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Reporting year 2024

Children looked after: A focus on placement location

This is the latest release

Published 17 November 2025

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[Children looked after: A focus on placement location](#)

This release provides information on [children looked after \(CLA\) \(opens in new tab\)](#) in England who are placed out of area, their characteristics and their associated [outcomes \(opens in new tab\)](#). Data is taken from the annual SSDA903 data collection which is collected from local authorities in England.

This analysis has been produced to provide additional insight into placements for CLA outside of the LA boundary.

The latest statistics and charts relate to the year ending 31 March 2024 and comparisons are to the year ending 31 March 2023 unless otherwise stated.

Each year local authorities can revise previous years' data. The standard period for data in this release is for the year ending 31 March 2015 to the year ending 31 March 2024.

Data from March 2020 to March 2022 may have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This potential impact should be taken into consideration when interpreting trends over time.

 [Search this page](#)

Headline facts and figures - 2024

Percentage of CLA placed outside the LA boundary

45%

A steady increase from 40% in 2015

► CLA that were place...

Percentage of CLA placed 20 miles or less from home

69%

A steady decrease from 76% in 2015

► CLA that were place...

Average distance for all CLA

7 miles

Increase from 6 miles in 2015

► Median distance for ...

Average distance for CLA with three or more placements

8 miles

Increase from 7 miles in 2015

► Median distance for ...

**CLA placed outside
the LA boundary
were in foster care**

52%

► CLA at 31 March 202...

**Percentage of CLA
placed outside their
neighbouring LA**

13%

► CLA at 31 March 202...

The total number of CLA at 31 March has gradually increased over the last ten years from 69,460 in 2015 to 83,760 in 2023, before a minor fall to 83,630 in 2024. This overall upward trend influences the changes observed in the analysis below, which examines CLA in England by location of their placement and distance from home, including trends over time.

Figures below relate to the year ending 31 March 2024 and compare to the year ending 31 March 2023 unless otherwise stated.

- 45% of all CLA were placed outside the LA boundary - slight increase from 44% last year
- 69% of all CLA were placed less than 20 miles from home - slight decrease from 70% last year
- 22% of all CLA were placed more than 20 miles from home - an increase from 21% last year
- 17% of all CLA were placed outside the LA boundary and over 20 miles from home - the same as last year
- Average (median) placement distance for all CLA was 7 miles - the same as last year
- Average (median) distance for CLA with three or more placements during the

year was 8 miles - consistent since 2016

- Of CLA who were placed outside the LA boundary, most (52%) were in foster care with other foster carers.
- Of CLA who were placed for adoption - 80% were placed outside the LA boundary.
- On average, CLA who were placed for adoption were furthest from home, at 24 miles, followed by residential schools and residential settings at 23 miles.
- CLA placed in foster care with a relative or friend are more likely to be placed closer to home than those placed in foster care with other foster carers.
- On average, CLA placed in independent fostering agency placements are further from home, at 10 miles compared to 5 miles for LA fostering placements.
- CLA who were male, aged 10 to 15 years or from Black, African, Caribbean or Black British ethnic groups were most likely to be placed further from home.
- CLA who were female, aged under 1 year or from Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups were most likely to be placed closer to home.
- 53% of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) were placed outside the LA boundary - an increase from 47% in 2022.

Local authorities (LAs) in smaller, urban, and densely populated areas, such as those within Greater London and major UK cities, often place CLA outside their jurisdictional boundaries. In contrast, larger and more rural LAs typically place children within their own boundaries.

LAs located in the South of England and major urban centres tend to report higher proportions of CLA placed outside the LA boundary and over 20 miles from home.

At 31 March 2024, 10,620 (13%) of all CLA were placed 'outside the neighbouring LAs' at an average distance of 76 miles. The North West receives a disproportionate proportion of CLA placed 'outside their neighbouring LAs' in children's homes (16% from South West and 11% from South East).

For CLA entering care during 2015-16:

- 64% of CLA had their first placement outside the LA boundary
- 70% of CLA were placed outside the LA boundary within 2 weeks of entering care, and Friday was the most likely day (24%) to be placed outside the LA

boundary

Many of the changes within the release can be explained by the large increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in recent years. UASC influence many of the changes seen in the figures as they are a distinct cohort with specific characteristics, for example they are generally male, aged 16+ years, with relatively short period of care.

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Additional supporting files

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All supporting files from this release are listed for individual download below:

[LA placer map 2024 \(png, 348 Kb\)](#)

A map of England showing whether each LA is an in-placer or an out-placer defined by

the net movement of CLA placed inside or outside the LA boundary in 2024.

[Go to top](#)

Hide all sections

CLA placement locality

Hide

LAs 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. Data is collected on whether CLA are placed inside or outside the LA boundary and the distance of the placement from their home address, if known.

Placement location

At 31 March 2024, LAs in England were responsible for 83,630 CLA. Over time the proportion of CLA placed inside the LA boundary has gradually decreased (from 60% in 2015 to 55% in 2024), and the proportion placed outside the LA boundary has increased (from 40% in 2015 to 45% in 2024).

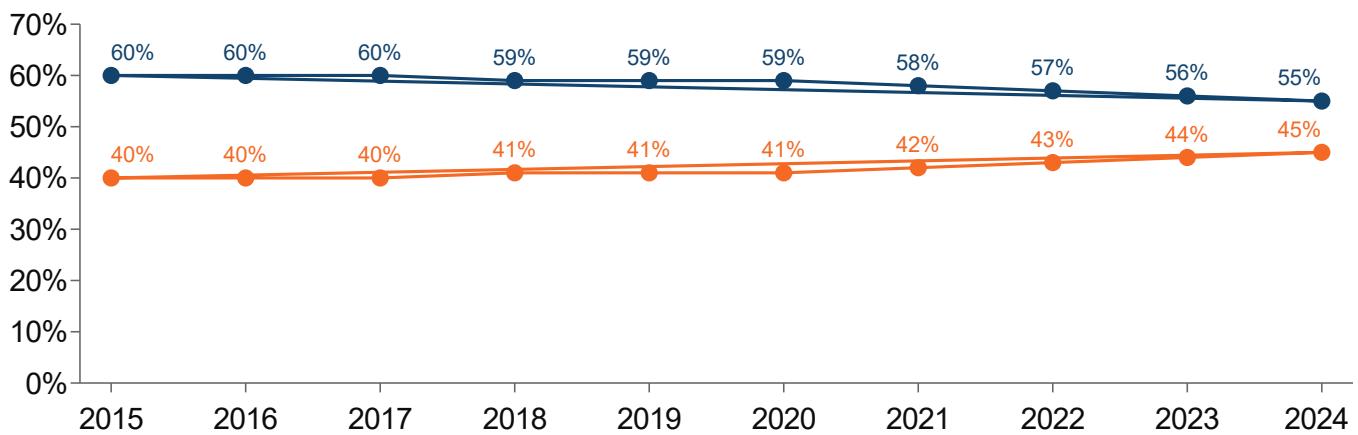
Chart

[Table](#)

► Export options

Proportion of CLA by placement locality

CLA at 31 March, England, 2015 to 2024



- Inside the LA boundary
- Outside the LA boundary

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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the 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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Placement distance

At 31 March 2024, more than two thirds of CLA (57,770, 69%) are placed 20 miles or less from home. Whilst the proportion has steadily decreased from 76% in 2015, this has actually been a numerical increase from 53,100 in 2015 to 58,250 in 2023 before a small reduction in the most recent year.

Placements where a distance is not known or not recorded has risen from 5% in 2015 to 9% in 2024, numerically this is an increase from 3,550 to 7,830. The increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) over the last 10 years has contributed to this rise, but it could also be because the home address was not known or for reasons of confidentiality.

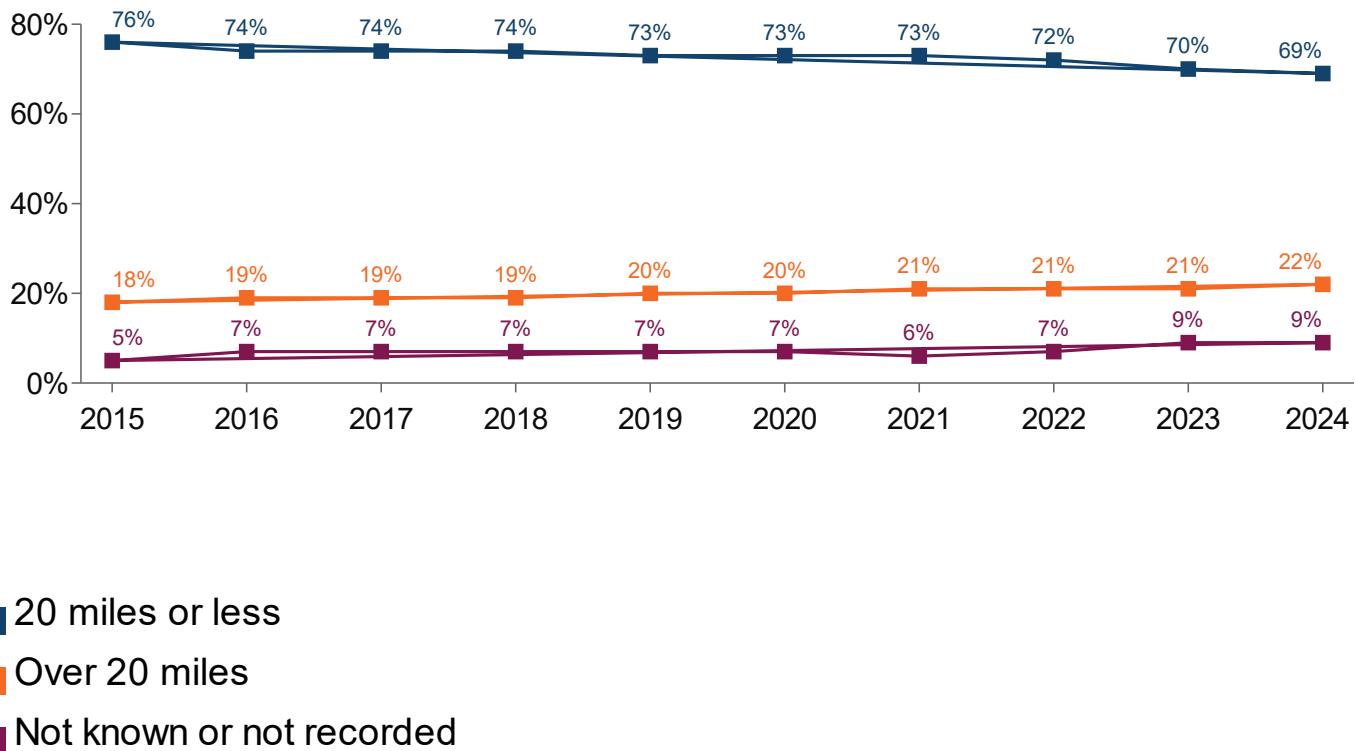
Chart

Table

► Export options

Proportion of CLA by placement distance

CLA at 31 March, England, 2015 to 2024



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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. For CLA with a placement distance 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.

Source: SSDA903

Explore and edit this data online

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At 31 March 2024, 18,030 CLA were placed more than 20 miles from their home. Of these 9,090 (11% of all CLA) were placed between 21 and 40 miles from home, and 3,420 (4% of all CLA) were placed between 41 and 60 miles from home. The proportion of children placed further from home generally declines as the distance increases, with most placements occurring within 20 miles.

In 2024, 2,670 (3% of all CLA) were placed over 100 miles from home. Of these, there were 830 (1% of all CLA) placed in foster care with a relative or friend, placed or adoption or placed with parents or other person with parental responsibility — arrangements considered appropriate for their circumstances.

The distribution of placement distances has remained broadly consistent since 2015.

