

Statistics on
Children Looked
After by Local
Authorities in
Scotland

*Scottish
Government*

Statistics on Children Looked After by Local Authorities in Scotland

October 2009

© Crown Copyright 2009

The text in this document may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium providing it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright and the title of the document specified.

Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

For any other use of this material please write to Office of Public Sector Information, Information Policy Team, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU or email: licensing@opsi.gov.uk

About the UK Statistics Authority

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established on 1 April 2008 by the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

The Authority's overall objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. It is also required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics, and good practice in relation to official statistics.

The Statistics Authority has two main functions:

1. oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the executive office of the Authority;
2. independent scrutiny (monitoring and assessment) of all official statistics produced in the UK.

Contact us

Tel: 0845 604 1857

Email: authority.enquiries@statistics.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk

UK Statistics Authority
Statistics House
Myddelton Street
London EC1R 1UW

ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATION

Under the provisions of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, the UK Statistics Authority has a statutory function to assess sets of statistics against the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, with a view to determining whether it is appropriate for the statistics to be designated, or to retain their designation, as National Statistics.

Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics are deemed to be compliant with the Code of Practice. Whilst the Code is wide-ranging, designation may be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are well explained.

Assessment reports will not normally comment further, for example on the validity of the statistics as a social or economic measure; though reports may point to such questions if the Authority believes that further research would be desirable.

Designation as National Statistics will sometimes be granted in cases where some changes still need to be made to meet fully the requirements of the Code, on condition that steps are taken by the producer body, within a stated timeframe, to address the weaknesses. This is to avoid public confusion and does not reduce the obligation to comply with the Code.

Designation is granted on the basis of the information provided to the Statistics Authority, primarily by the organisation that produces the statistics. The information includes a range of factual evidence and also assurances by senior statisticians in the producer organisation. The views of users are also sought. Should further information come to light subsequently which changes the Authority's analysis, the Assessment report may be withdrawn and revised as necessary.

Once designated as National Statistics, it is a statutory requirement on the producer organisation to ensure that the set of statistics continues to be produced in compliance with the Code of Practice.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This is one of a series of reports prepared under the provisions the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*¹. The report covers Children Looked After (CLA) statistics for Scotland, produced by the Scottish Government. These statistics cover children who are looked after by local authorities or are eligible for local authority aftercare support services.
- 1.2 The CLA statistics produced by the Scottish Government cover Scotland. Each UK administration produces and releases data on children looked after by its own local authorities (or Health Trusts in Northern Ireland). These distinct publications have different underlying definitions, methods of data collection and dissemination. As part of the initial pilot set of assessments, the CLA statistics from all four UK administrations were assessed. Cross-cutting UK issues are discussed further in Section 5.
- 1.3 The Statistics Authority will be inviting comments on both the process for assessment and the presentation of Assessment reports, with a view to further development of the arrangements in the coming months. The forward programme of assessments can be found on the Authority's website² along with further information on the principles and procedures for assessment³.
- 1.4 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

Section 2 Summary of findings, highlighting the main strengths and weaknesses in relation to the Code of Practice. This summary includes the UK Statistics Authority's decision in relation to designation as National Statistics.

Section 3 Subject of the assessment, an overview of the statistics and their history.

Section 4 The Assessment team's detailed assessment, providing more details about the assessment of compliance against each principle and protocol of the Code of Practice.

Section 5 The UK position, highlighting cross-cutting issues from the assessment of *Children Looked After* statistics for all four UK administrations.

Annex 1 Suggestions for improvement.

Annex 2 Summary of the assessment process and users' views.

¹ http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pga/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf

² <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/programme-of-assessment/index.html>

³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/principles---procedures/index.html>

1.5 This report was prepared by the Authority's Assessment team, and approved by the Board of the Statistics Authority on the advice of the Head of Assessment.

