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Transparency data

Regulatory activity in all types of children's homes between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024

Published 9 July 2024

Applies to England

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Introduction

An important part of our work is the regulation of social care settings. At the end of March 2024 there were 4,453 active or suspended children's social care providers in England. Most of these (3,491) were children's homes. This commentary focuses on regulatory activity in all types of children's home.

In the past, we discussed our regulatory activity in children's homes in the [Children's Social Care in England national statistics \(now accredited official statistics\)](#). As part of a drive to make our data and commentary more accessible, we have moved it to a separate publication. We will publish this material periodically as a commentary and transparency dataset from 2024 onwards.

3-month condition

When a children's home has no intention of operating for at least 3 months, we can impose a condition requiring it to give us 3 months' notice if it intends to admit a child. This means that we do not have to inspect the setting routinely. As at 31 March 2024, 71 children's homes (2%) had a condition requiring them to tell us 3 months before admitting any child. This is the same proportion as last year. This represents a potential capacity of 245 places.

Complaints and child protection concerns

Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, we received 716 complaints about 523 children's social care providers. This is 16% fewer than we received the previous year (851). We received at least one complaint about 15% of all children's homes, which is a decline from the previous 2 years, when we received a complaint about around 20% of the homes.

We also received 364 child protection concerns over the course of the year. This is an increase of 109 (43%) compared with the previous year, when we received 255 concerns. As we would expect in a growing sector, the number of child protection concerns has increased over the past few years, but the increase over the past 2 years has been proportionally larger than the sector growth.

Of the 1,080 total complaints and concerns, 786 (73%) had one or more actions recorded by the end of March 2024. Table 1 shows the number and type of actions recorded during 2023–24. Cases can have multiple actions taken, so the actions in Table 1 will add up to more than the total number of cases.

Table 1: Number and type of actions taken in 2023 to 2024

Action taken	Number of actions in 2023 to 2024
Key line of enquiry for next inspection	357
Continued monitoring by allocated inspector	300
Provider-led investigation	203
Inspection brought forward	188
Referred to child protection team in the relevant local authority	89
Monitoring visit	49
Compliance and enforcement action	37
Other action taken not included in above	134

categories

Total actions taken 1,357

Enforcement activity

Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, we carried out the following enforcement actions across all children's homes:

- 26 restrictions of accommodation
- 17 suspensions of providers
- 10 homes received a notice of cancellation

No homes received multiple restrictions of accommodation this year. The 17 suspensions occurred in 16 different children's homes, with one home receiving multiple suspensions. Of these 16 homes, 7 resigned and 2 were still suspended on 31 March 2024. The remaining 7 homes were active on 31 March 2024.

