

English Local Authority Children's Placement Sufficiency

December 2024

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1. Executive Summary

When separated into types of children care placements in England on the 1st September 2024, in-house mainstream foster care was the most prevalent with 27.9%, closely followed by independent foster carer with 24.8% (52.7% when combined as 'mainstream fostering'), then kinship care 15.6%, children's homes 11.4%, registered supported accommodation 9.8%, placed with parents 6.0%, other 3.3%, Unregulated 1% and Secure 0.1%.

Regional and individually there were significant variances in the types and use of placements. The North East, followed by Yorkshire & Humber and then the North West rank as having stronger placement sufficiency than any other regions. However, there are local authorities who are outliers in every region.



Fostering

The North East had the largest percentage of children and young people (CYP) living with in-house mainstream fostering households (34%) and East Midlands had the least (24.8%).

The West Midlands placed more CYP with independent foster carers (30.6%) and the North East had the least (17.6%).

In terms of kinship care, the North West had the most CYP living with family, friends and people they are connected with (20%), the East of England had the least (10%).

When we include all foster placements including kinship, the West Midlands (71.9%) had the highest percentage of CYP in any fostering setting, the East Midlands the least (64.5%).

Children's homes

As of the 1st September 2024, English local authorities placed 9,272 children or young people (CYP) in residential children's homes, this equated to 11.36% of the children looked after (CLA) population. Of these placements only 1,058 were with 347 local authority operated homes, this equated to 11.41% of all registered children's home population.

The East Midlands had the highest percentage of CYP in children's homes with 14.6% of CLA and the South East had the highest total with 1,326 CYP. Yorkshire & Humber had the lowest by percentage with 9.9% and the East of England the lowest with 694 CYP.

In terms of LA operated homes, Yorkshire & Humber had the highest percentage of children living in their own LA operated homes with 24.1% and the highest total with 229. The South West had the lowest percentage of CYP in their own homes with 3.5% and the lowest total with just 28 CYP.

Please see the separate 'Residential children's home use in England – December 2024' in the appendices for deeper analysis around current use and plans to develop more LA operated homes.

Regulated Supported Accommodation

On average across England, 9.8% of CYP in care were living in registered supported accommodation. The East of England had the largest percentage of CYP placed with supported accommodation (14.7%), the North East had the least with (4.4%).

Placement with Parents

On average across England, 6% of CYP in care were living with those with parental responsibility under 'placement with parents' regulations. The North West had the highest percentage of CYP placed with parents (9.1%), the East of England had the least (3.1%).

Unregulated

The South East had the highest percentage of CYP (under 16 years) in unregulated settings of any type (1.72%), the North West had the least (0.55%). Overall, the local authorities reported a total of 860 unregulated placements of all types across England. There is a theme around the highest users of unregulated placements, as a percentage of CLA, also not having their own children's home provision.

Secure

On average across England, just under 0.12% of CYP in care were in a secure children's home. All local authorities reported a total of 96 secure placements of all types across England on September 1st, 2024. There is a theme around the highest users of secure provision, operating their own or near another's secure provision.

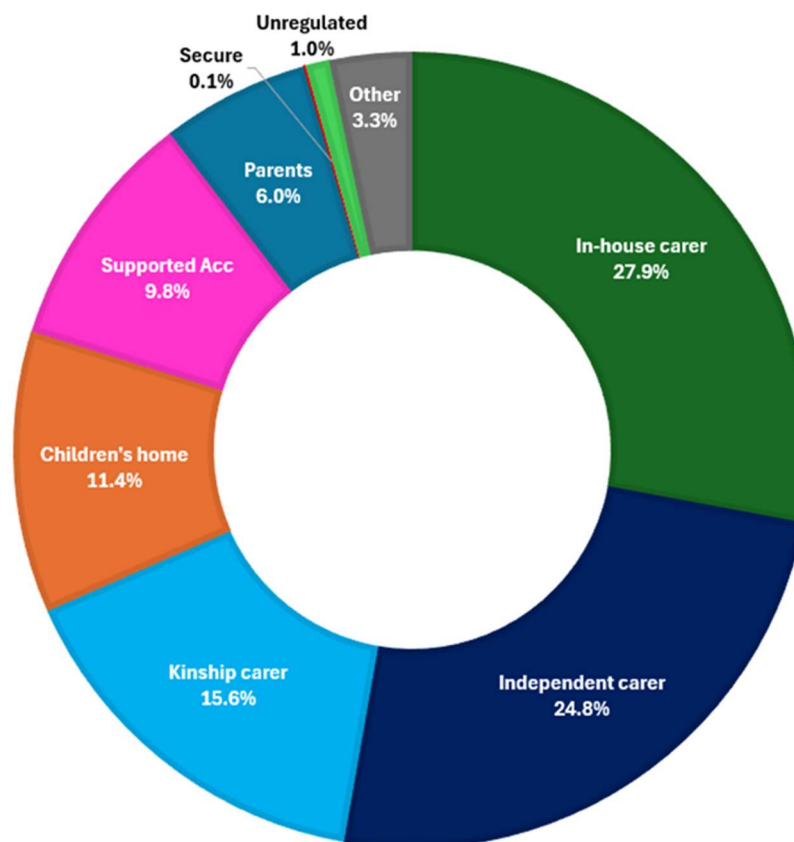
Assumptions

The data tells us that in most cases we can make 3 particular assumptions:

1. If you have a high level of in-house fostering placements, you are likely to have less IFP placements and vice versa, unless you have low levels of kinship.
2. If you have high levels of kinship care you will use less IFP placements (unless you have low levels of in-house carers) and supported accommodation.
3. The higher the amount of 'any type of fostering' placements a local authority makes, the lower the percentage of children's home and supported accommodation they will need to make.

England wide averages

When separated into types of placements, in-house mainstream foster care is the biggest area with 27.9%, closely followed by independent foster carer with 24.8% (52.7% when combined as 'mainstream fostering')



Then kinship care 15.6%, children's homes 11.4%, registered supported accommodation 9.8%, placed with parents 6.0%, other 3.3%, Unregulated 1% and Secure 0.1%.

The 'other' category includes placed for adoption (including concurrent planning), residential employment, NHS bed, family centre or parent and child unit, youth offending institution and residential school.

2. Introduction

The report

Offering analysis from a freedom of information request by Sufficiency.org.uk in September 2024 to every local authority responsible for children's social care about their current placement mix from kinship care to unregulated provision. The analysis represents responses from 150 local authorities. Local authorities with less than 100 children looked after (CLA) have not been included individually in the local authority highlight sections due to the low sample size but their data has been included in the regional and overall figures.

The intention of the report is to:

- give a clear regional and national picture of placement sufficiency by type, to assist with individual local authority sufficiency benchmarking and planning.
- investigate assumptions between placement type and over mix.
- highlight high performing local authorities and regions.
- identify regions requiring additional assistance in particular areas of placement growth.

The author

Nathan Whitley is a qualified social worker and commissioner with over 25 years' experience in children social care. Starting as a waking night in residential children's homes, he has worked in many roles within social care, particularly with children in care. He has held operational leadership roles within corporate parenting, provider services and children's commissioning a number of local authorities as well as consultancy, commissioning, and transformation roles within over 20 local authority and regional collaborations. Nathan has also led national independent fostering organisations and adoption agencies and been the director for a group of children's homes.

More recently he has been assisting local authorities and regions with their sufficiency strategies including business cases for and operating their own residential and secure provision.

