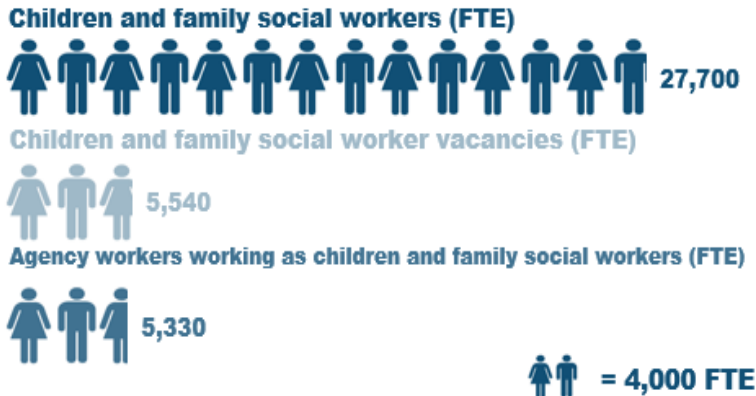




Experimental statistics: Children and family social work workforce in England, year ending 30 September 2016

SFR 08/2017, 16 February 2017

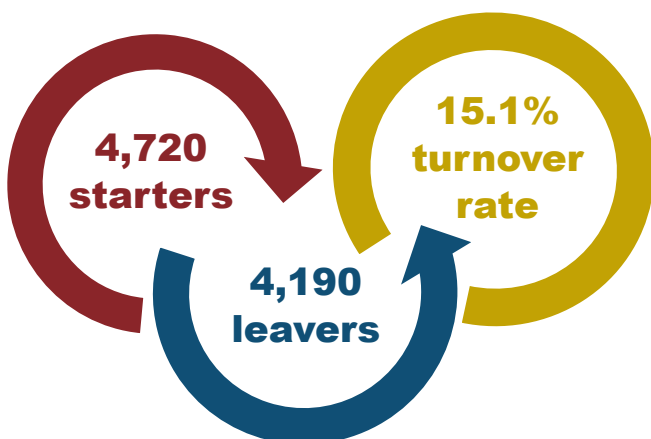
There were 27,700 FTE children and family social workers at 30 September 2016 (29,930 headcount), a reported increase on last year



The full-time equivalent (FTE) number of children and family social workers at 30 September 2016 was 27,700, an increase of 4.5% from 26,500 at 30 September 2015. The number of children and family social workers at 30 September 2016 was 29,930 (headcount), an increase of 4.7% from 28,570 (headcount) at 30 September 2015.

Agency workers are recorded separately from children and family social workers employed directly by the local authority. The number of agency workers working as children and family social workers at 30 September 2016 was 5,330 (FTE), an increase of 9.6% from 4,860 (FTE) at 30 September 2015.

During the year ending 30 September 2016, there were more starters than leavers



The FTE number of children and family social workers starting in the year ending 30 September 2016 was 4,720 (4,990 headcount). The FTE number of children and family social workers leaving in the year ending 30 September 2016 was 4,190 (4,730 headcount).

The turnover rate (defined as number of leavers divided by the number of workers in place at 30 September 2016) was 15.1% (FTE).

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About this release

This experimental statistical first release provides national and local level information on the children and family social work workforce in English local authorities for the year ending 30 September 2016. This is the fourth year that statistics have been published based on data collected from local authorities on the children and family social work workforce.

Experimental statistics

Experimental statistics are defined in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics as “new official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.” For more information on experimental statistics, please visit the ONS website [here](#).

Users should read and understand all footnotes and caveats presented in this release and the accompanying tables to fully understand the practical applications and limitations of the data. In particular, comparisons with previous year’s published statistics should be done so with caution as changes from year to year may not reflect actual changes in figures, but may simply indicate improvements in data quality. Known data quality issues and explanations are listed in the technical document.

In this publication

The following documents are included in the SFR:

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

The accompanying technical document provides information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data.

