

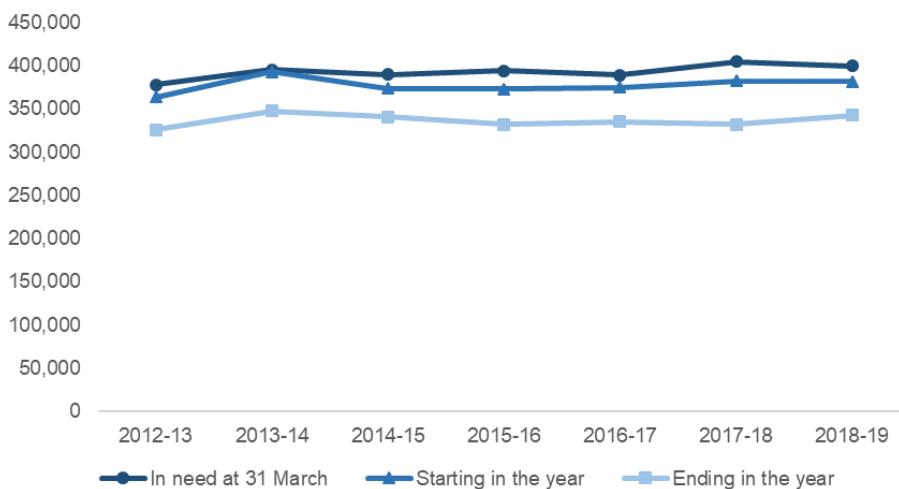


31 October 2019

The number of children in need at 31st March decreased very slightly from 2018 to 2019. Episode starts are unchanged, but more have ended compared to last year.

Figure A: Number of children in need at 31st March and children starting and ending an episode of need in the year ending 31st March

England, 2013 to 2019



There were 399,500 children in need at 31st March 2019, a decrease of 1% from 2018.

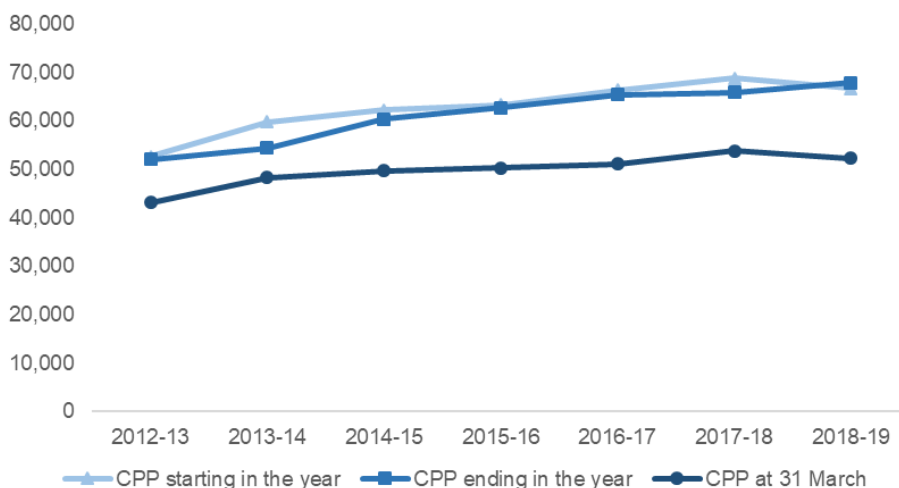
This decrease may in part be explained by a rise of 3%, to 343,000, in the number of children that ended an episode of need compared to last year.

The number of children that started an episode of need in 2018-19 was relatively unchanged compared to last year at 381,900.

There are fewer children on child protection plans (CPP) in 2019 compared to 2018. CPP starts have decreased and CPP ends increased since last year.

Figure B: Number of child protection plans starting and ending in the year and at 31st March

England, 2013 to 2019



At 31st March 2019 there were 52,300 children subject to a child protection plan, a decrease of 3% from 2018.

The number of child protection plans ending during the year continued to increase, up 3% to 67,900.

However, the number of child protection plans starting during the year fell by 3% to 66,700.

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About this release

This statistical publication provides the latest information on children referred to children's social care, assessments carried out upon those children and whether a child became the subject of a child protection plan.

All figures in this publication are derived from information collected in the children in need census. The Department for Education 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 methodology document accompanies this statistical publication. The document provides 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.

A quality document accompanies this statistical publication. The document details the key users and uses of the statistics, and highlights any known data quality issues and concerns.

Feedback

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

1. Children in need (Tables A1, A3, A7, B1, B2, B4)

Definition of children in need

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.

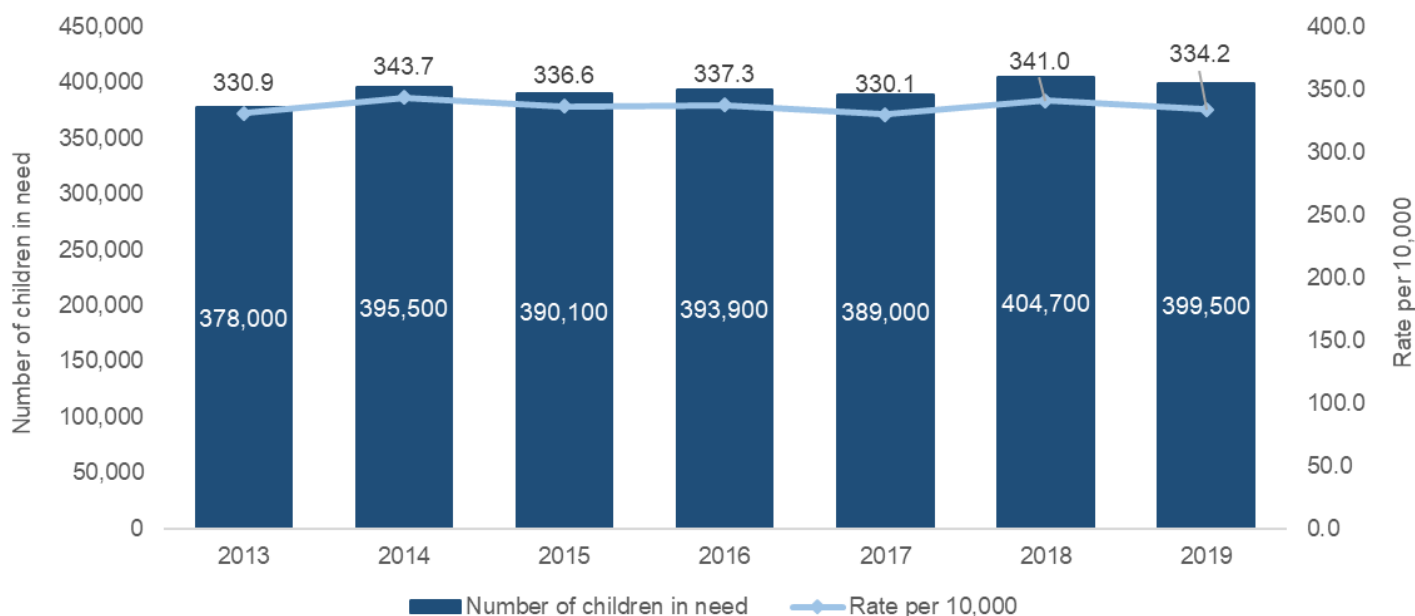
Method for counting the number of children in need episodes

