

# Somerset County Council (Private Fostering Arrangements)

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

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<b>Inspector</b>	Paul Clark
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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 Arrangements section of Somerset County Council is located within its general fostering service which is part of its Children and Young Person's Directorate which embraces both its social services and education provision. The Area Manager for the Taunton region has overall responsibility for the fostering service and line manages the Registered Manager of the service who is also based in Taunton. At the time of the inspection the authority had been notified about 10 private fostering arrangements within Somerset.

### **Summary**

The arrangements for privately fostered children within the Somerset area generally ensure their safety and wellbeing and the newly appointed manager of the service has identified all the areas in need of development and plans are in place to achieve these.

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 Private Fostering Arrangements of Somerset County Council.

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

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards under this outcome group.

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

The provision is good.

The service has completed Schedule 1 Forms (Regulation 3, 'Notification of a Private Fostering Arrangement') which are in place on each file for Private Fostering Households (PFH) and there is evidence on file to show that the authority has contacted parents asking them to make notification that their child is to be fostered by private arrangement. These forms have been typed by the visiting social worker and are not signed by them or by the private fosterers or by the parents of the child. There are separate case files in place for each PFH and for the young person placed. However, the files for PFH do not contain all the information required by Schedules 1 and 2. The authority advertises the fact that PFHs must inform local authorities about private fostering arrangements by distributing leaflets and having these on display in their area offices, GP surgeries, libraries, educational establishments and churches. This information is also contained on the Local Safeguarding Children Board's (LSCB) website. Communication has also taken place with the Somerset Race Equality Council to ensure that they are aware of the need for notification. There are significant populations of Chinese and Polish nationals in Somerset and the authority is currently working on the provision of information leaflets in these languages. The authority responds appropriately to any notification received where evidence of private fostering arrangements have been brought to their attention. The welfare of children in PFHs is safeguarded and promoted by social work visits every six weeks in the first year of placement and every 12 weeks thereafter and the child is always seen alone. Social workers also contact schools and GPs to check on the welfare of privately fostered children. Social workers check to see that there is contact between birth parents and their

privately fostered children and parents are contacted by the social worker to establish that they continue to be happy with the private fostering arrangements. The authority will offer advice and support to PFHs including resource services. Financial support is also available based on individual need (Section 17 of the Children Act, monies available for a 'Child in Need'). The authority also makes training courses available to PFHs in respect of particular needs of children placed. A full assessment of each PFH is undertaken by a social worker and is submitted to the Foster Panel. The panel does not 'approve' private fostering arrangements but agrees to its suitability. A 'Core Assessment Form' is used to establish the appropriateness of the PFH including undertaking all relevant Criminal Records Bureau and Police checks. Children are always asked if they are happy with private fostering arrangements affecting them. Privately fostered young people are provided with an information sheet about the support available to them from the local authority and this sheet is written in their own language. However, this does not contain the contact details of the advocacy service that is available to them.

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

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards under this outcome group.

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

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards under this outcome group.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards under this outcome group.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

A Statement of Purpose outlining the local authority's duties and responsibilities with regard to privately fostered children is in place. However, recent changes in the management of the service have resulted in the Statement not containing the names of the persons managing the service. Also, Ofsted have not been informed in writing of the names of the Registered Manager or of the Responsible Individual. The LSCB ensures that all practitioners dealing with private fostering arrangements have been appropriately trained and made aware of the findings of relevant inquiry reports. Records are kept of all young people in PFHs. The overall numbers of children placed are made known to all appropriate authorities. 'Somerset Direct' is a central call centre which collates all notifications of private fostering arrangements and a coded reference is taken of such notifications. The Registered Manager monitors the operation of the service and an Annual Written Report is made to the Director of Children's Services.

### **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 'Notifications of Private Fostering Arrangements' are signed by social workers, private foster carers and parents. Regulation 3	28 July 2008
3	ensure that case files for all Private Fostering households contain all the information required by Schedules 1 and 2.	28 July 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 Statement of Purpose is updated to contain the names of the persons managing the service. Also, inform Ofsted in writing of the names of the Registered Manager and of the Responsible Individual. (NMS 1)
- make information leaflets available to the Chinese and Polish communities that are written in their own language. (NMS 4.3)
- ensure that privately fostered young people have information about the contact details of the advocacy service that is available to them. (NMS 6.4)

## 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.**