

SFR 20/2010

6 July 2010

Coverage: England

**Theme: Children,
Education and Skills**

Issued by
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Telephone:
Press Office
020 7925 6789
Public Enquiries
0870 000 2288

Statistician
Graham Knox

Email
info@education.gsi.gov.uk

Internet
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/index.shtml>

PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENTS IN ENGLAND: YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2010

INTRODUCTION

This Statistical First Release (SFR) provides figures on children cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements in England. 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.

This release contains summary information that has been derived from statistical data supplied by the 152 Local Authorities in England. In addition to the figures published in previous years, this is the first time that information on the percentage of arrangements where visits were made within the required timescales is being published due to improvements in the quality of the information reported.

These figures are important because they monitor the impact of the legislative changes in 2005 under which Local Authorities have a duty to promote and encourage notification of private fostering arrangements. However, these figures are believed to be an underestimate of the total number of children in private fostering arrangements. This is because there is doubt over whether all parents, carers and other relevant third parties currently report the existence of these arrangements to their Local Authority. Therefore, some caution should be exercised in the use of the figures.

Comparison to the earlier years can be sourced from SFR 17/2009 which can be found at: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000859/index.shtml>.

KEY POINTS

- At 31 March 2010, 1,590 children were reported as being cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements in England. This compares with 1,530 children reported at 31 March 2009 and 1,330 at 31 March 2008.
- 1,940 new private fostering arrangements began during the year to 31 March 2010, a decrease compared to 1,980 arrangements beginning in the previous year.
- 1,950 private fostering arrangements ended during the year to 31 March 2010, compared to 1,700 arrangements that ended during the year to 31 March 2009.
- Of the 2,040 cases where action was taken in accordance with requirements for carrying out visits, 1,520 (75 percent) were carried out within 7 working days; in 2009 this figure was 77 percent.

Characteristics of privately fostered children who have new arrangements which started during the year ending 31 March 2010

- The percentage of privately fostered children in each age group remained the same in each category as in 2009, the largest group being those aged 10 to 15 (67 percent of privately fostered children).
- 65 percent of privately fostered children were born in the United Kingdom; in 2009 this figure was 66 percent and in 2008 it was 70 percent. The percentage of privately fostered children born in Asia has increased from 12 percent at 31 March 2009 to 14 percent at 31 March 2010.

Percentage of arrangements where visits were made within the required timescales

- 1,940 arrangements began on or after 1 April 2009 and of these 64 percent (1,240) were visited within the required timescales of intervals of not more than six weeks.
- Performance varied across the regions, the East Midlands achieved the highest percentage of visits within the timescales, at 72 percent, and the West Midlands achieved the lowest, at 52 percent.
- 1,470 arrangements were ongoing at the 1 April 2009 and of these 62 percent (910) were visited within the required timescales of intervals of not more than twelve weeks.
- For these ongoing cases, only 46 percent of visits in the South West were at intervals of not more than twelve weeks, compared to 84 percent in the North East.

BACKGROUND

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately for the care of a child under the age of 16 (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. 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 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.

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.

Legislation

The legislation relevant to private fostering is set out in Part 9 of, and Schedule 8 to, the Children Act 1989, as amended by section 44 of the Children Act 2004 which came into effect on 1 July 2005, and regulations made under Part 9 of 1989 Children Act (the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005), which also came into effect on 1 July 2005. Local authorities are required to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are, or will be, privately fostered within their area is being, or will be, satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

TABLES

Table 1	Number of children reported to Local Authorities as being cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements, years ending 31 March 2006 to 2010
Table 2	Number of cases where action was taken in accordance with requirements for carrying out visits, and of those the number carried out within 7 days during year ending 31 March 2010.
Table 3	Number and percentage of new arrangements which started during the year, by age of child as at 31 March 2010 and place of birth.
Table 4	Number and percentage of arrangements where scheduled visits were completed within the timescales, year ending 31 March 2010.

