

Private Fostering Arrangements - Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

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Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
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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 responsibility for identifying, responding to and monitoring private fostering arrangements in Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) lies with the Children, Young People and Families Service. The Manager of the fostering service monitors the notifications and private fostering arrangements and works closely with the Service Manager, Family Placements. A small number of children and young people are identified as living in private fostering arrangements.

Summary

This was the first inspection of the way that Barnsley Local Authority identify, respond and monitor private fostering arrangements in their area. An action plan has been developed to ensure that the welfare and well-being of privately fostered children is safeguarded, promoted and monitored. The majority of these targets have been met and are ongoing within the planned timescales. Overall, a good start has been made by the Local Authority who can demonstrate that its systems, policies and practices safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people who are privately fostered.

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 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.

Overall, the Local Authority has implemented suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people who live in private fostering arrangements. The Local Authority has developed various strategies to promote and increase awareness of private fostering legislation and guidance. The Service Manager reports to the Local Authorities Quality Assurance and Performance Management Sub-Group and peer professionals to ensure they are aware of the issues. A range of publicity material, such as leaflets, posters, booklets for children and young people, professionals, private foster carers' and parents, can be accessed in different languages. Carers confirm that they have been given these booklets. Further information about private fostering can be found on the Local Authorities e-mail and website. All publicity material has been sent to a range of services, such as schools, health centres and housing departments as well as the voluntary sector. The general public have been targeted through the local media. Contact has also been made with a Black and Ethnic Minority group in the area. They have advised the Local Authority about displaying positive black images in the publicity material. This recognises that private fostering can happen in all communities and promotes awareness. Positive contacts have been made with the Asylum team and plans are in place to make contacts with local Mosques. All the material sets out the legal duty to notify the local authority as well as the support provided. The awareness raising has had a positive impact and notifications have been made to the Local Authority about potential private fostering arrangements. Training is planned to increase awareness further amongst the Local Authorities

own staff and other agencies likely to come into contact with privately fostered children and young people. The Local Authority deals effectively when they are notified about private fostering arrangements. Late notifications have been effectively managed and the best interests of the child is safeguarded and promoted. Statutory checks are completed on carers, including enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance. However, in some instances, Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance has not returned by the time the assessment is complete and a suitability decision has been made. Visits and detailed assessments are carried out by a fostering social worker who leads on private fostering and has extensive experience of working with children and young people. They have also had specific training in private fostering. Carers spoken with about the assessment process understand the reasons why this has to be done and are cooperative. Birth parents and carers are aware as far as possible to the arrangements and this is agreed between all parties. The wishes and feelings of children and young people are also ascertained and cultural and religious needs are met. The assessments are approved by the manager of the fostering service. However, gaps in signing and dating these documents gives the impression that timescales have not been met or have not been agreed. The Local Authority plans to present private fostering arrangement to fostering panels. This ensures a robust system to review the quality of care and ensure ongoing suitability of the arrangements. Carers are receiving good advice and support to help them to care for children and young people. Carers confirm that financial advice, finance and additional equipment to support arrangements has been provided. Children seen in private fostering arrangements are thriving and their health and education needs are met. A range of community support and training is available to carers if they need it. Carers say they are visited by social workers and further visits have been arranged. Children and young people are seen during these visits and their views are ascertained, depending on their age and understanding. Carers confirm that they feel able to contact social workers in the fostering team and the children and young people's social workers if they need to. Birth parents remain involved in the decision-making about their children. Carers confirm that contact takes place at the planned timescales and some contact is facilitated by them. Parents have the contact details of allocated social workers who they can contact if they are concerned about the welfare of their child or if they want to be visited by a social worker.

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 local authority has developed clear procedures and guidance about private fostering. A written statement on Private Fostering is available and is posted on the internet and intranet. The document sets out its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and details how this will be carried out. It also signposts where children and young people who are privately fostered and their birth parents can obtain further advice and support. It also includes information about training and management responsibility. This document is promoted

strategically at senior management level to ensure awareness on all aspects of service delivery. Staff spoken with, including social workers have a good understanding of the Local Authorities duties and functions regarding private fostering. There are clear systems in place to record the number and nature of private fostering arrangements that the local authority is notified about. This information is collated as statistical data and submitted to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The Manager of the fostering service reports on a monthly basis to the Service Manager about private fostering activities. The report demonstrates how they are promoting awareness, enquiries and referrals made and deals with specific issues. This is informative and provides an immediate reference of private fostering activity. However, it does not include information why an arrangement ends. The files are well organised and contain information relevant to private fostering arrangements. The records contain key documents, including written assessments and safeguarding checks. Children and young people are visited in the family settings and depending on the age and understanding of the child, are seen alone to ascertain their wishes and feelings. Follow up visits undertaken by the fostering social worker demonstrate the frequency and content of visits. Carers visited expressed satisfaction with this process and have found the visits from the fostering and field social work teams very supportive. Annual reports are sent to the lead member for Children's Services, the Director of the Children, Young People and Families Service, and the Chair of Barnsley's Safeguarding Children Board. This reports on the way in which the Local Authority carries out its duties in relation to private fostering and satisfies itself that the welfare of children and young people is safeguarded and promoted. Reports are written by the Service Manager, Family Placements. It also includes an evaluation of outcomes in relation to private fostering arrangements and areas for development.

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):

- ensure that up to date CRB clearance is obtained before a suitability arrangement is concluded (NMS 3)
- ensure the documentation to decide on the overall suitability of arrangements is signed and dated (NMS 3)
- include information why a private fostering arrangement ends (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.