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Reporting year 2025

# Children looked after in England including adoptions

This is the latest release



**Published** 26 November 2025

**Next update** November 2026

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This release provides information on children looked after (CLA) in England, including numbers of CLA adopted, care leavers and CLA who were missing from their placement. Data is taken from the annual SSDA903 data collection which is collected from local authorities in England.

The latest statistics relate to the year ending 31 March 2025 and comparisons are to the year ending 31 March 2024 unless otherwise stated. Each year local authorities can revise previous years' data so figures for earlier years may have changed compared to previous releases of this data. The standard period for data in this release is for the year ending 31 March 2021 to the year ending 31 March 2025.

Users of the data should be aware that:

- 2021 was the year that the initial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are visible in the statistics, so they should be cautious making comparisons between the current year and 2021.
- many of the changes within the release are influenced by changes in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) who are a distinct cohort, with specific characteristics, for example they are generally male, aged 16+ years, with relatively short periods of care.

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One new table has been added to the release this year (table A6), showing characteristics of CLA on 31 March, excluding unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).

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# Headline facts and figures - 2025

Summary

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**Children looked  
after on 31 March  
2025**

**81,770**

Down 2% on 2024

**CLA rate per 10,000  
children aged under  
18 years**

**67**

Down from 69 in 2024

**Children looked  
after on 31 March  
2025 who were  
UASC**

**6,540**

Down 12% on 2024

**Children looked  
after on 31 March  
2025, excluding  
UASC**

**75,240**

Down 1% on 2024

**Children who**

**ceased to be looked  
after, due to  
adoption**

**3,040**

Up 1% on 2024

**Children who  
ceased to be looked  
after, due to a SGO**

**4,110**

Up 6% on 2024

The number of CLA reported by local authorities on 31 March decreased by 2% (down 1,760 children) compared to last year - now at 81,770 children. This decrease is due to a fall of 1% in the number of non-UASC CLA (down 860 children) and a fall of 12% in the number of CLA who were UASC (down 900).

The rate of all CLA per 10,000 children aged under 18 years has decreased to 67 - down from 69 last year and down from a recent peak of 70 in both 2022 and 2023.

The number of children starting to be looked after during the year has fallen and the number of CLA ceasing during the year has risen. CLA ceasing due to being the subject of a special guardianship order (SGO) increased by 6% (up 220 children) and CLA adopted increased by 1% (up 20 children).

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked-after by a local authority if he or she falls into one of the following: is provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours [Children Act 1989, Section 20 and 21], is subject to a care order [Children Act 1989, Part IV], or is subject to a placement order

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## All CLA on 31 March

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In 2025, the number of children looked after (CLA) by local authorities in England was 81,770, down 2% (down 1,760 children) on last year, and down from a recent peak of 83,750 in 2023. This is a rate of 67 CLA per 10,000 children, down from 69 last year.

Number of children looked after on 31 March 2021 to 2025, England

Year	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number of children looked after	80,780	82,090	83,750	83,530	81,770
Annual change	-	+1,310	+1,660	-220	-1,760

Annual percentage change	-	+2%	+2%	<	-2%
				-0.5%	
Rate per 10,000 children (<18 years)	69	70	70	69	67

Source: SSDA903

Numbers and rates per 10,000 children vary widely across local authorities, for example Blackpool has the highest rate at 184 CLA per 10,000 children and Richmond upon Thames has the lowest at 27 CLA per 10,000 children.

## Characteristics

Note: Many of the changes in characteristics seen in recent years have been as a result of the change in the number of UASC who are a distinct cohort with specific characteristics.

### Sex, ethnicity and age on 31 March

Males are slightly over-represented in the CLA population (56%) compared to the overall child population (51%) - as shown in the [latest ONS mid-year population estimates \(opens in new tab\)](#). Some of this is due to UASC, however males are still slightly over-represented for non-UASC CLA (53%).

[Children from Mixed ethnic groups were over-represented and children from Asian ethnic groups were under-represented \(opens in new tab\)](#) in the numbers of CLA compared to the overall child population. Children of White ethnicity account for 71% of CLA, 11% were Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups, 8% Black, African, Caribbean or Black British, 5% were Asian or Asian British, 4% other ethnicities, and ethnicity was not known or not yet recorded for 1%.

CLA are primarily from an older demographic. Over the last five years, whilst the overall number of CLA has increased (up by 1%) the numbers of CLA who were aged under 5 have decreased - under 1s have decreased by 8% and CLA aged 1 to 4 years have decreased by 14% - whilst the number aged 16 years or over have increased by 17%.

## Reasons for being looked after

When a child is assessed by children's services their primary need is recorded. For CLA this corresponds to most relevant need at the time the current period of being looked-after began. This list is hierarchical and where more than one need is identified then the need 'highest' up the list is reported.

The proportion of CLA reported within each primary need has been broadly stable over the last five years.

Reasons recorded for being looked after include the following:

- as a result of or because they were at risk of abuse or neglect
- primarily due to living in a family where the parenting capacity is chronically inadequate (family dysfunction)
- due to there being no parents available to provide for the child (absent parenting)
- due to living in a family that is going through a temporary crisis that diminishes the parental capacity to adequately meet some of the children's needs (family being in acute stress)
- due to the child's or parent's disability or illness
- due to low income or socially unacceptable behaviour

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**The majority of all CLA are looked after due to a primary need of abuse or neglect**

Category of need	Total children	Number					
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
<b>N1. Abuse or neglect</b>	53,490	54,160	54,710	55,100	55,020	66,000	66,000
<b>N2. Child's disability</b>	2,100	2,010	1,930	1,930	1,890	3,300	3,300
<b>N3. Parental illness or disability</b>	2,280	2,200	2,090	2,000	1,940	3,300	3,300
<b>N4. Family in acute stress</b>	6,110	6,060	6,160	6,120	5,910	8,800	8,800
<b>N5. Family dysfunction</b>	11,270	10,830	10,550	10,160	9,630	12,000	12,000
<b>N6. Socially unacceptable behaviour</b>	1,000	910	900	830	810	1,100	1,100
<b>N7. Low income</b>	90	90	90	70	70	100	100
<b>N8. Absent parenting</b>	4,440	5,820	7,320	7,310	6,510	6,600	6,600

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**Footnotes**

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Figures in some tables may be suppressed, denoted by a 'c', percentages <0.5% are denoted by a 'k'. Historical data may differ from older publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the previous publication. However, users looking for a longer time series may wish to check for the equivalent table in earlier releases of this publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. Category of need is the main category of the eight "need codes" at the time the child started to be looked after.

