

Experimental Statistical Release

Bridging Series for Outcomes for Looked After Children: Comparison of Data from Matched Administrative Source with Current Aggregate Source

TECHNICAL NOTES

1. Summary

This is a new Statistical Release which contains a comparison of figures on outcomes for looked after children, currently collected via the OC2 data collection with figures derived from a matched administrative data source taken from the National Pupil Database and the Children Looked After database. This document provides technical information on the different sources and calculations used in the production of the figures presented.

2. Background

The attainment information for looked after children has been collected from Local Authorities via the OC2 collection since 2000. However, the aggregate nature of this collection limits its use so the Department has been considering an alternative source for this information. In 2005-06, an additional data item (Unique Pupil Number (UPN)) was added to the individual Children Looked After (CLA) data collection, which is collected on an annual basis from Local Authorities via the SSDA903 return. Obtaining a UPN for looked after children enables us for the first time to link this database with other data collected across the Department on attainment (from awarding bodies) and on characteristics (from the School Census). This data is held in the National Pupil Database (NPD) and it is the matched CLA-NPD data which is being used throughout this publication.

An evaluation of the matched data was carried out internally which highlighted some concerns, particularly in certain Local Authorities and for particular Key Stages. A number of recommendations were made and during Spring 2009, prior to the start of the 2008-09 CLA collection, a range of work was carried out with Local Authorities to improve the volume of UPNs received. An evaluation of the 2008-09 CLA data concluded that improvements were seen in the volumes of UPNs received and we are therefore in a position to publish information from the matched data source and draw reliable comparisons with the previous aggregate collection.

In addition to the attainment data for looked after children which we are now obtaining from the matched CLA-NPD data, there is also a range of other data items collected via the OC2 collection such as information on health outcome, convictions and substance misuse, which were added to the CLA collection for 2008-09. We shall be carrying out a comparison of this information with that previously collected via the OC2 collection but as this will continue to be provided by the same contacts within Local Authorities we don't expect to find large differences. Any differences that do occur are likely to be caused by the move to collecting at individual level and also a different cohort basis (a move from academic year to financial year in line with the timings of the CLA collection).

We have noticed some issues already with the collection of these data items in the first year of their inclusion in the CLA collection and shall be tightening our validation rules to improve the quality of the data in future years. Once we are confident of the quality of this data, we shall publish it as additional information alongside the Children Looked After SFR.

3. OC2 collection methodology

Process

The OC2 collection takes place between September and November each year and collects a range of outcomes information for children who have been continuously looked after by the Local Authority for the 12 months preceding the 30 September each year. The OC2 collection is made up of 14 sections; information is collected at aggregate level on a range of outcomes including attainment, offending, health and substance misuse. Once the data has been received from Local Authorities, it is cleaned prior to publication which usually takes place in April each year.

Further details on the information collected via the OC2 collection can be found in the 'Guidance Notes', which are available on the Department's Statistical Returns site here: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/datastats1/guidelines/children/returns.shtml#oc2>

Advantages & Disadvantages of OC2 collection

Advantages

- Collection method - The aggregate nature of the collection means it is simple to run and complete and analysis carried out with the resulting data is also quick and easy to produce.
- Coverage - Information within the OC2 is available for all children who have been looked after by the Local Authority continuously for 12 months which gives complete coverage of the looked after children population.

Disadvantages

- Timing of data availability – The timings of the OC2 collection mean that the attainment information for looked after children is not collected until the autumn following the end of the academic year. Due to the time taken to process the data and produce the publication, this is then not published until the following April, which is considerably later than the publication of attainment information for all children.
- Limitations of analysis – The aggregate nature of the collection limits the scope of analysis that can be carried out, for example, even a breakdown by gender is not possible, which considerably limits how useful the data is in informing policy development.

4. New matched administrative data collection methodology

Process

The new source for the attainment of looked after children is produced by matching information from the CLA database, which is collected annually from Local Authorities via the SSDA903 return, with information within the NPD. Information in the CLA database is collected at individual level and since 2005-06 includes the Unique Pupil Number (UPN) field. This data is collected annually between April and June for the previous financial year. Once the data has been collected and checked, an extract is produced which is sent to our matching contractors for linking to the NPD. The UPN is the main field used for matching purposes but other information about the child is also used such as date of birth, gender and responsible Local Authority. Once the data has been matched into the NPD, extracts can be produced according to individual specification – the NPD contains attainment information for all Key Stages as well as information from the School Census and extracts can be produced based on all of the information within the NPD.

