

Why is it important?

The Children Act 1989 defines a Child in Need as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by a local authority. Disabled children and children whose health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of such services are also considered to be Children in Need under this Act.

The legislative definitions indicate the following categories of Children in Need:

- Significant Harm: Children who have suffered significant harm
- Disabled Children: Children with physical disabilities, sensory disabilities, learning disabilities or emotional and behavioural disabilities
- Parental Illness / Disability: Alcohol or drug misusing parents; Acutely ill parents (short term); Chronically disabled parents; Chronically mentally ill parents; Children assuming responsibility for chronically ill, addicted, or disabled parents
- Family in Acute Stress: Homeless family; Unsupported single parent; Death of carer
- Family Dysfunction: Domestic violence; Inconsistent parenting; Family breakdown
- Socially Unacceptable Behaviour: Disorderly behaviour; Offending; Truancy; Unsafe sexual behaviour
- Low Income: Asylum seeking families; Non habitually resident status; Independent young people
- Absent Parenting: Parents' death; Unaccompanied child asylum seekers; Children privately fostered
- Other: Step-parent adoptions; Inter country adoptions; Court reports; Subject access to files; Historical allegations / complaints

The local authority can provide a range of services for children in need which can include:

- after-school and holiday care or activities for school age children
- advice, guidance and counselling
- day care facilities for children under five and not yet at school
- occupational, social, cultural or recreational activities
- assistance with travelling to and from home in order to use any services provided by the local authority
- assistance for the child and family to have a holiday
- family centres
- financial assistance usually in the form of a loan
- respite care
- looking after the child

Local authorities have a responsibility to respond to all children who are identified as being in need, or in need of protection. This means that children and young people who are suffering from harm, abuse and neglect are quickly identified, and that information is shared appropriately to afford them protection and ensure access to appropriate services, in line with assessed need.

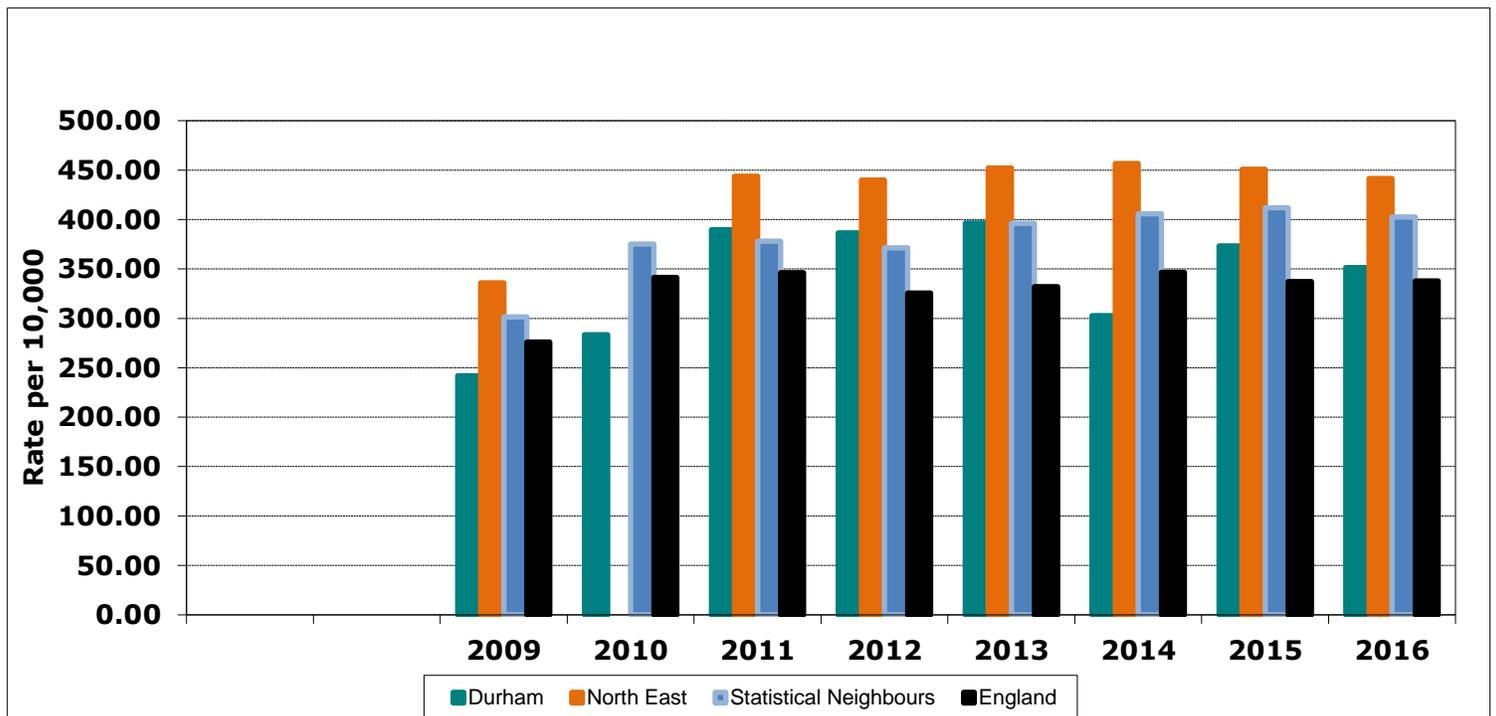
Durham data – the local picture and how we compare

