

Introduction

As of 31 March 2025, there were 153 upper tier local authorities (LAs) in England. Legislation requires each of these LAs to appoint a director of children's services (DCS). Due to the statutory nature of the post, there must always be a named DCS which results, on occasion, in short-term interim arrangements taking place when a serving post-holder leaves. The chief executives of Trust/ADM arrangements are equivalent to DCSs in terms of ADCS membership, however, we do not refer to a Trust as being a separate local authority for the purpose of this report.

The analysis that follows focuses on the ADCS membership year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. It also offers some year-on-year comparisons, several of which date back to 2007, the year ADCS was established, to highlight trends over time and patterns of change.

Headlines

- 18 new permanent DCSs appointed in 2024/25
- 39 of 153 LAs have experienced changes in DCS across the reporting period, down from 49 in 2023/24
- 51 DCS changes in total, down from 62 in 2023/24
- Average length of time served as a DCS, when factoring in cumulative time spent in multiple LAs as a DCS, is almost 4 and a half years
- 103 LAs currently have a female DCS
- 2024 diversity survey saw an increase in DCSs identifying as Black
- "Twin hat" directors down to just 11
- 17 interim DCSs in post as of 31 March 2025.

DCS Changes

51 changes in DCS post-holder took place between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. These changes have taken place across 39 LAs, which equates to just over 25% of LAs. The number of LAs effected by change is 10 fewer than in the previous reporting period.

10 LAs have experienced more than one change of DCS, largely due to short-term interim appointments being made prior to a permanent appointment. 8 LAs have experienced 2 DCS changes; 2 LAs have experienced 3 DCS changes.

51 changes across a 12-month period is in line with the average, which currently stands at 49; it also represents an 18% decrease in change compared to 2023/24 which saw a total of 62 changes.

Just 18 changes took place across quarters 3 and 4 (9 changes in September – December and 9 changes in January – March). Comparatively, these changes are the lowest since 2011/12 for the second half of the reporting year.

New appointments

2024/25 saw 18 new permanent DCS appointments, slightly lower than the average of 21. The majority of new permanent DCS appointments have seen assistant directors appointed to the role (16). Of the 16, 4 have been appointed from within the same LA, whilst 12 have been appointed from other LAs.

Interim appointments

The number of interim appointments in 2024/25 has been above average with 25 instances across the reporting period - the average being 19. That said, on only one occasion since 2011/12 has there been fewer than 20 interim appointments.

15 of the interim appointments made across the reporting period remain in post. The 10 who are no longer in post had tenures ranging from 1 month to 6 months, 7 of which were short-term arrangements of less than 3 months.

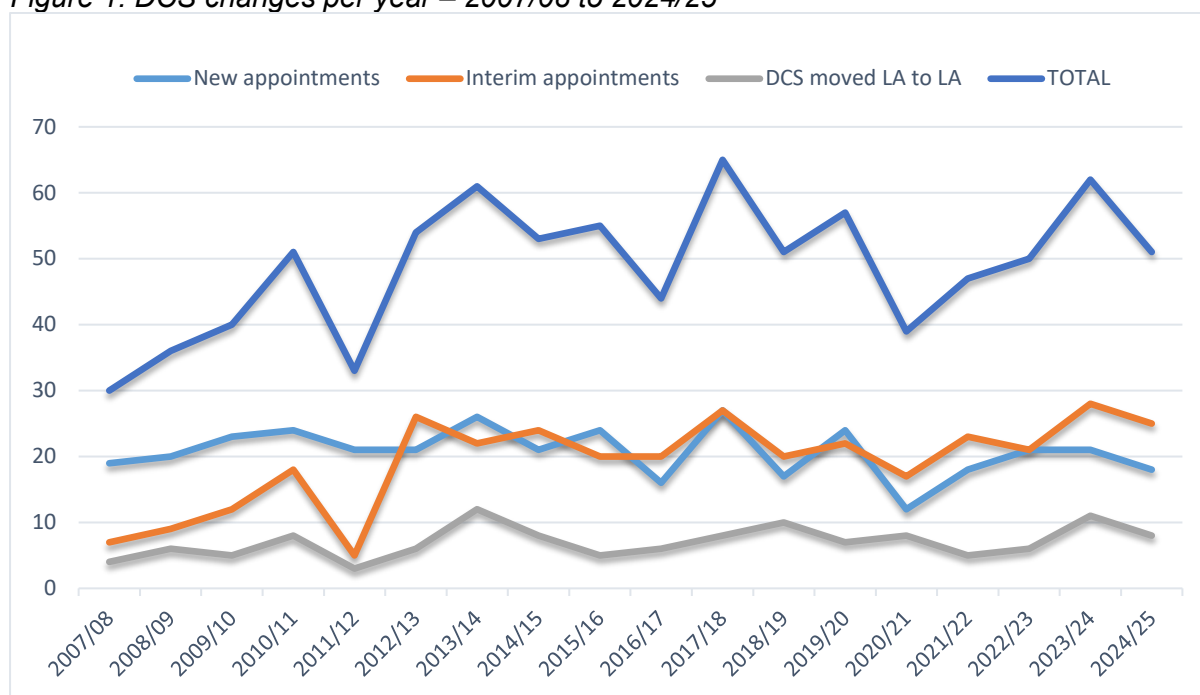
Of the 25 interim appointments, 14 were former DCSs or serving DASSs/Chief Executives holding the statutory DCS duties in addition to their substantive roles. 11 have been instances of assistant directors stepping into the statutory role on a temporary basis, several of which have been in post over 6 months.

