

## Children looked after placements by English local authorities

This release contains:

- Information about the characteristics, including age, gender and ethnicity, of all children looked after on 31 March 2015.
- Information about where all children looked after were living on 31 March 2015, including:
  - how far from their placing local authority they were living;
  - the type of placement;
  - how long they had been there;
  - the inspection judgements of the providers of these placements.
- Analysis of some contextual data, such as the levels of crime and deprivation in the areas in which these children were living.
- Information about the providers of children's social care in relation to where the children looked after were placed, including the number of providers and places and their inspection judgements as at 31 March 2015.

### Key Points<sup>1</sup>

Minority ethnic children who are looked after are more likely than White children to live in secure units, young offenders institutions (YOIs), or in prison

As at 31 March 2015, 45% of children placed in secure units, YOIs or prisons were from a Minority ethnic group, though only 23% of all looked after children were Minority ethnic.

One fifth of local authorities placed a small number of children in children's homes judged inadequate at the time of placement

Thirty two local authorities placed 41 children in children's homes in 2014-15 which were judged inadequate at the time of placement.

The majority of fostered children were placed within 10 miles of their local authority boundary

Eighty-eight per cent (45,547) of children in foster placements were placed within 10 miles of their local authority boundary.

<sup>1</sup> For a definition of any terms used in this document, please refer to the [glossary](#) at the end of the document.

## Key Points (continued)

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White children were twice as likely to be placed in an area of lower levels of crime as Minority ethnic children. Minority ethnic children were more likely to be placed in an area with higher levels of crime.

24% of White children were living in areas of lower levels of crime compared to 12% of Minority ethnic children. Areas with higher levels of crime had 38% of Minority ethnic children living within them and 25% of White children.

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## Contents

Key Points .....	1
Introduction.....	5
Key Findings.....	7
An overall picture of the children and young people .....	7
Where were the children living? .....	11
Distance from local authority boundary .....	15
What type of placements were children living in? .....	23
Ethnicity in Placement .....	25
Children living in placements whose providers are not regulated by Ofsted .....	26
How long had children been in their placements? .....	27
Characteristics of where the children were living .....	29
Rural/Urban areas.....	29
Deprivation.....	30
Crime .....	33
Provision and quality of children's social care .....	36
Adoption.....	36
Fostering .....	37
Capacity and occupancy .....	39
Children's Homes.....	39
Fostering .....	40
The quality of children's placements.....	41
Children's homes .....	41
Commissioning and ownership .....	43
Commissioning .....	43
Ownership.....	43
Children's homes .....	44
Fostering .....	46
List of charts, tables and maps .....	47
Revisions to previous release .....	48
Notes .....	48
Annex A .....	49
Glossary .....	51

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## Introduction

This is the third, and last, annual collection by Ofsted of information on all children looked after, the first of which took place on 31 March 2013, and which will be absorbed into the DfE SSDA903 return from 2016.<sup>2,3</sup> As with the 2013 and 2014 collections, this builds and expands on information collated and validated by local authorities as part of the process of submitting their SSDA903 returns to the Department for Education (DfE). In particular, additional information was collected by Ofsted to enable matching of 903 data to Ofsted's inspection judgement data as at 31 March 2015. All local authorities returned data sets to Ofsted, as they did in 2013 and 2014.<sup>4</sup>

Data is collected on all children looked after for any length of time as at the 31 March 2015. There were around 70,000 children looked after on this date, roughly 0.6% of all children in England. The data items collected include personal characteristics, such as age and ethnicity, and details of the child's placement, including the type of placement, and location, at the end of the financial year. Data is also collected on the local authority placing the child, as well as the local authority in which the child has been placed or is living, as well as the provider of that placement, whether local authority, private, voluntary or other.<sup>5</sup>

In many ways, the picture as at 31 March 2015 is similar to the previous two years. The number of children looked after has increased slightly, but, in relation to separate types of placements, the changes are small.

The data presented are a snapshot in time of children looked after and their placements, and an historical view of this. It is intended as a broad insight into the types of placements in which children looked after live and where they are living. This information can be used to provide detail to inform further analysis and debate about commissioning. It is not intended to be a commentary on local authority decision-making, or to offer judgements on local authority performance.

The underlying data used for this release are published alongside this release in Excel format.

The data are currently being used to inform the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, which began in

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<sup>2</sup> For more detailed information about the social care system in England, please refer to the Department for Education website, here (<https://www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/looked-after-children>).

<sup>3</sup> A related collection was carried out in 2011, but this concerned only commissioned places (excluding placements made via local authority's own provision) and therefore the data is not comparable and has not been referenced in this release. There was no collection in 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Isles of Scilly made a return confirming that they did not have any children and young people in placements as at 31 March 2015.

<sup>5</sup> ONS Census Mid-2014 population estimate:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>

November 2013. They are also used to inform inspection of independent fostering agencies and voluntary adoption agencies.

The process of collecting these data, and of the quality assurance work undertaken, has led to better quality data collection by both Ofsted and DfE. It has also resulted in the decision to include Ofsted URNs in the DfE 903 data collection for 2015-16, which will occur in spring 2016. Consequently, Ofsted has discontinued the data collection and this is the final publication.<sup>6</sup>

Although the data presented here are frequently in line with those presented by the DfE in their national statistics, there are some variations in the numbers presented here. The reasons for this are explored further below.

## **Are Ofsted data for 31 March 2015 different to DfE published data?**

The two sets of data are different for 2015, but continue the trend of being more aligned than in the previous years. As at 31 March 2015, the DfE reported that there were 69,540 children and young people being looked after, as opposed to the 69,310 cited here; a difference of approximately 230 children.<sup>7</sup> Some explanations for this difference are given in Annex A.

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<sup>6</sup> Unique Reference Numbers, the number assigned to each social care provider, upon successful registration with Ofsted.

<sup>7</sup> The DfE published statistics can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2014-to-2015>.

## Key Findings

### An overall picture of the children and young people

The number of children looked after in England on 31 March increased in 2015. This small increase is a continuation of previous years' trends. Children looked after were most likely to find themselves in a fostering placement. Most of the children were older, aged ten or more. Minority ethnic children were more likely to be looked after than White children. Boys and young men were twice as likely to be living in a children's home as girls and young women.

- There were 69,310 children and young people looked after by 151 English local authorities as at 31 March 2015. This was an increase of 756 children, or 1%, on the previous year (68,554).<sup>8</sup> (Table 1)
- Three quarters of children were fostered (51,985), 9% (6,031) were in children's homes, and 5% (3,314) were placed for adoption; the same percentages as in previous years.

**Table 1: Number of children in placement by type 2014 and 2015**

Placement Type	Number of children in placement at 31/03/2015	Number of children in placement at 31/03/2014
Foster placement	51,985	51,301
Children's Home	6,031	6,093
Independent living and residential accommodation	3,530	3,308
Placed with parents	3,527	3,207
Placed for Adoption	3,314	3,561
Secure unit, Young offender institute or prison	429	453
Other placement <sup>9</sup>	343	418
Residential schools not registered as children's homes	151	213
Total Children Looked After	69,310	68,554

- Of the 69,310 children looked after, we did not receive placement location information for 3,447 children, compared to 4,074 in 2014.
- The very large majority of those for whom we received no information were children placed for adoption; their placement locations were kept confidential by local authorities.

<sup>8</sup> This figure was in line with the DfE's published figure of 69,540 children, an increase of 740 children looked after. With regards to the main characteristics of the children and young people, Ofsted data were in line with the DfE data for gender, ethnicity and age.

<sup>9</sup> Other placements include: adult residential care homes; medical establishments; family centres or mother and baby units; residential employment. Unlike previous years where children and young people missing from their placement would have been recorded here, this year they are recorded under the placement type they were in before they went missing. This change is in line with the DfE's new recording method for children looked after who are missing.

- Gender, age and ethnicity generally do not have a noteworthy impact on children's placements and experiences, with some notable exceptions, which are described where relevant.
- The largest percentage of children looked after, at just over a third, were the group aged between 10 and 15 years old. However, as the three groups that make up the under 10 year olds accounted for over a third, the average age of children looked after was 10 years old. (Table 2)

**Table 2: Number and percentage of children looked after by their age group<sup>10</sup>**

Age Group	Number of Children	Percentage
Under 1	3,714	5%
1-4	10,081	15%
5-9	14,287	21%
10-15	26,069	38%
16 and over	15,159	22%
Total	69,310	100%

- The ethnicity of all children looked after, as at 31 March 2015, is outlined in the following table. (Table 3)

**Table 3: Number and percentage of children looked after by their ethnicity**

Ethnicity	Number of children	Proportion of children looked after as at 31/03/2015	Proportion of all children in England according to 2011 Census
White	53,445	77%	79%
Mixed	6,173	9%	5%
Black or Black British	4,893	7%	5%
Asian or Asian British	2,649	4%	10%
Chinese and other ethnic groups	1,690	2%	1%
Unknown	460	1%	-
Total	69,310	100%	100%

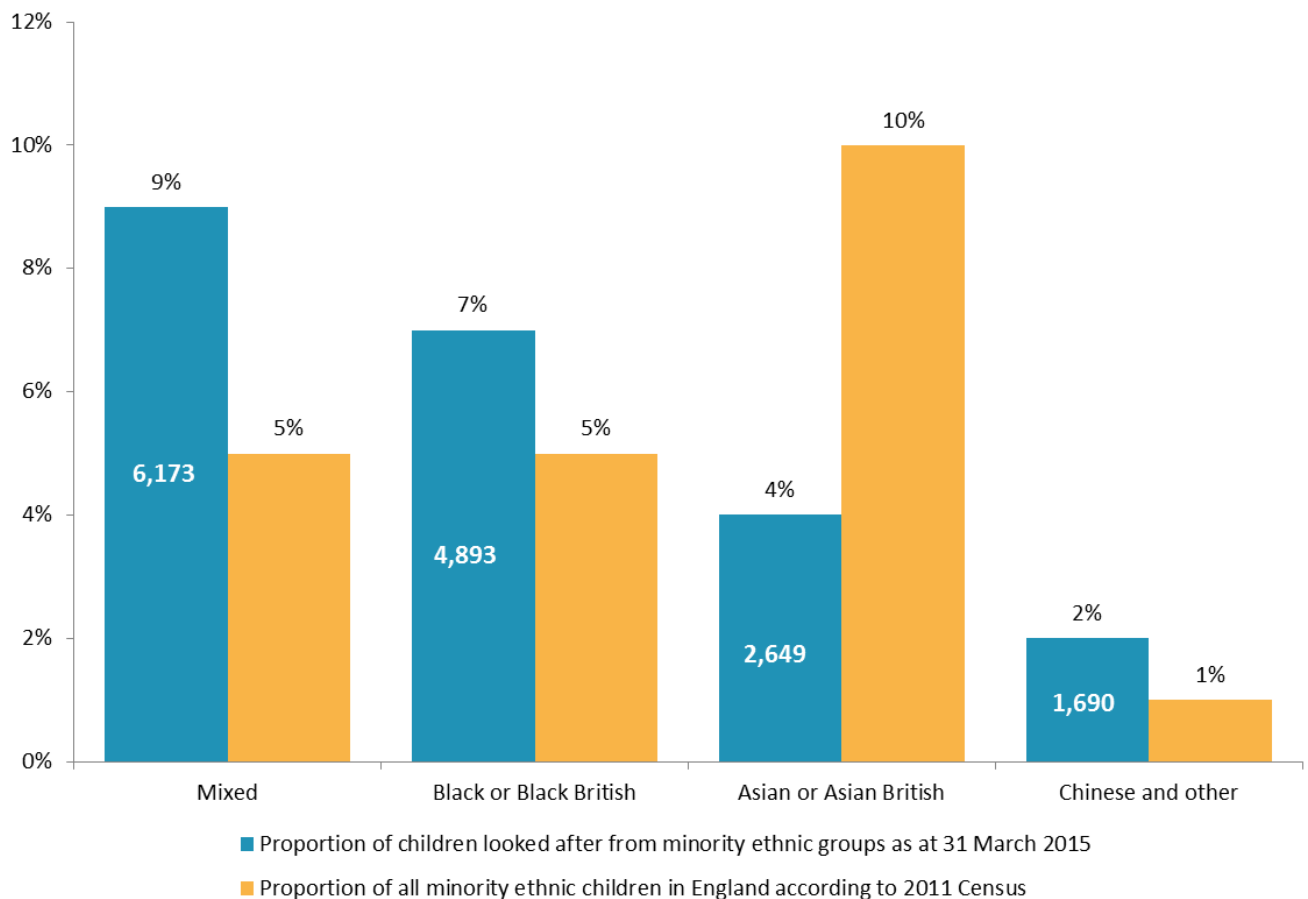
- In line with last year, overall, a higher percentage of children looked after were from Minority ethnic backgrounds when compared to all children in England; this was true for all ethnic groups apart from Asian & Asian British.<sup>11</sup> (Chart 1)

<sup>10</sup> Percentages throughout the document are rounded and may not add to 100.

<sup>11</sup> ONS Census 2011 data: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity>



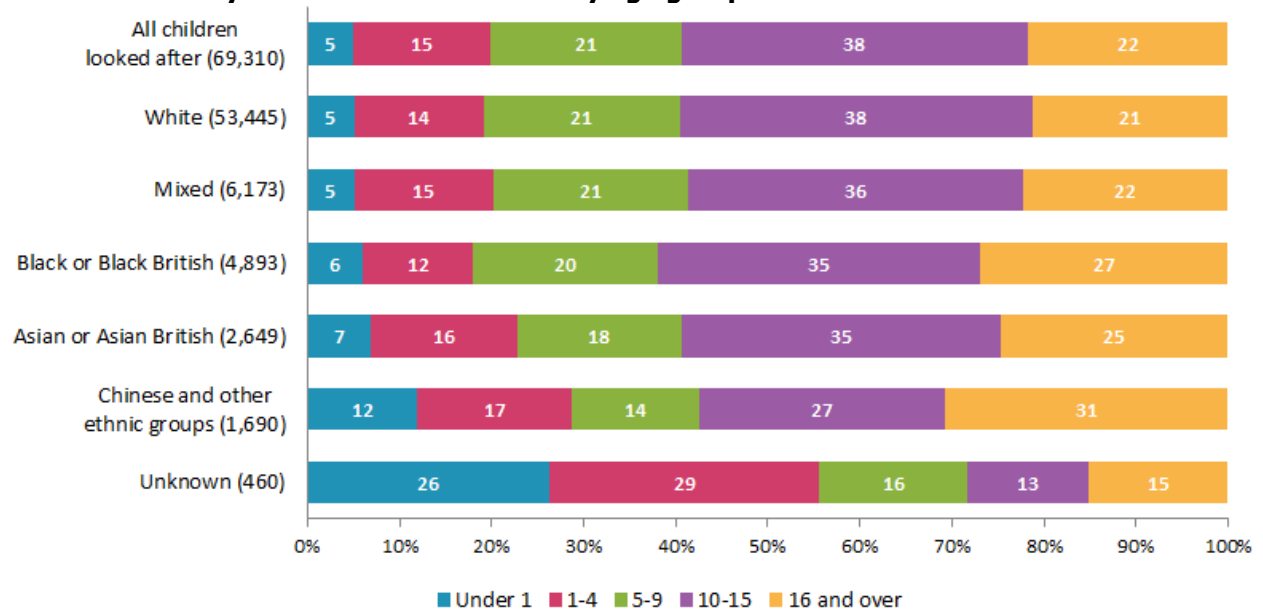
**Chart 1: Children looked after Minority ethnic population in England on 31 March 2015 and 2011 Census of all children aged 0-17 from ethnic minorities<sup>12</sup>**



- Children looked after who were from Black, Asian, or Chinese and other ethnic groups had a higher average age, of between 13 and 14 years old; compared to those from White or Mixed backgrounds, whose average ages were 11 and 10 respectively.

<sup>12</sup> Ethnicity information was not provided for 460 children looked after, as at 31 March 2015.

