

**South Gloucestershire Private Fostering Arrangements Service**  
Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

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<b>Inspector</b>	Paul Clark
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<b>Address</b>	South Gloucestershire County Council 2a Newton Road BRISTOL BS30 8EZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01454 866090
<b>Email</b>	lesley.raison@southglos.gov.uk
<b>Registered person</b>	South Glos Council Department for Young Children
<b>Registered manager</b>	Lesley Raison
<b>Responsible individual</b>	Mike Connelly
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	

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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**

The Private Fostering service of South Gloucestershire Council is part of its Department for Children and Young People. A 'Children's Information Services' team receives initial notifications of private fostering arrangements within the county. Administrators are trained to elicit necessary information and pass the notification to a duty social worker in one of the three geographic areas where the private fostering arrangement is taking place. The duty social worker carries out enquiries to ascertain the safety of the young person placed and within seven days they will visit the private fostering household, see the young person alone and will complete the initial assessment of the suitability of the placement. When a private fostering arrangement is deemed suitable it is 'signed off' by the Service Manager who acts as the 'Registered Manager' of the service. A 'Responsible Person' oversees and monitors the provision of the service. At inspection neither of these individuals were recorded with Ofsted as holding these positions and the Council has been advised to notify Ofsted in writing of their names. After the placement has been 'signed off' a social worker from the 'Family Placement Team' then takes responsibility for the continuing review and assessment of the placement. A social worker from the 'Looked After Children' team takes responsibility for the ongoing support of the young person. At the time of the inspection there were two young people placed in two households which were in the process of being assessed as being suitable private fostering arrangements.

### **Summary**

This announced inspection found that there are effective policies and procedures in place to inform practice and to safeguard young people placed in private fostering arrangements. Staff are trained to provide appropriate care and support.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

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

This was the first service inspection of this service by Ofsted.

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

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards which apply to this outcome group.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

The inspection found that there are satisfactory practices, policies, systems and procedures in place to safeguard young people placed in private fostering households. The council promote the need to be notified of private fostering arrangements within the county by appointing a Marketing and Recruitment Officer and a Children's Participation Officer part of whose function is to distribute information posters and leaflets to appropriate agencies and professional bodies to make them aware of their responsibilities in notifying the council about any private fostering arrangements that come to their notice. Distribution goes out to GP surgeries and Health Centres, Health Visitors, schools, school nurses, libraries and all council offices. They also advertise information in local newspapers and council publications. The two private fostering

arrangements currently being assessed were notified by the birth mother of one child placed, and by a nearby local authority in the case of the other child placed. The welfare of young people is promoted by an initial assessment of the suitability of a private fostering arrangement which is undertaken by a duty social worker and which council policy documents stipulated that they must be carried out within seven days of the council being notified. A social worker from the Family Placement Team then assesses and reviews the placement arrangements at designated frequencies and a social worker from the Looked After Children's Team provides ongoing support for the young person placed. Inspection of records showed that neither of the two young people currently placed had been visited within the seven days from notification required by Regulation 4. However, records indicated that both young people had been visited at least every six weeks thereafter when the young people had been seen alone and had stated that they were happy with the private fostering arrangements. The duration of the placements and the financial agreements between birth parents and carers was recorded in the running records contained within the young people's case files. However, there was no mention of the contact arrangements between young people and their birth parents. The council does not use properly formatted 'Private Fostering' forms commonly used by other local authorities to ensure that all matters contained in Schedule 3 are checked during review visits. Criminal Record Bureau checks were being carried out on all members of the private fostering households where the two young people were living. Private foster carers are given the contact details of the social worker who is allocated to them, who they can approach for help and advice. Information leaflets are available for young people, private foster carers and birth parents about the advice and support available to them. The leaflet for private fosterers does not advise them about available financial support. Young people placed are advised that they can access the advocacy service with which the council have a service level agreement.

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

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards which apply to this outcome group.

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

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards which apply to this outcome group.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards which apply to this outcome group.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

There are good systems, policies and procedures in place to ensure staff are aware of their duties in regard to private fostering arrangements and the service is monitored effectively. A clearly written Statement of Purpose and 'Policies and Procedures' document advises staff and other stakeholders about all aspects of private fostering which pertain to their work. These documents are reviewed annually. These documents are also available to staff on the council's intranet. There is also a specific page on the council's website about private fostering which provides the public with general guidance and information about the service. It was noted that whilst the Statement of Purpose contains the name of the person who staff can contact for

expert advice on private fostering it does not give the name of the person who 'signs off' off the private fostering arrangements as suitable and as required by National Minimum Standard 1.2. The Statement of Purpose also contains the training that the council makes available to private foster carers. It spells out the legal framework and gives a definition of the privately fostered young person. It spells out the responsibility of other agencies in regard to notifying the council about private fostering arrangements that come to their notice. Training for social workers about private fostering is contained in the child protection training that they receive as part of their induction and in the multi-agency child protection training course. The council maintains written records of young people placed and of private fostering households. The registered manager produces an annual review of the Private Fostering Service which is sent to the Director of Children and Young People's Services of the council and to the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

## 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, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
3	ensure that young people are visited within seven days of the council being notified of a private fostering arrangement. Regulation 4.	24 November 2008
3	ensure that social workers use properly formatted 'Private Fostering' forms to ensure that all matters contained in Schedule 3 are checked during review visits. Schedule 3.	25 November 2008

### Recommendations

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

- ensure that the information leaflet given to private foster carers advises them about available financial support. NMS 4.2
- ensure that the Statement of Purpose contains the name of the person who 'signs off' off the private fostering arrangements as suitable. NMS 1.2.

## Annex

## Annex A

### National Minimum Standards for private fostering arrangements

#### Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

#### Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the local authority is notified about privately fostered children living in its area (NMS 2)
- the welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted. (NMS 3 )
- 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 4)
- the local authority identifies and provides advice and support to the parents of children who are privately fostered within their area (NMS 5)
- 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 (NMS 6).

**Ofsted considers 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

#### Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

#### Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

#### Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

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

**Ofsted considers 1 and 7 the key standards to be inspected.**