

**Appendix C**

# **Private Fostering**

**Annual Report**

**For the period  
2013/2014**

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## SECTION 1 – Introduction

### 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 may be 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 of 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 stated above, 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;
  - 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, was hosted in Central Bedfordshire Council but provided to both Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council under a Service Level Agreement up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013. It became a single service as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014.
- 1.1.2 The private fostering provision was inspected by Ofsted in each council in January/February 2012 as part of the Safeguarding and Looked After Children inspections. No concerns or actions were identified by the inspectors in respect of private fostering.
- 1.1.3 This annual report is part of the governance of the Private Fostering Provision required by

Regulations.

## **SECTION 2 – AWARENESS RAISING DUTY**

### **2.0 – AWARENESS RAISING**

2.0.1 The Council 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.

2.0.2 Examples of awareness raising activities included:

- Adverts in local papers and radio advertising;
- Update of Private fostering information on both Councils' websites;
- LSCB training;
- 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.

## 2.1 – AWARENESS RAISING 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2013 – 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2014

2.1.1 An annual plan was developed each year outlining activity to raise awareness amongst professionals and the local community.

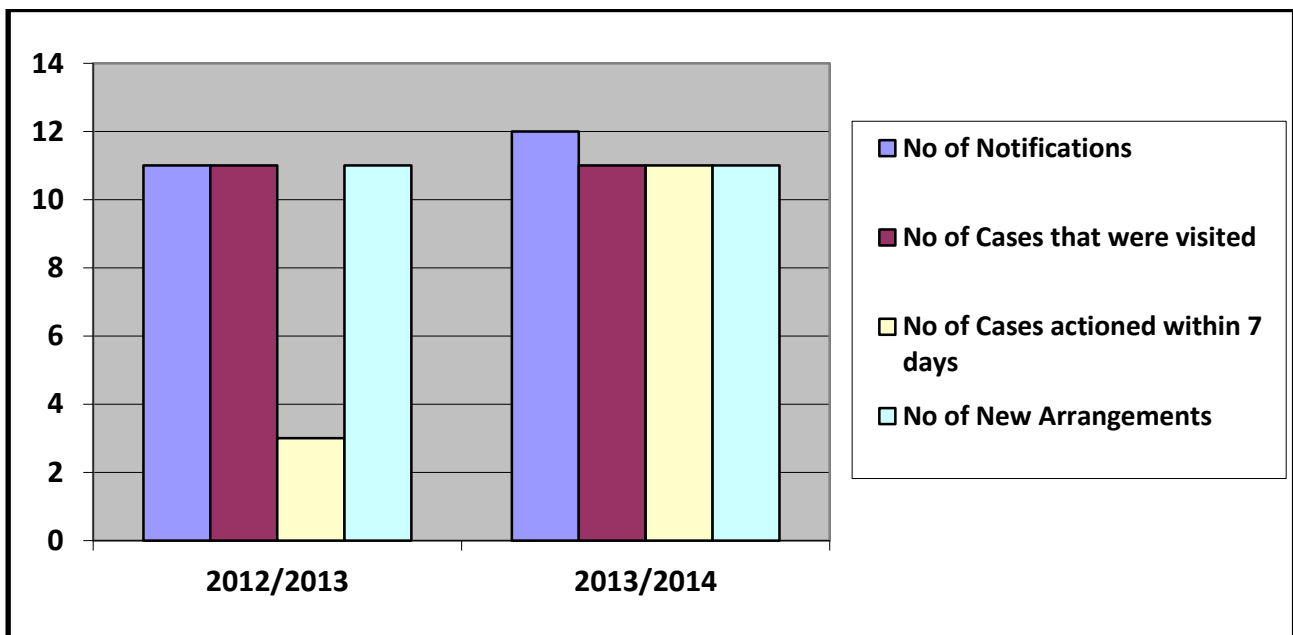
April 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBC/BB - Central Essentials – article and posters sent out to all staff.</li> <li>• Mail shot – all GP surgeries/Health Visitors 0-19 Team, Boarder Force – Heathrow/Gatwick/Luton, churches, Bedford Hospital</li> <li>• Intake &amp; Assessment &amp; Family Support Team – team meetings attended to raise awareness</li> <li>• School Governors provided with Private Fostering information for newsletter and posters sent</li> </ul>
May 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBC/BB - Newspaper Article – Biggleswade Chronicle and Bedfordshire on Sunday</li> <li>• Liaised with Sheila Pembroke (CBC) from CAF Training – explored having a space on the training – information sent to raise awareness, no response from BB</li> <li>• GP surgeries contacted in CBC &amp; BB.</li> </ul>
June 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBC – Visits to FISS and FYIS Team Meeting, posters and leaflets left</li> <li>• Visit to 0-19 Services Team Meeting (H/V, School Nurses, Family Support and Parenting Workers) Posters and information supplied</li> <li>• CBC/BB – LSCB – Training awareness</li> </ul>
July 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBC – Central Essentials Article and posters</li> <li>• LSCB Training Awareness</li> </ul>
August 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBC/BB – Liaised with Bedfordshire Police Public Protection Unit – due to attend meeting – posters supplied</li> </ul>
September 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBC/BB – Attended team meeting with Bedfordshire Police Public Protection Unit – Sexual Exploitation Unit.</li> </ul>
October 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBC/BB – Central Essentials article &amp; poster</li> <li>• LSCB Training – delivering awareness</li> </ul>
November 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBC/BB - LSCB Training – delivering awareness</li> <li>• Team Meeting attended with Children's Centre Manager</li> </ul>
December 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LSCB Training – delivering awareness</li> <li>• Attended School Admissions Team meeting</li> </ul>
January 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBC – LSCB Training – delivering awareness</li> <li>• Attended Team Meeting Intake &amp; Assessment &amp; Family Support</li> <li>• Updated CBC website – a newspaper article with a live case study</li> </ul>
February 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LSCB Training – delivering awareness</li> </ul>
March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LSCB Training – delivering awareness</li> </ul>

