



**Children and Young People  
Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee  
18 June 2013**

**Report from the Director of  
Children and Families**

Wards Affected:  
ALL

**Outcome of Ofsted's Inspection of Brent Children's  
Services Fostering Service**

**1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide detail regarding the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of Brent's Fostering Service, which took place between 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> March 2013. The detail is contained within the attached full inspection report.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Members note the outcome of the inspection which is summarised in the report published by Ofsted on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013 and attached at Appendix A.

**3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 Local Authority run fostering services are subject to regular inspection on a three-yearly cycle. Fostering services are subject to statutory regulation (Fostering Service Regulations 2011), guidance (Children Act 1989, Volume 4) and National Minimum Standards (2011). Compliance with these individual components forms a significant part of the inspection regime. The judgment scale for these inspections is as follows: outstanding, good, adequate and inadequate. Brent's fostering service was last inspected in October 2009 when the overall quality rating was 'good'. The Ofsted inspection regime for fostering services within Local Authorities is to change from September 2013. Scrutiny of fostering services will be combined with a more extensive

inspection of all of Children's Social Care performance – including safeguarding, Looked After Children and adoption.

3.2 In this most recent inspection the judgement received was that the overall effectiveness of the fostering service was 'good'. Overall effectiveness is measured against four specific inspection judgements:

- Outcomes for children and young people. We were judged to be **outstanding** in this area.
- Quality of service. We were judged to be **good** in this area.
- Safeguarding children and young people. We were judged to be **good** in this area.
- Leadership and Management. We were judged to be **outstanding** in this area.

3.3 The inspectors were extremely positive about the service, noting the significant improvements that have been implemented since the previous inspection and that all of the recommendations from that inspection had been met.

3.4 Two aspects of the service were judged as being 'outstanding'. One of the areas was that of outcomes for children and young people looked after by Brent foster carers. The service was recognised as treating each child as an individual and that every effort is made to place children within their own community and with carers who share a similar background. The stability of Brent foster care placements is good which enables continuity of educational placements, family and community links. Inspectors found a service that is highly aspirational for its children with education given a high priority.

3.5 The leadership and management of the service were also judged to be 'outstanding'. Improvements to quality assurance systems and a more focused team structure have helped to focus energies and improve outcomes. Inspectors found that the service benefits from a highly motivated and experienced staff team whose views are regularly sought to improve service delivery. The service was found to operate with a group of well-motivated carers who feel valued, well-supported and who have a good understanding of the often complex needs of children and young people in their care.

3.6 The inspection identified three areas where improvements should be made:

- That child-friendly profiles of foster carers should be developed in advance of any placement being made.
- That children and young people should be involved in the recruitment, preparation and training of foster carers and staff.
- That a training curriculum should be developed for carers to enable young people to acquire key life skills.

3.7 The fostering service has included these areas for improvement within the service action plan to ensure these are addressed in a timely manner. Child-friendly profiles will be completed by the end of July 2013. A young-person

has been identified to support in the recruitment of foster carers and the Care in Action group are being consulted on how young people can deliver on going training to foster carers. The foster carer training co-ordinator will include a specific course for carers on preparing young people for adult life in the next training curriculum.

- 3.8 The fostering service was very pleased with the overall outcome of the inspection. It has been shared with foster carers who were also very satisfied with the details of the report. The service is now aiming to build on the progress made, to ensure that improvements continue and that this contributes significantly to Children's Social Care's overall aspiration to be judged as 'good' when the new inspection framework is introduced in September 2013.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 None

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 None

#### **6.0 Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 The inspection noted that the fostering service was effective at responding to changing demand and was successful in recruiting carers from minority communities. This has allowed more children to remain within the borough and maintain contact with their existing social networks. Inspectors also found that the service was outstanding at recognising and responding to children's specific physical, social and cultural needs.

#### **7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)**

- 7.1 None

### **Background Papers**

London Borough of Brent Children's Services Placements' Fostering Service (inspection report for local authority fostering agency). Published by Ofsted, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013.

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