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CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN IN NEED IN ENGLAND, 2012-13

HEADLINES

These main messages refer to the year ending 31 March 2013 and make comparisons with the previous year.

Referrals to children's social services are at their lowest level since 2009-10

There have been 593,500 referrals, a decrease of 1.9%, taking referrals to their lowest level since the first full Children in Need census in 2009-10

Fewer initial assessments were completed

441,500 initial assessments were completed, down 2.2% compared with last year

Increases in core assessments and section 47 enquires

Core assessments are up 5.4% to 232,700. 127,100 section 47 enquiries were initiated, up 2.0%

Fewer children started an episode of need

The number of children starting an episode of need decreased by 0.1% to 395,100

Fewer children ended an episode of need

Compared with last year there has been a 3.8% decrease in the number of children ending an episode of need to 355,800

But, more children were in need at 31 March

As the number starting an episode is higher than the number ending an episode, there has been an increase in the number of children in need at 31 March up 2.5% to 378,600

More children became the subject of a child protection plan

52,700 children became the subject of a child protection plan, up 1.1%

INTRODUCTION

This publication reports the numbers of:

- referrals and assessments carried out by children's social care services
- children who are assessed to be in need
- children who were the subject of a child protection plan

These figures are used to monitor the workload and performance of local authority children's social care services, and to identify the numbers of children who are subject to safeguarding procedures.

MAIN POINTS

Children in Need

A child in need is one who has been assessed by children's social care to be in need of services. These services can include, for example, family support (to help keep together families experiencing difficulties), leaving care support (to help young people who have left local authority care), adoption support, or disabled children's services (including social care, education and health provision).

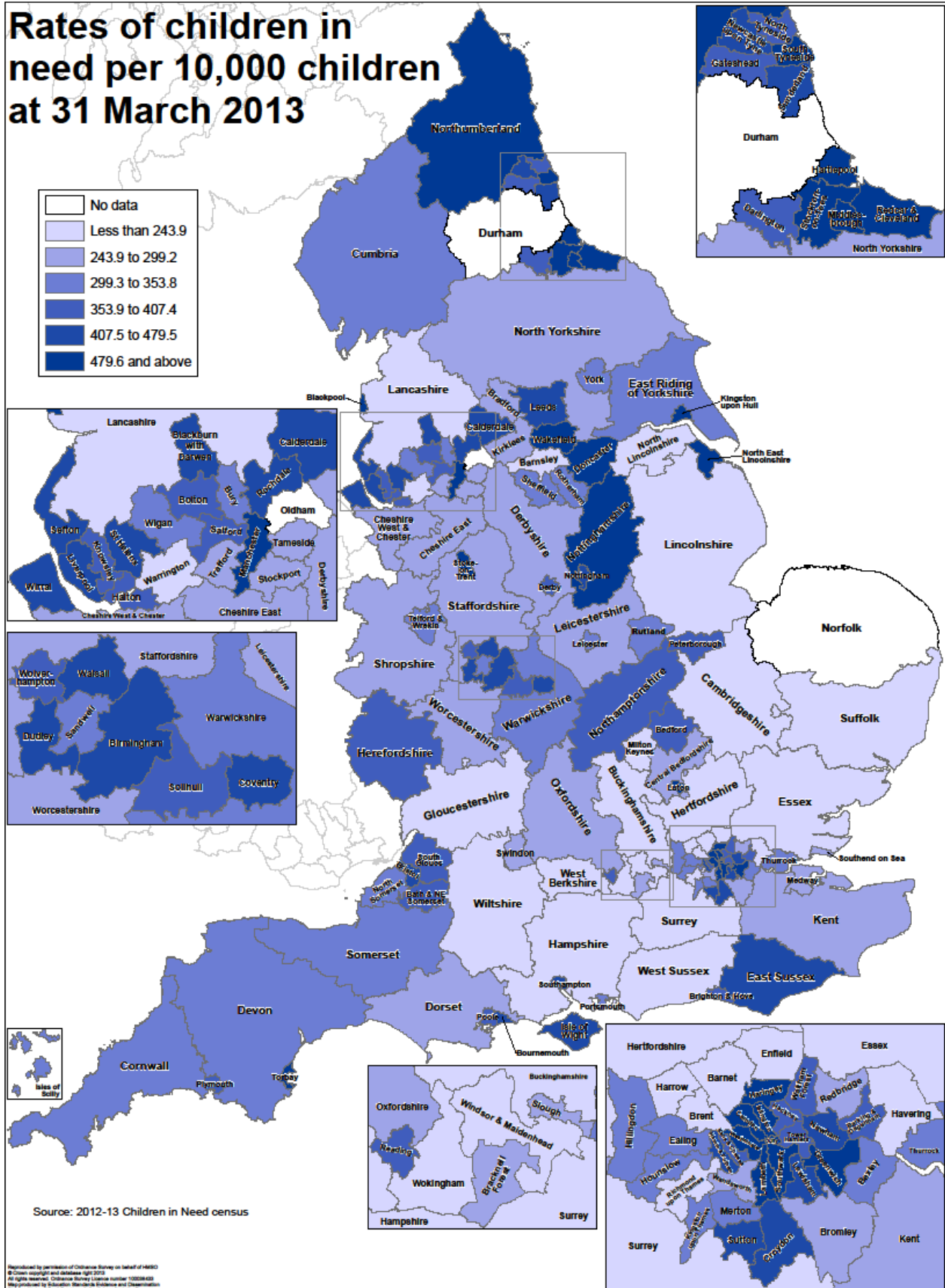
The figures below refer to the 31 March 2013.

