



Centre for excellence
for looked after children in Scotland

Looked after children statistics

Analysis of Scottish Government Social Work
statistics, 2014-15

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Improving care experiences

The most recent official statistics about children and young people who are looked after by (or in receipt of aftercare services from) Scottish local authorities were published by the Scottish Government on 24 March 2015. The data covers the year 1 August 2014 to 31 July 2015. This briefing presents new analysis as well as summarising Scottish Government's Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2014-15 publication.

Headlines

- 15,404 children were looked after, at 31 July 2015; a reduction in the total number for the third year in a row.
- However, the number of children living away from their families actually increased - continuing a trend which begun over 10 years ago.
- More children continue to be looked after in foster care - 36% of the total population - while 27% were living with friends and family (kinship care), 25% were at home with their parents, and 10% were in some form of residential care.
- Three of 32 local authorities (Glasgow, Edinburgh & Fife) were responsible for over one third (37%) of looked after children.
- 3,599 young people were eligible for aftercare support on 31 July 2015 - and of these care leavers 31% were not receiving aftercare support from their local authority, including over one hundred 15-16 year olds.
- 28% of care leavers were known to be in education, training or employment.

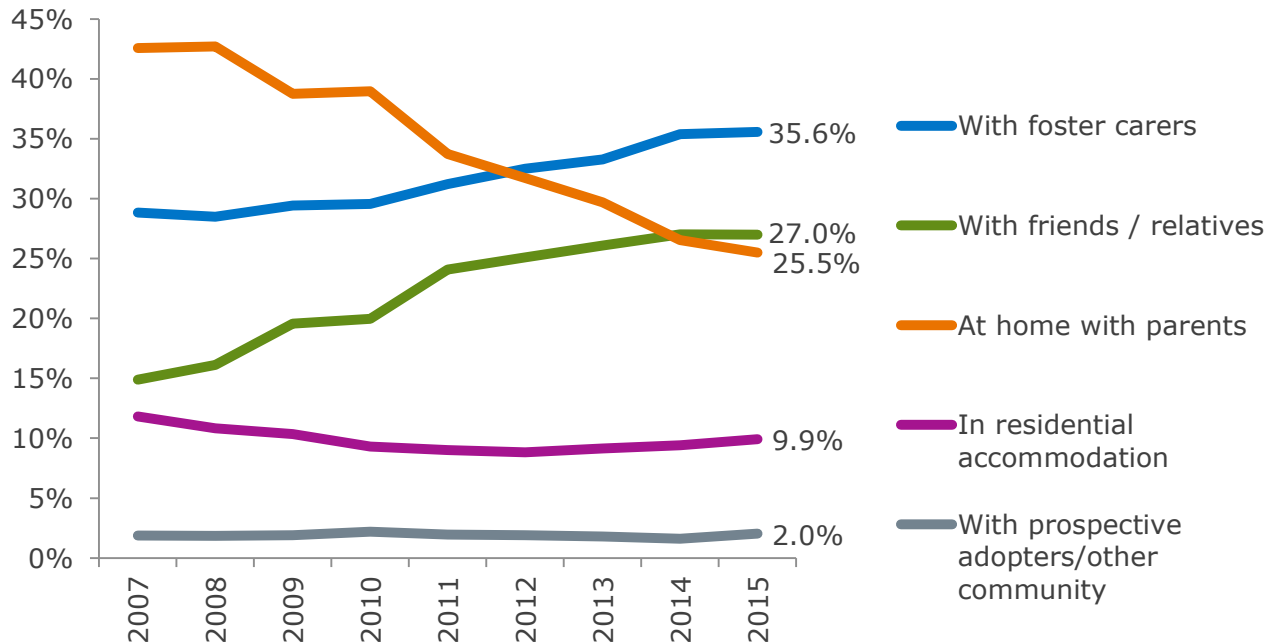
The looked after children population

While the total number of looked after children has reduced over the last 3 years, there is an upward trend in the number of children being provided with accommodation away from their parents (in foster, residential or kinship care). The number children accommodated away from home rose from 9,699 in 2010 to 11,477 in 2015 - that is an 18% increase over 5 years (see Chart 1).

- A slightly higher proportion of looked after children were boys - 54% were boys and 46% were girls.
- Almost 3 in 5 (58%) of children were aged 11 years or under and 42% were aged 12 to 21 years.
- The biggest single age group was secondary school aged children (12 - 17), at 6,276. There were also 5,723 primary school aged (5-11) children looked after.

- The majority (67%) of children were 'looked after' under the terms of a Compulsory Supervision Order.
- The proportion of children secured in a placement under a Permanence Order continued to increase, from 9.4% in 2013-14 to 11.1% in 2014-15.

