

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.

Annual report - Data analysis network for children's services

PLEASE CITE THE PUBLISHED VERSION

PUBLISHER

© Loughborough University

LICENCE

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

REPOSITORY RECORD

Ward, Harriet, and Mike Gatehouse. 2019. "Annual Report - Data Analysis Network for Children's Services".
figshare. <https://hdl.handle.net/2134/2937>.



Annual Report

2000

A project of
The Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University

Director
Dr Harriet Ward

Co-ordinator
Mike Gatehouse

Member authorities
Gwynedd, Newport, Pembrokeshire, Rhondda-Cynon-Taff, Swansea, Wrexham

Summary Points

Key Findings

- ➡ DAN members cannot at present easily or reliably produce most of the data on the education and health of looked after children required for Children First.
- ➡ The most important reason for this information shortfall is not technical, but that the information is not clearly defined, 'known' and used for operational purposes and is therefore not clearly recorded whether on paper or computer files.
- ➡ Most of the suggested indicators for Children First are too poorly defined and specified as to population and time point or period to be consistently and comparably measurable.
- ➡ It is wrong to assume that computer-based methods are better or quicker than manual ones. For many Children First indicators (e.g. SATS and GCSE results), the numbers of looked after children in the relevant age group in any one authority are so small that a manual search is likely to be quicker and more reliable than a computer-based one.
- ➡ New computer-based information systems will not on their own lead to any improvement either in reporting statistics for Children First or in outcomes for the children concerned. They will yield such improvements only if their introduction is carefully planned and phased; historic data is systematically cleaned and transferred; data entry is quality controlled and carefully dovetailed with case management and recording; and each child's computer records are routinely reviewed, corrected and updated.
- ➡ Data collected and analysed for managers or external bodies is rarely fed back to practitioners and used to inform work with individual children.

These issues need to be recognised and addressed, and they will form a major part of DAN's work in the coming year.

Key Points¹

- ➡ In its first year DAN has secured the support and participation of its six Welsh member local authorities, held two full conferences and a workshop and delivered a report to the National Assembly for Wales which has had some impact on the future choice of indicators for the MAP returns for Children First.
- ➡ We decided to concentrate exclusively on looked after children, and in particular on those indicators which the local authorities are required to deliver for Children First.
- ➡ The first research period (April - September 2000) focused on education indicators. The present period (September 2000 - March 2001) is focused on health indicators and will begin to look at the key indicators relating to placements.
- ➡ We adopted a 3-pronged strategy of examining Indicators, Triggers and Dividends:
Indicators: looking at indicators, variables and their definition.
Triggers: identifying 'trigger' events in the lives of looked after children and the processes by which these lead to information being recorded and data stored.
Dividends: attempting to identify the 'dividends' for social workers, team and social services managers which should be provided by information systems to facilitate their work and motivate ownership and quality control of data.

¹ Notation: throughout this report the symbol ➡ denotes a key finding or recommendation

- ➡ DAN does not and could not pretend to design entire information systems. Instead we have taken the approach of examining particular areas of information, attempting to identify problems and developing small-scale new approaches and tools for dealing with them.
- ➡ We are attempting to keep in touch with several other ongoing initiatives which affect information about looked after children, by attending meetings and conferences and/or receiving documents:
 - The LAC Support Groups.
 - The SSDA-903 Returns and revisions to them.
 - The NAW Performance Management Project.
 - The development of an Integrated Children's System through revising and merging Looking After Children and the tools supporting the Assessment Framework for children in need.
- ➡ A separate research project co-ordinated by Loughborough University is running parallel to DAN to determine the costs and consequences of placement choices for children looked after away from home. This aims to produce a decision analysis model for use by local authority social service departments. One of the DAN member authorities, Pembrokeshire, is also participating in this project. We plan to make the results, as they begin to emerge in the second half of 2001, available to DAN members, who will also have early access to the model.
- ➡ Issues for further discussion concern:
 - Timetable for meetings and attendance by member authorities.
 - Expanding membership to other authorities.
 - Future directions for 2001.

First Annual Report

Purpose Of DAN

A number of new developments have led to increased interest in the need to gather uniform data and develop systems that can analyse information in a meaningful way and produce comparable reports. These include the implementation of the Looking After Children system in England and Wales, the development of a Performance Assessment Framework in England and the introduction of Quality Protects in England and Children First in Wales. The data analysis network (DAN) is a forum established to co-ordinate work on data extraction and analysis so as to ensure that information in this area is both accurate, meaningfully employed at both an individual and strategic level and genuinely comparable over time and between authorities.

Background

The idea of a data analysis network (DAN) derived from the perception that universal implementation of the Looking After Children system would lead to uniform data with the result that uniform information systems would become both possible and necessary.

Funding for local authorities to participate in a network was made available for three years in Wales through a grant from Wales Office of Research and Development for Health & Social Care —WORD. All 22 Welsh local authorities were invited to participate and, from the volunteers, six authorities were selected mainly on a geographical basis: Pembrokeshire, Swansea, Rhondda-Cynon-Taff and Newport in the south and Gwynedd and Wrexham in the north².

The work of the network is coordinated by Mike Gatehouse on a part-time basis under the direction of Dr Harriet Ward, Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University. Additional support is provided by Professor David Quinton, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol and Ms Jean Soper, Department of Economics, University of Leicester.

A number of factors, events and previous research efforts contributed to the particular context in which DAN has begun its work:

- Local government reorganisation in Wales produced 22 unitary authorities, most of them quite small. The new authorities have faced particular challenges in trying to sustain and improve the range of services (notably in housing, social services and education) previously offered by much larger units. Although collaborative arrangements between authorities are possible and are being encouraged by the National Assembly, it is proving difficult to get these under way.
- The National Assembly for Wales came into being on July 1 1999, taking over supervision of the former Welsh Office, including the Social Services Inspectorate and the Children and Families Division. In some ways the situation of the Assembly is similar to that of the unitary authorities —a relatively small body attempting to provide all the services and support functions (in the sectors under its jurisdiction) of a much larger one (the Civil Service in England).
- The first two factors have meant that in Wales resources to provide consultation, training and support for new initiatives in the area of children's social services are much more

² Where tables and specific data are presented in this report, the names of member local authorities have been replaced by letter codes.

limited than in England. This gives additional impetus to the work of DAN, especially if DAN can identify and disseminate examples of good practice.

- In addition, all local authorities in Wales have been required to implement the Looking After Children system, designed to guide practitioners through the task of gathering information, making and reviewing plans and assessing outcomes for children looked after away from home. Implementation in Wales has benefited from the work done between 1996-1999 by Anne Crowley, worker for the LAC System Support Programme.

Further initiatives which contribute to the context within which DAN has begun its work are:

- The implementation of Best Value as a means of assessing the performance of local authorities in England and Wales across the entire range of their services.
- The implementation in Wales of Children First (Welsh Office Circular 20/99, April 1999) —similar to Quality Protects in England, and in part a response to the Utting report— with a requirement to produce an annual Management Action Plan.
- The requirement to collect statistical data on performance, initially through the SSDA-903 return, and in the future through a range of new performance indicators.
- The publication in February 2000 of the Waterhouse Report³ which drew attention once more to serious deficiencies in the care of looked after children in Wales.
- A detailed audit in Newport of Placements and Placement Patterns conducted by David Quinton and Lynne Bulley⁴.
- The commissioning by the National Assembly for Wales of a study of Performance Management Information for Social Services from the Nuffield Institute for Health⁵; and the establishment of a Performance Management Programme which has begun to hold a series of workshops with local authorities to discuss information, indicators and measurement.
- The ongoing efforts of local authorities to design and implement computer-based information systems capable of yielding the type of summary information and indicators of outcomes being required by the Audit Commission, Best Value, Children First and other frameworks, as well as for their own internal evaluation, management and planning purposes.
- A study of the Placement of Looked After Children in Wales, commissioned by the National Assembly⁶.