Source: SSDA903

## Explore and edit this data online

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## Legal status

Information is collected on the legal status underlying being 'looked-after', which helps to describe why the child is being looked after. These include:

- a care order - a court order placing a child in the care or supervision of a local authority
- a voluntary agreement - this allows the local authority to provide accommodation for a child where there's parental consent, or when no-one with parental responsibility is in place
- a placement order - a court order allowing a local authority to place a child for adoption
- detained for child protection reasons
- detained under youth justice legal statuses

In 2025, most CLA were looked after under a care order (75%), 19% of CLA were looked after under voluntary agreement and 6% under a placement order.

These figures on CLA on 31 March, by characteristics can be found in [table A1](#) of the release.

## Placements

The majority of CLA were placed in foster placements, where an approved carer looks after the child. The number of CLA in foster placements have continued to decrease, down 2% to 54,820 (down 1,140 children) however the proportion of CLA in foster placements has remained the same as last year at 67%. Almost a quarter (24%) of foster placements are with a relative or friend who are an approved foster carer. The number of CLA in these placements also decreased by 2% to 13,360 (down 220 children).

The number of CLA placed for adoption decreased by 22% to 1,660 children (down 460 children) - the proportion of all CLA who were placed for adoption is 2%. Placed for adoption means the child has gone to live with prospective adopters. A child may be placed for adoption with the formal consent of the child's parents/guardian or with a placement order from a court and may be placed for adoption with their current foster carer or with a stranger or relative who is an approved adopter.

CLA placed in children's homes including secure children's homes increased by 9% (770 children) to 9,480, which is 12% of CLA.

Supported accommodation providers accommodated 7,520 children (9% of CLA), there were a further 2,050 children placed in 'Other placements' which was 3% of all CLA. Note: Users should be cautious when interpreting and drawing conclusions from changes in CLA placed at these two placement types in 2024 and 2025 as there were some data issues reporting the transition to supported accommodation. For further information please see the methodology document that accompanies this release.

These figures on CLA on 31 March, by placement type can be found in [table A2](#) of the release.

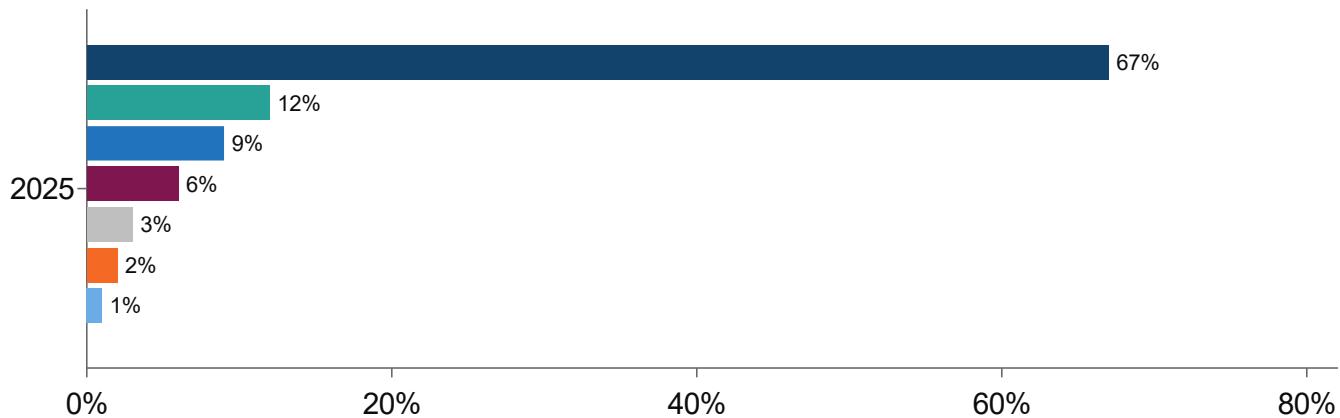
Chart

[Table](#)

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## Two thirds of CLA are placed in foster placements

Percentages, England, 31 March 2025



- Foster placements
- Children's homes and secure homes
- Supported accommodation
- Placed with parents/person with parental responsibility
- Other placements
- Placed for adoption
- Other residential settings

## Footnotes

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Figures in some tables may be suppressed, denoted by a 'c', percentages <0.5% are denoted by a 'k'. Historical data may differ from older publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the previous publication. However, users looking for a longer time series may wish to check for the equivalent table in earlier releases of this publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. The category 'Independent and semi-independent living arrangements/

supported accommodation' reports data for young people in placements in former semi-independent living arrangements and living independently up to and including 2023. From 2024 all placements are supported accommodation (registered with Ofsted). From 28 October 2023 it became illegal for young people to be placed in former semi independent and independent living placements. Supported accommodation providers were required to submit a completed application to Ofsted by 28 October 2023. From 2024, young people who were placed in former semi independent and independent living placements with providers who had not submitted a completed application by the deadline are reported within the 'Other' category.

Source: SSDA903

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## Locality of placements

Local authorities have a general duty to provide accommodation that is within the local authorities' area, that meets the needs of the child and allows the child to live near their home.

The proportion of placements inside the council boundary was 56%, up slightly from 55% last year, the remaining 44% were placed outside the boundary.

Location	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
All placements	80,780	82,090	83,750	83,530	81,770
Inside the LA boundary	46,710	46,710	47,080	46,010	45,420

Percentage	58%	57%	56%	55%	56%
Outside the LA boundary	34,070	35,370	36,670	37,520	36,350
Percentage	42%	43%	44%	45%	44%

The majority of CLA were still placed within 20 miles of home:

- placed within 20 miles of home - 69% - the same as last year
- placed over 20 miles from home - 22% - the same as last year
- information for the remaining 9% was not known or not recorded - in most cases this will be because the child was UASC, but it could also be because the home address was not known or for reasons of confidentiality.

As might be expected, location of placement varies by type of placement. Placements with the highest proportion of children:

- placed over 20 miles from home are those where the child is placed for adoption (52%)
- placed 20 miles or less from home are those where the child is placed with parents/other person with parental responsibility (91%) or in a foster placement (76%)

## Placement stability

1 in 10 children experienced high placement instability (3 or more placements during the year) - 10% - broadly stable from 11% in 2024 and 9% in 2021. A lower proportion of CLA experience high placement instability when focusing on those who have been in care for 12 months or more (9%) compared to those who have been in care for less than 12 months (14%).

Further information on placement stability can be found in the 'P' feature tables accompanying this release.

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## Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)

 Hide

UASC are children, who have applied for asylum in their own right and are separated from both parents and/or any other responsible adult. Local authorities have a legal duty to provide accommodation for these children.

