

JSNA Health and Wellbeing Profile 2024/25

Children Social Care

Summary points

- As at 31st March 2024, there were 768 children in care in Bristol.
- 416 children were the subject of a Child Protection Plan in Bristol (31st March 2024)
- 674 children were on Child In Need Plans in Bristol (31st March 2024)
- There were 2,996 children supported by Bristol Social Care at the 31st March 2024

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.

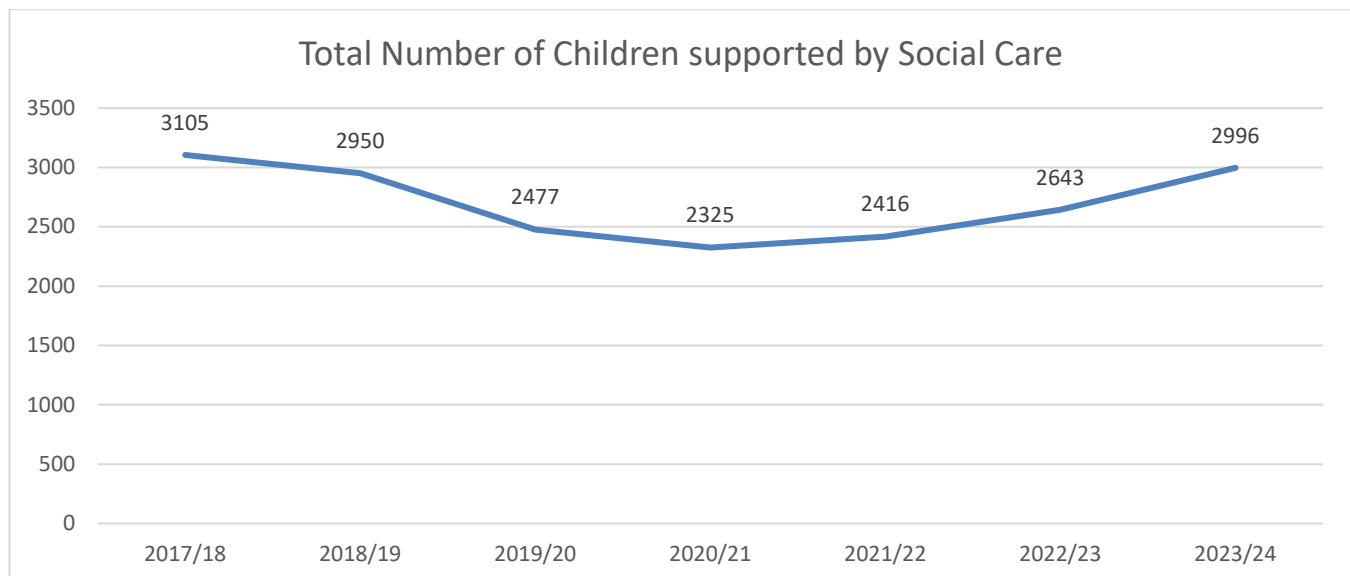


Figure 1: Children Open to Bristol Social Care at end of March each year (this includes looked after children, Child protection plans, Children on a child in need plan, those being assessed and Care leavers). Source: Bristol City Council, Insight, Performance, and Intelligence Team.

Through a focus on early intervention and by meeting need at the earliest point, the rate of Bristol children supported by statutory intervention remains low compared to statistical

neighbours, although it has increased in 2023/24. 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 768 children in care as at the end of March 2024, which is a rate of 84 per 10,000 children and is higher than the national average of 70 per 10,000 children (Figure 2). There was a significant increase in the number of children in care each year since 2021/22. Some of this increase can be attributed to more 16/17-year-olds coming into care. While this is in line 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.

