

Official Statistics Release

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Introduction

This official statistics release reports on the numbers and profile of foster carers and foster places¹ and placements², in both local authority and independent services, covering the period between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013. It also gives data relating to types of foster care, registrations and de-registrations, and a range of other subjects.

These statistics are based on data supplied by local authority fostering services and independent fostering services. Ofsted will publish these data annually and the next release is currently scheduled for autumn 2014.

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¹ Places refers to the total number of places that foster carers are approved to provide, whether occupied or not.

² Placements refers to arrangements made for children to be looked after, in this context living with foster carers.

Response rates

- Responses were received from all 152 LAs in England. A total of nine Local Authorities (LA) have four joint arrangements³ where the LAs involved either do not have individual fostering services or share resources.
- Of the 298 Independent Fostering Services (IFS) registrations that were active as at 31 March 2013 and who remained active, there were 291 who returned a completed dataset that were finalised. There were seven IFSs that did not make a return for this voluntary data collection.
- Overall this was a 98% response rate (443 of 450), which was higher than last year's fostering data collection⁴, which had a 94% response rate. For IFS data has been used from the 291 IFS registrations which represented a 98% response rate of the 298 eligible registrations; again this was higher than last year's response rate for IFS at 92%.

Key findings

Children and Young People

- As at 31 March 2013, there were 52,620 children and young people placed in foster care. Of these, 50,617 (96%) were fostering places and 2,003 (4%) were short break or respite places. [A1.2]

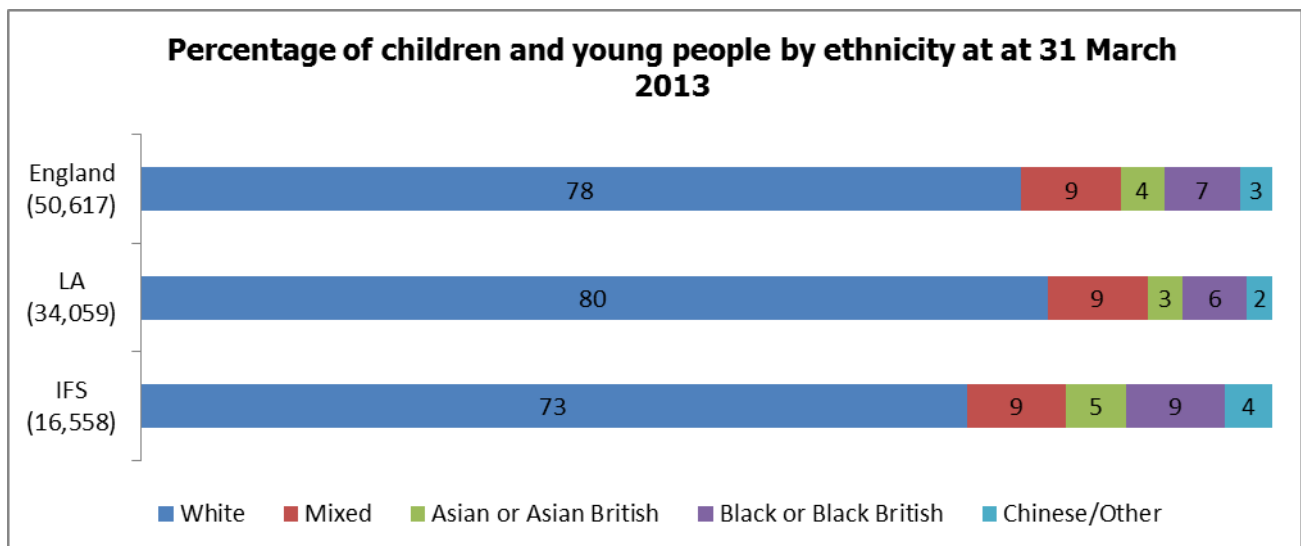
Types of foster care services provided	ENGLAND (50,585) ⁵		LA (34,027)		IFS (16,558)	
	Percentage of places filled at 31 March 2013	Number of places filled at 31 March 2013	Percentage of places filled at 31 March 2013	Number of places filled at 31 March 2013	Percentage of places filled at 31 March 2013	Number of places filled at 31 March 2013
Permanent long term foster care	30	14,941	25	8,576	38	6,365
Short term foster care, including pre-adoption and pre-permanence	52	26,475	53	18,002	51	8,473
Emergency foster care	2	1,099	1	217	5	882
Family and friends foster care	13	6,354	19	6,353	0	1
Parent and child foster care placements	1	621	0	133	3	488
Parent and child placements that are not foster care	0	50	0	6	0	44
Multi-dimensional treatment foster care under the Department for Education scheme	0	109	0	102	0	7
Remand foster care	0	75	0	36	0	39
Other	2	861	2	602	2	259

