

LASWS Children and Families Group Meeting

Monday 14th May, 2018, 11 am to 3 pm

IET Teacher building, Glasgow

MINUTES

1. Welcome and introductions. Cecilia Macintyre went over staff changes and recent activities in the unit, detailed in the Update document circulated with these minutes.
2. Actions from previous meeting 11.05-11.15
 - Action: Scottish Government to clarify the use of the data on permanence collected for 2016/17, and consider issues highlighted. **Discussion of permanence was covered in items 3 and 5 below.**
 - Action: Discuss neglect recording with Policy team. **Policy response was covered in item 6.**
 - Action: Scottish Government to circulate a paper describing the Family Nurse Partnership study and the request to be considered by the local authority. **Done**
3. Presentation from Shona Spence (Scottish Government) on Permanence and PACE, 11.15-11.30
PACE is a program that runs with CELCIS to improve the drift in delay over permanence cases. It promotes a stable environment, achieved as quickly as possible through minimum number of placements. Last year there were extra datasets created for permanence due to recommendation for permanence changes. The data requested is important due to legal interest in the interim period between the recommendation and the court appearance. Improvements have been suggested to avoid this type of delay, including possible delays at the court end, but need good data to support this. This is why we need to collect data from practitioners. Data can also allow good practices to spread to other areas.

Discussion:

- Local authorities have introduced various systems including permanence case trackers to collect this data. Social workers only record permanence infrequently and in notes, not in easy format for date retrieval. Some Local authorities have introduced a form for permanence data that asks for dates, social workers feel this is being asked to record twice over. Local authorities starting on PACE are learning from other Local authorities – those with the resources for a dedicated admin are using them, but resources lacking. Bigger challenge for larger Local authorities - very time consuming per case. Local authorities say that each area uses the system differently. Some variance in use for LAC at home, kinship care orders, and other variants.

- Suggestion for Scottish Government to liaise with the PACE teams in Local authorities to when reviewing the quality of data collected, as this data is collected by PACE teams.
- Consensus that the most difficult part of recording is the application to court, as court dates are recorded by the legal department not social work department. Not all go through Local authority legal service - some are private. In a lot of cases if a date is missing, it doesn't mean that it hasn't happened. Can also depend on the route to permanence. Conflicting advice as to whether kinship was included in permanence cases. The POA route involves 2 court submission dates: the earlier of these should be recorded.
- **Action: Talk to policy and clarify the guidance on the 4 difference routes to permanence and how all (Kinship care, LAC at home, adoption, POA) should be recorded.**

4. Ewan Mackenzie attending to introduce the plans for additional funding related to the Pupil Equity fund.

Ewan is doing policy work for learning division - Scottish Attainment Challenge unit on Pupil equity fund (PEF). More money is available this year. PEF is considering giving money to authorities based on the number of LAC in an authority. Needs to be spent to raise the attainment of LAC. Issues with data - missing SCNs – as can allocate funding according to which Local authorities children go to school in – which is a possible approach being considered for future.

SG will hold discussions with COSLA at a 30th June meeting and hope to announce something in the summer about PEF for LAC.

Discussion:

- Local authorities indicated the main issue is getting SCNs is for LAC educated outwith the authority area, which can be up to 60% in Edinburgh and Glasgow. They have no access to SEEMIS data from other authorities. Problem with the LAC flag – a local authority can't reliably know if children in their schools are looked after in another authority. Aberdeenshire: Schools have been known to record children as looked after who are not looked after (eg in private kinship care), making it difficult to track down children in from other Local authorities or children who are not yet recorded.
- Compiling and circulating a list of SEEMIS contacts in all 32 Local authorities would be useful to collect SCNs, or all-Scotland access to SEEMIS.
- **Action: SG to look into compiling this list**
- Edinburgh - suggestions of creating a virtual school with all looked after children. Kept the LAC status up to date.

- Linking via CHI and via placement postcode were both proposed but were both deemed impracticable. CHI introduces problems with data access. More authorities now using CHI number with Health and Social Care partnership, but some eg Aberdeen City do not have CHIs for under 18s.
- Consensus after discussion was that the placement postcode would not provide the data needed. Child could be attending a school in another area.
- Both linkage methods would require extra resources that are not available.
- Clackmannanshire reported a problem with ScotXed flagging SCN validation for children who are not old enough to have an SCN.
- **Action: ask Scotxed about changing the validation process for SCNs so the system doesn't flag missing SCNs for children under 5.**

5. Children Looked After collection

- 2017/18 & 2018/19 collection
 - No change for 18/19 collection planned. No new data items.
 - Permanence data and foster placement type continue to be optional due to data recording issues.
 - Continuing care will start to be recorded in 2017/18 collection as previously planned

Presentation of permanence data and foster placement type data received. Permanence data returned on around 1600 children. Some Local authorities have not provided any data, some have provided a very small number. Dates generally line up, so data quality of that which has been received looks acceptable. SG will report on the analysis once it has been performed and feedback findings.

Discussion of EfA collection and inclusion of 22-26 year olds (J Small/V Wood, Renfrewshire).

