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# Main findings: children's social care in England 2025

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**Applies to England**

Contents



This is the main findings report for the children's social care in England 2025 release. The following are also available:

- underlying data
- methodology
- pre-release access list

## Summary

This release contains:

- the number of providers of children's social care, and the number of places they are registered for, as at 31 March 2025
- the most recent inspections and outcomes for all regulated and inspected children's social care provision, as at 31 March 2025, and published by 30 April 2025

- outcomes for all regulated and inspected children's social care provision inspections carried out between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025 and published by 30 April 2025
- the number of providers of supported accommodation registrations, and the number of places they are registered for, as at 31 March 2025

## Main findings

During the 2024–25 inspection year:

- the children's social care sector continued to grow and now has 5,600 providers, with substantial increases in the number of children's homes and supported accommodation providers
- registration of supported accommodation continued, with 640 providers joining during the year. There was a higher number of applications than anticipated. There was also considerable diversity in the categories of accommodation offered, as well as in the number of premises operated by each provider
- the number of residential special schools continued to decrease, falling to 95 as at 31 March 2025
- the number of adoption support agencies fell to 29; this was mainly due to the impact of the changes to legislation in 2023
- children's homes continued to get smaller on average: those registered in-year had a mean capacity of 3, compared to 4 in children's homes overall
- most supported accommodation providers had relatively few premises; the median number of premises per provider was 4 as at 31 March 2025

## Introduction

Ofsted reports each year on social care inspections and outcomes for regulated providers and other providers of placements for children in England.

Out of the 12.7 million children living in England, around 400,000 (3%) are in the social care system at any one time, including children in need and children with child protection plans. Nearly 84,000 of these children are in care.

We regulate and inspect providers that offer care and support for looked-after children and children in other types of settings. More information about the different types of provider can be found in the glossary.

# Social care providers and places as at 31 March 2025

On 31 March 2025, there were 5,600 active or suspended children's social care providers, excluding local authorities and Cafcass.

This year's figure represents a 26% increase compared with 31 March 2024, when there were 4,450 providers.

**Figure 1: Number of settings on 31 March 2025 and percentage change since 31 March 2024**

| Number of settings on 31 March 2025 and percentage change since 31 March 2024 | |
|---|---|
| **4,010** children's homes of all types | **+15%** |
| **110** residential family centres | **+12%** |
| **340** independent fostering agencies | **+2%** |
| **890** supported accommodation providers | Ongoing initial registration |
| **34** further education colleges with residential accommodation | No change |
| **1** secure training centre | No change |
| **29** voluntary adoption agencies | **-6%** |
| **95** residential special schools | **-9%** |
| **51** boarding schools | **-11%** |
| **10** residential holiday schemes for disabled children | **-17%** |
| **29** adoption support agencies | **-17%** |

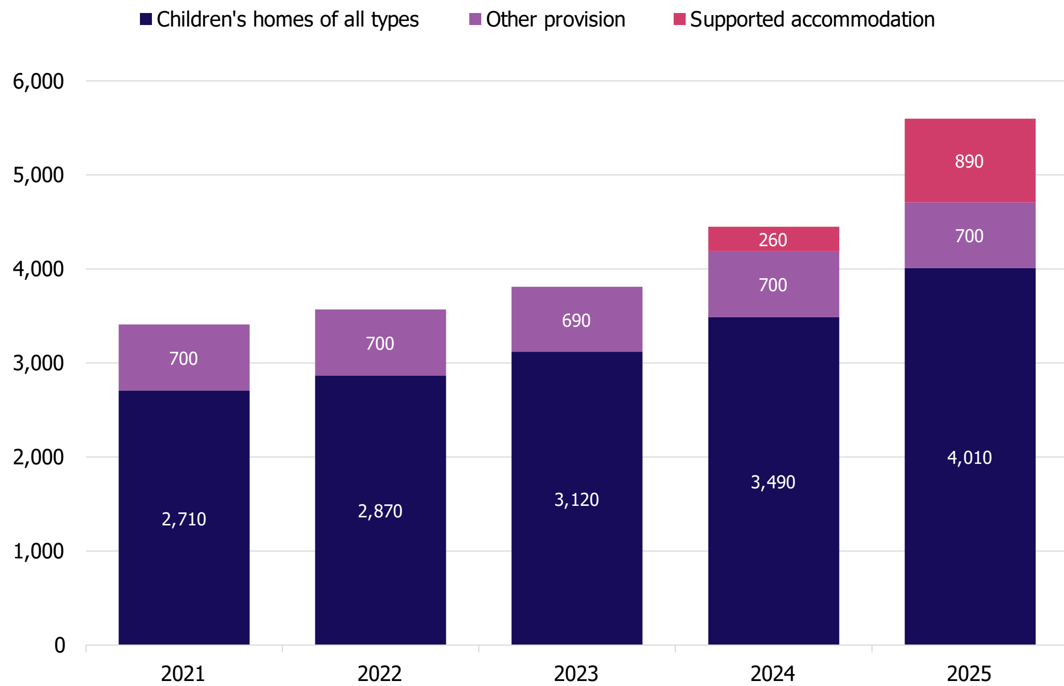
Note: See Notes for rounding guidelines.

