

Children's Social Care for Data People

An overview of the system, stakeholders, common local practice, and necessary knowledge for data professionals working in Children's Social Care

Last updated: 21/05/2024

Led by local authorities with support from the ADCS, DfE, Ofsted, and DLUHC, we're working to help LAs make better use of data in children's services



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What is *Data to Insight*?

Data to Insight (D2I) is **the sector-led service for children's services data professionals**.

Owned by local authority data professionals, and supported by the ADCS, DfE, DLUHC and Ofsted, we are a small core team supporting a much wider network of children's services data people, all **working together to improve data use in the sector**.

Our original informal motto was "Build once, use 150 times", and this still represents a core part of our ethos: there are many things that every local authority (LA) needs to do, and many of these can be done once in a shared, standard way. Doing this can **empower LA colleagues** – both to benefit from good practice shared across the sector, and to maximise the value of the time they spend locally on data work.

The core service maintains Excel data tools, web tools, Python code libraries, in-year data collections, learning opportunities and support documents. We also provide community support, collaboration support, and advocacy.

We also work on **funded projects** doing things like data validation, demand modelling, new data standards, and user research.

LA colleagues can sign up to join us at www.datatoinsight.org



1. Getting started

This document offers **an overview** of the system, stakeholders, common local practice, and necessary knowledge **for data professionals working in Children's Social Care**.

It draws on the work of sector professionals and service leaders, to whom we are grateful for generous support, advice, and in some cases direct contributions.

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Children's Social Care (CSC) is a unique national system, operated by individual local safeguarding authorities (LAs) supported by a range of national, regional and local organisations and other stakeholders. The legislative framework is complex, and local implementations can take a range of shapes. There is also an extensive statutory data requirement, as well as independent regulation.

The importance and complexity of safeguarding services in this context can make the data landscape difficult to understand, particularly given that technical factors – including the typical sizes of datasets, and common software restrictions within LAs – can mean that not all standard data approaches are appropriate in this context.

This document is neither exhaustive nor authoritative; we do, however, believe it represents a reasonable introduction to CSC, and CSC data work.

To contribute either to future versions of this report, or to our collaborative community more generally, please join us at www.datatoinsight.org



Upskilling new colleagues

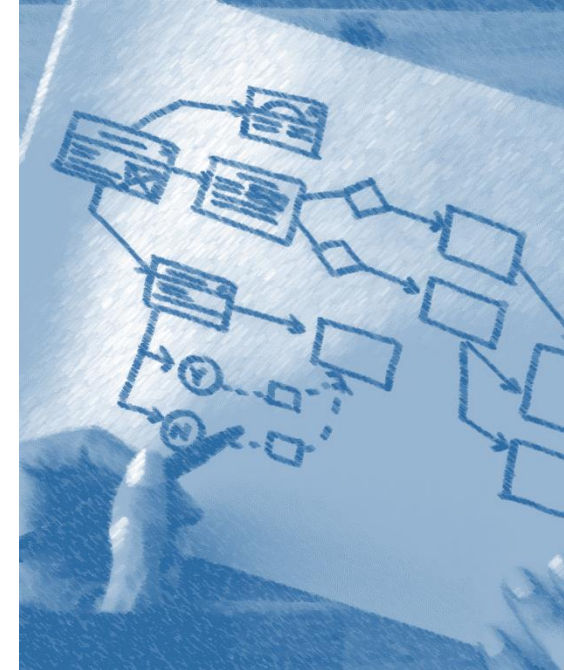
The best way to begin learning how CSC works is to shadow front-line services in your organisation. Half a day **shadowing front-line social work colleagues** in the CSC “front door” service is an invaluable way to learn the real-world operations which data work attempts to describe and monitor. We recommend that all data professionals involved in safeguarding work should be offered this opportunity by their employer.

This can be further expanded to include CIN, CP, CLA, fostering/adoption, and care leaver support teams over any such period of time as suits the LA.

Working alongside experienced technical colleagues is a useful way to learn “on the job”, as is ensuring that new colleagues engage in detail tasks focusing on different service areas. With each task they will gain fresh understanding which helps inform their wider view. It can also be useful to make time to work alongside local data architects, or to gain access to test database instances to allow for learning and data experimentation.

Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships (LSCP) may offer **training packages** providing an overview alongside local policies, statutory frameworks etc.

Generally, data professionals should complete all **systems and reporting training which is offered to front-line workers**. They should remember, though, that training is always introductory; understanding the system will be long term work, driven by an understanding of their specific duties.



Emotional demands of CSC data work

For some people, first-hand exposure to CSC practice, and the stories of young people and families engaged with CSC, can be a very challenging experience in terms of emotional demands.

While it's valuable to understand the "real work" before beginning to perform data analysis on the information we record about that work, case files and casework conversations often contain detailed descriptions of serious child abuse; as a manager or mentor, you must exercise judgement about how to appropriately convey that insight into what the data represent. As a new colleague, you must remain mindful of your own responses to this kind of experience and material.

It's okay to be deeply upset by stories of family breakdown, child abuse, or exploitation – especially when these are made “real” to you, sometimes by specific details of place or consequence which resonate.

Social workers receive training on this kind of experience and common responses, but it's far less common for data professionals to do the same.

In the first instance, if you feel that your work, or your organisation's approach to your professional development, is having undue impact on your wellbeing, you should **speak to your line manager** or an appropriate organisational representative. Managers and organisations should support employees in such a situation, and **tailor learning accordingly**.



2. How CSC works

The national framework for CSC is defined by the Department for Education (DfE). The legal basis is drawn from several pieces of legislation; the most important thing to understand is that there are some specific legal requirements, and plenty of areas where a broad directive is then interpreted locally by local safeguarding authorities.

The current core national guidance document is called **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023** (typically referred to as “Working Together”).

Local authorities interpret relevant law and guidance to develop local policies and procedures. They also procure their own information systems and recruit their own workforce. This means that two neighbouring LAs may operate different systems and practices to pursue similar goals. Understanding your local context in each new role is therefore important, and we can't usefully cover that detail in this document – ask a colleague!

CSC services exist to help children at significant risk of harm. Harm can take many different forms, and occurs along a spectrum of severity, which means a safeguarding service must first assess and understand a child or family's unique issues before making and delivering a support plan.

