



Private Fostering Annual Report

1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023

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Report Endorsed by	
Nigel Minns	Executive Director for People 18/07/23
John Coleman	Director of Children and Families 18/07/23

Introduction

This report outlines private fostering activity between April 2022 – March 2023 and includes the key findings of the private fostering team. It also includes an Action Plan for 2023 - 2024.

The Private fostering leaflets has been attached below.



Private Fostering
Children Young Peop



Private Fostering
Professionals Leaflet



Private Fostering
Parents Leaflet



Private Fostering
Private Foster Carers



Private Fostering
Host Family Leaflet

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Recommendations

1. The Executive Director for People, Nigel Minns & Director of Children and Families, John Coleman to note the content of this report.
2. Private Fostering Team Leaders to implement the Private Fostering Action Plan to address the issues raised and improve compliance with statutory guidance, regulations, national minimum standards, and good practice in private fostering.
3. The report to be shared with other groups to further develop awareness, understanding and multi-agency commitment to privately fostered children.
4. Report to be presented at Warwickshire Safeguarding Partnership Group or Partnership Executive Board.

Definition of Private Fostering

A private fostering arrangement is one made privately for the care of a child under the age of 16 or under 18, if disabled or subject to the Unaccompanied Minors Homes for Ukraine Scheme. The young person must be cared for 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 or host.

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 stepparent (i.e., by marriage to a parent) will not be a private foster carer.

This report covers private fostering activity between the 1st of April 2022 - 31st March 2023, and is provided under the requirements laid down in the National Minimum Standards for Private Fostering, which requires an annual report to be provided for consideration by the Director of Children's Services including an evaluation of the outcome of its work in relation to privately fostered children within its area.



Private Fostering Staffing Structure

Warwickshire's Private Fostering Service is located within the People Directorate, Corporate Parenting and sits under the Fostering and Alternative Support Carers Team.

In Warwickshire, private fostering sits under the Connected Person Supervision and Support Team within Fostering. The private fostering work is supported by one business support worker who maintains the private fostering statistical data.

The Team Leader ensures all private fostering notifications are progressed, i.e., private fostering assessments are allocated, and families are supported countywide. Family support workers offer support with Regulation 8 visits when necessary and carry out direct work with families.

Assessments

Child and Family Statutory Assessments are completed to determine the need for a private fostering assessment and are carried out by the Child's social worker or the Private Fostering social worker.

Children attending language schools within Warwickshire remain the responsibility of the nominated district team throughout their stay in England. The private fostering assessment and subsequent regulation 8 visits will be allocated to the Private Fostering social worker with support where possible.

In the last 12 months Private Fostering has expanded to include Assessments for Ukrainian Unaccompanied children or young people who wish to live in the UK under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. Responsibility for the reg 8 visits lies with the Homes for Ukraine Team.

For those children who are already known to Children's Social Care (as a child in need or a child with a child protection plan) when they are identified as a privately fostered child, they will continue to be supported by their allocated social worker - the Private Fostering social worker will complete the private fostering assessment only and subsequent annual reviews.

The Registered Fostering Manager acts as the decision maker on the suitability of the arrangement. The dedicated Fostering Team Leader has the responsibility of ensuring the minimal standards are met, annual audit and the completion of annual reviews are carried out in a timely manner. In addition, through service development, they are responsible for ensuring that there is an awareness of private fostering across the locality.

National Minimum standards:

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 Warwickshire are set out in the statement of purpose, published on the Council's online procedures for children's services and available to the public on [Private Fostering Statement of Purpose.pdf](#), [Private Fostering Policy.pdf](#)

National Minimum Standard 2 The local authority:

- **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;**
- **Responds effectively to notifications; and**
- **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. We use Private Fostering week to raise awareness in Warwickshire alongside regular advertising and information sharing:

During March 2022 - April 2023, the Team Leader and Private Fostering social workers used a variety of internal and external avenues to raise awareness about Private Fostering as follows:

- Delivering private fostering presentations and training to the children's teams.
- We offered training to newly qualified social workers.
- Promoted Private Fostering Awareness week in John's Blog
- Delivering interactive presentations during the 'Fostering Good Relations Conference' (held within Warwickshire County Council) in March 22.
- Offered a consultation service
- Updated Private Fostering policy and procedures

We also operate a Connected Person Supervision and Support duty system which enables individual staff and partner agencies to seek further advice when needed, and establish clear links to Warwickshire's website, which actively promotes Private fostering and provides information about the process:

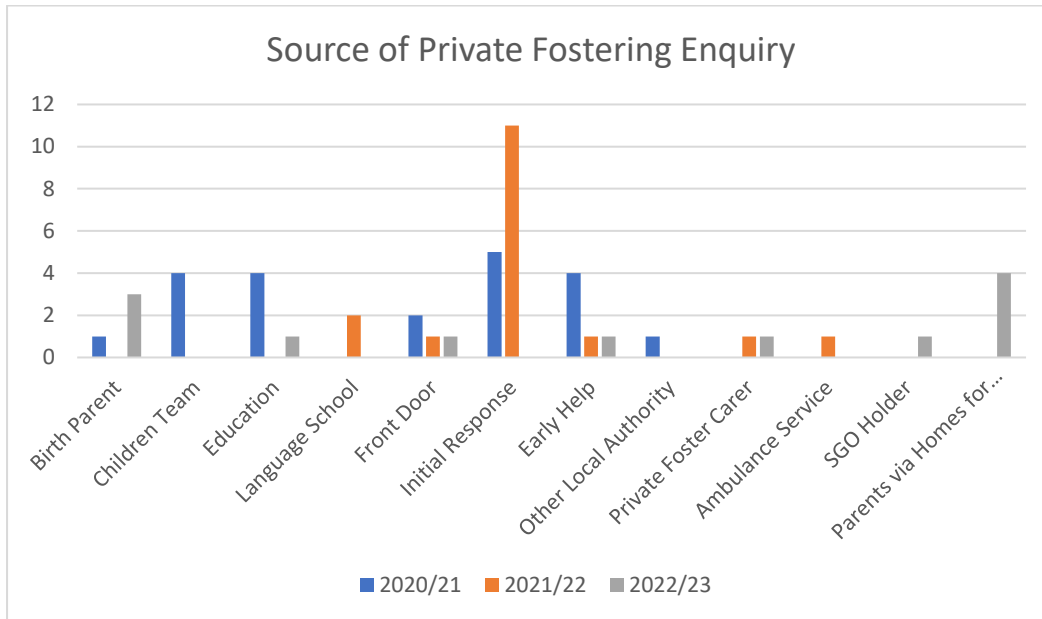
- Private Fostering e-learning training continues to be available on The Learning Hub
- There is mandatory training for all fostering Social Workers new to Warwickshire
- Notification on Core Brief and Warwickshire County Council blogs
- On FIS website & Twitter
- Posters and leaflets displayed at local community centres and libraries.

There is a continued need for communication and awareness raising of what constitutes a Private Fostering arrangement.

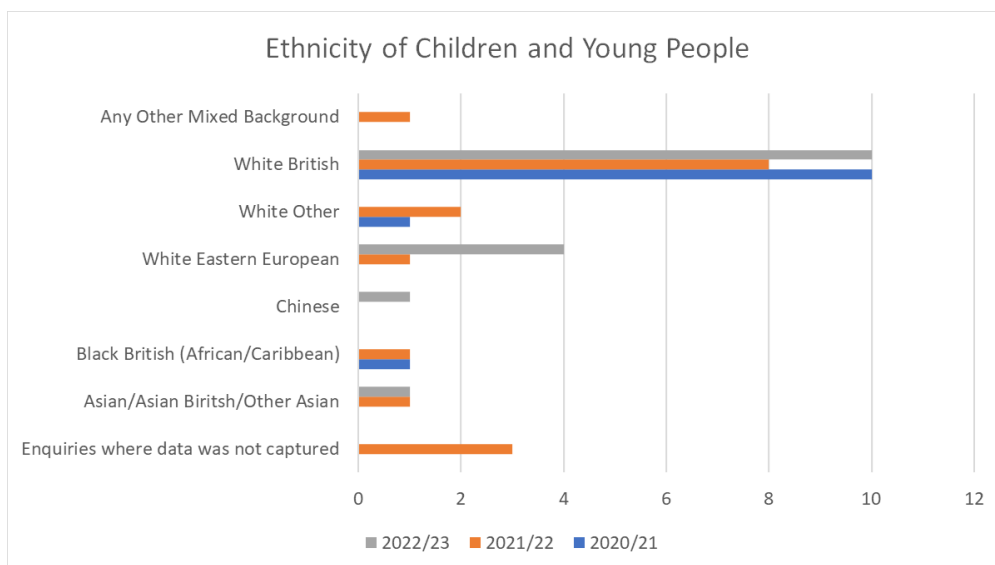
<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/privatefostering>

This direct promotion activity has increased since the pandemic and is ongoing.

The updated Action Plan is appended to this report which identifies the ongoing awareness raising planned with consideration for managing this area in the future.

