

## Fostering in England, 2014-15

This release covers:

- The numbers and profile of foster carers and foster places and placements, in both local authority (LA) and independent fostering agencies (IFA)
- Data relating to types of foster care, registrations, de-registrations and a range of other subjects
- The period between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015

More children and young people were in foster placements.

Between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015, there were 85,890 children and young people in foster placements, an increase of two percent from 2013-14.

There were fewer fostering households overall, but more family and friends households.

On the 31st March 2015, there were 36,890 fostering households, a decrease of one percent from the same date in 2014. In the same period, the number of family and friends households increased by six percent to 4,145.

More young people remained living with their foster carer after their eighteenth birthday.

There were 1,790 young people aged 18 and still living with their foster carers in 2014-15 under "Staying Put" arrangements.<sup>1</sup> This was an increase of two percent from the previous year.

More children were recorded as missing from placements and going missing more often.

There were 5,055 children recorded as missing in 2014-15, an increase of 19% from the previous year, and likely to reflect improved reporting around missing children. The number of times that children were recorded as going missing increased by 29%, to 17,175.

More children were reported as being at risk of CSE than as being subject to it.<sup>2</sup>

There were 2,690 children recorded as being at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) during the year 2014-15. There were 865 children recorded as subject to CSE.

<sup>1</sup> The "Staying Put" scheme came into force under the Children and Families Act 2014, and required local authorities to facilitate and support arrangements for fostered young people to remain living with their foster carers until age 21, if this is what both parties want, and it is in the fostered young person's best interests. A full description of the scheme is available in the glossary.

<sup>2</sup> Agencies were asked for the number of children "considered to be at risk of CSE" and "considered to be subject to CSE", with guidance that this did not have to have been confirmed by other professionals.

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## Introduction

This statistical release covers local authority (LA) fostering agencies and independent fostering agencies (IFAs) in England in the year 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. It includes data about fostered children, foster carers, recruitment, and capacity of providers. Fostered children make up around three quarters of children looked after in England.<sup>3</sup>

This report uses data returned to Ofsted by the agencies, and so may reflect both changes in what is happening in the sector and changes in how this is being recorded and reported.

Where applicable, comparisons to previous years (2013-14 and 2012-13) have been included. Although this report comments on how data has changed compared to previous years, this should be interpreted with caution; it is difficult to assess, from only three years' worth of data, what trend or pattern is emerging, and hence whether a change is indicative of a pattern or of a one-off change.

Regional analysis has also been included, where relevant. As IFAs cannot be neatly attached to regions, due to the aggregate data collected which does not indicate location of foster carers and fostered children, any regional analysis refers only to LA fostering agencies within that region.

The following sections have changed from previous years and so do not have comparable data from previous data sets:

- Child sexual exploitation: questions on children considered to be at risk or subject to child sexual exploitation were added for the first time in 2014-15;
- Unplanned endings: to prevent double counting, a question on placement moves occurring within 24 hours was revised;
- Applications: a separate question on family and friends approved households was added;
- Allegations: additional questions were added on source of allegations, categories of alleged abuse, actions resulting from allegations, and outcomes and timescales for investigations.

Survey question numbers are given in brackets at the end of statements in the document below, to enable readers to easily find this information in the underlying data tables. The full text of the questions in the 2014-15 survey can also be found in the copy of the survey form available online with this report.

Definitions of most terms can be found in the glossary at the end of this report.

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<sup>3</sup> Ofsted, Children Looked After in England 2014-15, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2014-to-2015>

## Key findings

### Children and young people

#### Number of children fostered

The number of children in foster care increased in 2014-15. This increase followed the trend of previous years although the rate of increase slowed. The majority of children are still fostered through LA agencies. However, there were the first signs that LAs are now increasing the percentage of children they place through independent agencies, as the increase in children placed through IFAs was higher than for those placed through LA fostering agencies.

- There were 85,890 children and young people who lived in fostering placements at some point during the year 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015; the equivalent of 1% of all children aged under 18 in England.<sup>4</sup> This was an increase of two percent from the 2013-14 figure (84,450). (A2.1)
- During 2014-15, two thirds of fostered children were in placements with LA fostering agencies (57,195); the remainder were in placements with IFAs (28,695).
- The number placed through IFAs increased by three percent from 2013-14, from 27,980 to 28,695 in 2014-15. Over the same period the number in LA fostering agencies increased by one percent, from 56,470 to 57,195; this was a smaller increase than in previous years.
- At the end of the period, on 31 March 2015, there were 51,805 children in fostering placements. This was a one percent increase on the previous year's figure (51,315). (A1.2)

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<sup>4</sup> ONS 2011 census (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/qs103ew>). At the time of the census, there were 11,336,960 young people aged 0-18 in England.

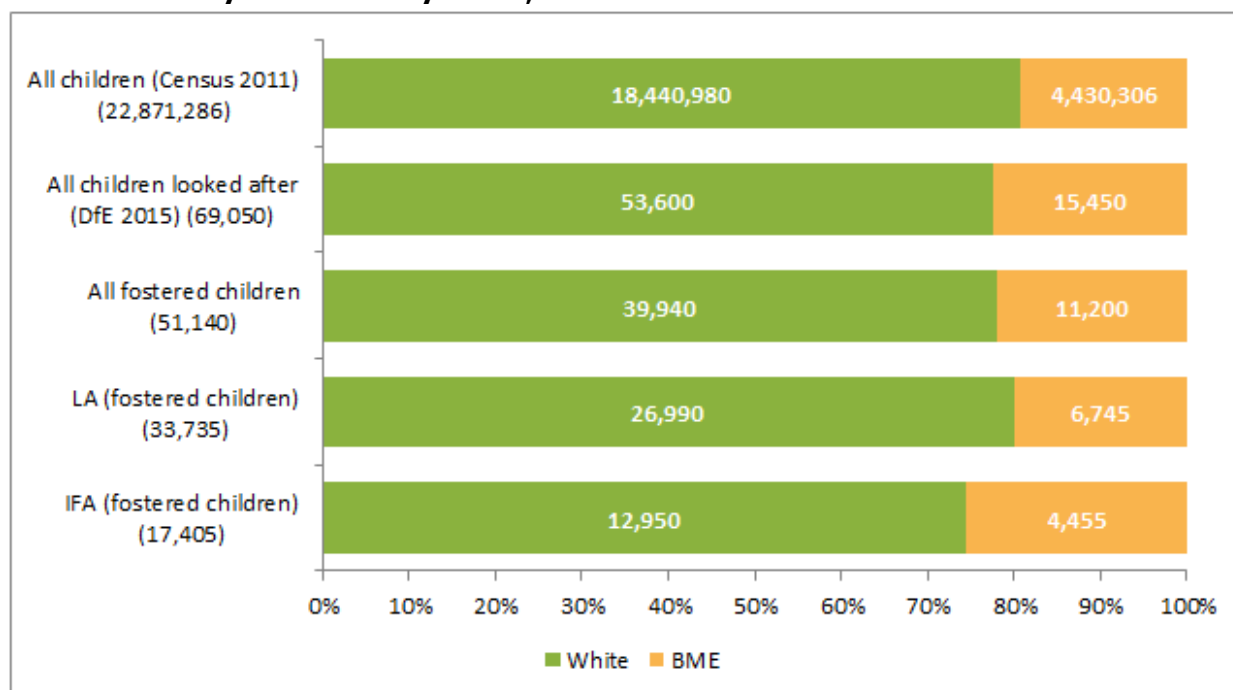
## Characteristics of children

The majority of children in foster placements were White, though there was a slightly higher percentage of Black and minority ethnic children in foster care than in the general population. White children were more likely to be fostered in LA placements than Black and minority ethnic children; this might be partly because some IFAs specialise in fostering Black and minority ethnic children. A higher percentage of fostered children had disabilities than in the child population as a whole. LA agencies increased the number of disabled children they placed, while placing fewer with independent agencies.

### Ethnicity

- As at 31 March 2015, the majority of children fostered, 39,940, were White (77%) and 11,200 were Black and minority ethnic (22%).<sup>5</sup> (B2.1-2.20)
- This was similar to the picture in 2013-14, and in line with the percentages for all children looked after.<sup>6</sup> (B2)
- Children from a White background made up a higher percentage of children placed with LA fostering agencies (79%) than with IFAs (73%). This was very much in line with the previous year.

**Chart 1: Ethnicity breakdown by sector, 2014-2015<sup>7,8</sup>**



<sup>5</sup> Children whose ethnicity was unknown have been excluded from this calculation, and so the total percentage does not equal 100%

<sup>6</sup> DfE 2014-15 903 data: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2014-to-2015> Table A1

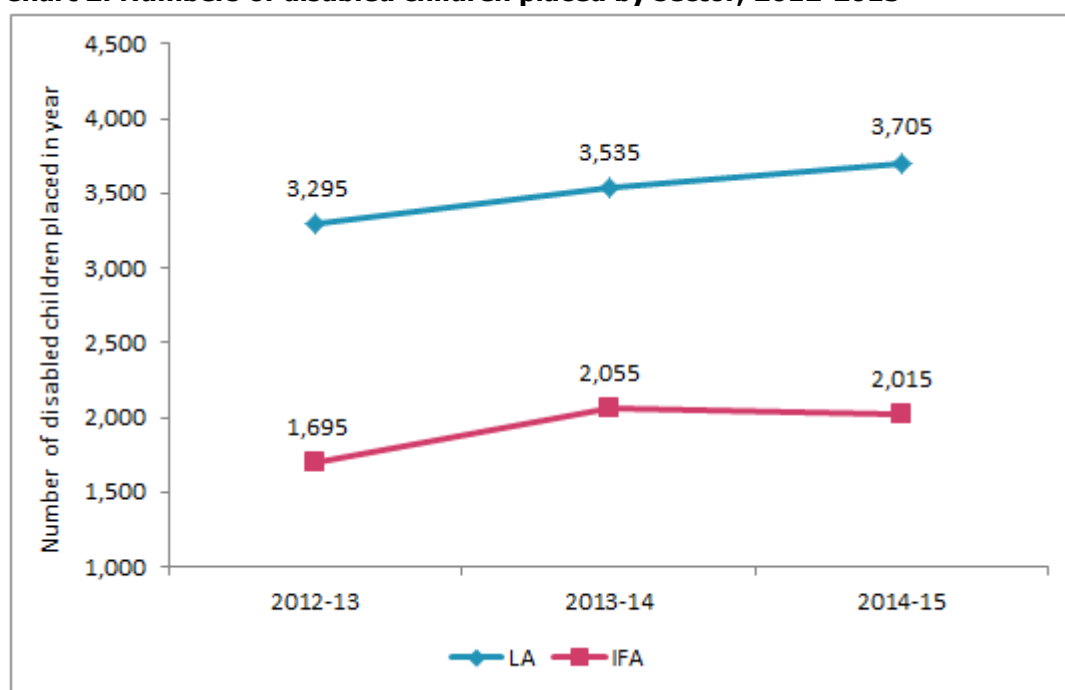
<sup>7</sup> Children of unknown ethnicity have been excluded from this chart, as they make up only 1% of all placed children.

<sup>8</sup> ONS 2011, <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/lc1203ew>

## Disability

- Of the 85,890 children placed at some point during 2014-15, seven percent (5,720) were disabled. This was almost twice the percentage of all children in England who were disabled (4%), according to the 2011 census.<sup>9</sup> (A2.1, A2.4)
- The number of disabled children placed with IFAs decreased by two percent from 2013-14. This was a contrast to the previous year, when the number of disabled children placed with IFAs increased by 21%.

**Chart 2: Numbers of disabled children placed by sector, 2012-2015**



## Brothers and sisters

Most brothers and sisters were placed together, and most were placed in accordance with their assessment. In 2014-15, brothers and sisters were less likely to be assessed as needing to be placed together and then placed separately. There was also an increase in the percentage assessed as needing to be placed separately.

