

Disability and housing issues

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Chapter 35. Disability and housing issues

35.1 Introduction

An important aspect of a strategic housing market assessment is to consider and incorporate the needs of specific groups, including different household types, “hard-to-reach” groups and people with disabilities and support needs.

35.2 The CLG guidance on households with specific needs

The CLG practice guidance on households with specific needs includes notes on how to assess the market and some useful sources of information. Much of this information is to be included in an assessment of needs in the County's Disability Housing Strategy, to be launched in 2008.

Ⓡ At the time of launching the SHMA consultation draft, we have not progressed as far with this issue as with other parts of the CLG guidance. Therefore our approach in this section is to briefly set out the national context and future challenge, to identify issues raised in research around access to homes, and to outline the draft County Disability Housing Strategy, which is currently being developed.

Ⓡ We plan to work with the Cambridgeshire Disability Housing Strategy Network on the County Disability Strategy to access and analyse the data required, to help bring together the evidence and jointly assess this important area of the housing market.

35.3 Meeting the future housing challenge (Disability Rights Commission)

In June 2007 the Disability Rights Commissions (DRC) launched its recommendations to meet the future housing challenge in England and Wales. This summary report, available at http://drc.uat.rroom.net/DisabilityDebate/recommendations/meeting_the_future_housing.aspx outlines the challenge, and the opportunity to create an alternative future.

A summary has been included in the Cambridge sub-regional SHMA to help set the national context for this section on housing and disability.

The housing sector in England and Wales faces many challenges, including meeting the demand for affordable housing, tackling homelessness, geographical disparities in supply and the need for a diversity of tenures.

Over the last three decades of the 20th century, the number of households in England and Wales increased by 30%, while the level of new house building fell by 50%. The number of households is projected to continue growing in England by 209,000 a year to 2026, of which 72% will be single person households.¹

This growth is linked to our ageing society. In his report on the costs of social care for the King's Fund, Sir Derek Wanless identified that in the next 20 years, the proportion of the population aged 85 and over in England is set to increase by two-thirds, compared with a

¹ Communities and Local Government: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/>

10% growth in the overall population.² This will significantly increase demand for accessible housing.

In a 2006 Ipsos/Mori poll commissioned by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) 90% of the public said that they anticipated, in the event of needing support, that they would receive social care services to enable them to stay in their own home rather than be placed in (increasingly costly) residential care.³ Yet in England there are already 300,000 people living in unsuitable housing who require accessible or adapted accommodation.⁴ This figure is almost evenly split between owner-occupiers and social housing tenants.

Systems of allocation within social housing are failing to ensure that accessible or adapted properties go to the people who need them most. Many local authorities have no mechanism for profiling the accessibility of housing stock or matching supply with demand. The choices available to people requiring accessible or adapted housing are therefore severely restricted.

With demand already far outstripping supply, and growing steeply, action is required now to avert a new housing crisis.

Improving the supply of accessible housing, matched with support where needed, would save NHS resources. Research by the spinal injuries charity Aspire shows that it can cost around £1,000 a day to support a patient in a hospital spinal injury unit. In a single 18-month period, one spinal unit spent over £1.3 million because patients were facing delayed discharge – in 47% of cases, because of a lack of suitable housing for them to move into.

With more accessible housing and an improved system of adapting existing stock, the NHS could make substantial savings. Similarly, improved housing design can prevent falls – and hospitalisation – for people with mobility and visual impairments.

Disabled people are twice as likely to be social housing tenants, less likely to own their own homes and more likely to live in 'non-decent' homes. Poor housing impacts on adults' and children's health and well-being.

Between 1997 and 2004, the number of households accepted as being in priority need by local authorities due to 'physical disabilities' increased by 24% and due to mental health problems by 65%.

The DRC paper proposes policy solutions aimed at meeting the housing challenge in England and Wales.

An alternative future?

The DRC believes that reform to the way we plan, design, maintain and allocate housing is achievable. The goal is more equal distribution of housing opportunities for disabled people.

The key objectives of an effective reform agenda are to:

- Ensure that the housing requirements, aspirations and experiences of disabled people are reflected in national, regional and local policy.
- Increase the supply and efficient use of accessible housing.

² Wanless, D. (2006) 'Securing Good Care for Older People – Taking a Long Term View', Kings Fund.

³ Ipsos/Mori on behalf of the DRC, EOC and Carers UK (2006) 'Public Attitudes Towards Social Care'.

⁴ Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) 'Housing in England 2004/5'.

- Improve housing standards, conditions and life chances.
- Maximise housing choice for disabled people across all tenures.
- Reduce the incidence of homelessness.

