

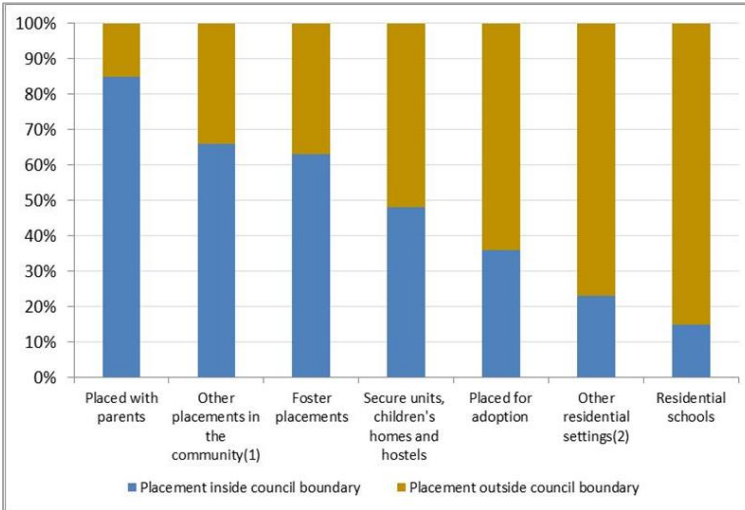


SFR 34/2015, 10 December 2015

Two thirds of foster placements are within the local authority boundaries...

Placement types, by whether within or outside the local authority boundary¹

England, 31 March 2015



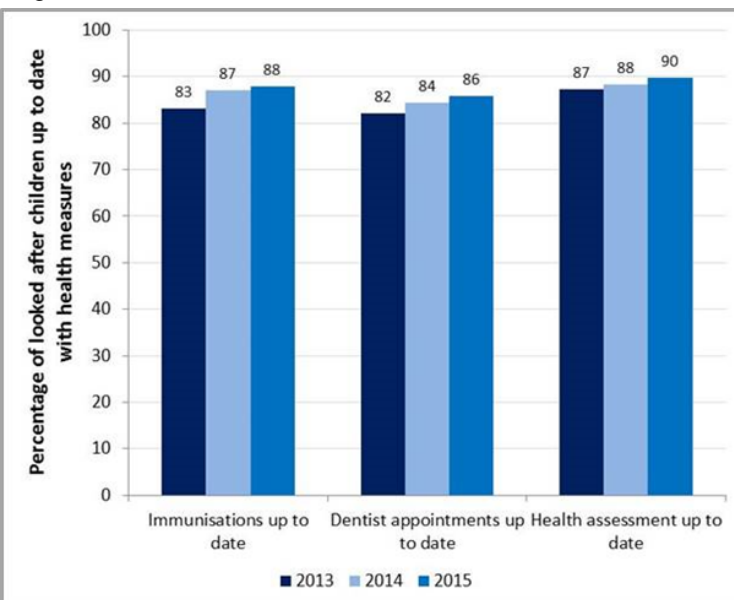
60% of all children looked after at the 31 March 2015 were in a placement inside the council boundary.

The proportion within the council boundary varies greatly by placement type; 63% of foster placements are within the the council boundary compared to 48% of secure unit, children's homes and hostel placements.

Higher proportions of children looked after are up to date with their health checks...

Health checks for children looked after continuously for 12 months

England, 31 March 2013 to 2015



88% of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months had their immunisation up to date, up from 83% in 2013.

86% had had their teeth checked by a dentist, up from 82% in 2013.

90% received their annual health assessment, up from 87% in 2013.

¹ (1) Includes living independently and residential employment

(2) Includes residential care homes, NHS/Health Trust or other establishments providing medical or nursing care, Family Centre or Mother and Baby Units and Young Offender Institutions or prison.

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About this release

This statistical first release provides further analysis relating to looked after children, based upon the same data source used in the main Statistical First Release of 1 October 2015. All figures are based upon the SSDA903 return collected each spring from all local authorities in England.

The main release was published on 1 October 2015 and provided headline figures on:

- children looked after at 31 March by characteristics, legal status, motherhood status and placement type
- children starting and ceasing to be looked after by characteristics and legal status
- looked after children who were adopted by characteristics and duration of the stages of adoption process
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) by characteristics
- care leavers; and
- children looked after who were missing or away from their placement (published for the first time)

This release provides further analysis of the same data source. At national level it includes figures on:

- children looked after at 31 March by locality of placement
- children looked after at any time during the year and children at 31 March who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months during the year, by characteristics, placement type and location, including placement durations
- children starting to be looked after by placement
- children ceasing to be looked after by placement and duration of placement
- number of placements and number of periods of care for children ceasing to be looked after
- legal status and gender of adopters, and adoption decisions and reversals
- offending, substance misuse, health and development assessments, and behavioural health outcome indicators (published in previous years in the SFR 'Outcomes for looked after children').

