

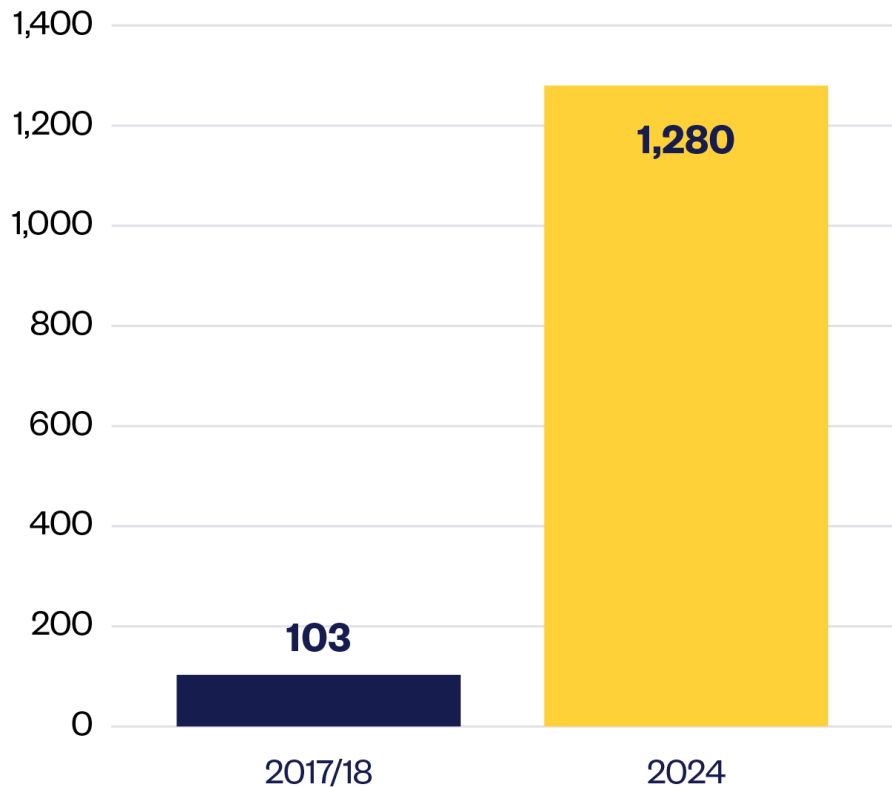
Care for children on deprivation of liberty orders

What we know



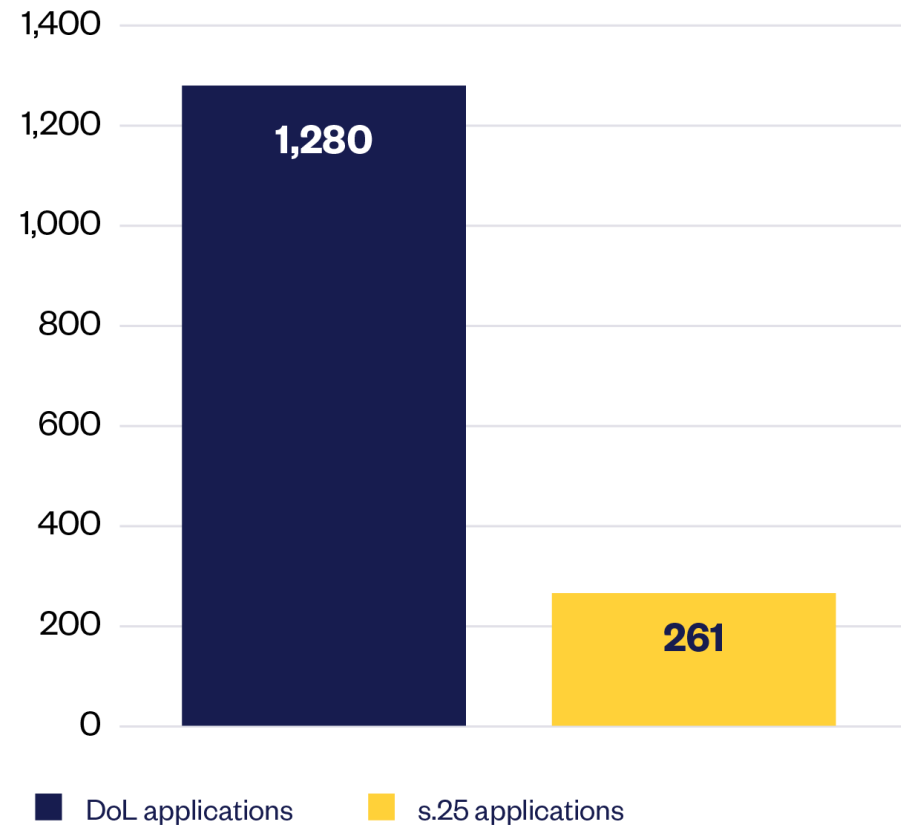
Rise in use of deprivation of liberty orders

