



*Making Social Care
Better for People*

inspection report

LOCAL COUNCIL PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENTS

Isle of Wight Private Fostering Arrangements

**Social Services Centre
Town Hall
Lind Street
Ryde
Isle of Wight
PO33 2NQ**

Lead Inspector
Lynda Mosling

Announced Inspection
15th November 2006 10:00

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 Isle of Wight Private Fostering Arrangements

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Town Hall
Lind Street
Ryde
Isle of Wight
PO33 2NQ

Telephone number 01983

Fax number 01983

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**Local Authority Web
address**

SUMMARY

Isle of Wight Council

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

The local authority has created a dedicated post to promote the welfare of privately fostered young people in their area and to raise awareness of the duties and responsibilities for private fostering.

Efforts have been made to advertise the need to notify the local authority of any private fostering arrangements. The dedicated worker has provided training and consultation with staff and other professionals to ensure there is understanding of the needs of privately fostered young people.

This has produced a small number of responses, and currently there are only 4 private fostering arrangements identified.

Most of the arrangements notified and assessed have been in regard to 15 year old young people living with the family of friends. Most have reached 16 years within a few weeks of the notification being made.

Whilst the numbers are very small the systems that have been set up and the efforts that have been made to raise awareness are good and the local authority has clearly demonstrated their desire to promote the welfare of privately fostered young people on the Isle of Wight.

The inspection was undertaken by two inspectors over one day, as part of the inspection of the local authority fostering service. Questionnaires were sent to the private foster carers and the young people but no responses were forthcoming and none of those involved wished to speak with an inspector.

What the local authority does well:

- Recruited a dedicated worker to ensure the local authority duties and responsibilities are met
- Provided information to staff and other agencies to raise awareness of the needs of privately fostered young people
- Advertised in local press to raise public awareness of the private fostering regulations and the need to notify the local authority of private fostering arrangements
- Undertake thorough assessments to ensure the welfare of the young people is met by the arrangement
- Communicate with other local authorities about the issues raised by private fostering
- Have clear records of the action taken following referral

What has improved since the last inspection?

- The appointment of the dedicated worker has given clear focus to the duties of the local authority with regard to private fostering
- All of the systems and processes used are an improvement on previous arrangements for private fostering within the local authority

What they could do better:

- Ensure the decision making process is clear and well recorded
- Review the work undertaken with regard to private fostering on a regular basis
- Produce an annual report for the local authority with regard to the private fostering functions

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

The judgement for this outcome area is **good**.

The local authority has advertised the need to be notified about privately fostered children and has ensured staff have passed on the necessary information to assess their welfare.

An assessment process is used to ensure the welfare of privately fostered children and young people is promoted.

Parents, young people and carers are provided with advice and support regarding the arrangements.

Young people are consulted about the arrangements made for their care.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to the service.

EVIDENCE:

The local authority, through the dedicated worker, has tried to raise public awareness about the need to notify them about private fostering arrangements. Advertisements in the local press, notices in libraries, medical centres and schools have been evidenced.

Additionally, council staff have been reminded of their duties regarding private fostering. Social workers in the children's services have referred all situations where private fostering arrangements are suspected.

The dedicated worker has visited schools, boarding schools, team meetings with other agencies in order to explain the local authorities duties and to open up lines of communication. Information packs and referral forms have been made available.

On receipt of a notification there is a clear system to assess the individual arrangements. Files were seen of the action taken following notification and were judged to be appropriate.

Contact is made with the carers, parents and young people and a core assessment is undertaken within 35 days to look at the young person's needs and ensure these are being met by the arrangements.

Where the arrangements are assessed not to meet the needs of the young people, or the arrangement can not continue due to the carers situation, the authority arranges for the appropriate alternatives to be discussed with the parents and young people. One such situation was recorded in the files seen and action was taken to provide a local authority foster placement.

The core assessment undertaken following notification is thorough and includes information from GP's, schools as well as the family and young person. The assessment identifies the needs of the young person and how the arrangement meets those needs.

Core assessment reports were seen as part of the inspection and were clear and well written. They are based on the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families.

The young person's views are taken into consideration and support offered to deal with any conflicts that arise.

Decisions about the suitability of the arrangements are made by the manager of the fostering service, although the decisions were not always clearly signed.

Although there was no indication that inappropriate decisions had been made, it is recommended that the process be clearer, with consideration given to using a panel to consider the reports prior to a decision being made. The decision must be accurately recorded and everyone formally informed.

Following the identification of private fostering arrangements the dedicated worker contacts to explain the process and offer support and advice.

In most cases the arrangements continue and the carers do not take up any offer of support. This might be different if the local authorities had the ability to offer financial assistance.

Information is given about possible benefits, training and support groups. Carers are given a contact number for children's services.

Young people are also given useful information and contact numbers and are made aware of their right to seek independent advice and support.

Parents of the young people are given information and helped to form agreements with the carers regarding contact, payments and benefits. There was evidence seen that communication with parents had led to some improvements in the arrangements made for young people.

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

The judgement in this outcome area is **good**.

The local authority have taken steps to make relevant staff aware of their duties and functions relating to private fostering.

The local authority monitors the discharge of its duties relating to private fostering.

This judgement has been made using available evidence including a visit to this service.

EVIDENCE:

The local authority created a dedicated private fostering post in order to ensure the duties and functions in relation to private fostering were discharged. This post is now managed by the fostering team manager.

An statement of purpose/procedural guide was produced that covers the responsibilities of the specialist social worker and outlines the process of referral, assessment etc. This was distributed to all relevant staff and meetings were held with teams of social workers to discuss the processes.

The referrals seen showed that staff are notifying the dedicated worker of arrangements that may be private fostering whenever they come across them in their work.

The manager of the fostering team supervises the work undertaken by the dedicated worker and is supportive of the work undertaken. As the number of private foster carers is so small the dedicated worker has been allocated other work within the team. This has been done in agreement with the worker and makes best use of the resources available. However, care will be needed to ensure the additional work does not take precedence over the private fostering task as the momentum could be lost and the work diluted. It is acknowledged by the worker that the need to raise public and professional awareness of the responsibilities for private fostering is an on-going task.

It is recommended that an annual report is produced regarding the private fostering arrangements and that regular reviews of the work undertaken form part of the senior management monitoring process.

The dedicated worker attends meetings with other local authority workers specialising in private fostering arrangements. This is useful in sharing experiences and ideas, and helps with a consistent approach to the issues raised.

Optional

Being Healthy

JUDGEMENT –

No assessment was undertaken under this outcome area.

EVIDENCE:

Enjoying and Achieving

JUDGEMENT –

No assessment was undertaken under this outcome area.

EVIDENCE:

Making a Positive Contribution

JUDGEMENT –

No assessment was undertaken under this outcome area.

EVIDENCE:

Achieving Economic Well Being

JUDGEMENT –

No assessment was undertaken in this outcome area.

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

No

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.	PF3	The decision making process is clarified and all decisions are accurately recorded and notified
2.	PF7	An annual report is produced and regular reviews of the arrangements form part of the senior management monitoring processes

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