

Durham Private Fostering Arrangements

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

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Inspector	Stella Henderson
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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

Durham private fostering service is based on the outskirts of Durham city, and is responsible for private fostering arrangements for the whole of the county. The service provides a wide range of information on private fostering, and works closely with parents and carers to make sure they are meeting the needs of children and young people who are privately fostered.

Summary

The purpose of this visit was to undertake a key inspection. Two outcomes were inspected; Staying Safe and Organisation. The service has more weaknesses than strengths, and there are no mechanisms in place to identify shortfalls and deficits within the system. This means that the development and safety of children and young people is put at risk.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the service's first inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

The private fostering service has a programme of communication activities and a range of publicity materials to make people aware of the notification requirements of private fostering arrangements. Children and young people are made vulnerable, however, by delays in responding to such notifications when the service becomes aware of the arrangement. The safety of children and young people is also compromised as the notification pro-forma does not ask private foster carers for all the information required by these regulations, such as the addresses of private foster carers for the last five years. Children and young people benefit from having their needs properly assessed by the service as all aspects of their progress and development is taken into account. The parenting capacity of the private foster carer is, in the majority of cases, assessed. This ensures that the majority of children and young people are suitably placed with carers who can meet their needs. One young person commented 'I feel well cared for where I am living now'. However, children and young people are inadequately safeguarded as there are delays in processing Criminal Record Bureau checks on private foster carers, and social workers fail to visit within required timescales and see children and young people on their own. Private foster carers are given advice and support with practical arrangements which helps to maintain children and young people safely in placement. For example, one carer had been given help in purchasing an extra bed, and another with accessing housing and passport information. One private foster carer commented that 'the social worker has been fantastic in every way', and another that 'social services have all been so very helpful'. Children and young people also found social work support helpful. One young person commented 'I meet regularly with my social worker. She's fantastic!' The majority of children and young people return home to their families within a short period of time. They are able to do this because social workers work closely with parents and families to ensure that contact is maintained. Where a return home is not possible and

where private fostering is not appropriate, children and young people are protected by other recognised and approved safeguarding arrangements.

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 inadequate.

The private fostering service has a written statement which sets out its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and the ways in which those functions will be carried out. This means that when they receive this information, children and young people can see how their needs will be met and what support and advice they are entitled to. Private fostering records kept on each child and young person show clear assessment and review processes, as well as basic essential information about them and their families. Children and young people are given the opportunity to contribute to this process, which helps them to develop a sense of choice and control over events. The private fostering service does not have a system in place to monitor compliance with these regulations or assess the quality of work undertaken. This means that deficits are not identified and consequently the welfare and safety of children and young people in private fostering placements is put at risk.

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
3	provide an action plan to demonstrate the compliance of all aspects of private fostering arrangements in accordance with the regulations (Regulation 4, 7, 8)	18 February 2008
7	plan and effectively implement a system for monitoring compliance with these regulations and standards (Regulation 12)	18 February 2008

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 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.