Number of applications per year



Source: Cafcass and Ministry of Justice

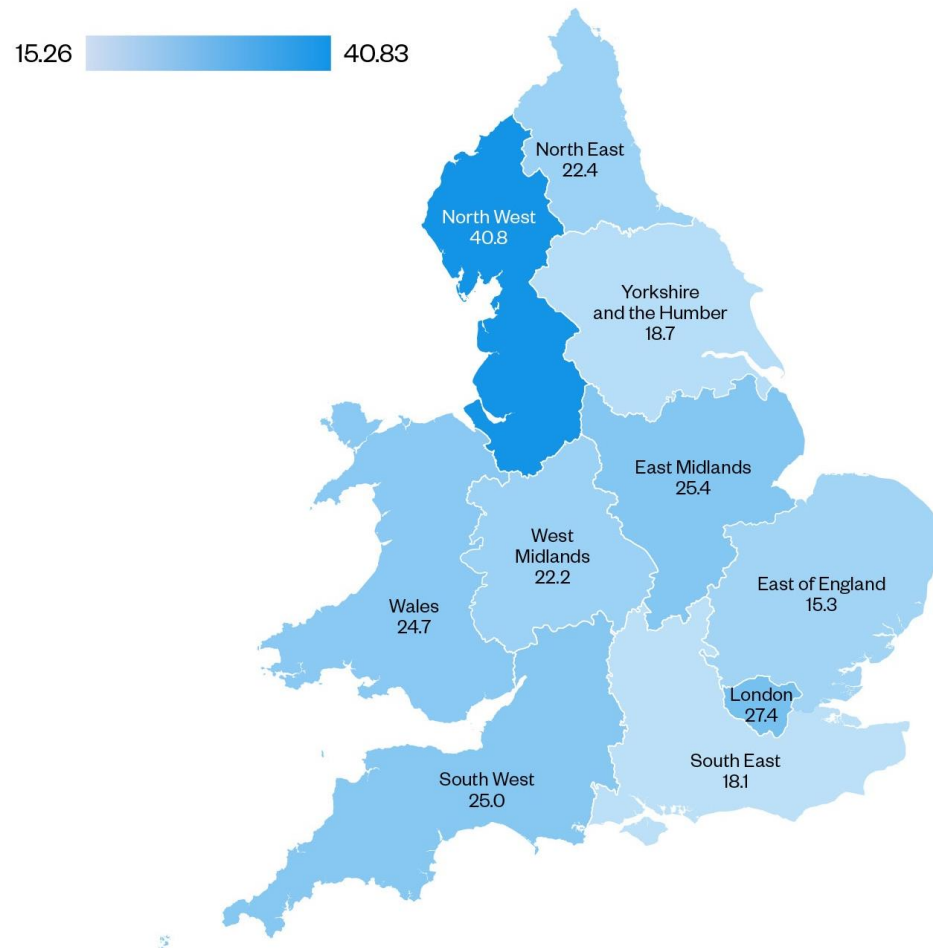
Number of DoL and secure accommodation applications, 2024



Source: MoJ (2025)

