

Committee(s):	Date(s):	Item no.
Community and Children's Services	June 2013	
Subject: Ofsted Inspection of Fostering Services 2013	Public	
Report of: Director of Community and Children's services	For Information	

Summary

This report informs members of the outcome of the recent Ofsted Inspection of City of London Fostering Services held 21st-27th March 2013. The final report can be found at Appendix 1.

The Inspection was carried out under the regulations set out in the Care Standards Act 2000, and the judgements made against a set of grade descriptors, based on the National Minimum Standards for Fostering, which can be found via the link below.

Inspectors are required to weigh up the evidence in a particular area (eg Overall Effectiveness, Outcomes for Young people etc.) and to consider it against the descriptors for outstanding, good, adequate and inadequate (the grade descriptors) before making a judgement. The link below also sets out the detail regarding what the evidence would be for each judgement.

In order to be given a judgement of Outstanding against a specific area, evidence against all the other descriptors needs to be met.

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/n/national%20minimum%20standards%20-%20fostering.pdf>

As well as a single judgement for Overall Effectiveness, 4 additional judgements are given for Outcomes for Children, Quality of Provision, Safeguarding and, Leadership and Management.

The Inspection was carried out by 1 Ofsted Inspector over a 4 day period. The Inspector spoke with and/or met the following people;

- 3 Looked After Children and their Foster Carers in their placement
- The Chief Executive of 1 Independent Fostering Agency
- Assistant Director People
- Service Manager Children Social Care
- Team Manager Children Social Care
- 3 Social Workers
- Human Resources Business Partner
- Lead Nurse for Looked After Children
- Independent Reviewing Officer

The Inspector also reviewed the Corporate Parenting Strategy & Statement of Purpose (Appendix 2), Performance Information and several case files.

The Inspection was particularly challenging, as the City of London does not have a Fostering Service, as described in the National Minimum Standards. As a result, Ofsted had to apply a degree of flexibility against their standard Fostering Inspection evaluation framework, in order to provide credible evidenced-based judgements.

The following judgements were made:

Overall Effectiveness :	Good
Outcomes for Children:	Outstanding
Quality of Service:	Good
Leadership and Management:	Good
Safeguarding:	Good

There were 3 recommendations made by the Inspector; 2 focusing upon safeguarding recruitment arrangements for Social Workers and 1 on engaging children and young people in the appraisal process for Social Workers. Progress on the implementation of these recommendations will be presented to the Safeguarding Sub Committee.

Recommendation:

Members are asked to note the Report.

Main Report

Background

1. Due to the small number of Looked After Children (8 at the time of the Inspection), the City of London does not operate a traditional fostering service with its own foster carers and accompanying support services, but instead commissions placements from Independent Fostering Agencies for its Looked After Children.
2. The City of London was subject to an Ofsted Inspection of its fostering services 21st-27th March 2013. The Inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the fostering service and to consider how well it complies with the requirements set out in the National Minimum Standards. The fact that the City of London does not have a fostering service presented challenges to the Inspector, as a number of the National Minimum Standards against which judgements are made did not apply.
3. As a result, a significant degree of flexibility was applied by the Inspector in order to support how the judgements would be made against the evaluation framework.

The Inspection makes judgements across the following 5 areas:

- Overall Effectiveness
- Outcomes for Children and Young People
- Quality of Service
- Safeguarding Children and Young People
- Leadership and Management

The judgements used are:

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

4. The Inspection was carried out by 1 Ofsted Inspector over a 4 day period. At the time of the Inspection, the City of London had 8 Looked After Children under eighteen years, and 3 Care Leavers aged between eighteen and twenty years placed with foster carers across 5 separate Independent Fostering Agencies. The Inspector spoke with and/or met with the following people;

- 3 Looked After Children and their Foster Carers in their placement
- The Chief Executive of 1 Independent Fostering Agency
- Assistant Director People
- Service Manager Children Social Care
- Team Manager Children Social Care
- 3 Social Workers
- Human Resources Business Partner
- Lead Nurse for Looked After Children
- Independent Reviewing Officer

5. The Inspector also reviewed the Corporate Parenting Strategy & Statement of Purpose, Performance Information and several case files. The Corporate Parenting Strategy & Statement of Purpose sets out the following overarching objectives that drive our work to ensure our Looked After Children achieve the best possible outcomes:

5a Securing and supporting secure, stable, safe, high quality placements for our Looked After Children

- Every placement decision should be based on a proper assessment of the child's need and taking into account the child's wishes and feelings.
- All placement decisions should be made with a view to maximising the opportunity for a child to find permanence.
- There must be a consistent focus on stability. Whilst some placement changes are positive (e.g. the child moving to their permanent placement from a temporary one - many are not). Being subjected to successive moves of placement and school leads to a sense of rejection, loss of confidence and capacity to trust.
- Placements should provide an experience of normal childhood, rather than an experience determined by potentially stigmatising regulations.

