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Statistician:	Adam King
Statistician's telephone number:	0300 013 0020
Public enquiries:	enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Press enquiries:	pressenquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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Key Points

- Of the 60,395 children in placements that are inspected by Ofsted, 79% were in placement with providers with Good or Outstanding judgements for *Overall effectiveness* or *Overall quality*.
- Children and young people living in independent living are almost twice as likely to live in the most deprived areas of the country as children in other placement types. Around half of these children and young people were living in the most deprived areas, as at 31 March 2013. Five per cent lived in the least deprived. Over half were living in areas with the highest crime levels and 4% were living in areas with the lowest crime levels.
- Overall, children living in children's homes are slightly less likely to live in the most deprived areas of the country than children who are fostered.
- Of the children looked after who were placed with their parents, around a third had been living there for more than two years.
- Around two thirds of children looked after were living within their local authority boundary. Five per cent were living more than 50 miles from their local authority.
- Seventy-one per cent of children placed for adoption had been in their placement for less than six months; 9% were in placement for more than 12 months.

Introduction

1. Local authorities are required to submit an annual data return, the SSDA903, to the Department for Education which includes information about all of their children looked after, including information about where they are living, i.e. their placements. This is published primarily in the statistical first release 'Children looked after by local authorities in England, including adoption'.¹
2. In 2011, Ofsted collected child-level data from local authorities on their commissioned services, that is services provided by private and voluntary organisations, for children looked after. This was an invaluable source of data and was used to inform the Children's Services Assessments, inspection, and national debate on commissioning for children looked after. Ofsted published a tool containing this information on 19 January 2012.²
3. In 2013, Ofsted collected data on *all* children looked after as at 31 March, including those placed in both commissioned and local authority services. This is a report of the findings from that collection.
4. This collection requested, for the most part, data that had already been collated and validated by local authorities as part of the process of submitting their SSDA903 returns to the DfE. Ofsted then matched these data to Ofsted's inspection judgement data as at 31 March 2013. The resulting matching enables local authorities to use the data to inform discussion around commissioning arrangements for children looked after.
5. The data presented is a snapshot of children looked after and their placements on a particular day and is therefore an historical view. It is intended as a broad insight into the types of placements in which children looked after live and where they are living. It is not intended to be a commentary on local authority decision-making; we are not making any judgements on local authority performance.
6. The data presented in this publication is, at times, different to that provided by the DfE in their national statistics for children looked after, including adoption. The reasons for this are explored further below.
7. The data are currently being used to inform the latest framework for the inspection of services for "Children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers", which began in November 2013.
8. This release is experimental because the statistics do not yet meet the rigorous quality standards of National Statistics. As is further discussed,

¹ Data are published annually through the www.gov.uk website. The latest release, for data as at 31 March 2013, can be found [here](#).

² The Commissioned Services placement data tool can be found [here](#).

below, there are issues of data quality, particularly around placement type, that require some further work. Ofsted have tried to resolve them as best we can. Although there is confidence in much of the high level identification of placement type, further work is needed on the identification of all the correct providers. The process of collecting these data, and of the quality assurance work undertaken, will inform better data collection by both Ofsted and DfE in the future.

Why is our data different to DfE published data?

9. As at 31 March 2013 the DfE reported that there were 68,110 children and young people being looked after, as opposed to the 67,886 cited here; a difference of approximately 200 children looked after. Some explanations for this difference are given below.
10. 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. There were 59 placements submitted by local authorities that had a placement start date after 31 March 2013, and 880 without a placement start date.
11. The quality assurance process also found errors in placement codes given by local authorities to the DfE. Some fostering codes, for example, were given for children who had been placed for adoption. Most of the children originally recorded as living in residential special schools were, in fact, living in children's homes that had educational facilities. In addition, most children and young people recorded as living in adult residential care were in children's homes. A breakdown of the most significant changes in placement codes before and after our quality assurance procedures can be viewed in the table below:³

Table 1: Summary of key placement codes before and after Ofsted quality assurance

Placement codes	Original		
	Submissions	Cleaned Data	Difference
Children's homes (K2)	5,216	6,141	925
Residential special schools (S1)	746	228	-518
Residential care home (R1)	500	40	-460
Adoption (A3, A4, A5 and A6)	3,369	2,402	33
Fostering (Q1 and Q2)	50,672	50,804	132
Other placement (Z1)	103	17	-86

Source: CLA placement data

³ See Glossary for more detailed explanations of placement codes.

12. Upon completion of the quality assurance process, we had placement details for a further 79 children and young people not provided to the DfE. The main reason given by local authorities for their initial data not including all children they had placed was that their systems had not been updated for all placements by the end of July 2013, the deadline for the collection of the DfE data.
13. Another difference between our data and the 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.

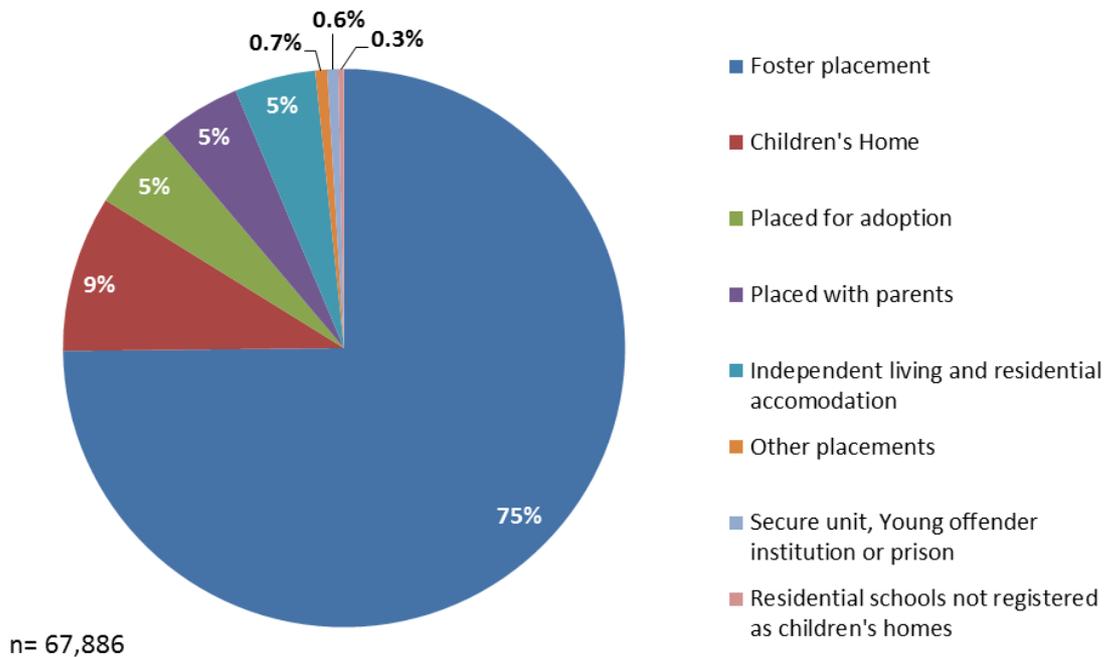
What type of placements were children living in?

14. There were 67,886 children looked after by local authorities in England as at 31 March 2013.
15. The largest proportion of these children (75%) was in foster placements (50,804 children). Almost 11% were placed in a foster placement with a relative or friend, while the remaining 64% were placed in a foster placement with other foster carers.
16. Almost one in ten children looked after (6,141) were placed in children's homes.⁴
17. Five per cent of children were placed for adoption (3,402). Eight percent of children placed for adoption were placed with their current foster carer.
18. Almost 5% of children looked after were placed with their own parents or other person with parental responsibility (3,257).

⁴ Throughout this report, children placed in children's homes includes those in Residential Special Schools where they reside for more than 295 days of the year unless otherwise stated. This is because Ofsted regulates and inspects these provisions as children's home provisions.

Chart 1^{5 6}

Proportion of looked after children by placement type as at 31 March 2013



Quality of children's placements

19. We matched the placement data collected with Ofsted inspection outcomes, using our Unique Reference Numbers as assigned to individual registrations. Information on inspection outcomes refers only to the latest full inspection outcome for each provider as at 31 March 2013, and does not take into account any subsequent inspection, either full or interim.

20. The information included, below, does not, therefore, tell us about the quality of the placement at the time the child was placed, or any progress made since by those providers that were judged to be less than *Good*.

21. Inspection outcomes for adoption and fostering services only tell us about the quality of the services that recruit, train and support adopters and foster carers, not about the nature of the placement itself. The outcomes also refer only to the most recent stand-alone inspection of services and do not take into account any outcomes from the inspections of "Children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers" which have replaced regulatory inspections of fostering and adoption services.

22. There were 60,395 children placed with providers inspected by Ofsted. There were 7,491 children in placements that were either not inspected by Ofsted, in

⁵ Percentages are rounded and may not add to exactly 100.

⁶ Other placements include: children in a refuge; adult residential care homes; medical establishments; family centres or mother and baby units; residential employment and children missing.

