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Research and analysis

Children's homes providing short breaks

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Background

This study covers:

- children's homes providing short breaks only, usually for disabled children
- short-break-only homes that were active on 31 March 2020

We have obtained this data from a one-off, in-depth analysis of statements of purpose (SoP) for children's homes of all types, as at 31 March 2020. Although we intend to review the short-break status of homes in future years, we will not be carrying out the same in-depth analysis in the future, due to time constraints.

We will include a brief summary of data on short-break-only children's homes in future children's social care in England national statistics releases.

Main findings

The main findings from this study are as follows.

- As at 31 March 2020, there were 167 short-break-only homes in England.
- A third of all local authorities (LAs) (51, 34%) had no short-break-only homes within their boundaries.
- Of the 100 LAs that had short-break-only homes within their boundaries: 64 had 1 home, 21 had 2 homes and 15 had 3 or more, including in some of the geographically largest LAs.
- Most short-break-only homes were LA- or voluntary-sector owned. This was different from children's homes, which were mostly privately owned.
- The majority of short-break-only homes (107, 64%) were LA-run, compared with around 15% of children's homes.
- The voluntary sector accounted for the second largest number of short-break-only homes (39 homes, 23%).
- Only 14 short-break-only homes (8%) were privately run.
- For 17 LAs (11%), the only children's homes that they ran were short-break-only homes.
- Data on the children resident in the homes on 31 March, or at any other time in the year, is incomplete. We estimate that 525 children were resident on any one weekday evening in 2019 to 2020.
- Of the 525 children, just over half (270) were children looked after and just under half (255) were children in need. Almost all of these children lived for most of the year with their parents or carers.
- Despite the gaps in the available data, we were able to identify 270 children resident on 31 March 2020. These children lived, on average, 8 miles from the short-break-only home.
- Short-break-only homes have the best inspection profile of any of the 4 sub-groups of children's homes. They had both proportionately more outstanding and proportionately more good outcome judgements. They had 8 percentage points more good or outstanding judgements than the largest group, children's homes.
- Short-break-only homes' current registered managers (RMs) have been, on average, in post for 4 years and 8 months. This is just over 2 years longer than their children's homes colleagues.

Introduction

In March 2020, there were around 2,500 children's homes in England. The range of services that children's homes provide to children in care is extensive. They deliver support and care for some of England's most vulnerable children, many of whom have complex needs.

Among children's homes, we had previously identified 3 groups. Each offers specific services to meet the needs of a specific group of children:

- secure children's homes (13 homes)
- residential special schools registered as children's homes (69 homes)
- children's homes (2,211 homes)

Secure children's homes

Secure children's homes provide accommodation and care for 2 groups of children: those placed by a Youth Justice Board while they are serving a custodial sentence and those placed there on welfare grounds by the LA. These homes provide a locked environment, meaning that the child cannot leave the home when they choose and their residential, educational and health needs are all met on site. Because of the nature of these homes, the age range is 10 to 17 years.

Residential special schools registered as children's homes

These homes primarily function as residential schools for children with high levels of special educational needs (SEN). Although the amount of time children spend living in these schools varies, some children live at the school for more than 295 days per year and these schools are, therefore, required to be registered as children's homes. These homes are generally larger than other types of children's home.

Children's homes

The majority of homes in England belong to this group. These homes provide residential care to the largest number of children in care. Different homes specialise in meeting different needs. Some are relatively generic (for example, working with children with a range of complex needs), while some are highly specialised (for example, working with those who have experienced child sexual exploitation). Children's homes typically provide group care, but can vary in size from 1 to 20 beds.

Short-break-only homes

In addition to the 3 types of home described above, there is also a fourth group, which is the focus of this study. Short-break-only homes are for disabled children. Most of these children live with their parents or guardians, though some may live with foster carers. This type of provision has not been explored and discussed much previously.

A table summarising the 4 different types of homes is provided in Appendix 1.

In previous publications, such as statistical first releases, we have included short-break-only homes within the largest group of children's homes. Our data collection project, carried out during 2020 to 2021, has allowed us to identify this group easily and regularly, for future releases. The methodology for this is described in Appendix 1. While we have briefly commented on this group of homes before, this is the first time we can do so in detail.

The work to identify short-break-only homes highlighted the complexity of care that homes offer. Many homes offer a mixture of different care types and, therefore, do not fit neatly into one of the 4 defined groups. We intend to publish further analysis on these homes later this year. This paper focuses on homes that exclusively provide short-break care to disabled children.

Short-break-only homes as at 31 March 2020

The type of need that these homes meet and the children that they serve

Under the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011, LAs must provide, as appropriate, a range of short breaks for disabled children. These breaks are for carers of disabled children, to support them to continue to care for their children.

The Equality Act 2010 defines someone as having a disability if they have 'a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

These impairments vary in severity and in the degree to which they impact on the child and on family life. Some families experience difficulties when caring for children with severe or profound and multiple disabilities, complex health needs and complex behaviour support needs. The impact, particularly on the health and well-being of carers and on brothers and sisters, can be substantial. Where this is the case, the need for short breaks is often highest.

Short breaks provide children with opportunities to enjoy different experiences, establish friendships and develop confidence, independence and social/emotional skills. Short breaks can also offer parents or carers a valuable respite from caring responsibilities.

The care and accommodation provided by short-break-only homes are part of a range of services for disabled children. This paper is only about residential short-break providers registered as children's homes and, therefore, is only part of the story of services provided for disabled children. Short breaks, and the type of support that they bring, can and do take many forms. These include home care, community childminders or specialist foster carers. Even within residential homes themselves, support can involve day, evening, overnight, weekend or holiday care.

The children who stay at short-break-only homes spend most of the time at home with their families. They visit the homes for an occasional or regular pattern of short breaks throughout the year.

The legal framework provides for 3 levels of legal status for children provided with short breaks through social care:

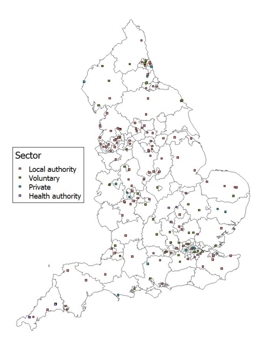
- section 17 (6) (see glossary): 'child in need' status, where a child is not 'looked after' but does have a child in need plan
- section 20 (4) (see glossary) (Regulation 48 applies): child is 'looked after' while away from home, with modified planning and review requirements
- section 20(4) (Regulation 48 does not apply): child is 'looked after' while away from home and full planning and review requirements apply

Most of the children who stay at short-break-only homes are covered by the first 2 categories.

