



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

STATISTICS, DOCUMENT

Children looked after by local authorities, April 2023 to March 2024 (official statistics in development)

Information on children on care orders and in placements, adoptions from care and numbers of children and young persons leaving care for April 2023 to March 2024.

First published: 28 January 2025

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Introduction

This annual statistical release presents figures about children looked after by local authorities. A child is a person who is aged under 18.

Section 74 of the **Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (UK legislation)** (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/enacted>) 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 Sections 109, 114 or 115.

New data is based on the year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, or the position on 31 March 2024. Data has been revised for the year ending 31 March 2023 throughout since previously published.

Data included in this release and further information for individual local authorities is published on **StatsWales (Children looked after)** (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After>).

Main points

On 31 March 2024

- 7,198 children were looked after, marginally higher than 7,188 (r) in the previous year, continuing the longer term upward trend in the numbers looked after.
- 80.2% of children looked after's legal status was under a care order.
- 67.7% of children looked after's placement was in foster care placements.

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- Of those in foster care 34.2% of children were placed with relatives or friends.
- 65.6% of children looked after were placed within their home local authority.
- A higher proportion of children looked after were in older age groups, male or from Black/Black British/Caribbean/African, Mixed or Other ethnic groups compared to the general child population.
- 4.7% of children looked after were an unaccompanied asylum seeking child, the highest recorded.

During 2023-24

- Just under 2,000 children started to be looked after, an increase of 2.6% compared to the previous year.
- Most children (54.4%) who started to be looked after during the year received care and support initially because of abuse or neglect.
- Just under 2,000 children left care, an increase of 9.6% compared to the previous year.
- Around half (50.6%) of children who left care during the year returned home to live with parents, relatives or other persons with parental responsibility.
- 254 children were adopted from care, the second lowest annual number in the last decade.
- 821 children aged 16 and over left care during the year and ceased to be looked after.

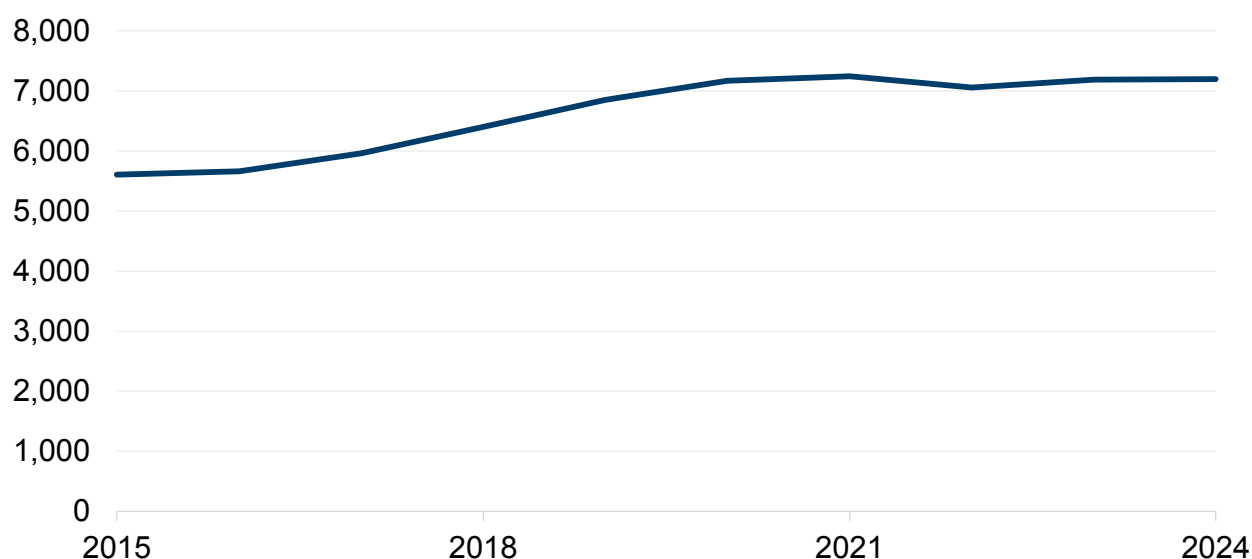
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Number of children looked after

Figure 1: Children looked after on 31 March, 2015 to 2024
[Note 1]



Description of Figure 1: Line chart showing that the trend in number of children looked after has been increasing though has levelled off in more recent years since 2020.

Source: SSDA903 return and Children looked after census, Welsh Government

Children looked after at 31 March by local authority, gender and age on StatsWales (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/childrenlookedafterat31march-by-localauthority-gender-age>)

[Note 1] Excludes children looked after exclusively under a series of short breaks.

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The number of children looked after has been on an upward trend in recent years and peaked at 7,241 in 2021.

Following a decrease in 2022, the number of children looked after increased in 2023 and further increased slightly to 7,198 in 2024. The number of children looked after on 31 March 2024 was 28.4% higher than a decade ago.

The rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 was 116.1 in 2024, marginally higher than the rate in 2023 (116.0 (r)) and the second highest rate ever. See **quality and methodology information** (<https://www.gov.wales#163369>) for data quality statement for population data.

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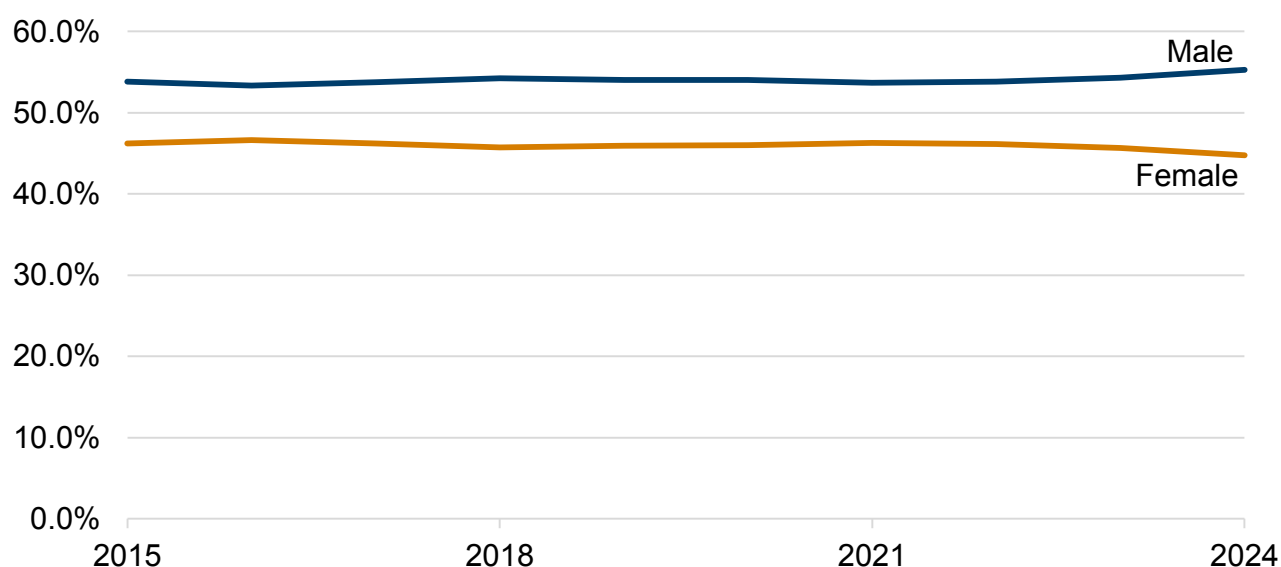
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Characteristics of children looked after

Gender

Figure 2: Children looked after by gender on 31 March, 2015 to 2024
[Note 1] [Note 2]



Description of Figure 2: Line chart showing that more males than females were looked after.