Feedback

We are changing how our releases look and welcome feedback on any aspect of this document at ProgrammeOffice.CSAR@education.gsi.gov.uk

1. Number of children and family social workers (tables 1a, 2, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 6, 7a, 7b, 7c)

Definition of a children and family social worker

A social worker that is registered with the Health and Care Professional Council (HCPC), 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 their position in the organisation, except Heads of Service. For the purpose of this publication the following job roles are included: Senior Manager (for example Area Director); Middle Manager (for example Service Manager); First Line Manager (for example Team Manager); Senior Practitioner (working in a local authority in a children’s services department as a team leader or supervising social worker); Case Holder (a social worker that manages cases; the definition of case can be found below); and Qualified without cases (for example Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), Youth Custody worker, Family Support).

For the purposes of this publication, agency workers working as children and family social workers are counted and reported separately to children and family social workers employed by local authorities.

Number of social workers in place as at 30 September 2016

The full-time equivalent (FTE) number of children and family social workers at 30 September 2016 was 27,700, an increase of 4.5% from 26,500 at 30 September 2015. The number of children and family social workers at 30 September 2016 was 29,930 (headcount), an increase of 4.7% from 28,570 (headcount) at 30 September 2015.

Part of the increase in the number of children and family social workers may be due to improved data quality and interpretation of the guidance. This is supported by fact that the net increase based on the recorded number of starters and leavers does not fully account for the increase from last year. A number of

local authorities have confirmed that the method for counting social workers is more robust this year compared to last year.

The increase follows the general trend from previous years although, it may be that the increases are explained by more accurate data collection over the different years, rather than genuine increase in social workers.

Figure 1: Number of children and family social workers
England, 2014-2016

	Number of children and family social workers at 30th September 2014	Number of children and family social workers at 30th September 2015	Number of children and family social workers at 30th September 2016
FTE	24,620	26,500	27,700
Headcount	26,810	28,570	29,930

Source: Children and family social worker workforce collection 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16.

Age of children and family social workers

At 30 September 2016, 54.3% (FTE) of children and family social workers were between 30 and 49 years of age, an increase from 53.9% (FTE) at 30 September 2015. The overall age distribution of children and family social workers remains similar to the previous year; however, as this was only reported as a mandatory data item for the second time this year, comparisons between years should be treated with caution.

Figure 2: Percentage of children and family social workers by age
England, 2016

Age	Percentage of children and family social workers at 30 September 2016 (FTE)
20 to 29 years old	15.9
30 to 39 years old	29.3
40 to 49 years old	25.0
50 to 59 years old	24.1
60 years old and over	5.1

Source: Children and family social worker workforce collection 2015-16.

Time in service at local authority

At 30 September 2016, 51.6% (FTE) of children and family social workers had been in service for less than 5 years, an increase from 48.0% (FTE) at 30 September 2015; however, as this was only reported as a mandatory data item for the second time this year, comparisons between years should be treated with caution.

Figure 3: Percentage of children and family social workers by time in service at local authority

England, 2016

Time in service at local authority	Percentage of children and family social workers at 30 September 2016 (FTE)
0 to 2 years	29.7
2 to 5 years	21.8
5 to 10 years	19.5
10 to 20 years	20.5
20 to 30 years	6.4
30 years or more	2.1

Source: Children and family social worker workforce collection 2015-16.

Social worker role

At the 30 September 2016, 54.2% (FTE) of children and family social workers were reported as being in a case holder role. This data item is mandatory for the first time this year; therefore, there are no comparable data for previous years. As this data item is new, it should be viewed with caution.

This distribution varies by local authority as roles vary across local authorities and the method for categorising a social worker role to the roles specified in the children and family social work workforce collection varies across authorities, with some local authorities reporting problems matching the roles breakdown used locally to the breakdown within the collection.

Figure 4: Percentage of children and family social workers by role

England, 2016

Role	Percentage of children and family social workers At 30 September 2016 (FTE)
Senior manager	1.9
Senior Practitioner	11.3
Middle Manager	4.7
First Line Manager	13.1
Case Holder	54.2
Qualified without cases	14.5

Source: Children and family social worker workforce collection 2015-16.

Number of cases

The number of cases held by children and family social workers (including agency workers) at 30 September 2016 was 326,770, with 284,130 of these cases being held by front-line children and family social workers.

