



Department  
for Education

# **Children accommodated in secure children's homes 31 March 2018**

**Data Quality, Uses and Methodology  
document**

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## Description and Background

This document outlines the use made of statistics covering children accommodated in secure children's homes and the types of decisions they inform. It provides information on the quality, reliability and methodology of these statistics overall, and in relation to the range of potential uses.

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### Types of secure accommodation

In England and Wales there are three types of secure accommodation in which children and young people can be placed on youth justice grounds. These are young offender institutions, secure training centres and secure children's homes. Secure children's homes also accommodate young people placed on welfare grounds. This statistical publication provides figures on children accommodated in secure children's homes. Information has been derived from statistical data reported to the Department for Education (DfE) by all secure children's homes in England and Wales that were open on 31 March 2018 along with historical data from previous years' collections. Data on young offender institutions and secure training centres are published separately; see [related information](#) section of this document.

From September 2017, the overall responsibility for commissioning of youth custody transferred to the Ministry of Justice from the Youth Justice Board. At the same time the Youth Custody Service (YCS) took over responsibility for individual placements of children and young people into youth custody and day-to-day management of youth custody.

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### Secure children's homes

Secure children's homes provide care in a secure setting for the most vulnerable looked after children and young offenders with challenging and complex needs, including sometimes severe behavioural and emotional difficulties.

- Children can be placed into the homes under section 25 of the Children Act 1989, for the protection of themselves and/or others by their local authority (a "welfare placement").
- Alternatively children can be placed by the youth justice system (a "justice" placement), either by the Youth Custody Service (YCS) when a child is detained

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for, or convicted of, a serious offence or to the care of their designated local authority when a child is remanded by a court.

There are 14 secure children's homes in England; 13 are managed by local authorities and one by a charity (Nugent Care). Although only 13 local authorities run secure children's homes, many authorities have an occasional but compelling need to commission secure welfare placements. There is one secure children's home in Wales, which is managed by the local authority. Of the 14 English homes, 7 cater solely for children placed under section 25 of the 1989 Act on welfare grounds, 2 contract solely with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and provide placements for young offenders and 5 secure children's homes provide both welfare and youth justice places. Children who are sentenced, detained or remanded are placed in secure children's homes by the YCS, whereas children who are placed on welfare grounds under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989 are commissioned on a spot-purchase basis by individual local authorities. The [secure children's homes website](#) has further information on the 15 homes included in this publication.

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Placement of children in secure children's homes

Many factors are taken into account when determining whether a child is placed in a secure children's home or another type of secure custodial accommodation. Children under 12 who commit serious offences will always be placed in a secure children's home; but for older children the YCS will take account of their vulnerability, based on what is known about their mental health, emotional and cognitive development etc. Whilst there is generally a preference for placing children within travelling distance of their home if it in their best interests to do so, for this very specialist provision, it is sometimes necessary to place further away from home. Further, some secure children's homes have developed expertise in addressing specific needs and vulnerabilities and these specialisms will also need to be taken into account in determining the most appropriate placement for an individual child.

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England and Wales    The statistical release contains information for both England and Wales due to a long-standing agreement with the Welsh Government that DfE will report on the single secure children's home in Wales. The combined figures for England and Wales are presented as the main figures, as cross-border placements mean that Welsh children may be accommodated in English secure children's homes and vice versa. Figures for England only are also available in the statistical release but should be interpreted with the aforementioned caveat in mind.

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## Users and usage

### DfE and Central Government

The children accommodated in secure children's homes statistical release includes:

- The number of secure children's homes in England and Wales
- The number of places approved
- The number of places in use or available for use
- The number of children accommodated by age, gender, length of stay and type of placement.

The purpose of this publication is to provide the latest information on the number of children accommodated in secure children's homes and the number of places approved for use.

### Other users

We are very familiar with the uses made of the data within the DfE and by the UK Government. However, we have less clarity of the uses made of this data by other organisations and external parties.

A user consultation was carried out in 2011 but no responses were received. We will continue to engage with users to ensure that the publication best meets their needs and welcome feedback or suggestions from any new or previously unknown users, which we will take on board. Would you like to feed in your views? If so, please contact:

[CLA.Stats@education.gov.uk](mailto:CLA.Stats@education.gov.uk)

## Data quality

The 2018 figures for children accommodated in secure children's homes are the latest in an annual series. Data is collected on the SA1 statistical return, which provides the DfE with aggregate data on children accommodated in secure children's homes in England and Wales.

