

Looked After Children

# Template sufficiency statement

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Prepared by the Local Government  
Association (LGA) and Alma Economics

May 2021



# Guidance

Alma Economics has been commissioned by the LGA to contribute to establishing a nationwide framework for producing sufficiency statements on placements for looked after children. Launching a framework that is common across the country will allow for consistent monitoring of need for and delivery of children's placements. It will also help councils to track progress towards meeting demand by providing high-quality, value for money services.

Our proposed framework includes: (i) a nationwide database on children's placements that will be used to inform the councils' statements, (ii) a sufficiency statement template, and (iii) a basic predictive tool for monitoring future trends in demand for placements that can be used by all councils in England. The overarching objective of the framework is to help councils in their day-to-day planning and decision-making activities. Here we present the components of the framework as well as guidelines on how to use it.

## Nationwide dataset

The dataset comprises council level-data on looked-after children and demand for and supply of placements collated by the councils and submitted to DfE and Ofsted. It also contains additional information held by councils and collected through a survey, as well as national figures that can be included in the statement for benchmarking purposes. In addition to key information, the dataset includes tables and graphs that feed into the template.

Councils will fill in the survey on an annual basis providing data that is collated and used to produce the database centrally. The dataset is then provided to councils as part of the framework. Each council will receive a copy of the dataset including their own data, national figures for benchmarking purposes, and graphs and tables that can be used to fill in the template.

## Sufficiency statement template

The template contains a summary of the council's strategy to provide suitable placement for looked after children over the past year and future plans (chapter 1) as well as important information on demand for (chapter 2) and supply of placements (chapter 3). It also includes appendices with additional information.

Guidelines on presenting and commenting on key indicators are provided for each section. Councils can choose the guidelines they will follow to produce their template and/or add additional text throughout the document to interpret the data and how it fits into the wider local picture.

The aim of the template is to provide a flexible tool that councils can use to produce their annual sufficiency statements. Statements can be produced using the template as is – alternatively, councils have the option to expand on the existing chapters and include additional information in the main text and/or appendices.

The first two pages are part of the guidance and should be excluded from the remainder of the template prior to publication.

## Predictive modelling

Chapter 4 includes forecasts on the population of looked after children, children in foster care and residential placement as well as provision of placements by councils' own resources and the private (and voluntary) sector. The estimated figures are based on a basic model developed by Alma Economics. Councils are encouraged to use this chapter to include their own forecasts for comparisons and/or forecasts on additional variables.

Looked After Children

# Sufficiency statement

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Here you can add your Subtitle  
or an explanatory short text

**Month Year**

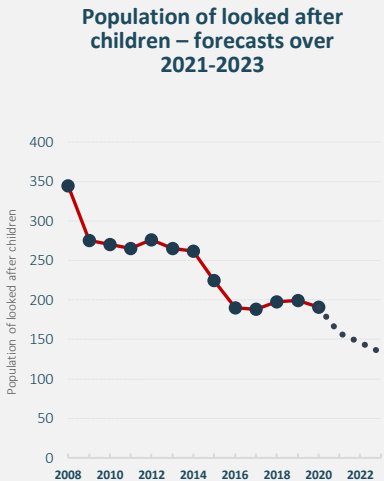
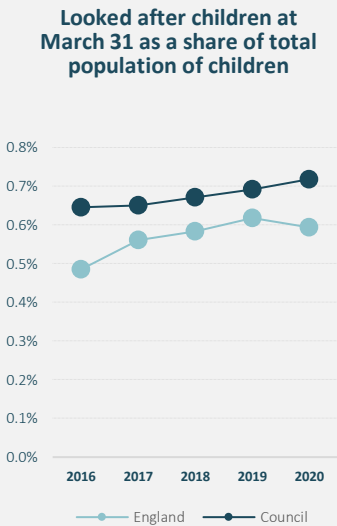
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## Summary

### Key information

- The population of looked after children has increased (or decreased) by x% over the last 5 years.
- X children were looked after at March 31 [year of interest] – x% of them were female while x% were of mixed, Asian, Black and other ethnic origin.
- X% of looked after children were placed within the LA boundary at 31 March [year of interest].
- X% of children were placed in foster households while x% were in residential settings.
- The population of looked after children is expected to increase (or decrease) by x over the next 3 years.



### Key Challenges

- Offering suitable placements in foster households through existing providers will be difficult over the next three years while the council will mostly manage to meet demand for residential placements.
- Placing children who are looked after because of socially unacceptable behaviour and abuse or neglect through existing providers is currently challenging and will remain so over the next three years.
- Providing placements for looked after children with disabilities will be increasingly challenging over the next three years.

Difficulties in meeting the demand for placement of looked after children	Currently		Over the next 1-3 years	
	Council	National	Council	National
Meet demand for placements				
Meet demand for foster care				
Meet demand for residential care				

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# 1. Overview

## **Guidance:**

**Councils are recommended to use this chapter to:**

- summarise key information included in the template – this can include population of looked after children and demographic characteristics, changes in size and demographic composition of the population of children from last year, share of placements provided by the council and the private/voluntary sector, etc.
- provide a quick assessment of the sufficiency and suitability of placements provided to looked after children according to their needs over the last year
- discuss the effectiveness of past strategies
- highlight strengths and best practice
- identify key challenges and areas for improvement with associated recommendations for action
- present future plans to provide suitable placements for looked after children in the area

## 2. Demand for placements

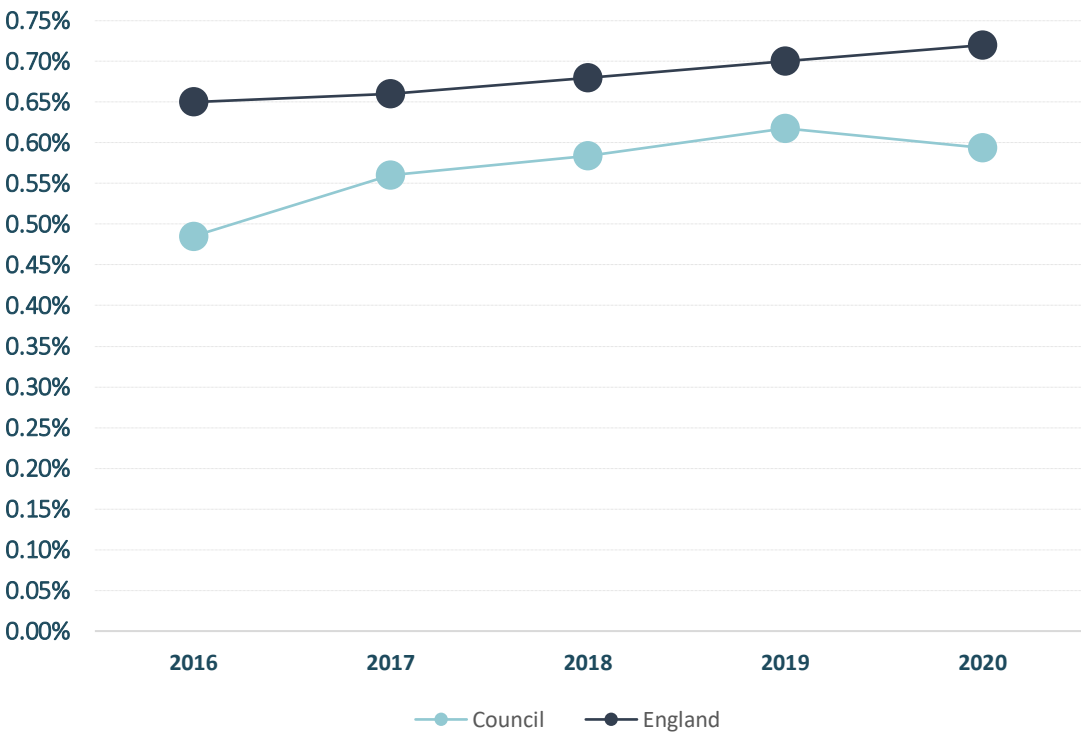
### 2.1 Population of looked after children

**[Guidance.** This section contains information on the population of looked after children at March 31st of the year of interest. The aim of the section is to present key statistics on the population of children, their demographic characteristics and need. It also includes key information on care leavers.

