

Private Fostering Annual Report



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1. Introduction

The Children Act (2004), defines a privately fostered child as:

- A child under the **age of 16** (18 if disabled) who is cared for, or proposed to be cared for, and provided with accommodation by someone other than:
- A parent of his/hers;
- A person who is not a parent but who has parental responsibility,
- A close relative of his/hers i.e. aunt, uncle, grandparent, sibling, step-parent (whether of full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership).

And she/he has been cared for and accommodated by that person;

- for 28 days or more:
- or the period of actual fostering is less than 28 days but the private foster carer **intends** to care for him/her for a period of 28 days or more.

2. Roles and Responsibilities of the Local Authority

The Children Act 1989 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 1991 set out the following duties and functions for every Local Authority;

- Giving and receiving notifications of private fostering arrangements.
- Safeguarding and promoting child/rens welfare via thorough assessment.
- Advice, support and monitoring placements through visits and written records of visits.
- · Duty to raise public awareness of private fostering.

Part of the Local Authority responsibility includes the following:

- Preparing a Statement of Purpose updated June 2013.
- Assessing the suitability of private carers and their households ongoing.
- Training ongoing training programme for private foster carers
- Raising Awareness of private fostering there is an expectation the local authority will take a more
 proactive approach to identify private fostering arrangements within the area. As such, St. Helens
 CYPS has prepared and distributed leaflets for professionals/carers and young people. In January
 2012 we established a private fostering network meeting, chaired by Local Safeguarding Children's
 Board Business Manager. The last private Fostering Network Meeting took place on 8th April 2013.

Local Authority's also have a duty to report at the end of every financial year to the Department for Children, Schools and Families on the number of children who are in private fostering arrangements.

Under Standard 5 of the NMS for private fostering, local authorities are expected to effectively monitor the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering, including:

- The local authority provides a written report each year, for consideration by the Director of Children's Services, which includes an evaluation of the outcomes of its work in relation to privately fostered children within its area. (Supporting criteria 7.9, NMS for PF).
- The local authority reports annually to the Local Safeguarding Children Board on how it satisfies itself that the welfare of privately fostered children in its area are safeguarded and promoted, including how it co-operates with other agencies in this connection (supporting criteria 7.10, NMS for PF).

This document sets out St.Helens CYPS annual report for April 2012 to march 2013 on private fostering and is based on the requirements set out in the NMS. This report will be presented to the Director of Children's Services and to the Chair of the LSCB.

3. Private Fostering Inspection

St. Helens CYPS received an Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's services between 25th June and 6th July 2012. In relation to Private Fostering, the Inspection noted the following:

- Private fostering arrangements judged adequate by Ofsted in 2008 have been strengthened. There
 is an effective awareness raising programme leading to a good rate of notifications.
- Designated teachers value the regular, high quality training and support they receive which helps them keep updated on key issues concerning looked after children. This includes the networking group for designated teachers that keep them informed of national directives, share good practice and explore issues pertinent to their role such as private fostering and special guardianship.

This Ofsted Inspection considered developments undertaken from an announced Ofsted inspection of its private fostering arrangements on 21/01/2009. This was St.Helens first inspection and was judged as satisfactory.

Recommendations below from Inspector Sharon Lloyd in 2009:

- 1) Provide advice for those involved in private fostering arrangements in different formats so that this information is accessible to all (NMS 4.3)
- 2) Carry out criminal records bureau and other checks promptly to ensure that children are protected as far as possible from living with potential abusers (NMS 3.2.6)
- 3) Ensure that arrangements are in place that promote the child's health (NMS 3.2.7)
- 4) Provide advice and support to parents of privately fostered children as needed and evidence this in record (NMS 5.1)
- 5) Ensure that social workers have a good understanding of their duties in relation to children in private fostering arrangements so that there is no delay in assessing the safety and well-being of children (NMS 2.1)

In response to these recommendations, the local authority has complied in the following way:

- 1) St.Helens CYPS has continued to review and improve in all aspects of the service. The impact of translation of documents into different languages has been considered and the national 'Do you look after Somebody Else's child' publicity is accessible in different languages on request from the contact centre or from the translation service. Other formats (Braille, audio tape or language) are available on request from the contact centre and translation service. The formation of the PF network meeting has enabled links with BME Community Development workers and Travellers link, who are able to distribute the information and where appropriate request varied format. In recognition of the larger polish community, written information has been translated into polish posters and flyers. The contact team are abreast of the resources available. Additionally, training and presentations are facilitated to CYPS, and all agencies via the PF network meeting. There is regular advertisement of PF information within the community in line with the marketing plan.
- 2) Private fostering policy now dictates that Criminal Records Bureau checks are completed with Private foster carers and all members of the household over the age of 16.
- 3) Notification letters are sent to the child's GP and school health (where applicable) to inform them of the PF arrangement. Children's health needs are promoted by ensuring that all children in private fostering arrangements are registered with a GP and dentist. Health needs are monitored via Family Action Meetings.
- 4) Private fostering policy now dictates that parents are notified in writing of the private fostering arrangement and provided with a booklet titled 'Is Someone Else Looking After Your Child?' The parent is consulted during the assessment process and their views recorded, they are also asked to contribute to a written agreement. As part of the children in need process, parental views are sought and recorded and they are encouraged to attend Family Action Meetings. Additionally as part of the annual review of private foster carers, parents are consulted and their view presented to private fostering meeting.

5) A variety of information sharing methods have been implemented to ensure social workers have a good understanding of private fostering. To date this has taken the format of presentations. A schedule of presentations for 2013 include: West Assessment team 20.05.13, Family Support Team 11.06.13, South East Team 15.05.13, EIT 04.06.13, LAC 12.06.13, contact 02.07.13, North East 13.05.13, YPT 03.07.13, First Response 05.06.13, BME communities, faith groups and traveller community 04.06.13. A private fostering network meeting took place on the 8th April 2013, and a presentation to Headtachers of primary and high schools took place on the 26th February 2013. Post this, information was e-mailed to Headteachers so they can place information about private fostering into their newsletters which are sent to all parents, guardians, carer's of pupils. There is also a breadth of policy information available on the intranet and guidebooks. The most recent of which is the Think family and PF protocol that demonstrates a flowchart of the PF process. In 2012, regulation 8 visiting proforma forms have been implemented to ensure that social workers are collating information on their visits to the child and private fostering household. It is envisaged that through this ongoing raising awareness, social workers will be aware of their duties and therefore prevent delay in assessing the safety and well-being of children. Regulation 8 visits are recorded at child level on ICS.

4. Ethnicity/Religious Persuasion

St. Helens CYPS has worked closely with the Local Authority Equalities officer, Simon Cousins in analysing the demographic of St. Helens. St. Helens ethnic group makeup is overwhelmingly 'White', 98.0% of the total population. This is a much higher percentage than England as a whole (85.5%), and above the NW (90.2%) and Liverpool City Region (94.8%) figures. This has changed marginally from 2001, when 98.8% of the local population classed their ethnic group as 'White'.

Ward Level Data - Ethnicity

- Over the past 10 years, England has become more ethnically diverse, with the White ethnic group decreasing from 91.3% in 2001 to 80.5% in 2011. St.Helens has not seen the same transformation, with 98% of the population considering themselves to be in the White ethnic group, which is broadly the same as 10 years ago.
- Across all wards in the Borough, more than 95% of the population judge themselves to be White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British.
- Town Centre Ward and Earlestown Ward have the smallest proportion of people who judge themselves to be White British.
- People of White:Other ethnic group are the next most populace group across the Borough. Parr Ward has the greatest proportion of people who report their ethnic origin as White: Other, at 1.7%.
- Rainhill Ward has the highest proportion of the usual resident population who are Asian/Asian British: Indian.
- Across all Wards, the proportion of people who state they are Black/African/Caribbean/Other British is very low. Less than 0.5% of the population of St.Helens records themselves in this ethnic group.
- The greatest increases across the Borough have been in the ethnic groups Other Asian, White /
 Black Caribbean and Chinese. At Ward level, Thatto Heath has witnessed the greatest increase in the
 number of people who are Chinese and Other Asian and Newton Ward has seen the largest
 increase in the number of people who are White & Black Caribbean.

