

Children's Services Statutory Returns Suppliers' / LA Focus Group Meeting

**DfE, Sanctuary Buildings, London
22 July 2014**

**DfE, St Paul's Place, Sheffield
23 July 2014**



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Introduction

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Children's Social Work Workforce Data Collection

Mark Pearson



Introduction

The 2012 to 2013 reporting period was the first year we collected the statutory Children's Social Work Workforce data collection. We published the findings in March this year. With a 100% response rate this is the first time we have a fully representative picture of the Children's Social Work Workforce in English local authorities. We have since done some thinking about what we would like to collect on future collections as well as obtaining feedback from LAs.

We are interested in talking to you about the following:

- Drawbacks of the current collection
- Proposals for extending future collections
- Feedback we have received from authorities so far
- Your views on how we can improve the data collection in future years

These slides cover:

- Purposes of workforce data collection
- 2012 to 2013 findings
- Drawbacks to current collection
- Extending the collection
- Questions to the focus group
- Worker-level collection?



Purposes of workforce data collection

The 2012 to 2013 data collection exercise was originally conceived as part of Munro Safeguarding Performance Information Framework. It was primarily intended as part of national and local assessments of LA performance (ie not really a planning/commissioning tool).

Since then, the Narey and Croisdale-Appleby reviews have noted an apparent mismatch between social work students/newly qualified social workers and workforce supply needs, and the primarily demand led nature of current social work funding.

Both advocate better targeting of funding to drive quality and match need.

We are therefore thinking about what sort of data might support commissioning based on informed workforce planning.



2012 to 2013 findings

Key findings from 2012 to 2013, published on 6 March, were:

24,890 children's social workers This is equivalent to 22,910 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

17 The number of children in need per FTE children's social worker.

3,610 FTE vacancies Local authorities estimate they need 3,850 social workers to fill these posts.

14% The vacancy rate based on the proportion of vacancies amongst all FTE social worker posts. Some of these vacancies are currently being filled by agency social workers.

1 in 7 social workers left their LA This is a turnover rate of 15% based on FTEs
3,460 children's social workers commenced employment at their local authority during the year ending 30 September 2013. This is equivalent to 3,280 FTEs.

3,630 children's social workers left their local authority during the year ending 30 September 2013. This is equivalent to 3,360 FTEs.

4% days missed due to absence This equates to a total of around 240,000 days lost through sickness absence; just less than one day a month per social worker.

3,390 agency social workers Agency social workers employed by local authorities in addition to their permanent children's social worker workforce. This is equivalent to 3,250 FTEs.



Drawbacks of current collection

There were some drawbacks with the 2012 to 2013 data collection:

Includes social workers without caseloads

The definition of a social worker used in 2012 to 2013 included all social workers, regardless of management responsibilities or caseloads. This has the advantage of being easy to interpret, however, this makes attempts to look at average caseloads less valid.

Some local authorities have informed us that they only included social workers with caseloads.

LA systems not ready

This is still a young data collection and local authorities' systems are not fully set up to support the collection, eg problems with sickness absence, some LAs do not collect information on agency workers' working patterns.

Aggregate data only

Data is collected aggregated to local authority level.

LA employees only

The collection does not cover the whole social workers profession, only those working in local authority children's services in England.

Vacancies include those covered by agency workers

Not being able to breakdown the vacancies that are covered by agency workers or agency workers covering vacancies makes it harder to understand the needs of local authorities.

New variables wanted

There are a number of data items we would like to collect but don't. e.g. ages, origins and destinations, experience, number of NQSWs and their qualification routes.

The following slides set out what steps we have taken so far to remedy this and ask for your views on what you would like to see collected in future collections.



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However, despite these drawbacks we are in a good starting position, with 100% response rate, the 2012 to 2013 data is the first time we have a fully representative picture of the Children's Social Work Workforce in English local authorities.

Extending the collection

We have starting taking steps to improve the collection and overcome some of these drawback.

In April we agreed a set of additional voluntary variables to be included in the 2013 to 2014 collection at Star Chamber. A version of this form has now been circulated to authorities.

2012 to 2013 variables

- Number of children's social workers
- Number of children's social worker vacancies
- Number of starters
- Number of leavers
- Days missed due to sickness absence
- Number of agency workers

New voluntary variables for 2013 to 2014

- **Number of children's social workers with caseloads**
- **Age of children's social workers**
- **Time in service at LA**
- Background of starters (including NQSW route)
- Time in service at LA of leavers
- Destination of leavers
- **Number of agency workers covering vacancies**

Earlier this month we also agreed the 2014 to 2015 form, intending to make the voluntary variables in bold above (which are snapshots at 30 September 2015) statutory and collect the age of starters and leavers during 2014 to 2015 on a voluntary basis, with these becoming statutory from 2015 to 2016. This form will be circulated to our LA contacts in the near future.

