Children's Social Work Statistics
Data consultation findings

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Introduction

Background

The Scottish Government collects data annually from local authorities and secure units on children and young people who were: formally looked after; under child protection arrangements; or in secure care at some point in the preceding year.

Data sourced from administrative records held by local authorities and secure units are provided to the Scottish Government via the ProcXed system. This is the Scottish Government's on-line validation software that supports local authorities in collecting and validating data. Automated data validation checks are undertaken at the point the data are submitted, and further validation checks are performed by the Children and Families Analysis team.

Each year, data collection begins on 1st August, reporting for the year ending on 31st July. Children's Social Work Statistics are published the following March, and Education Outcomes for Looked After Children Statistics are published in June. Details on the latest Official Statistics can be found on the Scottish Government website.

Data consultation

The Scottish Government sought users' views on a range of possible developments to these statistics and data collections in an online national consultation, which took place between 11 September and 16 November 2020. The purpose of the consultation was to enable an assessment to be made of user needs in relation to Children's Social Work Statistics. In particular, the consultation questionnaire prompted respondents to identify and justify any new data they would like to see collected, and, likewise, any current data which should be considered for removal from data collections. Views on the statistical products produced from these data collections were also gathered to inform developments on the presentation, content and format of future releases. The consultation questionnaire is included in Annex A of this document.

Next steps

This report provides a factual description of consultation responses.

To ensure Children's Social Work Statistics meet user needs, developments will be recommended, overseen and prioritised by a steering group led by the Children and Families Analysis team in the Scottish Government, comprising users of these statistics. The steering group will consider the findings of this report and other developments in the sector to recommend areas for improvement. The first meeting of the steering group will take place in Spring 2021.

Respondent profile

A total of 40 unique and valid[1] responses were received to the consultation. Two thirds (27 responses) were provided on behalf of an organisation, with the remainder being responses provided by individuals.

A total of 25 responses (63% of the total) were provided by respondents working in local government/ Health and Social Care Partnerships, who are users and providers of the data covered by the consultation. A further seven were provided by respondents in academic organisations, three by respondents in third sector organisations, and two by respondents in other public bodies.

Table 1: Number and percentage of responses by respondent sector

	Number	**Percentage**
Local government	25	63%
Academic[2]	7	18%
Third sector	3	8%
Other public body	2	5%
Central government	1	3%
Individual	1	3%
Professional organisation	1	3%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Percentage figures do not sum to 100%, due to rounding.

Consultation findings

The consultation questionnaire sought views on each of three current annual data collection exercises, and the statistics published based on those data.

The vast majority (95%) of respondents completed the Looked After Children section of the questionnaire, while three quarters (78%) did likewise for questions on Child Protection data. Just under half (48%) provided responses relating to Secure Accommodation data. The questions on published Children's Social Work Statistics and Education Outcomes for Looked After Children Statistics were completed by 80% of respondents.

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[1] Some blank responses were received. These were excluded from this report. Where an organisational response was covered by more than one respondent, they have only been included once in the above table.
[2] Includes organisations partly funded by the Scottish Government

Table 2: Responses by consultation question theme

	Number	Percentage
Looked After Children data	38	95%
Child Protection data	31	78%
Secure Accommodation data	19	48%
Published statistics	32	80%
Total	**40**	**100%**

Looked after children data

Since 2008-09, the data collection has taken place at the level of individual children. Data currently collected is specified in guidance on the Scottish Government website. It covers the following areas:

- Data about the child
    - ID number
    - Local authority
    - Scottish Candidate Number (SCN)
    - Date of birth
    - Gender
    - Ethnic Group
    - Disability status
- Data about episodes of care
    - Start and end date
    - Whether the child has a current care plan
    - Destination on discharge from care (including continuing care and kinship care orders)
    - Whether the young person had a pathway plan at the point of the episode of care ending
    - Whether the young person had a pathway co-ordinator at the point of the episode of care ending
- Data about each placement with an episode of care
    - Start and end date
    - Placement type
    - Foster placement type (permanent, long-term, interim, emergency)
- Data about legal reasons for each episode of care
    - Start and end date
    - Legal reason the child was being looked after
- Permanence data
    - Date on which permanence was recommended
    - Date of decision by Agency Decision Maker to allow the legal process to pursue permanence to begin
    - Date an application for a permanence order was submitted to court
- Data about eligibility for aftercare
    - Whether eligible young person is in receipt of aftercare

- o Accommodation of young people in aftercare
- o Economic activity
- o Number of days of homelessness
- o Whether the young person had a pathway plan at the point of the episode of care ending
- o Whether the young person had a pathway co-ordinator at the point of the episode of care ending

Data gaps

Respondents were asked to identify any gaps in the Looked After Children data. Responses were varied and descriptive in nature. The common themes arising are described below.

