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REFERRALS, ASSESSMENTS AND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE THE SUBJECT OF A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN OR ARE ON CHILD PROTECTION REGISTERS, ENGLAND - YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2007

INTRODUCTION

This Statistical First Release (SFR) provides the latest figures on referrals, assessments and young people who are the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP) or are on child protection registers (CPRs) in England, for the year ending 31 March 2007. Figures for earlier years are provided for comparison.

Some of the figures are used to produce the national level Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) performance indicators shown in the tables and quoted below.

KEY POINTS

Referrals

There were 545,000 referrals to social services departments in the year ending 31 March 2007, compared to the previous year's figure of 569,300 (in other recent years the figures have fluctuated from between 550,000 and 570,000). Of the 2007 referrals, 23% were repeat referrals within 12 months of a previous referral, the same as the previous year.

Initial assessments

Of the 305,000 initial assessments completed in the year, 208,700 (68%) were completed within 7 working days of referral. This compares with 194,900 (65%) out of a total of 300,200 for the previous year.

Core assessments

Of the 93,400 core assessments undertaken in the year, 73,300 (78%) were completed within 35 working days (PAF C64). This compares with 63,100 (74%) out of a total of 84,800 for the previous year.

Children who became the subject of a Child Protection Plan or ceased to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan (Registrations and de-registrations)

There were 33,300 children who became the subject of a plan (registrations) in 2007. Around 13% of these had previously been registered (PAF A3) – one percentage point less than in 2006. During the year ending 31 March 2007, 31,800 children ceased to be the subject of a plan.



Children who are the subject of a Child Protection Plan or are on Child Protection Registers

There were 27,900 children who were the subject of a plan at 31 March 2007, compared with 26,400 for 2006.

The 2007 figure represents 25 children per 10,000 of the population aged under 18, this compares with 24 in 2006.

Looked after children

Of the children who were the subject of a plan at 31 March 2007, 2,400 (9%) were also looked after by local authorities. This compares with 2,600 (10%) for 2006.

78% of looked after children who were the subject of a plan were in foster placements and 12% were placed with their own parents. Five years ago 76% of looked after children were in foster placements and 15% were placed with their own parents.

Category of abuse

Neglect is the most common category of abuse under which children became the subject of a plan, 44%, one percentage point more than in 2006. The percentage of children who became subject to a plan due to emotional abuse increased from 21% in 2006 to 23% in 2007. Children becoming the subject of a plan due to physical abuse decreased between 2006 and 2007, from 16% to 15% respectively.

Length of time on register

Six per cent of children who ceased to be the subject of a plan had been on it for over 2 years (PAF C21) – the same figure as last year, following a downward trend over a number of years.

Review of child protection cases

The percentage of child protection cases which should have been reviewed during the year that were reviewed (PAF C20) was 99%, the same as last year.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Background

1. The figures for the year ending 31 March 2007 are for referrals, assessments and children and young people who are the subject of a plan and are the latest in a regular series. Data are collected on the CPR3 statistical return, which provides the Department for Children, Schools and Families with aggregate data on children in all 150 local authorities in England. The information on referrals, assessments, children who became the subject of a Child Protection Plan or ceased to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan is at 31 March of each year shown. The number of children who were the subject of a plan is at 31 March of each year.
2. All numbers have been rounded to the nearest 100. The following symbols have been used throughout the tables:
 - Small number suppressed to preserve confidentiality. Normally this will be a number between 1 and 5 inclusive, or a percentage where either the numerator is 5 or less, or the denominator is 10 or less.
 - . Not applicable

Data quality

3. The reader should bear in mind that the great variability between local authorities shown in some of the figures presented here may be a result of local differences in the interpretation of the definitions of the data categories, rather than accurately reflecting differences in local social services practice. Some inconsistencies persist in relation to the number of young people becoming the subject of a CPP or on the register (registrations), the number of young people ceasing to be the subject of a CPP or on the register (de-registrations) and the overall change in the number of young people who are the subject of a CPP or on the register. The reasons for this are unclear, but the intention is to include the CPR3 return in the child level Children in Need Census in future years which should improve data quality.

