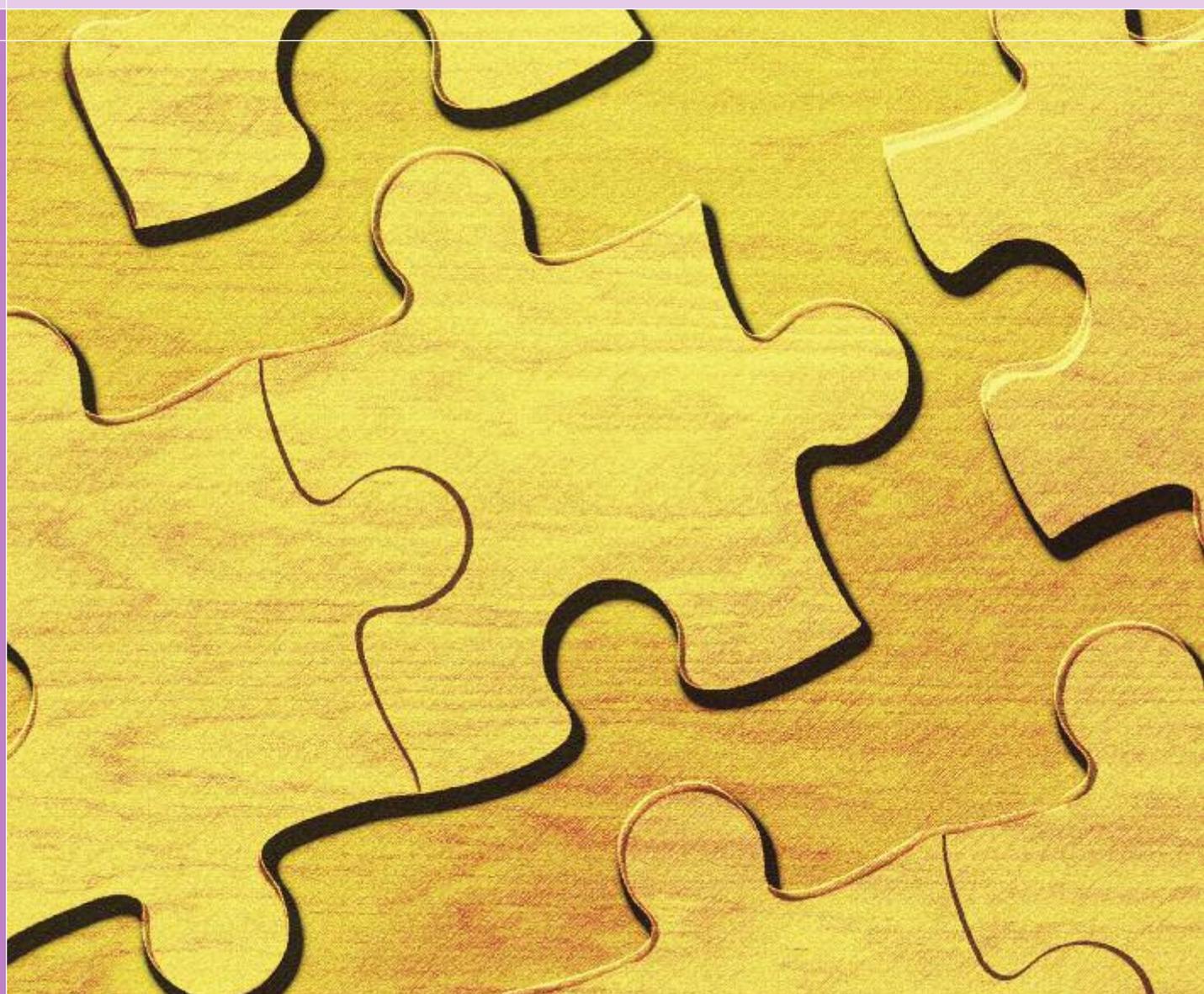


information sources for the local children and young people's services sector: a mapping study

Local Government Education and Children's Services Research Programme

LGaresearch report



Available in the Local Government Education and Children's Services Research Programme

How to sustain and replicate effective practice

Clare Southcott and Tami McCrone

ISBN 978-1-906792-88-6, free download

Devon multi-agency safeguarding hub: case-study report

Sarah Golden, Helen Aston and Ben Durbin

ISBN 978 1 906 792 87 9, free download

Local authority progress in tackling child poverty

Julie Nelson, Lisa O'Donnell and Caroline Filmer-Sankey

ISBN 978 1 906 792 82 4, free download

Governance models in schools

Tami McCrone, Clare Southcott and Nalia George

ISBN 978 1 906792 83 1, free download

Safeguarding children peer review programme: learning and recommendations

Kerry Martin and Jennifer Jeffes

ISBN 978 1 906792 81 7, free download

Hidden talents: exploiting the link between engagement of young people and the economy