Programme

In April 2000 DAN drew up its first year programme of work (*see the full document in Appendix A*). It was agreed in the first year to focus on the information relating to looked after children, especially that required for Children First, examining both the content of the information and the means of recording and storing it. We decided to work with three

³ *Lost in Care - Report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Care in the Former County Council Areas of Gwynedd and Clwyd since 1974*

⁴ *Audit of Placements and Placement Patterns; Jan 1 1997 to June 30 1998 —Report submitted to Newport County borough, David Quinton & Lynne Bulley, Centre for Family Policy & Child Welfare, School for Policy Studies, University of Bristol, April 1999*

⁵ *Performance Management Information Project, Final Report*, Nigel Jones, Simon Lowles, Neil Singleton, Peter Whittinham, Nuffield Institute for Health, June 2000

⁶ *A Study of the Placement of Looked After Children in Wales —A Report to the Wales Office of Research and Development, Health & Social Care*, Andrew Pithouse, Elizabeth Jones, Anne Crowley, Ian Butler & Pat Smail, Cardiff University School of Social Sciences, April 2000

specific sub-sets of information on looked after children: education, health and placements. The following framework was established for our work:

Information recording and storage

- **Computer-based systems:** DAN would attempt to establish, with each Local Authority:
 - What is currently possible with the existing information collection and IT systems.
 - What changes are in the pipeline.
 - The main problems with data entry, validation, updating, reporting and analysis.
 - What changes to systems, specifications and practice are feasible to procure improvements on the four focal fronts.
- **Paper-based systems:** although not specifically concerned with case recording, DAN would examine how information from LAC and other paper forms and case files is used, especially where computerised systems are not available or do not provide all the information required. We would also attempt to trace how changes to paper records are reflected on the computer and vice versa.

Information content

- **specification:** identifying a short-list of key variables that can feasibly be collected.
- **consistency:** establishing uniform definitions to ensure consistency over time and comparability between Local Authorities.
- **quality and flow:** linking information generation to key 'triggers' (events in the daily life and management of the looked-after child) and to 'dividends' (provision of essential operational information required for the daily work of social workers, team leaders and social services managers).
- **feedback loops:** exploring the best way the information can be used within each local authority.

Methodology

DAN's work has been undertaken through a series of conferences and workshops held for DAN members (*see list in Appendix K*), complemented by on-site visits by the co-ordinator to each of the member local authorities.

In looking at each specific information sub-set (education, health, placements, etc.) we plan to use similar methodology to explore the aspects of information (both recording and content) outlined in our programme, as indicated in the following table:

DAN methods	Information Framework					
	Recording & Storage		Content			
	Computer-based	Paper-based	Specification	Consistency	Quality & Flow	Feedback Loops
Info Systems Surveys	✓					
Variable & Indicator Surveys	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Triggers	✓				✓	✓
Dividends					✓	✓
Profiles	✓	✓	✓			✓

Information Systems Surveys

At the outset, each member authority was invited to complete a questionnaire indicating the present state and future plans for their computer-based systems. In addition members were asked to consider a Select Variable List⁷ and state how they could obtain data for each item. During subsequent DAN workshops we have attempted to ask of each information item the questions:

- How and when is it recorded?
- Is the information held manually or on computer?
- Can the required indicator be extracted from the data as it is at present recorded?

In the next phase of the project we plan to acquire more direct experience of the different computer systems, observing their actual use by social workers, administrative staff and managers in each authority.

With its limited skills and resources, DAN cannot hope to design or significantly alter any computer-based information system. However, we hope that our work will assist member authorities and provide them with some tools to commission and implement better computer systems. This will become particularly important following the publication of an information model for the future Integrated Children's System and probable moves both by local authorities and software suppliers to provide a single comprehensive software system to manage all aspects of services for children.

We hope in addition to develop sample database components in Microsoft Access (data and lookup tables, screen forms and printed reports). Members will be able to use these with their own data to develop prototypes to test with users and to demonstrate to software suppliers and their own IT staff.

Variables & Indicators

Starting from the list of indicators required for Children First, member authorities are asked to indicate on a spreadsheet provided:

- Can they/will they in future be able to deliver the data?
- Is the information held on manual or electronic files?
- Problems of population referred to, definition, time period and units.

Results are collated and compared to the specific experience of the MAP returns for Children First.

Triggers

Member authorities are asked to indicate on a spreadsheet provided the various triggers in the daily lives and case management of looked after children which generate the information we are seeking. An example of a trigger is 'child receives GCSE exam results'. We then seek to trace what are the responses of the various actors (parent, carer, health/education service, social services), and where the resulting information is recorded (case file, LAC forms, computer-based information system, etc.). The aim is to improve both the quality and flow of the information by demonstrating how it is or can be generated by 'real' life events rather than 'artificial' acts of census or accounting, and by direct 'actors' rather than potentially remote administrators.

Dividends

On the principle that staff will only input accurate data to information systems and update it regularly if they both perceive and realise direct benefits from doing so, DAN members are encouraged to identify the benefits that do or could accrue to social services staff (social

⁷ Taken from 'Using data from the *Looking After Children* materials to measure and improve performance', discussion paper by Anne Crowley, LAC Development Worker, the Welsh Office, March 1999

workers, team leaders, team administrators, managers and others) from the information systems they are asked to maintain. Examples of such 'dividends' are: the facility to generate name, address and basic information about each looked after child from a computer database to avoid repetitive entry on LAC and other manual forms; the ability to repeat information for siblings; a computer screen showing available foster places and contact details to speed up placements.

It is important to ask what happens to information that is collected or collated for internal management or external reporting purposes (e.g. for Children First). We have found that often it is not 'returned down the line' to teams, social workers and case files, so that a potential dividend is lost (a good example of this is information on school exam results derived from LEAs, *see below*).

Profiles

To find out about the education or health of a looked after child it is often necessary to look at many different pages both within the LAC system and in case files. We have started discussion work to draw up 'profiles' for information on education and health. Each profile is conceived as the information that could be recorded on a single sheet of paper, index card or computer screen and which accurately summarises all that needs to be known about that dimension of the life of a looked after child. It will probably need to combine both current and historical information (e.g. for education, both the name and details of the school currently attended and a list of all the schools previously attended by the child).

The profiles are intended to satisfy as far as possible, and in descending order of priority, the information requirements of: day-to-day case management by social workers; background and context for statutory case reviews; management and monitoring at team and authority level; national requirements, especially Children First and performance indicator frameworks.

The profiles (*see Appendix J: Designing Summary Information Profiles*) are intended to focus discussion of information specification and feedback to user requirements. They may be used as a basis for developing summary information requirements for the forthcoming Integrated Children's System.

Tools

The methods outlined above have tended to yield a number of potentially useful and reusable items (spreadsheets, lists of variables, fact sheets, database components, etc.), some of which are included in the appendices to this report.

We intend to make these 'tools' available (by e-mail, on CD and, eventually, on a website). As their number and quality increases, we will collect them into 'kits' which could be made available to councils for social-worker training, system specification and design and other purposes.

Research

Computer-based information systems

The full response to the questionnaire on computer-based systems is presented in Appendix B⁸. The following details are worth noting:

- Two out of the six authorities use a system from Sheridan (either SSID or its replacement SWIFT); one is using OLM's Carefirst; one has an old Uniplex/Unix system with limited uses; one uses mainly manual systems; one has an Oracle based system developed in-house.

⁸ In accordance with DAN practice, the names of the individual authorities have been replaced in the table by letter codes.

- Three authorities use simple office database packages to develop their own simple research or operational data alongside the large commercial systems they have purchased.
- All authorities had considerable difficulties in producing from their computer-based systems even the quite simple data required for the 1999 MAP return for Children First. Three out of the six based their results on a sample rather than population data.
- Three out of the six are in the midst of a major upgrade or implementation of a new computer-based system.
- In most authorities data entry is currently performed by team administrative staff. Most, however, are moving towards direct input by social workers.