There are different levels of support. Non-statutory or **Early Help** services support children and families below the threshold for obligatory state intervention. **Child in Need** support is the first tier of statutory intervention. More severe issues can result in **Child Protection** support. Where the balance of risk requires it, **Child Looked After** support is used to bring the child into LA care. There are then various pathways towards ending involvement, including de-escalation and eventual **case closure**.



Practice partners

The key local services with safeguarding responsibility will convene a **Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP)** to ensure they work together well. As well as the LA itself, membership will include:

- A designated lead officer, probably hosted by the LA
- Local health services (which may include multiple local trusts/hospitals)
- Local police services
- Local education partners
- Key local voluntary/third sector partners

The LSCP will meet regularly and collectively own the local area's safeguarding duty. This can be inspected by Ofsted as part of their JTAI (Joint Targeted Area Inspection) framework.

(In some local areas, the LA's role is performed by an external trust. This is typically following government intervention due to poor prior performance. This can result in a range of approaches to performance oversight and communication with the LA and wider partnership.)

In some LAs the partnership is very active and will place a high demand on LA data teams for support and insight. In others the LA will take more ownership of this role, selecting what to provide to the partnership alongside its partners.

The LA may have a range of commissioned services, or links with the third sector, which may require oversight via a contractually agreed approach.

The LA will also have a relationship with **national partners** such as Ofsted (the sector's independent regulator, responsible for inspections and supporting improvement plans) and the DfE (the sector's legislator, who may also seek direct involvement in LA operations in some circumstances).



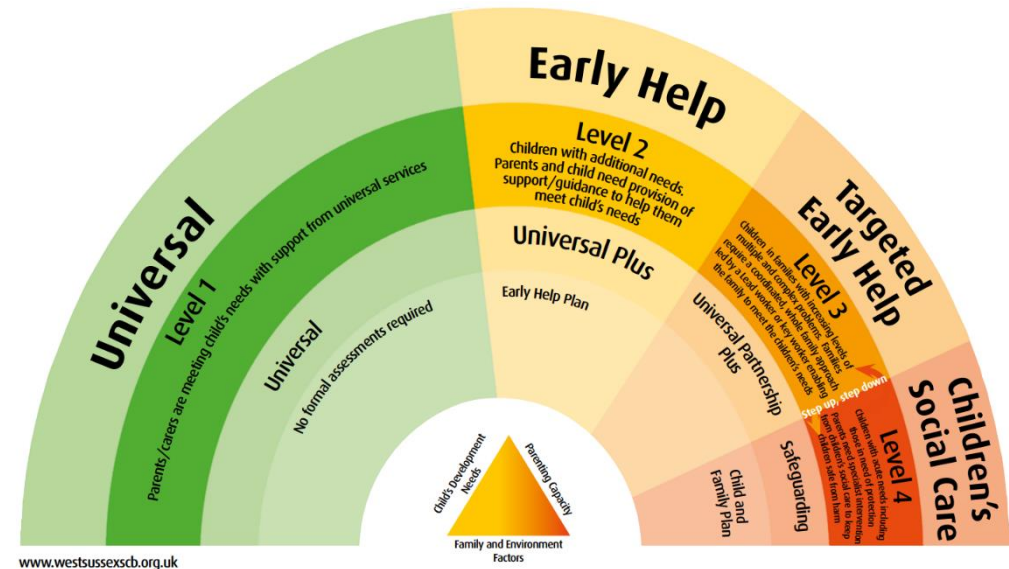
What local authorities do

Local authorities (LAs) interpret the national framework to implement locally-owned policies and procedures for delivering and monitoring local safeguarding services. As such, **different LAs can follow different practice models**. They do this in partnership with other local services, all of whom share responsibility for keeping children safe and responding to risks.

Typically, **the LA operates a “front door”** service for local services and residents to report concerns. The service performs triage and either signposts enquiries to relevant non-CSC resources, redirects to early help or similar services, or accepts a referral to CSC, depending on local service thresholds. The support spectrum is often visualised as a “windscreen”.

Within CSC, service leaders and team managers for different areas of practice (or locality) will supervise as **social workers support a caseload of several individual children and/or sibling groups**, seeking to understand their risks and support needs, and manage a plan for keeping them safe and helping them achieve appropriate outcomes.

The wider organisation, including IT, HR, corporate performance, finance, data and intelligence services, and others, will seek to manage the CSC service to keep children safe and keep the service affordable. To do this, **stakeholders rely on accurate and insightful information** to guide their attention to the service areas requiring attention.



Source: West Sussex County Council's online safeguarding information. Search for the phrase "Safeguarding windscreen" online for more local examples, or ask a colleague for your LA's version

3. How CSC data works

Local safeguarding practice generates **a complex and complicated range of data**, much of which – but not all – is stored in a local case management system (CMS) and interrogated using a range of reporting tools.

Local reporting must provide service leaders with clear information about how their services are operating. **Data can't tell the whole story**; your data work should help inform, challenge, and enhance leaders' direct experience.

There is also a significant element of national reporting. LAs provide data to DfE annually in several statutory data collection, most notably the CIN Census and the SSDA903 (CLA) return, as well as participating in quarterly benchmarking exercises regionally and nationally. Some local analysts will spend most of their time between April and July focused on producing, validating, and submitting their LA's **annual returns to DfE**. They will then review the national outturns later in the year alongside their local insight.

The data function must accommodate short local **cycles of work** with annual national cycles, alongside **ad hoc analysis** and information requests from service leaders to inform local improvement and performance work (and from external individuals in the form of Freedom of Information requests).

The last noteworthy element of the work is **preparing for, and responding to, inspections** by Ofsted, the sector regulator. LAs will prepare in different ways, including data quality work and careful performance analysis.



What makes CSC data different?

