

# JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2023/24

## Children Social Care

### Summary points

- As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, there were 735 children in care in Bristol.
- 339 children were subject of a Child Protection Plan in Bristol (31<sup>st</sup> March 2023)
- 574 children were on Child In Need Plans in Bristol (31<sup>st</sup> March 2023)
- There were 2,643 children Open to Bristol Social Care at the 31st March 2023

Children may become involved with Social Care for a variety of reasons, but the proportion who have a primary category of abuse and neglect, especially among looked after children, is considerably higher than those who have other primary categories. Neglect and abuse in childhood are significant risk factors for poor physical health, poor mental health and low educational attainment and can have an impact on the whole life course.

Children who experience neglect are also likely to have missed routine health checks and immunisations, leaving them at risk of a variety of harmful childhood and adult diseases. Poor health outcomes among children in care and those the subject of Child Protection plans are often exacerbated by other factors, such as deprivation.

There are three main categories of children requiring some level of support from Child Social Care; Children in care / children subject of a child protection plan / those in need of support (S17 Children Act 1989) for other reasons (which includes Disabled children). Figure 1 below shows a snapshot of the numbers of children in Bristol in these three categories of support at the end of each reporting year as well as those under assessment and children formerly in care still requiring a service.

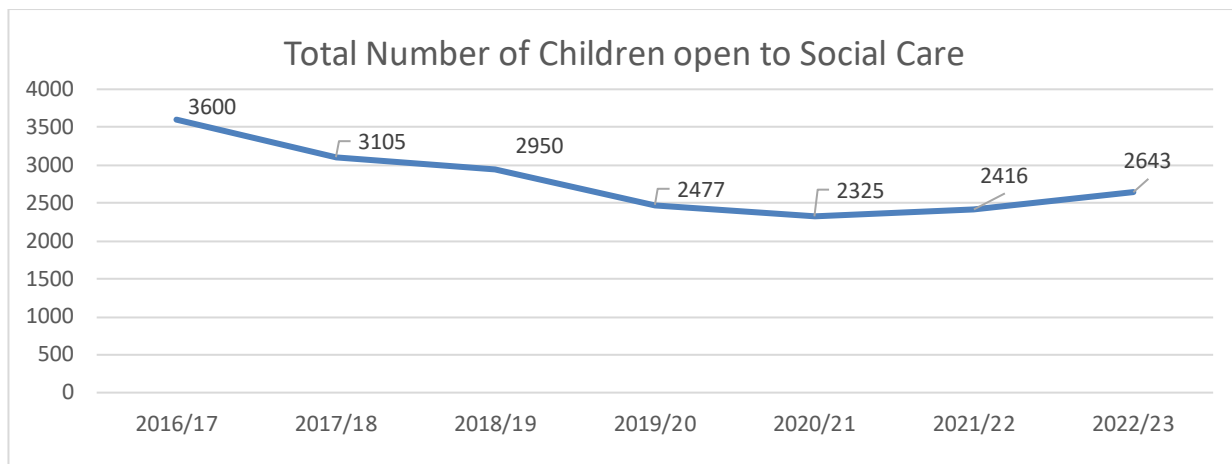


Figure 1: Children Open to Bristol Social Care at end of March each year (this includes looked after children, Child protection plans, Children on a child in need plan, those being assessed and Care leavers). Source: Bristol City Council, Insight, Performance, and Intelligence Team.

Through investment in early intervention and by meeting need at the earliest point, the rate of Bristol children supported by statutory intervention remains low, although it has increased in 2022/23. This is due to an increase in the number of children with a Child Protection Plan and more children entering care.

## Children in Care

Across Bristol, there were 735 children in care as at the end of March 2023 (Figure 2). There was a significant increase in the number of children in care during 2021/22 and 2022/23. Some of this increase can be attributed to more 16/17-year-olds and children seeking asylum coming into care. While this is rate still relatively low compared with statistical neighbours, it is a significant increase and has placed additional pressure on placement sufficiency, especially for older children and those with more complex needs.

