

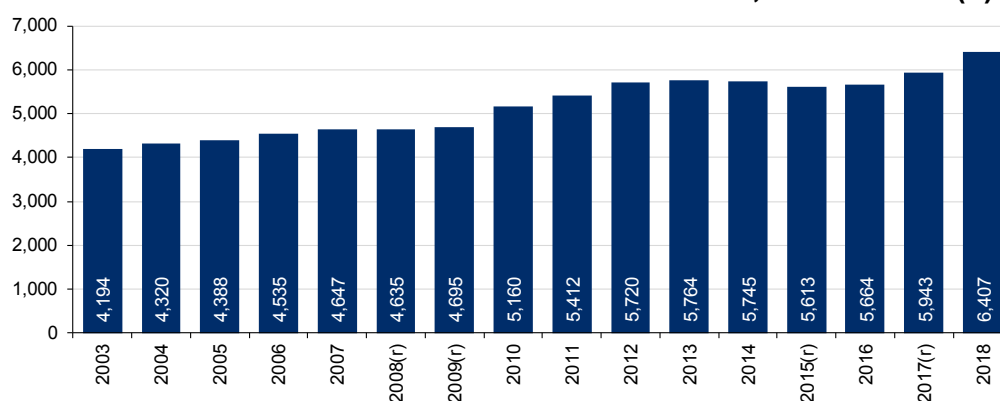
Experimental Statistics: Children looked after by local authorities, 2017-18

22 November 2018
SFR 112/2018

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.

This release is based on the second year of data collected from the [Looked after children census](#) following the introduction of the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act](#). See the [Key quality information](#) section for more information about the data.

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



Source: Looked after children census

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

Key results for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018

- 6,407 children were looked after on 31 March 2018, an increase of 464 (8 per cent) on the previous year and a rate of 102 per 10,000 population aged under 18. ([Chart 1](#) and [Table 1](#))
- Of the 2,162 children starting to be looked after in 2017-18, 1,386 (64 per cent) were due to abuse or neglect. ([Table 2](#))
- There were 647 children looked after at 31 March 2018 who had three or more placements during 2017-18 which was 10 per cent of children who were looked after.
- There were 308 children adopted from care in 2017-18, a decrease of 7 (2 per cent) on the previous year. ([Table 6](#))

About this release

This release presents key results at the Wales level from the Looked after children census data collected for the second time in 2017-18 following implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act on 6 April 2016. Data is based on the year 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, or the position at 31 March 2018, unless otherwise stated.

Further information for individual local authorities can be found in the [Annex](#) and published on [StatsWales](#).

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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 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.

6,407 children were looked after* on 31 March 2018, a rate of 102 per 10,000 children aged under 18. This was an increase of 464 (8 per cent) when compared to the previous year.

*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.

Placements of children looked after

Table 1: Number of children looked after at 31 March, by placement, 2014 to 2018 ^(a)

	2014	2015 (r)	2016 (r)	2017 (r)	2018
In foster care placements	4,444	4,221	4,252	4,412	4,717
With parents or other parental responsibility	551	581	636	722	852
Secure units, children's homes, hostels	227	240	241	277	299
Placed for adoption	265	294	264	246	240
Living independently	92	110	100	129	130
Residential schools	67	48	36	29	32
Other (b)	118	119	135	128	137
Total	5,764	5,613	5,664	5,943	6,407

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.

[Table 1](#) shows 74 per cent of looked after children at 31 March 2018 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. A relatively small proportion were living independently or at residential schools.

There were 647 children in care who had three or more placements between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, an increase of 16 children (3 per cent) compared with the previous year. 10 per cent of children who were looked after had 3 or more placements in 2017-18.

Children looked after by need for care and support

A child's need for care and support is defined as the main reason why a child is receiving care and support.

Table 2: Children starting to be looked after, by need for care and support, between 1 April and 31 March, 2013-14 to 2017-18^(a)

	2013-14	2014-15(r)	2015-16 (r)	2016-17(r)	2017-18
Children starting to be looked after	2,009	2,040	2,063	2,218	2,162
Number by category of need:					
Abuse or neglect	1,175	1,241	1,312	1,382	1,386
Family in acute stress or dysfunction	538	499	498	592	519
Parental illness, disability or absence	163	140	132	143	143
Socially unacceptable behaviour	105	123	86	69	79
Other (b)	28	37	35	32	35
<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>64</i>
<i>Family in acute stress or dysfunction</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Parental illness, disability or absence</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Socially unacceptable behaviour</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Other (b)</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</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.

[Table 2](#) shows there were 2,162 children who started to be looked after between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, a decrease of 56 children from the previous year.

The most common reason why a child is receiving care and support was because of abuse or neglect (64 per cent); a total of 1,386 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.