Recommendations for action are then set out in more detail, including actions for housing authorities nationally, regionally and locally, the Government, housing inspectorates, regulatory and good practice bodies.

35.4 Housing needs of people with physical disability (JRF)

In February 1995 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) published research into the Housing needs of people with physical disability, specifically the mismatch between the housing aspirations of people with a physical disability and suitable available property across all forms of housing tenure in Kent.

Having analysed the problems experienced by both housing providers and people with a physical disability who wanted more suitable accommodation, a database was developed to match people to property.

Although dated, the research highlighted issues around disability and housing which are still useful to remember:

- The lack of choice over housing options for people with a physical disability was due primarily to a lack of information on their housing needs.
- Many people with a physical disability were reluctant to register their housing need with a local authority. This reluctance was due to a variety of reasons, one being the stigma attached to the notion of registration in any form.
- Information held by the various agencies on the needs of people with a physical disability was incomplete and incompatible and therefore ineffective as a planning tool.
- Many people with a physical disability wanted to remain or become owner-occupiers but low income, lack of financial advice and limited information on what was available limited their options.
- Inflexible allocation systems tended to exclude occasional wheelchair users; two-thirds of the respondents in the survey were occasional wheelchair users.
- Lack of information on people wanting property meant that adapted property was difficult to let or was inappropriately let.
- Publicly funded adaptations were often removed prior to sale as their existence was felt to prejudice a sale.
- The willingness of all the relevant agencies to participate in the project indicated the level of support a multi-agency approach to meeting the housing needs of people with a physical disability had.

The report is available from <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/housing/H136.asp>

35.5 Cambridgeshire Disability Housing Strategy 2008- 2011

In the light of the disability and housing agenda, the Cambridgeshire Disability Housing Strategy Network has been developing a Disability Housing Strategy for 2008- 2011. At the time of consulting upon the draft SHMA, the strategy is still being developed. However even

in its early stages the strategy will cover a range of useful issues and a SMART action plan to ensure progress is made and issues within the county are tackled.

There are a range of partner organisations involved in the planning, development and provision of specific and general housing services and support to disabled people in Cambridgeshire. District Councils have responsibility for the development of local Housing Strategies. The County Council has the lead responsibility for the Supporting People programme and the provision of social care support. Councils work closely with Registered Social Landlords to maximise opportunities.

The Disability Housing Strategy Network includes a variety of agencies, including:

- Cambridgeshire County Council – the Office of Environment and Community Adult Support Disability Service and the Office of Children and Young People
- Cambridge City Council
- East Cambridgeshire District Council
- Fenland District Council
- Huntingdonshire District Council
- South Cambridgeshire District Council
- Supporting People Team
- Accent Nene
- Axiom Housing Association
- Cambridge Housing Society
- Granta Housing Society
- Hereward Housing Association
- Luminus group
- Muir Housing Association
- Papworth Trust
- Sanctuary Supported Housing
- Cambridgeshire Horizons

Listening to and taking account of the views and needs of disabled people in Cambridgeshire is key to ensuring a strategic approach is taken to identify and meet the needs of the diverse Cambridgeshire population. The issues and views already identified through past consultation and involvement have been taken into account and have been fed into this document. Further work will ensure that disabled people and key others are able to influence its development and implementation.

It is intended that the strategy will provide a basis from which to develop and evolve the provision of services and support best designed to assist and enable disabled people within Cambridgeshire to achieve and maximise their independence.

The draft Disability Housing Strategy 2008- 2011 aims:

“To achieve a coherent multi agency Housing Strategy for disabled adults (learning, physical or sensory) across Cambridgeshire that works towards the provision of housing and support services that removes the barriers to disabled people leading full lives with the maximum degree of

independence and choice. (Note: this strategy does not cover people with mental health problems)"

The objectives set out in the draft strategy are to:

- Ensure there is a partnership response to helping disabled people to live independently in their homes in respect to their housing and support needs of in Cambridgeshire.
- Ensure there is equity of access to good quality housing and support across the county to those in most need.
- Ensure prompt joint working to address any risk of homelessness.
- Ensure planning and developments take into account the views and needs of disabled people in Cambridgeshire.
- Identify current barriers and shortfalls in knowledge and provision and identify opportunities to address any issues identified.
- Provide a firm foundation on which to build and develop a partnership response to future need.
- Influence Regional and local Development organisations in order that the Housing and support needs of disabled people are taken into account.
- Inform planners in relation to targets for additional or specialised housing provision.
- Set out a framework of standards to which partners should adopt.