In addition to the national figures, a greater range of local authority analysis is included in this release, including local authority level data on UASC, care leavers and those children missing from care.

In this publication

The following tables are included in the SFR:

- Children looked after national tables (SFR34_2015_National_tables.xls)
- Children looked after local authority tables (SFR34_2015_LA_tables.xls)
- Children looked after Underlying data (SFR34_UnderlyingData) (open format .csv and metadata .txt)

The accompanying quality and methodology information document, provides information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data.

Feedback

We are changing how our releases look and welcome feedback on any aspect of this document at cla.stats@education.gsi.gov.uk.

1. Placement types for children looked after at 31 March 2015

(Tables A4 & A5)

Most looked after children were placed close to home. 53,500 (77%) of placements of children looked after at 31 March 2015 were within 20 miles from home and 12,430 (18%) of placements were more than 20 miles away – 5% were unknown.

For foster placements, 82% were within 20 miles, 14% were more than 20 miles away from home and 4% were unknown. For secure units, children's homes and hostels, 57% were within 20 miles, 37% were more than 20 miles (5% unknown).

60% of all placements are inside the local authority boundary. For foster placements this figure is 63%, for secure units, children's homes and hostels it is 48%.

Just over half of all placements are the own provision by the local authority; however it varies by placement type. For all placements the value is 56%, for foster placements the figure is 66% and for secure units, homes and hostels the figure is 25%.

Private provision is more likely to be used when the child is placed outside the LA boundary. Of those children looked after in placements supplied by a private provider, 63% were outside the local authority's boundary.

2. Children looked after during the year ending 31 March 2015 and their placements

(Table B1, B2 & B3)

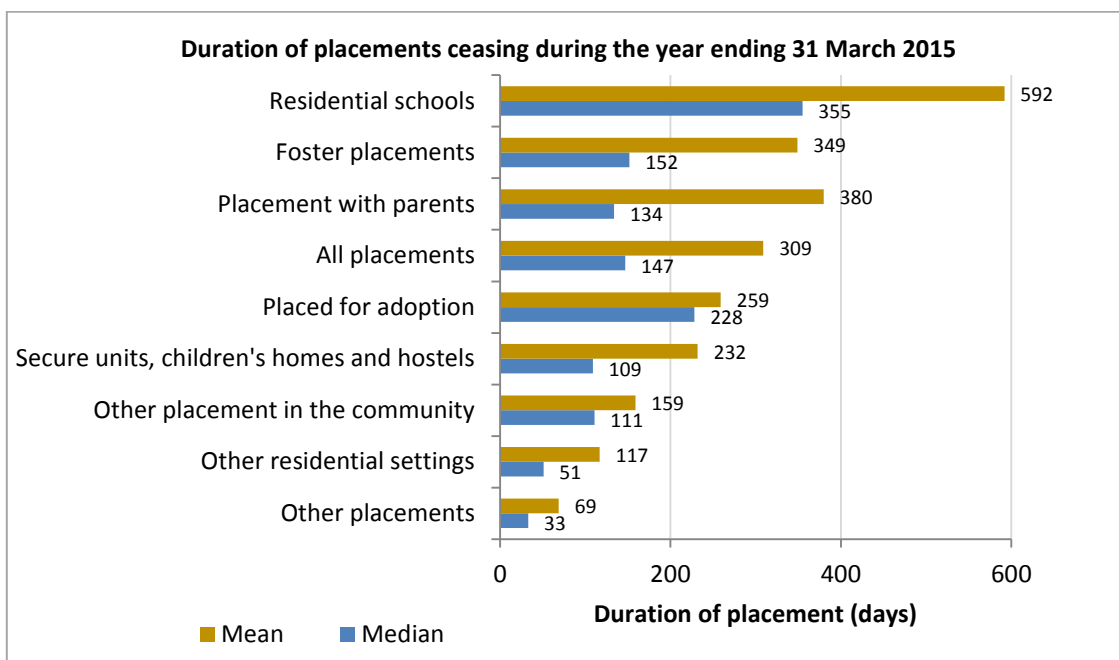
There were 99,230 children looked after at some point in the year ending 31 March 2015, up from 98,070 in 2014 and 91,180 in 2011.

48,090 children were looked after at the 31 March who had been looked after continuously during the year for at least 12 months, compared to 47,620 in 2014 and 46,130 in 2011. In 2015, 12% were aged 1-4 years old, down from 16% in 2011. 22% were aged 5-9 years old, up from 18% in 2011.

