



Bromley
Safeguarding
Children
Partnership



ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT PRIVATE FOSTERING

2019-2020

"By working together with partner agencies, we will ensure that every child in Bromley has the right help at the right time to keep them safe and to meet their needs, so that they achieve, thrive and reach their full potential."
Transforming Bromley to Deliver Better Outcomes for Children and Families (2020)

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- 1. Introduction**

1.1. The Private Fostering Regulations apply when children or young people, under the age of 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 can safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

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.

1.2. This annual report gives an overview of activities in relation to privately fostered children in the London Borough of Bromley from 01.04. 2019 to 31.03. 2020 and how the council has discharged its duties and in relation to Private Fostering.

This Annual Report should therefore be read in conjunction with the Statement of Purpose for 2019/2020.

1.3. 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.

1.4. 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 in line with Bromley's Transformation Programme (REAL); Respect, Empowerment, Ambition and Learning.
- 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 systemic 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 including digital innovation.
- Continue to take a leadership role amongst local authorities, in Southeast England in best practice development.

2. Planning on Private Fostering

2.1. 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 Partnership plays a vital role in supporting the Private Fostering service to protect children who are privately fostered, exercising leadership and raising awareness of the requirements and issues around Private Fostering.

2.2. 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 and is published on the council’s website.

3. Notification Arrangements

3.1. The number of notifications has risen considerably in Bromley over the last 12 months, due to proactive work in raising awareness amongst partners. This financial year 2019-2020, we have received notifications from Housing, Bromley School Admissions, Bromley School Welfare Inclusion, Language and international schools, Hospital, Faith group and Social Care. It is encouraging that we received notifications from our housing department, a Faith group and Princess Royal University hospital soon after our raising awareness presentation. This evidences that it is through efficient and strategic consistent awareness raising campaigns that we can reach our target audience effectively. Thereby safeguarding and promoting the welfare of privately fostered children in Bromley.

3.2. This is the second year since we streamlined and fully implemented the proposed changes for Private fostering processes; from Referral and Assessment Service to the Permanency service which

was launched as at 01 April 2018. We are pleased to report that since this implementation all Private fostering assessments/Regulation 4, initial visits regulation 7 and Regulation 8 statutory visits have been completed within statutory timescales. We have worked collaboratively with our MASH Service to record all notifications and referrals and this is working well. The Private Fostering social workers have continued to support the children and their family within private fostering arrangements if there are no safeguarding concerns identified. Private fostering arrangements with safeguarding concerns were transferred to the Safeguarding and Care Planning Team to action a safeguarding plan for the child. This financial year we have transferred three cases where we continued to work collaboratively with our colleagues from Safeguarding and Connected Persons and Special Guardianship Teams until two children achieved permanence via the making of Special Guardianship Orders. We have also worked collaboratively with the Staying Together Service to prevent a child being accommodated.

3.3. Our staff work with families systemically in line with the Bromley Relationship Model (BRM), enabling the social workers to develop a relationship with the child and their family. This is particularly important when assessing Private Fostering arrangements for children at risk of Trafficking and Exploitation.

4. Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare

4.1. We are proud to report that Bromley Private Fostering service has continued to effectively determine the suitability of all aspects of the private fostering arrangement in accordance with the regulations. This has been evidenced through a positive 'Practice Assurance Stocktake' in September 2019.

4.2. Within the regulation 4 assessments consideration is given and necessary steps taken to decide the care of the child's health, education and wellbeing, decisions regarding the child's day to day care are also assessed. Alongside this, contact arrangements for the child will be agreed to promote contact with their birth family. The Private Fostering Social workers ensures that all children within Private Fostering arrangements are registered with a GP practice and necessary steps taken to decide for the child's education.

4.3. When we have had concerns that the child may not be achieving a satisfactory level of health or development without the provision of services, the Private Fostering social workers have undertaken assessments under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, in accordance with the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (2000). Notably, also two private fostering children have achieved permanence via the making of Special Guardianship Orders and we are currently working together to achieve permanence for another child.

5. Practice Development

5.1. Since CORAMBAAF ended its involvement in supporting the Private fostering interest group in 2018, Bromley took the lead on organising and coordinating a Networking Interest group.

This has continued to grow and develop. This financial year we worked collaboratively with lead practitioners from 15 local authorities including Cambridge, Norwich, Kent and Essex in developing effective safeguarding system which are homogeneous across local authorities.

5.2. The Private Fostering social workers have continued to work closely with our partner agencies, Health, Education, Law Enforcement, Environment, Housing, Faith and Religious groups in raising awareness about Private Fostering in our local area and in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of privately fostered children. It is encouraging that this year we received a notification from a local religious group, and we are now in the process of supporting the carer with gaining parental responsibility for the child.

5.3. We also continued to work closely with language schools, international colleges, GP Surgeries, Schools, NHS Bromley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) etc. Information in the form of electronic posters, banners and leaflets regarding Private Fostering are regularly distributed to schools, libraries, GP surgeries, residents associations and faith groups (Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples) in Bromley, outlining the definition of Private Fostering and the legal duties to notify the Local Authority, of any known Private Fostering arrangements with the London borough of Bromley.

5.4. We remain resolute in raising Private Fostering Awareness using different mediums, including articles about Private Fostering featured in newsletters and school circulars and public places, keeping our message visible for Bromley residents.

In January 2020 the Private Fostering social workers attended and presented Private Fostering at the Bromley Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) Safeguarding Health Forum where representatives from different service areas within the NHS attended including GPs. Networking with lead professionals from the different service areas helped to increase awareness within the professionals' service area.

5.5. The Private Fostering social workers provided training in April 2019, July 2019, September 2019, November 2019 and January 2020. In addition, the Private Fostering social workers have worked collaboratively with colleagues from the Connected Persons and Special Guardianship Team to provide training for social work students and new social worker entrants into Bromley Children Social Care. The feedback has been very positive and what is evident is, it has provided clarity to colleagues and professionals across Children Services in the differences between Private Fostering arrangements and Connected persons placements.

5.6. We have also been raising awareness by sending messages via twitter via Bromley Communications department. We have recently updated the Bromley Private Fostering website and the Private Fostering information as well as our APP ([Bromley Private Fostering APP](#)) and awareness campaigns can be accessed online. We aim to continue with our drive towards digital innovation, especially given our new normal of working following COVID 19 pandemic. We are aware that this has and will increasingly become the most effective and efficient way to capture our target audience.