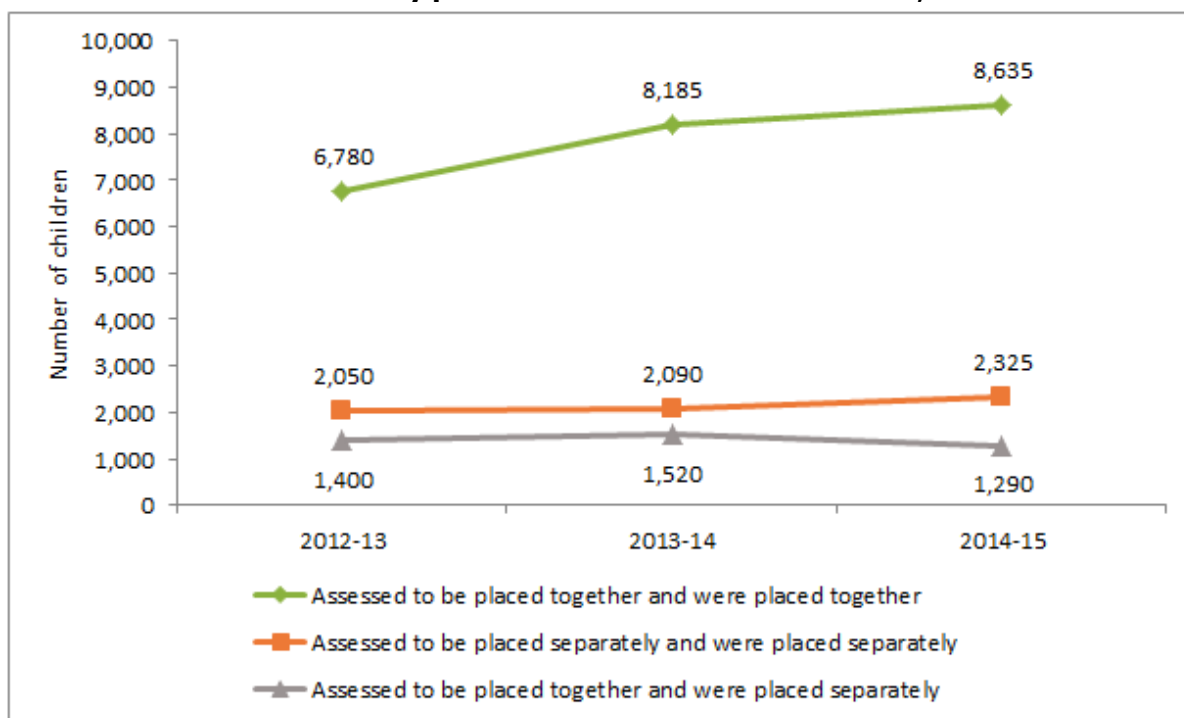
- There was a five percent increase, to 8,635 children, in the number of brothers and sisters assessed to be placed together and then placed together, from 2013-14 to 2014-15. (A5.2-3)

<sup>9</sup> ONS 2011 census ([www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/LC3101EWLS/view/2092957699?rows=c\\_disability&cols=c\\_age](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/LC3101EWLS/view/2092957699?rows=c_disability&cols=c_age)).

The exact proportion of children looked after who had disabilities is unknown; the figure of 3% had a category of need during 2013-14 of 'Child's disability'. (DfE statistics 2013-14, [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2), National Table B1)

- There was also an increase (11%) in the number of brothers and sisters assessed to be placed separately and placed separately.
- There was a decrease (15%) in the number of brothers and sisters assessed to be placed together but placed separately.

**Chart 3: Brothers and sisters by placement assessment and outcome, 2012-2015**



## Education

In 2014-15, as in previous years, most children had stable educational placements in mainstream school, which they attended regularly. Fewer children experienced a change in their educational establishment due to a change in foster placement.

- There was an increase of five percent in the number of compulsory school aged children (aged 5-16) in foster care from 51,550 in 2013-14 to 53,985 in 2014-15. This is in line with the increase for all children looked after of compulsory school age (4%)<sup>10</sup> and slightly above the increase in the overall number of fostered children (2%). (A2.2)
- During 2014-15, there were 10,075 young people aged 16-18 who had completed compulsory education and were therefore subject to the Raising the Participation Age scheme in foster care.<sup>11</sup> This was a large increase on the

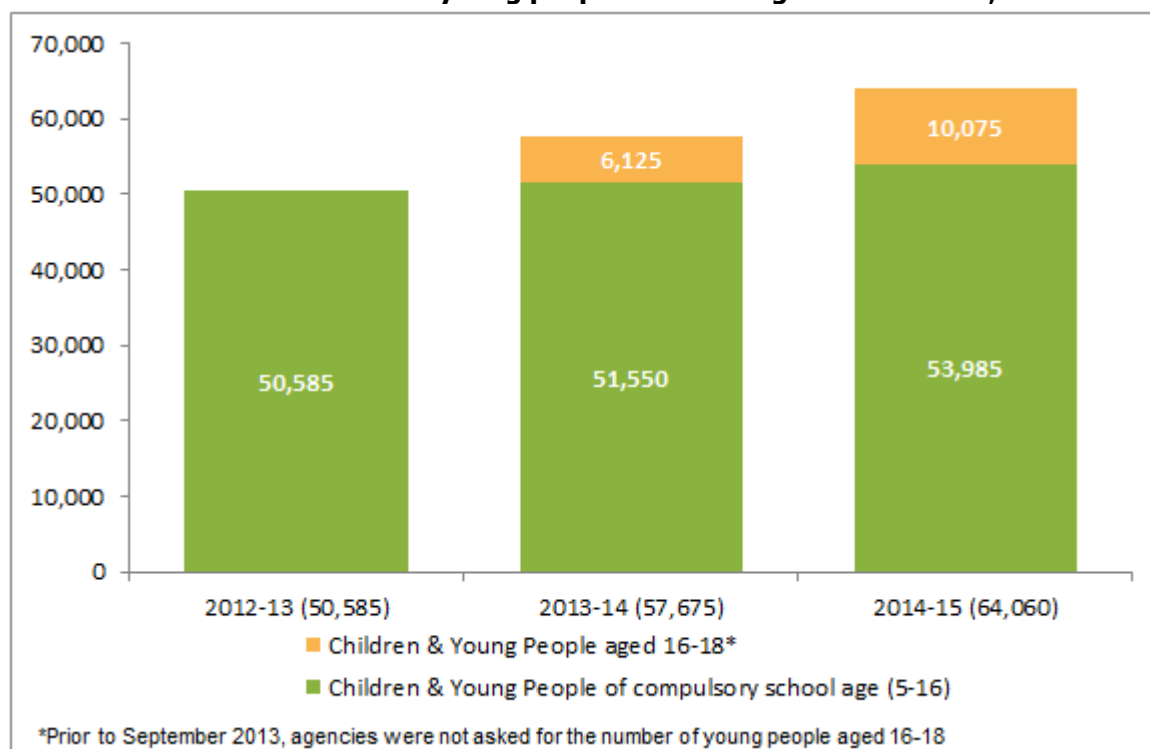
<sup>10</sup> DfE Children looked after in England including adoption: 2014 to 2015 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2014-to-2015>)

<sup>11</sup> The government introduced legislation in summer 2013 which requires young people to continue in some form of education or training until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.



previous year's 6,125 young people; however this is likely due to this being the first full year of the scheme's operation. (A2.1-3)

**Chart 4: Number of children and young people of school age in foster care, 2012-2015**



- The percentages of children in foster care not in regular, mainstream education remained broadly static in 2014-15 compared to 2013-14, with only small increases in children with no educational arrangements and who were persistently absent. (D7)

**Table 1: Percentage of CYP aged 5-18 in foster care not in regular, mainstream education, 2013-2015**

	2013-14	2014-15
Changed educational placement	5%	5%
Attended alternative provision	5%	5%
Had no educational arrangements	1%	2%
Were persistently absent	4%	5%

## Children's experiences

One fifth of unplanned endings<sup>12</sup> occurred within 24 hours of the placement start. Almost half the children who experienced unplanned endings experienced them at the foster carers' request; in two fifths of cases, these children had been placed with IFAs.

### Placement stability

- There were 7,245 unplanned endings in 2014-15, affecting a maximum of 8% of all placed children.<sup>13</sup> (A6.1-2)
- Almost two thirds (985) of moves within 24 hours were with LA fostering agencies. (A6.3)

**Chart 5: Number of unplanned endings by sector and reason, 2014-15**



- The LAs in both the East and the West Midlands regions reported that around one third (33% and 36%, respectively) of unplanned endings were within 24 hours; the average across regions was around one quarter.

<sup>12</sup> This is a 'placement ending that was not included in the social work plan either in the ending itself or the timing of the termination'. A fuller definition is given in the glossary.

<sup>13</sup> If a different child was affected by each unplanned ending, this would be the maximum percentage of children affected. As we do not collect data on how many children experience unplanned endings, it is not possible to state the actual percentage affected.

### Staying put<sup>14</sup>

Young people aged over eighteen were more likely overall to remain living with their foster carer after their eighteenth birthday in 2014-15 than in 2013-14. However, young people placed through IFAs were more likely to leave than remain with their carer.

- The number of young people staying with their foster carers after their eighteenth birthday increased by two percent from 1,750 in 2013-14 to 1,790 in 2014-15. (A8.1)
- The number of young people who stayed in their LA foster placement after turning 18 increased by three percent (from 1,215 to 1,255). Young people in LA placements were more likely to “Stay Put” than move out – 56% stayed after turning 18. (A8.1-2)
- The number of young people placed in IFAs who stayed in their placement after turning 18 remained the same (at 535), though as a percentage of all young people turning 18, it fell from 54% to 45%. For the first time in three years, young people placed through IFAs were more likely to move out than “Stay Put”.

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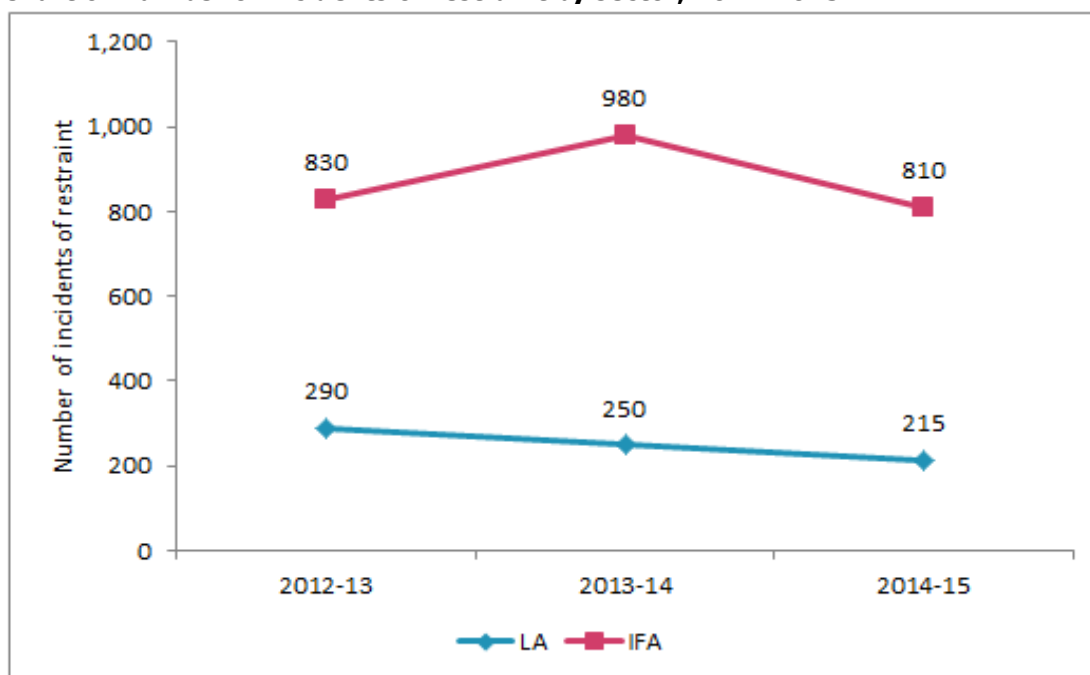
<sup>14</sup> Please refer to the glossary for a full definition of the Staying Put scheme.

