

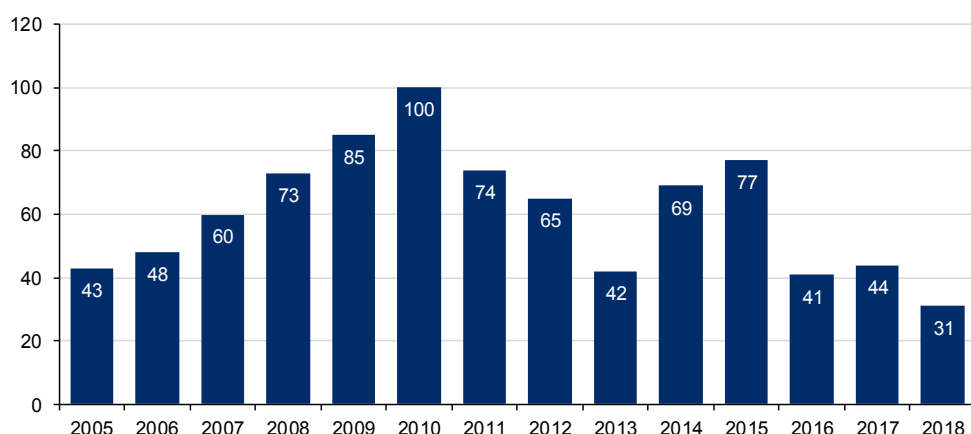
## Experimental statistics: Private Fostering in Wales, 2017-18

17 October 2018  
SFR 93/2018

This annual 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.

Compared to previous publications, some information is not available for 2016-17 onwards due to a change in source following commencement of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. See the [Key quality information](#) section for more information about the data.

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



Source: Children receiving care and support aggregate forms

### Key results for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018:

- The number of arrangements reported fluctuates over time. The numbers had increased steadily to 2010 but have since fallen overall.
- 31 new private fostering arrangements were reported during the year, compared to 44 in the previous year ([Chart 1](#), [Table 1](#)).
- 15 children received an initial visit from the local authority within 7 working days of notification of the beginning of the private fostering arrangement ([Table 1](#)).
- 29 private fostering homes were known to local authorities at 31 March 2018. ([Table 1](#))

### About this release

This release presents the key results in Wales for the year 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

The release provides information on the activity of local authority social services in relation to private fostering.

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

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## 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.

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 (a)**

Arrangements	2017	2018
Number of notifications of a child being privately fostered received during the year	44	31
Number of visits that were within 7 working days of notification of the beginning of the private fostering arrangement	36	15
Number of notifications of the end of a private fostering arrangement received during the year	40	31
Number of private fostering homes known to the local authority at 31 March	28	29

Source: Children receiving care and support aggregate form

There were 31 new private fostering arrangements which were reported during the year ending 31 March 2018, compared to 44 in the previous year. 15 children received an initial visit from a local authority worker within 7 working days of notification of the beginning of the private fostering during the year. Arrangements and initial visits may occur in different years, leading to differing totals.

**Table 2: Number of notifications of a child being privately fostered received during the year, by age of child at 31 March**

Age	2017	2018
Aged Under 1	0	0
Aged 1-4	1	3
Aged 5-9	4	2
Aged 10-15	37	25
Aged 16 and over	2	1
<b>All Ages</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>31</b>

Source: Children receiving care and support aggregate form

Of the 31 children under private fostering arrangements which were reported during the year, 84 per cent of children were aged 10 or over at 31 March 2018. There were no notifications of a child being fostered under the age of one.

There were 29 private fostering homes known to local authorities at 31 March 2018.

## Notes

This is the sixth 'Private Fostering in Wales' statistical release to be published, the first having been published on 23 October 2013. Compared to previous editions, some information is not available for 2016-17 onwards due to a change in source following commencement of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act came into effect on 6 April 2016. It is the new legal framework that brings together and modernises social services law in Wales. The Act changes the way people's needs are assessed and the way services are delivered.

From 6 April 2016, local authorities are expected to collect and return data on the activities of children's social services based on new reporting requirements developed in line with the implementation of Act. This release examines key findings for 2017-18 and is intended to provide a summary of activity during the year.

These statistics are published as experimental statistics reflecting the scale of change continuing to happen in social services and ongoing system changes. More information on the designation of these statistics can be found in the [correspondence between the Welsh Government and the Office for Statistical Regulation](#).

Information on the numbers of children publically fostered by local authorities can be obtained from the Statistical Release on [Children looked after by local authorities](#).

## Future developments

Data requirements in relation to measuring the impact that the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act is having on people who need care and support and carers who need support are currently being reviewed. It is intended that new data will be developed for the 2020-21 reporting year.

## 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 and coherence.

### Relevance

The statistics will be 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 are:

- Ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales
- the Department for Health and Social Services in the Welsh Government
- other areas of the Welsh Government
- local authorities
- the third sector (e.g. charities)

- 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 the uses include:

- Advice to Ministers
- To inform the social services policy decision-making process in Wales
- Local authority analysis
- To inform the Care Inspectorate Wales
- To assist in research on private fostering.

## **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.

The Welsh Government worked with local authorities to collect statistics on the activities of private fostering through the [Children receiving care and support](#) return. 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. Data adhere to the national standards and guidance, thus ensuring coherence within and across organisations. Local authorities are expected to comply with the guidance notes for completion that accompany the data collection form.

The figures in this release reflect the final position of the 2017-18 data year, and are correct as at 31 March 2018. Extensive quality assurance was undertaken with local authorities.

Occasionally, revisions can occur due to errors in our statistical processes or when a data supplier notifies the Welsh Government that they have submitted incorrect information. In these cases, a judgement is made as to whether the change is significant enough to publish a revised statistical release. Where changes are not deemed to be significant, figures will be corrected if they appear in future releases. However minor amendments to the figures may be reflected in the StatsWales tables prior to the next release.

## **Timeliness and punctuality**

The Data Collection team within the Welsh Government collected data, for the year 2017-18 i.e. from 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018, between May and July 2017. Data in this release refers to final 2017-18 data. Once submitted data has been validated, this release is drafted and published

as soon as possible. This release was published in October 2018, meeting the planned date of publication.

### **Accessibility and clarity**

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics and Research 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.

### **Comparability and coherence**

2017-18 is the second year of collecting and reporting on data derived from the [Children receiving care and support](#) return. This statistical release provides figures at Wales level. Further information for individual local authorities is available on [StatsWales](#). To ensure that the national data are comparable and consistent, local authorities are expected to comply with the guidance notes for completion that accompany the data collection form.

Data on private fostering arrangements has been published previously based on the Children's services: Performance management (PM1) data collection. Results are largely comparable however some information is no longer collected and reported. Not all the results are comparable for 2016-17 onwards as the collection guidance refers to the more recent Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) (Wales) Regulations 2006.

From 2016, the Department of Education no longer publish statistics on notifications of private fostering arrangements and have closed the private fostering data collection for local authorities in England. The Scottish Government do not collect information on private fostering arrangements in Scotland. The Department of Health, Social Services and Public safety does not produce statistics relating to private fostering arrangements in Northern Ireland.

### **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 the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

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: <https://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/private-fostering/?lang=en>

Data at local authority level is available on [StatsWales](#).

Further information is available in other Social Services statistical releases on the Welsh Government website via the [social services theme page](#).

## Next update

October 2019 (Provisional)

## We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to [stats.pss@gov.wales](mailto:stats.pss@gov.wales).

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