Data linkage

Eight responses supported adding other identifiers to enable data linkage – specifically the Community Health Index (**CHI)** number. Comments on this included the benefits of linking to health data and understanding outcomes, addressing existing issues with data quality on disability, and having a nationwide child identifier to help address recording issues when children move from one local authority to another. Data protection barriers to adding CHI to current data collections were also recognised.

Health indicators

Seven responses described **health indicators** which could be collected directly. These included: dates of health assessments, immunisations, and dental checks; health appointments being offered within one month; data on access to health services and outcomes from interventions; indicators of mental health and wellbeing (such as the number receiving Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) support; and details of care plan categories, including health - and dental health - needs.

Reasons for becoming looked after/ ceasing to be looked after

Eight responses noted that it would be helpful to gather information on **the reasons children become looked after**. Benefits of doing so that were provided included comparability with other UK countries in understanding child safety, and to support early planning to reduce the risks of children becoming looked after. Responses also noted the link to existing risk factors gathered in the Child Protection data collection, which may be used as a starting point to developing guidance for any new data collected on reasons children become looked after. It was also noted in one response that linking to child protection data itself may provide some insights on the reasons children become looked after, negating the need to add new data. Further to this, another response noted difficulties in defining the reasons that children become looked after.

One response also noted that data on the **reasons that placements end** would help indicate if changes were planned, and help explain the experience of the child or

young person in these circumstances. Two more responses proposed data on the details of **placement breakdown**.

<u>Family circumstances</u>

New data on **sibling relationships** was recommended in five responses. The proposals included: whether or not a child is placed with their sibling(s) in care, and whether a child not placed with his/ her sibling has a sibling in care or on the child protection register, and levels of direct contact with siblings. Responses noted the relevance of data on siblings in understanding issues such as sibling separation, and the impact of legislation promoting siblings relationships of children in care.

Four other responses also noted challenges with collecting data on siblings – in particular, definitional issues including for half-siblings, reasons for placement and contact between siblings based on individual assessments, and difficulty in retrieving information on siblings from social work systems.

Other family circumstances data was proposed in four other responses – including: demographic and socio-economic data about **parents**; whether the young person is a parent; whether parents were looked after; whether the parent has had other children become looked after; and drug-related deaths of parents.

<u>Geographical data</u>

Six responses supported inclusion of **geographical data** in the collection. In each case, analysis by area deprivation was identified as a priority. One response identified the additional benefit of understanding the distance children are placed from their parental home possibly by collecting home and placement postcode data. Another highlighted the benefit of having data for analysis at the lowest geographical level possible. Some data protection concerns were raised in relation to providing postcode, rather than area deprivation index information, and difficulties in providing postcode data when looked after children often move address.

<u>Change of social worker</u>

Two responses suggested collecting data on changes in social worker, taken as an indicator of **stability**, with one also stating that a reason for change could also be recorded, though this information is not currently routinely captured. One further response proposed indicators of stability possibly by further interrogation of existing data.

<u>Out-of-area placements</u>

Two responses described data which could be added in relation to **out-of-area placements**, where the child is placed in a different local authority to the one responsible for looking after them. One additional response identifying this can be tracked by gathering home and placement postcode data.

<u>Asylum seeker status</u>

Data identifying **unaccompanied asylum seekers** was proposed by two respondents.

Informal kinship care

Data on **informal kinship care**[3] (where the child is not formally looked after) was proposed by two respondents, with reasons cited including informing discussions about eligibility for financial support, and to assist national benchmarking. Another respondent highlighted the need to improve comparability of data on kinship care across local authorities, citing variations in recording practice, and one further response highlighted the need to develop data on kinship care generally.

Frequency of reviews

Data on the **frequency of reviews of children in care** were proposed by two respondents. One response specified more detailed information on looked after reviews, including child or young person's participation in reviews, review outcomes, and dates of reviews.

Continuing care[4]

Two respondents proposed additional and better-quality data on **continuing care**, such as the number of people in continuing care, duration in continuing care, and age entering continuing care, and one other respondent noted that improvements to this data may take a number of years to implement.

Outcomes/ care leavers/ aftercare[5]

Four responses described **outcome** measurements which could be added, including qualitative measures, and data relating to progression through aftercare. One other response noted challenges in defining outcomes. One specified information on adoption processes, such as date of matching, whether adopters were former foster carers, number of adopters, gender and legal status. Another proposed more information on destinations on leaving care (e.g. those not in education, employment or training).

Specific proposals relating to aftercare included: gathering accommodation and economic activity data whether or not the eligible person is in receipt of aftercare; data on the level of aftercare support; data on young people classified as discretionarily supported because they have had an eligible needs assessment; recording additional positive categories of economic activity of those receiving aftercare; and 'supported carer' being added as an aftercare accommodation category.

One respondent recording data from exit interviews of young people leaving care.

