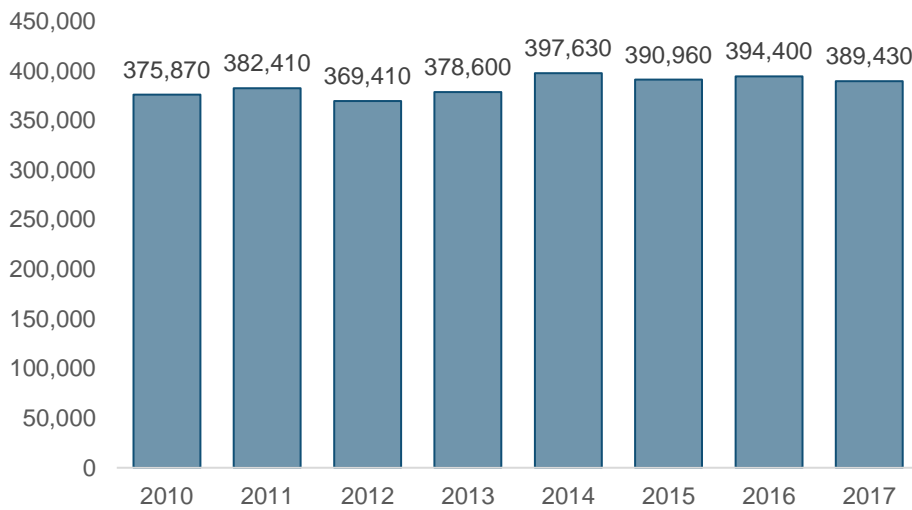




SFR 61/2017, 2 November 2017

The number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March has decreased, but the overall trend remains stable.

**Figure A: Number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
England, 2010-2017

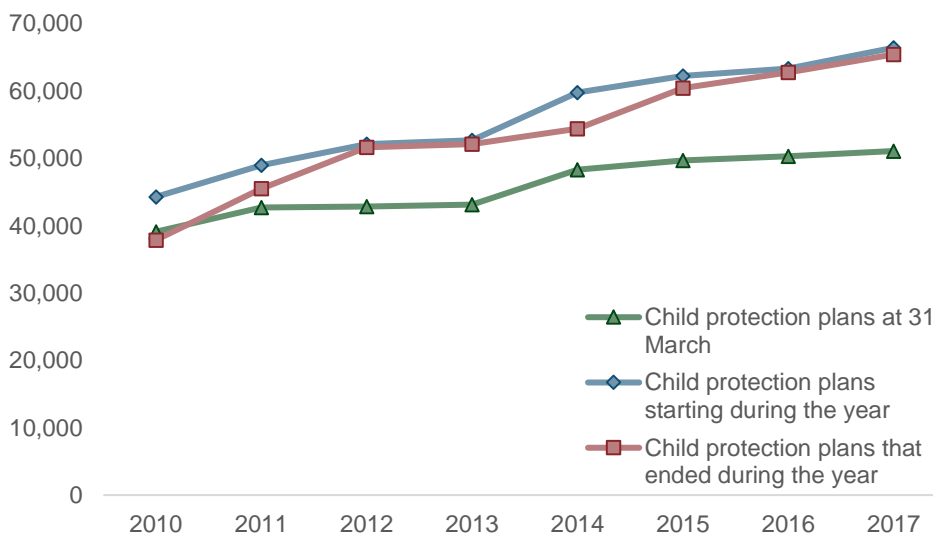


The number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March has decreased this year, from 394,400 in 2016 to 389,430 in 2017, a decrease of 1.3%.

The number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March has remained relatively stable over the last seven years. At its lowest, it was 369,410 in 2012, and at its highest, it was 397,630 in 2014.

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, 2010-2017



The number of child protection plans at 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 50,310 in 2016 to 51,080 in 2017, an increase of 1.5%.

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

# Contents

1.	Children in need (Tables A1, A3, B1, B2, B4) .....	3
	Characteristics of children in need.....	4
2.	Referrals (Tables A1, C1, C5).....	5
3.	Assessments (Tables A1, B3, C2, C3).....	7
	Primary need identified at assessment (Table B3) .....	7
	Factors identified at the end of assessment (Table C3).....	8
4.	Section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences (Table A2).....	9
5.	Child protection plans (Tables A2, A5, D4) .....	10
6.	Accompanying tables.....	12
7.	Further information is available .....	14
8.	Official Statistics .....	14
9.	Technical information.....	15
10.	Get in touch .....	15
	Media enquiries .....	15
	Other enquiries/feedback.....	15

## About this release

This statistical first release (SFR) 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 SFR are taken from the children in need census. The DfE has been collecting the children in need census from local authorities for the 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 SFR:

