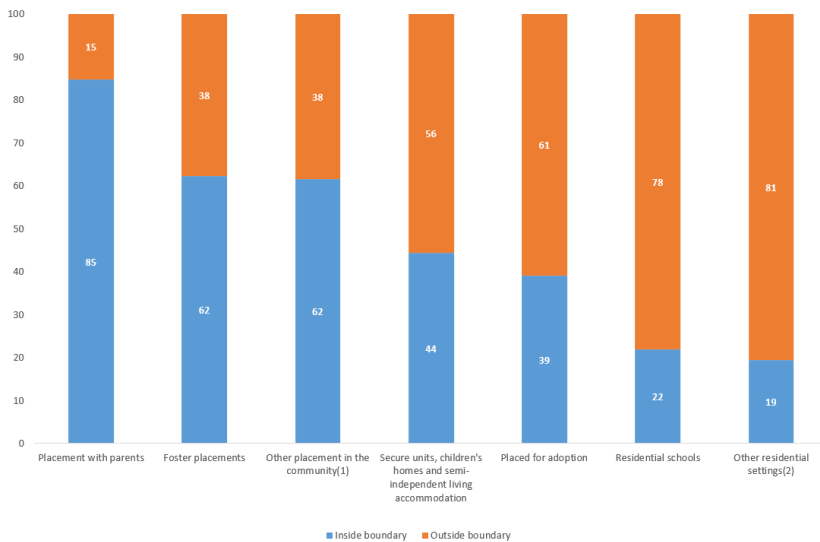




SFR 41/2016, 8 December 2016

Over 60% of foster placements continue to be within local authority boundaries...

Children looked after placed within or outside the local authority boundary: percentages¹
England, 31 March 2016

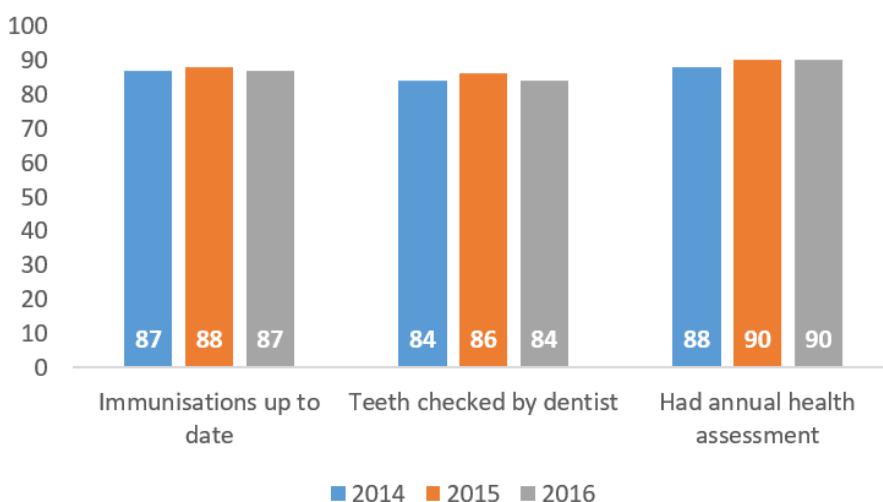


60% of all children looked after at the 31 March 2016 were in a placement inside the local authority boundary, the same as last year.

The proportion within the local authority boundary continues to vary by placement type; 62% of foster placements are within the local authority boundary compared to 44% of secure units, children's homes and semi-independent living accommodation placements.

Measures of health care for looked after children remain at similar levels to previous years...

Health care of children looked after continuously for at least 12 months: percentage of children who are up to date
England, 31 March 2016



87% of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months were up to date with their immunisations, 84% had had their teeth checked by a dentist and 90% had received their annual health assessment. These have remained at similar levels since 2014.

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 sources used in the main Statistical First Release published on 29 September 2016. Figures are taken from the SSDA903 data return, collected from local authorities in England. The main release published in September included:

- 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,
- children looked after children who were adopted, by characteristics and duration of the stages of adoption,
- unaccompanied asylum seeking children by characteristics,
- care leavers, and
- children looked after who were missing or away from placement without authorisation.

This release provides further information at national level on:

- children looked after at 31 March by locality of placement and placement provider,
- children starting and ceasing to be looked after by placement type,
- number of placements and number of periods of care for children ceasing to be looked after,
- duration of placements and new information on reason for placement change
- legal status and gender of adopters, and
- offending, substance misuse, health and development assessments and behavioural health outcomes indicators

In addition to national figures, this release contains further tables at local authority level.

In this publication

The following tables are included in the SFR:

- SFR41_2016_National_Tables (Excel .xls)
- SFR41_2016_LA_Tables (Excel .xls)

Underlying data (open format .csv and metadata .txt) will be published in January.

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 figures.

