

Covering Letter

To: Directors of Social Services in England
LA Chief Executives with PSS responsibilities
Chief Executives of Health Authorities (for information)

5 December 2000

Dear Director

CHILDREN IN NEED SURVEY 2000

I attach with this letter a copy of the report we have published today, giving the main (England) results from the survey of Children in Need last February. A copy of the report is also being made available on the DH Internet site.

We are very much aware that this exercise placed a significant demand on Children and Families teams, information management staff, and managers who were already under pressure on a number of other fronts. In the event, the results of the survey, in terms of the quality and completeness of the data far exceeded our expectations. The fact that the survey has been so successful is in large measure due to the efforts of the local authority staff involved. We would be grateful if you could pass on our thanks to your staff for their efforts here.

The survey provides a whole wealth of information which has not been available centrally before - the key national facts are in the attached summary. From your own experience you may not be surprised at the size of some of the numbers, but it is only now that we all have a complete national and quantifiable picture of the sheer scale of activity in Children and Families teams, work which has gone unrecorded nationally hitherto.

In addition, though the work of the Quality Protects Costs and Resources Project we are conscious of real headway being made in councils in such areas as cleaning up stored information, getting a grip on measuring activity and costs and recording ethnicity.

The intention is to publish early in the New Year a set of tables giving information by LA. This will also be available in electronic format.

We will therefore be sending you shortly some detailed tables for your authority where we think additional validation and discussion is needed before the figures can be published at LA level.

If you have any comments on the exercise from the perspective of your own authority, we would be pleased to hear from you. Please send any correspondence on this to John Rowlands (the policy lead: tel 020 7972 4439; e-mail john.rowlands@doh.gsi.gov.uk) or Mike Barker (the statistician involved: tel 020 7972 5593 e-mail mike.barker@doh.gsi.gov.uk).

We are proposing to repeat the Children in Need exercise with a census week in September/October 2001. We are working with local authorities supporting the Quality Protects Cost and Resources Project to make some key changes and enhancements to the CiN collection and database. The fundamentals of the collection will not change but the database will be made much more useful for local analysis.

Yours sincerely,

Antonia Roberts
Department of Health
Statistics Division 3

Executive summary: Key results

The following summarizes the main points:

Numbers of children involved

- There were nearly 400,000 Children in Need in England in February 2000;
- 64,000 of them were Children Looked After and the remaining 320,000 or so were other Children in Need;
- Social Services are providing services for nearly a quarter of a million Children in Need in a typical week;
- 92% of Children Looked After and 54% of other Children in Need receive a service or have money spent on their behalf in a typical week (either in terms of staff/centre time or in terms of cost of the Local Authority paying for provision needed - eg residential costs);

Characteristics of Children in Need

- The main need for social service intervention on children is cases of "abuse and neglect" which account for just over half (56%) of all Children Looked After and 28% of other Children in Need;
- About 12% of the Children in Need population is disabled;
- At least 16% of Children in Need are from the ethnic minorities (which is about one and a half times the figure for the under 18 population as a whole from the census)

Costs and resources

- Services for Children in Need cost Social Services on average about £41m per week, £26m per week on Children Looked After, and £15m per week on other Children in Need;
- About half of these Childrens costs are accounted for by regular payments (on residential/fostering/adoption costs) for Children Looked After;
- The average Child Looked After costs Social services £435 per week; and other Children in Need cost £85 per week;

Activity

- The average Child Looked After receives 4.3 hours per week of service from Social Work staff either in teams or centres;
- Other Children in Need receive on average about 2.9 hours per week of staff or centre time