

Kent County Council Private Fostering Annual Report April 2023- March 2024



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report is a statutory requirement laid down in the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering (July 2005). It provides an overview of referrals, assessment and support of privately fostered children referred to Kent Local Authority from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, and awareness raising with the multi-agency partnership.
- 1.2 A Private Fostering arrangement is one 'made privately (without the involvement of a Local Authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled or under Homes for Ukraine Scheme) by someone other than a parent or close relative i.e., a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, or aunt, whether of full or half blood or by marriage, or a stepparent. This is with the intention it should last for 28 days or more. 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 are being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

2. Private Fostering Staffing Structure

- 2.1 Kent's Private Fostering work is undertaken within the Children's Social Work Service (CSWS), with the responsibility of assessment and support of privately fostered children sitting with district Children's Social Work Teams (CSWT's). To ensure appropriate oversight and safety of the Private Fostering arrangement, the Service Manager of the relevant CSWS approves Private Fostering assessments - the Private Fostering Arrangement Assessment Record (PFAAR) - following completion of statutory checks.
- 2.2 To support the consistency and quality of this work, Kent has a network of Private Fostering Leads (Social Workers, Senior Practitioners or Team Managers) and Business Support Leads across the county. They provide support, advice and guidance to Social Workers, as well as raise awareness and share good practice and learning within their districts. In October 2023, Early Help introduced Private Fostering Leads to increase their knowledge and understanding of Private Fostering to ensure that all arrangements were being identified and referred.
- 2.3 The county Private Fostering Lead is Anita Hiller, supported by Sarah Jenner, Social Work Standards Officer.
- 2.4 Strategic ownership for Private Fostering rests with Leemya McKeown, Assistant Director for Safeguarding, Professional Standards and Quality Assurance.

3. Actions completed since 2023-2024 Annual Report

3.1 All objectives from 2023 to 2024 were completed (see Table 1). Further information about activity throughout the year is included in sections 5, 6 and 7.

Table 1: Actions from 2023-2024

Action:	How:	Date completed
Continue to raise awareness of Private Fostering with partner agencies and wider community	Private Fostering Newsletter to be sent to partner agencies and wider community, including Education, Health, Language Schools and Faith organisations.	May 24
	Further focus to health professionals by contacting safeguarding leads in different sectors	Nov 23
	Promote Private Fostering Week to raise awareness with partner agencies	May 23
	Increase communication and links with language and private schools in each area	Ongoing work
	Advertise and provide virtual training for multi-agency partners from statutory and voluntary services. Training will be twice a year, booked via KSCMP	Twice yearly – May and Nov 23
Develop Private Fostering practice across Integrated Children's Services	Continue to provide access to Private Fostering training and relevant resources on the Kent Academy and Kent Procedures Online.	Ongoing
	Communities of Practice event	May 23
	Private Fostering promotion within induction and training programmes for new staff, Newly Qualified Social Workers, social work students on Step Up to Social Work programmes, Frontline and Apprenticeships	Dec 23
	Good Practice in Private Fostering Forums to be held with district Private Fostering Leads to discuss best practice and disseminate information. Private Fostering Leads to feed back to districts	Bi-monthly throughout the year
	Consultations available and advice given by Private Fostering Lead regarding complex Private Fostering Arrangements	As and when required

	<p>Practice Development Bulletin and events during Private Fostering Week</p> <p>Business Support to monitor agency check requests and initial visit 'packs' which contain all necessary paperwork for proposed Private Foster carers to complete. Packs to include new Privacy Notice for Private Foster Carers.</p> <p>Training for Business Support Assistants.</p> <p>Promotion of Private Fostering e-learning with the ICS workforce</p> <p>Work with Strengthening Independence Service to increase awareness</p>	<p>May 23, yearly</p> <p>Throughout the year</p> <p>Dec 23</p> <p>Oct 23</p> <p>Dec 23</p>
Ongoing audit and monitoring of practice	<p>4 Private Fostering children to be included in each audit cycle, with moderations by moderators with Private Fostering experience</p> <p>Additional audit of 10 privately fostered children to ensure the quality and consistency of practice, including identity and use of Social Work Assistant</p> <p>Review and improve reporting on Power Bi, to include reporting of ethnicity and nationality data, and virtual visits</p>	<p>Throughout the year</p> <p>Jan – Mar 24</p> <p>Sept 23</p>

4. Summary of data for 2023 – 2024

4.1 There were 98 different Private Fostering arrangements during 2023–2024. Of these 4 (3%) also had a Child Protection Plan and 26 (27 %) had a Child in Need Plan which overlapped with the arrangement during 2023-2024. The previous year 2% had a Child Protection Plan and 21% had a Child in Need Plan so there has been no significant change.

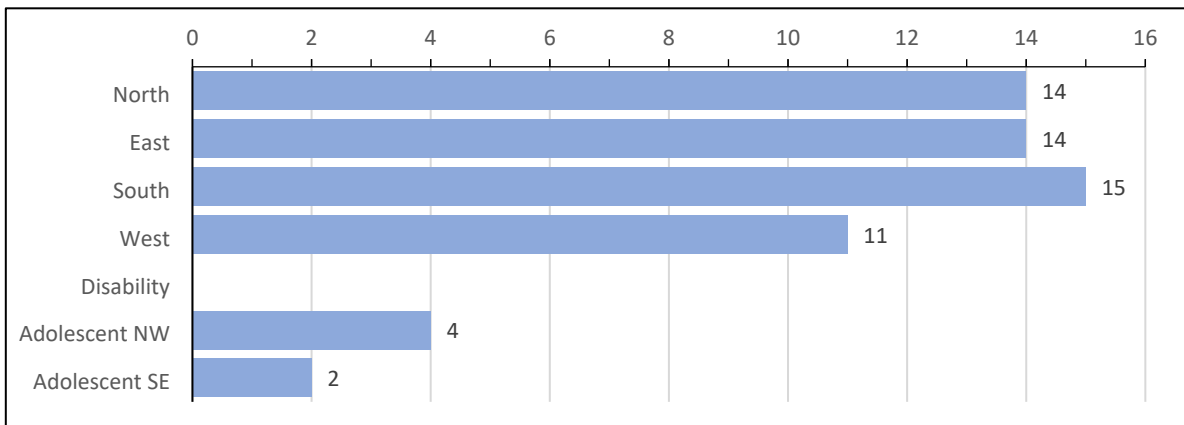
4.2 Notifications

In the year 2023-2024, there were 60 new Private Fostering notifications, a drop of 55% from the previous year and the lowest since 2014. Numbers of arrangements were expected to be higher this year as there had been an increase of international students in 2022-2023, sending figures to an overall high of 108 notifications. Figures were expected to continue increasing as confidence in travel continued following Covid. However, there was a decrease in students from Europe this year leading to lower Private Fostering notifications. The costs of travel, education and living costs have increased so this may

