

Walsall Children's Services

Children in Need – Performance and
Benchmarking Report 2020-21

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Children in Need – Performance and Benchmarking Report 2020-21

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report presents the performance and benchmarking data in relation to Children in Need, including child protection for 2020-21, compared to national, regional and statistical neighbours. This data is used to the relative performance of Walsall against the comparison group for a range of key indicators.
- 1.2. Walsall's statistical neighbours are: Bolton, Derby, Dudley, Kirklees, Peterborough, Rochdale, Sandwell, Stoke-on-Trent, Tameside, Telford and Wrekin.
- 1.3. The metrics below are based on data that was submitted via the Children in Need Census in June 2021 and published by the Department for Education in November 2021, which relate to Children in Need and Child Protection. Where available up to date information as at the end of September 2021 has been included.
- 1.4. Graphs are taken either from internal performance reports or the national Data to Insight Benchmarking Tool.
- 1.5. This report is not a checklist against which Walsall measures performance. These statistics tell only part of the story, and what makes a successful outcome will vary hugely for individual children and young people.

2. Walsall Population

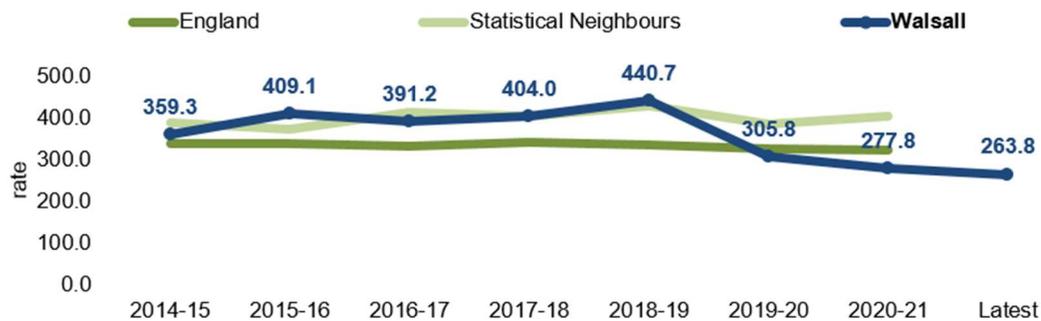
- 2.1. Children living in Walsall:
 - 69,375 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Walsall. This is 24.2% of the total population in the area.
 - In the Indices of Deprivation Affecting Children (IDACI), Walsall is the 19th most deprived Local Authority in the country with 29% of neighbourhoods in the top 10% of most deprived neighbourhoods nationally which is the 15 highest.
 - The Campaign to End Child poverty, based on research from Loughborough University states that 39% of children live in poverty after housing costs.
 - The proportion of children entitled to free school meals in Walsall:
 - In nursery and primary schools is 31.6%
 - in secondary schools is 27.5%

3. Children in Need

- 3.1. At 31 March 2021, the number of children in need including those on a child protection plan or in care in Walsall was just under 2,000, a rate of 277.8 per 10,000 children. As at the 30th September, there were 1,830 children in need, a rate of 263.8 per 10,000 children. The rate of children in need is lower than comparators.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Latest	% change from '19-20 to '20-
Walsall	359.3	409.1	391.2	404.0	440.7	305.8	277.8	263.8	Down -9%
England	336.6	337.3	330.1	341.0	334.2	323.7	321.2		Down -1%
Statistical Neighbours	386.3	373.1	413.2	403.4	427.4	384.7	401.7		Up 4%
West Midlands	368.6	358.9	352.2	360.2	352.3	338.1	343.8		Up 2%

Rate of children in need at 31 March per 10,000 children



4. Demand - Contacts and Referrals to Children's Social Services

- 4.1. Contacts to children's services can be made by anyone, but the majority of contacts are made by partner organisations such as the Police or schools where they are concerned about the safety or well-being of a child. The point at which a child meets the level of need for statutory services is determined in Walsall by our multi-agency Right Help, Right Time guidance which is overseen by the Walsall Safeguarding Partnership.