- 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 SFR. 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 2016, which ends in August 2016, and the same child begins another episode of need in December 2016 and is still in need on the 31 March 2017, the child is counted as two starts, one end and one count at the 31 March 2017. Therefore, for the first time this year, 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](#)

**Figure C: Number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
England, 2010-2017

Year ending 31 March	Number of children in need at 31 <sup>st</sup> March	Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years
2010	375,870	334.7
2011	382,410	339.0
2012	369,410	325.7
2013	378,600	331.4
2014	397,630	345.6
2015	390,960	337.3
2016	394,400	337.7
2017	389,430	330.4

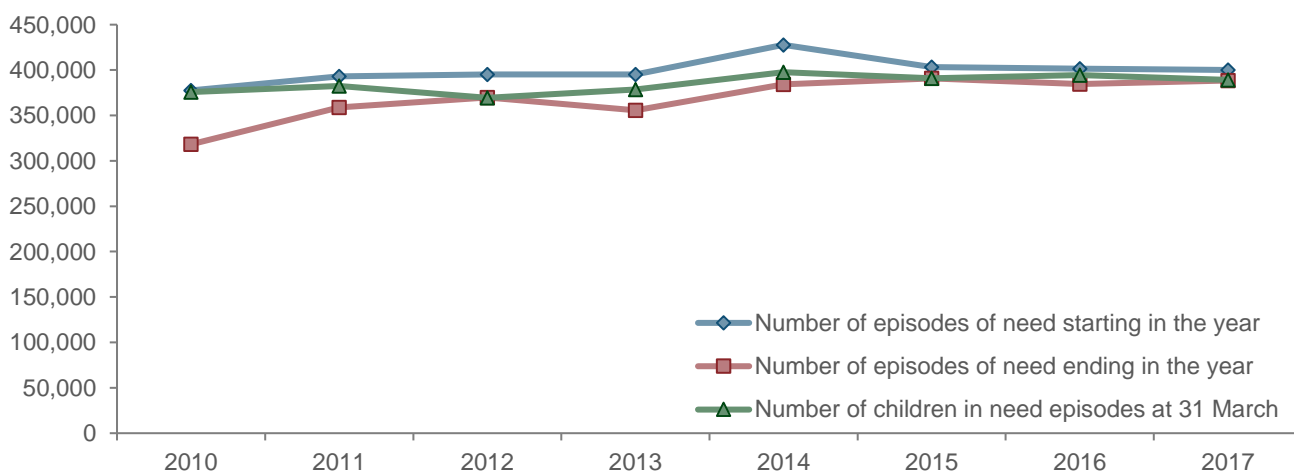
Source: Children in need census

The number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March has decreased this year, from 394,400 in 2016 to 389,430 in 2017, a decrease of 1.3%. There was also a decrease in the rate of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March per 10,000 in the population, from 337.7 in 2016 to 330.4 in 2017. There is considerable variability in the rate of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March per 10,000 children aged under 18 years in the population at a local authority level, ranging from 175.4 in Wokingham to 831.2 in the Isles of Scilly.

The number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March has remained relatively stable over the last seven years. At its lowest, it was 369,410 in 2012, and at its highest it was 397,630 in 2014. Similarly, the rate of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March per 10,000 children aged under 18 years in the population has also remained relatively stable over the last seven years. At its lowest, it was 325.7 in 2012, and at its highest, it was 345.6 in 2014.

**Figure D: Number of children in need episodes starting and ending in the year and those in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March**

England, 2010-2017



The number of children in need episodes starting in the year has decreased, from 401,600 in 2016 to 400,160 in 2017, a decrease of 0.4%.

**Figure E: Percentage of episodes ending in year by duration, in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
England, 2011-2017

Duration	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
6 months or less	69.2	69.2	68.7	66.8	64.0	64.1	63.5
6 to 12 months	12.5	12.0	12.3	13.3	14.7	14.8	15.2
1 year or more	18.3	18.7	18.9	19.9	21.3	21.1	21.3

Source: Children in need census

Of the episodes ending in the year, 21.3% lasted a year or more in 2017, compared to 21.1% in 2016.

Through our quality assurance processes we have identified an inconsistency within the derivation of the “ended an episode of need in the year” marker, which relates to how particular cases that remain open across census periods are dealt with. This affects the numbers of episodes ending in year in Figures D and E above. The headline measures of the number of children in need at the end of the year are unaffected. Please refer to the data quality and uses document for further information and the scale of the impact.

