

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
DIRECTORATE



Quarterly Child Protection Statistics for Northern Ireland (April – June 2016)



Reader Information

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Target Audience	Social Services Directors, Directors of Children's Services, Chief Executives of HSC Board and Trusts in Northern Ireland, health care professionals, academics and social care stakeholders.
Main uses of document	Data from this publication is used to monitor the delivery of social care services to children, to help assess Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust performance, corporate monitoring, to inform and monitor related policy, and to respond to parliamentary/assembly questions. The bulletin is also used by academics/ researchers, the voluntary sector and those with an interest in child protection.
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Please note that from quarter ending 30 September 2016 we will be publishing these statistics in table format only

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The statisticians within IAD are out posted from the Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency (NISRA) and the statistics are produced in accordance with the principles and protocols set out in the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#).

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- *to disseminate findings widely with a view to stimulating debate, promoting effective decision-making and improvement in service provision; and*
- *be an expert voice on social care information.*

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We collect, analyse, and publish a wide range of community information that is used to help monitor the delivery of personal social services policy. Information collected by CIB is used to assess HSC Trust performance, for corporate monitoring, policy evaluation, and to respond to parliamentary/assembly questions.

Information is widely disseminated through a number of regular key statistical publications and ad hoc reports, details of which are available online.

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Key Findings

Child Protection Register

- At 30 June 2016, 2,207 children were listed on the Child Protection Register in Northern Ireland. This represented a 3% increase on the previous quarter;
- Taking account of local demographics, register counts per 10,000 children's population (under 18), ranged from 44.7 in the Western HSC Trust to 57.9 in the Southern HSC Trust; overall there were 51.0 children per 10,000 on the register;
- Four out of five (82%) children were on the register due to physical abuse, neglect or a combination of physical abuse and neglect;
- Some 70% of children on the Child Protection Register at 30 June 2016 had been on the register for less than one year with 2% of children on the register for three years or longer;

Child Protection Referrals

- HSC Trusts received 1,079 child protection referrals for the quarter ending 30 June 2016. This was 4% lower than the previous quarter, and 2% below the number of referrals for the same quarter in 2015;
- The largest proportion of referrals, 52%, originated from within Social Services, followed by the police with 14%.

Introduction

Background

The “Quarterly Child Protection Statistics for Northern Ireland” are based on the quarterly Children Order Returns CPR2, CPR3, CPR4 and CPR5 for Northern Ireland. Figures in this bulletin cover the Child Protection Register by legal status, category of abuse, duration on the register and age. Child Protection Referrals are presented by source of referral. A wider set of Children Order Returns are used to produce the [Children's Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland](#) publication, which presents childrens social care data for year ending 31 March.

Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (the Children Order) is the principal statute governing the care, upbringing and protection of children in Northern Ireland. It affects all those who work and care for children, whether parents, paid carers or volunteers. The Children Order emphasises the unique advantages to a child of being brought up within their own family. In practice this means that the Children Order sees families as a major way of supporting and helping children. Health and Social Care Trusts have the power and in some circumstances the duty, under the Children Order, to help children by providing services to their families.

Children can be referred to Social Services for a variety of reasons. If there are concerns that a child may be suffering or at risk of suffering ‘significant harm’, Social Services will conduct an investigation under Article 66 of the Children Order and respond appropriately. A Child Protection Case Conference may be convened and the child’s name included on the Child Protection Register and a Child Protection Plan drawn up to safeguard the child.

For every child subject to a Child Protection Plan or on a Child Protection Register in the United Kingdom it is estimated that there are likely to be around eight other children who have suffered maltreatment¹. This and new ways of harming and abusing children (e.g. through the internet or trafficking) provide serious challenges to protecting children.

¹ Source: “How safe are our children” (NSPCC, 2013)

Child Protection Register

A register must be maintained by each Health and Social Care Trust listing every child in the Trust area who has been abused or who is considered to be at risk of abuse, and who is currently the subject of a child protection plan.

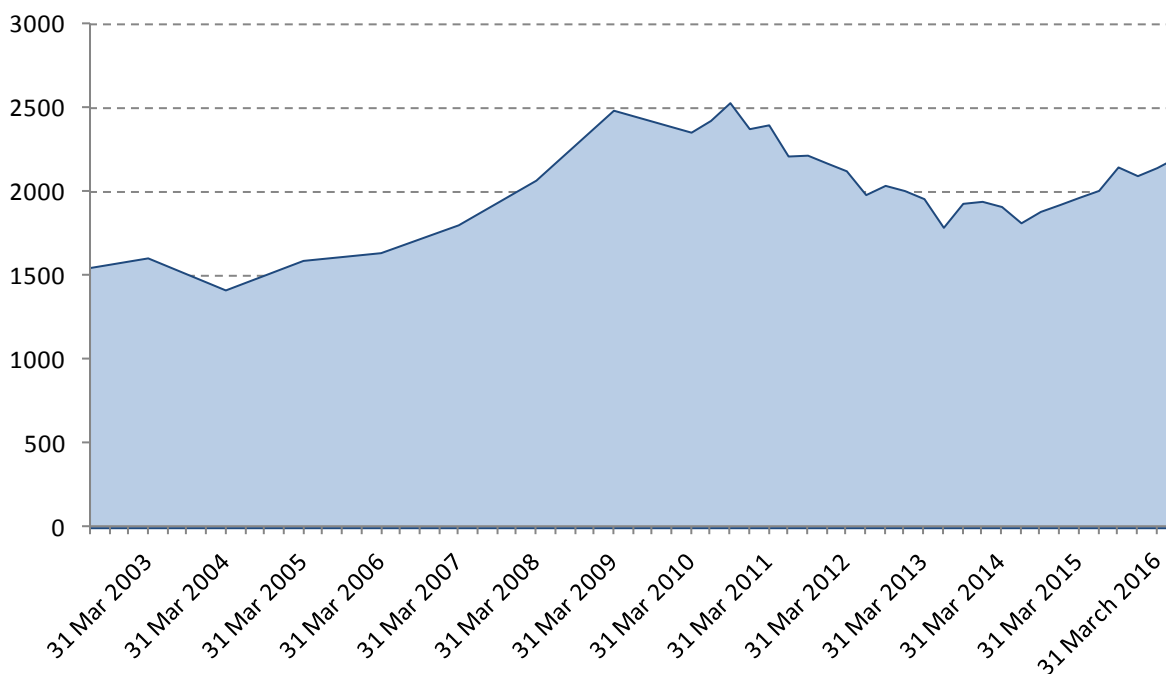
At 30 June 2016, 2,207 children were on the Child Protection Register in Northern Ireland, equivalent to 51.0 children per 10,000 of the under 18 population.

Children on the Register

From 2008 to 2011 there was a rapid growth in the number of children on the Child Protection Register, thought to be attributed to a number of high profile media stories relating to child protection. Since then there has been a general decline in the number of children on the register; however throughout 2015/16 there has again been a steady rise in the numbers of children registered.