View data in an accessible format.

The overall sector growth in 2024–25 was largely driven by the ongoing increase in children's homes and the continued registration of supported accommodation providers (supported accommodation providers were not regulated before April 2023).

**Figure 2: The number of children's social care providers by type as at 31**

**March for the years 2021 to 2025**




Note: See [Notes](#) for rounding guidelines.

The ‘other provision’ category includes residential special schools, residential family centres, boarding schools, further education colleges with residential accommodation, secure training centres, adoption support agencies, voluntary adoption agency branches, independent fostering agencies and residential holiday schemes for disabled children.

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

# Children’s homes of all types

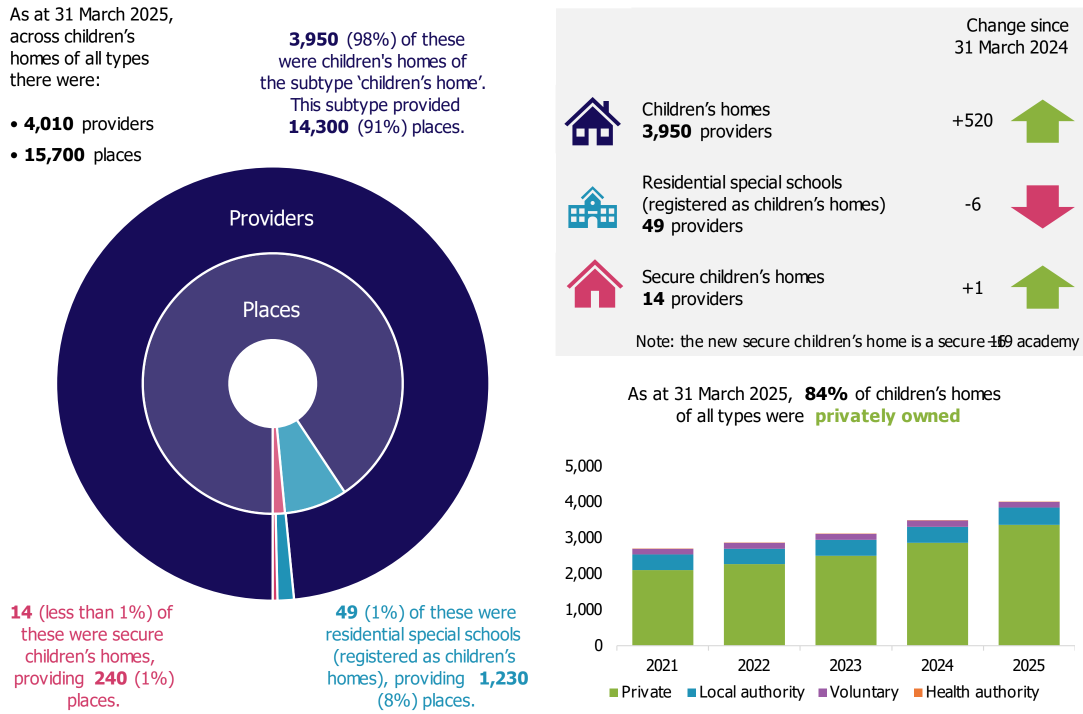
There were 4,010 children’s homes of all types as at 31 March 2025. This was a 15% increase (520 homes) from the previous year (3,490).

Children’s homes can be registered as 1 of 3 subtypes: children’s homes, residential special schools (registered as children’s homes) and secure children’s homes.

In total, children’s homes of all types were registered for 15,700 places. This represents a 9% increase in potential capacity since 31 March 2024, compared with a 7% increase in 2023–24, when there were 14,500 registered places in total.