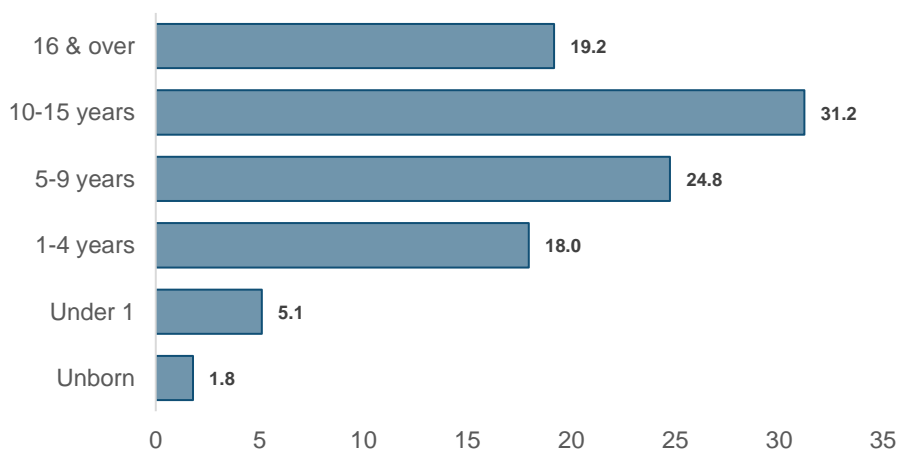
### Characteristics of children in need

The gender split of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 remains similar to previous years – 53.0% are male, 45.1% are female and 2.0% are unborn or of unknown gender.

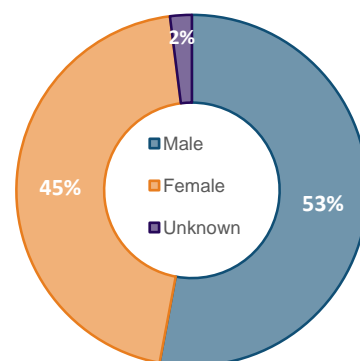
The age split of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 also remains broadly similar to previous years, with the largest age group being those aged 10-15 years accounting for 31.2% of children in need. Children aged under 5 account for 23.1%.

The percentage of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March with a disability recorded has increased this year from 12.7% in 2016 to 12.9% in 2017. The percentage of children in need with a disability recorded has fluctuated over the last six years, however there has been an overall decrease, from 14.2% in 2011 to 12.9% in 2017.

**Figure E: Percentage of children in need by age group**  
England, 2017



**Figure F: Percentage of children in need by gender**  
England, 2017



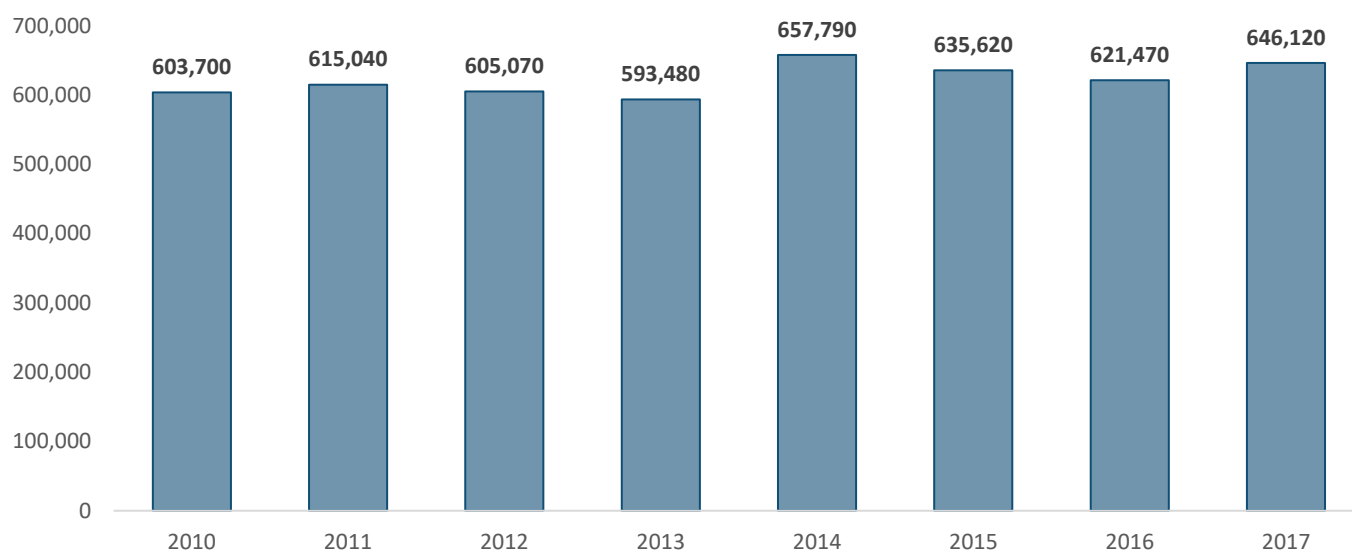
## 2. Referrals (Tables A1, C1, C5)

