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## Children's Social Work Workforce: Key numbers as at September 2013

**24,820 children's social workers** This is equivalent to 22,850 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

**17** The number of children in need per FTE children's social worker.

**3,570 FTE vacancies** Local authorities estimate they need 3,810 social workers to fill these posts.

**14%** The vacancy rate based on the proportion of vacancies amongst all FTE social worker posts. Some of these vacancies are currently being filled by agency social workers.

**1 in 7 social workers left their LA** This is a turnover rate of 15% based on FTEs  
3,430 children's social workers commenced employment at their local authority during the year ending 30 September 2013. This is equivalent to 3,260 FTEs.  
3,580 children's social workers left their local authority during the year ending 30 September 2013. This is equivalent to 3,320 FTEs.

**4% days missed due to absence** This equates to a total of around 240,000 days lost through sickness absence; just less than one day a month per social worker.

**3,340 agency social workers** Agency social workers employed by local authorities in addition to their permanent children's social worker workforce. This is equivalent to 3,190 FTEs.

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### Experimental Statistics

This is the first release from the statutory Children's Social Care Workforce data collection. In recognition that this is a new data collection we are publishing these as "experimental statistics".

## 1. Background and context

This Statistical First Release (SFR) provides national and local authority (LA) level information on the Children’s Social Work Workforce in local authorities. A “social worker” is defined as:

*A social worker that is registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC), and either working in a local authority in a children’s services department or (if working in an authority where the services are joined up) a social worker that works exclusively on children and families work.*

This includes social workers regardless of managerial responsibilities or number of caseloads.

Information was collected on headcounts and full-time equivalents (FTEs).

Turnover is based on social workers leaving their local authority, not the social workforce as a whole.

## 2. Findings

The table below and map on the next page show how the findings on page 1 compare across the country.

**Table 1: Findings vary across the country**

Number of children in need (CiN) per children’s social worker, vacancy, turnover and agency worker rates

	Number of CiN per social worker	Vacancy rate (%)	Turnover rate (%)	Agency worker rate (%)
England	17	14	15	12
East Midlands	22	9	12	7
West Midlands	19	16	12	16
North East	18	9	14	6
South West	17	11	13	8
Yorkshire And The Humber	16	8	12	7
East Of England	16	18	15	15
South East	16	15	16	11
North West	15	10	11	9
London	15	19	21	20
Inner London	14	14	20	16
Outer London	17	24	22	24

*based on FTEs*

In general, regions with the highest number of children in need per social worker had the lowest vacancy and agency worker rates. The West Midlands was an exception with above the national averages for these two rates. There was less variation in turnover rates across regions.

London had the lowest number of children in need per social worker but the highest vacancy, turnover and agency worker rates. There are large differences between Inner and Outer London.