2 Summary of findings

2.1 Decision concerning designation as National Statistics

- 2.1.1 The Statistics Authority confirms that the statistics published in *Children Looked After Statistics*⁴ for Scotland are designated as National Statistics, subject to the Scottish Government implementing the enhancements listed in sections 2.4 and 2.5 below and reporting them to the Authority by February 2010.
- 2.1.2 Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics are deemed to be compliant with the Code of Practice, and thus that they meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are well explained.
- 2.1.3 Designation also signifies that, subject to any caveats in this report, the Statistics Authority judges that the statistics are readily accessible, produced according to sound methods and managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

2.2 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

- 2.2.1 The Statistics Authority is satisfied that *Children Looked After Statistics* for Scotland are compliant with most aspects of the Code of Practice. These statistics have recently been the focus of a significant development programme to move from aggregate to child-level data. The benefits of this include improved quality and timeliness of the statistics, with more scope for analysis and linking to other data sources, while reducing the cost burden on local authorities of supplying the data. This is a good example of continuous improvement in statistical processes.
- 2.2.2 There has been little user consultation before or during the above improvements. The Scottish Government told us that this was because the changes were to the methods used to collect the data and not to the type of information being collected. Some users expressed dissatisfaction with the timeliness of the release. While the Scottish Government does not have plans to improve the timeliness of the next release, it expects the time gap to narrow as the new system is bedded in to local authority processes. However, the planned publication date for 2008-09 data has recently been moved back from November 2009 to February 2010 due to a number of unforeseen issues, mainly in relation to the new IT infrastructure that the Scottish Government has put in place.

2.3 Detailed recommendations

- 2.3.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that the Scottish Government could strengthen its compliance with the Code. Those which the Assessment team considers essential to enable designation as National

⁴ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/11/25103230/0>

Statistics are listed in sections 2.4 and 2.5 below. Other suggestions, which would improve the statistics and the service provided to users but which are not central to their designation, are listed at annex 1.

2.4 Requirements for designation as National Statistics

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| Requirement 1 | Publish plans for engaging with users, and document their needs (para 4.3) |
| Requirement 2 | Identify the earliest feasible date for publication of these statistics and bring forward publication to that date (para 4.4) |
| Requirement 3 | Publish a revisions policy for these statistics (para 4.7) |
| Requirement 4 | Publish the arrangements for protecting confidential data (para 4.12) |
| Requirement 5 | Improve the commentary to include information on the classifications used and more detailed discussion of the uses of the statistics, their context and methods (para 4.17) |
| Requirement 6 | Take appropriate steps to deposit the statistics with the relevant national archive (para 4.18) |
| Requirement 7 | Ensure that government statements issued alongside these statistics are clearly presented as policy statements or ministerial statements (para 4.20) |
| Requirement 8 | Publish a Statement of Administrative Sources and include in this Statement the arrangements for auditing the quality of the data provided by local authorities (para 4.25) |

2.5 UK-wide requirements

2.5.1 Cross-cutting UK issues are discussed further in Section 5. The corresponding requirement is below:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| UK Requirement 1 | The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the Welsh Assembly Government, the Scottish Government and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland (DHSSPS) should document clearly the differences between each administration's CLA statistics and scope out the feasibility and need for a comparable data subset (para 5.2.5) |
|-------------------------|---|

3 Subject of the assessment

- 3.1 This assessment covers the set of statistics released by the Scottish Government in *Children Looked After Statistics* for Scotland. This annual publication presents data on children who are looked after by local authorities in Scotland and on young people who are eligible for local authority aftercare support services. Previously, the main publication has been released each November covering the previous financial year. From 2009/10 this will change to the academic year with figures being released the following February. The Scottish Government will publish statistics for the academic year 2009/10 in February 2011, and will follow this up in April 2011 with a new publication that will link CLA statistics to educational data. This new publication is outside the scope of this assessment, but may be the subject of a future assessment.
- 3.2 The statistical release presents various statistics on looked-after children in Scotland for the most recent year, including breakdowns by type of placement, gender, age group, ethnicity and disability status. For children discharged from care it presents statistics that include age group, destination and the length of the placement. The release presents some time series and some breakdowns by local authority. The publication also presents statistics on young people who are eligible for aftercare services, including breakdowns by age, economic activity of the young people, disability status and episodes of homelessness.
- 3.3 The data are collected from local authorities, which hold data on looked-after children on management information systems. Until 2007/08 local authorities in Scotland were required to complete an aggregate statistical return. From 2008/09, local authorities provide data on each child by downloading data from management information systems. This development stems from a wider policy to improve administrative systems for children in care. It also provides potential benefits for the quality and usefulness of the statistics.
- 3.4 The information is used by the Scottish Government to inform policy on looked-after children. These children are among the most vulnerable groups in society. The statistics provide information about these children and the type of care that is provided for them. The data are important to fostering and adoption agencies, children's charities and other organisations that monitor and campaign for children in need and carry out research in this area. These organisations, the Scottish Parliament and the public are likely to use the data to evaluate how well local authorities are meeting the needs of the children they look after.
- 3.5 The legal definitions of looked-after children vary across UK administrations, so data are not directly comparable between Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Children under a supervision requirement in Scotland are considered to be in the care of their local authority, whilst in the rest of the UK, they are not.