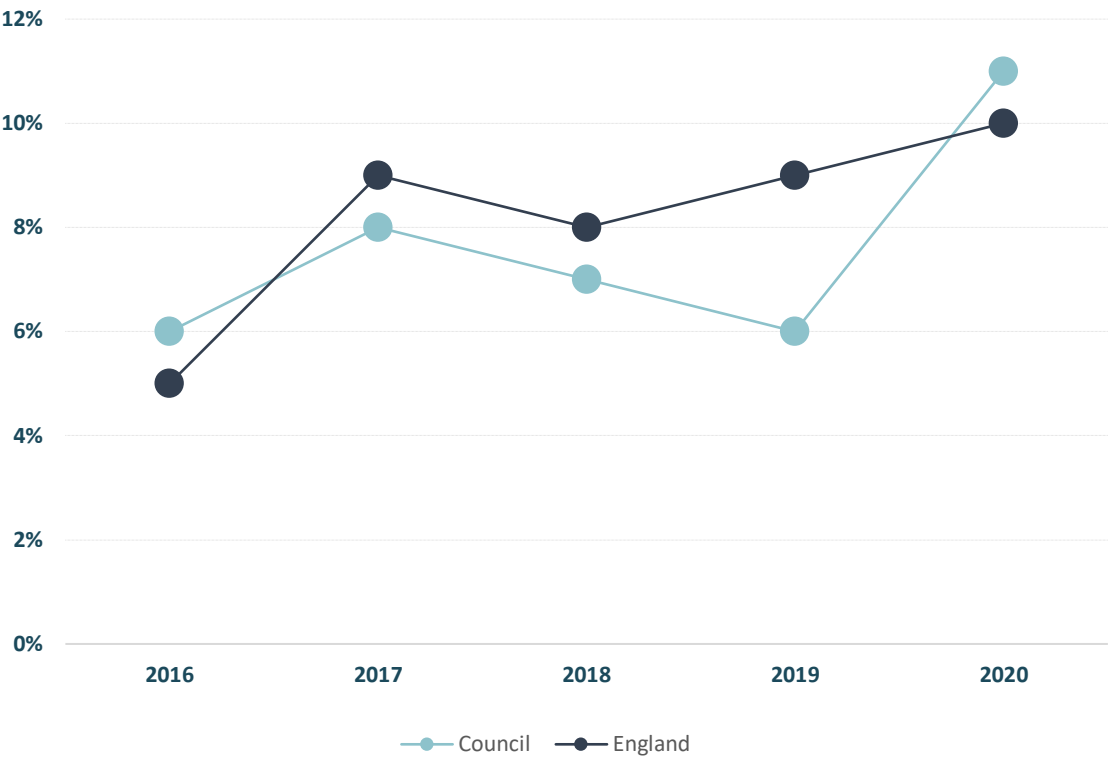
It should start with a brief paragraph, including:

- figures on the total number of looked after children at 31 March in the year of interest and changes since last year.
- a short commentary on Figure 1. The figure shows the proportion of looked after children over the last five years in the council and in England. Further comments on the differences between the figures should be included.
- **Optional:** a short commentary on Figure 2. The figure shows the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers Children (UASC) who were looked after in the council and in England. Further comments on the differences between the figures should be included.]

**Figure 1. Looked after children at 31 March as a share of total population of children**



**Figure 2.** *Optional:* Looked after children who were Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers as a share of the total CLA population



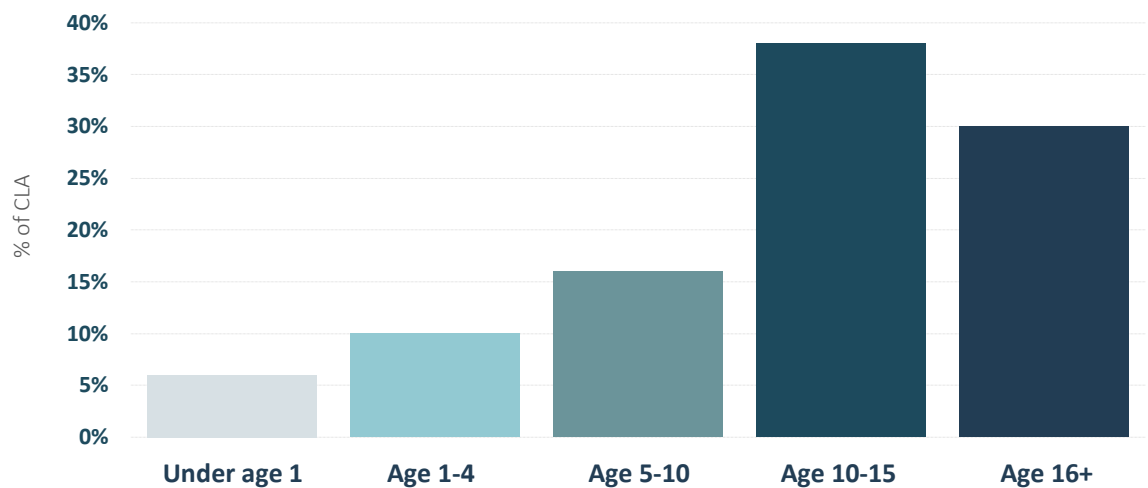
**Note:** The figure includes the number of looked after children at March 31, 2020 who were unaccompanied asylum seekers.



**[Guidance.** The second part of the section should focus on the characteristics of looked after children. It should include:

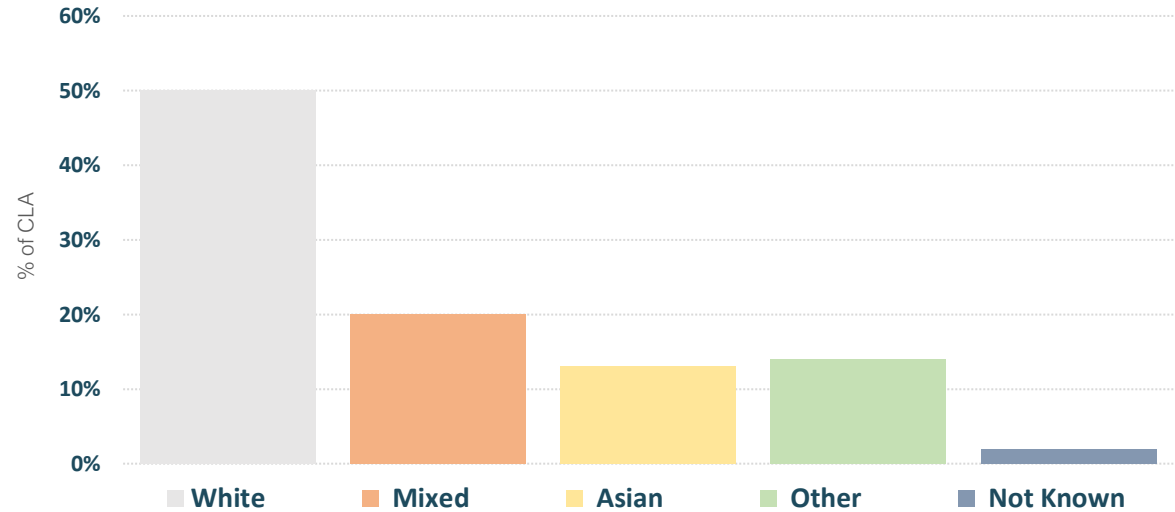
- the gender breakdown of looked after children in the year of interest.
- a short commentary on Figure 2 showing the proportion of looked after children by age group.
- a short commentary on Figure 3 showing the proportion of looked after children by ethnic background.]

**Figure 3. Looked after children by age group (as a share of total LAC population), 2020**



**Note:** The figure includes the number of looked after children at March 31, 2020.

**Figure 4. Looked after children by ethnic background (as a share of total CLA population), 2020**



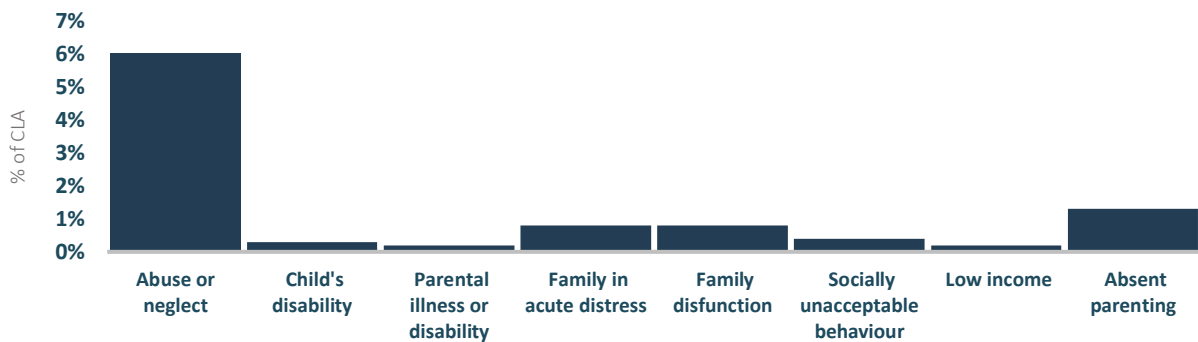
**Note:** The figure includes the number of looked after children at March 31, 2020.