Contacts are not reported as part of the Children in Need census, so no benchmarking is available.

- 4.2. In August 2021, the Early Help front door was merged with the MASH to create a single point of contact, smoother decision making process and reduce the potential for repeat contacts as the correct level of intervention is determined. Work is currently being taken on redesigning the analysis.
- 4.3. If the decision making in the MASH determines that a child's needs meet the threshold for intervention, a referral is made. A referral is defined as a request for services to be provided by children's social care and is in respect of a child who is not currently in need. A contact may result in:
- a referral for an assessment of the child's need;
 - an Early Help assessment
 - the provision of information or advice;
 - referral to another agency;
 - no further action.
- 4.4. However – it should be noted that there is no clearly set-out national definition for what constitutes a referral to social care, and counting methodology and definitions vary between local authorities, so care must be used when drawing conclusions in relation to referral rates. It is better to view referral rates in terms of local trends supported by quality assurance that referrals are appropriate.

4.5. If a child is referred more than once in the year then each referral is counted in the figures. New information relating to children who are already on an open episode of need is not counted as a referral. A re-referral is where a child has been referred within 12 months of a previous referral.

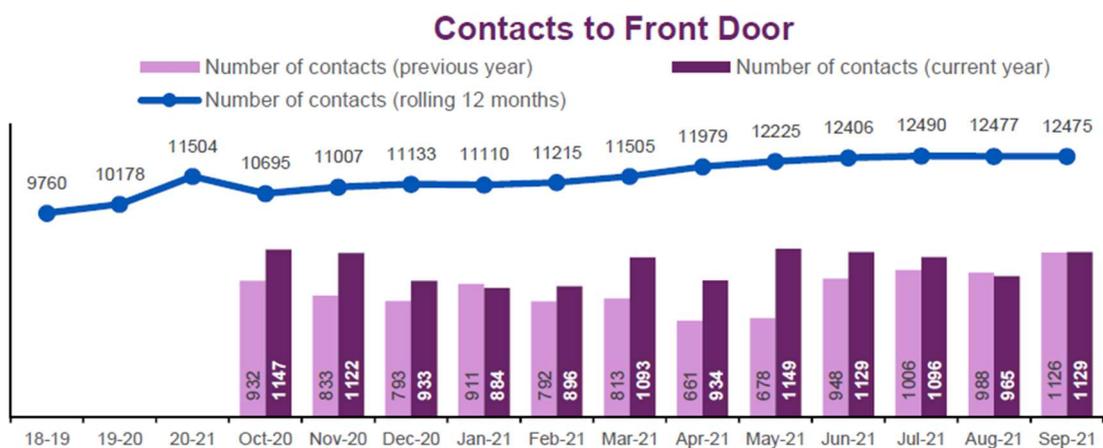
2020-21 Summary:

4.6. Data for contacts and referrals shows that:

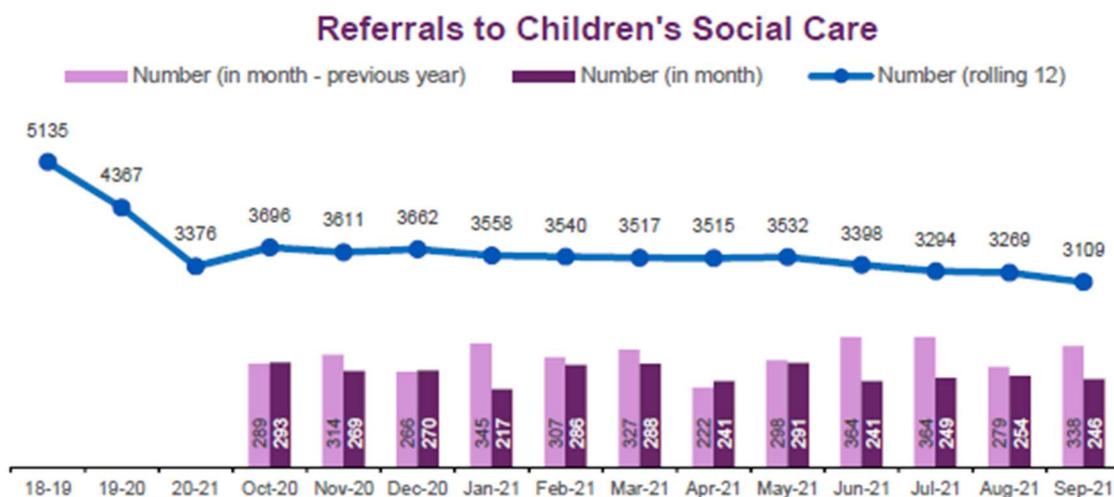
4.7. Between 2018-19 and 2020-21, the number of contacts have increased by 18%. The increase continued throughout the pandemic and continues to rise.

