

# Looked after children: trends in numbers, rates & spend

Including the Cordis Bright Looked After Children Stress Test

August 2020

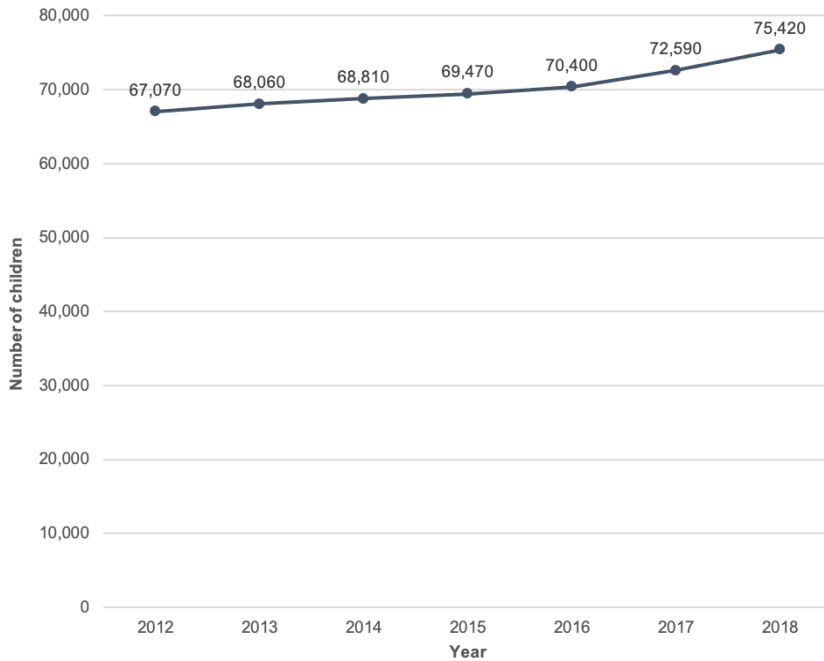


# Introduction

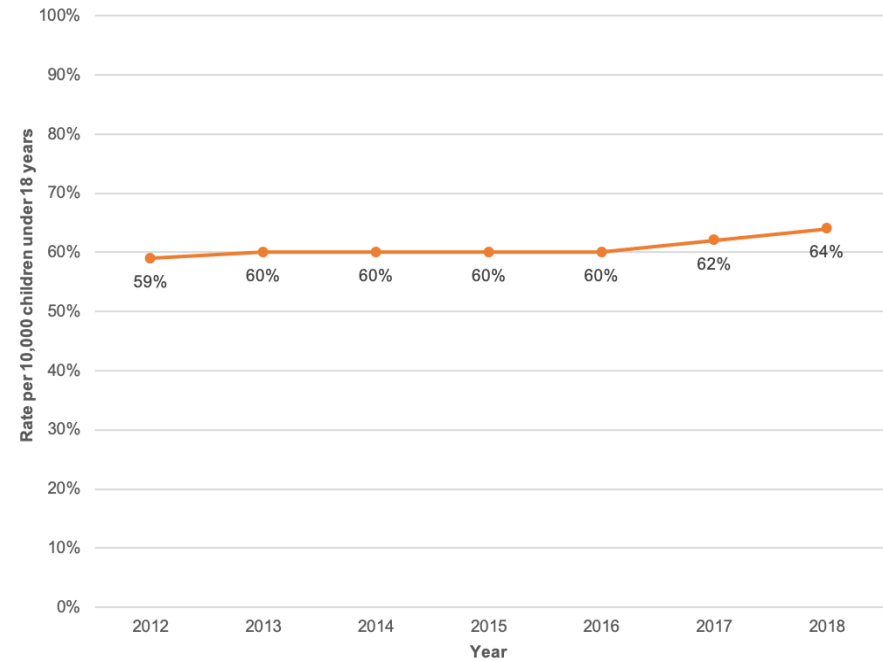
- This document uses publicly available data to examine recent trends in the numbers, rates and spend on **looked after children (LAC)** in England.
- The first section presents national trends from **2012 to 2018**.
- The second section examines **trends across local authorities**.
- As part of this, it highlights those **local authorities** that we think, from the data, **may be experiencing the most pressures in catering for LAC**.
- We also highlight local authorities that may be **sites of effective practice**.

# Number and rate of looked after children

Number of looked after children in England



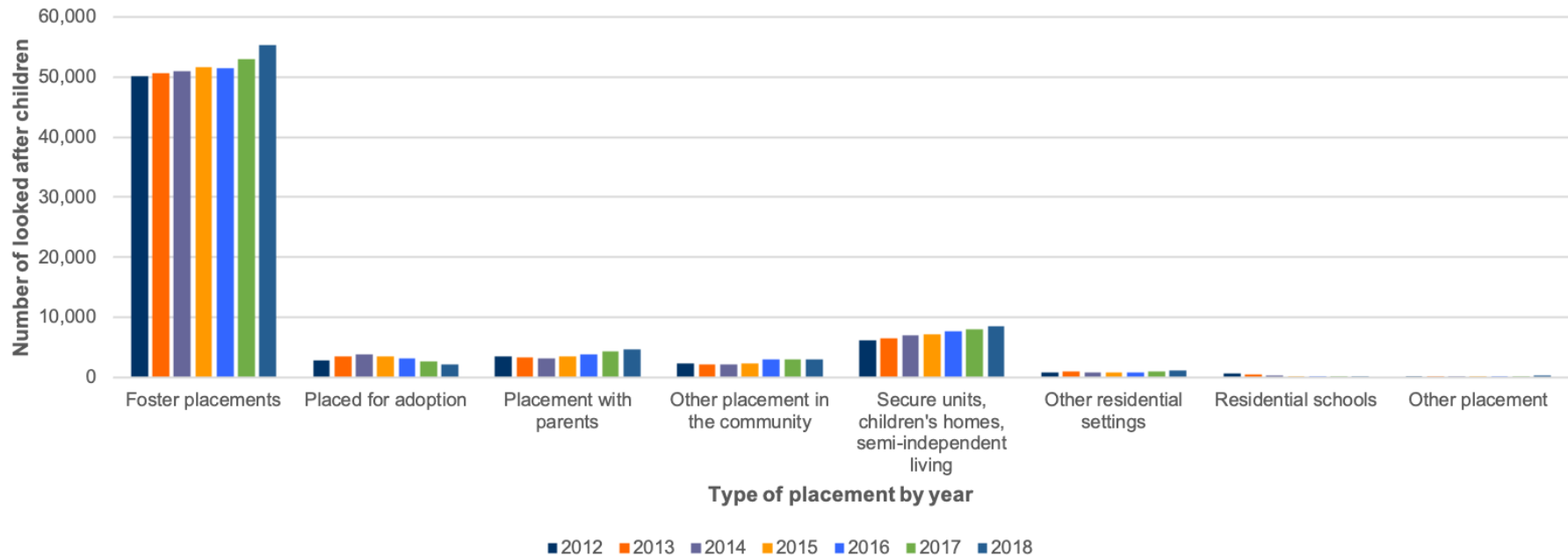
Rate of looked after children in England



Between 2012 and 2018, the number of LAC at 31 March increased from **67,070** to **75,420**, i.e. **12.4% increase**. The rate of LAC remained **relatively static** (at 60 per 10,000) **until 2016**, after which it increased by **2 children per 10,000 each year**. The increase in numbers, therefore, is driven by something other than overall population growth. Increases are likely to be due to complex and multi-faceted reasons. See [here](#) and [here](#) for some explorations.

# Placement of looked after children (#)

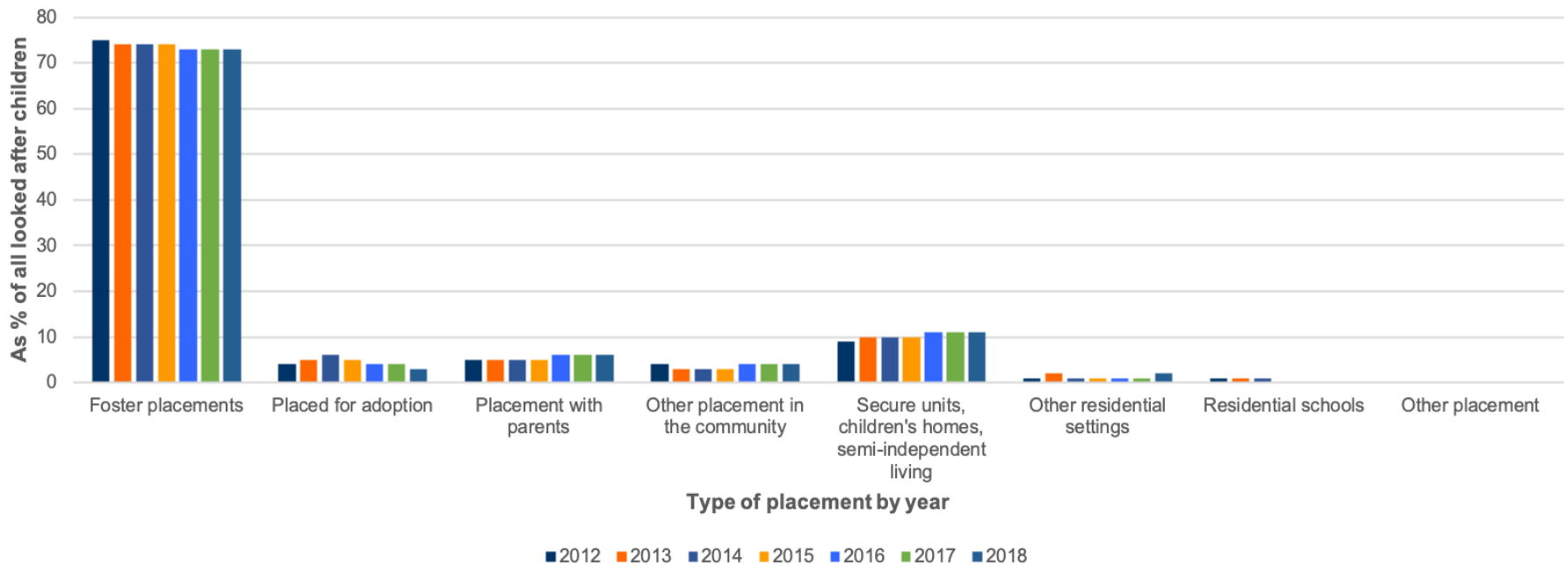
Placement of looked after children (count)



On average, approximately 51,800 LAC are placed in foster care and these numbers have increased year-on-year. The next largest number of LAC are placed in 'secure units, children's homes and semi-independent living'. Since 2014, the number of children placed for adoption has fallen consistently, whilst placements with parents have risen.

