

LASWS Children and Families Meeting Conference Room 3, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh on 14 May 2015

1. Introductions

Attendees:

Gail Abraham (Renfrewshire Council)	Laura Pugh (North Lanarkshire Council)
Graham Alexander (Falkirk Council)	Jacqui Small (Renfrewshire Council)
Scott Bryan (North Ayrshire Council)	Janice Smith (Glasgow City Council)
Derek Clark (Perth and Kinross Council)	Susie Kempself (Glasgow City Council)
Wendy Duguid (West Lothian Council)	Margaret Steel (Perth and Kinross Council)
Carrie Graham (Scottish Govt, Statistics) <i>Chair</i>	Katherine Hudson (Scottish Govt, LAC Policy)
Stacey Ironside (Aberdeenshire Council)	Carolyn Younie (Scottish Govt, LAC Policy)
Raymond Buckley (Scottish Government, ScotXed)	Donna Turnbull (Scottish Govt, CP Policy)
Kirsteen Lee (North Ayrshire Council)	Gary Stewart (Fife Council)
Ian Volante (Scottish Govt, Statistics) <i>Minutes</i>	Gillian Johnston (Stirling Council)
Caroline McConnell (East Dunbartonshire Council)	Margaret Reilly (Stirling Council)
Nicola Milne (Moray Council)	Justyna Zmuda (Dumfries and Galloway Council)
Shirley Moore (Aberdeen City Council)	Fiona McDonald (East Ayrshire Council)
Yvonne Murton (Argyll and Bute Council)	Kathleen Kennedy (Inverclyde Council)
Stuart Osborough (City of Edinburgh Council)	Pauline McCormick (Fife Council)
Jacqueline Pender (West Dunbartonshire Council)	

Apologies:

Kerstin Jorna (Dundee City Council)
Matt Mclay (Stirling Council)
Janet Penman (Midlothian Council)
Angela Duguid (Aberdeenshire Council)
Craig Bernard (Moray Council)
Isobel Prentice (South Lanarkshire Council)

2. Actions from the previous meeting

Leading zeroes are still an issue for Glasgow when uploading data. Before uploading data, they should liaise with the ScotXed team, who will attempt to resolve any issue to allow Glasgow to use the standard uploading process.

Aftercare services: changing the validation to flag over-25s is not a problem. Changing or removing the date validation on the school leaving age should be implemented.

3. Data development

A brief presentation on potential longitudinal outputs was shown, and this led into a discussion on future plans for data linkage. A pilot will be undertaken by Children and Families statisticians and local authorities who have volunteered to identify the most robust additional field that would allow linkage with health data. The aim is to have a recommended field for the 2016 LASWS meeting for inclusion in the 2017/18 data collections. Such a field would allow, for example, linkage with the 26-30 month health review.

The linkage between CLAS and dental health data via SCN continues. ISD (who are the NHS Scotland analysts) hope to have results out by the end of the year. C&F stats will circulate any findings when they come out. Main findings will be at national level, but ISD may be able to provide lower level breakdowns.

ACTION 1 – C&F Stats to send out contact details for LAC dental linkage study lead to enable them to ask for their own data outputs.

4. Child protection

Ian and Carrie reflected on the most recent CP collection:

- Second year of individual-level collection, so still ironing out some problems, although it was better than last year.
- We now have a better understanding of the issues that are often found, and we are currently looking at improving the validation checks provided on ProcXed as per:
 - a) Reports should account for transfers out.
 - b) Add a column to the report to show the balance between this year and last, which should equal zero.
 - c) New reports to show IDs of registrations, deregistrations and those currently on the register.
 - d) A set of logical checks will be added to ProcXed to disallow sequences of case conference outcomes that don't make sense; e.g. a non-registration followed by a deregistration.
 - e) Checks will flag up the occurrence of two conferences on the same date and pre-birth conferences after initial or review conferences.
- We will commence checking earlier this year – last time, we waited for all returns to be in and complete before commencing checking, which penalised those people getting their data in on time, and also left a lot of validation checks to complete in a short space of time.
- We'll introduce an escalation stage to try to ensure that returns aren't as late as some were for 2013/14.
- We realised that LAs may not be treating registered children who go on holiday to other LAs in the same way – this should be clarified in the guidance.