A number of conclusions can be tentatively drawn from this survey and from the visits conducted to the various authorities:

- ➔ Existing computer-based systems are failing to produce the kind of data required for Children First. There is no guarantee that the new systems planned or currently being introduced will solve this difficulty.
- ➔ Computer-based systems tend to be driven by certain routine administrative requirements (e.g. a system to make payments to carers; the need to compile the 903 returns). They are often too inflexible to accommodate new or changing data requirements, let alone the 'one-off' or relatively short-term demands of the many reviews and performance measurements currently being introduced or under discussion.
- ➔ Both computer- and paper-based information systems tend to be geared much more to the storage than the retrieval of information.
- ➔ In general it is highly unlikely that data which is missing from paper case files will be present and accurate in computer systems. The existence of fields for such items as dental checks on the computer record of a looked after child is no guarantee whatsoever that that information will be entered, or entered correctly.
- ➔ Quality control of the data in computer systems is seldom considered. Reviews of information should include routine, case-by-case review of the accuracy, completeness and non-redundancy of all electronically stored information.
- ➔ The number of computers per social worker is important. A 1:1 ratio (or at least one PC each for as many social workers as are likely to be in the office at any one time) is essential if direct data input by social workers is to be successful.
- ➔ Physical space is an important consideration —many team offices are extremely cramped so that the introduction of additional computers is difficult or unwelcome.
- ➔ Training and support are vital. Training on new systems is often scheduled before they are up and running so that staff cannot directly apply what they learn and have commonly forgotten it by the time they need to use it. Ongoing support is equally important both to help staff use the system and to adapt and improve it in response to staff requirements.
- ➔ Insufficient consideration is given to 'dividends' for those who input data to the computer-based systems: screen forms, searching, filtering and browsing facilities and printed reports, which meet the daily operational requirements of social work practice, would 'reward' them for the tedious chore of data entry and give them an incentive to ensure the accuracy and timely updating of all data.

The responses to the exploration of a Select Variable List⁹ are shown in Appendix C. They produce the following notable points:

- ➡ When they examine a list of variables or indicators local authority staff tend to have greater faith in the capacity of their computer-based information systems than is supported by their own experience of compiling specific returns (especially the MAP).
- ➡ Differences between the authorities are startling. One reported that it could obtain data from its computer-based information system to satisfy all 34 select variables, another that it could satisfy only 1 of them.
- ➡ The most problematic area is information on health. Most could obtain it only manually, if at all, and several reported that the information is not recorded on their LAC forms.
- ➡ From the authorities' responses it is once again apparent that they often neglect the LAC forms as a source of data, even where these are present and have been completed. This point was reinforced in the specific work undertaken on the availability of education and health data. One is led to the conclusion that the LAC system is regarded essentially as a recording, not an information system.
- ➡ Formal monitoring of the quality of information held in case files (including the presence or absence of completed LAC forms) is not routinely undertaken in most authorities. Although one authority's reviewing officer routinely inspects the case file and LAC forms of each looked after child for accuracy and completeness at or before the formal review meeting, there was strong resistance from the same officer to making this a formal requirement of the review ('it's not my job to be the admin policeman'). It would, nevertheless, be useful to make a separate *information* review —of *both* the paper (case and LAC files) *and* computer records for a looked after child— a formal part of the preparation for each case review meeting, with team managers responsible and reviewing officers being required to check that the information review had been completed.

Education indicators

A consolidated spreadsheet showing the result of the work on education indicators is included in Appendix D, a sample of the Triggers identified by one authority is shown at Appendix E, and the results from an exploration of how the data on examination results was compiled for the MAP returns are shown in Appendix F.

The following points emerged from discussion at the DAN workshops:

Variables & indicators

- ➡ **Populations:** the various Children First indicators need to specify precisely the population to which they refer (in most cases this will be 'all children of school age being looked after') and the point or period of time which defines that population (e.g. 'being looked after on March 31 of that year' or 'who were looked after at some time during the year ending March 31...' or 'looked after during the 1999-2000 school year', etc.).
- ➡ **Time periods:** for all education data and, arguably, for all data on children, it would be easier and more useful to take the school year as the relevant time period.
- ➡ **Minimum periods of being looked after:** several indicators stipulate children who have been looked after for a particular period (3 months, 6 months, etc.). The authorities questioned the relevance of these periods and indicated that such qualifications made it harder to obtain accurate data.
- ➡ **Care leavers:** there are particular difficulties around the concept of care-leaver. It is not clear whether the indicators refer only to young people aged 16+ leaving care after a

⁹ Anne Crowley, op.cit.

considerable period of being looked after or whether all young people of that age who were at some time looked after should be included; nor is it clear how long a period of care or accommodation makes a young person eligible for inclusion.

- ➡ **'not attending school'**: it is not clear how pupils who are attending the various different types of Pupil Referral Units or being taught at home should be classified. LEAs and Social Services may define this differently. Schools may also mis- or under-report; some troublesome children may not be formally excluded from school, although they are not encouraged to attend.
- ➡ **'average attainment'**: CF indicator 2.2b asks authorities to report 'the number of children achieving no less than average attainment of children from similar backgrounds living in their area'. All the authorities reported difficulties in deciding what criteria to use for 'children from similar backgrounds' and, even if criteria could be decided, how to obtain the reference data. They recommended that the comparison should be either with all children in the local authority area, or in the same school. They asked whether allowance should be made for the high proportion of looked after children who have special educational needs.
- ➡ **SATS results**: the indicator should ask what proportion of children attained the expected level for their age and key-stage. Authorities should also be asking how many children did not sit their SATS at the expected time.
- ➡ **GCSE results**: as expressed, the indicator ('achieving at least one GCSE or GNVQ') sets an extremely low standard (far lower than those included in NAW targets for education), and ignores questions of disability and/or special educational need.

Joy Rees, who has been engaged in research on the education of looked after children for Children in Wales and several Welsh local authorities, attended one of the DAN workshops and raised several additional points, which will also be considered in future DAN discussions:

- **Expected class for age**: a high proportion of looked after children are not in the 'expected' school class for their age, either because of their special needs or because disrupted lives have led to much missed schooling. Case files and reviews and returns to Children First, etc., should identify this variable.
- **Reading & CAT tests**: the reading levels and cognitive abilities of looked after children should be monitored (as these provide a much earlier indication of need for intervention than SATS or GCSE results), though there may be difficulties due to an absence of uniform practice in testing.
- **SEN**: it is important to record all special educational needs (and the relevant Code of Practice level), not just formal SEN statements. 30-50% of children in public care are on the SEN Code of Practice, compared with 11% in the general population.
- **PEPs**: the imminent introduction of Personal Education Plans should ensure that more data is routinely collected. The information in PEPs should correlate closely with that in the LAC forms and any future Education Profile.
- **WJEC database**: Joy had been able to identify approximately 80% of the relevant age looked after children in her study on WED, the database of the WJEC. WED stores exam results for all children in Welsh schools from SATS Key Stage 2 to AS Level.

Triggers

Three member authorities provided detailed responses to exercises identifying trigger events which generate relevant data on education (*See Appendix E for one of the most detailed responses*). Triggers identified were: child admitted to school; child commended at school; school (annual) report; SATS results; GCSE results; child goes on school trip; parents'

evening; immunisation; developmental tests at school; special need identified; child disciplined; child suspended; child excluded. From the details supplied the following points emerged:

- ➡ Authorities agree that the information from all the listed trigger events is or should be recorded on case files.
- ➡ Most, but not all of the information is/should be recorded on LAC forms.
- ➡ Only one authority —significantly the one which has developed its own in-house system—records the information on a computer system.

This system of identifying triggers was considered to be a useful means of organising the flow of information and improving its consistency and quality. If specific information is found to be missing, then a good rule of thumb might be to identify the trigger event(s) which generate it, the responses of relevant actors and whether and where the event and the information it generates are recorded. For instance, if information on the schools currently attended by looked after children is defective, then managers could identify the trigger (child admitted to school), see what action is taken at the time by the LEA and Social Services and ensure that appropriate records are generated (in the case file, LAC EIR2 form and computer system). This is also a useful way of checking whether information entered in case files or LAC forms is posted to computer systems and vice versa.

Dividends

Member authorities also identified the following 'dividends' (envisaged as paper forms, database screens or printed reports) that would be of obvious use to social workers, team leaders and managers:

- Summary report on the education of an individual looked after child.
- List of looked after children by school attended.
- List of looked after children with special educational needs.
- List of SATS & GCSE results of all looked after children.
- List of children expected to sit SATS & GCSE exams in the summer of the current year.
- Termly or annual list of attendance figures (or recorded absences) for all looked after children.
- List of disciplinary measures, temporary and permanent exclusions of looked after children.

These responses were the result of relatively early discussions and this work will be further developed next year when attention focuses more on the construction of feedback loops.

Feedback loops

Information feedback loops appear to be at best informal and at worst altogether absent. Information compiled for management or external review purposes (such as Children First returns to NAW) is seldom fed back to social workers or placed on individual case files.

This point was dramatically illustrated in discussion of GCSE and SATS results. Despite the fact that most of the information should be present in case files and, especially, recorded on LAC forms, all the member authorities stated, that they would seek it from their colleagues in Education. LEAs would be asked to provide a list of looked after children in appropriate age groups together with their exam results. When asked whether the individual results would then be extracted and placed on case files and/or discussed with social workers, the authorities admitted that there was no mechanism for this to take place.