In terms of religious persuasion, St.Helens remains a strongly Christian Borough, with 79% of the resident population identifying themselves as Christians. This is the 3rd highest in the Country. Only 14.6% of the population state that they had no religious affiliation. However, the Borough has followed the national trend by witnessing a growth in residents stating they had no religion and a subsequent reduction in residents declaring themselves as Christians since 2001. 6.3% of St.Helens residents said they had no religion, whilst 86.9% stated that they were Christian. The remaining non-Christian religious groupings in St.Helens in 2011 are relatively small. There are a total of 605 Muslims, 416 Hindus and 317 Buddhists (Census Report, 2011).

Ward level Data - Religion

- Across all Wards, the majority state that their belief is Christian. Town Centre, Earlestown and Parr have the smallest proportion of the population who are Christian, and correspondingly have the highest proportion who states they have no religion.
- Rainhill has the largest Hindu population, at 0.9% of the usual resident population and Earlestown and Thatto Heath have the largest Muslim populations, at 0.7%. This represents the next most significant religions in the Borough in terms of numbers.
- There is a relatively even spread across the Wards of people who did not state a religion, at approximately, 5%. Parr, Town Centre and Sutton Wards had the highest proportion at 6%.

Ethnicity and religion will continue to be targeted within the private fostering network meetings, and information regarding private fostering will be circulated via: electronic pdf and public settings.

5. Operational Practice/Safeguarding

The Fostering Service has overall responsibility for private fostering; the Assistant Team Manager has the operational lead in terms of facilitating and managing the assessments and raising awareness with other agencies.

Unlike mainstream fostering the Local Authority does not have a responsibility to approve private foster carers. However we have the responsibility to ensure that we have assessed the carers suitability and register the private fostering arrangement.

To ensure that the child's health needs are promoted, private fostering assessments collate information and details about the child's health needs. The key professionals (GP, Dental, School Health and Education) are notified of the private fostering arrangement and are contacted by the assessing social worker to gather their views. In 2011 we also began to ask prospective private foster carers to formally declare any health issues that may impact on their ability to care for a privately fostered child. This information is utilised in assessing the suitability of the arrangement.

The private fostering arrangement ends when the child reaches 16 years of age (18 for a child with a disability). Under The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, privately fostered children qualify for advice and assistance up to the age of 21 (up to 24 if in education or training). We ensure children, their carers, parents and agencies are notified of how to access this service from the Local Authority.

The private fostering and Think Family Procedures have been reviewed in 2012. This protocol is designed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of fostering and childcare social workers that are working with children who are in a private fostering arrangement.

Children within private fostering arrangements are some of the most vulnerable children within society; many have complex needs and can present additional challenges. Due to this, all privately fostered children must be appropriately safeguarded and it is important that they are fully incorporated into our children in need systems and structures.

A meeting was introduced in 2010, which meets monthly to monitor private fostering notifications, assessments and the local authorities duties.

The meeting currently comprises of the following:

- · Service Manager for Looked After Children Chair
- Assistant Team Manager Fostering Team Team Manager
- Assistant Team Manager Assessment Team Team Manager

The private fostering meeting ensures that plans around privately fostered children are robust and their welfare is safeguarded and promoted. These meetings register private fostering arrangements and create a mechanism of feedback for children and young people's social workers. The outcomes are fed back to parents and private foster carers. Formal minutes are taken to ensure accurate recording and information sharing.

The Local Children's Safeguarding Board continues to take an active role in promoting awareness of private fostering arrangements and ensuring the safety of the children by including private fostering in the safeguarding training. The report is presented annually to Local Children's safeguarding board.

Overall, records continue to be well maintained and audited, managers have a good overview of arrangements in place and are compliant with legislation. Private fostering is part of the overall performance management monitoring arrangements, which includes the regular auditing of files.

6. Notifications/Statistics of Privately Fostered Children and/or Young People

It is a legal requirement that anyone directly involved in making a private fostering arrangement must notify the local authority. This means that the parents of the child, the carers and anyone else involved in making the arrangement must tell the local authority at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is due to start, or within 48 hours if it is due to start sooner or has already started. The purpose of the publicity within St.Helens has been to increase the rate of notifications. Although non-notification is an offence, there have been no prosecutions within St.Helens.