The draft document sets out the context and current position in Cambridgeshire relating to housing and support for disabled young people and adults. It identifies and looks at some of the issues shortfalls and future needs for the county and sets out some good practice and standards that need to be taken into account in future development. The initial action plan sets out work needed to address some of the identified issues and the monitoring review process will ensure that the document is refreshed and informed by disabled people and key partners across the county.

35.6 Further work

The SHMA looks to the Disability Strategy once completed to provide the evidence base needed to include disability in this Assessment across the County. However there is a two-way process involved, where the Disability Housing Strategy Network can look to the SHMA to provide demographic and economic trends and forecasts to help inform its work on the housing issues and needs of people with disabilities.

This is a growing and developing area of work which we are keen to develop together to provide and assessment of needs, and to set priorities and implement an action plan by the agencies involved, to help identify and tackle these important issues.

To develop the SHMA in future new, primary research into this issue may be needed. By working with the Disability Housing Strategy Network we hope to build up a picture of any new information needed and any ways in which the SHMA can help identify the needs and support our partners in addressing them. The draft Disability Strategy already includes some of the required information, but for completeness this is a brief plan of the further information required either within the Strategy or within future updates of the SHMA:

- Identifying available and likely future housing stock using housing registers, strategic housing land availability assessments and other relevant management or administrative sources. This will include incorporating the outcomes of Choice Based

Lettings after its implementation in February 2008, in relation to specialist and adapted homes and to the needs of people who participate in the CBL system.

- Bringing together information required under the Disability Discrimination Act from providers of social housing on the specific needs for their services of people with disabilities.
- Assess the extent to which social housing providers' services meet needs and how they plan to fill gaps in provision under their Disability Equality Schemes, including through the National Register of Social Housing (NROSH) data system.
- Identify future improvements in accessibility through social housing providers' Disability Equality Schemes.
- Analyse Census information on the number of people with long-term limiting illness. Some of the information is included at Appendix 1, though further analysis is required to draw the necessary conclusions and assess the implications for our housing market.
- Analyse information from the Department of Work and Pensions on the numbers of Disability Living Allowance / Attendance Allowance benefit claimants.
- Analyse applications for Disabled Facilities Grant to give an indication of levels of expressed need (bearing in mind this could underestimate total need).
- Consider interviews or focus groups with people with disabilities or group representatives to better understand their housing requirements.

In addition, local Occupational Therapists have examined the Housing Corporation's scheme development standards, and have made some specific recommendations to improve these standards and to help make both existing and new homes more adaptable.

For example,

- It is difficult to fit simple grab rails and banisters on the walls because new methods of construction do not have fixing points (noggin) for securing weight bearing rails. This makes them very difficult to retro-fit rails particularly in bathrooms and staircases.
- The space recommended for level access shower is one metre square. This is too small because there are almost no wheeled shower chairs manufactured that are only 1 metre from front to back. They are all bigger and need to allow for space for the person's foot on the footplate without being squashed by shower doors.
- Another important factor to consider is the increasing prevalence of obesity. The OT service experiences a number of people who are wheelchair users who are also obese. They have larger wheelchairs that require larger turning circles and possibly other larger equipment such as heavy duty beds and larger hoists. It is almost impossible to meet these people's needs from the existing housing stock. A forward thinking strategy might make a recommendation of a percentage of wheelchair accessible properties as being for bariatric wheelchair users with higher specifications for turning circles.

Naturally, suggestions like these may help meet needs and make homes more adaptable in future. However they need careful consideration and partnership working with the Housing Corporation to see what is feasible and viable to implement. We look to the Disability Housing Strategy and future updates of the SHMA to help address and report on progress on such issues.

Appendix 1: Data around housing and disability

Fig 1: The ratio of the number of adults with a limiting long-term illness to the expected number of disabled adults, by ward

