

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

**RESULTS OF THE OFSTED INSPECTION OF
NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL FOSTERING TEAM**

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the results of the Ofsted inspection of North Lincolnshire Council Fostering Team, published on 1 September 2012

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1. The purpose of the inspection was to assure children and young people, parents, the public local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards. The inspection took place between 23 and 26 July 2012 and follows closely on the heels of the Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Services
- 2.2. The evidence evaluated by inspectors included:
- meetings with children and young people in care or care leavers, members of the children in care council as well as foster carers, and discussions with front line staff and managers, the chair of the fostering panel, the Agency Decision Maker and the Chair of the Foster Care Association.
 - a review of the files of foster carers offering a variety of foster care including short breaks for children with disabilities, mainstream (short term), mainstream (long term) and connected persons (family and friends carers). This provided a view of services provided over time and the quality of reporting, recording and decision making undertaken.
 - the outcomes of the most recent announced inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Services undertaken between 23 April and 3 May 2012.

- interviews and focus groups with foster carers, front line professionals managers and senior staff, including placing social workers and fostering social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Education representatives (including the Virtual Head Teacher for Looked After Children), the Looked After Children Nurse and the Children’s Advocate.
- The National Fostering Data Set which includes data relating to the percentage of looked after children and young people who are placed in foster care, placement stability and siblings placed apart.
- An examination of records including foster carer training and allegations management.
- Recruitment Publicity materials, foster care documentation including Safe Care Plans, the Children’s Guide to Foster Care and the Child’s Memory Book.
- User and Partner questionnaires were distributed to the children and young people who are placed with foster carers approved by the fostering service, their relatives and carers, prospective foster carers, foster carers, specialist health services, education services and the Independent Reviewing Service.

2.3. Inspection judgements are made using a four point scale:

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

2.4. The judgements are made against an evaluation schedule. The following table sets the evaluation schedule criteria and the judgement that was made about them:

Fostering Services	
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Outcomes for Children and Young People	Outstanding
Quality of service provision	Outstanding
Safeguarding children and young people	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding

- 2.5. The report commented that young people are at the centre of everything the service does and there are excellent arrangements in place to secure positive outcomes for them. The participation of young people in the decisions that are made about their own care and in the development of the service was found to be very good.
- 2.6. Young people were judged to be kept safe through a robust and proactive approach towards safeguarding. Rigorous systems for checking the suitability of foster carers and staff were found to be in place and the arrangements for supervising and supporting carers were viewed as excellent.
- 2.7. The inspectors found that the authority has developed excellent and highly effective working relationships with partner agencies. This ensures that there is a multidisciplinary approach to supporting children and their carers and this in turn promotes very positive outcomes for children.
- 2.8. The Inspectors stated that assessments were excellent and detailed and that care plans were comprehensive. They were of the view that managers and social workers in the fostering service had the skills and knowledge they need to enable them to deliver excellent service to foster carers and children and young people.
- 2.9. The Fostering panel was judged to be working very well with a central list membership made up of representatives from a number of disciplines. It made an excellent contribution to the improvement and development of the service through its quality assurance function.
- 2.10 Leadership and management was judged as outstanding, with comments on the leadership and commitment to the continuous development of the fostering service by elected members as well as officers. Arrangements for monitoring the quality of the service were found to be rigorous and very effective in ensuring that high standards are maintained.
- 2.11 The inspectors found that placement stability has been contributed to by the clear commitment the authority has made to improving and developing the service resulting in an increase of staff together with a robust recruitment drive resulting in successfully recruiting a number of new carer households.
- 2.12 It was found that foster carers are valued and feel supported as part of the team working with individual children and young people through being fully involved in service development. The local authority has adopted the principles of the Foster Carer Charter and developed its own charter in consultation with children and young people and foster carers.
- 2.13 The last inspection of the fostering service was in June 2009 with an overall judgement of satisfactory. The inspectors found that all recommendations made at the last inspection have been fully addressed and there have been significant improvements in the service since that time resulting in “outcomes for children and young people being greatly improved”.

3. **OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

3.1 None – for information only

4. **ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

4.1 None. For information only

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

5.1 None – for information only

6. **OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)**

6.1 None – for information only

7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

7.1 None required – for information only

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That Cabinet notes the results of the Ofsted inspection of North Lincolnshire Council Fostering Team.

8.2 That Cabinet welcomes the Outstanding judgement and commends the team.

DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: 'North Lincolnshire Council Fostering Team – Inspection report for local authority fostering agency ' , Ofsted, September 2012.

Available at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/north-lincolnshire>