### 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.

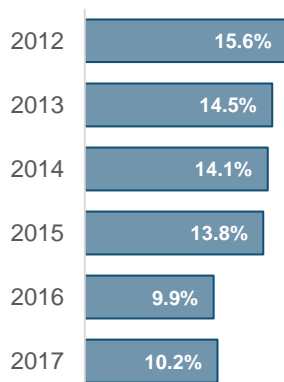
A **re-referral** is where a child has been referred within 12 months of a previous referral. Further details on how these figures are calculated can be found in the accompanying methodology document found alongside this publication at: [Statistics: children in need and child protection](#).

**Figure G: Number of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
England, 2010-2017

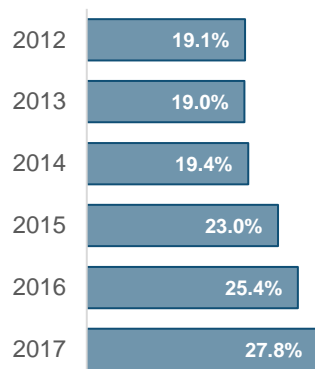


The number of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 621,470 in 2016 to 646,120 in 2017, an increase of 4.0%. The number of children who were subject to these referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 was 571,000 (i.e. there were 571,000 children who were the subject of the 646,120 referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017).

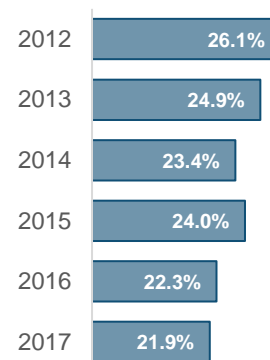
**Figure H1: Percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that resulted in no further action**  
England, 2012-2017



**Figure H2: Percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that were assessed and then required no further action**  
England, 2012-2017

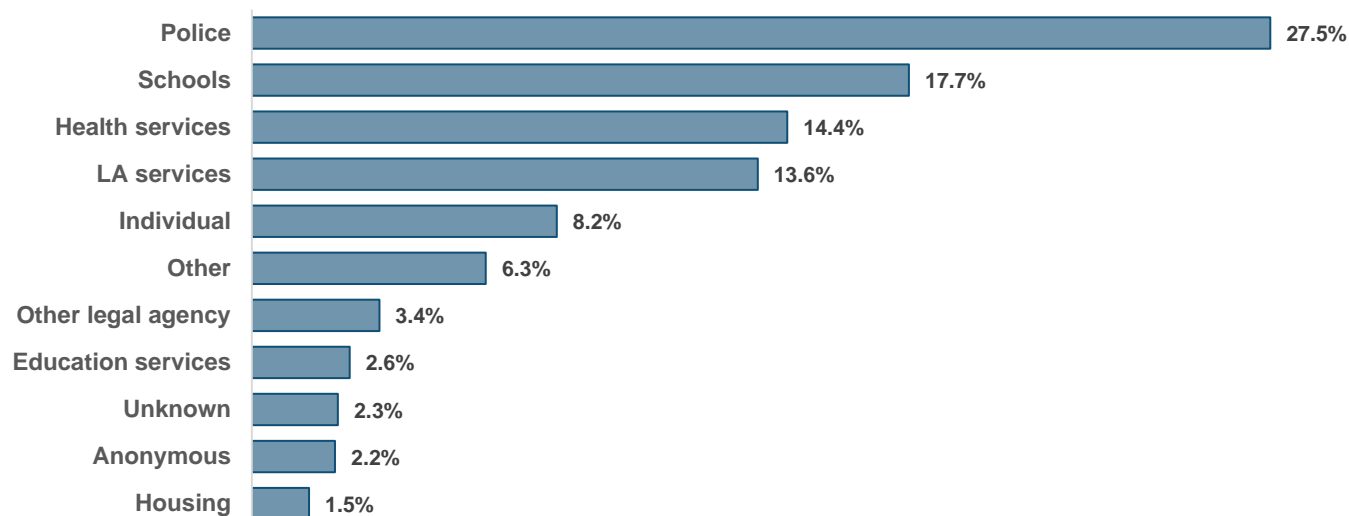


**Figure H3: Percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that were within 12 months of a previous referral**  
England, 2012-2017



The percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that resulted in no further action after initial consideration has increased, from 9.9% in 2016 to 10.2% in 2017, an increase of 0.3 percentage points (ppts). The percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that were assessed and then required no further action has also increased, from 25.4% in 2016 to 27.8% in 2017, an increase of 2.4ppts. However, the percentage of all referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that were within 12 months of a previous referral has decreased, from 22.3% in 2016, to 21.9% in 2017, a decrease of 0.4ppts.