There were 76,030 new placements made in the year ending 31 March 2015. Most of these were within 20 miles of the child's home (76%, 57,820 placements). 17% (13,260 placements) were over 20 miles and for the remaining 7% (4,950 placements) the detail was not recorded or unknown.

For placements ceasing during the year ending 31 March 2015, the average (mean) duration of placement varies greatly by placement type. For all placement types the mean duration is 309 days and the median duration is 147 days.

Figure 1: Placements in residential schools have the longest duration:
 England, year ending 31 March 2015



Source: SSSA903

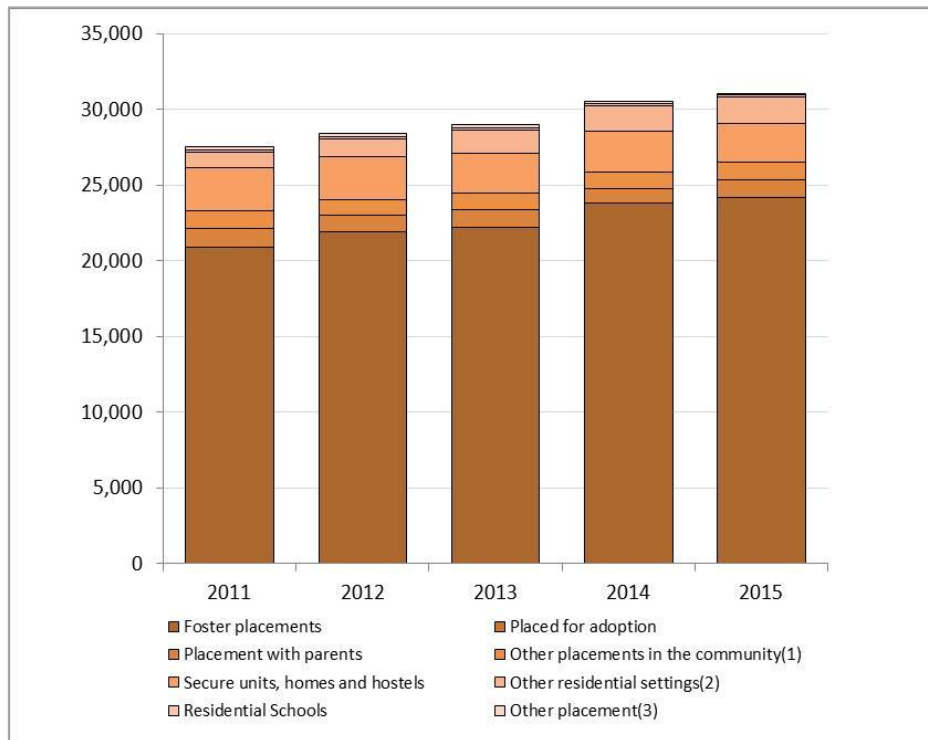
3. Placements of children who started to be looked after in the year ending 2015 (Table C2)

The main release showed 31,070 children started to be looked after in the year ending 31 March 2015. The majority of children starting to be looked after were placed in foster care, followed by secure units, homes and hostels.

78% of children starting to be looked after were placed in foster care, similar to 2014 and up from 76% in 2011. Over the past 5 years, the numbers of children starting to be looked after who were placed in secure units, children's homes and hostels has generally been declining. In the year ending 31 March 2015, 2,600 children were placed in these settings, representing 8% of all children starting to be looked after, down from 10% in 2011.

Figure 2: Increase in children starting to be looked after in foster care and decrease in those in secure units, homes and hostels²:

England, year ending 31 March



Source: SSDA903

4. Children who ceased to be looked after during the year ending 31 March 2015 (Tables D2, D3 & D4)

The October release reported 31,100 children ceased to be looked after in the year ending 31 March 2015, increasing from 30,600 last year.

Of the 31,100 children ceasing to be looked after in the year ending 31 March 2015, 16,490 (53%) were in foster care during their final placement prior to ceasing being looked after and this percentage has been relatively stable over the past 5 years.

The number placed for adoption prior to ceasing to be looked after has been increasing steadily over recent years, whilst the numbers and proportions of those placed with parents as their final placement, has been falling.

5,310 were placed for adoption in 2015, representing 17% of those ceasing to be looked after, increasing steadily from 3,080 (11%) in 2011. Most of those children ceasing who were placed for adoption were placed with a placement order not with their current foster carer (76%).

