

MARTIN HOUSE RESEARCH CENTRE

The issue

Although deaths in childhood have been decreasing, some 4,500 children still die in England and Wales each year, around half of which are children with a life-limiting condition. Where children die; usually in a hospital, hospice or at home, can indicate whether they and their families have a choice about where they die. It is also used as one way of assessing the quality of palliative care provision.

The research

We wanted to know where children are dying, and whether this has changed over time. We used healthcare and death records for children who died in England from 2003 to 2017 with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions. We classified each death as occurring at home, in hospital, in a hospice or elsewhere, based on recorded addresses of death. We looked at numbers of deaths in each place, changes over time and any differences by age, ethnicity, or by levels of deprivation in the area in which the child lived.

The outcome

Most deaths, 73 per cent, took place in hospital with only 6 per cent in a hospice and 16 per cent at home. Children with cancer differed to those with other conditions as far fewer - 44 per cent - died in hospital. The research provides information on where children and young people died, but not on whether this was where they or their families wanted them to be when they died. Children's palliative care services should be funded adequately to enable choice across all settings, conditions, and geographical regions.

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Published paper

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Our research themes:

CREATIVITY | CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION | ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE | JUSTICE AND EQUALITY
HEALTH AND WELLBEING | RISK, EVIDENCE AND DECISION MAKING | TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE FUTURE