

## Statistics of Education:

### Children Looked After in England: 2002–2003



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## CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER IN ENGLAND: 2002–2003

### Introduction

1 This Bulletin presents figures for children looked after by English Councils with Social Services responsibilities at 31 March 2003. These were collected on the statistical return CLA100, which enables the Department of Education and Skills to provide summary statistics in advance of the more detailed data, collected on the SSDA903 return. All 150 local councils in England provided data in time for inclusion in this bulletin (see Technical Notes at rear of bulletin).

2 Local councils are required to provide two CLA100 returns – one in respect of local children only, the other covering any Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in their care on 31 March 2003. This has enabled the Department to provide separate figures for UASC, and these are given in Table 6. All other tables include any UASC being looked after on 31 March 2003.

3 This Bulletin excludes any children being looked after under agreed series of short term placements under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989. Although children in such placements are looked after, figures for them cannot easily be collected on the same basis as for other looked after children.

### Main Findings

- 60,800 children were looked after at 31 March 2003, 2% more than a year earlier.
- The number of children looked after at 31 March increased by an average 2% per year between 2001 and 2003. This compares with 3% per year between 1999 to 2001.
- The use of care orders continues to increase. 39,600 children were under care orders at 31 March 2003, 3% more than a year earlier.
- 3,400 children were placed for adoption at 31 March 2003, 5% less than in the previous year. This is in sharp contrast for the period 1999 to 2002 where there was an average increase of 8% per year.
- 41,100 children (68% of all children) were looked after in foster placements at 31 March 2003, 14% more than in 1999.
- The largest category of need for looked after children was “abuse or neglect” with an estimated 37,900 children at 31 March 2003 (62% of total). The second largest category was “family dysfunction” (11% or 6,400 children).
- There was very little change in the ethnic origin of looked after children between March 2002 and

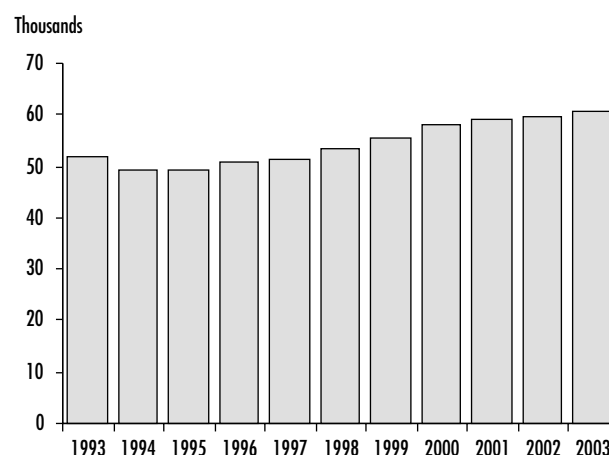
March 2003: 49,200 of looked after children were white (81%), 4,700 were mixed (8%), 4,200 were black (7%) and 1,400 were Asian (2%).

## STATISTICAL COMMENTARY

### Total figures (Table 1)

4 The estimated total number of children looked after at 31 March 2003 in England was 60,800, 2% more than a year earlier, and representing 55 per 10,000 children under 18. Whilst the number of children looked after at 31 March has been rising since 1994, the rate of increase between 2001 and 2003 has slowed markedly. Chart A below illustrates this trend.

**CHART A:**  
Number of children looked after at 31 March, 1993–2003



5 Table 1 shows that more boys were looked after than girls. At 31 March 2003, 55% of children looked after were boys as compared to 51% of the population aged under 18.

6 There was a marked increase in the number of children in the under 1 age group (up by 11%) and a more marginal increase in the number of 10–15 year olds (up by 3%). There was very little change in the numbers and proportions of the other age groups.

### Legal status (Table 2)

7 At 31 March 2003, an estimated 39,600 children were looked after under care orders, 65% of all looked after children and 1,200 more than a year earlier. The number of children under care orders has risen by 15% since 1999. This increase was especially marked for children under interim care orders, where the increase since 1999 has been 46%.

