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Transparency data

# Unregistered children's homes

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## Applies to England

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## Introduction

Unregistered children's homes are illegal. Anyone providing care and accommodation to a child in a setting that is not registered with Ofsted when it should be is committing an offence.

We have seen a concerning rise in local authorities using unregistered children's homes. Last year, we opened over 1,000 cases to investigate potential unregistered settings. Of these, we found that over 900 were unregistered settings, compared with around 700 the previous year.

## An increase in the use of unregistered homes

We have seen a steady increase in the number of potential unregistered homes that we are aware of. Between April 2023 and March 2024, we opened over 1,000 cases to look into these settings. This was up from almost 900 the year before.

We found that over 900 of these were unregistered settings. This is almost 3 times the number of unregistered settings we found in 2021–22, and an increase of 300 from 2022–23.

### **Figure 1: Number of unregistered children's homes providers, 2020–21 to 2023–24**



View the [data for Figure 1 in an accessible table format](#).

Local authorities are not legally obliged to tell us when they place children in unregistered children's homes, so these numbers are not exact. We suspect there will be more children living in unregistered children's homes that we are not aware of. However, it's clear that local authorities are using unregistered children's homes more.

## **Vulnerable children are placed in unregistered homes**

Most unregistered children's homes we are told about only look after one child. Of the children placed in unregistered settings we investigated last year, 12% were subject to a Deprivation of Liberty Order. These are some of the most vulnerable children in care. They should not be placed in settings with no regulatory or independent oversight.

## **Low registration rates for homes we investigate**

When we work out that a setting is unregistered, we normally send a warning letter to inform the provider of the setting that it must stop operating and apply for registration.

Very few providers of unregistered settings apply for registration after receiving a warning letter. Last year, only 6% did so. Of these applications, only 8% were successful in registering. This shows the poor quality typically found in unregistered settings.

# Unregistered homes are used across all regions

The use of unregistered children's homes is a national issue. In recent years, we have opened cases about them in all but 10 of the 153 local authorities in England. We have identified unregistered children's homes across all regions, with the highest volumes in the North West.

## Figure 2: Number of unregistered homes by region, 2023–24



View the [data for Figure 2 in an accessible table format](#).

## Annex: data tables for figures

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

### Data for Figure 1: Number of unregistered children's homes providers, 2020–21 to 2023–24

Period	Number of reported cases of unregistered settings	Number of unregistered children's homes
1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021	236	144
1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022	423	315
1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023	881	687
1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	1,056	931

See [Figure 1](#).

### Data for Figure 2: Number of unregistered homes by region, 2023–24

Region	Number of unregistered homes, 2023–24
North West	157

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North East, Yorkshire and The Humber	143
South East	139
East Midlands	131
West Midlands	106
South West	103
London	78
East of England	74

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See [Figure 2](#).

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