



Statistical Report

Winter 2019-20

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Headline Statistics

- This year in the UK, nearly **40,000**¹ 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 home². An increase of **3%** from the previous year.³
- More than **65,000** children live with almost **55,000** foster families across the UK.⁴
- The UK urgently needs to recruit **8,600** more foster families to meet the need.⁵
- At 31 December 2018, there were **2750** children waiting for adoption in England. **39%** of these had been waiting **eighteen months or more**.⁶

Care leavers

Around **8,600** young people in England age out of the care system every year⁷:

Only **6%** of care leavers aged 19-21 go on to higher education⁸.

Care experienced young people in England⁹:



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.¹
- **9%** of looked after children had three or more placements over the past year.²

Fostering

- **71%** of looked after children are accommodated in foster care placements.³
- It is estimated that fostering services need to recruit a further **550** foster families.⁴

Adoption

- **309** children were adopted in 2018-19 – a **3%** increase on the previous year.⁵
- **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.⁶
- At 31 March 2019, **338 children** were waiting to be matched or placed with a new family.⁷

Reason for becoming looked after⁸:

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 children⁹:

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.¹⁰
- Around **20%** of homeless people in Wales are care leavers.¹¹
- **25%** of adult prisoners are care experienced.¹²
- **14%** of young women leaving care are pregnant or already a Mother.¹³

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 children¹⁰:

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.^{1, 2}
- On average, **80%** of children living in orphanages have at least one living parent.³

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

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

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

- Between January and June 2019, around **2,800** unaccompanied and separated children arrived in Europe.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%**.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.³
- So far, **220** unaccompanied children have arrived in the UK through the Dubs amendment.⁴

References

- (1) England **(31,680)** Children looked after in England (including adoption) 2018-19
 Scotland **(4063)** Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2017-18
 Northern Ireland **(884)** Children's Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland 2018/19
 Wales **(2125)** Children looked after by local authorities, 2018-19
 TOTAL = **38,752**
- (2) Total is **99,197** based on published statistics for looked-after children:
 England **(78,150)** Children looked after in England (including adoption) 2018-19
 Scotland **(10,920)** Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2017-18
 Wales **(6,846)** Children looked after by local authorities, 2018-19
 Northern Ireland **(3281)** Children's Social Care Statistics 2018/19
- (3) Total average is **3%**. Total number of looked after children across UK in 2017-18 was 95,856. This year is 99,197.
- (4) Fostering Statistics, *The Fostering Network*; <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/all-about-fostering/fostering-statistics> [Accessed December 2019]
- (5) Fostering Statistics, *The Fostering Network* <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/all-about-fostering/fostering-statistics> [Accessed December 2019]
- (6) Headline Measures and Business Intelligence, Q3 2018-19; ASGLB; Available at: <https://coram-i.org.uk/asglb/data/> [Accessed December 2019]
- (7) Table D1: Children looked after in England (including adoption) year ending 31 March 2019; Department for Education
- (8) Children looked after in England (including adoption) 2018-19; Department for Education
- (9) *Care Leavers: engaging for solutions* (2016) National Audit Office

England

Statistics based largely on publications up to 31 March 2019

- (1) – (6) Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2019; Department for Education
- (7) Fostering Statistics; <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/all-about-fostering/fostering-statistics> [Accessed December 2019]
- (8) – (13) Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2019; Department for Education
- (14) *Care leavers' transition to adulthood* (2015) National Audit Office

- (15) Increasing the Number of Care Leavers in 'Settled, Safe Accommodation (2010) M. Stein and M. Morris
- (16) Nations Apart? Experiences of single homeless people across Great Britain (2014) P. Mackie and I. Thomas 2014, Crisis. https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20608/crisis_nations_apart_2014.pdf
- (17) (18) Children looked after in England (including adoption), year ending 31 March 2019; Department for Education

Scotland

Statistics based largely on publications up to 31 July 2018

- (1) - (4) Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2017-18; Scottish Government
- (5) Fostering Statistics; <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/all-about-fostering/fostering-statistics> [Accessed September 2019]
- (6) - (8) Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2017-18; Scottish Government
- (9) *Prisoner Survey 2017* (2017) Scottish Prison Service (SPS)
- (10) *Education Outcomes for Looked After Children 2017/18*, Scottish Government
- (11) Homelessness and Care Experience: Beyond the Headlines (2019) CELCIS
- (12) (13) Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2017-18; Scottish Government

Wales

Statistics based largely on publications up to 31 March 2019

- (1) (2) (3) Experimental Statistics: Children looked after by local authorities, 2018-19; Welsh Government
- (4) Fostering Statistics; <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/all-about-fostering/fostering-statistics> [Accessed September 2019]
- (5) (6) Experimental Statistics: Children looked after by local authorities, 2018-19; Welsh Government
- (7) Annual Report 2018-19, National Adoption Service
- (8) (9) Experimental Statistics: Children looked after by local authorities, 2018-19; Welsh Government
- (10) Quantitative social services performance measures – Children and Care Leavers (2018-19) StatsWales
- (11) (12) (13) *Care experienced children and young people* (2018) National Assembly for Wales, Public Accounts Committee

Northern Ireland

Statistics based largely on publications up to 31 March 2019

- (1) - (4) Children's Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland 2018/19; Department of Health
- (5) Fostering Statistics; The Fostering Network <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/advice-information/all-about-fostering/fostering-statistics> [Accessed September 2019]

- (6) (7)** Children's Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland 2018/19; Department of Health
- (8)** Children adopted from Care in Northern Ireland 2018-19; Department of Health
- (9) (10)** Children's Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland 2018/19; Department of Health
- (11) - (15)** Northern Ireland Care Leavers 2017/18; Department of Health

Global

Orphanages

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- (2)** Pinheiro, P.S. (2006) *World Report on Violence against Children*. New York: United Nations Secretary-General's study on violence against children, p183.
- (3)** Csáky, C. (2009) *Keeping children out of harmful institutions: Why we should be investing in family-based care*. London: Save the Children, p5.
- (4) (5) (6)** Tobis, D. (2000) *Moving from Residential Institutions to Community-Based Social Services in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, p.33.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

- (1)** UNICEF: Latest statistics and graphics on refugee and migrant children; Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/eca/emergencies/latest-statistics-and-graphics-refugee-and-migrant-children> [Accessed December 2019]
- (2)** UNICEF: Latest statistics and graphics on refugee and migrant children; Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/eca/emergencies/latest-statistics-and-graphics-refugee-and-migrant-children> [Accessed December 2019]
- (3)** *Over 100 Faith leaders call on PM Boris Johnson to welcome refugees* (2019) Safe Passage; Available at: <https://www.safepassage.org.uk/news/faith-leaders-call-on-boris-johnson-to-welcome-refugees> [Accessed December 2019]
- (4)** *Written Statement - Immigration: Children* (2018) The Minister for Immigration, Caroline Nokes; December 2018; Available at: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-12-20/debates/18122039000020/ImmigrationChildren?highlight=section%2067%20when%20calais%20camp#contribution-98D1DFDD-0491-4EF7-BA3C-CC414A271E6C>

*NEET = not in education, employment or training