



Department  
for Education

# **Children in need and children looked after by local authorities' outcomes statistics**

**Response to user feedback on proposed  
changes**

**March 2021**

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## Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) requested user feedback on proposals to change the annual children in need (CIN) and children looked after by local authorities (CLA) outcomes statistics. The request was based on the commitment made at the end of the review of children in need to improve the annual CIN and CLA outcomes publications and on previous user feedback.

Users were asked to submit feedback on the proposals between 24 September 2020 and 29 October 2020. Website analytics show that the request for user feedback was viewed by around four hundred and fifty unique users over this period.

We recommend reviewing the request for user feedback at [proposed changes to children in need \(CIN\) and children looked after by local authorities \(CLA\) outcomes statistics](#) before reading this document. Links to relevant sections of the request for user feedback have been included throughout this document.

We received feedback from external stakeholders, mainly local authorities and researchers. We also received feedback from internal DfE users of the data, including policy makers.

Feedback has not been attributed to specific organisations or users of the data and we have only published feedback and names of organisations where permission to do so has been granted. In some instances feedback is from individuals within organisations and in others we understand that it represents views from a range of individuals within the organisation.

## Summary of responses received and the department's response

As part of the request for user feedback we listed questions on each of the proposed changes that we suggested may be helpful to consider when providing feedback. Generally we've summarised the responses and subsequent actions around these questions below.

The responses showed that generally there is support for the proposed changes and the developments are welcomed by users.

### Changes to cohorts

The [changes to cohorts section](#) of the request for feedback proposed expanding the cohorts of interest from CIN and CLA for at least 12 months to include other cohorts of children in social care.

### Questions 1 and 2

**Do you think that the proposed changes to the definition of the CIN cohort and the inclusion of new cohorts will be an improvement on the existing statistics?**

Of the thirteen direct responses received to this question, the majority believe that the proposed changes overall would be an improvement. However, one response indicated that there were still gaps and another requested more data at local authority level. There were requests for more clarity with definitions, particularly the 'Ever – last 6 years' cohorts.

Several respondents found the individual cohorts that make up the CIN cohort preferable to the overall CIN cohort. They highlighted that the subgroups of the CIN cohort are useful as they acknowledge the types of support children receive at different levels of intervention. Although, another response found the CINP cohort problematic as it covers many different circumstances.

Most respondents who commented on the 'CLA for at least 12 months at 31 March' cohort found its inclusion helpful. Some of these respondents mentioned the importance of the cohort's inclusion was down to the differences in attainment between 'CLA for at least 12 months at 31 March' and 'CLA for 12 months or more at 31 March', as shown in the ad hoc release.

Respondents were mostly in favour of the 'Ever – last 6 years' and 'at any point' cohorts but some requested more clarity on their definitions.

Several respondents made additional requests to those proposed. The requests were for:

- An 'Ever CPP – last 6 years' cohort, for completeness.
- A CIN cohort excluding CLA.
- A separate UASC cohort.
- Separating out those no longer in need at 31 March from 'any point during the year' and 'Ever – last 6 years' cohorts.
- Alternative timeframes to 'Ever – last 6 years', as using the six-year timeframe brings difficulties for EYFSP and key stage 1 outcomes.
- An alternative methodology to remove duplicates across local authorities from national data.

**If we were to reduce the number of cohorts we publish from this list, which of the cohorts would be of most use to you at national level?**

Of the six direct responses we received to this question, there was a range of suggestions. Several responses indicated that the most useful cohorts are those 'at 31 March' for historical comparison purposes. Other responses indicated the 'Ever – last 6 years' and 'any point during the year' cohort would be useful to keep.

Other suggestions were to remove the 'at any point in the year' and the removal of the overall CIN cohorts ('CIN at 31 March', 'CIN at any point during the year' and 'Ever CIN – last 6 years').

## **Department's response**

We are pleased that the overall feedback on the cohorts we have proposed at national level has been positive, despite some variation in the feedback. We have reviewed all of the responses and concluded that there is user need for all of the cohorts we originally proposed at national level.

We plan to publish the proposed cohorts at national level with well described definitions and methodology, including limitations of the data to address some of the issues raised.

