

Children Of All Nations (COAN)

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

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Inspector	Peter Daniel
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Date of last inspection	11 March 2008

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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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

Children of All Nations is a small independent fostering agency. At present it has 10 approved families. The agency has been in operation for three years. The agency offers long and short term placements, respite, mother and baby placements and for children with disabilities. The agency is based in Croydon and serves the South London area. The home is only 10 minutes walk from East Croydon train station and there is regular bus transport.

Summary

Children of all Nations is a well run agency. Its staff and foster carers are being effectively managed and supervised. The agency has a 'family feel' and foster carers are fully supported. The agency is giving priority to training. Overall, the agency's foster carer's are meeting the needs of children in placement. There is a robust and effective fostering panel. File systems are in excellent order. The overall impression is that Children of all Nations is committed to achieving good standards and developing a culture of improvement. Children of all Nations is a small agency and the challenge will be to maintain its good standards as it expands.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The agency has addressed all requirements since the last inspection. These were mainly in relation to improving information on references and obtaining better documentation for matching purposes. The registered manager is currently undertaking her NVQ Level 4 qualification in management.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children of All Nations promotes the health and development of children in placement to a good standard. Foster carers ensure that when a child is placed they are registered with a General Practitioner, Dentist and Optician. Children are referred to Child Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for therapy. All the children in foster care have received an annual health check in the past 12 months. Foster carers report that children receive balanced healthy meals including fresh fruit and vegetables. Foster carers advise children and young people about healthy eating and exercise. Foster carers have been offered training in first aid and substance abuse. Foster carers advise young people on sex education. Foster carers have attended training in promoting health on behalf of looked after children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children of all Nations has safeguarding policies covering Safe Caring, Child Protection, Anti Bullying, Unauthorised Absences and Complaints. The agency's child protection policy should include guidelines on what the child does in event of wanting to make an allegation. This has been included as a recommendation. The service has sound recruitment and selection procedures for appointing staff, foster carers and fostering panel members. Staff files, including those of Independent Assessors, showed the following were in place- induction checklist, application

form, curriculum vitae, job description, employers and personal references, declaration about criminal offences, up to date Criminal Record Bureau checks, passport photocopy, copy of birth certificate, employment contract and training certificates. The Criminal Record Renewal Book for foster carers was checked. All foster carers have up to date CRB checks and Local Authority checks. Checks of the Fostering Panel Members folder and Chair of Panel folder also confirmed that all Criminal Record Bureau checks were up to date. Since the last inspection there have been no complaints or significant incidents. A recommendation has been made to include separate records/logs for complaints and allegations. The agency's Safe Caring Policy has recently been updated. Foster carers have had unannounced visits during the year. The agency ensures that foster carers provide a safe, healthy and nurturing environment. Health and safety checks are being undertaken annually as part of the annual review. The foster homes seen by the inspector were comfortable, homely and suitable and meet the needs of children and young people. Foster carers have undertaken training in child protection/safeguarding. The fostering panel was observed. The panel membership includes a police officer, foster carers, an ex-person in care, a manager of the residential assessment centre and the agency's manager. Three new members have recently been co-opted - a nursery nurse, a teacher and a nursery manager. It was seen to operate robustly and efficiently. The quality of assessments presented to the panel were of a good standard. The panel was well chaired and well organised. The panel membership has an appropriate representation of ethnic minorities. The panel has done BAAF certified training and looked at practice issues, expectations and roles.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children of all Nations, through its foster carers, is actively involved in promoting educational achievement. Foster carers help children with homework, one to one help with literacy and maths, encourage attendance at library, arrange learning support, liaise with teachers, provide availability of a computer, drive children to school and attend Personal Education Plan meetings. All school age children in placement have a Personal Education Plan. Children are encouraged to take part in a wide range of activities including gym, after school club, football, Kung Fu, swimming, drama, church, board games, bowling, cycling, family outings, cinema, cricket and leisure centres. The service values diversity and seeks to provide same race placements wherever possible. Foster carers have been recruited from a variety of ethnic backgrounds- Asian, Black and Mixed Race. Foster carers are sensitive to cultural diversity. Muslim children are encouraged to attend mosque. Foster carers provide ethnically sensitive food where appropriate. The agency has a Placement Officer who liaises with Local Authorities. She sends a profile of the carers to the Local Authority. The agency carefully matches by cultural background and the experience of carers and their skills.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children in placement have a care plan. The fostering agency encourages children and young people to maintain and develop family contacts and friendships. Foster carers facilitate direct contact with birth families and telephone contact is also encouraged as appropriate. The fostering agency also promotes consultation and ensures that the opinions and views of children are heard. Children and young people are attending their own reviews and have the opportunity to express their wishes and feelings. Children and young people receive a children's guide which

