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# Children's Social Services in Scotland



**CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS**



## **Key facts**

### **Children and Families**

- Children receiving social services can be aged from 0 (or pre-birth) to 18. For some young people who have been looked after by a local authority, a social work or social worker-led service may continue up to the age of 26.
- The reasons why social work involvement may be necessary vary, but usually the parents, children and/or whole family will be experiencing a combination of practical, emotional, and relationship difficulties.
- Children and parents in all income groups and with a wide range of disabilities, emotional and relationship difficulties may be assessed as in need of a social work service. However, families from areas of higher deprivation are more likely to receive statutory social work services.

### **Child Protection**

- During 2021, 570 Child Protection Orders were granted in emergency/high risk situations, with more orders granted for very young children.
- 4,397 initial and pre-birth Case Conferences were held – 76% of which resulted in a registration to the Child Protection Register.
- As at 31 July 2021, 2,104 children were on the Child Protection Register – the lowest this figure has been since 2002.

### **Looked after children**

- As at 31 July 2021, 13,255 children were looked after – the lowest this figure has been since 2006.
- The most common types of placements for looked after children were: at home with parents, kinship care, and with foster carers.

### **Workforce**

- In 2020, the overall headcount for children's social services was 15,830 – a 5% increase since 2015.
- The two largest subsectors in children's social services were residential child care (55%) and fieldwork services (37%).

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## 1 Introduction

This paper provides an overview of social services<sup>1</sup> provided to children and families in Scotland. <sup>2</sup> It forms one of an initial collection of contextual papers, setting out key sources of information about social care and related areas in Scotland, linking to the National Care Service Consultation proposals published in August 2021. Information on key national trends in those services is also provided. This includes provision trends, population profiles of children to whom these services are provided, and the workforce.

Official and National statistics are available for:

- Child Protection
- Children’s Hearings Duties (including the Principal Reporter)
- Looked after children
- Secure Care Accommodation

This is one of a collection of papers produced to inform draft legislation for the NCS. The collection consists of the following 6 papers on adult social care:

1. Scotland’s Health and Demographic Profile
2. People who Access Social Care and Unpaid Carers in Scotland
3. Social Care Support and Service Provision in Scotland
4. Experiences of Social Care and Caring in Scotland
5. The Adult Social Care Workforce in Scotland
6. Adult Social Care in Scotland - Equality Evidence Overview

And papers on:

1. Children’s Social Services
2. Justice Social Work in Scotland
3. Learning and evidence from national social care systems in Nordic and Scandinavian countries
4. Integrated Care Studies: The SCFNuka (Alaska) and Canterbury (New Zealand) Models

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<sup>1</sup> “Social services” is a term used to describe social work and social care services:

- Social work is a statutory role undertaken by qualified and registered social workers. Its role is to assess need, manage risk and promote the wellbeing of individuals and communities. It is the gateway through which most individuals access social care.
- Social care is an umbrella term for services which support people to meet their personal outcomes. It is the direct provision of services based on the assessment of need by social work.

<sup>2</sup> Services not covered by this report are: health services, additional support services, other youth justice services and whole family support services.

## 1.1 Sources

The data sources and reporting periods for this paper are summarised below. For consistency and ease of reporting, these will be referred to as whole years (e.g., 2021).

<b>Body</b>	<b>Data source</b>	<b>Reporting period</b>
Scottish Government	<u>Children's Social Work Statistics</u>	01 August 2020 to 31 July 2021
Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)	<u>SCRA Official Statistics</u>	01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021
Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)	<u>Children's Services Workforce Tables</u>	as at 31 December 2019
	<u>Local Authority Post Types Tables</u>	as at first Monday in December 2020
	<u>Report on 2020 Workforce Data</u>	as at 31 December 2020
Care Inspectorate	<u>Fostering and adoption statistical bulletin</u>	1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020

## 1.2 Context

Social services are provided to children and their families when additional support is needed or when children are at risk.

Section 22 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 places a duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who are in need and, where consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of children within their families. Every local authority in Scotland provides social services to fulfil these statutory duties.

Social work services may become involved with a family through different routes. A family member may request a social work service. It is more common that they will be referred by someone they know, usually a professional such as a health visitor, doctor, teacher, youth worker, or community police officer. This will usually be done with the person's permission. Anyone who considers that a child is being harmed or is at risk of suffering harm (usually a professional such as those above) may refer the child for assessment of whether a formal child protection service is necessary. Exceptionally, this can be done without seeking the parents' or an older child's

agreement, though professionals will usually try to explain why they consider that this is necessary and the steps a social worker might take.

Children and young people receiving social work services can be aged from 0 (or even pre-birth) to 18 years. If a young person has been looked after by the local authority, a social work or social worker-led service may continue up to the age of 26.

The reasons why social work involvement may be necessary are very varied but usually the parents and/or children, or the whole family, may be experiencing a combination of practical, emotional and relationship difficulties. Children and parents in all income groups and with a wide range of disabilities, emotional and relationship difficulties may be assessed as in need of a social work service. However, families from areas of higher deprivation are more likely to receive statutory social work services and poverty has a pervasive impact on families.

## 2 Child Protection

Child Protection refers to a range of processes involved in considering, assessing, planning, and taking necessary action to protect a child from abuse or neglect. These processes are usually initiated when a concern about harm or risk of harm to a child has been raised, and police and/or social work have been notified. If there is likelihood of significant harm, an inter-agency discussion<sup>3</sup> will commence – the formal process of information sharing, assessment, analysis, and decision-making following reported concern.

If the likelihood of significant harm to the child or others is present, initial plans are made about: investigation; joint investigative interviews; health assessment; the needs of the child and others involved in this context; as well as any immediate protective action.

### 2.1 Inter-agency referral discussions

An inter-agency referral discussion (IRD) is the start of the formal process of information sharing, assessment, analysis and decision-making following reported concern about abuse or neglect of a child or young person up to the age of 18 years, in relation to familial and non-familial concerns, and of siblings or other children within the same context. This includes an unborn baby that may be exposed to current or future risk.

An IRD involves significant system interrogation, analysis and multi-agency decision making by the three core agencies; Social Work, Police, and Health. It also places a requirement on social work to seek the views of education colleagues and any other relevant agencies. Seeking views from the child (where possible) and their main care givers is central to this process.

Currently there are no published Official Statistics relating to IRD due to historical variation in the approach to IRD across Scotland, both in definition and in practice. National Guidance for Child Protection<sup>4</sup>, revised and published in 2021, outlines how statutory and non-government agencies should work together with parents, families and communities to prevent harm and to protect children from abuse and neglect, including in relation to IRD. Therefore, future statistical data collection is intended to include IRD numbers to reflect child protection activity across Scotland.

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<sup>3</sup> The Scottish Government have been monitoring the number of Inter-Agency Discussions as part of the [Vulnerable Children COVID19 Monitoring Survey](#). These figures are not subject to the same quality assurance controls as Official Statistics and are therefore not presented here.

<sup>4</sup> [Part 2B: Approach to Multi-Agency Assessment in Child Protection - National guidance for child protection in Scotland 2021](#).

## 2.2 Child Protection Investigation

A Child Protection Investigation is a multi-agency assessment which takes place when inter-agency discussions decide that the child is at risk of significant harm<sup>5</sup>. This enables core agencies (e.g. police and social work) to gather information to inform risk assessment and needs of the child, as well as need for protective action.

In 2021, 11,726 Child Protection Investigations took place (rate of 12.8 per 1,000 of child population<sup>6</sup>).

## 2.3 Child Protection Case Conference

If, following an investigation, a child is deemed to be at risk of significant harm a case conference<sup>7</sup> will be held. This is a formal multi-disciplinary meeting during which core agency professionals and the family of the child will share information, identify risks and outline what action needs to be taken to protect the child (e.g. decide whether a child should be registered on the Child Protection Register, and whether referral to the Reporter is necessary for consideration of compulsory supervision measures).

In 2021, 4,397 initial<sup>8</sup> and pre-birth<sup>9</sup> case conferences were held. The most common concerns identified at these case conferences are set out in Chart 1.

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<sup>5</sup> If not, assessment and support may still be offered.

<sup>6</sup> Per 1,000 population aged 0-15 calculated using NRS mid-year 2020 population estimates.

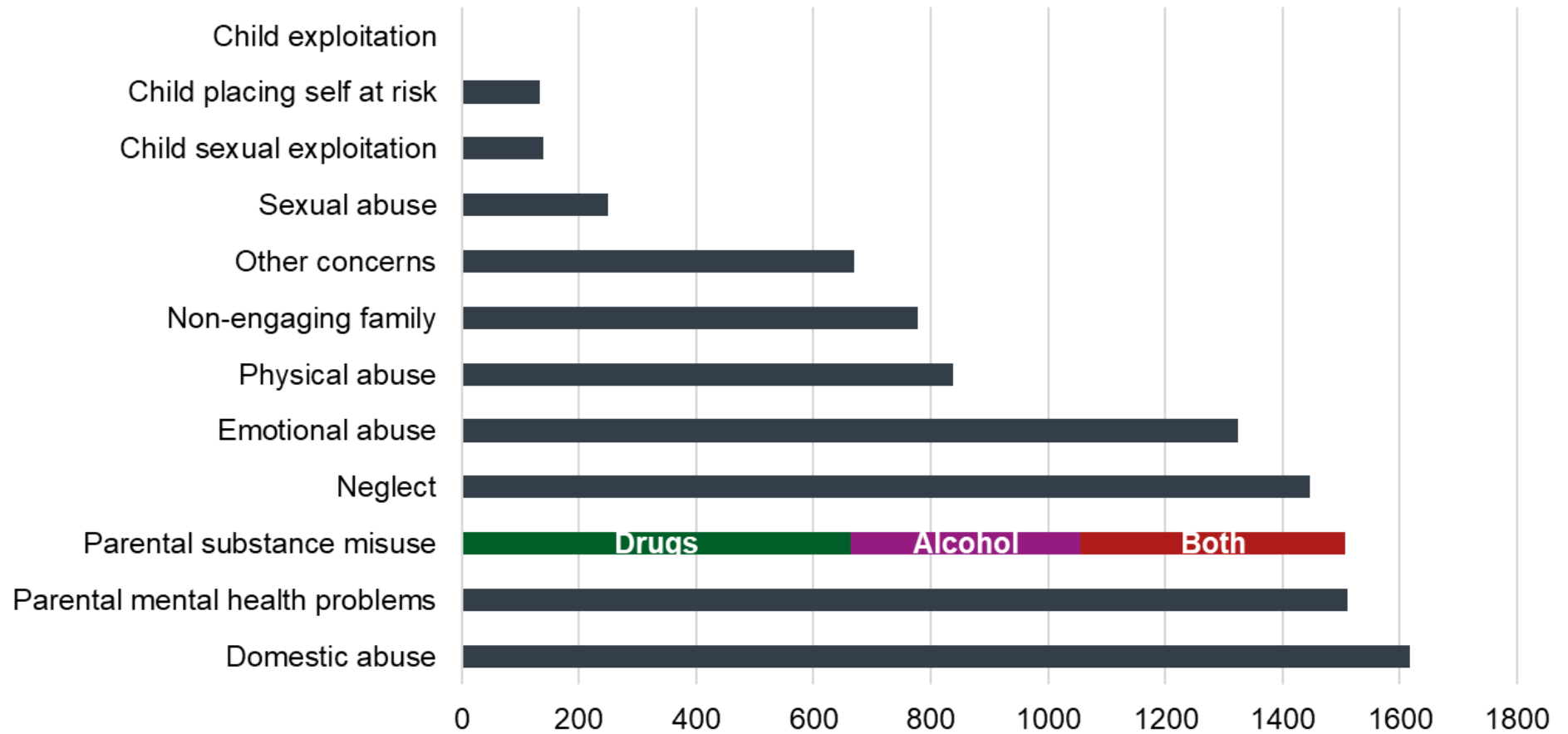
<sup>7</sup> Please note changes in terminology set out by the [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021](#) – from ‘Child Protection Case Conferences’ to ‘Child Protection Planning Meetings’. Here we refer to ‘Case Conferences’ to reflect terminology used within the most recent Children’s Social Work Statistics publication.