Where the short-break-only homes are

In England, as at 31 March 2020, there were 167 short-break-only homes that provided specialist care for disabled children. They are unevenly distributed around the country. Despite London's dense population, it has the second lowest number of short-break-only homes among the regions. In total, there are only 11 homes in 10 London boroughs.

Figure 1: Distribution of short-break-only homes in England, by government region and sector



View data in an accessible format.

The North East, Yorkshire and Humber region has the largest number of short-break-only homes (34). This region accounts for 20% of all short-break-only homes in England. This is more than triple the number found in London (11 homes, 7%) or the East Midlands (10 homes, 6%). Data currently collected on disabled children does not give us a clear idea of the degree to which it is proportionate to the numbers of children who need this form of support and care. For further details on this subject, see 'What we know about the children resident on 31 March 2020'.

Table 1: Regional breakdown of number of short-break-only homes and the number of places provided, as at 31 March 2020

Ofsted region	Number of short-break-only homes	% of short-break-only homes	Number of places	% of places
North East, Yorkshire and Humber	34	20	227	23
North West	27	16	135	13
South East	25	15	171	17
West Midlands	22	13	115	11
East of England	19	11	119	12
South West	19	11	99	10
London	11	7	72	7
East Midlands	10	6	70	7
Total	**167**	**100**	**1,008**	**100**

As at 31 March 2020, there were short-break-only homes in 100 (66%) of the 151 LAs in England; 51 had none. Of these 100 LAs, the majority (64 LAs) had only 1 short-break-only home within their boundaries. Consequently, almost three quarters of LAs (116 LAs, 77%) had either 1 or no short-break-only homes in their area. Three LAs (Richmond upon Thames, Southwark and Tower Hamlets) had short-break-only homes in their area, but no other children's homes.

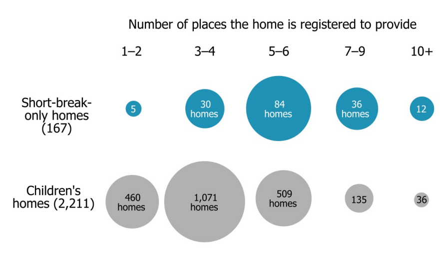
The regional breakdown of short-break-only homes is largely similar to that of children's homes. There is an uneven regional distribution of homes in both groups.

Number of short-break-only places

As at 31 March 2020, the 167 short-break-only homes provided a total of 1,008 places at any one time. Because of the nature of short-term stays, the homes provide support to a larger number of children annually than this figure implies. For example, a home may have a capacity of 5 places, but have 50 children who it supports throughout the year.

Across the 167 short-break-only homes nationally, the number of places provided by each home at any one time ranged from 2 to 14. The average was 6 places per home. The majority (132 homes, 79%) were registered to accommodate 5 or more children. The most common group was 5- or 6-bed homes (84 homes, 50%). This means that short-break-only homes were generally larger than children's homes. The largest number of children's homes were registered to accommodate 3 or 4 children. Although 79% of short-break homes provided 5 or more places, this was the case for only 31% of children's homes. Short-break-only homes made up 7% of all children's homes, but due to the larger average number of places these homes offer, they provide 10% of all children's home places.

Figure 2: Comparison of the number of places provided by short-break homes and children's homes, as at 31 March 2020



View data in an accessible format.

The North East, Yorkshire and Humber, which had the largest number of short-break-only homes (34, 20%), also provided the largest number of places (227, 23%). The East Midlands, the region with the fewest homes, also provided the fewest places (10 homes, 6%; 70 places, 7%). The South East region, which had the third largest number of homes (25, 15%), provided the second largest number of places (171, 17%).

What we know about the children resident on 31 March 2020

There is some data on disabled children in the social care system. For various reasons, the data that we currently collect is limited, meaning that we can only capture snapshots of residence. Therefore, the figures that follow in this study are a small part of the larger picture on disabled children in the social care system. For example, a home that is at full capacity with 5 children will in reality have a much larger cohort of children that it provides short-break care to during the year.

The annual Department for Education (DfE) data collection, the SSDA903, collects data on all children looked after, in the case of children who are provided with overnight stays under a section 20 short-break legal status. This collection does not include those children who were in the homes under a section 17 arrangement. Section 17 arrangement data is also not identifiable in the annual DfE children in need census, though the relevant children are included in that dataset.

Ofsted collects data on numbers of children in homes. We collect this 'Annex A' data during each full inspection of a children's home. The data for inspections carried out at some point in the year 2019 to 2020 identified approximately 525 children resident on the day of inspection. The SSDA903 collection identified around 270 children on 31 March 2020. Therefore, it is possible that, on any one weekday, about 255 children, or just under half of those identified in the Annex A data as resident, were there under a section 17 arrangement.

The SSDA903 collects detailed child-level data.

The collection for 2019 to 2020 indicated that, on the evening of 31 March 2020:

- 270 children were staying in these homes, with section 20 legal status.
- 76 short-break-only homes had children looked after in residence.
- The ages of the children ranged from 2 and a half to almost 19, and the average age was just under 14.
- Around 50 children were under 11, just over 110 were 11 to 14, and about the same number were 15 or over.
- Children had been coming and staying in these homes for periods ranging from a few months to 11 years, but on average had been coming to the home for a period of just under 2 years.
- Around 100 children had been receiving short-break care for under 1 year.
- Children stayed in homes in 64 LAs. Around 95% of the children went to a home within their own LA and the rest to nearby LAs.
- Around 185 children were in LA-run homes, almost all within their own LA.
- Just 4 LAs accounted for almost 40% of the placements because they had large capacity homes in their own LAs.
- The average distance travelled between a child's main home and the short-break-only home was 8 miles. The shortest distance travelled was under 1 mile; the longest 69 miles.

What we know of the 'picture of need' for these services

We know about the locations, size and services of short-break homes, as well as information about some of the children who were resident on 31 March 2020.

There is no dataset, however, that can adequately describe the level and distribution of what the prospective need is for short-break services. It is therefore difficult to establish the degree to which these homes provide services, in the right areas and at the right times, to meet the needs of the children and families. As stated earlier, this paper only covers a part of the story of services that support disabled children and their families. The story of the whole, and the degree to which demand is well met, still needs to be told.

Urban/rural breakdown

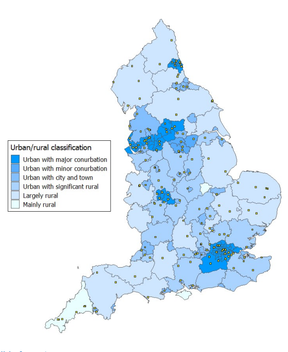
An alternative way to look at the location of short-break-only homes is by the distribution of urban and rural areas. We can do this using the Office for National Statistics (ONS) rural-urban classification of LAs. The ONS defines an LA's rural-urban classification based on the 'percentage of their resident population in rural areas or "rural-related" hub towns'. The ONS groups these as:

- predominantly urban: urban with major conurbation, urban with minor conurbation and urban with city and town
- urban with significant rural
- predominantly rural: largely rural and mainly rural

Around half of all short-break-only homes (87 homes, 52%) were located in predominantly urban areas. A further 39 homes (23%) were in areas defined as 'urban with significant rural' parts. A quarter of all short-break-only homes (41, 25%) were in predominantly rural areas.