# Placement of looked after children (%)

Placement of looked after children (%)

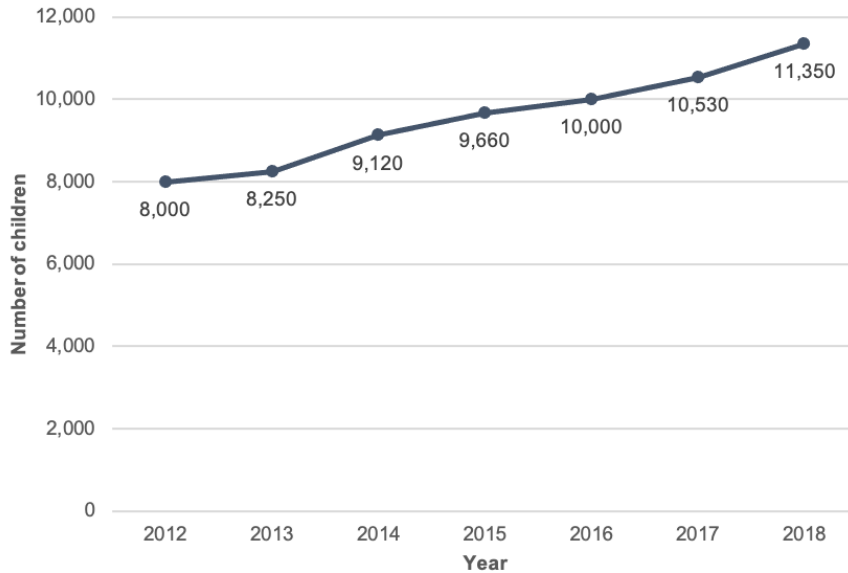


The proportion of LAC in different types of placements has remained relatively stable. Although, since 2012 there has been a 2% decrease in the proportion of LAC in foster placements. In comparison, there has been a 2% increase in the proportion of LAC in secure units, children's homes, and semi-independent living. Since 2014, there has been a 3% decrease in the proportion of LAC placed for adoption.

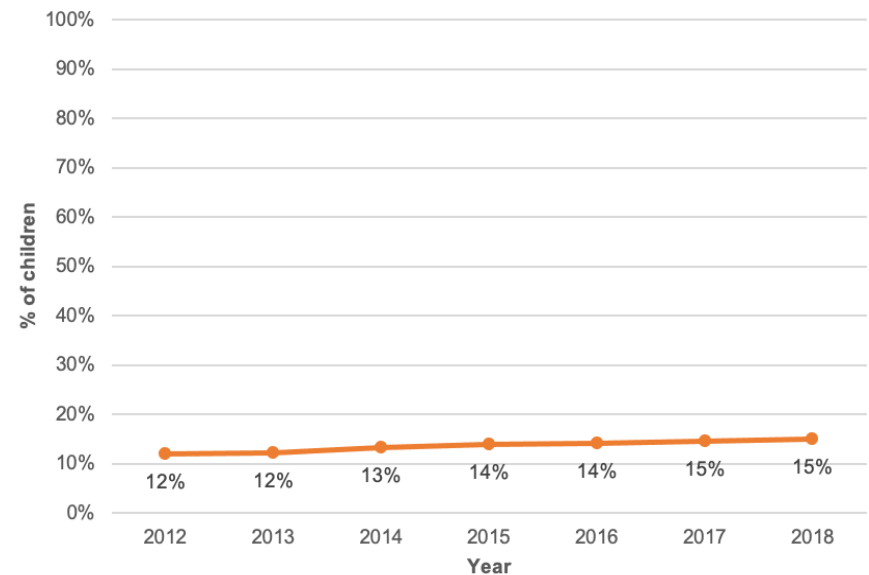


# Placement of LAC 20+ miles away & outside of local authority boundary

Number of LAC placed out of LA boundary and over 20 miles from home at March 31



Percentage of LAC placed outside LA boundary and over 20 miles from home at March 31

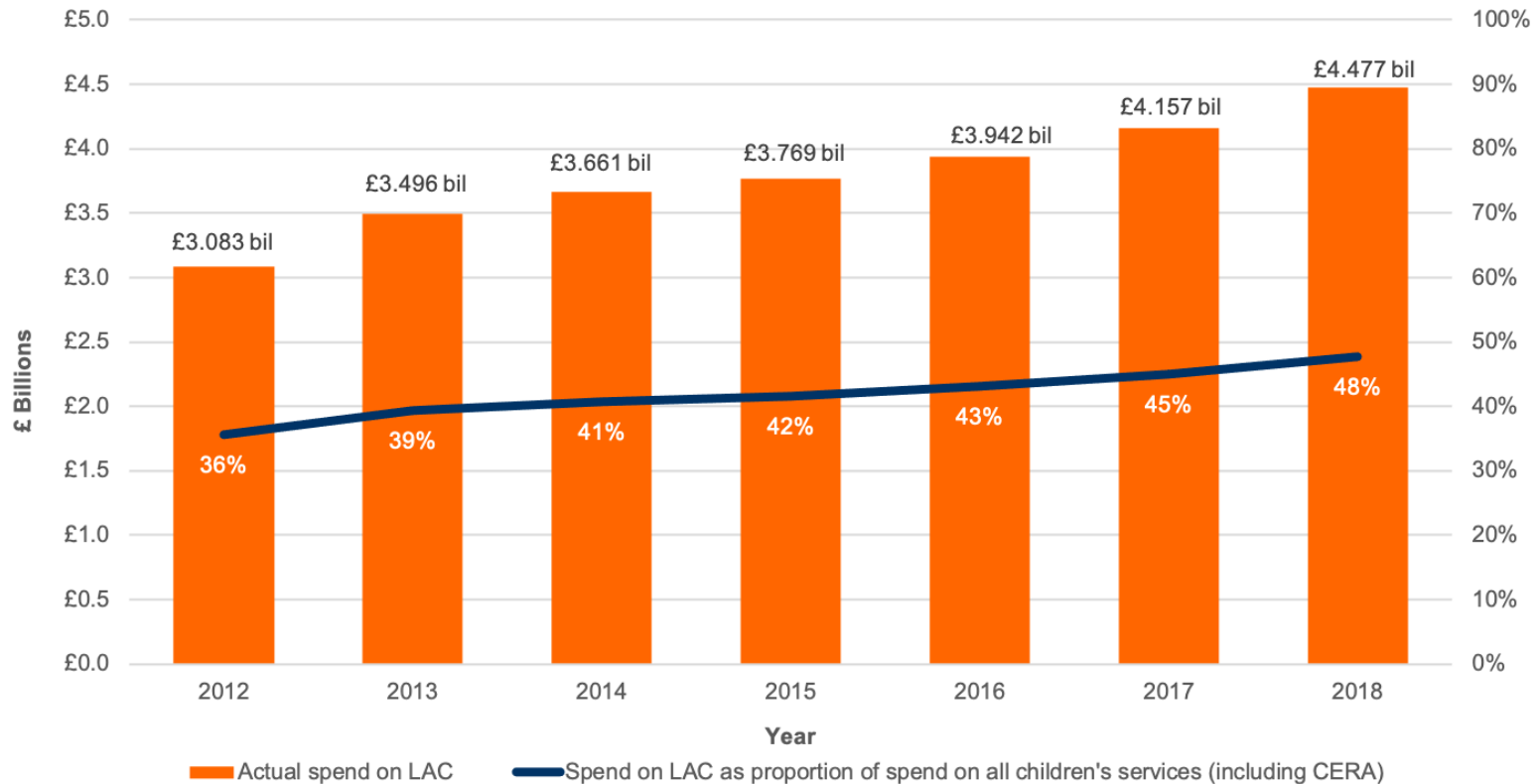


The number of LAC being placed more than 20 miles away and outside the local authority boundary has increased from **8,000** in 2012 to **11,350** in 2018, an increase of **42%**.

The overall proportion of LAC placed far from home has increased from **12%** in 2012 to **15%** in 2018. This suggests that the increase in numbers is only partly driven by increases in the population. It is also likely to be due, in part, to areas having **insufficient capacity locally** to cater for increasing demand for placements – either overall or for particular types of need.

