

# Northern Ireland Children's Social Services Data during COVID-19

The management information presented derive initially from a temporary weekly data collection for children's social care services during the period of COVID-19, and since October 2021 this data has been collected on a monthly basis. These data returns have been extracted from administrative systems for each of the five Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland.

**Please note these figures are provisional and may be subject to change.**

**Page 2: Number of Children on the Child Protection Register by HSC Trust (provisional)**

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**Page 4: Number of Children referred to Social Services (provisional)**

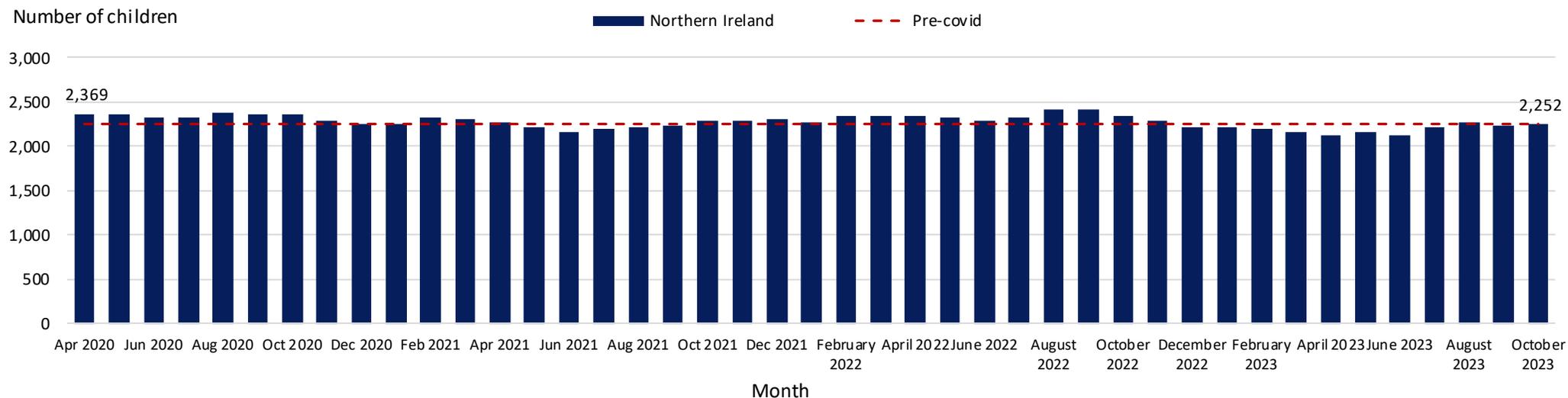
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# Child Protection Register

## Number of Children on the Child Protection Register (provisional)



The number of children on the Child Protection Register at the end of October 2023 was <1% higher than the last official figure prior to Covid19 (31 December 2019).

HSC Trust	Pre Covid19*	October 2022	November 2022	December 2022	January 2023	February 2023	March 2023	April 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023	August 2023	September 2023	October 2023
Belfast	277	412	408	401	395	393	394	397	392	389	389	392	402	392
Northern	512	521	504	471	455	463	462	441	434	457	485	493	492	481
South Eastern	335	323	338	319	322	318	315	301	322	301	310	345	325	328
Southern	545	511	496	499	492	515	495	506	538	537	557	555	534	539
Western	577	577	548	534	518	507	508	489	473	450	469	489	489	512
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>2,246</b>	<b>2,344</b>	<b>2,294</b>	<b>2,224</b>	<b>2,182</b>	<b>2,196</b>	<b>2,174</b>	<b>2,134</b>	<b>2,159</b>	<b>2,134</b>	<b>2,210</b>	<b>2,274</b>	<b>2,242</b>	<b>2,252</b>

\*Source: "Quarterly Child Protection Statistics for Northern Ireland, Quarter ending 31 December 2019", DoH.

Figures are provisional and may have been revised from previous months.

