

SUMMARY

The main findings for children looked after in England in 2002 are as follows:

Children looked after at 31 March 2002

- estimated number - 59,700 children, 1% higher than a year earlier (58,900) and 22% higher than in 1993/94 (49,100) - see chart
- legal status - 64% under care orders, 32% under single voluntary agreements
- placement – 66% in foster placements, 13% in children's homes and residential schools, 11% placed with parents
- 15% had experienced 3 or more placements during the year (indicator A1 of the Performance Assessment Framework)

Children looked after at any time during the year ending 31 March 2002

- estimated total number - 93,200 (84 per 10,000 children aged under 18)
- of these 12,200 (13%) were looked after under one or more series of short term placements

Days of care provided during the year ending 31 March 2002

- social service departments in England provided a total of almost 22 million days of care to looked after children, 14% more than during 1997/98

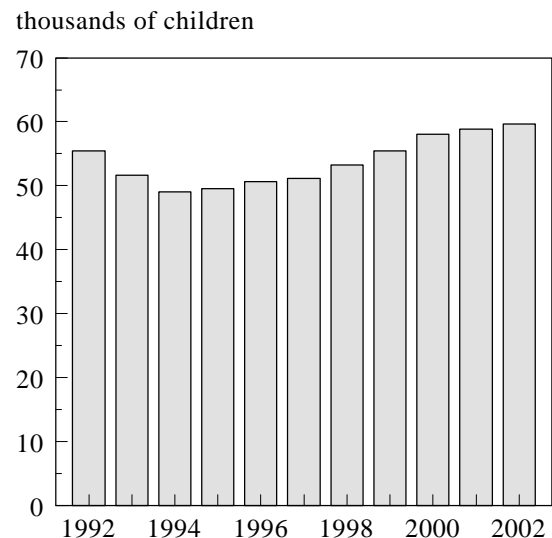
Children adopted from care during the year ending 31 March 2002

- Of those placements for adoption that ceased during 2001/2002, 93% ended in adoption
- number adopted – 3,400 (compared with 3,100 in 2000/2001) or 6% of children looked after at 31 March 2002. This was a 25% increase on 1999/2000
- 80% of looked after children who were adopted in the year ending 31 March 2002 were placed for adoption within 12 months of the best interest decision

Care leavers aged 16 or over during the year ending 31 March 2002

- the number of 16 year old care leavers 2,100, (compared with 2,400 a year earlier); the number leaving care on their 18th birthday - 3,200 (up from 3,100 a year earlier)
- 2,600 (41%) of care leavers aged 16 or over gained at least 1 GCSE or GNVQ
- 5% of care leavers aged 16 or over gained 5 or more GCSEs at grades A* to C
- councils were in touch with 75% of care leavers on or near their 19th birthdays and 46% were either in education, training or employment

Number of children looked after at 31 March



Four ways of presenting data on looked after children

The SSDA 903 form provides a continuous picture of the population of looked after children. This publication uses four different approaches to viewing this population:

The number of children who have been looked after **at any time in the year** (regardless of whether they were still looked after on 31 March).

- *this forms the basis of National Tables I, J and K (Volume 1), Local Authority Tables 1 and 2 (Volume 2).*

A "snapshot" count of the number of children who were looked after **on 31 March**;

- *this forms the basis of National Tables A-D, L-O (Volume 1), Local Authority Tables 3 and 5-11 (Volume 2).*

The number of children who **started** to be looked after at any time in the year. (Where a child had separate periods of care, only the first start is counted);

- *this forms the basis of National Tables E, F, P-R (Volume 1), Local Authority Tables 4, 12 and 13 (Volume 2).*

The number of children who **ceased** to be looked after at any time in the year. (Where a child had separate periods of care, only the latest time that a period of care ceased counted);

- *this forms the basis of National Tables G, H, S-W, Xi and Xii (Volume 1), Local Authority Tables 4 and 14-18 (Volume 2).*

These categories are not mutually exclusive, so it is possible for a child who had separate periods of care in the year to be counted in each of the tables.

For fuller details of how the "started" and "ceased" figures are calculated, and for an explanation of "numbers", "rates" and "percentages", please refer to the Introduction and Technical Notes.

All references to "year" in this publication refer to the standard financial year, which runs from 1 April to 31 March.