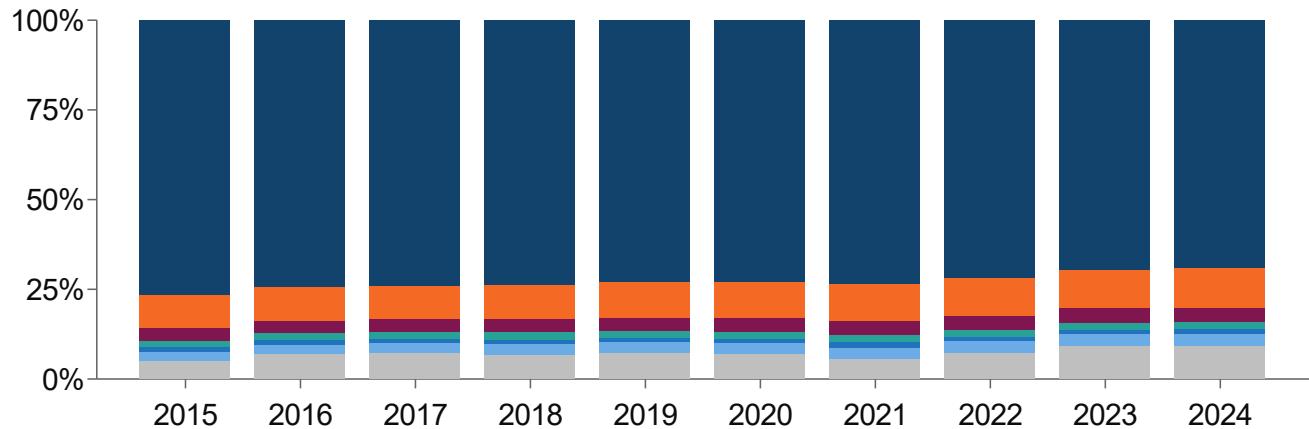
Chart

[Table](#)

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Proportion of CLA by placement distance groups

CLA at 31 March, England, 2015 to 2024



■ Less than 20 miles

■ 21-40 miles

■ 41-60 miles

■ 61-80 miles

■ 81-100 miles

■ Over 100 miles

■ Not Known or not recorded

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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. For CLA with a placement distance 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.

Source: SSDA903

Explore and edit this data online

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Distance locality

At 31 March, the proportion of CLA placed inside the LA boundary and within 20 miles has steadily decreased from 53% in 2015 to 47% in 2024. However, in numerical terms, this represents an increase from 37,080 to 39,060.

During the same period, the most notable change was observed for CLA who were placed outside the LA boundary and over 20 miles away, rising from 14% to 17%, which corresponds to a numerical increase from 9,960 to 14,590.

Additionally, the proportion of all CLA where the distance was not known or recorded has increased from 5% in 2015 to 9% in 2024, likely due to the growing proportion of UASC.

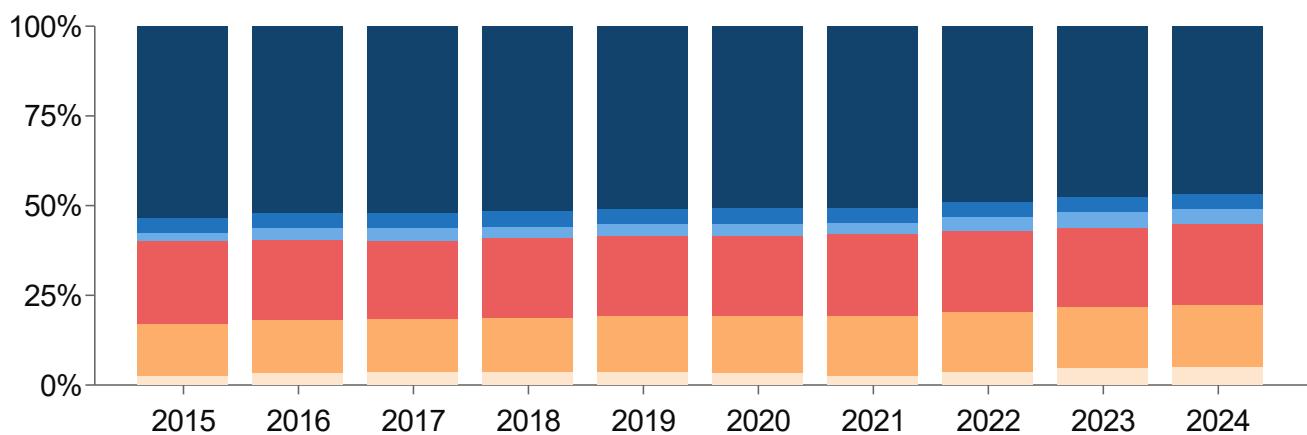
Chart

[Table](#)

► Export options

Proportions of CLA by distance locality

CLA at 31 March, England, 2015 to 2024



- Inside boundary - 20 miles or less
- Inside boundary - Over 20 miles
- Inside boundary - Distance not known or not recorded
- Outside boundary - 20 miles or less
- Outside boundary - Over 20 miles
- Outside boundary - Distance not known or not recorded

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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. For CLA with a placement distance 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.

Source: SSDA903

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Average distance for all CLA

At 31 March, the average placement distance for all CLA remained stable at 6 miles from 2015 to 2022, before increasing slightly to 7 miles in the last two years.

The average placement distance for CLA placed inside the LA boundary remained consistent at 3 miles over the last ten years.

There has been a gradual increase in the average placement distance for CLA placed outside the LA boundary, rising from 13 miles in 2015 to 16 miles in 2024. This suggests a trend toward CLA being further away from home when placed outside the LA boundary.

Chart

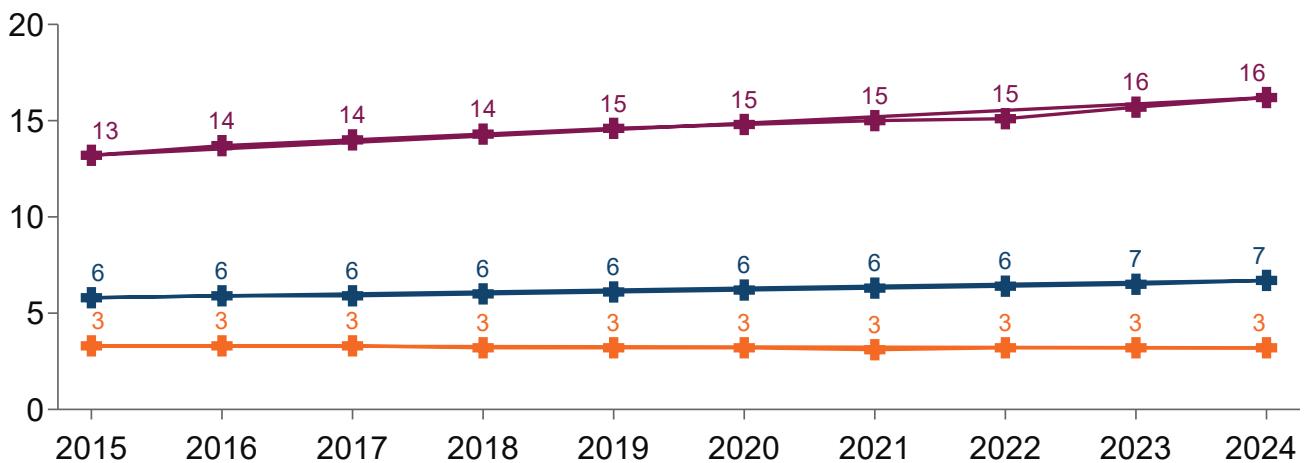
Table

► Export options

The average distance for CLA by placement locality

CLA at 31 March, England, 2015 to 2024

Average
distance
(miles)



✚ CLA placed outside the LA boundary

✚ All CLA

✚ CLA placed inside the LA boundary

Footnotes

1. The average distance relates to the median average.

Source: SSDA903

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Explore data

Average distance of placements during the year

This section uses the same methodology presented within the recent [Stability measures for children looked after in England](#) publication.

CLA with more placements tend to be placed slightly further from home, measured both on the mean and median averages. There was a gradual increase over time in both mean and median average distances across all groups.

The gap between mean and median average distances indicates that most children are placed relatively close to home, however there is a small number of longer distance placements pulling the mean average up.

The average median distance for CLA with a differing number of placements has remained largely consistent from 2015 to 2024. In the past ten years:

- All CLA had a median distance of 6-7 miles.
- CLA with one placement during the year had a median distance of 5-6 miles.
- CLA with two placements during the year had a median distance of 6-7 miles.
- CLA with three or more placements during the year had a median distance of 7-8 miles.

Chart

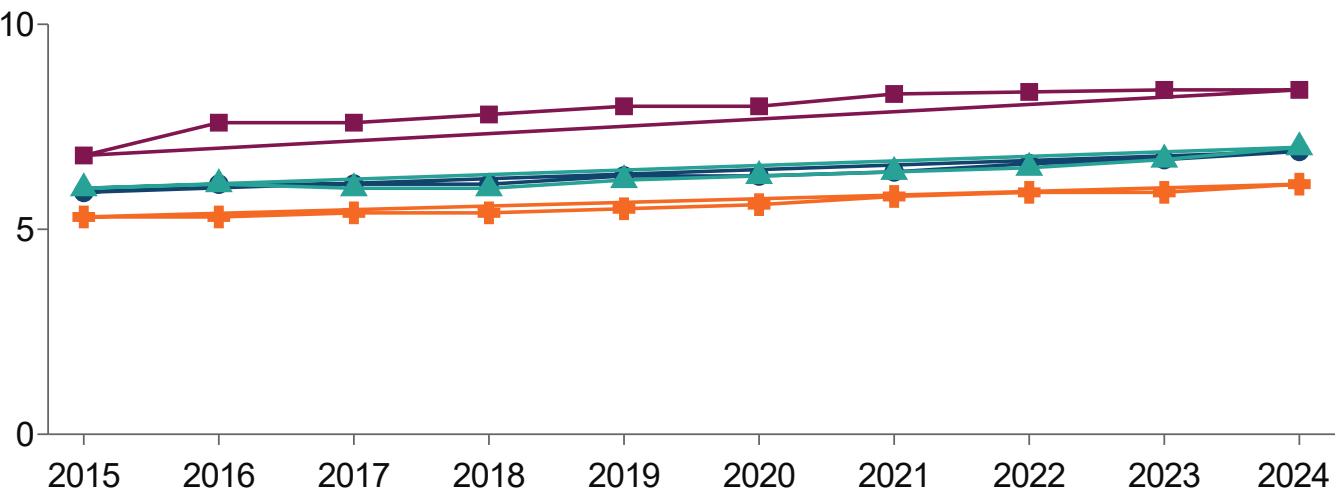
Table

► Export options

CLA by average distance of placements during the year

CLA at 31 March, England, 2015 to 2024

Average
distance
(miles)



- All CLA
- ✚ CLA with one placement during the year
- ▲ CLA with two placements during the year
- CLA with three or more placements during the year

Footnotes

1. Distance is the distance in miles between the child's home and placement. In some cases this is not known, for example UASC, or not recorded for confidentiality reasons, such as some children placed for adoption.
2. All placements for a child are included in the calculations. e.g. for children with 2 placements, both placements contribute towards average distances.

Source: SSDA903

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Distance of placements during the year

A local authority should prioritise placements closer to home first but when the placement breaks down, they may have to look further afield for a suitable placement. However, it can also result in a child being placed closer to friends and relatives who are now in a position to look after them.

In line with the increase of CLA from 69,460 in 2015 to 83,630 in 2024, there has been a general upward trend in number of placements during this period.

The number of CLA placed more than 20 miles from home in their first or only placement rose steadily from 11,160 in 2015 to 16,670 in 2024. However, the number CLA placed more than 20 miles in their second, third or subsequent placement remained relatively stable during this with slight increases of 1,420 and 1,200 respectively.

