

NSPCC

How safe are our children?

THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE
OVERVIEW OF CHILD
PROTECTION IN THE UK

2018



EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Authors

Holly Bentley, Andy Burrows, Laura Clarke, Abbie Gillgan, Jazmin Glen, Maria Hafizi, Fiona Letendrie, Pam Miller, Orla O'Hagan, Priya Patel, Jessica Peppiate, Kate Stanley, Emily Starr, Nikki Vasco and Janaya Walker

Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the input of many individuals. There are too many to thank everyone individually, but included in this list are government statisticians, experts in child protection and numerous NSPCC staff. We would particularly like to extend our thanks to Nick Moon, Joe Traynor and Dr. Caroline Jones for their invaluable feedback. Special thanks also go to Georgina Woolfrey, Susan Galloway, Harriet Jackson, Emily Davies, Nikki Humphreys, Martha Kirby, Anna Brown and Judith Fisher for their contributions.

Foreword



Child abuse can be prevented – and each of us can play a role in the fight against it. Our *How safe are our children?* report equips all of us with the latest and most robust child protection data that exists across the four nations in the UK. This enables us to keep track of what is working – and more importantly – what more needs to be done to better protect our children.

There will always be challenges in child protection.

This year we have seen a 16 per cent rise in the number of police recorded child sexual offences across the UK. Worryingly, offences of this nature have been steadily increasing for the past five years. A clear factor is the growth of technology and the often unchallenged opportunity it provides sexual predators to target and groom children.

Like all abusive behaviour, technology-facilitated abuse and exploitation can take many forms, such as communicating with a child via social media or recording a sexual assault of a child. Since we successfully campaigned for a new law to enable police to charge adults who send a sexual message to children in England and Wales, there have been more than 3,000 recorded offences in the first year. It's a figure that has exceeded even our estimations. In addition, through Childline we hear on a daily basis about how young people are experiencing cyber-bullying or being faced with pressures like sexting.

It is not a question of warning children off social media or preventing them from using the internet, as this can be the very place children socialise or seek help and advice when they have nowhere else to turn. It is now up to the Government to step in and protect children online in the same way we keep children safe offline. In May 2018 we were pleased to learn that Government has finally committed to laws to protect children online, which is a huge step forward and a victory for the NSPCC's Wild West Web campaign and all our supporters. Crucially the Government has signalled its proposals will seek to protect young people from online crimes such as grooming, as well as other harms like bullying.

In last year's *How safe are our children?* report we called for a new nationwide study that looks at the prevalence of all forms of child abuse and neglect. And I am pleased to reveal that the Office for National Statistics has agreed to bring forward a feasibility study, which will determine whether a new prevalence study could be an effective source of data on child abuse and neglect. This is a huge breakthrough as the last study of this kind was conducted by the NSPCC in 2009 – when the world was quite different and far less online abuse was reported.

Over the next year is where the real work starts in protecting children online. It's vital the forthcoming legislation to tackle online harms ensures its proposed Code of Practice, the regulator that enforces it, and the transparency measures to hold social networks to account are all enshrined in law. And we will be working with Government to ensure this happens.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Peter Wanless'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Peter Wanless
NSPCC Chief Executive

Contents

1. How safe are our children online?	6
2. Measuring the extent of abuse and neglect in the UK	10
INDICATOR 1: Child homicides recorded by police includes the offences of murder, manslaughter and infanticide	16
INDICATOR 2: Child deaths by assault and undetermined intent	20
INDICATOR 3: Child suicides	24
INDICATOR 4: Number of recorded sexual offences against children	28
INDICATOR 5: Number of recorded cruelty and neglect offences	32
INDICATOR 6: Self-reported prevalence of abuse and neglect	36
INDICATOR 7: Counselling sessions with Childline	38
INDICATOR 8: Contacts with the NSPCC helpline	40
INDICATOR 9: Online harm	42
Young people's experiences online	46
INDICATOR 10: Violent incidents experienced by 10 to 15 year olds Crime survey for England and Wales	48

INDICATOR 11: Referrals to social services	50
INDICATOR 12: Children in need or children receiving care and support	52
INDICATOR 13: Children in the child protection system	54
INDICATOR 14: Composition of child protection plans and child protection registers	58
INDICATOR 15: Re-registration onto child protection registers or becoming the subject of a child protection plan more than once	62
INDICATOR 16: How long children are the subject of child protection plans or on child protection registers	66
INDICATOR 17: Looked after children	68
INDICATOR 18: Proportion of looked after children who have three or more placements during the year	72
INDICATOR 19: Child trafficking	76
INDICATOR 20: Public attitudes to child abuse and neglect	78

3. Glossary

82

How safe are our children online?

Technology is central to children's lives. In 2017, just over half of children aged 12 had at least one social media account, despite the minimum age requirements for many sites being 13. By age 13, that figure rises to nearly three-quarters¹. Today's children don't see the division between 'online' and 'offline' worlds. Social media is now a ubiquitous part of childhood, but alongside wonderful opportunities, it opens up an array of potential harms.

For too long, social networks have been allowed to treat child safeguarding as an optional extra. We don't have the same protections in place online as offline, and the result is that children are exposed to unacceptable risks, in the spaces where they socialise, trust, and play.

After a decade of inaction, the challenge we face is now immense, but not insurmountable. The scale and complexity of the online threat is growing. Most platforms have failed to integrate child safeguarding into their business models or the design of their platforms. Rapidly developing technology creates new opportunities to initiate, maintain and escalate abuse.

As this year's *How safe are our children?* report makes clear, tackling these risks is now at the frontline in the fight for every childhood.

What are the risks to children on social networks?

Social media is part of the fabric of children's lives. Every moment, every experience is something to be captured online. Posts on social media aren't just a catalogue of 'real' life, they are an integral part of it.

The ubiquity of social media carries many risks, from exposure to inappropriate and sexualised content, to the production and distribution of child abuse imagery, through to the growing scale of technology-facilitated grooming. Platforms provide new opportunities to initiate and facilitate abuse. With so many children using social networks, gaming and messaging sites, it means that today's children and young people are increasingly exposed to the threat of abuse or exploitation, from both adults and their peers

Through the ease of access afforded by smartphones, groomers can target significant numbers of children, and quickly escalate and maintain their abuse. Groomers can readily move children into the shadows, moving children from well-known platforms to encrypted and hidden sites. New types of technology, notably livestreaming, provide new opportunities for abusers to control and coerce children into increasingly extreme forms of abuse².

Self-generated imagery is a considerable issue, accounting for around a third of recent images removed by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)³. Although children do not perceive a difference between their online and offline worlds, evidence suggests that lowered inhibitions can mean that children comply with requests that they would not offline⁴.

Once a self-generated image has been taken, it opens the door for exploitation and blackmail (including to prevent disclosure). The impact of losing control over an image can be devastating, particularly when it is shared among peers' social networks, sent to family members, or shared much more widely.

Social networks have consistently failed to address these problems - and it is clear that their unwillingness to do so has actively fuelled the scale and extent of the risks that children now face. Platforms have failed to build in adequate safeguarding protections, take steps to proactively tackle grooming, and to do enough to proactively tackle child sexual abuse imagery at source.

Successive governments have also repeatedly failed to intervene, placing disproportionate weight on the claims made by industry. As a result, for over a decade, social networks have repeatedly failed to protect their child users.

1 Ofcom (2017) [Children and parents: media use and attitudes report](#). London: Ofcom.

2 We Protect (2018) [Global threat assessment: working together to end the sexual exploitation of children online](#). London: We Protect.

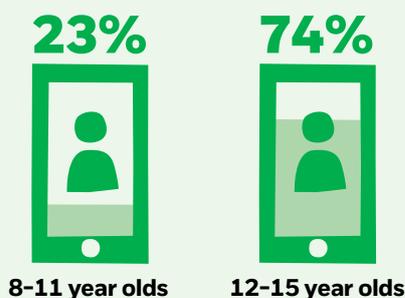
3 Internet Watch Foundation (2018, 15 May) [IWF research on child sex abuse live-streaming reveals 98% of victims are under 13](#). [Press release]

4 Hamilton-Giachritsis, C. et al. (2017) [Everyone deserves to be happy and safe](#). London: NSPCC.

Building a picture of online grooming

Children are using social media more and more...

Proportion of young people with social media accounts



Average time spent online a week



Based on a representative sample of children in the UK in 2017. Source: Ofcom (2017) [Children and parents: media use and attitudes report 2017](#). London: Ofcom.

...and facing risks which are facilitated by being online.



7%
of under 13s have
been asked for a sexual
image or message.

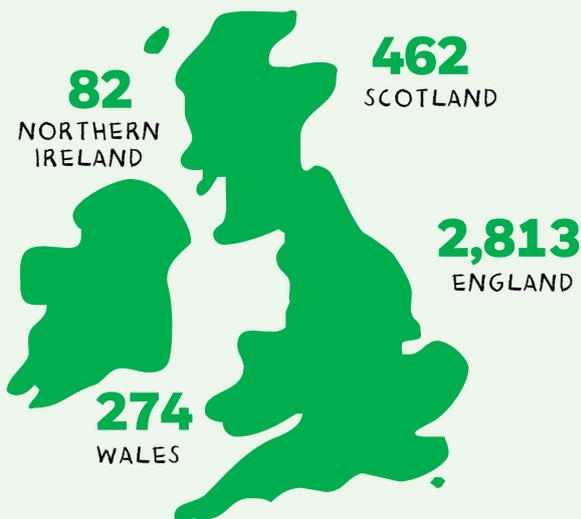


24%
of young people have
experienced an adult that they
don't know in real life trying to
contact them online.

Based on a survey of over 2,000 children and young people and their parents from across the UK in 2018.
See young people's experiences online: findings from Net Aware research for more information.

This is reflected in grooming offences recorded by police.

Police-recorded offences of sexual communication with a child last year



Figures for England, Wales and Northern Ireland are for 2017/18, whilst figures for Scotland are for 2016/17. The offence of sexual communication with a child was introduced in England and Wales in April 2017. A similar offence of communicating indecently with a child was introduced in Scotland in December 2010. The offence of sexual communication with a child was introduced in Northern Ireland in February 2016.

Sources: NSPCC (2018) FOI responses from all police forces in England and Wales. Some responses are for the full year, whilst others are for shorter time periods. Full limitations set out in Indicator 9; Scottish Government recorded crime statistics (data provided to NSPCC). Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) recorded crime statistics (data provided to NSPCC).

The impact and extent of technology-facilitated abuse

For children subject to technology-facilitated abuse, the impacts can be life-changing, which makes industry's reluctance to tackle online abuse even more disturbing.

Despite the common perception that online abuse is less impactful, NSPCC research⁵ has shown that the impact of 'online' and 'offline' abuse is the same, no matter how the abuse took place. Children who have been subjected to online abuse have reported a range of negative experiences, which can include flashbacks; depression; self-harm; anxiety; and self-blame. The impact of losing control of an image can be particularly damaging for young people, as they know the images could be shared or re-viewed at any time without their permission.

Children who have been abused are also more vulnerable to it happening again, for example, as a result of early sexualisation or by reducing their sense of self-worth and confidence.

We need to fully understand the complexity of online abuse. Cases of abuse that might traditionally been considered 'offline', such as institutional abuse, interfamilial abuse or where children are abused by someone in a position of trust, are now likely to have been facilitated through social media. With the prevalence of technology

in children's lives, it seems likely that technology will provide new routes through which to facilitate abuse.

Social networking and messaging apps allow offenders to immerse themselves into the most intimate aspects of children's lives. Messages can be exchanged at night, out of sight of parents and carers, which can build feelings of secrecy and intimacy in increasingly exploitative and abusive relationships.

There is much we still do not know about the scale and extent of online abuse. It is likely that the indicators tracked in in this year's *How safe are our children?* will significantly under-report the scale of technology-facilitated abuse. Nevertheless, these figures still paint a truly disturbing picture of online harms. As technology has provided new ways for offenders to commit abuse, the onus has been on social networks to do everything they can to make the channels through which they make their profits safer. They have failed to do so, and we can now see the consequences of this decade of inaction.

- There were over 3,000 police-recorded offences for sexual communication with a child in England and Wales in 2017/18⁶ – 2,813 in England and 274 in Wales – and a further 82 in Northern Ireland⁷. In Scotland, there were 462 records of the equivalent offence of communicating indecently with a child in

2016/17⁸, the most up-to-date figures available. In England and Wales, in more than half of cases where the data was recorded (53 per cent), offences took place on Facebook and the apps it owns⁹. This is despite the massive resources available to Facebook, as the largest social media network, to tackle abuse on its platforms.

- In 2017, the Internet Watch Foundation identified 78,589 URLs containing child sexual abuse imagery, an increase of 37 per cent from the previous year¹⁰. The director of vulnerabilities at the National Crime Agency (NCA), Will Kerr, recently told the UK parliament that 'there are thousands of children being unnecessarily exploited and abused because the tech sector has a significant responsibility and the ability to stop far more [abuse] at source¹¹'.
- According to recent NSPCC research¹², more than one in seven children aged 11-18 (15 per cent) have been asked to send sexual messages or images of themselves. One in ten girls aged 13 or under had received a request. Groomers are able to exploit the design of social networks, using friend and follower suggestions to infiltrate peer networks, and to establish contact with children that can quickly escalate into requests for sexual messages. Seven per cent of 11-16 year olds say they have shared a naked or semi-naked image of themselves.¹³

5 Ibid.
 6 NSPCC (2018) FOI request sent to all Police Forces in England and Wales. Based on responses from all 43 police forces in England and Wales and from British Transport Police. 40 police forces were able to provide a full year's worth of data, whilst one force provided nine months of data and three provided six months.
 7 Police Service of Northern Ireland recorded crime statistics. (Data provided to NSPCC).
 8 Scottish Government recorded crime statistics (Data provided to NSPCC).
 9 NSPCC (2018) FOI request sent to all Police Forces in England and Wales. Police disclosed what methods were used in 2,028 instances.
 10 Internet Watch Foundation (2018) *Annual report*. Cambridge: Internet Watch Foundation.
 11 Comments made in oral evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee Inquiry, 'Policing for the future', on 13th March 2018.
 12 NSPCC (2018) Net Aware research on file with the NSPCC.
 13 Martellozzo, E. et al (2016) *I wasn't sure if it was normal to watch it*. London. NSPCC

It's time to take a stand

After a decade of inaction, the NSPCC is now clear – it's time to introduce statutory regulation on social media sites. Since a voluntary Code of Practice was first proposed in the Byron Review¹⁴ ten years ago, social networks have been consistently unwilling to prioritise child protection and safeguarding measures. Instead, the platforms have been able to choose for themselves whether and how they protect their child users.

Our Wild West Web campaign called on our supporters to help strengthen the government's resolve to act. As a result, the culture secretary Matt Hancock has announced he will bring forward plans for legislation later this year to tackle online harms. Crucially, these proposals will target both inappropriate and illegal acts, including the growing challenge of online grooming.

This is a significant moment. However, government will only deliver on its ambition to 'make Britain the safest place in the world to be online'¹⁵ if it now ensures this legislation is comprehensive and wide reaching. If regulation is poorly devised, or not adequately built into law, this will not arrest the damaging consequences of a decade of doing nothing. Online platforms will not meaningfully change their ways unless there is a clear legal requirement for them to do so.

That's why the NSPCC is calling for the forthcoming legislation to:

Commit social media firms to follow a consistent set of minimum safeguarding standards. Legislation must require social networks to introduce dedicated child accounts, with default settings designed to protect children from online harms.

Make platforms report on how they keep children safe. Every firm should be legally required to produce an annual transparency report that sets out their complaint handling processes and outcomes. Firms should no longer be able to operate under a damaging cloak of opacity;

Carry consequences for platforms that don't follow safeguarding rules. We need a regulatory regime with robust investigatory and disclosure powers. It cannot be right that there is the least regulation where children face the greatest risks. The regulator must be able to levy financial sanctions where safeguarding measures aren't followed, and if children continue to be put at risk.

Make platforms take proactive steps to prevent exposure to illegal content and behaviour. It cannot be right that firms invest in algorithms to support their marketing, but fail to develop them to proactively identify illegal behaviour on their sites, including grooming.

We stand at a crossroads. In the coming months, government will decide whether its legislation will deliver meaningful, enforceable change, or whether it will continue to let platforms decide for themselves whether to protect child users. We need the proposed Code of Practice, the regulator that enforces it, and the transparency measures to hold industry to account to all be enshrined in law.

It is time for the tech firms to be finally held accountable for the risks on their sites.

It's time for the government to deliver for our children.

In the fight for every childhood, it's the time to ensure that every child is finally kept safe online.

14 Byron, T. (2008) *Safer children in a digital world: the report of the Byron Review*. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

15 Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (2017) *Internet safety strategy green paper*. London: Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

Measuring the extent of abuse and neglect in the UK

We have defined abuse and neglect according to the definitions set out in the table opposite. Definitions are from English statutory guidance for professionals,¹ with the exception of online abuse and harm for which an NSPCC definition has been provided in the absence of an official equivalent. Child protection is a devolved matter and each of the four nations of the UK has its own guidance and definitions. However, definitions for England are not substantially different from those used in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.²

The indicators we have used

We have compiled 20 different indicators in an effort to understand the extent of abuse and neglect in the UK today. The indicators relate to deaths due to child maltreatment, the incidence of abuse and neglect and adults' beliefs and attitudes about abuse and neglect.

Many of the indicators are based on agencies' responses to child abuse and neglect. For example, we use data from the police on recorded offences against children and data from children's services on the children they work with. Other indicators use "self-report" data, from surveys with children and adults about their personal experiences of, and attitudes towards, abuse and neglect.

Since there is a wide range of relevant information, we have had to be selective in the measures presented. Our aim has been to provide the most robust and comprehensive picture possible, so we have chosen indicators that:

- provide different insights on the extent of child abuse and neglect;
- use robust data, where possible based on a large sample and on standardised measures – where there are weaknesses in the data we state these; and
- wherever possible, use data that can be tracked over time and broken down by each of the four nations.

Data sources

For each indicator we have provided a reference for the most recent data release. Historical data is available from the data provider either in published reports or on request.

Time series data

The time series provided for each of the indicators is determined by the availability of data. We have chosen to provide data from the first available year for all four nations. For some indicators the way the data is recorded has changed over time. Where data is not comparable year-on-year this has been clearly marked.

1 Department for Education (2015) [Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children](#). London: Department for Education.

2 Key guidance for each nation is as follows: **Wales:** Welsh Government (2018) [Codes of practice and statutory guidance](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government; and the Social Services Improvement Agency (2008) [All Wales child protection procedures](#). Cardiff: All Wales Unit. **Scotland:** Scottish Government and Campbell, A. (2014) [National guidance for child protection in Scotland 2014](#). Edinburgh: Scottish Government. **Northern Ireland:** Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (2017) [Co-operating to safeguard children and young people in Northern Ireland](#). Belfast: Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

ABUSE

A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or "making fun" of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity, (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants; and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

NEGLECT

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

ONLINE ABUSE AND HARM

Online abuse is abuse that is facilitated using internet-connected technology. It may take place through social media, online games or other channels of digital communication. Children can also be re-victimised if evidence of their abuse is recorded or uploaded online. Technology can facilitate a number of illegal abusive behaviours including, but not limited to: harassment; stalking; threatening behaviour; child sexual abuse material; inciting a child to sexual activity; sexual exploitation; grooming; sexual communication with a child; and, causing a child to view images or watch videos of a sexual act. Using technology to facilitate any of the above activities is online abuse.

Alongside those illegal activities that are perpetrated online and constitute abuse, children may also be exposed to online harms, such as inappropriate behaviours or content online. For instance, children may be bullied online by their peers or they might, either accidentally or intentionally, view content which is intended for adults. Both online abuse and exposure to unsuitable content or behaviour can have a long-lasting impact on the wellbeing of children and young people.

Data on children

For the purposes of this report, a child is defined as anyone under the age of 18. Data is not always published for this age group, and where it has not been possible to include data for all under 18 year olds this has been noted.

Population data

Where we have provided data on rates of abuse within the child population, we have used mid-year UK population estimates published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The most recent population data comes from the 2016 mid-year population estimates.

Comparability of data between nations

Services to safeguard and protect children in the UK are underpinned by legislation, guidance and policies. As power is devolved within the UK, differences between the four nations' child protection systems have become increasingly pronounced.

When considering information about child abuse for each of the four nations, it is important to understand the different contexts in which the statistics have been compiled. Different nations have different approaches to measuring child abuse and neglect. Throughout the report we have noted where data is not comparable between nations. By including trends for each of the UK nations separately, we hope to provide a clearer picture of each distinct child protection landscape. A brief summary of the child protection systems in each of the four nations is included in the glossary of this report.

What we have not been able to include

We have not been able to include data on all forms of child abuse in this report, largely due to a lack of data. Sometimes the data that is available is not detailed enough to allow data relating specifically to children to be extracted.

We have not been able to provide a complete picture for all forms of child abuse in this report. This is largely due to data not being recorded or made available in a way that can be used in this report.

Examples of gaps in the data include the following.

- A lack of published time series data for Accident and Emergency (A&E) attendances for assault and self-harm broken down by age.
- Data on assaults is recorded by the police and published across the UK nations, but only in Northern Ireland is this data broken down by the age of the victims. The police do record this information but it is not currently collected and/or published centrally.
- Insufficient data on children's own views about how safe they feel from abuse and neglect.
- The only large-scale data set that looks at the UK prevalence of abuse and neglect is the NSPCC studies conducted in 2000 and 2009. There is a need for a new prevalence study that looks at all forms of child abuse and neglect.

More detailed information on the context, limitations, availability and comparability of the data used in *How safe are our children?* is included with each individual indicator.

Improvements in data collection

We have been calling for a new prevalence study since 2015, and made it the focus of last year's *How safe are our children?* report. The best way to get a clear idea of what is happening to children now is to survey children about their own experiences of abuse.

In December 2015, the National Statistician's Crime Statistics Advisory Committee set up a Task and Finish Group to look at child abuse data. The group was led by a member

of the committee, and included a representative from the NSPCC in its membership.

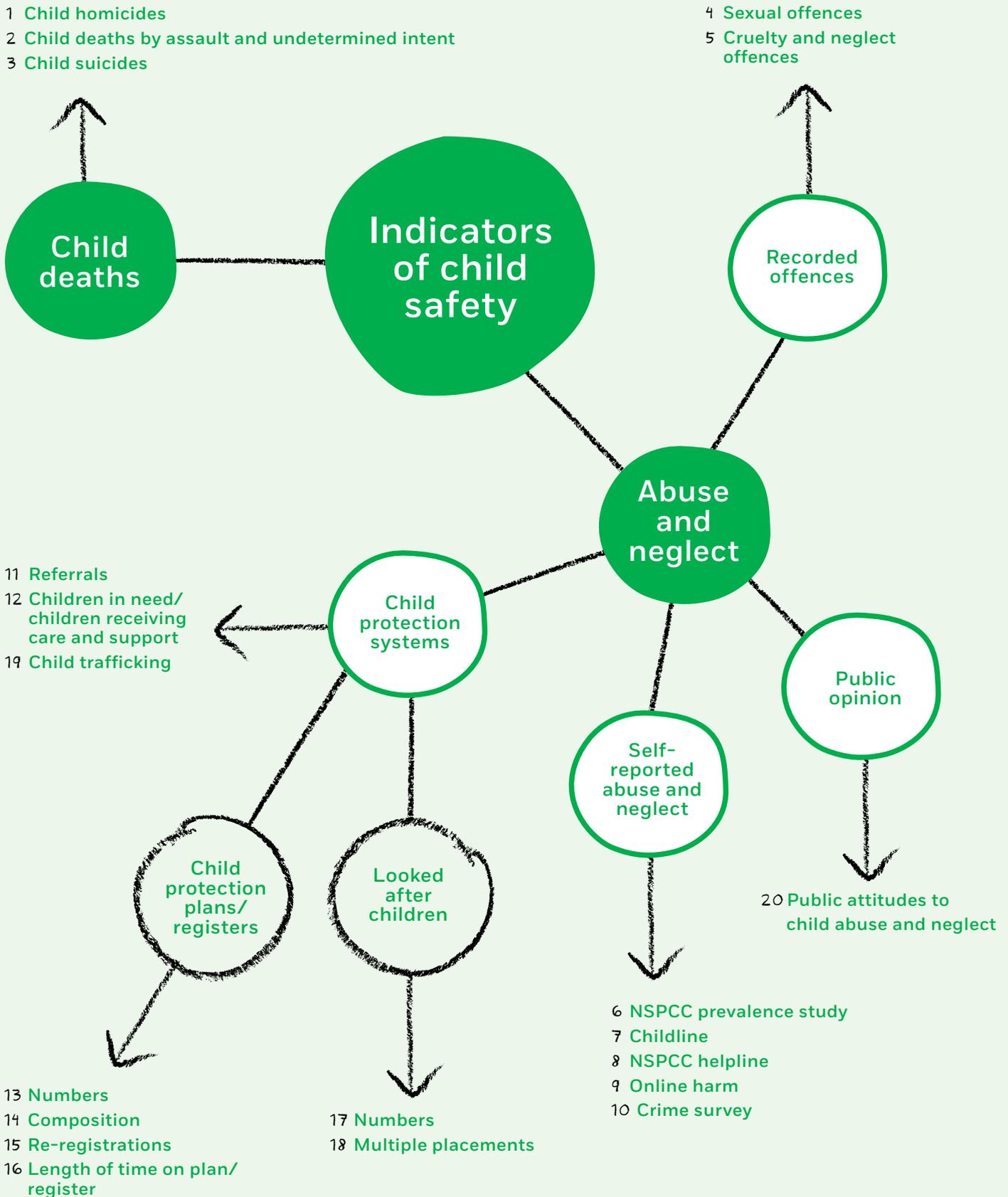
In May 2017 the Task and Finish Group submitted a set of recommendations to the Committee. These included that the government statistics service collaborate to produce a compendium of data sources on the best evidence of child abuse and publish this yearly; explore the use of Multiple System Estimation (MSE) to estimate the number of victims of child abuse; and, after that work is completed, consider a UK-wide prevalence study on all forms of abuse and neglect of children. Work on the compendium is progressing, but there have been considerable difficulties in accessing data to apply the MSE model.

In March 2018, the ONS wrote to the National Statistician recommending it bring forward a feasibility study to determine whether a new prevalence study could be an effective source of data on child abuse and neglect. The National Statistician accepted the new recommendation and the ONS is working on:

- producing a compendium of data sources relating to child abuse and child protection planned for publication in 2019;
- investigating use of Multiple System Estimation methods to estimate the number of children who experience abuse and neglect;
- conducting a feasibility study to determine whether a new prevalence study could be an effective source of data on child abuse and neglect.

These are positive developments and should go some way to addressing the current limitations of available data. The NSPCC is pleased to have been able to play a role in encouraging these changes. Particularly welcome is the feasibility study to determine whether to conduct a new study of the prevalence of abuse and neglect.

An overview of the 20 indicators



The diagram above summarises the different indicators and how they can be grouped. The table on the next page lists the 20 indicators, and sets out a brief description and the data availability.

Key

✓ Data is available in all four nations. Trend data may be for different time periods and there may be some differences in classifications, for example in offence categories.

▲ Data is available, but it was not possible to drill down to the same level of detail in all countries. For example, for children in need data or looked after children data we are interested in those children who are in need or looked after due to abuse or neglect as opposed to other reasons. Also used where data is only available for the latest year.

✗ No published data available.

■ UK-wide data or survey data where sample does not allow a breakdown by UK nation

Indicator

1	Child homicides recorded by the police
2	Child deaths by assault and undetermined intent
3	Child suicides
4	Number of recorded sexual offences against children
5	Number of recorded cruelty and neglect offences against children
6	Self-reported prevalence of abuse and neglect
7	Childline counselling sessions
8	Contacts with the NSPCC helpline
9	Online harm
10	Violent incidents experienced by 10 to 15 year olds (crime survey)
11	Referrals to social services
12	Children in need/children receiving care and support
13	Children in the child protection system
14	Composition of child protection plans/child protection register
15	Re-registration – child protection plans or registers
16	How long children are the subject of child protection plans or on child protection registers
17	Children looked after due to abuse or neglect
18	Proportion of looked after children who have three or more placements during the year
19	Child trafficking
20	Public attitudes to child abuse and neglect

Description	England	Wales	Scotland	N. Ireland
Murder, manslaughter and infanticide offences recorded by police.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Deaths by assault and undetermined intent based on death certificates provided by local registrars and information from coroners and procurators fiscal.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Deaths of 15 to 19 year olds recorded as intentional self-harm or event of undetermined intent, and deaths of 10 to 14 year olds recorded as intentional self-harm.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sexual offences recorded by the police including rape, sexual assault, child grooming and offences related to indecent images of children.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Offences recorded by police where a parent or carer wilfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons or exposes a child under 16 in a manner likely to cause them unnecessary suffering or injury to health.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Abuse or neglect reported by children when asked in a UK-wide survey.	Survey data.			
Counselling sessions held by Childline with children and young people via phone call, email and online chat.	Data covers the whole of the UK and is not broken down by country.			
Calls, emails, texts and online reporting to NSPCC's UK 24/7 helpline for those concerned about a child.	Data covers the whole of the UK and is not broken down by country.			
Information about children's experience of the internet.	Survey data.			
Violent offences against children reported in an annual crime survey for England and Wales.	✓	✓	✗	✗
Number of referrals made to social services due to concerns about the safety or welfare of a child.	✓	✗	✗	▲
Number of children deemed to be "in need" because they are unlikely to have a reasonable standard of health and development without support provided by a public authority, due to abuse or neglect.	✓	✓	✗	▲
Children who are the subject of a child protection plan or on a register because they are deemed to be at risk of ongoing harm.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Why children are the subject of a child protection plan or on the child protection register.	✓	✓	✓	✓
The number of children who are the subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time or come back onto child protection registers.	✓	▲	✓	✓
Percentage of children who are the subject of a child protection plan or on a register for more than two years.	✓	✗	✓	✓
Number of children where the state is acting as a corporate parent.	✓	✓	▲	▲
Proportion of looked after children who have had three or more placements during one year.	✓	✓	▲	✓
Number of children being recruited and moved for the purpose of exploitation.	Available data covers the whole of the UK and is not broken down by country.			
Survey data on public attitudes to child abuse and neglect.	Survey data.			

INDICATOR 1

Child homicides recorded by police includes the offences of murder, manslaughter and infanticide

KEY MESSAGES

- There were 98 child homicides across the UK in 2016/17 – of which 91 were in England, three were in Wales and four were in Scotland.
- In England, Northern Ireland and Scotland the five-year annual average homicide rate has declined over the past decade.
- In Wales five-year annual average homicide rates have fluctuated, and are now at a similar level to a decade ago.

Why is this measure important?

