

Slough Borough Council

REPORT TO:	Cabinet
DATE:	16 June 2025
SUBJECT:	Ofsted Inspection outcomes: - <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Fostering with Slough- Breakaway Short Breaks Children's Home
PORTFOLIO:	Councillor Bedi – Lead Member for Children & Lifelong Learning
CHIEF OFFICER:	Sue Butcher, Executive Director of Children's Services. Chief Executive of Slough Children First
CONTACT OFFICER:	Ben Short, Director of Operations. Slough Children First
WARD(S):	All
KEY DECISION:	No
EXEMPT:	No
DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN:	No
APPENDICES:	Appendix 1 – Slough Children First Fostering inspection Appendix 2 – Breakaway Ofsted inspection

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1. 'Foster with Slough', Slough Children First Fostering Service was the subject to an Ofsted inspection between the 3rd and 7th March and was rated as Good across all areas of the inspection framework.

Breakaway, our Short Breaks Children's Home for children with additional needs, was the subject of an Ofsted inspection on 11th and 12th March. It was rated as 'Outstanding' in all areas.

1.2. This paper provides an overview of Ofsted's findings during each inspection.

Recommendation:

1.3. To note and celebrate the positive outcome of the Fostering Inspection and to note the requirements and recommendations, including the process in place to submit registered for a registered person and requirements on that individual.

1.4. To note and celebrate the excellent outcome of the inspection of Breakaway.

Commissioner Review

This report is outside the scope for pre-publication commissioner review; please check the [Commissioners' instruction 5 to CLT to sign off papers](#) for further details.

2. Report and background

2.1. Foster with Slough is the Fostering Service provided by Slough Children First. In inspections terms, it is considered an independent fostering agency (IFA). The service is provided to deliver a fostering service for children in Slough who cannot live with their birth parents or within a kinship arrangement, sometimes known as Family and Family arrangement. At the time of the inspection the IFA was noted as supporting 47 fostering households that provide care for 52 children and young people.

2.2. Foster with Slough was inspected by Ofsted between 3rd and 7th March 2025. There are four inspection outcomes namely, Inadequate, Requires Improvement, Good and Outstanding. Foster with Slough was and was rated as 'Good' overall and in each domain as follows.

- Overall experienced and progress of children and young people: **Good**
- How well children and young people are helped and protected: **Good**
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers **Good**

2.3. However, the inspection also set out two Requirements which means that a regulation must be fully complied with and one Recommendation which is an area of practice that need to be improved. They are as follows:-

- **Requirement One:** the fostering service must provide foster parents with such training, advice, information and support, including support outside office hours, as it appears necessary in the interests of children placed with them
- **Requirement Two:** The registered person must maintain a system for monitoring the matters as set out in the fostering schedules at appropriate intervals and improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency. The registered person must provide the Chief Inspector with a written report in respect of any review and on request to any local authority.
- **Recommendation.** The registered person the registered person should ensure that foster carers are able to evidence the training, sport and developmental standards have been attained within 12 months of approval (or within 18 months for family and friends foster carers) fostering households may use the same evidence workbook
- For reference the Registered person is the person with responsibility for running the service alongside the Responsible Individual (RI). A Registered Manager is in the process of their application with Ofsted following recruitment in February of this year and is within the statutory timescale permitted. The service has continued to meet its statutory requirements with strong leadership provided by the Responsible Individual and the Slough Children First team.

- 2.4. Both requirements have been completed within the required timescale of 30th April.
- 2.5. The inspection report clearly outlines the commitment and difference that our foster carers are making when they support our children. They are well supported by the service and together, this is having a positive influence on the outcomes for children. this includes positive comments such as;

- Overall experience and progress of children and young people
 - Children live with foster carers with whom they build secure, warm and trusting relationships.
 - Foster carers have a good understanding of children's health needs, and they are effective in ensuring that these needs are met.
 - Foster carers show a strong commitment to the education of the children in their care.
 - Children have life experiences similar to other children of the same age.
 - Children feel part of the family, and foster carers treat them as such.
 - The community model of support operated by the service is a particular strength.
 - The service provides children with opportunities to express their views, wishes and feelings
 - The service works to recruit a diverse range of carers to meet the needs of Slough's children.
 - The fostering panel works well.
- How well children and young people are helped and protected.
 - Children are protected well. They do not go missing from home and they receive care from well-matched foster carers.
 - Children are helped to have positive, memorable experiences
 - Effective safeguarding practices are in place
 - Medication for children with complex needs is well managed by carers
 - Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding
 - Safe recruitment processes are good

2.5.3 The effectiveness of leaders and managers

- Leaders and managers are ambitious for the children and have high expectations for what children can achieve.
- There has been no registered manager since September 2024. However, leaders have worked diligently to recruit interim managers to ensure that the service has had effective management support. As stated above, a Registered Manager is now in the process of their application within the timescales permitted.
- Foster carers receive an effective level of support to help them progress and have good experiences
- Staff are positive about the level of support they receive
- Managers have good relationships with other professionals
- There is a clear commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. The carer cohort is diverse, and the service supports them well.
- The quality of the review reports has been satisfactory, but leaders and managers have not been consistent in providing these reviews to Ofsted with reasonable

timescales. This is already strengthened by the management team with clearer and more analytical reports being provided on time.

