

Meeting:	Children and Young People Scrutiny
Date:	18 th April 2013
Report Title:	Fostering Inspection Report (Ofsted Inspection 21 st -24 January 2013)
Service Area:	Children's Safeguarding- Fostering
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1. Purpose of this Report

To provide information about the recent Ofsted Inspection and rating of T&W Fostering service and consequent updating of the service action plan. A copy of the inspection report and the service action plan are attached as appendices 1 and 2 respectively

2. Recommendations

That members note this report and consider whether and when they would like a progress report on the action plan

3 The Inspection Process

- 3.1 Each local authority Fostering Service is inspected by Ofsted and a service grading applied as a consequence of findings of their Inspection. Telford & Wrekin Fostering Service was last inspected in November 2009. Since then the national inspection framework has changed from 6 weeks notice to 2 weeks notice. Previously inspectors were on site for 10 days, they are now on site for 4 days. The Inspection Framework takes account of the National Minimum Standards for the provision of Fostering services and Regulations (both 2011) – there are 31 Standards and 45 regulations with 7 accompanying schedules. The inspection activity covered- a review of key fostering service documents and performance information, casework analysis, and interviews with foster carers, children and young people, children's case managers, Independent reviewing officers, health and educational professionals. The gradings that can be awarded by Inspectors for specific aspects of provision are Outstanding Good, Adequate or inadequate.

4 Ofsted findings and gradings

- 4.1 Ofsted inspectors commended a number of areas of current service provision:

- Foster carers act as good role models and advocate as a good parent would
- Children and young people led busy lives outside their school day and at weekends
- Children and young people's health outcomes were good
- Educational support for children and young people in care is good.
- Young people have established good relationships with their foster carers and are given the opportunity to remain with their foster carers post 18.
- The Fostering Panel was acknowledged as well established, experienced representative professionals and that foster carers are fully conversant with the panel process.
- The management team of the fostering service learn from listening to what foster carers, children and young people and social workers tell them and welcome the feedback received to improve practice.

- Children and Young people missing from fostering homes is rare as a consequence of effective partnership working between the child's social worker, the foster carers, the police and fostering team. A senior police officer commented to the inspectors '*They like to get it right*'
- The recruitment and vetting of adults who wish to become foster carers or existing foster carers was considered to be sound.
- The fostering service knows the key achievements in the past year and it has made improvements to: capacity; placement stability, recruitment; developing staff skills; matching and reduction in placement disruptions.
- The Fostering service works effectively with other agencies

4.2 However, a period of turnover within the management of the service (which has now been resolved) prevented us making the progress we were aiming for quickly enough to meet the more stringent inspection criteria to retain our previous good rating. The overall gradings are as follows

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| • Overall effectiveness: | Adequate |
| • Outcomes for children and Young people: | Adequate |
| • Quality of Service: | Adequate |
| • Safeguarding children: | Adequate |
| • Leadership and management: | Adequate |

5 Recommendations made for Service Improvement and Development

Recruitment of Foster carers

- Continue to implement an effective strategy for recruitment of foster carers

Delegated Authority

- Support foster carers to achieve delegated authority

Supervision of foster carers

- Ensure supervision of foster carers take account of child's wishes and feelings and that carers are performance is managed to develop their competencies

Training of Foster carers

- Ensure support and training is available to foster carers, including hard to reach carers, to assist them in meeting the specific needs of children they are caring for or are expected to care for
- Ensure that foster carers are able to evidence that the Training, Support and development standards have been attained within 12 months of approval (or 18 months for family and friends foster carers)
- Ensure that all foster carers maintain an on going training and development portfolio which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them by the fostering service

Unannounced visits to foster carer's homes

- Ensure the foster home is inspected annually, without appointment by the fostering service to make sure that it continues to meet the needs of foster children

National Children's Rights Director

- Ensure that children know how to access and how to contact the Children's Rights Director

Performance Management and Service Improvement

- Ensure the fostering service monitors the management and outcomes of the services in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children
- Providing further opportunities for the child's birth family, their social worker, their foster care their Independent Reviewing Officer, who will all have views about how individual children are being cared for and how the fostering service as a whole is run and managed. Fostering services should regularly seek these views and draw on this feedback in improving the care they provide (vol 4 statutory guidance para 3,6)

6 Next steps

A position statement was provided for the Ofsted inspection team, which was well received, not least because it demonstrated that work was already underway on almost all of the recommendations made in the report. The Action Plan has been amended in line with the draft Inspection report, and amendments and additions are highlighted in grey. Inspectors were satisfied that we knew our service well and suggested informally that we were now well placed to achieve a "good rating" within 9 months.