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**Issued by**  
Department for  
Education  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

**Telephone:**  
**Press Office**  
020 7925 6789  
**Public Enquiries**  
0870 000 2288

**Statistician**  
Julie Glenndenning

**Email**  
[cla.stats@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:cla.stats@education.gsi.gov.uk)

**Internet**  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001084/index.shtml>

## **Children Looked After by Local Authorities in England, as at 31 March 2012 – Additional Tables**

Following the publication of the Statistical First Release in September, this document provides further analysis for children looked after as at 31 March 2012. Figures are presented giving further information on children who started to be looked after in the year ending 31 March 2012 and those who ceased to be looked after during the same period. Information is also provided on the location and providers of placements for looked after children, unaccompanied asylum seekers, looked after girls who are mothers and children looked after under a series of agreed short term breaks (respite care). Further information on adoptions is also included.

As with the Statistical First Release, all figures are based on data from the SSDA903 return collected each spring from all local authorities in England.

### **KEY POINTS**

**Note: All of the comparisons below and in this document relate to 31 March 2012**

- Of the 67,050 children looked after at 31 March, 76 per cent were placed in a setting within 20 miles of their home address, 16 per cent were placed at a distance of 20 miles or more from their home address.
- The majority of children (62 per cent) who started to be looked after in 2012 did so under a voluntary agreement under Section 20 of the Children's Act 1989. A further 6,200 started to be looked after under a care order, an increase of 10 per cent compared to 2011.
- There were 8,120 children who were looked after under an agreed series of short term placements (respite care) – a fall of 15 per cent from 2011.
- There were 2,150 unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) at 31 March 2012, a fall of 21 per cent from 2011.
- During the year ending 31 March 2012, there were 12,490 looked after children for whom a decision was in place that they should be placed for adoption.

## Children who started to be looked after in the year ending 31 March 2012

The Statistical First Release previously reported that there were 28,220 children who started to be looked after in the year ending 31 March 2012.

The majority of children (62 per cent) who started to be looked after did so under a voluntary agreement under Section 20 of the Children's Act 1989. The number of children who started to be looked after under a voluntary agreement has increased by 16 per cent since 2008. However this increase is lower than the increase seen in the total number of children who started to be looked after. The Statistical First Release published in September previously reported an increase of 21 per cent in the number of children who started to be looked after in the year ending 31 March 2012 compared to 2008. The proportion of all looked after children who start to be looked after, who do so under a voluntary agreement, has therefore decreased over the same time period. In 2012, 62 per cent of all children who started to be looked after did so under a voluntary agreement, this compares with 65 per cent for 2008.

A greater proportion of children who start to be looked after now do so under a care order. In 2012, the proportion of children who started to be looked after under a care order was 22 per cent, an increase from 19 per cent in 2008. In terms of numbers, in the year ending 31 March 2012, 6,200 children started to be looked after under a care order (either an interim or full care order), an increase of 40 per cent from 2008 and an increase of 10 per cent compared to 2011.