Permanence

Three responses indicated that additional data items on **permanence**[6] should be considered. Reasons included getting better evidence of timescales involved in

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[3] Looked after children: Kinship care - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
[4] Looked after children: Children leaving care - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
[5] Looked after children: Children leaving care - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
[6] Looked after children: Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

permanence planning. One response proposed removing some existing data items and simplifying the permanence data collection to only include an indicator stating whether a permanence order was granted during the year. Two responses noted that permanence data items were already collected and the emphasis should be on publishing that. Another response identified the relevance of permanence data to possible new data on siblings, but did not propose that new permanence data items were required to do this. One response supported adding descriptive permanence items in addition to dates, including type of permanence order sought, and planned permanence route.

Support/ services

Three responses described information which could be gathered on preventative **support,** advocacy or other services offered or received.

Other data items proposed

The following data items were also proposed for inclusion in the Looked After Children return, each by a single respondent unless indicated otherwise in brackets.

- Previously looked after status
- Views of young people
- Length of time on statutory orders
- Detail on types of disability
- (2) Special education needs/ additional support needs

General remarks

Some more general suggestions were provided, including having improved data on social demographics, having the right balance between quantitative and qualitative data, improving completeness of existing data items, and improving comparability of data between local authorities.

Data-supplier burden

Eight local authority respondents stated that the **current data collection was sufficient**, and did not propose adding any additional data items. The data-supplier burden was noted, in particular with reference to local authorities operating different management information systems, as well as the significant additional work required to add new data items, and that only the minimum data required for publication should be collected. Two local authorities highlighted the significant lead-in time required for inclusion of any additional items in data collections, and one proposed considering streamlining with the current weekly vulnerable children data collection. Responses also described the potential benefits in linking existing data to other sources, and making more use of existing data. Difficulty with the provision of Scottish Candidate Numbers was noted in one local authority response.

Data items to be removed

Overall, six responses proposed data items which should be dropped, or could be dropped following further consultation. These are as follows (number of respondents describing this is shown in brackets.)

- (1) Foster placement type – as these are defined by the legal reason and duration which is already provided.
- (3) Care plans/ pathway plans – as all looked after children should have a current child's plan.
- (3) Religion – as it is poorly recorded
- (1) Disability – as it is too open to interpretation and not medically-diagnosed.

Additional comments

Respondents were asked to provide any additional free-text comments on the Looked After Children data collection. The following comments were received (number of respondents describing the same point is shown in brackets). In some cases, comments provided have been categorised and represented in earlier sections.

- (4) Reporting period – two responses noted the current reporting period (1 August – 31 July) is not aligned to other local authority reporting. Two other responses felt the reporting period was not a problem, but one noted it would be helpful if other agencies changed their reporting cycles to be in sync.
- (4) Guidance – one local authority respondent noted the existing guidance was clear, while four others specified possible improvements, as follows:
  - (2) clearer guidance needed for data providers submitting data for the first time
  - clearer guidance on eligibility for aftercare
  - more validation reports required during data collection
- (2) Data collection frequency – one local authority response noted that more frequent provision of data would be problematic, while another (non-local authority) response proposed considering more frequent (e.g. quarterly) collation and publication of key data items.
- (1) Local benchmarking data - One response proposed that data in the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) should be included in the data collection.
- (1) Quality - One response stated that the Looked After Children data was of poor quality, but did not specify in what way.

Child Protection data

Since 2012-13, the child protection data has been collected at an individual level. Data currently collected is specified in guidance on the Scottish Government [website](). It covers the following areas:

Data about the child

- ID number
- Local authority
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Ethnic group
- Religion
- Disability
- Scottish Candidate Number

Data about child protection investigations

- Date investigation ended
- Whether the investigation resulted in an initial or pre-birth case conference

Data about the child protection case conferences

- Type of case conference (pre-birth/ initial/ review/ transfer in)
- Date of case conference
- Primary known/ suspected abuser identified
- Concerns raised at case conference
    - Parental alcohol misuse
    - Parental drug misuse
    - Non-engaging family
    - Parental mental health problems
    - Child placing themselves at risk
    - Sexual abuse
    - Physical abuse
    - Emotional abuse
    - Child sexual exploitation
    - Trafficking
    - Forced or dangerous labour
    - Neglect
    - Other concerns
- Whether the child was registered as a result of the case conference
- If registered
    - whether the child has been previously registered
    - date last de-registered
    - if transferred from another local authority, which one?
- Whether the child was deregistered
- If deregistered, what was the reason?

Data about child protection transfer out details

- Date of de-registration/ transfer in case conference
- Local authority to which child was transferred

Data gaps

Respondents were asked to identify any gaps in the Child Protection data. The common themes arising are described below.

Data linkage

Eight responses supported adding other identifiers to enable data linkage – specifically the **CHI** number. Five of these responses also supported data linkage in the Looked After Children data.

Comments included the benefits of linking to health data, including better information on disability, and the benefits of CHI compared to the Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) for linking data for children aged under 5 who do not have a SCN. One response described the benefit of using CHI together with SCN to enable better understanding of the lives, journeys and outcomes of children subject to child protection processes.