George Bramley, Liz Phillips and Shona Macleod

ISBN 978 1 906792 79 4, free download

Safeguarding children: literature review

Kerry Martin, Jennifer Jeffes and Shona Macleod

ISBN 978 1 906792 72 5, free download

Local authorities' experiences of improving parental confidence in the special educational needs process

Richard White, Shona Macleod, Jennifer Jeffes and Mary Atkinson

ISBN 978 1 906792 53 4, free download

The impact of the Baby Peter case on applications for care orders

Shona Macleod, Ruth Hart, Jennifer Jeffes and Anne Wilkin

ISBN 978 1 906792 56 5, free download

Safeguarding post-Laming: initial scoping study

Mary Atkinson

ISBN 978 1 906792 49 7, free download

information sources for the local children and young people's services sector: a mapping study

Helen Aston
Robert Smith

How to cite this publication:

Aston, H. and Smith, R. (2011). *Information sources for the local children and young people's services sector: a mapping study (LG Group Research Report)*. Slough: NFER

Published in September 2011
by the National Foundation for Educational Research,
The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire SL1 2DQ

www.nfer.ac.uk
© National Foundation for Educational Research 2011
Registered Charity No. 313392

ISBN 978 1 906792 95 4



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Contents

Executive summary	iv
Aims	iv
Methods	iv
Findings	iv
Conclusion	v
1 Introduction	1
2 Research findings	2
2.1 Overview of sources	2
2.2 Types of information	3
2.3 Subject areas	5
2.4 Accessing information	6
2.5 Have interviewees experienced any issues with using information sources?	6
2.6 What are the key features of a good information source?	7
3 Conclusions	8
Appendix Methods	9
A.1 Qualitative research	9
A.2 Mapping	9
A.3 Study limitations	10

Executive summary

The LG Group is currently developing its online offer for local authorities (LAs). The offer will consist of: the Knowledge Hub (K-Hub), a new information, advice and guidance hub; 'Inform', a web-based collection of data and data tools; and the esd-toolkit, which provides tools to help LAs deliver services to residents more effectively. It will provide a repository of higher-level information covering all aspects of local government and support LAs to understand their areas and improve services. The LG Group commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to carry out this mapping study to inform the development of the K-Hub and Inform.

Aims

The aims of the study were to identify:

- the national data, research, policy and practice sources targeted at, or of relevance to, professionals, LA officers and elected members in children and young people's (CYP) services
- any gaps or areas of duplication in the information available to the sector
- what sources of information are used by LA officers and elected members, and why
- any challenges that LA professionals have encountered when searching for or using information
- the key features of good information sources, from an LA perspective.

Methods

The NFER carried out interviews with ten LA officers and two elected members working in CYP services from 10 LAs in England. It also carried out online searches to identify relevant sources of information for the study, which were then reviewed.

Findings

The study found that there is a wealth of different types of information on all CYP subject areas available to the sector and there does appear to be a case for rationalising sources further. Interviewees did not identify the large amount of information available to them as an issue, perhaps because they tended to use only a small selection of sources, which they are familiar with and trust.

There is a far greater appetite for data among interviewees than policy, practice or research, with the exception of the elected members interviewed who wanted a full range of information types. Had we interviewed front-line practitioners the findings may, of course, have been different. There was some indication that the use of research would be higher if outputs were considered by users to be robust, concise, accessible and free. There is a need to find a way to maximise the use and impact of the large amount of information available to the sector.

There is a demand for guidance in specific areas and data on specific subjects, some of which the LG Group might be able to produce or lobby for. Furthermore, interviewees would appreciate having a single comprehensive source of information from a brand they trust. The LG Group would seem to be well placed to capitalise on its positive brand reputation among the sector and deliver a trusted one-stop shop for the sector's information needs.

LA officers are able to access information online, which is their preferred mode. If content could be compatible with Blackberry smartphones, this would help senior staff.

The degree to which sources are tailored to meet LAs' needs varies considerably. Interviewees reported issues when looking for information sources, and frustrations with websites that are difficult to use and have poor search functionalities. Developing a source which avoids these issues, while providing robust data, would be an incentive for users to migrate to a new source.

The key features of a good information source are:

- accuracy
- timeliness
- accessibility
- ease of use
- ability to meet the needs of different types of users
- data that can be manipulated (including the ability to drill down into local areas, link datasets, benchmark

against statistical neighbours, LA averages and national averages, and view trend data)

- a one-stop shop.

Conclusion

Interviewees' issues with finding robust information that meets their needs, and their enthusiasm for a one-stop shop suggests that a central information hub would be well received. Interviewees were generally positive about the role that K-Hub and Inform could have, if the key features identified in this report are incorporated.

