



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Foster Care NCH: Wessex Community Projects

**213 West Street
Fareham
Hampshire
PO16 0EN**

Lead Inspector
Bridgette Lowe

Announced Inspection
16 March 2006 10:00a

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	Foster Care NCH: Wessex Community Projects
Address	213 West Street Fareham Hampshire PO16 0EN
Telephone number	0207 704 7000
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	NCH
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ms Barbara Patricia Russell
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:

1. The agency may place children between 10 and 17 years of age who are on remand or licence

Date of last inspection 21st February 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

NCH is a national children's voluntary organisation that has a large number of projects operating throughout the country. The NCH Wessex Community Project provides foster care placements as an alternative to custody for vulnerable and troubled young people up to the age of 17, by providing safe, secure and stable family placement within the community. The project now offers fee based specialist placements for children aged 8-18 on a short term and long term basis. The service is piloting the Intensive Fostering Programme, which is an innovative programme, developed in the USA and commissioned by the Youth Justice Board.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection took place with one inspector over two days, with one day spent visiting two foster carers and young people placed with them, and the other day spent in the agencies office looking at records, files policies and procedures and talking to staff. The inspector met with the programme supervisor of the intensive Fostering Programme. Questionnaires were sent out to carers, young people and placing officers, with five, three and three responses being received respectively. The service has amalgamated the Wessex Project with Rushmoor Project with staff now working from one office in Fareham.

What the service does well:

The service has implemented the Intensive Fostering Programme that has had very good outcomes for young people as an alternative to a custodial sentence. The service is very good at supporting its carers and young people and this was reflected within questionnaires received from carers' young people and placing officers. The service ensures that matching considerations are effective to ensure young people are appropriately placed. The service promotes the health of its young people well. The service ensures that its carers receive training on a regular basis.

The service and its carers have made positive steps to ensure that young peoples cultural and diverse needs are met. Placing authorities feedback to the Commission were 'young people are provided with warm, accepting and supportive carers'. 'Strong and open channels of communication between social services, carers and NCH'.

Carer comments were overwhelmingly supportive of the service with comments 'very open service and very satisfied with support', 'support and back up provided is excellent', 'training and preparation we have received have been excellent '. ' I feel free to voice opinions about the service and our opinions are listened to'.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The service has successfully implemented the intensive fostering programme and has increased staffing, achieving positive outcomes for young people undertaking the pilot programme. The service is currently involving young people in the development of a new placement evaluation form.

What they could do better:

The service must ensure they gain consent for both prescribed and non-prescribed medication to be administered by foster carers prior to young people being placed. The service must ensure that staff Criminal Record Bureau checks are renewed every three years. The service needs to ensure that staff that have moved from the Rushmoor office can access young peoples records when needed.

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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Enjoying and Achieving

Making a Positive Contribution

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

Management

Scoring of Outcomes

Statutory Requirements Identified During the Inspection

Being Healthy

The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

12

The service is proactive in promoting health and development of young people, although there is a need to gain the appropriate consent before young people are placed and treatments are given.

EVIDENCE:

Three young peoples files were looked at, two had the appropriate medical consent and one was lacking this. The service must ensure they gain consent for any treatment, emergency, prescribed or non-prescribed from placing authorities prior to young people being placed with the carers. Carers visited confirmed having consent for young peoples medical treatment. Medical information relating to young people was clearly evidenced on file. Young people confirmed throughout questionnaires that carers help them to eat healthy and keep fit.

Staying Safe

The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

3,6,8,9,15

The service is well managed with good safeguards in place to appropriately provide suitable foster carers and offer a service that matches the needs of young people with the skills of the carers.

The service needs to ensure that Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks on staff are renewed every three years.

Staff were aware of child protection procedures and promoting the safety and welfare of young people.

EVIDENCE:

The inspector looked at the four personnel files including the current managers. The managers CRB was due to be renewed, as it has been over three years since the last check. This was also the case with one other member of staffs CRB check. The inspector was unable to view all the recruitment checks undertaken on the manager as this information was held within their head office. All the other personnel files viewed held all the appropriate recruitment checks. The manager is registered with the Commission and is qualified in Diploma in Social Work, MSc, BA (Hons) and holds a PGC in

Management studies. The manager has worked for Foster Care NCH since 1998.