ACTION 2 – C&F Stats to add note to guidance requesting that temporary placements are not recorded.

It was noted by LAs that some data issues can be caused by children being added to the register at the same time, but at different stages of the system, so checks are needed to make sure that recorded review types are all correct and not just assumed to be the same.

It was also noted that the treatment of transfers can be unclear – sometimes transfers occur without a review.

ACTION 3 – C&F Stats to investigate and clarify how transfers should be treated.

ACTION 4 – C&F Stats to contact LAs before the collection opens to remind them about updating data from previous year(s).

It became clear from discussion that local authorities are defining changes in placements differently (for instance, if a child is in a number of foster placement with different carers they might be recorded as multiple placements or just as one as the type of placement hasn't changed). It was agreed that it would be useful to see the range of ways in which placements are being recorded and amend guidance/caveats on the data accordingly.

ACTION 5 – LAs asked to supply information on how they define placement changes.

2014/15 dates

- We plan to run the collections for 2014/15 on the same basis as last year, so that would mean opening the CP collection on the 17th Aug and closing on the 6th November.
- We'll be aiming to publish towards the end of March.
- Add in tick box that data providers select to say they have checked the data and are content with it. (To avoid having to send out sign-off emails and create parity between LAC and CP process.)
- Add in escalation step to timetable after submission deadline. (To avoid large delays experienced this year.)

With the implementation of the tick-box to facilitate quicker approval of CP data, Ian clarified that manual quality assurance of data would still occur.

2015/16

Some inconsistencies and errors have been noted in the 2015/16 guidance – these will be rectified as soon as possible. The binary disability question will replace the additional support needs question.

2016/17

Removal of child exploitation risk factor, and replacing with the more specific Child Sexual Exploitation, trafficking, and forced or dangerous labour categories.

The additional suggestions summarised were:

- 1) Bringing in new categories currently locally described as 'other': Parenting concerns; historical issues; financial concerns; housing/community concerns; criminal, violent or anti-social behaviour concerns. There was agreement that we should look into whether the 'other' category for cause for concern could be split up at all or if guidance could be improved to reduce the number going into 'other'. Rather than using just the suggested categories, though, it was felt that we need to see the full range of categories currently used by LAs to split up the 'other' category and go from there.
- 2) Non-engaging family category is possibly misleading – 'resistant family' suggested as an alternative. This was not language that was widely used, however and change was rejected.
- 3) As per the proposed changes to the child exploitation risk factor, it is proposed that the categories of abuse (sexual/physical/emotional) are expanded to 'harm/abuse'. This was not language that was widely used, however and change was rejected.

ACTION 6 – LAs to provide on potential new categories of risk factor to capture numerous types which may currently be defined as 'other'.

ACTION 7 – C&F Stats to send CLAS and CP comparator tools to LAs.

ITEM 5 – FEEDBACK LOOP

Carrie explained that the feedback loop is a National Convener duty to produce an annual report on the implementation of compulsory supervision orders by local authorities, as outlined in sections 180 and 181 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (2011 Act). The 2011 Act places a duty on local authorities to comply with a request from the National Convener to provide information about the implementation of compulsory supervision orders.

Information will be collected separately for 2014/15 and 2015/16, but for 2016/17, it is proposed to collect this information alongside the existing CLAS collection, simply because this may be the most efficient way of going about things. As per the specification, it is proposed that this information would be collected in the same way as the aftercare data.

The general feeling of the group was that the current situation with this collection is very unclear. Some of this data is already held by SCRA and therefore it seems illogical to collect it again from LAs. It is also very difficult to make some of the data available – some systems simply cannot produce it, and it would therefore be a long manual job in many cases. There was general agreement that a quantitative national dataset was not a sensible source for this information – that the questions that were being asked would not be answered by the variables suggested and that much of the information needed would come from more qualitative sources. Many local authorities agreed that this information would be far better to come from a detailed study of the journeys of a sample of looked after children in each

local authority. Local authorities will be engaging with Children's Hearings Scotland to find a more appropriate way to report on this topic.