The count of 2,207 children on the Child Protection Register at 30 June 2016 represented a small increase (3%) on the previous quarter (2,146). Compared with the same time last year (June 2015), the number of children registered increased by 10%.

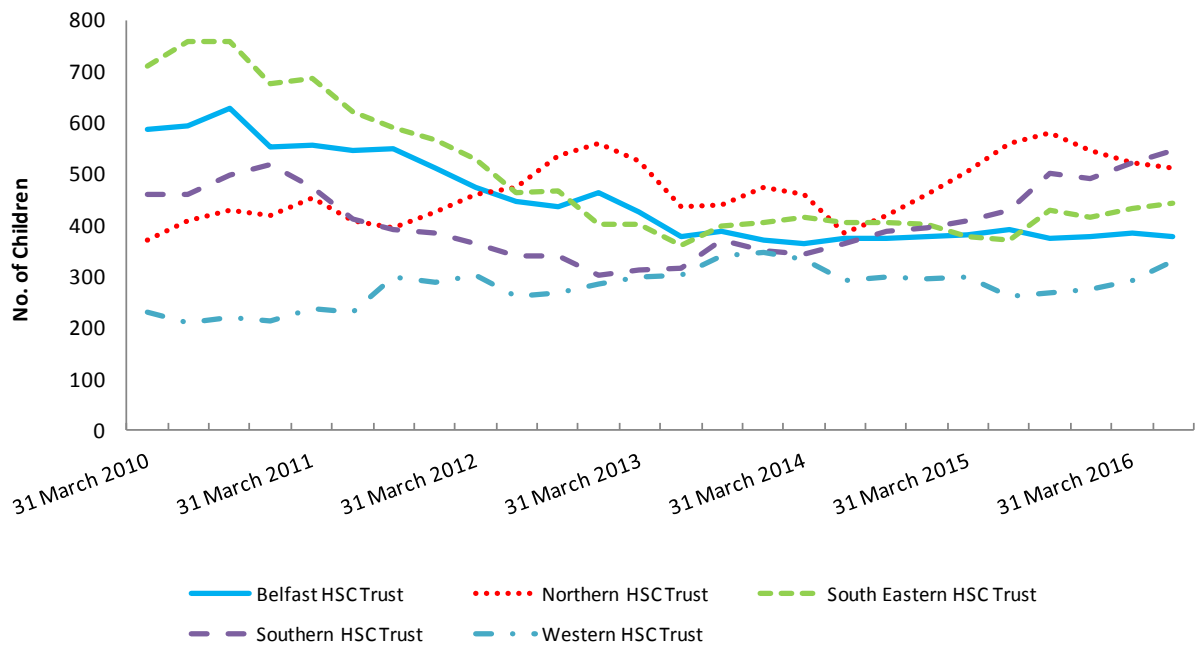
Figure 1: Children on the Child Protection Register 31 March 2002 – 30 June 2016



Source: Children Order Return CPR4

Note: Quarterly figures have been collated from 31 March 2010. Prior to this only annual figures were recorded

Figure 2: Number of Children on the Child Protection Register by HSC Trust (31 March 2010 – 30 June 2016)

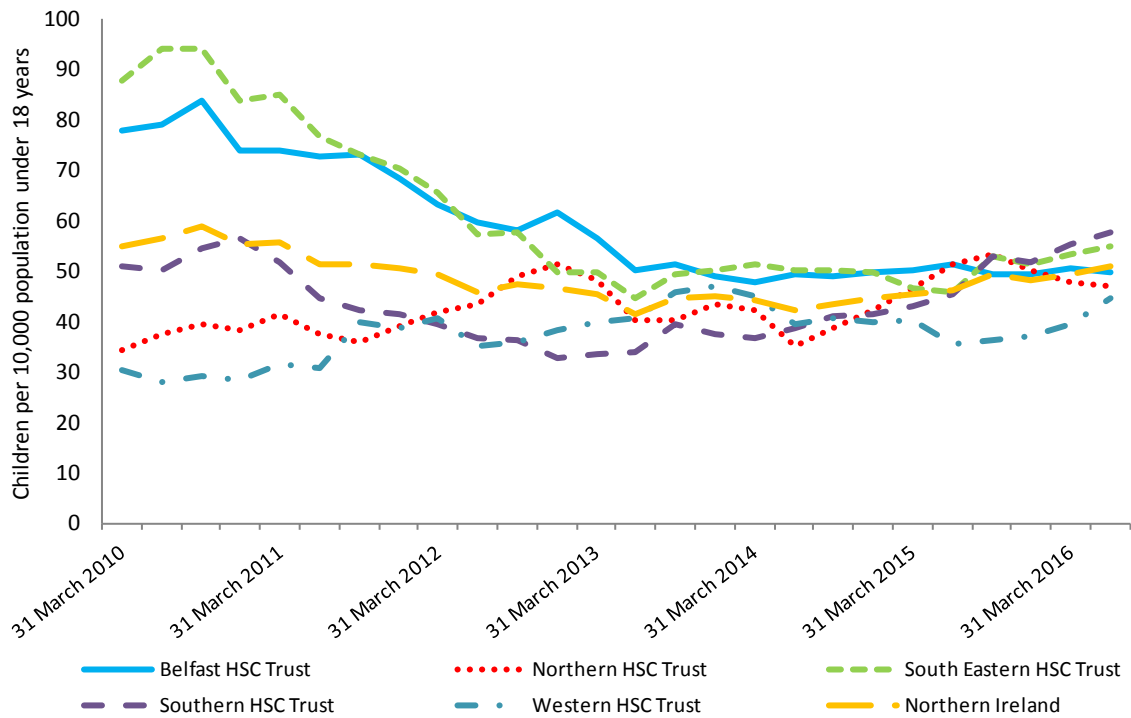


Source: Children Order Return CPR4

The number of children on the Child Protection Register by Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust is set out in Table 2. The small increase in the number of children on the register, compared to the previous quarter, is mainly due to an increase in the number of children registered in the Western and Southern HSC Trusts. At 30 June 2016, a quarter, 25%, of children on the register were in the Southern HSC Trust, with 23% in the Northern HSC Trust, 20% in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 17% in the Belfast HSC Trust and 15% in the Western HSC Trust.

Figure 2 illustrates that between June 2012 and June 2016, apart from two quarters, the Northern HSC Trust has had the largest number of children on the register. This might be expected as the Northern HSC Trust has the largest overall childrens population. However there is no overall correlation between childrens population size and the number of children in each HSC Trust area on the register, which would suggest that the number of children on the HSC Trusts register is related to a number of complex interconnecting socio-economic factors including poverty, deprivation and family stress.