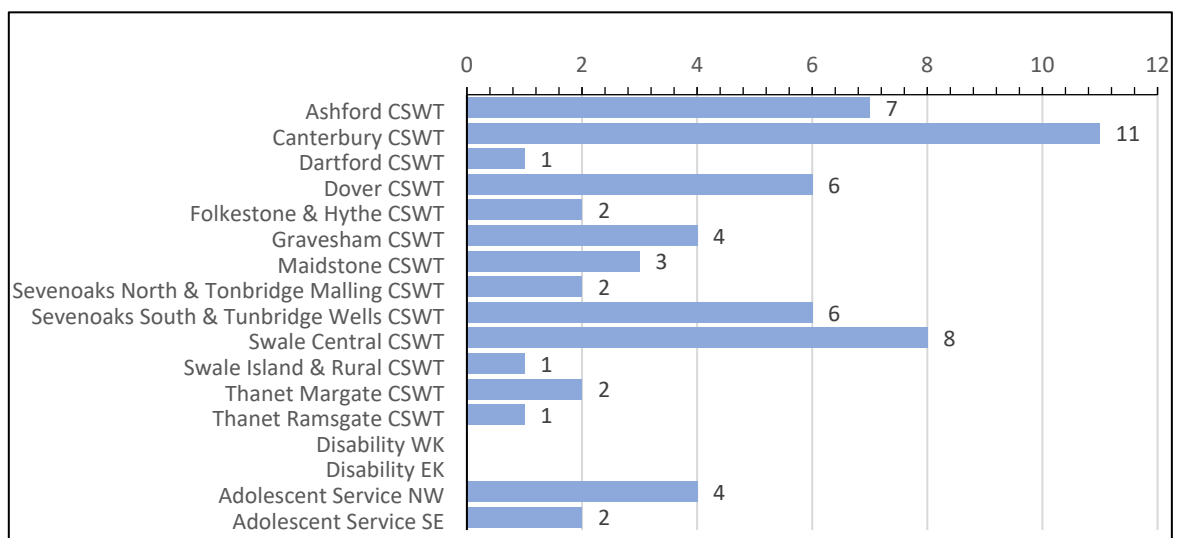
explain why this trend did not continue and students under 16 are choosing to stay for shorter periods than 28 days.

4.3 Graph 1 shows notifications by area and graph 2 notifications by service. Adolescent Service had low numbers of notifications compared to areas but the figures broken down into service show the differences are not that high. For the third year in a row the Strengthening Independence Service (recorded as Disability EK) did not have any Private Fostering arrangements. The services have a Private Fostering Lead who is promoting Private Fostering and the statutory requirements. This statistic would be an indication of arrangements not being identified in any other service but the significant needs of this group of children may make it difficult for them to be looked after by friends or family, so they are less likely to be privately fostered and more likely to access short breaks care or residential settings.

Graph 1 – Notifications Received by Area April 2023–March 2024



Graph 2 – Total PF Notifications by Received by Service April 2023–March 2024



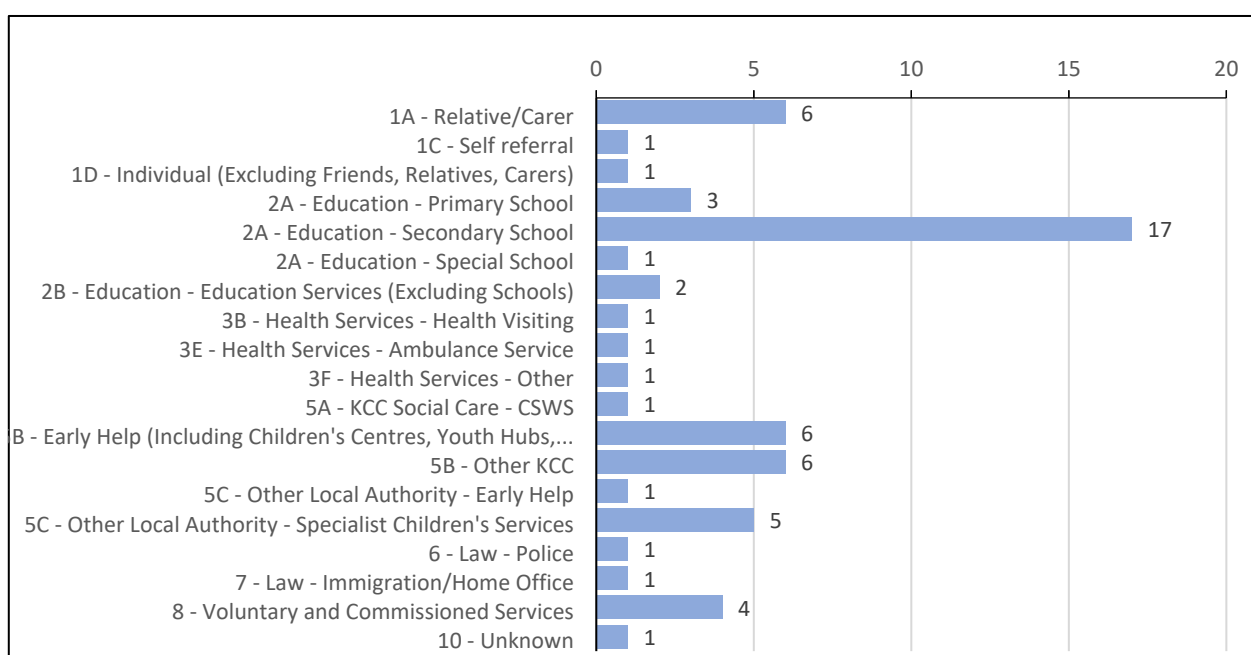
4.4 Source of Private Fostering Notification

Graph 3 shows the sources of all notifications. The largest number at 38% (23) came direct from education providers (secondary schools, English language schools, primary schools). This was similar to the previous year (42%). Generally, education is the highest source of notifications due to the combination of language students and secondary schools having access to information about adolescents not living at home.

