

# Brighton and Hove Private Fostering Arrangements Service

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

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<b>Inspector</b>	Valerie Packham
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<b>Address</b>	Central Area Team Bartholomew House Bartholomew Square Brighton BN1 1JP.
<b>Telephone number</b>	01273 294470
<b>Email</b>	sally.booth@brighton-hove.gov.uk
<b>Registered person</b>	Brighton & Hove City Council: Children and Young People Trust
<b>Registered manager</b>	Sally Booth
<b>Responsible individual</b>	
<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**

Brighton and Hove Council has a private fostering service which undertakes statutory duties and functions with regard to safeguarding children and young people who are privately fostered. Apart from the initial assessments of children and young people, the operational private fostering work is carried out by a specialist social worker. The private fostering social worker is supervised by a team manager, with a member of the Local Safeguarding Children Board as the monitoring officer. At the time of the inspection there were six notified private fostering arrangements in place. All children and young people in the notified arrangements have the private fostering social worker as their allocated worker.

### **Summary**

This is the first inspection of Brighton and Hove's private fostering arrangements against the Children (Private Arrangements For Fostering) Regulations 2005 and the accompanying National Minimum Standards. This inspection was an announced key inspection, with the outcomes of Staying Safe and Organisation assessed in order to focus on the ability of the service to keep children and young people safe and on the overall management of the service. The outcomes Being Healthy, Enjoying and Achieving, Positive Contribution and Economic Wellbeing were not assessed.

The safeguarding of children and young people has been compromised due to the initial visits not being carried out within the required timescale. The statement on private fostering has some key information omitted and there is no information on the website. There is an ongoing publicity campaign for promoting the awareness of private fostering, but this needs to be extended out further into the community and faith groups. All staff involved in the service are qualified and experienced social workers. The service has good links with other agencies. Children and young people are consulted about their day to day living arrangements. Staff members have been provided with information and work has also taken place with partner agencies to ensure other professionals working with children are aware of their responsibilities to notify the council of any private fostering arrangements. The service is producing the required reports about private fostering to the Children's Director and the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

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 Brighton and Hove's arrangements for private fostering.

### **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 service has a dedicated specialist private fostering social worker, who is supervised by a social work manager. The private fostering social worker supports privately fostered children, their carers and birth parents. A member of the Local Safeguarding Children Board is the

monitoring officer for private fostering. The private fostering service uses a range of publicity materials to raise awareness of the private fostering notification requirements. Awareness strategies have included a media campaign and an article in the council magazine 'Children First'. However, the Brighton and Hove council website does not have any information relating to private fostering. All language schools and private schools in Brighton and Hove have been contacted to raise awareness of private fostering. Leaflets have been distributed to key locations, such as council offices, health services, education establishments and libraries. The service has not yet raised awareness with some community and faith groups, which could mean some private foster children are not being appropriately identified and adequately protected.

Brighton and Hove has clear procedures which outline the process of assessing children. The initial assessment is not always being completed within the required seven days following notification and such delays leave children and young people vulnerable. The private fostering social worker receives the initial assessments from the area duty teams and then the suitability process of the private foster carers follows. Suitability of carers includes checks with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) as well as taking up written references. The whole process should ensure children live with private foster carers who are able to meet their needs. The service has not yet been informed in advance of private fostering arrangements taking place. All notifications have been made once the children have already started living in private foster care.

Children and young people are provided with information about private fostering and are given the contact details for the private fostering social worker. Children and young people who wrote to Ofsted as part of this inspection confirmed they knew the private fostering social worker's telephone number and were aware of how to make a complaint and who to contact should they have any concerns. Children and young people said they had met with the private fostering social worker on more than one occasion to talk about the arrangements for their care. Privately fostered children and young people can be directed to advocacy services by the private fostering social worker. Financial arrangements are explored, with advice and support given as necessary by the private fostering social worker. Information can be provided in different languages and discussions can be supported by interpreters. The service encourages children and their private foster carers to maintain close links with family members. Private foster carers are given advice and support with practical arrangements to help maintain children in placement. The private fostering social worker is aware of the importance of parents providing full information about their children to the private foster carers. The service liaises with education and health services as necessary to support children and young people in private foster care to access services that are needed.

The local authority has clear procedures for dealing with situations where it is not satisfied that a child or young person's welfare is being, or will be, satisfactorily safeguarded or promoted by a private fostering arrangement. The service has not renewed a CRB check on carers who have been private foster carers for over three years, which could put the children's welfare at risk. The service is alert to situations in which a private arrangement may change into one in which the authority needs to take more control. Arrangements are monitored to ensure that all parties to the arrangement are fulfilling their responsibilities to the child and appropriate steps are taken where this is not the case. Where children are estranged from their families, good support is provided to promote reunification and to develop good relationships.

### **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 private fostering service has developed a policy and procedures document, which sets out its duties and functions regarding private fostering and the ways in which those functions will be carried out. The document does not include the name of a person within the local authority with expertise in private fostering whom social workers can contact for advice or the name of the monitoring officer.

The service has a clear system for monitoring the way it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering. All cases are audited by the team manager and the monitoring officer as part of the monitoring process. A written report is produced each year for consideration by the Director of Children's Services, which includes an evaluation of the work in relation to privately fostered children and young people within its area. The service reports annually to the Local Safeguarding Children Board on how the welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted.

Records are kept and monitored about the numbers of privately fostered children and private foster carers living in Brighton and Hove. Confidential records are kept on each private foster carer and each child. These include assessments, parental consent, health information, education details, reports about suitability and records of any visits made. Children are given the opportunity to contribute to assessments and to express their wishes and feelings about the private fostering arrangements. The service keeps records on all the arrangements and notifications. File recordings are clear as to whether children are seen alone and if not, then why not, as children are supposed to be seen alone to enable the free communication of wishes and feelings.

Staff involved with the private fostering service are aware of the local authority's duties and functions in relation to private fostering and safeguarding children and young people. Other relevant professionals and local authority staff are provided with information about private fostering. Reports are produced for the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Director of Children's Services. Statistical information is collated for submission to the Department for Children, Schools and Families as required.

## 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):

- continue to promote awareness of the notification requirements within the Trust and consider ways of reaching diverse groups in the community (NMS 2)
- ensure an officer of the authority undertakes the required visit within seven working days of the initial notification being made (NMS 2)
- consider including information about private fostering on the website to assist in promoting awareness (NMS 2)
- review and revise the statement on private fostering to ensure it includes the required information (NMS 1.2)