8 In contrast, the proportion of children looked after under voluntary agreements (Section 20 of the Children Act 1989) has fallen since 1999. At 31 March 1999, 34%

of children (18,800) were looked after under voluntary agreements (involving continuous care) compared to 31% of children (18,900) at 31 March 2003.

### Placement (Table 3)

**9** The number of children looked after in foster placements continues to increase, At 31 March 2003, an estimated 41,100 or 68% of looked after children were in foster placements, 1,800 more than a year earlier, and just over 4,900 more than in 1999 (see Figure 3).

**10** The number and proportion of children in children's homes (including secure units) continues on a downward trend which has been observable for many years. The proportion of children in children's homes including secure units at March 1999 was 12% compared with 10% in March 2003.

**11** At 31 March 2003, 6,400 of all children looked after were placed with parents, compared to 6,300 in 1999 up by 1% although, compared to the previous year 2002, it has fallen by 5%.

**12** The numbers of children placed for adoption has risen by 19% since 1999, although, compared to the previous year 2002 it has fallen by 5%. Data provided for the AD1 statistical return shows that the number of looked after children adopted during 2002/03 rose to 3,500 compared with 3,400 during the previous year.<sup>1</sup>

### Category of need (Table 4)

**13** The category of need of looked after children was introduced in to the CLA 100 return for the first time for the year ending 31 March 2001. This records the principal need of the child which gives rise to social service intervention. As at 31 March 2003, an estimated 37,900 children (or 62%) were recorded with a need category of 'abuse or neglect'. This was by far the largest group; the second largest category of need was 'Family dysfunction' (11%) with 6,400 children.

**14** These figures are broadly in line with the latest Children in Need survey that was carried out for a typical week in February 2003. This survey showed that 55% of children looked after by local councils had a need code of 'abuse or neglect', and 11% had a main need of 'family dysfunction'.

### Ethnic origin (Table 5)

**15** Ethnic origin is another data item that was introduced in to the CLA 100 return for the first time for the year ending 31 March 2001. Table 5 shows there has been very little change in the ethnic origin of

looked after children since the introduction of this data item. The small fall in the "Other Ethnic group" category may well reflect improved coding. The figures on Table 5 are closely comparable to those which were collected in the Children in Need report census in February 2003

### Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) (Table 6)

**16** Table 6 shows there were 2,400 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children being looked after by local councils in England on 31 March 2003. The overwhelming majority (1,700 or 71 %) of these children were located in London, with a further 430 children (or 17 %) being located elsewhere in the South East. 1,900 (or 76%) of all UASC were boys, and only 580 (or 24%) were girls. 1,200 (or 49%) were aged 16 or over.

### Comparison between Local Councils

**17** The Charts below illustrate the considerable variation that exists between councils, both in terms of the proportions of children looked after under different legal statuses, and the proportions in different categories of placement. At 31 March 2003, the number of children looked after with a care order at local council level varied between 27% and 84% (see Chart B). Examination of the data shows care orders are less frequently used in the South East as shown in the table below.

Percentage of looked after children by legal status and region at 31 March 2003

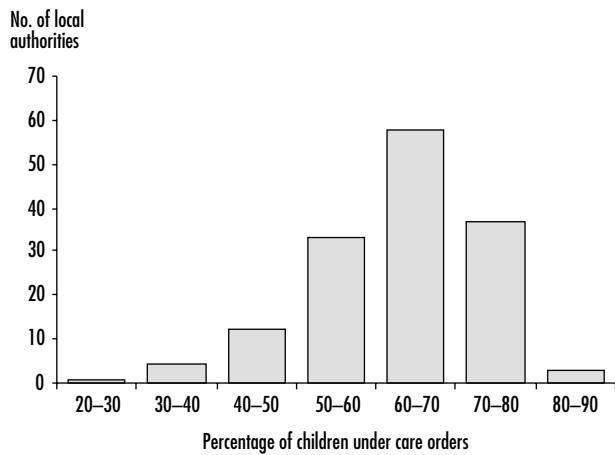
	Care Orders		Section 20	Other
	Interim	Full		
North	33	39	25	48
Midlands & S.W.	42	36	42	34
South East (inc. London)	25	25	33	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**18** Chart C shows that at 31 March 2003 nearly two-thirds of all the local authorities had between 60% and 70% of their looked after children in foster placements. However, 13 authorities had less than 60% of their looked after children in foster placements whilst 4 authorities used foster placements for more than 80% of their children.

