



Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland



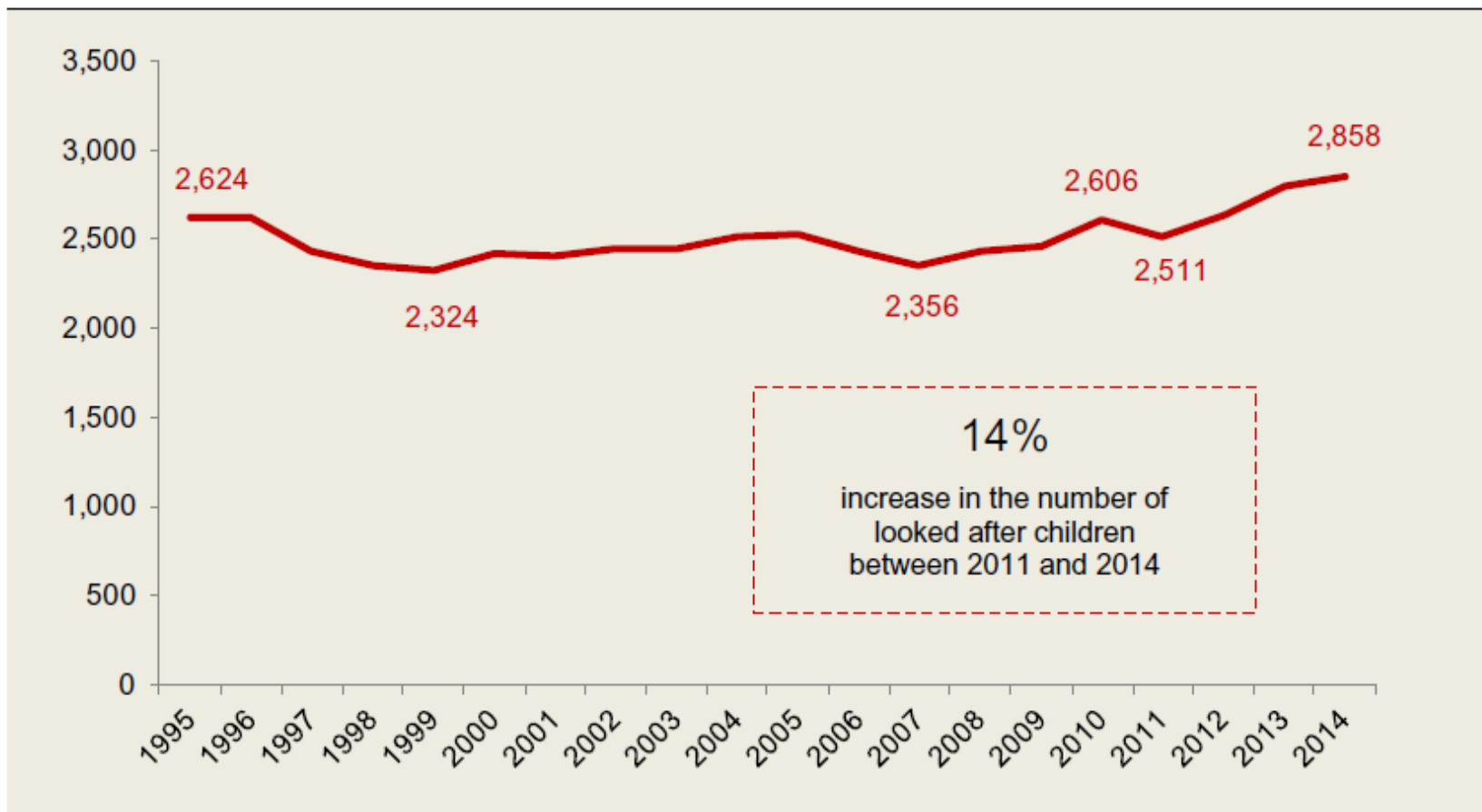
Making timely decisions for children: balancing differing needs in families

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Figure 3.1. Looked After Children in Northern Ireland at 31 March (1995 – 2014)



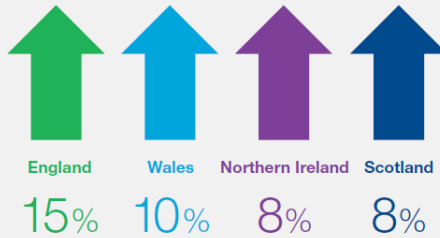
Source: Children Order Return LA1 & Delegated Statutory Functions Return 10.3.1

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/child-social-care-13-14.pdf>

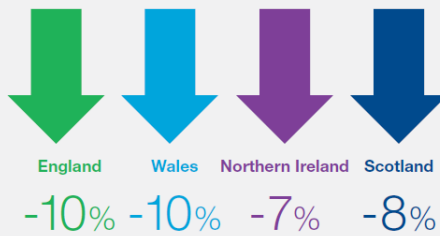


Expenditure

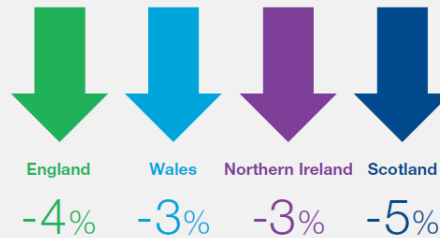
2006/7 – 2009/10



2010/11 – 2012/13

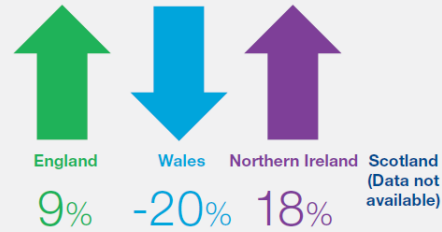


2012/13 – 2015/16 (forecast)