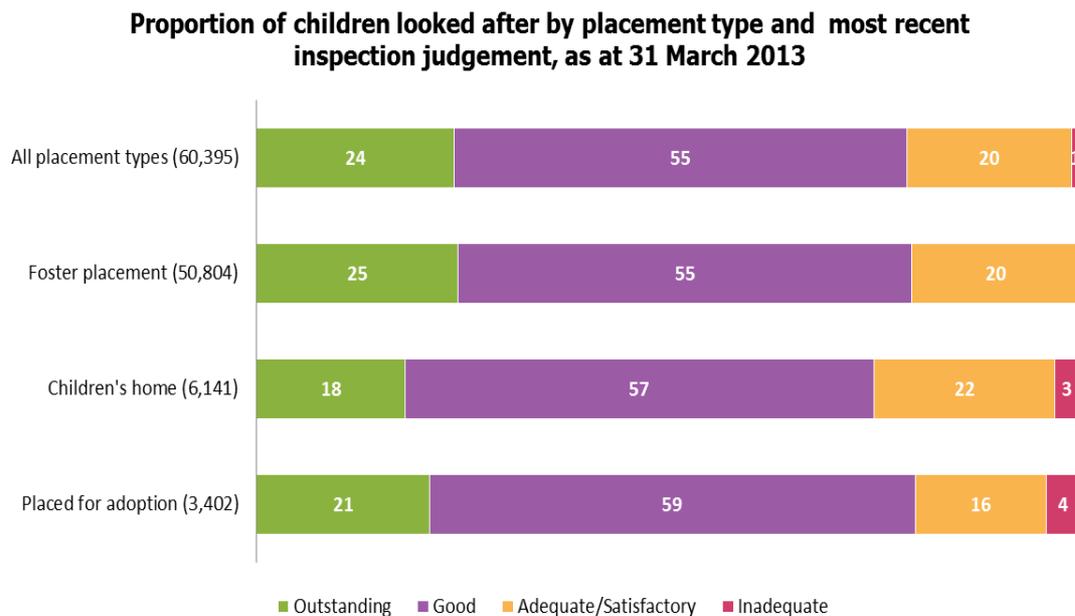
placement with provisions that had not yet been inspected at this date, or where there was insufficient information given to verify the provider.⁷ Services that had not been inspected by this date are those that were newly registered.

23. Of the 60,395 children in placements that are inspected by Ofsted, 79% were in placement with providers with *Good* or *Outstanding* judgements for *Overall effectiveness* or *Overall quality*.

24. Almost one in four children in children's homes and one in five in foster placements were placed with an *Adequate/Satisfactory* provider.

25. Two thirds of children placed in residential schools were in settings judged to be *Outstanding*.

Chart 2⁸



26. Seven local authorities had placed over 80% of their children looked after in *Outstanding* provisions. These were Rutland, Lincolnshire, Southampton, City of London, Poole, North Lincolnshire and Leicestershire.

⁷ 3,257 (43%) were children living with parents, for example, and 2,279 (30%) were children and young people in independent accommodation; placements not inspected by Ofsted. 669 children were living in placements through settings that had not yet been inspected (9%). 17% were children in all other placement types where the local authority could not readily provide the registration details of the service through which these children were placed. For example, one local authority could tell us which overall organisation they had placed children with, but could not give us the details of which individual registrations they had used. As a result, we were unable to match these placements to Ofsted judgements.

⁸ Percentages are rounded and may not add to exactly 100. All placement types includes only those settings inspected by Ofsted. For a breakdown of those placement types not inspected by Ofsted, see section below – *Not inspected by Ofsted*.

27. There were 426 children and young people, placed by 87 local authorities, in settings judged to be *Inadequate* at their most recent inspection as at 31 March 2013. Over 40% of these children (186) were placed in children's homes, while around a third (137) were placed for adoption. The majority of the remaining children (96) were placed in foster placements using *Inadequate* fostering services. Of the 426 children and young people living in *Inadequate* provisions in March 2013, Kent had placed 89 children and young people (21%), Nottinghamshire had placed 63 (15%) and Derby had placed 22 (5%).
28. As stated above, the quality of placements, as at 31 March 2013, does not reflect the quality of placements either at the time the children were placed, or any progress that provisions have since made. Many of these settings, particularly children's homes, have made *Good progress* since 31 March 2013. At the time of writing there are very few children's homes currently judged to be *Inadequate*.⁹
29. One in five children living in foster care (around 10,000) were placed using providers judged to be *Adequate/Satisfactory*.

How long had children been in their placements?¹⁰

30. The following report refers only to the most recent placement for each child looked after as at 31 March 2013. It is designed, therefore, to give an indication of placement stability but does not take into account the length of time each child has been looked after, their previous placements, or the number of placement moves.
31. Across all placement types, one in four children had been in placement for six to 12 months (16,636 children) and 27% had been in placement for over two years (18,556 children).¹¹
32. There is considerable variation in placement duration depending on placement type. Children in a foster placement with a relative or friend, in residential special schools, or with their parents were most likely to have been in their placement for more than two years (39%, 36% and 31% respectively).

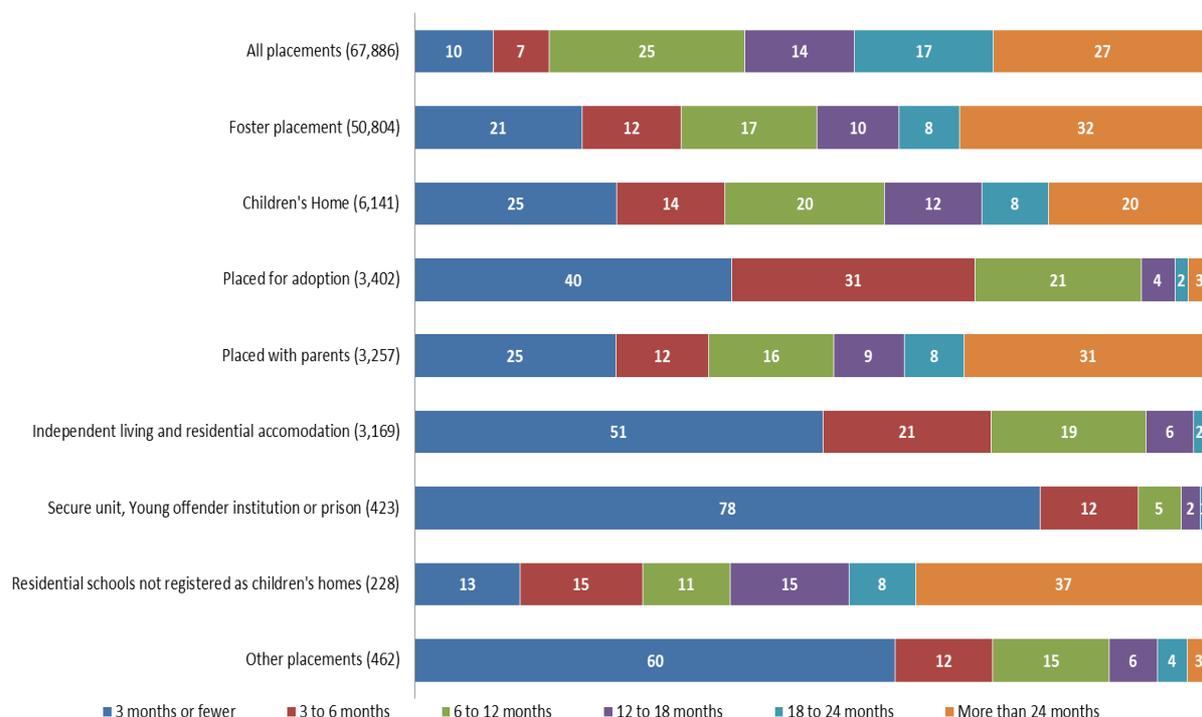
⁹ For full information on Ofsted social care inspection outcomes, see our Official Statistics release [here](#).

¹⁰ For further information regarding placement duration see: Department for Education (2013) *Children looked after in England, including adoption* available [here](#): Tables B3, D4 and D5. Please note that the data are not directly comparable as the DfE double-counts the same children who have been in different placement types throughout the year, as opposed to a snapshot as is given here.

¹¹ There were 59 placements for which start dates were not provided. They have not been included in this analysis.

Chart 3

Proportion of looked after children by length of time in their placement, as at 31 March 2013



33. A fifth of children in children's homes had been in placement for more than two years, while one in four had been in placement for less than three months.¹²

34. Only 9% of children placed for adoption had been in placement for over 12 months.

Where were children living?

Location of placements¹³

35. There were 63,860 children looked after placed in England.

36. There were 342 children who were living outside of England, including around 334 in Wales and Scotland, and 21 living outside of the UK.

¹² See: Department for Education (2014) Children's homes data pack, September 2013 updated June 2014 [here](#) p.8. The data pack indicates that in 2012-13 52% of children's home placements lasted less than three months. This data however, refers only to children who ceased to be looked after during the year aged 10 and over.

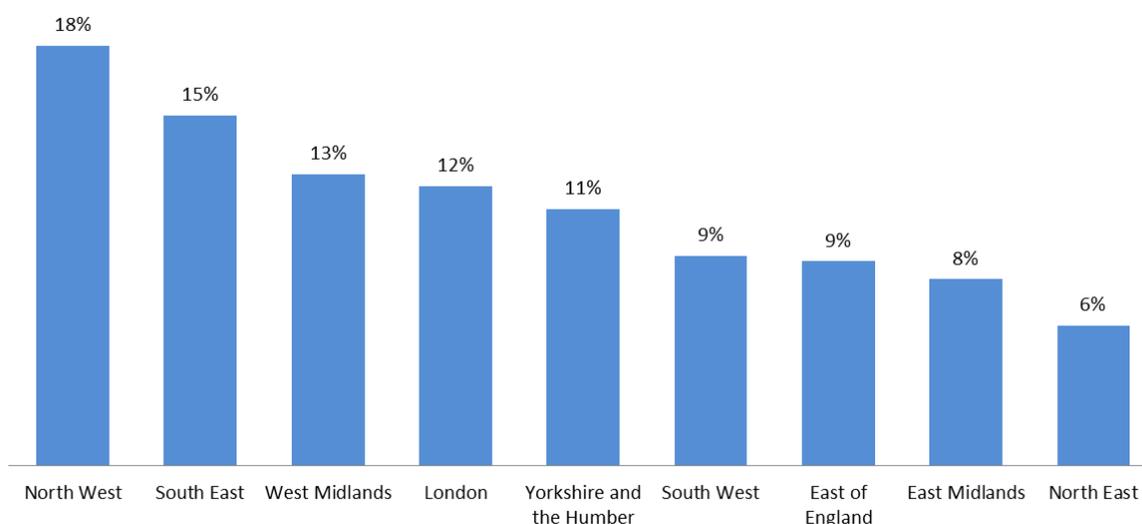
¹³ For the location of children's homes in England see: See: Department for Education (2014) Children's Homes Data Pack, September 2013 updated June 2014, p.14

37. There were 3,684 children and young people for whom we did not receive placement location information.¹⁴

38. Of the 63,860 children and young people we know to have been placed in England, nearly one in five were placed in the North West region of England. Six per cent were placed in the North East region.