We tend to identify CSC data work as differing from “typical” data work expectations, and understanding these differences will help you make good analytical choices. In particular, the below three factors are important to understand:

Small numbers

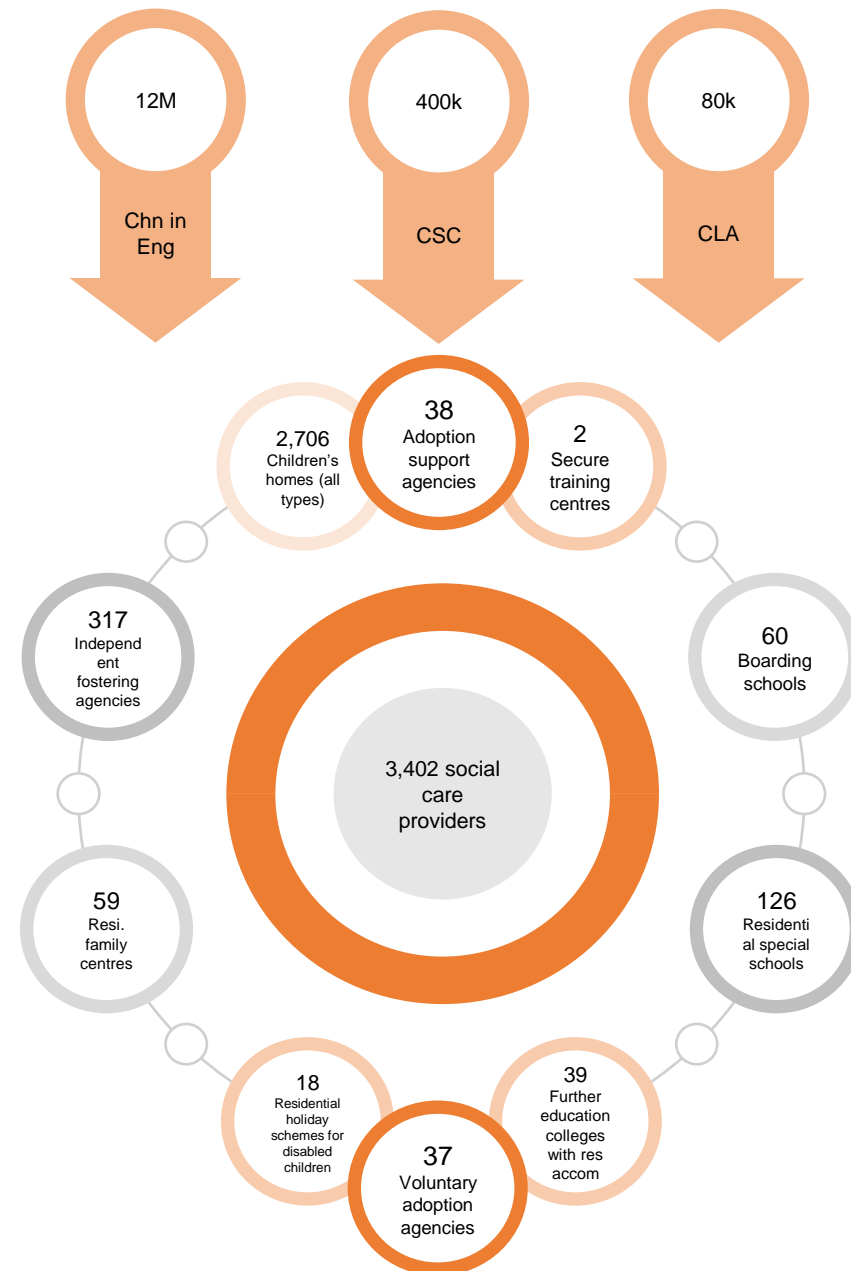
An average-sized LA might be working with 2,000 children across its CSC system at any one time. The cohort attracting most attention within that wider group is the cohort of children looked after (CLA) by the LA, which might total 300 children or fewer. “Big data” techniques are rarely appropriate in this context; even simple forecasting or demographic analysis must account for the small numbers involved. National data often suppresses small values, resulting in incomplete comparator datasets.

Complex systems

The legal and operational frameworks for delivering CSC are complicated and inter-related, and the data landscape is complex. As an analyst you must take care to properly represent, and properly interpret, within this context. You must also be aware of how data structures and recording expectations impact the data available for analysis. Learning what each data item represents in the real world, and which aspects of practice are not represented in the data, will improve your analysis work.

Duty of care

Rather than pursuing profit, we analyse CSC data to make complex services better, and to help organisations use limited resources effectively, helping leaders balance optimal and acceptable performance across different areas. Alongside this, though, the safety of the children we help is always paramount, and the local budgetary context can change rapidly in the wake of emerging issues or external criticism.