Two foster carers and young people were visited in their homes by the inspector and they were well aware of their responsibility to promote and safeguard young people. Carers and young peoples files were also looked at. Placing officer questionnaires received were positive about the good level of care and support that carers offered young people. The carers' register was viewed and held all the appropriate information. Foster carers and young people spoke of the positive matching considerations undertaken by the service, and carers confirmed that they received good information from the service prior to young people being placed. Qualified social workers undertake rigorous assessments on foster carers, including health and safety checks. Pre placement information seen on young peoples files looks at matching considerations and placement including looking at ethnic origin, religion and nationality, culture, language, education, health, disability and other areas of concern. The safety and protection of children and young people is outlined in the foster carers agreement and covered in the carers' handbook. The service provides a range of training for carers to ensure young people are protected and safeguarded. The significant events or incidents are recorded and monitored by the manager. There have been four child protection concerns recorded since the last inspection. The inspector was able to view the actions taken and the outcomes of each case. There were no Child Protection concerns at the time of inspection.

Enjoying and Achieving

The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

7,13,31

The agency ensures that children and young people are provided with foster care services that value diversity and promote equality.

Young peoples education is supported and promoted.

Carers do not provide short-term breaks

EVIDENCE:

The files sampled showed a wealth of evidence that during assessments valuing diversity was crucial, and that the services supervising social workers continue to promote this in supervision with foster carers. Matching considerations look at all areas of cultural and religious needs and training is undertaken with carers in relation to valuing diversity. Carers have forged links with a local Asian community in order to meet one young persons cultural and religious needs. Support groups for carers and specific specialised play groups have been sought to meet the needs of young people with disabilities.

There was evidence in contact sheets that young peoples education was discussed and carers confirmed taking an active role in young peoples education. Education of young people is discussed as a staff team in weekly clinical meetings. One young person spoke positively about being supported back into education since being placed with a NCH carer.

Carers are entitled to a certain amount of respite per year and this is managed within the services own carers and framework.

Making a Positive Contribution

The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

10,11

The service ensures that all young people are encouraged to maintain positive contacts with family members.

Children were being routinely consulted; the service ensures that their opinions were being sought in relation to their daily life and future.

EVIDENCE:

Carers, young people and placing officers reported positive links with family members where appropriate, and specifically the good work undertaken by carers to help young people maintain family contact. Contact arrangements were clearly outlined on young peoples files.

Young people were being routinely visited and consulted by the services social workers. One young person confirmed that the staff were proactive in listening and responding to any issues she raised. The young people placed on the intensive fostering service are supported to a very high level receiving two visits a week from NCH staff, this was confirmed by carers and evidenced has having a positive outcome for young people enabling them to remain in education and lead positive lives. The service is currently involving young people in the development of a new placement evaluation form.

Achieving Economic Wellbeing

The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

This standard was not assessed on this occasion. During the inspection there were no reasons for cause for concern.

EVIDENCE:

The company practices have been previously inspected and on this occasion were not explored.

Management

The intended outcomes 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 – The intended outcomes for these Standards are

17,21,24

The service has a competent qualified staff team who can meet the needs of both foster carers and young people.

Case records are comprehensive, well maintained and stored securely.

EVIDENCE:

The registered manager was not present on inspection, but provided pre inspection information about the service. Staff were spoken to on inspection and four personnel files viewed. There was clear evidence that all staff are suitably competent and qualified to meet the needs of both carers and young people. All social workers are registered with the General Social Care Council.

The training and support provided to carers is very good. Carers receive visits once a month from supervising social workers and detailed contact sheets were seen evidencing regular telephone contact with carers. The fostering service support their carers by enabling access to a member of staff from the service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year. Carers confirmed to the inspector the support from staff was excellent.

The inspector sampled two foster carers files and three young peoples files. All were comprehensive well ordered with all the relevant information apart from medical consent as previously mentioned in this report on one young persons file. All files were stored securely and confidentially. The service holds comprehensive information on a computer database which details progress and outcomes for young people. The inspector viewed this on inspection. staff from the Rushmoor office were finding it difficult to access young peoples records. The service were looking at rectifying the problem.

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services have been met and uses the following scale.

4 Standard Exceeded (Commendable) **3** Standard Met (No Shortfalls)
2 Standard Almost Met (Minor Shortfalls) **1** Standard Not Met (Major Shortfalls)

"X" in the standard met box denotes standard not assessed on this occasion

"N/A" in the standard met box denotes standard not applicable

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

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	2
6	3
8	3
9	3
15	2
30	X

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

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

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

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	4
22	X
23	X
24	3
25	X
26	X
27	X
28	X
32	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
1	3 and 15	20	The service needs to ensure that Criminal Record Bureau checks are renewed every three years.	30/05/06

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

Commission for Social Care Inspection

Hampshire Office

4th Floor Overline House

Blechynnden Terrace

Southampton

SO15 1GW

National Enquiry Line: 0845 015 0120

Email: enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.csci.org.uk

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