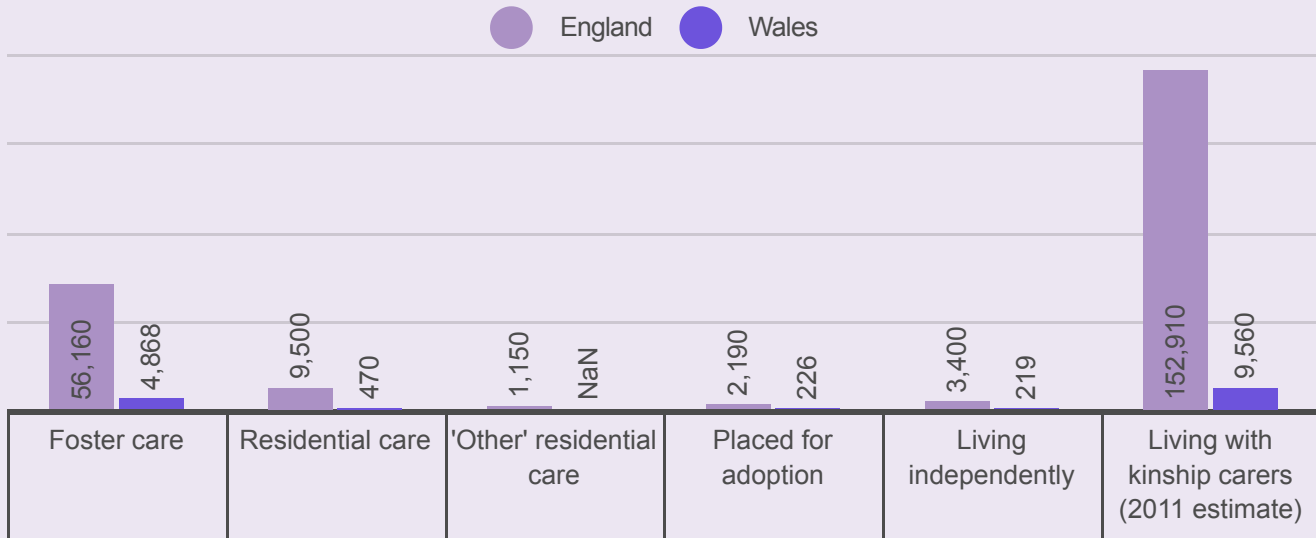


The coronavirus pandemic and associated social distancing measures have changed and limited the services available to children and families. In light of these changes, renewed focus has been placed on children not living with one or both parents, as well as those described as 'vulnerable children'.

Many parents in separated families have been asking what exactly social distancing and self-isolation means when it comes to children who spend time in two separate homes. Now we are in 'lockdown', separated parents are becoming increasingly concerned about what this means for existing child arrangements.

CHILDREN NOT LIVING WITH ONE OR BOTH BIRTH PARENTS

Placements of looked-after children and children living with kinship carers, England and Wales, 2019