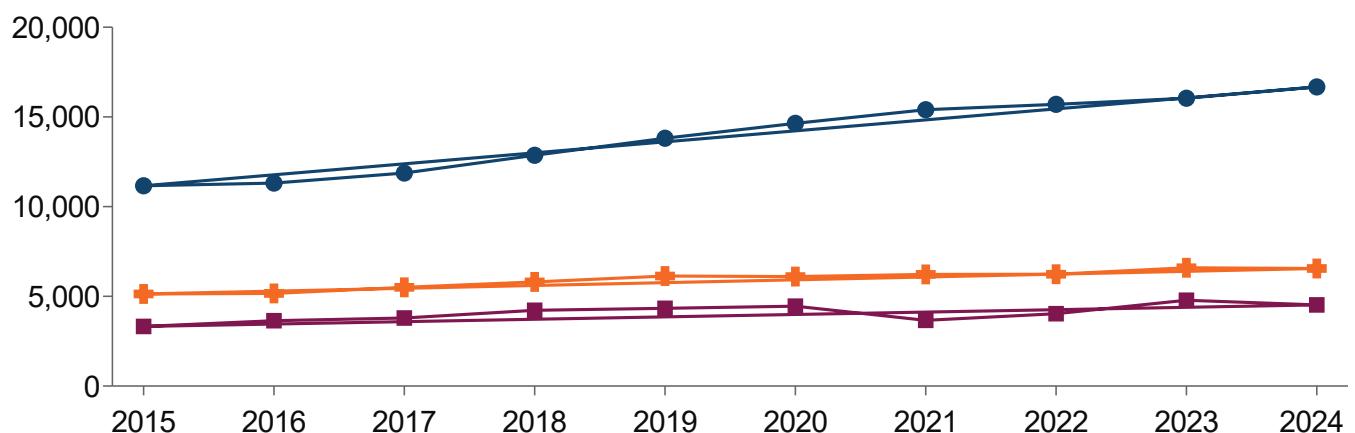
Chart

Table

► Export options

CLA placed over 20 miles by placements during the year

CLA at 31 March, England, 2015 to 2024



● First or only placement

✚ Second placement

■ Third or subsequent placement

Footnotes

1. Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. Distance is the distance in miles between the child's home and placement. In some cases this is not known, for example UASC, or not recorded for confidentiality reasons, such as some children placed for adoption.

[Show 1 more footnote](#)

Source: SSDA903

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Placement types

 [Hide](#)

It became illegal for young people to be placed in former semi-independent and independent living placements from 28 October 2023. Between 28 April 2023 and 27 October 2023 former semi-independent and independent living placement providers were required to submit a completed application to Ofsted to continue to operate as a supported accommodation provider beyond that date. Young people who were placed at providers who are not registered with Ofsted or had not submitted a completed application by the deadline are reported within the 'Other' category in the 2024 data.

There were some difficulties in reporting the transition to supported accommodation in the data collection in 2024, users should be cautious when interpreting and drawing conclusions from the figures. For further information please see the [methodology document that accompanies the Children looked after in England including adoptions release](#).

CLA placement type by locality

At 31 March 2024, 52% of CLA who were placed outside the LA boundary were in foster care with other foster carers. The second and third highest proportions were in secure homes and children's homes (16%) and foster care with a relative or friend (12%), respectively.

LAAs have a general duty to place CLA near their home but placing CLA outside the LA boundary in foster care with a relative or friend, with parents or other person with parental responsibility or for adoption may be in the best interests of the child. In 2024, there were 6,880 CLA (8% of all CLA) placed outside the LA boundary in these three placement types, representing nearly one-fifth of all placements outside the LA boundary.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

► Export options

For placement locality, the number and proportion of CLA within each placement, England, 2024

2024				
	Number of CLA placed inside LA boundary	Percentage of CLA placed inside LA boundary	Number of CLA placed outside LA boundary	Percentage of CLA placed outside LA boundary
Foster placements with relative or friend	9,310	20%	4,360	12%

friend

Foster placements with other foster carer	23,180	50%	19,560	52%
Placed for adoption	390	1%	1,520	4%
Placed with parents or other person with parental responsibility	4,290	9%	1,000	3%
Secure homes and children's homes	2,790	6%	5,860	16%
Independent and semi-independent living arrangements / supported accommodation	3,520	8%	2,730	7%
Other residential settings and residential schools	370	1%	990	3%
Other placements	2,280	5%	1,520	4%
Total CLA by placement locality	46,110	100%	37,520	100%

[Show full screen table](#)[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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. In 2024 there were 153 local authorities and 13 secure units in England, therefore most placements will inevitably be outside the local authority boundary.

[Show 1 more footnote](#)

Source: SSDA903

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CLA location by placement type

At 31 March 2024, of CLA placed for adoption, 80% (1,520) are placed outside the LA boundary, representing the highest proportion among all placement types. Residential schools and other residential settings had the second highest proportion of CLA placed outside the LA boundary, at 73% (990), followed by secure homes and children's homes with 68% (5,860).

Conversely, CLA placed with parents or other person with parental responsibility were most likely to remain inside the LA boundary, with only 19% (1,000) placed outside followed by children in foster care with relative or friend.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

- Export options

For each placement type, the number and proportion placed outside the LA boundary, England, 2024

2024				
	Number of CLA placed inside LA boundary	Percentage of CLA placed inside LA boundary	Number of CLA placed outside LA boundary	Percentage of CLA placed outside LA boundary
Foster placements with relative or friend	9,310	68%	4,360	32%
Foster placements with other foster carer	23,180	54%	19,560	46%
Placed for adoption	390	20%	1,520	80%
Placed with parents or other person with parental responsibility	4,290	81%	1,000	19%
Secure homes and children's homes	2,790	32%	5,860	68%
Independent and semi-independent	3,520	56%	2,730	44%

living arrangements / supported accommodation

Other residential settings and residential schools	370	27%	990	73%
Other placements	2,280	60%	1,520	40%

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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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. In 2024 there were 153 local authorities and 13 secure units in England, therefore most placements will inevitably be outside the local authority boundary.

[Show 2 more footnotes](#)

Source: SSDA903

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Average placement distance

The average referred to in this section is the median — the middle value in a sorted list of numbers — which is used to reduce the influence of extreme values.

CLA in foster care and in supported accommodation were placed 6 miles from home on average in 2024, and this has remained consistent over time.

The average distance for children placed in secure homes and children's homes increased from 18 miles in 2015 to a peak of 22 miles in 2020, before decreasing slightly to 20 miles in 2024.

There has been a reduction in the average distance for children placed in residential settings from 30 miles in 2016 to 23 miles in 2024.

The rise in 'other placement' in the latest year is likely attributable to the introduction of supported accommodation providers being required to register with Ofsted.

The average distance for CLA placed for adoption has slightly increased from 17 miles in 2015 to 24 miles in 2024.

The average placement distance for all other placement types have been consistent over the last 10 years.

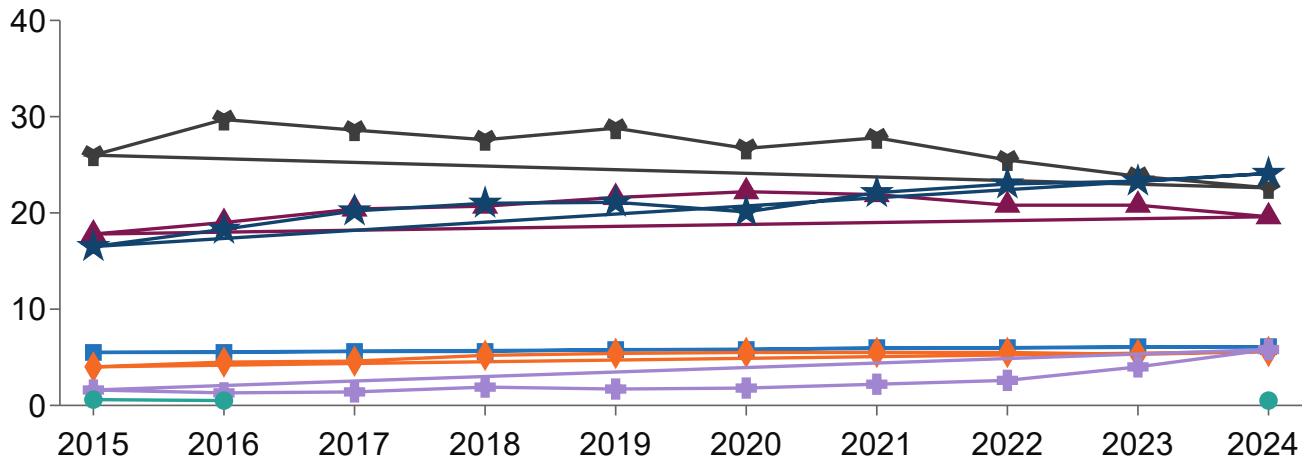
[Chart](#)[Table](#)

► Export options

The average distance for all placement types

CLA at 31 March, England, 2015 to 2024

Average
distance
(miles)



- ◆ Residential settings and residential schools
- ▲ Secure homes and childrens homes
- ★ Placed for adoption
- Foster care
- ◆ Independent and semi-independent living arrangements / supported accommodation
- ✚ Other placements
- Placed with parents or other person with parental responsibility

Footnotes

1. In 2024 there were 153 local authorities and 13 secure units in England, therefore most placements will inevitably be outside the local authority boundary.
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. In 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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Out of area foster placements

Foster placements can either be with foster carers who are not related to the child or with individuals who have a pre-existing relationship with the child, such as family members or close family friends.

CLA placed in foster care with a relative or friend are more likely to be placed closer to home than those placed in foster care with other foster carers.

For CLA in a foster placements with a relative or friend, the proportions have remained consistent in the last 10 years but there has been a small increase in those placed outside the LA boundary, rising from 29% in 2015 to 32% in 2024.

In the same period, CLA in foster placements with other foster carers have seen a bigger increase in the proportion placed outside the LA boundary, rising from 38% in 2015 to 45% in 2024. This increase is driven by those placed outside the LA boundary and more than 20 miles from home, increasing from 10% (4,490) in 2015 to 15% (6,430) in 2024.

The numbers and proportion of CLA within each placement type over the last ten years can be found within the additional supporting data files.

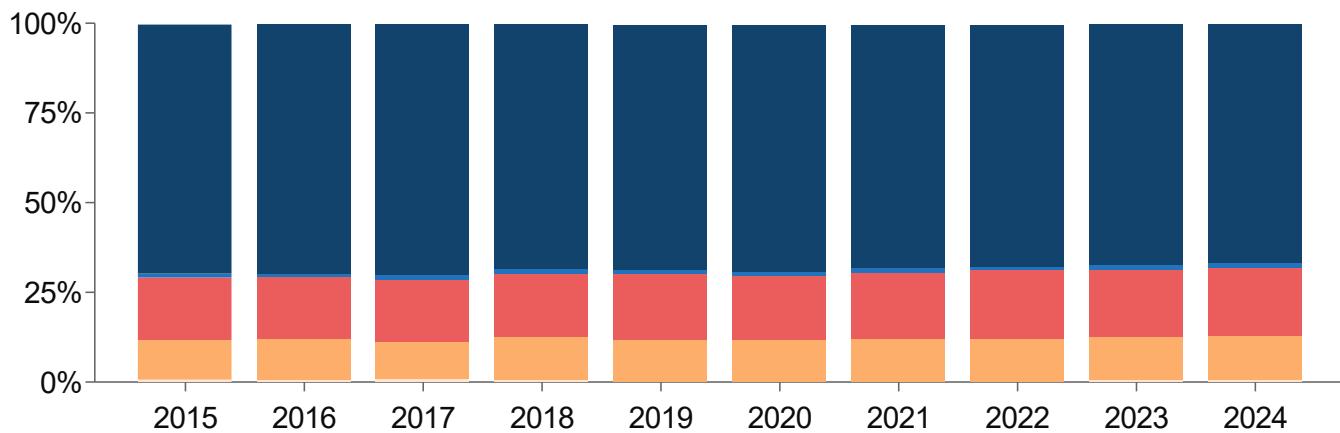
Chart

Table

- ▶ Export options

Proportion in foster care with relative or friend by distance locality

CLA at 31 March, England, 2015 to 2024



- Inside boundary - 20 miles or less
- Inside boundary - Over 20 miles
- Outside boundary - 20 miles or less
- Outside boundary - Over 20 miles
- Outside boundary - Distance not known or not recorded

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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked

after under a series of short-term placements.

