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# Inclusion Health Groups and other groups at risk of poor health and wellbeing

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## Focus of the briefing

To tackle inequalities, it is important to understand who is at higher risk of poorer health. This briefing provides a summary of key data and insights relating to children and young people in inclusion health groups and other groups at risk of poor health and wellbeing across West Sussex (PHSRU, 2024).

## Inclusion Health

‘Inclusion health’ is an umbrella term used to describe people who are socially excluded and typically experience multiple overlapping factors for poor health such as stigma, discrimination, poverty, violence and complex trauma (Public Health, 2021). This can often lead to barriers in accessing health services and poor health outcomes. As such, these groups are included in the NHS Core 20 PLUS 5.

People in inclusion health groups include:

- People who experience homelessness
- People with drug and alcohol dependence
- Vulnerable migrants and refugees
- Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities
- People in contact with the justice system
- Victims of modern slavery
- Sex workers
- Other marginalised groups

### Good to know

It is important to note that data on inclusion health groups is not always available when focusing specifically on children and young people. Therefore, this briefing draws only on information that is currently accessible in the public domain.

Extremely poor health status among inclusion health groups is driven by severe disadvantage and clusters of risks that can build up over the life course (NHS England, 2023). For example, adverse experiences in childhood [may be associated with social exclusion, vulnerabilities and health needs both in childhood and later in life](#).

There will be differences in needs within socially excluded groups (for example by gender) as intersectionality still applies to individuals’ experiences within inclusion health groups. It is important to remember that people may not be aware that they are part of an inclusion health group or may not identify themselves to be part of one. Additionally, people may pass through multiple inclusion health groups throughout their lifetime and will take these experiences and potential health issues with them throughout their life (Hampshire County Council, n.d.).

Further information on inclusion health can be found using the following links:

- [Inclusion Health Data Pack for Sussex](#)
- [Public Health England - Spotlight: Inclusion Health Groups](#)
- [Public Health England - Inclusion Health: applying All Our Health](#)

## Homelessness

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 introduced new duties on local authorities in England to prevent people from becoming homeless if they were at risk of losing their accommodation in 56 days or to provide ‘relief’ to those already homeless, regardless of priority need status (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2025)

In 2022/23, 1,167 households with dependent children across West Sussex were assessed as being owed a prevention or relief duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act. This equates to 12.4 households per 1,000, a lower rate than England (16.1 per 1,000 estimated households with at least one dependent child). Crawley had a significantly higher rate

of households with dependent children owed a duty (22.2 per 1,000 households) than England (16.1 per 1,000 households).

### Good to know

Dependent children refer to children aged under 18 and living at home or children aged 18 and in full time education or can't support themselves for other reasons and living at home (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2025).

### Young people seeking asylum

The UK Home Office defines unaccompanied asylum-seeking child (UASC) as 'a child who is under 18, not being cared for by an adult who by law has responsibility to do so, separated by their parents and has applied for asylum in the UK in their own right' (UK Visas and Immigration, 2025). Local authorities have a legal duty to provide accommodation for these children.

On the 31st of March 2025, there were 84 UASC who were looked after in West Sussex. This equates to around 9% of the total number of children looked after in the county.

### Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities

The 2021 Census provides data on the number of people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller ethnic groups. In West Sussex, approximately 165 young people aged 11-18 years identified as Gypsy or Irish Traveller (0.21%) and a further 95 identified as Roma (0.12%). Across the district and boroughs, Chichester has the highest proportion of young people from a Gypsy or Irish Traveller background (0.43% - higher than England at 0.18%) and Crawley has the highest proportion of Roma (0.20%).

***However, data collected on the number of people from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller ethnic groups is likely to be an under-representation of***

***people within these communities, due to factors such as a lack of trust behind data collection and fear of discrimination.***

According to the Census, 94% of children aged 15 years and under who identified as Gypsy or Irish Traveller in West Sussex were reported to be in good health. This was 91% for 16–19-year-olds. For children and young people who identified as Roma, 95% of 15 and under and 16-19 years identified as being in good health.

