

# Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Fostering Services

Inspection report for local authority fostering agency

---

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC043058                                |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 19/06/2012                              |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Muhammed Harunur Rashid / David Coulter |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full                                    |

---

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>Setting address</b>         | York Stream House, St. Ives Road, MAIDENHEAD,<br>Berkshire, SL6 1QS |
| <b>Telephone number</b>        | 01628 798 888   |
| <b>Email</b>                   | heather.andrews@rbwm.gov.uk   |
| <b>Registered person</b>       | Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead                             |
| <b>Registered manager</b>      | Julia Brown   |
| <b>Responsible individual</b>  | Heather Andrews   |
| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 27/09/2007  |

---

© Crown copyright 2012

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead fostering service operates as part of the family placement, fostering, adoption and respite care service team (FARS).

The team is located in central Maidenhead with other local authority children's services. The team manager is responsible to the service manager for placements and permanency, who in turn reports to the Head of Safeguarding and Specialist Services for Children.

Although FARS workers take a lead on, or have a special interest in some aspects of the work, all engage in the variety of tasks associated with the work of the team.

At the time of this inspection there were 79 approved foster carers within 46 households.

### The inspection judgements and what they mean

**Outstanding:** a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

**Good:** a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

**Adequate:** a service that only meets minimum requirements

**Inadequate:** a service that does not meet minimum requirements

## Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

The fostering service is effective and there is a clear leadership, direction and commitment in place. The fostering service is well monitored and managers have a clear understanding of the strengths and weakness of the service. A strength of the service is consultation with children, young people, their families and foster carers to improve the service.

The unitary authority benefits from being relatively small and as a result relationships between children, foster carers, staff and managers are close. This enables good matching of children and as a result unplanned endings are low. The fostering service meets the needs of children and young people in a highly individualised manner.

The excellent links with the health and educational professionals within Berkshire

bring together a range of skilled professionals who work collectively to support children and young people in order to achieve the best possible outcomes in care.

## Areas for improvement

### Recommendations

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

- ensure that the fostering service implements an effective strategy to ensure sufficient foster carers to be responsive to current and predicted future demands on the service. (NMS 13.1)

### Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Young people enjoy stable placements. Unplanned placement endings within the unitary authority are relatively low. Children and young people who are looked after by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead live with foster carers within the local area to ensure continuity of education and that children can maintain social networks. Children and young people benefit from constructive contacts with their family and friends. Contacts are supported and encouraged to maintain and develop contacts and friendships.

Children and young people are supported by foster carers who have a sound knowledge of their background. Children and young people are made aware of their backgrounds, family history and develop a sense of identity through their care history. Social workers and foster carers have been trained in undertaking life story work, which helps children to have an understanding of their backgrounds.

Children and young people are comfortable in their foster homes. They benefit from well planned moves to foster carers and benefit from good information about the placements through foster carers' profiles and DVDs. Young people spoken to say that they are treated as any other member of the household.

The promotion of health outcomes for children and young people is good. Children and young people live in a healthy environment and their health care needs are well met. They have access to services, such as, Healthy Minds, Looked After Children Nurses and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to meet their physical, emotional and psychological needs. In Windsor and Maidenhead authority the Healthy Minds provides consultancy and support to teams around the child, professional, foster carers and adopters, to enable them to listen to and respond to children and understand their behaviour.

Children and young people are well supported in making educational progress. The educational attainments for looked after children are good. The school attendances

of pupils have now increased to 96.69%. There have been no permanent exclusions for children in care. An improved number of young people have achieved 5 A\*-C grades in GCSE examinations. Four care leavers are now attending various university courses.

Foster carers support young people for developing various independent living skills for the preparation of their adulthood. Young people spoken to say that they do budgeting and get involved in household shopping with their foster carers. Older children are able to travel to and from school and are familiar with the local community.

Children and young people are well supported in developing a wide range of leisure and social activities, within the home and to encourage community contact. All children are positively encouraged to participate in after school activities. They have opportunities to take part in the local theatre workshops. Young people are provided with free leisure passes and the recent partnership works with the unitary authority and the Lego Land enable children and young people to visit the adventure park free with their foster families.

### **Quality of service**

The quality of the service is **good**.

