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STATISTICAL PRESS RELEASE

PUBLICATION OF 'CHILDREN ORDER STATISTICAL BULLETIN 2008'

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety today published the 'Children Order Statistical Bulletin 2008'.

This statistical bulletin presents information on a range of issues relating to children's social care; including child protection, looked after children, and children's homes.

The publication is based on annual children order statistical returns, introduced in December 1996, and returned to the Department by Health and Social Care Trusts.

To facilitate trend analysis, data is presented for the six year period from 2003 to 2008, and where available figures for England, Scotland and Wales have been included to put Northern Ireland figures within a wider social care context. However, it should be noted that these figures are set against a background in which England, Scotland and Wales operate under a different legislative framework. Children under a supervision requirement in Scotland are considered to be in the care of the local authority, whilst in the rest of the UK they are not. As a result of a high rate of children being looked after at home in Scotland, very low proportions are cared for in foster homes (29%), compared with Northern Ireland (59%), England (75%) and Wales (75%).

Key Facts and Figures

Child Protection

- At 31 March 2008, there were 2,071 children on the child protection register, an increase of 463 (29%) from the same date in 2003.
- During 2007/08 2,306 child protection investigations were completed, similar to the number completed in 2006/07 (2,320).
- Between 2002/03 and 2007/08, the number of child protection registrations increased by 36% (395), from 1,102 to 1,497 respectively.
- At 31 March 2008, almost one third (32%) of children on the child protection register were assessed to be at risk of Neglect (only), 24% (488) at risk of Physical Abuse (only), 13% (266) at risk of Emotional Abuse (only), 12% (244) at risk of Sexual Abuse (only) and 20% (408) at risk of more than one type of abuse.
- For the year ending 31 March 2008, Northern Ireland had the highest number (48.0) of children on the child protection register per 10,000-population aged under 18, compared with Wales (36.4), England 2 (26.6), and Scotland (23.3).

Looked After Children

- Between 2007 and 2008, the number of looked after children in Northern Ireland increased by 3% (77), from 2,356 to 2,429.
- In the six years from 2003 to 2008, the number of children in care has fluctuated from a high of 2,531 in 2005 to a low of 2,356 in 2007.
- At 56.3 and 54.1 respectively, in 2008, Northern Ireland and England had similar numbers of looked after children per 10,000-population aged under 18. Equivalent figures were notably higher for Scotland (142.1) and Wales (75.5).
- Almost 8 in 10 (78%) of all respite care placements in 2007/08, were with foster carers.
- Forty-three percent (390) of all care leavers in 2007/08 had been in care for 1 year or longer, compared with 34% (310) that were discharged after less than 2 weeks in care.

Children's Homes

- At 30 June 2008, there were 55 residential homes for children, providing a total of 388 places. Of these 55 residential homes, 42 were statutory and 13 were independent children's homes providing 311 and 70 places respectively.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. All publications are available on line at:

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/stats-cib/stats-cib_pubs/stats-cib-children_order_bulletin.htm

2. About the data:

- The sources of the data contained in this release are the Departmental Children Order statistical returns, collected from HSC Trusts on an annual basis.
- Figures incorporate all returns and amendments received from HSC Trusts up to 19th February 2009.

3. This statistical bulletin was produced by Community Information Branch, DHSSPS.

Further information is available from:

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4. Media queries to DHSSPS Information Office on 02890 520074, or out of hours contact the Duty Press Officer via pager number 076 9971 5440 and your call will be returned.