# Total spend on looked after children

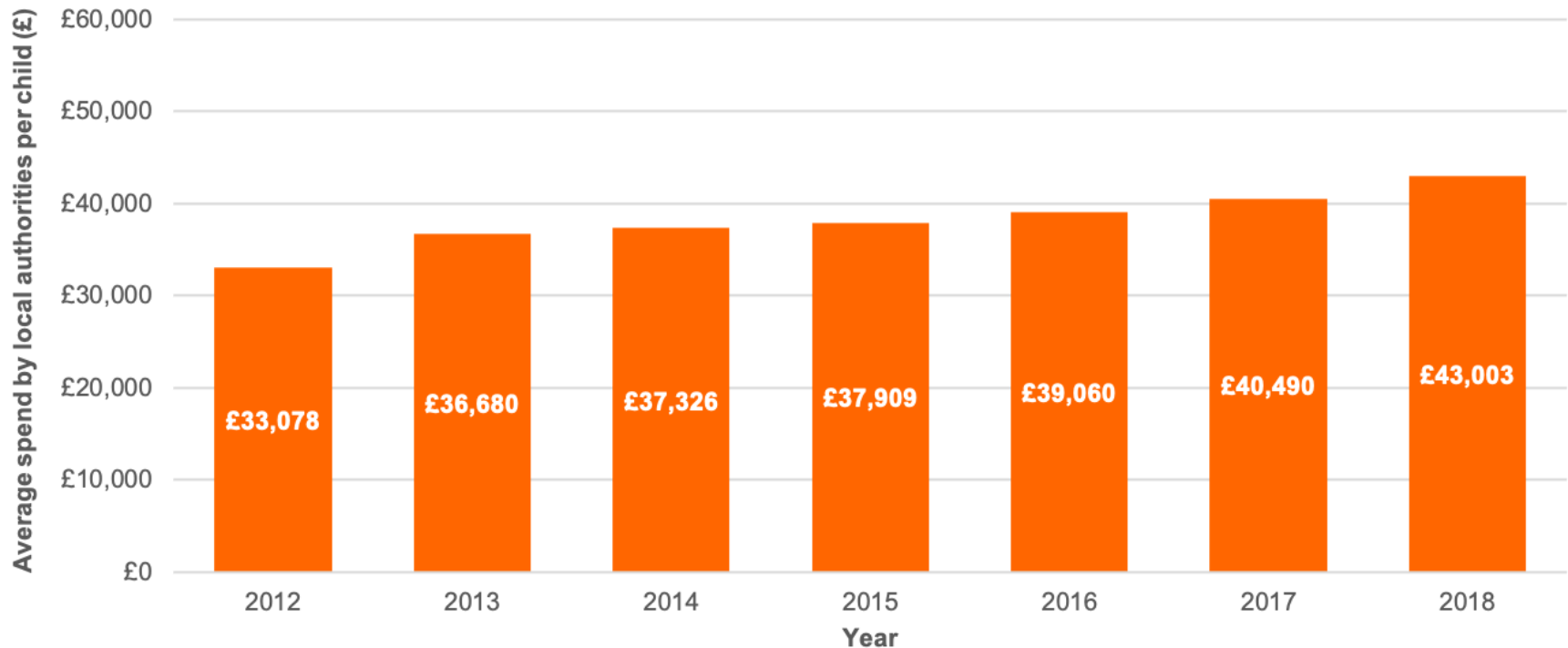
Total LA spend on LAC by local authorities (£ billions)



Total spending by local authorities on LAC has increased by **45% since 2012**, from **£3.083bn to £4.477bn in 2018**. This is above the predicted increase of 30% based on rise in numbers of LAC (12.4%) and CPI inflation (16%), so represents a real terms spending increase. Over this period, spending on LAC also absorbed an increasing proportion of total spend on children's services, from **36% in 2012 to 48% in 2018**.

# Spend per looked after child per year

Average spend by local authorities per child looked after during the year to March 31

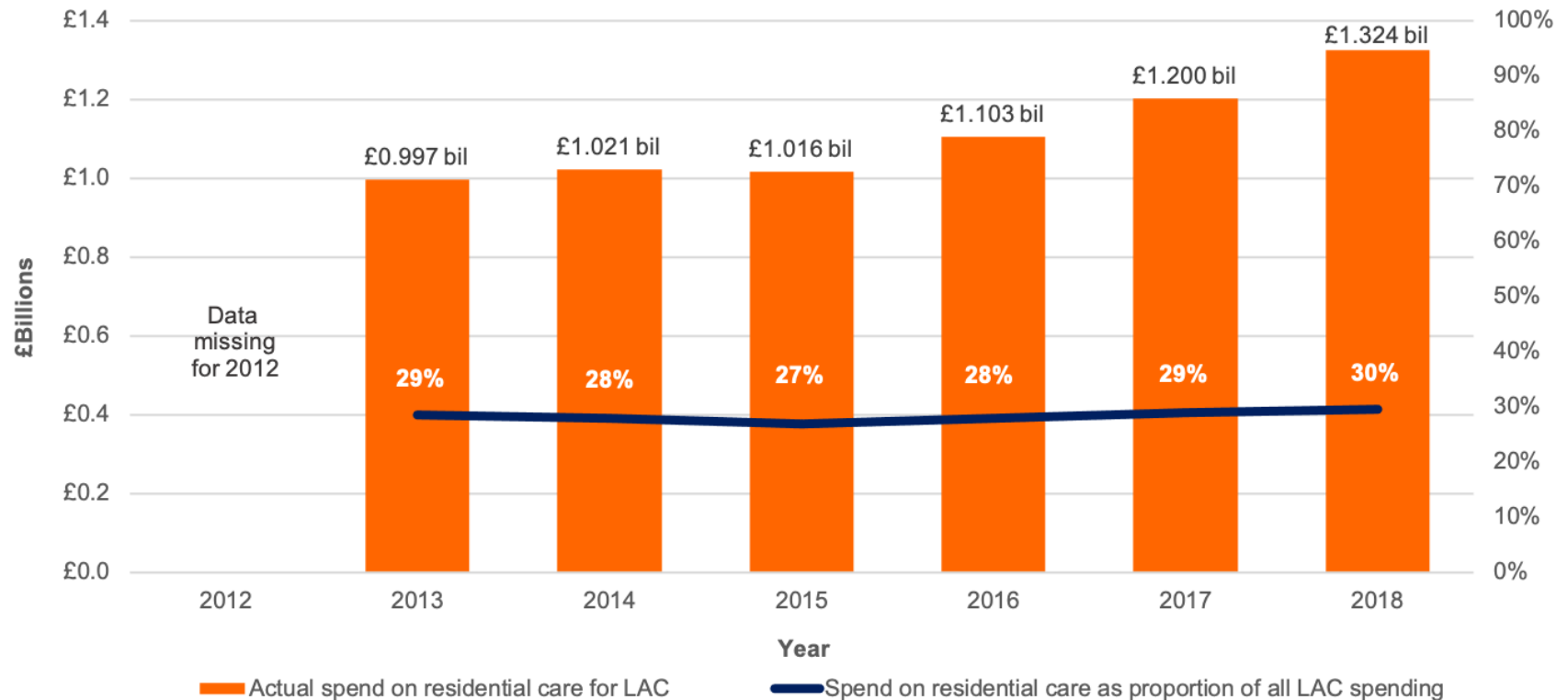


The average spend per LAC has also been increasing year-on-year. The average has risen from **£33,078 to £43,003, representing a 30% increase**. Given that CPI inflation over the same period was 16%, the average spend surpasses the expected average spend of **£38,370 in 2019** by approximately **£4,600**. This suggests that real terms spending per LAC has increased from 2012 to 2018.



# Spend on residential care for LAC

Total spend on residential care by local authorities (£billions)



Total spend on residential care has increased from £0.997bn in 2013 to £1.324bn in 2018, representing an **increase of 33%**. This is below the predicted increase of 42% based on **the rise in numbers of children in residential care (26%) and CPI inflation (13%)** over this period, so represents a real terms decrease in local authority spending on residential care.

# The Looked After Children Stress Test

The national averages disguise substantial differences between local authorities



# Introduction to the stress test

- The national averages disguise substantial differences **between local authorities in numbers, rates and spend on LAC.**
- This section examines these differences and highlights those **local authorities (LAs)** that the data suggests **might be experiencing the most challenges in catering for looked after children.**
- The **indicators** included in the analysis are shown below.

## Indicators (2018)

Rate of LAC

Percentage of LAC in residential care

Percentage of LAC 20 miles or more from home and outside local authority boundary

Percentage of children's services budget spent on LAC

Percentage of LAC budget spent on residential care

## Indicators (2013-2018)

Change in rate of LAC

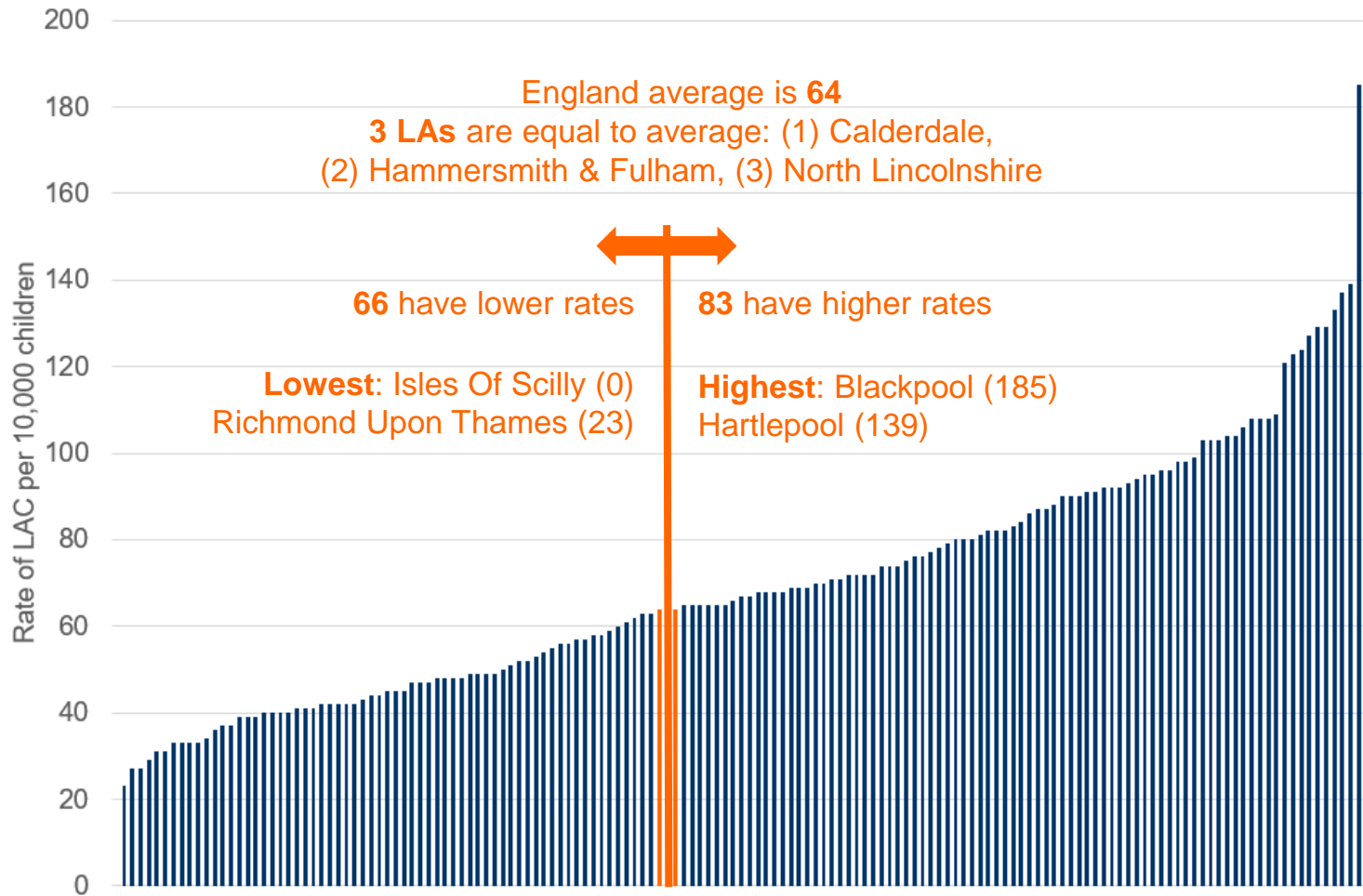
Change in percentage of LAC in residential care

