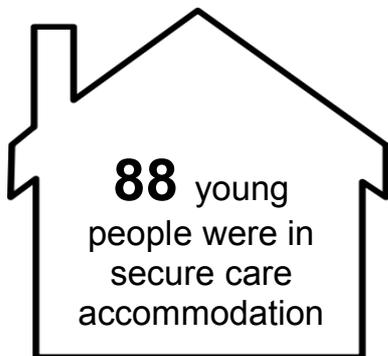
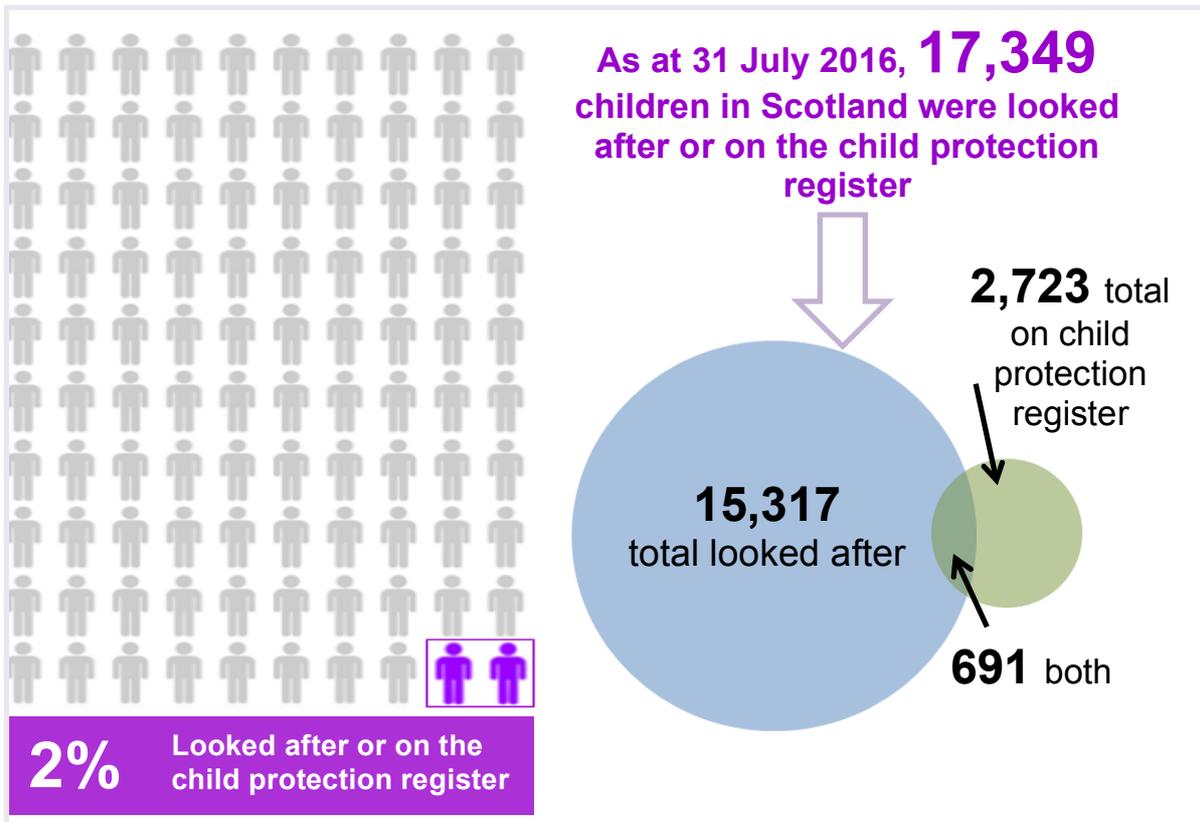


CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Children's Social Work Statistics Scotland, 2015-16



Comparisons with 2014-15:

- 1%** decrease in number of children looked after
- 1%** decrease in number of children on child protection register
- 3** more young people, on average, during the year in secure care accommodation

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Introduction

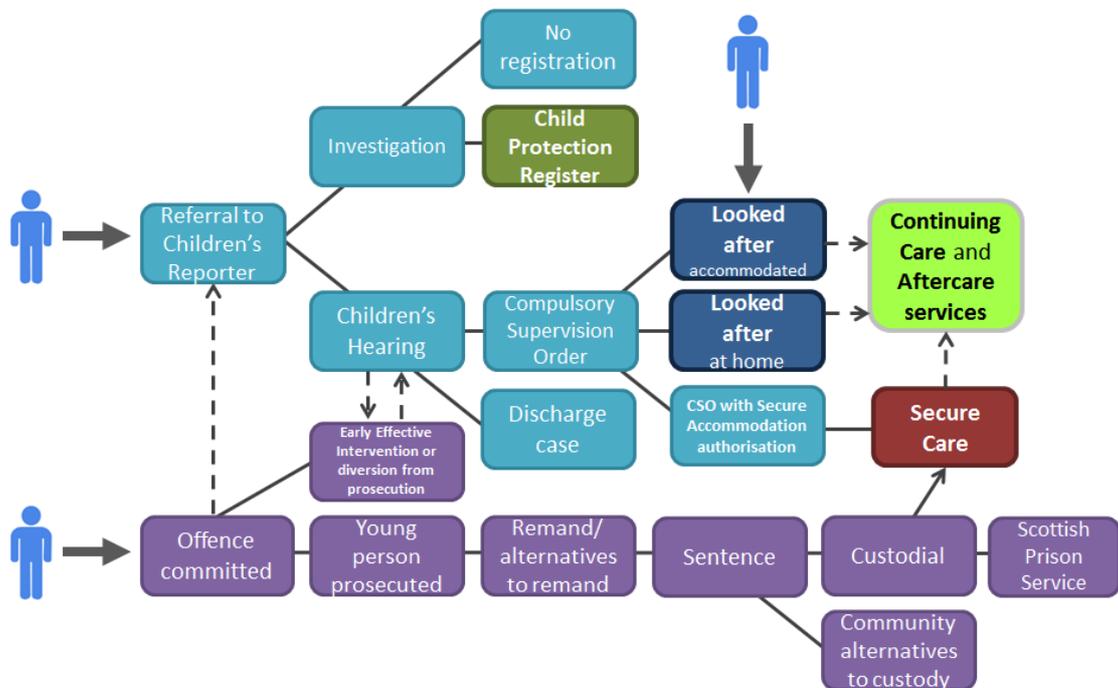
What do these statistics include?

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 August 2015 and July 2016.

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

How do children come to be counted in these figures?