Advantages & Disadvantages of new matched administrative data collection methodology

Advantages

- Rich source of data – The matched CLA-NPD data gives us individual level information on the attainment of looked after children for the first time which provides us with the opportunity to produce a range of analyses. In addition, the NPD contains much more information than was previously collected via the OC2 which enables us to produce analysis on a range of different attainment indicators, for example to look at the individual level attained by each child rather than just the number that attained the expected level.
- Consistency of definitions – The matched data uses the NPD which contains data collected directly from awarding bodies. As this is the same source of information used for all children, this new source ensures we can have consistent definitions with figures published for all children. For example, at Key Stage 4 we can ensure all GCSE equivalent qualifications are included where previously the OC2 collection only included GCSEs and GNVQs. This source will also ensure the attainment data for looked after children remains consistent with that for all children over time where previously the OC2 definitions had become outdated.
- Timing of data availability – The matched data source will be available at an earlier point in time compared to the previous OC2 data, which means that in future years attainment data for looked after children will be published at a similar time as that for all children.
- Reduction in data collection burden on Local Authorities – Using the new matched data enables us to drop the current OC2 collection thus relieving the data collection burden on Local Authorities.

Disadvantages

- Quality of matching – The quality of the matched data relies on receiving high volumes of good quality UPNs and other information from Local Authorities. Where these are not received, as is the case for some age groups and some

Local Authorities, the quality of the matched data is not as good, and the coverage of the data is therefore reduced and does not include the full looked after children population.

- Complex processing – There are more stages involved in the production of the matched data which makes it more complex to produce. In addition, the range of information available and the individual level nature of the data also make it more complex to process on receipt.

5. Improvements in new collection methodology over time

The volume of UPNs received from the CLA collection has increased for each Key Stage across the years, as can be seen in the table below. In the most recent year, we received 99% of UPNs for the OC2 cohort of children looked after continuously for 12 months.

Figure 1: Overall percentage of UPNs received, by Key Stage and year

	2006 OC2 cohort ¹ (based on 2007 database)	2007 OC2 cohort ¹ (based on 2008 database)	2008 OC2 cohort ¹ (based on 2009 database)
KS1	97	98	99
KS2	98	99	100
KS3	96	98	98
KS4	91	94	97
Aged 5-15	96	98	99

¹ The OC2 cohort refers to children looked after continuously for 12 months at 30 September each year, excluding children in receipt of respite care.

Alongside these figures at national level, there is a lot of variation when figures for individual Local Authorities are considered. There have also been improvements here across the years and the table below shows the percentages of Local Authorities where we have received 90% or more UPNs for each year.

Figure 2: Percentage of Local Authorities with 90% or more UPNs, by Key Stage and year

	2006 OC2 cohort ¹ (based on 2007 database)	2007 OC2 cohort ¹ (based on 2008 database)	2008 OC2 cohort ¹ (based on 2009 database)
KS1	86	85	95
KS2	89	95	97
KS3	85	94	97
KS4	73	86	87
Aged 5-15	86	93	97

¹ The OC2 cohort refers to children looked after continuously for 12 months at 30 September each year, excluding children in receipt of respite care.

6. Further improvements

Despite the improvements we have seen in the volumes of UPNs received in recent years, we shall be carrying out further work with Local Authorities to continue to communicate the importance of providing UPNs. We will specifically work with those Local Authorities of concern with low UPN volumes to further improve the number of UPNs received in future years.

7. Impact of changing the cohort basis

The OC2 collection covers all children looked after continuously for 12 months at 30 September and uses attainment figures the preceding summer. There are a couple of issues with this cohort, firstly some of the children within this cohort may not have been looked after for 12 months prior to taking their exams which means that the Local Authority may not have had the chance to make an impact and secondly, some children may be looked after at the time of their exams but may subsequently leave care prior to the OC2 collection date of 30 September and would therefore not be counted – and it may be the higher achieving children who are more likely to be lost here.