Other reports

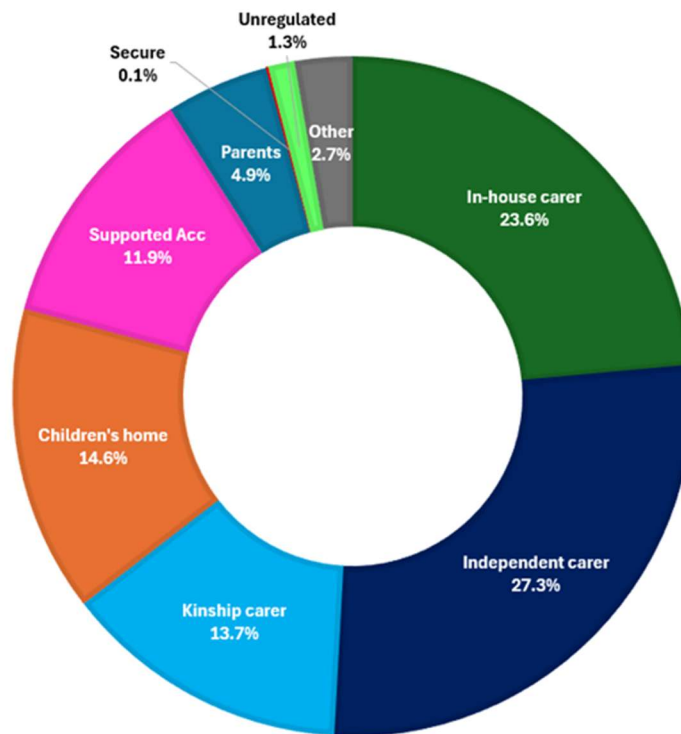
This report should read in conjunction with the 'Residential Children's Home Use in England – December 24' by contacting Nathan@sufficiency.org.uk or visiting www.sufficiency.org.uk

3. Regional Variances

East Midlands

This region has more CYP placed with independent foster carers, children's homes and supported accommodation and less CYP living with in-house foster carers, parents and kinship than the average for all England's region.

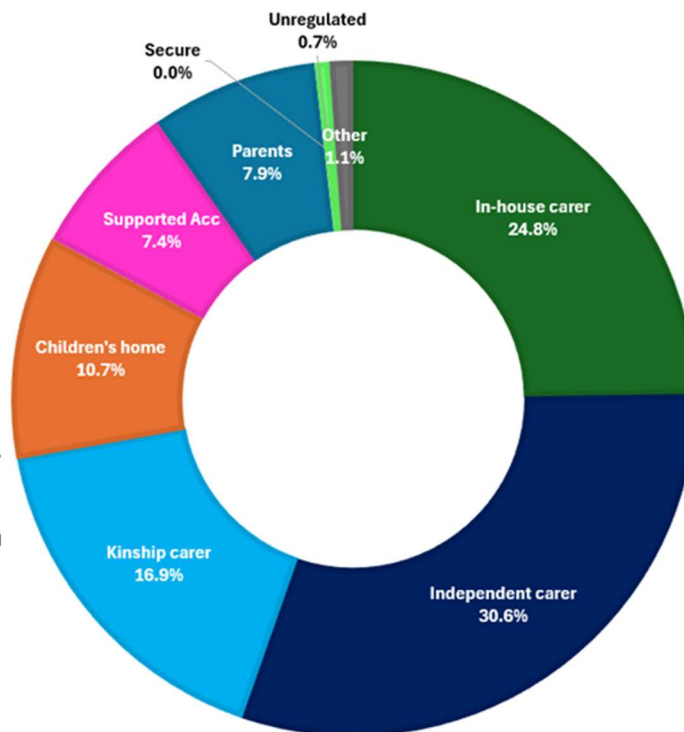
Out of all the regions, the East Midlands has the most CYP placed in children's homes (14.6%) and the least CYP living with in-house mainstream foster carers (23.6%), as a percentage of its CLA population.



West Midlands

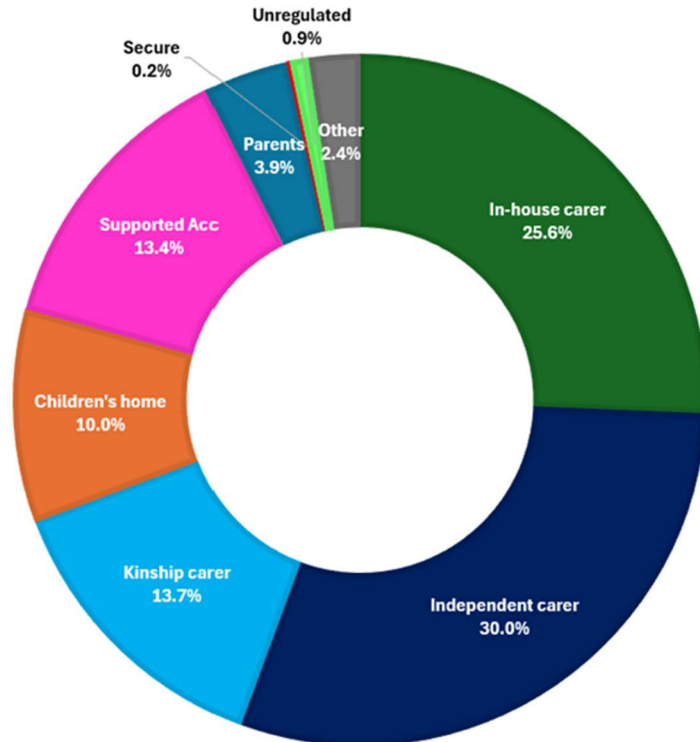
This region has more CYP placed with independent foster carers, kinship, parents and less placed in supported accommodation, with in-house foster carers, and children's homes than the average region.

The West Midlands has the most CYP living with independent foster carers (30.6%), as a percentage of its CLA population.



London

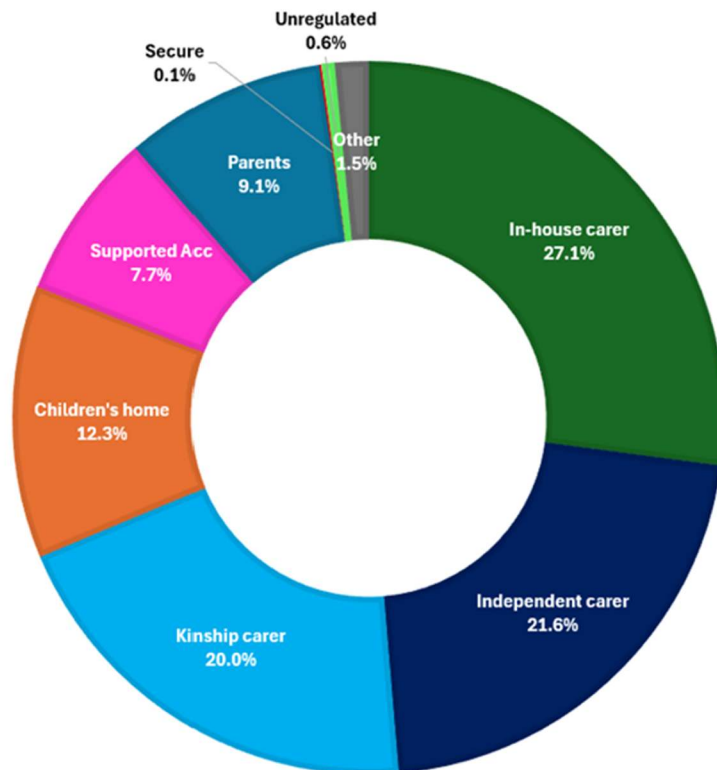
This region has more CYP placed with independent foster carers and supported accommodation, and less placed with in-house foster carers, parents, kinship and children's homes than the average region.



