

# Half of all private and voluntary sector fostering placements offered by just 6 companies

Press release

Ofsted has published statistics on private and voluntary providers of children's homes and independent fostering agencies (IFAs).



New Ofsted data shows that half of all private and voluntary fostering placements nationally are concentrated in just 6 providers. That equates to placements for over 18,000 children.

Published for the first time as management information, Ofsted's statistics show that the 6 largest providers own 66 independent fostering agencies (IFAs), around a fifth of all IFAs. The top two providers own 47 IFAs, offering over 11,000 fostering places between them, making up 31% of all places offered by private and voluntary IFAs nationally.

Across England, 93% of all IFAs have been judged either good or outstanding by Ofsted. The proportion of good and outstanding IFAs owned by the largest providers is higher than the national average, at 98%.

The data also reveals that around a third of all private and voluntary children's homes are run by just 10 providers, a similar position to last year.

Ofsted has previously raised concerns about the lack of suitable care placements for vulnerable children, with national supply not matching the local needs of children.

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

Demand for children's social care services continues to outstrip supply, and the need for placements for the most vulnerable children is only likely to rise in the wake of COVID-19. We have

repeatedly raised the issue of overall sufficiency of placements for looked after children.

The domination of the fostering market by a small number of operators creates an additional concern that the loss of any of the bigger providers could leave major gaps in supply. We worry that the narrowing of the market on top of the sufficiency issue is storing up trouble for the future.

## **Notes to editors**

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