We will not be changing the methodology for the 'at any point during the year' or 'Ever – last 6 years' cohorts at this stage to separate out those no longer in need at 31 March, as we believe the suggestions made within the responses are currently outside of the publication's scope.

We will publish the 'Ever CIN – last 6 years' this year and review the need for the 'Ever CLA – last 6 years' and 'Ever CPP – last 6 years' cohorts for future years.

We will continue to publish 'at 31 March' cohorts, as we have done historically. We plan to refresh historical data for 'at 31 March' cohorts and include historical data for the 'anypoint during the year' cohorts.

### Question 3

#### Will the removal of the non-looked after children cohort for attainment at national level cause any issues?

Of the seven direct responses received to this question, six accepted the removal of the non-looked after children cohort and one would prefer to keep it.

Of the six responses that were in favour, one response had some concerns if the comparison with all children impacted the attainment gap. Other responses had additional suggestions for comparison cohorts including; 'non-CIN', 'never-CLA-CPP-CIN over last 6 years' and an alternative cohort matched on characteristics associated with attainment.

#### Department's response

The feedback suggests that users are generally content with the proposal to remove the non-looked after children cohort and instead make comparisons to all children. We plan to remove this cohort from the publication.

#### Other

Some responses related to changes to cohorts but did not directly fit into the questions posed, including requests for (*with department's response*):

- Identification and/or removal of children that are CIN due to having disability or SEN (similar to CLA in respite care). Identification and/or removal of children that are CIN due to disability or illness (those without social worker) using CIN primary need and/or primary type of SEN.

*Department's response: We currently remove those in respite care (see page 28 [here](#)) from the CLA cohort. The data collected does not allow us to identify children that do not have a social worker.*

- Information on the proportion of children who are included in the analysis and what proportion were excluded due to missing unique pupil number (UPN) or other variables of interest.

*Department's response: We already publish information on this for CIN and CLA but we will review what is published and provide additional information where necessary.*

#### Changes to breakdowns

The [changes to breakdowns section](#) of the request for feedback proposed that we only publish local authority breakdowns for a number of specific cohorts.

## Question 1 and 2

**What are your views on the proposed cohorts for local authority level data? Which cohorts would you consider to be the most useful at local authority level?**

Of the six direct responses we received to this question:

- Three were content with the proposed cohorts at local authority level for CINP, CPP and both CLA cohorts - one of which requested that the CIN cohort not be included at local authority level as combining the groups masks the differences between them.
- One response indicated that all cohorts would be useful at local authority level but CINP would be if it only included children that had been allocated a social worker.
- Another response expressed a preference for 'at any point during the year' at local authority level as they believe 'at 31 March' hides variation across subgroups but that for historical comparison they would like to continue with 'at 31 March' as well.
- One response expressed a preference for data to be presented in tables rather than underlying data.

**If we were to publish 'at any point in the year' or 'Ever – last 6 years' cohorts at local authority level, would a child appearing in all of the local authorities they have been in during the year be acceptable for outcomes statistics?**

Of the ten direct responses we received to this question, four were content for these cohorts to be published at local authority level with double counting, one involving some adjustments to the methodology mentioned in the [changes to cohorts](#) section. Another of these responses explained that it is important to have children reported in all of the local authorities that have been responsible for their social care.

Two of the responses were content with 'at any point in the year' cohorts being published at local authority level, as long as any issues with double counting were clearly explained.

Other responses were concerned about double counting across local authorities because of the extent to which children move across local authorities. Another suggested national data would be enough for these cohorts due to concern about how children are allocated to local authorities.

## Department's response

The overall feedback on the cohorts we have proposed at local authority level has been positive, despite some variation in the feedback. The feedback suggests that users are generally content with publishing the proposed local authority level cohorts. Issues around double counting and children moving between local authorities will be explained

in the methodology document, however, we will not be including 'at any point in the year' or 'Ever – last 6 years' cohorts at local authority level, as proposed.

An overall CIN cohort will be published as it is useful for comparison against other cohorts and breakdowns.

### Question 3

**Will the removal of gender breakdowns for attainment cause any significant issues? If it does, what would be the impact of removing the gender breakdown?**

Of the nine direct responses we received to this question, three were content with the removal of gender breakdowns for attainment. However, six responses had concerns about the removal of gender breakdowns, four of them being strongly against it.