## Restraint

Restraint was recorded for less than 1% of all fostered children, and children were less likely to be physically restrained in 2014-15 than previously. More children who were restrained were placed through IFAs than in LA placements.

- There were 1,025 incidents of physical restraint during 2014-15, a 17% decrease from 1,230 incidents in 2013-14. These involved 570 children and young people. (D2.1-2)
- Almost three quarters (415) of the children reported to be subject to restraint were placed through IFAs. (D2.2, A2.1)
- The number of incidents of restraint reported by IFAs decreased by 17% from 2013-14 to 2014-15. This was a reversal from 2012-13 to 2013-14, when the number increased by 18%.

**Chart 6: Number of incidents of restraint by sector, 2012-2015**



## Safeguarding

### Child sexual exploitation

A minority of children and young people were reported as at risk of or subject to child sexual exploitation (CSE) during the year. Children and young people were more likely to be reported as at risk of CSE than as subject to it.

- During 2014-15, 3% of all children and young people in placements were reported as being at risk of CSE, and 1% were reported as being subject to CSE. (A3.1-2)
- During 2014-15, a slightly higher percentage of children in IFAs than in LA fostering agencies were reported to be at risk of CSE (4% compared to 3%); there was no variation for children reported to be subject to CSE.
- Three local authorities (Birmingham, Sandwell, and Norfolk) reported that they were unable to provide information on the number of children at risk of or subject to CSE. An additional 14 LAs reported no children at risk of CSE, often citing difficulties in assessing these numbers from their current recording systems.<sup>15</sup> Of these 14 LAs, three were able to give information on the number of children recorded as subject to CSE (Blackburn with Darwen, Redcar & Cleveland, and Warwickshire); the remainder reported no children subject to CSE, again citing difficulties in assessing these numbers.
- Although these figures are likely to have been affected by recording issues, the East Midlands region reported the highest percentage of children at risk of CSE (8%), while the West Midlands reported the lowest (1%).

### Children going missing

More children were recorded as going missing, and as going missing more often. Children placed in IFAs were more likely to be reported missing than those in LA placements. This may be due to stronger recording by IFAs than by LAs, particularly given that some IFAs have only a small number of children in placement so that the burden of recording is reduced, compared to LAs which are generally larger. Despite this, the gap between the two sectors around the number of children going missing has reduced.

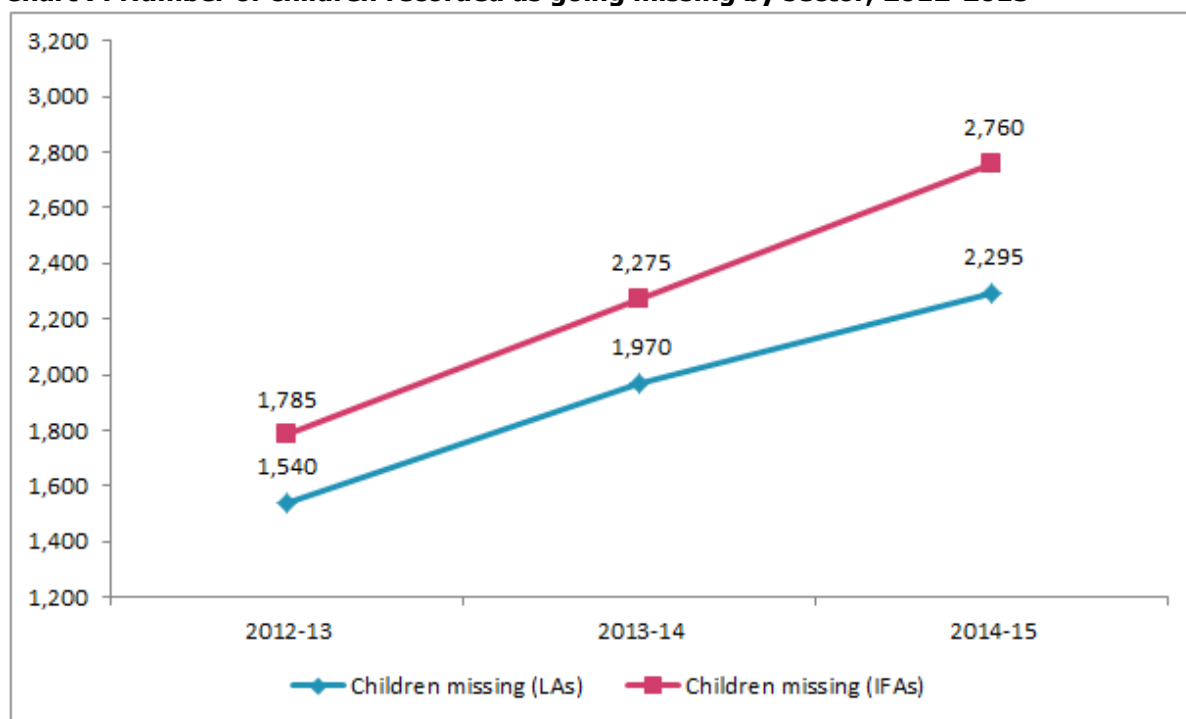
Children were more likely to go missing for longer periods in 2014-15 than previous years, particularly children placed through LA fostering agencies. Children most commonly went missing due to contact with family and friends. However, there were around a quarter of instances where the agency did not know why the child had gone missing; this was particularly the case for LAs. Children were more likely to be recorded as going missing due to CSE than in previous years; although this is likely to be evidence of better recording of CSE due to increased awareness as a result of recent high profile cases.

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<sup>15</sup> These additional 14 LAs were: Bedford Borough, Blackburn with Darwen, Buckinghamshire, Herefordshire, Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston-upon-Thames, Knowsley, Redcar & Cleveland, Rutland, Salford, Slough, Warwickshire, Westminster, and Wiltshire.

- The number of children reported as going missing during 2014-15 increased by 19% from 2013-14 to 2014-15. This was a smaller increase than from 2012-13 to 2013-14, when the increase was 28%. (D3.1-2)
- More children were reported missing from IFAs (55% of all children who went missing) than from LAs, despite only one third of all fostered children being placed in IFAs. However, the gap between the two sectors shrank from 2013-14, when 59% of missing children were from IFAs.
- The number of children recorded as going missing from IFAs increased by 21%, to 2,760 children in 2014-15. The number of children recorded as going missing from LAs increased by 16% to 2,295 children in 2014-15.
- The South East and London reported the highest percentages of children going missing (six percent and five percent respectively, consistent with previous years). This may be linked to the disappearance of children thought to be trafficked into the UK and removed from foster care, as reported in 2013.<sup>16</sup>

**Chart 7: Number of children recorded as going missing by sector, 2012-2015**

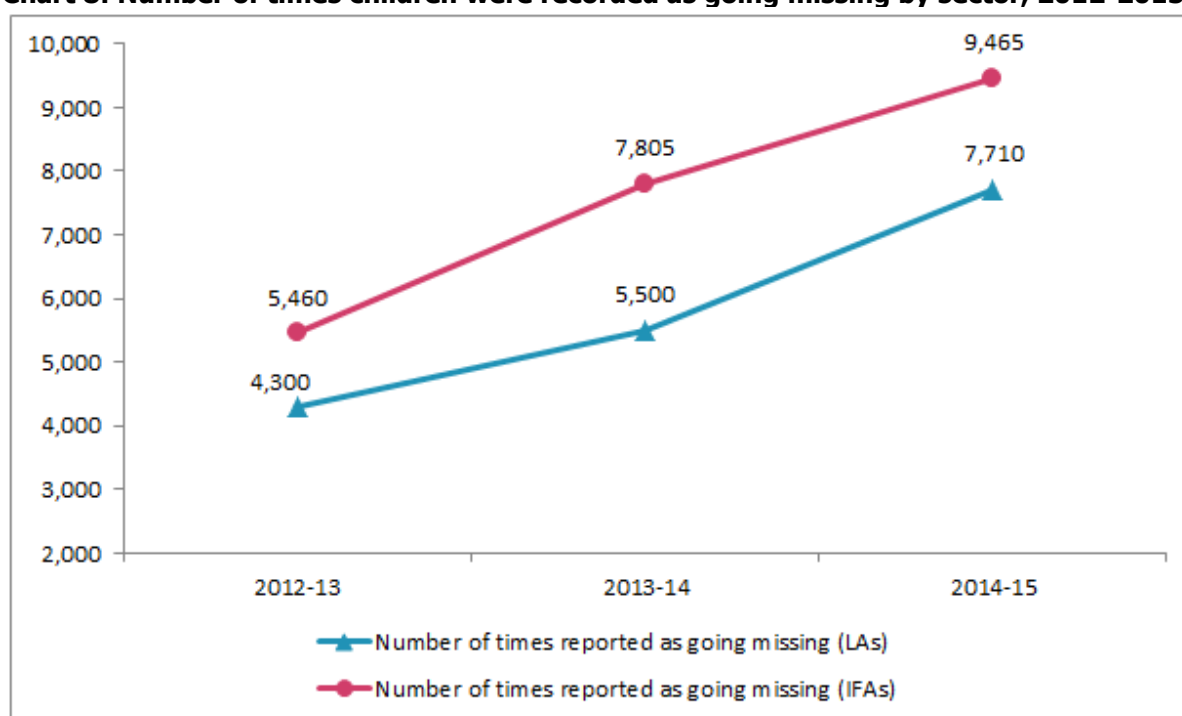


- There was a greater increase in the frequency of children being reported as going missing than in the number of children reported as missing: 29% from 2013-14 to 2014-15. This was a smaller increase than from 2012-13 to 2013-14, when the increase was 36%. (D3.1)

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, EPCAT report here ([http://www.ecpat.org.uk/sites/default/files/trafficked\\_children\\_and\\_missing\\_2.pdf](http://www.ecpat.org.uk/sites/default/files/trafficked_children_and_missing_2.pdf)).

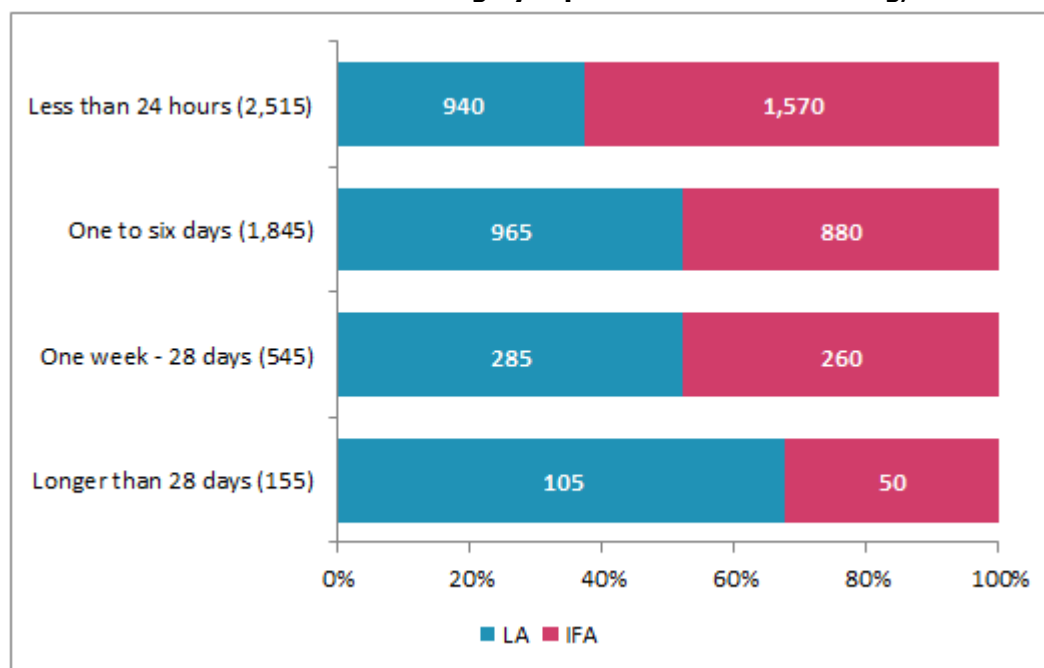
- The number of times children were recorded as going missing from LAs increased by 40% between 2013-14 and 2014-15. Between 2012-13 and 2013-14, LAs had a much smaller increase, of 28%.
- For IFAs, the increase was smaller than for LAs, at 21% between 2013-14 and 2014-15. It was also smaller than between 2012-13 and 2013-14, when the increase was 43%.
- Children in the London and South East regions were reported missing most frequently, with each missing child going missing an average of four times. The two regions also had the highest number of times that children were reported as going missing (1,555 in London, 1,965 in the South East).
- Almost all regions saw a large percentage increase in the number of times children were recorded as going missing from 2013-14 to 2014-15, but the increase ranged from one fifth in the South East (from 1,630 instances) to an increase of 145% in the South West (from 420 instances to 1,035 instances).
- The exception to this was the East of England, where there was a fall of almost a third in the number of times children were reported going missing (from 422 instances in 2013-14 to 300 instances in 2014-15).