<sup>8</sup> Initial conference is for a child not currently on the Register (i.e., newly registered).

<sup>9</sup> Pre-birth conferences are for an unborn child.



Chart 1. Concerns identified at case conferences of children registered during 2021<sup>[1]</sup>



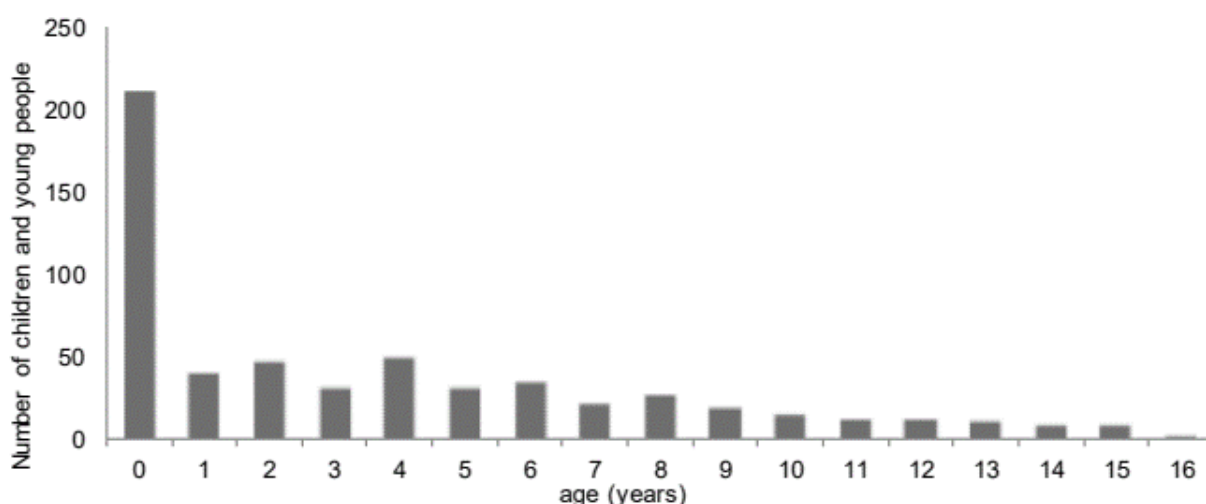
<sup>[1]</sup> Multiple concerns can be recorded per child.

## 2.4 Child Protection Orders (CPO)

A CPO is sought in emergency and high risk situations, where protection measures need to be put in place immediately to protect the child. Applications for CPOs are made in the Sheriff Court. A CPO may grant authority for a child to be removed from home to a safe place, or prevent the removal of the child from a place of safety. If granted by a Sheriff, a CPO leads to a referral to the Reporter and consideration of compulsory measures of supervision.

In 2021, 570 CPOs were granted. Of these, 99 (17%) related to children under the age of 20 days, 210 (37%) children under 1 year old, and 249 (44%) children under 2 years old (Chart 2). A significant proportion of CPOs are granted for very young children reflecting their high vulnerability and need for immediate protection.

**Chart 2. Children with CPOs granted by age in 2021**



<sup>[1]</sup> Source: SCRA Official Statistics 2020/21 report

## 2.5 New registrations on the Child Protection Register

If a case conference concludes significant risk of harm is present, the child will be added to the Child Protection Register.

In 2021, 3,324 (76%) of all initial and pre-birth case conferences resulted in a registration.

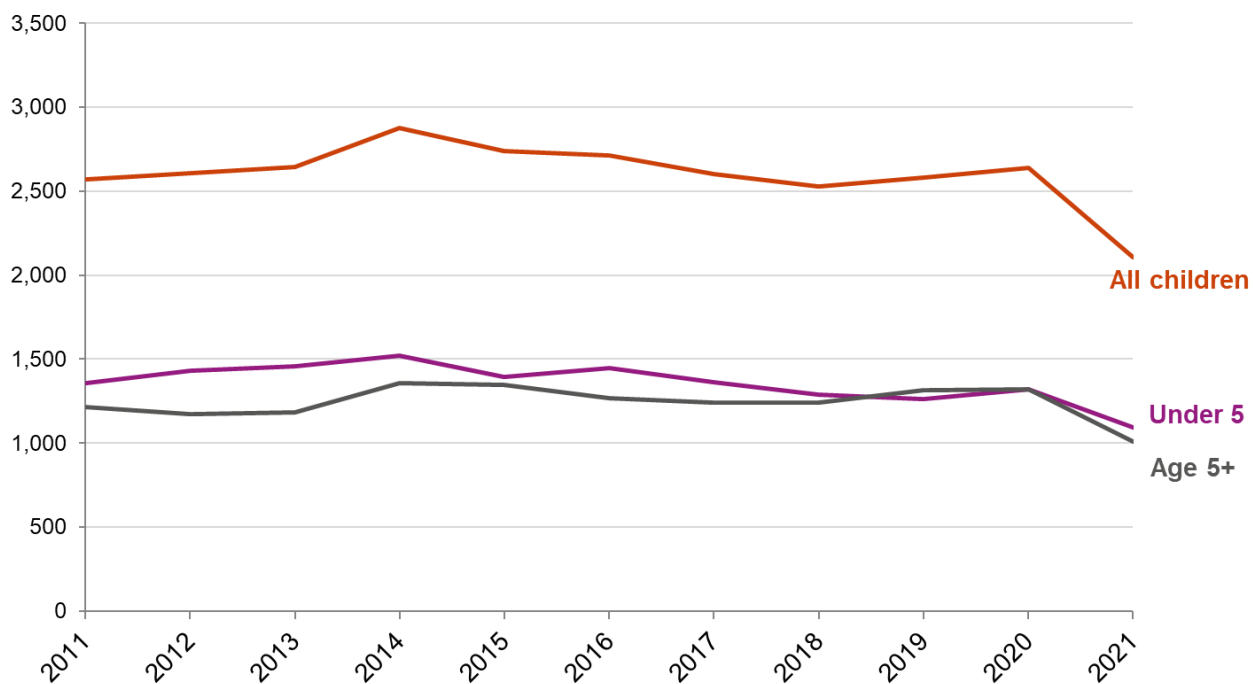
## 2.6 Children on the Child Protection Register

As at 31 July 2021, 2,104 children were on the Register (rate of 2.3 per 1,000 of child population<sup>10</sup>) – the lowest this figure has been since 2002. Over the past decade, the number of children on the Register has fluctuated (Chart 3).

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<sup>10</sup> Per 1,000 population aged 0-15 calculated using NRS mid-year 2020 population estimates

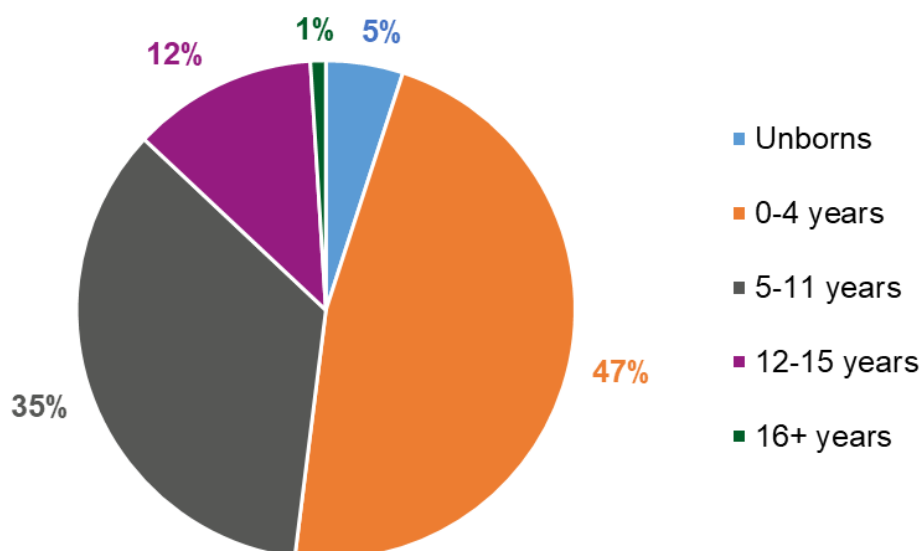
**Chart 3. Number of children on the Register by age, 2011-2021 (at 31 July)**



### 2.7 Demographic profiles of children on the Register

In 2021, 48% of children on the Register were male and 47% were female. A further 5% of were not yet born. The largest proportion of children on the Register were aged 4 and under, or unborn (52%; Chart 4).