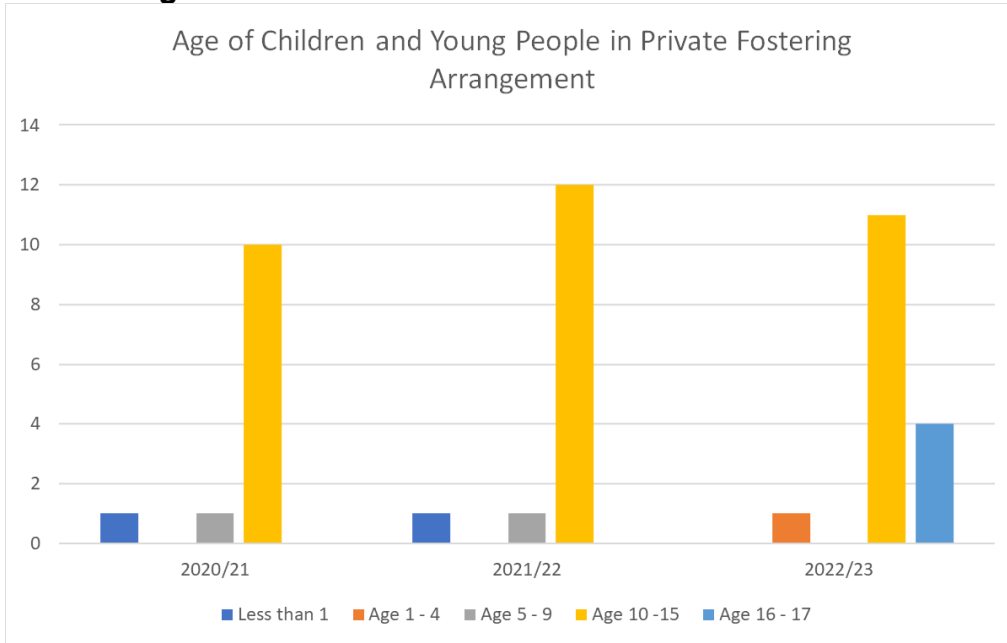
Table 1: Source of Private Fostering Enquiry


In comparison to 2021/22, there has been a decrease (40%) in the number of private fostering enquiries. The largest source during 2022/23 comes from the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. This scheme was opened to children and young people from July 2022 and the first referrals to Warwickshire came through in the second part of November. There has been an increase in referrals coming via birth parents and carers, this has generally been in situations where social workers are supporting children and families and the parents and carers are reporting new private fostering arrangements to the child's allocated social worker.

