

Outcomes of Ofsted Inspection of the Fostering Service

11th-14th December 2012

Context and Background

- Under the current Ofsted inspection framework, fostering services are inspected once in every 3 year cycle
- This was the first inspection since the Unitary Council came into being
- Fostering is part of the shared service managed by Central Bedfordshire Council on behalf of Bedford Borough Council
- Ten working days notice was given, and the inspection took place from 11th to 14th December 2012

Methodology and Framework

- As a shared service, the inspectors were considering, in tandem, outcomes for fostered young people from Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council
- Two inspectors were on site and
 - § looked at records
 - § met with children, foster carers, staff and other agencies
 - § considered feedback from surveys sent out in April 2012
 - § analysed performance data and our self assessment submitted in May 2012
- They formed a judgement about 'Overall Effectiveness' based on four sub-judgements:
 - Outcomes for children
 - Quality of service
 - Safeguarding
 - Leadership and Management

Outcomes

- The Overall Effectiveness of the service was judged to be Good
- In the sub-judgements of 'Outcomes for Children' and 'Safeguarding' we were also judged to be Good.
- In 'Quality of Service' and 'Leadership and Management' we were judged to be Adequate
- The report contained eight recommendations and the service has a detailed operational action plan with timescales to address these.

Recommendations

Ofsted said: 'ensure that foster carers have an awareness of the role and contact details of the office of the Children's Rights Director in order to enable them to support young people to make appropriate use of this service.'

We will: write to all foster carers about the Children's Right's Director, include details in our next newsletter to foster carers and update the Children's Guide to include this information.

Recommendations

Ofsted said: 'ensure that foster carers are given the maximum appropriate flexibility to take decisions relating to children in their care, within the framework of the agreed placement plan.'

We will: ensure that whenever a child is placed there is clear agreement about what decisions have been delegated to foster carers. We will provide some advice and training for children's social workers about expectations and how to implement this in practice. For children already placed we will ask Independent Reviewing Officers to discuss this at the next review of the child's care. We will ask Independent Reviewing Officers to keep this issue under constant review.

Recommendations

Ofsted said: 'ensure that all foster carers complete the required Children's Workforce Development Council training support and development standards within stated timescales.'

We will: continue with our programme of training, workshops, individual support and financial rewards to encourage and support foster carers to complete the standards within timescale.

Recommendations

Ofsted said: 'ensure that, when placements are made, foster carers are provided with all the information about the child and their family that they need to carry out their role effectively. The information must be in a clear, comprehensive written form.'

We will: visit children's social work teams to remind them of their duty to provide this information. We will also maintain records about when information has been provided, and the managers will escalate concerns to the appropriate children's social work team manager if information is outstanding or not of sufficient quality.

Recommendations

Ofsted said: 'ensure that supervision provided to foster carers follows a clearly stated agenda, which ensures that the carer is meeting each child's needs, taking account of their wishes and feeling, as well as providing a framework for assessing the carers' performance and developing their competence and skills.'

We will: monitor supervision records of foster carers to ensure that in all cases, on all occasions, supervising social workers address all items on the proforma agenda for foster carers' supervision.

Recommendations

Ofsted said: ‘demonstrate, through clear recording practice, that all potential allegations are referred to the local area designated officer (LADO) and retain a clear record of the decision making process with regard to categorising incidents as allegations or concerns. All records relating to allegations, complaints and concerns must contain clear detail of actions taken and outcomes.’

We will: make sure that our records of complaints and allegations are complete and detailed, and include the record of the decision making in conjunction with the LADO.

Recommendations

Ofsted said: 'ensure that monitoring reports identify the action taken to address any issues raised and reflect the identification of any patterns and trends emerging and their implications for service development.'

We will: update monitoring reports from now on with actions taken to address issues. We will also collate quarterly analysis of any trends and action taken to address them.

Recommendations

Ofsted said: 'ensure that the Statement of Purpose reflects the services and facilities provided to family and friends carers.'

We will: update the Statement of Purpose with this information by the end of January 2013.

New arrangements from 1st April 2013

From 1st April 2013 there will no longer be three separate inspections of adoption services, fostering services and the services for looked after children.

There will be one, unannounced, ten day inspection of services for looked after children which will consider the placements and support given to them, and the planning for their permanency, including adoption if appropriate.