

Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a local authority fostering service located in an inner city area, with a highly diverse and mobile population. The fostering service is part of the social care division of Lambeth children and young people's services. It is led by a head of service and includes: a recruitment team; a fostering assessment team; a fostering support team. The majority of looked after children are placed with foster carers provided by the independent sector, in neighbouring authorities. The provision of in-house carers has been growing.

The authority states its commitment to finding and supporting stable and secure foster care placements for children where the identified plan is fostering. The service aims to treat all parties with fairness and respect and to ensure that the services provided meet their diversified needs in relation to race, culture, ethnicity, language, disability, religion and sexuality.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This was an announced inspection, conducted over the course of two weeks by two inspectors. All key standards were considered and field activities took place over five days.

Lambeth demonstrates excellent commitment to participation and involvement of children and young people, who have real opportunity to shape the service. There is a strong ethos of inclusion. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is good promotion of health and education. The authority strives to safeguard children, with a number of well thought out strategies. There is strong leadership, excellent partnerships and a clear focus on improving outcomes for children.

There have been gaps in the monitoring and controlling of some aspects of the work of the fostering service. This has resulted in the areas for improvement identified. Access to the fostering service by telephone is difficult and a matter which poses problems for carers.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous inspection, conducted in February 2007, made six recommendations in relation to management and support to carers, safeguarding and premises. These have been addressed. In particular: vetting procedures are now more robust; child protection training and refreshers are provided on a rolling programme for staff and carers; monitoring visits now show how carers support children in relation to the