OUTCOME: The feedback loop data will not be collected via CLAS in the future.

ITEM 6 – CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

Reflections

Ian reported that the collection went smoothly this year, there were a couple of comments on things that could be improved:

1) Are we comfortable with pathway plans being described as present when they haven't been completely signed off due to the timing of the child leaving care and e.g. awaiting exam results?

This sparked a discussion on how pathway plans are recorded, and it is clear that there is inconsistency. Some LAs only record pathway plans as present when they are completed, and some record them when they are being put together. It was also noted that some authorities treat the presence of any sort of plan as have fulfilled the criteria, whereas some only focus on pathway plans specifically.

A circular argument on how best they should be recorded ensued, with no decisive outcome.

ACTION 8 – C&F Stats to discuss with policy what we are seeking to answer with this question and so how best to advise local authorities.

2) Could the ProcXed system flag whether children are old enough to leave school during the period?

This point was considered moot due to the simplification of the school leaving age rules.

Similarly to the CP collection, final sign-off on the data was later than it could have been – we will look to improve this process.

2014/15 dates

- We plan to run the collections for 2014/15 on the same basis as last year, so that would mean opening the LAC and EfA collections on the 17th Aug and closing on the 27th November, aiming for the March publication date.

2015/16

As per CP, someone pointed out a couple of minor errors in the guidance, which should be fixed in due course.

2016/17

There are a number of proposals for inclusion in the CLAS collection from 2016/17.

- 1) Page 9, Page 11 - Further detail on end of care. Reason for leaving care, provision of ongoing support packages to children/kinship families, has child's plan.
- 2) Page 12 - Alteration of placement type indicators to allow inclusion of new foster care descriptors.
- 3) Page 12 – Data on continuing care.
- 4) Page 16-18 - Feedback loop requirements.
- 5) Page 18 – Data identified by the Permanence Data Group as core data on performance.
- 6) Tentative consideration of enumerating children on the edge of care.

It was decided that the child's plan is equivalent to the care plan, and therefore would not add any value if included. If it was not equivalent to the care plan then guidance would be needed on how this differed before a decision could be made for inclusion – NOT TO BE INCLUDED.

Inclusion of a reason for leaving care, and the potential splitting of the kinship care destination require a specific list of outcomes and an understanding of how they differ from the existing legal reason/destination accommodation data before a decision can be made on their inclusion. – NOT TO BE INCLUDED IN 2016/17.

ACTION 9 – C&F Stats to consult with LAC policy team to clarify issues behind these proposals.

After some discussion, it was pointed out that discretionary support for care leavers should be classed under Aftercare, and also that the extra information collected regarding the extension of aftercare to under-26 year olds will fulfil a similar role to any collection of data on support to those beyond aftercare or other forms of support. – NOT TO BE INCLUDED.

The proposed inclusion of the newly-defined foster care descriptors was discussed at length, and it was agreed that a new question should be included to be answered where the placement type is foster care (03 or 04). This question will have the options of "Permanent", "Long-term", "Interim" and "Emergency" with definitions of these categories being added to the guidance notes.

Continuing care is a new option for care leavers aged 16-18 (eventually) which gives them an opportunity to stay in the same placement after they cease being looked after. It was decided that this should be included as a new option in the aftercare accommodation question.

The new questions on permanence as proposed by the Permanence Data Group were seen as being relatively easy to provide data on, so they will be included from 2016/17.

The discussion on data on children on the edge of care came to a tentative conclusion that some simple data, such as the total number of children on a council's case list, but not actually looked after or under CP may be easy to obtain. However, no firm commitments were made.

ACTION 10 – C&F Stats to update the 2016/17 CP and LAC data spec and guidance to reflect the new and updated data items.