North West

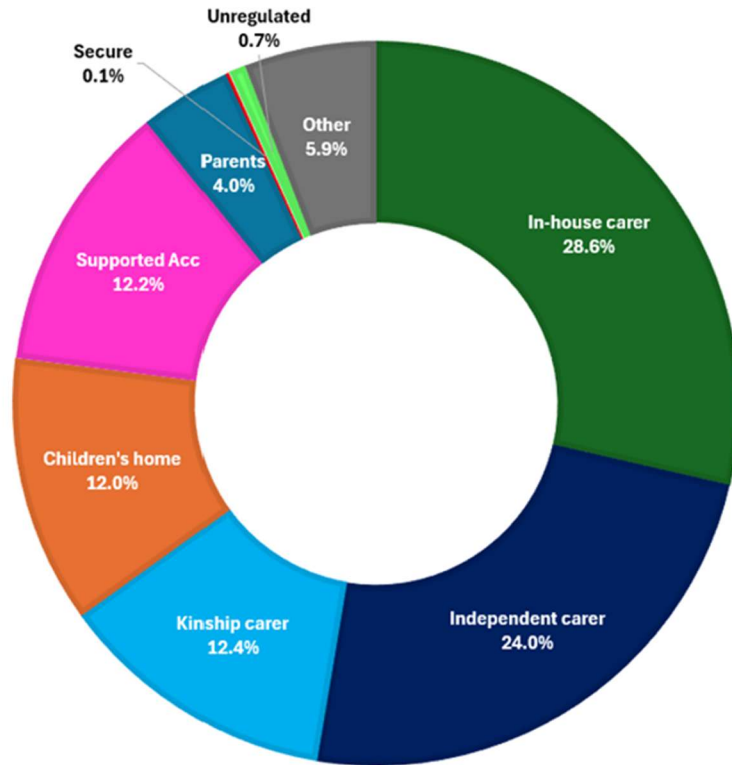
This region has more CYP placed with children's homes, parents and kinship, and less placed with in-house foster carers, independent foster carers and supported accommodation than the average region.

Of all the regions, the North West has the most CYP living with kinship carers (20%) and placed with parents (9.1%), as a percentage of its CLA population.



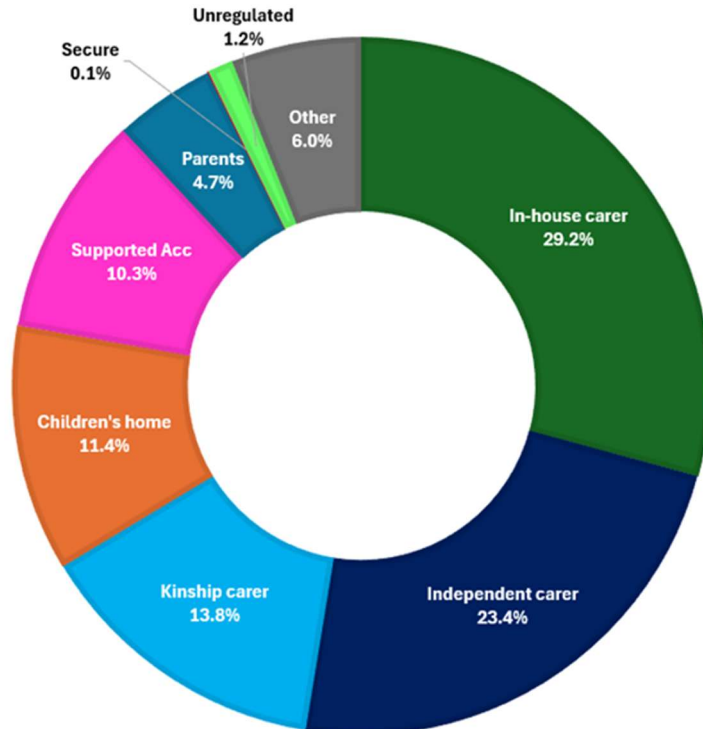
South East

This region has more CYP placed with in-house foster carers, children's homes and supported accommodation, and less placed with independent foster carers, parents and kinship than the average region.



South West

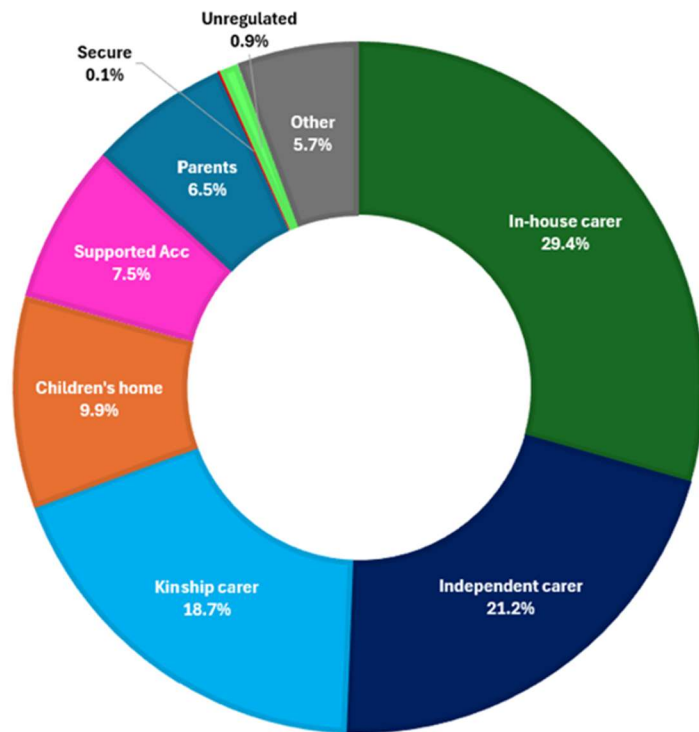
This region has more CYP placed with in-house foster carers and supported accommodation, and less placed with parents, kinship and independent foster carers than the average region. It has the average for CYP placed in children's homes.



Yorkshire & Humber

This region has more CYP placed with in-house foster carers, kinship carers and parents, and less placed in children's homes, supported accommodation and independent foster carers, than the average region.

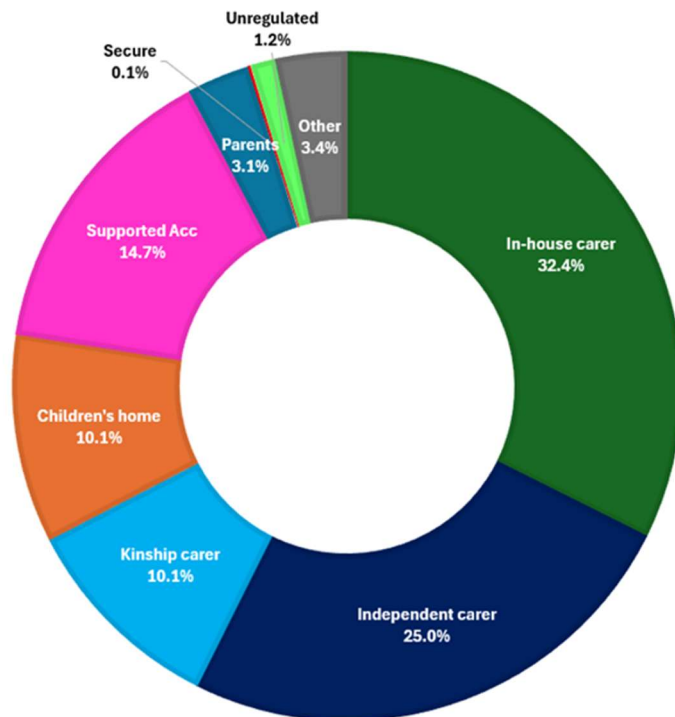
Yorkshire & Humber has the least CYP living in children's homes (9.9%), as a percentage of its CLA population.