There were 6,540 UASC on 31 March 2025, down 12% (900 children) on last year. During the pandemic there was a drop in the number of UASC to 4,150 in 2021, but this increased to a peak of 7,440 last year.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

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**After a dip during the pandemic, UASC increased to peak in 2023 and 2024 before falling this year**

	Number
<b>Children looked after on 31 March who were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children</b>	<b>2004</b> 3,000
	<b>2005</b> 3,160
	<b>2006</b> 3,370
	<b>2007</b> 3,390
	<b>2008</b> 3,540
	<b>2009</b> 3,890
	<b>2010</b> 3,490
	<b>2011</b> 2,740

<b>2012</b>	2,230
<b>2013</b>	1,940
<b>2014</b>	2,050
<b>2015</b>	2,760
<b>2016</b>	4,340
<b>2017</b>	4,710
<b>2018</b>	4,560
<b>2019</b>	5,150
<b>2020</b>	5,080
<b>2021</b>	4,150
<b>2022</b>	5,680
<b>2023</b>	7,410
<b>2024</b>	7,440
<b>2025</b>	6,540

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## Footnotes

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. Historical data may differ from older publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the previous publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.

Source: SSDA903

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## Characteristics of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

UASC are a distinct group of CLA and currently represent around 8% of all CLA, up from 5% in 2021.

Most UASC are male - 94% - and UASC are also usually older - 90% were aged 16 years or older, compared to 27% of all CLA.

89% of UASC have a primary need of 'Absent parenting' - a further 6% were in need due to abuse or neglect and 4% due to the family being in acute stress.

UASC tend to present themselves at points of entry into the country. Since February 2022 there has been a [mandated national transfer scheme \(opens in new tab\)](#) in place to enable the safe transfer of unaccompanied children between local authorities across the country to help ensure that unaccompanied children have access to services and support they need. Prior to this, the scheme was voluntary. Kent (451 young people), Hampshire (181) and Birmingham (176) were looking after the largest number of UASC on 31 March 2025.

37% of UASC are from 'Other ethnic groups' (this includes some people from the Middle East, North Africa and the Far East - more detail on the specific ethnicities within this group can be found in the Appendix 3 of the [CLA data collection guide \(opens in new tab\)](#)). 33% were of Black or Black British ethnicity, 24% of Asian or Asian British ethnicity, 3% White, 1% Mixed ethnicity and ethnicity was not known for 2%.

## Placements of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

The placements for UASC tend to reflect the fact that they are older:

- 56% of UASC were accommodated in supported accommodation placements (44%

last year) and 5% were in 'Other' placements accommodated (18% last year). However, direct comparison between the two years is difficult due to the transition of former semi-independent and living independently placement providers who were required to register with Ofsted as a supported accommodation provider..

Placements with providers that did not apply by the October 2023 deadline are reported as 'Other' placements. This change has affected data comparability for the period covering 2023 to 2025.

- 38% were in foster placements (up slightly from 37%)
- 1% were in children's homes and secure children's homes (same as last year)

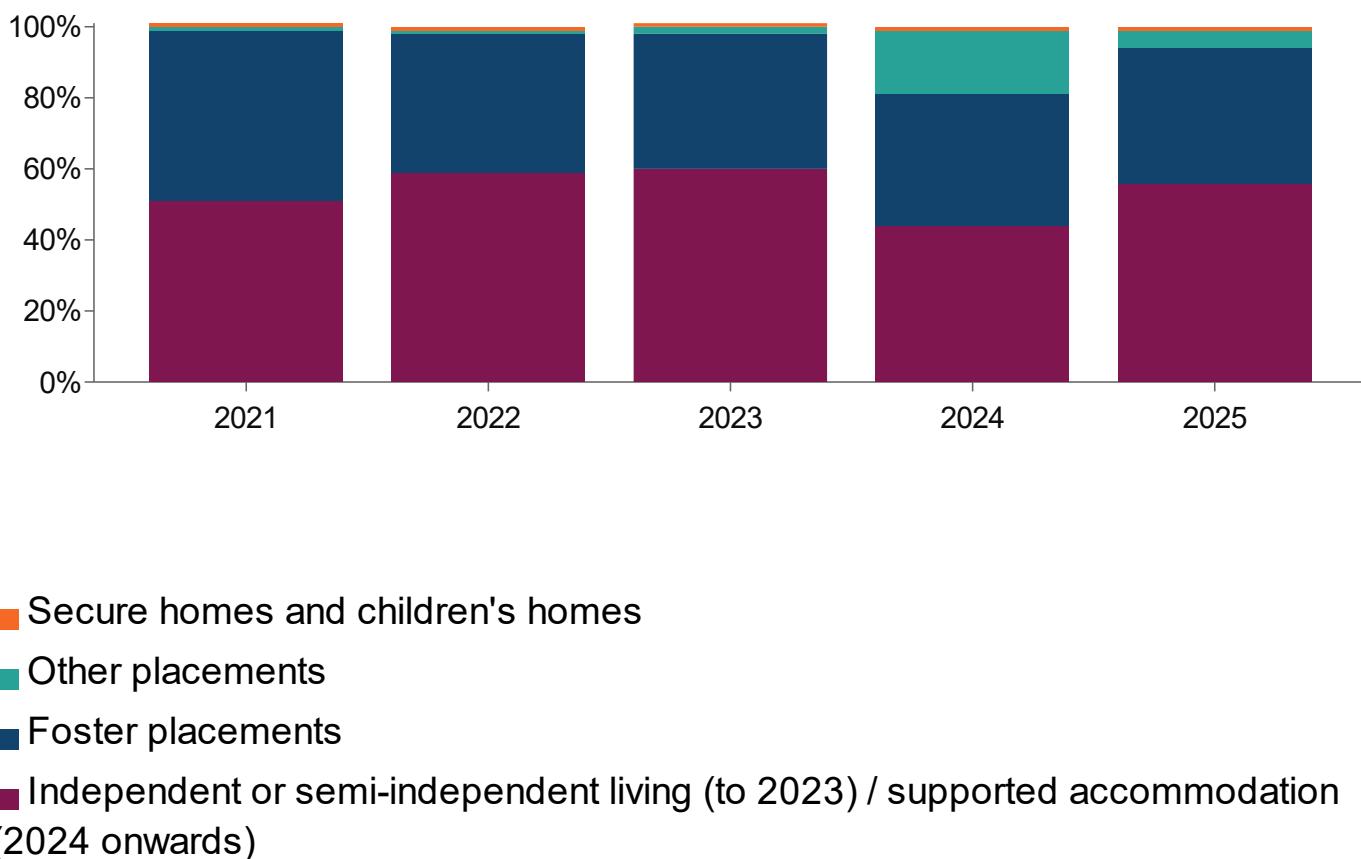
Chart

Table

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### Over half of UASC were in supported accommodation

