



city & hackney
safeguarding
children board

Private Fostering

London Borough of Hackney

Annual report 2014/15

1. Introduction

- 1.1 A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately for the care of a child under the age of 16 (or under 18 if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more.
- 1.2 Private foster carers may be from the extended family, such as a cousin or great aunt. A private foster carer may be a friend of the family, the parent of a friend of the child, or someone previously unknown to the child's family who is willing to privately foster a child. However, a person who is a close relative under the Children Act 1989 i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full or half blood or by marriage) or a step-parent will not be a private foster carer.
- 1.3 The period for which the child is cared for and accommodated by the private foster carer should be continuous, but if a child receives an occasional short break this is not considered to break that continuity.
- 1.4 Local authorities do not approve private foster carers, but are required to assess and say whether or not they agree and accept a private fostering arrangement to ensure that privately fostered children and young people are being safeguarded and their welfare promoted.
- 1.5 To fulfil this duty local authorities must take a pro-active approach in partnership with other agencies and other key professionals in raising public awareness of requirements regarding notifications of private fostering arrangements.
- 1.6 This report builds on the reporting of Private Fostering activity completed by Hackney Children and Young People's Services.

2. The Rules Governing Private Fostering

- 2.1 Privately fostered children are safeguarded by legislation set out in Part 9 of the Children Act 1989; the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005; and Section 44 of the Children Act 2004 effective 1 July 2005.
- 2.2 Standards of care and management for private fostering arrangements are set out in the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering (2005).

3. The National Picture 2014/15

- 3.1 1,560 - Children and young people reported as being cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements in England at 31 March 2015. The numbers have fluctuated between 1,250 and 1,650 over the past 9 years but overall are generally quite stable. The regions with the most children and young people reported in these arrangements continue to be London and the South West.
- 3.2 2,740 - New arrangements reported to have started during the 2015 financial year, an overall increase from 1,420 in 2007.
- 3.3 2,770 - Arrangements reported to have ended. This has been steadily increasing over the past 9 years, from 1,040 in 2007 to 2,770 in 2015.

3.4 75% - Of cases where action was taken following a notification of a private fostering arrangement had action taken within 7 working days. This percentage has fluctuated between 69% and 80% since 2007.

4. Hackney Children and Young People's Services

4.1 On becoming aware of a potential private fostering arrangement Hackney Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) take the lead role in determining the following:

- Assessing the suitability of private foster carers.
- Making regular visits to the child or young person and monitoring the overall standard of care.
- Ensuring the child or young person is well cared for in a safe environment.
- Carrying out Disclosure and Barring checks on the private foster carers and any person over the age of 16 in the household.
- Ensuring arrangements are in place to keep a record of private foster carers and children and young people who are privately fostered.
- Ensuring that advice and support to carers is made available when needed.
- Providing annual statistics of the numbers of privately fostered children and young people in Hackney to central Government and the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Board.
- If Hackney CYPS decide that an arrangement is unsuitable and if the child or young person cannot be returned to their parents, CYPS will decide what action to take to safeguard the child's welfare.

5. Overview & Analysis of Hackney Activity 2014/15

5.1 As at the end of March 2015 there were 21 children identified as being cared for in private fostering arrangements in Hackney. This is an increase from the figure of 16 private fostering arrangements in March 2014.

5.2 Of these, 13 were new arrangements that began in 2014/15. The majority of these children (9 of 13) were born in the U.K. (See Table 1.). The place of birth profile with UK born children being the highest number of new arrangements is consistent with the national picture.

5.3 Most of the children in private fostering arrangements are within the age range of 10-15 (See Table 2.). This age profile of the Hackney cohort is also reflected in the national data where 68% of children living in private fostering arrangements are aged 10-15 years.