**Figure 3: The number of children’s homes and children’s home places by**

**type and the number of children’s homes by sector as at 31 March 2025, the change in number of providers since 2024, and the number of children’s homes of all types by sector from 2021 to 2025**




Note: See Notes for rounding guidelines.

View data in an accessible format.

The majority of children’s homes across all types are privately owned. This trend has continued to grow steadily and reached 84% (3,360) in 2025. Most new registrations this year have also been in the private sector, which reinforces this ongoing shift.

However, within this broader category, residential special schools registered as children’s homes are less dominated by private ownership. 69% (34) of them are privately operated, accounting for 61% (750) of available places. Secure children’s homes are even more likely to be operated by public or voluntary sector organisations, with 12 out of the 14 settings run by local authorities and 2 by voluntary organisations.

## Shifts in the size and structure of homes

Of the 3,950 children’s homes of the subtype ‘children’s home’, the mean number of places for those registered within the year was 3, compared with a mean of 4 places among all those active or suspended as at 31 March 2025.

The number of children’s homes of the subtype ‘children’s home’ has risen increasingly rapidly over recent years. In 2025, the number of homes rose by 15%

to 3,950, up from 3,420 the previous year. The number of registered places also grew by 11%, reaching 14,300. This marks a steeper increase than the previous year's growth of 12% in homes and 9% in places. The pace of expansion appears to be accelerating year-on-year, suggesting a compounding trend.

A small number of children's homes of the subtype 'children's home' offer short-break-only care. As at 31 March 2025, there were 120 (3%) providers on record as providing care exclusively for short breaks, offering a potential capacity of 710 (5%) places.

**Regional distribution**

As in previous years, children's homes of the subtype 'children's home' are not distributed evenly across the country. All regions saw an increase in the number of homes and places in them. As at 31 March 2025, the North West had the most children's homes (1,020) and places (3,210). London had the fewest homes (250) and the South West had the fewest places (790).

Distribution of children's homes does not align with demand. While 26% of children's homes are located in the North West, only [18% of looked-after children come from that region](#).

**Table 1: The number of children's homes of the subtype 'children's home' (including short-break-only homes), providers and places as at 31 March 2025 and the net change in each since 31 March 2024, by region**

| Region | Number of children's homes | Number of children's home places | Net change in providers since 31 March 2024 | Net change in places since 31 March 2024 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| North West | 1,020 | 3,210 | +160 | +390 |
| West Midlands | 630 | 2,140 | +76 | + 200 |
| North East, Yorkshire and the Humber | 580 | 2,130 | +61 | +150 |
| East Midlands | 460 | 1,620 | +78 | +220 |
| South East | 410 | 1,930 | +44 | +170 |
| East of England | 330 | 1,350 | +49 | +130 |
| South West | 260 | 790 | +27 | +57 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| London | 250 | 1,100 | +30 | +91 |
| England | 3,950 | 14,300 | +520 | +1,410 |

Note: See Notes for rounding guidelines.

This year, the North West experienced the largest overall increase in number of settings (an increase of 160) and potential capacity (an increase of 390). This continues a longer-term trend – over the past few years, the region has consistently recorded the highest year-on-year increase in children's homes. At the same time, the East Midlands had the biggest growth in proportion to its size this year.

## Inspection of all types of children's homes during 2024 to 2025

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, we carried out a total of 4,460 full or monitoring inspections or assurance visits of 3,580 children's homes of all types.

