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Department for Education

Reporting year 2026

Serious incident notifications

Annual statistics for England on serious incidents that involve death or serious harm to a child due to abuse or neglect, and any death of a looked-after child.

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Official statistics

Department for Education

Published

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DfE is proposing to cease this publication due to data reliability concerns and low user engagement. See 'Proposed changes to this publication' section for further details. Feedback is invited via sin.statistics@education.gov.uk by 31 August 2026.

Headline facts and figures

Serious incident notifications

357

Up 19 from 2025 but down 141 from 2019

Serious incident notifications relating to child death

160

Down 2 from 2025 and down 67 from 2019

Serious incident notifications relating to serious harm

188

Up 21 from 2025 but down 48 from 2019

In the year to 31 March 2026, the total number of notifications rose from a year earlier, following falls in the previous two years; this was driven by an increase in notifications relating to serious harm. Notifications relating to child death fell slightly to the lowest level since DfE became responsible for producing and publishing these statistics in 2019.

DfE is aware that, in some instances, not all incidents that meet the definition for a serious incident are notified. It is not possible to ascertain whether the rise in 2026 reflects an increase in serious incidents or whether more notifications were reported compared with the previous year.

DfE will continue to work with the Panel and local authorities to encourage the notification of serious incidents that meet the criteria as set out in [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 \(opens in new tab\)](#).

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About these statistics

This annual release contains statistics on serious incidents involving children that have been notified by local authorities. Notifiable serious incidents are those that involve death or serious harm to a child where abuse or neglect is known or suspected, and any death of a looked after child.

Serious harm includes (but is not limited to) serious and/or long-term impairment of a child's mental health or intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. It also covers impairment of physical health.

The Children Act 2004 (as amended by the [Children and Social Work Act 2017 \(opens in new tab\)](#)) states that where a local authority in England knows or suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, the local authority must notify the [Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel \(opens in new tab\)](#) (the Panel) if:

1. The child dies or is seriously harmed in the local authority's area, or
2. While normally resident in the local authority's area, the child dies or is seriously harmed outside England.

The statutory duty to notify the Panel of serious incidents where abuse or neglect was known or suspected came into effect from 29 June 2018. Prior to this, these notifications were only made to Ofsted.

The local authority should notify the Panel of serious incidents where abuse or neglect is known or suspected within five working days of becoming aware that the incident has occurred. However, in some cases, there can be delays in notifications being submitted.

DfE and Ofsted have joint access to the information submitted to the Panel via the child safeguarding incident notification system.

The local authority must also notify the Secretary of State for Education and Ofsted where a looked after child has died, whether or not abuse or neglect is known or suspected, via the child safeguarding incident notification system. The local authority should also notify DfE and Ofsted of the death of a care leaver up to and including the age of 24, via the child safeguarding incident notification system.

The statistics show the number of incidents notified in the period, rather than the number of incidents that occurred in the period and are based on one notification per incident, which can relate to more than one child in some instances.

Each reporting year covers the year to 31 March, with the most recent 2026 statistics covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Time-series comparisons in this release are made from 2019 onwards, when DfE first became responsible for producing and publishing these statistics (previously produced and published by Ofsted).

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Proposed changes to this publication

DfE regularly reviews its statistical publications to ensure they are of high quality and continue to meet user need.

DfE is aware that, in some instances, not all incidents that meet the definition of a serious incident are notified. As a result, SIN data is incomplete and not sufficiently reliable to support meaningful analysis or decision-making.

In addition, user engagement with the SIN Official Statistics is low, raising questions about their value, impact, and continued use.

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel is changing the way it reports so that evidence and learning from national oversight of rapid reviews will be published on a quarterly and annual basis. These quarterly reports will provide a breakdown of the number of rapid reviews submitted for incidents occurring in that quarter, broken down by region, incident type and an overview of the demographics of the children who experienced harm. The reports will further highlight a small number of emerging themes and will be published on the [Panel's website \(opens in new tab\)](#). This will sit alongside Panel reviews into complex or nationally important child safeguarding issues, which also provide important sources of learning and information.

Given the concerns about the reliability of the data and its low usage, and that more comprehensive and timely information will be available through alternative publications, DfE is proposing to cease publication of the SIN Official Statistics series.