- Foster carers are positive about the training they receive, and they appreciate the quality. However, there is mandatory training that some carers have not completed, and some training has expired.

3. Breakaway

3.1. Breakaway offers short breaks for children with learning and/or physical disabilities. In exceptional circumstances, the home may provide children with an extended or full - time care package. The home is registered to provide care for up to six children a time. At the time of the inspection the home currently provides short breaks to 18 children and full-time care to one child.

3.2. The inspection took place on 11th and 12th March 2025 and the ratings are as

Overall experienced and progress of children and young people taking into account **outstanding**

How well children and young people are helped and protected: **outstanding**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **outstanding**

3.3. No requirements or recommendations were made. This is a significant improvement from the previous inspection which took place in Feb 2024 when the home was rated as 'Good'.

3.4. Overall experiences and progress of children and young people

- *Children receive exemplary, high-quality care from a dedicated and compassionate staff team.*
- *Staff interactions with children are consistently warm, friendly and supportive fostering a nurturing and stable home environment.*
- *Staff excel in supporting children to express their views, wishes and feelings through a diverse range of communication methods*
- *The great care and attention staff show the children has led to secure, trusting relationships.*
- *High staff ratio means that staff get to spend quality time with children*
- *Staff work closely with children's parents and carers. They go the extra mile in offering support when families most need it*
- *Staff work closely with children's parents and carers*
- *Children's learning outcomes are very good*
- *Children engage with community and specialist health services with the help of staff*
- *The home is purpose built, clean and well organised with plenty of space*
- *A monthly children's meeting is carefully planned*
- *One child was celebrating their 18th birthday with a cake, presents and games.*

3.5 How well children and young people are helped and protected

- Staff are attuned to the specific needs and risks affecting children and excel in managing them effectively.

- Staff are highly trained in de-escalation and restraint techniques, and their use of restraint is rare.
- Medication management is carefully organised using a comprehensive health plan that is tailored to each child
- The registered manager and staff implement a detailed and thoughtful admission process for each new child.
- The collaborative approach adopted by the team means that children are familiar with the routine of the home.
 - The building is safe and secure and there are no health and safety issues.

3.6 The effectiveness of the home is highly effective

- Leadership of the home is highly effective
- Staff are well supported and speak highly of their manager
- Staff have received meaningful and targeted training that supports them to further develop their professional curiosity
- Children's records and management reports consistently reflect children's lived experiences

4. Implications of the Recommendation

4.1. *Financial implications*

There are no financial implications as a result of the outcome of either inspection.

4.2. *Legal implications*

National Minimum Standards for fostering services together with regulations on the placement of children in foster care, such as the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, form the basis of the regulatory framework under the Care Standards Act 2000 for the conduct of fostering services. The two requirements identified within the inspection must be met as they are regulatory requirements.

The Care Standards Act 2000 and Children's Home (England) Regulations 2015 set out the statutory requirements for children's homes. The Regulations include Quality Standards setting out aspirational and positive outcomes that homes are expected to achieve and requirements that homes must meet in order to achieve these overarching outcomes. The requirements for short-breaks services are modified to take account of the short term nature of the service.

4.3. *Risk management implications*

The short breaks service has been found to be outstanding, providing an effective means of managing the risk of not being able to provide for children with complex needs and support for families in relation to effective respite.

Foster with Slough provides home for children who are looked after. The success of the service is critical to ensuring that our children have high quality homes in their community and where they are supported to succeed. The rating of Good and comments provided show the positive impact that the service, alongside our foster carers has. There are areas for further strengthening, including a Registered Manager and strengthened reporting timeliness which have been put into place.

4.4. ***Environmental implications***

None

4.5. ***Equality implications***

Both the fostering and short breaks service provide care and support to children from a range of diverse background and with different needs. Breakaway specifically provides support to children with disabilities and their families that enables children to enjoy positive activities with other children away from their parents'. This is part of a wider offer of support to children.

Foster carers and children who stay with them come from a range of different background and we positively welcome carers who represent our communities.

4.6. **Procurement implications**

There are no procurement implications from the inspection outcome

5. Implications for Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

The outcomes of both inspections provide strong assurance to Slough Children First and its partners that children in care are receiving safe, high-quality and nurturing placements that support their progress, well-being and stability. As corporate parents, members and senior officers have a collective responsibility to ensure children and young people experience love, security and opportunity. The Ofsted judgments confirm that the services commissioned and delivered through 'Foster with Slough' and Breakaway are fulfilling these duties effectively. The positive experiences of children, the strength of relationships with carers and staff, and the quality of care and safeguarding all reflect a system that upholds our corporate parenting principles. Therefore, a continued focus on training compliance and quality assurance will further strengthen this offer and help deliver consistently excellent outcomes for children in our care.

6. Background Papers

None