



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

STATISTICS, DOCUMENT

Children Receiving Care and Support Census: on 31 March 2023 (official statistics in development)

An annual statistical release presents figures about children receiving care and support from Welsh local authorities as at 31 March 2023.

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Discontinuation notice

The collection and subsequent publication of Children receiving care and support census data in its current format will cease after this release. Following review with local authorities and other stakeholders, data collection requirements have been refreshed and new requirements have been issued for the 2023-24 reporting year.

From April 2023, the census will be a full-year collection and the requirement for a snapshot of those children with a care and support plan for three months or more on 31 March will be removed. This will offer additional intelligence and capture individual level data for all children who receive care and support during the year. It is anticipated that data for 2023-24 will be returned by local authorities in autumn 2024 and be reported in spring 2025. Data collection documents for 2023-24 are available on the [Data collection: Local authority social services](#) page.

If you are a user of these statistics and have any queries please email the [contact](#) below.

Introduction

The number of children receiving care and support includes only those children (aged under 18) who had a care and support plan in place for three months or more on the census date of 31 March, i.e. the care and support plan was in place on or before 1 January 2023 and remained in place on 31 March 2023.

This includes children with a care and support plan who are:

- supported in their families or independently

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- looked after and in the care of or accommodated by a local authority
- on the child protection register (CPR) and are subjects of an inter-agency protection plan

These children may also have a support plan if they are providing care to someone else and may be in the secure estate (i.e. youth detention accommodation, prison or bail accommodation).

Children who were looked after and on the child protection register are counted as children looked after for the purposes of this release.

New data is based on the position on 31 March 2023.

Data included in this release and [further information for individual local authorities is published on StatsWales](#).

Main points

- 17,513 children were receiving care and support on 31 March 2023, an increase of 324 (2%) compared with the previous year. Which is equivalent to 282.6 children per 10,000 children aged under 18 years.
- The overall number and rate of children receiving care and support included in the Children Receiving Care and Support (CRCS) Census has increased each year since data began being collected on 31 March 2017.
- 7,095 children were looked after by a local authority and 2,393 children were on the child protection register (CPR). There were 148 children who were looked after and on the child protection register (included in the children looked after total). The remaining 8,025 children were not looked after by a local authority and not on the CPR.
- Risk of, or actual, abuse or neglect was the most common reason why children had started receiving care and support and was the main reason for

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half of children receiving care and support.

- Parental mental ill health was the most commonly recorded parenting capacity factor and was present for 42% of children receiving care and support.
- For children receiving care and support matching to the National Pupil Database aged 5 to 15 years old, 55% were entitled to free school meals and 49% had additional learning needs or special educational needs. These proportions were higher than for all pupils of statutory school age (22% and 15% respectively).
- 42% of children receiving care and support, matching to the National Pupil Database aged 13 or 14 years old, achieved the Core Subject Indicator at Key Stage 3 compared to 77% of all pupils in Wales.
- The average Capped 9 indicator (interim measures version) was 192 points for children receiving care and support in Year 11 at Key Stage 4, compared to 358 points for all pupils in Wales in 2023.

Number of children receiving care and support

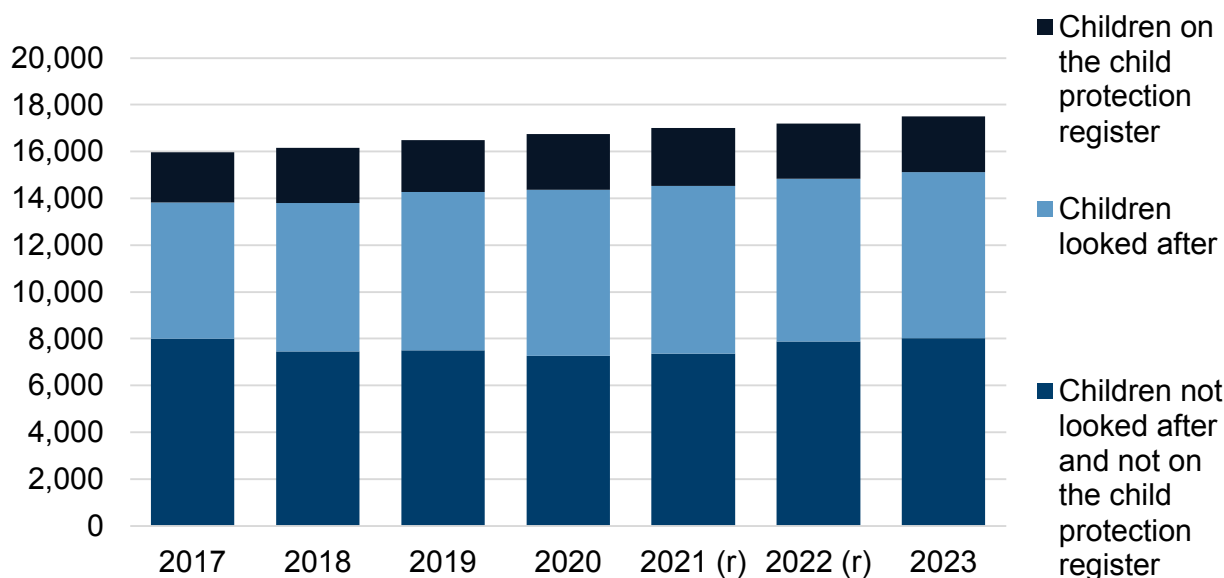
In order to have a care and support plan, children will have had an assessment of their care and support needs. The assessment will have concluded that the child's needs can only be met through a care and support plan.