East of England

This region has more CYP placed with in-house foster carers, kinship carers, parents and children's homes, and less placed in supported accommodation and with independent foster carers, than the average region.

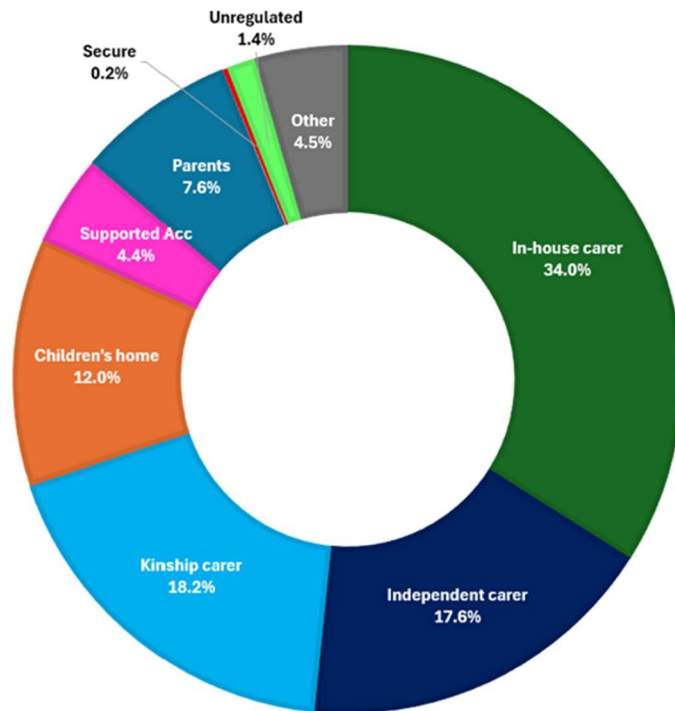
Out of all the regions, the East of England has the most CYP placed in supported accommodation (14.7%) and the least CYP living with kinship carers (10%) and parents (4.4%), as a percentage of its CLA population



North East

This region has more CYP placed with in-house foster carers, kinship carers, parents and children's homes, and less placed in supported accommodation and with independent foster carers, than the average region.

The North East has the most CYP living with in-house mainstream foster carers (34%) and has the least CYP living placed with independent foster carers (17.6%) and in supported accommodation (4.4%), as a percentage of its CLA population

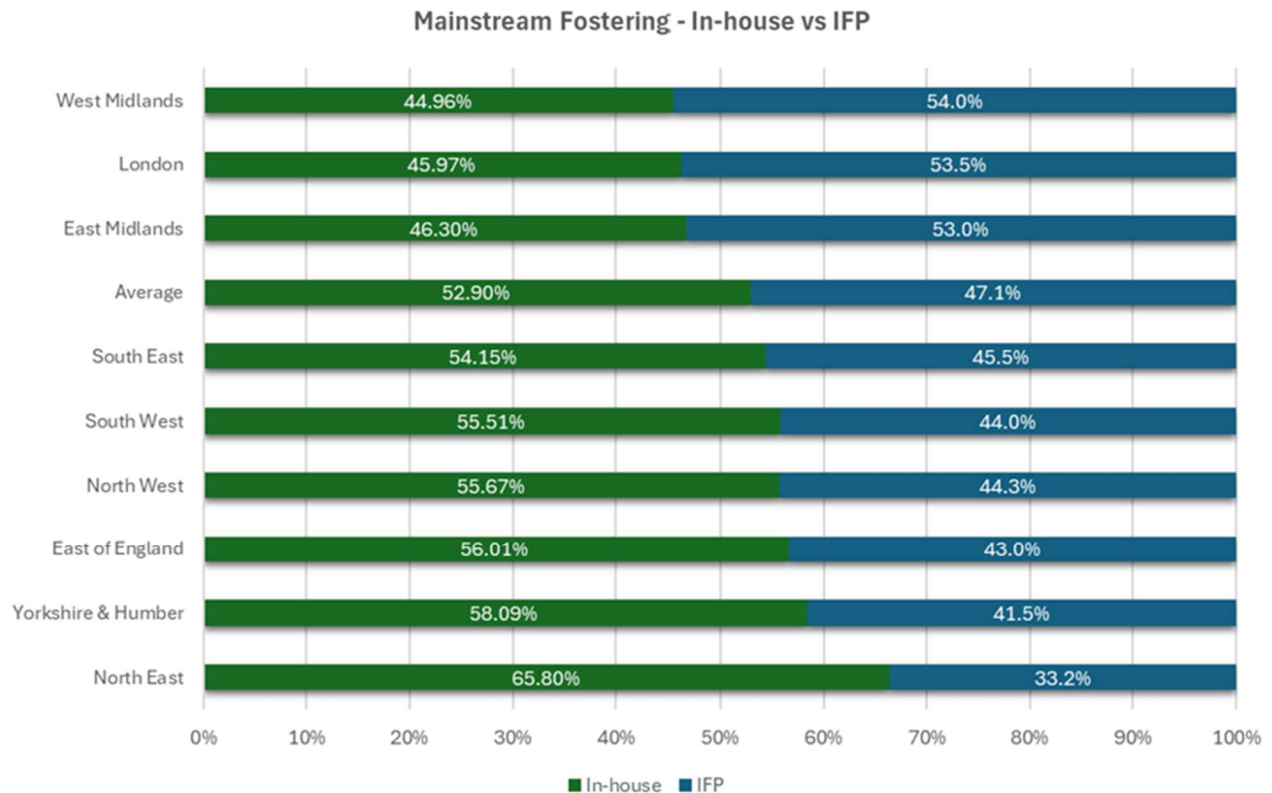


4. Fostering

a. Mainstream fostering

Across England 52.9% of children and young people (CYP) in mainstream foster care are living with in-house carers with 47.1% living with independent fostering provider (IFP) carers.

CYP living in mainstream fostering are 46% more likely to live with in-house carers if they live in the North East than the West Midlands and 24% more likely than the regional average



The above table includes all fostering placements that are not relatives or friends (kinship) or approved fostering for adoption/concurrent planning. Otherwise described as U4 or U6 placement type code set by the DfE.

Regions:

Highest

The North East has the highest in-house foster care percentages with 65.80% (+12.90% above average). Other regions with above average in-house care percentages are Yorkshire & Humber 58.09 (+5.19%), East of England 56.01% (+3.11%), North West 55.67% (+2.77%), South West 55.51% (+2.61%) and the South East 54.15% (+1.25%),

Lowest

The West Midlands has the lowest percentage of CYP with in-house foster cares at 44.96% (-7.94% below average). The two other regions with below average use of in-house mainstream carers are London with 45.97% (-6.93%) and the East Midlands with 46.30% (-6.60%).

Variance

There is a 20.9% variance in the local authority with most children and young people (CYP) living with in-house foster carers, the North East with 65.80% and the West Midlands with 44.96%.

Assumptions

If you have a high level of in-house fostering placements, you are likely to have less IFP placements and vice versa (unless you have low levels of kinship).