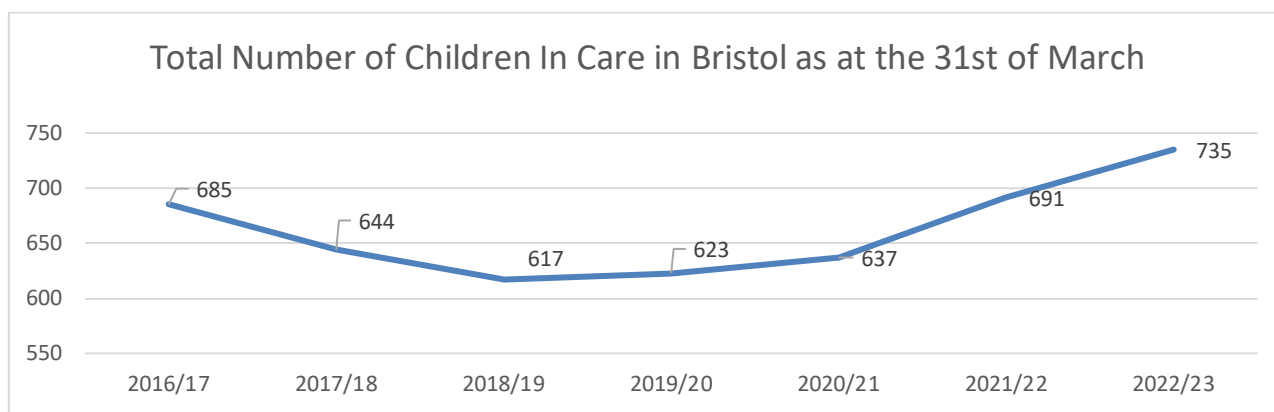


Figure 2: Bristol Children In Care at end of March each year. Source: Bristol City Council, Insight, Performance and Intelligence Team.

**Gender & Ethnicity:** The trend continues for more boys than girls to be taken into care, although this is dropping slowly. Of the children in care, 58% are boys and 42% are girls. Just under two-thirds of children in care (61%) are of white ethnicity.

## Health and Wellbeing

Health assessment figures from 2022/23, for children in care in Bristol, show:

- 77.8% have completed Health Assessments, a drop from 82.0% in 2021/22.
- 70.6% have completed Dental Checks, an increase from 55.7% in 2021/22.

During 2021/22, 215 Bristol children in care were measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, which assesses emotional health and wellbeing. Provisional data tells us that 107 (50%) assessments were banded normal, which was an increase on the previous year. In addition, 82 (38%) were categorised as cause for concern, a decrease on the previous year and 26 (12%) assessments were of borderline cause for concern, a slight decrease on the previous year. Data for 2022/23 is currently subject to data quality checks.

The 2022 Bristol Pupil Voice report shows marked inequalities in the health and wellbeing of children in care, increasing the risk of poor health outcomes across the whole life course. The number of children in care who took part was relatively small and therefore, although wide inequalities can be seen, only some of the differences in the data can be labelled as significant. The secondary school part of the survey is completed by pupils in years 8 and 10.

- 8% of children in care reported that they had smoked in the last week, significantly higher than the 2% average for all pupils in years 8 and 10.

- 25% of children in care reported that they had ever taken illegal drugs, compared to a 10% average for all pupils in years 8 and 10.
- 17% of children in care had a low wellbeing score for mental health, compared to a 14% average for all pupils in years 8 and 10.
- 100% of children in care who completed the survey said they ate fewer than 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day, compared to 81% for all pupils in years 8 and 10.
- 25% of children in care said that they did not intend to stay in full time education after secondary school, compared to an average of 14% for all in years 8 and 10.
- 38% of children in care reported that they had had teeth filled or removed. While this is lower than the 50% average for pupils in years 8 and 10 it should be recognised that access to dental treatment is more difficult for children in care so this figure may reflect a high level of unmet need relating to dental and oral health among children in care.

The next Pupil Voice survey will be completed in Summer 2024.

### Children subject of a Child Protection Plan

At the end of March 2023, the number of children recorded as being subject of a Child Protection Plan had increased to 339, compared with 258 at the end of March 2022 (Figure 3). The increase in child protection plans aligns with our strategic intent and has a number of contributory factors, which include the impact of increased poverty for families and harm experienced by children outside the home.

