



Department
for Education

Guide for the completion of the PF1 return

**Private fostering arrangements in
England 2015 to 2016**

Version 1.0 October 2014

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Version history

1.0	Initial version of the 2015-16 PF1 guide.	October 2014
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Contact details

Please use the [service request form](#) if you would like to change your contact details, request a COLLECT username and password or make any queries about the PF1 return.

Please use the [feedback form](#) if you have any comments about the content of this document, the Data Collection Helpdesk service, the COLLECT system or any other aspect of our data collection service.

Purpose of the return

The PF1 statistical return was introduced from 1 April 2004 and is designed to collect information on the number of children reported to be in private fostering arrangements in England. This is the 12th year of collection. PF1 data is submitted electronically by local authorities (LAs), using the Department's secure IT system - COLLECT.

Deadline

A PF1 return is required from all local authorities in England, even those who have no children reported to be under private fostering arrangements. All completed PF1 returns should be returned to the department by **Tuesday 31 May 2016**. There have been no changes since the 2014 to 2015 collection.

General background notes

A privately fostered child is defined as one under the age of 16 (18 if disabled) that is cared for by someone other than a parent or close relative as defined in section 105 of the Children Act 1989. Private foster carers may be from an extended family, such as a cousin or great uncle. They may be a friend of the family, or other non-relative, or someone unknown who has advertised to offer to privately foster a child. A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for him or her has done so for fewer than 28 days and does not intend to do so for longer than that. Privately fostered children are a diverse and potentially vulnerable group. Groups of privately fostered children include children sent from abroad to stay with another family.

For some years, the notification scheme under the Children Act 1989 was criticised for its failure to protect vulnerable children living in private fostering arrangements. Section 67 of the Children Act 1989 has therefore been amended by Section 44 of the Children Act 2004, and, in particular, extends the duty of local authorities in cases where a child is proposed to be, but is not yet, privately fostered. The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005, which, in essence, set out a private fostering notification scheme, replaced the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 1991. The 2005 Regulations and Section 44 of the Children Act 2004 came into effect on 1 July 2005.

Privately fostered children are not “looked after” children in the terms of section 22 of the Children Act 1989. However, local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that the welfare of privately fostered children is promoted, as identified in [Part IX of the Children Act 1989](#), amended by section 44 of the Children Act 2004 and in the [Children \(Private Arrangements for Fostering\) Regulations 2005](#). Further details on legislation are shown in [Appendix A](#).

Notes on individual items in PF1 return

Section 1: Numbers of children

Each local authority is required to provide information for each of the following items.

Item 1: LA code

Use the standard 3-digit Education Code number.

Item 2: Number of notifications of new private fostering arrangements received during the year in accordance with Regulation 3(1) and Regulation 5(1) Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

This is the number of notifications of new private fostering arrangements received by your local authority between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016. This includes notifications that were received during the year, but which may relate to arrangements that began/were scheduled to begin outside the year (for example, a notification could be received in February 2016 for a new arrangement planned to begin in May 2016). Likewise, authorities should include those arrangements where they were notified after the arrangement had already started (Regulation 5(1)).

Item 3: Number of cases where action was taken in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 4(1) and Regulation 7(1) of the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 for carrying out visits. Although Regulations 4 and 7 state that this must be within 7 days, what we are interested in for this item is just those where initial action was taken, regardless of the timescale.

This item is the number of children counted under item 2 where action was taken in accordance with these requirements by an official of your authority between 1 April 2015 and up to 7 working days after 31 March 2016. Further explanation of the requirements can be found in The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.

Item 4: Of these, the number of cases where this action was taken within 7 working days of receipt of notification of the private fostering arrangement.

Of those children counted under item 3, enter the number who received a visit from an official of the authority between 1 April 2015 and up to 7 working days after 31 March 2016 (i.e. up to 11 April 2016). The deadline for visits is extended for 7 working days after 31 March 2016 as authorities are allowed up to 7 days to visit a child after the beginning of a private fostering agreement. For those arrangements where authorities were notified after the arrangement began, authorities should enter the number of visits completed within 7 working days of the notification of the fostering arrangement.

Item 5: Number of new arrangements that began during the year

This is the number of private fostering arrangements that actually started between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016. This includes those arrangements where notification was received outside the assessment period (for example, where notification was received in March 2015, but the arrangement actually began in April 2015).

