

# Islington Private Fostering Arrangements Service - Children and Families

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC071842
<b>Inspection date</b>	17 March 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Sandra Jacobs-Walls
<b>Type of Inspection</b>	Key

---

<b>Address</b>	11-12 Highbury Crescent Islington London N5 1RN
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 75274298
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Islington Social Services
<b>Registered manager</b>	Susanna Daus
<b>Responsible individual</b>	Maggie Paris
<b>Date of last inspection</b>	

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Cripins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: [www.tso.co.uk/bookshop](http://www.tso.co.uk/bookshop)

## About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is 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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## Service information

### Brief description of the service

The London Borough of Islington's Private Fostering service is currently based within the borough's mainstream fostering service. The private fostering service is overseen by the operational manager for placements who is also the registered manager for the borough's fostering service. Currently staff allocated to private fostering arrangements are members of a wider specialist team responsible for kinship, private fostering and special guardianship placements. The team is managed by a deputy team manager. Islington's Children's Social Care Division is subject to re-structure as of April 1st 2008 and the management and operation of the private fostering service will be subject to change thereafter. It is planned that the delivery of a private fostering service will be located in the Children in Need service. There will be one central point for referral and supervision of the privately fostered children, dealt with by one service area. This will reduce the number of people that carers and children have to relate to and additionally offer a more specialised, sensitive and co-ordinated service. At the time of the inspection, a private fostering development worker had been in post for five months to assist, develop and implement a detailed project plan to identify children and young people living in the borough who may be privately fostered. The local authority had received notification of 11 new private fostering notifications in the preceding year. At the time of the inspection there were four young people privately fostered.

### Summary

This is the first inspection of the private fostering arrangements made by the London Borough of Islington. The purpose of the key announced inspection is to ensure the private fostering service safeguards and promotes the rights and welfare of children and young people living in private fostering arrangements. All seven National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering were examined. Overall Islington's private fostering service is judged to be good. Effective systems have been developed to raise the awareness of the service amongst partner agencies and the wider community within the borough. The requirements of the notification process has been well publicised and there are effective working relationships amongst statutory agencies and community groups to achieve targets, however, the number of notified arrangements have been low. Good attention is paid to the welfare and safety of children and young people who are privately fostered. There are systems in place to ensure private fostering arrangements are assessed and remain suitable for young people. Staff are aware of their duties in accordance with relevant legislation and supervisory visits are consistently conducted and well documented. Advice and support for private foster carers is offered and young people have the opportunity to express and share their views about the arrangement. The strategic planning of the service has been effective and the service is well monitored; developmental issues and achievements are reported to the safeguarding board on a consistent basis.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

### Improvements since the last inspection

This is Islington's first inspection of their private fostering service.

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

## Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Islington's private fostering service promotes and responds well to notifications. The role of the development worker and sound preliminary strategic planning has been instrumental in raising awareness of notification requirements with key partner agencies in the borough, to ensure that those professionals who may come in contact with privately fostered children and young people understand their role in notification. Keen and effective efforts have been made by the service to liaise, inform and advise key statutory bodies such as the borough's housing authority, primary care trust, education and early years service to effectively involve senior managers of the notification process of privately fostered arrangements. The metropolitan police and immigration and nationality department have also approached. The borough's Private Fostering Task Group (PFTG) comprises of key personnel from departmental and external partner agencies. In addition to statutory bodies the service includes key community based organisations in raising awareness of their role in the notification process. Thus organisations working with members of the black and ethnic minority communities have been targeted, in addition to faith groups and organisations with a lead on supporting the community with immigration issues. Specific settings were identified to conduct audits of existing records to gauge the likelihood and actual instances of young people being privately fostered. Staff of the service explained that the focus of the pilot is to ensure that partner agencies understand the notification process, the role they play in promoting notifications and ensuring key enquiries are initiated at the earliest opportunity. The initial pilot project has been conducted in a local primary school and there are plans for the further audits to be conducted more widely in other settings such as secondary schools, children's centres and a health clinic. The borough has established a Private Fostering Task Group to act as the project Board for the development and co-ordination of the Private Fostering Service. This is chaired by the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care Service. Key events and activities have been held to encourage the efforts of the group. This has included a Private Fostering Network event in September 2007 facilitated by a consultant from the British Agency for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) and a specialist in private fostering in order to establish the borough's Private Fostering Task Group. In November 2007 the Children's Social Care Service organised a specific training event to support the Task Group members lead the work on private fostering within their respective agencies. Key literature and publicity about Islington's private fostering service has been produced and distributed. Presentations and training events continue to be conducted with key agencies, local organisations and members of the general public to promote awareness. Information is also available via the borough's intranet. At the time of the inspection, the service was advertising the permanent post of the service's development worker. With regards to notification received, files reviewed during the inspection evidenced that staff facilitate prompt and appropriate action. Where families are not already known to the fostering service but other children's teams, an initial assessment is conducted within seven days of receipt of the notification and the case is then allocated to the fostering service for completion of a private fostering assessment. All case files reviewed evidence the required assessment, with the exception of one. To date no disqualifications have been initiated by the service. There are policies and procedures in place for prohibiting private fostering arrangements and imposing requirements where appropriate. Once established as a private fostering arrangement, families are visited at the required interval by supervising social workers - every six weeks for the first year and every three months in subsequent years. There is good evidence on file that demonstrates the service's commitment to safeguarding and the protection of young people who are privately fostered. The welfare