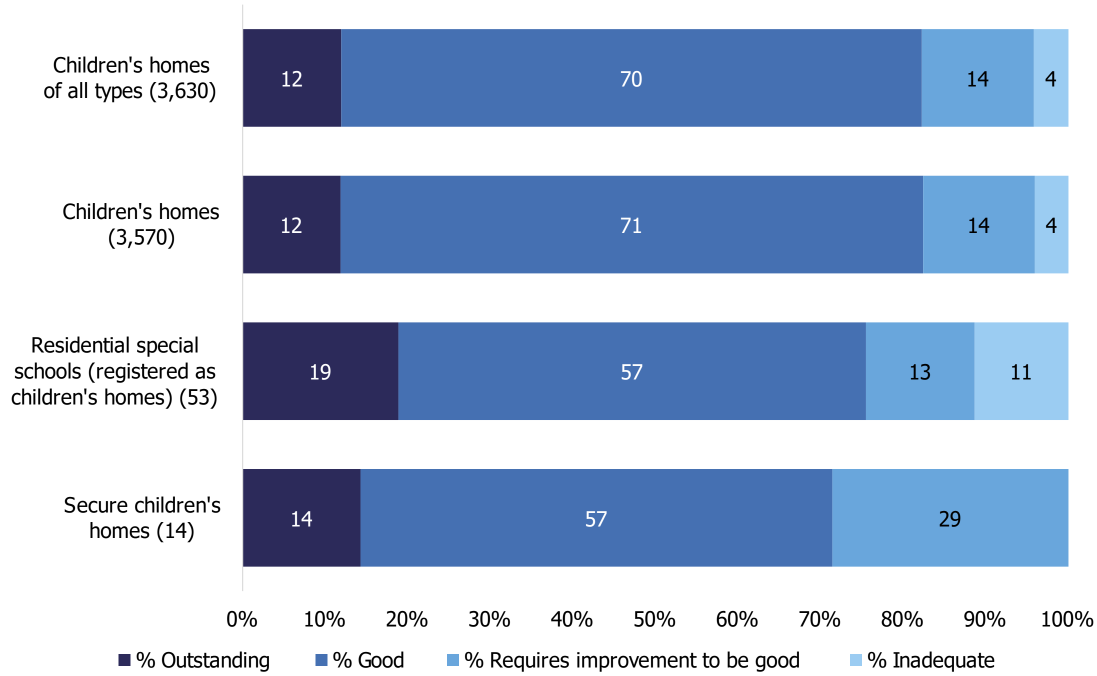
Under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF), full inspections of children's homes result in published judgements on the overall experiences and progress of children, taking into account:

- how well children are helped and protected
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers

Full inspections of secure children's homes also take into account:

- children's education and learning
- children's health

**Figure 4: Overall effectiveness judgements from all full inspections of children's homes of all types carried out between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025 by subtype**




Note: See Notes for rounding guidelines.

Totals in brackets represent the number of full inspections of children's homes of each type carried out between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025 and published by 30 April 2025. Percentages are rounded and may not sum to 100.

View data in an accessible format.

Of all children's homes given a full inspection in 2024–25:

- 81% received a good or outstanding judgement for how well children and young people are helped and protected
- 74% received a good or outstanding judgement for the effectiveness of leaders and managers

As at 31 March 2025, 91% of all active or suspended children's homes of all types had an inspection judgement (3,630 out of 4,010). The distribution of grades is broadly in line across the different ownership types. As at 31 March 2025, short-break-only children's homes and residential special schools (registered as children's homes) both had a notably high proportion of settings with an outstanding grade at their most recent graded inspection, at 22% and 20% respectively, compared with 13% across all types of children's homes. Short-break-only homes have maintained a higher-than-average rate of outstanding judgements over several years. In contrast, the proportion for residential special schools (registered as children's homes) has been more variable – it dipped below the average in 2023 before rising again in subsequent years.

# Supported accommodation

As at 31 March 2025, there were 890 active or suspended supported accommodation providers.

Supported accommodation became a regulated form of provision in April 2023. Every supported accommodation service provider must be registered separately with Ofsted. In this publication, we refer to service providers as ‘providers’. A provider may operate multiple ‘premises’ where young people are accommodated.

This dataset only includes supported accommodation providers that held an active or suspended status in the 2024–25 inspection year.

At the close of the 2024–25 inspection year, active or suspended providers operated 8,120 open or pending premises, offering 20,200 places. The highest proportions of premises (2,020, 25%) and places (3,590, 18%) were located in the North West.

As at 31 March 2025, the majority of providers were private (87%, 780), with voluntary and local authority providers making up 8% (74) and 4% (40) respectively. London had the highest proportion of providers (18%, 160).

## Premises and places

Supported accommodation premises can fall into 1 of 4 different categories:

- category 1: supported accommodation in a self-contained unit, where the accommodation is for the sole use of the child or for the child and other individuals living with the child
- category 2: supported accommodation in a shared- or group-living situation in premises used to accommodate only looked-after children and care leavers
- category 3: supported accommodation in a shared- or group-living situation in premises that are not limited to accommodating looked-after children and care leavers
- category 4: supported accommodation provided by an individual or individuals in a private residence

More information about the different categories can be found in the guidance on providing supported accommodation for children and young people.

