



Department
for Education



Statistical First Release

Characteristics of children in need in England, 2013-14

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Internet	Statistics: children in need and child protection

- 657,800** The number of referrals to children's social care in 2013-14 – an increase of 10.8% compared to the previous year when there were 593,500 referrals. Data collected for the first time, on the source of referrals, shows that nearly a quarter of referrals were from the police.
- 397,600** The number of children in need at 31 March 2014 – an increase of 5.0% from 378,600 at 31 March 2013, although the longer-term time series does fluctuate.
- 47.2%** The proportion of children in need with abuse or neglect identified as their primary need. This is the most common primary need, followed by family dysfunction at 18.6%. This has remained broadly similar to the previous year.
- 142,500** The number of section 47 enquiries carried out in 2013-14. An increase of 12.1% on 127,100 last year.
- 48,300** The number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2014. An increase of 12.1% on 43,100 at 31 March 2013 and an increase of 23.5% since 31 March 2010.

1. Number of Children in Need (Tables A1, B1, B5)

When a child is referred to children's social care, an assessment is carried out to identify if the child is in need of services, which local authorities have an obligation to provide under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. 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).

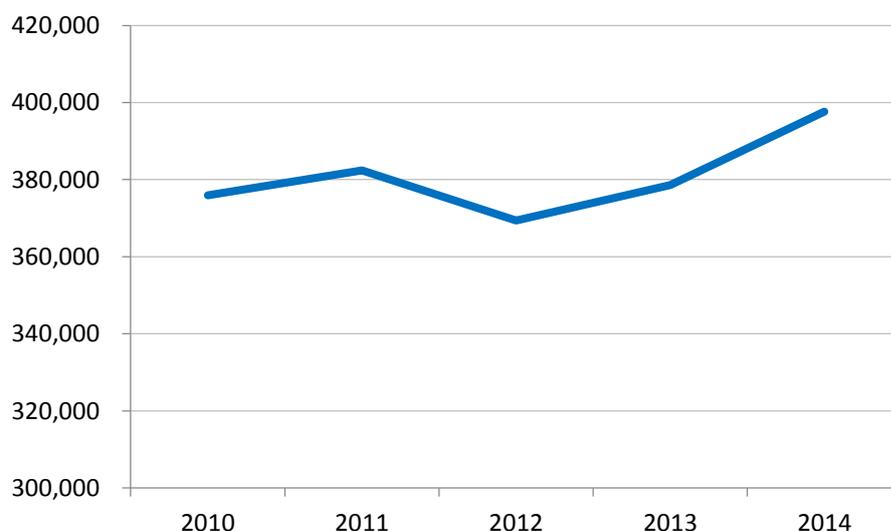
Methodology of counting the number of children in need

A child can start or end an episode of need more than once during the year but they should not have over-lapping episodes. For example, if a child begins an episode of need in May 2013 which ends in August 2013 and the same child begins another episode of need in December 2013 and is still in need on the 31 March 2014, the child is counted as two starts, one end and one count at the 31 March 2014.

Note that the number of children in need at 31 March does not equate to the previous year's number plus the number started in the year minus those ceased. It is likely this is due to: improving data quality as LA systems adapt to returning the census data; estimates calculated for missing data (estimates we need to calculate when a LA has not been able to supply full data); the census is taken each year and local authorities do not have the facility to amend previous year's data returns.

A more detailed explanation is given in the accompanying **methodology** document and the **data quality and uses** document found alongside this publication at [Statistics: children in need and child protection](#)

Figure 1: The number of children in need is increasing
Children in need at 31 March.



397,600 children in need at 31 March 2014, an increase on last year...

Numbers have increased by 5.0% from 378,600 in the previous year. Changes to the assessment process this year may have had a small effect on the increase. See later sections for more details.

...equating to 346.4 children in need per 10,000 in the population...

This is an increase from 332.2 in the previous year (comparing the number of children in need to the population helps to determine if the change is caused by an increase in the population; the rise in rate here reflects this is not a population driven increase).

...with great variability at local authority level

The children in need per 10,000 in the population ranges from 149.3 in Wokingham and 181.9 in Surrey, to 694.2 in Middlesbrough and 743.2 in Torbay.

The Children in Need census

The Department for Education has been collecting the Children in Need census from local authorities since 2008-09. The census collects information on all referrals to children's social care, assessments carried out upon those children and whether the children became the subject of a child protection plan.