England, 31 March 2021 to 2025



## Footnotes

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Figures in some tables may be suppressed, denoted by a 'c', percentages <0.5% are denoted by a 'k'. Historical data may differ from older publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the previous publication. However, users looking for a longer time series may wish to check for the equivalent table in earlier releases of this publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. The category 'Independent and semi-independent living arrangements/ supported accommodation' reports data for young people in placements in former semi-independent living arrangements and living independently up to and including 2023. From 2024 all placements are supported accommodation (registered with Ofsted). From 28 October 2023 it became illegal for young people to be placed in former semi independent and independent living placements. Supported accommodation providers were required to submit a completed application to Ofsted by 28 October 2023. From 2024, young people who were placed in former semi independent and independent living placements with providers who had not submitted a completed application by the deadline are reported within the 'Other' category.

[Show 1 more footnote](#)

Source: SSDA903

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**CLA on 31 March, excluding UASC**

 Hide

A new table has been added to the release this year to show the characteristics of CLA on 31 March, excluding unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

The number of these CLA fell by 1% (860 children) to 75,240, which follows decreases of very small amounts (<0.5%) in each of the last three years.

When UASC are excluded from the 31 March population count, the main differences are:

- for sex - the proportion of CLA who were male is lower (53%) but males are still overrepresented in the CLA population.
- for age - the proportion of CLA aged 16 or over is lower (22%)
- for primary need - a higher proportion are looked after due to abuse or neglect (73%) and fewer are looked after due to absent parenting (1%)
- for ethnicity - a greater proportion are white (77%) which means white ethnicities are overrepresented in the CLA non-UASC population compared to the overall population.
- for legal status - a higher proportion are CLA under a care order (81%) and fewer are CLA under a voluntary agreement (12%).

Further figures can be found in [table A6](#) of this release.

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## CLA starting during the year

 Hide

The number of children starting to be looked after during the year (CLA starting) is 32,270, down 3% (860 children) on last year.

Counts of the number of CLA starting relate to the first time the child started to be looked after in each LA during the year. They will include some double counting of children and young people whose care was transferred from another LA (for example

UASC transferred under the [National Transfer Scheme \(opens in new tab\)](#) - these children will be counted as starting a period of care once within each LA that was responsible for their care during the reporting year as we can not reliably track all children across LAs.

Adjusting for this, we estimate the number of CLA starting during the year could be more like 30,980 in 2024 and 29,630 in 2025, a decrease of 4%.

Population count	2024	2025
Reported CLA starting during the year	33,130	32,270
Of whom were non-UASC	25,800	25,320
Of whom were UASC	7,330	6,950
CLA ceasing during the year, whose care transferred to another LA (and so will be potentially double counted as a start)	2,140	2,640
Of whom were non-UASC	170	180
Of whom were UASC	1,970	2,460
Adjusted number of all CLA starting during the year (excluding where care transferred)	30,980	29,630
Adjusted number of UASC starting (excluding where care transferred)	5,360	4,480

57% of CLA starting were initially looked after under a voluntary agreement under S20 of the Children Act 1989, and 32% were initially looked after under a care order, however a child's legal status is likely to change during their period of care. 10% (3,290 children) were initially detained for child protection reasons and 2% (510 children) for youth justice reasons.

A small proportion of CLA starting during the year were known to have previously had a permanence arrangement - 580 children. These children were known to have previously been adopted (less than 0.5% of all CLA starting), been the subject of a

special guardianship order (1% of all CLA starting) or been the subject of a residence order or child arrangement order (less than 0.5% of all CLA starting).

Further information on CLA starting by characteristics can be found in [table C1](#), and by placement can be found in [table C2](#) of this release.

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## Conviction and health outcomes

 Hide

Figures in this section relate to the 58,530 CLA on 31 March who had been CLA for at least 12 months in the year ending 31 March 2025 unless otherwise stated.

Definitions and explanations of the information collected can be found in the [CLA data collection guide \(opens in new tab\)](#) and in the footnotes of the table below.

### Offending rates

Information in this section on offending rates is collected for children aged 10 years or over – 40,990 children in 2025.

The proportion of CLA who were convicted or were subject to youth cautions or youth conditional cautions during the year was:

- 2% for all ages – the same as last year
- 4% for CLA aged 16 to 17 years – the same as last year and almost three quarters (73%) of the cohort who offended
- 1% for CLA aged 13 to 15 years – down slightly from 2% last year and the remaining 28% of the cohort who offended

More males offend than females - 3% of males were convicted or subject to youth cautions or youth conditional cautions during the year compared to 1% of females - a similar pattern to previous years.

Figures on offending can be found in [table I1](#) of this release.

## Substance Misuse

3% of CLA were identified as having a substance misuse problem which is the same as last year and the same as in 2021.

An intervention was received for 41% of children who were identified as having a substance misuse problem, up from 39% last year. Interventions may include for example, advice and guidance, therapeutic support or support targeting the problems that are causing difficulties for the young person, like family contact, placement stability, school attendance or the young person's mental health.

Figures on substance misuse can be found in [table I2](#) of this release.

## Health and development outcomes

Most CLA are up to date with their health care and immunisations - figures are similar to last year. During the COVID-19 pandemic the proportion of CLA with their teeth checked during the year by a dentist fell to 41% but this proportion is now closer to pre-pandemic levels.

