



THE LONDON BOROUGH
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Annual Private Fostering Report 2016/2017



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2. Introduction

2.1 The Private Fostering Regulations apply when children or young people, aged under 16 years (18 if they have a disability) live with a person who is not a close relative for 28 days or more. The Local Authority where the arrangement takes place needs to assess the suitability of this arrangement and review it under the Private Fostering Regulations to ensure the placement is able to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

2.2 This annual report gives an overview of activities in relation to privately fostered children in the London Borough Bromley from the 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017. The report details how the London Borough Bromley has complied with its duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering and includes how the welfare of privately fostered children has been safeguarded and promoted over the past 12 months.

Bromley's Private Fostering Statement of Purpose has been updated and outlines the definition of Private Fostering and the expectations on the local authority to meet this. This Annual Report should therefore be read in conjunction with the Statement of Purpose for 2016/2017.

2.3 This report also outlines the activities, which have been undertaken to promote awareness of the notification requirements regarding children who are living in Private Fostering arrangements.

2.4 The London Borough of Bromley has, over the past year, continued to promote local understanding and awareness of Private Fostering and sought to improve how we meet the needs of the children and young people concerned. This includes using audits to review our own performance and to identify where improvements need to be made. Bromley gives consideration of all examples of good practice

regarding Private Fostering and demonstrates where possible innovative practice and aims to also exceed the National Minimum Standards. Bromley continues to:

- Consider its Private Fostering responsibilities with the upmost importance and senior managers continue to communicate the importance of ensuring that privately fostered children are safeguarded and seen within Statutory Timescales.
- Be proactive in identifying Private Fostering arrangements and ensure that its assessments and visits are performed in line with legislation and good practice.
- Safeguard children and escalate cases to Safeguarding and Care Planning Services where necessary.
- Promote equality, diversity and treating others with respect.
- Undertake regular Private Fostering awareness campaigns, which help to highlight Private Fostering arrangements, draw attention to the legal definition and outline the call to action when a Private Fostering arrangement is identified. Bromley will continue to develop good working relationships with its wider community and partner agencies in order to create and develop a comprehensive and systematic approach to identifying children and young people in Private Fostering arrangements.
- Maintain internal and external communication regarding Private Fostering arrangements using a wide range of publicity.

As of January 2016, the responsibility of Private Fostering moved to the Fostering Service where the role of lead professional was allocated to a Senior Practitioner in this team.

3. Private Fostering – A Definition

3.1 A Private Fostering (PF) arrangement is essentially one that is made privately (i.e. without the involvement of a local authority) 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. A person who is a close relative under the Children Act 1989 i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of full blood or half blood or by marriage) or stepparent will not be a private foster carer. However, private foster carers may be a cousin, a great aunt, friend of the family, parent of a friend of the child. The period for which the child is cared for by the private foster carer should be continuous.

3.2 Arrangements for Private Fostering were updated in the Children Act 2004 and the Children (Private Arrangement for Fostering) Regulations 2005, which set out the duties of local authorities in their arrangements for Private Fostering. The National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Local Authorities were published in 2005 alongside this.

4. Planning on Private Fostering

4.1 Standard 1 of the National Minimum Standards requires that the Local Authority has a written statement or plan, which sets out its duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out. Bromley has developed a formal 'Statement of Purpose', which is attached as **Appendix 1**. The Bromley Safeguarding Children Board BSCB plays a vital role in helping protect children who are privately fostered, exercising leadership and raising awareness of the requirements and issues around Private Fostering.

4.2 Bromley's Statement of Purpose for Private Fostering is reviewed annually alongside this annual report, in line with requirements under the National Minimum Standard (NMS) for Private Fostering. The Local Authority's Statement of Purpose

regarding Private Fostering sets out: the notification requirements; the Local Authority's duties and functions under the Children Act 1989, 2004 and the Children (Private Arrangement for Fostering) Regulations 2005; as well as the role of all professionals and agencies in Bromley and the arrangements of training for relevant staff and professionals.

4.3 This document will be made available to partner agencies, along with other Private Fostering publicity information, and will be published on Bromley's website.

5. Notification Arrangements

5.1 The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) receive new enquiries and referrals regarding proposed or existing Private Fostering arrangements. The Referral and Assessment Service (RAS) then undertakes the task of assessing the suitability of Private Fostering arrangements and initial welfare visits. Once the arrangement have been assessed as a safe Private Fostering arrangement, the duty of undertaking regular home visits and the provision of support and advice transfers to the Lead Officer for Private Fostering located within the Fostering Service. The Lead Officer is Godwin Munzara, Senior Practitioner Social Worker.