Chart 3

Proportion of children looked after placed in each region, as at 31 March 2013



n= 63,860

Distance from local authority boundary¹⁵

39. Around two thirds (63%) of the 64,201 children looked after, for whom placement location was known, were placed within the local authority boundary.¹⁶

40. Five per cent of all children placed (3,059) were placed more than 50 miles from their LA boundary.

¹⁴ This is a voluntary collection and some local authorities did not wish to disclose information about the location of potential adopters, children and young people living independently, or were placed with parents.

¹⁵ For further information on children living away from home, or outside of the local authority boundary, see: Ofsted (2013) *From a Distance* (insert link and correct reference). 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.

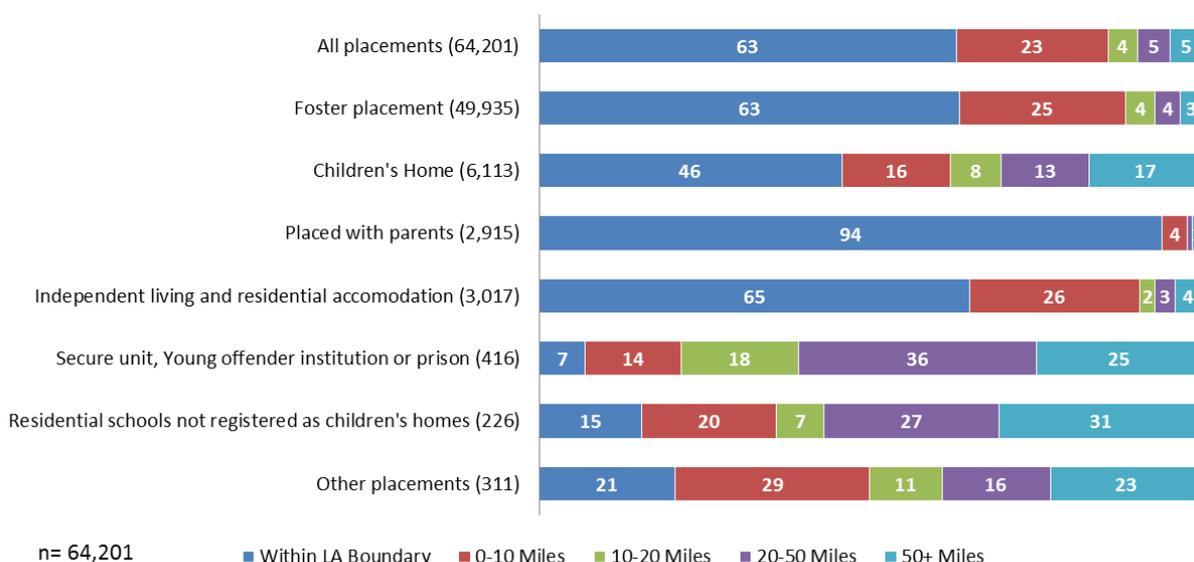
¹⁶ There were 3,685 children for whom we could not calculate distance from local authority boundary because not enough information about their location was provided. Many of these children were living with their parents, in independent living, or placed for adoption.

41. Just under half (2,791) of children placed in children’s homes were placed within the local authority boundary. Nearly one in five (1,047) were placed 50 miles or more from their local authority boundary.¹⁷

42. Nearly two thirds of children living in foster placements live within their local authority boundary.

Chart 5

Proportion of children looked after by placement type and distance from local authority boundary, as at 31 March 2013



43. The following map shows, by graded colour, the proportion of children looked after each local authority placed outside of their local authority boundary. Where an LA is shaded white, they did not place any children looked after outside the boundary¹⁸; where an LA is shaded dark green they placed all of their children looked after outside of the boundary.¹⁹ Lincolnshire, Gloucestershire, the Isle of Wight, Devon and the Wirral placed the highest proportions of children looked after within their own local authority boundary (over 85%). Decisions about whether or not to place children and young people within their local authority boundary are made with consideration as to what is in the best interests of the child, what best meets their needs, and may be reliant on the availability of places.

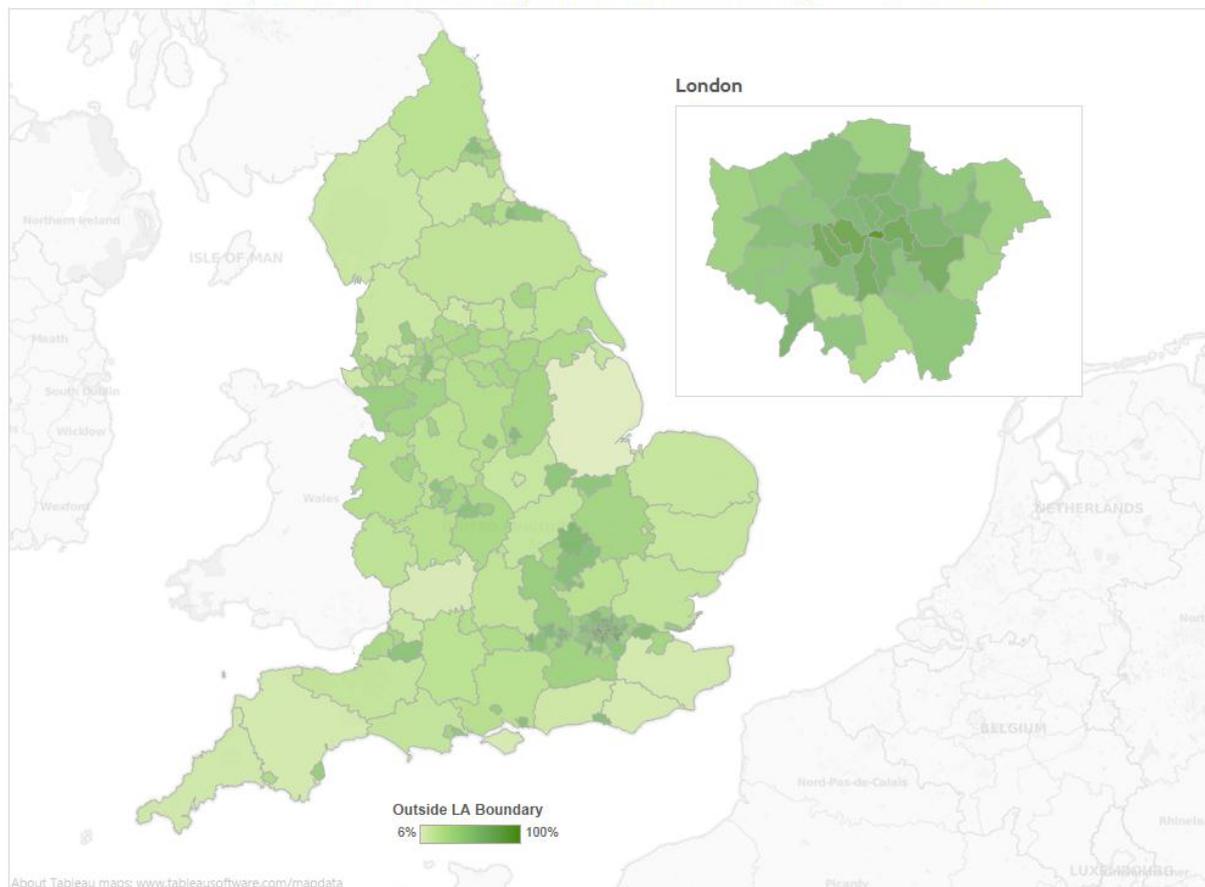
¹⁷ See: Department for Education (2014) Children’s Homes Data Pack, September 2013 p.10 for analysis of distance from boundary of placements for children in children’s homes at 31 March 2013. The figures cited here are different to those in the DfE Data pack as DfE calculated the distance children were from their home as opposed to their local authority boundary. We did not have information about children looked after and their parents addresses.

¹⁸ No local authorities placed all of their children looked after within the local authority boundary.

¹⁹ Only the City of London placed all of their children looked after outside of the boundary (11 children). Nine were placed within 10 miles, and two within 20 miles of the boundary.

Map 1

Proportion of children looked after placed outside their LA boundary, as at 31 March 2013