Because of the individual level nature of the new matched data, we have the opportunity to consider using a different reference point for the cohort and, given the timings of the CLA collection are planning to move to measure attainment on a ‘financial year’ basis rather than the previous ‘academic year’ cohort. This overcomes the two issues set out above and also has the added advantage of enabling us to release data at a much earlier point in time.

To calculate figures on the financial cohort basis, we look at all those looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March each year and consider their attainment that summer. This would mean that the Local Authority has definitely looked after them for 12 months prior to taking their examinations and therefore would have had an impact on them during this time but there is a possibility that the child may not have still been looked after at the time they took their examinations. We have therefore considered, in addition to the calculation of the indicators for this cohort, how many of those looked after at the end of March are still looked after in the following months. These figures have been calculated for the last three years and show a similar pattern throughout. Figures for those looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March 2008 are given in the table below which also shows the number and percentage still looked after at the end of April, May and June. As can be seen, there is a very high percentage of children who are still looked after in the months following the end of March, with 98% of children overall still looked after at the end of June. The figures differ slightly by Key Stage, with Key Stage 1 only having 95% of children still looked after at the end of June, however this percentage is still very high.

Figure 3: Children looked after at 31 March and their status in the following months

	Number at 31 March 2008 ¹	Number at 30 April 2008	%	Number at 31 May 2008	%	Number at 30 June 2008	%
Aged 6-16	31,700	31,400	99%	31,100	98%	30,900	98%
KS1	1,600	1,500	98%	1,500	97%	1,500	95%
KS2	2,700	2,600	99%	2,600	99%	2,600	98%
KS3	3,900	3,900	100%	3,900	99%	3,900	99%
KS4	5,000	5,000	99%	4,900	98%	4,900	97%

¹ Based on number of children looked after at 31 March 2008 who had been looked after continuously for 12 months at this date, excluding children in receipt of respite care.

8. Definitions used for production of figures

In producing the figures presented in this publication, a range of sources and variables are used, as detailed in the table below. The “Total number of looked after children” figures are derived from the CLA database to ensure these reflect the full population of looked after children. The figures for the “attainment achieved” are derived from extracts of the National Pupil Database for the relevant Key Stage and year.

Number of children: These figures are taken from the CLA database and form the denominator in percentage calculations.

	OC2 cohort	Financial Cohort
Key Stage 1	Aged 6 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 30 September, excluding those in respite care	Aged 6 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March, excluding those in respite care
Key Stage 2	Aged 10 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 30 September, excluding those in respite care	Aged 10 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March, excluding those in respite care
Key Stage 3	Aged 13 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 30 September, excluding those in respite care	Aged 13 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March, excluding those in respite care
Key Stage 4	Aged 15 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 30 September, excluding those in respite care	Aged 15 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March, excluding those in respite care

Attainment achieved: These figures are taken from the NPD data and form the numerator in percentage calculations

Key Stage 1	Aged 6 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 30 September, excluding those in respite care AND KS1 reading level/ KS1 writing level/ KS1 maths level = 2A or 2B or 2C or 3 (Attainment at Key Stage 1 based on teacher assessment)	Aged 6 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March, excluding those in respite care AND KS1 reading level/ KS1 writing level/ KS1 maths level = 2A or 2B or 2C or 3 (Attainment at Key Stage 1 based on teacher assessment)
Key Stage 2	Aged 10 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 30 September, excluding those in respite care AND KS2 English level/ KS2 mathematics level/ KS2 science level = 4 or 5 (Attainment at Key Stage 2 based on results in tests)	Aged 10 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March, excluding those in respite care AND KS2 English level/ KS2 mathematics level/ KS2 science level = 4 or 5 (Attainment at Key Stage 2 based on results in tests)
Key Stage 3	Aged 13 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 30 September, excluding those in respite care AND KS3 English level/ KS3 mathematics level/ KS3 science level = 5, 6 or 7 (Attainment at Key Stage 3 based on results in tests)	Aged 13 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March, excluding those in respite care AND KS3 English level/ KS3 mathematics level/ KS3 science level = 5, 6 or 7 (Attainment at Key Stage 3 based on results in tests)
Key Stage 4	Aged 15 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 30 September, excluding those in respite care AND <i>use relevant attainment indicator</i>	Aged 15 at start of academic year AND Looked after continuously for 12 months at 31 March, excluding those in respite care AND <i>use relevant attainment indicator</i>

