

# **Assessing the needs of sentenced children in the Youth Justice System 2018/19**

## **England and Wales**

Youth Justice Board / Ministry of Justice  
Experimental Statistics bulletin

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## Assessing the needs of sentenced children in the Youth Justice System, England and Wales, April 2018 to March 2019

The statistics in this publication suggest that a large proportion of children who are supervised by YOTs exhibit a range of important, interdependent and interrelated needs which are captured as concerns within AssetPlus.

The type and prevalence of these different needs may represent complex operational challenges around the delivery and provision of appropriate services to ensure best outcomes for children in the youth justice system.

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) will seek to explore relationships between concerns and other key measures through subsequent publications based on this data.

### Main points

**The number of concerns each child had increased with the severity of the type of sentence they received**

**39%**

Of the children assessed who received custodial sentences, 39% had 15-19 concerns present, compared with 11% of children assessed who received first-tier sentences.

**Seven out of 10 children were assessed to have a concern present in at least five of the 19 concerns**

**70%**

These were Safety and Wellbeing (88%), Risk to Others (85%), Substance Misuse (75%), Speech, Language and Communication (71%) and Mental Health (71%)

**Over half of children were assessed to be a current or previous Child in Need**

**56%**

18% were considered to have a current status around this and 38% had a previous status.

**Over a quarter of children were assessed as having a High or Very High Risk of Serious Harm rating**

**29%**

27% were considered to have a High Risk of Serious Harm and 2% a Very High Risk of Serious Harm

**Over two fifths of children were assessed as having a High or Very High Safety and Wellbeing rating**

**42%**

38% had a High Safety and Wellbeing rating and 4% a rating of Very High

*For technical details see the accompanying [Assessing the needs of sentenced children in the Youth Justice System Technical Note](#)*

We would welcome any feedback to [informationandanalysis@yjb.gov.uk](mailto:informationandanalysis@yjb.gov.uk)

## Assessing the needs of sentenced children in the Youth Justice System

*Figures within this release are published as Experimental Statistics under the guidelines set out by the Office for Statistics Regulation's expectations regarding the production and handling of experimental statistics, a subset of official statistics going through development and evaluation, in line with the Code of Practice for Statistics ([www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice))*

### Introduction

AssetPlus is a wide-ranging assessment and planning framework for use with children by Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and secure establishments across England and Wales. The needs of children supported by YOTs are regularly assessed by practitioners using AssetPlus to support the planning of suitable interventions both in the community and in custody.

This publication focuses on a small subset of AssetPlus data which includes 19 assessed concern types, eight care status types as well as the four ratings for both Safety and Wellbeing and Risk of Serious Harm. These are based on assessments of children who received a Referral Order, Reparation Order, Youth Rehabilitation Order or custodial sentence between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

Concern types refer to factors that practitioners judge to be affecting the child. The types of concerns cover their wellbeing (e.g. Mental Health, Physical Health and Safety and Wellbeing), how they relate to other people (e.g. Significant Relationships and Relations to Others), social factors and issues at home (e.g. Accommodation, Local Issues, Learning & Education, Training and Employment, Parenting or Family Behaviour) or their own behaviours (Substance Misuse, Offence Justification or Attitudes to Offending).

The factors around care status look at the child's current and previous care history (e.g. whether they are subject to a care order or child protection plan, whether they have siblings in care or are remanded to local authority accommodation or youth detention accommodation).

The practitioner assessed ratings for Risk of Serious Harm look at the imminence and likelihood of death or serious personal injury whether physical or psychological and the ratings for Safety and Wellbeing look at the risk that a child's safety and well-being is now or in the future potentially compromised through his or her own behaviour, personal circumstances or because of the acts or omissions of others.

These concerns and ratings are based on practitioners' judgements and therefore are an indirect measure of children's needs.

This data is from the assessment of a child that is closest to the date of their sentencing outcome and this captures only those who had an assessment completed. Within this publication, statements in the form 'X% of children assessed' refers to those who were assessed using AssetPlus within 30 days either side of their sentencing date.

The supplementary tables that accompany this publication show the data for England & Wales as well as England and Wales separately.

