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Department for Education

Reporting year 2026

Children accommodated in

secure children's homes

Children accommodated in secure children's homes in England and Wales including approved places, availability, occupancy, sex, age, ethnicity, length of stay

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Published

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Headline facts and figures

Number of children accommodated

139

Down 18% from 170 last year

► Children accommodated



Percentage of approved places occupied (occupancy rate)

64%

Down from 72% last year

► Occupancy rate



Number of children placed by YCS

63

Down from 83 children last year

► Placed by Youth Custody Service



Number of approved places decreases

The number of places that were approved for use was 218, down 17 places on last year. Between 2015 and 2022 the figure remained fairly stable around 250 places, then was just over 230 places between 2023 and 2025 and has decreased further this year.

Number of children accommodated in secure children's homes decreases

The number of children accommodated in secure children's homes in 2026 decreased by 18% (31 children) compared to 2025. Between 2010 and 2023 there was an overall gradual decline in children accommodated in secure children's homes to 139 children in 2023, after rising slightly in the last two years, the number has fallen back to 139 in 2026.

Occupancy rate decreases

The occupancy rate decreased to 64% - down from 72% last year.

Children placed by the Youth Custody Service (YCS) decreases

63 children were placed by the Youth Custody Service (YCS), down by 20 children. Between 2012 and 2021 there was a longer-term trend of fewer children being placed in secure children's homes by the YCS. Since 2021 the number has remained fairly stable around 60 children (with the exception of last year when 83 were placed).

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About these statistics

The data in this release is used to support monitoring and assessment of capacity within the secure children's homes estate. The data is reported for England and Wales and is collected directly from secure children's homes. The latest figures relate to 31 March 2026.

Given the cohort of children accommodated in secure children's homes is small, and these figures represent a snapshot of the position on 31 March each year, users should be cautious when interpreting year on year variations.

Secure children's homes

Secure children's homes provide a safe place where very vulnerable children and young people can receive the care, support and education they need. Beds within secure children's homes are either contracted to the Youth Custody Service (YCS) or are available to local authorities (LAs) for welfare or criminal justice placements, so children can be placed within these children's homes either by LAs or the YCS. The YCS place vulnerable children when they are remanded to custody by the courts or are serving a custodial sentence. LAs place children when no other type of placement can keep them safe as they are a significant risk to themselves or others.

There are currently two other types of secure accommodation - [young offender institutions](#) and [secure training centres](#) . There is also one secure school. Data on children placed in

these settings are not included in this release [but are published by the Ministry of Justice \(MoJ\)](#). ([opens in new tab](#))

Places contracted to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ)

From September 2017, the overall responsibility for commissioning of youth custody transferred to the MoJ from the Youth Justice Board. At the same time the YCS took over responsibility for individual placements of children and young people into youth custody and day-to-day management of youth custody. Some places within secure children's homes are contracted out for use to the MoJ and children are placed in them by the YCS.

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Places approved and available

There are currently 14 secure children's homes in England and Wales, with 218 approved places which is a decrease of 17 places on last year. Of these 218 approved places, 195 were available for use.

The availability of approved places was 89%, broadly similar to the levels seen since 2017, but was down very slightly from 90% last year.

Not all approved places are always available for use, for example homes may temporarily close to make improvements, a bed may be out of use due to damage or refurbishment or if staffing ratios mean a reduced number of places can be filled.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

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**Places approved for use and available for use in
secure children's homes in England and Wales,
2010 - 2026**

	Number of places approved	Number of places available
2010	311	291
2011	312	291
2012	300	288
2013	296	286
2014	298	283
2015	254	245
2016	254	245
2017	254	227
2018	255	220
2019	259	228
2020	254	227
2021	253	223
2022	249	220
2023	230	203
2024	237	220
2025	235	211
2026	218	195

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Footnotes

1. Figures are at 31 March each year, except for 2020 where figures are at 29 February to reflect the position before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the national lockdown.

