

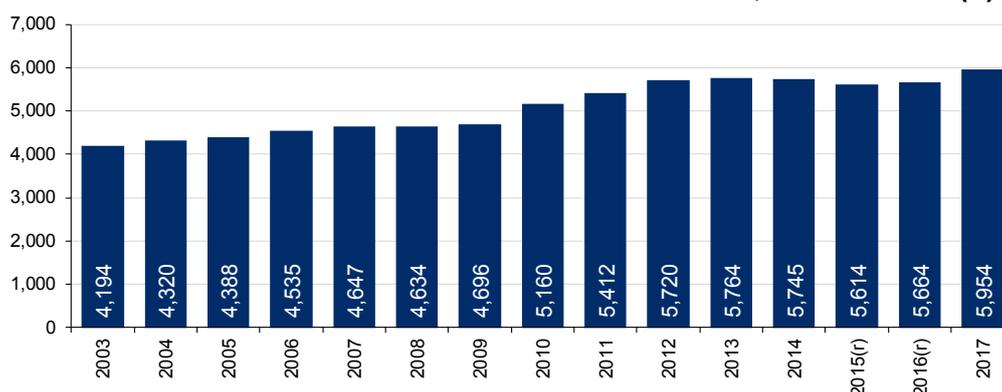
Experimental Statistics: Children looked after by local authorities, 2016-17

14 December 2017
SFR 184/2017

This annual statistics first release has been de-designated from National Statistics to Experimental Statistics to reflect the scale of the changes made to the social services and related systems. This publication is based on the first year of data collected from the [Looked after children census](#) following the introduction of the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act](#), the collection process and publication will be reviewed for 2017-18.

This release presents figures about children looked after by Welsh local authorities. Children looked after include those on care orders and others provided with accommodation by their local authority.

Chart 1: Number of children looked after in Wales, at 31 March (a)



(a) Excluding children looked after in short-term placements.

Source: Looked after children census

(r) The data has been revised since previously published.

Key results for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017

- 5,954 children were looked after on 31 March 2017, an increase of 290 (5 per cent) over the previous year and a rate of 95 per 10,000 population aged under 18. ([Chart 1](#) and [Table 1](#))
- There were 624 children looked after at 31st March 2017 who had three or more placements in 2016-17, a rate of 10 per cent. ([Chart 2](#))
- There were 312 children adopted from care, a decrease of 28 (8 per cent) on the previous year. ([Table 6](#))
- Of the 2,217 children starting to be looked after in 2016-17, 1,381 (62 per cent) were due to abuse or neglect. ([Table 2](#))

About this release

The release presents key results at the Wales level and is based on the year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, or the position at 31 March 2017, unless otherwise stated. All statistics in this release can be regarded as final figures, not subject to further revision or update.

Further information for individual local authorities can be found in the [Annexes](#).

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Children looked after by local authorities

Throughout this statistical release, 'children looked after' refers to children looked after by local authorities.

Placements of children looked after

Table 1: Number of children looked after by placement ^(a)

Placement	2014	2015 (r)	2016 (r)	2017
Children looked after at 31 March				
In foster care placements	4,384	4,222	4,252	4,434
With parents or other parental responsibility	544	581	635	712
Secure units, children's homes, hostels	246	240	241	276
Placed for adoption	293	294	264	239
Living independently	96	110	100	131
Residential schools	52	48	36	29
Other (b)	130	119	136	133
Total	5,745	5,614	5,664	5,954

Source: Looked after children census

(a) Excluding children looked after in short-term placements.

(b) Residential care home, NHS/Health Trust or other establishment providing medical or nursing care, family centre or mother and baby unit, Youth Offender Institution or prison, whereabouts unknown.

(r) The data has been revised since previously published.