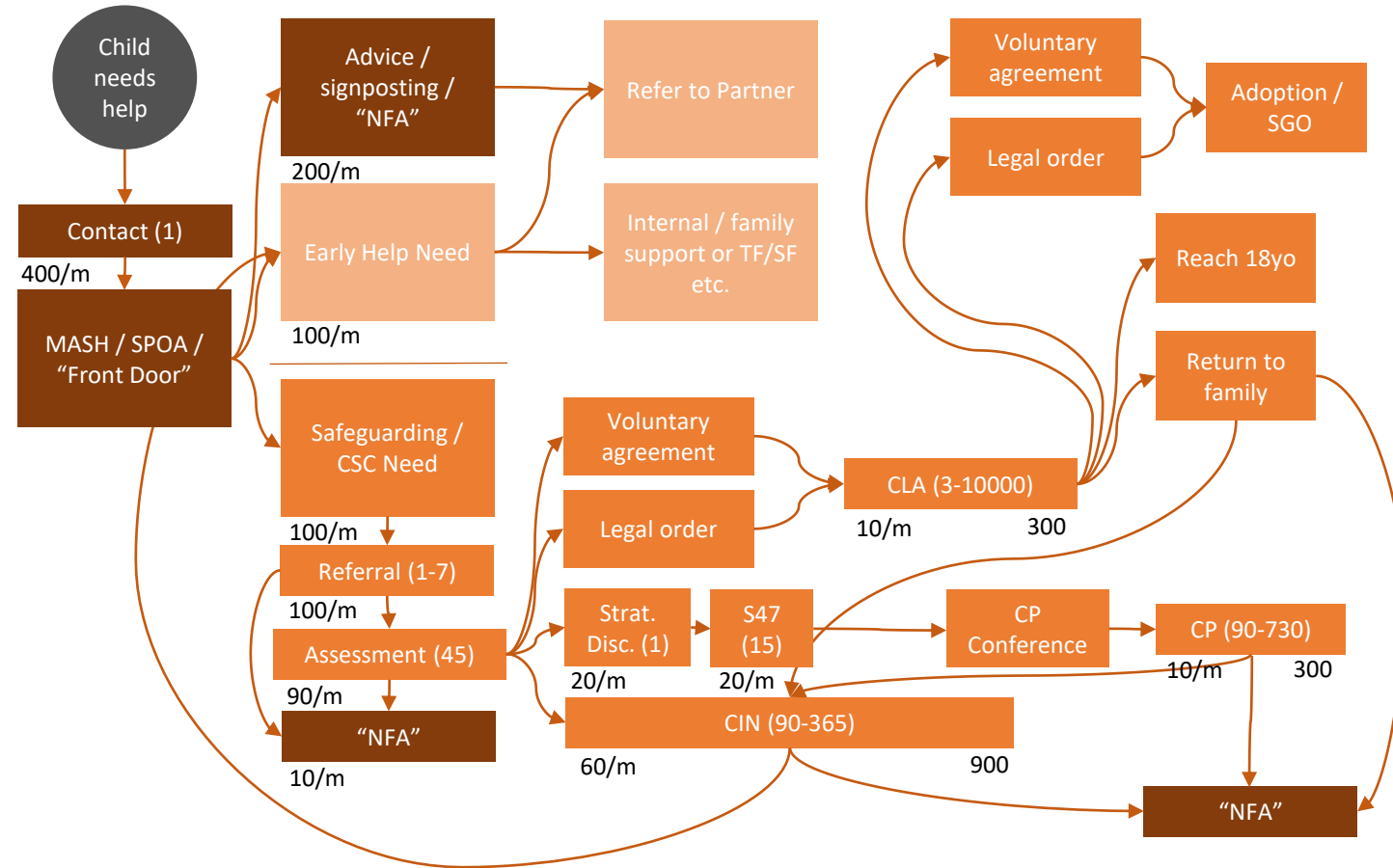


Mapping the core local data flow

Understanding the typical order of events, and the approximate hierarchy of interventions within CSC, is a key starting point for understanding the wider system, and longstanding colleagues can sometimes take for granted their knowledge of this data flow. It's not obvious what a "S47" is until you've found out – but **you need to know the significance of the data points you're reporting and analysing.**

The core local data flow can be visualised as a "pathway" or flowchart, and it's a useful exercise to map such a flowchart as part of induction for a new colleague. Even just an hour's session, talking through the directions which social work can take following a contact/referral, is hugely valuable.

Opposite is an example. Bear in mind that the map doesn't have to be "right" or "complete"; it just has to **help the analyst build their mental model of the interdependent system** from which we're gleaning our data points. From this, it becomes easier to learn by doing, or to identify useful routes for further research.



White text: Recorded activity (likely max days' duration in brackets)
 Black text: Indicative caseloads (typically as at date, or per month, based on an example LA receiving 400 contacts per month)

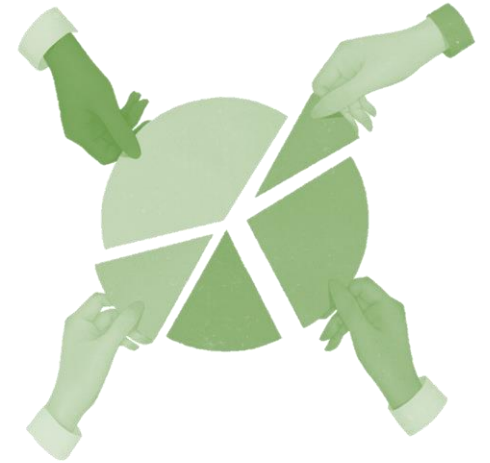
4. Data roles and functions

CSC data work isn't only about producing numbers and charts; as a whole activity it incorporates analysis, collaboration, service improvement, technical maintenance and strategy, as well as data cleaning, data extraction, data transformation, and data visualisation. But **these duties are often distributed across multiple people** or teams within the LA.

There is no one right way to deliver a local data service in support of children's safeguarding work. As data professionals, we rarely get to choose the shape, strategy, or ambition of our organisation. We must fit our operations to the wider context. A reasonable functional categorisation might include:

- Front line services and management
- Corporate performance and policy
- Internal (to the CSC service) performance and policy
- System and database maintenance/development
- Reporting maintenance/development
- Data analysis
- Information governance

Identifying where these functions occur in your LA, and the existing relationships between them, will ensure you can deliver value, and fulfil the real expectations which the wider organisation may have about your role.