The figures presented at 31 March 2018 are based on data reported by the 15 secure children's homes that were open at this time. The 2018 data has gone through the validation checks described in the [methodology chapter](#). There are no known quality issues with this data. The collection, that is the source for this publication, is unchanged and has been stable for many years.

## Related information

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### Ofsted

Ofsted publishes official statistics annually on [Children's social care in England](#). This includes data on the maximum number of places a provider may offer at any one time. Secure children's homes are one of a number of types of accommodation that they cover.

We check the number of approved places in our collection against the maximum number of places for each of the secure children's homes in England at 31 March reported by Ofsted. When comparing Ofsted figures with our figures, data may not always match due to slight differences in interpretation of classifications.

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### Youth Custody Data

The MoJ publishes [youth custody data](#) monthly on children and young people within secure children's homes (SCHs), secure training centres (STCs) and young offender institutions (YOIs).

While this publication from the DfE is concerned with children accommodated in secure children's homes, the MoJ publishes statistics on the population in custody of children and young people within secure children's homes, young offender institutions and secure training centres. The MoJ data do not include children placed in a secure children's home on a welfare basis.

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From the MoJ publication, only the figures on children in secure children's homes are comparable with figures in this publication.

We can compare the under 18 secure population accommodated in SCHs as at March 2018 from table '2.4 Accom Type' of the MoJ publication, with those children detained and placed by the YCS<sup>1</sup>, and those accommodated in a criminal justice context in this DfE publication.

The former shows 105 children accommodated (provisional data) and the latter 108. There are some small differences in definitions and methodology which can explain the difference between the two publications:

- i) The MoJ figures are for those accommodated in SCHs under 18 years old, whereas this DfE publication includes those accommodated in SCHs that are 18 years old and over.
- ii) The MoJ figures are a monthly snapshot of the custodial population in the secure estate for children and young people. They are taken on the last Friday of the month or first Friday of the following month, depending on which is nearer to the actual month end and not necessarily the position at 31 March on which this publication is based.
- iii) Both sets of figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems, which, as with any large-scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing and can be subject to change over time. The MoJ figures have been drawn from the internal YCS<sup>2</sup> placements system (eAsset, which replaced SACHS in April 2012) which is populated by the YCS upon placement of children into custody. The DfE

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<sup>1</sup> The Youth Justice Board carried out this function until September 2017.

<sup>2</sup> This system was managed by the Youth Justice Board placements team until September 2017, when the Youth Custody Service took over placing children.

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figures are taken from local records held by secure children's homes.

Both the DfE and MoJ figures are useful in their own right. The DfE's figures provides a comparable annual time series of data on secure children's homes sourced directly from them, and includes some figures on children detained or sentenced and placed by the YCS<sup>3</sup> in a secure children's home. The MoJ figures show the custody population in secure children's homes.

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Rest of the UK

Figures on the number of children accommodated in secure children's homes in Scotland are published in the [Children's and Social Work Statistics Scotland](#) publication.

Northern Ireland does not produce statistics relating specifically to secure accommodation.

Figures for Wales are published in this statistical release.

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Previous publications

[Links to previous publications.](#)

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## Methodology

The secure homes return their data as at 31 March to DfE via a data collection form, a copy of which can be found at Annex A. This form collects information on eight areas:

1. Number of approved places (Item 1)
2. Number of places in use or available for use (Item 2)
3. Number of approved places contracted to the Ministry of Justice (Item 3)
4. Number of children accommodated (Item 4)

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<sup>3</sup> The Youth Justice Board carried out this function until September 2017.



5. Sex of children (Items 5a and 5b)
6. Age of children (Items 6a-h)
7. Length of stay (Items 7a-f)
8. Type of placement (Items 8a-c)

## Data cleaning

A number of validation checks are carried out on the data once it is returned to DfE:

- The number of places in use or available for use (Item 2) should be less than or equal to the number of approved places (Item 1)
- The number of approved places contracted to the MoJ (Item 3) should be less than or equal to the number of approved places (Item 1)
- The number of children accommodated (Item 3) should be less than or equal to the number of approved places (Item 1) and the number of places in use or available for use (Item 2)
- The total number of males (Item 5a) and females (Item 5b) should be equal to the number of children accommodated (Item 4)
- The total number of children in each age group (Items 6a-h) should be equal to the number of children accommodated (Item 4)
- The total number of children by length of stay (Items 7a-f) should be equal to the number of children accommodated (Item 4)
- The total number of children in each type of placement (Items 8a-c) should be equal to the number of children accommodated (Item 4)

We also check where the number of places available is less than the number of places approved what the reason for this is. This can be for a number of reasons, for example, refurbishment, staff sickness, implementing new processes and procedures.

