

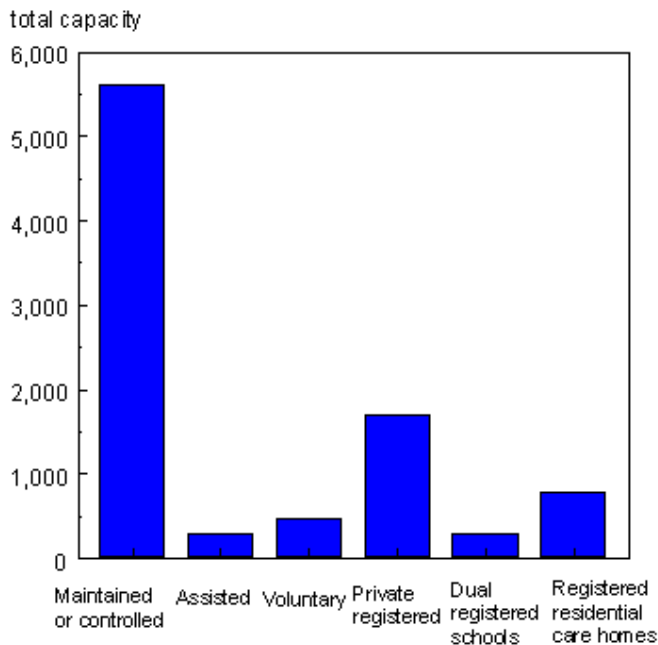
Children's Homes at 31 March 2000, England

This bulletin presents statistics on children's homes in England, at 31 March 2000.

Main findings:

- At 31 March 2000 there were 1,146 homes in England which accommodated children, 7% less than in 1997.
- 672 of these were maintained community homes, 14% less than in 1997.
- The number of private registered children's homes has increased from 221 at 31 March 1997 to 256 at 31 March 2000; a rise of 16%.
- The total capacity of all homes was 9,164 places in 2000, compared to 10,869 in 1997; a decrease of 16%.
- The average capacity of all homes was 8.0 places in 2000, a fall of 9% from 1997.
- The average occupancy rate of children's homes at 31 March 2000 was 72%.

Total capacity by type of home at 31 March 2000



Commentary

1. This Bulletin presents data on children's homes in England at 31 March 2000. These were provided by local authorities on the statistical return CH1, or in the case of voluntary and assisted community homes, provided separately to the Department of Health. These figures were last published in 1997 when the collection changed from annual to triennial.

2. Local authorities submitted a form for each home which accommodates children. Data was collected on the location of the home, type of home, facilities provided, age criterion for accommodation and maximum number of children that can be accommodated. All 150 local authorities provided data for this bulletin.

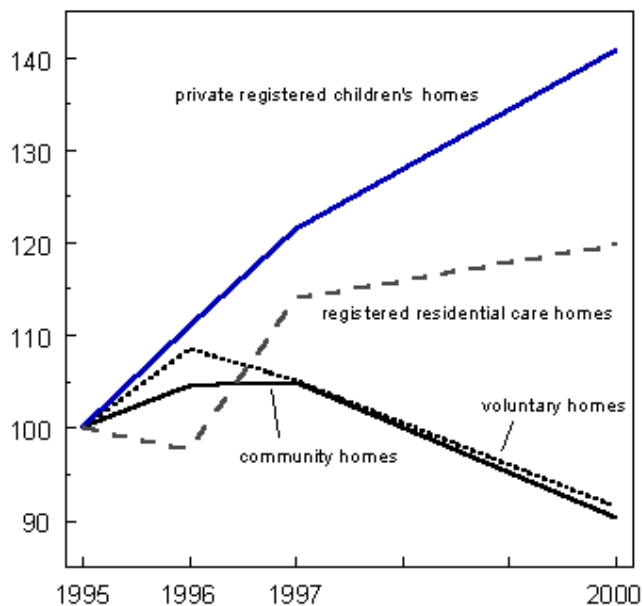
The number of children's homes

3. At 31 March 2000 there were 1,146 homes in England which accommodated children (Table A). This compares with 1,232 at 31 March 1997 (a decrease of 7%) and 1,139 at 31 March 1995 (an increase of 1%). Descriptions of the different types of home covered by the CH1 return are provided on Page 5. The most significant decrease was in the number of maintained community homes, which have fallen by 14% from 783 (64% of all homes) in 1997 to 672 (59% of all homes) in 2000. However, there have been increases in the numbers of other types of homes, notably private registered children's homes which have risen from 221 in 1997 to 256 in 2000; an increase of 16%. Since 31 March 1995, the number of these homes has increased by 41%. These trends are illustrated in Figure 1, which presents the numbers of each kind of home expressed as an index (where the figures for 1995=100).