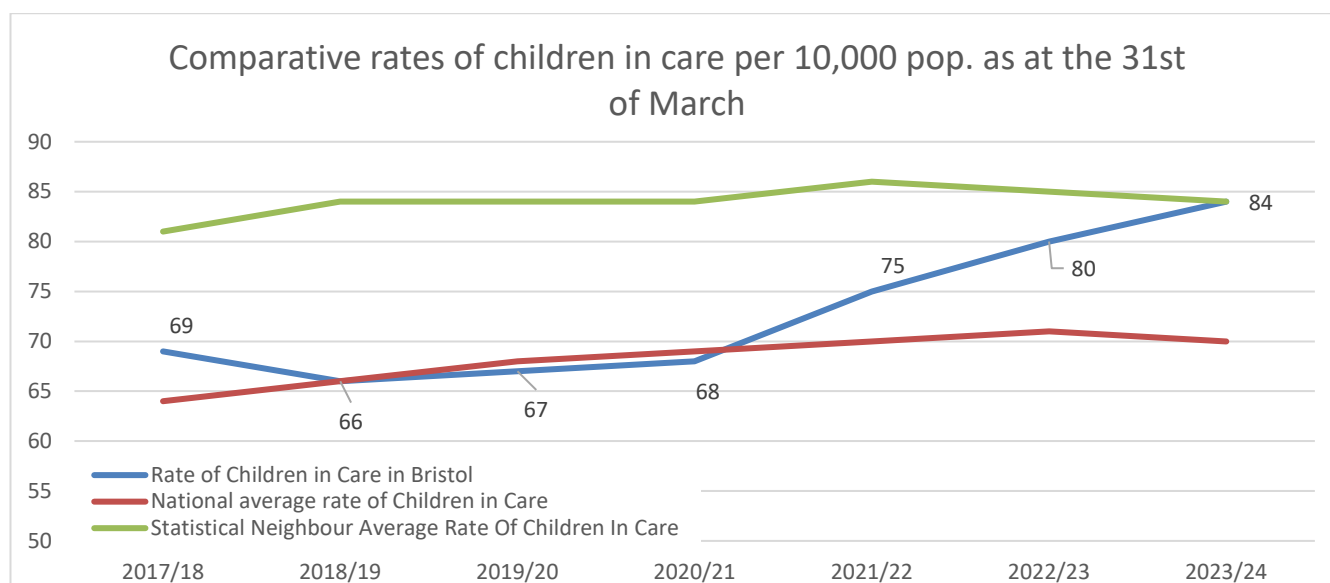


Figure 2: Bristol Children In Care at end of March each year. Source: Bristol City Council, Insight, Performance and Intelligence Team.

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, 57% are boys and 43% are girls. Just under two-thirds of children in care (63%) are of white ethnicity.

Health and Wellbeing

Health assessment figures from 2023/24, for children in care in Bristol, show:

- 78% have completed Health Assessments, a drop from 84.0% in 2022/23.
- 50% have completed Dental Checks, a decrease from 73% in 2022/23.

During 2023/24, 254 Bristol children in care were measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, which assesses emotional health and wellbeing. Provisional data tells us that 100 (39%) assessments were banded normal, which was a decrease on the previous year. In addition, 127 (50%) were categorised as cause for concern, an increase on the previous year and 27 (11%) assessments were of borderline cause for concern, a slight increase on the previous year.

Children subject of a Child Protection Plan

At the end of March 2024, the number of children recorded as being subject of a Child Protection Plan had increased to 416, compared with 341 at the end of March 2023. This is a rate of 46 per 10,000 children compared to the national rate of 42 per 10,000 children and the statistical neighbour average of 53 per 10,000 children (Figure 3). The increase in children subject of a child protection plan has a number of contributory factors, which include the impact of increased poverty for families and harm experienced by children outside the home.

