

Bath & North East Somerset Private Fostering Arrangements Services

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

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Inspector	Paul Clark
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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 Bath and North East Somerset Housing and Social Services Department is overseen by the Referral and Assessment Team, which is a child care 'Duty' team which receives referrals from the public and from other agencies. The Assistant Team Manager of the Referral and Assessment Team is the Registered Manager of the private fostering service. Social workers in the team carry out the initial assessment of private fostering households and are then passed to a social worker in the 'Long Term' team for ongoing work and assessment review. At the time of the assessment there were two active private fostering households accommodating three young people. The authority should notify Ofsted in writing of the names of the current Registered Manager and Responsible Individual.

Summary

This announced inspection found a satisfactory level of service provision. The authority makes rigorous efforts to promote public awareness of the service and to have in place systems that will keep young people safe. It tries hard to ensure that young people, parents and private carers are kept informed of all available help and support.

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 which apply to this outcome group.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The service makes strenuous efforts to ensure that relevant agencies are aware of the need for local authorities to be notified of Private Fostering households within their area and that there is also a public awareness. This is achieved by leaflet, poster, radio and newspaper campaigns and by displaying information at health centres, libraries and public buildings. Letters are sent to GPs, schools and other key agencies providing this information. These information materials contain the name of the contact person within the local authority. The materials are available in appropriate languages and formats if necessary. When a referral is made to the authority notifying them about a private fostering household the service carries out an initial assessment of the household within seven days. A flow chart has been constructed by the service which spells out the areas which the social worker must assess. Social workers complete an assessment form which records their assessment. Under the paragraph in the form which is headed 'Duration of Placement' it was noted that for the two current households the social workers had written 'for the foreseeable future' which does not give a clear indication of the intended length of placement. The social worker records whether the young person is happy with the placement. Social workers review the assessment and the health and development of young people at six weekly intervals within the first year of placement and record their findings. Social workers

always see the young person on their own and this fact is included in the record. All young people currently placed are registered with a GP and all are in full time education. The assessment and review records do not show clear details of the financial arrangements between parents and private foster carers and how well these are working. All members of private fostering households have been Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked. A discretionary 'Specific Carer's Allowance' of a maximum of £50 per week is payable where financial need is identified. Social workers will advise private carers if they are eligible. This information is also contained in the information leaflets. Contact is promoted between the birth parents and young people and the social worker records the frequency of this contact in their six weekly review. Records in case files showed that children placed are having regular contact with their parents and extended families. Private carers spoken to confirmed that they know the names and contact details of the social workers assessing the placements. Children defined as a 'Child in Need' have access to the 'Shout Out' advocacy service who the authority has a service level agreement with. The information leaflet given to young people advises them of their access to this service.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards which apply to this outcome group.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards which apply to this outcome group.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

There are no National Minimum Standards which apply to this outcome group.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The local authority website has a page specifically covering private fostering and within this a general policy statement serves as its written statement or plan. It contains details of how the service promotes awareness to key bodies about the need for notification to the local authority about private fostering arrangements that come to their attention. The statement also contains an explanation of the way it will determine the suitability of placements. It does not include in it any information about the available training that private carers might have access to which help them support placements. Neither does it contain the names of the person within the local authority with expertise in private fostering whom social workers can contact for advice, or the name(s) of the manager(s) of the service who sign off decisions about the overall suitability of a private fostering arrangement. Advice is given to private carers and parents in leaflet form and verbally by assessing social workers about the support that is available to them from the local authority. Young people are given an information pack containing a laminated card which gives them the contact details of all supporting and helping agencies relevant to them. The Registered Manager stated that training in 'Private Fostering' is part of the induction process for all new social work staff and multi agency child protection training carried out by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) includes training input on 'Private Fostering'. The authority have introduced an electronic recording system containing comprehensive information on all young people placed in private fostering households. They retain a hard copy record which is

not comprehensive in content in terms of the regulatory requirements. Electronic records of private fostering households are contained within the young person's record and should be dedicated, individual and comprehensive. The service does not have a written protocol on action to be taken (including the information to be given to birth parents) in the event of a conviction being identified during a CRB check on a private foster carer. Reviews of young people placed are regularly checked and signed off by the responsible manager. The service has provided the Director of Children's Services and the chair of the LSCB with a copy of its annual review of the service.

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	Show evidence that the financial arrangements between parents and private carers are working and ensure the care and maintenance of the child placed. Regs. 7&8, Sched.3 (4)(e)	31 October 2008

Recommendations

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

- ensure that assessment forms completed by social workers make clear the intended duration of placements as understood by the parent and private foster carers (NMS 3.2.1)
- ensure that the Statement of Purpose includes details of any training that may be available to private carers (NMS 1.2)
- ensure that the Statement of Purpose includes the name of the person within the local authority with expertise in private fostering whom social workers can contact for advice (NMS 1.2)
- ensure that the Statement of Purpose includes the name(s) of the manager(s) of the service who sign off decisions about the overall suitability of a private fostering arrangement (NMS 1.2)
- ensure that accurate, comprehensive, well organised and dedicated files are kept for each private fostering household (NMS 7.2)
- ensure that the service has a written protocol in place on action to be taken (including the information to be given to birth parents) in the event of a conviction being identified during a CRB check on a private foster carer. NMS 7.2

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.