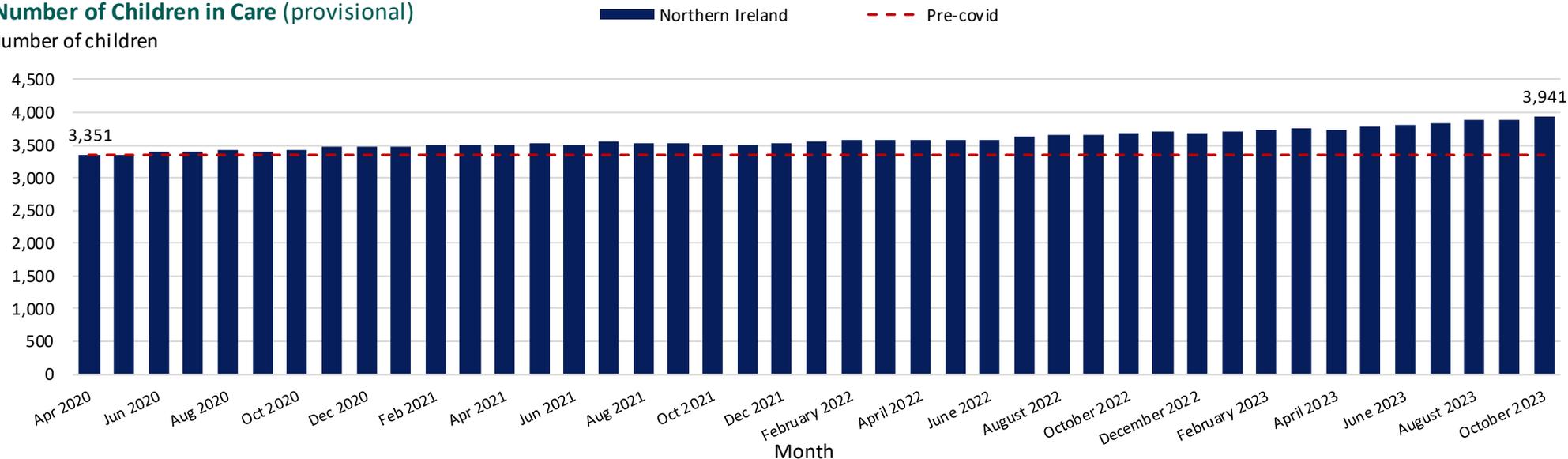
Months prior to October 2021 are based on the week ending figures and not last day of the month.

Weekly and monthly figures from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 in Excel format: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/temporary-information-releases-during-covid-19>.

# Children in Care

## Number of Children in Care (provisional)

Number of children



The number of children in care at the end of October 2023 was 17% higher than the last official figure prior to Covid19 (30 September 2019).

HSC Trust	Pre Covid19*	October 2022	November 2022	December 2022	January 2023	February 2023	March 2023	April 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023	August 2023	September 2023	October 2023
Belfast	826	1,003	1,014	1,021	1,018	1,032	1,029	1,022	1,041	1,041	1,057	1,065	1,062	1,075
Northern	680	725	728	724	732	735	753	745	746	757	773	782	787	808
South Eastern	621	650	655	642	645	657	664	645	655	664	658	664	661	668
Southern	582	611	616	617	619	620	623	628	638	641	648	653	659	665
Western	653	683	689	685	690	686	701	705	708	708	708	724	719	725
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>3,362</b>	<b>3,673</b>	<b>3,702</b>	<b>3,689</b>	<b>3,704</b>	<b>3,730</b>	<b>3,770</b>	<b>3,745</b>	<b>3,788</b>	<b>3,811</b>	<b>3,844</b>	<b>3,888</b>	<b>3,888</b>	<b>3,941</b>

\*Source: 30 September 2019, Delegated Statutory Functions report, Health & Social Care Board.