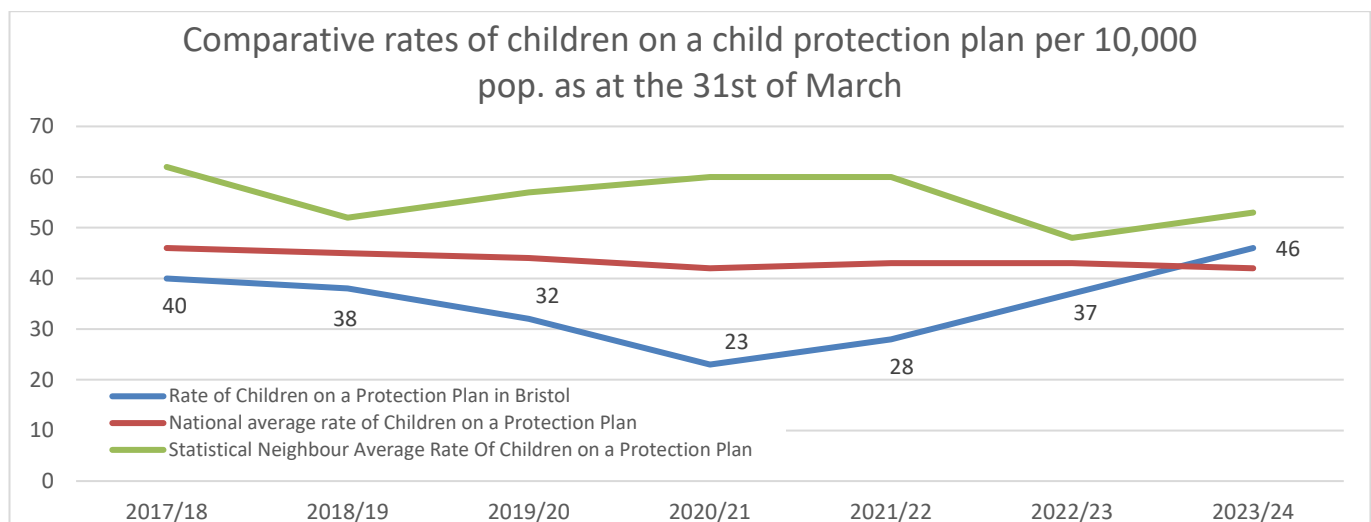


Figure 3: Bristol Children on a Protection plan at end of March each year

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

Equalities data: By the end of March 2024, 40% of Children the subject of a Child Protection Plan were girls and 59% were boys. The remaining 1% of children were unborn. 68% of the children subject to protection plans were of white ethnicity at the end of March 2024, 12% were of mixed ethnicity and 10 were of Black/Black British ethnicity (Figure 4).

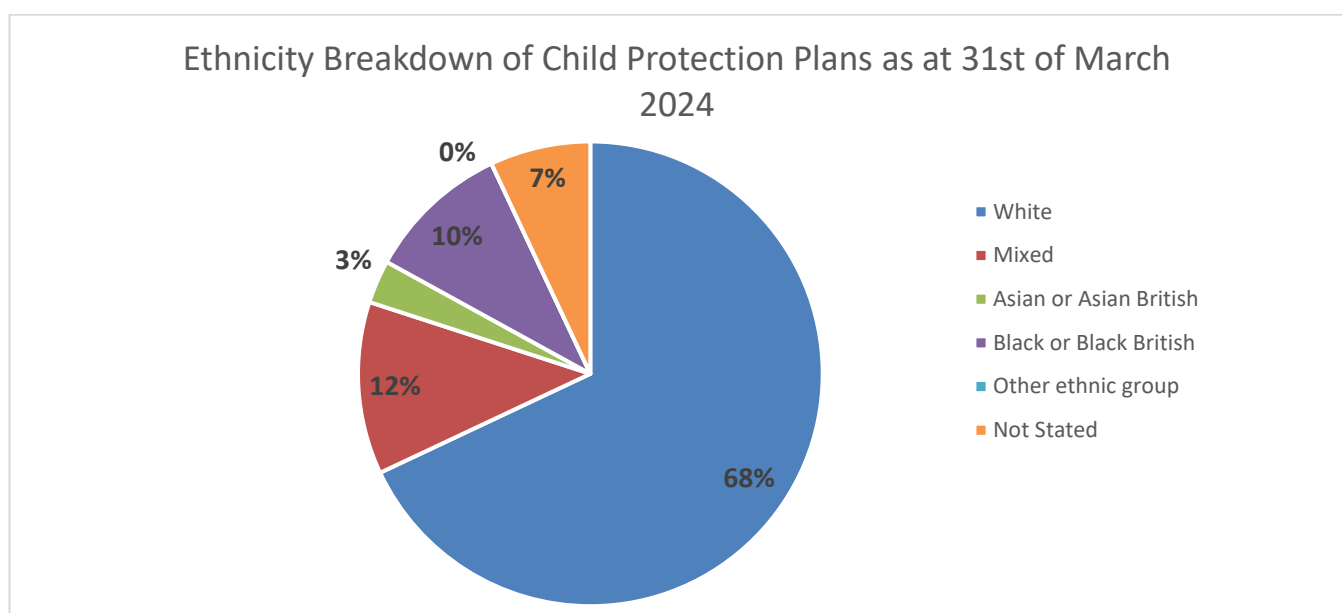


Figure 4: Ethnicity breakdown of Bristol Children on a Protection plan at end of March 2024