Figure 3: Children on the Child Protection Register per 10,000 Population Under 18 Years (31 March 2010 – 30 June 2016)

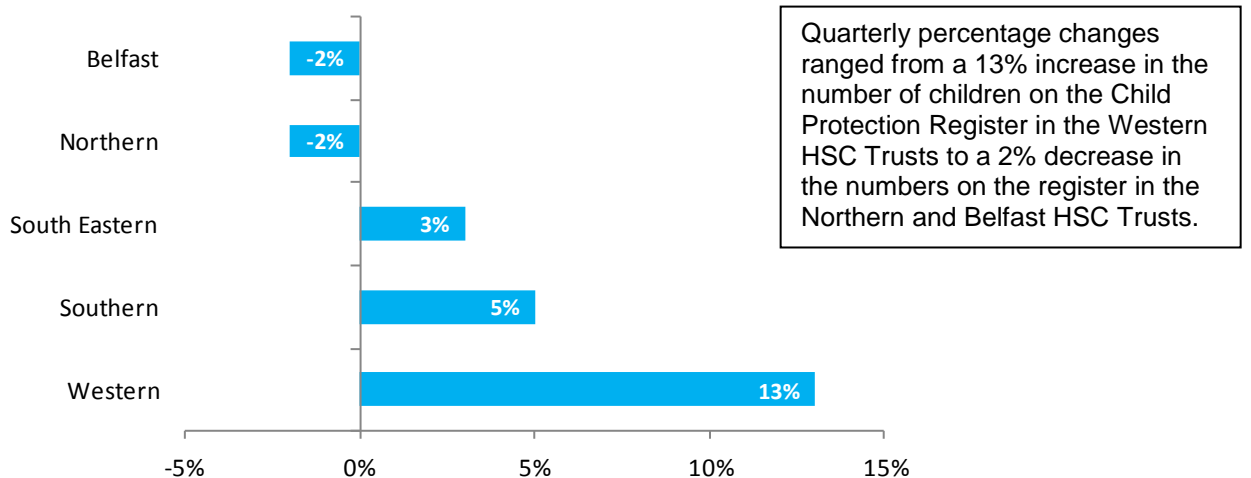


Source: Children Order Return CPR4

This becomes more apparent looking at Figure 3, which shows the changing trends in the number of children on the register as a proportion of the overall children’s population in each HSC Trust. It can be seen that, in general, there has been a convergence in the rates of children on the register, as rates in the Belfast and South Eastern Trusts have fallen.

Table 1, overleaf, details the number of children on the Child Protection Register per 10,000 of the population aged under 18 years. Regionally the proportion of children on the register has ranged from 58.9 children per 10,000 population under 18 at 30 September 2010 to 41.4 children per 10,000 under 18 at 30 June 2013, and is currently 51.0.

Figure 4: Quarterly Percentage Change in the Number of Children on the Child Protection Register by HSC Trust (31 December 2015 – 30 June 2016)



Source: Children Order Return CPR4

Table 1: Number of Children on the Child Protection Register per 10,000 Population Under 18 (31 March 2010 – 30 June 2016)

HSC Trust	Quarter Ending							
	31st March 2010	30th June 2010	30th September 2010	31st December 2010	31st March 2011	30th June 2011	30th September 2011	31st December 2011
Belfast	77.9	79.1	84.0	73.9	74.2	72.9	73.4	68.3
Northern	34.2	37.6	39.5	38.4	41.5	37.4	36.1	38.9
South Eastern	88.1	94.0	94.2	84.1	85.2	76.9	73.2	70.4
Southern	50.8	50.4	54.5	56.7	51.8	44.8	42.4	41.6
Western	30.5	28.0	29.2	28.4	31.4	30.9	39.9	38.5
Northern Ireland	54.8	56.4	58.9	55.3	55.8	51.4	51.5	50.4
	31st March 2012	30th June 2012	30th September 2012	31st December 2012	31st March 2013	30th June 2013	30th September 2013	31st December 2013
Belfast	63.4	59.7	58.2	61.7	56.6	50.2	51.4	49.0
Northern	42.1	43.6	49.1	51.5	48.3	40.1	40.3	43.6
South Eastern	65.6	57.2	57.7	49.6	49.8	44.5	49.5	50.1
Southern	39.4	36.7	36.3	32.6	33.7	33.8	39.4	37.4
Western	40.7	35.2	35.8	38.1	40.0	40.8	46.0	47.1
Northern Ireland	49.4	46.0	47.3	46.6	45.4	41.4	44.8	45.0
	31st March 2014	30th June 2014	30th September 2014	31st December 2014	31st March 2015	30th June 2015	30th September 2015	31st December 2015
Belfast	48.0	49.3	49.2	49.9	50.4	51.6	49.3	49.6
Northern	42.4	35.2	38.6	42.2	46.5	51.3	53.4	50.1
South Eastern	51.5	50.2	50.3	49.8	46.7	45.9	52.9	51.5
Southern	36.6	38.7	41.1	41.6	43.2	45.4	53.1	51.9
Western	45.1	39.4	40.6	39.9	40.3	35.6	36.4	37.1
Northern Ireland	44.3	41.9	43.5	44.5	45.5	46.4	49.6	48.4
	31st March 2016	30th June 2016						
Belfast	50.5	49.7						
Northern	47.9	47.1						
South Eastern	53.4	54.8						
Southern	55.2	57.9						
Western	39.4	44.7						
Northern Ireland	49.5	51.0						

Source: Children Order Return CPR4

Population figures based on latest available NISRA Mid-Year Estimates - some figures may differ from previous publications due to release of new NISRA Mid-Year Estimates

Age

Similar to the proportions of previous quarters, 12% of children on the register were aged under one year, 27% were aged 1 – 4 years, 39% were 5 – 11 years, 18% were 12 – 15 years and 4% were aged 16 or over at 30 June 2016. The proportion of children on the register aged 0 – 11 years was 11 percentage points higher than the Northern Ireland population for that age group. This indicates that the Child Protection population was younger than would be expected when looking at the general population. A contributing factor for this may be to do with the focus on early intervention to help families address problems as they arise.