1 Introduction

The LG Group is currently developing its online offer for local authorities (LAs). The offer will consist of: the Knowledge Hub (K-Hub), a new information, advice and guidance hub; 'Inform', a web-based collection of data and data tools; and the esd-toolkit, which provides tools to help LAs to deliver services to residents more effectively. It will provide a repository of higher-level information covering all aspects of local government and will support councils to understand their areas and improve services. The LG Group commissioned NFER to carry out this mapping study to inform the development of the K-Hub and Inform.

The aims of the study were to identify:

- the national data, research, policy and practice sources targeted at, or of relevance to, professionals, LA officers and elected members in children and young people's (CYP) services
- any gaps or areas of duplication in the information available to the sector
- what sources of information are used by LA officers and elected members, and why
- any challenges that LA professionals have encountered when searching for or using information
- the key features of good information sources, from an LA perspective.

To achieve this, NFER carried out interviews with ten local government officers and two elected members

working within children and young people's services from ten local authorities (LAs) in England. The NFER spoke to data officers, heads of services and lead members, from unitary, metropolitan and county LAs.

An online search identified the relevant sources of information for this study. The research team reviewed each source (effectively, each website), extracting, for example, the main types of information and subject areas, and the target user group(s). The NFER only included sources in the study that:

- focused exclusively or significantly on England or UK information
- were national (rather than regional or local)
- were live and had been updated since June 2010
- made all or much of their content available for free
- were at least partially focused on CYP services/issues
- targeted – or had relevance to – the local government sector
- featured research, policy, data, statistics, good practice, practitioner guidance or case studies on children and young people (or summaries, newsfeeds or alerts of/about these types of sources)
- were not produced by higher education institutions (HEIs).

Further details on the methods used in the study and its limitations are in the appendix.

2 Research findings

This chapter sets out the findings of the desk research positioned alongside the interview data. It describes:

- the main types of information and sources available to CYP professionals in LAs
- the types of information and sources used by interviewees
- the main CYP subject areas covered
- areas of overlap and any potential gaps
- the main routes and preferences for accessing sources
- challenges experienced by interviewees when using information sources
- interviewees' views on what constitutes a good information source.

2.1 Overview of sources

2.1.1 What sources are available?

The study identified 76 national sources of data, research, policy and practice information relevant to professionals working in CYP services in LAs (and which met the study's other inclusion criteria). The majority of sources are published by government departments and agencies, and third-sector organisations. A smaller proportion is published by membership organisations, such as the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and the Local Government Association (LGA). A minority are produced by other types of organisation, such as media companies.

Sources range from those covering a broad range of subject areas relevant to CYP professionals, to those focusing on a single issue. Seventeen cover at least 13 of the 16 pre-defined subject areas: education/schools; safeguarding; families; special educational needs (SEN);

disabled children; looked-after children (LAC); child protection; child poverty; health/wellbeing; childcare and/or early years; skills; early intervention; children and young people's views; youth work; youth justice; and play. Twenty-seven have a narrow subject focus, covering between one and four subject areas. Examples of the former include the Department for Education (DfE) and National Children's Bureau; examples of the latter include Play England and the Council for Disabled Children (CDC). Nine sources cover all sixteen subject areas. Six of these provide policy, research, data and practice information:

- the LGA
- info4local
- Children's Workforce Development Council
- Children and Young People Now
- the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen)
- the NFER.

Eleven of the sources are strongly targeted at LAs. Four focus purely on CYP subject areas:

- ADCS
- the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO)
- Research in Practice (RiP)
- Child Poverty Action Group's Child Poverty Toolkit website.

The scope of the other seven extends beyond CYP. Meanwhile, eight sources, including the teaching unions, are not targeted at LAs, but nonetheless provide some content that is of relevance to CYP professionals in LAs.

Fifty-five sources are partially targeted at LAs, either explicitly or implicitly (as part of a loosely defined target audience of policy makers, researchers and stakeholders). The degree to which the information provided by these sources is tailored to and readily findable by LAs varies considerably. A minority of sources, such as the DfE and NFER, have a specific section or sections on their websites for LAs, with associated tailored resources. A few sources, such as the Department for Work and Pensions website, invite users to categorise themselves, so that LA staff can identify themselves as such and be presented with a tailored selection of content. Many sources, such as the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence website, are not segmented by audience but, nonetheless, publish individual reports and content targeted at LAs.

All of the interviewees reported that they used national government websites, such as those of the DfE, Department of Health, Department for Communities and Local Government, Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, Office for National Statistics and data.gov.uk. Unsurprisingly, DfE was the most frequently mentioned source of information. Several interviewees stated that they access DfE data via its Key to Success minisite, with several more using its Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT). The elected members that we interviewed reported using LA sources rather more than other interviewees. These include the LG Group and ADCS. Other websites used by interviewees are the Association of Public Health Observatories¹, the Fischer Family Trust, Social Care Institute for Excellence, the Care Quality Commission, Child and Maternal Health Observatory, RiP, C4EO, NFER and the NSPCC's CASPAR newsletter.

