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Press release

Many children placed in homes far away from their families amid national sufficiency challenge

An Ofsted report published today suggests that there are too few suitable places to keep children in care close to home.

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Children in the care system are often placed in homes far away from their families because of a lack of suitable places near to where they live, Ofsted research published today suggests.

Ofsted's report, '[What types of needs do children's homes offer care for?](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-types-of-needs-do-childrens-homes-offer-care-for)' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-types-of-needs-do-childrens-homes-offer-care-for>) finds that children with mental health problems, or experience of abuse and neglect, are likely to be living the furthest away from their home prior to coming into care, and above the average distance of 36 miles.

The research suggests that children are living far away from their families because homes are not evenly distributed across the regions of England, meaning supply does not match demand. For example, just 5% of England's children's homes (7% of places) are located in London, but London local authorities placed 11% of all children living in homes. In contrast, local authorities in the North West placed 19% of children living in children's homes, but 25% of all homes (23% of places) are located in the region.

Yvette Stanley, Ofsted's National Director for Children's Social Care, said:

“ Today's research shows that this is a national challenge. It suggests that Local Authorities are making a difficult choice between placing a child either in a home close by, or in one that is far away but relevant to their needs.

“ Children need provision of the right care, in the right place, at the right time. And for some children, it is only through a better needs analysis and planning across health and social care at a national level, that they will be able to stay closer to their family and friends.”

Ofsted’s research, which is based on data up to 31 March 2020, aims to contribute to the wider conversation around why there may be barriers to achieving sufficiency of places in children’s homes.

Other findings in the report include:

- there was no link between the types of needs that homes said they could accommodate and their Ofsted inspection grades.
- a very high proportion of children living in children’s homes had special educational needs (80%) compared with all children looked after (52%) and all children (around 15%)
- the majority of homes (80%) said they could accommodate 2 or more areas of need, with one fifth (20%) saying they could accommodate only one area
- providers that stated they could accommodate children with complex needs were the most common (93%), while sensory impairment (4%) and complex health needs (5%) were the least common
- the majority (83%) of children’s homes included in the report were privately owned on 31 March 2020, which marked an increase from 69% on the same date in 2016

Press office

8.30am to 6pm Monday to Friday 0300 013 0415

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