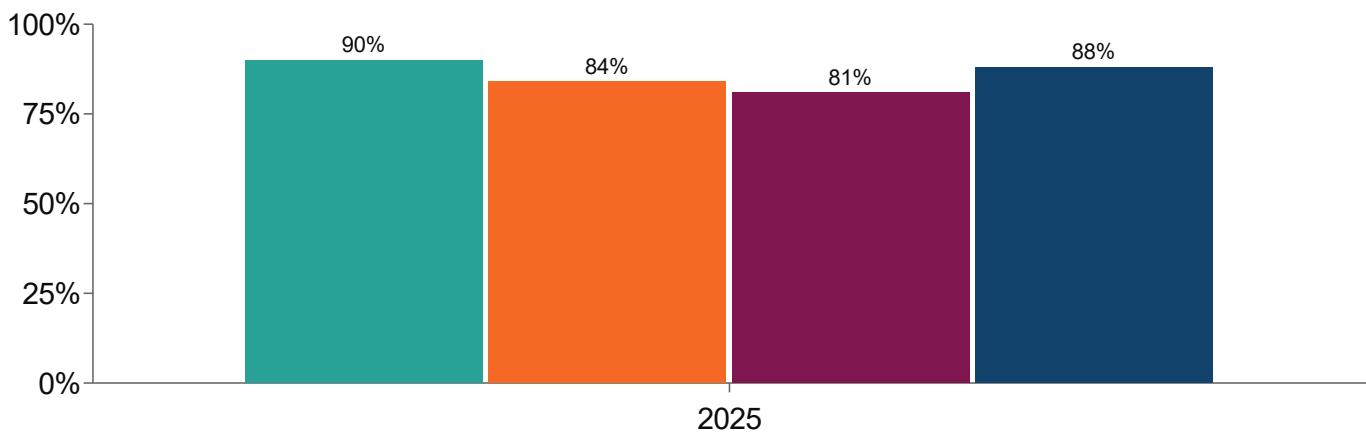
Chart

Table

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### Most CLA are up to date with their health care and immunisations

Percentage of CLA during the year up to date, 2025



- Annual health assessment
- Immunisations
- Teeth checked by a dentist
- Development assessments (under 5s)

## Footnotes

1. National and regional numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Figures in some tables may be suppressed, denoted by a 'c', percentages <0.5% are denoted by a 'k'. Historical data may differ from older publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the previous publication. However, users looking for a longer time series may wish to check for the equivalent table in earlier releases of this publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. Immunisations were up to date by end of March. 'Up to date' means the child has had all immunisations that a child of their age should have received, according to the NHS vaccination schedule.

[Show 3 more footnotes](#)

Source: SSDA903

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Figures on health and development outcomes can be found in tables [I3](#) and [I4](#) of this release.

## Emotional and behavioural health (SDQ scores)

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores - the SDQ is a behavioural screening questionnaire. Its primary purpose is to give social workers and health professionals information about a child's wellbeing. A score of 0 to 13 is considered normal, 14 to 16 is borderline, and 17 to 40 is a cause for concern.

For CLA aged 5 to 16 years (43,220 children), an SDQ score was reported for 78% of them - up slightly from 77% last year. The average score reported was 14.9 - up from 14.7 last year and up from 13.7 reported in 2021.

Of these 43,220 children:

- 45% had 'normal' emotional and behavioural health (down slightly from 46%)
- 13% had 'borderline' scores (same as last year)
- 42% had scores which were a cause for concern (up slightly from 41%).

In 2025, 44% of males had a score which was a cause for concern compared to 40% of females.

In the younger age groups, a greater proportion of males than females have scores which were a cause for concern; however for 15 and 16 year olds, this switches and a greater proportion of females than males have a score which is a cause for concern.

Figures on the SDQ scores of CLA can be found in [table I5](#) of this release.

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## Children missing or away from placement without authorisation

 Hide

Note: These figures are published as OFFICIAL STATISTICS. We do not recommend users make comparisons between local authorities or across years due to difference in reporting practices. An increasing number of local authorities are not using the away without authorisation category, to align their figures with information collected locally by the police. This means they will be reporting both their missing and away without authorisation incidents as missing.

We anticipate figures for missing are over reported by about 12%. See the methodology document for further details.

Missing incidents were reported for 12,720 of CLA (11%) in 2025 and there were 86,900 missing incidents. This is an average (mean) of 6.8 missing incidents per child who went missing. The vast majority (91%) of missing incidents lasted for 2 days or less.

Most missing incidents during the year were from children's homes (35%) or supported accommodation (31%). 16% of missing incidents were from foster care and a further 16% from other placements (including unregistered placements). Placements inside the local authority boundary accounted for half of all missing incidents.

Missing is defined as a looked after child who is not at their placement or a place they are expected to be and their whereabouts is not known.

Away without authorisation incidents were reported for 3% of CLA (2,900 children).

Away from placement without authorisation is defined as a looked after child whose whereabouts is known but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police.

Further information on CLA who were [missing](#) or who were [away from placement without authorisation](#) can be found in the 'G' feature tables accompanying this release.

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## CLA ceasing during the year

 Hide

Counts of the number of children ceasing to be looked after during the year (CLA ceasing) relate to the last time the child ceased to be looked after during the year in each LA. However, there may be some double counting of children if a child's care transfers to another LA, and then the child ceases to be looked after in the subsequent LA within the same reporting year.

The total number of CLA ceasing during the year increased by 2% since last year to 34,450 (670 children). This count includes children and young people whose care transferred to another LA - 8% of all CLA - which has steadily increased in recent years due to increases in the number of UASC, whose care is more likely to transfer due to the National Transfer Scheme. Overall numbers of CLA ceasing during the year can be found in the table.

Adjusting for these transfers, we estimate the number of CLA ceasing during the year could be more like 31,640 in 2024 and 31,810 in 2025, an increase of 1%.

Population count	2024	2025
All CLA ceasing during the year	33,780	34,450

CLA ceasing during the year whose care transferred to another LA	2,140	2,640
CLA (excluding when care transfers to another LA) ceasing during the year	31,640	31,810

## Reasons for ceasing to be looked after

The most common reasons for children and young people leaving care were because they returned home to live with parents as part of the care planning process, because they reached age 18 or because they were adopted or left as the subject of a special guardianship order.

- ▶ Export options

### CLA ceasing during the years ending 31 March 2021 to 2025, by reason the care episode ceased

Reason episode ceased	Total children	Number					%
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	
	<b>Total children</b>	28,120	30,230	31,850	33,780	34,450	100
	<b>Aged 18 (or over) and remained with current carers</b>	2,690	4,000	4,940	5,390	6,000	
	<b>Returned home to live with parents or other person with parental responsibility which was part</b>	4,620	5,360	5,510	5,780	5,540	

**of the care  
planning  
process**

<b>Moved into independent living (with supportive accommodation)</b>	3,740	3,490	3,750	4,230	4,220
<b>Special guardianship order</b>	3,820	3,910	3,870	3,890	4,110
<b>Adopted</b>	2,890	3,010	3,000	3,020	3,040
<b>Care taken by another local authority</b>	530	940	1,210	2,140	2,640
<b>Left care to live with parents, relatives or other person with no parental responsibility</b>	1,740	1,940	2,000	1,980	1,800
<b>Moved into independent living (with no formalised support)</b>	830	840	940	1,100	1,130
<b>Residence order or child arrangement order granted</b>	1,060	1,180	1,120	1,160	1,080
<b>Returned home to live with</b>	990	1,090	1,140	1,100	1,070

