

**LASWS Children and Families Meeting
Conference Room 3, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh
on 12 May 2016**

1. Introductions

Attendees:

Gail Abraham (Renfrewshire)	Shirley Moore (Aberdeen City)
Graham Alexander (Falkirk)	Yvonne Murton (Argyll and Bute)
Maciej Alexander (Clackmannanshire)	Stuart Osborough (City of Edinburgh)
Gail Baxter (Inverclyde)	Janet Penman (Midlothian)
Debbie Campbell (North Ayrshire)	Laura Pugh (North Lanarkshire)
Derek Clark (Perth and Kinross)	Stuart Singleton (North Ayrshire)
Wendy Duguid (West Lothian)	Jacqui Small (Renfrewshire)
Matthew Dunn (Midlothian)	Janice Smith (Glasgow City)
Fiona Hare (East Lothian)	Margaret Steel (Perth and Kinross)
Mandy Houghton (Fife)	Mareen Vernon (Dumfries and Galloway)
Stacey Ironside (Aberdeenshire)	Sara White (Scottish Govt, Statistics) <i>Chair</i>
Gillian Johnston (Stirling)	Ian Volante (Scottish Govt, Statistics) <i>Minutes</i>
Kerstin Jorna (Dundee City)	Laura Merenciano-Sanchis (Scottish Government, ScotXed)
Susie Kempself (Glasgow City)	Carolyn Younie (Scottish Govt, LAC Policy)
George Maldonado (Highland)	Philippa Brosnan (Scottish Govt, CP Policy)
Caroline McConnell (East Dunbartonshire)	
Nicola Milne (Moray)	

Apologies:

Robert Driscoll (Aberdeenshire)
Kath Gordon (NHS Highland)
Isobel Prentice (South Lanarkshire)
Beth Reader (Angus)
Caroline Sinclair (Orkney)

2. Actions from the previous meeting

Actions 1-4 completed. Action 5 requested information on how placement changes are recorded locally, and it has been noted that inconsistencies are minor only e.g. for financial record-keeping. Therefore, due to recording being largely consistent, no further action was considered necessary.

Action 6 again consulted LAs on what sub-categories are used locally to define causes for concern relating to CP placements. Arguments were heard for and against expanding the list of concerns. Neglect was thought to be too generic to be very useful, but the subjective nature of defining concerns, a desire for comparability, and the upcoming review led to a decision to keep categories consistent until the review has concluded.

Actions 7, 9 and 10 were completed, action 8 related to a later agenda item.

3. Data development

1) National Improvement Framework (NIF)

Andy King from the Attainment and Performance Statistics team spoke about the NIF. In January 2016, the published [National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education](#) set out the Scottish Government's priorities for education. The document detailed new data that will be collected to help achieve these priorities. The Teacher Judgement Survey collection will take place for the first time at the end of the academic year 2015/16 (i.e. June 2016) and gather information on the achievement of the curriculum levels in literacy and numeracy based on the teacher's professional judgment as to the most recent curriculum level a pupil has achieved. As part of the support work in preparation for this collection, Education Scotland held a series of events in May 2016 for delegates from all local authorities.

Andy noted that, as this is the first time this information will be collected, there are likely to be data capture and quality issues to resolve. Sara White explained that this data has potential to be included in the education's outcomes for looked after children (EOLAC) publication (by linking with LAC data), however, it would only be incorporated once there was confidence in the quality and robustness of the data. LASWS members felt linking of data across portfolios could be a useful incentive for LAs to improve the quality of their data as there is recognition for services to be more integrated locally.

ACTION 1 – C&F Stats team to monitor the suitability of NIF data for inclusion in the EOLAC publication in future.

2) Sara White provided some updates on ongoing projects:

a) Data linkage pilot: We are currently working with one authority's data, soon to be two to investigate how successful data-matching is using various variables, including part of the child's name. Once we are confident in matching criteria, we will arrange with interested LAs to obtain data with these variables so we can undertake a data linkage project specifically related to health outcomes. This will also help inform what (if any) variables would be useful to introduce to CLAS and/or CP returns in future.

b) Dental project: the report is almost finalised, although there are no final timescales for this being published yet.

c) Dashboard: CELCIS are currently investigating the possibility of creating a dashboard as an improvement to our current limited Excel-based comparator tools. An initial scoping exercise has been conducted and further funds to take this work forward are being sought. Views from LAs on the content and use of this will be sought (by CELCIS) and LASWS members have agreed for their contact details to be passed on to assist with this work.

ACTION 2 – C&F Stats team to send LASWS members' contact details to CELCIS.

d) Disability categories: Work is being undertaken to see whether new disability categories can be usefully created and implemented in the social work collections. It was commented that it would be useful if adult and child disability categories were consistent.