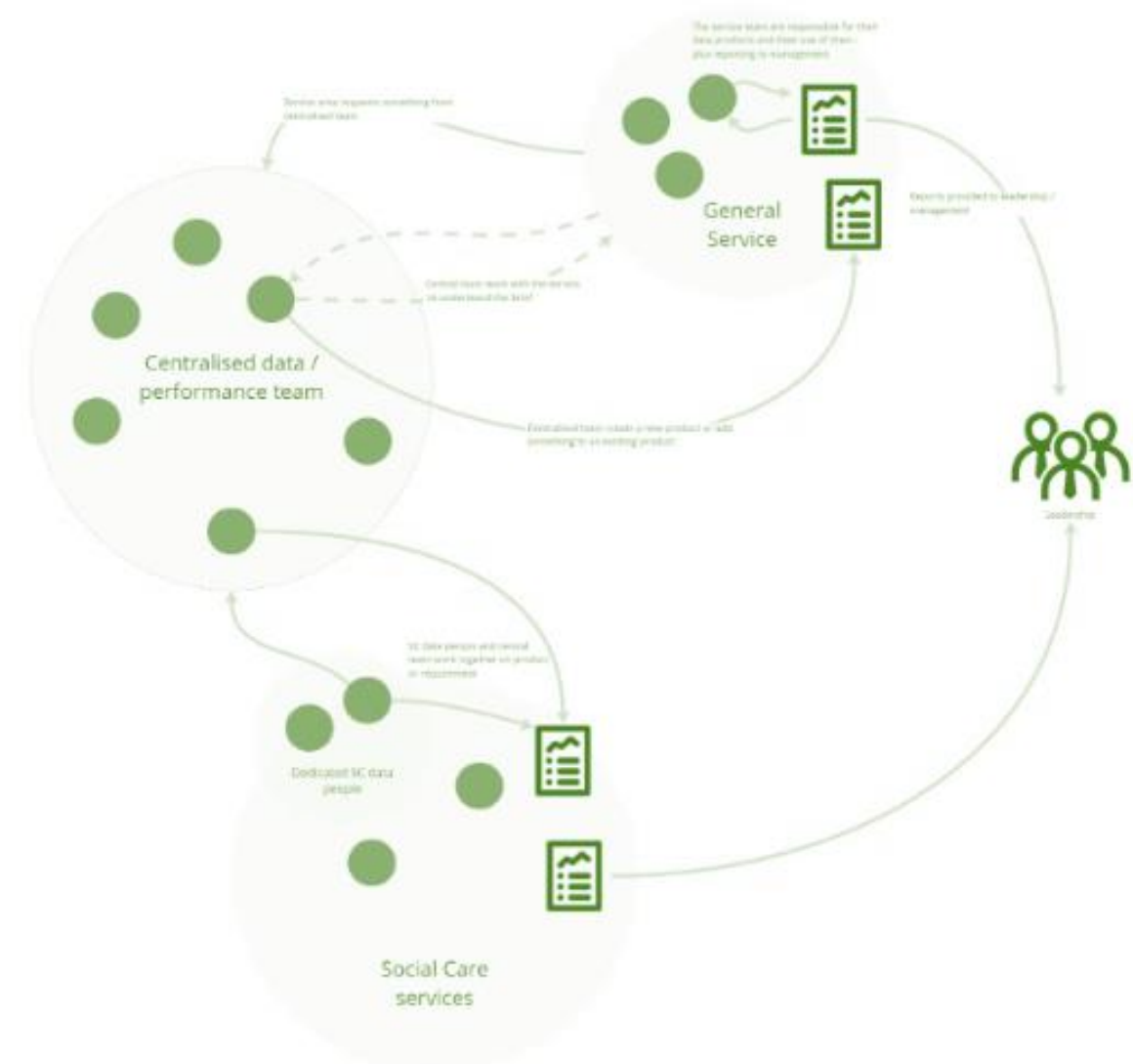
Typical organisational structures

To the right is an example of **a typical LA CSC data service** configuration: a corporate performance function supporting distinct service areas with their data work (including CSC). Another common approach is to have a specialist performance team shared across adults' and children's services, with links to the corporate service.

There are also models where (a) dedicated CSC data people all sit in the corporate team, (b) data work happens within the safeguarding service, with minimal interface with any other services, and (c) a significant portion of the work is held within a corporate ICT function rather than a corporate performance/data function.

These descriptions don't account for all the roles discussed earlier. One obvious further question for you to consider is how much of the CMS and reporting infrastructure is owned and maintained by a separate ICT function. This is a critical point of distinction which impacts analytical practice significantly – some CSC-embedded data people have full control over their systems and tools, using IT support only for hardware support and network security; at the other extreme, some must log an ICT support request to get a single field added to a data report, or may rely on their CMS supplier for almost all system maintenance.

Bear in mind that these descriptions are neither comprehensive in themselves, nor are they the only models which can work.



Typical performance processes

As with organisational structures, local performance processes will vary widely. It's best to begin by finding out what regular reporting tasks your team supports, and then understanding the wider service-wide and corporate frameworks which also happen. You'll probably find:

Daily/weekly reporting on critical measures, especially focused on “front door” activity and CIN/CP/CLA cohort sizes, watching for sudden changes. Sometimes provided to corporate directors and/or councillors as well as service leaders. May generate ad hoc analysis requests.

Weekly/monthly service-level operational reporting typically covers the core CSC services and processes, possibly using a dashboard, suite of reports, or a tool like ChAT, to give service leads an overview of performance and activity levels for further analysis. Should generate ad hoc requests.

Special reporting on niche service areas will vary based on requirements of key individual service leads, and will help manage specific services (e.g. adopter recruitment, care leavers, etc.)

Corporate performance reporting typically involves a survey of quarterly and annual KPI trends, with additional detailed analysis on highlighted areas. Will often become publicly available.

Regional and national benchmarking is a mix of quarterly aggregate data production and annual client-level data returns requiring intensive data quality work. Benchmarking work uses the national or regional outputs of these exercises to compare local activity to that of other LAs.

Ad hoc analysis requests can come from a wide range of stakeholders. In a well-functioning local system, good performance information should generate ad hoc analysis work to inform future plans. This may be performed by the originator of the regular report, or by someone else.

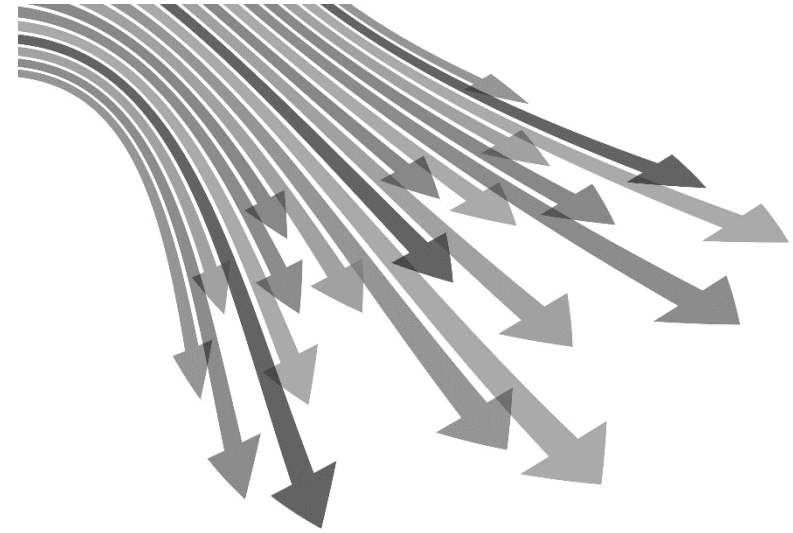


5. References

The following pages are a collection of cheat sheets, quick points of reference, and indexes of further information to help you find your way around the wider resource base for CSC data work.

It's worth restating that CSC, and CSC data work, is a complex area of practice, and any information provided here is necessarily incomplete. **Please use this document as a support for continuing professional development, not as a replacement for local policies/procedures.**

If, either as an experienced colleague or a newcomer to the sector, you would like to **suggest improvements, amendments, or additions** to this document, please write to datatoinsight.enquiries@gmail.com. We'll be delighted to hear your feedback and think about what we can do to improve this resource for colleagues all over the country.



References: beyond the core local data flow

The core social care data flow described on page 12 doesn't cover everything that local services do. Below are **some examples of other practice areas**, themes, and specialist services which may be relevant to the CSC data professional.

