

## Darlington LAC JSNA

In Darlington there were 220 children in care in 2017, excluding those in agreed short-term respite placements. In a population of 100,000, approximately 165 children would be expected to experience being looked after in any single year. However, due to movements in and out of care, more than a third as many children again will experience the care system during any one year. Nationally many children enter care for short periods of time: nearly a third (31%) of those who ceased being looked after had spent less than a month in care. Such short periods of being looked after are likely to create particular challenges for assessing and meeting health needs, as is the extent of movement of children between different carers. This dynamic picture is particularly challenging when planning local service provision.

### **The nature and prevalence of health problems in looked after children**

Looked after children and young people share many of the same health risks and problems of their peers, but often to a greater degree. They can have greater challenges such as discord within their own families, frequent changes of home or school, and lack of access to the support and advice of trusted adults. Children often enter the care system with a worse level of health than their peers, in part due to the impact of poverty, poor parenting, chaotic lifestyles and abuse or neglect. Longer term outcomes for looked after children remain worse than their peers<sup>1</sup>.

### **Mental health and emotional well-being**

There are high levels of mental health need amongst looked after children, particularly those in residential care. National research identified that 45% of looked after children were assessed as having a mental health disorder, rising to 72% of those in residential care. Among 5-10 year olds, 50% of boys and 33% of girls had an identifiable mental disorder. Among 11-15 year olds, the rates were 55% for boys and 43% for girls. This compares to around 10% of the general population aged 5 to 15.<sup>2 3</sup>

Clinically significant conduct disorders were the most common among looked after children (37%), while 12% had emotional disorders (anxiety and depression) and 7% were hyperactive. Even when compared to children in a community sample from the most deprived socio-economic groups, looked after children still showed significantly higher rates of mental health disorders.<sup>4</sup>

The Looking After Children longitudinal study of children and young people who remained in care for at least a year considered the needs of children at the point of first entry into care and identified emotional and behavioural problems from information recorded in case files by social workers and subsequently assessed by psychologists.<sup>5</sup> Using these methods, it was

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<sup>1</sup> Haywood J. and James C. (2008) Improving the health of children in care and care leavers in London 2008/9. Unpublished paper, Care Services Improvement Partnership

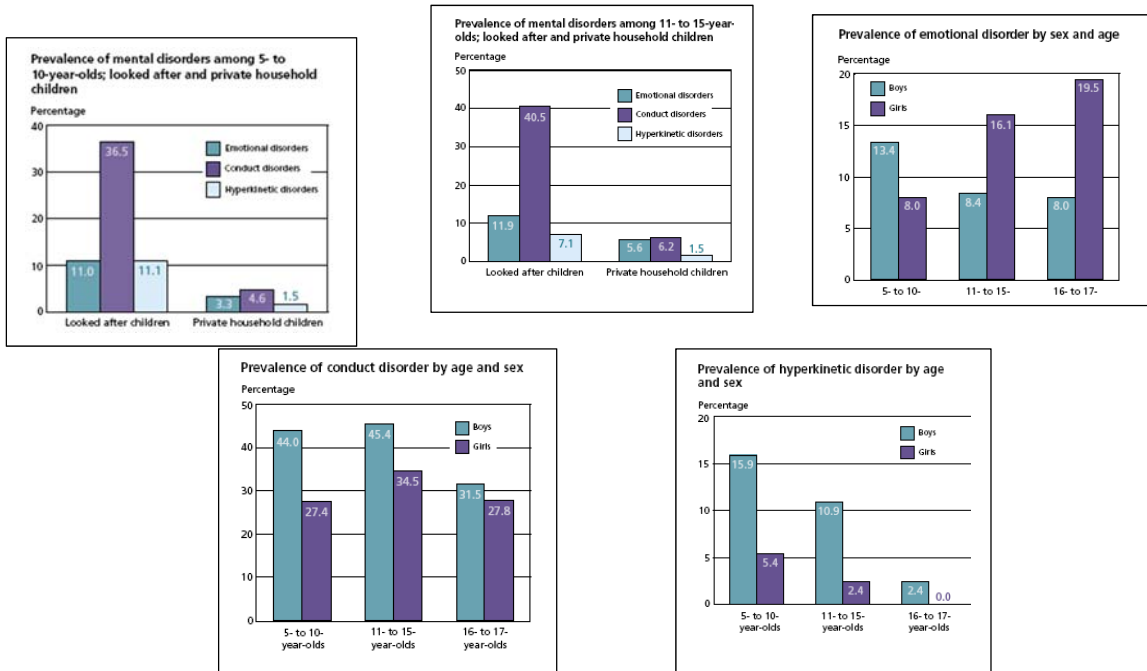
<sup>2</sup> Dimigen G., Del Priore C., Butler S. et al (1999) 'Psychiatric disorder among children at time of entering local authority care: questionnaire survey', *British Medical Journal*, 319, 675

<sup>3</sup> McCann J., James A., Wilson S. and Dunn G. (1996) 'Prevalence of psychiatric disorders in young people in the care system', *British Medical Journal* 313, 15, 29-30

<sup>4</sup> Ford T., Vostanis P., Meltzer H. and Goodman R. (2007) 'Psychiatric disorder among British children looked after by local authorities: comparison with children living in private households', *British Journal of Psychiatry* 190, 319-325

<sup>5</sup> Sempik J., Ward H. and Darker I. (2008) 'Emotional and behavioural difficulties of children and young people at entry to care', *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 13, 2, 221-233

found that 72% of looked after children aged 5 to 15 had a mental or behavioural problem. Among children starting to be looked after under the age of five, nearly one in five showed signs of emotional or behavioural problems.