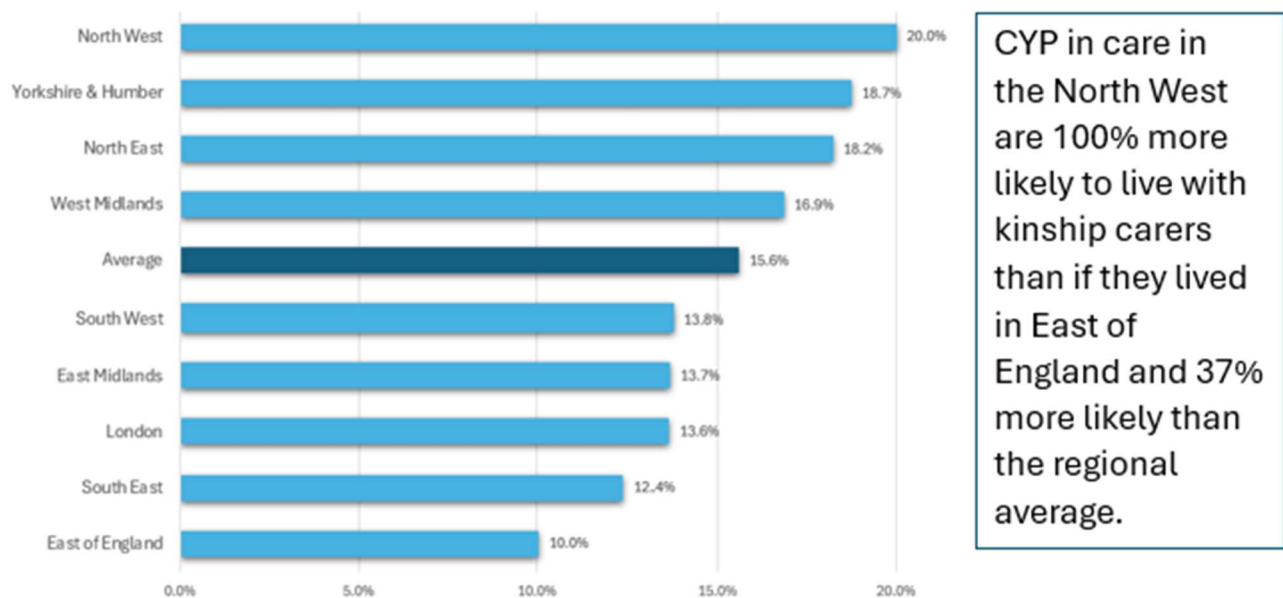
Local Authority highlights:

Birmingham, followed by Kent and then Lancashire had the highest number of CYP living with in-house mainstream foster carers. North Lincolnshire (99%), then North Yorkshire (98%) and Lincolnshire (87%) had the highest percentage of CYP living with in-house foster carers.

Local Authority	Total CYP living with in-house foster carers	Local Authority	% of CYP in fostering living with in-house carers
Birmingham (Children's Trust)	813	North Lincolnshire	99%
Kent	694	North Yorkshire	98%
Lancashire	499	Lincolnshire	87%
Leeds	492	Portsmouth	84%
Essex	491	Newcastle	83%
Hampshire	482	Northumberland	82%
Lincolnshire	383	Sunderland	81%
Durham	363	Bolton	79%
Staffordshire	347	Essex	78%
Hertfordshire	342	North Tyneside	78%

b. Kinship

Across England 15.6% of the children and young people (CYP) in care are living with kinship carers.



Regions:

Higher

The North West with 20.0% (+5.4% above average) has the highest percentage of kinship placements. The other regions with above average are Yorkshire & Humber 18.7% (+4.1%), North East 18.2% (+3.6%) and West Midlands 16.9% (+2.3%).

Lower

The East of England with 10% (-2.2% below average) has the lowest use of kinship for children in care placements. The three other regions with below average use are the South East with 12.4% (-2.2%), London 13.6% (-1%), East Midlands 13.7% (0.9%) and South West 13.8% (-0.8%).

Variance

There is a 10% variance in the local authority with most CYP living with kinship carers, the North West with 20.0% and the East of England with 10%.

Assumptions

If you have high levels of kinship care you will use less IFP placements (unless you have low levels of in-house carers) and you are more likely to use 'placement with parents'.

Local Authority highlights:

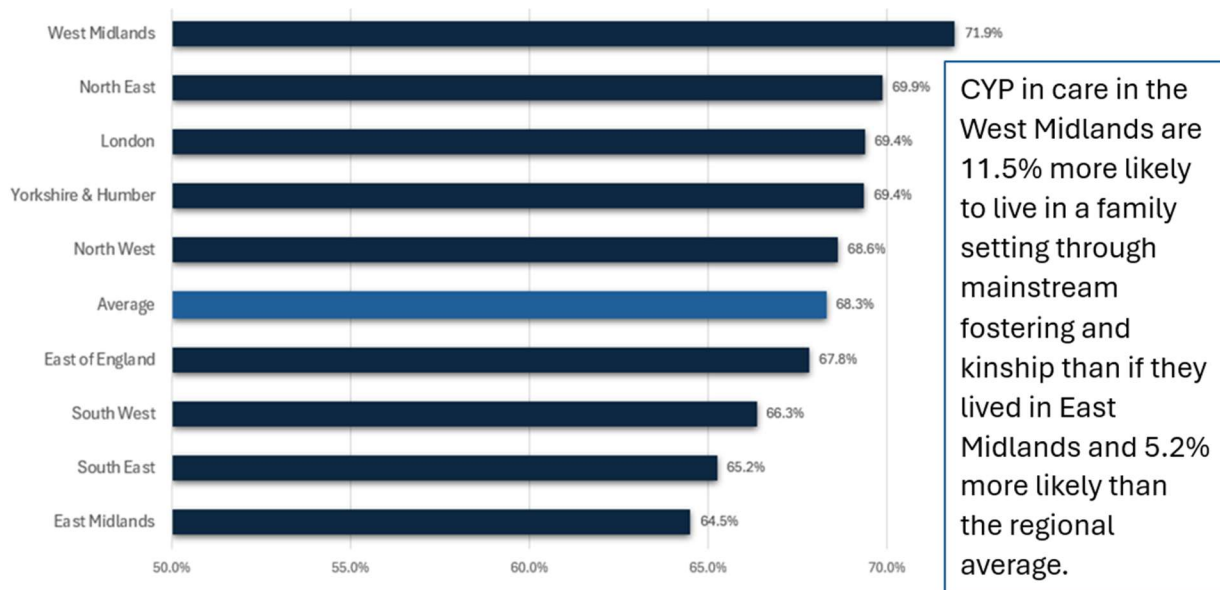
Liverpool, followed by Manchester and Leeds, had the highest numbers of CYP living with kinship carers.

North Tyneside (31%), then Manchester (29.8%) and Liverpool (29.1%), had the largest percentage of CYP living with Kinship carers.

Local Authority	Highest No. of kinship placements	Local Authority	Highest % of CLA population living with kinship carers
Liverpool	444	North Tyneside	32.1%
Manchester	400	Manchester	29.8%
Leeds	351	Liverpool	29.1%
Bradford	323	York	28.9%
Hampshire	283	North Yorkshire	28.3%
Lancashire	276	Stockton on Tees	28.0%
Worcestershire	224	Shropshire	27.9%
Stoke on Trent	223	West Berkshire	25.6%
Staffordshire	217	Trafford	24.8%
Northamptonshire (Children's Trust)	215	Solihull	24.3%

c. All foster placements incl Kinship – family based care

Across England 68.3% of children and young people (CYP) in care are living in a family setting, through mainstream fostering or kinship care.



Regions:

Higher

The West Midlands, with 71.9% (+3.6% above average) has the highest proportion of children and young people (CYP) living in a family setting through all types of fostering including kinship. The other regions with above average use are North East 69.9% (+1.6%), Yorkshire & Humber 69.4% (+1.1%), London also 69.4% (+1.1%) and the North West 68.6% (+0.3%).