Feedback

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

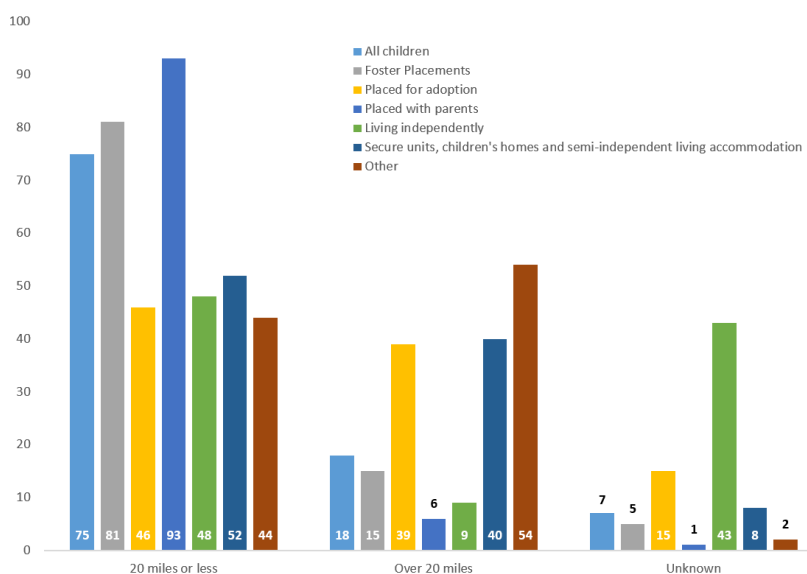
1. Children looked after at 31 March and their placements (Tables A4 and A5)

The main release reported that at 31 March 2016 there were 70,440 children looked after in England.

Most looked after children are placed close to their home address; at 31 March 2016 75% of looked after children were placed within 20 miles or less of their home address. 18% were placed over 20 miles away and for the remaining 7% the distance from “home” was not known. These figures are generally quite stable from year to year: in 2015 77% of children were placed within 20 miles of their home, 18% were placed over 20 miles away and for the remaining 5% the distance was unknown.

The distance from home varies depending upon the type of placement the child is in. The proportion of children who are in a placement within 20 miles or less of home, over 20 miles or whose distance is not known are shown in the chart below (figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of children looked after by placement type and distance from home: England, 31 March 2016



Source: SSSA903

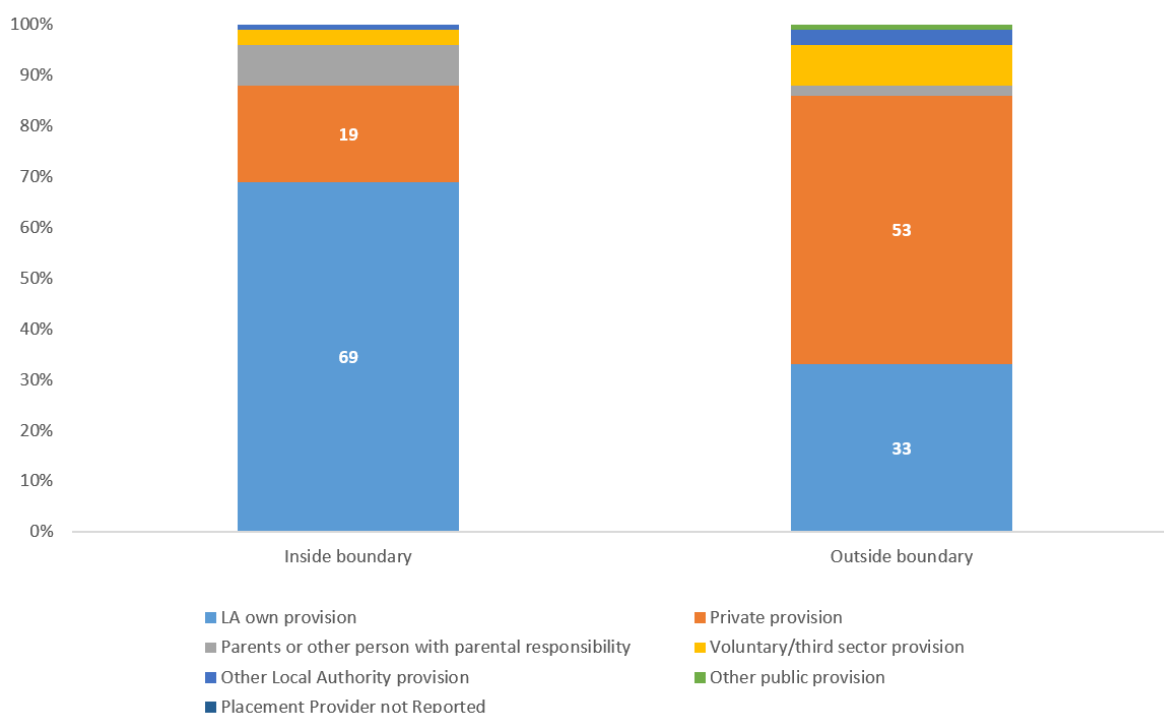
The main release highlighted the 54% increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children, up from 2,740 in 2015 to 4,210 in 2016. Distance cannot be calculated for unaccompanied asylum seeking children as the home postcode is not collected. The rise in unaccompanied asylum seeking children could be influencing the rise in unknown distances seen in the figures this year, particularly for those ‘living independently’.

Distance between home and placement

Within the SSSA903 data collection the child’s home postcode and placement postcode are collected and are used to calculate the distance between the child’s home and placement and whether the child was placed within the local authority boundary. In some instances, it is not possible to identify how far from home a child is placed as the “home” address is unknown. Examples include where the child’s home is outside of England, the child is from overseas, the child’s parents are homeless or the child is from a traveller family. Also, for reasons of confidentiality the distance and local authority of placement is not recorded for some children, including some children placed for adoption.

60% of looked after children at 31 March 2016 were looked after within the local authority boundary and 40% were looked after outside the boundary, similar to last year. Whether the provision is inside or outside the local authority boundary, most placements for looked after children are provided by either the local authority (55% of provision) or provided privately (33% of provision). For provision inside the local authority boundary over two thirds of placements (69%) were the local authorities' own provision, and a fifth (19%) were private provision. Of the remaining 12% of placements, 8% were with parents or others with parental responsibility, 3% were provided by the voluntary sector and 1% was provided by other local authorities. For provision outside the local authority boundary, a third (33%) was the local authorities own provision and just over half (53%) was private provision. The remaining 14% of placements outside the local authority boundary were provided by the voluntary/third sector (8%), other local authorities (3%) parents (2%) and other public provision (1%).

Figure 2: Children looked after by placement provider and location:
England, 31 March 2016



Source: SSSA903

2. Placements of children who started and ceased to be looked after in the year ending 31 March 2016 (Table C2, D3)

The numbers of children who began to be looked after in the year and the number who ceased to be looked after were published in the main release in September.

There were 32,050 children who started to be looked after during the year ending 31 March 2016; an increase of 2% from the previous year's figure of 31,340 and an increase of 13% from 2012.

There were 31,710 children who ceased to be looked after in 2016; an increase of 1% from the previous year's figure of 31,320 and an increase of 15% from 2012.

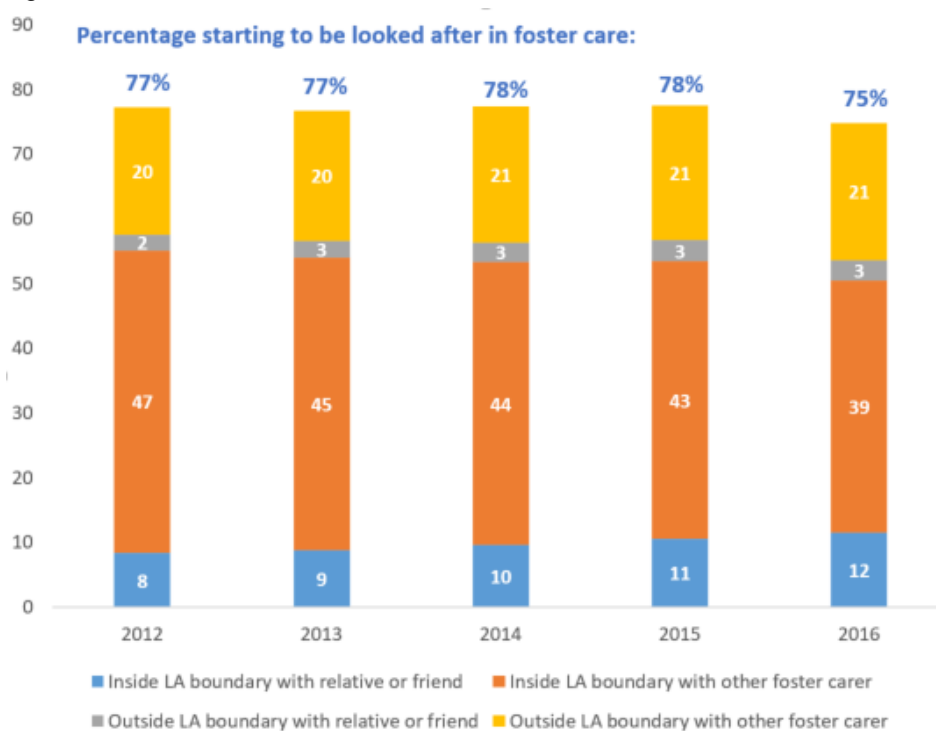
This release now provides breakdowns by placement type.

Children who started to be looked after in the year

Three quarters of children who started to be looked after were placed in foster placements – 50% were foster placements within the local authority boundary and 24% were foster placements outside the local authority boundary. The proportion inside the local authority boundary has decreased, down from 53% in 2015 and down from 55% in 2012, and the proportion outside the boundary has increased slightly, up from 22% in 2012.

The proportion of children starting to be looked after who were in foster placements inside the local authority boundary and were placed with relatives or friends increased steadily from 8% in 2012 to 12% in 2016. Over the same time period, the proportion of children who started to be looked after who were placed in foster placements inside the local authority boundary with other foster carers decreased, from 47% in 2012 to 39% in 2016. 10% (3,160) of children starting to be looked after were placed in secure units, homes and semi-independent living accommodation, 5% were living independently, 5% were in other residential care and 4% were placed with parents.

Figure 3: Percentage of children starting to be looked after placed in foster placements in the year, by location and type of foster placement:
England, year ending 31 March 2016

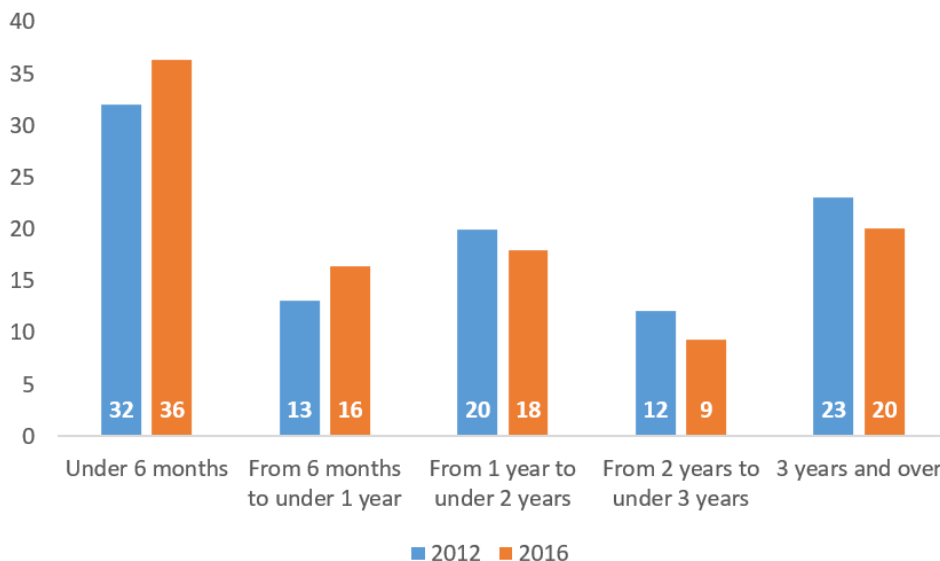


Source: SSSA903

Children who ceased to be looked after in the year

The average (mean) duration of the final period of care, in days, for children who ceased to be looked after continued to decrease as we have seen in recent years. In the year ending 31 March 2016, average duration for the latest period of care was 765 days, down from 783 in 2015 and down from 886 in 2012, reflecting the increase in the proportion of shorter placements: for example, in 2012, 32% of placements lasted less than 6 months but, in 2016, this had increased to 36%.

Figure 4: Percentage of children ceasing to be looked after by duration of latest period of care:
 England, years ending 31 March 2012 and 2016



Source: SSDA903

Most children ceasing to be looked after had one period of care (85%), 11% had two and 4% had three or more periods of care, the same as last year.

36% of all children who ceased to be looked after had three or more placements in their final period of care, which varies by age group; for example, 34% of 1-4 year olds ceasing to be looked after had three or more placements, 23% of 10-15 year olds and 60% of 18 year olds and over had three or more placements in their final period of care.

3. Placements during the year ending 31 March 2016 (Tables B2, B3, B4)

New placements

There were 78,780 new placements in the year ending 31 March 2016². 63% of these (49,400 placements) were foster placements, 14% (10,880 placements) were placements in secure units, children’s homes and semi-independent living accommodation, and 8% (6,590 placements) were living independently; the remainder were split fairly evenly between placed for adoption (5%), placed with parents (5%) and other residential settings (4%). These figures are similar to 2015.

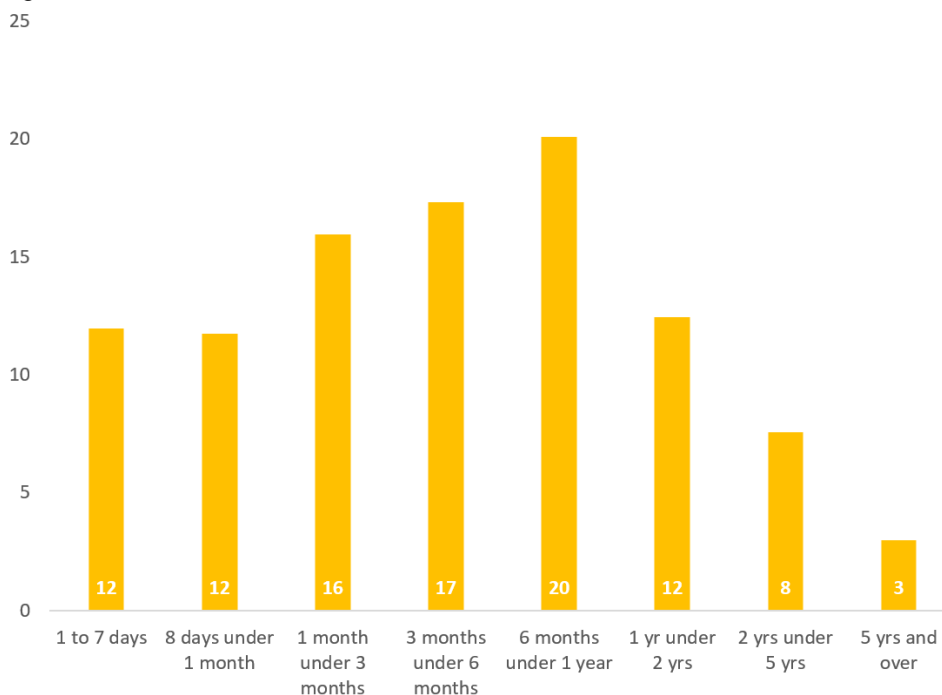
Almost three quarters (73%) of new placements were within 20 miles or less of the child’s home, 18% were over 20 miles and for 9% of new placements the distance was not recorded. Across many placement types there were slightly lower proportions of children placed within 20 miles or less from home and slightly higher proportions with distance unknown when compared to 2015 when 76% of placements were within 20 miles or less, 17% were over 20 miles and 7% were of unknown distance. This could be down to the increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children this year for whom distance of placement from home is not recorded.

² These figures relate to placements rather than children so if a child has had two foster placements in the year, then two placements would be counted here.

Duration of placements ceasing

78,410 placements ceased during the year ending 31 March 2016. Just under a quarter of placements (24%) lasted for under one month, and 23% lasted over a year, similar to last year.

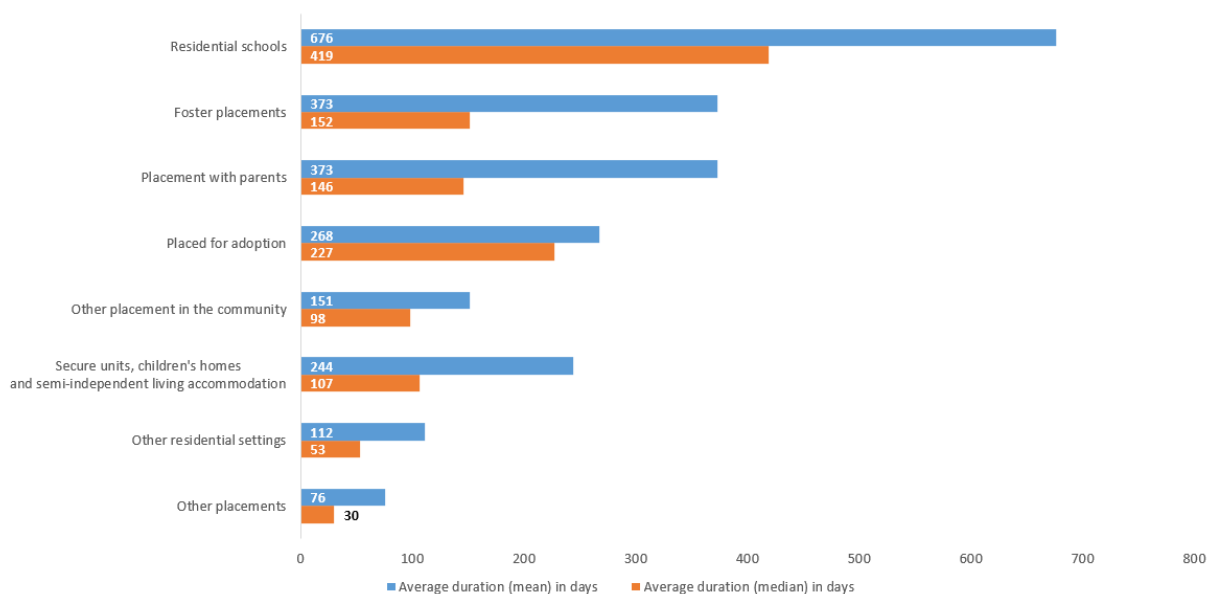
Figure 5: Placements ceasing in the year by duration (percentages):
England, year ending 31 March 2016



Source: SSDA903

For all placements, the average (mean) duration of placements which ceased in 2016, was 322 days (approximately 10 and a half months) and the median duration was 144 days (just under 5 months). The average duration of placements ceasing in the year vary greatly depending upon the type of placement; placements in residential schools last the longest – an average of 676 days in 2016.

Figure 6: Average duration (in days) of placements ceasing, by placement type:
England, year ending 31 March 2016



Source: SSDA903

Reason for placement change for children who moved placements in the year

Information on the reasons why children move placements was collected for the first time in 2016 so caution should be taken in interpreting this new data. In the year ending 31 March 2016, children changed placements 48,720 times, although 4,440 (9%) of these were due to a change in status of a placement only, for example the carer and fostered child moved house so their location changed.

A third of placements were recorded to have ended because of a change to or the implementation of the care plan. This is where the change of placement is a planned part of the child's care plan and it would be a move to a placement that meets the child's assessed needs on a temporary or permanent basis, for example a move from a short-term fostering placement to a long-term fostering placement. 11% of placements ended because the carer requested the placement ends due to the child's behaviour. For 9% of the placements, the changes were a change in the status of the placement: for example, the carer moves home, rather than the placement ending. 34% of placements were recorded as having ceased due to 'other reasons' but as this was the first year the data were collected; this might reflect incomplete recording rather than that placements ended due to a reason not listed. Additional quality checking will be undertaken during the 2017 data collection.

Table 1: Reason for placement change³ for children who moved placements in the year:
England, year ending 31 March 2016

	Number	Percentage
All placements	48,720	100%
Change to/implementation of care plan	15,870	33%
Carer requests placement ends due to child's behaviour	5,170	11%
Carer requests placement end other than due to child's behaviour	2,230	5%
Child requests placement end	2,000	4%
Responsible/Area authority requests placement end	1,050	2%
Resignation / closure of provision	490	1%
Standards of care concern	480	1%
Allegation (S47)	460	1%
Approval removed	90	<0.5%
Change in status of a placement only	4,440	9%
Other reason	16,440	34%

Source: SSDA903

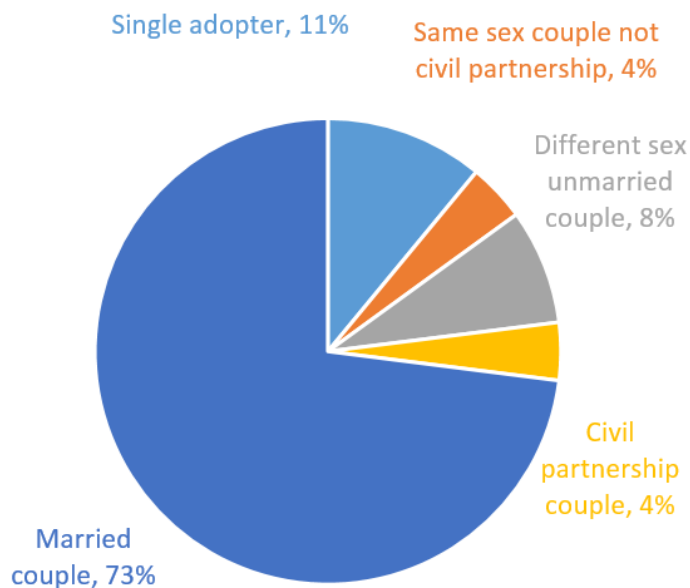
4. Looked after children placed for adoption who were adopted and their adopters (Tables E3)

The main release showed that 4,690 children looked after were adopted in the year ending 31 March 2016, down from 5,360 in 2015 and down from 5,050 in 2014. 89% were adopted by 2 people and 11% were adopted by 1 person – these percentages have fluctuated slightly over recent years.

Most looked after children are adopted by a married couple (including same sex married couples): 73% in 2016, which has fallen steadily from 80% in 2012. The proportions of children adopted in each of the other categories have all risen slightly since 2012. In 2016, 11% of children were adopted by a single adopter, 8% by a different sex unmarried couple, 4% were adopted by a same sex couple not in a civil partnership or married and 4% by a civil partnership couple.

³ More detail on the content of the categories can be found in the [collection guide](#).

Figure 7: Children adopted in the year, by legal status of adopters:
 England, year ending 31 March 2016



Source: SSDA903

5. Outcome indicators for looked after children (Tables I1-I5b)

Offending rates for children looked after (Tables I1)

In the year ending 31 March 2016, 5% of children aged 10 years or over (1,640 children) who were looked after for at least 12 months were convicted or subject to a final reprimand or warning during the year, similar to 2015 (also 5%) and 2014 (6%). Looked after children are five times more likely to offend than all children. The latest available figures for all children are for the year ending 31 March 2015 when 1% offended (compared to 5% of children looked after for at least 12 months)⁴.

Males were twice as likely to offend as females and older children were more likely to offend than younger children, similar to previous years. In the year ending 31 March 2016, 6% of males were convicted or subject to a final reprimand or warning, compared to 3% of females. 9% of 16 and 17-year-old children looked after for at least 12 months offended in the year ending 31 March 2016, almost twice as likely as 13 to 15 year olds where 5% offended and compared to less than 0.5% of 10 to 12 year olds, similar to previous years.

