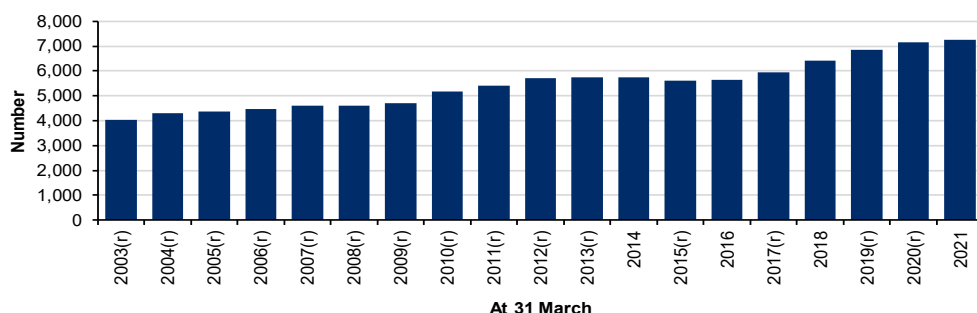


## Experimental Statistics: Children looked after by local authorities, 2020-21

4 November 2021  
SFR 346/2021

This annual 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)**



Source: SSDA903; Looked after children census

(a) Excluding children looked after in short-term placements.  
(r) The data has been revised since previously published.

### Main points for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021

At 31 March 2021:

- 7,263 children were looked after, an increase of 113 (2%) on the previous year. This equates to a rate of 115.3 per 10,000 population aged under 18, compared to a rate of 113.5 in 2019-20.
- 86% of children looked after were accommodated under care orders.
- 70% of children looked after were accommodated in foster care placements; nearly a third of children in foster care were placed with relatives or friends.

During 2020-21:

- 1,747 children started to be looked after, a decrease of 228 (12%) compared with the previous year. 59% were receiving care and support initially because of abuse or neglect.
- 1,657 children left care, a decrease of 14 (1%) compared with the previous year. 48% returned home to live with parents, relatives or other persons with parental responsibility.
- 266 children were adopted from care, a decrease of 32 (11%) on the previous year.

### About this release

This release presents key results at the Wales level from the Looked After Children Census data collected in 2020-21. Data is based on the year 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, or the position at 31 March 2021, unless otherwise stated.

Further information for individual local authorities are published on [StatsWales](https://stats.wales.gov.uk/).

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## Children looked after by local authorities

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

A child is a person who is aged under 18. Section 74 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act states that a child who is looked after by a local authority is a child who is in its care; or provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, by the authority in the exercise of any functions which are social services functions, apart from functions under section 15, Part 4, or section 109, 114 or 115.

## Impact of COVID-19 pandemic

Data in this update is based on the year 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 and covers the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. COVID-19 appears to have resulted in a slow-down of activity, particularly at the start of 2020-21 when Wales was under national lockdown and physical contact between local authorities and children and families was reduced. Whilst we cannot determine the exact impact of the pandemic, it is thought to be visible in the data through fewer children starting to be looked after, a higher proportion of children needing care due to family stress or dysfunction, fewer placement moves, fewer children leaving care and changes in the accommodation of young people leaving care.

Furthermore, [policy changes](#) primarily focussing on reducing the numbers of children in need of care across Wales were introduced in 2019-20. Local authorities have set plans in place to reduce safely the numbers of children in need of care, including targets for 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22, and are being monitored by Welsh Government officials.

## Children looked after at 31 March

7,263 children were looked after\* on 31 March 2021, an increase of 113 (2%) children when compared to the previous year. This equates to a rate of 115.3 per 10,000 population aged under 18, compared to a rate of 113.5 in 2019-20. More children started to be looked after than left care during 2020-21, as has been the case in recent years. Whilst the number of children looked after at 31 March has increased each year in recent years, the scale of growth has been less.

\*Children looked after exclusively under short breaks, who normally live at home but are accommodated by a local authority in a series of short periods of care, have been excluded.

