We don't know exactly how many children in Northern Ireland have experienced child abuse. But official statistics do tell us how many children have been identified as needing support or protection.
There are over 430,000 children under 18 in Northern Ireland

Source: ONS (2017) Table MYE2 in Population estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, mid-2016 (XLS).

Explanation: There were an estimated 435,567 children under 18 years in Northern Ireland in 2016.

Over 22,000 children received support from children’s services in Northern Ireland in 2017


Explanation: 37,618 children were referred to children’s services during 2016/17.

At 31 March 2017, 22,737 children were
known to Social Services as "children in need" of support, services or further investigation.

Northern Ireland does not publish data on why children become children in need. So we don’t know how many become children in need due to abuse or neglect.

The children in need figures include children on the child protection register (because they are at ongoing risk of significant harm), and looked after children (children in care). A child may also receive support services because they are disabled, a parent is ill or disabled, or there are other family problems. Some children may have been abused but either there is no ongoing risk of significant harm or they don’t reach the threshold for "significant harm".


View the trend graph for Children in need in Northern Ireland (PNG).

Almost 2,100 children in Northern Ireland were identified as needing protection from abuse in 2017.

Source: Information Analysis Directorate (2017) Table 2.1 in Children's Social Care Statistics for Northern Ireland 2016/17 (XLS).
Explanation: 2,132 children were on the child protection register in Northern Ireland at 31 March 2017

These figures represent children identified and assessed as being at risk of significant harm.

See also Indicator 13 in How safe are our children? 2017.

View the trend graph for Number of children on and added to a child protection register in Northern Ireland (PNG).

There are over 2,900 children in care in Northern Ireland


Explanation: There were 2,983 looked-after children in Northern Ireland at 31 March 2017.

364 of these children are placed with parents.

Northern Ireland does not publish data on why children become looked after. So we don't know how many become looked after due to

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abuse or neglect.

Children become looked-after when they are under the care of the local authority. Looked-after children are often referred to as children in care.

See also Indicator 17 in How safe are our children? 2017.

View the trend graph for Number of looked after children in Northern Ireland (PNG).

Statistics across the UK

England
View official statistics for how many children have been identified as needing support or protection
Find out more

Scotland
View official statistics for how many children have been identified as needing support or protection
Find out more

Wales
View official statistics for how many children have been identified as needing support or protection
Find out more
More information and resources

Statistics on child abuse

View statistics and information on child abuse and neglect in the United Kingdom.

Find out more

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