There are a number of ways that a child may come to be 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 looked after children has fallen again, although the rate of decrease has slowed



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

This section presents data on children looked after during the period from 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2016. This will be referred to as 2016 for ease of reporting (with 2014-15 referred to as 2015 and so on). Local authorities have a responsibility to provide support to certain vulnerable young people, known as ‘looked after children’. A young person 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 2016, there were 15,317 looked after children – a decrease of 83 (or less than one per cent) from 2015. This is the fourth consecutive year the numbers have decreased following a peak of 16,248 in 2012, although this year’s decline is small, numbers in care are stabilising. The amount of care leavers each year has been consistently more than the amount starting, although both numbers have also been declining – see tables 1.3 and 1.4.

The increase in Permanence Orders referred to above is presented in additional tables 2.5a and b – this 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 2012, and now stand at 1,971, a 12% increase on 2015.

Placement type

There are several types of placement in which looked after children or young people could be placed, 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 or a kinship placement (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 2016 compared to 34% in 2011. 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, but there has been a slight decline in numbers being fostered this year, while the proportion in kinship care continues to increase. Numbers of children looked after in residential care settings have been fairly static over recent years at just under 10% of the overall total.

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

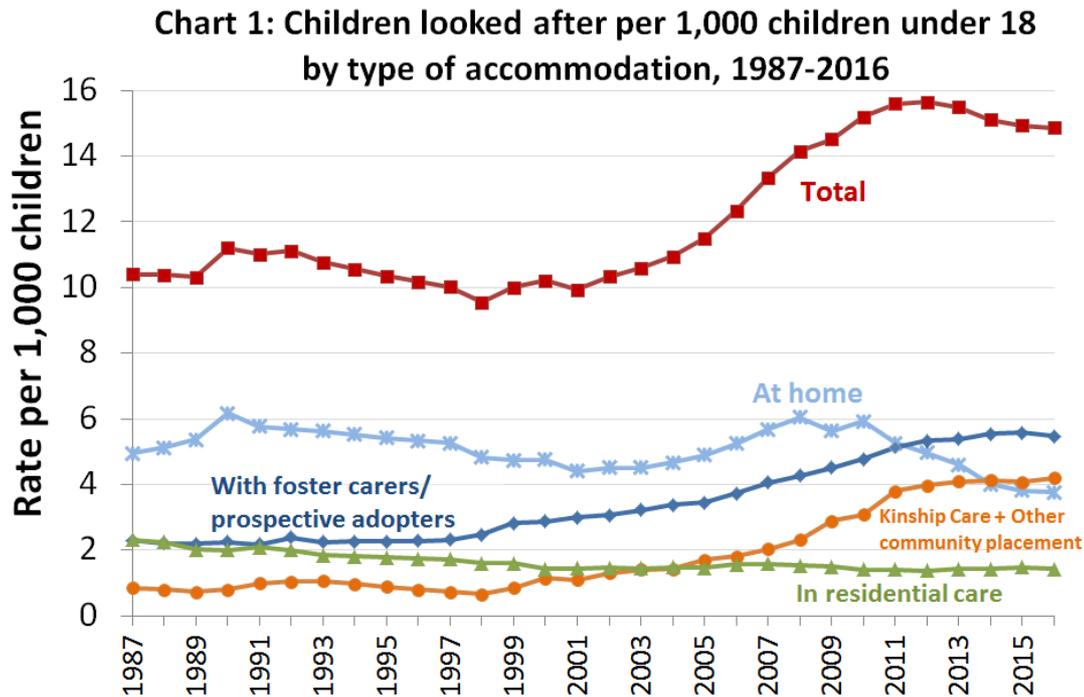
	2006	2015	2016	2006 %	2015 %	2016 %	10-year profile
In the community	11,344	13,871	13,840	87	90	90	
At home with parents	5,517	3,925	3,870	42	25	25	
With Kinship Carers: friends/relatives	1,731	4,158	4,279	13	27	28	
With Foster Carers provided by LA	3,731	3,889	3,826	29	25	25	
With Foster Carers purchased by LA	-	1,587	1,566	-	10	10	
With prospective adopters	184	264	251	1	2	2	
In other community ⁽²⁾	181	48	48	1	0	0	
Residential Accommodation	1,638	1,529	1,477	13	10	10	
In local authority home	737	564	581	6	4	4	
In voluntary home	84	133	136	1	1	1	
In residential school	662	402	376	5	3	2	
In secure accommodation	78	79	60	1	1	0	
Crisis care	-	18	7	-	0	0	
In other residential ⁽³⁾	77	333	317	1	2	2	
Total looked after children	12,982	15,400	15,317	100	100	100	

(1) Information on the number of children looked after by accommodation type is available back to 1971 in Table 1.1a of the excel version of the publication tables:

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

(2) 'In other community' is a category that captures those people in e.g. supported accommodation.

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



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 2016⁽¹⁾

	At home	Away from home	Away from home - breakdown by category				Total
			With Kinship Carers: friends/relatives	With Foster Carers	With prospective adopters/ other community	In Residential Care	
With a current care plan	3,561	10,767	3,712	5,309	287	1,459	14,328
Without a current care plan	309	680	567	83	12	18	989
Total	3,870	11,447	4,279	5,392	299	1,477	15,317
With a current care plan	92	94	87	98	96	99	94
Without a current care plan	8	6	13	2	4	1	6
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.

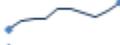
Table 1.2 shows that 94% of the 15,317 children who were looked after at the end of July 2016 had a current care plan, a one per cent decrease on 2015. There was little difference between children looked after at home and away from home.

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, 4,116 episodes of care began between 1 August 2015 and 31 July 2016 – the lowest figure since at least 2000. Table 1.3 shows a two per cent decrease from 2015 and a 13% decrease from 2006.

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

	2006	2015	2016	2006 %	2015 %	2016 %	10-year profile
Under 1	415	668	658	9	16	16	
1-4	993	933	916	21	22	22	
5-11	1,293	1,305	1,321	27	31	32	
12-15	1,796	1,232	1,175	38	29	29	
16-17	219	58	41	5	1	1	
18-21 ⁽²⁾	17	2	5	0	0	0	
Total	4,733	4,198	4,116	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 to be looked after at younger ages. In 2006, 30% of children starting to be looked after were under five years of age. By 2016 this had risen to 38%, although this is a decline from a peak of 41% in 2014. A large proportion of this group are the under-one year olds, and the numbers in this youngest group have increased by 59% since 2006, but have declined slightly since 2014. There has also been a corresponding decrease in the proportion of children aged 12-17 starting to be looked after since 2006.

There were slightly more boys than girls starting to be looked after in 2016 – 54% compared to 46% of girls (the last census showed that the general population was 51% boys aged under 18); the number of boys starting to be looked after has been steady in recent years while the

number of girls has been falling. This means that the trend has returned to the longer-term gender split of around 54% boys of children starting to be looked after, after there were near equal percentages of boys and girls entering care in 2011 and 2013.

