

Corporation of London Adoption Service

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

Unique reference number	SC388116
Inspection date	19 February 2009
Inspector	Jill Marriott
Type of Inspection	Key

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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

The City of London is a small local authority covering one square mile in central London. There is a small residential community of approximately 8,000 people living permanently in the area. Of these approximately 1,300 are children up to the age of 19 years. The City Of London's Children's Social Care Service consists of one team that provides generic services for children and families across the area. Support provided includes Services for Children in Need, Children with Disabilities, Child Protection, Looked After Children, Adoption, Fostering and Private Fostering. The children's social work team also provides a duty and assessment service. Social Care Services for children are located in the Guildhall which is easily accessible and is situated close to a range of transport links.

Summary

This is the first inspection of the private fostering arrangements made for the City of London. The key National Minimum Standards for privately fostered children were assessed.

Good systems have been developed to promote private fostering. The local authority ensures that steps are taken to raise awareness of private fostering. In particular to raise awareness of what professionals in the child care field and any member of the public should do if they are aware of such an arrangement. A range of training, advertising and awareness campaigns have been developed for the coming year.

At present there are no identified cases of private fostering arrangements. This is likely to be because the City of London is such a small area. There is an assessment procedure in place which shows how the health, education and day to day needs of privately fostered children will be met. The decision making process which follows assessment is clear with regard to the suitability of the arrangements in place. There is an appeals procedure to enable decisions to be challenged when all parties are not in agreement.

The City of London Children's Social Care Services have appropriate systems in place for the identification, notification, assessment and continuing support of private fostering arrangements made within the local area. The systems in place help to ensure privately fostered children are receiving satisfactory care.

No actions or recommendations have been made at this inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection of the City of London Private Fostering Arrangements.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The City of London promotes awareness of the private fostering service available in the local area. Social workers in the team and other relevant professionals have received training and are fully aware of the policies and procedures in place.

There are a range of information leaflets available explaining what private fostering is. These are freely available in hospitals, doctors' surgeries, schools, youth clubs and the local library. Leaflets are printed in different languages; they are aimed at children, parents, private foster carers and professionals working in the child care sector. They contain the contact details of the Children's Social Care Services to ensure easy access to advice and support. Information about private fostering can also be found on the City of London Website and is advertised in local publications such as *Your Homes* and *Young City* magazines. Information sessions are available for relevant professionals.

Clear user friendly notification forms have been developed and there are processes in place to work effectively with private fostering arrangements that are notified to the local authority. As yet the information and advertising campaigns have not resulted in any notifications being received by the Children's Social Care Service. It is likely that this is because the City of London has a very small residential community.

Social workers are clear that following the identification of a private fostering arrangement a child will be visited within seven days to complete an initial assessment. A core assessment linked to the framework for assessment of children in need and their families will take place within 35 working days. Each core assessment takes into account the accommodation provided and the parenting capacity of the carer. It looks at children's physical, emotional, intellectual, social and behavioural needs. It identifies needs that may arise from a child's religious persuasion, racial origins and cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Following the core assessment a decision is made by the head of service about how support will be offered. Where it is decided that the arrangements in place are satisfactory the case will be monitored and supported by the children in need service. Other cases will be subject to further assessment or closer monitoring. In some cases where child protection concerns are identified a section 47 investigation will be carried out following the Pan London Child Protection Procedures.

Private foster carers are expected to have an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure. Children will all have a named social worker and will be given age appropriate information about their own situation and what private fostering means. Advice will be available to parents and private foster carers about children's individual needs and support services will be available as identified through the core assessment process. Carers will be encouraged to promote contact between children, parents and extended families where appropriate.

The City of London has not to date identified any unsuitable private fostering arrangements in place. There are however processes in place to deal with such situations should they arise. In these cases either alternative arrangements will be made or private foster carers will be required to take action to ensure the wellbeing of the child. There is an appeals procedure in place for cases of disagreement.

The policies and procedures demonstrate that throughout the assessment process and beyond the children's needs remain of paramount importance. Each child will be at the centre of the assessment process and their views and the views of those close to them will be listened to. Where appropriate children will be made aware of alternative options to private fostering

arrangements and they will be assisted to be involved in making decisions about their future care and support. The systems in place to identify and support private fostering arrangements ensure that the welfare of the children and young people will be satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

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 good.

The City of London has clear policies and procedures in place and there is a statement of purpose specifically related to private fostering. These documents are available in an easy read style. They cover all of the require standards and regulations and they identify the duties and functions to be carried out by the local authority.

The policies and procedures have been shared with the social work team and all relevant professionals working with children and young people. Private fostering training is mandatory for all children's social workers. It is also included as part of the overall induction training arranged for all newly appointed staff. A range of workshops and information sessions have been identified by the Children's Social Care Services for the coming year 2009/10.

Systems in place demonstrate that records will be kept of all identified private fostering arrangements. Details are available of how these will be notified as required to the Department for Children, Schools and Families. There is an easy to follow flow chart in place which identifies private fostering arrangements and shows who the decision makers are, the timescales involved for assessment and how identified cases will be tracked and monitored.

Clear systems are in place for the identification, assessment and support of private fostering arrangements. The procedures help to ensure safe care practices are in place for all children supported by the City of London private fostering arrangements.

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):