

Planning statement

Proposal

**Change of use from dwelling house (C3) to Children's Care Home (C2) and
insertion of first floor flank window.**

At

53 Paddington Close, Hayes, UB4 9QH



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Introduction

The sites comprise a detached property, situated at the end of a residential estate road. The design of the host property is typical of other dwellings in the street. To the front is an area of hardstanding with parking. To the rear there is a garden. The site has access from Paddington Close and Wayfarer Road.

According to the environment agency, this location is in flood zone 1. Land within flood zone 1 has a low probability of flooding from rivers and the sea. According to Hillingdon panning maps, the site is not known to be in a Conservation Area nor is it known to contain any listed buildings. Based on the council's mapping system, the location appears to be outside of the HMO article 4 directive.

The proposal seeks permission for the Change of Use from a dwellinghouse (C3) to Children's Residential Home (C2) for up to 3 children including the insertion of a flank wall window at first floor.

The principle of the development

The existing property is a 4-bedroom dwelling. At a national level the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 61 has specific regard to housing stating that to determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a **local housing need** assessment... [and] within this context, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for **different groups in the community** should be assessed and reflected in planning policies.

Policy GG2 of the London Plan (2021) states that to create successful sustainable mixed-use places that make the best use of land, those involved in planning and development must enable the development of **brownfield land, particularly on sites within and on the edge of town centres, as well as utilising small sites wherever possible**. **Sites which are well connected by existing or planned public transport should be prioritised**, and options to intensify the use of land in well-connected area to support additional homes should be explored, promoting higher density development, particularly in locations that are **well-connected to jobs, services, infrastructure, and amenities by public transport, walking and cycling**. This should align with Policy D3 of the London Plan (2021) by applying a design-led approach to determine the optimum development capacity of a site.

The London Plan places a strong emphasis on accelerated housing growth. Objective GG4 states that to create a housing market that works better for all Londoners, those involved in planning and development **must create mixed and inclusive communities, with good quality homes that meet high standards of design and provide for identified needs, including for specialist housing**.

Policy GG3 of the London Plan (Creating a healthy city) requires developments to **address mental and physical health** in an integrated and co-ordinated way, **reducing health inequality** where possible, which includes **planning for appropriate health and care infrastructure** to address the needs of London's changing and growing population

The use of previously developed land is supported by the Local Plan, London Plan and NPPF. London Plan Policy H12 states 'The delivery, retention and refurbishment of **supported and specialised housing which meets an identified need should be supported**. The form this takes will vary, and it should be **designed to satisfy the requirements of the specific use or group it is intended for, whilst providing options within the accommodation offer for the diversity of London's population**, including disabled Londoners (see Policy D7 Accessible housing) within a wider inclusive community setting. Boroughs should undertake assessments of the need for short-term, medium-term and permanent supported and specialised accommodation within their borough. Supported and specialised accommodation could include: -

1. accommodation for people leaving hostels, refuges and other supported housing, as well as care leavers and people leaving prison to enable them to live independently.
2. **accommodation for young people with support needs**
3. reablement accommodation (intensive short-term) for people who are ready to be discharged from hospital but who require additional support to be able to return safely to live independently at home, or to move into appropriate long-term accommodation.
4. accommodation for disabled people (including people with physical and sensory impairments and learning difficulties) who require additional support or for whom living independently is not possible
5. accommodation (short-term or long-term) for people with mental health issues who require intensive support
6. accommodation for rough sleepers
7. accommodation for victims of domestic abuse
8. accommodation for victims of violence against women and girls.

Policy DMH 1 of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 - Development Management Policies (2020) states that 'The net loss of existing self-contained housing, including affordable housing, will be resisted unless the housing is replaced with at least **equivalent residential floorspace**. Under section B, policy DMH 1 states that the Council will grant planning permission for the subdivision of dwellings only if: -

- i) car parking standards can be met within the curtilage of the site without being detrimental to the street scene;
- ii) all units are self contained with exclusive use of sanitary and kitchen facilities and provided with individual entrances and internal staircases to serve units above ground floor level;
- iii) adequate amenity space is provided for the benefit of residents; and
- iv) adequate living space standards are met.

The requirement of this policy is explored further in this report.

Policy DMH 8 of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 - Development Management Policies (2020) states that the development of residential care homes and other types of supported housing will be permitted provided that: -

- i) it would not lead to an **over concentration** of similar uses detrimental to residential character or amenity and complies with Policy DMH 4: Residential Conversions.
- ii) **it caters for need** identified in the Council's Housing Market Assessment, in a needs assessment of a recognised **public body**, or within an appropriate needs assessment and is deemed to be responding to the needs identified by the Council or other recognised public body such as the Mental Health Trust;
- iii) the accommodation is fully **integrated into the residential surroundings**; and
- iv) in the case of sheltered housing, it is located near to shops and community facilities and is easily accessible by public transport.

B) Proposals for residential care establishments which fall under Use Class C2 must demonstrate that they would provide **levels of care as defined in Article 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended)**.

Compliance with this policy is explored below.

The proposed development is for a change of use from dwelling house (C3) to Children's Care Home (C2). Whilst it is acknowledged that there would be a loss of one C3 unit, this would enable the provision of a residential home **for a specialised category as listed in the London Plan**, the loss of one unit is acceptable in this instance.

Relative to the proposal there will be two full-time members of staff (carers) on site, one of which will be a site manager who will be present during the day shift. The staff will be on a shift pattern. There will be up to three children receiving care. The age of the children will be 8 to 15. The total number of occupants at any time would be 5no which is akin to that what would be expected of a typical house of this size. The children come from a range of different backgrounds and have varied experiences in life. Everyone has their own different and specific sets of needs. They will all share one thing in common in that they are **vulnerable individuals in need of care**. The requirement for providing care to the children residing at the premises is set out below: -

- Previous experiences of abuse.
- Previous experiences of neglect.
- Emotional needs.
- Minor health needs such learning disabilities.
- Increased vulnerability.
- Lack of stable relationships.

The accommodation will not facilitate anyone who is physically or mentally incapacitated. The home is orientated at mainstream living. There is no need for specialist care for any incapacity or wheelchair provision. The home is not regarded as an institution in this respect.

The aim of the care is to facilitate the following for the individuals involved: -

- Provide emotional wellbeing.
- Supporting emotional needs.
- Supporting mental health needs.
- Giving children a voice.
- Giving children influence.
- Improving understanding of how to identify damaging situations.
- Improving decision making.

There is a need to provide the type of accommodation within the area. The children are at risk and currently do not have a residence **due to lack of capacity for such accommodation**. Evidence for this need is documented below to reflect this.

Hillingdon Housing Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26

The Housing Strategy states “*during 2019-20, Hillingdon Safeguarding Adult Board’s (SAB) structure was aligned with the Safeguarding Children’s Arrangements. The partnership arrangements work to prevent abuse, neglect and self-neglect; and to ensure that, when it does occur, our multi-agency response is timely, proportionate, coordinated, effective and in accordance with the key principles of safeguarding children, young people and adults.*”

The strategy states that “*Hillingdon was corporate parent to 337 children at the end of 2019/20, including 89 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). At 26% of the Looked After Children (LAC) population, Hillingdon has a much higher than average proportion of UASC, who are also on average older than other LAC and consequently form a higher proportion of care leavers. The care leaver population in Hillingdon stood at 454 on 01.04.2020.*”

In the summary of the Housing Strategy, priority five supporting Independent Living, a Key outcome is that Hillingdon residents are supported to live as independently as possible. The document confirms that:-

“The council is committed to protecting vulnerable people and enabling people, as far as possible, to live independently. Many people require some help and support to do this either in specialist housing specifically provided for their needs or through floating support provided in general housing.”

This strategy shows that the council recognise that there are particular housing challenges for young people.

Hillingdon Charter and Pledge

This document states that “there are children and young people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds in the borough who, for a number of reasons, are unable to live with their birth families and so, as their corporate parent, it is our responsibility to ensure that they receive the chance they deserve of a happy, fulfilled life.”

This shows the councils commitment to make sure that they provide the support our children and young people need to thrive.

Looked After Children & Care Leavers Annual Report 2017/18

The document states that “generally, outcomes for looked after children across the UK are poorer than those who have not been in the care system. Despite the good work and dedication of professionals (Children’s Social Care, Education and Health) and carers, challenges still remain in improving the experiences and outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. Locally, the London Borough of Hillingdon closely monitors the progress and outcomes for each and every looked after child and care leaver, and effectively plan services around the child/young person as well as wider service provision for our care population.”

The document goes on to say that “Hillingdon currently has 311 looked after children and 400 care leavers, an increase by 5% from April 2018. In numbers, this is an increase of 15 children from 296 in April to 316 in June 2018, (5 children removed from LAC status in July). Year on year, there has been a 5% increase in the number of LAC this June compared to June last year when there were 295 LAC.”

The document reflects the increasing numbers of looked after children and the year-on-year rise. This is further reflected in a document titled unprecedented payment and benefits package for foster carers. This document states that “there are currently 365 children in the council’s care in Hillingdon, but with a national foster carer shortage, people are needed now more than ever to provide a loving, stable home for a child in need.”

The recent Ministerial Statement on planning for accommodation for looked after children’ (May 2023, Statement UIN HCWS795), underscored the need for additional care homes, particularly for children and indicated that Local Authorities must work with commissioners to assess local need and closely engage to support applications, where appropriate, for accommodation for looked after children as part of the authority’s statutory duties for looked after children.

This highlights a pressing national issue.

An article published in April 2023 in the Gurdian reveals the following: -

- Some of Britain’s most vulnerable children are being moved to care homes more than 300 miles away from the neighbourhoods they grew up in, according to an Observer investigation revealing a “national scandal”.
- Dozens of children from London alone are in foster or care homes more than 250 miles from the city, as councils battle a significant shortfall in provision. Children from the capital have been placed in homes near Perth, Glasgow, Knowsley, Leeds and Carlisle.
- About 600 children from London are in foster or residential care more than 50 miles from their home neighbourhoods. Councils have warned they often have to compete for limited places, and face “rising costs and profiteering on the backs of vulnerable children”.
- Experts warn that relocating children removed them from schools, friends and extended family, as well as clubs and activities that were often key to their wellbeing. They warned it also put some at greater risk of exploitation.
- According to the Observer’s findings, uncovered using the Freedom of Information Act, at least 37 children from the capital are placed more than 250 miles away. The figure is likely to be far higher, as some councils did not reveal precise numbers. At least 600 are more than 50 miles away.
- “There is a crisis in the residential care home sector, where a scarcity of places means that it can be extremely hard to find a suitable home for children – especially if they have complex or specific needs,” said Anntoinette Bramble, deputy mayor of Hackney. A Greenwich borough

council spokesperson said that a “lack of sufficient placement options is a national issue for children in care”.

The above highlights a **pressing and longstanding national issue**, i.e. a lack of local placements for the children in care. It is symptomatic of a broken system which places children far away from their homes which is detrimental to wellbeing. The article reinforces the issue is prevalent in London and at a national level.

An article by nyas published in July 2023 reveals the following: -

- *Ofsted’s data shows that since March 2022, there has been a 9% increase in the number of children’s residential homes across the country, meaning that there are more places for children to live. Although this sounds promising, residential homes remain unevenly distributed across the country. In the North-West of England, there are 746 children’s homes compared to only 164 in the London area.*
- *When local authorities cannot find suitable accommodation for children, it is likely that the child will be moved to live outside of their local area. This means that children are moved far from their support circles and unable to attend their normal education settings or have regular contact with friends and family.*

This shows that there **remains a shortage of suitable accommodation for children in the London area**. It again demonstrates the disproportionate balance of such homes across England.

An article by OFSTED published in September 2023 reveals the following: -

- *As at 31 March 2023, there was a 9% increase in the number of children’s homes (to 2,880) and a 7% increase in the number of places (to 10,818) compared with 31 March 2022. This continues the long-standing trend of the number of homes rising faster than the number of places.*
- *Although all regions had an increase in the number of children’s homes this year, homes are still not evenly distributed across England. Similar to last year, the North West accounts for a quarter of all children’s homes and almost a quarter of all places.*
- *As in previous years, children’s homes are not distributed evenly across the country. All regions saw an increase in homes and places. As at 31 March 2023, the North West had the most children’s homes (746) and places (2,458), while London had the fewest settings (164), and the South West had the fewest places (600).*

This shows that there remains a **shortage of suitable accommodation in London**.

A BBC report dated annuary 2023 has emphasised the lack of suitable childcare. It states: -

- *“Severe care home shortages across England are forcing vulnerable children to be sent away for specialist care.”*

An article by community care dated March 2022 further illustrates a lack of appropriate arrangements in this regard: -

- *“Local authorities are struggling to manage the children’s homes market, amid a shortage of suitable placements.”*
- *“Almost half (44%) had either no publicly available or no up-to-date strategy to secure sufficient local accommodation for looked-after children.”*

The above reflects the wider increase in the number of looked-after children and highlights a need for children’s care homes (i.e., justifying the need). It illustrates that stock is not meeting current requirement. Further details can be found in the appendix section of this report.

An article by LBC published in September 2024 states that there is a national emergency' as hundreds of children 'contained' illegally in holiday lets The article outlines:-

- *Data seen by LBC, from the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory, shows the number of young people this has happened to has rocketed by more than 500% since 2020.*
- *1,249 children were subjected to such orders in one year, between June 2022 and July 2023.*
- *But because of the huge lack of secure places, at least half - approximately 600 - were sent to live in the ad hoc properties, including holiday lets. They are illegal for under 16s because they're not regulated by Ofsted.*
- *Data from the Ministry of Justice estimates around half of the children deprived of their liberty between July and September 2023 were under 16. A quarter were aged between 16-18, while 7.2% were under 12-years-old.*

This shows that hundreds of vulnerable children are being "contained" illegally in holiday lets, Airbnbs and caravans across the UK, because of a chronic national shortage of children's secure care placements.

A search off the wider area reveals a lack of such care in the area.

- Elm Lodge Care Home is 1.4 miles away from the site and is a retirement home.
- Swanage Lodge is 1.9 miles away from the site and provides assisted living.
- Manor Court Care Home is 2.4 miles away from the site and is a nursing home.
- Hayes Cottage Nursing Home is 2.5 miles away from the site and is a nursing home.
- Ashwood Care Centre is 2.8 miles away from the site and is a nursing home.
- Aston House Care Home is 3.0 miles away from the site and provides assisted living.
- Petts Hill Care Home is 3.4 miles away from the site and is a nursing home.
- The Meadows Residential Care Home is 3.7 miles away from the site and provides assisted living.
- Parkfield House is 4.1 miles away from the site and is a nursing home.
- Marian House Care Home is 4.7 miles away from the site and provides aged care.
- Sweetcroft is 5.0 miles away from the site and provides assisted living.
- Ryefield Court is 5.3 miles away from the site and is a nursing home.

The above shows that there is an abundance of nursing homes and assisted living support. **It is considered that the proposed development would not result in an over concentration of care homes or similar C2 uses in the area.**

The care home will be operated by a registered provider will manage this children's care home. The company is yet to be formed but is **affiliated to Community Hosting and Support CIC (CHS)** which is a limited by guarantee not-for-profit Social Enterprise company and an approved provider of housing and support to vulnerable people aged 16 plus by the Commissioning Alliance (formerly West London Alliance).

The provider takes a collaborative approach to the care and support, helping children and young people lead healthy, happy and fulfilled lives. The company's purpose is to support children, providing them with hope, freedom of choice and the opportunity to be able to succeed. The company's goal is to provide exceptional quality of care for children. This includes empowering, supporting, and striving for inclusion. They provide excellent residential support and health care to children who are experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), neglect and abuse, feelings of rejection and challenges in life such as disabilities.

The provider will deliver the children with all the care and support children need from their highly trained carers and support workers. The property will be staffed by a team of experienced, dedicated and fully trained support workers of whom combine this professional experience with a family perspective to create a dynamic service that strives to offer children with better outcomes and wider horizons. The provider has multiple staff on hand however only 2 members of staff will be present at the property at any time including a manager during the day shift.

An application to OFSTED will be submitted for review. The provider has confirmed that the proposed living environment is designed to safely support the children's behaviours and there is 24-hour care provided by qualified and well-trained staff. The care home will be closely monitored and continually risk-assessed to ensure the utmost level of safety for the children in care.

Based on the above it is considered that the principle of development is acceptable. The proposed use is C2 use class, a change of use to another type of residential use would be deemed acceptable. There would be a loss of one C3 unit, however, given that this would enable the provision of a residential home for a specialised category as listed in the London Plan, the loss of one unit is acceptable in this instance. It has been shown that there will not be an overconcentration of similar uses in the area. The proposals have demonstrated the need for this type of accommodation at a national, regional and local level. OFSTED have confirmed that there is a shortage of such accommodation. Other Reputable sources have been cited. An audit of existing accommodation options available have been assessed and there is a clear shortage in capacity for children's care homes.

Non-borough residents

In terms of non-borough residents, the care home provider will be applying to sit on the **LB Hillingdon's children's home Framework**. The care home provider will be working very closely with borough officers to ensure that the property is **utilised by the local authority to its utmost**. They would also be happy to work with officers in terms of supporting them to bring back people who have been placed 'out of borough' due to lack of service provision in the locality. This would help contribute to meeting a local need for the borough's population and help ensure that non- borough residents are not given priority over locals. Such an arrangement would not have a detrimental impact on local welfare services.

Risk and management plan

The care home will be operated by a registered provider as stated above. The provider has confirmed that the proposed living environment is designed to safely support the children's behaviours and there is 24-hour care provided by qualified and well-trained staff. The provider has multiple staff on hand. Two carers will be present on site (shift pattern) at any time. This includes a manager. The care home will be closely monitored and continually risk-assessed to ensure the utmost level of safety for the people in care. The provider's mission is as follows: -

- *To provide a motivating environment where children can achieve, build positive friendships with their peers and most importantly call home.*
- *Promote equality for its occupants to ensure they are viewed and heard as individuals.*
- *Promote the safety and wellbeing of people who use their services.*
- *Build self-assurance and self-esteem in children.*
- *To generate a culture of openness and trust.*
- *Support individuals in their education and meaningful activities.*
- *Encourage long term healthy lifestyles.*

The main objective of the provider is to create a place to live, learn and thrive with all the care and support children need from their highly trained carers and support workers. The property will be staffed by a team of experienced, dedicated and fully trained support workers of whom combine this professional experience with a family perspective to create a dynamic service that strives to offer children with better outcomes and wider horizons. As stated above the provider has multiple staff on hand. Only 2 members of staff will be present at the property at any time.

The provider has procedures to be followed to conduct a risk assessment of the location of the Homes to identify and subsequently minimise safeguarding risks to the children. **This is to ensure compliance with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015, and the Children's Homes and Looked After Children (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2013.**

It is Company policy that the premises of the Children's Homes will be situated in an appropriate location that is safe and secure. By developing a clear understanding of the benefits and disadvantages of living in a specific location it will be possible to establish whether the area is suitable for a Home, ensuring that the children are safe and are able to benefit from good quality services. Therefore, through these location assessments it is the providers objective that the children cared for by the Homes will be: -

- **effectively safeguarded from potential harm.**
- **able to access services to meet their needs as identified in their placement or care plans.**

To achieve these objectives, management of the Homes will implement the following 3 strategies:

- Undertake a Location Risk Assessment of the area prior to the opening of the Home, and subsequently at regular intervals. These Assessments will be regularly reviewed to consider any new risks that are identified.
- Where risks have been identified before the home opens, or where new risks appear with time, putting in place appropriate safeguarding strategies.
- Collaborate with the police and the LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children's Board) at all stages of this process, not just in putting the safeguards in place, but also in trying to identify the risks from the outset.

The Location Risk Assessment will include considerations of the following: -

- Whether there is a likelihood of children placed in the Home being drawn into gang crime or anti-social behaviour in the local area.
- Whether the location of the Home influences the potential for an already vulnerable child to be a victim of crime, including being targeted or groomed for sexual exploitation.
- The suitability of the local neighbourhood as a location to care for children who may have already been victims of abuse and neglect.
- Any environmental factors that could present a hazard to children, such as locations near busy roads, level crossings, and un-fenced ponds.
- Any positive features in the local community that would benefit children from the Home. These include leisure, sporting or cultural activities, or links with services that could support a child's ethnic or religious identity.
- Collection of publicly available local data, involving internet-based searches of local crime statistics, obtaining the indices of deprivation, data about local schools, and other relevant data.
- Consultation with appropriate local services that have a statutory responsibility for safeguarding children in the neighbourhood where the Home is located. These will include the police, Children's Services, probation service providers, public transport that the children may use and, where relevant, voluntary services that support victims of crime or young runaways.
- Obtaining service user feedback, talking to the children in the Home's care about their perception of the quality of life in the area to establish whether they feel safe, and how to manage any risks they identify. Children will also be able to offer valuable insights about the quality of local services that they use.

Where Risk Assessments identify concerns about the location, strategies will be developed to support the children to manage any safeguarding concerns and, where necessary, to enable them to access appropriate local services. The following list summarises a range of activities that could contribute to managing risks: -

- Educating children in the Home about risks and supporting them in developing skills and strategies to manage those risks.
- Providing children with access to relevant support services to make them more aware of risks, and to make them more resilient.