2.1.2 What sources do LAs use?

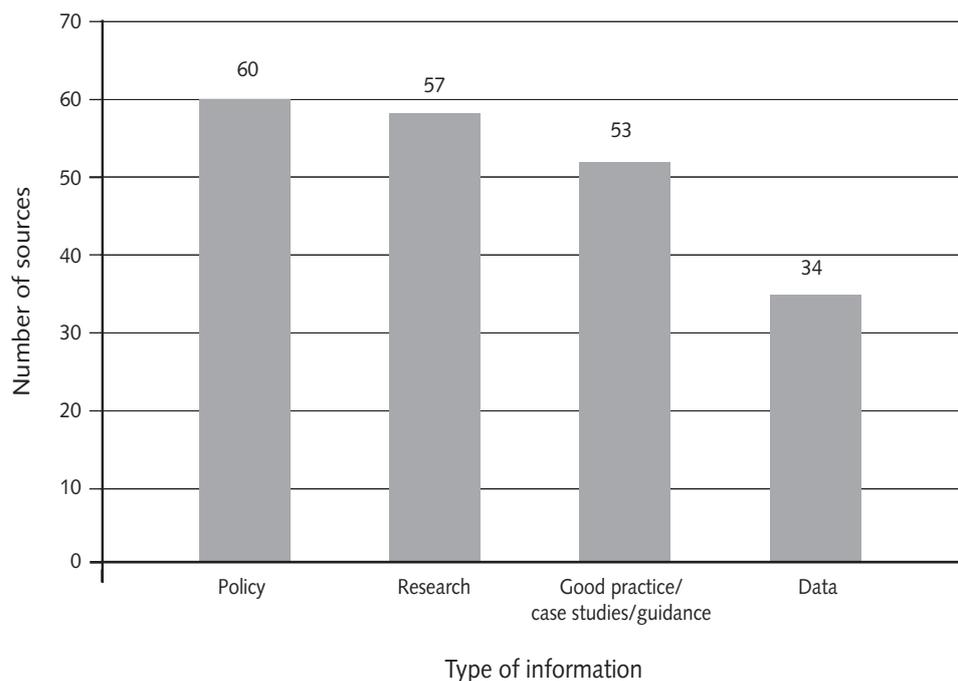
Interviewees said that they used sources that they trust to be reliable, robust and up to date. Interviewees tended to have between three and five preferred sources. There was particular enthusiasm for sources that present information in accessible ways and enable users to easily find all the information they need in one place.

2.2 Types of information

2.2.1 What types and quantity of information are available?

There are numerous sources of policy, data, research and practice available to the local CYP sector, as shown in Figure 1. Sixty of the reviewed sources feature policy

Figure 1 Types of information available



information, 57 contain research, 53 offer good-practice examples, case studies or guidance, and 34 provide data. It seems that there is a considerable choice of sources available to CYP professionals.