A nationwide problem

**Rate of applications per 100,000 children by region, England and Wales,
July 2022 to June 2023**

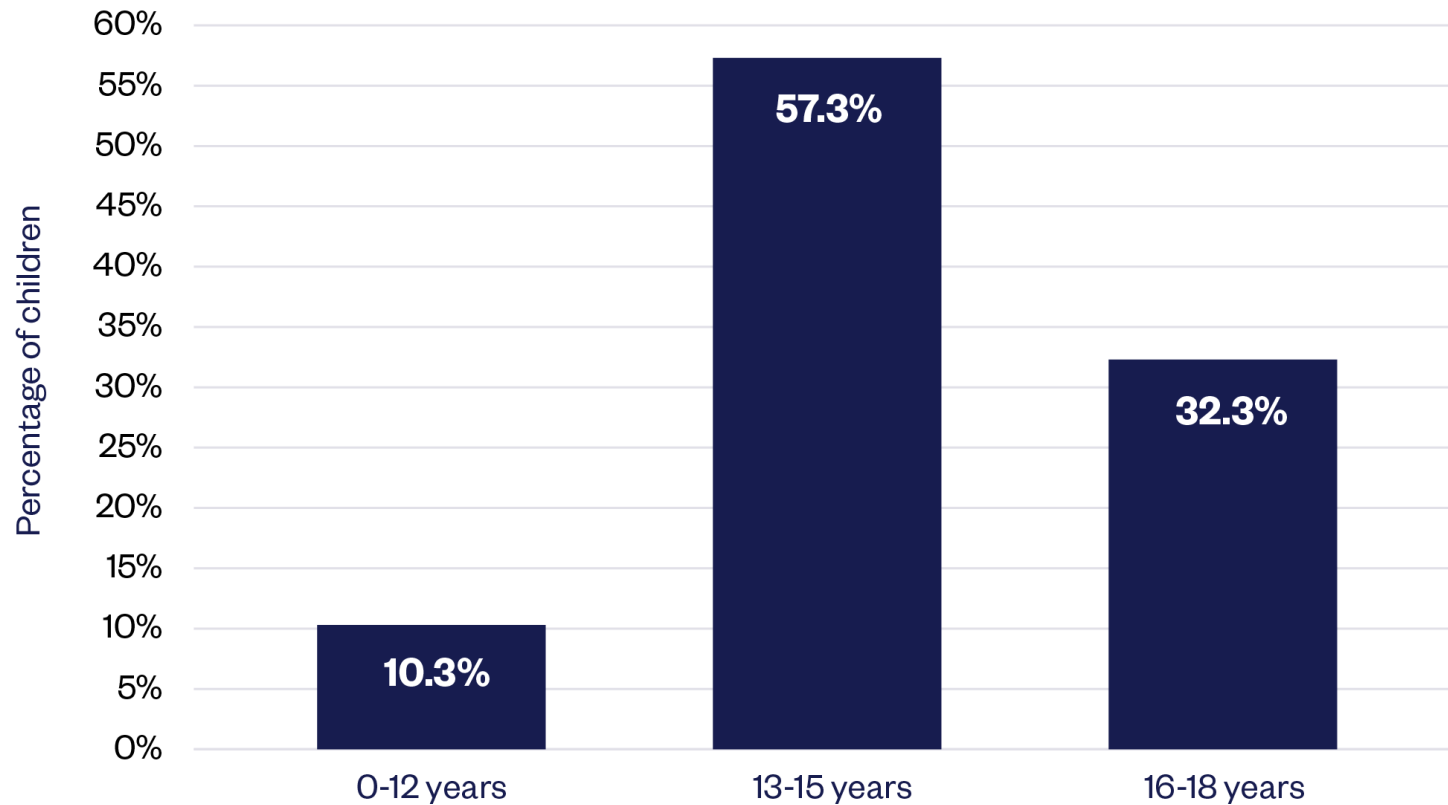


**94% of English local
authorities made an
application for a
deprivation of liberty
order in a 12-month
period**

Source: Nuffield FJO (2023)

