

Ministerial Foreword

This Government is absolutely determined to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people and create lasting change in our child protection system. From the Prime Minister, right across Government, to local authorities and out to frontline workers, we all need to focus resolutely on tackling barriers in the system and achieving better results.

The Government accepted Professor Munro's recommendation that local authorities and their partners should use a combination of nationally collected and locally published performance information to help them benchmark their own performance, facilitate improvement and promote local transparency and accountability.

Performance information has a key role to play in driving improvement locally and provides context for discussion about the health of child protection services. Asking the right questions, with sufficient challenge and rigour, and being able to scrutinise information intelligently is vital to enable local areas to focus on the impact they make to children and young people's lives.

Quantitative data provides information on the number of assessments and referrals, the number and characteristics of children in need or subject of a Child Protection Plan and the timeliness of decision making. Local authorities can use this nationally collected information to benchmark with other local authorities and to understand levels of activity in the child protection system. However, quantitative nationally collected data alone does not tell the full story of the child's journey, the quality of help given or the impact on the child or young person. It does not tell you how children, families and practitioners feel about the difference made. This is why locally held information along with national information must be an intrinsic part of local quality assurance. Without this information, we do professionals a disservice. We continue to focus on counting what we can count rather than looking at the difference a professional can have on a child's life and learning and developing to improve outcomes. This is why I am delighted that Government, Ofsted and the Association of Directors of Children's Services have come together to develop and agree the key questions that all local areas will want to consider in quality assuring how delivery in their area helps improve outcomes.

This document includes those key questions along with the related draft national data items. The information should inform learning locally, drive local service improvement, and be useful in sharing good practice with other local areas. There will be a full public consultation in the New Year on the draft national performance information set.

The outcomes and experiences of children, young people and their families

Professor Munro made it clear in her review of the child protection system that everyone involved in child protection should pursue child-centred working and recognise children and young people as individuals with rights, including their right to participation in decisions about them in line with their age and maturity.

The review emphasises the importance of the quality of the relationship between the child and family and professionals and its impact on the effectiveness of help given. The clear message from children (and their parents) is that they value continuity in those key relationships. Professor Munro highlighted that the key measure of the success of child protection systems is whether children are receiving effective help when they need it.

It is therefore crucial for local areas to get feedback from children and young people and their families to inform learning and drive service improvement. It is also key to understanding the impact of the service and the difference children young people and their families feel has been made to their lives. All too often children and young people report that they have not been involved in the decisions effecting their lives, they have not been provided with adequate information and they have not understood what is happening to them. We know also that social work is more effective when parents have clarity around expectations of their behaviour.

These questions and information items also underline the importance of the quality and continuity of a child's or young person's relationship with their social workers. Additionally they provide information on the educational attainment of children in need, whether they are in school and the quality and/or quantity of the education they receive.

Outcomes and experiences of children and young people and their families (local information)

How do you know how safe the children and young people engaged with children's social care services in your area feel:

- (a) At home
- (b) At school
- (c) In their local area

What is done as a result to help children and young people to be safe and to feel safe?

And how do you know whether the services you provide have made a difference?

How do you know whether children and young people engaged with children's social care services feel that their wishes and feelings are considered by the professionals involved in their case and that they understand what is happening and why?

How do you know what children feel about the difference key professionals have made and how well they feel treated?

How is this fed into the development of the service?

How do you know how helpful children and young people think the relationship with their social worker is during their journey from needing help to being helped?

How do you know what children think about changes of social worker?

How do you know whether the families engaged with children's social care feel that their views have been considered by each of the professionals involved in their child's case and that they understand what is happening, why it is happening and what the expectation of them is?

How is this fed into the development of the service?

How do you know that vulnerable children and young people in your area are receiving a suitable education?

