

STATISTICAL BULLETIN: CHILD CRUELTY

Introduction

This bulletin provides information on volumes and sentence outcomes for adult offenders¹ sentenced for certain offences covered by the Sentencing Council's draft child cruelty guideline².

The offence of failure to protect a child from the risk of female genital mutilation (FGM) is covered by the draft guideline. The offence came into force on 3rd May 2015, and in 2015 and 2016 there were no sentences passed for this offence. Statistics for this offence have therefore not been included in this bulletin, as there is currently no sentencing data available for this offence.

The Court Proceedings Database (CPD), maintained by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), is the data source for this bulletin.

Additional figures covering sentencing trends since 2006 and the demographics of offenders sentenced for child cruelty offences are available to download as an Excel spreadsheet at the following link:
<http://www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk/publications/?type=publications&s&cat=statistical-bulletin>

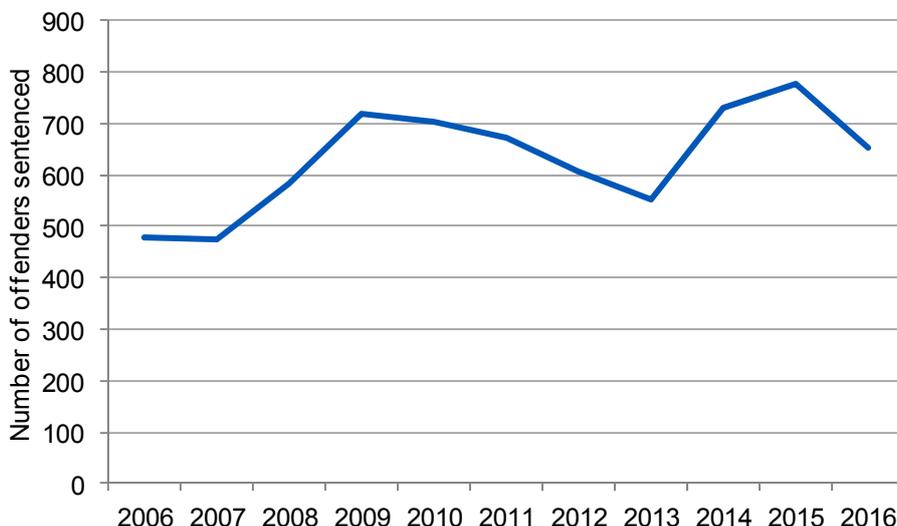
¹ Includes offenders aged 18 or over at the time of conviction.

² The draft child cruelty guideline covers the offences of cruelty to a child, causing or allowing the death of a child, causing or allowing a child to suffer serious physical harm, and failure to protect a child from the risk of female genital mutilation.

Sentence volumes

- Since 2006 the number of offenders sentenced for child cruelty offences covered by the guideline has increased, from 480 in 2006 to 650 in 2016 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Number of adult offenders sentenced for child cruelty offences covered by the draft guideline, 2006-2016



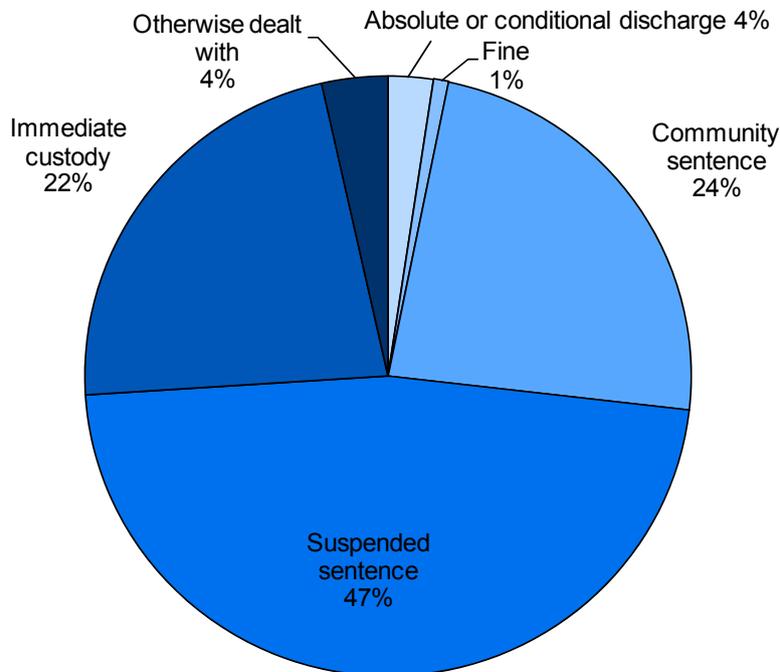
- The majority of offenders sentenced for child cruelty offences, are sentenced for the offence of cruelty to a child (95.6 per cent of child cruelty offences in 2016).
- The offences of causing or allowing the death of a child or vulnerable adult, and causing or allowing a child or vulnerable adult to suffer serious physical harm³, are lower volume offences. These made up 0.9 per cent (less than 10 offenders) and 3.5 per cent (20 offenders), respectively, of total child cruelty offences covered by the draft guideline in 2016.