- Ensuring that children have access to sources of confidential advice and advocacy so that they feel safe to disclose any risks they face.
- Recording evidence of children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation / grooming that could be used by the police as the basis for taking enforcement action against predatory adults or by probation service provides in connection with the management of offenders.
- Improving the perimeter security for the Home so that individuals or vehicles approaching the Home can be recorded, acting as a deterrent to potential predators.
- Convening multi-agency Risk Management meetings, involving local services, placing authorities, and individual children to develop strategies for managing and minimising the risks faced by the children.

This Risk Assessment must be undertaken and recorded every 6 months.

Operation management

Staff rota

Staff numbers

Staff X2, Day shift – 7.30am to 19.15pm including manager

Staff X2. Night shift – 19.30pm to 7.15am

The work schedule patterns have been designed to ensure that there is always at least two staff members on duty. No sleeping accommodation is provided for staff. This will ensure that there is no possibility of any antisocial behaviour, and that the children's need are always met. During the annual and sick leaves of permanent employees, interim staff and reserve team members will cover their duties. The staff handover will take place between 7.15am and 7.30am and between 19.15pm and 19.30pm. This will not be during school hours thus not impacting the staff's ability to take children to school.

Staff and visitors

Visitor Groups

Staff

Staff will be encouraged to use public transport or cycle to work. In any event the site has off street parking.

OFSTED inspector

Once a year during office working hours between Monday and Friday: 9am and 5pm.

The OFSTED inspector can use public transportation.

Social worker visit

This depends on the individual child's plan but once a month, as the children settle the visits will be less. They visit during office working hours Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.

The social workers can also use public transport.

Regulation 44 inspector

Once a year during office working hours Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.

The regulator 44 inspector can also use public transport.

LAC Nurse

Once a year for annual health check or never as the child can be asked to visit GP for the check. The nurse may never visit the health check can be taken at an offsite location like a school or a GP practice.

Family visit

These depend on the child's plan. Family will be encouraged to arrive by public transport.

The property is served by buses stopping just a few metres away. Consequently, employees and visitors can access the property via bus. There will be no visitations during staff handover time. Visits will be secured by a booking system and managed to ensure that there is no overlap. During handover time, the staff will be focused on exchanging information between those leaving and those beginning their shifts; therefore, visits will not be appropriate by others.

As a provider of social care services understanding public transport helps us structure the shift patterns to allow staff to access transport to travel to and from work. The staff and visitors have access to reliable public transportation, and the majority of visits will occur between Monday and Friday during working hours. Important information for residents, personnel, and visitors will be posted on the bulletin board, including specifics about local transportation.

The Children will not be of driving age.

Care provided

The primary purpose of the residential home is to assist children in need and provide them with the direction they need to become productive members of society. Regular supervision sessions will be held with them to assess their progress. Issues will be discussed with them and Social Services, who continue to have a responsibility for their welfare. The children will be assisted in gaining access to education, healthcare, and any other community services they may require.

Security measures

To ensure the safety of the property and its residents, CCTVs will be installed at the property's front and rear. In addition, a fire alarm system will be implemented. Fire doors are currently in place. These will be upgraded as necessary to comply with the building regulations.

Quality of Accommodation

The existing dwelling will be replaced by a care home which is similar in nature to the dwelling. Its size will be of an **equivalent space**. As existing, the site is currently a 4-bedroom dwelling. The care home would only be a 3-bedroom dwelling. One of the existing bedrooms would form a study at ground floor. Another bedroom would be integrated into the living kitchen and dining space. Upstairs the large bathroom would form a third bedroom. A further shower room is proposed. All rooms are of adequate size, shape and proportion. They all have at least one large window, therefore access to sufficient daylight. A rear garden is retained providing adequate outdoor space.

The unit will continue to be self-contained throughout.

Design and Quality of Materials

Paragraphs 130 and 134 of the NPPF outline that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of an area not just for the short term, but over the lifetime of the development. Paragraph 130 advises that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

London Plan policy D4 all echo the principles of the NPPF with regards to well-designed spaces. Policy D4 of the London Plan emphasizes that all development should have regard to the form, function, and structure of an area, place or street and the scale, mass and orientation of surrounding buildings. At a borough level, Policy BE1 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Strategic Policies (Built Environment) sets out that, in order to create successful and sustainable neighbourhoods, new development (including new buildings, alterations and extensions) should be of a high quality design which enhances the local distinctiveness of the area and contributes to a sense of place. As such. Proposals should be designed to be appropriate to the context of Hillingdon's buildings, townscapes, landscapes and views, and make a positive contribution to the local area in terms of layout, form, scale and materials.

The proposal only involves one new window to the flank elevation facing Wayfarer Road. The window would be of a similar appearance to the existing windows and therefore in keeping. Therefore, it is not considered that the proposal would generate any harm upon the character and appearance of the existing dwellinghouse. The accommodation remains fully integrated into the residential surroundings. The proposed development is therefore acceptable and policy compliant in terms of design.

Impacts to Neighbouring Amenity

Part D in Policy D6 of the London Plan requires development to provide sufficient daylight and sunlight to surrounding housing that is appropriate for its context. The proposal involves one new flank wall window. The window is adequately separated from the properties opposite the site and as such, there will be no material loss of outlook, light or overbearingness for surrounding properties.

The proposal is to incorporate 3 bedrooms for 3 no. of children. The future users of the site will share the ground floor communal areas. Considering that the existing property is a 4-bedroom dwelling which can provide accommodation for 5 persons the number of residents will be similar to the current situation without any additional intensification. The proposed situation is what one would expect from a family home containing shared facilities. The children and staff members on duty would live together as a family unit albeit that the live in carers would be on a shift pattern. The proposed floor plans clearly demonstrate that the premises would be laid out in a fashion akin to a single dwelling with a shared lounge, a kitchen and a dining space, a bathroom, and 3 bedrooms as well as a garden. It would be expected that the residents for the premises would eat breakfast, lunch and dinner together, watch TV together, relax together, sit in the garden together and so on.

The only difference in the case of specialist housing is that the children are vulnerable and thus require special care from specially trained adults. Therefore, it can be said that there is no material difference between a house used as a small children's care home and a conventional family dwellinghouse. In 2024 there have been several Inspectors who have corroborated this approach when determining certificates of lawful proposed use / planning applications at appeal. These are set out below.

No. 98 Westbury Road – Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames Certificate of lawful use.

The inspector concluded that the proposed C2 use did not result in a material change of use from the existing class C3 use as a dwellinghouse with the change of use therefore not amounting to development for which planning permission would be required. The appeal therefore succeeded.

No. 61 Shaw Road – London Borough of Lewisham. Certificate of lawful use.

The Inspector found that a house of this size could accommodate a typical family with two/three children and two adults. The use of the house as a home for a maximum of three young people and their carers would not be materially different from the authorised use as a family home.

No. 105 The Crescent – Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames. Certificate of lawful use

The Inspector found that the proposed use would not result in a material difference in the character of the activities at the site. Consequently, the proposal would not result in a material change of use from the existing Class C3 use as a dwellinghouse. The appeal therefore succeeded.

No. 58 Cartwright Road – London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. A full planning application

The Inspector concluded that the care home's intended use would maintain essential residential functions such as shared meals, a structured routine, and involvement in household tasks, thus it is not considered that the proposal would adversely affect the availability of family-sized homes in the area.

Living within such a densely populated residential region, it would typically be expected to hear, and normally tolerate, noises from the properties around you, such as traffic noise, voices, music, DIY noise, etc. Whilst the use class would change in planning terms, the property would still be in residential occupation with people using the dwelling and garden as anyone else would in any residential property. In this regard the change of use is not material.

It is acknowledged that the proposed care home is to be staffed by care workers on alternating shifts. This is to provide 24-hour care 7 days of the week. There will be 2 members of staff at one time on site. It is accepted that there could be an overlap in staff, but this would be for a matter of minutes whilst a shift change occurs. It is unlikely that this would be determinantal in terms of noise impact.

At a given time, in terms of actual occupants there would be. 3 children and 2 carers residing at the property. This would mean a maximum of 5 persons in the property which is on par with the current occupation. The shift change in staff is not material to the numbers on site occupying the premises. It is accepted that sporadic visits may occur at the property i.e. OFSTED inspector once a year, Regulation 44 inspector once a year, social workers and family (dependant on the child's plan). These visits would be intermittent and no different to friends and family visiting a traditional home setting.

The proposal is unlikely to generate more noise in this regard. The comings and goings would be similar to a single dwellinghouse. As previously stated, the existing 4-bedroom home could potentially house a large family of up to 5 people with associated comings and goings. Friends and family could visit the premises at any time. It is considered that at the scale proposed, the development would not result in harmful levels of noise and disturbance that would be out of keeping with a residential area. Additionally, the facility is to be managed by staff which will assist with minimising the potential for adverse impacts upon the amenity of occupiers of neighbouring dwellings by way of noise or anti-social behaviour. External CCTV will be in operation at the premises.

Highways

A public transport accessibility level (PTAL) is 1B and hence some dependency on the use of private motor transport to and from the site would be anticipated although children will not be of a driving age. Staff will mainly be using public transport. In any instance site is well positioned in terms of access to local amenities.

PARKING

Local Plan: Part 2 Policy - DMT 6 requires that new development will only be permitted where it accords with the council's adopted parking standards unless it can be demonstrated that a deviation from the standard would not result in a deleterious impact on the surrounding road network. There is space for 2 on-site frontage parking places and on street car parking on Wayfarer Road where there is an existing cross over. This gives a total of 3 spaces. The nearest and most appropriate council standard requires appraisal either by virtue of a Transport Assessment or 1 space per 4 dwelling units/occupants (with a minimum of 2 spaces) to be provided for a care home use (plus 1 warden/carer space). When applying the latter, this would therefore equate to a requirement of 3 spaces. The proposal accords to this. Cars are able to enter the site through Paddington Close and leave in a forward gear along Wayfarer Road.

Electric charging points

In accord with the Local Plan: Part 2 DMT 6 policy and parking standard, there is a requirement for EVCPs which would equate to a minimum facility of 5% of the total parking quantum for 'active' provision with a further 5% acting as 'passive' provision for future activation. As there is a strong move toward hybrid and fully electrified vehicles which will only increase in time, the proposal will incorporate 1 'active' and 1 'passive' space to futureproof for anticipated demand.

Cycle parking

In terms of cycle parking, there should be a provision of 1 space secure and accessible spaces per 3 staff (maximum on-site at any one time) to conform to the adopted borough cycle parking standard. 2 spaces are provided.

Vehicular trips

Local Plan: Part 2 Policies - DMT 1 and DMT 2 require the council to consider whether the traffic generated by proposed developments is acceptable in terms of the local highway and junction capacity, traffic flows and conditions of general highway or pedestrian safety. Owing to the traditionally 'low traffic generator' user profile the proposal would not be expected to generate measurable traffic burden on the surrounding roadways both during and outside of the most sensitive and therefore crucial peak morning and evening hours given the anticipated low car usage levels which can, therefore can be absorbed within the local road network without notable detriment to traffic congestion and road safety.

Refuse Collection

The plans show refuse collection would continue via the roadway and bin storage placement is generally placed within 10m of the collection point on the public highway to accord with the council's maximum waste collection distance standard.

Fire safety

The use of the property as defined within statutory Approved Document B volume 1, is a dwelling. The use will not change. The work will be classed as a material alteration to a dwelling and will require no substantial alteration from the current layouts. This is because it is occupied by no more than 6 people, including where an element of care is provided.

The scheme will include an automatic fire detection system designed to BS5839-6 to at least an LD1 standard and to a class A standard. LD1 maximum protection which is the highest level of protection of all occupants who might occupy the dwelling over the lifetime of the fire detection and fire alarm system. This will be installed throughout the premises, incorporating detectors in all circulation areas that form part of the escape routes from the premises, and in all rooms and areas, other than those with negligible sources of ignition, such as toilets, bathrooms, and shower rooms. Separate detectors, sounders and central control and indicating equipment with back-up power supply that conforms to British Standards BS EN 54. Installation by a specialist and certification to be provided throughout.

Fire alarm call points will be installed by the exists. A fire blanket and extinguisher is to be provided in the kitchen.

The building will have a protected escape route within the dwelling at ground and first floors leading to a final exit. All rooms and cupboards aside from bathrooms will have provision of FD30s doorsets. These are to be appropriately certified and installed by a specialist with hinges tested as part of the door set. As per BCA Technical Guidance Note 9 edge gaps to the Jambs and head of the door should be a maximum 4mm. The gap at the bottom of the door should be restricted to maximum of 10mm from a finished floor (BCA guidance). The smoke seals will work by acting as a smoke barrier, helping block the smoke, preventing it from seeping around door frames. The intumescent strips seal off gaps in between doors and door frames, to prevent the spread of fire. These measures will allow occupants to escape more safely in the event of a fire.

All parts of the dwelling are within 45m of a fire appliance positioned on the highway. The dwelling meets the provision of B5 albeit the measures stated above demonstrate an improved setting.

Emergency lighting is proposed to the exits and will be designed to an NM3 standard to BS5266-1. No fire signage will be required within the dwelling.

The property due its use as providing an element of foster care or similar will be an environment will require a reasonable and adequate fire risk assessment to be undertaken from the point of occupation. The contractor will pass on all the fire safety certificates he collects to inform the responsible person's decisions when the Fire Risk Assessment is drawn together. This will mean the Design, Installation and Commissioning Certificates to BS5839-6 to show the LD1 Cat A standard is achieved, and the technical information for the intumescent strips and cold smoke seals from the manufacturer. The certificates will make it quite clear what the maintenance obligations are for those elements of the build.

Other Issues

There only external change involves a new window. As such, there are no flooding, drainage, trees, landscaping or ecology issues. Air quality is unimpacted given that limited operations are taking place. The proposal is considered not be CIL liable or require planning obligations.

Appendix

Hillingdon Housing Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26

Hillingdon Charter and Pledge

Looked After Children & Care Leavers Annual Report 2017/18

Unprecedented payment and benefits package for foster carers

Article by the Guardian

Article by NYAS

Article and data by OFSTED

Data from GOV.UK

Article by BBC

Article by community care

LBC Article

Summary Hillingdon Housing Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26



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Priority five: Supporting Independent Living

Key outcome: Hillingdon residents are supported to live as independently as possible

1. The council is committed to protecting vulnerable people and enabling people, as far as possible, to live independently. Many people require some help and support to do this either in **specialist housing specifically provided for their needs** or through **floating support provided in general housing**.
2. There is a wide and diverse range of supported housing and housing support available in Hillingdon. An initial mapping exercise of all supported accommodation in the borough has been carried out, including both Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered and non-registered services. The list has been shared with NHS colleagues to support a mapping exercise to provide greater clarity regarding the make-up and geography of supply across the borough.
3. The largest client group for supported housing is older people, followed by people with learning disabilities and there is significant provision for mental health and for single homeless people and care leavers. There is also provision in the borough for those affected by domestic abuse.
4. This part of the Housing Strategy considers priorities to address the housing and support needs for particular groups of people, some of which have considerable overlap.
5. The impacts arising from Covid-19 could not be anticipated and have been unprecedented. Lockdown has meant an increased risk of abuse and neglect and of self-neglect for adults at risk. It has also increased the risk of domestic abuse, homelessness, mental health problems and drug and alcohol use in the wider population. Housing teams seek to identify other household support needs in their interventions with residents such as homelessness reviews, tenancy reviews and property disrepair inspections to allow for early identification of safeguarding issues.
6. This strategy aims to:
 - Foster a trauma informed approach to working with vulnerable people
 - Reduce homelessness and rough sleeping
 - Support people to sustain tenancies
 - Increase awareness and action regarding adult safeguarding
 - Achieve sustainable housing solutions for care leavers
 - Become Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accredited

Young people

48. We recognise that there are particular housing challenges for young people. Welfare benefits are less generous to those under 35 and the pool of available properties is even smaller than that for single people in general. Young people are less likely to have developed the necessary life skills to cope with independent living and consequently are more likely to run into difficulties in looking after a home and managing a tenancy. Relationships with parents may be difficult and not conducive to remaining the family home; relationships may be particularly fractious for some groups of young people, such as those in the LGBT community.

49. The Council aims to have an open door approach to young people with services centred around the contract with P3. The needs of the young person, not just homelessness, but other life skills and support needs are at the centre of the service which is designed to be open and transparent. Future work will focus on extending service outreach i.e. into schools and colleges.

Care Leavers

50. Hillingdon was corporate parent to 337 children at the end of 2019/20, including 89 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). At 26% of the Looked After Children (LAC) population, Hillingdon has a much higher than average proportion of UASC, who are also on average older than other LAC and consequently form a higher proportion of care leavers. The care leaver population in Hillingdon stood at 454 on 01.04.2020¹². All care leavers have a pathway plan in place and wherever possible this is co-produced and owned by the young people. Ideally this includes consideration of housing options at an early stage.

51. The council's Welfare Reform & Tenancy Support Team recognises that care leavers present a 'high-risk' group in the context of tenancy failure when transitioning to permanent accommodation in the council's managed housing stock. This group of new tenants are prioritised for support from the point of 'tenancy sign up' where support is 'front loaded' to maximise the potential for long term tenancy sustainment by ensuring that the skills and awareness necessary for independent living are in place and are developed.

52. On average, around 50 care leavers a year require assistance with housing. Care leavers are not automatically placed in social housing and in most instances private sector placements are sought. The Social Housing Allocation Policy does make special provision for care leavers. Care leavers are exempt from the residency requirement qualification criteria. If a care leaver has an identified housing need, they are awarded an appropriate band according to their need

¹² Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report 2019/20

Hillingdon Charter and Pledge

ages
12 to 21

Hillingdon Council's

Charter

As Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education, my priority is to make sure that we provide the support our children and young people need to thrive.



There are children and young people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds in the borough who, for a number of reasons, are unable to live with their birth families and so, as their corporate parent, it is our responsibility to ensure that they receive the chance they deserve of a happy, fulfilled life.

This responsibility continues even after a young person's 18th birthday and we are committed to supporting our young people leaving care with practical support and advice to help them map out a clear route to a prosperous, independent future. We know that leaving care can be a daunting process for young people and we work hard to ensure that they are supported through important life events – whether it is setting up home or entering education, training or employment.

It's our belief that every young person should be supported to be the best versions of themselves and it's our promise to work alongside them to help them achieve this.

Cllr Susan O'Brien
Cabinet Member for Children,
Families and Education

- We promise to respect you and honour your identity as an individual, taking into consideration your values, beliefs and personal needs.
- We promise to ask you about important decisions being made about you and take your views into consideration.
- We will do everything that we can to help you feel cared about, involved, valued and respected as an individual.
- We promise to believe in you. We will help you to set goals and support you in achieving them.
- We promise to be open, honest and give you an explanation of our decisions.
- We promise to acknowledge your messages, even if it is just to let you know that we have received them and aim to give you an answer as soon as we are able.
- We promise to value and support, where appropriate, relationships that are important to you.



Our promises to you



- We promise to point you in the right direction and help you move along at your own pace.
- We promise to support you throughout your education, employment or training so you can reach your full potential.
- We promise to support you in creating your Pathway Plan, a planning document for your journey into independence. We will both have a copy of this so that we remember what we are working towards.
- We promise to work with other services to respond to any changes in the law that affect the lives of young people.
- We promise to minimise any changes to your school, placement or workers unless they are absolutely necessary to make sure that you remain safe and well.
- We promise to take the time to listen to you and do our best to give you the right advice if things aren't going well for you.
- We promise to make sure you keep in touch with family and friends as much as possible whilst considering your safety and wellbeing.
- We will help you manage changing relationships or come to terms with loss, trauma or other important life events.
- We promise to keep you safe and well by making sure where you live is safe and the right place for you, giving you the right support so that you can be physically, emotionally and mentally healthy, and by doing everything we can to ensure that you are happy and safe when you move to independence.
- We promise to give you information about your entitlements at every stage of your move towards independence using our finance policy leaflets and support you to access these.

- We promise to make sure you know about our advocacy and complaints services in case you need help to have your views heard or unhappy with the service that we are giving you.

Hillingdon Council's Pledge

It is Hillingdon Council's job, as your corporate parent, to make sure your life in care is a good one.



You should feel safe in care, be healthy, have lots of opportunities to do things in the community and have a good education. When the time comes for you to leave care, you should also be supported in this too; like where you might live, how to manage your money and how to find a job or go to university.

Staying safe

- We will advise and support you to develop the skills you need to keep yourself safe.
- There may be times when we cannot tell you things, but we will be as honest as possible and explain why.
- We will only share information about you if we are sure it is in your best interests.
- We will explain why we cannot always provide you with everything you want.
- We will give careful thought about where you live so that you live in a place which is right for you.
- We will minimise any changes to your school, placement or workers unless they are absolutely necessary.
- We will help you manage changing relationships or come to terms with loss, trauma or other important life events.

Being healthy

- We will ensure that you are registered with a GP, dentist and optician.
- We will ensure all your medical needs are assessed and met.
- We will make sure you have all health appointments you need and support you to attend these.
- We will give you advice and support so that you can make good choices for your health.





Opportunities and aspirations

- We will believe in you.
- We will help you to set goals and support you in achieving them.
- We will celebrate your achievements with you.
- We will help you to access advice & guidance when you need it.
- We will help you to find and engage in activities and opportunities you enjoy.
- We will avoid taking you out of school/college for meetings so not to distract you.
- We will attend meetings with you, your foster carers and school/college to ensure that you are well supported in your education.
- We will make sure you get extra study support if you need it.