St.Helens CYPS received 27 notifications between April 12 and March 13. There are currently seven children in a private fostering arrangement, whereby the carers have been registered. There are five children who are in a private fostering arrangement, whereby the private foster carers are undergoing assessment. Thirteen children are White British, one young person is over the age of sixteen and has a disability. This number can fluctuate as children move in and out of placements.

The table below relates to privately fostered children:

	2012-13	2011-12	2010-11	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08
Number of enquiries	9	10	28	17	11	11
Number of notifications to the private fostering team	27	19	22	14	7	8
Number of new private fostering arrangements starting during the year	23	16	15	12	0	4
Number of arrangements ending during the year (including any historic arrangements)	27	14	15	3	6	4
Number of private fostering arrangements still in place at the end of each march	12	16	11	11	2	4

The number of notifications to the private fostering team has increased over the last 6 years, as has the number of new arrangements starting each year - the highest number we have reported in 2012-13 when compared with the figures reported in each of the previous 5 years. This year a high number of arrangements also came to an end and, amongst the 27 arrangements that ended, there were 14 young people who had became privately fostered in previous years as well as 13 arrangements ending for young people who only became privately fostered during 2012-13. The department are currently aware of 12 young people who are in private fostering arrangements at year end in March 2013, compared with 16 young people in place on 31st March 2012.

In Summary:

- St.Helens CYPS has received 27 private fostering notifications between 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013
- 23 new private fostering arrangements recorded as starting during the year from these notifications
- St.Helens CYPS had 16 on-going arrangements that began before 1st April 2012
- 27 private fostering arrangements came to an end between 1st April 2012 and 31st March 2013, (14 of these were historic cases, 13 were new arrangements)
- Of the 23 new arrangements between April 2012 and March 2013, 22 had visits of intervals of no more than 6 weeks
- Of the 14 historic cases, 14 were visited within the required timescales

The reasons for private fostering situations vary:

- · Parental capacity to care for the child
- Family breakdown
- · Parent receiving prison sentence
- Deceased parent
- Young people attending Liverpool football academy

They tend to be short term and end for various reasons. During April 2012 to March 2013, the following data applies:

- Return home (12 returned home)
- Obtain legal Orders (2 Private foster carer's obtained a residence order)
- Become looked after by this authority (4)
- Reach their 16th birthday when the private fostering arrangement is deemed to have ended although the young person may remain in the placement. (8, however, 5 were young players from LFA),
- Independent Living (1)

7. Monitoring Compliance with Duties and Functions in Relation to Private Fostering

St. Helens CYPS, through it's Performance, Management and Research Officer (in conjunction with the fostering service) monitors and reports to the DFE on the following:

- the number of notifications of new private fostering arrangements received during the year,
- the number of cases where action was taken in accordance with the requirements of regulation 4 (1) of the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005 for carrying out visits,
- of these, the number of cases where action was taken within 7 working days on receipt of the notification;
- the number of new arrangements that began during the year;
- the percentage of private fostering arrangements that began on or after the 31st March of that year, where visits were made at intervals of not more than six weeks;
- The number of private fostering arrangements that began before the 1st April of that year, where visits were made at intervals of not more than twelve weeks.
- the number of notifications of private fostering arrangements that came to an end during the year,
- · the number of children under private fostering arrangements, and
- the breakdown by age and place of birth (ethnicity).

All notifications that are received are recorded at child level on ICS on the case status tab, this means that the department has clear records of when a private fostering arrangement began, as well has confirming when the arrangement ended. All regulation 8 visits are recorded under the child's case notes.

Children's services will ensure that awareness training in relation to private fostering is included in the annual training plan and this is reviewed annually as part of the training strategy. All social workers undergo an induction and foundation training in relation to safeguarding. This will include a component on private fostering.

Under regulation 12, the Service Manager will monitor and report back to the Children's Service Management Team the way the department complies with and discharges its statutory duties and functions in relation to private fostering, as defined. The Service manager also oversees the monthly private fostering meeting.

8. Liverpool Football Club

During 1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013 we have had 4 notifications from Liverpool Football Academy to inform us of young male footballers who were being placed within host family's in St.Helens and therefore needed to be assessed under the private fostering regulations/procedures. At the end of March 2013, we have 4 Liverpool Football Academy players registered in a private fostering arrangement, and 1 undergoing a private fostering assessment. This number is included in the total figures.

