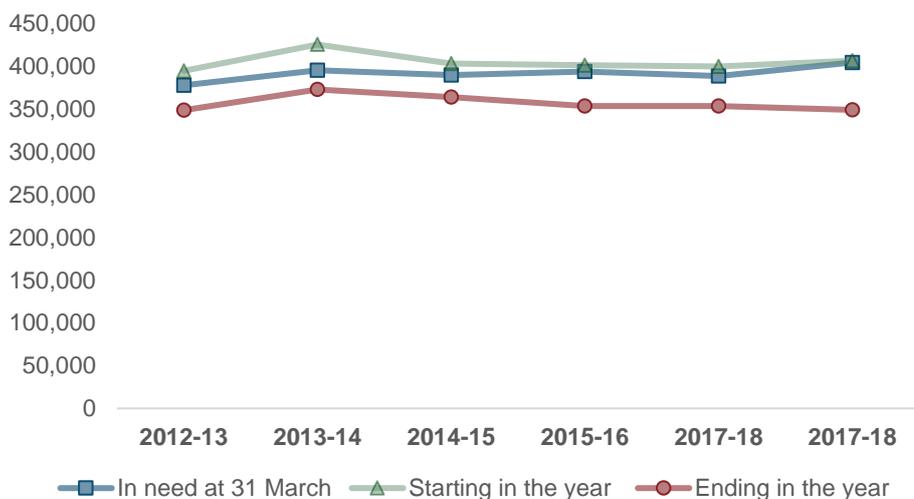




25 October 2018

The number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March, and number of episodes starting in the year have increased. Episodes ending in the year have decreased.

**Figure A: Number of children in need starting in the year, ending in the year, and at 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
England, 2013-2018

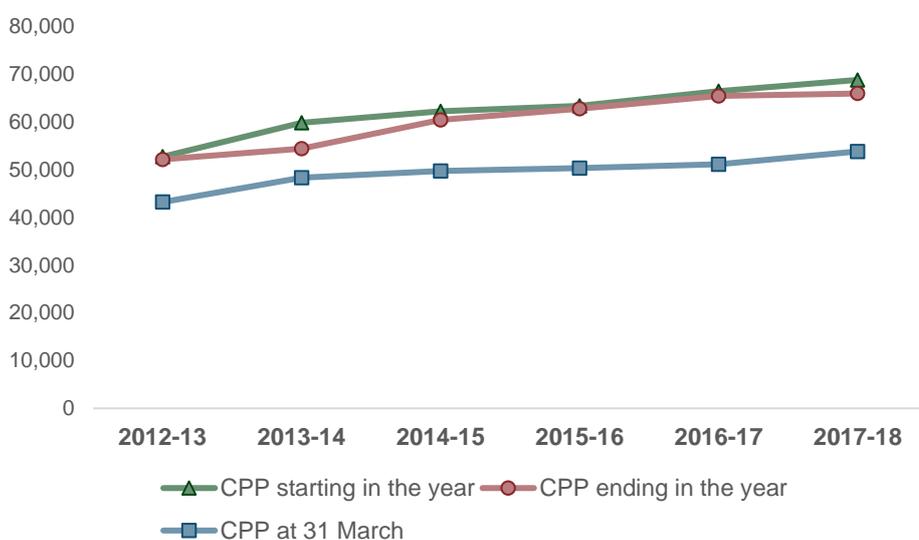


The number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 389,040 in 2017 to 404,710 in 2018, an increase of 4.0%.

The number of episodes of need starting in the year has risen by 1.7% from 400,110 to 406,770, whereas the number of episodes ending in the year fell by 1.3% from 353,860 to 349,130.

The number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31<sup>st</sup> March continues to follow the upward trend of recent years.

**Figure B: Number of child protection plans starting in the year, ending in the year and at 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
England, 2013-2018



The number of child protection plans at 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 51,080 in 2017 to 53,790 in 2018, an increase of 5.3%.

The number of child protection plans starting and ending during the year both continue to increase.

The number of child protection plans starting has increased by a larger percentage (3.6%), than those ending (0.8%).

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## About this release

This statistical publication provides the latest information on the number of referrals to children's social care, assessments carried out upon those children and whether the child became the subject of a child protection plan. All the figures included in this publication are taken from the children in need census. The DfE has been collecting the children in need census from local authorities for each full 12 month period since 2009-10.

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).

## In this publication

The following tables are included in the statistical publication:

- National and local authority tables (Excel .xls)
- Underlying data (open format .csv and metadata .txt)

A data quality and uses document and methodology document accompany this statistical publication. These documents provide further information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data, including how it is validated and processed.

## Feedback

We are changing how our releases look and welcome feedback on any aspect of this document at [CIN.STATS@education.gov.uk](mailto:CIN.STATS@education.gov.uk).

# 1. Children in need (Tables A1, A3, B1, B2, B4)

## Methodology for counting the number of children in need episodes

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 2017, which ends in August 2017, and the same child begins another episode of need in December 2017 and is still in need on the 31 March 2018, the child is counted as two starts, one end and one count at the 31 March 2018. Therefore, the number of children in need these episodes relate to (i.e. a de-duplicated child count) will accompany all episode level measures. 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](#)

## Changes to the children in need population time series

We have improved the way that we deal with cases that remain open across different census years within the current publication and have recalculated the full time series of data consistently. Please see the dedicated section in the data quality and uses document, entitled 'Children in need population figure time series changes', which covers these changes in detail.

### **The definition of what is counted as a child in need remains unchanged, and the number of episodes of need at the 31 March is largely unaffected by the changes.**

The changes have impacted on the "episodes ending in year" and "episodes at any point in year" metrics, and in particular more recent years. The number of episodes open at 'any point' in the year series previously reported slight year on year decreases since 2014-15. In the revised time series these decreases are larger than previously reported. For episodes 'ending' during the year the trend between 2013-14 and 2014-15 has reversed from an increase of 1.7%, to a decrease, of 2.4%. For the following years the trend remains in the same direction.

**Figure C: Number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
England, 2013-2018

Year ending 31 March	Number of children in need at 31 <sup>st</sup> March	Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years
2013	378,030	330.9
2014	395,480	343.7
2015	390,130	336.6
2016	393,910	337.3
2017	389,040	330.1
2018	404,710	341.0

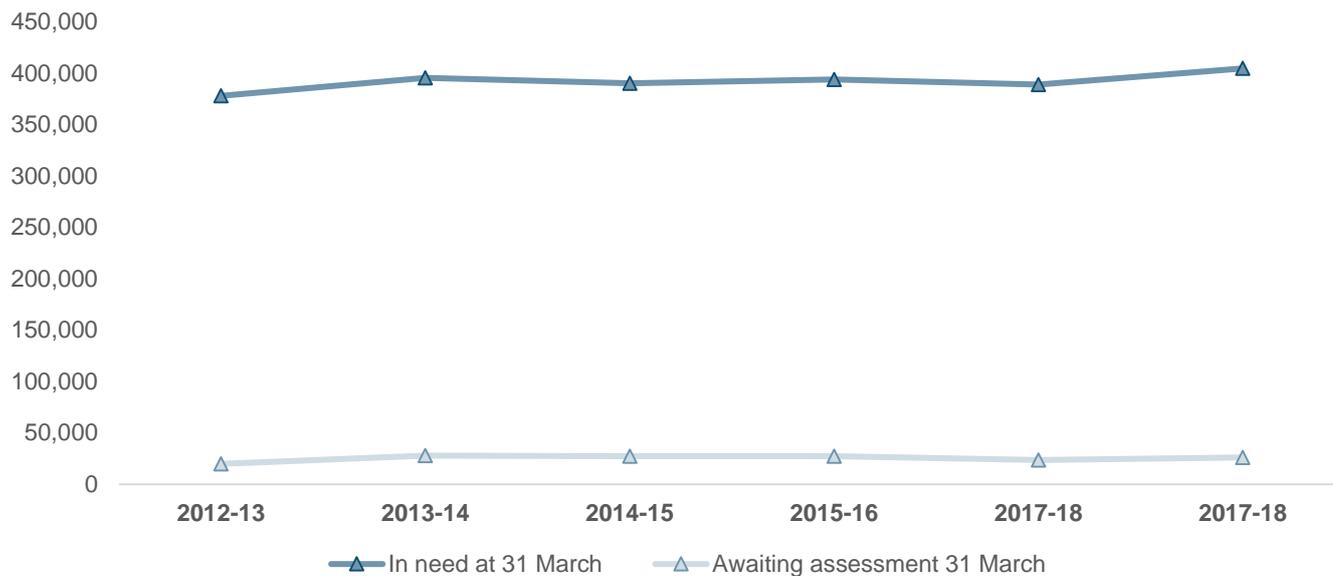
Source: Children in need census

The number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 389,040 in 2017 to 404,710 in 2018, an increase of 4.0%. There was also a increase in the rate of children in need per 10,000 in the population, from 330.1 in 2017 to 341.0 in 2018. There is considerable variability in the rate of children in need per 10,000 children aged under 18 years in the population at a local authority level (see main tables or underlying data).

