

Statistics on  
Children Looked  
After by Local  
Authorities in  
Wales

*Welsh Assembly  
Government*

# Statistics on Children Looked After by Local Authorities in Wales

October 2009

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### **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.

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## **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 of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*<sup>1</sup>. The report covers Children Looked After (CLA) statistics for Wales, produced by the Welsh Assembly 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 Welsh Assembly Government cover Wales. 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 website<sup>2</sup> along with further information on the principles and procedures for assessment<sup>3</sup>.
- 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.**

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pga/ukpga\\_20070018\\_en.pdf](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pga/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf)

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

<sup>3</sup> <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 '*Adoptions, Outcomes and Placements for Children Looked After by Local Authorities*'<sup>4</sup> in Wales are designated as National Statistics, subject to the Welsh Assembly 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 statistics published in *Adoptions, Outcomes and Placements for Children Looked After by Local Authorities* in Wales are compliant with most aspects of the Code of Practice. When compared with the other UK administrations, the Assembly Government publishes less statistics on children looked after in the format of a statistical release. Instead, it uses the Local Government Data Unit website to allow users to construct their own analyses of the data. The Assessment team regards this as a useful tool for maximising the reuse of data, but considers that there is an over-reliance on this as the primary dissemination format at the expense of the published release.

### **2.3 Detailed recommendations**

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

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<sup>4</sup> <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/health2008/hdw200809111/?lang=en>

## 2.4 Requirements for designation as National Statistics

<b>Requirement 1</b>	Publish plans for engaging with users, and document their needs (para 4.4)
<b>Requirement 2</b>	Publish the arrangements for protecting confidential data (para 4.13)
<b>Requirement 3</b>	Improve the commentary in the publication to include more detailed discussion of the uses of the statistics, their context, methods and quality, more analysis to meet user needs and direct links to the additional data available on the website (para 4.17)
<b>Requirement 4</b>	Take appropriate steps to deposit the statistics with the relevant national archive (para 4.19)
<b>Requirement 5</b>	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 4.26)

## 2.5 UK-wide requirements

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

<b>UK Requirement 1</b>	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)
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### 3 Subject of the assessment

- 3.1 This assessment covers the set of statistics released by the Welsh Assembly Government in '*Adoptions, Outcomes and Placements for Children Looked After by Local Authorities*' (CLA Statistics). This annual publication presents data on children who are looked after by local authorities in Wales.
- 3.2 The term 'children looked after' is used in the *Children Act 1989*<sup>5</sup> to describe all children who are the subject of a care order, or who are provided with accommodation on a voluntary basis for more than 24 hours. The tables in the statistical release cover data for Wales on the number of children who entered care, left care or were adopted. Analysis of the data includes breakdowns by category of need, type of placement and educational attainment. The release is published in September each year and relates to the previous financial year.
- 3.3 The data are collected from local authorities. The data collection and much of the analysis are carried out by the Local Government Data Unit<sup>6</sup> (the Data Unit) on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. At the same time as the Assembly Government publishes the main statistical release, the Data Unit publishes more detailed CLA Statistics data on its own website, including data at local authority level.
- 3.4 The detailed data published on the Data Unit website are a key part of the dissemination of the data. We have not assessed the Data Unit website in detail, but we have commented on the part it plays in the dissemination of the looked-after children data. There is a separate Assembly Government publication, *Referrals, Assessments and Social Services for Children*<sup>7</sup> that is released within a few weeks of the CLA Statistics. This will be the subject of a future assessment.
- 3.5 Originally, the Department for Health and Social Security for England and Wales published these statistics for Wales. Since 1977, the Welsh Office (and now the Welsh Assembly Government) has produced separate statistical reports for Wales. At the end of financial year 2009/10, much of the statistical collection and analysis work currently carried out by the Data Unit will transfer back to the Assembly Government.
- 3.6 The data are used extensively to inform policy on looked-after children and to monitor the performance of local authorities. 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 Welsh Assembly 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.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1989/Ukpga\\_19890041\\_en\\_1.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1989/Ukpga_19890041_en_1.htm)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dataunitwales.gov.uk/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/health2008/hdw200809243/?lang=en>

3.7 The Assembly Government also carries out a wider data collection to cover all children in contact with the children's services, including those who are looked after, known as the Children in Need Census.