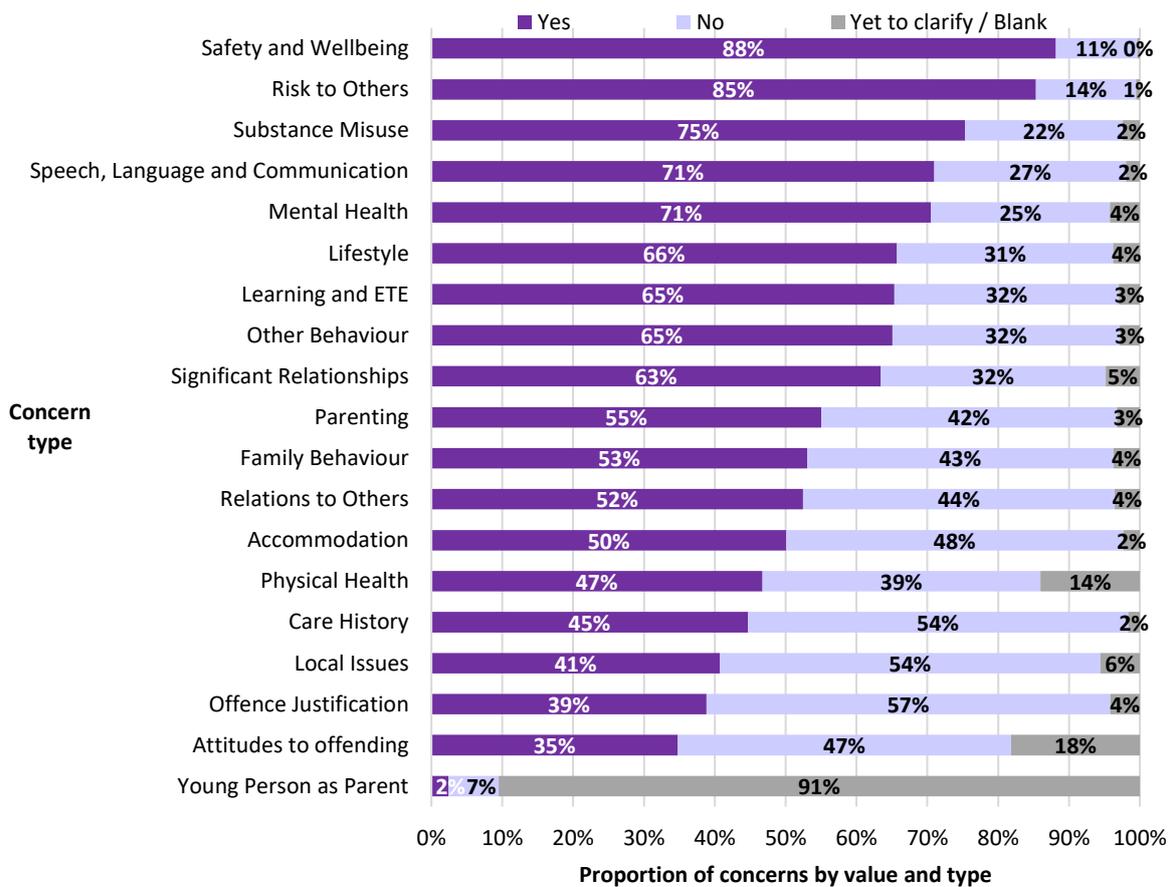
Please refer to the accompanying Technical Note for a guide to the interpretation, methodology and definitions used in this publication.

# 1. Assessed concerns of sentenced children

This section focuses on the high-level concerns assessed by practitioners for sentenced children. For the purposes of this report, a sentenced child is one who received a Referral Order, Reparation Order, Youth Rehabilitation Order or custodial sentence between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

This section looks at both the concerns by value and type as well as the proportion of children who had a concern present as a proportion of children assessed<sup>1</sup>.

**Figure 1.1 Concerns by type as a proportion of total children assessed, England and Wales, year ending March 2019**



*Supplementary Tables: Table 1.1b*

Figure 1.1 shows a large proportion of children assessed had concerns present across most concern types, though it's important to note that the data collected does not allow the measurement of the extent or nature of these concerns, but does give an indication of the vulnerability and complex needs of sentenced children within the Youth Justice System. For five of the 19 concern types, over 70% had a concern present.

<sup>1</sup> Please see the supplementary tables for the number and proportions these comprised for each concern type.