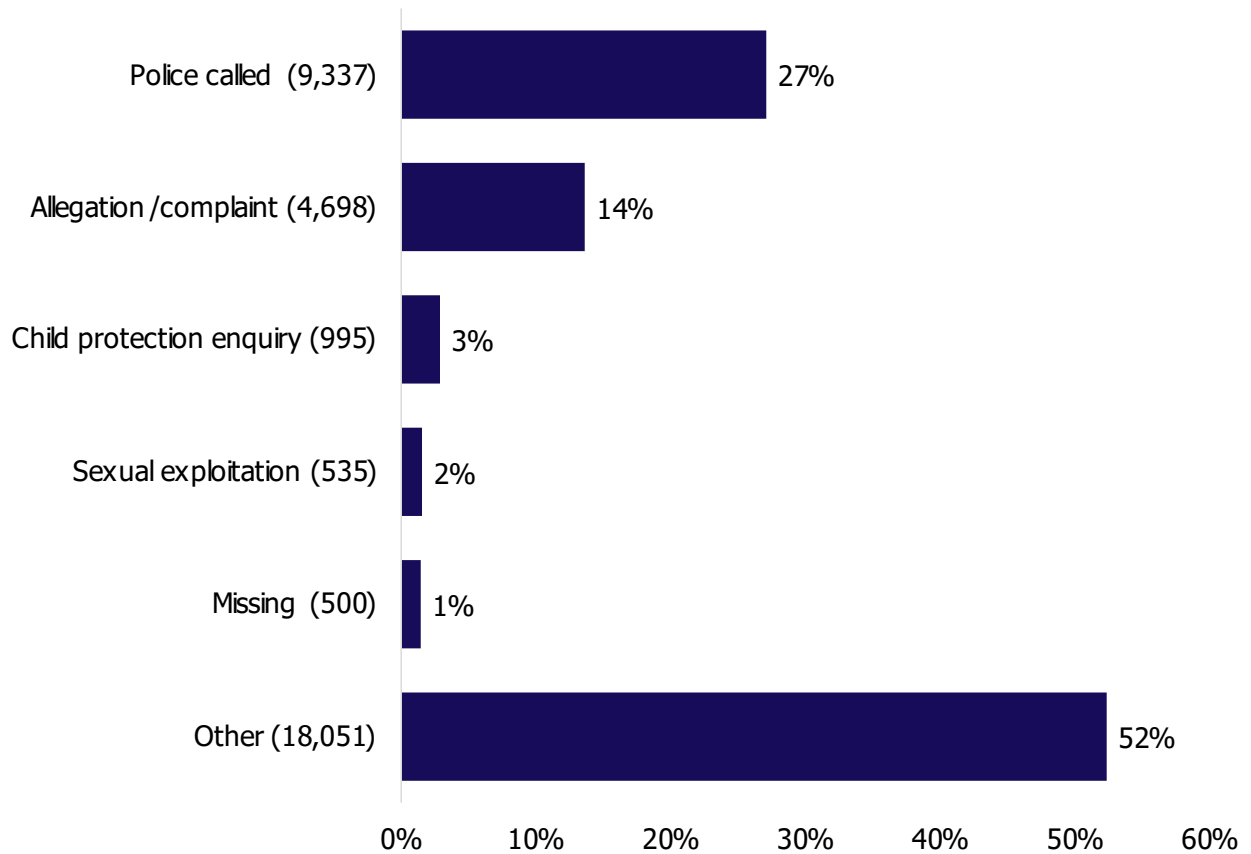
Incident notifications

Providers must tell Ofsted, as the regulator for children's homes in England, about the most serious incidents that happen to children living with them and what they have done in response.

Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, we received 34,481 notifications from children's homes. Half of all notifications (52%) received from children's homes in 2023 to 2024 were categorised as 'other'. 'Other' notifications cover any incident considered by the registered person to be serious but that does not fit under one of the existing categories. Police call-outs to the home were the next highest category and accounted for a quarter of all notifications (27%). Police call-out notifications are not exclusively related to the child being suspected of committing a crime. Police may be called because a child has gone missing, has been a victim of sexual or criminal exploitation or another crime, or has disclosed a historical safeguarding concern.

Figure 1: A breakdown of the types of events contained in notifications made

by children's homes from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024



Note: In a relatively small number of notifications, the main reason for the notification was a serious safeguarding concern about somebody working there, self-harm, the death of a child, or a child being the victim or perpetrator of a serious assault, illness or accident. Each of these accounted for less than 1% of notifications and are not shown here.

[View data in an accessible format.](#)