Listening to you

- We will care about you, and involve you in decisions about you.
- We will respect your culture, traditions, language and religion and enable you to follow these.
- We will be open and honest with you, as much as we can.
- We will encourage you to have the confidence to speak out and be heard.
- We will listen to how you feel about being in care and the care you receive from us.
- We will make sure you have an Independent Reviewing Officer to help plan what you need and ensure these plans are carried out.
- If you need support to express how you feel or if you want to make a complaint we will provide you with an advocate.
- When you first come into care we will help you to understand why.
- We will tell you about the things you are entitled to like pocket money and savings.

- We will make sure you get all of the information about where you will be living and who you will be living with, unless it is an emergency move.
- We will help you keep in touch with your family and friends.
- We will only make promises that we know we can keep.
- We will acknowledge your messages and calls and return these as soon as we can.
- We will listen to the children in care councils to make changes to development and delivery of services.

Leaving care



- We will encourage you to learn the skills you need to live independently like cooking and budgeting.
- We will make sure you have a named worker to create your Pathway Plan, a planning document for your journey into independence.
- We will give you information about your entitlements at every stage of your move towards independence and support you to access these.
- We will stay in touch with you until you are least 21, up to 25 if you stay in education.
- We will provide you with information about the financial support you are entitled to help you continue studying.

Join the children in care councils to get your voice heard.



Remember, these are promises that Hillingdon Council has made to you. If you feel these promises are not being met by the council, you can get in touch with the Children's Rights and Participation team [@ childrensrights@hillingdon.gov.uk](mailto:childrensrights@hillingdon.gov.uk)

HILLINGDON PLEDGE

It is Hillingdon Council's job, as your corporate parent, to make sure your life in care is a good one. You should feel safe in care, be healthy, have lots of opportunities to do things in the community and have a good education.

When the time comes for you to leave care, you should be supported in this too; like where you might live, how to manage your money and how to find a job or go to university.

Hillingdon Council promises

- We will care about you, believe in you and respect you.
- We will provide you with a safe home to live where you feel happy and taken care of.
- We will make sure we don't change your school, foster carer or social worker unless we really have to.
- We will make sure you are healthy and attend all health appointments.
- We will not take you out of school for meetings.
- We will listen to what you think about being in care, where you live and decisions about you.
- We will make sure you have an Independent Reviewing Officer to help plan what you need and make sure this happens.
- We will help you to enjoy life and take part in activities.
- We will be as honest with you as we can.
- We will help you keep in touch with your family and friends.

Want to get involved?

Join Talkers to get your voice heard!



Remember, these are promises that Hillingdon Council has made to you!

If you feel these promises are not being met by Hillingdon Council you can get in touch with the Children's Rights and Participation team:

@ childrensrights@hillingdon.gov.uk



LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN & CARE LEAVERS ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

Committee name	Social Care, Housing and Public Health
Officer reporting	Zafer Yulkan - Head of Service, Looked After Children, Leaving Care and Court Service
Papers with report	None
Ward	All

HEADLINES

This report provides a briefing to the Social Care, Housing and Public Health Policy Overview Committee regarding the Council's engagement with Hillingdon's Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers. It highlights the significant responsibilities the local authority has in relation to Looked After Children and Care Leavers, and how the council discharges its duties to ensure 'best outcomes are achieved' for the children, young people and care leavers who are in our care.

Generally, outcomes for looked after children across the UK are poorer than those who have not been in the care system. Despite the good work and dedication of professionals (Children's Social Care, Education and Health) and carers, challenges still remain in improving the experiences and outcomes for looked after children and care leavers. Locally, the London Borough of Hillingdon closely monitors the progress and outcomes for each and every looked after child and care leaver, and effectively plan services around the child/young person as well as wider service provision for our care population.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee notes the content of the report and the role the Committee and all Members have in championing the corporate parenting ethos across the Council. This report is for information.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Introduction

In this report, the term Looked After Children refers to those children for whom Hillingdon has assumed responsibility through a care order, by an agreement with parent(s) (Section 20) or for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASCs).

Hillingdon also has a duty and responsibility for all those young people who leave care after the age of 18 years until they reach the age of 25, following the recent legislative changes that were introduced with the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Previously, the duty was until 21 years for care leavers who were not in education. The change in legislation requires all local authorities

to support its care leavers until 25 years regardless of their educational status.

Corporate Parenting

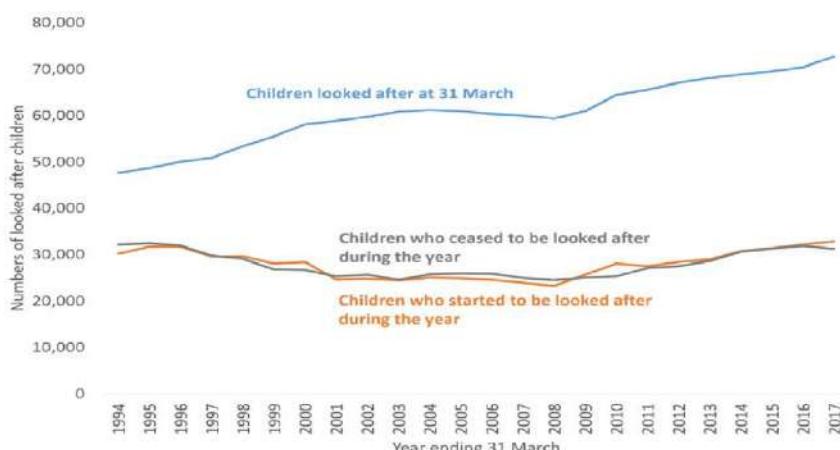
Corporate Parenting is a term used to refer to the collective responsibility of the council to provide the best care and protection for children and young people who are 'looked after' that is, who are in public care. Effective corporate parenting requires the commitment from all council employees and elected members. These responsibilities for Local Authorities were first laid out in the Children Act 1989, subsequently in the Children Act 2004 and the Children and Young People's Act 2008 and most recently again in the Children and Social Work Act 2017.

In Hillingdon, we are 'Corporate parent' to 711 children (looked after children and care leavers). We engage with each child and young person individually at statutory visits, looked after reviews and pathway planning meetings. In the first quarter of 2018, 86% of young people participated in their looked after (LAC) reviews.

Numbers of Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Nationally, there were 72,670 children and young people in care on 31 March 2017, compared with 70,440 at the same point in 2016 (national data for 2018 figures is not yet available). This represents a 3% increase in LAC population nationally. It is the highest figure of children in care since the implementation of the Children Act 1989.

Numbers of looked after children have continued to steadily rise



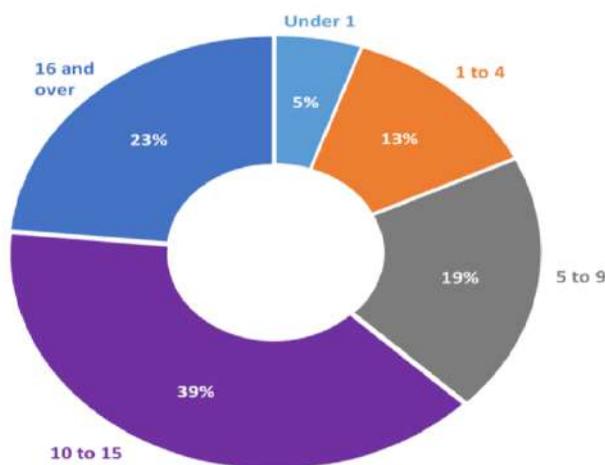
The majority of looked after children are placed with foster carers

74% of children looked after at 31 March 2017 were in foster placements, a similar proportion as in previous years. There has continued to be a fall in children placed with prospective adopters.

75% of looked after children at 31 March 2017 were white, 9% were of mixed ethnicity, 7% were black or black British, 5% were Asian or Asian British and 3% were other ethnic groups. Non-white children

appear to be slightly over-represented in the looked after children population, in particular children of mixed and black ethnicity. Children of Asian ethnicity are slightly under-represented. Over the last five years there have been small increases in the proportions of looked after children of non-white ethnicity which is likely to reflect the increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children

Age of Looked after children



Hillingdon currently has 311 looked after children and 400 care leavers, an increase by 5% from April 2018. In numbers, this is an increase of 15 children from 296 in April to 316 in June 2018, (5 children removed from LAC status in July). Year on year, there has been a 5% increase in the number of LAC this June compared to June last year when there were 295 LAC. Of the 311 LAC at the end of June 2018, 78 (25%) were asylum seeking children. This is an increase from 73 (25%) asylum seeking children at the end of April 2018. Year on year the number of LAC asylum seeking children has fallen from 80 in Q1 2017/18, as a percentage of the whole cohort the ratio of asylum seeking children has risen from 24% in Q1 2017/18 to 25% in Q1 2018/19. The range of LAC asylum seeking children during this period was 71-85 children / 24%-28%.

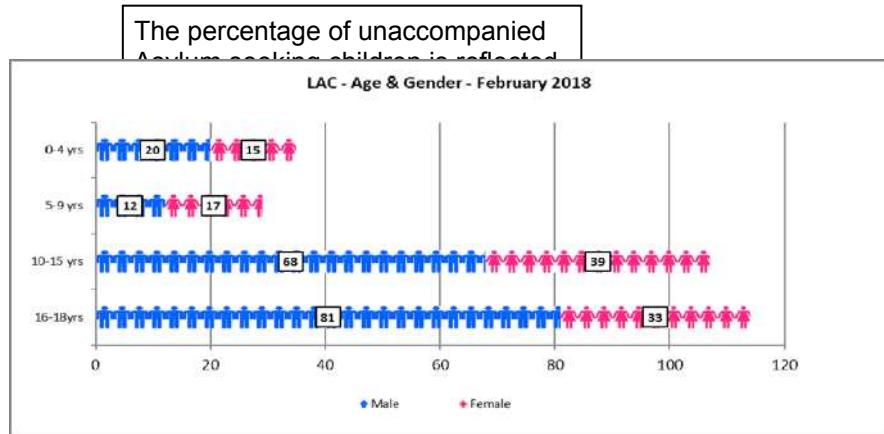
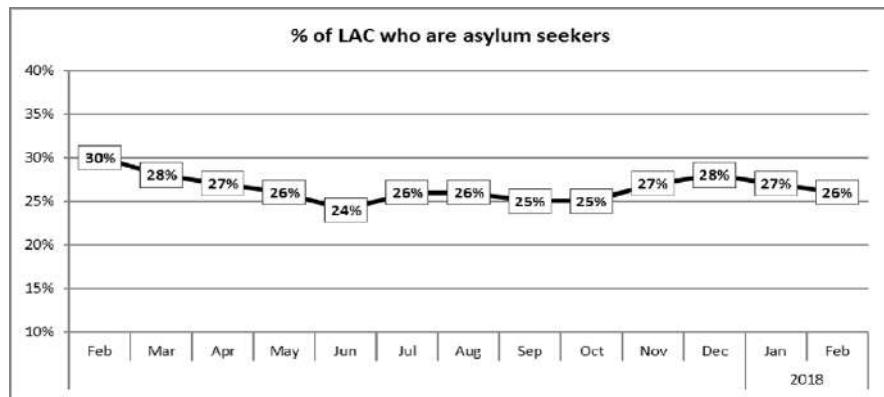
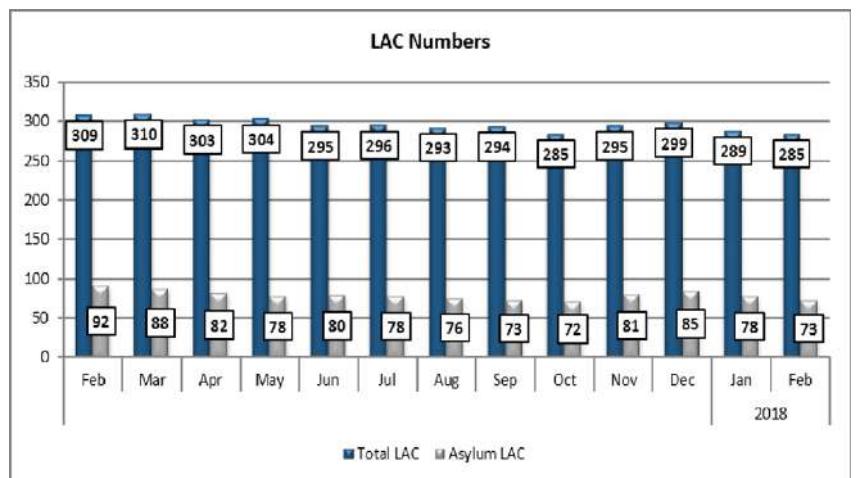
Table 1 below is a comparison of Hillingdon's LAC population with our statistical neighbours, London and nationally. There has been a steady year on year decrease in 'local' LAC population in contrast to sharp increase in UASC population of 27.4% increase in contrast to London average increase of 15.5% and nationally 6.3%.

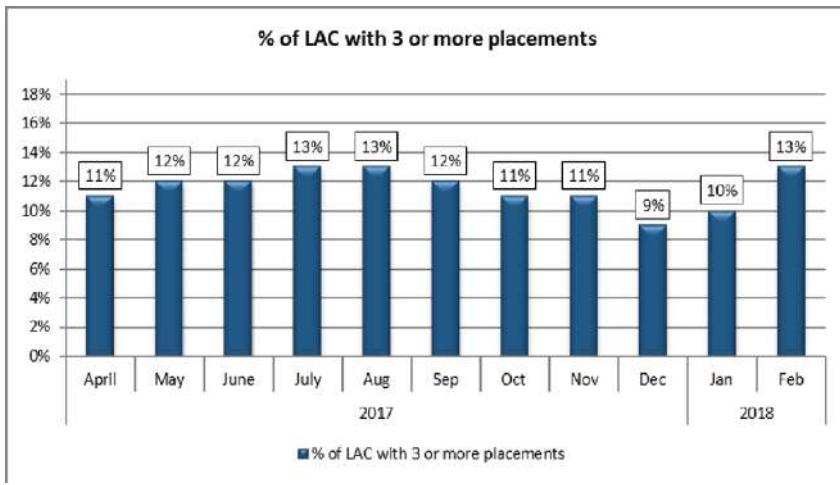
Table LAA1: Children looked after at 31 March

Table LAA4

Statistical neighbours	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Number of UASCs	% of LAC that are UASC - 2017
Hounslow	300	315	295	280	250	45	18.0%
Redbridge	205	215	215	215	230	15	6.5%
Slough	185	190	195	180	190	10	5.3%
Barnet	305	310	305	315	345	30	8.7%
Reading	225	205	210	220	260	10	3.8%
Sutton	170	195	225	230	230	20	8.7%
Ealing	400	385	355	370	345	45	13.0%
Coventry	620	630	590	580	620	40	6.5%
Milton Keynes	280	305	340	345	395	40	10.1%
Merton	140	150	155	165	150	20	13.3%
Hillingdon	360	355	335	340	310	85	27.4%
Top quartile	333	335	338	343	345	43	12%
Average	290	296	293	295	302	33	11%
England	68070	68820	69500	70450	72670	4560	6.3%
London	10080	10110	9980	9860	9910	1540	15.5%
Outer London	5630	5730	5780	5810	5680	1050	18.5%

The LAC population of Hillingdon is 65% male 35% female. This sits between the national ratio of 56% male and 44% female and for the London area 69% male and 31% female. In respect of age groups, the LAC population of Hillingdon has 41% of the population aged 16-18, this is greater than both the national average of 23% and the London average of 35%. Of the 78 LAC asylum seeking children 59 (76%) are aged 16-18 - 52 of these are male and 7 are female.





Placement Stability:

Children who are subject to frequent placement moves are less able to form positive attachments with their carers which makes them more vulnerable to forming unsafe relationships with other adults and peer groups and disengagement with education and positive activities. The number of placement moves that children have are carefully monitored and scrutinised to minimise disruption to our children and to make placement more resilient to prevent breakdown. Although every move is carefully planned and considered, placement breakdown for older children (14-16 year olds) remains a challenge for the local authority and a number of strategies have been put in place to prevent breakdown such as regular Placement Stability Meetings, additional support, therapy and where necessary 1-2-1 staffing ratio to prevent it. At the end of June 2018 37 (12%) LAC had three or more placements in the last 12 months, an improvement of 1 child from April 2018.

Unlike most London local authorities, we are fortunate to have 3 in-house residential units for children under 16 years and a semi-independent unit for 16 - 17 year olds. These provisions support Hillingdon's looked after children to remain locally. However, a small number of children are not able to live within Hillingdon when they are in care. A small minority of older children (17 children and young people) are placed at a distance in order to be more effectively safeguarded due to involvement in or due to the risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE), gang affiliation and/or drug dealing activities. At the end of June 2018 170 (55%) of LAC were in foster placements, 73 (23%) were in semi independent living and 54 ((17%)) in a residential placements. In 2017-18, there were 3 children in secure units (2 already successfully stepped-down to a therapeutic residential placement. At present, there is only one young person who was involved in high risk nationwide drug dealing remaining in a secure unit.

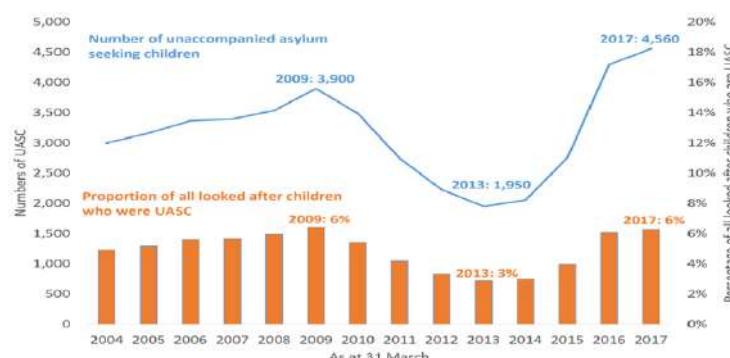
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Hillingdon currently has 93 UASC and 220 asylum seeking care leavers in our care. Within Hillingdon there has been consistently high numbers of UASC care entries and remained consistently much higher than Government's recommended ratio of 0.07% per 10.000 of local children's population. There is no dedicated budget for UASC or former UASC care leavers within Hillingdon, other than the Home Office grant received which covers only a small portion of Hillingdon's overall costs for UASC. Although the introduction of the National Transfer Scheme

(NTS) was intended to more evenly distribute UASC between the local authorities rather than primarily within London and the South East. Hillingdon is a port Local Authority to Heathrow Airport which brings additional challenges in relation to UASC and specifically for those UASC who refuse to move out of Hillingdon and London. Having said that, Hillingdon has forged strong links and partnership working with the Home Office, DfE and the UKBA to influence and develop good practice in relation to UASC. Currently, Hillingdon has 38 UASC awaiting transfers to other LAs, 12 refusing to go and 18 transferred since January 2018. Since the introduction of the NTS in July 2016, Hillingdon successfully transferred 61 UASC to other local authorities. Hillingdon also successfully negotiated with the Home Office to fund the Heathrow Standby Rota which ensures UASCs are assessed and supported at point of arrival at Heathrow Airport. Table 4 below demonstrates that Hillingdon deal with significantly higher volumes of UASC than our statistical neighbours and above national average. There is notable consistency in the age of UASC aged between 15-17 years. Given the age trends the UASC population has a significant bearing on Hillingdon's care leavers numbers and associated budgets.

Statistical neighbours	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Hounslow	25	30	40	35	45
Redbridge	20	20	25	20	15
Slough	10	10	10	10	10
Barnet	5	x	10	20	30
Reading	5	x	x	5	10
Sutton	5	10	10	15	20
Ealing	15	20	25	25	45
Coventry	10	10	15	15	40
Milton Keynes	5	10	25	40	40
Merton	20	15	15	25	20
Hillingdon	95	90	95	110	85
Top quartile	20	20	25	30	43
Average	20	24	27	29	33
England	1950	2060	2750	4300	4560
London	880	970	1230	1470	1540
Outer London	660	740	910	1070	1050

Table 4 - Unaccompanied asylum seeking children looked after at 31 March, by authority
The number of looked after children who were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children continues to increase in 2017



Health Outcomes for Looked After Children

Looked after children and young people share the same health risks and problems as their peers but often to a greater degree. They often enter care with a worse level of health than their peers due to poverty, neglect, abuse and poor parenting. UASCs face additional health, emotional and mental health needs due to their experiences in their country or on route to the UK. Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that regular health assessments are carried out for every looked after child. Hillingdon has a robust monitoring process to ensure timely completion of health assessments supported by a jointly produced Health & Wellbeing Guidance with Health. Table 5 below outlines the progress that has been made to improve health assessment outcomes for our looked after children and young people. 93% of all LAC have up to date health assessments. The remaining 10% refers to our young people who have refused to attend their health assessments, despite persistent encouragement by their workers.

Dental health is an integral part of the health assessment. The local authority and NHS Trust are required to ensure that all looked after children receive regular check-ups with a dentist. There has been a significant improvement (20% increase) in ensuring all LAC children have annual dental checks. At present, over 90% of LAC have up to date dental examination. Similar to health assessments, the remaining 10% relates to young people who refuse to attend their dentist appointments.

