

# Child Care bureau Ltd

Inspection report for independent fostering agency

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<b>Inspector</b>	Martha Nethaway / Suzanne Young
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<b>Address</b>	Child Care Bureau Ltd Unit H1 Blackpole East Blackpole Road WORCESTER WR3 8SG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01905 754 754
<b>Email</b>	Childcarebureau@btconnect.com
<b>Registered person</b>	Child Care Bureau Ltd
<b>Registered manager</b>	
<b>Responsible individual</b>	Pamela Jennifer Hemming
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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**

Child Care Bureau Ltd (CCB Ltd) is a family run, private limited company operating as an independent fostering agency. Two of its directors have previous experience as foster carers. It has been operating since June 2000 and was registered in accordance with the Care Standards Act 2000 on 4 March 2004. CCB Ltd state that their primary aim is to offer foster placements of a high standard in a stable, nurturing, safe and caring family environment for children and young people who are looked after. It offers a wide range of placements: short term, long term, task focussed, respite, pre-adoption, bridging, parent and child, leaving care and emergency. These placements are provided to children and young people from birth to 18-years-old. The agency also undertakes a range of fostering support services. CCB Ltd is based in Worcester and has carers in Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Dudley and Walsall. At the time of the inspection CCB Ltd is supporting 23 fostering households with 27 children and young people in placement.

### **Summary**

Two inspectors carried out the inspection visit over five days. During the inspection, the agency's policies and procedures are checked. The manager completes a self assessment and 14 questionnaires are returned from the children in placement. Three fostering households are visited with carers and discussions held with children and young people who are present. Their files are also examined. Meetings with the foster carers group and the social work team take place. Interviews with the registered manager and the responsible individual occur. The last three panel meeting minutes had to be examined as the panel meeting for June 2007 was cancelled.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Childcare Bureau has made improvements since the last inspection visit and continues to comply with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services. The agency did experience a unsettled period during the summer of 2006 with the departure of some key staff. The agency has addressed this by employing an experienced qualified social worker. A new manager, social worker and referrals and placements officer are now appointed. The agency has invested resources to manage the performance of the team and individuals. The structures in place for supervision of staff has been improved. The review of some key policies and procedures are taking place with contributions being sought from the staff team. Team meetings are scheduled to take place weekly and communication is more effective.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children and young people's health is actively promoted and managed because Childcare Bureau carries out a full assessment and are responsive to need. The referral forms deal with the health requirements of children. These areas are considered carefully during the matching process. The foster care agreement and monthly supervision establish what are the health needs of the children and address any matters. Consent to seek medical treatment is in place. The child's statutory review focuses on health monitoring and any additional resources that will be required.

All of these processes ensure that the health needs of children are placed high on the organisation's agenda. Children receive good attention to their health. The health records identify the name of the doctor and dentist, ongoing regular medication, all appointments made, immunisations and childhood illnesses. Carers also maintain comprehensive records of medication administered. Childcare Bureau continues to have good links with external agencies including Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Carers describe the intensive work taking place and described the positive outcomes for young people. Childcare Bureau is setting up training that relates to addressing sexual health matters. An external health worker is delivering the training to staff and foster carers in October 2007 and likewise training on self harm. Childcare Bureau is developing a broader range of links to external professionals including psychologists, psychiatrists and support professionals. There are clear arrangements in place to ensure that all foster carers are provided with first aid training and this helps children and young people when any injuries or accidents are sustained. Policies are based on a holistic approach of wellbeing and are focused on outcomes for children. This includes advice on their physical, mental, sexual and emotional health. Good attention is provided to children who have a disability and the social work team have a skilled worker who provides advice and guidance to foster carers. Childcare Bureau has a policy on smoking. Where carers do smoke consideration is given to the risks related to passive smoking. However, the policy does not ensure that children are fully protected from the harmful effects of smoke by insisting that the home is a smoke free environment. Recent guidance insists that carers who smoke should not be approved to care for children under the age of five. Any children under 16 admitted to the home with a smoking habit are encouraged to reduce and, eventually, stop smoking, in accordance with medical advice as appropriate.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