Table 2: Ethnicity of child in a private fostering arrangement


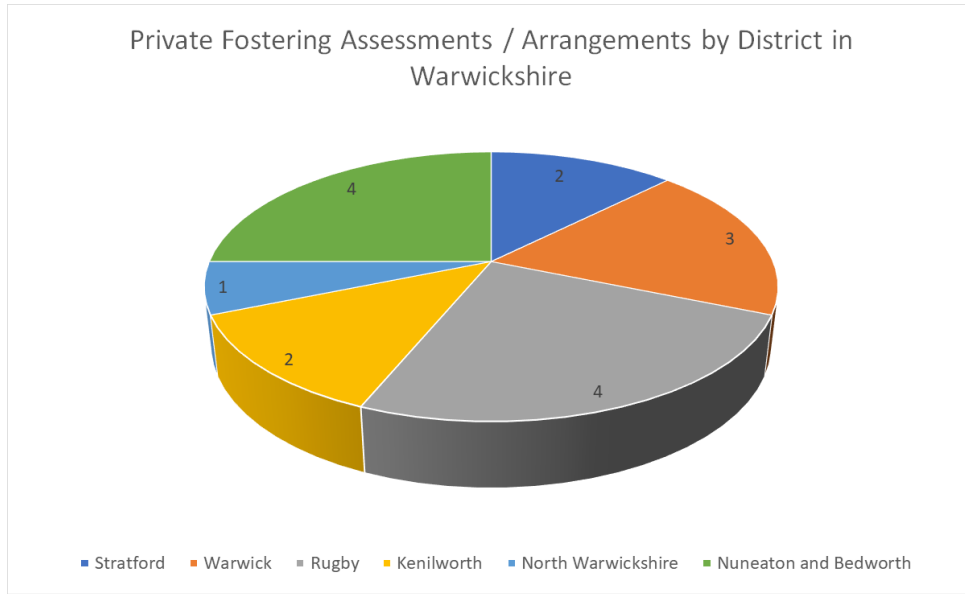
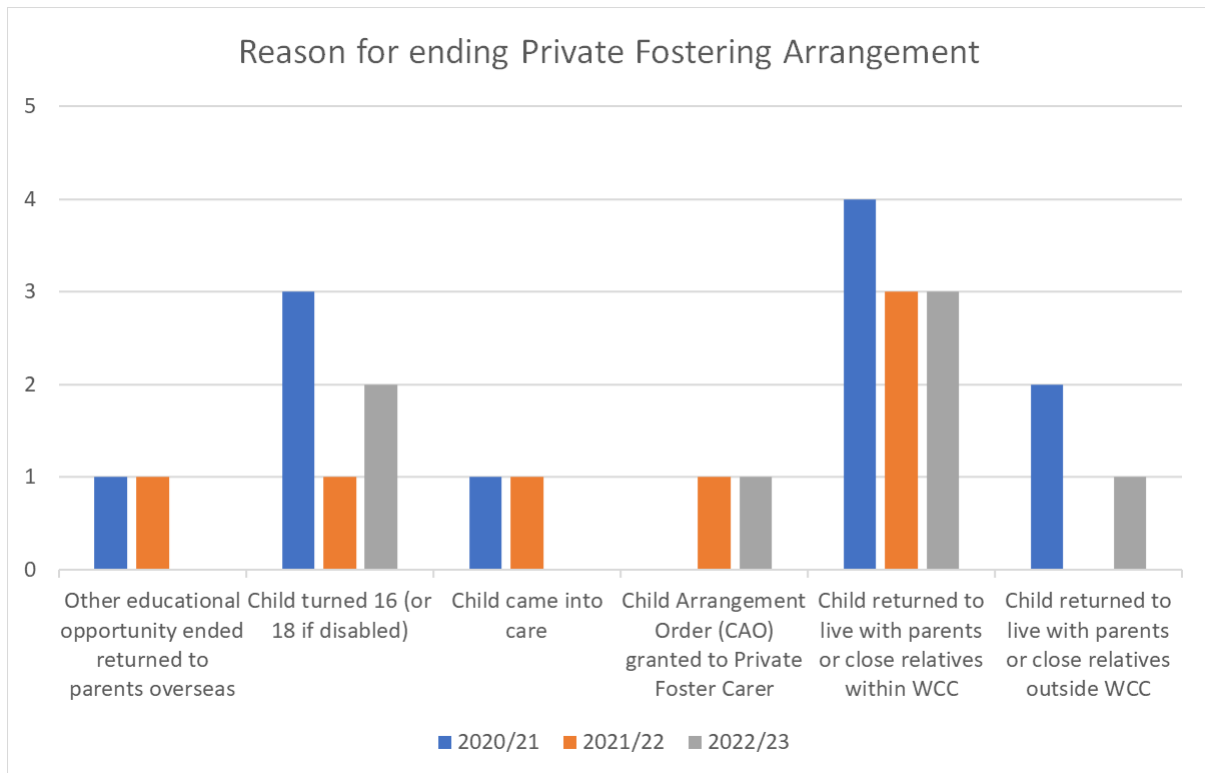
In the year 2022/2023 there were 10 new private fostering notifications resulting in 7 placements. This is a decrease of 7 young people on last year (which saw 17 enquiries resulting in 14 placements). Of all the children currently in a private fostering arrangement in Warwickshire 60% are identified as white British, followed by 25% identified as white/eastern European.

Table 3: Age of child



The majority of children (69%) assessed in private fostering arrangements were aged 10-15 years. This is consistent with the majority age range from previous years. This year we have an additional age range of 16-17 due to the Homes for Ukraine Scheme which supports children until they become adults.

In line with supporting permanency for the children within this arrangement, of the 16 private fostering arrangements that were open during 2022/23 one of the carers was supported by the authority to obtain a child arrangement order, and one began this process. A further 5 received and continue to receive support from 'Strengthening Families' and Safeguarding and Support Teams and are working towards the child returning to the care of a parent with Parental responsibility.

Table 4: New Private fostering assessments have been identified.

Table 5: Reasons for ending of Private Fostering


In 2022/23, 7 private fostering arrangements were ended; this is the same compared to last year, but lower than the year before when 11 ended. It is important to note that, in the last 2 years – 2021/22 and 2022/2023, the main reasons that the arrangements ended were due to the young person returning to the care of their



parents and the young person turning 16 (or 18 in respect of young people under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme).

Activity undertaken during 2022-2023:

All private fostering carers that were recommended for approval were approved by the Fostering Operations Manager.

Ongoing visiting requirements

Young people who are Privately Fostered under the Homes for Ukraine are required to be visited within 24 hours from arrival to the UK all other young people must be visited within 7 days of notification. 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.

