

JUNE 2007



A Service of
Foster Care Link (FCL)
Ofsted and Pan-London Consortium Approved Agency

www.islamicfostering.co.uk

Islamic Fostering Service Update Bulletin

السلام عليكم
Arabic: Peace Be With You

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**Our Referrals
Line is
020 7923
0330**

The Facts:

- 20 months were spent on development before launching our service in April 2004
- Consultations were held with BAAF, Islamic community leaders and leading senior consultant social workers to develop the service
- Unique policies and procedures govern the work of the agency with respect for diversity at the core
- We are an organisation committed to quality in child centred provision, and strive to work to best practice guidelines

Recognition of our Achievements with National Award!

At a ceremony in London's Mayfair, the Islamic Fostering Service beat competition from organisations across the UK to win the Uthman Dan Fodio Award for Excellence in Community Development at 'The Muslim News Awards for Excellence' event held on April 4 2007.

The award was sponsored by the Department of Communities and Local Government, and was presented by the Director General of the Department, Ms Susan Scholefield. The chief guest at the awards ceremony was Hillary Benn MP, Secretary of State for International Development.

The Islamic Fostering Service was established in 2002, after Ismail Amaan and Munaf Zeena realised that most Muslim children entering the care system were being placed with non-Muslim foster families, and therefore losing links with their culture, faith and heritage. They are committed to the promotion of fostering in



the Muslim community and have worked in partnership with 11 local authorities and helped place over 50 Muslim children within Muslim homes to date.

In the joint statement, the Directors stated that this was "an excellent achievement for the organisation". They added that "it is testament to all the hard work that has been put into the organisation over the last five years not only by us, but also by our highly committed and dedicated staff team. The Muslim News Awards is a

community event, and this award is recognition of the importance the Muslim community places on same faith placements. We therefore particularly thank those local authorities that have worked closely with us to understand and meet the particular needs of Muslim children".

The Muslim News Awards for Excellence is held annually to highlight the achievements of the Muslim community within the UK, with a total of thirteen awards in different categories.

CSCI Rates Service Highly

In our latest inspection which took place in late 2006, we have received a quality rating of "good". Care providers can be rated poor, adequate, good

or excellent by the Commission. After a detailed inspection, the team at Foster Care Link are very pleased with the "good" rating which is difficult

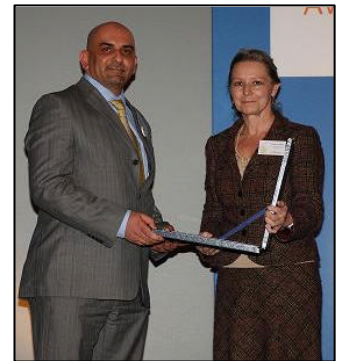
to achieve. The Inspector added that the agency has "a good track record of providing placements that help to achieve positive stability and outcomes for the fostered children and young people."



Message from MCB Secretary General to FCL

Message from Dr Abdul Bari, Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain (MCB): "Islam has strongly advised Muslims to foster children in need and look after them properly, taking its cue from the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who was himself fostered in early childhood according to Makkan custom, although his mother was still alive. At a later period, he treated his foster mother, Halima, with the highest esteem. As Muslims, we are enjoined to treat fostered

children in our care with the best of kindness and love, to be raised in the same way as one's biological children. Increasingly in our socially and economically chaotic world, there is genuine concern that many of our Muslim children will grow up without basic Islamic background and insight, a malaise which the Islamic Fostering Service seeks to redress. The Muslim Council of Britain lends its full support to the endeavours of the Islamic Fostering service and its outreach facility that will provide a much needed resource for the community at large and particularly those children that have sadly lost their natural parents."



Munaf Zeena receiving Muslim News Award from Ms Scholefield, Director of the DCLG Government Department



The Islamic Fostering Service was launched in April 2004 and offers foster care placements for children aged between 0-18 for short-term, long-term, respite, emergency, pre-adoption and bridging placements.

ments.

Since August 2002 we have been an active voice for promoting fostering issues in the Muslim and mainstream media. Articles on our work have been included in *Vectone Urdu TV*, *Islam Channel*, *Ramadan Radio*, *The London Muslim newspaper*, *Community Care*, *Care and Health*, *Children Now* and other media.