% of Health assessments & Dental checks for 2016 -17 and 2017-18 Hillingdon:

Year	Number of children with health surveillance checks up to date	Number of children who have had their annual health assessment	Number of children their teeth checked by a dentist
2017-2018	100%	93%	90%

2016-2017	88%	92%	70%
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Table 5 - Annual health assessment for LAC 2016-17 and 2017-18

Hillingdon's Looked after children have lower Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores than national averages, with Hillingdon's LAC population having a average score of 12.2 and nationally this being 14.1. Young people have access to community resources from our Targeted programmes and also specially commissioned service MAPS. The practice focuses on to ensure that:

- Initial and review health assessments inform good care planning, review and monitoring of health & wellbeing of our looked after children and care leavers
- Looked after children and Young people are given priority access to specialist services, including targeted programmes, CAMHS and sexual health services.
- Completion of SDQ's is undertaken in timescales laid out in Health and Wellbeing policy with all young people with a SDQ score of 17+ being referred to our in-house specialist Multi-Agency Psychology Service (MAPS). Review of middle scores between 14-16 need further analysis to ensure timely and appropriate support is provided to prevent mental health breakdown.
- Young people are supported to access their health records, including immunisation records
- Looked after children and young people are encouraged and supported to engage in extracurricular activities to support their social skills, self esteem and emotional wellbeing

Education of Looked After Children

Responsibility to promote the educational achievement of children who are looked after has been a statutory duty placed upon Local Authorities since the Children Act 1989 ("the 1989 Act") (as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014). The Children and Families Act 2014 amended the Children Act 1989 to require local authorities in England to appoint at least one person for the purpose of discharging the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievements of its Children Looked After, wherever they live or are educated. That person (the Virtual School Head, VSH) must be an officer employed by the authority or another local authority in England. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 further expanded this work to include making advice and information available for the purpose of promoting the educational achievement of each relevant child educated in their area.

Ensuring that Looked After Children receive a high quality education is the foundation for improving their lives. Looked After Children have poorer educational outcomes than non-looked after children. They still face significant challenges and are four times more likely to have a special educational need than all children and are almost 10 times more likely to have a statement of special educational need or an education, health and care plan (EHCP).

The rate of permanent exclusions for Looked After Children is around twice as high as the rate for all children. They are five times more likely to have a fixed period exclusion than all children.

In 2017, 32% of Looked After Children reached the new expected standard or above in the headline measure reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2, compared to 61% for non-looked after children.

In 2017, there was an increase in the percentage of Looked After Children achieving an A*-C in English and mathematics from 17.4 % to 17.5%. The percentage of Looked After Children achieving the old headline measure, percentage achieving 5+ GCSEs A*-C or equivalent including English and mathematics was 15%.

Hillingdon LAC educational achievements:

We have high aspirations for our children and encourage them to pursue a broad spectrum of activities. Hillingdon Virtual School continue to actively monitor, support and advocate for its complex and varied Looked After Children population and this work has contributed to many positive outcomes.

Although outcomes for Hillingdon LAC who have been in continuous care for 12 months or more fluctuate year on year and are highly dependent on the makeup of the cohort, progress over time has been evident, particularly at KS4 with a rise in Looked After Children achieving the old headline measure of 5 A*-C including English and maths from 7% in 2014 to 20% in 2017.

In 2017, 43% of eligible LAC achieved expected attainment at Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and maths, with positive progress recorded in writing (5.14) and maths (0.14).

On average, 2/3 of the statutory school age LAC cohort are making expected progress.

The percentage of statutory school age LAC without a school place remains low at 3.6%. Average attendance for statutory school age LAC is currently 90.18%, with unauthorised absence of 2.89%. 10.6 % of the statutory school age LAC cohort have recorded one or more fixed term exclusions.

To support LAC and care leavers to reach their educational potential, the following commitments have been made:

- Every LAC aged 4-18 has an allocated Virtual School Officer.
- Every LAC has access to high quality full time education, as appropriate to their needs.
- Every LAC has access to a comprehensive enrichment offer.
- Progress and attainment of LAC is closely monitored and 100% of PEPs are completed in time scale, 90%+ rag rated as the high quality, with the child's voice at the centre.
- To track and monitor the use of pupil premium plus, to ensure that all eligible LAC receive the support they require in a timely fashion.
- To work closely with schools, foster carers, social care colleagues and external partners to monitor and improve attendance and reduce unauthorised absence and exclusions for LAC.
- To build and strengthen the collaborative working to further reduce school changes, particularly as a result of care placement breakdowns.
- To reduce NEET figures for 16-18 Hillingdon LAC.
- To strengthen transitions from KS4 to KS5 and KS5 to leaving care and to develop a better understanding of educational needs post 18 in order to support HE access and provide appropriate information, advice and guidance.

Care Leavers

Nationally 40% of Care leavers aged 19-21 are not in education training or employment (NEET) in 2017. Care Leavers in Hillingdon are more likely to be engaged in Education Training and

Employment than the national average with 22% of our care leaver population being NEET.

We undertook a thematic NEET audit in 2017, which has resulted in greater investment in young people through promoting a greater range of options for training, employment and learning. We also established a NEET Panel, in collaboration with partners, which works closely to improve EET and outcomes for our care leavers such as promoting apprenticeships. The Virtual School actively supports the transition from care, through maintaining the PEP until the young person turns 18. This provides an understanding of the young person's progress in education or training, outlines the use of the 16-19 bursary and the young person's plans for the future and required steps to achieve.

Post 18, information, advice and guidance continues to be provided by the Virtual School for any young people remaining in education and this is communicated at the young person's final PEP, before they turn 18. The Virtual School team work with the PA's and social workers to ensure relevant services are signposted and support is available as required.

We are very proud of our academic achievements of our care leaver with 62 care leavers undertaking degree courses at University in the current academic year.

We have also encouraged care leavers to apply for jobs within the Council and we have committed to at least offer all those interested, the experience of a job interview. So far, 4 care leavers have applied for administrative roles. We continue to explore opportunities for care leavers to engage in Council leisure activities free of charge. Developments are in place to support our care leavers on:

- Recruitment and employment practices that offer supportive work experience and employment opportunities, including priority for apprenticeships for young people who are in or have left the Council's care.
- Commissioning structures that take into account opportunities for looked after children and young people, including apprenticeships.
- Continue to develop links with local ETE providers to enable young people to have access to a range to employment and training options.
- Virtual school team continue to offer information, advice and guidance post 18.
- Support young people to access training and services to develop their independent living skills at an early age.

Care leavers with additional needs who require an assessment under the Care Act are presented to the Transition panel before their 18th birthday to ensure timely assessment and provision of service based on assessed need. Our care leavers are given a choice to live in various housing options depending on the need identified and availability. We knew and our peers told us, about the need to explore further opportunities for care leavers linked to housing options. Our Children's Social Care and Housing Panel meet monthly to consider social housing for care leavers. This year, 38 care leavers were provided with council houses and 61 are waiting for suitable social housing. Care Leavers that are in shared accommodation or HMOs are routinely visited by the Monitoring Officer to ensure the suitability of the accommodation. We have moved a few care leavers from shared accommodations as the condition of the accommodation did not meet the standards set by the council.

Care leavers have the opportunity to stay with their families for longer. 19 care leavers are in 'Staying put' arrangements. 'Staying in touch' arrangements beyond the age of 18 are always

considered and promoted in Hillingdon and all care leavers regardless of their NEET or EET status continue to have a dedicated PA until 21. Our 'Staying put' policy was co-produced with our young people. Hillingdon's Placement Sufficiency Strategy 2018-2021 sets out the vision and priorities regarding placement options, choice and stability.

Permanency Planning

Hillingdon has an established and imbedded Pre-Proceedings process, which is accessed via the Hillingdon Access to Resources Panel. Our PLO and court proceedings were highly praised by both the LGA and Ofsted Inspectors at the last inspection in April 2018. The process includes timely identification of risk and effective intervention, with clear management oversight. Our highly specialised court team ensures timely, evidence-based, child-focused and high quality court work to avoid delays and drift to children's permanency. Our compliance and timescales as set out in Public Law Outline (PLO) which requires care proceedings to conclude within 26 weeks consistently remains one of the best performing Local Authority in London. Our performance since April 2017 as follows:

- There were 27 families- 57 children subject to pre-proceedings PLO and average of PLO process is 9 weeks (national target as set out in PLO is 12 weeks)
- Number of live care proceedings stands at 33 families and 60 children and average of care proceedings stands at 20 weeks which is below the 26 weeks set nationally.

Concluded cases by each quarter between April 2017 - March 2018

- Quarter 1 - 15 families involving 22 children are concluded within 21 weeks
- Quarter 2 - 20 families involving 32 children are concluded within 27 weeks
- Quarter 3- 11 families involving 17 children care concluded within 26 weeks
- Quarter 4 - 11 families involving 14 children are concluded in 25 weeks
- In total 57 care proceedings involving 85 children are concluded between April 2017- March 2018 and the average of care proceedings stands at 25 weeks.

The outcomes of proceedings:

- 31 Children became subject to Supervision Orders
- 25 Children subject to SGO (6 with Supervision Orders)
- 24 children on Care Orders (5 with Placement Orders)
- 5 Children were granted Placement Orders
- 16 Adoptions Orders have been made and 7 children are currently placed with their prospective adoptive families.

Wherever possible children remain within their families. Our Family Group Conference Service is contracted from DayBreak with good use of the service and this is promoted via HARP, supervision and Legal Planning Processes. Hillingdon have recently commissioned additional conference capacity to meet demand and ensure that children grow up in familiar families. This supports early identification of connected carers.

Listening to the voice of the child

The 2007 Care Matters: Time for Change White Paper set out the then government's intention for all local authorities to establish a children in care council to provide children and young

people, in and leaving care, with additional opportunities to voice their views and experiences of the care system and increase their ability to influence and improve the services they receive from their local authority corporate parents.

The importance of listening to the voice of the child is reinforced by Children and Social Work Act 2017 introducing the Corporate Parenting Principle of “to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people”.

Hillingdon has three established and well attended children in care council's (CiCC) Talkers, Step up and Stepping out who meet monthly and are part of the regional children in care council network. Our CiCC have a powerful collective voice, including having had input in the development on marketing materials in fostering recruitment, consultation on the licence agreements for staying put, development of a leaflet for care leavers to accompany the new financial policy. Consultation with the CiCC resulted in Operation Makesafe, a joint social care/police operation to make Hillingdon's high streets safer.

The CiCC's views were presented at each Corporate Parenting Board, at social work team and management meetings alongside members of stepping out attending the corporate parenting board meeting. Young people participate in the recruitment of staff and foster carers and meet with the director and deputy director on a quarterly basis.

Individually children are seen by qualified social workers with statutory visits being up to date for 93% of our children and young people. 86.7% of our Looked after children participated in their LAC reviews and there is ongoing development of the consultation forms, agenda's and a menu of options to support young people to be able to participation in LAC reviews in a way that suits them best, including the option to chair their own reviews.

Key achievement for Children in Care Council in the previous 12 months

- representatives of stepping out and step up met with Ofsted inspectors in April 2018 who described them as an insightful group of children and young people.
- representative of stepping out and step up met with the director and deputy director on a quarterly basis to discuss key areas of challenge and improvement for services for children in care and care leavers.
- representatives of Stepping out were involved in recruitment of Personal Advisors for the young people's service and staff within the children's rights and participation team.
- CiCC were engaged with the previous Corporate Parenting Board with 8 young people leading the board's discussion.
- Stepping out were actively involved in the planning and delivery of the annual care leavers conference in 2017 choosing the theme of chasing your dreams - education training and employment. The event, supported by Brunel University had 9 education, training and employment providers, with 100% of attendees stating that the event was enjoyable, useful and helpful.

Celebrating the achievement of our children in care

Every year Hillingdon celebrated the achievements of its children in care with an awards ceremony. The event, kindly supported by the Arora hotels group is planned, arranged and presented by children in care. The 2017 event saw 198 Looked after children and young people awarded a KICA with 21 young people actively involved in the preparation, support, presenting

and performing at the red carpet awards event. Feedback received by those in attendance show this event was a huge success.

Plans are in progress for KICA 2018 with the event taking place on 10th November 2018. The young person's KICA panel has chosen a theme of "carnival" for an exciting and uplifting event.

Future events and consultation

The children's rights and participation team continue to lead the involvement of young people in service development and delivery and are supporting young people in the next 6 months to:

- be involved in interviews for newly qualified social workers
- be involved in interviews for children's rights and participation officer
- leading a workshop at the annual CAFCASS conference
- providing training, alongside the LSCB to multi-agency colleagues regarding to support professionals understanding of their lived experiences
- involved in "young inspectors" project, inspecting Hillingdon's three residential units.
- be involved in the development of complaints leaflets, to meet the identified recommendations from the April 2018 Ofsted inspection.

What do looked after children and care leavers say about the service they receive from Hillingdon?

XX age 15 years

My name is XX and I am a 15-year-old girl. I am British/Gambian. I have high aspirations for the future. I have been the secretary of Stepping Up, one of Hillingdon's Children in Care Council subgroups for two years, where I am told I am very opinionated and vocal! I believe we do really good work at Stepping up, including describing what and who we want our social workers to be. I believe that helps children in care, because social workers learn from us. It also helps Hillingdon recruit good social workers!

K is my social worker. She is very, very good. She doesn't make promises she can't keep and she always does what she says. I can't even think of once that K didn't do what she said she would. She turns up early and takes me out for lunch, I particularly enjoy our Chinese-food lunches! K really listens to me and she is always there for me. She checks in when I go quiet, and will just turn up or she will text or call me. She tries really hard to make my life better. I find her to be supportive and understanding. She does not always agree with me, but she will listen to what I have to say.

K helps me to attend my meetings, because I can be shy around all the adults. I usually tell K what I need to say before a meeting, so that she can help me out if I need it. She is so supportive. She finds me activities to do and she helps me keep in contact with my family. She also helps me to make sense of stuff, like why my foster sister keeps following me around.

ZZ age 18 years

My name is ZZ, I am 18 years old and have had support from the Leaving Care Service from March 2016 when I first came into care. It was a rough ride! I was very angry, confused and volatile at the time. I did many things to hurt myself. I had an eating disorder, I really struggled with my mental health, I did not sleep and I was drinking and using drugs. I was also coming to terms with my sexuality. I would have massive meltdowns in the office, screaming at my social

worker and managers, but that is all in the past now.

I now have a full-time apprenticeship and am completing my GCSEs at the same time. I live in supported lodgings and have a great relationship with my Key worker and the girls there. It feels like family. I visit my family and even babysit my little niece. I do not binge drink anymore, I do not do drugs and I work really hard to make my dreams come true. I am saving for a car and have started my driving lessons!

Part of what helped me turn my life around was a change in my brain and in my thinking and the other part was the support and help from the Leaving Care Team. My social worker was amazing. She was the only person who got me. She listened (even if I was swearing and shouting!), she understood me and she knew my history and my journey. She never judged me. She never got angry. She just accepted me for who I am. The little things made a big difference, like taking me to my mental health appointments, going to the hospital, texting, phoning, turning up and arranging activities (I would have liked more of those!). When she was not around, the duty workers and team managers, even the Head of Service would meet with me and listen to me.

I did sometimes think the team was a bunch of pushy parents and I was not always ready or willing to listen to advice, but they never gave up, even when I had massive temper tantrums! They helped me to love myself, because they loved me and cared for me, no matter what I did. They accepted my sexuality and always respected me and treated me fairly.

I am now ready for the next part of my life journey and look forward to telling other Care Leavers about my difficult journey in the hope to inspire them to accept the help and know there is light at the end of the tunnel. I know that I would have been six feet under, if it wasn't for the help and support I received.

Implications on related Council policies

The Committee is able to recommend policy ideas within its remit to the Cabinet who is responsible for Council policy.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

Policy Overview Committees directly engage residents in looking at ways to further improve the way the Council provides services to residents.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

Engaging with children in care and care leavers is a key component of the seven Corporate Parenting Principles introduced by Statutory guidance for local authorities (February 2018) Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers.

Unprecedented payment and benefits package for foster carers

Thursday 9 May: To mark Foster Care Fortnight, Hillingdon Council has launched an unrivalled payment and benefits package for foster carers who can now earn up to £1,500 per week and receive a 25 per cent reduction in council tax when looking after a child in care.



The unprecedented campaign to recruit more foster carers offers the most competitive package in London, including £1,000 off utility bills, a winter fuel allowance and a family Merlin and leisure pass. This equates to an annual salary of up to £72,000.

There are currently 365 children in the council's care in Hillingdon, but with a national foster carer shortage, people are needed now more than ever to provide a loving, stable home for a child in need.

Jeanette Isaacs, aged 59 from Ruislip, has been fostering with Hillingdon Council for six years. She said: "The cost of living has gone up so much, so the council's new payment and benefits package will be a good incentive for many people to sign up. I foster because my heart is in it and I wanted to enhance a child's life, but the new offer shows further recognition for the valuable job we do

"I've got two grown up children and my divorce had a huge impact on us all. It was a traumatic experience, but we came through it stronger and I felt we had something special that we could offer someone. I felt it was important to give back and fostering is very rewarding - you can really make a difference."

Cllr Susan O'Brien, Hillingdon Council's Cabinet Member for Education and Families, said: "We are so proud to launch this incredible new payment and benefits package for our dedicated, hard-working foster carers and we hope it will encourage more people to find out more about fostering.

"There are many reasons people choose to foster; it's rewarding and a great chance to give back to the community, but it is also an excellent career choice; working in a role where you can directly change the life of a child or young person."

The council's fostering service is running several events throughout foster care fortnight, including a community walk at Ruislip Lido on Tuesday 21 May and an information stand at Hillingdon Business Expo on Thursday 23 May.

To find out more, visit: www.hillingdon.gov.uk/fostering



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Britain's care homes crisis: children sent to live hundreds of miles away

Observer investigation uncovers the scale of the crisis in a system where the most vulnerable 'will continue to be put at risk'

Michael Savage *Policy editor*

Sat 1 Apr 2023 18.33 BST

Some of Britain's most vulnerable children are being moved to care homes more than 300 miles away from the neighbourhoods they grew up in, according to an *Observer* investigation revealing a "national scandal".

The shocking figures make clear for the first time the scale of the crisis that has long worried child welfare experts. They show dozens of children from London alone are in foster or care homes more than 250 miles from the city, as councils battle a significant shortfall in provision. [Children](#) from the capital have been placed in homes near Perth, Glasgow, Knowsley, Leeds and Carlisle.

Care experts said that the pattern is being repeated across the country, removing children from critical support networks and familiar surroundings.

About 600 children from London are in foster or residential care more than 50 miles from their home neighbourhoods. Councils have warned they often have to compete for limited places, and face "rising costs and profiteering on the backs of vulnerable children".

Some children need to be placed in certain locations for their own safety. However, there is widespread acceptance that the care system is failing to provide enough appropriate places in the right areas. Experts warn that relocating children removed them from schools, friends and extended family, as well as clubs and activities that were often key to their wellbeing. They warned it also put some at greater risk of exploitation.

According to the *Observer*'s findings, uncovered using the Freedom of Information Act, at least 37 children from the capital are placed more than 250 miles away. The figure is likely to be far higher, as some councils did not reveal precise numbers. At least 600 are more than 50 miles away.

John Pearce, from the Association of Directors of Children's Services, said the investigation highlighted "a pressing and longstanding national issue that we continue to raise with the government - a lack of local placements for the children in our care".

"Local authorities are working hard to overcome the sufficiency challenges they face," he said. "But we need the support of the government to address the significant challenges we all face as well as rising costs and profiteering on the backs of vulnerable children."

Clare Bracey, director of policy and campaigns at Become, a charity for care leavers and those still in care, said being moved far from home left children lonely and isolated.

"This is a national scandal and is getting worse," she said. "There are sometimes reasons why these moves are necessary for the child, but the reality is that for many children these moves are happening because there just are not enough suitable places for them to stay close to home. They are being let down."

Chris Wild, a care leaver who campaigns for more legal protections for care leavers, said he knew of cases of children being moved several times a year. "I was in the care system 30 years ago, but from everything I'm seeing, nothing has changed," he said. "There's evidence these moves put them at greater risk of going missing, ending up homeless or developing severe mental health issues."

An independent review of children's social care last year revealed a system spiralling out of control, recommending a [five-year, £2.6bn plan](#) to improve it. However, ministers initially pledged just [£200m over two years](#). The government has since said it has added £259m to fund homes.

Anne Longfield, the former children's commissioner for England, said the large distances involved were a symptom of a broken system. "I have heard so many horrific stories of teenagers who are moved far from home to places where they know nobody," she said. "They then become easy pickings for those who want to exploit and abuse children."

"The independent review of children's social care published a year ago provided a roadmap to fixing this crisis. However, the government's half-hearted response and its failure to provide the levels of investment required means hundreds of vulnerable children will continue to be put at risk in places they can't even place on a map."

Rachel de Souza, England's current children's commissioner, said she wanted to see particular attention paid to sibling groups, those with mental health needs or disabilities, or who live in custody "for whom being placed large distances from their families and support networks can leave them without any of the positive relationships in their lives that other children take for granted".