6. Notifications and Referrals 2019-2020

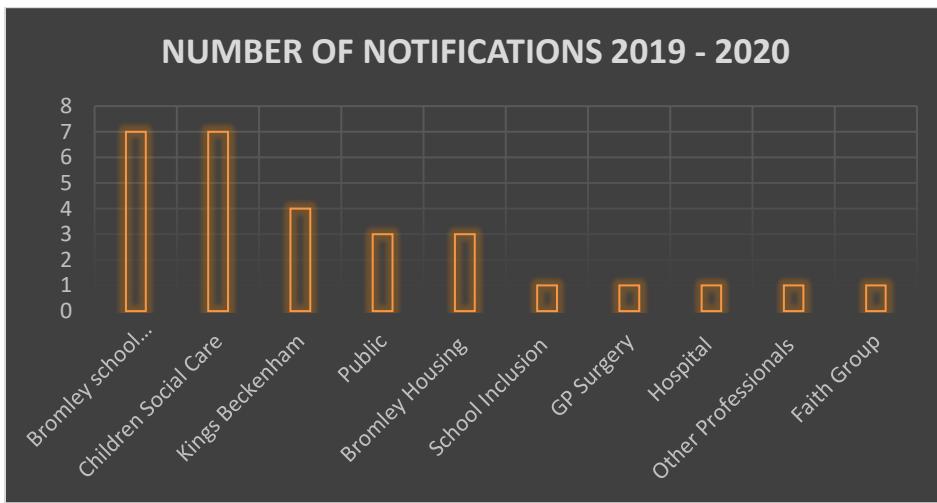
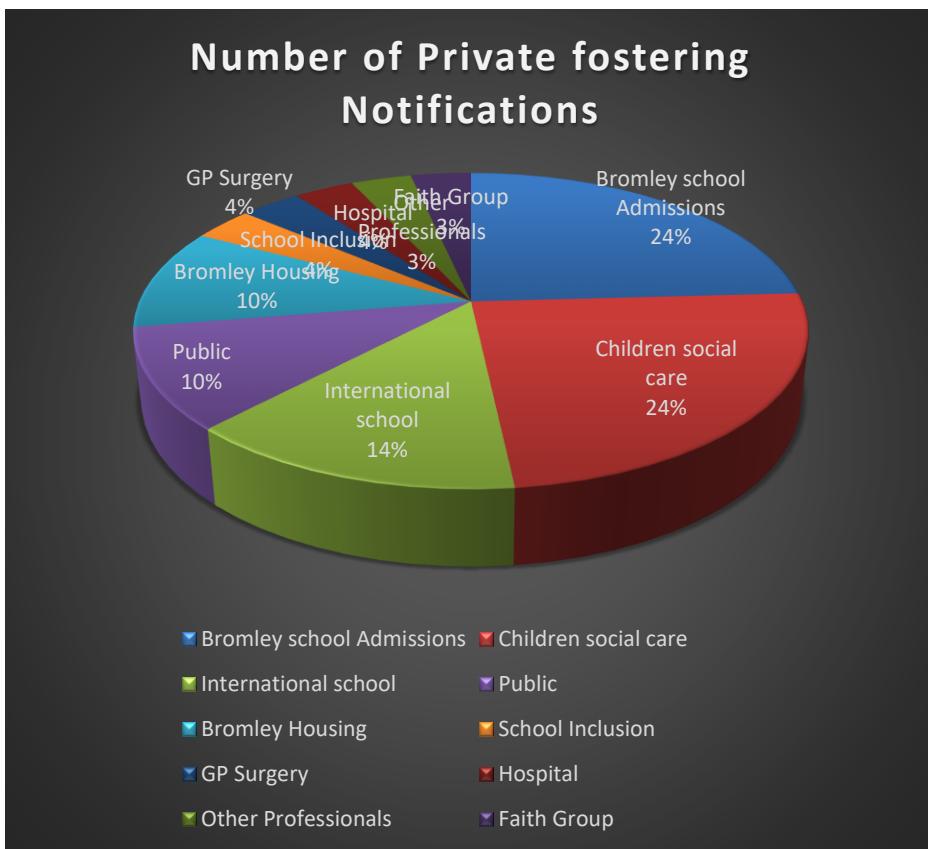
6.1. During 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020 we received 29 Notifications for Private Fostering arrangements which resulted in 13 new cases. Out of these, 7 Notifications were from Bromley School Admissions, 7 from social workers within Children services, 4 notifications came from an international school for international students mainly from Asia and the Middle-East, 3 from the general public, 3 from Bromley Housing, 1 from School inclusion, 1 from a GP surgery, 1 from hospital and 1 from other professionals.

Referrals and Notification 2019-2020

TOTAL NOTIFICATIONS 2019-2020	29
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SOURCE OF NOTIFICATIONS	NUMBER OF NOTIFICATIONS
Bromley school Admissions	7
Children social care	7
International school	4
Public	3
Bromley Housing	3
School Inclusion	1
GP Surgery	1
Hospital	1
Other Professionals	1
Faith Group	1
Total Notifications for the Year	29

In this financial year we have received 29 notifications compared to 25 in the previous year. Although this is a slight percentage increase in notifications, what is most encouraging for us is the increase in the diverse sources of notifications, for example housing, hospital and faith groups. Visibly a more proactive role from social workers across children services. The impact of making Private Fostering Training part of Safeguarding mandatory training for social workers and other children safeguarding officers in Bromley appears to be gaining momentum, as we have received more enquiries and notifications regarding private fostering from across children services, particularly from new social worker entrants into Bromley. The 16 notifications that did not progress to Private fostering arrangements were mainly from our safeguarding teams, these were either over the age of 16 years or they were being cared for by a close relative i.e. grandparents, aunties and uncles. This was also true for the notification that we received from the public, hospital, and international schools.