## Physical Health

An ONS survey<sup>6</sup> found that two thirds of all looked after children had at least one physical health complaint. Looked after children are more likely than their peers to experience problems including speech and language problems, bedwetting, co<sup>o</sup>rdination difficulties and eye or sight problems.

Other health issues<sup>7</sup> which are more likely to be found in children who are Looked After include relatively simple issues include:

- incomplete immunisations
- asthma
- dental caries
- scabies,
- head lice
- conductive hearing loss

There are also other more complex issues found to be more prevalent in children who are looked after including;

- foetal alcohol effects
- vertically transmitted infections
- Undiagnosed disability
- Diagnosed disability
- Consequences of neglect and abuse
- Special Educational Needs

<sup>6</sup> Meltzer H., Corbin T., Gatward R., Goodman R. and Ford T. (2003) The mental health of young people looked after by local authorities in England. London: The Stationery Office

<sup>7</sup> V Rodrigues. Health of children looked after by local authorities. Public Health 2004 Jul; 118(5):370-6

## Care Leavers

National studies have indicated that Care Leavers are more likely to have health problems compared to peers. This indicated that within 3 months of leaving care individuals will be:

- 2x's risk of drug/alcohol problems.
- 2x's risk of mental health problems.
- 44% incidence of other health problems e.g. asthma/weight loss/ allergies/flu/ drug or alcohol related.

Those girls leaving care were found to be more likely to become teenage parents with > 50% Care Leavers likely to become pregnant within 18-24 months leaving care and 25% more likely to become pregnant within 1 year of leaving care. The risk of any teenage pregnancy include:

- 3x's incidence post-natal depression.
- 25% low birth weight babies.
- 60% higher infant mortality.

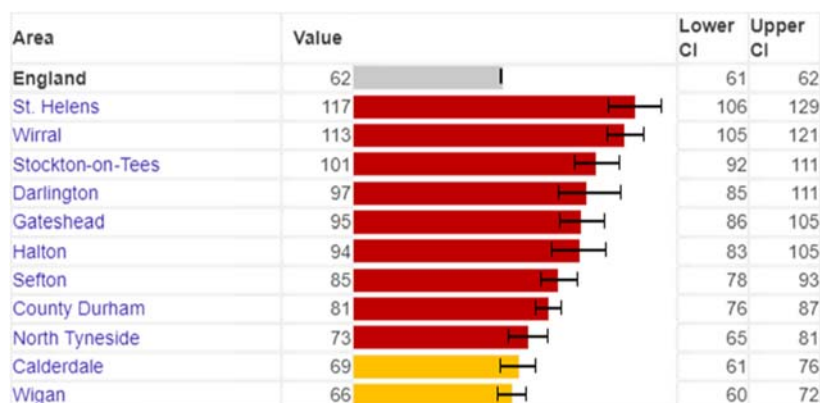
## Darlington position

All graphs obtained from PHE Fingertips <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/child-health-profiles/data#page/1/gid/1938133238/pat/6/par/E12000001/ati/102/are/E06000005/iid/90803/age/173/sex/4>

### Darlington and its CSSNBT statistical neighbours

Children in Care 2017

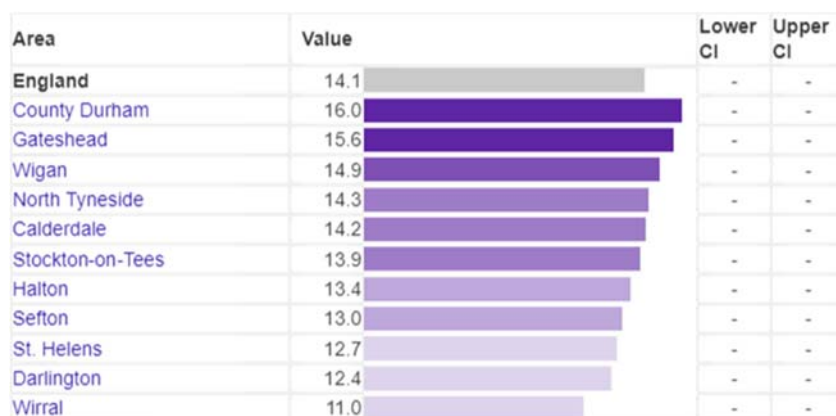
Crude rate per 100,000



Source: Children looked after in England. Department for Education.

Average difficulties score for all looked after children aged 5-16 who have been in care for at least 12 months on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016/17

Mean Score



Source: Department for Education

Looked after children: rate per 10,000 <18 population 2015/16 Crude rate - per 10,000

Area	Value	Lower CI	Upper CI
England	60.3	59.9	60.8
St. Helens	113.0	102.3	124.5
Wirral	99.2	91.9	107.0
Darlington	90.6	78.6	103.9
Stockton-on-Tees	87.7	79.1	97.1
Sefton	87.4	79.6	95.7
Gateshead	86.5	77.6	96.1
Halton	84.9	74.5	96.3
Wigan	71.8	65.6	78.5
North Tyneside	71.8	63.7	80.5
County Durham	67.8	62.8	73.1
Calderdale	65.4	58.2	73.3

Source: Department for Education

Under 18 conceptions 2016 Crude rate - per 100

Area	Value	Lower CI	Upper CI
England	18.8	18.5	19.1
Stockton-on-Tees	27.7	22.3	34.0
Halton	26.2	19.9	33.9
Wirral	26.2	22.1	30.9
Darlington	24.1	17.5	32.3
Wigan	23.1	19.1	27.6
St. Helens	22.6	17.5	28.8
County Durham	21.6	18.5	25.1
Sefton	20.9	16.9	25.6
Gateshead	20.6	15.9	26.2
Calderdale	19.6	15.4	24.7
North Tyneside	15.4	11.4	20.5

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)