



Central Bedfordshire Council  
and Bedford Borough Council

working together

# Private Fostering

## Annual Report

For the period  
2010/2011

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## FOREWORD

For the year 2010-2011, Central Bedfordshire hosted the Fostering Service as a shared service on behalf of both new unitary authorities. This report describes the activity of Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council's Private Fostering Service during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2010 to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2011, noting its achievements, clarifying the remit and focus of its work and identifying recommendations for the development of the service.

This annual report is part of the governance of the Private Fostering Provision required by Regulations.

It will be presented to the Directors of Children's Services in Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council in August 2011.

The Local Safeguarding Children's Boards in each authority will also consider this report in October 2011.

**July 2011**

## SECTION 1

### 1.0 - DEFINITION OF PRIVATE FOSTERING

- 1.01** The Children Act 1989 (section 66) defines private fostering as occurring when a child under 16 (or under 18 if disabled) is cared for and provided with accommodation, for 28 days or more by somebody other than a close relative, legal guardian or someone with parental responsibility. Close relatives are defined in the Act as step parents, siblings, brothers or sisters of the parents and grandparents. A private fostering arrangement is one which is made privately, that is to say without the involvement of the Local Authority.
- 1.02** Private foster carers maybe within the extended family such as cousins or Great Grandparents, or they may be a friend of the family or other non relative such as the parents if a boyfriend or girlfriend of the child in question.
- 1.03** For the purposes of the Act, parent includes unmarried or putative father. Relative means as above stated, whether by full, half-blood or by affinity or step-parent. Affinity refers to the relationship resulting from marriage, between the husband and the blood relations of the wife and also between the wife and the blood relations of the husband.
- 1.04** Examples of private fostering arrangements are;
- Children sent from abroad to stay with another family, usually to improve their English or for other educational purposes.
  - Asylum seeking and refugee children placed with an adult known to them, their family or their community;
  - Teenagers who, having problematic relationships with their parents, are staying in short term arrangements with friends or other non relatives;
  - Children living with host families arranged by language schools or other organisations;
  - Local children living apart from their families;

- Young people who have wanted to remain in this country to continue their education but whose parents have returned to their country of origin;
- Young children whose birth families are struggling to cope and turn to a friend or distant relative to care for the child.

## 1.1 - BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1** The Private Fostering service, in line with the Adoption and Fostering service, is hosted in Central Bedfordshire Council but provides to both Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council under a Service Level Agreement.
- 1.1.2** During 2010 the policy and procedures were reviewed by the Senior Management Team. Information on private fostering has been included on both Councils' web pages for access by professionals and members of the public. This has been updated this year to ensure clarity and ease of use, including the facility for electronic notification of private fostering arrangements.
- 1.1.3** Both Councils' Local Safeguarding Children's Boards received an annual report and six-monthly update in September 2010 concerning private fostering activity in Bedfordshire during 2009-10.

## SECTION 2

### 2.0 – AWARENESS RAISING

- 2.0.1** The Authority has continued to raise the awareness of private fostering within Children's Services, with fellow professionals, in partner agencies and within the community by a wide ranging and ongoing advertising and publicity programme. There has been a dedicated private fostering coordinator since 2010 initially covered by a locum worker and since March 2011 by a permanent worker.
- 2.02** The private fostering co-ordinator in conjunction with the Adoption & Fostering Service Recruitment Co-ordinator has continued to lead on the promotion of private fostering. Awareness raising activities have included;
- Advertises in local papers and radio advertising took place.
  - Articles have been placed in "Primary Times" a publication distributed to families of school age children.
  - Information displayed at Bedford Market during July and August 2010.
  - Presentation of the annual report to the Local Safeguarding board in November 2010, for dissemination to all partner agencies, including the Police, Probation and Ambulance Service, Councils including Housing, Early Years Services, Youth Services, and Voluntary Organisations.
  - Revision of the Private Fostering leaflet and poster.
  - A workshop at the County Wide Social work development day in March 2010.
  - Update of Private fostering information on both Councils' websites, with notification form to be submitted electronically

- Information on both Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils' employees' wage slips
- Information on "What to do when receiving a call or personal enquiry about private fostering" sent to all Customer First Points of Contact including reception staff and child care teams duty desks
- Presentation to Social Care professionals throughout 2010
- Mailshots to schools in March 2011.

**2.0.3** We will continue to build on our publicity campaign with professionals and the community in accordance with our action plan for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012.

