

London Borough of Brent Children's Services Placement (Private Fostering Arrangements)

Inspection report for private fostering arrangements

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Inspector	Muhammed Harunur Rashid
Type of Inspection	Key

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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 Brent holds statutory powers and responsibilities in relation to private fostering arrangements within the borough. The Fostering Assessment Team is the first point of contact and carries out assessments of the private foster carers. The Fostering Assessment Team has the responsibility for ensuring that all such arrangements are recorded and that the assessment of the suitability of the carers, and the relevant checks, have been carried out. Following successful completion of the assessments 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 Brent. This is a good service. Good systems have been developed to promote the service and keep children safe. A number of different methods have been introduced to raise awareness of private fostering with members of the public and with relevant professionals. 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 Brent 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 Brent promotes awareness of private fostering arrangements throughout the borough. Roadshows, seminars and information sessions take place regularly at various local venues. Clearly written and understandable leaflets are distributed in the local area, schools and various faith groups. Advertisements and articles are published in Brent Magazine. The local authority also advertises about private fostering on public notice boards, in GP surgeries and the Brent Borough website. Evidence shows that London Borough of Brent commenced their publicity programmes in November 2005. The private fostering awareness campaign in Brent has provided valuable information to the local community. This has been successful and 54 notifications have been made since 2005. All social workers in fostering and children in need 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 threshold. These assessments take into account the private foster carer's parenting capacity

and the children's developmental needs, including their health, education, emotional and behavioural development, and social presentation needs. The local authority makes efforts to ensure birth parents are included in the private fostering assessment wherever possible. 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. If an applicant is unhappy about the way any decision has been made in connection with a private fostering arrangement, they can make a complaint under Brent Social Services Department's complaints procedures. The local authority undertakes an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure for all adults in the household. The full process concludes within 35 days of the original notification. All privately fostered children are visited regularly by their allocated social workers. Social workers monitor all aspects of the placement to ensure that the child's needs continue to be met. Two privately fostered children and their carers spoken to informed the inspector that they were satisfied with the support provided by the local authority. The local authority ensures that children are involved in the assessment and review process. Children's views and wishes and those of the people close to them are listened to. Information about advocacy services are given to children. Training courses are available to all private foster carers; carers are given training information and are encouraged to attend. The local authority does not currently have a child friendly leaflet to provide them with information about private fostering.

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 Brent has an appropriate private fostering policy document in place which includes all necessary information, such as the legal definition of a privately fostered child, the local authority's duties and functions and awareness of the notification requirements. The policies and procedures have been shared with the fostering team and all relevant professionals working with children and young people. The local authority has identified a lead officer for private fostering (the looked after children's improving outcomes manager) who works in close collaboration with the acting principal officer (placement) to ensure that there is an overview with regards to the management, awareness raising and safeguarding requirements for private fostering cases. They both arrange 'study mornings' and seminars on a regular basis for children and families, staff, multi agency professionals and foster carers. There is a good system in place to monitor, review and develop 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, and support and advice available following assessment. The local authority's policies and procedures include a process for dealing with a situation where unsuitable fostering arrangements have been identified and there is an appropriate appeals procedure for use in case of disagreements. The local authority ensures that records are kept for all private fostering arrangements and these are notified as required

to the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The local authority reports annually to the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) 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 in this connection. Following the departure of the previous head of the placement service, the local authority has employed an acting head of the placement service. However, the local authority has yet to confirm to Ofsted, in writing, the name of the manager within the local authority, with expertise in private fostering, who will be responsible for decisions about the overall suitability of a 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
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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):

- develop a child friendly leaflet for providing better information about private fostering (NMS 6)
- notify Ofsted, in writing, of the name of the manager within the local authority with expertise in private fostering who will be responsible for decisions about the overall suitability of a private fostering arrangement (NMS 1).

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.