Department
for Education

A guide to looked after children statistics in England

May 2020 (Version 1.5)

Contents

1. Summary

This document provides a guide to [looked after children statistics](#) published by the Department for Education.

The key areas covered in this guide are:

- Data collection and coverage
- Data processing
- Information on published statistics
- Data quality and uses

Expiry or review date

This document is due to be revised in November 2020 when statistics on looked after children (including adoptions) are expected to be published for 2019 to 2020.

Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for users of published statistics including:

- Department for Education
- Stakeholders within the children's services sector
- Local authorities
- Researchers.

Version History

1.0	December 2017	First website version
1.1	March 2018	Outcomes information updated
1.2	November 2018	Information updated on release of 2017 to 2018 data
1.3	May 2019	Updated on release of 2017 to 2018 outcomes data
1.4	December 2019	Information updated on release of 2018 to 2019 data
1.5	May 2020	Information updated on release of 2019 to 2020 outcomes data

2. Data collection

The statistics are based on information on looked after children collected in the SSDA903 return which is completed annually by local authorities in England. The return is submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) and is required for two groups of children:

1. every child who is looked after by the local authority at any time during the year; and

2. children who have been looked after for at least 13 weeks which began after they reached the age of 14 and ended after they reached the age of 16 who are now aged 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 (care leavers)

The figures presented are based on data reported by all 152 local authorities in England.

2.1 History

The SSDA903 collection began in 1992 and prior to 1998 it covered all looked after children. Between 1998 and 2003 the SSDA903 return covered only a one third sample of children: those with a date of birth divisible by three. There was then an aggregate return, the CLA 100 return, which was used to provide 'fast track' data and to gross the sample data. In 2000, the OC1 (educational qualifications of care leavers) return was introduced, followed by the AD1 (children adopted) returns in 2001 and the OC3 return (19th birthday) in 2002. From 2004, the CLA100 return was discontinued and the SSDA903 reverted to covering all looked after children. Becoming a web based data collection for the first time, the SSDA903 return also incorporated the AD1, OC1 and OC3 returns.

Additional information on offending, health promotion checks, immunisations, dental checks, health assessments and substance misuse problem identification and intervention is also collected through the SSDA903. This is collected for the cohort of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months at 31 March. The information was previously collected via the Outcome Indicators (OC2) return which contained aggregated data collected at a local authority level. However, the information was added to the SSDA903 in 2008-09 and is now collected at child level.

A more detailed timeline of changes to the SSDA903 collection is given in Annex B.

2.2 Historical revisions

The database used to collect this information is longitudinal with one record for every episode of care. Local authorities are asked to update the database every year, including making amendments to previous years' records where there have been changes (see footnotes on historical changes in the relevant tables). The information collected contains details about the child (for example gender, date of birth, unique pupil number) and details about the child's episodes in care. When a change in legal status or placement (or

both) occurs, a new episode of care is started and the date and reason for the change are recorded.

The following table shows how data for 2018 has changed between this publication and last year's publication due to historical revisions:

Count of children	Reported in 2018 release	Reported in 2019 release	Percentage change
Children looked after at 31 March 2018	75,420	75,370	-0.1%
Children starting to be looked after during year ending 31 March 2018	32,050	32,190	+0.4%
Children ceasing to be looked after during year ending 31 March 2018	29,860	30,050	+0.6%

Revisions to previously published data occur as a result of amendments and corrections made by local authorities to their historical data. Records for the years since 2004 can be amended in the collection system directly by local authorities. Common amendments include correcting episode information and including missing records. Changes can also be made to dates of birth, gender or ethnicity.

An audit of records relating to the 2017 to 2018 year which were changed by local authorities shows that around 1,200 child records were deleted and a further 430 were added to the system. There were 5,200 master changes made, these are changes to a child's date of birth, gender or ethnic group. In addition, changes have also been made to the characteristics of a child's care.

It should be noted that a legal status or date change in any episode of care may mean that the child will no longer be included in a particular set of figures. For example, changing a date episode ceased in a child's care history may mean that the child is no longer included in ceased figures for 2018 but in 2019, this will also mean that the child is then considered to be looked after at 31 March 2018.

Further information on the data items collected in the SSDA903 return can be found in the collection guide. This and other documents useful for the completion of the SSDA903 return can be found on the DfE children looked after collection website.

3. Data processing

3.1 Data validation

To ensure data accuracy, its consistency and the integrity of each child's history over time, a number of validation checks are carried out on the records at the point of data entry, to identify and remove:

- Invalid codes

- Unlikely or impossible combinations of legal status

- Unlikely or impossible sequences of dates

- Information which contradicts that already held about the child, in particular details submitted for the beginning of the current year which do not match those at the end of the previous year

- Information in the supplementary milestone fields that contradicts details recorded in the episode date for the same child

- Information on the details of the looked after placement not matching that which is held on existing data by the DfE

Any record which fails the validation checks is shown as being in error and must be corrected. An explanation of each validation check and guidance on how corrections can be made are documented in the list of validation checks.

3.2 Production of snapshot tables

Local authorities supply information to the DfE annually, and these records are then linked (by a unique identifier for each child) to any supplied by the same local authority in preceding years (from 1992 onwards).

In early July each year, at the end of the data collection and cleaning process, a 'snapshot' or 'freeze' of the database is taken. As well as containing data for the latest year, this snapshot includes all the historic data for each child, as signed off by the local authority at the end of June of the latest year.

A series of checks are undertaken on these snapshot tables to ensure they have been produced correctly from the database, including year-on-year comparisons, sample checks against the live database (e.g. the number of children adopted in a particular LA) before the data are further processed to produce the tables for this statistical release. Cross checking between different snapshot tables is also carried out.

3.3 Creation of input files for matching

Following the collection of data from local authorities through the SSDA903 return and the initial processing, a final 'snapshot' of the database is taken. From the 'snapshot', a series of tables are produced including the 'Episodes' table, which presents a row for each separate episode of care during a child's period of care. This table is used to produce the input files which are sent for matching in the NPD. An input file is created for each year beginning 1 April and ending 31 March, including all children who have been looked after during the year. Historically, this was done for the most recent six years, in order to provide an updated five year time series in the Outcomes statistical release where possible. Six years were required due to the timing of exclusions data. In 2019 we reduced the number of years to five (in line with the main statistical release) as we no longer refresh earlier years for the Outcomes release (note in 2018 we only refreshed one year (2017) in the Outcomes publication).

For a looked after child's record to be eligible for matching, they must have a valid unique pupil number (UPN) which is the main field used to match data from the SSDA903 return in the NPD. It is the responsibility of the local authority to submit valid UPNs for children on the SSDA903 return.

A number of indicators are created on the child level input files which are sent for matching in the NPD – these indicators don't include children that have been looked after in respite care only.

- Child is looked after on 31 March

- Child is looked after continuously for at least six months

- Child is looked after continuously for at least twelve months

- Child is eligible for Pupil Premium

- Other variables including child characteristics and placement information.

Some children are looked after in respite care, under a series of short term placements. This is to provide parents or full-time carers with a break. This pattern of respite care is unlikely to impact on the outcomes for a child, and therefore children who are looked after in respite care only are excluded from the analysis.

Prior to finalising the input files, a number of quality assurance checks are completed. This includes the analysis being dual run independently by two members of the team, checks of summary figures against previous years for consistency and checks against relevant tables in the '*Children looked after in England (including adoption) year ending 31 March*' statistical release. Additional checks include assessing the volumes of UPNs by local authority and age.

The format of the files is set out in the input files specification document which is agreed between the looked after children and National Pupil Database teams each year.

3.4 Data matching

The UPN is the key field in the collection which allows the looked after children data to be matched in the NPD. Other information such as date of birth, gender, ethnicity and the local authority responsible for the care of the child may also be used to aid matching. It is the responsibility of local authorities to ensure that the UPN and child information provided on the SSDA903 return is accurate, as incorrect data could lead to a mismatch of data in the NPD.

A valid UPN should be returned for all looked after children aged 4 or over at 31 August within the collection year (with the exception of children looked after under an agreed series of short term placements). This criterion began in 2013. Previously UPNs were only required for looked after children aged 6 to 15 years old at 31 August. UPNs can be returned for younger children if they have been assigned one.