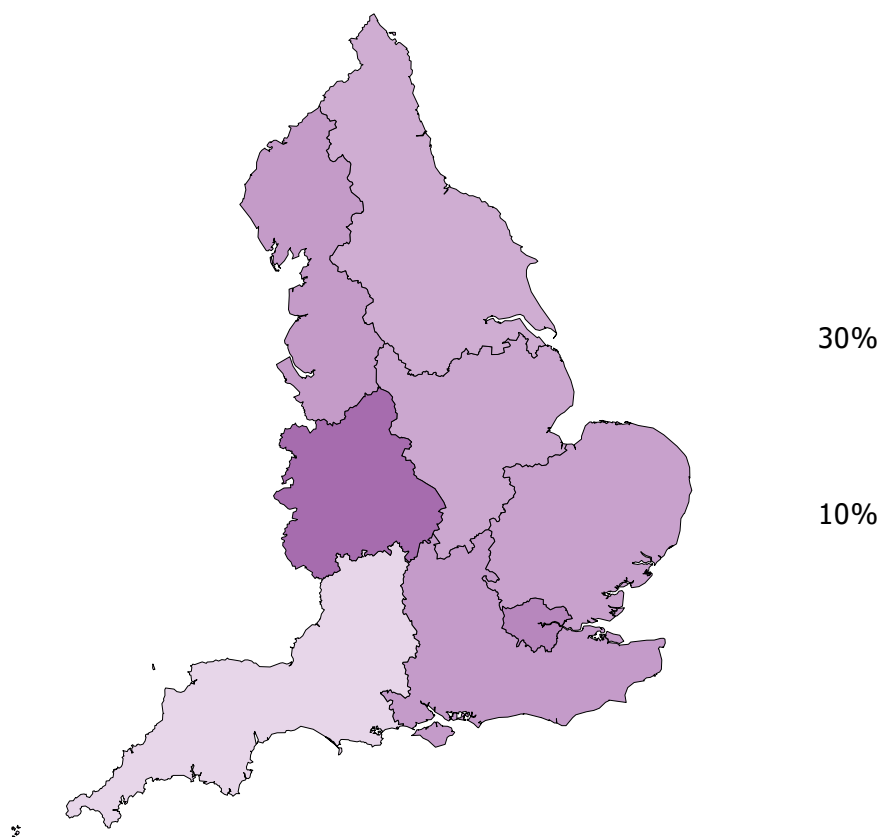
Registered managers

By law, all children's homes must have a manager who is registered with Ofsted. Some operate with a manager who is not registered, which can affect their inspection judgement. As at 31 March 2024, 771 children's homes in England did not have a registered manager in post (22%). The South West had the lowest proportion of vacant registered manager positions (15%) and the West Midlands had the highest (28%). Many of the children's homes without a registered manager had no manager in post at all (428), accounting for 12% of all children's homes in

England.

The regional distribution of vacant manager positions was in line with registered manager vacancies, with the South West the lowest (7%) and the West Midlands the highest (15%). Over the past 5 years, regional breakdowns for managers and registered managers have fluctuated: as at March 2022, the South West (the current lowest) had the highest proportion of vacant manager and registered manager positions (19% and 30%).

Figure 2: Percentage of children's homes without a registered manager in post by region, as at 31 March 2024



[View data in an accessible format.](#)

Unregistered children's homes

We receive and assess information about potential unregistered children's homes. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, we opened 1,019 cases into potential unregistered settings.

Most of these cases are opened when we receive information about a placement from the placing local authority (the local authority responsible for finding a suitable place for a child to live), although placing local authorities are not legally obligated to tell Ofsted about these placements. In 2023–24 the placing local authority was the source of information for 83% of the cases that we opened.

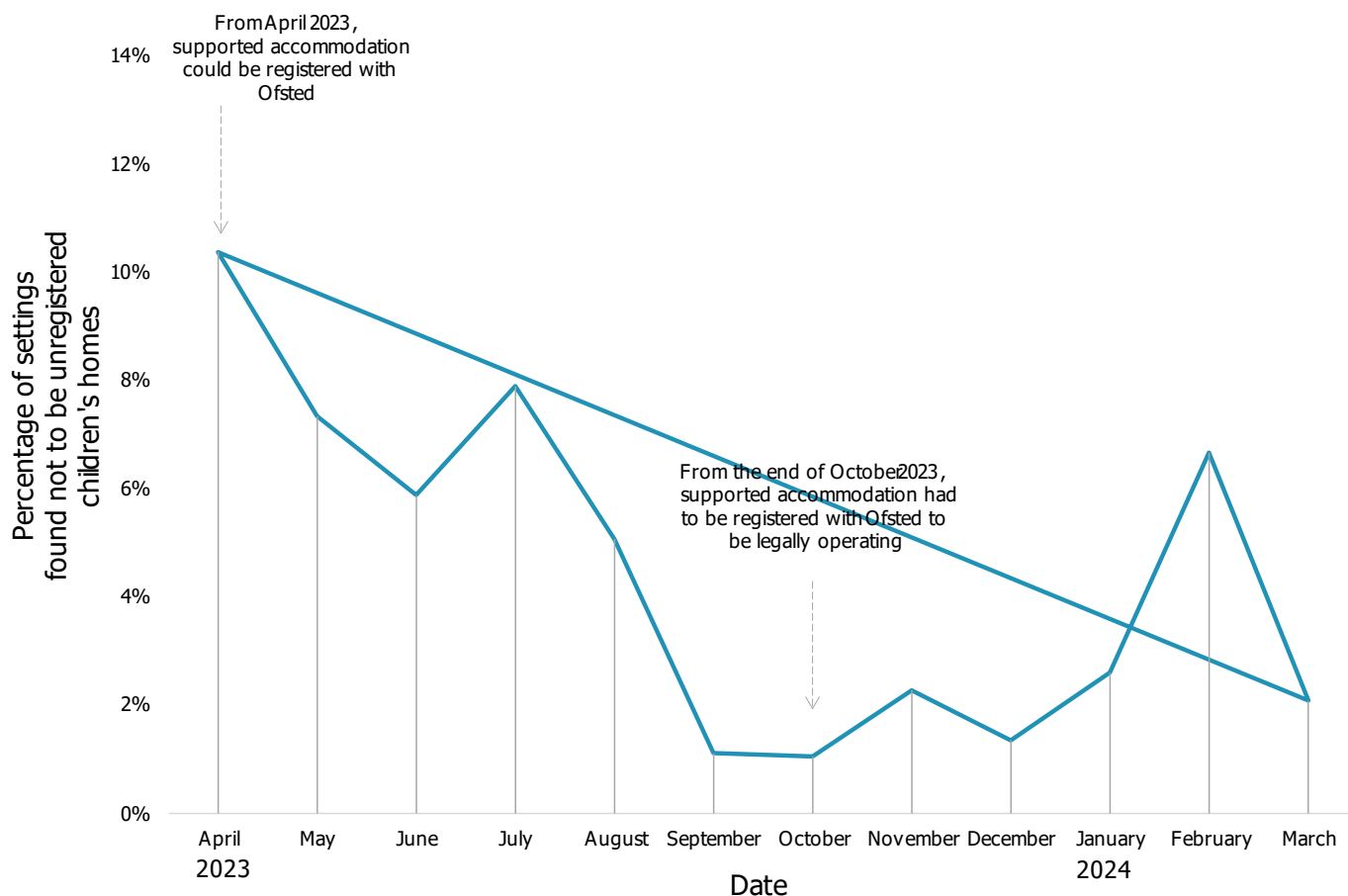
Local authorities tell us that, in most cases, children are placed in potentially unregistered children's homes (78%) because the local authority cannot find a suitable registered home. Placements in holiday lets used temporarily as unregistered children's homes accounted for 8% of the cases. A small proportion of settings were registered with the Care Quality Commission to provide regulated care but not registered with Ofsted as a children's home (less than 1%).