As urban areas are more densely populated, homes in these areas are likely to be locally accessible to a greater number of children and their families. The majority of densely populated areas were well served by short-break-only homes, though there are exceptions. However, there were only 41 short-break-only homes in rural locations across the whole of England. It is possible that disabled children who live rurally may have to travel long distances to access short breaks, or go without them entirely.

Figure 3: Distribution of short-break-only homes according to urban/rural classification

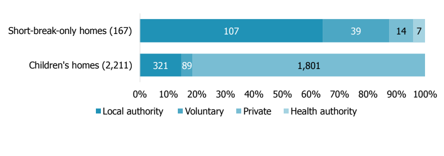


View data in an accessible format.

Split between sectors

Short-break-only homes were owned and run by 4 sectors: LA, health authority, private and voluntary.

Figure 4: Sector breakdown of short-break-only homes and children's homes



View data in an accessible format.

As at 31 March 2020, the majority of short-break-only homes (107 homes, 64%) were owned by an LA (this includes trusts that operate children's services on behalf of the LA). These 107 homes were owned by 73 different LAs across England, with the majority of these LAs (52 LAs, 71%) owning 1 short-break-only home each. However, over half of all LAs (78) did not operate any short-break-only homes.

Only 8 LAs owned 3 or more short-break-only homes, and the largest number owned by any single LA was 5. All but one of these LAs were among the group of geographically larger LAs. For 17 LAs (11% of all LAs), the only children's homes they ran were short-break-only provisions. In most cases, they ran a single short-break home; 2 of these LAs had 2 short-break-only homes.

The voluntary sector accounted for the second largest number of short-break-only homes (39 homes, 23%). One third of these homes (13) were owned by a single charity, Action for Children. This organisation was the 15th largest provider of all children's homes as at 31 March 2020, with 13 short-break-only and 4 children's homes.

Uniquely among children's homes, 7 short-break-only homes (4%) were owned by health authorities. These homes were located in London, the South West, the East Midlands and the West Midlands.

The majority of children's homes (82%) are owned by companies in the private sector. However, these companies owned only 14 short-break-only homes (8%). Of these 14 homes, 2 were owned by a company that was among the 10 largest providers of children's homes as at 31 March 2020.

It is striking that private sector ownership in this area is so low, particularly compared with its predominant presence in the overall area of children's homes. LAs have a larger presence in this group of homes because they are required to provide these services and they know that they can run them well; many of these homes have been registered for a long time. The services these homes provide are highly specialised, require a range of equipment and need staff with the right skills and experience to support the children well. The expense of this is high.

Who do short-break-only homes care for?

Age

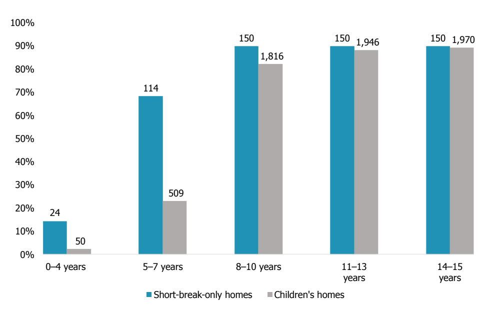
Children's homes of all types are required to specify the age range of children that they provide care for in their SoP. Across the 167 short-break-only homes, the full period of childhood was covered. The lowest age limit was in the earliest years of life (age 0 to 4). The upper limit sometimes extended into early adulthood (19 years and above).

The provision of short-break care for children in their early years (0 to 4 years) was the least extensive. Only 24 homes (14%) were able to provide care to this age group. However, the number of homes that can provide children aged 5 to 7 with short breaks increases substantially. As at 31 March 2020, just over two thirds (114 homes, 68%) of all short-break-only homes offered care to children within this age bracket. The number of homes increases even further for children aged 8 to 10. All short-break homes can accommodate this age group. There were 17 homes that did not indicate the youngest age group that they can accommodate.

There was a lot less variation in the upper age limit for short-break-only homes. Almost all homes (155 homes, 93%) were able to provide care for children up to the 16 to 18 years old range. An additional 9 homes offered care into early adulthood (19 years and above), subject to the majority of short breaks being taken by children under 18.

The high proportion of short-break-only homes that offer care for children aged 0 to 7 years old (114 homes, 68%) is different from children's homes. The majority of children's homes care for older children.

Figure 5: Cumulative breakdown of the age groups accommodated in short-break-only homes and children's homes



The homes that did not indicate the youngest age group they can accommodate were excluded from this figure.
View data in an accessible format.

These differences in age range reflect the different needs of the children being cared for. Children's homes are not generally the preferred care option for younger children as their permanent home. However, a short break offers the child the opportunity to enjoy

new experiences with other children.

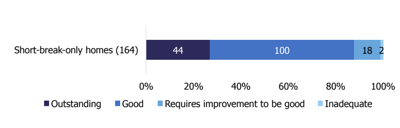
Gender

None of the short-break-only homes provided gender-specific care, with all offering care to children of all genders.

Inspection outcomes

As at 31 March 2020, 164 of the 167 short-break-only homes (98%) had received a full inspection judgement. The remaining 3 homes had been registered for less than a year before March 2020 and had yet to receive their first inspection. Of those homes that had received an inspection, 44 (27%) were judged to be outstanding and a further 100 (61%) were judged to be good. There were only 2 inadequate settings.

Figure 6: Inspection outcomes of short-break-only homes as at 31 March 2020



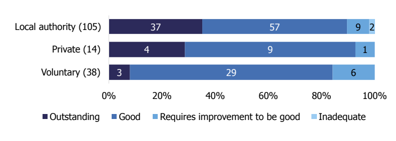
View data in an accessible format.

Of the 164 short-break-only homes that had an overall effectiveness judgement as at 31 March 2020, 127 had inspection judgements going back to the 2014 to 2015 inspection year. Of these homes, 112 (88%) had been judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection as at 31 March 2020. Over half of these homes (69 homes, 62%) had consistently been judged good or outstanding at all inspections since 1 April 2014.