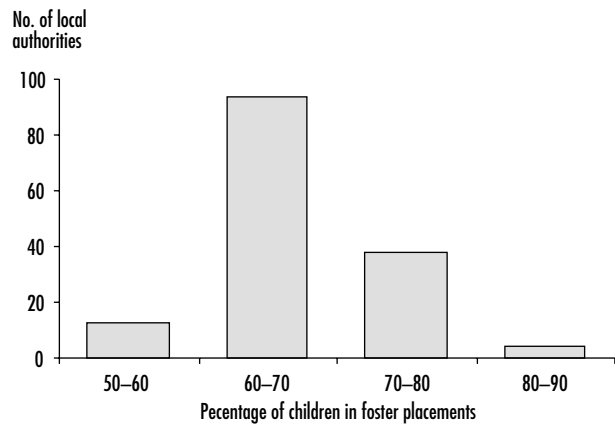
**19** Data at local council level are not being presented in this publication, but will be published in 2004.

<sup>1</sup> Children Adopted from Care in England: 2002-2003 publication.

**CHART B:**  
**Percentage of looked after children under care orders at 31 March 2003**



**CHART C:**  
**Percentage of looked after children in foster placements at 31 March 2003**



**Other UK Data**

**20** Enquiries about children looked after in other UK countries should be made to

Wales: Katherine Ormerod  
 02920 909 500

Scotland: Ester Roughsedge  
 0131 244 3745

Northern Ireland: Jenny Orr  
 02890 522580

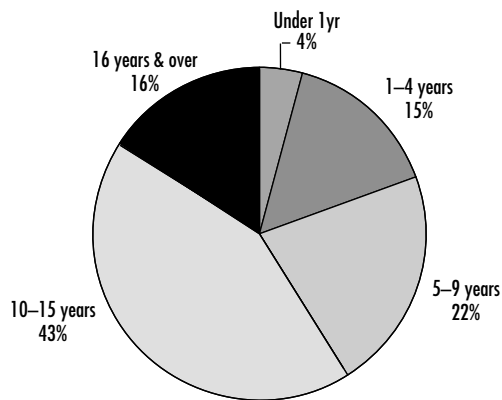
**TABLE 1**  
Children looked after at 31 March by age and sex, 1999–2003

England	numbers, percentages and rates per 10,000 children under 18									
	numbers <sup>2</sup>					percentages <sup>2</sup>				
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>All children looked after<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>55,500</b>	<b>58,100</b>	<b>58,900</b>	<b>59,700</b>	<b>60,800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Rates per 10,000 children under 18</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>55</b>					
Boys	30,200	31,900	32,600	33,200	33,700	54	55	55	56	55
Girls	25,300	26,200	26,300	26,500	27,200	46	45	45	44	45
Under 1	2,200	2,200	2,300	2,300	2,600	4	4	4	4	4
1–4	9,200	9,600	9,300	9,200	9,200	17	17	16	15	15
5–9	12,700	13,300	13,400	13,300	13,300	23	23	23	22	22
10–15	22,500	23,900	24,600	25,300	26,100	41	41	42	42	43
16 and over	8,900	9,100	9,300	9,500	9,600	16	16	16	16	16

1 Figures for children looked after in this table include any Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children looked after at 31 March 2002 and 2003. Table excludes any children being looked after under an agreed series of short term placements

2 Numbers and percentages may not add up to totals due to rounding

**FIGURE 1:**  
Children looked after at 31 March 2003, by age



- 60,800 children were looked after in England at 31 March 2003, 2% more than a year earlier and representing 55 per 10,000 children aged under 18
- 55% were boys
- The largest percentage increase between March 2002 and March 2003 was in the under 1 age group, an increase of 11%