ACTION 3 – C&F Stats team to feedback to the working group the request for harmonisation of children and adult disability categories.

e) LAC Data Strategy: This was released in November 2015, and a successful engagement event was held with stakeholders from across the sector in April 2016. Actions from the strategy are underway.

3) Ian Volante provided an update on the longitudinal analysis of LAC data, mentioning that an ad hoc release on the topic is planned for Autumn 2016. Ian explained that some initial exploratory work had already been done and thinking was underway as to what this may contain. Members were invited to provide suggestions for this analysis. These included:

- The link between CP and LAC
- Comparisons between LAs
- Whether the age of entry to care is getting earlier
- Patterns in destination
- The flow of children/young people through the system
- Numbers of placements/age/time in care over time
- Costs – number of returns to care under new act, including continuing care and after care.

Ian noted he had some of the initial analysis in a document and it was agreed he would circulate that to members of the group so as to get them thinking a bit more about further requirements from the analysis. Members were asked to feedback to the children and families statistics team with any ideas.

ACTION 4 – C&F Stats to send out summary paper on current available longitudinal analysis (*current plan is to send this out around the beginning of July*).

ACTION 5 – group members to consider requirements for longitudinal analysis for release in the Autumn and feed back to Ian.

4. Child protection

2014/15

Ian reflected on the most recent CP collection:

This was the best year for CP since we moved to individual-level collection. We improved our systems and minimised the time taken from submission to validation checks being sent out. We tracked every child from the previous return to this, and ironed out issues surrounding pre-birth children.

2015/16

- The binary disability question will be implemented for this collection onwards.
- Sexual exploitation and trafficking have been added as causes for concern.
- We plan to add another column to the ProcXed report which states the total on the CP as at the previous year end to further aid with balancing.
- A validation check to make sure that a cause for concern has been selected will be added.

- We plan to run the collections for 2015/16 on the same basis as last year, so that would mean opening the CP collection in early August (likely the first) and closing on the 4th November.
- A 'go-live' e-mail is to be sent out including the register as we have it at the start of the collection period for reference.
- Due to delays in some returns for the last collection (particularly for the looked after children return) causing issues for publication, formal escalation processes will be introduced for this year. Sara White explained that a lot of work has to be undertaken once the data has been submitted to identify and resolve validation queries and quality assurance issues. Timescales for quality assurance prior to publication were compromised this year but are an important step and adequate time for this, and other processes, are required.
- We'll be aiming to publish during March, maybe earlier than this year.

2016/17

Removal of child exploitation risk factor, and replacing with the more specific Child Sexual Exploitation, trafficking, and forced or dangerous labour categories.

2017/18

It was agreed that until the outcomes of the Child Protection Improvement Programme are known, it is not possible to agree changes to the CP collection. Philippa Brosnan (CP policy officer) explained that the review will have a strand looking specifically at data and evidence needs.

ACTION 6 – Provide link to the statement on the [Child Protection Improvement Programme](#).

5. Children Looked After

2014/15

Ian reflected on the most recent LAC collection:

This year's collection mostly ran smoothly, and the data was improved due to the ability to go back and fix the submitted data from the previous year.

In a couple of cases, late returns greatly reduced the time available for validation and analysis, and, as with CP, we tried to encourage earlier returns by validating submissions as quickly as possible. The escalation stage, outlined for CP, will therefore be even more important for this collection.

Dumfries and Galloway provided greatly improved SCN coverage, which will help provide better linkage to education outcomes data.

2015/16

- The binary disability question will be implemented for this collection onwards.

- Guidance to be corrected to refer to 'over-16s' for aftercare rather than those beyond school-leaving age.
- SCN validations are unnecessary for under-4s – these should be removed.
- We plan to run the collections for 2015/16 on the same basis as last year, so that would mean opening the CP collection in early August (likely the first) and closing on the 25th November.
- Escalation processes will be in place, similar to CP collection.
- We'll be aiming to publish during March, maybe earlier than this year.

ACTION 7 – Correct the guidance for age eligibility for aftercare.

ACTION 8 – ScotXed team to remove validation check for SCNs for under-4s.

2016/17

PERMANENCE

Belinda Robertson, who leads on the PACE programme, came along to discuss the new questions on permanence which are due to be collected for the 2016/17 data. She is currently working with 9 LAs, and another 5 are due to join the programme soon.

She said that the permanence questions link in to a new way of thinking, and that the information isn't yet recorded widely.

Regarding the three items we are intending to collect in 2016/17:

- a) Date permanence away from home is recommended: this is called different things in different LAs, Belinda is trying to help LAs with this item.
- b) Date of decision by agency decision maker: this is a clear point, although there are numerous notable dates before this which don't need collected.
- c) Date application submitted to court: this is clear.

LAs agreed that work was required to capture these datapoints, although it was pointed out that only information on new decisions after the 1st August 2016 were required, which makes the task easier.