It is noteworthy that, while parents would expect to find out about educational progress directly from the child concerned, the school report or the teacher, social services departments find it necessary to approach the LEA. Co-operation between the two

departments is generally good, and gives meaning to the concept 'corporate parenting'. However, this lack of an individual touch provides a neat illustration of the inability of such parenting 'by committee' to replace the vital advocacy good parents exercise continually on behalf of their children.

Report to National Assembly for Wales

The above information was collated and submitted as a brief report from DAN to the National Assembly for Wales in August in the hope of influencing work to revise the guidelines for the second set of MAP Reports for Children First. *(See Appendix H for the full text of this report).*

The Assembly's initial response is summarised in the table below:

Point	DAN recommendation	NAW initial response
Time periods	School year would be better than calendar or financial	Point taken, but any change would have to be made consistent with the Performance Management and Best Value frameworks.
Period versus point incidence	Needs to be clarified for all indicators	Point taken.
Progress or outcome measures	Include measures of progress of individual children against their previous level/achievement	Agreed.
Sub-Samples	Restricting data to sub-samples such as 'looked after for more than 3 months', etc. creates problems for data collection and accuracy	Point taken. Will examine.
Absenteeism	Should use same measure and criteria as used by LEAs and schools and in school reports to parents	Agreed.
Not in expected year for age	Important to capture as many looked after children fall behind	Agreed important, but believe it will be hard to capture.
Exam targets	Much too low for looked after children in comparison to national targets for all children	Agreed.
Placement & school changes	Important to distinguish placement changes that also cause a change of school	Agreed.
Reading & CAT tests	Important to include, even though not standard.	

Examinations fact-sheet

In discussion of data on the exam results of looked after children, several people observed that many social workers, unless they happen to have school age children of their own, are uncertain of the details of SATS exams, key stages, etc. We decided to produce a DAN fact sheet *(see Appendix G)* containing all the relevant information. This has been distributed to member authorities and will form part of the DAN toolkit.

Health indicators

Work on health indicators is at an early stage. This area is more difficult than education for three reasons:

Different authorities: whereas social services and education, albeit in separate administrative departments, are administered by the same local authority and therefore share geographical, financial and political boundaries, health authorities belong to an entirely different structure. Co-operation and sharing of information is inevitably more difficult.

Confidentiality: the regulations and culture surrounding the doctor-patient relationship make sharing of medical information a sensitive and problematic issue.

Measurement: it is difficult to measure the health of an individual, to separate cause and effect and to decide whether a particular outcome was caused or exacerbated by the lack of appropriate interventions. Moreover the effects of deficits in the health care of looked after children may not be apparent until long after they have ceased to be looked after.

Variables & indicators

Examination results provide a definitive *educational* outcome, recognised in society, which has clear implications for the chances and welfare in adult life of a looked after child. However no such outcome measures exist for health. Instead, there are various 'proxy' indicators which do not measure the health outcome for the child but merely ask whether certain actions were carried out by the relevant authorities (registration with a GP, immunisations, etc.).

The following points emerged from a trawl of case files in one member authority. They will be discussed with the other DAN authorities:

- **Immunisations (CF 2.3c3):** it is extremely difficult to decide whether a child has her/his 'full uptake of immunisations'. Although the LAC EIR2 form asks for full details, these are often only partially completed, if at all. Requirements (and the actual immunisations and their combinations) have changed over time and practice varies from one health area to another. Moreover most immunisations should take place before the child's fifth year so that in many cases the information must be collected for events which took place (or not) some years previously. Although the information should be recorded in medical records, these often fail to accompany looked after children in the many moves that often characterise their disrupted lives.
- **Dental checks (CF 2.3c1):** the data is usually absent from the case files and is not recorded in the LAC AARs.
- **Use of cigarettes, alcohol and drugs (CF 2.3c4):** data is very seldom present.
- ➡ We plan to produce a DAN Fact Sheet on immunisations, similar to the one for school examination results.

Dr Heather Payne attended one of the DAN workshops and described some of the findings from her work in Caerphilly:

- The 'inverse care law' (the greater the need, the lower the standard and/or delivery of care) frequently applies.
- Children move but their NHS records do not. (18% of children in the sample were placed in a different health area. 48% had incomplete NHS records).
- Social workers are not health professionals.
- A general lack of effective inter-agency work.
- The health of looked after children 'is nobody's job'.
- Health assessments would be better carried out by health visitors or school nurses than by GPs.
- A 'minimum dataset' for monitoring the health of looked-after children could include: immunisation uptake; child health surveillance uptake; registration with a GP;

registration with a dentist; presence of an individual health care plan; implementation of health care plan; waiting time for therapy; school attendance.

These points will help DAN to go into a more detailed examination of health indicators.

Placements

DAN will not commence detailed work on placement data until the spring of 2001.

However, some preliminary work, based on detailed study of placements in one member authority and the work of Professor David Quinton, highlight some of the problems:

- ➡ **Placement and placement episode:** the SSDA-903 Return collects data on placement episodes (defined as a change of *either* placement *or* legal status, or both). Social work practice and the LAC system treat placement and legal status separately. This leads to considerable confusion and makes it difficult to correlate data based on the 903 returns with case files, the LAC EIR2 form and computer systems based on case data.
- ➡ **Respite placements:** the definition of 'respite' is highly problematic, and the way of either counting or excluding respite placements from the Children First placement stability count leads to considerable difficulties.
- ➡ **Planned and unplanned moves:** it is likely that there is no clear criterion for distinguishing between a planned and an unplanned placement move.
- ➡ **Placement breakdown:** it is often difficult to decide which placement endings should be classified as 'breakdowns' and whether the subsequent move should be regarded as planned or unplanned.
- ➡ **Placement types:** the SSDA-903 coding of placement type¹⁰ is very unsatisfactory. It jumbles up a number of different dimensions, including: provider; home type; registration; home size; location within or outside local authority area; responsible authority. We developed a small demonstration database in Access to show how placement type codes could be broken down into these categories (*see Appendix I*), which we plan to use during 2001 when we come to examine placements in detail.

DAN Toolkit

The methods outlined above have tended to yield a number of potentially useful tools and reusable items (lists of variables, spreadsheets, fact sheets, database components, etc.), some of which are included in the appendices to this report. We hope to make these available by post or e-mail to member authorities. As they are tested and refined, we will collect them together in kits for training, data collection and system development purposes and publish them on CD and on the website for DAN which we plan to get up and running during 2001. Components of the toolkit currently being developed are:

- **Variable lists & spreadsheets:** the various lists of variables and spreadsheets we use to collect data and reports of difficulties with definitions, time periods, etc.
- **Fact sheets:** the School Tests and Examinations Factsheet (*see Appendix G*) and the planned Immunisations Factsheet.
- **Databases:** We are beginning to use Microsoft Access databases to collect data, examine variables and classifications and to demonstrate 'dividends' —screen forms and reports that would be useful to practitioners. One example is the database we helped our colleagues in the Costs and Consequences Project to develop for their own data collection. This contains a wide range of data on placements, health, education and special services supplied to looked after children. Another is the demonstration database for SSDA903 placement codes.

¹⁰ These observations were based on the Department of Health guidelines for completion of the 2000 SSDA-903 returns. The guidelines for 2001 have considerably modified the codings, and will be examined in due course by DAN.

- **Re-usable database components:** the above databases and others we develop in future contain many re-usable components, especially screen forms, reports and lookup tables. The latter include many of the standard classifications applicable to looked after children (such as ethnicity; CPR categories; legal status; placement type; reason for becoming looked after; reason for new care episode; SEN stages; etc.). These can easily be re-used by copying and adapting tables and forms.

DAN CD

We hope to publish this report and its appendices, together with the accompanying spreadsheet and database files, on CD, perhaps adding some of the relevant reports and documents in Word .doc or Acrobat .pdf format. This could be sent to all 22 local authorities in Wales and to any in England which request copies.

DAN website

We plan to establish a website, probably hosted by the Loughborough University Department of Social Sciences. All the same materials included in the DAN CD would be available on the site, together with links to relevant organisations.