4. The majority of homes (1,052) accommodated both boys and girls. There were 52 homes for boys only, and 42 homes for girls only.

Figure 1: Trends in the number of different types of home, at 31 March 1995 to 2000

Index of the number of homes. 1995=100



The total capacity of children's homes

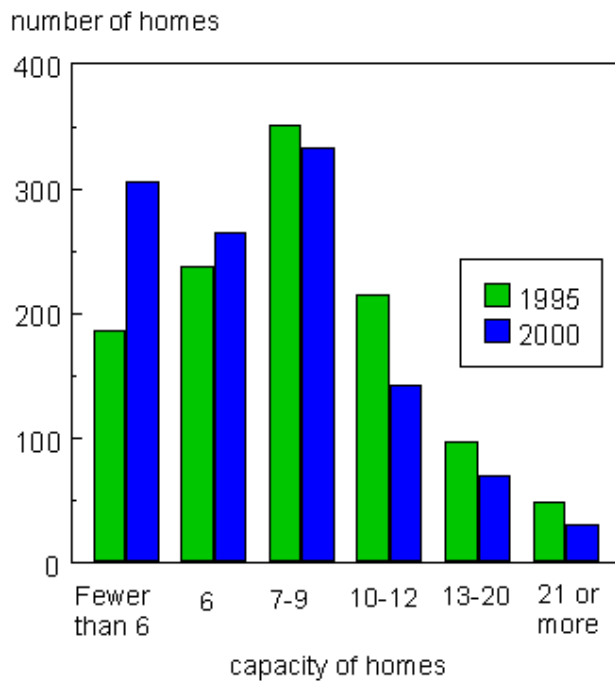
5. The CH1 return requires local authorities to provide figures for the capacity of homes, not in terms of the number of children accommodated in the homes at 31 March, but in terms of the maximum number of children who **can** be accommodated at any one time in the home. There has been a decrease in the total capacity of homes over recent years. At 31 March 1997 the total capacity of all homes was 10,869 places compared to 9,164 in 2000, a decrease of 16% (Table B). Over this period there were decreases in the total capacity of all types of homes except private registered children's homes, which reflects the change in the distribution of the number of homes. The total capacity of private registered homes in 2000 was 5% higher than in 1997 and 29% higher than in 1995. 61% of the total capacity of homes at 31 March 2000 was provided by maintained and controlled community homes (see the chart on the front page).

The average capacity of children's homes

6. Table C shows that the average capacity per home has been falling steadily for all types of homes over the last five years. The average capacity of all homes has decreased from 9.4 places in 1995 to 8.0 places in 2000; a decline of 15%. The largest fall was for voluntary children's homes, where the average capacity has decreased by 32% since 1995. Private registered children's homes are the smallest on average, with 6.7 places at 31 March 2000, compared with assisted community homes, which averaged 13.4 places. Dual registered schools had an average capacity of 24.8 places.

7. Recent changes in the capacity of homes can also be seen in Table D and in Figure 2. The number of large homes has fallen, while the number of smaller homes has risen steadily. At 31 March 2000, 101 homes (9%) could accommodate 13 or more children; this compares to 139 (11%) in 1997 and 147 (13%) in 1995. In contrast, 50% of homes at 31 March 2000 accommodated 6 or fewer children compared with 43% in 1997 and 37% in 1995.

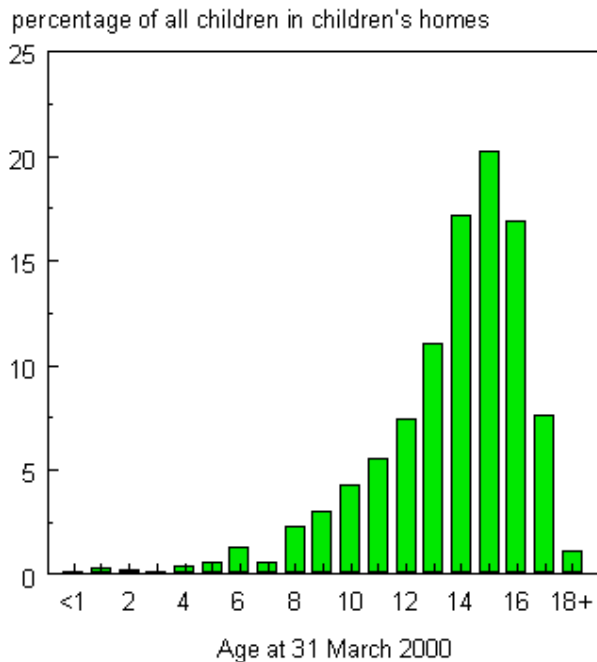
Figure 2: Number of homes by capacity, at 31 March 1995 and 2000