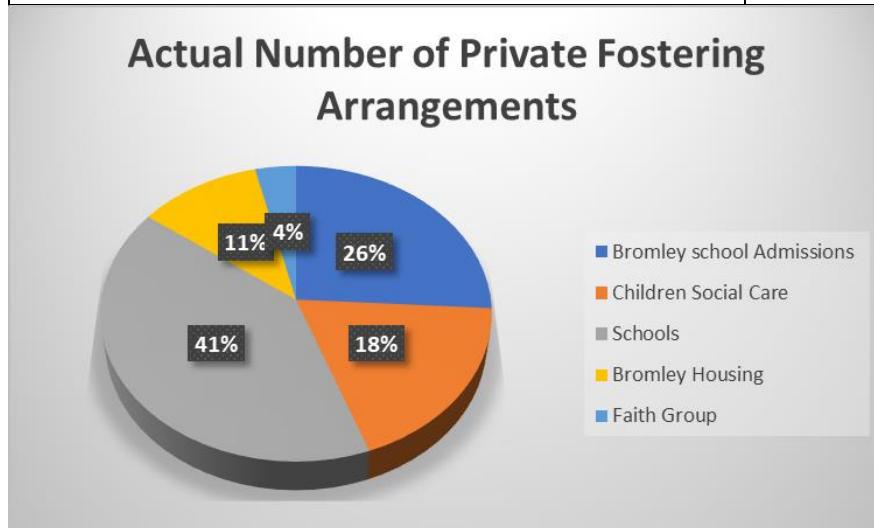


6.2. The data and pie chart below illustrate the source of notifications and, the total number of private fostering arrangements as at 31/03/2020. In 2019-2020 we had, 27 children in private fostering arrangements, and 10 open arrangements at 31st March 2020. Albeit the dip in open arrangements however we had considerably shorter Private fostering arrangements compared to last year, 2 children were accommodated by the local authority and as mentioned earlier we have also achieved

permanence for 3 children via the making of Special Guardianship Orders. From the 27 private fostering arrangements, 14 were on-going arrangements from the previous year and 13 were new arrangements.

We have continued to organize workshops with our health partners to increase awareness. As a Private Fostering Networking group, we have agreed to put all our efforts into raising awareness with our health partners a priority as part of a coordinated response to this challenge. We agreed that this will be our Theme for the 2020 National Private Fostering Awareness week.

SOURCE OF NOTIFICATIONS FOR 2019-2020 PFAs	Actual Number of Private Fostering Arrangements
Bromley school Admissions	7
Children Social Care	5
Schools	11
Bromley Housing	3
Faith Group	1
Total Private Fostering Arrangements for 2019 2020	27



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

- The Private Fostering Social Workers have increased the number of training sessions, providing in-depth training and advice to the children's workforce. We have seen an increased number of social work students and students in Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE)

which increased demand for Training. In this financial year we ran training sessions in April 2019, July 2019, September 2019, November 2019, January 2020 with a total of 75 attendees. The session in March 2020 was cancelled due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