**Chart 2: Ethnicity of children looked after by age group**

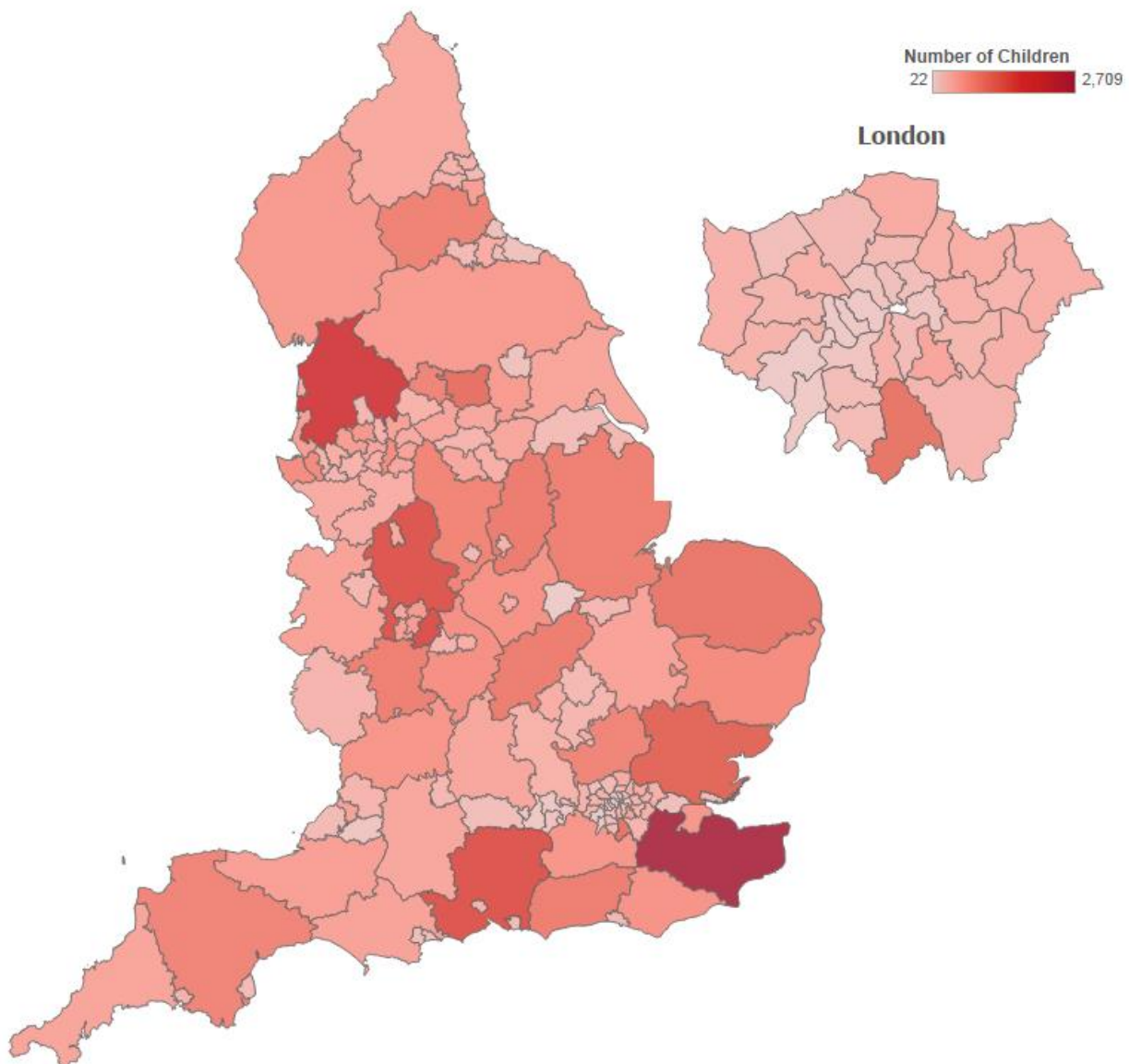


- As with previous years, two thirds of children placed in children's homes were male (3,810).

## Where were the children living?

One fifth of children were living in the North West of England. As a child looked after you were less likely to be placed outside England than in previous years. A child from London was more likely to be living in a children's home outside their own region than inside it.

**Map 1: Number of children placed in each local authority, as at 31 March 2015**



- Local authorities provided placement postcodes about where 65,863 children looked after were living; this was a 2% increase from the previous total of 64,309 in 2014.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The change is largely accounted for by the fall in the numbers placed for adoption, for which no postcodes were provided.

- There were 448 children looked after who were recorded as living outside England. Most were in Wales (325) and Scotland (99). There were also 24 children living in other areas of the United Kingdom (Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Northern Ireland) and abroad (France, Germany, Canada, USA, Ireland, Philippines and Spain).
- Of the 65,863 children with known placement locations, nearly one in five (11,806) were living in the North West of England. (Table 4)
- London had the largest difference between the number of children placed by their local authorities in any region and the number placed by any region within their local authorities. They had a net export of 1,632 children. In contrast the South East had a net import of 851 children.

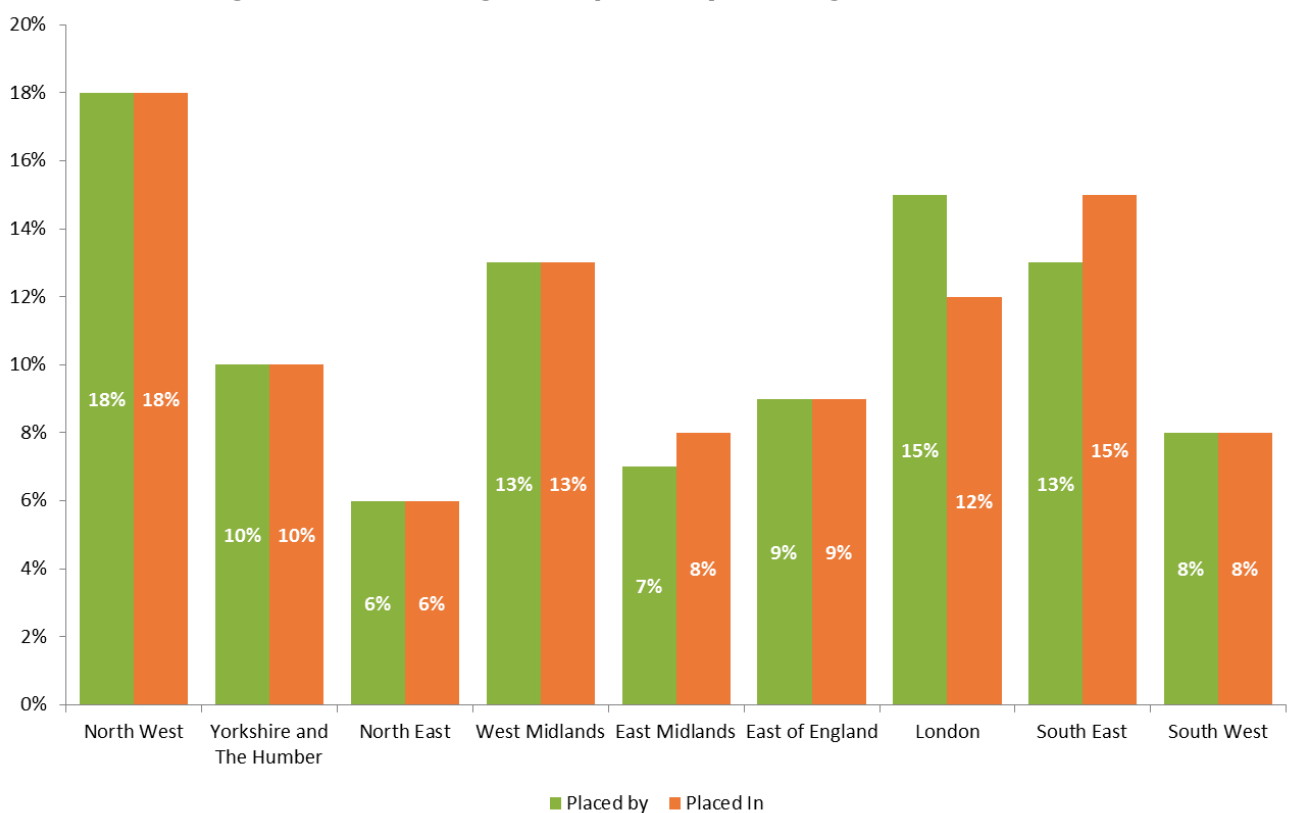
**Table 4: Number of children living in and placed by each region, as at 31 March 2015<sup>14</sup>**

Region	Number of children placed by	Number of children placed in
North West	11,666	11,806
Yorkshire and The Humber	6,795	6,673
North East	4,035	4,052
West Midlands	8,775	8,814
East Midlands	4,789	5,231
East of England	5,768	5,766
London	9,607	7,975
South East	8,770	9,621
South West	5,210	5,477
Total	65,415	65,415

<sup>14</sup> These exclude the 3,895 children who were placed outside of England or where their placement location was unknown.

- When looking at numbers of children, two groups are considered:
  - i) those who are the responsibility of the local authority and were placed by a local authority, who may be living within the placing local authority or outside it;
  - ii) children who are placed in the local authority.
 Although there will be a lot of overlap between the two groups, not all children placed *by* a local authority will be living *in* the local authority, and vice versa. When considered as regions, there are similar numbers of children living in and placed by local authorities in most regions. (Chart 3)

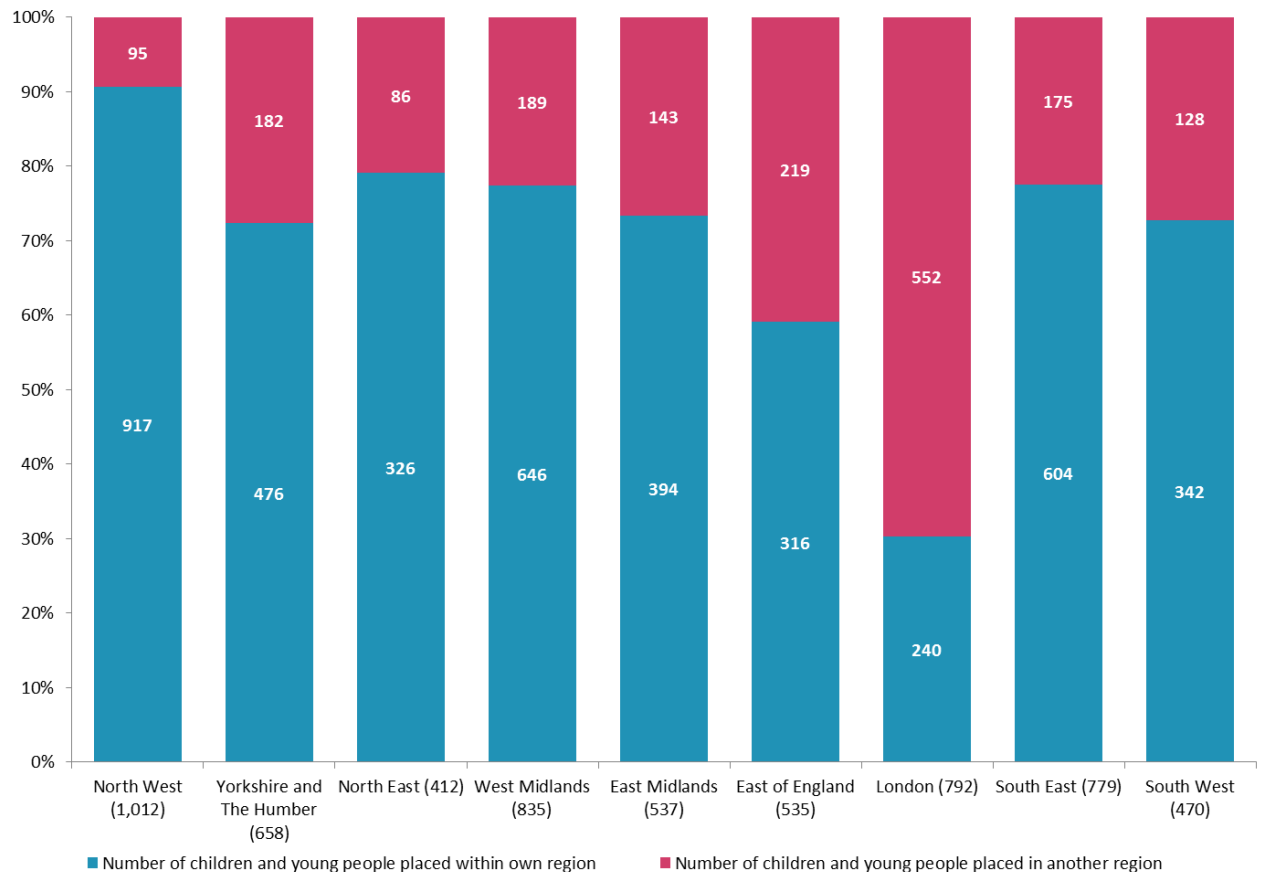
**Chart 3: Percentage of children living in and placed by each region, as at 31 March 2015**



- The North West retained the highest percentage of children living in children's homes within their region, placing 917 of their 1,012 (91%) children.<sup>15</sup> This was primarily because over one quarter of children's homes were located in that region. The North East and the South East placed the second and third largest number of children in children's homes in their own region with 79% and 78% respectively. (Chart 4)
- The London region retained the lowest percentage of children living in children's homes within region at 30% (240 of 792 children they placed in children's homes were placed in homes in London).

<sup>15</sup> The North West placed almost one sixth of the national figure of 6,031 children placed into children's homes.

**Chart 4: Number of children living in and placed by each region in children's homes, as at 31 March 2015<sup>16</sup>**



<sup>16</sup> There was one placement where placement location was not clear and has been excluded; children placed by each region outside of England have been included.

## Distance from local authority boundary<sup>17</sup>

As a child looked after there was a 61% chance of living within their own local authority boundary, although this figure was lower than the previous year. Children placed in foster care, independent living or residential accommodation, were more likely to be living within their local authority boundary than children in other placement types. If living in a children's home they were less likely than in previous years to be within their own local authority. Overall in 2015 children were no more likely to be living 20 or more miles from their local authority than they were the previous year.

It is important to note that this report does not equate distance with either a failure to meet appropriate need or poor outcomes for children. Whilst distance can be a factor affecting placement suitability, there are also other factors that can make a placement further from home more suitable than a placement closer to the child's local authority; such as the child's safety, child's specific needs e.g. learning difficulties, limited availability of nearby places due to how the system has evolved, etc. Research has shown that the most successful out of area placements are those in which there is good cooperation between the placing and placement authority.<sup>18</sup>

If you were from London you were twice as likely to be living outside your authority as children from any other region. Children from the South West were living within their authority more often than children from any other region. As an older child (aged 10 or over) you stood more chance of living outside your authority, than any other age group. White children were more liable to be placed within their authority than Minority ethnic children.

- Three fifths (61% or 40,247) of children looked after, where placement location was known, were living within the local authority boundary, a very small decrease from the previous year (62%).<sup>19</sup> (Chart 5)
- There were 10% (6,616) of children who were living more than 20 miles from their local authority boundary; this was also the same percentage as in 2014 and 2013.

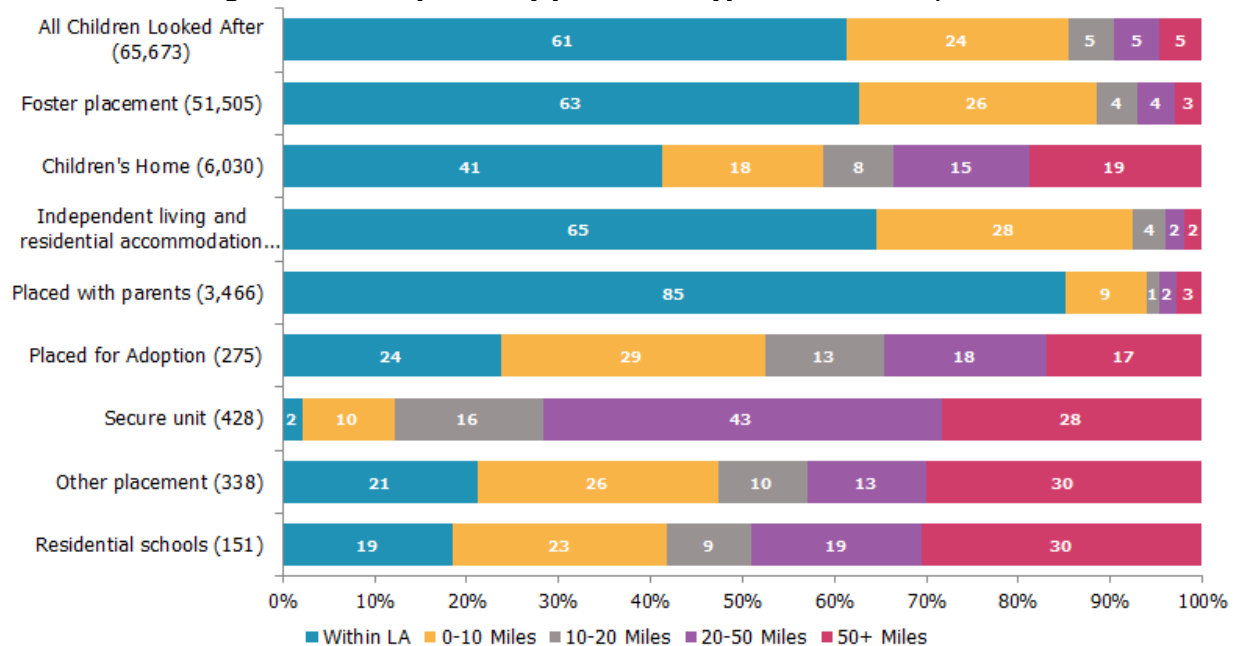
<sup>17</sup> For further information on children living away from home, or outside of the local authority boundary, see: Ofsted (2013) From a Distance, available on gov.uk here (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/looked-after-children-living-away-from-their-home-area-from-a-distance>). See also: Farmer, E. and Moyers, S. (2008) *Fostering effective family and friends placements*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Their research shows that children who live with relatives or friends have more contact with extended family members, often on a daily basis. The fact that many of these children are placed close to where they are from facilitates this type of contact; though that is not to say that this contact is always desirable.

<sup>18</sup> This could be down to local authorities closing their children's homes and an increase in the number of private and voluntary providers.

<sup>19</sup> From the total of 69,310 children looked after, we excluded 3,637 who were either placed for adoption, placed outside England or whose placement postcode was not a valid postcode.