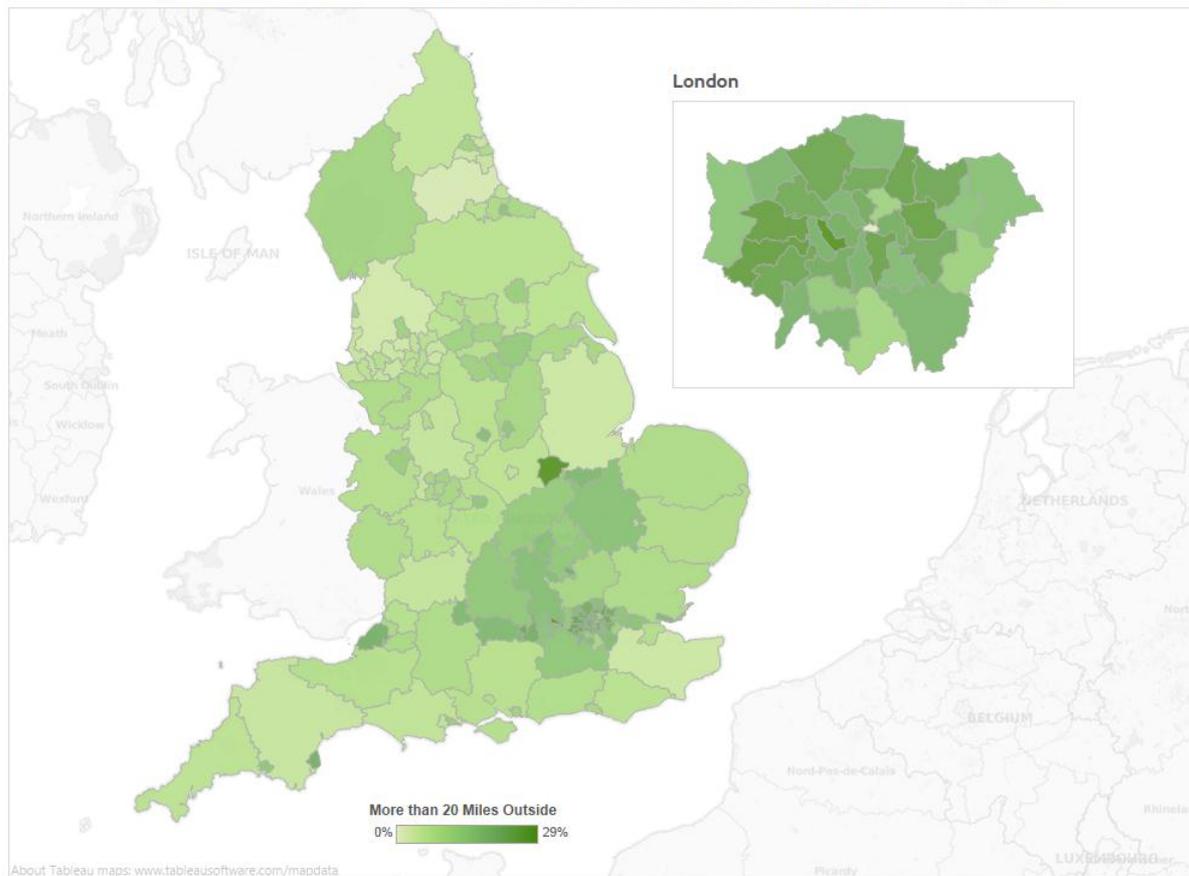
Source: Ofsted (Looked after children placement data collection, 2013)

44. London is the region with the highest proportion (65%) of children placed outside the local authority boundary. Often this is because these children are in other London boroughs. In contrast, 70% of children placed by local authorities in the South West were placed within their LA boundary, because of its large number of shire counties.
45. Further to this, the following map shows by graded colour the proportion of children looked after each local authority placed more than 20 miles outside of their local authority boundary. Where an LA is shaded white, they did not place any children looked after more than 20 miles outside the boundary;²⁰ where an LA is shaded dark green they placed a maximum of 29% of their children looked after more than 20 miles outside of the boundary. Rutland, Slough, Kensington and Chelsea, Hounslow and Reading placed more than one in five children looked after more than 20 miles from their local authority boundary.

²⁰ See previous footnote.

Map 2

Proportion of children looked after placed more than 20 miles from their LA boundary, as at 31 March 2013



Source: Ofsted (Looked after children placement data collection, 2013)

Out of country placements

46. Twenty one children had been placed out of the country by 17 local authorities, as at 31 March 2013.
47. Of the children placed outside the UK, one child was placed in each of the following countries: New Zealand, Australia and the USA. Two children each had been placed in Canada, France, Italy, Jamaica, and Spain, and four children had been placed in the Republic of Ireland. For four children, the local authorities were unable to specify the country.
48. Sixteen of the 21 children placed out of the country had been placed in a foster placement with a relative or friend, while the remaining five had been placed with other foster carers. One possible reason for this is that the foster carers may have moved abroad after the placement began.

Characteristics of the areas in which children looked after were living

Rural/Urban

49. Over three quarters (83%) of children looked after, for whom placement location was known, were living in urban areas (50,107). Around half of these children lived in a major conurbation area.²¹
50. A total of 10,612 children looked after (17%) lived in rural towns and villages.
51. There were 4,742 children looked after living in seaside towns. Of this group, 84% were fostered and 10% were living in children's homes.

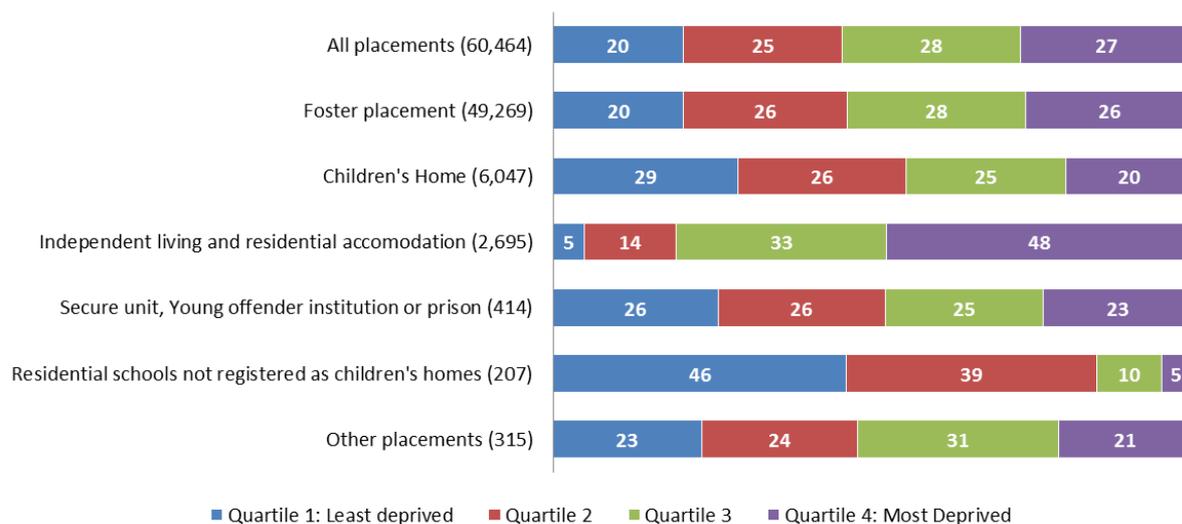
Deprivation

52. It was possible to identify the deprivation level, through postcodes, of the locations of 60,464 children and young people looked after.
53. Of these, children were evenly distributed across all areas from the most deprived (Quartile 1) to the least deprived (Quartile 4).
54. Children living in children's homes are no more likely to be living in areas of high deprivation than those who are fostered.

²¹ This data excludes 7,167 children and young people for whom we do not have information about the urban/rural characteristics of where they are living.

Chart 6²²

Proportion of children looked after by placement type and level of deprivation in local area, as at 31 March 2013



55. Just over one in four (16,280) children looked after were placed in the most deprived areas of the country, while one in five were placed in the least deprived (12,315).

56. Children living in independent living or residential accommodation were more than twice as likely to live in the most deprived areas of the country;²³ 48% of children looked after in these placement types were living in the most deprived areas while 5% lived in the least deprived. Nine local authorities placed at least a third of their children in the least deprived areas. These were: Bath and North East Somerset; Blackburn with Darwen; Cheshire East, Leicestershire; North Yorkshire; Reading; Rutland; Warrington and Wokingham.

57. Seventeen of the 20 local authorities with the largest proportion of children placed in the most deprived areas were in the London region. Hackney, for example, placed 319 children looked after and 203 (64%) of these were living in the most deprived areas, mostly in other London boroughs. However, over half were within 10 miles of the boundary. The local authorities outside of London who placed the largest proportions of children in the most deprived areas were Liverpool (55%), Sandwell (48%) and Birmingham (44%).

58. While children living in children's homes are not more likely to live in deprived areas overall, they are if the children's home is situated in a London borough. Of the larger authorities in other regions, over 50% of children living in

²² There were 7,422 children for whom we could not identify the level of local area deprivation. 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.

²³ Residential accommodation includes hostels, supported living and foyers. These are not inspected by Ofsted.

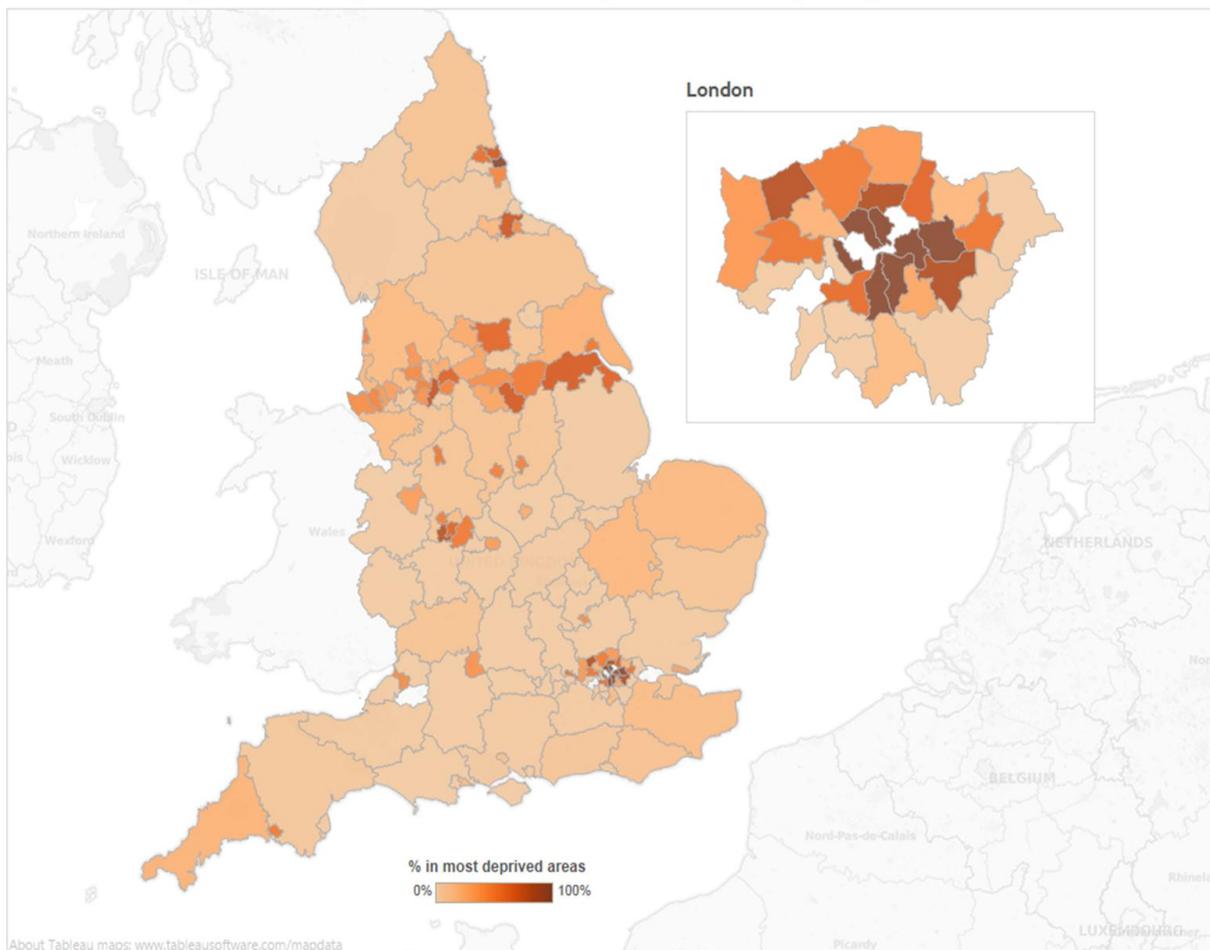
children’s homes in Manchester, Newcastle and Plymouth were living in the most deprived areas. Some of this is explained by higher levels of deprivation in these areas.