**Outcomes and experiences of children and young people
(Draft Nationally Collected Information Items)**

Information Item	Data Source	Rationale
Educational attainment of CIN. (New suggested item)	National Pupil Database matched to Children in Need (CIN) census	To understand the educational attainment of children in need as we can now do with other vulnerable groups such as looked after children.
Attendance of CIN at School (New suggested item)	National Pupil Database matched to Children in Need (CIN) census	To understand whether children in need as a group are attending school as we do for other groups of vulnerable children.
Rate of exclusion of CIN from school (New suggested item)	National Pupil Database matched to Children in Need (CIN) census	As above.
The rate of violent and sexual offences against children per 10,000 CYP population. (Included in the draft data set)	Home Office Data Source (From 2013)	An important contextual indicator of the level of violence affecting CYP in any area which may be used locally to inform strategies and approaches to tackle these issues
Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people (Included in the draft data set)	HES statistics (Currently collected)	Key outcome measure which looks at both deliberate injuries (child protections) and unintentional injuries (wider safeguarding).
Accident and Emergency attendance for assaults, deliberate self harm and other accidents in England rate per 10,000 children aged 0-17 (New suggested item)	HES statistics (Currently collected)	An important item to capture data on hospital attendances that do not result in an overnight stay.

Workforce

With the Government's commitment to implement Professor Munro's recommendation to reduce prescription, leaders in local authorities will have more autonomy but also more responsibility for helping their staff to operate with a high level of knowledge and skills. In moving to a system that promotes the exercise of professional judgment, local multi-agency systems will need to be better at monitoring, learning and adapting their practice.

Professor Munro's review highlighted that the messages frontline workers receive about what is important have a strong influence on the way they practise and on how caseloads are prioritised. A system based solely on process-based targets and performance indicators has skewed local priorities so that the focus is on specific aspects of process rather than practice quality and learning. To this end an understanding of how the workforce views the role they play in child protection and the difficulties they face is imperative in informing professional development and service improvement.

The local workforce questions and information items are intended as a starting point for local areas to understand their social workers' workload, and that of other practitioners, and their perceptions of the support they receive and the service they are able to offer vulnerable children and young people.

Professor Munro highlighted the importance of early help from the child or young person's point of view i.e. that preventative services do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services. Early help is also cost effective when current expenditure is compared to the cost of intervention when serious problems develop later. The local questions and national information items will help local areas judge how key professionals understand how and when to identify if children are suffering or likely to suffer abuse or neglect.

Workforce (local information)

How do you know what children and young people's social workers and other key professionals working with vulnerable children think about whether:

- a) Their interventions have improved the safety and welfare of children
- b) They received adequate reflective supervision and support
- c) Their workloads are manageable
- d) They are able to spend enough time with children and young people

And what are you doing as a result?

How do you know that key professionals within:

- a) The police
- b) The health service
- c) Schools and early years settings
- d) Adult social care
- e) Youth services
- f) Criminal justice agencies
- g) Other services

1) know how to identify concerns about a child or young persons welfare and what to do?

2) understand agreed children's social care referral thresholds for Section 17 (children in need) which includes children about whom there are concerns about their safety

3) know what to do where they have concerns about a child who would benefit from early help?

How do you support children & young people who do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention but require targeted or multi-agency support?

(Draft Nationally Collected Information Items)

Information Item	Data Source	Rationale
Social worker: a) Vacancy rate b) Turnover rate c) Absence/sickness rate d) Percentage of social work posts filled by agency workers	Collected in 2011/12 via NMDS-SC	Together, these would provide a good picture of social worker capacity and workforce stability, factors which contribute to overall quality of service provision

Timeliness and quality of decision making and planning

Professor Munro was clear that local attention needs to be given to: the timeliness in the identification of children's needs and provision of help; the quality of the assessment to inform next steps to safeguard and promote children's welfare; and the effectiveness of the help provided.

The local questions and national information items underline the continued importance of not allowing cases to drift, whilst emphasising the need to balance the speed of decision making with the quality and effectiveness of those decisions made.

**Timeliness and Quality
(Locally collected information items)**

How do you measure and understand the quality and timeliness of professional decision making for vulnerable children and young people?
Including:

- Quality of assessments
- Quality and timeliness of decisions after assessments have been completed.
- Whether the plans have improved children's outcomes

How do you know that the time from Initial Child Protection Conference to the first core group meeting is reasonable and appropriate for the child's safety and welfare?