- From 2013 to 2015 the percentage of children who were living more than 50 miles from their local authority boundary remained the same at 5%, or 3,188 children as at 31 March 2015.
- Eighty-eight per cent (45,547) of children in foster placements were placed within 10 miles of their local authority boundary.
- The small numbers of secure accommodation meant that children and young people are automatically more likely than children in other forms of provision to be living further from home. The overall reduction in the size of the secure estate in England – with the closure of two secure children’s homes and one secure training centre – necessarily impacted on average distances for these children. Of the children and young people placed in secure accommodation, 72% (307) were living 20 miles or more away from their own local authority boundaries. This was a twelve percentage point increase from the previous year.
- Residential schools had the second lowest percentage of children placed within ten miles of their own local authority, at 42%. This is because, in order to meet the individual requirements of the children, they are more likely to travel greater than average distances because they require a specific type of care and educational environment unavailable locally.
- The percentage of children living in children’s homes within the local authority boundary continued to drop in 2015 to 41% (2,485); this fell from 43% in 2014 and 46% in 2013.
- Nineteen per cent (1,129) of children placed in children’s homes were placed 50 miles or more away from the local authority boundary. The majority (723) were placed within 50 – 100 miles; there were also 163 children who were placed more than 150 miles away from the local authority boundary, the furthest being 278 miles away, in a children’s home in Scotland. Looking only at children placed in homes in England, 132 were placed more than 150 miles away, the furthest being 271 miles away.
- Of those 1,129 children, 15% (165) were placed in homes judged as adequate at the time of placement and 1% (nine children) placed in homes judged inadequate at time of placement.

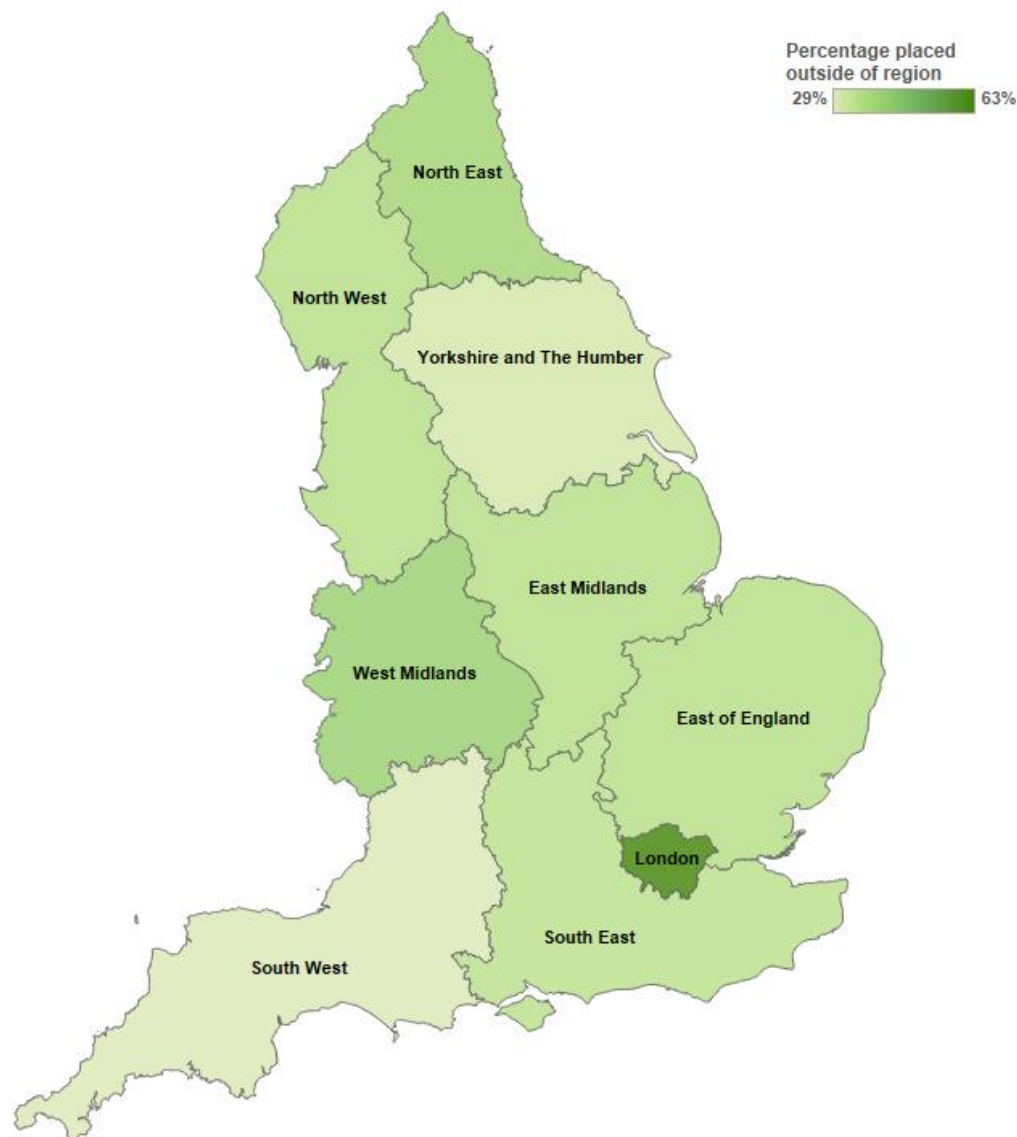


**Chart 5: Percentage of children placed by placement type and distance, as at 31 March 2015**


Some children looked after have been excluded as we have not been provided with their placement postcode.

- London, because it has a large number of small authorities, has remained the region with the highest percentage of children looked after living outside of their local authority boundary, at 63% (6,035 children). This meant children placed by London local authorities were nearly twice as likely to be placed outside the local authority boundary than most other regions. This was in line with the 2014 figure, at 63%. (Map 2)
- Along with London, the West Midlands and the North East remained amongst the top three regions with the largest percentage of children living outside of their local authority boundary. Both the West Midlands and North East had, though, seen very slight decreases from 41% in 2014 to 40% in 2015 and from 40% in 2014 to 38% in 2015 respectively.

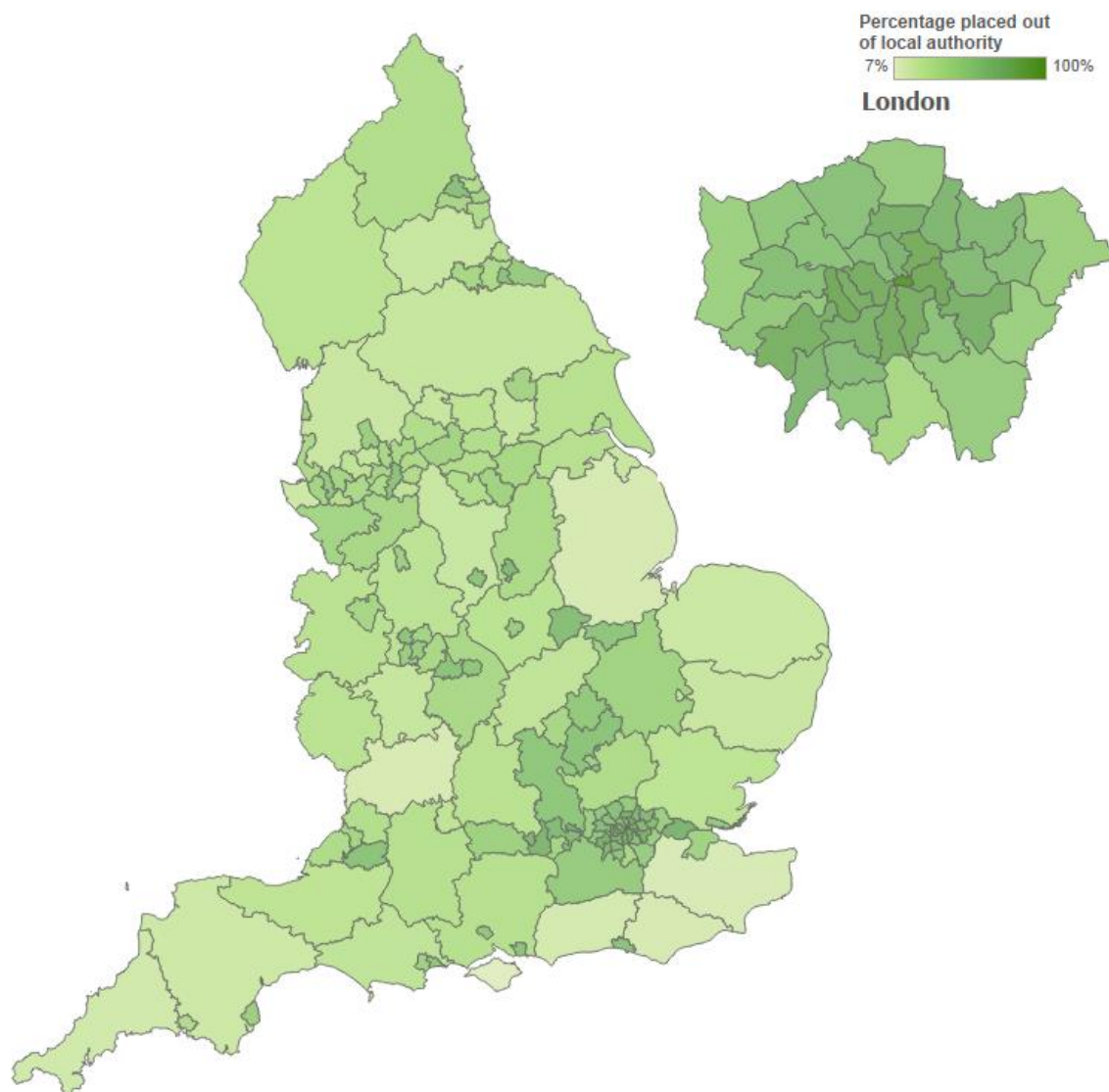
**Map 2: Percentage of children outside local authority boundary by region, as at 31 March 2015**



- The South West had the highest percentage of children that were placed within their local authority boundary, at 71%. Bath and North East Somerset and Bournemouth were the only local authorities within the South West where less than half their children were placed within their local authority boundary, at 41% and 45% respectively.

- Isle of Wight placed the lowest percentage of children outside their own local authority boundary, at 7%. Kent and Gloucestershire placed the next lowest at 12%.

**Map 3: Percentage of children outside local authority boundary, as at 31 March 2015<sup>20, 21</sup>**



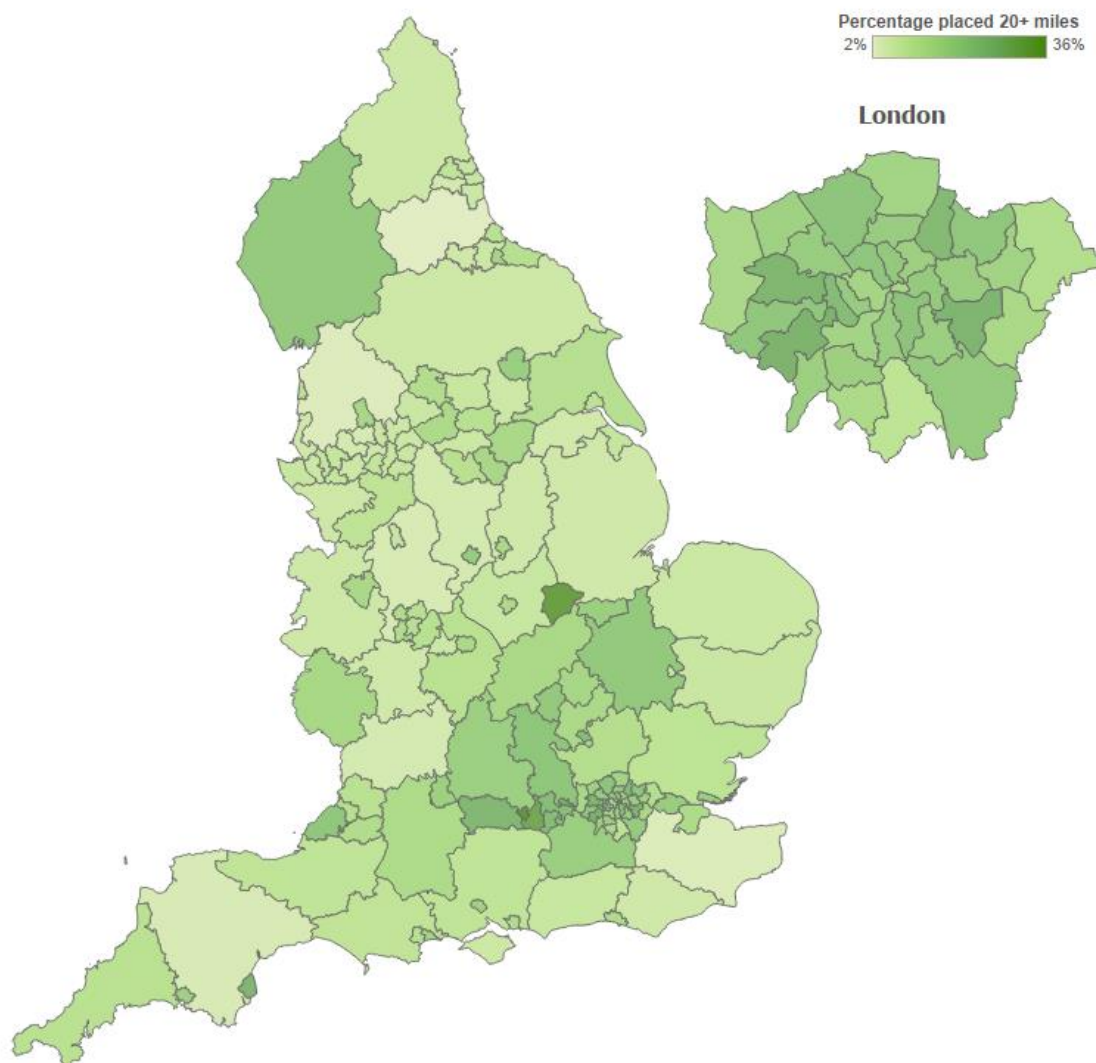
- London (four) and the South East (four) had eight of the top 10 local authorities with the highest percentage of children (24% or more) who were living 20 miles or more from their local authority boundary. House prices in London and the South East are substantially above the England average house price (69% more in London and 19% more in the South East) and this may be a contributing factor in the cost of certain placements. (Map 4)

<sup>20</sup> No local authorities placed all of their children looked after within the local authority boundary.

<sup>21</sup> Only one very small local authority placed all of their children looked after outside their authority boundary.

- Three of the ten local authorities with the lowest proportion of children living 20 miles or more from their local authority boundary were within the North West region.

**Map 4: Percentage of children 20 miles or more from local authority boundary, as at 31 March 2015<sup>22</sup>**

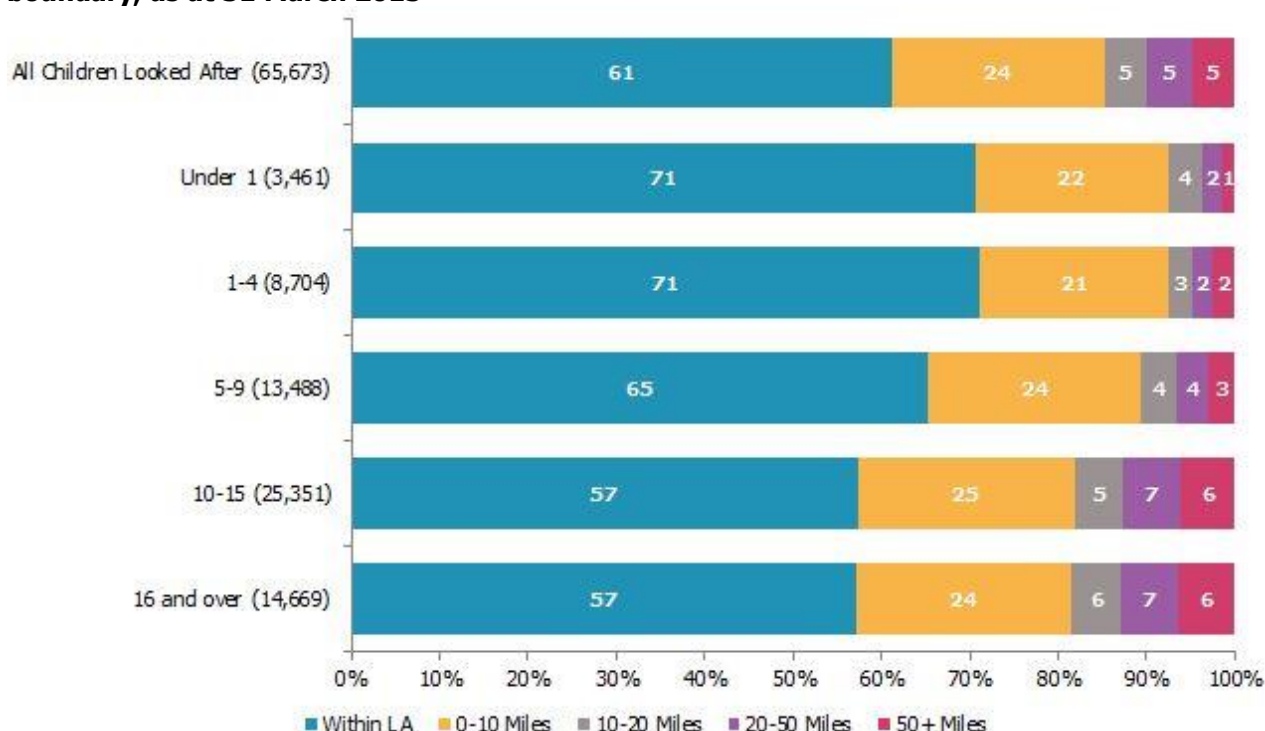


- As at 31 March 2015, there was a continuation of the trend from the previous year, where older children were more likely to live further away from their local authority boundary. (Chart 6)

<sup>22</sup> All local authorities had at least one child living more than 20 miles outside the boundary; the highest percentage of children living more than 20 miles outside the local authority boundary was 36%.

- Just under three quarters of children looked after who were aged under one were placed within their local authority; there was a similar picture for children aged between one and four years old.
- While for those aged 10-15, just over half were within their local authority, 6% (1,589) were living more than 50 miles away from their local authority boundary, as were 6% (960) of those aged 16 and over.