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 began an episode of need in May 2018 which ended in August 2018 and the same child began another episode of need in December 2018 and was still in need at 31st March 2019, this would count as two starts, one end and one count at 31st March 2019. The number of children in need these episodes relate to (a de-duplicated child count) will accompany all episode-level measures. A more detailed explanation of this method is provided in the accompanying methodology document.

There were 399,500 children in need at 31st March 2019, a slight decrease of 1% from 2018. The rate of children in need per 10,000 of the population of children under 18 also decreased slightly, down to 334.2 in 2019 from 341.0 last year.

Both the number and rate of children in need at 31st March have fluctuated over the last seven years, with no long term increasing or decreasing trend.

Figure C: Number of children in need at 31st March and rate per 10,000 children aged under 18
England, 2013 to 2019



The number of children waiting to undergo an assessment by children’s services or who did not require an assessment at 31st March 2019 decreased to 25,100, from 26,100 last year. However, the percentage of children awaiting assessment or not requiring assessment at 31st March has remained relatively stable over the last six years and is unchanged at 6% over the last three years.

Although children waiting to undergo an assessment are counted as children in need in this publication, it should be noted that they may go on to be assessed as not in need and would therefore be no longer be counted as a child in need. Furthermore, some children may not require an assessment; this may include cases where the child has transferred in to the local authority and an assessment has already been completed, family court related work, adoption support, short breaks and cancelled episodes.

Figure D: Number of children in need and children awaiting, or not requiring an assessment at 31 March 2019

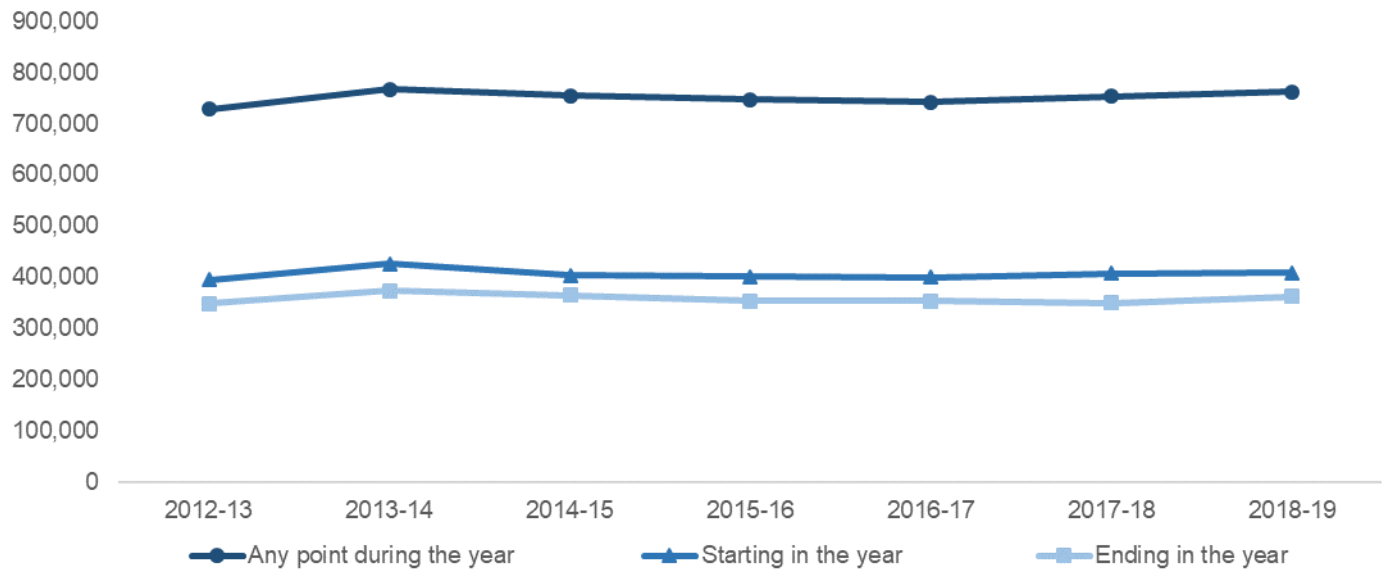
England, 2013 to 2019

Year ending 31 st March	Number of children in need at 31 st March	Number of children in need at 31 st March awaiting or not requiring an assessment	Percentage of children in need at 31 st March awaiting or not requiring an assessment
2013	378,000	19,900	5%
2014	395,500	27,900	7%
2015	390,100	27,500	7%
2016	393,900	27,400	7%
2017	389,000	23,500	6%
2018	404,700	26,100	6%
2019	399,500	25,100	6%

Source: Children in need census

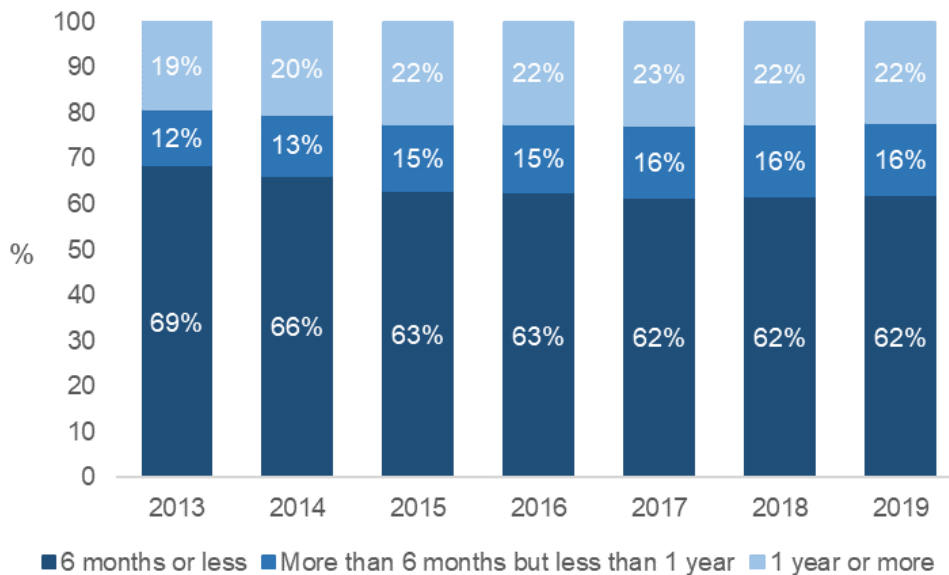
The number of children in need episodes starting in the year increased slightly to 408,900 in 2018-19. The increase in the number of episodes ending during 2018-19 was more noticeable, however, and was up by 4% to 362,800. There were 762,300 of episodes of need at any point during 2018-19, an increase of 1% from last year.

