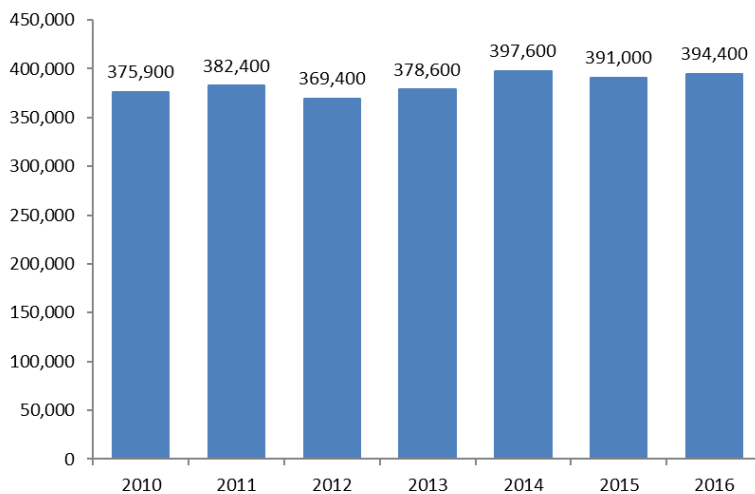




SFR 52/2016, 3 November 2016

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

**Figure A: Number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
England, 2010-2016

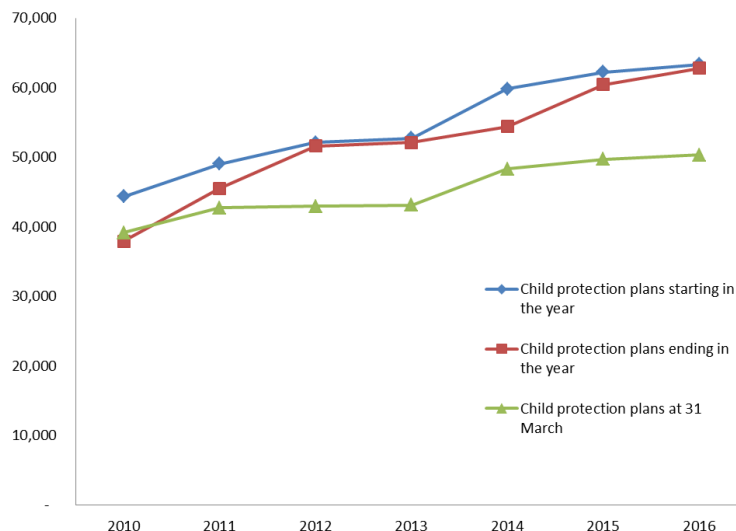


The number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 391,000 in 2015 to 394,400 in 2016, an increase of 0.9%.

The number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March has remained relatively stable over the last seven years.

The number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31<sup>st</sup> March continues to follow the upward trend of recent years.

**Figure B: Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan starting in the year, ending in the year and at 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
England, 2010-2016



The number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 49,700 in 2015 to 50,310 in 2016, an increase of 1.2%.

The number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan starting and ending a child protecting plan in the year both continue to increase.

# Contents

1.	Children in need (Tables A1, A3, B1, B2, B4) .....	3
	Characteristics of children in need .....	4
2.	Referrals (Tables A1, C1, C5).....	5
3.	Assessments (Tables A1, B3, C2, C3) .....	6
	Primary need identified at assessment (Table B3) .....	7
	Factors identified at the end of assessment (Table C3) .....	7
4.	Section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences (Table A2).....	8
5.	Child protection plans (Tables A2, A5, D4) .....	9
6.	Accompanying tables.....	10
7.	Further information is available .....	11
8.	National Statistics.....	12
9.	Technical information.....	12
10.	Get in touch.....	12
	Media enquiries .....	12
	Other enquiries/feedback .....	12

## About this release

This statistical first release (SFR) provides the latest information on the number of referrals to children's social care, assessments carried out upon those children and whether the child became the subject of a child protection plan. All the figures included in this SFR are taken from the children in need census. The DfE has been collecting the children in need census from local authorities for the full 12 month period since 2009-10.

When a child is referred to children's social care, an assessment is carried out to identify if the child is in need of services, which local authorities have an obligation to provide under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. These services can include, for example, family support (to help keep together families experiencing difficulties), leaving care support (to help young people who have left local authority care), adoption support or disabled children's services (including social care, education and health provision).

## In this publication

The following tables are included in the SFR:

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

A data quality and uses document and methodology document accompany this SFR. These documents provide further information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data, including how it is validated and processed.