- The number of children in need has increased compared with the previous year, from 369,400 to 378,600. The rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years is 332.2. The variation in this rate by local authority is shown overleaf.

Figure 1

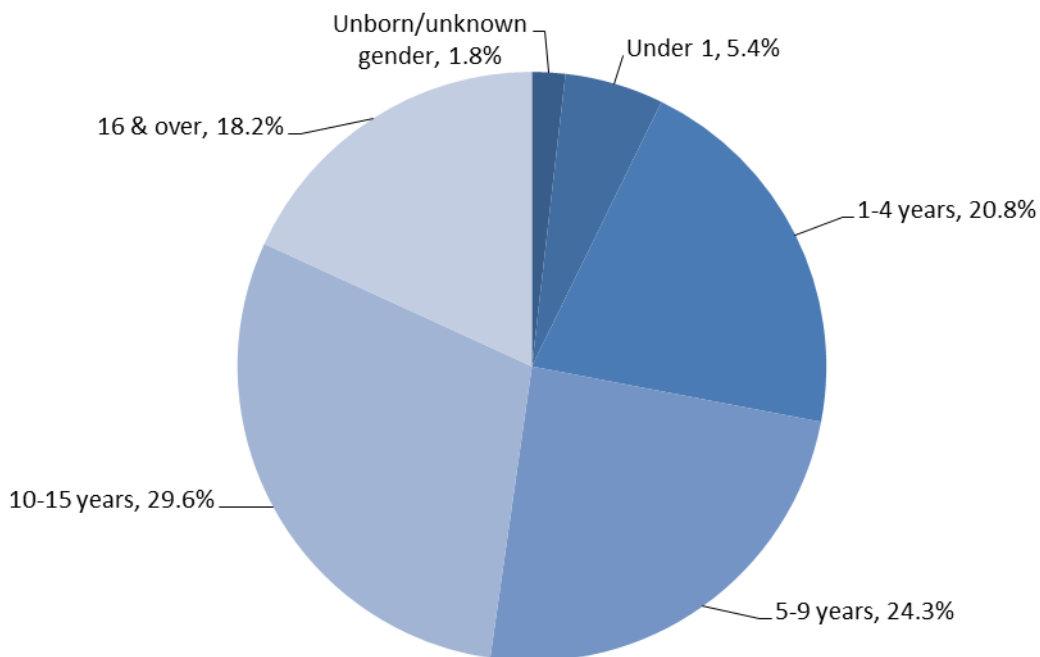


Department for Education



- As we would perhaps expect, local authorities with the highest rates of children in need tend to be concentrated in the major towns.
- At local authority level the rate per 10,000 children varies significantly. The highest is in Middlesbrough where the rate is 785.3 and the lowest is in Wokingham where the rate is 154.4.
- 95% of local authorities have a rate lying between 193.5 and 607.2 children in need per 10,000 children aged under 18 years.
- The gender split of children in need remains similar to last year. 53.0% are male, 45.2% are female and 1.8% are unborn or of unknown gender.
- The age split of children in need also remains similar to last year. The largest age group is those aged 10-15 years accounting for 29.6% of children in need; 26.2% are under 5 years of age. The full picture is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Children in Need at 31 March 2013 by Age (Table A3)