Not only teenagers

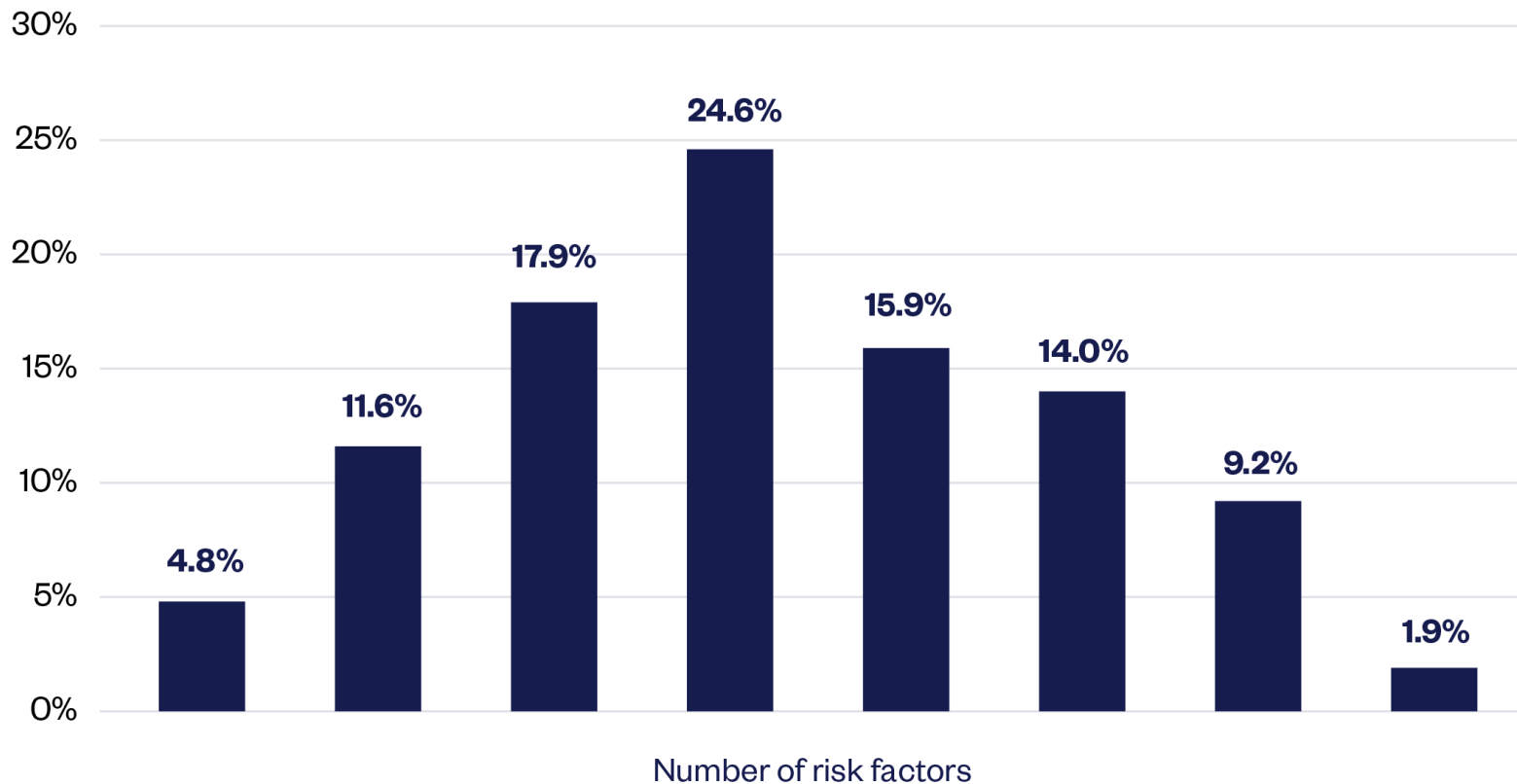
Age of children subject to DoL applications in 2024