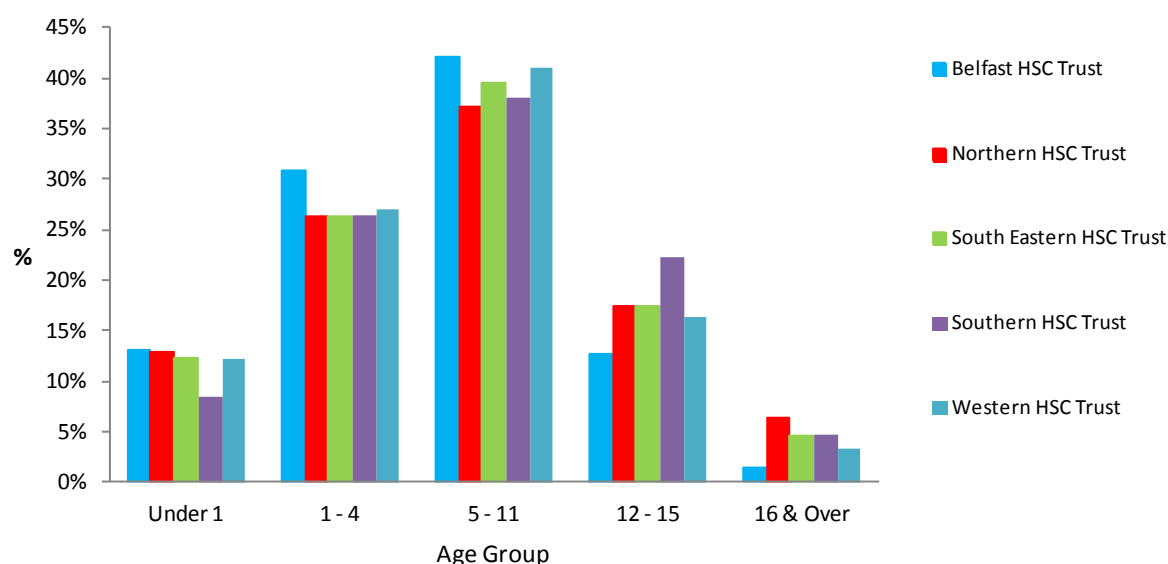
Table 2: Number of Children on the Child Protection Register by Age at 30 June 2016¹

HSC Trust	Age (years)					Total	Per 10,000 Population Under 18
	Under 1	1 - 4	5 - 11	12 - 15	16 +		
Belfast	49	116	159	48	5	377	49.7
Northern	66	135	190	89	32	512	47.1
South Eastern	54	116	175	77	20	442	54.8
Southern	46	145	208	122	26	547	57.9
Western	40	89	135	54	11	329	44.7
Northern Ireland	255	601	867	390	94	2,207	51.0

Population figures: Mid Year Population Estimates 2014 (NISRA, 2015)

In general the HSC Trusts have similar age distributions of children on the Child Protection Register, however some variation does occur quarter on quarter. For example at 30 June 2016 some 13% of the population on the register in the Belfast HSC Trust were aged 12 – 15 years compared to 22% in the Southern HSC Trusts.

Figure 5: The Age Profile of Children on the Child Protection Register at 30 June 2016



Source: Children Order Return CPR4

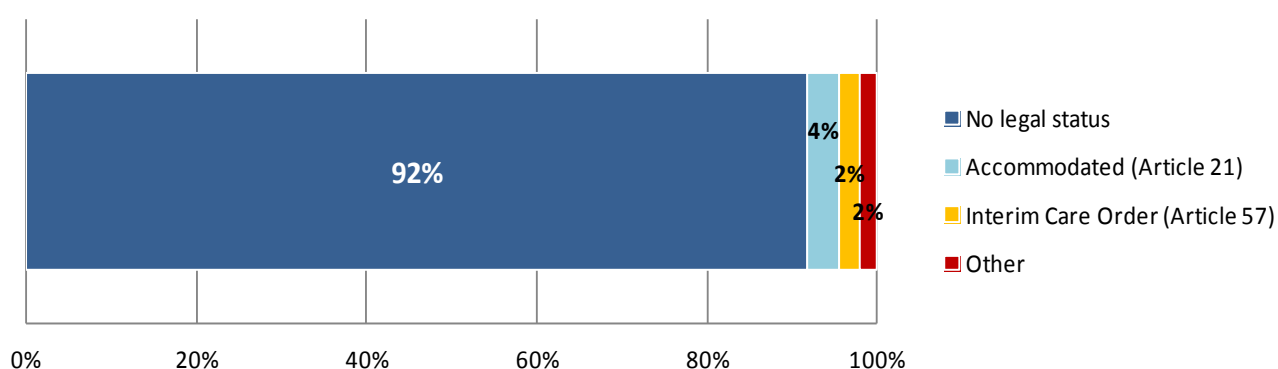
¹ Population figures are based on the latest available mid-year estimates from NISRA.

Legal Status

The Child Protection Register identifies children for whom there are serious concerns, and as such, the children on the register do not need to have a specific legal status. Those children on the register with a legal status are in many cases likely to be looked after children.

The majority, 92%, of children on the register had no recorded legal status at 30 June 2016. Some 4% of children were Accommodated (Article 21) and 2% were subject to an Interim Care Order. This regional pattern was repeated within each HSC Trust; however there was some variation with the proportion of those with no legal status ranging from 86% in the Western HSC Trust to 95% in the South Eastern HSC Trust. The composition of the register by legal status has remained relatively stable between 31 March 2010 and 30 June 2016¹.

Figure 6: Legal Status of Children on the Child Protection Register at 30 June 2016



Source: Children Order Return CPR4

¹ Description of the different legal status can be found in Appendix B

Table 3: Legal Status of Children on the Child Protection Register at 30 June 2016

HSC Trust	Legal Status							Total
	Accommodated (Article 21)	Interim Care Order (Article 57)	Care Order (Article 50 or 59)	Deemed Care Order (Paras 11 & 30 of Sch 8)	Interim Supervision Order (Article 57)	Other	None	
Belfast	16	12	5	0	0	16	328	377
Northern	17	6	-	0	-	8	479	512
South Eastern	15	8	-	0	-	0	418	442
Southern	19	8	-	0	-	6	511	547
Western	15	19	-	0	-	9	284	329
Northern Ireland	82	53	9	0	4	39	2,020	2,207

Source: Children Order Return CPR4

Other includes those children with an Emergency Protection Order (Article 63 & 64)

'-' cell counts have been suppressed to avoid personal disclosure

Category of Abuse

Category of abuse is recorded on the Child Protection Register as neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or a combination of these.