Figure E: Number of children in need episodes at any point during the year and starting and ending during the year
 England, 2013 to 2019



In the year ending 31st March 2019, 62% episodes of need ending in the year lasted 6 months or less, 16% lasted more than 6 months but less than a year and 22% lasted more than a year. The duration of the episodes ending in the year shows a similar pattern to previous years and is relatively unchanged in the last five years.

Figure F: Percentage of episodes ending during the year by duration
 England, 2013 to 2019

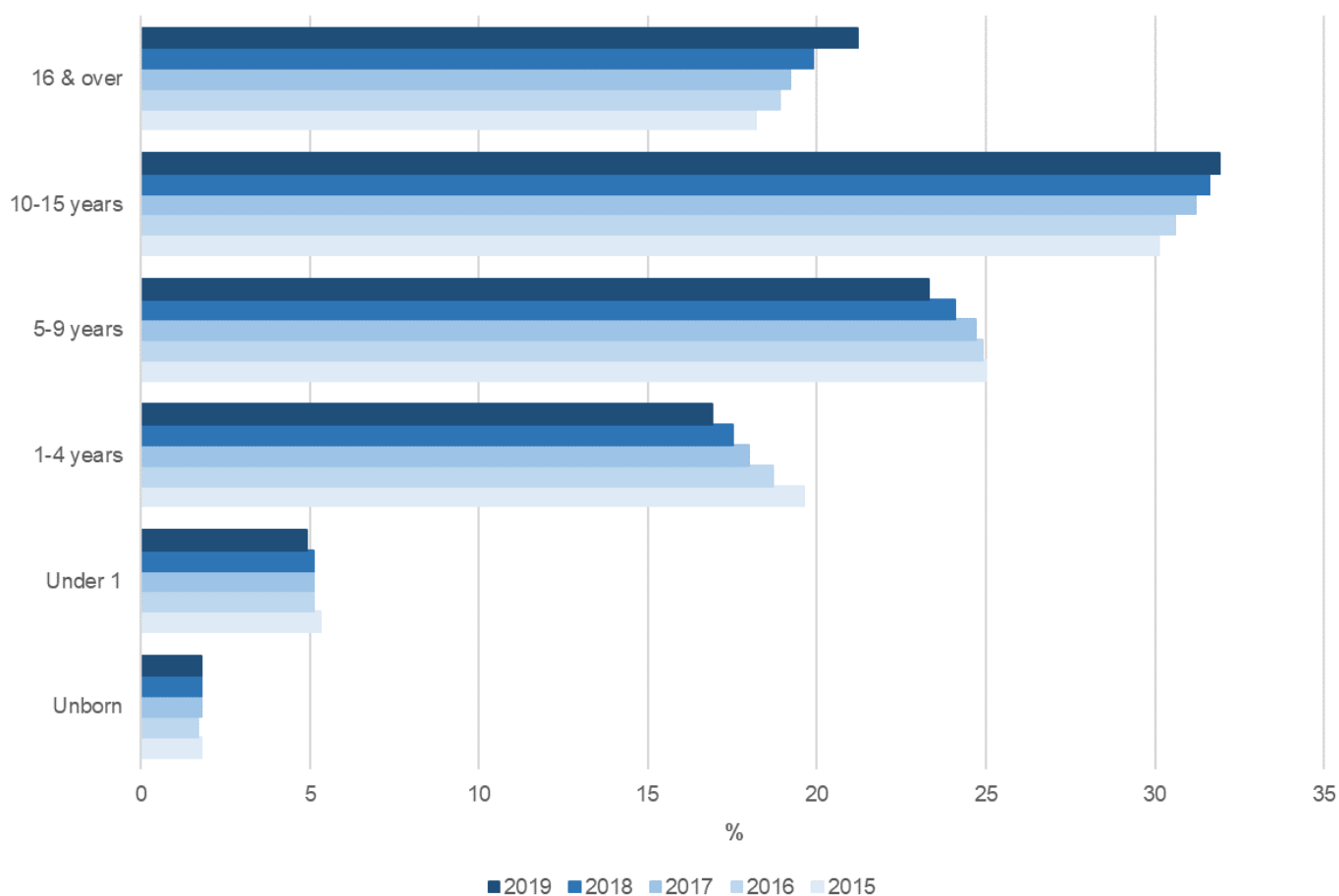


Characteristics of children in need

Boys are slightly more likely to be in need than girls. Of children in need at 31st March 2019, 53% were male, 45% female and 2% unborn or of unknown gender – the same as last year. In comparison, ONS 2018 mid-year estimates for the overall population of children under 18 show that 51% were male and 49% female.

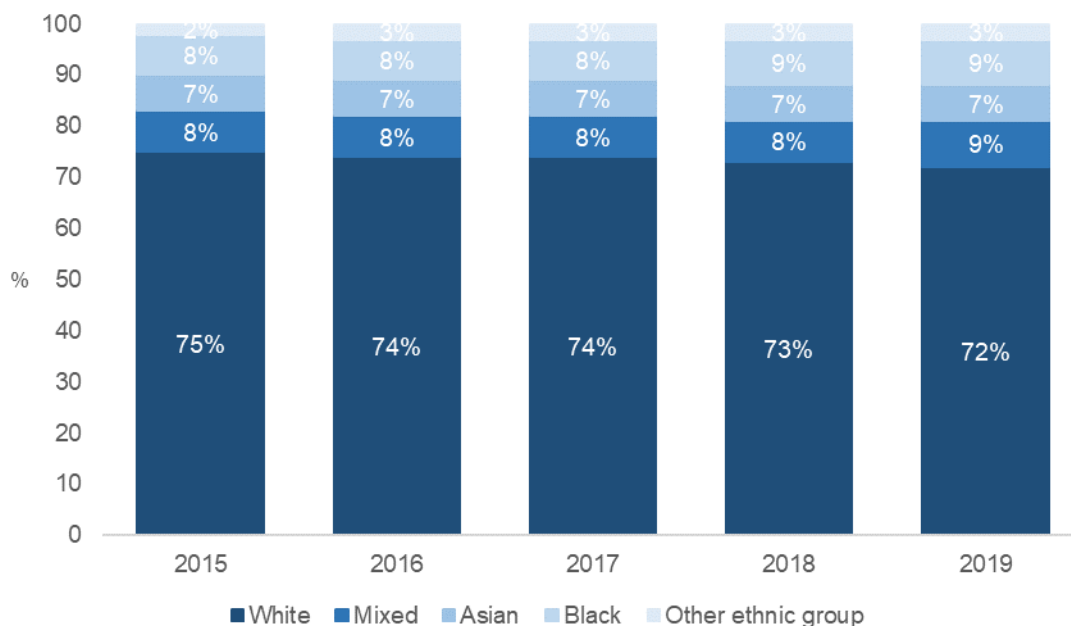
Since 2015 the percentage of children in need aged 10 years or over has increased from 48% to 53%, with the two “older” age categories reflecting a long term increase.