**Table 2: The number of open or pending supported accommodation premises as at 31 March 2025 by category and region**

| Region | Total number of premises | Category 1 | Category 2 | Category 3 | Category 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| North West | 2,020 | 1,260 | 240 | 360 | 160 |
| North East, Yorkshire and the Humber | 1,320 | 760 | 260 | 240 | 52 |
| East Midlands | 1,130 | 470 | 340 | 270 | 60 |
| South East | 830 | 180 | 260 | 190 | 210 |
| West Midlands | 820 | 260 | 290 | 210 | 70 |
| London | 730 | 120 | 360 | 240 | 18 |
| South West | 690 | 230 | 280 | 120 | 65 |
| East of England | 570 | 120 | 330 | 77 | 47 |
| England | 8,120 | 3,390 | 2,350 | 1,710 | 680 |

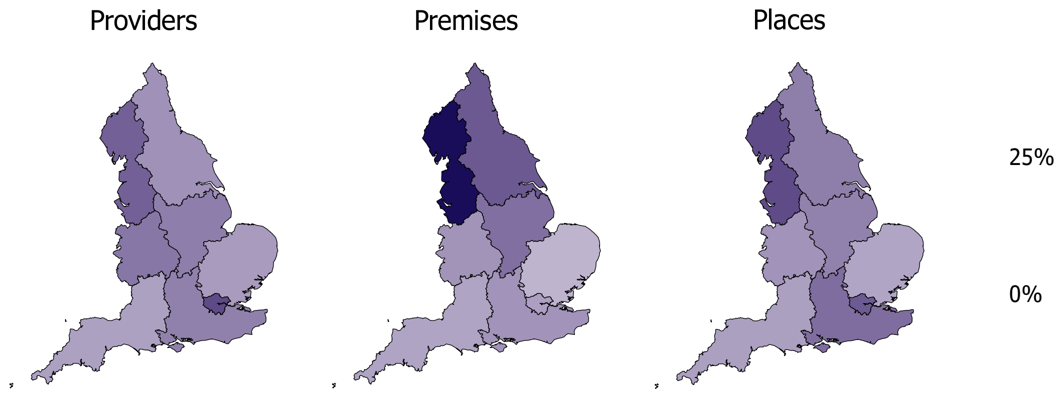
Note: See Notes for rounding guidelines.

Supported accommodation data is reported based on our records as at 31 March 2025. We are currently reviewing the status and category of supported accommodation premises registered as category 1 (self-contained unit), to ensure that the data is accurate.

A small number of premises located outside of England are not included in the above table.

As at 31 March 2025, category 1 was the most common type of supported accommodation premises (3,390, 42%), while the highest proportion of places was in category 2 premises (8,810, 44%).

**Figure 5: Regional distribution of supported accommodation providers, premises and places as at 31 March 2025**




Note: A small number of supported accommodation providers (4) and premises (1) are located in Wales. We have excluded these from the data in the above visualisation. In all maps, a lighter hue indicates a lower percentage.

View data in an accessible format.

## Inspection outcomes of supported accommodation providers

As part of a full or monitoring inspection under the SCCIF, we assess supported accommodation providers on 3 areas of evidence:

- the overall experiences and progress of children
- how well children are helped and protected
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers

Inspection results in a single overall judgement. Unlike other types of social care provision, supported accommodation can receive 1 of 3 outcomes when inspected:

- outcome 1: consistently strong service delivery
- outcome 2: inconsistent quality of service delivery
- outcome 3: serious or widespread weaknesses

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, a total of 88 supported accommodation providers received 50 full inspections and 72 monitoring inspections. This means that supported accommodation inspection data reported here is based on a relatively small number of inspections. We agreed with the Department for Education that we should prioritise dealing with the very high volume of registration applications in 2024–25. We plan to carry out a substantially higher number of inspections in 2025–26.

Of the 50 full inspections, 26 providers were assessed as providing consistently strong services, 19 as having an inconsistent quality of service delivery and 5 as having serious or widespread weaknesses.

# Other social care providers

As at 31 March 2025, there were 700 social care providers other than children's homes of all types and supported accommodation providers.