## SECTION 3 - PERFORMANCE

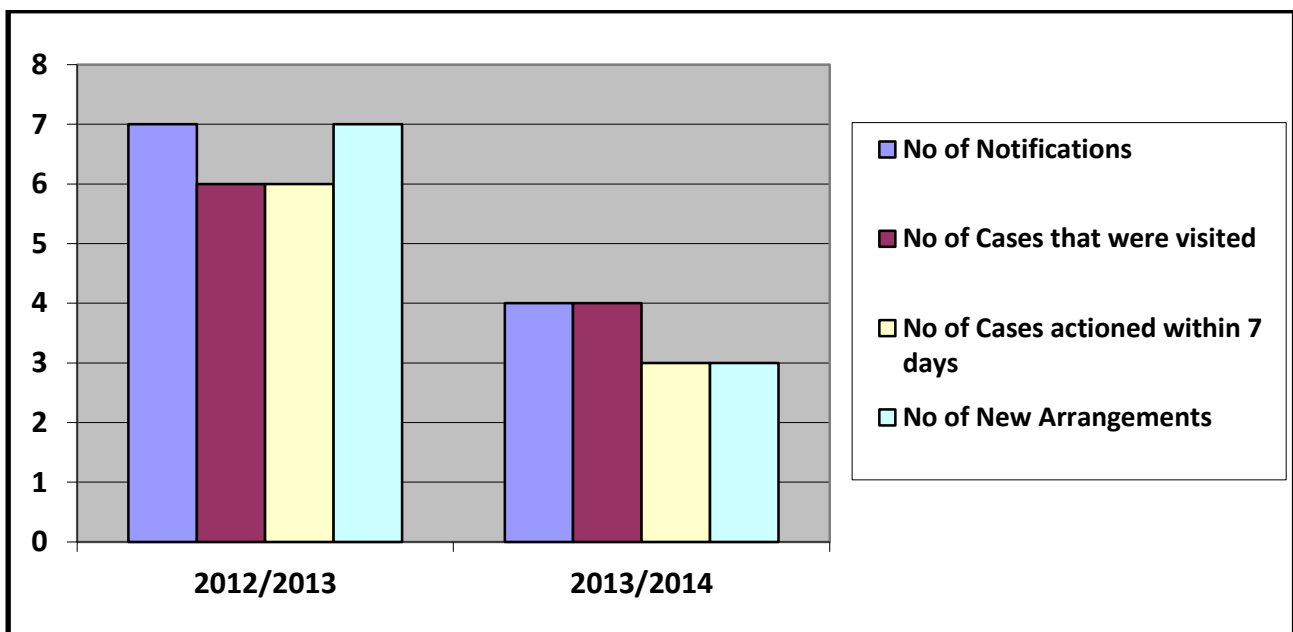
### 3.0 – STATISTICS

3.0.1 Each council has to submit data annually on the number of notifications received, how many of these notifications were responded to within 7 days, and how many of these cases were assessed as being a new private fostering arrangement.