National Minimum Standard 3

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

A monthly report is sent to the Private Fostering Team Leader from the business analysis unit which details both new and ended private fostering arrangements in Warwickshire that have been captured in the MOSAIC case record. This is checked for accuracy by the Team Leader. An annual report is completed from this information.

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.

Prospective private foster carers are provided with an information pack which details advice and support services regarding children's needs and details of support services and training. The private fostering social worker supports and advises carers on an ongoing basis with general parenting skills, and issues pertinent to the child's circumstances. Additional visits are made as requested to support carers. Social workers are carrying out regulated visits to provide consistency and offer additional support as needed. Family Support Workers can complete regulation 8 visits, when necessary.

Feedback is sought from foster carers, children, and parents when possible and at the point of annual review. There was no feedback in 2022-2023. Private Fostering Social Workers do however continue to encourage feedback from the private fostering carers, children, and parents during, and at the end of the arrangement.

All private foster carers, 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.



We continue to provide Private Foster Carers with advice and support to consider the securing of young people's permanence by way of a court order where appropriate. During 202/23, it is positive to see that permanence has been achieved by return to parents or close relative (for 4 children), and a child arrangement order (for 1 child).

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 whilst establishing the arrangements. When arrangements involve children from overseas discussions are generally held over the telephone, email or through consultation with the Homes for Ukraine Team.

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 the fostering social worker. This is to ensure that children have a consistent staff member supporting them and 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.

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.

There has been an increased focus on the 'voice of the child' within the private fostering arrangement, which is also incorporated into the assessment report. The Private Fostering social workers enquire directly with children and young people about their views and ensure that their private foster carers listen to their needs and wishes.

The child or young person is provided with information regarding advocacy.

Leaflets/information packs are provided to children and young people as appropriate during the initial visit to help them better understand the arrangements and their rights within it. These include the contact details for their Private Fostering Social Worker and family support worker as well as other key information.

Ongoing, regulation 8 visits also consider the child's needs and views. The private fostering social worker or family support worker will advocate on their behalf, if necessary, on issues such as legal status, placement, family time and education.

All children in the private fostering arrangement are seen on their own as part of the assessment and the ongoing regulation 8 visits.

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 Assessment Report' and is quality assured by the Team Leader and recommendation is made. Private Fostering arrangements are approved if appropriate by the Fostering Operations Manager on the electronic case file (Mosaic).

Workers are provided with regular supervision and there is management oversight of young people and carers.

Ofsted

In November 2021, Private Fostering was part of the Children's Inspection and in January OFSTED awarded Warwickshire Children and Families a rating of GOOD.

Analysis

In 2022/2023, some of the key findings are that – over 69% of children and young people in private fostering arrangements were aged 10+ years and 60% were identified as white British. Information gathered at enquiry and the initial visit suggests that many arrangements are due to family conflict and breakdown, however young people fleeing war in Ukraine accounts for a significant proportion of the referrals this year.

In line with supporting permanency for the children and young people within this arrangement, 25% returned to live with parents or close relatives within Warwickshire and outside of Warwickshire; 6.25% of the carers were supported by Warwickshire to obtain a child arrangement order. The remaining carers, children and young people continued to receive support from the private fostering team and/or strengthening families.

Referrals have come from a variety of services/agencies with the largest proportion of referrals coming from the new Homes for Ukraine Scheme. 42% of referrals came via parents and carers to allocated social workers, this is an increase from last years and coincides with a drop of referrals coming via the Front Door.

The number of children open to private fostering at the end of March 2023, is consistent with the last 3 years, suggesting that we are now returning to pre pandemic numbers.

All private fostering arrangements held by Warwickshire are residents of the County Council.



PF1 annual data returns continue to be gathered for the CIN census. Warwickshire private fostering team does meet all 7 national minimum standards to a satisfactory level.

Action Plan 2023/2024

Action	Target Date	Responsibility
Refresh posters and leaflets and ensure they are displayed in education, health and community resources	January 2023	Team Leader and Year 4 Advanced Practitioner
Increase promotion and liaison with all internal and external teams/agencies and schools to continue to raise awareness of private fostering.	Ongoing from July 2023-31 st March 2023	Team Leader and Year 4 Advanced Practitioner, Private Fostering Social Worker
Private fostering arrangements to be included in the Warwickshire Children and Families case file audit programme (bespoke)	September 2023	Team Leader/Quality and Impact Team
Produce a new Private Fostering Procedure for Unaccompanied Young People under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.	October 2023	Team Leader/Operations Manager/Homes for Ukraine Team
Add Private Fostering onto the agenda at Through Care Panel, updating terms and references as an additional way to monitor existing or new cases, ensuring case progression	October 2023	Service Manager Corporate Parenting