## Feedback

We are changing how our releases look and welcome feedback on any aspect of this document at [CIN.STATS@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:CIN.STATS@education.gsi.gov.uk).

# 1. Children in need (Tables A1, A3, B1, B2, B4)

## Methodology for counting the number of children in need

A child can start or end an episode of need more than once during the year, but they should not have over-lapping episodes. For example, if a child begins an episode of need in May 2015, which ends in August 2015, and the same child begins another episode of need in December 2015 and is still in need on the 31 March 2016, the child is counted as two starts, one end and one count at the 31 March 2016. A more detailed explanation is given in the accompanying methodology document and the data quality and uses document found alongside this publication at: [Statistics: children in need and child protection](#)

### Figure C: Number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March

England, 2010-2016

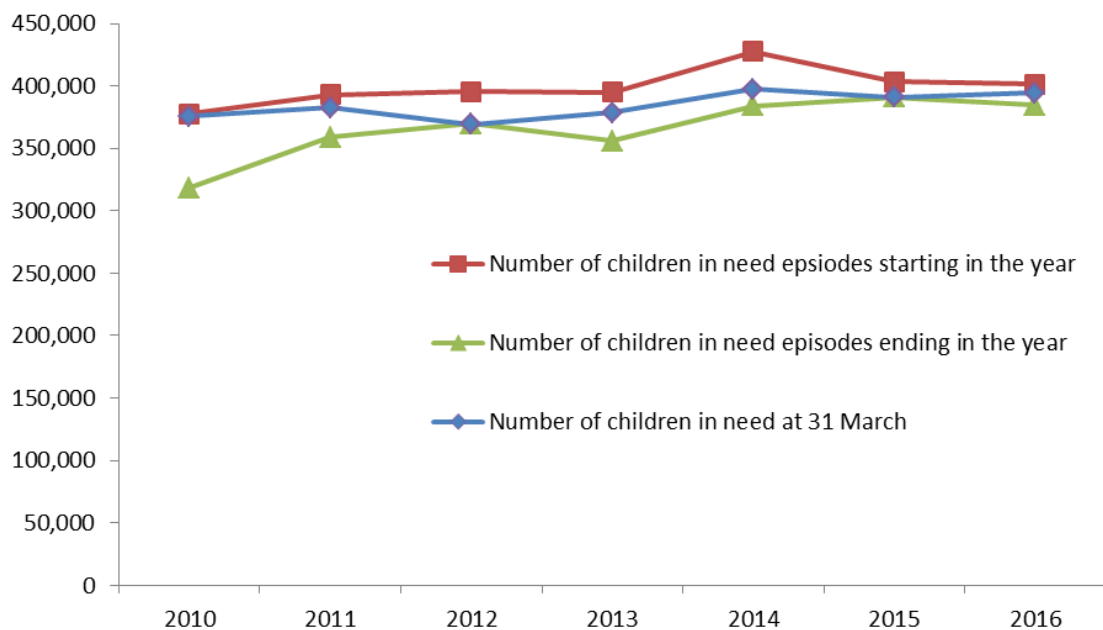
Year ending 31 March	Number of children in need at 31 <sup>st</sup> March	Rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 years
2010	375,900	334.7
2011	382,400	339.0
2012	369,400	325.7
2013	378,600	331.4
2014	397,600	345.6
2015	391,000	337.3
2016	394,400	337.7

*Source: Children in need census*

The number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 391,000 in 2015 to 394,400 in 2016, an increase of 0.9%. There was also an increase in the rate of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March per 10,000 in the population, from 337.3 in 2015 to 337.7 in 2016. There is considerable variability in the rate of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March per 10,000 children aged under 18 years in the population at a local authority level, ranging from 151 in Wokingham to 700.7 in Southampton.

The number of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March has remained relatively stable over the last seven years. At its lowest, this was 369,400 in 2012, and at its highest, this was 397,600 in 2014. Similarly, the rate of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March per 10,000 children aged under 18 years in the population has also remained relatively stable over the last seven years. At its lowest, this was 325.7 in 2012, and at its highest, this was 345.6 in 2014.

**Figure D: Number of children in need episodes starting and ending in the year and those in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
 England, 2010-2016



The number of children in need episodes starting in the year has decreased, from 403,400 in 2015 to 401,600 in 2016, a decrease of 0.5%. There was also a decrease in the number of children in need episodes ending in the year, from 390,800 in 2015 to 384,580 in 2016, a decrease of 1.6%.