We welcome feedback on this proposal. Please send your comments by 31 August 2026 to:
sin.statistics@education.gov.uk.

Total number of notifications

DfE is aware that, in some instances, not all incidents that meet the definition for a serious incident are notified. It is not possible to ascertain whether the rise in 2026 reflects an increase in serious incidents or whether more notifications were reported compared with the previous year.

Figures on serious incident notifications between 2015 and 2018 are based on [Ofsted published data \(opens in new tab\)](#) and from 2019 onwards are based on DfE data.

The rate (of notifications per total child population) in this section was calculated based on the [2024 mid-year ONS population estimates for England \(opens in new tab\)](#) as they were the latest available estimates at the time of publication.

In the year to 31 March 2026, the total number of notifications increased to 357 from a year earlier, following falls in the previous two years. This represents an increase of 19 notifications from the previous year, although the figure remains 141 notifications lower than in 2019.

DfE will continue to work with the Panel and local authorities to encourage the notification of serious incidents that meet the criteria as set out in [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 \(opens in new tab\)](#).

In 2026, there was approximately one notification per 34,000 children (aged 0 to 17) in England, equivalent to 0.003% of the total child population; this percentage has remained steady since the series started in 2019.

It is not possible to ascertain from the figures whether the annual increase in 2021, which also represents the series peak, was linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Panel noted in their [2020 Annual Report \(opens in new tab\)](#) (page 9) ‘Evidence from our analysis of Serious Incident Notifications and rapid reviews is that the COVID-19 outbreak continues to present a situational risk for vulnerable children and families, with the potential to exacerbate pre-existing safeguarding risks and bring about new ones’.

Chart

Table

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Number of serious incident notifications, 2015 to 2026, England

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Number of serious incident notifications	385	379	433	384	498	449	536	442	456	405	338	357

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[Data symbols](#) ?

Footnotes

1. Figures between 2015 and 2018 are based on [Ofsted published data \(opens in new tab\)](#).

Source: Child Safeguarding Incident Notification System

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Use our table tool to explore this data.

Explore data

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Nature of notifications

Serious incident notifications are categorised as either child death, serious harm, or other. Most notifications in the ‘other’ category relate to incidents with child perpetrators who were themselves known or suspected to have been abused or neglected.

DfE is aware that, in some instances, not all incidents that meet the definition for a serious incident are notified. It is not possible to ascertain whether the rise in 2026 reflects an increase in serious incidents or whether more notifications were reported compared with the previous year.

This release includes statistics from 2024 onwards on notifications relating to children looked after by local authorities (CLA), at national level only and with breakdowns by nature of notification, including whether abuse or neglect was known or suspected in the CLA death if applicable. This follows the additions of CLA status in December 2022 and accompanying guidance in April 2023 to the [Child Safeguarding Incident Notification System \(opens in new tab\)](#). Each notification for a CLA death represents the death of one CLA child.

A child is looked after by a local authority if they are:

- Provided with accommodation, for a continuous period of more than 24 hours;
- Subject to a care order; or
- Subject to a placement order.

CLA deaths figures as reported in the DfE statistics release [Children looked after in England including adoptions](#) are produced on a different basis from information within the [SSDA903 CLA return \(opens in new tab\)](#) and are not directly comparable with the CLA deaths figures reported in these statistics. In particular, the period the notification relates to is when the notification was reported, not the date of death.

The annual increase in the total number of notifications in the year to 31 March 2026 (up 19) was driven by a rise in serious harm notifications (up 21). Notifications relating to child death fell slightly (down 2) and other notifications were unchanged from the previous year. The number of child death notifications in 2026 was the lowest since DfE became responsible for producing and publishing these statistics in 2019.

The overall reduction in total notifications between 2019 and 2026 (down 141) reflected falls across all categories. This was primarily driven by fewer child death notifications (down 67) and serious harm notifications (down 48), alongside a fall in other types of notifications (down 26).

2024 represented the only year since DfE became responsible for producing and publishing these statistics that child death notifications were more common than serious harm notifications.