**Figure I: Percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March by source of referral**  
England, 2017



Most referrals are from the police – this year 27.5% of referrals were from the police, followed by schools with 17.7%, and health services with 14.4%. Where there is more than one referral for the same child, it is the referral source of the first referral reported in the children in need census. The order and proportions of the most frequent source of referral are similar to last year.

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

#### Recent 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.

All 152 local authorities were operating a continuous assessment model by the end of March 2017 (up from 98% by the end of March 2016 and 91% by the end of March 2015). No distinction between the types of assessment carried out was recorded in the data collected this year.

The number of assessments completed in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 571,640 in 2016 to 606,920 in 2017, an increase of 6.2%. The average (median) duration of assessment in 2017 was 29 working days, an increase from 2016 when it was 28 working days.

As there have been major changes to the process of carrying out assessments comparisons over a longer period are not recommended.

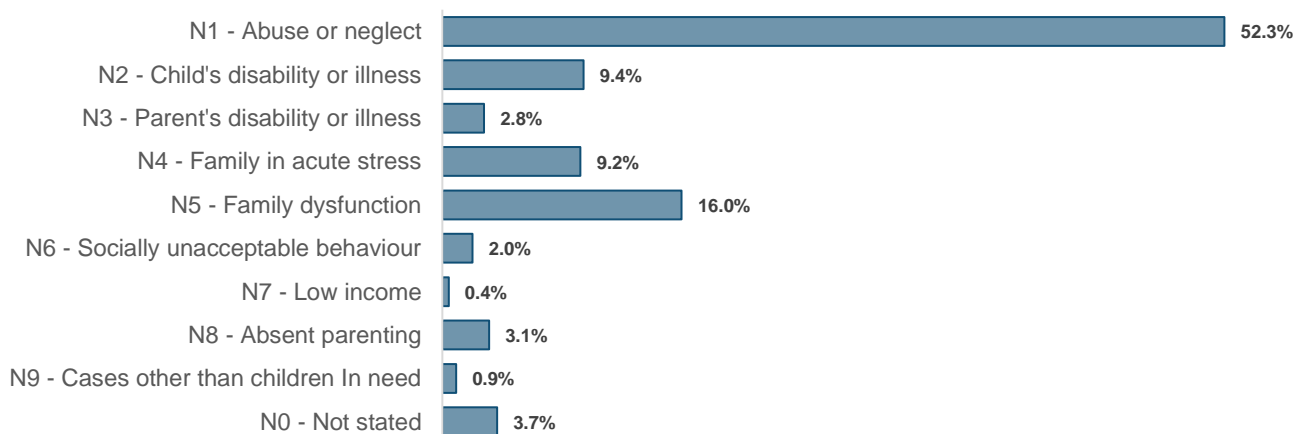
#### Primary need identified at assessment (Table B3)

##### 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.

**Figure J: Percentage of children in need at 31 March 2017, by primary need at assessment**  
England, 2017



Abuse or neglect was the most common primary need at assessment for children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. This year 52.3% 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 16.0%, and child's disability or illness at 9.4%. The order and proportions of the most frequent primary need at assessment are similar to last year.

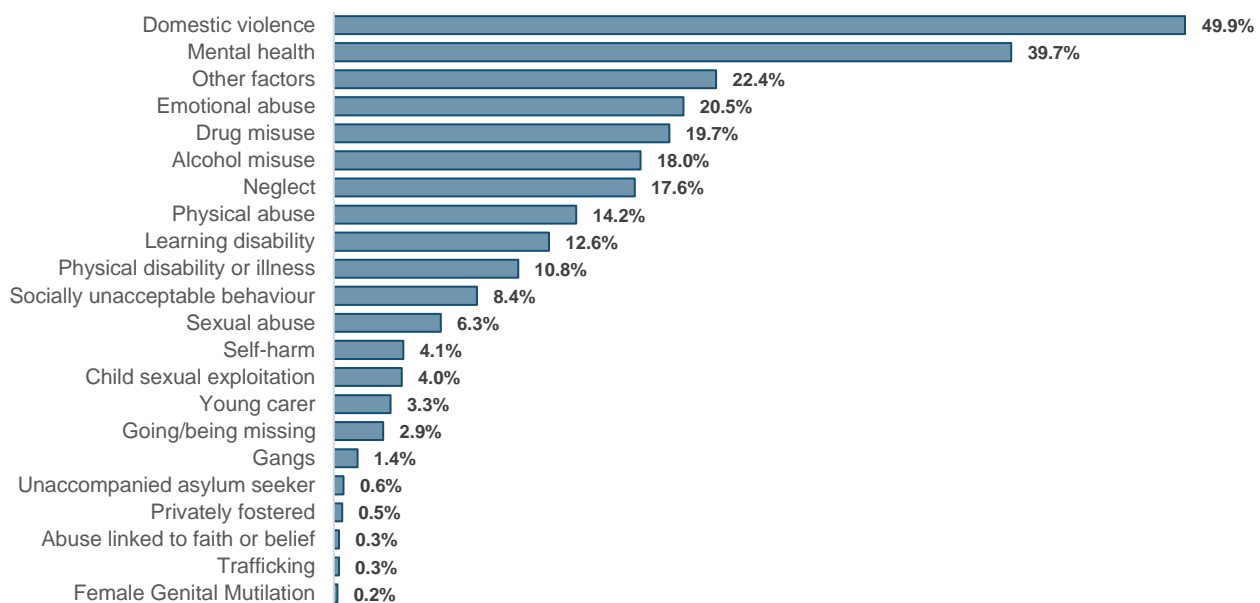
## Factors identified at the end of assessment (Table C3)