The age ranges for which accommodation was available

8. Local authorities provided information on the age ranges for which accommodation was **available** in each home at 31 March 2000. (The age ranges of the children actually accommodated at that date are likely to be narrower in most cases.) In Table E, homes are classified according to the youngest and oldest ages that they could accommodate. At 31 March 2000, of those homes which provided the information, 626 or 56% set a minimum age of between 10 and 15 years and a maximum of 16 or over. 403 homes (36% of those providing information) were able to accommodate children under 10 years of age. One small private registered children's home took children aged between 0 and 6.

Figure 3: Children placed in children's homes at 31 March 2000, by age



9. Figure 3 illustrates the age distribution of children accommodated in all children's homes at 31 March 2000, using data provided by local authorities about their looked after children (the SSDA903 return). It can be seen that most children placed in children's homes were teenagers although 9% were under the age of 10. 1

Special facilities

10. Table F summarises the information supplied about any special facilities provided by the homes. In total, 687 homes (60%) were recorded as having special facilities at 31 March 2000. This compares with 66% in 1997. There may however have been some under-reporting of facilities in the most recent collection. Homes can have more than one facility so the sum of the columns in Table F exceeds the total number of homes offering special facilities.

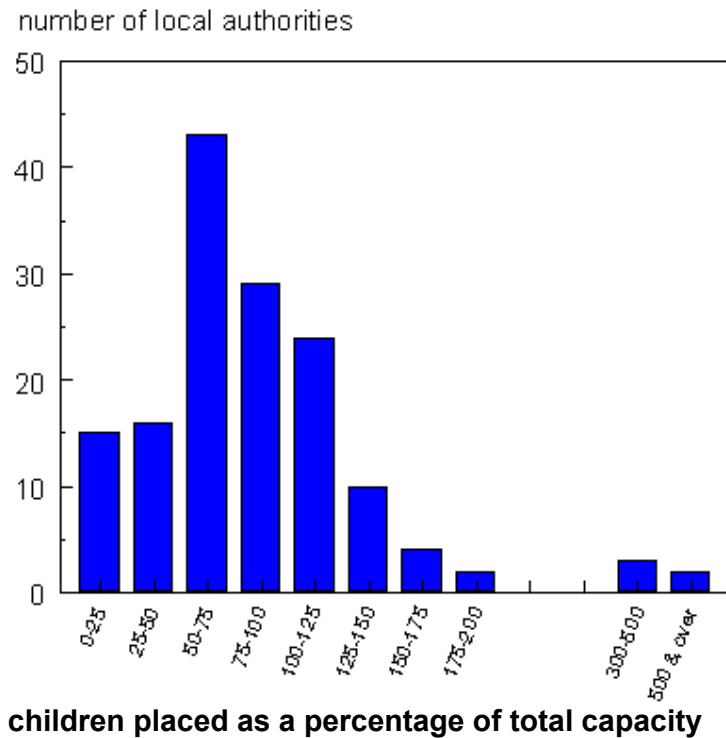
11. The most common facility was the provision for respite care. 337 homes offered this facility, although this number has fallen by 24% since 1997. There have also been decreases in the number of homes which provided facilities for children on remand or police bail and those which provided a hostel or semi-independence unit. In contrast, there have been increases since 1997 in the provision of educational facilities, facilities for children with learning disabilities and facilities for children with physical/sensory disabilities.

12. 64% of community homes provided special facilities, compared with 30% of voluntary homes and 47% of private registered children's homes, although this may in part reflect some under-reporting for the last two categories.

Children placed compared with places available

13. In Tables G and H the capacity of homes is compared with the number of looked after children placed in homes at 31 March 2000 (using data from the SSDA903 return).^[1] Table G shows this comparison by type of home. At 31 March 2000, 6,559 ^[2] looked after children were placed in children's homes, which had a total capacity of 9,164; an occupancy rate of 72%. Community homes had on average the highest occupancy rate (81%). The rate for residential care homes is relatively low; this is because they provide accommodation for both children and adults.