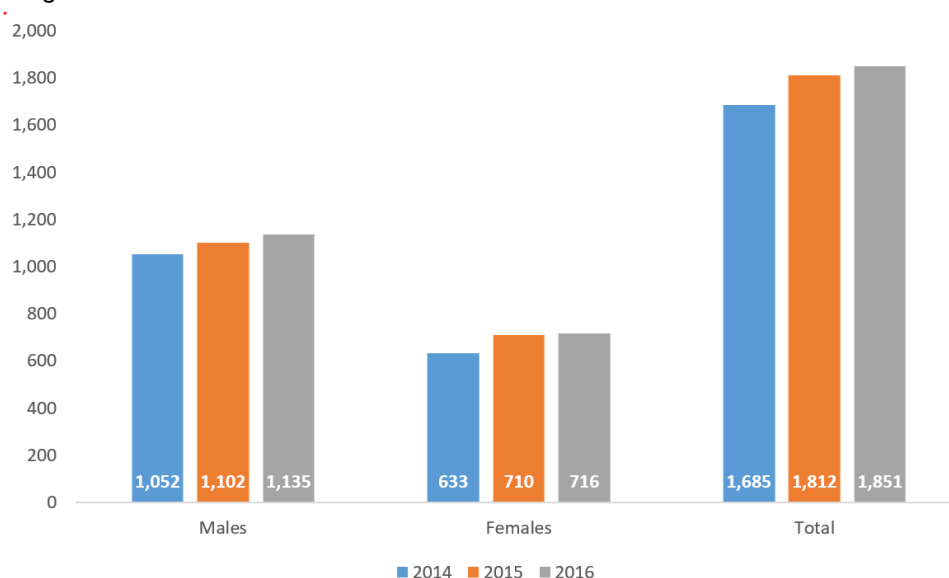
Substance Misuse (Tables I2)

The percentage of children looked after who were identified as having a substance misuse problem was similar to the previous year. Of the 48,490 children looked after for at least 12 months in the year ending 31 March 2016, 4% were identified as having a substance misuse problem. Half of these (50%) received an intervention for their substance misuse problem, compared to 48% last year, and down on the 56% receiving an intervention in 2014. A further 40% were offered an intervention but refused it, up slightly from 38% last year and up from 34% in 2014. Comparable rates for all children are not available.

⁴ Source: Ministry of Justice

Figure 8: Number of looked after children who were identified as having a substance misuse problem, by gender:

England, Years ending 31 March 2014 to 2016



Source: SSDA903

Substance misuse is slightly more common in males and is more common in older looked after children. 4% of males were identified with a substance misuse problems compared to 3% of females. 11% of 16 to 17 year olds were identified with a substance misuse problem in the year ending 31 March 2016, compared to 4% of 13 to 15 year olds.

Health and development outcomes (Tables I3 and I4)

Most looked after children are up to date with their health care. Of the 48,490 children looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March 2016:

- 87% were up to date with their immunisations, compared to 88% in 2015 and 87% in 2014,
- 90% had their annual health check, compared to 90% in 2015 and 88% in 2014,
- 84% had their teeth checked by a dentist, compared to 86% in 2015 and 84% in 2014.

Older children were less likely to be up to date, with 78% 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 – all similar to previous years.

Emotional and behavioural health (SDQ scores) (Tables I5a, I5b)

Almost half (49%) of children looked after continuously for at least 12 months had 'normal' emotional and behavioural health, 13% had 'borderline' scores and 38% had scores which were a cause for concern. These figures have remained fairly stable over recent years.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores

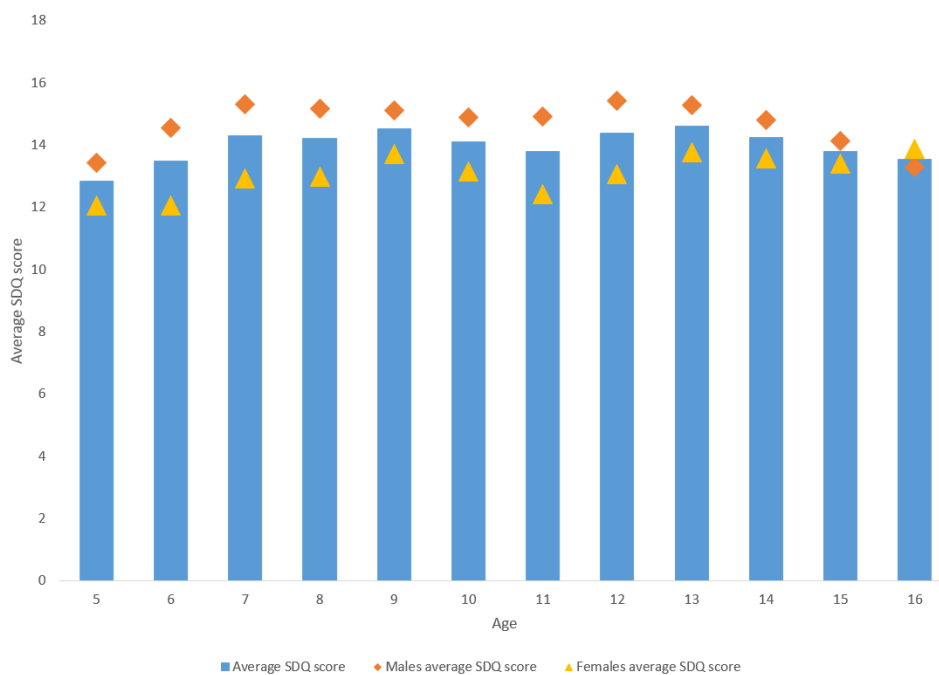
The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire should be completed for every child looked after for at least 12 months and aged 5 to 16 years-old as at the end of March. In 2016 there were 36,870 children in this cohort and 75% of these had an SDQ score returned.