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Figure 1: Children receiving care and support on 31 March, 2017 to 2023



Description of Figure 1: Stacked bar chart showing that the number of children receiving care and support has increased steadily since 2017 when data began being collected.

Source: Children receiving care and support census, Welsh Government

Children receiving care and support by local authority and looked after status on StatsWales

[r] Data has been revised since previously published.

The number of children receiving care and support has been on an upward trend and increased year-on-year since 2017. The rate per 10,000 children aged under 18 receiving care and support has also increased each year and was 282.6 on 31 March 2023. See [quality and methodology information](#) for data quality statement for population data.

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Nearly half (46%) of children receiving care and support were neither looked after nor on the child protection register in 2023. 41% of children receiving care and support were looked after and a further 14% were on the child protection register. These proportions were similar to 2022 and 2019, whilst 2020 and 2021 had slightly higher proportions of children looked after and on the child protection register.

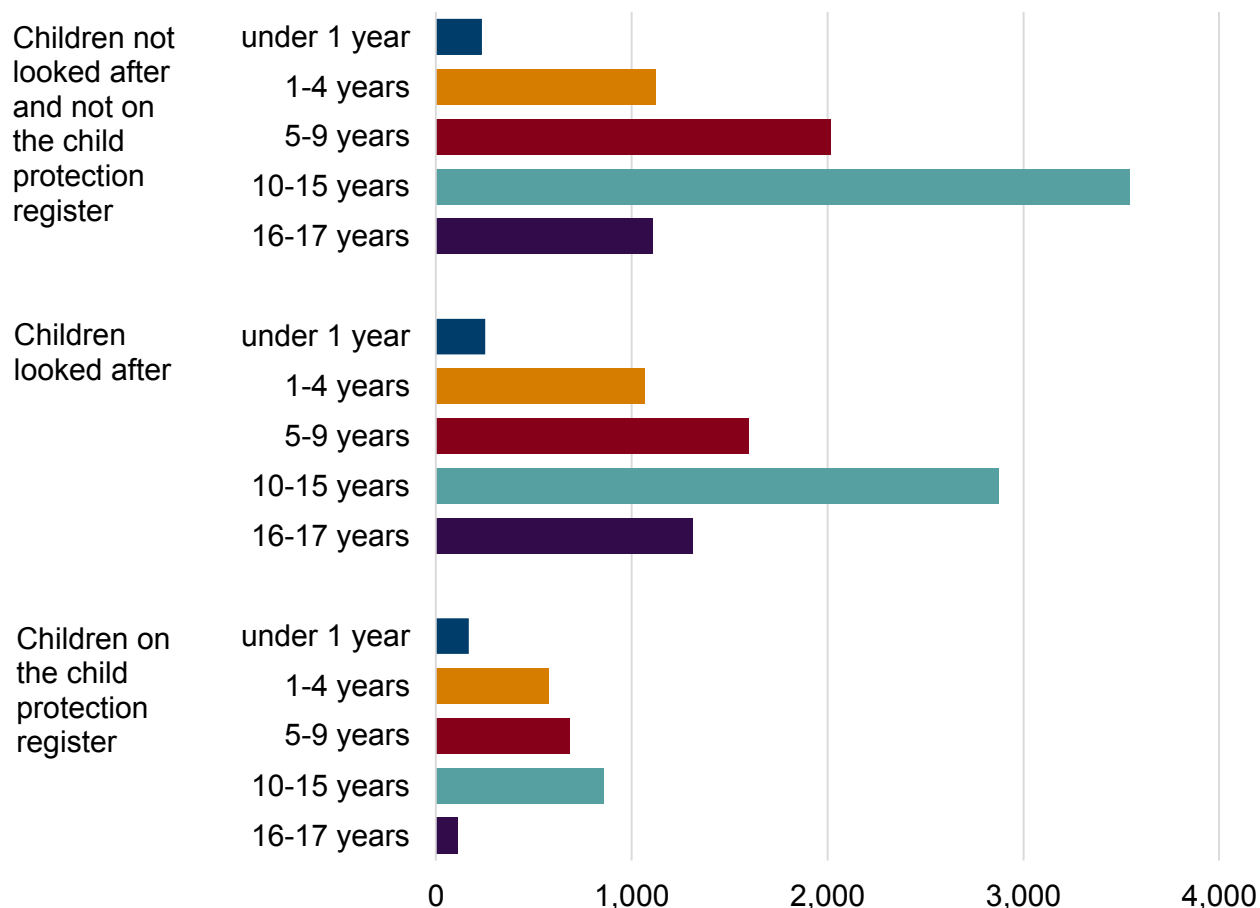
For those children on the child protection register on 31 March 2023, almost half (49%) had been added to the register under the category of emotional abuse only.