### 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.

**Figure K: Percentage of children in need at 31 March 2017, by factors identified at the end of assessment**  
England, 2017



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 2017 – this year 49.9% of children in need had domestic violence as a factor identified at the end of assessment, followed by mental health at 39.7%, which incorporates mental health of the child or other adults in the family/household.



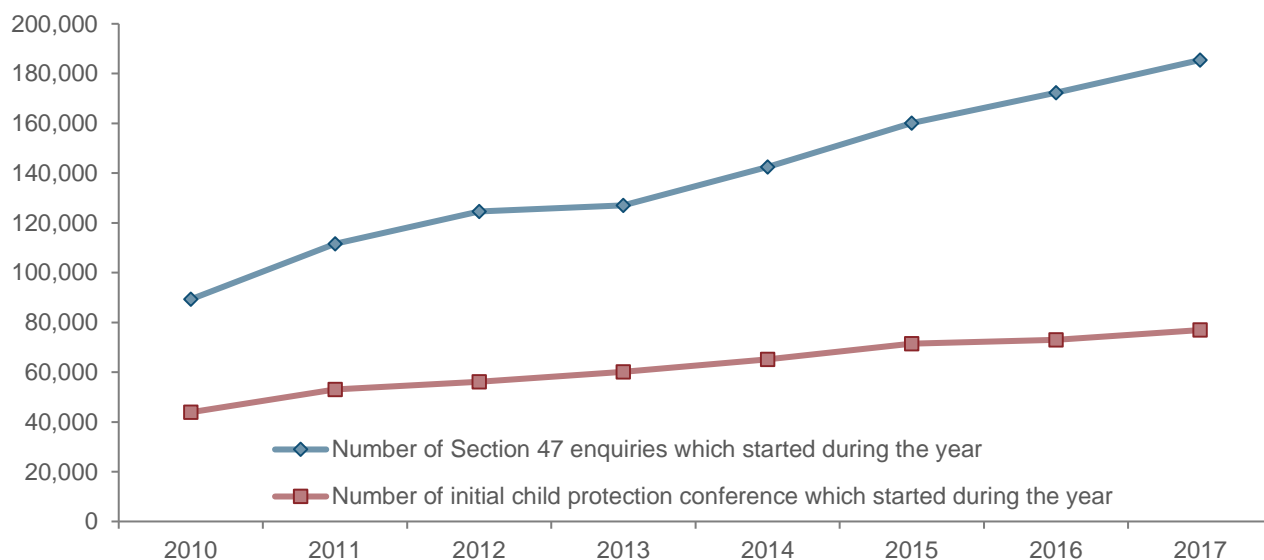
## 4. Section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences (Table A2)

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

England, 2010-2017



The number of section 47 enquiries within the year has increased, from 172,290 in 2016 to 185,450 in 2017, an increase of 7.6%. The number of children who were the subject of these section 47 enquiries during the year was 167,670 (i.e. there were 167,670 children who were the subject of the 185,450 section 47 enquiries in the year ending 31st March 2017).

There was also an increase in the number of initial stage child protection conferences which took place in the year, from 73,050 in 2016 to 76,930 in 2017, an increase of 5.3%. The number of children who were subject to these initial stage child protection conferences during the year was 75,890 (i.e. there were 75,890 children who were subject to 76,930 initial stage child protection conferences in the year ending 31st March 2017).

