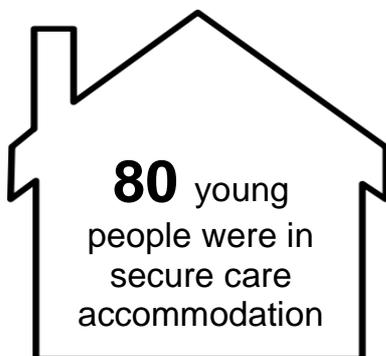
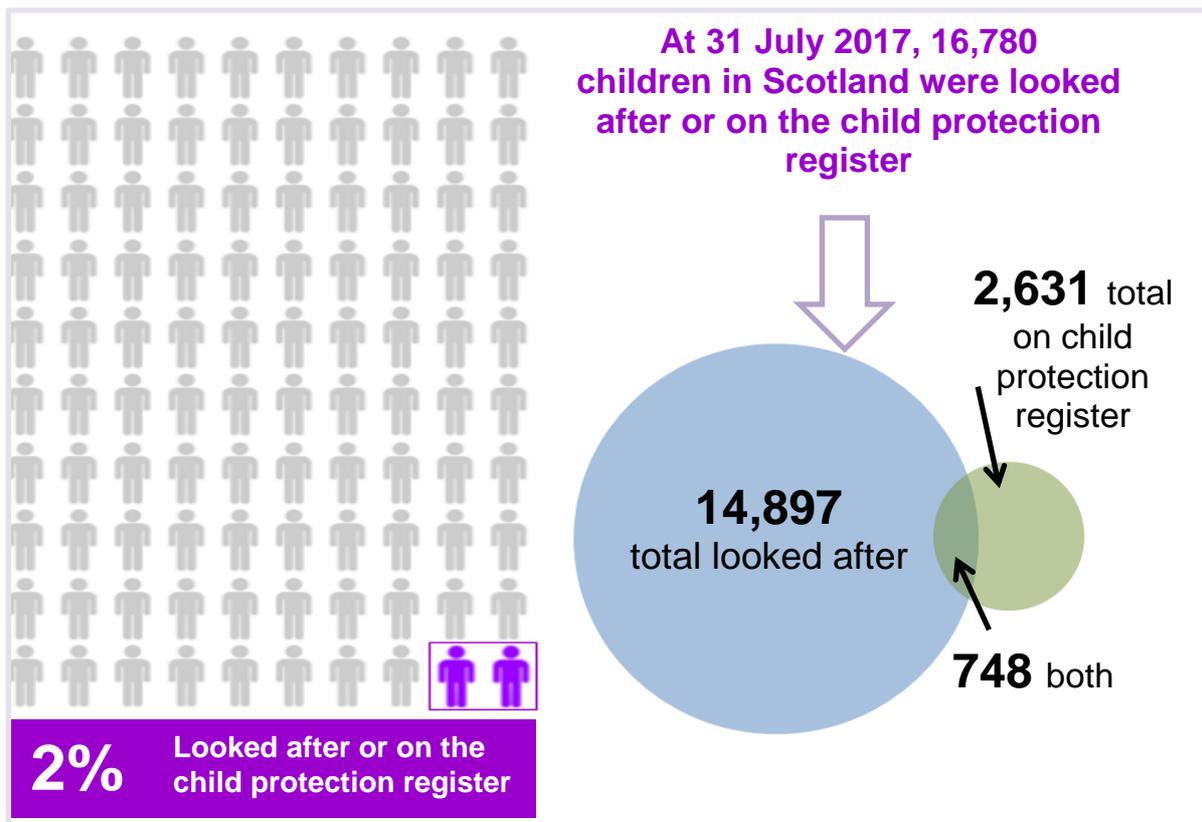


CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2016-17



Comparisons with 2015-16:

- 3%** decrease in number of children looked after
- 3%** decrease in number of children on child protection register
- 9** fewer young people, on average, during the year in secure care accommodation

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Introduction

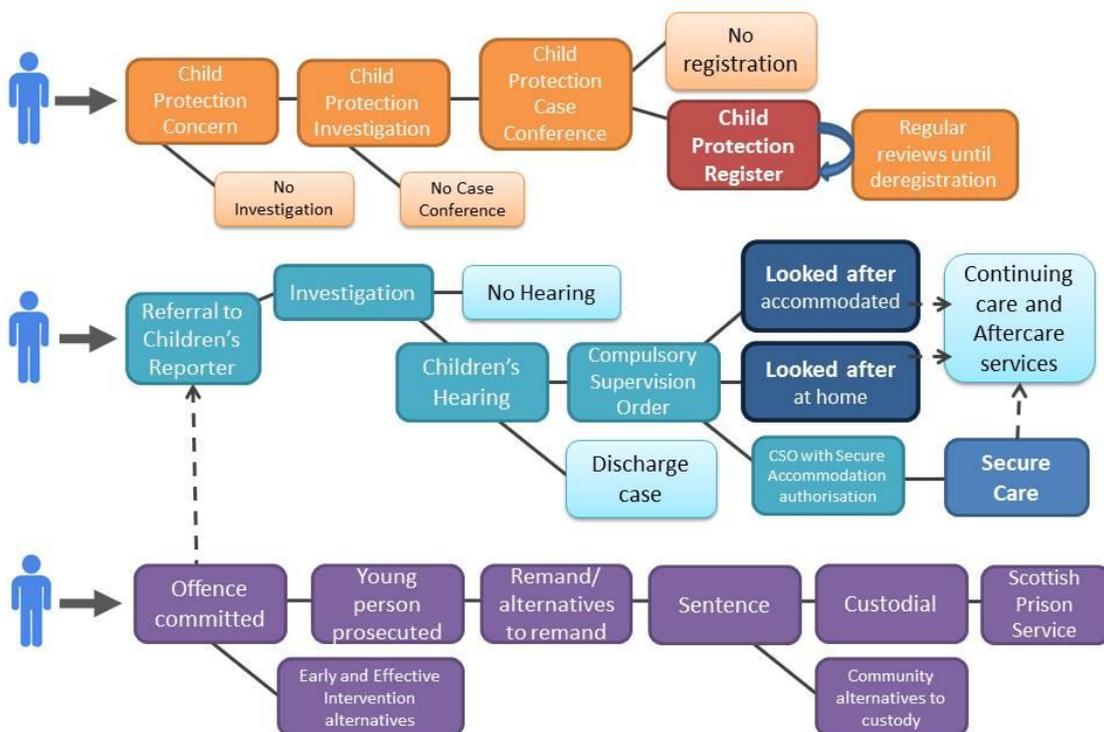
What do these statistics include?

We present information collected from local authorities and secure units on children and young people, generally younger than their mid-twenties, who were formally looked after, under child protection measures, or in secure care at some point between 1st August 2016 and 31st July 2017.

Some data tables are summarised within this publication, but full tables including extended time series are available in the spreadsheets published alongside this bulletin.

How do children come to be counted in these figures?

There are a number of ways that a child may become looked after, on the child protection register or in secure care. Children may be referred to the Children’s Reporter, become voluntarily looked after or come via the criminal justice system. The diagram below gives a high-level illustration of the main routes by which children would be included. See background note 1.1 for more information.



Children Looked After

-  **The total number of children looked after** has fallen for the fifth year
-  **The use of Permanence Orders** is increasing as the use of Compulsory Supervision Orders declines
-  **Adoptions** of looked after children increased to its highest level on record
-  The number of children **looked after at home** continues to fall

This section presents data on children looked after during the period from 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2017. This will be referred to as 2017 for ease of reporting (with 2015-16 referred to as 2016 and so on). Local authorities have a responsibility to provide support to certain children and young people, known as ‘looked after children’. A child may become looked after for a number of reasons; including neglect, abuse, complex disabilities which require specialist care, or involvement in the youth justice system.

At 31 July 2017, there were 14,897 looked after children – a decrease of 420 (around 3%) from 2016. This is the fifth consecutive year the numbers have decreased following a peak of 16,248 in 2012. The number of children ceasing to be looked after each year has been consistently more than the numbers becoming looked after, although both numbers have also been declining – see main tables 1.3 and 1.4.

Permanence Order data are presented in additional tables AT2.5a and b which presents three legal reasons (‘Freed for Adoption’, ‘Permanence Order’ and ‘Permanence Order with authority to place for adoption’) as ‘legally secure permanence’, and shows that together they have increased every year since collection began in 2012, and now stand at 2,064, a 4% increase on 2016.

Placement type

There are several types of care setting in which looked after children or young people could be looked after, including at home (where a child is subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order and continues to live in their

normal place of residence), foster care, residential unit or school, a secure unit, with prospective adopters, or in kinship care (where they are placed with friends or relatives).

Table 1.1 and Chart 1 show there is a continued decreasing trend in children being looked after at home with this group accounting for only 25% of the total in 2017 compared to 43% in 2007. Increasing numbers of children are being looked after away from home in community settings, in particular with foster carers (35% of the total). Foster care and kinship care are the most common settings for looked after children now. Numbers of children looked after in residential care settings have been fairly static over recent years at around 10% of the overall total.