9. Glossary

- **Looked after children** - Under the Children Act 1989, a child is looked after by a Local Authority if he or she is either provided with accommodation for a continuous period of more than 24 hours or is subject to a care order.
- **Respite care** - Respite care refers to a specific legal status under which a child is looked after where they are accommodated under an agreed series of short term breaks. These children are not included in any calculations within this publication.
- **OC2 cohort** - This relates to all children looked after continuously for at least 12 months at 30 September, excluding those in respite care.

- **Financial year cohort** - This relates to all children looked after continuously for at least 12 months at 31 March, excluding those in respite care.
- **Key Stage 1** - Children included within these calculations are those aged 6 at the start of the academic year i.e. 31 August. Key Stage 1 results are based on teacher assessments, which is the teachers' judgement of pupils' performance in the subject over the whole academic year. The National Curriculum standards have been designed so that most pupils will progress by approximately one level every two years. This means that by the end of KS1, pupils are expected to reach Level 2.
- **Key Stage 2** - Children included within these calculations are those aged 10 at the start of the academic year i.e. 31 August. Key Stage 2 figures are based on results in tests. Pupils' attainment is assessed in relation to the National Curriculum programmes of study, and pupils are awarded levels on the National Curriculum scale to reflect their attainment. National Curriculum tests are a measurement of achievement against the precise attainment targets of the National Curriculum rather than any generalised concept of ability in any of the subject areas.
- **Key Stage 3** - Children included within these calculations are those aged 13 at the start of the academic year i.e. 31 August. Key Stage 3 figures are based on results in tests. Pupils' attainment is assessed in relation to the National Curriculum programmes of study, and pupils are awarded levels on the National Curriculum scale to reflect their attainment. National Curriculum tests are a measurement of achievement against the precise attainment targets of the National Curriculum rather than any generalised concept of ability in any of the subject areas.
- **Key Stage 4** - Children included within these calculations are those aged 15 at the start of the academic year i.e. 31 August. Figures within table 4a include results in GCSEs and GNVQs only, figures in table 4b include results in GCSEs and other equivalent qualifications approved for use pre-16. The Qualifications and Curriculum Development Authority (QCDA) is responsible for the accreditation of qualifications. As part of the process of reporting achievements in GCSE and equivalent qualifications, QCDA defines the age group for which the qualification is approved and the contribution each qualification make towards a pupil's attainment of levels 1 and 2. Further information on approval, contributions to pupil level and point scores of qualifications can be found through QCDA's National Database of Accredited Qualifications website: www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk.
- **Awarding body** - An organisation or consortium recognised by a regulatory authority for the purpose of awarding specified qualifications.
- **Period of care** – a continuous period during which a child is looked after by a Local Authority, which may include more than one episode where there is a change in a child's legal status or placement.

- **Category of need** – This records the main reason why the child started to be looked after. There are eight need codes, as follows:

CiN code	Main reason for child being looked after at start of current period of care	Definition
N1	Abuse or neglect	Children in need as a result of, or at risk of, abuse or neglect
N2	Child's Disability	Children and their families whose main need for services arises out of the child's disabilities, illness or intrinsic condition
N3	Parental illness or disability	Children whose main need for services arises because the capacity of their parents or carers to care for them is impaired by disability, illness, mental illness, or addictions
N4	Family in acute stress	Children whose needs arise from living in a family going through a temporary crisis such that parenting capacity is diminished and some of the children's needs are not being adequately met
N5	Family dysfunction	Children whose needs arise mainly out of their living with families where the parenting capacity is chronically inadequate
N6	Socially Unacceptable Behaviour	Children and families whose need for services arises primarily out of their children's behaviour impacting detrimentally on the community
N7	Low income	Children, either living in families or independently, whose need for services arises mainly from being dependent on an income below the standard state entitlements
N8	Absent Parenting	Children whose need for services arises mainly from having no parents available to provide for them. Children whose parents decide it is in the best interest for the child to be adopted would be included in this category