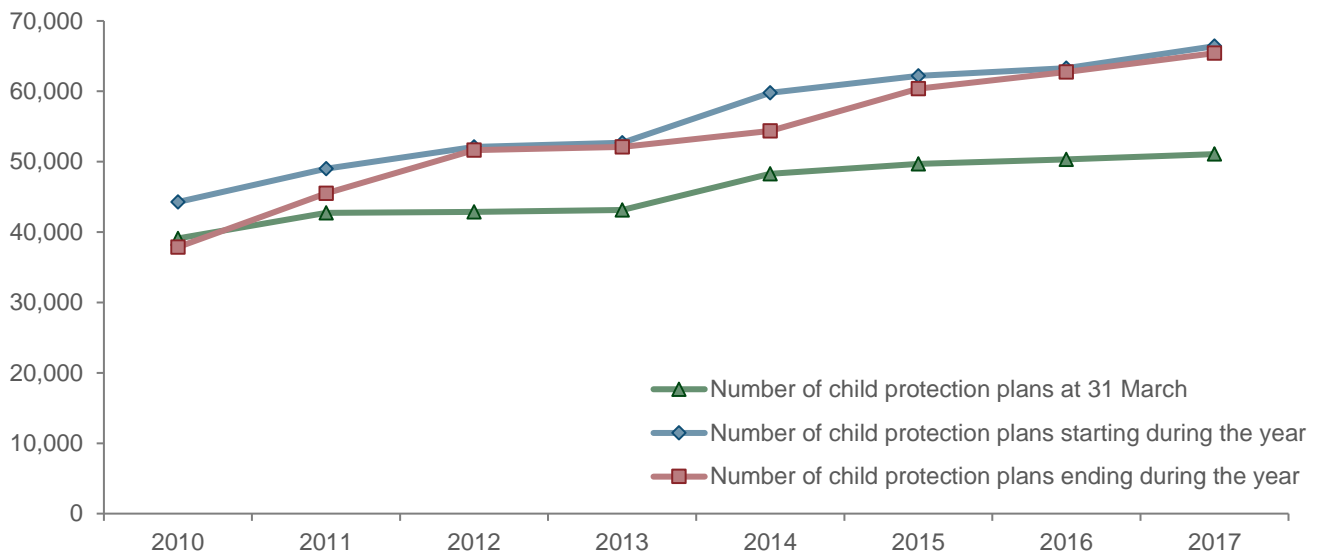
## 5. Child protection plans (Tables A2, A5, D4)

### 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 M: Number of child protection plans starting in the year, ending in the year and at 31<sup>st</sup> March England, 2010-2017**

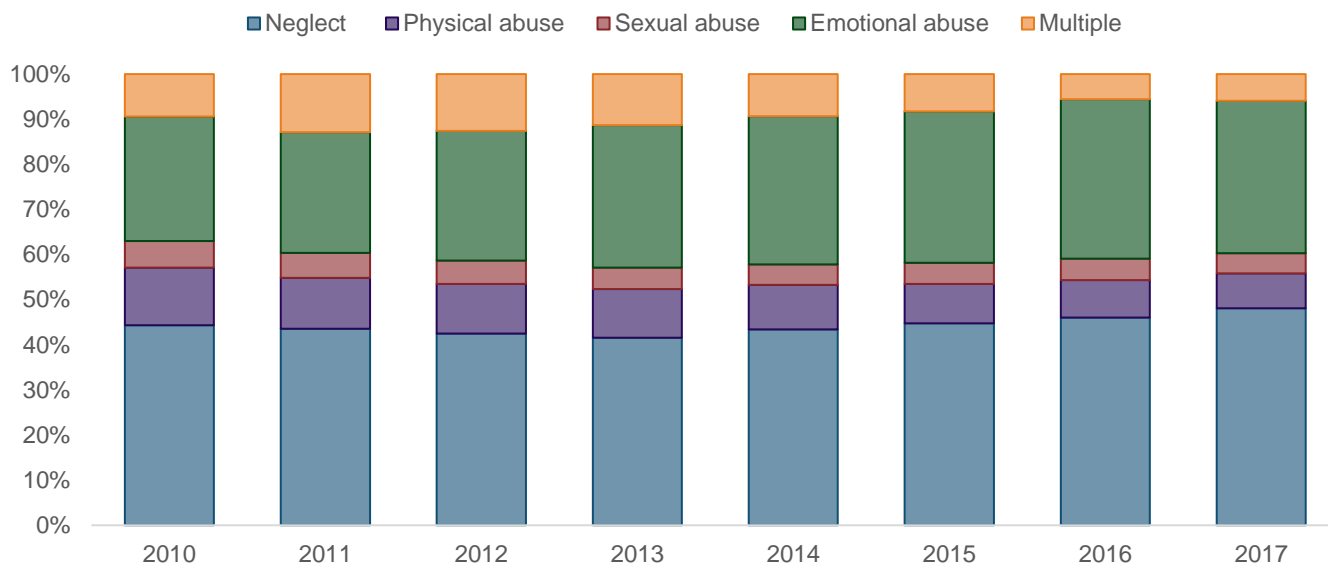


The number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 50,310 in 2016 to 51,080 in 2017, an increase of 1.5%. The percentage of children who had been the subject of a child protection plan for longer than three months at 31<sup>st</sup> March, and who had reviews carried out within the required timescales has decreased this year, from 93.7% in 2016 to 92.2% in 2017, a decrease of 1.5ppts.