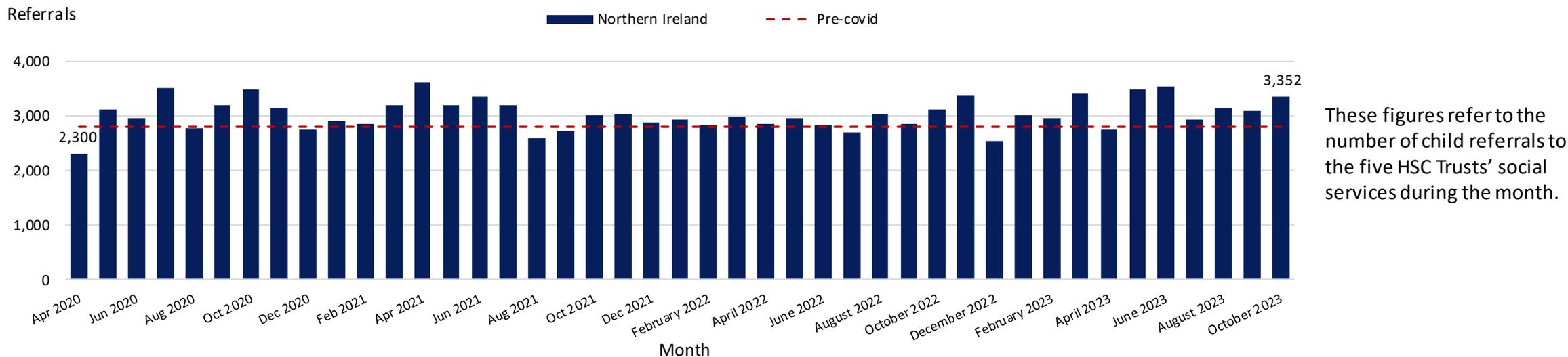
Figures are provisional and may have been revised from previous months.

Months prior to October 2021 are based on the week ending figures and not last day of the month.

Weekly and monthly figures from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 in Excel format: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/temporary-information-releases-during-covid-19>.

# Children referred to Social Services

## Number of Child Referrals to Social Services (provisional)



These figures refer to the number of child referrals to the five HSC Trusts' social services during the month.

HSC Trust	Pre Covid19*	October 2022	November 2022	December 2022	January 2023	February 2023	March 2023	April 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023	August 2023	September 2023	October 2023
Northern Ireland	2,799.5	3,103	3,377	2,530	3,002	2,963	3,415	2,739	3,483	3,543	2,941	3,153	3,086	3,352

\* Source: 30 September 2019, Delegated Statutory Functions report, Health & Social Care Board.

Note 1: Due to the nature of this collection, some Trusts report number of referrals received (dated) during the time period and other Trusts report the referrals recorded on their administrative systems. With the reporting lag of two weeks, these should be almost identical.

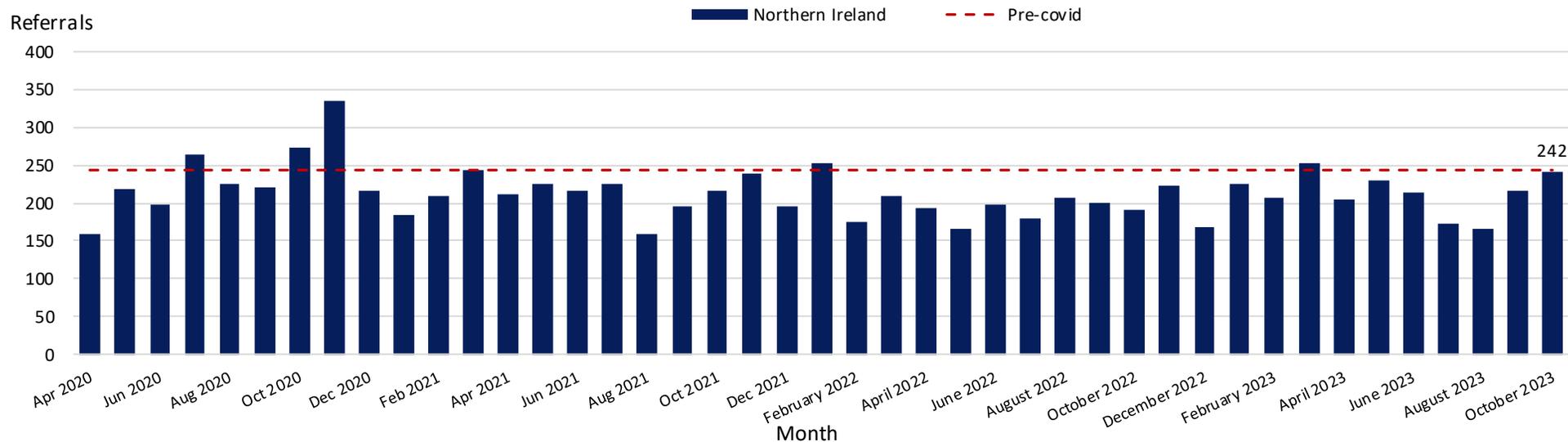
Note 2: For the three HSC Trusts Belfast, Southern and Western, the monthly figures up to October 2021 are the sum of weekly returns and therefore a proxy of the total of the month.