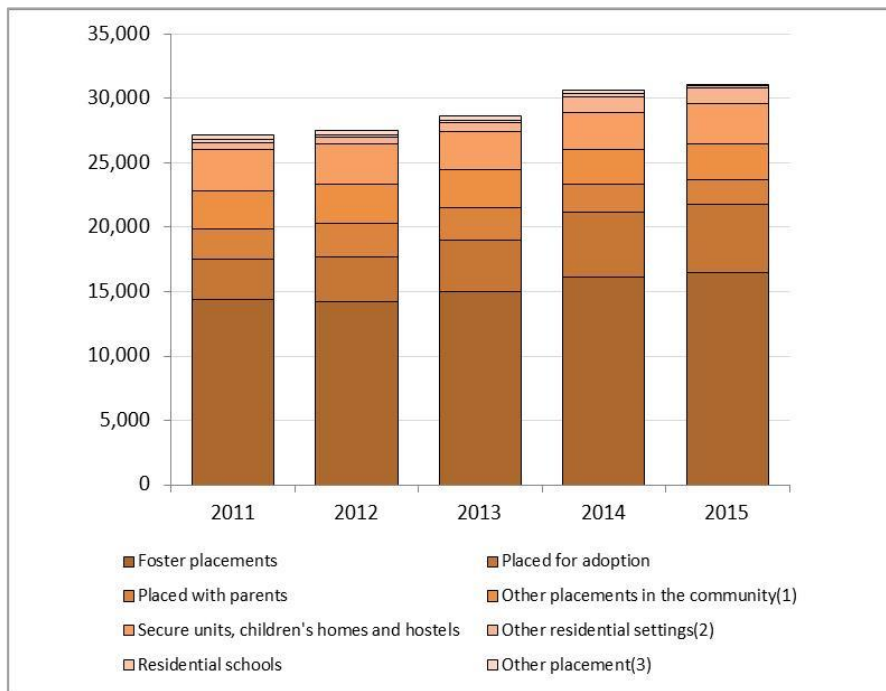
6% of children ceasing to be looked after were placed with parents as their final placement, compared with 9% in 2011, and 9% were placed in the community, compared with 11% in 2011. In 2015, a further 10% of final placements were in secure units, homes and hostels, 4% in other residential settings and 1% were in residential schools.

² (1) Includes living independently and residential employment

(2) Includes residential care homes, NHS/Health Trust or other establishments providing medical or nursing care, Family Centre or Mother and Baby Units and Young Offender Institutions or prison.

(3) Includes children missing from their placement for more than 24 hours for 2011 to 2014 and other placement not specified.

Figure 3: Increase in foster placements and placed for adoption as final placements³:
 England, year ending 31 March



Source: SSSA903

The average (mean) duration of the last period of care for those ceasing to be looked after in 2015 was 785 days, continuing a downward trend since 2012 when it was 886 days. In 2015, 52% of children ceasing to be looked after were looked after for less than a year, a further 18% for 1-2 years; 5% were looked after for 10 years or more. The proportion looked after for 8 weeks to 6 months increased from 12% to 17% in the last five years, the proportion looked after for 6 months to 1 year also increased from 13% to 16% over the same time period.

Most children ceasing to be looked after had 1 period of care (85%), 11% had two and 4% had 3 or more periods of care.

34% of all children who ceased to be looked after had 3 or more placements in their final period of care. 25% of 5-9 year olds, 37% of 16-17 year olds and 58% of 18 year olds and over had 3 or more placements in their final period of care. 1,080 (15%) of all those aged 18 years and over ceasing to be looked after had 10 or more placements in their final period of care, however these figures will include any periods of being missing from care as a placement, as these were counted as such up to April 2014.

³ (1) Includes living independently and residential employment

(2) Includes residential care homes, NHS/Health Trust or other establishments providing medical or nursing care, Family Centre or Mother and Baby Units and Young Offender Institutions or prison.

(3) Includes children missing from their placement for more than 24 hours for 2011 to 2014 and other placement not specified.