Children looked after leaving care

Table 3: Children leaving care, by reason for leaving between 1 April and 31 March, 2013-14 to 2017-18^{(a)(b)}

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16(r)	2016-17	2017-18
Children leaving care (b)	2,024	2,172	2,009	1,911	1,724
Returned home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility (c)	1,030	1,110	1,030	979	815
Adopted from care	347	385	341	315	308
Turned 18 years old and continued to live with former foster parent(s) (d)	..	..	..	81	132
Other	647	677	638	536	469
<i>Percentage (%) by category of need:</i>					
<i>Returned home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility (c)</i>	51%	51%	51%	51%	47%
<i>Adopted from care</i>	17%	18%	17%	16%	18%
<i>Turned 18 years old and continued to live with former foster parent(s) (d)</i>	..	..	..	4%	8%
<i>Other</i>	32%	31%	32%	28%	27%

Source: Looked after children census Iren 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 a excluded licensee agreement. This signifies the start of the 'When I am Ready' arrangement.

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

.. Data is not available.

[Table 3](#) shows 1,724 children left care between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018, a decrease of 187 children (10 per cent) compared with the previous year.

During 2017-18, 47 per cent of all children leaving care returned home to live with parents, relatives or other persons with parental responsibility, a smaller proportion than seen in the last four years.

Young persons (aged 16 and over) leaving care

Children cease to be looked after the day before their 18th birthday. 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 4: Young persons aged 16 and over leaving care, by age and reason for leaving between 1 April and 31 March, 2016-17 and 2017-18^{(a)(b)}

	2016-17				2017-18			
	16	17	18(d)	Total	16	17	18	Total
Moved into independent living arrangement and no longer looked after	9	33	151	193	4	28	134	166
Turned 18 years old and continuing to live with former foster parent(s) in a When I Am Ready arrangement	0	0	80	80	0	0	131	131
Returned home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility (c)	33	56	52	141	31	32	48	111
Transferred to care of adult social services (d)	0	0	32	32	0	0	41	41
Sentenced to custody	3	12	13	28	4	8	7	19
Period of being looked after ceased for any other reason	7	15	181	203	8	8	162	178
Total	52	116	509	677	47	76	523	646

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) One 19 year old has been included in these categories for 2016-17.

.. Data is not available.

[Table 4](#) shows 646 young persons aged 16 and over left care between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018; 523 (81 per cent) of those leaving care were aged 18 or over.

26 per cent of young persons leaving care moved into independent living arrangements and were no longer looked after, 20 per cent turned 18 years old and continued to live with former foster parent(s) in a When I Am Ready arrangement and 17 per cent returned home to live with parents, relatives or other person with parental responsibility.

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 and 2017-18 ^{(a)(b)}

	2016-17				2017-18			
	16	17	18 (c)	Total	16	17	18	Total
Suitable accommodation	45	95	473	613	37	67	494	598
With parents or relatives in suitable accommodation	36	59	116	211	26	30	102	158
In suitable ordinary lodgings without formal support	0	0	125	125	4	9	145	158
In suitable independent living	1	11	74	86	1	8	83	92
Suitable supported lodgings	4	11	64	79	0	7	68	75
In suitable semi-independent, transitional accommodation	2	11	53	66	4	4	62	70
Other suitable accommodation	1	0	5	6	1	5	12	18
In suitable community home or other form of residential or nursing care such as an NHS establishment (c)	0	1	22	23	1	0	15	16
In suitable foyers and similar supported accommodation	1	2	13	16	0	4	7	11
In suitable custody	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Unsuitable accommodation	7	21	36	64	10	9	29	48
In unsuitable custody	3	10	15	28	6	7	14	27
Other unsuitable accommodation	3	5	13	21	2	1	9	12
In unsuitable bed and breakfast	1	5	2	8	2	1	1	4
With parents or relatives in unsuitable accommodation	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	2
In unsuitable independent living	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	2
In unsuitable emergency accommodation	0	1	3	4	0	0	1	1
Total	52	116	509	677	47	76	523	646

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

(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 these categories for 2016-17.

[Table 5](#) shows there were 646 young persons aged 16 and over leaving care between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018. Of which, 598 (93 per cent) were in suitable accommodation at the date they ceased to be looked after; 158 of those were with parents or relatives in suitable accommodation.