Characteristics of children receiving care and support

Information is collected that describes the characteristics of children receiving care and support.

Age

Figure 2: Children receiving care and support by age, 31 March 2023



Description of Figure 2: Bar chart showing that most children receiving care and support on 31 March 2023 were aged between 10 and 15 years old.

Source: Children receiving care and support census, Welsh Government

Children receiving care and support by local authority and age group on StatsWales

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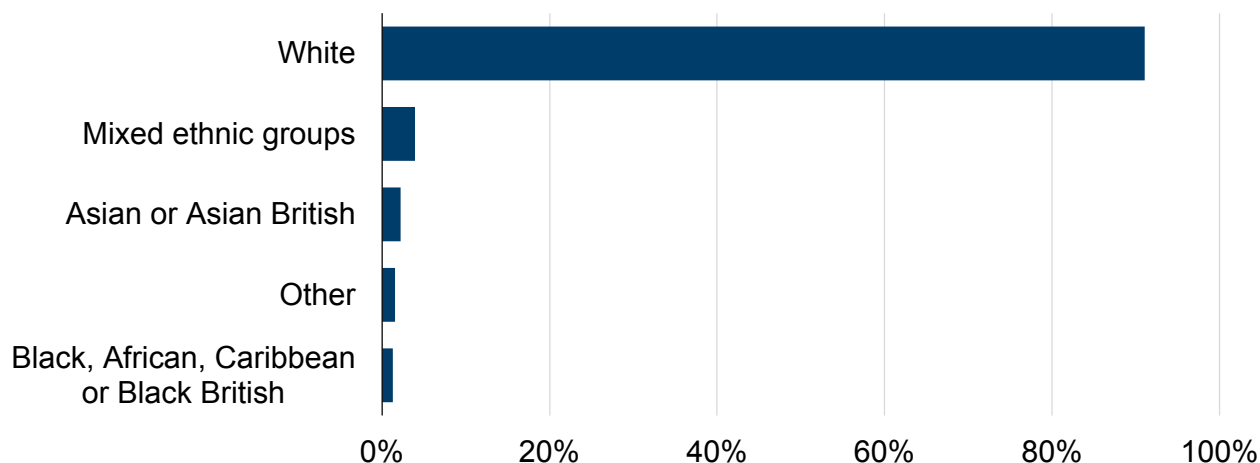
20% of all children receiving care and support were aged under 5 years old, 25% were aged 5 to 9 years old, 42% were aged 10 to 15 years and 14% of children receiving care and support were aged 16 years or older on 31 March 2023.

The proportion of children receiving care and support aged 1 to 4 years old has decreased since 2017 (from 19% to 16%), as has the proportion of children aged 5 to 9 years old (from 27% to 25%). Whilst the proportion of children receiving care and support aged 10 to 15 years old has increased over the same time (from 36% to 42%). Proportions for other age groups have stayed about the same.

Children receiving care and support who were on the child protection register were generally younger than other children receiving care and support. Children looked after and children not looked after nor on the child protection register were generally older.

Ethnicity

Figure 3: Children receiving care and support by ethnic group, 31 March 2023 [Note 1]



Description of Figure 3: Bar chart showing where ethnicity was recorded, 91% of children receiving care and support on 31 March 2023 were White.

Source: Children receiving care and support census, Welsh Government

Children receiving care and support by ethnicity and looked after status on StatsWales

[Note 1] Children with unknown ethnic group are not included. In 2023, there were 498 children (3%) with unknown ethnic group data.