The authority has recently established its own fostering panel. There are clear policies and procedures in place to conduct the functions of the panel. The panel fulfils its quality assurance functions, thus ensuring a high standard of assessment. Fostering panel members come from a wide range of expertise and the management is working towards recruiting a person with experience as a foster carer.

The preparation and assessment process for foster carers is thorough and informative. The fostering and adoption team social workers carry out comprehensive assessments of prospective foster carers. These cover all areas of the competencies needed to establish if an individual is suitable to become a foster carer. The training, supervision and development of carers, provides them with the skills to meet the needs of children and young people.

The excellent links with the education provisions within the authority and the virtual school bring together a range of skilled professionals who work collectively to support educational attainments of children and young people. Foster carers encourage and support children and young people to attend schools and help them with homework. Foster carers attend school evenings and contribute to children's personal education plans.

The fostering service recruits a range of foster carers who are able to meet the needs of children and young people placed with the in house foster carers. The authority has worked with independent fostering agencies within the county where they need additional resources to meet placement requirements of children with special needs and sibling groups. The fostering service recognise the difficulties in

recruiting appropriate carers to meet the changing needs of children they provide care for. The managers and independent reviewing officers said that there is a need for recruiting foster carers who can provide care for the increasing number of sibling groups and children with autistic spectrum disorders.

Children's social workers have a very good knowledge about foster carers skills and this helps with matching foster children to foster families. When a proposed match is identified the fostering service undertakes targeted work to assist in preparing the child for placement with the specific family identified. Children and young peoples' care needs are well assessed and individual comprehensive health and care plans are in place to meet these needs. All foster carers have access to a range of health and educational services in order to work in partnerships to meet foster children's holistic needs.

Placements stability within the unitary authority is good. Close liaison and discussions between the children's teams and the fostering team ensure that any concerns are shared at an early stage. Joint supervision takes place when there are complex issues to address across teams. Managers monitor care plans, including permanence plans regularly to ensure that care plans are being implemented promptly and reviewed regularly. In addition to this a multi-agency 'life change forum' meets quarterly to monitor progress and outcomes for all children in permanent foster care.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

The service is **good** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Children and young people say that they feel safe in their fostering placements and never experience bullying. They know how to make a complaint and access independent advocacy services. They live in homes where foster carers provide them with a nurturing, stable and safe environment. Foster carers are provided with child protection, anti-bullying and safe caring training to promote their awareness of how to protect children and young people in their care. This ensures that foster carers have a clear understanding of safeguarding and that they demonstrate an awareness of current practice.

Children's social workers undertake very effective statutory visits for monitoring children's placements and ensuring that these meeting their identified needs.

The fostering service conducts effective unannounced visits to foster carers' homes to ensure that children and young people live in a safe environment. The service also carries out all statutory checks on fostering household members and visitors to safeguard children and young people in foster care.

The fostering service is effective in breaking patterns of incidents regarding children and young people going missing from foster care. The missing from care incidents within the unitary authority are low.

### **Leadership and management**

The leadership and management of the local authority fostering agency are **good**.

The fostering service's managers provide good leadership and direction to foster carers and they are accessible to staff, foster carers and children for advice and guidance. The managers monitor the performance and delivery of the fostering service. The management and fostering staff demonstrate a clear commitment to reviewing the quality of the service and improving outcomes for children in foster care. The service regularly consults with children, young people, their parents and foster carers to ensure that their views are taken into account in both individual care planning and in service development.

There are various effective quality assurance tools available to monitor the service performance and promote the best possible outcomes for children in foster care. These include: consultation with children, recently seeking children's views about the development of its Foster Care Charter; regular consultation with foster carers contributes towards the service developments and improvements to promote outcomes for children in foster care.

Children and young people know how to make complaints and the children's guide provides information about the complaint procedure. They have easy access to children's advocacy service. Complaints received are investigated and responded to in accordance to the procedure.

The fostering service has excellent relationships with all outside agencies, including police, Local Safeguarding Board, health and educational professionals in order to promote welfare of foster children and achieve the best possible outcomes for them.

Fostering staff and carers receive regular high quality supervision and up to date training for their professional development. Foster carers have an annual training programme available and a number of carers have completed Children's Workforce Development Council training. Fostering social workers are all qualified social workers and have opportunities to attend post qualifying training for their professional development.

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead fostering service has acted upon all previous recommendations made at the last inspection.

## **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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the inspection framework and the evaluation schedule for local authority fostering agencies.