The child homicide rate is an important measure of child safety. It shows the number of children killed by another person. The statistics give an indication of how many children are dying directly as a result of violence or abuse. Historical data is available and consistent recording methods allow robust comparison over time.

Context and limitations

Homicide statistics for all four nations are designated as National Statistics. Police-recorded homicide statistics should accurately reflect the number of child homicides reported each year. However, they will only record cases where there is sufficient evidence to suspect that a homicide has taken place. Studies have indicated that the number of child deaths where abuse or neglect is suspected as a factor is higher than

shown in the police-recorded homicide figures.* Homicide data can give an indication of the scale of the problem, but cannot help us to understand the preventable factors behind child deaths.

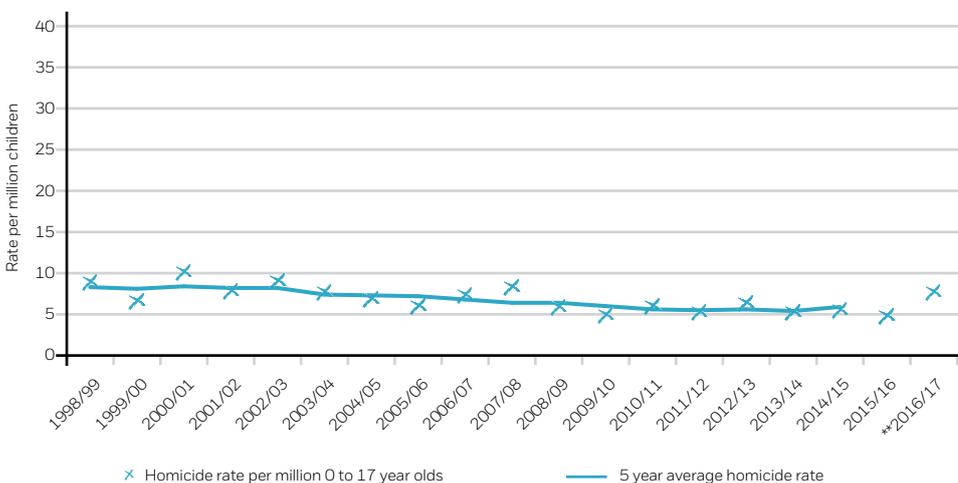
Major incidents have a significant impact on annual figures. These have been marked on the graphs and noted in the commentary. The number of child homicides recorded each year is small. This means a slight change in the number of deaths has a significant impact on homicide rates. We have tried to compensate for this by looking at five-year annual averages.

Availability and comparability

Recorded homicide offence data is available and comparable for all four nations.

England

Homicide rate per million children aged 0 to 17 years



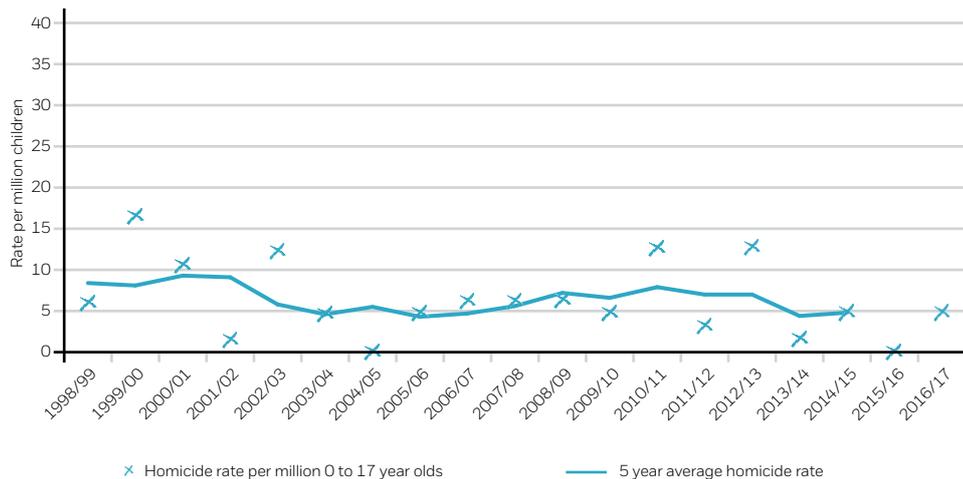
Latest figure: 91 homicides of under 18 year olds were recorded in England in 2016/17, which is a rate of 7.7 homicides per million children aged under 18.

Trend: The five-year annual average rate of child homicides is 5.9 per million, which is the highest it has been for the past four years. This year's figure has included 22 victims of the Hillsborough disaster in 1989, after the 2016 inquest found victims were unlawfully killed. The significant increase in the number of homicides this year is not likely to be indicative of the start of an upward trend, given these factors.

** Includes victims of the Hillsborough disaster

Wales

Homicide rate per million children aged 0 to 17 years

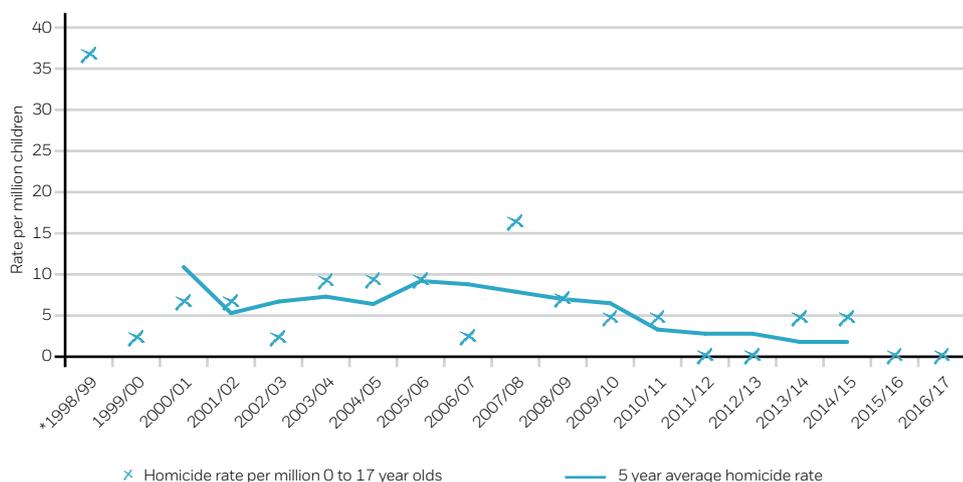


Latest figure: There were three homicides of children under 18 years recorded in Wales in 2016/17, which is a rate of 4.8 homicides per million children aged under 18.

Trend: The five-year annual average rate of child homicides is 4.8 per million. The five-year average has indicated a downward shift in the past two years, after a slight upward shift over the past decade.

Northern Ireland

Homicide rate per million children aged 0 to 17 years



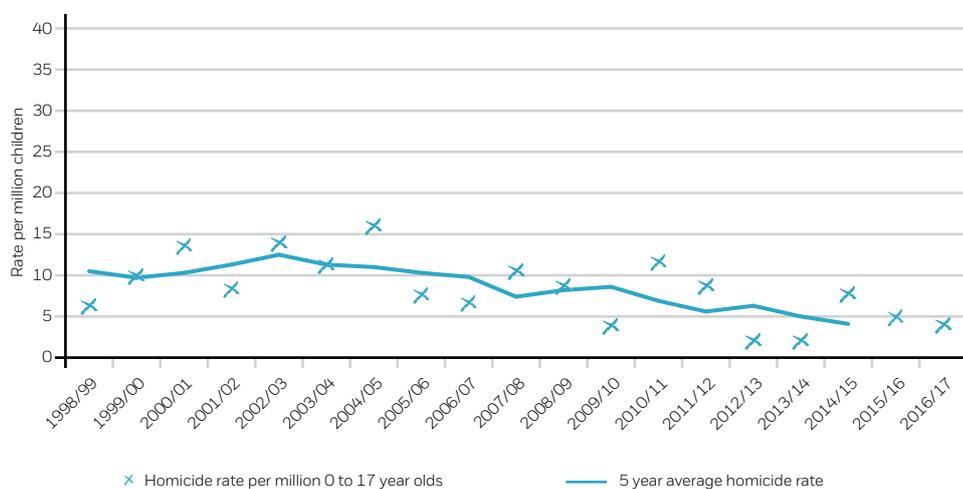
* Includes victims of the Omagh bombing

Latest figure: There were no homicides of children under 18 years recorded in Northern Ireland in 2016/17. The five-year average rate was 1.8 homicides per million children aged under 18.

Trend: The five-year annual average rate of child homicides has decreased by 71.6 per cent in Northern Ireland over the last five years. For the past two years there have been no recorded child homicides.

Scotland

Homicide rate per million children aged 0 to 17 years

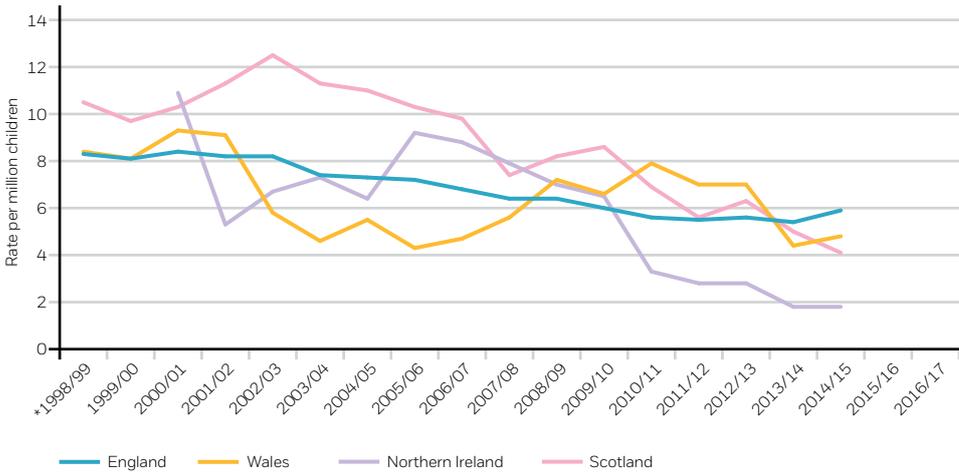


Latest figure: There were four homicides of children aged under 18 recorded in Scotland in 2016/17, which is a rate of 3.9 homicides per million children aged under 18.

Trend: The five-year annual average rate of child homicides is at its lowest ever, at 4.1 homicides per million. With minor fluctuations in some years, the five-year annual average rate in Scotland has been steadily declining for more than a decade.

United Kingdom comparison

Five-year annual average homicide rates per million children aged 0 to 17 years



The five-year annual average child homicide rate for 2012/13 to 2016/17 was 5.9 per million children under 18 in England, 4.8 per million in Wales, 1.8 per million in Northern Ireland and 4.1 per million in Scotland.

* Includes victims of the Omagh bombing

Data sources

England and Wales: Home Office recorded crime statistics (Data provided to NSPCC). **Scotland:** Scottish Government recorded crime statistics (Data provided to NSPCC). **Northern Ireland:** Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) (2017) [Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland: 1998/99 to 2016/17](#). Belfast: Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

**The five-year
annual average
child homicide
rates in England,
Northern Ireland
and Scotland have
declined over the
past decade.**

INDICATOR 2

Child deaths by assault and undetermined intent

KEY MESSAGES

- There has been a downward trend in five-year annual average death rates for assault and undetermined intent in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland since the average for 1981 to 1985.
- Five-year annual average death rates for assault and undetermined intent in Wales have remained at a similar level to that of the average for 1981 to 1985.

Why is this measure important?

Mortality statistics report the number of children who have died in any given year based on death certificates provided by local registrars and information from coroners and procurators fiscal. Data shown here is specifically for deaths of children aged 14 years or under where another person was responsible or where responsibility is not determined. It covers deaths recorded under the code of “assault”, which includes deaths by “neglect and abandonment” and “other maltreatment”, and the code of “undetermined intent”. Deaths of adolescents and adults by “undetermined intent” are considered as probable suicides, whereas for younger children it is considered more likely that someone else was responsible, though this cannot be proven. While the statistics may not fully reflect the number of child deaths where abuse or neglect may have been a factor, they do give an understanding of how many children are dying directly as a result of violence, abuse or in suspicious circumstances. This data includes deaths by homicide, but is a fundamentally different way of recording deaths since it is based on the cause of death rather than on whether or not a homicide was committed.

Context and limitations

Mortality statistics for all four nations are designated as National Statistics. The accuracy of mortality data depends on consistent recording practices. Studies have indicated that the number of child deaths where abuse or neglect is suspected is higher than shown in the mortality figures.* Data

is normally only published for children in “five year” age groups (e.g. 10 to 14 years and 15 to 19 years), so the figures that are readily available only cover children up to the age of 14. For all four nations, data relates to when a death was registered as opposed to when it occurred. Major incidents have a significant impact on annual figures. These have been marked on the graphs and noted in the commentary. The numbers of child deaths by assault or undetermined intent are normally relatively small, meaning that even a small change in numbers has a significant percentage impact on rates. We have tried to account for this by looking at five-year averages.

Availability and comparability

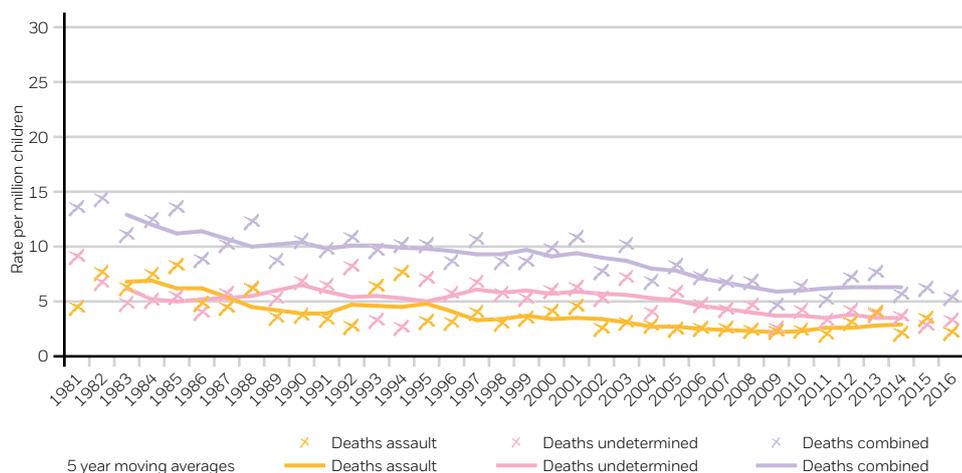
Mortality data coded under the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD) is available for all UK nations. In 2001 a new version of ICD was released, meaning that figures from before 2001 are not directly equivalent to those after that date. Differences in the death registration systems used in each nation may also have an impact on the comparability of the data. The codes used in official statistics to measure deaths by assault in England and Wales are different to those used in Scotland and Northern Ireland. These differences are set out in the footnotes.** Data has been split out for England and Wales based on postcodes. Because of this, data does not include deaths of non-resident children. This means that totals may be slightly smaller when data for England and Wales is separated than when combined.

* Sidebotham, P. et al. (2016) *Pathways to harm, pathways to protection: a triennial analysis of serious case reviews 2011 to 2014: final report*. London: Department for Education (DfE).

** Data for England and Wales drawn from deaths recorded from 2001–06 using ICD-10 under the codes of assault (X85–Y09) and undetermined intent (Y10–Y34); from 2007 onwards the count also includes deaths under the undetermined intent code of U50.9. Pre-2001 data for England and Wales is drawn from deaths recorded using ICD-9 under the codes E904, E960–E969 and E980–E989. Data for Scotland and Northern Ireland drawn from the deaths recorded from 2001 using ICD-10 under the codes of assault (X85–Y09, Y87.1) and undetermined intent (Y10–Y34, Y87.2); and pre-2001 using ICD-9 under the codes E904, E960–E969 and E980–E989.

England

Mortality rates among children aged 1 month to 14 years by assault or undetermined intent

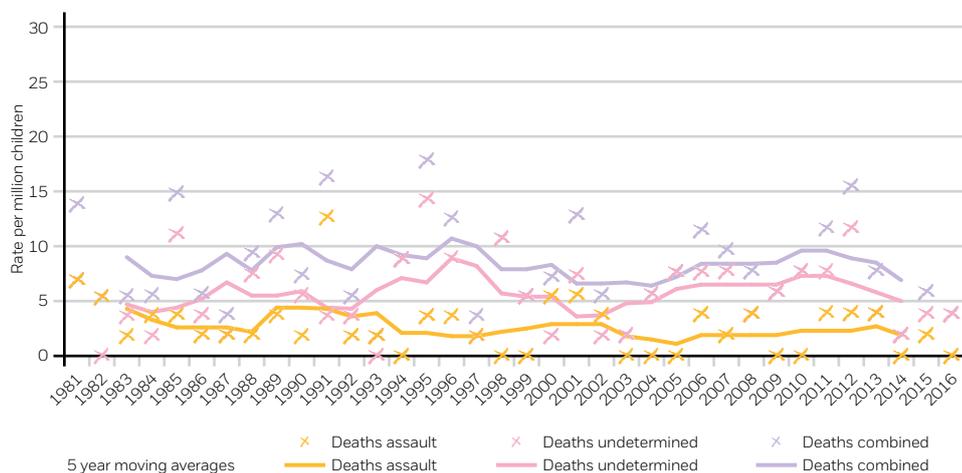


Latest figure: There were 53 deaths by assault or undetermined intent of children aged 28 days to 14 years in 2016.

Trend: There has been a downward trend in deaths by assault or undetermined intent. Overall there has been a 51.3 per cent decrease in the five-year annual average rate of child deaths due to assault or undetermined intent, from an average of 12.9 per million for 1981 to 1985 to 6.3 per million for 2012 to 2016.

Wales

Mortality rates among children aged 1 month to 14 years by assault or undetermined intent

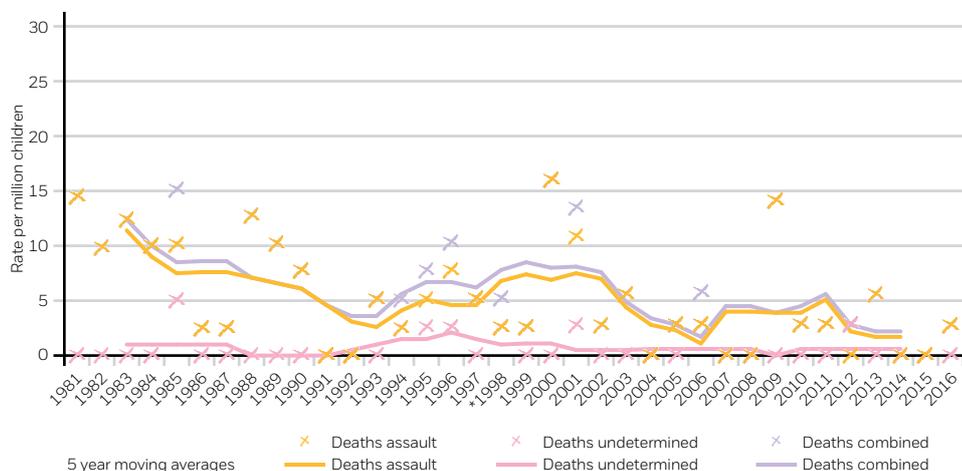


Latest figure: There were two deaths by assault or undetermined intent of children aged 28 days to 14 years recorded in 2016.

Trend: The five-year annual average rate of deaths by assault or undetermined intent from 2012 to 2016 was 6.9 per million. Average rates have remained fairly constant in Wales, fluctuating between a low of 6.4 per million for 2002 to 2006 and a high of 10.7 per million for 1994 to 1998.

Northern Ireland

Mortality rates among children aged 0 to 14 years by assault or undetermined intent



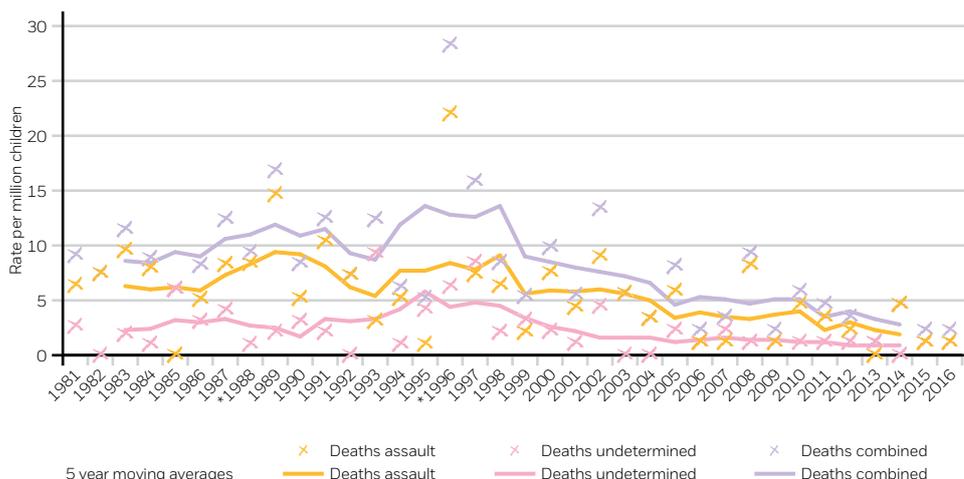
*The Omagh bombing occurred on 15 August 1998.

Latest figure: There was one death by assault or undetermined intent of a child aged 0 to 14 years recorded in 2016.

Trend: The five-year annual average rate of child deaths due to assault or undetermined intent has decreased by 81.9 per cent since 1981 to 1985, from 12.4 per million to an average of 2.2 per million for 2012 to 2016. The average rate increased in the years following the Omagh bombing in 1998.

Scotland

Mortality rates among children aged 0 to 14 years by assault or undetermined intent



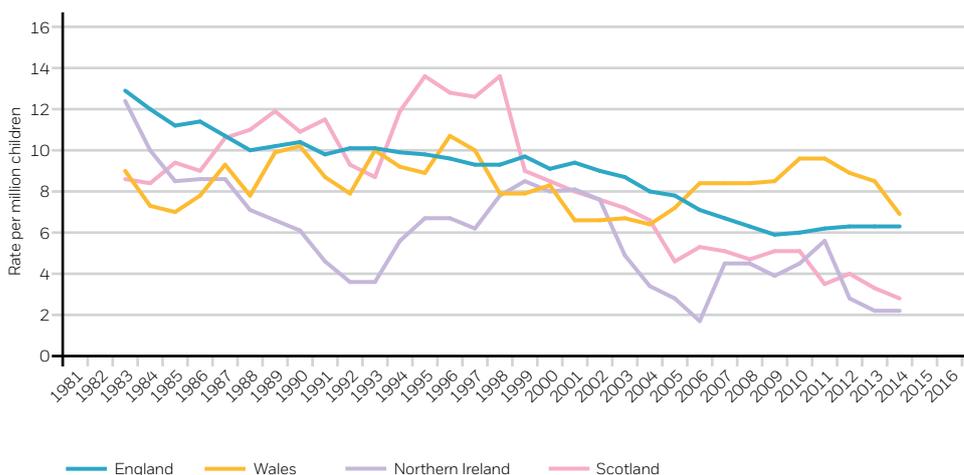
Latest figure: Two deaths by assault or undetermined intent of children aged 0 to 14 years were recorded in 2016.

Trend: The five-year average annual rate of deaths due to assault or undetermined intent has decreased by 67.4 per cent since 1981 to 1985, from 8.6 per million to an average of 2.8 per million for 2012 to 2016. The rate peaked in the late 1990s after the Dunblane massacre in 1996.

* The Lockerbie bombing occurred in 1988 and the Dunblane massacre in 1996.

United Kingdom comparison

Five-year mortality rates due to assault or undetermined intent among children aged 0 to 14 years*



The most recent five-year average annual rate of deaths due to assault or undetermined intent was highest in Wales at 6.9 per million, followed by England at 6.3 per million. Scotland had a five-year annual average rate of 2.8 per million. Northern Ireland had a rate of 2.2 per million. There has been a downward trend in death rates due to assault or undetermined intent in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, while rates in Wales have remained fairly constant. A change in the mortality coding system from 2001 may exaggerate the later decline.

* For England and Wales rates are for deaths of children aged 1 month to 14 years.

Data sources

England and Wales: Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2017) [Mortality statistics: underlying cause, sex and age](#). Newport: Office for National Statistics.

Northern Ireland: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2017) [Registrar General Northern Ireland: annual report 2016](#). Belfast: Department of Finance, Central Print Unit.

Scotland: National Records of Scotland (2017) [Vital events reference tables 2016](#). Edinburgh: National Records of Scotland.

**Child deaths by
assault are
in long-term decline
in England,
Northern Ireland
and Scotland.**

INDICATOR 3

Child suicides

KEY MESSAGES

- The five-year annual average suicide rates among 15 to 19 year olds in England and Wales were previously in decline, but have started to rise in recent years.
- There was an upward trend in the five-year annual average suicide rate among 15 to 19 year olds in Northern Ireland, but rates have started to decline since the average for 2008 to 2012.
- In Scotland, there has been a downward trend in the five-year annual average suicide rate among 15 to 18 year olds since the average for 1998 to 2002.
- There were five suicides of 10 to 14 year olds in the UK in 2016.

Why is this measure important?

Information on the number of suicides is an important measure of the safety of children and young people. Suicide may often be the result of a combination of other factors, such as abuse, neglect, family problems or mental health issues.

Tracking the numbers of children and young people who take their own lives shows the number of children who feel that there is no way out of their problems and for whom the right help is not there. It therefore shows a subset of the preventable deaths of children. The definition of suicide includes deaths given an underlying cause of intentional self-harm (labelled on the graphs below as suicides) or an injury or poisoning of undetermined intent. For young people aged 15 and over, deaths of undetermined intent will include cases where the harm was self-inflicted, but there was insufficient evidence to prove that the deceased deliberately intended to kill themselves. However, this definition cannot be applied to younger children due to the possibility that these deaths were caused by unverifiable accidents, neglect or abuse. Therefore the suicide data for 10 to 14 year olds only uses deaths coded under intentional self-harm.

Context and limitations

Mortality statistics for all four nations are designated as National Statistics. The accuracy of mortality data depends on consistent recording practices. Data on suicides from mortality statistics is affected by difficulties in recording the cause of death where intent is unclear. There may be difficulties in recording a death either as a suicide or as an accident. Data on attempted suicides is not reflected in these statistics. The number of child suicides each year is relatively small. This means a small change in the number of deaths has a significant impact on rates. We have tried to compensate for

this by looking at five-year annual averages. Data is published in age bands, so data for all children under 18 years is not readily available.

Research suggests that social and economic factors influence the risk of suicide.* Prevention strategies can also have an impact on suicide rates. For example, the decline in suicides in Scotland coincides with the Scottish Government's *Choose Life* suicide prevention strategy and plan** launched in 2002. Changes in recording practices also affect data. For example, Northern Ireland saw a sharp increase in the suicide rate between 2004 and 2006. In April 2006, following a review of the Coroner's Service, Northern Ireland's coroner districts were centralised into one Coroner's Service. It is likely that the increase was the result of the under-recording of suicides under the old system.

Availability and comparability

Mortality data coded under the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD) is available for all UK nations. In 2001 a new version of ICD was released, meaning that figures from before 2001 are not directly equivalent to those after that date. Differences in the death registration systems used in each nation may also have an impact on the comparability of the data. The codes used in official statistics to measure deaths by suicide in England and Wales are different to those used in Scotland and Northern Ireland.*** These differences are set out in the footnotes.****

Data has been split out for England and Wales based on postcodes. Because of this, data does not include deaths of non-resident children. This means that totals may be slightly smaller when data for England and Wales is separated than when combined.

* Sun B.Q., Zhang J. (2016) *Economic and sociological correlates of suicides: multilevel analysis of the time series data in the United Kingdom*. Journal of Forensic Sciences, 61(2): 345–351.

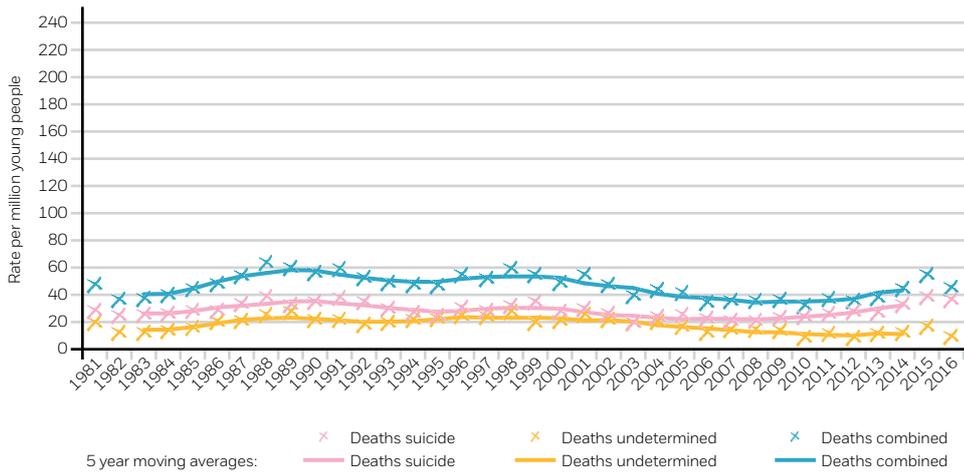
** Scottish Government (2002) *Choose life: a national strategy and action plan to prevent suicide in Scotland*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government

*** Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2016) *Suicides in the United Kingdom: 2014 registrations*. Newport: Office for National Statistics

**** For 15 to 19 year olds, data drawn from deaths are recorded under the codes of "intentional self-harm" (from 2001: X60–X84 and Y87.0. Pre-2001: E950–E959) and "event of undetermined intent" (from 2001: Y10–Y34 and Y87.2. Pre-2001: E980–E989). For 10 to 14 year olds, data drawn from deaths are recorded under the codes of "intentional self-harm" only. For England and Wales the code Y33.9 is excluded for 2001–06, the codes Y87.0 and Y87.2 are excluded for 2001 onwards and the code E988.8 is excluded pre-2001.

England

Suicide rates per million 15 to 19 year olds

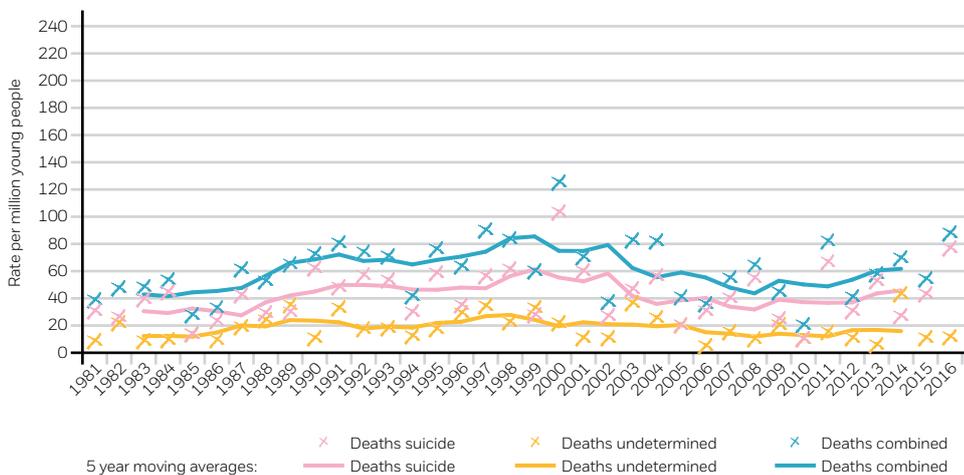


Latest figure: There were 115 suicides where death was recorded as by intentional self-harm, and a further 28 deaths by undetermined intent of 15 to 19 year olds in 2016.