³ Fostering services which were provided under joint arrangements involved the following LAs: Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire; Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith & Fulham and Westminster; City of London and Hackney; Isles of Scilly and Cornwall.

⁴ Fostering quality assurance and data forms 2011-12 first statistical release (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/fostering-quality-assurance-and-data-forms-2011-12-first-statistical-release>)

⁵ Due to there being a discrepancy in two returned datasets, there is a difference of 16 children in the total number of children placed as at 31 March 2013 and the disaggregated figures.

- Between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013, the number of children placed in foster care at any point in the year was 80,680, excluding short breaks: 53,369 (66%) placed in LA provision and 27,311 (34%) placed in IFS provision. [A2.1] This compares to the previous year's figure of 75,605: 53,197 in LA and 22,408 in IFS; a slight decrease in the former and an increase of 22 per cent for IFS
- Of the 80,680 children placed, excluding those in short break places, at 31 March 2013, there were 4,990 (6%) who were disabled. This. [A2.3]
- During 2012-13, of the 3,158 young people who turned eighteen, there were 1,685 (53%) who remained in foster placements supported by LAs. Of the 1,685, 518 were placed via a IFS. There was a change in the cohort from 2011-12 to 2012-13; 2011-12 captured all those young people who remained in a foster placement supported by a LA after turning eighteen, whereas the 2012-13 collection captured only those who had turned eighteen during the year. [A7.2]
- As at 31 March 2013, there were a total of 50,617 children in foster care. This compares with 47,420; an increase of seven per cent. The LA figure was 34,059 (67%); an increase of four per cent from the previous year (32,781). The IFS figure was 16,558 (33%); an increase of 13 per cent. [A1.2]
- Of the 50,617 children placed: a large majority were White (78%); the next largest ethnic group were Mixed (9%); followed by Black or Black British (7%); Asian or Asian British (4%); any other ethnic group (2%); and Other (1%). [B2]