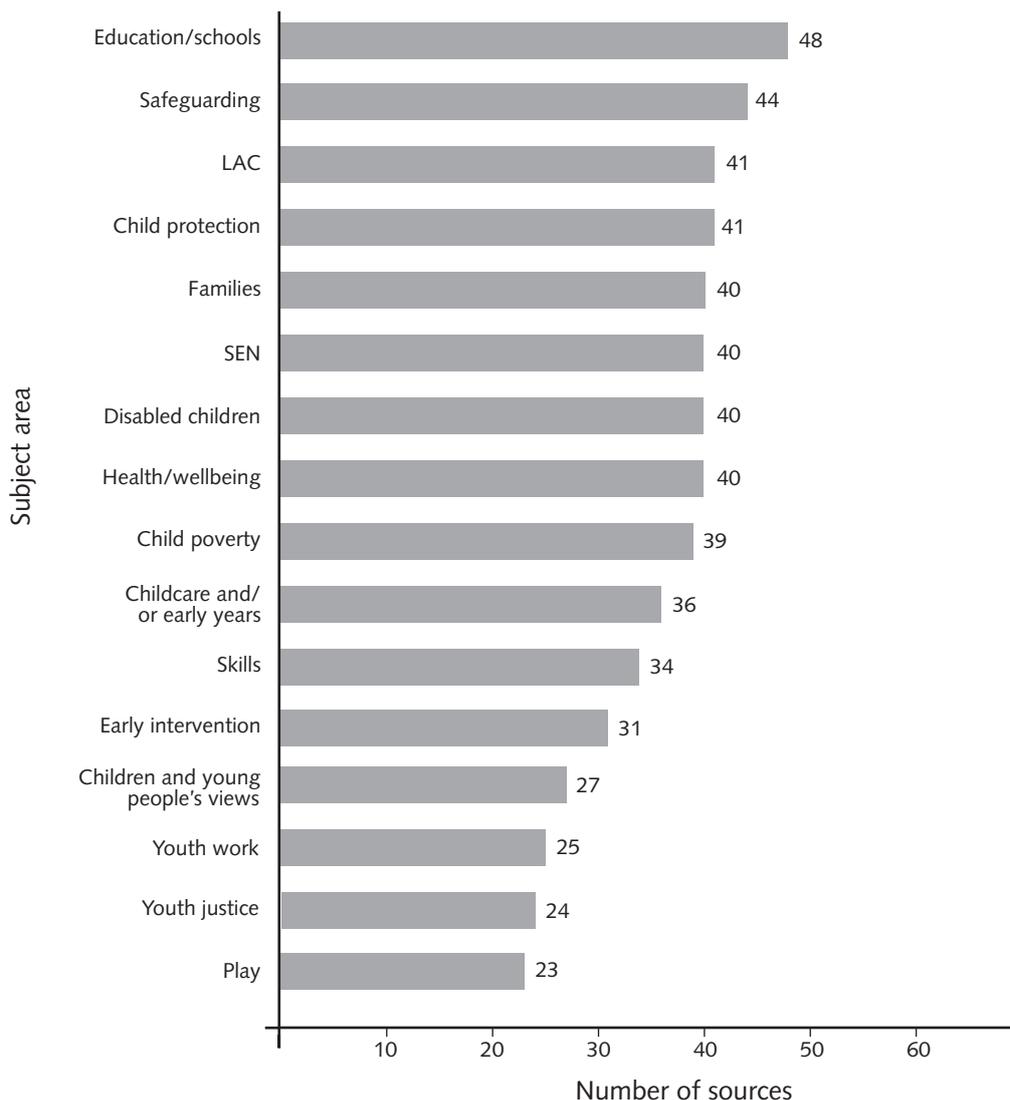
2.2.2 What types of information do LAs use?

Predominantly, the interviewees said they want to access statistical data, such as population statistics, deprivation data and the number of dependent children. As one interviewee commented: '[Data] is the lifeblood of the organisation', because a LA needs to understand the population that it serves to plan services effectively. Despite the popularity of central government websites, the ability to drill down into data at district, ward and lower super output area (LSOA) level is very important to

the interviewees. Interviewees were clear that being able to benchmark LA data against statistical neighbours and national averages is crucial. Consequently, they use sources and tools that enable them to do this.

Only a few interviewees said they use research, practice or policy documents. The two elected members reported accessing good-practice case studies and policy documents and guidance. One interviewee said they use research to find out what interventions work best, that is, what currently constitutes good practice. Several others said they would make more use of research if it were robust, concise, accessible and easy to find. A manager commented that research and practice documents are of more use to practitioners than those in her role, and it is worth bearing in mind that the study findings may have been different had the NFER spoken to practitioners.

Figure 2 Number of sources covering each subject area



2.3 Subject areas

2.3.1 How much information is available on different subjects?

On average, 36 sources of information are available on each subject area identified in Chapter 2 as being of interest to the CYP sector. The number of sources covering each subject area is shown in Figure 2.

2.3.2 Are there any gaps or duplication in coverage?

The research team did not identify any gaps in coverage. Indeed, the subject area covered by the fewest number of sources, play, is nonetheless covered by 23 sources. Meanwhile, professionals looking for information on the most popular subject areas, education/schools and safeguarding, have 48 and 44 sources, respectively, to choose from. The high number of sources available on each subject suggests that information is being duplicated. Therefore, there is scope to rationalise the amount of information and information sources available to the sector. At a minimum, users would benefit from being signposted to the best sources.

2.3.3 Are LAs satisfied with the amount of information available to them?

Generally, interviewees felt the amount of national information available to them is about right. However, many described being frustrated by an inability to breakdown data to a local level or link different datasets to build up a clear picture of an issue. One example given by an interviewee was an inability to link education, fire, crime and health data, which was needed to understand anti-social behaviour. In fact, most interviewees identified at least one area in which they would like more information. These included:

- fire, crime, housing, poverty, homelessness, academies and health data (for example, breastfeeding and obesity levels at district county level; impact of breastfeeding; and numbers of children admitted to different A&E departments)

- linked families and children data to enable targeting of vulnerable families
- longitudinal data which tracks children and young people
- unit cost data
- longitudinal prevention indicators
- young carers
- social work caseload data.

Interviewees also mentioned a need for guidance and support in a number of areas:

- early intervention
- measuring cost-effectiveness
- key bills and legislation as they move through Parliament
- voluntary sector costs data for delivering services (for benchmarking purposes).

