

Sefton Council Private Fostering Arrangements

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

Unique reference number	SC076238
Inspection date	7 March 2008
Inspector	Jeffrey Banham
Type of Inspection	Key

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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

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council has set up its arrangements to register and manage private fostering placements under the requirements of the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005. At the time of the inspection the authority had two notified fostering arrangements, although it has been notified and responded to other placements that have since ended. The Service Manager for Safeguarding is the named Private Fostering Officer and provides the Local Safeguarding Board with the annual report detailing how the authority has complied with its duties and functions.

Summary

The inspection of the private fostering service was announced. The inspection covered the areas of 'staying safe' and 'organisation' in accordance with guidance and the standards relevant to those areas. The local authority's arrangements for private fostering are well managed. The introduction, implementation and monitoring of the procedures is and has been the responsibility of the Service manager for Safeguarding. This has enabled a clear priority to safeguarding the welfare of children to be established as standard practice. Monitoring arrangements are good and have led to the identification of areas for improvement and subsequent plans for the development of the service.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection of the service.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The policies and procedures of the local authority are implemented thoroughly and consistently and this ensures that children's welfare and safety is effectively safeguarded and promoted. The local authority is notified by prospective foster carers and other professionals and responds within stated timescales to conduct initial assessments in order to make decisions about children's safety. Monitoring of the notification arrangements has enabled the local authority to recognise the need for improvement of the notification arrangements. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities and their performance is monitored through the usual line management supervision arrangements and the overall monitoring function of the Service Manager for Safeguarding. 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. The local authority's implementation of the private fostering arrangements is well coordinated with other safeguarding responsibilities. For example, privately foster children who are also subject to child protection procedures have their welfare safeguarded by robust implementation of the child protection procedures. Regular review

enables the local authority to determine the correct approach to be taken should privately fostered children need to become looked after by the local authority.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The private fostering arrangements are well managed. The local authority has produced a range of policies and procedures setting out the operational framework for its management of the private fostering arrangements. Responsibility for the implementation of these arrangements has always rested with the Service Manager for Safeguarding. This has enabled the initial impetus given to private fostering to be consistently maintained. The location of the responsibility with the Safeguarding Board promotes a clear recognition of the primary responsibility of the service to safeguard the welfare of children and ensure that due consideration is given to a child protection perspective. A training, publicity and information programme conducted with local authority staff and in the Borough has provided guidance about the extent of the framework and specific responsibilities for staff. The designated officer has produced bi-annual reports that monitor the way in which the local authority is discharging its functions. The reports identify areas that need improvement and lead to the production of an action plan that sets out the actions of the authority that are intended to implement necessary improvement.

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
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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):

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.