Trend: The most recent five-year annual average combined rate was 43.2 suicides per million 15 to 19 year olds. The five-year combined annual average rate among 15 to 19 year olds has been steadily declining for more than a decade, and has decreased by 25.8 per cent since the early 1990s (from a high of 58.2 per million for 1987 to 1991 to 43.2 per million for 2012 to 2016). However, the five-year annual average suicide rates have begun to rise in recent years, up 25.7 per cent since the average for 2006 to 2010.

Wales

Suicide rate per million 15 to 19 year olds

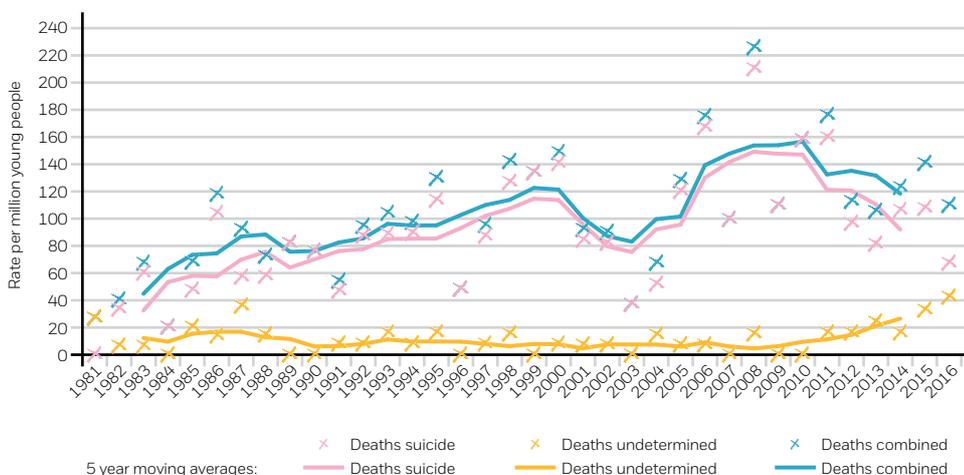


Latest figure: There were 14 suicides where death was recorded as by intentional self-harm, and a further two deaths by undetermined intent of 15 to 19 year olds in 2016.

Trend: The most recent five-year annual average combined rate is 61.7 per million 15 to 19 year olds. The five-year combined annual average rate among 15 to 19 year olds peaked at 85.5 per million for 1997 to 2001, and then declined, reaching a low of 43.7 suicides per million for 2006 to 2010. However since then rates have begun to increase, up 41.2 per cent to 61.7 per million 15 to 19 year olds for 2012 to 2016.

Northern Ireland

Suicide rate per million 15 to 19 year olds

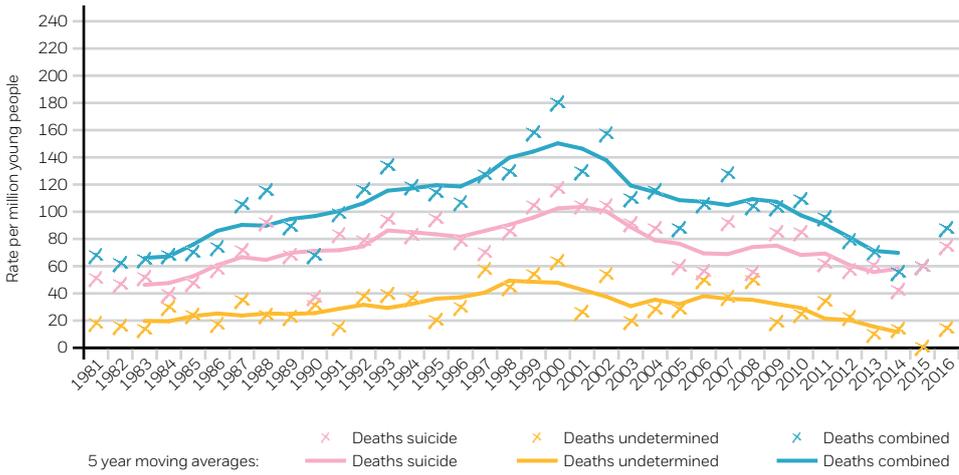


Latest figure: There were eight suicides where death was recorded as by intentional self-harm and a further five by undetermined intent of 15 to 19 year olds in 2016.

Trend: The most recent five-year annual average combined rate is 118.4 suicides per million 15 to 19 year olds. The five-year combined annual average rate among 15 to 19 year olds has increased by 164.2 per cent since the average for 1981 to 1985 (from 44.8 per million to 118.4). Since peaking at 156.6 from 2008 to 2012, the five-year combined annual average rate has started to decline.

Scotland

Suicide rates per million 15 to 19 year olds

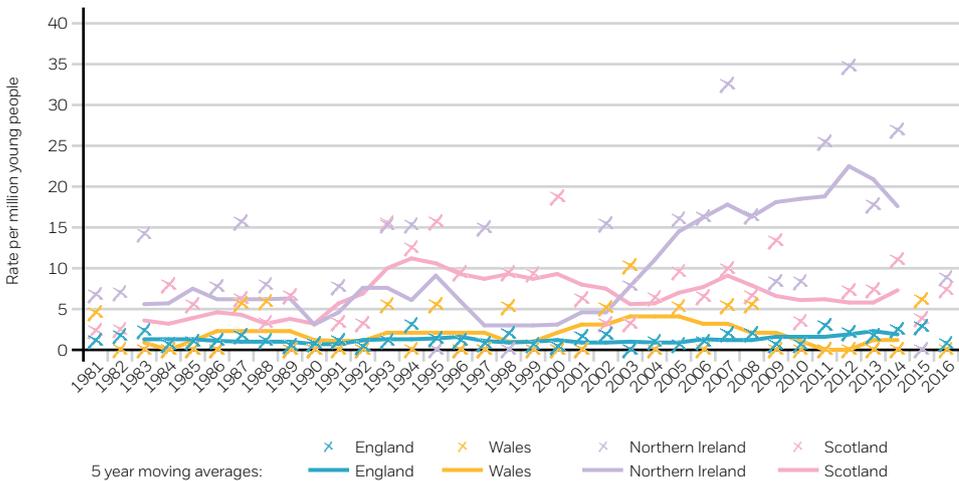


Latest figure: There were 22 suicides where death was recorded as by intentional self-harm, and four deaths by undetermined intent of 15 to 19 year olds in 2016.

Trend: The most recent five-year annual average combined rate is 69.8 per million 15 to 19 year olds. Annual average rates have declined from a peak of 150.3 for the period 1998 to 2002.

United Kingdom comparison

Suicide rate per million 10 to 14 year olds



Latest figure: There were five deaths of 10 to 14 year olds where death was recorded as by intentional self-harm in the UK in 2016.

Trend: The five-year annual average rate was 17.6 per million 10 to 14 year olds in Northern Ireland, 7.3 per million in Scotland, 1.9 per million in England and 1.2 per million in Wales.

Since the period 1981 to 1985 the five-year annual average rate per million 10 to 14 year olds for suicides recorded as deaths by intentional self-harm has remained relatively stable in England and Wales. The annual average rate peaked in Scotland in the 1990s and is now in decline. It has increased significantly (by 217.1 per cent since the average for the period 1981 to 1985) in Northern Ireland, although this year has seen the rate decline.

Numbers for all nations are very low compared to other age groups, and a small increase in actual numbers can lead to a large percentage increase.

Data sources

England and Wales: Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2017) [Mortality statistics: underlying cause, sex and age](#). Newport: Office for National Statistics.
Northern Ireland: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) (2017) [Registrar General Northern Ireland: annual report 2016](#). Belfast: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).
Scotland: National Records of Scotland (2017) [Vital events reference tables 2016](#). Edinburgh: National Records of Scotland.

**There were
198 suicides of
15 to 19 year olds in
the UK in 2016.**

INDICATOR 4

Number of recorded sexual offences against children

KEY MESSAGES

- All UK nations saw an increase in the number of recorded sexual offences against children in 2016/17.
- The number of offences has been steadily increasing since 2012/13 in all four nations, with offences more than doubling in both England and Wales.
- It is likely that improved recording of sexual offences by the police and an increased willingness of victims to come forward have contributed to this rise.

Why is this measure important?

This measure shows the number of sexual offences committed against children that were reported to and recorded by the police. The data covers a range of sexual offences, including rape, sexual assault, sexual activity with a minor and child grooming. While the data does not reflect the total number of sexual offences committed against children, it does provide an important part of the picture of sexual abuse committed against children.

Context and limitations

We know that police-recorded crime statistics do not necessarily reflect the actual number of offences committed, with many crimes suffering from under-reporting. However, public awareness of these issues is increasing and could be leading to increased reporting and more representative numbers of recorded offences. Although it is difficult to say whether we can attribute increases in recorded offences to an increase in incidences of offences, it is possible that this could be a contributing factor. The *Crime-recording: making the victim count* report of an inspection of crime data integrity in police forces in England and Wales was published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in November 2014. It found that levels of under-recording by the police were particularly pronounced for sexual offences. The timing of these inspections coincides with the start of rises in recordings in England and Wales and could have been a driver of better police recording and changes in policing practice, which are both key factors that could be leading to increasing numbers of recorded sexual offences.* Technology could also be influencing trends in the data.

Greater ability to contact and access children online has led to an increased opportunity for abusers to commit offences.

It is worth noting that data reflects the year in which an offence was reported, not the year it was committed, so a proportion of offences will be historic. However, while Home Office analysis shows that a significant proportion of offences are not recent, these numbers have increased in line with overall increases.* In January 2014 the UK Statistics Authority removed the National Statistics designation from recorded crime data in England and Wales following concerns about the data's reliability.** Crime data retains National Statistics status in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Availability and comparability

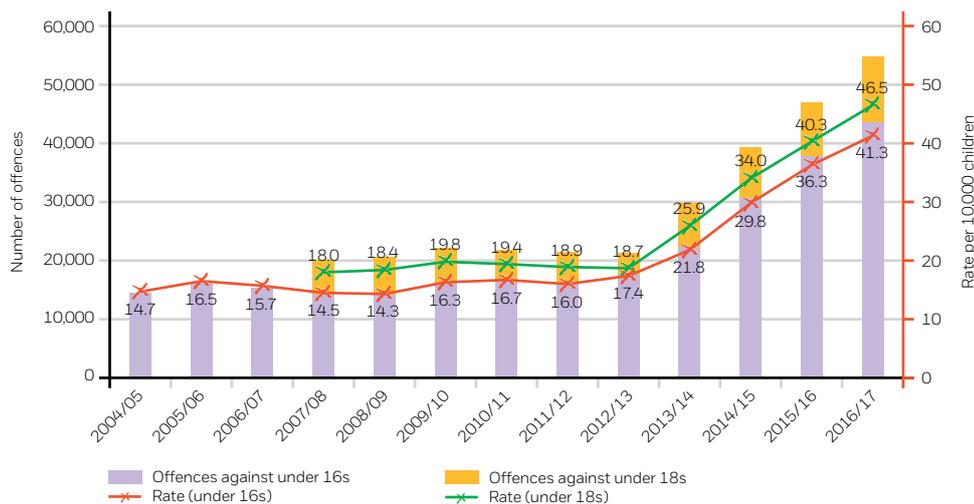
Recorded offence data is available for all four nations. To provide a more comprehensive picture of sexual offences against children, the NSPCC obtained statistics on recorded sexual offences against under 18 year olds from police forces in England through a Freedom of Information (FOI) request. This data is available from 2007/08 and is noted where referred to. Legislation, offence categories and recording methods are not identical across the UK. In particular, recorded crime statistics for England, Wales and Northern Ireland are not directly comparable with those in Scotland. In England and Wales, recording of crimes is based on the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) and Home Office Counting Rules for recorded crime. The Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) has a comparable system, while the Scotland Crime Recording System (SCRS) does not. It is important to take into account these differences when comparing the data.

* Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2018) *Sexual offences in England and Wales: year ending March 2017*. London: Office for National Statistics

** UK Statistics Authority (2014) *Assessment of compliance with the code of practice for official statistics: statistics on crime in England and Wales*. London: UK Statistics Authority.

England

Recorded sexual offences against children under 16 and under 18



Latest figure: In 2016/17 there were 43,522 recorded sexual offences against children under 16 years old. Police forces in England also provided information on the number of sexual offences against children under 18 in response to an FOI request. There were 54,846 offences against children under 18.

For under 16s, the rate of offences in 2016/17 was 41.3 offences per 10,000 children, while for under 18s it was 46.5 offences per 10,000 children. Both of these rates have more than doubled in the past four years.

Trend: Over time, we have seen notable increases in the number of sexual offences recorded against children aged under 16 years. From 2004/05 to 2012/13, there were marginal increases in recorded offences, with normal fluctuation from year to year. However, from 2012/13 onwards, there has been a steep upward trend in the number of offences recorded. The trend in sexual offences against under 18 year olds mirrors that of under 16 year olds.

England

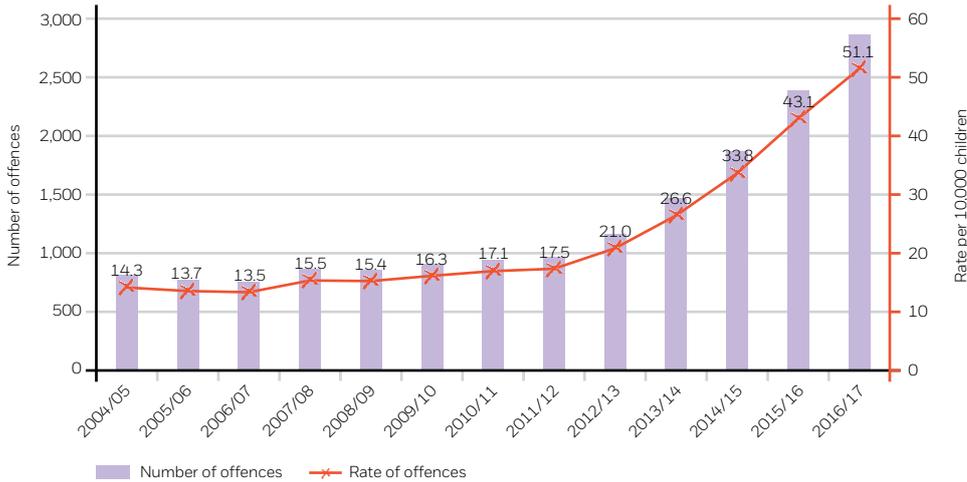
Offence category	2015/16	2016/17
Rape of a child under 13	5,609	6,009
Rape of a child under 16	5,625	6,299
Sexual assault on a child under 13	9,361	10,581
Sexual activity involving a child under 13	5,549	7,220
Sexual activity involving a child under 16	10,658	12,281
Sexual grooming	969	1,132
Abuse of position of trust of a sexual nature (includes u18s)	226	274
Abuse of children through sexual exploitation (includes u18s)	541	593

Published offence data shows an increase in all sexual offence categories year-on-year from 2015/16 to 2016/17. The most notable changes are:

- sexual activity involving a child under 13 has increased by 30.1 per cent since 2015/16;
- abuse of a position of trust offences have increased by 21.2 per cent since 2015/16; and
- sexual grooming has increased by 16.8 per cent since 2015/16.

Wales

Recorded sexual offences against children under 16



Latest figure: There were 2,845 recorded sexual offences against children under 16 years old in 2016/17. This is a rate of 51.1 sexual offences per 10,000 children aged under 16, which is the highest rate across all four UK nations this year.

Trend: Recorded sexual offences against children under 16 in Wales have increased significantly over the past five years. While Wales shows similar trends to England, over the past two years, recorded offences in Wales have increased at a faster rate than in any other UK nation.

Wales

Offence category	2015/16	2016/17
Rape of a child under 13	378	446
Rape of a child under 16	297	340
Sexual assault on a child under 13	626	648
Sexual activity involving a child under 13	375	566
Sexual activity involving a child under 16	640	791
Sexual grooming	44	54
Abuse of position of trust of a sexual nature (includes u18s)	12	5
Abuse of children through sexual exploitation (includes u18s)	22	24

Since 2015/16, there has been an increase in the majority of sexual offence categories. The most notable changes over the past two years are:

- sexual activity with a child aged under 13 has increased by 50.9 per cent;
- abuse of a position of trust of a sexual nature has decreased; and
- recorded offences of sexual grooming have shown a 22.7 per cent increase since 2015/16.

Northern Ireland

Recorded sexual offences against children under 18



Latest figure: There were 1,875 recorded sexual offences against children aged under 18 in 2016/17. This is a rate of 43.3 sexual offences per 10,000 children under 18.

The numbers of offences have shown an increase of 3.6 per cent – the smallest increase in all the UK nations this year and the smallest in Northern Ireland since the numbers began a steep upwards incline in 2011/12.

Trend: There has been an increasing trend in sexual offences since 2011/12, in line with the other nations. This smaller increase in recorded offences this year could indicate that the dramatic increases seen over the past few years will begin to level off in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland

Offence category	2015/16	2016/17
Rape (including attempted rape)	334	360
Sexual assaults on a child under 13	513	534
Sexual assaults on a child aged 13 and over	270	269
Sexual activity involving a child under 13	219	247
Sexual activity involving a child aged 13 and over	364	368
Sexual grooming	46	33
Other sexual offences	63	64

There has been an increase in five out of seven sexual offence categories compared with 2015/16. The most notable changes are:

- there was a 28.3 per cent decrease in sexual grooming offences since 2015/16, although this still remains more than eight times higher than in 2014/15, the year before the offence of sexual communication with a child began to be counted within sexual grooming offence totals; and
- sexual activity involving a child under 13 showed the largest percentage increase, at 12.8 per cent, from 2015/16 to 2016/17.

Scotland

Recorded sexual offences against children under 16



Latest figure: There were 4,097 recorded sexual offences against children aged under 16 years in 2015/16. This is a 10.3 per cent increase on the previous year and a rate of 45.0 sexual offences per 10,000 children under 16.

Trend: There has been an increasing trend in sexual offences against under 16 year olds, with the number of sexual offences increasing by 49.2 per cent since 2012/13. Similarly to England and Wales, there continue to be high increases in the rate of offences this year.

However, trends in Scotland must be treated with caution (please see below).

The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 came into force on 1 December 2010 and resulted in a change to the way some sexual offences were categorised. Comparisons over time of the breakdown of sexual crimes should therefore be treated with caution. However, no new crimes were introduced as a result of the legislation and this is not considered to be a break in the time series.

Scotland

Offence category	2015/16	2016/17
Rape or attempted rape of a child aged 13 to 15	225	196
Rape or attempted rape of a child aged under 13	129	161
Sexual assault of a child aged 13 to 15	462	423
Sexual assault of a child aged under 13	419	453
Sexual activity involving a child aged 13 to 15	594	583
Sexual activity involving a child aged under 13	244	337
Grooming of children for purposes of sexual offences	50	47
Sexual abuse of trust (includes u18s)	8	11
Other sexual offences (includes u18s)	1,592	1,902

There has been an increase in five out of nine sexual offence categories compared to 2015/16. The most notable changes are:

- sexual activity involving a child under 13 increased by 38.1 per cent in the last year;
- offences of sexual grooming fell by 6.0 per cent from the previous year, although this has still more than doubled since 2014/15; and
- the number of rapes of a child under 13 decreased from 160 to 129 offences between 2014/15 and 2015/16, however this has increased to 161 offences again this year.

Data sources

England and Wales: Home Office (2017) [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables](#). London: Home Office; NSPCC (2016) FOI requests sent to all police forces in England.
Scotland: Scottish Government recorded crime statistics (Data provided to NSPCC). **Northern Ireland:** Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) (2017) [Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland: 1998/99 to 2016/17](#). Belfast: Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

INDICATOR 5

Number of recorded cruelty and neglect offences

KEY MESSAGES

- Since 2011/12 there has been an increasing trend in recorded offences of cruelty and neglect in England and Northern Ireland, while Wales has seen a sharp rise in offences since 2012/13. This is believed to be associated with increased reporting and changes in recording practices.
- Scotland's trend is the opposite to the rest of the UK, with a continued decrease in the volume and rate of recorded cruelty and neglect offences since 2009/10.

Why is this measure important?

This measure shows the number of offences recorded by the police where a parent or carer "wilfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons or exposes a child under 16 in a manner likely to cause them 'unnecessary suffering or injury to health'". The data does not reflect the total number of children actually suffering from cruelty or neglect, but it does provide an important part of the picture of cruelty and neglect against children.

Context and limitations

As many crimes go unreported and unrecorded, police statistics do not represent the total number of offences committed. In some cases, it is agreed that the best interests of the child are served by a social care-led intervention rather than through police involvement. A recorded crime can be unrecorded if it is subsequently transferred or cancelled.

Trends in the data may also reflect increased public awareness and changes in policing practice rather than an increased incidence.

In January 2014 the UK Statistics Authority removed the National Statistics designation from recorded crime data in England and Wales following concerns about the data's reliability.* Data for Northern Ireland and Scotland have retained National Statistics status.

Availability and comparability

Legislation, offence categories and recording methods are not identical across the UK and so direct comparisons need to be treated with caution. In England and Wales, recording of crimes is based on the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) and Home Office Counting Rules for recorded crime. The Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) has a comparable system, while the Scotland Crime Recording System (SCRS) does not.

Figures for England and Wales include offences of abandonment of a child, as this offence was merged with that of cruelty to and neglect of children in 2013. Figures for Northern Ireland also include offences of cruelty to and neglect of children and abandoning a child. In Scotland, where crimes are counted differently, the reporting categories used are broader. Figures include offences of cruelty to and unnatural treatment of children, being drunk in charge of a child, and children and young person offences (not elsewhere classified).

England

Recorded cruelty and neglect against children under 16



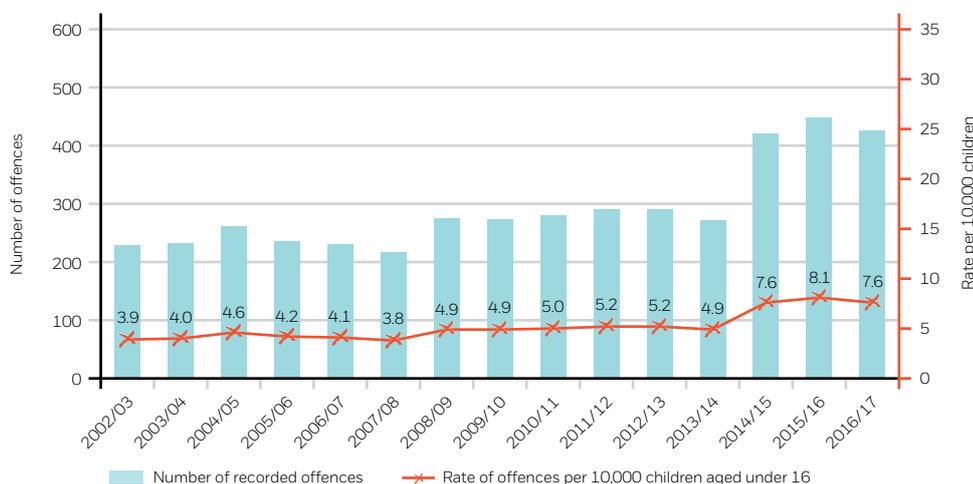
Latest figure: There were 13,591 recorded offences in 2016/17, a rate of 12.9 offences per 10,000 children aged under 16.

Trend: The number of offences has risen sharply since 2012/13 and the rate of offences per 10,000 children has increased by 134.6 per cent in the last five years.

This increase is believed to be attributable to increased reporting of offences and changes in recording practices.

Wales

Recorded cruelty and neglect against children under 16



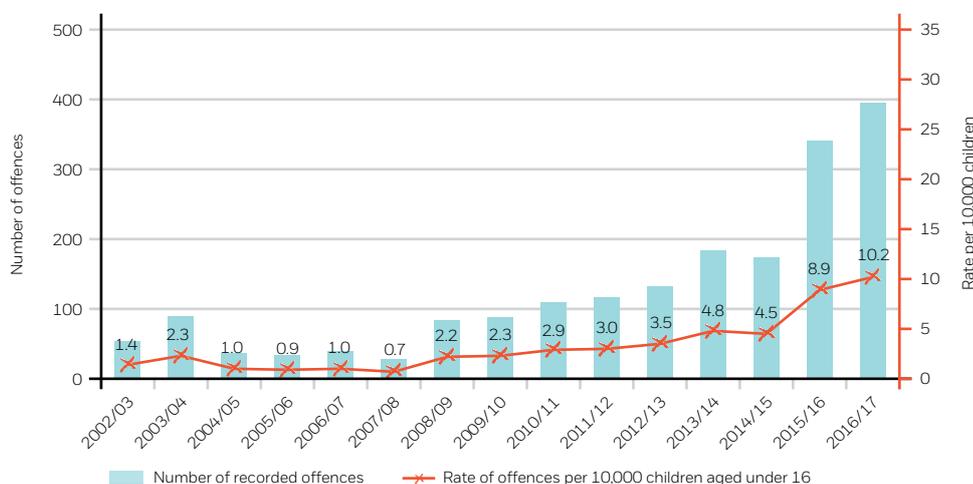
Latest figure: There were 426 recorded offences in 2016/17, a rate of 7.6 offences per 10,000 children aged under 16.

Trend: The total number of offences increased by 54.8 per cent between 2013/14 and 2014/15, but has remained broadly the same since then.

Increases in the number and rate of offences are believed to be a reflection of reporting and recording practices.

Northern Ireland

Recorded cruelty and neglect against children under 16

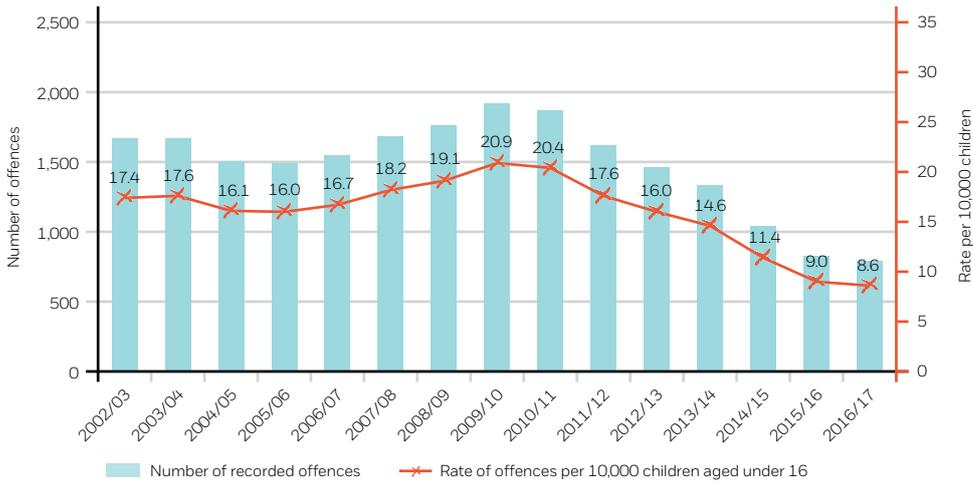


Latest figure: There were 395 recorded offences in 2016/17, a rate of 10.2 offences per 10,000 children aged under 16.

Trend: While consistently exhibiting lower rates of recorded cruelty and neglect than the other nations, Northern Ireland has seen the most notable increase over the past five years.

Scotland

Recorded cruelty and neglect against children under 16



Latest figure: There were 792 recorded offences in 2016/17, a rate of 8.6 offences per 10,000 children aged under 16. This is a 3.6 per cent decrease in the number of offences compared with 2015/16 and the lowest figure recorded within the data set.

Trend: Scotland is the opposite of the other nations with a notable decreasing trend between 2009/10 and 2016/17. Scotland has seen a 51.0 per cent decrease in the number of offences in the past five years.

Data sources

England and Wales: Home Office (2018) [Police recorded crimes and outcomes open data tables](#). London: Home Office.

Scotland: Scottish Government recorded crime statistics (Data provided to NSPCC).

Northern Ireland: Central Statistics Unit, Police Service of Northern Ireland (Data provided to NSPCC).

**Recorded cruelty
and neglect offences
have increased
in England, Wales
and Northern Ireland
in recent years.**

INDICATOR 6

Self-reported prevalence of abuse and neglect

KEY MESSAGES

- In 2009, 18.6 per cent of 11 to 17 year olds said they had experienced some type of severe maltreatment.
- Self-report survey data of young people indicates that prevalence of child maltreatment is higher than that reported in other indicators in this report.
- In 2009, 17.5 per cent of 11 to 17 year olds said they had been exposed to domestic violence.

Why is this measure important?

This measure draws on the findings of the NSPCC research report *Child abuse and neglect in the UK today*, published in September 2011. In that report, 2,160 parents of 0 to 10 year olds, 2,275 young people aged 11 to 17 years with their parents or guardians, and 1,761 young people aged 18 to 24 years in the UK were interviewed in 2009 about experiences of child abuse and neglect. The findings provide the only UK-wide research-based indication of the prevalence and impact of child abuse and neglect. Definitions of terms used in this indicator can be found in the glossary.

Context and limitations

This is a self-report household survey for 11 to 24 year olds and a caregiver survey for the under 11s. As survey data, it may be subject to error associated with sampling and respondents recalling past events. The households were selected at random from the postcode address file. The data has been weighted for the UK as a whole. For under 18s, parental consent was needed, which may have resulted in some sample bias.

Availability and comparability

This survey was completed in 2009 and no new data is available. This data is increasingly out of date and we welcome the announcement that the Office for National Statistics is conducting a feasibility study to determine whether a new prevalence study could be an effective source of data on child abuse and neglect. Although the data is available for all four nations, small sample sizes in the devolved nations mean that it is problematic to report these separately. There is no time series data for this indicator.

Lifetime exposure to severe maltreatment

Maltreatment type	11–17 years			18–24 years		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Severe physical abuse	6.7%	7.1%	6.9%	10.2%	12.9%	11.5%
Contact sexual abuse	2.6%	7.0%	4.8%	5.1%	17.8%	11.3%
Severe neglect by a parent or guardian	9.9%	9.8%	9.8%	7.0%	11.0%	9.0%
Severe maltreatment by a parent or guardian	13.5%	13.3%	13.4%	11.6%	17.5%	14.5%
All severe maltreatment	18.2%	19.0%	18.6%	20.3%	30.6%	25.3%

Among 18 to 24 year olds, 11.3 per cent reported that they had experienced contact sexual abuse while under the age of 18.