4.8. The top three reasons for contacts to be made are:

- Emotional Abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Neglect
- Physical abuse



4.9. Despite increasing number of contacts to the MASH, the number of referrals have been reducing. There were 3,376 referrals to children’s social services in Walsall in 2020-21 compared with 5,135 referrals in 2018-19 – a reduction of just under 34%.



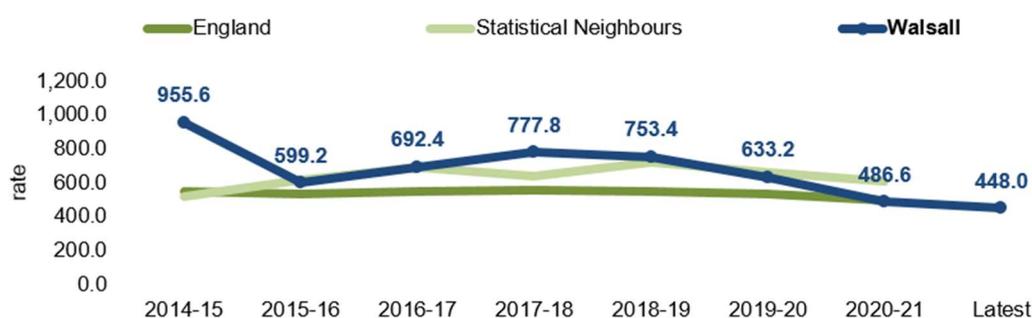
4.10. Audits and dip samples are undertaken regularly to ensure that decision making at the MASH is correct – particularly in light of the increasing proportion of contacts that do not result in a referral

which provides assurance. Work with partners to understand the thresholds continues, including feedback following contacts that have not led to a referral.

4.11. The referrals received in 2020-21 equate to a rate of 486.6 per 10,000 of the population aged 0-17. This is lower than regional, national and statistical neighbours. While the number of referrals has fallen across all comparator groups, the decrease in Walsall is significantly higher.

	2014-15 rate	2015-16 rate	2016-17 rate	2017-18 rate	2018-19 rate	2019-20 rate	2020-21 rate	Latest	% change from '19-20 to '20-	
Walsall	955.6	599.2	692.4	777.8	753.4	633.2	486.6	448.0	Down	-23%
England	548.3	532.2	548.2	552.5	544.5	534.8	494.3		Down	-8%
Statistical Neighbours	519.1	613.1	686.5	635.4	722.1	660.4	608.2		Down	-8%
West Midlands	613.3	559.0	654.0	649.3	593.1	528.6	494.5		Down	-6%