Source: SSDA903 return and Children looked after census, Welsh Government

Children looked after at 31 March by local authority, gender and age on StatsWales (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/childrenlookedafterat31march-by-localauthority-gender-age>)

[Note 1] Excludes children looked after exclusively under a series of short

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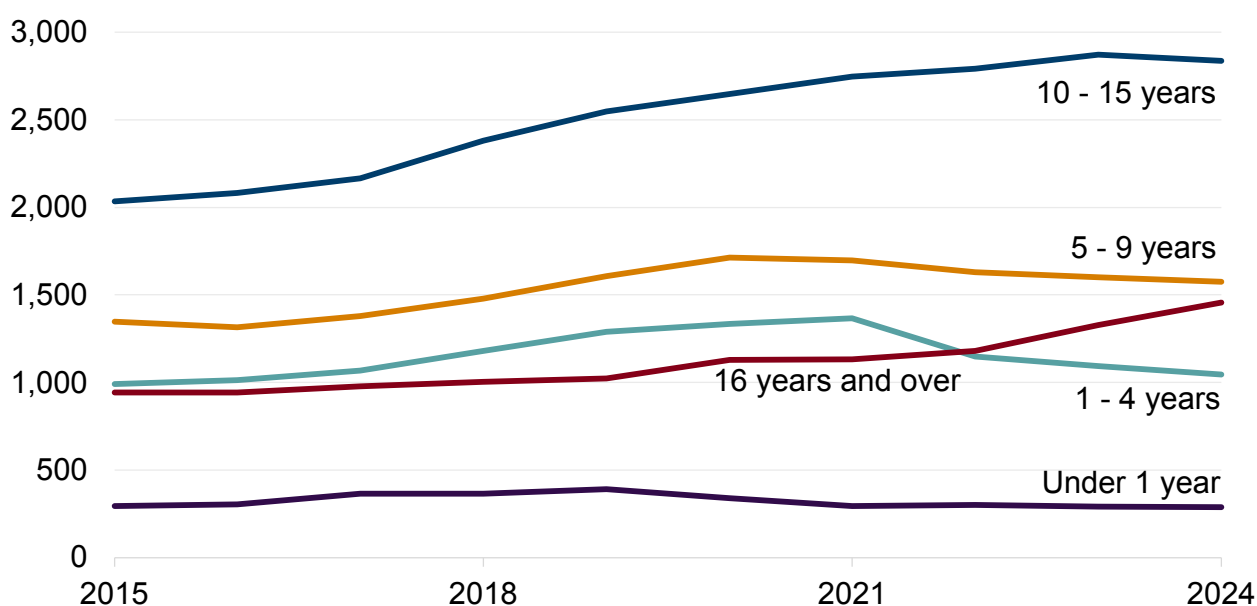
breaks.

[Note 2] Children with gender recorded as non-binary or not known are not included. These accounted for 0.1% of children looked after on 31 March 2024.

55.3% of children looked after were male and 44.7% were female on 31 March 2024. These proportions have been fairly stable in the last decade but the latest year was slightly different to previous years.

Age

Figure 3: Children looked after by age on 31 March, 2015 to 2024
[Note 1]



Description of Figure 3: Line chart showing that the age profile of children looked after has changed in recent years with a decrease in the proportion of children looked after aged under 10 and an increase in the proportion of children looked after aged 10 and over.

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Source: SSDA903 return and Children looked after census, Welsh Government

Children looked after at 31 March by local authority, gender and age on StatsWales (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/childrenlookedafterat31march-by-localauthority-gender-age>)

[Note 1] Excludes children looked after exclusively under a series of short breaks.

On 31 March 2024, 4.0% of children looked after were aged under 1 years old, 14.5% were aged 1 to 4 years old, 21.9% were aged 5 to 9 years old, 39.4% were aged 10 to 15 and 20.2% were 16 years and over.

Compared to the general child population a higher proportion of children looked after are in the older age groups according to the **2023 population estimates (StatsWales)** (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Estimates/nationallevelpopulationestimates-by-year-age-ukcountry>).

A greater proportion of children aged 10 and older were looked after than children aged 9 or younger. Using 2023 population estimates 144.8 per 10,000 of children aged 10 or older were looked after compared to 89.8 per 10,000 aged 9 or younger. See **quality and methodology information** (<https://www.gov.wales#163369>) for data quality statement for age data.

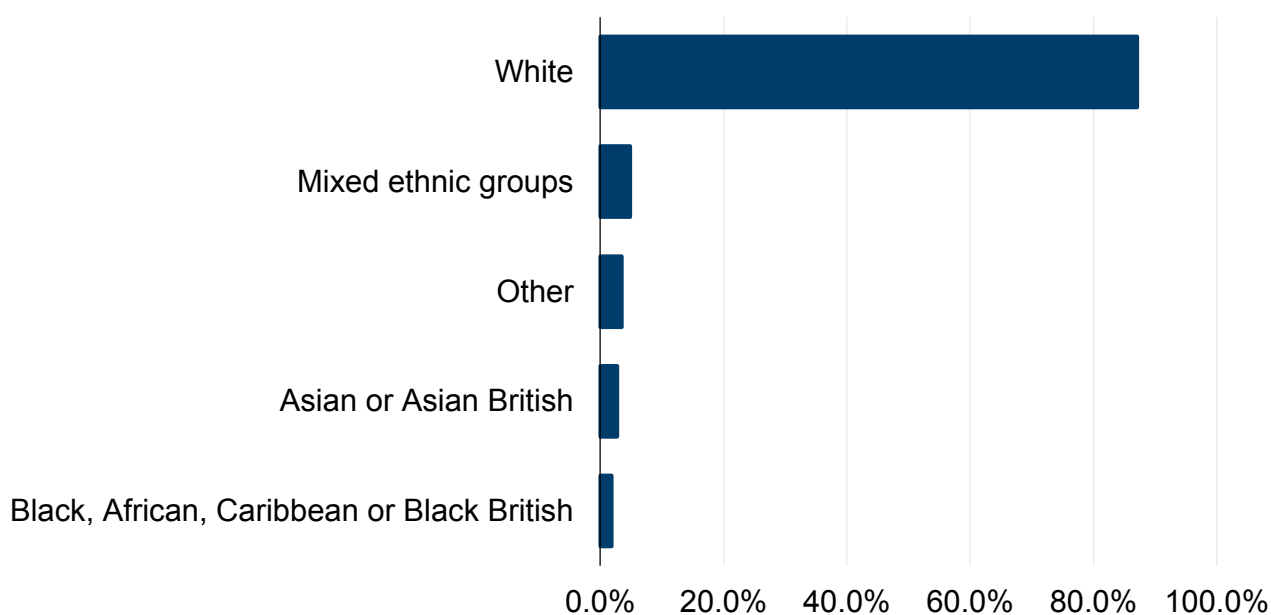
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Ethnicity

Figure 4: Children looked after by ethnicity, 31 March 2024 [Note 1]



Description of Figure 4: Bar chart showing that 87.1% of children looked after on 31 March 2024 were White.

Source: Children looked after census, Welsh Government

Children looked after at 31 March by local authority and ethnicity on StatsWales (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/childrenlookedafterat31march-by-localauthority-ethnicity>)

[Note 1] Excludes children looked after exclusively under a series of short breaks.

The proportion of children looked after who were White has decreased from

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94.9% in 2002 when data began being collected to 87.1% on 31 March 2024, whilst the proportions of children looked after from ethnic groups other than White have increased over this time. Proportions have changed more sharply since 2021. The Other ethnic group has increased as a proportion the most over the last decade.

A lower proportion of children looked after were from White or Asian/Asian British ethnic groups compared to the general population aged under 18 years old according to the **Census 2021 (ONS)** (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/datasets/ethnicgroupbyageandsexinenglandandwales>). Whilst a higher proportion of children looked after were from a Black/Black British, Mixed or an Other ethnic group compared to the general child population.

Disability

Where data was provided, 7.4% of children looked after on 31 March 2024 had 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 broadly stable in the last decade.