Definitions

4. Definitions of the key aspects of the referral, assessment and registration process as recorded via the CPR3 collection are shown below. These are based on the guidance in place at the time of the CPR collection ("Working Together"). A revised version has since been published.

a. Referral

A referral is defined for the purposes of the CPR collection as 'a request for services to be provided by the social services department.' This is in respect of a case where the child is not previously known to the council, or where the case was previously open but is now closed. A referral can be made by a professional from one of many different agencies (typically in the health and education sectors) but the term as used here is a broad one which encompasses referrals from any source, including self-referrals.

b. Initial assessment

An initial assessment is defined as a brief assessment of any child who has been referred to social services with a request that services be provided. An initial assessment is deemed to have started either at the point of referral to a social services department, or when new information on an open case indicates that an initial assessment should be repeated. Initial assessments may lead to three types of outcome:

no further action;

the immediate provision of services;

a more detailed type of assessment (known as a 'core assessment') being carried out. This may be carried out even where there is immediate provision of services.

c. Core assessment

A core assessment is defined as an in-depth assessment which addresses the central or most important aspects of the child's needs. There are several junctures at which a core assessment may start, depending on the child's circumstances, and the existence of child protection concerns ('risk of significant harm') is not a pre-requisite. The expected timescale for the completion of a core assessment is a maximum of 35 working days, recognising that where specialist assessments are required they may not take place within this timescale.

d. Section 47 enquiries

Where there is any suspicion that a child may be suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, social services departments are required by section 47 of the Children Act 1989 to make enquiries to establish whether there is a need for further action to safeguard the child's welfare.

While the exact order of stages of the process may depend on circumstances, an early action consists of convening a strategy discussion involving relevant professionals. Amongst other things this discussion should decide if enquiries under s.47 should be initiated, or should be continued if they have already begun. If a core assessment has not already started, it should be initiated with the s.47 enquires as this is the means by which a s.47 enquiry is carried out.

e. Initial Child Protection conferences and registration.

Where concerns about a child's welfare are substantiated and the agencies most involved judge that a child may continue to suffer, or be at risk of suffering significant harm, the social services department should convene an initial child protection conference. The purpose of the conference is to draw together the information that has been obtained and to make judgements on whether the child is at continuing risk of significant harm and whether he or she, therefore requires a child protection plan to be put in place. It is set out in the inter-agency guidance "Working Together to Safeguard Children" that an initial child protection conference should take place within 15 working days of the strategy discussion which decided whether s.47 enquiries should be initiated or continued if they have already begun. The conference will result in a decision on whether the child will become the subject of a plan or not.

f. Children who cease to be the subject of a plan

A child will cease to be the subject of a plan if:

it is judged that the child is no longer at continuing risk of significant harm requiring safeguarding by means of a child protection plan (e.g. the risk of harm has been reduced by action taken through the child protection plan; the child and family's circumstances have changed; or re-assessment of the child and family indicates that a child protection plan is not necessary). Under these circumstances, only a child protection review conference can decide that the child being the subject of a plan is no longer necessary;

the child and family have moved permanently to another local authority area. In such cases, the receiving local authority should convene a child protection conference within 15 working days of being notified of the move, only after which event may a child cease to be the subject of a plan in respect of the original local authority's plan;

the child has reached 18 years of age, has died or has permanently left the UK.

TABLES

- Table A** Referrals of children, and young people to social services departments, and assessments completed, during years ending 31 March 2003 to 2007 (numbers and percentages).
- Table B** Time series: Children subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP), children who became the subject of a plan and children who ceased to be the subject of a plan during the years ending 31 March 1997 to 2007, and children on child protection registers at 31 March each year, by gender (numbers, rates and percentages).
- Table C** Time series: Children and young people who were the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP) who were also looked after, by legal status and placement on that date (numbers and percentages) at 31 March 2003 to 2007.
- Table D** Time series: Numbers of children who became the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP), by whether first time, or for second or subsequent time; and those who became the subject of a plan within twelve months of last discontinuation of a plan (numbers and percentages) during the years ending 31 March 1997 to 2007.
- Table E** Time series: Children who became the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP), by category of abuse (numbers and percentages) during the years ending 31 March 2003 to 2007.
- Table F** Time series: Number of children whose Child Protection Plans (CPPs) were discontinued, by length of time as the subject of a plan (percentages) during the years ending 31 March 1997 to 2007.
- Table G** Percentage of child protection cases which should have been reviewed during the year that were reviewed during the years ending 31 March 2004 to 2007.

