



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

FOSTERING SERVICE

Breakaway & Dudley Shared Care Project (Midlands Region)

**Trinity House
Trinity Road
Dudley
West Midlands
DY1 1JB**

Lead Inspector
Christine Lancashire

Unannounced Inspection
7th August 2006 10:00

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	Breakaway & Dudley Shared Care Project (Midlands Region)
Address	Trinity House Trinity Road Dudley West Midlands DY1 1JB
Telephone number	0121 550 5271
Fax number	
Email address	
Provider Web address	
Name of registered provider(s)/company (if applicable)	Barnardo`s Midlands Region
Name of registered manager (if applicable)	Ann Tanner
Type of registration	Fostering Agencies

SERVICE INFORMATION

Conditions of registration:

Date of last inspection 5th September 2005

Brief Description of the Service:

The Breakaway is one of a number of similar projects run by Barnardos. It has been in operation for over 19 years. The aim of the project is to provide long term/permanent family based placements for children aged between 0 to 16 years who have various degrees of learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities. The service also provides family based short breaks, sitters and befrienders for children and young people living with their long term foster carers.

The project includes the Dudley Shared Care Project, which provides short term breaks for children with disabilities for a time limited or bridging placement or at short notice on an emergency basis. A range of services is available for children with disabilities who live at home with their families and are not accommodated by the Local Authority. This includes sleepovers, sitting, befriending or day care in the child's home or local community.

SUMMARY

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

This inspection was undertaken by two inspectors and took place over a week. The inspectors examined records and sampled three families to visit for discussion. Questionnaires were sent to a sample of foster carers, placing officers and to those children in placement who were able to provide a response. Responses were received from two children, three fostering households and two placing officers, in addition to two other professionals and the local authority's contracting section. The inspectors also interviewed the manager and two social workers employed by the project, prior to visiting three fostering households and attending a panel meeting. All interviewees and respondents provided positive comments. One placing social worker informed inspectors that the agency 'provides consistent support for foster carers and workers are aware of the needs of the child'. Another professional wrote, 'The contact I have had with the service has been of a consistently high standard.'

What the service does well:

This service fulfils its aim of recruiting and selecting carers who possess a wide range of qualities which make them suitable to care specifically for children with severe disabilities. One child wrote 'I always feel welcome and cared for when I come to stay with x'

Placing officers described carers as 'fully understanding of the individual needs of the children in their care' 'enthusiastic and committed'. There are suitable arrangements for the protection of children/young people. There are good arrangements for ensuring that all aspects of the child/young person's routines are followed during their stay with carers. This service employs suitable workers in sufficient numbers to provide support and supervision to the carers. The workers are well-managed and supervised and have access to relevant training opportunities.

The organisation has appropriate policies and procedures. There is a formal system in place for recording the monitoring and evaluation of the service by the manager and the company's senior managers. The manager constantly strives to identify areas of the service which could be improved.

Confidential information, documents and records are securely stored. There is a high level of satisfaction amongst foster carers in relation to the information and support provided by the project. Several carers described the support and access to training as 'excellent'.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The service is undertaking an intense campaign to reduce staff sickness and time off work, with a system of return to work interviews and triggers to monitor reasons for staff sickness.

The service is in the process of revising the carer support group, so that there are more shared experiences in order to establish more dialogue.

There have been improvements in the provision of training to carers, with more diversity in the times of the sessions to enable greater attendance. Training for staff is now more needs led and is tailored to professional and personal development.

Quarterly reviews with the panel chair have been introduced and there is now a more thorough system of preparation for panel discussions, which enables the panel to be more efficient. There is a new quality assurance system for the panel.

The service is expanding to provide short term breaks to children who are not part of the Dudley Service Level Agreement and who may come from other local authorities within the West Midlands.

The project is involved in an initiative to enable Asian families to be more aware of the services available and to recruit appropriate families to meet the needs of children from Asian backgrounds.

Home safety checks for carers are now undertaken on an unannounced basis.

What they could do better:

The manager has identified the need to recruit carers to provide care to children who have complex medical conditions. The service plans to target people working in the health service in forthcoming adverts.