Table 1.1: Number of children looked after by type of accommodation⁽¹⁾

	2007	2016	2017	2007 %	2016 %	2017 %	10-year profile
In the community	12,399	13,840	13,388	88	90	90	
At home with parents	5,986	3,870	3,766	43	25	25	
With Kinship Carers: friends/relatives	2,094	4,279	4,138	15	28	28	
With Foster Carers provided by LA	3,629	3,826	3,509	26	25	24	
With Foster Carers purchased by LA	426	1,566	1,743	3	10	12	
With prospective adopters	220	251	197	2	2	1	
In other community ⁽²⁾	44	48	35	0	0	0	
Residential Accommodation	1,661	1,477	1,509	12	10	10	
In local authority home	756	581	619	5	4	4	
In voluntary home	112	136	127	1	1	1	
In residential school	628	376	375	4	2	3	
In secure accommodation	113	60	56	1	0	0	
Crisis care	-	7	0	-	0	0	
In other residential ⁽³⁾	52	317	332	0	2	2	
Total looked after children	14,060	15,317	14,897	100	100	100	

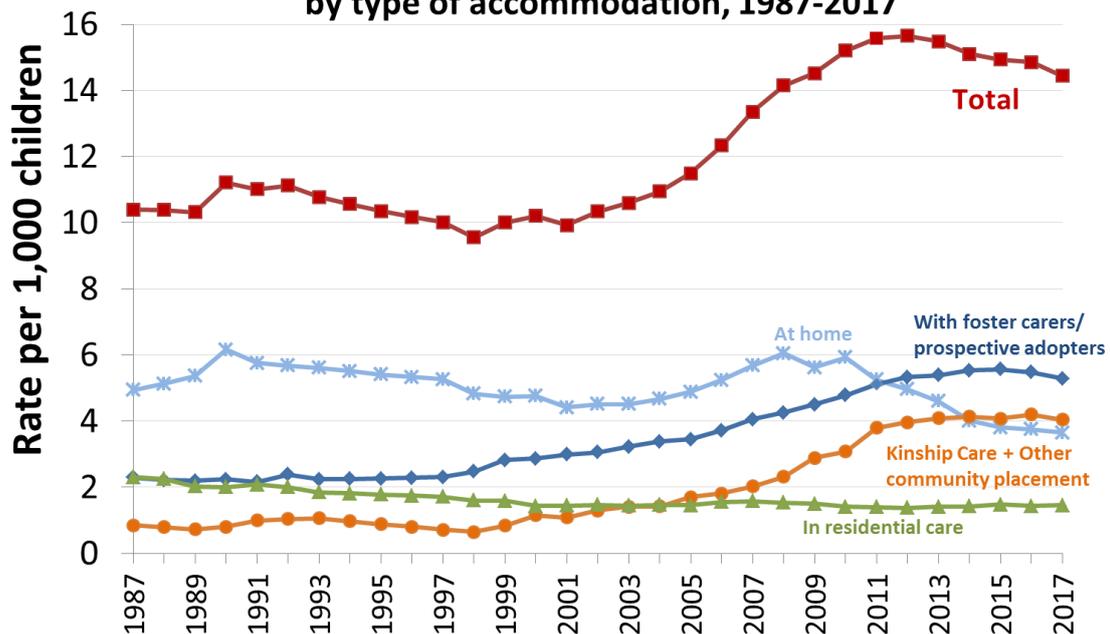
(1) Information on the number of children looked after by accommodation type is available back to 1971 in main table 1.1a of the spreadsheet version of the associated downloadable publication tables:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/PubChildrenSocialWork>

(2) 'In other community' is a category that captures those people in community placements outside those listed, such as supported accommodation.

(3) The bulk of the 'other residential' placements are private/independent residential placements for young people with complex needs.

Chart 1: Children looked after per 1,000 children under 18 by type of accommodation, 1987-2017



Care Plan

When children become looked after, a care plan should be produced. The care plan should include detailed information about the child’s care, education and health needs, as well as the responsibilities of the local authority, the parents and the child. A care plan is considered ‘current’ if it has been produced or reviewed in the past 12 months.

Table 1.2: Children looked after with and without a current care plan, at 31 July 2017⁽¹⁾

	At home		Away from home - breakdown by category				Total
	At home	Away from home	With Kinship Carers: friends/relatives	With Foster Carers	With prospective adopters/ other community	In Residential Care	
With a current care plan	3,509	10,595	3,711	5,178	229	1,477	14,104
Without a current care plan	257	536	427	74	3	32	793
Total	3,766	11,131	4,138	5,252	232	1,509	14,897
With a current care plan	93%	95%	90%	99%	99%	98%	95%
Without a current care plan	7%	5%	10%	1%	1%	2%	5%
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(1) Local authorities vary in their recording of care plans being in place, so some children without a current care plan may in fact have one in progress on this date.

Table 1.2 shows that 95% of the 14,897 children who were looked after at the end of July 2017 had a current care plan, a 1% increase on 2016.

There was little difference between children looked after at home and away from home.

Children starting and ceasing to be looked after

The reduction in total numbers being looked after is simply because more people are leaving care than starting. A child will be counted more than once in each set of figures if they have started being looked after and/or ceased being looked after more than once during the reporting year.

As shown in table 1.3, 4,186 episodes of care began between 1 August 2016 and 31 July 2017. Table 1.3 shows a 2% increase from 2016 and a 20% decrease from 2007.

Table 1.3: Number of children starting to be looked after by age⁽¹⁾

	2007	2016	2017	2007 %	2016 %	2017 %	10-year profile
Under 1	412	658	647	8	16	15	
1-4	1,157	916	972	22	22	23	
5-11	1,513	1,321	1,287	29	32	31	
12-15	1,878	1,175	1,191	36	29	28	
16-17	274	41	85	5	1	2	
18-21 ⁽²⁾	11	5	4	0	0	0	
Total	5,245	4,116	4,186	100	100	100	

(1) Table excludes planned series of short term placements.

(2) The 18-21 category in this table may include a small number of looked after young people who were over 21 years.

Table 1.3 also shows that over the last 10 years children have started episodes of care at younger ages. In 2007, 30% of children starting episodes of care were under five years of age. By 2017 this had risen to 39%, although this is a decline from a peak of 41% in 2014. A large proportion of the under-five group are the under-one year olds, and the numbers in this youngest group have increased by 57% since 2007, but have declined slightly since 2014. There has also been a corresponding decrease in the proportion of children aged 12-17 starting episodes of care since 2006.

There were slightly more boys than girls starting episodes of care in 2017 – 54% boys compared to 46% girls (Scotland's Census 2011 showed that the general population was 51% boys aged under 18). The number of boys starting episodes of care has been steady in recent

years while the number of girls has been falling until this year, as shown in the spreadsheet version of main table 1.3. The trend reflects a long-term gender split where boys make up around 54% of children starting episodes of care.

Table 1.4 shows the number of children who ceased episodes of care by length of time looked after. There were 4,274 children who ceased episodes of care between 1 August 2016 and 31 July 2017, an increase of 1% from 2016.

The total length of time children were looked after remained similar between 2016 and 2017. However in the longer-term, there are more children being looked after for more than five years, and fewer looked after for only a period of weeks. This is in line with the policy that children should remain looked after until a permanent placement is found.

Table 1.4: Number of children ceasing to be looked after, by length of time looked after ⁽¹⁾

	2007	2016	2017	2007 %	2016 %	2017 %	10-year profile
Under 6 weeks	398	292	235	10	7	5	
6 weeks to under 6 months	471	355	337	11	8	8	
6 months to under 1 year	805	581	594	19	14	14	
1 year to under 3 years	1,515	1,582	1,521	37	37	36	
3 years to under 5 years	569	661	658	14	16	15	
5 years and over	386	752	929	9	18	22	
Total	4,144	4,223	4,274	100	100	100	

(1) Excludes children who are on a planned series of short term placements. If a child ceases to be looked after more than once during the year they will be counted more than once.

Just as children are starting to be looked after at a younger age over the longer-term, children are also ceasing to be looked after at younger ages. The number of children ceasing to be looked after who were under the age of 12 was 42% in 2007 and is now 50%. However, most of the change occurred around 2010 and has seen little variation since. Fuller information can be found in the additional tables in AT1.12.

Table 1.5: Number of children ceasing to be looked after by destination (1)(3)

Destination after leaving care	2007	2016	2017	2007 %	2016 %	2017 %	10-year profile
Home with (biological) parents	2,155	2,573	2,326	52%	61%	54%	
Friends / relatives	362	656	877	9%	16%	21%	
Former foster carers	17	104	123	0%	2%	3%	
Adoption	133	341	367	3%	8%	9%	
Supported accommodation / own tenancy	206	270	283	5%	6%	7%	
Other ⁽²⁾	532	204	285	13%	5%	7%	
Not known	739	75	13	18%	2%	0%	
Total	4,144	4,223	4,274	100	100	100	

(1) Table excludes planned series of short term placements. A child may cease to be looked after more than once during the year and will be counted once for each episode of care ending. Some totals do not exactly equal the sum of their component parts due to the effects of rounding.

(2) "Other" includes residential care, homeless, in custody and other destination.

(3) Numbers from 2007 are not directly comparable to 2017 due to the large number of not known cases in that year. Not known cases in 2007 were from local authorities who did not provide data.

When a child ceases being looked after, a destination category is recorded (Table 1.5). Most children (54% in 2017) go home to their biological parents and 21% go to live in kinship care with friends or relatives. The percentage leaving care that go home has fallen consistently over the last five years. There is a long term increase in the number of children leaving care due to being adopted, and although the proportion of adoptions decreased slightly between 2014 and 2015, they increased to their highest level of 9% in 2017. The majority of adoptions (72%) are of children aged under five years old as seen in AT1.9. There is a much more even spread of ages of young people leaving care to go home or to live with friends and relatives. There has been an improvement in data quality over the past five years, as shown by the large decrease of the 'Not known' category in Table 1.5.

