



PRIVATE FOSTERING
ANNUAL REPORT

1ST APRIL 2017 – 31ST MARCH 2018

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1.0 Introduction

Private fostering continues to be an area that is vastly under reported. Whilst the legislation advises that parents should contact the local authority prior to the placement of their child in a private fostering arrangement research undertaken by Community Care advises us that this seldom happens.

We are also aware that whilst private fostering spans most age groups it more commonly occurs for young people between the age of 13-16 years old. In research undertaken in 2015 the reasons for being privately fostered were identified as follows;

- 25% said they became privately fostered because their parents were on holiday;
- 17% said they were privately fostered because their parents had long term health problems;
- another 17% said their parents were working away from home;
- 10% said their parents were living somewhere else;
- 9% said they'd had a row with their mum and dad;
- 5% said their parents were in prison.
- A further 34% cited 'other' as the reason they became privately fostered. (BAAF)

The reasons for becoming privately fostered differ from the authors view that many private fostering arrangements are likely due to family conflict, however the research above indicates that this is not the case and therefore fostering group will be targeting areas that had not been considered previously.

2.0 Overview of the Year 2017/18

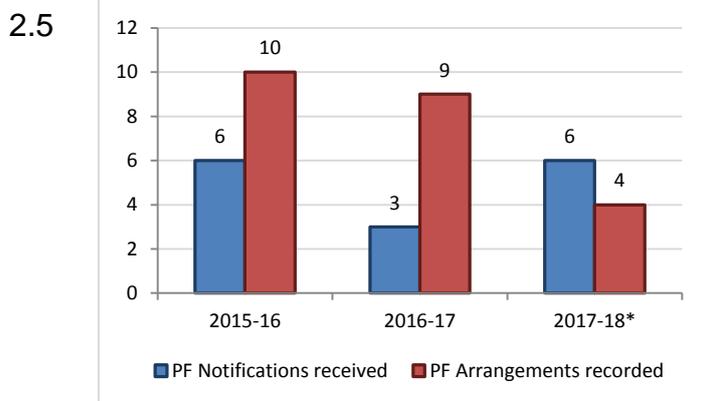
2.1 The Private Fostering Regulations came into force on the 1st July 2005 and were intended to strengthen and enhance the Children Act 1989 notification scheme. Also published were new minimum standards for Private Fostering. These minimum standards are intended to focus local authorities' attention on Private Fostering by requiring them to take a more proactive approach to identifying arrangements in their area.

2.2 Within this reporting year and following on from the activity last year the lead for private fostering wrote to solicitors in Halton in order to identify earlier any children who entered into a private fostering arrangement as a result of the parent or person with PR receiving a custodial sentence. This action was undertaken due to the research in respect of the overriding reasons why children are entering private fostering arrangements. The HSCB had made contact with Probation and CRC

and prisons locally in order to ensure that their awareness of private fostering was sufficient enough to identify specific cases and refer them. As a result of this a new system was implemented by CRC whereby a specific question was asked of new prisoners about whether they had a child and were they were living during the custodial sentence. By writing to the solicitors it was hoped that any potential arrangements could be identified earlier to assist in assessments and appropriate reviewing.

2.3 Meetings have been convened with Everton football club safeguarding team to ensure a clear process for the identification, assessment and monitoring of those families that host a child. The assessments completed by the club are thorough and cover the areas that would be required to be assessed by a social worker. Exploration of how best to manage these arrangements moving forward was discussed with the view that this should be done in conjunction with Liverpool and Knowsley councils in order to ensure consistent systems and approaches in order to keep children safe.

2.4 A new checklist was created and a flow chart to assist agencies in identifying whether a child is living in a private fostering arrangement. These were circulated to multi-agency partnership and uploaded to the website. The check list was shared with adult social care teams and hospitals to specifically target and identify children whose parents are detained under the Mental Health Act.



Halton has very few children identified as having a private fostering arrangement. Privately fostered children are assessed and visited separately from the child in need processes. The chart shows a snapshot of the numbers for the year to the end of Q4 and the previous two reporting years. There have been four arrangements during the reporting year. There was one arrangement open at the end of Q4, and all visits in relation to this arrangement were within timescale.

Reports show two notification forms were received and progressed to assessments of Private Fostering arrangements. An additional 28 notifications received via referral forms were abandoned on the recording system from 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018. This indicates

that social workers are asking the private fostering question, however abandoning the forms when identified as not relevant.

	2017/18
Notifications received during the report year	2 (28 abandoned referral notifications)
Private Fostering Arrangements starting during the reporting year	2
Arrangements open during the year	4
Average age of those children & young people with Private Fostering arrangements during the year at 31/03/2018	15.4
Private Fostering arrangements ending during the reporting year	3 (3 families)
Number open at end of reporting year 31 st March 2017	1 (1 family)

The data above shows that at 31st March 2018 there was one ongoing Private Fostering arrangement in Halton which started during the previous reporting year.

One arrangement ended during the year which started in the previous year.

There were two new arrangements open throughout the 12 month period, of these none have continued.

3.0 Recommendations

- Target Information at local solicitors
- Target information at Police
- Continue with briefing sessions to the multi-agency partnership
- Target awareness raising at hospitals