Source: SA1

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The number of approved places contracted to the MoJ steadily declined from 191 places in 2010 to 106 in 2019 and remained at a similar level until 2025. This year the number of places have fallen by 9 - there were 93 places contracted to the MoJ in 2026.

The number of children placed by the YCS in secure homes decreased from 146 in 2012 down to 55 in 2021. Last year there were 83 YCS placements, however they have decreased this year to 63.

Figures published by [His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service \(opens in new tab\) \(opens in new tab\)](#) show the overall population of the youth secure estate has been declining. This is reflected in the secure children's homes data for MoJ contracted places and YCS placements.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

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**Places contracted to the MoJ and children placed
by the YCS in England and Wales, 2010 - 2026**

	Number of children placed by YCS	Number of places contracted to the MoJ
2010	131	191
2011	146	190
2012	146	183
2013	102	166
2014	111	166
2015	97	138
2016	89	138
2017	93	117
2018	98	120
2019	66	106
2020	80	107
2021	55	107
2022	62	105
2023	56	105
2024	59	105
2025	83	102
2026	63	93

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Footnotes

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Source: SA1

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Children accommodated and occupancy rate

Within the 14 secure children's homes, there were 139 children accommodated, down 18% since last year. Between 2010 and 2021 there was an overall gradual decline in children accommodated in secure children's homes, but since 2021 the number of children accommodated has fluctuated more - generally around 150 children each year, and decreasing to 139 this year (same as in 2023).

The occupancy rate was 64% - down from 72% last year. Note that a lower than 100%

occupancy rate does not necessarily mean that there are available spaces within secure children's homes - availability of a suitable place may depend on if the place is contracted to the YCS. In addition, placements are complex, and each home will assess the resources required to support the individual needs of the children they accommodate.

Occupancy rates

These are based on the number of children accommodated in relation to the number of places for which the home has approval to operate with.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

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Children accommodated in secure homes in England and Wales have decreased in 2026

Number of children accommodated

2010	258
2011	221
2012	239
2013	206
2014	229
2015	205
2016	210
2017	203
2018	204
2019	172
2020	184
2021	142
2022	165
2023	139
2024	156
2025	170
2026	139

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Footnotes

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Source: SA1

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Availability and occupancy rates in secure children's homes in England and Wales, 2010 to 2026

	Percentage of approved places available (availability rate)	Percentage of approved places occupied (occupancy rate)
2010	94%	83%
2011	93%	71%
2012	96%	80%
2013	97%	70%
2014	95%	77%
2015	96%	81%
2016	96%	83%
2017	89%	80%
2018	86%	80%
2019	88%	66%
2020	89%	72%
2021	88%	56%
2022	88%	66%

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2026	89%	64%
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Footnotes

1. Percentages in charts and tables are rounded to the nearest whole number. Where percentages apply to a group of categories they may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
2. Figures are at 31 March each year, except for 2020 where figures are at 29 February to reflect the position before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the national lockdown.

Source: SA1

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Children and young people placed within secure children's homes may be placed as:

- **Children detained or sentenced and placed by the YCS** include children detained for, or convicted of, a serious offence under the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000 or the Criminal Justice Act 2003; or subject to a Supervision Order with a residence requirement or a Detention and Training Order under the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000.
- **Children placed by the local authority in a criminal justice context** include children remanded by a court under section 102 (Remand to youth detention accommodation) of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012; or accommodated pursuant to section 38 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.
- **Children placed by the local authority on welfare grounds** include children who are placed into the homes by their local authority under section 25 of the Children Act 1989 for the protection of themselves and/or others.

On 31 March 2026, 49% of the children accommodated in secure children's homes were placed on welfare grounds, 45% were detained or sentenced and placed by the YCS and

6% were placed by the LA in a criminal justice context.

Children placed in secure homes on a welfare basis decreased to 68 (down by 12 children).

Children detained or sentenced and placed by the YCS decreased to 63 (down by 20 children). Placements by the YCS had previously varied between 50 and 60 children between 2021 and 2024 and are down from a series peak of 146 in 2012.

Children placed by the LA in a criminal justice context increased to 8 (up by 1 child),

However, it is common for these figures to fluctuate from year to year.