Pathway Plans

Local authorities have a duty to provide advice, guidance and assistance for young people who at the point of leaving care have reached 16 years of age. This is referred to as 'aftercare services'. Local authorities are required to carry out a pathway assessment for aftercare services for all currently looked after young people who are over the age of sixteen and every 'compulsorily supported person' (a care leaver who has not yet reached their nineteenth birthday). These young people should be provided with a pathway co-ordinator who assesses their needs and a pathway plan which outlines how the local authority plans to meet the needs of the young person. The pathway assessment should be done within three months of a young person becoming a compulsorily

supported person but it is expected that all young people over age 16 will have had their pathway assessment, and will have a completed pathway plan in place as to their future before they cease to be looked after.

Of those young people who had reached 16 years of age at the time they ceased to be looked after during 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2017, 73% had a pathway plan and 75% had a pathway co-ordinator (table 1.6), an increase from 64% and 72% in 2016. Where a young person's final placement type was 'at home' they were less likely to have a pathway plan or a pathway co-ordinator than if the final placement type was 'away from home'. Table 1.6 shows that, of children whose last placement was at home, 57% had a pathway plan and 60% a pathway coordinator, compared with 79% and 81% respectively of those whose final placement type was 'away from home'.

Table 1.6: Pathway plans and nominated pathway co-ordinators of young people who were at least 16 years of age on the date they ceased to be looked after during 2016-17^{(1),(2)}

	Number			Percentage		
	Looked after at home	Looked after away from home	Total	Looked after at home	Looked after away from home	Total
With a pathway plan at discharge	212	783	995	57	79	73
Without a pathway plan at discharge	160	208	368	43	21	27
With a nominated pathway co-ord at discharge	224	805	1,029	60	81	75
Without a nominated pathway co-ord at discharge	148	186	334	40	19	25
Total	372	991	1,363	100	100	100

(1) Figures include all episodes of ceasing to be looked after beyond 16 years of age (i.e. a child may be counted more than once).

(2) It may be the case that some young people who don't have a relevant pathway plan/coordinator may be receiving similar support from adult services instead.

Aftercare services

Table 1.7 shows the proportion of young people eligible for aftercare services on 31 July 2017 by age and their economic activity. 'Economic activity' refers to the young person's engagement in education, employment, training, or another kind of activity such as seeking employment or caring for family.

Since April 2015, aftercare eligibility has been extended to cover all care leavers up to and including people aged 25 where it previously only covered up to the age of 21. As this is an extension of the original policy, the data in this publication are unlikely to be a full report on the additional eligible age group. These figures will continue to improve in quality in future publications as extension of support services to this group becomes more completely embedded. Figures have already risen from 4,602 in 2016 to 5,653 in 2017 as a result of better reporting of the over-21 age group.

There were 5,653 young people reported to be eligible for aftercare services on 31 July 2017, of whom 53% were known to be receiving aftercare. 47% of those receiving aftercare for whom current activity is known were in education, training or employment. This is a 3% decrease on 2016 (see also AT1.16).

For young people eligible for aftercare, more than half have taken up these services in some way. More of the 19 to 21 age group are not in education, training or employment, and more of this group are receiving aftercare compared to the other age groups. For the newly eligible over-21 age group, the majority are not receiving aftercare, which may be expected given that this is a relatively recent implementation, and many of this group may have moved onto adult services where required.

The proportion of aftercare-eligible individuals who are known to have never been homeless has risen from 52% last year to 54% this year.

Table 1.7: Percentage of young people eligible for aftercare services by age and economic activity, at 31 July 2017

	15-16	17	18	19-21	22+	Total
In education, training or employment	25	30	30	28	14	25
Not in education, training or employment	28	31	28	30	22	28
Not known	12	13	14	16	13	14
Not receiving aftercare	35	26	27	26	51	32
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Of those in education, training or employment						
	15-16	17	18	19-21	22+	Total
- In higher education	19	18	26	20	21	21
- In education other than HE	46	32	18	21	14	22
- In training or employment	35	50	56	59	64	57
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Of those not in education, training or employment						
	15-16	17	18	19-21	22+	Total
- due to short term illness	2	4	2	3	1	3
- due to long term illness or disability	4	3	6	9	8	7
- due to looking after family	5	6	6	9	10	8
- due to other circumstances	89	88	86	79	81	82
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

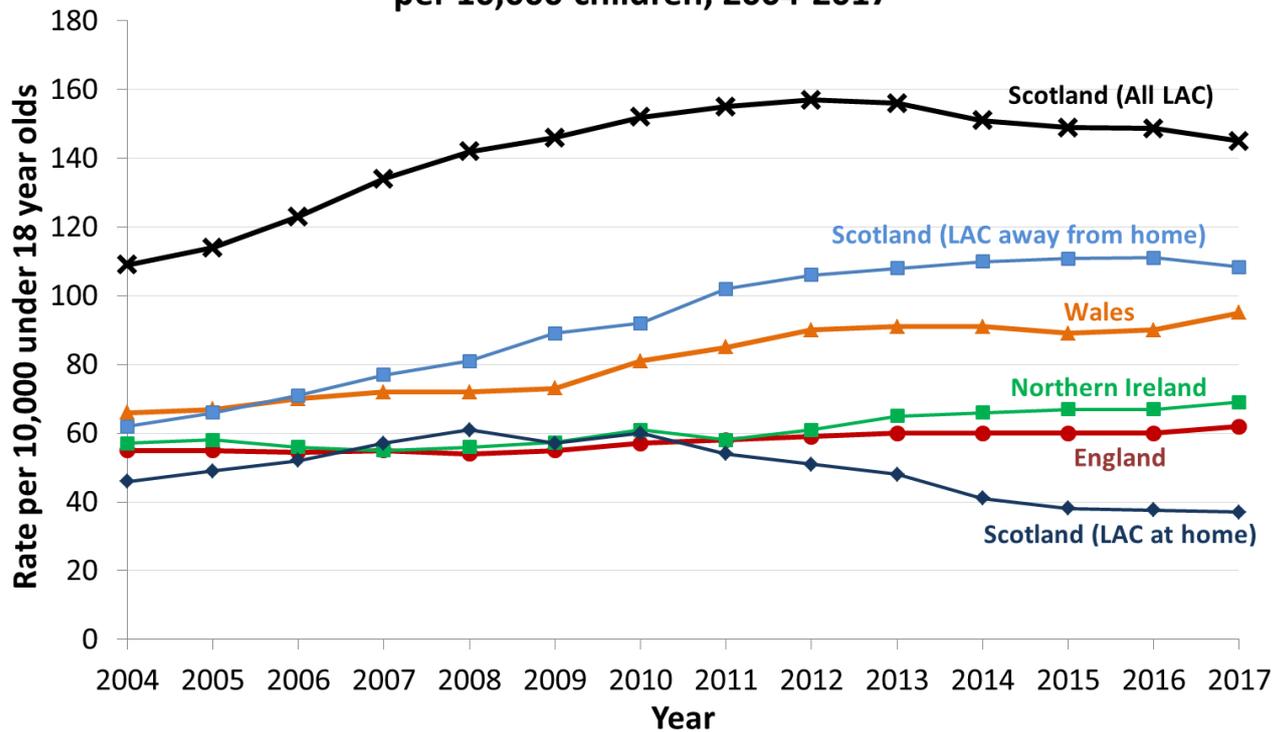
Cross-UK looked after comparisons

The definition of “looked after children” varies across the countries within the UK which makes cross UK comparisons difficult. In Scotland, children placed at home require a supervision order from the children’s panel, whereas in England and Wales, being looked after at home is an informal situation put in place by a social worker, often as an interim measure until a foster or kinship care placement can be found.

To improve comparability, the Scotland figure at 31 March has been used, rather than the published 31 July figure, as the other nations publish on this date.

Chart 2 gives Scottish figures both including and excluding children looked after at home. There appears to be some stability in the figures across the UK at the moment – all nations have rates that are relatively constant, and these contrast with increases seen around the start of this decade. The rate in Scotland appears to be continuing to decrease from its peak in 2011.

Chart 2: Cross-UK comparison of rate of looked after children per 10,000 children, 2004-2017



Links to the cross-UK data underlying Chart 3 can be found in Background Note 1.7. There is more information on the comparability of looked after children data across the UK:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/socialservicestats>

There are **additional tables** on looked after children available at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/PubChildrenSocialWork>