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

	2006	2015	2016	2006 %	2015 %	2016 %	10-year profile
Under 6 weeks	390	293	292	10	7	7	
6 weeks to under 6 months	405	371	355	10	8	8	
6 months to under 1 year	654	578	581	17	13	14	
1 year to under 3 years	1,524	1,620	1,582	39	37	37	
3 years to under 5 years	534	740	661	14	17	16	
5 years and over	378	769	752	10	18	18	
Total	3,885	4,371	4,223	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.

Table 1.4 shows the number of children who ceased being looked after by length of time looked after. There were 4,223 children who ceased being looked after between 1 August 2015 and 31 July 2016, a decrease of three per cent from the 2015 figure (4,371) and the smallest number of care leavers since 2007. However, this still represents an overall increase of nine per cent ten years ago.

The total length of time children had been looked after remained similar between 2015 and 2016. However in the longer-term, there are more children being looked after for more than five years, and fewer in care for only a period of weeks. This implies that children are more likely to remain looked after until a permanent placement is found.

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 43% in 2006 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 published Excel tables which accompany this release – see Annex B for details.

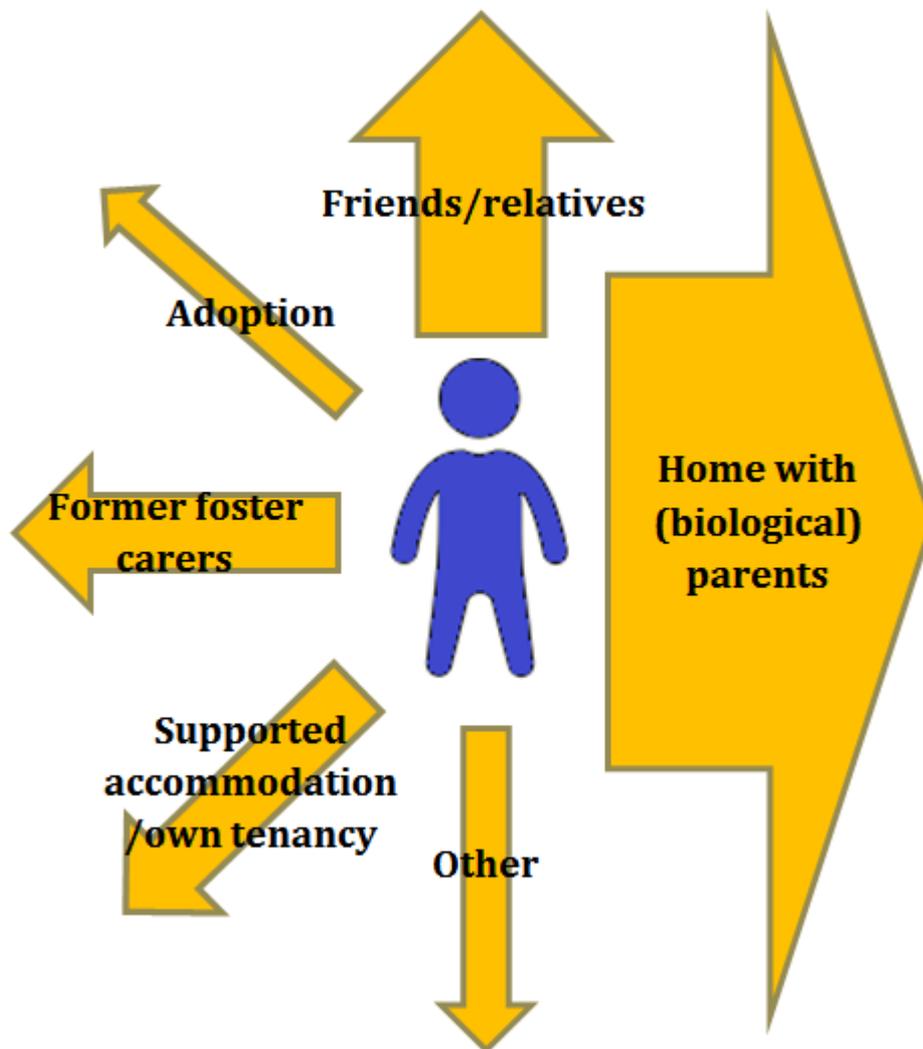
Table 1.5: Number of children ceasing to be looked after by destination
(1)

Destination after leaving care	2006	2015	2016	2006 %	2015 %	2016 %	10-year profile
Home with (biological) parents	2,194	2,682	2,573	56	61	61	
With Kinship Carers: friends/relatives	323	745	656	8	17	16	
Former foster carers	-	80	104	-	2	2	
Adoption	119	303	341	3	7	8	
Supported accommodation / own tenancy	202	295	270	5	7	6	
Other ⁽²⁾	541	219	204	14	5	5	
Not known	506	47	75	13	1	2	
Total	3,885	4,371	4,223	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.

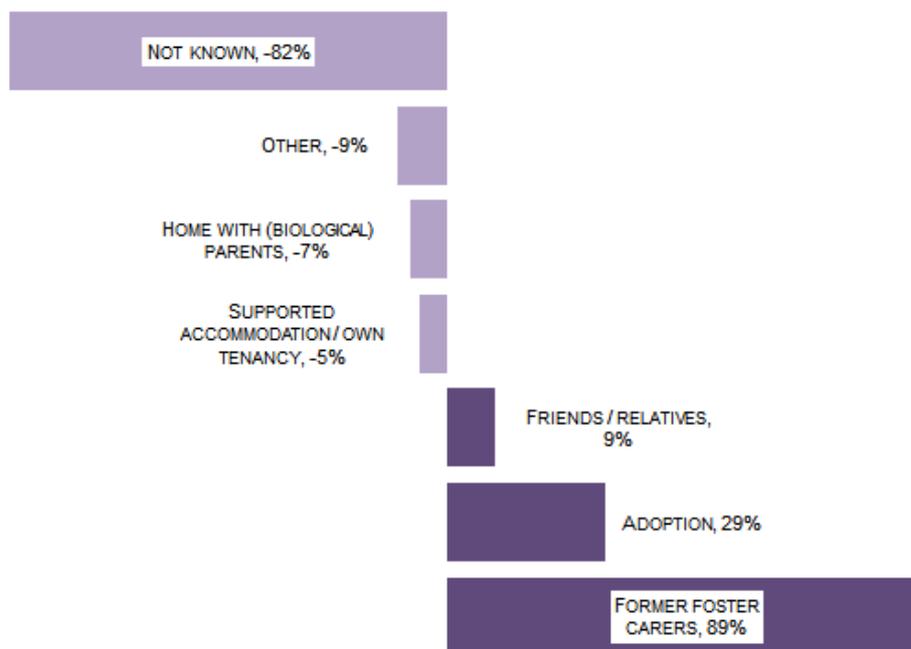
Illustration 2: Proportional representation of post-care destinations
(based on table 1.5)



When a child ceases being looked after, a destination category is recorded (Table 1.5). Most children (61% in 2016) go home to their

biological parents and 16% go to live in kinship care with friends or relatives. The percentage leaving care that go home has fallen consistently over the last four years. There is a long term increase in the number of adoptions when leaving care, and although they decreased slightly between 2014 and 2015, they increased to their highest level of 8% in 2016. The majority of adoptions (70%) are of children aged under five years old. 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 chart 2.