**Figure E: Percentage of episodes ending in year by duration, in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
 England, 2010-2016

Duration	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
6 months or less	69.2	69.2	68.7	66.8	64.0	64.1
6 to 12 months	12.5	12.0	12.3	13.3	14.7	14.8
1 year or more	18.3	18.7	18.9	19.9	21.3	21.1

Source: Children in need census

Of the episodes ending in the year, 21.1% lasted a year or more in 2016, compared to 21.3% in 2015.

### Characteristics of children in need

The gender split of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 remains similar to previous years - 52.7% are male, 45.3% are female and 2.0% are unborn or of unknown gender.

The age split of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 also remains similar to previous years. The largest age group is those aged 10-15 years accounting for 30.6% of children in need; 23.6% are under 5 years of age.

The percentage of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March with a disability recorded has decreased over the last five years, from 14.2% in 2010/11 to 12.7% in 2015/16.

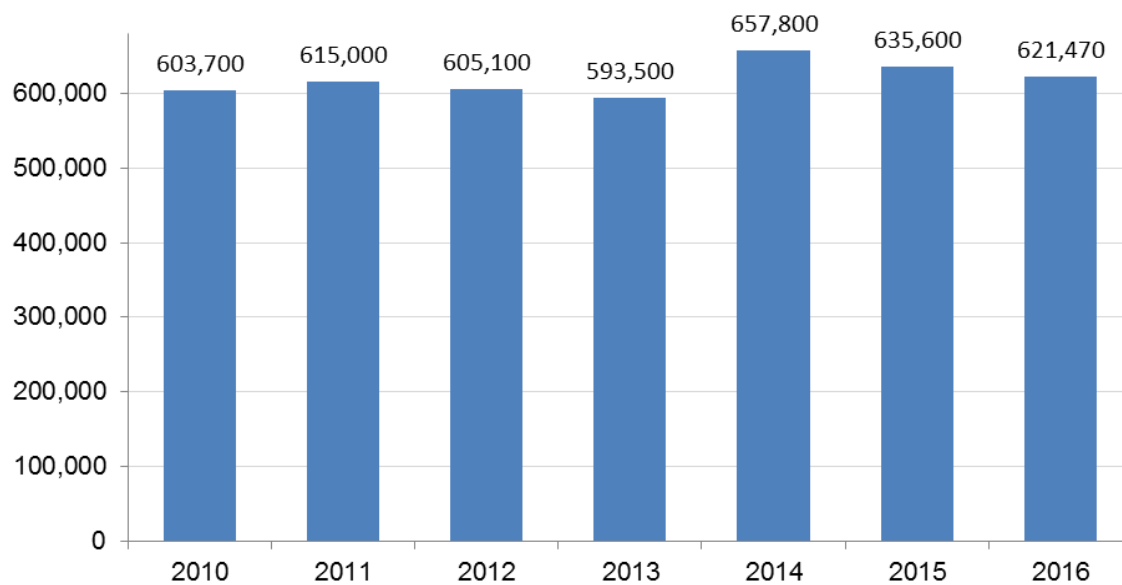
## 2. Referrals (Tables A1, C1, C5)

### Definition: referral and re-referral

A **referral** is defined as a request for services to be provided by children's social care and is in respect of a child who is not currently in need. A referral may result in: an assessment of the child's need; the provision of information or advice; referral to another agency; or no further action. If a child is referred more than once in the year then each referral is counted in the figures. New information relating to children who are already on an open episode of need is not counted as a referral.

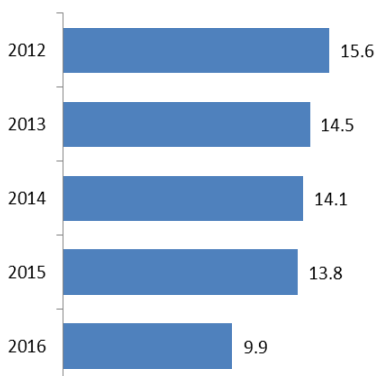
A **re-referral** is where a child has been referred within 12 months of a previous referral. Further details on how these figures are calculated can be found in the accompanying methodology document found alongside this publication at: Statistics: children in need and child protection.

**Figure F: Number of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March**  
England, 2010-2016

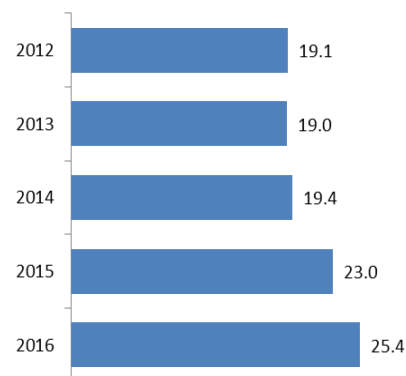


The number of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March has decreased this year, from 635,600 in 2015 to 621,470 in 2016, a decrease of 2.2%. This is the second year running there has been a decrease in the number of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March, following a larger than usual increase in 2014.