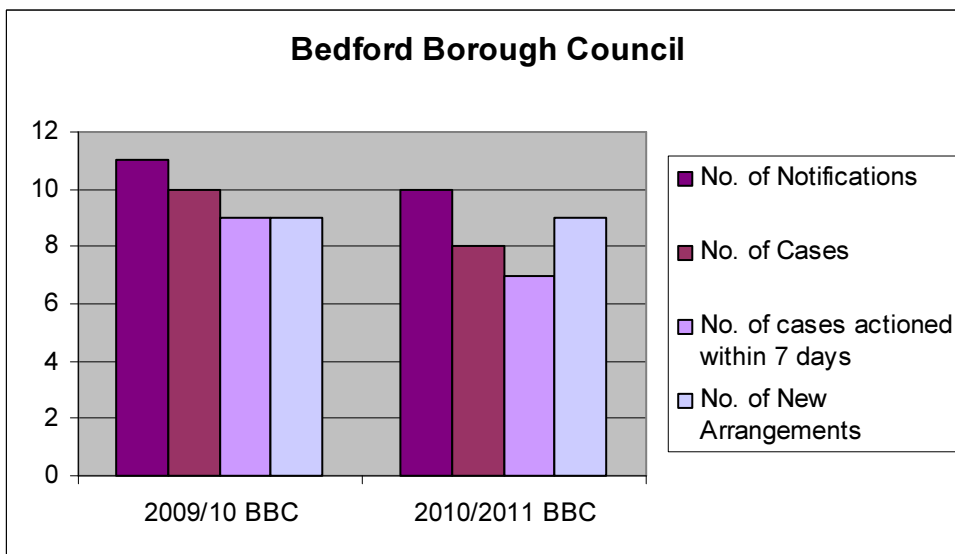
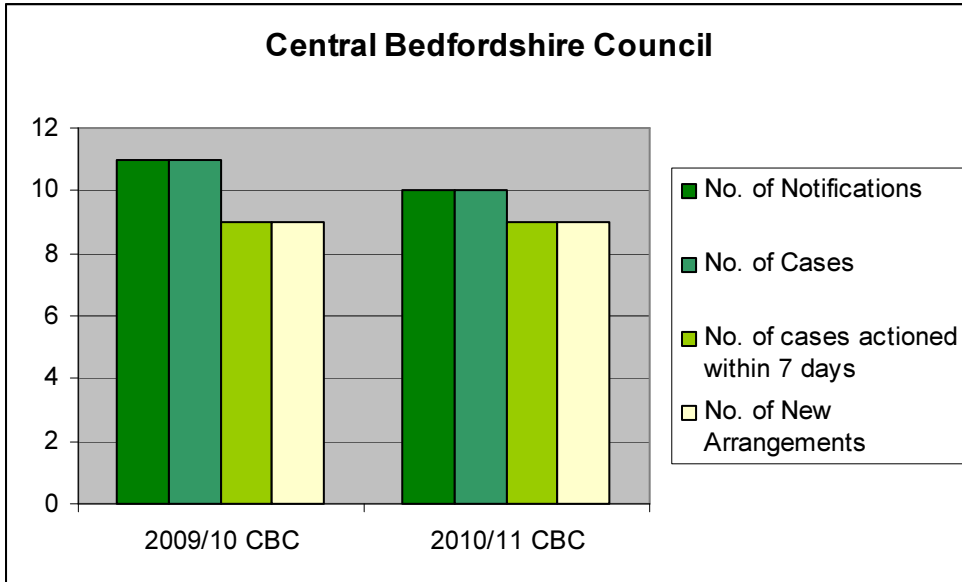
**2.0.4** Attendance at the quarterly BAAF Private Fostering Special Interest Group has continued throughout the year to ensure we develop best practice alongside our colleagues in neighbouring authorities.