There are 100,242 children aged 0-17yrs in County Durham.

In 2015/16 there were 6,679 children assessed as 'in need', a rate of 666.3 per 10,000. Durham's rate is comparable to the England rate (667.1).

A child in need is one who has been assessed by children's social care to be in need of services. When a child or young person requires a specialist service, a social care referral is received, an assessment undertaken and a decision is made on whether or not a service is required. These services can include, for example, family support (to help keep families together who are 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).

Figure 1: Children in Need rate (per 10,000) – 2009-2016 (as at 31st March annually)



Source: SSID 2016

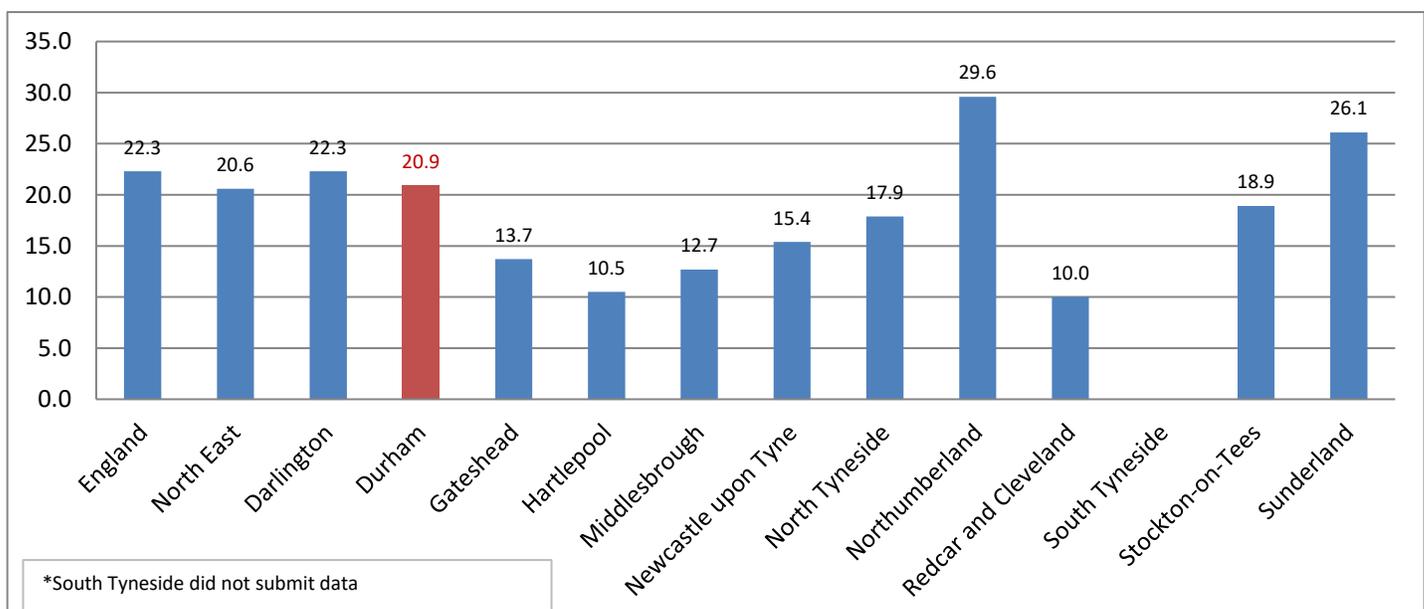
As at 31st March 2016, there were 3,523 children in need in County Durham. 377 (10.7%) of these had a disability recorded. 73.7% of the 377 had a learning disability. This is much higher than England (44.8%) and the North East (49.4%).

