



**SPECIALIST CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**ANNUAL REPORT ON  
PRIVATE FOSTERING**

**2015-2016**

## **Introduction**

A private fostering arrangement is one made privately 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. Private foster carers may be from the extended family, such as a cousin or great aunt.

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. However, a person who is a relative as defined by the Children Act 1989, i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of the full or half blood or by marriage) or a step-parent (i.e. by marriage to a parent) will not be a private foster carer.

This report is being provided under the requirements laid down in the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering which came in to force in July 2005.

Section 7.9 – the Local Authority provides that a report is written each year for consideration by the Director of Children's Services which include an evaluation of the outcome of its work in relation to privately fostered children within its area.

Section 7.10 – The Local Authority reports annually to the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board about how it satisfies itself that the health of privately fostered children in its area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted, including how the Local Authority cooperates with other agencies in this connection.

This report covers the period July 2015 – July 2016.

## **Private Fostering Staffing Structure**

Kent's Private Fostering Service is located within Specialist Children's Services.

In Kent, there are four districts (one in each Area) whose staff take responsibility for assessing all newly notified private fostering arrangements. The districts are Dover, Canterbury, The Weald and Swanley.

Each Area of the County continues to have a private fostering champion whose role it is to attend County meetings, share good practice within their area, support other staff in identifying/assessing private fostering arrangements and raise awareness with their local multi-agency partners.

All children attending language schools remain the responsibility of the nominated district team throughout their stay in England. Those children who are in private fostering arrangements in other parts of the Area will be allocated a social worker from the District where they reside following the completion of a Private Fostering Arrangement Assessment Record (PFAAR).

For those children who are already known to Specialist Children's Services (as a child in need or a child with a child protection plan) when they are identified as a privately fostered child, will continue to have their allocated social worker with an additional worker from the nominated team completing the private fostering arrangement assessment.

Local Team Managers supervise these social workers and Service Managers /Area Assistant Directors act as decision-makers.

## **National Minimum Standard 1**

**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.**

Private Fostering arrangements within Kent are set out in the statement of purpose, published on the Council's online procedures for children's services via Tri-X.

## **National Minimum Standard 2**

**The local authority:**

**2.1 promote awareness of the notification requirements and ensure that those professionals who may come into contact with privately fostered children understand their role in notification;**

**2.2 responds effectively to notifications; and**

**2.3 deals with situations where an arrangement comes to their attention, which has not been notified**

The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 sets out that anyone involved in making a private fostering arrangement (parent, carer or third party) must notify the appropriate local authority.

Parents and carers often fail to notify because they are unaware of the requirements and believe that this is a private family arrangement which does not concern anybody else. We use Private Fostering week (4-8 July 2016) to raise awareness in Kent, using the following awareness raising methods:

- Articles publicised on KELSI-the online portal into Early Help & Young People's Services, including education.
- Twitter feed
- Article to be published in the school Governors magazine in October 2016
- Information included in SCS Director ,Philip Segurola's monthly bulletin
- Press release
- Peter Oakford, KCC Lead Member for Children's Services being interviewed by KMFM and Heart FM about the subject
- Information sent and disseminated to its staff by Kent Police via "Spotlight" newsletter
- Information sent to Kent designated nurses and doctor for dissemination via email and GP bulletins
- Information sent to all children's commissioned services
- Information sent to all language schools and independent schools in Kent
- Information disseminated to staff via Early Help colleagues, Troubled Families colleagues and others

- Information disseminated to Minority Ethnic Outreach staff
- Information included in Early Help and Preventative Services Directors bulletin.
- Information sent to all Kent childminders (via Pacey)

Other awareness raising activity throughout the year has included:

- Attendance and “stall” at the KSCB 2015 annual conference (attended by approximately 180 professionals)
- KSCB “Need to know” multi agency training with approx. 40 attendees
- Training provided to all newly qualified staff within Specialist Children’s Services and attendance at several team/district meetings
- Liberi private fostering training sessions
- Three minute podcast has been filmed
- Presentation to UKBA staff (attended by approximately 30 staff)

There is still a high degree of communication and awareness raising that is needed in order to increase the County notifications of children in private fostering arrangements and to make a wider audience aware of what constitutes a Private Fostering arrangement.