The first collection in 2008-09 covered the six month period from 1 October 2008 to 31 March 2009; from 2009-10 the census was rolled out to cover the full 12 month period.

Figures below relate to the year ending 31 March 2014:

More episodes of need began... 427,700 episodes began, a rise of 8.3% on the 395,100 beginning the previous year.

...and more episodes ended 384,100 episodes ended, an increase of 8.0% on the 355,800 ending last year

... and episodes were slightly longer than in the previous year Proportionately fewer episodes which ended in the year lasted under six months, 66.7% rather than 68.7% in 2012-13.

Figure 2: Episodes of need are getting longer
Percentage of episodes ending in year by duration

Duration	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
6 months or less	69.2	69.2	68.7	66.7
More than 6 months but less than 1 year	12.5	12.0	12.3	13.3
1 year or more	18.3	18.7	18.9	20.0

2. Referrals to children's social care (Tables A1, A6, C1-C4, C6)

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 not currently in need. A referral may result in: an initial or continuous assessment of the child's need; 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.

Referrals have increased, perhaps caused by increased media attention

There were 657,800 referrals in 2013-14 compared to 593,500 in 2012-13 – the largest increase for a number of years. However, this is historically quite volatile. We have seen in previous years, and we have heard anecdotal evidence from local authorities, that increased media attention on child protection leads to an increase in the number of referrals they receive.

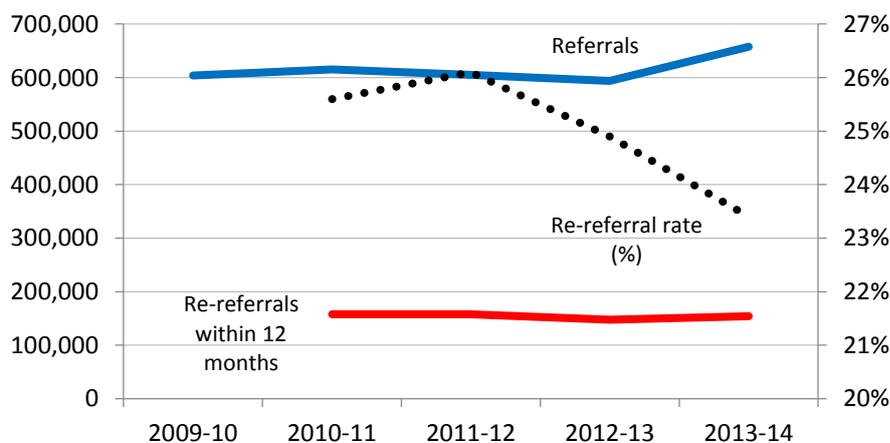
So have the number of re-referrals

We measure re-referrals within 12 months of a previous referral. Where a child has had more than one referral this year, each re-referral is counted. There were 154,000 re-referrals this year, up from 147,700 last year.

However, as a percentage of all referrals, re-referrals have fallen

Re-referrals within 12 months of a previous referral have fallen from 24.9% of referrals to 23.4%.

Figure 3: Referrals fluctuate but have increased this year
Number of referrals and re-referrals¹ in each year ending 31 March



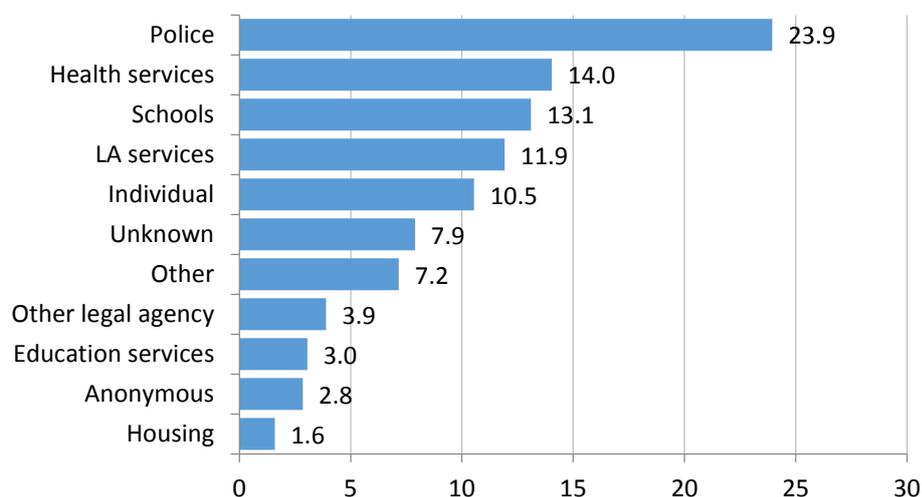
¹ 1 Re-referrals within 12 months of the previous referral could not be calculated in 2009-10 as full year's referral data was not collected for the previous year

Most common referral source is the police... 23.9% of referrals were from the police, followed by health services (14.0%) and schools (13.1%).

