Experiences in a child's early years lay a foundation for health and wellbeing and our services for children and families have an important role in building future resilience.

By identifying those most at risk of poorer outcomes later on, our resources can be targeted where they are needed most so that we can respond to risk and vulnerability.

The number of 0-4 year olds is expected to increase slightly but the number of 5-15 year olds will increase from about 49,090 in 2017 to 52,122 in 2027 (0.6% pa).

Big Numbers Box

68,585 total children

primary school children with Special Educational Needs **1.3%**

504 children and young people **in care** in Dorset

81% children leaving care go into suitable accommodation

133 child protection enquiries per 10,000 children

62 looked after children in every 10,000 in Dorset

53 child protection rate per 10,000 children
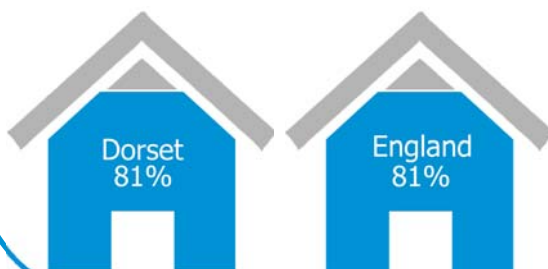
Box 1: Vulnerable children

- Vulnerable groups include:
  - those from deprived socio-economic backgrounds;
  - those with special educational needs;
  - children from particular ethnic groups.

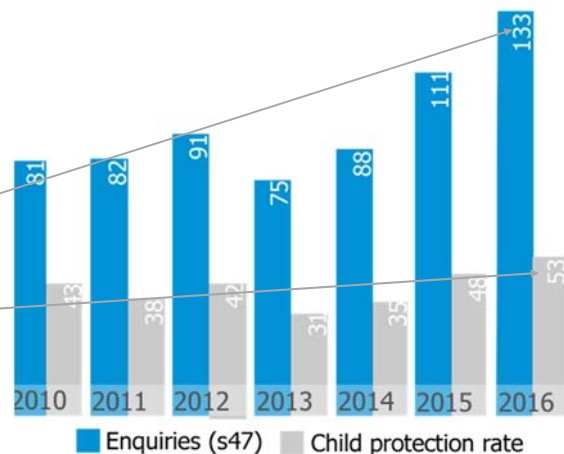- In December 2016, there were 504 children and young people in care in Dorset[1].

- There were 133 child protection enquiries (s47) per 10,000 children in 2016 compared with 148 in England[2].

- The child protection rate in 2016 was 53 per 10,000 children compared with 43 in England.[2]

% of children leaving care going into suitable accommodation

Dorset 81%

England 81%

Child protection: Dorset

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
81	82	91	75	88	111	133
43	38	42	31	35	48	53

■ Enquiries (s47)   ▨ Child protection rate

- The rate of looked after children rose from 49 per 10,000 children in 2015 to 62 in 2016[2].

- Suitable accommodation is not always available for children leaving care. In 2015, 81% of Dorset children leaving care went into suitable accommodation - in line with the national average.[2]

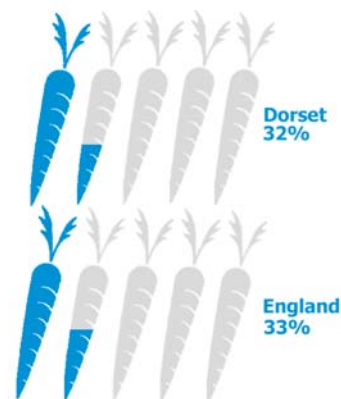### Sources
1 Dorset County Council, Children's Services
2 Local Area Interactive Tool (LAIT): Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait [accessed 29 November 2016]
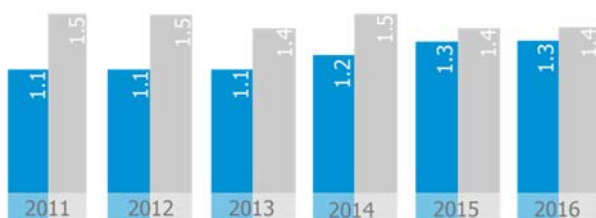
Children

Box 2: Schools

- In 2016, 70% of children achieved a good level of development in the Early Years Foundation Profile, an improvement of 2.6 percentage points on 2015[2].

- 32% of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) in Dorset achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and Maths compared with 33% nationally[2].

- 13% of primary pupils claim Free School Meals, compared to 15% nationally[2].

Pupils eligible for FSM achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs

Dorset 32%

England 33%

SEN statements

■ Primary ■ Secondary

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Primary	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.3
Secondary	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.4

- In 2016, 1.3% of primary school pupils had a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) as did 1.4% of secondary school pupils[2].

Why does it matter:

There is evidence to show that what a child experiences in early years, starting in the womb, affects health and wellbeing in later life. Early intervention is therefore key and cutbacks in spending on this for short term financial gain can lead to greater long term costs, both financial and social[3].

Research suggests that a range of interventions to provide support at different levels of need is most effective, with spending prioritised on:
- High quality support in the early years;
- Speech, language and communication needs;
- Parenting programmes; targeted family support; and
- Young people on the edge of care

These types of early intervention, underpinned and targeted through the use of sound evidence, can help identify those at risk in later life.

Evidence suggests that smarter working with the whole family leads to improved outcomes and better value for money and, as some will need ongoing support, there needs to be a continuum of services to support vulnerable people over time.

Sources

2 Local Area Interactive Tool (LAIT): Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-interactive-tool-lait [accessed 29 November 2016]
3 C4E0 Grasping the Nettle: early intervention for children, families and communities