



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

LOCAL COUNCIL PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENTS

Warrington Borough Council Private Fostering Arrangements

**St Werburgh's
Boswell Avenue
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 6BB**

Lead Inspector
Sharon Lloyd

Announced Inspection
16th January 2007 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

Reader Information	
Document Purpose	Inspection Report
Author	CSCI
Audience	General Public
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This is a report of an inspection to assess local authority private fostering arrangements against the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering. These standards can be found at www.dfes.gov.uk. The NMS specify a minimum standard for local authority practice in the fulfilment of their duties and functions in relation to private fostering under the Children Act 1989. Along with the new measures in section 44 of the Children Act 2004 and the 2005 regulations, they are intended to better focus local authorities' attention on private fostering, in part by requiring them to take a more proactive approach to identifying arrangements in their area.

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. The Private Fostering National Minimum Standards are mapped to just two of these outcomes, Staying Safe and Management.

Copies of *Every Child Matters* and *The Children Act 2004* are available from The Stationery Office as above

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Local Authority INFORMATION

Name of Local Authority Warrington Borough Council Private Fostering Arrangements

Address St Werburgh's
Boswell Avenue
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 6BB

Telephone number 01925 444400

Fax number

Email address

Local Authority Web address

SUMMARY

Warrington Borough Council

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

The private fostering arrangements were inspected as part of the annual fostering service inspection. A data set and annual quality assurance assessment were completed by the principal officer and were provided along with the statement of purpose, the marketing plan and copies of all information pamphlets. Interviews were held with the chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, the principal officer responsible for the service and social workers.

At the time of writing, there are three children known to the council who are living with private foster carers and one of these was case tracked during the inspection. This involved inspection of records held on the child and carers, inspection of the safeguarding team records relating to the child, discussion with social workers, carers and a private interview with the young person in her home.

What the local authority does well:

Warrington Borough Council (WBC) has made excellent progress in establishing effective systems and procedures to safeguard and promote the welfare of children living with private foster carers. Documentation is in place to aid social workers in carrying out assessments of the placement and all social care staff have been briefed on the WBC policy. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has taken an active role in ensuring the safety of children in private fostering arrangements.

A marketing strategy is in place to promote understanding and knowledge about private fostering within the borough and various pamphlets have been produced and distributed aimed at encouraging carers, parents and professionals to notify WBC Children's Services of any private fostering arrangements.

WBC has joined with a neighbouring authority to finance a one-year radio campaign to raise public awareness. Arrangements have been put in place to cascade information to key staff in schools, leisure and medical centres so that they are clear about their responsibilities to notify the local authority and familiar with the procedures.

What has improved since the last inspection?

This is the first inspection of the WBC private fostering arrangements.

What they could do better:

WBC is raising awareness of private fostering in accordance with its planned aims and objectives, although as yet, only two notifications have been made and a third situation was recognised by the local authority when the carer contacted the Children's Services Directorate. WBC should continue to use a variety of means to raise awareness amongst the public and front line professionals so that they are familiar with their duty to notify the local authority where children are privately fostered. They should ensure that all front line staff within the borough are familiar with the WBC policy so that they can recognise and respond to private fostering situations quickly.

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. The summary of this inspection report can be made available in other formats on request.

DETAILS OF INSPECTOR FINDINGS

CONTENTS

Staying Safe

Management

Staying Safe

The intended outcome for these Standards are:

(NMS 2) The local authority is notified about privately fostered children living in its area.

(NMS 3) The welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted

(NMS 4) Private foster carers and parents of privately fostered children receive advice and support to assist them to meet the needs of privately fostered children; privately fostered children are able to access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted.

(NMS 5) The local authority provides advice and support to the parents of children who are privately fostered within their area as appears to the authority to be needed.

(NMS 6) Children who are privately fostered are able to access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted. Privately fostered children are enabled to participate in decisions about their lives.

The Commission considers that all these Standards should be inspected.

JUDGEMENT – we looked at the outcome for the following Standard(s):

2,3,4,5,6

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using all available evidence including the site visit. Strategies are in place to raise public awareness of the need to notify WBC of private fostering situations. Children who are known to live with private foster carers are protected by the safeguarding systems in place.

EVIDENCE:

WBC has an agreed marketing plan aimed at raising awareness about private fostering. This includes brochures aimed at parents, carers, children and other professionals. The information is currently available only in English, but WBC are happy to arrange for it to be translated into any language, where needed. There was evidence of information being translated into Turkish for the parents of a young person in private foster care. WBC should consider including a statement on each of the brochures, to indicate that this service is available.