On 31 March 2023, where ethnicity was recorded, 91% of children receiving care and support were from a White ethnic group. 4% of children were from a mixed ethnic group, 2% were from other ethnic groups, 2% were from an Asian or Asian British ethnic group and 1% were from a Black, African, Caribbean or Black British ethnic group. The proportions for all ethnic groups were similar

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compared to the previous year.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of children receiving care and support from other ethnic groups were looked after, compared to 40% of children from a White ethnic group. Whilst a smaller proportion of children receiving care and support from other ethnic groups were neither looked after nor on the child protection register (32%). A higher proportion of children receiving care and support from a White ethnic group were on the child protection register (14%) compared to all other ethnic groups.

A higher proportion of children receiving care and support were from a White ethnic group compared to the general population aged under 18 years old according to the **Census 2021 (ONS)** (91% compared to 90%). Whilst the proportion of children receiving care and support from an Asian or Asian British ethnic group was lower compared to the general population (2% compared to 4%).

Disability

21% of children receiving care and support were disabled; where the child had a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities on 31 March 2023. This proportion has been similar each year since 2017. Over a third (34%) of children not looked after and not on the child protection register had a disability, compared to 11% of children looked after and 5% of children on the child protection register.

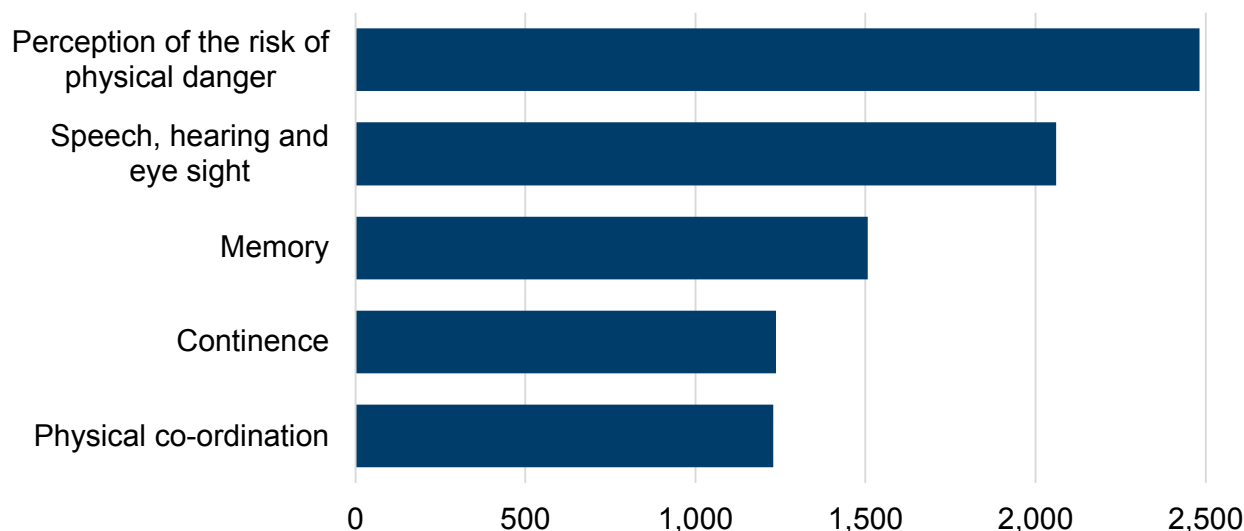
The percentage of disabled children receiving care and support was much higher than that for children in the general population, where 3% of the general population aged under 18 years old stated they had a long-term health problem or disability that limits their day-to-day activities a lot (according to the **Census 2021 (ONS)**).

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Figure 4: Top 5 impairment categories reported for children receiving care and support, 31 March 2023



Description of Figure 4: Bar chart showing that perception of the risk of physical danger was the most commonly reported category of impairment for children receiving care and support on 31 March 2023.

Source: Children receiving care and support census, Welsh Government

Disabilities of children receiving care and support by measure and year on StatsWales

Lack of perception of the risk of physical danger was recorded as a specific category of impairment for over two-thirds (68%) of all disabled children. Whilst almost two-fifths (57%) of disabled children were recorded as having a speech, hearing or eyesight impairment. For those children who were reported as having specified categories of impairments, only one category was recorded for 27% of children whilst all eight categories were recorded for 7% of children.

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Gender

55% of children receiving care and support were male and 45% were female on 31 March 2023. These proportions have been stable since data was first collected in 2017. Children with gender recorded as non-binary or unknown accounted for fewer than 1% of children receiving care and support on 31 March 2023.