2. For CLA with a placement distance 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.

Source: SSDA903

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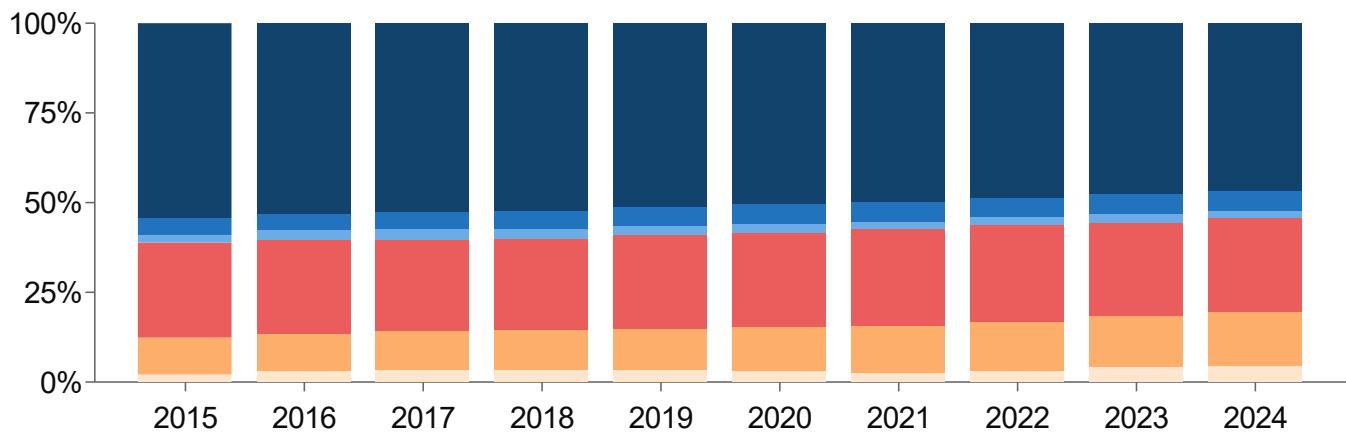
Chart

[Table](#)

► Export options

Proportion in foster care with other foster carer by distance locality

CLA at 31 March, England, 2015 to 2024



■ Inside boundary - 20 miles or less

- Inside boundary - Over 20 miles
- Inside boundary - Distance not known or not recorded
- Outside boundary - 20 miles or less
- Outside boundary - Over 20 miles
- Outside boundary - Distance not known or not recorded

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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. For CLA with a placement distance 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.

Source: SSDA903

Explore and edit this data online

Use our table tool to explore this data.

[Explore data](#)

Foster placement providers

When a child enters the care system, the LA becomes legally responsible for their welfare, and must find a home for the child that will best meet their individual needs. If the LA decides that fostering is most appropriate, then they will find a fostering home for the child, by matching them with suitable carers. There are two ways that LAs can find a suitable foster carer:

1. By matching them with foster carers who have been approved and registered with the **LA**. This can include kinship foster carers, who have a pre-existing relationship with the child.
2. By matching them with carers who have been approved and registered with an **independent fostering agency (IFA)**. This is a separate organisation that has been registered with Ofsted. You can find out more about how IFAs are registered here: [Introduction to independent fostering agencies - GOV.UK \(opens in new tab\)](#)

Some of the reasons why a LA might match a child with IFA foster carers include:

- They do not have enough of their own foster carers to care for the child
- They think the child has specific or complex needs that they do not think they can meet with their own carers
- They think the IFA may be able to provide more suitable care for the child's specific needs

Between 2015 and 2024, the total number of CLA in foster care has increased from 51,570 (74% of all CLA) to a peak of 57,190 in 2022 before a slight decrease to 56,390 (67% of all CLA) in 2024. Over the same period, the number of children in foster care placed within 20 miles of their home has increased from 42,180 in 2015 to 44,930 in 2021 before declining to 42,810 in the latest year.

In the last ten years, placements through LA fostering agencies have reduced by 660, while placements via IFAs have increased by 32% from 17,040 to 22,520.

The number of CLA in LA fostering placements with a relative or friend which are less than 20 miles from home has increased from 6,810 in 2015 to 10,440 in 2024. Conversely, the number of CLA in a LA fostering placement with other foster carers and 20 miles or less from home has decreased from 23,380 in 2015 to 17,790 in 2024.

The overall increase in the number of CLA over the past ten years has contributed to the upward trend observed in fostering placements over 20 miles from home, including those with IFAs.

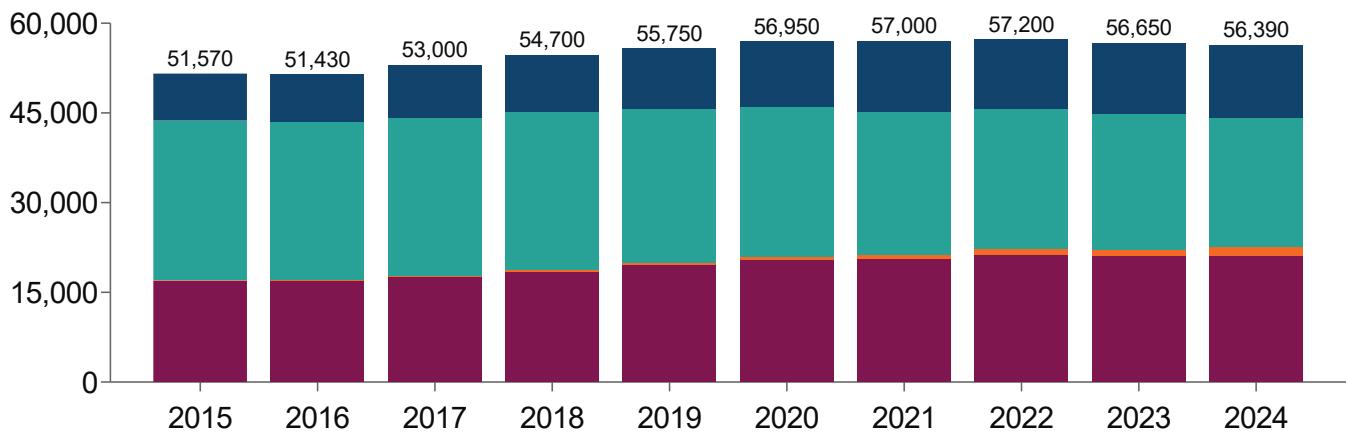
Chart

[Table](#)

► Export options

Fostering uptake for LA fostering and IFA providers

CLA at 31 March, England, 2015 to 2024



- LA fostering agency with relative or friend
- LA fostering agency with other foster carer
- IFA with relative or friend
- IFA with other foster carer

Footnotes

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Source: SSDA903

Explore and edit this data online

Use our table tool to explore this data.

Explore data

Average placement distances in foster care

- On average, CLA placed in IFA placements are placed further from home, at 10 miles compared to 5 miles for children in LA fostering placements. This difference is consistent since 2015.
- Placements with a relative or friend - across both LA and IFA providers - were generally closer to the child's home than placements with other foster carers.

Chart

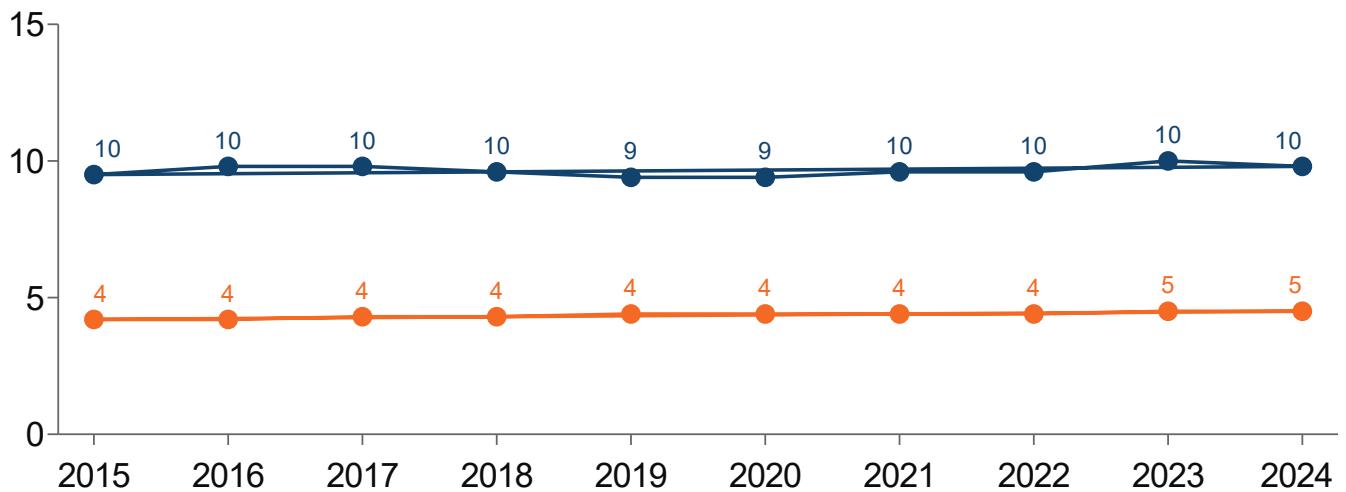
Table

► Export options

The average distance for fostering providers

CLA at 31 March, England, 2015 to 2024

Average
distance
(miles)



- 1.1 Independent fostering agency (IFA)
- 1.2 LA fostering agency

Footnotes

1. The average distance relates to the median average.

Source: SSDA903

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Characteristics and CLA related outcomes

 [Hide](#)

Gender

Over the past ten years, the majority of the CLA population have been male, rising from 55% in 2015 to 57% in 2024, at 31 March. Males are over-represented in the population of children looked after compared to 51% of the overall child population, as indicated by the [latest ONS mid-year population estimates. \(opens in new tab\)](#)

Females are slightly more likely to be placed inside the LA boundary, with 57% in 2024 compared to 53% of males. This trend has remained consistent over the past five years. Additionally, females are more likely to be placed within 20 miles from home, with 77% in 2024 compared to 63% of males.

Since 2015, there has been an increasing proportion of placements for males where the distance is not known or not recorded, this has risen from 7% in 2015 to 15% in 2024. In contrast, this proportion has decreased from 2% to 1% for females over the same period. This trend is likely attributable to the increasing number of UASC, where 96% were male in 2024.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

- ▶ Export options

CLA by gender and placement distance, England, 2024

		2024			
		Less than 20 miles	Over 20 miles	Distance not known or not recorded	Total
Male	Number	30,220	10,210		7,290 47,720
	Percentage	63%	21%	15%	100%
Female	Number	27,550	7,830		540 35,910
	Percentage	77%	22%	1%	100%
Total	Number	57,770	18,040		7,830 83,630
	Percentage	69%	22%	9%	100%

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[Data symbols](#) 

Footnotes

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2. For CLA with a placement distance 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.

Source: SSDA903

Explore and edit this data online

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Age

The CLA population is aging and those aged 10 and over now comprising the majority, accounting for 65% in 2024 which is an increase from 60% in 2015.

As of 31 March 2024, CLA across all age categories were more likely to be placed inside the LA boundary. Children aged under 1 year old were most likely to be placed inside the LA boundary, with 62% (2,300) placed inside the LA boundary and 38% (1,440) placed outside.

In general, younger children are more likely to be placed inside the LA boundary and older children, particular those aged 10 and over, are slightly more likely to be placed outside.

[Chart](#)[Table](#)

► Export options

CLA by age and placement location, England, 2024

		2024					
		Under 1 year	1 to 4 years	5 to 9 years	10 to 15 years	16 years and over	Total
Inside LA boundary	Number	2,300	6,140	8,820	16,720	12,140	46,11
	Percentage	62%	57%	59%	53%	54%	55%
Outside LA boundary	Number	1,440	4,680	6,200	14,730	10,480	37,52
	Percentage	38%	43%	41%	47%	46%	45%
Total	Number	3,730	10,820	15,020	31,440	22,620	83,63
	Percentage	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

[Show full screen table](#)

[Data symbols](#) 

Footnotes

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2. For CLA with a placement distance 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.

Source: SSDA903

Explore and edit this data online

Use our table tool to explore this data.