Lower

The East Midlands, with 64.5% (-3.8% below average) has the lowest use of family-based care through all fostering including kinship. The three other regions below average are the South East with 65.2% (-3.1%), South West 66.3% (-2%) and East of England 67.8% (-0.5%).

Variance

There is a 7.4% variance in the local authority with most CYP living with any type of fostering, the West Midlands with 71.9% and the East Midlands with 64.5%.

Assumptions

The higher level of any type of fostering placement a local authority makes the lower the percentage of children's home and supported accommodation they will need to make.

Regional highlights:

Birmingham has the largest number of CYP in any type of fostering, followed by Hampshire and Kent.

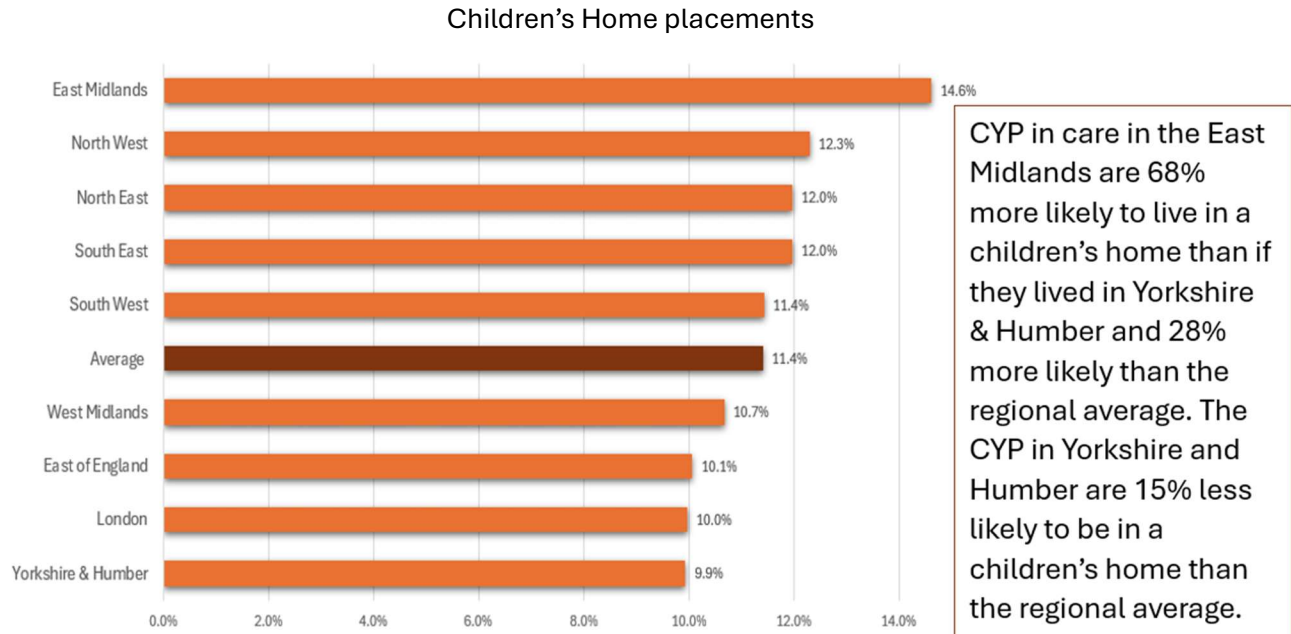
Portsmouth has the largest percentage of CYP in any type of foster care (89.8%), then York (82.2%) and Hartlepool (82.1%).

Local Authority	Total CLA in all foster care	Local Authority	% of CLA in all foster care
Birmingham (Children's Trust)	1725	Portsmouth	89.8%
Hampshire	1269	York	82.2%
Kent	1153	Hartlepool	82.1%
Lancashire	1101	Luton	81.6%
Liverpool	1098	Croydon	80.1%
Leeds	1094	North Lincolnshire	79.0%
Manchester	1007	Newcastle	78.9%
Bradford	927	Wiltshire	78.3%
Staffordshire	886	North East Lincolnshire	77.8%
Stoke on Trent	824	Islington	76.5%

5. Children's Homes

a. Children's home use

Across England 11.36% of CYP in care are living in a residential children's home.



Regions:

Higher

The East Midlands, with 14.6% (+3.2% above average) uses children's home placements more than any other region. There are three other regions with above average use of children's homes, these are the North West 12.3% (+0.9%), South East and the North East both with 12% (+0.6%) and the South West with 11.4%.

Lower

Yorkshire & Humber with 9.9% (-1.5% below average) is the least likely region to use children's home placements. The other regions with average or below use are London 10% (-1.4%), East of England 10.1% (-1.3%), West Midlands 10.7% (-0.7%) and the West Midlands 10.7% (-0.7%).

Variance

There is a 5.7% variance in the local authority with most CYP living in a residential children's home, the East Midlands with 14.6% and Yorkshire & Humber with 9.9% (-1.5% below average).

The other regions with average or below use are South West 11.4%, West Midlands 10.7% (-0.7%), East of England 10.1% (-1.3%) and London 10% (-1.4%).

Local authority highlights:

Lancashire had the highest number of CYP in children's homes (273), followed by Birmingham (228) and Bradford (223).

Nottinghamshire had the highest percentage of CYP living in children's homes (21.0%), then Nottingham (19.8%) and Richmond upon Thames (18.9%).

North Lincolnshire had the lowest percentage of CYP living in children's homes (3.4%) followed by Islington (3.9%) and Luton (4.5%).

Local Authority	No. of CYP in children's homes	Local Authority	Highest % of CYP in children's homes	Local Authority	Lowest % of CYP in children's homes
Lancashire	273	Nottinghamshire	21.0%	North Lincolnshire	3.4%
Birmingham (Children's Trust)	228	Nottingham	19.8%	Islington	3.9%
Bradford (C&F Trust)	223	Richmond upon Thames	18.9%	Luton	4.5%
Nottinghamshire	200	Westmorland and Furness	18.4%	York	4.5%
Derbyshire	173	West Sussex	18.4%	Redbridge	4.8%
Hampshire	171	Oxfordshire	18.0%	Tower Hamlets	5.0%
West Sussex	168	Lewisham	17.9%	Slough (Children First)	5.0%
Leeds	163	Buckinghamshire	17.9%	Wakefield	5.4%
Kent	158	Northumberland	17.8%	Torbay	5.4%
Northamptonshire (Children's Trust)	156	Wokingham	16.9%	North Yorkshire	5.5%

b. LA operated children's homes

Lancashire has the highest numbers of CYP living in its own local authority operated homes (50), followed by Hull (36) and both Derbyshire and Lincolnshire (35).