4 Detailed assessment

Principle 1: Meeting user needs

The production, management and dissemination of official statistics should meet the requirements of informed decision-making by government, public services, business, researchers and the public.

- 4.1 Within the Scottish Government, the statistics inform policy on looked-after children. They provide indicators of the performance of local authorities. They are also important to the range of organisations that monitor and campaign for vulnerable children.
- 4.2 The Scottish Government engages with internal policy users through regular meetings. The main external users are engaged via the Local Authority Social Work Services Groups (LASWS). This consists of representatives from local authorities and inspectorates such as the Social Work Inspection Agency. LASWS has been consulted on the recent change to child-level collections. The local authorities we contacted told us they found this forum effective.
- 4.3 Engagement with the wider user community is more limited. The statisticians in the Scottish Government told us that they had made little use of the ScotStat network (an online network for users of Scottish statistics) for consulting on the recent move to child-level collections. There is also a shortage of documentation about the needs of users of these statistics. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should publish a plan for engaging with users, and document their needs⁵ (Requirement 1).
- 4.4 In previous releases, the reporting period covered a financial year, with publication eight months later in November. Some users have told us that the existing eight-month delay means the statistics lose some of their relevance. At the request of internal policy users, and after consulting with LASWS, the reporting period will change to an academic year, with publication initially remaining eight months later in February. This will start for the academic year 2009-2010, due to be published in February 2011. The Scottish Government expects the time gap to narrow as the new data collection system is bedded in to local authority processes. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should identify the earliest feasible date for publication of these statistics and bring forward publication to that date⁶ (Requirement 2).

⁵ In relation to Principle 1 Practice 2, Principle 1 Practice 5 and Protocol 1 Practice 1 of the Code of Practice

⁶ In relation to Principle 1 Practice 4 and Protocol 2 Practice 1 of the Code of Practice

Principle 2: Impartiality and objectivity

Official statistics, and information about statistical processes, should be managed impartially and objectively.

- 4.5 The statistics are available through the National Statistics Publication Hub and on the Scottish Government website, free of charge. Where errors have been found in the publications, the Scottish Government has corrected these promptly, and alerted stakeholders by means of a note published on the website.
- 4.6 The methods involved in the production of these statistics have recently undergone a significant change (see para 4.10). This has been communicated to local authorities, and a note was included in the latest statistical release alerting users to the project.
- 4.7 The data are provided by local authorities. Local authorities continually update their systems to reflect changes and new information. At the end of each year, when local authorities provide their data they can amend the data for previous years. There is no revisions policy for these statistics, and the publication does not make it clear that data are routinely revised. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should publish a revisions policy for these statistics⁷ (Requirement 3).

⁷ In relation to Principle 2 Practice 6 of the Code of Practice

Principle 3: Integrity

At all stages in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics, the public interest should prevail over organisational, political or personal interests.

- 4.8 No incidents of political pressures, abuses of trust or complaints relating to professional integrity, quality or standards were reported to or identified by the Assessment team.

Principle 4: Sound methods and assured quality

Statistical methods should be consistent with scientific principles and internationally recognised best practices, and be fully documented. Quality should be monitored and assured taking account of internationally agreed practices.