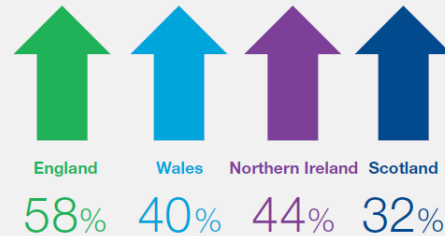


Demand 2006/7 – 2012/13

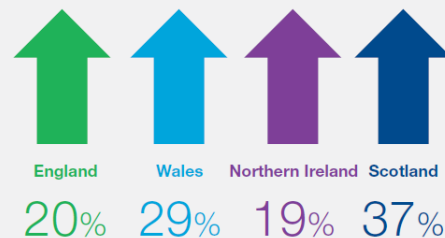
Referrals accepted by children's social care



Children on a protection plan/register



Looked-after children



From: Jütte *et al.*, 2014



Children's Need for Safety, Stability and Identity

Strains on the Looked After System

- Increasing numbers of looked after children
- Delays in admission to care
- Delays in the court process

Early Authoritative Intervention

- Parent's ability to change
- Parent's willingness to engage
- The durability of any changes
- The accessibility of services
- The availability of family support services in the longer term

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Concluding Care Proceedings
Within 26 Weeks:

Messages from the Evaluation of the
Tri-borough Care Proceedings Pilot

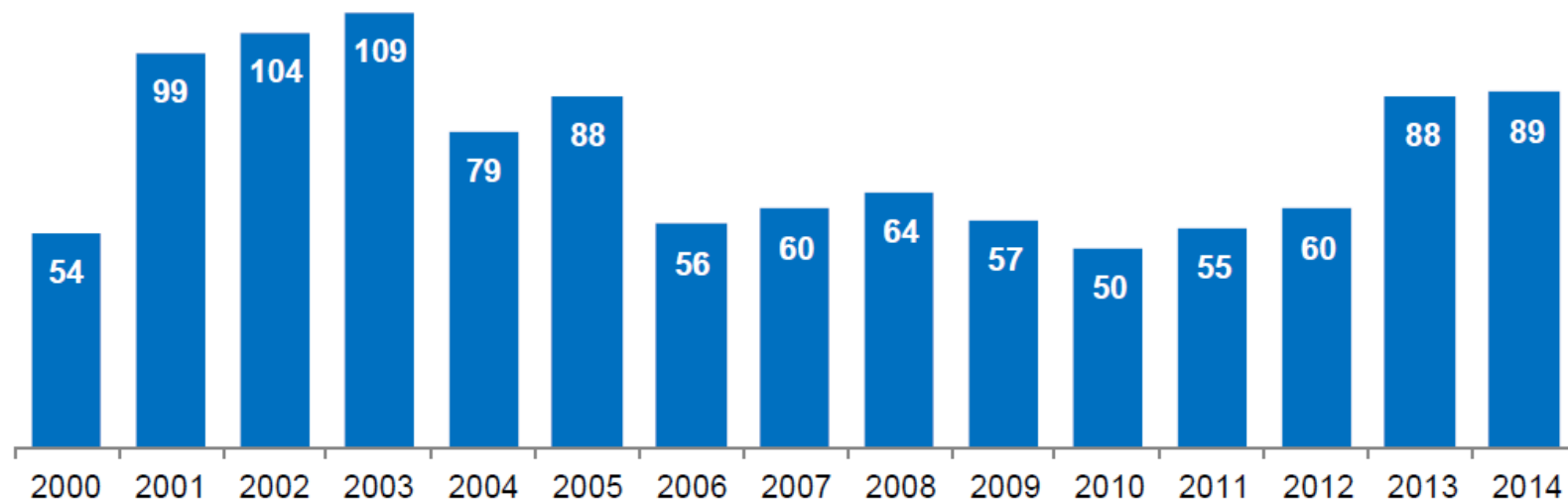
Updated version: May 2014

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Figure 1 Number of Children Adopted from Care in Northern Ireland (year ending 31 March)



Source for years 2000 and 2001: *Adopting Best Care*, Social Services Inspectorate, DHSSPS May 2002

Source from 2003: AD1 Surveys www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/statistics/socialcare/children-adopted-from-care.htm

Note: Number of adoptions has been estimated for the years 2002, 2007, 2009 and 2011.

<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/cani-13-14.pdf>

Children and Families Act 2014

- Introducing a time limit of 26 weeks when courts are considering whether a child should be taken into care for all except 'exceptional cases'
- Promoting 'fostering for adoption' so that children are placed sooner with the families that are able to adopt them
- Limiting the use of expert evidence to that which is necessary to assist the court to resolve proceedings justly
- Restricting judicial oversight of the care plan for the child

Significant Legal Judgements

- Re B (Care Proceedings: Appeal (2013) UKSC 33 2013 2FLR 1075)
- Re B-S (Adoption: Application of s 47 (5) 2013 EWCA Civ 1146 2014 1 FLR 1035)
- European Court of Human Rights (YC v United Kingdom (2012) 55 EHRR, 967)



Concluding Comments

1. Balancing different aims and the attendant tensions
2. 'We are not in the business of social engineering' !
3. The ethical challenges in the context of austerity and reductions in formal and informal supports
4. Developing dialogue around inevitable tensions





Northern Ireland
Assembly



Queen's University
Belfast



The Open
University



Ulster
University

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