³ The draft child cruelty guideline applies to this offence where the victim is a child only. However, these statistics include the offence of causing or allowing a vulnerable adult to die or suffer serious physical harm. It is not possible from the source data to separate out statistics for the offence where the victim was a child only. Analysis of sentencing remarks in 2014 suggests that all sentences passed in 2014 were for the offence where the victim is a child, however statistics for other years may include sentences passed for offences where the victim was a vulnerable adult.

Sentence outcomes

- Suspended sentence orders are the most frequently used sentence outcome for the offence of cruelty to a child, comprising 47 per cent of sentence outcomes in 2016 (Figure 2). A further 24 per cent of offenders received community orders.

Figure 2: Sentence outcomes received by adult offenders sentenced for the offence of cruelty to a child, 2016



- The majority of offenders sentenced for causing or allowing the death of a child or vulnerable adult over the past 5 years⁴ (2012-2016) received immediate custodial sentences (91 per cent, 30 offenders sentenced), with the remainder sentenced to suspended sentence orders (9 per cent, less than five offenders sentenced).
- The offence of causing or allowing a child or vulnerable adult to suffer serious physical harm came into force on 2nd July 2012.⁵ Since the offence came into force and up until the end of 2016, the majority of offenders sentenced were sentenced to immediate custody (68 per cent, 40 offenders sentenced), with a further 27 per cent (20 offenders sentenced) receiving suspended sentence orders. The remaining 5 per cent (less than five offenders) received community orders.

Sentence lengths

- The average custodial sentence length⁶ for cruelty to a child, in 2016, was 1 year 8 months. The average custodial sentence length has fluctuated between 1 to 2 years since 2006.
- The average custodial sentence length for causing or allowing the death of a child or vulnerable adult over the past 5 years (2012 to 2016) was 5 years 3 months.

⁴ Figures for the past 5 years have been grouped together due to the small numbers of offenders sentenced for this offence. The accompanying statistical tables provide further annual breakdowns.

⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/4/notes/division/4/1>

⁶ The averages reported in this section are mean average custodial sentence length values for offenders sentenced to determinate custodial sentences.

- The average custodial sentence length for causing or allowing a child or vulnerable adult to suffer serious physical harm was 2 years 6 months. This is the average sentence length for offenders sentenced since the offence came into force on 2nd July 2012, up until the end of 2016.

Further information

Volumes of sentences

The data presented in this bulletin only include cases where the offence detailed was the principal offence committed. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences this is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe. Although the offender will receive a sentence for each of the offences that they are convicted of, it is only the sentence for the principal offence that is presented in this bulletin.

Sentence outcomes

The outcomes presented are the final sentence outcomes, after taking into account all factors of the case, including whether a guilty plea was made.

General conventions

Actual numbers of sentences have been rounded to the nearest 100, when more than 1,000 offenders were sentenced, and to the nearest 10 when less than 1,000 offenders were sentenced.

Data sources and quality

The source of data for this bulletin is the Court Proceedings Database (CPD), which is maintained by MoJ. Every effort is made by MoJ and the Sentencing Council to ensure that the figures presented in this publication are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used. Subsequently, although numbers in the accompanying tables available online are shown to the last digit in order to provide a comprehensive record of the information collected, they are not necessarily accurate to the last digit shown.

Further details of the processes by which MoJ validate the records in the CPD can be found within the guide to their Criminal Justice Statistics publication which can be downloaded via the link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/criminal-justice-statistics>

Contact points for further information

We would be very pleased to hear your views on our statistical bulletins. If you have any feedback or comments, please send them to: research@sentencingcouncil.gsi.gov.uk

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Further information on the Sentencing Council and its work can be found at: <http://sentencingcouncil.org.uk>