Figure 4: Number of children placed in homes by each local authority, expressed as a percentage of the total capacity of the homes located in those authorities, at 31 March 2000



14. Table H shows a comparison between the capacity of homes **located** in each local authority and the number of children placed in homes, by each local authority at 31 March 2000. There is much variation between the 150 local authorities as can be seen in Figure 4. 45 local authorities placed more looked after children in children's homes than the number of places available within their authority. These have percentages greater than 100% in Table H. In particular, Lambeth placed 174 looked after children in children's homes whereas the total capacity of the homes located in Lambeth was reported as 17. Placing looked after children in homes located outside the authority appears to be most common in London; 19 authorities in London had percentages greater than 100%.

15. At the other extreme, 12 local authorities had ratios of less than 30%. In particular, Devon only placed 33 of their looked after children in children's homes although it reported the capacity for 201. A reason for this may be that out of the 25 children's homes located in Devon, 12 of them were residential care homes, so that many of the places reported may be filled by adults. This effect could distort the total capacity figures of those authorities with a high number of registered residential care homes, so care must be taken when comparisons between different local authorities are carried out. A table showing the breakdown of types of homes by local authorities (Table I), including the numbers of residential care homes, is available on the internet at www.doh.gov.uk/public/stats3.htm.

Small unregistrable homes

16. All figures presented in this Bulletin exclude small unregistrable homes. These are small privately operated children's homes which provide care for fewer than four children or young people at a time. Previously they were not subject to inspection or registration. However, the Department of Health announced in the White Paper '*Modernising Social Services*' that all children's homes would be subject to inspection and registration regardless of the numbers of children cared for. All existing homes were required to apply for registration with the local authority in whose area they are located, by 31 December 2000. From April 2002, they will be regulated, under the Care Standards Act 2000, by the National Care Standards Commission. Hence in future, details of these homes will be included in these statistics.

17. During the year ending 31 March 2000, local authorities reported that there were 172 small unregistrable homes. This is a 93% increase from 1997 when 89 of these homes were identified. This sharp increase is due, at least in part, to improved reporting within certain local authorities. It was reported that small unregistrable homes were located in 47 local authorities, and that several authorities had more than 10 of these homes. However, the Department has evidence that there are many more homes of this kind that are not being reported.

18. Percentages in the tables may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

19. Symbols used in tables

- zero

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Further enquiries

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***Statistics Division
Department of Health
March 2001***

**Bulletin 2001/9
Published 29 March 2001
ISBN 1 84182 353 8
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References:

1. 'Children looked after by local authorities, year ending 31 March 2000, England' www.doh.gov.uk/public/stats3.htm

2. Includes children in dual registered schools and registered residential care homes and for this reason is higher than the number in children's homes reported in the referenced publication (6,300). Excludes children placed in homes under agreed series of short term placements.

Definitions of children's homes

The different types of homes covered in this Bulletin are described below:

Maintained community homes

Homes which are fully funded, maintained, and directly managed by a local authority. (Section 53(3)(a) of the Children Act 1989 refers)

Controlled community homes

Homes which are provided by a voluntary organisation but predominantly managed by a local authority. (Section 53(4) of the Children Act 1989 refers)

Assisted community homes

Homes which are provided by a voluntary organisation with assistance and some funding from a local authority. (Section 53(5) of the Children Act 1989 refers)

Voluntary children's homes

Homes which are outside of the community system and provided by non-profit making voluntary organisations (normally registered as charities). All voluntary children's homes must be registered with the Department of Health and are subject to inspection by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI). (Section 60 of the Children Act 1989 refers)

Private registered children's homes

Homes which are run by private individuals, companies or organisations for profit, and which are registered with social services. (Section 63 of the Children Act 1989 refers)

Dual registered schools

Homes defined as boarding schools that provide accommodation for more than 3 children, for more than 295 days a year. They are registered both with Registrars, appointed by DfEE to maintain registers of independent schools (Education Act 1944 or Education Act 1993), and with the local authority (Section 63 of the Children Act 1989).

Registered residential care homes

Care homes which accommodate children and are registered under the Residential Homes Act 1984. The service they provide will normally include an element of personal care or nursing care and is therefore appropriate for children in need of health care. They do not include hospitals, or facilities provided by NHS/health trusts.

Small unregistrable homes

Homes accommodating fewer than four children which are run by private organisations for profit.