DCSs moving LA

The average number of DCSs moving from one LA to another in a DCS role is 7; in 2024/25 there were 8 such changes.

Figure 1 provides an illustration of the trends in DCS change since ADCS was established in 2007.

Figure 1. DCS changes per year – 2007/08 to 2024/25



DCS changes per region

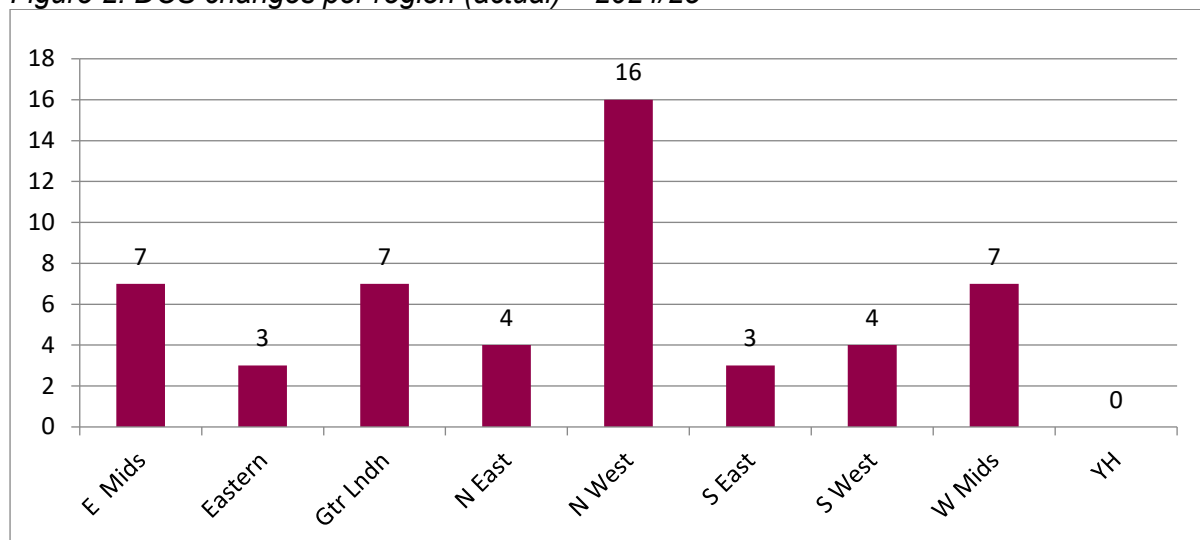
The number of changes in DCS post-holders from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 by region is illustrated in Figure 2. The North West has seen 16 DCS changes across the reporting period. This figure is slightly inflated due to multiple changes in 4 LAs, the majority of which were due to short-term interim arrangements pending permanent appointments.

The 7 changes in the East Midlands are high for a region of just 10 LAs, however, these changes have taken place across just 4 areas.

There have been no changes in the Yorkshire & Humber region. This is only the third occasion in which no DCS changes have taken place within a single region across a reporting period. The others being the North East in 2021/22 and the South West in 2007/08.

All other regions have seen comparatively modest changes in number of DCS post holders.

Figure 2. DCS changes per region (actual) – 2024/25



Areas of responsibility

As of 31 March 2025, there were 11 'twin hat' directors. This is the lowest number of such roles since ADCS was formed in 2007, when 13 LAs had a twin hat director. Of the 11 twin hatters, one is currently an interim appointment. Figure 3 shows the rise and fall of prevalence of twin hat post-holders.

There are also examples of the DCS having overall responsibility for children and adult services but, whilst holding the statutory duty for children's services, they do not also hold the statutory duty for adult services. For the purposes of this report these arrangements are not considered 'twin hat'. To our knowledge, there are now just 2 LAs with such arrangements.

Figure 3. Total number of 'twin hatters' – by year (as of 31 March respectively)

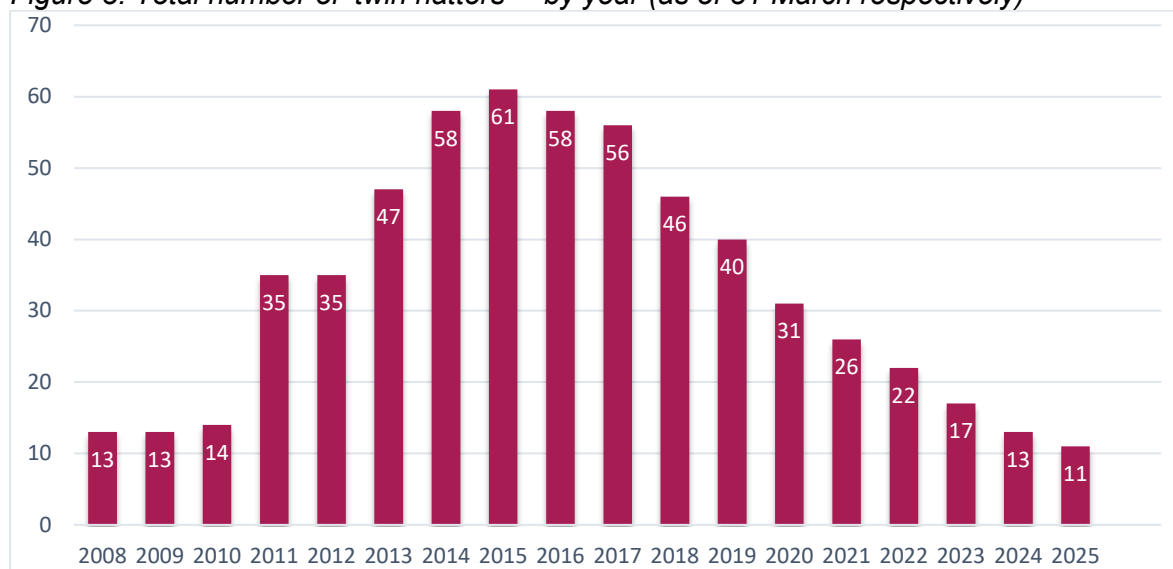
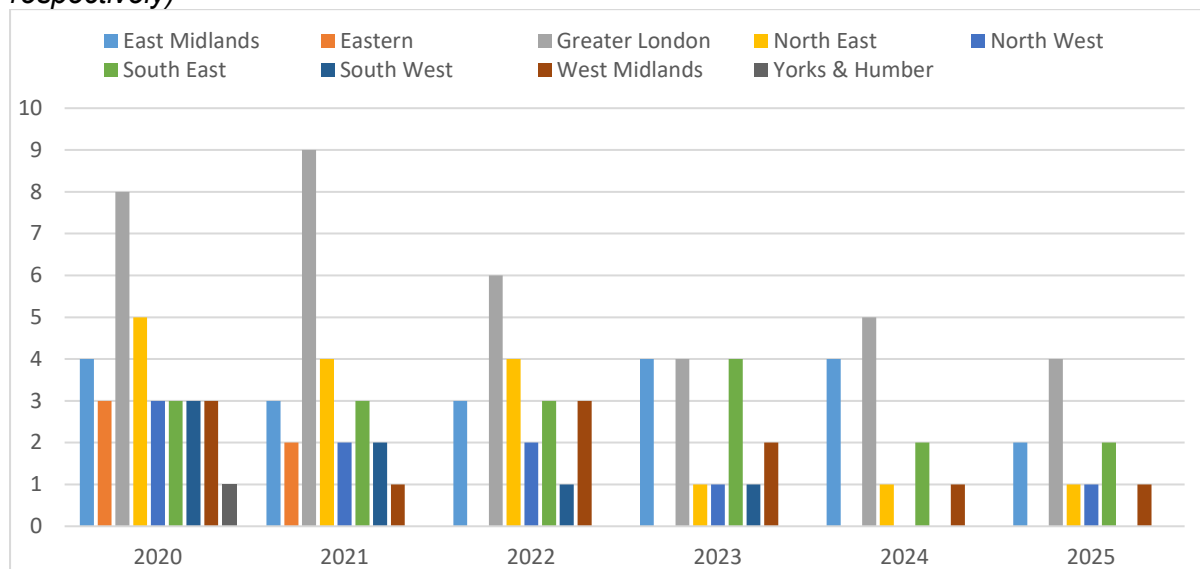


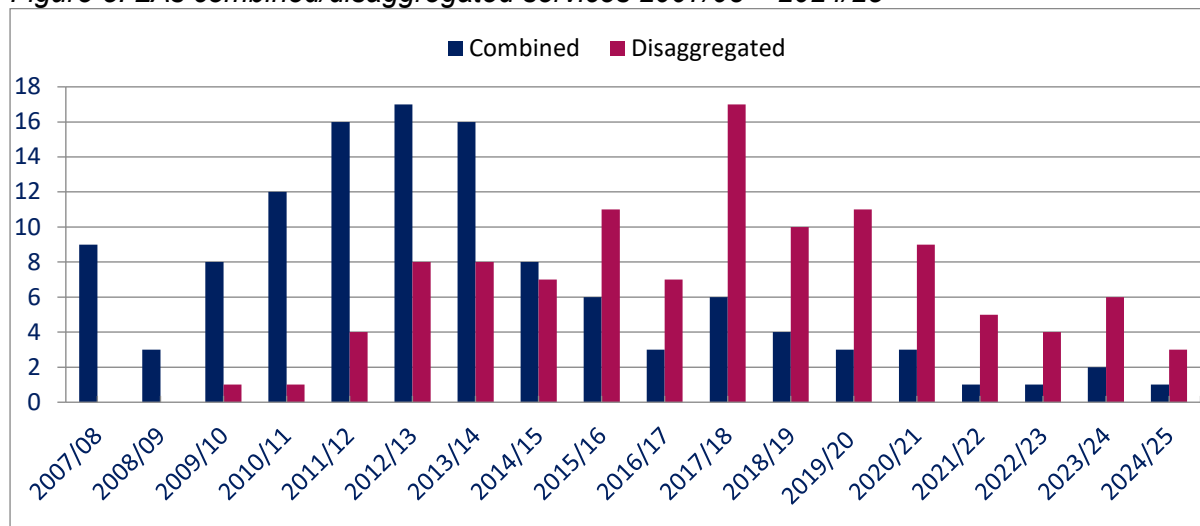
Figure 4 illustrates the continued decline in twin hatters on a regional level. The Eastern, South West and Yorkshire & Humber regions had no twin hat directors in post as of 31 March 2025. The North West is the only region to have an increase in twin hatters.

Figure 4. Total number of 'twin hatters' by region – 2020 to 2025 (as at 31 March respectively)



Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, 3 LAs disaggregated their children and adult director roles and just 1 LA combined the roles. Figure 5 illustrates the pace of change of both the combining and disaggregating of the twin hat role.

Figure 5. LAs combined/disaggregated services 2007/08 – 2024/25



Time in post

The average tenure of current DCSs, when factoring in cumulative time spent in multiple LAs as a DCS, is 52 months – this figure includes all permanent and interim appointments.

The average tenure of all current DCS post-holders in their current role is 38 months (an increase of 5 months compared to 2023/24); 42 months for permanent post holders (an increase of 7 months) and 7 months for interim post holders (a decrease of 1 month).

Naturally, there is an increase in average time in post for current post holders compared with previous reporting periods when the total number of changes per year has decreased.

The average duration of a DCS in post in the same LA (based on all interim and permanent appointments from 2007 to 31 March 2025) remains at 31 months – across all permanent appointments it is 41 months (an increase of 1 month) and for all interim appointments it remains at 7 months.

DCSs in more than one LA

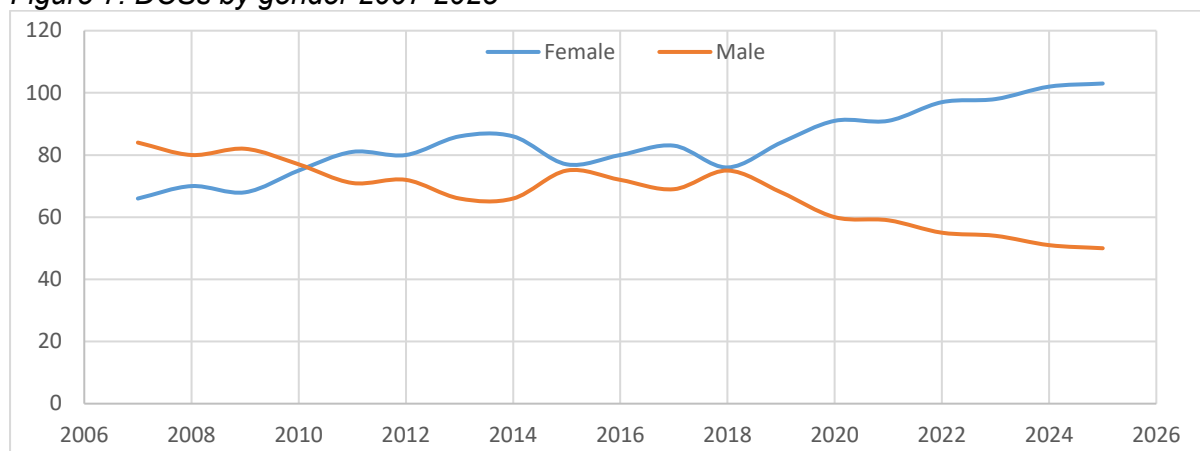
59 (39%) of current post holders have been DCS in more than 1 LA in either permanent, interim or multi-LA arrangements. 2 of the current post holders have been DCS in 7 LAs. 6 have been DCS in 4 LAs and a further 15 have been DCS in 3 LAs.