**Chart 8: Number of times children were recorded as going missing by sector, 2012-2015**



- As in 2013-14, around half of those children reported children in 2014-15 had been missing for a total period of less than 24 hours<sup>17</sup> (54% in 2013-14, 50% in 2014-15).
- However, the number of children missing for a total period of less than 24 hours increased by 9% from 2013-14 to 2014-15. This was a much smaller increase than from 2012-13 to 2013-14, when the increase was 33%. (D4.1)
- Children missing for less than 24 hours in total were more likely to have been placed through IFAs: 62% of these children were placed through IFAs in 2014-15. In 2013-14, this was 58%.
- Children missing for more than 28 days were more likely to be in LA placements: 68% of these children were in LA placements in 2014-15. In 2013-14, this was 60%.

**Chart 9: Number of children missing by reported total time missing, 2014-15**



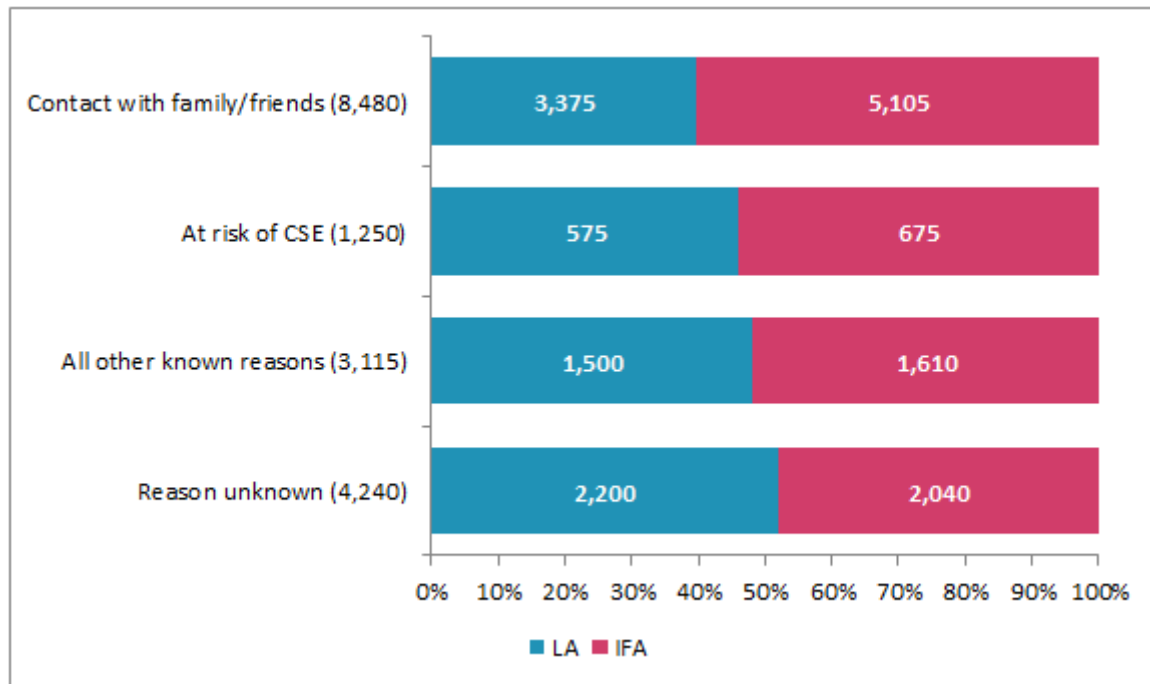
- The number of times children in foster care went missing due to contact with family and friends increased by 29% from 2013-14 to 2014-15. Half of all times that children went missing were related to contact with family and friends. (D5)
- For a quarter of all times that children went missing, the reason for this was recorded as unknown (4,240 times). This was an increase of one third from 2013-14.
- In 2014-15, just over half (52%) of times children went missing for unknown reasons were for children in LA placements. This is an increase from 2013-14,

<sup>17</sup> Total time missing is calculated by adding up the length of time the child was missing each time they were missing; for example, a child who went missing for 12 hours, then 2 days would be missing for a total of one—six days (two and a half days).



when 41% of times children went missing for unknown reasons were for children in LA placements.

**Chart 10: Number of times children went missing by reported reason, 2014-15**

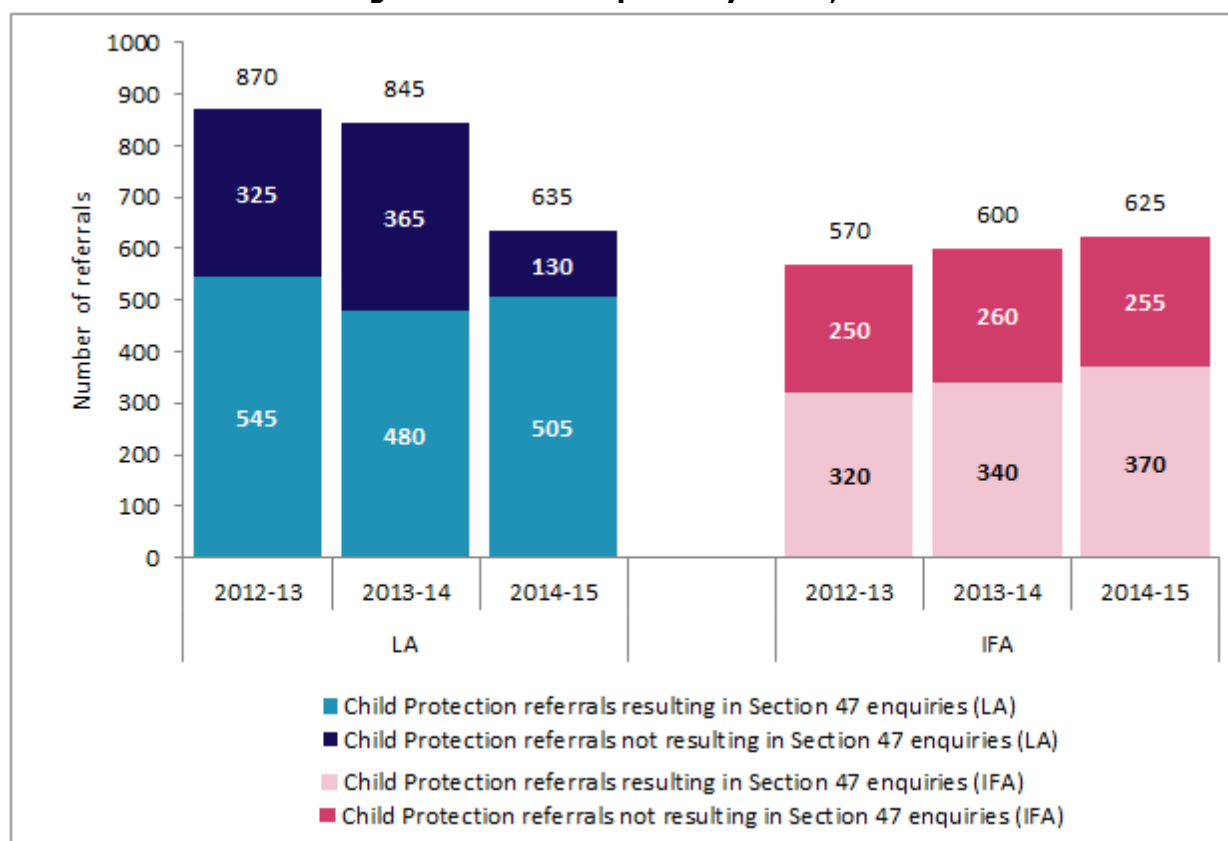


## Referrals

In 2014-15, children and young people in foster placements were less likely to be referred to LA social care teams than in previous years, but more likely to be subject to Section 47<sup>18</sup> enquiries. Children in LA placements saw a bigger decrease in the number of referrals than children placed through IFAs. However, children in LA placements who were referred were more likely to get a Section 47 enquiry than those referred by IFAs.

- The number of referrals to LA child protection teams decreased by 13% overall from 2013-14 to 2014-15. However, there was a rise in referrals from IFAs, of four percent. (D1.10)
- Between 2013-14 and 2014-15, there was an increase in the number of Section 47 enquiries of seven percent. IFAs saw a slightly bigger increase, of nine percent compared to LAs, who had a five percent increase.

**Chart 11: Referrals resulting in Section 47 enquiries by sector, 2012-2015**



<sup>18</sup> Please refer to the glossary for a full definition of Section 47.

- The number of referrals made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)<sup>19</sup> decreased by 19% from 2013-14 to 2014-15. Between 2012-13 and 2013-14, the number of referrals decreased by 8%. (D1.9)

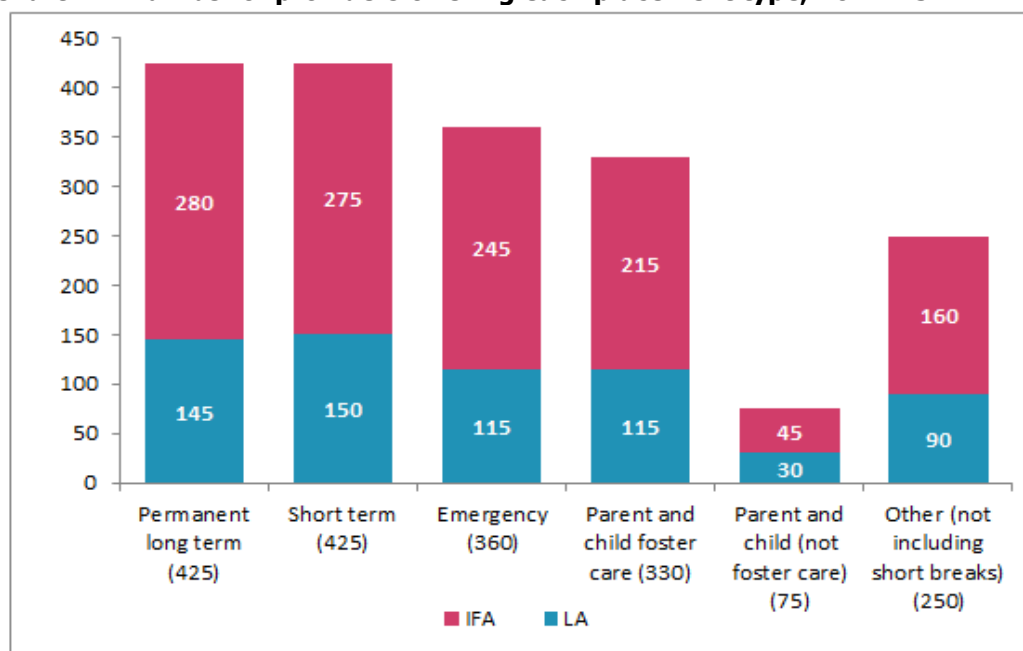
## National fostering capacity

### Types of placements

There were small changes in the number of providers offering most placement types. The number of filled places increased slightly overall but decreased for LAs. More children were placed in LA placements than with IFAs overall, and for most types of placements. Children in emergency or parent and child placements were more likely to be placed with IFAs, however. The number of approved fostering places fell slightly from 2013-14 to 2014-15 and so the capacity for placing children decreased: there were fewer vacant places in 2015, and more places that could not be used for various reasons.