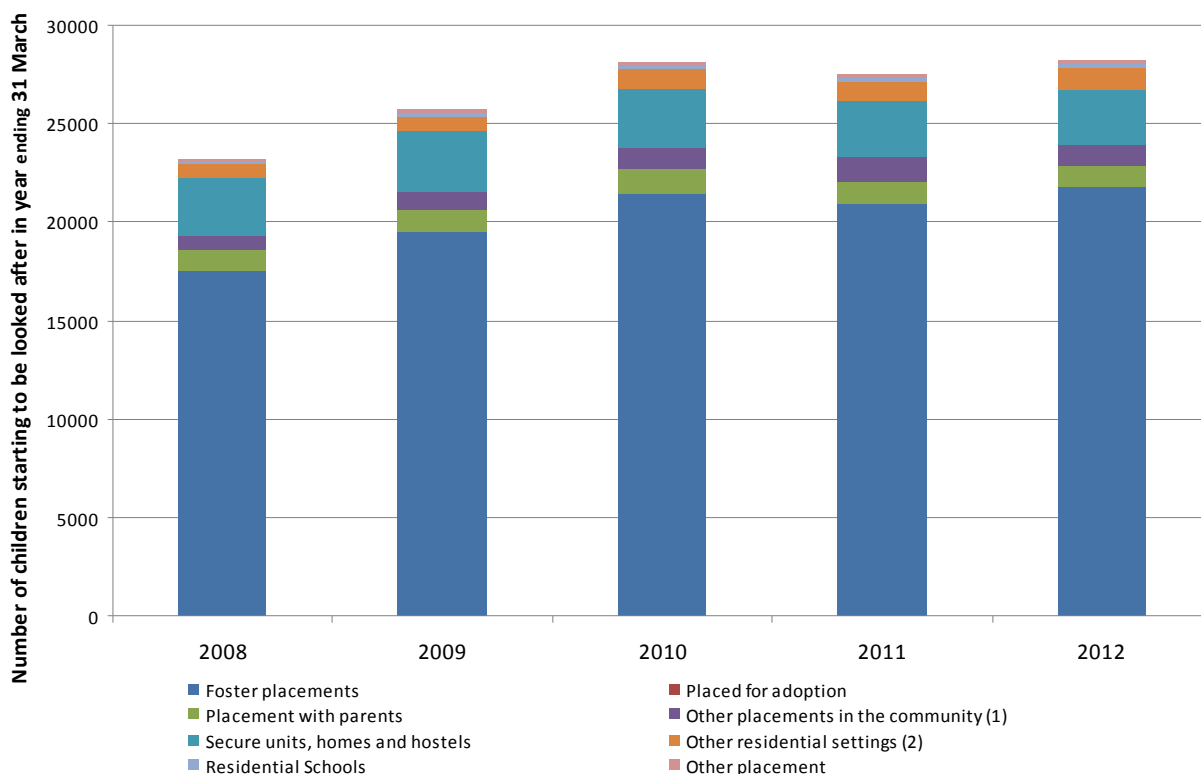
Chart A shows the numbers of children and their legal status on starting to be looked after for each year since 2008.

**Chart A: Numbers of children who started to be looked after in the year ending 31 March by legal status on starting**



The majority of children who started to be looked after in 2012 were placed in foster care (77 per cent). The proportion of children placed in foster care when starting to be looked after has risen slightly since 2008 when 75% of children were placed in foster care on starting to be looked after. Chart B shows the number of children who started to be looked after by their type of placement.

**Chart B: Children who started to be looked after in the year ending 31 March by type of placement**



1. Includes living independently and residential employment,
2. Includes residential care homes, NHS trusts providing medical/nursing care, family centre or mother and baby unit, youth treatment centres and young offenders institution or prison.

In 2012, 36 per cent of children who started to be looked after were taken into care, compared to 32% in 2008. Children taken into care are those whose legal status on starting is that of care order, police protection order, emergency protection order or child assessment order. The most common reason why a child would be taken into care was abuse or neglect – 72% of children taken into care were for this reason.