Change in percentage of LAC placed in residential care

Change in percentage of children's services budget spent on LAC

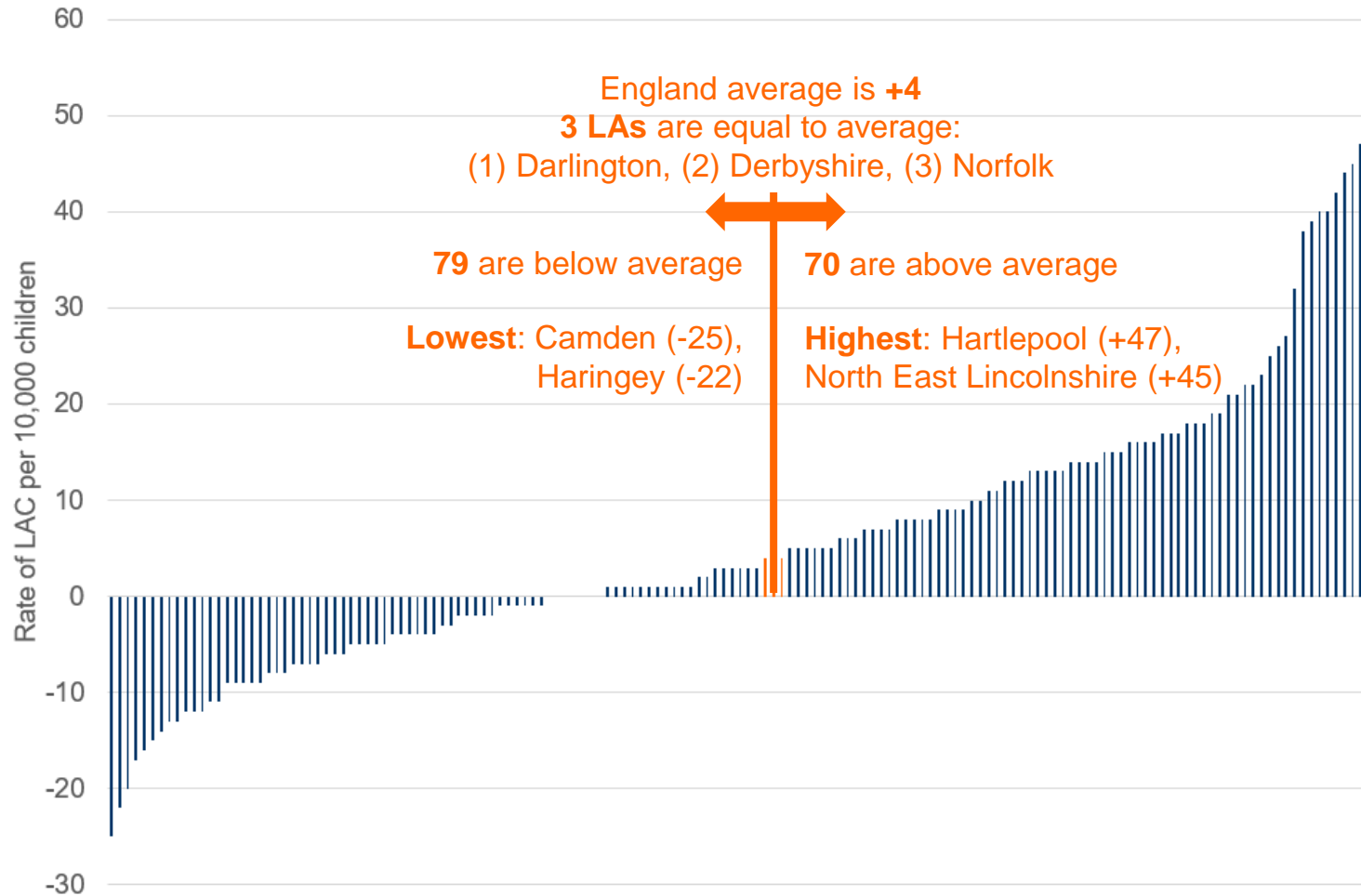
Change in percentage of LAC budget spent on residential care