- We have continued to develop our database of organisations in the borough including Churches, Mosques, Community centres, Housing Associations, Cultural Organisations, schools, GP surgeries, Children Centres and Public Libraries. Letters, circulars, posters, leaflets and booklets have been disseminated manually and electronically, highlighting the duty to notify the Local authority of any Private Fostering arrangements they may be aware of. We have also delivered workshops to our partner agencies in (Health) at the Children Commissioning Group (CCG) safeguarding forum, as well as at Princess Royal University Hospital, (Education) at the (DSL) Designated Safeguarding Leads Forum.
- The Private Fostering Social Workers have continued to liaise with educational establishments in Bromley including Pupil Referral Units/ Bromley Trust Academy, Bromley Children Project, Early Year's provisions and Intervention, consistently updating and replenishing awareness raising material, i.e. leaflets, posters, bookmarks, postcards, information resource booklets for professionals, children, carers and parents, especially in all the family centres, around the civic centre, GP surgeries and schools. We have ensured that Private Fostering articles are in the School Circular from the local authority's education department emphasising the need for schools to notify the local authority about any Private Fostering arrangements as well as providing training dates.
- The Private Fostering Social Workers have continued to raise awareness through the internal newsletters; Permanence service newsletter, In Touch, Spotlight, School Circulars and the BSCB newsletter. These publications and newsletters have been useful in disseminating messages and reaching a wider audience.
- In June 2019, the Private Fostering Social Workers attended the School Transition forum were Primary and Secondary schools meet to discuss about the children's transition from Primary to Secondary school. This forum is attended by most schools in Bromley therefore it is an opportunity to raise awareness with school safeguarding officers, SENCOs and head teachers.

We have also promoted Private Fostering awareness by attending various meetings with different organisations and partner agencies.

6.5. Private Fostering Website has been updated in line with the Bromley Corporate Website changes and it can be accessed via this link

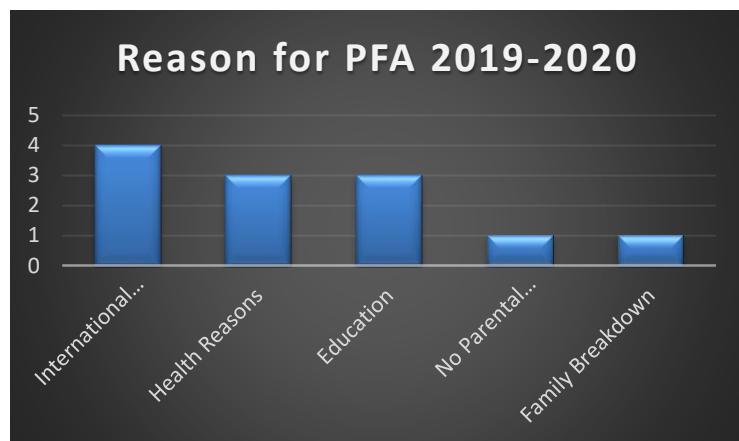
https://www.bromley.gov.uk/info/159/fostering/990/private_fostering

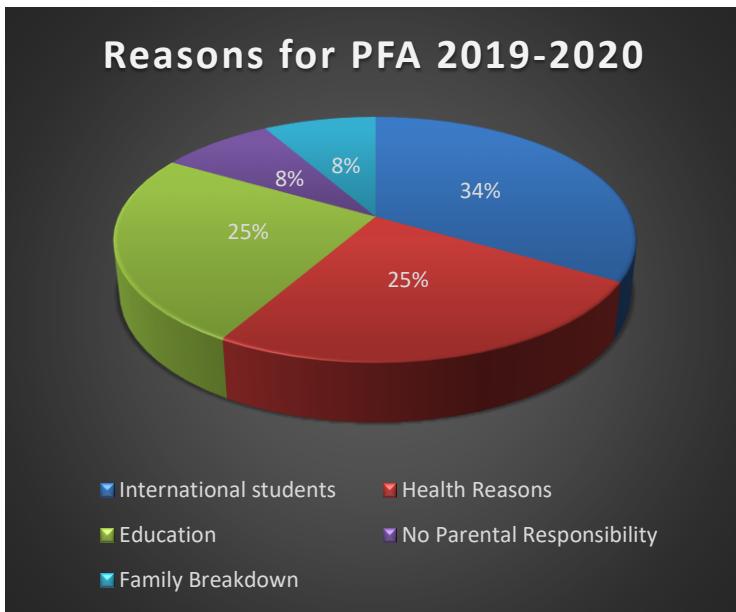
We have continued to promote the Bromley Private Fostering APP and we have achieved 12000 downloads within this financial year.