Asylum seeking children

2% of children receiving care and support were an asylum seeking child on 31 March 2023; most of whom were unaccompanied and not members of asylum seeking families and were looked after. This is the highest number and proportion recorded since 2017. More males than females were asylum seeking children as in previous years.

Language

Information on the child's preferred language was recorded for all but 29 children aged 3 and over on 31 March 2023. Where information was provided, English was the preferred language for 90% of children; this is lower than in previous years where the proportion was around 93%. Welsh was the preferred language for 3% of children; the same proportion as each year since 2017.

Need for care and support

As part of a child's assessment, their needs for care and support are identified. If a child's assessment leads to the provision of a care and support plan, the main

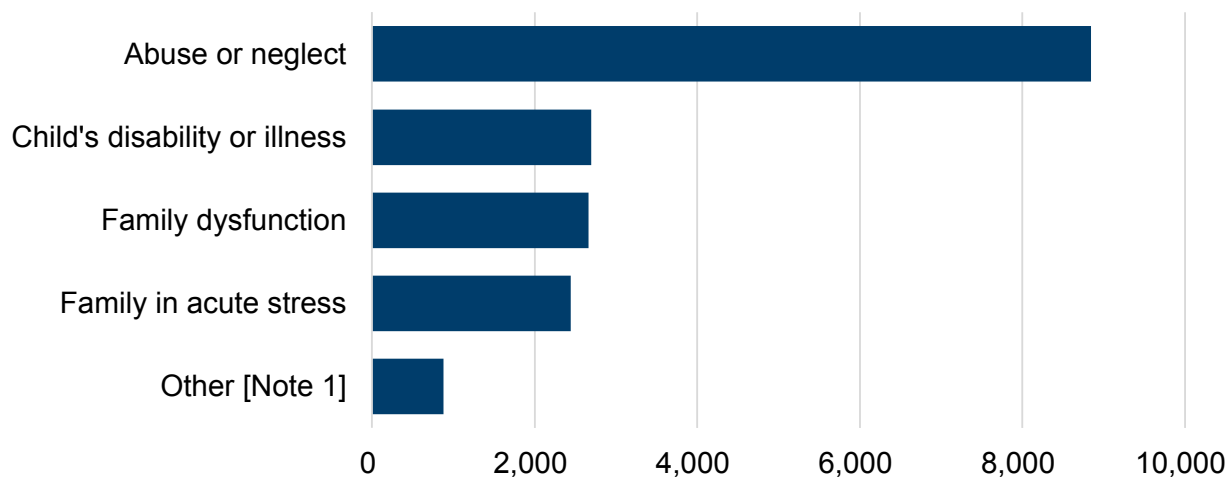
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reason why a child started to receive care and support from local authority social services is recorded.

Figure 5: Children receiving care and support by need for care and support, 31 March 2023



Description of Figure 5: Bar chart showing that just over half of children receiving care and support on 31 March 2023 had started to receive care and support because of the risk of, or actual, abuse or neglect.

Source: Children receiving care and support census, Welsh Government

Children receiving care and support by local authority and category of need on StatsWales

[Note 1] Other categories of need are socially unacceptable behaviour, parental disability or illness, absent parenting and adoption disruption. A full breakdown is available on StatsWales.

Half (50%) of all children receiving care and support on 31 March 2023 started to do so because of the risk of, or actual, abuse or neglect. This has been the

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most common category of need since data began being collected in 2017 but has decreased each year from a high of 54% in 2018 and 2019. The proportion was higher for children who were looked after or on the child protection register (65% and 64% respectively) compared to children who were not looked after and not on the child protection register (33%). This also varied by age with higher proportions of children starting to receive care and support because of abuse or neglect in the younger age groups (under 1 and 1 to 4 years); this decreased by age.

The child's disability or illness was the primary reason for starting to receive care and support for 15% of children receiving care and support. This varied by age with the lowest proportion of children starting to receive care and support because of disability or illness in the under 1 year old age group; this increased by age. Overall, 89% of children starting to receive care and support due to disability or illness were neither looked after nor on the child protection register.

Family dysfunction was also the reason for 15% of children starting to receive care and support, followed by family in acute stress for 14% of children. Socially unacceptable behaviour, parental disability or illness, absent parenting and adoption disruption were much less common reasons. These proportions have remained fairly stable since 2017.