The remaining 43 homes (38%) had each received at least 1 judgement, between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2020, that was not good or outstanding. Of these, 9 homes had received inadequate and 40 homes requires improvement to be good judgements. Many of these homes received a judgement of inadequate or requires improvement to be good only once (6 of 9 homes and 21 of 40 homes, respectively), but some received these judgements on multiple inspections. The most frequent were 1 home that received 4 inadequate judgements over the 6-year period, and another home that was judged requires improvement to be good a total of 3 times.

As at 31 March 2020, the proportion of LA- and privately owned homes that received an outstanding inspection judgement at their most recent inspection (around 3.5 and 3 in 10, respectively) was higher than among homes in the voluntary sector (just under 1 in 10). The 2 inadequate homes were both LA-run. The reasons for the judgement in both cases were serious safeguarding concerns and management shortcomings. One of these homes has had no new admissions since the last full inspection.

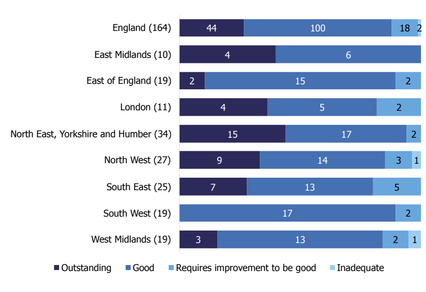
Figure 7: Inspection outcome of short-break-only homes as at 31 March 2020, by sector



1. The short-break-only homes owned by health authorities are not included in the chart due to their small numbers. In total, 5 were judged good and 2 requires improvement to be good.
2. Due to the small numbers in some sectors, figures should be treated with caution.
View data in an accessible format.

At the regional level, because of the small numbers, there was little variation, although the South West had no outstanding short-break-only homes.

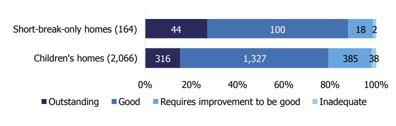
Figure 8: Breakdown of inspection outcome of short-break-only homes by region



View data in an accessible format.

Short-break-only homes had a better overall effectiveness profile than children's homes. The proportion of short-break-only homes that received a good or outstanding inspection judgement (88%) was 8 percentage points higher than among children's homes (80%). Most of this difference was due to the substantially higher proportion of outstanding short-break-only homes (27%, 44 homes). Only 15% of children's homes (316 homes) were judged to be outstanding.

Figure 9: Inspection outcomes of short-break-only homes and children's homes, as at 31 March 2020



View data in an accessible format.

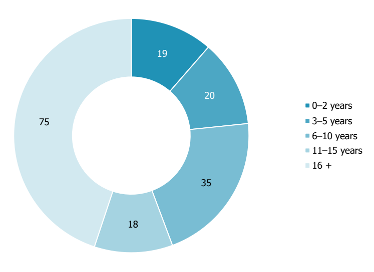
Length of registration

As at 31 March 2020, the length of time that short-break-only homes had been registered for ranged from less than 1 year to 34 years. The average length of registration was 12 years. The most common length of registration was 16 years (32 homes, 19%), closely followed by 17 years of registration (30 homes, 18%).

The average length of registration differed between the sectors. LA-owned (13 years) and voluntary-owned provisions (12 years) were open on average nearly twice as long as health authority homes (7 years) and 3 times longer than private sector homes (4 years).

The shorter average length of registration for privately owned homes can be partially explained by the re-registration of some homes. This occurs when homes that were previously owned by another sector or company are bought by a private company or change direct ownership. When the ownership of the home changes, we require the home to re-register and we give it a new unique reference number (URN). This results in a shorter length of registration under the re-registered URN. Of the 14 privately owned short-break-only homes, half were previously owned by a different provider. The length of time that these homes operated under a different provider ranges from less than a year to several decades.

Figure 10: Length of registration (years) for short-break-only homes



View data in an accessible format.

The most common registration length for short-break-only homes was 16 years (32 homes, 19%), compared with a year for children's homes (240 homes, 11%). On average, short-break-only homes were open 4 years longer than children's homes.

LA-owned short-break-only homes were, on average, registered for 2 years longer than LA-owned children's homes (13 years and 11 years, respectively). The private sector had the opposite pattern. Short-break-only homes had an average registration length of 4 years. This is 3 years less than for children's homes.

Table 2: Average length of registration, in years, by sector

Sector	Health authority	Local authority	Private	Voluntary	Total
Short-break-only homes	7	13	4	12	12
Children's homes	N/A	11	7	12	8

Complaints, notifications and enforcement actions

Complaints and child protection concerns

Complaints and child protection concerns are reports that are made directly to Ofsted to share alerts or opinions regarding a children's social care setting. Both are usually made by a third party, such as a parent, guardian or member of the public. In some cases, they can come from a member of staff, typically in a whistle-blowing capacity. Child protection concerns usually reflect serious alerts about a child's welfare.

In the March 2019 to April 2020 year, 13 (just under 1 in 10) short-break-only homes were the subject of complaints or child protection concerns. These 13 homes had a total of 17 notifications: 15 complaints and 2 child protection concerns. This was proportionately less than for children's homes (around 2 in 10, 464 homes).

Notifications

The home itself makes a notification directly to Ofsted. These notifications fulfil the legal requirement of children's homes to tell us about the most serious incidents that happen to children placed with them, and what the home has done in response. The content of notifications covers:

- the death of a child
- a child being subject to child sexual exploitation
- child protection enquiries
- the police being called to the provider
- a child engaging in self-harm
- allegations of abuse, complaints or referrals against people working for the provider
- any other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious

During 2019 to 2020, Ofsted received 265 notifications from almost two thirds of all short-break-only homes (106 homes, 63%). The average number of notifications per home was 3. The maximum number of notifications made by any single home was 12.

The majority (60%) of notifications were categorised as 'other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious'. Within this category, the reasons for notifications were quite varied. The majority related to children's underlying health conditions (like epilepsy), issues resulting from the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic or misadministration of medicine or health procedures. We know, from previous research, that homes sometimes notify Ofsted of events in a child's life that they are not required to, for a variety of reasons. This is likely to explain the majority of the notifications under 'any other incident'.

There were a number of notifications about police being called to the home (27, 10%). These were mainly in response to incidents where adults were unable to keep children or others safe from children's behaviour or there was resulting damage to people or property. There was also a small number where the police had been called in relation to child protection concerns about the child that did not relate to anything that had happened at the home.

Compared with short-break-only homes, a larger proportion of children's homes made notifications to Ofsted (89%, 1,962 homes) during 2019 to 2020. Both the average number (9) and the highest number (73) of notifications received from children's homes were higher than among short-break-only homes: 3 and 6 times, respectively.