The building has been subjected to vandalism. There is improved lighting at the rear of the building and the presence of security cameras would be advantageous. However, the space at the rear is shared with other buildings. The manager is implementing various changes such as the re-siting the burglar alarm system and the updating of other measures relating to safety and security, such as working arrangements for staff.

Since the project is mainly on the top floor of the building, a lift would greatly facilitate access for people whose mobility is restricted. However, the project does have access to some rooms on the ground floor.

Please contact the provider for advice of actions taken in response to this inspection.

The report of this inspection is available from enquiries@csci.gsi.gov.uk or by contacting your local CSCI office.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

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Being Healthy

The intended outcome for this Standard is:

- The fostering service promotes the health and development of children.(NMS 12)

The Commission considers Standard 12 the key standard to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for Standard:

12

The overall judgement for this set of standards is excellent.

The health and development of children is promoted by the service.

EVIDENCE:

Foster carers demonstrated that health care issues are dealt with appropriately. The children/young people in long-term placements are registered with local general practitioners and arrangements are made for routine health checks. The Foster Carer's Handbooks contain information about health care issues and the administration of prescribed medication and homely remedies. Written consent is obtained for the administration of medication and medical treatment from the person with parental responsibility. This is provided to the carers.

Some of the children need to have specific procedures carried out due to their particular medical needs and carers confirmed that they are given appropriate training and support to carry these out. The services of an occupational therapist are used to ensure that carers are supplied with suitable equipment to meet the specific needs of each child.

Case tracking revealed an example of a carer whose diligence and determination to advocate on behalf of the child had led to diagnosis of a condition. After treatment, the child's quality of life and behaviour improved significantly. Other carers described examples of good practice and hard work in obtaining appropriate medical services for the children in their care.

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 overall judgement for this set of standards is excellent.

The service is managed and staffed by suitable workers and provides suitable foster carers.

The service matches children to appropriate foster carers and protects children from abuse and neglect.

The fostering panel is organised efficiently and effectively.

EVIDENCE:

The manager and deputy of the service are suitably qualified in social work and are completing a relevant qualification in management. They have relevant experience to undertake the responsibilities of the post. Workers who were interviewed by the inspectors demonstrated appropriate knowledge and skills in relation to the tasks required to be carried out by them.

Barnardo's has a standard company procedure for the recruitment of staff and this is followed. Checks through the Criminal Records Bureau are made on all workers and these are renewed every three years.

The service carries out appropriate checks on prospective foster carers. Carers described this process as thorough and fair. Some commented on the length of the process and the depth of information required, but they understood why checks had to be so thorough. One carer explained that workers had tried to make the process as comfortable and as possible and said, 'They fitted in with us'. Records demonstrated the detailed process which is employed to assess the suitability of prospective carers. Carers also said that they had been well prepared for the task. One said that the worker had told her what to expect 'warts and all' so that there were no big surprises once a child was placed.

The carers' homes which were visited were warm, adequately furnished and decorated and maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene. The project social workers make regular supervisory visits to the carers and carers indicated that they value this support. The foster carers' preparation and training covers health and safety issues and these are outlined in booklets. One carer described the initial training as 'quite intense, but very good'. The service now carries out unannounced health and safety checks on the houses of carers on an annual basis.

Examination of records and discussions with carers and social workers at the service revealed that, in matching children with carers, the written assessments, care plans for the child and the views of the child and the carers are taken into account. Efforts are made to ensure that the ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic needs of the child are matched as closely as possible to those of the 'host' family. Carers made positive comments about the care which had been taken to ensure that particular children fitted into their families. Where a child had been placed with carers of a different ethnic background, the worker and the carers had received training together to find out how the child's cultural needs could be met.

Foster carers and social workers described the process of introduction and confirmed that their views had been sought at each stage of the process. Records provided evidence that, where a child was not able to communicate their views easily, workers from an advocacy service had been used to ascertain the preferences of the child in relation to the placement.

The service operates a joint panel with another Barnardo's project. This is appropriately established and conducted. The inspector attended a meeting of this panel as part of the inspection. Discussions with the chair, examination of records and observations revealed that the panel functions in an efficient way, with thorough interrogation of the evidence provided. Efforts are made to welcome attendees and put them at their ease. Information provided to the panel by the project workers is of a high standard and the Form F presented to the panel which was observed was extremely detailed and thorough.