Figures are provisional and may have been revised from previous months.

Weekly and monthly figures from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 in Excel format: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/artides/temporary-information-releases-during-covid-19>.

# Child Protection Referrals

## Number of Child Protection referrals (provisional)



These figures refer to the number of child protection referrals to the five HSC Trusts' social services during the month.

HSC Trust	Pre Covid19*	October 2022	November 2022	December 2022	January 2023	February 2023	March 2023	April 2023	May 2023	June 2023	July 2023	August 2023	September 2023	October 2023
Northern Ireland	167.7	200	192	222	168	226	208	205	230	214	172	165	216	242

\*Source: "Quarterly Child Protection Statistics for Northern Ireland, Quarter ending 31 December 2019", DoH.

Note 1: Due to the nature of this collection, some Trusts report number of referrals received (dated) during the time period and other Trusts report the referrals recorded on their administrative systems. With the reporting lag of two weeks, these should be almost identical.

Note 2: For the three HSC Trusts Belfast, Southern and Western, the monthly figures up to October 2021 are the sum of weekly returns and therefore a proxy of the total of the month.

Note 3: Figures may include some referrals classified as "significant event".

Figures are provisional and may have been revised from previous months.

Weekly and monthly figures from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 in Excel format: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/temporary-information-releases-during-covid-19>.

## TECHNICAL NOTES

### Temporary Data Collection

The figures presented in these tables derive from a temporary management data collection of Children's Social Care Services during the period of COVID-19. These data returns have been extracted from the administrative system and/or data warehouse for each of the five Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts in Northern Ireland.

The data in this output is separate to any official statistics data series published by Department of Health (DoH) on children's social care.

### Change to Data Collection from October 2021

This data collection has changed from weekly to monthly returns, with a two week reporting lag. This improves data quality as it increases the inclusion of input error corrections and any input delays will be minimised. Historic weekly figures prior to the monthly collection started has been grouped to display proxy monthly figures.

### Data validation

The reports used to extract the contained management figures have been agreed between HSC Trust, the HSC Board (now SPPG) and DoH.

Although the data has been deemed to be of robust, and improved quality, it has not undergone the same rigorous quality assurance checks that are carried out prior to the publication of official statistics. Therefore, these figures are deemed provisional and may be subject to change.

### Publication

As set out in the DoH press release (20 May 2020), these figures will be routinely updated without further notification. Data was published each week including December 2021. From January 2022, figures are published on a monthly basis. It is expected that DoH will continue to publish these figures until such time that the data collection is stood down.

The release is available here:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/temporary-information-releases-during-covid-19>

## DEFINITIONS

### Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order was made on 15 March 1995. The Order deals with the care, upbringing and protection of children, including disabled children. It reforms, consolidates and harmonises most of the public and private law relating to children in a single coherent statutory framework along the lines of the Children Act 1989 in England and Wales.

### Child

Under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18.

### Referral to Children's Social Care

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 currently not assessed to be in need. A referral may result in an episode of care which may be an initial assessment of the child's needs, the provision of information or advice, referral to another agency or alternatively no further action. A **Child Protection Referral** is one for which the initial assessment indicates that there may be Child Protection issues.

### Child Protection Register

A register must be maintained by each HSC Trust listing every child in the Trust area who has been abused or who is considered to be at risk of abuse, and who is currently the subject of a child protection plan.

### Looked After Child / Child in Care

A child is looked after by an Authority if he or she is in their care or if he or she is provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours by the authority in the exercise of its Social Services function. Figures presented excludes any children who were looked after by virtue of short break arrangements only.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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