

# North east Lincolnshire Council Private Fostering Arrangements Service

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

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<b>Inspector</b>	Michael McCleave
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<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 arrangement in North East Lincolnshire is managed by a service manager with a small dedicated team who are part of the Family Support Service. The team is based in modern offices located a short distance from the town centre, but within easy reach of other council service offices.

### **Summary**

At this announced full inspection, all key standards were inspected in the outcome areas of staying safe and organisation. Enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and economic wellbeing were not inspected. This is a good service that is very well managed. The team though small in number, demonstrate a positive commitment to developing the service, and to reach out into the wider community in order to identify privately fostered arrangements. The safety and wellbeing of those young people who are known to be privately fostered, is seen as a high priority. There are sound monitoring systems in place to ensure that the service is working appropriately to keep children and young people safe. However, consideration should be given to making private fostering a standing agenda item at Safeguarding Board meetings. The service has invested financial resources to increase the public awareness of private fostering. This needs to continue. The service manager has carried out a good assessment of the service, and the resulting action plan clearly identifies where improvements are to be made to the service provision. Staff are well supported by the manager who has a strong commitment and focus on improvement.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

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

This service has no previous requirements or recommendations.

### **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 service has a very proactive approach in attempting to provide to the general public, information about private fostering arrangements. The service has produced an extensive array of leaflets, posters, and booklets available for the general public. These are in several different languages, and include the legal responsibilities of those engaged in this activity. The local radio station has been used to highlight to the public the need to contact the local authority, if they are involved in private fostering arrangements. Advertising on the sides of the local bus service has been another imaginative means of raising awareness of private fostering. There is an effective duty system in place where all notifications are initially screened before being processed by the social worker. The service manager and team are very clear about their responsibilities in safeguarding young people in private fostering arrangements. Despite such arrangements having been set up between the carer and the young person's family, the social worker carries out an extensive assessment of the placement and makes a judgement of the suitability of the arrangement. It is the service manager's responsibility to sign off as agreeing

to the arrangement. Carers are satisfied with the support they receive from their social worker, and generally felt that the young person they cared for, benefited from the involvement of the statutory authority. The young people are provided with contact details of their social worker. The service manager is currently in the process of developing a contract agreement between the carer and parents to clarify the roles, responsibilities and expectations of each party to the arrangement that includes contact and financial details. This is good practice. It is recognised that financial support for the young person's family is often the main issue of concern. The Chair of the Safeguarding Board is kept abreast of issues relating to privately fostered children. However, this process would be enhanced if private fostering were a main agenda item at each meeting of the board. The service works proactively to identify privately fostered children and young people, and where these placements are known, a high level of support and monitoring is undertaken to ensure that the welfare of the children and young people are safeguarded.

### **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 service has in place a detailed Statement of Purpose that meets the standards. This document is widely distributed within the directorate of children's services. The standard of quality of work, provided to carers, is monitored by the service manager on a monthly basis through routine audits of case files. In addition to these checks, the manager discusses in detail current issues with the social worker during formal one to one supervision sessions. Records are well maintained and in addition to paper files, case records are now electronically stored, and these can be accessed by authorised personnel. Senior managers can therefore monitor the quality and suitability of privately fostered children and young people. The service manager has completed an audit of the service against the national minimum standards, and an action plan has been produced. The plan identifies where improvements need to be made. This plan forms part of the annual assessment report for the Director of Children's Services and for the Safeguarding Board. To promote a greater awareness of the situation around privately fostered placements, the service manager is currently increasing contact with other partnership agencies in the health and education sectors. There are plans to open up opportunities for private foster carers to attend training events organised for mainstream foster carers. This is good practice. The Service Manager is working towards the goal that private fostering will become an integral part of the overall fostering service development. In the meantime, private fostering should be included as part of the overall fostering training programme, so as to increase the awareness and understanding among staff. A written agreement between the carer and parents of a child that is privately fostered, is currently being developed by the manager to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both parties. The service manager has a clear vision of where the service needs to be, and there is a clear commitment to ensure that the service provided is maintained at a high level. The current drive to increase the public awareness about private fostering needs to continue. This service is well managed and good monitoring systems are in place to ensure

that quality of service provision is maintained. It is recognised by the manager that more needs to be done.

## 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):

- ensure that the duties and responsibility of the service in relation to private fostering are included in the induction and other training programmes (NMS 1.4).

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## 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.**