The service works to the Local Authority's Child Protection procedures for the area in which the child lives and those of the company, in addition to having a Child Protection Statement for the service which is reviewed on an annual basis. The statement and the procedures are included in the Carers' Handbook. Child protection training for staff is mandatory and is provided annually. Staff and managers attend relevant events and protection issues are an agenda item in staff supervision. Training for foster carers on child protection, suitable methods of control and physical intervention is compulsory.

The Project has its own guidelines for foster carers on safer care and the care and control of children and young people. Barnardo's policy manual includes a section on bullying and further guidance is provided in the Project's own anti-bullying policy.

Barnardo's 'Whistle Blowing' policy includes procedures for raising concerns. Carers indicated that they are aware of these procedures.

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

The overall judgement for this set of standards is excellent.

This service demonstrates its commitment to valuing diversity.

This service ensures that children's educational achievement is promoted.

When short-term breaks are arranged for children, the arrangements recognise the role of the child's usual carers.

EVIDENCE:

The Project works to its company's Children's Services Equality Statements and these cover the provision of information that is readily understandable to parents and takes account of their children's needs. There is an expectation that carers will play a key role in celebrating each child's race and culture. Conversations with staff and foster carers revealed that children receive specific services and support to enable them to maximise their potential and lead as full as life as possible. Same race placements are made wherever possible. Trans-racial placements are supported by additional advice and training for the carers. One carer described the training which she and her husband had attended with the supervising social worker.

Recognising that there are many potential service users from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, who presently may not know about the project, or who may not feel confident about accessing the services, the project is involved in an initiative to enable Asian families to be more aware of the services available and to recruit appropriate families to meet the needs of children from Asian backgrounds. It is anticipated that this will lead to the recruitment of more suitable carers from more diverse backgrounds, who will be able to meet the needs of people who are not currently receiving a service.

Records indicated that during the assessment of the carers, the significance of education to the applicants and their attitude towards the education of the child is assessed. Carers provided examples of co-operation with schools. Records showed that the LAC reviews of the child's progress often take place at the school and that a school representative is always invited to attend these. Foster carers were able to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring that each young person is encouraged to attain his/her full potential.

There is a separate guide to short term breaks arranged through the project. Careful consideration is given to matching and to considering the purpose of each respite placement. The inspectors spoke to carers who provide short-term breaks. The experience had clearly been a positive one for the carers and the children concerned. Carers reported good and co-operative relationships with the children's birth parents or usual carers and provided examples of good communication in this respect.

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

The overall judgement for this set of standards is excellent.

The service promotes contact arrangements for the child where appropriate.
The service promotes consultation.

EVIDENCE:

Project staff and carers confirmed that staff ensure that the carers are aware of their role and responsibilities in terms of supporting the child to have appropriate and agreed contact with family members and other significant people. However, it is the prime role of the placing authority to carry out direct work with the birth family. Carers described making arrangements for post box contact for one child. Carers who provide short break care demonstrated a good level of awareness of the importance of communicating with the usual carers and described good relationships in this respect.

The project provides children, young people and their parents with information about the project. This explains the purpose of the project and the roles and responsibilities of social workers and carers. This contains information about the methods of making a complaint. The right to an independent advocate is also explained and suitable contact numbers are included.

The documentation for use at the reviews includes the views of all parties on the placement. Advocates are used to ascertain and represent the views of the child when necessary. It is acknowledged that many of the children placed experience difficulties in communicating in writing or verbally. Carers demonstrated an appreciation of the importance of interpreting non-verbal indications of mood and provided many examples of times when they had advocated on the child's behalf.

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)

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

29

The overall judgement for this set of standards is good.

The service pays allowances and expenses to foster carers according to an agreed scale.

EVIDENCE:

There is a clear written policy and contract detailing the allowances paid to the foster carers. The carers confirmed that they receive information about the allowances and expenses before each child/young person is placed with them and that payments are made appropriately.

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, 24 and 32 the key standards to be inspected at least once during a 12 month period.