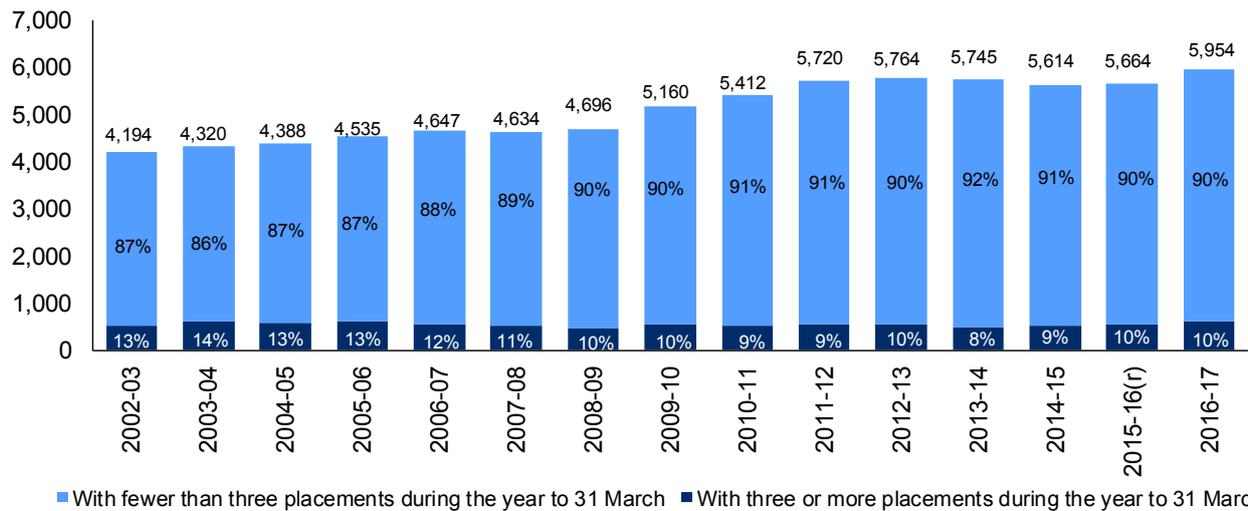
5,954 children were looked after on 31 March 2017, a rate of 95 per 10,000 children aged less than 18 years, and an increase of 290 (5 per cent) when compared to the previous year.

74 per cent of looked after children at 31 March 2017 were accommodated in foster care placements, a gradual decline in proportion since 2012, when it stood at 79 per cent. Over the last four years, the proportions of children in different placement types have remained broadly similar.

The remainder of children looked after were mostly placed with parents, at secure units, children's homes, hostels or placed for adoption and a relatively small proportion were living independently or at residential schools.

Further information can be found on the StatsWales website: [Children looked after at 31 March by local authority and placement type](#).

Chart 2: Percentage of children looked after who had 3 or more placements, at 31 March, 2002-03 to 2016-17^(a)



Source: Looked after children census

(a) Excluding children looked after in short-term placements.

(r) The data has been revised since previously published.

There were 624 children in care at 31 March 2017 who had three or more placements between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, an increase of 59 children (10 per cent) compared with the previous year. 10 per cent of children had 3 or more placements in 2016-17.

Children looked after by need for care

Table 2: Children starting to be looked after, by need for care, between 1 April and 31 March, 2013-14 to 2016-17^(a)

Need of Care	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16 (r)	2016-17
Children started to be looked after	2,009	2,041	2,064	2,217
Number by category of need:				
Abuse or neglect	1,175	1,241	1,312	1,381
Family in acute stress or dysfunction	538	500	498	592
Parental illness, disability or absence	163	140	132	143
Socially unacceptable behaviour	105	123	87	69
Other (b)	28	37	35	32
<i>Percentage (%) by category of need:</i>				
<i>Abuse or neglect</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Family in acute stress or dysfunction</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Parental illness, disability or absence</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Socially unacceptable behaviour</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Other (b)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>

Source: Looked after children census

(a) Excluding children looked after in short-term placements. Where a child had separate periods of care only the first period is counted and shows the initial reason for a child coming into care.

(b) up until 2015-16, the 'other' category included adoption disruption, disability and low income. From 2016-17 onwards, information is no longer collected on low income.