Along with the number of cases, information was collected on the number of frontline children and family social workers holding cases and the number of agency front-line social workers working as children and family social workers holding cases on a mandatory basis for the first time this year. The number of front line children and family social workers holding case at 30 September 2016 was 13,670 (FTE). The number of agency front line social workers working as children and family social workers holding cases was 3,270 (FTE).

The average caseload per children and family social worker was 16.1 cases (based on FTE counts). This is a new measure and should not be compared to last year's number of children in need (CiN) per social

worker measure. This is only an indicative caseload as the variable(s) used to calculate this will not capture all case holding social workers. Therefore, care should be taken when viewing these figures.

These data items are mandatory for the first time this year; therefore, there are no comparable data for previous years. As these data items are new, they should be viewed with caution. The interpretation of how to report these fields has varied by local authority and across the individual level and aggregate level data returns.

2. Agency workers (tables 1a, 2, 6)

Calculating the agency worker rate

Agency worker rate =

$$\frac{\text{Number of agency workers working as children and family social workers at 30 September}}{(\text{Number of agency workers working as children and family social workers at 30 September} + \text{Number of children and family social workers at 30 September})}$$

Agency workers are recorded separately from children and family social workers employed directly by the local authority. The number of agency workers working as children and family social workers at 30 September 2016 was 5,330 (FTE), an increase of 9.6% from 4,860 (FTE) at 30 September 2015.

The agency worker rate at 30 September 2016 was 16.1% (FTE), the same rate as at 30 September 2015.

At 30 September 2016, 3,870 (FTE) of the 5,330 (FTE) agency workers working as children and family social workers at 30 September 2016 were covering vacancies – this equates to 72.6% (FTE) of all agency workers covering vacancies, a decrease from 79.2% (FTE) at 30 September 2015. This data item is only mandatory for the second time this year; therefore, comparisons between years should be treated with caution.

The percentage of agency workers covering vacancies varies between local authorities. Some local authorities report that none of their agency workers are covering vacancies whilst for other authorities all of their agency workers were covering vacancies. Agency workers not covering vacancies could be used to manage seasonal peaks, or deal with acute backlogs, as an alternative to employing permanent social workers. For this reason, high agency worker rates do not necessarily imply recruitment and retention issues.

Figure 5: Number of agency workers working as children and family social workers

England, 2015 to 2016

	Number of agency workers at 30 September 2015		Number of agency workers at 30 September 2016	
	Total	Of which, covering vacancies	Total	Of which, covering vacancies
FTE	4,860	3,850	5,330	3,870
Headcount	5,070	4,010	5,570	4,020

Sources: Children and family social worker workforce collection 2014-15 and 2015-16.

3. Vacancies (table 1a, 2, 6)

Calculating the vacancy rate

$$\text{Vacancy rate} = \frac{\text{Number of vacancies at 30 September}}{(\text{Number of social workers at 30 September} + \text{Number of vacancies at 30 September})}$$

The number of children and family social worker vacancies at 30 September 2016 was 5,540 (FTE), an increase of 1.3% from 5,470 (FTE) at 30 September 2015.

The vacancy rate at 30 September 2016 was 16.7% (FTE), with large variations between the regions from 6.5% in Yorkshire & Humber to 25.8% (FTE) in Outer London and 23.2% (FTE) in Inner London.

These data items are only mandatory for the second time this year; therefore, comparisons between years should be treated with caution.

4. Absence (table 1a, 2, 6)

Calculating the absence rate

$$\text{Absence rate} = \frac{\text{Number of days missed due to sickness absence during year}}{(\text{Number of children and family social workers at 30 September (FTE)} \times 253)}$$

Where 253 is the number of working days in a year taking account of bank holidays. This includes all absences including long-term sickness.

The number of days missed due to sickness absence in the year ending 30 September 2016 was 244,320 days. This is broadly similar to last year's 236,760 days.

The absence rate during the year to 30 September 2016 was 3.5%; the rate varies across the regions, between 2.1% in Outer London and 4.7% in the North East.

