

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)

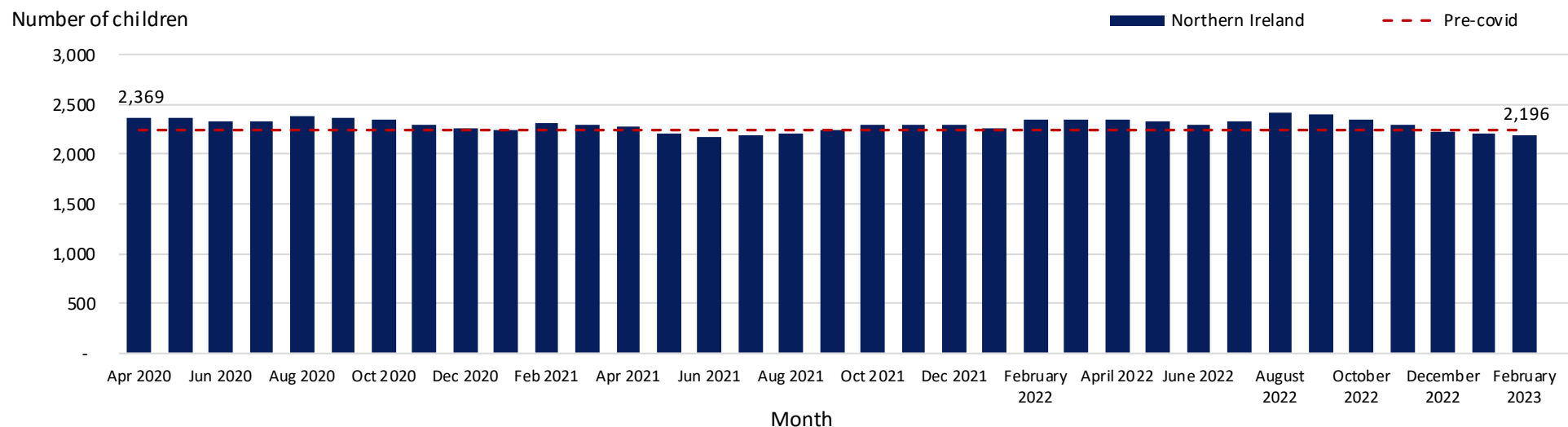
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Child Protection Register

Number of Children on the Child Protection Register (provisional)



The number of children on the Child Protection Register at the end of February 2023 was 2.2% lower than the last official figure prior to Covid19 (31 December 2019).

HSC Trust	Pre Covid19*	February 2022	March 2022	April 2022	May 2022	June 2022	July 2022	August 2022	September 2022	October 2022	November 2022	December 2022	January 2023	February 2023
Belfast	277	344	346	355	363	367	362	391	407	412	408	401	395	393
Northern	512	521	524	515	501	495	520	527	533	521	504	471	455	463
South Eastern	335	363	359	355	340	345	355	358	347	323	338	319	322	318
Southern	545	601	591	579	566	531	530	543	531	511	496	499	518	515
Western	577	518	529	540	555	551	556	597	590	577	548	534	518	507
Northern Ireland	2,246	2,347	2,349	2,344	2,325	2,289	2,323	2,416	2,408	2,344	2,294	2,224	2,208	2,196

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

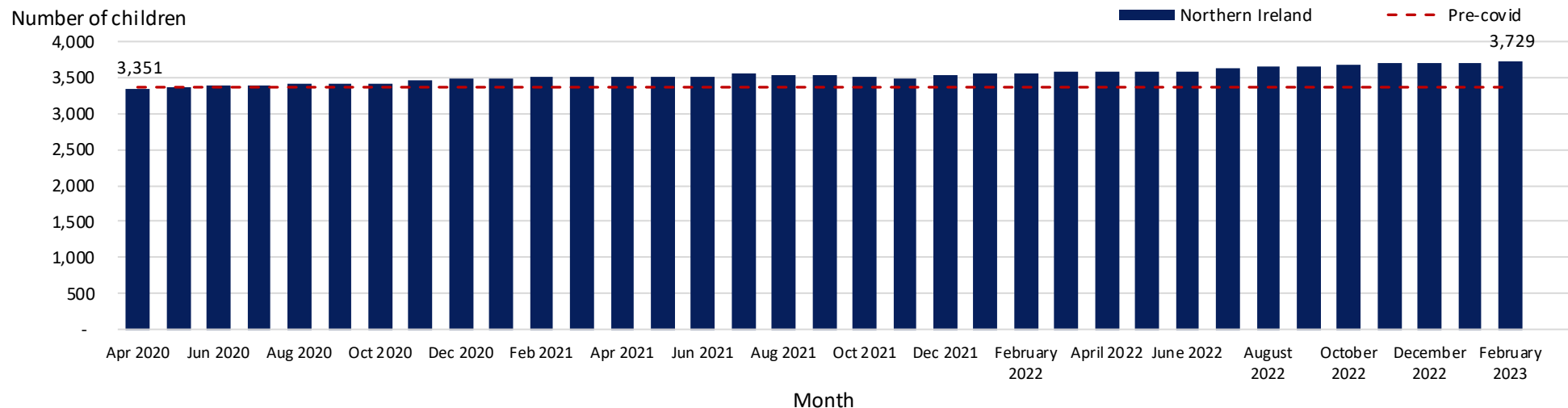
Figures are provisional and may have been revised from previous months.

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

Weekly and monthly figures from 6th 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)



The number of children in care at the end of February 2023 was 10.9% higher than the last official figure prior to Covid19 (30 September 2019).