Table 3: Notification reason for short-break-only homes

Type of notification	Number of short-break-only homes	% of short-break-only homes
Other incident relating to a child which the registered person considers to be serious	160	60
Allegation of abuse against the home or a person working there	33	12
Police called to the home	27	10
Child protection enquiry instigated	21	8
All other notifications[footnote 1]	24	8
Total	**265**	**100**

Enforcement actions

Ofsted has a regulatory role, and can therefore take several actions when children's homes do not meet the required safeguarding standards. Among the most serious of these are:

- restriction of accommodation: children currently residing in the setting can stay there, but no new residents are allowed until the enforcement action is lifted
- suspension of provider: the provider needs to move all residing children to different settings and no new residents are allowed until the enforcement action is lifted
- cancellation of providers: the provider needs to transfer out all residing children and young people and must close permanently

We cancelled one short-break-only home during 2019 to 2020.

Only one short-break-only home had an additional enforcement action during 2019 to 2020, which was a suspension of the provider. We suspended this home 'due to risk to children and young people in placement'. Over the same period, 3% of children's homes (65 homes) had 68 enforcement actions. Most of these actions were restrictions of accommodation (45 homes, 69%) and the rest were suspensions of providers (20 homes, 31%).

Registered manager vacancies

As at 31 March 2020, 13 of the 167 short-break-only homes (8%) had a vacant RM post. For these 13 homes, the RM post had been vacant for an average of 6 months, with 14 months being the longest vacancy. On the same date, there were no short-break-only homes in which the responsible individual (RI) post was vacant.

Short-break-only homes seem to have fewer vacant positions. The proportion of children's homes that had a vacant RM post was 4 percentage points higher than among short-break-only homes, at 12% (259 homes). The average length of time with an RM vacancy was slightly shorter for children's homes (5 months), compared with short-break-only homes (6 months), but the longest vacancy was considerably longer, at over 4 years (56 months).[footnote 2]

Among children's homes, there were 18 homes (1%) with a vacant RI post on 31 March 2020, compared with no short-break-only homes.

Table 4: Comparison of number and length of RM vacancies

	RM position vacant	RM position vacant (%)	Average time of vacant RM position (months)
Short-break-only homes (167)	13	8	6
Children's homes (2,210)	259	12	5

One children's home was omitted from the analysis because it has had no children in placement since 2012.

When comparing the time in post of the RMs between short-break-only and children's homes, there is a notable difference. Short-break-only homes' current RMs have been, on average, in post for 4 years and 8 months, just over 2 years longer than their children's homes colleagues. Similar to the current RMs, the previous RMs were, on average, in their posts for a year and 4 months longer in short-break-only homes than in children's homes. When looking into the RMs who were in post as at 31 March 2020, the percentage of short-break-only homes with the RM still in post on 31 March 2021 was 16 points higher (126, 82%) than among children's homes (1,289, 66%). These figures suggest that short-break-only homes have a more stable RM group.

Table 5: Comparison of the average length of time in post (years and months) for current and previous RMs

Type of home	Current RM	Previous RM
Short-break-only homes	4 years and 8 months	3 years and 8 months
Children's homes	2 years and 7 months	2 years and 4 months

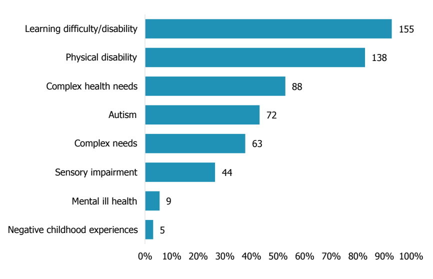
Care provided

An additional goal of our data collection was to investigate the different types of care that children's homes offer. As explained in the introduction, the short-break-only homes discussed in this paper exclusively provide care to disabled children. In our research, we grouped disabilities by type (for the precise groupings, please see the methodology section in Appendix 1), and found that short-break-only homes offered care for the following groups (in many cases, homes offered care for multiple groups):

- learning disabilities (93%)
- physical disabilities (83%)
- complex health needs (53%)
- autism (43%)
- sensory impairment (26%)
- children with complex needs, such as going missing, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or general complex needs (38%)

The primary purpose of short-break-only homes is to meet the needs of disabled children. Some homes also reported that they could accommodate additional specialist needs, such as negative childhood experiences (including abuse) and mental ill health.

Figure 11: Types of care provided in short-break-only homes

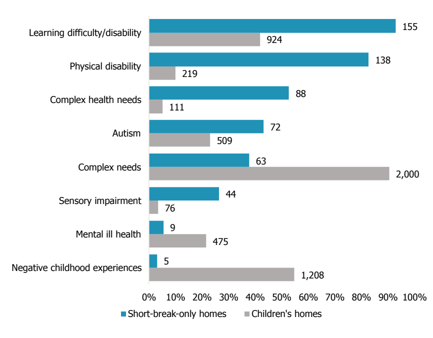


View data in an accessible format.

The majority of short-break-only homes (95%, 158 homes) were able to accommodate children from more than one of these groups.

As expected, due to the different purposes of the homes, the needs that were met by short-break-only homes differed substantially to those met by children's homes. Children's homes most commonly accommodated children with complex needs or negative childhood experiences, such as abuse.

Figure 12: Comparison of the different types of care provided by short-break-only and children's homes



View data in an accessible format.

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Glossary

Definitions of terms are in the statistical glossary.

Appendix 1: Methodology and limitations

Table 6: Summary of the different types of children's homes

Type of home (number as at 31 March 2020)	Who they care for	Duration of care offered	Average size of homes
Children's homes (2,211)	- Children who are looked after The range of needs of these children is very broad, with different homes specialising in meeting different needs	From overnight emergency care to 52-week, year-round care	4
Secure children's homes (13)	- Children looked after who are serving a custodial sentence - Children looked after who require secure accommodation on welfare grounds	52-week, year-round care	18
Residential special schools registered as a children's home (69)	- Children with high levels of SEN, who are looked after, and live at the school for more than 295 days per year	More than 295 days per year	28
Short-break-only homes (167)	Disabled children who are not usually looked after, but become looked after for the duration of the short break	Maximum of 17 days' continuous care per short break. Maximum 75 days' care in a 12-month period.	6

Background

Short-break-only homes are a distinct group of children's homes. We have wanted to report on this group of homes for several years, but have been unable to due to the poor quality of the existing data. We concluded that we needed to carry out our own data collection and analysis, identifying and describing short-break-only homes. We used all children's homes that were active or suspended on 31 March 2020 as our initial data group, with the intention of updating the data on an annual basis.

Description of data sources

When a children's home opens, it must provide Ofsted with a SoP. The document provides a detailed description of the children's home, including its specialities and the type of care it provides. We require the social care provider to update the SoP regularly. These documents formed the main sources for our data collection.

Due to the SoPs containing vast amounts of information (some are 40 or more pages in length), we were able to look into multiple items of interest at once. For the first time, we were able to comprehensively identify short-break-only children's homes. We were also able to categorise each children's home with regards to the type of care it provides.