Virtual school

The LA will operate a “virtual school”, with a “virtual headteacher”, to support CLA with their learning and school life.

Care leavers

The separate care leaver service supports a range of offers to different age groups of children who have left care.

Adoption and permanence

There may be a separate cycle of reporting and scrutiny around plans to achieve “permanence” for individual CLA.

Foster carers and adoptive parents

Recruiting, supporting and retaining foster carers and adopters is often managed by a distinct service with its own data needs.

Stronger Families / Troubled Families

Often there will be a single data role within this service, somewhat isolated from the core children's data function.

Early Help

The level of support below the threshold for statutory safeguarding services, this covers a wide range of approaches.

Family Support

The new model proposed by the 2022 MacAlister review of CSC, which blends early help with some CSC services.

Youth services

Local youth services may have links with local safeguarding services, and/or may access data support for separate systems.

Extra-Familial Harm

There may be a separate “exploitation” hub or service supporting CSC with specialist support for specific children.

Regional data work

There may be a regional lead LA or person co-ordinating projects across multiple LAs, or leads for specific projects.

Family Group Conferences

A way to engage families in co-developing a support plan for a child or young person.

Transitional safeguarding

An approach to safeguarding adolescents and young adults across developmental stages.

References: statutory returns data process

The most important statutory return period commences in April each year, reporting the CIN Census and SSDA903 (for CLA) to DfE.

The statutory returns data process as described by DfE is to **produce data** to the return specification from your local case management system (CMS), **upload** this to the relevant return site, **review** any validation errors reported by the return site, and either **amend** these or provide notes as to their causes. Finally, an LA representative must **sign off** the final return.

In practice, the typical approach is to **do as little work as possible within the return site**, and repeatedly submit fresh files from local sources until the number of remaining validation errors is minimal. After uploading a fresh local file, you can export an error report from the return site, group the error records by reason and/or by child ID, and identify:

- which ones can be addressed automatically
- which require a change to the CIN export script from the CMS
- which need some business support to amend
- which cannot be fixed, and will need a comment in the return site and a request to DfE to approve the error.

You can then fix as much as possible before resubmitting a fresh file, and repeat this process until very few errors remain. For errors which cannot be cleared, you usually have the option either to make notes against individual child records (e.g. erroneous date which cannot be amended for some local reason), or add return-level comments to DfE explaining the issue (e.g. system change resulted in “extra” activity records for a large number of children).

Some LAs will make the majority of local amendments in their CMS and generate fresh files to upload. Other LAs will make more amendments directly on the upload file, using tools like notepad++ (with more detailed search / replace options or the ability to format for xml language) as alternatives to simple text editors. Usually you’ll see common corrections that you can make to multiple records.

At the end of the process, **make sure to leave time for local sign-off** before submitting the return. Service leaders will want to interrogate the data after errors have been cleared, and will welcome the opportunity to address any indications of poor performance before they approve the return submission. **This effectively means there are two data exercises** involved in the statutory return; the first, to resolve validation errors and ensure a valid return, and the second to check the data is a proper representation of local activity, and allow for making any necessary amendments to satisfy local service leads before sign-off.

References: key data publications

Most publication dates are finalised with a one month notice period, meaning the dates provided here are approximated.

See also: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/childrens-social-care-statistics>

Expected publication date	Publication title	References
<i>Please allow 1-2 weeks for updated versions of ChAT and BMT</i>		
June	Schools, pupils and their characteristics (National pupil database updates covering school census, alternative provision, early years census, 3-term absence, etc.)	Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)
June	Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-year (estimates extrapolated from national census data, used to generate “rates per 10,000 population” for inter-LA comparisons).	Population estimates - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
November	Children looked after in England including adoptions (outturn from the SSDA903 statutory data return, often closely scrutinised by media and local leaders).	Statistics: looked-after children - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
November	Children in need in England (outturn from the CIN Census statutory data return, often closely scrutinised by media and local leaders).	Statistics: children in need and child protection - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
November	Fostering in England (outturn from the Ofsted fostering dataset collection)	Fostering in England 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
February	Children’s social work workforce	Statistics: children's social work workforce - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
March	Outcomes for children in need including children looked after and adoption	Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting year 2023 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

References: Ofsted inspection process

Ofsted inspects services at short notice. The inspection is an opportunity to demonstrate the quality of local services and identify areas for improvement. It's also a very challenging experience for most of the people involved, including data colleagues. In most councils, the whole organisation will prioritise the inspection response over most other work for the duration of the inspection. A poor inspection outcome will generate work, cost, and probably also staff turnover – as well as increasing the burden of work relating to Ofsted/DfE scrutiny in future years.

The inspection timeline differs slightly by type of inspection, as detailed in Ofsted's guidance documents. For CSC data people, the most relevant types are **ILACS** ([Inspection of local authority children's services](#), focused on the LA), **JTAI** ([joint targeted area inspection](#), focused on LA and partner organisations), and **SEND** ([special educational needs and disabilities](#)).

After notification of inspection, the LA will have a very short timeframe to **produce "Annex A" documents, including the Annex A child level lists, and check it before sending to Ofsted**. Most LAs will use their Annex A child level lists to populate a fresh copy of the ChAT report to provide to Ofsted at this point. (Annex A is the section of the inspection guidance detailing all the data required from the LA to support inspection). An Ofsted analyst may contact the LA to clarify any unclear data, but there's no formal analyst's meeting, so LA analysts may well not feel directly involved in inspection after providing Annex A.

During inspection, **analysts may well receive no further data requests from Ofsted; they will, however, receive requests from LA service leads** for data, analysis or investigatory work to support them in responding to Ofsted's key lines of enquiry (KLOEs). This can be an intensive period and the data team should plan before inspection how they will support service leads through this time, including planning how and when to respond to out-of-hours and last-minute requests for help.

Ofsted advises LAs to be pragmatic about inspection preparation, and say that they accept that not all data will be perfect, nor all answers. In reality, most LAs will be preparing intensively if they expect inspection in the near future.

The inspection outcome will be informally and confidentially related to the service lead at the end of the on-site inspection; **a formal report will follow later**, and some local officers will have to wait until this is published before learning the outcome.

