



THE LONDON BOROUGH  
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# Annual Private Fostering Report 2013/2014



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## 2. Introduction

2.1 This report sets out the London Borough of Bromley's performance for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 on Private Fostering. The report is based on the requirements set out in the National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Private Fostering 2005, the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and examples of good practice from the Ofsted report published in January 2014, ("Private Fostering: better information, better understanding") and have incorporated its messages into this report.

2.2 Bromley's Private Fostering Statement of Purpose, which is updated annually, outlines the detail of what private fostering is, and the Local Authorities responsibilities. This Annual Report should therefore be read in conjunction with the Statement of Purpose for 2013/2014.

2.3 This report will be presented to the Assistant Director of Children's Services and her Senior Management team and it forms the basis of the Annual Private Fostering Report for the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board. Whilst it is a requirement of the standards, this document is also a report to the council's Lead Member for Children's Services.

2.4 Bromley gives consideration of all examples of good practice regarding Private Fostering and demonstrates where possible innovative practice and aims to also exceed the N M S.

2.5 Some examples of good practice include:

- Bromley takes seriously its Private Fostering responsibilities and senior managers communicate the importance of ensuring that privately fostered children are safeguarded in a uniformed and structured manner and seen within a statutory time frame.
- Bromley continues to be proactive in identifying private fostering arrangements and ensuring that its activities are carried out to a high and uniformed standard.
- Bromley Promotes and respects equality and diversity.

- Bromley continues to undertake regular Private Fostering awareness campaigns, highlighting what they are and what needs to happen when such an arrangement is identified. Bromley is also working hard to develop good working relationships with as wide a range of agencies as possible, in order to have in place a comprehensive and systematic approach to identifying children and young people in aforementioned Private Fostering arrangements.
- Bromley continues to maintain internal communication regarding Private Fostering arrangements.
- Bromley has allocated a Senior Practitioner within the Looked after Children (LAC) team as Lead Officer for Private Fostering who is tasked with developing the Local Authority's approach to Private Fostering.

### 3. Private Fostering – A Definition

3.1 A private fostering (PF) arrangement is essentially one that is made privately (i.e. without the involvement of a local authority) 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. A person who is a close relative under the Children Act 1989 i.e. a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of full blood or half blood or by marriage) or step-parent will not be a Private Foster Carer. However, Private Foster Carers may be a cousin, a great aunt, friend of the family, parent of a friend of the child. The period for which the child is cared for and accommodated by the Private Foster Carer should be continuous.

3.3 Current arrangements for the regulation of private fostering originate from concerns following the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000. Victoria was privately fostered by her great aunt. Arrangements were codified in the Children Act 2004. This then follows the Children (Private Arrangement for Fostering) Regulations 2005, which sets out the duties of local authorities in their arrangements for private fostering and NMS for local authorities were published in 2005.

## 4. Planning on Private Fostering

- 4.1 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**.
- 4.2 A Statement of Purpose on Private Fostering document was completed in October 2013 will be reviewed annually. This is a requirement under the National Minimum Standard (NMS) for Private Fostering. The Local Authority's Statement of Purpose on Private Fostering document sets out: the notification requirements; the local authority's duties and functions under the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Private Arrangement for Fostering) Regulations 2005; the role of all professionals and agencies in Bromley and the arrangements of training for relevant staff and professionals.
- 4.3 This document will be made available to partner agencies, along with other private fostering publicity information, and will also be made available on Bromley's website.

## 5. Notification Arrangements

- 5.1 The Referral & Assessment Service (RAS) receive all new enquiries and referrals regarding proposed or existing Private Fostering arrangements. The Referral and Assessment Service undertake the task of assessing the suitability of Private Fostering arrangements and initial welfare visits. Once the arrangement is deemed as a safe Private Fostering arrangement, the duty of undertaking regular home visits and the provision of support and advice transfers to the Lead Officer for Private Fostering located within the LAC Team.