Issues for discussion

The views of DAN members

DAN member authority representatives met on their own at the DAN Conference on September 29 to discuss their views and make suggestions for the future of DAN work. They made the following points:

- Work to-date had been very helpful, and the members were very satisfied.
- DAN has limited resources: we should forget the 'big system' approach and concentrate on essential information, dividing the work into small and practical sub-projects.
- We should try to identify and share examples of good practice, especially with regard to:
 - Social Service Departments' own internal information systems.
 - Multi-agency information sharing (esp. with health and education).
 - Computer software systems.
- We should identify processes to achieve targets (e.g. obtaining consents for medical information).
- We should seek to facilitate joint working (cf. for Best Value) between authorities.
- They welcomed the opportunity DAN affords to feed back to the National Assembly for Wales and have input into the future of the LAC system.
- We should provide more feedback to members on the information they collect for DAN (spreadsheets, data, etc.).
- A DAN website would be very helpful.
- Expansion to include other local authorities would be welcome.
- DAN workshops had been useful. Members would be reluctant to abandon these, especially for the opportunities they provide for networking and sharing between authorities. Perhaps they could be linked to other meetings (e.g. of the LAC Regional Support Groups). Involvement of staff from health and education would be useful.
- We should seek to link up more directly with other research projects (e.g. the teams developing the Integrated Children's System).

Plans for 2001

Plans for the coming year include:

- **Health indicators:** continue work commenced in September 2000. Produce DAN Fact Sheet on immunisations.
- **Profiles:** continue and develop discussion of basic set of variables for Health and Education. Design paper and screen forms and look for volunteer authorities to test them. Provide feedback to the work of Jane Scott, Wendy Rose and Steven Walker and the groups at the Department of Health working on the Assessment Framework and Integrated Children's System.
- **Placements:** commence detailed work on placements at the April DAN Conference and subsequent workshops in N. and S.Wales (probably in June).
- **Computer-based Information Systems:** DAN co-ordinator to spend time at each member authority, observing their computer systems in use.
- **Toolkit, CD & Website:** aim to produce DAN CD by March 2001 and have website up and running by June 2001. Collate the various DAN tools to make coherent tool-kits. Monitor the use made by DAN member and other authorities.
- **Making use of data (feedback loops):** using key reports identified by DAN, assist authorities to make use of Children First and other data at all levels in the organisation. Monitor the development of this initiative.

Practical difficulties

Meeting frequency and attendance

The DAN Programme envisaged two 6-monthly conferences with bimonthly intermediate workshops for a total of 6 meetings per year. The Coordinator has found that he cannot organise and service so many meetings in the time available. In practice in the first year only 4 meetings were held (two conferences and a single workshop repeated at Haverfordwest and Caernarfon). The member authorities are reluctant to abandon the workshops altogether and stressed their value for networking with one another.

For obvious geographical reasons, it has not proved easy to secure good attendance at all the DAN meetings. The workshop in June at Haverfordwest, kindly hosted by Pembrokeshire, was attended only by the four southern authorities and it was necessary to repeat the workshop in September at Caernarfon.

- ➡ It is planned in future to hold fewer intermediate workshops (at most two per year) but to hold two sessions of each for the northern and southern authorities respectively.
- ➡ The Co-ordinator will increase the number of visits he makes to member authorities.

Staff turnover and re-organisation

DAN's work is made more difficult by the second wave of local government reorganisation which, for instance, has seen the amalgamation of children's services and education in Rhondda-Cynon-Taff. Staff turnover in Children's Services is high in some authorities with the result that it can be difficult to ensure continuity in the working relationship.

Relationship between DAN and other Welsh LAs

The National Assembly has been assiduous in publicising DAN and providing the Co-ordinator with opportunities to address a number of meetings. As a result, interest from other, non-member, authorities is beginning to grow, looking either to join DAN or to see the results of DAN's work.

So far three other authorities (Merthyr, Caerphilly and Powys) have informally expressed an interest in joining DAN. However, it will be difficult in practice to accommodate additional members with the existing level of funding and co-ordinator time. We hope that production

of a CD and establishment of a DAN website during 2001 will partially satisfy interest in the outcomes and products of DAN's work.

Future directions

Incorporating Costs & Consequences: As work proceeds on the Costs and Consequences project we hope to make the results and the eventual decision analysis model available to DAN members, though this may not happen until 2002. Pembrokeshire, which is a member of both projects, may play a leading part in this.

Effects of other new frameworks: While the focus of DAN will remain upon looked after children, by the beginning of 2002 it should be possible to examine the implications of the adoption of the Assessment Framework and the ongoing work towards the Integrated Children's System for the development of information on looked after children.

Appendices

- A. DAN Programme 2000**
- B. Information Systems in use by DAN members**
- C. Source of data to satisfy Select Variable List**
- D. Consolidated spreadsheet: Education Indicators**
- E. Example of Triggers for Information on Education of Looked After Children**
- F. How DAN member authorities collected information on GCSE and SATS results**
- G. School Tests and Examinations Fact-Sheet**
- H. DAN report to National Assembly for Wales. August 2000**
- I. Recoding scheme for SSDA-903 Placement Types**
- J. DAN Briefing: Designing Summary Information Profiles**
- K. DAN meetings & workshops**

Appendix A: DAN Programme

October 1999— December 2000

Phase 1: October 1999-December 1999

Identification of a Dan co-ordinator.

Identification of six participant local authorities.

Phase 2: January – April 2000

Induction of the DAN Co-ordinator, Mike Gatehouse.

Establishing links with the members of the Loughborough/LAC team, Harriet Ward, Tricia Skuse, Jane Scott, David Quinton, Jean Soper & Don Nicholson.

Introductory visits to Gwynedd, Wrexham, Pembrokeshire & Swansea County Councils.

Background reading and research.

Making contact with other actors and programmes in related fields, including:

the National Assembly of Wales/Nuffield Institute Management Information Project

the Loughborough Costs & Consequences Project

the work of Anne Crowley.

Holding a one-day Introductory Workshop for DAN at Builth Wells, attended by all the participating local authorities except Gwynedd as well as by members of the Loughborough team, the NAW-SSI, other NAW departments and WORD.

Initial Projects: May – December 2000

The Introductory Workshop established the parameters for ongoing work in the first year of DAN. While we were conscious of the wider questions raised by Children in Need, the Assessment Framework and work underway towards a Unified Children's System, it was agreed that DAN's work in this period would focus on the information relating to looked after children required for Children First.

The work would focus on four fronts:

Information specification: Identifying a short-list of key variables that can feasibly be collected.

Information consistency: establishing uniform definitions to ensure consistency over time and comparability between Local Authorities.

Information quality and flow: linking information generation to key 'triggers' (events in the daily life and management of the looked-after child) and to 'dividends' (provision of essential operational information required for the daily work of social workers, team leaders and social services managers).

Information feedback loops: exploring the best way the Information can be used within each local authority.

Computerised Information Systems: In each case DAN will attempt to establish, with each Local Authority:

What is currently possible with the existing information collection and IT systems.

What changes are in the pipeline (all 6 Local Authorities are currently implementing major changes to their Information Systems).

What are the main problems with data entry, validation, updating, reporting and analysis.

What changes to systems, specifications and practice are feasible to procure improvements on the four focal fronts.

Specific Information Areas: DAN will proceed by selecting specific information areas (e.g. Education in Phase 2) and conduct comparative analysis of the data across the 6 local authorities in order to highlight problems, inconsistencies and examples of good practice.

The Perfect System: DAN will eschew the temptation to design (let alone provide) the 'perfect system', working instead to help member local authorities to improve their use of their existing systems and to draw up better specifications for their replacement.

DAN Meetings: it was agreed to hold a bimonthly meeting with one representative from each local authority and a larger twice-yearly Workshop with two or more representatives per local authority and invitations to SSIW, Word and other participants. The first bimonthly meeting will be in June 2000 and the next Workshop in September.

Phase 3: May–June —Information relating to Education

Introductory visits to Newport and Rhondda-Cynon-Taff. Repeat visits to Gwynedd (where there have been staff changes which affect DAN representation) and Wrexham (where a major change of information system is under way).

May 4: Attendance at Nuffield Performance Management report-back workshop, Llandrindod Wells.

Research Task 1: to examine the data for Looked After Children relating to Education

June 16: Bi-monthly Meeting, to be held in Pembrokeshire, to analyse the results of the research task and to review and revise the methodology for the next phases.