7. Data on privately fostered arrangements (PFA) 2019-2020

7.1. Reasons for privately fostered arrangements

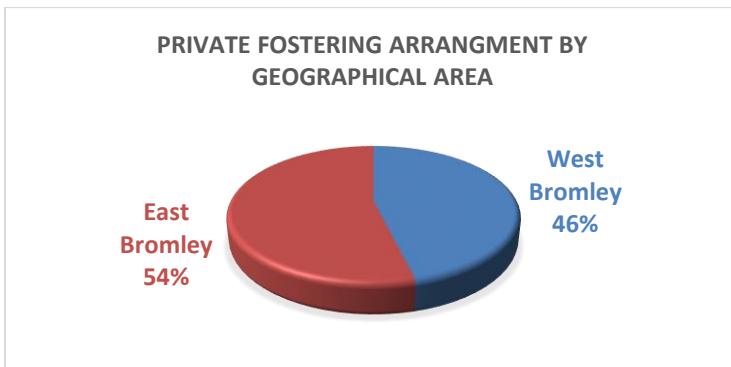
The diagrams below represent Bromley demographic trends and the reasons for Private Fostering Arrangements (PFA) referrals in the last financial year. We have seen a significant decrease in Children in private fostering arrangements due to family relationship breakdown, this is down from 50 percent in the last reporting year to 8 percent this year, compared to 34 percent for international students from Asia, Africa and the middle east.





7.2. Demographic trends

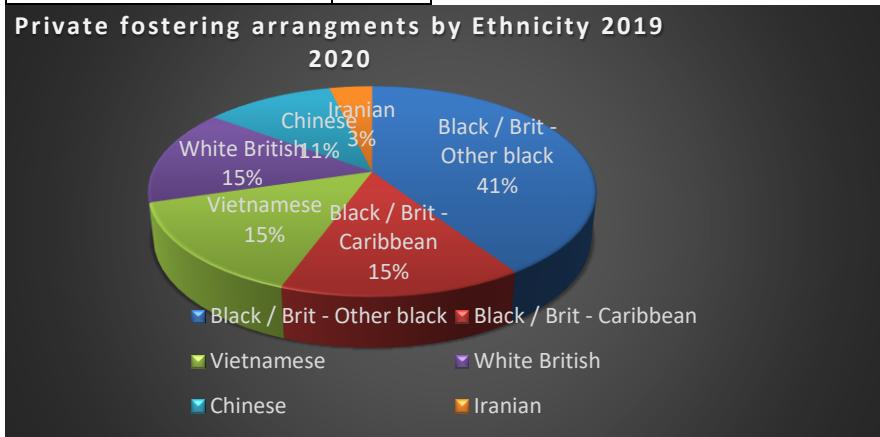
The trends indicate that 54 percent of the Private Fostering Arrangements were from the East side and 46 percent from the West side of the borough.



7.3. PFA by Ethnicity and Gender

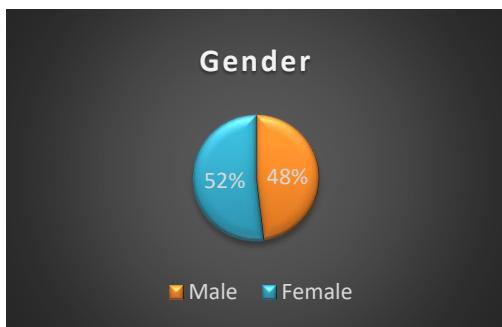
PFA by Ethnicity	
Black / Brit - Other black	11
Black / Brit - Caribbean	4
Vietnamese	4

