

London Borough of Hackney Private Fostering Arrangements Team

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

Unique reference number	SC070284
Inspection date	7 March 2008
Inspector	Jill Marriott
Type of Inspection	Key

Address	London Borough of Hackney Directorate of Social Services 205 Morning Lane LONDON E9 6JX
Telephone number	020 83566304
Email	
Registered person	London Borough of Hackney
Registered manager	Paul Owen
Responsible individual	Paul Owen
Date of last inspection	

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: 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

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

Hackney Local Authority has a named person with expertise in private fostering who is based in the Hackney Children and Young People's Services. The named person ensures that services are monitored, reviewed and developed and children are appropriately supported. At the time of this inspection four private fostering arrangements have been identified with appropriate assessments and actions taken in each case. All young people notified as being in private foster care are allocated a social worker and the arrangements in place have been assessed as meeting their needs. The Department for Children, Schools and Families is informed of all notifications made and the arrangements in place for identified children.

Summary

This is the first inspection of the private fostering arrangements made by the London Borough of Hackney. The key National Minimum Standards were assessed. Good systems have been developed to promote the service and keep young people safe. A number of different methods have been introduced to raise awareness of private fostering with the general public and with relevant professionals. The numbers of notified arrangements are low and plans are in place for further road shows with wider distribution of information targeted at specific faith and community groups. The assessment identifies the procedures in place to show how the child's health, education and day to day needs will be met. The decision making process is clear with regard to the suitability of the arrangements in place and includes information regarding how if necessary relevant people can appeal against decisions made. Hackney Children and Young People's Services have overall responsibility for the arrangements in place for the identification, notification, assessment and continual support of private fostering arrangements that are made within the local area. No actions or recommendations have been made following this inspection.

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 Hackney's Private Fostering arrangements.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

The provision is not judged

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The local authority promotes awareness of the private fostering service available in the Hackney area. There has been a range of awareness road shows presented at different venues over the past two years. Further information days are planned throughout 2008/9. Clearly written and easily understandable information leaflets are widely circulated throughout the borough. Information is available in local libraries, GP surgeries, health clinics, hospitals, schools and youth and community venues. Articles are regularly printed in the local paper, on the Hackney web site and in various local authority news letters published quarterly. Information is printed and made available in a range of community languages. The private fostering awareness

campaign in Hackney has provided valuable information to the local community but has resulted in very few notifications being received. The arrangements in place for promoting awareness have been reviewed to ensure the information is reaching all appropriate people including local faith and community groups. Clear user friendly forms have been devised to assist notification. These ask all the relevant questions about each child's situation. All children's social workers and relevant professionals have attended training and awareness days related to private fostering arrangements. 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 but has not been notified in accordance with regulation. Following the identification of private fostering arrangements an assessment which includes elements of the framework for assessment of Children in Need and their Families is undertaken. The assessment takes place as soon as is possible and within 35 days of the arrangement being notified. All aspects of the arrangements and the suitability of the carer to provide for the child are included. The views of the child, the proposed carer and the parent where possible are covered. The child's physical, emotional and cultural needs are considered as well as issues related to religion, race, gender and the financial arrangements of the placement. 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. Criminal Records Bureau disclosures are taken up for adult members of the private fostering household and relevant regular visitors to the home. Although no unsuitable arrangements have been notified to date, there are processes in place to deal with such situations. In such a case either alternative arrangements will be made or actions will be required to ensure the wellbeing of the child in placement. There is an appeals procedure in place for cases of disagreement. The full assessment report with recommendations is presented to the kinship foster panel. All privately fostered children are visited every six weeks by an allocated social worker. The social work task is clearly outlined in the report. Social workers monitor all aspects of the placement to ensure that the child's needs continue to be met in terms of financial arrangements and the arrangements made with regard to health and safety, education and contact with friends and relatives. Further financial support can be offered under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 in specific cases. Throughout the process to determine whether or not an arrangement is that of a private fostering arrangement the child's needs remain paramount. The local authority ensures that the child involved is at the centre of the assessment and that their views and the views of those close to them are listened to. Advice and support is available to carers and children and the telephone numbers of the responsible person and the allocated social worker are provided. Where appropriate children are made aware of alternative options to private fostering arrangements and they are assisted to be involved in making decisions about their future care and support. Information is provided in different languages and translation arrangements are available where appropriate. Training courses available to all of Hackney's foster carers are also available for private foster carers who are given relevant information about courses and are encouraged to attend.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

The provision is not judged

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

The provision is not judged

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

The provision is not judged

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Hackney has clear policies and procedures in place and a Statement of Purpose specifically related to private fostering. These documents are available in an easy to read style. They cover all the required regulations and standards and identify the duties and functions to be carried out by the local authority. The policies and procedures have been shared with the fostering team and all relevant professionals working with children and young people. Training is mandatory for all children's social workers and the fostering teams. The training is included as part of the induction process for all newly appointed staff. Hackney is committed to ongoing workshops to enhance a multi-disciplinary approach to meeting the needs of children privately fostered in the local area. Records are kept of all private fostering arrangements and these arrangement are notified as required to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The decision making process to define who is privately fostered is easily tracked. Cases are presented for approval to the kinship foster panel followed by a recommendation to the agency decision. A statement regarding the arrangements made for children and the signature of the agency decision maker is recorded in every case. Appropriate procedures are in place to refer any issues of concern about any young person's safety to the correct team for investigation. The procedures relate to all children including those who are in private fostering arrangement.

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
----------	--------	----------

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.