This is a similar proportion to that for the general population aged under 18 years old who stated they had a long-term health problem or disability that limits their day-to-day activities according to the **Census 2021 (ONS)** (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/disabilitybyagesexanddeprivationenglandandwales/census2021>). See **quality and methodology information** (<https://www.gov.wales#163369>) for data quality statement for disability data.

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Unaccompanied asylum seeking child

4.7% of children looked after on 31 March 2024 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 their 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 increased in recent years from being about 1.0% in 2017 to 2021 and is the highest number and proportion recorded.

Legal status of children looked after

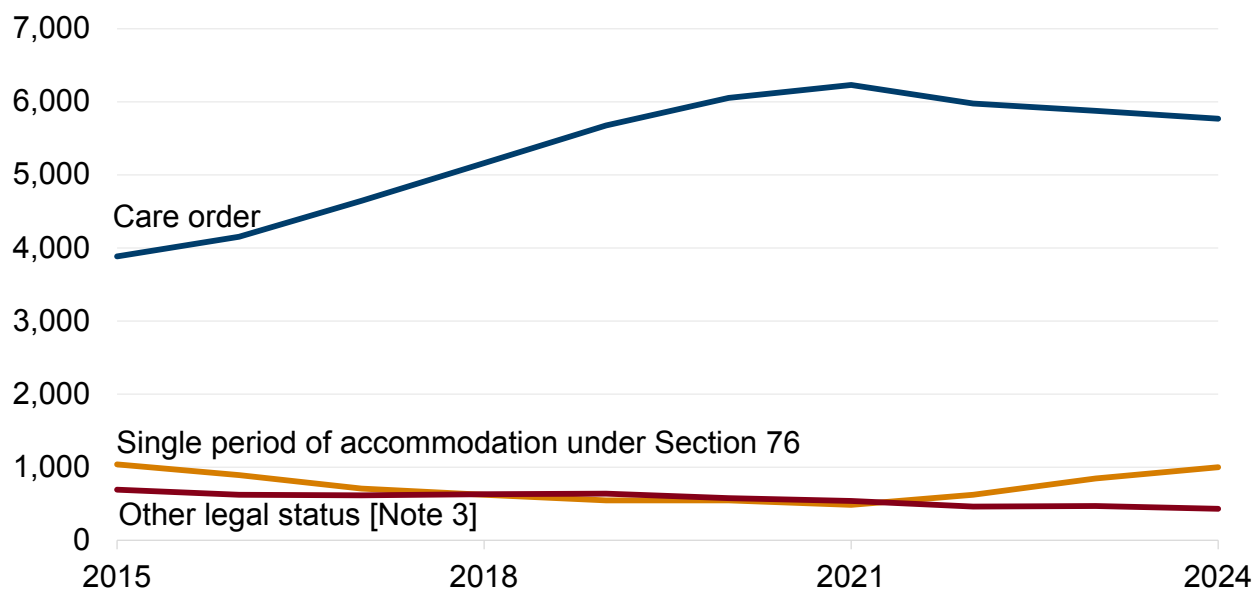
The legal status indicates the underlying legal reason describing why a child is being looked after.

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Figure 5: Children looked after by legal status on 31 March, 2015 to 2024 [Note 1] [Note 2]



Description of Figure 5: Line chart showing that though most children are looked after under care orders, the number and proportion has decreased in recent years.

Source: SSDA903 return and Children looked after census, Welsh Government

Children looked after at 31 March by local authority and legal status on StatsWales (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/childrenlookedafterat31march-by-localauthority-legalstatus>)

[Note 1] Excludes children looked after exclusively under a series of short breaks.

[Note 2] There have been minor data revisions for the years 2023, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016 and 2015 since previously published.

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[Note 3] Includes placement order granted; wardship granted in High Court and child in local authority accommodation; under police protection and in local authority accommodation; emergency protection order; under child assessment order and in local authority accommodation; remanded to local authority accommodation or youth detention accommodation; and detained in local authority accommodation under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE).

On 31 March 2024, the majority (80.2%) of children were looked after under a care order, a decrease from a high of 86.0% in 2021. 87.9% of the children looked after under care orders were looked after under full care orders compared to 12.1% looked after under interim care orders.

The number and proportion of children looked after under voluntary accommodation in a single period of accommodation (under Section 76 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014) had been decreasing in recent years. However, since falling to a low of 6.6% in 2021 the number has increased each year to more than double this low and 13.8% of children looked after under voluntary accommodation on 31 March 2024, the highest proportion since 2016.

The proportion of children looked after under other legal statuses has decreased in recent years from 12.3% on 31 March 2015 to 6.0% on 31 March 2024.

Placement of children looked after

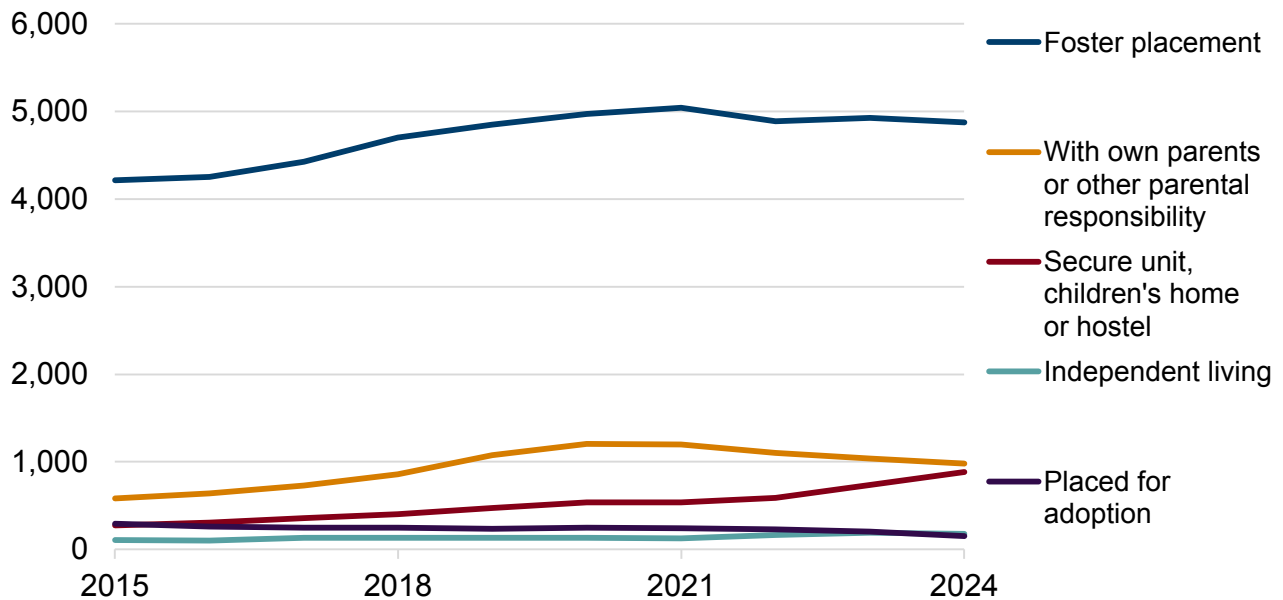
The placement indicates where children looked after are living whilst in the local authority's care.

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Figure 6: Top 5 placements for children looked after on 31 March, 2015 to 2024 [Note 1] [Note 2] [Note 3]



Description of Figure 6: Line chart showing that most children are looked after in foster care placements and this has been generally on an upward trend.

Source: SSDA903 return and Children looked after census, Welsh Government

Children looked after at 31 March by local authority and placement type on StatsWales (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/childrenlookedafterat31march-by-localauthority-placementtype>)

[Note 1] Excludes children looked after exclusively under a series of short breaks.

[Note 2] There have been minor data revisions for the years 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018 and 2017 since previously published.