## 6. Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare

- 6.1 The Referral and Assessment Service undertakes all suitability and safeguarding assessments and complete Regulation 8 visits until the case transfers to the LAC Team. The subsequent monitoring via welfare visits will then be conducted by the Lead Officer for Private Fostering based in the LAC Team.

6.2 The Referral and Assessment Service's Deputy Managers sign off all Private Fostering arrangements that are deemed safe; any arrangements that do not meet this threshold are pursued via the formal safeguarding route under the remit of the Safeguarding and Care Planning Service.

## 7. Practice Development

### Nationally:

7.1 The British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) facilitates a special interest group for Private Fostering. There are four regional groups in England, and Bromley is linked to the London Regional Group. The Lead Officer for Private fostering who sits within the LAC team has been attending the British Association of Adoption & Fostering's quarterly special interest group on Private Fostering four times a year. This enables local policy and practice to be developed in line with best practice from other authorities.

7.2 Members of the group include BAAF staff, representatives from the DCSF, Ofsted, member agencies and stakeholder groups with personal experience of private fostering. In the past, the group had supported members by providing relevant research findings, good practice guide and up-to-date materials in relation to Private Fostering.

7.3 BAAF co-ordinates a national publicity campaign for Private Fostering annually. This provides an opportunity for co-ordinated awareness raising within local authorities. Bromley Council will participate in this campaign during July 2014 and is now included in the draft communication plan.

### Locally:

7.4 The Private Fostering Lead officer has been closely working with internal and external Agencies both in raising awareness about private fostering and in safeguarding the safety and wellbeing of privately fostered children. The Lead Officer has established a close working relationship with internal and external agencies such as Language schools in Bromley in particular Kings College. In collaboration with Bromley Children Safeguarding Board and British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), training on Safeguarding

Privately Fostered Children training has been organised for Bromley staff and our external partners including representatives of language school (kings college) and will be commencing in October 2014.

7.5 The Statement of Purpose will be reviewed in October 2014 which is attached as **appendix 1**.

7.6 National Minimum Standards (NMS) – This Rolling Plan will be completed. The NMS is a Rolling plan that will comprehensively evaluate Local Authority's duty and function in relation to private fostering. The Rolling plan sets out specific objectives and measurable outcomes in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of privately fostered children.

7.7 In addition to the NMS- Rolling Plan; we will also complete a Self-Assessment form which is an official Ofsted form. We are using the Self-Assessment questionnaire as a "health check" and capacity building tool. The questionnaire within the Self-Assessment form enables us to reflect upon our own practice and identifies our strengths and the areas for improvement.

7.8 During the reporting year; we have started reviewing the Local Authority's policies and procedures in relation to private Fostering in Bromley. A new section 8 visit form has been updated on Care First and other forms are being reviewed. The form is specifically designed to record the views of privately fostered children and their parents and carers and it is hoped that the feedback received would enable the local authority to discharge its duty and function in relation to private fostering.

7.9 It is also intended to update Bromley's website and literature regarding Private fostering, including leaflets for privately fostered children, their parents and carers as well as for professionals and members of the public. The leaflets should be available both online and in hard copy form by the end of November 2014.

## 8. Raising Awareness about Private Fostering

8.1 The Private Fostering Lead officer has worked proactively with the Business Manager for Bromley Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB), the Local Authority's Communication Officer

and Children's Performance Improvement Officer in raising awareness about private fostering which was aimed at increasing notification of private fostering arrangements in Bromley.

8.2 It is planned via the Local Authority's Communication Officer to issue a press release via the council's website during July 2014 urging those caring for children that are not their own for 28 days or more during the year to get in touch to make sure they are complying with the law. The press release also outlined the meaning of Private fostering as well as appealing to members of the public who come into contact with children the council is asking school and health professionals to help spread the word.

8.3 A large self-standing poster will also be displayed at the Civic Centre main reception area during the National Private Fostering Week initiated by BAAF for July 2014. The private fostering awareness raising and publicity activities are to be targeted towards professionals working with children and young people, adults, the public and local communities.