Chart 2: Percentage difference by destination between 2011 and 2016



Pathway Plans

Local authorities are required to carry out a pathway assessment for aftercare services on young people who have reached 16 years of age, but are still looked after, within three months of the young person becoming compulsorily supported by the local authority. 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'. 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.

Of those young people who had reached 16 years of age at the time they ceased to be looked after during 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2016, 65% had a pathway plan and 72% had a pathway co-ordinator (table 1.6). 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, 47% had a pathway plan and 55% a pathway coordinator, compared with 75% 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 2015-16^{(1),(2)}

	Percentage			Away from home - breakdown by category			
	Looked after at home	Looked after away from home	Total	With Kinship Carers: friends/relatives	With Foster Carers	With prospective adopters/ other community	In Residential Care
With a pathway plan at discharge	47	75	65	61	76	81	82
Without a pathway plan at discharge	53	25	35	39	24	19	18
With a nominated pathway co-ord at discharge	55	81	72	77	81	78	83
Without a nominated pathway co-ord at discharge	45	19	28	23	19	22	17
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

(1) Figures include all episodes of ceasing to be looked after 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 2016 by age and their economic activity. 'Economic activity' refers to whether a young person was in education, employment or training, or not.

Since April 2015, aftercare eligibility has been extended to cover all care leavers up to and including those people aged 25 where it previously only covered up to the age of 21, and this year's figures begin to reflect that. It has not been possible to obtain complete data on the new 22-25 age group this year, but this is the aim for the 2016-17 collection.

There were 4,602 young people reported to be eligible for aftercare services on 31 July 2016, of whom 34% were known to not be receiving aftercare. 50% of those receiving aftercare for whom current activity is

known were in education, training or employment. This is a three per cent increase on 2015 (see also AT1.16).

For young people eligible for aftercare, more than half have taken up these services in some way. More of the 19-21 group are not in education, training or employment, and more of this group are receiving aftercare compared to the other age groups. For the new 22+ group, most are not receiving aftercare, which may be expected given that eligibility for this group is a relatively recent implementation, and many may have moved onto adult services where required.

Table 1.7: Percentage of young people eligible for aftercare services by age and economic activity, at 31 July 2016⁽¹⁾

Economic activity	15-16	17	18	19-21	22+	All
In education, training or employment	27	26	26	31	16	27
Not in education, training or employment	22	26	25	33	16	27
Not known	14	17	14	12	7	13
Not receiving aftercare	37	31	35	24	60	34
Total number	353	667	1,066	1,876	640	4,602
Of those in education, training or employment						
In higher education	15	20	21	24	33	23
In education other than HE	44	26	26	22	8	24
In training or employment	41	53	53	53	59	53
Total number	95	174	282	585	105	1,241
Not in education, training or employment						
- due to short term illness	0	*	3	2	*	3
- due to long term illness or disability	*	*	8	11	*	8
- due to looking after family	*	*	7	11	12	9
- due to other circumstances	93	90	82	75	80	80
Total number	76	174	262	610	104	1,226

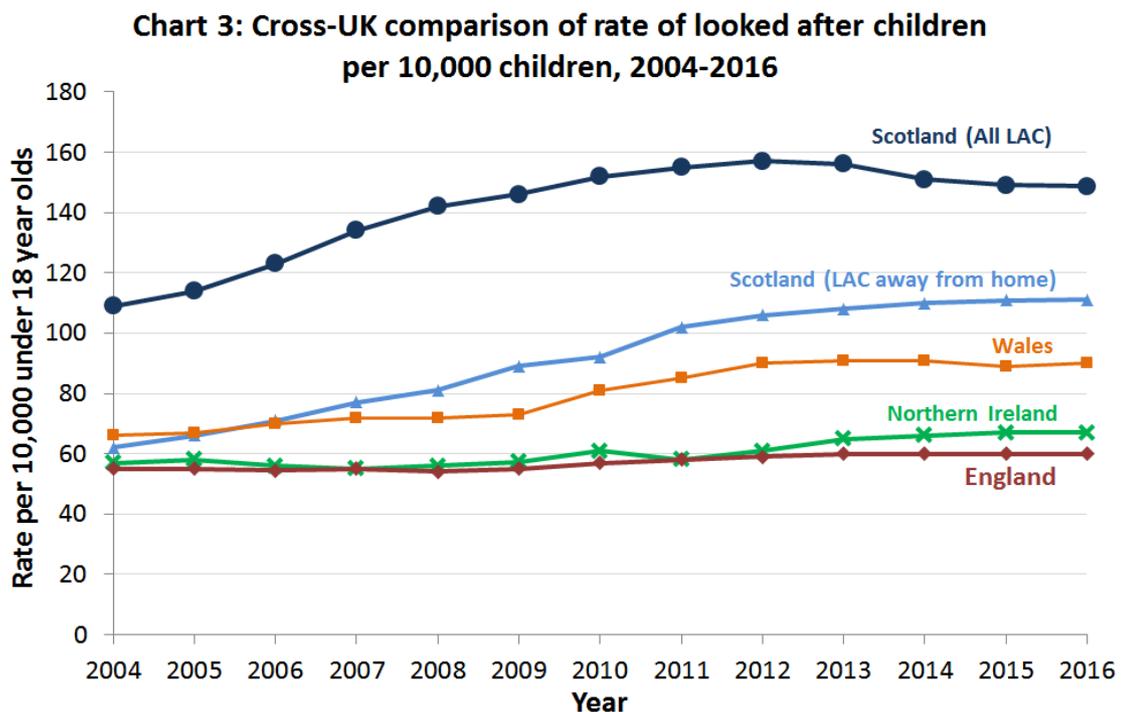
(1) Cells containing * represent numbers that are suppressed to maintain confidentiality. Due to rounding, the totals for percentages may not equal the sum of their parts.

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 below, rather than the published 31 July figure, as the other administrations publish on this date.

Chart 3 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 or only increasing very slightly, and these contrast with increases seen around the start of this decade.