- Eligibility for aftercare recording – discussion on what everyone is actually recording for this. Figures for Renfrewshire seem out of line with others. In Edinburgh, 94% receiving aftercare. Only 49% in Renfrewshire.
- Moray have a flag to show whether they are actively receiving aftercare or not. Moray and Inverclyde are recording duty cases as well (ie list of individuals to whom authority has a duty of care).
- Discussion indicated we do not get a full picture of who is eligible and who is actively receiving. Some issues highlighted included

- age limit for recording
- criteria for inclusion based on active contact in some areas and other areas include potential eligible despite no activity
- some authorities underestimating eligibility as only including those receiving aftercare

- definition of aftercare covers a wide range of service and definition varies across area

- **Action: SG to consider issues above and include more information in publication on quality issues and how this impacts on the use of the statistics.**

- **Action: SG to look at investigate quality by considering data on historical care leavers data to determine approximately how many people should be eligible for aftercare in each area.**

Edinburgh raised the related issue of pathway plans and suggested that this should be reviewed given the requirement for all children to have a child's plan.

Action: Check with policy about the usefulness of pathway plan recording and reporting.

Data quality discussion: differences in numbers of children recorded between annual returns.

Two users contacted C&F after the publication about whether the 3% fall in number of children looked after was real, and noted that most of the change was due to a fall in Glasgow numbers. The impact of changes to databases between extracts can be seen through differences between figures reported in the publication, and those derived from reported changes in the subsequent publication. An investigation has highlighted that there was an exercise carried out in Glasgow to review cases and update the database in Glasgow. This mainly concerned updating cases leaving care which had not been recorded in a timely fashion.

There was discussion of the effects of this variance and options for resolving it, and generally agreed that some discrepancies are acceptable given that the data is derived from administrative data. However, it may be necessary to consider including some more commentary in the instance when an authority carries out a major database cleaning as this will impact on comparative figures. Most areas use the CLAS figures for historical requests. Others signpost to published information for FOIs etc, and therefore it would be helpful to ensure time series are well documented.

Action: SG will look into validating this data, but given the size of the dataset this may be impractical. As an initial trial, SG will provide lists to local authorities which identify any cases which were omitted from the current extract but had been in care at 31st July 2016, and any which were new cases where the start date was before 31st July 2016.

BREAK FOR LUNCH 12.30-1.00

6. Child Protection

- Inquiry into recording options for abuser at child protection conferences (J Small, Renfrewshire).

Renfrewshire - revamping child protection data to align more with the return. This includes changes to recording of the primary abuser, and options for foster carer and professional carer as used at child protection conferences. They hope to harmonise the checklist to make it easier to complete the return.

SG responded that small numbers would mean that it is probably not suitable for a separate category, and could be recorded as other, but will work with Renfrewshire to consider implications for guidance .

Some discussion on how to record when the abuser is the parent's cohabitee/non-cohabiting partner. Child protection committee recording is inconsistent between areas. Suggestion that easier to change to parent's partner rather than cohabitee. This would remove the need to check whether the partner is a cohabitee.

Action: SG to check with policy. Changes to be considered and communicated well in advance.

- Policy response to recording of financial hardship at case conferences:

The policy team has been made aware of the issue around recording of concerns about financial hardship as neglect or other concerns. For now, they believe we should continue including this in the neglect category, but will take this issue under consideration when we refresh the guidance and specifications for the collection. They will also take it into account when interpreting neglect statistics. They ask if it would be useful to local authorities to have an explicit note in the guidance that financial hardship should be recorded as neglect for now.

Local authorities attending agreed that extra guidance would be useful. SG is not proposing any new data items.

If you have further feedback on this please contact Sandra at Sandra.aitken@gov.scot.

7. Child Protection Improvement Program (CPIP) and shared dataset: Update

- A student has been employed over the summer to analyse data collected on investigations, with a focus on data quality and the potential to include in subsequent publications. Group discussions were held on data items and publication focus (analyses, graphs) that would be useful, and data items that are not useful. A note of those discussions will be used to inform the analysis.

8. Shared dataset and next steps for consultation

- A consultation has just finished on a shared dataset for vulnerable children. One aim for the shared dataset is to improve consistency of data used by Child protection committees. The responses to this consultation will be useful to feed into the national data collection, but SG are interested in other ways in which user needs can be investigated.

Discussion:

Some discussion of disability recording, consensus that the current question is too blunt but that social workers are not equipped to make the medical decision of whether a child has a disability or not and certainly not what kind of disability, so there will always be variation.

Action: SG to review previous discussions about reviewing disability question

Issues noted around the shared dataset were

- responsibility for collating the information
- whether it will be mandatory to produce the data as part of the joint inspection of children's services
- importance of demonstrating that the data is used for planning rather than being able to produce the data on request.
- size of proposed dataset was a potential barrier to it fulfilling the purpose
- difficult to account for overlapping data items – recording has to be individually linked to people or can't see links between different indicators.

9. AOB – 2.30-3.00

- Discussion of need for SCNs for benchmarking and outcomes monitoring. Brief discussion of Education Outcomes publications.
- Video conference meeting options. A VC-only LASWS meeting will be held after the main meeting for LA staff who have too far to travel to make the regular LASWS meeting. Those interesting in attending should contact Lucy.Freem@gov.scot
- GDPR: Notes on Scottish government approach are in the Update document circulated with these minutes
- Request to update the data specifications as currently include the data on feedback loop which is not due to be collected this year.

10. Date of next meeting –*Wednesday 28th November 2018.*

Action: Circulate new meeting date