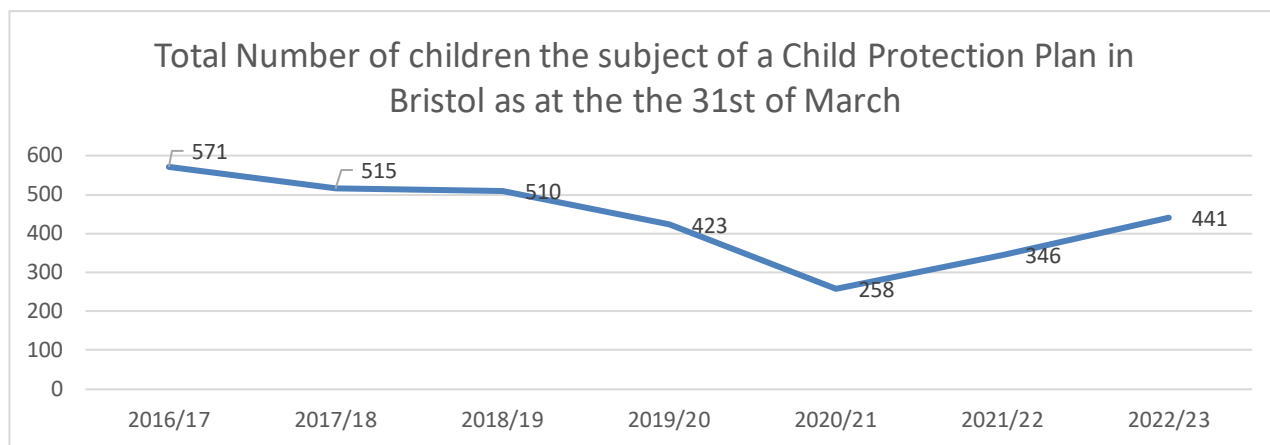


Figure 3: Bristol Children on a Protection plan at end of March each year  
 Source: Bristol City Council, Insight, Performance and Intelligence Team

**Equalities data:** By the end of March 2023, 45% of Children the subject of a Child Protection Plan were girls and 53% were boys .The remaining 2% of children were unborn. 71% of the children subject to protection plans were of white ethnicity at the end of March 2023, 16% were of mixed ethnicity and 6% were of Black/Black British ethnicity (Figure 4).

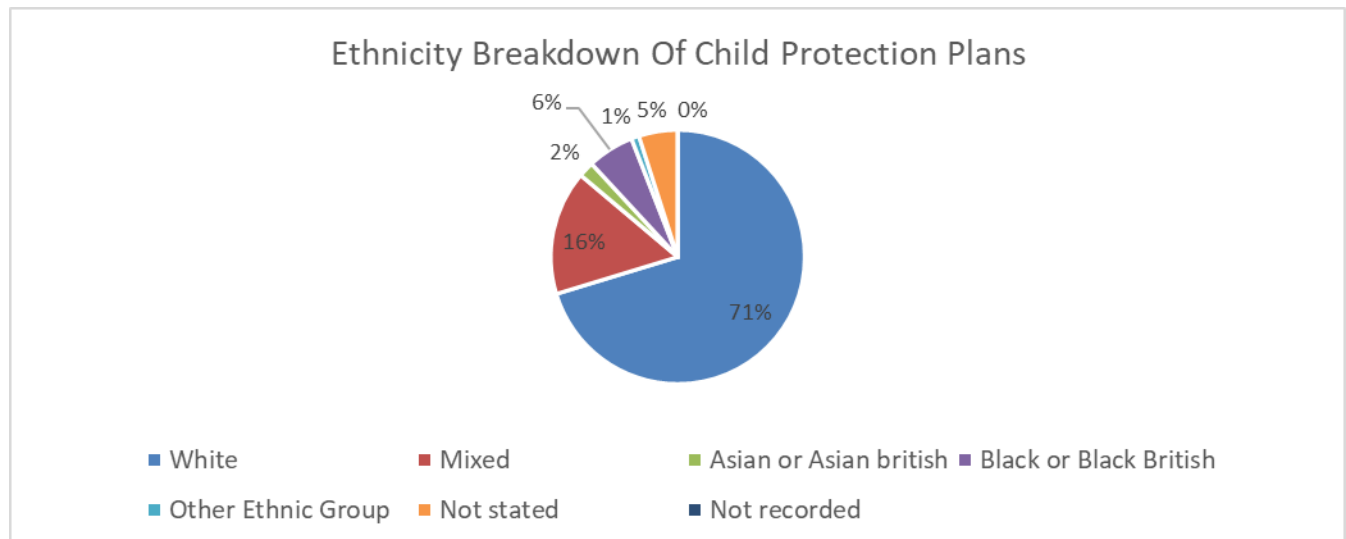


Figure 4: Ethnicity breakdown of Bristol Children on a Protection plan at end of March 2023