5.2 Moving forward we shall be looking at the notification and assessment arrangements to streamline the process so that it becomes more effective and efficient. The current arrangement of involving three different teams at the beginning of each notification and assessment process can cause delay. We shall be arranging for the suitability assessments for Private Fostering to be completed within the Fostering Service in going forward. Private Fostering arrangement notifications can continue to go via the MASH process however instead of transferring from MASH to RAS, Private Fostering cases will then be transferred to Lead Officer for Private Fostering from MASH. The Lead Officer

will then complete the suitability assessments and will continue to support the family if there are no safeguarding concerns identified.

5.3 This will have the following benefits:

- It will lessen the number of professionals the child is involved with. Currently children will have two different social workers within a short period of time.
- It will bring streamline the assessment process and reduce potential delays in transferring cases between RAS and Fostering Service – Lead Officer for Private Fostering.
- It will free time for social workers working in front line teams and will contribute to reducing the caseload of practitioners, in line to the current Service Improvement journey.
- Responsibility and accountability will no longer be shared, but rest with Private Fostering Lead Officer.

5.4 Also during the financial year 2016 to 2017 the Lead Officers for Private Fostering have undertaken developmental work including reviewing Private Fostering forms on the new Computer Information System 'Eclipse' which goes live in October 2017, as well as ensuring that the Local Authority's Private Fostering policies and procedures are in line with statutory requirements and national guidance.

The Lead Officer has also provided advice to social workers and partner agencies on complex Private Fostering matters as well as providing training to Bromley council staff and partner agencies.

6. Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare

6.1 As mentioned, before the notifications are currently processed through Bromley MASH to RAS and then to Private Fostering. The Referral and Assessment Service's Team Managers sign off all Private Fostering arrangements when they are assessed as safe and any arrangements that do not meet this threshold are

pursued via the formal safeguarding route under the remit of the Safeguarding and Care Planning Service. Before they are being transferred to the Lead Officer, a transfer meeting is held to ensure that all parties agree that it is a viable Private Fostering arrangement. Once held with the Lead Officer, at any point that risk is identified, this is escalated and pursued through the usual safeguarding routes

6.2 Transferring cases from Private Fostering to Safeguarding and Care Planning has come with its challenges during this reporting year due to gaps in the case transfer procedures. An example of the challenges in the transfer protocol was evidenced in one particular case, where the children were eventually accommodated following a Section 47 Enquiry. Since then the transfer protocols have been reviewed and the Fostering Team have had input into this process. All transfers now go through a Case Transfer Panel to ensure that any delays in transferring cases to the most appropriate team are minimised.

7. Practice Development

Nationally:

7.1 The British Association for Adoption and Fostering (CORAMBAAF) continues to facilitate a special interest group for Private Fostering. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering attends this special interest group, which meets four times a year and enables local policy and practice to be developed in line with best practice from other authorities.

7.2 Members of the group include; CORAMBAAF, Local Authority representatives with interest in Private Fostering's matters, direct or indirect representation from the DfE, NSPCC and member agencies with personal experience of Private Fostering. The group has been supporting members by providing relevant research findings, good practice guidance and up-to-date materials in relation to Private Fostering.

7.3 CORAMBAAF co-ordinates a national annual publicity campaign for Private Fostering. This provides an opportunity for raising awareness campaigns to be coordinated within local authorities. Bromley Council has participated in the local and national Private Fostering raising awareness campaign every July in line with the local authority's action plan.

Locally:

7.4 The Private Fostering Lead Officer has continued to work closely with both internal and external agencies in raising awareness about Private Fostering and in safeguarding and ensuring the wellbeing of privately fostered children. The Lead Officer has continued to build on the close working relationship with language schools, international colleges, GP's, schools and health. Information in the form of posters and leaflets regarding Private Fostering is regularly distributed to schools, libraries, GP surgeries, residents associations and faith groups in Bromley outlining the definition of Private Fostering and the legal duties to report any known Private Fostering arrangements.

7.5 In February 2017, the Lead Officer attended a SENCOs Forum where posters and leaflets were distributed and information was shared with safeguarding officers from across the borough.

7.6 The Lead Officer jointly with the Local Authority Designated Officer provided training in July 2017 for 31 professionals including; Independent Reviewing Officers, Social Workers, Head teachers, teachers, support workers from Bromley family centers, foster carers and professionals from health. The training covered areas including current legislation, guidance and publications. It is the current Lead Officer's aim to continue to offer on-going refresher training to all Social workers across children services through team meetings and formal training offered via Learning and Development in the 2017/18

financial year. This will ensure that any new employees are informed of the current practice, legislation and critical debates in Private Fostering. This will be rolled out in September 2017 and more training will be offered to partner agencies across the borough.