References: Ofsted data requirements

Ofsted inspect Local Authorities through the **inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS) framework** (link to guidance [here](#)), as well as part of the **joint area targeted area inspection (JTAI) framework** (link to guidance [here](#)). ILACS is split into standard and short inspections (which are published with a judgement), as well as focused visits and monitoring visits.

The main data request for ILACS is generally referred to as **Annex A** and, for short and standard inspections, involves uploading 11 **child-level lists** covering contacts through to adoption data (see right). The data template is available [here](#).

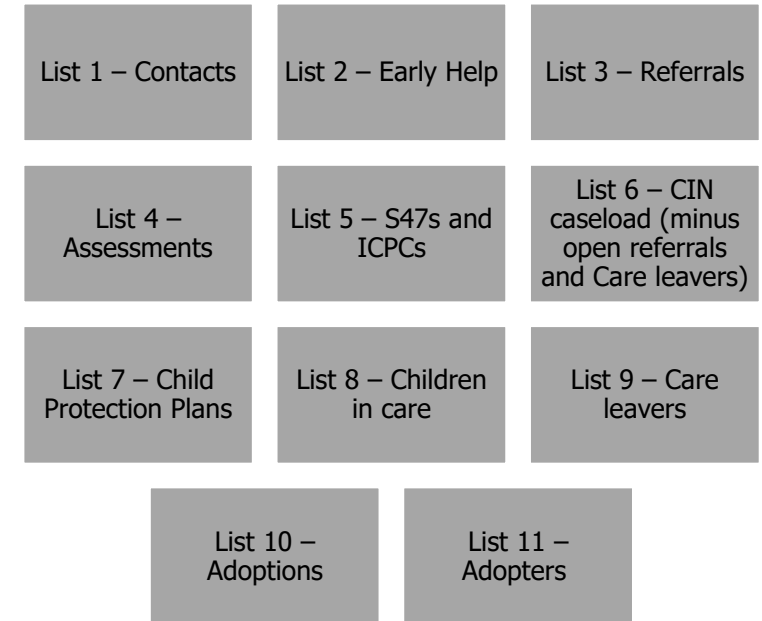
Annex A also includes a series of additional documents as described [here](#), with more specific requests about things like audits and workforce. It's important to know who in the LA is responsible for which items before the inspection begins, so that providing this information is straightforward during the inspection.

For **focused and monitoring visits**, the data request will depend on the theme of the visit and will be a filtered version of the standard / short request.

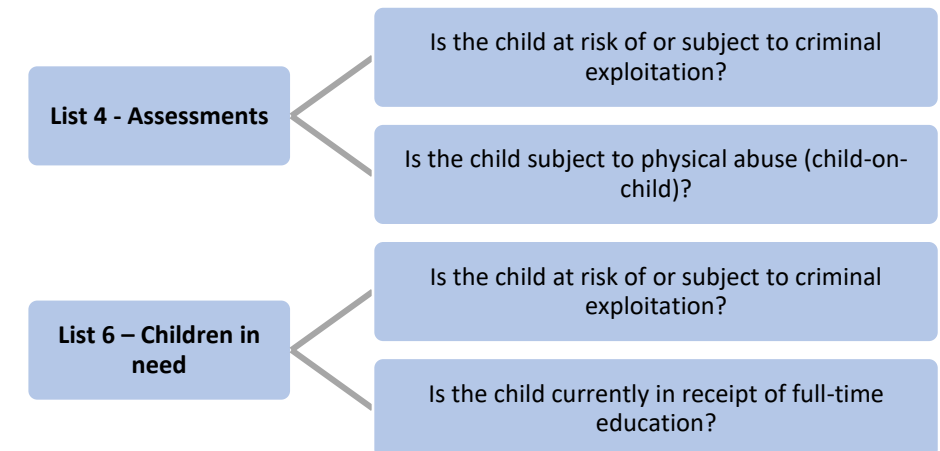
JTAI data demands depend on theme. The "front door" JTAI is ongoing (see guidance [here](#)). Other specific themes change each year. The current theme is serious youth violence (see guidance [here](#)). The data requirements are an adapted version of the ILACS request, and will add additional data items depending on the type of JTAI inspection (see example to the right).

For inspection queries, the LA should contact socialcareSAO@ofsted.gov.uk

ILACS child-level lists



Example JTAI child-level list additions



References: practice guidance

This page contains external links – we don't guarantee or endorse this externally-provided information

A wide range of organisations provide information online offering a broad understanding of the child social care landscape. Often this information is directed at the people in the process. For example:

- [Starting involvement with child social service](#)
- [Section 47](#)
- [Children in care](#)
- [CHILDREN'S SERVICES - Young Parents Advice \(frg.org.uk\)](#)

More detailed information can be found on the [coram child law advice website](#).

The government's website offers the [vital pieces of legislation](#), which may be too detailed for someone new to the subject.

The key current practice guidance document is [Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

Whilst largely not aimed at Data Analysts, some of the following may also help:

- [Must Know: Children's services guide to effective cross-council working | Local Government Association](#)
- [Chief executives 'must know' for children's services | Local Government Association](#)
- [Your first ten days as a portfolio holder for children's services | Local Government Association](#)
- [Performance management guide for local authority officers | Local Government Association](#)
- [Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures Manual](#)
- [Inspecting local authority children's services: Ofsted and the role of children's services scrutiny - Centre for Governance and Scrutiny \(cfgs.org.uk\)](#)

References: data guidance and resources

This page contains external links – we don't guarantee or endorse this externally-provided information

The following links are useful overviews for data and performance professionals supporting CSC:

- [Performance management guide for local authority officers | Local Government Association](#)
- [Inspecting local authority children's services: Ofsted and the role of children's services scrutiny - Centre for Governance and Scrutiny \(cfigs.org.uk\)](#)
- [Children's social care: dashboard and indicators update - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Children's social care data and digital strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The following links provide the key statutory guidance documents covering the major national data collections:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-children-in-need>
- <https://www.gov.uk/childcare-parenting/data-collection-for-looked-after-children>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-from-2018>

The following links provide useful sources of data to inform local analysis and visualisation work:

- [Home | Data to Insight](#) (includes national benchmarking tool incorporating all CSC data publications, plus quarterly data collections for CSC and EH)
- [Home | LG Inform \(local.gov.uk\)](#) (includes sector-wide performance information about all councils, as well as some CSC-specific report templates)
- [Local authority interactive tool \(LAIT\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) (includes a benchmarking tool and details of children's services "statistical neighbours")

References: learning opportunities

This page contains external links – we don't guarantee or endorse this externally-provided information. For opportunities involving significant time commitment, please discuss with your manager before pursuing, to help make sure the learning is appropriate to your role.

