



*Making Social Care  
Better for People*

# inspection report

## LOCAL COUNCIL PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENTS

### **Cumbria County Council Private Fostering Arrangements**

**Social Services Department  
Somerset House, Duke Street  
Whitehaven  
Cumbria  
CA28 7SQ**

*Lead Inspector*  
Helen Humphreys

*Unannounced Inspection*  
10<sup>th</sup> May 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

<b>Reader Information</b>	
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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](http://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

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# **SUMMARY**

## **Cumbria County Council**

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

From April 2006 Local Authority Private Fostering Arrangements are to be inspected by CSCI, as part of the joint inspection of the Adoption and Fostering Services. Cumbria SSD was one of the first local authorities to be inspected.

The private Fostering arrangements for Cumbria Social services were inspected as part of the Joint Fostering and Adoption Inspection which took place between May 2<sup>nd</sup> and May 10<sup>th</sup> 2006.

At the time of the inspection Cumbria did not have a nominated person, although the Acting Divisional Manager for South Lakes met with the inspectors. This person has subsequently been appointed as the Nominated Person.

Following this appointment Cumbria SSD were asked if they wished to complete the Annual Quality Assurance Assessment (Aqaa) and Data Set to provide additional supporting information to the inspectors. Cumbria SSD agreed to complete these documents and they were sent in July 2006. However they have not been returned to CSCI, despite additional requests.

This has meant that CSCI were unable to contact staff, young people or families involved in private fostering.

During the inspection of the fostering service, staff in many settings including health and education were asked about their knowledge of private fostering.

One file, selected by the Divisional manager, was inspected. Staff in the Kendal office who would deal with any referrals were asked generally if they were aware of procedures for private fostering.

### **What the local authority does well:**

The arrangements for private fostering were not implemented and therefore no examination of practice could take place.

### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

This was the first inspection.

### **What they could do better:**

Cumbria SSD need to create and implement a Statement on Private Fostering which complies with the Regulations and NMS which sets out how they intend to carry out their responsibilities for private fostering arrangements.

Cumbria SSD need to create and implement a notification system so that staff are aware of the need to notify social services if they come across a private fostering arrangement and so that families who are involved in private fostering know that they have to notify social services.

Cumbria SSD need to create a set of policies and procedures which staff can use when dealing with private fostering arrangements.

Cumbria SSD need to create a system so that children, their carers and families can access appropriate information, advice and support.

Cumbria SSD need to create and implement a monitoring system so that it can check the way it has, once implemented carried out its duties under the Regulations and NMS.

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](mailto: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):**

Quality in this outcome area is poor as there was no effective system in place to keep children who are being privately fostered safe.

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

### **EVIDENCE:**

Cumbria SSD does not have a notification system in place.

The file inspected, which had been selected by the Divisional manager, indicated that appropriate practice had been followed and that checks had been made through the family concerned.

Inspectors were assured that any privately fostered child and their family would be visited every 6 weeks. Given that family and friend carers are not



allocated or visited regularly by social services staff and that many foster carers do not receive regular visits and some are not allocated to specific workers, Inspectors question, therefore this level of visiting to private foster carers.

No specific information, advice and support is available to carers or young people and inspectors were not advised of systems in place to provide this.

Inspectors were advised that a set of policies and procedures have been created. However these were not available for inspection as they were stored in a room being used on the day of the inspection. No policies and procedures have been forwarded to the Inspectors, despite requests.

# 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):**

Quality in this outcome area is poor, there were no effective management systems in place.

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

### **EVIDENCE:**

With the exception of the staff in the initial assessment team based in Kendal, all staff interviewed as part of the inspection were not aware of the procedures for private fostering arrangements. Some staff did not know what private fostering was. There was a lack of knowledge of where in Cumbria private fostering might take place, for example boarding schools, language schools and diverse communities. Many staff including managers used stereotypical views of private fostering to justify why the knowledge and practice was so poor amongst staff and other professionals.

There are no monitoring systems in place.

Optional

## **Being Healthy**

### **JUDGEMENT –**

Not assessed.

### **EVIDENCE:**

# **Enjoying and Achieving**

**JUDGEMENT –**

**Not assessed**

**EVIDENCE:**

# **Making a Positive Contribution**

**JUDGEMENT –**

**Not assessed**

**EVIDENCE:**

# **Achieving Economic Well Being**

**JUDGEMENT –**

**Not assessed.**

**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

<b>STAYING SAFE</b>		<b>MANAGEMENT</b>	
<b>Standard No</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Standard No</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>2</b>	1	<b>1</b>	1
<b>3</b>	1	<b>7</b>	1
<b>4</b>	1		
<b>5</b>	1		
<b>6</b>	1		

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

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>		
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	FS1	Cumbria SSD should create and implement a Statement on Private Fostering.
2	FS2	Cumbria SSD should create and implement an effective Notification system.
3	FS3	Cumbria SSD should create an effective set of policies and procedures, which are known to staff to ensure that privately fostered children are safeguarded and that their welfare is promoted.
4	FS4 FS5 FS6	Cumbria SSD should create and implement a system so that children, their carers and their families can obtain information, support and advice.
5	FS7	Cumbria SSD should create and implement a system for monitoring their activity in relation to private fostering.



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