One in ten is under the age of 13

Complex lives not complex children

Aggregate number of risk factors present in all cases

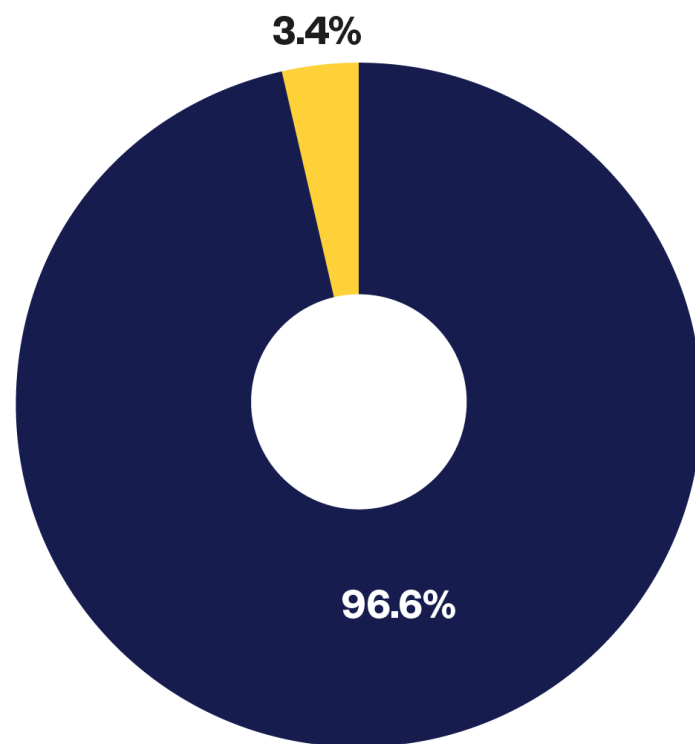


Source: Nuffield FJO (2023)

-
- being a risk to others
 - going missing
 - self-harming
 - having poor mental health
 - having a neuro-developmental disorder
 - having a disability
 - being sexually exploited
 - being criminally exploited
 - misusing alcohol/drugs
 - having a placement breakdown
 - being out of education

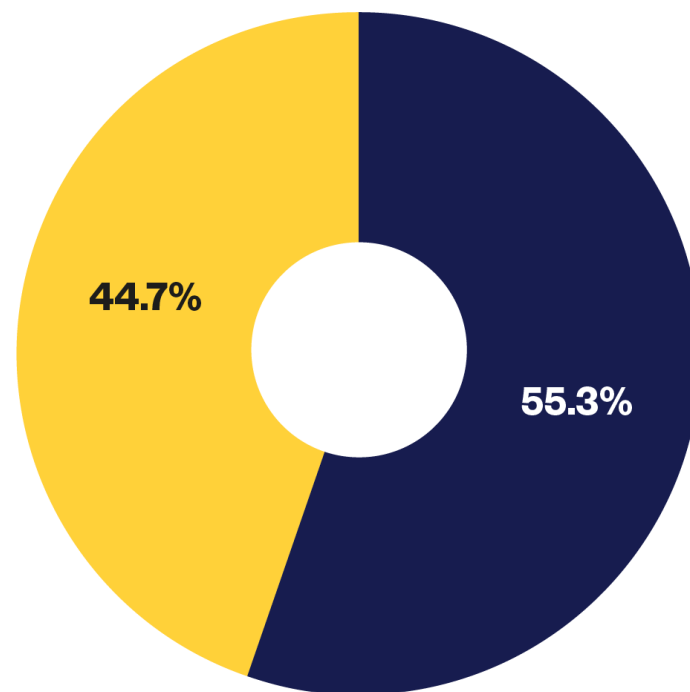
With systems unable to respond to their needs

Most children are in care



■ In care ■ Not in care

Disrupted care history



■ Multiple placement breakdown ■ Stable placement

Of 208 deprivation of liberty applications, only 10 children had recently come to the attention of the local authority

Source: Nuffield FJO (2023)