One interviewee said that he would like to have robust evidence on what interventions work and how much money they save, as well as research into what factors create demand (for example, the links between the number of female Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants and LAC/Child Protection Plans). Another would like to have a searchable best-practice hub.

Only a few interviewees felt that there is too much information available to the sector. One described an 'information overload'. Another had recommended a key authoritative data source to officers within his LA to mitigate against the duplication of information and ensure that the best data source is used.

Interviewees did not identify any LA groups not well served by the information available to them. However, the list of data gaps identified by them suggests that some specific data needs are not being met. One interviewee said the voluntary sector does not have all its data needs met.

Views on whether the amount of data has changed over the past year were mixed. Around half of interviewees thought that the amount of information has remained fairly constant; a few thought that it has decreased; one thought that it has increased; and the remainder were unsure. Some interviewees pointed to datasets that have been discontinued, such as the National Indicators and the Tellus Survey. Another noted that the DfE no longer publishes statistical first releases, resulting in delays to the LA's benchmarking. One was unsure whether there is less data available or whether data has just lost prominence over the past year, increasing the risk that a LA might miss a vital piece of data. Only one interviewee mentioned a decrease in the number of websites, and he felt that only the location of information has changed, not the amount of it. However, looking ahead, another interviewee was concerned that the LAIT will be discontinued, feeling that it would be too expensive for LAs to manage their own data and set up data-sharing arrangements with other LAs to support benchmarking.

2.4 Accessing information

2.4.1 How can users access information?

The main mode of finding and engaging with information is via the internet, with all 76 sources having their own website. A minority of the reviewed sources require users to subscribe in order to access the full range of resources, either on a free or paid-for basis. Most, however, make all their content available to view or download for free. Over two-thirds of sources push out content to users via e-newsletters, email alerts or Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds: 56 distribute information via at least one e-newsletter or email alert; while 35 have their own RSS feed(s) or contribute to the info4local aggregate RSS feeds. While the use of social media to make information available was not systematically mapped by this research, it is apparent that many websites are using tools such as Twitter and Facebook to make information available.

2.4.2 How do LAs prefer to access information?

Interviewees were clear that they prefer to access information sources online. Some also want the option

of downloading sources, while one felt that there is a value to sending a hard copy of key resources to each LA. Senior staff would like to be able to access key facts and figures on their Blackberries, and were disappointed that some file formats are incompatible with their devices. Only a few interviewees mentioned e-newsletters among their key sources of information, although several said that they generally found them useful. Only one interviewee actively disliked e-newsletters, as they 'clog up' his inbox. Several interviewees would welcome email alerts about forthcoming and new data releases. There was particular frustration that the DfE does not do this, resulting in interviewees having to keep revisiting the website to check for new content. No interviewees said that they access information via RSS feeds or social media.

2.5 Have interviewees experienced any issues with using information sources?

The majority of interviewees have experienced some difficulties finding and using information sources in the past due to a number of reasons:

- failure to give advance notification of future data releases
- incompatibility of datasets and consequent difficulty in linking them
- the cost of gaining access to academic research
- the absence of one comprehensive source of information for CYP professionals
- poor search engine and unintuitive website structures making it hard to find information
- hard to manipulate data sources
- failure to provide statistical neighbour averages
- out-of-date data
- dubious data quality where LAs have to upload data into central systems and the guidance leaves room for interpretation

- data protection issues preventing access to the full range of data
- Blackberry-incompatible formats
- technical difficulties.

The impact of these issues was reported to be a drain on LA staff time and resource, and an inability to develop a clear picture of locality-level data.

2.6 What are the key features of a good information source?

There was a high degree of consensus among interviewees about what constituted a good information source. They identified seven key features.

Accuracy: a source that people can rely on and is recognisable by others (such as LAIT) and a reputation for reliability and robustness. One interviewee said that the reputation of a source influenced how much a piece of information would be used within a LA.

Timeliness: the most up-to-date information, available as soon as possible and regularly updated.

Accessibility: concise documents written in plain English and clearly labelled data.

Ease of use: a good intelligent search engine, perhaps tailored for LAs' search needs.

Ability to meet the needs of different types of users: a good source should enable the user to view headline findings and figures, alongside the ability to drill down into datasets (for example to district, LSOA, ward or postcode level). Data should be accessible via tools that are simple enough for non-technical users to use and also presented in a form that enables sophisticated local-level analysis (such as in csv or Excel files).

Manipulation: data can be manipulated to meet the LA's needs and built into tailored outputs. Ready-made benchmarking against statistical neighbours (one interviewee preferred like-for-like neighbours), LA averages and national averages would be useful, as would trend data and linked data to enable a LA to build up a picture of an issue.