Figure G: Percentage of children in need at 31 March 2019 by age group
England, 2015 to 2019



The ethnic breakdown of children in need is similar to last year. However, over the last five years there has been a gradual decline in the proportion of children in need that were White, from 75% in 2015 to 72% this year. In contrast, there have been slight increases in the percentage whose ethnicity was Mixed or Black and no change in the percentage of those whose ethnicity was Asian.

Figure H: Percentage of children in need at 31 March by ethnic group
England, 2015 to 2019



The percentage of children in need at 31st March 2019 with a disability recorded was unchanged at 12% compared to last year and down from 14% in 2013.

2. Referrals (Tables A1, C1, C5, C6)

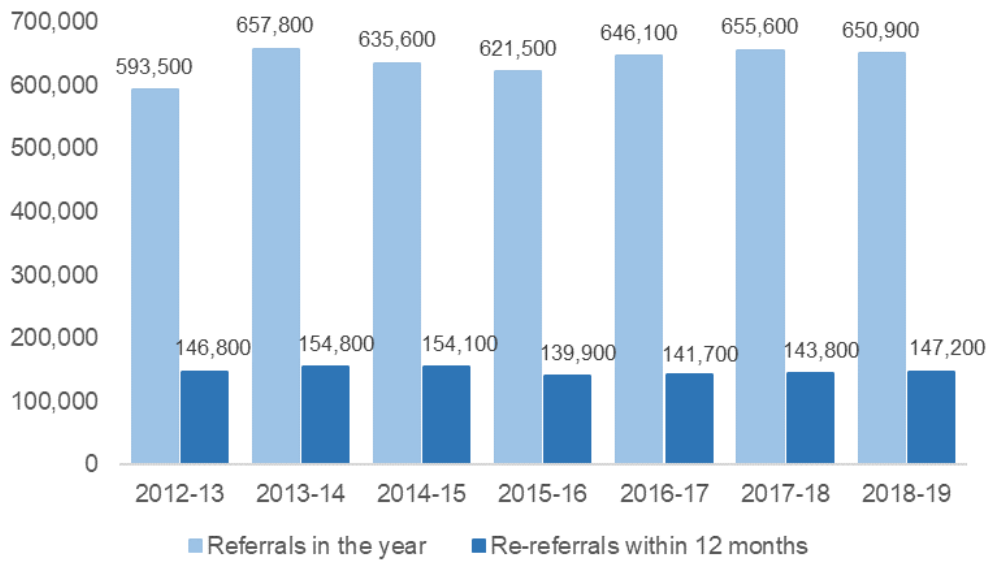
Definition: referral and re-referral

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. Referrals can be made from several different sources including schools, health services, individuals and the police.

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

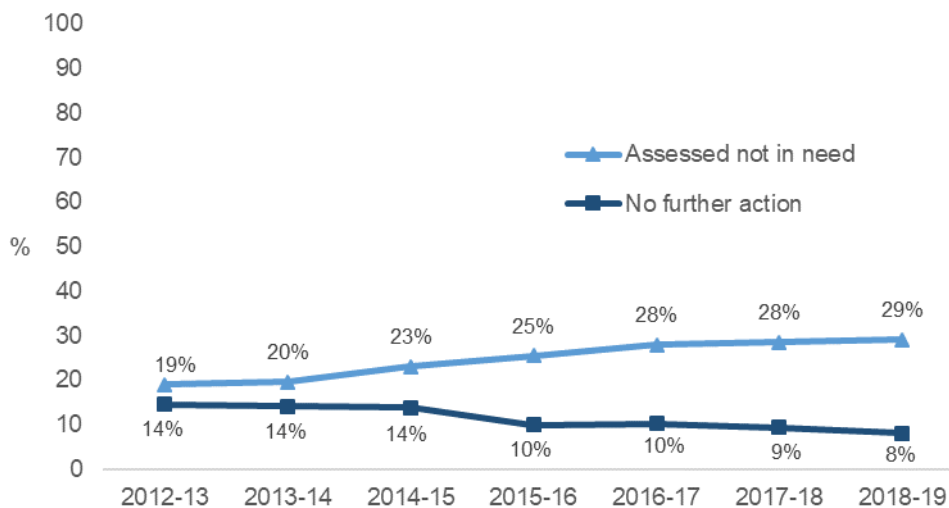
There were 650,900 referrals during 2018-19, a decrease of 1% from last year which reversed the upward trend seen between 2016 and 2018. The number of re-referrals continued to increase however and is at the highest level since 2015. There were 147,200 re-referrals in 2018-19, an increase of 2% from 2017-18, and represented 23% of all referrals in 2018-19.

Figure I: Number of referrals and referrals within 12 months of a previous referral in the year ending 31st March
 England, 2013 to 2019