Children and carers have limited voice

9.6%

Children attended at least one hearing in their case

4.8%

Children spoke to the judge directly before the hearing

5.8%

Children had written to the judge to share their views

88.5%

Parents and/or carers were not legally represented at any hearing in a DoL case



Life under a DoL order

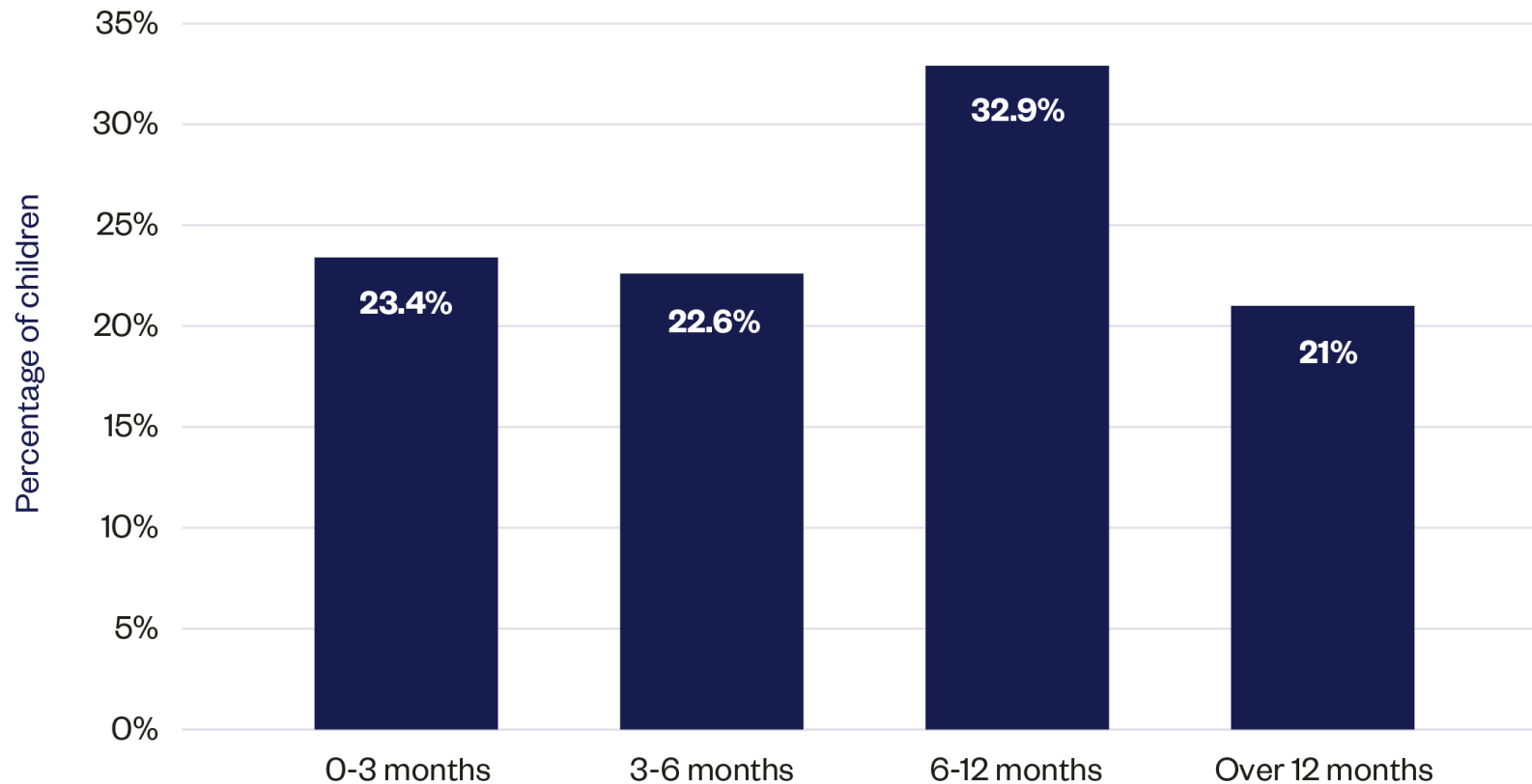
- Socially isolated
- Out of education
- Unmet mental health needs
- Short term plans
- Inexperienced staff
- Limited agency



Sources: Nuffield FJO (2024); Office of the Children's Commissioner (2024)

Severe, long-term restrictions

How long are children subject to DoL orders?



Source: MoJ (2025)

Each child was subject to an average of 6 different types of restriction, including in almost all cases constant supervision.

The use of restraint was permitted in over two-thirds of cases.

Restrictions were rarely relaxed.

Source: Nuffield FJO (2023)

What does good care involve?

1. Stable valued, trusted relationships
2. Holistic assessment, formulation and tailored plan of intervention
3. Long term support
4. Highly experienced multidisciplinary teams
5. Agency and respect

Source: Nuffield FJO (2023)