One-stop shop: a hub of all relevant information aggregated from multiple sources, where appropriate. One interviewee stated that his LA cluster is developing its own information hub to meet their needs.

Interviewees also mentioned other features of a good information source.

- They like having web-based and easily downloadable resources.
- Information should be available free of charge.
- Alerts about forthcoming and new information, such as data releases, are useful.
- A LA perspective on national issues. For example, the latest thinking on what bills, legislation and key issues mean for the sector. One interviewee felt that LAs can find it difficult to step outside of their own local context, and the LG Group could play a valuable role in providing 'overview insight' for the sector.
- Senior staff want to be able to find information on their mobile devices when they are on the move or at a meeting.
- Clear presentation of data, using graphs, charts and geographical representations of data, would be helpful. One interviewee mentioned Instant Atlas, which enables the user to select variables, and automatically plot the correlation between them graphically.
- Messaging boards are useful for asking questions and suggesting a data collection that could assist others.
- Clear introductions to resources ensure an understanding of what a resource does, what it will tell the user, and why the user needs to know this.

These features provide some clear pointers for the LG Group in developing an online offer that meets the needs of the sector.

Note

1. APHO was not included in the mapping because it has been formally dissolved.

3 Conclusions

This section draws conclusions about what the findings of the study may mean for the development of INFORM and the K-Hub.

The study established the following

- There is a wealth of different types of information on all CYP subject areas available to the sector and there does appear to be a case for considering further rationalisation of sources. Interviewees did not identify the large amount of information available to them as an issue, perhaps because they themselves used only a small selection of sources, with which they were familiar and trusted.
- There was a far greater appetite for data among interviewees than for policy, practice or research, with the exception of the elected members interviewed who wanted a full range of information types. Had we spoken to practitioners the findings may, of course, have been different. There was some indication that use of research would be higher if outputs were robust, concise, accessible and free. There is a need to find a way of maximising the use and impact of the large amount of information available to the sector.
- There was demand for guidance in specific areas and data on specific subjects, some of which the LG Group might be able to produce or lobby for.
- Interviewees would appreciate having a single comprehensive source of information from a 'brand' they trust. The LG Group would seem to be well

placed to capitalise on its positive brand reputation among the sector, to deliver a trusted one-stop shop for the sector's information needs.

- LAs are able to engage with information via their preferred mode: online. Ensuring that content is Blackberry compatible would help senior staff.
- the degree to which sources are tailored to meet LAs' needs varies considerably. Interviewees themselves reported issues in using information sources, particularly frustration with websites that were difficult to use and had poor search functionality. Developing a source which avoided these issues while providing robust data, would be an incentive for users to migrate to a new source.
- The key features of a good information source are: accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, ease of use, ability to meet the needs of different types of users, manipulatable data (including the ability to drill down into local areas; link datasets; benchmark against statistical neighbours, LA averages and national averages; and view trend data); a one-stop shop approach.

In conclusion, interviewees' issues with finding robust information that meets their needs, and their enthusiasm for a one-stop shop suggests that a central information hub would be well received. Interviewees were generally positive about the role that K-Hub and INFORM could have if the key features identified in this study are incorporated.

Appendix Methods

This appendix sets out the methods that the research team used to carry out the mapping study.

A.1 Qualitative research

The research team carried out interviews with ten LA officers and two elected members working in CYP services in ten LAs in England. Interviews were semi-structured and carried out by telephone, with the exception of one face-to-face interview. Interviewees were asked:

- what information sources they are aware of
- what information sources they use and do not use (and the reasons for this)
- whether the amount of data/knowledge available to them has changed over the past year, and any impact this has had
- the CYP areas about which they would like more data/knowledge
- the CYP areas where there is more than enough data/knowledge available
- the key features of a good data/knowledge source
- how they prefer to access data/knowledge.

We recruited interviewees by asking a sample of EMIE LA liaison officers to suggest suitable colleagues with whom we should speak. In selecting the sample, we aimed to recruit interviewees in different roles in different parts of England, from both rural and urban areas and different types of LAs. Our achieved sample comprised 12 CYP professionals working in a range of different LA roles, including data officers, heads of services and elected members. Interviewees were based in unitary, metropolitan and county LAs from rural and urban areas across England. We did not secure an interview with a representative of a London borough.

A.2 Mapping

The NFER’s library team compiled a list of information sources based on previous searches on CYP information sources. It also carried out free-text searches on the internet using the keywords from Set 1 combined with those from Set 2 as shown in Table A1.

Table A1: Keywords used in the free-text searches

Set 1	Set 2
Adoption/fostering	Research
Child poverty	Policy
Child protection	Information
Child welfare	Data
Childcare and early years	Statistics
Children and young people’s views	Good practice
Children services	Guidance
Disability	Case studies
Early intervention	
Education/schools	
Families	
Family support	
Health and wellbeing	
Looked after children (children in care)	
Play	
Safeguarding	
SEN	
Skills	
Social care (social work)	
Youth work	
Youth justice	

The library team also reviewed the list of free, open-access sources (see Table A2) contained within the databases listed using general keywords including: children, young people and youth.

