance systems should be formalised to record reviews of the quality of care.

Individualised safe care policies should be developed by foster carers, to better protect children.

Records should be kept of the agency's initial matching processes.

Improvements in record keeping for children's health information is needed.

The agency's own placement agreements should be signed as agreed by the relevant parties.

A clear case recording policy is needed to clarify the agency's expectations of foster carers.

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 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

Children benefit from having their health needs identified and provided for.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The agency strives to learn young peoples and children's medical histories including immunisation status etc. where a young person or child has specific health care needs the agency takes this into account when finding an appropriate carer.

The agency undertakes to provide the appropriate training and support to carers to ensure children and young people are exposed to health promotion, understand healthy eating, sexual health etc (age appropriate)

The information received should be transcribed into a separate health section in the children's files.

A discussion took, place regarding children having their own records similar to the NHS "personal child health record" book, which they could keep and maintain responsibility for

Carers had a clear understanding of their role in maintaining and promoting children's good health. Carers understood that they were responsible for ensuring children in their care attend appointments etc.

The agency said that it is often difficult to obtain all the relevant health information from the placing authority especially with respect to immunisations, however every effort is made to obtain this information.

# 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 service is run by a competent, experienced group, which places children with carers who can meet their needs. There is good evidence to suggest that matching is a significant strength of this agency.

There are robust procedures and practices in place to ensure people who work in or for the agency are suitable to work with children.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The manager ensures that the checks required to safeguard the children are carried out when they are required.

All references given for staff and carers joining the organisation are verified by the manager. Police checks are renewed every 3 years. And records are kept with respect to these checks.

It was evident from observing practice, discussion with staff, carers and children that the fostering agency makes available foster carers who provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment.

Foster carers homes comfortably accommodate those that live there, and are inspected annually on a formal basis, but informally much more frequently. Discussions with young people, children and foster carers, and the length of placements and low break down rate indicated that the one of Anchors strengths is that it matches carers and children very well. Documentation to

support the process of matching particularly when children and carers are initially matched needs to be developed.

Foster carers and staff, receive training in child protection, and foster carers receive training in safe care. The agency has safe care guidelines and policies in place.

Clear guidelines are in place to ensure foster carers are aware that corporal punishment is never used.

There were systems in place to collate and evaluate information regarding allegations of abuse. Evidence of clear and ongoing discussion and support was seen for carers looking after children who are particularly vulnerable.

The agency operates a clear and robust recruitment policy and procedure for appointing staff.

All people working in or for the fostering service are interviewed, provide references which are verified by the manager, CRB and other checks are undertaken. social work staff are appropriately qualified and have the appropriate knowledge and skills to undertake their roles.

Sessional workers are also fully checked.

Unqualified staff do not carry out social work functions.

The agency has recently formed a new fostering panel, there are clear guidelines for the panel to follow in line with regulation and good practice, the panel have undergone training specific to sitting on the panel.

The panel have had the necessary checks including CRB. Individuals come from a wide, diverse background, many are independent members, a foster carer, solicitor, independent special needs tutor, independent social worker, etc.

# 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 among children and carers is valued and young people receive the help they need to reach their academic potential.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The carers currently approved by the agency are predominantly white/ English married couples, however; this is largely reflective of the geographical area served and is certainly not mirrored within the rest of the organisation.

Evidence demonstrated that placements had been made based upon carers' ability to meet needs and this was most definitely observed from the carers and young people visited during the course of this inspection.

The agency continues to try to recruit from various ethnic backgrounds and social groups.

Clear evidence was found that the agency and its carers give high priority to meeting educational achievement by observing the support group. Carers and staff from the agency were acting as children's advocates. The agency provides financial support to bridge gaps left by local authority funding.

The foster placement agreement identifies that carers are responsible for school costs including school trips uniforms and equipment, however this is not always the case in practice. One young person is being part funded by the agency for a trip to the USA as the local authority could not meet the entire costs.

It is recommend that a record be kept of any exclusions from school.

# 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

Children and young people are supported to maintain contact where it is agreed and in their best interests.

The agency actively seeks the views of those using the service.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Anchor records information given by social services regarding contact and adheres to the instructions and advice it receives. Clear evidence was found that the agency seeks the views of the children and young people in its care regarding contact.

Carers are encouraged to promote healthy and positive relationships and contact for children with peers and other networks.

Responses received in questionnaire completed by young people and children indicated that they felt they were listened to, and they felt empowered.

Discussions with carers and agency social workers indicated that the agency was keen to ensure that children's opinions and those of their families and others significant to the child were sought over all issues that were likely to affect their daily life and future.

Children and young people were aware of how to make a complaint.

# 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

Teenagers are provided with comprehensive guidance and advice to prepare them for adult living.

Carers benefit from being paid their agreed allowances on time.

## **EVIDENCE:**

The foster carers handbook provides guidance on what is expected of carers in terms of preparing young people for adulthood and living alone. Training is provided for carers with young people reaching this age. The manager is currently looking into providing accommodation where young people can practice independent living skills within a supported environment.