Nine per cent of 18 to 24 year olds reported that they had experienced severe neglect while under the age of 18.

Overall maltreatment types

Maltreatment and victimisation type	11–17 years		18–24 years
	Past year	Lifetime	Lifetime
Severe maltreatment	-	18.6%	25.3%
Any neglect by parent/guardian	-	13.3%	16.0%
Emotional abuse ^a	31.9%	64.4%	66.8%
Physical violence	36.0%	65.5%	64.1%
Sexual abuse ^b	9.4%	16.5%	24.1%
Contact sexual	1.9%	4.8%	11.3%
Exposure to domestic violence	2.5%	17.5%	23.7%
Physical punishment ("smacking") ^c	45.9%	-	-

^a emotional abuse included bullying

^b sexual abuse included contact and non-contact by any adult or peer perpetrator

^c by primary caregiver

Children are exposed to many different types of abuse. This table can be used to conceptualise the amount and types of violence and abuse that young people are exposed to.

Almost a quarter of the 18 to 24 year olds said that they had been exposed to domestic violence during their childhood.

Two thirds of 18 to 24 year olds said that they had experienced emotional abuse, which includes bullying, during their childhood. Almost of a third of 11 to 17 year olds said that they had experienced emotional abuse in the past year.

Overall maltreatment and victimisation by perpetrator type

Maltreatment and victimisation type	11–17 years		18–24 years
	Past year	Lifetime	Lifetime
Maltreatment by parent/guardian	6.0%	21.9%	24.5%
Maltreatment by adult outside home	3.1%	7.8%	12.8%
Sibling victimisation	16.0%	31.8%	25.2%
Intimate partner abuse	5.0%	7.9%	13.4%
Peer victimisation	35.3%	59.5%	63.2%
Exposure to community violence	31.2%	61.4%	66.5%

Children are exposed to abuse in their home, at school and in the community. That abuse might be perpetrated by their parents, their siblings, adults they know, peers or strangers. This table can be used to conceptualise the amount and types of violence and abuse that young people are exposed to, and the perpetrators involved.

Almost 60 per cent of young people who are aged 11 to 17 will have been victimised by a peer – which includes anything from bullying to assault.

A quarter of 18 to 24 year olds said that they had been a victim of abuse by a sibling during their childhood. More than 30 per cent of 11 to 17 year olds said they had experienced sibling victimisation.

Data source

Radford, L. et al. (2011) *Child abuse and neglect in the UK today*. London: NSPCC.

INDICATOR 7

Counselling sessions with Childline

KEY MESSAGES

- Childline delivered 278,440 counselling sessions* in 2017/18; this is a 45.7 per cent increase since 2009/10.
- Mental/emotional health was the most common main concern in Childline counselling sessions in 2017/18.
- In 2017/18, 9.1 per cent of counselling sessions were about suicide, compared with 3.2 per cent in 2009/10.
- Childline made 4,604 referrals concerning the welfare of children to external agencies in 2017/18 on behalf of 4,278 children. This is a 6.4 per cent increase in the number of referrals since 2016/17.

Why is this measure important?

Childline is the UK's free, 24-hour helpline for children and young people. Information about Childline counselling sessions (delivered by phone and online) provides a unique indication of the nature and levels of concerns among children. It allows us to identify emerging trends in the issues that children are facing. Childline information also allows us to report on concerns about threats to children's welfare that may not be covered in official crime or child protection statistics.

Context and limitations

This data captures where children have been counselled by Childline and is therefore only a snapshot of the concerns they may have. It is not possible to identify the number of individual children who are speaking to Childline, as the same child may make multiple contacts. The number of and reasons for

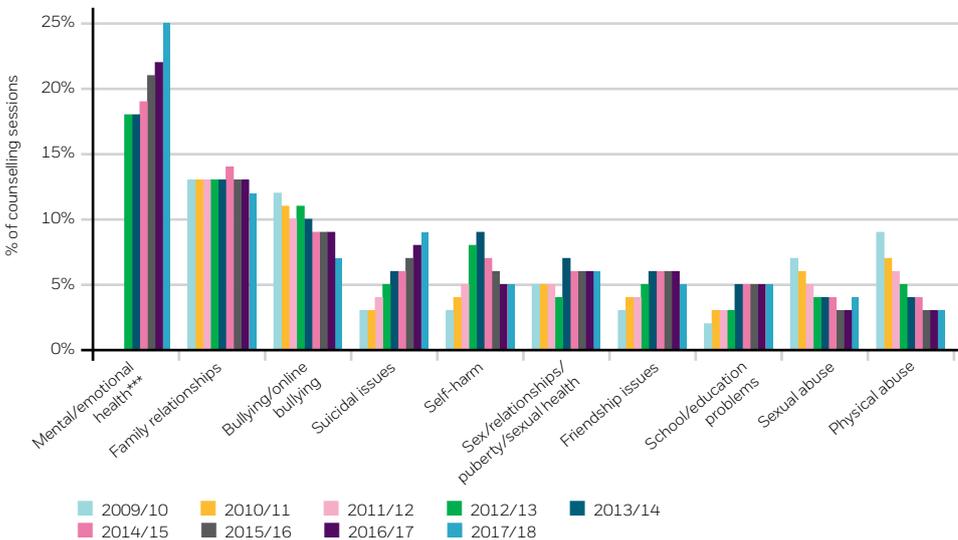
counselling sessions can also be affected by news coverage, NSPCC marketing, changes to how Childline data is coded and the introduction of new ways to contact Childline, such as the Childline app.

There have been significant developments in the way Childline comprehensively records and reports its data. Therefore some data in 2017/18 will not be directly comparable with previous years.

Availability and comparability

Childline data covers the UK as a whole. Due to the confidentiality of the service, very few young people tell a counsellor where they live, and therefore a UK nation breakdown of data is not possible.

Percentage of counselling sessions by primary concern 2017/18**



Mental/emotional health and family relationships remain the most talked-about issues in Childline counselling sessions with children and young people in 2017/18.

Suicidal issues, bullying and sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health were also among the top five main concerns counselled.

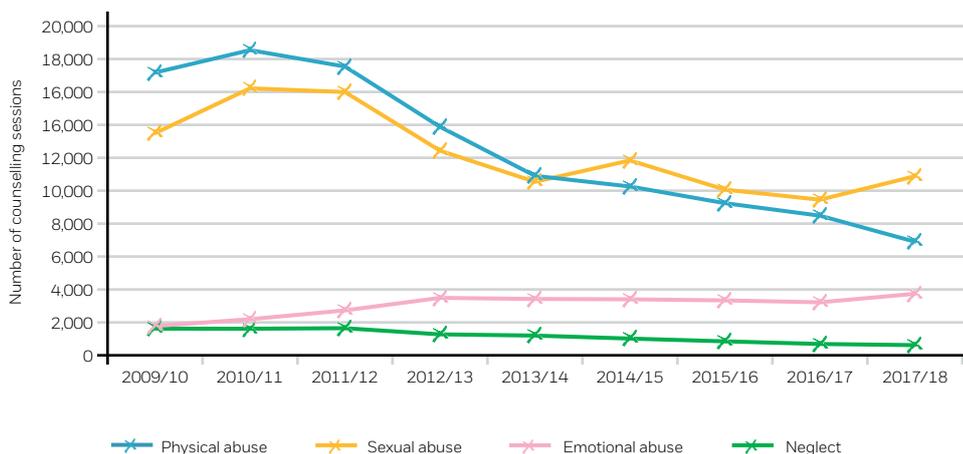
The trend of steady increases in the number of counselling sessions about mental/emotional health continued in 2017/18, as it has over the past six years. For the eighth year running, there was an increase in the number of counselling sessions about suicidal issues.

*Counselling sessions refer to calls, online chats and emails.

**Concern data relates to counselling sessions where children were talking about their own concerns. It excludes data from sessions where children contacted Childline with concerns about another person.

***A new code of mental/emotional health was introduced in 2016/17. This incorporates the previous codes of low mood/unhappiness, mental health issues and loss/bereavement; these codes have been combined for the previous years for comparison.

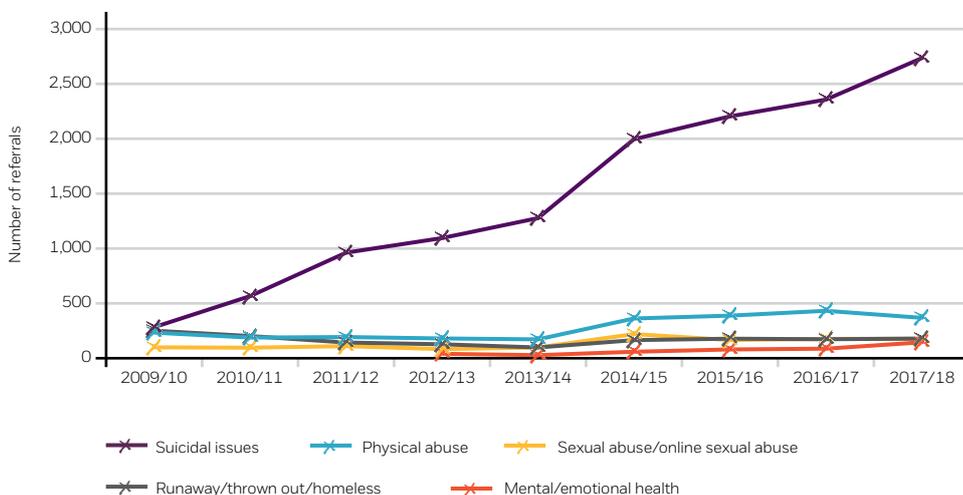
Counselling sessions with abuse as the primary concern



In 2017/18, more counselling sessions were carried out about sexual abuse/online sexual abuse than for other abuse-related main concerns. Over the past year Childline delivered 10,878 counselling sessions to children whose main concern was sexual abuse/online sexual abuse. This accounted for almost half (49.1 per cent) of all abuse-related main concerns.

The numbers of counselling sessions about physical abuse continue to follow a decreasing trend.

Referrals by the five most common primary concerns



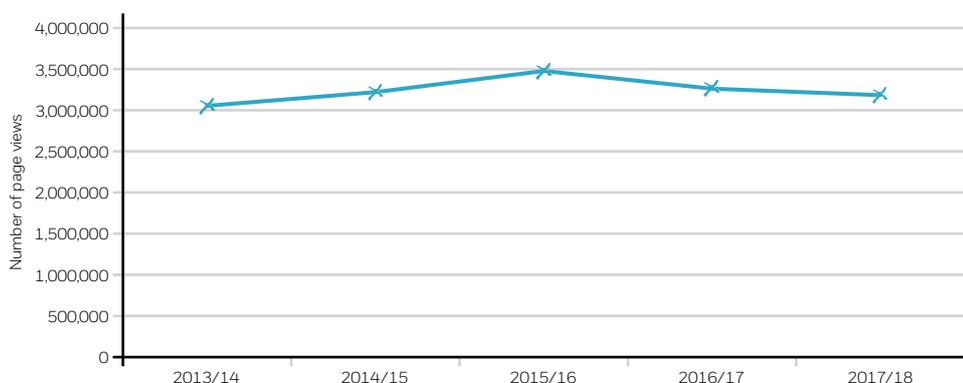
Childline makes referrals to external agencies in cases where a child is in a life-threatening situation, facing significant harm, or where the child has requested direct help.

In 2017/18, Childline made 4,604 referrals on behalf of 4,278 children to external agencies. This is a 64 per cent increase in the number of referrals since 2016/17; the number of referrals made by Childline has increased by 150.8 per cent over the past five years.

The most common reason for a referral to be made is suicide, accounting for 63.9 per cent of the number of referrals made in 2017/18.

Physical abuse accounted for 8.6 per cent of referrals made in 2017/18, sexual abuse accounted for 4.2 per cent, neglect for 1.4 per cent, and emotional abuse for 0.9 per cent.

Visits to the Childline website



In addition to offering counselling sessions by phone or online, the Childline website is a resource for children and young people. In 2017/18, the Childline website received a total of 3,183,058 visits.

The Childline Message Boards received a total of 1,896,279 page views.* There were 52,658 posts submitted and published by children and young people, a 13.6 per cent increase from 2016/17.

* Number of times that page was viewed, not the number of individuals who viewed that page.

INDICATOR 8

Contacts with the NSPCC helpline

KEY MESSAGES

Due to the introduction of a new recording and reporting system data for 2017/18 was not available in time for the publication of this report. Therefore we are re-publishing 2016/17 data.

- There were 66,218 contacts made to the NSPCC helpline in 2016/17.
- Neglect was the most common child welfare concern.

Why is this measure important?

The NSPCC helpline offers an advice and support service for anyone worried about the safety or welfare of a child. Information from the helpline gives us an indication of the levels of concern among the public and professionals about children's welfare, the nature of these concerns and whether they are serious enough to warrant a referral to police or children's services for further assessments. This is also a useful indicator to assist in future service planning for local authorities.

What are the limitations of the data?

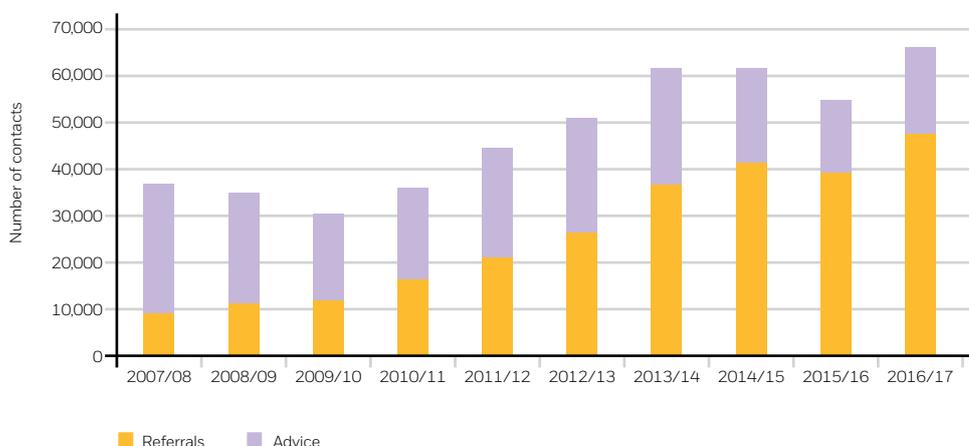
Contacts to the helpline are based on people's own perceptions of abuse and neglect, and therefore, the data only captures

instances of abuse and neglect that callers have identified. Also the number and reasons for contact can be affected by news coverage and NSPCC campaigns.

Data availability and comparability

Overall data is available and comparable back to 2007/08. Comparable data broken down by nation is available from 2010/11. Referral data captures the local authority or agency the referral was made to. For advice contacts, the geographical location of the caller is captured where the information is given to us by the caller. Due to the introduction of a new recording and reporting system part way through 2017/18, we have been unable to provide data for 2017/18 in time for the publication of this report.

Trends in helpline advice contacts and referrals



There were 66,218 contacts made to the NSPCC helpline in 2016/17. The number of contacts increased in 2016/17 after a decrease in 2015/16; prior to this the helpline saw a five year increase in the number of contacts.

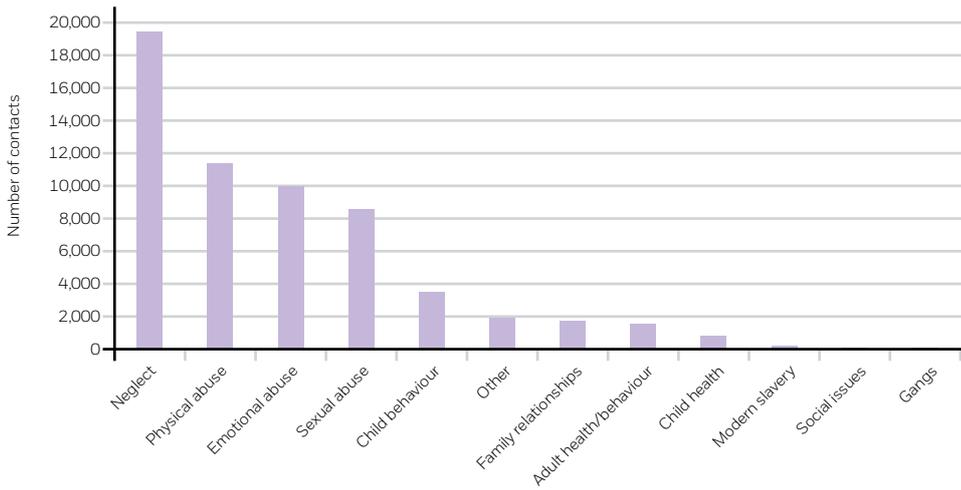
The increased demand reflects media attention in 2016/17, particularly around allegations of abuse in football.

Contacts to the helpline can result in the caller receiving advice or a referral being made to an external agency such as a local authority or the police

The proportion of contacts that led to a referral increased steadily since 2007/08. In 2016/17, 71.7 per cent of all contacts led to a referral.*

* Includes referral updates where the helpline received additional information about an existing referral.

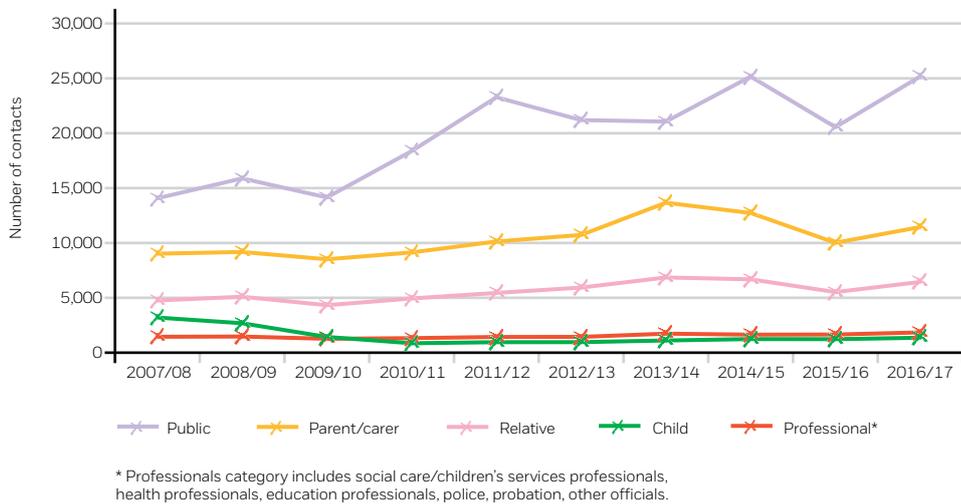
Reasons for contacting the Helpline in 2016-17



More than three-quarters (83.3 per cent) of contacts to the helpline related to abuse in 2016/17, including sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

Neglect was the most common child welfare concern in 2016/17, with 19,448 contacts about this issue. This was a 60.6 per cent increase from five years before, when there were 12,110 contacts about this issue in 2011/12.

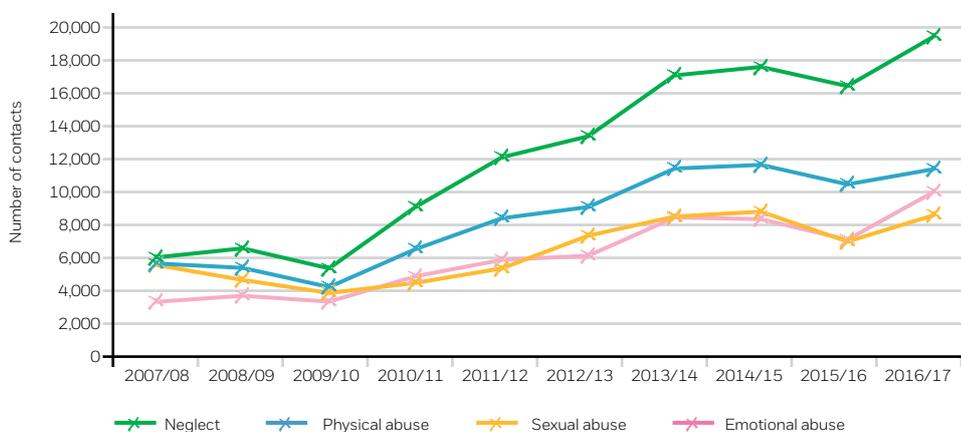
Who contacts the helpline?



In 2016/17, where the information was recorded, 58.9 per cent of contacts made to the helpline were from the public. Of these contacts, 81.1 per cent were serious enough to warrant a referral to an external agency.

There was a steady increase in members of the public contacting the helpline to seek advice or report a concern about the welfare of a child. Contacts from members of the public increased by 78.9 per cent since 2007/08.

Trends in contacts about abuse



There was an increase in contacts to the helpline about abuse over the past nine years. The most significant increases in abuse contacts in 2016/17 were in sexual abuse, which increased by 22.9 per cent since 2015/16, and emotional abuse, which increased by 40.9 per cent.

In 2016/17, 86.8 per cent of contacts about neglect, 80.0 per cent of contacts about physical abuse, 74.9 per cent of contacts about emotional abuse, and 54.5 per cent of contacts about sexual abuse led to a referral.

INDICATOR 9

Online harm

KEY MESSAGES

- 3,096 offences have been recorded by the police in England and Wales and the British Transport Police in the year since the introduction of a law making sexual communication with a child illegal in April 2017. The Police Service of Northern Ireland recorded 82 offences of sexual communication with a child in the same year.
- Scotland recorded 462 offences of communicating indecently with a child in 2016/17.
- In 2017/18, more than 3,000 Childline counselling sessions were about bullying online and online safety
- Among reviews by young people of the most popular social networks, apps and games, 15.9 per cent reported seeing sexual content.

Why is this measure important?

Many children have grown up with the internet and it is embedded in every aspect of their lives. While the internet is often a positive part of young people's daily life, allowing them to express themselves, communicate and be creative, inhabiting online spaces can present risks, such as exposure to inappropriate or upsetting content and sexual communication from adults.

Context and limitations

The online space is constantly changing and developing, meaning consistent and up-to-date data is limited. Much of the evidence in this indicator spans a short time period because longitudinal data does not yet exist. Policy developments, such as a law to protect children from sexual messages from adults, and the government's Internet Safety Strategy, show an increased awareness of online risk and will contribute to a greater understanding of the scale of online risks and harm in the future.

Availability and comparability

We present available data from Childline counselling sessions on online safety, Ofcom data on worrying or nasty online content, NSPCC research on inappropriate content and crime data relating to grooming offences.

A number of the snapshots in this indicator contain data that is not directly comparable to previous years due to changes in data collection methods and survey design, such as rewording of questions, or adjustments to multiple choice answers. Not all police forces responded to our Freedom of Information (FOI) request for a full year of data on the number of sexual communication with a child offences in England and Wales, so the figure under-estimates the true scale of the issue.

Number of Childline counselling sessions about online safety and abuse

Main concern	Number of counselling sessions in 2017/18
Bullying Online and Online Safety	3,088
Sexual Abuse Online	2,218

In 2017/18, 3,088 counselling sessions had a primary focus of bullying online and online safety. Childline delivered 2,218 counselling sessions about sexual abuse online.

Childline data from 2017/18 is not comparable with previous years, due to changes in the recording system. Indicator 7 provides more information on how recording has changed.

Ofcom survey: have you seen anything online that you found worrying or nasty?



Ofcom conducts annual research to understand the media consumption habits of children in the UK, including their use of the internet. This question asks whether young people have seen anything worrying or nasty online. In 2017, 17 per cent of 8 to 11 year olds and 29 per cent of 12 to 15 year olds reported seeing worrying or nasty content.

The wording of the question changed in 2017. Until 2016, respondents were asked if they had seen anything worrying or nasty in the last year. This year, respondents were asked if they had ever seen anything worrying or nasty. This means that this year's data is not comparable with previous years'. Prior to 2016 Ofcom asked if children had seen anything online that they found "worrying, nasty or offensive" in 2016 this question was shortened to focus on just "worrying or nasty" content.

Inappropriate content on social networking sites, apps, and games

Each year, the NSPCC asks children aged 11 to 18 to review 50 popular apps, sites and online games. These are selected by looking at the top apps on Google Play and the iOS App Store and the platforms that are frequently mentioned during Childline counselling sessions, as well as through consultation with young people and online safety professionals. Each app, site or game is required to receive at least ten reviews from young people in order to be included in the research. In 2018, 2,059 young people's reviews of 40 platforms were included in the final analysis. Due to changes in popularity, different sites are reviewed each year, meaning that the results are not directly comparable. However, they highlight the type of content that young people are seeing online.

% of young people's reviews that reported seeing inappropriate content

Type of content	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Violence and hatred	26.3	30.0	15.9
Sexual content	22.5	20.5	15.9
Bullying	30.3	19.4	18.0
Drink, drugs and crime*	23.8	17.0	12.0
Suicide and self-harm	12.0	11.5	10.8

*In 2017/18 this category was renamed "drink, drugs and crime". It had previously been called "adult or illegal"

In 2017/18, the content most commonly encountered by young people was bullying. In 2016/17, violence and hatred, including racist, sexist and homophobic content was most commonly encountered. The number of young people who reported seeing inappropriate content is noticeably fewer in 2017/18 compared with previous years. While the wording of the question did not change, the way in which the multiple choice answers were grouped did, which could account for the lower percentages. It is worth noting that many of the most popular social networks reviewed had higher numbers of young people encountering inappropriate content than these figures suggest. See the Young people's experiences online section for more detailed information on our Net Aware research.

Police-recorded grooming offences

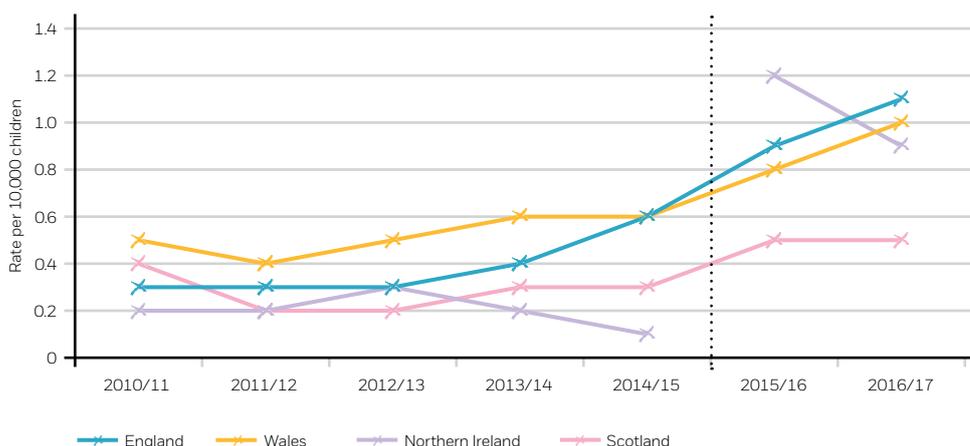
Grooming occurs when a perpetrator communicates with a child or young person to build a trusting relationship, with the intention of encouraging or manipulating them to engage in sexual behaviour. Not all grooming takes place online, but given the ubiquity of technology in children's lives, there are clear opportunities for grooming to be conducted online.

Until recently it was not an offence for an adult to send a child a sexual message, meaning some grooming behaviour was not illegal. Following the NSPCC's Flaw in the Law campaign, the offence of sexual communication with a child was introduced in Northern Ireland in February 2016 and in England and Wales in April 2017. This has facilitated earlier intervention by law enforcement which may prevent the escalation of offending. A similar offence of communicating indecently with a child was introduced in Scotland in December 2010.

The graphs below show the rate of grooming offences and the number of offences of sexual communication with a child or communicating indecently with a child.

United Kingdom comparison

Recorded grooming offences (rate per 10,000 children under 16)



The data indicates an upward trend in the rates of grooming offences across the four nations since 2010/11.

Data for England and Wales is combined when published, but we have been able to separate by country by looking at the number of offences for individual forces.

Northern Ireland included the offence of sexual communication with a child within the wider offence of grooming in 2016. This helps explain why the number of recorded offences has risen significantly since 2014/15.

England and Wales

Recorded sexual communication with a child offences*

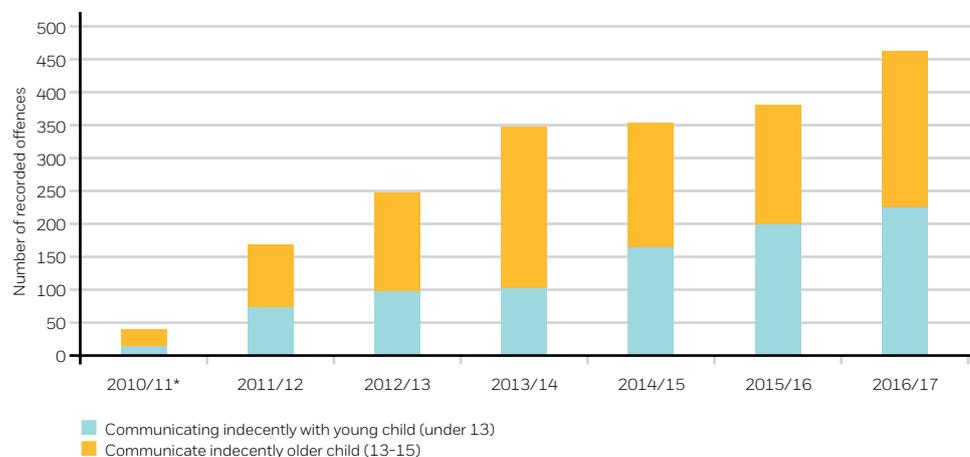
England	Wales	British Transport Police	Northern Ireland
2,813	274	9	82

*Based on responses from The Police Service of Northern Ireland, all 43 police forces in England and Wales and from British Transport Police. 40 police forces were able to provide a full year's worth of data, whilst one force provided nine months of data and three provided six months.

In the year since sexual communication with a child became an offence in April 2017, 3,096 offences have been recorded in England and Wales and by the British Transport Police. In 2017/18, 82 offences were recorded in Northern Ireland.

Scotland

Recorded communicating indecently with a child offences



Scotland introduced the offence of communicating indecently with a child in 2010. In 2016/17, the total number of recorded offences in Scotland was 462. This is a 175.0 per cent increase since 2011/12, the first full year for which data is available. Between 2015/16 and 2016/17, the number of offences rose from 381 to 462. It is expected that the number of recorded offences in England, Wales and Northern Ireland will follow a similar upward trend as awareness of the offence increases and the crime is more routinely recorded by police forces.

* Offences were not separately identifiable until the implementation of the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 on 1 December 2010. The 2010/11 figures for these offences relate only to the period 1 December 2010 to 31 March 2011.