(r) The data has been revised since previously published.

There were 2,217 children who started to be looked after between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, an increase of 153 children from the previous year. The main reason why social services first engaged with children looked after was because of abuse or neglect (62 per cent). During 2016-17, a total of 1,381 children started to be looked after because of abuse and neglect. The pattern of reasons for why children have started to become looked after has been broadly similar in recent years, but there has been an increase in the abuse and neglect category since 2003, when it stood at 48 per cent.

Further information can be found on the StatsWales website: [Children starting to be looked after during year to 31 March by local authority and need for care.](#)

Children looked after leaving care

Table 3: Children leaving care, by reason for leaving between 1 April and 31 March, 2013-14 to 2016-17^{(a)(b)}

Need of Care	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16(r)	2016-17
Children leaving care (b)	2,024	2,172	2,011	1,904
Returned home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility (c)	1,030	1,110	1,032	978
Adopted from care	347	385	341	312
Turned 18 years old and continued to live with former foster parent(s) (d)	81
Other	647	677	638	533
<i>Percentage (%) by category of need:</i>				
<i>Returned home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility (c)</i>	<i>51%</i>	<i>51%</i>	<i>51%</i>	<i>51%</i>
<i>Adopted from care</i>	<i>17%</i>	<i>18%</i>	<i>17%</i>	<i>16%</i>
<i>Turned 18 years old and continued to live with former foster parent(s) (d)</i>	<i>..</i>	<i>..</i>	<i>..</i>	<i>4%</i>
<i>Other</i>	<i>32%</i>	<i>31%</i>	<i>32%</i>	<i>28%</i>

Source: Looked after children census

(a) Excludes children looked after in short-term placements. Where a child had separate periods of care only the latest period is counted.

(b) Excludes children who died or where care was taken over by another local authority in the UK.

(c) Includes special guardianship orders made to carers or former foster carers.

(d) Data for this aspect is only available from 2016-17 onwards. When the young person reaches their 18th birthday, they are no longer in care. At this point, the young person, the carer and the appropriate local authority support staff members sign the 'When I am Ready' Living Together Agreement. The young person and the carer also sign an excluded licensee agreement. This signifies the start of the 'When I am Ready' arrangement.

(r) The data has been revised since previously published.

..' denotes data is not available.

1,904 children left care between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, a decrease of 107 children (5 per cent) compared with the previous year.

During 2016-17, just over half of all children leaving care (51 per cent) returned home to live with parents, relatives or other persons with parental responsibility, the same proportion as seen in the last three years.

Further information can be found on the StatsWales website: [Episodes finishing for children looked after during year to 31 March by local authority and reason for finishing](#).

Young persons (aged 16 and over) leaving care

Table 4: Young persons aged 16 and over leaving care, by age and reason for leaving between 1 April and 31 March 2016-17^{(a)(b)}

Need of Care	16	17	18	19	Total
Moved into independent living arrangement and no longer looked after	9	33	151	0	193
Returned home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility (c)	33	56	52	0	141
Turned 18 years old and continuing to live with former foster parent(s) (d)	.	.	80	.	80
Transferred to care of adult social services	0	0	31	1	32
Sentenced to custody	3	12	13	0	28
Other	7	15	181	0	203
Total	52	116	508	1	677

Source: Looked after children census

(a) Excludes children looked after in short-term placements. Where a child had separate periods of care only the latest period is counted.

(b) Excludes children who died or where care was taken over by another local authority in the UK.

(c) Includes special guardianship orders made to carers or former foster carers.

(d) Data for this aspect is only available from 2016-17 onwards. When the young person reaches their 18th birthday, they are no longer in care. At this point, the young person, the carer and the appropriate local authority support staff members sign the 'When I am Ready' Living Together Agreement. The young person and the carer also sign an excluded licensee agreement. This signifies the start of the 'When I am Ready' arrangement.

'.' denotes data is not available.