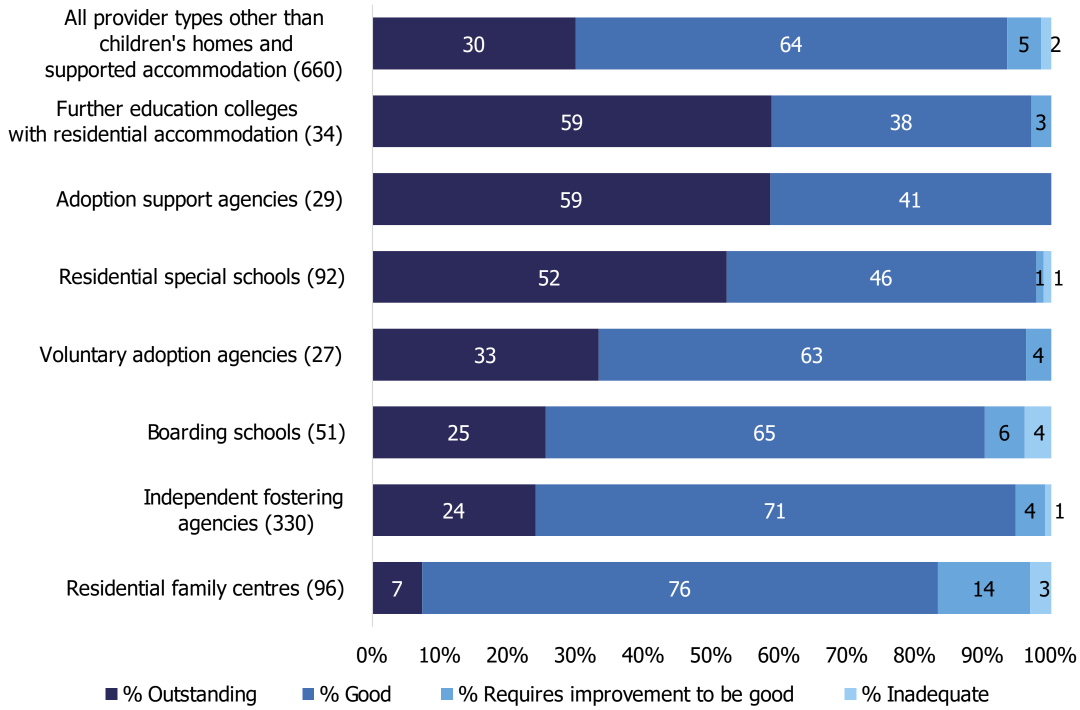
Excluding children's homes and supported accommodation, the majority of other social care providers were independent fostering agencies, with 340 settings, and residential family centres, with 110 settings.

## Inspection outcomes of other social care providers

Of the 660 other social care provider settings that had a published full inspection outcome as at 31 March 2025, 94% had received a good or outstanding judgement.

Of the 700 other social care provider settings that were active or suspended as at 31 March 2025, the majority (660, 95%) had a published full inspection outcome. Of these, 94% were good (420) or outstanding (200), 5% were requires improvement to be good (33) and 2% were inadequate (10).

**Figure 6: Overall effectiveness profile of other social care providers as at 31 March 2025, by provider type**




Note: See Notes for rounding guidelines.

Totals in brackets represent the number of providers of each type with an inspection outcome as at 31 March 2025, published by 30 April 2025.

There were also 9 residential holiday schemes for disabled children and 1 secure training centre that had an inspection outcome as at 31 March 2025. We have not reported on these provider types individually in Figure 6, because the low numbers mean that percentage-based comparisons with other setting types are not meaningful. These providers are included in the top row, which shows grades for all provider types other than children’s homes and supported accommodation. Percentages are rounded and may not sum to 100.

View data in an accessible format.

During 2024–25, we carried out a total of 310 full inspections, 32 monitoring inspections and 1 assurance visit of 330 other social care providers. The majority (89%) of full inspections of other providers this year resulted in an overall judgement of good or outstanding.

# Notes

We explain the main uses of this data and the arrangements for quality assurance, and provide further contextual information, in the methodology and quality report accompanying this release.

The methodology and quality report also provides information on the strengths and limitations of the statistics.

This publication is based on Ofsted data as at 31 March 2025.

## Revisions to previous release

This is the first release of this data for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

## Rounding

Numbers in this report are rounded as follows:

- numbers under 100 are not rounded
- numbers between 100 and 1,000 are rounded to 2 significant figures
- numbers over 1,000 are rounded to 3 significant figures

## Contacts

If you are a member of the public and have any comments or feedback on this publication, you can contact Rebecca Vincent or the social care team by email.