In 2015/16 County Durham received 6,054 children in need referrals, a rate of 603.9 per 10,000 population aged under 18. This is an increase compared to 5,600 in 2014/15, a rate of 558.3.

35% of all referrals were from the Police compared to 28% nationally and 27% for the North East. 15% of referrals were from the school / education service, which is lower than 20% nationally and 18% for the North East.

County Durham has the 4th highest percentage in the region (20.9%) of children in need referrals occurring within 12 months of the previous referral. County Durham's re-referral rate is lower than that in England (22.3%).

Figure 2: Percentage of referrals in 2015-16 which were within 12 months of a previous referral (re-referrals)

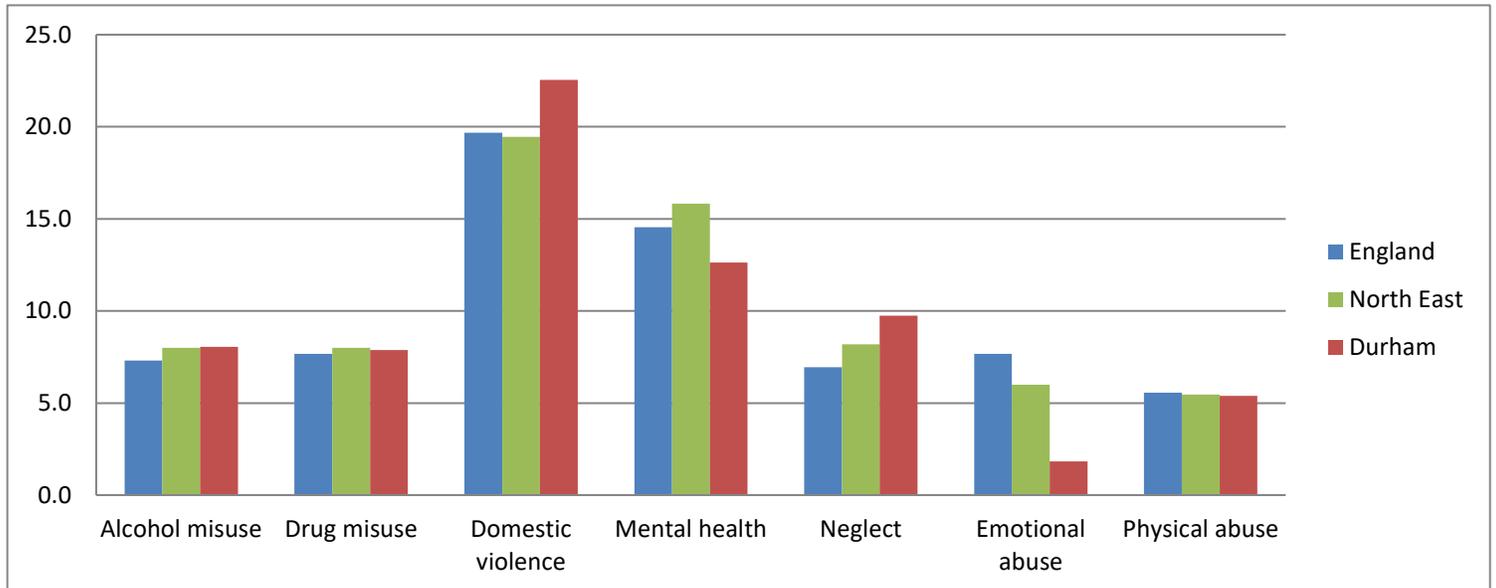


Source: SSID 2016

Figure 3 below shows that domestic violence is the main factor identified at assessment. It features in more of County Durham's assessments (approx. 22.6%) than in England (approx. 19.7%) and in the North East (approx. 19.5%).

In 2015/16, 52% of cases had neglect / abuse as the most common identified primary need, which is above the national average of 50.6%. Primary need records the main reason why a child started to receive services.