8.4 However, awareness raising activities to date have made little difference in terms of increasing notifications. According to Ofsted's report and best practice reported by other Local Authorities; the most effective awareness raising campaigns focus primarily on the council's own staff, GP's, School admissions and language colleges. This will be reflected in our draft communication plan and future National Private Fostering Week.

## **9. Advice and Support**

9.1 The RAS and the Lead Officer for Private Fostering ensures that Private Foster Carers, parents and their children receive appropriate advice and support, this includes using an interpreter when English is not the first language.

9.2 Where appropriate the Lead Officer for Private Fostering will direct people as to how best to resolve any Legal or immigration status issues that arise for the children or young people subject to Private Fostering arrangements.

## **10. Monitoring Compliance with Duties and Functions**

**The reporting period performance assessed against previous return figures.**



(Table 1)

| Indicators  | 2012/2013<br>Return | 2013/2014<br>Return |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Number of notifications of new private fostering arrangement received during the year   | 11                  | 10                  |
| Number of cases where action was taken in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 4 (1) and 7 (1) for carrying out visits  | 9                   | 10                  |
| Of these the number of cases where this action was taken within 7 working days of receipt of notification of the private fostering arrangement                                    | 2                   | 8                   |
| Number of new arrangements that began during the year   | 11                  | 10                  |
| The number of private fostering arrangements that began <b>On</b> or <b>After</b> 1 April 2013 where visits were made at intervals of not more than 6 weeks                       | 0                   | 5                   |
| The Number of private fostering arrangements that began <b>BEFORE</b> 1 April that were continuing on 1 April 2013  | 2                   | 3                   |
| The number of private fostering arrangements that began before 1 April 2013 that were continuing on 1 April 2013 where scheduled visits were completed in the requested timescale | 0                   | 3                   |
| Number of private fostering arrangements that ended during the year   | 9                   | 4                   |
| Number of children under private fostering arrangements   | 4                   | 13                  |

10.1 The above comparison table shows significant improvement both in terms of actions taken within 7 working days of receipt of notifications and completing statutory visit within the required timescale. We are confident that this progress will be sustained if not enhanced into 2014/15. In terms of private fostering cases held in the LAC Team; the visits have been 100%, except where the foreign language student was out of the country visiting their family and thus the allocated social worker was unable to complete such visits.

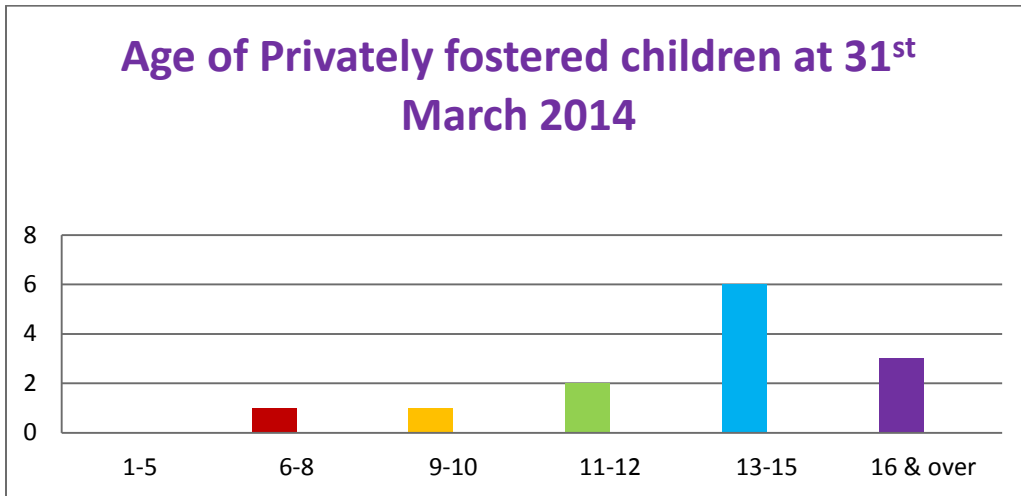
#### Summary of Private Fostering from 1/April 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 reporting period