[Chart](#)

[Table](#)

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Children placed in secure children's homes by placement type, England and Wales, 2010-2026

	Number of children accommodated				Percentage of children accommodated		
	Placement type				Placement type		
	Total	Child detained or sentenced and placed by the Youth Custody Service	Child placed by local authority in a criminal justice context	Child placed by local authority on welfare grounds	Total	Child detained or sentenced and placed by the Youth Custody Service	Child placed by local authority in a criminal justice context
2010	258	131	31	96	100%	51%	12
2011	221	146	13	62	100%	66%	6
2012	239	146	17	76	100%	61%	7

2013	206	102	15	89	100%	50%	7
2014	229	111	14	104	100%	48%	6
2015	205	97	20	88	100%	47%	10
2016	210	89	16	105	100%	42%	8
2017	203	93	7	103	100%	46%	3
2018	204	98	10	96	100%	48%	5
2019	172	66	9	97	100%	38%	5
2020	184	80	15	89	100%	43%	8
2021	142	55	7	80	100%	39%	5
2022	165	62	21	82	100%	38%	13
2023	139	56	9	74	100%	40%	6
2024	156	59	25	72	100%	38%	16
2025	170	83	7	80	100%	49%	4
2026	139	63	8	68	100%	45%	6

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2. Figures are at 31 March each year, except for 2020 where figures are at 29

February to reflect the position before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the national lockdown.

Source: SA1

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Characteristics of children accommodated

Note that due to the relatively small size of the cohort, users should be cautious interpreting year on year changes.

Sex

There are more males than females accommodated in secure children's homes. The proportion of children accommodated who were male was 66% - a slight decrease from 69% last year. Males are over-represented in the secure children's homes population (66% compared to 51% in the overall child population - as shown in the [ONS mid-year population estimates \(opens in new tab\)](#)).

Age

Children aged 15, 16 or 17 years make up 71% of the children accommodated. The numbers in each age group are small and do fluctuate over time - children

accommodated in 2026 were aged:

- 13 years old – 11 (8%)
- 14 years old - 22 (16%)
- 15 years old - 42 (30%)
- 16 years old - 36 (26%)
- 17 years old – 20 (14%)
- the remaining 6% were either aged under 13, or 18 years and over.

Ethnicity

Information on the ethnicity of children accommodated in secure homes has been reported since 2021.

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Children accommodated in secure children's homes, by ethnicity, in England and Wales, 2022 to 2026

		Number of children accommodated					Percentage of children accommodated		
		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2022	2023	2024
Ethnicity of child	Total	165	139	156	170	139	100%	100%	100%
	White	107	99	98	120	91	65%	71%	63%
	Mixed	30	18	13	16	14	18%	13%	8%
	Asian or Asian British	10	7	9	9	10	6%	5%	6%
	Black or Black British	9	13	24	14	14	5%	9%	15%
	Other Ethnic groups	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c
	Unknown	c	c	c	c	c	c	c	c

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Footnotes

1. Percentages in charts and tables are rounded to the nearest whole number. Where percentages apply to a group of categories they may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
2. Ethnicity was reported for the first time in 2021.

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Source: SA1

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Length of stay

68% of young people had been at the secure children's home for 3 months or more, compared to 60% last year.

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Children accommodated in secure children's homes, by length of stay, in England and Wales, 2022 to 2026

		Number of children accommodated					Percentage of children accommodated		
		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2022	2023	2024
Length of stay	Total	165	139	156	170	139	100%	100%	100%
	Under 1 month	36	22	27	24	19	22%	16%	17%
	1 to < 3 months	42	41	43	44	25	25%	29%	28%
	3 to < 6 months	42	25	41	41	33	25%	18%	26%
	6 to < 12 months	24	27	23	34	36	15%	19%	15%
	12 to < 24 months	c	c	16	10	17	c	c	10%
	24 months or more	c	c	6	17	9	c	c	4%

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Source: SA1

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Contact us

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Children looked after statistics team

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