The number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March has fluctuated over the last six years. At its lowest, it was 378,030 in 2013, and has risen to it's highest level in the current year at 404,710. However, the rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years in the population was at it's highest in 2014.

For the first time this year the number of children in need who were awaiting assessment at 31 March has also been presented. As at 31 March this year 26,130 (6.5%) children were waiting to undergo an assessment by children's services. While they are counted as children in need in this publication, these cases may go on to be assessed 'not in need', and would therefore be no longer be counted as a 'child in need'. The number of children awaiting assessment at 31 March has remained relatively stable over the last six years.

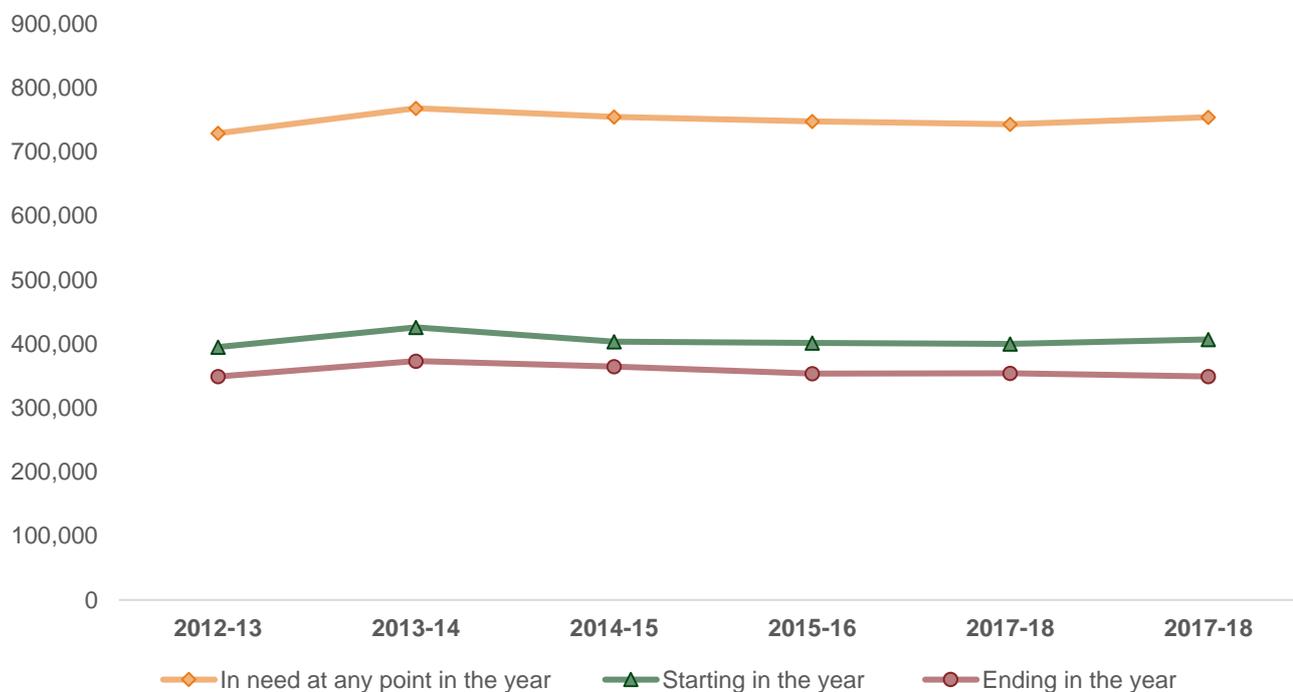
**Figure D: Number of children in need, and number of children awaiting assessment at 31 March 2018**  
England, 2013-2018



The number of children in need episodes starting in the year has increased, from 400,110 in 2017 to 406,770 in 2018, an increase of 1.7%. The number of episodes ending in the year has decreased from 353,860 in 2017, to 349,130 in 2018, a decrease of 1.3%.

The increase in episodes starting in the year, coupled with the decrease in episodes ending in the year contributes to the rise in the number of children in need at 31 March.

**Figure E: Number of children in need episodes starting and ending in the year, in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March, and number in need at any point in the year**  
England, 2013-2018



Of the episodes ending in the year, 22.4% lasted a year or more in 2018, compared to 22.8% in 2017.

**Figure F: Percentage of episodes ending in year by duration, in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March England, 2013-2018**

Duration	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
6 months or less	68.5	66.4	62.9	62.6	61.5	61.7
6 to 12 months	12.4	13.4	14.8	15.1	15.7	15.9
1 year or more	19.2	20.3	22.3	22.3	22.8	22.4

Source: Children in need census

### Characteristics of children in need

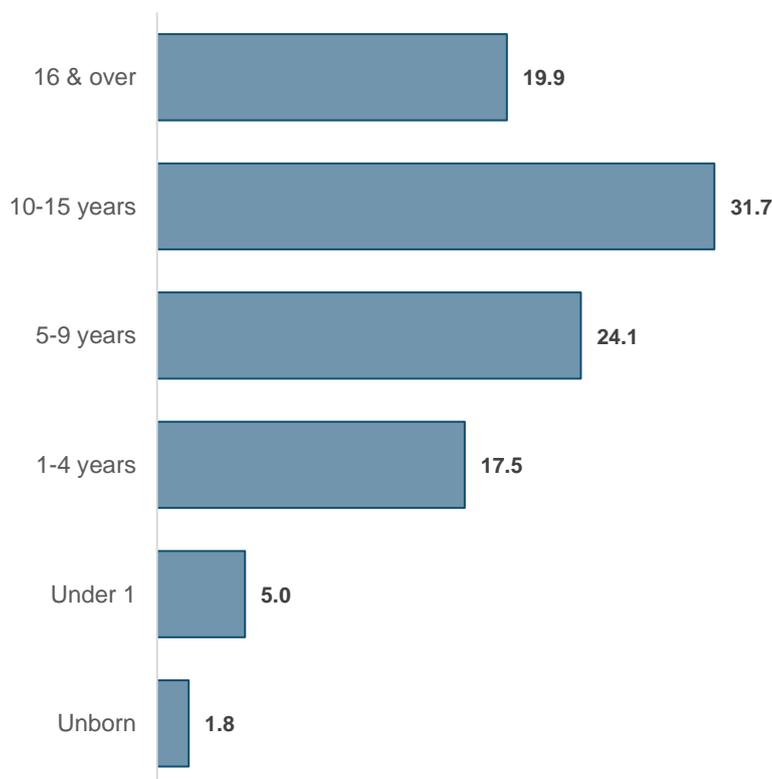
The gender split of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 was 53.0% male, and 45.0% female, with 2.0% being unborn or of unknown gender.

The age split of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 remains broadly similar to previous years, with the largest age group being those aged 10-15 years, who account for 31.7% of children in need. Children aged under 5 account for 22.5%.

