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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## **Survey of Children and Young People Receiving Personal Social Services in England Aged 10-17: 2004-05**

### **Introduction**

This Statistical First Release (SFR) presents the outcome of a survey of children and young people aged 10-17 receiving social services. The survey asked for the views of children and young people on the care and support they receive from social services.

### **Note on Interpretation**

This survey proved very difficult to run at a local level due to concerns about the safety of the children and young people involved. Although authorities were asked to undertake a risk assessment for each child prior to sending out the survey, some areas did not have the capacity to do this and took a more cautionary approach – for example by excluding all children on the child protection register. In addition, the response rate to the survey was very low in some authorities. Therefore, only national level results are included in this publication, and these should be interpreted with caution as they may not be representative of the population of children receiving services.

### **Main Findings**

These relate to the 22,000 children and young people from whom responses were received. The findings need to be interpreted with caution: see section on Data Quality and Interpretation.

In answer to the question

#### **Are you offered choices about the type of care and support you receive?**

- 22% of all respondents in England said that they were “always” offered choices.
- 25% of respondents said that they were “never” offered choices.

In response to the statement

#### **“My social worker listens to me when making decisions about my care or support”**

- 69% of all respondents in England said they “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement.
- 9% of clients said that they “strongly disagree”.

In answer to the question

#### **Overall, how satisfied are you with the care and support that you receive from Social Services?**

- 38% of all respondents said that they were “extremely” or “very” satisfied with the care and support they receive.
- 13% said that they were “very” or “extremely dissatisfied”

## Commentary

### Background

This SFR presents results from a survey of children and young people aged 10-17 receiving social services. This was carried out in February 2005, and was the first time this survey has been completed.

The requirement for nationally comparable satisfaction surveys was first announced in the Department of Health White Paper Modernising Social Services, published in 1998. In 2003, Department of Health Ministers agreed to set up a rolling national three year programme of surveys of users of social services. They agreed this would cover:

1. Elderly people receiving home care
2. Adults aged 18-64 with physical disabilities
3. Children in Need

In late 2003, responsibility for children's social services transferred over to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) following the creation of post of minister for children. Responsibility for the first two surveys in the rolling programme remains with the Department of Health (DH).

Further details of previous surveys are available at <http://www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/Statistics/StatisticalCollection/fs/en>

This year the user experience survey consisted of eight compulsory questions.

### Data Quality and Interpretation

**There are concerns about the data quality of the results obtained from this survey.** This is due to the different methods used to exclude children and young people who were thought would be put at risk of harm or upset by receipt of the survey. In addition, the response rate to the survey varied widely locally, with response rates in some areas being very low.

There are also some concerns about the interpretation of some of the questions – some children and young people may not be aware which of the services they receive are provided by social services and therefore would not be able to comment on their experience of these. Also some of the questions refer to a social worker – not all children receiving social services will have a social worker.

Surveys like this are based on a sample of the whole population but produce statistics that are estimates of the real figure for the whole population. These estimates are always surrounded by a margin of error (i.e. a confidence interval). The concerns about the variation in methodologies used and the low response rate means that there is a strong possibility that the results returned are not representative of the overall population of children in need. This needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results. For this reason, only national results are provided in this Statistical First Release and these figures should be treated with caution.

## **Overview of Methodology**

Local areas were asked to conduct a survey of their Personal Social Service clients. Guidance was issued to councils on the methodology to be used to ensure comparability. However, this guidance had to be amended very close to the start of the survey when DfES was notified that receipt of the survey might put some children at risk of harm. Due to this late change in guidance, not all authorities were able to prepare for the survey in the same way and this is likely to have introduced bias into the results.

The survey covered a sample of users who:

- Are children in need, but who do not have a learning disability with a comprehension level of less than 10 years;
- Are aged between 10 and 17; and
- Are in receipt of services excluding those who are only in receipt of equipment

The definition of a child in need should be the same as the definition used for the Children in Need data collection. For further details, please see the Children in Need census guidance notes at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/datastats1/guidelines/children/returns.shtml>.

For most councils the survey forms were distributed between January 2005 and March 2005. The method of distribution was mainly carried out in one way with 99% of councils providing the survey by post to the majority of their clients. It is possible that the method of distribution may have affected response rates or the actual responses, but an analysis of the results does not show any obvious effects.

## **Questionnaire**

Councils were provided with a sample questionnaire, which is available on the internet at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/datastats1/guidelines/children/returns.shtml>. However, councils were able to produce their own questionnaires which could include additional questions and local branding. Councils were asked to keep the wording and the ordering of questions as specified by DfES to ensure comparability across councils.

