

## Official Statistics Release

Policy area:	Fostering Datasets
Theme:	Education, children's services and skills
Published on:	27 October 2011
Coverage:	England
Period covered:	1 April 2010 - 31 March 2011
Status:	<b>EXPERIMENTAL (PROVISIONAL)</b>
Issued by:	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) 125 Kingsway London WC2B 6SE
Responsible director:	John Goldup
Statistician:	Adam King
Public enquiries:	enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Press enquiries:	pressenquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
Link to official statistics release web page:	<a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/fostering-agencies-and-fostering-services-dataset-201011">www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/fostering-agencies-and-fostering-services-dataset-201011</a>
Publication medium:	Ofsted website
Publication frequency:	Annually
Next publication date:	October 2012

## Introduction

This official statistics release reports on the numbers and profile of foster carers and children, in both local authority and independent services covering the period between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011. It also gives data relating to types of foster care, registrations and de-registrations, and a range of other subjects.

These statistics are based on data supplied by local authority fostering agencies and independent fostering agencies. Ofsted will publish these data annually and the next release will be in October 2012.

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## Key findings

- Of the 149<sup>1</sup> local authorities (LAs) in England, 135 responded to the survey - a 91%<sup>2</sup> return rate. The response for independent fostering agencies (IFAs) was lower with 229 out of 287 responding – an 80% return rate. The overall response rate was 84%.<sup>3</sup> (Intro and summary table). This was a higher response rate than the 2009/10 survey, where the overall response rate was 73%, with 76% of LAs and 71% of IFAs responding.
- Overall, there were 6,470 new fostering households approved during the year.<sup>4</sup> 61% of these were approved by LAs and 39% by independent agencies. (England report, A1.4). These are very similar percentages to the previous survey when LAs created 59% of new fostering households and IFAs created 41%.
- Of the fostering households created, 54% were for one child or young person. (England, A1.1). In the 2009/10 survey this figure was 56%.
- Nationally there was a total of 35,955 fostering households reported at the end of the year. Of these, 69% were LA households and 31% were independent. (England, A2.1).
- These fostering households consisted of 52,768 foster carers. White carers made up 85% of these, 2% were Mixed, 4% were Asian/Asian British, 8% were Black/Black British and 1% were other ethnic groups. (England, A4.1-19). These were very similar to the proportions reported in the 2009/10 survey.
- Nationally, agencies report that they are looking after 45,701 children and young people. (England, G1-20).
- Of these children and young people, 78% are white, 9% are Mixed, 5% are Asian/Asian British, 7% are Black/Black British and 2% are from other ethnic groups. (England, G1-20). These were the same proportions reported in the 2009/10 survey.
- There were 1,512 placements provided to unaccompanied children and young people seeking asylum. (England, G2.2).
- Of the total of 62,545 approved placements, 45,680 were filled (73%). 10,109 (16%) were vacant and 6,756 (11%) were non-available. (England, B.1). 78% of LA and 63% of IFA placements were filled. 11% of LA and 27% of IFA placements were vacant. (LA, B.1; IFA, B1). In the 2009/10 survey the overall vacancy rate was 14%, 10% of LA placements were vacant and 20% of IFAs placements were vacant.
- A total of 2,267 disabled children were placed with all agencies in full time foster care, excluding family link, shared care or respite care. (England, C.10).
- There were 2,419 unplanned endings of placements of over three months duration. 29% of these were for children aged under 11 years. 71% were for children and young people aged 11 years and over. (England, C11). In the 2009/10 survey 32% of unplanned endings were for children aged under 11 years and 66% were for children aged 11 years and over.
- There were 14,323 applications received from new prospective fostering households. 3,453 applications were carried over from the previous year, giving an overall total of 17,776 applications. (England, D1.1).

<sup>1</sup> Three local authorities share one fostering agency: Isles of Scilly and Cornwall; City of London and Hackney; Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.

<sup>2</sup> Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

<sup>3</sup> Data throughout refers to only those agencies that responded to the survey and is not necessarily representative of the national picture.

<sup>4</sup> This survey covers 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.