**Table 1: Children looked after at 31 March, 2017 to 2021**

	2017(r)	2018(r)	2019(r)	2020(r)	2021
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	3,205	3,477	3,708	3,861	3,897
Female	2,753	2,929	3,149	3,289	3,366
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,958</b>	<b>6,406</b>	<b>6,857</b>	<b>7,150</b>	<b>7,263</b>
<b>Age</b>					
Under 1	365	363	389	339	295
1 to 4	1,068	1,180	1,291	1,326	1,370
5 to 9	1,380	1,479	1,605	1,708	1,701
10 to 15	2,167	2,380	2,549	2,646	2,746
16 and over	978	1,004	1,023	1,131	1,151
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,958</b>	<b>6,406</b>	<b>6,857</b>	<b>7,150</b>	<b>7,263</b>
<b>Disability</b>					
Number of disabled children	322	454	437	431	445
Number of non-disabled children	5,351	5,813	6,265	6,404	6,083
Information not obtained	285	139	155	315	735
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,958</b>	<b>6,406</b>	<b>6,857</b>	<b>7,150</b>	<b>7,263</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>					
White	5,504	5,900	6,270	6,528	6,609
Mixed ethnic groups	210	195	235	245	263
Asian or Asian British	93	137	128	135	134
Black, African, Caribbean or Black British	83	91	103	109	107
Other ethnic group	64	83	121	129	101
Information not obtained	4	0	0	4	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,958</b>	<b>6,406</b>	<b>6,857</b>	<b>7,150</b>	<b>7,263</b>
<b>Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Child (UASC)</b>					
Number of UASC children	54	72	75	80	67
Number of non-UASC children	5,904	6,334	6,782	7,070	7,196
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,958</b>	<b>6,406</b>	<b>6,857</b>	<b>7,150</b>	<b>7,263</b>

Source: Looked after children census

(r) The data has been revised since previously published

Table 1 shows there more male than female children are looked after. At 31 March 2021, 54% of looked after children were male and 46% were female. These proportions have been stable in recent years. For transgender children, their gender identity at the present time is recorded.

38% of children looked after were aged 10-15, 23% were aged 5-9, 19% were aged 1-4, 4% were under 1 and 16% were 16 and over at 31 March 2021. The age profile of looked after children has changed slightly since 2016-17 with a small increase in the proportion of children looked after age 10-15 and a small decrease in the proportion of children looked after age under 1.

7% of children looked after at 31 March 2021 were disabled; where the child has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This proportion has been fairly stable in recent years.

92% of children looked after at 31 March 2021 were white, 4% were of mixed ethnicity, 2% were Asian or Asian British, 1% were Black, African, Caribbean or Black British and 1% were other ethnic groups.

1% of children looked after at 31 March 2021 were an unaccompanied asylum seeking child. An unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC) is an individual, who is under 18, who has applied for asylum in his/her own right, is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so. This proportion has been stable in recent years.

## Legal status of children looked after

The legal status indicates the underlying legal reason describing why a child is being looked after.

**Table 2: Children looked after by legal status at 31 March, 2017 to 2021(a)**

	2017(r)	2018(r)	2019(r)	2020(r)	2021
Care orders	4,640	5,155	5,673	6,035	6,215
<i>Interim Care Orders</i>	680	741	749	751	860
<i>Full Care orders</i>	3,960	4,414	4,924	5,284	5,355
Single period of accommodation	704	618	542	537	510
Other legal status (b)	610	629	627	571	531
Remand, detained or other compulsory order (c)	4	4	15	7	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,958</b>	<b>6,406</b>	<b>6,857</b>	<b>7,150</b>	<b>7,263</b>

Source: Looked after children census

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

(b) Includes freeing order granted; placement order granted; Wardship granted in High Court and child in LA accommodation.

(c) Includes those on remand, or committed for trial or sentence, and accommodated by LA; Detained in LA accommodation under PACE; Sentenced to CYP A 1969 supervision order with residence requirement; Under police protection and in local authority accommodation; Emergency protection order; Under child assessment order and local authority accommodation.

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

Table 2 shows most children are looked after under a care order, with the proportion having increased steadily in recent years to 86% at 31 March 2021. The majority of children looked after under care orders were looked after under full care orders; as opposed to interim care orders.

Over the same period of time, the proportion of children looked after under single instances of voluntary accommodation (under section 76 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) has decreased from 12% to 7%.

The proportion of children looked after under other legal status has also decreased and was 7% at 31 March 2021.

## Placements of children looked after

A looked after child's placement indicates where they are living whilst in the local authority's care.