4.5 There was a minor increase in referrals from a Relative or Carer (10% compared to 8%) and one self-referral.

4.6 Referrals from health providers are still lower than other organisations. This continues to be a focused area of awareness raising for 2024-2025. Health professionals are not entering homes like other professionals and therefore, are relying on children, parents of other carers reporting that a child is living in an arrangement which could be considered Private Fostering but it is important that they are able to recognise a Private Fostering arrangement.

Graph 3 – Notifications by Referrals source 2023 - 2024



4.7 Country of Birth

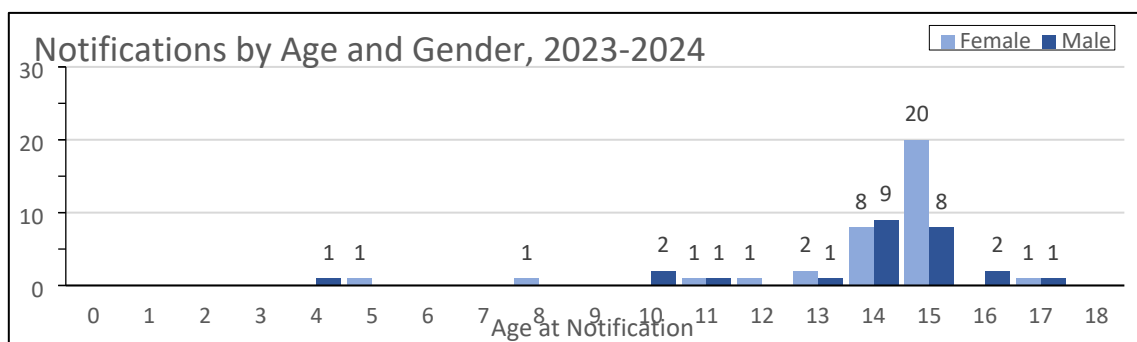
The majority of children are from the UK (40% from the UK, 32% in 2022-2023) and Europe.

4.8 The data collection on geographical ‘Country of Birth’ changed in December 2023 to ‘Nationality and Country of Birth’. This will ensure a greater understanding of where a child is from and ensure ethnicity is understood and considered in respect of the child’s lived experiences. As the method of capturing information changed this year, a year on year comparison is not possible. There will be a clearer picture for the year 2024-2025.

4.9 Age and Gender of Children at Notification

Graph 4 shows the breakdown of ages. Notifications were weighted towards the older adolescent age band of 12 to 15, with a higher ratio of females than males (58% compared to 42%). This is similar to previous years.

Graph 4 – Notifications by age and gender 2023 - 2024



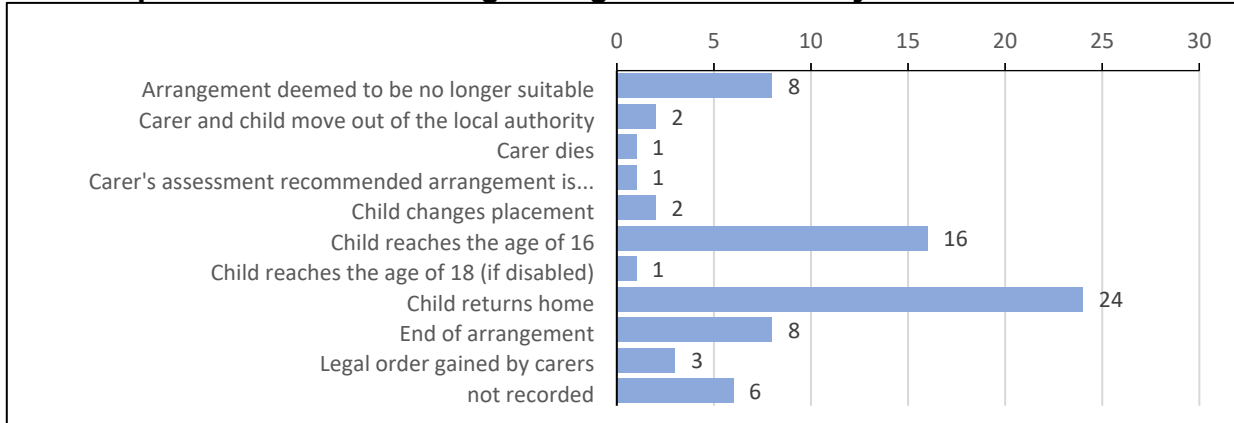
4.10 There were 7 notifications for children 11 years and younger, compared to 11 the previous year. Private Fostering arrangements are only suitable for younger children for a limited period of time. Stable permanent plans should be sought if there is no plan for the child to return home. This is monitored within moderations of audits and within the Good Practice in Private Fostering Forums.

4.11 Private Fostering Arrangements Ended

57 Private Fostering arrangements started from April 2023 to March 2024. The peak being July and September, linked with international students’ arrival into the country and those students who remained in boarding schools for over 2 weeks during school holidays, as these must be Private Fostering arrangements.

4.12 72 arrangements ended during the report period and the range of reasons is shown in graph 5. ‘Child returns home’ data will include international students returning to their country. It would be helpful to improve the data on children returning home so there is greater understanding of whether this is due to reunification work or some other reason. This will be part of the work with Management Information for 2024-2025.