There are several reasons why a child may not have a UPN, for example:

- Child looked after is not of school age and has not yet been assigned a UPN (some children not of school age have a UPN depending on the type of setting they attend)

- Child looked after has never attended a school where UPNs are mandatory (e.g. some unaccompanied asylum seeking children or children that have only ever attended an independent school)

- Child looked after is educated outside of England

- Child is newly looked after (from one week before the end of the collection period) and the UPN was not yet known at the time of the SSDA903 annual statistical return

- Sources collating UPNs reflect discrepancies for the child's name and/or surname and/or date of birth thus preventing reliable matching

The CLA database is a longitudinal dataset and local authorities can amend UPNs for earlier years during each collection.

The outcomes publication does not use an age filter when presenting attainment information (i.e. we publish data for children at the end of the key stage so they can be of varying age), however, the matching rates in the tables below use the following ages to ascertain the degree of matching for each key stage: age 6 for key stage 1, age 10 for key stage 2 and age 15 for key stage 4 (age at 31 August). This is not a precise measure of data quality, as some of these children may have repeated a year and therefore wouldn't be eligible for key stage exams. Conversely, there will be other children who are eligible for exams who are not aged 6, 10, or 15 years old but will not be included in the key stage percentages in the tables below.

Percentage of looked after children (children looked after continuously for at least 12 months as at 31 March) that have a UPN submitted in the SSDA903 return

	Children aged 4-15 at 31 August	Children eligible for Key Stage 1 teacher assessment	Children eligible for Key Stage 2 tests	Children eligible for Key Stage 4 tests
2019[1]	99.0	99.5	99.9	98.2
2018[2]	98.7	99.1	99.9	97.6
2017[2]	99.2	99.0	99.9	98.1
2016[3]	99.2	99.2	99.9	99.0
2015[3]	99.6	99.7	100.0	99.5

1. Based on 2019 SSDA903 as at 31 March 2019.

2. Based on 2018 SSDA903 as at 31 March for 2017 and 2018.

3. Based on 2017 SSDA903 as at 31 March for 2015 and 2016.

The UPN allows the data to be matched to attainment information held in the NPD, which is collected from awarding bodies. The percentage of successful matches with attainment information is summarised in the table below. Up to and including the 2017 publication, the matching process was re-run for historical data each year. In the 2018 publication the matching process ran for the current and previous year only and from 2019 onwards for the current year only, as historically changes to earlier years have been small.

Percentage of looked after children (children looked after continuously for at least 12 months as at 31 March) with a UPN that have successfully been matched to attainment data in the NPD

	Percentage of children looked after aged 6 with a UPN that were successfully matched to key stage 1 attainment data	Percentage of children looked after aged 10 with a UPN that were successfully matched to key stage 2 attainment	Percentage of children looked after aged 15 with a UPN that were successfully matched to key stage 4 attainment
2019[1]	93.9	92.7	92.8
2018[2]	94.1	93.4	92.9
2017[2]	94.8	93.0	91.7

1. Based on 2019 SSDA903 as at 31 March 2019.

2. Based on 2018 SSDA903 as at 31 March 2018.

Information on attainment, special educational needs (SEN), absence and exclusions are based on CLA data that has been matched in the NPD to attainment, school census, alternative provision census and where applicable pupil referral unit (PRU) census data (see Annex C for a process map):

Attainment data: CLA data is matched to provisional key stage 1 data and revised key stage 2 and key stage 4 data.

School census data: CLA data is matched to the spring school census data which is a snapshot of pupil information in schools as at the third Thursday in January. Pupil level data has been collected via the school census since 2002 (annually). A termly school census was introduced in 2006 for secondary school and since 2007 it has been returned for all other schools (nursery, primary, secondary and special); it has also been returned by pupil referral units since 2014 (the pupil referral unit census was introduced in 2010, but discontinued from 2014 onwards as these institutions now complete the school census). CLA data is also matched to the pupil referral unit census for January 2013. Absence and exclusions data is matched to the school census data in the NPD before the CLA-school census matching is carried out.

Alternative provision census data: CLA data is matched to the alternative provision census which is a snapshot of pupil information in alternative provision at the third Thursday in January. Pupil level information has been returned via the census since January 2008. The alternative provision census covers pupils attending a school not maintained by a local authority for whom the authority is paying full tuition fees, or educated otherwise than in schools and pupil referral units, under arrangements made (and funded) by the local authority.

3.5 Production of publication tables

From the snapshot, a series of data tables are produced. These snapshot tables are used to produce the publication tables. See Annex E for a list of the snapshot tables used for the production of the '*Children looked after in England (including adoption)*' publication. The '*Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities*' publication uses the matched data files described in the section above.

The publication tables are quality assured in accordance with DfE statistical quality principles and procedures.

4. Published statistics

4.1 Current publications

The Department currently publishes the following [looked after children statistics](#) annually:

- *Children looked after in England (including adoption)* (November/December)

- *Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities* (March/May).

Prior to 2018, the *Children looked after in England (including adoption)* release was published in September each year, with additional tables following in December. In 2018 the decision was made to combine this into one publication in November. In 2019 the publication was released in December although the aim is to publish earlier in 2020 where possible.

These statistics were first designated as National Statistics in 2009 and were reconfirmed as National Statistics in 2015. The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;

- are well explained and readily accessible;

- are produced according to sound methods; and

- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed. Since reconfirmation, we have continued to align the statistics to the Code of Practice, for example we have:

- continued to facilitate local authority user groups annually to discuss changes to the production of these statistics;

- improved the commentary supporting the statistics, through the introduction of this CLA statistics guide;

- endeavoured to minimise the number of releases of information through releasing all information together at the earliest opportunity. For example, in 2018 we released the main publication data altogether (rather than a main/additional table release) and in 2015 we moved the OC2 outcomes to the main publication rather than delaying its release until the later outcomes publication;

- developed the outcomes publication to include more comparator information, for example including figures for non-looked after children and children in need

alongside the looked after children figures, where comparable figures are available.

- provided local authority data in machine readable, tidy data format.

4.2 Children looked after in England including adoption

The '*Children looked after in England including adoption*' publication provides statistics on children who are looked after by local authorities during the year, those adopted from care and, for those who have recently left care, information about their activity and whereabouts on their 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th and 21st birthdays, in England. Due to the longitudinal nature of the data collection historical information can be amended each year. This means we update all time series figures published in each release.

The statistical release includes information on:

- Children looked after at 31 March in each year, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children

- Children looked after at any time during the year ending 31 March

- Children who started to be looked after during the year ending 31 March

- Children who ceased to be looked after during the year ending 31 March

- Children looked after who were adopted during the year ending 31 March

- Care leavers now aged 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 years old

- Children who went missing or away from placement without authorisation during the year ending 31 March

The tables include information on the reasons why a child is looked after, their legal status and placement type. Information is also included on the average time taken for each stage of the adoption process. Some of the statistics are experimental as they are recent additions to the collection for example, reason for placement change for children who moved placements during the year and care leaver data for 17 and 18 year olds and statistics on children who have gone missing or who are away from their placement without authorisation. In 2019 we have removed the 'experimental statistics' label from these statistics.

Note that figures for 2019 at local authority level are based on the local authority boundaries as at 31 March 2019 and do not reflect the 1 April 2019 boundary changes.

For a full list of tables that appear in the publications see Annex E.

All figures are based on data from the SSDA903 return collected each spring from all local authorities in England. Local authorities are required to complete the statutory SSDA903 return. This publication is the main information source on the numbers of looked after children in England; it is used to inform policy decisions to improve the

outcomes for this vulnerable group of children. It is also used extensively by other organisations interested in this subject.

4.3 Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities

The '*Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities*' publication provides national and local authority level information on the outcomes for children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months at 31 March by local authorities in England and has been published since 2010.

In the '*Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities*' publication:

- The definition of a 'looked after child' is a child who has been continuously looked after for at least 12 months up to and including 31 March. This definition has been used because 12 months is considered an appropriate length of time to gauge the possible association of being looked after on educational attainment. However, note that a child may not have been in the care of a local authority for the whole of a key stage period. It is also the cohort of children for whom information on outcomes such as health, wellbeing and offending are collected through the SSDA903.