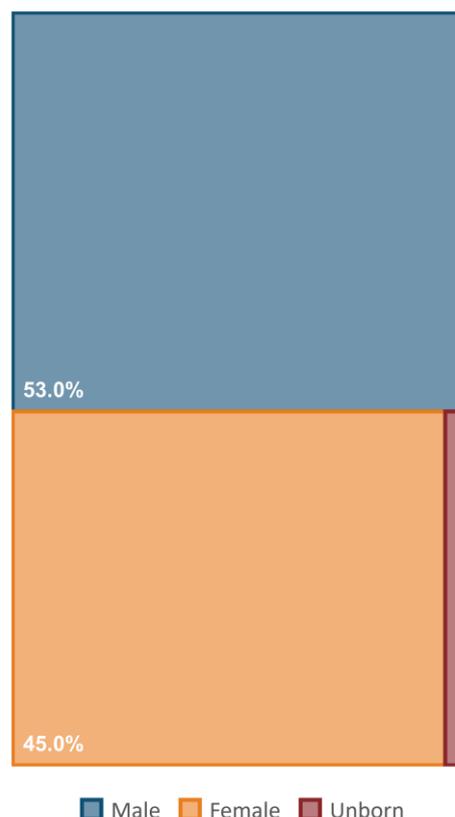
Of the children in need whose ethnicity is known, 72.6% were white, followed by 8.6% that were black or black British, and 8.4% who were of a mixed ethnic background.

The percentage of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March with a disability recorded has decreased this year from 12.9% in 2017 to 12.3% in 2018. This percentage has fluctuated over the last six years, however there has been an overall decrease, from 13.8% in 2013.

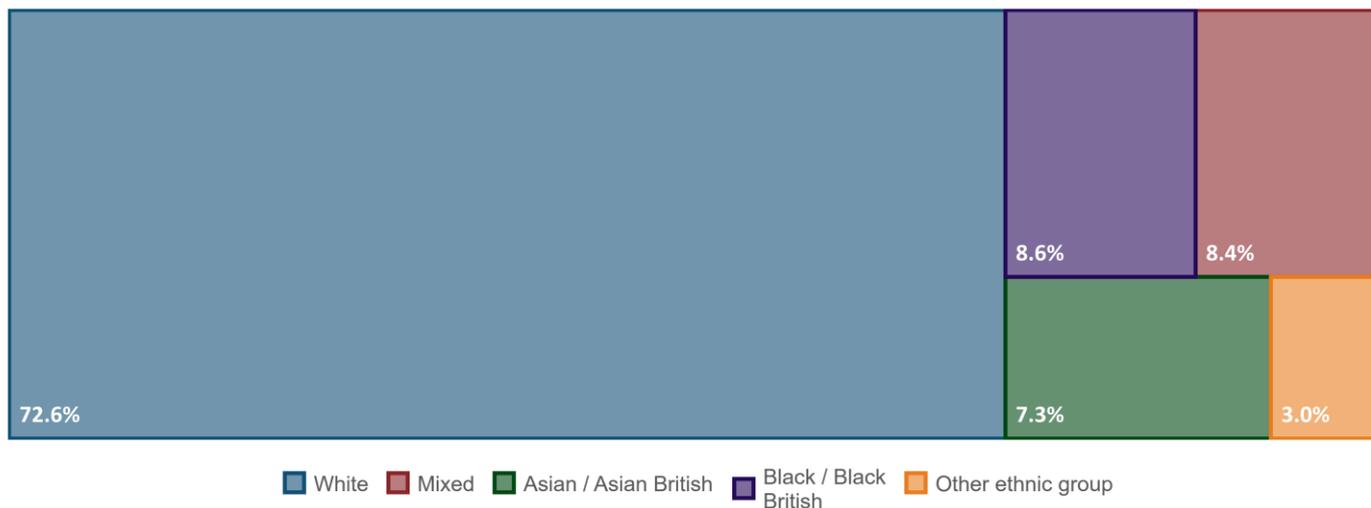
**Figure G: Percentage of children in need at 31 March 2018 by age group**  
England, 2018



**Figure H: Percentage of children in need at 31 March by gender**  
England, 2018



**Figure I: Percentage of children in need at 31 March 2018 by ethnicity**  
England, 2018



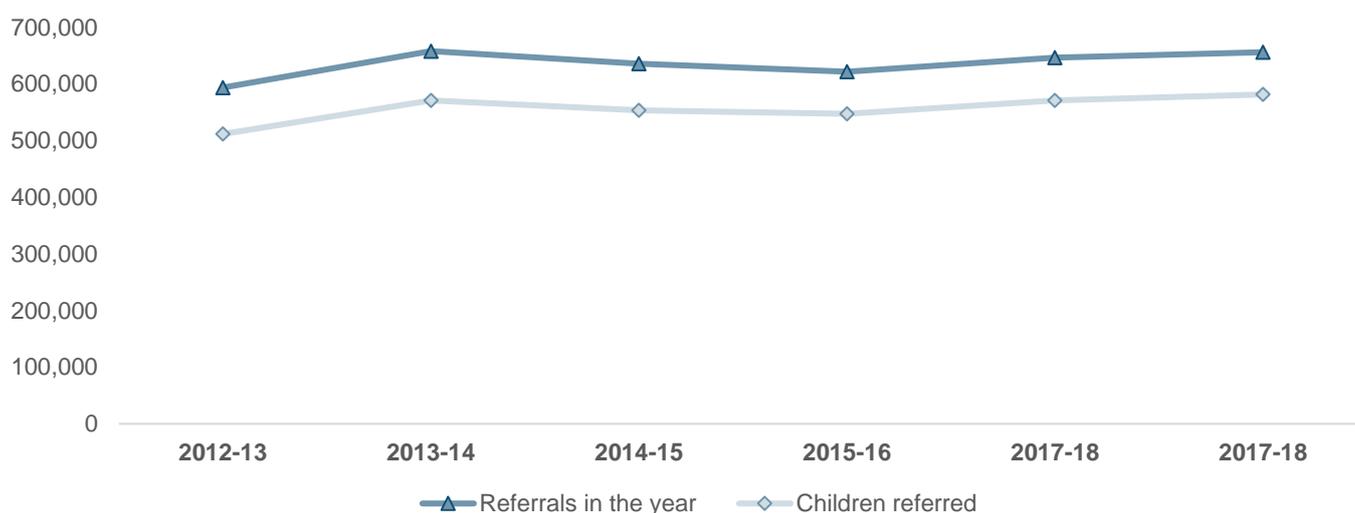
## 2. Referrals (Tables A1, C1, C5)

### Definition: referral and re-referral

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 assessment of the child’s need; the provision of information or advice; referral to another agency; or no further action. If a child is referred more than once in the year then each referral is counted in the figures. New information relating to children who are already on an open episode of need is not counted as a referral.

A **re-referral** is where a child has been referred within 12 months of a previous referral. Further details on how these figures are calculated can be found in the accompanying methodology document found alongside this publication at: [Statistics: children in need and child protection](#).

