

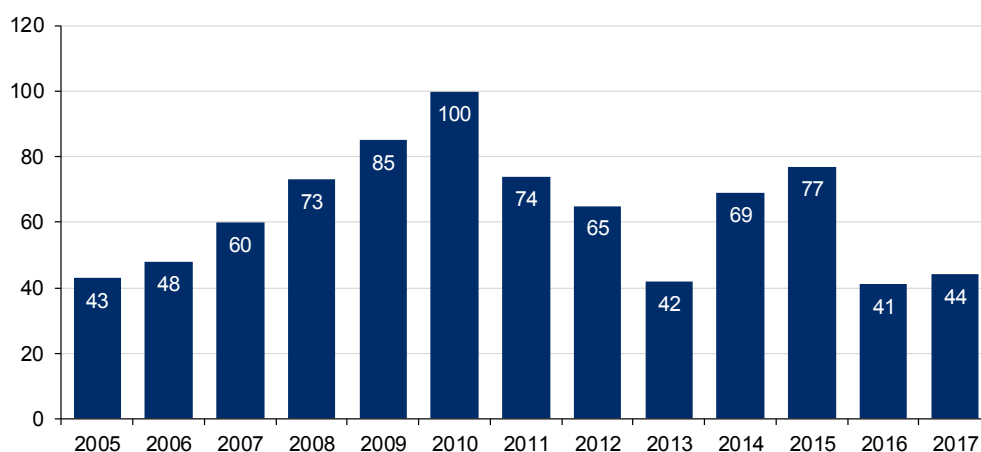
Experimental Statistics: Private Fostering in Wales, 2016-17

28 November 2017
SFR 175/2017

This annual Statistics First Release summarises information on private fostering arrangements in Wales. 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. This release does not include information on fostering of children looked after by local authorities.

Compared to previous publications, some information is not available for 2016-17 due to a change in source following commencement of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (for further information see the key quality section).

Chart 1: Number of private fostering arrangements reported, year ending 31 March



Source: Children receiving care and support aggregate form

Key results for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017:

- 44 new private fostering arrangements were reported during the year, compared to 41 in the previous year ([Chart 1](#), [Table 1](#)).
- 28 private fostering homes were known to local authorities at 31 March. ([Table 1](#))
- 36 children received an initial visit from the local authority within 7 working days of notification of the beginning of the private fostering arrangement ([Table 1](#)).
- 89 per cent were aged 10 or over on 31 March 2016 ([Table 2](#)).

About this release

The release presents key results in Wales for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. All statistics in this release can be regarded as final figures, not subject to further revision or update.

Further information and full details for individual local authorities are published online on [StatsWales](#).

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Accuracy

The Welsh Government worked with local authorities to collect statistics on the activities of private fostering through the [Children receiving care and support aggregate](#) return. 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. Data adhere to the national standards and guidance, thus ensuring coherence within and across organisations. Local authorities are expected to comply with the guidance notes for completion that accompany the data collection form.

The figures in this release reflect the final position of the 2016-17 data year, and are correct as at 31 March 2017. 2016-17 is the first year of collecting and reporting on data derived from the [Children receiving care and support aggregate](#) return following implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act.

During the year, some issues were raised about the quality of the data and not all local authorities provided complete returns; in most of these cases changes to systems and reporting processes had not yet been fully implemented. Extensive quality assurance was undertaken with local authorities and where issues were due to the need for more clarity around some specific data requirements greater agreement was reached in interpretation as the year progressed. One local authority was unable to provide any figures as a result of technical problems following implementation of the new Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) computer system.

These statistics are published as experimental statistics reflecting the scale of change happening in social services and system changes for the first year of data collection. Following the first year, the collection process and publication will be reviewed.

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, e.g. 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 (whether by full or half blood or by marriage) or a step-parent cannot 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 2015-16 decreased compared to previous years.

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 reported, year ending 31 March

Arrangements	2017
Number of notifications of a child being privately fostered received during the year	44
Number of visits that were within 7 working days of notification of the beginning of the private fostering arrangement	36
Number of notifications of the end of a private fostering arrangement received during the year	40
Number of private fostering homes known to the local authority at 31 March	28

Source: Children receiving care and support aggregate form

There were 44 new private fostering arrangements were reported during the year, compared to 41 in the previous year.

36 children received an initial visit from a local authority worker during the year ending 31 March 2016 within 7 working days of notification of the beginning of the private fostering.