The updated communications strategy is appended to this report which identifies the ongoing awareness raising planned.

### **Liberi**

The Management Information Unit (MIU) has worked closely with allocated social workers to ensure that Liberi is being used to appropriately record the private fostering assessments, visits and other activity. There has been ongoing support from MIU to encourage timely statutory visiting to children by the creation of private fostering trackers and inclusion of private fostering data on the Team Operational Dashboard (TOD).

Additionally MIU have continued to contact team managers on a weekly basis to remind them that private fostering ‘Regulation 8’ visits are due.

Ongoing training on how to input private fostering information has been provided as Regulation 8 visits need to be inputted on the system differently to child protection and child in care statutory visits. Additional boxes need to be ticked to ensure that data is counted and collated correctly by MIU.

### **Changes in Data Collection**

Following consultation, the Department for Education (DfE) no longer collect private fostering data. Some information is gathered via the children in need census.

The DfE have released guidance and technical specifications on the changes to the 2016 to 2017 children in need census to include extra sub-categories of the private fostering factors identified at the end of assessment (overseas children who intend to

return, overseas children who intend to stay, UK children in educational placements, UK children making alternative family arrangements and privately fostered-other).

This data collection will only consider those privately fostered children who are subject to child in need services. Those privately fostered children who are not receiving child in need services will not be considered by the DfE.

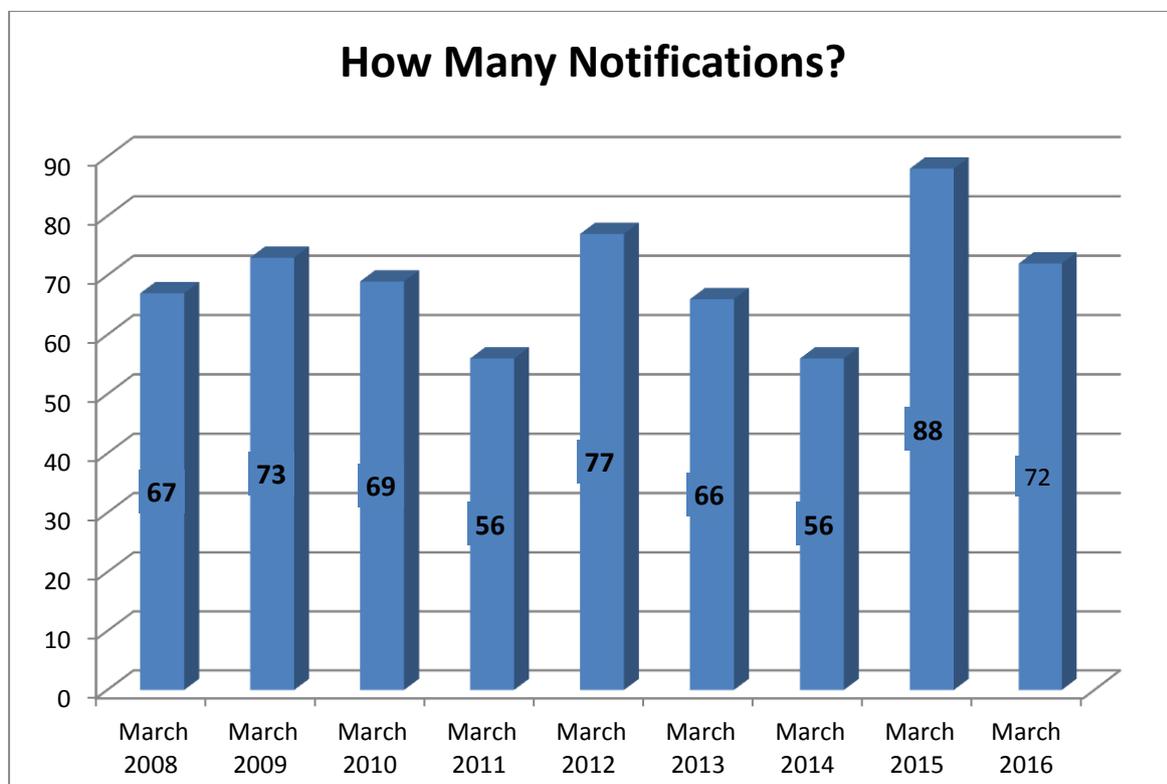
Due to the changes brought about by the DfE, Kent Specialist Children's Services have altered the three private fostering measures (which were % of PF notifications where initial visit held within 7 days, % of new PF arrangements where visits were held within 6 weeks and % of existing PF arrangements where visits were held in time) to a rolling 12 month method which considers visits made to the child in the preceding 12 months. It therefore considers initial visits, and both 6 & 12 weekly visits in the same measure.