[Upskill yourself in key data skills \(corndel.com\)](https://corndel.com)

Level 4 Data Analyst apprenticeship funded by the Apprenticeship Levy, tailored to Children's Services contexts with support from Data to Insight.

[Publications \(datatoinsight.org\)](https://datatoinsight.org)

A range of reports and resources published by Data to Insight.

[Technical workshops | Data to Insight](#) | [Python Learning and Tools | Data to Insight](#) | [Python for PATCH | Data to Insight](#)

Three links to register for workshops or access online resources to help with learning Python and programming to enhance your analysis skillset.

[Data Mastery in Social Care \(councildatamastery.org\)](https://councildatamastery.org)

Tool developed by Essex County Council to help "identify where your organisation is at on the path to Data Mastery, and what it can do to improve".

[Learning resources for digital teams | Local Digital](#) | [DfE User Research Manual](#) | [Department for Education](#)

Set of brief introductory reports developed by DLUHC focused on wider "digital" practices like Agile, and some DfE resources for user research.

[Foundations - Evidence Driven Change Making](#)

"What Works Centre" for Children and Families, providing research and evidence to support local service delivery.

References: networking opportunities

This page contains few links – if you are employed in a local authority or equivalent children’s services role, you can contact us for more information about any of the below.

Regional performance groups and NPIMG

Each of the nine English regions operates a regional performance network for CSC data leads. The nine chairs of these groups meet quarterly as a national group called NPIMG. This helps regions stay in touch and share good practice, as well as ensuring information reaches as many colleagues as possible.

D2I open house, RIIA workshops, EH workshops

Data to Insight run a range of regular workshops open to all LA colleagues. The “open house” is a show-and-tell for current D2I work, which we open to all colleagues to attend and contribute to design and learning discussions. The RIIA and EH workshops discuss national findings from quarterly benchmarking data collections.

D2I slack

Data to Insight operates a free Slack workspace for LA data professionals to connect and ask each other for support. The community also serves as a beta testing group for new versions of D2I’s data tools. D2I also maintains a social media presence at <https://www.linkedin.com/company/datatoinsight/> and <https://twitter.com/datatoinsightUK>, sharing news about DfE data publications, D2I tool updates, and wider sector initiatives of interest.

D2I newsletter

D2I sends a newsletter to several hundred LA colleagues, usually containing details of updated data tools, key national data and digital developments, new projects, and upcoming D2I events. The newsletter goes to every member of www.datatoinsight.org and is also published at [Blog | Data to Insight](#)

DfE slack

DfE runs a Slack workspace for LAs to liaise with DfE, primarily around statutory data returns. There is also a service request form: [Data collections service request form - Details about your request - DfE Online Forms \(education.gov.uk\)](#)

References: some common abbreviations

ADCSS	Association of Directors of Children's Services	ECM	Every Child Matters	MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
ASGLB	Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board	EFH	Extra Familial Harm	MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
ASSET	Youth Justice Assessment Tool	EH	Early Help	NCY	National Curriculum Year
BME	Black And Minority Ethnic	EHCP	Education Healthcare Plan	NEET	Not In Education, Employment Or Training
BVPI	Best Value Performance Indicator (now defunct)	EHE	Elective Home Education	NHS	National Health Service
CAF	Common Assessment Framework (now defunct)	FFT	Fischer Family Trust (Estimates Of Pupil Performance)	NIS	National Indicator Set (now defunct)
CAFCASS	Children And Family Court Advisory And Support Service	FGC	Family Group Conference	NPIMG	National Performance and Information Management Group
CAMHS	Child And Adolescent Mental Health Services	FGM	Female Genital Mutilation	OFSTED	Office For Standards In Education, Children's Services And Skills
CDOP	Child Death Overview Panel	FOI	Freedom of Information	ONS	Office For National Statistics
CIN	Children In Need	FS	Foundation Stage	PAF	Performance Assessment Framework For Social Services (now defunct)
CIPFA	Central Institute Of Public Finance Accountants	FSM	Free School Meals	PbR	Payment By Results
CLA	Children Looked After	GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation	PEP	Personal Education Plan
CMS	Case Management System	HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector(ate)	PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
CP	Child Protection	HV	Health Visitor	S47	Section 47 Enquiries (child protection activity)
CQC	Care Quality Commission	ICPC	Initial Child Protection Conference	SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
CSC	Children's Social Care	ICS	Integrated Children's System	SGO	Special Guardianship Order
CYP	Children & Young People	IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer	SHBOL	Stable Homes Built on Love
D2I	Data to Insight (sector-led service for CSC data professionals)	ILACS	Inspection Of Local Authority Children's Services	SSDA903	Annual data return about Children Looked After
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service	JTAI	Joint Targeted Area Inspection	TF	Troubled Families (now renamed Stronger Families)
DCS	Director Of Children's Services	KPI	Key Performance Indicator	WT	Working Together
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act	KS	Key Stage	YJB	Youth Justice Board
DfE	Department for Education	LA	Local Authority	YJS	Youth Justice System
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care	LAC	Looked After Child(ren)	YO	Youth Offenders
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	LGA	Local Government Association	YOI	Young Offender Institution
DOB	Date of Birth	LSCP	Local Safeguarding Children Partnership	YOT	Youth Offending Team

References: acknowledgements

This guidance draws from several sources, some of which are noted on the appropriate slides. Special thanks are due also to the individuals below, who contributed either to the creation of material within this report, or to the concept of the report:

Adam Curtis, Bristol City Council

Dahya Mistry, 3ngage IT Associates

Denis Butler, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Victoria Thornber, Derby City Council

Awais Raza, Slough Borough Council

Peter Worthington, Waltham Forest Borough Council

Cath Bentley, Ceri Jones, and Lorraine Sutcliffe, Calderdale Council

Alistair Herbert, Georgie Pym, John Foster, Joseph Cornford-Hutchings, and William Levack-Payne, Data to Insight (hosted by East Sussex County Council)

Jonathan Eastwood, Ofsted

Hannah McNamee, City of York Council

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