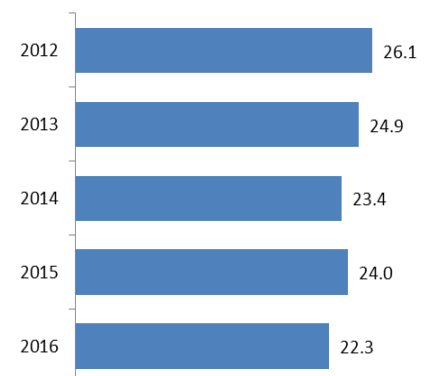
**Figure G1: Percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that resulted in no further action**  
England, 2012-2016



**Figure G2: Percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that were assessed and then required no further action**  
England, 2012-2016

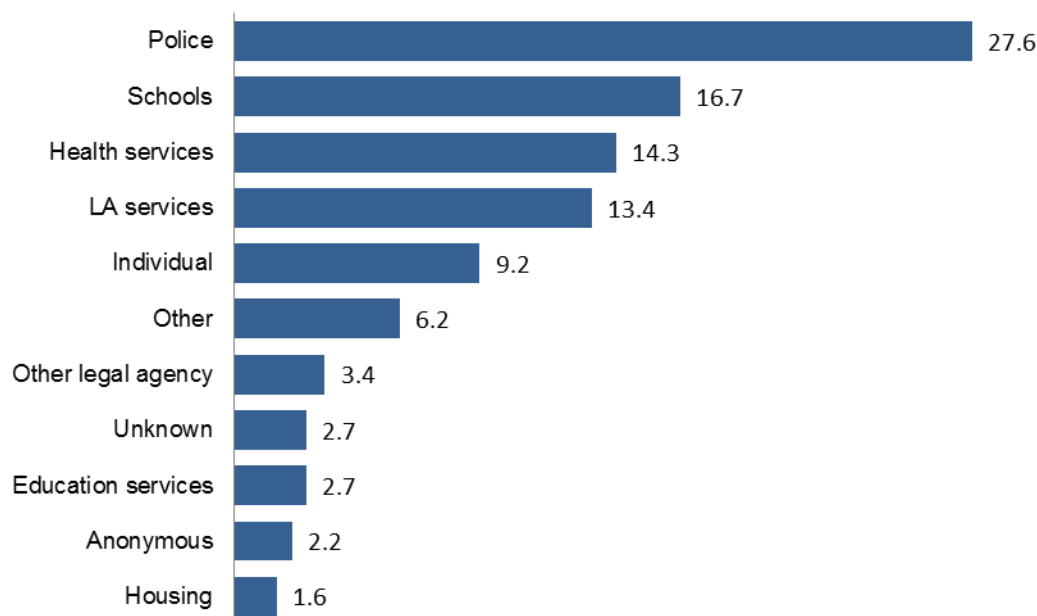


**Figure G3: Percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that were within 12 months of a previous referral**  
England, 2012-2016



The percentage of all referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that resulted in no further action after initial consideration has decreased, from 13.8% in 2015 to 9.9% in 2016, a decrease of 3.9ppts. However, the percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that were assessed and then required no further action has increased, from 23.0% in 2015 to 25.4% in 2016, an increase of 2.4ppts. The percentage of all referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March that were within 12 months of a previous referral has decreased, from 24.0% in 2015, to 22.3% in 2016, a decrease of 1.7ppts.

**Figure H: Percentage of referrals in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March by source of referral**  
England, 2015-16



Most referrals are from the police – this year 27.6% of referrals were from the police, followed by schools with 16.7%, and health services with 14.3%. Where there is more than one referral for the same child, it is the referral source of the first referral reported in the children in need census.

Source of referral collected and reported for the first time two years ago. As this is a relatively new data item users should exercise caution when analysing this.

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

#### Recent policy changes to assessing children in need

Statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' was revised in 2013 giving local authorities more flexibility when assessing children. Previously local authorities carried out an initial assessment within 10 working days and (where needed) a more in-depth core assessment within 35 working days. Local authorities now have the flexibility to carry out a single continuous assessment within 45 working days.

There were 149 (98%) local authorities operating a continuous assessment model by the end of March 2016 (up from 91% by the end of March 2015 and 71% by the end of March 2014). No distinction between the types of assessment carried out was recorded in the data collected this year.