As well as discussing these developments at Star Chamber boards, we have started dialogue with LAs via other routes:

- Invitation to LAs sent out with the 2013 to 2014 form to join future discussions and provide feedback;
- Discussions at regional Step Up to Social Work partnerships;
- We have contacted some LAs individually;
- This discussion at the CiN/CLA focus groups...



Extending the collection

Feedback from local authorities suggests:

- Some local authorities provided information on social workers with caseloads only
- A large number of returns are filled out by HR departments rather than Children's Services
- Some of the voluntary variables we have asked for will be harder to provide than others, but not all LAs agree on which.
- Information on the number of NQSWs is often collected by a different team
- Time in service at LA will be difficult to define
- Time in service in workforce will be even more so and LAs are unlikely to be able to provide this information.
- Some LAs hold information similar to what we have asked for, e.g. origins and destinations but with different categories.
- A worker level collection will be more burdensome, e.g. more data to validate

Some recommendations from local authorities have been:

- Improve guidance to make it clearer which roles to include
- Take account of agency staff in the calculation of caseloads

Conversations with Step Up LAs suggest:

- Universal interest in better workforce planning (of course involvement in Step Up already suggests this is a priority)
- Wide variation in current approaches – varying from simple vacancy monitoring to quite sophisticated attempts to track turnover over a number of years
- Staffing assumptions largely based on historic complement and movement rather than forward looking estimates (although some interesting attempts to match current need levels and local staffing distribution)
- This activity seems to be done by the services themselves rather than by HR

On the whole, feedback from authorities has been positive. Even of those who have said they don't currently hold further breakdowns, many have said they would be willing to start collecting them where possible, understanding the importance of having this data.



Questions to focus group

We are interested in learning the following from this discussion:

2015 to 2016 collection We are hoping to collect the other voluntary variables on a statutory basis in 2015 to 2016. Which variables do you think authorities will be best in a position to provide on a statutory basis by September 2016, and which will cause difficulty?

Ideally we would want to put off making a final decision about the 2015 to 2016 until December this year when we have seen the response rates of the new voluntary variables.

Future collections How do you envisage this collection further ahead?

Some conversations we have had have referenced the school workforce census. We would be interested in your view of the plausibility and usefulness of making this collection a worker-level collection similar to the school workforce census (see next slide).



Worker level collection?

We have done some thinking about how we might take the collection forward as a work-level collection:

School workforce census

The school workforce census is a teacher level collection returned by LA and schools. This is a new collection, school workforce data having previously been collected at LA level only. We are therefore considering the route the school workforce team took in getting to its current position consulting its guidance.

If we were to decide on collecting data at worker level, getting to such a point will take time. Lots of consultation will be required and LAs will need to be given time to prepare their systems.

School workforce census timeline

1960s -	Data collected at LA level via 618g form
2000 to 2002	Pupil census moves to pupil level collection
2003	Work begins on worker level collection
2004	Review of workforce data published
2006 to 2008	Consultation with data users, LAs, schools, software suppliers, ministers and unions
2008 to 2010	Piloting of the school workforce census
Jan 2010	Last 618g collection.
Nov 2010	First compulsory school workforce census.

Data held by the regulator

The regulator, currently hold worker level information on all registered social workers and this could be a possible source for future collections. Some issues we may face are:

- Not much information is collected on each social worker
- Information will be for all social workers and currently no breakdown by type of employer is available.
- Will have to get the regulator on board.
- Less timely (updated every two years).

Do authorities keep a record of the social worker ID used by the regulator?



Adoption Leadership Board Quarterly Adoption Survey

Mark Pearson



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Discussion of 2013 to 2014 CiN SFR tables: new data items

Adam Whitaker/Alison Butler



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CiN census changes 2014 to 2015

Adam Whitaker/Alison Butler



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Feedback from the SSDA 903 2013 to 2014 collection

Jessica Vickerstaff



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Feedback from the SSDA 903 2013 to 2014 collection

- **General review/feedback, including performance table indicator discussion**
- **18 year old care leaver voluntary collection**
- **New look system**



Confidential placements for children placed for adoption

Louise Feebrey



Department
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Postcodes for children placed for adoption

Addressing LA questions/concerns:

- Will the data be published?
- How will the data be used?

Feedback from LAs:

- Is there a need for the 'confidential' category going forward?