Data is also compared to previous years to ensure there are no unusual changes.

In addition to the above, we also make checks against other related publications:

- [Ofsted's Official Statistics on Children's Social Care in England](#): This includes data on the maximum number of places a provider may offer at any one time. Secure children's homes are one of a number of types of provider that they cover. We check the number of approved places (Item 1) in our collection against the maximum number of places for each of the secure children's homes in England

reported by Ofsted. We check against their data, which is published annually in August which covers data at 31 March at the link above.

- [Youth Custody Data](#) The MoJ publishes monthly statistics on children and young people within secure children's homes (SCHs), secure training centres (STCs) and young offender institutions (YOIs). We compare the total number of children detained or sentenced and placed by the YCS<sup>4</sup> (Item 8a) and those remanded (Item 8b) in our collection against the March monthly total for secure children's homes at the above link.

## Data processing

Once all secure children's homes have submitted their data and the validation checks listed above have been carried out, the data is collated into one spreadsheet ready for analysis.

## Production of statistical first release

The publication contains three tables:

**Table 1:** Places approved and children accommodated in secure children's homes at 31 March by gender, age, length of stay and type of placement (numbers and percentages), 2010 to 2018

**Table 2:** Places approved and children accommodated in secure children's homes at 31 March by type of placement (numbers and percentages), 2010 to 2018

**Table 3:** Places approved and available, and children accommodated at 31 March by individual secure children's homes (numbers and percentages), 2010 to 2018

Table 3 is the only table that contains home-level information. Data is taken directly from the data collection form. Additional calculations are made to form the percentages shown in the tables.

## Disclosure control

The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires us to take reasonable steps to ensure that our published or disseminated statistics protect confidentiality.

For confidentiality purposes, numbers from one to five inclusive and percentages based on a numerator between 1 and 5 inclusive and a denominator between 1 and 10 inclusive

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<sup>4</sup> The Youth Justice Board carried out this function until September 2017.

have been replaced in the published tables by a cross (x). To ensure the suppressed number cannot be identified by simple arithmetic secondary suppression may be required. Where any number is shown as zero (0), the original figure submitted was zero (0). “.” means not applicable.

When reviewing the tables, please note the following:

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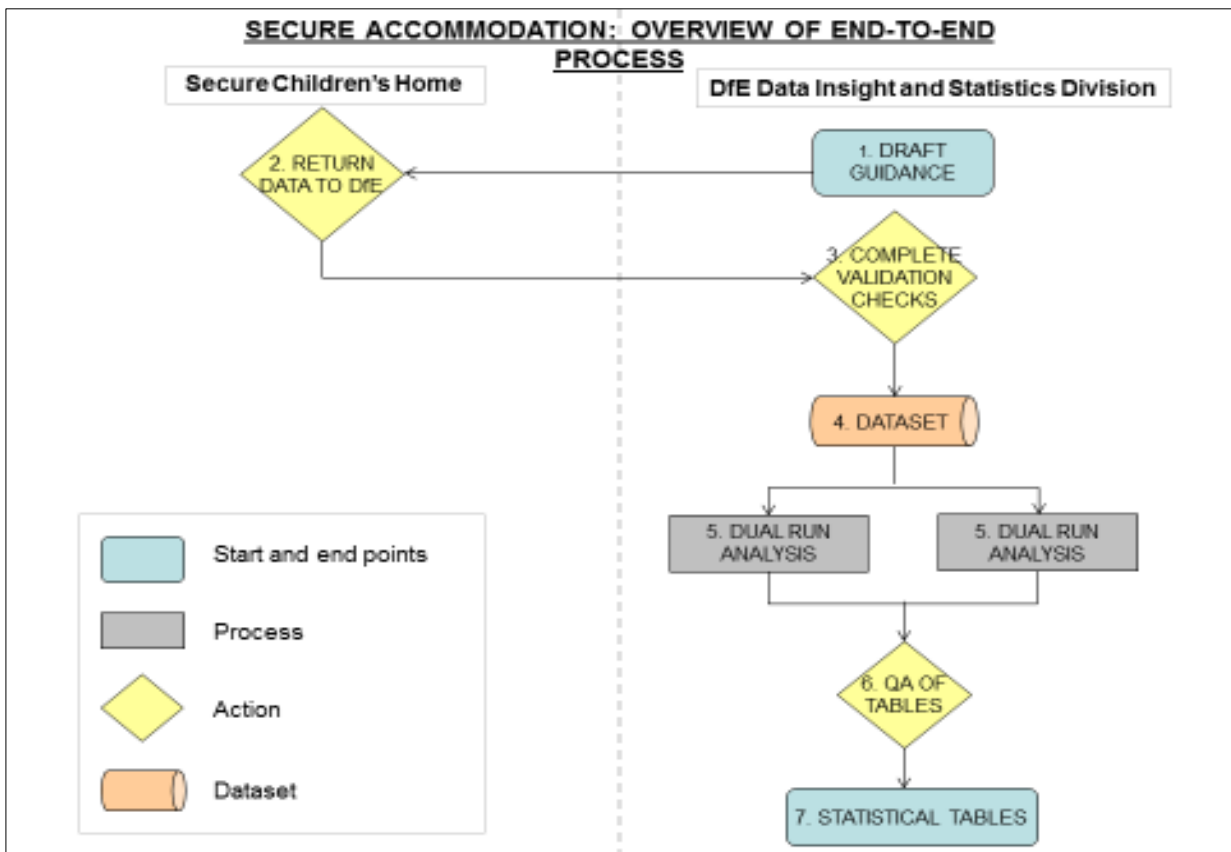
|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| We preserve confidentiality | The Code of Practice for Official Statistics requires we take reasonable steps to ensure that our published or disseminated statistics protect confidentiality.  |
| Percentages                 | Percentages are displayed to the nearest whole number. Due to rounding, it is possible that the sum of the category percentages may not always total 100%.   |
| Symbols                     | A dot has been used to signify where data is not applicable.   |
| Small numbers               | Note that in this collection, we are dealing with relatively small numbers and so percentages are volatile. In addition, this is a snapshot at the 31 March each year and there will naturally be a certain level of fluctuations in the data over time. |

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## Process map

The process map shown in Figure 1 covers the end-to-end process of the secure accommodation return, from data collection through to publication of the data.

**Figure 1: Overview of end to end process of secure accommodation collection and publication**



# Annex A: Secure accommodation data collection form

## Department for Education

Children Accommodated in Secure Children's Homes 31 March 2018

Secure Accommodation Return (SA1)

Each item of this return refers to the position at 31 March 2018

|   |   |                                     |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Number of places approved for use                              | <input type="text"/>                      | 1                                   |
| 2. Number of places in use or available for use                   | <input type="text"/>                      | 2                                   |
| 3. Number of approved places contracted to YJB                    | <input type="text"/>                      | 3                                   |
| 4. Number of children accommodated                                | <input type="text"/>                      | 4                                   |
| 5. Sex of children accommodated                                   |   |                                     |
|   | Number of males accommodated              | <input type="text"/> 5a             |
|   | Number of females accommodated            | <input type="text"/> 5b             |
| 6. Age of children accommodated                                   |   |                                     |
| Number aged under 12  | <input type="text"/> 6a                   | 15 <input type="text"/> 6e          |
| 12  | <input type="text"/> 6b                   | 16 <input type="text"/> 6f          |
| 13  | <input type="text"/> 6c                   | 17 <input type="text"/> 6g          |
| 14  | <input type="text"/> 6d                   | 18 and over <input type="text"/> 6h |
| 7. Length of stay (as at 31 March) of children accommodated       |   |                                     |
|   | Number accommodated for less than 1 month | <input type="text"/> 7a             |
|   | 1 month or more but less than 3 months    | <input type="text"/> 7b             |
|   | 3 months or more but less than 6 months   | <input type="text"/> 7c             |
|   | 6 months or more but less than 12 months  | <input type="text"/> 7d             |
|   | 12 months or more but less than 24 months | <input type="text"/> 7e             |
|   | 24 months or more                         | <input type="text"/> 7f             |
| 8. Type of placement*   |   |                                     |
| Child detained or sentenced and placed by the Youth Justice Board |   | <input type="text"/> 8a             |
| Child placed by local authority in a criminal justice context     |   | <input type="text"/> 8b             |
| Child placed by local authority on welfare grounds                |   | <input type="text"/> 8c             |

\*Please record the basis that applies at 31 March 2018, **not** on entry.



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