However, we need to note the high proportion reported with unknown source
 Although over 99% of referrals had information on their source reported, 7.9% of referrals were reported with an unknown source.
 This is the first year of collecting source of referral. Not all local authorities have been able to report it fully - nearly half of referrals with an unknown source are from local authorities with unknown as their majority. For this reason, data on source of referral should be interpreted with some caution and is likely to change next year.

Figure 4: The police are the main source of referrals to social care

Referrals in 2013-14 by source of referral (percent)



3. Assessments (Tables C2 to C4)

Policy changes to assessing children in need

Statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' was revised in 2013 giving local authorities more flexibility when assessing children. Previously, local authorities carried out an initial assessment within 10 working days and (where needed) a more in-depth core assessment within 35 working days. Local authorities now have the flexibility to carry out a single continuous assessment within 45 working days.

108 local authorities changed to using continuous assessments in the year. Many changed mid-year, completing 175,290 continuous assessments within an average (median) of 25 working days. Statutory guidance states continuous assessments should be completed within 45 working days.

Figure 5: Assessments completed and durations

Local authorities completing assessments and time taken to complete the assessments

	Number completed	Number of local authorities completing assessments	Median number of working days taken to complete
Initial Assessments	308,520	131	8
Core Assessments	170,640	130	32
Continuous Assessments	175,290	108	25

For those completing initial assessments, the median number of days taken was 8.

The median number of days taken to complete the assessments was 8 this year compared to 7 days last year. The expectation is within 10 working days.

This is possibly due to local authorities changing to continuous assessments.

For those completing core assessments, the median number of days taken was 32.

The median number of days taken to complete core assessments was 31 last year, increasing to 32 this year. The expectation is within 35 working days.

4. Primary need at assessment (Tables B3, A6)

Primary need

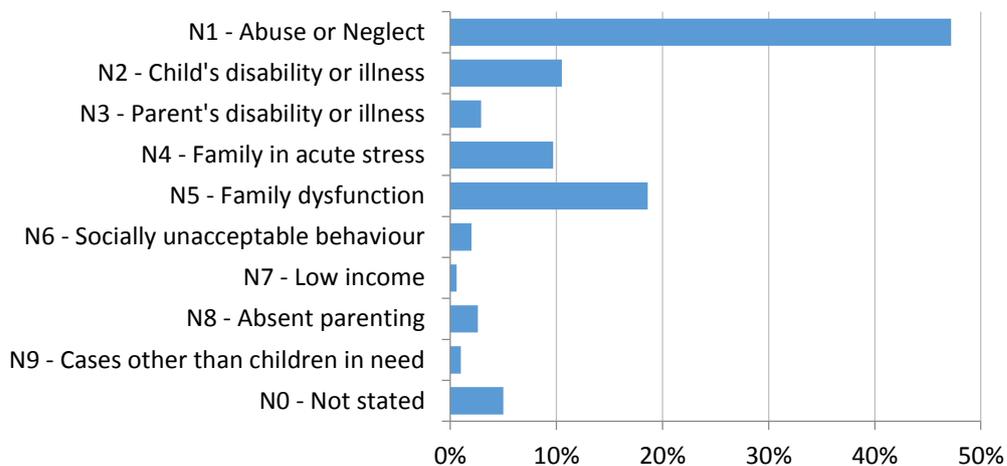
When a child is assessed following a referral, the practitioner determines the child's primary need at this first assessment. Only one need can be reported here and the list of primary needs is hierarchical, so in cases where multiple needs are identified, the need highest in the list is reported in the census.

"Abuse or neglect" was again the most common primary need at first assessment... 47.2% of cases recorded "abuse or neglect" as the child's primary need. The proportion of cases with "abuse or neglect" as their primary need is broadly similar to last year. Earlier years contain missing or unknown values which makes it difficult to draw conclusions from the longer time series.