Table 1. Total number of children and young people whose private fostering arrangement began between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015, by place of birth

Place of birth	Number of children
UK	9
Europe (other)	0
Africa	2
Asia	1
Middle East	0
Oceania	0
Canada and USA	0
Caribbean, Central and South America	1
Other	0
Total	13

Table 2. Total number of children and young people whose private fostering arrangement began between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015, by age

Age (at 31 st March 2015)	Number of children
Under 1	0
1 – 4	4
5 - 9	1
10 - 15	8
16 and over	0
Total	13

6. Timescales and visits

- 6.1 Private Fostering Regulations stipulate that children and young people must be seen within 7 working days of receipt of the notification.
- 6.2 During 2014/15, 100% of these visits in Hackney were undertaken within the stipulated timescale against the national average of 75%, reflecting strong performance and no delay in responding to the initial assessment of possible new arrangements.
- 6.3 The regulations also prescribe that children and young people must be seen at intervals of no more than six weeks thereafter. Of the 13 new cases, 12 (92%) were visited at intervals

of not more than six weeks which significantly exceeds the national average of 63%. This again reflects a strong performance and an appropriate visiting regime to monitor the welfare of children and young people in private fostering arrangements.

7. Raising Awareness of Private Fostering

7.1 Studies show that local councils are often not notified about private fostering arrangements, despite this being an offence under the Children Act 1989. When they are notified, it is nearly always after the fostering has started.

7.2 As part of its statutory function of awareness-raising, the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board (CHSCB) led a campaign on private fostering across Hackney in Spring 2015 - supported by a detailed communications strategy; the actions from which are set out in Appendix 1.

7.3 During 2014/15, Hackney's poster and leaflets on private fostering for professionals, parents and carers and young people were updated and continue to be distributed on a regular basis to a wide range of relevant groups including schools, GPs, children's centres, faith groups, housing offices and libraries (*See Annex 1 for a list of organisations sent letter from Independent Chair, posters and leaflets*).

<http://www.chscb.org.uk/news/story/117/2015-04-01/private-fostering-are-you-aware>

7.4 Particular attention has been applied by the Community Partnership Advisor for the CHSCB engaging with specific communities and faith groups given historically low numbers of arrangements arising from these communities. These are set out in Appendix 1 and numbers will be monitored during 2015/16.

8. Assurance

8.1 To further increase awareness of private fostering and to obtain descriptive statistical information, an annual assurance survey was designed and administered to primary and secondary schools in the City of London and Hackney.

8.2 The purpose of this survey was to prompt schools to reflect on their pupil population and confirm their awareness of any existing private fostering arrangements. Despite the survey being distributed twice via the Hackney Learning Trust and publicity material being sent to schools with a covering letter from the Independent Chair, the response rate was poor and not enough to provide any additional intelligence to the CHSCB.

8.3 Going forward, the CHSCB are considering alternative ways to engage schools which is likely to include a more focussed set of questions on private fostering in the forthcoming *Section 157/ 175 audit* of schools scheduled for 2016 and discussions are ongoing about how the admissions process for schools might also help with identification.

9. Training and Development

9.1 Lunchtime seminars for Children's Social Care staff on private fostering continue to take place on a quarterly basis, and multi-agency private fostering training events are organised through City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board.

9.2 Private fostering is also included in the introductory safeguarding course. Targeted work has also been undertaken with specific groups e.g. Somalia parents and other community groups through the work of the Community Partnership Advisor.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 Over 2014/15, there has been increase in the number of private fostering arrangements identified and whilst encouraging, Hackney CYPS and the CHSCB remain clear about the need to continue to raise the awareness of this important matter and seek to increase notifications. This is reflected in the CHSCB plan for Private Fostering awareness, which outlines a step-by-step targeted approach over 2014-16.
- 10.2 On notification, there is evidence of a robust response from Hackney CYPS to the assessment and monitoring of children and young people in private fostering arrangements, seen through the strong performance in terms of initial and follow up visits.
- 10.3 Private fostering is a key area of focus for the CHSCB and one of the challenges faced is to keep this issue high on the agenda amongst an ever-growing range of demands placed on front-line staff. Increasing the profile and awareness of private fostering across communities and professionals will continue over the course of next year, with a focus on trying to make the invisible visible through targeted activity with specific communities and groups reflecting the diverse demographics within Hackney itself.