- Only one local authority fostering agency (Brighton and Hove) did not offer any permanent long-term provision during 2014-15, possibly as a result of having placed only 20 children in long-term placements with their own carers during 2013-14. All LA fostering agencies provided short-term and family and friends places. (A4.1-9)

**Chart 12: Number of providers offering each placement type, 2014-15<sup>20</sup>**



<sup>19</sup> Please refer to the glossary for a full definition of the Disclosure and Barring Service.

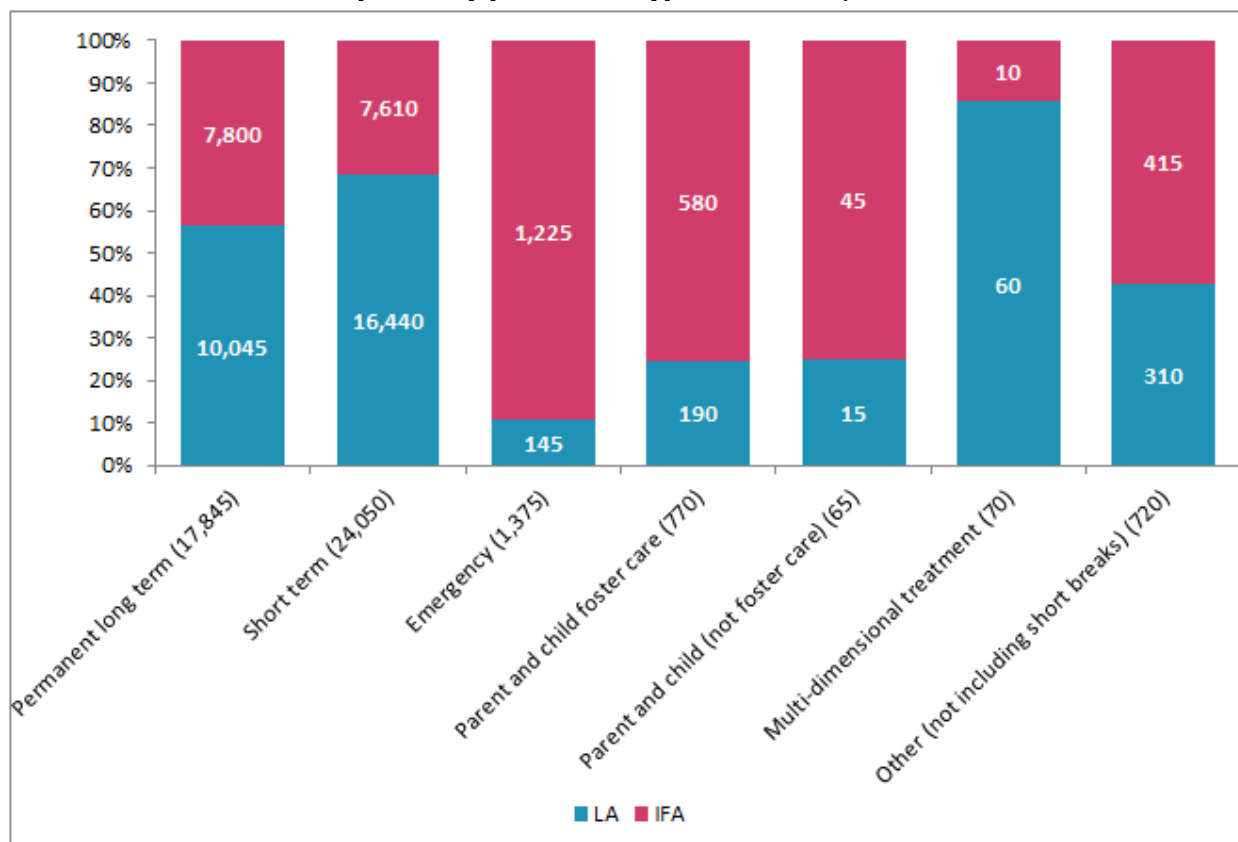
<sup>20</sup> As family and friends provision is only offered by LAs, this has been excluded from the chart. "Other" includes remand and multi-dimensional treatment foster care, as well as any other offers not included in the given categories.

- The number of fostering agencies offering exclusively short breaks placements decreased by 15% from 2013-14 to 2014-15. Most of this was accounted for by IFAs, where the number of agencies offering exclusively short breaks decreased by 27% (from 130 to 95). For LAs, the drop was only 4% (from 135 to 130) (A4.10)
- The number of children subject to concurrent planning did not change; however, LAs placed the majority of these children (56%) in 2014-15. In 2013-14, the majority (59%) were placed by IFAs. (A2.5)

### Filled places

- The number of filled places increased by 1% from 2014 to 2015. For LAs it fell by the same proportion; for IFAs it increased by 3%. (A4.1-9)
- The number of filled permanent places increased by 14% from 2014 to 2015.
- The number of filled short term and emergency places fell by 7% and 11% respectively.

**Chart 13: Number of filled places by placement type and sector, as at 31 March 2015<sup>21</sup>**

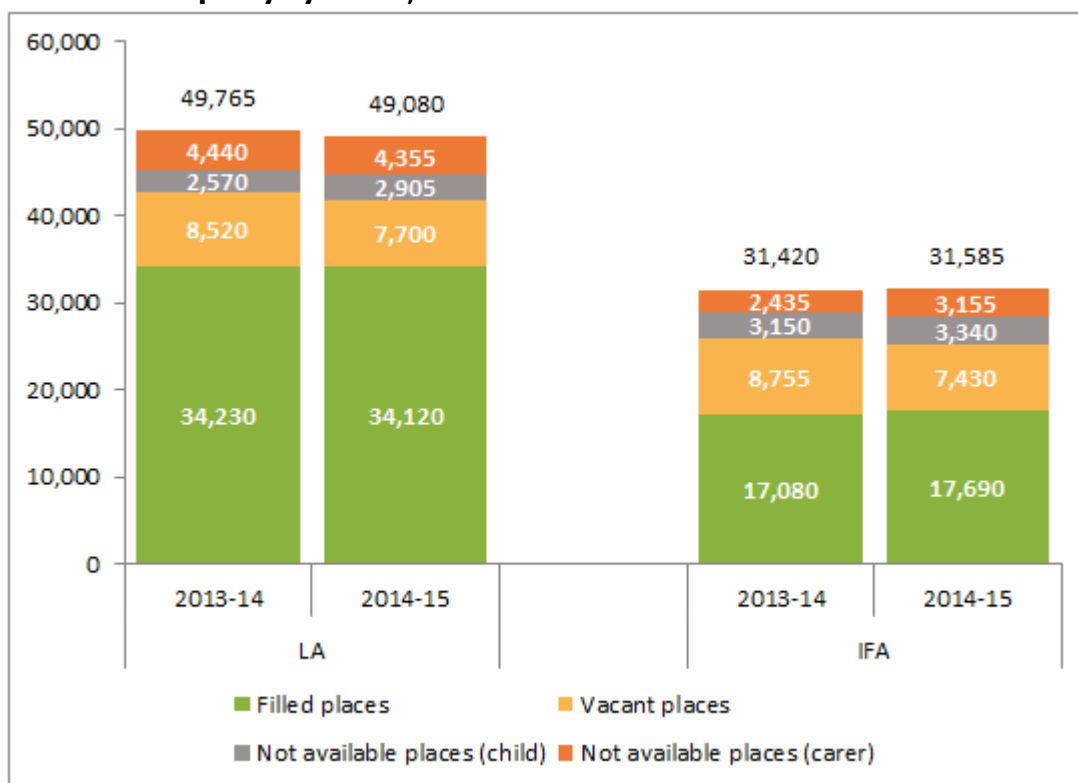


<sup>21</sup> As family and friends provision is only offered by LAs, this has been excluded from the chart. "Other" includes remand foster care, as well as any other offers not included in the given categories.

## Occupancy rates

- The number of approved places fell by 1% from 2013-14 to 2014-15. For LAs, it fell by 1%, but for IFAs it increased by 1%. (A1.1)
- The available capacity across the fostering sector decreased from 2013-14 to 2014-15: there were fewer vacant places, and more places unavailable due to the needs of the child or foster carer.

**Chart 14: Occupancy by sector, as at 31 March 2014 and 2015**



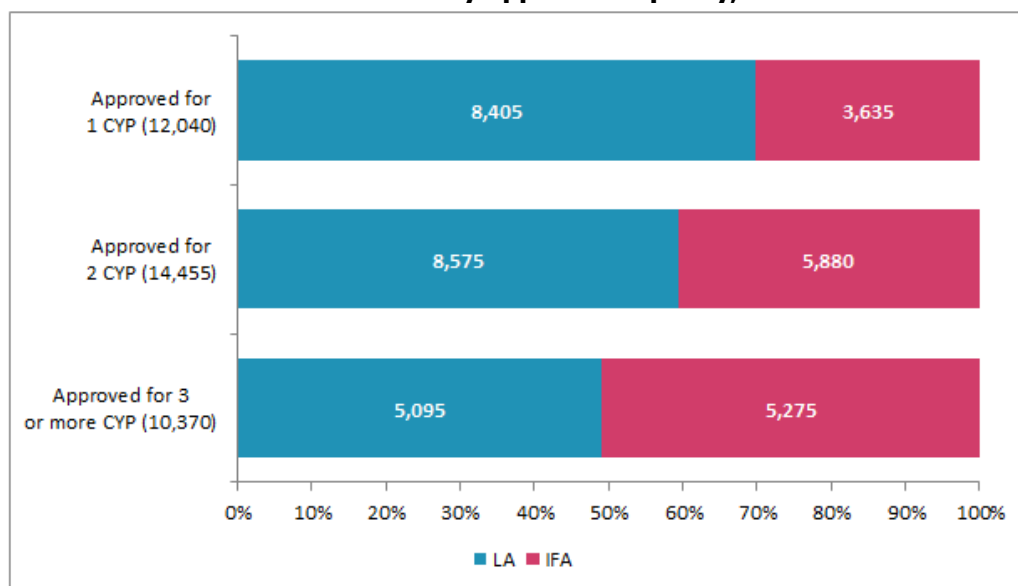
## Households

Overall, there were slightly fewer fostering households as at 31 March 2015; this was true for all household types except family and friends, which increased. IFAs had more large households (approved for three children) than LAs; this may contribute to LAs having had more exemptions in place during the year.