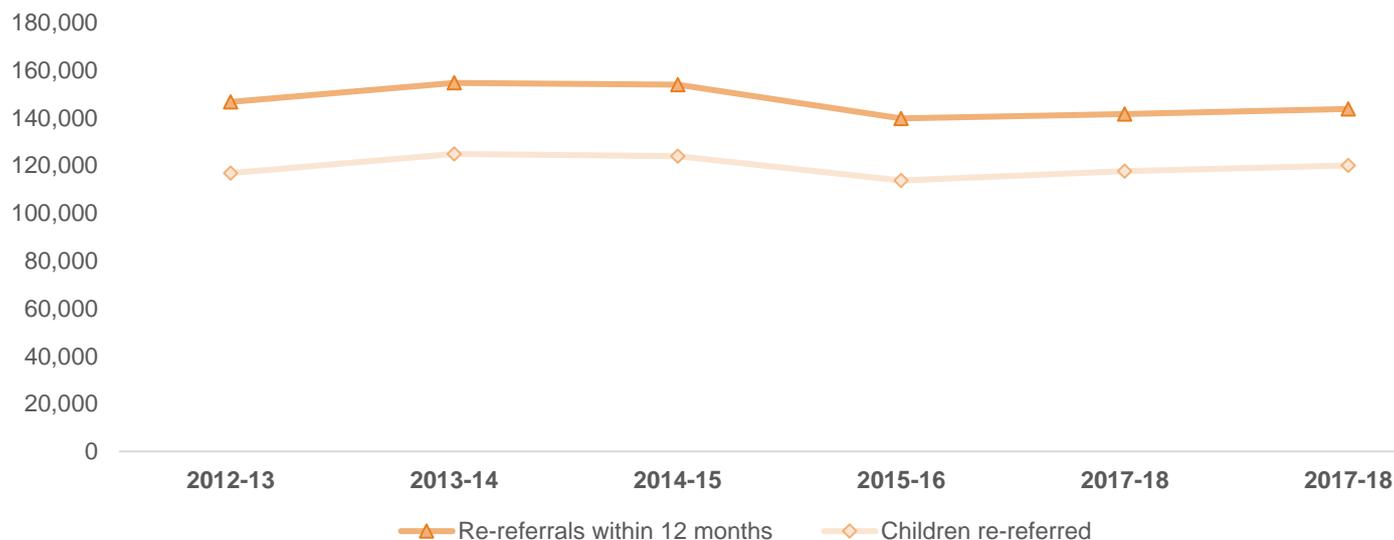
**Figure J: Number of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
England, 2013-2018



The number of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 646,120 in 2017 to 655,630 in 2018, an increase of 1.5%.

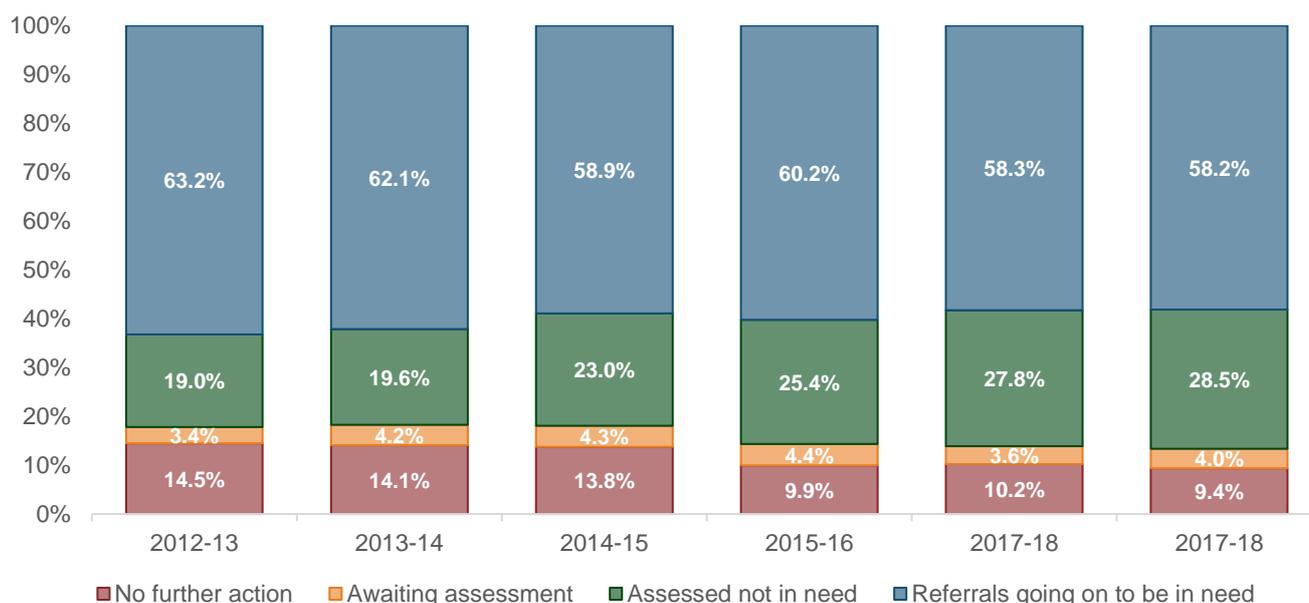
The number of children who were the subjects of these referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 was 581,280, this equates to a an average of 1.13 referrals per child. This rate has gradually decreased since 2013 when it was 1.16 referrals per child.

**Figure K: Number of referrals within 12 months of a previous referral in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
England, 2013-2018



The percentage of all referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that were within 12 months of a previous referral has remained at 21.9% in 2018.

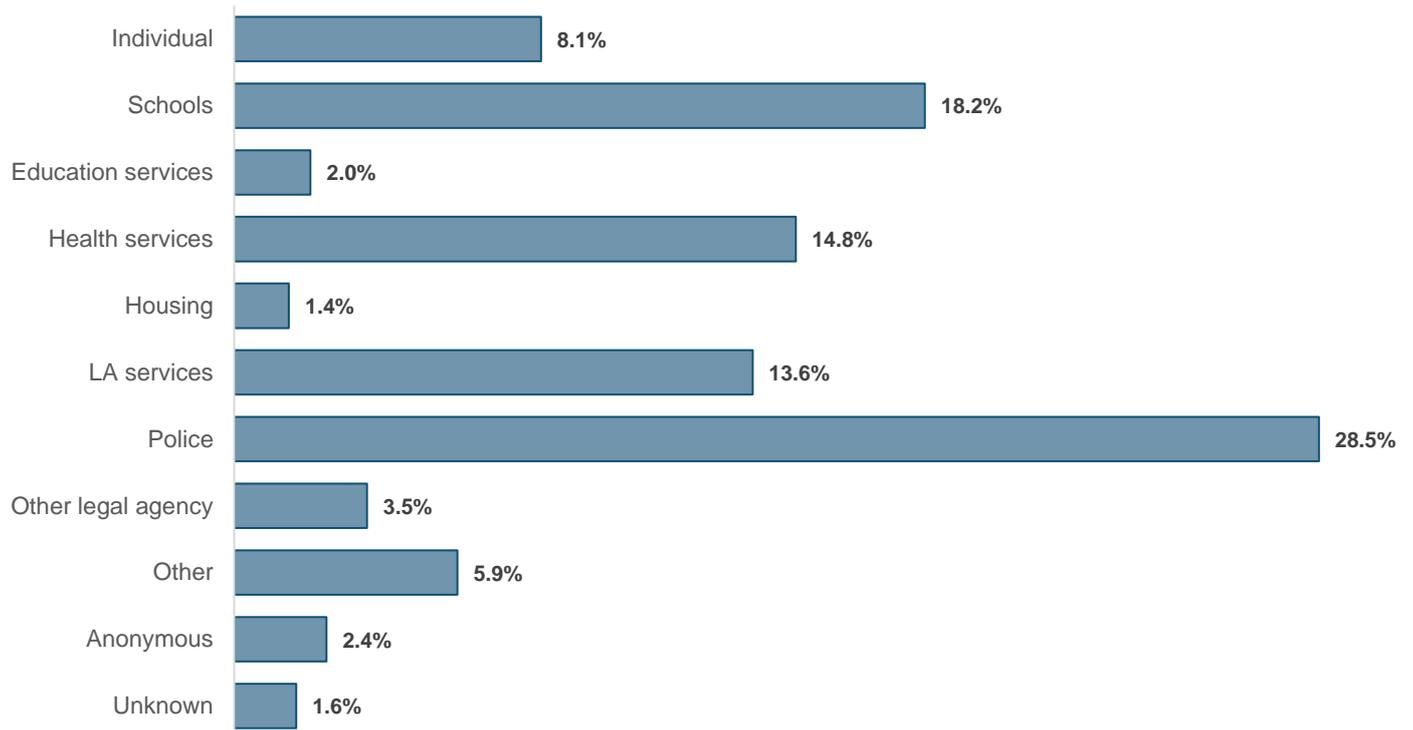
**Figure L: Number of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March, number awaiting assessment, number that went on to be assessed 'not in need', and number that had no further action.**  
England, 2013-2018



The percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that resulted in no further action after initial consideration has decreased, from 10.2% in 2017 to 9.4% in 2018, a decrease of 0.8 percentage points (ppts).