Information has also been included in a wide range of free publications to professionals and the public in Warrington and news releases are planned to support the campaign throughout its first year. WBC has joined with a neighbouring authority to finance a one year radio campaign and there is a dedicated web page on the local authority website.

There are a number of already established multi- agency groups established in Warrington and plans are in place to ensure that the information previously cascaded in written form is followed up with a personal approach to education and health staff as well as to those working in the four children's centres, with pre-school children and with children with disabilities.

There was evidence that the local authority has responded appropriately to notifications and has effectively assessed and supported an arrangement that came to their attention without notification, although it seems to have taken a few weeks for the local authority to recognise this as a private fostering arrangement (see below).

An assessment is made of the child's needs and the carers' capacity to meet those needs, including health, education, social, religious, linguistic, cultural and any needs arising from the child's ethnicity. Arrangements between the carer and birth family are explored and clarified. Checks are completed on the carers and the premises and a recommendation is made as to the suitability of the arrangement. The report is presented to the WBC private fostering arrangements' decision maker. Clear policies and procedures are in place regarding how to proceed if the placement is deemed unsuitable.

A young person confirmed that a social worker visits regularly and offers advice and support and that she has a good working relationship with the social worker, whom she trusts. The carer said WBC has provided good support in arranging a school placement for the young person; this happened once the social worker was allocated. There is a discrepancy between the date the carer said she wrote to the department asking for help in obtaining a school placement (10 Sept) and the date of the referral held on the young person's file (29 Sept). The carer said that during this time she contacted the Children's Services daily but had no response.

The young person confirmed that she was able to maintain contact regularly with her family and friends. She has acted as an interpreter between the social worker and her parents in an emergency situation. The social worker has arranged for all relevant information, including the core assessment, to be translated into Turkish for the parents.

There was evidence that the young person is encouraged and enabled to participate in decisions affecting her care and the local authority are supporting her to negotiate with the placing agency where necessary.

Management

The intended outcomes for these Standards are:

- (NMS 1) Relevant staff are aware of local authority duties and functions in relation to private fostering.
- (NMS 7) The local authority monitors the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering.

The Commission considers that all these standards should be inspected

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

,7

Quality in this outcome area is good. This judgement has been made using all available evidence including the site visit. Children's welfare is promoted by the good systems in place to monitor their welfare and respond to concerns.

EVIDENCE:

A comprehensive Statement of Purpose is available and covers all the information outlined in NMS1.

All social care staff have been briefed about the WBC private fostering arrangements and the associated regulations, although it is clear that there is a need to ensure that all front line children's services staff have this information.

Arrangements are in place to include information about private fostering in child protection, induction, foster carer pre-approval training and all multi-agency child in need training.

Monitoring systems are in place to assess the effectiveness of the raising awareness campaign as well as the management of individual assessments and support to children and carers.

Comprehensive, well-organised records are maintained for each child. A core assessment is completed on the child and an assessment of the carers is completed that includes health checks, references and enhanced CRB disclosures. There was evidence of the CRB check being rushed through the police where the child was already in placement at the time of notification.

A social worker was not aware of the duty to respond to notifications by visiting within 7 days although this was done as a matter of good practice.

Plans are in place for a written report to be prepared at the end of the first year and for this report to be made available to the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Director of Children's Services.

Concerns for the safety and welfare of a child are taken to the Local Safeguarding Children Team for a professionals' strategy meeting and there was evidence of good multi- agency working and good practice in relation to following up concerns about the welfare of a child.

Optional

Being Healthy

JUDGEMENT –

This outcome area was not assessed.

EVIDENCE:

Enjoying and Achieving

JUDGEMENT –

This outcome area was not assessed.

EVIDENCE:

Making a Positive Contribution

JUDGEMENT –

This outcome area was not assessed.

EVIDENCE:

Achieving Economic Well Being

JUDGEMENT –

This outcome area was not assessed.

EVIDENCE:

SCORING OF OUTCOMES

This page summarises the assessment of the extent to which the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering 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

STAYING SAFE		MANAGEMENT	
<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>	<i>Standard No</i>	<i>Score</i>
2	3	1	4
3	4	7	3
4	3		
5	3		
6	3		

N/A

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection?

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations relate to National Minimum Standards and are seen as good practice for the Local Authority to consider carrying out.

No.	Refer to Standard	Good Practice Recommendations
1.	PF1	WBC should ensure that all front line staff working for children's services are familiar with the policy on private fostering and know where to refer information to quickly, so that WBC can meet the timescales for intervention set out in regulation 4 of the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005
2.	PF2	WBC should consider including a statement on each of the brochures, to indicate that the information can be made available in different languages.

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