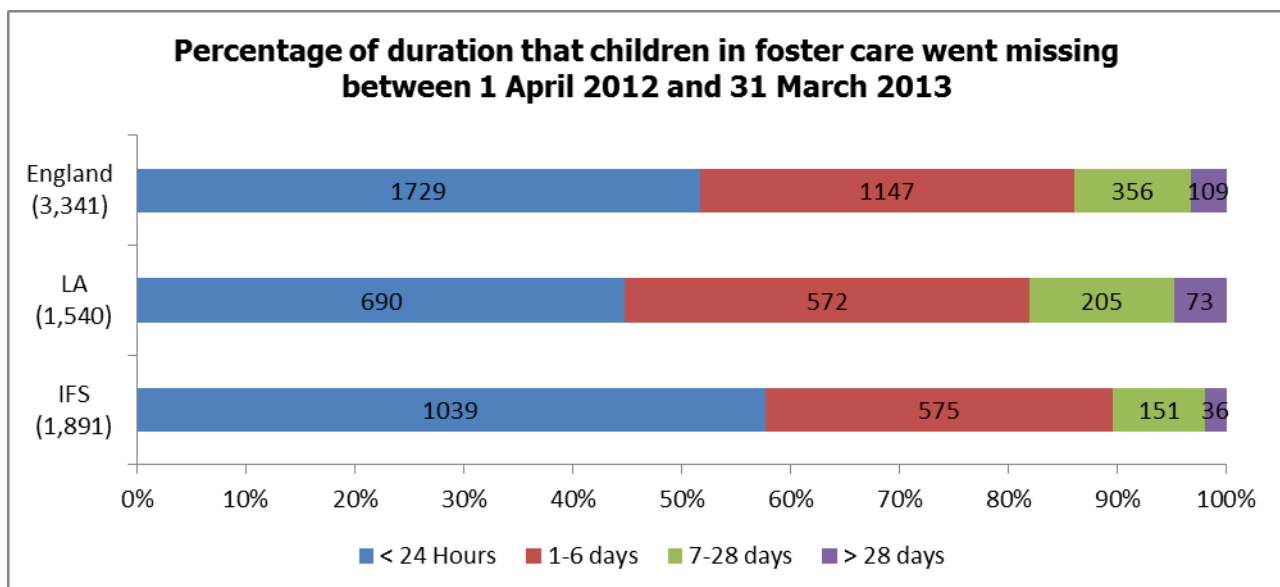


- This ethnic picture was in line with that of children looked after in England at 31 March 2013.⁶ In comparison with the 0-17 England population, the proportion of children in foster care was higher in those of Mixed background (9%) and Black or Black British (7%).

⁶ DfE: Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2013, Tables: SFR36/2013, table A1 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption>)

However, the proportion of children in foster care from an Asian or Asian British background was lower, at 4%, than the 0-17 aged population (10%).⁷

- During 2012-13 there was a 10% decrease, from the previous year, of the number of incidents of physical restraints recorded by foster carers: 1,119. A large majority of which (74% or 830) were recorded by IFS. Of all incidents of physical restraint, 536 foster carers were reported to have restrained children and a total of 553 foster children (1% of all children placed during the year) were subject to restraint. Of the 553, 385 were in IFS provision and 168 were in LA provision.[D3.1-3]
- Between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013 there were 9,764 incidents of children going missing, which involved 3,326 children. The number of incidents increased by 3%, from 2011-12, whereas the number of children these incidents related to increased by 6%. [D4.1-2]
- Although IFS placed 34% of all fostered children during 2012-13, they accounted for 56% (5,462) of incidents of missing children, and 54% (1,786) of the children who went missing. [D4.1-2]
- Of all children placed during 2012-13, there were 7% of the 27,311 children placed via IFS that went missing, and 3% of the 53,369 children placed via LAs went missing. [D4.1-2]
- Just over half of the children who went missing did so for less than 24 hours (1,729). Just over one third (1,147) went missing for between one and six days. 11% (356) went missing between seven and 28 days and 109 (3%) went missing for longer than 28 days over the course of the year. [D5.1]
- As at 31 March 2013, there were reported 48 (1%) children still missing. [D5.2]



⁷ Office for National Statistics (ONS): 2011 census(<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/dc2101ew>)

- In the year, April 2012 to March 2013, there were 50,584 foster children who were of compulsory school age. A total of 2,250 (4%) children and young in foster care changed educational placement, or school, as a result of a foster placement change. [A2.2, D7.1]
- During 2012-13, there were 2,293 (5%) children in foster care who attended alternative educational provision. [D7.2]
- There were 547 (1%) children who, at some point during the financial 2012-13, had no educational arrangements. [D7.3]
- There were 1,906 (4%) of children in foster care who were recorded as having persistent absence from school between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013. This compares to 5% of pupil enrolments that are persistent absentees, nationally⁸. [D7.4]