- The independent review mechanism (IRM) received applications for a review from 15 prospective foster carers and 76 registered carers. 39 referrals to IRM resulted in a fresh recommendation to an agency. (England, E1.1-1.3).
- To date a total of 17,778 foster carers have successfully completed the Children's Development Workforce Council's certificate in "Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care". (England, D3).
- Of the 360 agencies that responded to this question, four reported that foster carers were not paid allowances in line with the government's national minimum (there were four no responses). (England, F1).
- For 44 agencies, the required checks had not been completed for every member of staff in the fostering service, every foster carer and all adults in foster carers' households. (England, H1.1).
- Agencies reported that there were 1,554 allegations of misconduct made against foster carers. 45 allegations were made against staff or volunteers of the fostering agency or service. (England, H2.1-2.2).
- Agencies reported that 732 allegations into the misconduct of carers resulted in a review of the approval of a foster carer/s. (England, H2.5). A total of 1,451 children in foster care were the subject of child protection/safeguarding enquiries following an allegation. (England, H3.1)
- Following a child protection enquiry, 29 children and young people became the subject of a child protection plan. (England, H3.2).
- There were 826 incidents of physical restraint reported by 396 foster carers. (England, J4.1-4.2).
- There were 2,590 children and young people who went missing on a total of 7,699 occasions, during the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011. The most recurrent reason for going missing more than three times was to have contact with family and friends. (England, K1-4.2). The very large majority of missing episodes lasted up to 6 days. 36 children and young people were reported as still missing at the end of the period.
- A total of 1,217 complaints were received by agencies. 449 (37%) of these were upheld. (England, L1-5).
- A total of 197 children and young people in foster care were reported as having been permanently excluded from school during the year. A total of 3,748 had fixed-term exclusions. (England, M1-2).
- Of children of compulsory school age, 380 did not attend school. (England, M3).
- Of those fostered as at 31 March 2011, 1,680 children and young people, or 4%, changed schools as a result of a foster placement change. (England, M4). The proportion of such children in IFAs was slightly higher (5%) than in LAs (3%). (LA, IFA, M4).
- Agencies reported that 39,497 children and young people had an up-to-date care plan (86% of those in foster care as at 31 March). (England, N1.1). The figures for up-to-date care plans are 87% for LAs and 84% for IFAs.
- Agencies reported that 42,035 children and young people in their care had an allocated social worker (92%). (England, N1.2). The figures for allocated social workers are 91% for LAs and 95% for IFAs.
- Local authorities supported 1,647 young people to remain in their foster placement after their eighteenth birthday. (England, N2).

## Methodology

1. The data in this publication are taken from returns made to Ofsted by local authority and independent fostering agencies. Data relate to the period between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011.
2. The data are being published as experimental statistics as they are still subject to testing in terms of their volatility. Ofsted will be publishing a further release in December 2011.
3. For more information on how Ofsted regulates and inspects children's social care, please go to the Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Care-and-local-services/Children-s-social-care](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Care-and-local-services/Children-s-social-care).

## Additional information

All the tables shown in this release, along with data at England, total local authority fostering agencies and total independent fostering agencies, are available in Excel format on the Ofsted website in the same location as this document.

Please see data tables listed below:

**Table 1: Percentage of returns of the fostering datasets 2010-11**

Fostering data set (2010-11) - experimental statistics			
Fostering agencies and fostering services survey 2010-11: Survey returns analysis			
	Local authority fostering services	Independent fostering agencies	Total
Returns in analysis	135	229	364
Number of registered providers (as at 30 September 2011)	149	287	436
Percentage of returns	90.6%	79.8%	83.5%

**Table 2: Percentage of returns of the fostering datasets 2009-10**

Fostering data set (2009-10) - experimental statistics			
Fostering agencies and fostering services survey 2009-10: Survey returns analysis			
	Local authority fostering services	Independent fostering agencies	Total
Number of data sets	114	207	321
Number of registered providers (as at 27 September 2010)	151	290	441
Percentage of returns	75.5%	71.4%	72.8%

## Glossary

### **Fostering services**

Local authority fostering services are defined by section 4 of the Care Standards Act 2000. Local authority fostering services and independent fostering agencies recruit, prepare, assess, train and support foster carers. Independent fostering agencies (IFAs) are private companies or charities, who are registered with Ofsted and provide placements to children and young people with foster carers approved by them. IFAs work closely with Local Authorities to deliver these placements.

**See also the annex in the Excel workbook in the same zip file as this document**

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