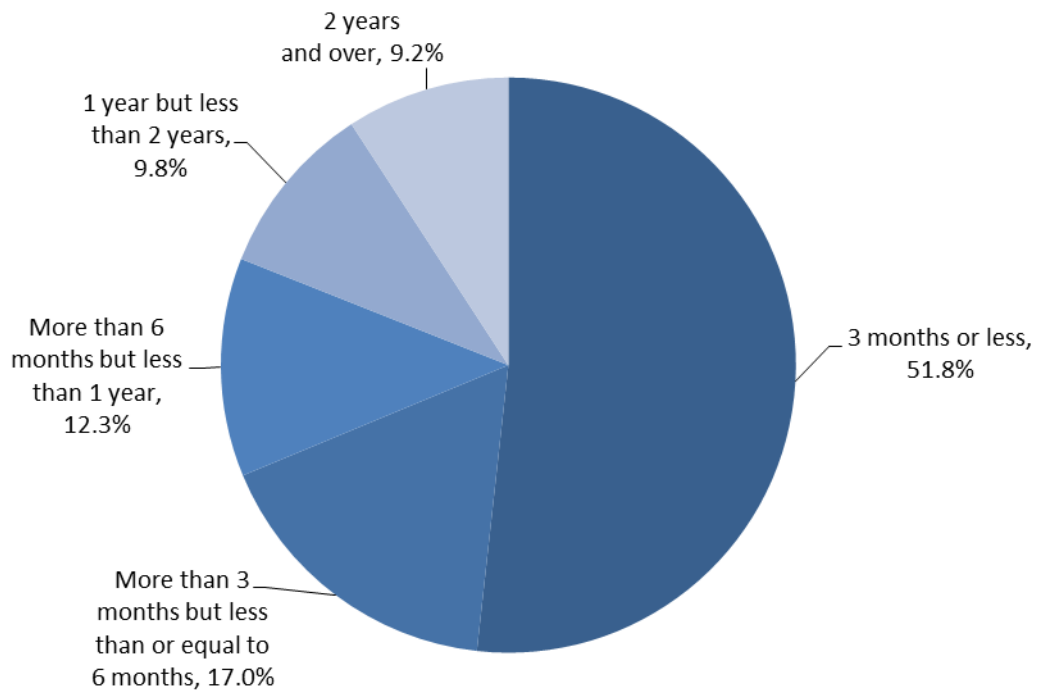
A child can be assessed to be in need more than once during the year and if they are, each episode will be counted separately in the figures. However a child should not have more than one episode of need at any point in time.

The figures below relate to the year ending 31 March 2013.

- Slightly fewer episodes of need began in 2013 than in 2012. 395,100 episodes of need started this year compared with 395,300 last year.
- The total number of episodes of need throughout the year decreased slightly by 0.4% from 739,300 to 736,100. The number of episodes per child in need was 1.08, down from 1.09 last year.
- 355,800 episodes ended in 2013, 14,100 fewer than last year. Over half (51.8%) of the episodes

ending in the year have lasted 3 months or less, however 9.2% have lasted 2 years or more. Figure 3 shows the full breakdown.