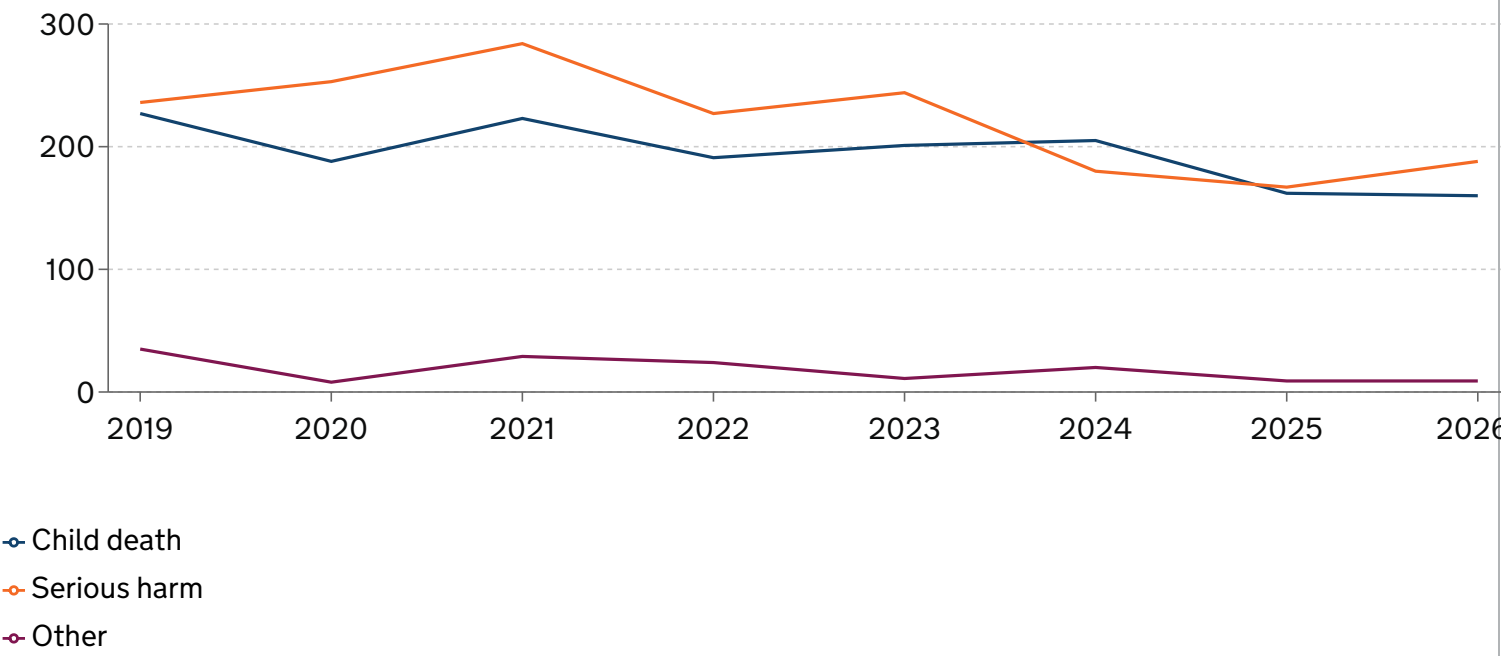
In 2026, around 3 in 10 child death notifications related to CLA (29% or 46 notifications), with 12 of those notifications involving children where abuse or neglect was known or suspected (26% of CLA death notifications) and 34 of those notifications involving children where abuse or neglect was not known or suspected (74% of CLA death notifications).

Chart

Table

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Number of serious incident notifications by nature of notification, 2019 to 2026, England



Footnotes

1. Most notifications in the other category relate to incidents with child perpetrators who were themselves known or suspected to have been abused or neglected.

Source: Child Safeguarding Incident Notification System

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Contact us

If you have a specific enquiry about Serious incident notifications statistics and data:

Children's Services Statistics TeamEmail: sin.stats@education.gov.uk

Contact name: Andy Brook

Press office

If you have a media enquiry:

Telephone: 020 7783 8300

Public enquiries

If you have a general enquiry about the Department for Education (DfE) or education:

Phone: 0370 000 2288

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