**Headline Statistics**

- This year in the UK, nearly 40,000 children and young people will enter the care system. That’s 109 every day.
- There are currently around 99,000 children in the UK who are classified as looked after away from home. An increase of 3% from the previous year.
- More than 65,000 children live with almost 55,000 foster families across the UK.
- The UK urgently needs to recruit 8,600 more foster families to meet the need.
- At 31 December 2018, there were 2750 children waiting for adoption in England. 39% of these had been waiting eighteen months or more.

**Care leavers**

Around 8,600 young people in England age out of the care system every year: Only 6% of care leavers aged 19-21 go on to higher education.

Care experienced young people in England:

- Make up 25% of the homeless population
- Make up almost half of men under 21 in contact with the criminal justice system
- Are three times more likely to be not in education, employment or training
England

- There are approximately 78,000 looked after children.¹
- The number of children starting to be looked after (31,680) has fallen by 2% from 2018 (32,050).²
- 56% of looked after children are male and 44% are female.³
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children make up 6% of the looked after children population.⁴
- 13% of children ceased to be looked after due to receiving a special guardianship order.⁵

Fostering

- 72% of looked after children are in foster placements.⁶
- It is estimated that a further 7,220 foster families need to be recruited over the next year.⁷
- Over the past year, 10% of fostered children have had three or more placements.⁸

Adoption

- 3,570 children ceased to be looked after due to adoption, a 7% decrease from 2018.⁹
- The average age of adoption is 3 years and 1 month.¹⁰
- The number of looked after children with a placement order for adoption has fallen by 35% since 2015.¹¹

Reason for becoming looked after¹²:

- 63% Abuse or neglect
- 14% Family dysfunction
- 8% Family being in acute stress
- 7% Absent parenting
- 3% Child’s disability
- 3% Parent’s illness
- 2% Other

Ethnicity of looked after children¹³:

- 74% White
- 10% Mixed
- 8% Black or black British
- 4% Asian or Asian British
- 4% Other ethnic groups, including Chinese

Care Leavers and care experienced young people

- Nearly half of all young men (21 and under) in custody have experience of the care system.¹⁴
- One third of care leavers become homeless within the first two years of leaving care¹⁵ and 25% of homeless people are care experienced.¹⁶
- 39% of care leavers aged 19-21 were NEET* compared to 12% of all 19-21 year olds.¹⁷
- 26% of 19 and 20-year olds continue to live with their former foster carers through ‘Staying Put’ despite ceasing to be looked after on their 18th birthday, the same as 2018.¹⁸
Scotland

*Please note:* A child classified as ‘looked after’ in Scotland includes all children looked after by a local authority, including some who remain living at home with their parents. Scotland is unique in this compared to the other UK nations.

- There are around 11,000 looked after* children.¹
- Just under 14% of all looked after* children are cared for in residential settings.²

**Fostering**
- Approximately 50% of looked after* children live with foster families.³
- 38% of all looked after* children live with kinship carers.⁴
- It is estimated that a further 580 more foster families are needed.⁵
- 5% of all looked after children experience three or more placement changes every year.⁶

**Adoption**
- Of children who cease to be looked after, around 7% go on to be adopted.⁷
- 68% of children who are adopted are under the age of five.⁸

**Ethnicity of looked after children:**

This is no longer collected as national data.

**Care leavers and care experienced young people**
- 26% of prisoners are care-experienced, with 27% of care experienced prisoners having experienced more than six different placements whilst in care.⁹
- Only 12% of school leavers who have been in care for the entirety of their final year have one qualification at Level 6 or better.¹⁰
- It is estimated that 17% of young people leaving care who are eligible for aftercare go on to make a homeless application.¹¹
- 28% of young people leave care without a formal ‘pathway’ plan for their next steps.¹²
- Of young people leaving care eligible for aftercare services, 38% did not receive any.¹³

*For the purposes of comparison with other UK nations, ‘looked after’ here refers to children looked after away from their home or parents.*
Wales

- 6,800 children are classified as looked after, an increase of 7% from the previous year. 
- 9% of looked after children had three or more placements over the past year.