7.7 National Minimum Standards (NMS) – The NMS Rolling Plan was reviewed in June 2017 to ensure we are confident we are still providing services within the National Minimum Standards. The local authority's policies and procedures in relation to Private Fostering in Bromley continue to be developed and Private Fostering Arrangement assessment forms will be integrated into the new information system 'Eclipse' which will be launched in Oct 2017. In February 2016, a new activity tool was added to Private Fostering to be able to monitor the DBS checks for private foster carers and alert us to when they need to be updated.

7.8 A new App for Private Fostering Awareness which will be available to download from iTunes is currently been designed and this will be launched within this financial year. This is a significant step forward in our awareness campaign as it is one of the most effective and efficient ways to achieve this objective.

We shall also be raising awareness by sending messages via twitter through the Bromley Corporate page. Bromley's website was updated in 2016 to ensure it was more streamlined. The majority of Private Fostering information can now be accessed online.

8. Raising Awareness about Private Fostering

8.1 The Children Act 2004 includes a paragraph (7A) in Schedule 8 of the Children Act 1989, which places a duty on local authorities to promote Private Fostering public awareness in their area of the notification requirements.

8.2 It is a legal requirement to promote public awareness however it continues to be concerning that 91% of the UK adult population do not know what Private Fostering is according to the research commissioned by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (CORAMBAAF (2015)).

8.3 Bromley recognises the importance of promoting Private Fostering public awareness in planned and organised ways. Outcomes of these activities in the past have made little difference in terms of increasing notifications and we are aware that the most effective awareness raising campaigns focus primarily on the council's own staff, GP's, school admissions and language colleges.

8.4 The data from 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016 showed that the number of notifications received increased significantly to 19, compared to 12 from the previous reporting year. The notifications received in the year 2016/2017 decreased to 12. What continues to be significant is that professionals who were unrelated to language schools referred a large number of these notifications. We are aware that there is still more work to do and Bromley will continue to build on these campaigns this coming year.

8.5 In order to meet that commitment and increase the number of Awareness campaigns in the coming year we shall ensure that the Lead Officer for Private Fostering is a full time role. Currently this role has been undertaken on a part time basis with the Lead Officer also having responsibility for supervising carers alongside this. In making the role full time and streamlining the notification and assessment process this will allow the Lead Officer to focus on raising awareness activities within the community and providing a more focused support service to children living in Private Fostering arrangements.

8.6 Bromley has this year undertaken the following strategies to raise awareness:

- 1) The Lead Officer has continued to provide in-depth training and advice to the children's workforce practitioners. However, this work needs to be extended to

include attending team meetings and arranging regular training throughout the year to ensure that social workers, new social workers to Bromley and newly qualified social workers keep informed and updated on their role in Private Fostering.

- 2) We have continued to develop our database of organisations in the borough including Churches, Mosques, Community centres, Resident associations, Cultural Organisations, schools, GP's, Children Centre's and Public Libraries. Letters, posters and leaflets have been sent highlighting the need to notify us of any Private Fostering arrangements they are aware of.
- 3) All educational establishments in Bromley including Early Year's provisions were sent a circular from the local authority's education department emphasising the need for notifying the local authority about any Private Fostering arrangements they are aware of.
- 5) Ongoing publications were undertaken in 2016/17 through the internal newsletter "In Touch" and the BSCB Newsletter. Both newsletters reach a wide audience and are circulated across the borough. They have been useful in disseminating messages and raising awareness.
- 6) In February 2017, the Lead Officer attended the SENCO Forum organised by BSCB where he distributed a guide for professionals as part of raising awareness activities. This was a large and diverse audience with a multiagency presence representing professionals with a large amount of involvement with children and families. We have also promoted Private Fostering awareness by attending various meetings with different organisations and partner agencies.