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

1,4,5,16,17,19,21,22,23,24,26

The overall judgement for this set of standards is excellent.

There is a clear Statement of Purpose for the service.

This fostering service is effectively managed, monitored and controlled. It is adequately staffed by workers who are sufficiently qualified and experienced and who have access to suitable training courses.

Staff and carers are well-supported.

Case records for children and carers are generally clear and well detailed. The premises are suitable for the purpose, although the majority of the offices are not accessible to people with restricted mobility.

EVIDENCE:

There is a clear Statement of Purpose for the service and this has recently been updated so that it reflects the current conditions. It contains the necessary information. The children's guide is presented in an appropriate format and the policies and procedures reflect the Statement of Purpose. Barnardo's has robust systems for monitoring and controlling the activities of each service. Policies and procedures are reviewed and updated on a regular basis and performance is monitored. In addition, the manager of the project monitors the performance of the team and identifies areas where practice can be improved. Feedback on the performance of the service is sought from carers, parents, professionals, the local authority and people attending panel. The manager provided several examples of developments in the service which are being made as a result of the desire to improve on present performance and to offer a better service to potential users. There is a new system for monitoring the quality of the panel meetings. Attendees complete a form at the end of each meeting.

There are sufficient workers, although the difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified social workers are acknowledged. The inspectors were informed about joint training which had been undertaken by project workers and foster carers. There are good and frequent opportunities for staff to undertake external professional training and attend short courses and seminars. Social workers described the post qualifying training which they had received. Training in first aid, autism and Health and Safety risk assessment has also been provided. They were very pleased with the access to and the quality of the training provided by Barnardo's. Records of staff appraisals confirm that discussions take place about individual training needs and areas of personal development. The manager is pro-active in identifying training needs for the staff.

The Project has a Handbook for carers which outlines the aims and objectives of the Project, makes clear the roles and responsibilities of workers and carers and outlines the Project's policies in relation to a wide range of issues affecting carers. It is apparent that project workers and carers have a clear understanding of each other's roles and they have a relationship of mutual respect. Feedback from carers indicated a high level of satisfaction with the overall support provided from the project social workers. Carers commented that the support received was 'excellent'. One carer wrote 'They are very friendly and good at sorting out any problems' and another wrote 'Any problems that might arise they will always try and help find the answers to'.

In addition to monthly supervision, carers reported frequent telephone contact and good accessibility. In addition to carer meetings, there are periodic gatherings, such as a party for the 30th anniversary of the project. Carers and staff had clearly enjoyed this.

There is an established pre- and post-approval training programme for carers, with sessions being arranged at a variety of times to facilitate access. This is appreciated by the carers, most of who have busy lives and many appointments to attend with children. Foster carers' comments with regard to the provision of training were all positive and they provided examples of training which they had found useful. There is evidence that discussions have been held with foster carers about their personal development needs at annual appraisals/reviews.

There is a written policy on case recording. Electronic records are maintained in addition to paper ones. Records were found to be well-organised.

Foster carers are provided with information about the young person's legal status and relevant information is made available in relation to the care to be provided. Carers are encouraged to maintain a record of any significant details of the young person's behaviour and events of importance. Guidance on record keeping is provided in the Foster Carers' Handbook.

The service is located close to the centre of Dudley. The service is based on the top floor of the building, but has access to rooms on the ground floor. The whole building houses Barnardo's workers. Access to people with restricted mobility is possible to the ground floor. A lift would greatly enhance the facilities, but funding is not currently available. There have been problems with vandalism to the building and access to the car park, at the rear of empty neighbouring properties, leaves staff vulnerable, especially when it is dark. The staff use strategies such as pairing up to leave the building when it is late. However, the whole area would benefit from better lighting and security cameras and these options are being explored. The alarm is being moved, so that staff use the front door at night and the manager is liaising with the police.

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	4
15	4
30	4

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

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	3

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

Are there any outstanding requirements from the last inspection?

No

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
2.	FS26	The inspectors recommend that the service should consider the installation of a lift should be installed to facilitate access to the project's main office by people with restricted mobility.

Commission for Social Care Inspection

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