

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH

EXECUTIVE – 5 JULY 2004

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES

INSPECTION FINDINGS OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL CARE INSPECTION IN RESPECT OF DUDLEY'S FOSTERING SERVICE

1.0 Purpose

1.1 To report to the Executive the inspection findings of the Commission for Social Care Inspection in respect of Dudley Local Authority Fostering service.

2.0 Background

2.1 Independent and Local Authority fostering services which fall within the jurisdiction of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) are subject to inspection, to establish if the service is meeting The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and the requirements of the Care Standards Act 2000, The Fostering Services Regulations 2002 and the Children Act 1989.

2.2 The Fostering Service Regulations 2002 are secondary legislation with which a service provider must comply. Service providers are expected to comply fully with the National Minimum Standards, which form the basis of judgments by CSCI.

2.3 The inspection of Dudley Local Authority Fostering Service took place over 2 days in January 2004 with some additional time set aside to meet with service users and carers and to observe a fostering panel.

2.4 The inspectors used a scale to indicate the extent to which standards have been met or not met. The scale ranges from:

- 4 - Standard exceeded (commendable)
- 3 - Standard met (no shortfalls)
- 2 - Standard almost met (minor shortfalls)
- 1 - Standard not met (major shortfalls)

2.5 In total there are 32 standards. However one standard which relates to short breaks/respice care did not apply to Dudley's Fostering Services as this provision is provided by Barnardos on behalf of the Local Authority under a Service Level Agreement.

- 2.6 The main focus of the inspection was on the work of the Fostering Team which is a dedicated team within the Social Services Directorate and consists of a Service Manager, 2 Senior Practitioners, 7 social work staff, a fostering support worker and 2 administrative staff.
- 2.7 The aim of the service is to offer a family placement to all children looked after by Dudley MBC when this is the agreed option and the underlying principle is “to provide looked after children in foster care with an experience of family life which promotes their physical and emotional well-being and happiness throughout their childhood”.
- 2.8 The service has not previously been inspected.
- 2.9 The inspection found that all of the standards were met or partially met and in 3 instances the standard was exceeded. These are summarized at appendix 1.
- 2.10 The inspection identified 7 requirements with which the Fostering Service will need to comply to fully meet the standards. An action plan has been submitted to CSCI to address these requirements. 3 of them have already been addressed and work is in progress on the outstanding actions
- 2.11 In addition the Inspectors made 6 good practice recommendations to be considered for implementation by the Authority.
- 2.12 Overall our judgment is that this was a positive inspection and that the service is performing well. The Fostering Service has previously been highlighted as a good practice example in national publications and was also praised by the Joint Review which took place in 2002.

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 That the Executive receive and note the outcome of the Fostering Inspection.

4.0 Resources

- 4.1 In ensuring that the Fostering Service complies fully with the requirements and practice recommendations there will be a requirement for additional investment into the service.
- 4.2 The Inspection highlighted the differential service which is received by Kinship/family carers. To ensure that this group of carers receive supervision, appraisal and training equivalent to other carers an additional full-time social worker will be required within the fostering team at a cost of £32,000.

4.3 In order to ensure that foster carers remain within their approved numbers and the service is able to offer placement choice to appropriately meet individual need, we will need to continue to enhance the skills of current carers and actively recruit new carers to the service. In the current financial year there is an investment of £240,000 to progress carers from level 1-2 to enhance their skills and from level 2 – 3 to enable the service to meet the needs of those children with the most challenging behaviour. In 2004/5 we intend to progress 20 carers from level 1 –2 and 4 from level 2 – 3 at a cost of £240,000.

4.4 Developing the Fostering Service will assist the Directorate in enhancing placement choice and capacity and limiting placements out of the Authority which have significantly higher unit costs than internal provision.

5.0 Equality/Safety/Community Implications

5.1 The provision of a fostering service contributes to the provision of stable, secure and safe care for children looked after in order that they can achieve good life chance outcomes. It assists the Council in discharging its corporate parenting responsibilities to ensure that looked after children are not disadvantaged by being in care and that they receive the support, care and security that we would wish for our own children.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 That the Executive agree the proposals in Section 3 of this report.

Linda Warren
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Appendix 1 - Fostering Inspection Findings

	Standard	Scale
Statement of Purpose	1	2
Fitness to Provide or Manage a Fostering Service	2	3

	3	2
Management of Fostering Service	4	3
	5	2
Securing and Promoting Welfare	6	2
	7	3
	8	3
	9	3
	10	4
	11	3
	12	3
	13	4
	14	2
Recruiting, Checking, Managing, Supporting and Training Staff and Foster Carers	15	2
	16	3
	17	3
	18	2
	19	3
	20	3
	21	3
	22	3
	23	4
Records	24	2
	25	2
Fitness of Premises for Use as a Fostering Service	26	3
Financial Requirements	27	3
	28	3
	29	3
Fostering Panels	30	3
Short Term Breaks	31	N/A
Family and Friends as Carers	32	2

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