

The Infants' Home, Ashfield

1877 –

Other Names:

- Ashfield Infants' Home
- Sydney Foundling Institution and Home for Destitute Infants

URL: <http://www.theinfantshome.org.au>

Details

The Infants' Home, Ashfield was established in Henry Street, Ashfield in 1877. Previously, it had been located in Stewart Street, Paddington, and known as the Sydney Foundling Hospital. The Infants' Home, Ashfield was a lying-in hospital and pioneered the practice of keeping mothers and babies together after the birth, and helping mothers find work. It also cared for babies without their mothers. From the 1930s it developed nurseries and crèches. It stopped providing residential care in 1972, opting instead to deliver a range of child and family health and welfare programmes.

The Infants' Home Ashfield had its beginnings in 1874, when a group of wealthy women established the Sydney Foundling Institution in Victoria Street, Darlinghurst. In 1875 this institution, then called the Sydney Foundling Hospital, moved to Port View House, Stewart Street, Paddington. The following year, after a £3,000 donation by Thomas Walker, the hospital bought a Gothic house called 'Gorton', in Henry Street, Ashfield. In 1877 the hospital was renamed The Infants' Home, Ashfield.

By 1889 there were 130 babies and 67 mothers in the home.

In 1897 a kindergarten was established on site, to provide stimulation to children aged between three and five and train the mothers in early childhood care.

In 1921, the Infants' Home was granted 5 shillings for every orphan in its care by the State Government. This allowance was extended to a range of private institutions that cared for children.

In 1924, The Infants' Home was incorporated by an Act of Parliament. It operated as a residential care facility, funded by donations and some government grants. The Lady Mayoress of Ashfield, Mrs J Lapish, was a committee member during the 1930s. A long day care centre was established in 1936. In 1937 the Home recorded nil infant mortality, for the first time. In 1965 the crew of the HMAS Sydney adopted The Infants' Home, in memory of the men lost on the HMAS Voyager when it collided with HMAS Melbourne in 1965. In 2012, the Home still enjoyed this support.

In 1972, Ashfield Infants' Home became the first organisation in New South Wales to move from providing residential care for children to supporting families by providing long day care for children aged from birth to five years. In 1974 it began offering family day care in local municipalities and in 1977 it established the Women's and Children's Stress Centre, which in 1984 was named Sydney Hope Family Cottage, named in honour of Sydney Hope, the first baby born at Ashfield. In 2009 it established the SpOT Children's Clinic, offering pathology and occupational therapy to children with additional needs.

By 2010 The Infants' Home Ashfield was a fully-integrated child and family-centred hub and a centre of excellence in the provision of early childhood and family support services.

Gallery



Ashfield Infants' Home

Description: This photo is undated, the date included is an estimate.



The original Gorton House in Ashfield

Description: This is a copy of an image published on the Infants' Home website.



Children at the Infants' Home in the late 1890s

Description: This is a copy of an image published on the Infants' Home website.

More info

Chronology

- Sydney Foundling Institution (May 1874 - October 1874)
 - Sydney Foundling Hospital (1874 - 1877)
- **The Infants' Home, Ashfield (1877 –)**

Related Entries

Related Organisations

- [Tresillian Mothercraft Homes, Royal Society for the Welfare of Mothers and Babies \(1918 - current\)](#)
Tresillian and the Infants' Home, Ashfield were both involved in adoptions. Tresillian cared for babies waiting for adoption.
Date: 1960s -
- [Inspector of Public Charities \(1866 - 1888\)](#)
- [Sydney Female Mission Home \(1873 - 1912?\)](#)
Babies were sometimes placed in The Infant's Home, Ashfield from the Sydney Female Mission Home

Related Legislation

- [Infants' Home, Ashfield Act 1924 \(1924 - current\)](#)

Resources

- Ramsland, John, *Children of the back lanes: destitute and neglected children in colonial New South Wales*, 1986
- Lorne-Johnson, Susan, *Betrayed and forsaken: the official history of the Infants' Home, Ashfield, founded in 1874 as the Sydney Foundling Institution*, 2001
- [Sydney Foundling Institution](#), Australian Town and Country Journal, 4 May 1878
- [Deaconess Institutions](#), Evening News, 3 April 1893

- [*Women's Conference at Sydney: Fifty-Two Societies Represented, Record of Great Social Work*](#), The Mercury, 10 August 1911

Records

For more information and to access your records, follow the links below:

Records

- [The Infants' Home, Ashfield, Records \(1874 - 2002\)](#)
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You can view this page online by visiting <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/entity/the-infants-home-ashfield/>