

SDR 168/2015

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Private fostering in Wales, 2014-15

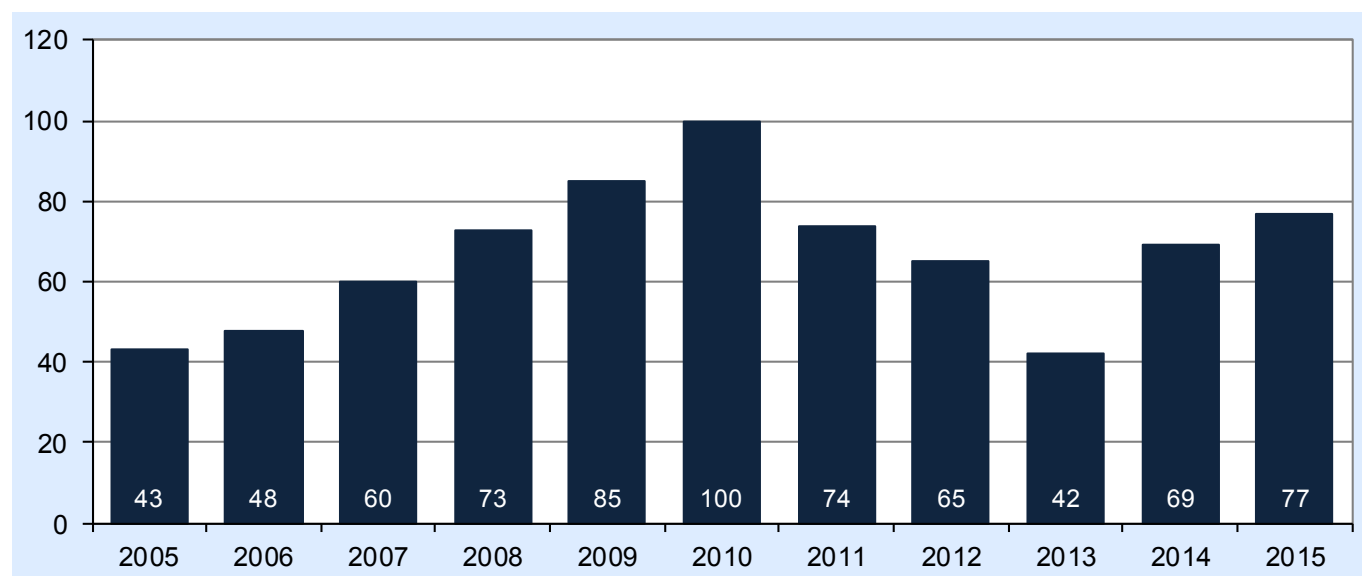
This annual Statistics First Release summarises information on private fostering arrangements in Wales. The release presents key results in Wales for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. A [private fostering arrangement](#) occurs when a child under 16 (under 18 if disabled) is cared for by an adult, 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.

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

Key results for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015:

- 77 new private fostering arrangements were reported during the year, compared to 69 in the previous year ([Chart 1](#), [Table 1](#)).
- 76 children received an initial visit from the local authority during the year, 75 per cent of which were within 7 days of the beginning of the fostering arrangement ([Table 1](#)).
- 60 per cent of the children whose private fostering arrangement began in the year were born in the UK and 40 per cent in other countries. 90 per cent were aged 10 or over on 31 March 2015 ([Table 2](#)).

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



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 (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 2014-15 continued the upward trend of recent 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

Private fostering arrangements	2012	2013 ^(a)	2014	2015
Number of arrangements commencing during the year	65	42	69	77
Number of children with an initial visit during the year	74	48	68	76
Number of visits within 7 working days	54	39	45	57

Source: SSSA904

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

There were 76 children who received an initial visit from a local authority worker during the year ending 31 March 2015. 75 per cent of visits were within 7 days of the beginning of the fostering arrangement, an increase of 9 percentage points compared to the year ending 31 March 2014. Arrangements and initial visits may occur in different years, leading to differing totals.

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

Arrangement	2012 ^(a)	2013	2014	2015
Place of birth of children:				
United Kingdom	47	30	57	46
Elsewhere	13	11	12	31
Total	60	41	69	77
Age of children:				
Under 10 years old	8	6	22	8
10 years old and older	52	35	47	69
Total	60	41	69	77

Source: SSSA904

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

Of the 77 children whose private fostering arrangements began during the year to 31 March 2015, 46 (60 per cent) were born in the UK, with 31 (40 per cent) being born in other countries.

90 per cent of children were aged 10 or over when their arrangement commenced in the year ending 31 March 2015. This represented a return to the age split observed before the year ending 31 March 2014, when there were significantly more children aged under 10.

1. Notes

1. This is the third 'Private Fostering in Wales' statistical release to be published, the first having been published on 23 October 2013.
2. 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 was published on 28 September 2015.
[SDR 152/2015, Adoptions, Outcomes and Placements for Children Looked After by Local Authorities, Wales, 2014-15.](#)
3. 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 2014-15 should be understood as 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015).

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.

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 may be:

- 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.

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

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 2014-15 financial year and are correct as at 31 March 2015.

2.3 Timeliness and Punctuality

The Data Collection team within the Welsh Government collected data, for the financial year 2014-15, between May and July 2015. Data in this release refers to final 2014-15 data. This release was published in October 2015, 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.

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/statistics/notifications-of-private-fostering-arrangements-in-england-2015>

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 website:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/?topics=Health+and+social+care&subtopics=Social+services&view=Search+results&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.



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