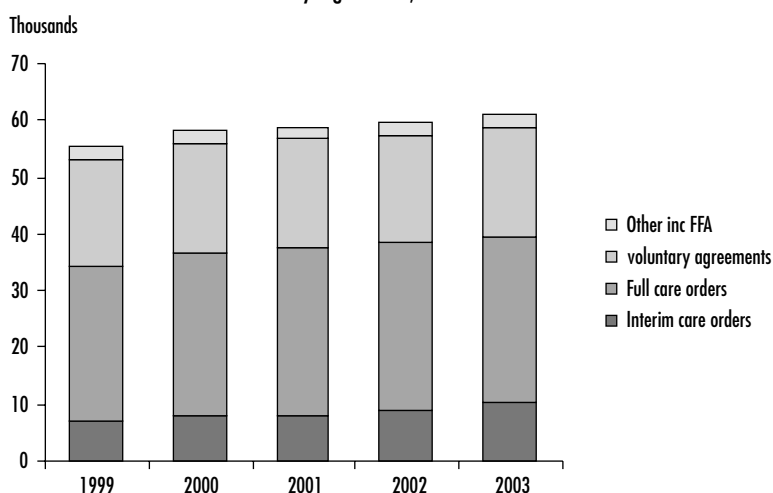
**TABLE 2**  
Children looked after at 31 March by legal status, 1999–2003

England		numbers and percentages									
		numbers <sup>4</sup>					percentages <sup>4</sup>				
		1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>All children looked after<sup>1</sup></b>		<b>55,500</b>	<b>58,100</b>	<b>58,900</b>	<b>59,700</b>	<b>60,800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Care orders		34,400	36,400	37,600	38,400	39,600	62	63	64	64	65
Of which:	interim	7,000	7,900	7,900	8,800	10,200	13	14	13	15	17
	full	27,400	28,500	29,800	29,600	29,400	49	49	51	50	48
S20 CA 1989 (voluntary agreements) <sup>2</sup>		18,800	19,300	19,100	19,000	18,900	34	33	32	32	31
Freed for adoption		1,300	1,400	1,600	1,800	1,900	2	2	3	3	3
Other <sup>3</sup>		950	930	570	540	470	2	2	1	1	1

- 1 Figures for children looked after in this table include any Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children looked after at 31 March 2002 and 2003. Table excludes any children being looked after under an agreed series of short term placements
- 2 Single occasion, not part of a series of short term placements
- 3 Includes children who are on remand, committed for trial or detained, and children who are subject to emergency orders or police protection. Figures from 1999 and 2000, include approximately 100 children who are subject to a compulsory order under Section 53 of 1933 CYPA, who are technically not looked after (see Technical Notes).
- 4 Numbers and percentages may not add up to totals due to rounding

- 39,600 children were looked after under a care order at 31 March 2003, an increase of 1,200 on a year earlier
- The proportion of children looked after under voluntary agreements was 31%, compared with 34% in 1999
- The number freed for adoption had increased by 41% compared with 1999
- The number of interim care orders was up by 46% compared with 1999