Arrangements and initial visits may occur in different years, leading to differing totals.

There were 28 private fostering homes known to the local authority at 31 March.

Table 2: Number of notifications of a child being privately fostered received during the year, by age of child at 31 March 2017

Ages	Number of notifications
Aged Under 1	*
Aged 1-4	*
Aged 5-9	*
Aged 10-15	37
Aged 16 and over	*
All Ages	44

Source: Children receiving care and support aggregate form

* Figures less than 5 have been suppressed

Of the 44 children under private fostering arrangements, 89 per cent of children were aged 10 or over when their arrangement commenced in the year ending 31 March 2016. There were no notifications of a child being fostered under the age of one.

Notes

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act came into effect on 6 April 2016. It is the new legal framework that brings together and modernises social services law in Wales. The Act changes the way people's needs are assessed and the way services are delivered.

From 6 April 2016, local authorities are expected to collect and return data on the activities of children's social services based on new reporting requirements developed in line with the implementation of Act. This release examines key findings for 2016-17 and is intended to monitor the introduction of the new assessment and eligibility model to support delivery and assess its impact.

This is the fifth 'Private Fostering in Wales' statistical release to be published, the first having been published on 23 October 2013.

Compared to previous editions, some information is not available for 2016-17 due to a change in source following commencement of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (for further information see the key quality section).

Information on the numbers of children publically fostered by local authorities can be obtained from the Statistical Release on looked after children, the latest edition of which will be published on the 30th November 2017.

[Children looked after by local authorities](#)

There are no planned revisions to the data in this release.

Data collection

All references made to 'year' in relation to 2016-17 relate to the year from implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act i.e. from 6 April to 31 March. All references made to 'year' in relation to any other years relate to the standard financial year which runs from 1 April to 31 March

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 [Children receiving care and support aggregate form](#). The form applies an extensive series of validation checks to ensure that the information provided is accurate and consistent.

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.

Relevance

The statistics will be used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor private fostering 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 will be:

- Ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales;
- The Department for Health and Social Services in the Welsh Government;
- Other areas of the Welsh Government;
- Local authorities;
- The third sector (e.g. charities);
- 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 the uses include:

- Advice to Ministers;
- To inform the social services policy decision-making process in Wales;
- Local authority comparisons and benchmarks;
- To inform the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales;
- To assist in research on private fostering.

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. However, the figures may still be used to monitor local authority performance in visiting children.

This is the first year of collecting the data from the [Children receiving care and support aggregate](#). 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. Data adhere to the national standards and guidance, thus ensuring coherence within

and across organisations. Local authorities are expected to comply with the guidance notes for completion that accompany the data collection form.

The figures in this release reflect the final position of the 2016-17 data year and are correct as at 31 March 2017. 2016-17 is the first year of collecting and reporting on data derived from the [Children receiving care and support aggregate](#) return following implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. This new data collection is supported by detailed guidance and an extensive series of validation checks were undertaken to ensure that the information provided is accurate and consistent.

Timeliness and punctuality

The Data Collection team within the Welsh Government collected data, for the year 2016-17, between May and July 2017. Data in this release refers to final 2016-17 data. Once submitted data has been validated, this release is drafted and published as soon as possible. This release was published in November 2017, meeting the planned date of publication.

Accessibility and clarity

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics and Research 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.

Comparability and coherence

2016-17 is the first year of collecting and reporting on data derived from the [Children receiving care and support aggregate](#) return. This Statistical Release provides figures at Wales level, with some further information about individual local authorities available on [StatsWales](#). To ensure that the national data are comparable and consistent, local authorities are expected to comply with the guidance notes for completion that accompany the data collection form.

Data has been published previously on private fostering arrangements in Wales based on the previous Children's services: Performance management (PM1) data collection. Results are largely comparable however some information is no longer collected and reported. Not all the results are comparable as the 2016-17 collection guidance refers to the more recent Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) (Wales) Regulations 2006.

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:

From 2016 England no longer publish and collect statistics on notifications of private fostering arrangements. Instead they intend to gather information on private fostering through the existing annual children in need census.

[Private fostering arrangement notifications: planned revisions](#)

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.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on indicators and associated technical information - [How do you measure a nation's progress? - National Indicators](#)

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

Further details

The document is available at: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/private-fostering/?lang=en>

Data for each local authority is available on [StatsWales](#).

Next update

November 2018 (Provisional)

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to stats.pss@gov.wales.

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