# Rate of LAC (2018)\*



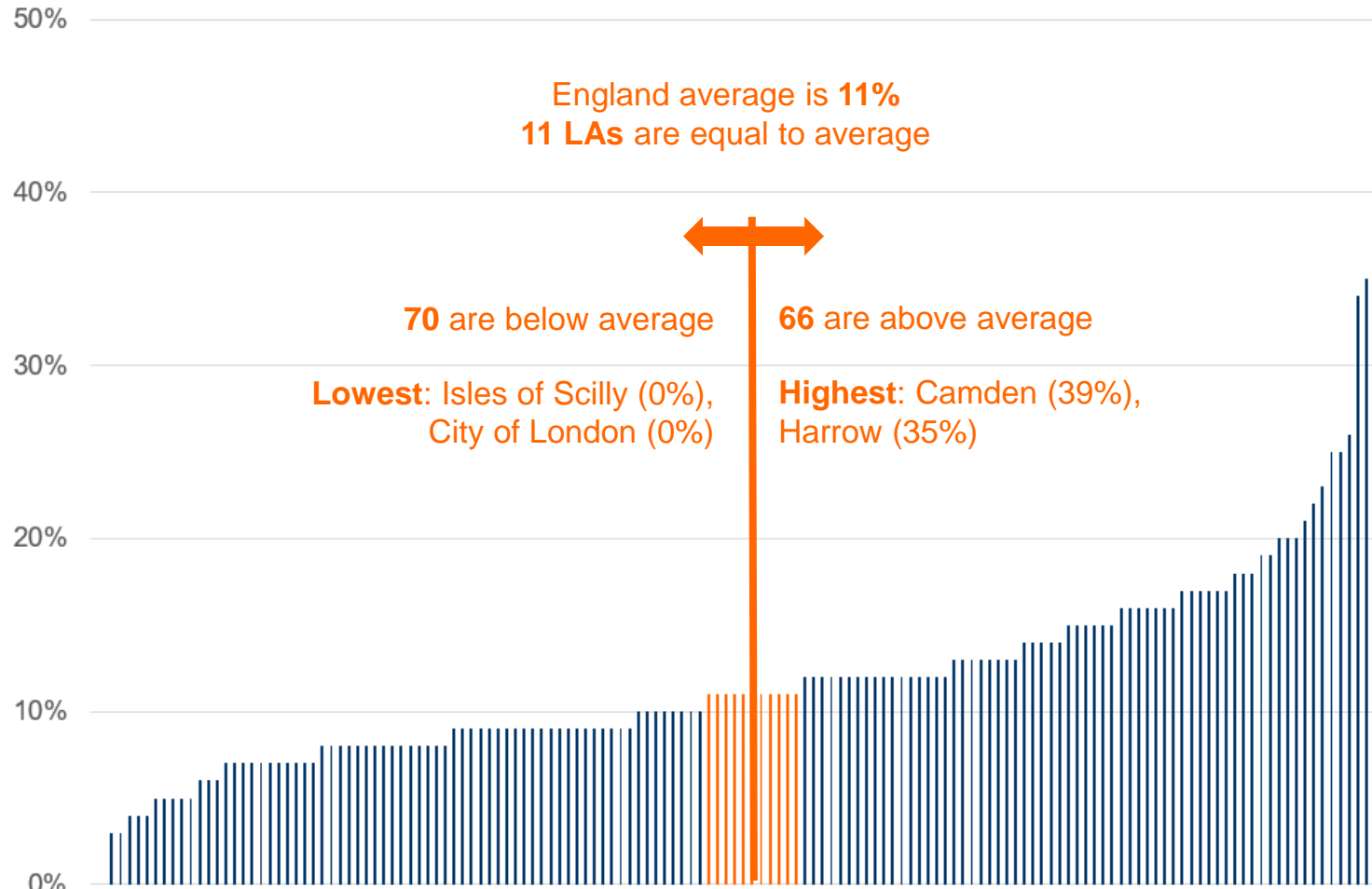
\* At 31 March 2018

# Change in rate of LAC (2013 – 2018)\*



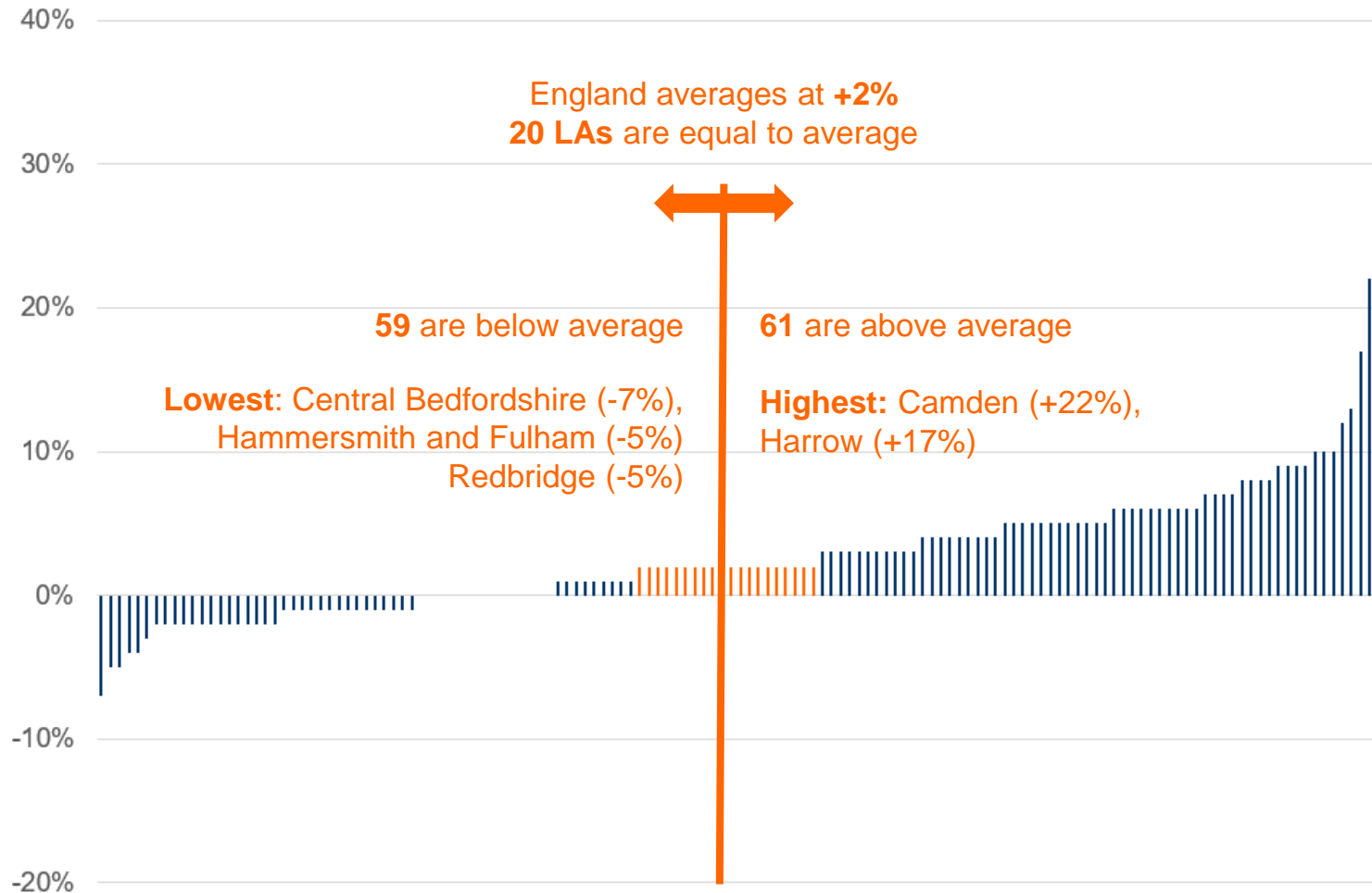
\* Based on snapshot at 31 March each year

# Percentage of LAC in residential care (2018)\*



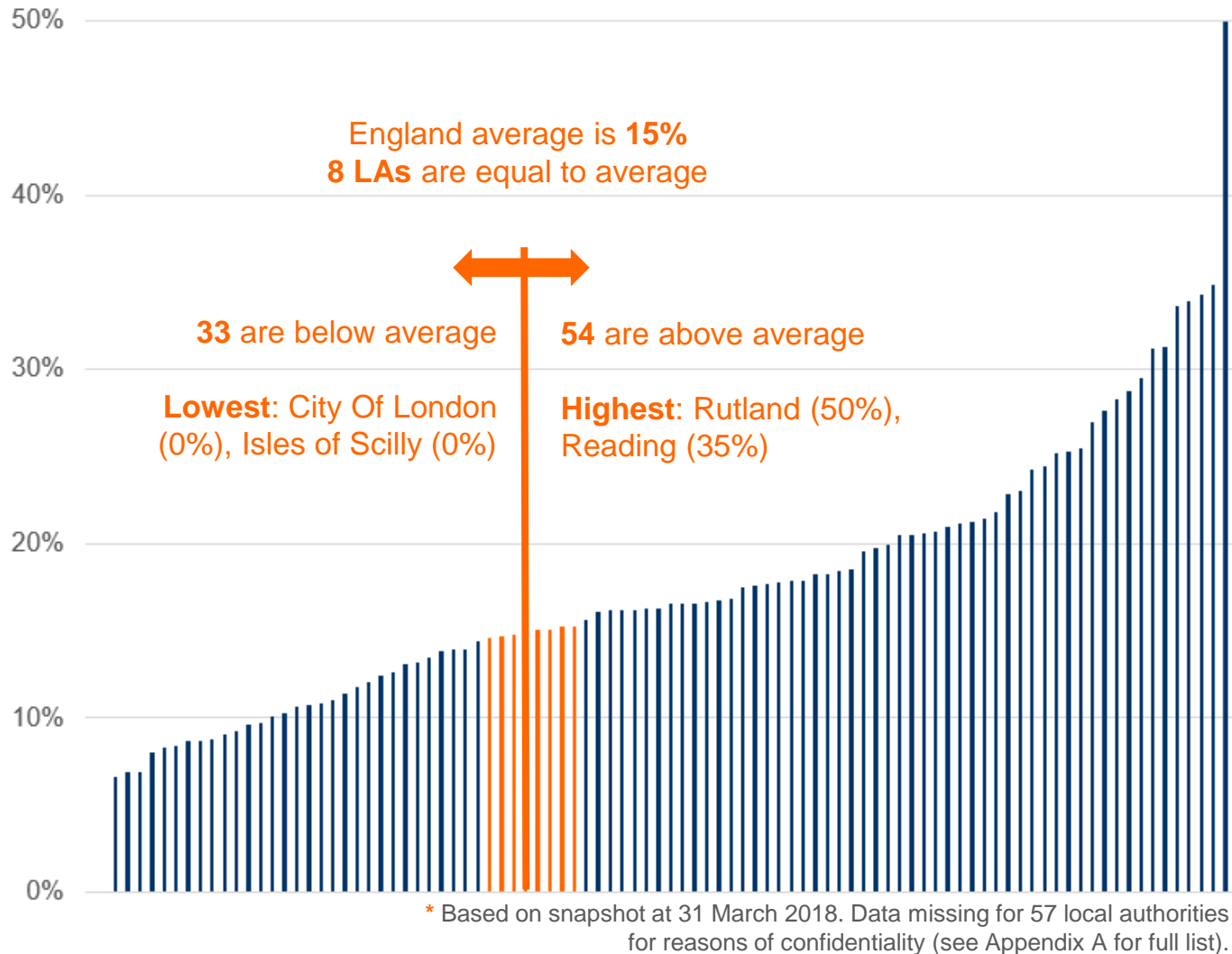
\* Based on snapshot on 31 March 2018 of LAC placed in secure units, children's homes and semi-independent living accommodation. Other residential placements not included due to large amounts of missing data. Data missing from Herefordshire, Kingston Upon Thames, Merton, Richmond Upon Thames and Rutland for reasons of confidentiality.