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[Note 3] Other placement types, not shown in the chart, include NHS/Health Trust or other establishment providing medical or nursing care; residential family centre or mother and baby unit; youth offender institution or prison; residential school; residential employment and other placement not listed. 125 children were in other placements on 31 March 2024.

On 31 March 2024, 4,876 (67.7%) children looked after were in foster care placements. This proportion has decreased steadily from a high of 79.2% in 2011. Just over a third (34.2%) of children in foster care were in placements with a relative or friend on 31 March 2024. This proportion has increased each year from 2014 when it was 19.7%.

978 (13.6%) children looked after were placed with their own parents or others with parental responsibility on 31 March 2024; these children were nearly all subject to care orders. This proportion has decreased each year from a high of 16.8% in 2020.

887 (12.3%) children looked after were in secure units, children's homes or hostels on 31 March 2024. This proportion has increased three-fold from a low of 3.9% in 2012. The remaining other placement types have stayed broadly similar accounting for around 7.0% of placements in total.

Location of placement

Where information was provided, nearly two-thirds (65.6%) of children who were looked after on 31 March 2024 were in placements inside the local authority where they were living when they first became looked after. 26.9% of children were in placements outside their home local authority but within Wales and a further 7.5% were placed outside Wales. The proportion of children looked after placed within their home local authority has decreased in recent years from a high of 72.6% in 2016, whilst the proportion of children placed outside of Wales has increased over this time from 3.2%.

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Number of placements

There were 622 (8.6%) children looked after on 31 March 2024 who had three or more placements during the year. Whilst the number of children who had three or more placements has fluctuated, the proportion of children with three or more placements has remained at about 9.0% in recent years, except for 2021 when it was 7.3% (there were fewer placement moves in 2020-21 during the heights of the COVID-19 pandemic).

Children starting to be looked after

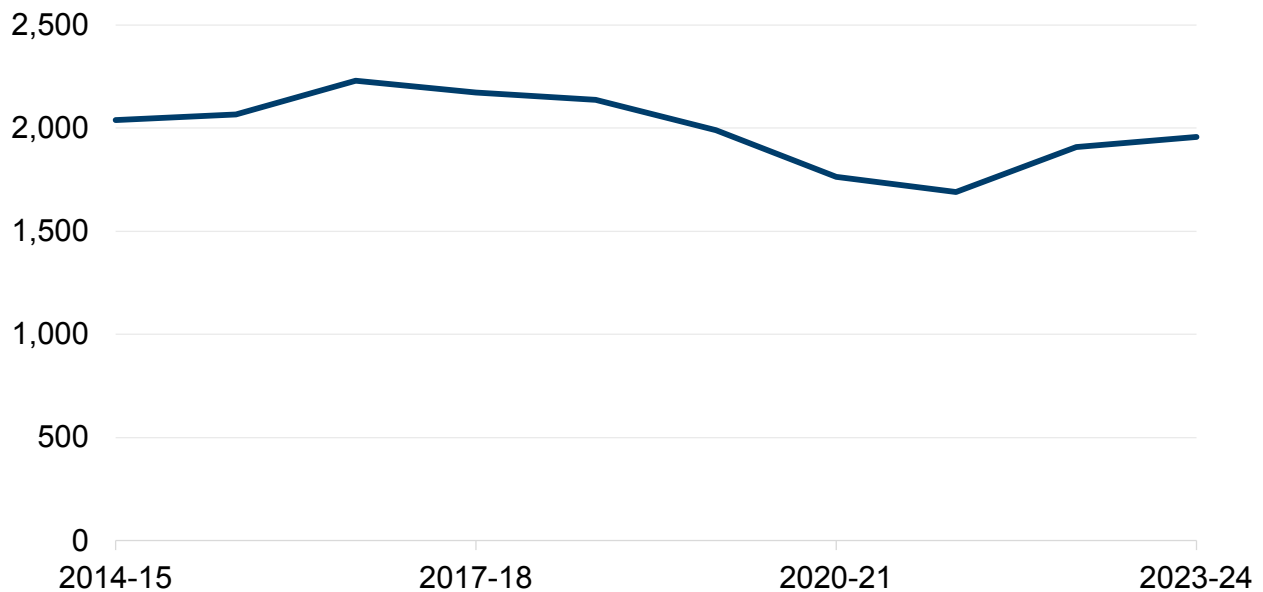
Children looked after for the first time, and children who had previously left care and start being looked after again during the reporting year are counted in this section. Where a child had multiple periods of care during the year only the first period is counted.

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Figure 7: Children starting to be looked after by year, 2014-15 to 2023-24 [Note 1] [Note 2]



Description of Figure 7: Line chart showing that the number of children starting to be looked after had been on a downward trend but increased in 2022-23 and increased further in 2023-24.

Source: SSDA903 return and Children looked after census, Welsh Government

Children starting to be looked after during year to 31 March by local authority and need for care on StatsWales (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/childrenstartingtobelookedafterduringyearto31march-by-localauthority-needforcare>)

[Note 1] Excludes children looked after exclusively under a series of short breaks. Where a child had multiple periods of care during the year only the first period is counted.

[Note 2] There have been minor data revisions for the years 2022-23 and

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2021-22 since previously published.

1,957 children started to be looked after between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, an increase of 49 (2.6%) children from the previous year. This is the second annual increase in the number of children starting to be looked after following reductions each year from 2017-18 to 2021-22, however this was a smaller increase than was seen in the previous year.

Children starting to be looked after during the year were generally younger than those in care on 31 March 2024 and the general child population. Most noticeable was the difference in proportion of children aged under 1 which was 20.7% for those starting to be looked after compared to 4.0% of children looked after on 31 March 2024 and 4.5% of the general child population according to the **2023 population estimates (StatsWales)** (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>).

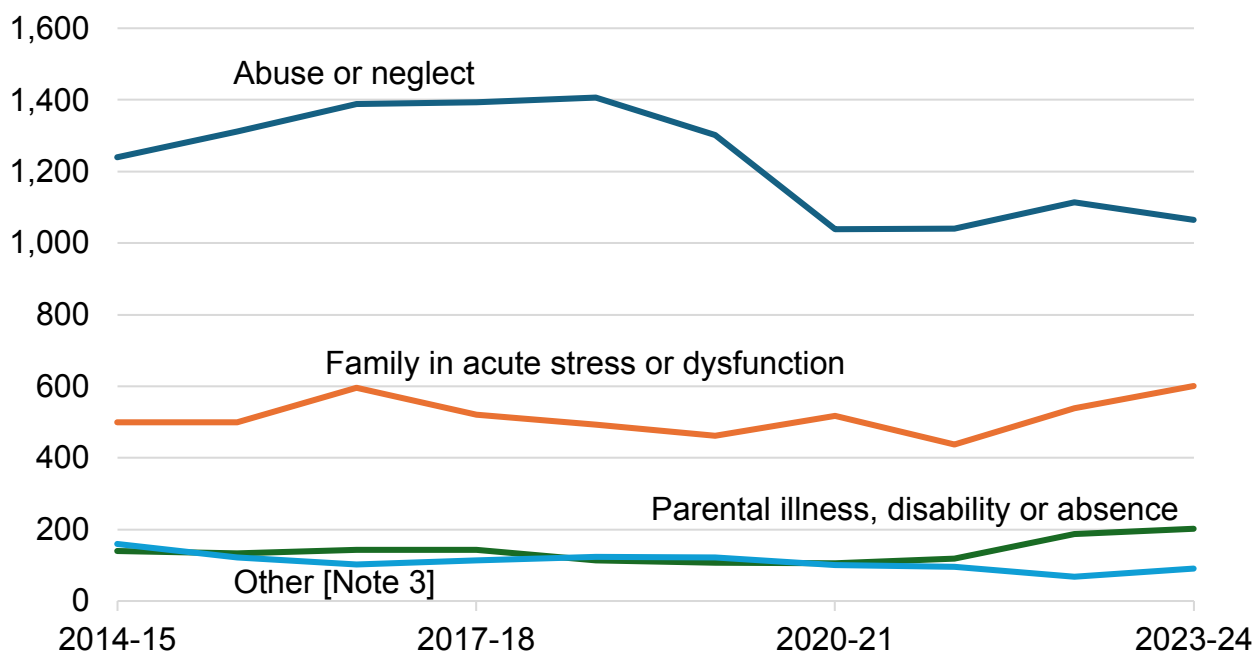
Of the children who started to be looked after during 2023-24, 62.7% were initially looked after under voluntary accommodation in a single instance of accommodation (under Section 76 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014); compared to 13.8% looked after under this legal status on 31 March 2024. The majority (64.7%) were initially placed in foster care placements; a little lower than the proportion in foster placements on 31 March 2024 (67.7%).