5. Children looked after who were placed for adoption, who were adopted and their adopters (Table E3 & E4)

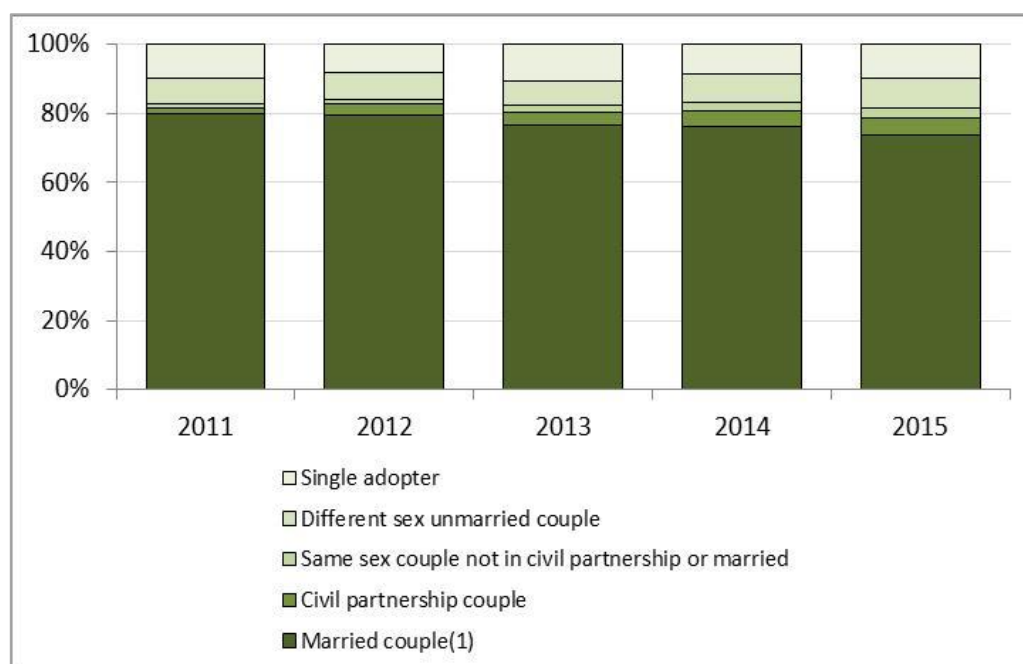
The number of children for whom the decision has been made that they should be placed for adoption was 14,490 in the year ending 31 March 2015. 4,310 of these children had the decision made in that year (down from 6,170 in 2014), and 10,180 had decisions made in earlier years.

Of the 14,490 children with a decision in the year, 5,420 (37%) were adopted during the year or left care without the decision being reversed, 3,310 (23%) were placed for adoption, 1,170 (8%) had the decision reversed, and the remaining 4,600 (32%) were still waiting to be placed for adoption at 31 March 2015. Children waiting with a placement order continued to fall from a peak of 5,510 in 2013 to 3,060 this year.

The main SFR reported an increase in the number of children looked after who were adopted, up to 5,330 this year from 3,100 in 2011. Most adoptions are by two people – 90% of adoptions in 2015 were by two people and this has been fairly constant over recent years.

The proportion of adopters who were married couples has fallen, from 80% in 2011 to 74% in 2015, however over this time period the numbers have increased from 2,470 to 3,930. There has been an increase in the proportion of adopters in a civil partnership (up from 2% to 5%) and different sex unmarried couples (up from 7% to 9%).

Figure 4: Decrease in the proportion of adopters who were a married couple⁴:
England, year ending 31 March



Source: SSDA903

⁴ (1) Includes adopting couples who are different sex and same sex. The Royal Assent to the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act in July 2013 allowed same sex marriages to be performed from summer 2014.

6. Offending rates (Table I1)

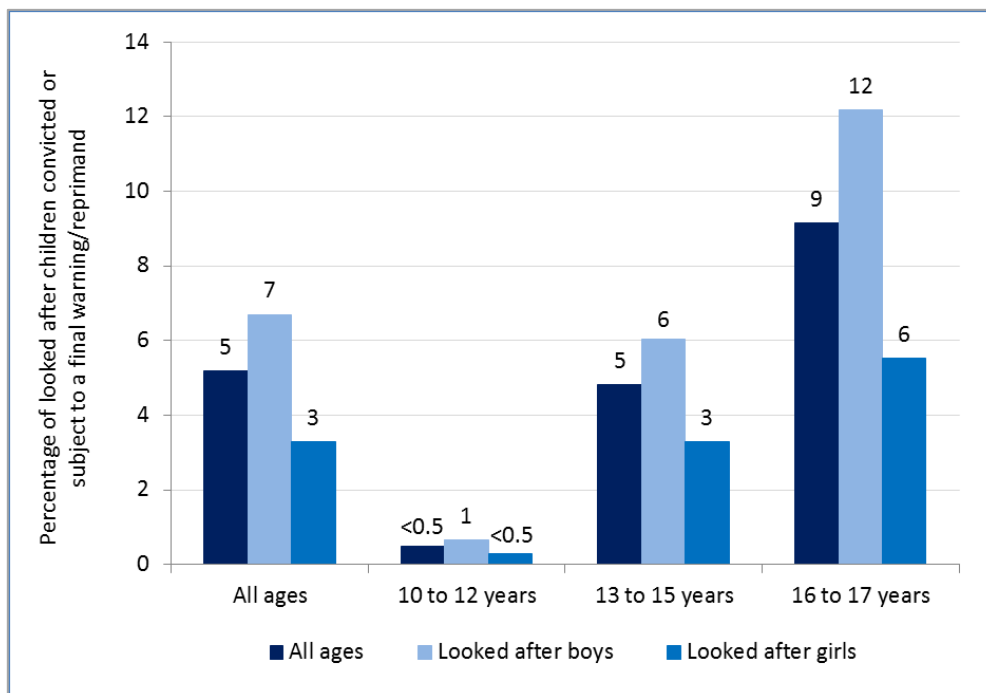
Offending rates are falling slightly, although they are still higher than for all children.