# Change in percentage of LAC in residential care (2013 – 2018)\*



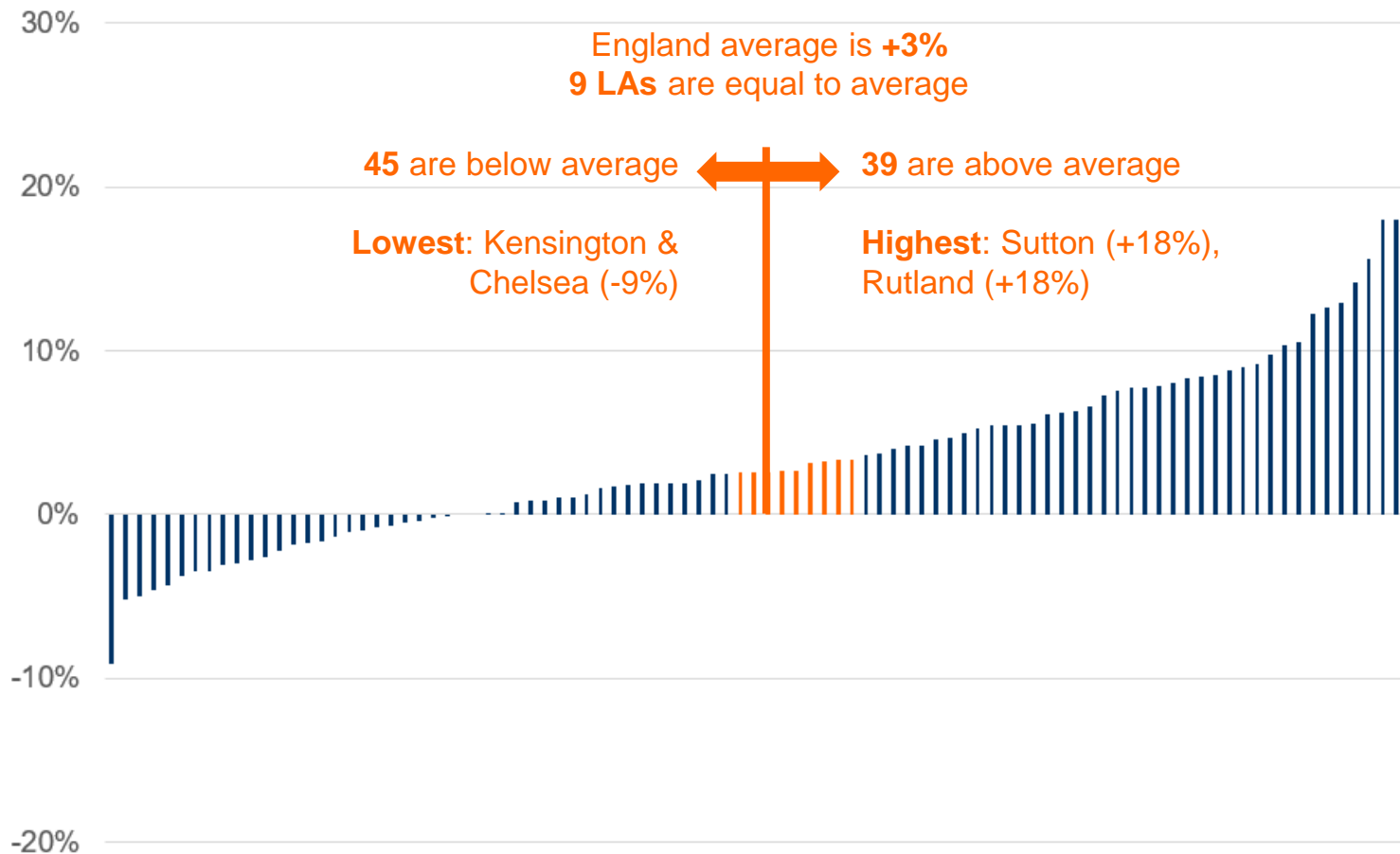
\* Based on snapshot on 31 March 2018 of LAC placed in secure units, children's homes and semi-independent living accommodation. Other residential placements not included due to large amounts of missing data. Data missing from Barking and Dagenham, Bath and North East Somerset, Bournemouth, Herefordshire, Kingston Upon Thames, Merton, Poole, Richmond Upon Thames, Rutland, South Gloucestershire, Swindon and Thurrock for reasons of confidentiality.

# Percentage of LAC placed 20+ miles away & outside of LA boundary (2018)\*



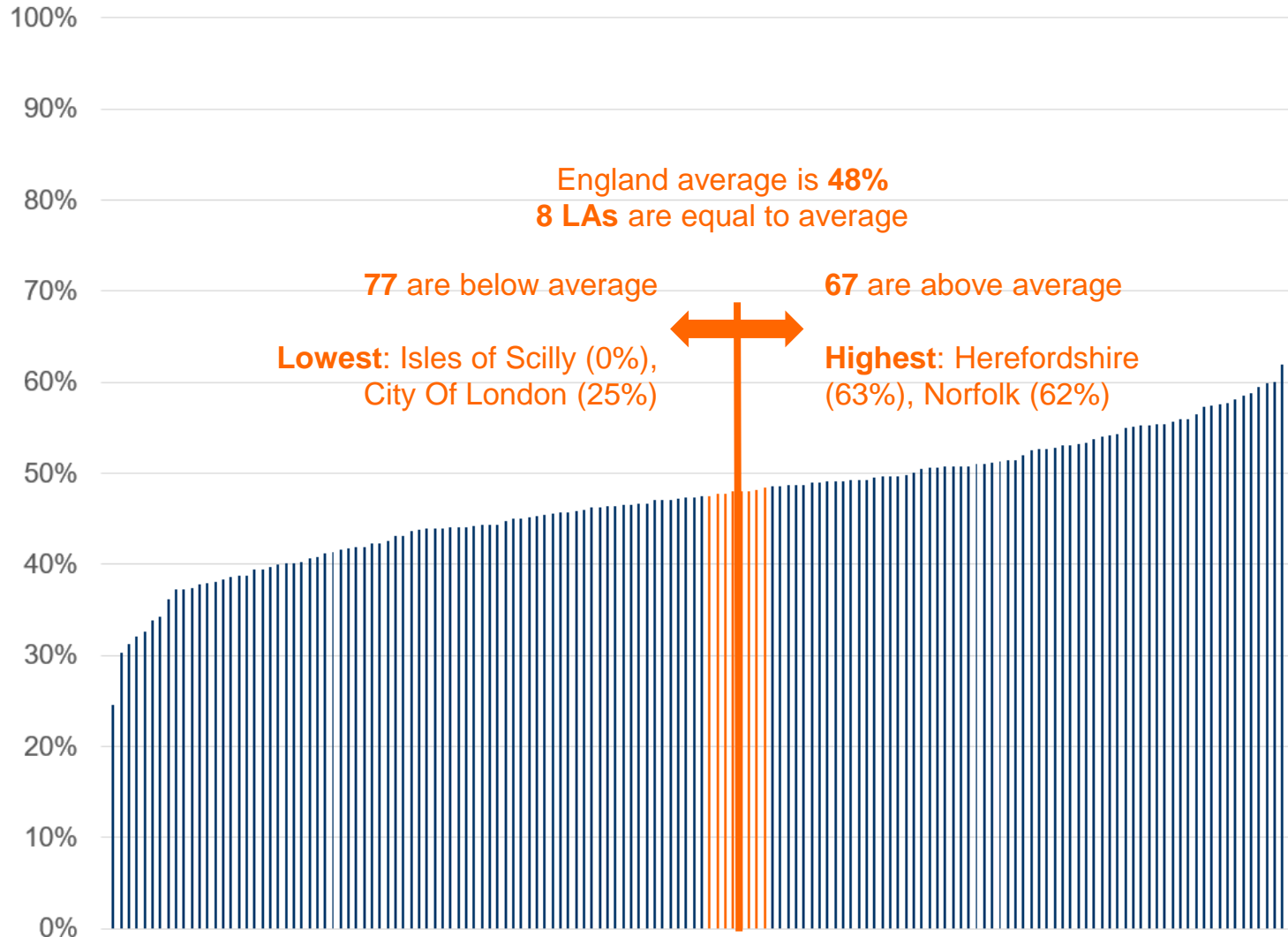


# Change in percentage of LAC placed 20+ miles & outside LA boundary (2013-18)\*

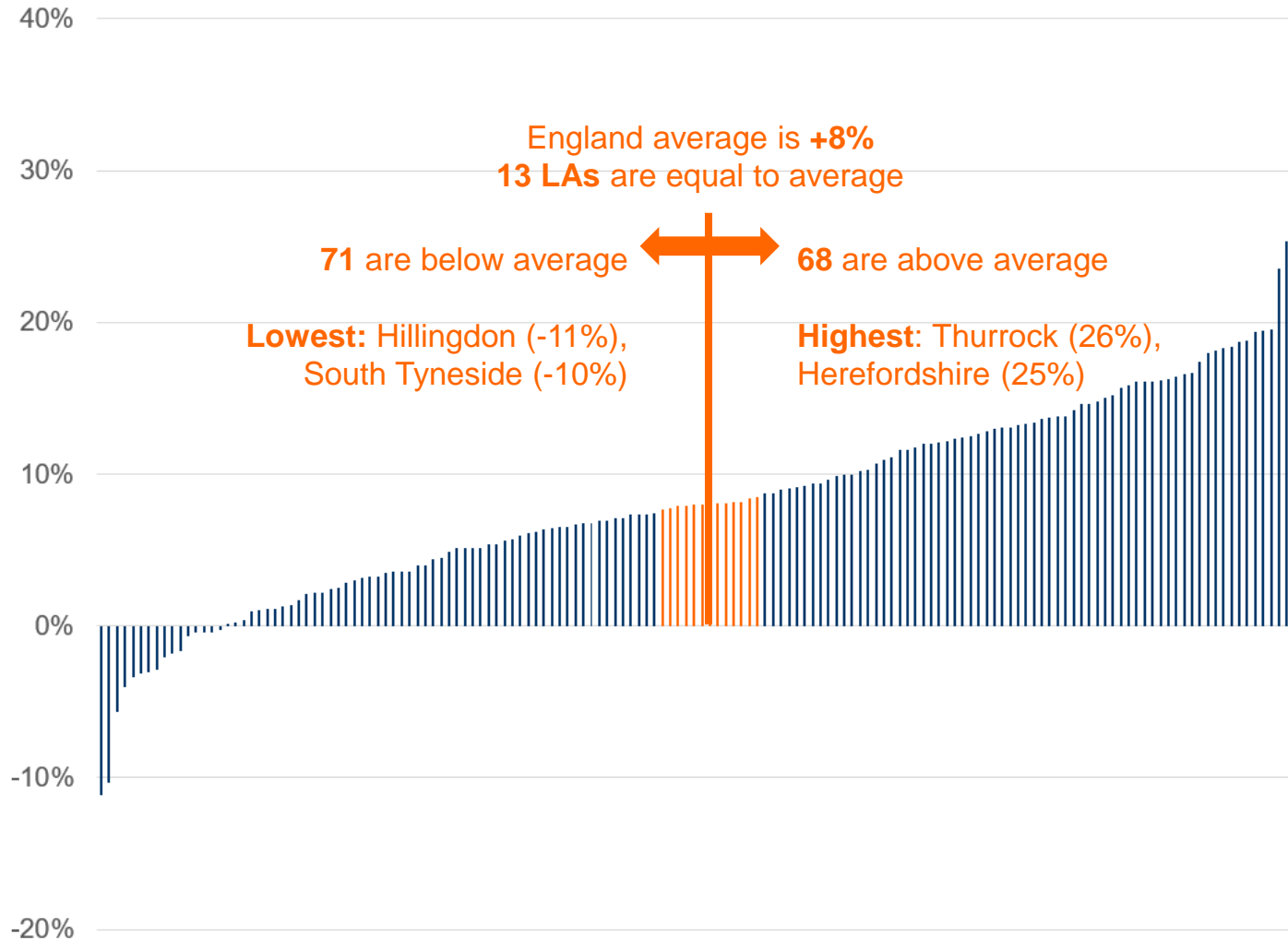


\* Based on snapshot at 31 March each year. Data missing from 59 local authorities for reasons of confidentiality. These 59 include those listed in Appendix A plus Hartlepool and Tameside.

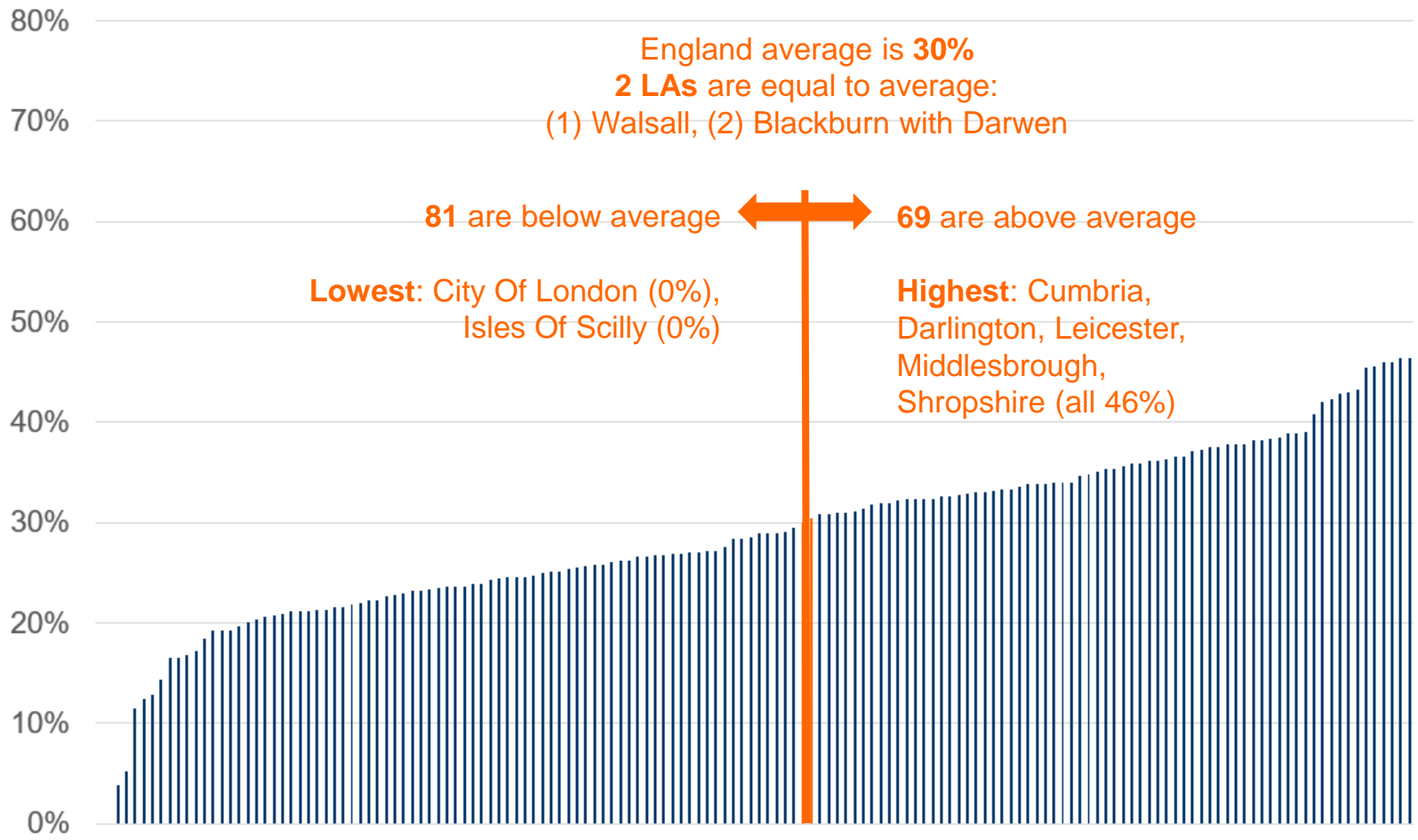
# Percentage of children's services budget spent on LAC (2018)



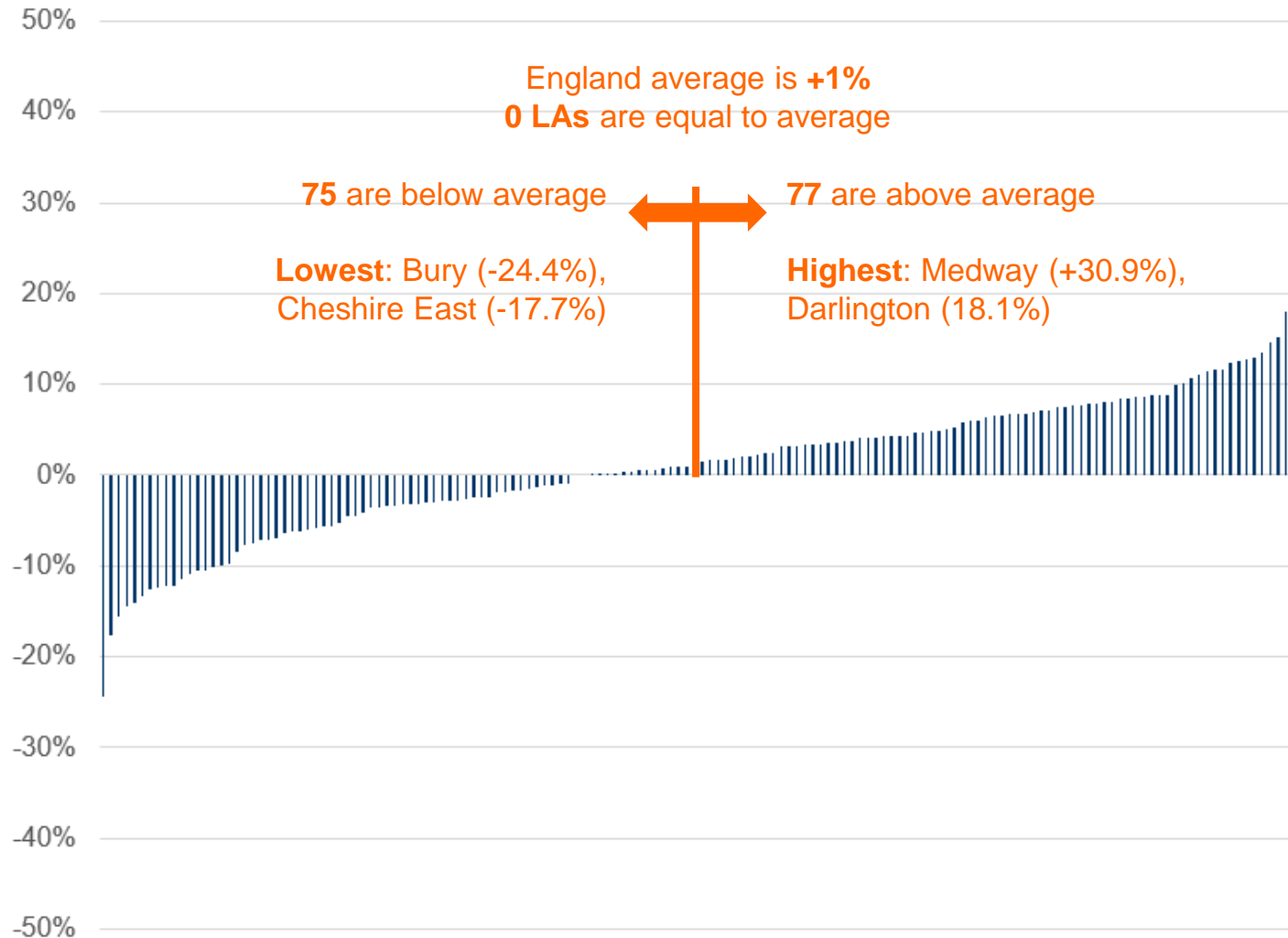
# Change in percentage of children's services budget spent on LAC (2013-18)



# Percentage of LAC budget spent on residential care (2018)



# Change in percentage of LAC budget spent on residential care (2013 - 2018)



# Top 20 'most stressed' local authorities

- The tables overleaf show the **c.20 'most stressed' local authorities** for each indicator in the stress-test.

# c.20 most “stressed” local authorities

Rate of LAC		Residential care		20 miles out of LA	
Rate	Change in rate	%	Change in %	%	Change in %
Blackpool	Hartlepool	Camden	Camden	Rutland	Rutland
Hartlepool	North East Lincolnshire	Harrow	Harrow	Reading	Sutton
Middlesbrough	Tameside	Barnet	Waltham Forest	Buckinghamshire	Derby
Kingston Upon Hull, City of	Stoke-On-Trent	Kensington and Chelsea	Barnet	Sutton	Bracknell Forest
Stoke-On-Trent	Halton	Brent	Hackney	Derby	Reading
Torbay	Redcar and Cleveland	Waltham Forest	Surrey	Cambridgeshire	Cumbria
Liverpool	Rotherham	West Sussex	Windsor and Maidenhead	Bracknell Forest	Windsor and Maidenhead
Tameside	Warrington	Windsor and Maidenhead	Kensington and Chelsea	Greenwich	Southampton
Wirral	Oldham	Hounslow	Lewisham	Surrey	Oxfordshire
St Helens	Herefordshire	Buckinghamshire	North Tyneside	Oxfordshire	Leicestershire
Rotherham	Sunderland	Ealing	Southend-on-Sea	Cumbria	Gloucestershire
South Tyneside	Wirral	Havering	Brent	North Somerset	Dorset
Stockton-On-Tees	Middlesbrough	Darlington	Buckinghamshire	Wokingham	Somerset
Wolverhampton	Portsmouth	Southend-on-Sea	Greenwich	Slough	Greenwich
Sunderland	Stockton-On-Tees	Bracknell Forest	West Sussex	Windsor and Maidenhead	Kingston Upon Thames
Manchester	Isle Of Wight	Cambridgeshire	Cumbria	Kingston Upon Thames	Buckinghamshire
Southampton	Liverpool	Coventry	Darlington	Southwark	North Somerset
North East Lincolnshire	Blackpool	Hackney	Derbyshire	Islington	Knowsley
Redcar and Cleveland	Swindon	Lewisham	Manchester	Redbridge	Surrey
Salford	Lancashire	North Tyneside	Birmingham	Somerset	Bath and North East Somerset
	Northamptonshire	Poole	Bromley		East Riding of Yorkshire
	Oxfordshire	Surrey	Bury		
		Tameside	East Sussex		
			Islington		
			Kent		
			Luton		
			Plymouth		
			Southampton		
			Tameside		

## c.20 most “stressed” local authorities

% of children’s services budget spent on LAC		% of LAC budget spent on residential care	
%	Change in %	%	Change in %
Herefordshire	Thurrock	Cumbria	Medway Towns
Norfolk	Herefordshire	Middlesbrough	Darlington
Haringey	Oxfordshire	Leicester	Blackburn with Darwen
Thurrock	Wakefield	Shropshire	Central Bedfordshire
St Helens	Tower Hamlets	Darlington	Wandsworth
Shropshire	St Helens	Stockton-On-Tees	Gloucestershire
Hampshire	Lancashire	Worcestershire	Lewisham
Middlesbrough	Northamptonshire	Tameside	Tameside
Northamptonshire	Wirral	South Tyneside	St Helens
Cheshire East	North Tyneside	Oxfordshire	Southwark
Peterborough	Hampshire	Stockport	Barking and Dagenham
Liverpool	Slough	Wakefield	Northamptonshire
Derbyshire	Sutton	Northamptonshire	Reading
Tameside	Plymouth	Salford	Bolton
Kingston Upon Hull, City of	Westminster	North East Lincolnshire	Worcestershire
Darlington	Halton	Telford and Wrekin	Wakefield
Lancashire	City Of London	St Helens	South Tyneside
Nottingham	Bolton	Bolton	Haringey
Stoke-On-Trent	Portsmouth	Bracknell Forest	Sutton
Worcestershire	Derbyshire	Hampshire	Lincolnshire
Oxfordshire	Swindon	Derbyshire	Plymouth
Slough	Luton	Medway Towns	Leicester
	Liverpool	Wiltshire	Redcar and Cleveland
		Bournemouth	Liverpool



# Ones to watch in 2018

Local Authority	Number of indicators in which LA is in top 20 “most stressed” (2018)
Tameside	7
Oxfordshire	6
Liverpool	5
Northamptonshire	5
St Helens	5
Darlington	5
Windsor and Maidenhead	4
Bracknell Forest	4
Surrey	4
Buckinghamshire	4
Derbyshire	4
Cumbria	4
Middlesbrough	4
Sutton	4
Bury	4

In 2018, 15 local authorities were in the top 20 for at least four indicators of stress. **Tameside** was in the top 20 for seven indicators and **Oxfordshire** was in the top 20 for six indicators. Four local authorities were in the top 20 for five indicators: **Liverpool, Northamptonshire, St Helens, and Darlington.**

There is some evidence for increased pressure over time. For instance, the number of LAs in the top 20 for at least four indicators of stress has risen steadily from **10 in 2016 to 15 in 2018**. Furthermore, the number of LAs experiencing no indicators of stress has decreased from **54 in 2016 to 47 in 2018** (although there has been a slight increase from 44 in 2017).

# Ones to watch in recent years...

2018	2017
<b>Tameside (7)</b>	Tameside (6)
Oxfordshire (6)	Halton (5)
<b>Liverpool (5)</b>	St Helens (5)
Northamptonshire (5)	Stoke-on-Trent (5)
<b>St Helens (5)</b>	Wokingham (5)
Darlington (5)	Blackpool (4)
Windsor and Maidenhead (4)	Herefordshire (4)
Bracknell Forest (4)	Kingston-Upon-Thames (4)
Surrey (4)	Liverpool (4)
Buckinghamshire (4)	Luton (4)
Derbyshire (4)	Middlesbrough (4)
Cumbria (4)	Richmond-Upon-Thames (4)
<b>Middlesbrough (4)</b>	Slough (4)
Sutton (4)	Wakefield (4)
Bury(4)	

One LA, **St Helens**, has been in the 'most stressed' category for three years in a row. Three LAs have been in the 'most stressed' category for two years in a row: **Tameside, Liverpool, and Middlesbrough.**

This implies that **11 LAs** experienced a rapid increase in stress between 2017 and 2018.

**Key**  
 On list for past 2+ years ■



# Change in level of stress over time – increasing pressures

Local Authority	2018 # of stress indicators	2017 # of stress indicators	Change
Tameside	7	6	↑
Oxfordshire	6	3	↑
Liverpool	5	4	↑
Northamptonshire	5	2	↑
St Helens	5	5	→
Darlington	5	3	↑
Windsor & Maidenhead	4	3	↑
Bracknell Forest	4	3	↑
Surrey	4	3	↑
Buckinghamshire	4	1	↑
Derbyshire	4	0	↑
Cumbria	4	3	↑
Middlesbrough	4	4	→
Sutton	4	3	↑
Bury	4	1	↑

This is further demonstrated here. **13 of the 15 'most stressed' local authorities experienced increases in stress between 2017 and 2018**, often across multiple indicators. This suggests a volatile picture in terms of performance and pressures at a local authority level.

# Change in level of stress over time – decreasing pressures

Local Authority	2018 # of stress indicators	2017 # of stress indicators	Change
Halton	2	5	↓
Stoke-On-Trent	3	5	↓
Wokingham	1	5	↓
Blackpool	2	4	↓
Herefordshire	3	4	↓
Kingston-Upon-Thames	2	4	↓
Luton	2	4	↓
Richmond-Upon-Thames	0	4	↓
Slough	3	4	↓
Wakefield	3	4	↓

Between 2017 and 2018, 10 local authorities fell off the 'most stressed' list. Of particular note are Wokingham and Richmond-Upon-Thames who both fell by four indicators between 2017 and 2018.

# Local authorities with relatively low pressures

Relatively low pressures		
Lambeth	Bedford Borough	Bradford
Suffolk	York	Brighton and Hove
<b>Wigan</b>	<b>Nottinghamshire</b>	Newham
Leeds	Hertfordshire	<b>West Berkshire</b>
Newcastle Upon Tyne	Kirklees	Trafford
North Yorkshire	<b>Rochdale</b>	<b>Warwickshire</b>
Croydon	South Gloucestershire	Essex
Sheffield	Isles Of Scilly	Doncaster
Gateshead	<b>Sefton</b>	Solihull
Enfield	Sandwell	Calderdale

**Key**  
 Not in top 20 in 2017 or 2018 

26 local authorities were not in the top 20 ‘most-stressed’ for any indicators for three years in a row, from 2016 to 2018. An additional six local authorities (Wigan, Nottinghamshire, Rochdale, Sefton, West Berkshire, Warwickshire) were not in the top 20 ‘most stressed’ for any indicators for two years in a row, from 2017 to 2018. These sites could potentially provide some useful evidence on how services are helping to anticipate or reduce demand for more intensive statutory provision.

# References I

## Slide 3

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>

## Slide 4

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>

## Slide 5

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>

## Slide 6

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>

## Slide 7

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/la-and-school-expenditure-2017-to-2018-financial-year>

**Inflation calculator:** <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

## Slide 8

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/la-and-school-expenditure-2017-to-2018-financial-year>

**Inflation calculator:** <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

## Slide 9

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/section-251-2017-to-2018#section-251-outturn-data>

**Inflation calculator:** <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

# References II

## **Slides 12**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>

## **Slides 13**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>

## **Slide 14**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>

## **Slide 15**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>

## **Slide 16**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>

## **Slide 17**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2017-to-2018>

## **Slide 18**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/la-and-school-expenditure-2017-to-2018-financial-year>

## **Slide 19**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/la-and-school-expenditure-2017-to-2018-financial-year>

## **Slide 20**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/section-251-2017-to-2018#section-251-outturn-data>

## **Slide 21**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/section-251-2017-to-2018#section-251-outturn-data>

# Appendix

## Appendix A: Local authorities with missing data for percentage of LAC placed 20 miles+ from home and out of LA boundary on 31 March 2018.

Local Authorities (n = 57)				
Barnsley	Darlington	Liverpool	Poole	Torbay
Bedford Borough	Doncaster	Luton	Redcar and Cleveland	Trafford
Birmingham	Dudley	Manchester	Richmond Upon Thames	Wakefield
Blackburn with Darwen	Enfield	Medway	Rotherham	Wandsworth
Blackpool	Halton	Merton	Salford	West Berkshire
Bolton	Haringey	Milton Keynes	Sandwell	Wigan
Bournemouth	Harrow	North East Lincolnshire	Sheffield	Wirral
Bradford	Isle Of Wight	North Lincolnshire	South Gloucestershire	Wolverhampton
Brighton and Hove	Kingston Upon Hull, City of	North Tyneside	Southend-on-Sea	York
Bury	Kirklees	Oldham	Stockport	
Calderdale	Leicester	Peterborough	Stoke-On-Trent	
Central Bedfordshire	Lewisham	Plymouth	Sunderland	





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