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Figure 8: Children starting to be looked after by need for care and support, 2014-15 to 2023-24 [Note 1] [Note 2]



Description of Figure 8: Line chart showing that most children who start to be looked after receive care and support initially because of abuse or neglect. This number has been falling over the last decade, whereas other needs for care and support have remained broadly similar.

Source: SSDA903 return and Children looked after census, Welsh Government

Children starting to be looked after during year to 31 March by local authority and need for care on StatsWales (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/childrenstartingtobelookedafterduringyearto31march-by-localauthority-needforcare>)

[Note 1] Excludes children looked after exclusively under a series of short breaks. Where a child had multiple periods of care during the year only the first

period is counted.

[Note 2] There have been minor data revisions for the years 2022-23, 2021-22 and 2015-16 since previously published.

[Note 3] Includes child's disability or illness, socially unacceptable behaviour and adoption disruption.

For children who started to be looked after during 2023-24, the most common reason why the child became looked after was as a result of, or due to the risk of, abuse or neglect (54.4%). Both the number and proportion has decreased in recent years, from a high of 65.8% in 2018-19. Whilst the number and proportion starting to be looked after due to family in acute stress or family dysfunction has increased over this time from 23.0% to 30.7% in 2023-24.

The proportion of children starting to be looked after due to parental illness, disability or absence was 10.3% and similar to the previous year but an increase in number and proportion compared to prior years. The number and proportion of children who started to be looked after for other reasons has remained broadly similar.

Children leaving care

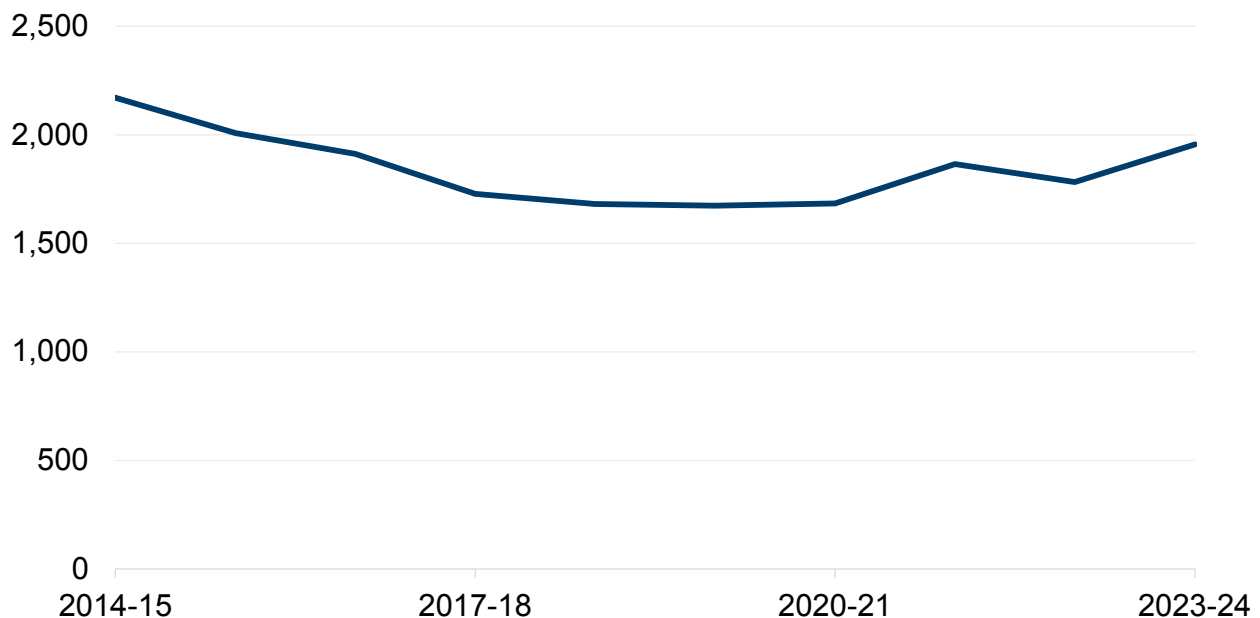
Children looked after who leave care during the reporting year are counted in this section; some children who leave care may come back into care during the year. Where a child had multiple periods of care during the year only the latest period is counted.

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Figure 9: Children leaving care by year, 2014-15 to 2023-24 [Note 1]



Description of Figure 9: Line chart showing that the number of children who left care had been on a downward trend but has increased generally since 2020-21.

Source: SSDA903 return and Children looked after census, Welsh Government

Episodes finishing for children looked after during year to 31 March by local authority and reason for finishing on StatsWales

(<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/episodesfinishingforchildrenlookedafterduringyearto31march-by-localauthority-reasonforfinishing>)

[Note 1] Excludes children looked after exclusively under a series of short breaks, children who died or where care was taken over by another local authority in the UK. Where a child had multiple periods of care during the year

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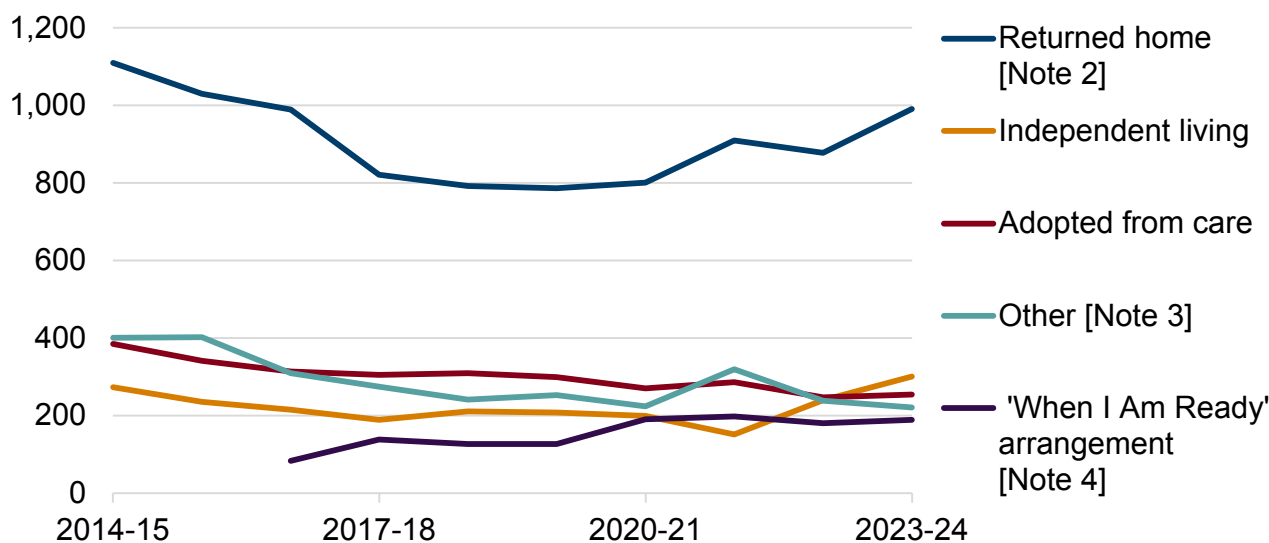
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only the latest period is counted.