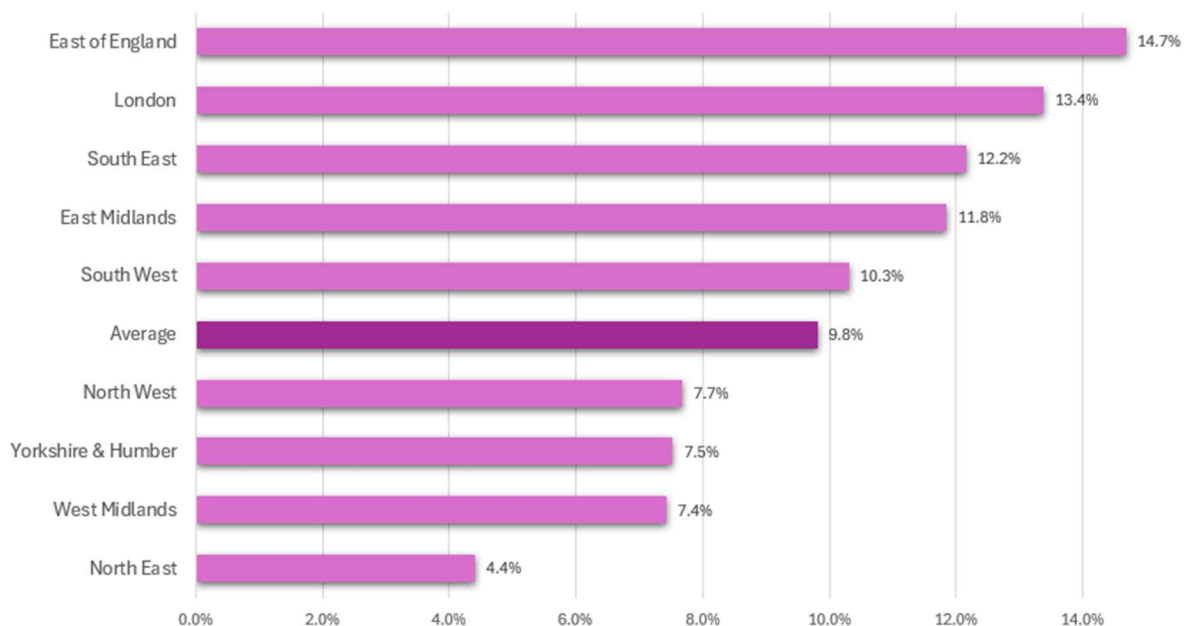
North Lincolnshire has the highest percentage of CYP in children's homes living in their own provision (71.4%), then Hull (62.1%) and North Yorkshire (53.6%). The English average is 11.4%.

Local Authority	CYP in LA or trust operated homes	Local Authority	% of CYP in children's homes in LA or trust operated homes
Lancashire	50	North Lincolnshire	71.4%
Hull	36	Hull	62.1%

Derbyshire	35	North Yorkshire	53.6%
Lincolnshire	35	Lincolnshire	47.9%
Leeds	31	Wakefield	42.1%
Sunderland (Together for Children)	31	Sunderland (Together for Children)	40.3%
Hampshire	28	Kirklees	36.6%
Leicester	28	North Tyneside	32.1%
West Sussex	28	Darlington	31.6%
Hertfordshire	27	North East Lincolnshire	31.1%

6. Supported Accommodation

On average across England, 9.8% of CYP in care are currently living in registered supported accommodation.



Regions:

Lower

The North East has the lowest percentage of CYP living in supported accommodation with 4.4%. Three other local authorities have lower than average percentage of CYP living in supported accommodation, North West with 7.7%, Yorkshire & Humber with 7.5% and the West Midlands with 7.4%.

Higher

East of England has the highest percentage of CYP living in supported accommodation with 14.7%. Three other local authorities also have a larger percentage than average of CYP living in supported accommodation, South West with 10.3%, East Midlands with 11.8%, South East with 12.2% and London with 13.4%.

Local authority highlights:

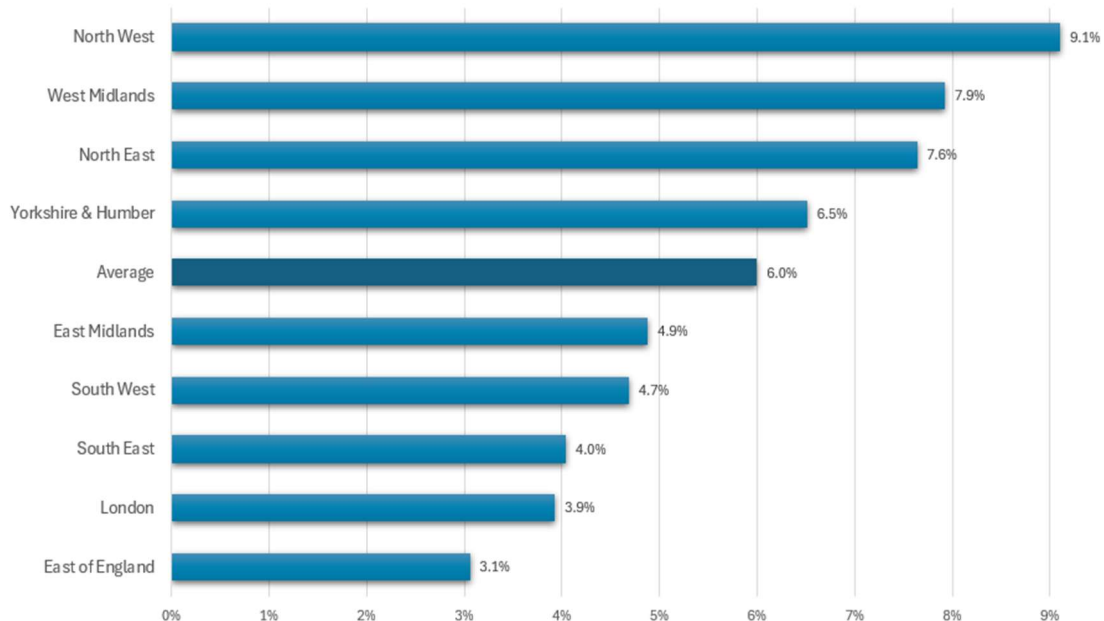
Kent has the highest number of CYP in supported accommodation, followed by Hampshire and Birmingham.

Doncaster has the highest percentage of CYP in supported accommodation (22.2%), then Slough (21.9%) and Kensington & Chelsea (21.3%). Portsmouth has the lowest percentage of CYP in supported accommodation (0.3%), followed by Newcastle (1.2%) and Middlesbrough (1.7%). The English average is 9.8%.

Local Authority	All Supported accommodation	Local authority	Highest % of CYP in supported accommodation	Local Authority	Lowest % of CYP in supported accommodation
Kent	331	Doncaster	22.2%	Portsmouth	0.3%
Hampshire	248	Slough (Children First)	21.9%	Newcastle	1.2%
Birmingham (Children's Trust)	213	Kensington and Chelsea	21.3%	Middlesbrough	1.7%
Norfolk	197	Hounslow	21.2%	South Tyneside	2.0%
Essex	179	West Berkshire	21.1%	Hartlepool	2.3%
Manchester	171	Kingston upon Thames	18.9%	Sefton	2.3%
Hertfordshire	167	Hammersmith & Fulham	18.6%	Tameside	2.7%
Nottinghamshire	146	Southwark	18.4%	North East Lincolnshire	2.8%
Northamptonshire (Children's Trust)	144	Richmond Upon Thames	18.0%	York	2.9%
Bristol	129	Kent	17.2%	Blackburn & Darwen	3.0%

7. Placement with Parents

On average across England, 6% of children and young people (CYP) in care are currently living with those with parental responsibility under 'placement with parents' regulations.



Regions:

Higher

The North West has the highest percentage of CYP placed with parents with 9.1%. Three other local authorities have a higher-than-average percentage of CYP placed with parents, West Midlands 7.9%, North East 7.6% and Yorkshire & Humber with 6.5%.

Lower

East of England has the lowest percentage of CYP placed with parents with 3.1%. Four other local authorities also have a lower percentage than average of CYP placed with parents, East Midlands with 4.9%, South West with 4.7%, South East with 4% and London with 3.9%.