Further release of information

Additional commentary (Word file) and tables (Excel file) will be added alongside the SFR on the DCSF Research and Statistics Gateway. The tables will repeat the England tables contained within the main SFR and also provide equivalent local authority level data.

- Referrals and assessments of children in need.
- Section 47 enquiries, and conferences.
- Summary of child protection plan activity: time series.
- Children and young people who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March.
- Children and young people who became the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March.
- Children and young people whose child protection plans were discontinued.
- Review of child protection cases.

A National Statistics publication

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

Related publications

Information on Children Looked After has been released in a separate SFR today.

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000741/index.shtml>.

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Table A: Referrals of children and young people to children's social care services, and assessments completed.
Years ending 31 March 2003 to 2007
Coverage: England

	numbers and percentages									
	numbers					percentages				
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Referrals of children to children's social care services¹										
All referrals during year	570,200	572,700	552,000	569,300	545,000	100	100	100	100	100
<i>of which:</i>										
Referrals within 12 months of a previous referral ²	125,900	127,400	121,800	132,500	123,900	22	22	22	23	23
Initial assessments completed in the year¹										
All initial assessments completed in the year	263,900	290,800	290,300	300,200	305,000	100	100	100	100	100
<i>of which:</i>										
Initial assessments completed within 7 working days of referral	149,400	169,100	179,200	194,900	208,700	57	58	62	65	68
Initial assessments completed in year as a percentage of all referrals in year	.	.	.	.	.	46	51	53	53	56
Core assessments completed in the year¹										
Total number of core assessments completed in the year	55,700	63,600	74,100	84,800	93,400	100	100	100	100	100
<i>of which:</i>										
Core assessments completed within 35 working days of initial assessments ³	31,000	39,400	49,700	63,100	73,300	56	62	67	74	78

Source: CPR3

1. Figures for referrals, initial assessments and core assessments include unborn children.

2. Re-referrals relate to a previous referral to the same authority only.

3. Or within 35 working days of the trigger event where this was not an initial assessment. Indicator C64 of the Performance Assessment Framework: The proportion of Core Assessments that were completed within 35 working days of their commencement.

Table B: Children subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP), children who became the subject of a plan and children who ceased to be the subject of a plan, by gender.

Years at and years ending 31 March 1997 to 2007

Coverage: England

numbers, rates per 10,000 children aged under 18 years and percentages

	numbers ¹			rates			percentages ²	
	All children ³	Boys	Girls	All children ³	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Subject of a CPP at 31 March								
1997	32,400	16,400	15,700	29	29	29	51	49
1998	31,600	16,000	15,500	28	28	28	51	49
1999	31,900	16,000	15,600	29	28	29	51	49
2000	30,300	15,400	14,600	27	27	27	51	49
2001	26,800	13,700	12,900	24	24	24	52	48
2002	25,700	13,300	12,200	23	23	22	52	48
2003	26,600	13,600	12,700	24	24	23	52	48
2004	26,300	13,500	12,500	24	24	23	52	48
2005	25,900	13,100	12,600	23	23	23	51	49
2006	26,400	13,200	12,800	24	23	24	51	49
2007	27,900	14,100	13,400	25	25	25	51	49
Became the subject of a CPP during the year⁴								
1997	29,200	14,500	14,100	26	25	26	51	49
1998	30,000	14,800	14,600	27	26	27	50	50
1999	30,100	14,700	14,600	27	26	27	50	50
2000	29,300	14,500	13,900	26	25	26	51	49
2001	27,000	13,300	12,700	24	23	23	51	49
2002	27,800	14,000	12,800	25	25	24	52	48
2003	30,200	15,000	14,200	27	26	26	51	49
2004	31,200	15,500	14,700	28	27	27	51	49
2005	30,700	14,800	14,400	28	26	27	51	49
2006	31,500	15,100	14,800	28	27	27	50	50
2007	33,300	16,100	15,300	30	28	28	51	49
Ceased to be the subject of a CPP during the year⁵								
1997	28,900	14,400	14,500	26	25	26	50	50
1998	30,200	15,300	14,800	27	27	27	51	49
1999	29,400	14,800	14,600	26	26	27	51	49
2000	30,500	15,300	15,100	27	27	28	50	50
2001	30,200	15,400	14,700	27	27	27	51	49
2002	28,800	14,700	14,000	26	26	26	51	49
2003	29,200	15,100	14,000	26	27	26	51	49
2004	31,200	15,900	15,200	28	28	28	51	49
2005	31,100	15,900	15,100	28	28	28	51	49
2006	31,000	15,800	15,200	28	28	28	51	49
2007	31,800	16,000	15,600	29	28	29	51	49