[Explore data](#)

At 31 March 2024, nearly one-third (29%) of CLA aged 16 years or over had a placement distance that was not known or not recorded, this represents a notable increase from 14% in 2015. The rise is likely to be influenced by the growing number of UASC during this period, who are typically aged 16 and over.

With the exception mentioned above, the proportions for all age groups have been largely consistent for both distance locality measures since 2015.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

► Export options

CLA by age and placement distance, England, 2024

		2024					
		Under 1 year	1 to 4 years	5 to 9 years	10 to 15 years	16 years and over	Total
Less than 20 miles	Number	3,000	8,270	11,660	22,620	12,220	57,77
	Percentage	80%	76%	78%	72%	54%	69%
Over 20 miles	Number	690	2,380	3,270	7,920	3,790	18,04
	Percentage	18%	22%	22%	25%	17%	22%
Distance not known or not recorded	Number	50	170	90	910	6,610	7,83
	Percentage	1%	2%	1%	3%	29%	9%
Total	Number	3,730	10,820	15,020	31,440	22,620	83,63
	Percentage	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

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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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. For CLA with a placement distance 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.

Source: SSDA903

Explore and edit this data online

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Ethnicity

Over the past decade, the ethnic composition of the CLA population has shifted. The proportion of CLA from White ethnic backgrounds has decreased from 77% to 71%, while the proportion of CLA from all other ethnic groups has increased. [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.

At 31 March 2024, 58% of White CLA were placed inside the LA boundary — the highest proportion of any ethnic group. In contrast, Black, African, Caribbean or Black British are most likely to be placed outside the LA boundary (56%). CLA from the remaining ethnic groups show a more balanced distribution with CLA in 'Other ethnic group' having a slight majority placed outside the LA boundary (53%).

CLA classed as White or Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups were most likely to be placed less than 20 miles from home, at 74% and 76% respectively.

UASC are placed across a range of ethnic categories other than White.

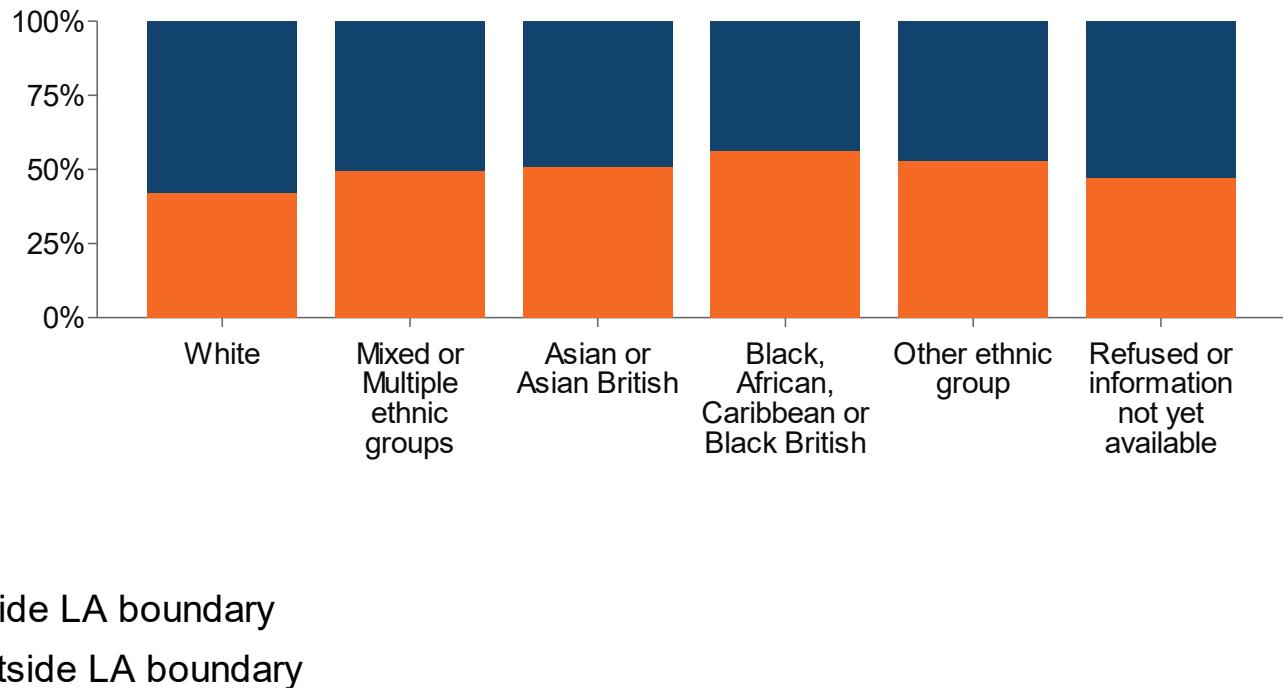
[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

► Export options

Proportion of CLA by ethnicity and placement location

CLA at 31 March, England, 2024



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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.

Source: SSDA903

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SDQ scores

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (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.

In 2024, a SDQ score was reported for 43,540 CLA who were aged 5 to 16 years. Over the past ten years, regardless of placement location or distance, the proportion of CLA with SDQ scores indicating cause for concern has increased from 27% in 2015 to 32% in 2024.

At 31 March 2024, across all categories of SDQ scores, there were marginally more children residing inside the LA boundary than outside. 56% of CLA with a normal SDQ score were placed inside the LA boundary, but there was little difference between the other SDQ score groups.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

- ▶ Export options

SDQ scores for CLA by placement locality, England, 2024

		2024		
		Inside LA boundary	Outside LA boundary	Total
SDQ score is a cause for concern	Number	7,230	6,520	13,750
	Percentage	53%	47%	100%
SDQ score is borderline	Number	2,320	1,970	4,280
	Percentage	54%	46%	100%
SDQ score is normal	Number	8,680	6,780	15,460
	Percentage	56%	44%	100%
SDQ score not recorded	Number	5,200	4,850	10,050
	Percentage	52%	48%	100%
Total	Number	23,430	20,120	43,540
	Percentage	54%	46%	100%

[Show full screen table](#)

[Data symbols](#) 

Footnotes

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2. For CLA with a placement distance 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.

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In 2024, over two thirds of children were placed within 20 miles of their home across all SDQ categories. CLA whose SDQ score was normal were less likely to be placed further from home, with only 20% (3,133 children) over 20 miles from home.

Children were more likely to have a SDQ score not recorded (4%) or recorded as normal (4%) when their distance was not known or recorded. The majority of CLA with a distance not known or not recorded are UASC.

The 2024 distance group proportions for each SDQ score category have been broadly consistent since 2015.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

► Export options

SDQ scores for CLA by placement distance, England, 2024

		2024			
		Less than 20 miles	Over 20 miles	Distance not known or not recorded	Total
SDQ score is a cause for concern	Number	9,840	3,830	80	13,750
	Percentage	72%	28%	1%	100%
SDQ score is borderline	Number	3,120	1,100	60	4,280
	Percentage	73%	26%	1%	100%
SDQ score is normal	Number	11,760	3,130	570	15,460
	Percentage	76%	20%	4%	100%
SDQ score not recorded	Number	6,890	2,780	380	10,050
	Percentage	69%	28%	4%	100%
Total	Number	31,620	10,840	1,080	43,540
	Percentage	73%	25%	2%	100%

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[Data symbols](#) 

Footnotes

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2. For CLA with a placement distance 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.

Source: SSDA903

Explore and edit this data online

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Special educational needs (SEN)

In 2023/24, the percentage of CLA with SEN provision placed outside the LA boundary was very similar to that of all CLA at 31 March and those CLA placed within the LA boundary. However, it was more than three times higher than the percentage observed in the overall pupil population.

- 32.6% of school aged CLA who were placed outside the LA boundary had an EHC plan at 31 March 2024, compared to 29.1% of all CLA and 26.4% of CLA placed inside the LA boundary.
- 27.1% of school aged CLA who were placed outside the LA boundary received SEN support at 31 March 2024, compared to 28.1% of all CLA and 28.9% of CLA placed inside the LA boundary.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

► [Export options](#)

SEN provision by social care group, England, 2024

2023/24				
	Education, health and care plan	No identified SEN	SEN support	Total
All pupils	4.7%	81.9%	13.4%	100.0%
All CLA at 31 March	29.1%	42.8%	28.1%	100.0%
CLA placed inside LA boundary	26.4%	44.7%	28.9%	100.0%
CLA placed outside LA boundary	32.6%	40.3%	27.1%	100.0%

[Show full screen table](#)

[Data symbols](#) 

Footnotes

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Source: SSDA903 and Outcomes data

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Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC)

 Hide

UASC proportions by distance locality

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. Details of the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) can be found in the [methodology section of the Children looked after publication](#).

The total number of UASC has increased from 2,760 in 2015 to a peak of 7,410 in 2023, and remained stable at 7,380 in 2024. Within this UASC cohort, 96% were male and only 11% were aged under 16 years.

The proportion of UASC placed outside the LA boundary increased from 46% (1,260) in 2015 to 47% (2,670) in 2022. Notably, since 2023, a higher proportion of UASC are now placed outside the LA boundary. In 2024, this figure increased to 53%, representing 3,890 children. This shift coincides with an overall increase in the total number of UASC.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

► Export options

Number of UASC in care at 31 March, England, 2015 to 2024

	Number
2015	2,760
2016	4,340
2017	4,710
2018	4,560
2019	5,150
2020	5,080
2021	4,150
2022	5,680
2023	7,410
2024	7,380

[Show full screen table](#)

[Data symbols](#) 

Footnotes

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Source: SSDA903

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Use our table tool to explore this data.

[Chart](#)[Table](#)

► Export options

UASC by placement locality, England, 2015 to 2024

UASC				
	Number		Percentage	
	Inside the LA boundary	Outside the LA boundary	Inside the LA boundary	Outside the LA boundary
2015	1,500	1,260	54%	46%
2016	2,300	2,040	53%	47%
2017	2,500	2,210	53%	47%
2018	2,300	2,260	50%	50%
2019	2,670	2,480	52%	48%
2020	2,750	2,330	54%	46%
2021	2,300	1,850	55%	45%
2022	3,000	2,670	53%	47%
2023	3,600	3,810	49%	51%
2024	3,490	3,890	47%	53%

[Show full screen table](#)

[Data symbols](#) 

Footnotes

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Source: SSDA903

Explore and edit this data online

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UASC placement types

At 31 March 2024, the two most common placement types for UASC were independent and semi-independent living arrangements / supported accommodation and foster care with other foster carers. The placements for UASC tend to reflect the fact that they are older.

Of the 3,280 UASC placed in independent and semi-independent living arrangements / supported accommodation, the majority (1,810) were placed inside the LA boundary, compared to outside (1,470).

In contrast, of the 2,650 UASC in foster care with other foster carers, the majority were placed outside the LA boundary (1,830), compared to inside (820).

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

- ▶ Export options

UASC by placement type and location, England, 2024

2024				
	Number		Percentage	
	Inside LA boundary	Outside LA boundary	Inside LA boundary	Outside LA boundary
Foster placements with relative or friend	20	60	1%	2%
Foster placements with other foster carer	820	1,830	23%	47%
Placed with parents or other person with parental responsibility	c	c	c	c
Secure homes and children's homes	30	60	1%	2%
Independent and semi-independent living arrangements / supported accommodation	1,810	1,470	52%	38%
Other residential settings and residential schools	10	10	k	k
Other placements	800	460	23%	12%
Total	3,490	3,890	100%	100%

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Footnotes

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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. In 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

Explore and edit this data online

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Distance not known or recorded

In 2024, there were 7,830 CLA with a distance not known or not recorded, of which 94% (7,380) were UASC.

UASC as a proportion of all children looked after whose placement distance was not

known or recorded, has remained broadly consistent between 88-94% since 2016.