**Table 3: Children looked after by placement at 31 March, 2017 to 2021(a)**

	2017(r)	2018(r)	2019(r)	2020(r)	2021
In foster care placements	4,425	4,700	4,851	4,965	5,072
<i>With relative or friends</i>	1,013	1,191	1,355	1,500	1,609
<i>With other foster carers</i>	3,412	3,509	3,496	3,465	3,463
With parents or other parental responsibility	732	861	1,076	1,198	1,198
Secure units, children's homes, hostels	356	400	475	538	535
Placed for adoption	247	251	235	244	235
Living independently	130	133	130	130	132
Residential schools	28	29	27	28	31
Other (b)	40	32	63	47	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,958</b>	<b>6,406</b>	<b>6,857</b>	<b>7,150</b>	<b>7,263</b>

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, residential employment and whereabouts unknown.

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

Table 3 shows 70% of children looked after at 31 March 2021 were accommodated in foster care placements, a gradual decline in proportion since 31 March 2017. Nearly a third (32%) of children in foster care were in placements with a relative or friends. This proportion has steadily increased from 23% at 31 March 2017.

16% of all children looked after were placed with parents or others with parental responsibility; these were mostly children subject to care orders. Whilst this proportion had been gradually increasing in recent years, it has been stable since 31 March 2019. Over the last four years, the proportions of children in the remaining other placement types have stayed broadly similar accounting for around 14% of placements in total.

Over two-thirds (68%) of children who were looked after at 31 March 2021 were in placements inside the local authority where they were living when they first became looked after. 27% of children were in placements outside their home local authority but within Wales and a further 6% were placed outside Wales. These proportions have remained fairly constant in recent years. Those children for which no postcode was provided have been excluded.

There were 516 children looked after at 31 March 2021 who had three or more placements during the year, a decrease of 139 children (21%) compared with the previous year. This equates to 7% of children and is lower than the proportion of around 9% seen in recent years. This is the lowest proportion seen since data started being collected in 2002-03.

## Children starting to be looked after

**Table 4: Children starting to be looked after by need for care and support, 2016-17 to 2020-21(a)**

	2016-17	2017-18(r)	2018-19(r)	2019-20(r)	2020-21
<b>Number by category of need:</b>	<b>2,228</b>	<b>2,172</b>	<b>2,137</b>	<b>1,975</b>	<b>1,747</b>
Abuse or neglect	1,388	1,394	1,408	1,289	1,027
Family in acute stress or dysfunction	595	521	492	459	516
Parental illness, disability or absence	143	143	114	106	104
Socially unacceptable behaviour	69	79	77	82	63
Other	33	35	46	39	37
<b>Percentage by category of need:</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Abuse or neglect</i>	62	64	66	65	59
<i>Family in acute stress or dysfunction</i>	27	24	23	23	30
<i>Parental illness, disability or absence</i>	6	7	5	5	6
<i>Socially unacceptable behaviour</i>	3	4	4	4	4
<i>Other</i>	1	2	2	2	2

Source: Looked after children census

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

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

Table 4 shows 1,747 children started to be looked after between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, a decrease of 228 children (12%) from the previous year. Since 2016-17, fewer children have started being looked after each year; this is more apparent from 2019-20 onwards.

For children who started to be looked after during 2020-21, the most common reason why the child received care and support initially was because of abuse or neglect (59% or 1,027 children). This is a decrease in proportion compared to around 65% in recent years. The proportion of children receiving care and support due to family in acute distress or dysfunction increased to 30% in 2020-21 (from around 23% in recent years); the highest proportion seen for this category since data started being collected in 2002-03.

The proportion of children looked after receiving care and support because of other categories of need has remained similar at about 12% in total.

## Children leaving care

**Table 5: Children leaving care by reason for leaving, 2016-17 to 2020-21(a)(b)**

	2016-17(r)	2017-18(r)	2018-19(r)	2019-20(r)	2020-21
<b>Number by reason for leaving care (b):</b>	<b>1,909</b>	<b>1,726</b>	<b>1,682</b>	<b>1,671</b>	<b>1,657</b>
Returned home to live with parents, relatives, or other person with parental responsibility (c)	989	820	792	788	798
Adopted from care	314	305	310	298	266
Independent Living	216	189	211	208	194
Turned 18 years old and continued to live with former foster parent(s) (d)	84	139	127	127	187
Other	306	273	242	250	212
<b>Percentage by reason for leaving care:</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Returned home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility (c)</i>	52	48	47	47	48
<i>Adopted from care</i>	16	18	18	18	16
<i>Independent Living</i>	11	11	13	12	12
<i>Turned 18 years old and continued to live with former foster parent(s) (d)</i>	4	8	8	8	11
<i>Other</i>	16	16	14	15	13

Source: Looked after children census

(a) Excludes children looked after in short-term placements. Where a child had multiple 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) When the young person reaches their 18th birthday, they are no longer in care. The young person may continue living with their former foster parent(s) through a 'When I am Ready' arrangement.