The organisation has systems in place to ensure that the protection and safety of children is carefully considered, reviewed and monitored. The registered manager has the required qualifications and experience, is competent and well motivated to manage a regulated service. The manager is child focused and leads and supports the staff team and foster carers. The registered manager checks that foster carers and staff are suitable to work with children and young people which ensures their safety of children placed in their care. Staff and independent Form F assessors complete assessments of prospective foster carers. The new British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) Form F is used to process the assessment which includes a set of competencies to measure the skills and abilities of potential foster carers. Panel minutes read, demonstrate that the agency has a robust fostering panel in place which ensures good quality decisions are made. The level of scrutiny demonstrated in these minutes evidence a good quality assurance function is provided by the panel providing feedback to social workers bringing assessments and reviews to panel. Children's safety remains of paramount importance because issues such as behaviour management and child abuse are considered and discussed as part of the Form F assessment of prospective foster carers. Checks are conducted which include Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, medical and health and safety. In one case, evidence shows that extended family members and employees who had not undergone the rigorous checking process had regular contact, at times alone, with the young person placed. This places children at potential risk. Most of the foster placement agreements are completed at the start of placement and signed by carers except for some respite arrangements. It is good practice to ensure this aspect of practice is consistently addressed. Supervision is taking place regularly enabling the agency to monitor the carer's ability to adequately care for children.

Carers express their satisfaction with the level of support, advice and guidance from the social work team. Unannounced visits to foster carers take place. This process ensures that children and young people's placements are being observed. All three of the homes visited are warm, comfortable and inviting. Childcare Bureau certify that health and safety checks are carried out on each premises. Good records are being maintained of identified risks to children that require attention. The agency has a generic safe caring policy in place for the fostering household. However it does not fully address issues specific to the fostering family nor does it fully reflect the structure and issues within the fostering household. On placement of a child or young person, a risk assessment is completed which supplements the safe caring policy. This risk assessment is comprehensive and reflects the level of risk and actions to be taken to reduce the risk identified. Risk assessments are an excellent tool to help secure the safety of children and young people but are dependent on their accuracy. The agency ensures that on placement of a child or young person, a risk assessment is completed which supplements the safe caring policy. This risk assessment is comprehensive and reflects the level of risk and actions to be taken to reduce the risk identified. Risk assessments are excellent tool to help secure the safety of children and young people but are dependent on their accuracy. Some variance did exist with the level of detail provided on the forms. Childcare Bureau provides a system that makes certain that the matching criteria is well considered. The agency is able to match children with carers who are capable of meeting their needs, ensuring positive outcomes for children. Childcare Bureau employs a designated referral officer. This enables effective liaison with the referring authorities and develops a consistent approach. Carers stated how positive the consultation process is with good information sharing and their involvement with the induction visits for the child. Childcare Bureau does accept emergency placements and a great deal of effort takes place to prepare the child and carers. All carers are provided with child protection training including skills to foster training event. However, senior staff have not attended the Local Safeguarding Children Board, training Level 2 and Level 3 training events. Ensuring senior staff update their training will further strengthen the agency's protective strategies for keeping children and young people safe. The agency has developed a comprehensive and robust system to ensure all those working in or for the fostering agency are suitable to work with children and young people. There was one file for a sessional worker which did not have any form of identification and therefore did not meet Schedule 1 of the Fostering Service Regulations.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

The agency has a positive attitude to meeting the needs of children who are disabled or from minority ethnic backgrounds. There is a good awareness and understating of valuing diversity. Plans are in place to invite representatives from different ethnic and disability groups to contribute to the development of a broader understanding of issues for staff and foster carers. These initiatives will continue to improve outcomes for all children and create ownership of the equality and diversity agenda by all staff at all levels. The issue of culture and ethnicity is addressed in the matching process. Although evidence of this could not always be seen in matching forms and in foster placement agreements. This needs to be given more prominence within the agency. This demonstrates a lack of consistency in this regard. Support is provided to transracial placements through supervision when required, for example, directing carers to appropriate skin and hair care. Translators are used to support contact when this has been identified as being needed. Carers were seen to support children with dual heritage and actively promote their identity and offer positive role models. Carers are supplied with literature to address their learning needs. One carer had made excellent links into the child's community

and is able to provide culturally relevant food and home cooking. The matching process identifies gaps in cultural matching and outlines how these deficits are addressed. The social work team has a strong understanding of disability and is familiar with legislation, grants and access to specialist teams and resources. This enables the team to recognise and provide for the needs of children and young people with disability, particularly in relation to the communication needs of those with a learning disability or developmental delay. Children and young people's educational attainment and achievement is given prominence. Young people are supported by carers to meet educational needs. Where young people are not in full time education the agency expects carers to ensure constructive activity is provided. Examples were given of Childcare Bureau social workers helping carers access work on the internet and develop timetables for young people to do school work at home.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