### Educational Outcomes

Education is strongly linked to health behaviours and outcomes, meaning that low attainment at school can negatively impact both physical and mental health (Public Health England, 2017). A recent briefing looking at Gypsy and Traveller education in England by the House of Commons Library (2024) reported that:

- 31% of pupils identified as Travellers of Irish Heritage and 16% of pupils identifying as Gypsy/Roma attained GCSE English and Maths at grade 4 or above (standard pass) compared to 65% of all pupils.
- Gypsy/ Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils consistently have the highest rates of permanent exclusion (expulsion) and fixed-term exclusion (suspension) of any ethnic groups
- For Gypsy/ Roma pupils, the permanent exclusion rate was more than triple the national average rate at 0.14% (0.04% nationally). For Travellers of Irish Heritage, it was around five times higher than the national average, at 0.18%. By using rates rather than raw numbers, this provides a more accurate picture of exclusion trends, as they take into account changes in the size of pupil groups over time.
- For Gypsy/ Roma pupils, the suspension rate was around four times higher than the national rate, at 11.43% (3.13% nationally). For Travellers of Irish Heritage it was around double the national rate, at 6.69%
- In 2021/22, 12.6% of Gypsy and Roma young people progressed to HE, compared to 9.0% of Travellers of Irish Heritage and 46.8% across all ethnic groups.

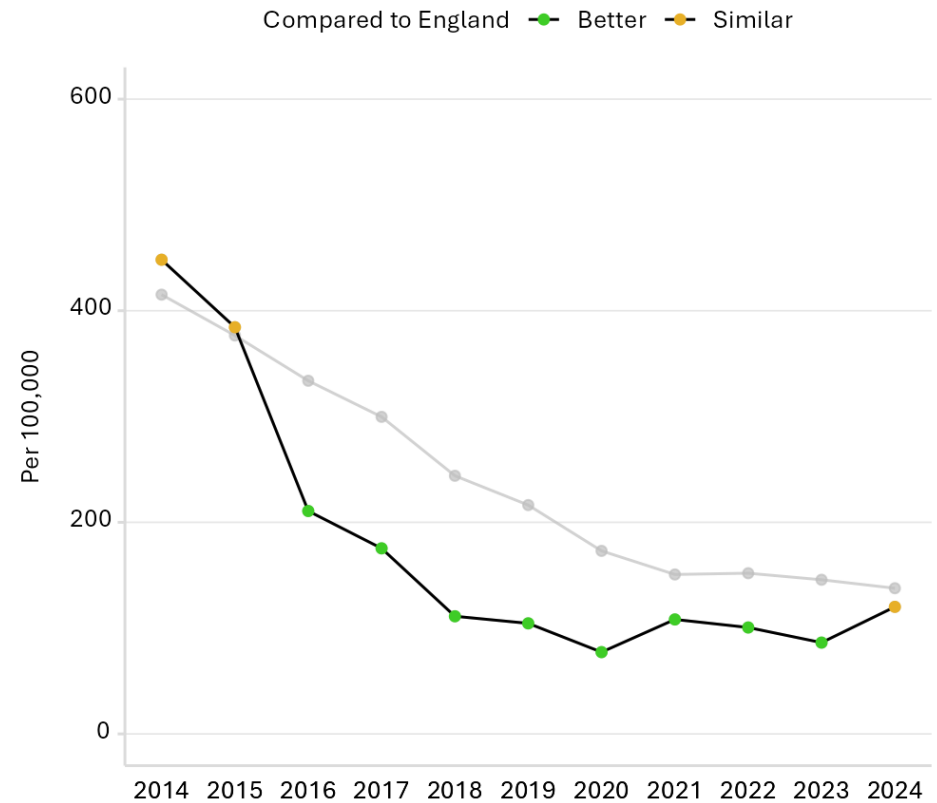
One report suggests prejudice, discrimination and exclusion were some of the main causes of disrupted educational pathways for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people (Higher Education Policy Institute, 2022) (House of Commons Library, 2024).

### Young people in contact with youth justice

The Youth Justice System deals with young people aged 10–17-year-olds who may have committed a crime (Rowe & Low, 2024). In 2024, the rate of 10-to-17-year-olds receiving their first reprimand, warning or conviction in West Sussex was 120.1 per 100,000, not significantly different to the England average (137.7 per 100,000).

From 2016 to 2023, West Sussex had a significantly lower rate of 10-to-17-year-olds receiving their first reprimand, warning or conviction compared to the England average. From 2023 to 2024, the rate has increased from 86.3 to 120.1 per 100,000 population.

Figure 1: First time entrants to the youth justice system (per 100,000 population) – West Sussex compared to England 2014 to 2024



Note. Rate for England shown in grey.

Source: OHID, based on Ministry of Justice and Office for National Statistics data.