(Table 2)

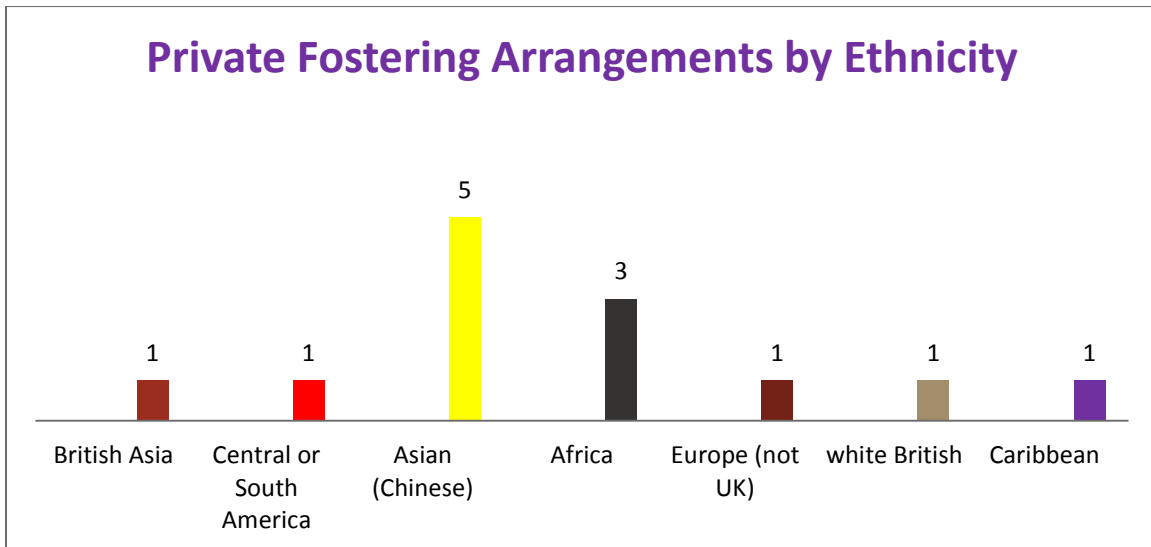
| Indicators   | Number |
|--|--------|
| PF arrangements already in place at the 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2013            | 3      |
| Number of new notifications during the year                                    | 10     |
| Total number of children currently in PF Arrangements                          | 9      |
| Number of PF Arrangements which have ended during the year                     | 4      |
| Number of notifications which didn't progress to private fostering assessments | 0      |

- 10.2 At the beginning of the period covered by this report, Bromley already had **3** children subject to Private Fostering arrangements and are all held in LAC Team. During the 12 month reporting period, the Local Authority was notified of **10** new children subject to Private Fostering arrangements; **8** of which were deemed to be long-term arrangements that subsequently transferred to the LAC team for on-going monitoring and support and the remaining **two** cases were held within RAS and the monitoring task ceased as both young people became sixteen in July and September 2013 respectively. Two other private fostering arrangements held in LAC team also ended during April and July 2013 respectively. The age make-up of the **13** privately fostered children that Bromley was aware of during the 2013/2014 reporting period were as follows:

(Table 3)