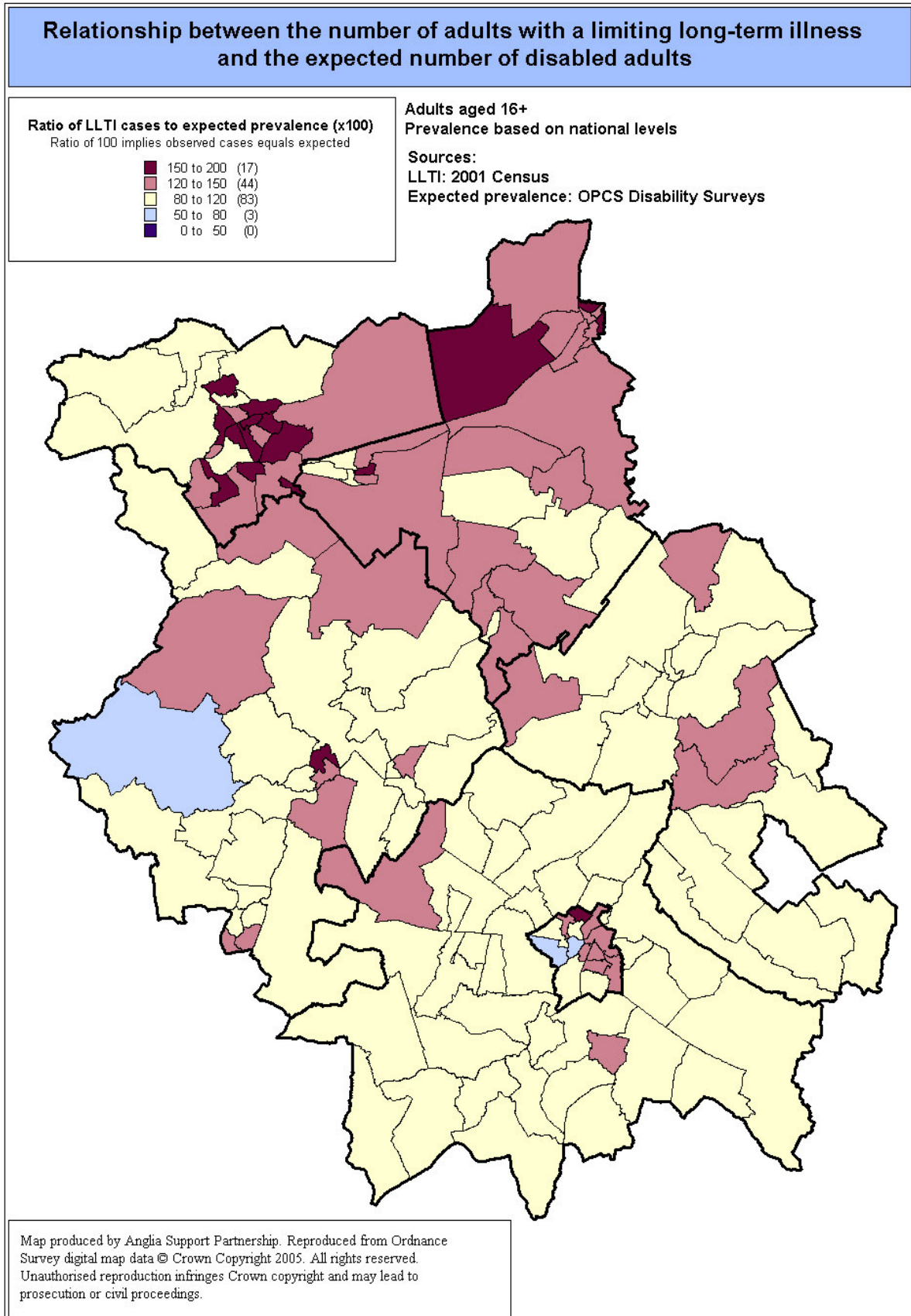


Fig 2: Adults claiming Disability Living Allowance, rate per 1,000 people aged 16-59, by ward