**FIGURE 2:**  
Children looked after at 31 March by legal status, 1999 to 2003



**TABLE 3**  
Children looked after at 31 March by placement, 1999–2003

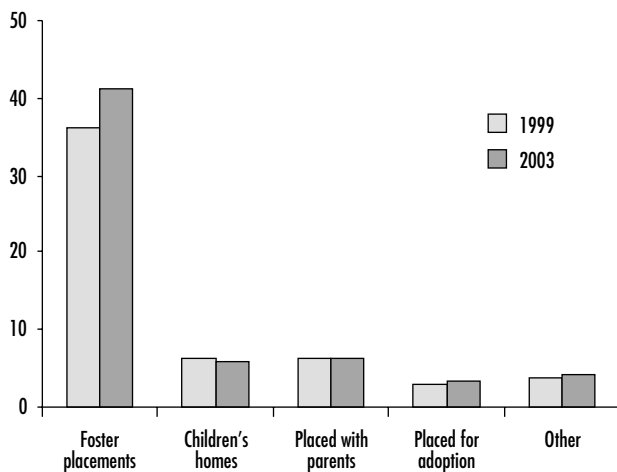
	England									
	numbers <sup>2</sup>					percentages <sup>2</sup>				
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
<b>All children looked after<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>55,500</b>	<b>58,100</b>	<b>58,900</b>	<b>59,700</b>	<b>60,800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Foster placements	36,200	37,900	38,300	39,200	41,100	65	65	65	66	68
within LA boundary	n/a	n/a	29,300	28,800	29,700			50	48	49
outside LA boundary	n/a	n/a	9,100	10,400	11,400			15	17	19
Children's homes <sup>3</sup>	6,400	5,700	6,100	6,000	5,900	12	12	10	10	10
within LA boundary			3,700	3,600	3,400			6	6	6
outside LA boundary			2,300	2,400	2,500			4	4	4
Secure Units			190	220	210			-	-	-
Hostels and other supportive placements	180	330	520	540	560	-	1	1	1	1
Placed for adoption	2,900	3,100	3,400	3,600	3,400	5	5	6	6	6
Placed with parents	6,300	6,500	6,900	6,700	6,400	11	11	12	11	10
In lodgings, residential employment or living independently	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,100	1,200	2	2	2	2	2
Residential schools	2,400	2,300	1,100	1,100	1,100			2	2	2
Other residential settings			670	650	620	4	4	1	1	1
All other placements			510	480	370			1	1	1

1 Figures for children looked after in this table include any Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children looked after at 31 March 2002 and 2003. Table excludes any children being looked after under an agreed series of short term placements

2 Numbers and percentages may not add up to totals due to rounding

3 Prior to 2001, secure units were recorded under children homes

**FIGURE 3:**  
Children looked after at 31 March 1999 and 2003, by placement  
Thousands



- 5,900 children were looked after in children's homes at 31 March 2003 (including secure units), 8% less than in 1999
- 3,400 children were placed for adoption, compared with 3,600 a year earlier
- 41,100 children were looked after in foster placements at 31 March 2003, up 4,900 since 1999

**TABLE 4**  
Children looked after at 31 March by category of need

England

numbers and percentages

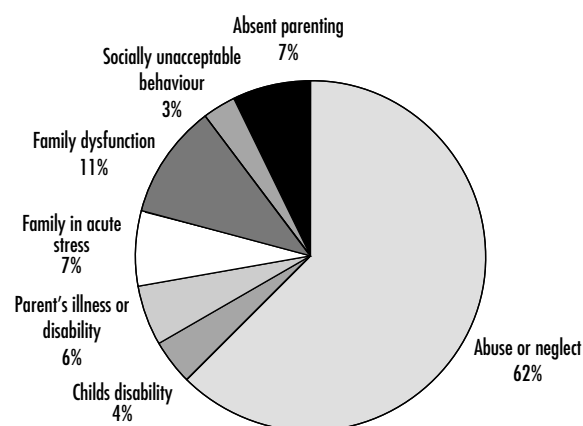
Category of need	numbers <sup>2</sup>			percentages <sup>2</sup>		
	2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
<b>All Children<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>58,900</b>	<b>59,700</b>	<b>60,800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Abuse or neglect	36,200	37,100	37,900	61	62	62
Childs disability	2,100	2,300	2,500	4	4	4
Parent's illness or disability	3,800	3,700	3,500	6	6	6
Family in acute stress	4,100	4,100	4,100	7	7	7
Family dysfunction	6,100	6,200	6,400	10	10	11
Socially unacceptable behaviour	2,400	2,000	1,800	4	3	3
Low income	120	90	130	-	-	-
Absent parenting	4,100	4,300	4,500	7	7	7

1 Figures for children looked after in this table include any Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children looked after at 31 March 2002 and 2003. Table excludes any children being looked after under an agreed series of short term placements

2 Numbers and percentages may not add up to totals due to rounding

- 62% of looked after children were recorded with a need category of 'abuse or neglect' at 31 March 2003
- There has been very little change in the ratios between the years 2001 and 2003