1,955 children left care between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, an increase of 172 (9.6%) children compared to the previous year and is the highest since 2015-16. This number has generally increased since 2020-21.

The age distribution of children leaving care during the year was different to that for children in care on 31 March 2024 with a higher proportion of children leaving care who were either very young children (aged 4 and under) or older children (aged 16 and over).

Figure 10: Children leaving care by reason, 2014-15 to 2023-24 [Note 1]



Description of Figure 10: Line chart showing that the main reason for children leaving care is returning home to live with parents, relatives or others with parental responsibility. Reasons for leaving care have remained largely stable over time.

Source: SSDA903 return and Children looked after census, Welsh Government

Episodes finishing for children looked after during year to 31 March by local authority and reason for finishing on StatsWales

(<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/episodesfinishingforchildrenlookedafterduringyearto31march-by-localauthority-reasonforfinishing>)

[Note 1] Excludes children looked after exclusively under a series of short breaks, children who died or where care was taken over by another local authority in the UK. Where a child had multiple periods of care during the year only the latest period is counted.

[Note 2] Returned home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility. Includes special guardianship orders made to former foster carers or carers other than former foster carers.

[Note 3] Includes transferred to care of adult social services, sentenced to custody and other reason not listed.

[Note 4] A young person turning 18 years old may continue living with their former foster parent(s) in a '**When I am Ready** (<https://www.gov.wales/children-local-authority-care-code-practice>)' arrangement. Such arrangements have been in place since April 2016.

During 2023-24 most (50.6%) children left care to return home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility. Special guardianship orders were made for 295 of these children.

301 (15.4%) children were living independently, 254 (13.0%) children were adopted from care and 189 (9.7%) children left care having turned 18 years old under '**When I am Ready**' (<https://gov.wales/children-local-authority-care-code->

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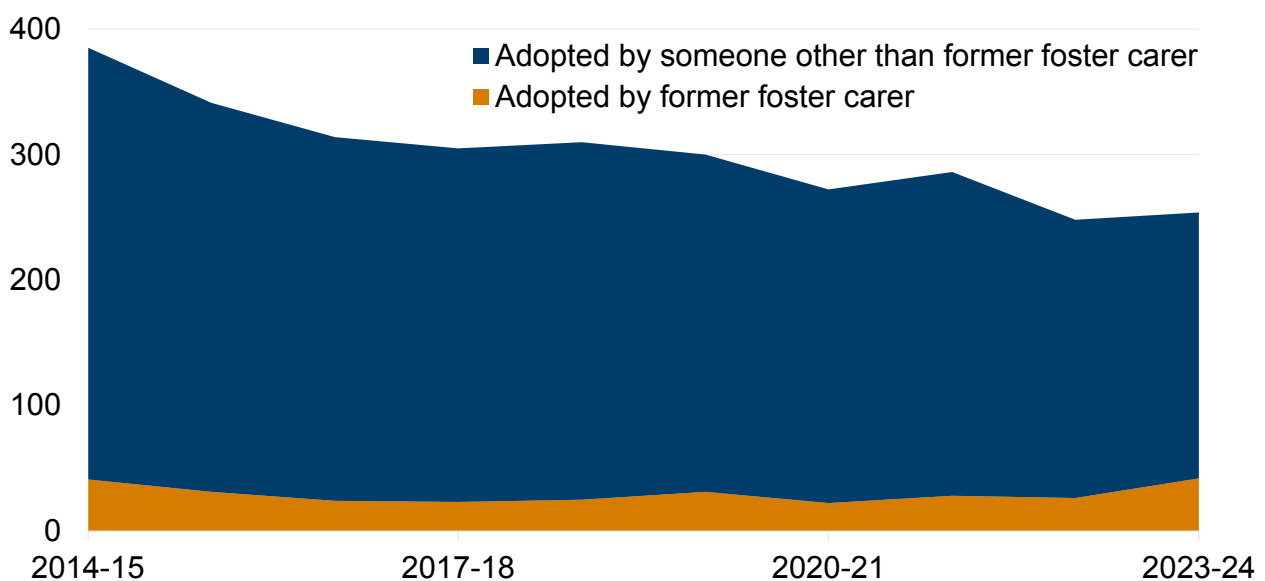
practice) arrangements.

The proportion of children leaving care and returning home to live with parents, relatives or other persons with parental responsibility has increased in recent years, having been around 47.0% from 2017-18 to 2020-21 and higher prior to that. The proportion of children leaving care having been adopted has decreased since 2018-19.

Adoptions of children looked after

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

Figure 11: Adoptions of children looked after, 2014-15 to 2023-24



Description of Figure 11: Filled line chart showing that the number of children adopted has generally decreased in the last decade.

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Source: AD1 return and Children looked after census, Welsh Government

Adoptions of looked after children during year ending 31 March by age and gender on StatsWales (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/Adoptions/adoptionsoflookedafterchildrenduringyearending31march-by-age-gender>)

254 children were adopted from care between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024; an increase of 6 (2.4%) children compared with the previous year; this is the second lowest number of adoptions in the last decade. The number of children adopted has decreased from a high of 385 children adopted during 2014-15.

16.5% of children were adopted by their former foster carer during 2023-24, a much higher proportion than the figure of around 10.0% for the previous few years.

The majority (78.7%) of children adopted during the year were in the 1-4 years age group. The average age of children looked after adopted during the year was 40 months at adoption, similar to the previous two years.

Further information on adoptions of children looked after, including the profile of adopters, can be found on StatsWales (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/Adoptions>).

Young people (aged 16 and over) ceasing to be looked after

Children looked after aged 16 and over who leave care during the reporting year and do not come back into care are counted in this section. Typically, children cease to be looked after the day before their 18th birthday.

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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.