N.B. The detail of Phases 4-5 is conditional upon the outcome of Phase 3.

Phase 4: July–September —Information relating to Health

Research Task 2: to examine the data for looked after children relating to Health

September 29: Twice-Yearly Workshop, Rhayader.

To analyse the results of the two research tasks on Education and Health.

To draw up guidelines for the next phase.

To consider recommendations to NAW in regard to information requirements for the next MAP Report in the light of progress to date.

To hear progress report of the Costs & Consequences project.

To hear of developments relating to Children in Need, the Assessment Framework and the Unified Children's System.

Phase 5: September–December —Information on Placements

Research Task 3: to examine the data for looked after children relating to Placements.

To finalise report to NAW on information requirements for the next MAP Report.

November: Bi-Monthly Meeting, to analyse results of the research task.

December: produce first DAN Annual Report.

Dissemination of Report/Report summary to all local authorities in Wales.

Seek permission of NAW to disseminate DAN report to local authorities in England.

Review: progress of DAN in first year.

Appendix B: Computer-based information systems

Information Systems of 5 out of 6 DAN local authorities. April 2000

Local authority	MIS system (* = in-house)	for	Upgrade plans	Data input	1999 MAP return	Practitioner use	Problems
A	SSID -Anite (aka Sheridan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • case IDs • 1st Contact: SSID records basic referral details & 7-day Assessment details • Payments: SSID processes schedule, passed to finance • Case notes (only summaries placed on files) • Reviews 	Complete implementation of SSID	Team Admin from practitioners' data forms. PC:Staff ratio 1:1 by June 2000	System coped, just. Unrealistic time scale. 903 system hard to adapt to complex information required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can search and analyse by team, placement type, looked after totals at a given date, history for a given child (complete 903 info) • Used to measure workloads for restructuring of practitioner teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System is too 903-specific. • Hard to police timely input of new children and movements • Lack of connection between SSID and LAC (though LAC, being in-house, is adaptable) • Slow network <p>But:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-house system is easy to modify
	LAC –Lotus Approach*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive LAC details • 903 Returns • Placements 	SSID LAC module	Networked LAC system giving access to each team			
	Lakeside Computing templates	LAC forms					
B	SWIFT (formerly SSID) -Sheridan Business Objects Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modules inc: finance, childcare, first contact, placements, LAC forms. • 903 Return • 1st Contact records • Placements • LAC Forms 		Admin & Team Managers; from June SWs will be trained to input	System (then SSID) did not cope well (quantitative not qualitative). No information sharing with Education and Health. Most info produced from sampling and extrapolation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Managers for supervision & team management. • Admin: for setting up CP Case Conferences. • Practitioners to generate part-populated Assessment Forms Parts 1 & 2, LCAS forms and Change of Circumstances forms • Carers Module of SWIFT can be used to process applications for Foster Carers and as a placements register 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing the Culture to get Team Managers and SWs using IT • Lack of financial resources • Need to build skills in data production & analysis • Not all required SWIFT modules are ready yet • Physical space for PCs
	YOIS	Youth Justice System					
	Corporate Unipay System*	Payments	May purchase SWIFT payments module				
C	Client Info System (Clipper/DOS)* CPR* Schedule 1 offenders* Finance (Excel & Access)*	1 st Contact 903s Placements Payments	Childcare YOT system –Both from Careworks, Dublin. MS Exchange Server/Outlook/SQL Server based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admin only now. In future all practitioners will do own LAC & movement forms • PC:Staff 1:2 operational, 1:1 admin & seniors 	System did not cope. Had to sample and make inquiry of Teams. Educ. Data from SIMS. Health data from NHS. LAC compliance limited. Took 3 months to complete	Currently none	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture, even with newly graduated social workers • Funding for infrastructure
D	80% manual		CareFirst MIS inc LAC & YOT modules, –OLM		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With difficulty. • Used sample, compiled manually from good LAC records • Relied on LEA to check records for looked after children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use movement reports • Reviewing Officer uses LAC and 903s. • CareFirst is supposed to be practitioner oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practitioner resistance to IT (BUT CareFirst is user-friendly) • matching data to external lists • global updating tasks
	Access databases*	903s 1stContact Placements Disabilities Register Residential placements from out of area	CareFirst				

Local authority	MIS system (* = in-house)	for	Upgrade plans	Data input	1999 MAP return	Practitioner use	Problems
	Excel*	Payments	Haven't yet decided to purchase OLM finance module		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • had probs with health data • 		
E	Client Information System (Oracle)*	903 module of episode system Episodes, Placements, Legal Status, Register of Carers, LAC System, Child Disability Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All in-house and in constant development. Upgrading to latest Oracle • Have 3 programmers working on 	Team-level Admin only	Extraction from LAC module of CIS. But, poor completion, esp of Health & Education data, and no information on Children in Need	Client Index Can view LAC on screen Mainly Team Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of integration • User unfriendliness • interface to Word & Excel • old versions of Oracle
	Boarded-Out Payments (Soft Fox)	Payments					
	Discretionary Payment System						
	Absconsions/Missing Children						
F*	Uniplex/Unix MIS System	Payments to Carers 903s	Have own small IT Dept with SSD, though some tensions with corporate IT.	3 key forms: MIS1 for child info; MIS2 and MIS3 for placements Input by Area Team Admin Workers PC:Staff ratio 1:3	Largely manual based on a 10% sample of case files weighted to produce 50:50 CiN/LAC ratio No educ data directly available		Would like to get to list all placement vacancies to facilitate rapid placement
	Access front-end to Uniplex	key LAC data	Plan to amend and implement. Looked at SSRADU but too costly to amend for Welsh language requirements	never resolved who would do data input		Produces weekly reports to Team Leaders listing all placements by Child, SW and Carer	Never fully implemented and virtually unused: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAC compliance at the time was too low • key systems such as 903 returns and payments to carers required continued use of existing MIS system • never defined required reports
	LAC templates for MS-Word customised for Welsh language use	Producing repeat LAC forms		SWs either fill in data on screen or print blank form and hand-fill. Screen filled forms sometimes saved but often not.		SWs often do not fill-in data on screen form and/or do not save file for future use. No standard file naming or folder procedures	

* Authority F did not complete a questionnaire, but the data here was compiled on the basis with interviews with staff members carried out during a visit in February 2000.

Appendix C: Source of data to satisfy the Select Variable List

	Variable	LAC	A	B	C	D	E
1	<i>What are the needs of looked-after children?</i>						
1.1*	Which culture does the child identify with?	*EIR1.4	✓	✓	✓	M	✓
1.2	Ongoing health conditions?	EIR 10	M	✓	M	M	✓
1.3	Free of serious ebd problems?	AAR.B.Obj 1	M	✓	M	NL	✓
1.4*	School/education facility attended?	*AAR.E1 EIR2.37	✓	✓	✓	M	✓
1.5*	Developmental delay/learning difficulty?	*AAR.E3	✓	✓	✓	NL	✓
1.6*	Bullied, neglected, emotionally abused or harmed physically or sexually?	*AAR.B3/4	M	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	<i>Do they receive a service appropriate to their developmental needs?</i>						
2.1	Routine immunisations up-to-date?	EIR2.29	✓	M	NL	M	✓
2.2*	Statemented (SEN)?	*EIR2.38b	✓	✓	✓	M	✓
2.3	Developmental checks & reviews up-to-date?	AAR.H2	M	M	✓	NL	✓
2.4	Having contact according to contact plan?	AAR.F7/8 PP2.5	M	✓	NL	M	✓
2.5	Stable relationship with at least one adult over a number of years?	AAR.F.Obj 4	M	M	NL	NL	✓
2.6	Seen by a mental health professional in past?	AAR.B1	M	M	NL	NL	✓
2.7	Being seen by mental health professional now?	AAR.B1	M	✓	NL	NL	✓
2.8	Health promotion in tobacco, alcohol, drugs, safer sex & STDs?	AAR.H13-15, 20	✓	M	NL	NL	✓
2.9	All ongoing health conditions and disabilities being adequately dealt with?	AAR.H.Obj 4	M	M	NL	NL	✓
2.10	Receiving education appropriate to needs?	AAR.E1	M	M	NL	M	✓
3	<i>What are the (organisational) risk factors that prevent children receiving a satisfactory service?</i>						
3.1*	Has an allocated social worker?	*EIR1.front	✓	✓	✓	M	✓
3.2*	How many times changed placement since admission?	*EIR.48	✓	✓	✓	M	✓
3.3*	Reason for last change of placement	*EIR.48	✓	✓	✓	M	✓
3.4	Looked after for longer than expected?	EIR2.48 CP.14	M	✓	NL	NL	✓
3.5	What is the overall care plan for the child/young person?	CP.9 RF.6	M	M	M	M	✓
3.6	Current placement meets day-to-day needs as per plan and placement plan?	RF.11	✓	M	M	M	✓
3.7	How many times overall care plan changed since admission?	RF.23n	M	✓	M	M	✓
4	<i>How do children progress?</i>						
4.1	What educational qualifications?	EIR2.39 a/b (15+)	✓	M	M	M	✓
4.2	About to enter further education?	AAR.13 (15+)	✓	M	M	NL	✓
4.3	Currently employed?	EIR2.44 (16+)	M	✓	M	M	✓
4.4	How many recorded offences in last 12 months?	EIR2.49	NL	NL	✓	M	✓
4.5	Ever been pregnant?	AAR.19	✓	NL	NL	NL	✓
4.6	Excluded from school in last term?	AAR.E1	✓	M	M	M	✓
5	<i>903s</i>						
5.1	Why being looked after?	EIR.46	✓	✓	✓	M	✓
5.2	Current legal status?	EIR2.46	✓	✓	✓	M	✓
5.3	When started being looked after?	EIR2.48	✓	✓	✓	M	✓
5.4	Current type of placement?	EIR2.48 RF.1	✓	✓	✓	M	✓
5.5	How long has placement lasted?	EIR2.48	✓	✓	✓	M	✓

