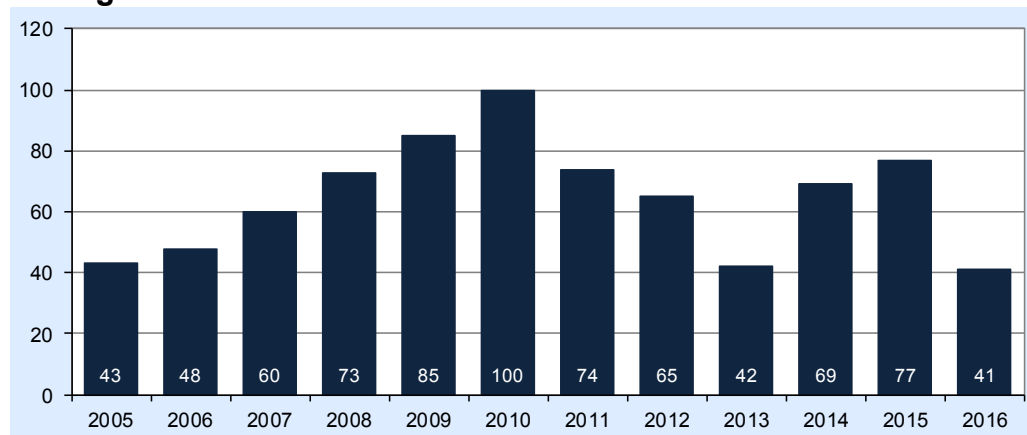


26 October 2016
SFR 147/2016

Private fostering in Wales, 2015-16

This annual Statistics First Release summarises information on private fostering arrangements in Wales. A [private fostering arrangement](#) occurs when a child under 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by an adult, who is not a relative, under a private arrangement between parent and carer that lasts for 28 days or more. This release does not include information on fostering of children looked after by local authorities.

Chart 1: Number of private fostering arrangements reported, year ending 31 March



Source: SSDA904

Key results for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016:

- 41 new private fostering arrangements were reported during the year, compared to 77 in the previous year ([Chart 1](#), [Table 1](#)).
- 38 children received an initial visit from the local authority during the year, 58 per cent of which were within 7 days of the beginning of the fostering arrangement ([Table 1](#)).
- 73 per cent of the children whose private fostering arrangement began in the year were born in the UK and 27 per cent in other countries. 88 per cent were aged 10 or over on 31 March 2016 ([Table 2](#)).

About this release

The release presents key results in Wales for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. All statistics in this release can be regarded as final figures, not subject to further revision or update.

Further information and full details for individual local authorities are published online on [StatsWales](#).

In this release

Private fostering arrangements	2
Notes	3
Key quality information	4

Private fostering arrangements

Private fostering occurs when a child under 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by an adult, who is not a relative, under a private arrangement between parent and carer that lasts for 28 days or more. Private foster carers may be from the child's extended family, eg a cousin or great aunt. However, a person who is a relative as defined under the [Children Act 1989](#), i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, aunt or uncle (whether by full or half blood or by marriage) or a step-parent cannot be a private foster carer. 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. The number of arrangements commencing in 2015-16 decreased compared to previous years.

Local authorities have a duty to promote and encourage notification of private fostering arrangements and also to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children privately fostered is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. These responsibilities include making visits to the children.

Table 1: Private fostering arrangements reported, year ending 31 March

Arrangements	2013 ^(a)	2014	2015	2016
Number of arrangements commencing during the year	42	69	77	41
Number of children with an initial visit during the year	48	68	76	38
Number of visits within 7 working days	39	45	57	22

Source: SSDA905

(a) In 2013, one child had two arrangements.

There were 41 children who received an initial visit from a local authority worker during the year ending 31 March 2016. 58 per cent of visits were within 7 days of the beginning of the fostering arrangement, a decrease of 17 percentage points compared to the year ending 31 March 2015. Arrangements and initial visits may occur in different years, leading to differing totals.

Table 2: Children whose private fostering arrangement started, year ending 31 March

Arrangement	2013	2014	2015	2016
Place of birth of children:				
United Kingdom	30	57	46	30
Elsewhere	11	12	31	11
Total	41	69	77	41
Age of children:				
Under 10 years old	6	22	8	5
10 years old and older	35	47	69	36
Total	41	69	77	41

Source: SSDA904

Of the 41 children whose private fostering arrangements began during the year to 31 March 2016, 30 (73 per cent) were born in the UK, with 11 (27 per cent) being born in other countries.