Source: CPR3

1. Figures may not add due to rounding.
2. Percentage calculations exclude unborn children.
3. The 'all children' figures include unborn children.
4. Where a child was made the subject of a child protection plan (registered) more than once in the year within the same authority, each registration has been counted.
5. Where a child ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan (de-registered) more than once in the year within the same authority, each de-registration has been counted.

Table C: Children and young people who were the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP) who were also looked after, by legal status¹ and placement on that date.

Years at 31 March 2003 to 2007

Coverage: England

	numbers and percentages				
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Number of looked after children who were the subject of a CPP at 31 March ^{2,3}	4,200	3,400	3,000	2,600	2,400
Percentage of all children who were the subject of a CPP at 31 March who were also looked after on that date ^{2,3}	16	13	12	10	9
Legal statuses¹ of looked after children who were the subject of a CPP at 31 March (percentages):					
All legal statuses ¹	100	100	100	100	100
Interim care order	51	44	43	45	41
Full care order	4	4	4	2	4
Remand, detained or other compulsory order ⁴	2	2	2	2	2
Accommodated under Section 20 - planned series of short term breaks	5	6	5	6	5
Accommodated under Section 20 - single occasion of accommodation	38	43	45	45	48
Placements of looked after children who were the subject of a CPP at 31 March (percentages):					
All placements	100	100	100	100	100
Foster placement	76	79	79	80	78
Children's home ⁵ or secure unit	5	5	4	5	6
Placed with own parents	15	13	13	12	12
Other placement	4	3	3	3	4

Source: CPR3

1. Refers to the legal status under the provisions of the Children Act 1989 which underpins each child's looked-after status.
2. Figures for all years include children receiving an agreed series of short-term breaks.
3. Figures include any children looked after at 31 March who were unaccompanied asylum-seekers.
4. Under police protection or an emergency protection order, or in local authority accommodation on remand, or committed for trial or sentence, or detained under PACE 1984.
5. Refers to placements in community homes, voluntary homes and hostels, and private registered children's homes.

Table D: Numbers of children who became the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP), by whether first time, or for second or subsequent time¹; and those who became subject of a plan within twelve months of last discontinuation of a plan².

Years ending 31 March 1997 to 2007

Coverage: England

	numbers				percentages		
	Number of children who became the subject of a plan	First time who became the subject of a plan (First time registrations)	Became the subject of a plan for a second or subsequent time (All re-registrations)	Children who became subject of a plan within 12 months of last discontinuation of a plan (Re-registrations within 12 months) ²	First time who became the subject of a plan	Became the subject of a plan for a second or subsequent time ³	Children who became subject of a plan within 12 months of last discontinuation as a % of those becoming the subject for a subsequent time
1997	29,200	23,900	5,300	.	82	18	.
1998	30,000	24,100	5,900	.	80	20	.
1999	30,100	25,500	4,600	.	85	15	.
2000	29,300	25,100	4,200	.	86	14	.
2001	27,000	23,200	3,700	1,100	86	14	31
2002	27,800	23,900	3,900	1,200	86	14	31
2003	30,200	26,100	4,100	1,200	87	13	29
2004	31,200	27,100	4,100	1,200	87	13	29
2005	30,700	26,600	4,100	1,200	87	13	30
2006	31,500	27,000	4,500	1,200	86	14	26
2007	33,300	28,800	4,400	1,100	87	13	24