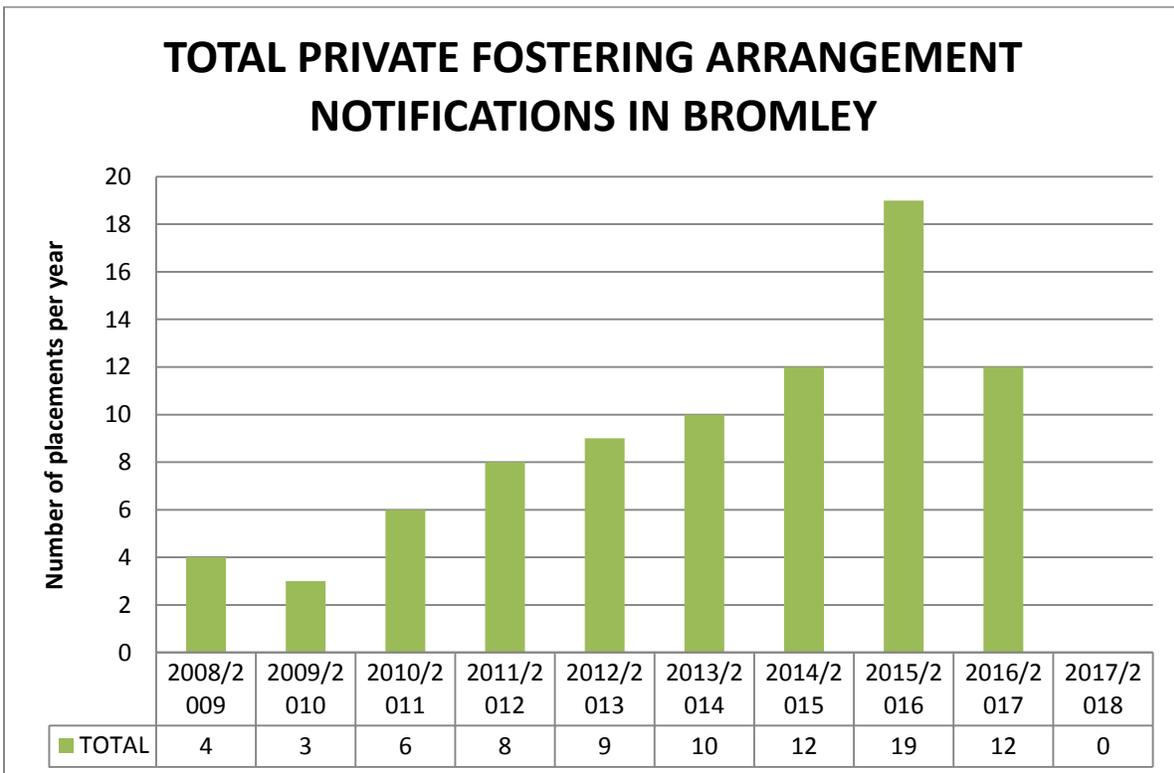
8.6 The Bromley Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB) continued to provide a leadership role in Private Fostering and contributed to raising awareness through their internal newsletter and conferences as well as supporting the Lead Officer with Private Fostering.

8.7 Bromley Corporate Website has been updated to reflect Private Fostering and it signposts the reader to the Bromley Mylife online Portal

(<https://bromley.mylifeportal.co.uk/privatefostering/>, last accessed 23.08.2017)

9. Outcomes for children in Private Fostering arrangements.

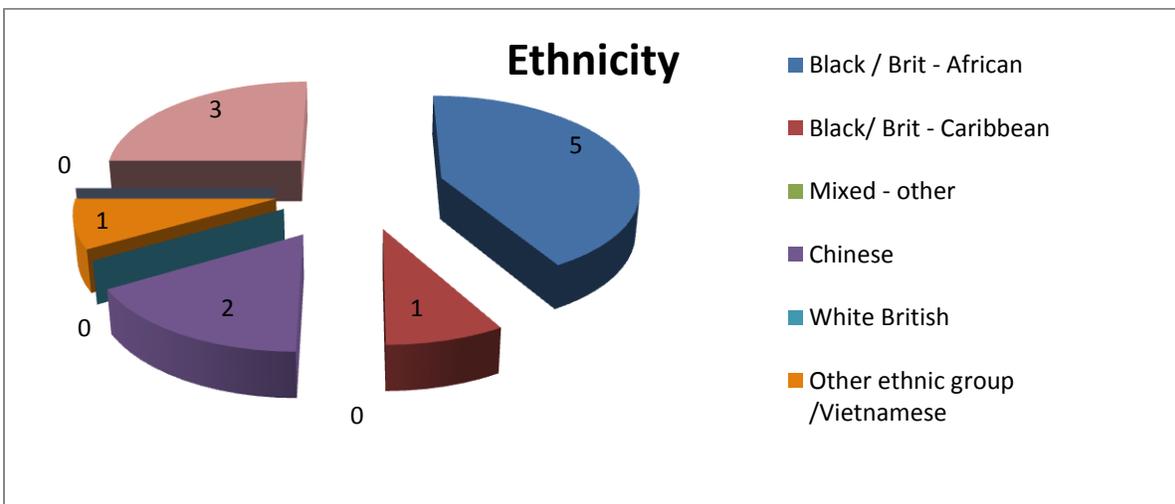
Graphic analysis of Notifications



9.1 The chart above provides summary figures showing key Private Fostering notification activity in Bromley over the last 9 years. It is clear from the graph that the notifications have continued to increase over years. The 2015/16, reporting year indicates a marked increase in notifications recorded in 7 years. This may have been due to the implementation of the Private Fostering Awareness Campaign, which launched in 2013/2014.