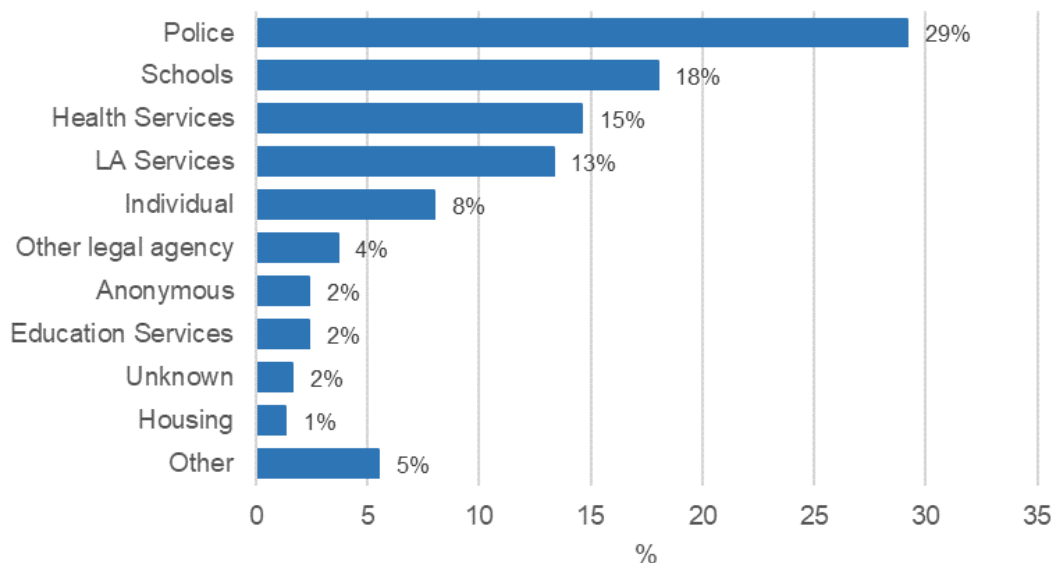
The percentage of referrals that resulted in no further action decreased from 14% to 8% between 2012-13 and 2018-19. In contrast, the percentage of referrals where children were assessed as being not in need increased from 19% to 29% over the same period.

Figure J: Percentage of referrals in year ending 31st March going on to be assessed as not in need or requiring no further action
 England, 2013 to 2019



Referrals can be made from a number of different sources and, as in previous years, the highest proportion (29%) came from the police in 2018-19. The breakdown of source of referral is very similar to last year.

Figure K: Percentage of referrals in the year ending 31st March by source of referral England, 2019



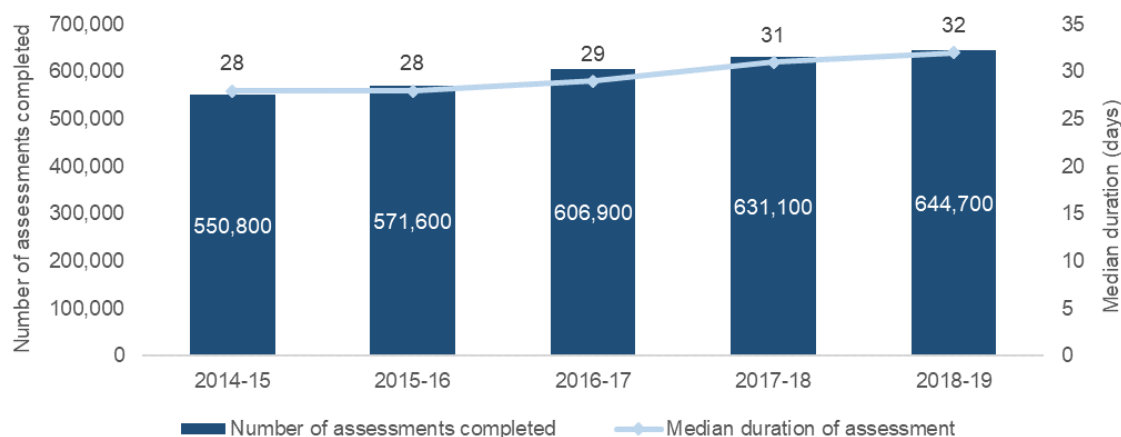
3. Assessments (Tables A1, A3, B3, C2, C3)

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. By 2014-15, 91% of local authorities operated a continuous assessment model.

The number of assessments completed in the year has increased in each year since 2014-15, rising by 17% from 550,800 in 2014-15 to 644,700 this year. In the same period the average (median) duration of assessments increased from 28 to 32 working days.

Figure L: Number of assessments completed in the year ending 31st March and median duration of assessments England, 2015 to 2019



Primary need identified at assessment (Table B3)

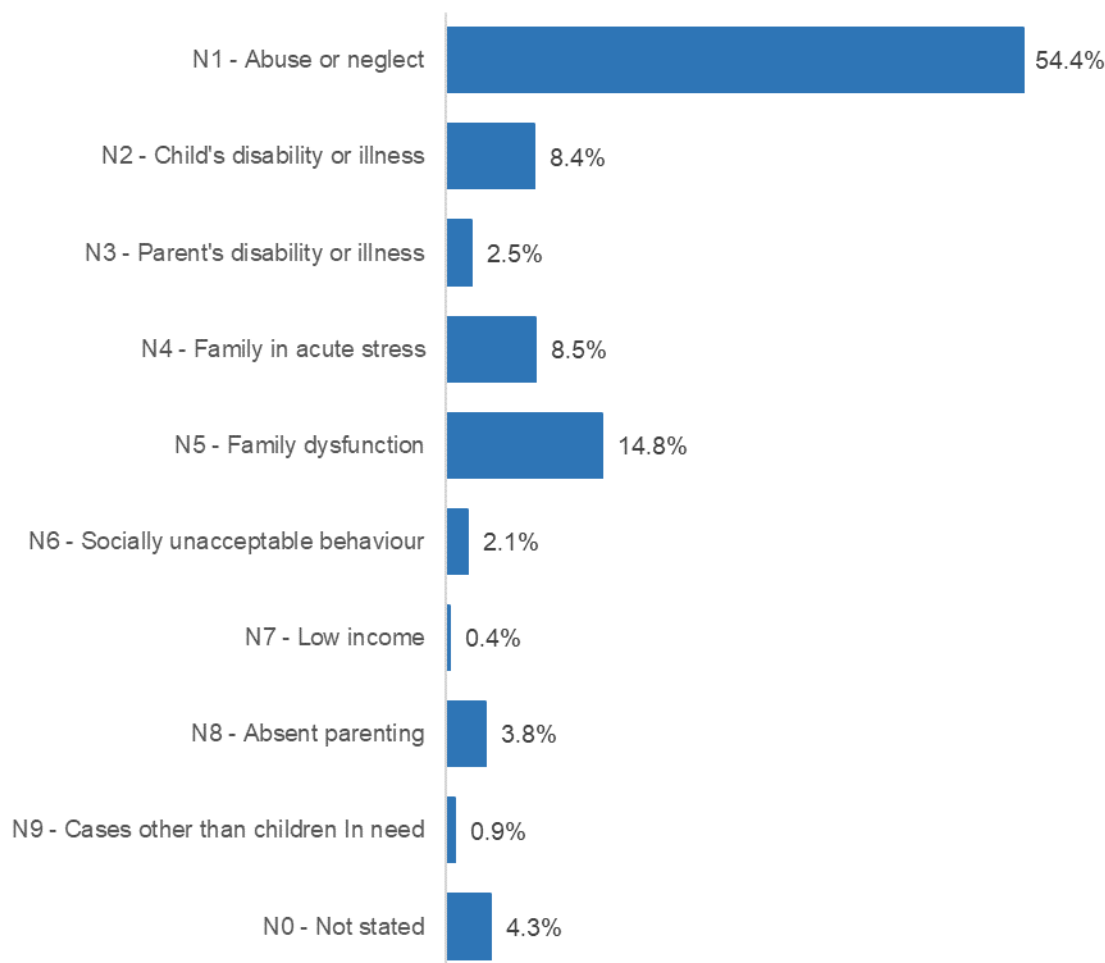
Method for identifying primary need at assessment

When a child is assessed following a referral, the practitioner determines the child's primary need at the first assessment. Only one primary need can be reported at this point and is selected from a hierarchical list (as shown in Figure O below). In cases where multiple needs are identified, the need highest in the list is reported in the census.