**Chart 4. Age of children on the Register, at 31 July 2021**



In 2021, the majority (71%) of children on the Register were recorded as being white, though it should be noted that ethnicity was not known for 24% of children (Table 1).

**Table 1. Children on the Register by ethnic group, at 31 July 2021**

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>% all children in Scotland (2011 Census) <sup>[1][2]</sup></b>
White	1,490	71%	94%
Mixed or Multiple Ethnicity	45	2%	1%
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British	28	1%	3%
African, Caribbean or Black	22	1%	1%
Other Ethnic Background	18	1%	0%
Not known	501	24%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,104</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>[1]</sup> Scotland percentages refer to ages 0 to 15 and are based on the 2011 census

<sup>[2]</sup> Due to rounding, the percentage totals may not equal the sum of their parts.

In 2021, 4% of children on the Register were recorded as having a disability, though disability status was not yet assessed for 46% of children (Table 2).

**Table 2. Children on the Register by disability<sup>[1]</sup> status, at 31 July 2021**

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage<sup>[2]</sup></b>
Yes	81	4%
No	1,042	50%
Not yet assessed	967	46%
Not known/recorded	14	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,104</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>[1]</sup> This is defined as having a mental or physical impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

<sup>[2]</sup> Due to rounding, the percentage totals may not equal the sum of their parts.

### **3 The Children’s Hearings System**

The Children’s Hearings system is Scotland’s care and justice system for children and young people. It exists to protect the safety and wellbeing of infants, children and young people across Scotland. The Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration and Children’s Hearings Scotland are key statutory organisations within this system. It is not proposed that either of these organisations are within the scope of the NCS. Their independence, and that of the Reporter, are key components to the system. The system plays a critical role in the social services provided to children through the decision-making functions.

## 4 Children’s Hearings Duties

Children are referred to the Children’s Reporter if it is considered that they may need compulsory legal measures of protection, guidance, treatment or control. Most referrals to the Children’s Reporter come from partner agencies, such as the police, social work, and education. Additionally, parents, family members, carers or members of the public can make a referral. The Reporter will investigate the referral and decide whether or not to convene a Children’s Hearing – the legal tribunal responsible for deciding what’s in the best interest of the child and whether compulsory measures of supervision are necessary and, if so, which ones.

### 4.1 Children referred to the Reporter

In 2021, 9,665 children were referred<sup>11</sup> to the Reporter, equating to 1.1% of all children in Scotland<sup>12</sup>. Of these, 8,013 were referred on care and protection (non-offence) grounds and 2,207 on offence grounds.

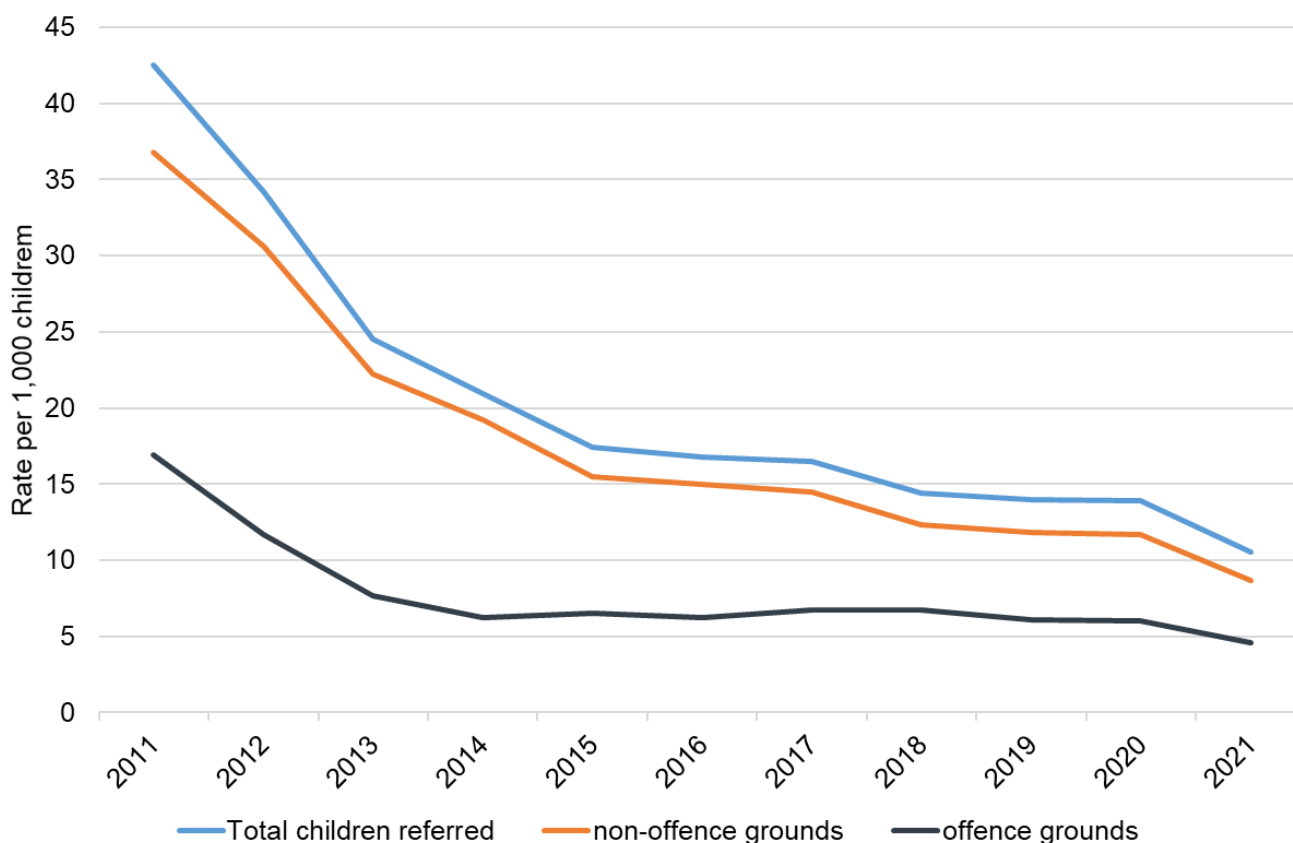
Over the past decade, the number of children referred to the Reporter has declined (Chart 5), peaking in 2011 and at its lowest in 2021.

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<sup>11</sup> A child may be referred more than once.

<sup>12</sup> % of population aged under 16 years, based on mid-year estimates for 2020 from the National Records of Scotland.

**Chart 5. Children referred to the Reporter, by year<sup>[1],[2]</sup>**



<sup>[1]</sup> Source: [SCRA Official Statistics](#) dashboard.

<sup>[2]</sup> Rate per 1,000 is calculated using relevant NRS mid year population estimates for those under 16 years, with the exception of 'offence grounds' which is shown per 1,000 of population aged between 8 and 16 years.

Notably, in 2021:

- Most children were referred by Police (68%) and Social Work (29%).
- The most common grounds for referrals were:
  1. Lack of parental care (3,449)
  2. Offence (2,198)
  3. Close connection with person who has carried out domestic abuse (1,961)
  4. Child's conduct harmful to self or others (946).
- 22% of children (2,150) with cases decided had a Reporter decision to arrange a Children's Hearing on at least one referral.

## 4.2 Children's Hearings

In 2021, 16,248 Children's Hearings were held for 8,977 children (rate of 17.7 per 1,000 population<sup>13</sup>) – a decrease from 41,825 Hearing held in 2011 (rate of 45.6 per 1,000 population). A concerted effort to reduce referrals where there was no need for compulsory measures has brought referrals numbers down in recent years.

Following assessment and development of a multiagency child plan, social workers will prepare reports for a Children's Hearing. The purpose of this is to enable the Hearing (made up of a panel of three members) to make an informed decision about the best interests of the child and provide effective outcomes that support the child and their family. This includes addressing assessed needs, promote the child's welfare and, where the referral concerns offending, reduce any risks of reoffending.

The Hearing will decide if compulsory measures of supervision are required as being in the best interests of the child or young person and, if so, what those should be. If the hearing concludes compulsory measures of supervision are needed, it will make a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) which will identify the measures required. In most cases the child will continue to live at home but will be under the supervision of the Chief Social Worker. In some cases the hearing will decide that the child should live away from home with relatives or other carers, or in an identified residential placement (see next section on looked after children).

## 4.3 Compulsory Supervision Orders (CSO)

In 2021, 7,959 children (0.9% of Scotland's child population) were subject to a CSO (rate of 8.7 per 1,000 population<sup>14</sup>), compared with 13,474 in 2011 (rate of 14.7 per 1,000 population).

## 4.4 Demographic profiles of children referred to the Reporter

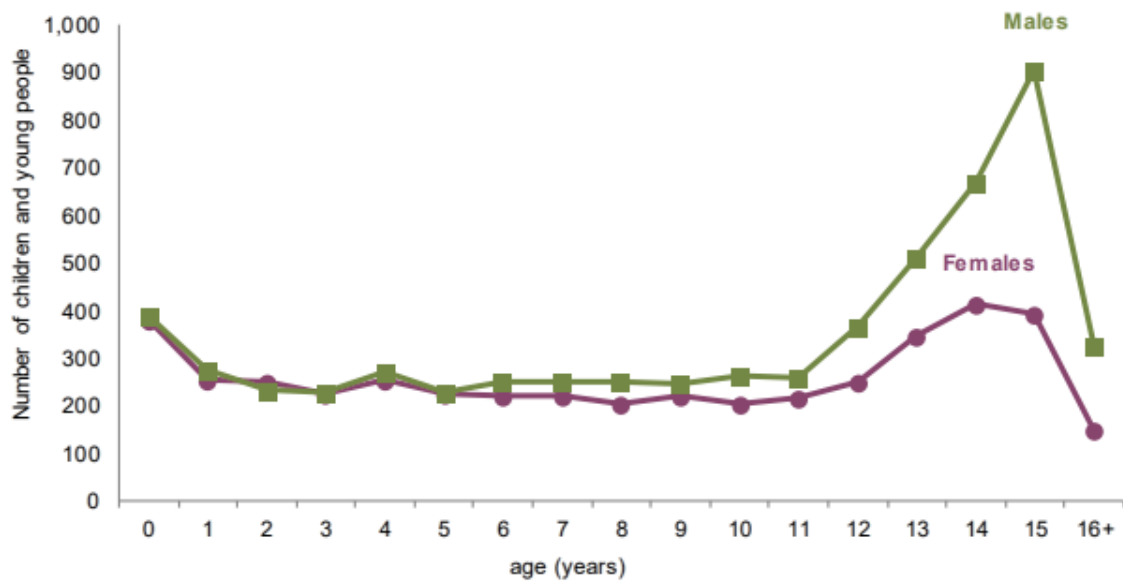
In 2021, 57% of children referred to the Reporter were male and 43% were female. A large number of children were referred before their first birthday (769). Referral rates then remain relatively consistent before increasing from ages 12 (618) and to 15 years (1,296).