## Sentence type

**Figure 1.2 Proportion of concerns present as a proportion of children assessed by type of sentence, England and Wales, year ending March 2019**

Proportion of concerns present per child assessed	Number of concerns present per child assessed			
	0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 14	15 - 19
Overall	11%	26%	41%	22%
First-tier	18%	35%	36%	11%
Community	4%	18%	46%	31%
Custody	3%	16%	43%	39%

*Supplementary Tables: Table 1.1a*

When looking at different sentence types, the number of concerns present as a proportion of children assessed increased with the severity of the type of sentence. Of the children assessed who received custodial sentences, 39% showed 15-19 concerns present, compared with 11% of children assessed who received first-tier sentences.

## Demographics

Looking at concerns by ethnicity, there was a greater proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) children assessed as having concerns with Local Issues<sup>2</sup> (Asian 42%, Black 54%, Mixed 46% and Other 49%) than White children (37%). A greater proportion of White children assessed had Mental Health concerns present (75%) than those from a BAME background (Asian 50%, Black 57%, Mixed 70% and Other 65%).

Children aged 10-14 who were assessed showed a greater proportion of Speech, Language and Communication (80%) and Learning and ETE (71%) concerns than 15-17 year olds (69% and 64% respectively), whereas 15-17 year olds who were assessed showed a greater proportion of Substance Misuse concerns (78% compared with 60% for 10-14 year olds).

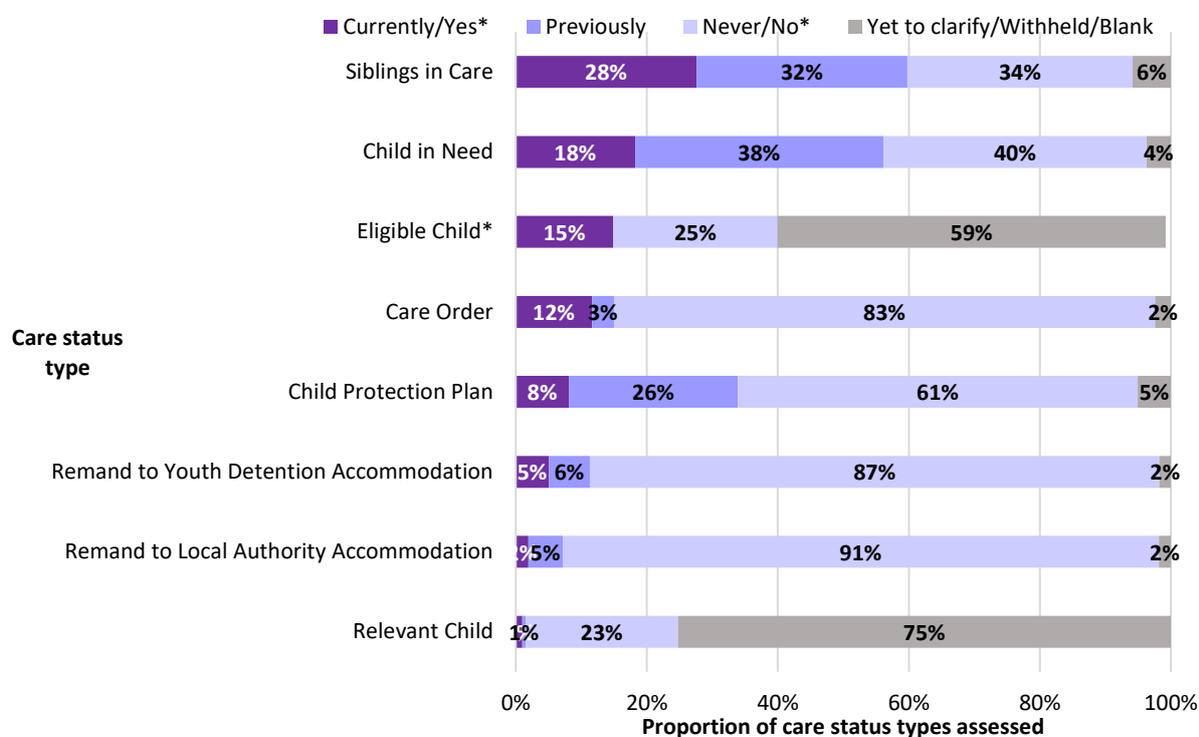
Boys assessed had a greater proportion of Local Issues concerns than girls (43% compared to 25% for girls), whereas there was a greater proportion of Mental Health concerns for girls (81% compared with 69% for boys).

<sup>2</sup> Concerns about the child being adversely affected by specific local tensions, pressures or issues.