...followed by "family dysfunction". 18.6% of cases, rising steadily from 15.7% in 2010.

Figure 6: "Abuse or neglect" is the most common primary need

Children in need at 31 March 2014, by primary need at first assessment



Other factors identified at the assessment were collected for the first time this year

Of the 175,300 continuous assessments, 145,700 (83.1%) reported factors identified at assessment. This information showed that domestic violence, which includes that aimed at children or other adults in the household, was the most common factor - flagged in 40.6% of continuous assessments with factors recorded against them. However, only around two thirds of local authorities returned this information and some were incomplete or caveated. Therefore, this finding should be treated with caution.

5. Section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences

(Tables C5)

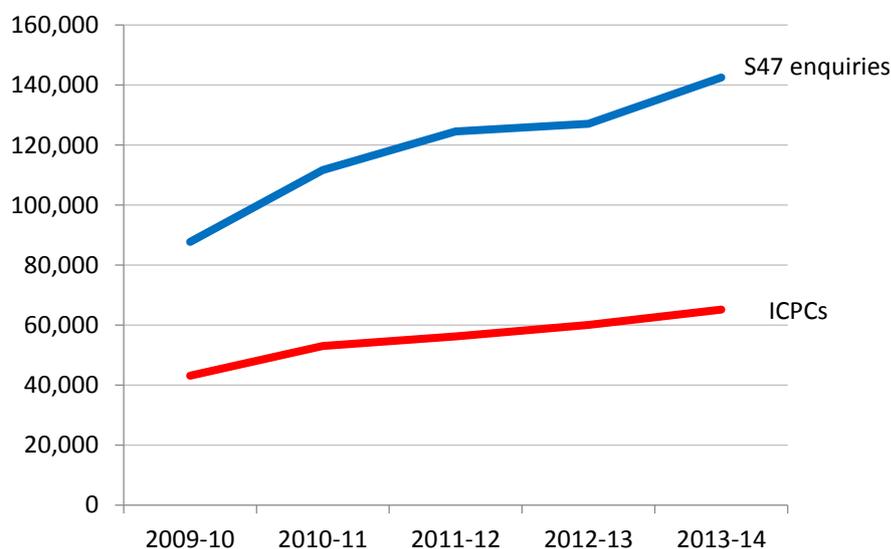
Section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences

If the local authority identifies there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, it will carry out an **assessment under section 47** of the Children Act 1989 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** should be convened within 15 working days.

The number of section 47 enquiries carried out increased this year	In 2013-14, 142,500 section 47 enquiries were initiated - equivalent to 124.1 enquiries per 10,000 children. This is an increase of 12.1% on 127,100 enquiries in 2012-13. Figures have been steadily increasing since 87,700 in 2009-10
Initial child protection conferences have also increased	Up by 8.5% from 60,100 in 2012-13 to 65,200 in 2013-14. The number of initial child protection conferences carried out has been increasing as section 47 enquiries have increased.

Figure 7: Section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences are increasing

Numbers carried out in the last five years



Average time taken to convene an initial child protection conference stays the same	In 2013-14, the average time taken to convene an initial child protection conference was 14 working days. It was the same 2012-13.
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6. Child protection plans (Tables D1 – D9)

Child protection plans

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**. When a child becomes the subject of a plan, the initial category of abuse is recorded.

A sharp increase in the number of children starting a plan...

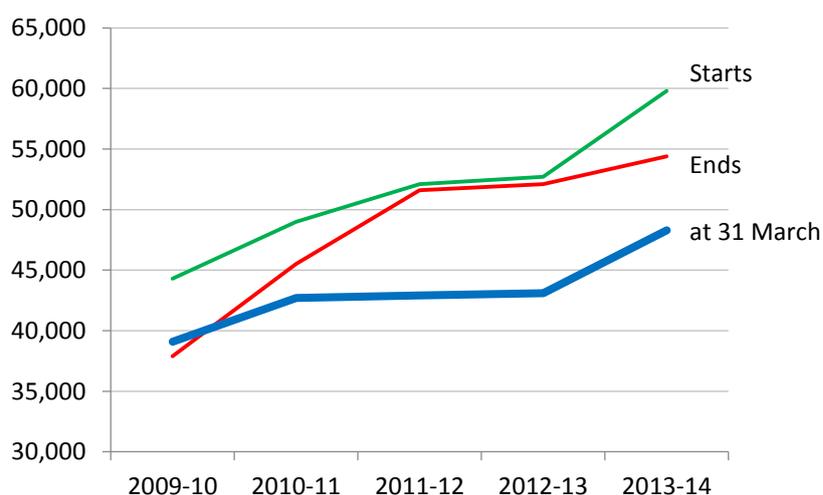
In 2013-14, 59,800 children became the subject of a plan - an increase of 13.5% from 52,700 in 2012-13. In comparison, the increase from 2011-12 to 2012-13 was 1.2%.