These categories are intended 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 the importance of the primary need. The order has remained fixed since primary need at assessment information was first collected in the 2013-14 census. This provides consistency and allows meaningful comparisons to be made between years.

In 2019, 54% of children in need at 31st March had abuse or neglect recorded as their primary need identified at assessment, compared to 53% last year and 49% in 2015. Family dysfunction (15%) and child's disability (8%) were the next largest categories, as they were last year.

Figure M: Percentage of children in need at 31 March 2019 by primary need at assessment England, 2019



Factors identified at the end of assessment (Table C3)

Method for identifying need at end of assessment

Factors identified at the end of assessment are collected in addition to the primary need identified at assessment. They were collected and reported for the first time in the 2014-15 census and provide information on the factors which contribute to a child being in need.

If more than one factor was identified at assessment, each should be recorded and included in the census. This means that the majority of children will have more than one factor identified and reported for each episode of need.

Local authorities are encouraged to record all factors identified at the end of assessment, which may account for some of the increases seen in recent years as reporting improves.

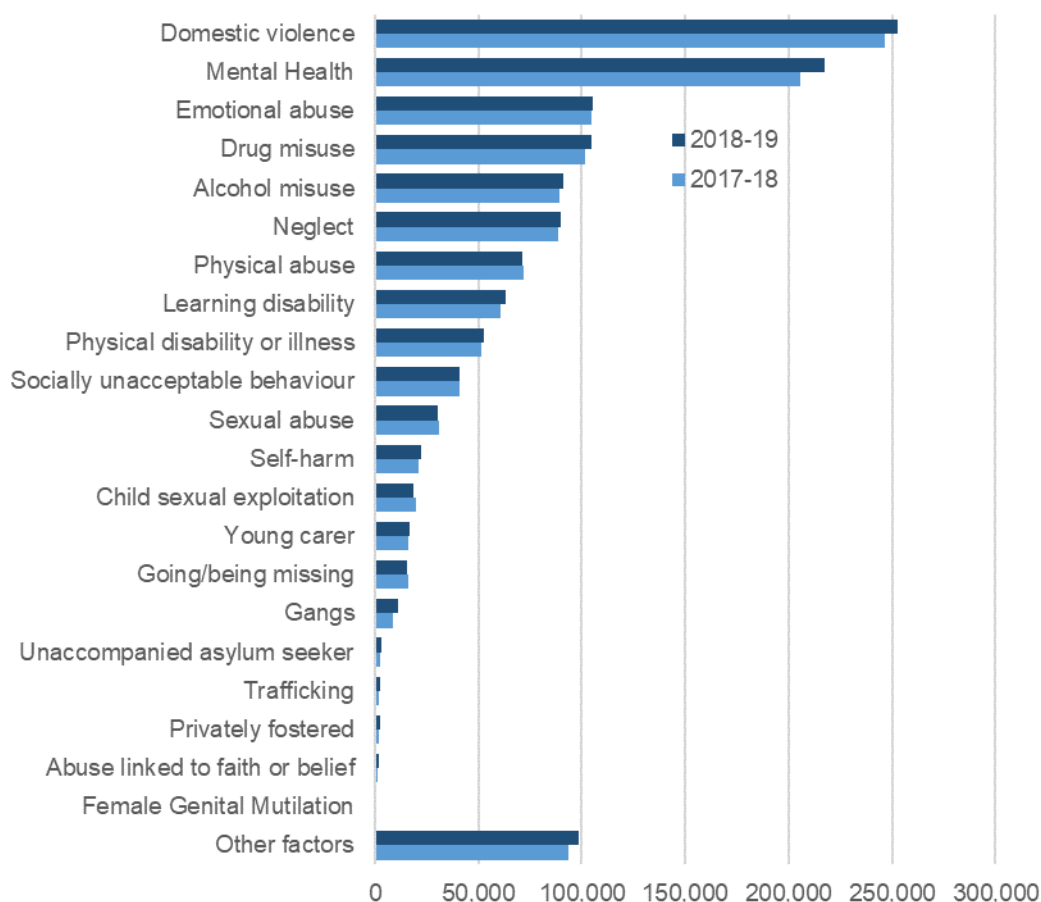
This year 77% of episodes of need had factors identified that contributed to the child being in need, which is unchanged from last year. These episodes had a total of 1.3 million factors identified at the end of assessment.

Domestic violence (including that directed at children, the parent/carer or other adults in the household) remains the most common factor identified at end of assessment, followed by mental health (including that of the child, the parent/carer or other adults in the household). Together these two factors account for over a third of all factors identified.

Child sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, physical abuse and going/being missing were the only factors to decrease compared to last year, though the changes were relatively small.

There was an increase of 30% in the number of factors identified as “unaccompanied asylum seeker” compared to last year and similarly large percentage increases for gangs (up 27%), trafficking and abuse linked to faith or belief (both up 20%). These percentage increases are relatively large, but it should be noted that they are from a low base compared to some other factors, and they remain uncommon overall.