- The number of fostering households was 44,625 on 31 March 2015, a very small decrease of less than 1% from the same date in 2014. From 2013 to 2014, the number had increased by 4%. (C1)
- The number of long-term fostering households was 36,890 on 31 March 2015, a small decrease of 1% from the same date in 2014. From 2013 to 2014, the number had increased by 5%. (C1.1)

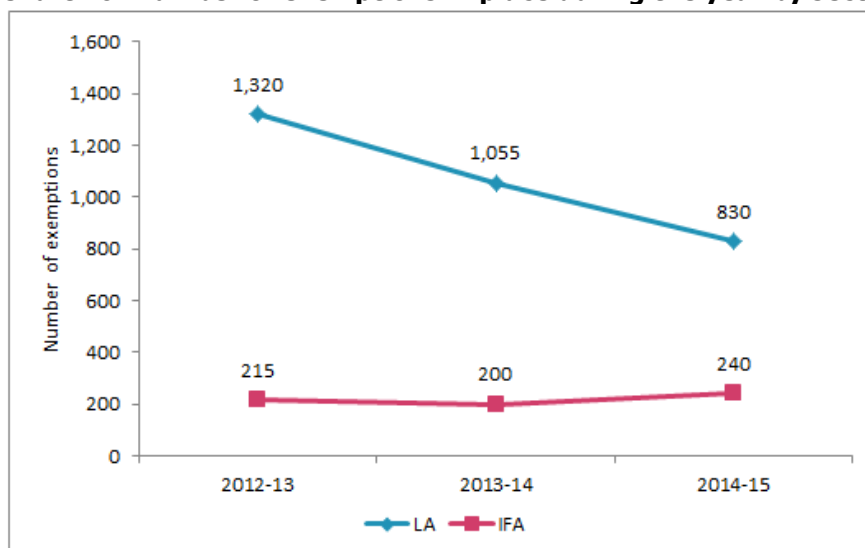
- IFAs do not generally provide family and friends/connected persons households, but for LAs, the number was 5,650 on 31 March 2015, an increase of 7% from 2014. This was a smaller increase than from 2013 to 2014, when it was 15%.
- IFAs were more likely to have larger households than LAs: 36% of IFA households were approved for three or more children (5,275) compared to 23% of LA households (5,095).

**Chart 15: Number of households by approved capacity, 2014-15**



- The total number of exemptions in place continued to decrease; by 15% from 2013-14 to 2014-15, following the 18% decrease the previous year. (A7.1)
- LAs were still responsible for the majority (78%) of exemptions.

**Chart 16: Number of exemptions in place during the year by sector, 2012-2015**



## Foster carer profile

Similar to the pattern for fostering households, there were slightly fewer foster carers as at 31 March 2015; this was true for all carer types except family and friends, of whom there were more. Most foster carers were White, though foster carers in IFAs were slightly more likely to be Black and minority ethnic than those in LAs; this may be because of IFAs focussed on placing Black and minority ethnic children. More foster carers had completed their post-approval training; IFAs in particular saw a large increase in this.

### Approved foster carers

- The number of approved foster carers fell slightly from 2014 to 2015 (by less than one percent). This was a reversal of the previous year, when the number of approved carers increased by four percent from 2013 to 2014. (B1.1-3)
- The number of exclusively short breaks carers decreased more markedly, by 14% from 2014 to 2015, the same as between 2013 to 2014. (B1.3)

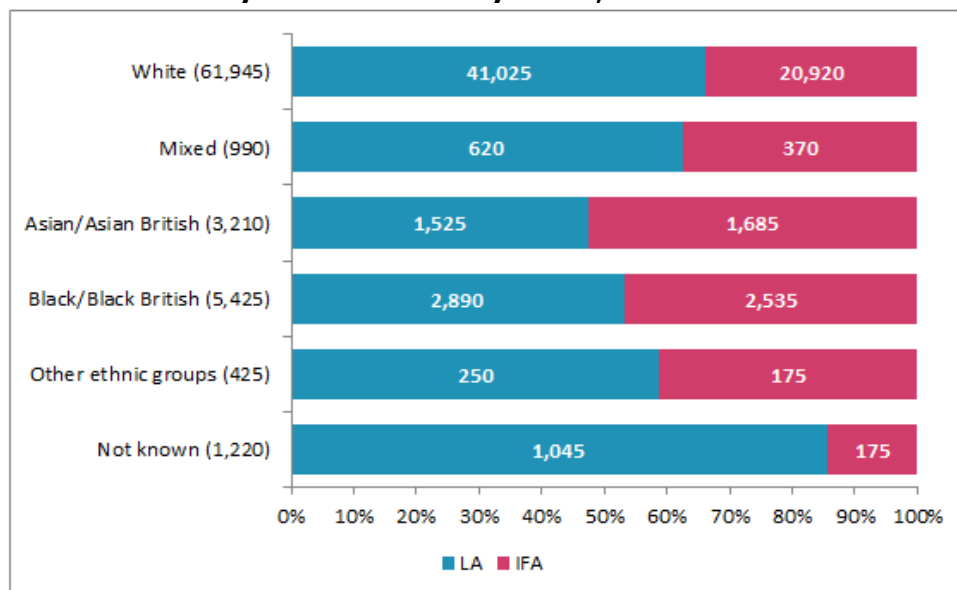
### Ethnicity

- Data about ethnic backgrounds were supplied for 99% of foster carers as at 31 March 2015. However, two local authorities (London Borough of Croydon and Nottinghamshire County Council) did not provide ethnicity data on all of their approved foster carers. (B2)
- Most carers (85%) were White in 2014-15. This was very similar to the ethnic profile among the adult (aged 20 and older) resident population in the 2011 census: with 87% of adults who were White and 13% who were of BME backgrounds.<sup>22</sup> In IFAs, 81% of carers were White, and in LAs 87%. (B2, 2011 census)

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<sup>22</sup> Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2011 census, [www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/DC2101EW/view/2092957699?rows=c\\_age&cols=c\\_ethpuk11](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/DC2101EW/view/2092957699?rows=c_age&cols=c_ethpuk11)

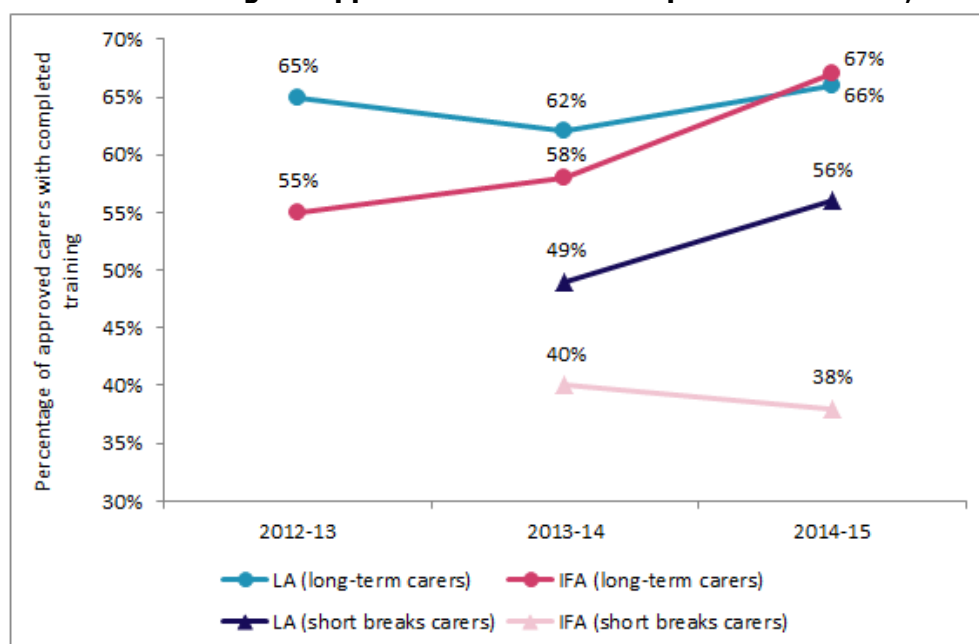
**Chart 17: Ethnicity of foster carers by sector, as at 31 March 2015**



### Post approval training

- As at 31 March 2015, 66% of approved carers had completed their Training, Support and Development (TSD) workbooks at some point since their approval. In 2014, this was 61%. (C7)
- As well as an increase in the percentage of carers with post approval (TSD) training, the number of carers also increased, by nine percent from 2014 to 2015. From 2013 to 2014, it increased by three percent. (C7.1)

**Chart 18: Percentage of approved carers with completed workbooks, 2012-2015**





## Recruitment and retention

Recruitment activity, including initial enquiries and applications, slowed down in 2014-15 compared to the previous year, particularly for LA fostering agencies. For the first year, applications to IFAs were higher than to LAs. Applications were also more likely to be withdrawn prior to the panel stage than in the previous year. Carers were most likely to initiate the de-registration process themselves, although slightly less likely than the previous year.

### Overview of recruitment in the year

- The number of initial enquiries decreased by 9%, from 114,150 in 2013-14 to 103,355 in 2014-15. This was a change from 2012-13 to 2013-14, when there was an increase of less than 1%. (C3.1)
- However, IFAs continued to receive around two thirds more initial enquiries than LA fostering agencies (38,725 by LA agencies compared to 64,630 by IFAs).
- The number of initial enquiries per application increased slightly overall, from seven enquiries per application in 2013-14 to eight per application in 2014-15. (C3.1-2)
- The number of applications decreased by over one fifth from 2013-14 to 2014-15, mostly from LAs, whose applications decreased by one third. (C3.2)

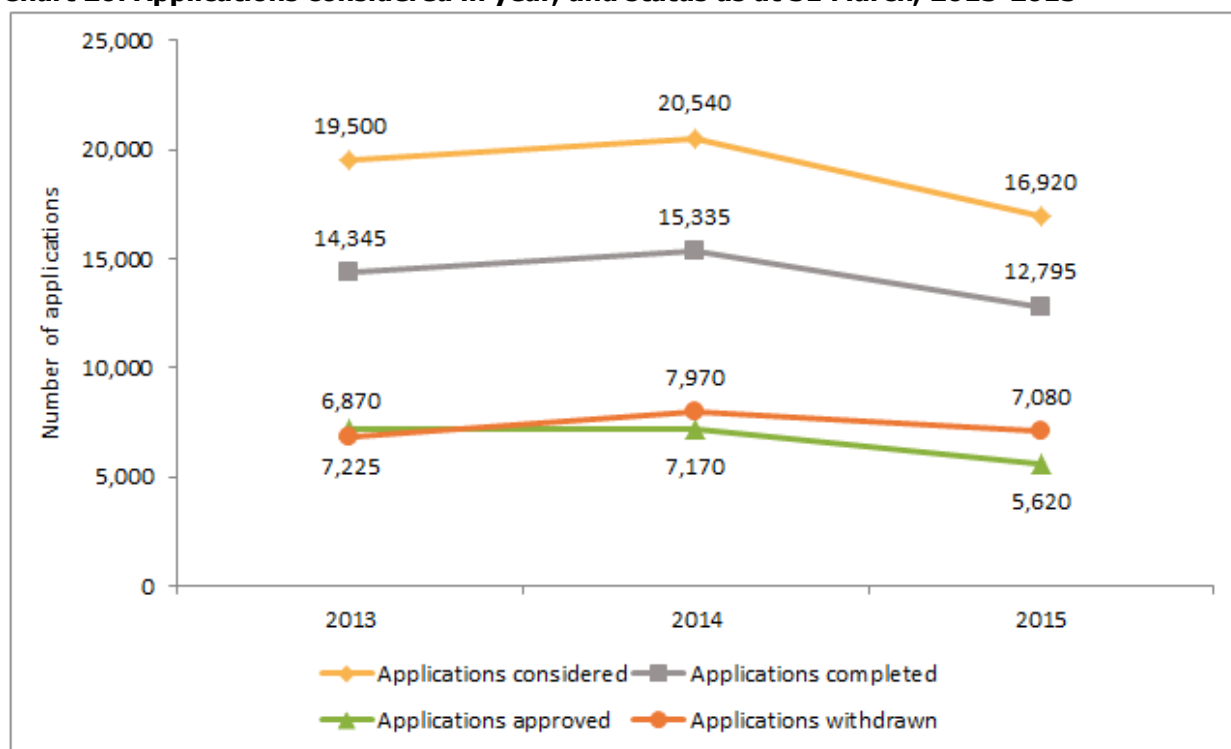
**Chart 19: Number of applications considered by sector, 2012-2015**



## Application outcomes

- The number of applications that were completed during the year decreased by 17% from 2013-14 to 2014-15. This was in contrast to a 7% increase in the previous period. (C3.2-3, C4)
- While completed applications for IFAs rose slightly, those for LAs were far fewer than in the previous year.
- The rate of completion by sector changed from the position the previous year: in 2013-14, 57% of completed applications were with LA fostering agencies; in 2014-15, 47% were with LA agencies.