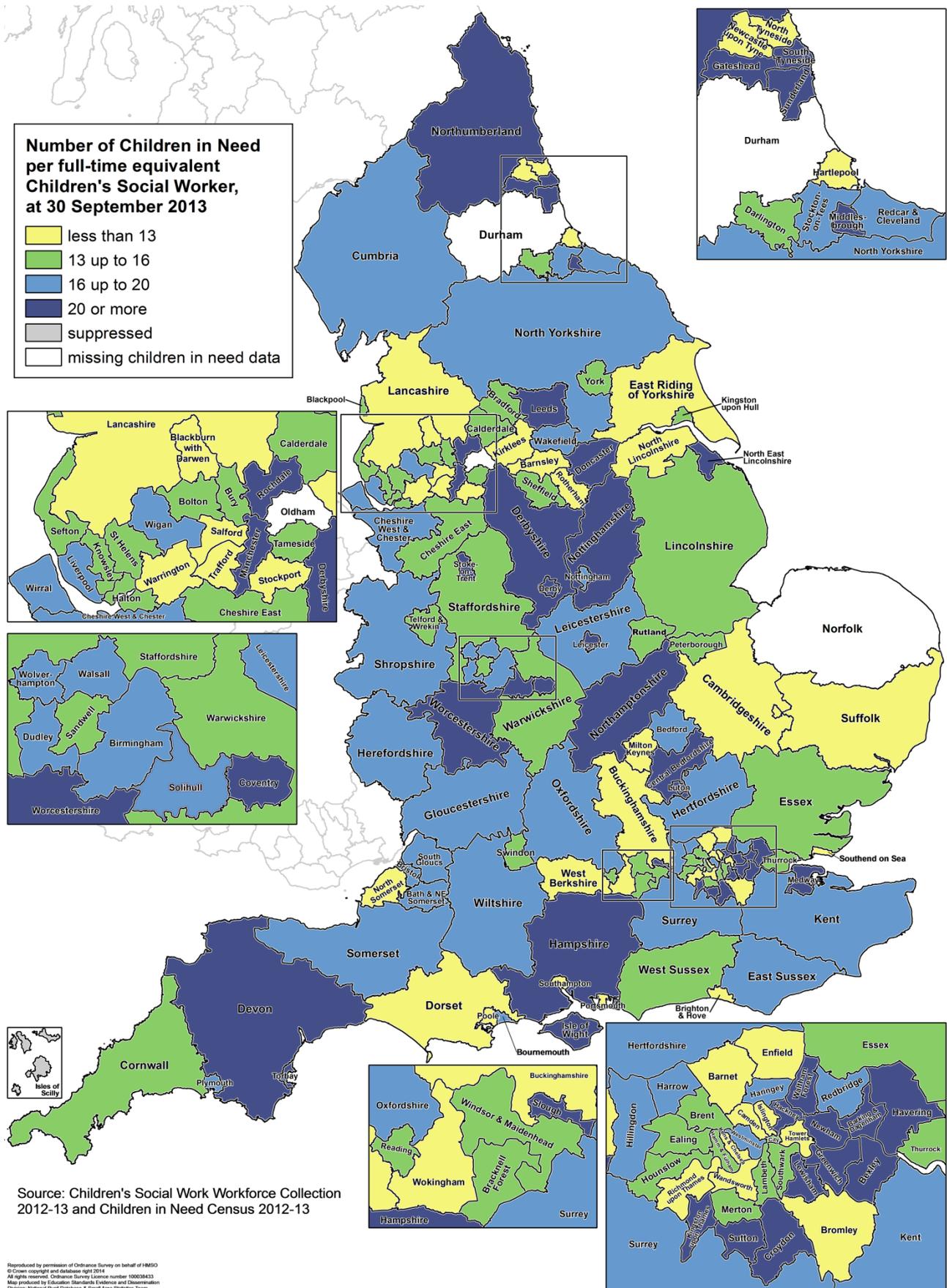
LAs vary widely (figures below are based on FTEs):

- 6 to 36** The range of children in need per social worker across all LAs.
- 0-50%** The range of vacancy rates across all LAs. 7 LAs had no vacancies.
- 0-82%** The range of turnover rates across all LAs. Only the two smallest LAs, City of London and Isles of Scilly, had no turnover.
- 0-51%** The range of agency worker rates across all LAs. 9 LAs employed no agency workers.

Absence rates have not been disseminated below national level due to concerns with data quality (see “Data quality” section).

Figure 1: Children in need per social worker ratios vary across local authorities

The number of children in need per children's social worker based on FTEs



### 3. List of Supplementary Tables

Further local authority and regional breakdowns have been published alongside this release:

**Table LA1 (FTEs)** Number of Children's Social Workers, Vacancies, Agency Workers and Turnover by Local Authority, based on full-time equivalents – Year ending 30 September 2013

**Table LA2 (Headcounts)** Number of Children's Social Workers, Vacancies, Agency Workers and Turnover by Local Authority, based on headcount – Year ending 30 September 2013

### 4. Technical Notes

#### Definitions

**Social workers** Included in this SFR are social workers who have registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC), and who either work in a local authority in a children's services department or (if working in an authority where the services are joined up) work exclusively on children and families work.

This includes social workers regardless of managerial responsibilities or number of caseloads.

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**Full time equivalents (FTEs)** Calculated by aggregating the total number of hours that staff are contracted to work and dividing by the standard hours for their grade. In this way, the number of part-time staff is converted into an equivalent number of 'full-time' staff.

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**CiN per children's social worker** The numbers of children in need (CiN) per social worker are calculated using the number of children in need at 31 March 2013 from the Children in Need 2012-13 Census. Note that the number of social workers is as at 30 September 2013. A link to the CiN release is in the "related publications" section.

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**Vacancy rates** FTE and headcount estimates are calculated using:  
$$= \text{Number of vacancies} / (\text{Number of social workers} + \text{Number of vacancies})$$
and relate to a snapshot at 30 September 2013.

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**Turnover rates** FTE and headcount estimates are calculated using:  
$$= \text{Number of leavers during the year} / \text{Number of social workers at 30 September}$$

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**Agency worker rates** FTE and headcount estimates are calculated using:  
$$= \text{Number of agency social workers} / (\text{Number of social workers} + \text{Number of agency workers})$$
and relate to a snapshot at 30 September 2013.

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**Absence rates** Calculated using:  
$$= \text{Number of days missed due to sickness absence during year} / (\text{Number of FTE at 30 September} \times 253)$$
where 253 is the number of working days in a year taking account of bank holidays.