Parenting factors

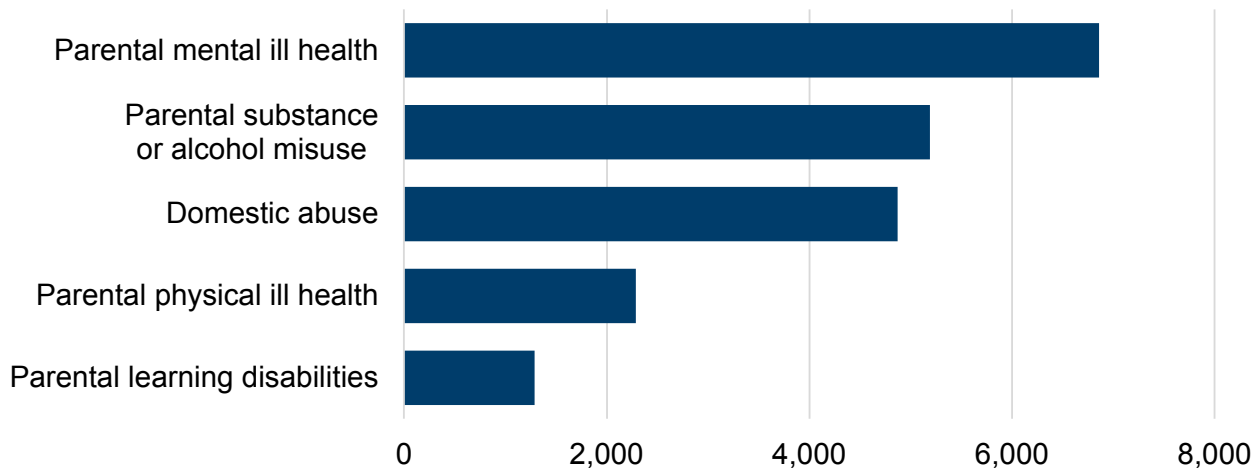
Information was recorded on five factors related to the child's parents that might affect their ability to parent. These factors may have been present at the referral stage or may have arisen since referral. One or more factors may have been recorded for each child and so children may be counted under more than one factor.

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Figure 6: Children receiving care and support by parental factors recorded, 31 March 2023



Description of Figure 6: Bar chart showing that parental mental ill health was the most commonly recorded parenting capacity factor present for children receiving care and support for whom information was provided on 31 March 2023.

Source: Children receiving care and support census, Welsh Government

Parental factors of children receiving care and support by measure and year on StatsWales

64% of children receiving care and support for whom information was available had at least one parenting capacity factor recorded as being present on 31 March 2023. The percentages of children with parenting capacity factors recorded as present in 2023 were similar to 2022 and 2021 and higher than for previous years.

Parental mental ill health was the most frequently recorded parenting capacity factor. It was reported for 42% of children for whom information was provided, a significant increase from 29% in 2017. This was followed by parental substance

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or alcohol misuse (32%) and domestic abuse (30%).

Parental physical ill health was recorded for 14% of children receiving care and support; just over half (51%) of these children were neither looked after nor on the child protection register. Parental learning disabilities was recorded for 8% of children receiving care and support. A higher proportion of children looked after reported parental learning disabilities as a factor present than those not looked after, as in previous years.

The proportion of children reporting parental factors present was lower for those not looked after and not on the child protection register for each factor except for parental physical ill health.

Health

Information was collected on mental health and substance misuse, and also on how up to date children in the relevant age groups were with health surveillance checks, dental checks and immunisations.

Mental health

Mental health data was collected for children aged 10 years old and over. For those children where information was available, 18% were recorded as having a mental health problem on 31 March 2023. This is a similar proportion to the previous year.

A higher proportion of 16 to 17 year olds (25%) were reported as having a mental health problem than those aged 10 to 15 years old (16%). A lower proportion of children receiving care and support who were looked after were reported as having a mental health problem (16%) than those who were not

looked after (20%).

45% of children receiving care and support with a mental health problem had parental mental ill health recorded as a present factor, compared to 37% for all children aged 10 and over in the CRCS Census.

Substance misuse

Substance misuse data was collected for children aged 10 years old and over. For those children where information was available, 8% were recorded as having a substance misuse problem on 31 March 2023. This is up slightly from 7% in the previous year.

A higher proportion of 16 to 17 year olds (15%) were reported as having a substance misuse problem than those aged 10 to 15 years old (6%). A higher proportion of children on the child protection register (13%) were reported as having a substance misuse problem than those looked after or not looked after and not on the child protection register (8%).

37% of children receiving care and support with a substance misuse problem had parental substance or alcohol misuse recorded as a present factor, compared to 27% for all children aged 10 and over in the CRCS Census. 44% of children receiving care and support with a substance misuse problem had parental mental ill health recorded as a present factor.