## **Reweighting**

A decision has been made not to re-weight the results of the census to take account of the variation in response rates. This is because it is felt that this would only correct part of the bias in the responses. Bias has also been introduced by the differing methodologies employed in different areas and this cannot be corrected for with the information available centrally.

The figures for England have been calculated by aggregating the responses across all councils. Therefore the figures calculated do not take account of the differential response rates across councils.

## **Coverage and Missing Data**

The sample was defined as children and young people aged 10-17 who were in receipt of social services at the time the questionnaires were distributed. In total, survey forms were distributed to 81,000 clients from whom roughly 22,000 valid responses were received – an overall response rate of 28%.

4 councils were exempt from taking part in the survey as they had less than 150 eligible users. These were Rutland, Milton Keynes, City of London and the Isles of Scilly.

## **Problems reported in the collection of data**

Most authorities supplied comments along with their data. Their major concerns and observations are given below.

- The survey produced low response rates due to other recent surveys, the worry that sending reminders pressurises children, and the fact that it was a postal survey. The survey design was also not considered appealing to children.
- The survey was not meaningful for such a diverse group of children – and some children are not aware that they receive services from Social Services.
- Parental consent was a problem – some parents complained that their children were being surveyed.

## **Future developments**

The 2005-06 user experience survey will cover elderly people receiving home care. Guidance for that survey is available at <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/pss/usersurveys/2005-06>.

## **Social Services User Group**

The Social Services User Surveys Group (SSUSG) was set up by the Department of Health in early 2003 to recommend a programme of social services user experience surveys, develop their content and advise on methodology. Currently, this group includes DH/DfES policy leads, DH/DfES statisticians, LA representatives, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and researchers. Further details about the group, including its membership, terms of reference and papers are available at: [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/datastats1/guidelines/children/ss\\_survey.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/datastats1/guidelines/children/ss_survey.shtml)

The 2004-05 survey was developed in consultation with the SSUSG.

## **Tables**

Table 1: Responses to the Children in Need User Experience Survey 2004-05 (England)

**TABLE 1 Responses to the Children in Need User Experience Survey 2004-05 (England)<sup>1,2</sup>**

**Q1: Social Services gives me most of the care or support that I need from them**

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Stongly disagree	Not Applicable	Not Stated <sup>3</sup>
17%	50%	15%	11%	6%	2%

**Q2: The care or support that Social Services gives me is usually good**

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Stongly disagree	Not Applicable	Not Stated <sup>3</sup>
18%	53%	14%	8%	5%	2%

**Q3: My social worker listens to me when making decisions about my care or support**

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Stongly disagree	Not Applicable	Not Stated <sup>3</sup>
29%	40%	11%	9%	9%	3%

**Q4: In the last year, has Social Services asked you how you feel about the care and support you get from them?**

Yes	No	Not Applicable	Not Stated <sup>3</sup>
51%	41%	7%	2%

**Q5: Are you offered choices about the type of care and support you receive?**

Yes, always	Yes, some of the time	No, never	Not Applicable	Not Stated <sup>3</sup>
22%	43%	25%	8%	2%

**Q6: Do you know how to make a complaint about Social Services?**

Yes	No	Not Stated <sup>3</sup>
50%	49%	2%

**Q7: Do you think the care and support you receive from Social Services could be improved?**

Yes, a lot	Yes, a bit	No, it's fine as it is	Not Applicable	Not Stated <sup>3</sup>
31%	33%	30%	4%	1%

**Q8: Overall, how satisfied are you with the care and support that you receive from Social Services?**

Extremely satisfied	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dis-satisfied	Extremely dissatisfied	Not Stated <sup>3</sup>
13%	25%	27%	16%	4%	4%	9%	2%

**Q9: Did you fill in this questionnaire by yourself or did you have help from someone else?**

I filled it in myself	I had help from my parent/ carer	I had help from a relative	I had help from a teacher	I had help from my social worker	I had help from a friend	I had help from someone else	Not Stated <sup>3</sup>
66%	25%	2%	0%	1%	1%	3%	2%

1. There are concerns about the data quality of the results obtained from this survey and the figures here should be treated with caution. Data users should refer to the "Data quality and interpretation" section of the Statistical First Release when using these figures.
2. Forms were provided to 81,000 children from a potential sample frame of 105,000 children in need. Responses were received from 22,000 children (28%).
3. The proportion of clients that responded to some of the questionnaire, but not this question.