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

Table 5 shows 1,657 children left care between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, a decrease of 14 children (1%) compared with the previous year. The number of children leaving care had been decreasing but has been fairly stable since 2018-19.

During 2020-21, 798 children left care to return home to live with parents, relatives or other persons with parental responsibility with special guardianship orders made for 224 of these children. Children returning home accounted for 48% of all children leaving care in 2020-21. A similar proportion has been seen in the last four years but this is a smaller proportion than seen prior to 2017-18.

The proportion of children leaving care having turned 18 and continuing to live with former foster parent(s) increased to 11% in 2020-21 compared with 8% in the previous three years and 4% in 2016-17 following the creation of When I am Ready arrangements.

266 (16%) children who left care during 2020-21 were adopted, a slight decrease from 18% since 2017-18.

## Young people (aged 16 and over) leaving care

Typically, children cease to be looked after the day before their 18th birthday. Some young people may need to be accommodated by the local authority up to their 21st birthday if they are being looked after in a community home which is suitable for children aged 16 and over. In practice these are few in number, and tend to be young persons with severe physical or mental disabilities.

**Table 6: Young people aged 16 and over leaving care by age when leaving care and reason for leaving, 2018-19 to 2020-21 (a)(b)**

	2018-19(r)				2019-20(r)				2020-21			
	16	17	18 (d)	Total	16	17	18	Total	16	17	18	Total
Moved into independent living arrangement and no longer looked after	12	138	63	<b>213</b>	14	135	59	208	7	133	54	194
Turned 18 years old and continuing to live with former foster parent(s)	..	75	52	<b>127</b>	..	77	51	128	..	110	77	187
Returned home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility (c)	56	78	14	<b>148</b>	41	68	18	127	37	62	27	126
Transferred to care of adult social services (d)	0	26	20	<b>46</b>	0	25	17	42	0	15	24	39
Sentenced to custody (d)	3	6	0	<b>9</b>	4	9	2	15	0	6	2	8
Adopted	0	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Period of being looked after ceased for any other reason	15	56	87	<b>158</b>	8	31	78	117	4	22	81	107
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>662</b>

Source: Looked after children census

(a) Includes children looked after exclusively under a series of short term breaks. 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) One 19 year old has been included in this category for 2018-19.

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

.. Data is not applicable.

Table 6 shows 662 young persons aged 16 and over left care between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, an increase of 25 children (4%) compared with the previous year. 265 (40%) of those leaving were aged 18 or over when they left care, a higher proportion than seen in recent years.

The proportion of young people leaving care moving into independent living arrangements and were no longer looked after decreased to 29% in 2020-21, compared to 33% in 2019-20. Whilst the proportion of young people turning 18 years old and continuing to live with former foster parent(s) in a When I Am Ready arrangement increased to 28% in 2020-21, compared to 20% in 2019-20.

The proportions of young people who returned home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility or transferred to the care of adult social services during 2020-21 were 19% and 6% respectively, and similar proportions to the previous year.



**Table 7: Young people aged 16 and over leaving care by age and accommodation at date of ceasing to be looked after, 2018-19 to 2020-21 (a)(b)**

	2018-19(r)				2019-20(r)				2020-21			
	16	17	18 (c)	Total	16	17	18	Total	16	17	18	Total
<b>Suitable accommodation</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>628</b>
Ordinary lodgings without formal support	3	75	52	130	6	85	61	152	1	98	79	178
With parents or relatives in suitable accommodation	54	99	42	195	41	81	36	158	37	78	56	171
Semi-independent, transitional accommodation	8	62	39	109	5	66	39	110	3	68	35	106
Independent living (c)	5	37	42	84	2	33	29	64	1	35	34	70
Suitable supported lodgings	4	42	33	79	5	41	28	74	4	31	26	61
Community home or other form of residential or nursing care such as an NHS establishment	2	9	9	20	1	6	9	16	0	12	10	22
Foyers and similar supported accommodation	0	12	0	12	0	0	3	3	0	2	5	7
In custody	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Emergency accommodation	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other suitable accommodation	3	9	7	19	2	11	7	20	3	6	4	13
<b>Unsuitable accommodation</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>662</b>

Source: Looked after children census

(a) Includes children looked after exclusively under a series of short term breaks. 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) One 19 year old has been included in this category for 2018-19.