**Chart 20: Applications considered in year, and status as at 31 March, 2013-2015<sup>23</sup>**

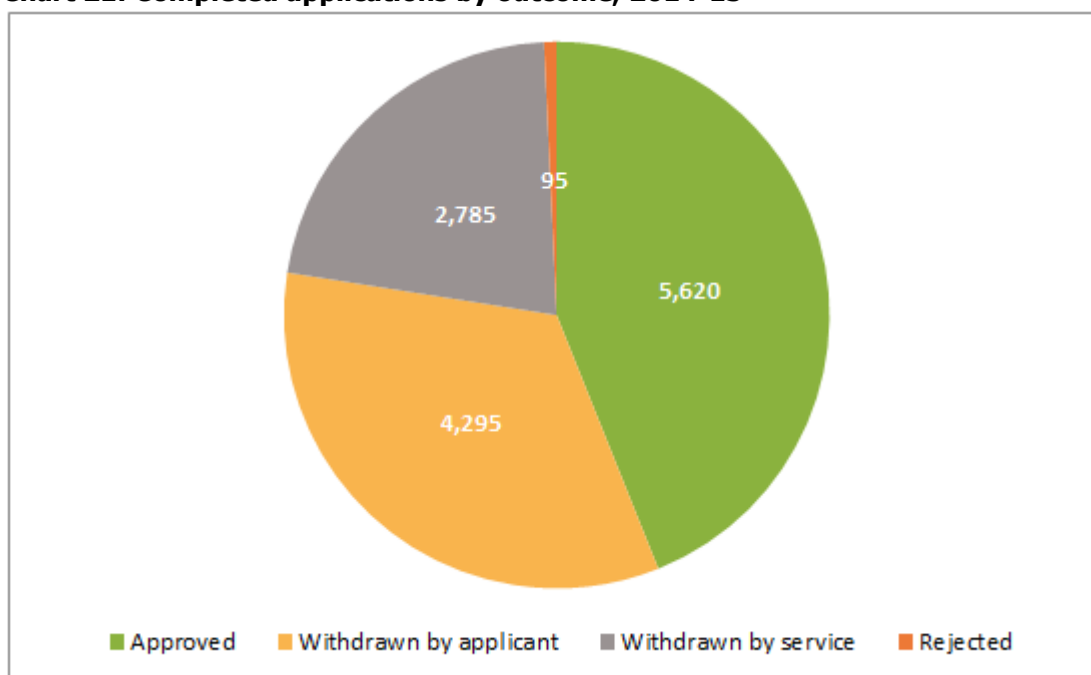


- IFAs completed a higher percentage of the slightly increased number of applications made to them (77%) in 2014-15 than in 2013-14 (74%). LAs completed a slightly lower percentage of the decreased number of applications made to them (74%) in 2014-15 than in 2013-14. (C3.2-3, C4)
- A smaller percentage of completed applications were approved in 2014-15 (44%) than in 2013-14 (47%). This decrease was due to IFAs, whose approval rate for completed applications dropped from 45% in 2013-14 to 40% in 2014-15 (C4.1-4)

<sup>23</sup> Due to the small numbers, rejected applications and those still in progress as at 31 March have not been included in this chart,

- Roughly half of approved applications were to each sector: LAs dealt with 51% of approved applications in 2014-15. This brought the two sectors closer than 2013-14, when LAs had dealt with 58% of all approved applications.

**Chart 21: Completed applications by outcome, 2014-15**

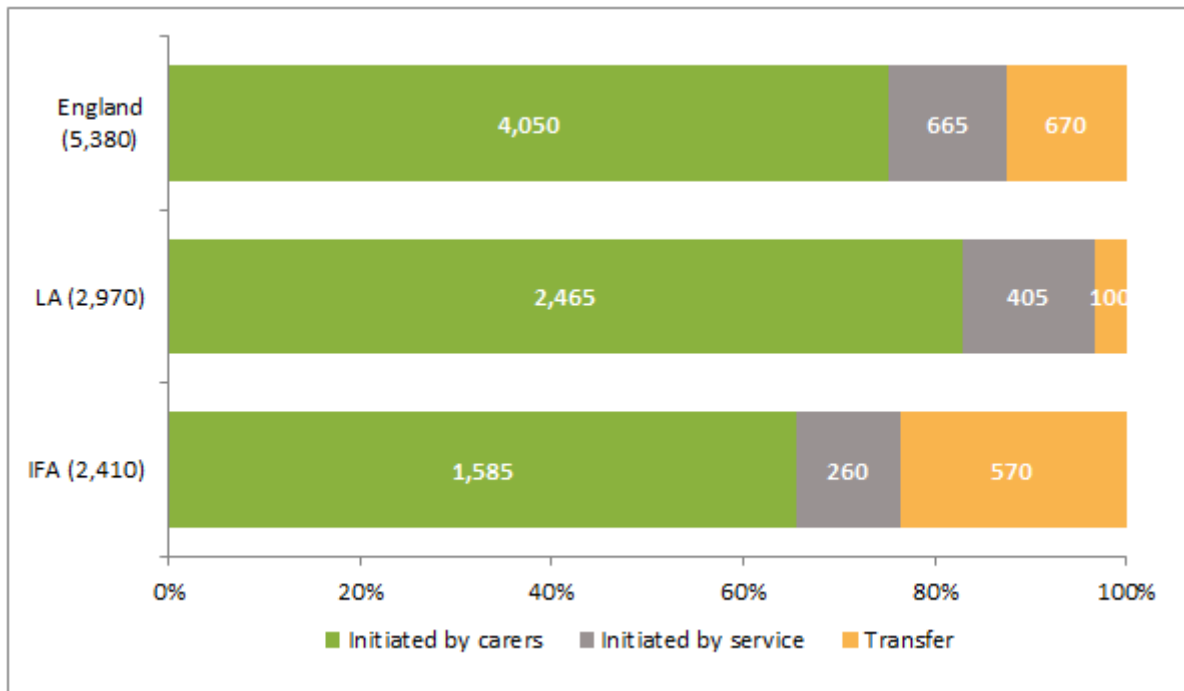


- Data on approvals of family and friends/connected persons households was collected for the first time in 2014-15.
- There were 2,335 households reported to be approved during 2014-15; 99% of these (2,305) were approved by LA fostering agencies. (C2.1)
- The number of referrals made to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) during 2014-15 increased by 10%, from 100 to 110. (C6.1)
- Around one third of referrals resulted in a recommendation to review the decision in 2014-15 (35) and in 2013-14 (35). (C6.1-2)
- Most of these were for LAs in both 2014-15 (86%) and 2013-14 (71%).

## De-registration of fostering households

- Fewer households ceased to provide foster care between 2013-14 and 2014-15 (9%) than in the previous period (24%). (C3.4)
- Over half of all de-registrations in 2014-15 were by LA registered households (55%), compared to just under two thirds (63%) in 2013-14. (C3.4)

**Chart 22: De-registrations by reason and sector, 2014-15**

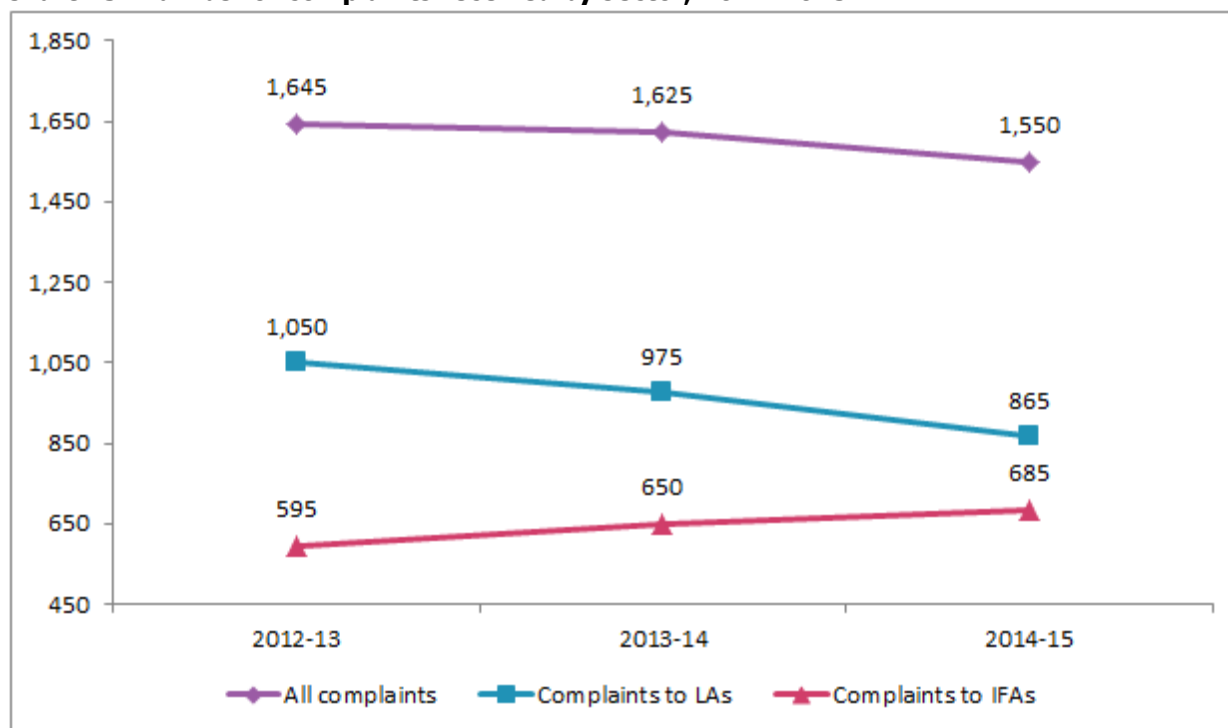


## Complaints and allegations of misconduct

Very little has changed regarding the overall number of complaints from 2013-14 to 2014-15; however, the gap between the two sectors has shrunk. Allegations saw more change, as well as additional information being collected in 2014-15. Foster carers were more likely to be the subject of an allegation in 2014-15 than previous years; allegations were most likely to relate to physical abuse.