What has not changed is the duty on local authorities to satisfy themselves that the welfare of a child privately fostered within their area is satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. Nor does it change the way local authorities discharge their statutory duties in line with 'The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005'.

### **New Notifications**

In the year 2015/16, there were 72 new private fostering notifications.

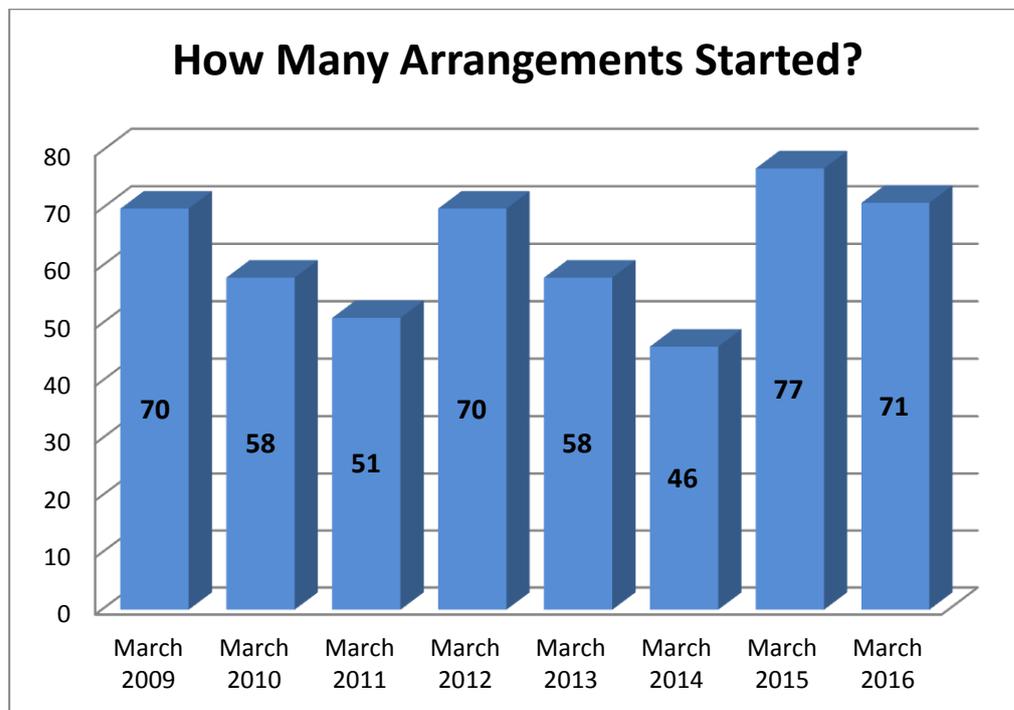
This figure is 18% lower than 2014/15.



Due to the changes in the DfE data collection, comparable data is unlikely to be available until October 2017 (following the completion of the 2016/2017 child in census returns).