Data sources

Childline data on file with the NSPCC. Ofcom (2017) *Children and parents: media use and attitudes report*. London: Ofcom. NSPCC (2018) Net Aware research on file with the NSPCC. **England and Wales:** Home Office (2017) *Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables*. London: Home Office, NSPCC (2018) FOI request sent to all Police Forces in England and Wales. **Scotland:** Scottish Government recorded crime statistics (Data provided to NSPCC). **Northern Ireland:** Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) (2017) *Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland: 1998/99 to 2016/17*. Belfast: Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). (Additional data provided to NSPCC)

**More than 3,000
Childline counselling
sessions were about
bullying online and
online safety**



Let's keep kids safe online

Young people's experiences online

Findings from Net Aware research

Net Aware is the guide from the NSPCC and O2 to the top sites, apps and games that children and young people use. It is designed to help parents and professionals to understand the risks of these sites, the type of content that young people might be exposed to and the settings and features available to help keep them safe. The online world changes so quickly that it can be hard to keep track. Net Aware helps parents and professionals stay up to date with the latest apps and trends.

Since 2014 we have conducted annual research, asking parents and young people to review the most popular sites, apps and games. We ask them to review each platform's safety features, the types of inappropriate content they have come across, and what they like and dislike about these platforms. Net Aware re-launched in May 2018 with reviews from 2,049 parents and 2,059 young people aged 11 to 18 from across the UK.

You can download the Net Aware app for free, from Google Play or the App Store.

Each year the sites that feature on Net Aware change according to what is most popular at the time. Fourteen new apps, sites and games were added in 2018, so now a total of 40 feature on the Net Aware site and app. As sites and trends quickly come and go, we introduced 'In the news' to the Net Aware site in 2017. It provides more regular updates from the NSPCC and O2, including tips and advice on new online trends, which are available as instant notifications to those using the app.

What do parents and young people tell us?

Every year, young people talk about the positive experiences they have online: opportunities to communicate with friends and family, being creative and having a safe space for self-expression.

"You can talk to people who have the same interests as you and you can also chat with your friends." – Young person, 13 (Discord)

"I can contact my friends and see news from all over the world." – Girl, 16 (Facebook)

However, we also hear about the risks that young people are exposed to, which include being contacted by people they don't know, bullying or nasty comments, and seeing inappropriate content.

"Some people use this platform for cyber bullying, posting distressing content and many more things which shouldn't be on social media." – Girl, 14 (Facebook)

"I don't like that random people can follow you and send you messages." – Boy, 13 (Instagram)

Sending and receiving messages online

We know that sending and receiving messages on social networks and games is one of the things that young people like most about the internet. While it allows young people to communicate with friends and family and to feel connected, chat features can also expose young people to some risks, including being contacted by adults they don't know.

23.6% of young people (486) experienced an adult they do not know in real life trying to contact them over a site, app or game.

Being sent upsetting content online

Nearly one in four young people has been sent upsetting content online.

- 23.8 per cent of the young people we surveyed (490) told us that they had been sent messages, images, videos or other content that made them feel sad, worried or uncomfortable;
- 16.4 per cent of the young people we surveyed said that they received upsetting content from people they know;
- 11.5 per cent of the young people we surveyed said that they received it from people they didn't know.

"I don't like how easy it is to spread hateful messages." – Young person, 13 (Pinterest)

Requests for sexual messages

15.5 per cent of young people aged 11 to 18 have received a request for a sexual image or messages.

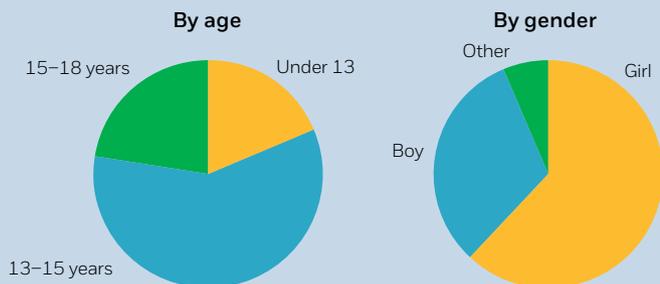
This year we asked young people if they had ever received a request online for a sexual image or messages. There were variations according to age and gender, but across the whole sample a worrying 15.5 per cent of young people (319) had received this request.

Who had received a request for a sexual image or messages?

- 52.3 per cent of girls (45/86) aged 16 to 18;
- 18.0 per cent of boys (18/100) aged 16 to 18;
- one in 10 girls (9.7 per cent) and one in 20 boys (4.5 per cent) under the age of 13.

"I don't like that people ask you to send sexual images or they can send sexual images to you." – Girl, 13 (Snapchat)

Breakdown of those who had received a request for a sexual image or messages



Seeing upsetting content

Every year young people and parents tell us that they are seeing inappropriate content online. This includes violent videos, sexual images and content displaying or even encouraging self-harm. It could be something that friends share with them, an advert, or a post from someone they don't know. Seeing this can be extremely upsetting for young people.

Due to changes in popularity, different sites are reviewed each year, meaning that the results are not directly comparable between years. However, this year we saw a decrease in the number of reviews from young people where they told us they'd seen upsetting content. This indicates that some sites are getting better at blocking or removing inappropriate content. This varies between different sites, with many still leaving children at a high risk of seeing inappropriate content. It's clear from this research that more needs to be done to make sure children are safe on these sites.

Many of the parents we spoke to also saw this content on the sites, apps and games they reviewed:

- 19.0 per cent of parents told us that they saw sexual content;
- 15.7 per cent of parents said that they had seen violence or hatred.

"Be very careful what you let your children have access to, as some of the games show extreme violence and sexual content." – Father of a 17-year-old girl

Each app, site or game on Net Aware is given a rating for the level of risk for five categories of inappropriate content: violence and hatred, sexual content, bullying, suicide and self-harm, and drink, drugs and crime. Where more than a quarter of reviews from young people and parents reported seeing this type of content, we rated it as high-risk.

Of the 40 sites on Net Aware in 2018, 14 are high-risk for at least one category of inappropriate content.

YouTube, Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas and Facebook are high-risk across all five categories of inappropriate content.

"Sometimes things come up in the recommended section, which are for older people, like sexual or rude videos." – Boy, 12 (YouTube)

Staying safe online

Another encouraging trend is the number of young people who told us that they know how to use different safety features on the sites, apps and games they use. Many young people are taking proactive steps to keep themselves safe online.

"I do feel safe because there are many report services and ways for me to report any disturbing content and I am fully aware how to block and remove friends and accounts." – Girl, 14 (Facebook)

"It is very easy to block and report people who make you feel uncomfortable." – Boy, 13 (Reddit)

Safety feature	Percentage of reviews where young people told us they know how to use this safety feature	
	2017	2018
Reporting	42.3%	66.5%
Blocking	50.1%	66.9%
Changing privacy settings	49.8%	66.9%
Turning off location sharing	37.4%	63.0%

Despite young people's improved knowledge of using these features, many still feel that more needs to be done to keep them safe online:

- 35.6 per cent of young people think the government is not doing enough;
- 17.7 per cent of young people think schools are not doing enough;
- 41.0 per cent of young people think the sites, apps and games are not doing enough.

"I once reported someone on the app because of a message they sent me, although I assume nothing was done about it as they were still able to send me messages and they still have their account." – Male, 18 (Yubo)

"If you're taught how to use sites safely you won't get yourself in trouble." – Boy, 16 (Discord)

Feelings that the government, schools and internet companies could do more to protect children were also echoed in what parents said. While many parents highlighted their role in equipping children to stay safe online, many believe that the responsibility is not solely theirs.

"I think schools and media could do more to highlight safe practices." – Father of four

"If governments would work together and come up with some practical and effective way to age-verify people then the internet would be a much safer place for children." – Father of three

"The site should be more responsible and draw users' attention to rules and community standards." – Mother of two

There are strong indications that young people are becoming more confident and aware about the steps available to help make the sites, apps and games they use as safe as possible. Parents and professionals also play a key role in keeping children safe online. However, we also know that site owners and developers can and must do more to make their sites safer for children. To enable young people to fully benefit from the advantages that the internet has to offer, it is vital that everyone works together in equipping and supporting young people to explore the internet safely.

"Try to keep an open dialogue with your child so they feel confident to discuss any concerns with you." – Mother of a 14-year-old girl

INDICATOR 10

Violent incidents experienced by 10 to 15 year olds

Crime survey for England and Wales

KEY MESSAGES

- In 2016/17, 5.6 per cent of 10 to 15 year olds in England and Wales were the victim of a violent crime.
- Of these offences, 80.4 per cent resulted in an injury to the victim.
- An estimated 359,000 violent offences were experienced by children aged 10 to 15 in 2016/17.

Why is this measure important?

The Crime survey for England and Wales (previously the British crime survey) is a face-to-face survey in which people in households in England and Wales are asked about their experiences of crime in the previous 12 months. The 2016/17 survey was based on face-to-face interviews with a nationally representative sample of 2,804 children aged 10 to 15.* Crime survey estimates are higher than the number of crimes recorded by the police because the survey captures offences that may not have been reported to the police. Used alongside police-recorded crime statistics, the Crime Survey is a valuable source of information on the extent and nature of crime.

Context and limitations

The survey only provides data for children aged 10 to 15 years old and only covers certain offence categories (violent and theft offences). It also excludes children living in communal establishments, boarding schools, youth detention centres and children's homes as all respondents were selected from households already taking part in the adult survey. Only one child per household takes part in the survey.

The Crime survey for England and Wales has National Statistics status. However, as with all survey data, it may be subject to errors associated with sampling and respondents recalling past events. Respondents may accidentally fail to recall incidents or they may be unwilling to disclose that an incident has occurred.

Due to the difficulty in classifying some crimes against children, the survey uses two different measures of crime: the preferred measure and the broad measure. The broad measure is the widest possible count of offences and incorporates minor offences between children and family members that would not usually be classed as crimes. The preferred measure is a narrower approach that takes into account factors identified as important in determining the severity of an incident – for example, the relationship to the offender and the level of injury.

Availability and comparability

The Scotland and Northern Ireland crime surveys do not include data for under 16s.

Data is only available for England and Wales combined for the past eight years. However, comparison across the eight years is not possible due to changes in the way the statistics are collected. The small sample size means that estimates fluctuate over time making trends difficult to interpret.

Methodological differences between the adults' and children's surveys mean that direct comparison is not possible.

England and Wales

Estimated percentage of 10 to 15 year olds who were the victim of a violent crime in the past 12 months

Preferred measure table

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Wounding	1.8	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.8	1.4	1.1
Assault with minor injury	3.7	3.7	3.6	2.9	3.3	2.8	3.2	3.5
Robbery	1.3	0.9	1.3	1.0	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6
Violence with injury	5.3	4.7	4.5	3.9	4.3	3.6	4.4	4.5
Violence without injury	2.4	1.7	2.2	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.1
Any violent incidents	7.4	6.2	6.4	5.2	5.9	5.2	5.8	5.6

According to the preferred measure, which captures more severe incidents, in 2016/17, 5.6 per cent of 10 to 15 year olds in England and Wales were the victim of a violent crime in the past 12 months. Of these, 80.4 per cent sustained an injury.

As an indication, this is more than three times the proportion of adults who were victims of violent crime in 2016/17 (1.7 per cent), though direct comparisons are problematic due to methodological differences.

Broad measure table

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Wounding	1.9	1.1	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.8	1.4	1.1
Assault with minor injury	5.0	4.4	4.4	3.7	4.2	4.0	4.0	3.9
Robbery	1.6	1.0	1.3	1.1	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.6
Violence with injury	6.6	5.5	5.3	4.6	5.2	4.7	5.2	4.9
Violence without injury	11.4	7.0	7.2	6.5	5.1	6.1	5.9	5.5
Any violent incidents	17.0	11.5	11.8	10.8	9.8	10.1	10.7	10.1

When minor incidents are included using the broad measure, the results show that more than 10 per cent of 10 to 15 year olds were a victim of a violent crime.

It is not possible to compare data across the eight years due to changes in the way the statistics are collected and the small sample size, making trends difficult to interpret.

General findings

The Crime Survey estimates that a total of 697,000 crimes were experienced by children aged 10 to 15 in 2016/17 based on the preferred measure of more severe incidents. Of this total, 51.5 per cent were violent crimes (359,000) while most of the remaining crimes were thefts (251,000). Of the 359,000 violent offences, the majority (78.0 per cent) resulted in injury to the victim. In comparison, 47.4 per cent of violent incidents among adults (aged 16 or above) resulted in injury to the victim. In 2016/17, 4.5 per cent of 10 to 15 year olds were the victims of violence and sustained an injury on the preferred measure, equal to 280,000 individual incidents.

Data source

Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2017) [Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2017](#). Newport: Office for National Statistics.

INDICATOR 11

Referrals to social services

KEY MESSAGES

- In 2016/17, information on referrals was only available for England and Northern Ireland.
- In England, there has been a 4.0 per cent increase in the number of accepted referrals for 2016/17. This follows a decline in the previous two years from a peak in 2013/14.
- In Northern Ireland, the number of children in need who were referred in 2016/17 increased by 10.2 per cent, following a decline the year before.

Why is this measure important?

A referral is the first stage of the child protection process in all four nations. A referral will be made about a child where some aspect of their life gives cause for concern. A referral is a request for services to be provided by children's services where the child is not previously known to them, or where the case was previously open but is now closed. Anyone who has concerns about the safety or welfare of a child can make a referral to statutory services.

Context and limitations

Data is collected on the number of referrals accepted by children's services in England and the number of children in need who are referred in Northern Ireland. There is no requirement to report initial contacts that may, or may not, be accepted as a referral. A referral can be made for a variety of different reasons and does not necessarily mean that there are child protection concerns.

Data for England comes from the Children in need census. Last year an inconsistency was identified in how children in need cases that remain open across census periods are dealt with. Although headline measures at the end of the year are unaffected, the decision was made to withdraw their status as National Statistics while the methodology is reviewed. Northern Ireland's statistics retain National Statistics status. However, these figures are produced bi-annually so there may be some double-counting of children.

An increase in referrals is not necessarily good or bad in terms of the safety of children. An increase in referrals could indicate increased awareness of concerns about the safety of a child. Alternately, it could indicate an increase in the levels of concern about the safety of children or changes in legislation, policy and practice.

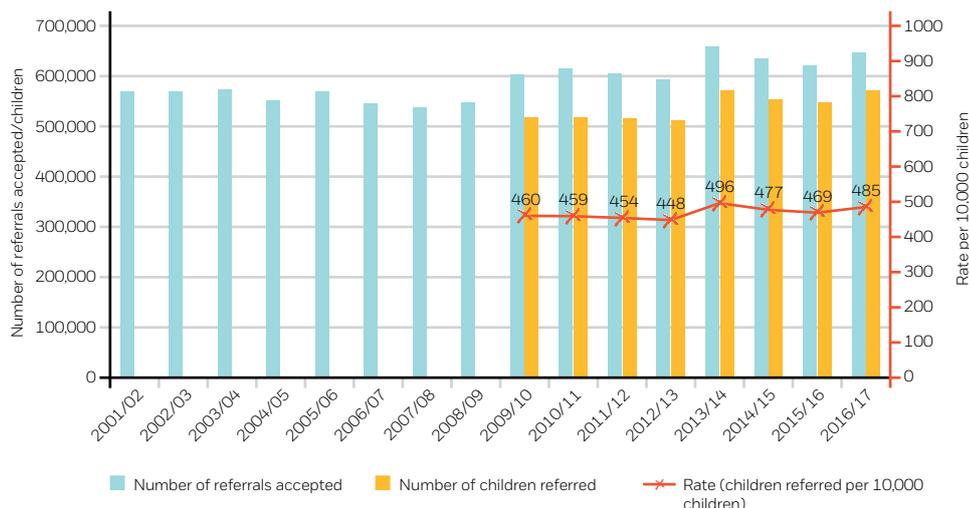
Availability and comparability

Data relating to referrals is published for England and Northern Ireland. Referral data for England and Northern Ireland use different measures, and should not be directly compared. In 2014/15 Northern Ireland changed how it sources some child protection data. This means that data published in 2014/15 is not the same and cannot be compared with earlier data.

Scotland discontinued publication of referral data in 2010 due to concerns about the inconsistency of definitions used to record data with local authorities. Wales discontinued publication in 2016/17, following the passing of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The Act changed the way needs are assessed and services are delivered, resulting in significant changes to data collections. This included an end to the collection of data on referrals, losing us an important insight in to the demand for children's services.

England

Number of referrals accepted

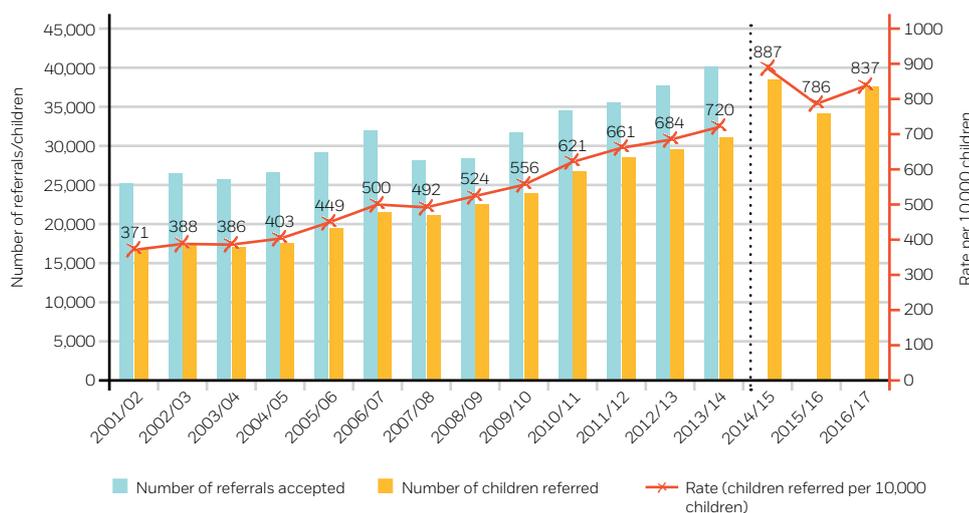


Latest figure: There were 646,120 referrals relating to 571,000 children for the year ending 31 March 2017.

Trend: In England, there has been a 4.0 per cent increase in the number of accepted referrals for 2016/17. This follows a decline in the previous two years, from a peak in 2013/14.

Northern Ireland

Number of referrals accepted



Latest figure: There were 37,618 children in need referred to social services for the year ending 31 March 2017.

Trend: In Northern Ireland, the number of children in need who were referred increased by 10.2 per cent from the previous year, following a decline of 11.2 per cent the year before. Data collection methods changed in 2014/5.

Data sources

England: Department for Education (DfE) (2017) *Characteristics of children in need: 2016 to 2017*. London: Department for Education.

Northern Ireland: Department of Health (2017) *Children's social care statistics for Northern Ireland 2016/17*. Belfast: Department of Health.

INDICATOR 12

Children in need or children receiving care and support

KEY MESSAGES

- In England the number and rate of children in need due to abuse and neglect has increased every year since 2011/12.
- More than half of both children in need in England and children receiving care and support in Wales needed services due to their experiences of abuse or neglect.

Why is this measure important?

A child is a “child in need” if they are unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by a public authority; or if a child’s development or health is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired without the provision of such services. In Wales, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 repealed Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 that defines children in need. Instead, a child is classified as a “child receiving care and support” if services are needed in addition to, or instead of, the care and support provided by their family. A child will be eligible for a service if: the need arises from circumstances such as their age or health, it relates to their personal wellbeing outcomes, it cannot be met by their parents, wider family or community services and it can only be met by their local authority. There are many different reasons why a child would be in need of services including, for instance, being disabled. Here we have focused, wherever possible, on data about children who are in need of services due to abuse or neglect.

Context and limitations

An increase or decrease in the number of children in need does not mean that children are becoming more or less safe. A fluctuation may instead mean that more or fewer children are coming to the attention of social services.

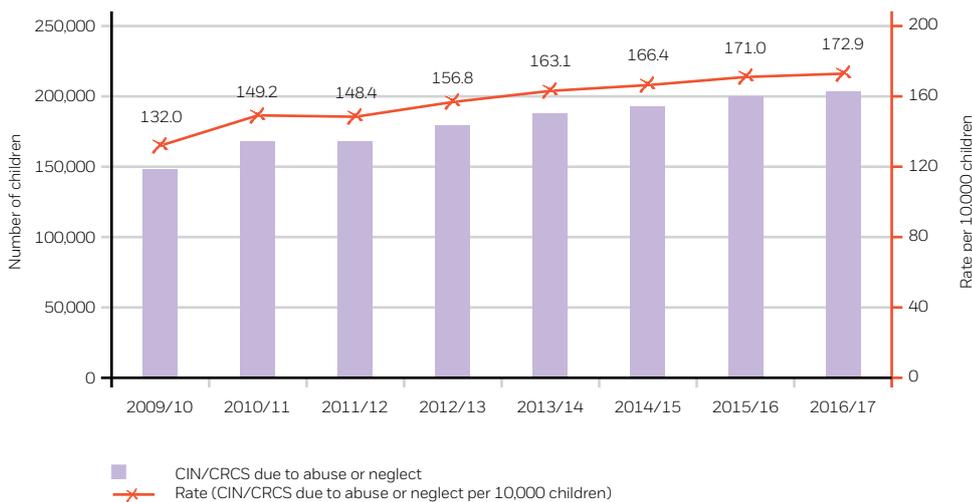
Data for England comes from the Children in need census. This year an inconsistency was identified in how children in need cases that remain open across census periods are dealt with. Although headline measures of the number of children in need at the end of the year are unaffected, the decision was made to de-designate these statistics as National Statistics while the methodology is reviewed. In Wales, data comes from the new Children receiving care and support census. This year’s first release has been de-designated from National Statistics to Experimental Statistics, reflecting the significant changes made to the way that children’s needs are assessed and services are delivered in Wales. Northern Ireland’s statistics retain National Statistics status.

Availability and comparability

Data showing the breakdown of children in need due to abuse or neglect is only available for England. In Wales data is published for the number of children receiving care and support due to abuse or neglect. Although similar to children in need data, changes to the way data is recorded means comparisons between countries and with previous years should be avoided. Children in need data is collected and published in Northern Ireland, however it does not show how many children are in need due to abuse or neglect. Children in need data is not collected or published in Scotland.

England

Children in need (CIN) due to abuse or neglect

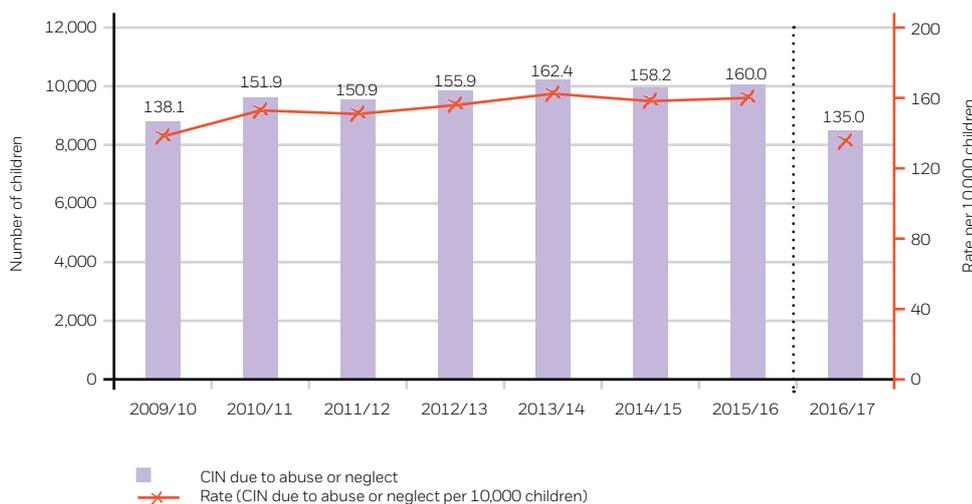


Latest figure: There were 203,750 children in need due to abuse or neglect at 31 March 2017. This comprises 52.3 per cent of all children in need, the highest ever recorded proportion. The rate per 10,000 children was 172.9.

Trend: The total number and rate of children in need due to abuse or neglect has increased every year since 2011/12.

Wales

Children in need/children receiving care and support (CRCS) due to abuse or neglect



Latest figure: There were 8,475 children receiving care and support due to abuse or neglect at 31 March 2017. This comprises 53.2 per cent of all children receiving care and support. The rate per 10,000 children was 135.0.

Trend: The source of data has changed from the Children in need census to the Children receiving care and support census. This has resulted in changes to the way data is recorded, including the exclusion of unborn children from the count. This means data from 2016/17 cannot be compared to previous years. Prior to 2016/17, there was a slight upwards trend in the number and rate of children in need due to abuse or neglect.

Northern Ireland

Children in need



Latest figure: There were 22,737 children in need in Northern Ireland at 31 March 2017.

Trend: Despite a decrease in the number of children in need over the past year in Northern Ireland, overall the numbers have remained fairly stable since 2011/12.

Data sources

England: Department for Education (DfE) (2017) [Characteristics of children in need: 2016 to 2017](#). London: Department for Education (DfE).

Wales: StatsWales (2018) [Children receiving care and support by local authority and category of need](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Northern Ireland: Department of Health (2017) [Children's social care statistics for Northern Ireland 2016/17](#). Belfast: Department of Health (DoH).

INDICATOR 13

Children in the child protection system

KEY MESSAGES

- There has been a long-term upward trend in all UK nations in the number of children who became the subject of a protection plan or were added to a register.
- There has also been a long-term upward trend in the rate of children who are the subject of a plan or on a register in all UK nations.

Why is this measure important?

Children who were the subject of a child protection plan (CPP) or on child protection registers (CPR) are considered to be at risk of harm. While the terminology differs slightly, plans and registers are largely similar: both record information relating to children whose safety is an ongoing concern.

We have collated data on the number of children who are the subject of CPPs or on CPRs at a specific point in time and on the number of children who become the subject of a CPP or are added to a CPR in a year. In England, Wales and Scotland, a consistently higher number of children are becoming the subject of a plan or are being added to a register than the number who are the subject of a plan or on a register at a specific point in time. This is because some children will be the subject of a plan or on a register for less than a year, and some will be re-registered in the same year and counted multiple times. This may be because more children are being re-registered, or are spending a shorter period of time on a plan or register.

Context and limitations

This data captures the number of children who are the subject of a CPP or who are on CPRs. These children have been identified by the authorities as being in need of a child protection plan. This does not account for all children who have experienced or are at risk of significant harm, many of whom may not be known to authorities. Consequently, these figures should not be interpreted as a record of all child abuse.

Increasing numbers of children who are the subject of CPPs or are on CPRs may reflect increased public awareness of the impact on children of parental neglect and abuse and a greater willingness to take action to protect children at potential risk of harm, particularly following high profile child protection cases, such as the Peter Connelly ("Baby P") case.

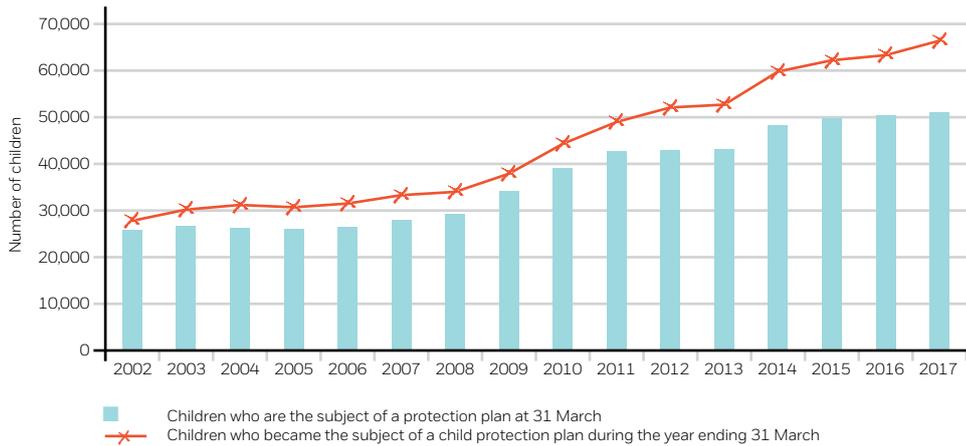
Data for England comes from the Children in need census. This year an inconsistency was identified in how children in need cases that remain open across census periods are dealt with. Although headline measures at the end of the year are unaffected, the decision was made to de-designate these statistics as National Statistics while the methodology is reviewed. In Wales, data comes from the new Children receiving care and support census. This year's first release has been de-designated from National Statistics to Experimental Statistics, reflecting the significant changes made to the way children's needs are assessed and services are delivered in Wales. Northern Ireland's and Scotland's statistics retain National Statistics status.

Availability and comparability

All four nations publish data on the number of children who are the subject of CPPs or are on CPRs. Scotland began to collect this data for the year ending 31 July (rather than 31 March) from 2011. Wales has changed the way that this information is collected, meaning that the 2016/17 data is not comparable to previous years.

England

Number of children who are and who are becoming the subject of a child protection plan

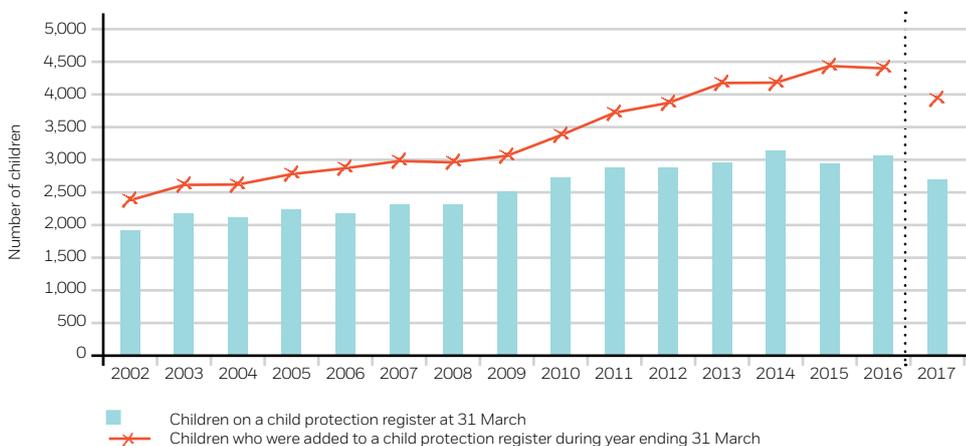


Latest figure: 51,080 children were the subject of child protection plans (CPPs) on 31 March 2017, and 64,410 children became the subject of a CPP in the year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. If a child is the subject of more than one child protection plan during the year, each CPP is counted.

Trend: The number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan has been increasing since 2002. Between 2002 and 2017 the number of children who were the subject of CPPs on 31 March increased by 68.6 per cent. The number of children becoming the subject of a CPP each year has increased by 126.7 per cent.