HSC Trust	Pre Covid19*	February 2022	March 2022	April 2022	May 2022	June 2022	July 2022	August 2022	September 2022	October 2022	November 2022	December 2022	January 2023	February 2023
Belfast	826	946	948	953	956	953	971	975	990	1,003	1,014	1,021	1,018	1,032
Northern	680	723	732	735	738	731	732	740	729	725	728	724	732	735
South Eastern	621	613	612	602	614	621	623	639	637	650	655	642	645	657
Southern	582	587	589	590	588	592	599	610	613	611	616	617	619	619
Western	653	698	700	692	695	693	696	697	688	683	689	685	690	686
Northern Ireland	3,362	3,567	3,581	3,572	3,591	3,590	3,621	3,661	3,655	3,673	3,702	3,689	3,704	3,729

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

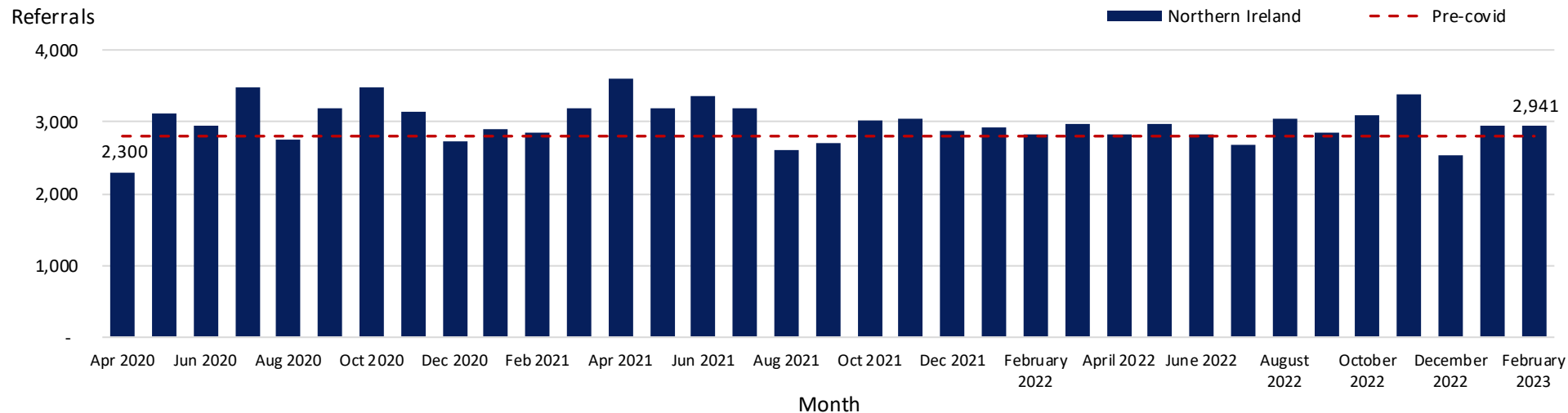
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Children referred to Social Services

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*	February 2022	March 2022	April 2022	May 2022	June 2022	July 2022	August 2022	September 2022	October 2022	November 2022	December 2022	January 2023	February 2023
Northern Ireland	2,799.5	2,832	2,977	2,838	2,971	2,822	2,692	3,036	2,848	3,102	3,377	2,525	2,961	2,941

* 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.

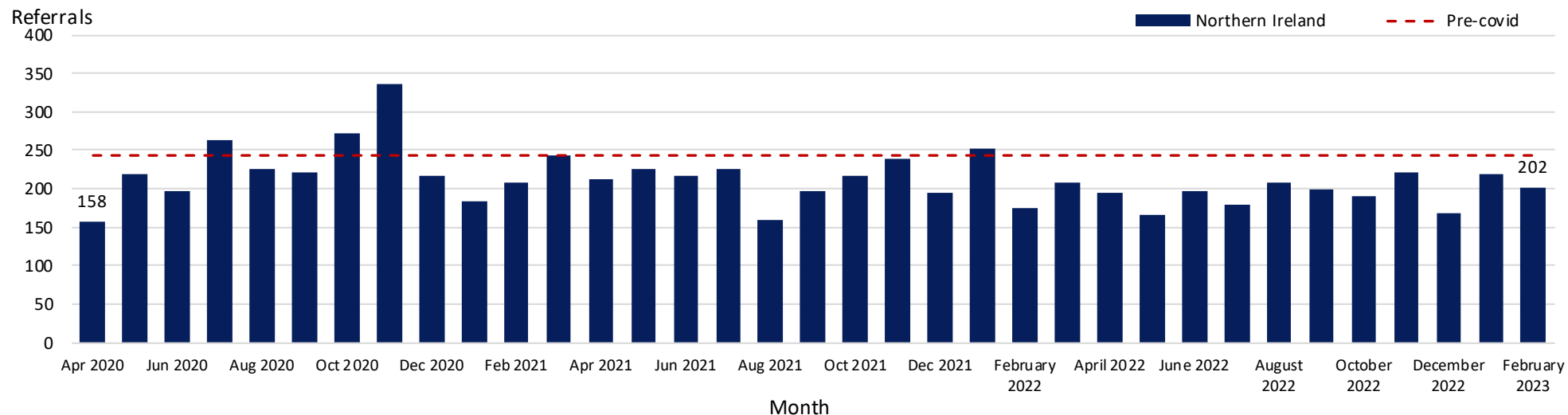
Note 2: For the three HSC Trusts Belfast, Southern and Western, the monthly figures up to October 2021 are the sum of weekly returns and therefore a proxy of the total of the month.

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

Weekly and monthly figures from 6th 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*	February 2022	March 2022	April 2022	May 2022	June 2022	July 2022	August 2022	September 2022	October 2022	November 2022	December 2022	January 2023	February 2023
Northern Ireland	167.7	174	209	194	166	198	179	208	200	191	222	168	218	202

*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 6th 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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