## 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 Assembly Government the statistics inform policy on looked-after children. The statistics are used as an indicator of the performance of local authorities, and are important to the range of organisations and groups who monitor and campaign for children in need. Users who responded to us about this assessment were largely satisfied that the data met their needs. Some users indicated that they would like to have some comparisons between looked-after children and their peers, and some longer-term analysis of outcomes.
- 4.2 The main forum that the Assembly Government uses to engage with users is a Technical Working Group for Personal Social Services Statistics (TWGPSS). This group consists of representatives from local authorities, the Association of Directors of Social Services, the Care and Social Services Inspectorate and users within the Assembly Government. Its remit covers technical issues and how to ensure data about the personal social services sector in Wales are agreed, coherent, reliable and timely. The group discusses planned changes to data collections and how to minimise burden and duplication. Information about the group is available through the Data Unit's website, including meeting agendas, papers and minutes. We suggest that the Welsh Assembly Government review the membership of TWGPSS to consider extending representation to other external users, for example, from the voluntary sector and academia.
- 4.3 Internal Assembly Government users are consulted on statistical work plans and these are then published in the annual Assembly Government Statistics Work Plan. The latest Statistics Work Plan includes a section on user engagement and invites user feedback.
- 4.4 The Assembly Government told us that contact with other external users of CLA statistics is limited and reactive rather than pro-active. The Assembly Government undertakes 5-yearly reviews of all its statistics and is due to review the CLA statistics in the coming year. They told us that this is likely to involve external consultation. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Assembly Government should publish a plan for engaging with users, and document their needs<sup>8</sup> (Requirement 1). This will enable users to provide input to the development of the CLA statistics.

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<sup>8</sup> In relation to Principle 1 Practice 2, Principle 1 Practice 5 and Protocol 1 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, on the Assembly Government website and on the Data Unit's website. No charge is made for the statistics. There have been no recent errors or exceptions to the practices of the Code of Practice. On two occasions the statistical release has been delayed to allow additional time for data quality assurance. In both cases the reason for the delay was announced on the website and a new publication date was given.
- 4.6 The only recent changes to the methods involved in the production of the statistics relate to the data codes applied by local authorities. This change has provided more detail, without limiting the outputs in any way. Full details on the codes used and the changes made are published on the Data Unit website.
- 4.7 The Assembly Government has a published revisions policy, although the CLA data are rarely revised. The Assembly Government told us that any revisions to the CLA data would be handled as corrections. This approach differs from England and Scotland where, each year, local authorities update the information they have provided for previous years.

### **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 data are collected by local authorities for their own operational purposes. The method of collecting and holding the information varies by local authority. The Assembly Government provides local authorities with detailed guidance on the information required, and this guidance is also available on the Data Unit website.
- 4.10 Local authorities transmit the data to the Data Unit using a secure online data collection tool called Emyr. Emyr subjects the data to around 170 validation checks at the time they are submitted and local authorities are required to make any necessary corrections before they can complete the data submission. The Assembly Government told us that Emyr had improved the timeliness of data delivery. This has contributed to the improved timeliness of the publication, which has been brought forward by five months over the past four years. The use of Emyr has also led to improvements in data quality as local authorities are now correcting the data at the time it is submitted.
- 4.11 The data are quality assured by the Data Unit and the Assembly Government, mostly by comparing with historical data and checking consistency between tables. In common with the other UK administrations, the Assembly Government and the Data Unit have to rely on local authorities to submit accurate data based on the guidance supplied. Some of the local authority data used for CLA statistics are used for performance monitoring and so are subject to internal audit and an annual consultation exercise. This issue is discussed further under Protocol 3.
- 4.12 At the end of financial year 2009/10, much of the statistical collection and analysis work currently carried out by the Data Unit will transfer back to the Assembly Government. This presents risks to the continuing quality of the data. We suggest the Assembly Government publishes a plan for the transfer of this work from the Data Unit to the Assembly Government, which describes the arrangements for ensuring the continuing quality of the data.

## **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.**

4.13 The Assembly Government has assured us that it takes all necessary steps to protect the confidentiality of the data it collects. This includes secure data transfer arrangements, a secure data storage environment, no child identifiers attached to the data and disclosure controls to ensure no personal information is published. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Assembly Government should publish the arrangements for protecting confidential data<sup>9</sup> (Requirement 2).

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<sup>9</sup> 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.**

4.14 For each data collection activity, the Data Unit collects information on the time it takes each local authority to provide the data, and the grade of the person involved. The Data Unit then uses this information to estimate supplier costs and monitor the burden of each data collection. While monitoring burden is good practice, the Data Unit told us that they were unsure whether their guidance on what local authorities should include in this estimate was being applied consistently.

## **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. The Assembly Government has told us that discussions with internal colleagues inform the statistics work plan and the allocation of resources. This has recently led to proposed work on the quality of historical data being postponed in favour of collecting new data on children in need. The Assessment team found no evidence of consultation with other users. In common with the requirement in Principle 1 concerning user engagement, we suggest the Assembly Government establish an extended network of external users to provide input on proposed statistical plans and priorities.
- 4.16 The new Children in Need data collection will provide a common identifier that enables the data to be linked to other sources. However, the data collected will relate to the position at the year-end, rather than covering all episodes of care (as currently included in the CLA statistics) and so will not be directly comparable. The Assembly Government told us that they hope that over time the Children in Need data collection will take the place of some of the CLA statistics collection. This would ensure the most efficient use possible of resources.