The number of assessments completed in the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 550,800 in 2015 to 571,640 in 2016, an increase of 3.8%. The average (median) duration of assessment in 2016 was 28 working days, the same as in 2015.

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

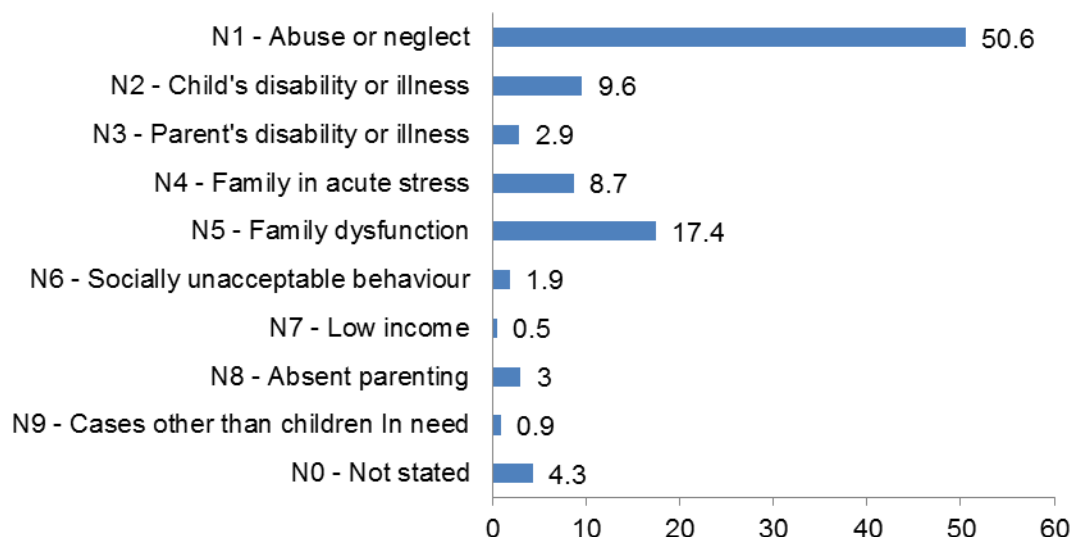
## Primary need identified at assessment (Table B3)

### Methodology for identifying primary need at assessment

When a child is assessed following a referral, the practitioner determines the child's primary need at this first assessment. Only one need can be reported here and the list of primary needs is hierarchical, so in cases where multiple needs are identified, the need highest in the list is reported in the census.

The categories are designed only to identify what kinds of pressures are placed on children's social services. The order of the categories relate to the specificity of the description and not necessarily importance. However, the order is fixed so that there is consistency.

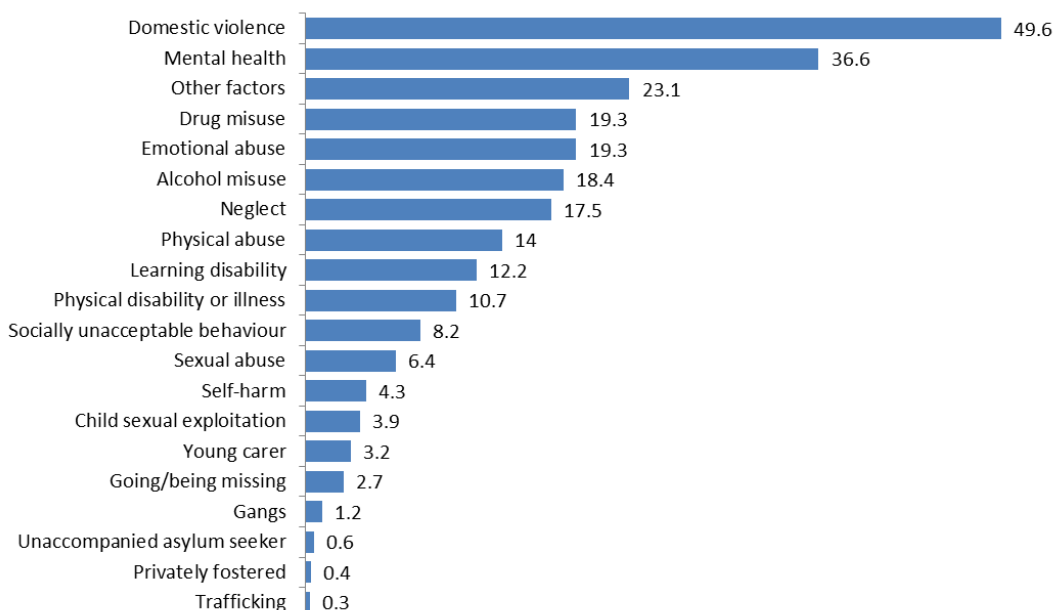
**Figure I: Percentage of children in need at 31 March 2016, by primary need at assessment**  
England, 2015-16



Abuse or neglect was the most common primary need at assessment for children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 – this year 50.6% of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March had abuse or neglect as their primary need identified at assessment, followed by family dysfunction with 17.4%, and child's disability or illness at 9.6%.