### Progression to arrangement

71 new private fostering arrangements began in 2015/16.



Notifications which progress to a private fostering arrangement may not necessarily fall into the same year due to a combination of late notifications (i.e. carer/parent not informing the local authority in time), or due to early notifications (i.e. language school students where the notification may be made some months before the young person arrives).

Kent County Council's performance represents 99% (71/72) of all notifications progressing to placement, and compares with 89% (78/88) for the previous year 2014/15.

| Referrals Source Type  | Number |
|--|--------|
| 1A - Individual - Family member/relative/carers  | 8      |
| 1B - Individual - Acquaintance (including neighbours and child minders)  | 1      |
| 2A - Schools   | 13     |
| 2B - Education Services  | 17     |
| 3B - Health services - Health Visitor  | 1      |
| 5A - LA services - Social care e.g. adults social care   | 5      |
| 5B - LA services - Other internal (department other than social care in LA e.g. youth offending (excluding housing)) | 4      |
| 5C - LA services - External e.g. from other LAs adult social care  | 4      |
| 6 - Police   | 6      |
| 7 - Other legal agency - Including courts, probation, immigration, CAFCASS, prison                                   | 2      |
| 8 - Other - Including children's centres, independent agency providers, voluntary                                    | 6      |

|                    |           |
|--------------------|-----------|
| organisations      |           |
| 9 - Anonymous      | 1         |
| 10 - Unknown       | 2         |
| Not Recorded       | 2         |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>72</b> |

In the year 15/16, we have seen an increase in notifications by Local Authority services (ie: adult social care), other internal Local Authority services department other than social care in LA e.g. youth offending and the Police.

### Country of Birth:

Of the 72 Private Fostering notifications made in 2015/16, 33 involved children that were born in the UK (46%) and 28 involved children visiting from Europe (39%).

The following table identifies the overall distribution (last year's figures given in brackets):

| Place of Birth    | Total number of children (15/16 figures) | Total number of children (14/15 figures) |
|-------------------|--|--|
| UK                | 33                                       | 34                                       |
| Europe (excl. UK) | 28                                       | 37                                       |
| Africa            | 1  | 5  |
| Asia              | 6  | 7  |
| Middle East       | 1  | 3  |
| Other             | 2  | 2  |

### Age when Private Fostering Arrangement Assessment was completed.

In Kent, 61/72 (85%) children were aged 10 and above at the time the PFAAR was completed.

| Age at PFAR Date (when PF Assessment completed) | Number    |
|---|-----------|
| 0   | 2         |
| 3   | 1         |
| 5   | 1         |
| 6   | 2         |
| 7   | 1         |
| 8   | 1         |
| 9   | 2         |
| 10  | 1         |
| 11  | 3         |
| 13  | 2         |
| 14  | 18        |
| 15  | 31        |
| 16  | 5         |
| (blank)   | 1         |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                              | <b>71</b> |

**Ongoing visiting requirements**

Privately fostered children must be visited at a frequency of a minimum of 6 weekly in the first year of placement, and 12 weekly in second and subsequent years. These visits are completed to observe the overall standard of care, ensure that the child is developing appropriately, ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child (seeing them alone) to ensure that the child’s health, education and contact needs are being met and to support rehabilitation home in appropriate circumstances.

Of the private fostering arrangements that had commenced between March 2015 and March 2016 (using the new data collection formula of rolling 12 month method which considers visits made to the child in the pre-ceding 12 months) performance stood at 87% with 172 visits in time out of 197 visits.

Given that data collection has altered, there is no historic comparable data.