9.2 There has been a decrease in the number of Private Fostering notifications between 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2017. The numbers of notifications have decreased from 19 in the previous reporting year to 12 in this reporting year. Although the awareness campaign activities have continued on the trend of the previous year, the reasons for this decrease is not apparent. These statistics would be discussed at the next CoramBAAF Private Fostering Special Interest Group to analyse this in comparison with other authorities.

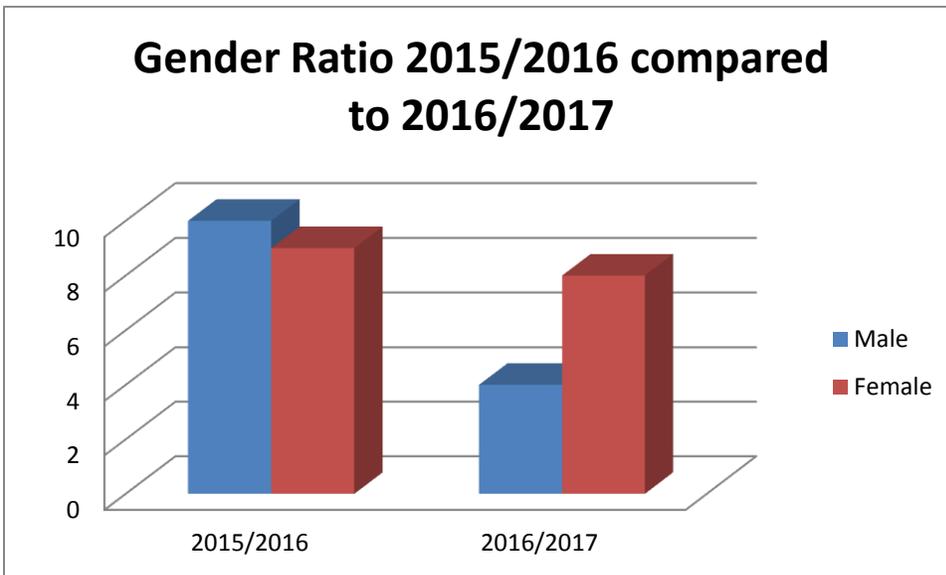
From the 12 notifications received in the last year, 5 of them were from language schools, this leaves 7 notifications from other sources. For the first time notifications for non-students have been more than for student notifications.



9.3 Out of the 12 notifications, 5 children were classified as Black British-African, 3 were White European, 2 were Chinese, 1 was Black British-African-Caribbean, and 1 was Vietnamese. It is encouraging to see that there continue to be more of a mix of ethnicities from the last reporting year and continued on to this reporting year. This may be an indication that the Awareness Campaign is reaching a diverse audience and different communities.

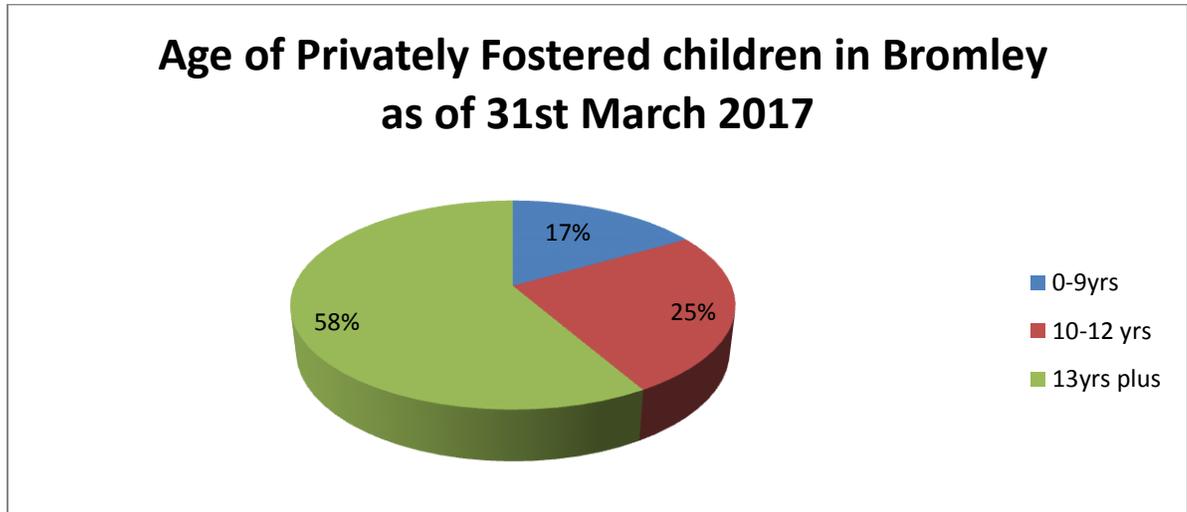
9.4 Bromley has and will continue to develop the Private Fostering communication plan, forming new relationships with other professionals to widen the impact of raising awareness activities. Bromley will also look at these statistics and use them to analyse and build on the effectiveness of our campaigns.

