



Making Social Care
Better for People

inspection report

LOCAL COUNCIL PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENTS

LB of Waltham Forest Private Fostering Arrangement

Fostering and Adoption Assessment Team
1C The Drive
Walthamstow
London
E17 3BN

Lead Inspector
Paula Eaton

Announced Inspection
5th February 2007 10:00 am

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

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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

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Email address	
Local Authority Web address	

SUMMARY

London Borough of Waltham Forest

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

The inspection of Waltham Forests Private Fostering Service was completed alongside the inspection of the Fostering Service. The service does not have a particular team dedicated to Private Fostering; social workers within the Fostering Assessment Team are allocated cases as the local authority become aware of them. The Fostering Assessment Team Manager for the service is responsible for taking the lead and monitoring Private Fostering arrangements at present. However, at the time of the inspection only one Private Fostering arrangement had been identified. A social worker from the team was in the process of assessing this case. This social worker was spoken to, as was the Fostering Assessment Team Manager.

Records, policies and procedures were examined. No Private foster carers were visited as there were no identified cases that had been fully assessed at the time of the inspection. It was difficult to fully assess the service against the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering on this occasion as the Local Authority had only identified one private fostering arrangement and the authority was still in the process of implementing systems to increase awareness, notifications and monitoring.

What the local authority does well:

The service has a thorough and comprehensive assessment process in place that safeguards children and young people in private fostering arrangements

The service has developed appropriate policies and procedures relating to Private Fostering.

What has improved since the last inspection?

This was the first inspection.

What they could do better:

The management are already aware of where further changes and developments are needed. This includes increasing networks and awareness to improve notifications. It was evident that the Local Authority should have progressed with the work regarding Private Fostering arrangements earlier. It should also be noted that although all but one of the assessed standards are assessed as met in this report it was difficult to make a full and accurate assessment as no Private Fostering arrangements were being monitored at the time of the inspection.

While Private Fostering Arrangements are not regulated services, they are private arrangements and Local Authorities have functions and duties with regard to Children that are privately fostered. The Commission for Social Care Inspection has agreed to inspect all Local Authorities against the new National Minimum Standards over the next three years. The London Borough of Waltham Forest is one of the Local Authorities whose Private Fostering Arrangements have been inspected in the first year. It should therefore be noted that in comparison to those Local Authorities due to be inspected in years two and three, those in year one have had less opportunity to progress work in this area.

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 and 6

Quality in this outcome area is adequate. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. The local authority needs to take further steps to increase awareness and promote notification of private fostering arrangements. Robust assessment procedures are in place.

EVIDENCE:

At the time of the inspection there was only one private fostering arrangement that had been identified and was in the process of being assessed. The local authority had completed some work towards raising awareness to improve notifications such as adding articles to local council newsletters and organising staff seminars to provide information. A communication plan had also been developed including a briefing paper for professionals and leaflets and posters. A copy of the posters to be used in the community were seen during the

inspection. These were eye catching and will hopefully be an effective tool in raising awareness and increasing notifications. A Community Cohesion Officer had been employed to work with the Children's Safeguarding Board and lead on this communication plan with regard to Private Fostering. The service is working with other departments such as education and health to raise awareness.

It is important that literature used to raise awareness is provided in suitable formats, for example, translated in to languages spoken by communities where private fostering arrangements are known to be common.

It was very difficult to assess how the local authority would safeguard children in Private Fostering arrangements as no Private Fostering arrangements were being monitored at the time of the inspection.

The social worker spoken to who was carrying out the Private Fostering assessment was aware of her role and responsibilities with regard to the assessment and the needs of the child in the placement. She had a good knowledge of the expectations regarding the assessment and monitoring of Private Fostering arrangements.

Six private fostering referrals had been made to the service but only one was an actual Private Fostering arrangement. The service has appropriate policies and procedures in place and a specific guidance leaflet for young people was in the process of being developed.

The assessment process takes account of the feelings and wishes of the young person. It was evident from speaking to the assessing social worker that she had had discussions with the young person in the Private Fostering arrangement and was including this in the assessment. The assessment process also includes safety checks such as Criminal Record Bureau checks and Local Authority checks to safeguard the child in placement. The assessment will also be presented to the fostering panel for the panel to recommend approval of the placement.

The Group Manager said that Private Foster carers will be offered support in the way of training and support groups to ensure that their needs are met as carers. She also said that Private Foster carers will have a named support worker to monitor the arrangements and provide support and advice as required.

Privately fostered children will be given a Children's Guide providing information on what it means to be privately fostered as well as contact information and guidance on what they can expect from the service.

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):

1 and 7

Quality in this outcome area is adequate. This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service. Staff are aware of the Local Authorities duties and functions in relation to private fostering.

EVIDENCE:

The service has a written statement completed in January 2005 outlining the aims and objectives of the service in relation to Private Fostering. However, since this time progress has been slow with regard to carrying out this work and increasing awareness.

The service is intending to provide training for staff regarding Private Fostering this year. The deputy team manager in the Fostering Assessment Team has the lead role in advising and supervising staff with regard to Private Fostering and the Team Manager has overall responsibility. There is also a lead person in the Children's First Response Team who has an advisory role and is the first point of contact.

The Children's Safeguarding Board has a lead role in raising awareness and the Community Cohesion officer has been appointed to form links with local community and faith groups.

Adequate procedures are in place for monitoring placements, however, it was not possible to assess the effectiveness of these as no Private Fostering arrangements were being monitored at the time of the inspection.

The procedures for Private Fostering state that all cases will be presented to the fostering panel and will be subject to an annual review. All cases will be

treated similarly to other fostering households with case files being held, regular monitoring visits taking place and support and advice being provided as required.

Optional

Being Healthy

JUDGEMENT –

EVIDENCE:

Enjoying and Achieving

JUDGEMENT –

EVIDENCE:

Making a Positive Contribution

JUDGEMENT –

EVIDENCE:

Achieving Economic Well Being

JUDGEMENT –

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	2	1	3
3	3	7	3
4	3		
5	3		
6	3		

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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	PF2	Further strategies should be implemented to increase awareness and promote notifications regarding private fostering arrangements amongst all professionals and the wider community.
2	PF2	Literature used to increase awareness and promote notifications should be produced in suitable formats to ensure it reaches the target audience in the most effective way.

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