

# West Berkshire District Council Private Fostering Arrangements Services

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC073055
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 March 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Gavin Thomas
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

---

<b>Address</b>	West Berkshire District Council Social Services Avonbank House West Street NEWBURY Berkshire RG14 1BZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01635 516820
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	West Berkshire Council
<b>Registered manager</b>	Diane Grist
<b>Responsible individual</b>	Maggie Short
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	

---

© Crown copyright 2008

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.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN.  
Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

## 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 Children and Families Services are responsible for West Berkshire Council's private fostering arrangements. One of the Assistant Managers within the Family Placement Team has a lead role on private fostering. Information on private fostering is provided on West Berkshire Council's website. This is in addition to local publicity and awareness campaigns.

### Summary

This inspection took place over the period of one day. It was conducted by one inspector. The inspection included: a pre-inspection meeting, liaison with the inspection coordinator, inspection of a range of records and documents (electronic and manual), meetings with staff, observation of the fostering panel, evaluation of comments received via surveys from private foster carers and young people in private foster care arrangements, evaluation of pre-inspection information supplied prior to the inspection and a visit to a private foster home. Overall, the outcomes for young people in private foster arrangements are good. Private foster carers confirmed that visits and phone calls from social workers are regular. Private foster carers described their involvement with the Family Placement Team and social workers as being positive and helpful. They did indicate however, they are amazed and mostly unaware of the detail of assessment and decision making processes. The fostering service is aware of these views and is working closely with the language school to further promote the awareness of private fostering and what it entails for private foster carers. Young people are satisfied with the care and support they receive from their carers. Young people also know their social workers by name. They are also aware of the frequency of meetings and social worker contact details. Most young people refer to private foster carers as 'host families'. The families are described by young people as being 'kind' and 'nice'. There are a number of strengths within the service. For example, training and development for staff is well received. Publicity and awareness campaigns are well established and regularly reviewed for effectiveness. Management is strong. Record keeping is evaluative and safety and protection of young people is clearly at the forefront of all work undertaken with private fostering arrangements. Links with external agencies are established and still evolving. The service is proactive in identifying areas for improvement and development. There are no actions or recommendations made as a result of this inspection.

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 undertaken of the private fostering arrangements provided by West Berkshire District Council. The service is forward thinking in reviewing ways in which services for private fostering are publicised and delivered. For example, over the last twelve months new policies and procedures have been implemented and awareness campaigns have been launched within the department. The service has identified three goals for the future as follows: continue publicising private fostering within the community; continue working with the local language school to increase their understanding of their duty with regard to private fostering; and introduce a support group for young people who are privately fostered.

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

There are no standards for this outcome, therefore it is not inspected.

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

The provision is good.

There is a broad range of initiatives in place to ensure that the general public are made aware of private fostering arrangements. Advertisements and publications are explicit. Awareness campaigns commenced approximately two years ago. These are currently coordinated by the Recruitment and Publicity Officer. Current strategies are regularly reviewed for effectiveness. There are very clear procedures in place for responding to private fostering notifications and responding to unnotified arrangements. There have been no appeals or disqualifications as a result of the work undertaken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people in private fostering arrangements. There are vigorous procedures in place to promote the safety and welfare of young people in private fostering arrangements. For example, the fostering panel has been authorised by the council to make judgements about the suitability of private fostering arrangements. All assessments are thoroughly scrutinised by the fostering panel. The fostering panel is also thorough in ensuring that as far as possible, the wishes and feelings of the young person are ascertained about the private fostering arrangements. The fostering service is working closely with a local language school to raise awareness about private fostering and to ensure that correct procedures are followed regarding private fostering arrangements. There are good support systems in place for private foster carers. This was indicated via completed surveys and during the inspection. Staff were described as being polite and professional. The council's website provides valuable information on private fostering arrangements. This is beneficial for carers and young people. Currently, the majority of privately fostering arrangements are identified via a local language school. However, protocols are in place for providing advice and support to parents of young people who are privately fostered. Young people who are privately fostered have good access to information and support. The fostering service ensures that all young people receive a guide and other types of information as required. Young people indicated via completed surveys that they are pleased with the support they receive from social workers. This includes regular visits and telephone calls. Young people also indicated that they know who to contact if they have any concerns about their private fostering arrangements. Currently, there are no young people in private fostering arrangements with disabilities. However, protocols are in place for responding to these notifications.

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

The provision is not judged.

There are no standards for this outcome, therefore it is not inspected.

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

The provision is not judged.

There are no standards for this outcome, therefore it is not inspected.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

There are no standards for this outcome, therefore it is not inspected.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

A statement on private fostering is in place. This statement is reflective of the council's practice. It clearly sets out its duties and functions. The functions and duties of the service are consistent with the statement on private fostering. For example, annual reports are presented to the Local Safeguarding Board and the Director of Children's Service. Effective procedures are also in place for recording and monitoring the numbers of notifications received and numbers of children in private fostering arrangements. Statistics include the relative start dates of private fostering arrangements, length of stay, classification of arrangement and ethnicity. Records are kept up to date. Systems are in place to ensure that new notifications are reported to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). In addition to duties carried out by the Family Placement Team, the outcomes for young people in private fostering arrangements and general issues on private fostering are addressed by a Private Fostering Steering group. This group is well established and involves representatives from health, education, social workers and private foster carer. The quality of records on private fostering arrangements is good. The content clearly sets out the nature of the arrangement, decision making processes and evidence of decisions being signed-off by an appropriate person. There are good examples on record of correspondence with other parties regarding the outcome of the decision making process. There are good management systems in place for ensuring consistency with the implementation of the National Minimum Standards and regulations for private fostering arrangements. Procedural guidance is clear and transparent. Staff are appropriately trained and supported to discharge their duties effectively. This includes proper time devoted to monitoring the arrangements and delivering the council's plan for private fostering. Staff and panel members are provided with adequate training on private fostering such as lunch time seminars. In addition, specific training has been provided for panel members.

## 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
----------	--------	----------

### 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.