Table 4: Children on the Child Protection Register by Category of Abuse at 30 June 2016

HSC Trust	Category of Abuse								Total
	Neglect, Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse	Neglect and Physical Abuse	Neglect and Sexual Abuse	Physical and Sexual Abuse	Neglect Only	Physical Abuse Only	Sexual Abuse Only	Emotional Abuse Only	
Belfast	5	95	7	5	120	112	14	19	377
Northern	-	90	-	23	149	153	40	43	512
South Eastern	-	92	6	-	154	118	21	43	442
Southern	-	76	-	11	119	237	46	47	547
Western	-	61	-	-	113	94	21	31	329
Northern Ireland	18	414	36	45	655	714	142	183	2,207

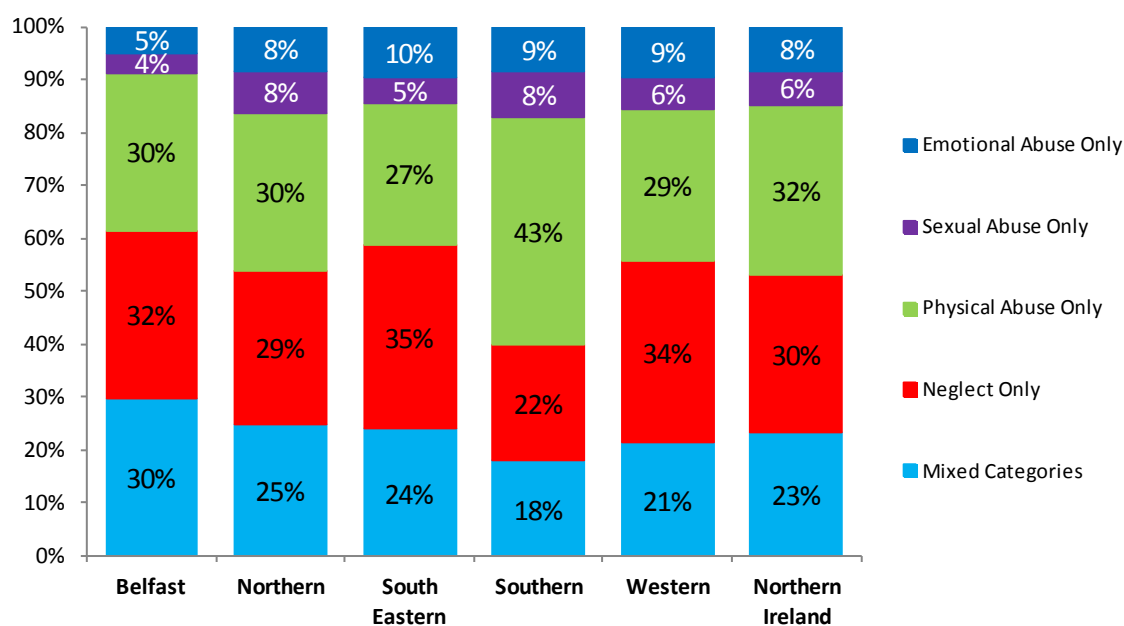
Source: Children Order Return CPR2

'-' cell counts have been suppressed to avoid personal disclosure

At 30 June 2016 the largest proportion of children was on the register due to Physical Abuse Only (32%) followed by Neglect Only (30%). A further fifth of children were on the register due to a combination of Neglect and Physical Abuse (19%).

There was some variation between the HSC Trusts in regards to the categories of abuse. The highest proportion of children on the Child Protection Register in the Southern (43%) and Northern (30%) HSC Trusts was due to physical abuse only. In the South Eastern (35%), Western (34%) and Belfast (32%) HSC Trusts the highest proportions of children registered were due to neglect only. 'Emotional Abuse Only' and 'Sexual Abuse Only' accounted for the smallest proportion of children on the register across all HSC Trusts, with regional proportions of 8% and 6% respectively.

Figure 7: Children on the Child Protection Register by Category of Abuse and HSC Trust at 30 June 2016



Source: Children Order Return CPR2

Duration on the Register

Just over two thirds (70%) of children had been on the register for less than one year at 30 June 2016, with over a quarter on the register for less than 3 months (27%). Just under a tenth had been on the register for over two years with two percent registered for three years or longer.

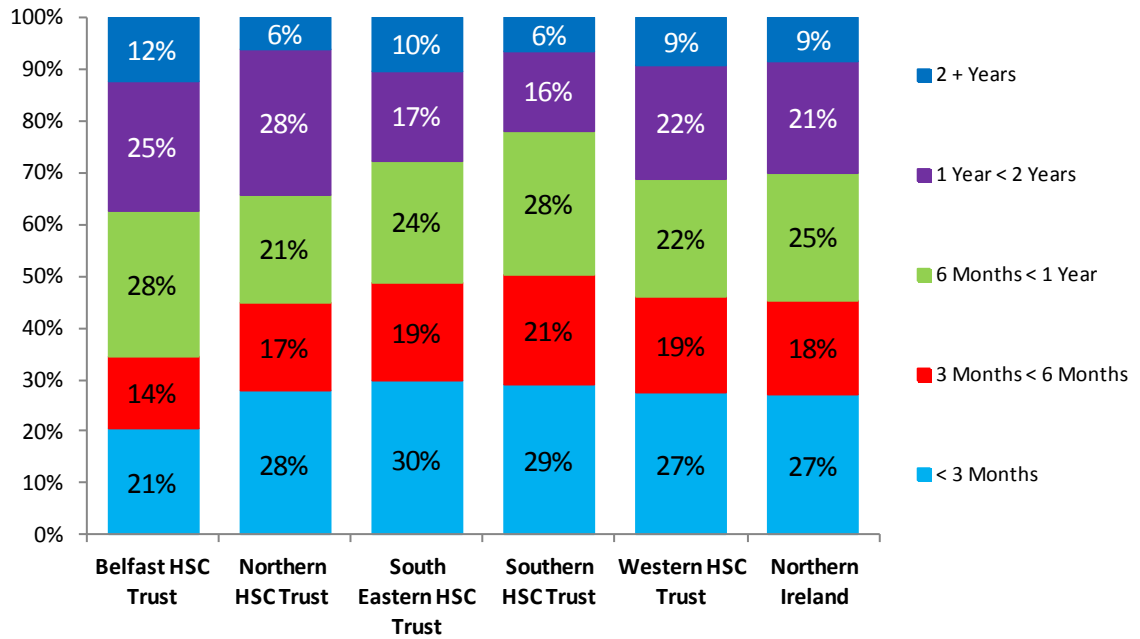
Table 5: Children on the Child Protection Register by Duration at 30 June 2016

HSC Trust	Duration					Total
	< 3 Months	3 Months < 6 Months	6 Months < 1 Year	1 Year < 2 Years	2 + Years	
Belfast	78	52	106	94	47	377
Northern	142	88	107	143	32	512
South Eastern	131	85	104	77	45	442
Southern	159	116	152	85	35	547
Western	90	62	74	73	30	329
Northern Ireland	600	403	543	472	189	2,207

Source: Children Order Return CPR5

The Southern HSC Trusts had the largest proportions of children on the register for less than one year at 78%, in comparison 63% of children in the Belfast HSC Trust had been on the register for this length of time. Some 6% of children in both the Northern and Southern HSC Trusts had been on the register for two years or longer compared to 12% of children in the Belfast HSC Trusts.

Figure 8: Children on the Child Protection Register by Duration and HSC Trust at 30 June 2016



Source: Children Order Return CPR5

Child Protection Referrals

During the quarter ending 30 June 2016, 1,079 Child Protection Referrals were received in Northern Ireland.