Graph 5 – Private Fostering arrangements ended by reason 2023 - 2024



4.13 Children over 16 who have a disability should be subject to a Private Fostering arrangement until the age of 18. The current criterion for disability is based on the Strengthening Independence Service criteria but a recent safeguarding review has led to consideration about whether this criterion is being applied too rigidly and there may be some vulnerable children with Education Health Care Plans and mental health problems who would benefit from remaining open to services beyond 16. If not Private Fostering, there could be acknowledgement of the child's additional vulnerability and support could be provided under Child in Need procedures. Consent for support would be required under Child in Need. The Private Fostering Guidance has been updated to highlight the learning and vulnerability and this will be an area of further exploration and monitoring for 2024.

4.14 The data indicated that 8 of the arrangements ended as these were no longer deemed suitable, and 1 Private Fostering assessment concluded that the arrangement would not be suitable for the child. However, further exploration of the reasons for the arrangement ending showed that these arrangements ended for a variety of reasons and were not recorded correctly. The arrangement which ended following the assessment process resulted in a Prohibition Letter being issued. The child has moved to live with family out of county. Table 2 shows reasons for the arrangements ending.

Child	Age	Reason for end	Current status of child
Child 1	16	Application for Child Arrangements Order (CAO)	No longer in need of services
Child 2	15	PF Carer unable to continue for personal reasons	Living with family

Child 3	6	Application for CAO	No longer in need of services
Child 4	18	Application for Ukrainian child in resettlement scheme. Did not come to the UK.	In Ukraine
Child 5	16	Prohibition letter. PF carer unable to meet child's needs and deemed unsuitable for this PF arrangement.	Living with father in another local authority
Child 6	18	Application for Ukrainian child in resettlement scheme. Did not come to the UK.	In Ukraine
Child 7/8 Same child – 2 different arrangements	15	Child was due to come from China for education. Did not come initially and then mother came with him so PF arrangement did not go ahead. Now in a suitable PF arrangement.	Private Fostering arrangement while studying.
Child 9	17	Application for Ukrainian child in resettlement scheme. Did not come to the UK.	In Ukraine

4.15 Reporting of reasons why arrangements have ended needs to be accurate and social workers need to understand the importance of this.

4.16 Permanency

Permanency, stability and a feeling of belonging is important for children. Where the plan for a child is to be privately fostered long term, the gaining of a legal order takes away any ambiguity of the status of their arrangement or care provided. A legal order also observes the child's right to family life and least intervention. In 2023-2024, 3 legal orders were gained (1 more than 2022-2023), with two additional Private Foster Carers receiving financial support to seek legal advice and understand the implications of legal applications. Both have applied for Child Arrangements Orders for the children they are caring for.

4.17 The 5 arrangements leading to private law orders are low to the total number of privately fostered children. However, not all arrangements are suitable for considering long-term and the majority of arrangements are short-term

arrangements. The first consideration is always for children to return to their families, where appropriate and safe to do so. These are private arrangements between parents and Private Foster Carers and the Local Authority would signpost to possible orders. However, the Private Foster Carer would need to apply for a Child Arrangements Order directly to the Court and meet the cost of this.

4.18 Further analysis of the data shows that only 40% of the arrangements with have ended are children from the UK and the majority are older adolescents. There are limitations in the data in respect of arrangements ending but graph 5 indicates that only 31 children could have been considered for legal orders as all the other children either returned home or had arrangements end for other reasons. In-depth analysis is required to understand the age and circumstances of these children further to understand whether there are circumstances where we would want permanent arrangements to have been put in place.

4.19 Permanency is an agenda item within each Good Practice in Private Fostering Forum so this is a live discussion and it remains part of moderation discussions within audits. Accurate data and analysis are required to ensure we are addressing permanence and considering the suitability of these arrangements and in particular, for our younger children.

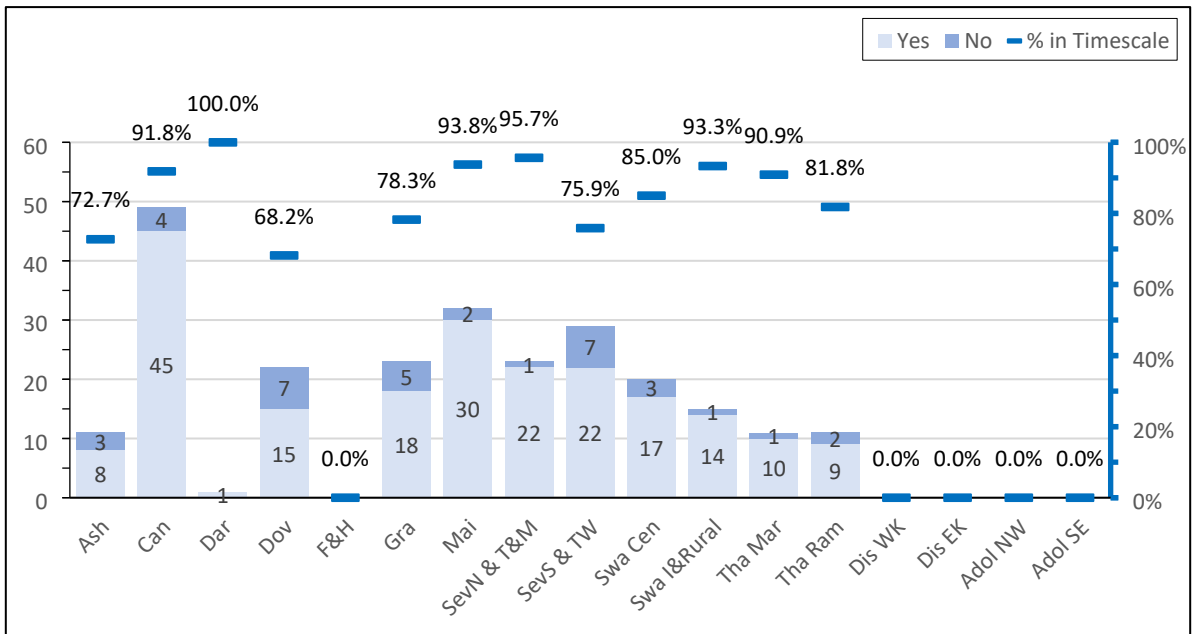
4.20 Ongoing Visiting Requirements (reg. 8 visits)