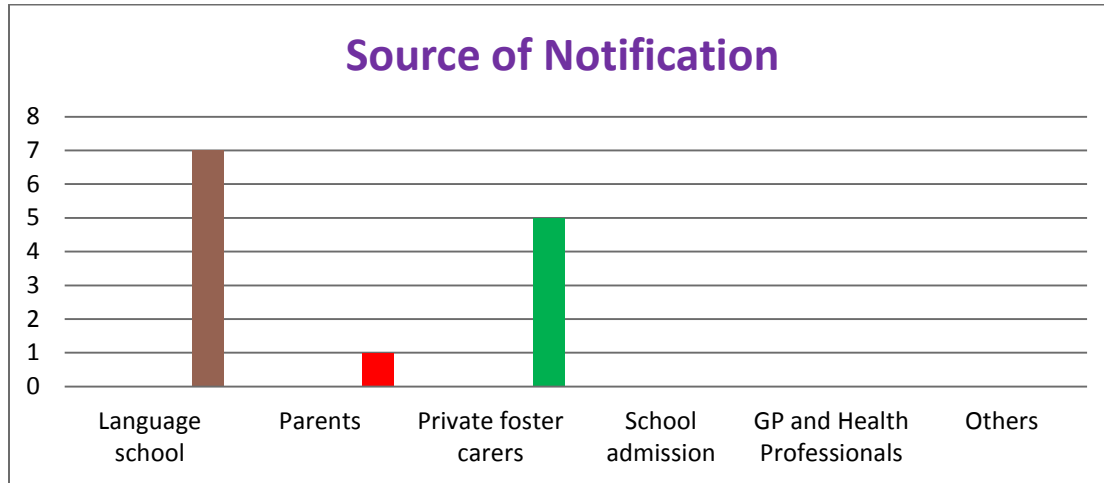


(Table 4)



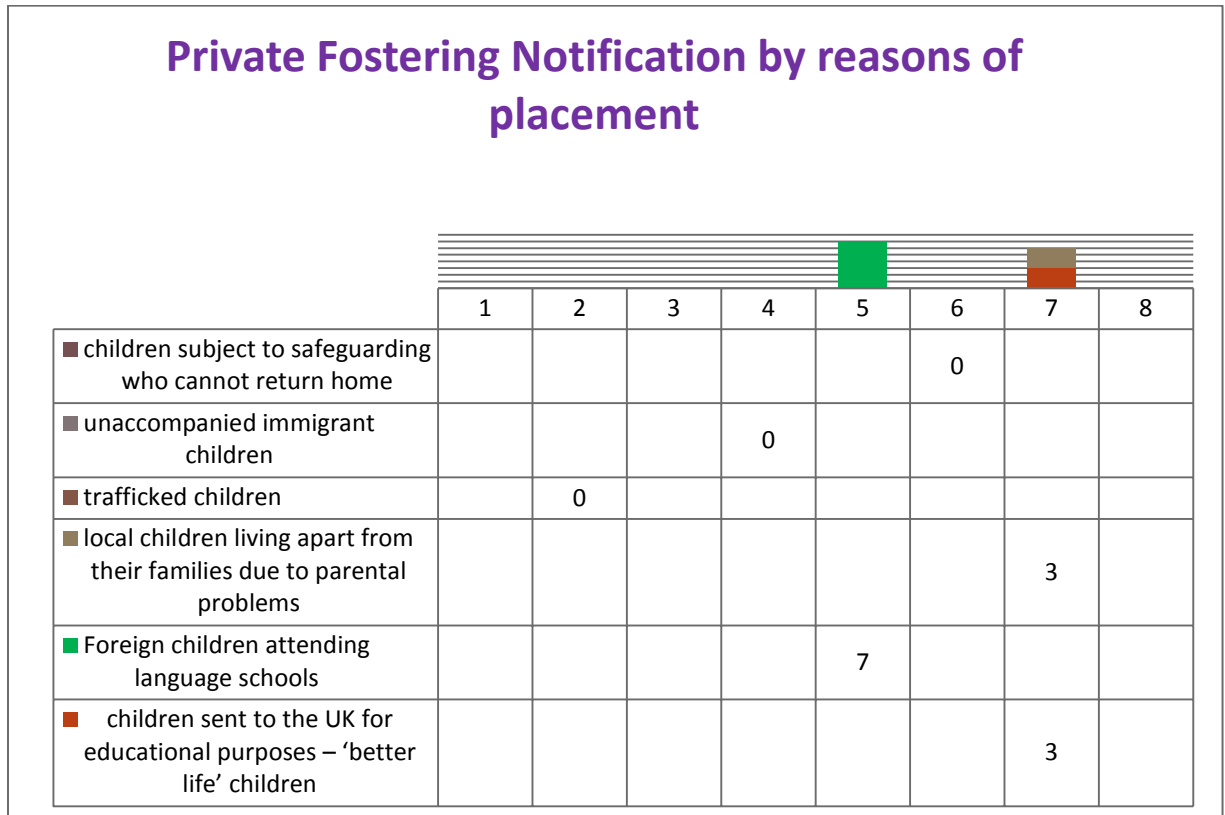
The majority of children and young people being privately fostered in Bromley are from China and live and attend a language school in Bromley.