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<sup>13</sup> Per 1,000 population aged under 16 years calculated using NRS mid-year 2020 population estimates.

<sup>14</sup> Per 1,000 population aged under 16 years calculated using NRS mid-year 2020 population estimates.

Chart 6. Children referred to the Reporter, by sex and age, in 2021<sup>[1]</sup>



<sup>[1]</sup>Source: [SCRA Official Statistics 2020/21](#) report.



## 5 Looked after children

Under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, looked after children are those in the care of their local authority. Children can be looked after and live at home if they are subject to a CSO. Where children and young people are looked after away from home, this can be where the child:

- has been through the Children's Hearings system and is subject to a CSO with a condition of residence;
- is subject to an order made or authorisation or warrant granted by virtue of chapter 2, 3 or 4 of Part 2 of the 1995 Act;
- is being provided with accommodation under Section 25 of the 1995 Act (a voluntary agreement);
- is placed by a local authority which has made a permanence order under section 80 of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007.

There are many reasons children may become looked after, including:

- they face abuse or neglect at home;
- they have disabilities that require special care;
- they are unaccompanied minors seeking asylum, or who have been illegally trafficked into the UK;
- they have been involved in the youth justice system.

Children may be looked after for a short time, longer time, or it could be episodic – there are a range of different circumstances. Children who are looked after away from home may be placed with kinship carers (extended family/friends), foster carers, with prospective adopters, or in residential care (see next section on [types of placements](#)).

As at 31 July 2021, 13,255 children were looked after, reflecting 1.3% of Scotland's child population<sup>15</sup> and the lowest this figure has been since 2006. Of these, 95% had a current care plan<sup>16</sup> produced by the local authority.

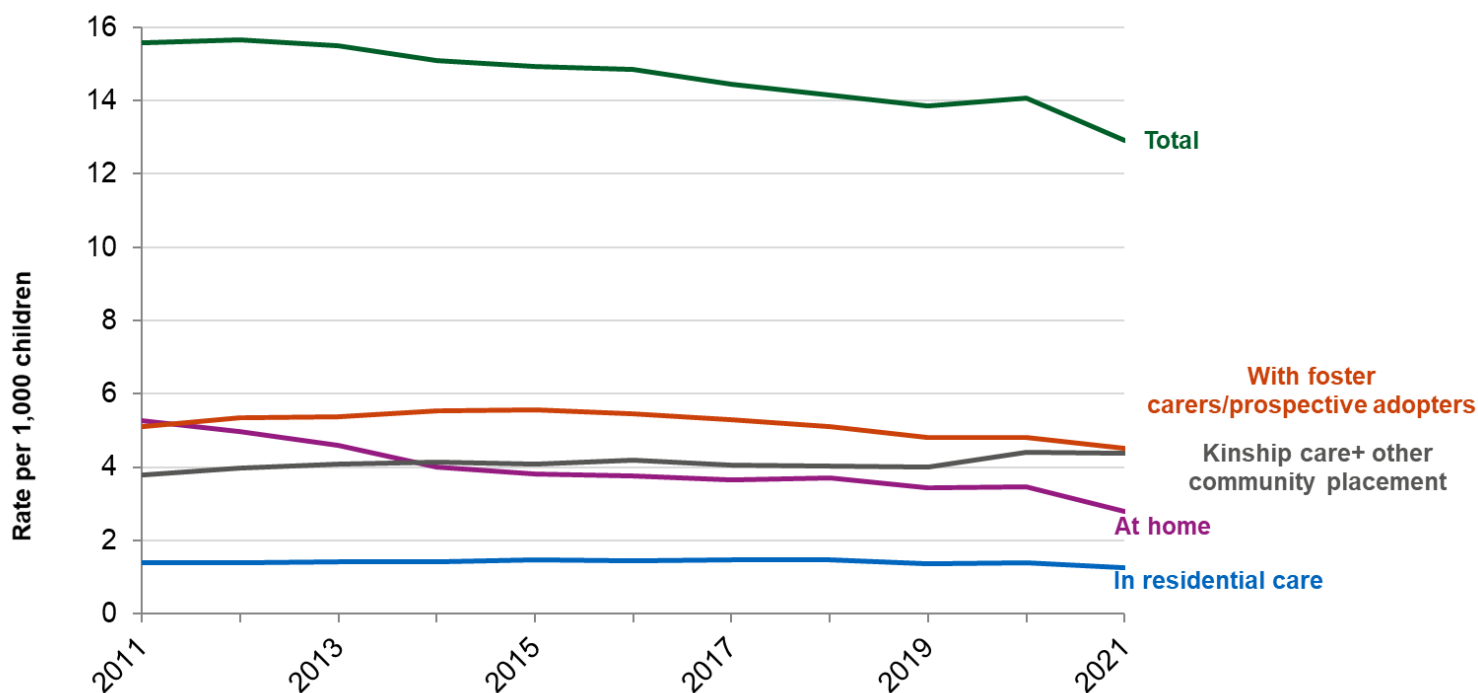
Over the past decade, the number of looked after children in Scotland has declined (Chart 7), peaking in 2012 and was at its lowest in 2021.

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<sup>15</sup> % of population aged under 18 years, based on mid-year estimates for 2020 from the National Records of Scotland.

<sup>16</sup>A care plan includes detailed information about the child's care, education and health needs, as well as the responsibilities of the local authority, the parents, and the child. A care plan is considered 'current' if it has been produced or reviewed in the past 12 months.

**Chart 7. Looked after children per 1,000, by type of accommodation 2011-2021**



### 5.1 Types of placements

**At home with parents:** A child becomes looked after at home when the Children's Hearing imposes a supervision requirement with no condition of residence. There are two main instances in which this happens:

- as a starting point for planned intervention, where the balance of risk indicates that it is not essential to remove the child from the care of their parents, but that the situation must be monitored;
- where children are returning home after being looked after away from home, where some risks still remain and home supervision aims to help reunite the family.

A child looked after at home continues to live at their usual residence (usually the family home), but receives regular visits from social workers to ensure that the objectives of the home supervision order are being met. In 2021, 2,859 children were placed at home with parents (22% of all looked after children).

**Kinship care:** when a child is looked after by their extended family or close friends if they cannot remain with their birth parents. Under the Looked after children (Scotland) Regulations 2009, a kinship carer is defined as: "a person who is related to the child (through blood, marriage or civil partnership) or a person with whom the child has a pre-existing relationship". In 2021, 4,399 children were placed in kinship care (33% of all looked after children).

**Foster care:** when a child is looked after by an approved foster family in their home. Fostering can be provided for short breaks or to provide interim, long term or permanent care for children. In 2021, 3,160 children were placed with foster carers provided by a local authority and 1,307 children were placed with foster carers purchased by a local authority (24% and 10% of all looked after children, respectively). In 2020, there were 59 fostering services in Scotland, with 27 independent services in addition to 32 local authority services and a total of 3,540 approved foster care households.

**Prospective adopters:** when a child is placed with their prospective adopters. In 2021, 156 children were placed with prospective adopters (1% of all looked after children).

**Residential child care:** Residential care homes provide accommodation, support and, in some cases, education for young people, usually of secondary school age. In 2021, 1,286 children were placed in a residential placement (10% of all looked after children). In 2020, residential child care provision included 323 care homes for children, 5 secure care centres, and 37 residential special schools.

In 2021, most looked after children (90%) were placed in the community (Table 3). Notably, while the proportion of children placed at home with parents decreased over the past decade (from 34% in 2011 to 22% in 2021), the proportion of children placed with kinship carers increased (from 24% in 2011 to 33% in 2021).