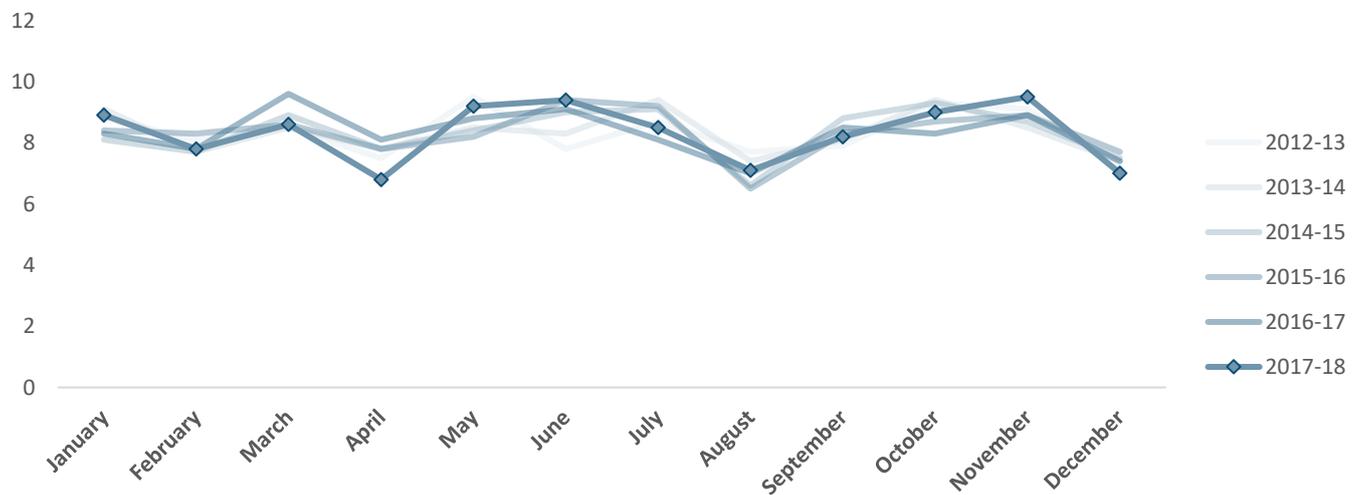
The percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that were assessed as not in need has increased, from 27.8% in 2017 to 28.5% in 2018, an increase of 0.7 ppts. However the proportion of referrals that are closed with no further action, or assessed not in need, has remained similar to last year at 37.9%.

**Figure M: Percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March by source of referral**  
England, 2018



The majority of referrals come from the police – this year 28.5% of referrals were from the police, followed by schools with 18.2%, and health services with 14.8%.

**Figure N: Percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March by month of referral**  
England, 2013-2018



Across the course of the year referrals follow a seasonal pattern, with referrals peaking in June (9.4%) and November (9.5%), and dipping in April (6.8%), August (7.1%) and December (7.0%).

The dips in referral numbers in April, August and December coincide with major holiday periods throughout the year, and the peaks tend to precede the summer and end of year holidays.

### 3. Assessments (Tables A1, B3, C2, C3)

#### Past 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.

The number of assessments completed in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 606,910 in 2017 to 631,090 in 2018, an increase of 4.0%. The average (median) duration of assessment in 2018 was 31 working days, an increase of 2 working days from 2017.

As there have been major changes to the process of carrying out assessments, comparisons to numbers prior to 2015 are not recommended.

#### Primary need identified at assessment (Table B3)

##### Methodology for identifying primary need at assessment

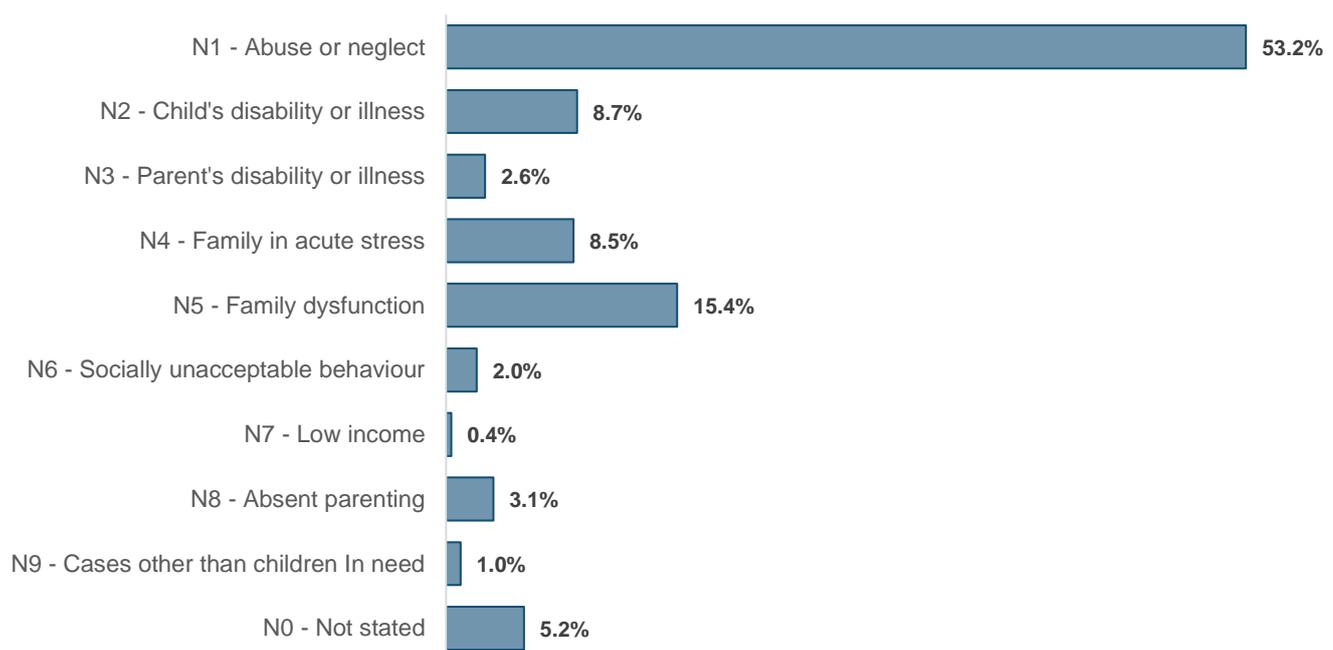
When a child is assessed following a referral, the practitioner determines the child's primary need at this first assessment. Only one need can be reported here and the list of primary needs is hierarchical, so in cases where multiple needs are identified, the need highest in the list is reported in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

The categories are designed only to identify what kinds of pressures are placed on children's social services. The order of the categories relate to the specificity of the description and not necessarily importance. However, the order is fixed so that there is consistency.

This year 482,750 of 631,090 (76.5%) of assessments had factors identified that contributed to the child being in need.

Abuse or neglect was the most common primary need at assessment for children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018. This year 53.2% of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March had 'abuse or neglect' as their primary need identified at assessment, followed by family dysfunction with 15.4%, and child's disability or illness at 8.7%.