- 4.9 The Scottish Government is in the process of changing the way local authorities are required to provide the data behind these statistics. Starting in financial year 2008-09, local authorities have extracted the data from management information systems, which they use for their own operational purposes, rather than filling in an aggregate statistical return. This is in line with the systems used in England and Wales. Some unforeseen issues have arisen in relation to the new IT infrastructure. This has resulted in the planned publication date for 2008-09 data being moved back from November 2009 to February 2010.
- 4.10 Systems for collecting and holding the information vary across local authorities. The Scottish Government provides local authorities with detailed data specifications and guidance notes, which are also available on its website. Local authorities extract the data from their management information systems into the format required for the statistics. They then upload the data to a secure server, which contains a built-in validation tool that checks the data for errors and inconsistencies. This tool also produces summary aggregated tables for quality assurance purposes. Local authorities correct any errors found by editing the data held on their management information systems.
- 4.11 Additional validation checks are carried out by statisticians in the Scottish Government. This may generate additional queries for which the local authority will be asked to provide a response.

Principle 5: Confidentiality

Private information about individual persons (including bodies corporate) compiled in the production of official statistics is confidential, and should be used for statistical purposes only.

4.12 The Scottish Government has assured us that it takes all necessary steps to protect the confidentiality of the data they collect. Only staff with the training to process and analyse these data will have access to them. The Scottish Government publishes its procedures for responding to third-party requests for access to the data on its website. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should publish the arrangements for protecting confidential data⁸ (Requirement 4).

⁸ In relation to Principle 5 Practice 4 of the Code of Practice

Principle 6: Proportionate burden

The cost burden on data suppliers should not be excessive and should be assessed relative to the benefits arising from the use of the statistics.

- 4.13 There has been an initial set-up burden on local authorities to develop the new arrangements for extracting data from existing management information systems (see para 4.10). The Scottish Government has provided detailed data specifications and guidance and made additional funding available to assist local authorities meet the new requirements. The Scottish Government told us that once the new system is set up the burden on suppliers will be less than that imposed by the old system. Suppliers who responded to our questionnaire recognised that the old system was cumbersome and the new system will help in the future. There are also non-statistical benefits to the new system, as local authorities will have more accurate and reliable information on children in the care system for their own purposes.
- 4.14 We suggest the Scottish Government engages with the producers of CLA statistics for England, Wales and Northern Ireland to learn from their experience in estimating the costs to local authorities of supplying the data and develop an approach to producing estimates for Scotland⁹.

⁹ In relation to Principle 6 Practice 1 of the Code of Practice

Principle 7: Resources

The resources made available for statistical activities should be sufficient to meet the requirements of this Code and should be used efficiently and effectively.

- 4.15 The production of these statistics appears to be sufficiently resourced. Additional resources were allocated by the Scottish Government to support the move away from an aggregate-level survey to the collection of the same information at child-level. The Scottish Government has told us that users' views were taken into account in planning these changes.

Principle 8: Frankness and accessibility

Official statistics, accompanied by full and frank commentary, should be readily accessible to all users.

- 4.16 The statistics are available via the National Statistics Publication Hub and are published on the Scottish Government website. In the past the aggregated collection method limited the level of detail that could be presented. The new child-level data can support more detailed analysis and linking with other data sources, although there are no plans to produce any additional tables or analysis with the next publication. We suggest the Scottish Government should explore the potential of the new data for allowing more detailed analysis.
- 4.17 The commentary provided is limited to a series of factual statements about the numbers. There is no information about the policy or operational context, or on methods, procedures and classifications. There is also no explanation of what is meant by ‘children looked after’ or ‘young people eligible for aftercare services’. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should improve the commentary to include information on the classifications used and more detailed discussion of the uses of the statistics, the context and methods¹⁰ (Requirement 5).
- 4.18 As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should take appropriate steps to deposit the statistics with the relevant national archive¹¹ (Requirement 6).

¹⁰ In relation to Principle 8 Practice 2 of the Code of Practice

¹¹ In relation to Principle 8 Practice 7 of the Code of Practice

Protocol 1: User engagement

Effective user engagement is fundamental both to trust in statistics and securing maximum public value. This Protocol draws together the relevant practices set out elsewhere in the Code and expands on the requirements in relation to consultation.