As in the Looked After Children questions, data protection barriers to collecting CHI were described in one response.

Child Protection – early processes

Seven responses were supportive of collecting data about **early child protection processes**, such as Inter-Agency Referral Discussions or child protection referrals to local authority social work departments. Responses described the benefits of having information about: the source of referrals, conversion rates from referrals to investigations and case conferences, and reasons for referrals, and the level of multi-agency activity to respond to and support children involved in the overall child protection process. One response noted that information on Inter-Agency Referral Discussions might not be best sourced from local authorities, but rather from Police Scotland, provided identifiers could be shared between local authority and police systems to enable provision of data at child-level. Another response also proposed collecting data on Police child concern reports.

One respondent highlighted the need for any new data requirements on earlier stages in child protection to be very clearly defined to ensure comparability nationally and to ensure consistency between local authority areas.

Geographical data

Four responses supported collecting lower-level **geographical data**.

Analysis by area deprivation was identified as a priority in these responses. One response described the benefit of providing evidence on the strength of relationship between child abuse and neglect and poverty and deprivation. One response suggested analysis at the 'intermediate zone' geographical level would be useful. As in the Looked After Children response, one respondent identified the value of parental home datazone providing a proxy for family-level socio-economic data.

Two respondents described data protection or disclosure concerns in relation to providing postcode, rather than area deprivation index information, with two others describing technical difficulties in providing postcode data.

Risk factors

Four responses proposed some additional **risk factors** which could be included in the areas for concern recorded at child protection case conferences, with one noting that this list should be aligned to the new National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland and that it would be worthwhile collecting information on risk factors identified at investigation stage.

Specific risk factors at case conference stage proposed in one response were: parental offending behaviour, online abuse, and separately identifying risks within the existing 'child placing themselves at risk' category (self-harm/ suicide attempts, alcohol/ drug misuse, running away/ going missing, inappropriate sexual behaviour, sexual exploitation, problematic or harmful sexual behaviour, violent behaviour, criminal activity).

One response proposed recording the week 28 gestation date for pre-birth case conferences – to allow reporting on the child protection timescales set out in the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland[7].

Another response proposed recording data on changes to child protection registrations – in particular, additional or removed risks, when these occurred, and whether they can be linked to any interventions made.

One response proposed gathering more detail on categories of neglect, including medical and dental neglect.

Child and Parental participation and support

Four responses proposed gathering data on **child and family participation**, including: children who attended or had their views expressed at an initial child protection case conference; parents who attended or had their views expressed at an initial child protection case conference; children who received advocacy support; and parents/ carers who received advocacy support. One respondent also proposed recording: offers of advocacy support; whether children's views were sought and included in relation to decisions/ plans; whether children were consulted about decisions/ plans; whether they were in agreement with decisions/ plans; and the number of complaints made by children and young people and their caregivers.

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[7] https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland/

Other data items proposed

- Development of the disability measure to enable identification of different types of disability, including additional support needs of children. Another response highlighted that existing guidance on disability data needed to be improved.
- Recording the frequency of reviews, including child protection core groups.
- Socio-economic and demographic data about the parents of children subject to child protection involvement.
- Data on unplanned changes in social worker.
- Provision of support aiming to prevent entry into statutory system.

The following data items were proposed to be included either in the Child Protection data collection, or in a new data collection, each by a single respondent.

- Children going through Early and Effective Intervention measures and experiencing police direct measures.
- Children in secure care and custody due to being in conflict with the law.
- Children and young people who die in secure care and in custody.
- Children strip-searched and intimately searched in police custody, and the number of positive searches.
- Number of uses of control and restraint measures in Young Offender Institutions and prison.
- Number of uses of seclusion and solitary confinement in Young Offender Institutions, prison and secure care settings.
- Number of sexual abuse allegations made by children and young people across the youth justice sector.

The following data items were also specified, in relation to children in Care and Risk Management (CARM) processes, each by a single respondent.

CARM

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Legal status
- Progression to an Initial CARM meeting
- Whether previously been subject to CARM or equivalent process
- Risk concerns recorded for children at Initial CARM meetings
- Involvement of key people in CARM meetings
- Children leaving the CARM process
- Reasons for children leaving the CARM process
- Assessment tools used to inform risk assessments while child was in CARM
- Incidents of further serious harm by children while subject to CARM process
- Months spent by children in CARM process prior to exiting

Data supplier burden

Five local authority respondents stated that the current data collection on child protection was sufficient. Two other responses supported adding CHI, with one also supporting adding geographical data, but considered that the rest of the collection comprehensive. One respondent noted the significant lead-in time to introduce developments to data collections, and another noted that timelines for new reporting requirements would be helpful. As in the Looked After Children data collection, one response described difficulties in providing Scottish Candidate Number data.