677 young persons aged 16 and over left care between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, 509 (75 per cent) of those leaving care were 18 or over. 29 per cent of young persons leaving care moved into independent living arrangements and were no longer looked after, 21 per cent returned home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility and four per cent were sentenced to custody.

Table 5: Young persons aged 16 and over leaving care, by accommodation at date of ceasing to be looked after between 1 April and 31 March, 2016-17 ^{(a)(b)}

Accommodation	16	17	18	19	Total
In suitable accommodation	45	95	472	1	613
In a suitable community, residential or nursing care home such as an NHS establishment	0	1	21	1	23
In suitable custody	0	0	1	0	1
In suitable foyers and similar supported accommodation	1	2	13	0	16
In suitable independent living	1	11	74	0	86
In suitable ordinary lodgings without formal support	0	0	125	0	125
In suitable semi-independent, transitional accommodation	2	11	53	0	66
Other suitable accommodation	1	0	5	0	6
Suitable supported lodgings	4	11	64	0	79
With parents or relatives in suitable accommodation	36	59	116	0	211
In unsuitable accommodation	7	21	36	0	64
In unsuitable bed and breakfast	1	5	2	0	8
In unsuitable custody	3	10	15	0	28
In unsuitable emergency accommodation	0	1	3	0	4
In unsuitable independent living	0	0	1	0	1
Other unsuitable accommodation	3	5	13	0	21
With parents or relatives in unsuitable accommodation	0	0	2	0	2
Total	52	116	508	1	677

Source: Looked after children census

(a) Excludes children looked after in short-term placements. Where a child had separate periods of care only the latest period is counted.

(b) Excludes children who died or where care was taken over by another local authority in the UK.

Of the 677 young persons aged 16 and over leaving care, 613 (91 per cent) were in suitable accommodation at the date they ceased to be looked after; 211 of those were with parents or relatives in suitable accommodation.

Adoptions of children looked after

Table 6: Adoptions of children looked after between 1 April and 31 March, 2013-14 to 2016-17^(a)

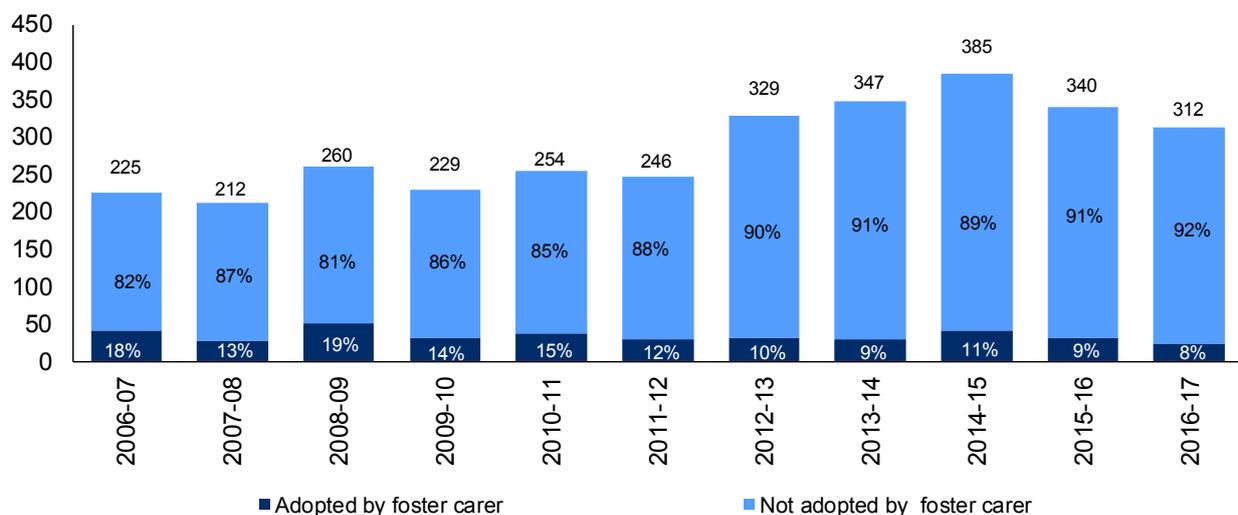
Adoptions	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Children adopted from care	347	385	340	312
Number:				
Adopted by former foster carer	30	41	31	24
Adopted by others	317	344	309	288
Percentage (%):				
Adopted by former foster carer	9	11	9	8
Adopted by others	91	89	91	92

Source: Looked after children census

(a) Excluding children looked after in short-term placements. Where a child had separate periods of care only the latest period is counted.

