

# Bristol Social Services Private Fostering Arrangements Service

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

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<b>Inspector</b>	Paul Clark
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<b>Address</b>	Children & Young Peoples Services Avonvale Road BRISTOL BS5 9RH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01179 037790
<b>Email</b>	angela.clarke@bristol.gov.uk
<b>Registered person</b>	Bristol City Council (Children and Young People Services)
<b>Registered manager</b>	Angela Clarke
<b>Responsible individual</b>	Liz Osbourne
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	

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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 Private Fostering Service at Bristol City Council is part of the Children and Young Person's Services which is overseen by a Planning and Development manager and a strategy leader (Safeguarding). Assessments of the suitability of Private Fostering Households and the review of placements is carried out by locality social workers in the three area social work teams and is overseen by their respective team managers. At the time of the inspection there were 10 young people known to be placed in Private Fostering households. The names of the registered manager and responsible individual currently held by Ofsted are incorrect and the Council should notify Ofsted in writing of the people that are currently occupying these positions.

### **Summary**

This announced inspection found that the Private Fostering Service at Bristol City Council makes strenuous efforts to ensure that their staff and other relevant agencies notify the council when they are aware of a private fostering arrangement within their area. They attempt also to ensure that this requirement to notify is publicly known. Internal recording and monitoring systems are generally appropriate although staff require training to ensure that social work records are full and complete and that young people placed are visited within required frequencies. Overall the service provides a satisfactory standard of care for the young people in its area; who are privately fostered.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

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

This was the first service inspection of this service by Ofsted.

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

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards for this outcome group.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

The Council has a page on its website which gives full information about the service and the fact that Private Fostering households must notify the local authority of their existence. They also have an annual poster distribution campaign which clearly sets out the requirement for notification. This poster goes out to all GP surgeries, schools, health centres, school nurses and all council offices and libraries. The council have also used local radio stations to advertise the need for notification. The registered manager stated that they intend to target specific immigrant communities in the coming year to make this fact known. There are currently 10 active Private Fostering arrangements in Bristol City Council. Notifications have come from the Council's Emergency Duty Team, its Education Welfare Officers, its social workers and two notifications from Private Fostering households themselves. Referral and information assistants in each of the three area offices receive the notification information and refer to their area social work team (rather than directly to the fostering team) who will carry out an assessment of the household within seven days. This time schedule is written in the policy and procedures

document for the service. The Council have a well formatted series of recording forms (which they call Forms PF 1-5) to guide the assessment and review of privately fostered young people and which help to ensure that the welfare of privately fostered young people is safeguarded and promoted. Young people's files showed that social workers check on the duration of placements, that young people are consulted about their wishes and feelings about the placement, that contact arrangements between young people and their parents and significant others are in place, and that they are always seen alone by the social worker. Information leaflets for parents emphasize the importance of maintaining regular contact with their children. All young people are registered with a GP. Few of the young people's records gave explicit detail of the financial arrangements between birth parents and private fostering households. There was also inadequate social worker's comment on the suitability of the placement (Form PF 3, Part F). Only 40% of the young people placed were visited at the required frequency of once every six weeks within the first year of placement. There are leaflets available for parents, private fosterers and young people which give information on what support services are available to them and these are available in different languages and formats. This information is also contained on the council's website. The information leaflets given to privately fostered young people do not advise them that they can have access to an advocacy service if they are deemed to be 'children in need'. Private foster carers are given the contact details of the social worker they can approach for help and support and they are advised about the training that is available to them. Although it is the council's policy to review placements at the same frequency as Looked After Children (LAC) there was no recorded evidence that this is being done.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards for this outcome group.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards for this outcome group.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards for this outcome group.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The council has produced a 'Policies and Procedures' document which stands as its written statement or plan and which spells out the local authority's duties and responsibilities with regard to private fostering. It states that the local authority will support foster carers including offering training. It contains a full description of the 'privately fostered child' with relevant examples. The legal framework is also fully explained in this document. The responsibility of other key agencies, for example schools and GPs in notifying the council when they become aware of a private fostering arrangement is also clearly spelt out on the council's website. The 'Policies and Procedures' document does not however contain the name and contact details of the person within the authority who can be contacted to offer expert advice on private fostering. The council's recording forms (PF 1-4) are completed by the social workers carrying out the assessment of the suitability of the placement and these forms contain all items of assessment

required by the regulations. The in-house Child Protection training that locality social workers receive includes information on private fostering and issues of diversity. However, this fact is not included in the 'Policies and Procedures' document. Team managers 'sign off' decisions that social workers make about the suitability of a private fostering arrangement. The Council keeps a confidential record for each young person who is privately fostered but no record for each foster carer. A copy of the annual written report given to the Director of Children's Services and to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board is in place.

## 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
7	ensure that social workers record the financial arrangements between parents and private foster carers. Schedule 2, Regulation 4 (3g)	31 October 2008
7	ensure that social workers make detailed comment on young people's recording systems of their assessment of the suitability of placements. Schedule 3, Regulations 7 & 8	31 October 2008
7	ensure that young people placed are visited at the required frequency of once every six weeks within the first year of placement. Regulation 8 (1)(a).	31 October 2008

### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- attempt to review the placements of privately fostered young people within appropriate timescales. NMS 3.4
- update the information leaflets given to privately fostered young people to advise them that they can have access to an advocacy service if they are deemed to be 'children in need'. NMS 6.4
- ensure that the written statement or plan of the Private Fostering Service contains the name and contact details of the person who can be contacted for expert advice. NMS 1.2
- ensure that the written statement or plan of the Private Fostering Service contains the way that relevant staff will be trained. NMS 1.2
- ensure that a confidential record is kept for each carer who privately fosters. 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.**