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All the London councils who spoke to the *Observer* said the needs of the children were always their first priority and that cost was not the driver of any placements, with some of the young people needing to be moved for their own safety. They said keeping all children within their neighbourhoods was always the aim and that the vast majority of children were placed within their boroughs. There are also several studies and plans under way to create more secure child care home places.

However, many acknowledged the serious shortcomings hampering the system.

"There is a crisis in the residential care home sector, where a scarcity of places means that it can be extremely hard to find a suitable home for children - especially if they have complex or specific needs," said Anntoinette Bramble, deputy mayor of Hackney. A Greenwich borough council spokesperson said that a "lack of sufficient placement options is a national issue for children in care".

Marian James, from Sutton council, said: "The [independent review of children's care] recommended more funding for children's social care, which we wholeheartedly agree with, along with reform of the children's care system, but we need to receive adequate funding to enable the whole of the review recommendations to be fully realised."

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "Local authorities are responsible for placing looked after children and must look to make placements in the child's best interests, which in most cases means a child is placed within 20 miles of their home."

"In addition to the £200m announced in March, we are investing £259m to create more placements for children in high-quality and safe homes."

"We are also investing over £27m to recruit and retain more foster carers and are working to develop a new regional model of delivering care placements, helping more children stay closer to their home networks."

Ofsted Data Shows Concern for Children Living in Residential Settings

A new report from Ofsted shows that there continues to remain a shortage of suitable accommodation for children living in care in England, with more than 1 in 10 unregistered placements being holiday rental homes.

31 July 2023

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) has published a new [report](#) including data on children's homes, serious incidents, and unregistered accommodation in England, covering the period March 2022-23. Ofsted are responsible for inspecting education and children's services in England to make sure that all children and young people receive the best quality of education and care. The data released raises concerns for children's residential care in England.

An increase in homes, but national shortage of places persists

Ofsted's data shows that since March 2022, there has been a 9% increase in the number of children's residential homes across the country, meaning that there are more places for children to live. Although this sounds promising, residential homes remain unevenly distributed across the country. In the North-West of England, there are 746 children's homes compared to only 164 in the London area.

When local authorities cannot find suitable accommodation for children, it is likely that the child will be moved to live outside of their local area. This means that children are moved far from their support circles and unable to attend their normal education settings or have regular contact with friends and family.

The data for secure children's homes paints an equally worrying picture. There are still only 13 secure children's homes across England, offering a total of just 204 places. In [last year's data summary](#), it was reported that at any one time, around 50 children each day were waiting for a place in a secure children's home. Similar data for 2023 has not been reported on.

Ofsted have highlighted that in London and the West Midlands there are no secure homes. This means that for children living in these areas who need therapeutic care, their only option is to be moved away from their local area. NYAS' [research series](#) offers more insight into the challenges facing secure children's homes, with reforms to this type of care urgently needed.

Care-experienced children continue to be criminalised and exploited

All children's homes in England must report serious incidents to Ofsted. 30,200 incidents were reported to Ofsted from children's residential homes over the past year, with 26% of these incidents involving police call outs. Not all these incidents involving the police were because a child was acting unlawfully. The data shows that half of police call outs related to situations where a child was reported as [missing](#) or was a victim of exploitation. It is however unclear from the data how many police incidents specifically involved children being criminalised and what the outcomes of these incidents were.

Care-experienced children are 15 times more likely to be criminalised compared to their peers and around one quarter of all adults in prison in England are care-experienced. It is important for the data released to clearly state why police are being called out to children's homes and the outcomes of these calls, so children's charities like NYAS can help to reduce the number of care-experienced children entering the criminal justice system.

The use of unregistered accommodation remains a serious concern

Any type of accommodation that provides care for a child or young person must legally notify Ofsted so they can become a registered care provider. When this does not happen it means the accommodation is unregistered and that is illegal in England. Despite this, unregistered and unsuitable accommodation is still being used in England.

Between March 2022-23, Ofsted conducted 460 investigations into unregistered accommodation. 71% of unregistered home placements were used because local authorities could not find suitable accommodation for children and more than 1 in 10 of unregistered placements were found to be holiday rental homes. Placing children in these types of accommodation is illegal and breaking their UNCRC Article 27 right to an adequate standard of living.

Ofsted reportedly found that 77% of all placements investigated should have been registered, and these placements have now either received a final letter of notice or have been shut down. It is unclear from the data, however, how many of these unregistered

CO

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The data published by Ofsted raises concerns over the state of children's residential care in England. NYAS is urging the UK Government to take immediate action to make sure that:

- There are enough registered children's homes in England to end the use of unregistered accommodation
- To take a stronger approach to providers or local authorities placing children in unregistered accommodation

You can read the full data report from Ofsted [here](#).

Latest News



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9 November 2023

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 > Children looked after in England including adoptions

Reporting year 2023

Children looked after in England including adoptions

This is the latest data



Published 16 November 2023

Next update November 2024

Last updated 25 April 2024

Release type [Accredited official statistics](#)

Receive updates

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

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Releases in this series

Methodologies

[Children looked after in England including](#)

The latest statistics relate to the year ending 31 March 2023 and comparisons are to the year ending 31 March 2022 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 2019 to the year ending 31 March 2023.

[adoptions](#)

Headline facts and figures - 2023

Children looked after on 31 March 2023

83,840

Up 2% on 2022

CLA on 31 March, who were UASC

7,290

Up 29% on 2022

Children who ceased to be looked after

31,680

Up 5% on 2022

CLA per 10,000 children

71

Up from 70 in 2022

Children who started to be looked after

33,000

Up 6% on 2022

Children who ceased to be looked after, who were adopted

2,960

Down 2% on 2022

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked-after by a local authority if he or she falls into one of the following:

- is provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours [Children Act 1989, Section 20 and 21]
- is subject to a care order [Children Act 1989, Part IV]
- is subject to a placement order

Figures relate to the year ending 31 March 2023 and compare to the year ending 31 March 2022 unless otherwise stated.

The number of children looked after (CLA) by local authorities in England rose to 83,840 - up 2% - continuing the rise seen in recent years. This is a rate of 71 children looked after per 10,000 children - up from 70 last year.

Both the numbers of children looked after starting (CLA starting) and children looked after ceasing to be looked after (CLA ceasing) have increased - the number of CLA starting during the year has increased by 6% - to 33,000 - and the number of CLA ceasing during the year increased by 5% - to 31,680.

The number of CLA who were adopted was down 2% to 2,960.

Many of the changes within the release can be explained by the large increase in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) this year. UASC have increased by 29%, following the 37% increase seen last year. UASC influence many of the changes seen in the figures this year as they are a distinct cohort with specific characteristics, for example they are generally male, aged 16+ years.

[Home](#) > [Parenting, childcare and children's services](#)

> [Safeguarding and social care for children](#) > [Children's social care providers](#)
> [Children's social care data in England 2023](#)



National statistics

Main findings: children's social care in England 2023

Updated 8 September 2023

Applies to England

Contents

[Summary](#)

[Main findings](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Inspection of LA children's services](#)

[Social care providers and places as at 31 March 2023](#)

[Children's homes of all types](#)

[Other social care providers](#)

[Further information](#)

[Glossary](#)

[Annex: data tables for figures](#)



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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childrens-social-care-data-in-england-2023/main-findings-childrens-social-care-in-england-2023>

This is the main findings report for the [children's social care in England 2023 release](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childrens-social-care-data-in-england-2023) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childrens-social-care-data-in-england-2023>). The following are also available:

- underlying data
- methodology
- pre-release access list

Summary

This release contains:

- inspection outcomes for local authority (LA) children's services inspections from 1 November 2013, covering all inspections published by 30 April 2023
- the number of providers of children's social care, and the number of places they are registered for, as at 31 March 2023
- the most recent inspections and outcomes for all regulated and inspected children's social care provision, as at 31 March 2023 and published by 30 April 2023
- outcomes for all regulated and inspected children's social care provision inspections carried out between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 and published by 30 April 2023

Main findings

The number of children's homes in England continues to rise across all regions.

As at 31 March 2023, there was a 9% increase in the number of children's homes (to 2,880) and a 7% increase in the number of places (to 10,818) compared with 31 March 2022. This continues the long-standing trend of the number of homes rising faster than the number of places.

Although all regions had an increase in the number of children's homes this year, homes are still not evenly distributed across England. Similar to last year, the North West accounts for a quarter of all children's homes and almost a quarter of all places.

All LAs have now had at least one inspection under the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. A higher proportion of LAs were graded good or outstanding after their first ILACS inspection compared with their first single inspection framework (SIF) inspection.

After every LA had received one ILACS inspection, the proportion of LAs judged good or outstanding for overall effectiveness was 55%, which is higher than after every LA had received a full inspection under the SIF framework, when this proportion was 36%. The proportion of LAs rated inadequate has fallen from 22% after every LA had received a full SIF inspection to 13% after every LA had received a full ILACS inspection.

The long-term trend of the steadily decreasing number and potential capacity of residential special schools registered as children's homes continues this year as these settings close or reconfigure their registration.

This year's total of 56 residential special schools registered as children's homes is the lowest in the last decade and contrasts with the 2014 total of 88 residential special schools registered as children's homes (a 36% drop since 2014). In the same period, potential capacity has dropped from 2,331 to 1,457 (a 37% drop since 2014). In some cases, this may relate to reconfiguration of settings' registration as opposed to their closure.

Residential family centres saw a large proportional increase compared with last year, with a 15% increase in settings and a 20% increase in potential capacity.

Residential family centres represent a small proportion of social care providers and places overall but saw a substantial increase compared with last year, with a 15% increase in settings (from 68 to 78) and a 20% increase in potential capacity (from 371 to 444).

Introduction

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

Out of the [nearly 12 million children](#)

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland> living in England, just over [400,000 \(3%\)](#)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/characteristics-of-children-in-need-2021-to-2022>) are in the social care system at any one time. Just over [82,000 of these children are children in care](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2021-to-2022>). As at 31 March 2023, across England, 152 LAs were responsible for ensuring and overseeing the effective delivery of social care services for children. We inspect these LAs to see how their children's services are performing.

We regulate and/or inspect providers that offer placements for children in care and other providers of placements. As at 31 March 2023, there were 3,812 active or suspended social care providers of these services in England. More information about the different types of providers can be found in [Figure 5](#) and in the [glossary](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/glossary-of-terms-ofsted-statistics#Socialcareglossary>).

Inspection of LA children's services

This year we reached a point at which every LA had been inspected under the ILACS framework. This means that it is now possible to compare inspection outcomes after every LA had received a full ILACS inspection with those after every LA had received a full SIF inspection.

Of these, one (South Tyneside) was inspected during the 2022 to 2023 period but was not published by the usual deadline for inclusion; however, it is included in this report to enable comparison between inspection outcomes after every LA had received a full inspection under the SIF and after every LA had received a full inspection under the ILACS framework.

This year, we visited 95 LAs on 111 occasions to carry out short or standard ILACS inspections, focused visits and monitoring visits. There have been 51 short or standard ILACS inspections during the year.

Overall LA effectiveness as at 31 March 2023

As at 31 March 2023, 16% of LAs were judged outstanding, 43% good, 32% requires improvement to be good and 9% inadequate. The proportion of LAs judged outstanding or good has increased from 53% in 2022 to 59% in 2023.

Figure 1: LA overall effectiveness as at 31 March 2023 compared with 31 March 2022

As at 31 March 2023 (152)

16

43

32

9

As at 31 March 2022 (150)

13

40

35

12

Category	As at 31 March 2023 (152)	As at 31 March 2022 (150)
% Outstanding	16	13
% Good	43	40
% Requires improvement to be good	32	35
% Inadequate	9	12

Note: Numbers in brackets represent the number of LAs with an overall effectiveness outcome as at 31 March 2022 and 2023.

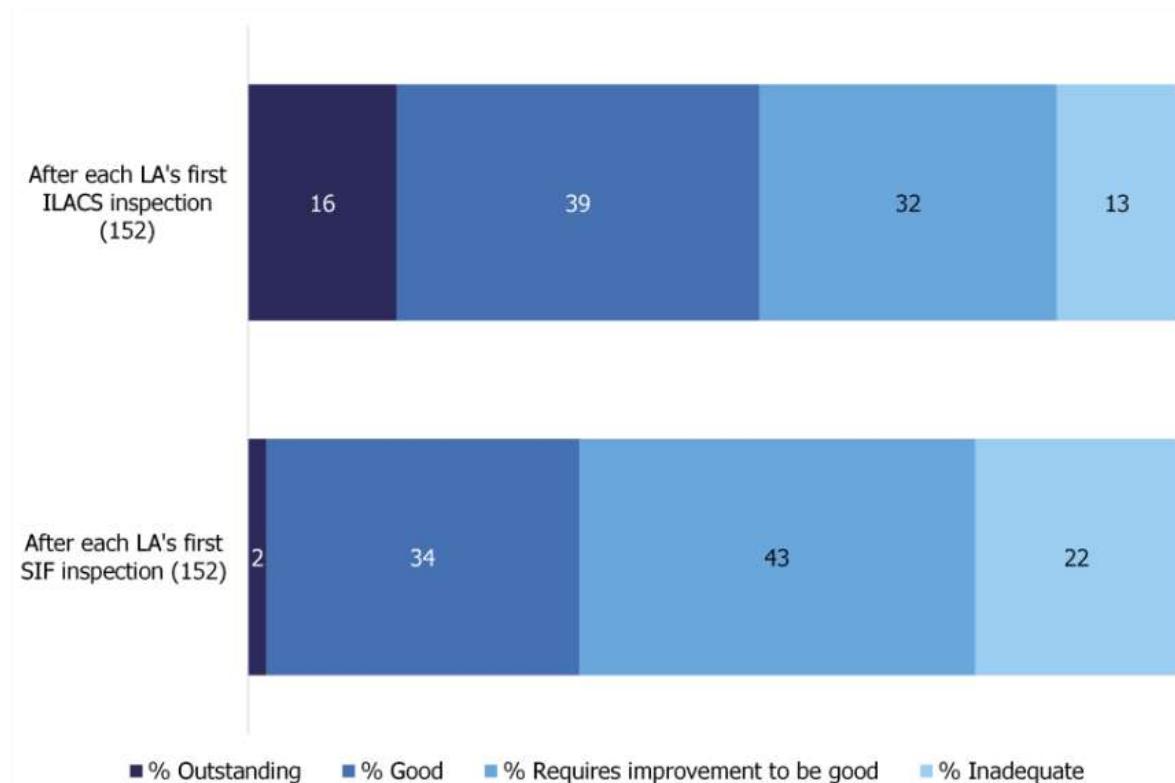
Due to rounding, percentages might not add up to 100.

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

A small number of LAs have already had their second ILACS inspection. Their most recent grade as at 31 March 2023 is shown in the figure above.

After their first ILACS inspection, over half (55%) of LAs were graded outstanding or good. When every LA had received a full SIF inspection, 36% of LAs were graded outstanding or good. There were also fewer LAs graded inadequate after their first inspection under the ILACS framework (13%) compared with their first inspection under the SIF framework (22%). This comparison is shown in the figure below.

Figure 2: LA overall effectiveness after every LA had received a full ILACS inspection and after every LA had received a full SIF inspection



Note: Numbers in brackets represent the number of LAs with an overall effectiveness outcome after their first inspection under the ILACS and SIF frameworks.

Due to rounding, percentages might not add up to 100.

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

ILACS activity between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, we visited 95 LAs to carry out ILACS activities. We made a total of 111 visits to these LAs.

Figure 3: ILACS inspection activity between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023



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

ILACS standard and short inspections

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, we carried out 51 ILACS standard or short inspections.

Over half of these inspections resulted in a judgement of outstanding or good (55%). The remaining inspections resulted in judgements of requires improvement to be good (33%) or inadequate (12%). Of the 51 inspected LAs, more improved than declined in their overall effectiveness judgement. 25 LAs improved their judgement, while 6 declined. There were 18 LAs that retained the same judgement. Two LAs were inspected for the first time during this period.

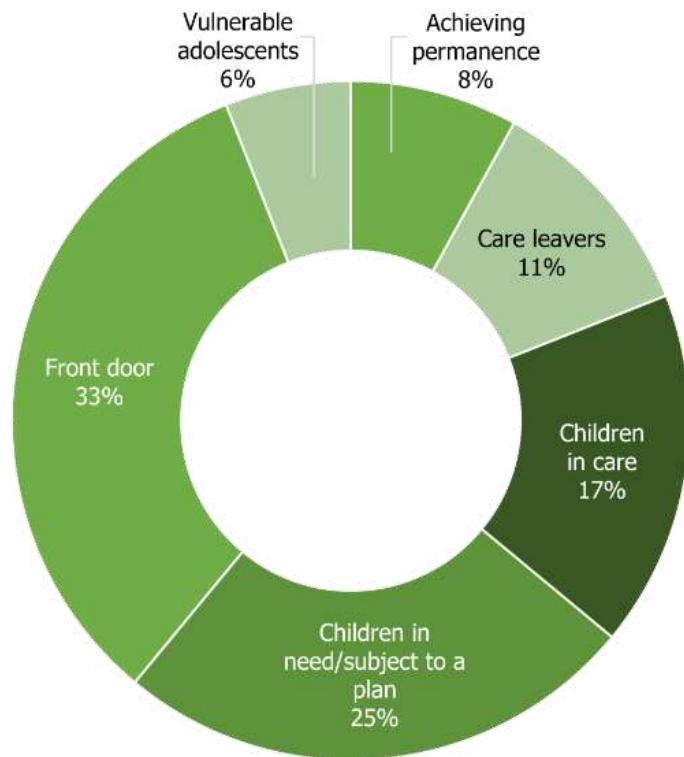
Of the 25 LAs that improved, 3 did so by more than one grade. All 3 of these changed from inadequate at their last inspection to good.

ILACS focused visits

We carry out focused visits between standard and short inspections. A focused visit will look at one or more aspects of the service or themes or cohorts of children.

Of the 36 focused visits carried out, nearly half (17) were to LAs judged requires improvement to be good at their last graded inspection. Details of visit themes are given in figure 4.

Figure 4: ILACS focused visits by theme between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023



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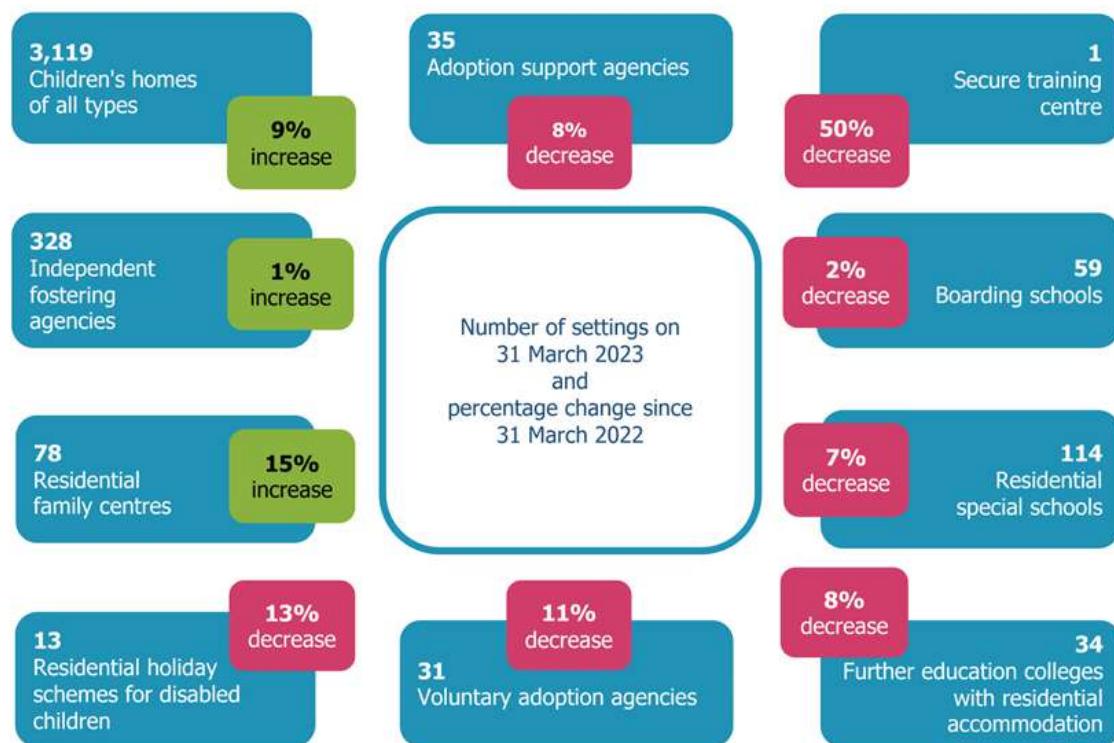
ILACS monitoring visits

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, we carried out a total of 24 monitoring visits across 14 LAs.

Social care providers and places as at 31 March 2023

As at 31 March 2023, there were 3,812 children's social care providers. This is a 7% increase compared with 31 March 2022, when there were 3,576 providers. This is a similar increase to previous years. As in previous years, the reason for this increase can be attributed largely to the increase in children's homes: a 9% increase in settings (246) and a 5% increase in places (630). Residential family centres represent a much smaller proportion of social care providers and places overall but saw a large proportional increase compared with last year, with a 15% increase in settings (10) and a 20% increase in potential capacity (73).