#### Central Bedfordshire Council

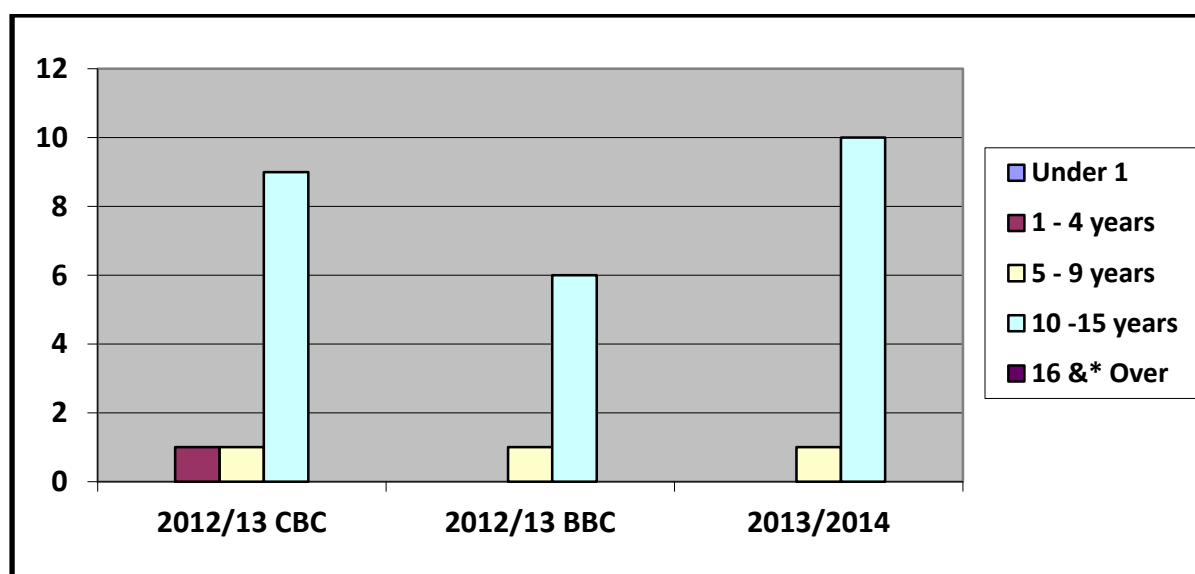


#### Bedford Borough Council

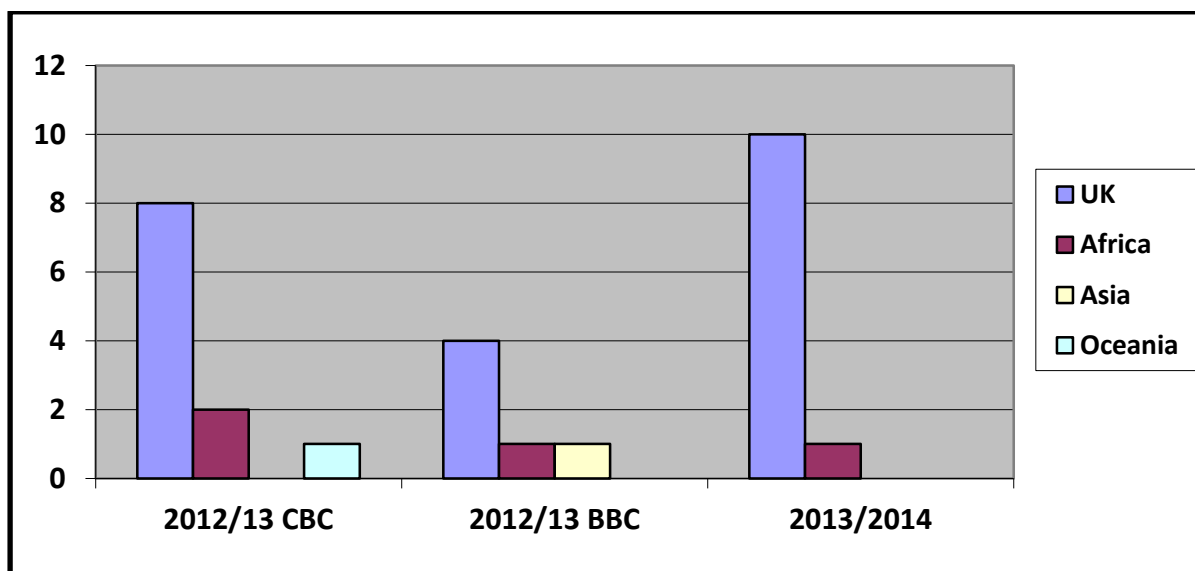


- 3.0.2 Levels of activity across the councils increased overall with more notifications and new arrangements than in 2012-13. However activity in the Bedford Borough Council area declined and activity in Central Bedfordshire increased from the previous year. There is no identifiable reason why this should be the case. Overall numbers remain small, but in line with statistical neighbours.
- 3.0.3 The totals number of private fostering arrangements in the year 2013-2014 was 14. Of these 11 were within Central Bedfordshire Council and 3 arrangements were within Bedford Borough Council. Of the 11 arranged within Central Bedfordshire Council 2 of these were made between January and the end of March 2014 which after the Service was disaggregated.