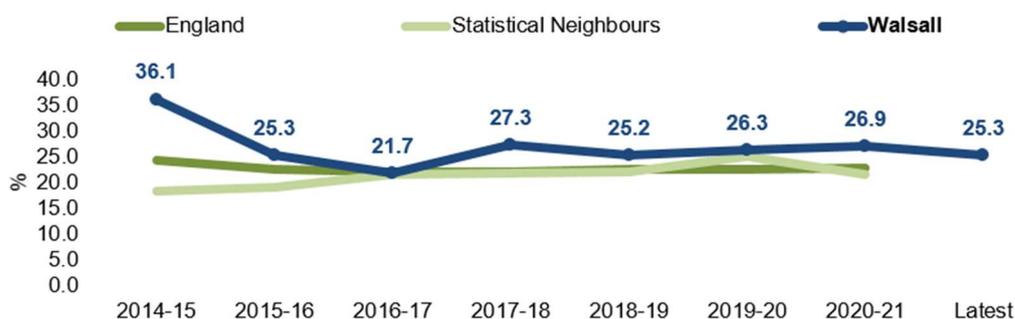
Rate of referrals per 10,000 children



4.12. 26.9% of referrals to social care in 2020-21 were repeat referrals within 12 months of a previous referral. This is a slight increase on the previous year and is higher than comparators. Between October 2020 and September 2021, the proportion of repeat referrals has begun to fall. The higher level of repeat referrals is likely to be due to the lower numbers of referrals overall.

	2014-15 %	2015-16 %	2016-17 %	2017-18 %	2018-19 %	2019-20 %	2020-21 %	Latest	% change from '19-20 to '20-	
Walsall	36.1	25.3	21.7	27.3	25.2	26.3	26.9	25.3	Up	2%
England	24.2	22.5	21.9	21.9	22.6	22.6	22.7		Up	0%
Statistical Neighbours	18.3	19.0	21.4	21.7	21.9	25.0	21.6		Down	-14%
West Midlands	23.0	20.9	23.4	24.8	23.6	23.0	20.4		Down	-11%

% Referrals which: Were within 12 months of a previous referral



5. Assessments of Need

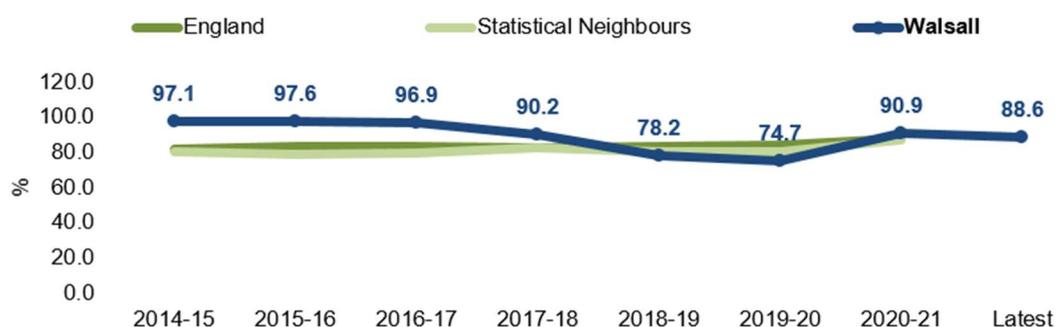
5.1. Statutory guidance and targets indicate that assessments of need should be completed within 45 working days. Walsall's performance in assessment timeliness had historically been good,

however, performance dipped in 2018-19 and 2019-20 to below that of comparators for the first time. However, it is positive that in 2020-21, performance increased once again to over 90%.

- 5.2. In the 12 months up to 30th September 2021, performance has dipped slightly but remains better than comparators. Assessments are one of our five practice priorities and an area of focus and improvement within the service both in terms of timeliness and quality.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Latest	% change from '19-20 to '20-
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Walsall	97.1	97.6	96.9	90.2	78.2	74.7	90.9	88.6	Up 22%
England	81.5	83.4	82.9	82.7	83.1	83.9	87.6		Up 4%
Statistical Neighbours	80.4	79.1	79.6	82.5	80.5	80.5	86.9		Up 8%
West Midlands	74.9	82.1	84.3	84.6	84.5	82.7	86.4		Up 5%