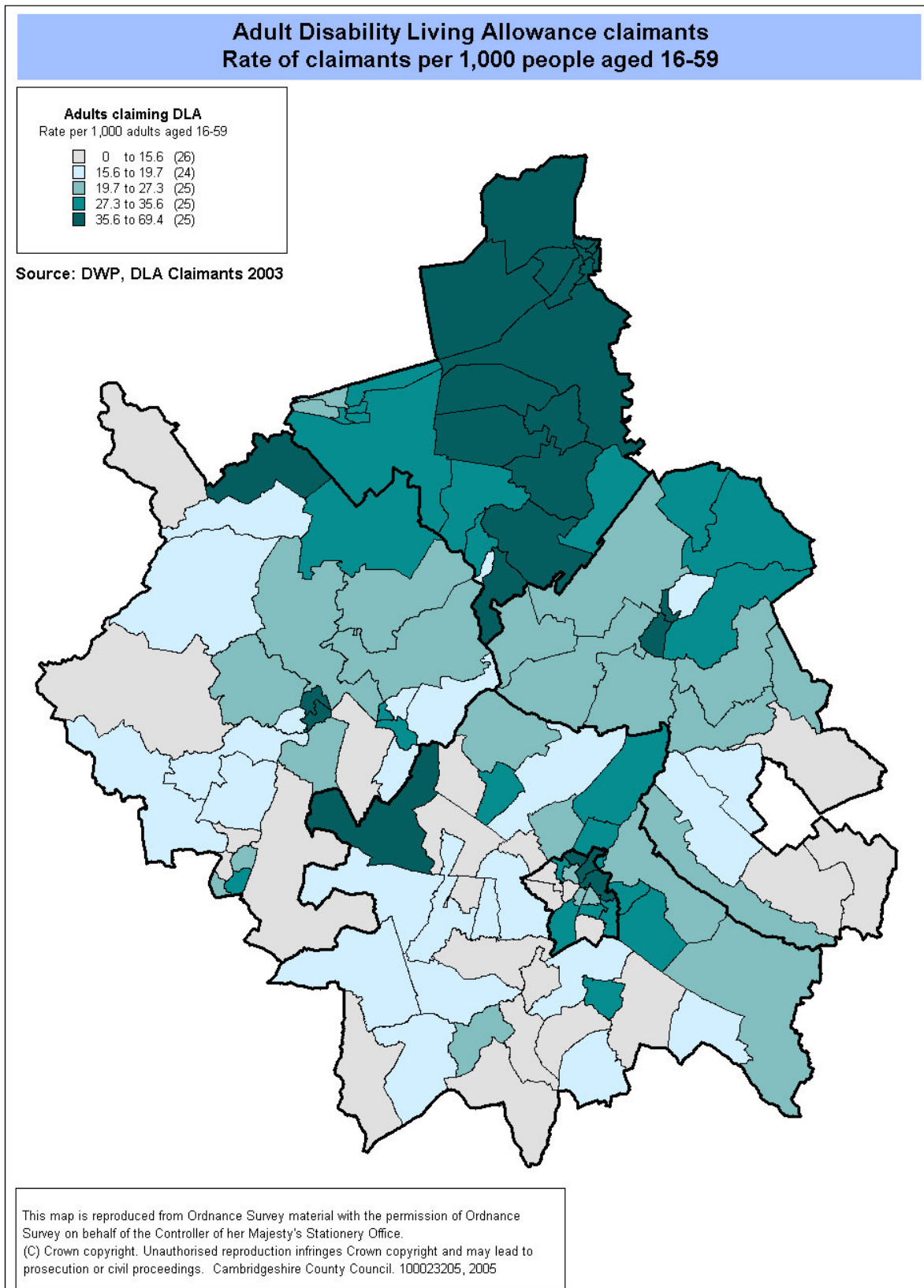


Fig 3: Ratio of the number of adults claiming DLA to the expected number of disabled adults, by ward.

