



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

**Barnardos North West Fostering Service (NW
Region)**

**5 Lineside Close
Liverpool
Merseyside
L25 2UD**

Lead Inspector
Julia Toller

Announced Inspection
6th March 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

Reader Information	
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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	Barnardos North West Fostering Service (NW Region)
Address	5 Lineside Close Liverpool Merseyside L25 2UD
Telephone number	0151 488 0822
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	www.barnardos.org.uk/northwestfosteringse
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Barnardo`s North West Region
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Mr John Hardy
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies
Category(ies) of registration, with number of places	

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 7th March 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

The fostering service consists of a service manager, who oversees the operation of the service, one deputy children's service manager, who deputises in the absence of the children's service manager, and one team leader, seven Barnardo's social workers and five administrative staff.

The fostering service functions are divided between two teams, comprising of long-term foster care and short-term breaks, which also include contract care and the befriending service.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service's main function is to provide a range of fostering placements for children with severe learning difficulties, who are looked after by the local authority.

The services provided are as follows: -

- Planned, structured, family based short – term break support to children residing with their birth families.
- Planned family based short – term breaks for long – term foster carers, in order to provide appropriate respite care.
- A befriending service to support long – term carers, in ensuring older children/young people access the local facilities in their community.
- Long – term care to meet the needs of children, who are no longer able to live in their families.

In providing the above fostering placements, Barnardo's North West Fostering Service recruits, assesses and approves foster carers. The service also trains, supports and carries out annual reviews of foster carers.

SUMMARY

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

The inspection was announced and took place over three days. As part of the inspection, a selection of records including children's files, and staff files were inspected. Two foster carers were visited in their homes, and the inspector also spoke to foster carers by telephone to discuss their views of what it is like to work for the organisation.

Placing authority social workers also contacted the inspector to pass on their positive experiences of placing children with the organisation, making comments such as "It's been a pleasure to work with Barnardo's staff" and that they provide "positive outcomes for children".

The inspector also met with the foster care staff group as a team to collate their opinions, and also the managers of the organisation.

What the service does well:

A great deal of planning takes place before children move to live with foster carers to make sure they have the relevant information about children and their needs, and are clear about the arrangements for caring for them. The children have been matched carefully with foster carers with the skills and experience to look after them well.

Children have the opportunity to meet foster carers before they go to live with them. Giving children the chance to become familiar with the foster carers and their family, neighbourhood, and family pets before moving in.

The manager and supervising social workers are suitably qualified and experienced. They have the knowledge and skills to manage and work in a fostering service. The staff recruitment and selection procedure is comprehensive and thorough. Staff files showed that Barnardo's North West collects and verifies relevant information about people wishing to work for the service to make sure children are protected. The service should be commended for the level of joint training that takes place between staff and carers.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Foster carers, have been provided with training in positive care and control as recommended in the last inspection report.

A new team leader for the short term break team has been recruited since the last inspection, in addition to two new team members.

A new form has been developed for the supervision of foster carers, which has improved recording process in the organisation, although further work could be done in this area.

What they could do better:

The complaints procedure for Barnardo's should be improved upon, by "signposting" staff, to the potential need for involving child protection.

The new supervision form needs to be monitored by manager's to ensure that the content of these forms is satisfactory and consistent.

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.

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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

Children welfare is closely monitored and their health needs are well met. The promotion of healthy lifestyles is taken seriously.

EVIDENCE:

The inspector was informed that Barnardo's North West Fostering Service receives full details regarding the health needs of a child and that this information is taken into account, in the matching process and ultimately the placement of the child. The manager of the service confirmed that no placement would be made, which prevented a child from continuing to receive the specialist health care services that they needed.

The inspector was advised that foster carers receive basic training on a variety of health and hygiene issues. This includes first aid, communicable diseases, invasive medical treatment and sexual health education. This was discussed with the foster carers individually during the inspector's visits to their homes and they confirmed that this training had taken place and that it had been informative and relevant.