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

	Second consecutive decrease in headline numbers on register against long-term trend
	Numbers of registrations and deregistrations have declined, and are close to parity this year
	Causes for concern relating to parental substance misuse and domestic abuse are the most prevalent

This section presents data on children on the child protection register from 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2016. This will be referred to as 2016 for ease of reporting (with 2014-15 referred to as 2015 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).

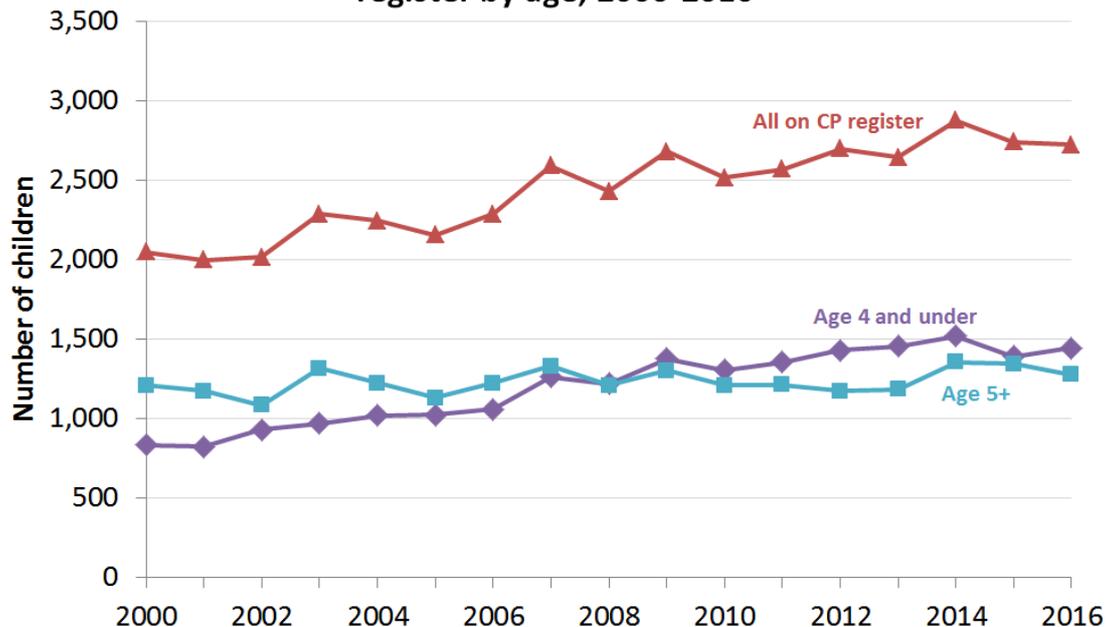
2015-16 was the fourth year that child protection data has been collected entirely at individual level. As the series has lengthened, more in-depth validation of the data has been possible, which gives a high level of confidence in its accuracy. Some of the 2015 figures in this publication have been revised as part of the 2016 validation process.

Children on the child protection register

Chart 4 shows that the number of children on the child protection register has fluctuated regularly, but there is a general upwards trend. However, in the last two years there has been a slight decrease, which may be the start of a longer term decline, but it is too early to know. This is the first time since 2005 that there have been two consecutive years of decline. The total has increased by 33% between 2000 and 2016 (from 2,050 to 2,723). Following updated information from local

authorities, the 2015 data have been revised down slightly from the initial published figure from 2,751 to 2,741. The number of children registered in 2016 is slightly lower than last year (by one per cent). It should be noted that relatively large year-on-year changes are experienced in a number of local authorities (see Table 2.2 for local authority level breakdowns).

Chart 4: Number of children on the child protection register by age, 2000-2016



In 2016, 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 has widened again in 2016, after it closed in 2014 and 2015. In 2016, there was a four per cent increase in the number of those aged 5 and under, after a fall between 2014 and 2015. In contrast, there has been a fall of five per cent in the number of children aged over five, continuing last year's decline.

There is no strong gender pattern among children on the child protection register – 49% were boys, 47% were girls and the remaining four per cent 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.

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

	2006	2015	2016	2006 %	2015 %	2016 %	Rate per 1,000 under 16s 2016 ⁽²⁾	10-year profile
Boys	1,179	1,379	1,340	52	50	49	3.0	
Girls	1,109	1,230	1,281	48	45	47	2.9	
Unborns	18	131	102	1	5	4	-	
Unknown	0	1	0	0	0	0	-	
All children	2,288	2,741	2,723	100	100	100	3.0	

(1) Full data by gender and age group for 2000-2015 is available in Table 2.1 of the excel version of the publication tables.

(2) Source: National Records of Scotland, 2015 mid-year population estimates.

Table 2.2 shows that 3.0 children in every 1,000 children under 16 were on the child protection register in Scotland in 2016. At local authority level the rate varied from 0.3 per 1,000 children in Orkney to 5.2 per 1,000 children in Glasgow.

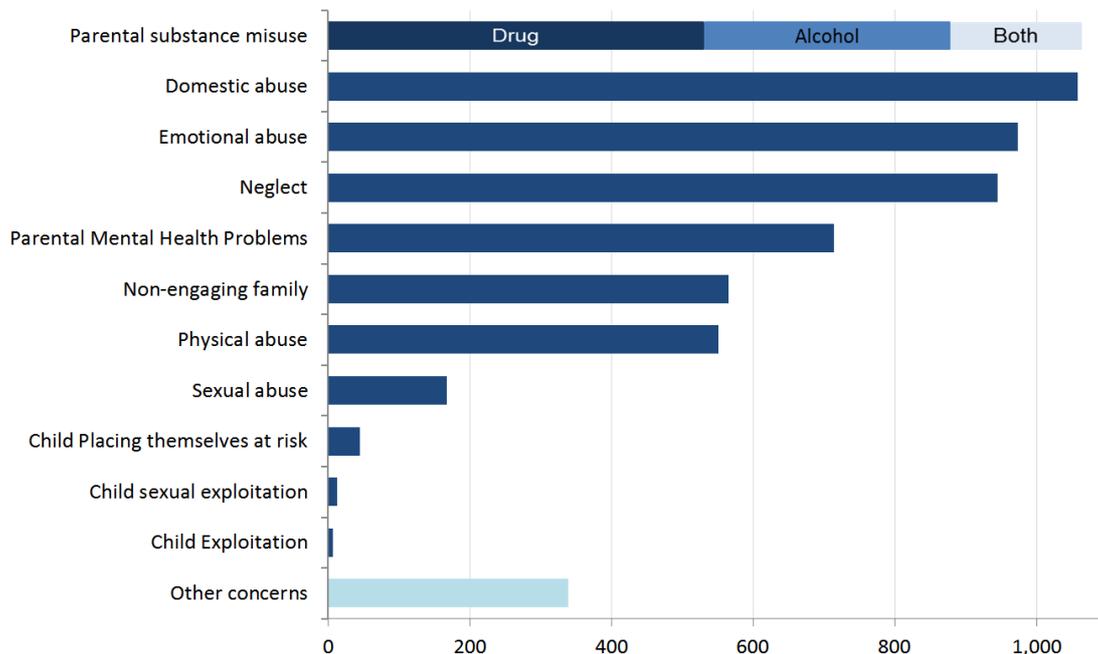
As is often the case, there is a lot of variability from year to year in the numbers of children on the child protection register at a local authority level. In many cases, there are no obvious reasons for changes, although in some areas, sibling groups entering and leaving the system has led to fluctuating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