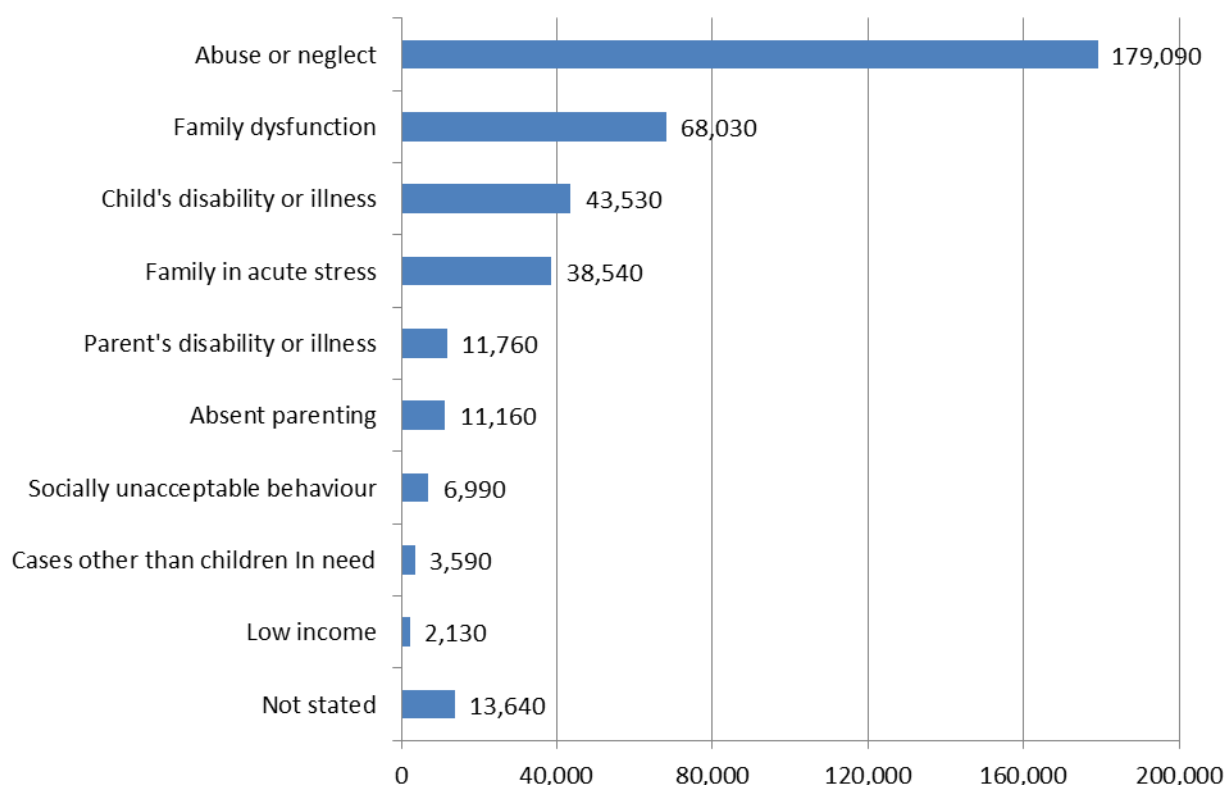
Figure 3: Duration of episodes of need ending in the year ending 31 March 2013 (Table B5)



Local authorities carry out an initial assessment to determine if the child is in need. If the child is deemed to be in need at this initial assessment, the main reason why they started to receive services is recorded.

- 'Abuse or Neglect' continues to be the most common primary need, increasing from 45.5% to 47.3% this year (see Figure 4). Family dysfunction is the second most common need at similar levels to last year (18.1% in 2012, 18.0% in 2013).

Figure 4: Children In Need at 31 March 2013 by primary need at initial assessment (Table A3)



Referrals and assessments

A referral is defined as a request for services to be provided by children's social care and is in respect of a child who is currently not assessed to be in need. A referral may result in an initial assessment of the child's needs, the provision of information or advice, referral to another agency or no further action. New information relating to children who are already assessed to be a child in need is not counted as a referral. Section 7 of the accompanying methodology note gives further information on the different stages of assessment.

Figures below relate to the year ending 31 March 2013 unless otherwise stated.

- There has been a decrease in the number of referrals in 2013 compared with the previous year. The number is at its lowest since the first full Children in Need census in 2009-10. There are 593,500 referrals to children's social care, compared with 605,100 referrals in 2012.
- 24.9% of referrals (147,700) are re-referrals (within 12 months of the previous referral), a decrease from last year (26.1%, 157,700).

An initial assessment is a brief assessment of the child's needs. It may lead to no further action, the direct provision of services and/or a more in-depth core assessment within which section 47 enquiries may be encompassed (see next section for more details on Section 47).

- 441,500 initial assessments have been completed, a decrease from 451,500 reported in 2012

From 1 April 2010, statutory guidance states that local authorities are expected to complete an initial assessment within 10 working days.

This year the actual start date for assessments was collected, rather than the effective start date which

has been collected and used previously to calculate durations. This change came about as part of a review of the CIN census. This change means the percentage of initial assessments completed within 10 working days and the percentage of core assessments completed within 35 working days can no longer be calculated. Figures on the actual duration of assessments have been reported in the publication tables. More detail on this change is included in Section 4.2 of the accompanying Methodology document.

- The median number of working days taken to complete an initial assessment is 7, the same as last year. 95 per cent of local authorities have a median value of between 1 and 13 working days to complete an initial assessment.
- The number of initial assessments completed in the year as a percentage of all referrals received in the year has slightly decreased from 74.6% in 2012, to 74.4% this year.

Where the outcome of the initial assessment requires a more in-depth assessment of need to be carried out, statutory guidance states that local authorities are expected to complete this core assessment within 35 working days.

- The number of core assessments completed has increased by 5.4%. 232,700 core assessments have been completed this year compared with 220,700 last year.
- A core assessment is the means by which a section 47 enquiry is carried out. The increase in section 47 enquiries this year (see the section below) has contributed to this rise in core assessments, as has an improvement in local authorities reporting a separate core assessment alongside the section 47 enquiry.
- The median number of working days taken to complete a core assessment is 31 working days. This figure was 32 working days in 2012.