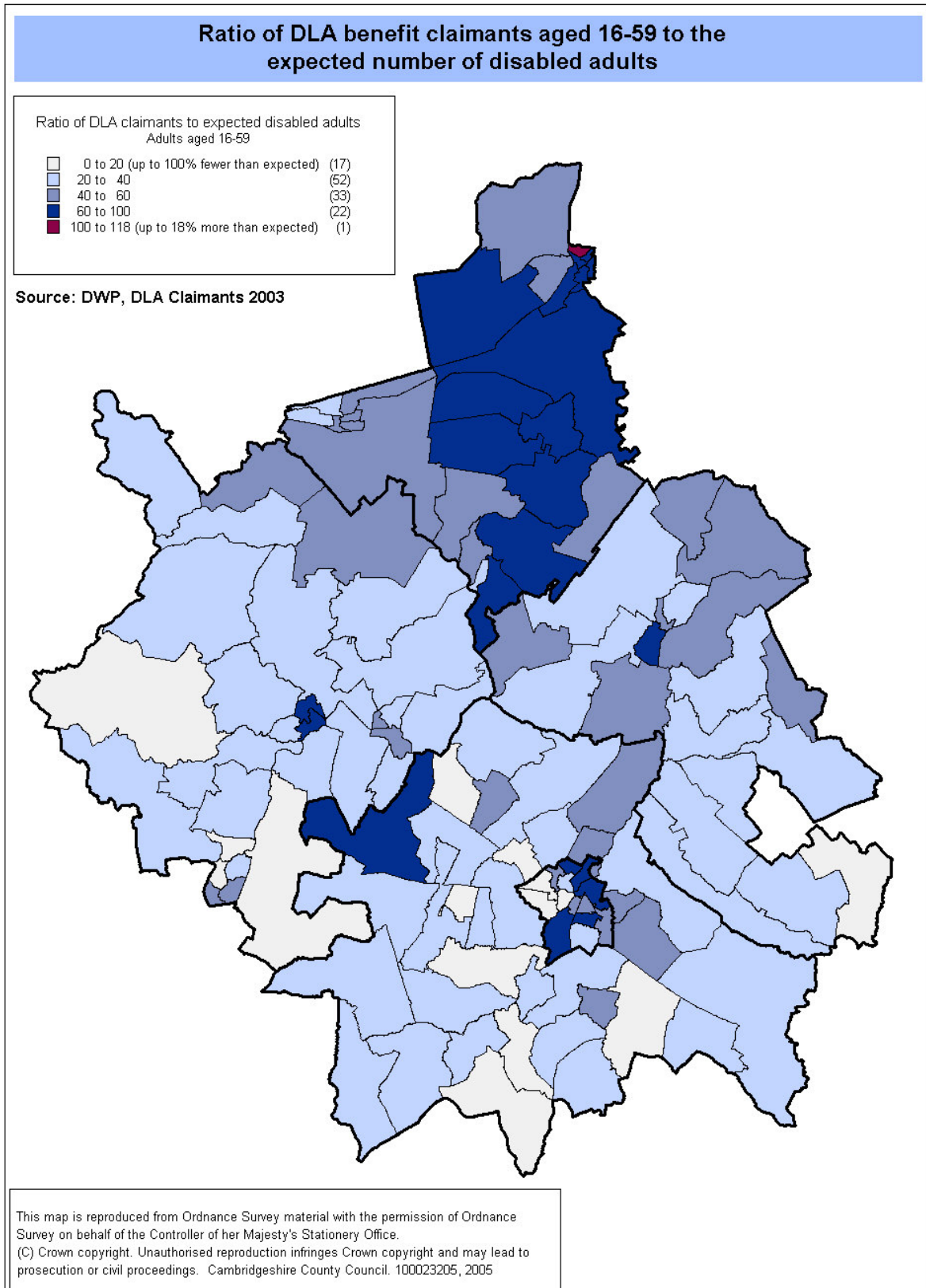


Fig 4: Ratio of children with a limiting long-term illness to the expected number of children with a disability, based on OPCS prevalence rates