Chart

Table

► Export options

UASC status of CLA with placement distance not known or not recorded, England, 2024

	Not UASC		UASC		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
2015	810	23%	2,760	77%	3,570	100%
2016	590	12%	4,340	88%	4,930	100%
2017	580	11%	4,710	89%	5,290	100%
2018	620	12%	4,560	88%	5,180	100%
2019	520	9%	5,150	91%	5,670	100%
2020	510	9%	5,080	91%	5,590	100%
2021	450	10%	4,150	90%	4,600	100%
2022	440	7%	5,680	93%	6,120	100%
2023	460	6%	7,410	94%	7,860	100%
2024	450	6%	7,380	94%	7,830	100%

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[Data symbols](#) 

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2. For CLA with a placement distance 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.

Source: SSDA903

Explore and edit this data online

Use our table tool to explore this data.

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Local authority (LA) breakdowns

 [Hide](#)

A local authority (LA) is classified as an 'out-placer' if it has more CLA placed in other LAs than it has CLA from other LAs placed within its boundary. Conversely, an LA is considered an 'in-placer' if it has more CLA from other LAs placed within its jurisdiction than it places in other LAs. If the difference between the two cohorts is within $\pm 5\%$, the LA is categorised as 'about the same'.

LA placer map

Local authorities (LAs) in smaller, urban, and densely populated areas, such as those within Greater London and major UK cities, often place CLA outside their jurisdictional boundaries (but mostly within the geographical region). In contrast, larger and more rural LAs typically place children within their own boundaries.

There is also a group of LAs in the East of England and East Midlands regions that are classified as out-placers.

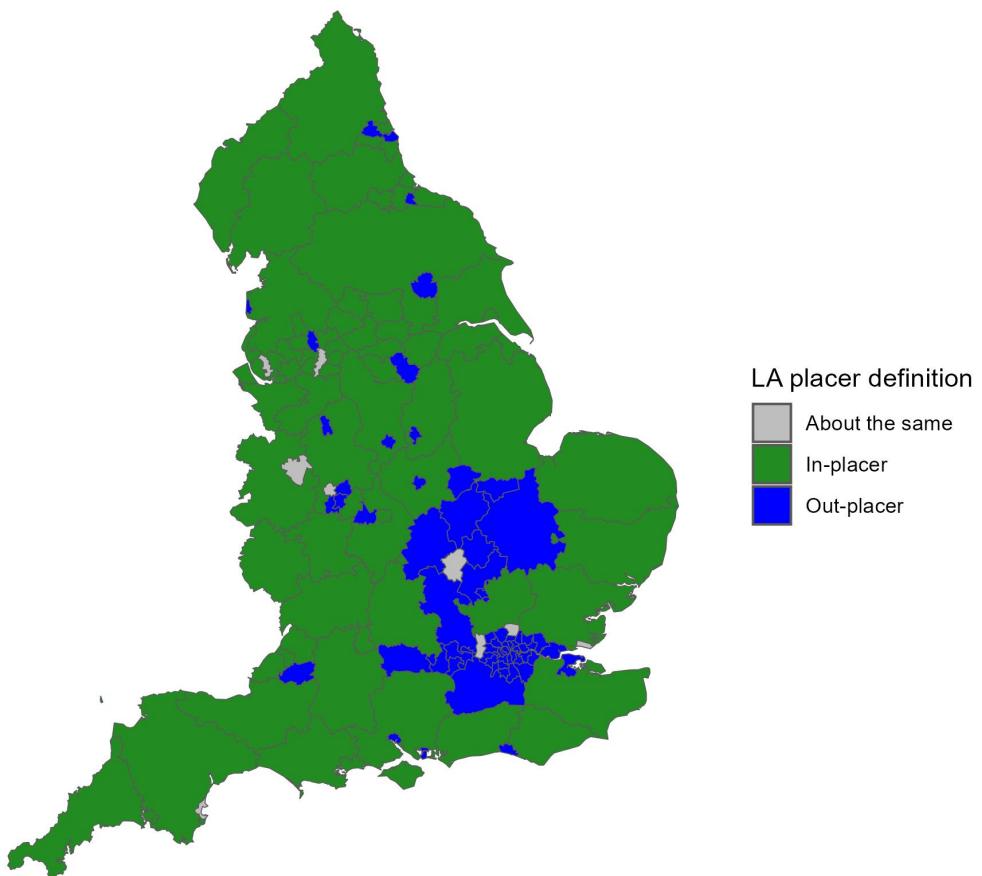
Chart

Table

- ▶ Export options

LA placer map, England, 2024

Map of England showing which LAs are in-placers and out-placers



Footnotes

1. Net CLA movement is the difference between the total CLA who are placed within this LA boundary and the number of CLA who are the responsibility of this LA placed outside the LA boundary. These figures also include CLA who are the responsibility of a LA that remain within that LA boundary, therefore the figures will not match to the [published LA net gain table](#).

Source: SSDA903

Explore and edit this data online

Use our table tool to explore this data.

[Explore data](#)

Distance locality for CLA by LA

The table below presents the 2024 data for the number and proportion of CLA who were placed outside the LA boundary and over 20 miles.

Overall, LAs located in the South of England and major urban centres tend to report higher proportions of CLA placed outside the LA boundary and over 20 miles from home. This trend may reflect variations in LA capacity and the differing logistical and financial considerations associated with placements in urban and rural settings.

► Export options

CLA placed outside the LA boundary and over 20 miles by LA, England, 2024

	2024		
	Number of CLA placed outside LA boundary and over 20	Percentage of CLA placed outside of LA boundary and over 20 miles	Total CLA

	miles		
England	14,590	17%	83,630
North East	700	11%	6,110
North West	1,760	12%	15,090
Yorkshire and The Humber	1,510	16%	9,270
East Midlands	1,420	22%	6,570
West Midlands	1,930	16%	11,920
East of England	1,430	21%	6,870
London	1,680	17%	9,640
South East	2,450	22%	11,180
South West	1,720	25%	6,980
North East	129	11%	1,213
County Durham			
Darlington	36	12%	299
Gateshead	48	9%	528
Hartlepool	44	13%	334
Middlesbrough	72	14%	513
Newcastle upon Tyne	46	8%	600
North Tyneside	37	11%	351
Northumberland	88	20%	436
Redcar and Cleveland	62	15%	419

	South Tyneside	34	11%	307
	Stockton-on-Tees	52	9%	581
	Sunderland	53	10%	525
North West	Blackburn with Darwen	33	9%	349
	Blackpool	80	15%	520
	Bolton	51	9%	571
	Bury	33	10%	344
	Cheshire East	116	21%	542
	Cheshire West and Chester	91	16%	570
	Cumberland	186	39%	482
	Cumbria	z	z	z
	Halton	56	15%	381
	Knowsley	27	8%	337
	Lancashire	154	9%	1,754
	Liverpool	169	11%	1,490
	Manchester	119	9%	1,303
	Oldham	48	8%	590
	Rochdale	48	8%	605
	Salford	44	8%	561
	Sefton	59	10%	581

St. Helens	49	10%	488
Stockport	33	7%	495
Tameside	86	13%	645
Trafford	30	8%	377
Warrington	48	14%	354
Westmorland and Furness	77	31%	246
Wigan	51	7%	741
Wirral	72	9%	767
Yorkshire and The Humber			
Barnsley	45	11%	405
Bradford	284	19%	1,483
Calderdale	46	13%	363
Doncaster	84	16%	523
East Riding of Yorkshire	82	23%	351
Kingston upon Hull, City of	114	15%	747
Kirklees	69	11%	603
Leeds	278	18%	1,549
North East Lincolnshire	115	25%	469
North Lincolnshire	10	5%	205
North Yorkshire	63	13%	501

	Rotherham	65	13%	502
	Sheffield	93	14%	646
	Wakefield	105	15%	684
	York	57	23%	243
East Midlands	Derby	187	31%	598
	Derbyshire	231	22%	1,057
	Leicester	127	21%	599
	Leicestershire	121	17%	726
	Lincolnshire	101	13%	754
	North	136	26%	533
	Northamptonshire			
	Nottingham	134	20%	674
	Nottinghamshire	218	23%	957
	Rutland	11	41%	27
	West	149	23%	648
	Northamptonshire			
West Midlands	Birmingham	262	11%	2,300
	Coventry	86	13%	674
	Dudley	76	13%	574
	Herefordshire, County of	63	16%	387
	Sandwell	87	11%	812

Shropshire	182	25%	717
Solihull	48	9%	554
Staffordshire	235	18%	1,307
Stoke-on-Trent	284	25%	1,151
Telford and Wrekin	77	19%	412
Walsall	116	17%	665
Warwickshire	152	19%	805
Wolverhampton	62	12%	522
Worcestershire	197	19%	1,044
East of England	Bedford	29%	262
	Cambridgeshire	32%	649
	Central Bedfordshire	25%	365
	Essex	13%	1,149
	Hertfordshire	22%	971
	Luton	32%	374
	Norfolk	16%	1,152
	Peterborough	27%	422
	Southend-on-Sea	19%	307
	Suffolk	18%	930
	Thurrock	22%	290

London	Barking and Dagenham	68	16%	436
	Barnet	75	23%	330
	Bexley	47	16%	292
	Brent	59	19%	307
	Bromley	70	20%	350
	Camden	36	17%	214
	City of London	c	c	7
	Croydon	69	14%	509
	Ealing	61	20%	301
	Enfield	64	15%	414
	Greenwich	102	24%	420
	Hackney	44	12%	382
	Hammersmith and Fulham	26	13%	206
	Haringey	63	19%	334
	Harrow	31	18%	176
	Havering	48	17%	284
	Hillingdon	58	18%	317
	Hounslow	74	26%	285
	Islington	73	24%	298
	Kensington and Chelsea	16	13%	122

Kingston upon Thames	40	31%	130
Lambeth	51	11%	464
Lewisham	88	19%	461
Merton	18	12%	147
Newham	53	12%	425
Redbridge	38	12%	310
Richmond upon Thames	29	26%	110
Southwark	78	20%	397
Sutton	60	26%	234
Tower Hamlets	49	18%	277
Waltham Forest	51	17%	308
Wandsworth	25	11%	218
Westminster	19	11%	175
South East			
Bracknell Forest	38	27%	140
Brighton and Hove	49	14%	354
Buckinghamshire	185	35%	523
East Sussex	117	18%	657
Hampshire	370	19%	1,917
Isle of Wight	37	13%	279

Kent	152	8%	1,960	
Medway	132	28%	476	
Milton Keynes	120	29%	410	
Oxfordshire	259	34%	770	
Portsmouth	55	14%	402	
Reading	85	32%	266	
Slough	55	27%	201	
Southampton	95	19%	488	
Surrey	366	38%	963	
West Berkshire	48	26%	187	
West Sussex	213	24%	906	
Windsor and Maidenhead	45	32%	140	
Wokingham	26	19%	137	
South West	Bath and North East Somerset	54	25%	218
	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	129	24%	546
	Bristol, City of	188	24%	768
	Cornwall	112	18%	619
	Devon	185	21%	873
	Dorset	116	26%	446

Gloucestershire	200	24%	842
North Somerset	66	26%	254
Plymouth	119	23%	513
Somerset	182	31%	586
South Gloucestershire	35	16%	214
Swindon	117	37%	320
Torbay	92	31%	300
Wiltshire	122	26%	476

[Show full screen table](#)

[Data symbols](#) 

Footnotes

1. Due to local government reorganisation, data for Cumbria is unavailable for 2024.

Source: SSDA903

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Outside neighbouring LAs placements

 Hide

In this section, **CLA defined as placed ‘outside the neighbouring LAs’** when all three of the following placement criteria are met:

- Placed outside the responsible LA, where their home address is located
- Placed outside the neighbouring LAs that share a physical border with the responsible LA
- Placed over 20 miles from their home address

For example, a child living in Plymouth could be placed in either of the neighbouring LAs Devon or Cornwall. If placed outside of this vicinity, additional travel time and costs may be incurred for friends or relatives wishing to maintain regular contact, which should be considered as part of the placement planning process to support the child’s welfare and continuity of relationships.