59. Local authorities with higher levels of deprivation, such as those in the London region, have an important issue to consider when placing children: keeping the child close to home or placing them in a less deprived area.

60. The following map shows, by graded colour, the proportion of children looked after living in children’s homes within each local authority boundary, according to the local level of deprivation. Where an LA is shaded white, relatively few children are living in children’s homes in highly deprived areas; where an LA is shaded brown, a higher proportion of children are living in highly deprived areas.

Map 3

Proportion of children placed in children's homes by level of local area deprivation, as at 31 March 2013



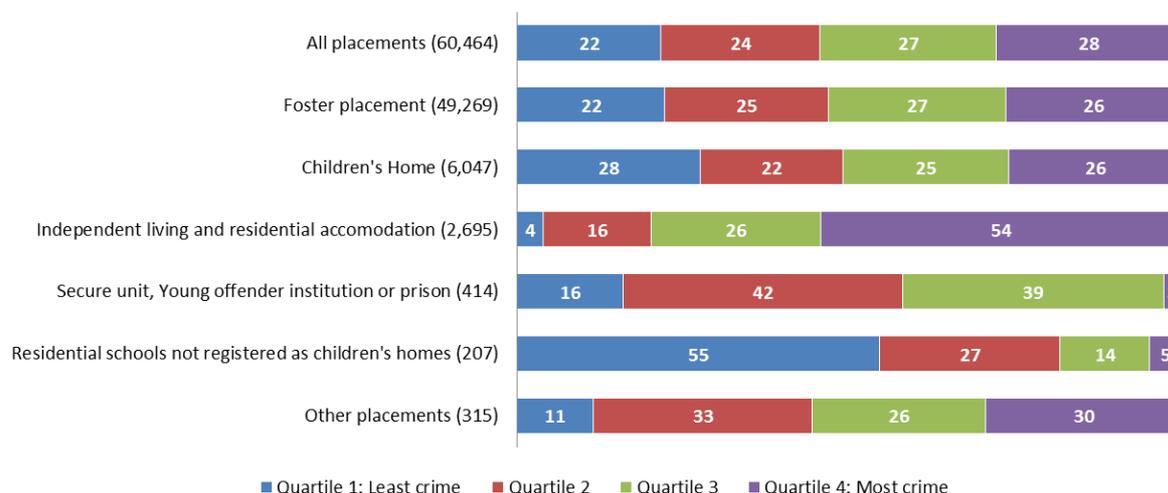
Source: Ofsted (Looked after children placement data collection, 2013)

Crime

61. Just over one in four (16,843) children looked after were placed in areas of the country with the highest crime levels, while just over one in five were placed in areas with the lowest crime levels (13,102).^{24 25}
62. Children living in children's homes were no more likely to be living in high crime areas than children in foster care.
63. Over half of children and young people living in independent accommodation and residential homes were living in areas with the highest crime levels. Four per cent were living in areas with the lowest crime rates.

Chart 7

Proportion of children looked after by placement type and level of crime in local area, as at 31 March 2013



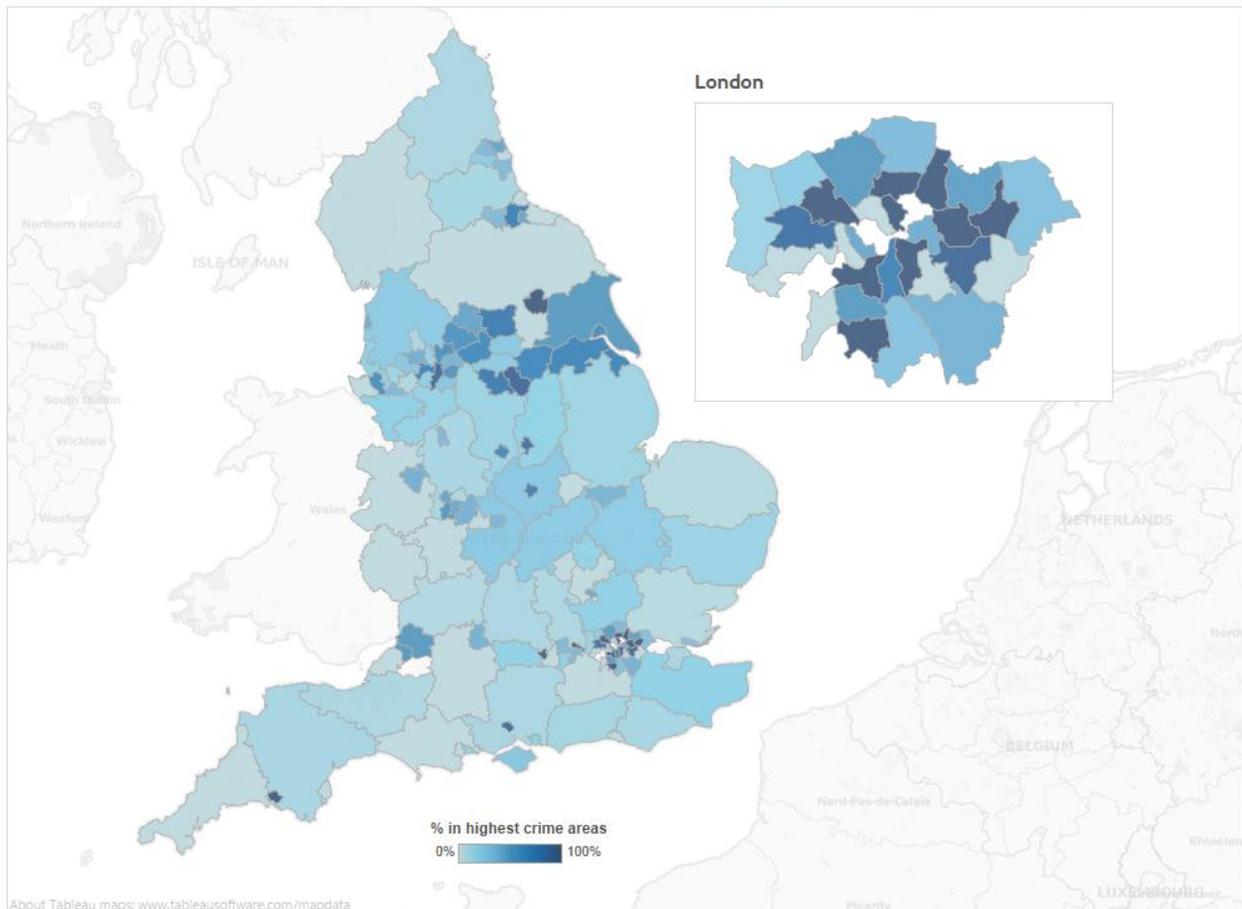
64. Although children living in children's homes were not more likely to be living in high crime areas, all the children placed in children's homes by the following local authorities were living in the highest areas for crime in the country: Barking and Dagenham, Brent, Haringey, Newham, Plymouth, Reading, Slough, Southwark, Sutton, Waltham Forest, Wandsworth and York. Although some of these LAs are among the most deprived in the country, which is closely linked to crime levels, not all are.
65. Shire counties and local authorities with relatively low deprivation levels placed more of their children looked after in low crime areas. Five of these local authorities placed more than 50% of their children looked after in areas with the lowest crime levels in the country, these authorities were Cornwall, Devon, Norfolk, North Yorkshire and Shropshire.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ This data refers to 60,464 of the 67,886 children placed as at 31 March 2013, as we do not have data on crime for 7,422 placements.

Map 4

Proportion of children looked after placed in children's homes by level of crime in the local area, as at 31 March 2013



Source: Ofsted (Looked after children placement data collection, 2013)

Children living in placements not inspected by Ofsted

66. There were 6,968 children living in placements that are not inspected by Ofsted. These included those in independent living, those placed with their own parents or persons with parental responsibility, children in refuge, in NHS or health trust, children in residential accommodation such as hostels, adult residential care homes, residential employment and in Young Offenders Institutions.^{26,27}

²⁶ Young Offender Institutions are inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons who are the lead inspectorate for this provision, although we do provide inspectors to assist.

²⁷ There were a further 523 children living in placements that had either not yet been inspected, or where we were unable to identify the setting that the children had been placed with.