Data items to be removed

Three respondents specified data which could be removed from the existing data collection. These were as described below (number of respondents describing this is in brackets.)

- (2) Religion – as it is poorly recorded
- (1) Child protection investigations data – as it is not used or published
- (1) Disability – as it is too open to interpretation and not medically diagnosed.
- (1) Primary/ suspected abuser – as it is not widely used

One respondent highlighted that the reason for de-registration is not widely used, and it may be worth reviewing the response categories to provide a more meaningful list.

Additional comments

Respondents were asked to provide any additional free-text comments on the Child Protection data collection. The following comments were received (number of respondents describing the same point is shown in brackets).

- (6) Alignment with Minimum Dataset for Child Protection Committees[8] – one response noted it would be helpful to have the same detail of guidance in the minimum dataset as in the national annual return; and other comments highlighted the importance of the two being aligned.
- (5) Clearer data-provider guidance required/ inconsistent recording –Two local authority respondents noted issues with a lack of detail in some validation reports provided during quality assurance. Two others noted that risk factors/ areas of concern were not recorded consistently by different local authority areas. One comment explained that the statistical guidance for data providers could be clearer for unknown/ unrecorded data. Another two respondents noted that the existing statistical guidance for data providers is clear, with one noting that there is scope to make stakeholders and practitioners more aware of the level of definitional detail included.

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[8] Minimum Dataset for Child Protection Committees (celcis.org)

- (2) Reporting period – Two respondents noted the reporting period (1 August – 31 July) created confusion with other data analysed for financial years, while one respondent commented that the reporting period was not a problem.
- (1) Reporting frequency – one respondent noted that more frequent data collection would be problematic.
- (1) The value of health data, and data provided in the weekly 'vulnerable children' monitoring report[9], to inform planning was described in one response.

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[9]https://public.tableau.com/profile/sg.eas.learninganalysis#!/vizhome/VulnerableChildrenandAdultProtection/Introduction

Secure care accommodation data

Secure care accommodation data is collected from the five secure care centres in Scotland in an annual census. The current data collection includes the following data items:

Data about the centre

- Number of secure places
- Whether the centre has an emergency or short-term bed
- Average cost per week per bed

Data about individual residents excluding emergency beds
- ID number
- Scottish Candidate Number
- Social Work Child ID Number
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Ethnic group
- Religion
- Disability
- Local authority area of child's home
- Whether the young person is looked after by the local authority

Data about each admission

- Date of admission
- Whether admission was from emergency or short-term bed to main unit
  - If not, how many nights the young person stayed before leaving
- Date of admission to another bed in the main unit
- Placement prior to admission
- Legal reason for placement on admission

Data on medical care in secure care

- Whether a general health discussion or advice was received
- Whether immunisations were received while in secure care
- Whether dental check-up or treatment was received
- Whether care of treatment for a diagnosed psychiatric illness was received
- Whether sexual health treatment was received
- Whether care or treatment to enhance mental wellbeing was received
- Whether general physical healthcare or treatment were received
- Whether the young person was in the unit for less than 72 hours and it is not known whether any medical care or advice was received
- Whether the details of medical care or advice received are unknown
- Number of HPV immunisations received while in secure care

Data about each discharge from secure care

- Date of discharge
- Placement immediately after discharge

Data gaps

Respondents were asked to identify any gaps in the Secure Care data currently collected. The points raised are described below.

Reason for placement in secure care

Three respondents proposed recording the **reason for each placement in secure care**. One respondent also proposed recording the reason for a secure placement ending. One proposed gathering data on engagement in child protection and care services before entering secure care.

Young people's views/ experiences

Two responses highlighted the value of data on **young people's views and experiences**, with one noting the importance of understanding participation of young people in decision-making meetings and processes.

Support offered

Three responses noted that data on the type of **support available** to young people while they are in secure care could be collected, with one response focussing on healthcare support, another highlighting support during the transition from secure care, and one focussing on advocacy and legal support.

Other data items proposed

Each of the following data items/ analysis were proposed by single respondents, unless shown otherwise in brackets. Some responses also proposed data items which are already collected. These have not been included in the list below.

- Destinations and outcomes, including transition to adult services
- Levels of sibling contact and co-placement
- Frequency of reviews
- Use of restraint
- Assessments offered to young people and their family while in secure care
- Whether CAMHS/ Forensic CAMHS input was provided in healthcare support
- Whether each admission was discussed with the local authority in advance
- Impact of secure care on children's outcomes
- Disability and additional support needs
- Area deprivation
- Date child's plan received
- Types of risk concerns on admission
- Conditions for secure care authorisation

- In cases where secure care was authorised but there was no place available, what happened/where the child went
- Details of required alternative provision, if secure care was authorised but an alternative provision would have best met the child's needs
- Whether subject to CARM process at time of admission
- Whether subject to Child Protection at time of admission
- Distance from home to secure unit
- Number of times/ time spent previously in secure care
- Outstanding court appearances
- Whether a Looked After Child Review took place within 72 hours of admission
- Whether the child was on a Compulsory Supervision Order when a placement ended
- Reason a child was remanded or sentenced to custody whilst secure care was legally viable
- (2) Rates of use of secure care units, by local authority area
- Repeat episodes of secure care
- Placement duration
- Out-of-area placements in secure care

The following data items were also specified, in relation to young people being considered for secure care authorisation, each by a single respondent.