Work began with Liverpool Football Academy in 2009, and since then we have established good working relationships. The Academy scouts for junior football players throughout the UK and enrol them to train and play with the junior squads. Liverpool football club employ their own methodology to recruit 'host' families to care for and provide accommodation for the young men whilst they are enrolled with the academy. The staff strive to match the young person's needs and carers abilities accordingly.

The Head of Education and Welfare notifies the Assistant Team Manager in the Fostering Service of the intended private fostering arrangement, which is assessed by the Local Authority.

CYPS internal guidance regarding assessment of need of children and young people within private fostering arrangements now recognises that some young people will not necessarily be defined as 'in need of support' and will not require family action meetings. Young people defined as not 'in need' will continue to receive regulation visits from their allocated social worker and the private foster carers will receive regular supervision from their supporting social worker. All private foster carer's affiliated to Liverpool Football Academy are subject to an Annual Review.

We have continued to work closely the Academy and in doing so have helped them to amend/combine paperwork to streamline the initial stages of assessment to prevent duplication for families and agencies.

Fostering staff continue to meet with the clubs staff to explain their responsibilities and duties. Private foster carers involved with the Academy also have access to the Local Authority Safe Care training.

9. Advice, Support & Training

All children in private fostering arrangements have an allocated social worker and will be visited once every six weeks for the first year of placement, and once every twelve weeks thereafter. Family Action Meetings will support a child defined as 'in need' within three months of placement, and six monthly thereafter. Private fostering monitoring has been introduced to ensure that Regulation 8 visits, Supervisions and Family Action Meetings are taking place in accordance with the private fostering policies and procedures.

The private foster carer's are visited by the fostering social worker every twelve weeks, and a formal supervision is completed. The arrangement is also subject to an annual unannounced visit and an annual review.

A private fostering Safe Care Policy continues to be utilized. Safe care statements for each young person, taking account of their individual needs including age, gender, race, religion, culture, personal care needs and accommodation are agreed with the whole family and recorded on the private fostering file.

The private fostering annual review has been designed to include views of birth parents, social worker, young person and education, and are recorded.

Training on private fostering is ongoing and incorporated into Social Workers induction training. Frontline staff are equipped with policies so that they can respond to private fostering situations quickly. All the policies, procedures and standard forms are available electronically and easily accessible to staff. Private fostering has been incorporated into the LSCB and the department's multi-disciplinary safeguarding children courses, which are mandatory courses for professionals.

The Assistant Team Manager repeats training to frontline staff to raise their awareness in terms of their duties and responsibilities. In 2013, an information sheet for social workers will be updated which will include the legal definition for Private Fostering, a summary of the legal requirements and responsibilities of social workers; details of the person within the LA responsible for Private Fostering; a quick and easy checklist to decide whether a particular arrangement is Private Fostering; and a flow chart of the process.

10. Private Fostering Network Meeting

In partnership with LSCB business manager and LSCB Learning and Development Training Officer, a targeted Private Fostering Network Meeting was established in January 2012 to initially facilitate multi-agency training across the borough but with a view to be an ongoing awareness raising and also a support forum. Successful attendance included Travellers Link Worker, community development worker for the Black, Minority and ethnic community, Family Crime Investigation Unit, Safeguarding lead for the PCT, and representatives from the Young Peoples Team. The last Network Meeting took place on 8th April 2013.

In 2013, inclusion at Private Fostering Network Meetings and/or training will be targeted/delivered to:

- Children services teams inclusive of the first response Team
- Schools (both secondary and primary)
- BME (Black Minority Ethnic) and Saith Communities
- Youth offending teams
- · Youth service

11. Raising Awareness

In 2013, inclusion at Private Fostering Network Meetings and/or training will be targeted/delivered to:

- Children services teams inclusive of the first response Team
- Schools (both secondary and primary)
- · Housing officers
- · Probation service.
- · Youth offending teams
- · Youth service
- Citizen advice bureau
- · Drug and alcohol projects
- · Private day nurseries

There is an ongoing awareness-raising programme coordinated by the Assistant Team Manager Fostering Team. St Helens has established effective systems and procedures to safeguard and promote the welfare of privately fostered children. Written information for children, parents, private foster carers and professionals is regularly distributed and also made available at public buildings throughout the area.

