

# East Sussex Private Fostering Arrangements Service

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

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<b>Inspector</b>	Lindy Latreille
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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**

East Sussex County Council contract out the Private Fostering service to the National Children's Homes (NCH). Private fostering occurs when a child under 16 years old lives and is looked after for more than 28 days by someone who is not their parent or a close relative. Recruitment is in place for a manager, as the previous manager has now moved to alternative employment although she is retaining a managerial role on one day each week until a new appointment is made.

### **Summary**

This was an announced inspection that took place over one day. All key standards were inspected in Staying safe and Organisation. The manager fully facilitated the inspection through the provision of information and documentation.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

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

This is the first inspection of this service.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is not judged.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

The National Children's Homes (NCH) has publicised the work that it is doing in relation to private foster care throughout East Sussex, locally with open days at the Centre and by a range of leaflets distributed throughout the county. Following a notification the service expects to allocate a children and families worker (CFW) to a privately fostered child and carer. Presentations have been given to Health Visitors in East Sussex so that they are aware of the arrangements in place and their responsibility in notifying the local authority. Local schools have been contacted to raise awareness so that they will identify situations where a young person is not living with a family member. Visits by the private fostering team have been made to Housing, Sure Start, children and adolescent mental health (CAMHS) and various voluntary groups. The outcome of this work in March 2007 was a 400% increase in notifications. The operations manager's report is sent to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and the Corporate Parenting panel of the local authority and the Deputy Director of children's services; providing scrutiny of the service. Each young person is seen at least every six weeks during their first year of private fostering; every three months subsequently; or more frequently if they request it. Activities are arranged for young people to attend the NCH centre if they wish to take part. The service is active in support of diverse heritage of the young people fostered and this is reflected at the regular supervision meetings that take place in the fostering household to establish that the standard of care is appropriate for each young person. Decisions about suitability are achieved within required timescales. Following the inspection the service has been asked to make a referral to safeguarding in respect of one placement. The NCH provides advice and support to carers through regular visits and information such as benefit advice, health and education services. Health and safety checks are completed for each

household; not all are signed by the author. Criminal Record Bureau checks (CRBs) are recorded as clear but not each number for each individual, as this is held at head office. Parents are informed of open days at the NCH centre. Information is made available in different languages or interpreters sought as necessary. The service considers contact at each home visit to ensure that the young person's needs are being addressed. Parents are given contact details of an allocated social worker. The young people are visited every six weeks and a report is made to the manager on their progressing situation in relation to each young person. Identified concerns are actioned, often by the workers in relation to health and education. Activities are planned at the NCH centre to engage the young people in peer groups and socialisation.

**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 satisfactory.

The statement of purpose is contained in three leaflets that by means of flow charts explain when people should contact the NCH at the centre in relation to private fostering. The leaflets are distributed so that professionals, parents and others may understand the legal status of private foster care. These clearly state that NCH is working on behalf of East Sussex local authority. A children's guide explains what is meant by private fostering and the implications for the young person and also the professionals that will visit and support them during this period of their lives. Staff at the NCH centre have received training from the manager to raise awareness of all the implications for a private fostering service. Locality social workers have seen similar presentations. The manager has close communication with the area manager from NCH and the operations manager for the local authority. Files are mostly comprehensive, though some reports are written in pencil. One placement identified at feedback as raising safeguarding concerns has been the focus for a safeguarding referral at the request of Ofsted. Although the detail about the placement is known to the children and families worker (CFW), insufficient consideration has been taken to ensure the ongoing safeguarding of a young person. All assessments are signed off by the operations manager, who is himself moving to a new position within the local authority and his replacement, though recruited, has not yet taken up his position.

**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 health and safety checks are signed and dated by the author. NMS 4
- ensure that all arrangements made safeguard each young person placed in a private fostering arrangement as stated in Schedule 3 and are fully recorded. Regulation 7 & 8
- ensure that record keeping is in ink or information technology format. NMS 7

## 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.**