Privately Fostered Children by Gender – Reporting Period of Notifications 1st April 2015 – 31st March 2017



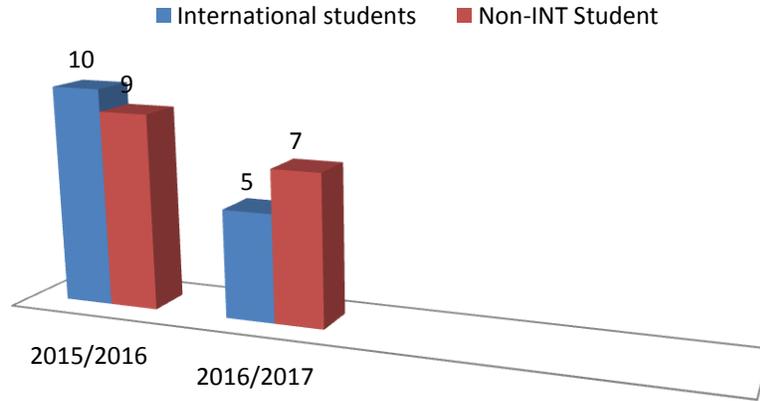
9.5 Out of the 12 notifications, 9 were female and 3 were male. In the year 2015/2016 there were more (10) boys Private Fostering notifications compared to girls (9), however in the year 2016/2017 the notifications for boys dropped significantly. This figure also informs us that overall, there was a downtrend on notifications in 2016/2017.

Age of Privately Fostered children in Bromley as of 31st March 2017



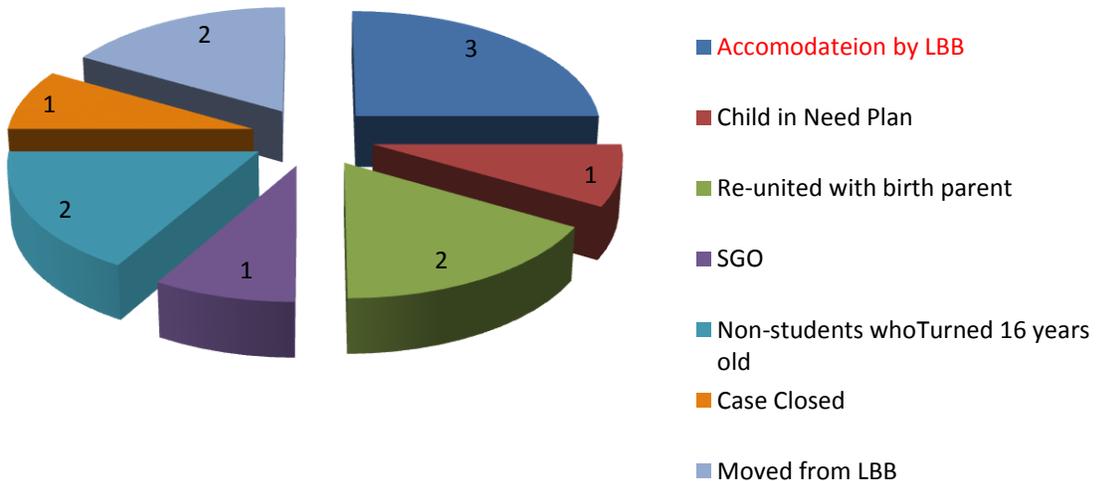
9.6 This table demonstrates that as of 31st March 2017, there were two children under 9 years old who were subject to Private Fostering arrangements as compared to the year 2015/16 where there were no children in the 0- 9 years range. There has been an increase in the number of children within the age range 13-16 by two compared to last year and the children aged 10-12 years have also increased from 3 to 4.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT NON-STUDENTS RATIO



In the 2016/2017 period we have also noticed an upwards trend in notifications from non- international students as compared to the 2015/2016 period where there were more notifications from international students.

