

London Borough of Hillingdon Private Fostering Arrangements Service

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

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Inspector	Muhammed Harunur Rashid
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	London Borough of Hillingdon Civic Centre High Street UXBRIDGE Middlesex UB8 1UW
Telephone number	01895 277852
Email	
Registered person	London Borough of Hillingdon
Registered manager	Paul Hewitt
Responsible individual	Debbie Haith
Date of last inspection	

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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 Hillingdon holds statutory power and responsibilities in relation to private fostering arrangements within the borough. The Referral and Assessment Team's duty is as the first point of contact and to handle all initial enquiries. The Initial Assessment Team then carries out assessments and all relevant checks of the private foster carers. Following successful completion of the assessments and checks the cases are then transferred to the Children in Needs Team.

Summary

At this announced full inspection all key standards were inspected. The outcomes not examined included being healthy, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and economic wellbeing. This is because there are no key standards under these outcomes. This is the first inspection of the private fostering arrangements made by the London Borough of Hillingdon. This is a good service. Good systems have been developed to promote the service and keep children and young people safe. A number of different methods have been introduced to raise awareness of private fostering with members of the public and with relevant professionals and agencies, such as UK Border Agency based at Heathrow airport. The numbers of notified arrangements are good and plans are in place for further publicity with wider distribution of information.

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 the first inspection of the London Borough of Hillingdon against the National Minimum Standards for private fostering and associated regulations.

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.

The London Borough of Hillingdon promotes awareness of private fostering arrangements throughout the borough. Awareness of notification requirements are promoted via information and advertising in newspapers, as well as information published on the London Borough of Hillingdon website. The local authority is undertaking information sessions with key professionals, partnership agencies and members of public, at faith and community organisations, and schools. Publicity materials are distributed to key points, such as, schools, libraries and one-stop shops. Private fostering has been sponsored by the Director of Children's services through the Hillingdon Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB). The service manager of the safeguarding and quality assurance regularly attends Pan Heathrow Forum where he discusses issues and shares information about private fostering with relevant professionals including UK Border Agency staff. The private fostering awareness campaign in Hillingdon has provided valuable information to the local community. This has been successful and 90 notifications have been notified. User friendly forms are in place to assist notifications. All social workers in fostering, referral and assessment teams, and other relevant professionals, have attended training and have awareness of private fostering. There are identified processes in place to deal

effectively with situations where a private fostering arrangement has come to the attention of the local authority. Staff experienced in carrying out fostering assessments ensure that initial assessments are carried out on all notifications to determine whether they meet the private fostering criteria and suitability of threshold. The assessment establishes whether or not a child should be classified as in need. If they are, the responsibility that the decision places on the authority is identified and actions are recommended. Financial arrangements are taken into account and advice is given with regard to benefits where needed. The local authority undertakes enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosures for all adults in the household. The full report of the child's circumstances is signed off by the responsible team manager prior to the presentation at the Private Fostering Panel. The final decision with regard to whether the arrangement is approved or not is made by the Head of Safeguarding Services. All privately fostered children are visited regularly by their allocated social workers. Social workers monitor all aspects of the placement to ensure that the children's needs continue to be met. Private foster carers informed the Inspector that they were satisfied with the support provided by the local authority. However, foster carers mentioned that they would be benefited from attending various training with relevant professionals. An HSCB training officer informed the Inspector that he will make provision for all private foster carers to be included in the integrated training.

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.

The London Borough of Hillingdon has appropriate written private fostering policy documents in place which include all the necessary information, such as the legal definition of a private fostered child, the local authority's duties and functions and awareness of the notification requirements. The local authority has identified a Registered Manager (the service manager of safeguarding and quality assurance) for private fostering services who closely works with multi agency teams to ensure that there is an overview with regards to the management, awareness raising and safeguarding requirements for private fostering cases. The local authority has employed a temporary dedicated part-time social worker to take lead on private fostering cases. Staff and private foster carers informed the Inspector that a permanent and possibly a full time post will enable the local authority to develop the service further. There is a good system in place to monitor and review the service available to children and foster carers where private fostering arrangements have been notified. The system includes full details of the process used to assess the arrangements, support and advice available following assessments. The local authority ensures that records are kept for all private fostering arrangements and these are notified to the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The local authority reports to the HSCB on how it satisfies itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in its area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, including how it co-operates with other agencies concerned.

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
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that all private foster carers are provided with training facilities (NMS 4)
- consider employing a permanent dedicated social worker to take lead on private fostering cases (NMS 7)

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.