**Snap shot of current arrangements**

On the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016, there were a total of 32 private fostering cases open across the County. This figure is an increase of seven on last year.

| <b>Reporting Year</b> | <b>Number of Placements as at 31<sup>st</sup> March</b> |
|-----------------------|---|
| 2006 / 07             | 37  |
| 2007 / 08             | 37  |
| 2008 / 09             | 43  |
| 2009 / 10             | 36  |
| 2010/11               | 36  |
| 2011/12               | 35  |
| 2012/13               | 28  |
| 2013/14               | 21  |
| 2014/15               | 25  |
| 2015/16               | 32  |

**National Minimum Standard 3**

**The Local Authority determines effectively the suitability of all aspects of the private fostering arrangements in accordance with regulations.**

A new monthly auditing process began in June 2016, spreading the responsibility for auditing and improving practice when working with Privately Fostered children across the nominated teams (private fostering champions and nominated team managers) and the practice development officer who has historically completed the audits and fed back.

At present, one audit has been completed, which was graded as ‘requires improvement’. This audit identified some excellent social work recorded on this case, with a good quality assessment. There was evidence of direct work with the young

person and evidence of the social worker attempting to build relationships with the child, carers and parents. There was also evidence of good management oversight and some regular reflective supervision. Unfortunately it took some time for the private fostering arrangement to be identified which meant that it could not be graded more highly.

#### **National Minimum Standard 4**

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

Private Foster Carers are provided with information and advice regarding children's developmental needs. The social workers in the team assist and advise all Private Foster Carers with general parenting skills, and provide advice on an ongoing basis.

As part of their work, the team offers support on a case by case basis to the private foster carers and to the children privately fostered. Support and assistance with practical support for carers around benefits and housing has been offered in several cases.

Letters were also sent out to private foster carers to gain their views about a potential focus group and were asked to comment on what they felt could be the purpose of said group, how they felt this group should be run and whether they would like to attend in their capacity as a private foster carer. We did not receive any feedback.

All Private Foster Carers and children and young people, where appropriate, are provided with the contact details for the social workers in the team and the Out of Hours service.

Private Foster Carers are given advice and support to consider the securing of young people's permanence by way of an Order.

#### **National Minimum Standard 5**

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

Where it has been possible all parents are met with and spoken to during the course of establishing the arrangements. When arrangements involve children from overseas discussions are generally held over the telephone.

If children already have a social worker, the initial visit to assess the private fostering arrangement will be completed jointly by the case holding social worker and social worker from the nominated district. This is to ensure that children have a consistent staff member supporting them and to ensure that any ongoing issues which might prevent the need for a private fostering arrangement to be made or where there is a clear safeguarding concern can be addressed at an early stage.

A leaflet for parents of children who are privately fostered has been designed and where possible given to all parents.

Contact details for social workers have been provided to all parents where possible.

### **National Minimum Standard 6**

**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 enabled to participate in decisions about their lives.**

Experience has shown that children in private fostering arrangements do generally understand the arrangement and their rights within it. The social workers in the team consult individually with them about their views and ensure that their private foster carers listen to their needs and wishes. Children and young people's views and wishes are incorporated into the assessment report and the recent audit evidences good recording of children's views.

Children are often seen at school to provide a different context to the private fostering environment to discuss their needs, wishes and feelings.

A leaflet for children who are subject to private fostering arrangements is given to all children who are privately fostered, and the child's social worker will advocate on their behalf if necessary on issues such as legal status, placement, contact and education.

Contact details for social workers are always provided to children.

### **National Minimum Standard 7**

**The local authority has in place and implements 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.**

Each Private Fostering arrangement is assessed using the Private Fostering Arrangement Assessment Record and this is signed off by a Team Manager. Private Fostering arrangements are agreed by Assistant Directors or Service Managers (where consent has been delegated).

As stated, audits of the quality of work are continuing to be completed.

### **Update of Recommendations made in 2015/16**

See attached plan

### **Recommendations 2015/16**

Based on the data and analysis presented in this report, recommendations are made for the annual plan 2016/17. See attached.

The Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing and Kent Safeguarding Children Board are asked to note the annual report and plan.