Figure N: Number of factors identified at the end of assessment in the year ending 31st March
 England, 2018 and 2019

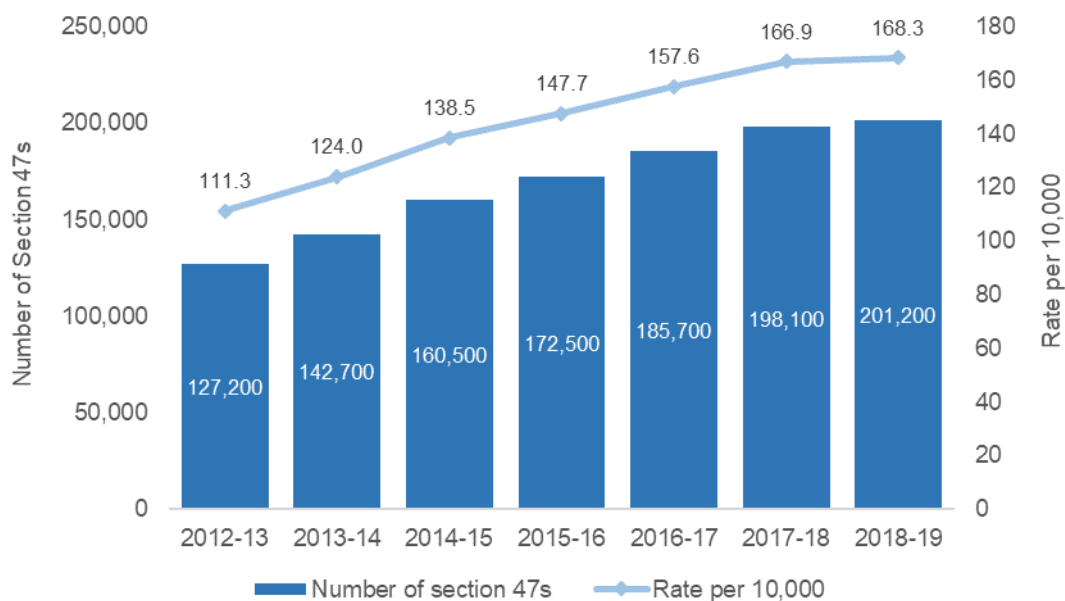


4. Section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences (Tables A2, C4)

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.

The number of section 47 enquiries starting in the year has increased in each year since 2012-13, although the rate of increase has slowed this year. The rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 shows a corresponding trend, increasing slightly to 168.3, compared to 166.9 last year.

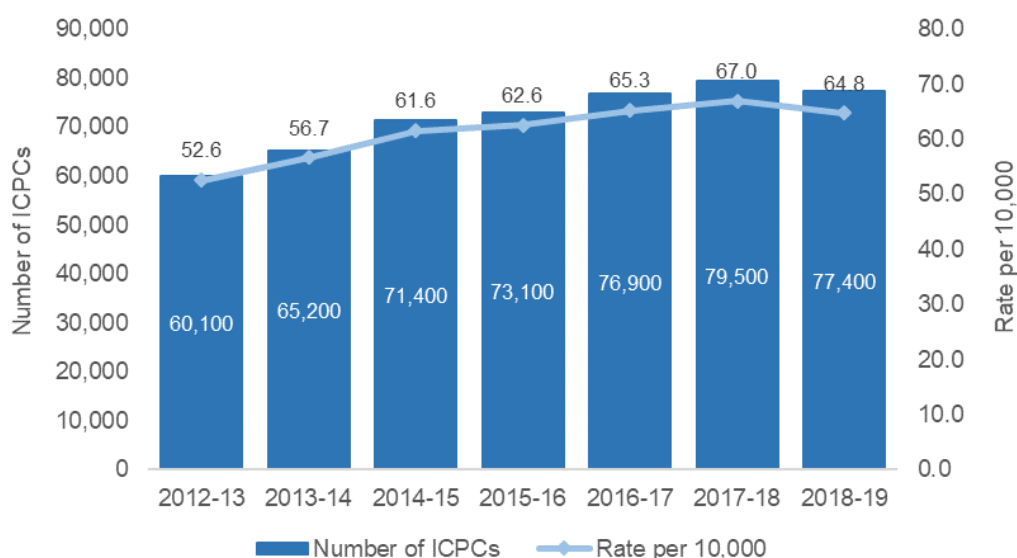
Figure O: Number of section 47 enquiries starting in the year ending 31st March and rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 England 2013 to 2019



In contrast to section 47 enquiries, the number of initial stage child protection conferences which took place decreased compared to last year; reversing the upward trend seen from 2013 to 2018. There were 77,400 initial stage child protection conferences in 2018-19, down by 3% from a year earlier. The associated rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 also decreased, to 64.8, its lowest level since 2015-16.

The percentage of section 47 enquiries which lead to an initial child protection conference has been steadily decreasing over time; from 47% in 2013, to 40% last year and 38% this year.

Figure P: Number of initial stage child protection conferences (ICPCs) starting in the year ending 31st March and rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 England, 2013 to 2019



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

Child protection plan

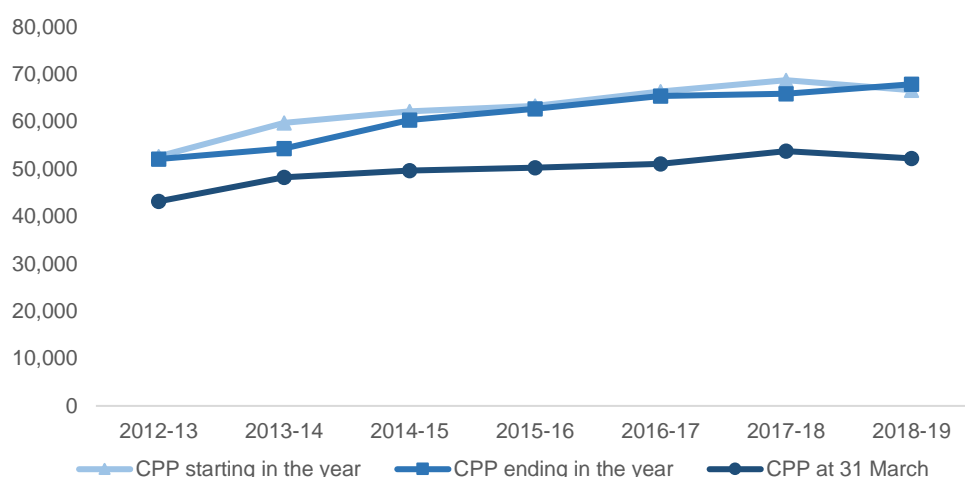
At the initial child protection conference, a decision will be made as to whether the child needs to become the subject of a **child protection plan**. When a child becomes the subject of a plan, the initial category of abuse is recorded. Plans should be reviewed within the first three months, and then 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.

At 31st March 2019 there were 52,300 children subject to a child protection plan, a decrease of 3% from compared to 2018. The number of child protection plans ending during the year continued to increase, up 3% in 2018-19. However, the number of child protection plans starting during the year fell by 3% in the same period.