Item 6: The number of private fostering arrangements that began on or after 1 April 2015 where visits were made at intervals of not more than six weeks

This item is collecting information on the follow-up visits which have been made by local authorities. (The minimum number of visits required is at intervals of not more than six weeks in respect of the first year of any private fostering arrangement and at intervals of not more than 12 weeks in respect of the second and any subsequent years of any arrangement).

We are aware that there may be instances where an arrangement begins within the survey year, however the first scheduled visit will be outside the survey year, for example, if a private fostering arrangement begins on 1 March 2016, then the first scheduled visit will be 6 weeks after this in mid-April 2016. These instances would not be included in Item 6. However, we expect these numbers to be small and if the visits are undertaken on time will be recorded in item 8 of the following year's return.

Item 7: The number of private fostering arrangements that began before 1 April 2015 that were continuing on 1 April 2015

This item is collecting information on the number of private fostering arrangements which require scheduled visits within the survey year.

Item 8: The number of private fostering arrangements that began before 1 April 2015 that were continuing on 1 April 2015 where scheduled visits in the survey year were completed in the required timescale

This item is collecting information on the follow-up visits which have been made by local authorities within the required timescale. (The minimum number of visits required is at intervals of not more than six weeks in respect of the first year of any private fostering arrangement and at intervals of not more than 12 weeks in respect of the second and any subsequent years of any arrangement).

Item 9: Number of private fostering arrangements that ended during the year

As with item 5, this item covers the actual number of arrangements that ended between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016. Therefore, notification of the end of the agreement may have been received outside the assessment period.

Item 10: Number of children under private fostering arrangements

Items 1 to 9, as shown above, are calculated for the whole year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. Item 10 is concerned only with the number of private fostering arrangements that your authority was aware of as at 31 March 2016. For item 10, please enter the number of private fostering arrangements that you were aware were still active as at 31 March 2016.

Section 2: Breakdown by age and place of birth

For all children measured under item 5, please enter a breakdown of their age and place of birth. Age should be measured as at 31 March 2016. This includes private fostering arrangements that may have ended before 31 March. For the purposes of completing this return, authorities should use the list shown in [Appendix B](#) to classify countries into geographical regions.

Appendix A: Legislation

The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005, which came into effect on 1 July 2005, provide for the arrangements for fostering children privately. These Regulations make provision for the matters as to which Local Authorities are required to satisfy themselves regarding the welfare of privately fostered children. In terms of the information local authorities are required to provide on the PF1 return, these are covered by the regulations as follows:

- Regulation 3 (1) requires any person who proposes to foster a child privately to notify the appropriate local authority at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is to begin or immediately, where the arrangement is to begin within six weeks.
- Regulation 3 (2) requires any person who is involved (whether or not directly) in arranging for a child to be fostered privately must notify the appropriate local authority of the arrangement as soon as possible after the arrangement has been made.
- Regulation 5 (1) requires any person who has been fostering a child privately and has not given notification to the appropriate local authority must notify the appropriate local authority immediately.
- Regulation 6 (1) requires any person who has given notification under Regulation 3 (1) must notify the appropriate local authority within 48 hours of the arrangement starting.
- Regulation 10 (1) requires any person who has been fostering a child privately, but has ceased to do so, to notify the appropriate local authority within 48 hours of the arrangement ceasing.
- Regulation 4 (1) states that where a local authority have received notification under regulation 3 they must, within seven working days, visit the proposed private foster carer at the premises where the child will be accommodated and visit and speak to the child.
- Regulation 7 (1) states that where a local authority have received a notification under regulation 5 or 6 they must, within seven working days, visit the private foster carer at the premises where the child will be accommodated and visit and speak to the child.
- Regulation 8 (1) states that following the initial visit to the child, a local authority must arrange for the child to be visited at intervals of not more than six weeks in the first year of the arrangement and thereafter at intervals of not more than twelve weeks.
- Regulation 8 (6) provides that for the purposes of Regulation 8 the start of the private fostering arrangement is deemed to be the time when the local authority become aware of it.

Schedule 1, with reference to Regulations 3 and 5, requires that any person notifying a local authority of a private fostering arrangement should specify the child's name, sex, date and place of birth, racial, cultural and linguistic background.

Appendix B: Classification of countries into geographic regions

For the purposes of this return, authorities should use the following list to classify the place of birth of a child under a private fostering arrangement into a geographic region.