These data are only mandatory for the second time this year; hence caution should be used when making comparisons year on year comparisons.

5. Starters and Leavers (table 1a, 1b, 1c, 2, 4a, 5a, 5b, 6, 8a, 9a, 9b)

Calculating the turnover rate

$$\text{Turnover rate} = \frac{\text{Number of children and family social workers leaving in year ending at 30 September}}{\text{Number of children and family social workers at 30 September}}$$

The FTE number of children and family social workers starting in the year ending 30 September 2016 was 4,720 (4,990 headcount). The FTE number of children and family social workers leaving in the year ending 30 September 2016 was 4,190 (4,730 headcount). The FTE turnover rate was 15.1% (15.8% headcount).

Figure 6: Number of children and family social workers leaving and starting in the year
England, 2016

	At 30 September 2016	Starters in the year ending 30 September 2016	Leavers in the year ending 30 September 2016	Turnover rate
FTE	27,700	4,720	4,190	15.1
Headcount	29,930	4,990	4,730	15.8

Source: Children and family social worker workforce collection 2015-16.

Information on the number of starters and leavers during the year ending 30 September has been collected on a mandatory basis since 2013. However, for the first time this year, we have collected, on a mandatory basis, further breakdowns for both groups. As these are new data items, they should be viewed with caution.

Age and origin of starters

During the year ending the 30 September 2016, 63.7% (FTE) of children and family social workers starting in the year were aged 39 or below.

Figure 7: Percentage of starters in the year by age
England, 2016

Age	Percentage of starters in the year ending 30 September 2016 (FTE)
20 to 29 years old	30.9
30 to 39 years old	32.8
40 to 49 years old	21.6
50 to 59 years old	13.3
60 years old and over	1.4

Source: Children and family social worker workforce collection 2015-16.

During the year ending the 30 September 2016, 64.5% (FTE) of children and family social workers starting in the year had an origin of either 'Not know' or 'Not yet collected'.

These data items are mandatory for the first time this year; therefore, there are no comparable data for previous years. As these are new data items, they should be viewed with caution.

Age, time in service and destination of leavers

During the year ending the 30 September 2016, 55.8% (FTE) of children and family social workers leaving in the year were aged between 30 and 49.

Figure 8: Percentage of leavers in the year by age
England, 2016

Age	Percentage of leavers in the year ending 30 September 2016 (FTE)
20 to 29 years old	13.8
30 to 39 years old	29.5
40 to 49 years old	26.3
50 to 59 years old	19.3
60 years old and over	9.9

Source: Children and family social worker workforce collection 2015-16.

During the year ending the 30 September 2016, 59.8% (FTE) of children and family social workers leaving in the year had been in service for less than 5 years.

Figure 9: Percentage of leavers in the year by time in service
England, 2016

Time in service	Percentage of leavers in the year ending 30 September 2016 (FTE)
0 to 2 years	31.7
2 to 5 years	28.1
5 to 10 years	18.2
10 to 20 years	14.5
20 to 30 years	5.0
30 years or more	2.6

Source: Children and family social worker workforce collection 2015-16.

During the year ending the 30 September 2016, 63.1% (FTE) of children and family social workers leaving in the year had a destination of either 'Not know' or 'Not yet collected'.

These data items are mandatory for the first time this year; therefore, there are no comparable data for previous years. As these are new data items, they should be viewed with caution.

6. Information collected on a voluntary basis from individual level returns

Warning about response rates for voluntary variables

The following section provides figures for the new voluntary data items from the individual return, with 23 of 152 local authorities providing this. However, the response rate varied for each data item. The figures should be considered in conjunction with their response rates. Particular care should be taken when looking at variables that had very low response rates.

The figures in this section are not provided in the accompanying tables and are not provided below national level due to the response rates.

For the first time in 2015-16, individual social worker level data was collected on a voluntary basis alongside the statutory aggregate data return. Local authorities that chose to return an individual social worker level return were not also required to complete the aggregate version. The individual return was used to derive the figures presented in the accompanying tables for these local authorities. In total 23 authorities submitted the voluntary individual level data return.

