

**From:** Christine Palmer, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services  
Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

**To:** Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee

**Date:** 16 September 2025

**Subject:** Private Fostering Annual Report

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Summary:**

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 2024 to 31st March 2025, and awareness raising with the multi-agency partnership.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and note the annual report and its recommendations for 2025-2026.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 Children in Private Fostering arrangements are particularly vulnerable due to the lack of family and formal oversight and the potential for their needs and safety to be hidden or overlooked.

## **2. Body of the report**

- 2.1 The report sets out the activity from April 2024 to March 2025 in relation to assessing and monitoring the safety of privately fostering arrangements for children. It includes how Kent County Council has exercised its duties and responsibilities to raise awareness within its own services and within. In addition, it sets out the quality assurance framework used to give assurance that children within these arrangements are safe.

- 2.2 The 2024 Private Fostering Annual Report raised 3 overarching areas of focus to improve practice: Continue to raise awareness of Private Fostering with partner agencies and wider community, develop Private Fostering practice across Integrated Children's Services; **and** ongoing audit and monitoring of practice. All actions were achieved in the 12 month period with elements now forming part of regular cycles/expectations.
- 2.3 The number of children in these arrangements is low both in Kent and nationally. This is due in part to global financial constraints for young people studying in England. Despite the decrease in numbers, Private Fostering remains a key focus.
- 2.4 It has been a positive year for Private Fostering with audits showing an improvement in practice again across Kent.
- 2.5 Practice of assessing and undertaking work with Private Foster Carers and children who are privately fostered remains a focus with quarterly meetings to with Private Fostering Leads in each district to maintain a high level of practice and compliance with regulatory functions.

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 Private Fostering work is undertaken by allocated social workers within Children's Social Work Services. There are no additional costs in terms of the monitoring and review of private fostering arrangements as these are undertaken with other forms of statutory work.
- 3.2 As this is a family arrangement, there is no financial support from the local authority and parents maintain parental and financial responsibility for their child.
- 3.3 The local authority has a duty to ensure that all private fostering arrangements are safe and the Regulations state that a DBS check is required when for every Private Foster Carer.

### **4. Legal implications**

- 4.1 Kent County Council has a duty to comply with the Children Act 1989 Guidance on Private Fostering and the National Minimum Standards (2005). These set out the local authority's duties and responsibilities.

### **5. Equalities implications**

- 5.1 None

### **6. Other corporate implications**

- 6.1 Remember that other functions may overlap. Consider whether or not your decision has an impact in other areas of the Council's work.

## **7. Governance**

- 7.1 Who is likely to inherit the main delegations via the Officer Scheme of Delegation?

## **8. Conclusions**

- 8.1 Private Fostering remains a strong area of practice within Kent but it remains a concern that some arrangements go unidentified and these children are hidden from professional view. With this in mind, the key area of focus is to ensure a significant increase in awareness raising across Kent.

## **9. Recommendation(s):**

There is a full action plan within the report which the Private Fostering Lead will ensure is completed.

The Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services is asked to support awareness raising with a short interview on Kent Radio to make citizens within Kent without private fostering knowledge aware of this area of legislation and their duty to notify. If agreed, this will be arranged through the Media Office and support with a script will be supplied. This would ideally be broadcast on National Private Fostering Day on 4<sup>th</sup> November.

## **10. Background Documents**

- 10.1 The Annual Report for 2024/2025 is attached.

## **11. Contact details**

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