**Chart 6: Age of children looked after and the distance they lived from their local authority boundary, as at 31 March 2015**

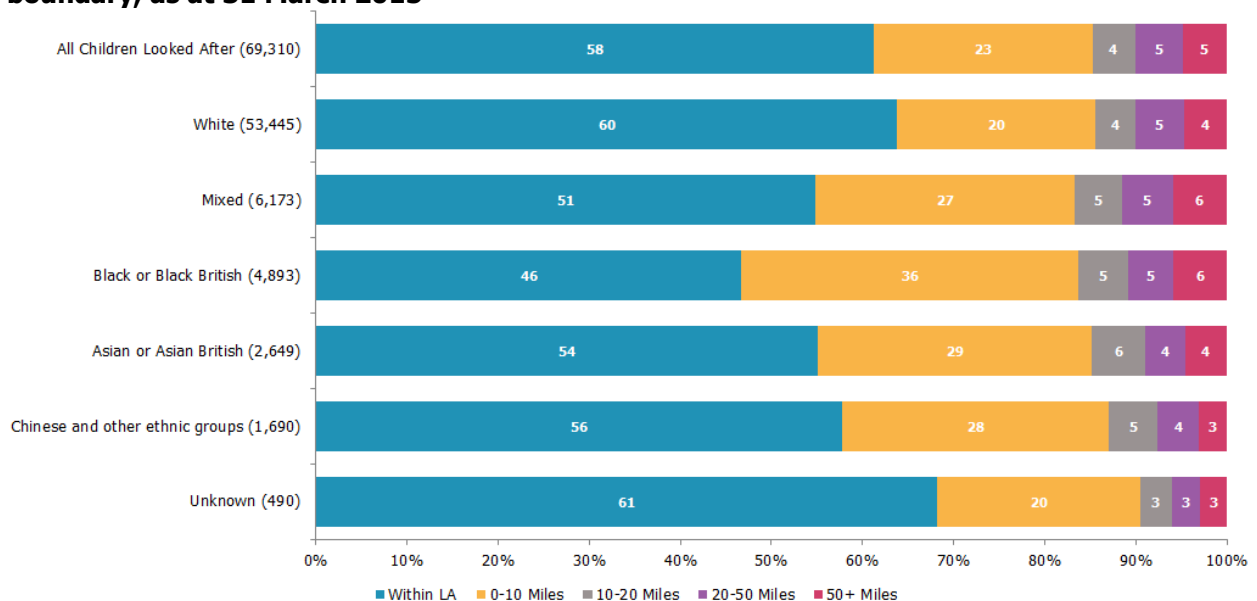


- White children were more like to be placed within their authority than Minority ethnic children. One reason for this could be the ethnic breakdown of foster carers, with 15% of foster carers at 31 March 2015 being Minority ethnic, but 22% of fostered children being Minority ethnic.<sup>23</sup> This could mean local authorities having to search further afield to place Minority ethnic children with foster carers that are able to meet their needs. For fostered children, 53% of Minority ethnic children were placed within their local authority compared to 64% of White children.

<sup>23</sup> The data relating to foster carer ethnicity come from the Official Statistics release 'Fostering in England 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015': <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fostering-in-england-1-april-2014-to-31-march-2015>

- While there has been a fall in the percentage of White children and young people placed within their authority from 64% to 60%, this was still higher than those from any Minority ethnic background. For instance, only 46% of those from a Black background were placed within their authority. (Chart 7)
- The percentage differences between ethnic groups were very small when looking at those placed more than 10 miles from their authority boundary.

**Chart 7: Ethnicity of children looked after and the distance they lived from the local authority boundary, as at 31 March 2015**





## What type of placements were children living in?

As in previous years most children were living with foster carers. They were less likely to be living in a children's home than in previous years. The number of children placed with their own parents increased and the number placed for adoption fell, although neither changed as a percentage of all children looked after. Children living in the North West were more than three times as likely to be placed with parents as children in the rest of England.

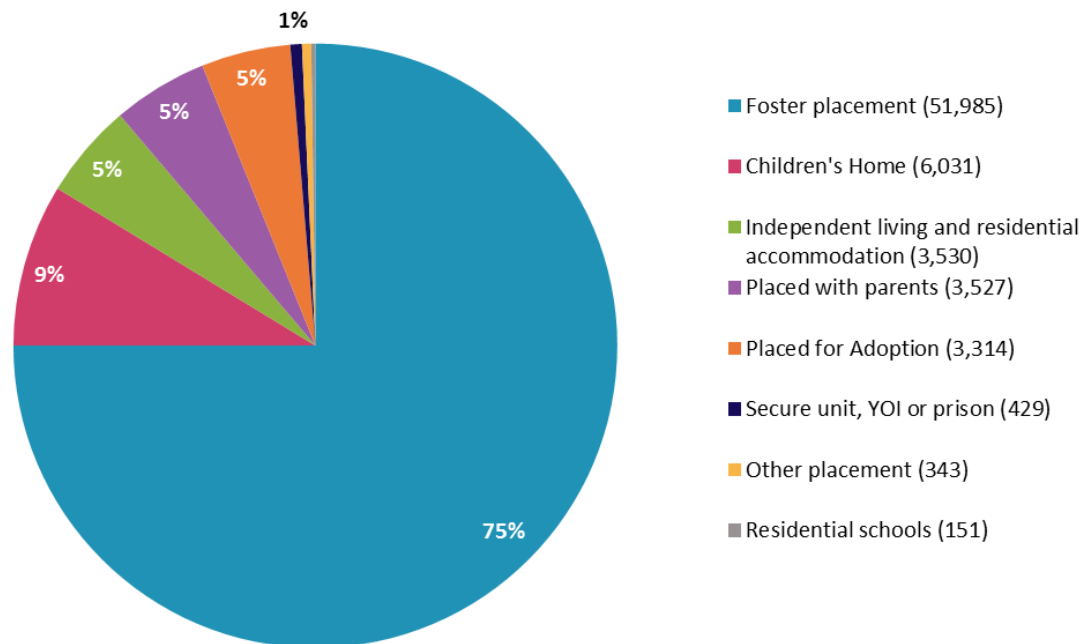
- The number of children and young people looked after as at 31 March 2015 continued to rise, by 756 placements, to 69,310. This was mainly due to an increase in the number of those fostered, those placed with parents and those in independent living and residential accommodation.<sup>24</sup> (Chart 8)
- There was a slight increase in the number of children in foster care of 684 to 51,985 in 2015.
- As seen in previous years, the number of children in children's homes continued to fall slightly. It fell by 62 (1%) to 6,031.
- Five per cent of children looked after were placed for adoption, the same as the previous two years. Whilst the percentage has remained the same, the number of children placed for adoption decreased by 7% to 3,314 in 2015.<sup>25</sup>
- Eleven per cent (348) of those placed for adoption were placed with their current foster carer. This represented a slight drop in the number (from 367) when compared to last year, but a slight increase in the percentage, from 10%.
- The number of children looked after placed with their own parents or other person with parental responsibility had risen by 320 placements (10%), when compared to the same day in 2014. Despite this rise the percentage of children placed with parents remained the same as the previous year, at 5% of all children looked after.
- Nearly a quarter (843) of those children placed with their own parents have been in placement for more than two years and just under a half (1,599) had been in placement for over one year.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Residential accommodation includes hostels, supported living and foyers. These are not inspected by Ofsted. For brevity, and to avoid confusion with other types of residential accommodation such as children's homes, this placement type is referred to as simply independent living throughout this report.

<sup>25</sup> This is a smaller percentage decrease than that recorded by the DfE (16%). The DfE recalculated their 2014 data in 2015 and this led to an increase in the number of adoptions in their revised 2014 data. This change in DfE 2014 adoption numbers is the main reason for the difference in the fall in adoption numbers between Ofsted and DfE figures.

**Chart 8: Percentage of children living in each placement type, as at 31 March 2015**



- As was the case in 2014, Sefton had the highest percentage of children placed with parents, at 18%. Bolton and Cheshire West and Chester were the next highest at 16%.
- The North West had more than twice as many children placed with parents as any other region. It also had 19 of the 25 local authorities nationally that had 10% or more of their children with parents.
- Twenty-nine local authorities had no placements in a secure unit, young offender institute or prison.<sup>27</sup>
- Richmond had the lowest percentage of children placed in foster placements at 59%. Three other authorities had less than 65% of children in foster placements: Kensington and Chelsea (63%), Halton (64%) and Wakefield (64%).

<sup>26</sup> Although this appears higher than the DfE's figure of 15% placed with parents for more than two years, and a quarter for more than one year, the DfE data covers only children whose placements ceased during 2014-15, while Ofsted's data covers all children in placement on 31 March 2015.

<sup>27</sup> The twenty-nine local authorities are as follows: Bath and North East Somerset, Bournemouth, Bracknell Forest, Bromley, Buckinghamshire, Calderdale, Cheshire West and Chester, City of London, East Riding of Yorkshire, Gateshead, Havering, Herefordshire, Isle of Wight, Kingston upon Hull, Medway, North East Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire, Peterborough, Poole, Portsmouth, Redcar and Cleveland, Rutland, Shropshire, St Helens, Torbay, Wiltshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham and York.



- Oxfordshire placed the highest percentage (16%) of children in children's homes. Aside from very small authorities, Croydon and Southampton had the lowest percentage, both at 2%.<sup>28</sup>
- Kingston Upon Thames placed the highest percentage of their children aged 16 and over in independent living placements (58% of 33), compared to other local authorities.

## Ethnicity in Placement

If you were White or of a Mixed ethnic background the chance of being placed for adoption was greater when compared to children from any other ethnic background. As a child or young person from a Minority ethnic group you were far more likely to be placed in secure accommodation of some type than a White child or young person. As a young person from a Minority ethnic group you were also twice as liable to be placed in independent living or residential accommodation as a White young person.

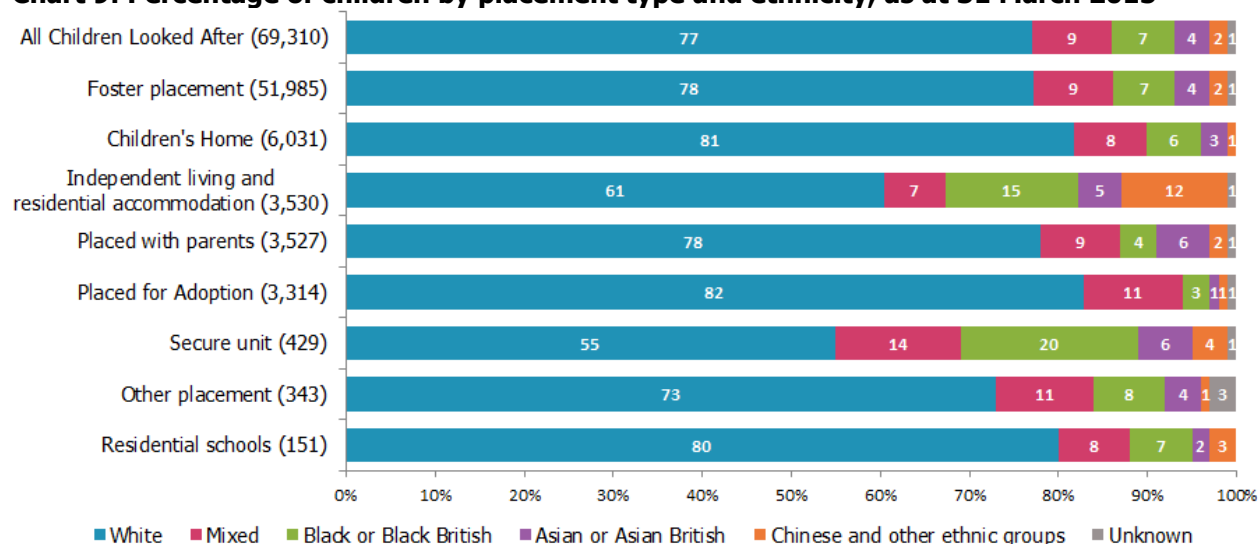
- Children who were placed for adoption were more likely to be White at 82%. Children from a Mixed background made up 11% of all children placed for adoption; this was slightly above the percentage of looked after children from a mixed background (9%).
- White children (81%) were more likely to be living in children's homes; again, this was above the percentage for all children looked after (77%).
- Just over half of those children looked after who were placed in a secure unit, young offender institute or prison were from a White background, at 55%. Twenty per cent placed in a secure unit, young offender institute or prison were from a Black or Black British background; this was much higher than that of the national figure for all children looked after placed, at 7%. Those from a Mixed background also made up 14% of those placed, again higher than the national figure at 9%. These figures showing high Minority ethnic populations were also higher than the figures for the Minority ethnic percentage of the total prison population of 26%.<sup>29</sup>
- Those young people from Minority ethnic groups are more than twice as likely to be placed in independent living than those from a White background, at 9% and 4% respectively. Of all the young people placed in independent living, 39% were

<sup>28</sup> For these local authorities you can see corresponding differences to the national figure for fostering; Oxfordshire placed 68% of their children in fostering which was lower than the national figure and Croydon 86% and Southampton 81% were both higher than the national figure. These differences may suggest varying strategies on how best to place children looked after.

<sup>29</sup> The Prison Reform Trust (<http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/projectsresearch/race>) and the Ministry of Justice statistics for 2014 ([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/339036/prison-population-2014.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/339036/prison-population-2014.xls)), give figures of 26% for the national Minority ethnic prison population.

from Minority ethnic groups, this had decreased by five percentage points from last year.

**Chart 9: Percentage of children by placement type and ethnicity, as at 31 March 2015**



## Children living in placements whose providers are not regulated by Ofsted

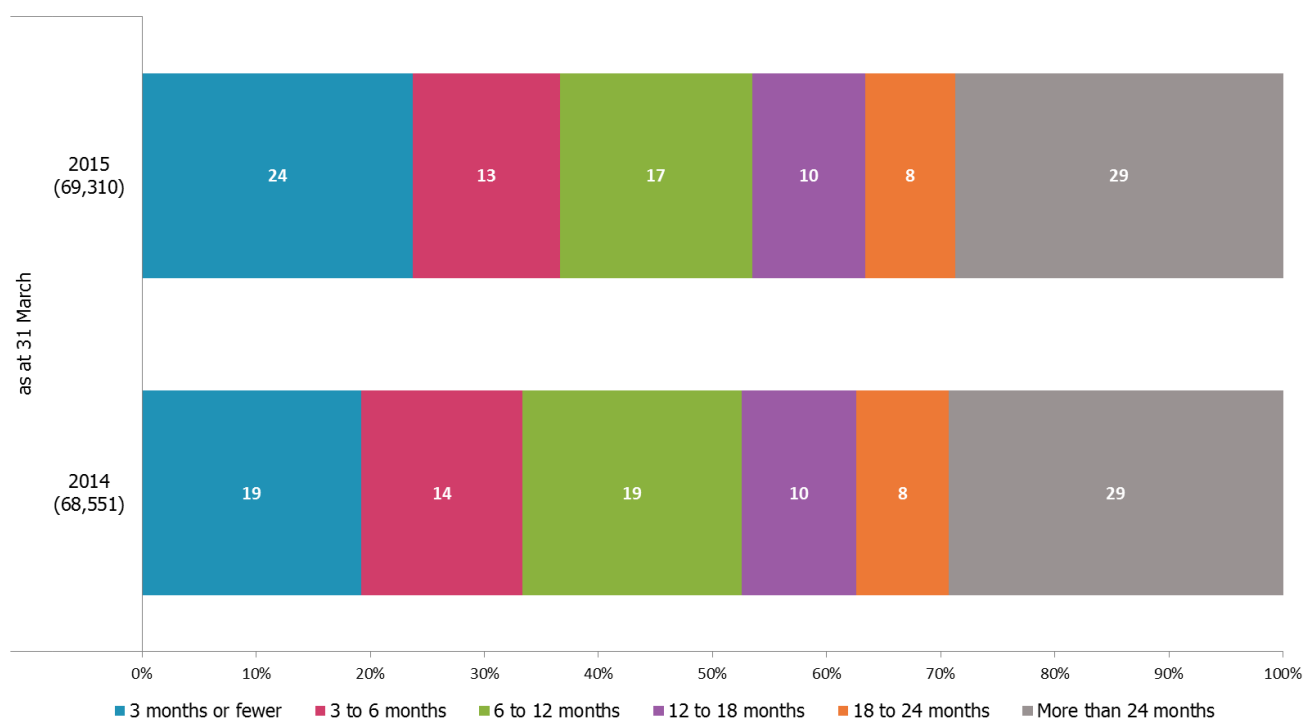
- As at 31 March 2015, there were 7,666 (11%) children looked after who were living in placements that are not regulated by Ofsted. This was an increase when compared to the same day last year, where 7,157 children (10%) were in placements not inspected by Ofsted. These included those: placed with their own parents or persons with parental responsibility; in refuges; in NHS or health trust locations; in independent living; in residential accommodation, such as hostels; in adult residential care homes; in residential employment; and in Young Offenders Institutions. They also include where the placement was a provision type Ofsted inspects but the provision was based outside England.

## How long had children been in their placements?

You were likely to have been in your current placement for a shorter period of time than in 2014, particularly if you were in independent living or residential accommodation. Children in foster placements or residential schools were more likely to have been there for two or more years than children in any other type of placement.

