



Achieving for Children (AfC)

Private Fostering Annual Report April 2024- March 2025

Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames
London Borough of Richmond
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead



1. Terms of reference

A 'privately fostered' child means a child or young person under 16 years (or under 18 years if they are disabled) who is being cared for and is living with someone who is not their parent or close relative and who doesn't have parental responsibility. This arrangement is not one the local authority is a party to but is a private arrangement made between the parent and the carer. The arrangement is only private fostering if the child has been living with the carer for more than 28 consecutive days.

In December 2015 the Department of Education ceased the Private Fostering data collection and were clear that Local Authorities were expected to continue to collect the data and:

- Provide a written report each year, for consideration by the Director of Children's Services, which includes an evaluation of the outcomes of its work in relation to privately fostered children within its area.
- Report annually to the chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board on how it satisfies itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in this area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, including how it co-operates with other agencies in this regard.

2. Methodology

We have deliberately provided data on all three local authority areas in this one report because of the very small private fostering numbers and the opportunity it provides to benchmark performance and practice and identify areas for development in each area. We keep monthly data on the number of private fostering arrangements in Kingston & Richmond (K&R).

3. Key findings

- The ongoing Ukrainian war has continued to see referrals for considerations of Ukrainian unaccompanied minors potentially moving to our three local authority areas with linked sponsors; however this has not significantly changed the private fostering numbers and we have seen a decrease in assessment requests through the Home Office the longer the war has continued. Currently there are 2 cases of Ukrainian minors living with private fostering carers/sponsors in Kingston, 1 under assessment in Richmond and 0 in Windsor and Maidenhead. We are closely monitoring this situation and following government guidance on this matter.
- Briefing the SPA teams in both areas has given us confidence that potential private fostering arrangements where there are already safeguarding concerns are being identified. There is a clear flowchart which outlines responsibility for the assessment and then monitoring of potential private fostering arrangements. Agencies are now always questioned about whether the child is living with a parent/close relative at the point of referral.

- We still need partners within Local Safeguarding Partnerships to support awareness raising with all key agencies. We have therefore updated private fostering leaflets and developed a one minute guide. We have shared these with partners to pass on to health settings for example: GP surgeries and both private and state schools. We have backed this up by offering sessions for designated teachers, school nurses and health visitors.

4. What is working well?

Finding 1: Work with schools has successfully raised awareness of private fostering arrangements and is evidenced in the number of calls from schools.

School heads were all briefed to make sure their awareness of private fostering remains high. Letters were sent out to all primary, secondary and independent schools in all three boroughs on 26.03. 2025 reminding schools of their responsibility to refer in any situations which could possibly involve private fostering. We created new elearning content on private fostering which was sent out to schools. Schools can also invite the fostering service to staff meetings to discuss what is Private Fostering and for Q&A sessions. Private fostering awareness sessions were booked online for all three local authority areas for

- 23/07/2025 at 3pm - <https://afcservices.org.uk/T263342>
- 30/09/2025 at 1pm - <https://afcservices.org.uk/T263343>
- 11/11/2025 at 5pm - <https://afcservices.org.uk/T263344>

Finding 2: Provision of advice and guidance is now more widely available across all three local authorities and LSCBs.

Information on all three local authority websites about private fostering is comprehensive and both LSCB's have an annual conversation about better promotion of private fostering although there is little funding or capacity to do more than targeted mailings to schools.

We also created a new template for a Private Fostering Assessments with discrete sections for parent/carer/child /young person's views and agreement to the arrangement. Both operational areas have a Private Fostering Lead whose role is to make contact with schools and the leads have also arranged Awareness Training sessions.

Information sessions have continued through this year period in both operational areas, offering outreach sessions with teams.

Finding 3: File audits have indicated that there are good working relationships between the private carer, children and Supervising Social workers.

The private fostering assessments are undertaken by a social worker from the Fostering Service. Careful consideration is given to person/s who have Parental responsibility and their ability to exercise this while their child is in a private fostering arrangement. The supervising social workers meet with the private foster carers and child/ren once every 6 or 12 weeks as needed or more frequently if needed. The supervising social workers meet with the child/ren alone to get a clearer understanding of their experiences

In the London Borough of Richmond we oversaw a total of 3 children subject to private fostering arrangements including under the Ukrainian scheme between April 2024 and March 2025, with 1 assessment completed during this period and another underway. File audit identified that the private foster felt very supported by AfC and that all processes were followed correctly. The private foster is glad they are able to offer care to a child through the difficult circumstances going on in their home country of Ukraine.