## 2.2 Needs of looked after children

**[Guidance.** This section describes the needs of looked after children and the main reason for being looked after. The objective of this section is to highlight the main needs of children looked after and to discuss how to best meet these needs. The section should start with a paragraph including:

- a short commentary on Figure 5 showing the proportion of children who started to be looked after in the year of interest by primary need category. The focus should be on prevalent categories.
- a short commentary on table 1 presenting challenges in providing placements for children across primary categories of need. Councils are encouraged to add any additional information on the challenges they face to meet demand for placements from children with different needs.]

**Figure 5. Children who started to be looked after during 2020 by primary need category**



**Note:** The figure shows the proportion of children who started to be looked after during the year ending March 31 by need category

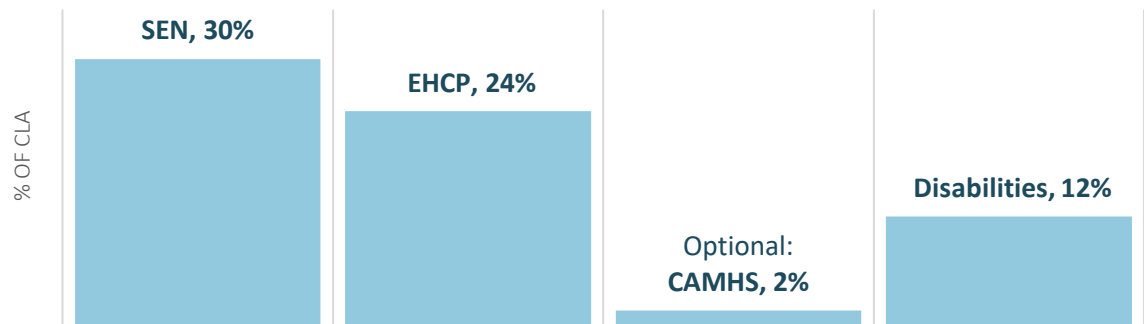
Table 1.				
Difficulties in providing placements for children across primary need categories	Currently		Over the next 1-3 years	
	Council	National	Council	National
Abuse or neglect	Red	Red	Red	Red
Child's disability	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow
Parent's illness or disability	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Family in acute stress	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow
Family dysfunction	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Socially unacceptable behaviour	Red	Red	Red	Red
Low income	Green	Green	Green	Green
Absent parenting	Green	Green	Yellow	Green

**Notes:** Red indicates that the council expects that they will face difficulties meeting demand through existing suppliers and/or needs to produce services at high costs; Amber indicates that the council expects that they will mostly meet demand through existing providers at reasonable costs, but there are cases where that is not true; Green indicates that the council expects they will meet demand through existing supply at reasonable cost.

**[Guidance.** The second part of the section contains information on children with special needs, disabilities, and mental health issues. This section should include a paragraph with:

- a short commentary on Figure 6 showing the share of looked after children with Special Education Needs (SEN) and disabilities as well as those who are qualified for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan **[optional:** and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services]. Data on children with disabilities and CAMHS are collected through the survey.<sup>1</sup> Additional comments on the challenges that the council might face in providing placements and services to looked after children in these categories should be included.
- A short commentary on Figure 7 showing the share of looked after children who completed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) by the results they obtained. The average scores obtained by children looked after by the council can also *be mentioned and compared to the national average (included in the provided dataset).*]

**Figure 6. Looked after children with special needs and disabilities (as a share of total CLA population), 2020**



**Note:** The figure includes the proportion of looked after children at March 31, 2020.

**Figure 7. Proportion of looked after children by SDQ score (as a share of total CLA population), 2019**



**Note:** The figure includes the proportion of looked after children whose SDQ score was normal, borderline, and cause of concern

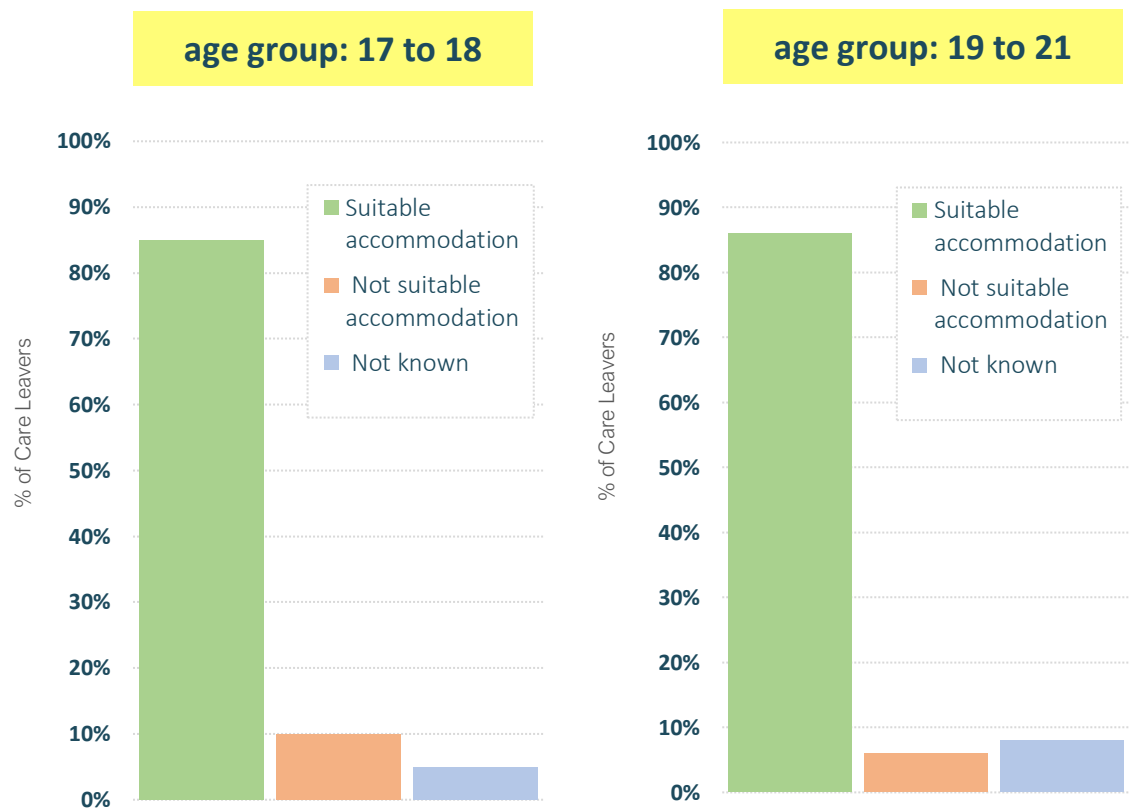
<sup>1</sup> Few of the councils participating in the pilot phase highlighted that it is hard to collect information on CAMHS, therefore, for several councils this information might not be available.

## 2.3 Care leavers

**[Guidance.** This section contains key statistics on care leavers aged 17 to 18 and 19 to 21. The scope of the section is to discuss provision of support to care leavers in order to achieve a successful transition to independent living. The section should start with a paragraph including:

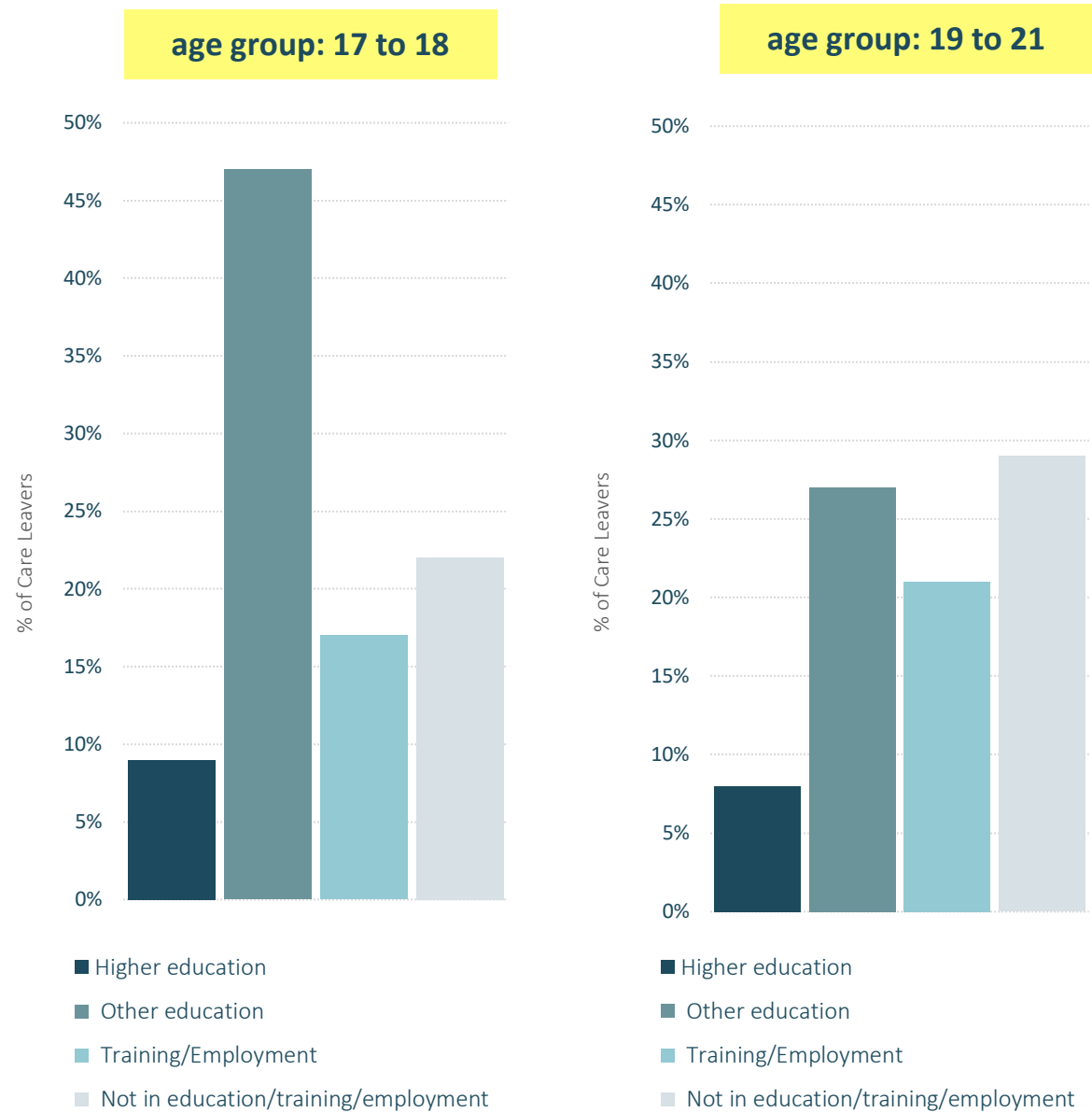
- the total number of care leavers aged 17 to 18 and 19 to 21 at March 31 in the year of interest. Additional information on care leavers aged 17 to 18 and 19 to 21 as a proportion of the total population of looked after children should also be included (these figures are included in the dataset provided).
- the number care leavers in the year of interest ending at March 31 aged 18 that were accommodated with former foster carers (included in the dataset provided).
- a short commentary on Figure 8 showing the type of accommodation in which care leavers aged 17 to 18 and 19 to 21 were in in the year of interest. Additional comments on challenges the council might have faced to ensure that care leavers end up in suitable accommodation should be also included.
- a short commentary on Figure 9 showing the activity of care leavers aged 17 to 18 and 19 to 21.]

**Figure 8. Care leavers by suitability of accommodation (as a share of total population of care leavers), 2020**



**Note:** The figure includes care leavers in the year ending March 31, 2020 aged 17 and 18 and 19 to 21 who were looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday including some time after their 16th birthday

**Figure 9. Care leavers by type of activity (as a share of the total population of care leavers), 2020**



**Note:** The figure includes care leavers in the year ending March 31, 2020 aged 17 and 18 and 19 to 21 who were looked after for a total of at least 13 weeks after their 14th birthday including some time after their 16th birthday. The figure does not include care leavers for whom the activity is not known.

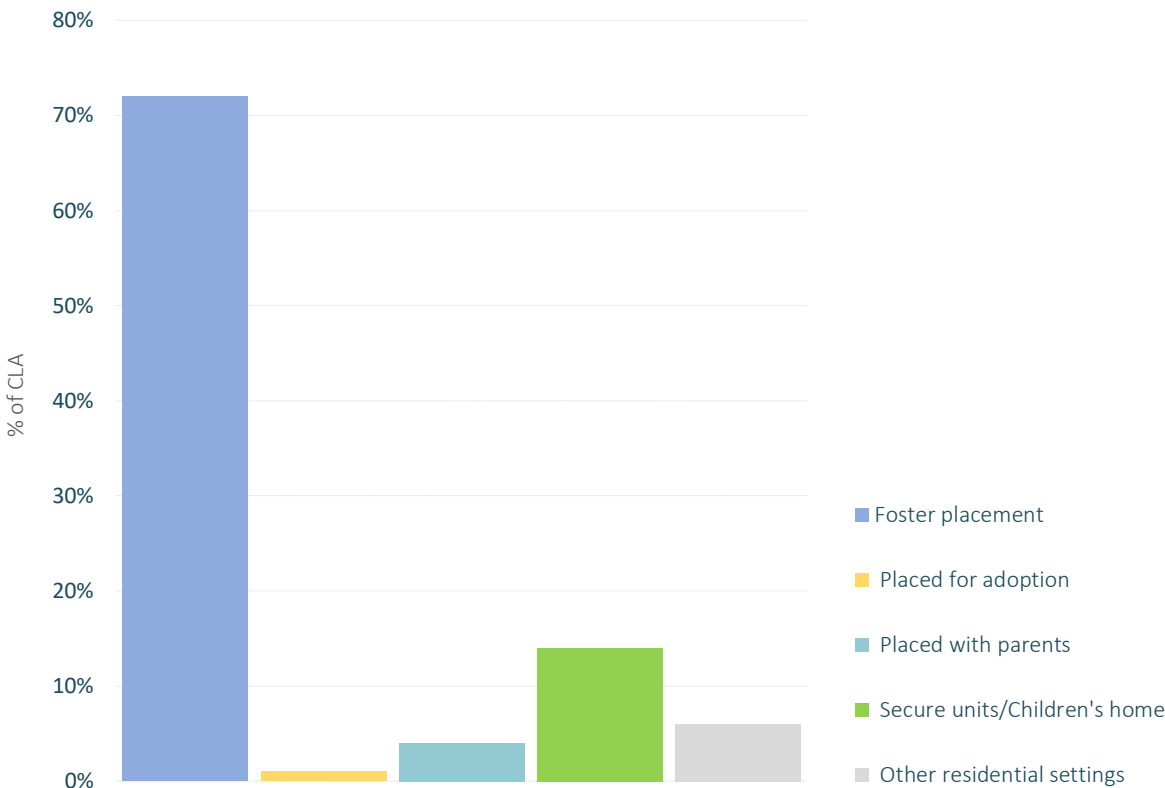
### 3. Supply of placements

#### 3.1 Provision of placements

**[Guidance.** This section summarises the provision of placements for looked after children. It discusses the supply of different types of placements as well as the quality and suitability of the provided placements. It should start with a paragraph including:

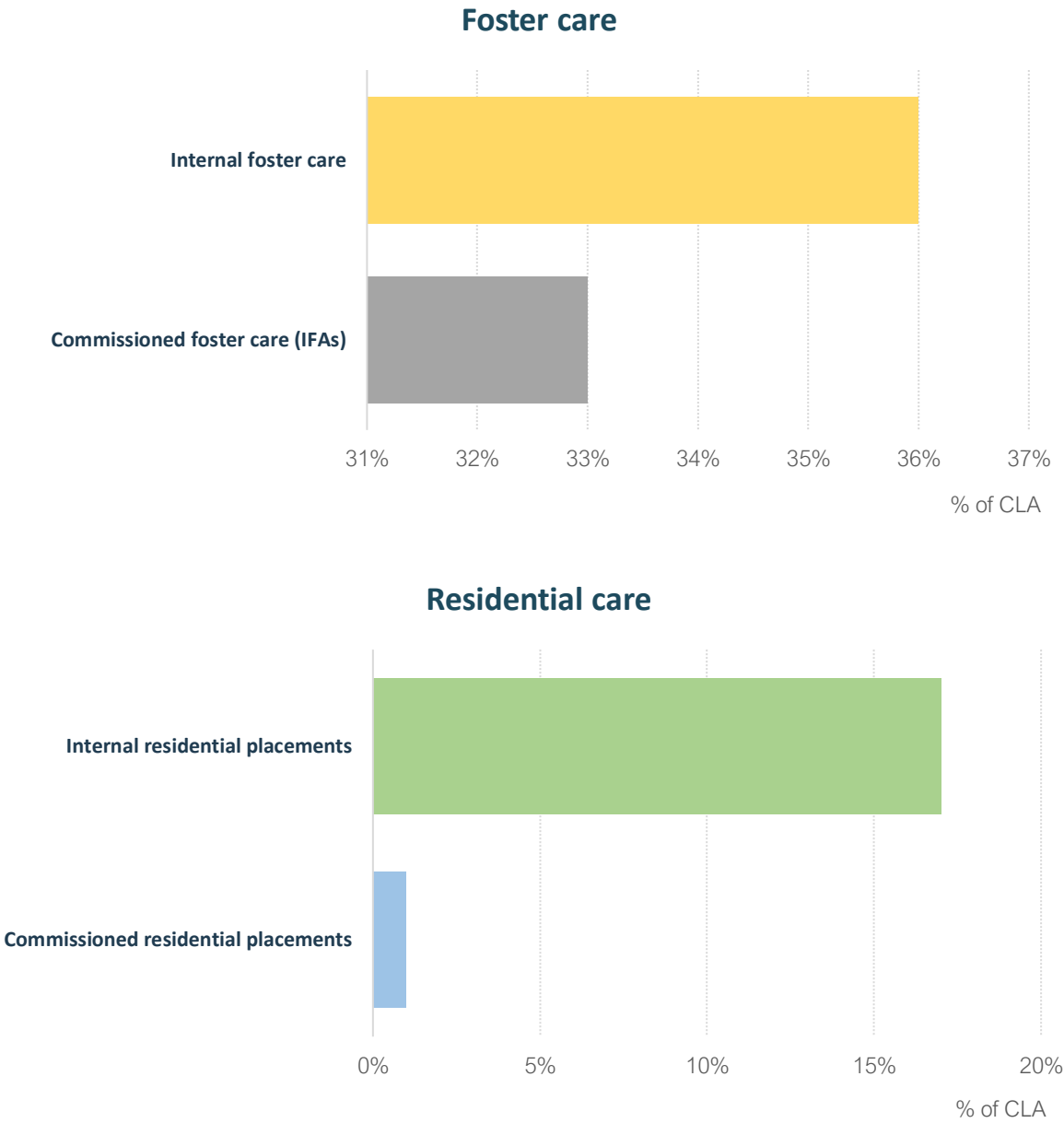
- a short commentary on Figure 10 showing the share of looked after children by type of placement.
- a short commentary on Figure 11 showing the share of looked after children in residential and foster placements by type of provider.]

**Figure 10. Looked after children by type of placement (as a share of the total CLA population), 2020**



**Note:** The figure includes the proportion of looked after children at March 31, 2020

**Figure 11. Looked after children by placement provider (as a share of the total CLA population), 2020**



**Note:** the figures include the proportion of looked after children at March 31, 2020, by type of placement.

**[Guidance.** The second part of this section discusses placement stability. A brief paragraph should be added here including:

- a short commentary on Table 2 reporting on children looked after for at least 12 months as a share of the total population of looked after children, the share of looked after children with three or more placement during the year of interest, and the share of looked after children who lived continuously in the same placement for two years. The aim of the table is to highlight the extent to which children are provided with a stable placement.
- Additional information on the groups included in the table as well as key reasons why placements might not be stable can also be included.]

Table 2. <b>Stability of placements for children looked after</b>	<b>2020</b>
% children looked after for at least 12 months	65%
% of children looked after with three or more placements during the year	11%
% of children looked after continuously for at least 2.5 years aged under 16 who were living in the same placement for at least 2 years	64%

**Note:** This table shows numbers of looked after children at March 31, 2020.



**[Guidance.** The last part of the section includes information on the quality of placement. This section should include a paragraph with:

- a short commentary on Table 3 reporting Ofsted inspection outcomes for Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) and children's home in the year of interest. The aim of the table is to show the overall quality of children's home and IFAs and highlight whether placements are in line with Ofsted requirements.]

<b>Table 3. Quality of placements based on Ofsted inspections, 2020</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Requires improvement to be good</b>	<b>Inadequate</b>
<b>Overall experiences and progress of children and young people</b>				
Independent Fostering Agencies	0	5	1	0
Children's homes	4	30	16	2
<b>How well children &amp; young people are helped and protected</b>	0	5	1	0
Independent Fostering Agencies	0	5	1	0
Children's homes	6	22	19	5
<b>Effectiveness of leaders &amp; managers</b>				
Independent Fostering Agencies	0	4	2	0
Children's home	4	30	16	2

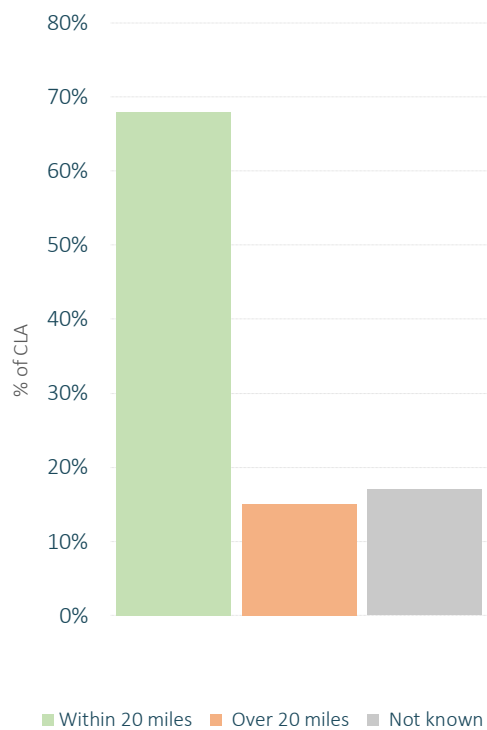
**Note:** The table includes outcomes from Ofsted inspections of IFAs and children's homes (both internal and external). Numbers of IFAs and children's homes are presented by inspection outcomes. Information on Ofsted inspection outcomes for residential schools and secure home is not shown here, as they represent a small proportion of available residential settings.

### 3.2 Location of placements

**[Guidance.** This section presents information on placement locations and discusses proximity to children’s homes and availability of placements within the council. It should start with a paragraph including:

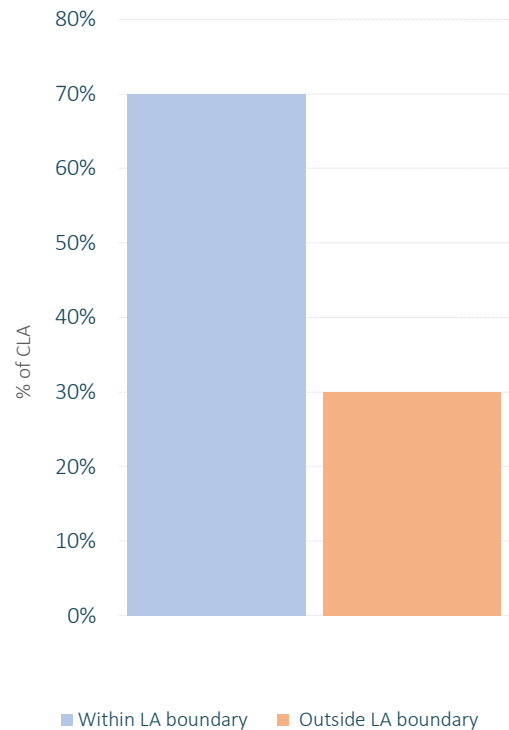
- a short commentary on Figure 12 showing looked after children placed within and over 20 miles from their home as a share of the total population of looked after children. Any challenges the council might face to place children close to their home should be highlighted here.
- a short commentary on Figure 13 showing looked after children placed within and outside the council boundaries as a share of the total population of looked after children. Any challenges the council might face to place children within its boundaries should be highlighted here.]

**Figure 12. Looked after children by the distance between the placement and home (as a share of total population of CLA), 2020**



**Note:** The figure includes numbers of looked after children at March 31, 2020.

**Figure 13. Looked after children placed within and outside the LA boundary, (as a share of total population of CLA), 2020**



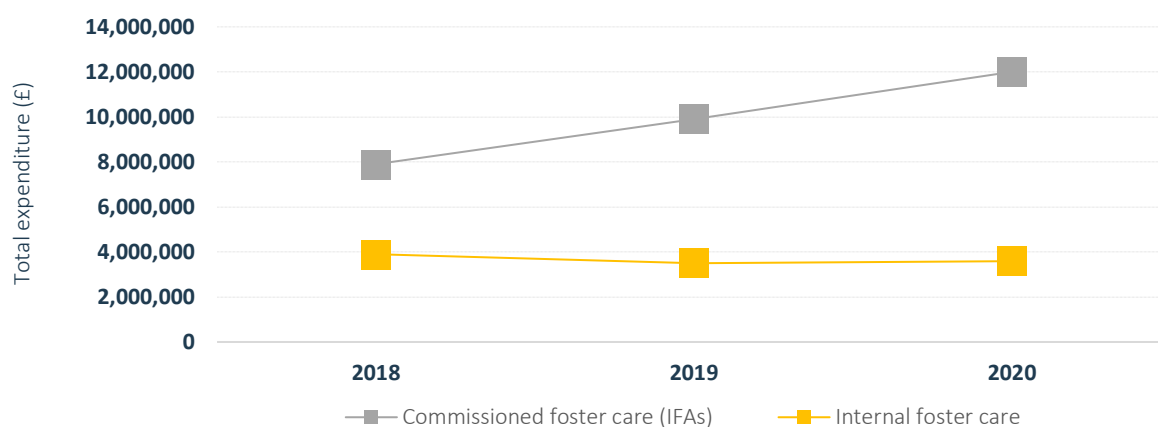
**Note:** the figure includes numbers of looked after children at March 31, 2020.