Tables for September and December CLA Statistical First Releases

Jessica Vickerstaff



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CLA SFR Tables

- **Removing**
- **Method of participation in reviews (Table A8)**
- **Respite (Table B2)**
- **Started to be looked after by placement (Table C4)**
- **Care leavers by gender (Table F2)**
- **Adding**
- **Looked after in year in a new placement by distance**
- **Changing**
- **Started to be looked after by characteristics – adding info on previous permanence arrangement**
- **Care leavers – to cover new cohort**



Missing from care

Louise Feebrey



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Children missing from care 2014 to 2015

- **Are there any problems with recording children against the definitions of missing/away from placement without authorisation? Is the difference between the two categories understood?**
- **Are there any issues in working with the police on data for missing children? Are you attempting to reconcile your data with police data?**
- **Do you have any other feedback from the data you're collecting on the new module in the 2014 to 2015 data collection?**



Changes to SSDA903 2015 to 2016 collection

Louise Feebrey



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2015 to 2016 CLA collection changes

- **Extension of care leaver data to 17 and 18 year olds**
- **Extension of codeset: reason for new episodes**
- **New data item: reason for placement move**
- **New data item: reason for out of area placements**
- **New data item: URN**



Reason for New Episode (1)

- **Currently, there are 4 codes for ‘reason for new episode’ (S, L, P, B) but we plan to expand this to 6 codes to enable us to distinguish between placement moves which involve a change of carer, and those which do not:**



Reason for New Episode (2)

Reason for new episode code list	Current Code	Proposed New Code
Started to be looked after	S	S
Change of legal status only	L	L
Change of placement only	P	P
Change of placement type only	P	T
Change of both legal status and placement at same time	B	B
Change of legal status and change of placement type at same time	B	U



Reason for placement move (1)

- From 1 April 2015, for all episodes that end due to a change in placement or placement type, we want local authorities to record the reason for placement move. The collection of this data will enable us to understand more about why placements end, and trends in placement moves over time.
- We would expect the reason for episode ceased to be recorded as X1 (episode ceases and new episode begins on same day, for any reason). Additionally, we would expect the reason for the subsequent new episode to be P, B, T or U.
- We know that some of the reasons may not be clear cut and may be a combination of factors so will ask that social workers make a judgement about the primary reason.



Reason for placement move (2)

New codeset:

- **Change to/Implementation of Care Plan**
- **Resignation/closure of provision**
- **Allegation (s47)**
- **Standards of Care concern**
- **Approval removed**
- **Carer requests placement end due to child's behaviour**
- **Carer requests placement end other than due to child's behaviour**
- **Child requests placement end**
- **Responsible/Area authority requests placement end**
- **Other**



Reason for out of area placements (1)

- For new episodes triggered by a change in placement or placement type, we want local authorities to record the reason for any out of area placement using the code list on the next slide.
- We know that some of the reasons may not be clear cut and may be a combination of factors so will ask that social workers make a judgement about the primary reason – e.g. the child may have both specific therapeutic needs and be unsafe in their current environment but the safety may be the stronger of the two needs and would become the primary reason.



Reason for out of area placements (2)

- **Star Chamber support the aims of this business case but have asked us to sound out the details with the focus groups before agreeing the final codeset. In particular we would like your views on whether:**
 - the codes are clear;
 - we have missed any categories that would be helpful;
 - you agree that this information should not be collected for the types of placement listed.



Reason for out of area placements (3)

Draft codeset:

- **Specialist need, no suitable provision within authority**
 - where the placement is because the child has a specialist therapeutic need or particular disability and there are no placements within authority that meet the needs of that child or are of insufficient quality.
- **Within authority provision fully utilised - specialist therapeutic need or particular disability**
- **Within authority provision fully utilised – no specialist therapeutic need or particular disability**
 - where the placement is because there is insufficient local provision (i.e. it is at full occupancy)



Reason for out of area placements (4)

- **Safety**
 - where the placement is to move the child away from an environment which is not conducive to their physical or mental wellbeing.
- **Other**
 - where a child has been placed out of area for any other reason.



Reason for out of area placements (5)

This information is not required for new episodes which are for:

- children placed with their own parents or other person with parental responsibility;
- children placed for adoption;
- children looked after under an agreed series of short term break (respite);
- those moving to independent living; and
- those moving to young offender's institution.



Placement URN (1)

- **For each ongoing placement at 1 April 2015, and each subsequent placement, where the placement is a setting inspected by Ofsted, we would like LAs to provide us with Ofsted's Unique Reference Number for the placement. E.g. for children's homes this would be the URN of the individual home, and for foster placements this would be the URN of the fostering service the foster carer works for.**
- **Ofsted will provide an up to date list of URNs for LAs to use throughout the year, ensuring it includes all settings open at some point during the year.**



Placement URN (2)

- **Our intention is that the list of URNs in operation throughout the year will be loaded into the SSDA903 system to enable validation of the data on entry by LAs.**
- **Initially this requirement would be in addition to the current SSDA903 requirements on placements but we expect to be able to streamline the requirements once this new data item is bedded in.**



Local Authority and supplier questions

Alan Brooks



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Next Meeting

Any Other Business