TECHNICAL NOTES

Data

1. The figures in this release are taken from the PF1 statistical return for 2009/10, plus historical figures taken from the collections for 2004/05 to 2008/09. The PF1 return provides DfE with aggregate data on the number of children cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements at 31 March, and the number of new arrangements and the number of arrangements which ceased during the year to 31 March.
2. The figures provided are based on data provided by all 152 Local Authorities. Three of these Local Authorities reported that they had had no private fostering arrangements during the year.
3. Two new questions were introduced in the 2006/07 survey about the percentage of foster placements where visits were made to new arrangements at intervals of not more than 6 weeks, and to existing arrangements of not more than 12 weeks. Doubts over whether the percentages were calculated correctly and the quality of the data submitted in response to these questions resulted in figures not being reported in previous publications. However, for 2009/10, underlying data were collected from which these percentages were calculated which has led to improved accuracy and confidence in the data, therefore we have published the figures in table 4.
4. Provisions on private fostering in the Children Act 2004 and the new Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 came into effect on 1st July 2005 and therefore affect arrangements starting from that date. These measures are designed to strengthen the existing notification scheme for private fostering arrangements. For further details, please refer to the Private Fostering Guidance at: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/datastats1/guidelines/children/returns.shtml#pfr>.
5. A research document funded by DCSF (Research into Private Fostering) was published in March 2010 and can be found at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/projectinformation.cfm?projectId=15688&keyword=229&keywordlist1=0&keywordlist2=0&keywordlist3=0&and=or&type=0&resultpage=1>. The Private Fostering Advisory Group reported in March 2010, in relation to increasing notifications of private fostering. This can be found at: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00707/>.

Revisions

6. There are no planned revisions to this Statistical First Release, however, if at a later date we

need to make a revision this will comply with the Departmental revisions policy which is published at: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/nat-stats.shtml> .

Confidentiality

7. In order to protect individual data, all figures have been rounded to the nearest 10. Numbers from 1-5 inclusive (before rounding) have been suppressed and are shown as crosses. Where any number is shown as zero (0), the original figure submitted was zero. Percentages are shown rounded to whole numbers but where the numerator was five or less or the denominator was 10 or less, they have been suppressed and replaced by a cross. Where a percentage is zero because the number from which that percentage has been calculated is a zero, the percentage is shown as zero.
8. As part of a Government drive for data transparency in official publications. Supporting data for this publication will be made available through the DfE Research and Statistics Gateway at: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000944/index.shtml> in the week commencing 12 July 2010.

National Statistics

9. This is a National Statistics publication. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

ENQUIRIES

Enquiries about the figures contained in this press release should be addressed to:

Children and Early Years Data Unit – Private Fostering
Department for Education
Floor 1 Area I
Mowden Hall
Staindrop Road
Darlington
DL3 9BG
Telephone Number: 01325 392 055
Email: Alison.Butler@education.gsi.gov.uk

Press enquiries should be made to the Department's Press Office at:

Press Office Newsdesk,
Department for Children, Schools and Families
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
LONDON
SW1P 3BT
Telephone Number: 020 7925 6789

Table 1: Number of children reported to Local Authorities as being cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements ^{1,2,3}

Years ending 31 March 2006 to 2010

Coverage: England

numbers ⁴																				
	Number of children under private fostering arrangements at 31 March					Number of new notifications during the year					Number of new arrangements that began during the year					Number of arrangements that ended during the year				
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
England	980	1,250	1,330	1,530	1,590	1,100	1,570	1,790	2,180	2,370	1,100	1,420	1,560	1,980	1,940	730	1,040	1,520	1,700	1,950
Region																				
North East	40	50	60	70	70	60	80	80	80	70	60	80	80	80	70	30	50	70	70	70
North West	80	100	90	160	170	70	90	110	230	250	80	90	90	200	220	60	70	100	160	220
Yorkshire and Humberside	60	70	90	100	130	90	80	120	130	170	90	80	110	110	150	90	60	100	90	140
East Midlands	120	110	110	100	110	120	140	160	170	170	110	130	120	140	120	90	100	120	110	130
West Midlands	60	90	120	170	150	70	120	170	240	210	70	120	160	220	190	50	90	150	190	220
East of England	70	120	140	160	160	90	110	180	240	310	80	110	160	230	230	60	60	150	170	190
London	240	360	370	400	440	240	420	470	400	470	250	340	330	330	360	100	180	310	290	340
South East	170	210	230	220	190	140	260	260	360	340	140	250	290	340	290	80	200	280	340	320
South West	140	140	120	150	190	200	270	240	330	380	220	230	220	340	300	170	230	240	290	320