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Legal status
- Children subject to child protection process at time of consideration for secure care
- Risk concerns recorded at time of being considered for secure care
- Type of assessment tools used to inform risk-reduction plan
- Whether Movement Restriction Conditions were considered
- Children authorised for secure care
- Condition for authorisation of Secure Care placement
- Availability of Secure Care place for authorised child
- Whether authorised child had previous secure care placement

Data items to be removed

No respondents proposed any secure care data items which should be considered for removal from the current data collection.

Additional comments

Respondents were asked to provide any additional free-text comments on the Secure Care data collection. The following comments were received, each by a single respondent.

- Financial year rather than academic years would be a more suitable reporting period
- The data currently reflect the capacity but not demand of secure units
- It would be useful to understand how many are in secure care due to being a risk to themselves compared to being a risk to others
- The return should be linked to the secure care standards
- The data return should be mandatory

Published statistics

Usefulness of published statistics

Respondents were asked to indicate how useful they found each Children's Social Work statistical product. Chart 1 summarises the responses provided.

Chart 1: Usefulness of current Children's Social Work Statistical bulletins
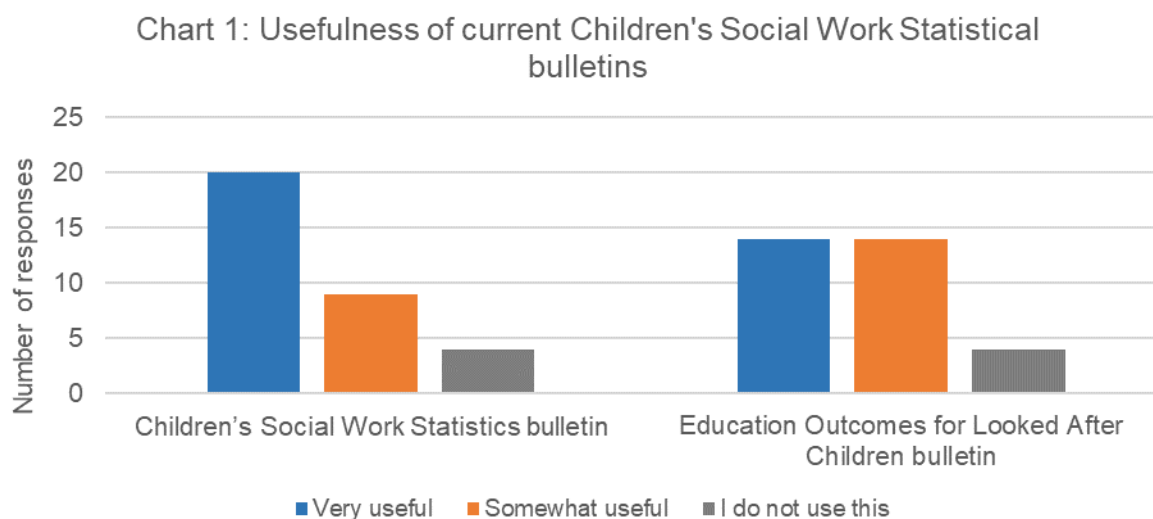
Almost nine in ten (88%) respondents indicated each publication was either very or somewhat useful, with proportionately more finding the Children's Social Work Statistics report very useful, while an even balance of respondents found the Education Outcomes for Looked After Children bulletin somewhat useful. Nobody responded that the publications were not useful, but 12-13% of respondents indicated they did not use the reports.

The following comments were received on the statistical publications. Unless indicated otherwise, in brackets, each response was received by a single respondent.

- (8) Eight responses described significant use being made of the spreadsheet tables, including but not limited to the local authority-level results for benchmarking purposes. Comments noted that a broader range of material would be more useful. Another response noted that all data items should be analysed at local authority level.
- The timing of publications is out of sync with the general social work and education statistical reporting schedule.
- There is a mismatch on the attainment of looked after children at local authority level from the point of view of the local authority responsible for education and the local authority looking after the child.
- (2) Children's Social Work Statistics currently do not focus on the experiences or outcomes of children and their families