(Table 5)

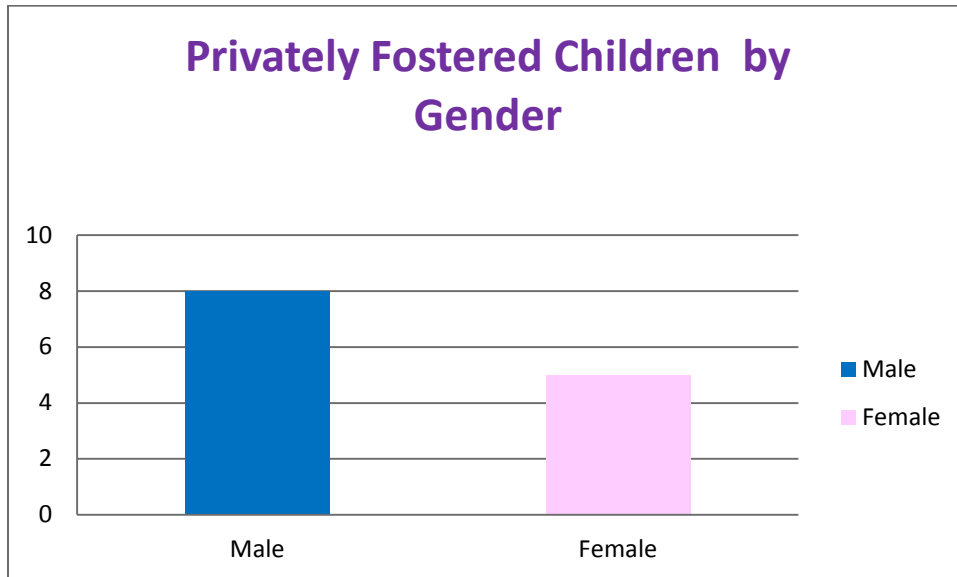
**Source of Notification of Private Fostering Arrangements**

The above chart shows that over 50% of the notifications to the LA were received from language school and the rest were from parents and carers. There were no notifications received either from school or health professionals. The Local Authority's draft communication plan will aim to raise awareness about private fostering by focusing on GPs, schools and school admissions.

**(Table 6)**



The above graph shows that the majority of the children living in private fostering arrangements are those who attend language schools and classified as a privately fostered children under the Private Fostering Regulation 2005. Awareness raising activities have so far made little impact in increasing notifications of mainstream private fostering arrangements.



All Privately Fostered children were considered to be in safe and suitable arrangements and the allocated Social Worker received regular supervision on all Private Fostering cases.

### 11.Ofsted Inspection

- 11.1 Ofsted examines the way in which local authorities undertake and perform their duties and responsibilities in relation to private fostering. This is measured against the NMS for Private Fostering and the Children (Private Arrangement for Fostering) Regulations 2005 and in accordance with the Ofsted single inspection framework which sets out the statutory basis for inspection and summarises the main features of inspections
- 11.2 Bromley's Private Fostering Service has not been subject to a stand-alone Ofsted inspection and hence there is no specific judgment made by Ofsted regarding Bromley's arrangements concerning private fostering.
- 11.3 The Lead Officer for private fostering in Bromley has been proactively working to improve the quality and standards of care in relation to privately fostered children. The Lead Officer for Private fostering jointly with Referral and Assessment services has been proactively working towards addressing the requirements of NMS and the private fostering regulation 2005 and within the framework for inspection of Local Authority' Private Fostering Services.