Children who are missing

67. There were 95 children classed as missing from placement as at 31 March 2013, which equates to 0.1% of the all children placed.²⁸
68. A total of 33 local authorities had at least one child missing from placement. There were no children missing from placement from local authorities in the North East or the Yorkshire and Humber regions. The absence of this information may be due to the quality of the data as it is unclear whether a number of local authorities adequately record and monitor missing children, an issue that has been identified by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Looked After Children and Care Leavers in 2012.²⁹
69. Of all the regions the South East had the largest number of missing children (41 out of 95). There is a strong link between children that go missing and children who arrive in the country as victims of trafficking so the large number of points of entry from Europe into the South East increases the potential for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children to go missing after they arrive.³⁰
70. Of the 95 children that were missing, 24 children had been missing for a period of more than six months.

Independent Living^{31,32}

71. There were 2,279 children looked after reported as living in independent living accommodation as at 31 March 2013. This was an overall proportion of 3% of all children looked after.
72. Regionally, the proportion of children looked after reported to be in independent living in the North East was 1% (58 of 4,172 children and young people) compared to 6% for London (576 of 10,075). It is unclear whether children and young people are more likely to be placed in independent living earlier in London, while they remain looked after, or whether local authorities in other regions are under-recording those children and young people placed in independent living.

²⁸ Children who have been missing from their placement for at least 24 hours.

²⁹ The APPG for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults and the APPG for Looked After Children and Care Leavers (June 2012) *Report from the Joint Inquiry into Children who Go Missing from Care* available [here](#).

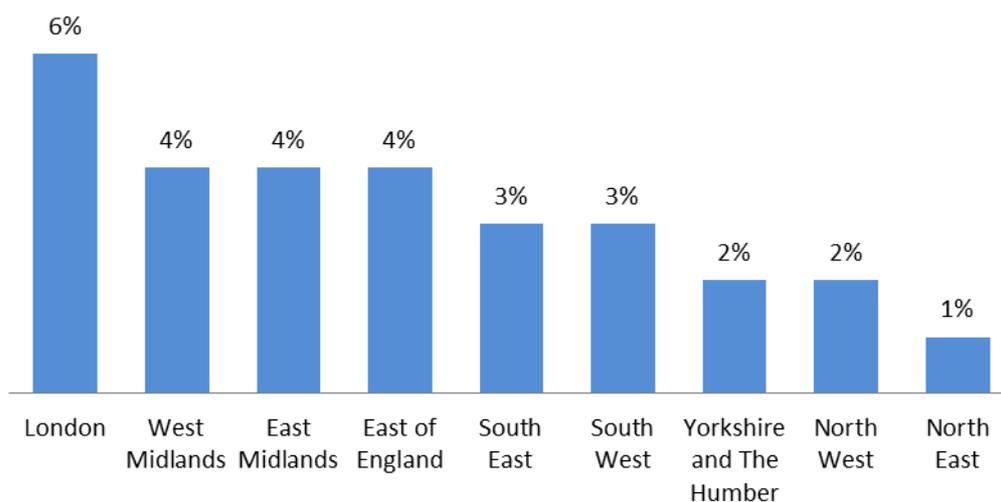
³⁰ The government has recognised the link between children missing from care and being at risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking with the joint enquiry into children who go missing from care. The DfE ran a consultation on statutory guidance for Local Authorities on the care of unaccompanied asylum seeking and trafficked children, seeking views on new proposed regulations and statutory guidance regarding the planning and provision of care for unaccompanied asylum seeking and trafficking children. The consultation closed on 25 March 2014 and responses were being analysed at the time of publication.

³¹ For further research on young people living in independent accommodation see: Hannon, C. et al (2010) *In Loco Parentis*, Demos. This research shows that of the 6,000 or so young people who leave care every year 21% are 16 years old, 17% are 17, and 61% are 18 (p.129). While we cannot verify the ages of the young people in independent living that local authorities supplied us with, they were asked for only those children and young people who are legally looked after. As such, we would expect that all of the young people in placed in independent living in this report are under 18.

³² We have excluded those children and young people living in residential accommodation, such as hostels and foyers, for the purposes of this section because those classed as independent living are more likely to be living on their own with less supervision.

Chart 8

Proportion of children looked after in independent living by region, as at 31 March 2013



73. Fifteen local authorities did not report having any children and young people in independent living. These authorities were: Barnet, City of London, Haringey, Harrow, Herefordshire, Hounslow, North East Lincolnshire, North Tyneside, Rutland, Slough, Southampton, Torbay, Waltham Forest, Windsor and Maidenhead, and York.

74. Around three fifths of children and young people in independent living were placed within the local authority boundary. Six per cent were placed more than 20 miles from the boundary.

75. Children living in independent living are almost twice as likely to live in the most deprived areas of the country as children in other placement types. Around half of these children and young people were living in the most deprived areas. Five per cent lived in the least deprived. Over half were living in areas with the highest crime levels and 4% were living in areas with the lowest crime levels.

Providers of children's social care

Provider Type

76. There are thirteen types of provider of children's social care services that Ofsted inspects, twelve of which look after children.³³ As at 31 March 2013,

³³ Adoption Support Agencies are inspected by Ofsted, but do not look after children.

there were 3,094 active registrations, of which approximately 2,441 had at least one child in placement as at 31 March 2013.^{34, 35}

77. There were 318 active children's homes without any children in placement.³⁶

Table 2: All active providers and whether children are placed with them, as at 31 March 2013³⁷

Provision Type	Number of	Number of
	active providers	providers with at least one child placed
	As at 31 March 2013	
Adoption Support Agency	38	N/A
Boarding School	79	1
Children's Home	1,950	1,632
Further Education College with Residential Accommodation	42	1
Independent Fostering Service	302	281
Local Authority Adoption Agency	152	146
Local Authority Fostering Service	152	149
Residential Family Centre	50	42
Residential Special School	184	60
Residential special school >295 days/year	84	75
Secure Children's Home	16	16
Secure Training Centre	4	4
Voluntary Adoption Agency	41	31
Total	3094	2441

Source: RSA and CLA placement data 2013

Sector³⁸

78. Although the number of private and voluntary-run services is almost double that of local authority-run services, 63% of children were placed with a local authority-run service.

79. The chart below shows the proportion of children placed using local authority, private and voluntary-run services according to their placement type.

³⁴ There were 509 children living in placements that are inspected by Ofsted but for which setting information was not supplied. Therefore, some registrations may have in fact had a child in placement that we have been unable to match.

³⁵ Active registrations are those which are currently permitted to place children and young people. Some settings are registered, but have since resigned.

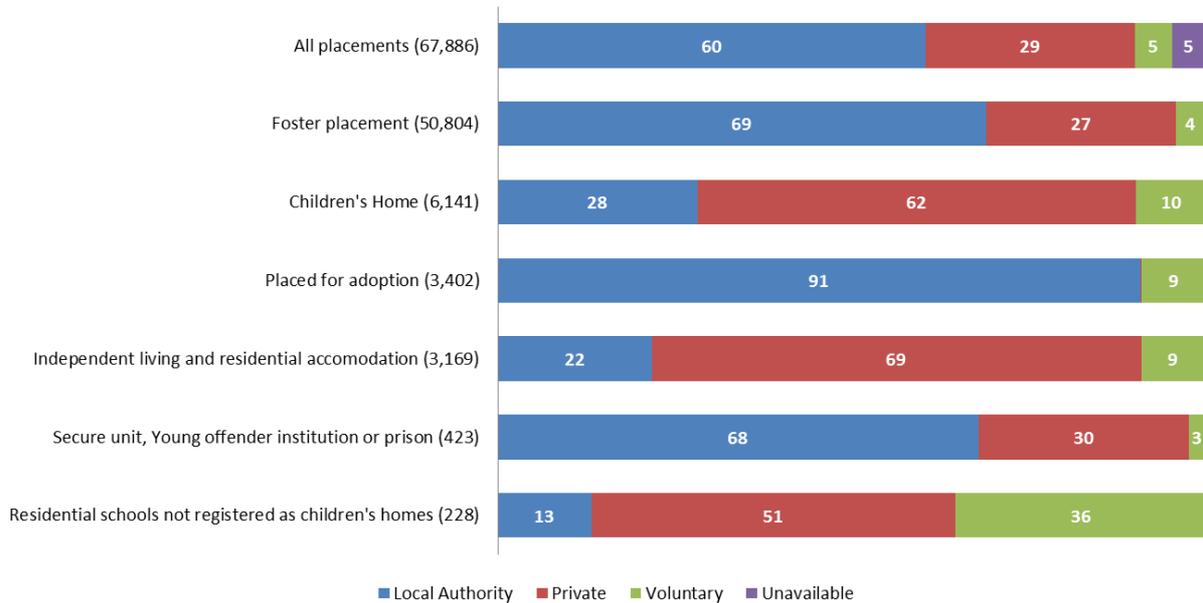
³⁶ These refer to children's homes only and do not include Residential Special Schools >295 days. The 6,141 children placed in children's homes referred to throughout this report will include children in Residential Special Schools >295 days as these are regulated and inspected as children's homes.

³⁷ It should also be noted that the snapshot date of 31 March 2013 took place over the Easter holiday in that year, and so the number of Boarding Schools and Residential Special Schools with children in placement may well be higher, depending on how local authorities record these children's placements during school holiday periods. Also, Adoption Support Agencies do not place children and young people, and have been included in the above table to illustrate the number of providers we inspect.

³⁸ See: Department for Education (2013) Children's Homes Data Pack, September 2013 p.11 for analysis of children's homes according to their sector compared with whether children were living inside or outside their local authority boundary. The suggestion is that children placed within the local authority boundary are more likely to live in a local authority-run children's home. This is likely to be as a result of local authorities almost exclusively owning children's homes within their local authority boundary combined while at the same time nearly two thirds of children placed in children's homes are placed in homes that are privately-run which will not have the same location restrictions.