Fostering

- 71% of looked after children are accommodated in foster care placements.
- It is estimated that fostering services need to recruit a further 550 foster families.

Adoption

- 309 children were adopted in 2018-19 – a 3% increase on the previous year.
- 8% of children were adopted by their former foster carer, a proportion that has fallen steadily over the past ten years but remained consistent over the last three years.
- At 31 March 2019, 338 children were waiting to be matched or placed with a new family.

Reason for becoming looked after:

- 66% Abuse or neglect
- 23% Family in acute stress or dysfunction
- 5% Parental illness, disability or absence
- 4% Socially unacceptable behaviour
- 2% Other

Ethnicity of looked after children:

- 91% White
- 3% Mixed Ethnicity
- 2% Asian or Asian British
- 2% Black or Black British
- 2% Other

Care leavers and care experienced young people

- 53% of care leavers are in education, training or employment at 12 months after leaving care.
- Around 20% of homeless people in Wales are care leavers.
- 25% of adult prisoners are care experienced.
- 14% of young women leaving care are pregnant or already a Mother.
Northern Ireland

- There are 3281 children classified as looked after, a 6% increase on last year.¹
- 6% of looked after children live in residential care.²
- 54% of children in care have been looked after for less than three years and just under 10% of children have been looked after for ten years or longer.³

Fostering

- 79% of looked after children are in foster placements.⁴
- It is estimated that 250 more foster families need to be recruited.⁵
- 48% of children in foster care are in a kinship placement.⁶

Adoption

- 9% of those leaving care are adopted.⁷
- Children wait on average, 3 years and 1 month to be adopted.⁸
- 14% of those leaving care go to live with their former foster carers via the ‘Going the Extra Mile’ (GEM) Scheme.⁹

Ethnicity of looked after children:¹⁰

- 93% White
- 7% Other ethnicities including mixed race, Irish/Roma Travellers, Black, Chinese and Pakistani

Care leavers and care experienced young people

- 31% of children leaving care have no qualifications.¹¹
- 27% of care leavers aged 16-18 have 5 GCSEs (A*-C) or higher.¹²
- Nearly 1 in 4 care leavers aged 16-18 had a statement of special educational needs.¹³
- 35% of care leavers aged 19 were NEET*.¹⁴
- 12% of all care leavers aged 19 were parents.¹⁵
Global

Orphanages

- There are between 2.7 and 8 million children residing in orphanages globally.\textsuperscript{1,2}
- On average, 80\% of children living in orphanages have at least one living parent.\textsuperscript{3}

*The following statistics are based on reports carried out in one location:*

- 1 in 3 children exiting residential care institutions becomes homeless.\textsuperscript{4}
- 1 in 5 children exiting residential care institutions gains a criminal record.\textsuperscript{5}
- 1 in 10 children exiting residential care institutions commits suicide.\textsuperscript{6}

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

- Between January and June 2019, around 2,800 unaccompanied and separated children arrived in Europe.\textsuperscript{1}
- Between January and June 2019, the UK received 4,780 child asylum applications (not unaccompanied or separated), making up 5\% of all applications across Europe. In contrast, Germany received 39\% of applications, France 12\%, Spain 11\% and Greece 10\%.\textsuperscript{2}
- In 2017, nearly 31,000 unaccompanied children arrived in Europe. At this time, the UK government agreed to resettle 480 (1.5\%) of these.\textsuperscript{3}
- So far, 220 unaccompanied children have arrived in the UK through the Dubs amendment.\textsuperscript{4}
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TOTAL = 38,752

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(3) Total average is 3%. Total number of looked after children across UK in 2017-18 was 95,856. This year is 99,197.


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Global

Orphanages


Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)


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*NEET = not in education, employment or training*