**Figure O: Percentage of children in need at 31 March 2018, by primary need at assessment**  
England, 2018



## Factors identified at the end of assessment (Table C3)

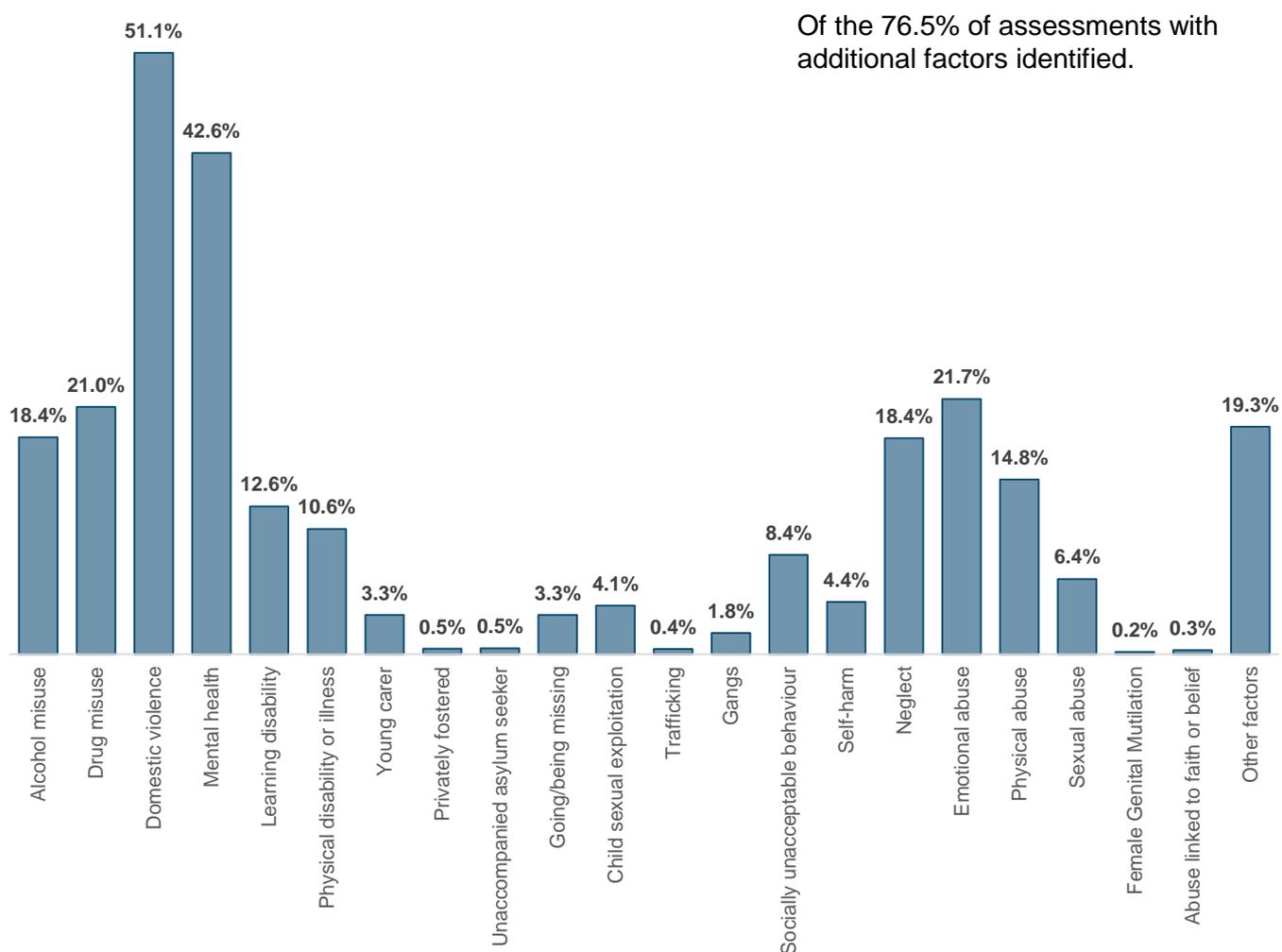
### Methodology for identifying need at end of assessment

Factors identified at the end of assessment are in addition to the primary need identified at assessment and were collected and reported for the first time three years ago.

If more than one factor has been identified at assessment, each can be reported within the census. Most children will have more than one factor identified and reported.

The quality of the data on factors identified at assessment may be less robust than other data returned through the collection. We are reliant on the data as it is provided by local authorities, and due to its nature this information can be volatile and may be subjective due to being based on the opinion of the social worker assessing the case. Care should be taken when drawing comparisons using this information, in particular at a local level.

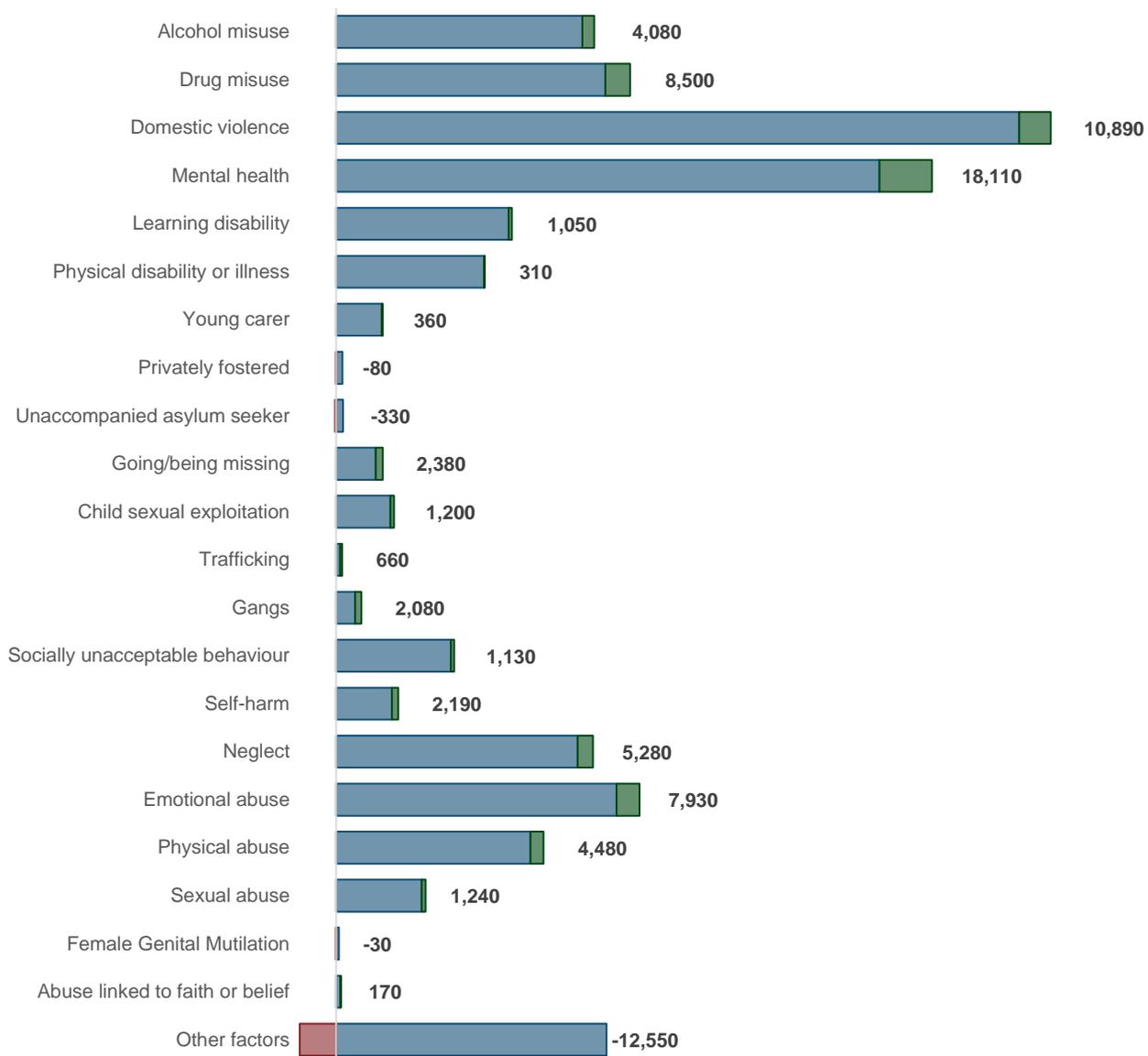
**Figure P: Percentage of assessments with factors identified, by factors identified at the end of assessment**  
England, 2018



This year 482,750 of 631,090 (76.5%) of assessments had factors identified that contributed to the child being in need. This is a 2.2% increase from last year when there were 472,440 assessment with factors identified.