% Assessment timeliness: within 45 working days



- 5.3. Walsall implemented Family Safeguarding in September 2020. The model of practice involves adult workers working in teams alongside children’s social workers, to support families where there is domestic abuse, mental health concerns, alcohol or substance misuse and where there are children aged 12 and under in the household.
- 5.4. In 2020-21, 42.6% of assessments had a factor of domestic abuse among parents recorded – a 21% point increase on the previous year and slightly higher than statistical neighbours and regional comparators at 38.9%. Domestic abuse had increased among all comparators and it is believed that this has been an impact of the pandemic, evidenced further by a reduction in Walsall to 37.9% of assessments in the 12 months up to 30th September 2021.
- 5.5. Mental Health was a factor in 23.8% of assessments in 2020-21 compared with 31.8% in England, 34.7% in the West Midlands and 34.8% among statistical neighbours. The percentage of assessments with a mental health factor among parents has increased to 25.3% in the 12 months up to 30th September.
- 5.6. Alcohol abuse and substance misuse among parents was a factor in 10.9% of assessments and 8.8% of assessments respectively. Both of these are below proportions seen in comparator assessments but unlike Mental Health have seen a slight reduction in the 12 months to the end of September 2021 (10.4% and 8.0% respectively)

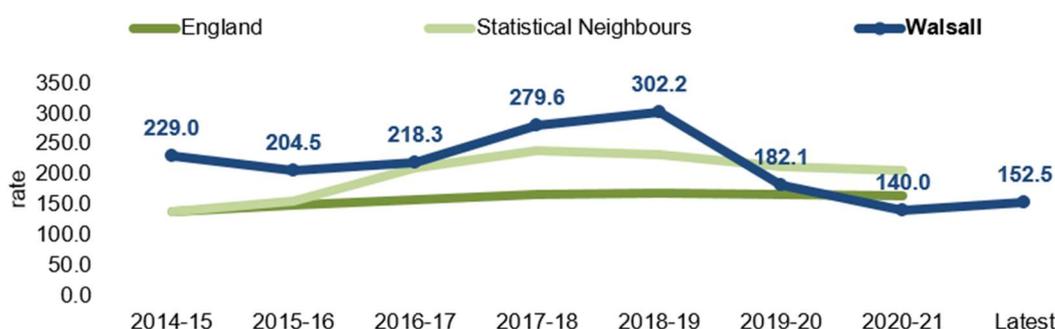
6. Child Protection Enquiries

- 6.1. If concerns for a child are serious, then a child protection or section 47 enquiry will be held to determine whether a child may need to become subject of a child protection plan. 971 section 47 enquiries were held in 2020-21, a rate of 140 per 10,000 population aged 0-17. This is a significantly lower number than held by comparators. There has been a slight increase in the rate of section 47 enquiries in the previous 12 months, although the rate remains below comparators.

6.2. If the section 47 enquiry determines that the child may need to be supported with a child protection plan then an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) is held with partners to review the assessment and other associated reports, and bring in feedback from partners, the parents and the child themselves (if they are old enough). The outcome of ICPC makes the final decision about whether the child will become subject of a plan. In Walsall, the proportion of section 47 enquiries that result in a plan was 40.6%. This is line with statistical neighbours at 41.9%, but higher than national (36.5%) and regional (35.6%) conversion rates.

	2014-15 rate	2015-16 rate	2016-17 rate	2017-18 rate	2018-19 rate	2019-20 rate	2020-21 rate	Latest	% change from '19-20 to '20-
Walsall	229.0	204.5	218.3	279.6	302.2	182.1	140.0	152.5	Down -23%
England	138.5	147.7	157.6	166.9	168.3	167.2	164.4		Down -2%
Statistical Neighbours	138.3	154.2	210.8	238.8	231.9	212.9	206.4		Down -3%
West Midlands	158.5	165.8	182.1	191.8	187.0	169.5	178.3		Up 5%