The manager of the service informed the inspectors that the service promotes the health of the child/young person in ensuring G.P. and dental registration occurs. This is illustrated by the fact that the foster carers' agreement clearly indicates that foster carers are expected to ensure that the child/young person has regular dental and optical check ups; access to a balanced diet and opportunities for exercise commensurate with their abilities. The service also ensures carers are supported to access any health services required.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service, would appear to have good links with health agencies, however it will and does act as an advocate for the child when needed, in securing services for the child.

Foster carers are expected to attend their foster child's 'looked after children' review, to provide information regarding the child/young persons' health needs and generally contribute to the planning and reviewing process, in respect of their foster child. Through examination of children/young people and carers' files, as well as in interviews with managers, staff, and carers the inspectors were able to evidence, most of the elements in this standard. However as discussed in accordance with the Foster Care Regulations and mentioned earlier in this report information must be received in writing from the placing authority in order to maintain the care and well being of each child placed including medical consent were applicable, this is also in accordance with Regulation 11.

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

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has clearly written recruitment and selection procedures for the appointment of staff, which follows good practice in safeguarding children and young people.

Children live with suitable foster carers capable of meeting their needs and making sure they are protected from harm.

EVIDENCE:

Barnardo's Quality and Development Unit have developed a Safeguarding and Protecting Children Manual. This manual contains Barnardo's Child Protection "core" operating standards, which underpins all the organisation's work with children.

In accordance with these standards, Barnardo's has a robust, recruitment and selection policy and closely, adheres to its procedures. During the inspection a sample of personnel files were examined. These contained all the information required in Schedule 1, of the Fostering Services Regulations 2002.

There is a system in place to ensure that CRB checks are renewed every three years. Records are kept of checks and references that have been obtained and their outcome. Some specific advice was given with regard to the recording systems in relation to CRB's. Telephone enquiries are also now made to follow up written references.

The foster carers visited, provided suitable living environments for the children/young people being cared for. The children visited who were currently in placement had their own bedroom and accommodation arrangements that reflected the child's need for space and privacy.

The organisation undertakes comprehensive risk assessments with the foster carers in relation to health and safety matters. This includes a hazard risk checklist that assists carers in maintaining and promoting the health and safety of children in their care. This checklist is used during the preparation and training of carers raising the issue of health and safety to prospective foster carers from the outset and enables families to identify health and safety issues in every room of the house, in the garden, grounds and in the routine family activities. The manager also informed the inspectors that once a child is placed with foster carers, a social worker from the fostering service also completes a safe caring document. Long-term carers have this safe caring document reviewed by the Barnardo's social worker, every six months and short-term break or contract carers have the document reviewed, on an annual basis. It is recommended that at each review of the safe caring document both the foster carers and social worker sign the document.

Comments were received from a social worker who had recently been involved in the placement of a child with Barnardos, such as;

*"Barnardos demonstrated a commitment to making the placement work",
" Staff worked very flexibly to meet the needs of the young person"*

Barnardo's has a Safeguarding and Protecting Children Manual, which informs staff and carers on the "core" operating standards of the organisation. In line with these standards, there is a robust, recruitment and selection policy and the service closely, adheres to these procedures.

The inspector was advised that as part of foster carers' assessment training, training sessions are held on promoting and safeguarding the welfare of the child. The following training is also provided to carers: -

- Child protection
- Child Abuse
- Safe Caring
- Sexual Health Education

Foster carers are also given the "Safeguarding and Protecting Children," Barnardo's Policy Manual (2002) and the North West Fostering Service's "Safeguarding Children Guidelines for Foster Carers and Volunteers".

Once a child is placed with foster carers, a social worker from the fostering service completes a safe caring document, which is reviewed on a six or twelve month basis, dependent on the nature of the fostering service being provided. From an examination of a sample of carer's files and subsequent interviews with a number of foster carers, the inspectors were able to evidence that carers have a safe caring document that is subject to a regular review. It is recommended upon this review that both the foster carers and the social worker sign this document accordingly.