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

**Figure J: Percentage of children in need at 31 March 2016, by factors identified at the end of assessment**  
England, 2015-16



### Methodology for identifying need at end of assessment

Factors identified at the end of assessment are in addition to the primary need identified at assessment and were collected and reported for the first time two years ago. As this is a relatively new data item users should exercise caution when analysing this.

If more than one factor has been identified at assessment, each can be reported within the census. Most children will have more than one factor identified and reported.

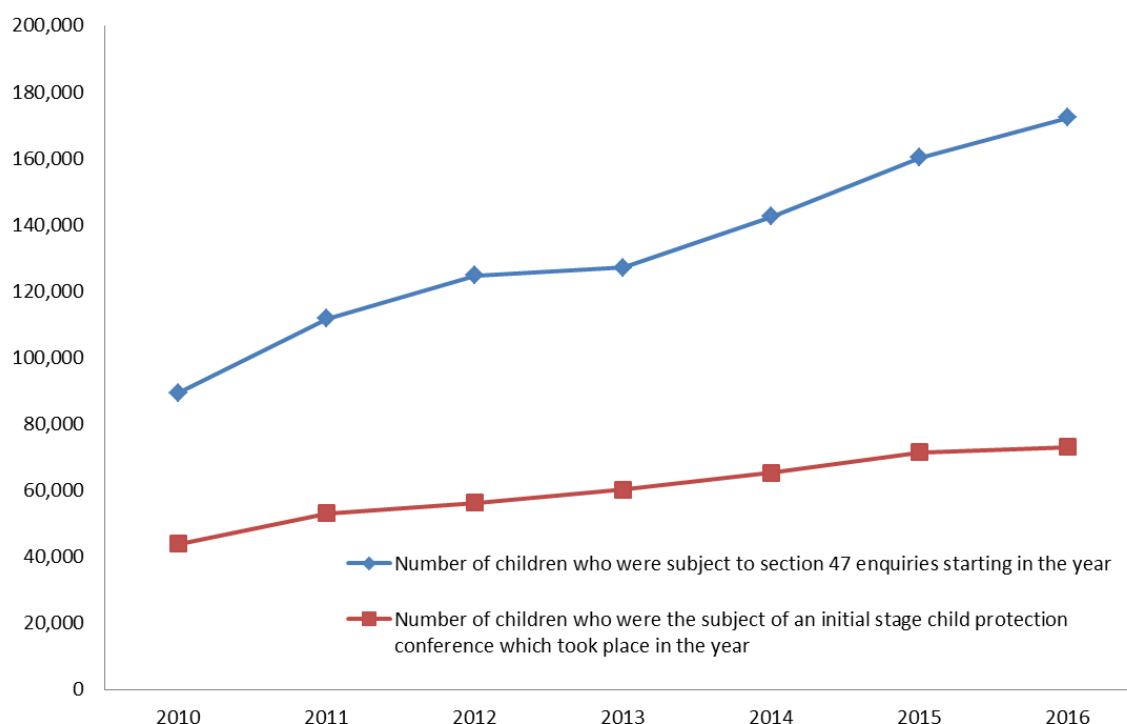
Domestic violence, which includes that aimed at children or other adults in the household, was the most common factor identified at end of assessment for children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 – this year 49.6% of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March had domestic violence as a factor identified at end of assessment, followed by mental health at 36.6%, which incorporates mental health of the child or other adults in the family/household.

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

### Section 47 enquiry and initial child protection conference

If the local authority identifies there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, it will carry out an assessment under **section 47 of the Children Act 1989** to determine if it needs to take steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. If concerns are substantiated and the child is judged to be at continuing risk of harm then an **initial child protection conference** should be convened within 15 working days.

**Figure K: Number of children who were subject to section 47 enquiries starting in the year and number of children who were the subject of an initial stage child protection conference which took place in the year England, 2010-2016**



The number of children who were subject to section 47 enquiries starting in the year has increased, from 160,200 in 2015 to 172,290 in 2016, an increase of 7.6%. There was also an increase in the number of children who were the subject of an initial stage child protection conference which took place in the year, from 71,400 in 2015 to 73,050 in 2016, an increase of 2.3%.