Table 2.2: Number of children on the child protection register and rate⁽¹⁾ per 1,000 population aged 0-15 by local authority, 2006 and 2016

Local authority	2006		2016		10-year profile
	Number on Register	Rate	Number on Register	Rate	
Aberdeen City	159	4.9	118	3.5	
Aberdeenshire	105	2.2	64	1.3	
Angus	62	3.0	96	4.9	
Argyll & Bute	56	3.5	40	3.0	
Clackmannanshire	24	2.5	18	2.0	
Dumfries & Galloway	48	1.8	61	2.6	
Dundee City	93	3.8	80	3.4	
East Ayrshire	44	1.9	39	1.8	
East Dunbartonshire	9	0.4	38	2.0	
East Lothian	44	2.4	47	2.5	
East Renfrewshire	20	1.1	12	0.7	
Edinburgh, City of	290	4.2	288	3.8	
Na h-Eileanan Siar	12	2.5	*	*	
Falkirk	55	2.0	82	2.9	
Fife	168	2.6	159	2.5	
Glasgow City	308	3.1	512	5.2	
Highland	111	2.7	104	2.6	
Inverclyde	33	2.2	40	3.1	
Midlothian	50	3.2	51	3.1	
Moray	56	3.3	64	3.9	
North Ayrshire	34	1.3	68	2.9	
North Lanarkshire	61	0.9	115	1.8	
Orkney Isles	7	1.9	*	*	
Perth & Kinross	31	1.2	73	3.0	
Renfrewshire	79	2.5	72	2.4	
Scottish Borders	46	2.3	64	3.4	
Shetland	13	2.8	17	4.0	
South Ayrshire	17	0.9	70	3.9	
South Lanarkshire	99	1.7	158	2.9	
Stirling	21	1.3	44	2.8	
West Dunbartonshire	28	1.7	48	3.1	
West Lothian	105	3.0	77	2.2	
Scotland	2,288	2.5	2,723	3.0	

(1) Calculated using National Records of Scotland 2015 mid-year population estimates.

Chart 5: Concerns identified at the case conferences of children who were on the child protection register, 2016



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 2,723 children on the child protection register at 31 July 2016, there were 6,439 concerns at the case conferences at which they were registered – an average of 2.4 concerns per conference. Chart 5 shows the most common concerns identified were parental substance misuse (39% of case conferences recorded this concern), domestic abuse (39%), and emotional abuse (36%).

Child protection registrations and deregistrations

The number of registrations to the child protection register increased between 2010 and 2014, and has decreased in the past two years. The proportion returning to the register after previously being deregistered is at 17% this year, and has consistently remained between 14 and 17% in recent years. Table 2.3 shows that the length of time between these periods of registration is generally increasing, with many more having been off the register for more than two years.

Table 2.3: Number of registrations following an initial, pre-birth or transfer-in case conference by length of time since previous deregistration

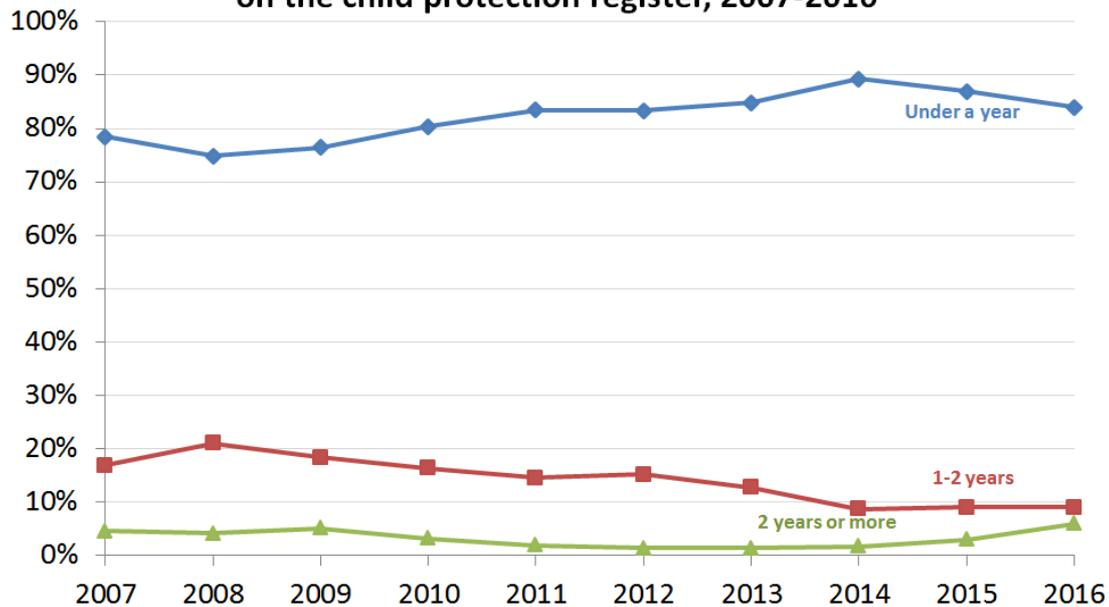
Time since last deregistration	2006	2015	2016	2006 %	2015 %	2016 %	10-year profile
Never been registered before	2,150	3,699	3,529	76	84	83	
Registered before but time unknown	-	2	0	-	0	-	
Less than 6 months	64	111	82	2	3	2	
6 months - < 1 year	58	91	83	2	2	2	
1 year - < 18 months	27	95	98	1	2	2	
18 months - < 2 years	35	67	89	1	2	2	
2 years or more	204	325	363	7	7	9	
Not known if been registered before	273	11	21	10	0	0	
Total	2,811	4,401	4,265	100	100	100	

Table 2.4 shows the numbers of deregistrations. There were fewer this year, which is the first decline since 2011. There were 4,283 deregistrations from the child protection register in the year to 31 July 2016, a six per cent decrease on 2015, but a 39% increase on 2007. The most common reason for deregistration in 2015-16 (in 55% of cases) was an improved home situation.