Child Protection



Number of children on register is 3% lower than last year



Numbers of registrations and deregistrations have both increased slightly



Causes for concern relating to **emotional abuse** are the most prevalent

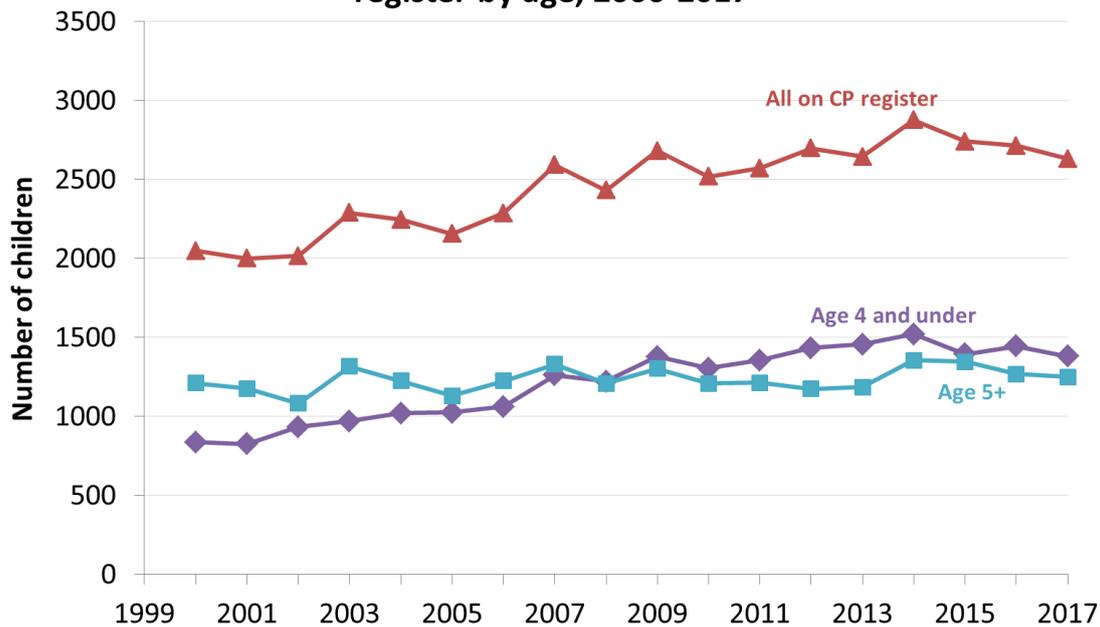
This section presents data on children on the child protection register from 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2017. This will be referred to as 2017 for ease of reporting (with 2015-16 referred to as 2016 etc.). Child protection means protecting a child from abuse or neglect. This can either be in cases where abuse or neglect has taken place, or in cases where a likelihood of significant harm or neglect has been identified. The risk of harm or neglect is considered at a Child Protection Case Conference. Where a child is believed to be at risk of significant harm, their name will be added to the child protection register (a child protection registration).

2016-17 was the fifth year that child protection data has been collected entirely at individual level. As the series has lengthened, more in-depth validation of the data has been possible, which gives a high level of confidence in its accuracy. Some of the 2016 figures in this publication have been revised as part of the 2017 validation process.

Children on the child protection register

The number of children on the child protection register decreased from 2,715 in 2016 to 2,631 in 2017 (a 3% decrease). Chart 3 shows that the number of children on the child protection register fluctuated regularly, and there was a general upwards trend until 2014. However, in the last three years there has been a decrease, which may be the start of a longer term decline. Following updated information from local authorities, the number of children on the register in 2016 has been amended from 2,723 to 2,715. It should be noted that relatively large year-on-year changes are experienced in a number of local authorities (see Table 2.4 for local authority level breakdowns).

Chart 3: Number of children on the child protection register by age, 2000-2017



In 2017, 53% of children on the child protection register were aged under five. Since 2008 there have been more children aged under five than over five on the child protection register, and the gap between the over five and under five groups widened in 2016 and stayed similar in 2017, after it closed in 2014 and 2015.

There is no strong gender pattern among children on the child protection register – 48% were boys, 47% were girls and the remaining 5% were unborn children. Because of a change in how unborn children were recorded by local authorities in 2010, figures for unborn children are only comparable from 2011 onwards and have been a small but increasing proportion of the total number of registrations from 2011 onwards.

Table 2.1: Number of children on the child protection register by gender ^(1, 2, 3)

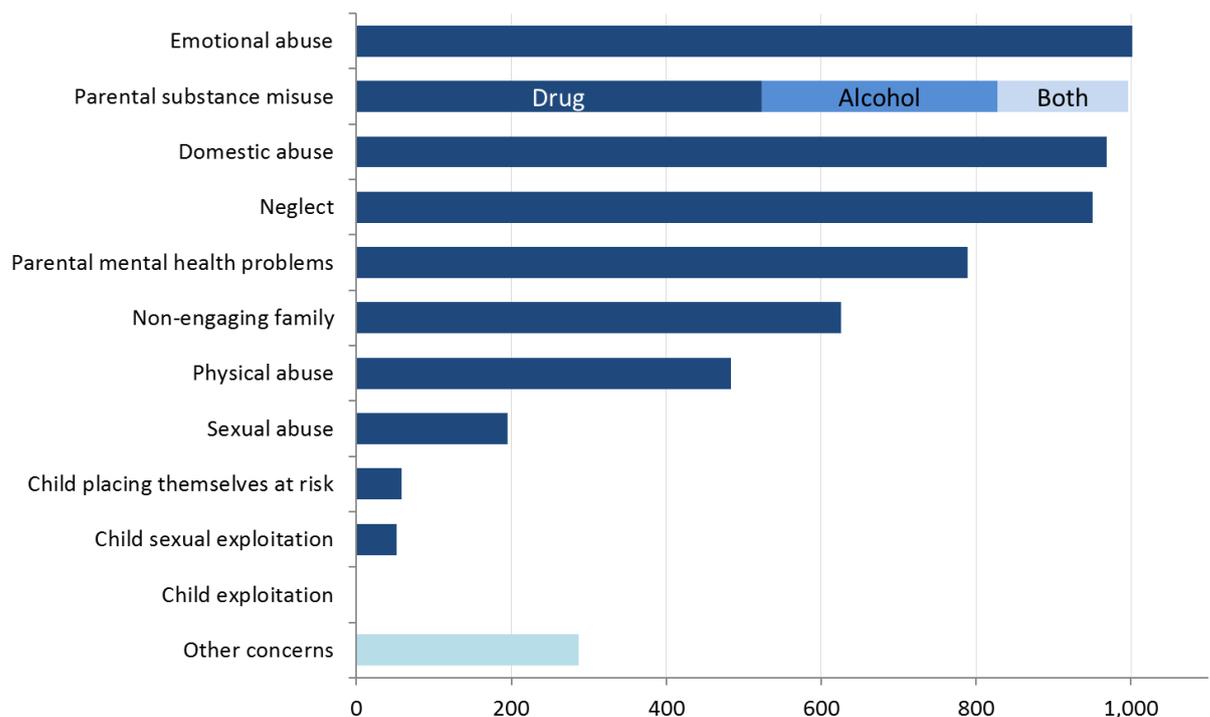
	2007	2016	2017	2007 %	2016 %	2017 %	Rate per 1,000 under 16s 2017 ⁽²⁾	10-year profile
Boys	1,290	1,329	1,273	50	49	48	2.7	
Girls	1,272	1,278	1,232	49	47	47	2.8	
Unborns	31	108	126	1	4	5	-	
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	
All children	2,593	2,715	2,631	100	100	100	2.9	

(1) Full annual data by gender and age group from 2000 is available in main table 2.1 of the associated downloadable publication spreadsheet tables.

(2) Source: National Records of Scotland, 2016 mid-year population estimates.

(3) The All children rate shown in this table includes unborn children and a small number of young people over 16.

Chart 4: Concerns identified at the case conferences of children who were on the child protection register, 2017



Since 2012, multiple concerns can be recorded at each case conference (rather than just the main category of abuse). This means that the total number of concerns is larger than the total number of registrations, and that figures on concerns identified from 2012 onwards are not comparable to previous data on category of abuse/risk. For the 2,631 children on the child protection register at 31 July 2017, there were 6,410 concerns at the case conferences at which they were registered – an average of 2.4 concerns per conference. Chart 4 shows

the most common concerns identified were emotional abuse (38% of case conferences recorded this concern), parental substance misuse (38%), and domestic abuse (37%), similar to last year's figures. Data is shown in full in AT4.3.

Child sexual abuse concerns recorded at case conferences rose 17% since 2016 but are still lower than in any year 2012-2015. There was also a rise in recording from 12 to 52 concerns in the new category of Child Sexual Exploitation, representing the first full year of data in this category. This is matched by a decrease in recording of Child Exploitation. The numbers for Child Trafficking were lower, and are grouped with Other Concerns in the publication.

Child protection registrations and deregistrations

The number of registrations to the child protection register increased between 2010 and 2014, but has been steady since. The proportion returning to the register after previously being deregistered is at 17% this year, and has consistently remained between 15 and 17% in recent years. Table 2.2 shows that the length of time between these periods of registration has decreased this year, with an increase in children being re-registered after a gap of less than 6 months.