There are currently 2 multi-LA arrangements, where a single DCS has responsibility for children's services across 2 LAs.

Gender and diversity

As of 31 March 2025, there were 103 LAs with female directors and 50 LAs with male directors. Of the 103 LAs with female directors, 7 were 'twin hatters'. Of the 50 LAs with a male director, 4 were 'twin hatters'. Of the 17 interim directors in post, 11 were female and 6 were male.

Figure 7. DCSs by gender 2007-2025



For a number of years, ADCS has collected anonymised diversity data. In the most recent survey, which took place in autumn 2024, a total of 109 DCS/Trust Chief Executives responded to the survey. As the response do not cover the full DCS/Trust Chief Executive cohort, it is not a fully accurate representation.

Based on the responses received, the following changes were identified:

- **Ethnicity:** An increase in the number of DCSs identifying as Black (5% in 2024, compared to 2% in 2023) and a decrease in those identifying as White (88% in 2024, 90% in 2023). There were no changes in the number identifying as Asian nor those identifying as Mixed/Multiple ethnicity.
- **Age:** A slight increase in the age profile, with 10% aged 40-49 (compared to 12% in 2023), 67% aged 50 – 59 (compared to 69% in 2023) and 21% aged over 60 (compared to 17% in 2023).

- **Sexual Orientation:** A slight increase in the number identifying as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (17% in 2024, compared to 16% in 2023).
- **Religion or Belief:** The proportion of DCS members with no religion or belief decreased to 48% in 2024, from 51% in 2023, while the percentage identifying as Christian increased to 39% in 2024 from 35% in 2023. There was an increase in those identifying as Hindu (from 1% in 2023 to 2% in 2024) and Jewish (from 1% in 2023 to 2% in 2024).
- **Health and/or disability:** 14% identified as having a health issue and/or disability, a 3% increase from 2023.

Alternative Delivery Models and Trust Arrangements

There are a number of Alternative Delivery Models (ADMs) currently providing aspects of children's services on behalf of local authorities:

- Achieving for Children provides children's services on behalf of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
- Achieving for Children also provides some services on behalf of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
- Together for Children provides children's services on behalf of Sunderland City Council
- Brighter Futures for Children provides children's services on behalf of Reading Council
- Slough Children First provides children's services on behalf of Slough Borough Council

In September 2024, Worcestershire County Council took back control of all children's services from Worcestershire Children First.

As of 31 March 2025, Trust arrangements were in place in Birmingham, Bradford Northamptonshire and Sandwell. There has been a comparable level of stability in terms of turnover and tenure of Trust Chief Executives with that of DCSs, with all current Trust Chief Executives being former experienced DCSs.

Comparison with other roles

In order to offer some comparative context to the rate of turnover of statutory DCSs, ADCS has sought information in relation to change of Chief Executive post holders.

Chief Executives

For a number of years, ADCS has taken a snapshot of changes in Chief Executive post-holders to offer comparative data. The data does not include any changes that may have taken place in-year, therefore any short-term interim appointments which may have taken place will not be included in the figures.

Between March 2024 and March 2025:

- There have been 31 changes in Chief Executives – compared with 33 in the previous year, and 19 in 2022/23.
- As of March 2025, 17 Chief Executives had previously been a DCS

- 6 Chief Executives moved from one LA to another between March 24 and March 2025
- There is currently one multi-LA arrangement where the Chief Executive holds the role for two LAs simultaneously.
- The gender balance of Chief Executives continues to change. As of March 2025, there were 80 male and 73 female Chief Executives. This compares with 86 male and 67 females in 2024; 90 male and 62 females in 2023 and 96 male and 56 females in 2022.