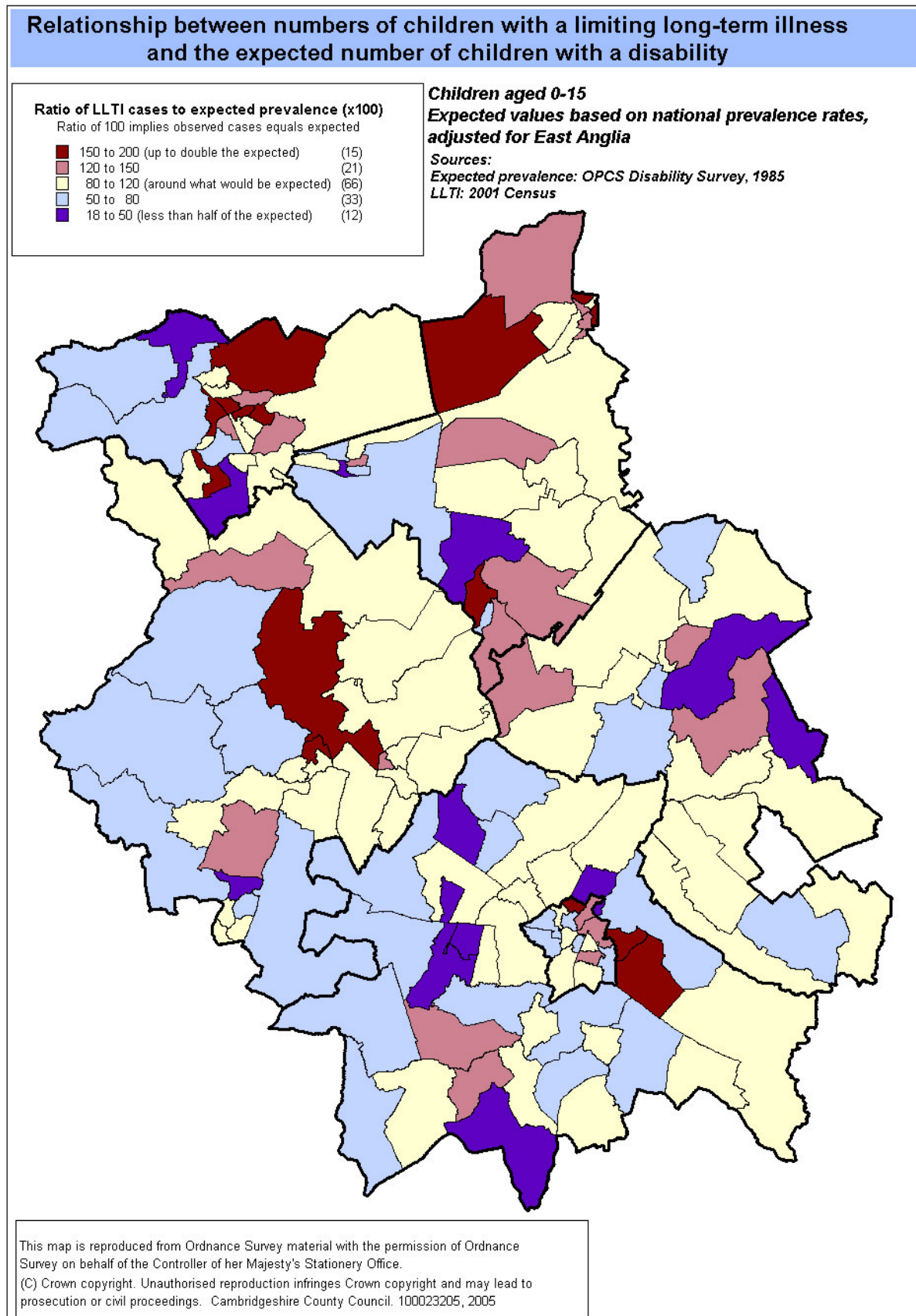


Fig 5: Percentage of all children aged 5 to 15 with a statement of special educational needs

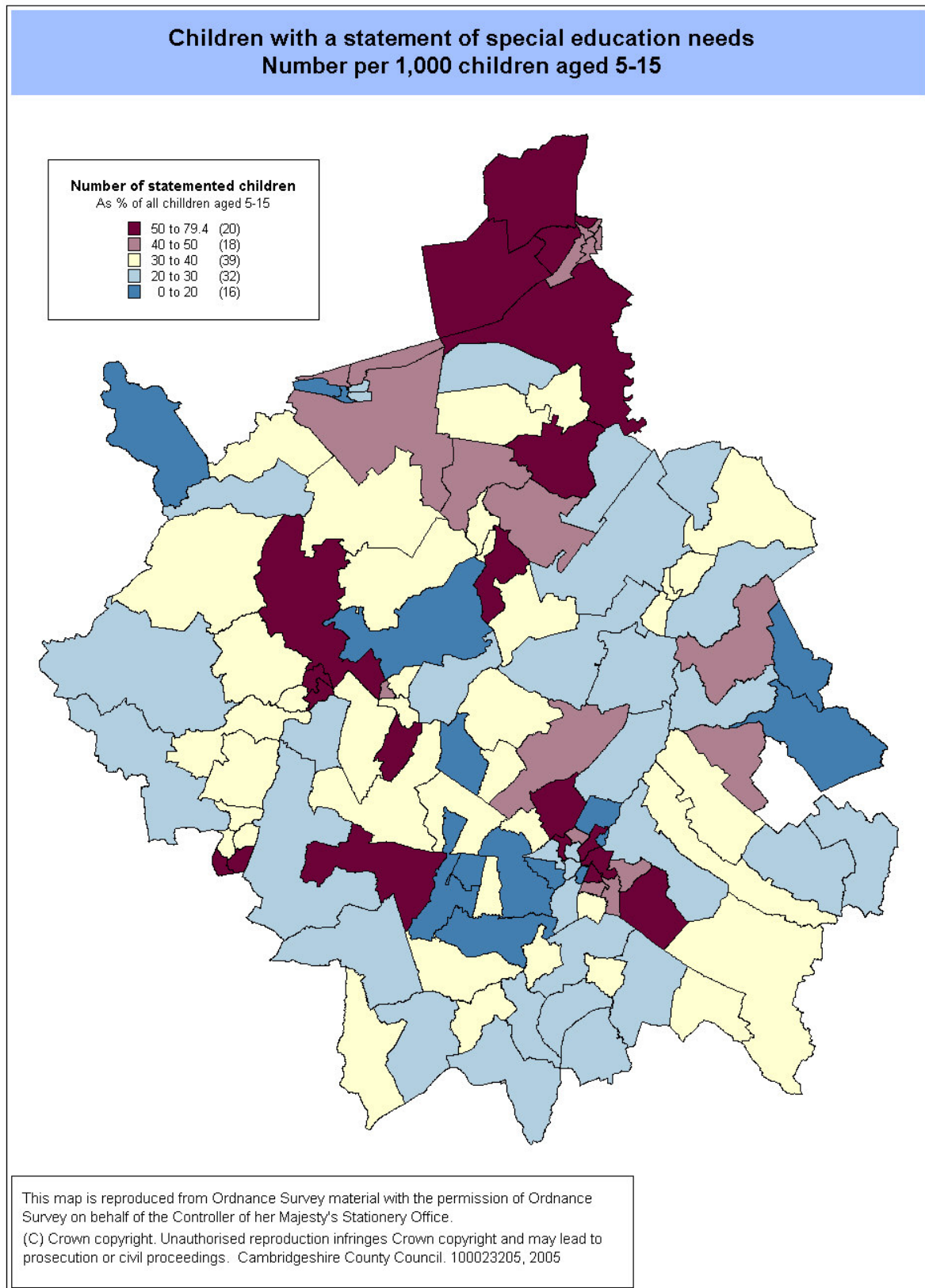


Fig 6: Percentage of all children under 16 for whom Disability Living Allowance is claimed