**parents or other person with parental responsibility which was not part of the care planning process**

<b>Transferred to residential care funded by adult social services</b>	620	580	500	460	480
<b>Age assessment determined child aged 18 or over</b>	190	190	260	370	340
<b>Sentenced to custody</b>	220	230	210	220	210
<b>Accommodation on remand ended</b>	150	150	140	150	140
<b>Child moved abroad</b>	70	70	80	70	80
<b>Died</b>	60	40	60	60	60
<b>Care ceased for any other reason</b>	3,910	3,230	3,120	2,680	2,520

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[Data symbols](#) 

**Footnotes**

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Figures in some tables may be suppressed, denoted by a 'c', percentages <0.5% are denoted by a 'k'. Historical data may differ from older publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the previous publication. However, users looking for a longer time series may wish to check for the equivalent table in earlier releases of this publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. Only the last occasion on which a child ceased to be looked after in the LA during the year has been counted. The care of a small number of children each year is transferred between LAs, in national figures these children will be counted as ceasing once within each LA. For more information see the methodology document.

[Show 1 more footnote](#)

Source: SSDA903

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## Duration of period of care for CLA ceasing during the year

Just over a quarter (28%) of CLA ceasing had been looked after for under 6 months, the same as last year.

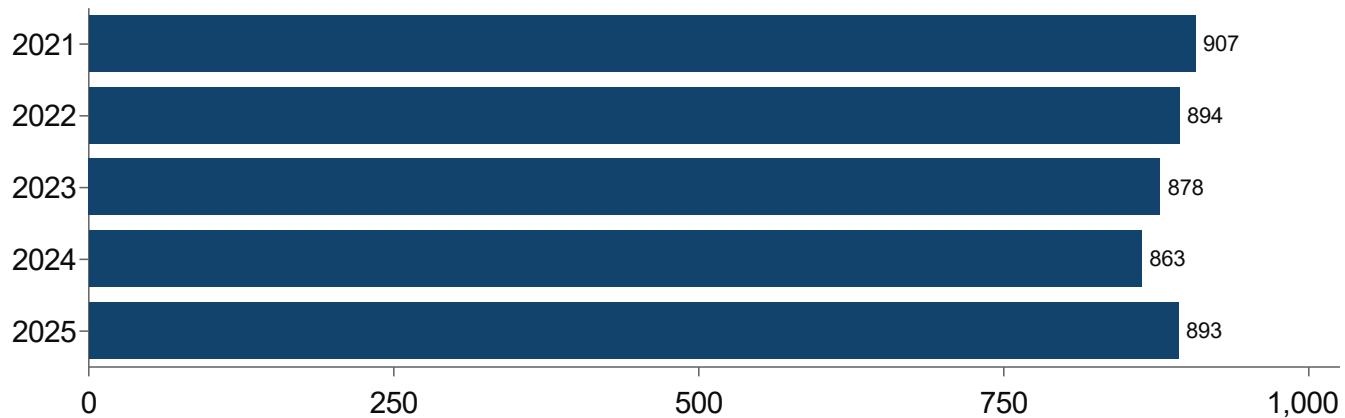
The average duration of the last period of care increased during the COVID-19 pandemic to 907 days in 2021 but has since been gradually decreasing - down to 863 days last year. However, the mean duration has increased by 30 days this year to 893 days (almost 2 years and 6 months).

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

- ▶ Export options

## Duration (mean) of last period of care for CLA ceasing during the year England, 2021 to 2025



## Footnotes

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Figures in some tables may be suppressed, denoted by a 'c', percentages <0.5% are denoted by a 'K'. Historical data may differ from older publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the previous publication. However, users looking for a longer time series may wish to check for the equivalent table in earlier releases of this publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. Only the last occasion on which a child ceased to be looked after in the LA during the year has been counted. The care of a small number of children each year is transferred between LAs, in national figures these children will be counted as ceasing once within each LA. For more information see the methodology document.

[Show 1 more footnote](#)

Source: SSDA903

**Explore and edit this data online**

Use our table tool to explore this data.

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Further information on CLA ceasing during the year can be found in the 'D' feature tables accompanying this release.

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## Adoptions and special guardianship orders (SGOs)

 Hide

The number of CLA who were adopted is up very slightly on last year, up by 20 children to 3,040 and the number of CLA ceasing during the year under a SGO is up 6% (up by 220 children) at 4,110.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

► Export options

### CLA ceasing due to adoption or a special guardianship order

			2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Adopted	Sex	Total	2,890	3,010	3,000	3,020	3,040
		Male	1,520	1,580	1,600	1,580	1,620
Special guardianship order	Sex	Total	3,820	3,910	3,870	3,890	4,110
		Male	1,920	1,950	1,930	1,970	2,040
		Female	1,900	1,960	1,940	1,920	2,070

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## Footnotes

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Figures in some tables may be suppressed, denoted by a 'c', percentages <0.5% are denoted by a 'k'. Historical data may differ from older publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the previous publication. However, users looking for a longer time series may wish to check for the equivalent table in earlier releases of this publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.

Source: SSDA903

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# Adoptions

Adoptions rose sharply from 2011 to a peak in 2015 but have since been falling. The decrease followed two court rulings in 2013, which stated that adoption orders should be made only when there was no other alternative, such as placing a child with birth relatives. There was a further fall in 2021 during the pandemic, which was a result of the impact on court proceedings during the pandemic where cases progressed more slowly or were paused, however since then the number of adoptions have remained around 3,000 each year.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

- ▶ Export options

## CLA ceasing due to adoption remains similar to last year

	Number
<b>Children looked after who were adopted during the year</b>	<b>2025</b> 3,040
	<b>2024</b> 3,020
	<b>2023</b> 3,000
	<b>2022</b> 3,010
	<b>2021</b> 2,890
	<b>2020</b> 3,480
	<b>2019</b> 3,600
	<b>2018</b> 3,850
	<b>2017</b> 4,370
	<b>2016</b> 4,710
	<b>2015</b> 5,360

<b>2014</b>	5,050
<b>2013</b>	4,010
<b>2012</b>	3,470
<b>2011</b>	3,090
<b>2010</b>	3,200
<b>2009</b>	3,330
<b>2008</b>	3,180
<b>2007</b>	3,330
<b>2006</b>	3,700
<b>2005</b>	3,770
<b>2004</b>	3,760
<b>2003</b>	3,540
<b>2002</b>	3,430
<b>2001</b>	3,070
<b>2000</b>	2,710
<b>1999</b>	2,060
<b>1998</b>	2,190
<b>1997</b>	1,830
<b>1996</b>	1,870
<b>1995</b>	1,980
<b>1994</b>	2,190

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## Footnotes

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. Historical data may differ from older publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the previous publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.

Source: SSDA903

## Explore and edit this data online

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The majority of children who were adopted start their final period of care whilst aged under 1 year - 72% - up from 69% and representing an increase of 90 children.

On average it takes 2 years and 3 months (27 months) for a child to be adopted - down one month - and the average age at adoption is 3 years and 2 months - down by two months. The average time between a child entering care and being placed for adoption was 1 year and 7 months (19 months), the same as last year. It then takes a further 9 months on average for an adoption order to be granted and completed.

## CLA who left care as the subject of a special guardianship order (SGO)

The number of CLA ceasing during the year under a special guardianship order (SGO) is 4,110, up 6% on last year.

Most of the 4,110 SGOs granted were to relatives or friends (90%) the remainder were largely to other former foster carers (7%) and to other carers (3%).

The number of children leaving care as the subject of a SGO granted to former foster carers who were relatives or friends increased by 13% to 2,800 - an increase of 330 children.

The average duration of the final period of care for CLA leaving as the subject of a SGO remains at 1 year and 9 months. However, as the average age on starting their final period of care is 4 years and 8 months, up from 4 years and 5 months, that means the average age at SGO is up from 6 years and 2 months to 6 years and 5 months.

Most children who cease to be looked after under a special guardianship order were looked after under a care order - 91%.

Further information on CLA ceasing due to an SGO can be found in [table E5](#) of this release.

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## 17 to 21 year old care leavers

 Hide

### Data collected on care leavers

Local authorities provide information about young people who were previously looked after, who turned 17 to 21 in the year. These young people were CLA for at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday, including some time after their 16th birthday. The information provided relates to contact around their birthday in the year.

### ‘In touch’

Local authorities are expected to initiate contact and stay in touch with care leavers aged 21 years and younger and provide statutory support to help the care leaver transition to living independently.

The proportion of care leavers whom the local authority is in touch with varies by age and has generally been stable across all ages except 17-year-olds. As these young people are less likely to be in touch with the local authority, less information is known about their activity and accommodation as a care leaver.

## Activity

Information is collected on the activity that most accurately reflects the young person's main activity status on or around their birthday and figures are in the table below.

For 19- to 21- year-olds 27% were in education (6% higher education, 21% education other than higher education) and 27% were in training or employment or an apprenticeship; 40% were not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to an estimated 15% of all young people aged 19 to 21 years old (Source: Labour force survey data, percentage of young people aged 19 to 21 in England who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) during the year ending 31 March 2025).

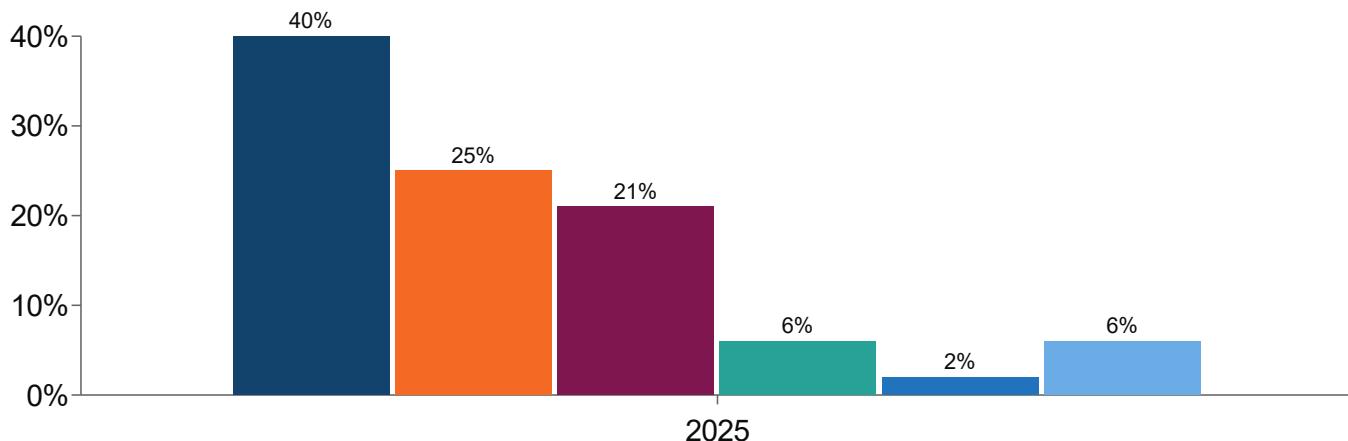
Chart

Table

► Export options

### Proportion of 19 to 21 year old care leavers by activity reported during the year

England, 2025



- NEET
- Training or employment (excl. apprenticeships)
- Education other than higher education
- Higher education
- Apprenticeships
- Information not known

## Footnotes

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Figures in some tables may be suppressed, denoted by a 'c', percentages <0.5% are denoted by a 'k'. Figures exclude young people who were looked after under an agreed series of short term placements, those who have died since leaving care, those who have returned home to parents or someone with parental responsibility for a continuous period of at least 6 months and those whose care was transferred to another local authority. Historical data may differ from older publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the previous publication.
2. Local authority not in touch' excludes young people where activity information is known, as a third party provided it even though the local authority is not directly in touch with the young person.

[Show 1 more footnote](#)

Source: SSDA903

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## Accommodation of former care leavers

As former care leavers get older, they tend to transition into more independent living

arrangements. The most common living arrangements (on or around their birthday) are given in the table.

Most common accommodation type for 17, 18 and 19-21 year old care leavers, 2025

<b>Age of care leaver</b>	<b>Top 3 accommodation types</b>	<b>Percentage information not known</b>
17 years	With parents or relatives - 47% Custody - 7% Semi-independent transitional accommodation - 3%	36%
18 years	Semi-independent transitional accommodation - 36% Former foster carers - 18% With parents or relatives - 11%	5%
19-21 years	Living independently - 36% Semi-independent transitional accommodation - 19% With parents or relatives - 11%	6%

The full list of the accommodation that care leavers are living in can be found in [table F3](#).

## Accommodation suitability

Information on whether care leaver accommodation is suitable can be used to monitor whether they are receiving the support they need to make a successful transition to adulthood. However, there are no hard and fast rules on whether accommodation is deemed 'suitable'; the decision made by local authorities when reporting

accommodation information will depend on the circumstances of the individual case.

The proportions of young people known to be in unsuitable accommodation are in [table F4](#).

