

Children's Social Works Statistics (incorporating the Children Looked after Statistics)

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On 31 March the Scottish Government published official statistics about children and young people who were 'looked after' by (or in receipt of aftercare services from) Scottish local authorities, over the year from 01 August 2013 to 31 July 2014.¹ These figures confirmed some interesting trends, and pose some interesting questions about how children's social work practice is changing in Scotland. Headline statistics include:

- A reduction in the total number of Looked After Children (for a second year), reversing a trend of increasing total numbers which begun around 2002. The total number at 31 July 2014 was 15,580. However, if 'children looked after at home' are excluded from the figures, the number of children 'accommodated' away from their families by Scottish local authorities actually increased, rising by 1% on the previous year (continuing a trend which begun over five years ago). This is comparable to the situation in England, which also saw a 1% increase in the total number of looked after children last year.²
- For the second year in a row, fewer children became 'looked after'; a total of 4,292 over the twelve months of 2013-14. Over 41% of these children were under 5 years old. The proportion of 'new cases / episodes' which relate to pre-school children has increased steadily over recent years, from 37% in 2010 to 41% in 2014.
- Of the total population of looked after children and young people, 58% were aged 11 or under, and 42% were 12 - 21 years old. The biggest single age group was secondary school aged children (12 - 17), at 6,276. There were also 5,818 primary school aged (5-11) children looked after.
- The number of children looked after 'at home' (with parents or relatives) decreased for the second year in a row, from 4,762 to 4,144. The 'Looked after At

¹ Scottish Government (2015) [Children's Social Work Statistics 2013-14](#)

² Department for Education (2014) [Children looked after in England \(including adoption and care leavers\) year ending 31 March 2014](#)

Home' population now represents approximately 27% of the total looked after population. However, the number of children on the Child Protection Register increased significantly, by 9%, to 2,882. Roughly, a third of the children on the Child Protection Register are also 'Looked After'.

- Number of children in foster care increased from the previous year, from 5,333 to 5,533. The fostered population now represents 36% of the total looked after population and 48% of the total 'accommodated' population. For comparison, in England (which has a largely 'accommodated' population) foster care represents 75% of all 'looked after' placements. If the trend continues in Scotland, and the total population remains roughly static, the fostered population will represent more than half of all accommodated children by next year, and half of all looked after children by 2025 (if not much sooner).
- The number in residential care (including secure) remained approximately the same, at 1,470 (or 9% of total population).
- At 31 July 2014, 1,452 children were secured in a permanent placement (under a Permanence Order or a Permanence Order with Authority to Adopt).
- If we exclude those 'looked after at home', 731 young people over school leaving age ceased to be looked after in 2013-14. These young people are officially 'care leavers', and eligible for Aftercare support. Of the 731 formerly accommodated young people, 20% (143) returned to live with their parents, 23% (170) returned or remained with family members (kinship), 13% (96) moved into their own tenancy, and 20% (148) moved into supported accommodation. 71 young people remained living with their foster carers; under Continuing Care, we should expect to see this figure increase year on year.
- Nearly 40% of 'care leavers' (including those formerly looked after at home) received no aftercare support in 2013-14.