Wales

Number of children on and added to a child protection register

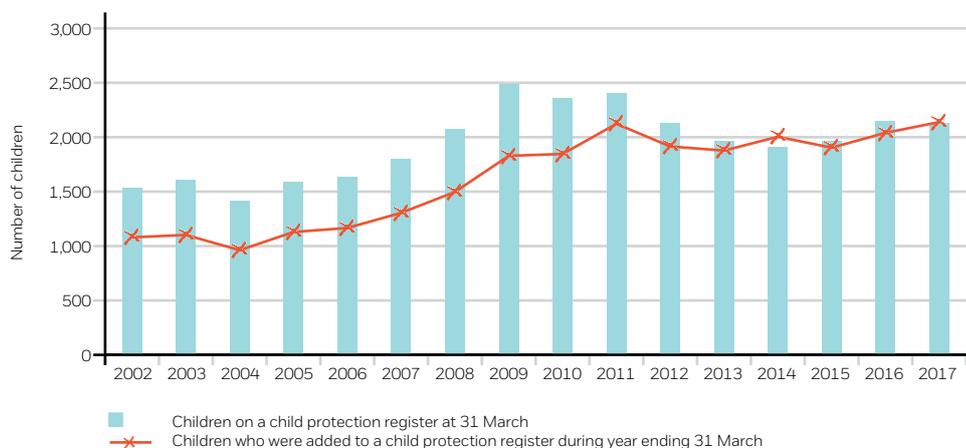


Latest figure: There were 2,690 children on a child protection register (CPR) on 31 March 2017, and 3,931 children were added to a CPR in the year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. Where a child has moved on to the register several times during the year, each registration is recorded.

Trend: Between 2002 and 2016 the number of children on a CPR on 31 March increased by 59.7 per cent and the number of children added to a CPR per year increased by 84.9 per cent. It is not possible to compare 2017 data to previous years.

Northern Ireland

Number of children on and added to a child protection register

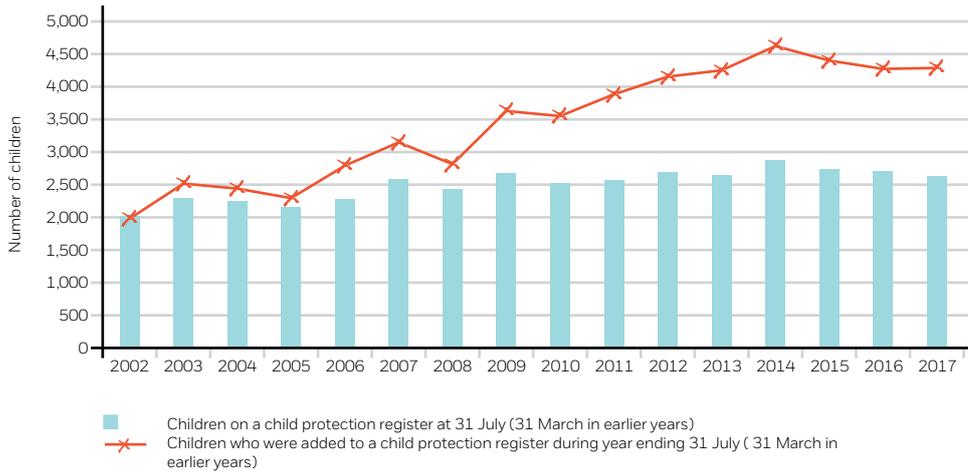


Latest figure: There were 2,132 children on a CPR on 31 March 2017, and 2,139 children were added to a CPR in the year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. Where a child has moved on to the register several times during the year, each registration is recorded.

Trend: Between 2002 and 2017 the number of children on a CPR at 31 March increased by 39.3 per cent and the number of children added to a CPR each year increased by 98.1 per cent. Unlike other nations, the number of children added to a CPR over the course of a year is generally lower than the overall number of children on a CPR, although this year slightly more children were added to a CPR than were on a CPR at 31 March. Numbers of children on a register at 31 March peaked in 2009 at 2,488. Figures have since declined, but remain above pre-2008 levels. Numbers of children added to a child protection register reached their highest number to date in 2017.

Scotland

Number of children on and added to a child protection register

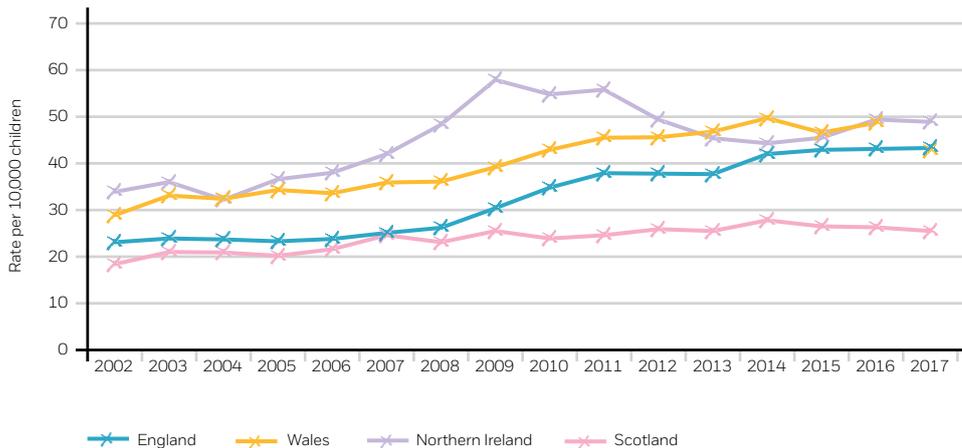


Latest figure: Scotland began to collect data for the year ending 31 July in 2011. There were 2,631 children on a CPR on 31 July 2017 and 4,287 children were added to a CPR in the year 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2017. Where a child has moved on to the register several times during the year, each registration is recorded.

Trend: Between 2002 and 2017 the number of children on a CPR at 31 July increased by 28.3 per cent overall and the number of children added to a CPR per year increased by 126.8 per cent. The number of children on a CPR at 31 July and added to a CPR peaked in 2014 and has since started to decline, but remains above pre-2008 levels.

United Kingdom comparison

Children who are the subject of child protection plans or on registers (rate per 10,000 children)



Latest figure: Scotland has the lowest rate of children on child protection registers, with 25.5 per 10,000 under 18s. Northern Ireland has the highest rate of children on child protection registers, with 48.9 per 10,000 under 18s.

Trend: Since 2002 the rate of children who were the subject of CPPs and on CPRs has increased in all four nations.

Between 2002 and 2017 the largest rate increase was in England (88.0 per cent), Northern Ireland (44.2 per cent) and Scotland (38.7 per cent). During this period the population of children increased in England and declined in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The rate for Wales increased by 68.4 per cent between 2002 and 2016. It is not possible to compare data from Wales for 2017 to previous years.

Data sources

England: Department for Education (DfE) (2016) *Characteristics of children in need: 2016 to 2017*. London: Department for Education.

Wales: Welsh Government (2017) *Children on child protection register by local authority, category of abuse and age group*. Cardiff: StatsWales; and Welsh Government (2017) *Quantitative social services performance measures: children*. Cardiff: StatsWales.

Scotland: Scottish Government (2018) *Children's social work statistics*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

Northern Ireland: Department of Health (2017) *Children's social care statistics for Northern Ireland 2016/17*. Belfast: Department of Health.

**The proportion of
UK children who
are the subject of a
child protection plan
or on a child protection
register is higher than
a decade ago.**

INDICATOR 14

Composition of child protection plans and child protection registers

KEY MESSAGES

- Neglect remains the most common reason for being the subject of a child protection plan (CPP) or on a child protection register (CPR) in England and Wales. There has been an overall upward trend in the proportion due to emotional abuse in England and Wales, making this the second most common reason.
- The trend in Northern Ireland differs from the other nations in that physical abuse has been the main reason for a child being on a CPR since 2015. Neglect is the second most common reason.
- Emotional abuse, parental substance misuse and domestic abuse are the main reasons identified at case conferences in Scotland.

Why is this measure important?

This data shows the reasons why a child who is deemed to be at continuing risk of harm is the subject of a child protection plan (CPP) or is on a child protection register (CPR).

Context and limitations

All four nations publish data on the reasons why children are the subject of a CPP or are on a CPR, but there are differences between the nations in the criteria for recording and the classification of categories of abuse or concerns.

Changes in the proportion of concerns about a specific abuse type do not necessarily represent a rise in the number of children experiencing that form of abuse. Change could also represent increased awareness among the public and professionals about that form of abuse.

Data for England comes from the Children in need census. This year an inconsistency was identified in how children in need cases that remain open across census periods are dealt with. Although headline measures at the end of the year are unaffected, the decision was made to de-designate these statistics as National Statistics while the methodology is reviewed. In Wales, data comes from the new Children receiving care and support census. This year's first release has been de-designated from National Statistics to Experimental Statistics, reflecting the significant changes made to the way children's needs are assessed and services are delivered in Wales. Northern Ireland's and Scotland's statistics retain National Statistics status.

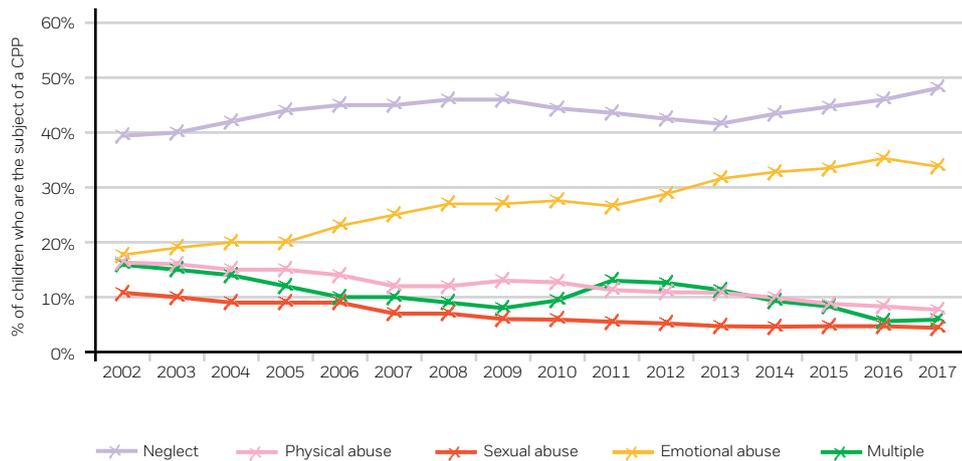
Availability and comparability

In England, Northern Ireland and Wales the data shows the reasons why a child is the subject of a CPP or on a CPR by initial category of abuse (neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or multiple forms of abuse). This is the category as assessed when the CPP or CPR registration commenced. The method of recording in Scotland changed in 2012 to enable multiple concerns to be recorded at each case conference rather than just the initial category of abuse. Since this change, Scotland records additional categories, including domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and parental mental health. On average it records two or three concerns per child case conference. The change to the method of recording in Scotland means that figures on concerns identified in Scotland are not directly comparable to data on the category of abuse/risk prior to 2012.

In England only the main category of abuse is recorded as the reason for a child being the subject of a plan. The multiple category of abuse is used only when there is no single main category of abuse.* In contrast, in Wales and Northern Ireland practitioners are able to record combinations of abuse categories. For example a child can be on a child protection register for "neglect and physical abuse" or "neglect, physical and sexual abuse". For the purposes of this report we have put all these combinations of abuse types into one "multiple" category. This difference in recording practice means that abuse categories for England are not directly comparable with those for Wales and Northern Ireland.

England

Composition of child protection plans

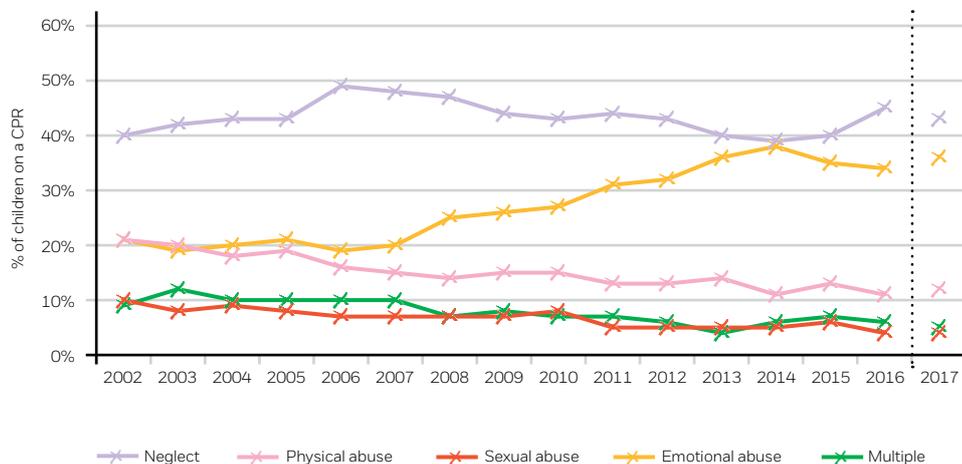


Latest figure: At 31 March 2017 the breakdown of reasons for being the subject of a CPP was as follows: 48.1 per cent neglect; 33.8 per cent emotional abuse; 7.7 per cent physical abuse; and 4.4 per cent sexual abuse.

Trend: The proportion of children who were the subject of a CPP for neglect has been increasing gradually in recent years. It remains the most common reason for a child to be the subject of a plan. There has been an upward trend in the proportion of children who are subjects of a CPP due to emotional abuse, and that proportion has almost doubled since 2002. There has been a general downward trend in the proportion of children who are subjects of a CPP due to sexual abuse and physical abuse.

Wales

Composition of child protection registers

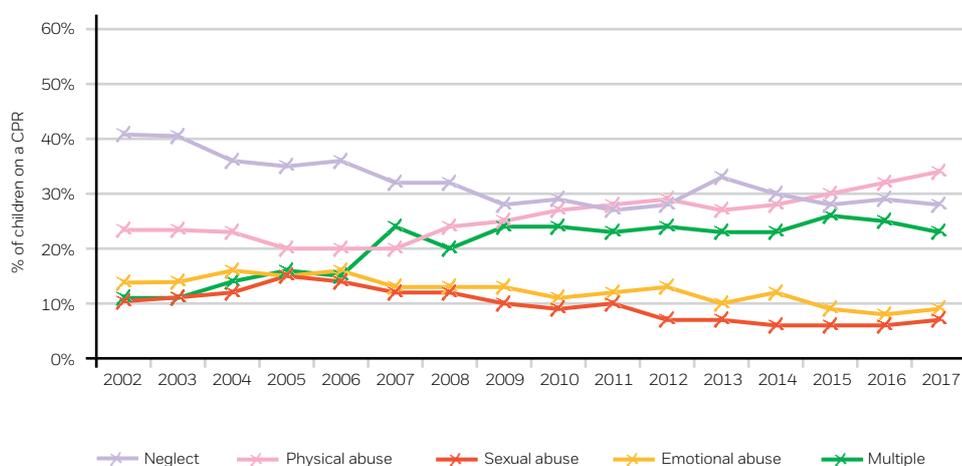


Latest figures: The breakdown of reasons for being on a CPR was as follows: 42.9 per cent neglect; 36.2 per cent emotional abuse; 11.8 per cent physical abuse; and 4.5 per cent sexual abuse. There were 126 children on a CPR for more than one type of abuse – of these 76.1 per cent related to neglect and physical abuse; 14.3 per cent to neglect and sexual abuse; 7.1 per cent to physical and sexual abuse.

Trend: Data from 2016/17 is not directly comparable to previous years. However, looking at long-term trends, the proportion of children on a register due to neglect has remained fairly constant and is consistently the most common reason for being on a CPR. There is an upward trend in the proportion of children on a register for emotional abuse. This remains the second most common reason for being on a CPR, accounting for more than a third of all children on a CPR in Wales. There has been a general downward trend since 2002 in the proportion of children on a CPR due to sexual abuse and physical abuse.

Northern Ireland

Composition of child protection registers

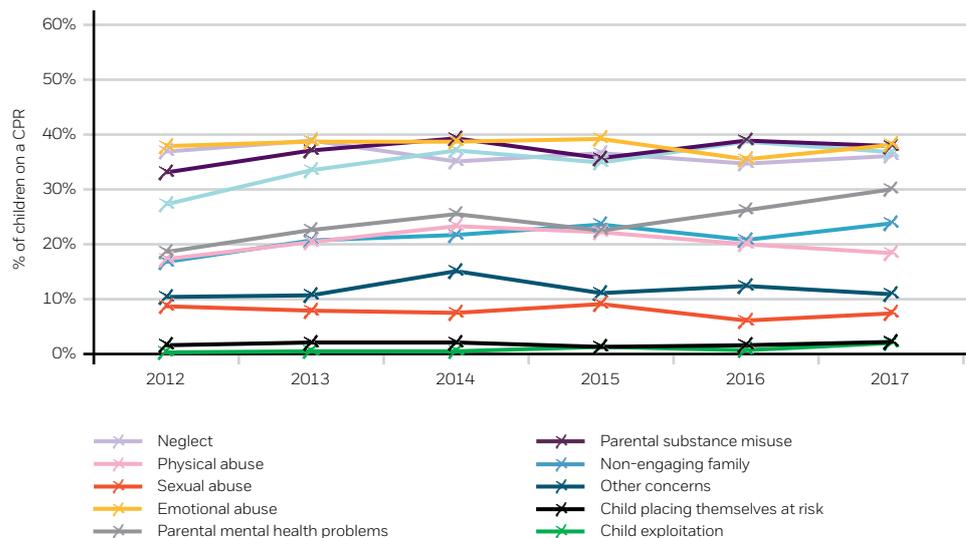


Latest figures: The breakdown of causes was as follows: 33.6 per cent physical abuse; 28.0 per cent neglect; 8.9 per cent emotional abuse; and 6.6 per cent sexual abuse. There were 489 children on a CPR for more than one type of abuse – of these 80.0 per cent related to neglect and physical abuse; 8.4 per cent physical and sexual abuse; 7.4 per cent neglect and sexual abuse; and the remaining 4.3 per cent included neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse.

Trend: There has been an upward trend in the proportion of children on a register due to physical abuse. This has been the main reason for a child being on a CPR since 2015, accounting for a third of all CPRs. The proportion of children on a CPR for multiple reasons has also increased since 2002. There has been a decline in the proportion of children on a CPR due to emotional abuse, neglect and sexual abuse since 2002.

Scotland

Concerns at case conference of children on the child protection register



Latest figures: The percentage breakdown of causes were as follows: 38.1 per cent emotional abuse; 37.9 per cent parental substance misuse; 36.8 per cent domestic abuse; 36.1 per cent neglect; 30.0 per cent parental mental health problems; 23.8 per cent non-engaging family; 18.4 per cent physical abuse; 7.4 per cent sexual abuse; 2.2 per cent child placing themselves at risk; and 2.0 per cent child exploitation.

Trend: There has been an increasing trend in the proportion of concerns relating to parental mental health problems at case conferences of children on a CPR. Other proportions have remained fairly constant over time. Emotional abuse, parental substance misuse, domestic abuse and neglect are the main reasons identified at case conferences in Scotland.

Data sources

England: Department for Education (DfE) (2017) *Characteristics of children in need: 2016 to 2017*. London: Department for Education.

Wales: Welsh Government (2017) *Children receiving care and support 2016-17 (Experimental statistics), 2017*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Northern Ireland: Department of Health (DOH) (2017) *Children's social care statistics for Northern Ireland 2016/17*. Belfast: Department of Health.

Scotland: Scottish Government (2018) *Children's social work statistics: 2016-2017*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

**Neglect remains
the most common
reason for being the
subject of a child
protection plan or
on a child protection
register in England
and Wales.**

INDICATOR 15

Re-registration onto child protection registers or becoming the subject of a child protection plan more than once

KEY MESSAGES

- In England the percentage of children who became the subject of a child protection plan (CPP) for a second or subsequent time has increased slightly every year since 2010/11.
- In Northern Ireland the proportion of children who went back on a child protection register (CPR) for a second or subsequent time has been generally increasing in recent years.
- In Scotland the percentage of children who went back on a CPR for a second or subsequent time has been broadly constant since 2009/10.

Why is this measure important?

Re-registration data shows the number of children who were the subject of child protection plans (CPPs) more than once or who come back onto child protection registers (CPRs). Re-registration rates could suggest that the decision to remove a child initially from a CPP or CPR was premature and that they are not actually safer, or they could suggest that circumstances in the child's life have changed requiring re-registration.

Context and limitations

Data is only held on children who have been identified by the authorities as in need of becoming the subject of a child protection plan or of being added to a register. Many children who have experienced or are likely to experience significant harm may not be identified. These figures should therefore not be interpreted as a record of all child abuse. It should be noted that there is no optimal amount of time to be the subject of a CPP or to be on a CPR.

Data for England comes from the Children in need census. This year an inconsistency was identified in how children in need cases that remain open across census periods are

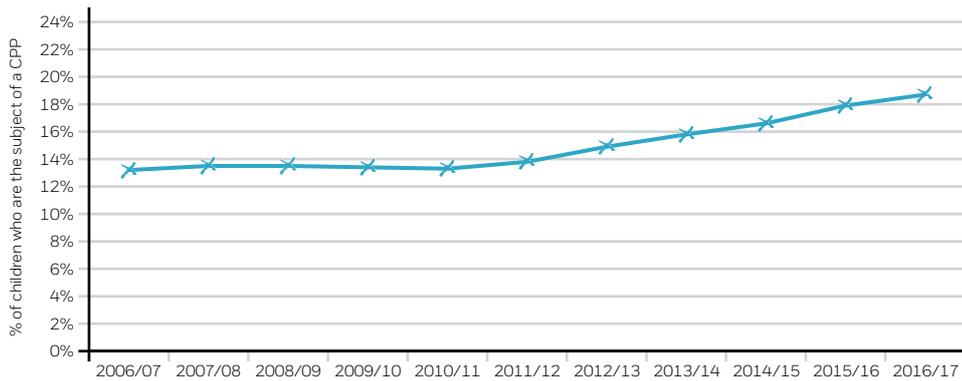
dealt with. Although headline measures at the end of the year are unaffected, the decision was made to de-designate these statistics as National Statistics while the methodology is reviewed. In Wales, data comes from the new Children receiving care and support census. This year's first release has been de-designated from National Statistics to Experimental Statistics, reflecting the significant changes made to the way that children's needs are assessed and services are delivered in Wales. Northern Ireland's and Scotland's statistics retain National Statistics status.

Availability and comparability

England, Northern Ireland and Scotland provide data on the number of children who become the subject of a CPP for a second or subsequent time or who return to a CPR. Wales no longer publishes this data, but does measure the number of children returning to a register within a year of previously being on a register. This means that Welsh data is not comparable to other nations. Also, because of changes in recording practice Welsh data from 2016/17 is not comparable to previous years.

England

Percentage of children who became the subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time

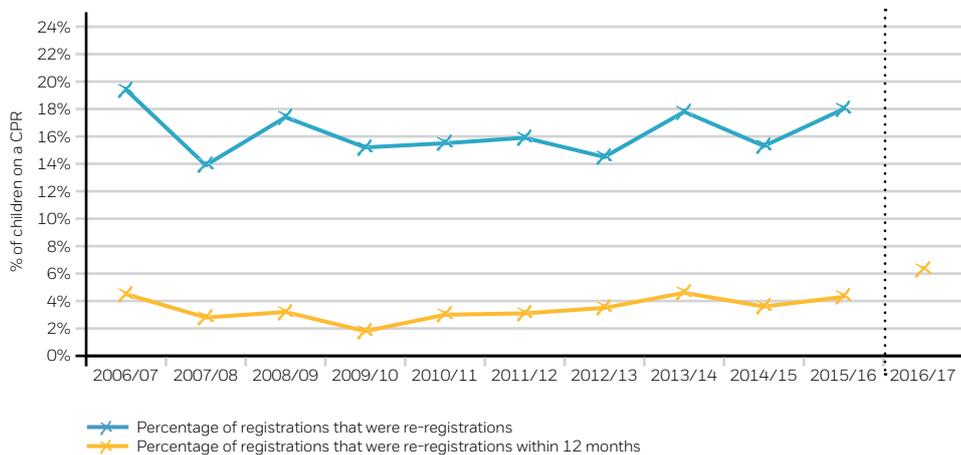


Latest figure: 18.7 per cent of children who became the subject of a child protection plan (CPP) did so for a second or subsequent time in the year to 31 March 2017.

Trend: The percentage of children who became the subject of a CPP for a second or subsequent time has increased every year since 2010/11 when 13.3 per cent of children were in this category.

Wales

Percentage of children returning to a child protection register for a second or subsequent time



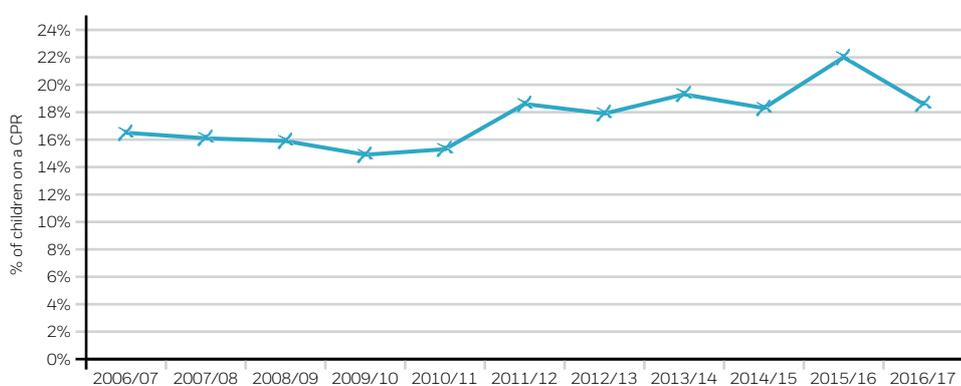
Latest figure: 6.3 per cent of children added to the register were re-registrations within 12 months during the year to 31 March 2017. The overall percentage of children who were registered on a CPR for a second or subsequent time is not available for Wales for 2016/17.

Trend: Welsh data for 2016/17 is not comparable to previous years.

Prior to 2016/17 the percentage of re-registrations remained fairly consistent.

Northern Ireland

Percentage of children returning to a child protection register for a second or subsequent time

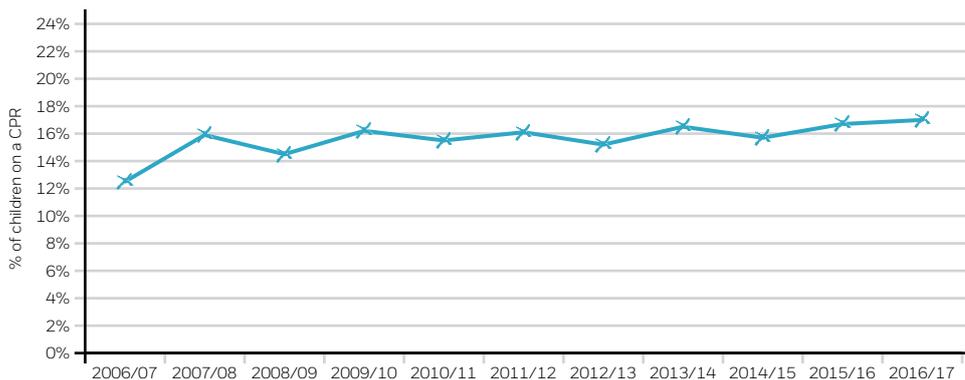


Latest figure: 18.6 per cent of children were registered on a CPR for a second or subsequent time in the year to 31 March 2017.

Trend: In Northern Ireland the proportion of children on a register becoming re-registered has been increasing in recent years. The proportion increased from 15.3 per cent in 2010/11 to a high of 22.0 per cent in 2015/16. It has since dropped slightly to 18.6 per cent.

Scotland

Percentage of children returning to a child protection register for a second or subsequent time



Latest figure: 17.0 per cent of CPR registrations relate to children being registered for a second or subsequent time in the year to 31 July 2017.

Trend: The percentage of children going back on a CPR for a second or subsequent time has been broadly constant since 2009/10, at between 15.2 and 17.0 per cent.

Data sources

England: Department for Education (DfE) (2017) [Characteristics of children in need: 2016 to 2017](#). London: Department for Education.

Wales: Welsh Government (2017) [Children receiving care and support 2016-17 \(Experimental statistics\), 2017](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Northern Ireland: Department of Health (DOH) (2017) [Children's social care statistics for Northern Ireland 2016/17](#). Belfast: Department of Health.

Scotland: Scottish Government (2018) [Children's social work statistics: 2016-2017](#). Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

**Increasing numbers
of children in England
are becoming the
subject of a child
protection plan
multiple times.**

INDICATOR 16

How long children are the subject of child protection plans or on child protection registers

KEY MESSAGES

- There has been a downward trend in the proportion of children who are the subject of child protection plans (CPPs) for longer than two years in England. This may indicate that the proportion of children whose cases are “drifting” is decreasing.
- Contrary to the long-term decreasing trend, recent years have seen an increase in the percentage of children who are on child protection registers (CPRs) for longer than two years in Northern Ireland and Scotland.
- The data shows that a larger proportion of children on CPRs in Northern Ireland are on registers for two years or longer compared with those in England or Scotland (12.5 per cent for Northern Ireland compared to 6.5 per cent on a CPR in Scotland and 3.4 per cent as the subject of a CPP in England).

Why is this measure important?

Child protection plans (CPPs) and child protection registers (CPRs) record details regarding children where there are concerns about their safety. When a child is de-registered, it would suggest that there were no longer concerns about that child's safety and that he or she was safe and no longer at risk of harm.

The data presented here shows the percentage of children who are the subject of a CPP or on a CPR who are there for longer than two years. Spending a long time on either plans or registers could suggest that cases are being allowed to “drift”.

Context and limitations

The length of time that a child is the subject of a CPP or on a CPR is an indication of how long the authorities are providing them with support, rather than the length of time that abuse is occurring. Many children who have experienced or are likely to experience significant harm may not be identified, and abuse may have been going on for a long time before it comes to the

attention of the authorities. The threshold criteria for support may change over time and this could affect the support a child receives. It should be noted that there is no optimal amount of time to be the subject of a CPP or on a CPR.