### Complaints

- The number of complaints decreased by 5% from 1,625 in 2013-14 to 1,550 in 2014-15. This was a larger decrease than from 2012-13 to 2013-14, when the number fell by 1%. (E1)

**Chart 23: Number of complaints received by sector, 2012-2015**

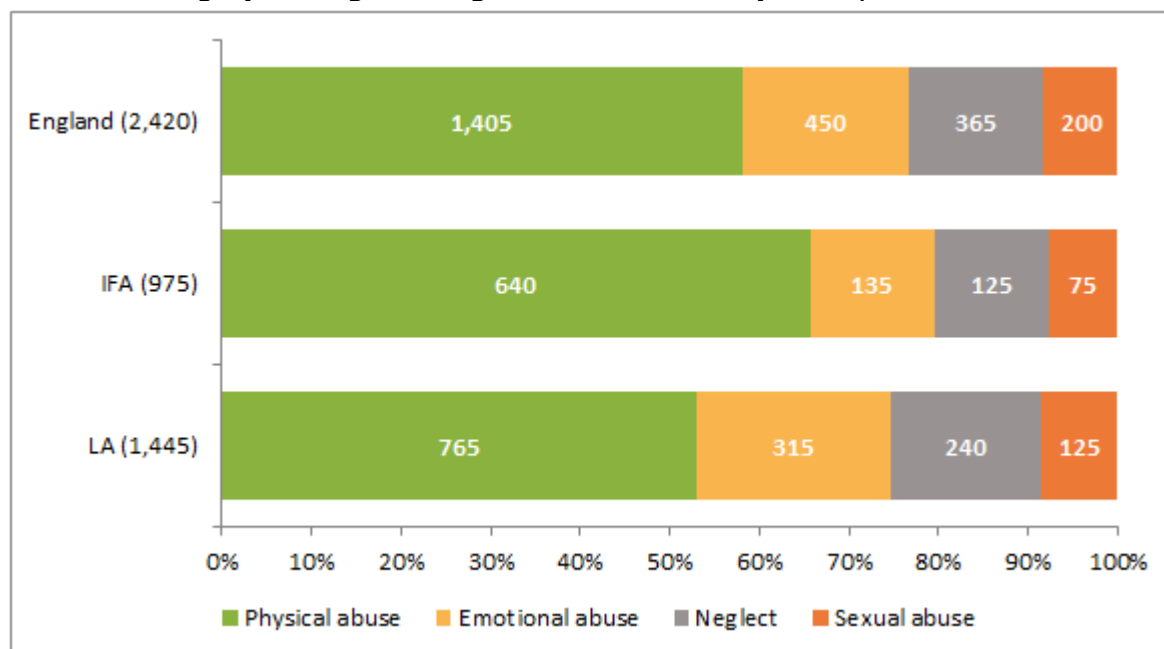
- More complaints were received from foster carers than any other source in 2014-15 (545), as in 2013-14 (540). Children and young people were the second most common source of complaints in 2014-15, though there were 13% fewer complaints from this group than in 2013-14.(E1)
- Almost half of all complaints to LA fostering agencies were instigated by foster carers, while LAs received a smaller proportion than nationally of complaints from children.
- By contrast, the majority of complaints to IFAs were split broadly equally between children (25%), social workers (22%) and foster carers (20%). The remainder were from parents, other professionals than social workers, and other sources.
- The number of complaints which were not upheld fell by 3% from 2013-14 to 2014-15. (E1)
- Parents were most likely to have their complaint not upheld, with 58% of complaints (115 of 200 complaints) from this group not upheld in 2014-15, and 48% in 2013-14.

### Allegations of misconduct

Detailed information about allegations of misconduct was collected for the first time in 2014-15, including around categories of abuse, timescales, and outcomes for investigations.

- The number of allegations against foster carers increased by 5% from 2013-14 to 2014-15. This was a shift from 2012-13 to 2013-14, when the number of allegations decreased by 25%. (D1)
- Two thirds of allegations (1,640) were made by fostered children, with the remaining 785 coming from other sources. As this is the first year data on sources of allegations was collected, there is no comparable data from previous years. (D1.1-2)
- The majority of allegations (58%) were categorised as physical abuse, followed by emotional abuse (19%), neglect (15%) and sexual abuse (8%). (D1.5-8)

**Chart 24: Category of allegations against foster carers by sector, 2014-15**



- The majority of concerns (60%) were resolved with no further action, with 17% having continued monitoring, and a quarter being referred to the fostering panel for review. (D1.12-14)
- Over half of all allegations (1,335) were resolved in less than 21 working days, while almost a fifth (430) took more than 50 working days (10 weeks) to resolve, often due to the length of time needed for police investigations. (D1.15-18)
- IFAs completed almost two thirds of their investigations in less than 21 working days (62%), compared to half of those concerning LAs.
- LA fostering agencies were more likely to take over ten weeks to complete investigations, with one fifth of their investigations taking this long, compared to one sixth of those by IFAs.

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## Revisions to previous release

This is the first release of these data for the period 1 April 2014 – 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](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/childrens-social-care-statistics) under the heading 'Fostering in England'.

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

## Response rates

	2015			2014		
	Local authority fostering services	Independent fostering agencies	Total	Local authority fostering services	Independent fostering agencies	Total
Number of providers eligible to return (as at 31 March)	152	293	445	152	301	453
Returns in analysis	152	293	445	151	299	450
Percentage of returns	100%	100%	100%	99%	99%	99%

Ofsted received data returns from all LA fostering agencies and IFAs eligible to return data, a one percentage point increase from 2014. Around 2% of all returns contained data inaccuracies which could not be resolved. These data have been included in the national, LA and IFA data and in this report, with an acknowledgement where necessary.

The number of LA fostering agencies has fallen by one, as Doncaster's fostering service is now run by an IFA, Doncaster Children's Trust. The Isles of Scilly and the City of London provided nil returns, as their fostering services are provided by Cornwall and the Pan-London arrangement respectively, rather than in house. Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster's fostering services operate collectively as London Tri-Borough, though each individual LA submits a return, which are then combined into a single return.

Of the 300 registered IFAs on 31 March 2015, two were ineligible to be collected as they were duplicate registrations and four were ineligible to be collected because they resigned after the start of the collection. The 294 returns in this dataset, therefore, represent 100% of all eligible IFAs in England.

## Additional information

The aggregated data at England, total LA, and total IFA levels, and at individual LA and regional total levels, are available in Excel format on the Ofsted website [www.gov.uk/government/collections/childrens-social-care-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/childrens-social-care-statistics) under the heading 'Fostering in England'.



## Glossary

### **Alternative educational provision**

This includes provisions outside of long-term and special schools. This includes: provision directly managed by a local authority; pupil referral units; hospital schools; hospital and home teaching services; tuition centres; e-learning centres; and provision that is brokered or arranged by a local authority, school or group of schools, such as placements in FE colleges, extended work experience, projects provided by the voluntary or private sector or multi-agency initiatives.

### **Approved foster carers**

These are individual foster carers who are currently approved by a fostering service as at 31 March 2015.

### **At risk (of CSE)**

This concerns any child where there is a concern that they will become subject to CSE at some point, but this has not yet happened. The risk does not need to have been confirmed by other professionals.

### **Child Sexual Exploitation**

The DfE uses the following definition of CSE:

Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; for example being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

Safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation, DfE 2009, [www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-young-people-from-sexual-exploitation-supplementary-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-young-people-from-sexual-exploitation-supplementary-guidance), (p.9)

### **Complaints not upheld**

This only includes those complaints where no action on any aspect was necessary.

### **Concurrent planning**

This is where a looked after child is placed with approved foster carers who are also approved as adopters. If rehabilitation with parents is not successful, the child is

placed for adoption, and remains with the family ensuring a continuity of attachment.

### **Compulsory school age**

Children are of 'compulsory school age' on the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday. Young people cease to be of 'compulsory school age' on the last Friday of June during the year that they become 16, provided that their birthday is before the beginning of the next school year.

### **Disabled**

Section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Examples include cancer, diabetes, multiple sclerosis and heart conditions; hearing or sight impairments, or a significant mobility difficulty; and mental health conditions or learning difficulties.

### **Exemption**

An exemption is required in the specific situation in which a foster carer is asked to look after more than three children who are not all part of a sibling group, under sections 63(12) and Schedule 7(2) of the Children Act 1989.

### **Family and friends foster care**

Foster care provided for a looked after child(ren) by a connected person, relative or friend who is approved by a fostering service to foster that particular child(ren). (Kinship care; relative care)

### **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 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 with foster carers approved by them. Independent fostering agencies work closely with local authorities to deliver these placements.

### **Foster places**

Foster places refers to the total number of places that foster carers are approved to provide, whether occupied or not; it relates to the capacity of foster care in England.

### **Foster placements**

Foster placements refers to arrangements made for children to be looked after, in this context living with foster carers.

### **Missing**

In this context refers to children up to the age of 18 who have run away from their foster placement, have been abducted, or whose whereabouts is unknown. Missing does include child abduction where a child has been abducted or forcibly removed from their place of residence. Missing does not include unauthorised absence where a looked-after child's whereabouts are known or thought to be known but unconfirmed, they are not missing and may instead be considered as absent without authorisation from their placement. Missing is reported in terms of the numbers of children who went missing and also the total number of 'instances' on which children went missing.

### **Multi-dimensional treatment foster care under the Department for Education scheme**

MTFC is a highly structured behavioural programme, providing wraparound multi-professional support and including daily communication between carers, the team and school. The key elements of the intervention are: the provision of a consistent reinforcing environment in which young people are mentored and encouraged; provision of clearly specified boundaries to behaviour and specified consequences that can be delivered in a teaching-oriented manner; close supervision of young people's activities and whereabouts; diversion from anti-social peers and help to develop positive social skills that will help young people form relationships with a positive peer group. (<http://evidencebasedinterventions.org.uk/>)

### **No educational arrangements**

This refers to children in foster care who have no mainstream, special school or alternative educational provision. The data needs to cover the financial year April-March (not the academic year) and is only applicable when the child/young person is in a foster placement.

### **Parent and child placements (foster and non-foster)**

Foster care provided with approved foster carers in a family setting for a parent together with her/his child where at least one of them is looked after. Parent and child arrangements which do not fit this definition are included as parent and child arrangements that are not foster care.

### **Persistent absence from school**

'Persistent absence' from school is defined by the Department for Education. Persistent absentees are defined as having an overall absence rate of around 15 percent or more. As an example, this would equate to 46 or more sessions (23 days) of absence (authorised and unauthorised) during the first five half terms of the academic year. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/absence-statistics-guide>

The data needs to cover the financial year April-March (not the academic year) and is only applicable when the child/young person is in a foster placement.

**Physical restraint**

Means stopping a foster child/young person from doing something they appear to want to do by physical means. For example, the foster carer moving the child/young person or blocking their movement to stop them hurting themselves or others or from seriously damaging property.

**Raising the participation age (RPA)**

The government introduced legislation in summer 2013 which requires young people to continue in some form of education or training until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-young-people/2010-to-2015-government-policy-young-people#appendix-3-raising-the-participation-age>

**Remained in progress**

Any applications which were still in progress as at 31 March, having not either reached the decision stage or been stopped by the applicant.

**Remand foster care**

Foster care provided for children on remand, or committed for trial or sentence under CYPA or CDA, or detained in local authority accommodation under PACE, or subject to a supervision order with residence requirement.

**Section 47**

Refers to section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and relates to the local authority's duty to investigate child protection concerns.

**Staying Put**

This is a duty on local authorities in England which came into force in May 2014 as part of the Children and Families Act 2014.

This requires local authorities in England to facilitate, monitor and support staying put arrangements for fostered young people until they reach the age of 21, where this is what they and their foster carers want, unless the local authority consider that the staying put arrangement is not consistent with the welfare of the young person.

(<https://www.fostering.net/all-about-fostering/providers/staying-put-update#.VknTO9LhCUk>)

The DfE/Children's Partnership's good practice guide gives more information:

[http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/1154341/staying\\_put.pdf](http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/1154341/staying_put.pdf)

**Subject to (CSE)**

This refers to any child considered to have experienced child sexual exploitation. This does not have to have been confirmed by other professionals.

### **Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards**

This is post-approval training for foster carers, including evidence workbooks. The evidence workbooks, published by the DfE, contain certificates of completion which are signed off by fostering services once foster carers have successfully evidenced meeting all the outcomes in the TDS standards.

Details of the TDS standards can be found at:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/training-support-and-development-standards-for-foster-care-evidence-workbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/training-support-and-development-standards-for-foster-care-evidence-workbook)

### **Unplanned endings**

This is a 'placement ending that was not included in the social work plan either in the ending itself or the timing of the termination' (p 12). [Berridge D and Cleaver H, Foster Home Breakdown, Oxford: Blackwell, 1987]

An unplanned ending includes a placement which ended earlier than the original planned end date (for example, because the foster carer gave notice to terminate the placement) even if a new plan was in place when the child moved placement.

Unplanned endings within 24 hours refers to when a placement ends within 24 hours of a triggering event, regardless of whether that placement has only just started or if the child has been in placement long term

### **Withdrawn**

Applications which are stopped by the applicant or by the service (after a decision prior to panel that the applicant is not suitable).

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