Each Private Fostering visit is recorded on a statutory Regulation 8 form. The target for visits to be completed within timescale in Kent is 90%. Children are visited 6 weekly within the first year and 12 weekly thereafter. The average percentage of visits within timescale over the 12-month period was 85%. A slight increase from 2023 (83%). The KPI is a rolling 12-month figure so overdue visits impact on average percentages for the whole year. This is particularly evident when notifications (expected 6 weeks prior to a Private Fostering arrangement starting) are for children who are not yet in the country and cannot be visited. This usually applies to foreign students or Ukrainian children waiting for a visa (60% of the arrangements). The assessments and statutory checks can be started but the child cannot be seen in person until arrival which is then out of the statutory timescale. The initial visit in person is required within 7 days of being in the arrangement, or within 24 hours if from Ukraine. The new case note 'Out of Country PF Communication' will help to identify the children that cannot be visited due to these circumstances, improving reporting of data.

Table 3 Reg 8 Visits by Area with % within Timescale

Service at Visit Date	Visit in Timescale		Total	% in Timescale
	Yes	No		
North	50	9	59	85%
East	64	7	71	90%
South	23	10	33	70%
West	74	10	84	88%
Disability	0	0	0	-
Adolescent NW	0	0	0	-
Adolescent SE	0	0	0	-
Total	211	36	247	85%

Graph 6 – Reg 8 visits by district (% in timescale on right axis)



4.21 Private Fostering is reported on PowerBI and the monthly scorecard. Percentages are discussed in the bi-monthly Forums. Further exploration of month-on-month figures shows a more accurate picture of visiting timescales within each area and by each District. It is noticeable Reg 8 visits are not recorded by the Adolescent Service in addition to the statutory Private Fostering visit. This is an area of development which the Private Fostering Lead will undertake with the Adolescent Service. The Adolescent Service Private Fostering Lead will support staff, alongside the Management Information Officer, to understand visiting requirements and recording on Liberi.

5. Private Fostering Awareness Raising 2023-2024

5.1 Multi-agency partners

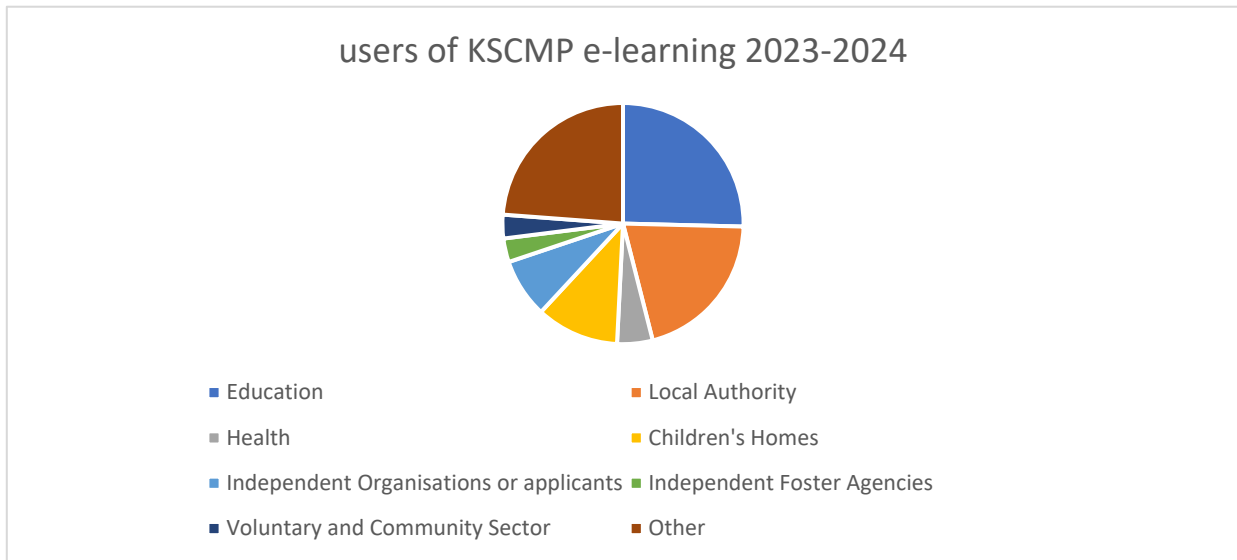
The Local Authority has a duty to promote and raise awareness of Private Fostering with partner agencies.

5.2 In May 2023, a Private Fostering Newsletter was circulated to partner agencies who may encounter children in Private Fostering arrangements, including English language schools, faith organisations and youth groups. The timing was linked to the promotion of Private Fostering week by Kent from 9th to 12th May. Following this Coram BAAF announced they were reinstating celebrating Private Fostering with a day in November 2023). Kent advertised the Coram BAAF events to partner agencies as well as within Integrated Children's Services.

5.3 The Practice Development Team provides two virtual training events per year for multi-agency partners, advertised through the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (KSCMP). 12 participants attended the training on 12th May 2023 and 31 on 8th November 2023. The training included information about Private Fostering, the risks and vulnerabilities for privately fostered children, the duties and actions for external professionals as well as Children's Social Work Teams. In addition, there were speakers to talk about the Homes for Ukraine and Unaccompanied Minor Scheme. Participants at the event included Safeguarding Leads and Headteachers from primary and secondary schools, health practitioners, 2 faith organisations and colleagues from Integrated Children's Services.

5.4 KSCMP also provide a Private Fostering e-learning course and during the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 this was completed 63 times by Kent learners. (KSCMP share their system with Medway, so these figures are for learners who have accounts registered as being in Kent or Kent and Medway, but not those registered as a Medway only organisation). Chart 1 shows a breakdown of sectors who undertook the training.