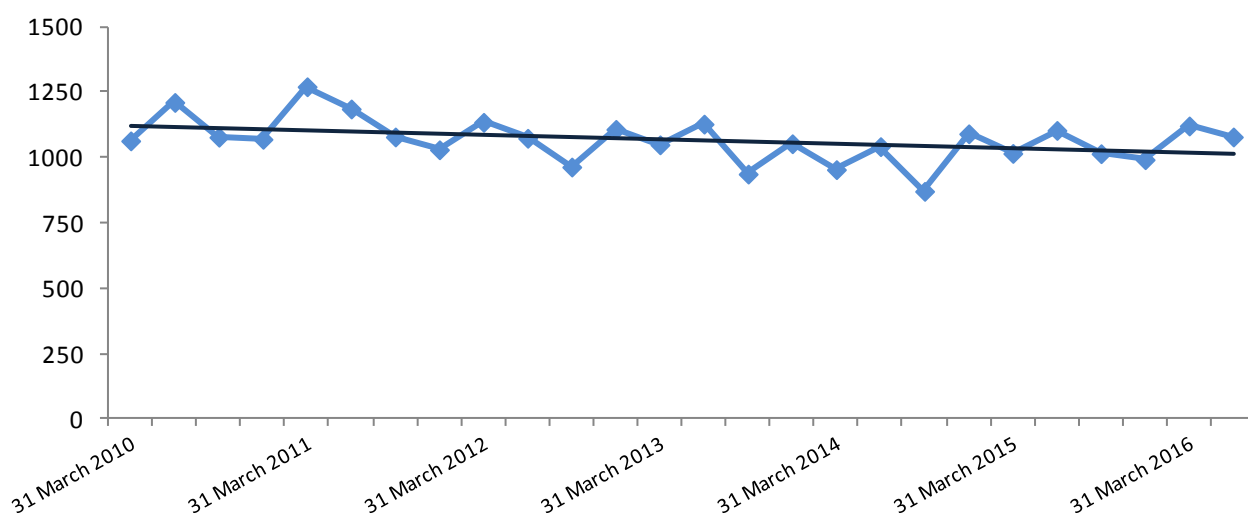
Referral Trends

In Northern Ireland, there were 24.9 child protection referrals per 10,000 of the population under 18 years during the quarter ending 30 June 2016, compared to 25.9 during quarter ending 31 March 2016. As a proportion of the children's population the Southern HSC Trust received the largest number of child protection referrals (31.7 referrals per 10,000 of the population under 18 years) and the Northern HSC Trust the lowest (17.0 referrals per 10,000 of the child population).

Of the total number of referrals received in Northern Ireland during the quarter, 28% originated in the Southern HSC Trust, 23% were in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 17% were in the Northern HSC Trust and 16% were in the Belfast and Western HSC Trusts respectively.

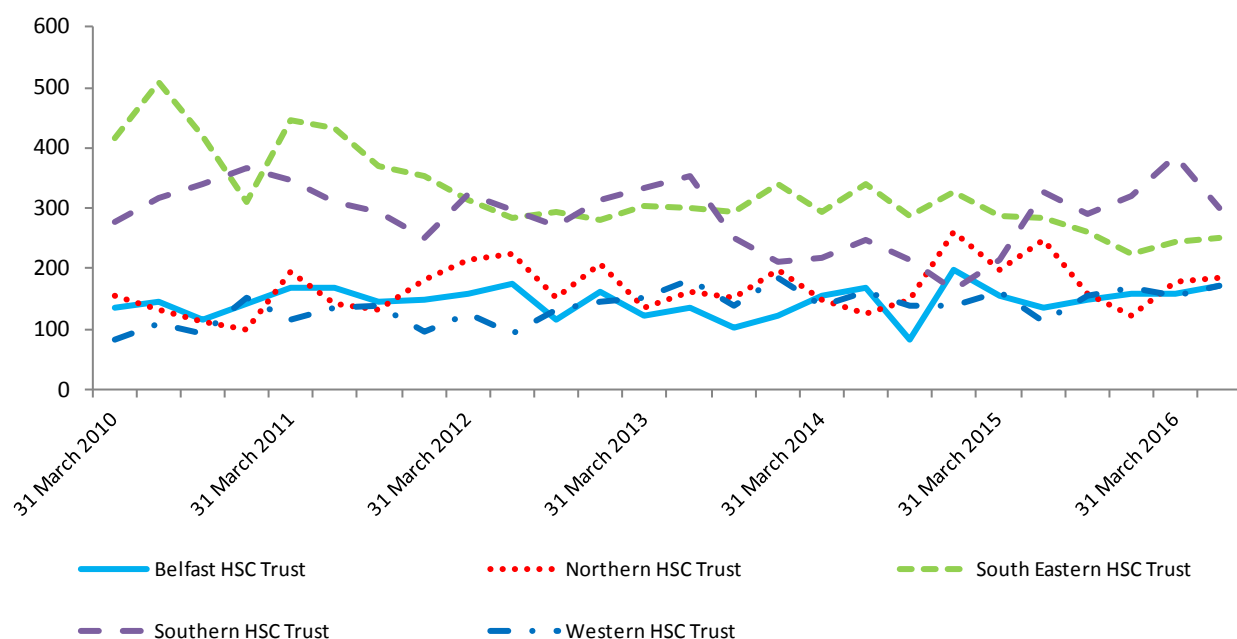
The 1,079 child protection referrals received was 4% lower than the previous quarter (1,121), and 2% below the referrals count for the same quarter in 2015 (1,104). In recent years the highest number of referrals was recorded in quarter ending 31 March 2011, when 1,271 referrals were received.

Figure 9: Child Protection Referrals 31 March 2010 – 30 June 2016



Source: Children Order Return CPR3

Figure 10: Number of Child Protection Referrals by HSC Trust (31 March 2010 – 30 June 2016)



Source: Children Order Return CPR3

There were increases of 11% in the Western HSC Trusts, 8% in the Belfast HSC Trust, 5% in the Northern HSC Trust and 3% in the South Eastern HSC Trust between quarter ending 31 March 2016 and 30 June 2016. Over the same period there was a decrease of 22% in the Southern HSC Trust. In general we should be careful in drawing conclusions from these findings as the relatively small numbers involved can lead to what seem to be large quarter on quarter percentage changes.

With this in mind, Figure 10, above, illustrates that the Belfast, Northern and Western HSC Trusts have received a reasonably steady flow of referrals since quarter ending 31 March 2010. The South Eastern and Southern HSC Trusts have in general received larger numbers of child protection referrals over the same period.

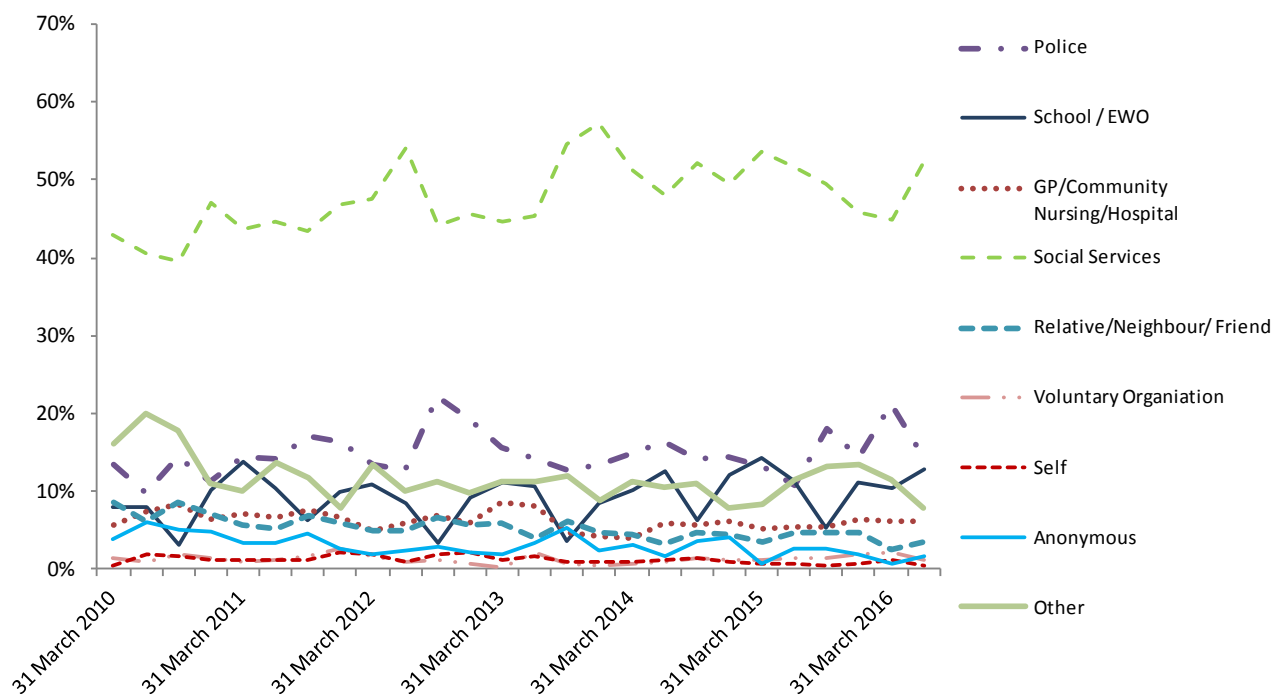
Referrals by Source

Table 6 overleaf sets out the number of child protection referrals for the quarter ending 30 June 2016, by source of referral.

The largest proportion of referrals during quarter ending 30 June 2016 originated from within Social Services (52%), followed by the police (14%). For all of the HSC Trusts the main source of referrals was within Social Services. However variation in these counts existed between the Trusts, with 74% of the referrals in the Northern HSC Trust originating from Social Services compared to 40% of the referrals in the South Eastern HSC Trust.

Social Services followed by the Police have consistently been the main sources of child protection referrals. Self referrals and those from voluntary organisations have amounted to around 1% each of all referrals each quarter.

Figure 11: Source of Child Protection Referrals in Northern Ireland (31 March 2011 – 30 June 2016)



Source: Children Order Return CPR3

Table 6: Child Protection Referrals by Source of Referral for Quarter ending 30 June 2016

HSC Trust	Source of Referral												Total	Per 10,000 Population Under 18
	Police	School / EWO ¹	Voluntary Org.	GP	Social Services	Comm. Nursing	Relative	Neighbour / Friend	Hospital	Self	Anon	Other		
Belfast	27	19	-	0	81	-	5	0	7	-	-	28	171	22.6
Northern	8	11	0	0	136	7	-	0	-	0	0	14	185	17.0
South Eastern	45	43	6	12	100	-	12	0	-	-	12	14	252	31.2
Southern	49	52	-	-	141	5	11	0	12	0	-	20	299	31.7
Western	26	14	-	-	107	0	-	0	-	0	-	9	172	23.4
Northern Ireland	155	139	12	18	565	15	36	0	32	4	18	85	1,079	24.9

^{1,2} cell counts have been suppressed to avoid personal disclosure

¹ EWO – Educational Welfare Officer

Source: Children Order Return CPR3

Population figures: Mid Year Population Estimates 2014 (NISRA, 2015)

Appendix A – Technical Notes

Data Collection

The figures in this bulletin detail numbers of children on the Child Protection Register at 30 June 2016 by legal status, age, category of abuse and duration and the numbers of Child Protection Referrals by source of referral for the quarter ending 30 June 2016. Figures are presented regionally and by Health and Social Care Trusts.

The statistics presented in this bulletin derive from Children Order returns CPR2, CPR3, CPR4, CPR5 and the Regional Child Protection Committee Returns, provided by each of the five Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts in Northern Ireland to the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) as well as Community Information Branch (CIB) within the Department of Health (DoH).

These returns are part of a wider set of annual Children Order returns which together provide statistics on activity relating to Child Protection, Children in Need, Looked After Children, and Children's Day Care. The wider set of returns are used to produce [Children's Social Care Statistics in Northern Ireland](#), which records childrens social care data at 31 March and for year ending 31 March, and compares childrens social care data over a five year period.

Data Quality

To facilitate the return of accurate counts HSC Trusts have agreed that ten working days from the end of the quarter is sufficient time to update the main administrative system with relevant information. Statistics published do not reflect system updates after the ten day window has passed. Following submission to CIB, further checks are carried out to verify that information is internally consistent. Trend analyses are used to monitor variations and emerging trends.

Queries arising from validation are presented to HSC Trusts for clarification, and if required returns may be amended and/or re-submitted.

Statement of Administrative Sources

CPR2, CPR3, CPR4, CPR5 and the Regional Child Protection Committee returns are derived from SOS CARE, which is the main administrative system used to support HSC Trusts in delivering social care services to children.

Rounding Conventions

Percentages have been rounded to whole numbers and as a consequence some percentages may not sum to 100. 0% may reflect rounding down of values under 0.5%

Disclosure Conventions

To prevent disclosure of the identity of individual children, it has been necessary to suppress the values of cells with low counts which may otherwise be derived by means of simple arithmetic. Our policy statement on [disclosure and confidentiality](#) is available on our website.

Revisions Policy

These data are revised by exception. If revisions are required, background circumstances are reported and revision dates are noted in subsequent publications of these series of statistics. The general [revisions policy](#) for community statistics is published on our website.

Main Uses of Data

Data from this publication is used to monitor the delivery of social care services to children, to help assess Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust performance, corporate monitoring, to inform and monitor related policy, and to respond to parliamentary/assembly questions. The bulletin is also used by academics/ researchers, the voluntary sector and those with an interest in child protection.