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 6: Adoptions of children looked after between 1 April and 31 March, 2013-14 to 2017-18^(a)

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Children adopted from care	347	385	341 (r)	315 (r)	308
Number:					
Adopted by former foster carer	30	41	31	24	24
Adopted by others	317	344	310 (r)	291 (r)	284
Percentage (%):					
Adopted by former foster carer	9	11	9	8	8
Adopted by others	91	89	91	92	92

Source: Looked after children census

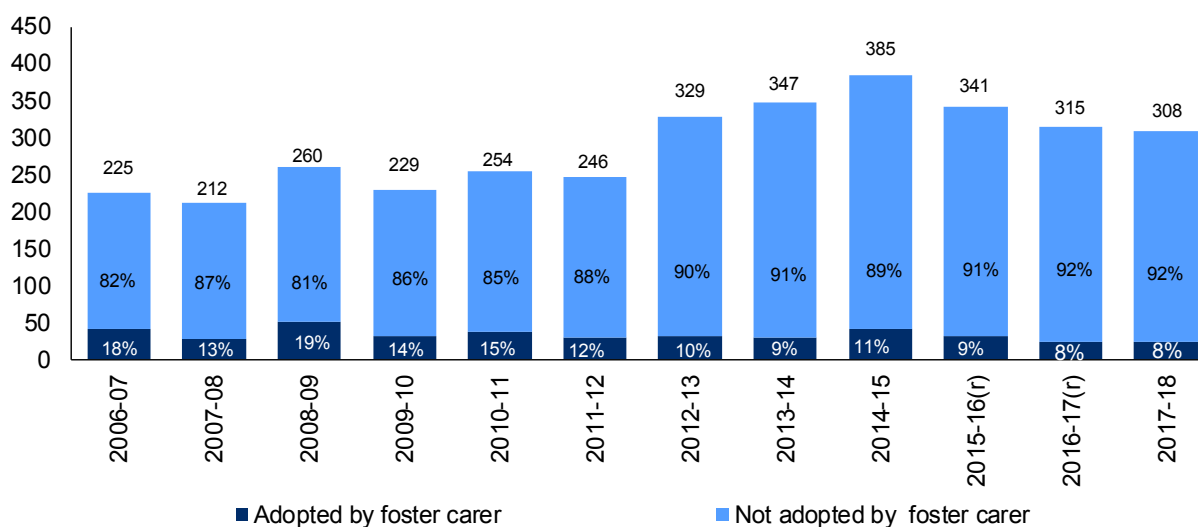
(a) Excluding children looked after in short-term placements. Where a child had separate periods of care only the latest period

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

[Table 6](#) shows there were 308 children adopted from care between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018. The total number of children adopted decreased by 7 (2 per cent) over the previous year.

8 per cent of children were adopted by their former foster carer, a proportion that has fallen over the past 10 years.

Chart 2: Percentage and number of adoptions of children looked after between 1 April and 31 March, 2006-07 to 2017-18



Source: Looked after children census

Table 7: Placements of looked after children by local authority, 31 March 2018 ^(a)

	Children looked after at 31 March 2018	With parents or other		
		In foster care placements	parental responsibility	Other placements (b)
Isle of Anglesey	144	99	24	21
Gwynedd	227	145	54	28
Conwy	212	153	26	33
Denbighshire	165	108	36	21
Flintshire	217	139	44	34
Wrexham	256	174	54	28
Powys	210	166	13	31
Ceredigion	62	48	9	5
Pembrokeshire	136	91	24	21
Carmarthenshire	193	153	16	24
Swansea	520	419	36	65
Neath Port Talbot	328	269	30	29
Bridgend	384	291	48	45
Vale of Glamorgan	245	177	46	22
Cardiff	830	569	119	142
Rhondda Cynon Taf	676	542	49	85
Merthyr Tydfil	156	119	23	14
Caerphilly	385	290	50	45
Blaenau Gwent	233	152	41	40
Torfaen	364	268	65	31
Monmouthshire	139	99	24	16
Newport	325	246	21	58
Wales	6,407	4,717	852	838

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.

Notes

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act came into effect on 6 April 2016. It is the new legal framework that brings together and modernises social services law in Wales. From 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 looked after children 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 reflecting the scale of change continuing to happen in social services and ongoing system changes. 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 requirements in relation to measuring the impact that the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act is having on people who need care and support and carers who need support are currently being reviewed. It is intended that new data will be developed for the 2020-21 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 National Assembly for Wales
- 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, 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
- to inform the social services policy decision-making process in Wales
- 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 receiving care and support.

Accuracy

This is the second 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 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.

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 2017-18 data year and are correct as at 31 March 2018. 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.

Timeliness and punctuality

The Data Collection team within the Welsh Government collected data, for the year 2017-18 i.e. from 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018, between March and May 2018. Data in this release refers to final 2017-18 data. Once submitted data has been validated, this release is drafted and

published as soon as possible. This release was published in November 2018, after being postponed from being published in October.

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

2017-18 is the second year of collecting and reporting on data derived from the [Looked after children census](#) return. 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:

[Children looked after in England](#) statistics are produced by the Department for Education.

Scotland:

[Children's social work statistics](#) are produced by the Scottish Government.

Northern Ireland:

[Children in care in Northern Ireland](#) are produced by the Department of Health.

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 the indicators, along with narratives for each of the well-being goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being 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 well-being plans.

Further details

The document is available at:

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

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.

Further information is available in other Social Services statistical releases on the Welsh Government web site at the [social services theme page](#).

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 2019 (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

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Datasets 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](#)