Chart 1 – Pie chart showing breakdown of organisation type/sector for KSCMP e-learning



5.5 Additionally, awareness raising has taken place with language schools throughout the year.

5.6 Integrated Children’s Services

Good Practice in Private Fostering Forums continued bi-monthly throughout the year, chaired by the Private Fostering Lead. As of 1st April 2024, all service, including the Adolescent Service had a Lead. There is an expectation a representative from each Service attends the forums but there were some regular gaps in attendance, which were highlighted with the Service Managers to address. Early Help Unit Leads from three areas in Kent also attended the Good Practice in Private Fostering Forums from October 2023.

5.7 Agenda items at the Forums include trends and themes (including from audit findings), key performance indicators, challenging aspects of the work, and good practice examples. This helped inform changes to the Private Fostering resources, Liberi and the Private Fostering guidance. Information was disseminated back to services by the Leads and audits continued to indicate practice improvements throughout the last year.

5.8 The county Private Fostering Lead provides individual consultations and guidance to practitioners to help inform practice. The Lead maintains links with the County Team Manager for Ukraine Refugee Response and their Cultural Officer, which assists with ongoing learning, development and training.

5.9 Resources are continuously updated and promoted on Kent Academy. Guidance is regularly reviewed for Kent Procedures Online.

5.10 Awareness raising and work has been undertaken with Strengthening Independence Service to increase awareness.

5.11 Additional training for Integrated Children's Services

A Communities of Practice event was held on 4th May 2023 for Integrated Children's Services attended by 32 staff. 11 staff have since accessed the video. Attendance by job role is shown in chart 2. Roles with low attendance figures will be targeted in future.

5.12 A training session was also held in June 2023 for Newly Qualified Social Work staff and in February 2024 for the Front Door Service.

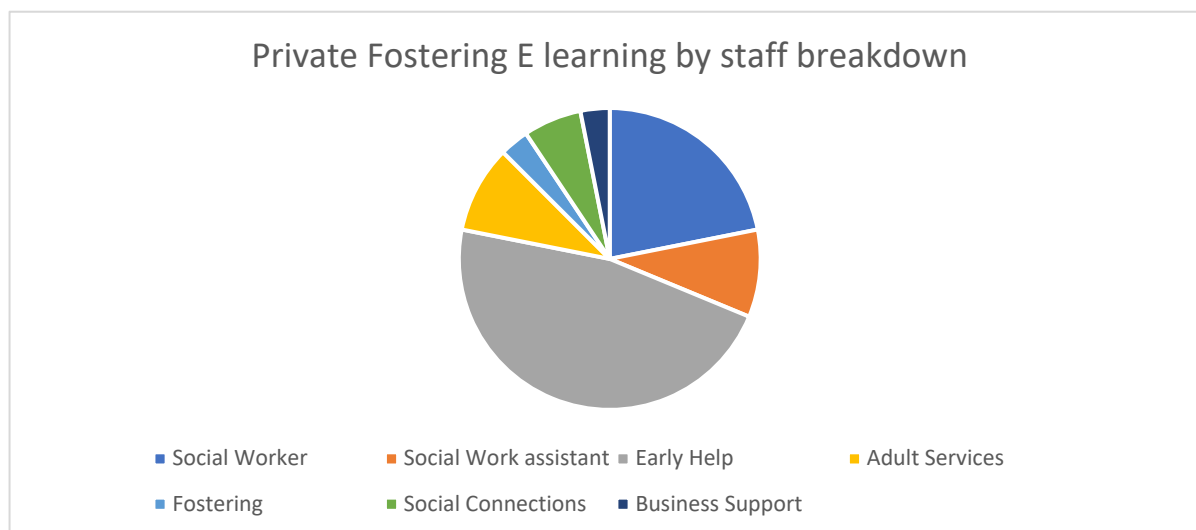
Chart 2 – Pie chart showing ICS staff roles at the Communities of Practice 04.05.2023



5.13 Kent Academy provides dedicated training and resources for Integrated Children's Services and 33 members of staff accessed the Private Fostering e-learning during 2023-2024 (one less than the previous year).

5.14 Generally, we need to promote training within Early Help, Youth Justice and Family Hubs to ensure awareness across all sectors of the workforce.

Chart 3 – Pie chart shows ICS staff professions accessing e-learning 01.04.23 – 31.03.24



5.15 A Practice Bulletin was created and circulated in May 2023 covering information about Private Fostering, expectations, developments and links to the guidance. This had 125 views up to April 2024.

5.16 Whilst it is positive that staff are engaging with ways to learn more about Private Fostering, the numbers of attendees or views are low in relation to the total workforce. However, staff have said at training events they are disseminating information amongst colleagues and access to learning continues to be promoted at Good Practice in Private Fostering forums. The grades from audits would appear to evidence this.

6. Audits

6.1 Private Fostering work is audited as part of the county audit process in line with other children receiving support from the Children’s Social Work Service. From April 2023 to March 2024 inclusive, 21 privately fostered children’s records were audited by the allocated districts. 1 was moderated by a Service Manager and 20 by the Private Fostering Leads in the Practice Development Team, given their in-depth knowledge of Private Fostering legislation and processes. Moderation is a valuable check on the quality of audits undertaken, as well as an opportunity for the Private Fostering lead to give informal training.