We are constantly working with a network of faith and BME voluntary and community or-

ganisations to promote fostering issues using close links the Directors have built throughout the UK over many years.

As an agency we believe our greatest asset is our diverse pool of carers from many ethnic backgrounds. We therefore ensure that they are well supported with 24 hour access to advice, and regular support and supervision visits. We also have a training programme for all carers that equips them for the fostering task, and through a system of feedback strengthen their skills continuously by offering on-going training. All carers undergo a rigorous checks and assessment procedure before being approved, as is expected by regulations and best practice guidelines.

Most are 2nd generation, and speak fluent English and are fully integrated with British society.

Our website (www.fostercarelink.com) is updated regularly, and has a range of PDF downloads available.

"We are constantly working with a network of faith and BME voluntary organisations to promote fostering"

Foster Care Link is a robust organisation, and we hope that the Islamic Fostering Service will eventually develop to become a national resource especially for multicultural metropolitan areas. However, we believe in expansion without compromise on quality, and will therefore closely monitor all areas of our work to ensure we are meeting our own high internal standards where the voice of the child is always paramount.

Islam in the most misunderstood religion in the West. A religion that teaches peace, tolerance, equality and respect for all is often misrepresented as a faith of violence, misogyny, and oppression.

With regard to the issue of foster care the religion is clear; it is a duty for Muslims to care for those within the community that require this. A complex set of rules



govern "Kafala" - the Shariah defined system of foster

care which literally means "to feed" but is best translated as "foster care". Over 1400 years ago the Prophet Mohammed set the ground rules for the preservation of fostered and adopted children's' identity. They should maintain their family heritage and their family name. He himself fostered young children, and as a child orphan was fostered himself. Throughout his teachings he propounds the rights of looked after children, the need to put in trust their wealth, the duty for the community to parent them and promote their wellbeing. He also warned against those that wished to take advantage of their vulner-

Islam and Foster Care

ability due to their lack of guardianship. For example, he stated that "The home wherein the orphan [child] is ill treated is the worst home on Earth".

Whilst adhering to legislation and working to best practice, Foster Care Link and the Islamic Fostering Service also work to these ethics. It seeks to develop a yet untapped resource; the many caring Muslim families that would potentially foster children first and foremost as an act of compassion for fellow human beings and an act of respect for the guidance and recommendation offered by their Prophet.



Latest News Summary

Preferred Provider Contracts

After attaining Pan London Consortium contractor status, we entered into detailed negotiations with a number of Local Authorities. This has resulted in a formal preferred provider arrangement with two Local Authorities, and an informal arrangement with a third—which is even more important as it serves an inner-London Borough with a high Muslim population. These arrangements mean that the Local Authorities can plan services more efficiently, and offer mutually beneficial working terms.

Midlands Operation

After positive discussions with several Midlands Local Authorities, Foster Care Link is bringing its Islamic Fostering Service to the Midlands. The first of hopefully many carers has already been assessed and approved within the area. Over the next 6 months we hope to recruit more families and expand on this service.

Two New Members Join Staff Team

Over the last few months, we have been fortunate enough to have two additional members of staff joining our staff team.

Khadijah Hoodless is a well experienced social worker with a varied career history, she will now be the lead Assessing Social Worker for the agency. Faiza Zaman is the new Support Worker. She has a career track record in offering support assistance to the vulnerable, and is already a valuable team member.

Best Local Authority Educational Achievement Award for Child

A young person placed with us was awarded a prize as the best educational achiever within looked after children in the Local Authority. Well done to her!

Become Our Partner - Give Muslim Children the Right Start

Since we launched our service in April 2004, we have come a long way. We have had the opportunity to work with fourteen local authorities; with some of these we only provided a service for a few weeks and with others we continue a working partnership that was formed within the first weeks of our launch.

Our proudest moments come when we know our intervention and involve-



ment has changed the life of a young person forever. Our saddest have been when we just couldn't help.

Our journey has taken many twists and turns; we have found homes for children from all across the globe and many who have lived all their lives in our local neighbourhoods.

What can we do to help you? We are asking local authorities to take a proactive step and contact us to discuss how we can work together in true partnership.

The Directors are ready to discuss your needs and to apply innovative thinking and flexibility to ensure that Muslim children and young people are given the right start in life.