### Department's response

We have had to prioritise key groups of interest for the 2020 release and so have decided to remove gender breakdowns for attainment data for this reason. However, we will review this ahead of the 2021 publication.

### Other

Some responses related to changes to breakdowns but did not directly fit into the questions posed, including requests for (with department's response):

- The same age filter across all cohorts would be very helpful for ease of comparing across tables.

*Department's response: Part of the rationale for the proposals for the new publication is to make definitions and methodology consistent for all cohorts.*

- Breakdowns by ethnicity and free school meals eligibility.

*Department's response: We do not plan to include breakdowns on ethnicity as it is currently outside of the scope of the 2020 publication but it will be reviewed ahead of next year's publication. We will not provide information on free school meals for CLA. However, there will be information on free school meals for other cohorts. We do not plan to have breakdowns of attainment by these measures as we believe it is currently outside of the publication's remit.*

- Can academies / local maintained split be included at national level?

*Department's response: We will consider incorporating an academies / local maintained split at a national level where applicable. We endeavour to produce high quality statistics which meet user needs. However, we need to balance this with resource and efficiency. We aim to include the most appropriate and relevant*



*statistics and to continually review and develop the publication to meet user needs.*

## Changes to outcomes

The [changes to outcomes section](#) of the request for feedback proposed that we only publish local authority breakdowns for a number of specific cohorts.

### Question 1

#### **Will there be any significant issues if we remove primary type of SEN statistics?**

Of the seven direct responses we received to this question, six requested that statistics on primary type of SEN be retained. One respondent suggested incorporating primary type of SEN statistics with SEN provision, removing the school type information. It was also requested that definitions for 'all children' comparisons be included in the publication alongside the figures, rather than having to reference the SEN publication.

Another respondent requested that primary type of SEN breakdowns be included in educational attainment statistics. There were other responses that requested identification of children with particular needs, either through additional breakdowns or in some instances through removal from the dataset.

### Department's response

Previously we have published primary type of SEN for CLA at national level only with data from the school census. We intend to retain statistics on primary type of SEN for CLA and to expand this to other cohorts where numbers are large enough. However, we plan to remove school type information.

We intend to publish this data at local authority level for cohorts where numbers are large enough. We will include definitions for 'all children' in the publication, rather than having to reference the SEN publication. From 2018, primary type of SEN information is available on the alternative provisions census (in addition to the school census) and we intend to include this data for statistics from 2018 onwards. We don't plan to include primary type of need breakdowns for other outcomes as the numbers are unlikely to be large enough.

### Question 2

#### **Will there be any significant issues if we make the proposed changes at key stage 4?**

Of the eight direct responses we received to this question, four had no significant issues with the proposed changes at key stage 4. There were two responses that specifically requested we retain the Progress 8 by length of most recent period of care breakdown and another that requested that all information at key stage 4 be retained (including gender breakdowns). Another respondent requested that we provide the Progress 8 school type breakdown at LA level.

Generally there was a mixed response to the removal or reduction of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) measures and there was some concern over whether the removal of these measures for statistical reasons could ultimately give the wrong message to users generally and most importantly, it could give the wrong message to children included in the statistics and their families.

### Department's response

When the request for feedback was published on 24 September 2020, the availability of key stage 4 data for 2020 was yet to be confirmed. On 26 November 2020, key stage 4 data for 2020 was published at [Key stage 4 performance 2020](#). There are changes to accountability arrangements in 2020 due to COVID-19 and information on these changes is available at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): school and college accountability 2019 to 2020](#). The 2020 key stage 4 published data did not include the Progress 8 headline measure. More detailed information on the 2020 key stage 4 publication can be found in the Quality and Methodology document within the 'download associated files' area at [Key stage 4 performance 2020](#).

With regard to removing or reducing the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) measures we will continue to provide information on entering EBacc and the EBacc average point score to reflect the headline measures in the main key stage 4 publication. We intend to publish this data at local authority level for cohorts where numbers are large enough. We will no longer comment on the EBacc percentage achieving measure, however, we will continue to provide it in the underlying data.