## 2.1 – ADVERTISING 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2010 – 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2011

<b>May 2010</b>	Exhibition stand at Young Farmers Annual Event
<b>June 2010</b>	Presentation to LAC Team CBC
<b>July 2010</b>	Exhibition stand at Bedford Market
	Presentation to Intake & Assessment Team BBC
<b>Aug 2010</b>	Exhibition stand at Bedford Market
<b>October 2010</b>	Website Information updated
<b>Jan 2011</b>	Article in News Central CBC
	Article in One Team BBC
	Presentation to Intake and Assessment Team CBC
	Training for Head of Safeguarding and Managers BBC
	Posters on display in main council offices
	Presentation by LSCB – Great Denham
<b>Feb 2011</b>	Advert on Heart radio
	Presentation to CWD Team – BBC
	Presentation to LAC and Asylum Teams BBC
	Mail shot – Libraries, Education Centres, Probation, Hospital, CAB, Leisure Centres, YOT, Health Centres, Doctors, RAF Chicksands and Henlow
	Training for Family Support Team CBC
	Presentation LSCB Great Denham and Dunstable Fire Station
<b>March 2011</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> – 27 <sup>th</sup> Private Fostering Awareness Week
	Mail shot to private schools
	Mail shot to schools in BBC and CBC
	Presentation LSCB Great Denham and Dunstable Fire Station
<b>April 2011</b>	Advert in local newspaper

SECTION 3

3.0 – STATISTICS



Activity remained consistent in 2010-11 similar levels of open cases to 2009-2010.

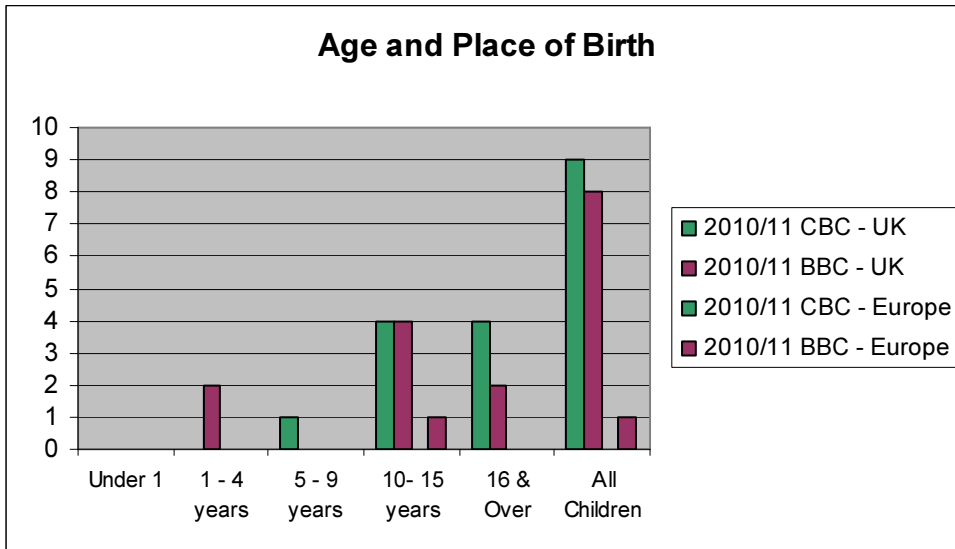
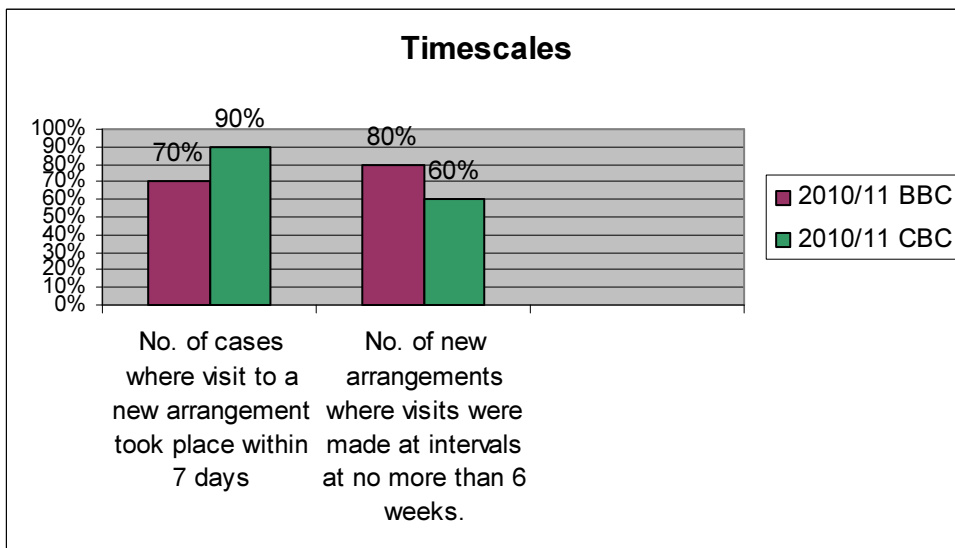