**Sophie Baker**  
**Practice Development Officer – Private Fostering County Lead**  
**Safeguarding Unit**  
**05.07.2016**



**Private Fostering Annual Plan (update)**  
**March 2015-16**

| <b>Objective:</b>  | Fulfil the Communication and Engagement Action Plan |                   |                  |                  |                           |   |
|--|---|-------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Action/Task and Priority:</b>                                   | <b>Audience Focus</b>                               | <b>Lead</b>       | <b>Timescale</b> | <b>Resources</b> | <b>Measure of Success</b> | <b>Achieved</b>   |
| Ongoing implementation of Communication and Engagement Action Plan | All partners  | Safeguarding Unit | Ongoing          |                  | Increase of notifications | Partially achieved – awareness raising as planned in the Communication and Engagement Action Plan has continued. There has been a decrease in notifications by 18%. |

| <b>Objective:</b>   | Embed Area Operational Arrangements Regarding Private Fostering |                                  |                  |  |   |   |
|---|---|----------------------------------|------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>Action/Task and Priority:</b>  | <b>Audience Focus</b>   | <b>Lead</b>                      | <b>Timescale</b> | <b>Resources</b>   | <b>Measure of Success</b>   | <b>Achieved</b>   |
| Embedding private fostering practices. Improve timescales of 12 week visiting children in | SCS   | Safeguarding Unit (Sophie Baker) | By Dec 15        | Area PFAAR workshops<br>Attendance at case progression meetings in Areas who are working with this new | 7 day, 6 week and 12 week visiting timescales will have been met in 80% or more cases<br>Improved quality of PFAAR – inclusive of | Achieved – there are new data collection techniques – 87% of visits to privately fostered children were within timescales |

|  |   |  |   |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|--|
| placement, ensuring children are continuing to be seen alone and quality of assessment                                   |   |  |   | process<br><br>Use of County Meetings to share outcome of audit and action plans from team managers | agencies views of placement (not just blanket agency checks), detail of proposed carers including their experiences of being parented, how their culture, ethnicity etc might impact on the care they provide for the young person etc<br><br>Evidence that referees are being sourced and visited/communicated with | between March 15-March 16.<br><br>New monthly auditing began in June 2016.                         |
| Evidence that KSCB leaflets are being given to children, parents, proposed carers etc                                    | SCS                                     | Allocated social workers   | Ongoing   |   | Evidence that leaflets are being shared will be identified in audit (April 16)   | New monthly auditing began in June 2016.   |
| Continue to offer training to social workers in new Liberi system in order to accurately evidence private fostering work | SCS                                     | Liberi implementation team – champions to share knowledge with their own teams to ensure accurate Liberi use | Sessions to be delivered when necessary (ie: new PF champions employed etc) |   | Good quality data  | Achieved – awareness raising sessions held within the organisation and with multi agency partners. |
| Attendance at County and Practice Meetings   | SCS/MIU/health/education representative | All staff  | On-going  |   | Staff receiving consistent and clear   | Achieved – ongoing good attendance at  |

|  |                       |                   |                  |                                       |  |   |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| to include health and education representation                           |                       |                   |                  |                                       | messages, consistent Private Fostering across the county. Improved notification rate and understanding within agency partners. | County meetings. We have a health and education representative who are linked and available for consultation and discussion<br><br>It was agreed that the County meeting was not an appropriate forum for health and education representative attendance although they remain available for support in awareness raising. |
| <b>Objective:</b>  | Practice monitoring   |                   |                  |                                       |  |   |
| <b>Action/Task and Priority:</b>   | <b>Audience Focus</b> | <b>Lead</b>       | <b>Timescale</b> | <b>Resources</b>                      | <b>Measure of Success</b>  | <b>Achieved</b>   |
| Ongoing MIU support to identify visits and assessments that are soon due | SCS                   | MIU               | Ongoing          | TOD Tracker<br>Weekly emails from MIU | 7 day, 6 week and 12 week visiting timescales will have been met in 80% or more cases  | Achieved – ongoing support from MIU directly to case holding staff.   |
| Complete annual Private Fostering  | SCS                   | Safeguarding Unit | By April 16      |                                       | Improved quality of social work  | New monthly auditing began in June 2016.  |

|  |  |  |  |  |                                       |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| audit to consider<br>assessment<br>quality, stat<br>visiting,<br>management<br>oversight etc |  |  |  |  | practice.<br>Improved<br>safeguarding |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|---------------------------------------|--|

