**Collecting and Using Locally Held Information**

 **The children’s safeguarding performance information framework includes both key nationally collected data and recommended questions agreed with the sector that local agencies need to ask children, families and professionals so that their experience can help drive local improvement and encourage debate.**

**The Department for Education consulted 23 January 2012 – 16 April 2012 on what should be included in the framework. The consultation response can be found here on the Department’s website**[[1]](#footnote-1)**. The consultation also asked how local areas could make use of local performance information and how information could be shared between local areas as part of sector led improvement.**

**This document includes some examples and suggestions people provided in response to the consultation for how local areas collect information and use the recommended local questions. This is not intended to be in any way exhaustive or the best or only way to do things. But, it is hoped that the suggestions will be useful to local authorities and agencies wanting to make use of the local information.**

**How do you know what children think?**

* A programme of service user questionnaires which gather a range of qualitative and quantitative information relating to the parent/carer's satisfaction with social care assessments (initial and core) and satisfaction with services received from Safeguarding & Specialist Services (exit survey). The questionnaires cover the following themes: contact and communication; discussing needs; behaviour of staff; listening to parent/carers; listening to children/young people; taking account of disability/cultural/religious needs; arranging and receiving services; and areas for improvement.
* The Children and Young People (CYP) Survey is carried out on an annual basis and informs the review of the Children, Young People and Families plan each year. The information provided is also used to manage our performance against key performance indicators and make service improvements. The CYP survey allows children and young people to enter free text information giving a richer picture of their views as well as reporting on key areas such as feeling safe in and out of school.
* Annual and quarterly representations reports to provide information on both statutory and non-statutory representations made by children and young people or by representatives on behalf of children and young people regarding services received from the local authority children’s services. Analysed to provide trends, learning points for the service and key areas for improvement. The information is monitored on a quarterly basis by the Senior Leadership Team and Standards Committee.
* The use of aggregated local information concerning the views of children in shaping services and making changes could help to improve the experience of children who come into contact with our services. Use of the computerised questionnaire as one method to gather the views of looked after children, across all age groups, on a range of issues such as their perceptions of their own safety (at school or their placement), their schooling, theirs carers, experience of social workers etc. All responses from all looked after children are aggregated on a 6 monthly basis into a report which helps to give an overall indication of the experiences of children in care in our area, and identifies issues that looked after children are either most positive about or equally most negative. This information is used by the multi-agency looked after partnership to identify areas for improvement and also used to aid discussion with our Voices for Choices Group.
* Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) questionnaires about relationships between children and social workers (applies to looked after children not child protection cases). Closed survey questions to allow for comparison over time and within region, but with free text boxes to explore concerns.
* The local information items are key for ensuring good/outstanding performance from Ofsted. They are currently being used to review practice particularly around children’s participation and consultation initiatives and embed changes. This is being driven by the LSCB.
* Children and young people also need to be asked about their experience of a range of services, not just children’s social care. For example, child and adult mental health services, other health, and education services. Obtaining feedback about, and from children with a disability is another significant area which requires adequately resourcing. This should include experience of transitions, particularly from children to adult services. Independent reviewing officers are important sources of information.

**How do you know what the workforce thinks?**

* Linking workforce data collections (national and local) to Social Work Health Check process[[2]](#footnote-2) .
* Ensuring time is spent between different professional groups for critical reflection on what data is showing about the processes for which they have shared responsibility.
* Focusing on critical reflection and evidence-informed practice in staff development and management.
* Staff take part in an annual workforce survey which is analysed by service area /team and can be used to support some of the workforce feedback in the local dataset. Partner agencies are able to feedback on Child Protection conferences through Multi agency feedback forms. We have internal case file audit processes to assess the quality of decision making about a case, and a multi-agency case file audit process to follow the case across agencies and the actions and decisions taken in relation to the case by the different agencies. Outcomes of which are fed into training and cases are tracked where further actions are required. We are developing measures around adequate case supervision.