88 per cent of children were aged 10 or over when their arrangement commenced in the year ending 31 March 2016.

1. Notes

1. This is the fourth 'Private Fostering in Wales' statistical release to be published, the first having been published on 23 October 2013.
2. Information on the numbers of children publically fostered by local authorities can be obtained from the Statistical Release on looked after children, the latest edition of which was published on 5 October 2016.
[SDR 132/2016, Adoptions, Outcomes and Placements for Children Looked After by Local Authorities, Wales, 2015-16.](#)
3. There are no planned revisions to the data in this release.

1.1 Data collection

All references made to 'year' relate to the standard financial year which runs from 1 April to 31 March (for example 2015-16 should be understood as 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016).

The data on private fostering were supplied to the Data Collection team within the Welsh Government by the 22 local authorities in Wales on the SSDA904 form. The form applies an extensive series of validation checks to ensure that the information provided is accurate and consistent.

2. Key Quality Information

This section provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability.

2.1 Relevance

The statistics are used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor private fostering trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some of the key users may be:

- Ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales;
- Local authorities;
- The third sector (e.g. charities);
- The Department for Health and Social Services in the Welsh Government;
- Other areas of the Welsh Government;
- The research community;
- Students, academics and universities;
- Individual citizens and private companies.

The statistics may also be useful for other UK governments

- The Northern Ireland Executive's Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
- The Scottish Government, Analytical Services Division
- The Department for Education in England.

These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of these are:

- advice to Ministers;
- local authority comparisons and benchmarks;
- to inform the social services policy decision-making process in Wales;
- to inform the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales.

2.2 Accuracy

The data on private fostering may be an underestimate of the total number of children in private fostering arrangements as there is doubt over whether all parents, carers and other relevant third parties currently report the existence of these arrangements to the local authority. However, the figures may still be used to monitor local authority performance in visiting children.

Every year the data are collected from the same source (the SSDA904 data collection return) and adhere to the national standards and guidance, thus ensuring coherence within and across organisations.

Statisticians within the Welsh Government review the data and query any anomalies with local authorities between submissions to ensure coherence of the data received, and before tables are published. The figures in this release reflect the final position of the 2015-16 financial year and are correct as at 31 March 2016.

2.3 Timeliness and punctuality

The Data Collection team within the Welsh Government collected data, for the financial year 2015-16, between May and July 2016. Data in this release refers to final 2015-16 data. This release was published in October 2016, meeting the planned date of publication.

2.4 Accessibility and clarity

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics section of the Welsh Government website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables on [StatsWales](#), a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download data.

2.5 Comparability and coherence

Statistics collected in each United Kingdom country may differ and the detailed guidance available from each country's website should be consulted before using these statistics as comparative measures. Related publications for the UK can be found at:

England

From 2016 England no longer publish and collect statistics on notifications of private fostering arrangements. Instead they intend to gather information on private fostering through the existing annual children in need census. More information can be found here:

[Private fostering arrangement notifications: planned revisions](#)

Scotland

The Scottish Government do not collect information on private fostering arrangements in Scotland.

Northern Ireland

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public safety does not produce statistics relating to private fostering arrangements in Northern Ireland.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act sets out significant changes in policy, which in turn will have an effect on the current national social services data collections. In order to understand and develop requirements in relation to these changes, the Welsh Government set up the Social Services Technical Information Network in November 2014. The Network includes representation from the Welsh Local Government Association, Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru, Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales and Welsh Government.

The Network has reviewed all of the national social services data returns submitted by local authorities and requirements for data have been developed in line with the implementation of the Act. From April 2016, local authorities are required to collect the performance measures detailed in the Code of Practice in relation to social services performance issued under the Act.

[New forms – Local authority social services data collections](#)

2.6 Further information

Further information is available for other Personal Social Services statistical releases on the [Welsh Government website](#):

2.7 Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on indicators and associated technical information - [How do you measure a nation's progress? - National Indicators](#)

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

Further details

The document is available at: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/private-fostering/?lang=en>

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to stats.pss@wales.gsi.gov.uk .

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