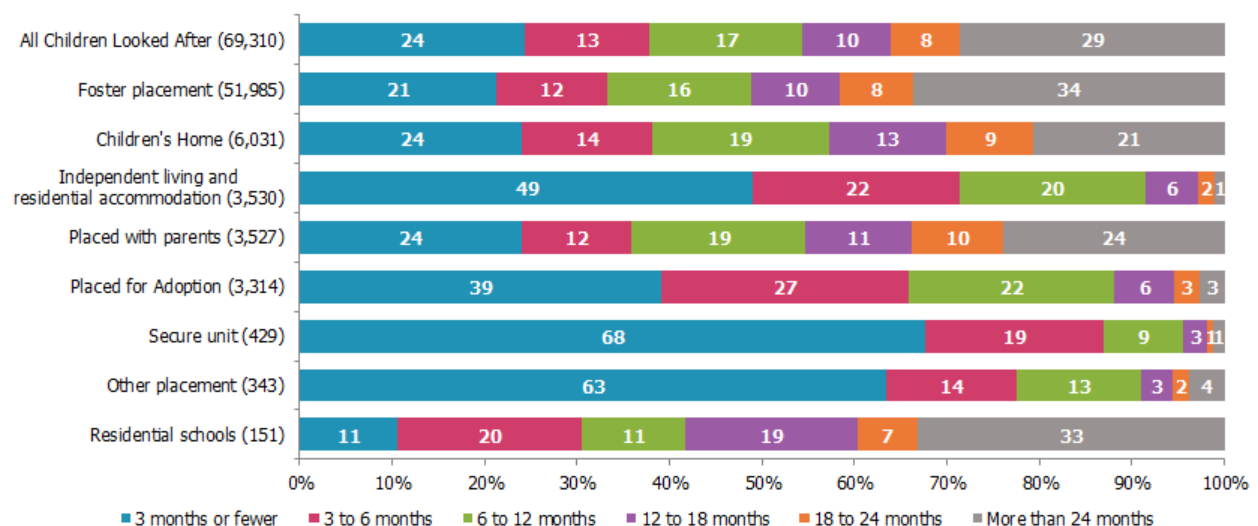
- As at 31 March 2015, there had been an increase in the percentage (24%) and number (16,855) of children looked after who had been in their placement three months or less, when compared to the same day last year. This was a change from the previous, decreasing trend.
- The following chart compares the length of time children had been living in the same place as at 31 March in 2014 and 2015.

**Chart 10: Percentage of children looked after by length of time in placement, as at 31 March, for the years ending 2014 and 2015**



- Those fostered and in residential special schools had been in placement for the longest. Around one third of these children had been living in their placement for more than two years. This suggests a greater level of stability for children in these types of placements. (Chart 11)
- Nearly half of those young people (49%) placed in independent living had been living in their placement for less than three months. This increased by ten percentage points since the previous year, and would suggest that the level of stability for young people had dropped in these types of placements.

**Chart 11: Length of time children lived in their most recent placement, as at 31 March 2015**



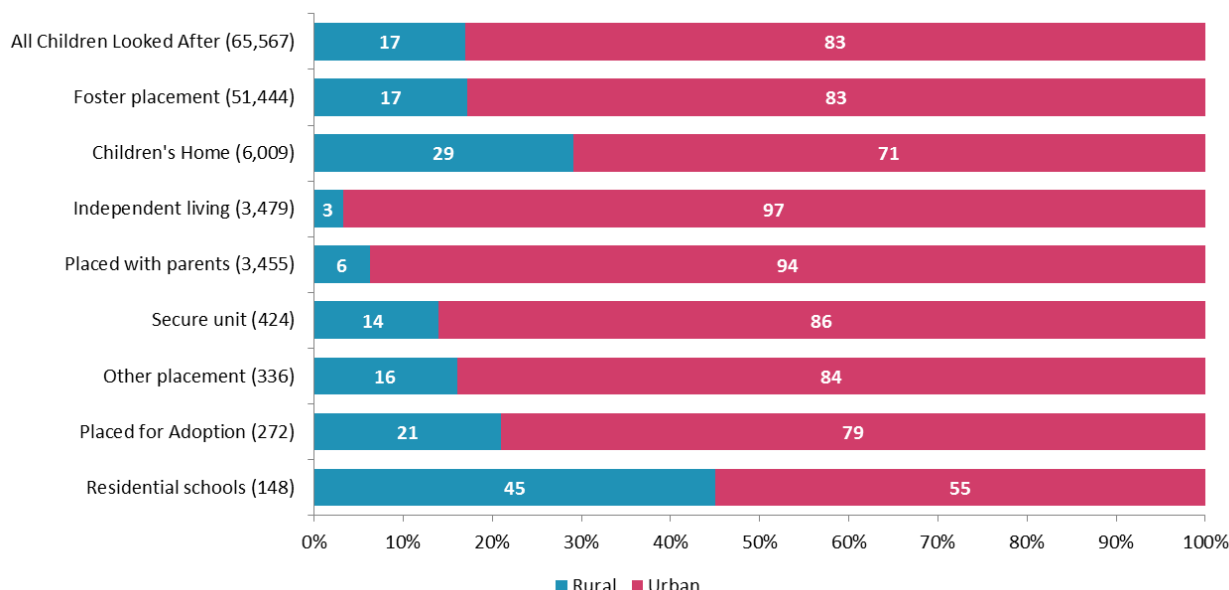
## Characteristics of where the children were living<sup>30</sup>

### Rural/Urban areas

As a child looked after there was a far greater chance of living in an urban area than a rural one, at least in part because more looked after places are in urban than rural areas. Children in independent living had a higher probability in 2015 than previous years that they would be living in a seaside town. White children were twice as likely to be placed in a rural area as children from Minority ethnic groups.

- The number of children looked after, for whom a placement location was known, who were living in urban areas had increased by 1,293 placements (2%) to 54,275. However, the percentage of children in urban areas had remained the same when compared to the previous year, at 83%.<sup>31</sup> (Chart 12)
- The percentage of children placed in rural areas remained the same as the previous year at 17%.

**Chart 12: Percentage of children in rural and urban locations by placement types, as at 31 March 2015**



- There were 5,130 (8%) children with known placement locations who were recorded as living in seaside towns; an increase from the previous year of 421 children (from 4,709).

<sup>30</sup> We are reporting on where children are living; where children can live is dictated in part by where there are approved places. This in turn is influenced by a number of factors such as house prices, population density etc.

<sup>31</sup> These data exclude 3,743 of the total 69,310 looked after children and young people population, as we do not have information about the urban/rural characteristics of where they were living.

- Of the 5,130 children living in seaside towns, 81% were fostered, down from 86% in 2014, and there was a slight increase to 5% for those in independent living. The increase in independent living was possibly due to the change in property use from guesthouse to hostels as tourist numbers and seaside holidays declined.
- In contrast, the percentage of children living in children's homes in seaside towns, has remained the same as in both 2014 and 2013: 10%. This may in part be due to providers being less inclined to open new children's homes in these areas after the negative press coverage surrounding this practice in the last few years.
- As in the previous year, those aged 10-15 years old were most likely to be placed in rural areas, one in five; and those aged sixteen and over, and one-four years old, were least likely to be placed in rural areas, one in six.
- Those children placed from a White background are more than twice as likely to be placed in a rural placement when compared to those from Minority ethnic groups: 20% of White children were placed in a rural location compared to 9% of those from Minority ethnic groups.

### Levels of deprivation

Children were slightly more likely to be living in an area of high deprivation in 2015 than in 2014; however this change was mainly due to the re-banding in 2015 of the deprivation index since the last publication of this data. As in previous years White children stood more of a chance of living in areas of least deprivation than Minority ethnic children. While Minority ethnic children stood less chance than in previous years of living in areas of most deprivation, they were still far more likely than their White counterparts to be living in those areas.

- Where placement location was provided, the deprivation level was identified for 65,126 children.<sup>32</sup>
- Those placed in the least deprived areas (first quartile) had dropped from 12,614 (20%) placed in 2014 to 11,442 (18%) in 2015. There was a corresponding increase in those placed in the most deprived areas (fourth quartile) 28% (17,763) to 30% (19,463).<sup>33,34</sup> (Chart 13)

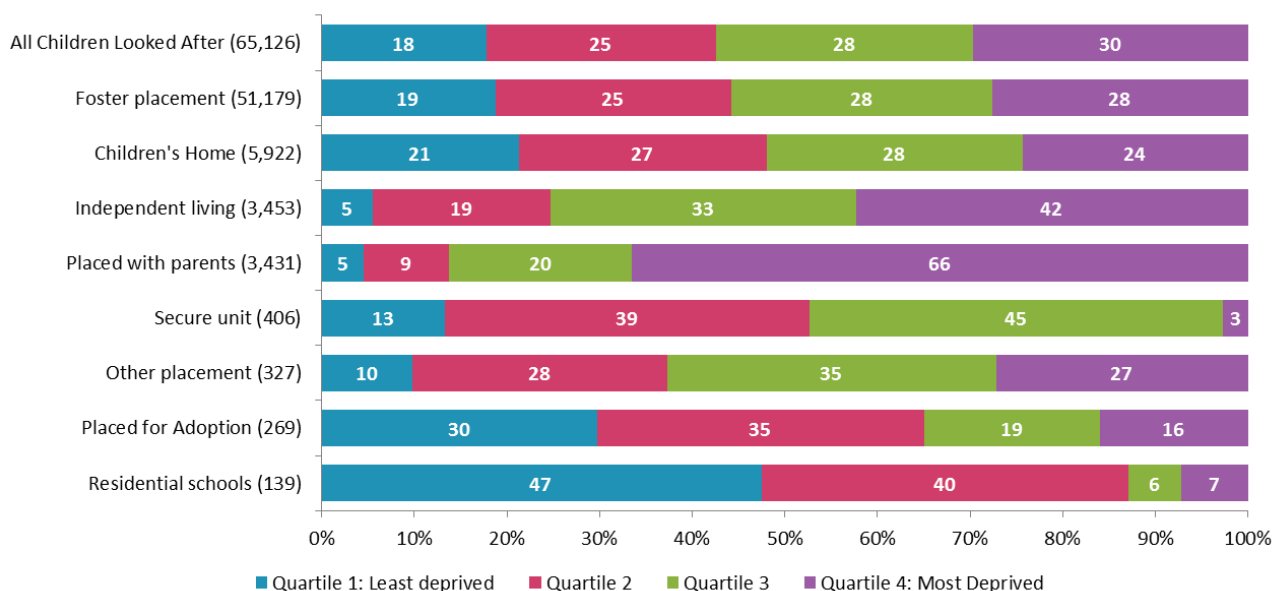
<sup>32</sup> There were 4,184 of the total 69,310 children and young people population, for whom we could not identify the level of local area deprivation.

<sup>33</sup> Areas of deprivation are analysed in quartiles as defined by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Quartile 1 refers to the top 25% of the country in the least deprived areas, while quartile 4 refers to the bottom 25% of the country in the most deprived areas.

<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that the deprivation levels were re-banded in 2015. Prior to this, deprivation quartiles were based on 2010 data. Therefore while an area might now be classed as most deprived, it might not have been classed as that when the actual placement of the child was made. More information on the re-banding of deprivation is available in the Department for Communities and Local Government "Statistical release – main findings" published September 2015 and available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015>

- The difference in the percentage of children looked after living in children's homes and those living in foster placements in the most deprived area has narrowed, from a seven percentage point difference in 2014 to a four percentage point difference in 2015. The shift was primarily accounted for by the increase in children living in children's homes in the most deprived areas, from 19% to 24%; in foster care, the increase was from 26% to 28%. This is heading back towards the 2013 position when they were equal.
- Two thirds (66%) of children placed with parents are in the most deprived areas, an increase of six percentage points from the previous year.

**Chart 13: Percentage of children looked after by placement type and level of deprivation in local areas, as at 31 March 2015**



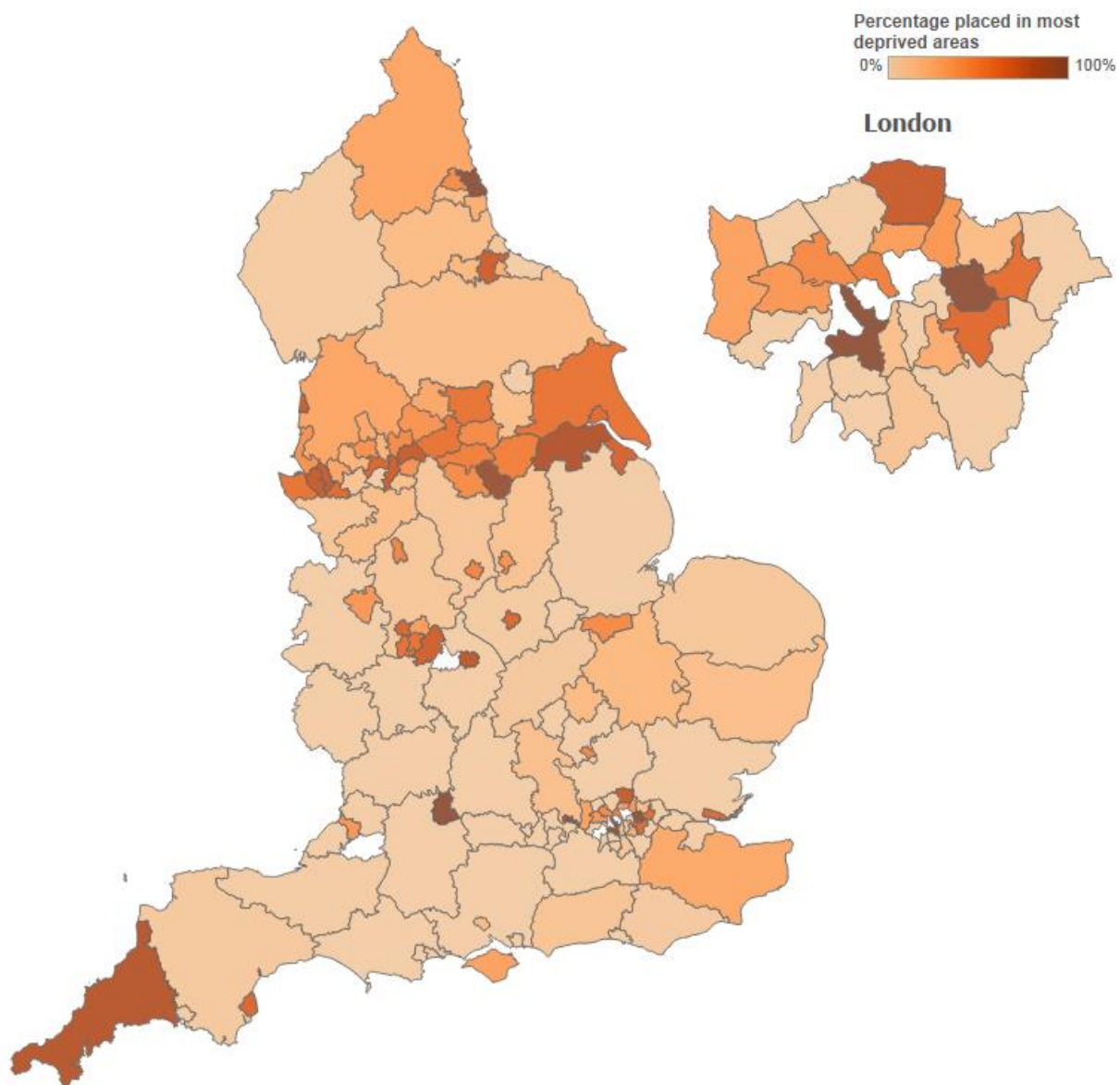
- The number of local authorities placing at least a third of their children looked after in the least deprived areas has continued to increase, from 14 in 2014 to 17 local authorities in 2015. Wokingham placed the highest percentage of children in the least deprived areas, at 52%.<sup>35</sup>
- Eleven local authorities placed more than half of their children in the most deprived areas, two fewer than in 2014. However, there was a shift in the regions where these children were placed; seven of the eleven local authorities were in the North West, whereas eleven of the thirteen local authorities in 2014 were in

<sup>35</sup> These local authorities were: Leicestershire, Rutland, Central Bedfordshire, Bexley, Kingston upon Thames, Cheshire East, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Reading, Surrey, West Berkshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham, Bath and North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire and York.



the London region. This shift from London to the North West was mainly due to the re-banding of the deprivation levels.<sup>36</sup>

**Map 5: Percentage of children placed in children's homes in the most deprived areas, as at 31 March 2015<sup>37</sup>**



- Those children looked after from a White background continued, as in previous years, to be most likely to be placed in areas of least deprivation, at 19%, compared to 13% of Minority ethnic children.

<sup>36</sup> These local authorities were: City of London, South Tyneside, Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Salford, Sefton, St Helens, Wirral, Sandwell and Kingston upon Hull

<sup>37</sup> Deprivation levels in some local authorities can be skewed by widely varied house prices, leading to provision for children looked after being disproportionately concentrated in the most deprived quartiles as housing is more affordable there.



- The percentage of children from a Minority ethnic background that were placed in the most deprived areas decreased from 40% in 2014 to 35% in 2015. However they were still far more likely than their White counterparts to be placed in areas of most deprivation. (Table 5)

**Table 5: Percentage of children living in each deprivation area, by ethnicity, as at 31 March 2015**

	Quartile 1: Least deprived	Quartile 2	Quartile 3	Quartile 4: Most Deprived
White	19%	26%	27%	28%
Minority ethnic groups	13%	21%	31%	35%

## Levels of crime<sup>38</sup>

Across the country children stood no greater chance of being placed in areas with higher levels of crime in 2015 than in the previous year. Those placed with parents or in independent living were far more likely to be placed in areas with higher levels of crime. A White child was twice as likely to be placed in an area of low crime as a Minority ethnic child. A Minority ethnic child was also more likely to be placed in an area with higher levels of crime.