Fostering capacity (places) and placements

- On 31 March 2013, there were 82,393 approved foster places, compared to 75,634 the previous year; a rise of nine per cent. There were 76,563 foster care places, excluding those for short-breaks. This was about a 16% increase from the previous year (66,180). [A1.1]
- At the same point in time, there were 5,830 short break places. This was a substantial decrease (38%) from the number of short break places in 2011-12, at 9,454. [A1.1] While the LA numbers have fallen from 4,362 to 3,628, or 17%, the IFS numbers have fallen from 5,092 to 2,202, or 57%.
- Of the filled foster care places, 34,059 (67%) were in LA provision and 16,558 (33%) were in IFS provision. Filled short break places were made up of 1,657 (83%) in LA provisions and 346 (17%) were in IFS. [A1.2]
- While there has been an increase in both the number of approved fostering places (16% increase) and the total number of filled places (7% increase); the larger increase in approved fostering places has meant occupancy has decreased both nationally and by sector from the previous year. As at 31 March 2013, there was 66% overall occupancy of foster places, which was down from 72% in 2011-12. Within the sectors occupancy was 72% for LA provision and 56% for IFS provision, compared to the previous year of 78% and 61% respectively. [A1.1, A1.2]
- During 2012-13, of the 4,103 sibling groups or 10,144 individual children whose placements commenced in the year, 449 (11%) were assessed to be placed together, but were placed separately. This meant that 1,373 children were not placed in line with their assessment to be placed together. A large majority (72%) of sibling groups, however, were placed together, in line with the assessment. Around one fifth of sibling groups were assessed to be placed separately: 720 groups (18%). [A4]

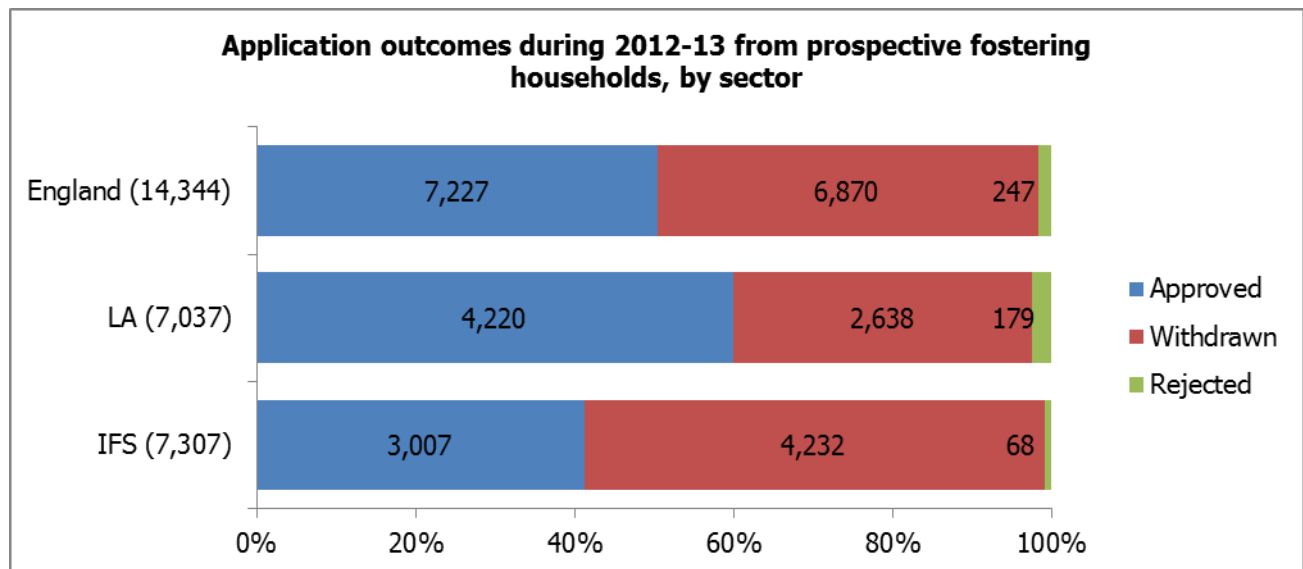
⁸ DfE: Pupil absence in schools in England: autumn 2012 and spring 2013: National tables: SFR39/2013: Table 2 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-2012-and-spring-2013>)

- Between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013, there were 4,328 unplanned endings of placements; 4,292 (5%) children were subject of these unplanned endings. [A5.1-2] This meant that some children had more than one unplanned ending during the year.
- For the same period of time there were 1,531 (4%) exemptions in fostering households, where foster carers are asked to look after more than three children who are not part of the same sibling group. This was a 25% decrease from the previous year, at 2,037, continuing a downward trend. [A6.1]