**How does performance information feed into service design and delivery?**

* Qualitative data reported alongside national indicators and other quantitative data at quarterly update meetings with senior managers. Data presented at team level to allow detailed analysis and circulated to team managers to inform staff of progress.
* A service user engagement forum called the 'Dragon's Den' where young people meet with service providers and commissioners. Through this forum professionals are challenged to improve service delivery and service users get the chance of influencing service design. A recent example includes the development of a peripatetic, 6 day a week contraceptive and sexual health service with young people clinics being provided on a Saturday morning.  Professionals regularly update on their progress to service users at the Dragon's Den.
* A vibrant 'making changes together' group of parents of disabled children.  They are central to informing how and what is delivered and we have seen a marked improvement regarding performance in relation to short breaks.
* Investing in Children which co-ordinates the participation of children and young people across the breadth of the Council’s and Children’s Trust activity. The work includes supporting the commissioning and overview and scrutiny references groups, developing the Investing in Children (IiC) membership programme and facilitating wider participation by Council services and Children’s Trusts membership as well as broadening the work further in the UK. Other examples include the involvement of children and young people in the CYPFP process, value for money reviews and in the development of the One Point Service. The Independent Reviewing Officer’s work with IiC to ensure that the best methods for involving children, particularly the most vulnerable are implemented.  IiC awards membership to teams who can clearly demonstrate that they have listened to children.  They meet with children who give them their views, the service/team then has to make changes and then the team meets again with the children to advise of the changes they have put in place as a result of listening to them.  If the children agree and approve, the team is then awarded IiC membership.  This clearly demonstrates real change as a direct result of children's views.
* An Initial Response Survey used to gather information on satisfaction of those service users that come into contact with 'front of house' safeguarding service and is primarily targeted at professionals
* Regional LSCB Chairs’ Network meetings to facilitate LSCB Chairs sharing information across areas
* Internal case file audit processes to assess the quality of decision making about a case, and a multi-agency case file audit process to follow the case across agencies and the actions and decisions taken in relation to the case by the different agencies.
* Monthly social care performance clinic to highlight areas where further support, challenge or evaluation is required in response to unusual patterns of activity. In our local authority, the local information items will support further development of the challenge and analysis that takes place in our monthly Social Care Performance Clinic. Work over the past year through our Clinic has highlighted the benefits of more in-depth analysis of activity in relation to contacts, referrals and re-referrals – by highlighting areas where further support, challenge or evaluation is required in response to unusual patterns of activity, e.g. levels of referrals from various agencies, or rates of re-referrals.
* Involvement in research activity, for example, through commissioning of other forms of local inquiry in order to understand factors that are shaping local trends, or forming partnerships with universities and research institutions to enrich and extend local knowledge.
* Using the children’s safeguarding performance information framework in conjunction with other data sets - such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Public Health Outcomes Framework - to enable local authorities to demonstrate that they are effectively identifying and meeting local need. Using the information to support a commissioning cycle that enables local authorities to help vulnerable children get the early help they need.
* Local performance information is used to address local issues as highlighted through internal benchmarking and consultation. Key sources used in our local authority include children and parents’ sounding boards; children in care council; source workers etc. The council has a suite of local measures and a quality assurance framework that focuses on cases and supervision records.
* The local information is the sort of information that Elected Members should be asking about the safety of children. This qualitative information is potentially of much more interest to local people than quantitative data. A subgroup of the Safeguarding Board will have a strengthened remit to collate and analyse this information. A proposed quality assurance framework will identify local priority areas.
* The local performance information is extremely useful as a set of self assessment prompts for local authorities that each individual authority could then benchmark over time. By being clear on the evidence to underpin each information item, this would drive individual authorities’ improvement planning which would feed into sector-led improvement and peer challenge. It is also important to use the same/similar questions to seek the views of children, young people and their families and then compare their responses against the authority’s own self assessment. Again, this will be key for improvement planning.
* Performance monitoring should cover the hard data and softer data when evaluating services provided and outcomes achieved. This in currently done through our children’s involvement team gathering feedback from children and young people, and through the independent reviewing officer meetings with children in care, as well as feedback from children at Child Protection conferences (where appropriate age). This will also form part of the annual self assessment and peer challenge process and our performance framework is evolving to include softer intelligence for a holistic picture of safeguarding and services provided to vulnerable children and families. We have a Children in Care Pledge and monitor on a quarterly basis how our children in care think we are delivering against our pledge to them. This is evaluated alongside the quantitative data.
* There is a wealth of data produced by the Department for Education and published through various statistical first release, which could be used to aid regional or local discussions about key issues from performance information, other than those identified through key performance data. The VCSN (the Vulnerable Children Safeguarding Network) commissioned a neighbouring local authority to produce regional benchmarking data around child protection and looked after children (based on statistical first release data) which allowed a regional discussion to take place about key issues in child protection and looked after children trends in the area.
* The information will be part of performance monitoring and service improvement. our service user feedback methodology is currently being re-designed to include experiences and outcomes of children and families.
* We will include the agreed indicators in the LSCB dataset.
* Feeding back views of children and parents/carers into planning for individual cases and for whole service improvement. The sharing of information within the authority to inform commissioning strategies, sharing of information across partner organisations, for example though the LSCB.

**How can information be shared between local authorities to support sector-led improvement?**

* The Eastern Safeguarding Project, providing opportunities for benchmarking, peer challenge and review activities and exchange of good practice.
* The London Information Exchange Group and London Safeguarding Board, where sector lead improvements are discussed regularly and local authorities are able to bring reports and share good practice.
* The adult social care National Adult Social Care Intelligence Service model (as an example of sharing information in a timely manner).
* Regional quarterly benchmarking exercise coupled with regular meetings to discuss local, regional and national issues in relation to performance and data (in the west midlands).
* The National Treatment Agency working directly with local authorities (including the Director of Public Health and Director of Children’s Services) to encourage and facilitate sharing of good practice across areas and sectors.
* Regional agreements on sharing data across LSCBs particularly where there are cross area issues and agencies providing services across LSCB areas.
* This already happens in the North East, with Northumberland taking the lead in a data collection exercise that uses data collected from contributing authorities to assess recent trends across the region. There is also the Children’s Improvement Board profile and peer review process that is designed to facilitate sector led improvement.
1. <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/safeguardingchildren/protection>

  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/social%20work%20task%20force%20health%20check.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)