Table 2.2: Number of registrations following an initial, pre-birth or transfer-in case conference by length of time since previous deregistration

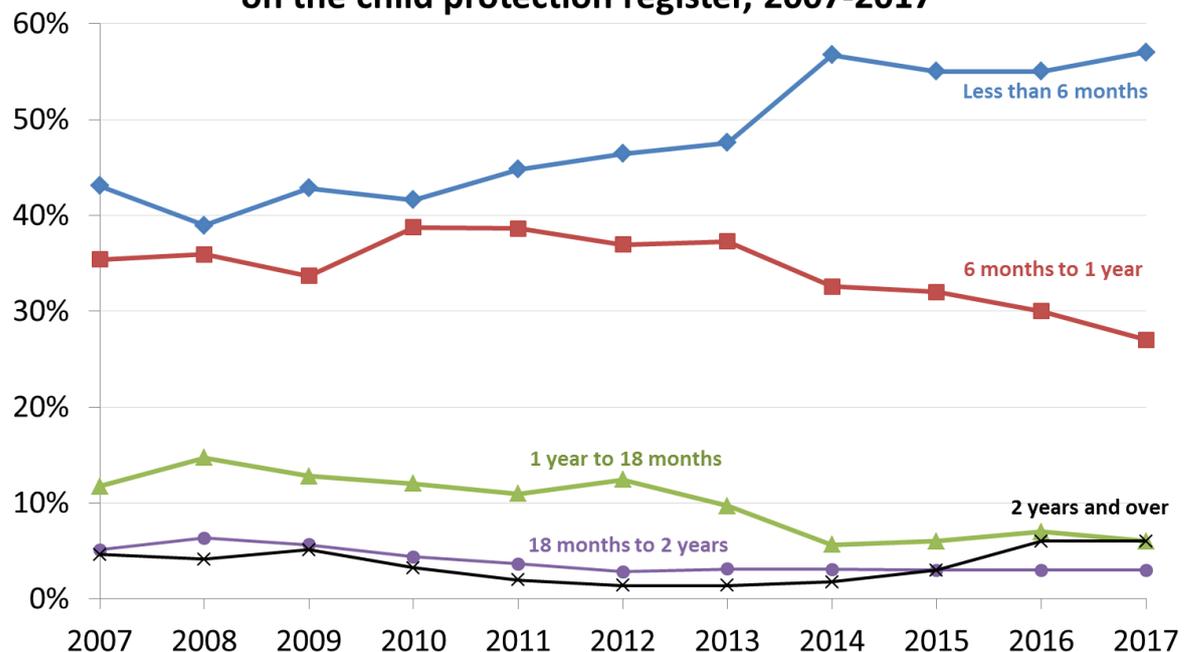
Time since last deregistration	2007	2016	2017	2007 %	2016 %	2017 %	10-year profile
Never been registered before	2,565	3,532	3,549	81	83	83	
Registered before but time unknown	8	0	0	0	0	0	
Less than 6 months	92	82	122	3	2	3	
6 months - < 1 year	68	85	97	2	2	2	
1 year - < 18 months	46	99	58	1	2	1	
18 months - < 2 years	43	89	70	1	2	2	
2 years or more	120	363	364	4	8	9	
Not known if been registered before	206	23	27	7	1	1	
Total	3,148	4,273	4,287	100	100	100	

Table 2.3 shows the numbers of deregistrations. There were 4,371 deregistrations from the child protection register in the year to 31 July 2017, a small increase on 2016, and a 42% increase on 2007. The most common reason for deregistration in 2016-17 (in 54% of cases) was an improved home situation.

Table 2.3: Number of deregistrations from the child protection register by length of time on register and reason for deregistration, 2016-2017

Time since last deregistration	2007	2016	2017	2007 %	2016 %	2017 %	10-year profile
Length of time registered							
Less than 6 months	1,329	2,347	2,470	43	55	57	
6 months to under 1 year	1,092	1,271	1,175	35	30	27	
1 year to under 18 months	362	281	274	12	7	6	
18 months to under 2 years	158	119	123	5	3	3	
2 years or more	143	255	282	5	6	6	
No date of registration information		26	47	0	1	1	
Reason for de-registration⁽³⁾							
Child taken into care & risk reduced	-	592	599	-	14	14	
Child with other carers	-	282	275	-	7	6	
Child died	-	7	6	-	0	0	
Removal of perpetrator	-	76	153	-	2	3	
Improved home situation	-	2,369	2,362	-	55	54	
Child automatically de-registered because of	-	7	7	-	0	0	
Child moved away - no continued risk	-	41	31	-	1	1	
Other reason	-	925	938	-	22	21	
Reason not known	-	0	0	-	0	0	
Total	3,084	4,299	4,371	100	100	100	

Chart 5: Percentage of deregistrations by length of time on the child protection register, 2007-2017



Similarly to registrations, the number of deregistrations from the child protection register also increased between 2010 and 2014, but decreased in the past 3 years (Chart 5). This decline is mostly driven by

a decrease in the number of children spending 6 months to under 1 year on the register, while the number of children spending under 6 months or over 2 years on the register has actually increased. It appears as though there is an increasing split between a large group of children who spend less than 6 months on the register, and a much smaller group spending more than 2 years on the register.

Child Protection Register Geographical Comparisons

Within Scotland

Table 2.4 shows that 2.9 children in every 1,000 children under 16 were on the child protection register in Scotland in 2017. At local authority level the rate varied from 0.7 per 1,000 children in Na h-Elieanan Siar and Shetland to 4.8 per 1,000 children in Moray.

As is often the case, there is a lot of variability from year to year in the numbers of children on the child protection register at a local authority level due to the small numbers of children involved in each local authority. In many cases, there are no obvious reasons for changes, although in some areas, sibling groups entering and leaving the system has led to fluctuating numbers.

Table 2.4: Number of children on the child protection register and rate^(1, 2) per 1,000 population aged 0-15 by local authority, 2007 and 2017

Local authority	2007		2017		10-year profile
	Number on Register	Rate	Number on Register	Rate	
Aberdeen City	142	4.4	81	2.4	
Aberdeenshire	68	1.4	77	1.6	
Angus	88	4.2	52	2.7	
Argyll & Bute	34	2.2	31	2.3	
Clackmannanshire	23	2.5	27	3.0	
Dumfries & Galloway	57	2.2	79	3.3	
Dundee City	89	3.7	70	2.9	
East Ayrshire	45	2.0	100	4.7	
East Dunbartonshire	25	1.2	42	2.2	
East Lothian	46	2.5	48	2.5	
East Renfrewshire	18	1.0	21	1.1	
Edinburgh, City of	311	4.5	236	3.1	
Na h-Eileanan Siar	15	3.1	*	0.7	
Falkirk	81	2.9	80	2.8	
Fife	202	3.1	175	2.7	
Glasgow City	353	3.6	405	4.1	
Highland	125	3.1	102	2.6	
Inverclyde	30	2.0	36	2.8	
Midlothian	80	5.2	64	3.8	
Moray	72	4.3	79	4.8	
North Ayrshire	56	2.2	60	2.6	
North Lanarkshire	100	1.6	131	2.1	
Orkney Isles	20	5.4	*	0.9	
Perth & Kinross	47	1.9	85	3.5	
Renfrewshire	87	2.8	107	3.6	
Scottish Borders	63	3.2	41	2.2	
Shetland	10	2.2	*	0.7	
South Ayrshire	29	1.5	60	3.4	
South Lanarkshire	127	2.2	144	2.6	
Stirling	28	1.7	48	3.1	
West Dunbartonshire	22	1.3	71	4.5	
West Lothian	100	2.9	70	2.0	
Scotland	2,593	2.8	2,631	2.9	

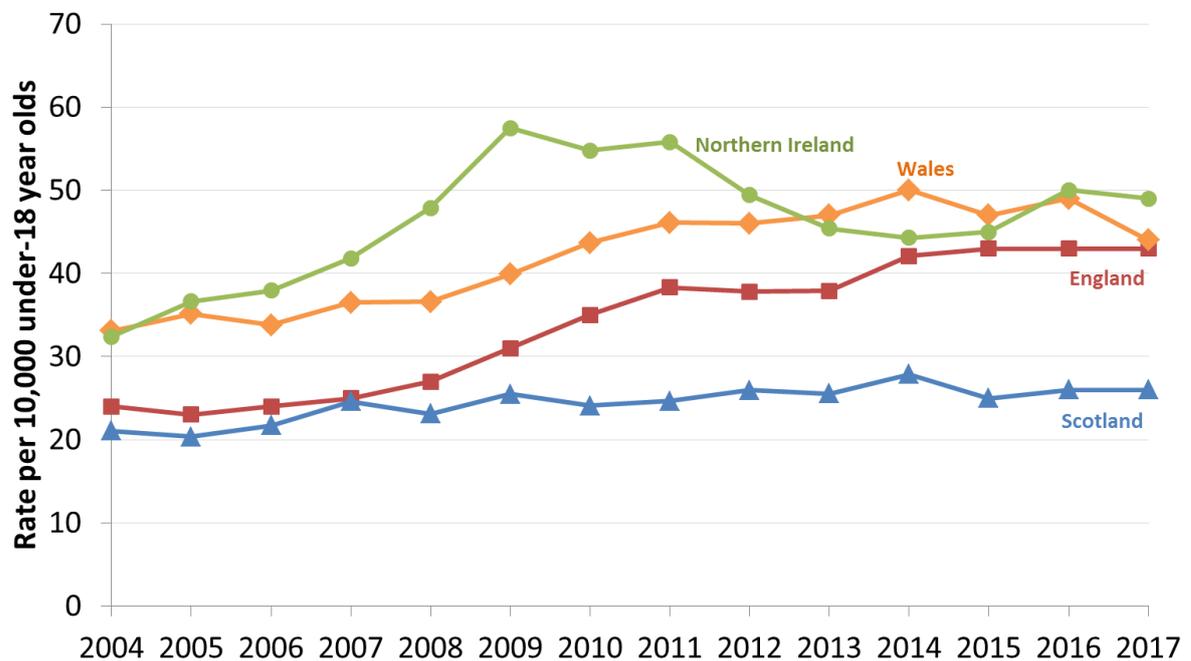
(1) Calculated using National Records of Scotland 2016 mid-year population estimates.

(2) The rate shown in this table includes unborn children who are on the register.

Cross-UK child protection comparisons

Child protection systems across the United Kingdom vary but are generally comparable. Scotland's collection year runs from 1 August to 31 July, so end-year figures are typically reported at 31 July in this publication, while the collection year in England, Wales and Northern Ireland runs from 1 April to 31 March (so end-year figures are at 31 March). However, in Chart 6 we report the Scotland figures at the 31st March to allow comparison with the other countries.