**Table 3: Number of looked after children at 31 July, in each type of placement**

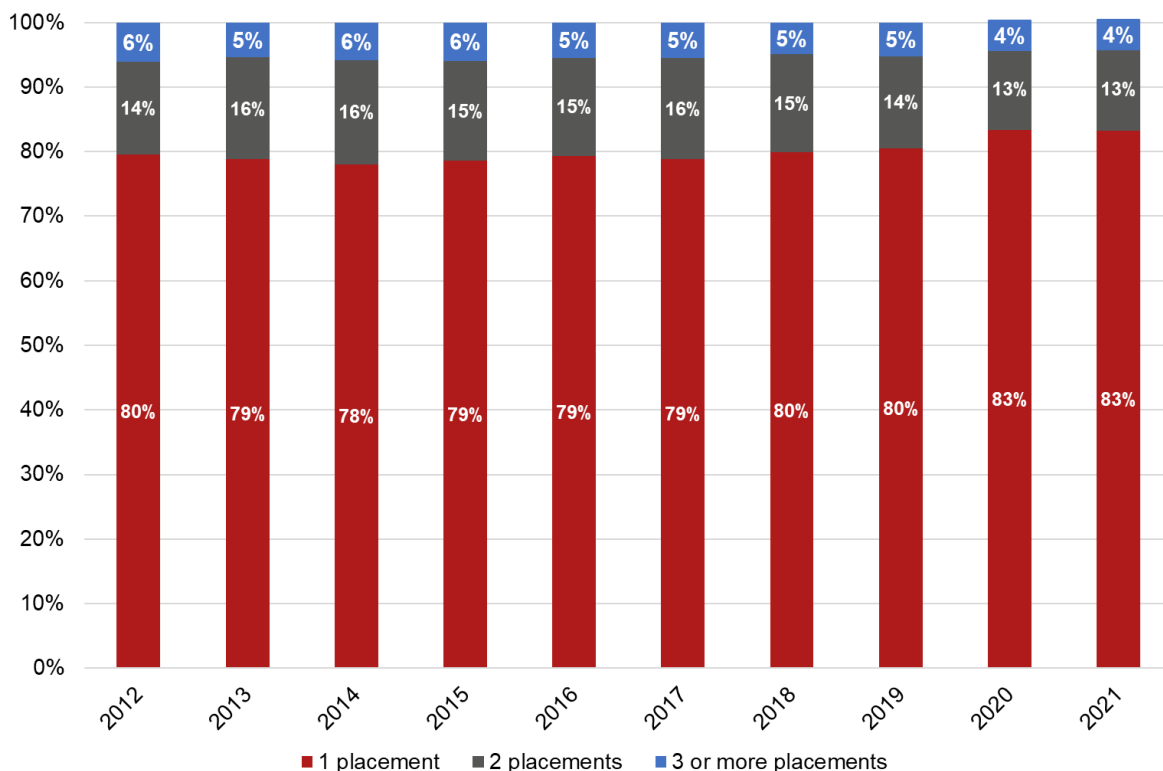
	Number		Percentage <sup>[2]</sup>	
	2011	2021	2011	2021
<b>In the community</b>	<b>14,770</b>	<b>11,969</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>90%</b>
At home with parents	5,476	2,859	34%	22%
With Kinship Carers: friends/relatives	3,910	4,399	24%	33%
With Foster Carers provided by LA	3,871	3,160	24%	24%
With Foster Carers purchased by LA	1,197	1,307	7%	10%
With prospective adopters	267	156	2%	1%
In other community	49	88	0%	1%
<b>In residential accommodation</b>	<b>1,461</b>	<b>1,286</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>10%</b>
In local authority home	615	525	4%	4%
In voluntary home	88	96	1%	1%
In residential special school	460	323	3%	2%
In secure accommodation	86	38	1%	0%
Crisis care	13	0	0%	0%
In other residential <sup>[1]</sup>	199	304	1%	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,231</b>	<b>13,255</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>[1]</sup> The bulk of the 'other residential' placements are private/independent residential placements for young people with complex needs.

<sup>[2]</sup> Due to rounding, the percentage totals may not equal the sum of their parts.

In terms of the number of placements provided for children who are looked after, the pattern has remained relatively stable since 2012 (Chart 8). Notably, since 2012 the proportion of children with 3 or more placements has decreased slightly from 6% to 4% in 2021. By contrast, the proportion of children with a single placement has increased from 80% in 2012 to 83% in 2021.

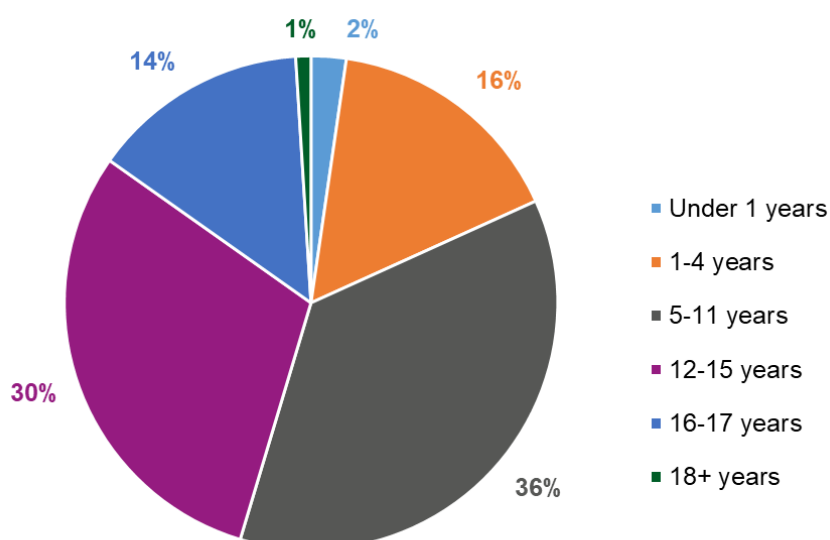
**Chart 8. Proportion of placements for looked after children, at 31 July 2012-2021**



### 5.1.1 Demographic profile of looked after children

In 2021, 54% of looked after children were male and 46% were female. The highest proportions were aged 5-11 years (36%) and 12-15 years (30%; Chart 9).

**Chart 9. Age of children looked after, at 31 July 2021**



In 2021, the majority (84%) of looked after children were white (Table 3).

**Table 4. Children looked after by ethnic group, at 31 July 2021**

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>% all children in Scotland (2011 Census)<sup>[1]</sup></b>
White	11,141	84%	95%
Mixed Ethnicity	171	1%	1%
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British	122	1%	3%
Black, Black Scottish or Black British	92	1%	1%
Other Ethnic Background	198	1%	0%
Not known	1,531	12%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,255</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>[1]</sup> Scotland percentages refer to ages 0 to 19 and are based on the 2011 census.

In 2021, 10% of looked after children had a disability, though disability status was not known/recorded for a quarter of children (Table 5).

**Table 5. Children looked after by disability<sup>[1]</sup> status, at 31 July 2021**

<b>Disability</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage<sup>[2]</sup></b>
Yes	1,288	10%
No	8,589	65%
Not yet assessed	92	1%
Not known/recorded	3,286	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,255</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>[1]</sup> This is defined as having a mental or physical impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

<sup>[2]</sup> Due to rounding, the percentage totals may not equal the sum of their parts.

## **5.2 Social services support for looked after children**

When children and young people are looked after, social services will provide support in various ways and carry out a number of functions. This includes:

- Supporting children and families who voluntarily reach accommodation agreements and support the family to keep the child safe and nurtured in a placement out with the usual family home.
- Recruitment and assessment of prospective foster carers and adopters; and the identification and assessment of potential kinship carers for children who require care away from home. The conversion rate from initial enquiry to approval and registration as a foster carer is one in twelve. Thereafter supporting children, carers and/or parents, even following a permanency decision, to prevent

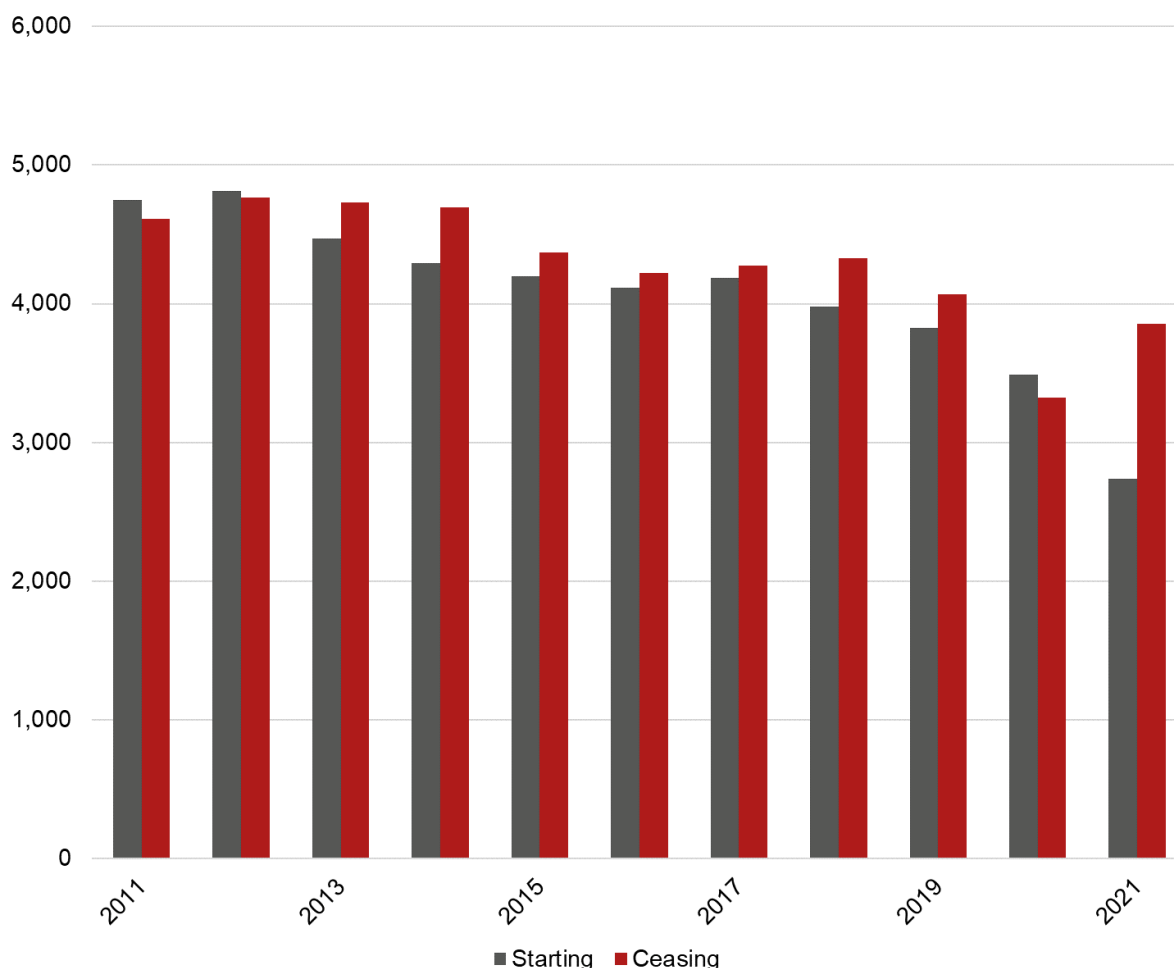
breakdown of family relationships and further supporting the child or young person to maintain sibling type relationships where appropriate.

- Supporting children and young people to maintain meaningful relationships with the people that they identify as important to them. This may include tracing ‘lost’ family relationships and facilitating family meetings. Additionally, helping children and young people, even following their experience of care, to find and connect with key people and supporting their understanding of their life story.

### 5.3 Children ceasing to be looked after

In 2021, substantially more children ceased to be looked after, than started to become looked after. By contrast, in 2011 slightly more children started to become looked after than ceased (Chart 10).

**Chart 10. Number of children starting and ceasing to be looked after at 31 July, 2011-2021**



Compared with 2011, a higher proportion of children ceasing to be looked after had been looked after for five years or longer – up from 13% in 2011 to 21% in 2021. Meanwhile the proportion of children looked after for a shorter period of time,

especially for between 6 months and under 1 year, decreased (from 16% in 2011 to 10% 2021).