## Data source

The figures are derived from the Children's Social Work Workforce 2012-13 data collection. This is the first time the Department has collected this information on a statutory basis. The table local authorities were asked to populate and its guidance can be found at the following link:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/social/a00222027/childrens-workforce-data-collection-2013-14>

The primary source for information on the Children's Social Care Workforce has previously been the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC). This is a voluntary return and the last report published by the Department covering the workforce at December 2012 used data returned by 68 out of the 152 local authorities. The response rate for the new data collection has been 100%.

## Experimental Statistics

In recognition that this is a new data collection we are publishing these as "experimental statistics" and we will seek to improve data quality in future collections.

## Data quality

Various quality assurance checks have been carried out on the data at each stage of the collection and production of this release. Anomalous data were highlighted and verified by contacting the local authority and late returns pursued to ensure overall response was as complete and accurate as possible.

In the majority of cases local authorities will derive the data they send from their management information systems and will require managerial sign off before sending the data. However, information on the specific data checks carried out by local authorities was not collected.

Some known data quality issues are listed below:

**Interpretation of days missed due to absence** It has come to our attention that some local authorities record the number of days missed due to absence differently. This is often as a result of not having systems in place to provide an exact figure. For example, some know the FTE of an employee but not specific working patterns. E.g. if an employee works a 0.5 FTE week but usually works a full day on a day that they were absent, they would be recorded as 0.5 days missed instead of 1 day.

In light of this we have not published any breakdowns of absence below national level and the national figure used in this document has been rounded to the nearest 10,000 days.

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**Estimated headcounts for vacancies** Six local authorities provided estimates of the number of vacancies based on headcounts. These were Trafford, Leicester, Suffolk, Hounslow, West Berkshire and Gloucestershire. Southend-On-Sea provided an estimate for FTE vacancies. These estimates have contributed to the regional and national totals but have been suppressed at LA level in the supplementary tables.

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**Estimated agency worker figures** Six local authorities provided an estimate of their agency worker FTE figure. These were Halton, Solihull, Southend-On-Sea, Thurrock, Buckinghamshire and Portsmouth. These estimates have contributed to the regional and national totals but have been suppressed at LA level in the supplementary table.

A common reason for this is that agency workers do not always have fixed FTE working patterns and that some LAs obtain this data from the agencies.

## Rounding conventions and confidentiality

The following rounding conventions have been used:

**In this document** The counts given in this main text have been rounded to the nearest 10 with the exception of the number of days missed due to sickness absence which is rounded to the nearest 10,000.

Rates and percentages have been rounded to the nearest per cent.

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**In the supplementary tables and underlying data** National and regional figures for both headcounts and FTEs have been rounded to the nearest 10. Local authority figures relating to headcounts have been kept as unrounded integers whilst local authority figures for FTEs have been rounded to 1 decimal place.

Rates and percentages have been rounded to the nearest per cent.

The National Statistics Code of Practice requires we take reasonable steps to ensure that our published or disseminated statistics protect confidentiality. The following conventions have been used:

✕ We have suppressed all counts where figures are 2 or fewer and replaced by a cross (x).  
Percentages and rates where the numerator or denominator is based on a value of 2 or fewer have also been replaced by a cross.

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0 Where any number is shown as zero (0), the original figure submitted was zero.

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· Not applicable

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.. Not available

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- Negligible – used to represent a percentage below 0.5%

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These conventions are consistent with the Department's Statistical Policy Statement on Confidentiality found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-official-statistics-published-by-the-department-for-education>

## Revisions

There are no scheduled revisions planned for this release. However, where a substantial error has occurred as a result of the compilation or dissemination process the statistical release and accompanying tables will be updated with a correction notice as soon as is practical.

The Department's Statistical Policy Statement on Revisions can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/standards-for-official-statistics-published-by-the-department-for-education>

## 5. Related Publications

**Previous releases** Previous releases on local authority children's social care services workforce based on the NMDS-SC can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-childrens-social-care-workforce>

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**Rest of the UK** Information on the children's social work workforce of devolved administrations can be found at the following links:

Scotland:

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

Wales:

<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/local-authority-social-services-staff-numbers>

Northern Ireland:

[http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats\\_research/workforce-statistics/stats-hsc.htm](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/workforce-statistics/stats-hsc.htm)

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**Children in Need** Statistical First Releases published by the Department for Education relating to Children in Need in England can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-children-in-need>

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**Children Looked After** Statistical First Releases published relating to Children Looked After in England can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-looked-after-children>

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## 6. User Engagement

Users are encouraged to provide feedback on how these statistics are used and how well they meet user needs. Comments on any issues relating to this statistical release are welcomed and encouraged. Any enquiries should be addressed to the following:

**Non-media** Safeguarding and Vulnerable Children's Analysis Team, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3BT.

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