**FIGURE 4:**  
Children looked after at 31 March 2003, by category of need



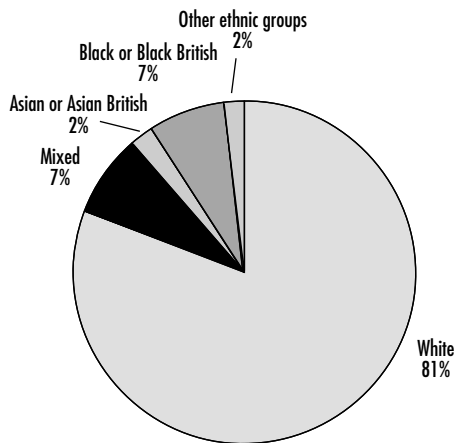
**TABLE 5**  
Children looked after at 31 March by ethnic origin

Ethnic Origin	England					
	numbers <sup>2</sup>			percentages <sup>2</sup>		
	2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
<b>All Children<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>58,900</b>	<b>59,700</b>	<b>60,800</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
White	48,200	48,700	49,200	82	82	81
Mixed	3,900	4,400	4,700	7	7	8
Asian or Asian British	1,100	1,400	1,400	2	2	2
Black or Black British	3,900	3,900	4,200	7	7	7
Other ethnic groups	1,800	1,400	1,300	3	2	2

1 Figures for children looked after in this table include any Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children looked after at 31 March 2002 and 2003. Table excludes any children being looked after under an agreed series of short term placements

2 Numbers and percentages may not add up to totals due to rounding

**FIGURE 5:**  
Children looked after at 31 March 2003, by ethnic origin



- There has been very little change in the ethnic origin of looked after children between March 2001 and March 2003. The small fall in the Other Ethnic groups category may simply reflect improved coding

**TABLE 6**  
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children who are looked after at 31 March by region

England <sup>1</sup>	numbers <sup>1</sup>					
	2002			2003		
	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls
<b>All children<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>2,200</b>	<b>1,700</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>2,400</b>	<b>1,900</b>	<b>580</b>
<b>North<sup>3</sup></b>	50	50	-	100	70	30
<b>Midlands<sup>4</sup></b>	160	140	20	190	180	10
<b>London</b>	1,600	1,200	390	1,700	1,200	470
<b>South East (exc. London)</b>	410	330	80	430	370	60

1 These children are included in tables 1 to 5; numbers may not add up to totals due to rounding

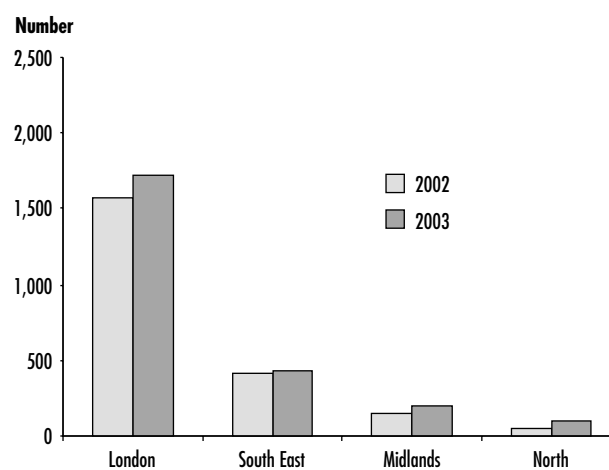
2 Figures for children looked after in this table *include* any Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children looked after at 31 March, but *exclude* any being looked after under an agreed series of short term placements

3 Includes regions North East, North West, Merseyside and Yorks & Humberside

4 Includes East Midland, West Midlands, South West and Eastern

- Nearly three quarters of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children who were looked after were placed in London at 31 March 2003.
- Since 2002, there have been increases in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children in all 4 regions

**FIGURE 6:**  
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children who are looked after at 31 March 2002 and 2003 by region



## Technical Notes

### The CLA100 return

The CLA100 return collects aggregate figures for children looked after by local authorities. It was first introduced for the year ending 31 March 1998, following a review in 1997 of the statistics on personal social services collected by the Department of Health. The aim of this return is to enable a fast turnaround of data, providing more up-to-date summary figures for our customers than is possible from the detailed SSDA903 return.