We are willing to discuss favourable partnerships that can last long, and work to the best benefit of both parties.

Muslim children have special needs, they need to know their heritage and culture so that they do not grow up confused and without identity. They need direction and focus, and like every other child, they need love. Contact us today.

Testimonials for Our Service

For more testimonials and goodwill messages please see previous additions of our newsletter, below are a few to highlight our reputation in with Local Authorities, who are our main partners:

"... we are satisfied with the service you have recently provided ... we have been impressed with your professionalism and flexibility. At the point of referral and following identification of placement, your agency endeavoured to meet our

requirements. We would have no hesitation in using your services again"

London Borough of Camden

"We have found the staff to be efficient, informative and supportive to the children placed with their carers ... We would have no hesitation about using them in the future"

London Borough of Barnet

"[We] ... would be more than happy to use your agency again and were very satisfied with the service provided"

Surrey County Council

"[Your carers] ... proved to be excellent foster carers and had great genuine interest ... [they were] very proactive in ensuring all the boys needs were met"

London Borough of Newham

Check our website for many more



Frequently Asked Questions (and some you were too polite to ask)

Q. Why is it important to place Muslim children with Muslim families?

A. Islam encompasses many spheres of day-to-day life. Although Muslims vary on their level of practise, all adhere to basic rules. This often includes dietary requirements for Halal meat and ingredients (which effects everyday supermarket products such as bread), Islamic daily *Salaah* prayers, fasting and prayer in the month of *Ramadhan*, after-school Islamic ethics and classical Arabic lessons, preparation for adulthood in understanding dealing with finance and distributing *Zakaat* (giving 2.5% of wealth to charity, a fundamental pillar of Islam). These are just some basic areas covered by Islam. To our carers this comes as second nature, and they impart this knowledge and practice to children on an ongoing basis. It is often understandably difficult for a non-Muslims to deal with these issues other than in a superficial way.

Q. How will you meet the needs for Muslim children differently from existing providers?

A. All of our carers are Muslim. The home environment for children will therefore strongly reflect existing religious practice. Our carers also come from a range of ethnic backgrounds providing appropriate cultural care, though Muslims from diverse backgrounds often share similar cultural practises. One of our Social Workers is also an *Aalim* (qualified Islamic scholar). He therefore has a level of respect from parents of

looked after children, carers and within the Muslim com-



munity in general. This is unique in the sector. Our policies and procedures are also geared towards addressing the very specific needs of the Muslim community.

Q. How do you ensure that the children are not uncomfortably forced into fully practising Islamic rules when they are not used to this?

A. An important part of our training for carers is to understand how to precisely meet the needs of children. This includes never forcing Islamic practice on children, but instead catering for their needs and level of understanding. We educate them on suitably tailoring Islamic education and environment. Our carers vary in their level of practise. Sometimes they need to improve their own practise to 'keep up' with what the child is used to, and sometimes they need to remain flexible and understanding when a child understands only the very basics. We follow the Quranic advice that 'there is no compulsion in religion'. Fundamentally, we ensure that a child feels comfortable within the environment of the carers home as much as possible, and this is closely monitored by our social workers.

Q. How do we know that the best interests of the child in all areas are promoted?

A. Our carers must undergo stringent checks and assessments prior to approval. They are fully trained on an ongoing basis on promoting the interests of children placed. Most of our carers are UK born, and are passionate about providing a home to a Muslim child as an act of brother/sisterhood with fellow Muslims.

The agency as a whole follows comprehensive policies and procedures governing all areas using best practise as the base. We manage many successful

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This newsletter is
available in PDF format
on our website

placements, and have had positive outcomes as can be confirmed through written references provided on request (also see front cover).

Q. Are you an existing Muslim agency re-branded or re-launched?

A. No. We are completely independent of any other agency or provider, and are now the only Muslim provider in the UK. We launched in early 2004 after twenty months of independent consultation and development (commencing late 2002) using leading consultants in the field. To the best of our knowledge, we were the first Islamic agency to be registered with the CSC1. Both Directors of the agency have substantial experience in the Muslim voluntary and community sector of more than fourteen years. It was their vision that drove the establishment of the Islamic Fostering Service.

OUR WEBSITE CONTAINS MANY FACTSHEETS THAT CAN BE DOWNLOADED—VISIT TODAY!