Key:

- * variable the group felt to be not necessarily derived/derivable from computer-based information systems or LAC forms.
- ✓ expect to be able to derive from computer-based MIS system.
- M derived manually.
- NL not from LAC forms currently completed by authority.

Appendix D: Children First Education Indicators

The table below is based on spreadsheets returned by 4 out of 6 DAN members in June 2000 and the subsequent discussion at workshops in Haverfordwest and Caernarfon.

Notation:

LACH Looked after children

ND No/insufficient data

M/C Manual or Computer

SC See Comment for detailed figures

No.	Indicator	Population	Time point/period
CF2.1a	Number of children looked after for over 3 months not attending school	School-age LACH	Point time or during year and which year, school or FY?
Definition problems	'School' --what about Pupil Referral Units, home tuition, etc. LEA and SSD may define 'not attending school' differently.		
Comment	Depends who you ask, different definitions between education and social services etc. Problem of schools misreporting, e.g. don't want child in school. Schools may misreport, e.g. they don't want child in school.		
Summary	Non specific. Time period & definition problems.		

LA	Data	N	Time period	Source	M /C?	Definition probs	Comment
A	25	219	@ LAC Review	LAC database	C		As @ review not for 3 months. Reasons for non-attendance and action taken also noted
B	5	208	@ 30.09.1999	Assessment Care Mgrs	M		Snapshot only. Doesn't give position for year. Liaison with LEA from 2000 on.
D	0	ND					
E	ND	193	@ 31.05.2000	LEA	M	'not attending school'?	unable to answer on information currently collected

No.	Indicator	Population	Time point/period
CF2.1b	Number of children permanently excluded from school	School-age LACH	Point or during year? Year = school or FY?
Definition problems			
Comment	Standard process, generally can get from education. Problem of linking to placement stability i.e. measure some by financial year, some by school year. Should be recorded in AARs but generally isn't.		
Summary	Data should be good and precise if time period resolved		

LA	Data	N	Time period	Source	M /C?	Definition probs	Comment
A	7	219	@ LAC Review	LAC database	C		
B	1	208	@ 30.09.1999	Assessment Care Mgrs	M		
D	0	ND					
E	ND	193	@31.05.2000	LACCIS/AAR	C		Available for last school-term only. Poor completion of AAR frustrates collection of data

No.	Indicator	Population	Time point/period
CF2.1c	Number of children with fixed-term exclusions	School-age LACH	Point or during year? Year = school or FY?
Definition problems	Need to count all children who have had one or more fixed-term exclusions.		
Comment	Standard process, generally can get from education. Problem of linking to placement stability i.e. measure some by financial year, some by school year. Should be recorded in AARs but generally isn't.		
Summary	Data should be good and precise if time period resolved		

LA	Data	N	Time period	Source	M /C?	Definition probs	Comment
A	0	219	@ LAC Review	LAC database	C		
B	1	208	@ 30.09.1999	Assessment Care Mgrs	M		
D	2	ND					
E	ND	193	@31.05.2000	LACCIS/AAR	C		Available for last school-term only. Poor completion of AAR frustrates collection of data

No.	Indicator	Population	Time point/period
CF2.2	Levels achieved in SATS & GCSE by children looked after for 6 months continuously	LACH in SATS & GCSE age-groups	When? In previous school year?
Definition problems	For SATS should be % achieving expected level for age		
Comment	SATS results in successive key stages important, as it can indicate decreases in achievement during period looked after and/or because of disrupted lives. Should also look at the number of children with no recorded SATS result (missed exam, absent from school, not enrolled at school, not in expected year for age, etc.). How meaningful is the 'looked after for 6 months' criterion? Doesn't this just complicate data collection?		
Summary			

LA	Data	N	Time period	Source	M /C?*	Definition probs	Comment
A	ND		@ LAC Review	LAC database	C	Problem with 6 month criterion	From LEA
B	ND						Closer liaison with LEA to be implemented. Results to be obtained bi-annually
D	SC						KS1 N = 21. Known results = 14. Av level = 3.8. Target level= 4. 62% of grades level 4 or above. 28% stated.
							KS3 N = 8; Known results = 7; Av. level = 3.5. Target level = 5; 1% of grades level 5 or above. 37% stated. N = 5 in year group; No with results
							GCSE = 2; one sat 9, highest score D; one sat 1, scored D. Nil stated.
E	ND		@ 31.05.2000	LACCIS/EIR2/AAR	C	Which 6 months?	Poor completion of AAR/EIR2 makes data unreliable. Rely on match with education records

No.	Indicator	Population	Time point/period
CF2.2a	Number of children achieving at least one GCSE or NVQ	LACH 16+	When? In previous school year?
Definition problems			
Comment	Possibly should be expanded. Perhaps looking at who entered and who sat exams. This is a very low standard to set for looked after children. Should also include alternative qualifications. Should measure looked after children by same criteria as general population.		
Summary			

LA	Data	N	Time period	Source	M /C?*	Definition probs	Comment
A	ND			LAC Database	C		
B	ND						Closer liaison with LEA to be implemented. Results to be obtained bi-annually.
D	0			LEA	M		
E	ND	36		LACCIS/EIR2	C		Poor completion of AAR/EIR2 makes data unreliable.

No.	Indicator	Population	Time point/period
CF2.2b	Number of children achieving no less than average attainment of children from similar backgrounds living in their area	School-age LACH	
Definition problems	'average attainment'; 'similar backgrounds'; 'their area'		
Comment	No-one can get data for this		
Summary			

LA	Data	N	Time period	Source	M /C?*	Definition probs	Comment
A	ND					How to define 'similar' deprivation indices. By ref to ward of originating address?	'Soft' data only
B	ND					What constitutes 'similar background'? Will use LA-wide picture	
D	ND			LEA			
E	ND			LEA		Unable to define 'similar background' for comparison	Clarification sought

No.	Indicator	Population	Time point/period
CF2.5	Number of current educational assessments combined with the development of appropriate educational plans carried out by the LEA on becoming looked after	LACH in first year after becoming looked after?	
Definition problems	'number' in relation to what? Presumably proportion of children with educational assessments completed within a fixed period of becoming looked after; and number of children with a PEP?		
Comment	Not really measurable as stated. It would be better to ask for the proportion of looked after children of school age who have not had an education assessment and/or do not have a PEP. PEPs are not yet implemented. In general indicators such as these which seek to count reviews and other required procedures are seldom meaningful: they either fail for lack of comparison, for lack of clarity about the time frame or because it is unlikely that any organisation will provide a fully truthful count of things it has failed to do.		
Summary			

LA	Data	N	Time period	Source	M /C?*	Definition probs	Comment
A	ND						Some data available but only by trawling case files
B	ND						All LACH will by the second review have a Personal Education Plan
D	ND						
E	ND						PEPs not yet implemented by LEA