The CLA100 has been designed to complement the SSDA903 return. Simultaneous to its introduction, the SSDA903 return moved to a one third sample collection; thus the introduction of the CLA100 enables the Department to maintain a record of the total numbers of children looked after by local authorities. The CLA 100 is also used to collect some Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) data, in particular, indicators A1, B7, C22, C23 & D35.

For the years 1998 to 2001, the CLA 100 return collected data on the number of children who ceased to be looked after during the year. This was dropped from the return with effect from 2002. Estimates on the number of children ceasing and starting to be looked after will now be based on SSDA 903 data, and published in March of the following year.

### Definitions used

The terms and definitions used in this Bulletin are consistent with those used for the more detailed SSDA903 return. Further details can be found in the Department of Health publication "Children looked after by local authorities", A/F 01/12 which can be obtained from the address on the back page.

### Data Validation

Figures from the CLA 100 are validated where possible against figures collected on SSDA 903 (looked after

children) statistical return which reports care histories at the individual child level. Where there are inconsistencies between the same data items as reported on these different returns, these are referred back to councils for investigation. At the time of going to press a number of such inconsistencies were still in process of being resolved.

### Data for 2002/2003 are provisional

Given the number of outstanding inconsistencies, and the possibility of later adjustments and/or re-submissions from local councils, the figures presented in this bulletin should be treated as provisional and are subject to revision at a later date.

### Section 53 children

For the years 1998 to 2000 local authorities were asked to include in their figures children under Section 90–92 of the Powers of the Criminal Courts Act 2000, (formally Section 53 of the Criminal & Young Persons Act 1933) even though these are generally not looked after. For these years, this will inflate the England estimates for children looked after at 31 March by about 100 children compared with the figures for later years.

### Figures on the Internet

The Department for Education and Skills web site contains a copy of this Bulletin. It can be found at:

[www.dfes.gov.uk/DB/SBU/b000424/index.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/DB/SBU/b000424/index.shtml)

### Symbols used in tables

- .. not available
- 5 or less

Figures in the tables may not sum to the totals shown due to rounding.

## **Children's Social Services**

Recent related statistical publications available from the Department of Health and the Department for Education and Skills:

**Children Looked After by Local Authorities, year ending 31 March 2002; England**  
[www.doh.gov.uk/public/cla2001.htm](http://www.doh.gov.uk/public/cla2001.htm)

**Educational Qualifications of Care Leavers year ending 31 March 2002; England**  
[www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000423/index.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000423/index.shtml)

**Children adopted from care, 2003; England**  
[www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000425/index.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000425/index.shtml)

**Children and Young People on Child Protection Registers, year ending 31 March 2002; England**  
[www.doh.gov.uk/public/cpr2002.htm](http://www.doh.gov.uk/public/cpr2002.htm)

**Children Accommodated in Secure Units, year ending 31 March 2003; England and Wales**  
[www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000409/index.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000409/index.shtml)

**Outcome Indicators for Looked after Children, twelve months to 30 September 2001; England**  
[www.doh.gov.uk/public/oi2001.htm](http://www.doh.gov.uk/public/oi2001.htm)

**Children in Need in England, February 2003**  
[www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/contents.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/contents.shtml)

**Children's Homes at 31 March 2000; England**  
[www.doh.gov.uk/public/sb0109.htm](http://www.doh.gov.uk/public/sb0109.htm)

**Key Indicators Graphical System 2003**  
– available on CD-ROM only

**Social Services Performance Assessment Framework Indicators 2002–2003**  
[www.doh.gov.uk/paf](http://www.doh.gov.uk/paf)

**The Children Act Report 2001**  
available from The Stationery Office, or from  
[www.doh.gov.uk/scg/childrenactreport2001.htm](http://www.doh.gov.uk/scg/childrenactreport2001.htm)