- **Placement** – This indicates the type of accommodation which the child is provided. The following codes are used within the Children Looked After data collection:

Family placements

Foster placements

Foster placement with relative or friend	Q1
Placement with other foster carer	Q2

Placement for adoption

Placed for adoption with consent with current foster carer (under section 19 of the Adoption Act, 2002)	A3
Placed for adoption with consent not with current foster carer (under section 19 of the Adoption Act, 2002)	A4

Placed for adoption with placement order with current foster carer (under section 21 of the Adoption Act, 2002)	A5
Placed for adoption with placement order not with current foster carer (under section 21 of the Adoption Act, 2002)	A6

Placed with own Parents

Placed with own parents or other person with parental responsibility	P1
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Other placements in the community

Independent living , e.g. in flat, lodgings, bedsit, B&B or with friends, with or without formal support	P2
Residential employment	P3

Placements in residential settings

Looked after, and Placed in secure unit

Secure unit	K1
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Placements in homes and hostels subject to *Children's Homes Regulations*

Homes and hostels	K2
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Placements in other hostels and supportive residential settings

Residential accommodation not subject to <i>Children's homes regulations</i>	H5
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Placements in other residential settings

Residential care home	R1
NHS/Health Trust or other establishment providing medical or nursing care	R2
Family centre or mother and baby unit	R3
Young Offender Institution or prison	R5

Schools

All Residential schools, except where dual-registered as a school and children's home.	S1
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Temporary Placements (use of these codes is optional)

Temporary placements which do not count towards NIS Indicator 62

<i>All types</i> of temporary move (see paragraphs 2.4.5.9-2.4.5.12)	T0
Temporary periods in hospital	T1
Temporary absences of the child on holiday	T2
Temporary accommodation whilst normal foster carer is on holiday	T3

Temporary accommodation of seven days or less, <i>for any reason</i> , not covered by codes T1 to T3	T4
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Other Placements

Missing - Absent more than 24 hours from agreed placement

In Refuge (section 51 of Children Act)	M1
Whereabouts known (not in Refuge)	M2
Whereabouts unknown	M3

Other placements not Listed above

Other placements (must be listed on a schedule sent to DCSF with annual submission)	Z1
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Further details of the data collected for Looked After Children within the SSDA903 return can be found in the Guidance Notes which are available of the Statistical Returns site here: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/datastats1/guidelines/children/returns.shtml#clad>

10. Rounding and suppression

National Tables

1. All **numbers** which appear in the national tables have been rounded to the nearest 100 if they exceed 1,000 and to the nearest 10 otherwise. Numbers from 1 to 5 inclusive have been suppressed, being replaced in the table by a hyphen. Where any number is shown as zero (0) the original figure submitted was also zero.
2. **Percentages** at national level at Key Stage 4 have been rounded to 1 decimal place; those for other Key Stages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Local Authority Tables

3. At Local Authority level the England total **numbers** at the head of each table have been rounded either to the nearest 10 or 100, following the rule outlined above.
4. All other numbers at local authority level have been rounded to the nearest five, and numbers from 1 to 5 inclusive have been suppressed, being replaced in the published Tables by a hyphen. Where any number is shown as zero (0), the original figure submitted was also zero.
5. **Percentages** at Local Authority level have been suppressed and replaced by a hyphen wherever the numerator is 5 or less or the denominator is 10 or less of the underlying numbers from which a percentage has been calculated. Where any percentage is shown as zero (0) the denominator was 1 or more and the numerator was zero. If the denominator and numerator were equal to zero the percentage has been replaced with a dot (.).

11. Consultation process

These statistics are published as 'Experimental Statistics' which reflects the fact that we are working with a new data source and using a new methodology. These figures should be treated with caution as this is the first year for which such data have been published.

We have worked with some interested parties in developing both the method and the outputs but are now seeking wider comments on:

- (a) Does the methodology seem fair and reasonable?
- (b) Do the published tables satisfy your needs?

We would welcome any contributions to this consultation; please send any comments you have to:

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