Placements and characteristics

At 31 March 2024, there were 10,620 CLA placed ‘outside the neighbouring LAs’ with an average distance of 76 miles, this is 13% of all CLA. Of these children:

- CLA placed in secure units had the longest average distance from home, at 137 miles. This placement distance is somewhat expected as, given that in 2024, there are 153 LAs in England but only 13 secure units.
- Foster placements with other foster carers and supported accommodation placements are the nearest to home, at 60 and 64 miles respectively.
- There were 4,190 (40%) placed in foster care with other foster carers and 2,920 (28%) placed in children’s homes. This combined figure of 7,110 equates to 8.5% of the total CLA in 2024 and this proportion has remained consistent over the last five years.
- There were 2,290 (22%) placed in foster care with a relative or friend, with parents or other person with parental responsibility or placed for adoption, showing that whilst

some children are placed further from home, they often remain close to their family support network.

- Males are over-represented in this cohort, accounting for 6,170 individuals (58%), compared to 4,450 females (42%). In addition, 67% are aged 10 years and over. CLA of Mixed or Multiple ethnicity are over-represented in this group (13%) compared to the 2021 census data (7%) and the 2024 total CLA population (11%).

Chart

Table

- ▶ Export options

CLA placed outside the neighbouring LAs by placement type, England, 2024

2024			
	Average distance (miles) of placement	Number	Percentage
Foster placements with relative or friend	93	1,350	13%
Foster placements with other foster carer	60	4,190	40%
Placed for adoption	92	630	6%
Placed with parents or other person with parental responsibility	89	310	3%
Secure units	137	90	1%
Children's homes	86	2,920	28%
Independent and semi-independent living arrangements / supported accommodation	64	230	2%
Other residential settings and residential schools	73	540	5%
Other placements	80	360	3%
Total CLA placed outside neighbouring LAs	76	10,620	100%

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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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. CLA are defined as placed 'outside the neighbouring LAs' when the placement is outside the responsible LA, outside the neighbouring LAs that share a physical border and over 20 miles from their home address.

[Show 3 more footnotes](#)

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Within the group of CLA placed 'outside neighbouring LAs', foster care with other foster carers and children's homes represent the two largest placement groups. This section will investigate each of them separately and explore where children are placed based on the region their home address is located (origin) and the region of their placement (destination).

Children's homes origins

As reported in Ofsted's ['Main findings: children's social care in England 2025' \(opens in new tab\)](#) publication, 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). However, the **North West receives a disproportionate proportion of CLA placed 'outside their neighbouring LAs' in children's homes:**

- 41% from the North East
- 39% from the Yorkshire and the Humber
- 23% from each of the East Midlands and the West Midlands
- 16% from the South West
- 11% from each of the South East and the East of England
- 10% from London

Despite being at opposite ends of the country, LAs in the South East place 11% of all CLA in children's homes 'outside neighbouring LAs' in the North West compared to only 6% in the South West, which is a geographical neighbour.

Among CLA whose home address is in London, only 3% of CLA placed 'outside the neighbouring LAs' remain in this region, indicating a reliance on external regions with 34% placed in South East and 21% in East of England as the highest two proportions.

Chart

Table

► Export options

Proportion of CLA placed outside neighbouring LAs in children's homes by their region origin

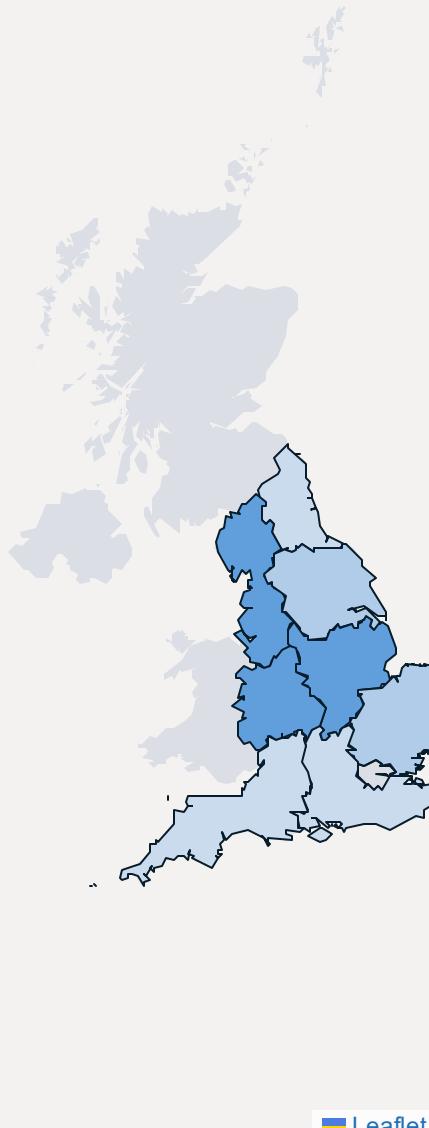
CLA at 31 March, England, 2024

1. Select data to view

East Midlands origin

2. Select a Region

None selected



 Leaflet

Key to East Midlands origin

	2% to 6%
	7% to 11%
	12% to 16%
	17% to 21%
	22% to 25%

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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. CLA are defined as placed 'outside the neighbouring LAs' when the placement is outside the responsible LA, outside the neighbouring LAs that share a physical border and over 20 miles from their home address.

[Show 1 more footnote](#)

Explore and edit this data online

Use our table tool to explore this data.

[Explore data](#)

Children's homes destinations

Of the CLA who are placed 'outside the neighbouring LAs' and in a children's home, when the placement destination is:

- North East – 51% of CLA originate from that region
- South West – 48% of CLA originate from that region.

However, when East of England is the destination, 25% of CLA are originally from London and 29% from South East, compared to 14% from that region. Similarly when South East is the destination, 33% of CLA are originally from London compared to 29% from that region. This indicates a reliance from London on the neighbouring regions.

There are 480 CLA placed in children's homes in the North West who are not originally from that region, this is the highest total across all regions. London is the lowest with just 90 CLA from other regions.

Chart

[Table](#)

- ▶ Export options

Proportion of CLA placed outside neighbouring LAs in children's homes by region destination

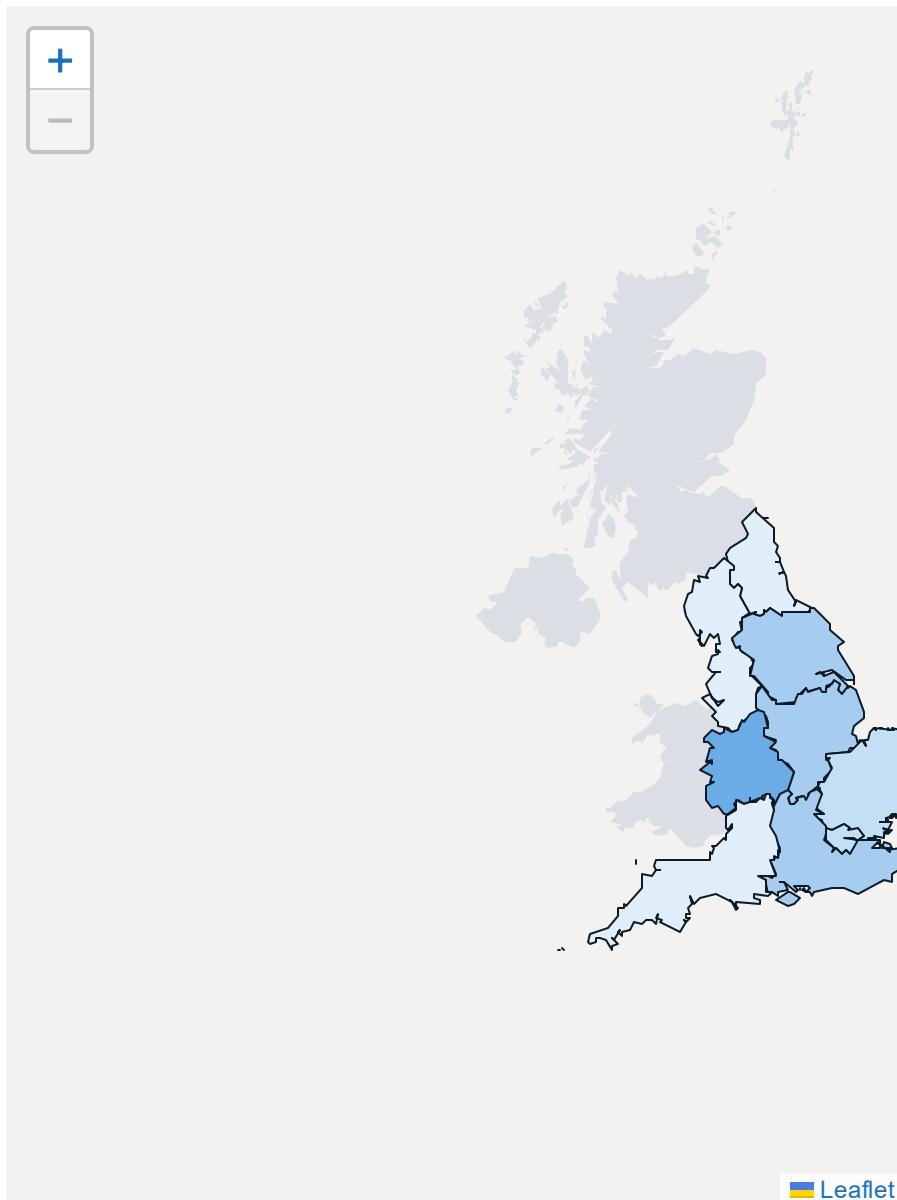
CLA at 31 March, England, 2024

1. Select data to view

2. Select a Region

East Midlands destination

None selected



Key to East Midlands destination

- 3% to 7%
- 8% to 12%
- 13% to 17%
- 18% to 22%
- 23% to 24%

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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.
2. CLA are defined as placed 'outside the neighbouring LAs' when the placement is outside the responsible LA, outside the neighbouring LAs that share a physical border and over 20 miles from their home address.

[Show 1 more footnote](#)

Source: SSDA903

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Foster placements with other foster carer origins

Whilst CLA may be placed 'outside the neighbouring LAs', every region except London places the highest proportion within the same region. London places 56% of CLA in foster care with other foster carer in South East England, compared to only 5% inside London.

Among CLA whose home address is in South East England and who are placed 'outside the neighbouring LAs' in foster care with other foster carer, 37% remain within the South East and 21% are placed in the East of England. **Only 7% are placed in the West Midlands and North West England combined, suggesting there is no such trend from South East England to the North West for foster placements with other foster carer, possibly due to availability.** London and the South West, both neighbouring regions, are the next highest proportions of children's destinations are 16% and 14% respectively.

The majority of regions tend to place children in neighbouring regions, but in particular the West Midlands and East Midlands appear to share capacity and resources more than most.