## 12 Progress Report on Action Plan 2013/14

The action Plan out lined in the Annual Report 2012/2013 has mostly been fully implemented with a few action points partially implemented. The current action plan has a number of additional actions it is expected that all time scales will be met. During the reporting year, several developmental works have been undertaken in relation to private fostering within Bromley. The most up to date Action Plan covering 2013 to March 2015 is attached as **appendix 2.**

## 13. Action Plan for 2014/2015

1. The Local Authority's Statement of Purpose in relation to Private fostering to be reviewed in October 2014.
2. There will be well-coordinated raising awareness activities in July 2014 as outlined in the Communication Plan. The Lead Officer for Private fostering to monitor the effectiveness of raising awareness and report to his manager of its outcomes or any difficulties.
3. The Lead officer for Private Fostering to continue reviewing the NMS-Rolling Plan and ensure that actions are taken within the timescales indicated in the NMS-Rolling plan 2013/2014.
4. The Lead office for Private Fostering to complete and Review the NMS-Rolling plan for the reporting year 2014-2015 by October 2014.
5. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering to complete Annual Self –Assessment form for 2014/2015 by November 2014.
6. The Lead officer for Private fostering to review the Local Authority's Communications Plan in relation to raising awareness about private fostering in line with the OFSTED recommendations and good practice undertaken by other Local Authorities.
7. The Lead officer to continue working with language schools and agencies providing host families for overseas students attending language school, to ensure they fully brief their host families on both their responsibilities and those of the Local Authority's in relation to the assessment and most importantly the on-going monitoring of such arrangements.
8. The Lead officer for Private fostering to liaise with Learning and Development Team and Business Manager for BSCB to ensure that training on Safeguarding Privately Fostered

- children is arranged for relevant staff members and private foster carers including host families in Bromley.
9. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering to continue attending the Private Fostering Specialist Interest Group (PFSIG) run by BAAF and use this as mechanism to disseminate any lessons learnt or examples of best practice from other Local Authorities who attend the meetings.
  10. The Lead Officer for Private Fostering to ensure that Leaflets/information for privately fostered children and their parents and carers are translated into at list two different languages which include two Chinese main language – Cantonese and Mandarin . These languages are considered to be the current most commonly spoken by foreign language students who are classified as privately fostered children in Bromley.
  11. The Lead Officer for Private fostering to liaise with Bromley Website administrators to ensure that all necessary information about private fostering in Bromley are available and updated online. Leaflets and posters to be distributed in accordance with the Communication Plan for 2014/2015.
  12. The Lead officer for Private fostering to liaise with Website administrators and Facebook Team to ensure the service supports raising awareness of PF through their social media during Annual National Private Fostering Week in July 2014.
  13. The Lead Officer for Private fostering to ensure that privately fostered children, their parents and carers are expressed their views about the services they have been getting and use the feedback and responses collected to support service change and development.
  14. The Lead officer for private fostering will continue working with the social workers in RAS and provide advice on private fostering as required.
  15. The lead officer for Private fostering to continue working with the Business Manager for Bromley Safeguarding Children's Board (BSCB) in regards to raising awareness about private fostering in Bromley. The BSCB Business manager is a member Communication Plan which is aimed to raise awareness in July 2014 during National Private Fostering Week.



16. The Lead Officer for Private fostering to continue working with Children's Performance Improvement Officer and RAS to complete a review of policies and procedures in regards to Private Fostering and ensure this is completed in March 2015.
17. The Lead office for private fostering to liaise with Bromley's Schools Principal Admissions Officer to ensure that completed forms are checked for potential private fostering arrangements.
18. The Lead officer for Private fostering to ensure that Privately Fostered Young People who turn sixteen will be referred to 16 Plus Service for support and advice following discharge from private fostering service if required.