Of the 31,820 children looked after aged between 10 and 17 years olds 1,650 (5%) had been convicted or subject to a final warning or reprimand during the year, compared to 6% in both 2013 and 2014.

Comparable figures for all children for 2015 are not yet available, however 1% of all children were convicted or subject to a final warning or reprimand in 2013 and 2014.

16 to 17 year olds were most likely to have been convicted or subject to a final warning or reprimand during the year - 9% compared with 5% of 13 to 15 year olds and less than 0.5% of 10 to 12 year olds.

Figure 5: Offending is higher in older looked after children and boys:
England, year ending 31 March 2015



Note: Chart is based on unrounded figures.

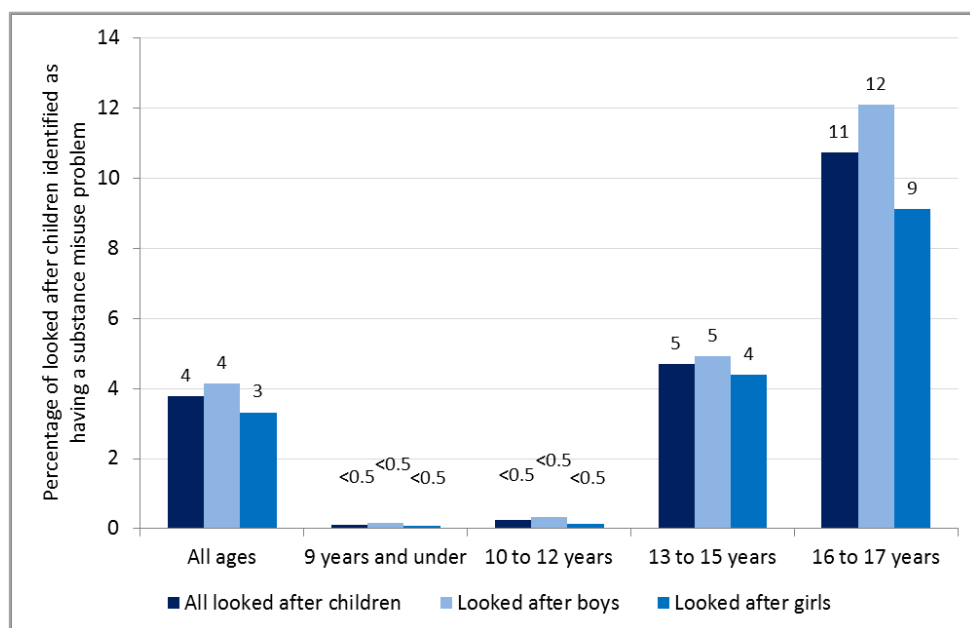
Source: SSDA903

7. Substance misuse (Table I2)

The rate of substance misuse is similar to last year. Of the 48,090 children looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March 2015, 1,810 children (4%) were identified as having a substance misuse problem during the year, the same as in 2014 and up from 3% in 2013. Comparable rates for all children are not available.

Substance misuse is more common amongst older looked after children. 1,230 children who were identified as having a substance misuse problem were aged 16 or 17, representing 11% of all looked after children aged 16 to 17 years. In all age groups, boys are more likely to have a substance misuse problem than girls.

Figure 6: Substance misuse is higher in older looked after children and by boys:
 England, year ending 31 March 2015



Note: Chart is based on unrounded figures.

Source: SSDA903

Of the 1,810 looked after children identified as having a substance misuse problem in 2015, 48% (880 children) received an intervention for the problem with a further 38% (680 children) refusing the intervention which was offered. This is down from the 56% receiving an intervention in 2014, when a further 35% refused the intervention.

8. Health care (Tables I3 and I4)

Most looked after children are up to date with their health care. Of the 48,090 children looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March 2015:

- 88% are up to date on their immunisations, up slightly from 87% last year and 83% in 2013.
- 90% had their annual health check, up from 88% last year and 87% in 2013.
- 86% had their teeth checked by a dentist, up from 84% last year and 82% in 2013.

Older children are less likely to be up to date, with 79% of those aged 16 years and over being up to date with immunisations, 83% had their annual health check and 77% had their teeth checked. However, there have been improvements over recent years.

There were 7,480 looked after children who were looked after for at least twelve months and aged 5 years and under in 2015. 89% of these were up to date with their development assessments (health surveillance or promotion checks), compared with 87% in 2014 and 85% in 2013.