There were 312 children adopted from care between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017; 8 per cent of children were adopted by their former foster carer, a proportion that has fallen over the past 10 years. The number of children adopted decreased by 28 (8 per cent) over the previous year.

Chart 3: Percentage of adoptions of children looked after between 1 April and 31 March, 2006-07 to 2016-17



Source: Looked after children census

Further information can be found on the StatsWales website: [Foster care adopters by duration of final period of care and measure](#).

Table 7: Placements of looked after children by local authority, 31 March 2017 ^(a)

Local Authority	Children looked after at 31		
	March 2017	In foster care placements	Other placements (b)
Isle of Anglesey	140	102	38
Gwynedd	218	143	75
Conwy	177	124	53
Denbighshire	163	112	51
Flintshire	212	145	67
Wrexham	210	137	73
Powys	155	121	34
Ceredigion	75	54	21
Pembrokeshire	127	92	35
Carmarthenshire	206	171	35
Swansea	481	380	101
Neath Port Talbot	347	285	62
Bridgend	390	301	89
Vale of Glamorgan	226	166	60
Cardiff	721	489	232
Rhondda Cynon Taf	690	558	132
Merthyr Tydfil	146	115	31
Caerphilly	328	257	71
Blaenau Gwent	211	142	69
Torfaen	317	242	75
Monmouthshire	133	91	42
Newport	281	207	74
Wales	5,954	4,434	1,520

Source: Looked after children census

(a) Excluding children looked after in short-term placements.

(b) Residential care home, NHS/Health Trust or other establishment providing medical or nursing care, family centre or mother and baby unit, Youth Offender Institution or prison, whereabouts unknown.

Further information can be found on the StatsWales website: [Children looked after in foster placements at 31 March by local authority and placement type](#).

Glossary

A **“child”** is anyone under 18 years of age. Children cease to be looked after the day before their 18th birthday. The words 'child' and 'children' are used in this sense throughout this guidance.

“Looked after” is the term used in the Children Act 1989 to describe all children who are the subject of a care order, or who are provided with accommodation on a voluntary basis for more than 24 hours.

“Placements” of looked after children include all placement types, except where a child is in respite care. For a full list of these placements, please refer to the SSDA903 guidance. A new placement is recorded for a child when they start to be looked after or are already looked after and move to a new location. These changes are indicated by the use of ‘Reason for new episode’ codes S, P and B. A change in legal status alone (‘Reason for new episode’ code L) is not regarded as a placement change.

“Special guardianship orders” (SGO) were introduced by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 section 144(4) which amended the Children Act 1989. A special guardianship order gives the special guardian parental responsibility for the child. Unlike adoption, under a SGO the parents remain the child's parents and retain parental responsibility, though their ability to exercise their parental responsibility is extremely limited.

“Need for care” or **“Category of need”** is the main reason why a child is being provided with services.

“Short term placement” is the term used to describe children who are subject to short-term break agreements. These children normally live at home, but are accommodated by a local authority in a pattern of short periods of care in order to give their parents (or guardians) some “respite” from the normal duties of looking after a child.

Notes

1. Context

1.1 Policy/operational context

All references made to 'year' relate to the standard financial year which runs from 1 April to 31 March (for example 2016-17 should be understood as 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017).

From 2016-17 individual level data in relation to looked after children will be collected during the year through the Looked after children census. This replaces the existing datasets Looked After Children (SSDA903), Adoptions of looked after children (AD1), Educational qualifications of care leavers (OC1) and Care leavers on their 19th birthday (OC3).