In terms of the recorded destinations of children ceasing to be looked after in 2021 (Table 6):

- 56% had a recorded destination of at home with their biological parents – a 4 percentage point decrease since 2011 (60%);
- 16% had a recorded destination of kinship care – a 3 percentage point increase since 2011 (13%);
- 6% of children were adopted – a figure which has remained stable since 2011. The majority of children who were adopted (66%) were below the age of 5 years.

**Table 6. Children ceasing to be looked after, by destination**

Destination after leaving care	Number		Percentage <sup>[4]</sup>	
	2011	2021	2011	2021
Home with (biological) parents	2,766	2,166	60%	56%
Kinship carers: Friends/relatives <sup>[1]</sup>	603	532	13%	14%
Kinship Care Order <sup>[2]</sup>	-	84	-	2%
Former foster carers <sup>[1]</sup>	55	47	1%	1%
Continuing Care <sup>[2]</sup>	-	267	-	7%
Adoption	264	224	6%	6%
Supported accommodation/own tenancy	285	244	6%	6%
Other <sup>[3]</sup>	225	276	5%	7%
Not known	413	16	9%	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,611</b>	<b>3,856</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>[1]</sup> This excludes planned series of short term placements. A child may cease to be looked after more than once during the year and will be counted once for each episode of care ending.

<sup>[2]</sup> New destination categories of 'Continuing Care' and 'Kinship Care Order' were added in 2018.

Previously, children who left care for 'Continuing Care' were mostly recorded in the 'Foster Carers' destination category, while those who left care under a 'Kinship Care Order' were mostly recorded in the 'Kinship Carers (friends/relatives)' category.

<sup>[3]</sup> 'Other' includes residential care, homeless, in custody and other destination.

<sup>[4]</sup> Due to rounding, the percentage totals may not equal the sum of their parts.

## 5.4 Support for care leavers

### 5.4.1 Pathway planning

It is expected that all young people who are looked after on their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday will have had a pathway assessment, and will have a pathway plan in place as to their future before they cease to be looked after. This will set out the actions that must be taken by the local authority, the young person, their parents, their carers, and other agencies to enable them to achieve their aspirations and make a successful



transition to adulthood. In 2021, 71% of eligible young people had a pathway plan. Further, 56% of eligible young people had a pathway co-ordinator (Table 7).

**Table 7. Pathway plans and pathway co-ordinators of young people who were at least 16 years of age on the date they ceased to be looked after** <sup>[1],[2]</sup>

	Number		Percentage	
	2016	2021	2016	2021
With pathway plan	838	994	65%	71%
Without pathway plan	445	411	35%	29%
With pathway co-ordinator	923	788	72%	56%
Without pathway co-ordinator	360	617	28%	44%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,283</b>	<b>1,405</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>[1]</sup> Figures include all episodes of ceasing to be looked after beyond 16 years of age (i.e. a young person may be counted more than once).

<sup>[2]</sup> It may be the case that some young people who don't have a relevant pathway plan/coordinator may be receiving similar support from adult services instead.

#### 5.4.2 Continuing care

Young people aged 16 years or over who are looked after in foster, kinship, or residential care are eligible to remain in their current care placement until the age of 21 – also known as Continuing Care<sup>17</sup>. In 2021, 534 young people were in Continuing Care.

#### 5.4.3 Aftercare

Aftercare services<sup>18</sup> refer to local authorities' duty to provide advice, guidance, and assistance for all care leavers who cease to be looked after on or after their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, and are below 26 years of age. This provision applies to all care leavers regardless of the placement type while looked after. Social services provide this support for young people who have experienced care and who are moving on to independence. In 2021, 54% of young people eligible for aftercare support were in receipt of aftercare services (Table 8).

<sup>17</sup> A young person receiving Continuing Care will no longer be defined as 'looked after' but will continue to receive the same support.

<sup>18</sup> Since April 2015, aftercare eligibility was extended to cover all care leavers up to, and including, people aged 25 years (where it previously only covered up to their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday).

**Table 8. Number of young people eligible for aftercare services on 31 July**

	Number		Percentage	
	2016	2021	2016	2021
In receipt of aftercare	3,054	3,931	66%	54%
Not in receipt of aftercare	1,548	3,392	34%	46%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,602</b>	<b>7,323</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 5.4.4 Demographic profiles of young people receiving aftercare services

Of the eligible young people receiving aftercare services, 55% were male and 45% were female. The highest proportion of eligible young people in receipt of aftercare services were those aged 19-21 years (58%; Table 9). The lowest proportion of children in receipt of aftercare services were those aged 16 years (46%).

**Table 9. Number of young people eligible for aftercare services on 31 July 2021 by age<sup>[1]</sup>**

Status	16	17	18	19-21	22+	Total
In receipt of aftercare	118	311	619	1,584	1,299	3,931
Not in receipt of aftercare	136	264	544	1,150	1,298	3,392
<b>Total eligible for aftercare</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>575</b>	<b>1,163</b>	<b>2,734</b>	<b>2,597</b>	<b>7,323</b>
In receipt of aftercare	46%	54%	53%	58%	50%	54%
Not in receipt of aftercare	54%	46%	47%	42%	50%	46%
<b>Total eligible for aftercare</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>[1]</sup> Age on 31 July 2021.

## 6 Adoption services

An adoption service makes arrangements in connection with the adoption of children. This does not include when the proposed adopter is a relative of the child.

There were 38 adoption services operating in Scotland in 2020, 32 local authority adoption services and six independent adoption services. In 2020, 232 new adoptive households were approved, down from 259 in 2019 and continuing a downward trend. The year-on-year decrease is only in the local authority sector, with independent services showing a flatter trend. There were 186 approved households at 31 December 2020 waiting for a child to be placed. At the same time there were 148 children and young people approved for adoption and waiting to be matched to an adoptive household. Of these, 47% were part of a family group (an increase from 31% the previous year) and 30% had been waiting for over one year. In 2020 there were 225 children approved for adoption, 207 children placed with their new adoptive families and 206 children legally adopted.

## 7 Secure Care Accommodation

Secure care accommodation is a locked residential care setting that provides intensive trauma-informed support, care, and education to children aged 12-18 years who may be a significant risk to themselves or others in the community. A secure care placement can only be authorised following a decision through the Children’s Hearing system, court, or as an emergency placement for a looked after child for up to 72 hours before attending a Hearing or court.

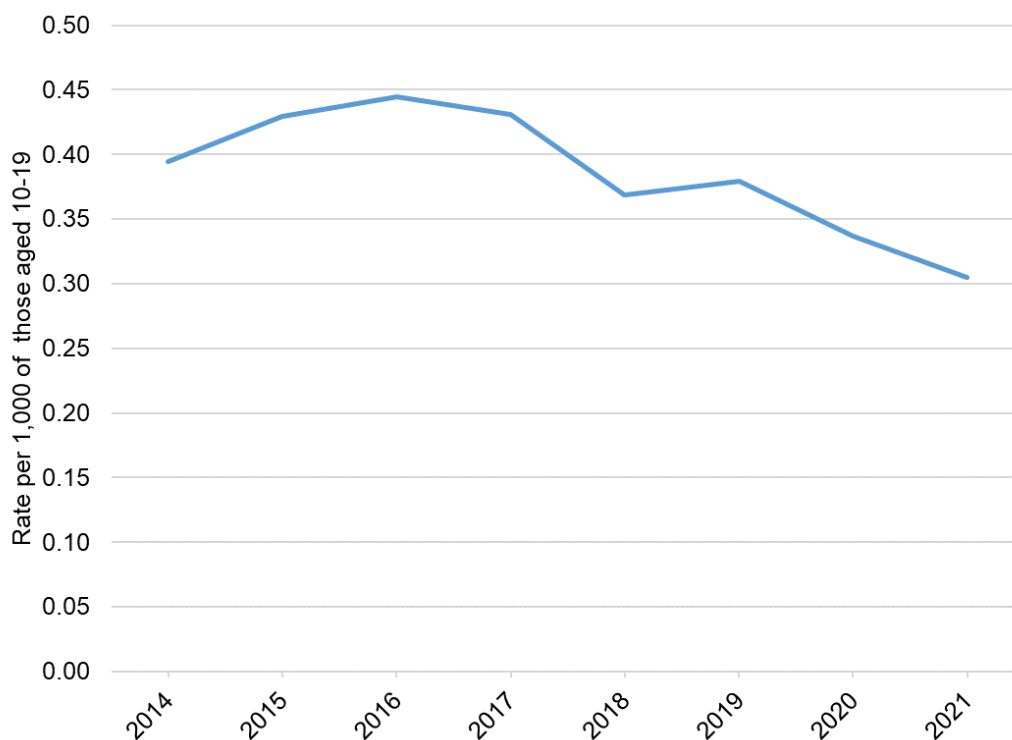
### 7.1 Capacity

In Scotland there are five secure care accommodation units in total. As at 31 July 2021, there were 84 beds available in five secure units (of which, one is a local authority run setting and four are independent) in Scotland, compared with 90 beds in 2014. In 2021, the annual average number of residents was 76, compared with 74 in 2014.

### 7.2 Admissions

In 2021, 177 young people were admitted to secure care accommodation (rate of 0.31 per 1,000), compared with 232 young people in 2014 (rate of 0.39 per 1,000; Chart 11). Admissions may include young people who are from elsewhere in the UK.