Domestic violence, which includes that aimed at children or other adults in the household, was the most common factor identified at end of assessment for children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 – this year 51.1% of assessments had domestic violence as a factor identified, followed by mental health at 42.6%, which incorporates mental health of the child or other adults in the family/household.

**Figure Q: Year on year change in numbers of factors identified at the end of assessment between 31 March 2017 and 31 March 2018**  
England, 2017-2018



Notes: Number indicates change in total number of assessments in which a factor was identified from 2017.

Since 2017 most assessment factors have risen in number. In terms of numbers of assessments, the biggest increases were for mental health, and domestic violence. Some less common categories have seen larger increases in percentage terms, though they remain relatively uncommon overall - particularly 'trafficking' and 'gangs'.

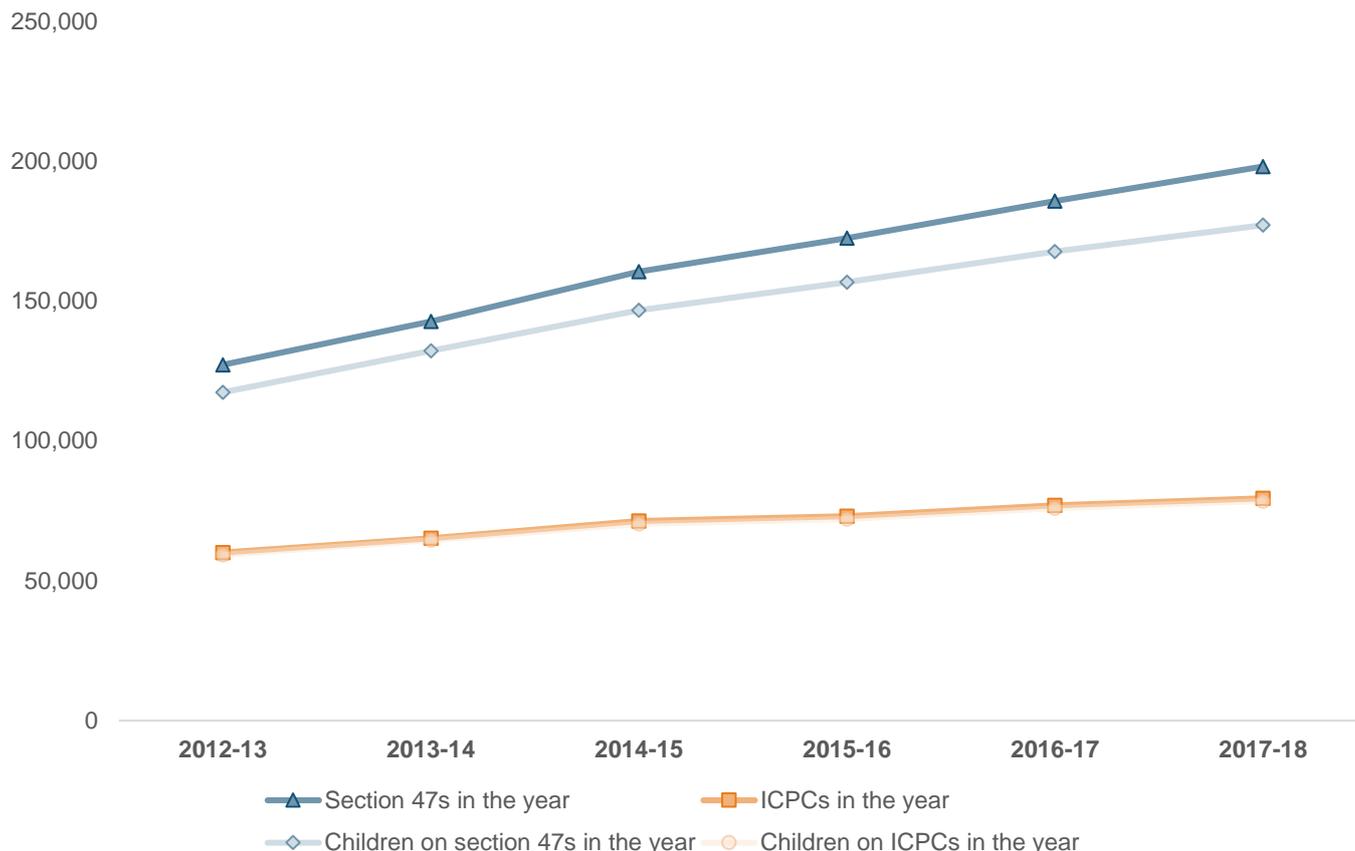
## 4. Section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences (Table A2)

### Section 47 enquiry and initial child protection conference

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.

**Figure R: Number of section 47 enquiries starting in the year and number of initial stage child protection conferences which took place in the year**

England, 2013-2018



The number of section 47 enquiries within the year has increased, from 185,680 in 2017 to 198,090 in 2018, an increase of 6.7%.

The number of children who were the subject of these section 47 enquiries during the year was 177,110, this equates to an average of 1.12 Section 47s per child. This figure has been increasing consistently since 2013 when it was 1.08 Section 47s per child, and indicates that some children are subject to multiple Section 47 enquiries.

There was also an increase in the number of initial stage child protection conferences which took place in the year, from 76,930 in 2017 to 79,470 in 2018, an increase of 3.3%. The number of children who were subject to these initial stage child protection conferences during the year was 78,490, equating to a mean of 1.01 ICPCs to each child, this has remained stable since 2013.

Whilst the number of referrals which go on to a Section 47 has increased, the proportion of Section 47s that lead to an initial child protection conference was 40.1% in 2018. This has been steadily decreasing over time from 47.2% in 2013.

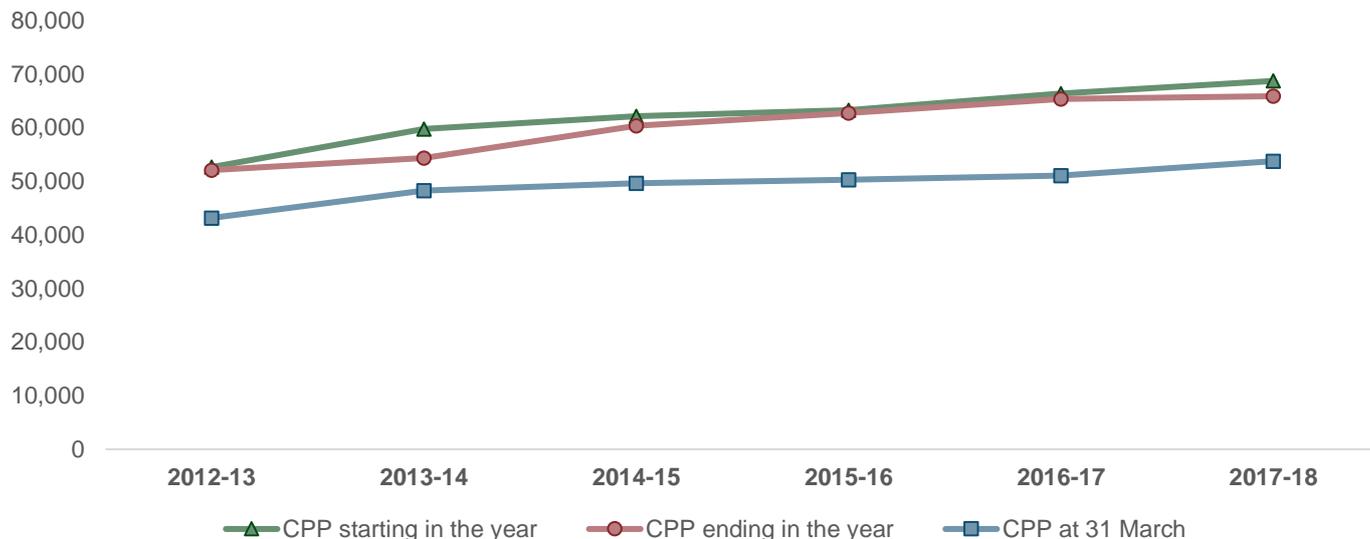
## 5. Child protection plans (Tables A2, A5, D4)

### Child protection plan

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. Plans should be reviewed within the first three months, and then at least every six months.