The number of children starting a child protection plan is largely driven by referrals. The number of children starting a protection plan as a proportion of referrals has remained around 8% or 9% for the last four years.

... and a similar increase in the number of children subject to a plan on the 31 March.

On 31 March 2014, 48,300 children were the subject of a plan - an increase of 12.1% from 43,100 on 31 March 2013. In comparison, the increase from 2011-12 to 2012-13 was 0.5%.

Figure 8: Children starting, ending and who were the subjects of a plan at the end of March each year increase
Children who were the subject of a child protection plan



Timescales for child protection plans

Children who are the subject of a plan should have their plan reviewed within the first three months, and then at least every six months.

More children at the end of the year had been on a plan for at least 3 months

33,100 children were the subject of a plan at the end of the year and had been the subject of a plan for at least three months, an increase from 30,900 last year

94.6 had their plans reviewed within the statutory timescales

This year, 94.6% (31,300) of plans at the end of the year had had reviews which were within the required timescales, compared to 96.2% (29,700) last year.

Ending child protection plans

A child should no longer be the subject of a 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 authority and the receiving authority will start a new plan if deemed necessary.

More plans came to an end

In 2013-14, 54,400 child protection plans came to an end – up 4.4% from 52,100 in 2012-13.

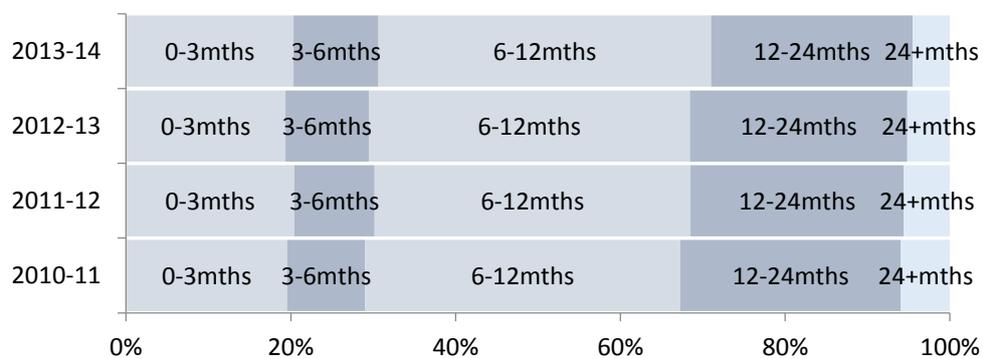
With slightly shorter durations

In 2013-14, 20.3% (11,100) of plans lasted 3 months or less, compared to 19.3% (10,100) last year.

And fewer had been the subject of a plan for over 2 years

4.5% (2,500) this year compared to 5.2% (2,700) last year.

Figure 9: Proportionately more plans have a shorter duration
 Percentage distribution of durations of child protection plans ending in year



7. List of tables

The following tables are available in spreadsheets on the department's statistics website: [Statistics: children in need and child protection](#)

National figures

- A1 Numbers of children in need, referrals, and assessments carried out by children's social care services, years ending 31 March, 2010 to 2014
- 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 2014
- A3 Numbers of children in need at 31 March 2014, by gender, age (at 31 March) and primary need at assessment, England
- A4 Numbers of children in need at 31 March 2014 by age (at 31 March), gender and ethnicity
- A5 Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2014, by age (at 31 March), gender, initial category of abuse and ethnicity
- A6 Factors identified at assessments completed in the year ending 31 March 2014

Local authority figures: Children in Need

- B1 Numbers of children in need. All children in need throughout the year, children starting, ending and at 31 March 2014, and rates per 10,000 children
- B2 Number of children in need at 31 March 2014, by disability
- B3 Numbers of children in need at 31 March 2014, by primary need at assessment
- B4 Number of children in need at 31 March 2014, by duration of open case
- B5 Numbers of children ceasing to be in need in the year ending 31 March 2014, by duration of episode of need
- B6 Numbers and percentages of children ceasing to be in need in the year ending 31 March 2014, by reason for case closure