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

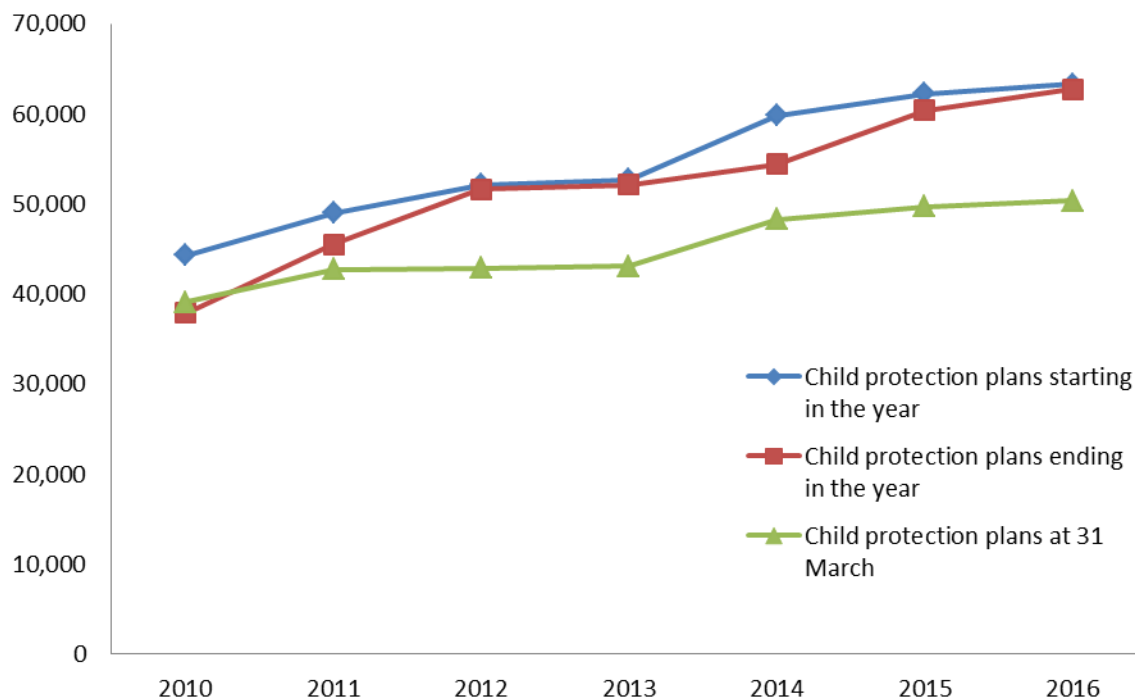
### Child protection plan

At the initial child protection conference, the decision will be made as to whether the child needs to become the subject of a **child protection plan**. When a child becomes the subject of a plan, the initial category of abuse is recorded. Plans should be reviewed within the first three months, and then at least every six months.

A child should no longer be the subject of a plan if it is judged they are no longer at risk of harm, or if the child has reached 18 years old, left the country or died. A local authority will end a plan if the family moves permanently to another authority and the receiving authority will start a new plan if deemed necessary.

**Figure B: Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan starting in the year, ending in the year and at 31<sup>st</sup> March**

England, 2010-2016



The number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31<sup>st</sup> March has increased this year, from 49,700 in 2015 to 50,310 in 2016, an increase of 1.2%. The percentage of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31<sup>st</sup> March who had had reviews carried out within the required timescales has decreased this year, from 94.0% in 2015 to 93.7% in 2016, a decrease of 0.3ppts.

Neglect was the most common initial category of abuse for children in need who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 – this year 46.0% of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March had neglect as their initial category of abuse, followed by emotional abuse with 35.3%. Neglect was also the most common latest category of abuse for children in need who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 – this year 44.9% of children in need at 31<sup>st</sup> March had neglect as their latest category of abuse, followed by emotional abuse with 38.3%.

The number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan starting and ending a child protecting plan in the year both continue to increase.