Neglect was the most common initial category of abuse for children in need who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 – this year 48.1% of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March had neglect as their initial category of abuse, followed by emotional abuse with 33.8%. Neglect was also the most common latest category of abuse for children in need who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 – this year 47.8% of children who were subject to a child protection plan at 31<sup>st</sup> March had neglect as their latest category of abuse, followed by emotional abuse with 36.7%.

**Figure N: Percentage of children in need subject of a child protection plan at 31<sup>st</sup> March by initial category of abuse**

England, 2010-2017



The number of child protection plans starting during the year has increased from 63,310 in 2016 to 66,410 in 2017. The number of children starting these child protection plans in 2017 was 66,180 (i.e. there were 66,180 children who started 66,410 child protection plans in the year ending 31st March 2017).

The number of child protection plans ending during the year has increased from 62,750 in 2016 to 65,420 in 2017. The number of children subject to ending a child protection plan in 2017 was 65,200 (i.e. there were 65,200 children who ended 65,420 child protection plans in the year ending 31st March 2017).

The number of child protection plans at any point during the year is 116,500 in 2017. The number of children subject to these child protection plans was 115,210.

## 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 2017
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 2017
Table A3:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2017, by gender, age (at 31 March) and primary need
Table A4:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2017, 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 2017, 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 2010 to 2017, 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 2017, and rates per 10,000 children, by local authority
Table B2:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2017, by local authority and disability
Table B3:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2017, by local authority and primary need
Table B4:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2017, by local authority and duration of open case
Table B5:	Numbers of episodes of need ending in the year to 31 March 2017, by local authority and duration of episode of need.
Table B6:	Numbers of episodes of need ending in the year to 31 March 2017, 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 2017, by local authority.
Table C2:	Number of assessments completed by children's social care services, in the year ending 31 March 2017, by local authority and duration of assessment
Table C3:	Number of episodes with assessment factor information, in the year ending 31 March 2017, 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 2017, by local authority
Table C5:	Number of referrals completed by children's social care services, in the year ending 31 March 2017, by local authority and source of referral

### 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 2017, 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 2017, by local authority, initial and latest category of abuse
Table D3:	Number of child protection plans starting in the year ending 31 March 2017 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 2017, 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 2017, 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 2017, 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 2017, 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 2017, by local authority and the length of time the child remained in need.

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 <a href="#">Statistics: children in need and child protection</a> webpage.
-----------------------	---

---

Rounding conventions and suppression	<p>The Code of Practice for Official 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>‘-’ means negligible count</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>
--------------------------------------	---

---

## 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: <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>

---

## 8. Official Statistics

These are Official Statistics and have been produced in line with Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

This 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
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest

The department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

### Previous designation as National Statistics

These statistics have previously been designated National Statistics. Through our quality assurance processes we have identified an inconsistency within the derivation of the ‘in need’ at any point during the year and the ended an episode of need flags, which relates to how particular cases that remain open across census periods are dealt with. The headline measures of the number of children in need at the end of the year are unaffected. In light of this issue, and in agreement with the UKSA, these statistics have been de-designated as National Statistics while the methodology is reviewed. Please refer to the data quality and uses document for further information and the scale of the impact.

## 9. Technical information

A data quality and uses and methodology document accompany this SFR. 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

Press Office News Desk, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

Tel: 020 7783 8300

### Other enquiries/feedback

Nicholas Treece, Data Outputs Division, Department for Education, 2 St Paul's Place, Sheffield, S1 2FJ.

Email: [CIN.STATS@education.gov.uk](mailto:CIN.STATS@education.gov.uk)



# Department for Education

© Crown copyright 2017

This publication (not including logos) is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

To view this licence:

visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3)

email [psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

write to Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London, TW9 4DU

About this publication:

Enquiries: Nicholas Treece, Data Outputs Division, Department for Education, 2 St Paul's Place, Sheffield, S1 2FJ.

Email: [CIN.STATS@education.gov.uk](mailto:CIN.STATS@education.gov.uk)

Reference: [SFR 61/2017]



Follow us on Twitter:  
[@educationgovuk](https://twitter.com/educationgovuk)



Like us on Facebook:  
[facebook.com/educationgovuk](https://facebook.com/educationgovuk)