- Export options

### Proportion of care leavers aged 17 to 21 years in suitable accommodation

17 years	Suitability of accommodation	Total	Percentage			
			2021	2022	2023	2024
	<b>Accommodation considered suitable</b>	68%	63%	59%	66%	
	<b>Accommodation considered unsuitable</b>	8%	7%	8%	7%	
	<b>No information</b>	24%	30%	33%	27%	
18 years	Suitability of accommodation	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
			92%	91%	92%	91%
	<b>Accommodation considered unsuitable</b>	4%	4%	3%	3%	
	<b>No information</b>	4%	5%	5%	5%	
19 to 21 years	Suitability of accommodation	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
			88%	88%	88%	88%

## considered suitable

<b>Accommodation considered unsuitable</b>	5%	6%	6%	6%
<b>No information</b>	7%	7%	6%	7%

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[Data symbols](#) 

## Footnotes

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Figures in some tables may be suppressed, denoted by a 'c', percentages <0.5% are denoted by a 'k'. Figures exclude young people who were looked after under an agreed series of short term placements, those who have died since leaving care, those who have returned home to parents or someone with parental responsibility for a continuous period of at least 6 months and those whose care was transferred to another local authority. Historical data may differ from older publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the previous publication.
2. Accommodation suitable/not suitable figures also exclude young people who have gone abroad, been deported or their residence is not known as in these cases the suitability of the accommodation will be unknown. This means the total of care leavers in this table will be slightly lower than the total in the care leaver accommodation table. Regulation 9(2) of the Care Leavers Regulations defines what is meant by 'Suitable accommodation'. 'No information' includes young people whose accommodation is not known because either the local authority is not in touch, or the young person has refused contact or no longer requires services.

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Source: SSDA903

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### “Staying Put”

The proportion of 18-year-olds in a foster placement, who ceased to be looked after on their 18th birthday and who were still living with their former foster carers 3 months after their 18th birthday ("staying put") remains at 62% in 2025, the same as last year. The proportion of 19- and 20-year-olds still living with their foster carers also was 33%, up from 32% last year.

### Care leavers who were formerly UASC

For former care leavers aged 19-21-years, an increasing number and proportion were formerly UASC. This increase is due to the relatively high number of UASC since 2015 moving through the age groups and who are now care leavers.

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**The numbers of former care leavers now aged 19 to 21 years old who were UASC, continue to increase**

## Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

		<b>Total</b>				
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<b>Number</b>	<b>17 years</b>	30	30	40	40	30
	<b>18 years</b>	3,080	2,910	3,830	4,670	4,870
	<b>19 to 21 years</b>	8,160	8,700	9,060	9,820	11,410
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>17 years</b>	5%	5%	7%	8%	7%
	<b>18 years</b>	27%	24%	30%	34%	34%
	<b>19 to 21 years</b>	25%	26%	26%	27%	30%

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[Data symbols](#) 

## Footnotes

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. Percentages rounded to the nearest whole number. Figures in some tables may be suppressed, denoted by a 'c', percentages <0.5% are denoted by a 'k'. Figures exclude young people who were looked after under an agreed series of short term placements, those who have died since leaving care, those who have returned home to parents or someone with parental responsibility for a continuous period of at least 6 months and those whose care was transferred to another local authority. Historical data may differ from older publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the previous publication.
2. In touch, activity and accommodation information for 17-21 year old care leavers relates to contact around their birthday. Users looking for a longer time series may wish to check for the equivalent table in earlier releases of this

publication. Figures for the number of care leavers who have died each year can be found in the methodology document.

Source: SSDA903

## Explore and edit this data online

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Further information on care leavers can be found in the 'F' feature tables accompanying this release.

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## 22- to 25-year-old care leavers

 Hide

Data was collected for the first time in 2023 on care leavers aged 22- to 25-years-old who had been in touch with their local authority and who had requested and received support. We believe the data collected may be an undercount of the full cohort, particularly for the older care leavers, so users should take this into account when using this data.

Care leavers are assigned a Personal Advisor who will work with the young person to make sure they receive the care, support and entitlements they need when they leave care. Care leavers will have a Personal Advisor until they are at least 21 years old, and up to the age of 25 years if the care leaver chooses.

Whereas for care leavers aged 21 years and younger, the local authority is

expected to initiate contact with the care leaver, they are not expected to be in touch and initiate contact with young people over age 21. This data is collected and reported (based on their latest contact during the year) and records the numbers of older care leavers who are accessing their entitlement to request support in order to better understand their activity and accommodation status.

The data shows that 58% of care leavers aged 22 years requested and received support from their local authority at some point during the year. This proportion decreases as age increases: 43% of 23-year-olds, 34% of 24-year-olds and 22% of 25-year-olds.

Further information on the activity and accommodation of 22- to 25-year-old care leavers who had requested and received support from the local authority can be found in the 'J' feature tables accompanying this release.

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## Find my data and feedback

 [Hide](#)

To find information on topics of interest, expand the content sections, for example 'CLA on 31 March' or '17 to 21 year old care leavers'. In each section, there will be summary commentary and related tables/charts. You can also create your own tables through the [table tool](#) or modify the pre-prepared tables which use the same files.

At the top of the release, there is a link 'download associated files' which includes the data and metadata that sits underneath the release. There are also links under 'related guidance' at the top right-hand side of the release. These will direct you to the statistics methodology document, the latest data collection guide, the EES glossary and previous statistical releases in this series.

The standard period for data in the release is for the year ending 31 March 2021 to the year ending 31 March 2025. Users wishing to access time series longer than the published five years may refer to the equivalent tables in earlier statistical releases in

this series. The data set 'Time series of children looked after data - 1994 to 2025 - NATIONAL' includes longer time series data from 1994 for children looked after, and for unaccompanied asylum seeking-children a time series from 2004. Figures for CLA back to 1965 are available in the [annex of the methodology document for this release](#).

Links to other [related statistical publications on children's social care can be found in the methodology document](#) that accompanies this release.

## Feedback

Your feedback is important to help us improve and develop. To provide feedback on this release, content, or functionality, and for any other queries, please contact the CLA statistics mailbox. Email: [CLAStats@education.gov.uk](mailto:CLAStats@education.gov.uk)

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[Children looked after in England including adoptions](#)

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- managed impartially and objectively in the public interest
- meet identified user needs
- produced according to sound methods
- well explained and readily accessible

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### **Looked-after children statistics team**

Email: [cla.stats@education.gov.uk](mailto:cla.stats@education.gov.uk)

Contact name: Justin Ushie

### **Press office**

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Telephone: 020 7783 8300

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