With regard to the proposed changes for Progress 8, due to the removal of Progress 8 from the key stage 4 publication in 2020, we will not include Progress 8 in the 2020 publication at all, including in earlier years. We will review this at an appropriate point in the future using information from this request for feedback and other information available on the use of Progress 8 at the time.

### Question 3

**Do you find the data on school type included in the ad-hoc publication useful and would it be beneficial for us to include in future? If so, would it be beneficial to provide this data at national level and local authority level?**

Of the eight direct responses we received to this question, six indicated that the inclusion of school type would be beneficial.

Of these six responses, three requested more information including a more detailed breakdown of school type and other types of alternative provision. It was also requested that definitions of school type were made clear. Two responses indicated that local authority level data would be useful and one of these indicated that higher level detail at national level would be preferable even if it can't be provided at local authority level.

There was also a response that expressed concern over how children were allocated to a particular provision, particularly when they are dual registered. There was also a request for information on school mobility in relation to school type.

## Department's response

We plan to publish data on school type and include more detailed information where possible at the national level with some data at local authority level. We will review our methodology regarding how children are allocated a particular provision and make it clear in the publication how this is done. We do not plan to include information on school mobility as part of the publication as we believe it is currently outside of the publication's remit. The Office of the Children's Commissioner have done some work on stability more generally, including school stability – more information can be found [here](#).

## Question 4

### **Will it be beneficial to add in exclusions (now referred to as expulsions and suspensions) data for previously looked after children?**

All of the seven direct responses we received to this question indicated that it would be beneficial to add exclusions data for previously looked after children to the publication.

It was indicated that this data would be useful to assess whether these children still have an elevated risk of exclusion. One of the responses mentioned that this data would be useful at local authority level. Another response commented on including information around identification of children before and after leaving care through adoption, special guardianship order or child arrangements order. There was also a response that questioned coverage and clarity of the definitions generally with regard to which children are included.

A further suggestion was to include additional statistics on children who were previously on a child protection plan and children who were previously children in need, in addition to information on length of follow-up.

## Department's response

Statistics on exclusions for previously looked after children were published by the department within the exclusions publication in 2019 and 2020 at national level at [Statistics: exclusions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/exclusions). To note, in 2020 statistics on absence for previously looked after children were published by the department for the autumn term (2019) at [Statistics: pupil absence - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-absence). The methodology used in the department's absence and exclusions publications differs to that used in the historic CIN and CLA outcomes publications. We do not plan to publish absence and exclusions for previously looked after children as part of this release.

We do not plan to include information on children who were previously on a child protection plan or children who were previously children in need as we do not hold this information, nor information on length of follow-up as we believe this is currently outside of the publication's remit.

## Other

Some responses related to changes to outcomes but did not directly fit into the questions posed, including requests for (*with department's response*):

- Statistics on grades 9-4 be retained alongside the combined headline measure statistics on grades 9-5 (at key stage 4).

*Department's response: We plan to do this.*

- Inclusion of post-16 attainment data. By not having outcomes after key stage 4 it was suggested that this does not represent the true longer term outcomes of a lot of CLA.

*Department's response: We don't plan to do this at present as we believe this is currently outside of the publication's remit. We will review this ahead of next year's publication.*

- Stability measure for CLA and possibly other cohorts too (CIN/ CPP).

*Department's response: The Office of the Children's Commissioner have done some work on measuring levels of stability for children in care – more information can be found [here](#).*

- Inclusion of attendance and exclusions statistics by school phase at local authority level.

*Department's response: We will review and may consider publishing data at local authority level for cohorts where numbers are large enough.*

Other requests were for:

- Results for English and mathematics to be published separately, in addition to the combined English and mathematics headline measure (at key stage 4).
- Include 'ever accommodated in children's homes or semi-independent accommodation' measure as well as information on proportion that were publicly versus privately run.
- Including all outcomes together (e.g. health outcomes), making more comparisons across outcomes and generally including more predictors of educational attainment.

*Department's response: We endeavour to produce high quality statistics which meet user needs. However, we need to balance this with resource and efficiency. We aim to include the most appropriate and relevant statistics and to continually review and develop the publication to meet user needs.*

## Other

Some responses were outside of the proposed changes, including some general feedback and requests.