In the Royal Borough of Kingston we oversaw a total of 7 children subject to private fostering arrangements including under the Ukrainian scheme between April 2024 and March 2025, with 2 assessments completed during this period. We audited files and themes that have emerged included; social workers can talk knowledgeably about the carer and their family, positive relationship between Fostering Social workers and children placed under private fostering arrangements and we are able to make contact with parent/s.

In the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead we oversaw 3 private fostering arrangements during this time period, this includes 1 Ukrainian Private Fostering arrangement. A file audit is due to be completed on the current arrangements as they have now reached 6 months since assessment, and we will follow usual processes regarding this. For the Ukrainian case that has since closed an audit found that the private foster carer who is caring for the Ukrainian young person has felt supported by their supervising social worker who they have needed advice from regarding financial support, delegated authority and options for the young person when they turn 18 years old.

5. What are we worried about?

Finding 1: Despite increased awareness raising and more notifications than last year the total number of private fostering arrangements have remained low in the last 12 months.

- The number of notifications of private fostering arrangements in Windsor & Maidenhead was two through the year which is the same as last year.
- The number of notifications of private fostering arrangements in Richmond was 4 through the year (0 the previous year).
- The number of notifications of private fostering arrangements in Kingston was 6 through the year (4 the previous year).

Finding 2: Awareness raising campaigns need to be carefully targeted.

AfC has limitations in its capacity to promote awareness raising about private fostering with partners across the three local authority areas. AfC therefore needs to identify and target specific areas e.g. summer schools whilst focusing on more rigorous questioning of whether a child could be in a private fostering arrangement at the SPAMASH enquiry stage.

Finding 3: The Ukrainian crisis may lead to an increase in private fostering arrangements and additional assessment and monitoring resource may be required

We were notified of Ukrainian children placed in a private fostering arrangement in the period April 2024- March 2025. We have shared letters with the homes for Ukraine scheme team, to share with the current households, should there be situations where parents have had to leave the children with the sponsors. The letter provides information on how to reach out and the support we can provide.

6. Recommendations and what needs to happen in 2025-26

Outcome 1: Increase activity to raise awareness about private fostering

Action	Lead name and designation	By:
Lin Ferguson and Ian Dodds to send out letters to all primary, secondary and independent schools reminding them of their private fostering responsibilities.	Matthew Edwards, AD for Provider Services	Letters and new pamphlets to be sent out to all schools in January 2026

We will continue to offer on-line awareness raising sessions with both Private Fostering leads in both operational areas.	Fostering Registered Managers to agree three dates for schools to be offered online training between April 2025 and March 2026.	Three new sessions to be booked by January 2025 and take place between April 2025 and March 2026.
Attend Safeguarding Partnerships in both operational areas to discuss promotion of private fostering.	Matthew Edwards, AD for Provider Services	Matthew Edwards attends these on an annual basis.

Outcome 2: Enable practitioners to appropriately identify private fostering arrangements

Action	Lead name and designation	By:
Private Fostering champions in both OA2 and OA1 areas to follow up with visits to schools, family centers etc particularly where SPA teams identify that extra awareness raising is required.	Pravahsani Naicker and Hannah Leedham to identify who will undertake this work from within their fostering teams. Katrin Sandhaus is now the designated lead in Ops 1 and Angela Burkinshaw in Ops 2.	Ongoing. A quarterly meeting will take place between the private fostering leads and the SPA in both areas to pick up any trends or issues around Private Fostering identification and referrals

Outcome 3: Audit of all new Private Arrangements

Action	Lead name and designation	By:
Branch managers to conduct six monthly audits of all current private fostering arrangements. All new arrangements to be audited within three months of commencement.	Natalie Bugeja, Head of Fostering Matthew Edwards	Reviews of audits to take place in September 2025, Jan 2026 and April 2026

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