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

Table 7 shows of the 662 young persons aged 16 and over who left care between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, 628 (95%) were in suitable accommodation at the date they ceased to be looked after. Accommodation is regarded as suitable if it provides safe, secure and affordable provision for young people. The proportion of young people in suitable accommodation has increased from 91% in 2016-17.

28% of young people in suitable accommodation were in ordinary lodgings without formal support and 27% were with parents or relatives. The proportion of young people in ordinary lodgings without formal support has generally increased since 2016-17, as has the proportion in semi-independent transitional accommodation (about 17% since 2018-19). The proportion of young people with parents or relatives, in independent living and in suitable supported lodgings have generally decreased over this time.

Bed and breakfasts are considered unsuitable accommodation, in addition, the types of accommodation in Table 7 are considered to be unsuitable if they clearly exposes the person to risk of harm or social exclusion. The number, and the proportion, of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation has decreased in recent years. The number of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation decreased by 5 (13%) from 39 to 34 compared with the previous year; equating to 5% of care leavers being in unsuitable accommodation during 2020-21. 26% of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation during 2020-21 were in custody.

## Adoptions of children looked after

An adoption refers to when a child ceases to be looked after on the granting of an adoption order.

**Table 8: Adoptions of children looked after, 2016-17 to 2020-21 (a)**

	2016-17	2017-18(r)	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
<b>Children adopted from care</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>266</b>
Adopted by former foster carer	24	23	25	31	22
Adopted by others	290	282	285	267	244

Source: Looked after children census

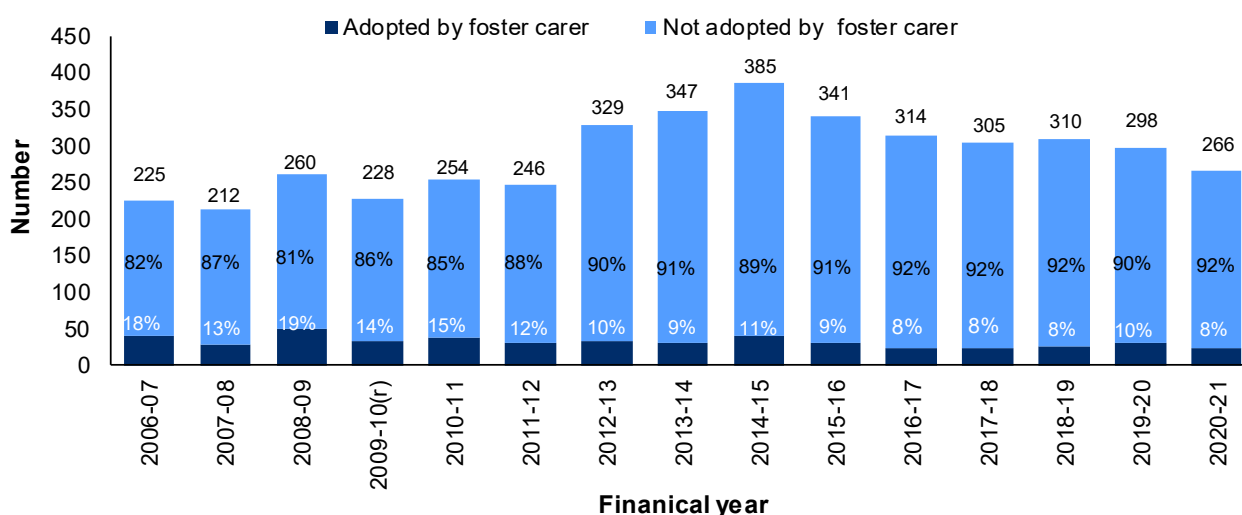
(a) Excluding children looked after in short-term placements. Where a child had separate periods of care only the latest period is counted.

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

Table 8 shows 266 children were adopted from care between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021; a decrease of 32 children (11%) compared with the previous year. The number of children adopted has been decreasing in recent years from a high of 385 children adopted during 2014-15.

Most (85%) of the children adopted during the year were in the 1-4 years age group. The average age of looked after children adopted during the year was 37 months at adoption.