Table 2.4: Number of deregistrations from the child protection register by length of time on register and reason for deregistration, 2015-2016

Time since last deregistration	2006	2015	2016	2006 %	2015 %	2016 %	10-year profile
Length of time registered							
Less than 6 months	1,097	2,483	2,342	38	55	55	
6 months to under 1 year	1,052	1,462	1,265	36	32	30	
1 year to under 18 months	404	284	282	14	6	7	
18 months to under 2 years	166	130	118	6	3	3	
2 years or more	168	157	250	6	3	6	
No date of registration information	-	24	26	-	1	1	
Reason for de-registration⁽³⁾							
Child taken into care & risk reduced	-	611	590	-	13	14	
Child with other carers	-	259	281	-	6	7	
Child died	-	6	7	-	0	0	
Removal of perpetrator	-	167	76	-	4	2	
Improved home situation	-	2,502	2,365	-	55	55	
Child automatically de-registered because of a	-	8	7	-	0	0	
Child moved away - no continued risk	-	50	41	-	1	1	
Other reason	-	937	916	-	21	21	
Reason not known	-	0	0	-	0	0	
Total	2,887	4,540	4,283	100	100	100	

Chart 6: Percentage of deregistrations by length of time on the child protection register, 2007-2016



Similarly to registrations, the number of deregistrations from the child protection register also increased between 2010 and 2014, but decreased in the past 2 years (chart 6). The numbers of young people on the register for more than two years has increased at a similar rate to the rate of decline in those spending less than a year on the register, implying a general increase in time spent on the register.

Child Protection Register Geographical Comparisons

Within Scotland

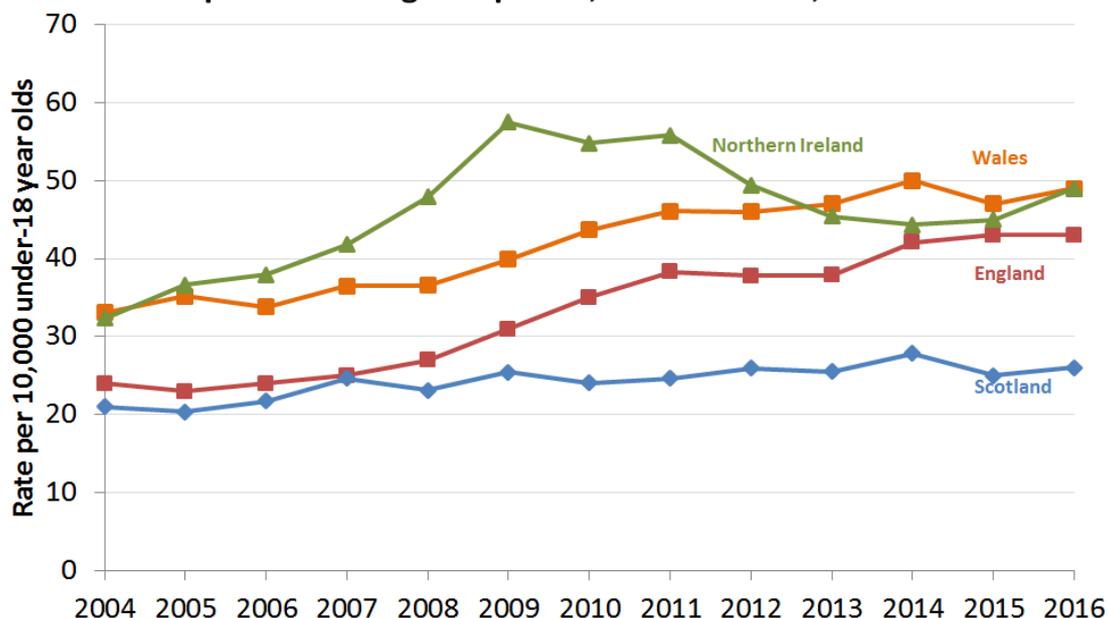
Across Scotland, 17.5 per 1,000 under 18s are looked after or on the child protection register, but there is variation across local authorities. The rate is highest in Glasgow (with 34.8 children per 1,000 under 18s) and lowest in East Renfrewshire, (with 6.8 per children per 1,000 under 18s). In general, rates are higher in the West of Scotland and urban areas.

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 this chart we report the Scotland figures at the 31st March to allow comparison with the other countries.

Chart 7: Cross-UK comparison of rate of children on the child protection register per 10,000 under 18s, 2004-2016



While Scotland has seen an increasing trend in the proportion of children on the child protection register over the last decade, it is not as high as the increases in the rest of the UK. Northern Ireland has been the outlier in terms of its fluctuating trends over recent years, but the rates in the other parts of the UK are very similar, with Scotland remaining notably low.

There are links to the cross-UK data underlying chart 7 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 decreased



Emergency bed usage has declined from previous high levels

This section presents 2015-16 data on secure care accommodation. Secure care normally refers to accommodation for vulnerable young people who are likely to abscond or are at risk of harm to themselves or others. They are usually placed in secure care on welfare grounds by the Children's Hearing System. Children can also be placed on offence grounds by the Hearings System or the Criminal Justice System.

As secure care accommodation is in place for a very specific group of individuals, numbers are much smaller than for those who are looked after or on the child protection register.

Bed complement

There were 90 secure places available in five secure units in Scotland excluding emergency beds on 31 July 2016 (Table 3.1). It should be noted that two units operated at reduced capacity for part of the previous year, and this may partly explain the reduction emergency bed use. 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 2015-16 was £5,579 up 1.5% from £5,495 in 2014-15.

Table 3.1: Secure care unit bed complement at 31 July 2016⁽¹⁾

Unit	Bed Complement
Edinburgh Secure Services	12
Good Shepherd	18
Kibble	18
Rossie School	18
St. Mary's Kenmure	24
ALL UNITS	90

Capacity and usage

There were an average of 85 residents in secure care accommodation throughout 2015-16, an increase of four per cent from 82 residents in the previous year and reversing the recent downward trend (Table 3.2). However, this increase was driven by an increase in placements from the rest of the UK – there was a five per cent decline in residents from Scotland.

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

	2013	2014	2015	2016	% change 2015-16
Places at year end	90	90	90	90	0%
Admissions during the year	215	232	249	256	3%
Discharges during the year	228	226	245	253	3%
Average number of residents during the year	77	74	82	85	4%
Residents from within Scotland	76	67	76	72	-5%
Residents from rest of the UK	1	7	6	13	117%
Minimum number of residents during the year	66	60	71	77	8%
Maximum number of residents during the year	90	84	89	90	1%
Number of nights emergency bed used during the year	48	5	146	50	-66%
Number of residents emergency bed used for during the year	15	3	13	11	-15%

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

This increase was driven by additional cross-border occupancy compared to previous years. Excluding these from the total, the average number of residents from Scotland fell by five per cent compared to last year. The number of young people in secure care accommodation throughout the year ranged from 77 to 90.