- The definition of a 'non-looked after child' is a child who has not been looked after continuously for 12 months as at 31 March. This will include both children who have never been looked after and also those who have been looked after but who have not met the 12 months criteria.

Figures are based on data from the SSDA903 return. Data from the SSDA903 return is matched to attainment, school census and alternative provision census data in the national pupil database (NPD). Due to the longitudinal nature of the data collection historical information can be amended each year, however changes to earlier years are small. In 2018 we only updated the previous year's figures in any time series (whereas in earlier years we would update all time series figures published in each release). From 2019 we don't update any of the previous year's figures in any time series. Information is provided on:

- Educational attainment at key stage 1, key stage 2 and key stage 4

- Special educational needs (SEN)

- Absence from school

- Exclusions from school

This publication is the main source of information on the outcomes for looked after children in England. It is used to inform policy decisions to improve the life chances for this vulnerable group of children. It is also used extensively by other groups interested in this subject and by local authorities for benchmarking purposes.

From 2015, the publication includes information for previously looked after children who left care through an adoption, special guardianship order or child arrangements order on:

- Educational attainment at key stage 2 and key stage 4

This official statistics publication is the main source of information on the attainment outcomes of previously looked after children who left care through an adoption, special guardianship order or child arrangements order.

4.3.1 Recent history

Throughout the release comparisons are made to children in need and non-looked after children where similar figures are available.

In 2019:

- Data refreshes

  In previous releases we have refreshed earlier years data within each time series for looked after children. This year we have assessed whether this annual refresh is still necessary and concluded that, given there is minimal change (if any) on the figures for earlier years from one release to the next and balancing that with the resource required to do the refreshes that we would no longer update previous years data.

  - Key stage 1

  Changes to the reading, maths and science teacher assessment (TA) frameworks in 2019 means that attainment is not comparable to previous years. So only writing TA can be compared to 2018 (and this changed in 2018, so can't be compared prior to 2018). As a results we have only published 2018 and 2019 data.

  - Destinations

  For the first time this year, data has been included at national level on the destinations of looked after children after key stage 4. This is 2017/18 destinations for the 2016/17 cohort.

In 2018:

- Data was refreshed for 2017 only (instead of the whole time series).

- At key stage 1, changes made within the 2017/18 writing teacher assessment frameworks mean that judgements made in writing in 2018 are not directly comparable to those made using the previous interim frameworks in 2016 and 2017.

- At key stage 2, changes made within the 2017/18 writing TA frameworks similarly mean that judgements in 2018 are not directly comparable to those made using the previous interim frameworks in 2016 and 2017. At key stage 2 this also means that figures for reading, writing and mathematics combined in 2018 are not comparable to previous years.

- In 2017, pupils sat reformed GCSEs in English language, English literature and maths for the first time, graded on a 9 to 1 scale. New GCSEs in other subjects

were phased in, first being taught from September 2016 to 2018. Of the reformed GCSE subjects introduced in 2018, only science had a significant change in the structure of the qualifications available; combined science was introduced replacing core and additional. Combined science is a double award GCSE and is graded from 9-9 to 1-1. When comparing the 2018 revised headline and additional measures to the equivalent revised data from 2017, it is important to note any changes to methodology or data changes underpinning the 2018 measures as a result of the introduction of further reformed GCSEs graded on the 9-1 scale which have a higher maximum score than unreformed GCSEs.

- Since 2018, Attainment 8 had a maximum point score of 90, compared to a maximum of 87 in 2017, as a result of the phased introduction of reformed GCSEs. This difference should be taken into account when considering any change in Attainment 8 score between prior to 2018 and beyond. Due to the introduction of reformed GCSEs and the 9-1 grading scale, this measure will not be comparable between years until all reformed GCSEs are introduced into performance tables in 2020.

- As announced in July 2017, from 2018 the headline EBacc attainment measure is the EBacc average point score (EBacc APS). This replaces the previous threshold EBacc attainment measure. EBacc APS measures pupils' point scores across the five pillars of the EBacc. This ensures the attainment of all pupils is recognised, not just those at particular grade boundaries, encouraging schools to enter pupils of all abilities, and support them to achieve their full potential.

In 2017:

The following changes were made to the publication:

- Local authority level data was published as underlying data instead of formatted tables, for the most recent year. This follows the department's new guidelines for improving the way we produce and publish data for users.

- At key stage 2, the progress methodology was further refined to allow a greater number of prior attainment groups and better comparisons between pupils working below the standard of the tests.

- Local authority key stage 2 attainment data was updated to align with the main key stage 2 statistical release. The national level data remains the same as in previous years and excludes pupils with missing or lost test results and pupils where results are suppressed pending the outcome of a maladministration investigation. The local authority level data excludes pupils with lost results but includes those with missing results or pending maladministration. It also excludes children that have recently arrived from overseas. As a result, national level England figures don't match national figures from local authority data.

- In 2017, pupils sat reformed GCSEs in English language, English literature and maths for the first time, graded on a 9 to 1 scale. The headline threshold

attainment measures use a grade 5 for reformed English and mathematics. When comparing 2017 headline measures to the equivalent revised data from 2016, it is important to note the changes in methodology underpinning the 2017 data. Additional measures were provided using a grade 4 threshold in order to allow comparison to 2016.

- There were two new tables for looked after children at national level at key stage 4; both provide additional breakdowns of the Progress 8 measure (school type and length of most recent period of care).

- Local authority key stage 4 attainment data was updated to align with the main key stage 4 statistical release. The local authority attainment data has children recently arrived from overseas removed. As a result, national level England figures don't match national figures from local authority data.

In 2016:

Changes were made to the publication to bring it in line with the new educational outcome measures, following the primary and secondary school reforms:

- Children at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 were assessed under the new national curriculum using new tests and interim frameworks for teacher assessment where the expected standard has been raised. The headline measures were changed to reflect the new curriculum and the data is not comparable with that provided for previous years; therefore, no information is provided for years earlier from 2016.

- In October 2013, it was announced that a new secondary school accountability system would be implemented from 2016. It includes two new headline measures: Attainment 8 and Progress 8 and the English Baccalaureate measure was published for looked after children for the first time.

- In addition at key stage 4, the department has made changes to how English counts in two of the headline measures in 2016: achieving A*-C in both English and Mathematics and achievement of the English Baccalaureate, to align more closely with Attainment 8 and Progress 8.

In September 2015 the definition of a persistent absentee changed. Therefore, from 2016 the publication includes figures based on the new methodology for all years to provide a time series. This is similar to what has been done in the pupil absence in schools publication.

Prior to 2016, the percentage of children looked after continuously for twelve months at 31 March who had a valid unique pupil number (UPN) recorded in the SSDA903 return, was published in the local authority tables for relevant ages. This information was originally published in 2012. The percentage of children with a UPN for these tables is over 90% for the majority of local authorities and so these rates were not published from the 2016 publication onwards.

In 2015:

The 2015 publication was released later (moved from December to March) to allow the use of revised key stage 2 and key stage 4 data, and to include more comparative and contextual data, and additional information on attainment of children who have been adopted from care or left care with a special guardianship order or child arrangements order.

Health and offending information previously collected via the Outcome Indicators (OC2) return which contained aggregated data at local authority level was added to the SSDA903 return in 2008-09 and collected at child level. From 2010, the OC2 data was included in the '*Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities in England, 31 March*' publication. However, in 2015, it was moved to the '*Children looked after in England (including adoption)*' publication.

4.3.2 Coverage and duplicates

The numbers of pupils at the end of each key stage in the publication can be different to that reported in the main attainment publications. Some of this difference is due to the coverage within the releases. Generally the coverage for looked after children is greater than the main attainment publications as we aim to include as many looked after children as possible.

Duplicates within the looked after children matched attainment data have been removed by taking the best attainment result for that child.

4.4 Underlying data

Historically underlying data has been published alongside national and local authority tables in each publication. Alongside the underlying data there is an accompanying document (metadata) which provides further information on the contents of these files.

In December 2017, underlying data for the '*Children looked after in England (including adoptions)*' additional tables was reviewed in order to ensure information previously presented in the local authority tables was available in the underlying data and the extended local authority tables were not published.

In March 2018, underlying data for the '*Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities*' publication was also expanded to replace previous local authority level tables.

Future statistical releases will be published through the new DfE Explore Education Statistics Data platform, so we anticipate the format of the underlying data files will change for publications for 2020 onwards.