- 3.0.4 The councils also have to monitor the age and place of birth in respect of children in private fostering arrangements. The majority of children are white British and aged over 10 years at the time the private fostering arrangement commences.

### Age



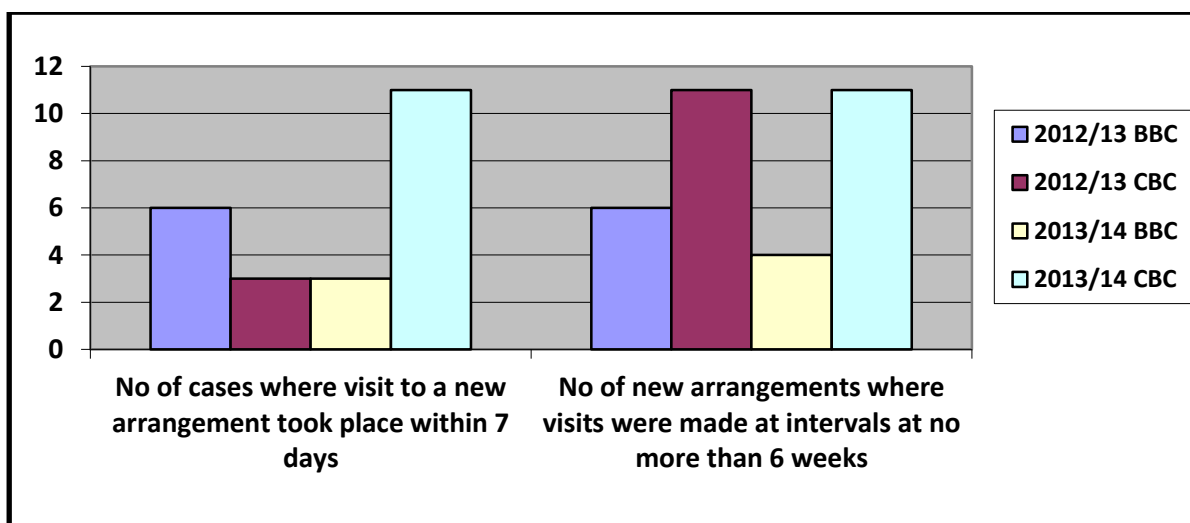
### Place of Birth



### 3.1 – MEETING TIMESCALES

- 3.1.1 The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 outline statutory timescales for visiting new arrangements and subsequent visits. Following notification of a new or proposed arrangement, the council must visit within 7 working days. In regard to ongoing arrangements the council must visit a privately fostered child at least every six weeks in the first year of the private fostering arrangement, and at least every 12 weeks in the second or subsequent year.
- 3.1.2 Statutory visits were 100% within timescales. This includes initial visits within 7 days and the weekly assessment visits. It also includes the ongoing completion of the Private Fostering Assessment within 42 days and the ongoing 6 weekly supervised visits.