Outcomes for care leavers on their 19th birthday are no longer captured. Information on care leavers should be captured for all those who leave care during the year.

Data has been submitted to the Welsh Government annually and reflect a financial years worth of data. This first year will detail the financial year 06 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

With effect from 6 April 2016 Part 3 of and Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 ("the 1989 Act") will no longer apply to local authorities in Wales. The rights and duties under those provisions have been incorporated into the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 ("the 2014 Act"), in the main, into [Part 6 of and Schedule 1 to the 2014 Act](#).

1.2 A National Statistics status

These statistics, previously designated as National Statistics, are published as experimental statistics reflecting the scale of change happening in social services and system changes for the first year of data collection as not all local authorities provided complete returns. Following the first year, the collection process and publication will be reviewed.

Occasionally, revisions can occur due to errors in our statistical processes or when a data supplier notifies the Welsh Government that they have submitted incorrect information. In these cases, a judgement is made as to whether the change is significant enough to publish a revised statistical release. Where changes are not deemed to be significant, figures will be corrected if they appear in future releases. However minor amendments to the figures may be reflected in the StatsWales tables prior to the next release.

2. Key Quality Information

This section provides a summary of information on this output against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability.

2.1 Relevance

The statistics are used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor child social services trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some of the key users are:

- Ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales;
- Local authorities;
- The third sector (e.g. charities);
- The Health and Social Services Group in the Welsh Government;
- Other areas of the Welsh Government;
- The research community;
- Students, academics and universities;
- Individual citizens and private companies.

The statistics may also be useful for other UK governments

- The Northern Ireland Executive's Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
- The Scottish Government, Analytical Services Division
- The Department for Education in England.

These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of these are:

- advice to Ministers;
- local authority comparisons and benchmarks;
- to inform the social services policy decision-making process in Wales;
- to inform the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales;
- to model the financial consequences of changes in the population or the care system
- to assist in research on children receiving social services.

2.2 Accuracy

The collection adheres closely to the definition of looked after children provided in law. In a small number of instances where there is scope for confusion, guidance on how to interpret the term 'looked after' for statistical purposes is given. This is to achieve consistency in data so that there is comparability between local authorities' figures.

This is the first year of collecting the data from the [Looked after children census](#) following the introduction of the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act](#). Statisticians within the Welsh Government review the data and query any anomalies with local authorities between submissions to ensure coherence of the data received, and before tables are published. Data adhere to the national standards and guidance, thus ensuring coherence within and across organisations. Local authorities are expected to comply with the guidance notes for completion that accompany the [data collection form](#).

The figures in this release reflect the final position of the 2016-17 data year and are correct as at 31 March 2017. 2016-17 is the first year of collecting and reporting on data derived from the [Looked after children census](#) following implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. This new data collection is supported by detailed guidance and an extensive series of validation checks were undertaken to ensure that the information provided is accurate and consistent.

For the children looked after data, information which may be inconsistent with that already held in a previous year about the child is checked, in particular details submitted for the beginning of the current year which do not match those at the end of the previous year.

2.3 Timeliness and Punctuality

The Data Collection team within the Welsh Government collected data, for the financial year 2016-17, between March and May 2017. Data in this release refers to final 2016-17 data. This release was published in December 2017, after being postponed from being published in October.

2.4 Accessibility and Clarity

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics section of the Welsh Government website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables on [StatsWales](#), a free to use service that allows visitors to view, manipulate, create and download data.

2.5 Comparability and coherence

The tables are based on complete returns from all local authorities in Wales. Statistics collected in each United Kingdom country may differ and the detailed guidance available from each country's website should be consulted before using these statistics as comparative measures.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act sets out significant changes in policy, which in turn will have an effect on the current national social services data collections. In order to understand and develop requirements in relation to these changes, the Welsh Government set up the Social Services Technical Information Network in November 2014. The Network includes representation from the Welsh Local Government Association, Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru, Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales and Welsh Government.