## Other groups at risk of poor health and wellbeing

### Children in need

Children in need (CIN) are a legally defined group of children (under the Children Act 1989) who are assessed as needing help and protection due to risks to their development and health (Department for Education, 2025). This group includes those on child in need or child protection plans, children looked after by local authorities, care leavers and disabled children. Children in need also includes young people aged 18 or over who continue to receive care, accommodation or support from children's services, and unborn children (Department for Education, 2025).

As of 31st March 2025, 5,526 children in West Sussex were classed as in need, equating to a rate of 303.7 per 10,000 children aged under 18. This rate is lower than England (330.3 per 10,000 children). In West Sussex, 548 (9.9%) of children in need had a disability recorded, compared with 14.4% for England.

### Factors identified at assessment

When a child is referred to children's social care services, an assessment is carried out (usually within 45 working days of a referral) to identify if the child is in need of services (Department for Education, 2024). Factors that contribute to the child being in need are identified at the end of assessment by the social worker and recorded as relevant in a case. For example, the prevalence of domestic abuse can impact the services (including multi-agency services) needed (Department for Education, 2021).

For the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, there were 5,556 episodes across West Sussex where factors could be identified at the end of assessment. Parental mental health concerns were the most frequently cited factor at the end of an assessment (of those with factors

identified). This was identified in 1,856 (33.4%) assessments for the year ending 31st March 2025.

### Domestic violence

For the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, domestic violence was the second most common factor identified in assessments of episodes of need amongst children in West Sussex (after parental mental health concerns). Over a third (32.9%) of Children in Need episodes in West Sussex identified domestic violence concerns where the parent was a victim at the end of the assessment period (compared to 31.7% nationally). 7.8% of Children in Need episodes in West Sussex (where factors were identified) identified domestic violence concerns where the child was a victim (compared to 11.3% nationally)

### Child criminal exploitation

Child criminal exploitation is defined as a form of child abuse where a child or young person is forced or coerced to engage in criminal activity or commit a crime (NSPCC, 2023). This covers a range of areas including county lines and modern slavery (LGA).

In 2025, 151 (2.7%) Children in Need episodes in West Sussex (where factors were identified) identified concerns of child criminal exploitation.

### Child protection plans

A child becomes the subject of a child protection plan if they are assessed as being at risk of significant harm at an initial child protection conference. As of 31st March 2025, 631 children and young people were assessed as being at risk of harm and becoming subject of a child protection plan in West Sussex, a rate of 34.6 per 10,000 under 18 years. This rate is lower than England (40.6 per 10,000).

## **Children looked after**

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a local authority if they are provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours or subject to a care order (which will put them into the care of the local authority) or placement order (which gives the local authority the ability to place the child for adoption). A child ceases to be 'looked after' when they are adopted, return home or turn 18.

As of 31st March 2025, the number of children looked after in West Sussex was 975, an increase of 7.6% (69 children) compared to the previous year (Department for Education, 2025). This equates to a rate of 54 looked after children per 100,000 under 18 years, an increase from a rate of 50 per 100,000 last year (Department for Education, 2025).

Of those, 24% were placed for care outside the local authority and further than 20 miles from where they used to live (LGA Research, n.d.).

Official government statistics publish data on certain characteristics of children in care, such as their gender, age and ethnicity. In West Sussex, there were more male children who were looked after (59%) than female (41%). These children were predominantly older (39% aged 10-15 years and 31% aged 16 and over) and majority from a white ethnic background (78%) compared to 7% from mixed or multiple ethnic groups.

## **Care leavers**

Care leavers are young people who have been in the care of the local authority for a period of 13 weeks or more after their 14th birthday, including some time after their 16th birthday (Foley, 2024). Councils are expected to stay in touch with care leavers and provide support (Local Government Association, 2025).

In 2025, there were approximately 700 care leavers aged 17-21 years in West Sussex (Department for Education, 2025). 75% of care leavers aged 17-18 were in education, employment or training.

## **Young carers**

The 2021 Census provides data on the number of people aged 5 years and over who provided unpaid care. Approximately 1,242 young people aged 5-15 identified as an unpaid carer in West Sussex with an additional 1,255 aged 16-19.

In Spring 2023, a category for young carers was added to the annual school census for state schools. Section 17ZA of the Children Act 1989 defines a young carer as 'a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person (which isn't a contract or voluntary work)' (Department for Education, 2025).

For the academic year 2024/25, 504 (0.8%) of pupils in state-funded primary schools and 625 (1.2%) of state-funded secondary school pupils in West Sussex identified as young carers (either by the school or disclosed by a parent or child themselves). Nationally, 0.5% of pupils in state-funded primary schools and 1.1% of pupils in state-funded secondary schools were known to be young carers.

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