4.19 The requirements for this protocol are covered elsewhere in this report.

Protocol 2: Release practices

Statistical reports should be released into the public domain in an orderly manner that promotes public confidence and gives equal access to all, subject to relevant legislation.

- 4.20 Ministerial statements relating to the statistics are released as a 'news release'¹² on the same day as the statistics are published. These are issued separately from the statistics and are not published ahead of the publication of the statistics. However, they are not clearly distinguishable from a statistical news release. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should ensure that government statements issued alongside these statistics are clearly presented as policy statements or ministerial statements¹³ (Requirement 7).
- 4.21 The Scottish Government has prepared a list that records the job titles of those expected to be granted pre-release access to these statistics. We suggest that the Scottish Government publishes records of those granted pre-release access to these statistics in their final form.
- 4.22 The Scottish Government issued a notice on its website and also sent an email to registered Scotstat users of CLA statistics to draw attention to the postponement of the publication planned for November 2008 and to explain the reason for the change (see para 4.9).

¹² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2008/11/26095740>

¹³ In relation to Protocol 2 Practice 9b of the Code of Practice

Protocol 3: The use of administrative sources for statistical purposes

Administrative sources should be fully exploited for statistical purposes, subject to adherence to appropriate safeguards.

- 4.23 The move to automated child-level data extractions is an example of exploiting administrative data for statistical purposes. It also has the potential for linking with other sources of information, such as educational data. The improvements have been achieved by creating common data specifications and guidelines and helping local authorities find ways to meet the requirements with their existing systems. This has helped facilitate the flow of information between local authorities and the Scottish Government.
- 4.24 We suggest that the Scottish Government explores ways of ensuring that statistical needs are considered at the earliest stages of the development of new administrative systems covering all children services. This will make it easier for these systems to be designed with statistical purposes in mind from the start.
- 4.25 There is no published information on the quality of the underlying data held by local authorities. The data undergo validation checks when they are submitted, but Scottish Government statisticians do not carry out any wider quality assurance or audit of the data held by local authorities. However, there is a requirement for local authorities to carry out internal audits. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Scottish Government should publish a Statement of Administrative Sources and include in this Statement the arrangements for auditing the quality of the data provided by local authorities¹⁴ (Requirement 8). We also suggest that the Scottish Government takes steps to ensure that relevant information from the audits are passed to the team responsible for CLA statistics.

¹⁴ In relation to Protocol 3 Practice 5 of the Code of Practice. Practice 5 (e), requires the Statement to identify the arrangements for auditing the quality of administrative data used for statistical purposes.

5 The UK position

5.1 The assessment programme

- 5.1.1 The CLA statistics produced by the Scottish Government cover Scotland. Each UK administration produces and releases data on looked-after children to cover its own local authorities (or Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland). This results in distinct publications, each with different underlying definitions, methods of data collection and dissemination.
- 5.1.2 The CLA statistics produced by all four administrations were included in the initial assessment programme to enable the assessment team to explore these statistics from a UK perspective. The statistics produced by England, Wales and Northern Ireland are the subject of Assessment Reports 13, 15 and 16 respectively. This chapter considers cross-cutting UK issues.

5.2 UK data availability and common issues

- 5.2.1 Statistics on looked-after children for the UK as a whole are included in *Regional Trends*, produced by the Office for National Statistics. The Northern Ireland *Children Order Statistical Bulletin* also includes a section on UK-wide data. Neither of the other administrations include UK data in their CLA releases.
- 5.2.2 There are differences in the coverage of the *Children Looked After* statistics for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, mostly due to differences in the legislative backgrounds. In Scotland, children who are in need of care and protection may have a supervision requirement placed on them. Most of these children are allowed to stay at home under the supervision of a social worker. The legal definition of looked-after children in Scotland includes these children. This is not the case in the rest of the UK, where looked-after children are those placed in the care of a local authority or provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours. This is the single biggest definitional difference across the outputs, and has a considerable effect on the comparability of the data. For example, the proportion of children placed in foster homes in Scotland is considerably lower than elsewhere in the UK, because more children are looked after in their own homes in Scotland.
- 5.2.3 The UK data in both *Regional Trends* and the Northern Ireland bulletin are accompanied by a number of caveats, to reflect the differences in the definitions in each administration.
- 5.2.4 Users who responded to this assessment exercise were usually interested in one particular set of CLA statistics, but some users specifically look for UK data, and there were some common issues that arose across the different administrations. These issues include producing outcome indicators for older age groups, and challenging the quality of the data provided by local authorities (or HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland). Users who specifically look for UK data said that their use of the statistics is limited by the definitional differences and the inconsistent time-periods across the different sets of CLA statistics.