## **Principle 8: Frankness and accessibility**

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

- 4.17 In the view of the Assessment team, the publication is clear, but contains only a few tables covering high-level information. The commentary accompanying the tables is currently very brief. More detailed tables are available on the Data Unit website, which has a dissemination tool that enables users to construct their own analyses of the data, including drawing maps and charts. The tool provides a powerful basis for users to tailor outputs to suit their needs and maximises the usefulness of the data. However, it can be complex to use for the casual user. The Assembly Government should be wary of relying on the dissemination tool to present the data, and should ensure that the statistical release itself includes the key data that users want to see. As part of the designation of these statistics, the Assembly Government should improve the commentary in the publication to include more detailed discussion of the uses of the statistics, the context, methods and quality, more analysis to meet user needs and direct links to the additional data available on the website<sup>10</sup> (Requirement 3).
- 4.18 At the end of the financial year 2009/10, the Assembly Government will bring much of the statistical collection and analysis work back in-house. We suggest that the Assembly Government provides assurance to users that the outputs and level of data accessibility currently available through the Data Unit website will continue under the new arrangements.
- 4.19 As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Assembly Government should take appropriate steps to deposit the statistics with the relevant national archive<sup>11</sup> (Requirement 4)

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<sup>10</sup> In relation to Principle 8 Practice 2 of the Code of Practice

<sup>11</sup> 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.**

4.20 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.**

- 4.21 The CLA statistics publication is available via the National Statistics Publication Hub. It is published on the Assembly Government's website, and publicised on both the Assembly Government's website and the Data Unit website. The Data Unit sends a notification email to a list of people who have registered an interest in the publication.
- 4.22 The timetable for publication has been brought forward by five months over the last four years, and the Assembly Government has told us that it is now published as early as possible.
- 4.23 The Assembly Government publishes on its website the list of those who have had pre-release access to the CLA statistics. We suggest that the Assembly Government makes the pre-release list more accessible on their website.

### **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.**

- 4.24 As outlined in Principle 7, the new data collection on Children in Need will provide a common identifier that enables the Assembly Government to link the CLA data to other sources. The Assembly Government told us that they hope that over time the Children in Need data collection will take the place of some of the CLA statistics collection. We suggest the Assembly Government continues to work towards linking CLA data to other sources.
- 4.25 In Principle 4 we noted that local authorities use different systems for recording information about the children they look after, and the time and costs of data supply will vary according to how well the system is able to extract the information required for the CLA statistics. We suggest that the Assembly Government explores ways of ensuring that statistical needs are considered at the earliest stages of 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.
- 4.26 The publication does not include information on the quality of the data held by local authorities. The data undergo validation checks when they are submitted, but the Data Unit do not undertake any wider quality assurance or audit of the data. As part of the designation as National Statistics, the Assembly 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 authorities (Requirement 5)<sup>12</sup>. We also suggest that the Assembly Government takes steps to ensure that relevant information from the audits is passed to the team responsible for CLA statistics.

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<sup>12</sup> 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 Assembly Government cover Wales. 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, Scotland and Northern Ireland are the subject of Assessment Reports 13, 14 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 in each administration, 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 subset <sup>13</sup> (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.

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<sup>13</sup> 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.

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|---------------------|---|
| <b>Suggestion 1</b> | Review the membership of TWGPSS to consider extending representation to other external users, for example, from the voluntary sector and academia (para 4.2)  |
| <b>Suggestion 2</b> | Publish a plan for the transfer of data collection and analysis work from the Data Unit to the Assembly Government, which describes the arrangements for ensuring the quality of the data (para 4.12) |
| <b>Suggestion 3</b> | Establish an extended network of external users to provide input on proposed statistical plans and priorities (para 4.15)   |
| <b>Suggestion 4</b> | Provide assurance to users that the outputs and level of data accessibility currently available through the Data Unit website will continue under the new arrangements (para 4.19)                    |
| <b>Suggestion 5</b> | Make the pre-release list more accessible on the website (para 4.24)  |
| <b>Suggestion 6</b> | Continue to work towards linking CLA data to other sources (para 4.25)  |
| <b>Suggestion 7</b> | Explore ways of ensuring that statistical needs are considered at the earliest stages of development of new administrative systems covering all children services (para 4.25)                         |
| <b>Suggestion 8</b> | Take steps to ensure that relevant information from the audits of the quality of the data provided by local authorities is passed to the team responsible for CLA statistics (para 4.27)              |
| <b>Suggestion 9</b> | Ensure best practice is shared with the Scottish 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 Assembly Government an initial meeting in April 2009. Some background information was provided by the Assembly Government during April 2009, and Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 14 May 2009. The Assessment team subsequently met with the Assembly Government on 25 June 2009 to confirm and clarify the written evidence provided.

### **Summary of users contacted, and issues raised**

A2.3 The assessment team received 10 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

Local Authorities	7
Academia	1
Government departments	1
Third Sector (Children)	1

A.2.4 Most users indicated they were satisfied with the statistics. The following points were raised by individual users:

- More could be done in relation to checking the quality of returns from local authorities
- Longer term analysis of the outcomes for older children would be useful
- Lower level regional comparisons would be useful
- Data Unit presentation may be confusing for some users

### **Key documents/links provided**

Written Evidence for Assessment document

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/health2008/hdw200809111/?lang=en>