Health checks

Health checks data was collected for children aged 5 years old or younger. For those children where information was available, 92% were up to date with health surveillance checks on 31 March 2023; this proportion has increased from 80% in 2017. The proportion of children looked after who were up to date with health

checks (95%) was higher than for other children on the child protection register or otherwise not looked after and not on the child protection register (91% and 90% respectively).

Dental checks

Dental checks data was collected for children aged 5 years old and over. For those children where information was available, 80% were up to date with dental checks on 31 March 2023; this proportion has increased from the previous year and is more similar to years prior to 2020. The proportion of children looked after who were up to date with dental checks (84%) was higher than for other children on the child protection register or otherwise not looked after and not on the child protection register (72% and 78% respectively).

Immunisations

For all children where information was provided, 94% were up to date with immunisations on 31 March 2023; this is up slightly from 93% in the previous year and much higher than prior to 2020 (when it was about 83%). The proportion of children on the child protection register who were up to date with immunisations (91%) was lower than for children looked after or not looked after and not on the child protection register (94%) however this is the highest proportion recorded.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder

Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) were reported for 13% of children receiving care and support on 31 March 2023, a slight increase from the previous year and the highest proportion recorded. Three-quarters (75%) of the children recorded as having an ASD were boys.

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Of those children aged 5 to 15 years receiving care and support on 31 March 2023, 15% were reported as having an ASD. This compares to 2% for all pupils aged 5-15 years in Wales (according to the January 2023 [Pupil Level Annual Schools Census \(StatsWales\)](#)).

Education

The Unique Pupil Number (UPN) is collected for children receiving care and support and allows for anonymous matching of children in the relevant age groups with the National Pupil Database (NPD) so that educational records can be summarised without having to collect this information from local authorities. Throughout this section of the release pupils' ages are quoted as at 31 August 2022. See [quality and methodology information](#) for data quality statement on education data.

Free school meals

Pupils are eligible for free school meals if their parents or guardians are in receipt of certain benefits or support payments.

55% of children receiving care and support aged 5 to 15 years old who matched to the NPD were eligible for free school meals. This differed between children receiving care and support who were looked after (43%) and children who were not looked after (62%). A higher proportion of children not looked after but on the child protection register were eligible for free school meals compared to children not looked after and not on the child protection register. These proportions have remained broadly similar since 2022.

This compares to 22% of pupils aged 5 to 15 years old known to be eligible for free school meals at January 2023. [Further information and statistics on](#)

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[pupils in Wales entitled to free school meals can be found on StatsWales](#) and [Schools Census Results](#) statistical releases.

Additional learning needs and special educational needs

A child has special needs if they have learning difficulties which require special educational provision to be made for them. Pupils with special educational needs may have Statements issued by the local authority or may have their needs identified by the school (under either School Action or School Action Plus). From 1 September 2021 learners may have Individual Development Plans maintained by the school or the local authority.

49% of children receiving care and support aged 5 to 15 years old who matched to the NDP had additional learning needs or special educational needs. This differed between children receiving care and support who were looked after (41%) and children who were not looked after (54%). A higher proportion of children not looked after and not on the child protection register had additional learning needs or special educational needs compared to children not looked after but on the child protection register. These proportions have decreased in recent years. [Further breakdowns by type of provision can be found on StatsWales](#).

This compares to 15% of pupils of statutory school age known to have additional learning needs or special educational needs at January 2023. [Further information and statistics on pupils in Wales with additional learning needs or special educational needs can be found on StatsWales](#) and [Schools Census Results](#) statistical releases.

Attainment at Key Stage 3

The Core Subject Indicator (CSI) at Key Stage 3 represents the percentage of

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pupils achieving Level 5 or above, based on teacher assessments, in English or Welsh (first language), Mathematics and Science in combination at the end of Key Stage 3, aged 14.

42% of children receiving care and support aged 13 or 14 years old who matched to the NDP had achieved the CSI at Key Stage 3. This differed between children receiving care and support who were looked after (52%) and children who were not looked after (34%). A higher proportion of children not looked after and on the child protection register achieved CSI at Key Stage 3 compared to children not looked after and not on the child protection register.

This compares to 77% of all pupils in Wales who achieved the CSI at Key Stage 3 in 2023. A higher proportion of girls than boys achieved CSI at Key Stage 3 for both children receiving care and support and all pupils in Wales. [Further information and statistics on the achievement of pupils in Wales at Key Stage 3 can be found on StatsWales](#) and [Academic achievement of pupils aged 4 to 14](#) statistical releases.