4.5 Rounding, suppression and grossing

Rounding and suppression is applied to the data. The National Statistics Code of Practice requires that reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that all published or disseminated statistics produced by the DfE protect confidentiality. The publications follow the DfE policy statement on confidentiality.

National and regional figures have been rounded to the nearest 10. Prior to 2018, local authority figures were rounded to the nearest 5 in statistical tables and were unrounded in underlying data tables. From 2018 local authority figures are unrounded in statistical tables. For confidentiality purposes, small numbers have been replaced in the published tables by a (c) (prior to 2019 this was a cross (x)). To ensure the suppressed number cannot be identified by simple arithmetic, secondary suppression may be required and in these cases, another number may be suppressed. Where any number is shown as zero (0), the original figure submitted was zero (0). The following convention has been used:

"." means not applicable

".." means not available

"-" means negligible – used to represent a percentage that would appear as 0 when rounded but is not zero

Where the numerator or denominator in a percentage is small then the percentage has been suppressed and replaced by a (c) (prior to 2019, a cross (x)). Note that percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Generally, percentages have been rounded to whole numbers but there are some exceptions - in the '*Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities*' publication; key stage 4 percentages have been rounded to one decimal place and exclusions have been rounded to two decimal places. This is in line with the department's rounding protocols for the main statistical releases in these subject areas. For CLA matched with NPD data, zero numerators and percentages are also suppressed.

Averages that are based on small numbers have been suppressed and replaced by a (c) (prior to 2019, a cross (x)). In the '*Children looked after in England including adoption*' publication; the average durations in table E2 have been rounded to the nearest month and the average number of missing or away without authorisation incidents in table G1 has been rounded to one decimal place. In the '*Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities*' publication; at key stage 2 and key stage 4 attainment averages have been rounded to one decimal place and to two decimal places at key stage 4 for progress measures.

Prior to 2013, grossing factors were applied to the data in order to compensate for records with errors in their episodes. These were calculated by comparing the number of valid looked after children records reported in the return with the number of invalid records in the system. In 2013, because of the rigorous validation checks applied to data submitted, such discrepancies were very low and the calculated grossing factors to be

applied were close to 1 and after a review of grossing factors, it was decided to discontinue grossing the data from 2013 onwards.

5. Data quality and uses

5.1 Children looked after in England (including adoption)

Local authorities collect data on all looked after children as described above. Validation and consistency checks are in place to ensure the information provided is of high quality. However, the following should be taken into account when reviewing the statistics on looked after children.

5.1.1 Effect of collecting provider unique reference numbers on placement type

For the collection year 2015 to 2016, there was a new requirement for local authorities to provide the unique reference number (URN) where the setting is subject to Ofsted inspections. For children's homes, for example, this would be the URN of the individual home, and for foster or adoptive placements, for example, this would be the URN of the relevant service or agency providing the placement. For larger providers with multiple settings or branches this meant the precise URN for the particular setting or branch. This data, which covers around 90% of placements, was required for any placement that was ongoing on 1 April 2015, or for any new placement after 1 April 2015.

As a result of this, and the in-built system validation to ensure the placement type submitted by local authorities corresponds with the placement type for the given URN, there were some corrections of placement types by local authorities in 2016 and 2017. In particular, there were a number of cases where children previously recorded as being in residential schools in 2015, were recorded as being in children's homes in 2016 and 2017; in many cases the provider may have been dual-registered.

Whilst we usually see small annual revisions to previous year figures, these changes will largely be a result of improvements in the accuracy of reporting placement types.

URNs have only been collected since 1 April 2015. A placement which was coded with the incorrect URN will not have been corrected if it ended in 2016-17. Older placements are more likely to be misreported and so any decrease, or increase in placements over time should be interpreted cautiously.

5.1.2 Children missing from care

Information was collected for the first time in 2015 on children who were missing or away from their placement without authorisation in the year ending 31 March, for any length of time. Previously, information had only been collected on children who were missing or absent for at least 24 hours.

The definitions of missing and away from placement without authorisation are as follows:

Missing from care – a looked after child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (e.g. school) and their whereabouts is not known;

Away from placement without authorisation – a looked after child whose whereabouts is known but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police.

These reflect the definitions in the [statutory guidance](#) on children who run away or go missing from home or care.

Information is collected on the start and end date of the missing incident. If a child goes missing or away from placement without authorisation more than once in the same day, each separate incident is counted. It is possible that children who were missing were also away from placement without authorisation during the year, and vice versa, so the figures should not be summed to give a total number who were not at their placement during the year. Additionally, users should exercise caution when summing the number of missing periods and away from placement without authorisation periods together, this is because an away from placement without authorisation period could become a missing period if the child's whereabouts becomes unknown. These will appear as separate incidents in the data, but could be one continuous period where the child is not at his/her placement.

This information was initially published in 2015 as 'experimental statistics' given it was the first year in which the data had been collected and, therefore, local authority data collection systems and recording practices were still bedding in. In 2019 we removed this label. Feedback from local authorities have suggested the figures are becoming more robust and some local authorities have continued to report some improvements in recording. However, since 2017 a growing number of local authorities are informing us that they do not record incidents as 'away without authorisation' but instead report all incidents as 'missing' as their primary source of this information is the police. We estimate this could mean that at a national level there is an overestimate of missing incidents of up to 10% in 2019, and an undercount of away without authorisation incidents of up to 22%. There is some variation across the country in the way these incidents are reported and so robust comparisons between regions is not possible. Some of these local authorities submitted some 'away without authorisation' information and this has been included in the tables. Local authorities who have informed us of these difficulties are footnoted in table LAG1 and we continue to work with local authorities to improve the quality of this data. Given the changes in the way this data has been reported, comparisons over time should not be made.

Information on children missing from care is collected separately by police forces. Details of all missing or absent incidents are provided to the National Crime Agency quarterly. The NCA publish annual information – the [latest available](#) report (2016-17 UKMPU Data Report v1) was published on 1 July 2019. This information is not directly comparable with the latest DfE statistics due to the different collection methods and definitions.

Table G1 includes figures for the average duration of being missing. Around 9 in 10 of missing and away from placement without authorisation incidents are for 2 days or less. In each case, there are a small number of particularly long durations of being missing reported by local authorities in the data, which affect the value of the mean duration. Both

the mean and median have been presented in the table in order to show a better descriptor of the true average value.

Measure	Average number of days per missing incident	Average number of days per away from placement without authorisation incident
25th percentile	0 days	0 days
Median	1 day	1 day
75th percentile	1 day	1 day
Mean	2 days	2 days

Note, the exact times a child went missing or away without authorisation or returned are not recorded, only the date, so the duration of missing incidents are calculated to the nearest whole day.

5.1.3 Care leavers

In the national table, figures exclude those who were looked after under an agreed series of short term placements, those who have died since leaving care, those who have returned home to parents or someone with parental responsibility for a continuous period of at least 6 months and those whose care was transferred to another local authority. The numbers of young people recorded as having returned home for at least 6 months, or having died after ceasing to be looked after in each year, are as follows:

Age	2017 Died	2017 Returned home for at least 6 months	2018 Died	2018 Returned home for at least 6 months	2019 Died	2019 Returned home for at least 6 months
17	0	100	0	100	c	90
18	c	180	c	220	c	200
19	10	200	10	220	20	250
20	20	200	20	210	30	250
21	30	190	40	230	30	210

A young person may be recorded in more than one year

c - Suppressed data

The percentage of known information about activity and accommodation remains high, for 17 to 18-year olds the figure was 93% in 2019 compared to 91% for 19 to 21-year olds. As a result, year-on-year changes cannot be immediately assessed. Tables F1 and F2 present the percentage of care leavers in each activity or accommodation category as a percentage of all young people; the table below shows care leaver activity and accommodation for those care leavers aged 19 to 21 **where the information is known**:

Activity of 19 to 21-year-old care leavers	2017	2018	2019
In higher education i.e. studies beyond A level	6	6	6
In education other than higher education	19	20	21
In training or employment	25	25	25
Not in education, training or employment owing to illness or disability	11	10	9
Not in education, training or employment owing to pregnancy or parenting	7	7	6
Not in education, training or employment owing to other reasons	23	22	23

Accommodation of 19 to 21-year-old care leavers	2017	2018	2019
With parents or relatives	12	12	11
Community home	5	4	4
Semi-independent, transitional accommodation	11	12	14
Supported lodgings	5	4	4
Gone abroad	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5
Deported	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5
Ordinary lodgings	2	2	2
Residence not known	1	1	1
No fixed abode/homeless	1	1	1
Foyers	2	2	3
Independent living	36	35	35
Emergency accommodation	<0.5	1	<0.5
Bed and breakfast	<0.5	<0.5	<0.5
In custody	4	4	3
With former foster carers	7	8	8
Other accommodation	4	4	4

It is not possible for local authorities to determine the suitability of the accommodation where the young person was deported, had gone abroad, or their residence was not known. Therefore, in this statistical release these accommodation types have been removed from the suitability calculations.

