



Department  
for Education



## Statistical First Release

### Notifications of private fostering arrangements in England: year ending 31 March 2015

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Issued by	Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT
Press office	020 7783 8300
Public enquiries	0370 000 2288
Statistician	Anneka Nelson-Girtchen
Phone	01142 742590
Email	<a href="mailto:Anneka.Nelson-Girtchen@education.gsi.gov.uk">Anneka.Nelson-Girtchen@education.gsi.gov.uk</a>
Internet	<a href="#">Private Fostering Arrangements</a>

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- 1,560** Children 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 reported in these arrangements continue to be London and the South West.
- 2,740** New arrangements reported to have started during the 2015 financial year, an overall increase from 1,420 in 2007.
- 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.
- 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.
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## 1. Background and context

This statistical first release (SFR) provides figures on notifications received by local authorities of children cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements in England.

### Definition of a private fostering arrangement

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. 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. 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.

Please see the accompanying methodology document for further details on the collection process.

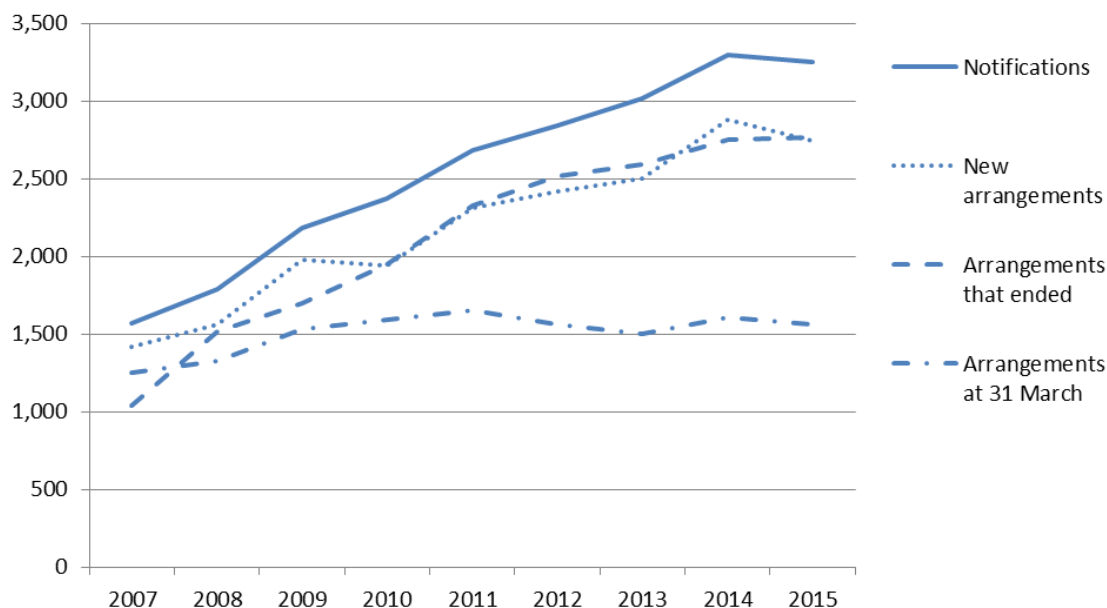
The figures reported in the SFR are believed to be an underestimate of the total number of children in private fostering arrangements as the mechanism relies on self-reporting. Therefore, caution should be exercised in the use of the figures. Further information on the issue of under-reporting can be found in the quality and uses document, which accompanies this SFR and can be found on the publication webpage.

## 2. Notifications and arrangements (Table 1)

3,250 notifications were received	There were 3,250 notifications of new private fostering arrangements received by local authorities in the year ending 31 March 2015, over twice as many as there were in 2007. Note that not all notifications go on to be classified as a private fostering arrangement and there has been a slight decrease in notifications on the previous year.
2,740 new arrangements started	There were 2,740 new arrangements reported to have started during the year ending 31 March 2015, an overall increase from 1,420 in 2007.
Arrangements at 31 March have fluctuated over the past 9 years	The number of arrangements at 31 March has increased from 1,250 in 2007 to 1,560 in 2015. The numbers have fluctuated over the past 9 years but are generally quite stable.

Figure A: Number of notifications, new arrangements, arrangements that ended and arrangements at 31 March from 2007 to 2015

The numbers of notifications and new arrangements have decreased in 2015.