**Chart 11. Rate per 1,000 of young people admitted to Secure Care, 2014-2021**



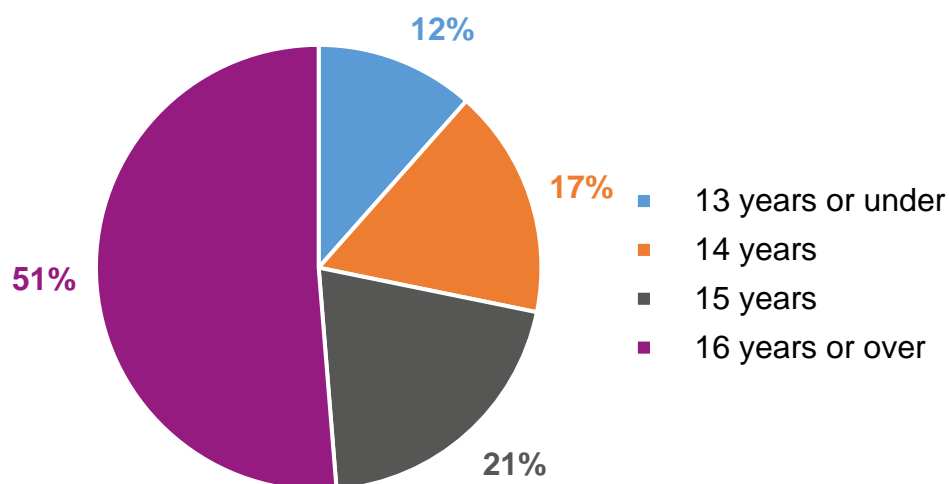
<sup>[1]</sup> Rate per 1,000 is calculated using relevant NRS mid-year population estimates for those aged 10-19 years.

<sup>[2]</sup> Young people can be admitted more than once during the year.

### 7.3 Demographic profiles of residents

In 2021, 56% of residents were male and 44% were female. The highest proportion were over the age of 15 (72%; Chart 12).

**Chart 12. Age of residents, at 31 July 2021**



In 2021, 23% of residents had a disability<sup>19</sup>, while the remaining 77% either did not have a disability, or this information was not known.

## 8 Other welfare and support services

The needs of children and families supported by social services differ widely and do not always require the statutory approaches available in child protection procedures or the children's hearing system. Some have needs which can be addressed simply and swiftly through appropriate interventions and support. Other children and families may require longer term and intensive support for complex and long-lasting needs.

Children who are at risk of becoming looked after or being placed into residential care may need support to remain with their families in a manner that is safe, nurturing and which promotes their welfare. Social services are significantly involved in multi-agency whole system and Getting It Right For Every Child<sup>20</sup> (GIRFEC) approaches. These include early and effective interventions which support the child

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<sup>19</sup> This is defined as having a mental or physical impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

<sup>20</sup> GIRFEC is the national approach which supports families by making sure children and young people can receive the right help, at the right time, from the right people. The aim is to help them to grow up feeling loved, safe and respected so that they can realise their full potential. If children need extra help, GIRFEC is a way for families to work in partnership with people who can support them.

and their family (where child welfare concerns emerge) to avoid crises, reduce the risks of offending behaviours by the child and prevent the need further down the line for statutory interventions or for children to become looked after. This will involve working within a multidisciplinary forum for children who are neither categorised as “looked after” children nor placed on the child protection register. Social workers will attend meetings with universal services (such as education and certain healthcare services) where a child wellbeing concern has been identified. This will happen under the GIRFEC framework which ensures that support for the child, from the right people, is put in place at the most appropriate time through a single planning process that may result in a single child’s plan coordinated by a Lead Professional.

Referrals may also be made for children, young people, and families to targeted services provided by third and independent sector organisations which play an important role in improving outcomes for children and families. Services may include befriending, mentoring, outreach, and intensive family support. Delivery of the whole system and GIRFEC approaches have contributed to the downward trends in recent years of children who are referred to the children’s reporter, and for the length of time that children remain on child protection registers.

In order to avoid bringing children into the criminal justice system, social services support diversion from prosecution. This may include offence and behaviour focused work through addressing the needs of children and young people who have offended and/or who are at risk of doing so. This is often carried out either by children and families social work, youth justice social work or criminal justice teams and provides early and effective interventions and diversions from the courts and the children’s hearings system whilst also reducing the risks of (re)offending. Other interventions include diversion programmes.

The services provided under section 22 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 local authority duty includes services for disabled children under the age of 18, children affected adversely by the disability of any other person in the family, and children whose health or development may be affected or may fall below a reasonable standard without services from the local authority. Social work services will often route the child and their family to other professional services such as speech and language therapy, psychology, addictions and a range of healthcare provision.

The Social Care (Self-Directed Support) Act 2013 affects the way that particular forms of support for children and families are arranged and provided to children and families. In particular, it provides the opportunity for children and families to take greater control over the support provided to them. The 2013 Act imposes a further duty to provide choice and flexibility with respect to the relevant support to children or families. It requires the local authority to provide a range of options to the child/family. In a great number of circumstances (including all support to children affected by disability but not restricted to such support) the provision of alternatives

such as direct payments or individual services funds can provide a creative and positive means by which to meet the child's needs. However, in some instances the local authority's safeguarding function will affect the form of support which is necessary to safeguard the child's wellbeing, and therefore the extent to which additional choice and control is possible.

## 9 Workforce

This section relates to the workforce involved in the processes described above, using SSSC sources. Where possible, the most recent available data is reported.

### 9.1 Headcount and composition

In 2020, the overall headcount for children's social services was 15,830 – a 5% increase since 2015 (Table 10). The two largest subsectors in children's social services were residential child care<sup>21</sup> (accounting for 55% of the total headcount), and fieldwork services<sup>22</sup> (accounting for 37% of the total headcount). The Public Service Reform Scotland Act 2010 distinguishes between registered care services on one hand, and social work services (of which fieldwork services are the essential part) on the other.

Since 2015, the greatest percentage increase in headcount was observed in residential childcare (+13%). Meanwhile, the greatest percentage decrease was observed for fostering services (-14%).

**Table 10. Workforce headcount 2015 and 2020**<sup>[1],[2]</sup>

<b>Children's service</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>% change since 2015</b>
<b>Adoption</b>	460	420	-9%
<b>Fieldwork</b>	5,960	5,920	-1%
<b>Fostering</b>	980	840	-14%
<b>Residential child care</b>	7,650	8,650	+13%
<b>Total</b>	15,050	15,830	+5%

<sup>[1]</sup> This excludes:

- a) personal assistants employed directly by recipients of self-directed support (SDS) - these are thought to work primarily with adults;
- b) "headquarters" staff in private and voluntary sector care providers who aren't employed directly in a registered care service; and
- c) staff employed by private and voluntary sector providers which have been commissioned by local authorities to deliver some of the local authority's social work functions.

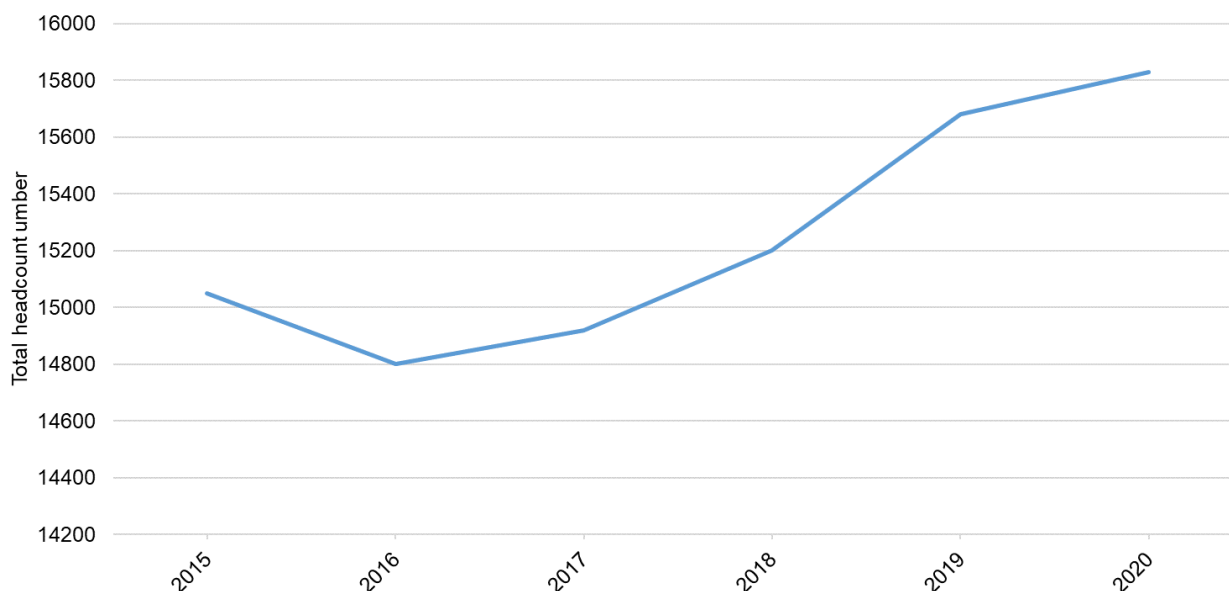
<sup>[2]</sup> Headcount of filled posts; a small amount of double-counting of individuals may exist. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10 which means that individual columns may not sum to the totals. All estimated total staff figures are rounded to the nearest 10 to express the uncertainty inherent in these estimates.

<sup>21</sup> These services are care homes, special school accommodation services and secure accommodation services for children who are looked after away from home.

<sup>22</sup> Local authority fieldwork staff usually based in local offices providing services to children and families. Staff will include qualified social workers. The Public Service Reform Scotland Act 2010 distinguishes between registered care services on one hand, and social work services (of which fieldwork services are the essential part) on the other.

Between 2015 and 2016 the headcount of staff working in children’s social services decreased slightly, before gradually increasing thereafter (Chart 13).

**Chart 13. Workforce headcount, 2015-2020**



## 9.2 Employer type

In 2020, 58% (9,120) of children’s social services workforce were employed by a public employer, 27% (4,250) were employed by a voluntary sector employer, and 15% (2,450) were employed by the private sector (Table 11).