The Network has reviewed all of the national social services data returns submitted by local authorities and requirements for data have been developed in line with the implementation of the Act. From April 2016, local authorities are required to collect the performance measures detailed in the Code of Practice in relation to social services performance issued under the Act.

[New forms – Local authority social services data collections](#)

3. Revisions

Occasionally, revisions can occur due to errors in our statistical processes or when a data supplier notifies the Welsh Government that they have submitted incorrect information. In these cases, a judgment is made as to whether the change is significant enough to publish a revised statistical release. Where changes are not deemed to be significant, figures will be corrected if they appear in future releases. However minor amendments to the figures may be reflected in the StatsWales tables prior to the next release.

Following submission of the current year's data, the data is validated against previous years' submissions for each local authority. This can often result in minor revisions to previous years' data. These changes are then reflected in the annual statistical release. Revised figures have been marked with the letter "r" in the relevant tables and charts affected throughout the release.

4. Further information

Information on the costs to local authorities of services provided for looked after children are produced by the Welsh Government from local authority financial returns. [Detailed figures are available on StatsWales.](#)

Information on the characteristics and educational outcomes of all children receiving social services was published in the "[Wales Children in Need Census, 2015](#)".

5. Related publications

England:

[Looked After Children Statistics](#) are produced annually by the Department for Education. The most recent data was published on 29 September 2016.

Scotland:

[Children Looked After Statistics](#) are produced annually by the Scottish Government. The most recent data were published on 22 March 2016.

Northern Ireland:

[Children Looked After Statistics](#) are produced annually by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. The latest [Children Order Statistics](#) were published on 19 November 2015.

6. Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being

goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on indicators and associated technical information - [How do you measure a nation's progress? - National Indicators](#)

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

7. Further details

The document is available at:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/children-looked-after-local-authorities/?lang=en>

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to stats.pss@gov.wales

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Annex 1: A List of Tables and Data Items Provided in StatsWales

1. [Children looked after at 31 March by local authority, gender and age](#)
(Chart 1 of the Release)
2. [Children looked after at 31 March by local authority and placement type](#)
(Table 1 and Annex 1 of the Release)
3. [Children looked after at 31 March by local authority, number of placements during the year and measure](#)
(Chart 2 of the Release)
4. [Children starting to be looked after during year 31 March by local authority and need for care](#)
(Table 2 of the Release)
5. [Episodes finishing for children looked after during 31 March by local authority and reason for finishing](#)
(Table 3 of the Release)
6. [Educational attainment of children looked after by local authority and measure](#)
(Table 4 of the Release)
7. [Educational Qualifications of children who ceased to be looked after aged 16 or over with GCSE or GNVQ qualification by local authorities, gender and year](#)
(Table 5 of the Release)
8. [Care leavers on their 19th birthday during year ending 31 March by local authority and activity](#)
(Table 6 of the Release)
9. [Foster care adopters and duration of final period of care by duration and year](#)
(Chart 3)

Dataset only available on StatsWales

1. [Children looked after at 31 March by local authority and legal status](#)
2. [Children looked after in foster placements at 31 March by local authority and placement type](#)
3. [Children looked after at 31 March by local authority and ethnicity](#)
4. [Respite care for looked after children by local authority and placement](#)
5. [Respite care for looked after children by local authority and need for care](#)
6. [Educational qualifications of care leavers by local authorities, qualifications and year](#)
7. [Care leavers on their 19th birthday by local authorities, activity and year](#)
8. [Adoption of looked after children during year ending 31 March by age and gender](#)
9. [Average age at adoption \(months\) of looked after children by local authorities and year](#)
10. [Looked after children adopted during year ending 31 March by age of child at start of last period of care and the length of time until adoption](#)
11. [Looked after children adopted during year ending 31 March by gender and marital status of adopters](#)
12. [Looked after children adopted year ending 31 March by ethnicity of adopters and year](#)