The allowances and expenses payable to foster carers are made explicitly clear through Foster Carer Agreements and Carer Handbooks. Such allowances are reviewed annually. Carers were satisfied with their payments and confirmed that these are paid correctly and on time.

# 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, 32.

The agency is managed effectively and efficiently. The number and skills of the staff and carers is appropriate for the service.

Case records would be improved by more clear recording of health information. The agency provides appropriate support to the carers. The agency is financially viable.

## **EVIDENCE:**

Anchor have devised a statement of purpose which includes the aims and objectives of the service.

Not all the young people or children spoken with could remember if they had received the children's guide however they all had very good knowledge of how to complain and were aware of their rights. The agency has produced the children's guide in 2 formats for older and younger children.

The manager and responsible individual have worked in social care with children and in fostering for a number of years. The agency has been running for over 4 years and is expanding. The manager has a DIPSW and NVQ 4 in management.

Staff, foster carers and young people spoken with confirmed that the manager is a very effective leader and clearly possess the skills needed to run the agency. The agency is clearly run in a manner which delivers the best possible care to the children.

Whilst it is evident that the manager monitors the activities of the agency some areas should be formalised and documented. The manager and the staff are clear about their roles and accountability is clear.

Clear information is provided to purchasers of the service which includes charges, statements of monies paid to carers and other itemised amounts paid for other services.

The service is well managed the manager has a clear job description and works at anchor only. The lines of accountability and responsibility are clear.

There are clear arrangements in place for one of the senior supervising social workers to deputise for the manager in her absence and out of hours.

the agency has recently expanded and as a result of this a further administrator has been recruited.

The staffing complement is adequate to meet the needs of the fostering service. Staff turn over is very low at this agency due to the support, training and respect of work life balances.

The agency aims to recruit a range of carers to meet the diverse needs of the children referred.

Assessments of prospective carers are comprehensive, and include all the information recommended and required

The agency operates a robust recruitment procedure. Out of hours support is available to foster carers. Carers stated that the support provided by anchor was exceptionally good Supervision and appraisal is carried out regularly. The agency has the appropriate insurances in place, and a policy for whistle blowing.

There is a training plan for staff and staff said that any specialist training Is accessed and made available for them. Staff said that should they which to undertake the post qualifying award the agency would support them to do this. Staff said they felt very well supported and were very clear about their responsibilities, this was confirmed by detailed job descriptions. All staff receive supervision and said they found it a useful forum. Staff said that the support provided by the manager was outstanding.

Team meetings are held regularly

There are clear arrangements for working with carers that include arrangements for training and development, supervision, support services out of hours support, arrangements for reviews etc. carers were clear about the role of the supervising social worker. There was evidence of good working relationships between the agency supervising social workers and the children's social workers

Regular supervision is provided for foster carers. All files on foster carers contained a foster carer agreement, however the agency has devised a new improved agreement, it is recommended that existing carers be asked to sign the new agreements.

If carers approval criteria changes the foster agreement should be altered to reflect this.

Foster carers receive a comprehensive handbook, which covers policies procedures and other useful guidance as well as legal information.

Foster carers receive planned visits and unannounced visits from their supervising social workers.

Foster carers are encouraged and supported to undertake training to obtain the skills required to provide care to children, with a range of needs. Training is provided after support group sessions, and at varying times to ensure carers are able to attend. Safe care training is provided, it is recommended that carers be supported and encouraged to devise their own safe care policies.

Comprehensive, up to date records on children were seen it is recommended that the health section contain information transcribed from the LAC documentation and any other relevant health information. Children are encouraged to keep memorabilia and to understand their histories. carers are supplied with a lockable box to store records.

The agency keeps detailed and up to date records with respect to allegations, complaints, children, carers and staff. The manager monitors the records and the agency has recently purchased a computer system "foster track" to assist the manager and staff with monitoring and collating information. A clear case recording policy is required for carers and other staff, carers are provided with training regarding what records to keep, how to store them, sharing of information etc.

The premises are appropriate and suitable at present. The manager said they might move in the future. Staff have the equipment they need to carry out their jobs, and appropriate insurance is in place.

The responsible individual stated that the business is financially viable. The business conforms to its legal requirements regarding PAYE, national insurance etc.

The agencies financial procedures are maintained in accordance with appropriate accounting standards and practice. The agency's accounts are monitored and audited

# 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

<b>BEING HEALTHY</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>12</b>	3

<b>STAYING SAFE</b>	
<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

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

<b>MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION</b>	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
<b>10</b>	3
<b>11</b>	4

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

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

### 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	FS4	Its is recommended that the systems for reviewing the quality of care be formalised.
2	FS6	It is recommended that foster carers be encouraged and supported to formulate their own personalised "safe care" policies.
3	FS8	It is recommended that the strategies used when children are initially matched with carers be documented.
4	FS12	It is strongly recommended that all health information with respect to children be collated in the separate health section of the children's files.
5	FS24	It is recommended that the agency ensure that their own placement agreements are signed.
6	FS24	It is strongly recommended that the case recording policy be reviewed and developed further to be more comprehensive.

## **Commission for Social Care Inspection**

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