### 3.3 Cost of placements

**[Guidance.** This section presents placement costs that are collected using the annual survey and collated centrally to produce the nationwide database. It includes information on council expenditure on placements and aims to make comparisons with the national average and discuss strategies to provide value for money services for looked after children. It is recommended that councils add information on how the presented costs are calculated and what elements they include.

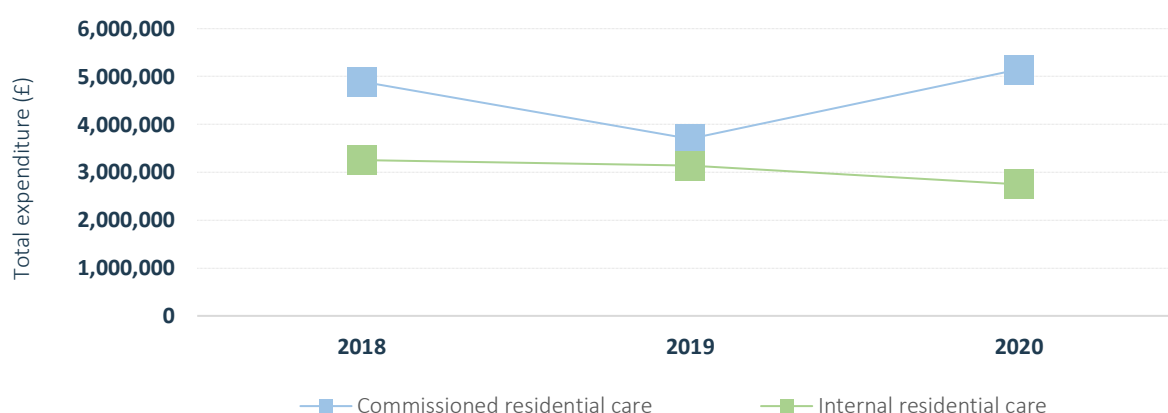
- The section should start with a paragraph including:
- a short commentary on Figures 14 and 15 showing total expenditure on internal and commissioned foster and residential care in the year of interest and discuss changes from last year.
- a brief discussion on expenditure trends over time and reasons for the observed increases/reductions in expenditure.]

**Figure 14. Total expenditure in foster care during the year ending March 31**



**Note.** Council figures do not include management & other internal costs while expenditure on commissioned services includes overhead costs.

**Figure 15. Total expenditure in residential placements during the year ending March 31**

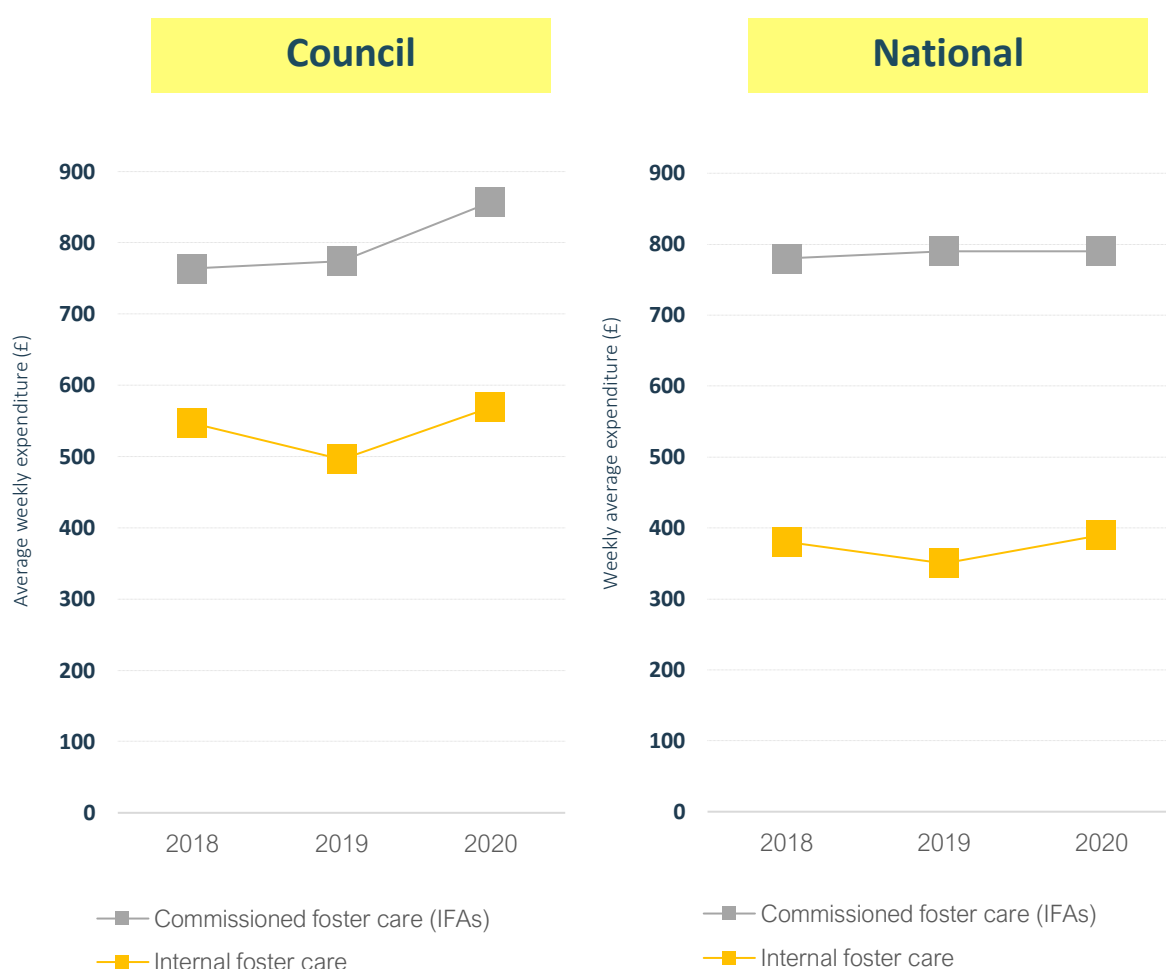


**Note.** The figure only includes expenditure in residential placements (management & other internal costs are not taken under consideration).

**[Guidance.]** The second part of this section contains information on average weekly expenditure for different types of placements. It should include:

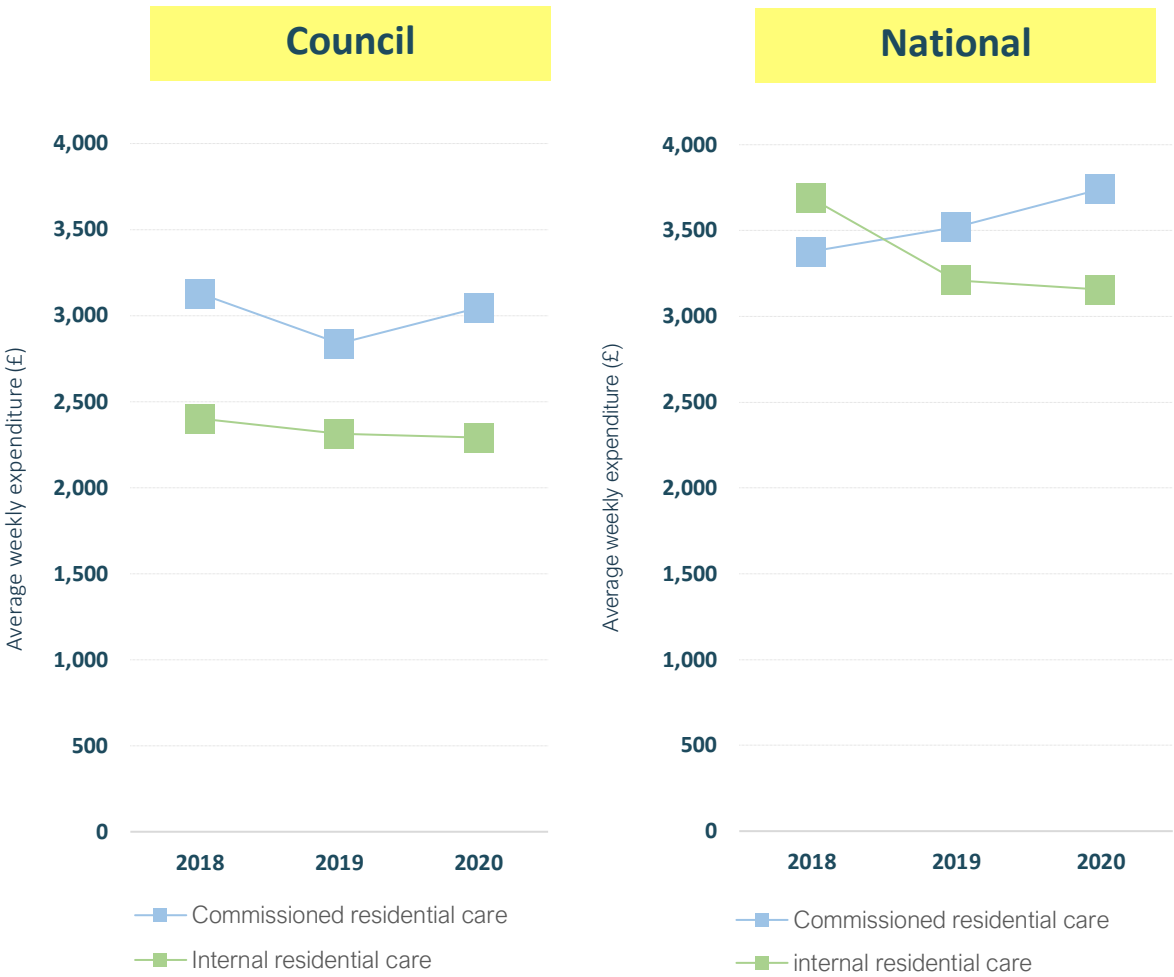
- a short commentary on Figures 16 and 17 showing average weekly expenditure (per child) in foster and residential care (both internal and commissioned) over the past three years. Comparisons with average expenditure on each type of placement at the national level (should also be included).
- a brief discussion on expenditure trends over time and reasons for the observed increases/reductions in expenditure.
- Optional: additional information on unusually high costs and explanation (e.g. specific needs of children looked after, length of stay etc.).]

**Figure 16. Average weekly expenditure (per child) in foster care during the year ending March 31**



**Note.** Council figures do not include management & other internal costs while expenditure on commissioned services includes overhead costs.

**Figure 17. Average weekly expenditure (per child) in residential care during the year ending March 31**



**Note.** The figure only includes expenditure in residential placements (management & other internal costs are not taken under consideration).

### 3.4 Challenges in providing placements and related services

**[Guidance.]** This section describes the main challenges faced by councils in providing placements for looked after children. This section is based on assessments of placement provision collected from the councils using the survey. It should include:

- a short commentary on table 3 presenting current and future challenges in meeting demand for placements for looked after children and comparisons with challenges in key areas faced by the average council at the national level. Councils are recommended to present strategies and actions taken to face these challenges. Any additional challenges in meeting demand for placements should be included here.

**Table 4.**

Difficulties in meeting the demand for placement of looked after children	Currently		Over the next 1-3 years	
	Council	National	Council	National
Meet demand for placements				
Meet demand for foster care				
Meet demand for residential care				

**Notes:** Red indicates that the council expects that they will face difficulties meeting demand through existing suppliers and/or needs to produce services at high costs; Amber indicates that the council expects that they will mostly meet demand through existing providers at reasonable costs, but there are cases where that is not true; Green indicates that the council expects they will meet demand through existing supply at reasonable cost.

**[Guidance.** The section should also include:

- a short commentary on Table 5 presenting current and future challenges in meeting demand for key services for looked after children and comparisons with challenges faced by the average council at the national level. Councils are recommended to present strategies and actions taken to face these challenges. Any additional challenges in meeting demand for placements should be included here.]

<b>Table 5.</b>				
<b>Difficulties in meeting demand for key services</b>	<b>Currently</b>		<b>Over the next 1-3 years</b>	
	<b>Council</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Council</b>	<b>National</b>
Healthcare services				
Development assessments				
Interventions for substance misuse				
Support for children with emotional and behavioural needs/mental health problems				
Specialist provision for children with CSE/HSB				
Sibling group who require a fostering placement together				

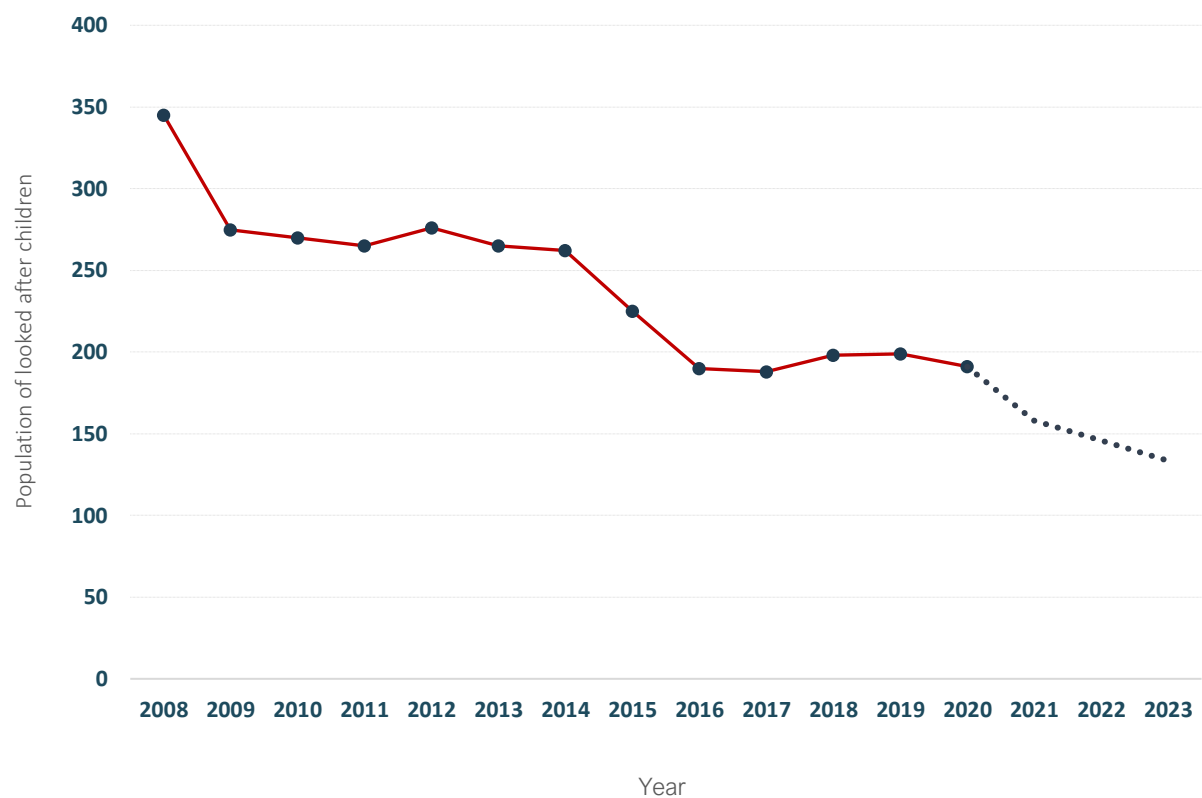
**Notes:** Red indicates that the council expects that they will face difficulties meeting demand through existing suppliers and/or needs to produce services at high costs; Amber indicates that the council expects that they will mostly meet demand through existing providers at reasonable costs, but there are cases where that is not true; Green indicates that the council expects they will meet demand through existing supply at reasonable cost.

## 4. Projections on demand for placements

**[Guidance.** This section includes forecasts on demand for placements over the next three years. The forecasts are produced centrally using the Alma simple forecasting model. The section should include a short paragraph with:

- a short commentary on Figure 18 showing historical trends as well as forecasts on the population of looked after children at March 31 of each year.
- a short commentary on Figures 19 and 20 showing historical trends as well as forecasts on looked after children by type of placement and placement provider.
- Councils are also encouraged to use this section to add their own forecasts on the existing and/or alternative indicators as well as any other information that might be useful.]

