

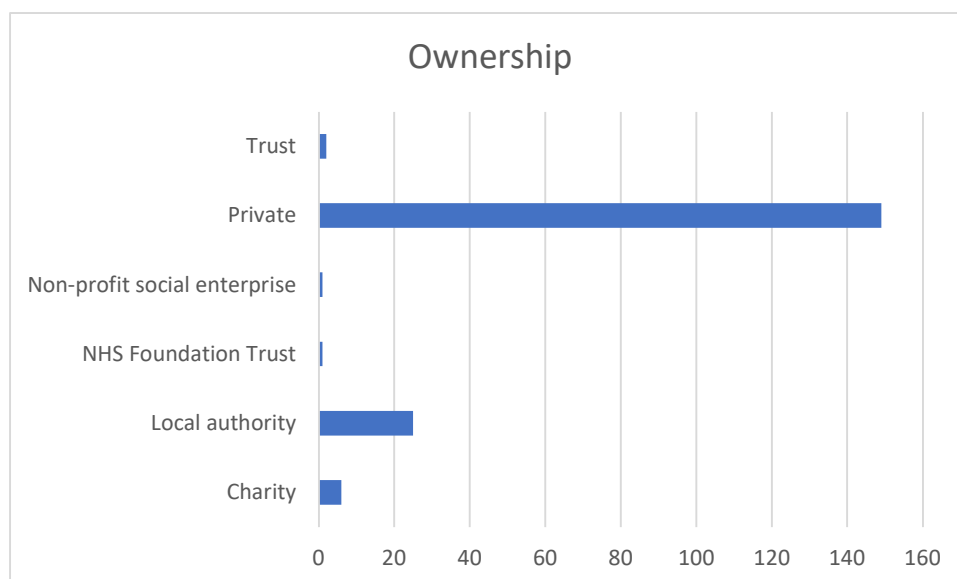
Residential children’s homes in England and Wales: a snapshot

In order to investigate the suppliers and quality of residential children’s homes in England and Wales, *Seen and Heard* has analysed all of Ofsted’s full inspection reports for children’s homes, published for July 2022. These comprise a total of 184 reports, based on inspections taking place from May to July 2022. We suggest that this is a sufficient number to give a flavour of the situation in children’s homes.

We have begun by breaking the homes down by provider. This shows that the operators of the homes inspected are made up of:

- private companies – 149 homes
- local authorities – 25 homes
- charities – 6 homes
- Children’s Services Trust – 2 homes
- NHS Foundation Trust – 1 home;
- non-profit social enterprise – 1 home.

The first point is the size and importance of the private sector for providing residential children’s homes with (in our sample) eight out of ten children’s homes being owned by the private sector. In March 2022, the Competition & Markets Authority reported that over three-quarters of children’s homes were within the independent sector and so our snapshot does not seem to be unrepresentative of the sector as a whole.



We can also investigate the range of judgments by Ofsted within each sector to look at the experiences and safety of the individual children in each property. Only four homes were rated Outstanding and these were all owned by private companies. Reading their inspection reports, it is very clear that the consistent factor in all of these is the manager and staff. In all of these homes, the children (or child where there is only one in the home) are making great strides through the efforts of managers who are highly trained and committed to the task. The staff working with them are a stable and consistent group of people who are similarly well trained and who thoroughly understand the children they are caring for. The relationships that the children are able to form with the staff have clearly made enormous contributions to those children's lives.

Of the 25 local authority homes inspected, 60 per cent (15 homes) were rated Good. For independent providers, 83 homes were rated as Good, equating to 55 per cent of the private homes inspected. Our sample does not, from the children's viewpoint, suggest that the private sector necessarily brings with it a higher quality experience for the child.

For charity-owned children's homes, five out of six were rated as Good by Ofsted in our sample. That sample is too small to make broader conclusions, but, we would suggest, that the charity model of children's homes is something where further research would be warranted, if we are seeking to raise outcomes for the children who live in these homes. The only operator in the sample not rated Good was Homes2Inspire Limited (owned by the Shaw Trust), which was rated as Requires Improvement to be Good.

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