

# Barnardo's Brighton & Hove Link Plus

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC045651       |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 28/08/2012     |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Diane Thackrah |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full           |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       |                |

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| <b>Registered person</b>       | Barnardo's  |
| <b>Registered manager</b>      | Lisa Dawn Giles   |
| <b>Responsible individual</b>  | Michelle Lee-Izu  |
| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 01/08/2008  |

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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

Barnardo's Brighton and Hove Link Plus is an independent fostering agency. It is a jointly funded project between Brighton and Hove Children and Young People's Trust and Barnardo's. The service provides short-break foster care to children and young people with disabilities. There are 24 carers and 35 children and young people receiving a service. Placements include overnight stays, weekend/week breaks and for a few children, full-time foster care.

### The inspection judgements and what they mean

**Outstanding:** a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

**Good:** a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

**Adequate:** a service that only meets minimum requirements

**Inadequate:** a service that does not meet minimum requirements

## Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

This is a good service where young people have their needs well met. There is high quality support which results in placement stability. Young people make good progress in all areas of their lives and their welfare is promoted. Young people are happy in their placements and share strong relationships with their carers. There is generally a thorough recruitment and assessment process which means that young people receive care from people who can meet their needs. This means that young people feel happy and are kept safe. However, the arrangements for the vetting of volunteers could be improved in order to offer safer care to young people. The high quality support provided to carers means that carers understand young people's needs and how to meet these. The views of young people are valued and actively sought. As a result, these views help shape the service's work. There is good management within the service and a strong focus of quality monitoring. This means that effective steps are taken to improve service provision. There are low levels of young people who go missing from the service which reflect trends found nationally.

## Areas for improvement

### 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 (England) Regulations 2011

and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

| Reg.         | Requirement  | Due date   |
|--------------|--|------------|
| 20<br>(2011) | ensure the fostering service has a record of the recruitment and suitability checks which have been carried out for foster carers and those working (including volunteers) which includes all checks listed A - F in this NMS. Regulation 20 (1)(a)&(b)) | 03/10/2012 |

## Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

### Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Young people make progress in their development as they receive quality short breaks. Staff are active in the early decision making process about matching as they contribute to the panel process. This means that staff liaise with social workers, health workers and education providers about suitable placements. As a result, young people are placed with carers who support them to make progress in all areas of their lives. Young people are happy and safe in their placements and feel valued by their foster carers. A parent said that her son, 'Really looks forwards to going. His personal development has really been enhanced, he has grown in confidence and this has enhanced his playing and socialising.'

Young people develop skills in understanding health risks and healthy lifestyles. This is achieved as carers understand their roles in promoting the health of young people. Access to health care is available through consultant paediatricians, looked after children's nurses and physiotherapists. As a result, young people access the services that meet their health needs. Young people are supported to make achievements in education. They attend educational provision that meets their needs and carers play a strong role in supporting young people's educational attainment. A social worker said, 'carers really advocate for young people.' There is a transitions policy which is comprehensive and covers areas such as social lives and relationships, sex, and developing self-esteem. The implementation of this policy is successful in providing young people with skills for a successful transition into adulthood.

Young people are regularly consulted with about the running of the service. An independent reviewing officer said, 'Children's views are usually sought about the foster care they have been offered.' Young people are supported to communicate their views. There is a strong focus on the individual communication needs of young people and in helping carers to understand these. As a result, young people feel valued, listened to and happy. There are very few placement disruptions. This is

achieved through the strong support provided to carers and the strong focus on supporting positive parent/carer relationships. Young people enjoy a full range of stimulating and interesting opportunities. For example, some go to Brownies when staying with their carers. Carers understand that this is important for the development of young people. As a result, young people develop and enjoy meaningful relationships with their peers and enjoy their short breaks.

### **Quality of service**

The quality of the service is **good**.

There are strong arrangements for the recruitment of a range of skilled foster carers. A stakeholder said, 'They put a lot of energy into getting the right carers.' There is an on-going recruitment process which is focussed and promotes the recruitment of minority groups. This ensures that young people have their needs met by people capable to do so. There is an informative and clear website that sets out a realistic picture of what it is like to be a foster carer. The assessment process is well focused on the needs of young people. As a result, suitable carers are recruited who can meet the needs of young people. There is an effective panel that make quality and appropriate recommendations which promote the welfare of young people. A panel member said, 'We have had some well-organised, informative and interesting training, My appraisal is formally recorded.' A carer said, 'Panel was scary but the members where lovely.'

Foster carers feel well supported by the service. They say that they are visited every month by their supervising social workers. Carers have a named supervising social worker to offer advice and support and to liaise with parents and other agencies in order to support placement stability. Carers say that the support provided is extremely strong. One carer said, 'If your link worker is not available, someone else in the service helps you.' A comprehensive training programme is available to carers through the local authority. Additional training is provided through the service. For example, on-line training in paediatric first aid has been added to the training programme. Carers say that positive intervention training is fantastic. One said, 'It really helped me to think about things and this has helped reduce problems.' This is effective in ensuring that carers have the skills and knowledge to care for young people well. The development of foster carers is viewed as important and support is provided for them to fill any gaps in their knowledge.