9. Emotional and behavioural health (Table I5a and I5b)

Half of all children looked after for at least 12 months at 31 March 2015 had ‘normal’ emotional and behavioural health which has remained unchanged over recent years. A further 13% have emotional and behavioural health that is considered borderline and for 37%, it was considered to be a cause for concern.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire should be completed for every child looked after for at least 12 months and aged 5 to 16 years-old as at the end of March. In 2015 there were 36,140 children in this cohort and 72% of these had an SDQ score returned.

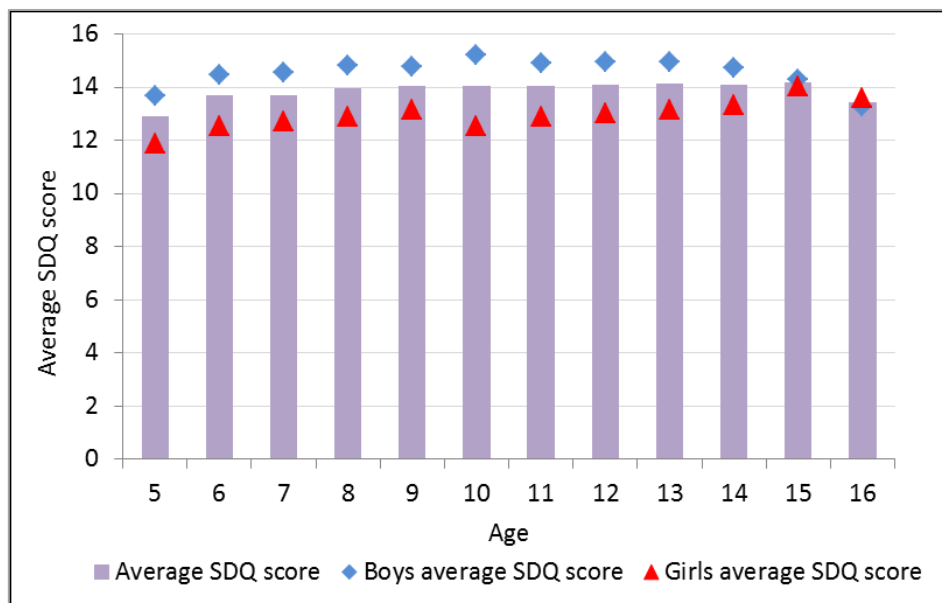
A score of:

- 0 to 13 is considered normal
- 14 to 16 is borderline, and
- 17 to 40 is a cause for concern.

In 2015, a higher proportion of boys (40%) than girls (33%) scored 17 or above on their SDQ, indicating cause for concern with their emotional health.

The average SDQ score was 13.9 – for girls it was 13.1 and for boys it was 14.5. Across all ages looked after boys score higher than looked after girls, except for children aged 16 years (see figure 7).

Figure 7: At all ages, looked after boys score more highly than girls on their SDQ scores:
England, year ending 31 March 2015



Source: SSSA903

10. Accompanying tables

The following tables are available in Excel format on the department's statistics website ([Statistics: looked after children](#)):

National tables

Children looked after at 31 March

A4 Children looked after at 31 March by distance between home and placement and locality of placement

A5 Children looked after at 31 March by placement, placement location and placement provider

Children looked after during the year

B1 Children looked after at any time during the year ending 31 March and those looked after continuously for at least 12 months at 31 March by gender, age at 31 March, placement and ethnic origin

B2 New placements for children looked after during the year by locality of placement and distance between home and placement

B3 Duration of placements ceasing during the year ending 31 March

Children who started to be looked after during the year

C2 Children who started to be looked after during the years ending 31 March by placement

Children who ceased to be looked after during the year

D2 Children who ceased to be looked after during the years ending 31 March by placement on ceasing

D3 Children who ceased to be looked after during the years ending 31 March by duration of latest period of care and average duration of latest period of care in days

D4 Children who ceased to be looked after during the year ending 31 March by number of periods of care in care history, number of placements in care history and age on ceasing

Children who were adopted during the year

E3 Children looked after who were adopted during the years ending 31 March by number of adopters, legal status of adopters and by gender of adopters

E4 Children for whom the local authority has made the decision that the child should be placed for adoption, those placed for adoption, those placed and waiting for adoption and children where the decision to be placed for adoption has been reversed, by gender, age at reversal of decision, reason for reversal of decision and duration of decision before reversal

Historic time series of looked after children and adoptions

H1 Children looked after at 31 March and children who started, ceased and were adopted during the years ending 31 March

Outcomes for looked after children

I1 Offending by children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, by age and gender

I2 Substance misuse by children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, by age and gender

