

This item was submitted to [Loughborough's Research Repository](#) by the author.
Items in Figshare are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise indicated.

The cost calculator for children's services: extension for all children in need - mapping children in need services.

PLEASE CITE THE PUBLISHED VERSION

PUBLISHER

© Loughborough University

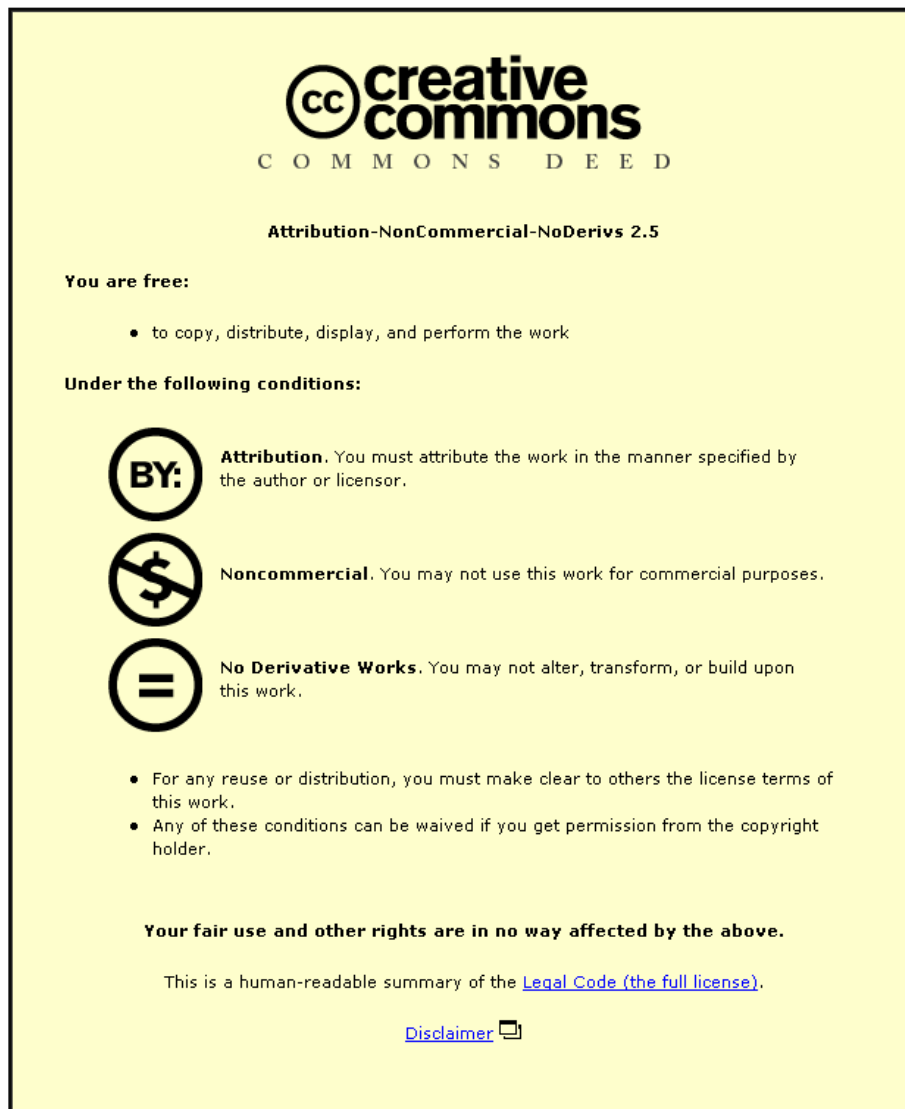
LICENCE

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

REPOSITORY RECORD

McDermid, Samantha. 2019. "The Cost Calculator for Children's Services: Extension for All Children in Need - Mapping Children in Need Services.". figshare. <https://hdl.handle.net/2134/3573>.

This item was submitted to Loughborough's Institutional Repository by the author and is made available under the following Creative Commons Licence conditions.



For the full text of this licence, please go to:
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/>

The Cost Calculator for Children's Services: extension for all children in need - mapping children in need services

Samantha McDermid

Key words: children in need, unit costs, family support services

Background and introduction

Developed as part of an ongoing research programme exploring the costs and outcomes of child welfare interventions, the cost calculator methodology is a 'bottom up' method for calculating the unit costs of placing and supporting looked after children. The methodology uses the unit costs of social work activities as the basis for building up the costs over time of placements and part placements. It takes into account social work activity time associated with eight processes that cover the activity to support a child. This allows a 'true cost' of supporting a child in their placement to be calculated as it includes the placement cost, as well as the additional cost of social worker and other social care professional time.

