

From: Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Children's and Young People's Cabinet Committee – 29 November 2022

Subject: Private Fostering Annual Report 2021-2022

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: The report is published on the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership website.

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This annual report provides an overview of referrals, assessment and support of privately fostered children who were referred to Kent Local Authority; alongside compliance with national minimum standards (including awareness raising) for the year April 2021 to end March 2022.

Recommendation(s):

The Committee is asked to note the content of the report so that it may be informed of matters impacting on privately fostered children.

1. Introduction

1.1 The annual report sets out the Local Authority's private fostering activity over the year 2021-2022.

2. Body of the report

2.1 The report sets out the Local Authority's awareness raising activity; private fostering numbers by distribution of age, gender, nationality and vulnerability (children subject to Child in Need Plans and Child Protection Plans); and the quality assurance of private fostering work. This includes the relevant history and detail, such as all options considered and dismissed, and associated risk.

2.2 The report highlights Ofsted's positive review of Kent's private fostering processes and oversight, as inspected according to the ILACS framework in May 2022.

2.3 Finally, the report discusses the impact of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme on private fostering numbers currently, highlighting the potentials that numbers of unaccompanied Ukrainian children may increase in the future. These children will be subject to private fostering regulations until they are 18 years old, 2 years longer than other privately fostered children.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 There are no specific financial implications discussed in the report in respect of private fostering.

4. Legal implications

4.1 The Local Authority maintains a duty under s44 of the Children Act 2004 (amendment to s67(1) Children Act 1989) to satisfy themselves the welfare of privately fostered children in their area is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

5. Equalities implications

5.1 Privately fostered children from the UK and other countries receive the same level of service provision.

6. Other corporate implications

6.1 Unaccompanied children under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme would be entitled to education and health provision.

7. Governance

7.1 There are no specific governance issues raised. Statutory responsibilities remain within Integrated Children's Services and case held by the Children's Social Work Service.

8. Conclusions

8.1 The data highlights a reduction in the number of privately fostered children but a return to pre-pandemic ratios in terms of nationalities and gender observed in previous years.

8.2 There are indications Private Fostering awareness increased through extensive promotion. This focus is to continue this year with training for Integrated Children's Services, as well as multi-agency partners to ensure referrals are made and private fostering arrangements are assessed.

8.3 Practice improved, as evidenced by audit gradings and Ofsted's findings. This suggests there is closer monitoring of Private Fostering arrangements. Good practice is highlighted and shared within bi-monthly forums and information is

disseminated to districts, building a culture of interest, enthusiasm, and best practice across the county.

8.4 The positive work identified by Ofsted will continue.

9. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

The Committee is asked to note the content of the report so that it may be informed of matters impacting on privately fostered children.

10. Background Documents

10.1 Kent County Council's Private Fostering Annual Report 2021-2022 is included with this document

11. Contact details

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