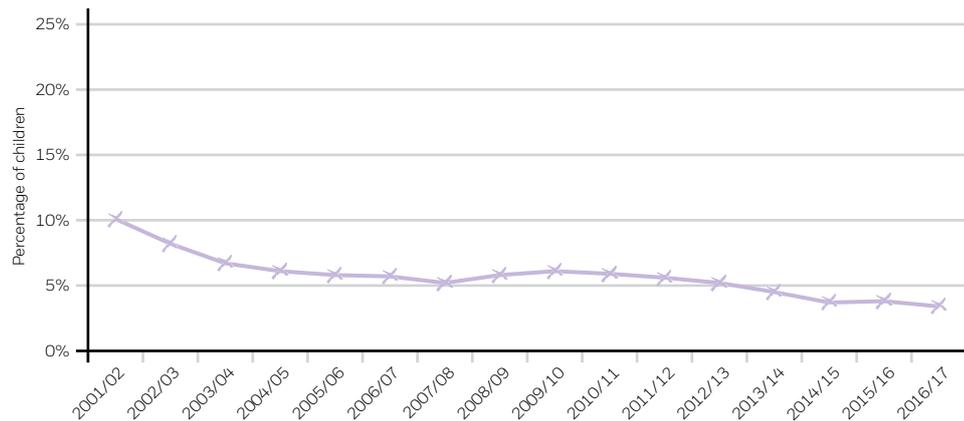
Data for England comes from the Children in need census. This year an inconsistency was identified in how children in need cases that remain open across census periods are dealt with. Although headline measures at the end of the year are unaffected, the decision was made to de-designate these statistics as National Statistics while the methodology is reviewed. Northern Ireland's and Scotland's statistics retain National Statistics status.

Availability and comparability

All nations, apart from Wales, publish data on how long in total children were the subject of a CPP or were on a CPR before they were de-registered. Wales records how long children have been on a register at the year's end, which is not a comparable figure.

England

Percentage of children who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan after having been so for two years or longer

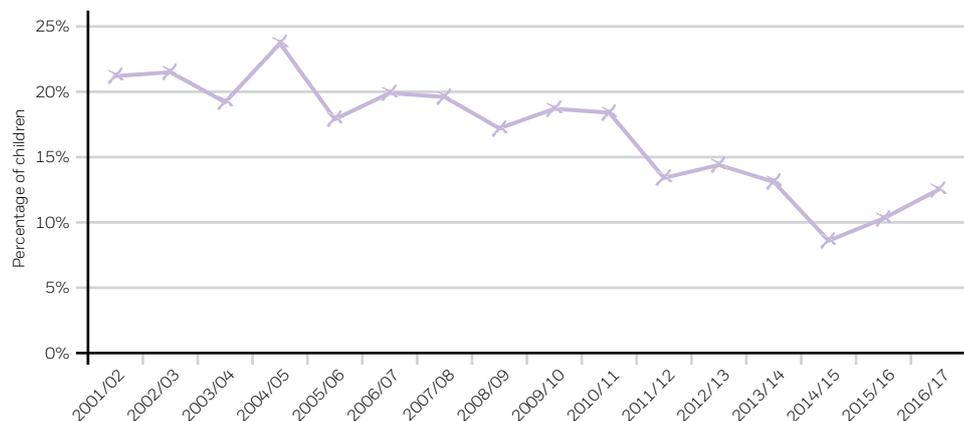


Latest figure: 3.4 per cent of children ceased to be the subject of a CPP in the year to 31 March 2017 after having been the subject for longer than two years.

Trend: Since 2001/02 there has been a long-term decline in the percentage of children who had been the subject of a CPP for two years or longer. In 2014/15 it fell below 4 per cent for the first time and it has remained at similar levels since then.

Northern Ireland

Percentage of children ceasing to be on a child protection register who had been on for longer than two years

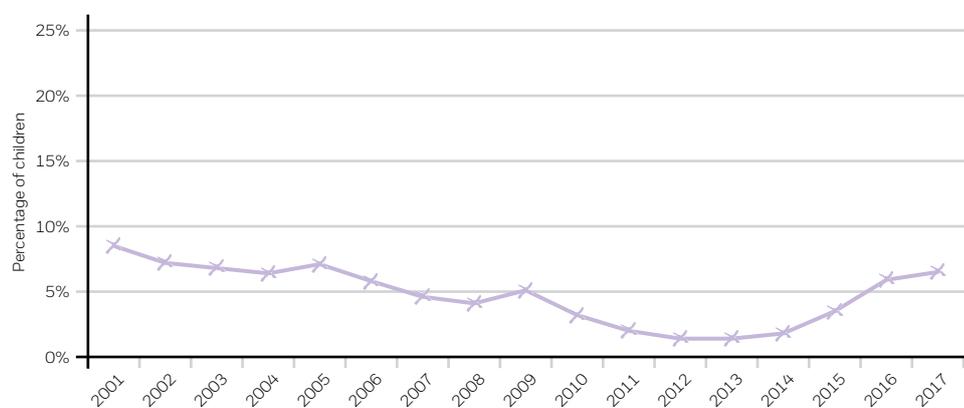


Latest figure: 12.5 per cent of children who were coming off a CPR in the year to 31 March 2017 had been on a register for longer than two years.

Trend: Since 2001/02 there has been a downward trend in the percentage of children who have been on a CPR for longer than two years. However since 2014/15 it has increased from a low of 8.6 per cent to 12.5 per cent.

Scotland

Percentage of children ceasing to be on a child protection register who had been on for two years or longer



Latest figure: 6.5 per cent of children who came off a CPR in the year to 31 July 2017 had been on a register for two years or longer.

Trend: The percentage of children who had been on a CPR for two years or longer has decreased since 2001. It reached a low of 1.4 per cent in 2012 and has been increasing since 2014.

Data sources

England: Department for Education (DfE) (2017) *Characteristics of children in need: 2016 to 2017*. London: Department for Education.

Northern Ireland: Department of Health (DOH) (2017) *Children's social care statistics for Northern Ireland 2016/17*. Belfast: Department of Health.

Scotland: Scottish Government (2018) *Children's social work statistics: 2016-2017*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

INDICATOR 17

Looked after children

KEY MESSAGES

- The number of children who are looked after due to abuse or neglect is the highest on record in England.
- In Wales the number of looked after children due to abuse or neglect is now the second highest on record after a peak in 2013. The number starting to be looked after has seen a general increase since 2003.
- In Wales 67.5 per cent of all looked after children in 2016/17 were looked after as a result of abuse or neglect. In England the figure is 61.4 per cent.
- The number of looked after children in Northern Ireland has increased and is the highest on record.

Why is this measure important?

Each UK nation has a slightly different definition of children in care, but in general, the term “looked after children” refers to those children who are cared for by the state. The measure gives an indication of the number of instances in which the state acts as a corporate parent. There are many reasons why the state might be a corporate parent, including because a child has suffered abuse or neglect or is disabled, the parent is ill or disabled, or because parents are absent.

We have focused, where available, on statistics for children who are looked after due to abuse or neglect. This data provides an important picture of where the risk of harm from abuse and neglect was considered serious enough to remove a child from parental care.

Context and limitations

Looked after children statistics are designated as National Statistics in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland. This year, because of changes made to social services, the data in Wales has been de-designated from National Statistics to Experimental Statistics. As such, caution is needed when comparing with previous years' data.

In England and Wales statistics on looked after children are available for different categories of need. When a child first becomes looked after in England and Wales their primary category of need is recorded. This may not be the only category relevant to that child for the period during which he or she is looked after.

Increased trends in the number of looked after children across the four UK nations may reflect increased public awareness of the impact on children of parental neglect and abuse and a greater willingness to take action to protect children at potential risk of harm; alternatively, it could indicate improved collection and processing of information.

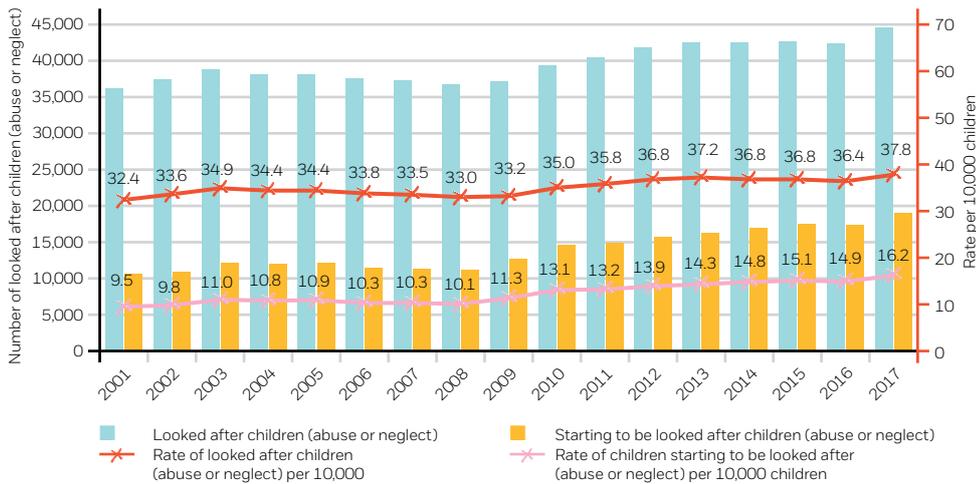
Availability and comparability

Data is published for all four nations on looked after children. In England and Wales there are similar data collections, including data on the number of children who are looked after due to abuse or neglect. Northern Ireland and Scotland only publish numbers of looked after children, not the reasons why they become looked after.

Northern Ireland is the only nation that includes children in short-term placements in the looked after children statistics. Unlike the rest of the UK, in Scotland children looked after at home require a supervision order from the children's panel, making them looked after children. To make Scottish figures more comparable, children accommodated at home have been excluded from the looked after children figures.

England

Number and rate of children looked after due to abuse or neglect who started to be looked after

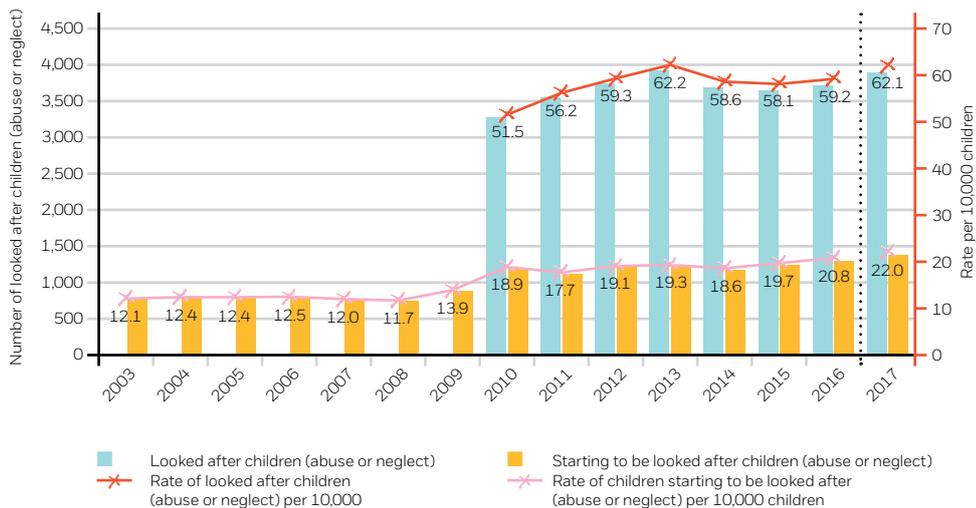


Latest figure: There were 44,600 children looked after due to abuse or neglect at 31 March 2017. 61.4 per cent of all looked after children in England in 2016/17 were looked after as a result of abuse or neglect. During the year, 19,060 children became looked after due to abuse or neglect.

Trend: The proportion of children being looked after due to abuse or neglect has remained between 60 and 63 per cent for the past five years. In recent years there has been a general upward trend in the number of children both starting to be looked after due to abuse or neglect and being looked after due to abuse or neglect at 31 March. These figures are an increase on the previous year and are the highest on record.

Wales

Number and rate of children looked after due to abuse or neglect who started to be looked after

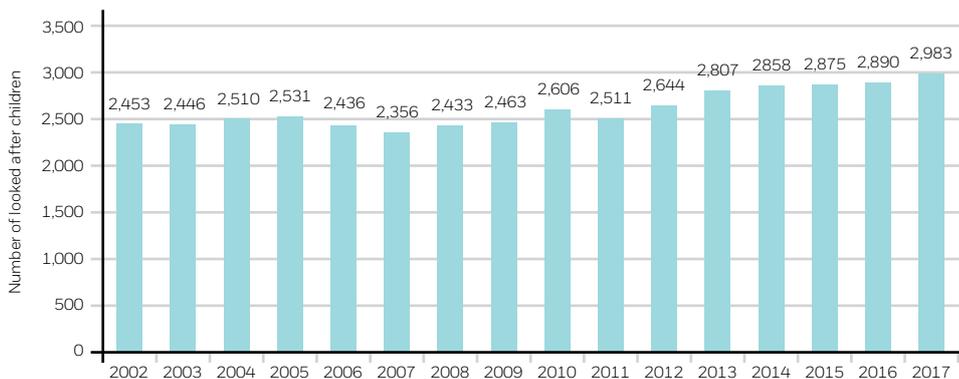


Latest figure: There were 3,900 children looked after due to abuse or neglect at 31 March 2017. This means 67.5 per cent of all looked after children in Wales in 2016/17 were looked after as a result of abuse or neglect. During the year 1,380 children started to be looked after due to abuse or neglect.

Trend: The proportion of children in care due to abuse or neglect has remained between 65 and 68 per cent for the past five years. The overall number of looked after children due to abuse or neglect is now the second highest on record after a peak in 2013 and the number starting to be looked after has seen a general increase since 2003.

Northern Ireland

Number of looked after children

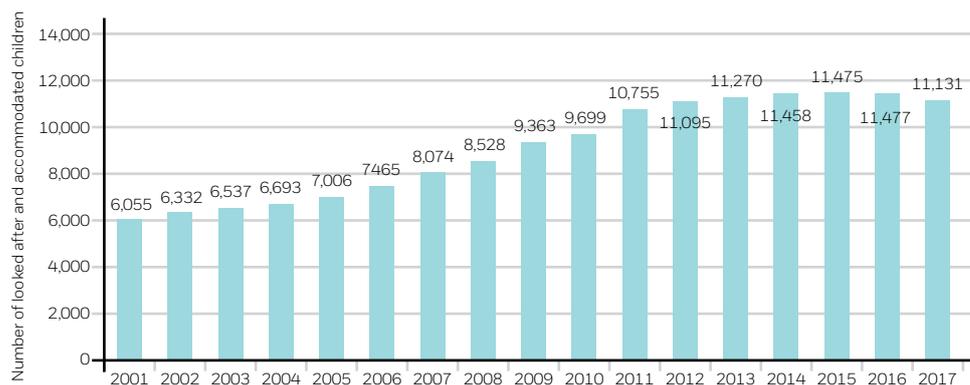


Latest figure: There were 2,983 looked after children in Northern Ireland at 31 March 2017.

Trend: In a continuing upward trend the number of looked after children has increased each year since 2011 and is now the highest recorded number since the introduction of the Children (NI) Order 1995. Rate calculations have not been included. They would not be comparable with England and Wales as Northern Ireland's data does not allow us to identify children looked after due to abuse or neglect.

Scotland

Number of looked after and accommodated children



Latest figure: There were 14,897 looked after children in Scotland at 31 July 2017. Of these 11,131 were looked after or accommodated away from home.

Trend: The number of looked after and accommodated children in Scotland has seen a long-term upward trend since 2001 with a peak in 2015. Rate calculations have not been included as the Scottish data does not allow us to identify children looked after due to abuse or neglect.

Data sources

England: Department for Education (DfE) (2017) [Children looked after in England including adoption: 2016 to 2017](#). London: Department for Education.

Wales: Welsh Government (2018) [Wales Children Receiving Care and Support Census 2017](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Northern Ireland: Department of Health (DOH) (2017) [Children's social care statistics for Northern Ireland 2016/17](#). Belfast: Department of Health.

Scotland: Scottish Government (2018) [Children's social work statistics: 2016-2017](#). Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

The number of children looked after due to abuse or neglect is the highest on record in England.

INDICATOR 18

Proportion of looked after children who have three or more placements during the year

KEY MESSAGES

- In England there has been a downward trend in the proportion of looked after children who have had three or more placement moves during the year.
- In Wales following a long period of decline, the percentage of looked after children who had three or more placements during the year has started to increase.
- In England and Wales more than 10 per cent of all looked after children had three or more placement moves in 2016/17.

Why is this measure important?

This indicator shows the proportion of looked after children who have three or more placements in a year. (See Indicator 17 for information about children looked after generally and as a result of abuse or neglect.)

The evidence suggests that many children do well in care, particularly if they are able to settle into their placements long term.* However, research suggests a link between placement instability and poor mental health outcomes for children in care.** Here we present the available data on the proportion of looked after children who have three or more placements in a year. A low and/or falling proportion of children who have three or more placements would suggest that placement stability is improving.

Context and limitations

Looked after children statistics are designated as National Statistics in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland. This year, because of changes made to social services, the data in Wales has been de-designated from National Statistics to Experimental Statistics. As such, caution is needed when comparing with previous years' data.

The data on the number of placements relates to all children who are looked after, not just those children who are looked after due to abuse or neglect. Available data is not broken down to that level of detail.

Availability and comparability

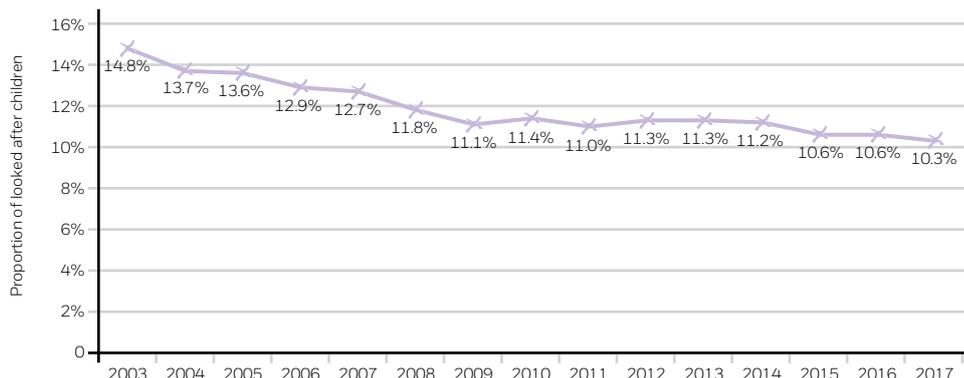
Data on the number of placements that looked after children have is available for all four nations. In England data from 2016 onwards does not include children who do not change carer in a new placement. This means that data from 2016 onwards is not comparable to earlier data. In Northern Ireland the data is only collected over a six-month period. In 2014/15 Northern Ireland changed the collection of data which meant that placement moves for looked after children excluded those for respite purposes. The change to the recording practices in Northern Ireland means that the data is not directly comparable to data from the other nations or to earlier data for Northern Ireland. In Scotland there is a broader definition of a "looked after child" as it incorporates those children who are looked after at home and accommodated away from home, therefore the proportion of placement moves is considerably lower.

* Sebba, J. et al. (2015) *The educational progress of looked after children in England: linking care and educational data*. Oxford: Rees Centre/University of Bristol.

** Villodas, M.T. et al. (2016) 'Long-term placement trajectories of children who were maltreated and entered the child welfare system at an early age: consequences for physical and behavioral well-being'. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 41(1): 46–54.

England

Proportion of looked after children with three or more placements during the year

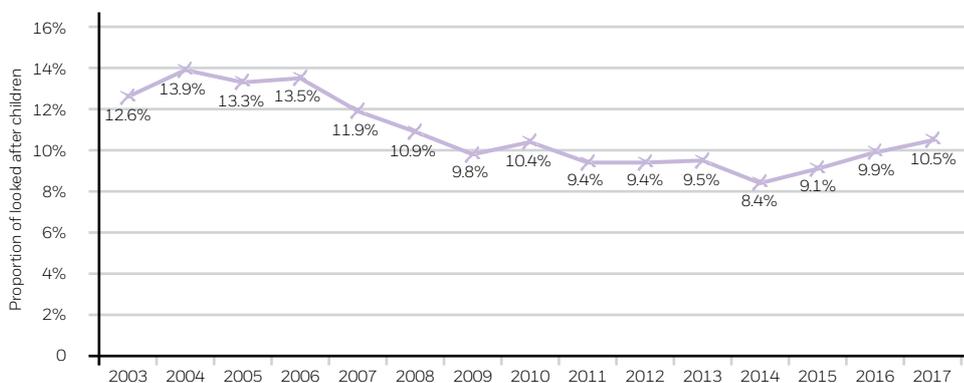


Latest figure: There were 7,520 looked after children who had three or more placements in the year ending 31 March 2017. This represented 10.3 per cent of all looked after children at 31 March 2017.

Trend: The number of looked after children with three or more placements has been in long-term decline since 2002. The percentage of children with three or more placements has shown a downward trend from a peak of 14.8 per cent in 2003 to a low of 10.3 per cent in 2017.

Wales

Proportion of looked after children with three or more placements during the year

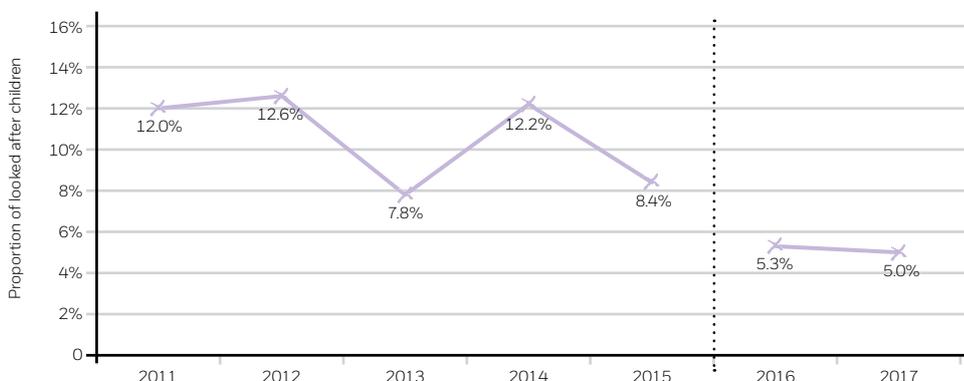


Latest figure: There were 625 looked after children who had three or more placements in the year ending 31 March 2017. This was 10.5 per cent of all looked after children at 31 March 2017.

Trend: There was a general downward trend in the number of looked after children who had three or more placements. Following a decade of decline, the percentage of looked after children who had three or more placements during the year has continued to increase from a low of 8.4 per cent in 2014 to 10.5 per cent in 2017.

Northern Ireland

Proportion of looked after children with three or more placements during the six months ending 31 March 2017

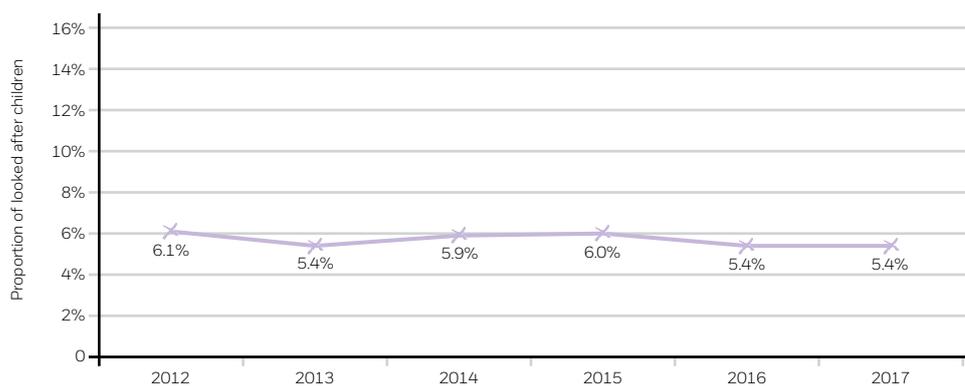


Latest figure: Of all looked after children at 31 March 2017, 150 of them had three or more placements in the six months prior. This was 5.0 per cent of all looked after children at 31 March 2017.

Trend: The proportion of looked after children who had three or more placement moves in a given six month period has declined. The decrease is believed to be attributed to changes in recording practices in April 2015 which excluded placement moves for respite purposes.

Scotland

Proportion of looked after children with three or more placements during the year



Latest figure: There were 815 looked after children who had three or more placements in the year ending 31 July 2017. This was 5.4 per cent of all looked after children at 31 July 2017.

Trend: Over the past five years the number of looked after children who had three or more placements in the year has fluctuated between a high of 6.1 per cent in 2012 and a low of 5.4 per cent in both 2013 and 2017. In Scotland there is a consistently lower proportion of placement moves of looked after children compared to the other nations because they include those accommodated at home.

Data sources

England: Department for Education (DfE) (2017) [Children looked after in England including adoption: 2016 to 2017](#). London: Department for Education (DfE).

Wales: Welsh Government (2017) [Children looked after by local authorities 2016-17](#). Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Northern Ireland: Department of Health (2017) [Children's social care statistics for Northern Ireland 2016/17](#). Belfast: Department of Health.

Scotland: Scottish Government (2018) [Children's social work statistics: 2016-2017](#). Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

**More than 10 per cent
of all looked after
children in England
and Wales had three
or more placement
moves in 2016/17.**

INDICATOR 19

Child trafficking

KEY MESSAGES

- **2,118 potential child victims of modern slavery were referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in 2017, up 65.7 per cent from 1,278 in 2016.**
- **307 children were referred to the NSPCC's Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC) in the year ending October 2017, up 6.9 per cent since the year ending October 2016.**

Why is this measure important?

"Modern slavery" is the overarching term used by the UK Government to encompass slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour, and human trafficking. Child trafficking is the recruitment and movement of children for the purpose of exploitation and is a form of modern slavery. Child trafficking can happen across borders and internally. Children cannot give informed consent to being trafficked. It is a serious form of child abuse that causes significant harm to its victims. Victims are vulnerable to a very high level of physical, emotional and sexual abuse and neglect while being trafficked.

Modern slavery has been identified as an issue of significance by the UK Government: in March 2015 the Modern Slavery Bill received Royal Assent. The Act consolidates current offences relating to trafficking and slavery. This measure uses data from referrals received by the Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC)* as well as data from the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), a framework for identifying victims of modern slavery and ensuring that they receive appropriate care.**

Context and limitations

The hidden nature of modern slavery and child trafficking makes it difficult to identify its true extent. Both CTAC and NRM data depends on a referral being made by a professional with concerns about a child. However, not all cases identified will be referred, and even if a referral has been made, the indicators may not always be clear. It is not mandatory for a professional to make a referral to the NRM. Some victims will not be identified in the first place. This means that these data sources don't necessarily reflect the full scale of modern slavery and child trafficking in the UK.

The NRM provides figures relating to the number of potential victims of modern slavery who have been referred in each year. The data set should be considered provisional as it contains data on cases which have not yet been concluded. The data from referrals to the NSPCC's CTAC only reflects referrals made to the service. Neither of these data sets are National Statistics.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) cites an increase in referrals about County Lines*** gang exploitation and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as key factors behind this year's rise in NRM figures. However, increases in referrals may not always indicate an increase in children experiencing trafficking or modern slavery, but rather an increase in the numbers being identified. Trends may also be affected by changes in recording and reporting procedures. For example, in 2015 the NRM process, which was set up to deal solely with human trafficking, extended its remit to cover all forms of modern slavery.****

Availability and comparability

Available data is limited. Currently available child protection data does not include information on whether a child has been trafficked. NRM figures include data on children trafficked within the UK, whereas CTAC's data only includes children trafficked to the UK from overseas. This data is shared with the NCA and added to its figures on child trafficking and exploitation.

Since 2015 the NRM figures have included a breakdown of referrals for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, but this does not give us enough data to analyse trends. Also, due to changes introduced to the NRM recording methodology in line with Home Office Counting Rules, there is no direct comparison to previous years' nation-level referral totals.

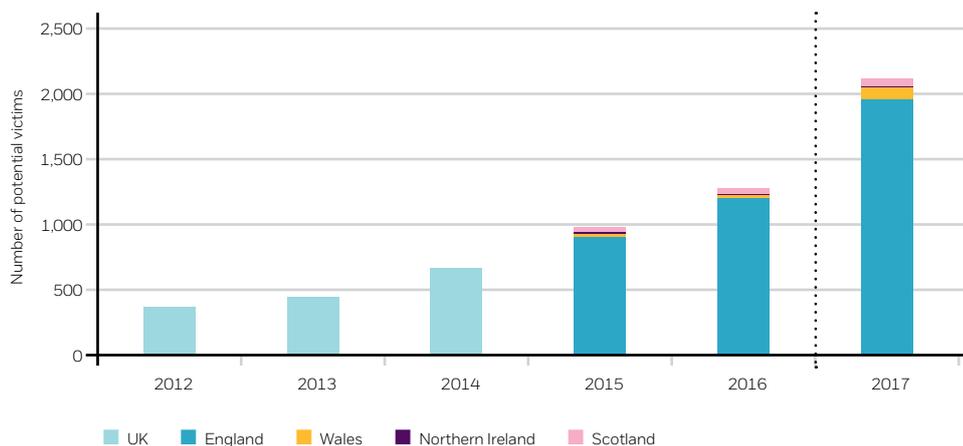
* CTAC was launched in 2007. It is an NSPCC service offering free guidance and training to professionals concerned that a child or young person has been or is about to be trafficked into or out of the UK. CTAC also coordinates multi-agency responses; attends child protection meetings; produces child trafficking reports for courts; and is a first responder for child referrals into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

** The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a victim identification and support process that is designed to make it easier for all the different agencies involved in a trafficking case (for example, the police, UK Visa and Immigration, local authorities and NGOs) to cooperate, share information about potential victims and facilitate their access to advice, accommodation and support.

***County Lines is a term used by the police to describe the way urban gangs supply drugs to suburban areas, market towns and coastal towns. See glossary for full definition.

**** In July 2015, the government contract for adult victim care in England and Wales was extended to cover victims of all forms of modern slavery. The Northern Ireland Department of Justice has also extended the scope of support in Northern Ireland to cover all potential victims of modern slavery.

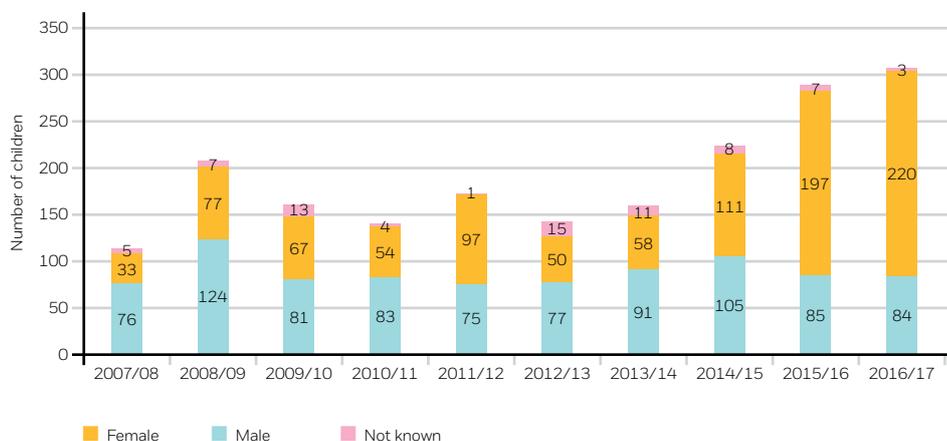
Number of potential victims of child trafficking



2,118 potential child victims of modern slavery were referred to the NRM in 2017. This is a 65.7 per cent increase on 2016.