6.2 Audit analysis

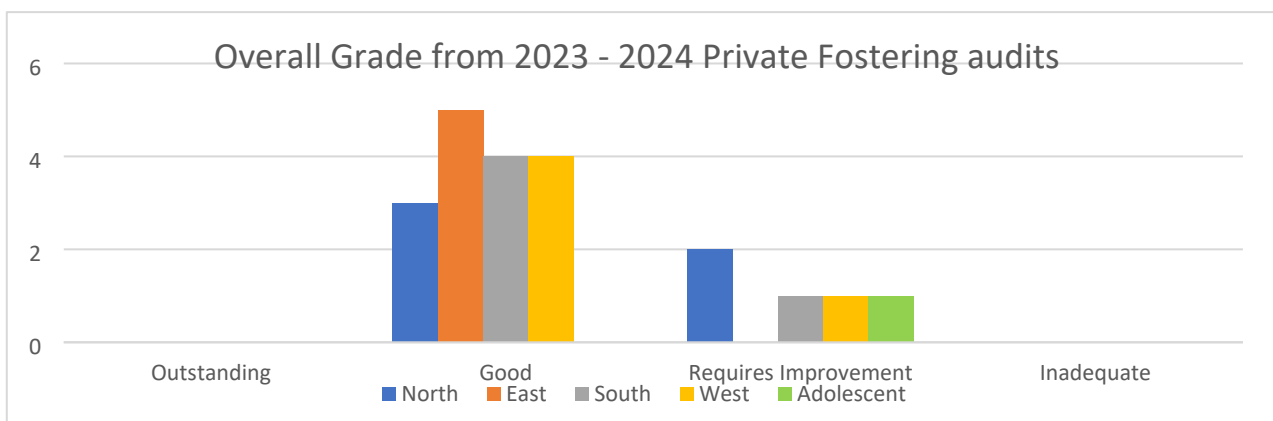
Audits showed an improvement in overall grades. Within the sections of the audit, assessment and child focused intervention had improved from last year. Management oversight was an area for improvement.

Table 4 – Grade comparisons from year to year

Percentage grades	2022-2023	2023-24
Good	57%	76%
Requires improvement	29%	24%
Inadequate	14%	0%

6.3 Chart 4 shows the breakdown for different areas and shows a strong focus on Private Fostering in East Kent. East Kent has a Service Manager lead for the area and internal meetings to promote PF within their districts. This has led to performance in East Kent being significantly better than other areas, as reported in previous reports. Other areas would benefit from replicating this system but numbers vary from area to area and are relatively low compared to children subject to Child in Need and Child Protection Plans.

Chart 4 – Table showing audit gradings broken down by Area



6.4 Additional audits

Ten additional audits were undertaken by the Private Fostering Lead in the Practice Development Service, to focus on recommendations from the 2022-2023 report. This included reviewing how identity was considered within assessments; support and plans; annual reviews; allocations of Social Work

Assistants for Child in Need and Child Protection; statutory checks and management oversight.

6.5 The audits were not graded but identified some areas of good practice and some areas of development.

6.6 Visits to children

6/10 of children were seen within 7 days. Of the 4 children not seen within timescale, only 1 had a rationale recorded as to why. It should be noted that there are a high number of children who cannot be seen due to them not being in the country, although this needs to be made clearer on the child's file.

6.7 Visits were completed within timescale for 7/10 children. All children should be seen within timescale to ensure they are safe in the arrangement.

6.8 6/10 children were not seen alone and 1 was too young to see alone. To ensure children are able to speak freely and independently to the Private Foster Carer, they must be seen alone.

6.9 Assessments

8/10 assessments were not completed within timescale with 4/10 not having a completed DBS before being signed off. This is significant as a police check is not sufficient before signing off. This is being addressed through the Good Practice in Private Fostering Forums.

6.10 2/4 annual reviews had not completed at the time of the check. District teams need to ensure reviews are completed in a timely manner.

6.11 Management Oversight

All assessments have been signed off by the Service Manager which demonstrates improved practice and oversight. However, Service Managers need to ensure all aspects of practice are reviewed when signing off to ensure social workers are complying with policy as key practice issues above were not always noted by the Service Manager. Some of the issues identified above but were not identified by Service Managers, e.g., DBS not received or Ofsted check, so a wider review of the file was not always undertaken.

6.12 3/10 had no formal supervision recorded, although the files indicated management oversight at key points.

6.13 Exploration for culture and identity is an improving area, showing Social Workers are more curious about children and exploring how these impacts on the child. Work on culture and identity for all children has been undertaken across Integrated Children's Services.

- 6.14** For those children subject to a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan when they enter a Private Fostering arrangement, the district team must allocate a Social Work Assistant (SWA). There has been a significant improvement in Social Work Assistants being offered for support, allocated or rationales recorded about why one was not allocated or required.
- 6.15** One audit raised practice concerns which were addressed directly with the Service Manager. This was a complex set of circumstances for this child and advice had been sought by the district to the Private Fostering Lead previously. However, circumstances had become more complex and mother has moved into the home while concerns had been raised by another Local Authority regarding her care of the privately fostered child's sibling in mother's care.
- 6.16** Learning from the audits was shared at the Forums to be disseminated back to districts and will continue to be areas specifically addressed in training. There will also be general communication of the findings via the CYPE bulletin in June 2024, to remind all staff of their roles and responsibilities.

6.17 Future audits

Bi-monthly audits of 4 children who are privately fostered will continue as part of the audit cycle. additional dip-sample audits will take place. Themes will continue to be discussed at Good Practice in Private Fostering Forums and where grades are a concern, staff will be offered additional advice and training.

7. Systems

- 7.1** A Management Information Officer in the Management Information and Intelligence Team continues to work closely with district CSWT's to improve recording, reduce data errors, and ensure compliance with statutory requirements. The Management Information Officer attends the Good Practice in Private Fostering Forums and training events and offers one-to-one support to practitioners. In 2023, MI created "bitesize" videos to help understand the Private Fostering pathway on Liberi.
- 7.2** The Liberi Operational Group approved three key changes in December 2023 to enable more sophisticated data collection, including around the circumstances leading to Private Fostering and to inform work around culture and identity.

Out of Country PF Communication. This case note is now used to record contact with the child/young person when a visit to them is not possible due to them being out of the country. It replaced Initial Visit – virtual (Private Fostering) as the rationale is self-explanatory.

A new mandatory question has been added to the PFAAR – Reason for Private Fostering. This has a picklist for answers to help understand the reason for the arrangement. This will help when looking at trends and understanding the increase and decline e.g., if linked to language students.

Place of birth (by geographical region) has been replaced by Nationality and Country of Birth in the PFAAR. This will assist when considering identity within assessments, the plan for the child and support for a Private Foster carer.