Figure Q: Number of child protection plans starting in the year, ending in the year and at 31st March

England, 2013 to 2019

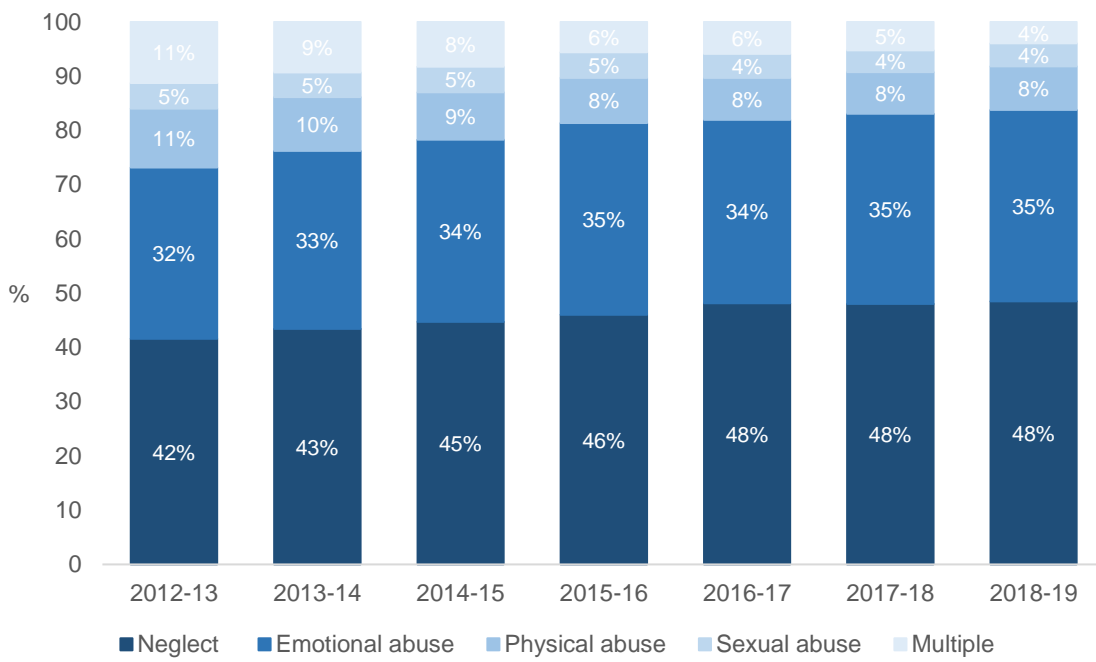


The percentage of children in need that had been the subject of a child protection plan for longer than three months at 31st March 2019, and had reviews carried out within the required timescales, was relatively unchanged from last year at 92%.

There was no change in the initial categories of abuse recorded for children in need that became the subject of a child protection plan compared to last year. Neglect (48%) remained the most common initial category of abuse in 2018-19, followed by emotional abuse (35%).

Since 2012-13 however, there has been an increase in the percentage of children that had neglect and emotional abuse recorded as the initial category of abuse. In contrast, there has been a drop in the percentage recorded as sexual, physical or multiple abuse over the same period.

Figure R: Percentage of children in need who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31st March, by initial category of abuse
 England, 2013 to 2019



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: Time series of children in need, episodes of need, referrals and assessments completed by children's social care services, in the year ending 31 March
- Table A2: Time series of section 47 enquiries² and initial child protection conferences carried out by children's social care services, and children who were the subject of a child protection plan, in the year ending 31 March
- Table A3: Children in need at 31 March 2019, by gender, age (at 31 March) and primary need
- Table A4: Children in need at 31 March 2019, by gender, age (at 31 March) and ethnicity
- Table A5: Children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2019 by gender, age (at 31 March), initial category of abuse and ethnicity
- Table A6: Time series of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March by initial category of abuse
- Table A7: Time series of children in need at 31 March, by gender, age (at 31 March) and ethnicity

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 2019 by local authority
- Table B2: Children in need at 31 March 2019, by disability and local authority
- Table B3: Children in need at 31 March 2019, by primary need and local authority
- Table B4: Children in need at 31 March 2019, by duration of open case and local authority
- Table B5: Episodes of need ending in the year ending 31 March 2019, by duration of episode of need and local authority
- Table B6: Episodes of need ending in the year to 31 March 2019, by reason for case closure and local authority

Local authority figures: referrals and assessments

- Table C1: Referrals to children's social care services, referrals which resulted in no further action, referrals which were assessed and resulted in no further action, children referred and where the referral was within 12 months of a previous referral, in the year ending 31 March 2019, by local authority
- Table C2: Assessments completed by children's social care services in the year ending 31 March 2019, by duration of assessment and local authority
- Table C3: Episodes with assessment factor information in the year ending 31 March 2019, and factors identified at the end of assessment by local authority
- Table C4: Section 47 enquiries¹ and initial child protection conferences¹ in the year ending 31 March 2019, by local authority

Table C5: Referrals to children's social care services in the year ending 31 March 2019, by source of referral and local authority

Table C6: Referrals to children's social care services, in the year ending 31 March 2019, by month of the year and local authority

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

Table D1: Child protection plans starting, ending and at any point during the year ending 31 March 2019, children subject to a child protection plan at 31 March 2019, by local authority

Table D2: Child protection plans starting during the year ending 31 March 2019, by initial and latest category of abuse and local authority

Table D3: Child protection plans starting in the year ending 31 March 2019 and child protection plans which are a second or subsequent plan, by local authority

Table D4: Children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2019, by initial¹ and latest category² of abuse and local authority

Table D5: Children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2019, by length of time as the subject of a plan and local authority

Table D6: Children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2019, and who had been on a plan for at least three months and had reviews carried out within the required timescales by local authority

Table D7: Child protection plans ending¹, during year ending 31 March 2019, by length of time as the subject of a plan and local authority

Table D8: Child protection plans ending during the first six months of the year ending 31 March 2019, by length of time the child remained in need and local authority

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

Data quality and uses

The quality and uses document gives more details, this can be found on the [Statistics: children in need and child protection](#) webpage.

Rounding conventions and suppression

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.

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).

The following conventions have been used:

‘.’ means not applicable

‘..’ means not available

'c' indicates suppression has been applied to figures between 1 and 5 inclusive, to preserve confidentiality

Please note that secondary suppression may be applied to numbers above 5 to preserve confidentiality.

7. Further information is available

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: Statistics: children in need and child protection
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 st October 2008 to 31 st March 2009; however, from 2009-10 the census was rolled out to cover the full 12 month period: Children in need census
Looked-after children	Statistics on children under local authority care at national and local authority level: Statistics: looked-after children
Children’s social workers	Statistics on children’s social care workers employed by local authorities: Statistics: children's social work workforce
Ofsted statistics	Ofsted publish inspection outcomes for local authority children’s services and children’s social care providers in England: Children's social care statistics
Statistics for other UK countries	The Scottish Government: Children’s social work statistics The Welsh Government: Social services performance measures Children’s Services statistics for Northern Ireland

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

Media enquiries

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Department for Education

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About this publication:

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Reference: [Characteristics of children in need: 2018 to 2019]



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