Section 47s in the year as a rate per 10,000 of children aged under 18 years

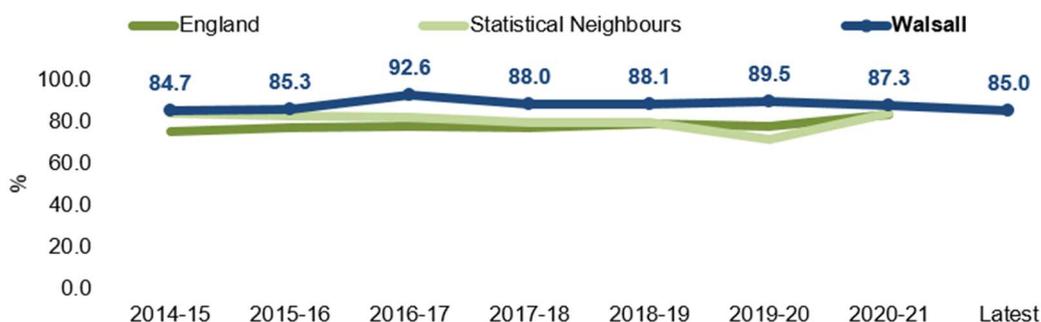


6.3. As with section 47 enquiries, the rate of ICPCs has fallen over the past couple of years and is below comparators. In 2020-21 370 ICPCs were held and in the 12 months up to the end of September there have been 353.

6.4. Statutory guidance states that ICPCs should be completed within 15 working days of the strategy discussion taking place and performance in this area in Walsall is historically and currently very good and above that have comparators.

	2014-15 %	2015-16 %	2016-17 %	2017-18 %	2018-19 %	2019-20 %	2020-21 %	Latest	% change from '19-20 to '20-
Walsall	84.7	85.3	92.6	88.0	88.1	89.5	87.3	85.0	Down -2%
England	74.7	76.7	77.2	76.9	78.7	77.7	83.0		Up 7%
Statistical Neighbours	83.7	82.7	81.8	79.1	79.2	71.4	83.8		Up 17%
West Midlands	71.1	76.5	78.8	77.0	82.5	77.6	85.0		Up 10%

% ICPC timeliness: within 15 working days



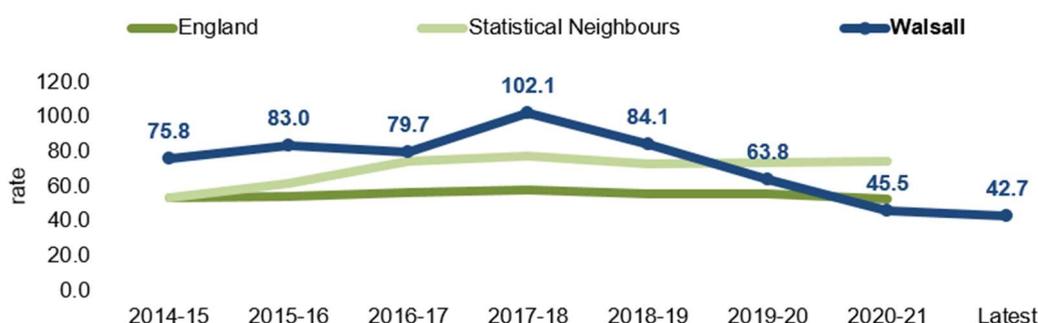
7. Children subject of a Child Protection Plan

7.1. In 2020-21 328 children became subject of a child protection plan, a decrease of 113 or 27% on the previous year. The number of children becoming subject of a plan has continued to fall and was 296 in the 12 months to the end of September. Walsall has gone from having a significantly higher rate of children becoming subject of plan compared to statistical, regional and national neighbours to having a lower rate which has continued to fall.

7.2. The reduction in the number of children becoming subject of a plan began in Autumn 2019 following work undertaken at the front door in supporting staff to better understand risk and the start of training to support the implementation of the Family Safeguarding model. A significant amount of quality assurance work has been undertaken, both internally and via external peer reviews to provide assurance that the reduction in children becoming subject of a plan is not leaving vulnerable children at risk.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Latest	% change from '19-20 to '20-
Walsall	75.8	83.0	79.7	102.1	84.1	63.8	45.5	42.7	Down -29%
England	53.5	54.0	56.2	57.8	55.6	55.1	52.6		Down -5%
Statistical Neighbours	53.6	61.3	74.0	77.5	72.8	73.5	73.9		Up 0%
West Midlands	57.7	57.3	62.1	68.0	62.4	59.7	57.3		Down -4%

Rate of children who became the subject of a child protection plan during the year per 10,000 children