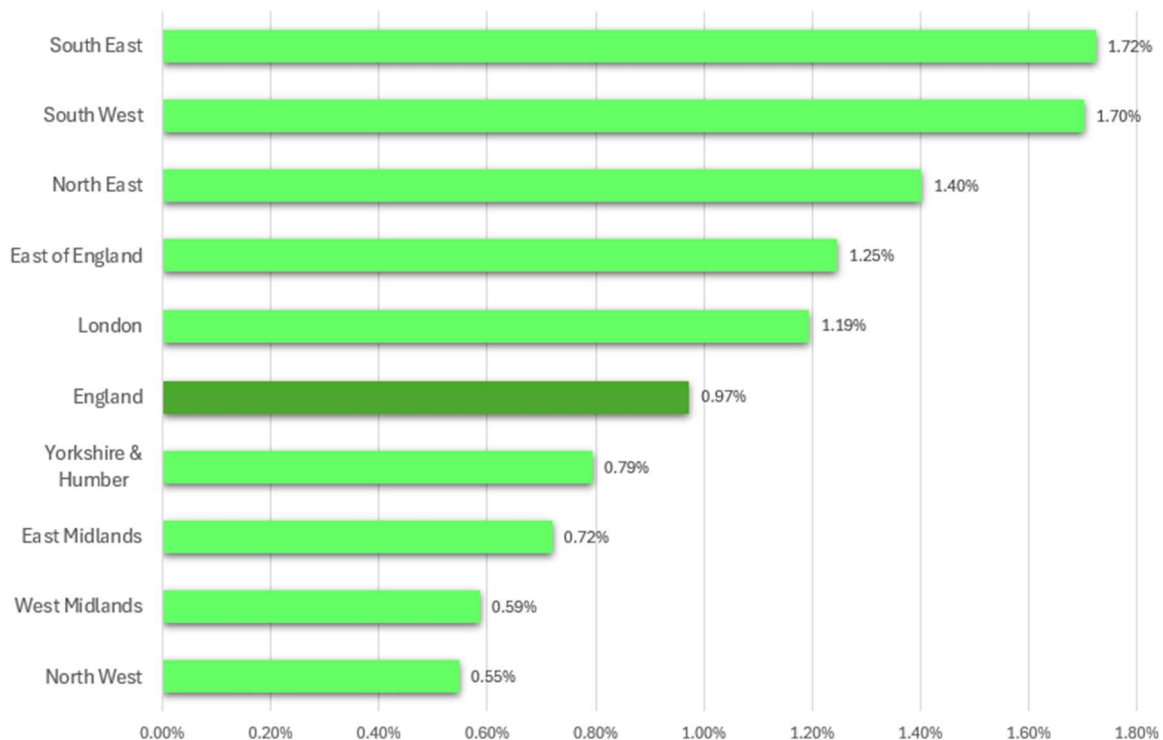
Local authority highlights:

Liverpool has the highest number of CYP placed with parents, followed by Birmingham and Manchester. Knowsley has the highest percentage of CYP placed with parents (17.4%), then Darlington (13.1%) and Shropshire (12.9%). The English average is 6%.

Local Authority name	Total CYP placed with parents	Local Authority name	% of CYP placed with parents
Liverpool	191	Knowsley	17.4%
Birmingham (Children's Trust)	173	Darlington	13.1%
Manchester	150	Shropshire	12.9%
Lancashire	118	Isle of Wight	12.7%
Staffordshire	116	Liverpool	12.5%
Stoke on Trent	115	Redcar & Cleveland	11.9%
Leeds	109	Cheshire West and Chester	11.6%
Hampshire	104	Halton	11.4%
Durham	101	Solihull	11.4%
Shropshire	96	Manchester	11.2%

8. Unregulated

On average across England, just under 1% of CYP in care are currently in unregulated placements (under 16s). All local authorities reported a total of 860 unregulated placements of all types across England on September 1st, 2024.



Regions:

Higher

The South East has the highest percentage of CYP in these placements with 1.72%. Four other local authorities have a higher-than-average percentage of CYP in unregulated placements (under16), South West 1.7%, North East 1.4%, East of England 1.25% and London 1.19%.

Lower

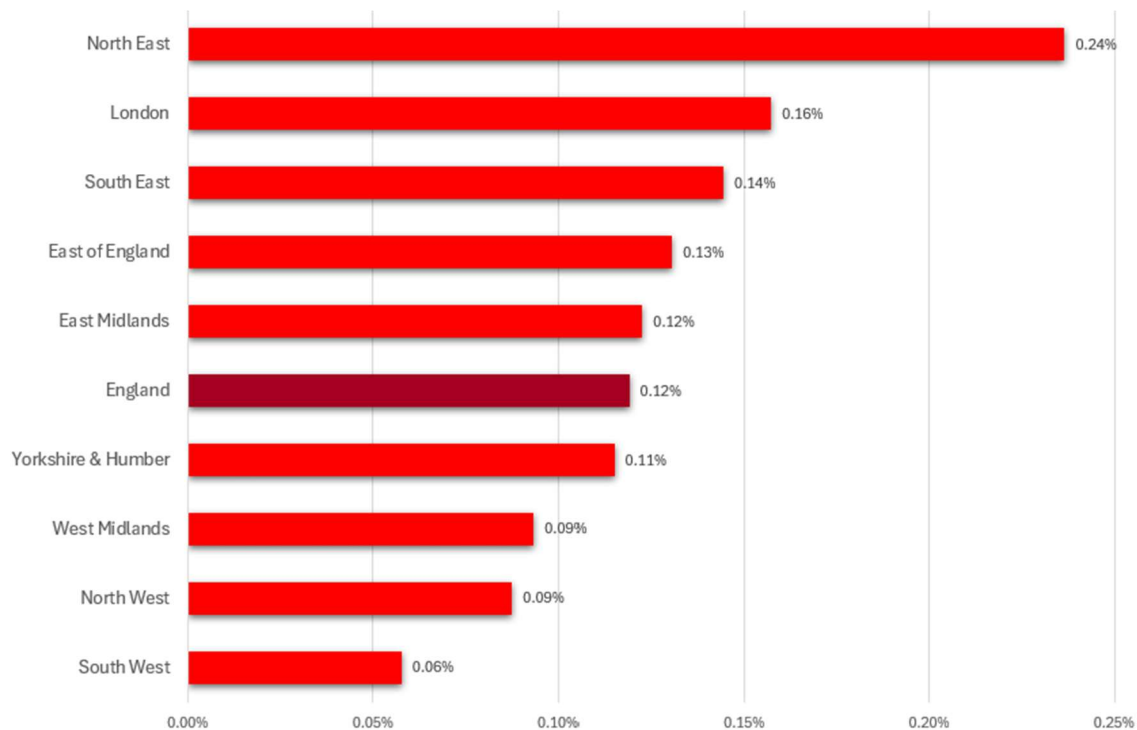
The North West has the lowest percentage of CYP living in unregulated (under 16s) with 0.55%. Three other local authorities also have a lower percentage than average of CYP placed in unregulated accommodation, Yorkshire & Humber with 0.79%, East Midlands with 0.72% and West Midlands with 0.59%.

Local authority highlights:

The data provided is not complete enough due to non-disclosures to give a table but there is a constant theme around the highest users as a percentage of CLA not having their own children's home provision.

9. Secure

On average across England, just under 0.12% of CYP in care are currently a secure children's home. All local authorities reported a total of 96 secure placements of all types across England on September 1st, 2024.



Regions:

Higher

The North East has the highest percentage of CYP in these placements with 0.24%. Four other local authorities have a higher-than-average percentage of CYP in secure, London 0.16%, South East 0.14%, East of England 0.13% and East Midlands with 0.12%.

Lower

The South West has the lowest percentage of CYP living in a secure home at 0.06%. Three other local authorities also have a lower percentage than average of CYP placed in secure, Yorkshire & Humber with 0.11%, and both West Midlands and North West with 0.09%.

Local authority highlights:

The data provided is not complete enough due to non-disclosures to give a table but there is a theme around the highest users of secure provision, operating their own or near another's secure provision.