The recruitment files of staff working in the service that were inspected and interviews with staff indicated there was evidence that the qualifications experience, knowledge and skills of staff employed to work within the fostering service, meets the National Minimum Standards. The inspector noted that all staff had knowledge of the roles of other agencies, in particular health and education. They also had a belief in promoting equality, diversity and the rights of individuals.

Evidence was available on individual's files to show, that staff have now registered with the GSCC council.

Management systems are in place to collate and evaluate information on the circumstances, number and outcome of allegations of neglect and abuse of a child in foster care.

The foster carers interviewed and staff confirmed that foster carers are provided with full information about foster children to enable them to meet their needs and the needs of their own family.

The Fostering Panel is well organised, extremely thorough and effectively run to make sure that good decisions are made about the approval of suitable foster carers, and make sure that children in foster care are well looked after and protected from harm. The Panel is made up of suitably qualified and experienced people who are knowledgeable about foster care and the needs of vulnerable children.

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

Education is actively promoted and children are encouraged and supported to develop their skills and to achieve their full potential.

EVIDENCE:

The fostering service has an Equal Opportunities Policy statement and action plan, which promotes diversity and anti - discriminatory practice. The inspectors were advised by the manager of the service and staff that promoting equality and managing diversity training is provided for all carers and staff. The manager of the service stated that where carers cannot reflect the child's religious, cultural, racial, linguistic (communication) background and needs, additional training and support is given.

A booklet ("getting to know you") is provided to foster carers prior to a child's placement; this is an innovative way of describing a child's needs and how the child would like them to be met. This includes information around a child's interests and activities that they enjoy. The examples of these booklets that were available on the files inspected were well presented and provided a great deal of information in a succinct and clear manner.

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service's commitment in employing educational psychologists emphasises the importance that this service gives to the promotion of the education and development of the children and young people, fostered by this service. This in turn is communicated to foster carers, who ensure that an environment is provided, where education and learning are valued.

The foster carers agreement and foster placement agreement clearly, outlines the expectations of Barnardo's North West Fostering Service's, in relation to the foster carers' contribution to the assessment of the children's educational needs and progress, in the planning and review process.

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

Appropriate contact between children and their families and friends is encouraged to help them maintain relationships. Children's views are sought over matters affecting their daily lives and futures.

EVIDENCE:

The inspector was advised that the service promotes contact between the child and his/ her family, in accordance with the Children Act 1989 and other relevant guidance. Contact is therefore addressed at every stage of the care planning process, in the development of the care plan, at looked after children reviews, during the matching process, at foster panels and sometimes via the legal system. During these processes, the service makes every effort to ascertain the views and wishes of the child or young person in relation to contact with their family.

In the promotion of contact, foster carers are provided with an informative booklet, entitled, "Contact: Maintaining Links with Families." This booklet covers a whole range of aspects relating to contact, which includes the nature of contact, its purpose, the effects of contact on children, parents, foster carers, the role of social worker's, as well as practical and legal matters regarding contact.

Many of the children/young people, who are fostered by Barnardo's North West fostering service, have severe learning difficulties. The service uses a variety of methods to communicate which includes, utilising the Picture Exchange Communication system (PEC's) as well as Makaton sign language. These are used with a view to eliciting the foster child/young persons' feelings and wishes. The service also makes use of local advocacy services.

At the last inspection it was recommended that the service needed to continue to explore individual communication systems, with a view to more effectively engaging the foster child or young person in the consultative process regarding issues likely to affect their every day life and future. At this inspection there was good evidence of this in the foster placements visited with imaginative and creative personalised children's guides available.