In 2017 the NRM received 1,961 referrals of potential child victims of modern slavery where the referral was sent to a police force in England, 84 in Wales, 63 in Scotland and 10 in Northern Ireland.

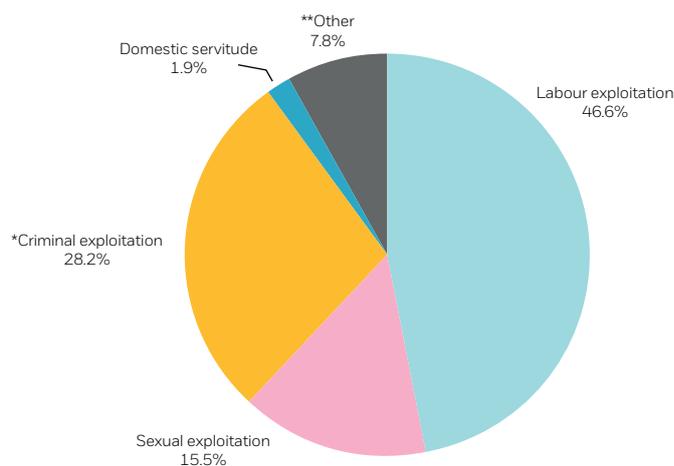
Number of children referred to CTAC



Latest figure: Between November 2016 and October 2017, 307 children were referred to CTAC. Of these, 84 were female, 220 were male and in three cases the gender was not known. This was an increase of 6.9 per cent since the year ending October 2016.

Trend: The number of children referred to CTAC reached its highest number to date between November 2016 and October 2017. The total number of children referred has increased by 169.2 per cent since 2007/08.

CTAC: trafficking concerns Nov 2016–Oct 2017



* Includes tending cannabis plants, drug mule, theft against a person and begging.
 ** Includes child soldiers, forced marriage, illegal adoption and informal fostering for benefit fraud.

This chart shows the main trafficking concerns about children who were referred to CTAC for the year ending October 2017. In total, 360 trafficking concerns were recorded. These included 257 cases which were still under investigation. The chart shows a breakdown of concerns, excluding cases still under investigation.

Labour exploitation was the most common with 46.6 per cent of referrals. Sexual exploitation is the second most common concern, with 15.5 per cent.

When CTAC receives referrals, two main concerns can be recorded for each case. This means the total number of concerns can be higher than the total number of CTAC cases. Each reporting year for CTAC runs from November to October.

Data sources

CTAC data on file with the NSPCC.
 National Crime Agency (2018) [National Referral Mechanism statistics - end of year summary 2017](#). London: National Crime Agency.

INDICATOR 20

Public attitudes to child abuse and neglect

KEY MESSAGES

- The proportion of people who said in a NatCen survey that it would be easy to tell if a 10-year-old child was suffering abuse or neglect has remained consistent from 2006 to 2016 (between 22 and 24 per cent).
- The most popular solution to tackle abuse and neglect identified from the YouGov “tracker survey” continues to be “removing children at risk of being abused from their families/ carers” (33 per cent).
- Another commonly identified solution was “doing more to reduce poverty”, which has seen a gradual increase from 2013, from 20 to 29 per cent.
- More than one third (34 per cent) of respondents agreed that child abuse can be ended, showing an 8-point increase from 26 per cent since September 2013.

Why is this indicator important?

Abuse and neglect affects large numbers of children every year, but we all have a responsibility to take action to keep children safe. Public attitudes about abuse and neglect matter because they guide behaviour. If people are aware of the prevalence of abuse and neglect, believe that it can be prevented and acknowledge that they can play a part, they are more likely to take action to keep children safe.

Context and limitations

The data presented here comes from two data sources, a YouGov “tracker survey” and a NatCen British Social Attitudes Survey.

The data in this section comes predominantly from YouGov’s quantitative, quarterly “tracker survey” commissioned by the NSPCC. It uses YouGov’s online panel, with a nationally representative sample of 2,063 adults in the UK. The data is weighted by age, gender, social grade and government office region.

The Department for Education has commissioned some questions on child abuse and neglect to be included on NatCen’s annual British Social Attitudes survey. NatCen uses random probability sampling to ensure that results are representative of adults living in England, Scotland and Wales.

Survey data may be subject to error with regards to sampling issues. Because of how data is published, percentages are only provided to the nearest whole number.

Availability and comparability

The YouGov “tracker survey” is drawn from a representative UK sample and therefore a UK nation breakdown of data is not possible. The three measures reported here have varying sampling periods, therefore caution should be taken when attempting to draw comparisons.

The NatCen survey is also drawn from a representative sample of England, Scotland and Wales and a breakdown by nation is not possible. Although the British Social Attitudes survey is carried out annually, the same questions are not included each year therefore we are unable to report data trends. The data we have used comes from chapter five, “Child abuse and child protection”, of the 2016 report.

Public awareness of the prevalence of child abuse and neglect in the UK

NatCen British Social Attitudes survey

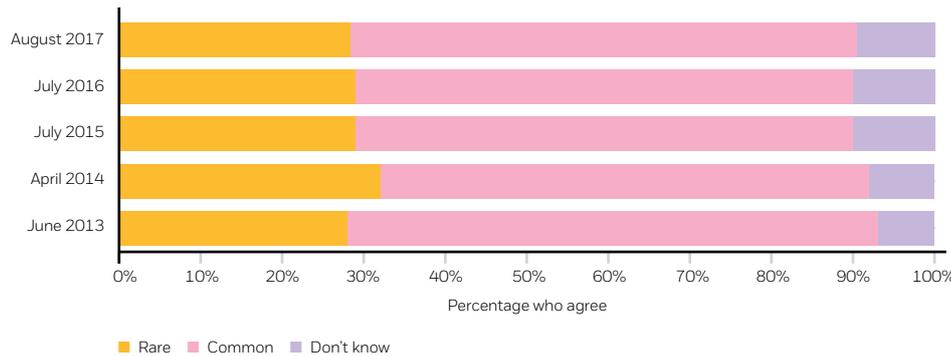
Proportion of people who said...	2006	2016
It would be very or fairly easy to tell if a 10-year-old child was suffering abuse or neglect	22%	24%
They would be very or quite confident that they would know what to do if they were certain their neighbours had a 10-year-old child who was being seriously abused or neglected	70%	71%

Public awareness of abuse and neglect has remained fairly high.

According to the NatCen survey, in 2016 just under a quarter of the public said that they could easily tell if a 10-year-old child was suffering abuse and neglect; this proportion remains consistent from the 2006 survey.

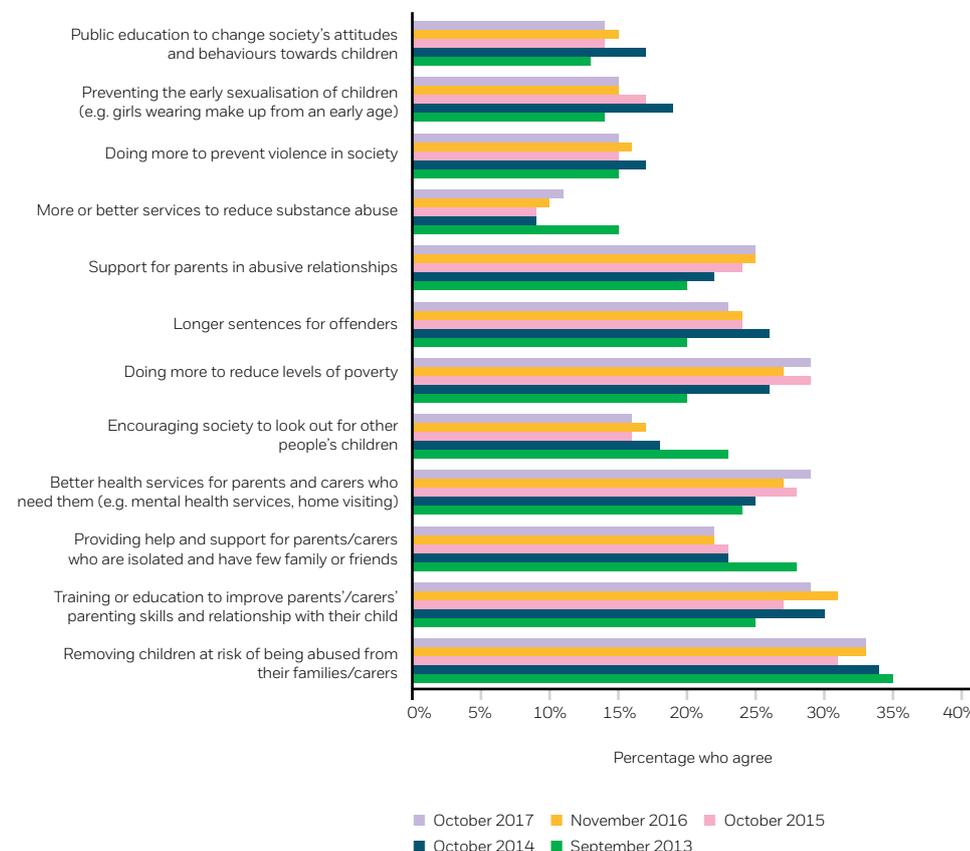
Similarly, the proportion of people who said they would know what to do if a 10 year old was suffering abuse and neglect remained consistent (70 per cent in 2006 and 71 per cent in 2016).

YouGov tracker survey: Which of these best describes how prevalent you think child abuse and neglect are in the UK?



The YouGov "tracker survey" indicates that the public's awareness of the level of child abuse and neglect in the UK has not changed significantly since June 2013. In August 2017, 62 per cent of the public said that they thought that child abuse and neglect were common in the UK compared to 65 per cent in 2013. In both June 2013 and August 2017, 28 per cent thought that child abuse and neglect were rare.

Solutions to tackle child abuse and neglect



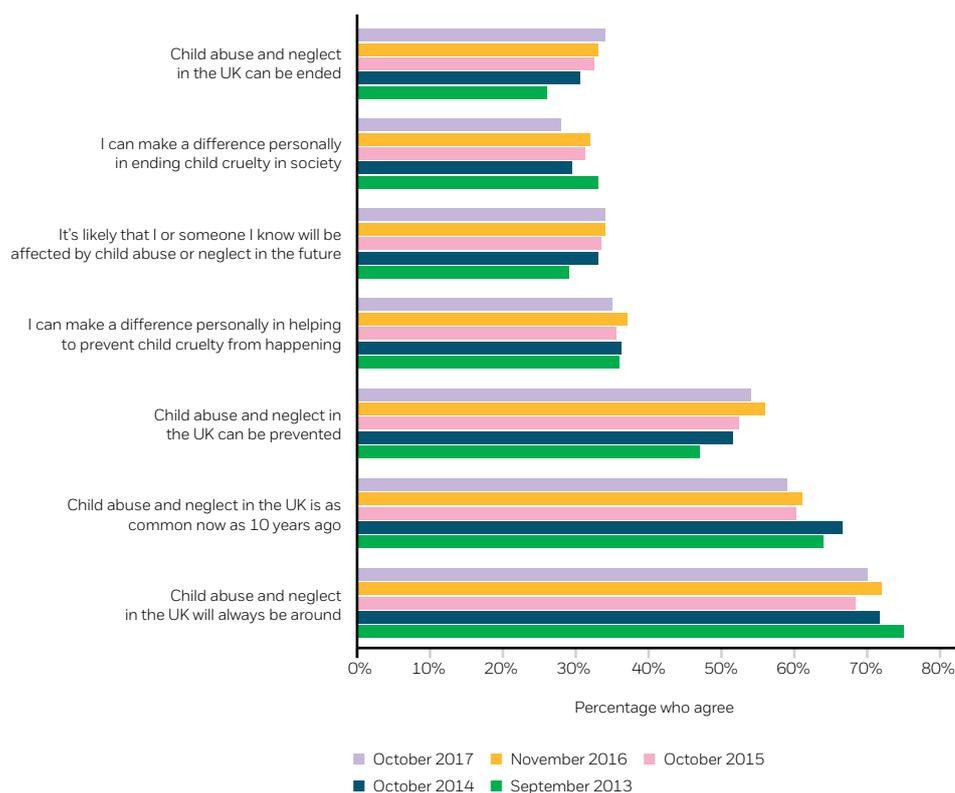
The YouGov "tracker survey" asks respondents about potential solutions to abuse and neglect. Since 2013, the solution most commonly identified as having the potential to tackle abuse and neglect has been "removing children at risk of being abused from their families/carers" (between 31 and 35 per cent).

In October 2017, another commonly identified solution was "doing more to reduce poverty", which has seen an increase from 2013, from 20 to 29 per cent.

Other solutions that have seen more support since 2013 are "training or education to improve parents'/carers' parenting skills and relationship with their child" and "better health services for parents and carers who need them (e.g. mental health services, home visiting)".

Currently, only 11 per cent of people believe that "more or better services to reduce substance abuse" are a solution to tackling child abuse and neglect. This has remained low since October 2014.

Having a personal impact on ending child abuse and neglect



Both statements "child abuse and neglect can be prevented in the UK" and "child abuse and neglect in the UK can be ended" have seen increases since September 2013 (7-point and 8-point increases respectively). Despite this, 70 per cent of respondents in October 2017 believe that "child abuse and neglect in the UK will always be around". However, these results demonstrate the limitations of survey data as 34 per cent of respondents believe that child abuse can be ended but 70 per cent believe that child abuse and neglect will always be around, meaning some respondents gave contradictory answers.

More than one third of respondents (37 per cent) agreed that they "can make a difference personally to prevent cruelty to children from happening". Slightly fewer (28 per cent) believed that they could "make a difference personally in ending child cruelty in society". These proportions have remained consistent since September 2013.

Data source

YouGov/NSPCC (unpublished) (2017) NSPCC Brand Tracking Survey.

Department for Education (DfE)/NatCen (2017) [Attitudes to education and children's services: the British Social Attitudes survey 2016](#). London: Department for Education.

**More than one third
of people agree
that child abuse
can be ended.**

Glossary

Child in need (CIN)

In England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, a child in need is a child who is unlikely to have, or have the opportunity to have, a reasonable standard of health and development without any support provided by a public authority.

Child receiving care and support (CRCR)

A child receiving care and support is the Welsh equivalent of a child in need. A child is classified as receiving care and support if they need care and support in addition to, or instead of, the care and support provided by their family. A child will be eligible for a service if: the need arises from circumstances such as their age or health, it relates to their personal wellbeing outcomes, it cannot be met by their parents, wider family or community services and it can only be met by their local authority.

Child protection plan / child protection register

Children who are the subject of a plan or on a register are deemed to be at ongoing risk of harm. Plans and registers record details regarding children where there are concerns about their safety. Despite a difference in terminology, plans and registers are roughly the same. In England a child may be the subject of a child protection plan (CPP) if they are deemed to be at risk of ongoing harm. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have retained the use of child protection registers (CPR).

Child protection systems in the UK

Services to safeguard and protect children in the UK are underpinned by legislation, guidance and policies. As power is devolved within the UK, differences between the respective child protection systems have become increasingly pronounced. In comparing information about child abuse in each of the four nations, it is important to understand the different contexts in which the statistics have been compiled.

Each nation's approach is founded on key pieces of child protection legislation about the welfare of children, covering support for children in need of support or protection. In England these are the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004; in Wales, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004; in Northern Ireland, the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 and Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Act 2011; and in Scotland, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

England

Child protection in England is the overall responsibility of the Department for Education (DfE), which issues guidance to local authorities. At the time of going to print, current guidance is Working together to safeguard children 2015. England's 148 Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) use this guidance to produce their own procedures that should be followed by practitioners and professionals who come into contact with children and their families in their local authority area. LSCBs are responsible for ensuring that the key agencies involved in safeguarding children work effectively together in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children at the local level. Their core membership is set out in the Children Act 2004, and includes local authorities, health bodies, the police and others.

Following the Children and Social Work Act 2017, new Working together guidance was expected to be released in June 2018. Publication deadlines prevent inclusion of changes brought in by the new guidance here, but these were expected to include the replacement of LSCBs with new local safeguarding arrangements, led by three safeguarding partners (local authorities, chief officers of police and clinical commissioning groups). The Act places a duty on these partners to make arrangements for themselves and relevant agencies to work together for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in their area.

Northern Ireland

Child protection in Northern Ireland is fully devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive and is the overall responsibility of the Department of Health (DoH). The primary piece of legislation is the Children (NI) Order 1995, underpinned by sets of policy guidance and regulations. The legislation shares many of the concepts and principles found in the Children Act 1989.

Department of Health guidance *Co-operating to safeguard children and young people in Northern Ireland (2016)* provides the overarching policy framework for safeguarding children and young people in Northern Ireland. Other child protection provisions can be found in the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008, Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 and various departmental circulars and guidance documents. Public Protections Arrangements Northern Ireland (PPANI) oversee the risk assessment and management of certain classes of sexual and violent offenders.

The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI), a public body of the DoH established under the Safeguarding Board Act (NI) 2011, coordinates and ensures the effectiveness of work to protect and promote the welfare of children. The board includes representatives from health, social care, the police, the probation board, youth justice, education, district councils and the NSPCC. The SBNI is responsible for developing policies and procedures to improve how different agencies work together and has launched a new suite of regional core child protection procedures. SBNI also has statutory responsibility for the conduct of case management reviews.

Scotland

Child protection in Scotland is the responsibility of the Scottish Government. National interagency child protection guidance was published by the Scottish Government in 2014, providing a national framework for agencies and practitioners at a local level to work together to protect children. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places the Scottish Government's broader *Getting it right for every child* approach on a statutory footing. The Act places a range of duties on public authorities to promote and safeguard children's wellbeing, including a "named person" for every child to act as a single point of contact for children and families, and a requirement to share relevant information about wellbeing concerns with the named person. The Scottish Government intends to bring this into force in 2018.

The child protection system in Scotland is unique within the UK in having a Children's Hearing System. This is based upon the principles that there is no meaningful distinction between children for whom there are child protection concerns and children who have committed offences and, further, that families should be involved in the processes for determining intervention and support for children. Introduced by the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, and reformed recently by the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, the system allows for decision-making to be made by a panel of lay persons, based upon the needs of the child.

In Scotland social work departments and the police have a statutory duty to investigate and take action to protect children, where there is reasonable cause to suggest that they are suffering, or are likely to suffer significant harm. However offence and care and protection cases must be referred to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration if compulsory measures of care are needed. Anyone, not just professionals, can make such a referral.

Scotland also has a national structure of local Child Protection Committees which are responsible for the strategic planning of local interagency child protection work. Although these have a similar remit to LSCBs in England, they do not have a statutory basis. They are the main network with whom the Scottish Government engages in developing child protection policy, with the government convening national meetings of Chairs of Child Protection Committees. Joint inspection of child protection in Scotland was introduced by legislation in 2006 and covers education, social work, police, community social care and health services. It is carried out by a new unified independent body, Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS), known as the Care Inspectorate.

In February 2016, the Scottish Government announced a review of child protection policy practice, services and structures. A year on, the independent chair of the Child Protection Improvement Programme published two reports summarising its key areas of work. The Scottish Government accepted all the recommendations, which will be implemented as part of the ongoing improvement programme.

Wales

Child protection in Wales is the responsibility of the Welsh Government. The Children Acts 1989 and 2004 and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 provide the legislative framework for child protection and safeguarding in Wales.

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 strengthens collaboration by placing duties on local government, health boards and other public bodies to improve the wellbeing of people and to provide preventive services and advice and assistance in order to reduce the demand on social services. The Act repeals Parts 3 and 4 of the Children Act 1989; this includes Section 17 Children in Need which is replaced by a duty to assess the needs of a child for care and support, to meet eligible needs and to consider providing preventive services or information, advice and assistance. The Act also has established six Safeguarding Children Boards (to replace the 22 LSCBs) in Wales and a National Independent Safeguarding Board.

A suite of guidance and codes of practice were issued under Section 145 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. These documents set out the social services requirements for local authorities in Wales. The codes and guidance cover both services for adults and children. There is one outstanding code of practice in relation to Part 7 of the Act, on handling individual cases to protect children and adults at risk. Once this has been published, the codes will replace Safeguarding children: working together under the Children Act 2004 in its entirety.

The All Wales Child Protection Procedures from 2008, owned by the Safeguarding Boards, are a fundamental part of the safeguarding activities and processes in Wales. They provide guidance and operational procedures that all professionals in Wales must follow and there are a series of All Wales Protocols that provide further guidance in certain areas such as child sexual exploitation. The Welsh Government has provided Safeguarding Boards with funding to enable the procedures to be updated and to take account of changes brought in by the Act; it is envisaged that the new procedures will be available in a digital format towards the end of 2018.

Contact sexual abuse

For the NSPCC Prevalence study¹ statutory contact sexual offences were restricted to: children under 18 who experienced sexual abuse perpetrated by an individual in a position of trust; children under 16 who experienced sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult relative; and children under 13 who experienced sexual abuse perpetrated by any other non-resident adult.

County Lines

County Lines is a term used by the police to describe the way urban gangs supply drugs to suburban areas, market towns and coastal towns. It is a form of criminal exploitation involving violence and coercion. The gangs often use children to move drugs and/or money via public transport; and may take over the homes of vulnerable adults in outlying areas to use as a base for their illegal activity. Gangs are known to target vulnerable people, for example those who have experienced abuse or neglect, children whose families are facing adversity, or children in care. Indicators that a child may be involved in County Lines include persistently going missing without an explanation; being found out-of-area; acquiring money or possessions without an explanation; and receiving an excessive amount of texts or phone calls from unknown numbers. There is evidence to suggest that some children who are involved with County Lines gangs are sexually abused.

Cruelty and neglect offence

An offence of cruelty and neglect is recorded when a parent or carer wilfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons or exposes a child under 16 in a manner likely to cause them unnecessary suffering or injury to health.

Deaths by assault or neglect

Causes of death are coded using the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems Tenth Revision (ICD-10) from 2001 and the Ninth Revision (ICD-9) from 1981 to 2000.

The codes used for deaths by assault or neglect are:

ICD-9 codes	ICD-10 codes	Description
E904, E960–E969	X85–Y09	Assault or neglect
E980–E989	Y10–Y34 ^a	Injury/poisoning of undetermined intent
	Y87.1, Y87.2 ^b	Sequelae of assault or neglect/event of undetermined intent

a. For England and Wales from 2007 onward, code U50.9 is also included in counts for deaths by undetermined intent. U50.9 replaced Y33.9 as the code assigned in England and Wales when the coroner's verdict is still pending. The majority of deaths where the coroner's verdict is still pending are eventually coded as assaults, therefore they are included with figures for deaths from assault.

b. Y87.1 and Y87.2 are not included for England and Wales.

Death by suicide

Causes of death are coded using the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems Tenth Revision (ICD-10) from 2001 and the Ninth Revision (ICD-9) from 1981 to 2000. The codes used for deaths by suicide² are:

ICD-9 codes	ICD-10 codes	Description
E950–E959	X60–X84	Intentional self-harm
E980–E989 ^{a,b}	Y10–Y34 ^{b,c}	Injury/poisoning of undetermined intent
	Y87.0–Y87.2 ^d	Sequelae of intentional self-harm/event of undetermined intent

a. Excluding E988.8 for England and Wales.

b. Excluding injury/poisoning of undetermined intent for persons aged 10 to 14 years.

c. Excluding Y33.9 where the coroner's verdict was pending in England and Wales for the years 2001 to 2006.

d. Y87.0 and Y87.2 are not included for England and Wales.

Death by intentional self-harm Death by undetermined intent

Death by purposely self-inflicted poisoning or injury.

Events where available information is insufficient to enable a medical or legal authority to make a distinction between accident, self-harm and assault. It includes self-inflicted injuries, but not poisoning, when not specified whether accidental or with intent to harm.

International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems

The International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems is the standard tool used to classify causes of death. It provides World Health Organization (WHO) member states with a common language for reporting and monitoring causes of death between countries and over periods of time. All member states use the ICD, which has been translated into 43 languages.

Intimate partner abuse

Defined by the NSPCC Prevalence study³ as: abuse that occurs within an intimate partner relationship. The duration of the relationship is varied, from one day to years. There is no age restriction for this type of abuse.

Looked after children

The term "looked after children and young people" is generally used to mean those looked after by the state. Each nation – England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales – has specific legislation that defines who is looked after. This includes those who are subject to a care order or temporarily classed as looked after on a planned basis for short breaks or respite care.

Looked after at home with parent(s)

In Scotland, where the child or young person is subject to a Supervision Requirement with the condition of residence at home with parent(s) or "relevant person(s)" as defined in Sec. 93(2)(b) of the Children's (Scotland) Act 1995.

Online harm and abuse

Online abuse is abuse that is facilitated using internet-connected technology. It may take place through social media, online games, or other channels of digital communication. Children can also be re-victimised if evidence of their abuse is recorded or uploaded online. Technology can facilitate a number of illegal abusive behaviours including, but not limited to: harassment; stalking; threatening behaviour; child sexual abuse material; inciting a child to sexual activity; sexual exploitation; grooming; sexual communication with a child; and, causing a child to view images or watch videos of a sexual act. Using technology to facilitate any of the above activities is online abuse.

Alongside those illegal activities that are perpetrated online and constitute abuse, children may also be exposed to online harms, such as inappropriate behaviours or content online. For instance, children may be bullied online by their peers or they might, either accidentally or intentionally, view content which is intended for adults. Both online abuse and exposure to unsuitable content or behaviour can have a long-lasting impact on the wellbeing of children and young people.

National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking or modern slavery and ensuring that they receive appropriate support. Following the implementation of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, it was extended to all victims of modern slavery in England and Wales. This includes those who have experienced human trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour.

Initial referrals of potential trafficking or modern slavery must be handled by an authorised agency. These "first responders" include: police forces; the National Crime Agency; UK Border Force; UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI); local authorities; and the NSPCC (CTAC). They will complete a full referral form and pass this to the Modern Slavery Human Trafficking unit (MSHTU). Referrals to the NRM are not compulsory, and if the potential victim is an adult they must give their permission for the referral process to go ahead. If the potential victim is a child, they do not need to give consent.

2 Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2016) *Suicides in the United Kingdom: 2014 registrations*. Newport: Office for National Statistics

3 Radford et al. (2011) op. cit., p.7.

Following referral, a Competent Authority (CA), must investigate the case. In the UK, these are the Modern Slavery Human Trafficking unit (MSHTU), which deals with referrals from the police, local authorities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs); and UKVI, which deals with referrals identified as part of the immigration process. Trained members of staff in the CA will assess the details of each case and decide whether an individual is a victim of trafficking or modern slavery.⁴

Overall maltreatment

Defined by the NSPCC Prevalence study⁵ as: all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.⁶

Physical punishment and violence

The NSPCC Prevalence study⁷ distinguished between two types of physical abuse – physical violence (not including “smacking”) and physical punishment by a carer or parent. Physical violence was defined as acts of physical violence such as being beaten, kicked, hit or physically hurt by a parent or guardian, or being physically attacked with or without a weapon but not including “smacking”.

Potential victim of human trafficking or modern slavery

When a person's case is referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), they are known as a “potential victim”. Following referral, a full investigation is carried out and trained staff will determine whether the individual is a victim of human trafficking or modern slavery. As this can take time, not all cases will be resolved within the same year that they were referred.

The NRM data provides figures relating to the number of potential victims who have been referred into the NRM process during a given year. However it does not provide any analysis of the picture of modern slavery in the UK.

Recorded offences

Police record a crime if, on the balance of probabilities, the circumstances as reported amount to a crime defined by law and if there is no credible evidence to the contrary.

Referral

A referral is the first stage of the child protection process in all four nations. A referral will be made about children because some aspect of their life is giving cause for concern. Anyone who has concerns about the safety or welfare of a child can make a referral to statutory services. However it is worth noting that some referrals are for services (e.g. disabled children) so not every referral is the first stage of the child protection process.

Severe maltreatment

This term is used to describe a combination of screener questions from the NSPCC Prevalence study that are analysed together.⁸ This is a combination of subjective and objective questions. Only acts of maltreatment by adults are included. These acts include severe physical abuse, severe neglect and contact sexual abuse.

Severe neglect

This term is used to describe a combination of screener questions from the NSPCC Prevalence study that are analysed together.⁹ Only acts of violence perpetrated by parents or guardians are included. Acts of severe neglect include acts of medical and supervisory neglect that occurred with high lifetime frequency (more than six times in the young person's lifetime), resulted in some type of physical harm and acts which the young person felt amounted to “child neglect” or were of “criminal” nature. All neglect screener questions are adjusted for age-appropriate responses.

Severe physical abuse

This term is used to describe a combination of screener questions from the NSPCC Prevalence study that are analysed together.¹⁰ Only acts of violence perpetrated by adults are included. Acts of violence included were where a weapon which could potentially cause harm was used, resulted in an injury, had a high frequency (more than six times in the young person's lifetime), more than two types of physical violence were perpetrated or if the young person felt the acts perpetrated upon them were “child abuse” or “criminal”.

Sexting

Sexting is the exchange of sexual messages or self-generated sexual images or videos through mobile phones or the internet.

Sexual activity

The offence of sexual activity is the intentional sexual touching of an under 16 year old by an adult.

Sexual assault

The offence of sexual assault is the intentional sexual touching of another person without their consent.

URL

URL is an acronym for Uniform Resource Locator and is the address of a website.

4 National Crime Agency (2015) [National referral mechanism](#). [Accessed 25/4/2017]

5 Radford et al. (2011) op. cit., p.7.

6 World Health Organization (WHO) et al. (2006) [Preventing child maltreatment: a guide to taking action and generating evidence](#). Geneva: World Health Organization.

7 Radford et al. (2011) op. cit., p.7.

8 Radford et al. (2011) op. cit.

9 Ibid., p.132.

10 Ibid.

Measuring the extent of abuse and neglect in the UK

This report compiles and analyses the most robust and up-to-date child protection data that exists across the four nations in the UK.

The report sets out 20 different indicators. Each indicator looks at the question of 'how safe are our children?' from a different perspective. They also include historic data, to help track progress over time.

NSPCC

Everyone who comes into contact with children and young people has a responsibility to keep them safe. At the NSPCC, we help individuals and organisations to do this.

We provide a range of online and face-to-face training courses. We keep you up-to-date with the latest child protection policy, practice and research and help you to understand and respond to your safeguarding challenges. And we share our knowledge of what works to help you deliver services for children and families.

It means together we can help children who've been abused to rebuild their lives. Together we can protect children at risk. And, together, we can find the best ways of preventing child abuse from ever happening.

But it's only with your support, working together, that we can be there to make children safer right across the UK.

[nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk)

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR