

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE PLACEMENTS

The Council have made 177 placements of children in this financial year (1st April 2015 to 18th December 2015). These placements range across a number of placement types and geographic spread, both in borough and out of borough, and are dependent and determined by the needs of the young person and individual family circumstances. In 2015 the highest percentage of placements were made with the in house fostering service.

Placements since 01/04/2015¹

16+ Placement	16
Residential	18
IFA Foster Placement	58
In house Foster Carer	70
Mother and Baby Residential Placement	9
Mother and baby Foster placement	5
Secure	1
Total	177

Service Standards

Service provision for children and young people (CYP) under 16yrs is required to comply with the Care Standards set by Care Standards Act 2000 and are regulated and inspected by Ofsted. This includes Residential Parenting Assessment Centres, Independent Foster Agencies (IFAs), Children's Homes, Special Schools, Residential (Boarding) Schools and Secure accommodation (for both remand and welfare placements).

Ofsted conduct a full inspection on an annual cycle for residential units and a 3-year cycle for independent fostering agencies, for which they may make a judgement in the following categories:

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

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Requires Improvement: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

The Central Placements team will only make placements with providers that have a rating of Good or above.

Quality Monitoring

The majority of providers used by the Council are affiliated to the London Care Placements (LCP) consortium which means that they have been inspected, accredited and are monitored annually by the consortium officers as well as the registration and inspection processes of Ofsted. Each year the London Care Placements team negotiate base fees and uplifts on behalf of the London authorities and issue a core contract as part of the affiliation process. Each year the Authority pays an affiliation fee which covers the cost of the services provided by the consortium. In this financial year, 2015/16 this was £5,800.

¹ These figures only include only those which concluded with final placement

The consortium also maintains a record of the Ofsted inspection outcomes and removes any providers from the approved list who receive an inadequate rating. The London Care Placements team keep the providers under scrutiny and will reinstate them to the approved provider list only when their rating has been adjusted upwards.

In addition to the monitoring carried out by the consortium the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations 2010 require placing authorities to conduct visits to providers prior to making a placement if the provider has not been used by the authority in the previous six months. In Bromley either the social worker for the child or a Placement Officer will undertake a visit to the proposed providers prior to a placement being made. In any given year a number of visits will be undertaken by the Placements team to new providers (including those out of borough) and the Council uses the London Care Placement formats for the assessment reports.

Bromley's Central Placements Team reviews Ofsted inspection outcomes with the provider or Ofsted to ensure that any recommendations or requirements set by Ofsted have been followed through and actioned by the provider and references are taken from other placing authorities prior to making a placement.

Where an Ofsted judgement drops during the lifetime of a placement the local authority is notified in a number of ways :

- As part of the service offered by the LCP providers are monitored on behalf of the London authorities. Providers registered with the consortium are required to notify the consortium officers of the outcome of any Ofsted inspection and local authorities placing with that provider are in turn notified by LCP of any change in inspection outcome;
- Providers generally will send a copy of their last Ofsted inspection report to all the local authorities who have a child placed in their care, in particular if their inspection outcomes are Outstanding as this becomes part of their marketing material;
- Children's Homes are required by the Children's Home Regulations to evidence their ability and standard of care via an independent inspection on a monthly basis by a suitably qualified individual, (Regulation 33 visits). These reports are required to be sent by the provider to all the placing authorities every month. These reports are read by the Children's Co-ordinator and any issues raised with the child's social worker, team manager, or senior manager (as appropriate).
- The Social worker for the child, the Independent Reviewing Officer and the Placements team as directly involved professionals are responsible for ensuring that the standards within the care provision are kept under review and are confident of the ability of service provider to deliver the level of care expected.
- Ofsted will notify all placing authorities where the outcome of an inspection identifies safeguarding concerns and if the provision receives a judgement of "Inadequate".

Where Bromley receives such a notification a review of the placement will be undertaken. The social worker for the child/ren will undertake a visit to the child and conduct a risk assessment. Depending on the reasons for the judgement a strategy meeting may be called by the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding team within Children's Social Care, to review the report outcomes, notification details and to determine whether or not to recommend the removal of any child from the care of the provider.

For any service receiving a judgement of either “Requires Improvement” or “Inadequate” a 6 month and annual inspections will be conducted by Ofsted to ensure that the Action Plan, recommendations and requirements issued by Ofsted are progressing and meeting deadlines.

Issues in 2015

In January 2015 allegations were made against staff by a young person at a unit for 16+yrs. The matter was addressed formally with the provider resulting in a member of staff leaving the organisation.

In January 2015 concerns were raised regarding the standard of care being provided to a sibling group of children with a foster carer from an independent foster agency (IFA). The matter was investigated and the children were moved to the care of a new foster carer.

During 2015 a number of concerns were raised regarding the standards of assessment and reporting by a parenting assessment service in Bromley where a number of placements had been made. Despite efforts to work with the provider to improve the quality of service, further placements have been suspended pending improvements.

In December 2015 a provider of residential and educational provision to both adults and children with whom Bromley had a number of placements was closed by the CQC following a poor inspection outcome. All young people and adults were removed as quickly as possible and alternative educational and residential provision is being sought for the new academic year.

Contracting Arrangements

All placements for Children’s Social Care are made by the Central Placements Team in the Commissioning Division of ECHS on a spot purchase basis in order to ensure that the full range of provider options is available to the service. This enables the Placements Team to both match the child with the provision that can most meet the identified needs and to negotiate each individual placement in line with the specific service requirements of the child to achieve the best outcomes for them and value for money for the Council.

Spot purchasing of placements also enables the Authority to be very timely in its responses to poor service delivery if this should arise. The provider would be excluded from any future referrals until action had been taken to address any identified areas of concern. A number of providers have been suspended from receiving referrals during periods of investigation in the past year, some of these remain on-going whilst discussions take place with the providers and/or where concerns have been raised and the provider’s response has not met a satisfactory conclusion.

Standard terms within the London Care Placement contract which Bromley issues requires the provider to comply with Care Standards, safeguarding procedures and the requirements of either Fostering or Children’s Home regulations in respect of all issues relating to safeguarding and operation of their service.

Safeguarding

Where safeguarding concerns are raised for a child in placement responsibility for the investigation of the incident falls to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and social worker (SW) for the child, alongside the

Placements Team who will investigate any allegation or complaint and take appropriate action. This may involve removing the child to another provision if complaints, allegations or concerns are substantiated.

In the past year there have been no complaints received with respect to the provision of the children's placements service, although in the past year a number of notifications have been received by the Authority for which the safeguarding procedures identified above have been initiated (see details above).