Chart 6⁽¹⁾: Cross-UK comparison of rate of children on the child protection register per 10,000 under 18s, 2004-2017



(1)2017 comparative data for Wales is not comparable to previous Welsh data due to a change in Welsh child protection data reporting and collection. This rate is based on experimental statistics. Details of the change are at <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2017/171031-children-receiving-care-support-2016-17-en.pdf>

Scotland has seen an increase in the proportion of children on the child protection register over the last decade, but this proportion remains notably low compared to the rest of the UK as Scotland did not have large increases in children on the register in 2007-2011 as seen in the rest of the UK. Northern Ireland has been the outlier in terms of its fluctuating trends over recent years. The decrease in the Welsh rate this year is likely due to a change in Welsh data collection procedures and does not reflect a change actual numbers.

There are links to the cross-UK data underlying Chart 6 in Background Note 1.8 and more information on the comparability of child protection data across the UK here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/socialservicestats>

Additional tables on child protection are available at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/PubChildrenSocialWork>

Secure Care Accommodation

-  **Average number of Scottish residents** has continued to decrease
-  **Emergency bed usage** increased

This section presents 2016-17 data on secure care accommodation. Secure care is used for a small number of young people who present high risk to themselves or others and can only be authorised following a decision through the Children’s Hearing System or a Court.

Bed complement

There were 84 secure places available in five secure units in Scotland excluding emergency beds on 31 July 2017 (Table 3.1). It should be noted that one unit permanently reduced capacity this year, resulting in a reduction of available beds. Furthermore, there were an additional 6 beds available across these units for emergency and respite use – these would normally only be used if required and on a very short-term basis. The average cost per week of a secure bed during 2016-17 was £5,672 up 1.6% from £5,579 in 2015-16.

Table 3.1: Secure care unit bed complement at 31 July 2017

Unit	Number of secure care beds
Edinburgh Secure Services ⁽¹⁾	6
Good Shepherd	18
Kibble	18
Rossie School	18
St. Mary's Kenmure ⁽²⁾	24
ALL UNITS	84

(1) Edinburgh Secure Services decreased bed numbers from 12 beds to 6 beds in November 2016

(2) St. Mary's Kenmure provide a care services to 24 children and young people in secure care accommodation. In addition the service has 3 short term / respite beds which can be used when the service is at capacity.

Capacity and usage

There were an average of 76 residents in secure care accommodation throughout 2017, a decrease of 11% per cent from 85 residents in the

previous year. There was a 29% decline in residents from within Scotland and a reduction of the number of available secure places in Scotland from 90 to 84. There was an increase in the number of residents from outside Scotland, most of whom were from England.

Table 3.2: Secure care accommodation capacity⁽¹⁾ and usage

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	% change 2016-17
Places at year end	90	90	90	90	84	-7%
Admissions during the year	215	232	249	256	248	-3%
Discharges during the year	228	226	245	253	257	2%
Average number of residents during the year	77	74	82	85	76	-12%
Residents from within Scotland	76	67	76	72	56	-29%
Residents from outside Scotland	1	7	6	13	19	32%
Minimum number of residents during the year	66	60	71	77	67	0%
Maximum number of residents during the year ⁽¹⁾	90	84	89	90	87	0%
Number of nights emergency bed used during the year ⁽²⁾	48	5	146	50	90	44%
Number of residents emergency bed used for during the year ⁽²⁾	15	3	13	11	25	56%

(1) Capacity: Young people can be admitted and discharged more than once during the year.

(2) Three units reported having an emergency bed: Rossie School, Good Shepherd & Kibble (see background notes for definition of an emergency bed).

Table 3.2 shows that the average number of young people in secure care accommodation during the year was 76. Following a four-year increase over 2013-2016, this has decreased in 2017. This year there was a downsizing of one secure care unit and a decline in the number of placements from Scottish Local Authorities.

The use of emergency beds has increased this year and is above the long-term average.

As can be seen in the additional tables (AT5.4), there has been a large increase in cross-border occupancy, with 30% of admissions in 2016-17 being from the rest of the UK, compared to 18% in 2015-16 and 6% in 2014-15.

On 31 July 2017, 58% of young people in secure care accommodation were male (Table 3.3). Just under 30% were aged 16 or over and around half (51%) were aged 15 or older. Young people in secure care accommodation tend to be older than those looked after and on the child protection registers.

On 31 July 2017, 34% of young people in secure care accommodation had at least one disability, defined as “a mental or physical impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”. This definition introduced in 2016 is more clearly defined than in previous years, which were based on additional support needs, and the numbers in this category are consequently lower.

Table 3.3: Young people in secure care accommodation at 31st July 2017 by gender, age at admission, disability and length of stay⁽¹⁾

	2013	2014	2015	2016	% of 2016 total	2017	% of 2017 total
Gender of residents⁽⁴⁾							
Males	47	52	59	65	74%	46	58%
Females	27	29	26	23	26%	34	43%
Age of Residents							
13 years old or under	10	5	7	9	10%	14	18%
14 years	9	12	18	18	20%	18	23%
15 years	16	31	28	27	31%	26	33%
16 years or over	39	33	32	34	39%	22	28%
Residents with disability⁽²⁾							
Yes	-	-	-	34	39%	27	34%
No/unknown	-	-	-	54	61%	53	66%
Length of stay of residents at year end							
Less than 1 month	18	13	17	20	23%	26	33%
1 month to under 2 months	8	14	16	14	16%	13	16%
2 months to under 3 months	12	14	13	14	16%	12	15%
3 months to under 6 months	18	23	26	24	27%	25	31%
6 months to under 1 year	10	9	9	10	11%	3	4%
1 year or more	8	8	4	6	7%	1	1%
Total	74	81	85	88	100%	80	100%

(1) As at 31 July of each year.

(2) The question was new in 2016, and asked: “does the young person have a mental or physical impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities?”. This replaced ‘additional support needs’, which did not match the definition of disability from the Equalities Act. See background note 3.22 for more information.

(4) Trans, intersex and nonbinary young people are included in the category ‘male’ for data protection purposes.

Cross-UK secure care accommodation comparisons

Table 3.4: Number of secure children's homes/secure care accommodation units, places approved and children accommodated at year end across the United Kingdom^{(1),(2),(3),(4)}

		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
England	Number of secure children's homes	16	16	14	14	14
	Places approved	274	276	232	232	232
	Children accommodated	187	211	194	192	184
Wales	Number of secure children's homes	1	1	1	1	1
	Places approved	22	22	22	22	22
	Children accommodated	19	18	11	18	19
Scotland ⁽⁴⁾	Number of secure care units	5	5	5	5	5
	Places approved	90	90	90	90	84
	Children accommodated	74	80	85	84	81

(1) Sources: England and Wales - Children accommodated in secure children's homes statistics; Scotland - Secure care accommodation census; Northern Ireland, official/national statistics are not produced on secure care accommodation. The legal routes into secure care can vary between the four UK countries.

(2) The figures from outside Scotland include children placed on welfare grounds only.

(3) As noted elsewhere, the Scotland total includes a number of children from the rest of the UK, so trends in each country based on the children's origin may be different.

(4) To allow for comparison with England and Wales, Scotland's data for all years is 'at 31 March' within this table only.

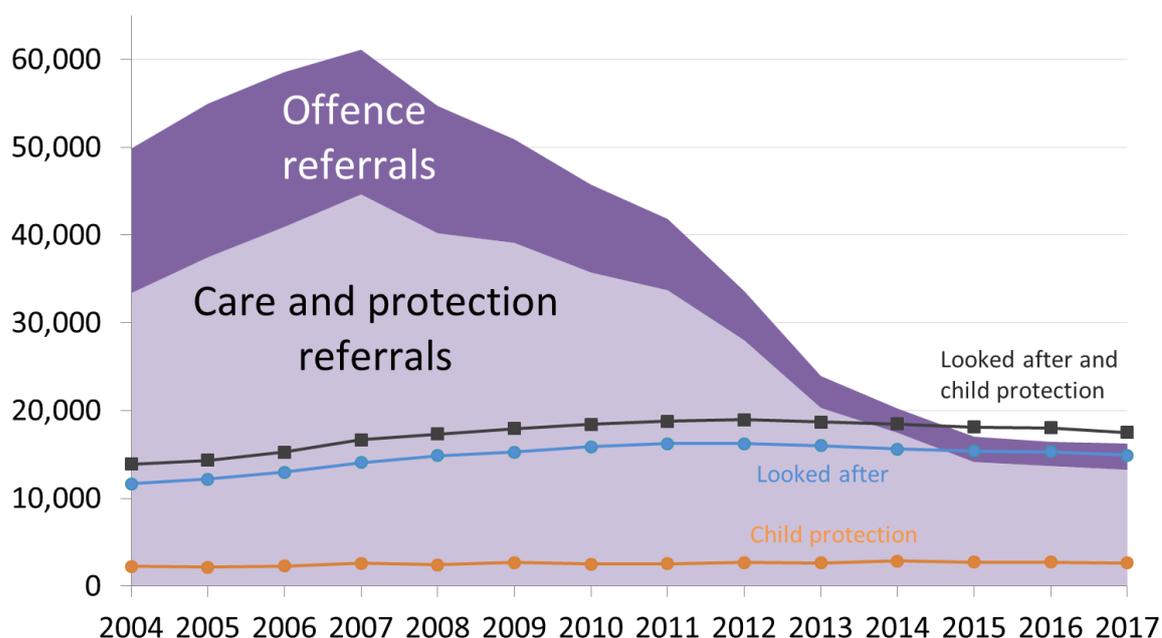
Table 3.4 shows secure children's homes/secure care accommodation units, places approved, and children accommodated across the United Kingdom. This shows that there is no clear trend in the number of children accommodated in England and Wales, as the numbers have fluctuated.