Figure 5: The number of settings as at 31 March 2023 by provider type, and the change from 31 March 2022



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

Children's homes of all types

In this section, we report separately on the 4 types of children's homes:

- secure children's homes
- residential special schools registered as children's homes
- short-break-only children's homes

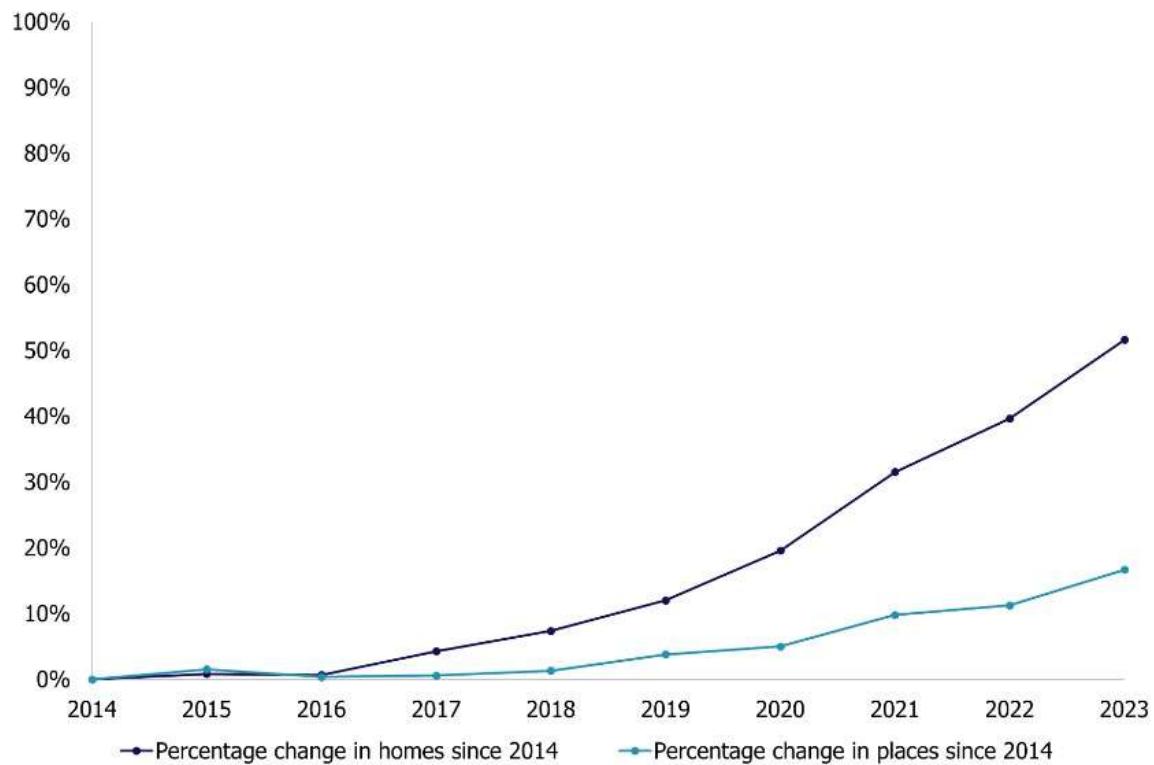
- children's homes

There were 3,119 children's homes of all types as at 31 March 2023, a 9% increase (246 homes) from the previous year (2,873).

In total, the 3,119 children's homes of all types were registered for 13,528 places. This represents a 5% increase in potential capacity since 31 March 2022, when there were 12,898 registered places in total. The proportional increase in potential capacity is larger than last year, when there was a 1% increase (from 12,732 places in 2021 to 12,898 in 2022). On average, children's homes have 4 places, which is in line with previous years.

Since 2019, the number of children's homes has increased by 35%, from 2,304 to 3,119. Over the same period, the number of places has increased by a smaller proportion (12%), from 12,035 to 13,528.

Figure 6: Percentage change in the number of children's homes of all types and their potential capacity since 2014



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

Secure children's homes

There were 13 secure children's homes as at 31 March 2023. Of these, 12 are run by LAs and 1 by a charitable organisation. According to our data, these offer a total of 214 places, of which 101 are commissioned by the Youth Custody Service for children remanded in custody by the courts or who are serving a custodial sentence. The rest are for children placed by LAs under section 25 of the Children Act 1989. There are no secure children's homes in London or the West Midlands.

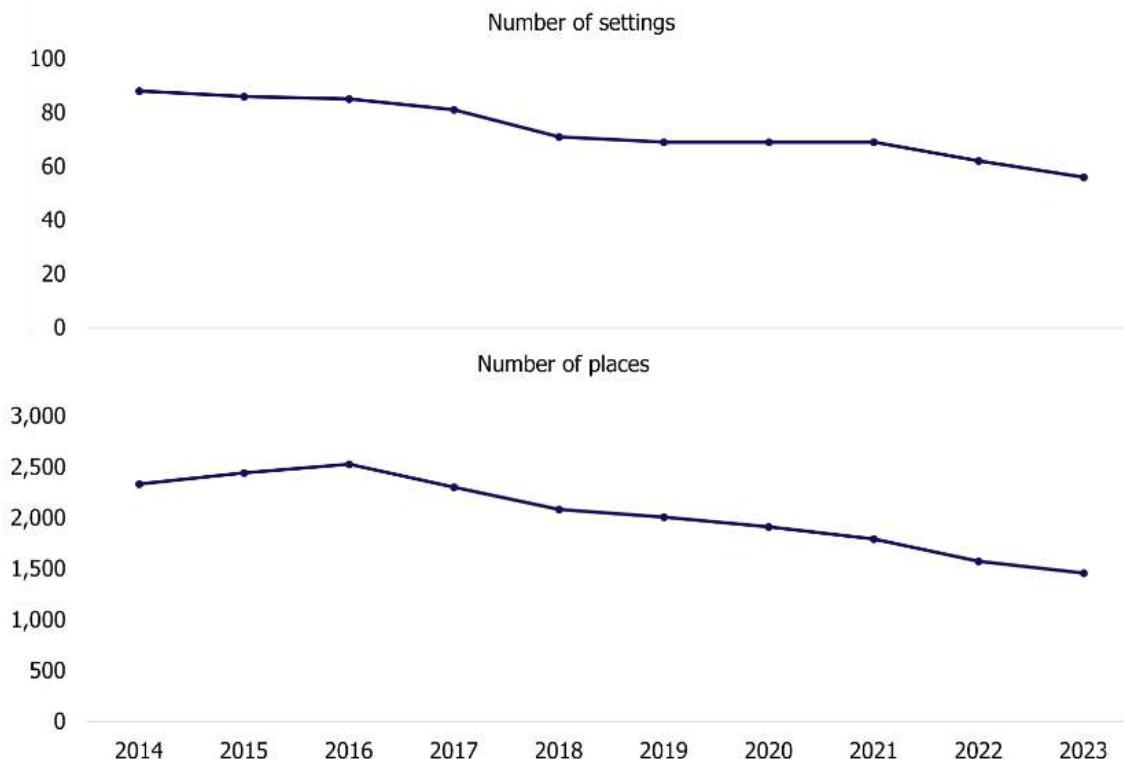
Residential special schools registered as children's homes

As at 31 March 2023, there were 56 residential special schools registered as children's homes, offering 1,457 places. This is a 10% decrease in the number of providers and a 7% decrease in the number of places since March 2022, when these totals were 62 and 1,573, respectively.

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, no residential special schools registered as children's homes opened. Meanwhile, 5 residential special schools registered as children's homes either closed or reconfigured their registration (87 places). All the settings that closed or ceased to operate as residential special schools registered as children's homes were in the private sector.

This continues the longer-term trend of the steadily decreasing number and potential capacity of residential special schools registered as children's homes.

Figure 7: The year-on-year change in the number of residential special schools registered as children's homes and places since 2014



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

Private companies ran most residential special schools registered as children's homes. They operated 40 schools, providing 926 places. Voluntary-sector organisations ran 13 schools, providing 453 places. LAs ran the remaining 3 schools, providing 78 places.

Short-break-only children's homes

As at 31 March 2023, there were 170 children's homes that provided care exclusively for short breaks, offering 1,039 places. This is an increase compared with the number of homes recorded as short-break-only as at 31 March 2022, when there were 156 homes offering 982 places. This data has only been analysed separately since 2021, so we cannot yet comment on longer-term trends.

Table 1: The number of short-break-only children's homes and places as at 31 March 2023, by region

Region	Number of short-break-only children's homes	Percentage of short-break-only children's homes	Number of short-break-only children's home places	Percentage of short-break-only children's home places
North East, Yorkshire and the Humber	31	18%	226	22%
North West	31	18%	161	15%
South East	26	15%	174	17%
West Midlands	22	13%	115	11%
East of England	18	11%	100	10%
South West	18	11%	84	8%
London	13	8%	94	9%
East Midlands	11	6%	85	8%
England	170	100%	1,039	100%

Table 2: The number of short-break-only children's homes and places as at 31 March 2023, by sector

Sector	Number of short-break-only children's homes	Percentage of short-break-only children's homes	Number of short-break-only children's home places	Percentage of short-break-only children's home places
Local authority	107	63%	647	62%
Voluntary	38	22%	245	24%
Private	16	9%	94	9%

Sector	Number of short-break-only children's homes	Percentage of short-break-only children's homes	Number of short-break-only children's home places	Percentage of short-break-only children's home places
Health authority	9	5%	53	5%
All	170	100%	1,039	100%

Note: Due to rounding, percentages might not add up to 100.

Children's homes

In this section, when we refer to children's homes, we mean children's homes excluding short-break-only children's homes, secure children's homes and residential special schools registered as children's homes.

The number of children's homes in England continues to rise. There was a 9% increase in the number of homes and a 7% increase in the number of places compared with 31 March 2022. This year's data continues the long-standing trend of a greater proportional year-on-year increase in children's homes than places.

Children's home providers and places as at 31 March 2023

There were 2,880 children's homes as at 31 March 2023, a 9% increase (238 homes) from the previous year (2,642). These 2,880 homes were registered for 10,818 places, a 7% increase from 10,113 at 31 March 2022. Both the number of homes and places had a faster rate of growth this year than the rate in 2022, when the number of homes grew by 7% and places by 4%. This was accounted for by 365 homes opening and 116 homes closing.

Change in the number of homes by region

As in previous years, children's homes are not distributed evenly across the country. All regions saw an increase in homes and places. As at 31 March 2023, the North West had the most children's homes (746) and places (2,458), while London had the fewest settings (164), and the South West had the fewest places (600).

Table 3: The number of children's homes and the number of places as at 31 March 2023, by region

Region	Number of children's homes	Percentage of children's homes	Number of children's home places	Percentage of children's home places
North West	746	26%	2,458	23%
West Midlands	475	16%	1,672	15%
North East, Yorkshire and the Humber	430	15%	1,612	15%
East Midlands	331	11%	1,218	11%
South East	303	11%	1,461	13%
East of England	230	8%	1,010	9%
South West	201	7%	600	6%
London	164	6%	787	7%
England	2,880	100%	10,818	100%

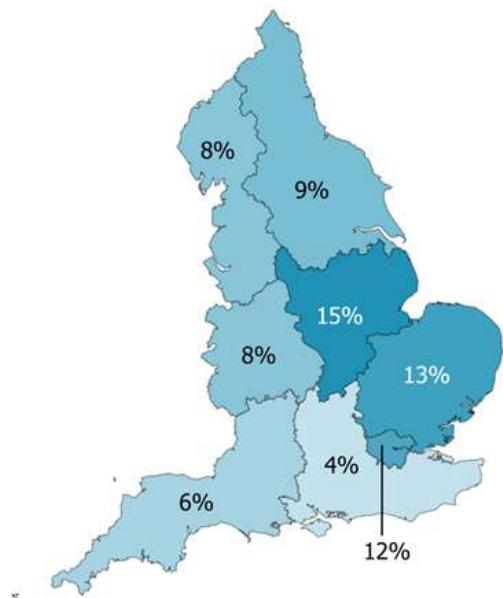
Note: Due to rounding, percentages might not add up to 100.

The regions with the most substantial growth in the number of settings over the last year were East Midlands (15%), East of England (13%) and London (12%). East Midlands and East of England saw the largest proportional increase in places (12% and 10%, respectively).

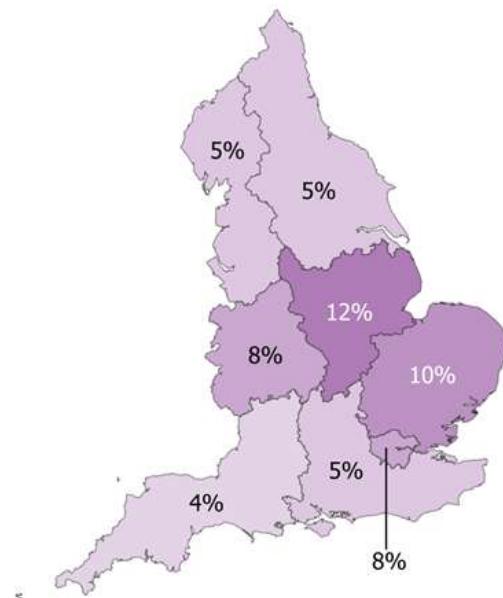
Although net change in the North West was relatively low, this region accounted for the highest number of newly registered children's homes (88, 24%) and places (273, 22%), which is roughly in line with the previous year. This region also accounted for nearly a quarter of both closed homes (29, 24%) and places (121, 23%).

Figure 8: The percentage change of children's homes and places from 31 March 2022 to 31 March 2023, by region

Children's homes



Children's homes places



Note: In both maps, lighter hue indicates lower percentage change.

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

Number of homes by sector

As at 31 March 2023, private companies ran 85% of children's homes (2,450), providing 81% of places (8,791). LAs ran 12% (333) of children's homes, providing 14% of places (1,529).

15 of these LA homes were run by organisations that provide the children's services function of the council, including trusts. This accounted for 89 places. Voluntary providers ran 3% of homes (97) providing 5% of places (498).

The private sector saw an increase in the number both of homes (11%) and places (10%) compared with 2022. This increase is in line with previous years. The voluntary sector also saw an increase in homes (3%) and places (1%).

Since 2021, which was the first year we analysed children's homes without short-break-only homes, there has been a 21% increase in private-sector homes, a 7% increase in voluntary-run homes and a 2% decrease in LA-run homes. There has been a 35% decrease in LA homes run by organisations that provide the children's services function of the council, including trusts, in this period.

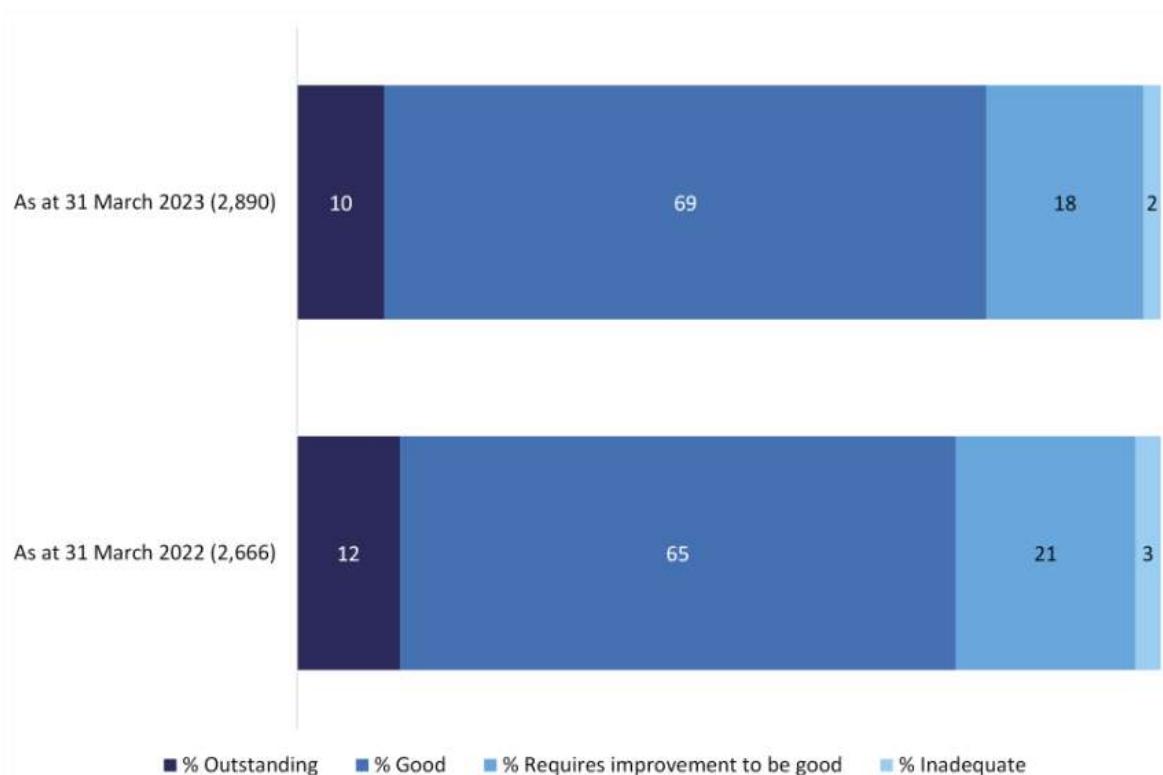
Inspection profile of all types of children's homes as at 31 March 2023

In this section, we report on the 4 types of children's homes together.

As at 31 March 2023, 93% of all active children's homes of all types had an inspection judgement (2,890 out of 3,119).

The proportion of children's homes of all types judged outstanding or good was 79% as at 31 March 2023 (10% outstanding, 69% good). This is a slight increase from 2022, when the proportion was 77%. 18% of homes were judged requires improvement to be good (compared with 21% in 2022) and 2% were judged inadequate (compared with 3% in 2022).

Figure 9: Grade profile of children's homes of all types with inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2023 and 31 March 2022



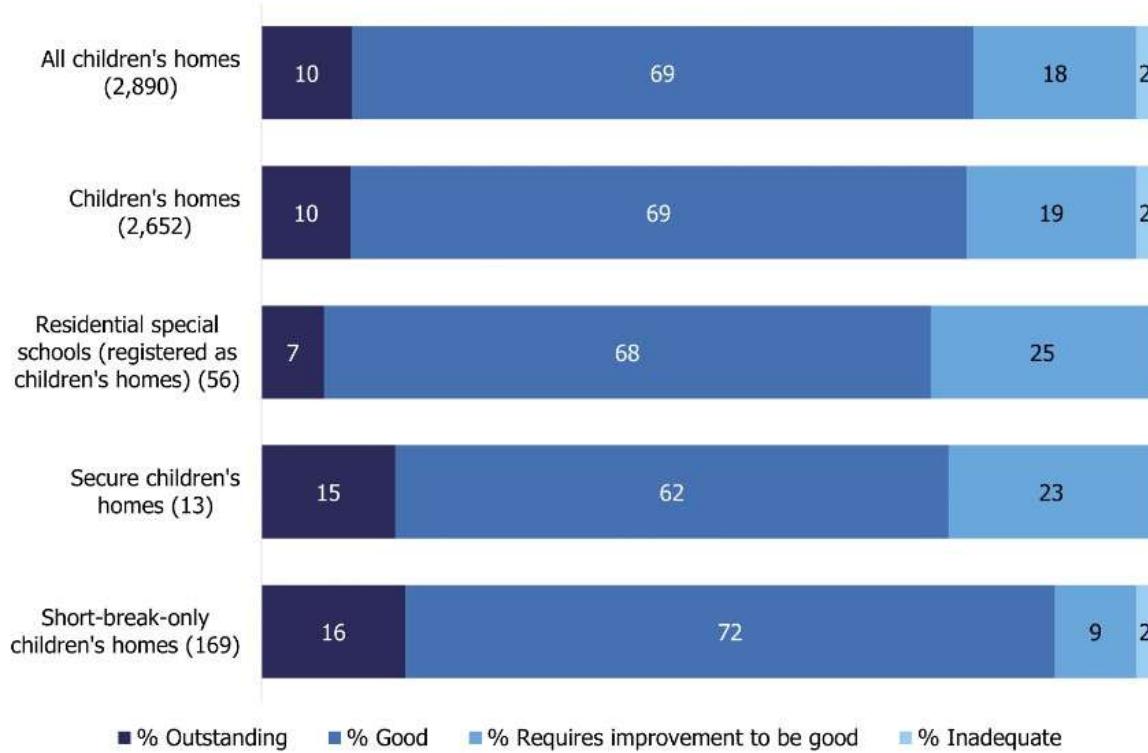
Note: Numbers in brackets represent the number of providers with an overall effectiveness grade as at 31 March 2022 and 2023.

Due to rounding, percentages might not add up to 100.

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

Although the inspection profile is similar for most types of children's homes, short-break-only homes had a higher proportion of outstanding homes (16%). However, the percentage of outstanding short-break-only homes has fallen over time from 29% in 2020.