#### Timeliness of Visits

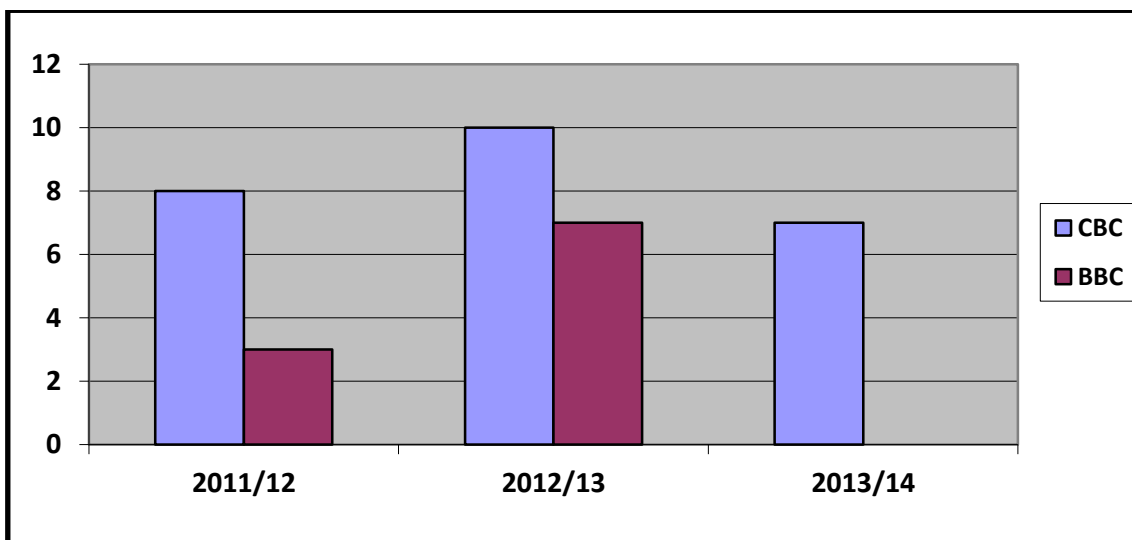




3.1.3 Records are kept for the reasons that private fostering arrangements end. In 2013-14 the reasons were:

- 4 young people went home to parent.
- 2 young people became looked after
- 1 young person moved out of the area

**Numbers of Arrangements Ending In Year**



## 3.2 – SUITABILITY OF ARRANGEMENTS

3.2.1. All new private fostering arrangements have to be assessed and a report compiled as to the suitability to meet the needs of the child. The decision on suitability usually rests with the Head of Adoption and Fostering, with appropriate discussion or decision making from the Assistant Director in complex cases. In two cases there were some concerns about how arrangements could meet the needs of the children involved. This was resolved by the Local Authority intervening and accommodating both young people.

## **SECTION 4 - SUPPORT TO YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **4.0 – ADVOCACY SUPPORT**

- 4.0.1 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 leaflet 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 legal age at which a child is deemed to be no longer privately fostered is 16 (18 if disabled). For some young people it may not be possible for them to remain in private foster care beyond the age of 16. It is the role of the allocated social worker to sign post the young people in private foster care who are approaching their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday to universal services with regard to accommodation, advice and guidance.

## SECTION 5 – SUMMARY & DEVELOPMENTS

- 5.1 The joint service ended on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013. This had little impact on the Central Bedfordshire Private Fostering Service. Raising awareness of private fostering has become more straightforward because there is now a smaller area to cover. Networking with partner agencies and other professionals is therefore less time consuming.
- 5.2 The number of notifications has gradually increased since 2006 when the requirement was first enacted and levels are now broadly similar to those of comparator authorities. Awareness- raising activities and advertising campaigns continue and there is a good level of awareness amongst local professionals. However National Campaigns have stopped as have campaigns through BAAF because of lack of funding. Therefore there is more pressure on Local Authorities to intensify their own campaigns of raising awareness.
- 5.3 The new client database in Central Bedfordshire has now been configured to enable referrals to be made easily and to give management information to support timely allocation of work. There are also contingency plans in place if the lead worker is absent for any unplanned reason.
- 5.4 Central Bedfordshire has continued 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.
- 5.5 In March 2012 following the annual review of the Shared Service Level Agreement it was decided to end the Shared Service Arrangement. This decision was subsequently reviewed in detail in Autumn 2012 with the decision being made for the disaggregation of the service to be effective from 1 January 2014.

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

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