The agency promotes positive contact with birth families and friends. These outcomes are beneficial to children and young people because they are able to retain family contact that is in their best interest. Arrangements for contact is considered during referral and matching and is clarified at the start of placement in foster placement agreements. Carers are expected facilitate contact with birth families including transporting children where appropriate. Outcomes of contact are recorded in daily logs. Childcare Bureau pays good attention to how it consults with children and young people. A number of different mediums are used to engage opinions and consider how further improvements be can made. This includes child friendly questionnaires, themed fun days and activities outings. Children and young people are benefiting from this focussed approach. Carers really appreciate Childcare Bureau's efforts to see the children in placement as well as the birth children. The agency social workers see foster children on a monthly basis and complete children and young people's monthly supervision forms. This is good practice. Foster children and birth children are formally consulted during the foster carer's annual review.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The effective organisation of the agency has a predominantly positive impact on the care of children and young people. There is a statement of purpose that is issued by Childcare Bureau to provide information to prospective carers and children. The children's guide is circulated to children. Both sets of documents reflect the agency's particular ethos and practice. A new manager is in post since the last inspection who is appropriately qualified and experienced. He is well regarded by colleagues and fellow professionals. Staff performance and annual appraisals are taking place. The manager has developed systems and structures for an efficient organisation. The manager is collating information to comply with Schedule 7 and quarterly monitoring reports are being produced. This process is still in it's infancy. No overall quality assurance system has been developed to encompass this monitoring and no evaluation of this information can be seen in order to maintain and improve quality of care within the organisation. The manager recognises this is an area of development to ensure any quality assurances function illustrates how the agency evaluates and promotes the care provided to children. The manager

also needs to develop a system for auditing and reviewing staff files. A comprehensive system of record keeping for staff and foster carers has been developed. The quality of recording from some of the fostering team varies in detail and lacks a consistent, effective approach. The registered manager provides supervision for all of the staff and keeps documentary evidence of these meetings. Good systems and the clarity of the management overview results in a positive team atmosphere. The seamless relation between the social team and how the business administrative support is executed is a particular strength of the agency. Lines of accountability are understood by the staff group and the role of the senior practitioner supports the registered manager. The agency has in place a detailed and comprehensive induction plan for all new members of staff. This area is well accomplished. All employees, sessional workers and consultants are provided with appropriate contracts and job descriptions. The agency's achievement with maintaining this continued level of support to carers is a positive strength. This commendable support to carers has a positive impact on children placed in their care. Foster carers experience extensive levels of support through supervision, support visits and when in crisis. Carers articulated that staff are accessible; provide advice and support to meet their needs. Access for emergency support is available. Carers receive formal supervision on a monthly basis and they have fortnightly support visits. These are recorded and placed on carer's files. Carers meet on a regular basis in support groups to which members of staff are invited when required. The agency must ensure separate records are being kept in line with the expectation of the standards. Standard 32 was not examined as the agency does not approve family or friends of children as foster carers.

## 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
4	ensure the quality assurance function illustrates how the agency evaluates and promotes the care provided to children Regulation 42.	31 October 2007
25	ensure that the agency maintains separate records of the matters set out under the national minimum standard 25.2 Regulation 22.	10 August 2007
15	ensure all staff files meet Schedule 1 of the Fostering Service Regulation 5,7, 20.	10 August 2007

### Recommendations

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

- ensure that in accordance with recent guidance all carers who smoke should not be approved for children under the age of five. Any children under sixteen admitted to the home with a smoking habit are encouraged to reduce and, eventually, stop smoking, in accordance with medical advice as appropriate. National Minimum Standard 12



- ensure documentary evidence supports the decision making for all placements including moves for respite. The agency must ensure foster placement agreements are in place and signed by respite carers. National Minimum Standard 8
- ensure that all extended family members and others who have regular contact while alone with foster children and young people are fully risk assessed and checked to ensure their suitability. National Minimum Standard 9
- ensure that the safe caring policy in place for the fostering household is specific to the fostering family and reflect the structure and issues within the fostering household. National Minimum Standard 9
- ensure that all senior staff attend the Local Safeguarding Children Board training Level 2 and Level 3 training events. National Minimum Standard 9
- ensure that issues of culture, ethnicity and religion is addressed in the matching process and clearly evidenced in the matching forms and in the foster placement agreement. This needs to be given more prominence within the agency. National Minimum Standard 7
- ensure the consistency in quality of recording by social workers and provide the necessary training to reinforce this. National Minimum Standard 16

## 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.**