17 and 18-year-old care leavers

The cohort for former care leavers was extended in 2016 to include care leavers aged 17 and 18, in addition to those aged 19, 20 and 21, who were looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday including some time after their 16th birthday. These figures were initially released as 'experimental statistics', however this label was removed in 2019. Analysis suggests that in the first year of collecting the information

(2016) there was under reporting by some local authorities for 17 and 18-year-olds who left care on their birthday. We believe under reporting was very small for 17-year-olds but for 18-year-olds we believe we could have been missing data for around 1,000; 11% of young people. However, whilst we expect under reporting to remain a risk, the same level of under-reporting was not experienced in 2017 and we do not expect this to be an issue going forwards.

5.1.4 Long term fostering placements

From 2016, all children in an ongoing long term foster placement on 1 April 2015, or those who change to a long term foster placement after this date, should have been recorded as such. The definition of a long-term foster placement came into effect from 1 April 2015 in The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015 and is defined as:

 A "long term foster placement" means an arrangement made by the responsible authority for the child to be placed with a foster carer where:

(a) the child's plan for permanence is foster care,

(b) the foster carer has agreed to act as child's foster parent until the child ceases to be looked after, and

(c) the responsible authority has confirmed the nature of the arrangement to the foster carer, parents and the child.

Local authority level analysis of this data has highlighted large differences in the proportion of foster placements reported as being long term foster placements. In earlier years, quality assurance checks carried out with local authorities with very high or very low proportions of children in long term foster care identified a degree of misreporting at a level that has affected our confidence in the figures and so figures for long term fostering have not been included in the main release tables. We are continuing to discuss with local authorities at our focus groups to work towards improving the quality of this data. In the meantime, children reported in the collection under the long term fostering category are included in the categories 'With other foster carer not FFA/concurrent planning' or 'With relative or friend, not FFA/concurrent planning' as appropriate, in the statistical release data tables for 2016 to 2019. Time series of the figures are shown below:

Numbers of children looked after in a long term fostering placement

Years ending 31 March 2016 to 2019

Placement	2016	2017	2018	2019
Children looked after at 31 March in long term fostering placements	**24,010**	**23,380**	**22,770**	**22,010**
Inside council boundary	*14,690*	*14,360*	*13,900*	*13,260*
With relative or friend	3,150	3,160	3,160	3,180
With other foster carer	11,540	11,200	10,740	10,070
Outside council boundary	*9,320*	*9,020*	*8,870*	*8,760*
With relative or friend	1,400	1,390	1,500	1,570
With other foster carer	7,910	7,630	7,370	7,190
Children starting to be looked after in long term fostering placements	**3,950**	**3,450**	**2,560**	**2,330**
Inside council boundary	*2,720*	*2,270*	*1,660*	*1,510*
With relative or friend	930	800	590	580
With other foster carer	1,790	1,470	1,070	930
Outside council boundary	*1,240*	*1,170*	*910*	*820*
With relative or friend	250	270	200	230
With other foster carer	980	910	700	590
Children ceasing to be looked after in long term fostering placements	**4,600**	**4,070**	**3,450**	**3,580**
Inside council boundary	*3,140*	*2,620*	*2,190*	*2,300*
With relative or friend	1,250	1,090	890	930
With other foster carer	1,890	1,530	1,300	1,380
Outside council boundary	*1,460*	*1,450*	*1,260*	*1,280*
With relative or friend	420	430	370	370
With other foster carer	1,040	1,020	890	910

5.1.5 Reason episode ceased 'other'

The 'reason episode ceased' codes collected in the SSDA903 record the circumstances when a child ceases to be looked after. If a child ceases to be looked after because he/she has turned 18, this can already be deduced from his/her date of birth. Therefore, the appropriate code is used to capture the destination of the young person. In 2014, 5,000 episodes (16%) were reported as ceasing with the code 'Period of being looked after ceased for any other reason'. After discussion with local authority data contacts three new categories were introduced in 2015 to try to capture the reasons for these children leaving care. These categories were 'Accommodation on remand ended', 'Age assessment determined child aged 18 or over' and 'Child moved abroad'. However, despite the introduction of these new categories, in 2019, 5,430 children ceasing to be looked after (18%) are still categorised as 'Care ceased for any other reason'. 3,910

(72%) of these were aged 18 years or over so it's likely they ceased to be looked after as they reached 18 years of age and the more detailed code has not been provided.

5.1.6 Reason for placement change

For episodes that cease due to a change in placement, from 1 April 2015 the SSDA903 collection records the reason for the placement change. A full list of valid codes can be found in the guide. Nationally 13,350 placements (or 24%) were recorded in the 'Other' category in 2019 which is similar to the 23% in 2018, but a slight reduction from 26% in 2017 and from 34% in 2016. Feedback from local authorities suggests that placement changes due to custody are reported within the 'other' category. We introduced a change for the 2019 collection to allow the identification of children changing placement due to custody, however this has had little effect on the numbers reported as 'other'.

5.1.7 31 March, starts and ceased comparability

The number of looked after children at 31 March 2019 (Table A1) does not always equate to the number at 31 March 2018 plus the number who started (Table C1) minus the number who ceased to be looked after in the year (Table D1). The reason for this is that a child is only ever counted once as starting to be looked after during the year, and once as ceasing to be looked after during the year, but in some circumstances a child may enter care and/or leave care more than once during the year. There are also a small number of children who move in and out of respite care during the year for whom the same will apply.

5.1.8 Children freed for adoption

The 2018 data shows that there are no longer any children subject to freeing orders. Applications for freeing orders could not be made on or after 30 December 2005 as they were replaced by placement orders. Further guidance on the use of freeing orders has been included in the guide.

5.1.9 Local authority of placement

There are a minority of children in each year whose local authority of placement is outside England or is not submitted due to confidentiality purposes. Therefore, these children are not included in either of the columns CLA_IntPl or CLA_ExtPl in the underlying data sheet CLA2019.csv. The local authority of placement for these children are in the table below.

Children looked after at 31 March 2019 who were placed outside England or whose local authority of placement was confidential

Placement location	Numbers
Placed outside England	700
Northern Ireland	10
Scotland	190
Wales	450
Outside UK	50
LA of placement confidential	210

5.2 Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities

5.2.1 Denominators

In this publication, denominators for educational attainment, special educational needs (SEN), absence and exclusions only include those children for whom a UPN has been supplied and have been matched to the NPD. This methodology was introduced in 2012. Prior to this, percentages were given based on the total number of looked after children with and without UPNs.

Prior to 2016, the percentage of children looked after continuously for twelve months at 31 March who had a UPN recorded in the SSDA903 return, was published in the local authority tables for relevant ages. This information was originally published in 2012. The percentage of children with a UPN for these tables was over 90% for the majority of local authorities in 2016 and so from 2016, these rates were not included in the publication.

5.2.2 Attainment data

Attainment data is given for looked after children in any educational setting who are at the end of the key stage and have key stage data available.

Recent changes to attainment data that affect the publication are summarised in the recent history section of this document.

At key stage 4, 2014 data onwards cannot be compared to earlier years due to two major reforms that took place previously – a full breakdown of the reforms and their impact is given in SFR41/2014.

In 2015, SEN breakdowns were provided at national level for key stage 2 and key stage 4 for the first time in the publication. The SEN information was taken from matched school census data. From 2016, SEN information is taken from both the school census and the alternative provision census matched data.