8. Summary

- 8.1** The number of children in Private Fostering arrangements is relatively small compared to the number of children open to services but they are an extremely vulnerable group. These children are not with their birth family; may speak another language and be far from home; may have limited oversight from professionals unless identified as privately fostered; and may go under the radar and be at risk, as a result. The challenge is to ensure that all children in these arrangements are identified and the arrangements are assessed to ensure children are safe. Therefore, awareness raising is vital for both practitioners within Integrated Children's Services and other agencies. We are committed to ensuring that privately fostered children are identified, assessed, supported, and safe within Kent, and ensuring they receive the same service as other children open to services. This includes ensuring that children have stability and permanency when these arrangements are identified as being long-term.
- 8.2** It has been a positive year for Private Fostering with audits showing an improvement in practice across Kent. The additional audits identified good practice, for example an increase in offering Social Work Assistants to ensure stability of arrangements for those children subject to Child in Need Plans or Child Protection Plans. It was concerning to find that some regulatory checks required for a Private Fostering assessments were not completed prior to approval and there is room for improvement for visiting timescales.
- 8.3** The current trajectory for improvement will continue with further promotion, training, auditing, systems improvements and advice offered to district social work teams and practitioners in other services, such as Early Help.

8.4 This report has identified a number of areas where data systems need to support our collection of data to really understand the practice in Kent and understand our lived experience of our privately fostered children. This will include work with our Management Information and Intelligence Team but also, work with our social work teams to ensure children are seen alone.

8.5 The action plan highlights the work which needs to continue over 2024-2025.

9. Next Steps Plan

9.1 See next page

	Objectives 2024 - 2025	Responsible person	Complete by
1	Continue to raise awareness of Private Fostering (PF) with partner agencies and wider community		
1.1	Advertise and provide virtual training for multi-agency partners from statutory and voluntary services. Training will be twice a year, booked via KSCMP with one coinciding with Coram BAAF Private Fostering day. Build training into Family Hubs Workforce Development Plan.	PF Lead / KSCMP	Bi-annual June 2024 Nov 2024
1.2	Share Private Fostering Week events, including Coram BAAF activities	PF Lead	May to Nov 2024
1.3	Focus on increasing health professionals' awareness by contacting safeguarding leads in different sectors. The new Practice Framework Roadshows to multi-agency partners will include a focus on Private Fostering.	PF Lead	Starting Sept 2024
1.4	Build links with language and private schools in each area to improve communication and practice. Utilise current newsletters and organisations such as Education Safeguarding Service and British Council.	PF Lead	July – Dec 2024
1.5	Private Fostering Newsletter to be sent to partner agencies and wider community, including Education, Health, Language Schools and Faith organisations	PF Lead	Nov 2024
2	Develop Private Fostering practice across Integrated Children's Services		
2.1	Highlight in CYPE bulletin practice expectations and statutory requirements for Private Fostering and link to updated guidance.	PF Lead	June 2024

2.2	Consider Private Fostering post 16 in respect of disability and widening to ENCP/mental health. Give clear direction to district social work teams.	PF Lead to liaise with senior managers	June 2024
2.3	Good Practice in Private Fostering Forums to be held with district Private Fostering Leads to discuss best practice, learning from audits and data and disseminate information. Private Fostering Leads to feed back to districts.	PF Lead and District Leads	Bi-monthly
2.4	Continue to review and highlight if absences from the Good Practice in Private Fostering Forums with Service Managers and link with data/audit findings	PF Lead	As and when required
2.5	Consultations available and advice given by Private Fostering Lead regarding complex Private Fostering Arrangements	PF Lead	As and when required
2.6	Provide Private Fostering Bulletin and Communities of Practice event during Private Fostering Week.	PF Lead	Nov 2024
2.7	In conjunction with Private Fostering Business Support leads, provide training for Business Support colleagues.	PF Lead	Dec 2024
2.9	Continue to promote Private Fostering training and relevant resources on the Kent Academy and Kent Procedures Online.	PF Lead	2024-2025
2.10	Private Fostering promotion within induction and training programmes for new staff, Newly Qualified Social Workers, social work students on Step Up to Social Work programmes, Frontline and Apprenticeships.	Team Managers/ district Leads / ASYE and student programme co- ordinators	Throughout 2024- 2025

2.11	Liaison with specific services regarding identifying PF – Adolescent Service, Strengthening Independence. This may include visits to service meetings.	PF Lead	Throughout 2024-2025
2.12	Exploration of top tips sheet or built in checklist within the PFAAR for Service Managers to assist with checks prior to signing off assessment.	PF Lead	Sept 2024
2.13	Improve recording of Regulation 8 visits, especially within services where this is poor, e.g., Adolescent Service. This will be through the visits to service meetings, within awareness raising/moderations/Good Practice in Private Fostering Forums, and COP in Private Fostering Week.	PF Lead and Practice Development Team	Throughout 2024-2025
2.14	Legal briefing session on achieving permanence to incorporate children in private arrangements, such as Private Fostering.	Legal Briefings Co-ordinator	Dec 2024
3	Ongoing practice monitoring		
3.1	4 Private Fostering children to be included in each audit cycle, with moderations by moderators with Private Fostering experience	Management Information Team	2024-2025
3.2	Via Power Bi review completion of ethnicity, country of birth, regulatory and out of country visits and highlight and address any gaps	PF Lead / Management Information	2024-2025
3.3	Work with Management Information and Intelligence to: Improve PF pathway on Liberi to capture data Ensure more in-depth analysis of reasons why arrangements end Improve reporting of timescales for visits and assessments Capture information about prohibitions and disqualifications Understand data on nationality and country and correlate this to initial visits to report separately regarding Kent children and international students or Ukrainian nationals. Capture and monitor child seen alone data.	PF Lead / Management Information	Oct 2024

3.4	Further analysis required to understand and report on initial visits to children within Private Fostering arrangements. Changes to Liberi already made will support this but further work is required to improve reporting.	PF Lead / Management Information	Oct 2024