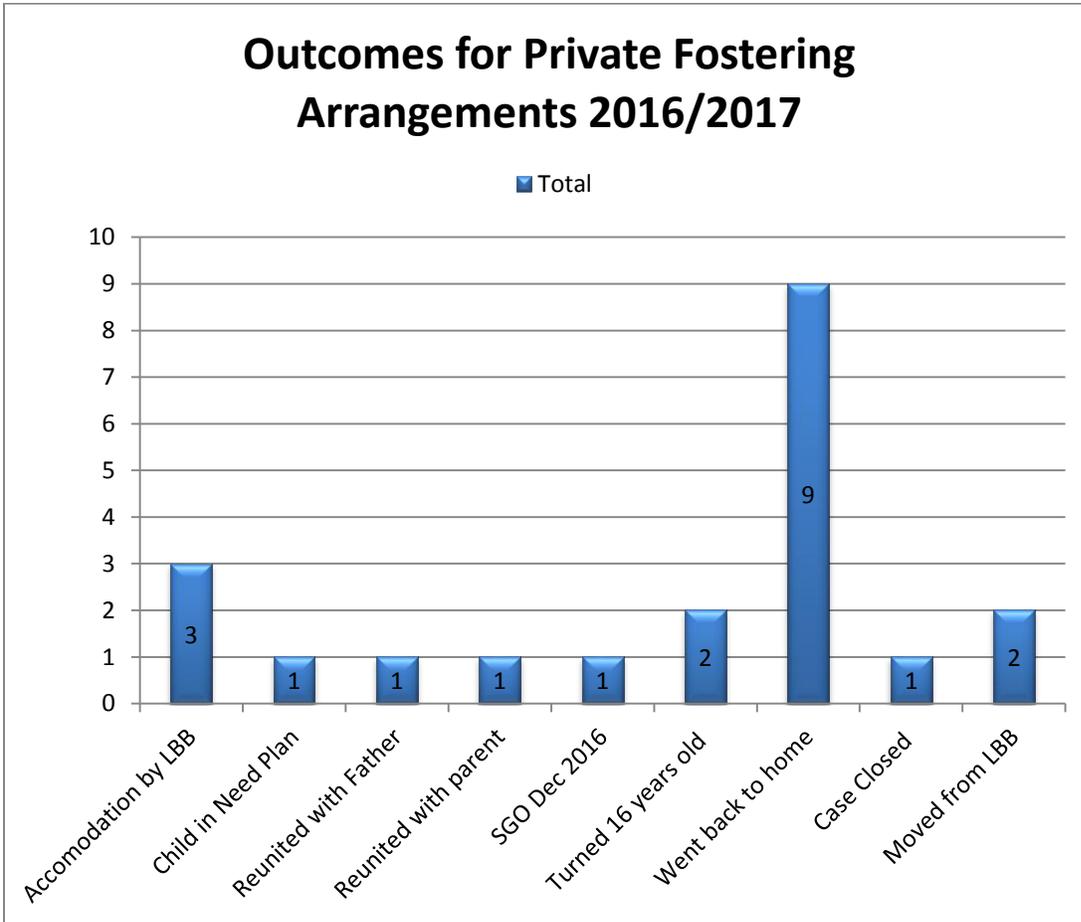
Outcomes for Private Fostering Arrangements 2016/2017



9.7 During this reporting year, the Local Authority has accommodated two children from a Private Fostering Arrangement, under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. The children were placed with an in-house foster carer and the cases remained within Private Fostering, until the Local Authority were granted Interim Care Orders in respect of the two children. While the case was managed in Private Fostering, assessments were carried out including; Risk and Viability assessments for family members as well as the CLA process.

9.6 Out of the 12 Private Fostering arrangements that ceased:

- a) three children were accommodated by the Local Authority and were placed with in-house foster carers. The Local Authority obtained Interim Care Orders in respect of two of the children and they are currently thriving in the foster placement.
- b) In one case permanence has been achieved for the young person through a Special Guardianship Order;
- c) one case was transferred to the Safeguarding and Care Planning Team under a Child in Need Plan;
- d) two children were reunited with their birth parents;
- e) two turned 16 years old when the Private Fostering arrangement monitoring ended in accordance to the Private Fostering Regulation 2005 and
- f) two moved away from the London Borough of Bromley area to another Local Authority.



10. Advice and Support

- 10.1 The Referral and Assessment service and the Lead Officer for Private Fostering ensure that private foster carers, parents and their children receive appropriate advice and support in all areas including advice on benefits and housing.
- 10.2 Where possible, the Lead Officer for Private Fostering will continue to offer support to private foster carers in matters of immigration or signpost them to appropriate Legal Service available, in relation to the children or young people subject to Private Fostering regulations.
- 10.3 Private foster carers are offered support and receive appropriate information if they wish to seek a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order. This

has occurred with a private foster carer recently and she has been supported by both Lead Officers to apply for an SGO for the child that she is caring for.

- 10.4 The Lead Officer for Private Fostering has been available to offer support and advice to colleagues who require clarification on Private Fostering matters. This has included answering email and phone queries from professionals from schools and other areas who are working with families.
- 10.5 The Lead Officer seeks advice and support from the safeguarding team and has escalated cases to a child in need and child protection level where necessary.