Following the publication of Messages from Research (Department of Health 1995) and more recently, Every Child Matters (Department for Education and Skills 2004), greater impetus has been placed on the importance of developing services provided to all children in need, for achieving positive outcomes for all children. Work is currently being undertaken to extend the cost calculator methodology to include all children in need, making it possible for local authorities to cost a fuller range of services and to cost family support interventions provided under section 17 arrangements (Children Act 1989).

Purpose

The initial stage of extending the cost calculator to children in need sought to gather data regarding the prevalence and nature of services accessed by children in need. Fifteen local authorities were invited to identify the services they solely or jointly funded or commissioned to support children identified as in need.

These services were subsequently configured into a mapping template designed to capture comprehensive information regarding the services identified. The local authorities were asked to categorise each service by the Every Child Matters outcomes and to identify whether the service was universal, targeted or specialist, give some expenditure information and briefly describe the service.

From the completed maps, 'core services', defined as those services which were most frequently cited and incurred the highest proportion of the Children Services budget, were identified as being the most useful to be costed in the pilot extended cost calculator.

Key findings

The focus on early intervention and prevention, including the introduction of the Common Assessment Framework, as emphasised by Every Child Matters has led to disparities in how authorities define a child in need. Examination of a sample of policy and procedure documents also identified considerable variations in the interpretation and implementation of the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health, Department for Education and Skills and Home Office 2000).

It was also clear that the partnership and integration agenda has been fully embraced across agencies, with the maps indicating numerous agencies and providers cited as delivering a range of interventions. Furthermore, there were many inconsistencies in the level of child data recorded. These factors may lead to an underestimation of the numbers of children receiving support under section 17 arrangements.

The research identified highly varied and diverse range of services for children in need. However, some core services did emerge to inform the immediate development of the cost calculator for all children in need. Two types of services were identified: 'case management teams', where social care professional manage the daily needs of a case; and the 'additional services' which include the groups or sessions aimed at addressing specific needs. The case management teams were consistently the most frequently cited and took up the largest proportion on the social care budget. The mapping identified a number of core additional services.

Next steps for the Cost Calculator

The mapping highlighted some key areas to consider in the extension of the cost calculator for children in need. These factors will be explored with the four research authorities participating in the programme. This includes identifying, measuring and costing of the activity of the case management teams. The additional services identified through the mapping as core services will also be costed in the pilot version of the extended cost calculator. The research team are currently mapping the social care processes and activity for children in need, and data collection begins in Autumn 2008.

Implications for policy

The policy emphasis on early intervention, prevention and integration is having an impact on support for children in need:

- The range of financial information and child level data sources is complex. There are strict accounting regulations for public authorities, but within these the Department for Children Schools and Families may like to consider how it can influence the collection of this data to enhance child level knowledge.
- The mapping has illustrated that further work is required on the relationship between costs and outcomes. Not all family support services are costly, but may be very beneficial in terms of outcomes.
- Although, the Every Child Matters policy of integration and the development of early intervention services is being wholeheartedly embraced, the maps demonstrate a wide range of interpretations of the 'integration agenda' which are not always comparable and consistent.

References

Children Act 1989. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Department for Education and Skills (2004) *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*. London: DfES. Accessed 14/02/08 at <http://publications.everychildmatters.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DfES10812004.pdf>

Department of Health (1995) *Messages from Research; studies in child protection*, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Department of Health, Department for Education and Skills and The Home Office (2000) *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*, London: The Stationery Office. Accessed 14/02/08 at <http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/doh/facn/fw-00.htm>

Contact details

Samantha McDermid, Research Associate, Centre for Child and Family Research, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 3TU. UK. Email: s.mcdermid@lboro.ac.uk

This paper may be referenced as: McDermid, S. (2008) 'The Cost Calculator for Children's Services: extension for all children in need - mapping children in need services.' *Paper presented at the Care Matters: Transforming Lives – Improving Outcomes Conference, incorporating the 8th International Looking After Children Conference, 7-9 July 2008, Keble College Oxford UK.*