

26 February 2026

Dear

ATISN 26645: Request for Information – Unregistered Children’s Care Homes

Thank you for your request which we received on 30/01/2026.

You asked for the following information regarding the placement of looked after children in unregistered care home accommodation:

1. *The number of children placed in unregistered care home accommodation in the following financial years:*
 - 2022-2023
 - 2023-2024
 - 2024-2025

2. *For the children placed in unregistered care home accommodation during the periods above:*
 - *The average length of placement (in days)*
 - *The longest single placement (in days).*

If exact figures are not held, to provide the closest available data or banded ranges

3. *A breakdown of the types of accommodation used for unregistered children’s care home placements, where this information is held. To include but not limited to:*
 - *Caravans or mobile homes*
 - *Holiday lets or short-term rentals (including Airbnb-type accommodation)*
 - *Hotels or bed-and-breakfast accommodation*
 - *Private residential properties*

Our response

We have considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The information we hold that is subject to your request is set out below.

Please note: Although CIW has requested that Local Authorities inform the inspectorate when they commence operating a children’s care home without registration, there is no legal obligation for them to do so. As such, the figures below reflect the unregistered settings reported to CIW.

1. The number of children placed in unregistered care home accommodation in the financial years 2022-2023, 2023-2024 and 2024-2025

CIW register and inspect providers, services and settings so the numbers below are the number of unregistered care homes for children reported to CIW during that financial year. This is not the same as the number of children in each of the unregistered settings as whilst we are aware most have been opened in an

urgent situation to place one child; there may be occurrences where the unregistered care home has accommodated more than one child.

2022-2023 - 92

2023-2024 - 117

2024-2025 – 74

2. For the children placed in unregistered care home accommodation during the periods above, the average length of placement (in days) and the longest single placement (in days).

This information is not routinely captured within our data. We have some details of the dates of placements recorded against some of the records for unregistered care homes for children. However, this data would be incomplete and cannot be easily extracted from these records. So, whilst we hold some information on lengths of placements, we estimate it would exceed the appropriate limit set out in Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act to locate and collate this information. Details of how we have estimated this are set out under the section headed 'Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000' of this response.

In 2023 CIW undertook a specific review of care homes for children operating without registration. While as part of that review CIW explored details such as length of placements and age of children, this is not information CIW can routinely identify.

3. A breakdown of the types of accommodation used for unregistered children's care home placements.

This information is not routinely captured within our data. We may have some details of the type of accommodation noted within related documentation recorded against some of the records for unregistered care homes for children. However, this data would be incomplete, and we estimate it would exceed the appropriate limit set out in Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act to determine whether we hold any information on the type of accommodation used for unregistered care homes for children. Details of how we have estimated this are set out under the section headed 'Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000' of this response.

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000: '*Cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit*'.

From our preliminary assessment, we estimate it will cost more than the appropriate limit set out in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004 to answer questions 2 and 3 of your request. The appropriate limit specified for central government is £600. This represents the estimated cost of it taking over 24 hours of time to determine whether we hold the information and to thereafter locate, retrieve and extract it.

To locate and collate the data requested for question 2 of your request, and to determine whether we hold any information in respect of question 3, we would be required to manually review all the records held against each of the unregistered care homes for children notified to CIW. This includes records such as notes, correspondence and documents against each record, to see whether we have any details on the dates or length of placements, or the type of accommodation, included within them. We estimate to manually review all the records for the notifications of unregistered care homes for children to identify any information held, would take more than 30 hours to complete. This is based on the time taken to review a small sample of records to try to locate this information, multiplied by the 283 total records of unregistered care homes for children to which this request relates.

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with our handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ
or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely