

Children in Need (CiN) and Child Protection (CP)

Why is it important?

Most children and young people in County Durham are able to lead normal, happy and healthy lives and are safe within their family networks and communities, without the need for specialist or targeted services. However, some children are more vulnerable than others, either because of their own additional needs or because of less advantageous circumstances in which they live, will need extra help to be healthy and safe, and to achieve their potential.

The term 'vulnerable children' relates to children who are growing up with risks that could affect their wellbeing and ultimately life chances (Vulnerability Report 2019, Children's Commissioner). They may be at risk of harm and face poorer outcomes unless they are offered support through early intervention. The risk factors are broad and often interrelated, so understanding and recognising when a child or young person is at risk relies upon a culture of professional curiosity across all services. It is also crucial that there are appropriate referral mechanisms in place and that these are understood by all¹.

These vulnerable children, at increased risk of poorer health and wellbeing outcomes, are described as 'children in need' (CIN). This can include:

A **Child in Need (CIN)** is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health or development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services, or the child is disabled.

- children where referrals have been made about their welfare and safety
- those children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP)
- children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) or
- children who have become looked after.

A child in need is one who has been assessed by children's social care to be in need of services. These services can include, for example, family support (to help keep together families experiencing difficulties), leaving care support (to help young people who have left local authority care), adoption support, or disabled children's services (including social care, education and health provision). If a local authority identifies there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, it will carry out an assessment under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 to determine if it needs to take steps to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. If concerns are substantiated and the child is judged to be at continuing risk of harm, then an initial child protection conference should be convened within 15 working days. At the initial child protection conference, the decision will be made as to whether the child needs to become the subject of a child protection plan. When a child becomes the subject of a plan, the initial category of abuse is recorded.

A timely support package based on an early assessment of need is therefore crucial to enable the child to reach their potential and a failure to address these needs may place the child at risk and cause an escalation in their complexity.

¹ [Vulnerable Children](https://www.durhaminsight.info/vulnerable-children) landing page, Durham Insight, <https://www.durhaminsight.info/vulnerable-children>

Child Protection relates to safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.'

Working together to safeguard children, HM Government, 2018.

Children can be in need or at risk of significant harm for many reasons. Key risk indicators include living in poverty, family isolation and lack of support.

'Working Together to safeguard children' (HM Government, 2018) defines neglect as " The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Children who have a child protection plan are considered to be in need of protection, including from physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. The plan will detail the main areas of concern, what action will taken to reduce those concerns, how the child will be kept safe and how we know when progress is being made.

The latest report from the Children's Commissioner² suggests that nationally, based on the latest available data:

2.3 million

- children in England growing up with a vulnerable family background

1.6 million

- Children in families with complex needs for which there is no national established, recognised form of support

829,000

- Children 'invisible' to services

25%

- Of the amount councils spend on children now goes on the 1.1% of children who need acute and specialist services

Given the challenges faced by children in need and the inevitable disruption to their education, outcomes for this cohort are significantly lower than that for children as a whole. Across England's school population, children in need are:

3 X

- more likely to have Special Educational Needs, to be eligible for free school meals (a proxy for child poverty), or be persistent absentees

Twice

- as much school missed as the average child in England

1/3 more

- Children in Need failed to reach expected levels in reading, writing and maths than the average 11 year old

15%

- Reached 5ACEM GCSEs including English and maths, compared to a national average of **57% (2014)**

Child Protection

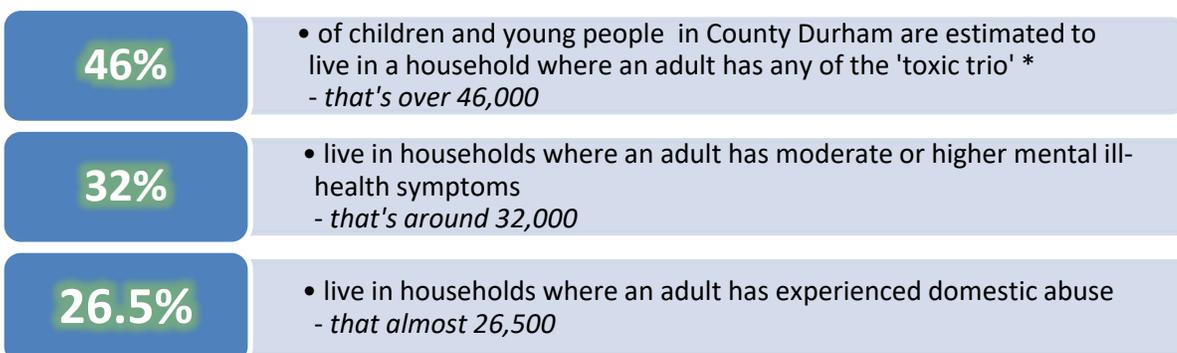
Children who are suspected of being subject to abuse and/or neglect are referred to children's social care services and may become subject to a child protection conference and an individual child protection plan.

Other relevant JSNA factsheets are available via the Children and Young Peoples theme on [Durham Insight](#) including [Children Looked After](#) (CLA), [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) (SEND) and [Domestic Abuse](#) (within the Community Safety theme).

County Durham – the local picture and how we compare

Children can experience many adverse 'risk factors' relating to a health, family or environment. These risk factors rarely occur in isolation and can combine to lead to relatively poor outcomes later in life.

Recent estimates for County Durham, produced as part of the Children's Commissioner's annual report on Vulnerability (2019) suggest that:

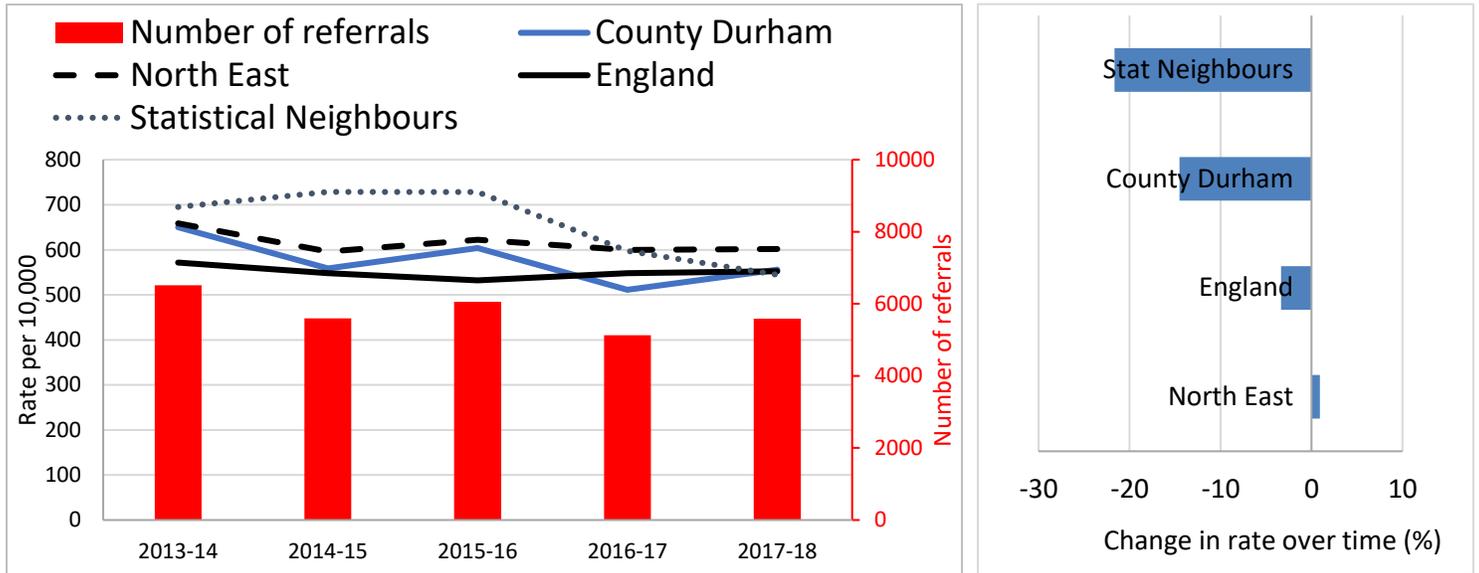


* toxic trio related relates to domestic abuse, alcohol/substance misuse and poor mental health

While little is known about trends in underlying prevalence of children *in need* of protection (*CiN*), much more is known about the profile of children being supported by children's social care, and how it has changed over time. The number of *CiN* changes frequently throughout the year. New children become in need and current children cease to be in need. For the purpose of this factsheet rates and numbers as at March 31st will be used for consistency, unless otherwise stated.

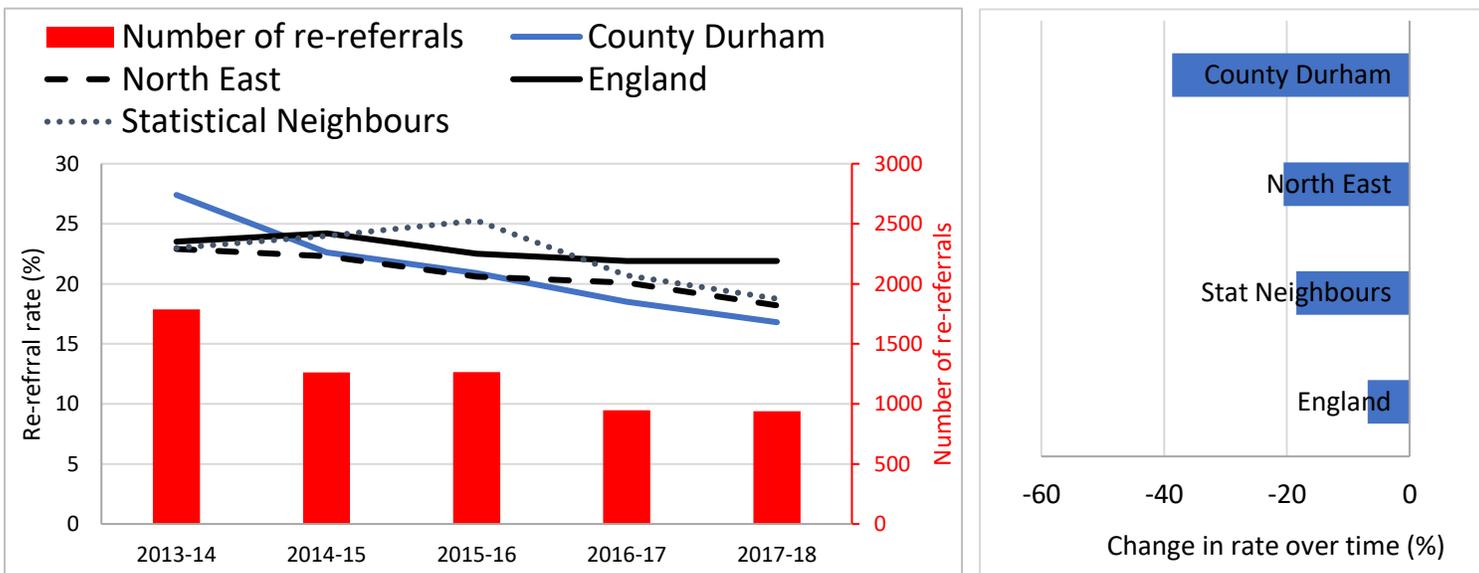
For the year 2017/18 there were 5,558 referrals to children's social care in County Durham at a rate of 556 per 10,000 (figure 1). This is similar to England (553) and Statistical Neighbours (545) and lower than the North East (602). Over time the rate of children's social care referrals in County Durham has been falling; from a high of 650 per 10,000 in 2013/14 to 556 in 2017/18, a reduction of almost 15%. In comparison, over the same period, referral rates over time for statistical neighbours fell by 22%, national rates reduced by 3% and regionally there was an almost 1% increase.

Figure 1. Referrals to children’s social care, number and rate per 10,000, and change over time (%) County Durham, North East, Statistical Neighbours and England, 2013/14 – 2017/18. Source. Children’s Social Care Benchmarking Tool (v2)



The rate of re-referrals to children’s social care in 2017/18 (figure 2) was lower in County Durham (16.8%) than nationally (21.9%), regionally (18.2%) and for statistical neighbours (18.7%). Over time the rate of children’s social care re-referrals in County Durham has been falling; from a high of 27.4% in 2013/14 to 16.8% in 2017/18, a reduction of almost 39%. In comparison, over the same period, re-referral rates over time regionally fell by 20.5%, for statistical neighbours the reduction was 18.5%, and nationally the reduction was almost 9%.

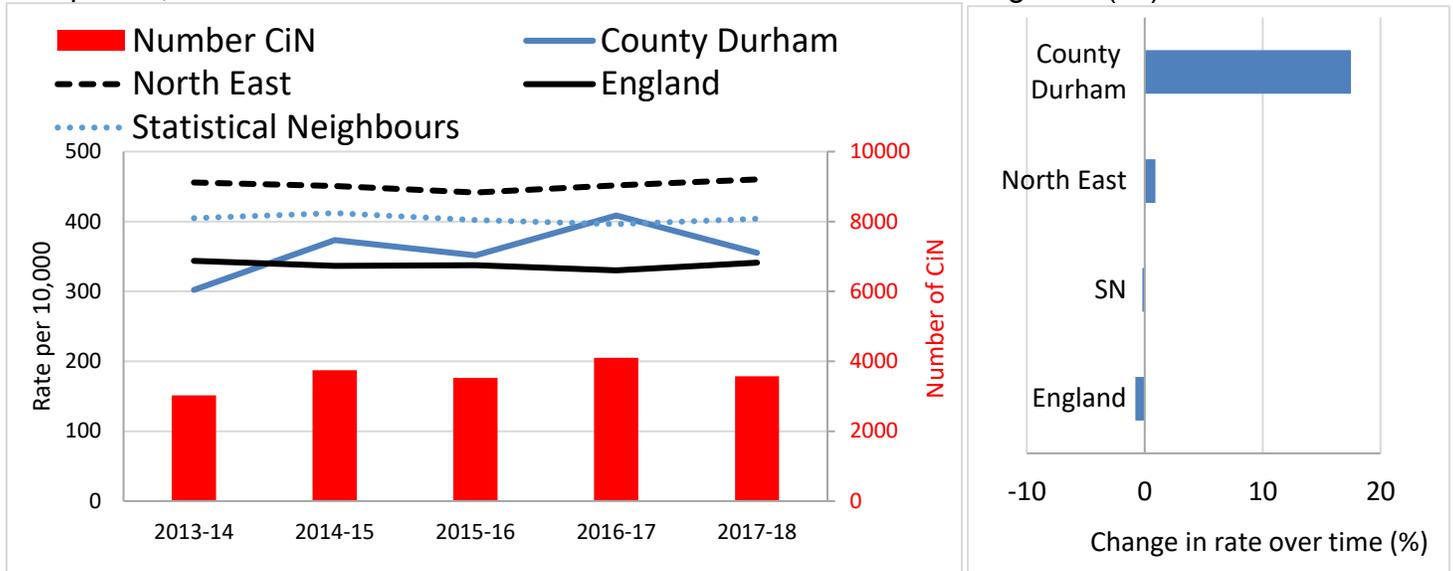
Figure 2. Re-referrals to children’s social care, number and rate per 10,000, and change over time (%), County Durham, North East, Statistical Neighbours and England, 2013/14 – 2017/18. Source. Children’s Social Care Benchmarking Tool (v2)



As at March 31st 2018 there were 3,570 children in need in County Durham at a rate of 355 per 10,000 (figure 3). This is similar to the England rate and lower than both statistical neighbour and regional benchmarks. Over time the rate of CiN has fallen locally by around 18% between 2014

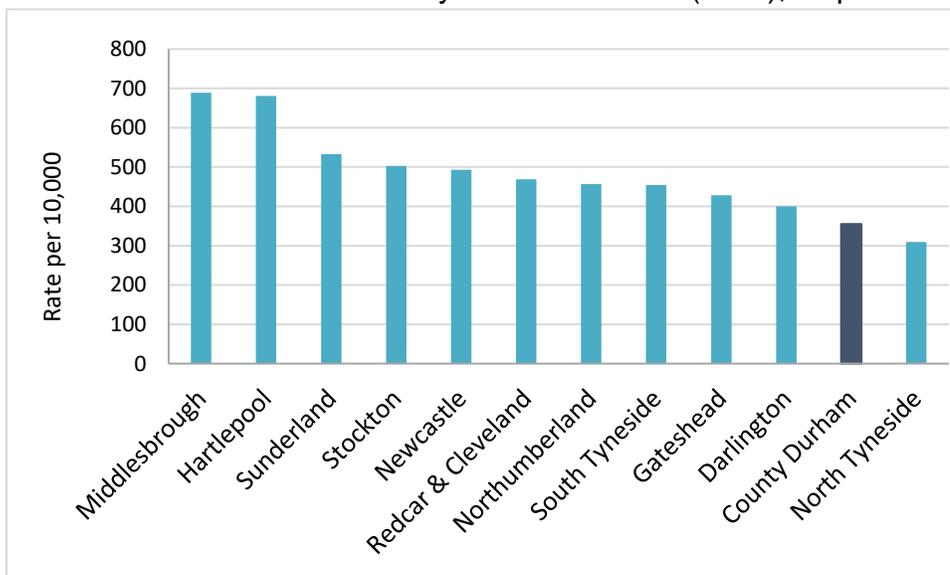
and 2018. In contrast national, statistical neighbour and regional benchmarks have experienced little change over time.

Figure 3. Children in Need, number (County Durham) and rate per 10,000, as at March 31st 2018, County Durham, Statistical Neighbours, North East and England, and percentage change in the rate per 10,000 over time. Source: Children’s Social Care Benchmarking Tool (v2)



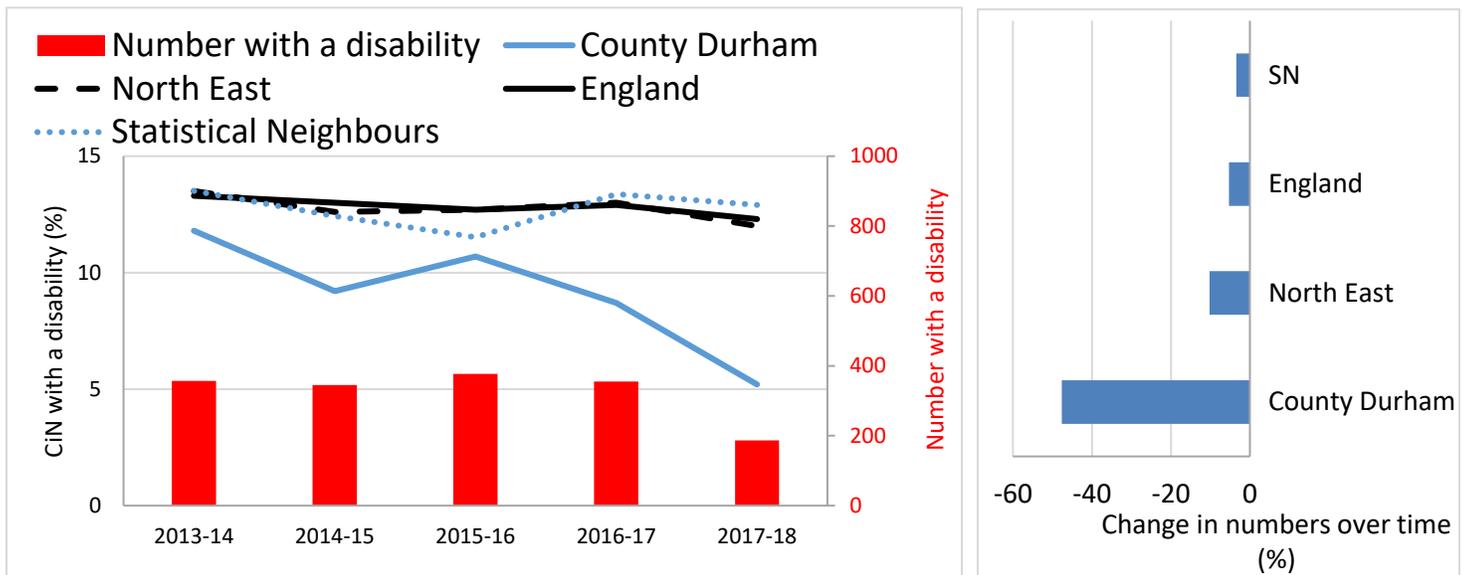
There is variation in the rate of CiN regionally, from a high of 689/10,000 in Middlesbrough to a low of 309/10,000 in North Tyneside (figure 4). The rate in County Durham is the second lowest of all North East Local Authorities. This is despite the significant increase in CiN over time shown in figure 3.

Figure 4. Children in Need, rate per 10,000, as at March 31st 2018, North East local authorities. Source: Source: Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT), Department for Education, March 2019.



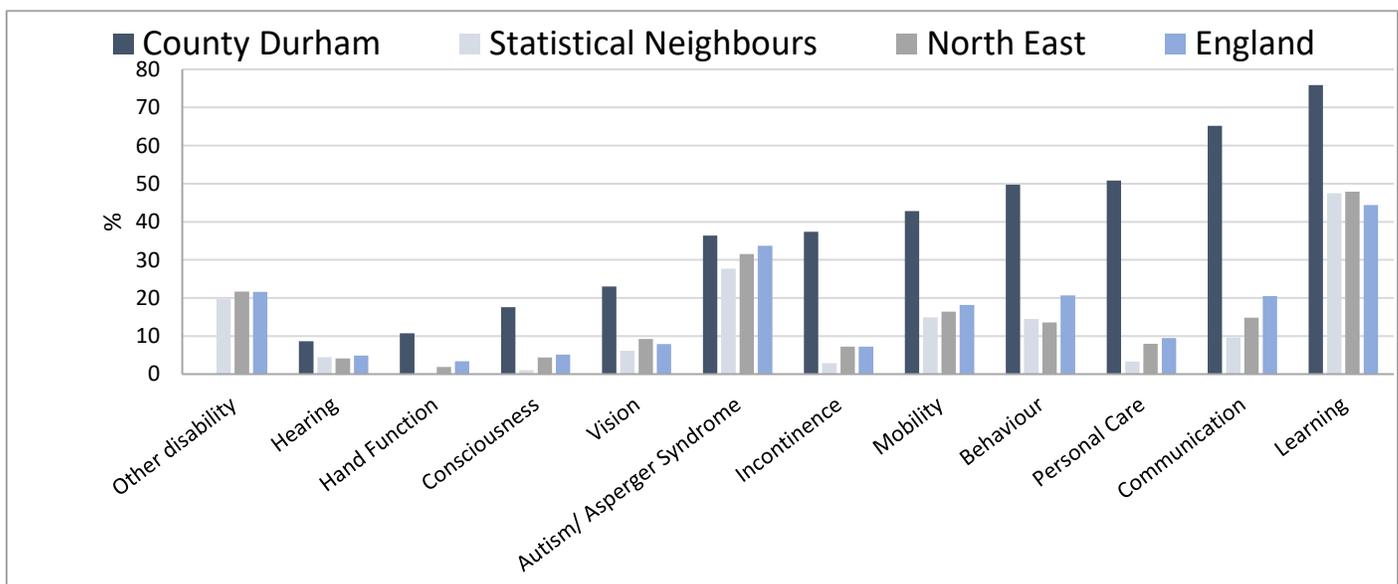
Around 5% (n=187) of Children in Need in County Durham have a recorded disability (figure 5). This is lower than regional, statistical neighbour and national benchmarks. Over time, County Durham experienced a larger reduction in the percentage of children in need with a disability (48%) than regional (10%), statistical neighbour (3%) and national (5%) benchmarks.

Figure 5. Children in Need with a recorded disability, number (County Durham) and rate per 10,000, as at March 31st 2018, County Durham, Statistical Neighbours, North East and England, and percentage change in the number over time. Source: Children’s Social Care Benchmarking Tool (v2)



Learning disability is the most common form of recorded disability in County Durham (76%), this is higher than national (44%), regional (48%) and statistical neighbour (47%) benchmarks (figure 6). County Durham displays a significantly higher proportion of recorded disability than benchmark comparators across most disability categories, with the notable exception of autism/asberger’s syndrome and ‘other disability’.

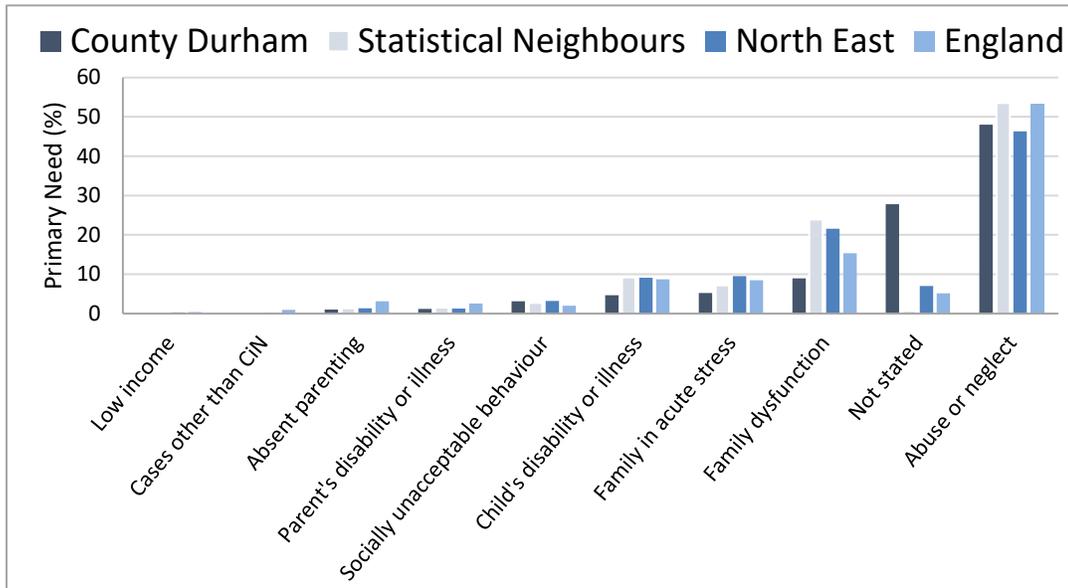
Figure 6. Proportion of Children in Need with a disability recorded, by disability, County Durham, North East, Statistical Neighbours and England, as at March 31st 2018. Source: Children’s Social Care Benchmarking Tool (v2)



Primary Need records the main reason for a child receiving services. The category submitted is that which fits best at the point where the initial assessment is carried out. If there is difficulty choosing between two or more categories, then the category highest in the list is chosen. The

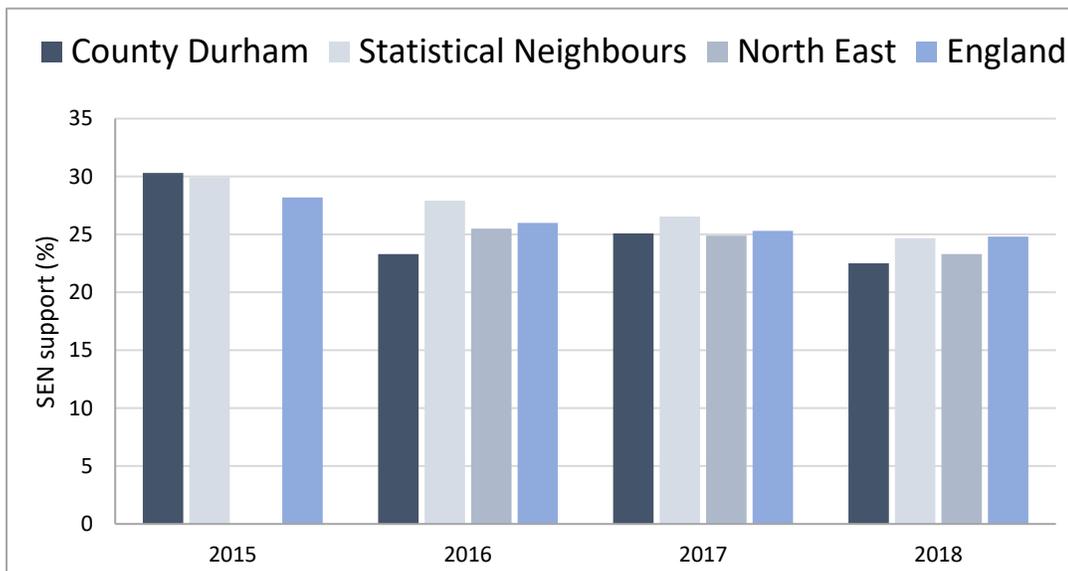
ordering of the categories relates to the specificity of the description, not necessarily of importance, but the order is fixed for consistency. Of those children in need in County Durham as at March 31st 2019 48.8% were defined as in need due to abuse/neglect (figure 7). This is similar to the regional figure (46%) and lower than national (53%) and statistical neighbour benchmarks (54%).

Figure 7. Children in need, by primary need, %, as at March 31st 2018, County Durham, Statistical Neighbours, North East and England. Source: Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT), Department for Education, March 2019.



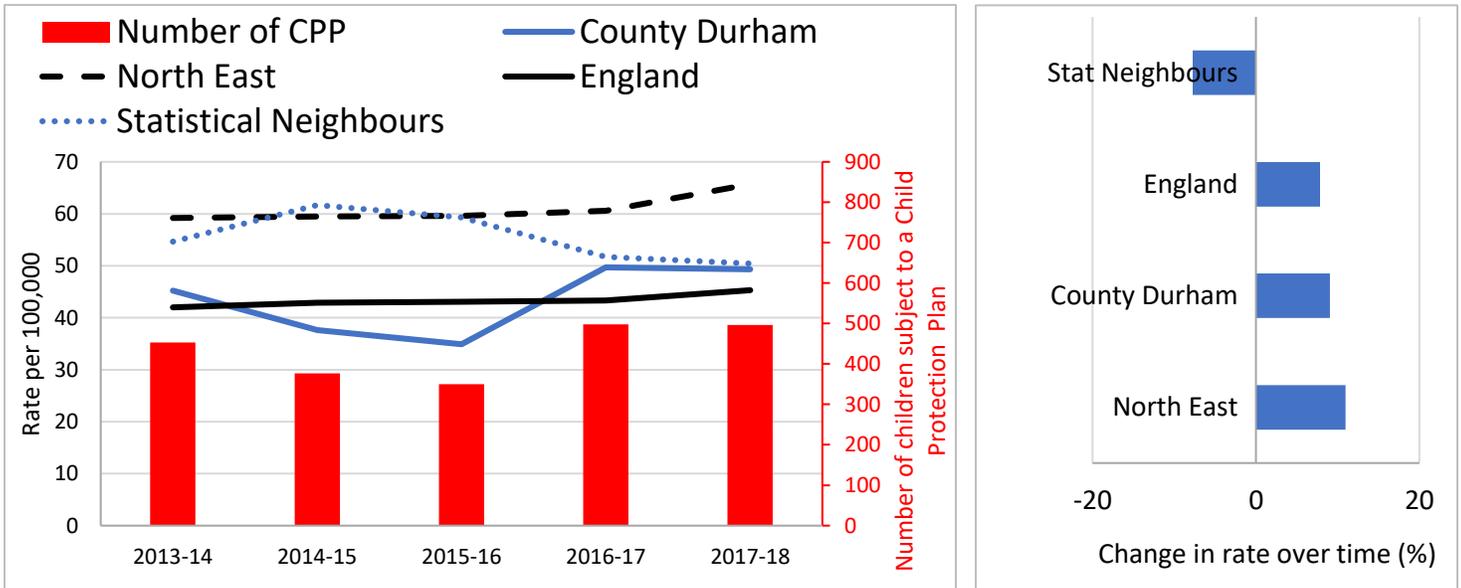
Nationally, around one in seven children in the general population have Special Educational Needs [SEN] ([SEND JSNA factsheet](#), Durham Insight). In County Durham 11.4% of all school pupils receive SEN support, marginally lower than the North East (12.4%) and England (11.7%). In comparison the proportion of school-aged CiN with SEN support (figure 8) is much greater locally (22.5), regionally (23.3%), nationally (24.8%) and for statistical neighbours (24.5%).

Figure 8. School-aged Children in Need with SEN Support, %, as at March 31st 2018, County Durham, Statistical Neighbours, North East and England. Source: Source: Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT), Department for Education, March 2019.



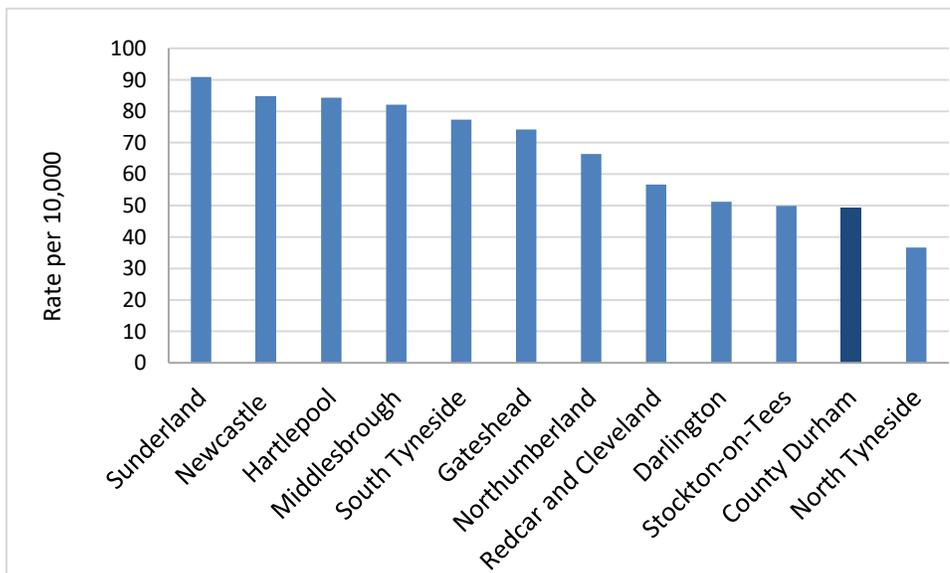
At 31st March 2019 the rate of children subject to a child protection plan in County Durham was 49 per 10,000 (figure 9). This equates to 496 children in County Durham. This rate is similar to the England rate (45.3) and lower than the North East (65.7). The rate of children subject to a Child Protection Plan has been rising over time locally (by 9%), regionally (by 11%) and nationally (by 8%). The statistical neighbour benchmark has experienced an 8% reduction over the same time period.

Figure 9. Number of children subject to a child protection plan, and rate per 100,000, as at March 31st 2018, County Durham, Statistical Neighbours, North East and England, and percentage change in the number over time. Source: Children’s Social Care Benchmarking Tool (v2)



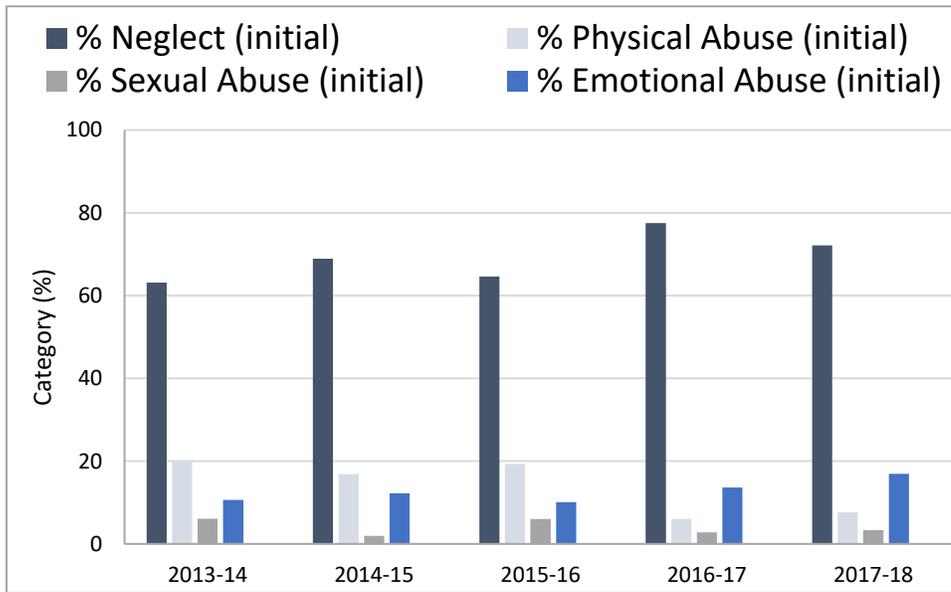
There is variation in the rate of children subject to a child protection plan regionally, from a high of 91/10,000 in Sunderland to a low of 37/10,000 in North Tyneside (figure 10). The rate in County Durham is the second lowest of all North East Local Authorities. This is despite the increase in the rate of child protection over time shown in figure 9.

Figure 10. Children subject to a Child Protection Plan, rate per 10,000, as at March 31st 2018, North East local authorities. Source: Source: Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT), Department for Education, March 2019.



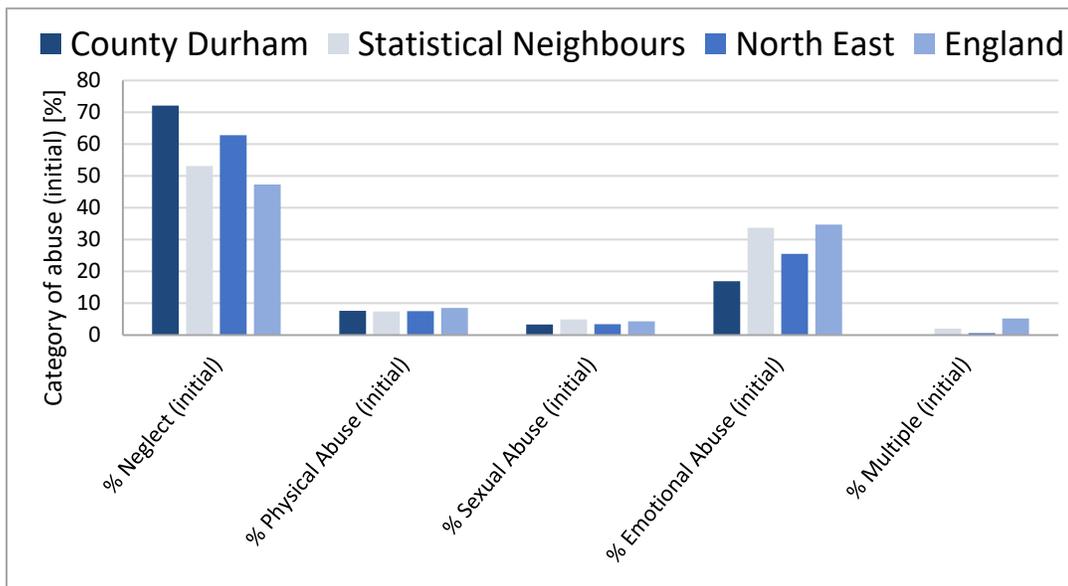
Categories given as the reason for the child protection plan are an 'on the day' count and thus provide a snapshot picture. Those children subject to a plan in County Durham as a result of neglect continue to remain the highest proportion at 72%, rising from 63% in 2013/14 (figure 11). Emotional abuse has become the second highest category, increasing from 10% in 2015/16 to 17% in 2017/18. This has coincided with a reduction in the proportion with physical abuse as an initial category of abuse over time, from 20% in 2013/14 to 8% in 2017/18.

Figure 11. Children subject to a child protection plan by initial category of abuse, as at March 31st, 2013/14 to 2017/18, County Durham. Source: Children’s Social Care Benchmarking Tool (v2)



Proportionally neglect is the largest category of abuse locally, regionally, nationally and in statistical neighbours (figure 12). However, the proportion of children subject to a CPP due to neglect in County Durham is higher (72%) than England (47%) and regional (63%) and statistical neighbour benchmarks (53%). However, the proportion with an initial category of emotional abuse is lower in County Durham (17%) than England (35%), the North East (25%) and statistical neighbours (34%).