Chart 1: Number of looked after children by where they live



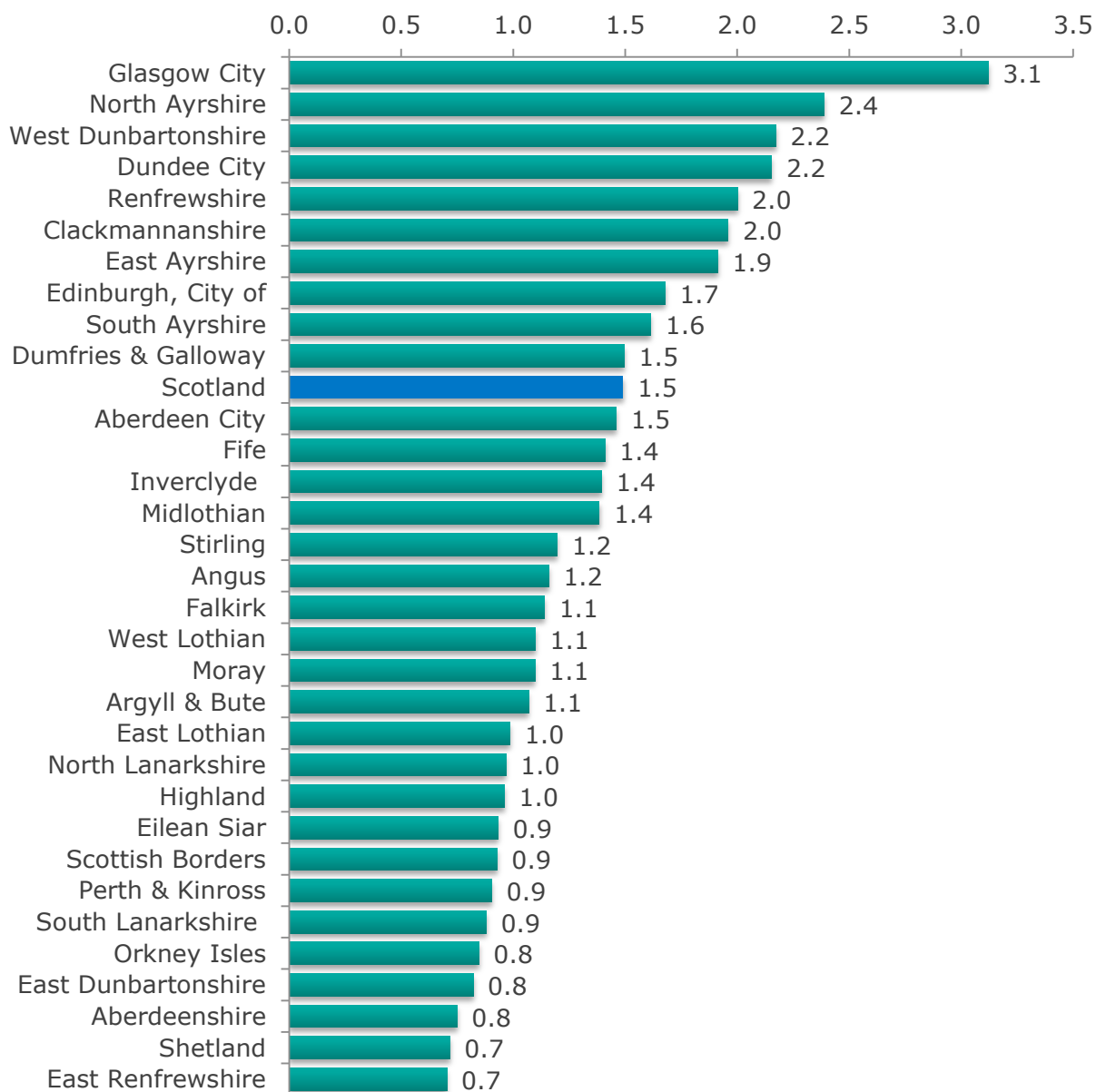
- When looking at the total number of looked after children, more than one third (37%) were looked after by Glasgow, Edinburgh and Fife local authorities.
- In Scotland 1.5% of all children are looked after. However this varies across local authorities and is highest in Glasgow, North Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire local authorities (see Chart 2).

Children becoming looked after

- For the sixth year in a row, fewer children became looked after; a total of 4,198 over the twelve months of 2014-15.
- Although the proportion of 'new cases / episodes' which relate to pre-school children (0-5 years) has increased steadily over recent years, from 37% in 2010 to 41% in 2014, last year it dropped back slightly, to 38%.
- Children looked after at home
- The number of children looked after at home (with parents) decreased for the fifth year in a row, to 3,927.
- The looked after at home population now represents approximately 25% of the total looked after population; down from 40% in 2010.

- There is significant variation among local authorities in the number of children looked after at home. On 31 July 2015, 50% of East Renfrewshire's 'looked after' population was at home, compared to just 11.9% of looked after children in Scottish Borders.

Chart 2: Proportion of children who are looked after by local authority



Children in kinship care

The kinship care figures only capture children living with friends or relatives who are formally 'looked after' by a local authority. However, we know there are many other children in Scotland who live in informal kinship care arrangements without the day-to-day involvement of a local authority.

- The number of children in formal kinship care was 4,158 – that is, 27% of the total looked after children population.
- This is the first time that formal kinship care constituted a bigger proportion of the looked after population than those living at home.