There were some concerns raised about gaps in the dataset, these were:

- CIN dataset - citing the lack of variables related to needs and circumstances and citing that data on children's disabilities is extremely limited and only available for those with referrals to services.
- Lack of data about the services and support that young people receive and the outcomes that are achieved. For example, regarding SDQ scores - even though a score is recorded for many CLA there is no evidence whether scores indicate a cause for concern in mental health support services.
- For looked after children, the datasets do not include any information about the carers that children are placed with, or the quality of care. They also highlighted lack of ethnicity data in this area.
- Unable to identify siblings in the datasets.

*Department's response: We appreciate the respondents concerns about gaps in the dataset. We endeavour to produce high quality statistics which meet user needs. However, we need to balance this with resource and efficiency. We aim to include the most appropriate and relevant statistics and to continually review and develop the publication to meet user needs.*

There were also some concerns raised about the limitations around matching, referring to:

- The way child identifiers are assigned means that it's not possible to match or link records for children moving between local authorities.
- Educational outcomes not available for children whose social work experiences are limited to the years before they start school due to unavailable matched UPN.
- The separation of the administrative datasets, particularly the dataset on adoption managed by Coram (in addition to CIN/CLA) limits longitudinal analyses.

*Department's response: We will include information about the matching process in the methodology document to make the limitations clear to users.*

There were requests for clarity on:

- The role of Virtual School Heads regarding CIN.
- If CIN is consistently categorised across local authorities, with interest in how DfE/Ofsted feel local authorities are being held to account on this.

*Department's response: We endeavour to produce high quality statistics which meet user needs and will include clarity and definitions in our release and accompanying documentation where within the scope of the release.*

One response gave feedback on the new Explore Education Statistics (EES) platform, stating that it is very helpful and easy to navigate and that the 'create your own table online' function was great. However, it was requested that denominators were included as well as percentages. They also requested more information about the underlying datasets on the EES platform website.

*Department's response: We plan to include denominators and will publish well described definitions and methodology, including on the limitations of the data.*

## Next steps

The Department for Education (DfE) will publish 'Outcomes for children in need, including looked after children in England' on 25 March 2021. This will be a single publication, bringing together the CIN and CLA outcomes statistics into one place. We will publish a time series for each outcome at national level where possible and also provide local authority level data. The cohorts, breakdowns and outcomes will be as described in this document.

## **Annex A: List of organisations that responded to the request for user feedback**

- National Association of Virtual School Heads
- Brighton and Hove City Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Leeds City Council
- Lewisham Local Authority
- Milton Keynes Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Surrey County Council
- Sutton Local Authority
- City of York Council
- Wiltshire Council
- Education Policy Institute
- Rees Centre, University of Oxford
- Institute of Health Informatics, University College London
- What Works for Children's Social Care



## Annex B: List of proposed cohorts in the request for user feedback

- CIN at 31 March (all CIN at 31 March without any cohorts removed)
  - CINP<sup>1</sup> at 31 March (all CIN at 31 March excluding children looked after and children on a child protection plan)
  - CPP<sup>2</sup> at 31 March (all CPP at 31 March excluding children looked after)
  - CLA at 31 March
  - CLA for at least 12 months at 31 March
  - CLA for less than 12 months at 31 March
- 
- CIN at any point in the year (all CIN at any point in the year without any cohorts removed)
  - CINP at any point in the year (all CIN at any point in the year excluding children looked after and children on a child protection plan)
  - CPP at any point in the year (all CPP at any point in the year excluding children looked after)
  - CLA at any point in the year
- 
- Ever CIN – last 6 years
  - Ever CLA – last 6 years<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the request for feedback and the response we have referred to the cohort that includes children in need but excludes children looked after and children on a child protection plan as 'CINP', however, in response to further feedback we will now refer to this cohort as 'CINO' to avoid any confusion over what it includes.

<sup>2</sup> In the request for feedback and the response we have referred to the cohort that includes children on a child protection plan but excludes children looked after as 'CPP', however, we will now refer to this cohort as 'CPPO' to avoid any confusion over what it includes.

<sup>3</sup> We will publish the 'Ever CIN – last 6 years' this year and review the need for the 'Ever CLA – last 6 years' and 'Ever CPP – last 6 years' cohorts for future years (see page 5).



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