**Table 11. Distribution of workforce headcount by employer type 2020 <sup>[1]</sup>**

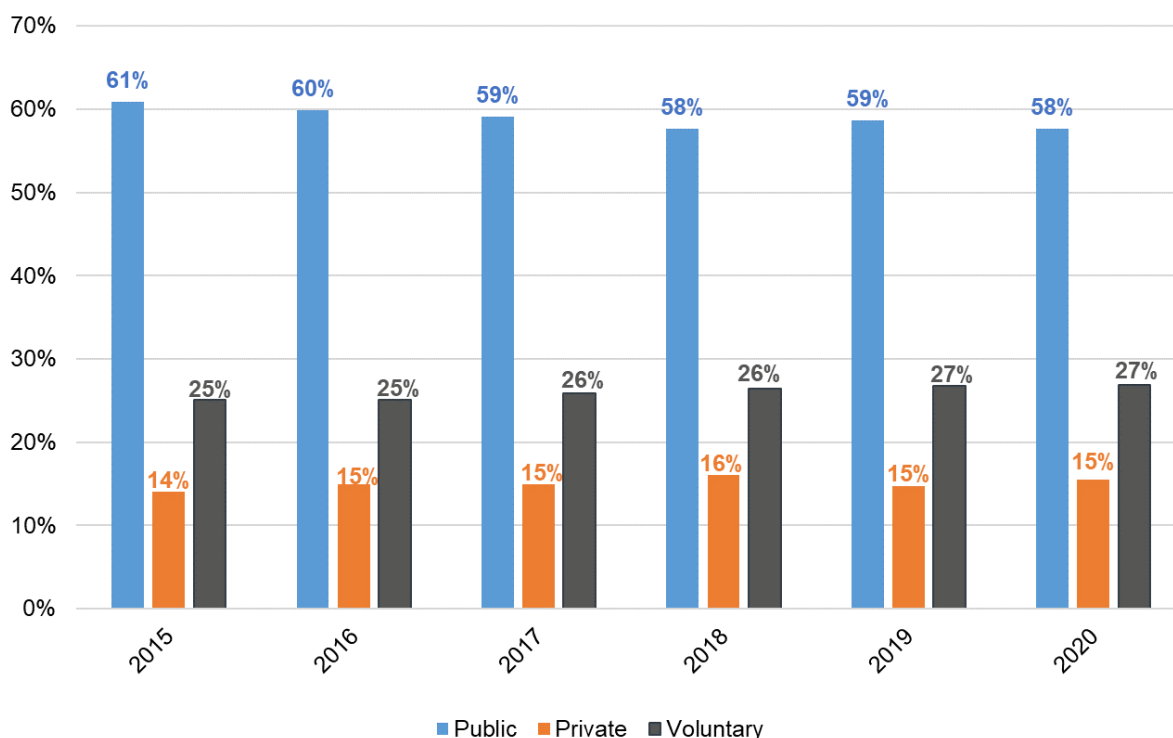
Children's service	Public	Private	Voluntary	Total
<b>Adoption</b>	330	-	90	420
<b>Fieldwork</b>	5,920	-	-	5,920
<b>Fostering</b>	430	-	410	840
<b>Residential child care</b>	2,440	2,450	3,750	8,650
<b>Total</b>	9,120	2,450	4,250	15,830

<sup>[1]</sup> Headcount of filled posts; a small amount of double-counting of individuals may exist. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10 which means that individual columns may not sum to the totals. All estimated total staff figures are rounded to the nearest 10 to express the uncertainty inherent in these estimates.

Since 2015, the distribution of workforce across the public, private and voluntary sectors has remained relatively stable (Chart 14).



**Chart 14. Distribution of workforce headcount by employer type, 2015-2020**



### 9.3 Residential child care services

This section focuses on additional data breakdowns for residential child care services sub-sector. Please note that the more detailed breakdowns are only currently available for 2019. This sub-sector includes:

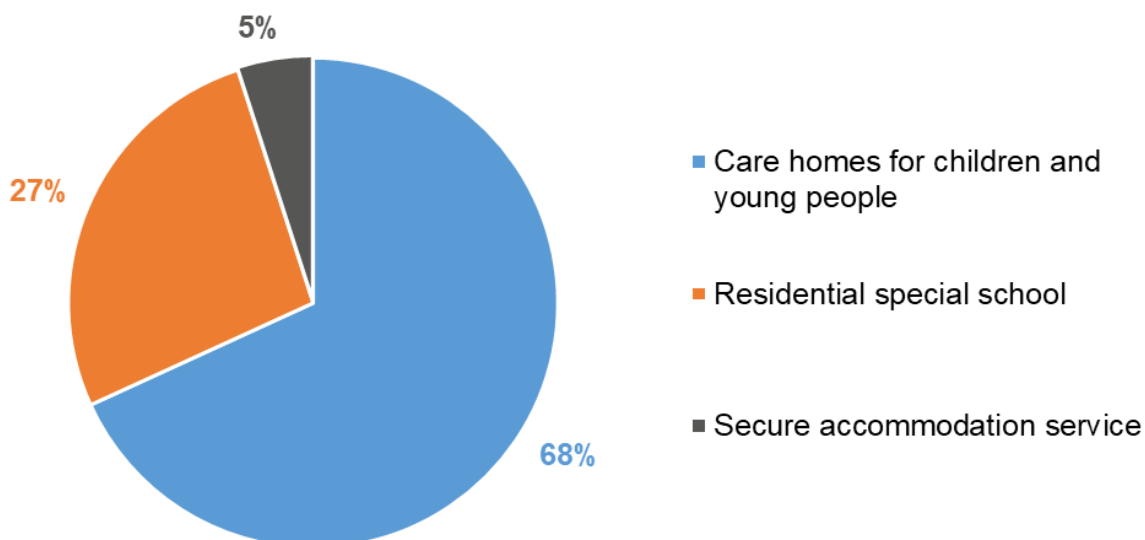
- 1) Care homes for children and young people – provide care and accommodation for looked after children with no specific further needs.
- 2) Residential special schools – provide care and accommodation for children with additional educational needs.
- 3) Secure accommodation services – provide care and accommodation for looked after children in a secure environment.

In 2019<sup>23</sup>, 8,420 staff worked in residential child care services, with the largest proportion (68%) working within care homes for children and young people (Chart 15).

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<sup>23</sup> In 2020, there were 8,650 staff working in residential child care services, however, more detailed breakdowns are not available for this figure. As such, 2019 data is reported here.

**Chart 15. Distribution of services by service type**



Of all residential child care staff, 29% were employed by a public sector employer, 27% by a private sector employer, and 43% by a voluntary sector employer.

**Table 12. Distribution of services by service type and employer type in residential child care, 2019**

Service type	Public	Private	Voluntary	Total
Care homes for children and young people	2,440	1,790	1,510	5,740
Residential special school	0	510	1,750	2,260
Secure accommodation service	20	0	400	420
<b>Residential child care</b>	<b>2,460</b>	<b>2,300</b>	<b>3,660</b>	<b>8,420</b>

### 9.3.1 Post characteristics

The majority (67%) of staff in residential child care worked in a full time post, with a median of 37 hours worked across all staff. Further breakdowns by service type are presented in Table 13.

**Table 13. Percentage of staff by part time/full time in residential child care, 2019**

<b>Service type</b>	<b>Part time</b>	<b>Full time</b>
Care homes for children and young people	36%	64%
Residential special school	29%	71%
Secure accommodation service	20%	80%
<b>Residential child care</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>67%</b>

In terms of job function, the majority of residential child care staff (86%) constituted care staff. A smaller proportion included auxiliary staff (8%) and managers (6%). Further breakdowns by service type are presented in Table 14.

**Table 14. Percentage of staff by job function in residential childcare, 2019**

<b>Service type</b>	<b>Auxiliary</b>	<b>Care</b>	<b>Managers</b>
Care homes for children and young people	4%	90%	6%
Residential special school	16%	78%	6%
Secure accommodation service	22%	73%	4%
<b>Residential child care</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>6%</b>

In terms of contract type, 80% of residential child care staff were on permanent contracts. Further breakdowns by service type are presented in Table 15.

**Table 15. Percentage of staff by contract type in residential child care, 2019**

<b>Service type</b>	<b>Permanent</b>	<b>Other<sup>[1]</sup></b>
Care homes for children and young people	79%	21%
Residential special school	81%	19%
Secure accommodation service	84%	16%
<b>Residential child care</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>20%</b>

<sup>[1]</sup>Other includes the following type of contracts: temporary, bank, sessional, casual/relief, as well as other/not known.

### 9.3.2 Demographics

The median age of staff in residential childcare was 42 years. Further breakdowns by service type are presented in Table 16.

**Table 16. Median age of residential child care workforce, 2019**

<b>Service type</b>	<b>Median Age</b>
Care homes for children and young people	42
Residential special school	40
Secure accommodation service	33
<b>Residential child care</b>	<b>42</b>

The majority (70%) of the residential child care workforce were female. Further breakdowns by service type are presented in Table 17.

**Table 17. Percentage of staff by sex in residential child care, 2019**

<b>Service type</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
Care homes for children and young people	73%	27%
Residential special school	65%	35%
Secure accommodation service	60%	40%
<b>Residential child care</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>30%</b>

#### **9.4 Fieldwork Services**

This section draws from Local authority post types tables published by the SSSC, the most recent of which relates to 2020 (as at first Monday in December). Please note that these figures are different from those reported for 2019 as these relate to different published data and time periods.

This data includes all filled posts in local authority social work services where those employed do not work in a registered care service. This therefore covers staff working primarily in fieldwork social work services.

In 2020, 5,916 staff worked in fieldwork social work services. The majority of this workforce were female (85%).

##### **9.4.1 Post characteristics**

The majority (70%) of staff in fieldwork social work services worked in a full time post. In terms of job function, 39% of the fieldwork services work force constituted main grade social workers and 17% included social work assistants. Proportions of other roles are summarised in Table 18.

**Table 18. Percentage of staff by job function in fieldwork social work services, 2020<sup>[1]</sup>**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Number of staff</b>	<b>% of all staff</b>
Service managers	112	2%
Team leaders/managers	368	6%
Senior social workers	453	8%
Main grade social workers	2,292	39%
Advocacy/rights staff	13	0%
Senior occupational therapists	0	0%
Occupational therapists	14	0%
Other qualified fieldwork staff	846	14%
Trainee social workers	9	0%
Social work assistants	994	17%
Occupational therapists assistants	2	0%
Support services (including admin/clerical)	813	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,916</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>[1]</sup>This does not include central/strategic staff.

## **10 Conclusion**

This report provides an overview of social services provided to children and families in Scotland. This report should be considered in light of its limitations and that only readily available data was used. Therefore, further analysis may be necessary on the delivery of children's services.



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ISBN: 978-1-80435-491-9

The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

Produced for  
the Scottish Government  
by APS Group Scotland  
PPDAS1092982 (06/22)  
Published by  
the Scottish Government,  
June 2022



Social Research series  
ISSN 2045-6964  
ISBN 978-1-80435-491-9

Web Publication  
[www.gov.scot/socialresearch](http://www.gov.scot/socialresearch)

PPDAS1092982 (06/22)