In 2016, the new progress measures at key stage 2 and key stage 4 were based on models that include children in state-funded mainstream schools. However, children in

some settings outside of the model have progress scores. In 2017, the model for the key stage 2 progress measures was expanded to include all state-funded schools.

In the national key stage 2 publication, progress measures are published for state-funded schools which are the schools included in the new national model (from 2017). However, within the CLA outcomes publication we include progress measures for all schools that have been included in the progress measure calculations which in addition to state-funded schools includes non-maintained special schools, as we want to cover as many looked after children as possible. We publish this by SEN.

In the national key stage 4 publication, the Progress 8 measure breakdowns are generally published for state-funded schools which is state-funded mainstream schools (those schools in the national model) plus state-funded special schools. However, within the CLA outcomes publication we include progress measures for all schools that have been included in the progress measure calculations which in addition to state-funded mainstream schools includes state-funded special schools, non-maintained special schools and alternative provision, as we want to cover as many looked after children as possible. We publish this by SEN. In addition, we've provided a total for state-funded mainstream schools for comparison.

Further information on attainment data can be found in the following publications: key stage 1, key stage 2 and key stage 4.

5.2.3 Special educational needs

The national and local authority SEN provision tables relate to looked after children who have been matched to the school census and the alternative provision census. It is possible for a child to be matched to both of these census types if they attend more than one kind of setting. Such cases will be included in the figures but will only count once. In these cases, the highest level of SEN has been counted.

In September 2014 the special educational needs and disability (SEND) reforms came into effect as part of the Children and Families Act 2014. See the SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 for more detailed information on the reforms.

Further national and local authority figures on special educational needs can be found in: Special educational needs in England.

5.2.4 Absence data

The school census started to collect absence information on a termly basis in 2006 from maintained secondary schools, city technology colleges and academies. From 2007, this was extended to cover maintained primary schools and special schools.

Absence information is collected in arrears and the latest available data is for the 2018 to 2019 school year.

In September 2015 the definition of a persistent absentee changed. In the 2017 Outcomes statistical release, figures based on the new methodology were calculated for previous years, in order to provide a time series. This is similar to what was done in the 2016 pupil absence in schools publication.

More details on how pupil absence statistics are calculated can be found in: the Pupil absence statistics: guide.

5.2.5 Exclusions data

From 2017 onwards, figures are based on the number of children looked after continuously for at least 12 months at 31 March who were aged 5-15 at the start of the academic year (31 August) and were matched to the school census. Figures for previous years will be different from previously published figures as these were based on children aged 4-15, and local authorities may update information for past years.

Exclusions data was first collected for the school year 1994 to 1995. The school census started to collect exclusions data on a termly basis in 2006 from maintained secondary schools, city technology colleges and academies. From 2007, this was extended to cover maintained primary schools and special schools.

The school census collects exclusions information two terms in arrears. For example, the summer school census collects information on exclusions occurring during the autumn term. The latest available exclusions data is for the 2017 to 2018 school year.

More details on how pupil exclusion statistics are calculated can be found in: the Pupil exclusion statistics: guide.

5.2.6 Adoptions, special guardianship orders and child arrangements orders

The figures on attainment for previously looked after children who left care through an adoption, special guardianship order (SGO) or child arrangements order (CAO) were published as additional tables to the '*Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities*' publication in 2016. This information was published for the first time in 2015.

The coverage is partial as the cohort information is taken from the school census and alternative provision census, where children are reported as having previously left care due to adoption, a SGO or a CAO only if their parents or carers have declared this information to the school or alternative provision setting. Therefore, the data is reliant on

self-declaration from parents and is partial rather than a full count. Users are advised to exercise caution when interpreting these statistics as there can be issues with low levels of coverage which may introduce bias and changes in coverage and attainment measures mean year on year comparisons should not be made. In the 2015 publication, only information from the school census was published. Since 2016, information from the school census and the alternative provision census have been published.

We cannot match the children looked after data (from SSDA903) for those that have left care due to an adoption, a SGO or a CAO with attainment data as the UPN for the majority of children is changed when a child leaves care under these circumstances and the UPN is the key matching data item.

Comparing figures reported on the school census and alternative provision census with those from the SSDA903, we calculate in 2019, nearly three-quarters of these children are covered at key stage 2 and just less than half at key stage 4.

Calculated percentage coverage of children who left care through an adoption, SGO or CAO, 2018 to 2019

	2018 KS2	**2019 KS2**	**2018 KS4**	**2019 KS4**
Adoption	73	73	48	52
SGO	71	76	38	42
CAO	55	66	32	34
Total	69	73	43	47

Only children with a valid UPN that have been matched to attainment data are included in the coverage calculations above. Some children may have been counted more than once in the SSDA903 data if they have left care under these circumstances more than once.

Information on children that left care due to adoption, a SGO or CAO is reported via the school census and alternative provision census for previous years and may not represent the current situation for a child.

6. Revisions

The '*Children looked after in England including adoption*' and the '*Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities*' publications are produced using a final version of the dataset. We do not plan to make any revisions to the publications. If we later discover that a revision is necessary, this will be made in accordance with the [DfE statistical policy statement on revisions](#).

7. Other related publications

- Children in need and child protection statistics for England:

  Information on [referrals, assessments and children who were the subject of a child protection plan](#) (taken from the Children in Need census) is available for 2019.

- Information on care proceedings in England:

  The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) publish information on [care proceedings applications](#) made by local authorities where CAFCASS has been appointed by the court to represent the interests of children.

- Local authority children in care and adoption statistics:

  Children in care and adoption performance tables (published within the [local authority interactive tool](#)) and [adoption scorecards](#) show how local authorities and looked after children's services compare with others in England.

- Local authority expenditure:

  Information on local authority [planned expenditure](#) on schools, education, children and young people's services is available. This data is returned to DfE by local authorities via the Section 251 Budget Return.

- Ofsted statistics:

  [Ofsted](#) publish inspection outcomes for local authority children's services and children's social care providers in England as well as data on the placements of children looked after and fostering in England.

- Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board (ASGLB):

  Quarterly reports are available [here](#).

8. Devolved administration statistics

Data is collected and published independently by each of the four countries in the UK. Although there are similarities between the data collected by the four nations, there are also differences which may be down to different policies and legislation, and differing historical data collections.

- Scotland:

    Statistics on children's social work (including children looked after) in Scotland are available for 2017-18 on the Scottish Government website.

    Statistics on the outcomes of children looked after in Scotland are available for 2017-18 on the Scottish Government website.

- Wales:

    Statistics on children looked after in Wales, adoptions and outcomes are available for the period up to 31 March 2019 on the Welsh Government website.

- Northern Ireland:

    Statistics on children looked after in Northern Ireland are available for 2018-19 and are published on the Department of Health website.

    Statistics on children adopted from care in Northern Ireland are available for 2018-19 and are published on the Department of Health website.

9. Contacts

Email: CLA.STATS@education.gov.uk

Public enquiries: 037 0000 2288

Press office: 020 7783 8300

Annex A – Glossary

Below are some definitions relevant to this document. For more detailed information see the CLA return guide.