It was agreed that partial data returns for these items for 2016/17 were acceptable, improvements can be made in the future. However, any concerns with providing any part of the data should be raised with the children and families statistics team, who can pass on to Belinda. A pragmatic solution can then be found and agreed.

ACTION 9 – group members to inform the children and families statistics team of difficulties in supplying permanence data items for 2016/17.

Group members noted that the communication which is sent from the Scottish Government to other parts of their organisation, don't always reach them, even if it is work they are directly involved in. It was agreed that all communication Belinda and her team send out would be copied to the children and families statistics team so they could forward on to LASWS contacts to ensure they have early sight of this.

ACTION 10 – SG to ensure relevant communication is copied to LASWS group members.

FOSTER CARE DESCRIPTORS

It has emerged that there are problems with the implementation of the new foster care descriptors. Some LAs may have issues with foster placements being linked to payments in their systems, and the reasoning behind the collection of these descriptors has become unclear.

Previous discussions were pointed out that went against using them to track overrunning placements, yet that was the recent steer received from the policy team.

There may also be an issue with the cascading of software updates to LAs.

Provisionally, this item will be included for 2016/17, but will be optional to be provided where possible. It was clear that further discussion was required to resolve this issue and group members asked that meetings be held every 6 months, rather than annually, to ensure momentum around changes is kept up. It was felt this would be useful more generally as there is a lot to discuss at an annual meeting.

ACTION 11 – set up a LASWS meeting for November 2016.

Sara White explained that LASWS members have details of proposed changes ahead of LASWS so they can fully consider the implications and feasibility of these ahead of LASWS, where concerns can be raised and discussed in detail. The changes do not have to be signed off until the 31st July which provides group members further opportunity, following the LASWS meeting, to feed in additional information for decision making. It is the collective responsibility of the LASWS group to agree changes, having fully considered all implications. If any concerns arise after sign-off, these should be communicated to the children and families statistics team immediately.

ACTION 12 – LAs to fully consider and test new data items to identify problems early and feed back issues to children and families statistics team.

Clear definitions were seen to be crucial for new data items and a plea that these were fully considered prior to implementation was received. Similarly, it was suggested that the

rationale behind questions being introduced were explained so data providers could better understand the requirement and therefore could offer alternative solutions if more appropriate.

CONTINUING CARE

It had already been decided to delay the implementation of the collection of the continuing care variable, as there has been no agreement on where to usefully include it within the collection. It was also mentioned that the legality of payments regarding continuing care is not yet settled.

The request to include a variable to track whether continuing care was requested but not obtained was linked into the overall discussion on continuing care, and will be considered as part of the general topic.

ACTION 13 – Clarify the reasons behind collecting this variable.

ACTION 14 – Discuss via email correspondence, and aim to agree implementation for 2017/18 at the November LASWS meeting.

2017/18

The proposals for new variables to be included are as follow:

1) Variable to track whether continuing care was requested (but not necessarily obtained): This was linked into the overall discussion on continuing care, and will be considered as part of the general topic. SUBJECT TO FURTHER DISCUSSION

2) Whether a child has a kinship care order:

This was seen to fall under section 11 orders, which also includes non-LAC. It isn't necessarily suitable for all LAs at the moment. However, it was AGREED THAT THIS WOULD BE INCLUDED AS A NEW DESTINATION CODE FROM 2017/18.

3) Is a placement a re-entry to care due to a failed adoption?:

This wasn't necessarily recorded by all LAs, and is complicated by cross-border adoptions and new IDs being given to such cases. It was thought that numbers are probably too small to make collection of this worth the effort, and so was agreed subject to evidence being provided by LAs not to include this. NOT TO BE INCLUDED IN 2017/18

ACTION 15 – LASWS members to quantify adoption breakdowns and pass on to children and families statistics team.

4) Splitting 'other residential' to account for increased numbers of cases in this category: Two authorities in particular make a lot of use of this category, often for small specialist residential units. Another reason more generally was that this covered short-term hospital stays. Further discussion was needed on what change if anything may be useful.

5) More response options for pathway plans. It's been previously acknowledged that there are local differences in recording timing of pathway plans etc. Further discussion is required on this.

6) A question was raised on the treatment of interim Compulsory Supervision Orders and whether they should be categorised in the same manner as full orders, as it appears that some interim variation orders have been. Discussion is ongoing on this.

ACTION 16 – C&F Stats to provide updated data specification and guidance as soon as possible.

FEEDBACK LOOP – additional section to meeting with representatives from CHS

1) There was agreement that feedback loop data would be collected as part of the CLAS collection from 2017/18 for any children in secure care only.

2) Dialogue will continue with data handlers on this topic, and a working group will be set up for this purpose.

3) Another meeting will be held alongside the November LASWS meeting.

7. Date of next meeting

November 2016 – details in due course