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 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.

**Figure S: Number of child protection plans starting in the year, ending in the year and at 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
England, 2013-2018



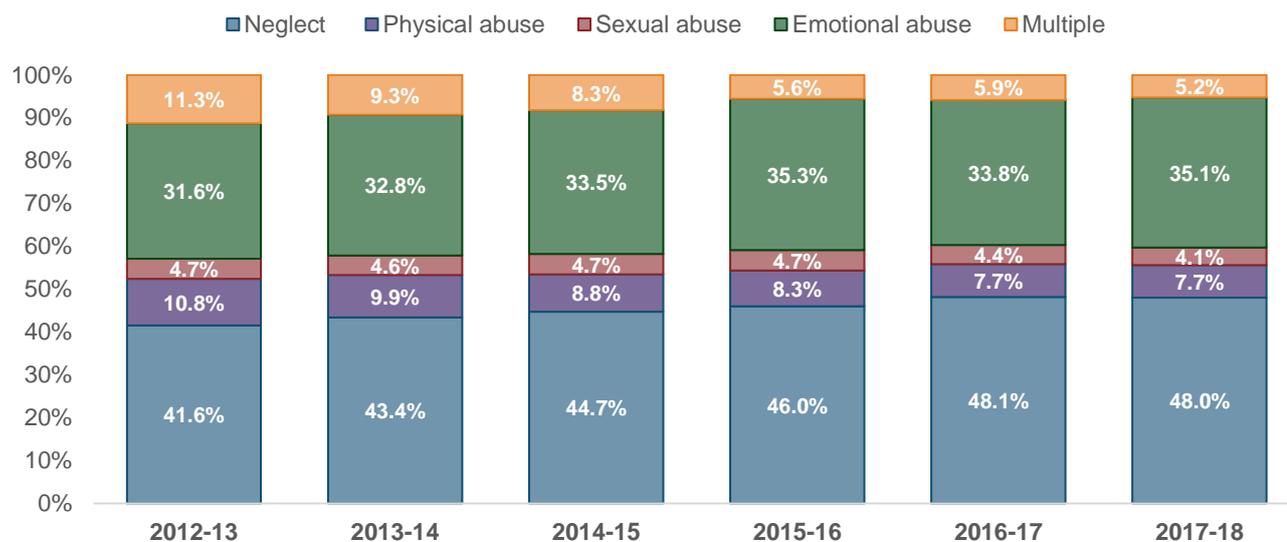
The number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 51,080 in 2017 to 53,790 in 2018, an increase of 5.3%.

The number of child protection plans starting during the year has increased from 66,410 in 2017 to 68,770 in 2018, an increase of 3.6%. The number of children starting these child protection plans in 2018 was 68,590.

The number of child protection plans ending during the year was 65,920 in 2018, this increased slightly from last years figure of 65,420, an increase of 0.8%. The number of children ending a child protection plan in 2018 was 65,720, an increase of 0.8%.

The percentage of children who had been the subject of a child protection plan for longer than three months at 31<sup>st</sup> March, and who had reviews carried out within the required timescales has decreased this year, from 92.1% in 2017 to 90.5% in 2018.

**Figure T: Percentage of children in need at 31 March 2018, by initial category of abuse**  
England, 2013-2018



Neglect was the most common initial category of abuse for children in need who were the subject of a child protection plan (48.0% in 2017-18), followed by emotional abuse (35.1%).

## 6. Accompanying tables

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

### National tables

Table A1:	Number of children in need, episodes of need, referrals and assessments completed by children's social care services, in the year ending 31 March 2018
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, in the year ending 31 March 2018
Table A3:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2018, by gender, age (at 31 March) and primary need
Table A4:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2018, by age (at 31 March), gender and ethnicity
Table A5:	Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2018, by age (at 31 March), gender, initial category of abuse and ethnicity
Table A6:	Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March for the years 2013 to 2018, by initial category of abuse

### Local authority figures: children in need

Table B1:	All children in need episodes at any point during the year, episodes starting, episodes ending, and children in need at 31 March 2018, and rates per 10,000 children, by local authority
Table B2:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2018, by local authority and disability
Table B3:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2018, by local authority and primary need
Table B4:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2018, by local authority and duration of open case
Table B5:	Numbers of episodes of need ending in the year to 31 March 2018, by local authority and duration of episode of need.
Table B6:	Numbers of episodes of need ending in the year to 31 March 2018, by local authority and reason for case closure.

### Local authority figures: referrals and assessments

Table C1:	Number of referrals, number which resulted in no further action, number which were assessed and resulted in no further action, number of children referred, and the number where the referral was within 12 months of a previous referral in the year ending 31 March 2018, by local authority.
Table C2:	Number of assessments completed by children's social care services, in the year ending 31 March 2018, by local authority and duration of assessment
Table C3:	Number of episodes with assessment factor information, in the year ending 31 March 2018, by local authority and factors identified at the end of assessment
Table C4:	Number of section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences in the year ending 31 March 2018, by local authority
Table C5:	Number of referrals completed by children's social care services, in the year ending 31 March 2018, by local authority and source of referral
Table C6:	Table C6: Number of referrals completed by children's social care services, in the year ending 31 March 2018, by local authority and month of the year

### Local authority figures: children who were the subject of a child protection plan

Table D1:	Number of child protection plans starting during the year ending 31 March 2018, by local authority, initial and latest category of abuse
Table D2:	Number of children who became the subject of a child protection plan, in the year ending 31 March 2018, by local authority, initial and latest category of abuse

- Table D3: Number of child protection plans starting in the year ending 31 March 2018 by local authority, and child protection plans which are a second or subsequent plan.
- Table D4: Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2018, by local authority, initial and latest category of abuse
- Table D5: Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2018, by local authority and length of time as the subject of a plan
- Table D6: Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2018, by local authority and who had been on a plan for at least three months and had reviews carried out within the required timescales
- Table D7: Number of child protection plans ending, during year ending 31 March 2018, by local authority and length of time as the subject of a child protection plan.
- Table D8: Number of child protection plans ending during the first six months of the year ending 31 March 2018, by local authority and the length of time the child remained in need.

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

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Data quality and uses	The quality and uses document gives more details, this can be found on the <a href="#">Statistics: children in need and child protection</a> webpage.
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Rounding conventions and suppression	<p>The Code of Practice for Statistics 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, rates and 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>
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## 7. Further information is available

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Previous publications	Information on the number of referrals to children’s social care, assessments carried out upon those children and whether the child became the subject of a child protection plan: <a href="#">Statistics: children in need and child protection</a>
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; however, from 2009-10 the census was rolled out to cover the full 12 month period: <a href="#">Children in need census</a>
Looked-after children	Statistics on children under local authority care at national and local authority level: <a href="#">Statistics: children looked-after</a>
Children’s social workers	Statistics on children’s social care workers employed by local authorities: <a href="#">Statistics: children's social care workforce</a>
Ofsted statistics	Ofsted publish inspection outcomes for local authority children’s services and children’s social care providers in England: <a href="#">Children's social care statistics</a>
Statistics for other UK countries	<a href="#">The Scottish Government: Children’s social work statistics</a> <a href="#">Welsh Government: Social services statistics</a> <a href="#">Children’s services statistics for Northern Ireland</a>

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## 8. National Statistics

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, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as Official 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.

## 9. Technical information

A data quality and uses and methodology document accompany this statistical publication. These documents provide further information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data, including how it is validated and processed.

## 10. Get in touch

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# Department for Education

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Reference: [Characteristics of children in need: 2017 to 2018]



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