- (3) Comments on dissemination: including difficulty in navigating the website, and the reports not being shared pro-actively with local authorities following release.
- (2) The Education Outcomes for Looked After Children report should link to Scottish Funding Council data on college progression and outcomes for care-experienced students.
- (4) The report is currently used for research and development purposes / is comprehensive / meets user needs/ helpful. One additional response noted the secure care data was of limited use given other data available.
- (3) The publication content could be expanded, including more insightful commentary, and narrative could be improved, e.g. using more strengths-based language; and the language used should be adapted on the understanding that reports will be read by care-experienced young people.
- The Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) could be further verified to consider cases where the same SCN does not follow a child who moves school or local authority area.
- Absolute numbers should be published where currently only rates or percentages are reported.
- The Education Outcomes for Looked After Children report should reintroduce analysis for children looked after for only part of the year.
- The disability and additional support needs status of looked after children should be reported, in line with all children in the Pupil Census.
- The content of the Education Outcomes for Looked After Children report should be re-ordered to reflect the child's journey through primary, secondary and post-school destinations.
- The Education Outcomes for Looked After Children report should make clear results are presently only for children looked after in the last year, not the larger care-experienced population.
- Information should be presented on the number of looked after children with co-ordinated support plans, and with part-time or flexible timetables.
- Attendance and exclusions data should be published annually rather than every two years.
- Attainment data should be reported at a more aspirational level and with more detailed breakdowns.
- More detail on positive destinations should be reported, including the extent to which positive destinations are sustained, and quality of positive destinations.
- (2) Publication of Educational Outcomes for Children on – or previously on - the Child Protection Register should be explored.

Usefulness of supporting tables and charts

Respondents were also asked to indicate how useful they found each of five published supporting Excel documents. Chart 2 summarises responses for each.

Chart 2: Usefulness of publication supporting tables and charts
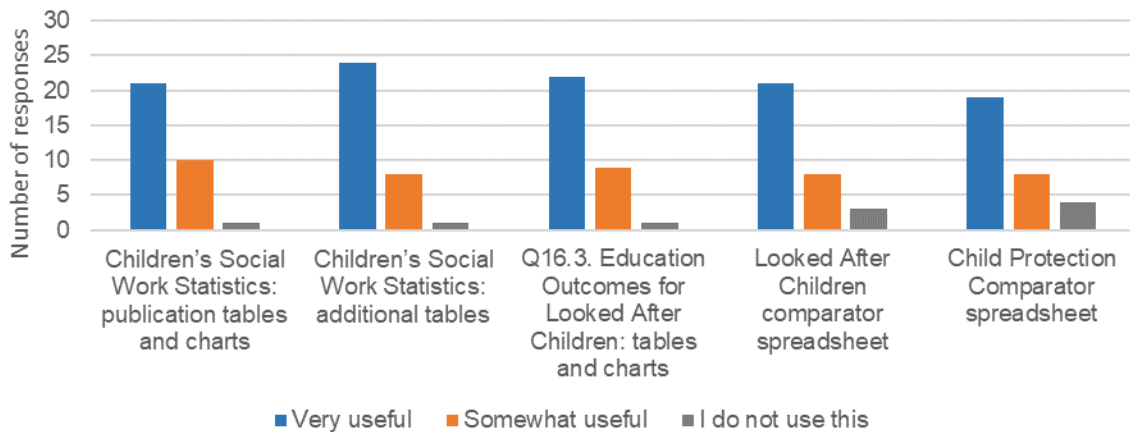
A majority of respondents, ranging from 61% to 73%, considered the supporting tables and charts documents to be very useful, and 87% to 97% considered them to be at least somewhat useful. No respondents said any of the published supporting files were not useful, but a small number indicated they did not use them.

The following proposals were received for additional tables or cross-tabulations to be included in these supporting documents. In some cases, general comments were provided which were already provided in response to an earlier question. These have not been repeated below. Unless otherwise stated in brackets, each proposal was mentioned in a single response.

Children's Social Work Statistics

- More detailed reporting on aftercare by local authority area
- More detail on placements: placement length by type of placement, by age, and number of placements by age when child became looked after.
- Data about the household and neighbourhood
- Cross-tabulations which highlight inequality and intersectional issues
- (2) Cross-tabulations with preventative health, mortality, education and deprivation data
- More detail on child protection re-registrations
- Looked after children outcomes by ethnicity – age of leaving care, destination, homelessness rates and economic activity
- Child protection risk factors by age, disability, ethnicity and area deprivation

Education Outcomes for Looked After Children

- Moving averages where numbers are low and volatile
- (2) Local authority results by placement type
- Attainment at SCQF levels 5 and 6

Priorities in supporting tables and charts

Respondents were asked what their priorities are when considering developments to published tables and charts. Chart 3 summarises the responses received.

Chart 3: Priorities in the published supporting files

All respondents indicated that the ability to compare between areas, trend analysis and interactive reporting were at least somewhat useful. Trend analysis was considered very important by 91% of respondents, area comparisons by 76% of respondents, and interactive reporting by 65% of respondents. Two responses said linkage to health outcomes was another priority.

Additional comments

The following additional comments were provided. Except where otherwise indicated in brackets, each was made by a single respondent.