- 5.2.5 As part of the designation as National Statistics, DCSF, the Welsh Assembly Government, the Scottish Government and DHSSPS should document clearly the differences between each administration's CLA statistics and scope out the feasibility and need for a comparable data subset¹⁵ (UK Requirement 1).
- 5.2.6 A common issue across the UK set of *Children Looked After* statistics is the quality assurance or audit of the data held by local authorities. In England, this issue was raised in December 2006 by a National Audit Office review of the data systems underpinning DCSF's PSA targets. The Code, under Protocol 3 Practice 5e, requires the organisational Statement of Administrative Sources to identify the arrangements for auditing the quality of administrative data used for statistical purposes. The position in each administration differs slightly and this issue has been addressed in section 4 of the individual assessment reports.
- 5.2.7 There is a four-nation data working group on these statistics. This group meets twice a year and we were told that it is an effective forum, providing the statisticians from each administration with an opportunity to update each other on recent issues and developments. It is important that this forum is used to consider how best to meet the needs of users of UK data. It should also be used to share best practice. This will ensure developments are based on existing experience, rather than each administration investing resource to develop independently. Specific examples of good practice across the four administrations include the work in DCSF to link to other data sources (Children in Need, National Pupil Database); and in Wales, the collection of information on the cost to local authorities of providing the data. We suggest DCSF, the Welsh Assembly Government, the Scottish Government and DHSSPS ensure best practice is shared, to make best use of resources across the four administrations.

¹⁵ In relation to Principle 4 Practice 6 of the Code of Practice

Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to the statistics, in the interest of the public good. These are not formally required for designation, but the Assessment team considers that their implementation will improve public confidence in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Suggestion 1 | Engage with the producers of CLA statistics for England, Wales and Northern Ireland to learn from their experience in estimating the costs to local authorities of supplying the data and develop an approach to producing estimates of these costs for Scotland (para 4.14) |
| Suggestion 2 | Explore the potential of the new data collection methods for providing more detailed analysis (para 4.16) |
| Suggestion 3 | Publish records of those granted pre-release access to these statistics in their final form (para 4.21) |
| Suggestion 4 | Explore ways of ensuring that statistical needs are considered at the earliest stages of development of new administrative systems covering all children services (para 4.24) |
| Suggestion 5 | Take steps to ensure that relevant information from audits of the quality of the data provided by local authorities is passed to the team responsible for CLA statistics (para 4.25) |
| Suggestion 6 | Ensure best practice is shared with the Welsh Assembly Government, DHSSPS and DCSF, to make best use of resources across the four administrations (para 5.2.7) |

Annex 2: Summary of assessment process and users' views

A2.1 This assessment was conducted from March to August 2009.

A2.2 The Assessment team met representatives of the Scottish Government at an initial meeting in March 2009. Some background information was provided by the Scottish Government during March 2009, and Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 1 May 2009. The Assessment team subsequently met with the Scottish Government during June 2009 to confirm and clarify the written evidence provided.

Summary of users contacted, and issues raised

A2.3 The assessment team received 14 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

Local councils	9
Health and care organisations	2
Government departments	2
Third Sector (Children)	1

A.2.4 Overall, users were satisfied with the level of consultation; some mentioned that the quarterly LASWS meetings are particularly useful. Users felt their comments were taken on board. The data itself was reported to be of good quality, meeting the needs of most users. Users also commented that the statisticians were helpful and enthusiastic, and willing to provide additional analysis. The main point of dissatisfaction was with timeliness. The lack of comparability with other sources and across the UK was also raised.

Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/11/25103230/0>

