



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

LOCAL COUNCIL PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENTS

Fostering Services (RBKC Private Fostering Arrangements)

**Social Services Department
Westway, 140 Ladbroke Grove
North Kensington
London
W10 5ND**

Lead Inspector
Paula Eaton

Announced Inspection
11th September 2006 09:30

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

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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

Name of Local Authority	Fostering Services (RBKC Private Fostering Arrangements)
Address	Social Services Department Westway, 140 Ladbroke Grove North Kensington London W10 5ND
Telephone number	020 7361 2473
Fax number	
Email address	
Local Authority Web address	

SUMMARY

Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea

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

The inspection of Kensington and Chelsea's Private Fostering 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 Children and Families Teams are allocated cases as the local authority become aware of them. The Principal Child Protection Advisor for the service is responsible for taking the lead and monitoring Private Fostering arrangements. This member of staff and two of the social workers who had been involved in assessing and monitoring private fostering arrangements were spoken to. Records, policies and procedures were examined and one Private Foster Carer was visited. 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 five private fostering arrangements 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 established appropriate links with other local authorities to explore a joint approach to increasing awareness and notifications.

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

The service has comprehensive monitoring systems in place.

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 is important that children and young people are provided with sufficient information regarding their Privately Fostered status and given appropriate contact details to enable them to ask for help and support if needed. Support for Private Foster carers could also be improved.

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 Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea 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, 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. Good assessment and monitoring procedures are in place.

EVIDENCE:

At the time of the inspection there were only four private fostering arrangements that were being monitored, a fifth private fostering arrangement that was being monitored had ended. The manager responsible for Private Fostering said that some work had been completed with other local Boroughs to develop strategies to increase awareness of Private Fostering and to try and

increase notifications. This would include publicity through various media sources and building links with local community groups. A Communication Plan was viewed that provided evidence of this. However, more effective systems need to be developed to ensure that both professionals and the wider community are aware of private fostering and that these arrangements should be notified. 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. The service had already produced leaflets in French and Chinese and was in the process of planning to have a leaflet printed in Bengali. The service had also given a presentation on private fostering at the Chinese Centre in Soho.

The case records for the five known private fostering arrangements were viewed. It was evident that a full assessment of the family's circumstances had been completed and that each young person's needs had been assessed. Comprehensive assessments had taken place that had taken account of the child/young person's developmental needs, health, educational, emotional and behavioural and cultural/racial/linguistic needs.

The two social workers spoken to who were monitoring private fostering arrangements were clear about their roles and responsibilities and appeared to be adequately supporting the private foster carers and the children they were looking after. Young people had been supported with taking part in leisure activities and buying small items to personalise their bedrooms. One young person had been provided with a camera to take pictures whilst on holiday.

It was evident from the records viewed and from speaking to staff that parental involvement was encouraged where possible and appropriate. The private foster carer visited described how the young person in her care maintained contact with her birth Mother and that plans were being made for her to possibly return home in the near future.

As a result of limited or no contact with the some children's parents especially if they are overseas it is not always possible to determine the intended duration of a private fostering arrangement or to promote or facilitate contact with a young person's birth parents.

The records viewed showed that children and young people were being spoken to on their own and the private foster carer visited confirmed that the young person in her care had been seen on her own by the visiting social worker. Therefore young people were being given the opportunity to speak to the social worker in confidence.

It was evident from the records viewed and from speaking to a private foster carer that support and advice had been given to private foster carers. The private foster carer who was visited confirmed that they had received visits from Social Services and that they had been provided with some support. The

manager responsible for the private fostering arrangements said that young people are provided with a leaflet produced by BAAF regarding private fostering. It is important that children and young people are provided with information regarding their situation and the requirements for monitoring this arrangement as well as information regarding their rights and contact information should they need advice or assistance. The Local Authority should also consider providing training to private foster carers and establishing a support group. The manager responsible for the private fostering arrangements said that the service would be looking to develop a support group for private foster carers in the future.

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, 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. Effective monitoring systems had been developed.

EVIDENCE:

It was evident from interviewing social workers and speaking to the manager responsible for the private fostering that staff were aware of their duties and functions. Clear guidance had been developed for staff and distributed and staff had received briefings on this. Comprehensive policies and procedures for private fostering arrangements were available on the Local Authority's intranet site and staff spoken to said that they found this useful.

The records for all five private fostering arrangements were viewed. All of them contained comprehensive information regarding the assessment process, any contact and monitoring information along with records of any advice or support given. At the time of the inspection all private fostering arrangements were being presented to the fostering panel once assessed as a safeguarding measure.

The Principal Child Protection Advisor who is the manager responsible for the private fostering maintains a database of all private fostering arrangements and is responsible for monitoring the management of these placements. He also reports regularly to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board on these matters.

Optional

Being Healthy

JUDGEMENT –

Not assessed on this occasion.

EVIDENCE:

Enjoying and Achieving

JUDGEMENT –

Not assessed on this occasion.

EVIDENCE:

Making a Positive Contribution

JUDGEMENT –

Not assessed on this occasion.

EVIDENCE:

Achieving Economic Well Being

JUDGEMENT –

Not assessed on this occasion.

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	2		

Are there any outstanding recommendations from the last inspection? N/A

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
2	PF2	Further strategies should be implemented to increase awareness and promote notifications regarding private fostering arrangements amongst all professionals and the wider community.
3	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.
4	PF4	The service should provide training for Private Foster carers.
5	PF4	The service should explore establishing a support group for private foster carers.
6	PF6	Children and young people who are privately fostered should receive information regarding advocacy services and contact details for their social worker.

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