**Figure 18. Population of looked after children – forecasts over 2020-2023**



**Note:** Forecasts are produced using historical data on numbers of looked after children at March 31 of each year.



Figure 19. Looked after children in foster and residential placements

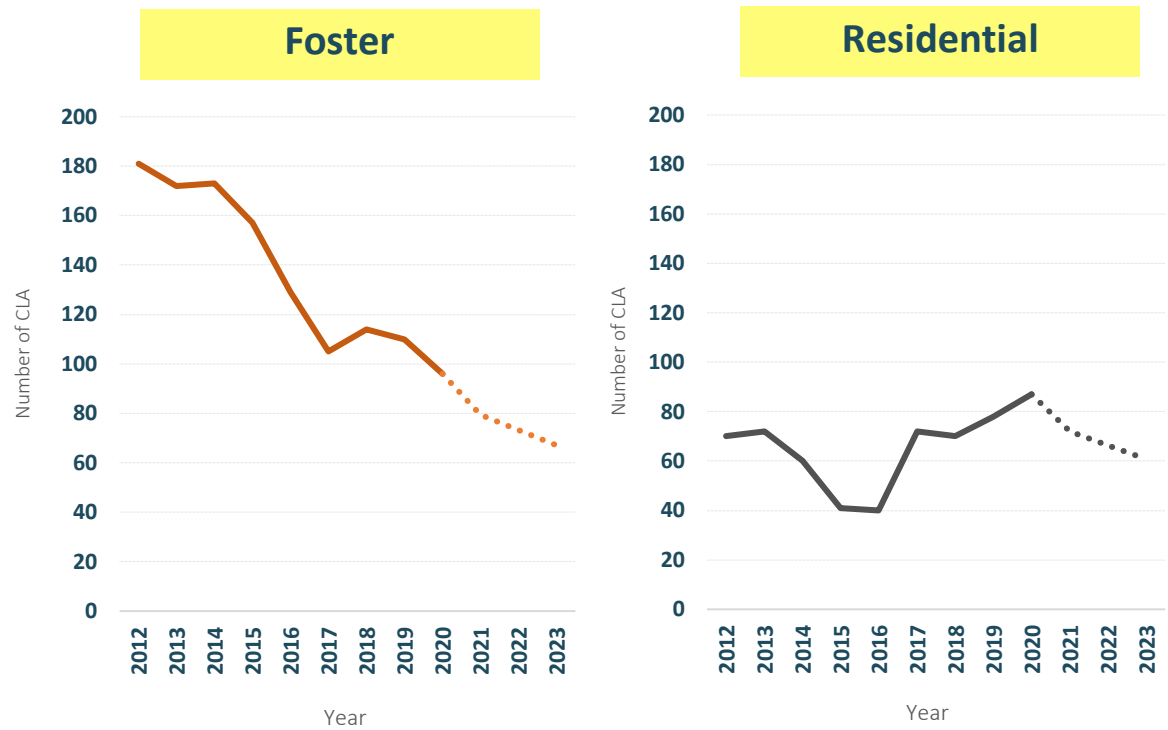
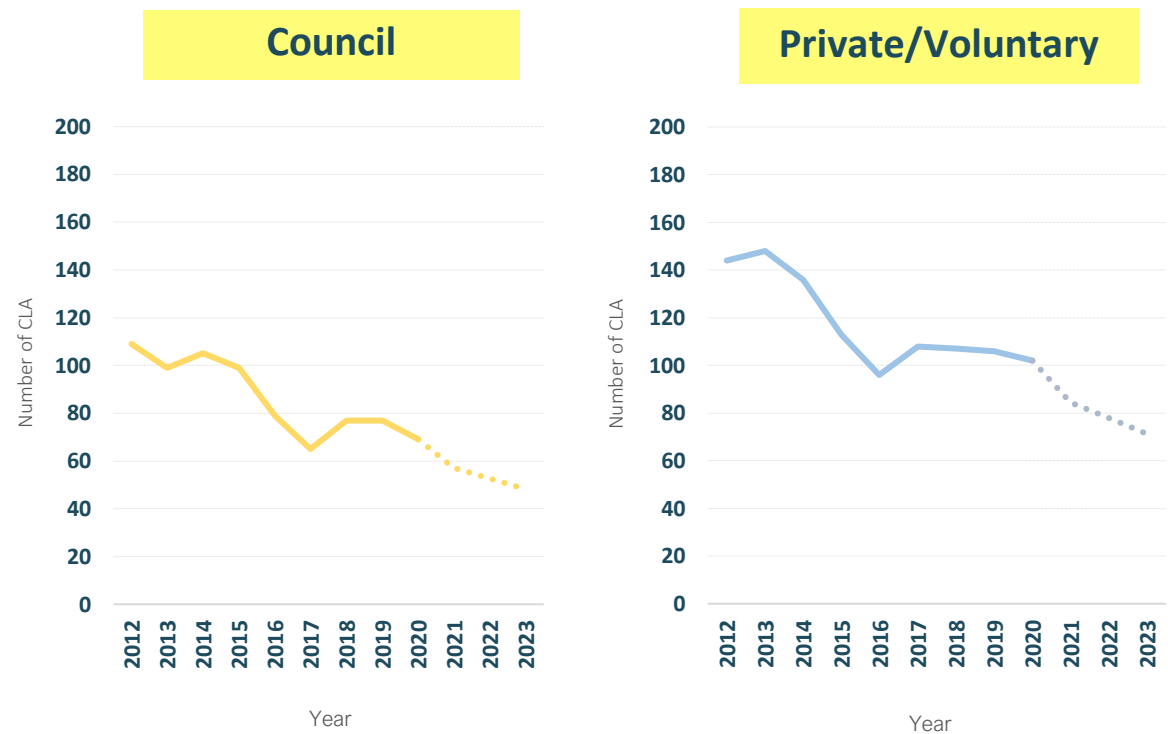


Figure 20. Looked after children by type of provider



**Note:** Forecasts are produced using historical data on numbers of looked after children at March 31 of each year. Residential placements include secure units, children’s homes, semi-independent living accommodation, residential schools and other residential settings.

## 5. Appendix

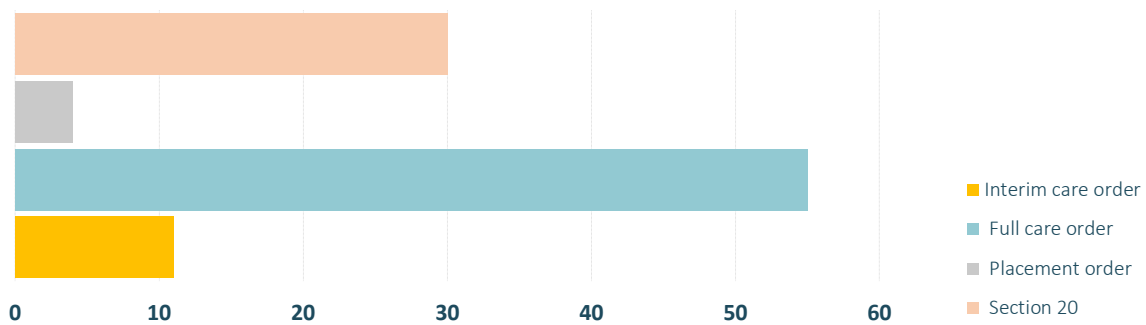
**[Guidance.** The appendix provides additional information on the population of looked after children. It should include the following graphs and tables as well as short commentaries if needed.]

### A1. Population of looked after children

**Table A1. Population of looked after children during the year ending March 31**

	2018	2019	2020
Children looked after	609	599	607
Children who started to be looked after	195	194	201
Children who ceased to be looked after	179	190	177

**Figure A1. Legal status of looked after children, 2020**



Note. The figure includes information on the legal status of children looked after at March 31 in the year of interest.

Figure A2. Outcomes of looked after children, 2020



**Note.** The figures includes information on outcomes of children looked after at March 31 of the year of interest.

## A2. Supply of placements

<b>Table A2. Number of fostering households, 2020</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
Number of fostering households (internal)	408	416	403
Number of fostering households (IFAs)	421	414	432

**Note.** The table includes the number of fostering households (internal) and the number of fostering households (IFA) at March 31 of each year.

<b>Table A3. Number of residential places and number of beds, 2020</b>	<b>Council</b>	<b>Private/Third sector</b>	<b>N. beds</b>
Children's home	0	5	28
Secure homes	0	0	0
Residential schools	0	0	0

**Note.** The table includes the number of children's home, secure homes, and residential schools owned by the council (including both those owned by the Local Authority and the Health Authority) and privately owned (including those owned by the third sector).

## A3. Children placed outside the council boundary

<b>Table A4. Looked after children placed in other councils, 2020</b>		
	<b>Residential care</b>	<b>Foster care</b>
Birmingham	5	6
Coventry	7	2
Dudley	3	6
Herefordshire	6	4
Sandwell	7	10
Shropshire	2	1
Solihull	5	6
Staffordshire	1	3
Stoke-on-Trent	2	6
Telford	1	4
Wrekin	2	1
Walsall	2	3
Warwickshire	4	1
Wolverhampton	2	1
Worcestershire	1	1