The fostering service has a complaints policy and procedures. All foster carers are provided with a leaflet, entitled, "Having your Say", which encourages users of the service, to comment upon or complain about, the service they have received. This leaflet also talks of the use of advocacy and provides brief information, regarding the 'formal complaints' procedure, directing the individual to obtain a booklet, entitled "Your Right to be Heard", which details the process of making a 'formal complaint'. The foster carers seen by the inspectors, during this inspection, clearly understood the complaints system. The telephone number of CSCI should be included in this documentation. All foster carers interviewed spoke very positively of the service and support that they receive from Barnardo's.

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 are good at helping children prepare for adult life. There is a clear and efficient system for paying allowances to foster carers.

EVIDENCE:

Barnardo's North West Fostering Service has a clear policy on foster carer's allowances and expenses, which are reviewed on an annual basis. Each foster carer within the service is provided with a copy of the foster carer allowances and expenses.

During the course of the inspection, foster carers did not suggest there were any difficulties with the payment of allowances/expenses, as the general view appeared to be, that they were paid promptly and on time. The inspector was of the opinion that the service provided an efficient payment system.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- There is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives.(NMS 1)
- The fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience. (NMS 2)
- The fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified. (NMS 4)
- The fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently.(NMS 5)
- Staff are organised and managed effectively.(NMS 16)
- The fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff.(NMS 17)
- The fostering service is a fair and competent employer.(NMS 18)
- There is a good quality training programme. (NMS 19)
- All staff are properly accountable and supported.(NMS 20)
- The fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers.(NMS 21)
- Foster carers are provided with supervision and support.(NMS 22)
- Foster carers are appropriately trained.(NMS 23)
- Case records for children are comprehensive.(NMS 24)
- The administrative records are maintained as required.(NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose.(NMS 26)
- The fostering service is financially viable. (NMS 27)
- The fostering service has robust financial processes. (NMS 28)
- Local Authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers.(NMS 32)

The Commission considers Standards 17, 21, and 24 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at outcomes for the following standard(s):

17,21,24

The fostering service is managed efficiently by people with suitable skills and experiences, and delivers a high level of support to foster carers and children living with them

EVIDENCE:

There are a number of systems in place for working with and supporting carers. The service has clear arrangements for the training and development of carers. The manager of the service advised the inspector that there are local foster carer support groups, which are usually held quarterly.

During office hours foster carers can contact their social worker or in their absence team manager, or if necessary, the service manager. The inspector was informed that "out of hours" support is also provided and that all foster carers have the telephone numbers of their Barnardo's social worker and the managers of the service. The inspector was able to confirm this during their interviews with foster carers.

All the foster carers' interviewed by the inspectors had an understanding of the role of Barnardo's social workers and spoke very highly of the support that was provided.

Throughout the inspection, carers came forward to voice their positive comments about the organisation. The following comments were made:

"They are the best people you could work for, there's somebody there 24 hours a day." "We are listened to"

"The support received from the educational psychologist has been invaluable, you only have to ring for assistance and it's provided"

The fostering service has an Equal Opportunities Policy statement and action plan, which promotes diversity and anti - discriminatory practice. The inspector was advised by the manager of the service and staff that promoting equality and managing diversity training is provided for all carers and staff. The manager of the service stated that where carers cannot reflect the child's religious, cultural, racial, linguistic (communication) background and needs, additional training and support is given.

The staff team met with the inspector regarding what it was like to work for the organisation. Staff said that they received adequate and regular support, and that there was always someone available to ask for advice. Team meetings take place regularly, and training is satisfactory. They were aware that the organisation had high standards but felt that on the whole their workloads allowed them to meet these.

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	4

STAYING SAFE	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
3	3
6	3
8	4
9	3
15	3
30	3

ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
7	4
13	3
31	3

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

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

MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
1	X
2	X
4	X
5	X
16	X
17	3
18	X
19	X
20	X
21	3
22	X
23	X
24	3
25	X
26	X
27	X
28	X
32	X

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	FS9	It is recommended that the complaints policy includes the telephone number of CSCI.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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