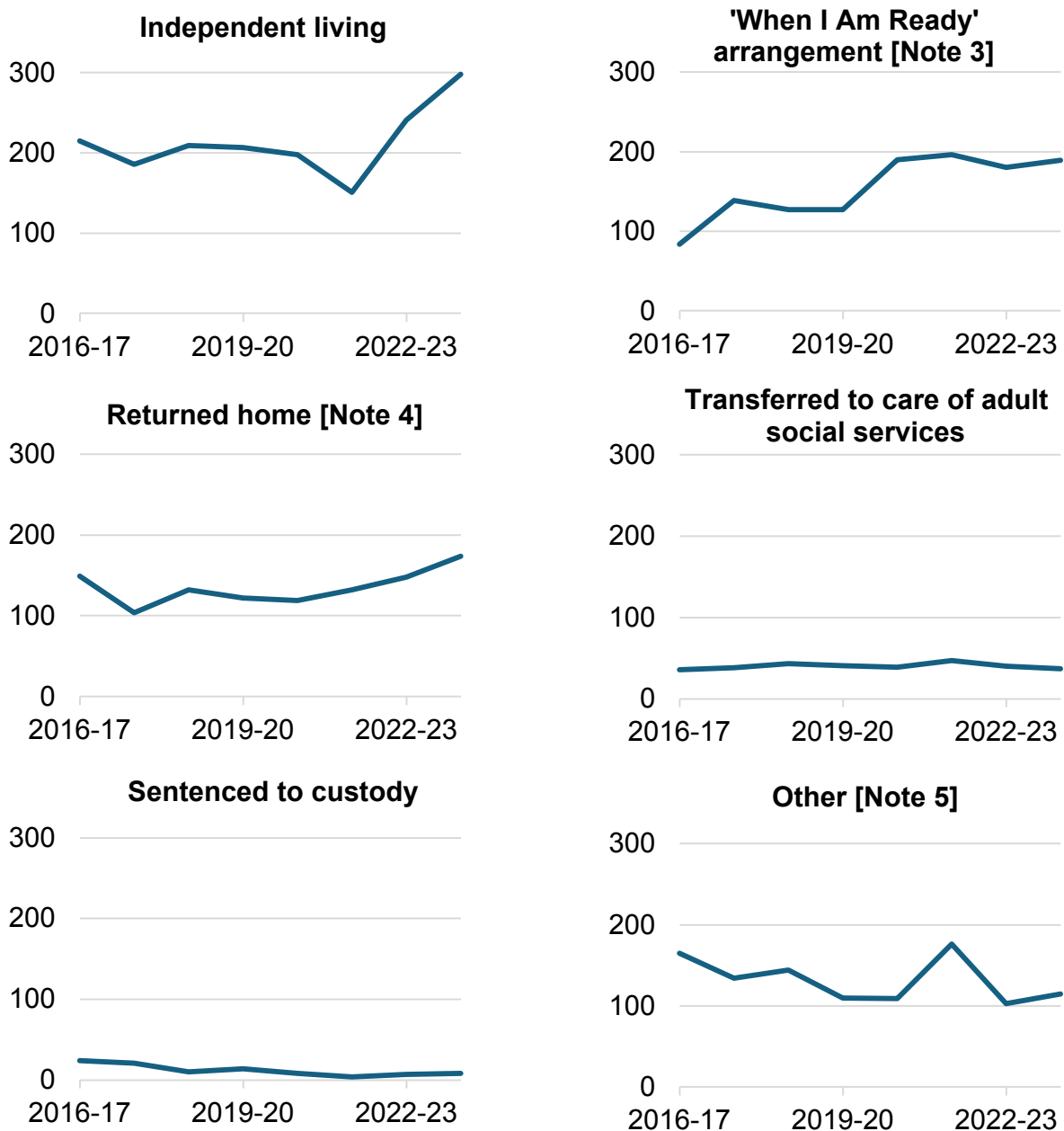
During the processing of 2023-24 data it was established that not all local authorities were providing data on young people aged 16 and over ceasing to be looked after as expected. Some local authorities had not provided additional care leaver data for those young people who were in care for less than a certain period of time and did not meet the care leaver Category 1-6 definitions in previous years. As such, the change in number of young people (aged 16 and over) ceasing to be looked after for this year is likely to be largely impacted by this reporting clarification rather than a real change in numbers and so detailed comparison to previous years should be avoided.

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Figure 12: Young people aged 16 and over ceasing to be looked after by reason, 2016-17 to 2023-24 [Note 1] [Note 2]



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Description of Figure 12: Line charts showing the number of young people ceasing to be looked after moving into independent living and into 'When I Am Ready' arrangements has increased since 2016-17 and are the most common reason. The number sentenced to custody has decreased. The number of young people returning home and transferring to the care of adult social services has remained broadly stable whilst the number of young people ceasing to be looked after for all other reasons has fluctuated.

Source: SSDA903 return and Children looked after census, Welsh Government

Episodes finishing for children looked after (aged 16 and over) during the year to 31 March by local authority, gender and reason for finishing on StatsWales (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/Care-Leavers-Aged-16-and-Over/episodesfinishingforchildrenlookedafteraged16andoverduringyearto31march-by-localauthority-reasonforfinishing>)

[Note 1] Excludes children looked after exclusively under a series of short breaks, children who died or where care was taken over by another local authority in the UK. Where a child had multiple periods of care during the year only the latest period is counted.

[Note 2] Data for 2023-24 should not be directly compared with previous years as set out by the note above.

[Note 3] A young person turning 18 years old may continue living with their former foster parent(s) in a '**When I am Ready** (<https://www.gov.wales/children-local-authority-care-code-practice>)' arrangement.

[Note 4] Returned home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility. Includes special guardianship orders made to former foster carers or carers other than former foster carers.

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[Note 5] Includes adopted and other reason not listed.

821 young people aged 16 and over left care during 2023-24 and did not re-enter care prior to 31 March 2024, an increase of 102 young people compared with the previous year. It has been identified that around 76% of this increase is due to the clarification in reporting detailed above. Whilst the number of young people (aged 16 and over) ceasing to be looked after has increased in recent years, the change compared to 2022-23 is likely to be largely impacted by the reporting change detailed above and should not be directly compared.

Over a third (36.3%) of young people who ceased being looked after moved into independent living arrangements during 2023-24. This proportion has increased compared to 2022-23 (33.5%).

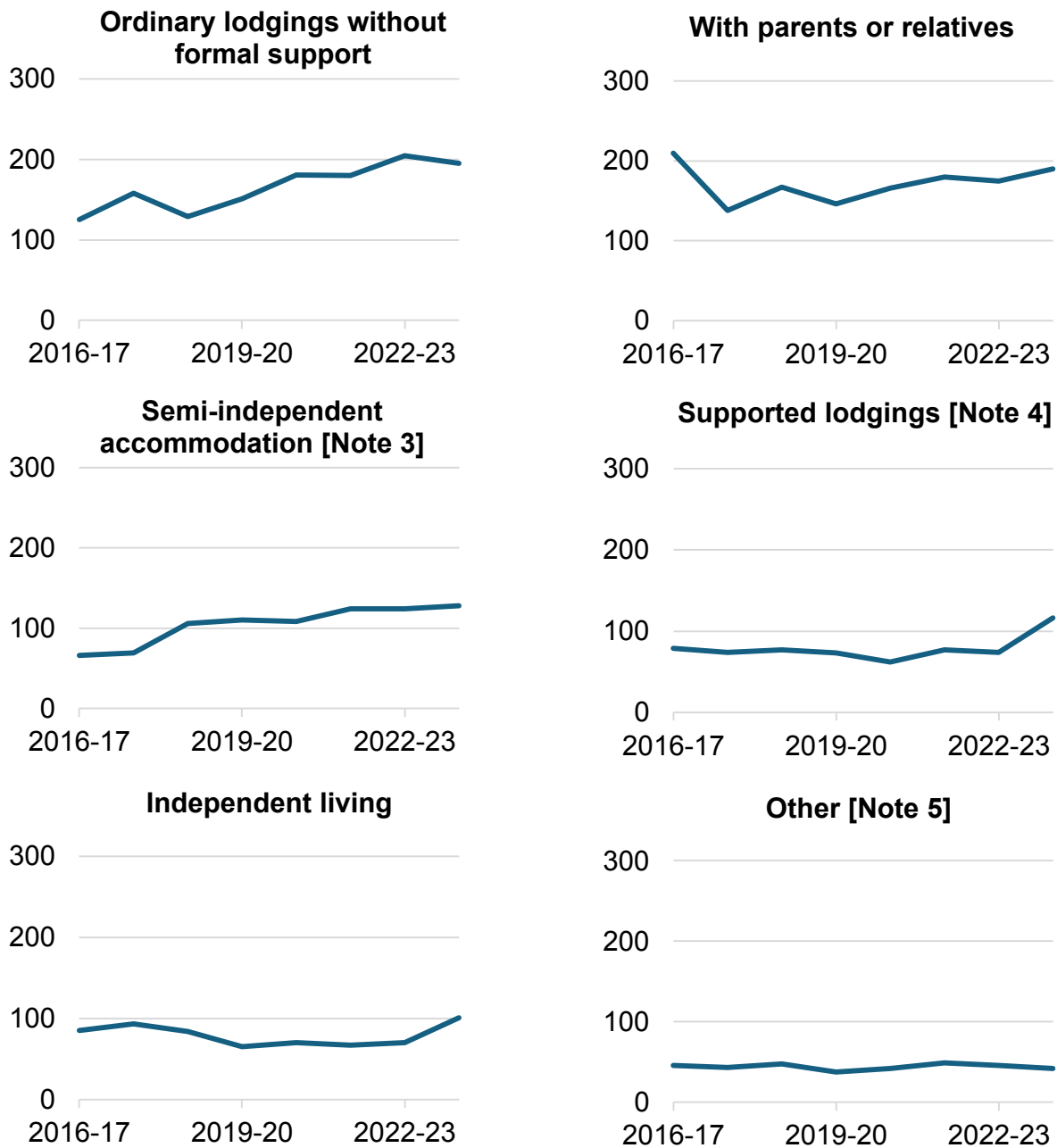
A little under a quarter (23.0%) of young people turned 18 years old and entered into a 'When I Am Ready' arrangement. Whilst the number of young people entering 'When I Am Ready' arrangements has remained fairly stable the proportion has decreased from 28.7% in 2020-21.