Foster Carers – Recruitment and Retention

- There were a total of 42,951 fostering households, as at 31 March 2013. This was around a 5% increase from last year's figure. Of these two thirds were registered with LAs and one third were registered with IFS. [C1.1-3]
- Between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013, there were 113,413 initial enquiries made from new prospective fostering households with 14% (15,772) continuing to making application. [C2.2]
- Of the initial enquiries 69,964 (62%) were received by IFS's with 11% (7,811) continuing to making applications and 43,449 (38%) received by LAs with 18% (7,961) progressing to applications. [C2.2]
- The number of applications from new prospective fostering households received between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013 was 15,772, this was a 6% decrease from the previous year. The number of applications received by IFS was in line with the previous year, however, the number received by LAs had dropped by around 12%. [C2.3-4]
- Of the 14,344 applications from prospective fostering households in England that were concluded during 2012-13, half were approved, slightly under half were withdrawn⁹ and very few were rejected at panel: 50%, 48% and 2% respectively. This profile of application outcomes in 2012-13 was very similar to the previous year. [C3.1-3.3]
- There was a substantially higher proportion of applications to LAs that were approved, than for IFS: 60% and 41% respectively. The chart, below, shows the applications concluded between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013, split into proportions by application outcome. [C3.1-3.3]

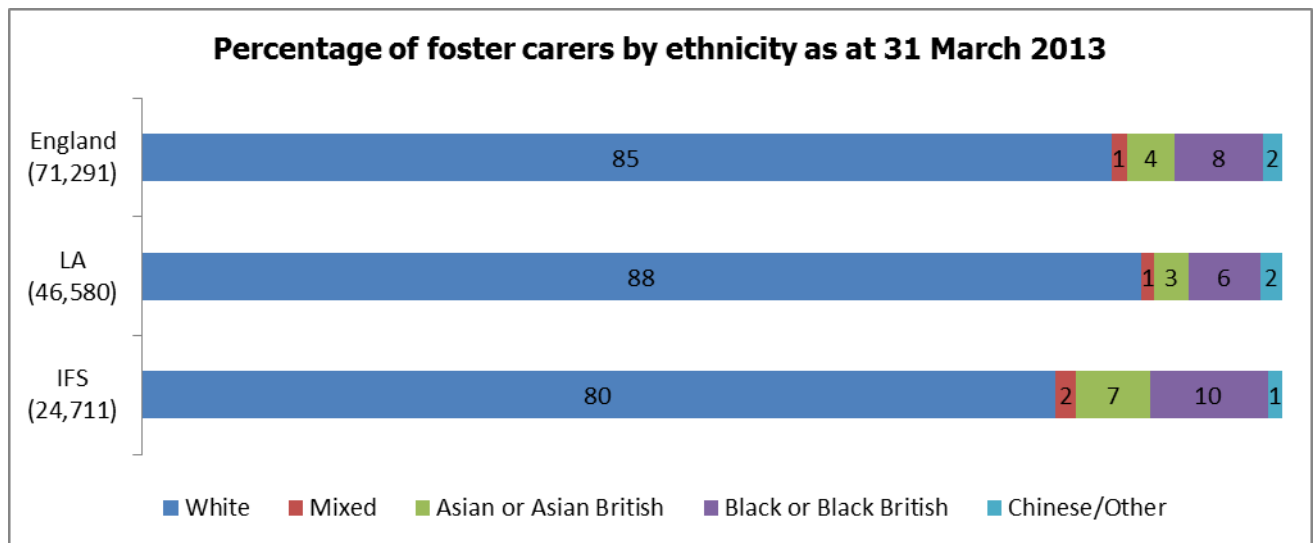
⁹ Of the IFS applications from prospective fostering households which were withdrawn, 29% (1,231) were accounted for by just six providers. This may distort the picture of application outcomes and has raised some questions about interpretation of what constitutes an application which will be explored further.



- Between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013, there were 7,227 new fostering households approved and 4,759 were de-registered. This saw a net increase of 2,468 approved fostering households from last year. [C3.1, C2.1]
- Of the 7,227 new approved fostering households, 58% (4,220) were approved by LA and 42% (3,007) were approved by IFS. This compares to 63% of new households approved by LAs, in 2011-12, and 37% by IFS. [C3.1]
- During 2012-13 there were 102 applications made to the Independent Review Mechanism, this was a 19% increase from the number of applications made in 2011-12. Of the 102 applications, 31 (30%) resulted in a recommendation being made to the service to review the decision. [C4.1-2]

Foster Carers – Characteristics

- As at 31 March 2013, there were a total of 71,291 approved foster carers: a very large majority were White (85%); followed by Black or Black British (8%); Asian or Asian British (4%); Mixed (1%); any other ethnic group (1%); and Other (1%). Although the number of approved foster carers has increased from 2011-12, the ethnic profile has remained the same. [B2]

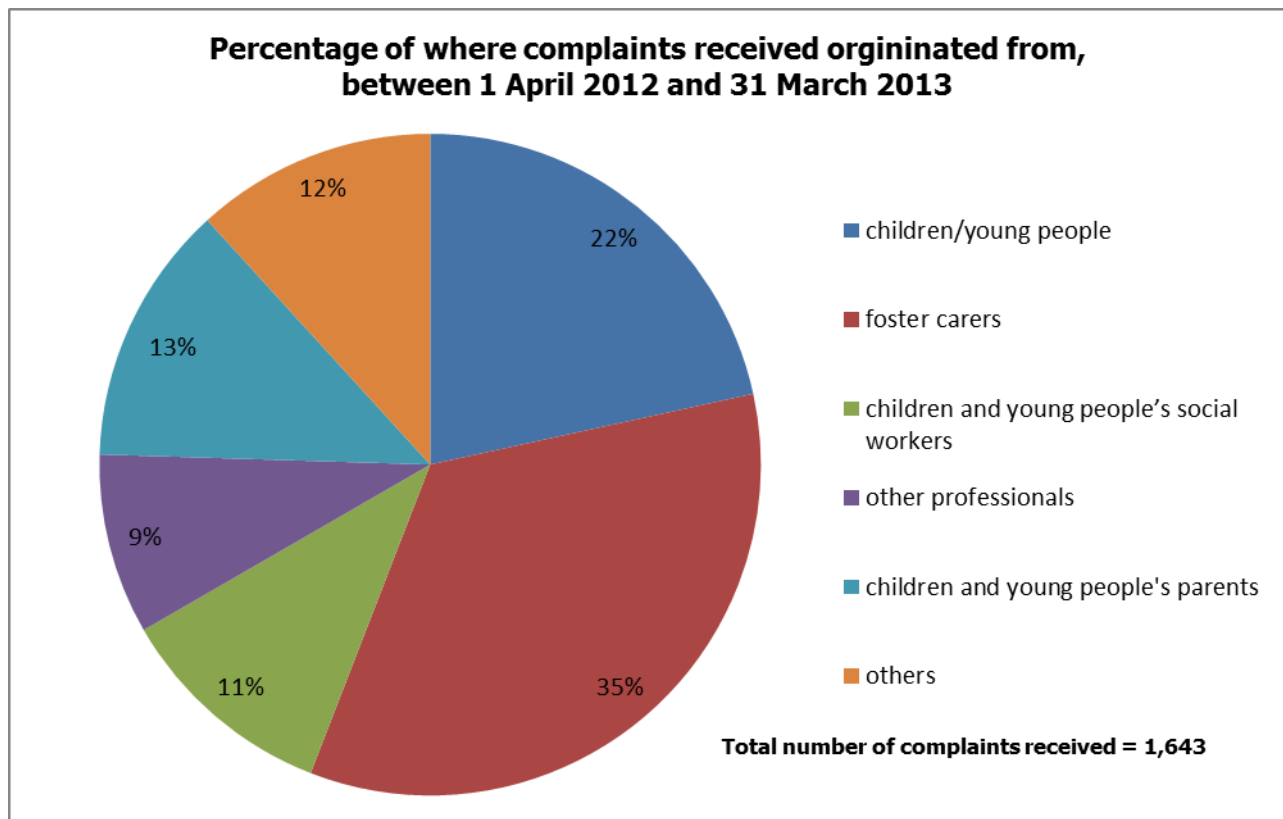


- The percentage of White foster carers (85%), as at 31 March 2013, is in line with the England population¹⁰ of those aged over 18 (87%). However, there was a higher proportion of Black or Black British foster carers (8%) in comparison to the England adult population (3%). [B2]
- As at 31 March 2013, 61% of approved foster carers had completed the Children's Workforce Development Council's (CWDC) certificate in "Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care": 36,948 individuals with certificates of 60,186 approved foster carers. This had increased from the previous year, where 50% of foster carers had completed this training, or an 11% increase. [C5.1-3]

Complaints and Allegations

- There were 1,856 allegations of misconduct made against foster carers between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013; a small increase from last year. [D1.1]
- In 2012-13, there was also a small increase (2%) from the previous year to the number of referrals made to the Independent Safeguarding Authority. Slightly more were made from IFS (55%), in contrast to the previous year where just under 40% were made by IFS. [D1.2]
- There were 862 section 47 enquiries involving child protection allegations against foster carers in the year to 31 March 2013; a 5% decrease from previous year (905). Of the 862, 63% (544) section 47 enquiries were made involving allegations about foster carers approved by LAs. [D2.2]
- There were a total of 1,643 complaints about fostering services in 2012-13, a 3% increase from the number of complaints last year. Over 50% of complaints made were made by foster carers and children. Of the total number of complaints received, 55% were upheld for any aspect of the complaint. [E1.1-6]

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics (ONS): 2011 census (<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/dc2101ew>).



Methodology

1. The data in this publication are taken from returns made to Ofsted by local authority and independent fostering service. Most of the data relate to the period between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013.