Chart 9

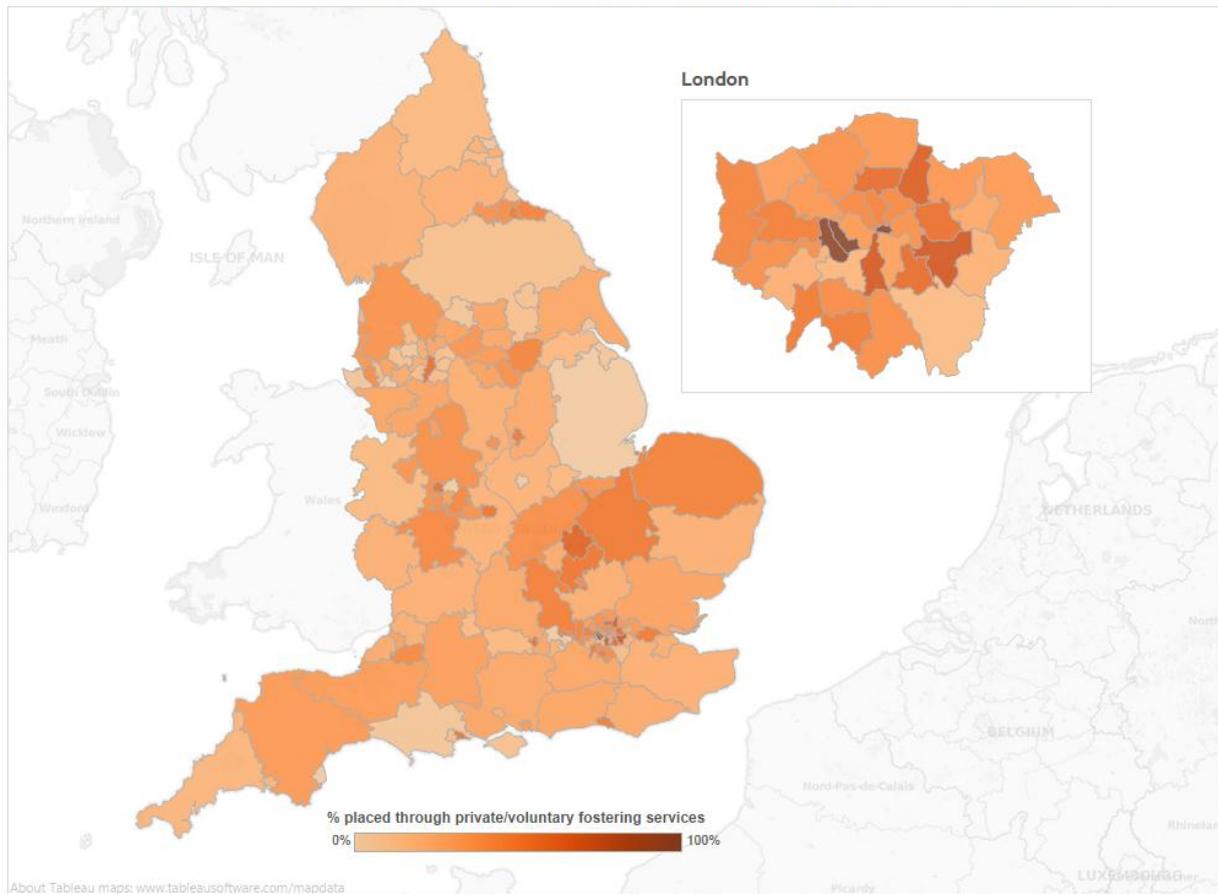
Proportion of children looked after by placement type and sector, as at 31 March 2013



80. Sixty-nine percent of children in foster care were living in local authority placements. Four local authorities placed all of their children in fostering through local authority-run services: Leicester, Torbay, Walsall and Windsor and Maidenhead. Conversely, twenty-four local authorities placed more than 50% of their children through Independent Fostering Services.

Map 5

Proportion of children looked after that LAs placed using private or voluntary fostering services, as at 31 March 2013



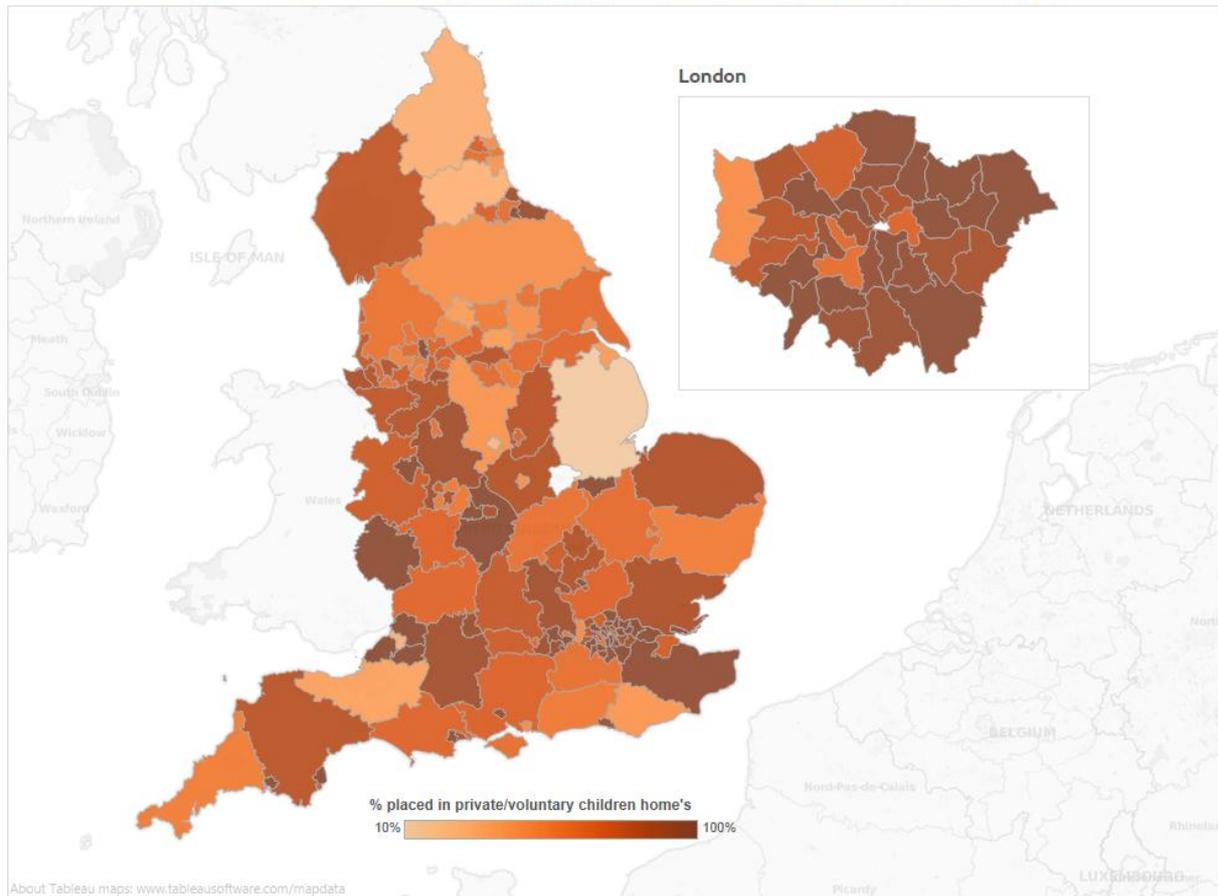
Source: Ofsted (Looked after children placement data collection, 2013)

81. Twenty eight per cent of children placed in children’s homes had been placed in local authority-run homes.³⁹ For 20 local authorities, more than 90% of their children were placed in privately-run homes. Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge and Southwark used only privately-run children’s homes. Lincolnshire placed the lowest proportion of their children in private or voluntary-run homes (10%), followed by Bristol and Durham (28% and 29% respectively).

³⁹ This is due to the number of local authority-run children’s homes available, see Capacity and Volume below.

Map 6⁴⁰

Proportion of children looked after that LAs placed in private or voluntary children's homes, as at 31 March 2013



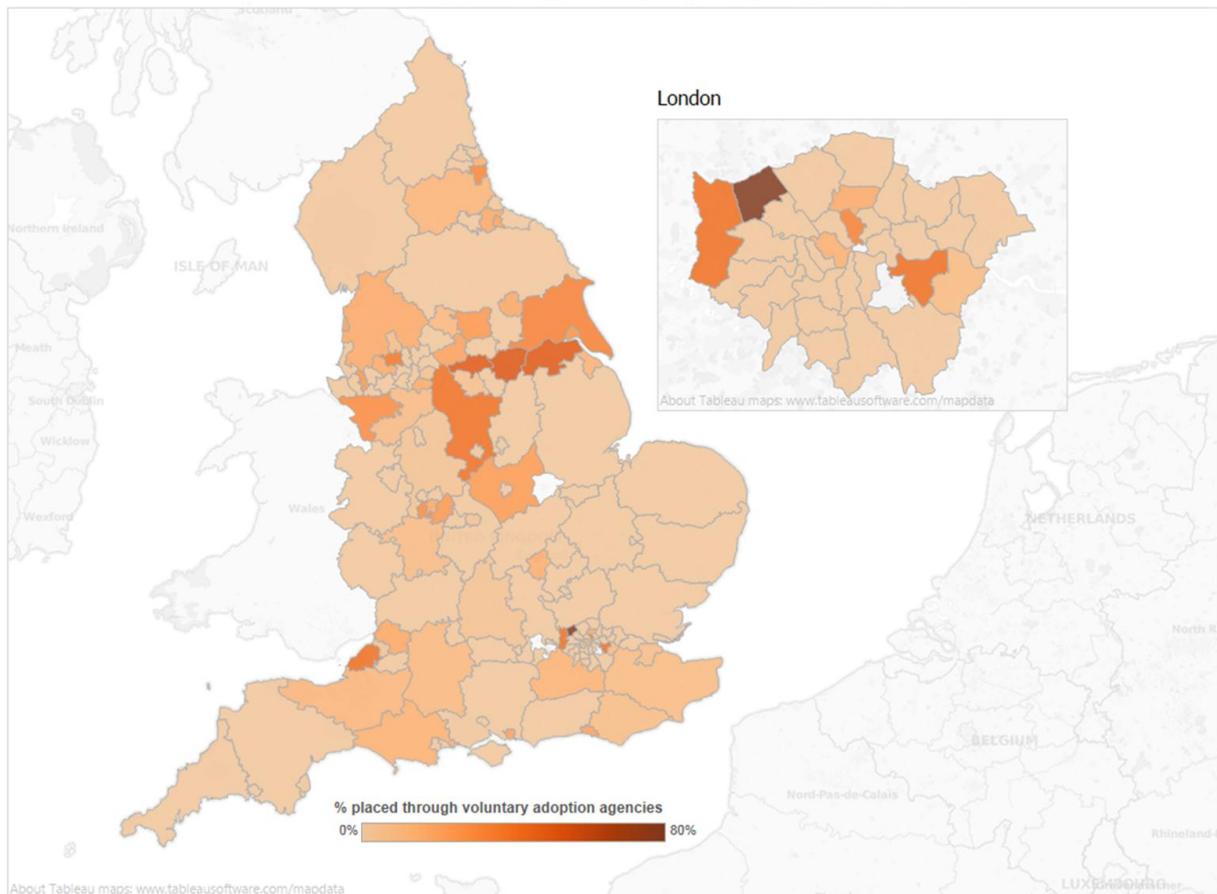
Source: Ofsted (Looked after children placement data collection, 2013)