Figure 12. Children subject to a child protection plan by initial category of abuse, as at March 31st, County Durham, Statistical Neighbours, North East and England, 2017/18. Source: Children’s Social Care Benchmarking Tool (v2)



Who's at risk

A number of factors have been identified as contributing to the risk of harm to children. Significant factors include households where drug or alcohol misuse are prevalent, where parents suffer from mental health issues, and households where children are exposed to domestic violence.

Any child or young person can be at risk of neglect, abuse, harm and exploitation regardless of their age, gender, socio-economic or ethnic background. However, the groups outlined below are at risk due to their exposure to several factors:

- Parental factors
- Domestic abuse
- Harmful practices (honour-based violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilation)
- Child sexual exploitation
- Being exposed or subject to abuse or radicalisation via technology
- Misusing substances and/or alcohol
- Experiencing mental health problems
- Having a disability
- Participating in risky behaviour
- Missing children and young people/runaways
- Living in poverty and homelessness

Parental factors

Children and young people most at risk of suffering significant neglect and abuse are those living in families exposed to multiple issues, such as a combination of one or more parental issues including poor mental health, substance misuse, domestic abuse and learning difficulties or disabilities

Parental substance misuse

In some cases, substance misuse can affect a parent's ability to meet adequately their child's needs. In particular, inadequate supervision might lead to an increased risk of injury to a child, and in the longer term might impact on a child's emotional development and feelings of self-worth. In addition, parent/carer substance misuse is a factor which can increase the likelihood of domestic abuse.

Poor parental mental health

Children might also be adversely impacted by poor parental mental health where it affects parents' ability to care for their child. They might suffer from anxiety and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. In older young people levels of emotional difficulty might lead to self-harming, eating disorders and suicidal ideation and attempts. Parents who have a learning disability may have difficulty in understanding their child's needs and developing the necessary skills to meet these needs leading to increased and poor outcomes for a child's health and emotional wellbeing.

Abuse and neglect

In the short term, children subject to harm and abuse may be at risk of physical injury and neglect and can fail to thrive as a result of their basic care needs not being met. Where children are subject to sustained abuse and neglect the long-term impact on their health might include physical and mental health problems, increased likelihood of substance misuse and behavioural issues such as self-harming, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. In adulthood, they might experience difficulties in forming and maintaining healthy relationships and poor mental health.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is a particularly prevalent factor prompting referrals to Children's Social Care, the highest recorded factor in assessment outcomes and a determining factor present in a significant number of families where there are children with a Child Protection Plan. Children might be physically at risk as a result of exposure to domestic abuse and are at risk of emotional abuse if they have witnessed abuse within their household. The effects of witnessing domestic abuse are well researched, and this issue is known to have a significant impact on the emotional wellbeing of children. Younger children might display symptoms of anxiety, bed wetting and fear of separation from the abused parent, and older children can be at greater risk of self harm, substance misuse or behavioural problems.

Missing Children

Children who are absent or missing from home or care could be trying to avoid a number of situations and problems where they are vulnerable or at risk of harm. Going missing can increase a child's vulnerability therefore placing them at further risk of becoming involved in crime, drug/alcohol use, child sexual exploitation and potentially child trafficking.

Sexual abuse and exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is significant harm and can result in sexual abuse, pregnancy, physical injury, mental health issues and emotional problems linked to the experiences, self harming, attempted suicide and eating disorders. In addition, substance misuse problems are common amongst those in sexually exploitative situations either when used as a coping mechanism for the trauma experienced or when used by perpetrators as a means of controlling the victim. Where CSE and child trafficking are linked the needs of young people are most unlikely to be met, their outcomes poor and their care neglected.

Technology

Technology may also pose a risk as children may be exposed or subject to abuse or radicalisation through:

- Online grooming.
- 'Sexting'
- Cyberbullying
- Online abuse or exploitation

How does this topic link to our strategies and plans?

In County Durham, we want all children and young people to have a safe childhood; to be given every opportunity to take control of their lives, be as independent as possible and achieve their full potential. Our key aim is to provide early help for children and families whilst protecting those that need it. We take the lead role in working with partners to implement safeguarding and child protection procedures as agreed by the [Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership](#). As a corporate parent, local authorities should have the same high aspirations for the children they look after as any parent and should ensure looked-after children and young people have the care and support they need in order to be healthy, happy and reach their full potential.

Further information relating to children in need and child protection can be found in the following strategies and plans:

- Count Durham Children and Young Peoples Strategy 2018/19 to 2020/21
- County Durham Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy for Looked After Children and Care Leavers 2018-2021

- County Durham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2019
- Durham County Council CAS Service Plan 2016-19

Evidence of what works

NICE Guidance

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) have produced a number of guidelines to support children in need including:

- [Looked-after babies, children and young people](#) (Pathway, 2016)
- [Looked-after children and young people, Public health guideline \[PH28\]](#)
- [Children's attachment: attachment in children and young people who are adopted from care, in care or at high risk of going into care](#) (NG26, 2015)
- [Transition from children's to adults' services for young people using health or social care services](#) (NG43, 2016)
- [Child abuse and neglect](#) (NG76, 2017)
- [Transition from children's to adults' services](#) (QS140)
- [Child maltreatment: when to suspect maltreatment in under 18s](#) (CG89, 2017)
- [Harmful sexual behaviour among children and young people](#) (NG55, 2016)
- [Children's attachment: attachment in children and young people who are adopted from care, in care or at high risk of going into care](#) (NG26, 2015)
- [Domestic violence and abuse: multi-agency working](#) (PH50, 2014)

Department for Education/Department of Health

- [Promoting the health and wellbeing of looked-after children](#) (Statutory guidance for local authorities, clinical commissioning groups and NHS England) (2015)
- [Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children](#) (Statutory guidance for local authorities) (2018)