

Liverpool City Council Private Fostering Arrangements

Inspection report for la fostering agency

Unique reference number	SC068564
Inspection date	26 June 2007
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd / Sue Winson
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

Liverpool City Council's fostering service provides a range of placements for children and young people who are unable to live at home with their families for short or long periods. It is responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are privately fostered as well as those living with mainstream carers and family and friends carers. The service operates from council offices known as "Parklands" in Speke, approximately eight miles from the city centre. A principal officer leads the service and is assisted by three team leaders and approximately 40 social work and support staff. The fostering service works closely with the safeguarding unit and other local authority and health services. As chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, the children's director has oversight of and responsibility for the council's strategy for safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children in private fostering arrangements.

Summary

The private fostering arrangements were assessed against the national minimum standards and The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005. Discussions were held with key personnel and social work staff. Policies, procedures and documentation were assessed for compliance with the regulations. No case tracking took place. Liverpool City Council is currently not aware of any children who are privately fostered. It recognises that members of the public may be reluctant to notify the local authority of private fostering situations and that other professionals may not be fully aware of their duties. It has reviewed its strategy within the last 12 months and has developed systems and procedures aimed at raising awareness of private fostering amongst all members of society. It has emphasised the support that children will receive as a result of notification. The overall quality rating for the service is based on the strategy in place and not on outcomes for children. Therefore, the highest rating that can be applied is 'satisfactory'.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This was the first inspection of the private fostering arrangements.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

There are no standards to be inspected under this outcome area.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Policies and systems are in place to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in private fostering arrangements. Written information for parents, other professionals and the general public has been redesigned, reissued and made available at public buildings throughout the city. A major publicity campaign, including radio advertising has taken place this year. Information is also available on the local authority website and in safeguarding documents produced by the council. It sets out clearly the duty to notify the local authority as well as the

support that will be provided as a result of notification. Despite this, only one notification has been received to date and this turned out not to be a private fostering situation. Good corporate parenting strategies exist within the council and close liaison is maintained between the fostering service, safeguarding unit and education, health, mental health, day care and leisure services. Plans are in place to raise awareness of private fostering amongst professionals by providing safeguarding training to all schools, extended schools and children's centres within the city. A community safeguarding event is planned during the summer months. Information has already been distributed to schools, health organisations and to licensees. Satisfactory procedures are in place to assess private fostering arrangements and support children. These include Criminal Records Bureau and other checks on the private foster carers and other adults living in the home. The suitability of the premises is to be assessed and the child's wishes and feelings taken into account. The assessment of arrangements are to be presented to a panel for a recommendation to be made to the agency decision maker. Where arrangements are deemed satisfactory, a social worker is to be allocated who will carry out statutory visits to support the placement. Documentation recognises the role and responsibilities of those with parental responsibility and promotes good, clear agreements between parents and carers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

There are no standards to be inspected under this outcome area.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

There are no standards to be inspected under this outcome area.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

There are no standards to be inspected under this outcome area.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Staff confirmed that they have had training in their duties in relation to privately fostered children. Clear written guidance is available. Systems to monitor the effectiveness of the local authority's private fostering strategy and to provide an annual report to the chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board have been put in place this year. Managers are hopeful that their latest advertising campaign coupled with the ongoing training for other professionals will lead to notifications being made.

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, The Fostering Services Regulations 2005 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 la fostering agency

Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service promotes the health and development of children (NMS 12).

Ofsted considers 12 the key standard to be inspected.

Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- any persons carrying on or managing the service are suitable (NMS 3)
- the fostering service provides suitable foster carers (NMS 6)
- the service matches children to carers appropriately (NMS 8)
- the fostering service protects each child or young person from abuse and neglect (NMS 9)
- the people who work in or for the fostering service are suitable to work with children and young people (NMS 15)
- fostering panels are organised efficiently and effectively (NMS 30)

Ofsted considers 3, 6, 8, 9, 15 and 30 the key standards to be inspected.

Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service values diversity (NMS 7)
- the fostering service promotes educational achievement (NMS 13)
- when foster care is provided as a short-term break for a child, the arrangements recognise that the parents remain the main carers for the child (NMS 31)

Ofsted considers 7, 13 and 31 the key standards to be inspected.

Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service promotes contact arrangements for the child or young person (NMS 10)
- the fostering service promotes consultation (NMS 11)

Ofsted considers 10 and 11 the key standards to be inspected.

Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the fostering service prepares young people for adulthood (NMS 14)
- the fostering service pays carers an allowance and agreed expenses as specified (NMS 29)

Ofsted considers none of the above to be key standards to be inspected.

Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- there is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service and the fostering service ensures that they meet those aims and objectives (NMS 1)
- the fostering service is managed by those with the appropriate skills and experience (NMS 2)
- the fostering service is monitored and controlled as specified (NMS 4)

Annex A

- the fostering service is managed effectively and efficiently (NMS 5)
- staff are organised and managed effectively (NMS 16)
- the fostering service has an adequate number of sufficiently experienced and qualified staff (NMS 17)
- the fostering service is a fair and competent employer (NMS 18)
- there is a good quality training programme (NMS 19)
- all staff are properly accountable and supported (NMS 20)
- the fostering service has a clear strategy for working with and supporting carers (NMS 21)
- foster carers are provided with supervision and support (NMS 22)
- foster carers are appropriately trained (NMS 23)
- case records for children are comprehensive (NMS 24)
- the administrative records are maintained as required (NMS 25)
- The premises used as offices by the fostering service are suitable for the purpose (NMS 26)
- the fostering service is financially viable (NMS 27)
- the fostering service has robust financial processes (NMS 28)
- local authority fostering services recognise the contribution made by family and friends as carers (NMS 32)

Ofsted considers 1, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25 and 32 the key standards to be inspected.