Figure 3: Top 7 Factors identified at assessment (2015/16) as a % of all factors identified

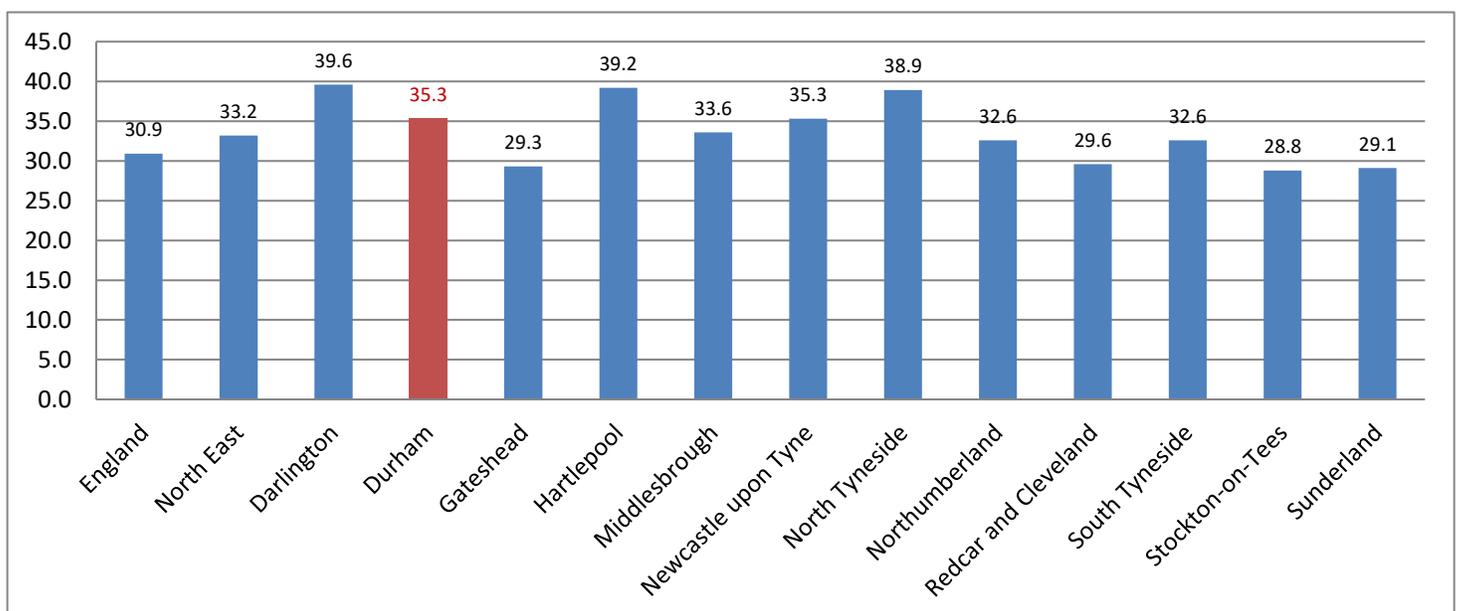


Source: SSID 2016

Emotional abuse is a factor identified in very few of the county's assessments – approximately 2%. Nationally, emotional abuse is identified in around 7.5% of assessments.

County Durham has the 4th highest percentage in the region (35.3%) of children in need cases which have been open for 2 years or more and a higher percentage than that nationally (30.9%).

Figure 4: Percentage of children in need as at 31 March 2016 where case has been open for 2 years or more



Source: SSID 2016

It should also be noted that 16.2% of cases are open for 3 months or less, compared to England (25.6%) and the North East (24.0%).

Groups most at risk

Children and young people in the child protection system and those who are looked after are most vulnerable.

Research and data show that there are a number of factors which make children and young people more likely to become a recipient of safeguarding and looked after children services. These include:-

- Children whose vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development (or their health and development will be impaired) without the provision of services, for example children with a disability
- Children whose parents have mental ill-health or learning difficulties themselves
- Children with parents abusing substances
- Households with children where domestic violence is present
- Children living in more deprived areas
- Asylum seeking children and young people

How does this topic link to our strategies and plans?

Further information can be found in the following strategies and plans:

- [County Durham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2019](#)
- [Children, Young People and Families Plan 2015-18](#)
- [Durham County Council CAS Service Plan 2016-19](#)
- [Early Help and Neglect Strategy 2015-17](#)

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Approver:

Published: March 2017

Data sources:

Social Services Information Database (SSID) 2016