### 3. Action taken in accordance with requirements for carrying out visits (Table 2)

#### Action taken in accordance with requirements

Within seven working days of receipt of notification of a private fostering arrangement, local authorities are required to take action which involves carrying out visits. Action will not be taken if the notification does not meet the requirements of a private fostering arrangement. Further information on the Regulations is in the accompanying methodology document.

Figure B: Numbers and percentages of cases where action was taken within 7 working days

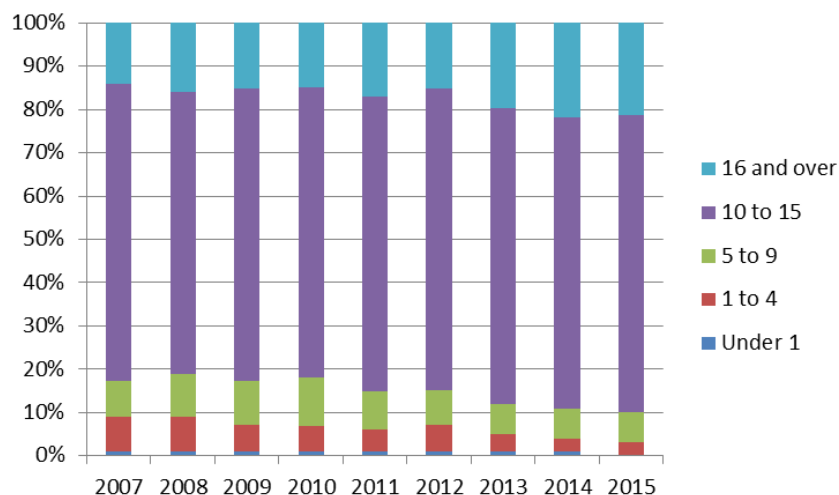
The percentage of cases where action was taken within 7 working days fluctuates over time.

	Action cases	Actioned within 7 working days	%
2007	1,410	970	69
2008	1,600	1,240	78
2009	1,880	1,440	77
2010	2,040	1,520	75
2011	2,420	1,860	77
2012	2,420	1,870	77
2013	2,820	2,020	72
2014	3,060	2,440	80
2015	2,910	2,180	75

#### 4. Characteristics (Table 3)

Figure C: Age breakdown of children reported to have started a new private fostering arrangement during the year, 2007-2015

Majority of children are aged 10 to 15.



**Most are aged 10 to 15** The majority (68%) of children in new private fostering arrangements are aged 10 to 15. This proportion is relatively stable over time: it has varied between a minimum of 65% and a maximum of 69% over the last 9 years. Over time there has been an increase in the number of older children in such arrangements.

**37% born in the UK** 37% of children reported to be in private fostering arrangements were born in the UK. Although this proportion has been declining since 2008, this percentage is very similar to last year (38%).

#### 5. Visits within timescale (Tables 4a and 4b)

##### Regulations for visits

Within the first year of a private fostering arrangement, local authorities are required to make follow-up visits at intervals of not more than 6 weeks. For the second and any subsequent years, visits should be made at intervals of not more than 12 weeks. Further information on the Regulations is in the accompanying methodology document.

**63% visited within 6 weeks** 2,740 arrangements were reported to have started in the year ending 31 March 2015 and, of these, 63% were visited within the required timescale of 6 weeks. This has been fairly stable over the past 6 years, ranging between 63% and 69%.

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68% visited within 12 weeks      1,590 arrangements were reported to be ongoing at the start of the year ending 31 March 2015 and, of these, 68% were visited within 12 weeks. This has been fairly stable over the past 6 years, ranging between 62% and 68%.

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## 6. List of tables

The following tables are available in excel format on the department's statistics website: [Private Fostering Arrangements](#).

- 1 Number of children reported to local authorities as being cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements, years ending 31 March 2007 to 2015
- 2 Number of cases where action was taken in accordance with requirements for carrying out visits and, of those, the number that were carried out within 7 working days, years ending 31 March 2007 to 2015
- 3 Number and percentage of reported new arrangements which started during the year, by age of child as at 31 March and place of birth, years ending 31 March 2007 to 2015
- 4a Number and percentage of reported new arrangements where scheduled visits were completed within 6 weeks, years ending 31 March 2010 to 2015
- 4b Number and percentage of reported ongoing arrangements where scheduled visits were completed in 12 weeks, years ending 31 March 2010 to 2015



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This document is also available from our website at: [Private Fostering Arrangements](#).