- East Midlands places 26% of children in the West Midlands — second highest proportion after internal placements at 34%.
- West Midlands places 21% of children in the East Midlands — second highest proportion after internal placements at 55%.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

- ▶ Export options

Proportion of CLA placed outside neighbouring LAs in foster care with other foster carer by region origin

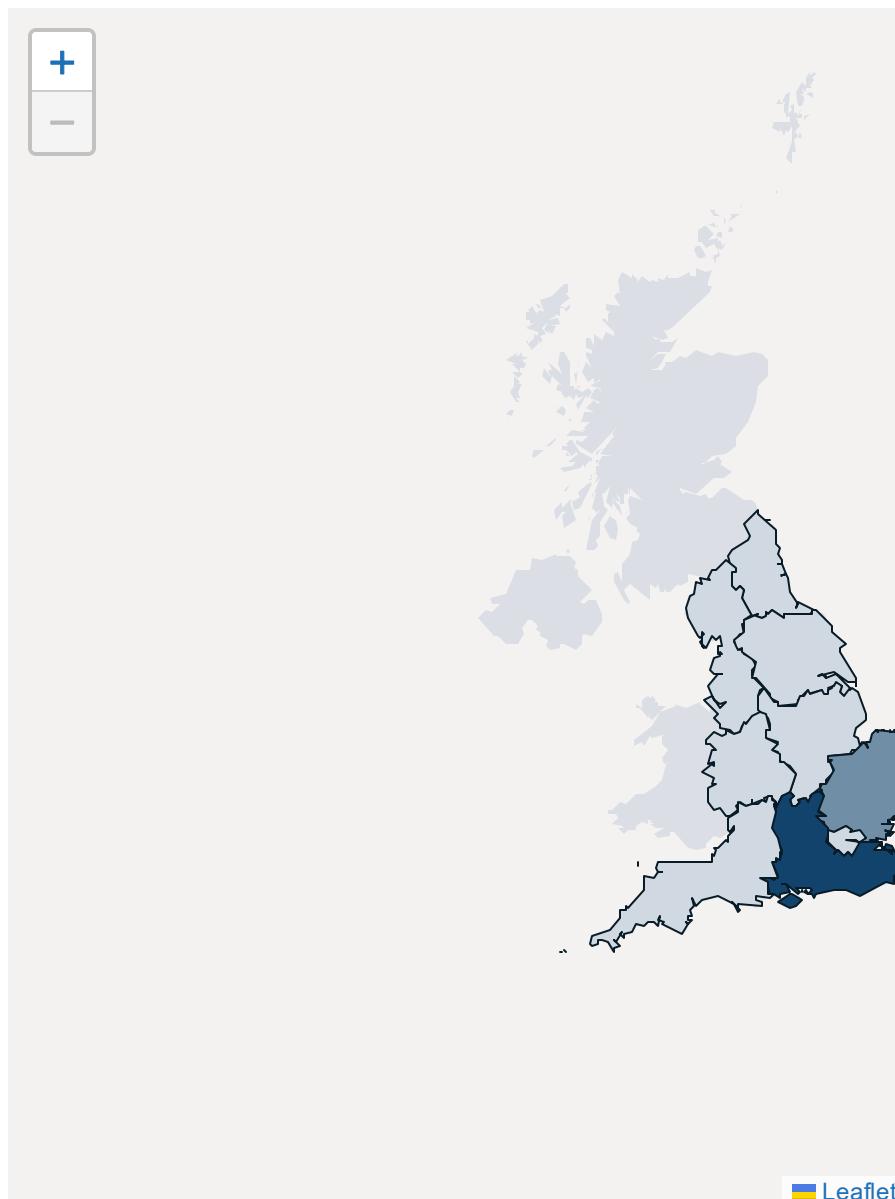
CLA at 31 March, England, 2024

1. Select data to view

London origin

2. Select a Region

None selected



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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.

2. CLA are defined as placed 'outside the neighbouring LAs' when the placement is outside the responsible LA, outside the neighbouring LAs that share a physical border and over 20 miles from their home address.

[Show 1 more footnote](#)

Source: SSDA903

Explore and edit this data online

Use our table tool to explore this data.

[Explore data](#)

Foster placements with other foster carer destinations

Of the CLA who are placed 'outside the neighbouring LAs' and in a foster placement with other foster carer, the placement destinations of those CLA are predominately from the same region — notably the North West (72%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (67%).

However, when the South East and the East of England are the placement destinations, the highest proportion of CLA are coming from the London region, at 48% and 37% respectively.

When London is the placement destination, the highest proportion come from the South East (44%) and only 14% are originally based in the London region.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

► Export options

Proportion of CLA placed outside neighbouring LAs in foster care with other foster carer by region destination

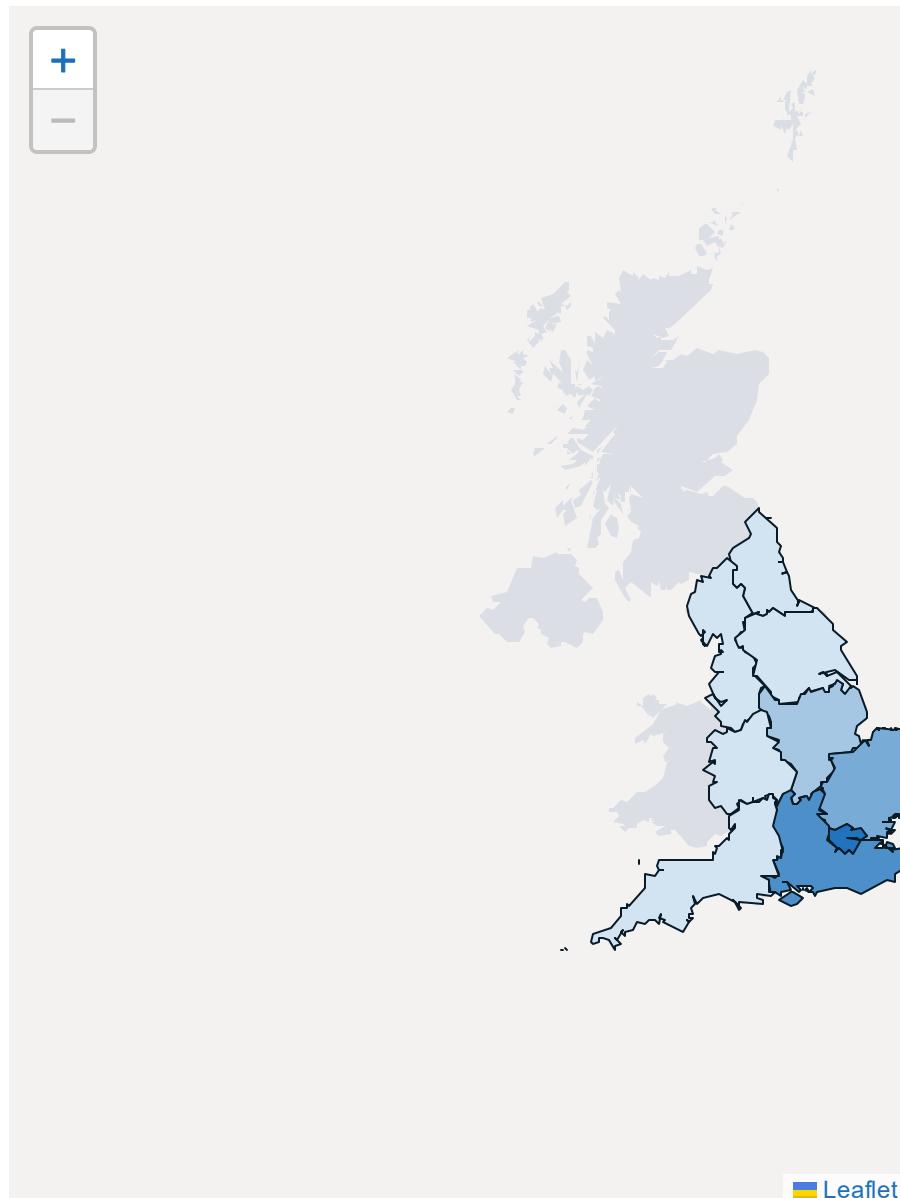
CLA at 31 March, England, 2024

1. Select data to view

East of England destination

2. Select a Region

None selected



Key to East of England destination

- 1% to 8%
- 9% to 16%
- 17% to 24%
- 25% to 32%
- 33% to 37%

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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.

2. CLA are defined as placed 'outside the neighbouring LAs' when the placement is outside the responsible LA, outside the neighbouring LAs that share a physical border and over 20 miles from their home address.

[Show 1 more footnote](#)

Source: SSDA903

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CLA out of area placement journeys

 Hide

This section examines children who began receiving care during the 2015-16 period and tracks their journey through the system until 31st March 2024. The statistics emphasise their experiences with outside the LA boundary placements throughout this eight-year period.

Episode of care: When a change in legal status or placement (or both) occurs, a new episode of care is started and the date and reason for the

change are recorded.

Period of care refers to the duration during which a child is looked after by a LA. This includes both children who newly enter care and those whose care arrangements are transferred between LAs. Where the care of a young person is transferred between LAs, the initial period of care ceases and a new period of care will start at the LA the child transfers to.

The first instance where a child had an outside the LA boundary placement was used to determine:

- The reason for new episode
- The time between entering care and moving into an outside the LA boundary placement
- The day of the week the child was moved into an outside the LA boundary placement

The re-entry to care measure considers CLA who left that period of care from an outside the LA boundary placement (not necessarily their first outside the LA boundary placement) and determined whether they re-entered care during the subsequent eight-year follow-up period.

Reason for new episode

For CLA who entered care during 2015-16, of those who had at least one placement outside the LA boundary in their period of care:

- 64% were children whose first placement was outside the LA boundary (started to be looked after)
- 32% of children changed to an outside the LA boundary placement (changed placement and carer in the period of care).
- Only 2% of children kept the same carer when they moved into their first outside the LA boundary placement. This can happen when a carer moves outside the LA boundary.

The proportions above have remained consistent when comparing against the 2014-15 cohort up to 2022-23.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

- ▶ Export options

Reason for new episode categories for the first outside the LA boundary placement, for CLA who entered care during 2015-16

	Number	Percentage
Started to be looked after	10,540	64%
Change of placement (i.e. carer) only	5,360	32%
Change of placement (but same carer) only	330	2%
Change of both legal status and placement (i.e. carer) at same time	240	1%
Change of legal status and change of placement (but same carer) at same time	20	k
Change of legal status only	20	k
Total CLA who entered care in 2015-16 with first OOA placement	16,520	100%

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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 children looked after publications which is mainly due to amendments made by local authorities after the publication. Figures exclude children looked after under a series of short-term placements.

Source: SSDA903

Explore and edit this data online

Use our table tool to explore this data.

[Explore data](#)

Time between entering care and moving to an outside the LA boundary placement

The majority of children that entered care in 2015-16 who were placed outside the LA boundary, moved into that placement quickly.

- 70% (11,500) were first placed outside the LA boundary within the first 2 weeks of entering care.
- 15% (2,410) of children wait between 6 months and 2 years before moving to their first placement outside the LA boundary.
- The maximum duration a child waits before transitioning to their first placement outside the LA boundary is between 5 to 10 years, affecting 2% (270 children) of children.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

► Export options

Time between entering care and moving to the first outside the LA boundary placement, for CLA who entered care during 2015-16

	Number	Percentage
Under 2 weeks	11,500	70%
2 to 8 weeks	750	5%
8 weeks to 6 months	950	6%
6 months to 1 year	1,290	8%
1 to 2 years	1,120	7%
2 to 3 years	350	2%
3 to 5 years	280	2%
5 to 10 years	270	2%
Total	16,520	100%

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[Data symbols](#) 

Footnotes

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Source: SSDA903

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Day of the week for outside the LA boundary placements

For children who started to be looked after during 2015-16:

- A higher proportion of children received their first outside the LA boundary placement on a Friday, accounting for 24% (3,900 children) compared to other weekdays.
- A small proportion of children were placed outside the LA boundary on a Saturday, accounting for 4% (660 children), or a Sunday accounting for 3% (420 children).

The proportions above have remained consistent when comparing against the 2014-15 cohort up to 2022-23.

Chart

Table

► Export options

Day of the week the child was moved to their first outside the LA boundary, for CLA who entered care during 2015-16

	Number	Percentage
Sunday	420	3%
Monday	2,840	17%
Tuesday	2,720	16%
Wednesday	2,920	18%
Thursday	3,070	19%
Friday	3,900	24%
Saturday	660	4%
Total	16,520	100%

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[Data symbols](#) 

Footnotes

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Source: SSDA903

Explore and edit this data online

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Re-entry to care 2015-16 to 2023-24

Among the CLA who left a period of care outside the LA boundary, the majority (92%) did not re-enter care during the follow-up period. The length of the follow-up varied depending on each child's age and the time remaining before they transitioned out of the care system. This compares to 90% for all CLA. **Therefore, CLA placed outside the LA boundary are slightly less likely to re-enter care.**

The proportion of children re-entering care is influenced by their age at the end of the episode of care, as older children will 'age out' of the care system quicker. The age distribution for the CLA placed outside the LA boundary is broadly similar to that of all CLA.

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[Children looked after: A focus on placement location](#)

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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

Find out more about the standards we follow to produce these statistics through our [Standards for official statistics published by DfE guidance \(opens in new tab\)](#).

Contact us

If you have a specific enquiry about Children looked after: A focus on placement location statistics and data:

Children's Social Care Analysis and Research

Email: Martyn.RATH@education.gov.uk

Contact name: Martyn Rath

Press office

If you have a media enquiry:

Telephone: 020 7783 8300

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