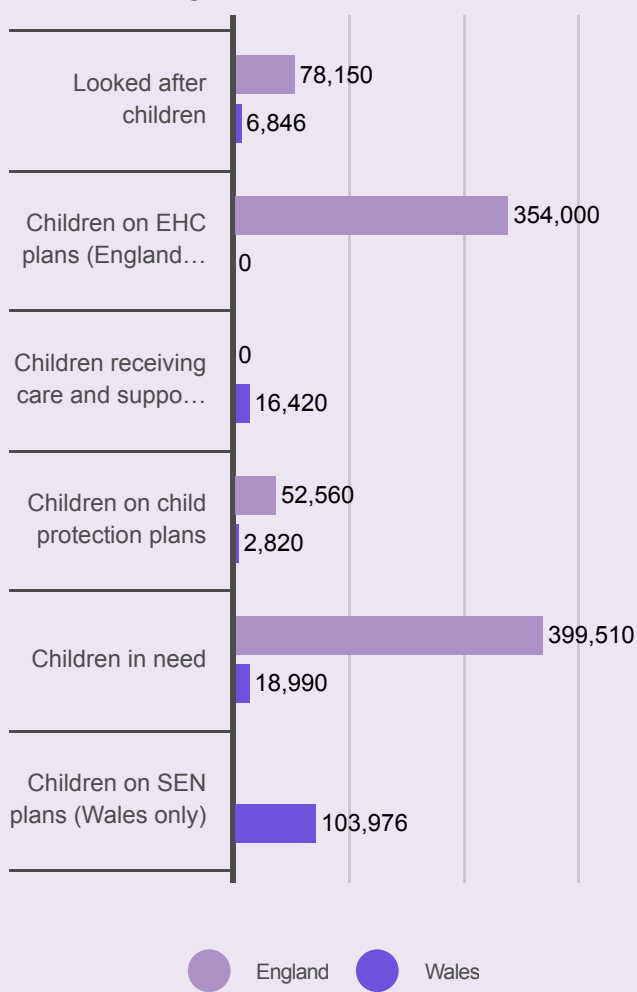


DfE (2020); StatsWales (2019); Wijedasa (2017).

Note: Estimated number of separated families included below. Kinship carers estimate from 2011 census data (Wijedasa, 2017). This estimate does not distinguish between kinship placements organised formally through local authorities and courts, and those organised informally between relatives and friends. Does not include *total* number of adopted children under 18 as data is not publicly available. 'Residential care' refers to secure units, children's homes and semi-independent living accommodation. 'Other residential care' refers to: residential care homes; NHS trust; family centre or mother and baby unit; or young offenders institution. 'Living independently' includes living independently, in residential schools or in other placements.

WHO ARE THE CHILDREN?

Number of vulnerable children, England and Wales, 2019



DfE (2020); DfE (2019); StatsWales (2019)

Note: Individual children may fall into a number of these categories, so may be duplicated.

WHO ARE THE VULNERABLE CHILDREN?

Some children could be living with a birth parent but still be classed as 'vulnerable' under the government's definition. According to recent government guidance 'vulnerable children' in England include those who have a social worker and those children and young people up to the age of 25 with education, health and care (EHC) plans (DfE, 2020). Children that fit into this definition can continue to attend school or state-funded childcare during the lockdown.

Those who have a social worker include children who have a child protection plan and those who are looked after by the local authority. A child may also be deemed to be vulnerable if they have been assessed as being in need.

In Wales, for the purpose of the provision those who have a social worker include children with care and support or support plans, children on the child protection register and children who are looked after.

SEPARATED FAMILIES

HOW MANY CHILDREN ARE LIVING IN SEPARATED FAMILIES?

Family forms have changed a great deal in the last two decades. Children are now more likely to live in a more fluid family form, with rising numbers of parents who never live together, who separate, and who are in traditionally 'less stable' relationships. According to recent data we estimate that:

- **One child in six** is born into a single parent household (ONS, 2019).
- **Nearly half** of children experience parents' separation during childhood (higher for children of cohabiters) (DWP, 2015; Haux et al., 2015).
- At any point there are around **2.5 million separated families raising 4 million children** (DWP, 2019).

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THEIR CONTACT ARRANGEMENTS?

Separated parents may also be worried that they might not be able to see their child for a sustained period of time, for example if the child goes into isolation while with the other parent. We have data—largely from longitudinal surveys—on the nature of post-separation contact arrangements:

- **Four in 10** children have at least weekly contact with their non-resident parent—but **one in three** has no contact at all (Bryson et al., 2017);
- Contact falls as time since separation increases (Goisis et al 2016);
- **One in three** children stay overnight regularly with the non-resident parent (Bryson et al 2017);
- The proportions of children staying overnight regularly increases with age (Haux et al 2015).

GUIDANCE FOR FAMILIES

The latest advice (accurate as of 9th April 2020) and guidance on the effect of the stay-at-home-rule on separated families and those who have hitherto been subject to a child arrangement order or parenting plan can be found below:

- [Advice and guidance from Cafcass](#)
- [ADCS published Covid-19 guidance and resources for children's services](#)
- [Guidance: Making C100 applications during COVID-19](#)
- [Government advice on child arrangements for separated families](#)
- [Guidance for children's social care](#)