Local authority figures: Referrals and assessments

- C1 Number of referrals in 2013-14 and rates per 10,000 children, number of referrals within 12 months of a previous referral and the number resulting in no further action

- C2 Numbers of initial assessments completed by children's social care services in 2013-14 by duration of initial assessment
- C3 Numbers of core assessments completed by children's social care services in 2013-14 by duration of core assessment
- C4 Numbers of continuous assessments completed by children's social care services in 2013-14 by duration of continuous assessment
- C5 Numbers of children who were subject to section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences, year ending 31 March 2014
- C6 Numbers of referrals completed by children's social care services by source of referral, year ending 31 March 2014

Local authority figures: Child protection plans

- D1 Numbers of children who were the subject of a child protection plan starting or ending during the year ending 31 March 2014, and at 31 March 2014, and rates per 10,000 children
- D2 Number of children who became the subject of a child protection plan during the year ending 31 March 2014, by initial and latest category of abuse
- D3 Number of children who became the subject of a child protection plan during the year ending 31 March 2014, who became the subject of a plan for a second or subsequent time
- D4 Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2014, by initial and latest category of abuse
- D5 Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2014, by length of time as the subject of a plan
- D6 Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2014, who had been the subject of a plan for at least three months and had reviews carried out within the required timescales
- D7 Number of children who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan during the

- year ending 31 March 2014, by length of time as the subject of a plan
- D8 Number 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
- D9 Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan during the year ending 31 March 2014 who were seen by the lead social worker in accordance with the timescales specified in the plan

List of tables (cont.)

When reviewing the tables, please note the following:

National Statistics	<p>The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.</p> <p>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; and are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.</p> <p>Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.</p>
Data confidence indicators and data quality and uses	<p>Data confidence indicators enable more sensible comparisons. Local authorities are allocated a 1 (low confidence in the data) to 3 (high confidence in the data). The quality and uses document gives more details. This can be found on the Statistics: children in need and child protection webpage.</p>
Rounding conventions and suppression	<p>The National Statistics Code of Practice requires that reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that all published or disseminated statistics produced by the Department for Education protect confidentiality.</p> <p>In most tables the figures are presented as whole numbers while in some tables, percentages are displayed to 1 decimal point. The rounding convention is as follows: any fractions of 0.5 and above will be rounded up, anything less than 0.5 will be rounded down. Where any number is shown as zero (0), the original figure submitted was zero (0).</p> <p>The following conventions have been used:</p> <p>‘.’ means not applicable</p> <p>‘..’ means not available</p> <p>‘x’ means a figure between 1 and 5 inclusive</p> <p>Please note that further secondary suppression may have been applied on zeroes or numbers above 5 to preserve confidentiality where primary suppression could be derived.</p>

8. Want more?

Previous publications	<p>Information on the numbers of children referred to and assessed by children's social services for the year ending March 2013.</p> <p>Statistics: children in need and child protection</p>
The children in need census	<p>The Department for Education has been collecting the Children in Need census from local authorities since 2008-09. The census collects information on all referrals to children's social care, assessments carried out upon those children and whether the children became the subject of a child protection plan.</p> <p>The first collection in 2008-09 covered the six month period from 1 October 2008 to 31 March 2009 – from 2009-10 the census was rolled out to cover the full 12 month period.</p> <p>Children in need census</p>
Looked-after children	<p>Statistics on children under local authority care at national and local authority level.</p> <p>Statistics: looked-after children</p>
Children's Social Workers	<p>Statistics on children's social workers employed by local authorities.</p> <p>Statistics: children's social care workforce</p>
Secure Children's Homes	<p>Statistics on secure children's homes, including the number of children they accommodate as of 31 March each year</p> <p>Statistics: secure children's homes</p>
Children's services on gov.uk	<p>A collection of published information sources on children's services.</p> <p>Children's social care on gov.uk</p>
Statistics for other UK countries	<p>The Scottish Government: Children's social work statistics</p> <p>Welsh Government: Social services statistics</p> <p>Children Order Statistics for Northern Ireland</p>

Got a query? Like to give feedback?

Any enquiries should be addressed to the following:

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