# 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: The number of settings as at 31 March 2025 by provider type, and the change from 31 March 2024**

| Type of provider | Number of settings as at 31 March 2025 | Percentage change since 31 March 2024 |
|---|---|---|
| Children’s homes of all types | 4,010 | +15% |
| Residential family centres | 110 | +12% |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Residential family centres | 110 | +12% |
| Independent fostering agencies | 340 | +2% |
| Supported accommodation | 890 | Ongoing initial registration |
| Further education colleges with residential accommodation | 34 | No change |
| Secure training centre | 1 | No change |
| Voluntary adoption agencies | 29 | -6% |
| Residential special schools | 95 | -9% |
| Boarding schools | 51 | -11% |
| Residential holiday schemes for disabled children | 10 | -17% |
| Adoption support agencies | 29 | -17% |

See Figure 1.

**Data for Figure 2: The number of children's social care providers by type as at 31 March for the years 2021 to 2025**

| Year | Total children's homes of all types | Total providers other than children's homes of all types and supported accommodation | Total supported accommodation providers |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2021 | 2,710 | 700 | 0 |
| 2022 | 2,870 | 700 | 0 |
| 2023 | 3,120 | 690 | 0 |
| 2024 | 3,490 | 700 | 260 |
| 2025 | 4,010 | 700 | 890 |

See Figure 2.

**Data for Figure 3 (parts 1 and 2): The number of children's homes and children's home places by type and the number of children's homes by sector as at 31 March 2025, the change in number of providers since 2024**

| Provision type | Total providers as at 31 March 2025 | Percentage providers as at 31 March 2025 | Total places as at 31 March 2025 | Percentage places as at 31 March 2025 | Increase in providers since 31 March 2024 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Children's homes of the subtype 'children's home' | 3,950 | 98% | 14,300 | 91% | +520 |
| Residential special schools (registered as children's homes) | 49 | 1% | 1,230 | 8% | -6 |
| Secure children's homes | 14 | <1% | 240 | 1% | +1 |
| Children's homes of all types | 4,010 | 100% | 15,700 | 100% | +520 |

See Figure 3.

### Data for Figure 3 (part 3): The number of children's homes of all types by sector from 2021 to 2025

| Sector | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Private | 2,100 | 2,270 | 2,510 | 2,860 | 3,360 |
| Local authority | 440 | 430 | 440 | 450 | 480 |
| Voluntary | 160 | 170 | 160 | 170 | 160 |
| Health authority | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 7 |

See Figure 3.

### Data for Figure 4: Overall effectiveness judgements for all full inspections of children's homes of all types carried out between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025 by subtype

| Provision type | % Outstanding | % Good | % Requires improvement to be good | % Inadequate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Children's homes of all types (3,630) | 12 | 70 | 14 | 4 |
| Children's homes (3,570) | 12 | 71 | 14 | 4 |
| Residential special school (registered as children's homes) (53) | 19 | 57 | 13 | 11 |
| Secure children's homes (14) | 14 | 57 | 29 | 0 |

See [Figure 4].

### Data for Figure 5: Regional distribution of supported accommodation providers, premises and places as at 31 March 2025

| Region | % Providers | % Premises | % Places |
|---|---|---|---|
| East Midlands | 12 | 14 | 12 |
| East of England | 9 | 7 | 8 |
| London | 18 | 9 | 16 |
| North East, Yorkshire and the Humber | 10 | 16 | 12 |
| North West | 15 | 25 | 18 |
| South East | 12 | 10 | 14 |
| South West | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| West Midlands | 13 | 10 | 10 |

See [Figure 5].

### Data for Figure 6: Overall effectiveness profile of other social care providers as at 31 March 2025, by provider type

| Provider type | % Outstanding | % Good | % Requires improvement to be good | % Inadequate |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| All provider types other than children's homes and supported accommodation (660) | 30 | 64 | 5 | 2 |
| Further education colleges with residential accommodation (34) | 59 | 38 | 3 | 0 |
| Adoption support agencies (29) | 59 | 41 | 0 | 0 |
| Residential special schools (92) | 52 | 46 | 1 | 1 |
| Voluntary adoption agencies (27) | 33 | 63 | 4 | 0 |
| Boarding schools (51) | 25 | 65 | 6 | 4 |
| Independent fostering agencies (330) | 24 | 71 | 4 | 1 |
| Residential family centres (96) | 7 | 76 | 14 | 3 |

See Figure 6.

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