**Private Fostering Annual Plan**  
**March 2016-17**

| <b>Objective:</b>  | Fulfil the Communication and Engagement Action Plan |                   |                  |                  |                           |                 |
|--|---|-------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Action/Task and Priority:</b>                                   | <b>Audience Focus</b>                               | <b>Lead</b>       | <b>Timescale</b> | <b>Resources</b> | <b>Measure of Success</b> | <b>Achieved</b> |
| Ongoing implementation of Communication and Engagement Action Plan | All partners  | Safeguarding Unit | Ongoing          |                  | Increase of notifications |                 |

| <b>Objective:</b>   | Embed Area Operational Arrangements Regarding Private Fostering |                                  |                  |  |  |                 |
|---|---|----------------------------------|------------------|--|--|-----------------|
| <b>Action/Task and Priority:</b>  | <b>Audience Focus</b>   | <b>Lead</b>                      | <b>Timescale</b> | <b>Resources</b>   | <b>Measure of Success</b>  | <b>Achieved</b> |
| Embedding private fostering practices. Continued improvement of timescales for visiting | SCS   | Safeguarding Unit (Sophie Baker) | By March 17      | Area PFAAR workshops<br><br>Use of County Meetings to share outcome of audit and action plans from team managers | Increased improvement in timescales for visiting.<br><br>Improved quality of PFAAR – inclusive of agencies views of placement (not just blanket agency checks), detail of proposed carers including their experiences of being parented, how their |                 |

|  |   |  |   |  |  |  |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|--|
|  |   |  |   |  | <p>culture, ethnicity etc might impact on the care they provide for the young person etc</p> <p>Evidence that referees are being sourced and visited/communicated with</p> |  |
| Evidence that KSCB leaflets are being given to children, parents, proposed carers etc                                      | SCS                                     | Allocated social workers   | Ongoing   |  | Evidence that leaflets are being shared will be identified in audit  |  |
| Continue to offer training to social workers in using Liberi system in order to accurately evidence private fostering work | SCS                                     | Liberi implementation team – champions to share knowledge with their own teams to ensure accurate Liberi use | Sessions to be delivered when necessary (ie: new PF champions employed etc) |  | Increased improvement in timescales for visiting.  |  |
| SCS attendance at County and Practice Meetings with ongoing support from health and education representatives              | SCS/MIU/health/education representative | All staff  | On-going  |  | Staff receiving consistent and clear messages, consistent Private Fostering across the county. Improved notification rate and understanding within agency partners.        |  |

| <b>Objective:</b>   | Practice monitoring   |                   |                        |                                       |  |                 |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| <b>Action/Task and Priority:</b>  | <b>Audience Focus</b> | <b>Lead</b>       | <b>Timescale</b>       | <b>Resources</b>                      | <b>Measure of Success</b>  | <b>Achieved</b> |
| Ongoing MIU support to identify visits and assessments that are soon due                        | SCS                   | MIU               | Ongoing                | TOD Tracker<br>Weekly emails from MIU |  |                 |
| Monthly auditing to continue to consider assessment quality, visiting, management oversight etc | SCS                   | Safeguarding Unit | Ongoing until March 17 |                                       | Improved quality of social work practice.<br>Improved safeguarding |                 |

The Director of Specialist Children's Services and Kent Safeguarding Children Board are asked to note the annual report and plan.

**Sophie Baker**  
**Practice Development Officer – Private Fostering County Lead**  
**Safeguarding Unit**  
**05.07.2016**