Figure 10: Grade profile of all types of children's homes with inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2023



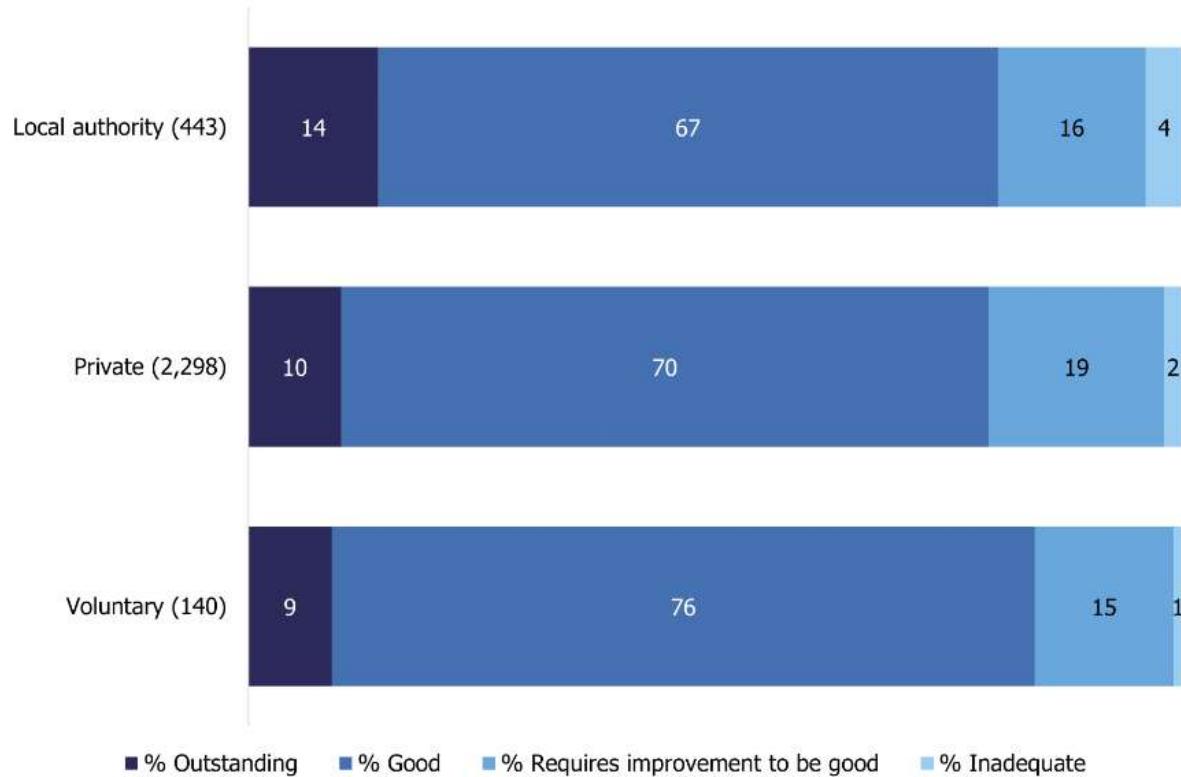
Note: Numbers in brackets represent the number of providers with an overall effectiveness grade as at 31 March 2023.

Due to rounding, percentages might not add up to 100.

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

The grade profiles are broadly in line across the sectors. LAs have the highest proportion of outstanding children's homes (14%).

Figure 11: Grade profile of all types of children's homes with inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2023, split by sector



Note: Totals in brackets are the number of children's homes of all types in each sector with an overall effectiveness grade as at 31 March 2023.

Nine children's homes are run by a health authority and are excluded from the chart. As at 31 March 2023, all 9 were judged to be good.

Due to rounding, percentages might not add up to 100.

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

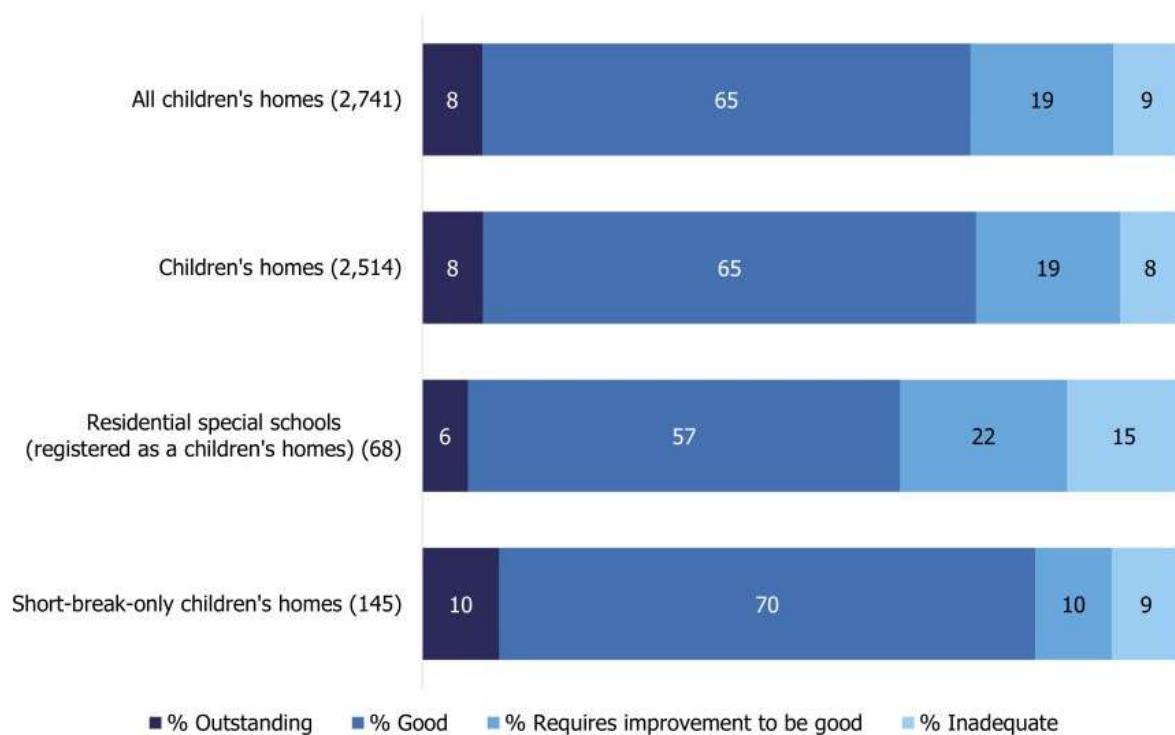
Inspections of all types of children's homes during 2022 to 2023

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, we carried out a total of 3,441 full, assurance or monitoring inspections of 2,606 children's homes.

Full inspections

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, we carried out 2,741 full inspections of children's homes. This figure captures multiple inspections of some settings, while others were not inspected at all this year. In terms of outcomes, 73% were judged outstanding or good (8% outstanding and 65% good), with the remainder being judged requires improvement to be good (19%) or inadequate (9%).

Figure 12: Grade profile of all full inspections of all types of children's homes carried out between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023



Note: Totals in brackets are the number of children's homes of each type that received a full inspection between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023.

There is a small number of secure children's homes, making percentage-based comparisons with other setting types difficult in this instance. They are therefore excluded from this chart.

Due to rounding, percentages might not add up to 100.

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

There were 2 secure children's homes judged as inadequate this year. Both underwent a monitoring visit and subsequent full inspection later in the year and saw their overall grade increase to requires improvement to be good. For this reason, the data for providers as at 31 March 2023 does not show any secure children's homes with an inadequate judgement.

Monitoring visits and other inspections

Since 1 April 2022, we have carried out 437 monitoring visits to 315 children's homes of all types. We have also carried out 263 assurance visits to 262 children's homes of all types.

Regulatory activity in all types of children's homes between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023

An important part of our work is the regulation of social care settings. Much of this concerns children's homes, which make up the majority of all children's social care providers.

3-month condition

When it is clear that a children's home has no intention of operating for at least 3 months, Ofsted can impose a condition requiring it to give 3 months' notice to Ofsted if it intends to admit a child. This means that Ofsted is not required to inspect the setting routinely. As at 31 March 2023, 60 children's homes (2%) had a 3-month condition to inform Ofsted 3 months before any child is accommodated. This represents a potential capacity of 206 places.

Enforcement activity

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, we carried out the following enforcement actions across all children's homes:

- 103 restrictions of accommodation
- 20 suspensions of providers
- 24 homes received a notice of cancellation

The 103 restrictions of accommodation occurred in 98 different children's homes. Of these, 4 homes received more than one restriction of accommodation.

The 20 suspensions occurred in 19 different children's homes, with 1 home receiving multiple suspensions. Of these 19 homes, 3 resigned and 4 were still suspended on 31 March 2023. The remaining 12 homes were active on 31 March 2023.

Incident notifications received from children's homes between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023

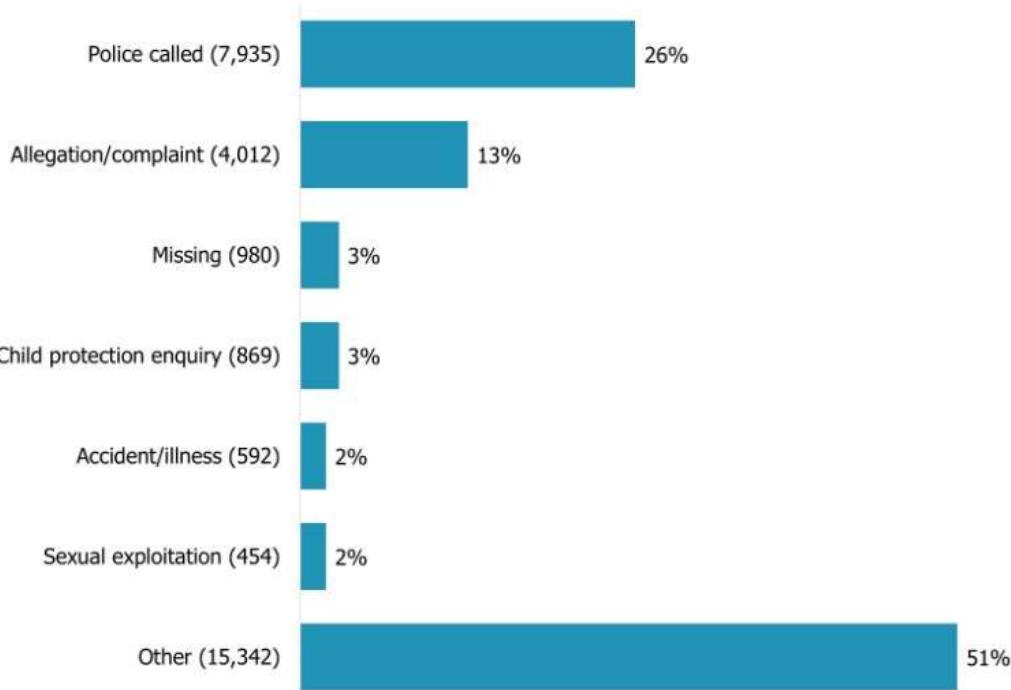
Providers must tell Ofsted, as the regulator for children's homes in England, about the most serious incidents that happen to children living with them and what they have done in response.

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, we received a total of 37,094 notifications from social care providers. The majority of these (30,200, 81%) came from children's homes, in line with previous years.

Half of all notifications (51%) received from children's homes in 2022 to 2023 were categorised as 'other'. 'Other' notifications cover any incident considered by the registered person to be serious but that does not fit under one of the

existing categories, which is why we see a high number of notifications in this category. Police call-outs to the home were the next highest category and accounted for a quarter of all notifications (26%). Police call-out notifications are not exclusively related to the child being suspected of committing a crime. Around half of all police call-out notifications relate to the police being called because a child has gone missing, has been a victim of sexual or criminal exploitation or another crime, or has disclosed a historic safeguarding concern.

Figure 13: A breakdown of the types of events contained in notifications made by children's homes from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023



Note: There were 16 notifications relating to the death of a child, which are not represented here. Therefore, percentages might not add up to 100.

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

Unregistered children's homes

Alongside our regulatory work, we receive and investigate notifications about potentially unregistered children's homes. Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, we completed 460 investigations into potentially unregistered settings. This is an increase from 420 in 2021 to 2022.

Most of our work (75%) follows a notification of the placement by the placing local authority (the local authority with responsibility for finding a suitable place for a child to live). The next most common source of notification (5%) was Ofsted identifying a potentially unregistered children's home during inspection.

The majority of placements in potentially unregistered children's homes (71%) were because the LA was unable to find a suitable regulated option. More than 1 in 10 placements were in holidays lets being used temporarily as unregistered children's homes (13%). A small proportion of settings were already registered with the Care Quality Commission but not with Ofsted (3%).

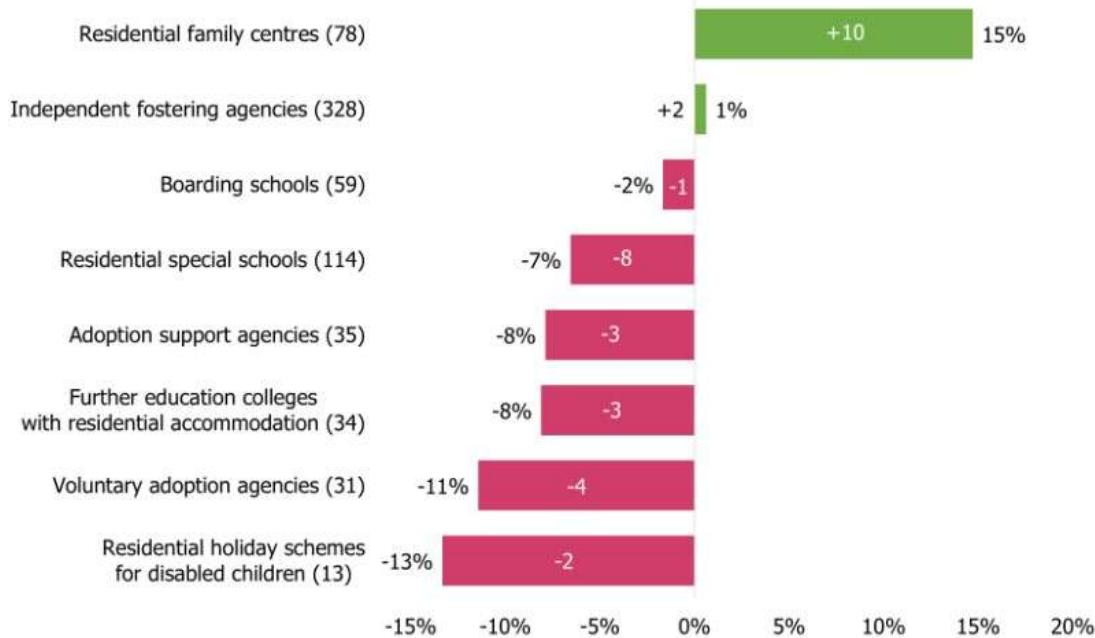
Of the 460 potentially unregistered children's homes we investigated, 16% of settings (72) did not need to be registered or were used for very short-term temporary placements that had ended by the time of the investigation. This is an increase from 2021 to 2022, when fewer than 10% of settings did not need to be registered. These 72 settings were fairly evenly split between providers of supported accommodation and similar unregulated placements, and temporary placements that had since ended.

There were 356 settings (77%) that should have been registered with us. Most settings have since received warning letters, and many have closed.

Other social care providers

As at 31 March 2023, there were 693 settings from other social care provider types. Independent fostering agencies and residential special schools accounted for the majority of the 693 settings, with 328 (47%) and 114 (16%) settings respectively.

Figure 14: Percentage change of other social care providers from 31 March 2022 to 31 March 2023



Note: Totals in brackets are the number of settings of each type as at 31 March 2023.

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

We have data on the number of places available as at 31 March 2023 for the following 4 provider types:

- residential special schools – the number of places fell by 4% to 3,372
- boarding schools – the number of places fell by 9% to 8,939
- further education colleges with residential accommodation – the number of places fell by 1% to 5,134
- residential family centres – the number of places rose 20% by 73 places to 444

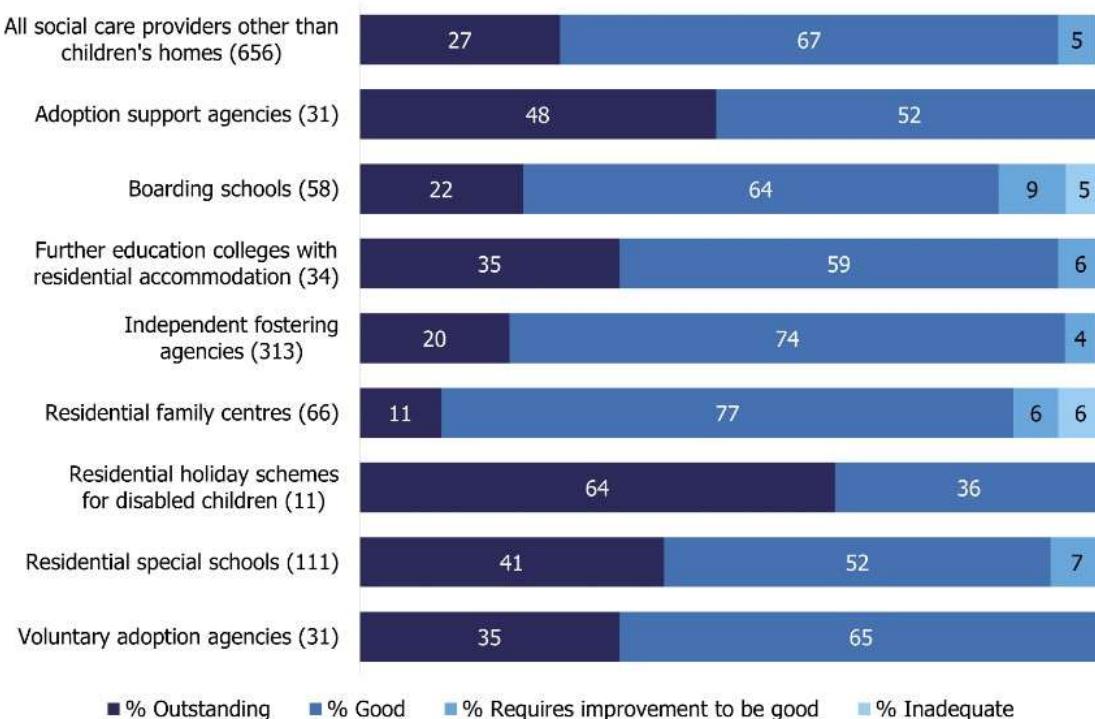
Inspections of other social care providers

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, we carried out a total of 289 full inspections at 287 other social care providers. We also carried out 32 monitoring visits and one emergency inspection. </div>

Inspection profile of other social care providers as at 31 March 2023

Of the 693 other social care provider settings, the majority (656, 95%) had a full inspection outcome as at 31 March 2023.

Figure 15: Inspection judgement profile of other social care providers at 31 March 2023



Note: Numbers in brackets represent the number of other social care providers with an overall effectiveness grade as at 31 March 2023.

There is one secure training centre, which was inspected this year and judged requires improvement to be good. This has been excluded from the chart.

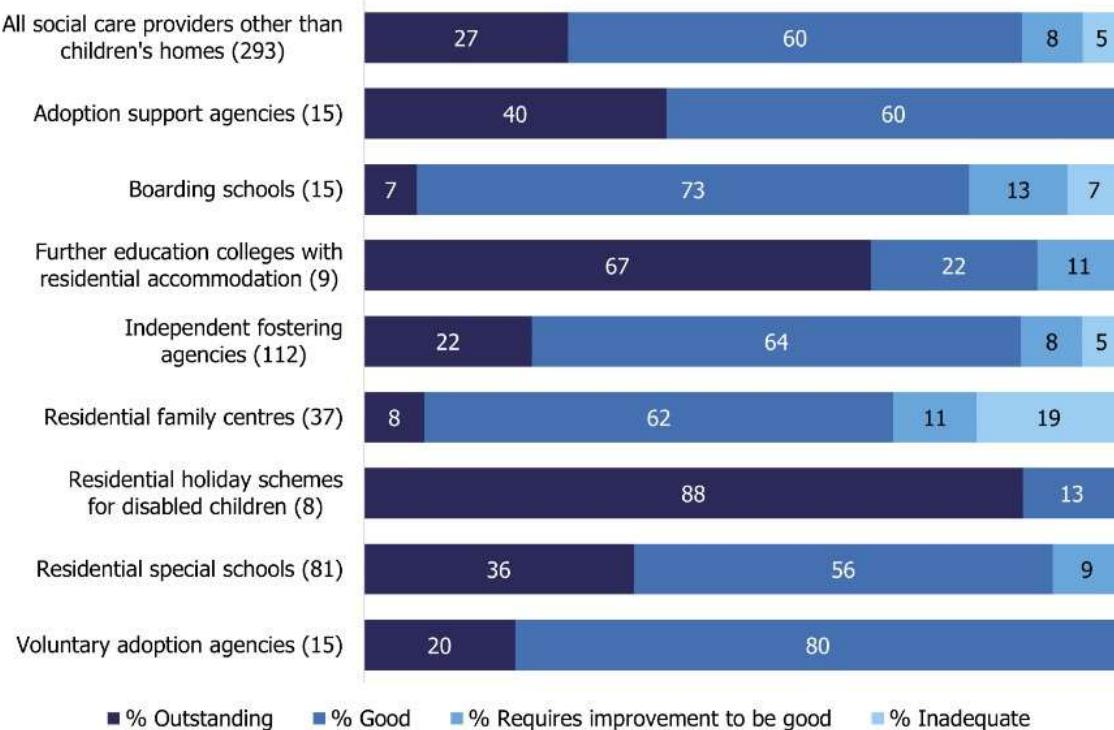
Due to rounding, percentages might not add up to 100.