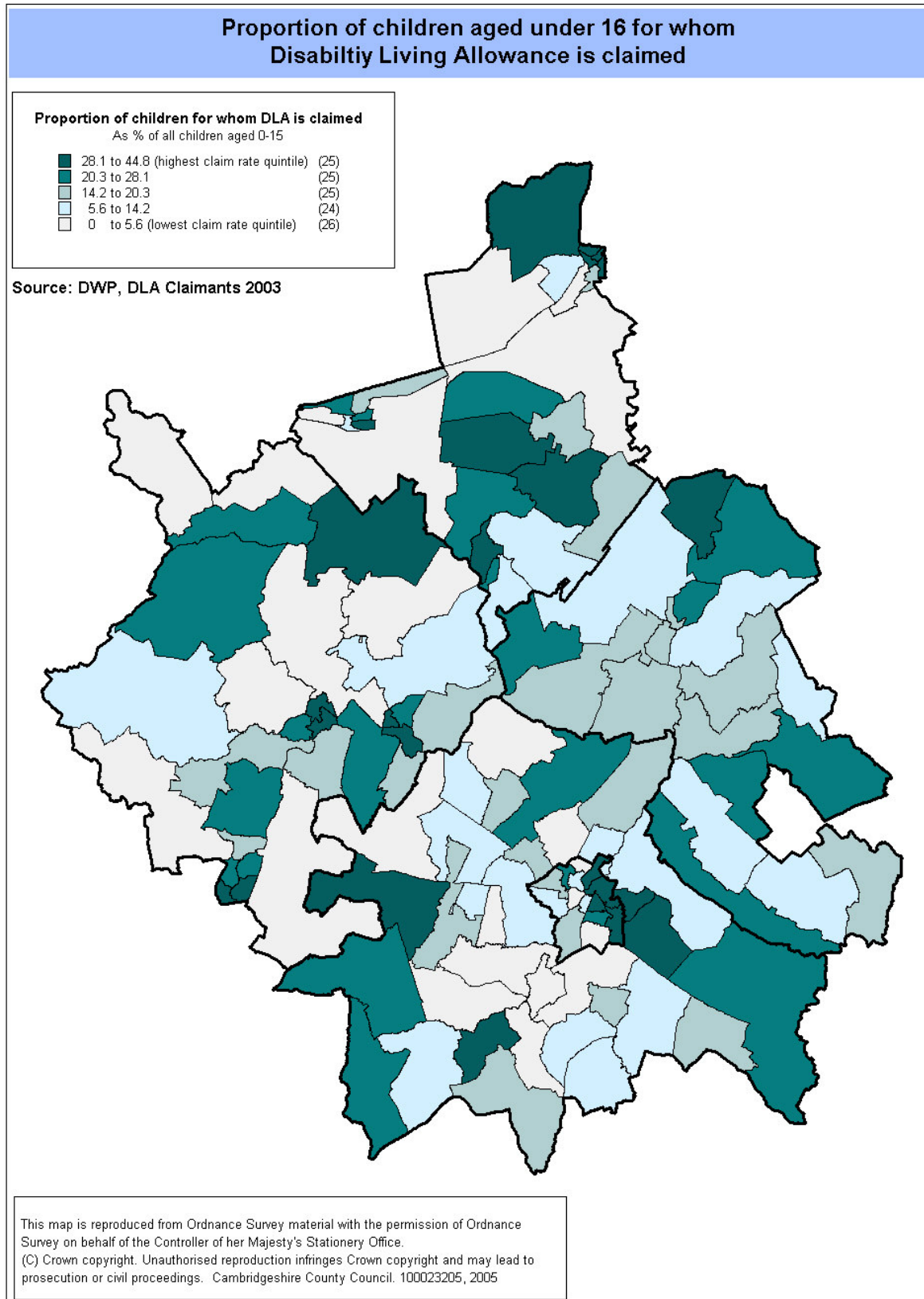


Fig 7: Ratio of the number of children for whom DLA is claimed to the expected number of disabled children