Table 3.3 shows that the number of young people in secure care accommodation on 31 July 2016 was 88. Following a three-year decrease from 2009-10, this has increased in the last three years, and by 4% in the last year.

The use of emergency beds has fallen this year from last year's high level, and is now close to 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 18% of admissions in 2015-16 being from the rest of the UK, compared to 6% last year, or the previous recorded high of 10% in 2013-14.

74% of young people in secure care accommodation on 31 July 2016 were male and just under 40% were aged 16 years and over (table 3.3). Young people in secure care accommodation tend to be older than those looked after and on the child protection registers. The data shows the majority (70%) of young people in secure care accommodation are 15 years or older. This is a very different pattern from what is seen in the child protection and looked after children data where the majority of children are under five and 11 respectively.

In a new method of recording this year, 39% of young people in secure care accommodation on 31 July 2016 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 new definition is much stricter than in previous years, which were based on additional support needs, and the numbers falling into this category are consequently lower.

Table 3.3: Young people in secure care accommodation by gender, age, disability and length of stay⁽¹⁾

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

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
England⁽²⁾	Number of secure children's homes	16	16	14	14
	Places approved	274	276	232	232
	Children accommodated	187	211	194	192
Wales⁽²⁾	Number of secure children's homes	1	1	1	1
	Places approved	22	22	22	22
	Children accommodated	19	18	11	18
Scotland^{(3),(4)}	Number of secure care units	5	5	5	5
	Places approved	90	90	90	90
	Children accommodated	74	80	85	84

(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.

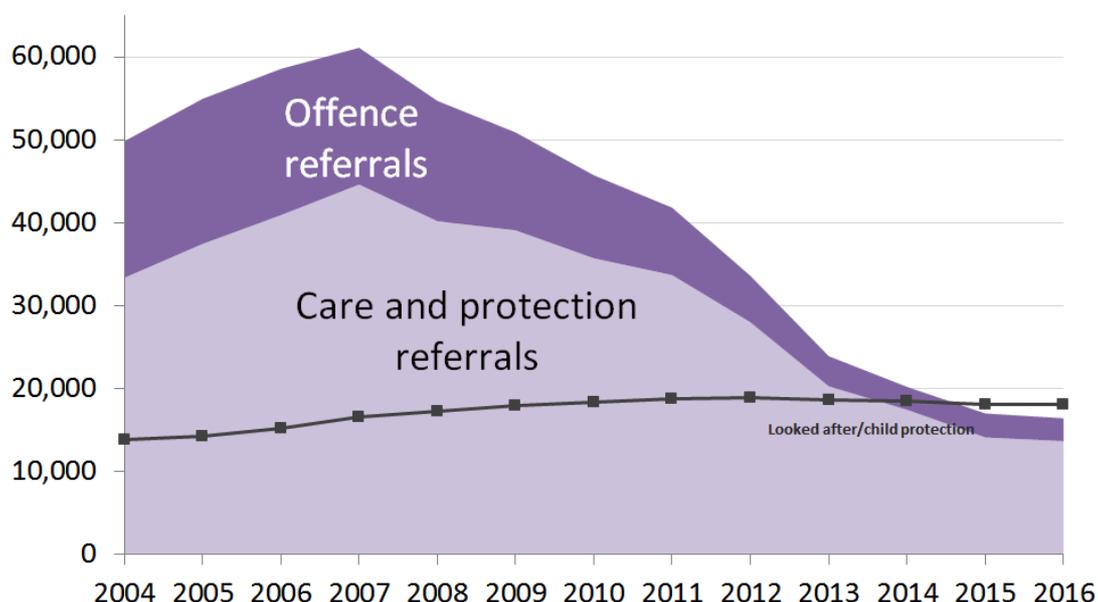
Table 3.4 shows secure children's homes/secure care accommodation units, places approved, and children accommodated across the United Kingdom. This shows that there is no clear trend in the number of children accommodated in England and Wales, as the numbers have fluctuated.

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 2004 and 2016 the number of children who are looked after or on the child protection register *increased* by 30%, whereas the number of children and young people referred to the Children's Reporter *decreased* by almost 67%¹ (chart 8). The decrease is the result of falls in both the number of offence and non-offence referrals. Offence referrals now account for 17% all referrals, down from 33% in 2003/04.

Chart 8: Children Referred to the Children's Reporter and numbers looked after/on child protection register, 2004-2016



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 Reporter are potentially of a more complex nature and are more likely to

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

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 2015-16 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 2015 and 31 July 2016. 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/

1.2 This publication collates demographic data on children who were looked after during 2015-16. In June 2017, Education Outcomes for Looked After Children statistics 2015-16 will be published on a subset of these children – focussing mainly on those looked after continuously for a year from August 2015 to July 2016. 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 2014-15 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/adoptions-outcomes-placements-children-looked-after/?lang=en
Northern Ireland	https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/news/publication-childrens-social-care-statistics-ni-201516

1.8 Child protection statistics:

England	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-children-in-need
Wales	http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/local-authority-child-protection-registers/?lang=en

Northern Ireland	https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/news/publication-childrens-social-care-statistics-ni-201516
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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 29 June 2016 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 2015 and 31 July 2016, 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 fifth 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 2015 to 31 July 2016. 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 2015.

2.5 The secure care accommodation census covered 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2016. The data collected at the unit level covers the number of places and average cost per week per bed. 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 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
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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 it is 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 or where there are significant changes in the child or family situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Child remains on register or – Child is de-registered
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 2015 and 31 July 2016.

3.10 *Deregistrations* - Children who were subject to a transfer or review conference and subsequently removed from the child protection register between 1 August 2015 and 31 July 2016.

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 2015-16 and age at 31 July 2016 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 the previous data. 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 and is potentially disclosive, indicates that data have been suppressed.

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.

4.7 This publication presents revised 2014-15 data for looked after children, although the changes were minimal (the total is now 0.03% lower).

Looked after – data quality of specific variables

4.8 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).

4.9 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

4.10 For the first time in 2012-13 the child protection data were collected entirely at individual level. As there was much more detail and complexity to the 2012-13 data than in previous years there was much more scope for small errors. During the 2015-16 collection process, it was possible for local authorities to revise their 2014-15 data. This, coupled with the possibility of comparing data across two different years, had helped improve on the quality of individual data and the confidence in the accuracy of this.

4.11 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.

4.12 This publication presents revised 2014-15 data for child protection which has resulted in a 0.5 per cent decrease in the national figure.

Secure care accommodation

4.13 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.

4.14 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:

- Jenny Scott, 0131 244 2939

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@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Children and Families Statistics
28 March 2017

Annex A

Children's Social Work Statistics 2015-16

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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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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How to access background or source data

The data collected for this statistical bulletin may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact children.statistics@gov.scot for further information.

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