Young people's needs are comprehensively understood by carers leading to stable placements. A parent said, 'I feel totally confident that my son will be well looked after.' Additional support is provided to enhance placement safety and quality where this is necessary. For example, cupboard locks, safety gates, stairs and a bath board have been provided for a young person in one carer's home to enhance safety. An occupational therapist was provided to demonstrate how to use these safely. There is an expectation that all carers complete training in promoting good mental and physical health for young people. Mandatory training regarding current guidelines such as swine flu and rules regarding paracetomal is provided to carers. As a result, young people's health is well promoted. There are strong working relationships

between carers and the fostering service. Carers speak exceptionally highly of the support they receive. One carer said, 'Nothing is too much trouble. They provide all equipment required.' Another said, 'They are so professional, if you ask for something they respond immediately.' These positive relationships help to ensure that all those involved with the service are satisfied with the service they receive.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

The service is **adequate** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Safeguarding in this service is generally at the centre of all it does. Health and safety audits are carried out annually with additional bi-monthly checks. Unannounced visits are made to carer's homes and this promotes young people's safety and welfare. Pre-approval checks are completed for all carers in relation to the safety of their home environment. Risk assessments are carried out for activities where there is any possible risk of accident or injury. Foster carers understand how to keep young people safe regarding going missing. They talk to young people about keeping themselves safe and are well prepared to respond appropriately should a young person go missing. It is uncommon for young people to go missing from their placements. As a result, young people are kept safe.

Young people know their concerns will be listened to and taken seriously. There is a formal complaints system which young people are familiar with. One young person said they had been listened to when they wanted to change their fosters carer and this change had happened. There are few reports of concerns regarding bullying. When bullying is an issue, it is well responded to. For example, a young person's discussion with their carer about bullying at school was reported appropriately, leading to the school taking action to address this. As a result, young people feel safe and secure. Young people are protected from harm by carers and staff who understand the impact of abuse and neglect. Safeguarding is taken seriously and staff are generally proactive in ensuring effective child protection. Carers undergo child protection and safe carer training. Safeguarding practices are kept under review and monitored through quality assurance systems. The recruitment and vetting of adults working for the fostering service is generally satisfactory with all required checks being carried out prior to an adult working with young people. However, in one instance there has been shortfalls in the vetting of a volunteer used to provide personal care to young people. Whilst some measures have been taken to protect the safety of young people in this case such as obtaining a criminal records bureau check, full checks have not been carried out as required. This practice does not fully have a clear focus on safeguarding and child protection.

### **Leadership and management**

The leadership and management of the independent fostering agency are **good**.

There is a clear focus on monitoring the delivery of the service and an insightful review of annual progress. The positive approach to this quality assurance process results in the continuous improvement in service provision and outcomes for young

people. For example, recent quality assurance has resulted in the review of how safeguarding is discussed in team meetings, a plan for greater ownership for carers of health and safety issues and the review of staff training needs and volunteer recruitment. The service has a strong outcomes framework and individual monitoring for each young person occurs weekly. As a result, young people benefit from positive short breaks.

Foster carers feel valued. They play a significant role in planning for the care of individual young people and in service development. A parent and carer consultation group meets regularly with staff for the purpose of service improvement. Carers and parents also assist in the information and preparation groups for new carers. A foster carer said, 'I feel a completely equal member of the team, there's a feeling you can make a difference.' There are clear processes for ensuring that the views of young people also contribute to the development of the service. For example, they have recently helped to redesign the young people's guide. As a result, the services function well at meeting the needs of young people, parents and carers. There is strong partnership working with other agencies with a focus on improving the care of young people. A local authority commissioner said, 'They work well with us and are another part of the team.'

Complaints are viewed positively and taken seriously. They are used as an opportunity to learn and develop the service. For example, clearer guidelines have been provided to carers about confidentiality and social media following a complaint and joint working with other professionals has been strengthened. As a result, there are stronger measures in place for ensuring young people's confidentiality and for their needs to be met. The service has a positive approach to addressing shortfalls raised at inspection. There is now a statement of purpose that provides all required information and this means that stakeholders have clear information about the aims of the service. A clearer focus on employment gaps in staff vetting and in carer child protection training helps to keep young people safe. Foster carers are now trained in paediatric first aid which promotes young people's welfare. There is a more focused approach to preparing young people for independent or semi-independent living and for ensuring that all staff who provide supervisions are trained to do so. As a result, young people's welfare is enhanced.

There is good partnership working with other agencies which helps to improve the care provided to young people. This includes working closely with the placing authority to ensure that placements match needs. Joint working with health agencies ensures that there is a strong focus on health promotion. Staff are skilled and well-motivated. They receive a thorough induction and training programme prior to any direct work with young people. One staff member said, 'We have had some well-organised, informative and interesting training.' Supervision is valued in this service and there are regular staff appraisals. As a result, carers are well supported to provide good care to young people.

## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework and the evaluation schedule for independent fostering agencies.