Of the 1,019 potentially unregistered children's homes that we opened cases on in 2023–24, 48 (5%) did not need to be registered or were used for very short-term temporary placements, and 887 (87%) should have been registered. Most of the settings we identified as unregistered children's homes (64%) have received warning letters, and many (44%) have closed.

From April 2023, [providers of supported accommodation were able to register with Ofsted](#). Those who submitted a complete application and paid the application fee by 28 October 2023 are able to operate legally while we make a decision on their registration. Applicants who have applied since, or paid the fee after 28 October 2023, must be fully registered to operate legally.

Before this change, a substantial proportion of assessments of potentially unregistered provision found that the premises were not unregistered children's homes but supported accommodation (figure 3).

Figure 3: Percentage of investigations each month in which settings were found not to be unregistered children's homes, 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024



[View data in an accessible format.](#)

Regulatory activity in other children's social care providers between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024

We also regulate and register other types of children's social care provision. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, there were no cancellations among these providers and one suspension of an independent fostering agency. During this period, we received 209 complaints about 167 non-children's-home providers. This is a 36% increase on the number of complaints received in the previous year (154). Supported accommodation, which was not included in previous years, accounted for 67 of these complaints from 64 individual providers.

We also received 298 child protection concerns over the course of the year. Only 4 of this year's concerns related to supported accommodation

Glossary

Definitions of terms are in the [statistical glossary](#).

Annex: data tables for figures

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

Data for Figure 1: A breakdown of the types of events contained in notifications made by children's homes from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Type of event	Percentage
Police called (9,337)	27%
Allegation/complaint (4,698)	14%
Child protection enquiry (995)	3%
Sexual exploitation (585)	2%
Missing (500)	1%
Other (18,051)	52%

See [Figure 1](#).

Data for Figure 2: Percentage of children's homes without a registered manager in post by region, as at 31 March 2024

Region	Percentage
West Midlands	28%
London	25%
North West	22%

South East	22%
East of England	21%
East Midlands	21%
North East, Yorkshire and The Humber	20%
South West	15%

See [Figure 2](#).

Data for Figure 3: Percentage of investigations each month in which settings were not found to be unregistered children’s homes 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Month	Percentage
April 2023	10%
May 2023	7%
June 2023	6%
July 2023	8%
August 2023	5%
September 2023	1%
October 2023	1%
November 2023	2%
December 2023	1%
January 2024	2%
February 2024	5%
March 2024	1%

Note: From April 2023, supported accommodation could be registered with Ofsted. From the end of October 2023, supported accommodation had to be registered with Ofsted to be legally operating.

See [Figure 3](#).

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