- Overall, the profile of children looked after by level of crime in their local area has remained in line with last year with a relatively even distribution across the four quartiles.<sup>39,40,41</sup> (Chart 14)
- When broken down by placement type, like the overall picture, there was very little change from the previous year. Children and young people who were placed in independent living or placed with parents continued to have the highest percentage living in areas with the highest levels of crime.

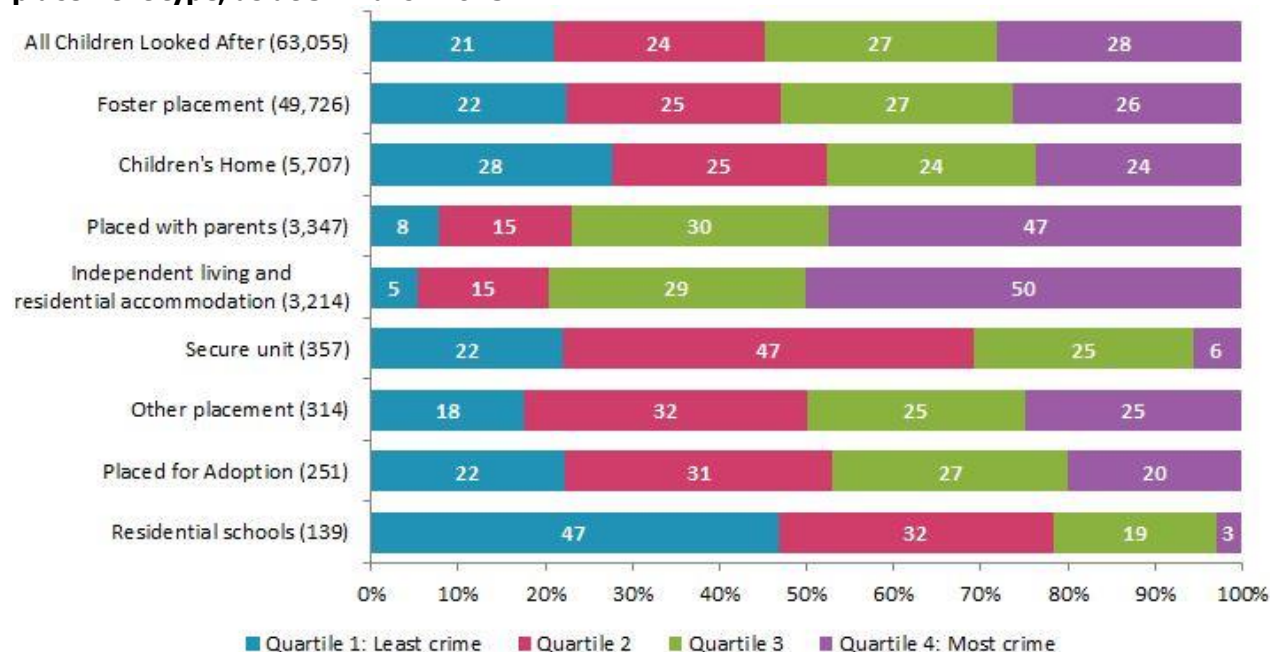
<sup>38</sup> Crime deprivation is one of seven domains of the 2015 indices of deprivation. The crime deprivation domain measures the risk of personal and material victimisation at a local level; this includes rates of violence, burglary, theft and criminal damage per 1000 "at risk" people or properties in each small area of England. This is based on recorded crime for 2013-14, as defined in *the English indices of deprivation 2015 technical report* department for communities and local government.

<sup>39</sup> There were 6,255 of the total 69,310 children and young people population, for whom we could not identify the level of local area crime.

<sup>40</sup> Areas of deprivation by crime level are analysed in quartiles as defined by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Quartile 1 refers to the top 25% of the country in the lowest crime areas, by lower super output areas, while quartile 4 refers to the bottom 25% of the country in the highest crime areas.

<sup>41</sup> It should be noted that the crime figures change over time and so while an area might now be classed as an area of higher crime, it might not have been classed as that when the actual placement of the child was made.

**Chart 14: Percentage of children looked after by level of crime in local area, according to placement type, as at 31 March 2015**

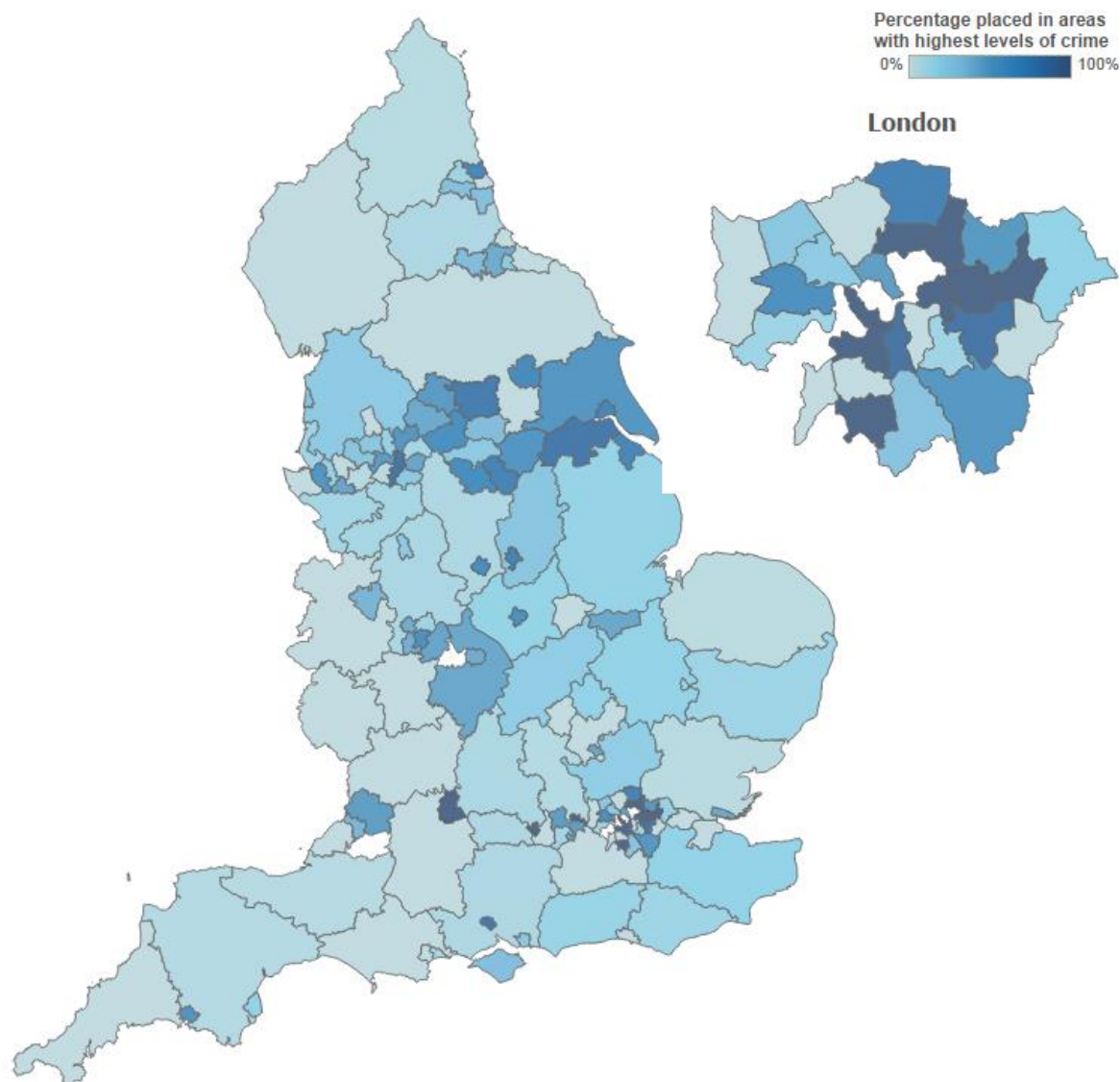


- The number of local authorities who placed more than half of their children in higher crime areas had fallen from 13 local authorities in 2014 to ten in 2015. Seven of these ten local authorities were located in Yorkshire and the Humber.<sup>42</sup>
- Although children were not more likely to be placed in higher crime areas, there were eleven local authorities where all of the children placed in children's homes were living in areas with the highest crime rates; an increase of one local authority from 2014. Eight of these local authorities were in London; of the remainder, two were in the South East and one in the South West.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> These local authorities were: Nottingham, Haringey, Slough, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, Sheffield and York

<sup>43</sup> These local authorities were: Barking and Dagenham, Haringey, Kensington and Chelsea, Newham, Reading, Slough, Sutton, Swindon, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest and Wandsworth.

**Map 6: Percentage of children placed in children's homes in areas with highest levels of crime, as at 31 March 2015**



- When broken down by ethnicity, those from a White background were twice as likely to be placed in areas with the lowest rates of crime than children from Minority ethnic groups, 24% compared to 12%. These percentages are almost identical to 2014.
- There were 38% of children from Minority ethnic backgrounds placed in areas with the highest levels of crime, compared to 25% of those from a White background. As with previous years, this was almost certainly due to the connection between levels of crime and levels of deprivation. It may also be influenced by the higher percentage of White children living in Shire county local authorities with correspondingly lower deprivation and crime levels.

## Provision and quality of children's social care

A child placed for adoption was usually placed by a local authority agency and in many local authorities was guaranteed to be placed through that local authority's agency. Two out of three fostered children were placed by a local authority agency.

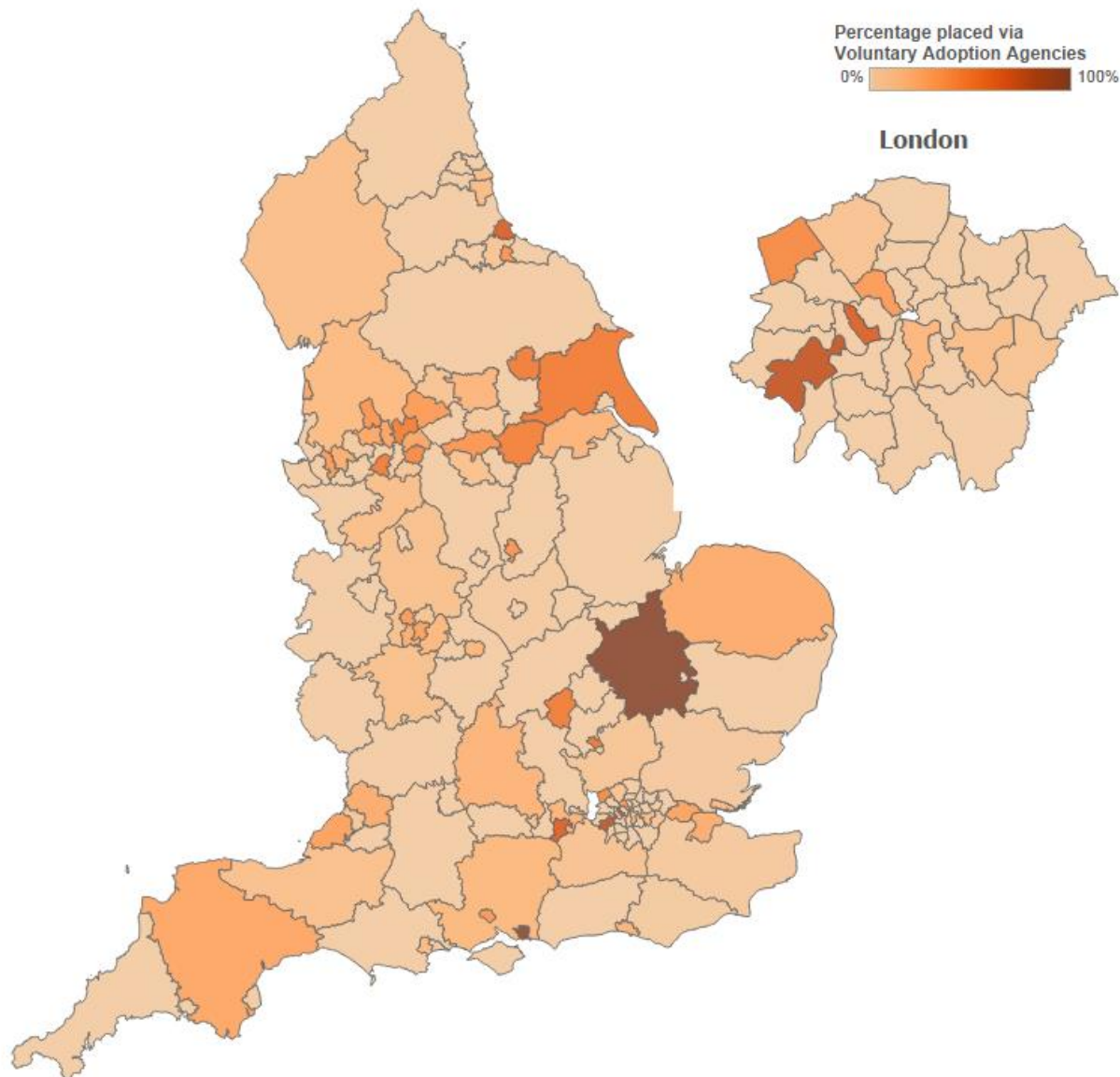
### Adoption

- As in previous years, it was very common for authorities to place all of their children for adoption through local authority adoption agencies.
- Of all children looked after placed for adoption, 87% were placed via a local authority adoption agency. The East of England (81%) placed the lowest percentage with local authority agencies and the East Midlands the highest (95%); seven of the nine local authorities in the East Midlands placed all of their children through local authority adoption agencies.
- For the 13% of children placed for adoption via a voluntary adoption agency, the East Midlands (5%), North East (7%) and London (6%) placed the fewest children via this route, similar to 2014.
- There were three local authorities that placed three quarters or more of their children for adoption via a voluntary adoption agency: Richmond upon Thames (75%), Cambridgeshire (100%) and Portsmouth (100%).<sup>44</sup> (Map 6)

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<sup>44</sup> Adoption services in Cambridgeshire are delivered by Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption voluntary adoption agency.

**Map 7: Percentage of children local authorities placed via voluntary adoption agencies, as at 31 March 2015**

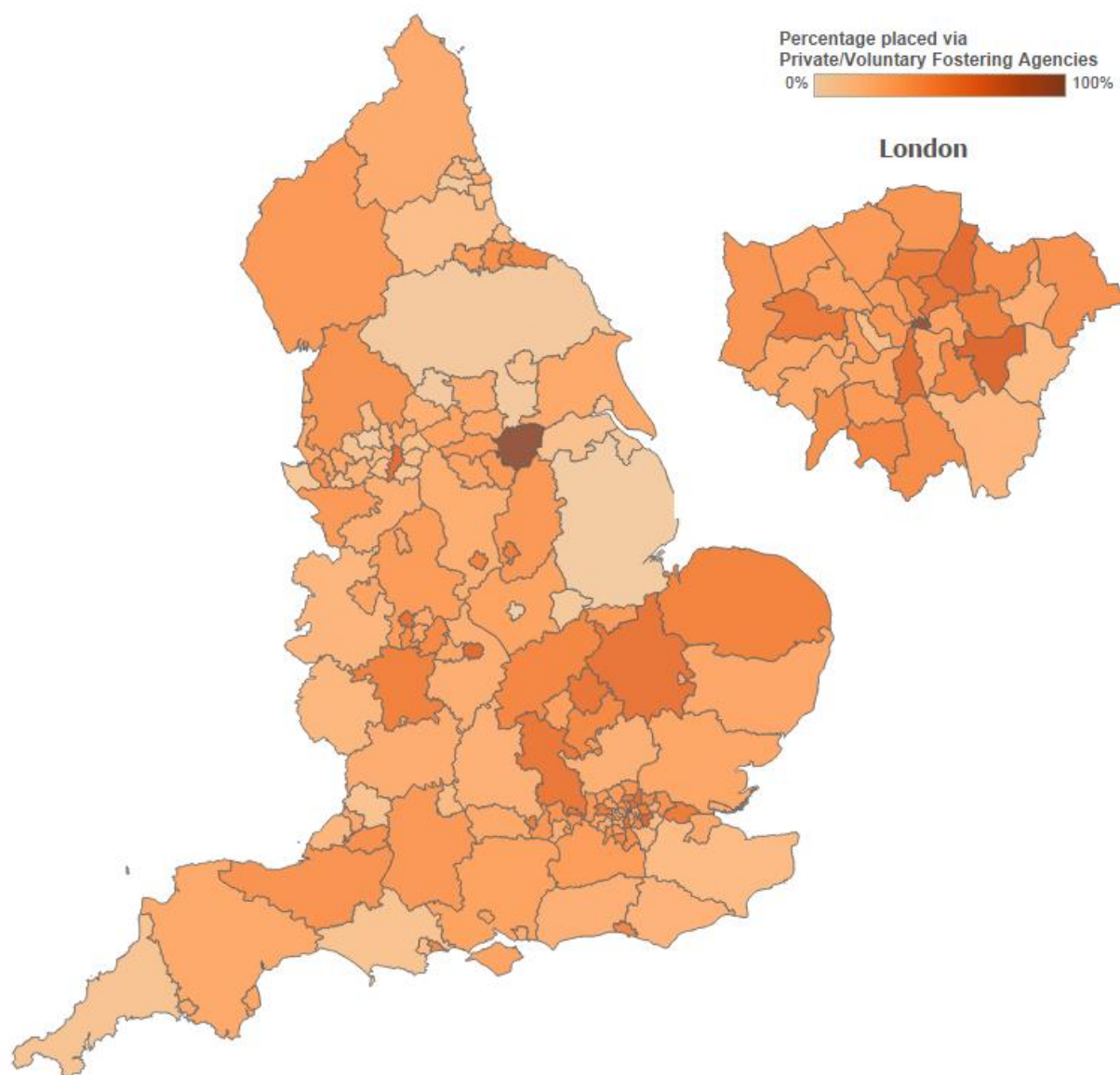


## Fostering

- Of all children and young people in foster placements as at 31 March 2015, 67% (34,864) were placed by local authority fostering agencies. The North East placed the highest percentage of children via local authority fostering agencies, at 76% and London placed the lowest at 57%.
- Leicester was the only local authority that did not place any children and young people via an independent fostering agency. (Map 8)



**Map 8: Percentage of children placed via independent fostering agencies, as at 31 March 2015<sup>45</sup>**



<sup>45</sup> City of London and Doncaster place all their foster placements via independent fostering agencies; this is due to the low numbers placed by City of London, meaning it does not offer a "traditional local authority fostering service"; and Doncaster Children's Trust are an IFA performing the functions of the local authority, with no local authority fostering provision in that area.