Attainment at Key Stage 4

The average Capped 9 indicator (interim measure version) is calculated using Year 11 pupils' best nine results from the qualifications available in Wales, including subject specific requirements. Since 2018/19 this includes English or Welsh (Language or Literature), Mathematics or Mathematics Numeracy and a Science GCSE.

The average Capped 9 indicator (interim measures version) was 192 points for children receiving care and support. This was higher for children receiving care and support who were looked after, compared to children who were not looked after.

This compares to an average Capped 9 indicator (interim measures version)

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score of 358 points for all pupils in Wales in 2023. [Further information and statistics on the achievement of pupils in Wales at Key Stage 4 can be found on StatsWales](#) and [Examination results](#) statistical releases.

Quality and methodology information

From 2016-17 individual level data in relation to children receiving care and support has been collected through the [Children receiving care and support census](#).

The collection captures children with a care and support plan as detailed in the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014 \(UK legislation\)](#). The [data collection guidance document](#) provides explanations of the data items and response categories captured within the data collection.

Population estimates

The rate of children receiving care and support per 10,000 population aged under 18 has been calculated based on the 2022 mid-year estimates provided by ONS. Children receiving care and support rates from 2017 have been revised following publication of rebased mid-year estimates.

Disability

The Welsh Government accepts the social definition of disability, in which it is recognised that people with impairments are disabled by barriers that commonly exist in society. However, data has been collected based on the Equality Act 2010 which uses the medical definition of disability.

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Education

The Unique Pupil Number (UPN) allows for anonymous matching of children receiving care and support in the relevant age groups with the National Pupil Database (NPD). Records about free school meals eligibility, special educational needs and attainment can be summarised for children receiving care and support without having to collect this information from local authorities. Overall 81% of children receiving care and support with UPN recorded were matched to the NPD. The UPN was missing for 16% of children on 31 March 2023.

Analysis on education is based upon children of statutory school age, i.e. who were already five or over at the time of the CRCS Census but had not yet reached their 16th birthday at the end of the 2022/23 school year. This removes the effect of differing local provision for the under fives and sixth forms. Using this statutory school age there were 10,376 children receiving care and support whose UPN matched with the education databases (89% match rate).

Pupils' ages are quoted as at 31 August 2022. This refers to the start of the academic year and is a useful reference in that pupils normally transfer from maintained primary to secondary school, and move thereafter through the secondary school system, according to their age at 31 August.

Revisions

Minor revisions have been made as part of processing the 2023 data which have been agreed by local authorities. This affected data for 2022, 2021 and 2020. Revisions made to previous years' data are labelled with a "r".

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Statistical designation

These statistics are published as official statistics in development. More information on the designation of these statistics can be found in the [correspondence between the Welsh Government and the Office for Statistical Regulation](#).

Data collection requirements for the Children receiving care and support census have recently been reviewed and refreshed data requirements have been issued for the 2023-24 reporting year. From April 2023-24 the census will be a full-year collection. Section 1, Core Details, is completed for all children who have a care and support plan at any point in the financial year. Section 2, Care and Support Details, is only completed for those with an active care and support plan on 31 March 2024.

Quality statement

These figures reflect the position at 31 March 2023. Quality assurance was undertaken with local authorities. Not all local authorities provided complete returns.

Ethnicity information was missing for 3% of children.

Gender information was missing for less than 1% of children.

Parental factors data was missing for over 50% of children for each factor in one local authority. Other local authorities were missing data for some children. Overall, parental capacity factors data was missing for at most 8% of children.

Mental health and substance misuse data was missing for around half of all children aged 10 year and over in two local authorities. Other local authorities

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were missing data for some children. Overall, mental health and substance misuse data was missing for 5% and 7% of children respectively.

Health checks data was missing for over 70% of children aged 5 years or younger in two local authorities. Other local authorities were missing data for some children. Overall, health checks data was missing for 12% of children.

Dental checks data was missing for over 60% of children aged 5 years and over in two local authorities. Other local authorities were missing data for some children. Overall, dental checks data was missing for 13% of children.

Immunisations data was missing for over 60% of children in one local authority. Other local authorities were missing data for some children. Overall, immunisations data was missing for 9% of children.

Percentages in this release have been calculated based on those children where known information was provided and are rounded to the nearest per cent. Where information is not available, this is clearly indicated on StatsWales.

Some information on education has not been updated. End of Foundation Phase assessments and Key Stage 2 assessments were not required in 2023. 2023 will be the last ever collection of Key Stage 3 data. Only the Capped 9 (interim) average points score has been published at Key Stage 4.

Further information on quality can be found in the [statistical release for 31 March 2019](#).

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous,

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resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid on 16 March 2016.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

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