White British	4
Chinese	3
Iranian	1

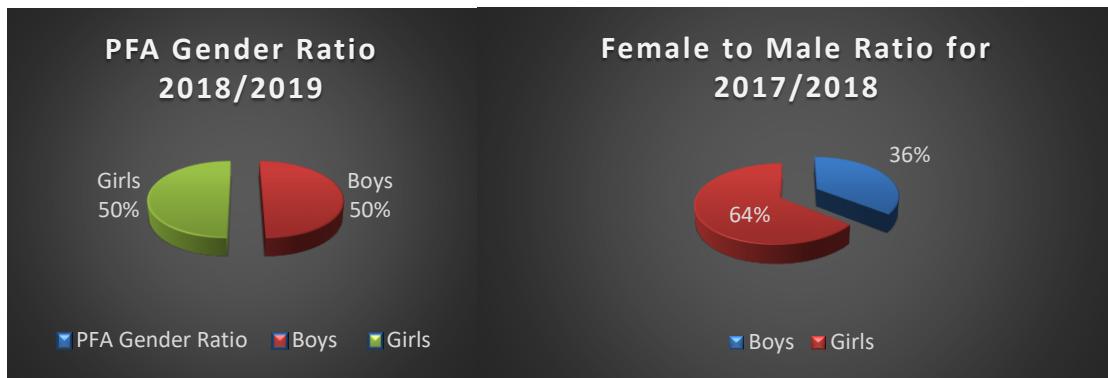


7.4. The pie chart above illustrate that from the 27 private fostering arrangements in this financial year, 41 percent of the children were classified as Black/British- African, 15 percent Black/British- African Caribbean, 15 per cent White British, 15 per cent Vietnamese, 11 per cent Chinese, and 3 per cent Iranian. We have noticed a significant drop in international students from the European Union compared to the preceding years.

Privately Fostered Children by Gender – in the Period 1st April 2019 – 31st March 2020



PFA by Gender	2019-2020
Male	13
Female	14

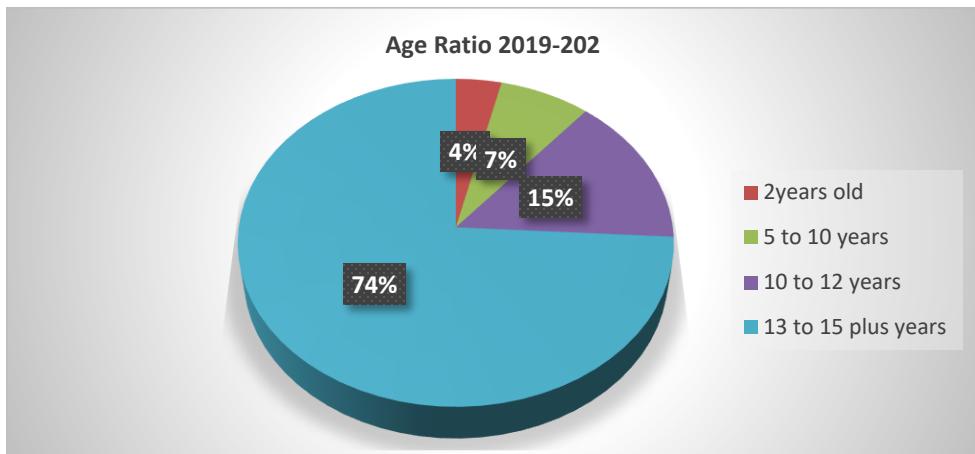


7.5. There has not been any significant shift in the gender ratio and we have not recorded any child or young person who classified themselves as transgender.

7.6. Age range of Privately Fostered children in Bromley as at 1st April 2019-2020

0 to 2 years old	1
5 to 10 years	2
10 to 12 years	4
13 to 15 plus years	20

7.7. During last year we had a 2-year-old within a private fostering arrangement. This was due to a housing crisis, which was resolved expediently, and we ensured that the level of contact between the child and the parent was at a high level. We worked collaboratively with our colleagues in the Housing Department and Croydon Children Social Care and suitable housing was allocated to the family. As a result, this arrangement ended within a short period of time and the child was reunited with his mother within 6 weeks. The 74 percent of the 13 to 15 plus years, generally reflects the national averages for private fostering arrangements given that it is within this age group that we have international students.