A detailed quality report for children's community statistics providing further information is available on our website.

Related Publications

Details of statistics on similar themes to those detailed within this bulletin and published by other countries in the United Kingdom and Ireland are outlined below.

England

[Characteristics of Children in Need in England 2014/15](#)

Wales

[Referrals, Assessments and Social Services for Children, 2014/15](#)

Scotland

[Children's Social Work Statistics 2014/15](#)

Republic of Ireland

[Quarterly Performance and Activity Data](#)

A National Statistics Publication

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is a producer's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

User Engagement

If you have any comments on this publication please contact:

Iain Waugh

iain.waugh@health-ni.gov.uk

Tel: 028 905 28446

After consultation this publication will no longer be published in its current format and, from quarter ending 30 September 2016, will be published as data tables only. In-depth analysis will be provided in the annual publication 'Children's Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland'.

Next Release

The next release of these statistics, for the quarter ending 30 September 2016, is scheduled for November 2016. The publication release dates for Health and Social Care statistics in Northern Ireland are available from the DoH website at:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/statistical-releases-calendar>

Appendix B – Data Definitions

Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order was made on 15 March 1995. The Children Order deals with the care, upbringing and protection of children, including disabled children. It reforms, consolidates and harmonises most of the public and private law relating to children in a single coherent statutory framework along the lines of the Children Act 1989 in England and Wales.

Child

Under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18.

Child Protection Register

A register must be maintained by each Trust listing every child in the Trust area who has been abused or who is considered to be at risk of abuse, and who is currently the subject of a child protection plan.

Registration

Placement of a child on to the Child Protection Register. Where a child has moved on or off the register several times during the year each registration is recorded.

Child Protection Deregistration

Deregistration is the removal of a child from the Child Protection Register. Where a child has moved on or off the register several times during the year each deregistration is recorded.

Child Protection Re-registration

Re-registration is the placement on to the Child Protection Register of a child who has already been on the register, irrespective of the date of their first registration on the register.

Child Protection Referrals

Child protection referrals are those referrals for which the initial assessment indicates that there may be child protection issues.

The threshold for action should be the allegation or suspicion of child abuse. However the balance needs to be struck between taking action designed to protect the child from abuse while at the same time avoiding unnecessary intervention. Except in emergency situations or urgent cases when immediate protective action is required, referrals will require preliminary discussion with other professionals from the child protection agencies and with the referrer. In some cases it will be necessary to seek specialist opinion.

In some cases action other than a formal investigation will be decided upon following the consultation process. This might include the provision of support for the family. Such a decision should be discussed and agreed with a social worker in consultation with the team leader or supervisor; and recorded and communicated to senior management.

The definition is not taken to mean all referrals, as some may require action such as advice or family support rather than child protection procedures.

Category of Abuse for Child Protection Registration

The category of abuse under which a child is registered will have been decided upon at the child protection conference, when agreement was reached that registration was necessary. If a child suffers multiple abuses, this should be recorded against the main category of abuse. The abuse may

be potential, suspected or confirmed, although the terms 'actual' or 'likely' occur. Potential and suspected equate with 'likely' and confirmed with 'actual'. The categories are:

1. Neglect, Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse
2. Main category - neglect
3. Main category - physical abuse
4. Main category - sexual abuse
5. Neglect and Physical Abuse
6. Main category - neglect
7. Main category - physical abuse
8. Neglect and Sexual Abuse
9. Main category - neglect
10. Main category - sexual abuse
11. Physical and Sexual Abuse
12. Main category - physical abuse
13. Main category - sexual abuse
14. Neglect (only)
15. Physical Abuse (only)
16. Sexual Abuse (only)
17. Emotional Abuse (only)

Neglect: The actual or likely persistent or severe neglect of a child, or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold or starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in significant impairment of the child's health or development, including non-organic failure to thrive.

Physical Abuse: Actual or likely deliberate physical injury to a child, or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child including deliberate poisoning, suffocation or Munchausen syndrome by proxy.

Sexual Abuse: Actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent. The child may be dependent and/or developmentally immature.

Emotional Abuse: Actual or likely persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection resulting in severe adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioural development of a child. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment. This category should be used where it is the main or only form of abuse.

Legal Status

The legal framework for compulsory intervention in the care and upbringing of children. If more than one legal status is indicated or in force for the child at 31 March, the latest one only is recorded.

Emergency Protection Order (Article 63 & 64): An Emergency Protection Order (EPO) is intended for use in urgent cases to protect a child in the short-term. Almost anyone with a concern can apply for an EPO, although in most circumstances a Trust will seek one. Where the applicant is a Trust or the NSPCC they must show that in the course of fulfilling their duty to investigate they are being unreasonably frustrated in gaining access to the child. Anyone else applying for an EPO they must show that the child is likely to suffer significant harm unless removed to, or allowed to remain, in a safe place.

An EPO last for eight days but can be extended on one occasion for a further seven days. An application to discharge the order cannot be made within the first 72 hours giving a Trust sometime to decide what actions to take in respect of the child. The person to whom the order is addressed also gains parental responsibility for the child for the duration of the order.

Accommodated (Article 21): Children with this legal status have been accommodated by a HSC Trust if there is no one who has parental responsibility for them, they have been lost or abandoned or of the person who has been caring for them has been prevented, for whatever reason, from providing them with suitable accommodation or care. Children are often accommodated with the permission of their parents.

Care Order (Article 50 or 59): A Care Order accords the HSC Trust parental responsibility and allows for the child to be removed from the parental home. This does not extinguish the parental responsibility of the child's parents but means that they cannot exercise this responsibility while the Care Order is in place. In for a Court to make a Care Order it must be satisfied that the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm and that the harm or likelihood of harm is attributable to,

the care given to the child, or likely to be given to the child, not being what it would be reasonable to expect a parent to give or the child being beyond parental control.

Interim Care Orders (Article 57): An Interim Care Order is put in place following an adjournment of proceedings for a Care Order or in any family proceedings in which a Court orders a Trust to investigate the circumstances of a child. An Interim Care Order can be in place for up to eight weeks initially and for a further four weeks upon renewal and subsequent occasions that Court deems an Interim Order necessary.

Supervision Order: This order requires the Trust to advise, assist and befriend the supervised child and can only be granted if the same threshold conditions that apply for Care Orders are met. This Order does not give the Trust parental responsibility. It does allow a social worker to issue directions about the child's upbringing including place of residence and involvement in certain programmes. Schedule 3 of the Children Order sets out the full range of matters that may be addressed in a Supervision Order.

Interim Supervision Orders (Article 57): An Interim Supervision can be put in place following an adjournment of proceedings for a Supervision Order or in any family proceedings in which a question arises with respect to the welfare of any child, it appears to the court that it may be appropriate for a supervision order to be made with respect to him, the court may direct the appropriate authority to undertake an investigation of the child's circumstance

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