Seven local authorities were given dispensation by the Secretary of State to carry out a more flexible approach to assessment. Specifically they were given permission to carry out a continuous assessment (rather than the initial and core assessments prescribed in statutory guidance) and were allowed to remove the statutory timescales for completing assessments. Data for six of these authorities is reported in Table A6; one local authority did not provide their data in a suitable format.

- These six pilot authorities completed 10,640 continuous assessments during the year. The median number of working days to complete a continuous assessments is 26 working days.

Section 47 enquiries and children who were the subject of a child protection plan

At an initial assessment the local authority should ascertain if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm (section 47 of the Children Act 1989). If this is suspected then the local authority should carry out a section 47 enquiry to determine if it needs to take steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. If concerns are substantiated and the child is judged to be at continuing risk of harm then an initial child protection conference will be convened.

- The number of section 47 enquiries carried out has increased by 2.0%, from 124,600 last year to 127,100 this year.
- While there is a decrease in initial assessments compared with last year, the increase in core assessments and section 47 enquiries could suggest there is an increase in the number of children at risk who require these more detailed assessments but it could also suggest local authorities are being more cautious when assessing children.
- There are 60,100 initial child protection conferences, up from 56,200 in 2012. These include

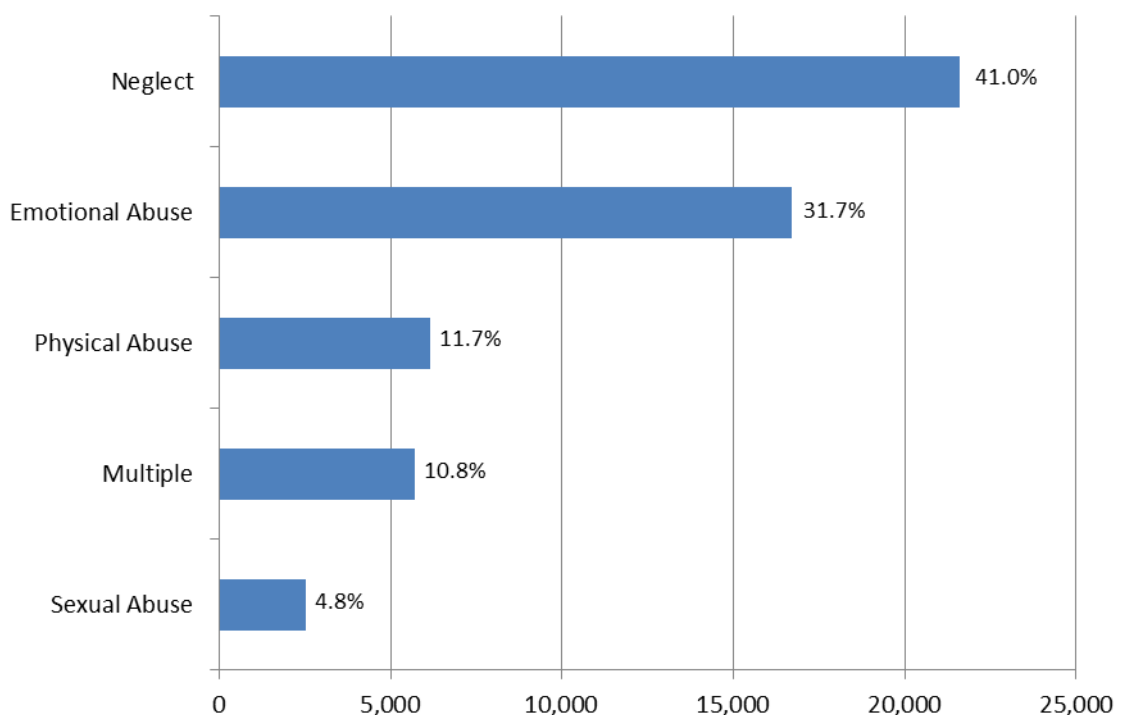
both conferences resulting from section 47 enquiries and children on existing plans who transferred local authorities.

- The median duration from the section 47 enquires to the date of initial child protection conference is 14 working days. This was 13 working days last year.
- 41.5% of section 47 enquiries initiated result in a child protection plan (compared with 41.8% last year).

At the initial child protection conference, the decision will be made as to whether the child needs to become the subject of a child protection plan and if they do, the initial category of abuse is recorded.