## Capacity and occupancy

Children from London were most likely to be living in children's homes outside their region despite London having the largest percentage of unfilled places in children's homes.<sup>46</sup> Almost all fostering agencies had placed at least one child.

### Children's Homes<sup>47</sup>

- There were 1,795 active children's homes as at 31 March 2015.<sup>48,49</sup> This was 41 more than at the same point in 2014.
- There were 1,635 children's homes where at least one child was in placement; an increase of 24 homes when compared to 2014.
- There were 160 active children's homes with no children placed; an increase of 17 homes from 2014.
- It is important to note that these data are for the day in question and may vary on other days. Children's homes places may be unfilled for a variety of reasons including that some places were not available for use, or that the homes often provide very specialised care to meet particular needs, for which demand on the day in question was not required.
- In both 2015 and 2014, London had the highest percentage of their available children's homes places unfilled: 48% were unfilled in 2015. Yet despite this, London boroughs placed a high percentage of their children's homes placements outside the region: 62% (388) were placed in children's homes outside London. (Table 6)
- The North East and East Midlands had the lowest percentage of unfilled places at 29%.

<sup>46</sup> Unfilled places data exclude residential special schools registered as children's homes, secure children's homes and short break only children's homes.

<sup>47</sup> The following types of children's homes have been excluded from this section:

- Residential special schools (RSS) where children reside for more than 295 days are designated as children's homes and are regulated and inspected as such. They are often very large in size and have children living there who are looked after and who are not. Consequently comparing their capacity with their occupancy can create a distorted picture. These RSS registered as homes have been excluded from the discussion on capacity versus occupancy.
- Secure children's homes are excluded as they are treated as secure units for the purposes of these statistics.
- Homes which only provide short breaks care are excluded as they often have unfilled beds due to the nature of the care and service they offer.
- Homes based outside England.

<sup>48</sup> Data on the numbers of each type of home as at 31 March 2015, together with equivalent data on the other types of social care provision Ofsted regulates and/or inspects, can be found in the Official Statistics release 'Children's social care in England 2015': <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childrens-social-care-in-england-2015>

<sup>49</sup> These homes accounted for approximately 84% of children living in children's homes.

- The biggest changes saw a 7% increase in the percentage of unfilled places in the East of England (36% in 2014 up to 43% in 2015) and a 6% increase in the South East (36% in 2014 up to 42% in 2015).

**Table 6: Places in active children's homes, as at 31 March 2015**

Region	Available Places	Filled Places	Unfilled places	Proportion of places unfilled (percentage)	
	Number			2015	2014
London	533	277	256	48%	46%
South West	544	304	240	44%	39%
East of England	712	409	303	43%	36%
South East	1,335	772	563	42%	36%
North West	1,687	1137	550	33%	30%
Yorkshire and the Humber	761	513	248	33%	32%
West Midlands	1,190	837	353	30%	30%
East Midlands	703	498	205	29%	28%
North East	491	348	143	29%	29%
All Regions	7,956	5,095	2,861	36%	33%

- Just over half the places (128 of 235) in secure children's homes were filled as at 31 March 2015. This was a higher level of filled places than in 2014 (121 of 276).

## Fostering

- There were 451 active fostering agencies as at 31 March 2015. These were comprised of 151 local authority fostering agencies and 300 independent fostering agencies, one of which was performing the functions of a local authority (Doncaster Children's Trust).
- Of these 451 agencies, 438 had at least one child in a placement.
- Thirteen fostering agencies were recorded as having no children in placement; two of the very smallest local authorities and eleven independent fostering agencies.<sup>50</sup> This was half the amount when compared to the same day last year where 27 fostering agencies had no children in placements.
- There was a slight drop in the number of approved fostering places in England, from 81,185 as at 31 March 2014 to 80,660 at the same point in 2015.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> City of London and Isles of Scilly.

<sup>51</sup> The data relating to actual places available and unfilled come from the National Statistics release 'Fostering in England 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015': <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fostering-in-england-1-april-2014-to-31-march-2015>



- Of the 80,660 approved places, 51,985 were filled according to the data received for this collection.<sup>52</sup> There were 28,675 unfilled places. Of those unfilled places, approximately 15,030 places were vacant; approximately 6,180 places were not available, due to the needs of other children currently in placement; and approximately 7,470 places were not available, due to the personal circumstances of the foster carers.

## The quality of children's placements<sup>53</sup>

Almost three quarters of children were living in good or better children's homes, although this was a small decrease from the previous year. As at 31 March 2015, thirty two local authorities had placed, during 2014-15, at least one child in a children's home that was judged inadequate when the child was placed.

- There were 61,644 children looked after placed with providers that are inspected by Ofsted, an increase of 275 placements compared to last year.
- Inspection outcomes for regulated providers of residential accommodation can tell us something about the quality of the placement. Inspection outcomes for adoption and fostering agencies, though, only tells us about the quality of the agencies that recruit, train and support adopters and foster carers, not about the nature of the placement itself.

## Children's homes

- There were 6,031 children living in children's homes (including residential special schools registered as children's homes) as at the 31 March 2015. Of these children, inspection outcome data was available for 98% of placements.
- Nearly seventy five per cent of children were living in good or better homes. There were 3,301 (59%) living in good homes and 758 (14%) living in outstanding homes. This was a very small decrease from 2014.
- Twenty six per cent (1,474) were living in adequate homes and 1% (67) were living in inadequate homes; a very small increase from the position in 2014 (24% and 1% respectively).

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<sup>52</sup> These filled places data do not exactly match the data gathered from the local authority and independent fostering agencies as part of the 2015 Fostering data collection. We do not have enough information to clarify exactly why they do not match, but it is most likely due to the children looked after data coming solely from local authorities, while the fostering data come from local authorities and independent fostering agencies. Also in some local authorities it may be different departments who complete the separate data collections.

<sup>53</sup> The data collected on placements was matched with Ofsted inspection outcomes, using our Unique Reference Numbers as assigned to individual providers. Information here on inspection outcomes, unless otherwise stated, refers to the latest full inspection outcome for each provider, as at 31 March 2015. The data does not take into account any subsequent inspection, either full or interim.

- There were 146 local authorities who had children in adequate homes at the end of the year, the same as the previous year. There were also 41 local authorities who had children in inadequate homes.<sup>54</sup>
- We can identify inspection outcomes for the point at which 4,938 children started in their children's home placement.<sup>55</sup>
- A majority of the children (2,810) started their placement during the year April 2014 to March 2015. One quarter of this group (728) were placed in a home already judged adequate, a three per cent increase on the previous year.
- A small number of children (41) were placed, by 32 local authorities, in a home already judged inadequate.
- Around one in seven children (333) were placed in homes that had not yet been inspected at the time of placement; this was the same as 2014.<sup>56</sup>
- Nearly four out of ten local authorities (59) had placed 80% or more children into good or better homes. Just under a sixth (23) of local authorities had 25% or more of their children placed in outstanding homes. This was slightly less than in 2014 where a fifth (31) placed 25% or more of their children in outstanding homes.

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<sup>54</sup> Those local authorities were: Bath and North East Somerset, Bedford, Bexley, Bournemouth, Bradford, Brent, Central Bedfordshire, Cornwall, Coventry, Derbyshire, Devon, Ealing, Enfield, Essex, Greenwich, Harrow, Islington, Kent, Kirklees, Leicestershire, Medway, Middlesbrough, North Somerset, North Tyneside, North Yorkshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Slough, Solihull, Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Southwark, Staffordshire, Suffolk, Surrey, Tameside, Tower Hamlets, Westminster, Wokingham, Wolverhampton and York

<sup>55</sup> Placements still active at 31 March 2015 and so excluding placements that started and finished between the 31 March 2014 and 31 March 2015 data collections. Also excluding placements where homes have not been inspected and children placed outside England.

<sup>56</sup> It should be noted that some of these homes may have been re-registrations, and so local authorities would have been able to reference inspection judgements against the previous URN.

## Commissioning and ownership

Every local authority had children looked after living within their boundary who had been placed by another local authority. Although children were only slightly less likely to be placed within their own local authority in 2015 than in 2014, those who were placed in the area by another local authority were coming from a larger number of local authorities than in 2014. The number of organisations providing care decreased slightly from 2014.

## Commissioning

- On average, a single local authority had children from 29 other local authorities placed within its boundaries, an increase from 21 in 2014. However, this does not necessarily equate to children being placed further from their home authority, as there was, nationally, an increase in the number of children placed within their local authority (though, due to the increase in the overall number of children looked after, there was a decrease when considered as a percentage).
- The number of these placements ranged from eight in Bath and North East Somerset, Portsmouth, Redcar & Cleveland, and Richmond upon Thames; up to 79 in Lancashire and 85 in Kent.
- In line with 2014, around one fifth (31) of authorities had children placed from 40 or more other local authorities.

## Ownership

- The picture on ownership of private and voluntary organisations looking after children was similar overall to last year, but there were more children looked after in children's homes owned by fewer organisations.
- There were 599 private and voluntary owned, Ofsted inspected organisations and 20 individually owned that provided care for children looked after. This was 51 more than the previous year. The number of children these organisations were looking after also increased from 20,808 to 21,893.
- A very large majority (568 organisations and the 20 individually owned ones) provided care in just one provision type, looking after 15,898 children. This was an increase from 523 organisations looking after 14,300 children in 2014.
- The largest independent organisation providing foster care looked after 2,122 children.

- There were 38 organisations who owned multiple types of social care provision, who provided care for 6,448 children. The largest organisation provided care for 1,332 children in children's homes, foster placements and residential schools not registered as children's homes.
- Of these 38 providers, 30 owned children's homes and fostering agencies and four owned children's homes, fostering agencies and adoption agencies.

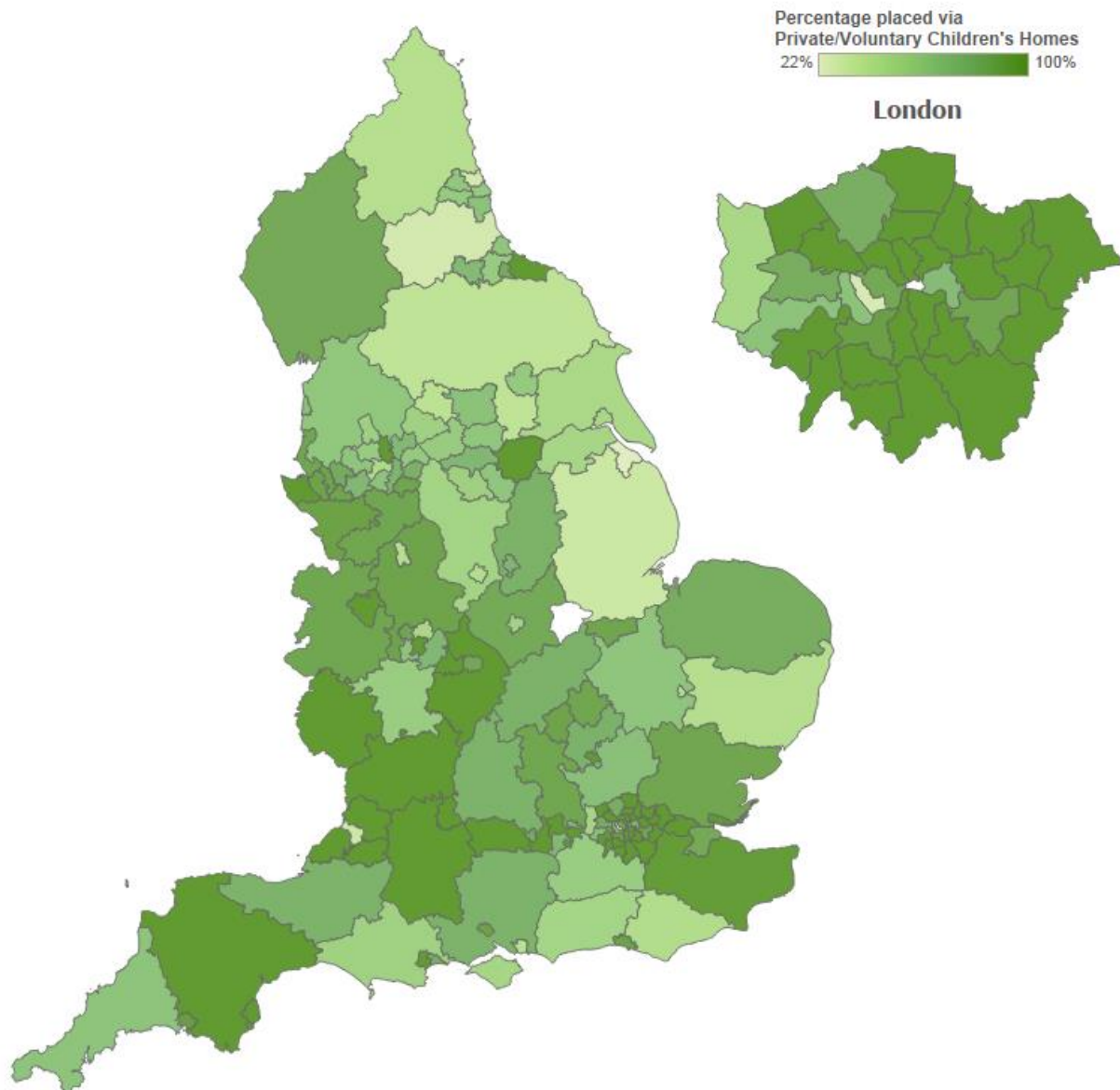
### **Children's homes**

- There were 404 organisations and 15 individually owned providers looked after 4,570 children. Though there were fewer organisations than in 2014 (when there were 430), the number of children looked after had increased from 3,638 in 2014.
- Just over a fifth of these providers were providing care for one or two children, and approximately one third provided care for three to five children.
- The ten largest looked after just over a quarter of all children (1,311) in private and voluntary-run children's homes. The largest provided care for 398 children (9% of the total).
- There were 42 local authorities who placed all of their children, placed in children's homes, in private and voluntary-run children's homes. Of the 42 local authorities there were 15 who had at least one local-authority run children's home. Durham and North East Lincolnshire placed the lowest percentage of children in private and voluntary-run homes, at 30% and 22% respectively.<sup>57</sup> <sup>58</sup> (Map 9)

<sup>57</sup> City of London and Rutland placed no children in non-local authority run homes.

<sup>58</sup> The 42 local authorities were: Devon, Southwark, Wiltshire, Doncaster, Wirral, Newham, Sandwell, Thurrock, Lambeth, Enfield, Telford and Wrekin, Gloucestershire, Barking and Dagenham, Warwickshire, Torbay, Bexley, Solihull, Brent, Plymouth, Havering, Merton, Camden, Bury, Islington, Herefordshire, Redcar and Cleveland, Luton, Sutton, Poole, Swindon, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset, Southampton, Southend on Sea, Harrow, Croydon, Hackney, Windsor and Maidenhead, West Berkshire, Bath and North East Somerset, Wokingham and Kingston upon Thames.