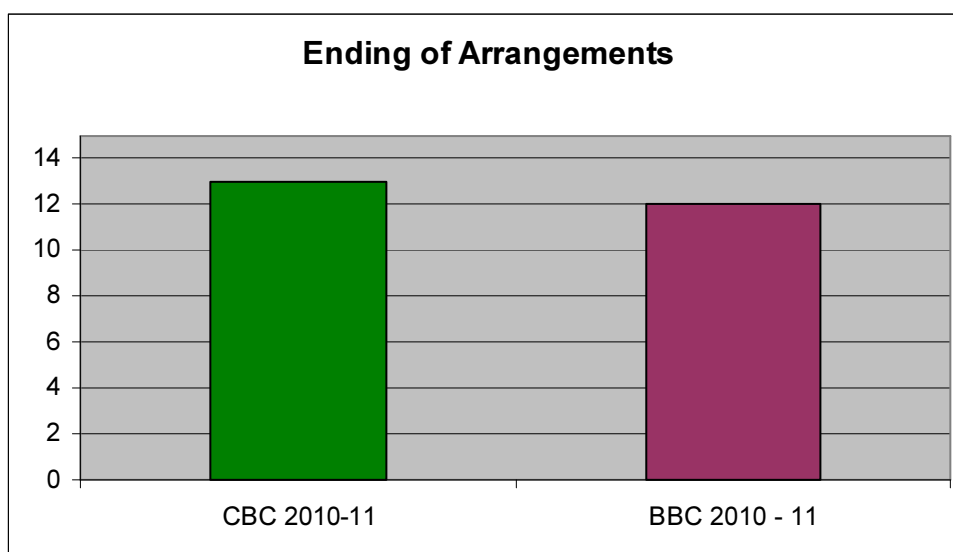
Chart shows only countries of origin where we have data.

## 3.1 – MEETING TIMESCALES

**3.1.1** Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils have been committed to meeting the timescales set down in the Regulations for assessment of arrangements and visiting of children in private fostering arrangements. A tracking sheet is used by managers to ensure ongoing improvement in adherence to timescales. The recruitment of a dedicated worker for private fostering during 2010 improved the timeliness of some assessments and visits, and performance is better than in our comparator authorities.



### 3.1.2 Ending of arrangements



Records are kept for the reasons that private fostering arrangements end. In 2010-11 the reasons were.

- 6 young people became 16
- 2 young person secured legal arrangements with their carers by way of Residence Order or Special Guardianship Order.
- 12 young people returned to care of their parents.
- 4 young people became looked after.

### 3.1.3 Suitability of Arrangements

In one case in the reporting period, the assessment raised concerns about the suitability of the arrangement and it was agreed that the young person be accommodated under Section 20. It was decided by the AD Children's Services Operations that it was not necessary or proportionate in that specific case to issue any prohibition notice under S69 Children Act 1989.

In another case the arrangement was assessed as unsuitable and it was necessary to issue notification to the private foster carer of intention to prohibit the arrangement. The young person moved to an alternative private fostering arrangement. Both these cases were in Central Bedfordshire Council.

## SECTION 4 - SUPPORT TO YOUNG PEOPLE

### 4.0 – ADVOCACY SUPPORT

**4.0.1** Young people in private fostering arrangements are given the opportunity to have access to an advocate from the National Youth Advisory Service. Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils' Children's Social Care Services have a contract with NYAS to provide advocacy services to children and young people who are in need of these services.

**4.0.2** Upon visiting a child or young person in a private fostering arrangement for the first time the social worker gives the child a child friendly pack which explains about private fostering and



gives information for the many services provided for young people across the appropriate council area and the contact details of NYAS should they need independent advocacy.

## 4.1 – SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE POST 16

- 4.1.1** The Leaving and After Care Teams in each council provide a service to all young people who are approaching their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and beyond, and have been within the care system. This service is accessible for all young people in private fostering arrangements to provide advice and guidance to them to make a successful transition to adulthood. This is important in private fostering as the legal age at which a child is no longer deemed to be privately fostered is 16 (18 if disabled) and for many young people their placement may end at 16 leaving them with little or no support.
- 4.1.2** A Supportive Lodging Scheme has been developed so that young people who have been in private fostering situations may be eligible for appropriate accommodation locally with carers who can offer them transitional support to help them learn to live independently.

## SECTION 5 – NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS

### 5.0 – EVALUATION AGAINST NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS

#### 5.1 STANDARD 1 – Statement on Private Fostering

- A Statement of Purpose has been completed setting out the duties and functions in relation to private fostering. This document was reviewed and updated during 2010.

#### 5.2 STANDARD 2 - Notification

As detailed in Section 2 of this report awareness raising has continued across both councils in 2010 – 11.

- A manager from the Adoption and Fostering Services attends both Councils' weekly resource panels, thus ensuring that any private fostering arrangements which come to light and have not been notified are then referred to the Fostering duty team.
- The Family Group Meeting Service continues to be used effectively by proposed and actual private foster carers, parents of privately fostered children and privately fostered children and young people.

#### 5.3 STANDARD 3 – Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare

- The service provides a specific private fostering coordinator post to oversee the private fostering service in conjunction with the fostering manager.
- Assessment social workers in the fostering service have also undertaken assessments of private fostering arrangements to ensure the skills are circulated within the service and to enable assessments to be completed within timescales when the private fostering coordinator is not available.
- All workers have received monthly supervision and all private fostering arrangements are monitored through this process.
- The Head of Service Fostering and Adoption has responsibility for determining the suitability of private fostering arrangements.

#### 5.5 STANDARD 4 – Advice and Support

**The local authority provides such advice and support to private foster carers and prospective foster carers as appears to the authority to be needed.**

- The co-ordinator for private fostering ensures that private foster carers received appropriate advice and support by providing them with an information pack, timely visits and access to a named worker.
- Information Packs are produced for private foster carers which have detailed written information about private fostering including the BAAF information booklet on private fostering, welfare benefits and information and contact details for other useful organisations. This pack was updated during 2010.

## 5.6 STANDARD 5 – Advice and Support

**The local authority provides advice and support to the parents of children who are privately fostered within their area as appears to the authority as needed.**

- Parents are notified in writing when a private fostering arrangement is endorsed.
- The assessing social worker, where possible, visits the parent or person with parental responsibility to discuss and explain the assessment and services available and to obtain their wishes and feelings.
- An Information Pack is produced for parents or those with parental responsibility which has detailed written information about private fostering, and contact details for other useful organisations. This was reviewed in 2010.

## 5.7 STANDARD 6 – Advice and Support

**Children who are privately fostered are able to access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted; privately fostered children are able to participate in decisions in their lives.**

- An Information Pack on private fostering is given to all privately fostered children. This was updated during 2010.
- During 2010 some children were supported by social workers from the Family Support teams where their case was particularly complex.

## 5.8 STANDARD 7 – Monitoring Compliance with Duties and Functions in relation to Private Fostering

**The local authority has in place and implants effectively a system for monitoring the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering. It improves practice where this is indicated as necessary by the monitoring system.**

- Both Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils continued to have robust performance monitoring and reporting systems in relation to private fostering activity.
- PF1 reports were completed by both councils and submitted to the DfE as required.
- An annual report is provided to the Director of Children's Services in each authority.

## SECTION 6 – SUMMARY & DEVELOPMENTS

### 6.0 – SUMMARY AND DEVELOPMENTS

- 6.1** There has continued to be progress in developing the service for privately fostered children and their families in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils. Support for those young people post 16 has been developed to ensure maximum support is available as they mature into adulthood. The Service has a clear Statement of Purpose and also an action plan which is regularly reviewed to ensure an ongoing programme of awareness raising among professionals and the community as a whole.
- 6.2** The provision of a dedicated Private Fostering Coordinator has enabled development and progression of the service.
- 6.3** Appropriate documentation has been put in place to ensure the safety and welfare of privately fostered children is assessed and actively promoted. This documentation has been reviewed to ensure it maintains maximum effectiveness. Tracking tools have been developed and are an active management tool to ensure adherence to statutory timescales.
- 6.4** The levels of notifications have increased along the national level. The provision of a continued shared service arrangement appears to be working well.
- 6.5** We contributed to the consultation on a proposed restructure of the inspection regime by Ofsted, and have begun preparation for a forthcoming inspection of the arrangements in both authorities.
- 6.6** In the meantime Central Bedfordshire will continue on behalf of the two Councils to proactively promote private fostering awareness raising and to work with the children and young people in these situations to ensure they are safe, well cared for and reach their full potential to become positive citizens.

This information can be made available in  
Large print and in other languages if required

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