Source: Bristol City Council, Insight, Performance and Intelligence Team

### Children in Need

According to S17 of the Children Act (1989) a child is in need if:

- they are assessed as being unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development, or to have the opportunity to do so, without provision of services from the Local Authority,
- their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of services from the Local Authority,
- they have a disability.

There were 574 'Children in Need' (allocated to a Social Worker) at the end of March 2023, which is a drop of 19 from 593 in March 2022

**Equalities data:** Of the children in need, 53% are boys and 45% are girls and the remaining 2% of children were unborn. Nearly two-thirds of children in need (64%) are of white ethnicity, 15% are of mixed ethnicity and 8% are of Black/Black British ethnicity (Figure 5).

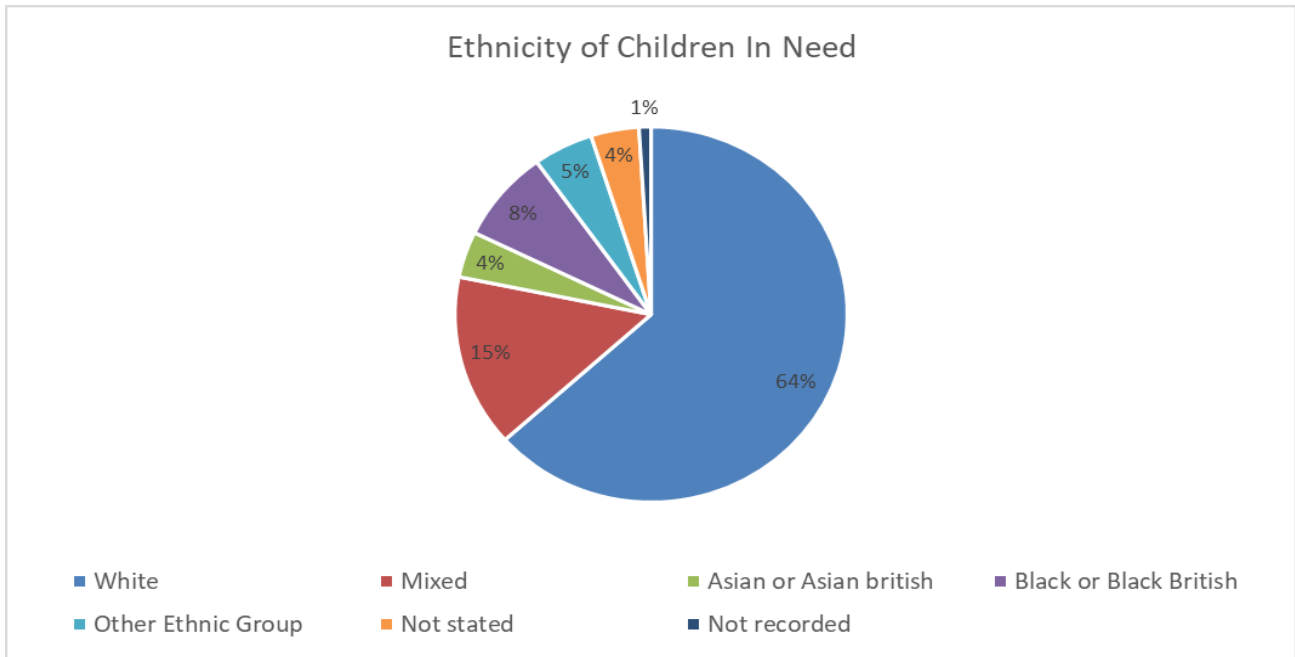


Figure 5: Ethnicity breakdown of Bristol Children in Need at end of March 2023  
 Source: Bristol City Council, Insight, Performance and Intelligence Team

**Further data / links / consultations:**

- Bristol City Council - [Social care support for children and families](#)

**Date updated:** February 2024

**Next Update Due:** June 2024