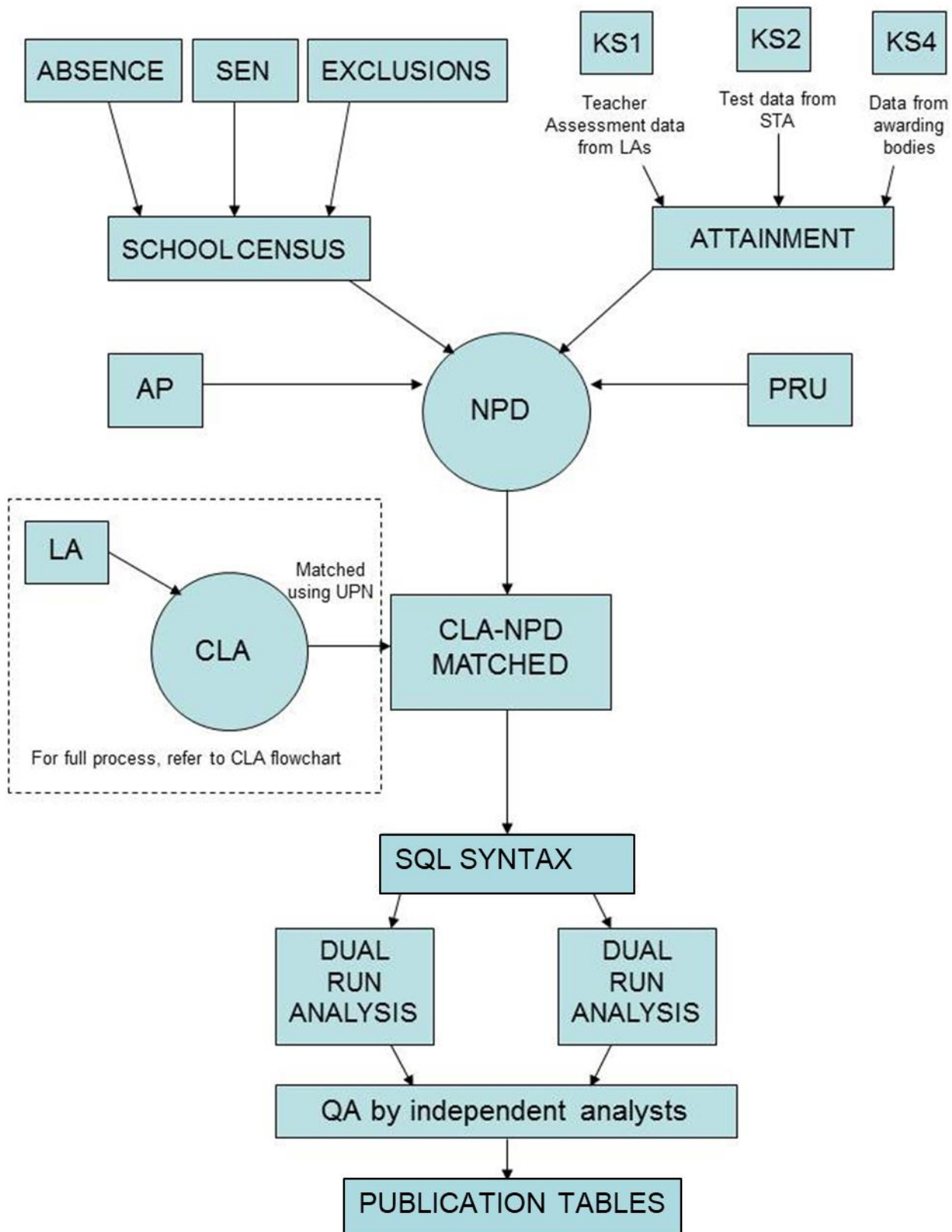| Term	Definition
Child	A 'child' is anyone aged under 18. In the vast majority of cases, children cease to be looked after on their 18th birthday.
Looked after	The term 'looked after' has a specific, legal meaning, based on the Children Act 1989 and the SSDA903 collection follows this as closely as possible. A child is looked after by a local authority if they are provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours; are subject to a care order or are subject to a placement order.
An 'Episode' on the SSDA903	The period of time during which a child is looked after by the local authority is broken down into 'episodes' of care on the SSDA903. Each episode represents a period of being looked after under the same legal status and in the same placement. When either of these changes, a new episode begins.
Respite care	Respite care is the term used to describe children who are subject to short-term break agreements. Special legal codes (V3 and V4) are used to identify this group of children.
Unique pupil number (UPN)	A UPN is a number that identifies each pupil in England uniquely. It is allocated to each pupil on first entry to school, following a national formula and is intended to remain with the child throughout their school career.
Child arrangements order (CAO)	A child arrangements order provides for a child to live with a person, discharges any existing care order. That person will also be awarded or be deemed to have parental responsibility if he/she does not already have it. The child arrangements order also provides for who a child should spend time with as well as who a child should live with.
Special guardianship order (SGO)	A special guardianship order is an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child's 'special guardian'. It is a private law order made under the Children Act 1989 and is intended for those children who cannot live with their birth parents and who would benefit from a legally secure placement.
Adoption order	This is made after a placement order and transfers Parental Responsibility for the child from the birth parents and others who had Parental Responsibility, including the local authority, permanently and solely to the adopter(s). An Adoption Order can be made where the Court agrees that adoption is in the best interests of the child and Parental consent to adoption has been given or dispensed with by the Court.

Annex B – Timeline

Year	Major changes	Other changes
1992	SSDA903 introduced	
1993		
1994		
1995		
1996		
1997		
1998	Collection switched to one third sample. CLA100 aggregate return used to gross sample data to overall population.	
1999		
2000		
2001	AD1 return for adopted children introduced.	All codes revamped from numeric to alphanumeric.
2002	OC3 return for care leavers aged 19 introduced.	
2003		
2004	Collection reverted to all children. CLA100 discontinued. Collection became web-based for first time. OC1 return on educational achievements introduced.	Placement code set expanded to include temporary placements. Respite care codes split.
2005		Participation in reviews collected.
2006		Freeing orders replaced by placement orders. Reason episode ceased codes expanded to include residence orders and special guardianship orders.
2007		Code set for adoption placements expanded to incorporate placement with consent or placement order. Gender and relationship status of adopters collected. Activity of care leavers expanded to include full-time/part-time activity.

Year	Major changes	Other changes
2008		Reason episode ceased expanded to include adoption orders unopposed/consent dispensed, special guardianship orders split into former foster carers/other, sentenced to custody collected.
2009	OC2 return for outcomes for looked after children introduced. Adoption decision return introduced.	LA of placement code set expanded to include other constituent countries. Placement provider collected. SDQ information introduced.
2010		Ethnicity code set revised to align with school census
2011		Care leavers accommodation code expanded to incorporate care leavers with former foster carers.
2012	OC1 discontinued.	
2013		UPNs collected for all children of school age. Activity at 16 discontinued.
2014	OC3 expanded to include care leavers aged 19 to 21. Previous permanence return introduced.	Episode information expanded to include postcode for all placements. In touch information for care leavers redefined and switched from numeric to alphanumeric.
2015	Missing return for children going missing/away without authorisation for any period introduced.	Reason episode ceased expanded for further details. Foster codes extension to include FFA and long-term fostering. Relationship status of adopters expanded to include same sex marriage.
2016	OC3 expanded again to include care leavers aged 17 to 21.	Ofsted URN of placement collected. Reason for placement change collected. Reason for new episode code expanded to incorporate children staying with same carer. Activity of care leavers expanded to include NEET due to parenting or pregnancy.
2017		
2018		
2019		Reason episode ceased expanded to cover more information on special guardianship orders.

Annex C – Matched data process map

CLA-NPD: Overview of end to end process

Annex D – Snapshot tables

Snapshot table	Count of children	Definition	Main publication tables
March table	Children looked after at 31 March	Children whose period of care was open at 31 March (i.e. started on or before 31 March with no end date). Children looked after under an agreed series of short-term placements (i.e. legal status of V3 or V4) are excluded.	A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1, H1, LAA1, LAA4
Episodes table	Children looked after during the year ending 31 March	Children who had an episode of care at any point between 1 April and 31 March. Children looked after solely under an agreed series of short-term placements (i.e. legal status of V3 or V4) are excluded.	B1, B2, B3, B4, D4, E4, LAB1
Starts tables	Children who started to be looked after during the year ending 31 March	Children whose period of care started on or after 1 April. If a child started to be looked after more than once in the year, only their first period of care is counted. Children who started to be looked after under an agreed series of short-term placements (i.e. legal status of V3 or V4) are excluded.	C1, C2, H1, LAC1

Snapshot table	Count of children	Definition	Main publication tables
Ceased table	Children who ceased to be looked after during the year ending 31 March	Children whose period of care ceased on or after 1 April. If a child ceased to be looked after more than once in the year, only their last period of care is counted. Children who ceased to be looked after while under an agreed series of short-term placements (i.e. legal status of V3 or V4) are excluded.	D1, D2, D3, E5, H1, LAD1
AD1 table	Children who were adopted during the year ending 31 March	Children who ceased to be looked after on or after 1 April using reason episode ceased of either 'Adopted – application for adoption order unopposed' or 'Adopted – consent dispensed with by court'.	E1, E2, E3, H1, LAE1
Adoption decision table	Children who were the subject of an adoption decision	Children who were the subject of an adoption decision, including information on reversals of adoption decisions.	E4
OC2 table	Outcome indicators for looked after children	Outcomes indicators for children continuously looked after for 12 months including SDQ scores, health, offending and substance misuse.	I1, I2, I3, I4, I5a, I5b
OC3 table	Care leavers aged 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21	Children whose 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st birthday falls between 1 April and 31 March who were previously looked after for at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday, including some time after their 16th birthday.	F1, F2, F3, F4, LAF2a, LAF2b, LAF4a, LAF4b