Timeliness
(Draft Nationally Collected Information Items)

Information Item	Data Source	Rationale
Distribution of working days taken from referral to assessment completion	CIN Census (Currently collected in CIN Census)	Provides an indication of how quickly the assessment and provision of help to children in need takes place [This is subject to any decision to be taken around timescales for assessment]
Distribution of working days from Child Protection strategy meeting to Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) (New suggested item)	CIN Census (Currently collected in CIN Census)	Provides an indication of how quickly the safety of children who are judged to be continuing to, or likely to suffer significant harm is being considered by a multi-agency meeting [This is subject to any decision to be taken around timescales for assessment]
Length of time child is considered to be a child in need (New suggested item)	CIN Census (Currently collected in CIN Census)	This is useful information for local areas to understand their pattern of service compared to other areas.

Plans
(Draft Nationally Collected Information Items)

Information Item	Data Source	Rationale
Percentage of cases where children who have been the subject of child protection plans in the past 12/24 months are re-referred to children's social care	CIN Census (Currently in CIN Census)	Provides an indication of how effectively the original CPP dealt with the initial child safety/ welfare concerns
Percentage of Child Protection Plans lasting two years or more	CIN Census (Currently collected in CIN Census)	Provides an indication of case drift/issues not being resolved
Percentage of children becoming the subject of Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time (within two years)	CIN Census (Currently collected in CIN Census)	Provides an indication of the effectiveness of the original child protection plan
Number of children who are the subject of a Child Protection Plan (rate per 10,000 population)	CIN Census (Currently collected in CIN Census)	Provides a comparable measure of numbers of CPPs
Percentage of CPPs that close where the CIN case also closes or the child becomes looked after	CIN Census (Currently collected in CIN Census)	To provide a continued support and effectiveness of the plan
Children with a previous CPP subject to a further S47 enquiry	CIN Census (Currently collected in CIN Census)	To understand whether the plan addressed the child's safety and resulted in sustained change in the parents' capacity to keep their child safe.
Children who are both looked after and have a CPP	CIN Census (Currently collected in CIN Census)	Children who are Looked After should be safe and therefore it should only be exceptional cases that they should also be the subject of a CP Plan
Rate of conversion of Section 47 enquiries to ICPC.	CIN Census (Currently collected in CIN Census)	The better the quality of the assessment about whether the child there reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm prior to deciding to initiate Section 47 enquiries, the more likely it will be that these enquiries led to a ICPC.

Number per 10,000 children aged 0-17 years of children & young people who are the subject of an application to court in past 6 months (including care and supervision orders and police protection)

CAFCASS

[DN late item]

Activity
(Draft Nationally Collected information items)

Information Item	Data Source	Rationale
Rate of assessments per 10,000 population	CIN Census (Currently in CIN Census)	Provides a comparable measure of throughput
Rate of section 47 enquiries per 10,000 population	CIN Census (Currently collected in CIN Census)	Provides a comparable measure of numbers of section 47 enquiries carried out
Percentage of referrals/assessments leading to the provision of a social care service (as defined by the child becoming an open case)	CIN Census (Currently collected in CIN census)	Provides data on flow through the children's social care system
Percentage of referrals to children's social care from: a) The police b) The health service c) Schools and Early Years settings d) Local authority services e) VCS f) Other sources and the percentage that result in no further action	CIN Census (Requiring major changes to CIN Census)	Taken together will give an indication of where referrals are coming from and with the local items on workforce the level of understanding of referral thresholds
Referrals to children's social care where parents/carers' mental health, substance abuse or domestic violence is a feature (rate per 10,000 population), measured at the end of assessment	CIN Census (Requiring major changes to CIN Census)	Provides a comparable measure of referrals where parental problems are a contributory factor. Should be disaggregated.
Children becoming the subject of a Child Protection Plan for physical, emotional, and sexual abuse or neglect) (rate per 10,000 population)	CIN Census (Currently collected in CIN Census)	Provides a comparable measure of Child Protection Plans under the four main categories. Should be disaggregated
Percentage of cases where the lead social worker has seen a child/young person in accordance with their Child Protection Plan.	CIN Census (Requiring major changes to CIN Census)	It is crucial that the child is seen (alone when appropriate) by the lead social worker in accordance with the CP Plan: the child should be spoken and listened to and their wishes and feelings ascertained (in accordance with their age and understanding). worst failures have occurred when social workers have lost

		sight of the child.
Rate of ICPCs per 10,000 population	CIN Census (Currently collected in CIN Census)	Provides a comparable measure of ICPCs