Where appropriate, to add context, we also used data collected from LAs by the DfE about children in need and children looked after. We also supplemented our data collection with internal Ofsted data.

Table 7: List of variables collected for each children's home

Variable	Data type	Source
Children's home URN	for example, SC12345	Internal Ofsted data
Length of registration (years open as at 31 March 2020)	for example, 1	Internal Ofsted data
Sector	for example, 'Private'	Internal Ofsted data
Company that owns the home	for example, 'CareTech Holdings Plc'	Companies House
RM post vacant	for example, 'Yes'	Internal Ofsted data
Months since RM post vacant as at 31 March 2020	for example, 1	Internal Ofsted data
RI post vacant	for example, 'Yes'	Internal Ofsted data
Months since RI post vacant as at 31 March 2020	for example, 1	Internal Ofsted data
Is the RM still in post?	for example, 'Yes'	Internal Ofsted data
Postcode of children's home	for example, BB1 1BB	Internal Ofsted data
in which the home is based	for example, 'Barnet'	Internal Ofsted data
Ofsted region in which the home is based	for example, 'East Midlands'	Internal Ofsted data
Overall effectiveness grade	for example, 'Good'	Internal Ofsted data
Notifications	for example, 'any other incident'	Internal Ofsted data
Complaints and child protection notifications	for example, 1	Internal Ofsted data
Enforcement actions	for example, 'suspended'	Internal Ofsted data
Places offered per home	for example, 1	Statement of purpose
Highest and lowest age of children	for example, '0-4'	Statement of purpose
Gender of accommodated children	for example, 'Male'	Statement of purpose
Type of children's home	for example, ' short-break-only home'	Statement of purpose
Rural/urban classification	for example, 'Mainly rural'	ONS data
Number of disabled children	for example, 1	DfE children in need census
Does the home accommodate children with:		
Complex needs	for example, 'Provided'	Statement of purpose
Learning disability	for example, 'Provided'	Statement of purpose
Physical disability	for example, 'Provided'	Statement of purpose
Autism and sensory processing	for example, 'Provided'	Statement of purpose
Complex health needs	for example, 'Provided'	Statement of purpose
Mental ill health	for example, 'Provided'	Statement of purpose
Negative childhood experiences	for example, 'Provided'	Statement of purpose
Sensory impairment	for example, 'Provided'	Statement of purpose

Methodology

Extensive thought and planning went into designing the data matrix, which formed the basis of the analysis, in order to decide what data to collect and record from SoPs. We

We used a sample of 20 children's homes. Staff's to narrow down what data we could collect and how we could do it. We used a mixed methods approach to ensure we reached as many people as possible and to ensure we could triangulate data.

From this, we decided what categories of care to use and, where appropriate, what questions we could include. We collected data on physical disability, complex health needs and sensory impairment. We also collected data on:

- complex needs
  - going missing
  - attachment disorders
  - sexualised behaviour towards NONO
  - communication difficulties related to complex needs
  - drug or alcohol dependence
  - emotional and behavioural difficulties
  - offending behaviour
  - self harm
  - sexualised behaviour
  - violent behaviour
  - unspecified complex needs.
- learning disability
  - learning difficulty
  - learning disability
- communication difficulties related to learning
  - autism
  - autism
- sensory processing
  - sensory processing impairments
- subject-relating children
  - physical abuse
  - emotional abuse
  - sexual abuse
  - neglect and exploitation
  - neglect
  - trauma
  - emotional abuse
- young People
  - mental ill health
  - eating disorders

We also asked for data on 20 pages long, our team used the statistical programming software R to analyse the data. We used descriptive statistics to describe the characteristics of the sample of need. We did this using extensive lists of key words related to each category of need, following a similar looking of the process to that described above. We used the Fisher Exact Test to compare the proportions of children in care with and in the positive for example. This home cannot accommodate children with mental health need.). The finished dataset then went through thorough cleaning and quality assurance.

Advantages and limitations

Advantages of the new dataset

As mentioned above, this data collection enabled us to collect data on what special needs children in care have and how children's homes provided. This is the first time we can accurately report on these details.

During the data collection, we realised that there are some children's homes that do not accommodate children with certain types of complex needs. To ensure data collection, we identified a small group of children's homes that offered short breaks for non-disabled children (10 homes). Other groups came to light as well, relating to children who go missing, children who have attachment disorders and children who are LGBT and/or Black and Mixed Race. These homes provide a mixture of residential and non-short break care, and were classified based on the home's main profile. For example, a home that mainly provides short breaks for children with a learning disability and short break care. The identification of these groups took us a step closer to being able to describe the full picture of children's homes.

Table A: Breakdown of the different types of children's homes

Type of children's home	Number of homes	% of homes
Children's homes	2,164	87
Short breaks only homes	52	2
Children's homes +	95	4
Short break homes +	10	0
Short breaks for non-disabled children	10	0
Total	2,476	100

As we have discussed, this new dataset is more accurate than our previous data regarding short breaks. Of the 907 short-break only homes, we found that 10 (1%) had previously been recorded as something else, and a further 24 (2.6%) did not have a previous record. Of the 52 homes, a further 47 (90.4%) of short-break homes were not previously recorded as such.

Table B: Comparison between the previously existing and new datasets (number of homes)

Comparison between the new and old dataset	Children's homes	Short break homes	Children's + homes	Short break + homes	Short breaks for non-disabled children	Total
Correct	1,979	124	92	8	10	2,213
Incorrect	20	10	3	2	0	35
Nothing in archive	24	24	0	0	0	48
Total	2,023	157	95	10	10	2,296

Table TD: Comparison between the previously existing and new datasets (percentages of homes)

Comparison between the new and old dataset	% of Children's homes	% of Short break homes	% of Children's + homes	% of Short break + homes	% of short breaks for non-disabled children	Total
Correct	98	79	97	80	100	96
Incorrect	1	6	3	20	0	2
Nothing in archive	1	15	0	0	0	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Limitations of the new dataset

Our newly collected dataset has many upsides. However, it will has some limitations.

- We used the most up-to-date Staff's available for each children's home, but some of them had not been updated recently. This means that our dataset may be out of date.
- Some Staff's did not provide enough detail on the care that such homes offer to be classified as providing for children with complex needs. This is a limitation of our data.
- Our data collection was carried out by multiple colleagues, meaning that there might have been some differences in perception. This could have led to some inconsistencies in the data. Before the Staff's analysis, we checked for inconsistencies.
- The process of archiving the data from the Staff's is extremely time-consuming.

Future work

We intend to produce at least one more paper after this one. This will cover the care provided by children's homes outside of the short-break groups.