## 2. Assessed care status of sentenced children

This section shows information about sentenced children's assessed care status.

**Figure 2.1 Care status type as a proportion of children assessed, England and Wales, year ending March 2019**



\*Available values for Eligible Child are Yes, No, Yet to Clarify or Withheld

*Supplementary Tables: Table 1.2a*

Over half (56%) of children assessed showed them to be a current or previous Child in Need. A Child in Need is defined as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services.

### Sentence type

Almost a third of children sentenced to custody were assessed to be an Eligible Child<sup>3</sup> compared with 20% of those on community sentences and 7% of those on first-tier sentences.

### Demographics

When comparing genders, there was a higher proportion of girls assessed with the following care statuses than boys:

- a Child in Need (22% compared to 18%);
- on a Child Protection Plan (13% compared to 8%);
- an Eligible Child (18% compared to 15%); and
- Siblings in Care (37% compared to 27%).

<sup>3</sup> An Eligible Child refers to those in care aged 16 and 17 who have been looked after for a period to be prescribed. The age at which spells in care start to count towards eligibility will also be prescribed.

Children aged 10-14 assessed showed a larger proportion than 15-17 year olds with:

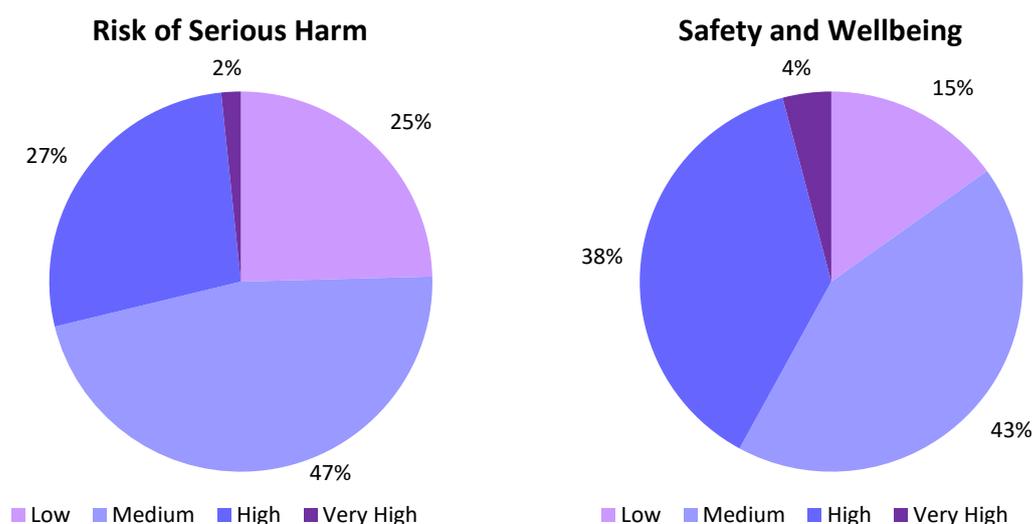
- Siblings in Care (37% compared to 26%);
- on a Child Protection Plan (18% compared to 6%);
- A Child in Need (23% compared to 17%); and
- On a Care Order (13% compared to 11%).

### 3. Risk of Serious Harm and Safety and Wellbeing ratings

Risk of Serious Harm is the imminence and likelihood of death or serious personal injury whether physical or psychological. This is rated as Low, Medium, High and Very High.

Safety and Wellbeing is defined as the risk of whether a young person's safety and well-being is now or in the future potentially compromised through his or her own behaviour, personal circumstances or because of the acts or omissions of others. This is rated as Low, Medium, High and Very High.

**Figures 3.1 and 3.2 Risk of Serious Harm and Safety and Wellbeing ratings as a proportion of children assessed, England and Wales, year ending March 2019**



*Supplementary Tables: Table 1.3a*

In the year ending March 2019, almost half (47%) of children assessed had a Medium Risk of Serious Harm rating, while 29% were rated as High or Very High.

For Safety and Wellbeing 43% of children assessed were rated Medium risk, while 42% were High or Very High.