contains information on how to complain. It contains useful phone numbers including Child Line, Voice and the Children's Legal Centre.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The fostering agency encourages young people towards independence and foster carers prepare them for independent living and adulthood. Foster carers support young people to learn independent living skills, such as budgeting, preparing meals, doing their own laundry, self care and personal hygiene. The 16 year olds are encouraged to buy their own food and clothing and are taught to prepare meals. Children of all Nations pays fostering allowances that are in line with other agencies.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children of all Nations is a small fostering agency which currently has 10 foster carers. It is jointly owned by the Provider and the fostering manager. The fostering agency has a competent workforce and the staff have appropriate qualifications, skills and experience. The Registered Provider is the Director of the agency and her role is to oversee the running of the agency. She spends two or three days a week at the agency and has daily communication with the staff. The fostering manager who is the registered manager, manages the day to day activities of the service. She is presently doing the NVQ Level 4 in management which she hopes to finish by the end of April. The fostering manager receives professional supervision from the Director. The registered manager has on occasions undertaken the supervision of the carers. There are two independent supervising social workers who are both qualified and who supervise the foster carers. One undertakes supervision of foster carers and annual reviews and in addition does Form F assessments for new applicants. The other Supervising Social Worker exclusively supervises foster carers. There is one full time administration staff member. In addition, there is a Placements Officer whose job is to get children placed. She works three days a week. She also offers support in supervision of contact between children and their families. The small staff group each confirmed that they feel supported and receive regular supervision - approximately once every four-six weeks. The smallness of the agency means there is also a lot of informal contact. The agency does not convene team meetings because of its smallness but a recommendation has been included to allow each member of staff to attend regular staff and team meetings. One of the supervising social workers had done the Form F assessment course. The agency currently has 10 foster carers on its books and five have long-term placements. There are five carers without placements. There are two applicants who are in the process of being approved. The agency's aim is to have a maximum of 12 carers. The agency is about to be inspected by Pan London and if successful anticipate an increase in the referral rate. The agency matches by cultural background and experience of carers and their skills. Foster carers receive regular supervision and good support. They are visited at least every four weeks and sometimes more frequently. There is 24 hour duty service. When necessary, the Director or Fostering Manager will double up and offer support and supervision to the foster carers in the absence of the Independent Supervising Social Worker. The agency runs a support group bi-monthly. On the alternate month, the agency offers training six times a year. The majority of foster carers reported that they attend all the meetings and were generally satisfied with the support and training offered by the agency. Evidence was seen of staff appraisal and development reports. The fostering agency gives priority to training its foster carers. Nine

foster carers are doing NVQ Level 3. In house training has included varied topics including child protection, skills to foster, first aid, attachment, contact, valuing diversity, promoting health in looked after children and caring for unaccompanied minors. Last year the courses covered challenging behaviour and parents with mental health problems. The agency offers child care support so that foster carers can attend. The regular support groups also discuss practice. The agency has procedures in place for monitoring and controlling its activities. These include feedback forms from the children in placement, file audits, supervision notes, health records ,supervision visits to foster carers, unannounced visits, foster carers reviews, training and support groups and Criminal Record Bureau, Local Authority and health and safety checks. There are structures in place to ensure assessments, approvals and reviews of carers are managed and implemented effectively. There is a panel feedback form for applicants and foster carers attending reviews. The service has proper financial procedures and holds regular meetings with the accountant. Balance sheets were seen and the agency is financially viable. Any profit goes in to a reserve account. The agency ensures that a comprehensive case record is maintained for each child and files were in excellent order. Information on file included a referral form, Looked After Children (LAC) information- Essential Information, Placement Plan 1 and 2, Care Plan, LAC Review, LAC consultation form, Personal Education Plan, Health Assessment, Health Record, Supervising Social Worker contact sheets, Asylum papers and children's monthly progress sheets. Foster carer's files were also in good order and included the following information- a checklist for first enquiry, initial visit form, health and safety checklist, application form, local authority checks, NSPCC check, up to date CRB's on both applicants, birth certificate, driving licence and passport, bill, approval form, personal and employer reference, Form F, health and safety checklist, household and vehicle insurance, adult health report, up to date contact sheets, up to date supervision records and training records. Overall, foster carer's files are in very good order.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Fostering Services Regulations 2005 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

- ensure separate records/logs are kept for complaints and allegations - NMS 25.2.
- ensure each member of staff has the opportunity to attend regular staff and team meetings -NMS 20.5
- ensure the agency's child protection policy includes guidelines on what the child does in event of wanting to make an allegation - NMS 9.3

Annex

Annex A

National Minimum Standards for independent fostering agency

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

Ofsted considers 12 the key standard to be inspected.

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)

Ofsted considers 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.

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)

Ofsted considers 7, 13 and 31 the key standards to be inspected.

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)

Ofsted considers 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

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)

Ofsted considers none of the above to be key standards to be inspected.

Organisation

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)

Annex A

- 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)

Ofsted considers 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.