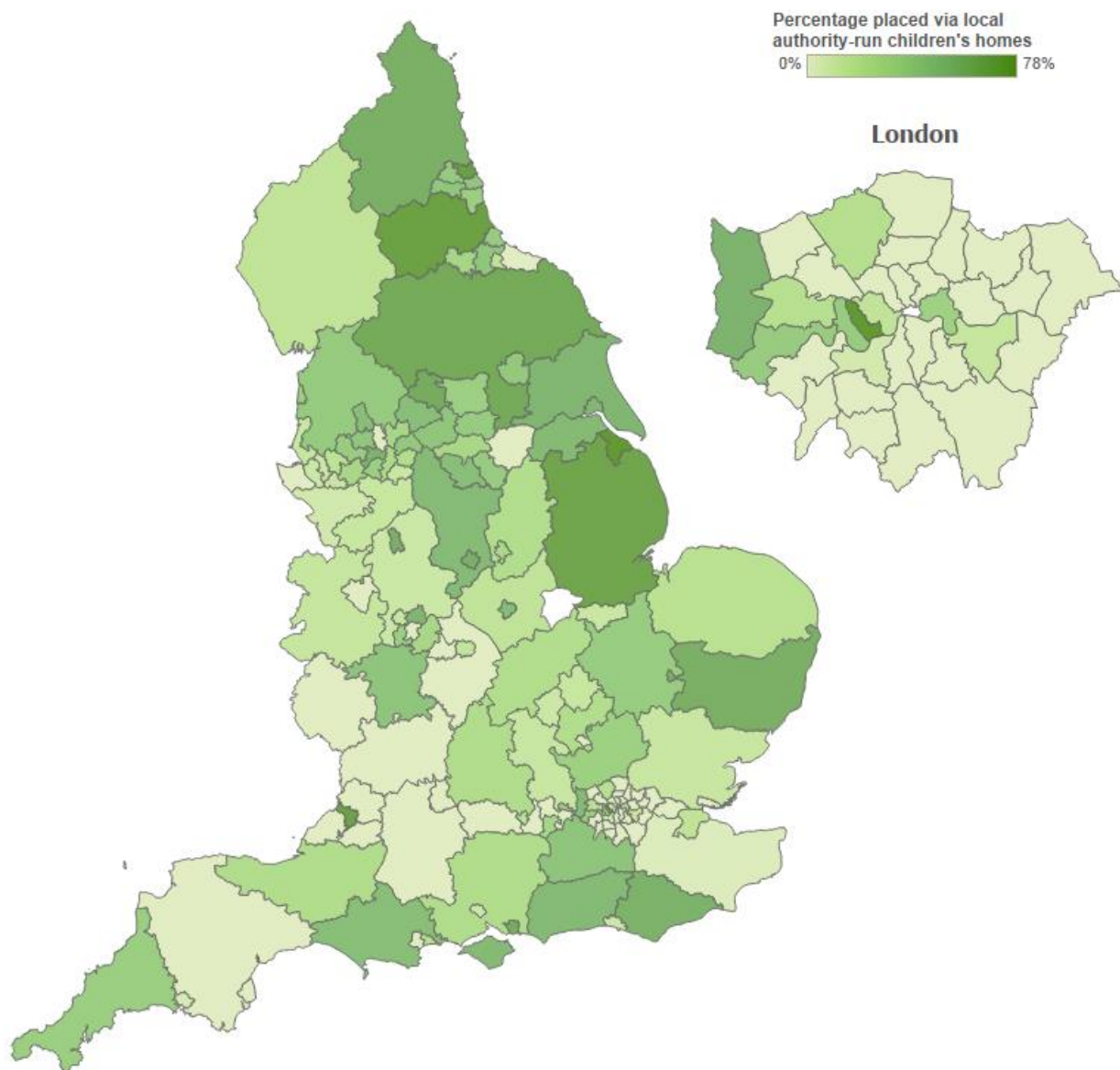
**Map 9: Percentage of children by placing local authority living in private and voluntary-run children's homes, as at 31 March 2015**



- There were 109 local authorities who placed 1,367 children in a local authority-run children's home.
- North East Lincolnshire placed the highest percentage of children in local authority-run children's homes (76%). Waltham Forest and Lewisham placed the smallest percentage of children in these homes (3%).
- Sixteen local authorities placed a total of 34 children in children's homes run by another local authority.



**Map 10: Percentage of children by placing local authority living in local authority owned children's homes, as at 31 March 2015**



## Fostering

- There were 177 organisations and three individuals owning 289 independent fostering agencies which provided care for 17,074 children.<sup>59</sup>
- Over half (8,866) of the children were placed by the ten largest organisations. This was a change from 2014, when half of all fostered children in IFAs were looked after by the 16 largest organisations.

<sup>59</sup> These figures exclude children placed through organisations based outside of England and also children where we were unable to identify which agency the placement was made through.



## List of charts, tables and maps

### List of Charts

Chart 1: Children looked after Minority ethnic population in England on 31 March 2015 and 2011 Census of all children aged 0-17 from ethnic minorities

Chart 2: Ethnicity of children looked after by age group

Chart 3: Percentage of children living in and placed by each region, as at 31 March 2015

Chart 4: Number of children living in and placed by each region in children's homes, as at 31 March 2015

Chart 5: Percentage of children placed by placement type and distance, as at 31 March 2015

Chart 6: Age of children looked after and the distance they lived from their local authority boundary, as at 31 March 2015

Chart 7: Ethnicity of children looked after and the distance they lived from the local authority boundary, as at 31 March 2015

Chart 8: Percentage of children living in each placement type, as at 31 March 2015

Chart 9: Percentage of children by placement type and ethnicity, as at 31 March 2015

Chart 10: Percentage of children looked after by length of time in placement, as at 31 March, for the years ending 2014 and 2015

Chart 11: Length of time children lived in their most recent placement, as at 31 March 2015

Chart 12: Percentage of children in rural and urban locations by placement types, as at 31 March 2015

Chart 13: Percentage of children looked after by placement type and level of deprivation in local areas, as at 31 March 2015

Chart 14: Percentage of children looked after by level of crime in local area, according to placement type, as at 31 March 2015

### List of Tables

Table 1: Number of children in placement by type 2014 and 2015

Table 2: Number and percentage of children looked after by their age group

Table 3: Number and percentage of children looked after by their ethnicity

Table 4: Number of children living in and placed by each region, as at 31 March 2015

Table 5: Percentage of children living in each deprivation area, by ethnicity, as at 31 March 2015

Table 6: Places in active children's homes, as at 31 March 2015

Table 7: Summary of key placement codes before and after Ofsted quality assurance 2015

### List of Maps

Map 1: Number of children placed in each local authority, as at 31 March 2015

Map 2: Percentage of children outside local authority boundary by region, as at 31 March 2015

Map 3: Percentage of children outside local authority boundary, as at 31 March 2015,  
Map 4: Percentage of children 20 miles or more from local authority boundary, as at 31 March 2015  
Map 5: Percentage of children placed in children's homes in the most deprived areas, as at 31 March 2015  
Map 6: Percentage of children placed in children's homes in areas with highest levels of crime, as at 31 March 2015  
Map 7: Percentage of children local authorities placed via voluntary adoption agencies, as at 31 March 2015  
Map 8: Percentage of children placed via independent fostering agencies, as at 31 March 2015  
Map 9: Percentage of children by placing local authority living in private and voluntary-run children's homes, as at 31 March 2015  
Map 10: Percentage of children by placing local authority living in local authority owned children's homes, as at 31 March 2015

## **Revisions to previous release**

This is the first release of these data for the period, as at 31 March 2015. These data are fixed point in time data and will not be revised.

## **Notes**

An explanation about key uses of these data and further contextual information and the arrangements for quality assurance is provided in the accompanying Quality and Methodology report.

The Quality and Methodology report can be found at the following webpage:  
[www.gov.uk/government/collections/childrens-social-care-statistics#children-looked-after-placements](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/childrens-social-care-statistics#children-looked-after-placements) under the heading 'Children looked after placements'.

The report also provides information about strengths and limitations of the statistics.

## **Response rates**

In 2013, 2014 and 2015, 100% of local authorities returned data.

## Annex A

The following quality assurance checks were undertaken for this data collection:

- The quality assurance process for this data collection checked for discrepancies in local authority submissions against the DfE statistical release and where these were found, local authorities were asked to explain any inconsistencies. Some indicated that they had updated their records since they had submitted their SSDA903 return, while others stated that they had submitted their return with errors that had since been corrected. Some records which had been submitted to the DfE were removed during the quality assurance process, in discussion with the submitting local authority.
- Further quality assurance was done by Ofsted on all records after final submissions were received, and quality assured in consultation with local authorities, and some records were removed as a result. In particular, 104 records were removed from the Ofsted data as they were children on short break placements; this return was not counting short break or respite placements.
- The final major difference between Ofsted and DfE data is the way in which some placement types are aggregated in DfE publications, which means the data cannot be directly compared. For example, the way in which the DfE have aggregated data about secure units, hostels and children's home placements into one group has not been replicated here. Ofsted separately counts hostels as non-inspected provisions.
- The quality assurance process also found some errors in placement codes given by local authorities to the DfE. Again, these were fewer than last year.

Overall, in 2015, there was no change from 2014 in the number of placement codes being amended as part of the quality assurance process (Table 1). Types of placements which saw a large fall in the number of incorrectly coded placements from 2013 to 2014 mostly remained stable in terms of number of incorrectly coded placements from 2014 to 2015. This was particularly true for children's homes, with 247 incorrectly coded in 2014 and 240 in 2015 and for adoptions, with eight incorrectly coded in both years. There were also some placement types which continued to see drops in the number of incorrectly coded placements, particularly residential special schools, and, to a lesser extent fostering. However, there were also some increases in incorrectly coded placements, particularly for those resident in adult care homes (R1), where the number of incorrectly coded placements almost doubled from 90 in 2014 to 170 in 2015. Despite this, numbers of incorrectly coded placements remain far lower than in 2013, and other

placements (Z1) are continuing as what they were originally intended to be, codes to be used in only very exceptional circumstances.<sup>60</sup> (Table 7)

**Table 7: Summary of key placement codes before and after Ofsted quality assurance 2015**

Placement codes	Original Submissions	Cleaned Data	Differences 2015	<i>Differences 2014</i>	<i>Differences 2013</i>
Children's homes (K2)	5,791	6,031	240	<i>247</i>	<i>925</i>
Residential special schools (S1)	376	151	-225	<i>-305</i>	<i>-518</i>
Residential care homes (R1)	225	55	-170	<i>-90</i>	<i>-460</i>
Adoption (A3, A4, A5 and A6)	3,306	3,314	8	<i>8</i>	<i>33</i>
Fostering (U1, U2, U3, U4, U5 and U6)	51,967	51,985	18	<i>-30</i>	<i>528</i>
Other placement (Z1)	45	3	-42	<i>-24</i>	<i>-86</i>

*Source: CLA placement data 2015, 2014 and 2013*

As a result of this quality assurance process and use of Ofsted's internal database of social care providers, Ofsted are confident in the quality of the data and analysis presented in this report.

<sup>60</sup> See Glossary for more detailed explanations of placement codes.

## Glossary

### Adoption agencies

The focus of all adoption agencies is on placing children successfully into adoptive families who the agency recruits, assesses, prepares and supports, so they will meet the children's needs and enable them to develop and achieve throughout their lives. The services maintained by local authorities are described in section 3(1) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. Local authorities place children with adoptive families recruited and approved by themselves, by other local authorities or by voluntary adoption agencies who must register with Ofsted. Adoption agencies may also provide birth records, counselling and intermediary services to adoptees and birth relatives. There are three branches of voluntary adoption agencies in Wales which are inspected by Ofsted because their head offices are in England.

### Adoption support agencies

Adoption support agencies are defined by section 8 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and provide services to anyone touched by adoption and are registered with Ofsted. This includes counselling and help for children and adults to gain information about their adoption or to trace birth relatives. Adoption support agencies can be either organisations or individuals, and may be contracted by a local authority to provide support services.

### Boarding Schools

The majority of boarding schools are independent and belong to associations which are members of the Independent Schools Council. As both education and welfare in these schools are inspected by their own inspectorate, Ofsted does not inspect these schools and so they are not included in the data. The remainder are maintained boarding schools where both education and the welfare of boarders are the subject of Ofsted inspection and independent boarding schools which are members of the Bridge Schools Inspectorate or Schools Inspection Service and who receive their education inspections by these organisations and their welfare inspections by Ofsted.

### Children's homes

A children's home is defined in section 1 of the Care Standards Act 2000, and is an establishment that provides care and accommodation wholly or mainly for children. Children's homes vary in size and nature. They fulfil a range of purposes designed to meet the different needs of those children and young people who are assessed as needing a residential care placement. Some homes, for example, provide short breaks which are needed to help support children and their family. Some residential special schools are registered as children's homes because boarders are resident for more than 295 days per year.

**Fostering agencies**

Local authority fostering agencies are defined by section 4 of the Care Standards Act 2000. Local authority fostering agencies and independent fostering agencies (IFAs) recruit, prepare, assess, train and support foster carers. Independent fostering agencies are private companies or charities, which are registered with Ofsted and provide placements to children and young people with foster carers approved by them. IFAs work closely with local authorities to deliver these placements.

**Placed for adoption**

A child may be placed for adoption with parental/guardian consent or with a placement order. A child placed for adoption is living with their proposed adopters, where the permanence plan for the child is adoption, but the final adoption order has not yet been completed.

**Placed with parents**

A child can remain looked after but be living with their parent(s), for example, as a step towards returning the child to live permanently with their parents. When a child is placed with parents, they remain the responsibility of the placing local authority. Parents in this instance are defined as a parent, a person with parental responsibility, a person who has a Child Arrangements Order in respect of the child, or any person having contact with the child by virtue of an order made under S34 Children Act 1989.

**Residential accommodation in further education colleges**

The care provision of further education colleges that provide, or arrange, residential accommodation for one or more students under the age of 18 years. Ofsted inspects these colleges under section 87 of the children act 1989 as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000. Where a college is registered as a care home, the residential provision is inspected by the Care Quality Commission rather than by Ofsted.

**Residential family centres**

Residential family centres are defined in section 4(2) of the Care Standards Act 2000 as establishments at which: a) accommodation is provided for children and their parents; b) the parents' capacity to respond to the children's needs and to safeguard their welfare is monitored and assessed; and c) the parents are given such advice, guidance and counselling is considered necessary.

**Residential special schools**

Residential special schools are defined in section 59 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. They vary in size and nature. The sector includes large non-maintained special schools which make provision for very specific needs and take children as full boarders from all over the country, to smaller more local providers catering for children with a range of different special needs and disabilities who may be resident at the school only during the week. Some residential special schools are registered as children's homes because boarders are resident for more than 295 days per year. There are also a small



number of independent residential special schools who also tend to cater for children with very specialist needs.

### **Secure children's homes**

Secure children's homes are defined by section 25 of the Children Act 1989. They accommodate children and young people who are remanded or have been sentenced for committing a criminal offence. They also accommodate children and young people who are placed there by a court because their behaviour is deemed to present a significant and immediate threat to their safety or the safety of others, unless they are placed in a secure environment. Ofsted inspections are conducted in accordance with the Care Standards Act 2000 and judgements in reports are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004. The criteria are the same as those used to inspect other children's homes.

### **Secure training centres/Secure units**

Secure training centres are defined by section 43(1) (d) of the Prison Act 1952, as amended by Section 6(2) of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. Ofsted has the power to inspect under section 146 Education and Inspections Act 2006 and inspects both the care and educational provision for children in four secure training centres. They accommodate young people between the ages of 12 and 17 who have been remanded or sentenced by the courts. The centres are under contract to the Youth Justice Board, which monitors their compliance with requirements. Ofsted does not regulate secure training centres but has an agreement with the Youth Justice Board to inspect care twice a year and education once a year.

### **Young offenders' institutions**

Young offender institutions (YOIs) are a type of prison for offenders aged between 18 and 20, with some catering for young offenders aged 15 to 17. Generally a young offender is regarded as such until the date of their 21st or 22nd birthday, whereupon he or she will be sent to an adult prison or can remain in the YOI until they turn 22 if deemed appropriate. These were introduced under the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

### **Sector**

Sector refers to the type of provider that owns the children's social care provision.

#### *Local Authority*

These are public bodies responsible for the provision.

#### *Private*

These are for-profit organisations mostly with limited company status. These can also, though, be individually owned provisions and run for profit.

### *Voluntary*

These are mostly not-for-profit organisations, mainly with charitable status. These can also be individually owned provisions and run on a not-for-profit basis.

### *Health Authority*

These are NHS Trust-run.

## **SSDA903 return**

This is an annual return to the Department for Education (DfE) completed by each local authority in England for every child looked after by that local authority at any time during the year ending 31 March, and all young people eligible for care leave support and whose 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> birthday falls within the collection period.

## **Placement codes**

The children looked after placement data collection requested data on children's placements that, for the most part, had already been validated as part of the process to submit the SSDA903 returns to the DfE. This DfE return requires local authorities to submit details of the placements where their children are, using placement codes.

The full list of placement codes and their meanings is as follows:

<b>Placement Codes:</b>	
A3	Placed for adoption with parental/guardian consent with current foster carer
A4	Placed for adoption with parental/guardian consent not with current foster carer
A5	Placed for adoption with placement order with current foster carer
A6	Placed for adoption with placement order not with current foster carer
H5	Residential accommodation not subject to Children's Homes Regulations
K1	Secure Unit
K2	Children's Homes
P1	Placed with own parents or other person with parental responsibility
P2	Independent living e.g. in flat, lodgings, bedsit, B&B or with friends, with or without formal support
P3	Residential employment
R1	Residential Care Home
R2	NHS/Health Trust or other establishment providing medical or nursing care
R3	Family Centre or Mother and Baby Unit
R5	Young Offender Institution or prison
S1	All Residential schools, except where dual-registered as a school and Children's Home.
U1	Foster placement with relative or friend- long term fostering
U2	Fostering placement with relative or friend who is also an approved adopter – FFA/concurrent planning

U3	Fostering placement with relative or friend who is not long-term or FFA/concurrent planning
U4	Foster placement with other foster carer - long term fostering
U5	Foster placement with other foster carer who is also an approved adopter – FFA/concurrent planning
U6	Foster placement with other foster carer- not long term or FFA/concurrent planning
Z1	Other placements

Placement Provider Codes	
PR0	Parents or other person with parental responsibility
PR1	Own provision (by the Local Authority)
PR2	Other Local Authority provision
PR3	Other public provision (e.g. by a PCT etc.)
PR4	Private provision
PR5	Voluntary/third sector provision

### Aggregated placement codes

For the purposes of this release, we have aggregated some of the codes so that they are grouped with similar placements, for example all the adoption placement codes are grouped together. This helps increase the number of children in a particular type of placement and therefore the robustness of the data. The following aggregations of placement types have been used:

Foster placement	U1 - U6
Children's Home	K2
Placed for adoption	A3 - A6
Placed with parents	P1
Independent living and residential accommodation	P2 and H5
Secure unit, Young offender institution or prison	R5 and K1
Residential schools not registered as children's homes	S1
Other placements	P3, R1 - R3, Z1

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