Snapshot table	Count of children	Definition	Main publication tables
Missing table	Children who went missing or were away from placement without authorisation during the year ending 31 March	Children who went missing or away from their placement without authorisation (excluding those looked after under an agreed series of short-term placements (i.e. legal status of V3 or V4)).	G1, LAG1

Annex E – Tables

The Department currently publishes the following looked after children statistics annually:

Children looked after in England (including adoption) (December 2019)

National tables

Children looked after at 31 March

A1 Children looked after at 31 March by gender, age at 31 March, category of need, ethnic origin, legal status and motherhood status, 2015 to 2019

A2 Children looked after at 31 March by placement, 2015 to 2019

A3 Children looked after at 31 March, who were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children during the year, by gender, age, category of need and ethnic origin, 2015 to 2019

A4 Children looked after at 31 March, by distance between home and placement and locality of placement, 2019

A5 Children looked after at 31 March, by placement, placement location and placement provider, 2019

Children looked after during the year

B1 Children looked after at any time during the year ending 31 March and those looked after continuously for at least 12 months at 31 March by gender, age, placement and ethnic origin, 2015 to 2019

B2 Number of new placements for children looked after during the year by locality of placement and distance between home and placement, 2019

B3 Duration of placements ceasing during the year ending 31 March 2019

B4 Reason for placement change for children who moved placements in the year ending 31 March 2019

Children starting to be looked after

C1 Children who started to be looked after during the years ending 31 March by gender, age on starting, category of need, ethnic origin, legal status and previous permanence arrangement, 2015 to 2019

C2 Children who started to be looked after during the years ending 31 March, by gender, 2015 to 2019

Children who ceased to be looked after

D1 Children who ceased to be looked after during the years ending 31 March by gender, age on ceasing, reason episode ceased, ethnic origin, category of need and legal status, 2015 to 2019

D2 Children who ceased to be looked after during the years ending 31 March by placement on ceasing, 2015 to 2019

D3 Children who ceased to be looked after during the years ending 31 March, by duration of latest period of care and average duration of latest period of care in days, 2015 to 2019

D4 Children who ceased to be looked after during the year ending 31 March, by number of periods of care in care history, number of placements in period of care and age on ceasing, 2019

Children looked after who were adopted

E1 Children looked after who were adopted during the year ending 31 March by gender, age at adoption, ethnic origin, category of need, final legal status, duration of final period of care and age on starting final period of care, 2015 to 2019

E2 Children looked after who were adopted during the year ending 31 March by average time between the different stages of the adoption process and age at start of period of care, 2015 to 2019

E3 Children looked after who were adopted during the years ending 31 March by number of adopters, legal status of adopters and by gender of adopters, 2015 to 2019

E4 Children for whom the local authority has made the decision that the child should be placed for adoption, those placed and waiting for adoption and children where the decision to be placed for adoption has been reversed, 2015 to 2019

E5 Children looked after who were the subject of a special guardianship order during the years ending 31 March by gender, age on ceasing to be looked after, ethnic origin, category of need, final legal status, duration of final period of care and age on starting final period of care, 2015 to 2109

Care Leavers

F1 Care leavers now aged 19, 20 and 21 years old by gender, contact with the local authority and activity and former UASC status, 2017 to 2019

F2 Care leavers now aged 19, 20 and 21 years old by accommodation, 2017 to 2019

F3 Care leavers aged 17 and 18 years old by gender, contact with the local authority and activity and former UASC status, 2017 to 2019

F4 Care leavers aged 17 and 18 years old by accommodation, 2017 to 2019

Children missing or away without authorisation

G1 Children looked after who were missing or away from placement without authorisation, 2015 to 2019 – Official Statistics

Time Series of key figures

H1 Children looked after at 31 March and children who started, ceased and were adopted during the years ending 31 March 1994 to 2019

Outcomes for looked after children (OC2)

I1 Offending by children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, by age and gender, 2017 to 2019

I2 Substance misuse by children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, by age and gender, 2017 to 2019

I3 Health care of children who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, by age and gender, 2017 to 2019

I4 Development assessments for children aged 4 or under who have been looked after continuously for at least 12 months, by age and gender, 2019

I5a Emotional and behavioural health of looked after children – average score for children looked after at 31 March for whom a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was received, 2019

I5b Emotional and behavioural health of looked after children for whom a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) was received, by gender, 2017 to 2019

Local authority and regional tables

LAA1   Children looked after at 31 March 2015 to 2019

LAA4   Children looked after at 31 March, who were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) during the year, 2015 to 2019

LAB1   Children looked after at any time during the year ending 31 March and those looked after exclusively under a series of short-term placements, 2015 to 2019

LAC1   Children who started to be looked after during the years ending 31 March 2015 to 2019

LAD1   Children who ceased to be looked after during the years ending 31 March 2015 to 2019

LAE1   Children who ceased to be looked after and the number and percentage adopted during the year ending 31 March 2015 to 2019

LAF2a Care leavers now aged 19, 20 and 21 by activity, 2019

LAF2b Care leavers aged 17 and 18 by activity, 2019

LAF4a Care leavers now aged 19, 20 and 21 by suitability of accommodation, 2019

LAF4b Care leavers aged 17 and 18 by suitability of accommodation, 2019

LAG1   Children looked after who were missing or away from placement without authorisation, 2019 – Official Statistics

Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities (March 2020)

National Tables

1   Children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months and children in need, by special educational needs (SEN), eligibility for free school meals (FSM), attainment, progress and absence, 2019

2a   Children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, school age children in need at 31 March and all children with special educational needs (SEN), 2019

2b   Children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, by primary type of special educational need (SEN), 2019

3   Key stage 1 eligibility and performance of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, non-looked after children and school age children in need at 31 March, by gender, 2018 to 2019

4a   Key stage 2 eligibility and performance of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, non-looked after children and school age children in need at 31 March, by special educational needs (SEN) and gender, 2016 to 2019

4b   Key stage 2 average progress scores of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, non-looked after children and school age children in need at 31 March, by special educational needs (SEN) and gender, 2019

5a   Key stage 4 eligibility and performance of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, non-looked after children and school age children in need at 31 March, by special educational needs (SEN) and gender, 2017 to 2019

5b   Key stage 4 average Attainment 8 scores of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, non-looked after children and school age children in need at 31 March, by special educational needs (SEN) and gender, 2017 to 2019

5c   Key stage 4 average Progress 8 scores of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, non-looked after children and school age children in need at 31 March, by special educational needs (SEN) and gender, 2019

5d   Key stage 4 average Progress 8 scores of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, non-looked after children and school age children in need at 31 March, by school type and gender, 2019

5e Key stage 4 average Progress 8 scores of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, by length of most recent period of care, 2019

6   Destinations after completing key stage 4, of children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, and school age children in need at 31 March, by school type, 2018

7   Absence by type of school for children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, school age children in need at 31 March and all children, 2014 to 2019

8   Exclusions by type of school for children who have been looked after continuously for at least twelve months, school age children in need at 31 March and all children, 2013 to 2018

Official Statistics (May 2020)

A1   Key stage 2 eligibility and performance of former looked after children who have been adopted, or were the subject of a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order, by special educational need (SEN) and gender, 2016 to 2019

A2   Key stage 2 average progress scores of former looked after children who have been adopted, or were the subject of a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order, by special educational need (SEN) and gender, 2019

B1   Key stage 4 eligibility and performance of former looked after children who have been adopted, or were the subject of a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order, by special educational need (SEN) and gender, 2017 to 2019

B2   Key stage 4 average Attainment 8 scores of former looked after children who have been adopted, or were the subject of a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order, by special educational need (SEN) and gender, 2017 to 2019

B3 Key stage 4 average Progress 8 scores of former looked after children who have been adopted, or were the subject of a special guardianship order or a child arrangements order, by special educational need (SEN) and gender, 2019

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