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 674 'Children in Need' (allocated to a Social Worker) at the end of March 2024, which is an increase of 100 from 574 in March 2023

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 (61%) are of white ethnicity, 15% are of mixed ethnicity and 9% are of Black/Black British ethnicity (Figure 5).

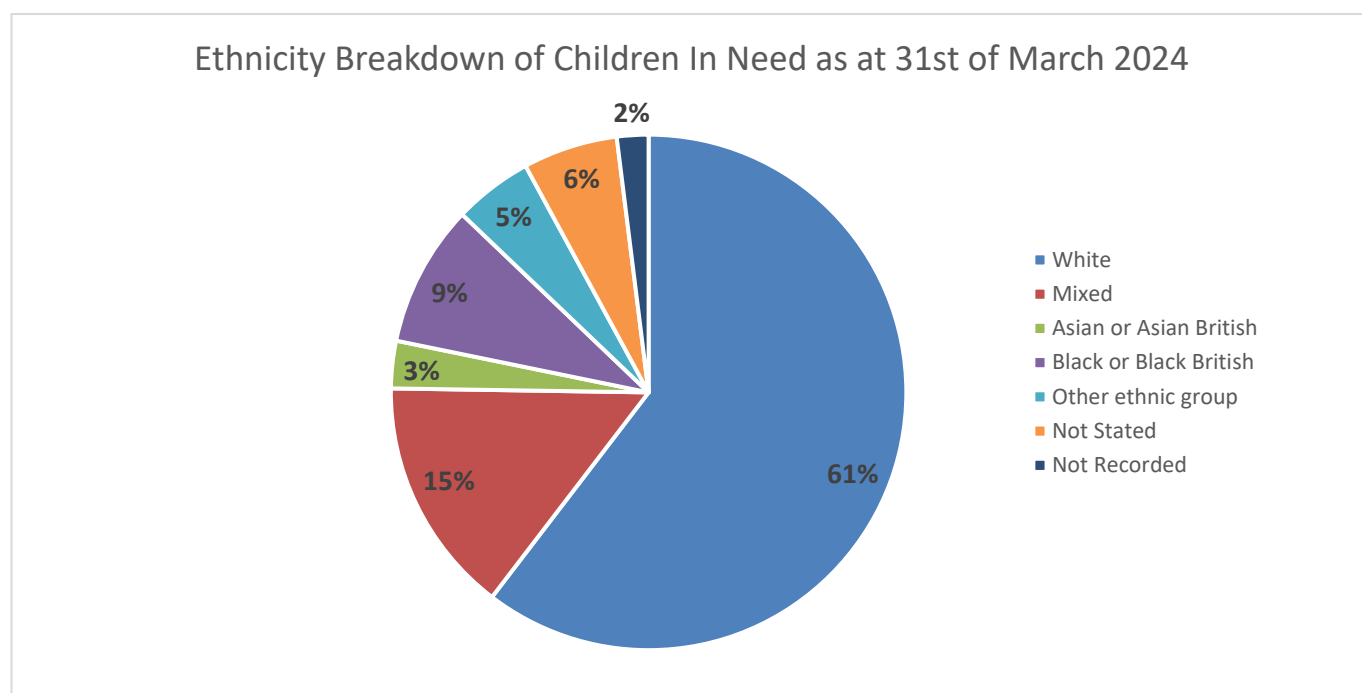


Figure 5: Ethnicity breakdown of Bristol Children in Need at end of March 2024
Source: Bristol City Council, Insight, Performance and Intelligence Team

Further data / links / consultations:

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

Date updated: December 2024

Next update due: December 2025