- The number of children becoming the subject of a child protection plan has continued to increase although at a slower rate than previous years. 52,700 children became the subject of a plan in 2013, a small increase of 1.1% on 2012.
- A higher proportion became the subject of a plan for the second or subsequent time, 14.9% this year compared with 13.8% last year.
- Neglect is the most common initial category of abuse under which children became the subject of a plan, in 41.0% of cases. Emotional abuse is the next most common category (31.7%) followed by physical abuse (11.7%). These figures are similar to last year. Figure 5 shows the complete picture.

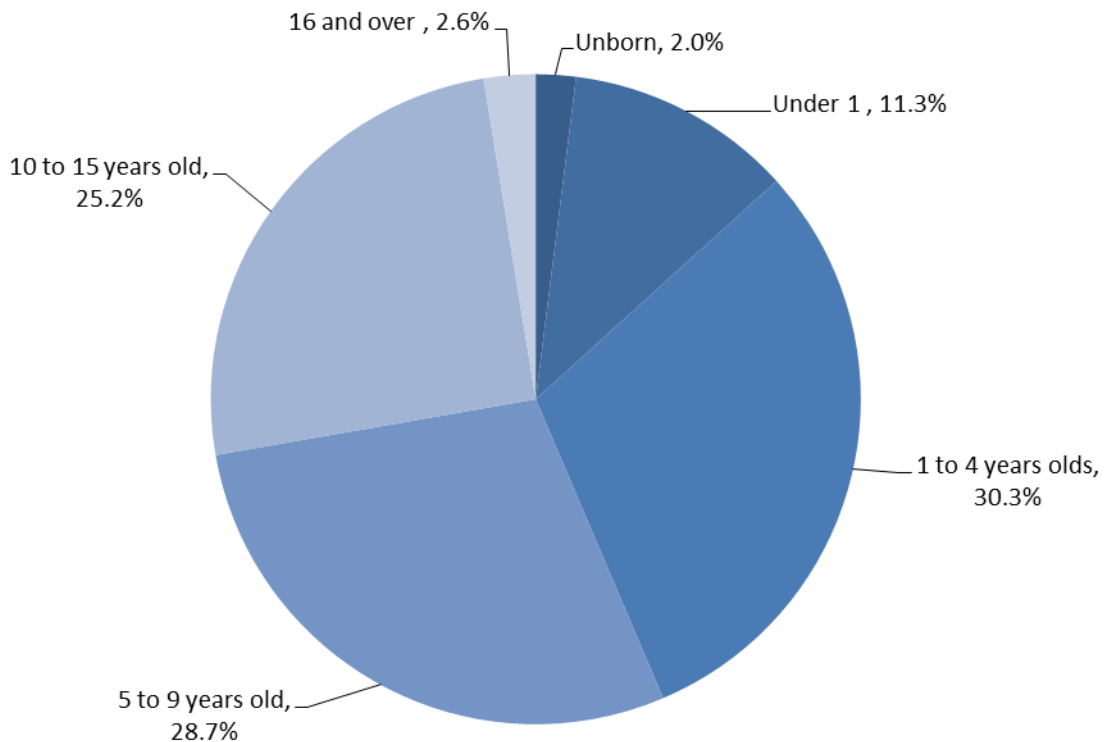
Figure 5: Children who became the subject of a child protection plan, by initial category of abuse, year ending 31 March 2013 (Table D2)



- The number of children who are the subject of a child protection plan at the end of the year has increased very slightly from 42,900 last year to 43,100 this year.
- 21,710 (50.3%) are male, 20,530 (47.6%) are female and 910 (2.1%) are unborn/unknown gender, similar to in 2012.

- The largest age group are those aged 1-4 years old. Almost one third (30.3%) of children who are the subject of a child protection plan are in this age range. The full picture is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Children who are the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2013, by age (Table A5)



When a child becomes the subject of a child protection plan, their plan should be reviewed within the first three months and then subsequently at least every six months.

- The number of children who have been the subject of a plan at 31 March for at least 3 months also increased, from 30,600 last year to 30,900 this year.
- The proportion of children who have their plan reviewed in line with statutory guidance decreased, from 96.7% in 2012 to 96.2% in 2013.

A child should no longer be the subject of a child protection plan if it is judged they are no longer at risk of harm, or if the child has reached 18 years old, left the country or has died. A local authority will end a plan if the family moves permanently to another local authority. The receiving authority will start a new plan if deemed necessary.