We will also use the data to inform our work with children's homes, and to inform the section in more detail about children's homes of all types.

As the data collection is updated annually, we will also have the potential to report on how the sector is changing over time. This will include emerging needs and how these are being met by children's homes.

Appendix 2: Data tables for figures

This section contains the underlying data in an accessible table format for all figures.

Data for Figure 3: Distribution of short-break only homes in England, by government region and value

Local authority in which the home is located	Local authority	Voluntary	Private	Health authority
Bexley	0	1	0	0
Barnsley	1	0	0	0
Bath and North East Somerset	1	0	0	0
Bedford Borough	1	0	0	0
Bexley	0	1	0	0
Birmingham	2	1	0	0
Blackburn with Darwen	1	0	0	0
Blackpool	1	0	0	0
Bolton	2	0	0	0
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	0	1	0	0
Bracknell Forest	1	0	0	0
Bradford	2	0	0	0
Brent	2	0	0	0
Brighton	1	0	0	0
Bromley	1	0	0	0
Buckinghamshire	0	1	0	0
Calderdale	2	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire	1	0	0	0
Central Bedfordshire	1	0	0	0
Cheshire West and Chester	1	0	0	0
Cornwall	2	0	0	0
Coventry	1	0	0	0
Croydon	1	0	0	0
Cumbria	2	0	0	0
Darlington	1	0	0	0
Derby City	2	0	0	0
Derbyshire	2	0	0	0
Devon	2	0	0	0
Doncaster	1	0	0	0
Dorset	1	0	0	0
Dudley	2	0	0	0
Durham	1	0	0	0
Ealing	1	0	0	0
Gateshead	1	0	0	0
Gloucestershire	1	0	0	0
Hackney	1	0	0	0
Halton	0	1	0	0
Hartlepool	1	0	0	0
Hounslow	1	0	0	0
Isle of Wight	1	0	0	0
Kent	0	1	0	0
Kingston upon Hull, City of	1	0	0	0
Kirklees	1	0	0	0
Knowsley	1	0	0	0
Lambeth	1	0	0	0
Lancashire	2	0	0	0
Leicester	1	0	0	0
Lincolnshire	2	0	0	0
Liverpool	1	0	0	0
Luton	1	0	0	0
Medway	1	0	0	0
Middlesbrough	1	0	0	0
Milton Keynes	1	0	0	0
Newcastle upon Tyne	1	0	0	0
Norfolk	2	0	0	0
North East Lincolnshire	1	0	0	0
North Lincolnshire	1	0	0	0
North Somerset	1	0	0	0
North Tyneside	1	0	0	0
North Yorkshire	2	0	0	0
Northamptonshire	0	1	0	0
Northumberland	1	0	0	0
Nottingham City	1	0	0	0
Nottinghamshire	1	0	0	0
Oldham	1	0	0	0
Oxfordshire	1	0	0	0
Peterborough	1	0	0	0
Plymouth	2	0	0	0
Portsmouth	1	0	0	0
Reading	0	1	0	0
Redcar and Cleveland	1	0	0	0
Rotherham	1	0	0	0
Rutland	1	0	0	0
Salford	1	0	0	0
Shropshire	1	0	0	0
Sheffield	1	0	0	0
Slough	1	0	0	0
Southend	1	0	0	0
South Gloucestershire	0	1	0	0
South Tyneside	1	0	0	0
Southampton	1	0	0	0
Southwark	1	0	0	0
St. Helens	1	0	0	0
Staffordshire	2	0	0	0
Stockport	0	1	0	0
Stockton-on-Tees	1	0	0	0
Stoke-on-Trent	1	0	0	0
Suffolk	2	0	0	0
Sunderland	0	1	0	0
Surrey	1	0	0	0
Swindon	1	0	0	0
Telford & Wrekin	0	1	0	0
Tower Hamlets	0	1	0	0
Wakefield	1	0	0	0
Walsall	1	0	0	0
Warrington	1	0	0	0
West Berkshire	1	0	0	0
Wigan	2	0	0	0
Wiltshire	1	0	0	0
Wokingham	1	0	0	0
Wolverhampton	1	0	0	0
Worcestershire	1	0	0	0
Total	107	26	4	1

See Figure 3.

Data for Figure 3: Comparison of the number of places provided by short-break homes and children's homes, as at 31 March 2020

Number of places	Number of children's homes	% of children's homes	Number of short-break only homes	% of short-break only homes
1 to 3	450	21	5	1
4 to 6	1,011	46	18	19
7 to 9	570	23	54	50
10 to 12	120	5	19	20
13 or more	14	2	12	11

See Figure 3.

Data for Figure 3: Distribution of short-break only homes according to urban/rural classification

Local authority	Urban/rural classification	Number of short-break only homes
Barnet	Urban with significant rural	1
Barnsley	Urban with significant rural	1
Bath and North East Somerset	Urban with significant rural	1
Bedford	Urban with significant rural	1
Bexley	Urban with significant rural	1
Birmingham	Urban with significant rural	1
Blackburn with Darwen	Urban with significant rural	1
Blackpool	Urban with city and town	1
Bolton	Urban with significant rural	1
Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole	Urban with city and town	1
Bracknell Forest	Urban with significant rural	1
Bradford	Urban with city and town	1
Brent	Urban with major conurbation	1
Bristol, City of	Urban with city and town	1
Bromley	Urban with major conurbation	1
Buckinghamshire	Urban with significant rural	1
Calderdale	Urban with city and town	1
Cambridgeshire	Largely rural	1
Central Bedfordshire	Largely rural	1
Cheshire West and Chester	Urban with significant rural	1
Cornwall	Mainly rural	1
Coventry	Urban with city and town	1
Croydon	Urban with major conurbation	1
Cumbria	Largely rural	1
Darlington	Urban with city and town	1
Derby	Urban with city and town	1
Derbyshire	Urban with significant rural	1
Devon	Largely rural	1
Doncaster	Urban with significant rural	1
Dorset	Largely rural	1
Dudley	Urban with major conurbation	1
Durham	Largely rural	1
Ealing	Urban with major conurbation	1
Gateshead	Urban with major conurbation	1
Gloucestershire	Urban with significant rural	1
Halton	Urban with city and town	1
Hampshire	Urban with significant rural	1
Hartlepool	Urban with city and town	1
Hackney	Urban with significant rural	1
Hounslow	Urban with significant rural	1
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	Urban with major conurbation	1
Lancashire	Urban with significant rural	1
Leeds	Urban with significant rural	1
Leicestershire	Urban with significant rural	1
Leicester	Urban with city and town	1
Lincolnshire	Largely rural	1
Liverpool	Urban with major conurbation	1
Luton	Urban with city and town	1
Manchester	Urban with major conurbation	1
Middlesbrough	Urban with city and town	1
Milton Keynes	Urban with significant rural	1
Newcastle upon Tyne	Urban with city and town	1
Norfolk	Largely rural	1
North East Lincolnshire	Urban with city and town	1
North Lincolnshire	Urban with significant rural	1
North Somerset	Urban with city and town	1
North Tyneside	Urban with city and town	1
Northamptonshire	Urban with significant rural	1
Northumberland	Largely rural	1
Nottingham	Urban with city and town	1
Nottinghamshire County Council	Urban with significant rural	1
Oldham	Urban with city and town	1
Oxfordshire	Largely rural	1
Peterborough	Urban with city and town	1
Plymouth	Urban with city and town	1
Portsmouth	Urban with city and town	1
Reading	Urban with city and town	1
Redcar and Cleveland	Urban with significant rural	1
Rotherham	Urban with city and town	1
Rutland	Largely rural	1
Salford	Urban with city and town	1
Sefton	Urban with major conurbation	1
Sheffield	Urban with city and town	1
Shropshire	Largely rural	1
Slough	Urban with city and town	1
Southend	Largely rural	1
South Gloucestershire	Urban with city and town	1
South Tyneside	Urban with city and town	1
Southampton	Urban with city and town	1
Southwark	Urban with major conurbation	1
Stockport	Urban with major conurbation	1
St Helens	Urban with major conurbation	1
Staffordshire	Urban with significant rural	1
Stoke-on-Trent	Urban with city and town	1
Swindon	Urban with city and town	1
Telford & Wrekin	Urban with city and town	1
Tower Hamlets	Urban with major conurbation	1
Wakefield	Urban with city and town	1
Walsall	Urban with major conurbation	1
Warrington	Urban with city and town	1
Warwickshire	Urban with significant rural	1
West Berkshire	Largely rural	1
Wigan	Urban with major conurbation	1
Wiltshire	Largely rural	1
Wokingham	Urban with city and town	1
Wolverhampton	Urban with major conurbation	1
Worcestershire	Urban with significant rural	1