and safety of young people is a consistent feature of supervisory home visits by staff and young people's case files have a section dedicated to child protection issues. One file reviewed contained comprehensive information of the management of a child protection enquiry of a privately fostered young person. Decisions and actions taken were prompt and in accordance with the borough's safeguarding procedures. Documentation was clear and consistent, consultation with all parties was good and in particular consultation with the young person was sensitively conducted. The service effectively determines the suitability of all aspects of the private fostering arrangement primarily via the assessment process. The assessment tool evidenced on file addresses all key issues as outlined in the regulations. These include the intended duration of the arrangement, the wishes and feelings of the young person, and an assessment that the young person's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development is appropriate and satisfactory. The assessment document explores well any religious, racial, cultural and linguistic needs of the young person and how these are to be addressed. Financial arrangements are explored, as is the capacity of the identified carers to provide adequate care to children and young people who are privately fostered. Files indicate that where there are identified needs, support, advice and where appropriate, practical assistance can be accessed. Keen attention is paid to the health and educational needs of young people and any contact arrangements in place with birth families or friends. Files evidence good attempts by staff to establish the suitability of all household members; however it is acknowledged by managers that obtaining CRB's for family members of the identified carer is sometimes difficult. Private foster carers confirm that the welfare of young people and the continued suitability of the placement was consistently reviewed at regularly held supervisory visits. Carers confirm that advice and support was forthcoming from staff; one private foster carer commented that she was currently working with the supervising social worker to address financial and welfare benefits issues. No privately fostered young person was interviewed as part of the inspection process, however files indicate and carers confirm that supervisory visits incorporated private consultation with the young people. File documentation highlight that support and advice is also made available to young people and their general and specific needs are consistently explored with them.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is not judged.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is not judged.

### **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is not judged.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Islington's private fostering service has a comprehensive written statement which outlines its duties and functions in relation to private fostering and how this is to be implemented. The document in use at the time of the inspection is user friendly and contains all information as outlined in the National Minimum Standards and the regulation. At the time of the inspection, the Statement was under review to update information in line with the imminent reorganisation of the borough's Children's Social Care Service and the private fostering service. The reorganisation is due to be implemented April 1 2008. The re-organisation of the Private

Fostering Service will see the service being managed within the borough's Children in Need service. The Children in Need intake service will comprise of four senior social workers one of which will take the lead for private fostering cases, offering consultation and advice to social workers allocated private fostering cases. This worker will have a quality assurance role for the private fostering service. It is anticipated that after April 2008 no more than six social workers will be responsible for privately fostered children's cases. Social work staff are appropriately qualified, skilled and knowledgeable about the functions and tasks of the private fostering service. Ongoing training focussed on private fostering is widely available within and external to Children's Social Care Services. Islington has good monitoring systems in place to review the functioning of its private fostering service. The quality assurance framework in place ensures that case files are audited periodically against the National Minimum Standards for privately fostered children and young people. The Safeguarding Board receives reviews and reports of the development of the service that will be used to inform an improvement strategy for the service post April 2008. The case files of privately fostered children and their carers are comprehensive and appropriately detailed. Records of supervisory visits are equally detailed, outlining the suitability and progress of the arrangement and ensuring that the welfare and safety of privately fostered young people is satisfactory. Any matters of concern are appropriately explored with relevant parties. There are systems in place to record the number and nature of enquiries received in relation to private fostering and the responses given and any action taken. The service reports annually to Islington's Safeguarding Children's Board as required under the regulations, which includes an evaluation of its general work and safeguarding issues in relation to privately fostered young people in the borough.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
3	ensure that all private fostering arrangements are subject to an assessment process that explores matters as outlined in Schedule 3 of the Regulations. (Regulation 8)	1 July 2008

### Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

## Annex

## Annex A

### National Minimum Standards for private fostering arrangements

#### Being healthy

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

**Ofsted considers none of the above to be key standards to be inspected.**

#### Staying safe

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- the local authority is notified about privately fostered children living in its area (NMS 2)
- the welfare of privately fostered children is safeguarded and promoted. (NMS 3 )
- private foster carers and parents of privately fostered children receive advice and support to assist them to meet the needs of privately fostered children; privately fostered children are able to access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted (NMS 4)
- the local authority identifies and provides advice and support to the parents of children who are privately fostered within their area (NMS 5)
- children who are privately fostered are able to access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted. Privately fostered children are enabled to participate in decisions about their lives (NMS 6).

**Ofsted considers 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 the key standards to be inspected.**

#### Enjoying and achieving

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

**Ofsted considers none of the above to be key standards to be inspected.**

#### Making a positive contribution

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

**Ofsted considers none of the above to be key standards to be inspected.**

#### Achieving economic well-being

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

**Ofsted considers none of the above to be key standards to be inspected.**

#### Organisation

The intended outcomes for these standards are:

- relevant staff are aware of local authority duties and functions in relation to private fostering (NMS 1)
- the local authority monitors the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering (NMS 7).

**Ofsted considers 1 and 7 the key standards to be inspected.**