8. Advice and Support

8.1. The Private Fostering Social Workers have continued to ensure that private foster carers, parents and their children receive appropriate advice and support in all areas including advice on Welfare benefits, housing, education, health, access to training, respite, leisure and other activities.

8.2. Where possible, the Private Fostering social workers will continue to offer support to private foster carers in matters of permanence, delegated authority or signpost them to appropriate Legal Services available, in relation to the children or young people subject to Private Fostering regulations.

8..3. Private foster carers are offered support and receive appropriate information if they wish to seek a Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order. We recognise that in some instances, families may make their own arrangements for the care of a child or young person, however the best way to achieve permanence for some of our children and young people, which will allow them the opportunity to be brought up within their own families, we will encourage and enable them to do this in a way that is appropriate, focusing on achieving the best outcomes for children and young people in these arrangements.

8.4. The Private Fostering Social Workers have continually liaised with MASH and sought advice and support from the Safeguarding service and has escalated cases to child in need where thresholds were met.

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

The Private Fostering service recognise and acknowledge that service improvement, development and innovation come through listening to the voice of children, young people, carers, parents and the wider family. We are also aware that to achieve these we need to build positive relationships with our clients which involve the lead officer developing and sustaining supportive professional relationships in unique, complex and challenging situations. This is in line with the Bromley Relationship Based Model which recognises that each social work encounter is unique.

Relationship Based Practice is at the heart of our Child/ Service User centred approach and gaining feedback from privately fostered children, their parents and carers continue to be at the heart of our practice. The service has consistently encouraged privately fostered children, their carers and parents to give their feedback. We continue to be encouraged with the feedback that we received from children, carers and parents which demonstrates client satisfaction with our service delivery.

The following are examples of feedback from children, young people parents and carers;

“I am happy that my social worker was always in contact with me to make sure that I am safe and that I speak to my dad”

“My social worker kept in contact with us via emails, phone and home visits and we have developed a strong professional relationship with them”

“The social worker has been very professional, they have provided us with all the information, that we needed, this has helped us to understand about gaining parental responsibility by way of special guardianship”

“I feel listened to because the social worker understands what I say and takes time to listen to me and focus on me and even give me ideas on how to do some things like being safe and education. I am happy with the work the social worker has done with me.”

“Yes, the social worker encourages me to express my feelings by asking me questions and using their own experience to advise housing related issues.”

“The social worker encourages us to express ourselves by not taking sides. She come across as a very neutral and keen to promote the better relationship of all of us. Perfect mediation”

"The social worker has helped us. Her visits overtures have been a factor to the improvement of our sons behaviour. She seems to have a very good ability to feel welcoming and it doesn't feel like speaking to a stranger."

"The social worker has been very helpful, gave us all the information that we needed. Great experience".

10. Monitoring Compliance with Duties and Functions

The reporting period performance assessed against previous return figures

Indicators	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Number of notifications of new Private Fostering arrangement received during the year	14	27	29
Number of cases where action was taken in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 4 (1) and 7 (1) for carrying out visits	15	18	14
Of these the number of cases where this action was taken within 7 working days of receipt of notification of the Private Fostering arrangement	15	18	14
Number of new arrangements that began during the year	14	15	13
The number of Private Fostering arrangements that began On or After 1 April 2019 where visits were made at intervals of not more than 6 weeks	11	28	15
The Number of Private Fostering arrangements that began BEFORE 1st April 2018 that were continuing on 1st April 2019	8	6	13

The number of Private Fostering arrangements that began before 1 April 2019 that were continuing on 1 April 2019 where scheduled visits were completed in the requested timescale	2	18	15
Number of Private Fostering arrangements that ended during the year	9	19	18
Number of children under Private Fostering arrangements as of 31 st March 2019	18	15	18

Areas of development for next financial year:

- Review our private fostering processes to ensure good practice in the field is embedded in our service to privately fostered children and their carers
- Continue to lead on the Networking Interest Group and contribute to developments in private fostering in the region and nationally
- Work on a smooth transition to our new IT system

Date: **20.10.2020**

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