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Figure 13: Young people aged 16 and over ceasing to be looked after by type of suitable accommodation at date of leaving care, 2016-17 to 2023-24 [Note 1] [Note 2]



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Description of Figure 13: Line charts showing the number of young people ceasing to be looked in suitable ordinary lodgings without support, semi-independent accommodation and supported lodgings has increased since 2016-17. The number of young people ceasing to be looked after in other suitable accommodation has fluctuated but remained broadly stable.

Source: SSDA903 return and Children looked after census, Welsh Government

Accommodation at date of ceasing for children looked after during year ending 31 March (aged 16 and over), by local authority and accommodation type on StatsWales (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After/Care-Leavers-Aged-16-and-Over/careleaversaccommodation-by-localauthority-accomodationtype>)

[Note 1] Excludes children looked after exclusively under a series of short breaks, children who died or where care was taken over by another local authority in the UK. Where a child had multiple periods of care during the year only the latest period is counted.

[Note 2] Data for 2023-24 should not be directly compared with previous years as set out by the note above.

[Note 3] Semi-independent, transitional accommodation; self-contained accommodation with specialist personal assistance support and self-contained accommodation with floating support.

[Note 4] Where supervisory staff or advice workers are available to provide formal advice or support.

[Note 5] Includes residential or nursing care such as an NHS establishment, foyers and similar supported accommodation, and other suitable accommodation.

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Of the 821 young people aged 16 and over who left care during 2023-24 and did not re-enter care prior to 31 March 2024, 772 (94.0%) 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 in 2023-24 decreased compared to the previous year.

25.3% of young people in suitable accommodation were in ordinary lodgings without formal support at the date of ceasing to be looked after, and 24.6% of young people were with parents or relatives. 16.6% of young people were in semi-independent transitional accommodation, 15.0% were in supported lodgings and a further 13.1% were in independent living. The proportions of young people in different types of suitable accommodation has been fairly stable in recent years.

Accommodation is considered to be unsuitable if it clearly exposes the young person to risk of harm or social exclusion. The proportion of young people in unsuitable accommodation had decreased each year since 2016-17, however there was an increase in 2023-24. The number of young people in unsuitable accommodation increased by 24 (96.0%) from 25 (r) to 49 compared with the previous year, equating to 6.0% of care leavers age 16 and over being in unsuitable accommodation at the date of ceasing to be looked after during 2023-24.

This increase in number and proportion is impacted by the reporting clarification in 2023-24 detailed above, as a higher proportion of additional young people recorded after reporting requirements were clarified were in unsuitable accommodation at the date of ceasing to be looked after.

Young people in unsuitable accommodation were less likely to be eligible for a personal adviser and a pathway plan, compared to those in suitable accommodation at the date of ceasing to be looked after.

Quality and methodology information

From 2016-17 individual level data in relation to children looked after has been collected through the **Children Looked After Census** (<https://www.gov.wales/data-collection-local-authority-social-services#12706>). Data on children looked after was previously collected through the SSDA903 and associated returns.

The collection adheres closely to the definition of children looked after provided in law as detailed in the **Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (UK legislation)** (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/enacted>). 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. The **data collection guidance document** (<https://www.gov.wales/data-collection-local-authority-social-services>) also provides detailed explanations of the legal, placement and other response categories captured within the data collection.

Some local authorities had not provided additional care leaver forms for those young people who were in care for less than a certain period of time and did not meet the care leaver Category 1-6 definitions in previous years. Reporting requirements for care leaver forms were clarified with data providers during the processing of 2023-24 data and resulted in at least four local authorities submitting subsequent forms showing an increase in the number of young people (aged 16 and over) ceasing to be looked after for this year. Guidance has been amended for 2024-25.

Population estimates

The rate of children looked after per 10,000 population aged under 18 has been calculated based on the **2023 population estimates (StatsWales)** (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Estimates/>

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[nationallevelpopulationestimates-by-year-age-ukcountry](#)).

Age

9 young people aged 18 or over were looked after on 31 March 2024.

Disability

The Welsh Government is committed to the social definition of disability, in which it is recognised that people with impairments are disabled by barriers that commonly exist in society. However, data has been collected based on the Equality Act 2010 which uses the medical definition of disability.

Revisions

Minor revisions can be made as part of processing the latest year's data. Revisions made to previous years' data have been agreed by local authorities and are highlighted in notes. This mostly affects the 2022-23 year. However, as these numbers are small this may not affect data published on StatsWales due to rounding and suppression being applied.

Statistical designation

These statistics are published as official statistics in development. More information on the designation of these statistics can be found in the [correspondence between the Welsh Government and the Office for Statistical Regulation](#) (<https://osr.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/correspondence-list/?keyword=welsh+government&theme=&date=&archive=true>).

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Further information on quality can be found in the **2020-21 statistical release** (<https://www.gov.wales/children-looked-after-local-authorities-april-2020-march-2021>).

Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

All of our statistics are produced and published in accordance with a number of statements and protocols to enhance trustworthiness, quality and value. These are set out in the Welsh Government's **Statement of Compliance** (<https://www.gov.wales/about-statistics-and-research#Statementofcompliance>).

These official statistics demonstrate the standards expected around trustworthiness, quality and public value in the following ways.

Trustworthiness

Data is returned annually from all 22 local authorities on Excel spreadsheets via Objective Connect, a web-based tool to securely share and receive files. Data collection is based on detailed guidance.

The published figures are compiled by professional analysts using the latest available data and applying methods using their professional judgement and analytical skillset.

These statistics are pre-announced on the **Statistics and Research area of the Welsh Government website** (<https://www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research/>

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upcoming). Access to the data during processing is restricted to those involved in the production of the statistics, quality assurance and for operational purposes. Pre-release access is restricted to eligible recipients in line with the **Code of Practice (OSR)** (<https://code.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/the-code/trustworthiness/t3-orderly-release/>).

Quality

Our statistics are produced to high professional standards and are produced free from any political interference.

Validation checks are performed by Welsh Government statisticians and queries referred to local authorities where necessary.

The statistical release is approved by senior statisticians before publication. Data is published in line with **statement on confidentiality and data access** (<https://www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research-statement-confidentiality-and-data-access>) each year.

Value

The purpose of the statistical release is to inform users about the number and characteristics of children looked after by local authorities in Wales. This information is published alongside other data on **Children receiving care and support** (<https://www.gov.wales/wales-children-receiving-care-and-support-census>) and **Social Services activity** (<https://www.gov.wales/social-services-activity>) to give a more complete picture of children receiving care and support and the activity of Children's Social Services.

Statistics are published annually with a nine-month lag between the reference period of the latest statistics and publication. The statistics are published with

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Wales level analysis and commentary, in addition to open data format tables which are published on [StatsWales](https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After) (<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Childrens-Services/Children-Looked-After>).

You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk (<https://www.gov.walesmailto:regulation@statistics.gov.uk>) or via the OSR website.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing 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 wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing of Wales report](https://www.gov.wales/wellbeing-wales) (<https://www.gov.wales/wellbeing-wales>).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](https://www.gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-wales-act-2015-guidance) (<https://www.gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-wales-act-2015-guidance>).

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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 wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

Contact details

Statistician: Bethan Sherwood

Email: stats.pss@gov.wales (<https://www.gov.walesmailto:stats.pss@gov.wales>)

Media: 0300 025 8099

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