Children in foster care

- The number of children in foster care decreased slightly on the previous year, from 5,522 to 5,478.
- Foster care remains the single biggest 'type' of care – it represents 36% of the whole looked after population and 48% of the accommodated population.
- In England (which has a largely 'accommodated' population) foster care represents approximately 75% of all looked after placements.

Children in residential care

- The number of children in residential care (including secure care) increased slightly in 2014-15 to a total of 1,529; this represented 10% of the total looked after population.
- The majority (54%) of the residential population were 12 – 15 years old and 10% (n= 158) were 5 – 11 years old. A large number of these children were in residential schools.

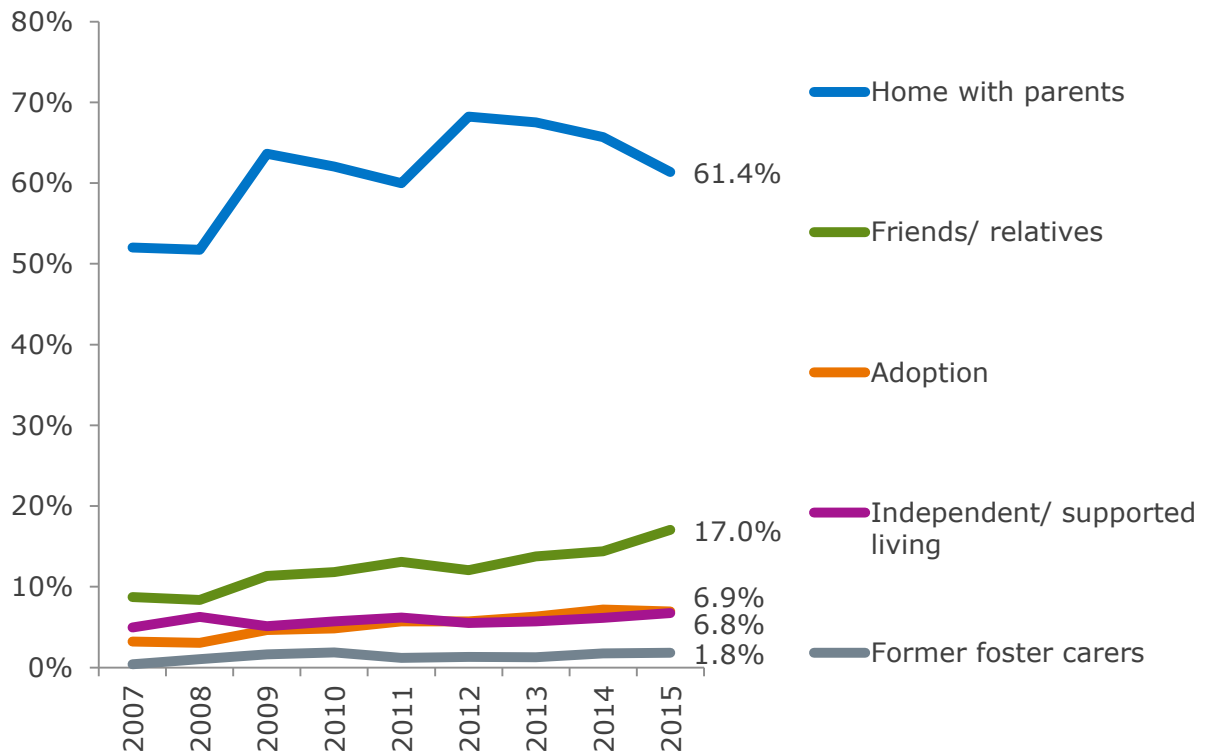
Leaving care

- 4,367 children and young people 'ceased' to be looked after in the year from 1 August 2014 to 31 July 2015 .
- Of those who ceased to be looked after in 2014-15, 18% had been looked after for 5 years or more. The proportion of children who, at the time of ceasing to be looked after, had been in the care system for 5 years or more has increased steadily over the past decade.
- 61% of the children and young people who ceased to be looked after remained with or returned to their biological parents (see Chart 3).

Care leavers

- 1,226 young people ceased to be looked after on a date after their minimum school leaving age; this group, referred to officially as 'care leavers', are eligible for aftercare services. Just under half (n = 614) of this group were aged 15 or 16 years old.
- Excluding those new care leavers who were looked after at home, 29% (n = 210) were living with friends or relatives after leaving care. Another 23% (n = 168) moved into supported accommodation and 16% were living in their own tenancy (n = 115, including 24 young people aged 15 – 16 years old).

Chart 3: Destinations of children ceasing to be looked after



- At 31 July 2015, a total of 3,599 young people (15 – 25 years) were eligible for aftercare services. With changes introduced to aftercare eligibility in April 2015, we expect this number to increase significantly next year (2015-16).
- Over one third of Scotland’s care leavers (including those formerly looked after at home) received no aftercare support from their local authority in 2014-15. For this group we do not know their current activity (education, employment, etc.) or accommodation status.
- Of those care leavers for which we have data, 47% (n = 996) were in education, training or employment.