#### Sentence type

**Figure 3.3 Risk of Serious Harm and Safety and Wellbeing ratings as a proportion of children assessed by sentence type, England and Wales, year ending March 2019**

Sentence type	Risk of Serious Harm				Sentence type	Safety and Wellbeing			
	Low	Medium	High	Very High		Low	Medium	High	Very High
First-tier	39%	50%	11%	0%	First-tier	24%	50%	24%	2%
Community	14%	49%	35%	1%	Community	7%	38%	49%	6%
Custody	4%	26%	62%	8%	Custody	3%	29%	59%	9%

*Supplementary Tables: Table 1.3a*

As the sentence type severity increased so did the proportion of children that had a High or Very High Risk of Serious Harm rating. Over two thirds (70%) of children assessed who received a custodial sentence had a High or Very High Risk of Serious Harm rating, compared with 36% of those who received community sentences and 11% of those who received first-tier sentences.

The same is true for Safety and Wellbeing ratings. Over two thirds (68%) of children assessed who received a custodial sentence had a High or Very High rating, compared with 55% of those who received community sentences and 26% for those who received first-tier sentences.

## Demographics

**Figure 3.4 Ratings of Risk of Serious Harm and Safety and Wellbeing as a proportion of children assessed by gender, England and Wales, year ending March 2019**

Risk of Serious Harm					Safety and Wellbeing				
Gender	Low	Medium	High	Very High	Gender	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Boys	23%	47%	29%	2%	Boys	15%	43%	38%	4%
Girls	42%	46%	11%	1%	Girls	12%	41%	42%	5%

Supplementary Tables: Table 1.3a

Just under a third (31%) of boys assessed had a Risk of Serious Harm rating of High or Very High compared with 12% of girls. Though a small percentage point difference, the proportion with High and Very High Safety and Wellbeing ratings was greater for girls (47%) than boys (42%).

**Figure 3.5 Ratings of Risk of Serious Harm and Safety and Wellbeing as a proportion of children assessed by age group, England and Wales, year ending March 2019**

Risk of Serious Harm					Safety and Wellbeing				
Age Group	Low	Medium	High	Very High	Age Group	Low	Medium	High	Very High
10-14	27%	50%	22%	1%	10-14	13%	46%	39%	3%
15-17	24%	46%	28%	2%	15-17	16%	42%	38%	4%

Supplementary Tables: Table 1.3a

Under a quarter (23%) of 10-14 year olds assessed had a Risk of Serious Harm rating of High or Very High compared with 30% of 15-17 year olds who were assessed. For Safety and Wellbeing, the proportions that had a rating of High or Very High were the same for both age groups (42%).

**Figure 3.6 Ratings of Risk of Serious Harm and Safety and Wellbeing as a proportion of children assessed by ethnicity group, England and Wales, year ending March 2019**

Risk of Serious Harm					Safety and Wellbeing				
Ethnicity Group	Low	Medium	High	Very High	Ethnicity Group	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Asian	24%	49%	27%	1%	Asian	21%	47%	30%	2%
Black	13%	42%	41%	3%	Black	11%	34%	48%	7%
Mixed	18%	47%	34%	1%	Mixed	11%	43%	40%	5%
Other	19%	46%	31%	4%	Other	13%	38%	43%	5%
White	28%	47%	23%	1%	White	16%	44%	36%	4%

Supplementary Tables: Table 1.3a

White children assessed had a smaller proportion (24%) of High or Very High Risk of Serious Harm ratings than BAME children (Asian 28%, Black 44%, Mixed 35% and Other 35%). For Safety and Wellbeing, over half (55%) of Black children assessed had a High or Very High rating, compared with 32% for Asian, 45% for Mixed, 48% for Other and 40% for White.

## User feedback

Experimental statistics are a subset of newly developed or innovative official statistics that are undergoing evaluation. They are developed under the guidance of the Head of Profession for Statistics.

Experimental statistics status provides a clear statement of the nature of the official statistics going through development, with a potentially wider degree of uncertainty in the resulting estimates as the methods and processes are established and verified.

Testing of the experimental statistics allows producers to gain a good understanding of their quality, including their accuracy and reliability, and their value.

Users are central to this process – without their involvement, producers will have an incomplete understanding of the suitability of the statistics. The YJB Information & Analysis Team welcomes feedback from users of these figures, specifically in relation to the following issues:

- Are these figures useful?
- How would you like statistics from AssetPlus data to be developed in the future?
- What other data would be of value from the data captured within AssetPlus?

Feedback can be sent to the following e-mail address [informationandanalysis@yjb.gov.uk](mailto:informationandanalysis@yjb.gov.uk), with the subject 'AssetPlus Experimental Statistics Publication', or to the postal address below.

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