Annex 1

Promotion of Public and Professional Awareness

No	Activity	RAG	Planned Action
1	Meeting between Leethen Bartholomew, Faeza Sayegh & Deborah Ennis to discuss private fostering campaign / communication strategy	Completed: meeting took place on 18/6/14	Meeting to review actions undertaken thus far and plan new steps if required March 2016
2	Leaflets/Posters to be sent to all schools, children centres and nurseries	Completed: Material sent with covering letter from independent chair	Repeat - April 2016
3	Leaflets/posters to be sent to GPs	Completed: Material sent with covering letter from independent chair	Repeat - April 2016
4	Leaflets/posters to be sent to CAFCASS	Completed: Material sent with covering letter from independent chair	Repeat - April 2016
5	Leaflets/posters to be sent to Probation Service/CRC	Completed: Material sent with covering letter from independent chair	Repeat - April 2016
6	Leaflets/posters to be sent to Young Hackney Hubs	Completed: Material sent with covering letter from independent chair	Repeat - April 2016
7	Leaflets/posters to be sent to Citizen Advice Bureau, Housing and Libraries	Completed: Material sent with covering letter from independent chair	Repeat - April 2016
8	Twitter message to be sent out by Communication Team with link to CHSCB website	Completed: Sent out on 11/4/15 with link to CHSCB bit.ly/1z1tk8C	Repeat - April 2016
9	All Hackney staff to receive information via Staff Headlines with a link to the leaflets	Completed: 15/4/15 http://staffnews.hackney.gov.uk/15-april-2015/headlines/safeguarding-is-everyones-responsibility-things-you-should-know	Repeat - April 2016
10	Update CHSCB website with new leaflets	Completed http://www.chscb.org.uk/content/111/	To be reviewed by April 2016

11	Update LBH website with new leaflets	Completed http://www.hackney.gov.uk/sf-cypf-fostering-private.htm	To be reviewed by April 2016
12	Young Hackney website updated with information for children and young people	Completed: http://www.younghackney.org/support/looked-after-children-and-young-people/private-fostering2.php	To be reviewed by April 2016
13	Social workers in Schools project to be provided with extra leaflets/posters to target staff with the aim to increase notifications	Completed: Material provided to Faeza Sayegh, CSC private fostering lead	To be reviewed by April 2016 as project may have ended.
14	Leaflets/posters to be distributed at CHSCB conference	Completed: Conference to be held on 8/5/15	Next staff conference will be May 2016
15	Hackney Learning Trust to consider Admissions process to improve PF identification.	Completed: Rory McCallum to discuss with Paul Kelly week beginning 20/4/15	
16	Article to be distributed in HCVS weekly newsletter Leaflets and posters sent to Hackney CVS	Completed: week beginning 20/4/15 Material sent with covering letter from independent chair	Repeat - April 2016
17	Private fostering lunchtime seminar	To be held on 21/10/15	New dates to be confirmed by April 2016
18	Survey to be emailed to all head teachers (primary & secondary)	Completed: Safeguarding in Education Team to arrange for email to be distributed following discussion between Paul Kelly and Rory McCallum Survey resent to head teachers via Hackney Learning Trust bulletin	This to be reviewed as it is envisaged that instead of undertaking a survey the requested information is included in the 157 & 175 audit.

19	Private fostering leaflets to be shared with Interlink to explore if they are suitable for the Orthodox Jewish community. If unsuitable then the content will need to be amended and possibly translated to Yiddish and/or Hebrew	Completed: Email sent to Interlink 23/4/15 to seek their advice.	No further action required.
20	Leaflets and posters sent to Interlink	Completed: Material sent on 30/4/15 with covering letter from independent chair (more to be sent once more copies of leaflet printed)	Repeat - April 2016
21	Interlink training to Orthodox Jewish community to include private fostering within the content of the training to be delivered.	Completed: Email from lead trainer Nava Kestenbaum on 30/4/15 confirming this. This to be followed up by QA the training presentation.	This action to be continued.
22	Leaflets and posters sent to Hackney CVS	Material sent with covering letter from independent chair	Repeat - April 2016
23	Presentation delivered to designated safeguarding leads for schools.	Completed: Presentation delivered by Rory McCallum at HLT on 11/6/15	Repeat - April 2016
24	Leaflets distributed at HLT head teachers forum	Completed: Leaflets distributed by Leethen Bartholomew	Repeat - April 2016
25	Leaflets distributed to Orthodox Jewish schools	Completed: Leaflets posted.	Repeat - April 2016
26	Leaflets distributed to North London Muslim Community Centre	Completed: Leaflets posted.	Repeat - April 2016
27	Awareness event with Somali parents in partnership with Family Action	Completed: 5/5/15	Further awareness with Congolese and Vietnamese parents to be undertaken April 2016.