See Figure 3.

Data for Figure 4: Section breakdown of short-break only homes and children's homes

Sector	Number of short-break only homes	% of short-break only homes	Number of children's homes	% of children's homes
Local authority	107	11	2,023	85
Private	75	8	1,691	87
Voluntary	26	2	90	4
Health authority	1	0	4	0
Total	907	100	2,291	100

See Figure 4.

Data for Figure 5: Cumulative breakdown of the age groups accommodated in short-break only homes and children's homes

Age group	Cumulative % of short-break only homes	Cumulative % of children's homes	Cumulative % of short-break only homes	Cumulative % of children's homes
0 to 4 years	0	0	0	0
5 to 7 years	14	64	509	31
8 to 10 years	55	85	1,994	70
11 to 14 years	85	97	2,291	100
15 to 18 years	100	100	1,915	85

See Figure 5.

Data for Figure 6: Inspection outcomes of short-break only homes as at 31 March 2020

Inspection outcome	Number of short-break only homes	% of short-break only homes
Outstanding	10	1
Good	150	20
Requires improvement to be good	31	4
Inadequate	2	0
Total	193	100

See Figure 6.

Data for Figure 7: Inspection outcomes of short-break only homes as at 31 March 2020, by sector

Sector	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement to be good	Inadequate
Local authority	1	19	3	0
Private	8	125	25	2
Voluntary	1	6	3	0
Health authority	0	0	0	0

See Figure 7.

Inspection outcome	Number of local authority homes	% of local authority homes	Number of private homes	% of private homes	Number of voluntary homes	% of voluntary homes
Outstanding	37	35	4	29	3	8
Good	57	54	9	64	29	76
Requires improvement to be good	9	9	1	7	6	16
Inadequate	2	2	0	0	0	0
Total	105	100	14	100	38	100

See Figure 7.

Data for Figure 8: Breakdown of inspection outcome of short-break-only homes by region

Region	Number of outstanding homes	% of outstanding homes	Number of good homes	% of good homes	Number of requires improvement to be good homes	% of requires improvement to be good homes	Number of inadequate homes	% of inadequate homes
England (164)	44	27	100	61	18	11	2	1
East Midlands (10)	4	40	6	60	0	0	0	0
East of England (19)	2	11	15	79	2	11	0	0
London (11)	4	36	5	45	2	18	0	0
North East, Yorkshire and Humber (34)	15	44	17	50	2	6	0	0
North West (27)	9	33	14	52	3	11	1	4
South East (25)	7	28	13	52	5	20	0	0
South West (19)	0	0	17	89	2	11	0	0
West Midlands (19)	3	16	13	68	2	11	1	5

See Figure 8.

Data for Figure 9: Inspection outcomes of short-break-only homes and children's homes, as at 31 March 2020

Inspection outcome	Number of children's homes	% of children's homes	Number of short-break-only homes	% of short-break-only homes
Outstanding	316	15	44	27
Good	1,330	64	100	61
Requires improvement to be good	386	19	18	11
Inadequate	38	2	2	1
Total	2,070	100	164	100

See Figure 9.

Data for Figure 10: Length of registration (years) for short-break-only homes

Length of registration (years)	Number of short-break-only homes	% of short-break-only homes
0-2 years	19	11
3-5 years	20	12
6-10 years	35	21
11-15 years	18	11
16 +	75	45

See Figure 10.

Data for Figure 11: Types of care provided in short-break-only homes

Type of care	Number of short-break-only homes	% of short-break-only homes
Learning difficulty/disability	155	93
Physical disability	138	83
Complex health needs	88	53
Autism	72	43
Complex needs	63	38
Sensory impairment	44	26
Mental ill health	9	5
Negative childhood experiences	5	3

See Figure 11.

Data for Figure 12: Comparison of the different types of care provided by short-break-only and children's homes

Type of care	Number of children's homes	% of children's homes	Number of short-break-only homes	% of short-break-only homes
Learning difficulty/disability	924	42	155	93
Physical disability	219	10	138	83
Complex health needs	111	5	88	53
Autism	509	23	72	43
Complex needs	2,000	90	63	38
Sensory impairment	76	3	44	26
Mental ill health	475	21	9	5
Negative childhood experiences	1,208	55	5	3

See Figure 12.

1. All other notifications include serious illness or accident of a child; child protection enquiry involving a child has concluded; serious concerns over the missing behaviour of a child; death of a child; child has been a victim of a serious assault; child involved in or subject to, or is suspected of being involved in or subject to, sexual exploitation; and serious incident of self-harm by a child. ↩
2. It is possible that the home was attempting to fill the vacancy during this period, including proposing new RMs to Ofsted for the approval process, but these attempts were unsuccessful. ↩

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