## 6. Accompanying tables

The following tables are available in Excel format on the department's statistics website ([Statistics: children in need and child protection](#)):

### National tables

Table A1:	Number of children in need, referrals and assessments completed by children's social care services, in the year ending 31 March 2016
Table A2:	Number of section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences carried out by children's social care services, and the number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan, in the year ending 31 March 2016
Table A3:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2016, by gender, age (at 31 March) and primary need at assessment
Table A4:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2016, by age (at 31 March), gender and ethnicity
Table A5:	Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2016, by age (at 31 March), gender, initial category of abuse and ethnicity

### Local authority figures: children in need

Table B1:	Number of children in need, in the year ending 31 March 2016, by local authority
Table B2:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2016, by local authority and disability
Table B3:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2016, by local authority and primary need at assessment
Table B4:	Number of children in need at 31 March 2016, by local authority and duration of open case
Table B5:	Number of children ceasing to be in need, in the year ending 31 March 2016, by local authority and duration of episode of need
Table B6:	Number of children ceasing to be in need, in the year ending 31 March 2016, by local authority and reason for case closure

### Local authority figures: referrals and assessments

Table C1:	Number of referrals, referrals within 12 months of a previous referral and the number of referrals which resulted in no further action, in the year ending 31 March 2016, by local authority
Table C2:	Number of assessments completed by children's social care services, in the year ending 31 March 2016, by local authority and duration of assessment
Table C3:	Number of episodes with assessment factor information, in the year ending 31 March 2016, by local authority and factors identified at the end of assessment
Table C4:	Number of children who were subject to section 47 enquiries and initial child protection conferences, in the year ending 31 March 2016, by local authority
Table C5:	Number of referrals completed by children's social care services, in the year ending 31 March 2016, by local authority and source of referral

### Local authority figures: children who were the subject of a child protection plan

Table D1:	Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan, in the year ending 31 March 2016, by local authority
Table D2:	Number of children who became the subject of a child protection plan, in the year ending 31 March 2016, by local authority, initial and latest category of abuse
Table D3:	Number of children who became the subject of a child protection plan, in the year ending 31 March 2016, by local authority and those who became the subject of a plan for a second or subsequent time plan for a second or subsequent time
Table D4:	Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2016, by local authority, initial and latest category of abuse

- Table D5: Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2016, by local authority and length of time as the subject of a plan
- Table D6: Number of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March 2016, by local authority and who had been on a plan for at least three months and had reviews carried out within the required timescales
- Table D7: Number of children who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan, in the year ending 31 March 2016, by local authority and length of time as the subject of a plan
- Table D8: Number of children who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan during the first six months of the year ending 31 March 2016, by local authority and the length of time the child remained in need

When reviewing the tables, please note that:

Data quality and uses	The quality and uses document gives more details, this can be found on the <a href="#">Statistics: children in need and child protection</a> webpage.
Rounding conventions and suppression	<p>The National Statistics Code of Practice requires that reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that all published or disseminated statistics produced by the department for Education protect confidentiality.</p> <p>In most tables the figures are presented as whole numbers while in some tables, rates and percentages are displayed to 1 decimal point. The rounding convention is as follows: any fractions of 0.5 and above will be rounded up, anything less than 0.5 will be rounded down. Where any number is shown as zero (0), the original figure submitted was zero (0).</p> <p>The following conventions have been used:</p> <p>‘.’ means not applicable</p> <p>‘..’ means not available</p> <p>‘-’ means negligible count</p> <p>‘x’ means a figure between 1 and 5 inclusive</p> <p>Please note that further secondary suppression may have been applied on zeroes or numbers above 5 to preserve confidentiality where primary suppression could be derived.</p>

## 7. Further information is available

Previous publications	<p>Information on the number of referrals to children’s social care, assessments carried out upon those children and whether the child became the subject of a child protection plan:</p> <p><a href="#">Statistics: children in need and child protection</a></p>
The children in need census	<p>The Department for Education has been collecting the children in need census from local authorities since 2008-09. The census collects information on all referrals to children’s social care, assessments carried out upon those children and whether the children became the subject of a child protection plan. The first collection in 2008-09 covered the six month period from 1 October 2008 to 31 March 2009; however, from 2009-10 the census was rolled out to cover the full 12 month period: <a href="#">Children in need census</a></p>

Looked-after children	Statistics on children under local authority care at national and local authority level: <a href="#">Statistics: children looked-after</a>
Children's social workers	Statistics on children's social care workers employed by local authorities: <a href="#">Statistics: children's social care workforce</a>
Ofsted statistics	Ofsted publish inspection outcomes for local authority children's services and children's social care providers in England: <a href="#">Children's social care statistics</a>
Statistics for other UK countries	<a href="#">The Scottish Government: Children's social work statistics</a> <a href="#">Welsh Government: Social services statistics</a> <a href="#">Children's services statistics for Northern Ireland</a>

## 8. National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed. The Department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

## 9. Technical information

A data quality and uses document and methodology document accompany this SFR. These documents provide further information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data, including how it is validated and processed.

## 10. Get in touch

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