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rsgateway/DB/SFR/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/)**PRIVATE FOSTERING ARRANGEMENTS IN ENGLAND: YEAR ENDING  
31 MARCH 2007****INTRODUCTION**

This Statistical First Release (SFR) provides figures on children cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements in England. A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more.

This release contains summary information that has been derived from statistical data supplied by the 150 Local Authorities in England.

These figures are important because they monitor the impact of the legislative changes in 2005 under which Local Authorities have a duty to promote and encourage notification of private fostering arrangements. However, these figures are believed to be an underestimate of the total number of children in private fostering arrangements. This is because there is doubt over whether all parents, carers and other relevant third parties currently report the existence of these arrangements to their Local Authority. Readers are cautioned against using the figures in this SFR as an estimate of the total number of children in private fostering arrangements.

**KEY POINTS**

- At 31 March 2007, 1,250 children were reported as being cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements in England. This compares with 980 children reported at 31 March 2006 and 730 at 31 March 2005.
- 1,420 new private fostering arrangements began during the year to 31 March 2007, and 1,010 private fostering arrangements ended during the year.
- Of the number of cases where action was taken, 69% were taken in accordance with requirements within 7 working days.

**Characteristics of privately fostered children**

- 68% of privately fostered children were aged from 10 to 15.
- 68% of privately fostered children were born in the United Kingdom, 23% were born in Africa or Asia.



## **BACKGROUND**

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately for the care of a child under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. Private foster carers may be from the extended family, such as a cousin or great aunt. However, a person who is a relative under the Children Act 1989 i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full or half blood or by marriage) 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 period for which the child is cared for and accommodated by the private foster carer should be continuous, but if a child receives an occasional short break this is not considered to break that continuity.

### **Legislation**

The legislation relevant to private fostering is set out in Part 9 of, and Schedule 8 to, the Children Act 1989, as amended by section 44 of the Children Act 2004 which came into effect on 1 July 2005, and regulations made under Part 9 of 1989 Children Act (the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005), which also came into effect on 1 July 2005. Local authorities are required to satisfy themselves that the welfare of children who are, or will be, privately fostered within their area is being, or will be, satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted.

## **TABLES**

- Table 1** Number of children reported to Local Authorities as being cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements during year ending 31 March 2007.
- Table 2** Number of cases where action was taken in accordance with requirements for carrying out visits, and of those the number that were carried out within 7 days during year ending 31 March 2007.
- Table 3** Number of children reported to Local Authorities as being cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements which started during the year, by age as at 31 March 2007 and place of birth.
- Table 4** Number of children reported to Local Authorities as being cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements during years ending 31 March 2005 to 2007.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

1. In 1991 the then Department of Health ceased collecting statistics on private fostering, at which time there were around 2,000 private fostering arrangements known to Local Authorities. The collection was ceased because of concerns about the level of notification of arrangements to those authorities. However, in 2004/05 a new collection (the PF1 return) was put in place. The figures in this release are taken from the PF1 statistical return for 2006/07, which provides the DCSF with aggregate data on the number of children cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements at 31 March, and the number of new arrangements and the number of arrangements which ceased during the year to 31 March.
2. Two new questions were introduced in the most recent survey about the percentage of foster placements where visits were made to new arrangements at intervals of not more than 6 weeks, and to existing arrangements of not more than 12 weeks. Doubts over the quality of the data submitted in response to these questions have resulted in figures not being reported in this SFR.
3. Provisions on private fostering in the Children Act 2004 and the new Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 came into effect on 1st July 2005 and therefore affect arrangements starting from that date. These measures are designed to strengthen the existing notification scheme for private fostering arrangements. For further details, please refer to the Private Fostering Guidance at:  
[http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/datastats1/guidelines/children/pdf/Private Fostering Guidance notes 2005-06.pdf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/datastats1/guidelines/children/pdf/Private_Fostering_Guidance_notes_2005-06.pdf) .
4. The figures provided are based on data provided by all 150 Local Authorities. Four of these Local Authorities reported that they had had no private fostering arrangements during the year, a decrease from 14 in 2005/06. This may be due in part to the fact that this is the third year of data collection and Local Authorities have an increased awareness of regulations and a better knowledge of private fostering arrangements.
5. A research document funded by DCSF (An Exploratory Study of Private Fostering) which was referenced in the previous Statistical First Release as due for publication in 2007 can now be found at:  
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/projectinformation.cfm?projectId=15240&keyword=private&keywordlist1=0&keywordlist2=0&keywordlist3=0&andor=or&type=0&resultspage=1> .
6. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 10. Numbers from 1 to 5 inclusive have been suppressed, being replaced in the published tables by a hyphen (-). Where any number is shown as zero (0), the original figure submitted was zero.