Source: CPR3

1. Where a child became the subject of a plan (registered) or as a second or subsequent time (re-registered) by the same authority more than once during a year, each occasion has been counted. A child may therefore be counted more than once in these figures. Numbers and percentages in this table include unborn children.
2. Refers to children who have been made the subject of a child protection plan having been the subject of a plan before (re-registration) which occurred within twelve months of last discontinuation of a plan (de-registration) within the same authority. This data item is a subset of the column 'Becoming the subject of a plan for a second or subsequent time (All re-registrations)' in the preceding column, and was collected for the first time for year ending 31 March 2001.
3. Indicator A3 of the Performance Assessment Framework.

**Table E: Children who became the subject of a Child Protection Plan (CPP)¹, by category of abuse.
Years ending 31 March 2003 to 2007
Coverage: England**

Category of abuse	numbers and percentages									
	numbers					percentages				
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Neglect	11,700	12,600	13,200	13,700	14,800	39	41	43	43	44
Physical abuse	5,700	5,800	5,500	5,100	5,100	19	19	18	16	15
Sexual abuse	3,000	2,800	2,700	2,600	2,500	10	9	9	8	7
Emotional abuse	5,400	5,700	5,700	6,700	7,800	18	18	19	21	23
Mixed / not recommended by 'Working Together'	4,400	4,300	3,700	3,300	3,200	15	14	12	11	10

Source: CPR3

1. Where a child was made the subject of a child protection plan (registered) more than once in the year within the same authority, each registration has been counted. These include unborn children.

**Table F: Number of children whose Child Protection Plans (CPPs) were discontinued¹, by length of time as the subject of a plan.
Years ending 31 March 1997 to 2007
Coverage: England**

percentages

length of time as subject of a plan (or on the CPR)

	All Children ²	Under 3 months	3 months to under 6 months	6 months to under 1 year	One year to under 2 years	2 years & over ³
1997	28,900	7	20	31	28	14
1998	30,200	7	19	33	27	13
1999	29,400	7	19	33	28	13
2000	30,500	7	19	33	28	12
2001	30,200	8	20	33	28	11
2002	28,800	13	17	33	27	10
2003	29,200	16	15	35	26	8
2004	31,200	19	14	36	25	7
2005	31,100	21	12	35	26	6
2006	31,000	21	12	36	25	6
2007	31,800	22	11	37	24	6

Source: CPR3

1. Where a child ceased to be the subject of a plan (de-registered) more than once in the statistical year by the same authority each discontinuation has been counted. A child may therefore appear more than once in this table.
2. Figures may not add due to rounding. The 'all children' figures and durations to under 1 year include unborn children.
3. Indicator C21 of the Performance Assessment Framework.

**Table G: Percentage of child protection cases which should have been reviewed during the year that were reviewed.
Years ending 31 March 2004 to 2007
Coverage: England**

Children whose cases had been reviewed ¹		
	Number	percentages ^{2,3}
2004	18,000	95
2005	19,400	99
2006	18,800	99
2007	19,500	99

Source: CPR3

1. The percentage of children whose cases had been reviewed, so that:
 - (i) the first review of the year was held within 6 months of the last review in the previous year (or within 3 months of the child being made the subject of a child protection plan, if there was no review in the previous year)
 - (ii) the maximum gap between reviews during the year was 6 months; and
 - (iii) a review was held within 6 months of the end of the year (ie on or after 1 October)
2. Expressed as a percentage of children subject of a child protection plan at 31 March who at that date had been so continuously for at least the previous 3 months.
3. Indicator C20 of the Performance Assessment Framework.
The measurement was re-defined in 2003-04.