- More child protection plans came to an end in 2013, 52,100 compared with 51,600 in 2012, and slightly fewer had been the subject of a plan for two or more years (5.2% in 2013, compared with 5.6% in 2012).

TABLES

The tables in this statistical release are listed below. These figures are all **final**. All the tables listed below can be found in the Excel workbook the publication website.

As part of a Government drive for data transparency in official publications and to make data more accessible, supporting underlying data for this publication will be available on the publication website.

National Level tables

Table	Title	Coverage	Level
Table A1	Referrals and assessments carried out by children's social care services	Years ending 31 March 2010 to 2013	England
Table A2	Number of section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences carried out by children's social care services, and the number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan	Years ending 31 March 2010 to 2013	England
Table A3	Numbers of children in need at 31 March 2013, by gender, age (at 31 March) and primary need at initial assessment	Year ending 31 March 2013	England
Table A4	Numbers of children in need at 31 March 2013, by age (at 31 March), gender and ethnicity	Year ending 31 March 2013	England
Table A5	Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2013, by age (at 31 March), gender, ethnicity and initial category of abuse	Year ending 31 March 2013	England
Table A6	Number of continuous assessments carried out by local authorities trialling a continuous assessment process	Year ending 31 March 2013	England

LA level tables

NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN NEED

Table	Title	Coverage	Level
Table B1	Numbers of children in need. All children in need throughout the year, children starting, ending and at 31 March 2013, and rates per 10,000 children	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table B2	Number of children in need at 31 March 2013, by disability	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table B3	Numbers of children in need at 31 March 2013, by primary need at initial assessment	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table B4	Numbers of children in need at 31 March 2013, by duration of open case	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table B5	Numbers of children ceasing to be in need in the year ending 31 March 2013, by duration of episode of need	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table B6	Numbers and percentages of children ceasing to be in need in the year ending 31 March 2013, by reason for case closure	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority

REFERRALS AND ASSESSMENTS

Table	Title	Coverage	Level
Table C1	Numbers and percentages of referrals and initial assessments completed by children's social care services	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table C2	Number and percentage of referrals in the year ending 31 March 2013, within 12 months of a previous referral and the number and percentage which resulted in no further action	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table C3	Numbers and percentages of core assessments completed by children's social care services	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table C4	Number of children who were subject to section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority

CHILDREN WHO WERE THE SUBJECT OF A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

Table	Title	Coverage	Level
Table D1	Numbers of children who were the subject of a child protection plan throughout, starting or ending during the year ending 31 March 2013, and at 31 March 2013	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table D2	Number of children who became the subject of a child protection plan during the year ending 31 March 2013, by initial and latest category of abuse	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table D3	Number of children who became the subject of a child protection plan during the year ending 31 March 2013 who became the subject of a plan for a second or subsequent time	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table D4	Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2013, by initial and latest category of abuse	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table D5	Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2013, by length of time as the subject of a plan	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table D6	Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2013, who had been on a plan for at least three months and had reviews carried out within the required timescales	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table D7	Number of children who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan during the year ending 31 March 2013, by length of time as the subject of a plan	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority
Table D8	Numbers of children who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan during the first six months of the year, by length of time the child remained in need	Year ending 31 March 2013	Local authority

TECHNICAL NOTE

Background

1. The 2012-13 Children in Need (CIN) census captured child level information on children referred to and assessed by children's social care services within the 12 month period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013. The census includes any child referred to children's social care services within the year and also any cases open at 1 April 2012, for whom local authorities were providing services, for example:

- active case work
- making regular payments
- where funding or on-going services such as respite care has been agreed
- maintaining a child with care and accommodation
- a commitment to review the case at a predetermined date
- maintaining a child's name on a register that ensures the child and family receives targeted information or other special consideration

A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services, or the child is disabled. In these cases assessments by a social worker are carried out under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. The purpose of an assessment is to gather information and evidence about a child's developmental needs and the parents' capacity to meet these needs within the context of the wider family and community. This information should be used to inform decision about the help needed by the child.

Children who are looked after are a specific subset of children in need. Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if he or she:

- is provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours, [Children Act 1989 Section 20 and 21], or
- is subject to a care order [Children Act 1989 Part IV].

More detailed information on children looked after is collected annually through the SSDA903 collection and information on the availability of these statistics is in section 13.

2. The data items collected in 2012-13 included child identifiers and characteristics along with the dates of any referrals, initial or core assessments, section 47 enquiries and child protection plans and reviews. Local authorities submitted data to DfE in summer 2013 and information has been published in this Statistical Release. There were no new data items introduced for 2012-13.