As part of the individual return, there were new voluntary data items that were only collected on the individual form. Of the 23 local authorities to submit individual level data on a voluntary basis, 21 returned partial data for at least one of the two voluntary variables collected (ethnicity and gender). Therefore, figures for ethnicity and gender have been summarised below.

Ethnicity

Of the data returned by participating local authorities on ethnicity, during the year ending 30 September 2016, 53.8% (headcount) of children and family social workers had an ethnicity of white ('White – British', 'White – Irish' or 'Any Other White Background'). 30.8% (headcount) of children and family social workers had an ethnicity of either unknown ('Refused' or 'Information Not Yet Obtained') or no ethnicity was provided.

Figure 10: Percentage of children and family social workers by ethnicity (from local authorities participating in the voluntary individual return)

England, 2016

Ethnicity	Percentage of children and family social workers (headcount)
White	53.8
Black	8.5
Asian	4.3
Mixed	2.0
Unknown or information not provided	30.8

Source: Children and family social worker workforce collection 2015-16.

Gender

Of the data returned by participating local authorities on gender, during the year ending 30 September 2016, 78.8% (headcount) of children and family social workers were female; 7.3% (headcount) had no gender provided.

Figure 11: Percentage of children and family social workers by gender (from local authorities participating in the voluntary individual return)

England, 2016

Gender	Percentage of children and family social workers (headcount)
Female	78.8
Male	13.9
Information not provided	7.3

Source: Children and family social worker workforce collection 2015-16.

7. Accompanying tables

The following tables are available in excel format on the department's statistics website for [Children and family social work workforce](#).

National level

- Table 1a: National summary of key statistics of children and family social workers
- Table 1b: National summary of key statistics of children and family social workers starting in the year
- Table 1c: National summary of key statistics of children and family social workers leaving in the year

Regional and local authority level

- Table 2: Key statistics of children and family social workers by region and local authority, based on full-time equivalents (FTEs)
- Table 3a: Number of children and family social workers by age, region and local authority, based on full-time equivalents (FTEs)
- Table 3b: Number of children and family social workers by time in service at local authority, region and local authority, based on full-time equivalents (FTEs)

Table 3c:	Number of children and family social workers by role, region and local authority, based on full-time equivalents (FTEs)
Table 3d:	Number of cases held by children and family social workers and average caseload, by local authority, based on full-time equivalents (FTEs)
Table 4:	Number of children and family social workers starting in the year by age, region and local authority based on full-time equivalents (FTEs)
Table 5a:	Number of children and family social workers leaving in the year by age, region and local authority based on full-time equivalents (FTEs)
Table 5b:	Number of children and family social workers leaving in the year by time in service at local authority, region and local authority, based on full-time equivalents (FTEs)
Table 6:	Key statistics of children and family social workers by region and local authority, based on headcount
Table 7a:	Number of children and family social workers by age, region and local authority, based on headcount
Table 7b:	Number of children and family social workers by time in service at local authority, region and local authority, based on headcount
Table 7c:	Number of children and family social workers by role, region and local authority, based on headcount
Table 8:	Number of children and family social workers starting in the year by age, region and local authority based on headcount
Table 9a:	Number of children and family social workers leaving in the year by age, region and local authority based on headcount
Table 9b:	Number of children and family social workers leaving in the year by time in service at local authority, region and local authority, based on headcount

8. Further information is available

- Previous releases: [Children's social care workforce](#).
- Rest of the UK: Information on the children and family social work workforce of devolved administrations can be found at the following links:
 - [Scotland](#)
 - [Wales](#)
 - [Northern Ireland](#)
- Children in Need: [Statistical First Release Characteristics of children in need](#)
- Children Looked After: Statistical First Release [Children Looked After in England](#)

9. Experimental Statistics

The Department has designated these as experimental statistics, which are defined as new official statistics undergoing evaluation. They are published in order to involve users and stakeholders in their development and as a means to build in quality at an early stage.

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

10. Technical information

A technical document accompanies this SFR. This 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.

11. Get in touch

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Other enquiries/feedback

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Department for Education

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