Source: PF1

1. Where a child has had more than one private fostering arrangement during the year, each arrangement has been counted.
2. Notifications received during the year include private fostering arrangements which may have started before 1 April or were due to start after 31 March. The same applies to notifications of private fostering arrangements coming to an end.
3. Figures across years are not necessarily comparable due to improvements in data collection.
4. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. Regional figures may not sum to the national total due to rounding.

Table 2: Number of cases where action was taken in accordance with requirements for carrying out visits¹, and of those the number that were carried out within 7 days

Year ending 31 March 2010

Coverage: England

numbers and percentages²

	Number of cases where action was taken in accordance with requirements for carrying out visits	Number of cases where this action was taken in accordance with requirements within 7 working days	Percentage of cases where action was taken within 7 working days
England	2,040	1,520	75
Region			
North East	70	60	86
North West	240	150	63
Yorkshire and Humberside	160	130	83
East Midlands	160	120	78
West Midlands	190	130	67
East of England	210	160	77
London	420	330	78
South East	300	220	73
South West	290	220	74

Source: PF1

1. The table displays figures for visits made in accordance with regulation 4 of the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005. Regulation 4 states that where a Local authority has received notification under Regulation 3 they must, within seven working days, visit the proposed private foster carer at the premises where the child will be accommodated and visit and speak to the child.

2. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. Regional figures may not sum to the national total due to rounding.

Table 3: Number and percentage of new arrangements which started during the year, by age of child as at 31 March 2010 and place of birth¹
Year ending 31 March 2010
Coverage: England

						numbers ²
	All children	UK	Europe (other)	Africa	Asia	Other ³
All children	1,940	1,260	190	130	260	100
Under 1	20	20	0	0	x	x
1 - 4	120	90	10	10	x	10
5 - 9	210	130	20	30	20	10
10 - 15	1,300	840	130	70	200	60
16 & over	290	190	40	10	50	10
						percentages
	All children	UK	Europe (other)	Africa	Asia	Other ³
All children	100	65	10	6	14	5
Under 1	1	2	0	0	1	3
1 - 4	6	7	5	7	0	8
5 - 9	11	10	10	27	6	12
10 - 15	67	66	67	58	76	63
16 & over	15	15	18	7	17	14
All ages	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: PF1

1. Where a child has had more than one private fostering arrangement during the year, each arrangement has been counted.
2. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. Regional figures may not sum to the national total due to rounding.
3. Other includes Middle East, Oceania, Canada & USA, Central & South America.
- x. Figures have been suppressed to protect confidentiality.

Table 4. Number and percentage of arrangements where scheduled visits were completed within the timescales¹.

Year ending 31 March 2010

Coverage: England

	numbers and percentages ²			
	Arrangements that began on or after 1 April 2009 where visits were made at intervals of not more than six weeks		Arrangements that began before 1 April 2009 that were continuing on 1 April 2009 where visits were made at intervals of not more than twelve weeks	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
England	1,240	64	910	62
Region				
North East	50	70	60	84
North West	150	70	110	74
Yorkshire and Humberside	90	59	70	65
East Midlands	90	72	60	61
West Midlands	100	52	90	53
East of England	140	60	80	68
London	240	67	250	66
South East	190	64	110	55
South West	200	65	80	46

Source: PF1

1. This table displays information on the follow up visits which have been made by Local Authorities. The minimum number of visits required is at intervals of not more than six weeks in respect of the first year of any private fostering arrangement and at intervals of not more than twelve weeks in respect of the second and any subsequent years of any arrangement.

2. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. Regional figures may not sum to the national total due to rounding.