The research team reviewed each source, extracting information such as the main types of information and subject areas covered and the target user group(s).

Table A2: Databases

Databases	URL
British Education Index Free Collections	https://www.leeds.ac.uk/bei/COLN/COLN_default.html
Educational Evidence Portal	http://www.eep.ac.uk/dnn2/Searchceep/Searchceepdatabase/tabid/62/Default.aspx
Evidence bank (RiP)	http://www.rip.org.uk/research-evidence/evidencebank
Education Resources Information Center	http://www.eric.ed.gov/
Evidence Network	http://www.evidencenetwork.org/
Intute	http://www.intute.ac.uk/
Social Care Online	http://www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/
Excellence Gateway	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/

Note: All websites accessed 18 August 2011.

We did not extract data about opinion pieces, blogs, support or training offers, events or communities of practice.

To be included in the study, sources had to be:

- focused exclusively or significantly on England or UK information
- were national (rather than regional or local)
- were live and had been updated since June 2010
- made all or much of their content available for free
- were at least partially focused on CYP services/issues
- targeted – or had relevance to – the local government sector
- featured research, policy, data, statistics, good practice, practitioner guidance or case studies on children and young people (or summaries, newsfeeds or alerts of/about these types of sources)
- were not produced by higher education institutions (HEIs).

Sources were excluded from the research if they:

- focus on any country other than England
- are international, regional or local

- no longer live/in publication
- last published prior to June 2010
- are only available on a paid-for basis
- focus exclusively on services or issues outside of CYP services and issues
- were HEIs.

A.3 Study limitations

It is worth noting the limitations to this study. Firstly, this was a small study carried out within a tight timescale. There may, therefore, be sources that meet the study inclusion criteria, which we have not identified through the searching. Secondly, the coding of sources has relied on the researchers' professional judgement at times due to the complex nature of children's services, interlinked nature of the subject areas, and the unwieldy nature of some of the websites reviewed. To mitigate against human error, we have double-coded a sample of the coding carried out by each researcher. Third, we interviewed 12 LA professionals – the qualitative findings cannot, therefore, be considered to be reflective of the diversity of the sector. That said, we were successful in recruiting professionals from different roles and different types of LAs, so the findings are certainly not based on a homogenous group.

Recently published reports

The Local Government Education and Children's Services Research Programme is carried out by the NFER. The research projects cover topics and perspectives that are of special interest to local authorities. All the reports are published and disseminated by the NFER, with separate executive summaries. The summaries, and more information about this series, are available free of charge at www.nfer.ac.uk/research/local-government-association/



Young people's aspirations in rural areas

Youth unemployment is a serious issue affecting rural areas. One possible cause is believed to be low aspirations among young people, their families and the local community. Based on a rapid review of literature and case-study visits, this report explores the influence and impact of low aspirations.

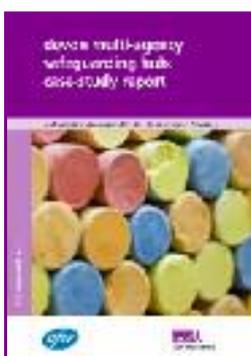
<http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/LYPA01>



How to sustain and replicate effective practice

This report examines how effective practice examples that have been through the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes' (C4EO) validation process have been, or could be, replicated and sustained. A set of [online guidelines](#) was produced as part of this research.

<http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/LRSV01>



Devon multi-agency safeguarding hub: case-study report

Safeguarding children and young people is a central concern for a range of agencies, in particular CYPS, the police and the health service. This case-study report covers the MASH model, its outcomes and impacts, and future developments. A companion report examines the hub's value for money.

<http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/LGMX01>

For more information, or to buy any of these publications, please contact: The Publications Unit, National Foundation for Educational Research, The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire SL1 2DQ, tel: +44 (0)1753 637002, fax: +44 (0)1753 637280, email: book.sales@nfer.ac.uk, web: www.nfer.ac.uk/publications.

The LG Group is currently developing its online offer for local authorities (LAs). The offer will consist of: the Knowledge Hub (K-Hub), a new information, advice and guidance hub; 'Inform', a web-based collection of data and data tools; and the esd-toolkit, which provides tools to help LAs deliver services to residents more effectively. This LG Group commissioned this mapping study to inform the development of this offer

This report identifies:

- the national data, research, policy and practice sources available to professionals, LA officers and elected members in children and young people's (CYP) services
- information gaps or areas of duplication
- the national sources of information that LA officers and elected members use
- LAs' challenges in finding or using information
- the key features of a good information source