- (11) An interactive dashboard would be a useful addition. Comments included the importance of also having the existing Excel files, and a multi-year dashboard being important, and the positive development of a weekly dashboard monitoring COVID impacts.
- (4) More local authority data could be made available to help with benchmarking/ comparisons
- There is scope to develop a national Youth Justice dataset
- One respondent proposed that more frequent publication should be considered, while another said that annual publication was sufficient.
- Two respondents commented on communication of results and developments: one noting that improved communication on the uses of the data was necessary, and another commented that communication was working well.

Annex A: Consultation questionnaire

You and your team

1. Are you responding as an individual or an organisation? [Individual/ organisation]
2. Full name, or organisation's name [Free text]
3. Email address [Free text]
4. Are you content for the Scottish Government Children and Families Analysis Team to contact you again in relation to your responses? [Yes/ No]

Looked After Children data

We are considering adding or changing items in the Looked After Children data collection and updating guidance for local authority data providers. New data items may relate to topics including: identifiers to enable data linkage; kinship care, permanence, sibling separation, outcomes and experiences, reasons children become looked after, social demographics, geographical data; or other topics.

1. Please use this space to tell us what information you would like to see added to the existing data collection and specify how you would intend to use it once analysis of the new data became available. Please be specific about the information you would like to see added to data collections.

[Free text]

2. Is there any information in the Looked After Children data collection which you feel should be removed? Please explain your reasons for this.

[Free text]

3. Please provide any further comments you have on the content of the Looked After Children data collection, for example relating to guidance or the reporting period.

[Free text]

Child Protection data

We are considering adding or changing items in the Child Protection data collection and updating guidance for local authority data providers. New data items may relate to topics including: identifiers to enable data linkage; early stages in the child protection process; risk factors; geographical data; or other topics.

Please use this space to tell us what information you would like to see added to the existing data collection and specify how you would intend to use it. Please be specific about the information you would like to see added to data collections.
[Free text]

Is there any information in the Child Protection data collection which you feel should be removed? Please explain your reasons for this.
[Free text]

Please provide any further comments you have on the content of the Child Protection data collection, for example relating to guidance or the reporting period.
[Free text]

Secure Accommodation data

Secure Accommodation data are collected annually from Secure Units.

Please use this space to tell us what information you would like to see added to the existing data collection and specify how you would intend to use it. Please be specific about the information you would like to see added to data collections.
[Free text]

Is there any information in the Secure Care data collection which you feel should be removed? Please explain your reasons for this.
[Free text]

Please provide any further comments you have on the content of the Secure Care data collection, for example relating to guidance or the reporting period.
[Free text]

Published statistics

Children's Social Work Statistics are published annually. Looked After Children data also contribute to annual Education Outcomes for Looked After Children Statistics.

4. Please indicate whether you find each of the following reporting products useful:
   - Children's Social Work Statistics bulletin [very useful/ somewhat useful/ not useful/ I do not use this]
   - Education Outcomes for Looked After Children: bulletin [very useful/ somewhat useful/ not useful/ I do not use this]

5. Please use this space to provide any further comments you have on Children's Social Work Statistics.
   [Free text]

6. Please use this space to provide any further comments you have on Education Outcomes for Looked After Children Statistics.
   [Free text]

We are considering introducing changes to the supporting tables and charts, and local authority comparator tool, which are released alongside annual publications. This may include new cross-tabulations which have not been presented before, and changes to the formats in which results are presented, e.g. from Excel tables to an interactive dashboard.

Please indicate which of the following supporting data you find useful:

   - Children's Social Work Statistics: publication tables and charts [very useful/ somewhat useful/ not useful/ I do not use this]
   - Children's Social Work Statistics: additional tables [very useful/ somewhat useful/ not useful/ I do not use this]
   - Education Outcomes for Looked After Children: tables and charts [very useful/ somewhat useful/ not useful/ I do not use this]
   - Looked After Children comparator spreadsheet [very useful/ somewhat useful/ not useful/ I do not use this]
   - Child Protection Comparator spreadsheet [very useful/ somewhat useful/ not useful/ I do not use this]

7. Please use this space to specify any new cross-tabulations of variables in Children's Social Work Statistics data you would find useful, which are not presently published. Please specify how this information would be used.
   [Free text]

8. Please use this space to specify any new cross-tabulations of variables in Education Outcomes for Looked After Children data you would find useful, which are not presently published. Please specify how this information would be used.
   [Free text]

9. What are your priorities in the supporting files published alongside annual statistics?
   a. ability to compare results between areas [Very important, somewhat important, not important]
   b. trend analysis [Very important, somewhat important, not important]
   c. interactive reporting (e.g. dashboard presentation) [Very important, somewhat important, not important]
   d. other (please specify) [Very important, somewhat important, not important]

10. Please provide any further comments you have on the supporting tables and charts published alongside these reports. For example, use this space to provide any additional comments relating to the frequency of content or presentation format.
   [Free text]