82. Ninety-one per cent of children placed for adoption had been placed using local authority-run adoption agencies; 9% were placed using Voluntary Adoption Agencies. Ninety-two local authorities placed all of their children looked after for adoption through local authority-run agencies. Doncaster and Barnsley placed the highest proportion of children for adoption through Voluntary Adoption Agencies at 52% and 50% respectively.

⁴⁰ NB: City of London and Rutland are shaded white because they did not place any children in children's homes.

Map 7

Proportion of children LAs placed using Voluntary Adoption Agencies, as at 31 March 2013



Source: Ofsted (Looked after children placement data collection, 2013)

83. Local authorities in London were more likely to place children through Voluntary Adoption Agencies.

Volume and Capacity

Children's Homes

84. 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. Therefore, the following discussion of children's homes largely includes Residential Special Schools where children reside for more than 295 days, unless explicitly stated otherwise. Where we have referred to RSS in this section, we are always referring to those where children reside for more than 295 days.

85. There were 1,950 children's homes (excluding RSS), of which approximately 1,629 had at least one child in placement as at 31 March 2013. Therefore, there were 321 active children's homes with no children in placement on this

date. Similarly, there were 84 active Residential Special Schools with children for more than 295 days, of which 75 had at least one child in placement on this date.

86. There were 6,141 children placed in children's homes (including RSS) as at 31 March 2013. The total number of places available in children's homes and RSS was 11,509. Therefore, there were 5,456 places unfilled as at 31 March 2013. Approximately 2,000 of these places (both available and unfilled) were in Residential Special Schools.

87. The proportion of unfilled children's home places (including RSS) was 47%. This was the position on the day in question and is not necessarily an indication of the situation the day before, or the day after, or any other day. Children's homes places may be unfilled for a variety of good 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. It should also be noted that the inclusion of the RSS places figure greatly inflates this proportion, as "available places" for these children's homes includes the maximum possible number of children that can be looked after, which is rarely expected to be achieved in such homes.

88. Regionally, the South West had the highest proportion of unfilled children's home places at 60%, however this proportion is inflated by a high number of RSS places available in this region. London, on the other hand, had no Residential Special Schools and so all of its unfilled places were in children's homes (54% unfilled). Local authorities in London placed 795 children in children's homes and 326 of these (41%) were placed more than 50 miles from their local authority boundary. This should not, however, be taken as an indication of poor commissioning; it suggests that local authorities in London placed children in children's homes outside of London for reasons likely to be specific to the needs of the children. The North East and North West regions had the lowest proportion of unfilled children's home places, including RSS, both at 41%.

Table 3 Places in active providers, as at 31 March 2013

Region	Available places	Filled places	Unfilled places	Proportion of unfilled places
	Number			Percentage
South West	1,333	534	799	60
London	700	321	379	54
East of England	917	461	456	50
South East	1,799	911	888	49
East Midlands	1,142	617	525	46
West Midlands	1,583	874	709	45
Yorkshire and The Humber	1,109	619	490	44
North East	584	342	242	41
North West	2,342	1,374	968	41
Total	11,509	6,141	5,456	47

Source: RSA and CLA placement data 2013

89. As part of the data collection, we asked local authorities to omit placements for children in respite care only. However, of all 6,141 children placed in children's homes, 62 local authorities reported having placed 183 children in 76 children's homes that we understand to be short-breaks or respite-only. Nearly one third of these children had been in their placement for more than two years (56 children), while 21% (38 children) had been in their placement for less than three months. It is not clear if this is an issue of data accuracy.

Fostering

90. There were 454 active fostering services: 152 local authority-run and 302 Independent Fostering Services. Of these, 425 had at least one child in placement as at 31 March 2013. Four local authorities and 25 Independent Fostering Services had no children in placement at this date.

91. There were 76,210 approved foster places in England, of which 50,504 were filled. There were 25,706 unfilled foster places as at 31 March 2013. Unfilled foster places include those that are currently unavailable. There are many reasons why approved places may be unavailable at any given time. For example, sickness or bereavement or situations where carers approved for more than one placement may have a child already fostered with whom it would not be appropriate to place another.

Commissioning and ownership

92. As at 31 March 2013, each local authority had children placed within their boundary from an average of 27 other local authorities, although the number ranged from six LAs placing in Redcar & Cleveland to 85 LAs placing children in Kent.

93. Around one fifth (19%) of LAs had children living there from 40 or more other local authorities. As might be expected, most of the recipient local authorities were large shire counties but there were some exceptions to this. For example, 475 children were placed in Croydon from 40 different authorities, the vast majority from other London boroughs.

Private and voluntary organisations

94. There were over 600 different private and voluntary organisations looking after over 23,000 children at the end of March 2013. There is huge variation in the size and scope of these organisations, from small private organisations looking after one or two children in children's homes to large organisations looking after several hundred children through children's home, adoption and fostering providers. As such, organisations may have several registrations each.

95. There were 57 larger private and voluntary organisations that owned a service in more than one provider type. Two thirds (38) of these owned both children's homes and fostering services. A further nine organisations owned children's homes, fostering and adoption services. 94. The 57 organisations looked after 6,385 children at the end of March, or 9% of all children looked after.

96. Over 550 organisations (563) looked after children with just one service; a total of 14,007 children (21%).

Children's homes

97. There were 412 separate private and voluntary-run organisations looking after a total of 4,299 children in children's homes. At 31 March 2013, just under one quarter of these organisations looked after one or two children, and one third looked after between three and five children, across all their individual registrations.

98. The largest 20 organisations looked after a total of over 1,700 children, almost two fifths (39%) of all children in private and voluntary children's homes. Of that group, five organisations looked after almost 900 children. Sixteen of the largest 20 organisations were private and four were voluntary.

Independent fostering services

99. There were 170 separate organisations that owned 281 Independent Fostering Services. These looked after a total of 15,533 children as at 31 March 2013. Most of these children (86%) were looked after by privately-run Independent Fostering Services and 14% by voluntary-run services.

100. A little under half (7,490) of all children looked after by Independent Fostering Services were looked after by just ten organisations, operating through the 58 services that they owned. All but one of these services was privately owned.

Methodology

101. The child-level placement data was collected for the purpose of informing inspection of local authority children's services as well as to contribute to national debate on placing of, and commissioning for, children looked after.

102. We asked all local authorities to complete a child-level data collection form on all children looked after placements as at 31 March 2013. The collection asks local authorities for similar information to that requested by the Department for Education (DfE) in their annual SSDA903 return. However, we did ask for information that is not requested by the DfE, in particular the name and address of the specific branch of commissioned organisations through which children and young people were placed.

103. The request for additional information to that required by the DfE did cause some local authorities some difficulties. Local authority systems contain statutorily required information for each child, and although further information is recorded elsewhere, for many LAs the additional information requested required manual input of data. This affected the timescales in which LAs could complete the return and increased the likelihood of errors in these returns.

104. This is experimental data and we are consulting with local authorities about the collection for 31 March 2014. Any comments on the content or format of this report would be welcome and can be sent to socialcaredata@ofsted.gov.uk.

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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.

Fostering services

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

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.

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 non-secure children's homes.

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.

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.

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 Training Centres

Secure Training Centres are defined by section 43(1) (d) of the Prison Act 1952. 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.

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 children’s home.

Private

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

Voluntary

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

Health Authority

These are NHS Trust-run.

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:

Placement Codes:	
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
M1	In Refuge (Section 51 of Children Act)
M2	Whereabouts known (not in Refuge)
M3	Whereabouts unknown
P1	Placed with own parents or other person with parental responsibility
P2	Independent living
P3	Residential employment
Q1	Foster placement with relative or friend
Q2	Placement with other foster carer

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.
T0	All types of temporary move
T1	Temporary periods in hospital
T2	Temporary absences of the child on holiday
T3	Temporary accommodation whilst normal foster carer is on holiday
T4	Temporary accommodation of seven days or less, for any reason, not covered by codes T1 to T3
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

Placement Location Codes	
IN	Inside local authority boundary
OUT	Outside local authority boundary

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	Q1 - Q2
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	M1 - M3, P3, R1 - R3, Z1

Further information

Ofsted publications

Children's homes inspections and outcomes, Ofsted, 2013 (quarterly) available: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/official-statistics-childrens-social-care-inspections-and-outcomes>

Children's social care providers and places, Ofsted, 2013 (six monthly) available: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/official-statistics-childrens-social-care-providers-and-places>

Other publications

Biehal, N., Ellison, S., Baker, C. & Sinclair, I. (2010) *Belonging and Permanence: Outcomes in Long-term Foster Care and Adoption*, London, BAAF

Department for Education (2014) *Children's homes data pack: updated June 2014* available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-homes-data-pack>

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