A score of:

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

The average SDQ score was 14.0 in 2016, similar to both 2015 and 2014 when the value was 13.9. For males the average SDQ score was 14.7 and for females the average SDQ score was 13.2. The score for looked after males was higher than for females across all ages, except for those aged 16 years (see figure 9).

Figure 9: Average SDQ scores for males and females by age:
England, Year ending 31 March 2016



Source: SSSA903

6. 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 2016, by distance between home and placement and locality of placement

A5 Children looked after at 31 March 2016, by placement, placement location and placement provider

Children looked after during the year

B2 New placements for children looked after during the year ending 31 March 2016, by locality of placement and distance between home and placement

B3 Duration of placements ceasing during the year ending 31 March 2016

B4 Reason for placement change for children who moved placements in the year ending 31 March 2016 – Experimental Statistics

Children starting to be looked after

C2 Children who started to be looked after during the year ending 31 March, by gender, age on starting, category of needs, ethnic origin, legal status and previous permanence arrangement

Children who ceased to be looked after

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 2016, by number of periods of care in care history, number of placements in period of care and age on ceasing

Children looked after who were adopted

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

Time Series of key figures

H1 Children looked after at 31 March and children who started, ceased and were adopted during the years ending 31 March, 1994 to 2016

Outcomes for looked after children (OC2)

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 twelve 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 under 5 years 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
- 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
- LAA7 Children looked after at 31 March, by placement provider
- LAA8 Children looked after at 31 March, by ethnic origin

Children looked after during the year

- LAB2 New placements for children looked after during the year by locality of placement and distance between home and placement
- LAB3 Reason for placement change for children whose placements ended in the year – Experimental Statistics

Children who started to be looked after

- LAC2 Children who started to be looked after during the year ending 31 March 2016 by gender and age on starting
- LAC3 Children who started to be looked after during the year ending 31 March 2016 by legal status on starting
- LAC4 Children who started to be looked after during the year ending 31 March 2016, by category of need

Children who ceased to be looked after

- LAD2 Children who ceased to be looked after during the year ending 31 March 2016 by reason episode ceased
- LAD3 Children who ceased to be looked after during the year ending 31 March 2016 by gender and age on ceasing

Care leavers

- LAF1a Care leavers now aged 19, 20 and 21 by contact with the local authority
- LAF1b Care leavers now aged 17 and 18 by contact with the local authority - Experimental Statistics
- LAF2a Care leavers now aged 19, 20 and 21 by activity
- LAF2b Care leavers now aged 17 and 18 by activity - Experimental Statistics
- LAF3a Care leavers now aged 19, 20 and 21 by accommodation
- LAF3b Care leavers now aged 17 and 18 by accommodation - Experimental Statistics
- LAF4a Care leavers now aged 19, 20 and 21 by suitability of accommodation
- LAF4b Care leavers now aged 17 and 18 by suitability of accommodation - Experimental Statistics
- LAF5a Care leavers now aged 19, 20 and 21 who ceased to be looked after on their 18th birthday, and remain with their former foster carers
- LAF5b Care leavers now aged 18 who ceased to be looked after on their 18th birthday, and remain with their former foster carers - Experimental Statistics

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

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

Outcome indicators (OC2) for children looked after continuously for at least 12 months at 31 March

- LAI1 Offending by children who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months
- LAI2 Substance misuse by children who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months
- LAI3 Health care and development assessment 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

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 DfE protect confidentiality. National 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 and its percentage 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.

7. Further information is available

Outcomes for looked after children in England Information on [outcomes for looked after children](#) is available for children looked after at 31 March 2015. Outcomes include educational attainment, special educational needs (SEN), absence and exclusions from school.

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 2016 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 2015-16. 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 and fostering in England.

Scotland Statistics on children’s social work in Scotland are available for 2014-15 on the Scottish Government [website](#).

Wales	Statistics on children looked after in Wales are available for the period up to 31 March 2016 on the Welsh Government website .
Northern Ireland	Statistics on children looked after in Northern Ireland are available for 2015-16 and are published on the Northern Ireland Department of Health website .

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. Get in touch

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Department
for Education



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