As noted earlier in this Secure Care Accommodation section, the Scotland total includes a number of children that are from the rest of the UK. The England and Wales totals may also include some children from other parts of the UK, but these numbers aren't published separately.

What are the trends in other children's social work data?

Between 2007 and 2017 the number of children who are looked after or on the child protection register increased by 5%, whereas the number of children and young people referred to the Children's Reporter decreased by 73%¹ (Chart 7). The decrease is the result of falls in both the number of offence and non-offence referrals. Offence referrals now account for 18% of all referrals, down from 27% in 2006/07.

Chart 7: Children Referred to the Children's Reporter and numbers looked after/on child protection register, 2004-2017



The fall in referrals to the Reporter is likely to be due to pre-referral screening across many areas of the country. This has led to a reduction in referrals received by the Reporter where compulsory measures are not deemed necessary; and a proportionate increase in referrals where they are deemed necessary.

The historic increase in the number of children who are looked after or on the child protection register at a time when referrals are falling, means that the smaller number of referrals being received by the

¹ SCRA Official Statistics http://www.scra.gov.uk/resources_articles_category/official-statistics/

Reporters are potentially of a more complex nature and are more likely to result in being looked after or on the child protection register than in previous years. The continuing decline in numbers of children who are both looked after and on the child protection register seen since 2012 could be linked to the fall in referrals feeding through to the later stages of the social work system – however, the rate of decline has slowed, so this effect may not be particularly pronounced.

Are these figures accurate?

The data are high quality and validated both by local authorities and Scottish Government. There may be minor amendments to the 2017 data in future years as records are updated, but this is unlikely to affect the overall trends. There is more information on data quality in the background notes.

Background notes

1. Context and related publications

1.1 This publication includes data on children and young people who were looked after, on the child protection register or in secure care accommodation between 1 August 2016 and 31 July 2017. Children most commonly become looked after or placed on the child protection register following a referral to the Children's Reporter. The majority of referrals to the Children's Reporter are on care and protection grounds, although a small proportion are on offence grounds. Young people are placed in secure care either as an outcome of the criminal justice system or through a referral to the Children's Reporter. Figures on referrals to the Children's Reporter are published by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA):

http://www.scra.gov.uk/resources_articles_category/official-statistics/

Figures on referrals of young people from the criminal justice system to the social work system are published here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/PubSocialWork>

1.2 This publication collates demographic data on children who were looked after during 2016-17. In June 2017, Education Outcomes for Looked After Children statistics 2016-17 will be published on a subset of these children – focusing mainly on those looked after continuously for a year. However, there is value in looking at the wider population too, and this data will also be available in some form. The education outcomes publication will be available here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/EducOutcomesLAC>

1.3 The annual Civil Law Statistics published by the Scottish Government includes a table which gives the number of petitions for adoption made through the courts. These figures include looked after children who are adopted from care as well as children who are outwith the care system. The Civil Law Statistics in Scotland are available here: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/civil-judicial-statistics/>

Cross-UK comparability

1.4 It is possible to draw comparisons between the looked after children, child protection and secure care accommodation statistics of the four UK countries. However it should be borne in mind that there are differences in legislation, the children's social work systems and the definitions of categories that will affect these figures.

1.5 Work has been undertaken between the Scottish Government and administrations from England, Wales and Northern Ireland to document clearly the differences between each administration's **looked after children** statistics and to scope out the feasibility and need for a comparable dataset. Further developments from this work have been published on the Scottish Government children's statistics web site at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/socialservicestats>

1.6 Work was commissioned by the Department for Education to document clearly the differences between each administration's **child protection** statistics. Further developments from this work have been published on the Scottish Government Children's Statistics web site at: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/socialservicestats>

Equivalent data across the UK

1.7 **Looked after** statistics:

England	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-looked-after-children
Wales	http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/children-looked-after-local-authorities/?lang=en
Northern Ireland	https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/news/publication-childrens-social-care-statistics-ni-201617

1.8 **Child protection** statistics:

England	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-children-in-need
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Wales	http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/children-receiving-care-support/?lang=en
Northern Ireland	https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/childrens-social-care-statistics-northern-ireland-201617

1.9 Official/national statistics are not produced on **secure accommodation** in Northern Ireland. However, there is one secure unit which when at full capacity can house sixteen 11 to 18 year olds. The latest national statistics on children accommodated in secure children's homes in England and Wales were released on 1 June 2017 and can be found at:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-secure-children-s-homes>

2. Data sources and coverage

2.1 The **looked after children** data in this publication were collected at an individual level from local authorities. Data were collected on all children/young people who were looked after between 1 August 2016 and 31 July 2017, on every episode of being looked after which occurred at some point in the reporting period, every placement that took place during these episodes, and every legal reason for which a child was looked after. Statistics were also collected at an individual-level for those eligible for aftercare. We have now ceased the collection of information regarding planned series of short-term placements. Therefore, since 2013-14, this information has not been collected. Please refer to the previous '[Children's Social Work Statistics](#)' publications for statistics on planned series of short-term placements.

2.2 All **child protection** information in this publication were collected at an individual level from local authorities for the sixth consecutive year. Information is submitted for each investigation and case conference held as well as demographic information for each child. In 2011-12 individual-level information was collected on children on the child protection register at 31 July 2012 only and prior to this data was collected in full or in part as aggregate summarised data.

2.3 The child protection statistics survey covered the period 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2017. If a member of the public or professional report

concern about a child, a referral will be made to an agency such as the local authority social work team. If they decide that the child is at risk of significant harm, an investigation will be undertaken. In 2010-11 and previous years, aggregate information was collected on the referrals that were initiated during the period (so numbers starting). From 2011-12 information has been collected on child protection investigations which ended during the collection period. Information on child protection referrals has not been collected since 2010-11.

2.4 The **secure care** statistics in this publication were collected from five secure care units which were open at 1 August 2016.

2.5 The secure care accommodation census covered 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2017. The data collected at the unit level covers the number of places. Individual-level information was collected on the characteristics of the young person, medical care, admissions and discharges in secure care accommodation. Information on dedicated close support and the cost of places is no longer collected. Please refer to Background Notes 2.6 and 2.7 for further information.

2.6 During 2014, the questions/sections that were asked in the secure care and close support accommodation census were reviewed. This was to reduce the burden for the data providers, given that some data was either available from other sources or there was no identifiable need. The following information has subsequently been dropped:

Unit level:-

- Number of close support places (see Background Note 2.7).
- Emergency bed usage (as this information could be calculated from the individual level section).
- Staffing (as this information is available from the Scottish Social Services Council). See Background Note 2.8 for further information.

Individual level:-

- Close support (see Background Note 2.7).

2.7 Information on close support was collected from 2010 to 2013. Close support previously included in this publication were those that were in the same building as the secure unit i.e. that were related

directly to the secure unit. The reason for only including close support in the same physical location as the secure unit was because capital and overhead costs were thought to be inherently linked. However, for 2012-13, data was revised to remove Edinburgh’s information, as they did not meet the criteria for inclusion. This meant that for the remaining two units that had a dedicated close support unit (Good Shepherd and Rossie) there were limitations to what information could be published on close support due to small numbers. These two units confirmed that they were also able to separate out secure care and close support costs. Therefore, from 2013-14, this information has not been collected. Please refer to the previous [‘Children’s Social Work Statistics’](#) publications for statistics on close support information.

2.8 The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) can provide information on staffing and vacancies of secure accommodation services, where a secure unit has provided that information to the Care Inspectorate, although this is not necessarily published. Please note that vacancy information would be at an aggregate level, not at post level. This means staff type would not be available, nor would it be possible to tell if the post was full time or part time. The data is an annual snapshot of the workforce on 31 December each year and includes a range of variables in addition to vacancy information. If you require further information on staffing and vacancies on the other data held for secure accommodation services, please contact James Arnold (james.arnold@sssc.uk.com) at the SSSC. Alternatively, you can visit the SSSC’s workforce data site at: <http://data.sssc.uk.com>.

3. Definitions and notation

3.1 The survey forms, data specifications and guidance notes for the statistics presented in this publication (and previous years publications) are all available online. The data specifications include the standard validation checks undertaken to quality assure these data.

	Online documentation
Looked after	http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/SurveyChildrenLookedAfter

Child protection	http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/SurveyChildProtection
Secure care accommodation	http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/SurveySecureAccommodation

Children Looked After

3.2 *Looked after child* – The definition of a looked after child is in section 17(6) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, as amended by Schedule 2, para 9(4) of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007. Information on this definition is available here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2011/03/10110037/2>

3.3 *Supervision Requirement/Compulsory Supervision Order* – A children's hearing is a lay tribunal which considers and makes decisions on the welfare of the child or young person before them, taking into account the circumstances including any offending behaviour. The hearing decides on the measures of supervision which are in the best interests of the child or young person. If the hearing concludes compulsory measures of supervision are needed, it will make a Supervision Requirement or a Compulsory Supervision Order which will determine the type of placement for the child. In most cases the child will continue to live at home but will be under the supervision of a social worker. In some cases the hearing will decide that the child should live away from home with relatives or other carers.

3.5 *Permanence order* – This is an order that the sheriff court can make for the protection and supervision of children. By default, parents have a right for their child to live with them and control where the child lives. A Permanence order, which can only be applied for by the local authority, transfers this right to the local authority. Other parental rights and responsibilities can be shared between the local authority, birth parents and carers of the child (e.g. foster or kinship carers).

