

Private Fostering in Wales, 2012-13

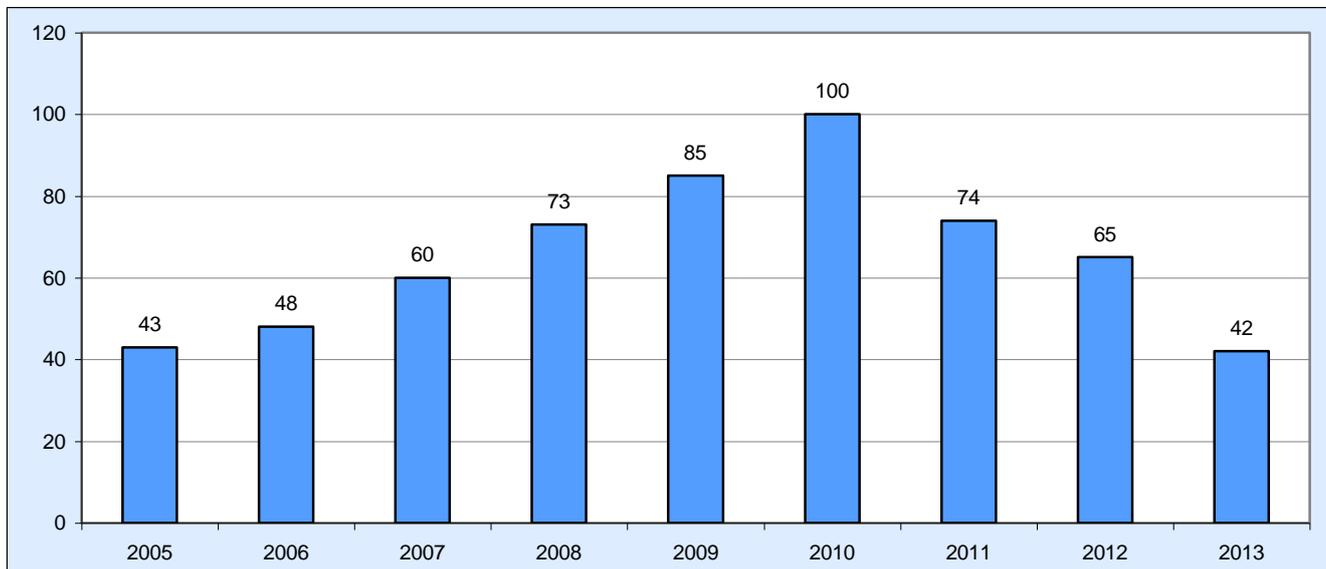
This annual Statistics First Release (SFR) summarises information on private fostering arrangements in Wales. The release presents key results in Wales for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013. A private fostering arrangement occurs when a child under 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by an adult, who is not a relative, under a private arrangement between parent and carer that lasts for 28 days or more. Information on private fostering was previously published in the Statistical Release "Fostering and Adoption Intermediary Services", which has been discontinued. For more details, see the Notes to this release.

Further information and full details for individual local authorities are published today in StatsWales tables at StatsWales.

Key results for the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013:

- 42 new private fostering arrangements started during the year, compared to 65 in the previous year (Chart 1, Table 1).
- 48 children received an initial visit during the year, 81 per cent of which were within 7 days of the beginning of the fostering arrangement (Table 1).
- 73 per cent of the children whose private fostering arrangement began in the year were born in the UK and 27 per cent in other countries. 87 per cent were aged 10 or over on 31 March 2013 (Table 2).

Chart 1: Number of new private fostering arrangements started during the year



Source: SSDA904

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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 or a step-parent will not 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. The number of arrangements commencing in 2012-13 fell again.

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, year ending 31 March

	2011	2012	2013
Number of arrangements commencing during the year (a)	74	65	42
Number of children with an initial visit during the year	76	74	48
Number of visits within 7 working days	56	54	39
<i>Percentage (%)</i>	74	73	81

Source: SSSA904

(a) In 2013, one child had two arrangements.

There were 48 children who received an initial visit from a local authority worker during the year ending 31 March 2013. 81 per cent of visits were within 7 days of the beginning of the fostering arrangement, an increase of 8 percentage points compared to 31 March 2012. Arrangements and initial visits may occur in different years, leading to differing totals.

Table 2: Children whose private fostering arrangement started in the year ending 31 March

	2011 ^(a)	2012 ^(a)	2013
Place of birth of children:			
United Kingdom	54	47	30
Elsewhere	15	13	11
Total	69	60	41
Age of children:			
Under 10 years old	13	8	6
10 years old and older	56	52	35
Total	69	60	41

Source: SSSA904

(a) 2011 and 2012 based on 21 authorities that supplied a breakdown of numbers by age and place of birth.

Of the 41 children whose private fostering arrangements began during the year to 31 March 2013, 73 per cent were born in the UK, with 27 per cent being born in other countries. 87 per cent were aged 10 or over on 31 March 2013.

1. Notes

1. These statistics were previously published in the Statistical Release “Fostering and Adoption Intermediary Services”, the last edition being [SDR 184/2012, Fostering and Adoption Intermediary Services, Wales, year ending 31 March 2012](#). That Statistical Release also included statistics on adoption intermediary services and public foster care settings (i.e. those used by local authorities to foster children they are looking after).
2. A consultation with users on the statistics about adoption intermediary services was reported in SDR 184/2012. The consultation indicated that there was no demand for these statistics and a proposal was made in SDR 184/2012 to cease collecting them unless there were representations from users. However, no comments were received on the proposal and therefore the statistics were not collected for 2012-13.
3. The statistics on public foster care settings had been obtained from the database of the national Children’s Commissioning Support Resource. However, central funding by the Welsh Government for this database has been replaced by regional initiatives, and there is no longer a single database for the whole of Wales.
4. If you consider that the publication of statistics on the numbers of public foster care settings would meet a user need, please contact us using the details at the end of these notes. The Welsh Government is developing a National Outcomes Framework for social services and user views will be taken into account in the development of statistics to support the National Outcomes Framework.
5. Information on the numbers of children publically fostered can be obtained from the Statistical Release on looked after children, the latest edition of which was published on 26 September 2013 [SDR 163/2013, Adoptions, Outcomes and Placements for Children Looked After by Local Authorities, Wales, 2012-13](#).
6. There are no planned revisions to the data in this release.

1.1 Data Collection

All references made to ‘year’ relate to the standard financial year which runs from 1 April to 31 March (for example 2012-13 should be understood as 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013).

The data on private fostering were supplied to the Data Collection team within the Welsh Government by the 22 local authorities in Wales on the SSDA904 form. The form applies an extensive series of validation checks to ensure that the information provided is accurate and consistent.

Further information on quality and methods can be found in the Quality Report at: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/publications/socialservicesquality/?lang=en>

1.2 Symbols and rounding conventions

The following symbols are used in the tables:

- the data item is not exactly zero, but is less than half the final digit shown.
- . the data item is not applicable.
- .. the data item is not available.
- * the data item is disclosive or not sufficiently robust for publication.

2. 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.

2.1 Relevance

The statistics are used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor adult social services 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;
- Local authorities;
- The third sector (e.g. charities);
- The Department for Health and Social Services in the Welsh Government;
- Other areas of the Welsh Government;
- 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 these are:

- advice to Ministers;
- local authority comparisons and benchmarks;
- to inform the social services policy decision-making process in Wales;
- to inform the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales;
- to assist in research on adults receiving social services.

2.2 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.

Every year the data are collected from the same source (the SSDA904 data collection return) and adhere to the national standards and guidance, thus ensuring coherence within and across organisations.

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. The figures in this release reflect the final position of the 2012-13 financial year and are correct as at 31 March 2013.

2.3 Timeliness and Punctuality

The Data Collection team within the Welsh Government collected data, for the financial year 2012-13, between May and July 2013. Data in this release refers to final 2012-13 data. This release was published in October 2013, meeting the planned date of publication.

2.4 Accessibility and Clarity

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics 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. Please select "Fostering Services" at the navigation screen of the following site:

<https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services>

2.5 Comparability

Statistics collected in each United Kingdom country may differ and the detailed guidance available from each country's website should be consulted before using these statistics as comparative measures.

Related publications for the UK can be found at:

England:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/notifications-of-private-fostering-arrangements-in-england-31-march-2013>

Scotland:

The Scottish Government do not collect information on private fostering arrangements in Scotland.

Northern Ireland:

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public safety does not produce statistics relating to private fostering arrangements in Northern Ireland.

2.6 Further information

Further information is available for other Personal Social Services statistical releases on the Welsh Government web site:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/health/social-services/?lang=en>

2.7 Contact information

If you have any comments about this Statistical Release, please contact:

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User Feedback

We want to engage with users of our statistics and we invite you to send your comments on the publication to stats.pss@wales.gsi.gov.uk.