GEOGRAPHIC REGION	COUNTRY	
UNITED KINGDOM	England	Scotland
	Northern Ireland	Wales
EUROPE	Albania	Italy
	Armenia	Latvia
	Austria	Liechtenstein
	Azerbaijan	Lithuania
	Belarus	Luxembourg
	Belgium	Macedonia
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Malta
	Bulgaria	Moldova
	Croatia	Netherlands
	Cyprus	Norway
	Czech Republic	Poland
	Denmark	Portugal
	Estonia	Romania
	Finland	Russian Federation
	France	Serbia and Montenegro
	Georgia	Serbia and Montenegro (including Kosovo)
	Germany	Slovakia
	Gibraltar (UK OT)	Slovenia
	Greece	Spain, Kingdom of
	Holy See	Sweden
Hungary	Switzerland	
Iceland	Turkey	
Ireland	Ukraine	
CANADA & USA	Canada	United States of America
CARIBBEAN, CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA	Anguilla (UK OT)	Guatemala
	Antigua and Barbuda	Guyana

GEOGRAPHIC REGION	COUNTRY	
	Argentina	Haiti
	Ascension (UK OT)	Honduras
	Bahamas	Jamaica
	Barbados	Mexico
	Belize	Montserrat (UK OT)
	Bermuda (UK OT)	Nicaragua
	Bolivia	Panama
	Brazil	Paraguay
	British Antarctic Territory (UK OT)	Peru
	British Virgin Islands (UK OT)	Saint Christopher and Nevis
	Cayman Islands (UK OT)	Saint Christopher and Nevis (St Kitts & Nevis)
	Chile	Saint Helena (UK OT)
	Columbia	Saint Lucia
	Costa Rica	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
	Cuba	South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands (UK OT)
	Dominica, Commonwealth of	Suriname
	Dominican Republic	Trinidad and Tobago
	Ecuador	Tristan da Cunha (Dependency of St Helena)
	El Salvador	Turks and Caicos Islands (UK OT)
	Falkland Islands (UK OT)	Uruguay
	Grenada	Venezuela
AFRICA	Algeria	Libya
	Angola	Madagascar
	Benin	Malawi
	Botswana	Mali
	Burkina Faso	Mauritania
	Burundi	Mauritius
	Cameroon	Morocco
	Cape Verde	Mozambique
	Central African Republic	Namibia
	Chad	Niger

GEOGRAPHIC REGION	COUNTRY	
	Comoros	Nigeria
	Congo	Rwanda
	Congo (Democratic Republic)	Sao Tome and Principe
	Djibouti	Senegal
	Egypt	Seychelles
	Equatorial Guinea	Sierra Leone
	Eritrea	Somalia
	Ethiopia	South Africa
	Gabon	Sudan
	Gambia, The Republic of	Swaziland
	Ghana	Tanzania
	Guinea	Togo
	Guinea-Bissau	Tunisia
	Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire)	Uganda
	Kenya	Zambia
	Lesotho	Zimbabwe
	Liberia	
MIDDLE EAST	Bahrain	Oman
	Iran	Palestine National Authority
	Iraq	Qatar (State of)
	Israel	Saudi Arabia
	Jordan	Syria
	Kuwait	United Arab Emirates
	Lebanon	Yemen
ASIA	Afganistan	Laos
	Bangladesh	Macao (Special Administrative Region of China)
	Bhutan	Malaysia
	British Indian Ocean Territory (UK OT)	Maldives
	Brunei	Mongolia
	Burma	Nepal
	Cambodia	Pakistan
	China	Phillippines

GEOGRAPHIC REGION	COUNTRY	
	East Timor	Singapore
	Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China)	Sri Lanka
	India	Taiwan
	Indonesia	Tajikistan
	Japan	Thailand
	Kazakhstan	Turkmenistan
	Korea, DPR (North Korea)	Uzbekistan
	Korea, Republic of (South Korea)	Vietnam
	Kyrgyzstan	
OCEANIA	Australia	Papua New Guinea
	Fiji	Pitcairn Henderson Ducie Oeno Islands (UK OT)
	Kiribati	Samoa
	Marshall Islands	Solomon Islands
	Micronesia	Tonga
	Nauru	Tuvalu
	New Zealand	Vanuatu

UK OT = UK overseas territory



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