I3 Health care of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, by age and gender

I4 Development assessments for children aged 5 or under who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, by gender

I5a Emotional and behavioural health of looked after children – average score for children looked after at 31 March for whom a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was received

I5b Emotional and behavioural health of looked after children for whom a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was received

Local authority and regional tables

Children looked after at 31 March

- LAA2 Children looked after at 31 March by legal status
- LAA3 Children looked after at 31 March by placement
- LAA4 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children looked after at 31 March
- LAA5 Children looked after at 31 March by age and gender
- LAA6 Children looked after at 31 March by distance between home and placement and locality of placement, and placement in or out of local authority's area
- LAA7 Children looked after at 31 March by placement order
- LAA8 Children looked after at 31 March by ethnic origin

Children looked after during the year

- LAB1 Children looked after at any time during the year ending 31 March and those looked after exclusively under a series of short term placements
- LAB2 New placements starting during the year by locality of placement, and distance between home and placement

Children who started to be looked after during the year

- LAC2 Children who started to be looked after during the year ending 31 March by gender and age on starting
- LAC3 Children who started to be looked after by legal status on starting, and number taken into care during the year ending 31 March
- LAC4 Children who started to be looked after during the year ending 31 March by category of need

Children who ceased to be looked after during the years ending 31 March

- LAD2 Children who ceased to be looked after during the year ending 31 March by reason for episode ceased
- LAD3 Children who ceased to be looked after during the year ending 31 March by gender and age on ceasing

Children adopted during the year

- LAE1 Children who ceased to be looked after and the number and percentage adopted during the years ending 31 March

Care Leavers

- LAF1a Care leavers now aged 19 by activity
- LAF1b Care leavers now aged 20 by activity
- LAF1c Care leavers now aged 21 by activity
- LAF2a Care leavers now aged 19 by accommodation
- LAF2b Care leavers now aged 20 by accommodation
- LAF2c Care leavers now aged 21 by accommodation
- LAF3 Care leavers aged 19, 20 and 21 by suitability of accommodation

Children missing from care

- LAG1 Children looked after who were missing or away from placement without authorisation

Outcomes for looked after children (OC2)

- LAI1 Offending by children who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months
- LAI2 Substance misuse by children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months
- LAI3 Health care and development assessments of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months
- LAI4 Emotional and behavioural health of children looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March for whom a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was completed, by local authority

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

Rounding Conventions

The National Statistics Code of Practice requires that reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that all published or disseminated statistics produced by the Department for Education protect confidentiality. National and regional figures have been rounded to the nearest 10 and Local Authority figures have been rounded to the nearest 5. For confidentiality purposes, numbers from one to five inclusive have been replaced in the published tables by a cross (x). To ensure the suppressed number cannot be identified by simple arithmetic secondary suppression may be required. In this case the next smallest number less than 20 is also suppressed. Where any number is shown as zero (0), the original figure submitted was zero (0). The following convention has been used:

“.” means not applicable

“-” means negligible – used to represent a percentage below 0.5%

UK Comparability of Looked-After Children’s Statistics

Data is collected and published independently by each of the 4 countries in the UK. Although there are similarities between the data collected by the 4 nations, there are also differences which may be down to different policies and legislation, and differing historical data collections.

Information on the comparability of looked after children statistics across the four countries of the UK can be found on [our web page](#).

11. Further information is available

Outcomes for looked after children in England

Information on educational attainment, special educational needs (SEN) and absence and exclusions from school will be published in March 2016. Figures for previous years are available at: [outcomes for looked after children](#).

Children in need and child protection statistics for England

Information on referrals, assessments and children who were the subject of a child protection plan (taken from the Children in Need census) is available for 2015 on the [children in need statistics website](#).

Information on care proceedings in England

The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) publish information on [care proceedings applications](#) made by local authorities where CAFCASS has been appointed by the court to represent the interests of children.

Local authority expenditure

Information on local authority [planned expenditure](#) on schools, education, children and young people’s services is available for the financial year 2013-14. This data is returned to DfE by local authorities via the Section 251 Budget Return.

Ofsted statistics	Ofsted publish inspection outcomes for local authority children's services and children's social care providers in England as well as data on the placements of children looked after.
Scotland	Statistics on children's social work in Scotland are available for 2013-14 on the Scottish Government website .
Wales	Statistics on children looked after in Wales are available for the period up to 31 March 2014 on the Welsh Government website .
Northern Ireland	Statistics on children looked after in Northern Ireland are available for 2013-14 and are published on the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety website .

12. National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The Department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

13. Technical information

A quality and methodology information document accompanies this SFR. This provides further information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data, including how it is validated and processed.

14. Get in touch

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for Education



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