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

Inspections of other social care providers during 2022 to 2023

Of the 293 inspections of other social care providers, the majority (87%) were judged outstanding or good.

Figure 16: Full inspection outcomes of other social care providers between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, by provider type



■ % Outstanding ■ % Good ■ % Requires improvement to be good ■ % Inadequate

Note: There is one secure training centre, which was inspected this year and judged requires improvement to be good. This has been excluded from the chart.

Due to rounding, percentages might not add up to 100.

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

Further information

Notes

South Tyneside LA was inspected within the 2022 to 2023 year, but the report was not published by our usual deadline for inclusion in official statistics. It is included in this report to enable comparison between inspection outcomes after every LA had received a full inspection under the SIF and after every LA had received a full inspection under the ILACS framework.

There is a [quality and methodology report](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/childrens-social-care-data-in-england-2023/methodology-report-childrens-social-care-in-england-2022-to-2023>) to accompany this release.

Contacts

If you are a member of the public and have any comments or feedback on this publication, contact Emma Martin (emma.martin@ofsted.gov.uk) or the social care and area SEND analysis team (socialcaredata@ofsted.gov.uk).

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the following for their contribution to this statistical release: Hannah Tempest and Courtney Edwards.

Glossary

Definitions of terms are in the [statistical glossary](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/glossary-of-terms-ofsted-statistics#Socialcareglossary) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/glossary-of-terms-ofsted-statistics#Socialcareglossary>).

Annex: data tables for figures

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

Data for Figure 1: LA overall effectiveness as at 31 March 2023 compared with 31 March 2022

Period	% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement to be good	% Inadequate
As at 31 March 2023 (152)	16	43	32	9
As at 31 March 2022 (150)	13	40	35	12

See [Figure 1](#).

Data for Figure 2: LA overall effectiveness after every LA had received a full ILACS inspection and after every LA had received a full SIF inspection

Period	% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement to be good	% Inadequate
After each LA's first ILACS inspection (152)	16	39	32	13
After each LA's first SIF inspection, as at October 2017 (152)	2	34	43	22

See [Figure 2](#).

Data for Figure 3: ILACS inspection activity between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023

Type of visit	Number
ILACS standard inspections	38
ILACS short inspections	13
ILACS monitoring visits	24
ILACS focused visits	36

See [Figure 3](#).

Data for Figure 4: ILACS focused visits by theme between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023

Theme	Percentage
Front door	33%

Theme	Percentage
Children in need/subject to a plan	25%
Children in care	17%
Care leavers	11%
Achieving permanence	8%
Vulnerable adolescents	6%

See [Figure 4](#).

Data for Figure 5: The number of settings as at 31 March 2023 by provider type, and the change from 31 March 2022

Type of provider	Number of settings as at 31 March 2023	Percentage change since 31 March 2022
Children's homes of all types	3,119	9% increase
Independent fostering agencies	328	1% increase
Residential family centres	78	15% increase
Residential holiday schemes for disabled children	13	13% decrease
Adoption support agencies	35	8% decrease
Voluntary adoption agencies	31	11% decrease
Secure training centre	1	50% decrease
Boarding schools	59	2% decrease
Residential special schools	114	7% decrease
Further education colleges with residential accommodation	34	8% decrease

See [Figure 5](#).

Data for Figure 6: Percentage change in the number of children's homes of all types and their potential capacity since 2014

Year	Percentage change in the number of homes	Percentage change in the number of places
2014	0%	0%
2015	1%	2%
2016	1%	0%
2017	4%	1%
2018	7%	1%
2019	12%	4%
2020	20%	5%
2021	32%	10%
2022	40%	11%
2023	52%	17%

See [Figure 6](#).

Data for Figure 7: The year-on-year change in the number of residential special schools registered as children's homes, and places since 2014

Year	Number of settings	Number of places
2014	88	2,331
2015	86	2,441
2016	85	2,527
2017	81	2,302
2018	71	2,082
2019	69	2,006

Year	Number of settings	Number of places
2020	69	1,911
2021	69	1,793
2022	62	1,573
2023	56	1,457

See [Figure 7](#).

Data for Figure 8: The percentage change of children's homes and places from 31 March 2022 to 31 March 2023, by region

Region	Percentage change of children's homes	Percentage change of children's home places
East Midlands	15%	12%
East of England	13%	10%
London	12%	8%
North East, Yorkshire and the Humber	9%	5%
West Midlands	8%	8%
North West	8%	5%
South West	6%	4%
South East	4%	5%

See [Figure 8](#).

Data for Figure 9: Grade profile of children's homes of all types with inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2023 and 31 March 2022

Period	% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement to be good	% Inadequate
As at 31 March 2023 (2,890)	10	69	18	2
As at 31 March 2022 (2,666)	12	65	21	3

See [Figure 9](#).

Data for Figure 10: Grade profile of all types of children's homes with inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2023

Type of children's home	% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement to be good	% Inadequate
All children's homes (2,890)	10	69	18	2
Children's homes (2,652)	10	69	19	2
Residential special schools (registered as children's homes) (56)	7	68	25	0
Secure children's homes (13)	15	62	23	0
Short-break-only children's homes (169)	16	72	9	2

See [Figure 10](#).

Data for Figure 11: Grade profile of all types of children's homes with inspection outcomes as at 31 March 2023, split by sector

Sector	% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement to be good	% Inadequate
Local authority (443)	14	67	16	4
Private (2,298)	10	70	19	2
Voluntary (140)	9	76	15	1

See [Figure 11](#).

Data for Figure 12: Grade profile of all full inspections of all types of children's homes carried out between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023

Type of children's home	% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement to be good	% Inadequate
All children's homes (2,741)	8	65	19	9
Children's homes (2,514)	8	65	19	8
Residential special schools (registered as children's homes) (68)	6	57	22	15
Short-break-only children's homes (145)	10	70	10	9

See [Figure 12](#).

Data for Figure 13: A breakdown of the types of events contained in notifications made by children's homes from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023

Type of event	Percentage
Police called (7,935)	26%
Allegation/complaint (4,012)	13%
Missing (980)	3%
Child protection enquiry (869)	3%
Accident/illness (592)	2%
Sexual exploitation (454)	2%
Other (15,342)	51%

See [Figure 13](#).

Data for Figure 14: Percentage change of other social care providers from 31 March 2022 to 31 March 2023

Provider type	Net change	Percentage change
Residential family centres (78)	+10	15%
Independent fostering agencies (328)	+2	1%
Boarding schools (59)	-1	-2%
Residential special schools (114)	-8	-7%
Adoption support agencies (35)	-3	-8%
Further education colleges with residential accommodation (34)	-3	-8%
Voluntary adoption agencies (31)	-4	-11%
Residential holiday schemes for disabled children (13)	-2	-13%

See [Figure 14](#).

Data for Figure 15: Inspection judgement profile of other social care providers as at 31 March 2023

Provider type	% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement to be good	% Inadequate
All social care providers other than children's homes (655)	27	67	5	1
Adoption support agencies (31)	48	52	0	0
Boarding schools (57)	23	65	9	4
Further education colleges with residential accommodation (34)	35	59	6	0
Independent fostering agencies (313)	20	74	4	1
Residential family centres (66)	11	77	6	6
Residential holiday schemes for disabled children (11)	64	36	0	0
Residential special schools (111)	41	52	7	0
Voluntary adoption agencies (31)	39	61	0	0

See [Figure 15](#).

Data for Figure 16: Full inspection outcomes of other social care providers between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, by provider type

Provider type	% Outstanding	% Good	% Requires improvement to be good	% Inadequate
All social care providers other than children's homes (289)	28	59	8	5
Adoption support agencies (15)	40	60	0	0
Boarding schools (15)	7	73	13	7
Further education colleges with residential accommodation (9)	67	22	11	0
Independent fostering agencies (112)	22	64	8	5
Residential family centres (37)	8	62	11	19
Residential holiday schemes for disabled children (8)	88	13	0	0
Residential special schools (81)	36	59	9	0
Voluntary adoption agencies (11)	27	73	0	0

See [Figure 16](#).

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Care home shortages: London children sent to Scotland

10 January



Young people from London are being sent to Scotland amid shortages of children care homes

Children in need of care in London are being sent 450 miles away due to lack of care home capacity in England, a report has revealed.

Lewisham Council data shows between December 2021 and September 2022, 12 children were sent to secure welfare facilities outside the capital.

At least three of those children were sent to homes in Scotland.

Severe care home shortages across England are forcing vulnerable children to be sent away for specialist care.

Secure children's home are facilities designed for children aged 10 to 17 who pose a risk to themselves or others. These children may have a history of fleeing from previous care homes or need to be detained as they await trial or sentencing for a crime.

- **Children's homes close after BBC reveals failures**

Lewisham and Barnet councils are planning to build London's first secure children's home that will have room to look after up to 24 children.

Led by Barnet Council, the home, expected to open by 2026, is being funded by the Department of Education which has committed £50m.

Lewisham Council will contribute a further £20,000 a year for the upkeep and running of the building.

Under current plans, which are set to be approved at a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Lewisham Council would continue to oversee the running of the home until at least 2028.

The **Local Democracy Reporting Service** found the cost of building and maintaining a secure children's home was too high for an individual council to shoulder alone. Barnet Council is hopeful other London authorities will join the project.

According to Lewisham Council documents, the average cost of a secure welfare placement in London has increased - from £7,000 a week in 2019, rising to £10,500 a week in 2022. Some local authorities have paid up to £25,000 a week for secure welfare placements in that period.

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Councils struggling to manage children's homes market, amid placement shortage, study finds

Almost half of councils lack up-to-date strategy to secure sufficient placements for looked-after children while those that do are missing key information on market, says What Works

by **Rob Preston** on March 9, 2022 in **Children, Social work leaders**



Photo: fizkes/Adobe Stock

Local authorities are struggling to manage the children's homes market, amid a shortage of suitable placements, according to a study published yesterday.

Almost half (44%) had either no publicly available or no up-to-date strategy to secure sufficient local accommodation for looked-after children, found an analysis by What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC).

This is despite this being a requirement of [statutory guidance on councils' Children Act 1989 duty](#) to, as far as reasonably practicable, take steps to secure enough suitable accommodation locally for children in care, consistent with their welfare.

The lack of a strategy would also limit councils' ability to communicate information about expected demand to providers, said What Works, who was commissioned to undertake the study by the Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

Little analysis of local supply

However, the centre also found significant deficiencies in the strategies of the 84 English councils with an up-to-date plan.

Just 28% had a clear statement of whether they were under or over-supplied with residential provision or numerical information on the number of placements. Others stated they had insufficient placements, but without analysing underlying factors, or provided just a partial or no analysis of local supply.

While most strategies contained information on providers' costs, just 12 discussed price trends.

Just 34% reported changes in their demand for residential care and, while 41% provided forecasts of future need, just 10% presented a clear methodology for these estimates.

'Lack of transparent information on future need'

"It is thus unclear how LAs can meaningfully engage with providers given that – based on the material presented in the sufficiency strategies – LAs do not have transparent and/or reliable information around future need," the report said.

"This is a key area in need of improvement, considering that an analysis of previous and future demand constitutes the foundation of a sufficiency strategy."

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- [Government should be required to ensure enough secure placements, says Children's Commissioner](#)
- [Some firms 'profiteering' from children's homes, says minister](#)
- [Call for 'serious reform' to reduce number of children placed out of area](#)

WWCSC said it was unclear whether children, young people and providers had been consulted as part of most councils sufficiency strategies, and that this was a "key area of concern" and should be better reported in future strategies.

It also found few councils were clear in reflecting on how they had progressed since previous strategies and called on authorities to better document how they had implemented different commissioning approaches.

Significant barriers to local placements

The report found significant barriers to councils placing children locally, notably competing with other authorities for placements, which was even a problem in those councils who said they were over-supplied.

Some councils also described deficient local provision, unsuited to accommodating emergency, specialist or therapeutic placements.

Many councils said it was difficult to compare prices across different providers as these costs would often vary depending on occupancy, the children's varying care packages and the urgency of a placement.

They suggested that being better able to understand the true value for money of a placement would improve commissioning decisions.

Most councils were part of a regional commissioning framework, but many reported that these were not as effective as they hoped in improving access to high-quality and good-value placements due to some authorities and providers not taking part.

Councils 'failing to navigate and shape market' – MacAlister

Josh MacAlister, chair of the care review, set to publish in late spring, said the report showed that “on top of dealing with budget cuts, too many local authorities are failing to navigate and shape the marketised system of care for children”.

“Too often this means children are moved around the country, unable to stay at their school, remain in touch with their brothers or sisters or build new relationships that will last,” he said.

“The review will be making detailed recommendations to address this when we report in the spring.”

The What Works report also comes on the eve of the Competition and Markets Authority’s final report of its study on the children’s social care market this week, which MacAlister said he was looking forward to reading.

It also comes amid rising concerns among charities, local authorities and, latterly, children’s minister [Will Quince](#), about levels of profits in a market Quince described as “broken” due to demand far exceeding supply.

Directors: providers able to ‘pick and choose’ referrals

The Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) said that, currently, providers were able to “pick and choose” which referrals to accept or not, due to the scarcity of placements.

“Local authorities are working hard to overcome the sufficiency challenges they face including by investing in their own children’s homes but need more support from government to ensure the right homes are available in the right places,” said Matt Dunkley, chair of the ADCS’s resources and sustainability policy committee.

He said councils were open to learning from what worked but added that improved commissioning “was not a panacea”.

“We also need a comprehensive placement strategy which addresses shortages across all types of placements to meet the needs of children and young people,” Dunkley added.

The Local Government Association said it had become more difficult for councils to find appropriate children’s homes as they were increasingly provided by the private sector and children’s needs had become more complex.

“While councils are working hard to improve sufficiency, this is challenging in a context in which staff capacity is under more pressure than ever and ownership of homes for children in care is increasingly concentrated in a small number of very large providers,” it said.



 [care placements, looked-after children](#)

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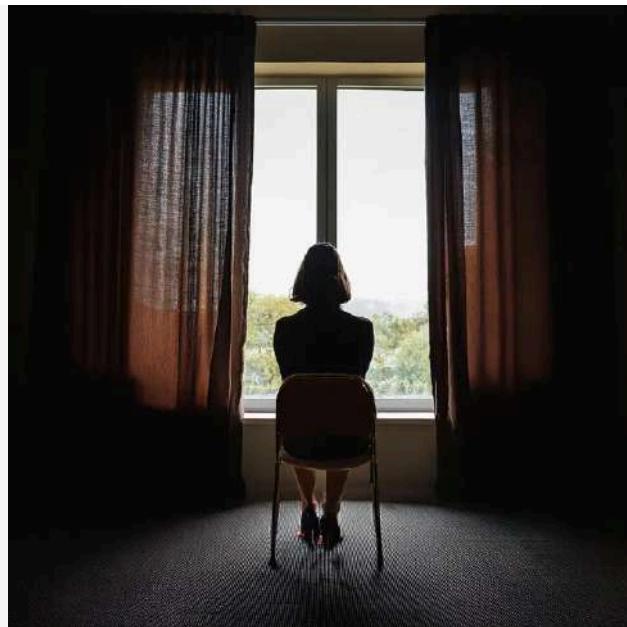
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'National emergency' as hundreds of children 'contained' illegally in holiday lets

19 September 2024, 05:57 | Updated: 19 September 2024, 14:57



Hundreds of vulnerable children are being "contained" illegally in holiday lets. Picture: Alamy



By Charlotte Lynch

[@charlotterlynch](#)

Hundreds of vulnerable children are being "contained" illegally in holiday lets, Airbnbs and caravans across the UK, because of a chronic national shortage of children's secure care placements.

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The children, some of whom are younger than 12, are subjected to what's known as a Deprivation of Liberty order. It allows them to essentially be detained and isolated, and placed under constant supervision by agency staff.

Data seen by LBC, from the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory, shows the number of young people this has happened to has rocketed by more than 500% since 2020.

The children, who often have complex needs like autism, are unable to go to school, socialise with friends or access money.

Former Children's Commissioner Anne Longfield warned the situation is an "emergency" and urged ministers to launch a "crisis intervention", describing the children as the most vulnerable in society.



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Ms Longfield said they're deemed "too complicated to help", resulting in their existence being "warehoused" by local authorities who are unable to find proper placements for them.

"It was like a holding cell... he couldn't function, he couldn't eat"

LBC spoke to the mother of John*, who became suicidal after being sent to live alone in a "basic" terraced house 150 miles away from home.

Tanya* was told her 17-year-old son should be deprived of his liberty for his own safety, after being groomed into a county lines gang.

She told LBC she was led to believe the order was an "opportunity to improve his life" and remove him from an increasingly risky situation, but the reality soon became clear.

She described how John "couldn't function or eat" after living there for six months, saying he "couldn't focus on anything other than coming home - he was mentally absolutely broken. He just felt that there was nothing for him in this world, that nobody wanted him".

Tanya described the property as akin to a "holding cell", with bare painted floorboards and no wardrobe, forcing him to live out of a suitcase.

John, who has autism, was supervised 24/7 by three agency care staff. Tanya said it became "apparent from day one" that they weren't properly trained in special needs and trauma informed care.

He never received education or counselling, with the idea of any rehabilitation becoming "a distant fantasy".

Tanya believed her son planned to take his own life, so she broke the court order and risked being arrested to bring him back to his family home. But to her surprise, no one came looking for John.

"I just saw this broken little boy who wanted to end his life, and I just couldn't take him back there. And I thought, well, they can come and arrest me, but I will fight them", she said.

"So I brought him home... and actually nothing happened. I realised then that it was all just a ruse. That nobody really cared where he was. As long as he wasn't causing trouble to anyone - he could disappear".

"We have to look ourselves in the mirror"

1,249 children were subjected to such orders in one year, between June 2022 and July 2023.

But because of the huge lack of secure places, at least half - approximately 600 - were sent to live in the ad hoc properties, including holiday lets. They are illegal for under 16s because they're not regulated by Ofsted.

Data from the Ministry of Justice estimates around half of the children deprived of their liberty between July and September 2023 were under 16. A quarter were aged between 16-18, while 7.2% were under 12-years-old.

What's more, it's costing the public billions of pounds.

Local authorities have reported a major increase in the number of children's social care placements costing at least £10,000 per week, as private providers take advantage of the shortage.

Ms Longfield told LBC: "Often these places can be hotel bedrooms, caravans, boats... and they will have a team of people around them, a team that will watch them constantly. Their ability to have any resemblance of a normal life is out the window.

"We should be astonished that we're putting the most vulnerable children in to settings that don't have the highest level of supervision and care. We have to look ourselves in the mirror and say, surely, the most vulnerable children should be getting the best help possible.

"We can't turn our back on these kids", she urged. "We've allowed them to get to this place in the first stage without offering them help. At this point to say, 'we can't do anything about it, we just have to warehouse your existence', is completely unacceptable and intolerable on any level".

"There are no witnesses"

Carolyne Willow, the director of charity Article 39, expressed major alarm at the children being "out of view" surrounded by a team of adult staff.

"These are not necessarily trained, experienced and qualified staff. That rings alarm bells", she told LBC.

"When a child is in an institutional setting on their own, away from their families, and they are the only child in a property with up to six staff that have been brought together in an ad hoc, chaotic set of circumstances, they are vulnerable to mistreatment."

She said the children were unprotected with a "lack of witnesses and independent scrutiny" with Ofsted unable to regulate the homes.

Article 39 is in touch with advocates who have managed to contact some of the children.

"Children are desperately lonely. They feel lost, because they don't know when these restrictions will be lifted, and they're frequently many miles from home. They will feel helpless and afraid", Ms Willow said.

She told LBC their day-to-day life involves "sitting around or lying on their bed with very little to do".

"We don't know they are safe"

Ofsted urged the government to introduce new powers that would allow them to act against illegal providers more quickly.

Yvette Stanley, Ofsted's National Director for Social Care and Early Years Regulation, said the regulator was "concerned that many children, usually those with the most complex needs, are living in places with the least oversight".

"Without that regulatory oversight, we are unable to know whether they are getting the care and support they need", she said.

A national shortage of registered placements means local authorities are increasingly struggling to find care for the growing numbers of children being deprived of their liberty.

Ms Stanley said it means that "too often, they're placed in illegal, unregistered settings where we don't know they are safe or if the people caring for them have the right skills to meet their needs".

"It is important that providers register, and that local authorities play their part to ensure vulnerable children are only placed in registered settings. The previous government promised us additional powers in 2021 that would enable us to take action against illegal providers more quickly – these powers are urgently needed, in the interests of our most vulnerable children", she said.

The Family Rights Group, who supported Tanya, have called for "urgent reform" of the system, and led a call to the Ministry of Justice for better access for legal support for families where children are deprived of their liberty.

A Department for Education spokesperson called LBC's findings "devastating" and said it shows young people are being "let down by a system that should be protecting them".

"All children should live in settings that meet their needs and keep them safe. We are committed to increasing provision, and our Children's Wellbeing Bill will strengthen regulation to make sure every child has a safe, loving home", the spokesperson said.

**'John' and 'Tanya's names have been changed to protect their identity. 'Tanya' is being supported by the Family Rights Group, who's free and confidential advice line can be contacted on 0808 801 0366.*



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