3.6 *Types of placement*

- At home with parent(s): at home with parent(s) or 'relevant person(s)' as defined in Section 200 of the Children's Hearings Act 2011

- With friends/relatives: placed with friends or relatives who are not approved foster carers. Also referred to as 'kinship care'.
- With foster carers provided by the local authority
- With foster carers purchased by the local authority
- With prospective adopters
- Other community: such as supported accommodation, hospital (e.g. at birth)
- Local authority home: in local authority children's home/hostel, local authority home/hostel for children with learning disabilities, local authority home/hostel for physically disabled children
- Voluntary home: in voluntary children's home/hostel which may be specifically for children with learning disabilities or for physically disabled children
- Residential school: in local authority or voluntary residential school (home/hostel), private school or independent school
- Secure accommodation
- Crisis care: in women's refuge, local authority/voluntary hostel for offenders or for drug/alcohol abusers
- Other residential: a known residential setting but does not fit with one of the above

3.7 There is information on the process by which children come to be looked after and legislation governing this on the Scottish Government website: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/protecting/lac>

Child Protection

3.8 *Child Protection Case Conference (CPCC)* – a meeting where the risk of harm or neglect of a child is addressed. There are four types of CPCC:

Type	Who is it for	Potential outcome
Initial	a child not currently on the child protection register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child is registered or – Child is not registered
Pre-birth	an unborn child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child is registered or – Child is not registered
Review	a child already on the child protection register either	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child remains on register or – Child is de-registered

	receiving a regular case review, or where there are significant recent changes in the child or family situation	
Transfer	a child already on the child protection register moving between local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child is de-registered or - Child remains on register

3.9 *Registrations* - The children who were the subject of a child protection case conference and were subsequently added to the child protection register between 1 August 2016 and 31 July 2017.

3.10 *Deregistrations* - Children who were subject to a transfer or review conference and subsequently removed from the child protection register between 1 August 2016 and 31 July 2017.

3.11 The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, published in 2010 and refreshed in 2014, is available here:
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/05/3052>

Secure care accommodation

3.12 *Secure accommodation legal framework* – The children's hearings system has responsibility for dealing with most children and young people under 16 who commit offences or who are in need of care and protection. In some cases children's hearings have responsibility for young people under 18 where the young person is under the supervision of the hearing when he or she reaches 16 and the supervision requirement is extended.

3.13 For children who commit very grave crimes (the circumstances are set out in the relevant Lord Advocate's guidelines), the option remains for them to be jointly reported to the children's reporter and the procurator fiscal and together, they will decide whether prosecution through the court is appropriate. The court may then sentence, or return the young person to the hearing to be dealt with.

3.14 A young person who appears in court accused of an offence, where bail is not considered appropriate, can be remanded to the care of the local authority responsible for them under section 51 of the Criminal Procedures (Scotland) Act 1995. Local authorities are then responsible for placing that young person in secure care.

3.15 A young person convicted of an offence in court can be sentenced to detention in secure accommodation under section 205 or 208 of the Criminal Procedures (Scotland) Act 1995. In these cases, it is the responsibility of Scottish Ministers to place the sentenced young person in suitable accommodation.

3.16 Before a child or young person can be placed in secure accommodation through the children's hearings system, the children's panel must consider that the young person meets the legal criteria set out in The Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011. The conditions are -

- (a) that the child has previously absconded and is likely to abscond again and, if the child were to abscond, it is likely that the child's physical, mental, or moral welfare would be at risk;
- (b) the child is likely to engage in self harming conduct;
- (c) the child is likely to cause injury to another person.

3.17 Average number – The average number of young people in secure care accommodation over the year is calculated using the dates of admission and discharge for every child. Ages on admission, discharge during 2016-17 and age at 31 July 2017 are the actual ages for all young people.

3.18 *Ethnicity and Religion* – Data was collected on ethnicity and religion of young people in secure care and close support accommodation, but we are unable to publish this due to small numbers and data confidentiality issues.

3.19 *Emergency beds* – these can be used at short notice, for example, when a young person is admitted during the night as it is less disruptive for the other young people. The young person is usually admitted to the main facility the following day. Three units operated such a place.

3.20 *Mothballed* – The term mothballed was used when recommendation 6 from the Securing our Future Initiative report recommended the targeted closure of 12 beds to bring the capacity of each of the independent secure units down to 18 beds. Beds were mothballed for the first year with on-going review meaning provision was reduced although a group of key core staff were retained to provide emergency cover if there was ever a short term need to increase capacity.

Disability and additional support needs

3.22 Prior to 2011, data was presented as 'Disability', and, because the categories in use did not match with definitions in the Equalities Act, from 2011-12 until 2014-15, data was presented as 'additional support needs'. The statistics themselves did not change in any way – the content of the data and categories remained the same, so were still comparable over time. For 2015-16, a new disability question was introduced for the child protection, children looked after and secure care accommodation data collections, and this reduced the question to a simple yes/no, but with a more stringent qualification - "does the young person have a mental or physical impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities?". This is not comparable to data previous to 2016. Work is underway to find a unified set of disability criteria to provide more detail and which meet user needs.

Further information is available at:-

- Children looked after – [data specifications and guidance notes](#)
- Child protection – [data specification and guidance notes](#)
- Secure care accommodation – [data specification and guidance notes](#)

Notation and rounding

3.23 The following notation is used in this publication

- Data not available
- * In cases where information is presented on a small number of children, indicates that data have been suppressed to prevent disclosure of personal information.

3.24 The sum of the breakdowns in the tables may not sum to the total displayed due to rounding.

4. Data Quality and revisions

4.1 The data for all three parts of this publication – looked after children, child protection and secure care – come from administrative data held by local authorities and secure units. As this information is used to monitor and manage these sectors it should be robust and accurate.

4.2 Automated validation checks are undertaken at the point the data are submitted. These validations are outlined in the relevant data specifications (see Background note 3.1 for links).

4.3 The Children and Families statistics team undertake a range of validation checks on administrative data as part of the quality assurance process of preparing this national statistics publication. These procedures include; trend analysis, comparing against other available sources, and checking outliers with data providers. The data providers are then asked to confirm their data – for looked after children and child protection data this confirmation comes from local authorities, for secure care accommodation this confirmation comes from secure units. In cases where concerns about data quality outweigh the value of having an estimated figure publically available, we would not publish that particular information (e.g. legal reason data from the looked after children collection).

4.4 There is more information on the data quality of the administrative sources underlying this publication here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/sourcesandsuitability/StatementAdminSources>

Looked after – comparability over time

4.5 Looked after children statistics for years prior to 2008-09 used data supplied by local authorities aggregated at a local authority level. Since 2008-09, there have been significant improvements in the quality

of data reporting as a result of the new individualised collection methodology. This should be borne in mind when performing cross-year comparisons.

4.6 Data collected on children in a current planned series of short-term placements were not collected from 2013/14 onwards – in consultation with local authorities and data users, it was seen to be little-used, and could therefore be dropped from the collection. Historical figures are still available from previous years' publications.

Looked after – data quality of specific variables

4.7 From 2011-12, local authorities were requested to supply information on all legal reasons for a child being looked after (i.e. a child may have more than one legal reason at any time). While the quality of this information is improving, it is still not being consistently recorded across local authorities. Only information on the legal reasons in place at the 31st July has been published (Table 2.5 in the additional tables).

4.8 The only looked after field for which data is collected but not published is religion. This is due to data quality concerns as each year around two-thirds of children are recorded with religion as 'unknown'.

Child protection

4.9 In 2012-13 the child protection data were collected entirely at individual level. The added detail and complexity to the data have increased scope for small errors. During the 2016-17 collection process, it was possible for local authorities to revise their 2015-16 data. Data revisions This, coupled with the possibility of comparing data across two different years, has helped improve on the quality of individual data and the confidence in the accuracy of this.

4.10 Prior to 2011-12, some local authorities did not place 'unborn' children on the child protection register until the child was actually born. The revised National Guidance now states that 'unborn' children should be placed on the child protection register if this is required and not wait until the child is born.

4.11 This publication presents revised 2015-16 data for child protection which has resulted in a 0.3% decrease in the published national figure from 2,723 to 2,715.

Secure care accommodation

4.12 As the number of young people using secure care is very small, relative changes over time will show greater percentage changes than for data relating to children looked after or child protection.

4.13 Information was collected in 2011-12 to help monitor outcomes for the National Contract for Secure Care on whether a full medical assessment was received, an individualised Care/sentenced/remand plan completed, an individualised learning plan based on educational assessment completed and a transition/pathway plan in place. As the contract for secure care continues to develop, this information has become less relevant to the annual collection. To reduce burden on units, we have not collected the information listed above or on information on secure authorisations turned down from 2012-13.

5. Enquiries

Please send any **media enquiries** to:

- Donna Simpson, 0131 244 3070

These data in this publication and **additional tables** on looked after children, child protection and secure care and close support accommodation are available at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/PubChildrenSocialWork>

Email any requests for **further analysis** to:

childrens.statistics@gov.scot

Children and Families Statistics
27 March 2018

Annex A

Children's Social Work Statistics 2016-17

Publication tables

Full Excel versions of these tables with additional detail are available here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/PubChildrenSocialWork>

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Children's Social Work Statistics 2016-17

Additional tables

Excel versions of these tables will be made available here:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Children/PubChildrenSocialWork>

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A National Statistics publication for Scotland

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 interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

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