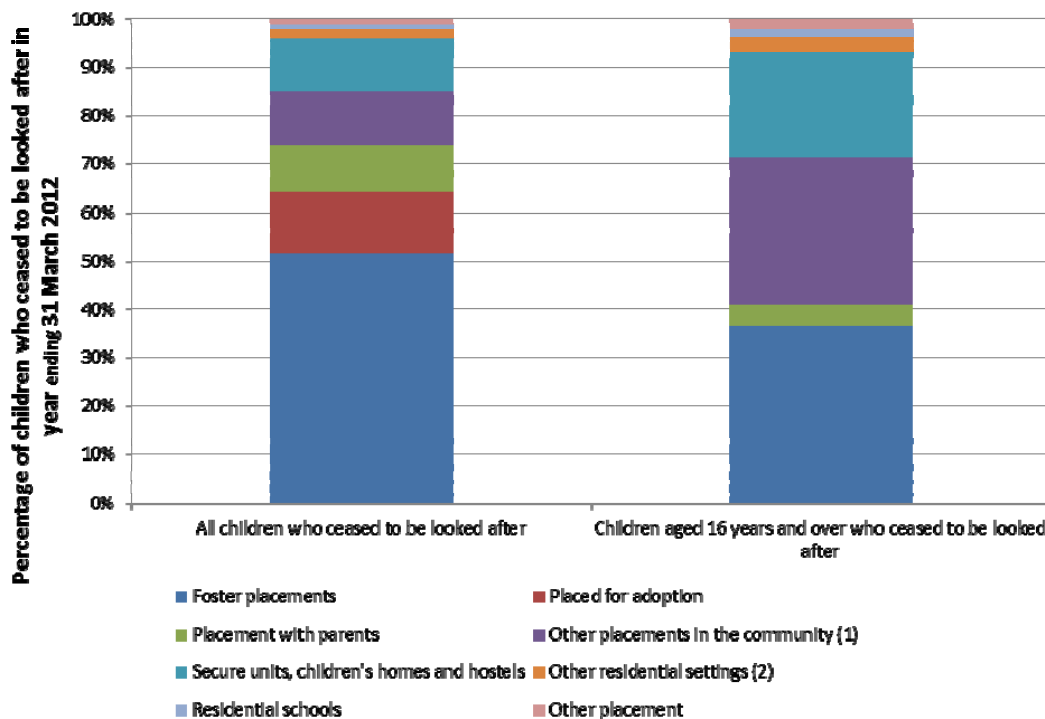
### Children who ceased to be looked after during the year ending 31 March

The Statistical First Release previously reported that 27,350 children ceased to be looked after in the year ending 31 March 2012. Of these children, 10,000 were aged 16 or over.

For all children who ceased to be looked after, 52 per cent were in foster care during their final

placement prior to ceasing. For children who ceased to be looked after aged 16 and over, 37 per cent were in foster care during their final placement prior to ceasing. Chart C shows the final placement of children who ceased to be looked after during the year ending 31 March 2012.

**Chart C: Final placement for children who ceased to be looked after in the year ending 31 March 2012**



1. Includes living independently and residential employment,
2. Includes residential care homes, NHS trusts providing medical/nursing care, family centre or mother and baby unit, youth treatment centres and young offenders' institution or prison.

Of the 10,000 young people who ceased to be looked after when aged 16 or over, 17 per cent ceased to be looked after when 16 years old, 17 per cent when 17 years and 65 per cent ceased to be looked after on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. This is consistent with a general trend for children to leave care at a later age. In 2008, 60% of children who ceased care when aged 16 or over ceased on their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### Children looked after during the year ending 31 March

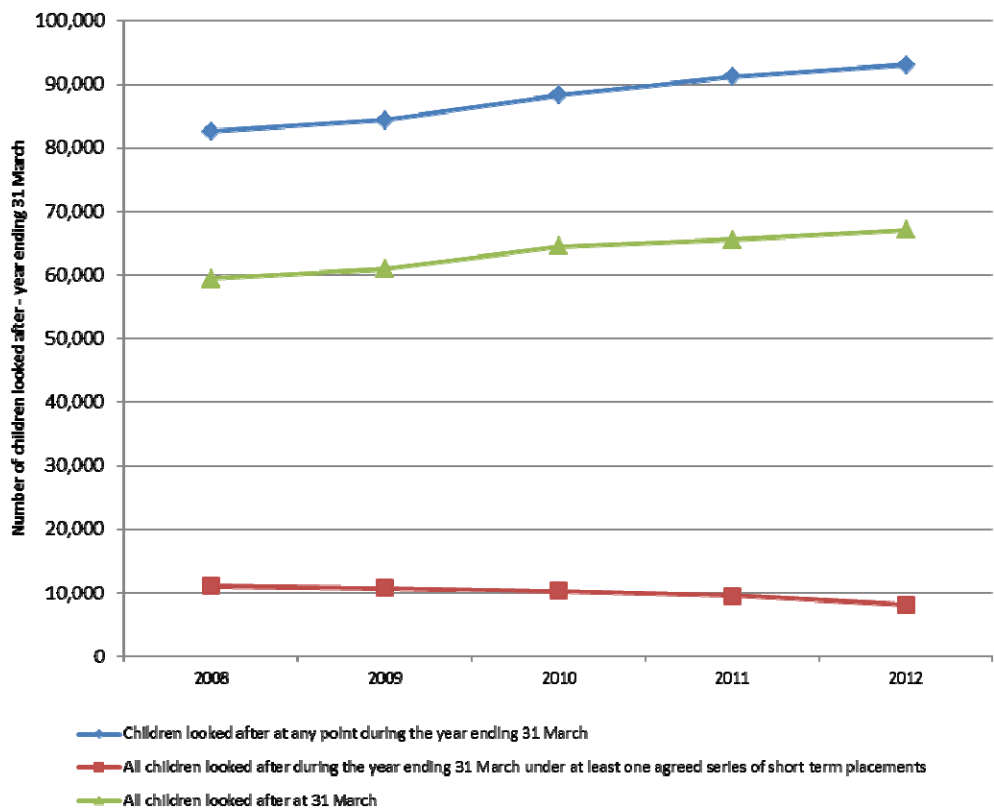
The Statistical First Release previously reported that 67,050 children were looked after on the 31 March 2012.