5b Supporting successful education, health and social development outcomes and helping Looked After Children make an effective transition into adulthood

- Ensuring all Looked After Children under the age of 5 years are attending appropriate early years provision.
- Seeking to narrow the gap between the educational performance of the looked after population and the rest of the City of London school population at all Key Stages.

- Ensuring high level of attendance of City of London’s Looked After Children, so that it exceeds the attendance levels of the general school population national attendance levels.
- Ensuring no City of London child is subject to fixed term or permanent exclusions.
- Ensuring all Looked After Children have regular health, dental and eye checks.

5c To ensure that every child’s voice is heard in the planning and shaping of their care

- All Looked After Children will be consulted as part of the care planning review process.
- Independent Reviewing Officers are required to ensure Looked After Children are fully consulted in their reviews.
- Visits to the placement by the Social Worker are expected to exceed the minimum statutory requirements.
- Opportunities for Looked After Children and Care Leavers to engage at service planning level will be available through engagement with their Social Workers and, where possible, the Youth Engagement Sub Committee of the Children Executive Board.

Current Position

6. The Inspection of the City of London fostering services made the following judgements;

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| • Overall Effectiveness | GOOD |
| • Outcomes for Children and Young People | OUTSTANDING |
| • Quality of Service | GOOD |
| • Safeguarding Children and Young People | GOOD |
| • Leadership and Management | GOOD |

Overall Effectiveness- Good

7. The report highlights that the City of London ensures children achieve outstanding outcomes, receive good quality services and experience good arrangements to keep them safe.

It notes that management arrangements are good, with managers, staff and members of the Corporate Parenting and Young Peoples Task Group working well together and showing commitment to improving children’s lives and helping them do well.

Outcomes for Children and Young People - Outstanding

8. Outcomes for children and young people are described as ‘exceptional’ as a result of the careful commissioning of quality placements, and systematic monitoring of these arrangements.
9. Page 5 of the report details the evidence to support the judgement of Outstanding, which includes a focus upon stability of placements, education attainment and attendance levels, contact arrangements with birth family, health of Looked After Children and their behaviour. In concluding, the section on outcomes the report notes;

“Children benefit from frequent, quality contact with their social workers and from warm relationships with them. Children’s views are highly valued; their views are considered in all aspects of their placements and plans for the future”.

Quality of Service - Good

10. Under the Quality of Service section on page 6, the report again emphasises strengths in the commissioning arrangements, relationships between staff and the children and, planning arrangements.

Safeguarding Children and Young People - Good

11. The report again highlights the commissioning arrangements as a strength, noting that placements are only made with agencies that have clear evidence of good or outstanding practice.
12. The report notes that that Social Work staff’s understanding and knowledge of child protection is very good. They are aware of the regulations and procedures to support Looked After Children if they go missing or experience bullying; however, the report notes that incidences of either are very low.

Leadership and Management - Good

13. As noted in the overall effectiveness judgement, the report highlights the high expectations of management and staff, with management having a detailed knowledge of the Looked after Children. The report also notes that management have a good understanding of their strengths and areas for development.

14. In conclusion, the report finally notes that;

“An appropriate Statement of Purpose sets out what the City of London Corporation’s aims are to achieve for Looked after Children so that people know what to expect from the service”.

The Inspection Report Recommendations

15. The report identified 3 areas for further development, listed on page 4 of the report:

- Ensure telephone enquiries are made to each referee to verify the written references
- Make sure, where possible, that references include a statement from each referee as to their opinion of the person’s suitability to work with children
- Ensure staff appraisals take into account any views of children about the service with which they are provided.

16. In relation to the first 2 recommendations, these have been progressed by Human Resources.

In relation to the third recommendation, this will be addressed as part of the appraisal process for 2013/14 and will draw on feedback provided by children as part of the already established consultation processes that exist in the service.

Implementation of all three recommendations will be monitored by the Department Leadership Team and reported to the Safeguarding Sub Committee.

The Corporate & Strategic Implications

17. The work of Children Social Care service, along with our partners, supports our communities and makes the City safer.

Building on inspection findings helps the City to continue to provide modern, efficient and high quality local services

Financial Implications

No financial implications.

Conclusion

18. Despite the City of London not having a traditional fostering service, the Fostering Inspection highlighted the good work that is undertaken by the Children Social Care service, foster carers and partner agencies to ensure that City of London's Looked After Children are supported in achieving outstanding outcomes in terms of their education, health and emotional well-being.
19. The City of London Department of Community and Children Services notes that the Inspection report is a fair and accurate reflection of the work undertaken, and will progress the 3 development areas highlighted in the recommendations to support the continuing improvement work within the Department.

Background Papers:

Ofsted Inspection Report

Corporate Parenting Strategy and Statement of Purpose

Appendices

Appendix 1 Ofsted Inspection Report

Appendix 2 Corporate Parenting Strategy and Statement of Purpose

Web link

National Minimum Standards

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/n/national%20minimum%20standards%20-%20fostering.pdf>

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