2. For more information on how Ofsted regulates and inspects independent fostering services, please go to the Ofsted website: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/childrens-social-care-registration-introduction-independent-fostering-agencies>

Additional information

The underlying data, along with aggregated data at England level, at local authority fostering service and total independent fostering service levels, are available in Excel format on the Ofsted website in the same location as this document: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/fostering-quality-assurance-and-data-forms-2012-13-first-statistical-release>

The summary release also includes an overview of response rates, as shown in the table below:

Table 3

Percentage of returns of the fostering quality assurance and data form 2012-13

Fostering Services 2012-13			
Quality assurance and data form returns analysis			
	Local authority fostering services	Independent fostering services	Total
Returns in analysis	152	291	443
Number of registered providers (as at 31 March 2013)	152	298	450
Percentage of returns	100%	98%	98%

Glossary

Alternative educational provision

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

Approved foster carers

These are individual foster carers who are currently approved by a fostering service as at 31 March 2013.

Complaints not upheld

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

Disabled

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

Exemption

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

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 are private companies or charities, which are registered with Ofsted and provide placements to children with foster carers approved by them. Independent fostering services work closely with local authorities to deliver these placements.

Foster places

Foster places refers to the total number of places that foster carers are approved to provide, whether occupied or not.

Foster placements

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

Misconduct

Where a formal investigation into the conduct of a member of staff or a prospective adopter is undertaken which follows a voluntary adoption agency's procedures for investigating such allegations. The use of the term allegation is used for employment as well as safeguarding.

Missing

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

Persistent absence from school

"Persistent absence' from school is defined by the Department for Education. Persistent absentees are defined as having an overall absence rate of around 15 per cent or more. As an example, this would equate to 46 or more sessions (23 days) of absence (authorised and unauthorised) during the first five half terms of the academic year.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001117/index.shtml>

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

Physical restraint

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

Section 47

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

Withdrawn

The definition of withdrawn is 'those applications that were stopped by the applicant'.

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