3. 151 out of 152 local authorities have provided a CIN census return in summer 2013. Norfolk was unable to make a full child level CIN census return within required timescales.

4. Prior to the CIN census (up to and including 2008-09), aggregate information was collected on children referred and assessed by children's social care services through the Child Protection and Referrals 3 (CPR3) return. Figures for 2008-09 and earlier are available in the Statistical First Release 'Referrals, assessments and children who were the subject of a child protection plan, England, 2008-09' available at: <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000873/index.shtml>.

Methodology

5. Information on the data items, methodology and definitions used in this Statistical First Release are published in 'SFR45/2013 Methodology document' which can be found on the publication website.

Data Quality and Uses of the Data

6. Information on the users and the potential use made of these statistics, and information on the assessment of the quality of these statistics is available in 'SFR45/2013 Data Quality and Uses of Data Document' which has been published alongside these statistics. This can be found on the publication website.

7. To enhance the usability of the statistics at a local level, a data confidence indicator has been constructed for all local authority figures to highlight any known data issues (see section 4 of the data quality and uses of data document for further information).

Confidentiality

8. In order to ensure confidentiality of all Children in Need, the following suppression conventions have been used in this statistical release:

- any numbers between 1 and 5 inclusive have been suppressed and have been replaced by a 'x'. To protect suppressed numbers, secondary suppression may be needed in some cases.
- England and regional estimates rounded to the nearest 10 or 100
- where any number is shown as zero (0), the original figure submitted was zero
- percentages are displayed to 1 decimal place
- where data were not submitted by a local authority or the local authority were not happy with the quality of their data '..' has been used

9. As part of a Government drive for data transparency in official publications, supporting data for this publication will be released on publication website. Figures are suppressed to preserve confidentiality.

UK Comparability of Children's Social Services Statistics

10. Data is collected and published independently by each of the 4 countries in the UK. Although there are similarities between the data collected by the 4 nations, there are also differences which may be down to different policies and legislation, and differing historical data collections.

The Department for Education commissioned The Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre (CWRC) to undertake a study to draw together data on safeguarding children and to compare the current position of England with other countries. As part of the wider study, this research presents findings from preliminary work to explore the current availability and comparability of safeguarding and child protection data in the UK; this is of particular interest given that there have been shifts in policy and practice in recent years and these data have the potential to facilitate exploration of changes in levels of need and service responses in different parts of the UK over time. The document can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-statistics-the-availability-and-comparability-of-data-in-the-uk-brief>

Population Estimates

11. Population estimates are used to calculate rates per 10,000 children throughout the publication. The population estimates used are based upon information provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), adjusted to academic years by the Department. Estimates for mid-2012 are based upon the 2011 census. Rates per 10,000 children for 2009-10 and 2010-11 have been updated as revised population estimates for these years were released in early 2013.

National Statistics

12. The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs
- are well explained and readily accessible
- are produced according to sound methods
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The Department has a set of statistical policies in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, these are published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-official-statistics-published-by-the-department-for-education>

Related Publications

13. Related publications from the 4 nations can be found at:

England:

The results of the 2011-12 CIN census can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/characteristics-of-children-in-need-in-england-year-endingmarch-2012>

The CIN census data is matched to the National Pupil Database and the resulting matched data is used to look at outcomes of children looked after, for example Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 outcomes, alongside further information on their characteristics, obtained from the School Census, for example prevalence of free school meals and special educational needs. This data is published in 'Additional tables: SFR27/2012' at the above link.

Statistics on 'Children looked after in England (including adoption and care leavers) year ending 31 March 2013' were published on 26 September 2013 and are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption>

The Children Looked After Data (CLA) data is also matched to the National Pupil Database. This information is published annually in December each year in 'Outcomes for Children Looked After'. The latest figures for 2012 can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/outcomes-for-children-looked-after-by-local-authorities-in-england-31-march-2012>

Scotland:

Child Protection Statistics for Scotland are available at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/PubChildrenSocialWork>

Wales:

Latest information can be found at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/health/social-services/?lang=en>

Northern Ireland:

Children Order Statistical Tables for Northern Ireland are available on their website at:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib-3/statistics_and_research-cib-pub/children_statistics/stats-cib-children_order.htm

Queries

14. We welcome any comments or suggestions on the existing content of this publication along with any suggestions on how future publications could better meet any user needs. Any feedback or queries about the figures contained in this release, or if you would like to be involved in future consultation about this publication, should be addressed to:

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