The national campaign for promoting awareness of Private Fostering Week took place on 11th to the 15th February 2013. This was promoted by two full page press advertorials in the St Helens Reporter and St Helens streamlined the contact information advertised to make it easier for individuals to notify the department, this included the creation of a unique short URL

(www.sthelens.gov.uk/privatefosdtering). St Helens also created a specific e-mail address, which is privatefostering@sthelens.gov.uk, and updated and re-printed information leaflets for professionals, birth parents and carer's.

The Equalities Officer has been a support in identifying the resources and methods effective to access ethnic groups within the local community. All information leaflets can be made available in other languages/formats on request.

Throughout 2013/14 professionals and key partner agencies will be targeted using e-communications. An electronic printable pdf will be made available as an attachment. This will help to ensure effective and environmentally friendly distribution of information to raise awareness of private fostering.

12. Outcomes and Impact

The ongoing raising awareness campaign and marketing plan has given greater confidence that the workforce and community recognise Private fostering arrangements and are aware of the need to notify the Local Authority. This means that through assessment and appropriate checks, safeguards are in place early on to protect the child.

The implementation of family action meetings with those children within Private fostering arrangements ensures multi-agency robust planning around the child. This enables multi-agency and family review to ensure that children needs are being met and they are achieving their outcomes. It is acknowledged that greater focus needs to be placed on ensuring parental involvement and frequency of meetings. As a result, meetings will also consider thorough rehabilitation planning and/or permanence planning for children and young people.

Private foster carers, children/young people, are provided with advice and information about private fostering arrangements. The arrangements are supported and monitored by home visiting, supervisions of private foster carers, listening to children's views and written record.

EVALUATION OF OUTCOMES

BE HEALTHY:

- · All privately fostered children are registered with a GP
- Privately fostered young people are encouraged to attend regular dental and optical check ups
- · Increased awareness of private fostering among health professionals
- Signposting young people to information regarding sexual health, mental health, drugs and alcohol, smoking, children's rights service.
- Young persons health is monitored via: Family Action meetings and formal supervision with the private foster carer's
- All carer's are encouraged to promote a healthy diet and lifestyle choices
- Positive contact with birth family is encouraged to promote emotional well-being

STAY SAFE:

- Key agencies identified and contacted at early stage
- Raised awareness of private fostering in St Helens
- Privately fostered young people identified
- Privately fostered young people are visited before 28 days to commence initial safety checks
- · Private foster carer's and members of household assessed
- Comprehensive health and safety assessment of the property
- Individual safe care documents completed
- · Comprehensive pet policy completed
- · Privately fostered young people have a name child care social worker
- Privately fostered young people receive Regulation 8 visits in line with the national minimum standards
- Private foster carer's have access to training, support and information
- Effective prohibition process established

ENJOY AND ACHIEVE:

- Regular liaison with schools
- · School attendance monitored
- · Young people encouraged to attend out of school activities
- Private foster carer's capacity to support the young person's education is assessed and continuous monitoring of this via: FAM and supervisions
- · Further education encouraged.

MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION:

- · Young people are encouraged to participate in decision making
- · Young people are encouraged to engage in positive activities
- Young people are encouraged to develop positive relationships
- Support given to young people in all areas by their child-care social worker
- Private foster carers are encouraged to promote positive behaviour

ACHIEVE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING:

- Young people are encouraged to remain in school
- · Private foster carers are encouraged to ensure good school attendance
- Young people are encouraged to consider further education
- Young people are encouraged to seek appropriate part time employment/career development
- Post 16years meetings are convened to ensure that appropriate support post 16years is in place for the young people.

13. Policies and Procedures

- Statement of Purpose for Private Fostering (May 2013)
- Private Fostering & Think Family Procedural Protocol (March 2012)
- Private Fostering Policy (January 2011). To be updated/revised 2013
- Raising Awareness Strategy (2011-2012 & 2012-2013)
- Marketing Plan (Fostering 2011-2012 & 2012-2013)



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