**Chart 2: Number and percentage of adoptions of children looked after, 2006-07 to 2020-21**



Source: AD1; Looked after children census

Chart 2 shows 8% of children were adopted by their former foster carer in 2020-21, a proportion that has remained fairly consistent in recent years.

Further information on adoptions of children looked after, including the profile of adopters, can be found on [StatsWales](https://www.statswales.gov.wales/).

## Notes

From commencement of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act on 6 April 2016, Part 3 of and Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 no longer applies to local authorities in Wales. The rights and duties under those provisions have been incorporated into the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, in the main, into Part 6 of and Schedule 1 to the 2014 Act.

From 2016-17 individual level data in relation to children looked after is collected through the Looked After Children Census. This replaced the 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.

These statistics are published as experimental statistics. More information on the designation of these statistics can be found in the [correspondence between the Welsh Government and the Office for Statistical Regulation](#).

## Future developments

Data collection requirements for the Looked After Children Census are currently being reviewed. It is intended that refreshed data requirements will be introduced for the 2022-23 reporting year.

## 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 and coherence.

### Relevance

The statistics are used both within and outside the Welsh Government to monitor children's social services trends and as a baseline for further analysis of the underlying data. More specifically they provide a summary in relation to children looked after by local authorities under Part 6 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. These statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some of the key users are:

- ministers and the Members Research Service in the Welsh Parliament;
- the Health and Social Services Group in the Welsh Government;
- other areas of the Welsh Government;
- local authorities;
- the third sector (e.g. charities);
- 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;
- 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;
- to inform the national policy development;
- local authority analysis;
- to inform the Care Inspectorate Wales;
- to model the financial consequences of changes in the population or the care system;
- to assist in research on children looked after.

## **Accuracy**

This is the fifth year of collecting the data from the [Looked after children Census](#) following the introduction of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act. The collection adheres closely to the definition of children looked after 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.

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 2020-21 data year and are correct as at 31 March 2021. 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.

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.

Since the 2019-20 data was published, further validation has been carried out on all data due to a linkage exercise with the SAIL databank. The validation highlighted some inconsistencies within pre 2009-10 data such as missing episode end dates and incorrect legal and placement codes, which have been corrected to allow for continuous episodes to be captured fully. This has resulted

in revisions made to previous years' data and these have been labelled with an "r". Also highlighted are revisions made as part of processing the 2020-21 data which have been agreed by local authorities. Revisions ranged from a change of between 26 (1%) and 158 (4%) looked after children between 2002-03 and 2007-08 and generally fewer than 3 from 2008-09 onwards; most local authorities were affected.

### **Timeliness and punctuality**

The Data Collection team within the Welsh Government collected data, for the year 2020-21 i.e. from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, between May and August 2021. Data in this release refers to final 2020-21 data. Once submitted data has been validated, this release is drafted and published as soon as possible. This release was published in November 2021, meeting the planned date of publication.

### **Accessibility and clarity**

This statistical release is pre-announced and then published on the Statistics and Research 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.

### **Comparability and coherence**

2020-21 is the fifth year of collecting and reporting on data derived from the [Looked after children census return](#). Data on children looked after was previously collected through the SSDA903 and associated returns.

This statistical release largely provides figures at the Wales level. Further information for local authorities is available on [StatsWales](#). To ensure that the national data are comparable and consistent, local authorities are expected to comply with the guidance notes for completion that accompany the data collection form. When comparing figures for different local authorities, relevant factors such as the size of the local authority population should be taken into account. [Local authority population estimates](#) by age can be found on StatsWales.

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.

[England's Children looked after publication](#) (Department for Education).

[Scotland's Children's social work statistics](#) (Scottish Government).

[Northern Ireland's Children in care publication](#) (Northern Ireland Executive)

### **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 wellbeing 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 Senedd Cymru. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing of Wales report](#).

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 wellbeing plans.

## Further details

The document is available here: <https://gov.wales/children-looked-after-local-authorities-april-2020-march-2021>

Data at local authority level is available on [StatsWales](#).

Codes of practice and statutory guidance issued under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act are available at: [Codes of practice and statutory guidance](#)

Information on the costs to local authorities of services provided for 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 care and support is available at: [Children Receiving Care and Support Census](#)

## Next update

October 2022 (provisional)

## 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](mailto:stats.pss@gov.wales)

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