7.3. The percentage of children becoming subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time is higher than comparators. However, this is impacted by smaller numbers of children and a number of larger sibling groups who have become subject of a plan. This indicator is monitored closely on a monthly basis via performance management arrangements.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Latest	% change from '19-20 to '20-
Walsall	13.3	17.2	11.6	24.5	19.0	24.3	26.5	30.4	Up 9%
England	16.6	17.9	18.7	20.2	20.8	21.9	22.1		Up 1%
Statistical Neighbours	15.4	16.3	17.4	18.1	19.5	20.9	21.2		Up 1%
West Midlands	17.3	18.5	18.7	21.3	20.6	22.7	22.7		Same 0%

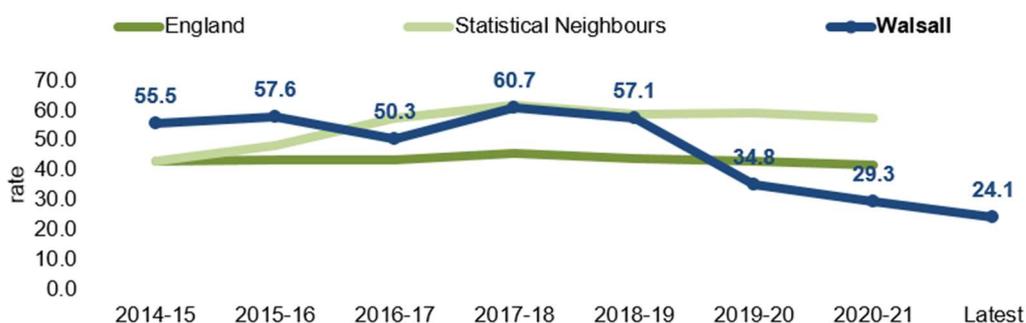
% CPP starters who became the subject of a plan for a second or subsequent time



7.4. At 31st March 2021, there were 203 children who were subject of a child protection plan – a rate of 29.3 per 10,000 children. This has continued to fall with 167 children being subject of a plan at the end of September. Throughout the last 12 months the number of children subject of a plan has remained stable at between around 170 and 200 children. The rate of children who are subject of child protection plan is almost half that of statistical neighbours and 25% lower than regional and national comparators.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	Latest	% change from '19-20 to '20-	
	rate									
Walsall	55.5	57.6	50.3	60.7	57.1	34.8	29.3	24.1	Down	-16%
England	42.9	43.1	43.3	45.3	43.7	42.8	41.4		Down	-3%
Statistical Neighbours	43.1	48.0	57.1	61.8	58.5	59.2	57.4		Down	-3%
West Midlands	45.9	43.2	45.3	49.9	47.3	45.5	42.6		Down	-6%

Rate of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March per 10,000 children



7.5. A significantly lower proportion of children subject of a plan have a latest category of neglect – 25.1% compared with 47.3% nationally, 43.1% regionally and 50.4% among statistical neighbours. Conversely a much higher proportion of children are on a plan for emotional abuse – 67.0% compared with 40.5% nationally, 46.9% regionally and 40.8% among statistical neighbours. This is linked to the higher proportions of children who are known to social care due to domestic abuse.

7.6. In 2020-21, 96.5% of children who were subject of a child protection plan were reviewed within timescale. Again, performance in Walsall has always been good in this area and is consistently above that of comparators, providing assurance that children’s plans are kept up to date and progress against plans is monitored, so that children only remain on plans as long as they need to. Children’s voices are also well heard at their conferences with over 97% of children contributing to their reviews.

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	% change from '19-20 to '20-	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%		
Walsall	99.5	94.3	98.6	96.2	98.2	95.3	96.5	Up	1%
England	93.9	93.6	92.1	90.5	91.8	91.5	93.2	Up	2%
Statistical Neighbours	95.1	94.1	93.0	88.5	88.3	89.2	92.6	Up	4%
West Midlands	90.9	91.6	91.7	84.2	89.8	90.6	90.5	Down	0%

% CPP at 31 March on plan for 3+ months reviewed within timescales