During the year ending 31 March 2012, there were 93,020 children who were looked after at some point during the year 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012.

There were 8,120 children who were looked after under an agreed series of short term placements (respite care). The number looked after under an agreed series of short term placements in 2012 has fallen by 15 per cent from 2011 and by 27 per cent from 2008. The majority of children looked after under a series of agreed short term breaks are provided with a service due to the child's disability (84 per cent). This proportion has increased slightly since 2008 when the figure was 81

per cent. Children provided with such short term breaks are most likely to be placed in secure units, children's homes and hostels; in 2012, 57 per cent were placed in these settings. Chart D shows the trends in numbers of children looked after since 2008.

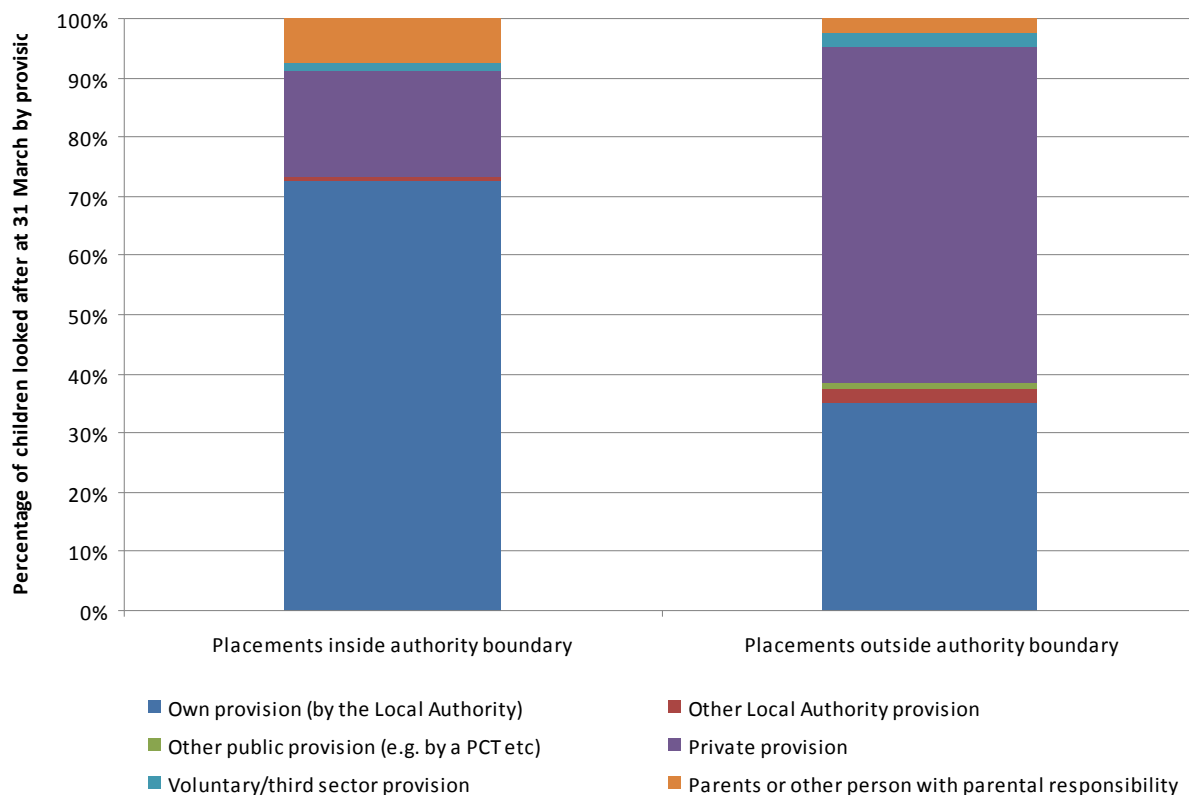
**Chart D: Trends in numbers of children looked after, year ending 31 March**