11. The views of privately fostered children, their parents and carers

- 11.1 The Private Fostering service is attempting to offer a service user centred approach through gaining feedback from privately fostered children, their parents and carers to better meet their needs and priorities. Bromley has been encouraging privately fostered children, their carers and parents to feedback. At the end of his studies in the UK, one international student expressed that *“Although I didn’t really need to see a social worker every month, it was reassuring to know that you have someone in authority looking out for you”*
- 11.2 The previous Lead Officer ensured that social workers received appropriate training focused on helping them to understand the importance of gathering feedback for further analysis. This will continue through the year and social workers will be encouraged to report feedback to the Lead Officer.

12. Monitoring Compliance with Duties and Functions

The reporting period performance assessed against previous return figures

(Table 1)

Indicators	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Number of notifications of new Private Fostering arrangement received during the year	10	8	20	12
Number of cases where action was taken in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 4 (1) and 7 (1) for carrying out visits	10	8	20	9
Of these the number of cases where this action was taken within 7 working days of receipt of notification of the Private Fostering arrangement	8	6	15	5
Number of new arrangements that began during the year	10	8	19	12
The number of Private Fostering arrangements that began On or After 1 April 2016 where visits were made at intervals of not more than 6 weeks	5	4	17	7
The Number of Private Fostering arrangements that began BEFORE 1st April 2016 that were continuing on 1st April 2017	3	8	4	6
The number of Private Fostering arrangements that began before 1 April 2016 that were continuing on 1 April 2016 where scheduled visits were	3	5	4	0

completed in the requested timescale				
Number of Private Fostering arrangements that ended during the year	4	11	15	13
Number of children under Private Fostering arrangements as of 31 st March 2017	13	6	9	8

13. Action Plan for 2017/2018

1. The Local Authority's Statement of Purpose in relation to Private Fostering continues to be reviewed annually, every July.
2. The Group Manager will arrange for the role of the Lead Officer for Private Fostering to become a full time post.
3. Arrangements will be made to streamline the notification and assessment process so that the Lead Officer undertakes the initial assessments following a notification to MASH.
4. There was coordinated raising awareness activities in July 2017 as outlined in the Communication Plan. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering will monitor the effectiveness of raising awareness and report to management of its outcomes or challenges.
5. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering will review the NMS-Rolling plan for the reporting year 2016-2017 by October 2017 to ensure that we remain in line with National Minimum Standards.
6. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering will continue to review the Local Authority's Communications Plan in relation to raising awareness about Private Fostering in line with the OFSTED recommendations and good practice undertaken by other Local Authorities.
7. The Lead Officer will continue to work with language schools and agencies providing host families for overseas students attending language school, to

ensure they fully brief their host families on both their responsibilities and those of the local authority's in relation to the assessment and most importantly the on-going monitoring of such arrangements.

8. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering will continue to provide appropriate training for children workforce practitioners and partner agencies by working closely with Learning and Development and Business Manager for BSCB.
9. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering will continue to attend the Private Fostering Specialist Interest Group (PFSIG) run by CORAMBAAF and use this as mechanism to disseminate any lessons learnt or share examples of best practice from other Local Authorities.
10. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering will ensure that leaflets/information for privately fostered children and their parents and carers are translated into different languages, which will include Cantonese and Mandarin. The young people who have originated from abroad to study English have in 2016-2017 spoken very good English and providing paperwork for them in their own language has not often been necessary. It has also been noted that the school have very good relationships with the parents and speak to them often. Good communication with the schools will remain a priority as this can then continue to be used as another base for communication.
11. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering will liaise with the local authorities website and Twitter administrators to ensure that information which supports raising awareness of Private Fostering, is maintained and regularly updated through social media throughout the year. This includes leading on the development and implementation of the Private Fostering App for Bromley.
12. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering will develop processes to ensure that all privately fostered children, their parents and carers express their views about the services they have received and use the feedback forms to inform the team to enable ongoing service change and development.

13. The Lead Officer will ensure that privately fostered children who do not have an adult who holds parental responsibility for them will be assessed to ascertain and inform the best outcome for their situation.
14. The Lead Officer will ensure that all DBS certificates for private foster carers and their children over 16 years old are up to date and clear.
15. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering will continue to work with the Business Manager for Bromley Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB) in regards to raising awareness about Private Fostering in Bromley.
16. The Lead office for Private Fostering to continue liaising with Bromley's Schools Principal Admissions Officer to ensure that completed forms are checked for potential Private Fostering arrangements.
17. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering to ensure that privately fostered young people who turn sixteen will be referred to the 16plus Service for support and advice following discharge from Private Fostering service if required.

Written By:

Godwin Munzara, Senior Practitioner Social Worker - Lead Officer for Private Fostering

Date: **03.08.2017**

Mark Vening, Group Manager, Family Placements, Fostering Team

Date: **16.08.2017**