## **A National Statistics publication**

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

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**Table 1: Number of children reported to Local Authorities as being cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements<sup>1,2,3</sup>**  
**Year ending 31 March 2007**  
**Coverage: England**

	numbers				
	Number of children under private fostering arrangements at 31 March	Number of new notifications during the year	Number of new arrangements that began during the year	Notifications of arrangements coming to an end during the year	Number of arrangements that ended during the year
<b>England</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>1,570</b>	<b>1,420</b>	<b>1,010</b>	<b>1,040</b>
<b>Region</b>					
North East	50	80	80	40	50
North West	100	90	90	60	70
Yorkshire and Humberside	70	80	80	60	60
East Midlands	110	140	130	100	100
West Midlands	90	120	120	90	90
East of England	120	110	110	40	60
London	360	420	340	190	180
South East	210	260	250	190	200
South West	140	270	230	260	230

Source: PF1

1. Where a child has had more than one private fostering arrangement during the year, each arrangement has been counted.
2. Notifications received during the year include private fostering arrangements which may have started before 1st April 2006 or were due to start after 31 March 2007. The same applies to notifications of private fostering arrangements coming to an end.
3. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. Figures may not add up due to rounding.

**Table 2: Number of cases where action was taken in accordance with requirements for carrying out visits, and of those the number that were carried out within 7 days<sup>1</sup>**

**Year ending 31 March 2007**

**Coverage: England**

numbers and percentages

	Number of cases where action was taken in accordance with requirements for carrying out visits	Number of cases where this action was taken in accordance with requirements within 7 working days	Percentage of cases where action was taken within 7 working days
<b>England</b>	<b>1,410</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Region</b>			
North East	70	60	86
North West	90	80	90
Yorkshire and Humberside	80	50	68
East Midlands	130	100	75
West Midlands	100	70	64
East of England	110	80	79
London	390	250	64
South East	220	130	60
South West	220	140	64

Source: PF1

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. Figures may not add up due to rounding.

**Table 3: Number of children reported to Local Authorities as being cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements which started during the year, by age as at 31 March 2007 and place of birth <sup>1,2</sup>**

**Year ending 31 March 2007**

**Coverage: England**

	numbers					
	All children	UK	Europe (other)	Africa	Asia	Other <sup>3</sup>
<b>All children</b>	<b>1,420</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>70</b>
Under 1	20	20	0	-	-	0
1 - 4	110	80	-	20	-	10
5 - 9	120	70	-	30	10	10
10 - 15	970	630	50	80	160	50
16 & over	200	160	10	10	10	-

*Source: PF1*

1. Where a child has had more than one private fostering arrangement during the year, the child has only been counted once.
2. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. Figures may not add up due to rounding.
3. Other includes Middle East, Oceania, Canada & USA, Central & South America.

**Table 4: Number of children reported to Local Authorities as being cared for and accommodated in private fostering arrangements<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>**  
**Years ending 31 March 2005 to 2007**  
**Coverage: England**

	numbers														
	Number of children under private fostering arrangements at 31 March			Number of new notifications during the year			Number of new arrangements that began during the year			Notifications of arrangements coming to an end during the year			Number of arrangements that ended during the year		
	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007
<b>England</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,570</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>1,420</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>1,010</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>1,040</b>
<b>Region</b>															
North East	30	40	50	20	60	80	20	60	80	-	30	40	-	30	50
North West	70	80	100	70	70	90	90	80	90	40	40	60	40	60	70
Yorkshire and Humberside	90	60	70	80	90	80	80	90	80	40	80	60	40	90	60
East Midlands	110	120	110	100	120	140	90	110	130	50	60	100	50	90	100
West Midlands	50	60	90	40	70	120	40	70	120	20	50	90	20	50	90
East of England	40	70	120	30	90	110	30	80	110	20	50	40	20	60	60
London	130	240	360	110	240	420	90	250	340	20	80	190	20	100	180
South East	130	170	210	100	140	260	100	140	250	50	80	190	60	80	200
South West	100	140	140	100	200	270	90	220	230	80	160	260	80	170	230

Source: PF1

1. Where a child has had more than one private fostering arrangement during the year, each arrangement has been counted.
2. Notifications received during the year include private fostering arrangements which may have started before 1st April or were due to start after 31 March. The same applies to notifications of private fostering arrangements coming to an end.
3. The figures across years may not tally because of the continually improving reporting of arrangements and the possible counting of children with more than one arrangement during the year.
4. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. Figures may not add up due to rounding.