Of the 67,050 children looked after at 31 March, 76 per cent were placed in a setting within 20 miles of their home address, 16 per cent were placed at a distance of 20 miles or more from their home address. Children placed in foster care were more frequently placed within 20 miles of their home address compared with other placement types (with the exception of placements with parents). 83 per cent of looked after children placed in foster care were placed within 20 miles of home compared to 62 per cent of children placed in secure units, children's homes or hostels.

For children looked after at 31 March 2012, 59 per cent were placed in the local authorities own provision. The placements for a further 31 per cent were supplied by private providers and a further 2 per cent by voluntary or third sector providers. Private provision is more likely to be used where the child is placed outside of the authorities boundaries. There were 13,430 children placed outside of the authorities boundaries in private provision. Chart E shows the percentage of children looked after by placement provision and location.

**Chart E: Percentage of looked after children at 31 March 2012 by placement provision and location**



### Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

There were 2,150 looked after unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) at 31 March 2012. The number of these children has fallen each year since 2009; in 2012 the number fell by 21 per cent from 2011 – a similar fall to that seen between 2010 and 2011.

The majority of UASC are boys; of all UASC in 2012, 87 per cent were boys. The proportion of boys has risen since 2008 when this figure was 81 per cent. Most UASC are aged over 16. In 2012, 74 per cent of all UASC were in this age group compared to 66 per cent in 2008.

Of all UASC, 40 per cent are from a background of other Asian (please note that this group does *not* include children from Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi backgrounds). A further 16 per cent were from a Black African background. This compares to 2008 when 34 per cent of UASC were from an other Asian background and 25 per cent were from a Black African background.

### Adoptions of looked after children in year ending 31 March 2012

At 31 March 2012, there were 12,490 looked after children for whom a decision was in place during 2012 that they should be placed for adoption. Please note that this does not reflect the number of adoption decisions made in 2012 but the number of children looked after in 2012 where a decision had been made – for a proportion of these children the decision that they should be placed for adoption will have been made in an earlier year.

Of these 12,490 children, 21 per cent had been placed for adoption and 46 per cent were waiting

to be placed for adoption at 31 March 2012, and 28 per cent had ceased to be looked after (mainly due to adoption).

In addition there were 560 children (5 per cent) where the original decision to place for adoption has been reversed, 59 per cent of these children were aged between 5 and 9 years old when the reversal decision was made, 27 per cent were aged between 1 and 4 years and 2 per cent were aged under 1.

There are various reasons why a decision to place a child for adoption should be reversed. For 32 per cent of children the decision was reversed due to the child's needs changing following the decision. For 30 per cent of children the decision was reversed as no prospective adopters could be found.

The majority of children, where the decision to place for adoption was reversed, were looked after with the original decision to place for adoption being in place for more than 1 year. For 27 per cent the decision to place for adoption was in place for between 1 and 2 years, for 15 per cent it was in place for between 2 and 3 years and for 23 per cent of children the decision was in place for 3 or more years prior to being reversed.

The Statistical First Release previously reported that there were 3,450 adoptions of children looked after in the year ending 31 March 2012. Of these children 92 per cent were adopted by a couple, with 80 per cent by a married couple.