<i>No.</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Time point/period</i>
CF5.4	Involvement in education, training or employment of young people aged 19	Care-leavers now aged 19	At what point or over what period?
Definition problems	'involved'? 'young people' = care-leaver?		
Comment	Very vague. Tracking care leavers is very difficult. It would be better to ask specifically for numbers currently employed, unemployed, in full-time, in part-time education or training, etc.		
Summary			

<i>LA</i>	<i>Data</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Time period</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>M /C?*</i>	<i>Definition probs</i>	<i>Comment</i>
A	ND			After-care register	C	Definition of care-leaver? = Section 24, Children's Act?	Not easy as it refers to those now aged 19
B	13	30		Survey of care leavers	M		
D	SC	19		After-care team	M		of 19 care leavers: 7 left at age 16; 5 at 17; 7 at 18; 1 in HE; 5 full-time mothers; 4 claiming sickness benefit; 2 working; 2 unemployed; 5 whereabouts unknown
E	ND			After-care team	M		Work to refine information base under way.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Time point/period</i>
CF7.4	Timely completion of reviews for children on SEN register	LACH on SEN Register	
Definition problems			
Comment			
Summary			

<i>LA</i>	<i>Data</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Time period</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>M /C?*</i>	<i>Definition probs</i>	<i>Comment</i>
A	ND			LEA	M		Mechanism exists to get data from LEA
B	ND						Reviews of children on SEN register take place annually. Closer links between SSD and LEA established. Results to be obtained bi-annually.
D	100%			LEA	M		
E	100%			LEA	C		

Appendix E: Example of Triggers for Information on Education of Looked After Children. Authority E.

TRIGGERS	RESPONSES				INFORMATION RECORDED IN			
	(What is the response of ... ?)				(What information is recorded in ... ?)			
Trigger event	Parent	Carer	Health/Educ Service	SSD	Case file	LAC forms	Information System (IS/MIS)	Other (e.g. any special forms/returns)
Child admitted to school	Nothing	Prepares child for school and may transport child to school.	Draw up PEP and attend next LAC Review	SW contacts school to amend CIS). Apply for school uniform/suitable clothing. Arrange transport.	Change of Personal Details form completed	EIR1;EIR2;PP2 updated	LACCIS updated and CIS updated	Application for school uniform via Form D. Complete Taxi request form.
Child commended at school	Nothing	Reward child in some way	Commend child and note in school report	Encourage carers and parents to recognise and reward achievement no matter how small. SW may directly reward child.	Record in case notes with copy of certificate etc.	Update EIR2	LACCIS updated	
School report	Reads report and may talk to child about poor performance	Reads report, rewards good report or discusses reasons for poor performance.	In case of poor performance revise PEP to reflect need for greater input.	Read report. Liaise with school.	Copy report to file	Nothing	Nothing	
SATS results	Receive results and talk over with child	Receive results and talk over with child. Reward good results.	Record and aggregate the results. May need to revise PEP.	Receive and record results. Liaise with school and discuss in LAC Review.	Record of results with commentary	Update AAR	LACCIS updated	
GCSE results	Receive results and talk over with child	Receive results and talk over with child. Reward good results.	Record and aggregate the results. May need to revise PEP.	Receive and record results. Liaise with school and discuss in LAC Review.	Record of results with commentary	Update EIR2/AAR	LACCIS updated	
Child goes on school trip	Gives consent and may contribute spending money	Prepares child for trip and may accompany child	Organise the event. Ensure consent obtained and safety	Ensure involvement of parent. Apply for cost of trip	Record event in case notes	Nothing	Nothing	Apply for funding via completion of Form D.
Parents evening	Attends event with child	Attend event with child	Organise the event.	May be recorded	Record event in case notes	Nothing	Nothing	
Immunisation	Gives consent	Nothing if held in school	Organise immunisation. Reflect changes in immunisation history and include in HV consultation document.	Record outcome	Record event in case notes	Update EIR2	LACCIS updated	
Developmental tests at school		Take note of outcomes and act on referrals recommendations	Conduct developmental tests, make recommendations and arrange follow up appointments.	Record outcome and ensure follow up to recommendations	Record outcomes in case notes	Update AAR	LACCIS updated	
Special Need identified	Participates in SEN process	Participates in SEN process	SEN process initiated	Participates in SEN process	Record SEN process in case notes	Update EIR2 (if stated)	Update LACCIS and CIS	Complete Change of Personal Details Form.
Child disciplined	Appeal against exclusion	Liaise with SSD. May require additional support	Notify of exclusion. Provide alternative arrangements.	Liaise with all parties - may invoke FGC process in certain schools. Provide additional support to carer. Complete C of PD form.	Record event in case notes and resultant discussions meetings etc.			

TRIGGERS		RESPONSES			INFORMATION RECORDED IN			
		(What is the response of ... ?)			(What information is recorded in ... ?)			
Trigger event	Parent	Carer	Health/Educ Service	SSD	Case file	LAC forms	Information System (IS/MIS)	Other (e.g. any special forms/returns)
Child suspended	Appeal against exclusion	Liaise with SSD. May require additional support	Notify of exclusion. Provide alternative arrangements.	Liaise with all parties - may invoke FGC process in certain schools. Provide additional support to carer. Complete C of PD form.	Record event in case notes and resultant discussions meetings etc.	Update AAR; PP2		
Child excluded	Appeal against exclusion	Liaise with SSD. May require additional support	Notify of exclusion. Provide alternative arrangements.	Liaise with all parties - may invoke FGC process in certain schools. Provide additional support to carer. Complete C of PD form.	Record event in case notes and resultant discussions meetings etc.	Update AAR; PP2, Care Plan	LACCIS and CIS updated	Complete Change of Personal Details Form.

Appendix F: How DAN member authorities collect information on GCSE and SATS results.

(3 out of 6 responded to a questionnaire in September 2000. Their results are donated by the letter codes B, D and E)

Key Indicator 2.2: Levels achieved in SATS and GCSE by children looked after for six months continuously. DAN

Question:	Where/how did you/do you/will you...	For the December 1999 MAP return	Now/In future
...obtain data on the SATS & GCSE results of your Looked After Children?	from your computer database		D
	from LAC forms		
	from children's annual school reports (SATS only)		
	from other notes on case files		
	from LEA	B, D, E	B, D, E
	from children's schools		B
	other source: Comment:	B: used overall, authority-wide figures	B: Database of LAC to be held within welfare database in LEA. Data held will come from: Children's Services (Name, DoB, Start LAC, School, Ref. No); LAC Co-ordinator Teacher (other details); Schools (SATS results) D: Yet to be decided
—if from a computer database...	Which database/system?	D: Access E: In house LACCIS (Oracle)	B: SIMS (Schools); SWIFT (Children's Services): Access (LEA) D: Access or CareFirst E: In house LACCIS (Oracle)
	Who records/updates exam results?	D: Education Dept E: Case worker	B: Schools on SIMS, return info to LEA, input by admin officer into Welfare database D: Anticipate dual recording system: LEA will update Access. Social Worker to start inputting on CareFirst to coincide with the introduction of Personal Education Plans. E: Case Worker
	Is the data generally up-to-date and accurate?	D: No —1 academic year behind E: No	B: Yes, response-chasing will be undertaken for any missing data D: It should be! E: Yes
—if from LAC forms...	Who records/updates exam results, and when?	D: Education Dept > Social Services > National Assembly for Wales	D: Education Dept > Social Services > National Assembly for Wales
—if from children's annual school reports (SATS only)...	Where are the reports filed?		D: Copy on file. Copy with foster carer.
	How and when are they collected?		D: As issued by school
—if from other notes on case files	Which?		

Question:	Where/how did you/do you/will you...	For the December 1999 MAP return	Now/In future
—if from the LEA...	What information did you have to supply?		
	..Child's full name	D, E	B, D
	..Child's date of birth	D, E	B, D
	..School currently attended	D, E	B, D
	..UPN or other identifier used by LEA		
	..Other		B: SWIFT Reference No.
	..No specifics (LEA has accurate list of looked after children and can extract data)		D E: LEA has accurate list of looked after children and can extract data.
	What problems did you have in obtaining complete and accurate data?	D: No major problems. Need to update periodically at present.	B: Schools not maintained on SWIFT database. Information from schools not always prompt. D: System being put in place for sharing database and movements will be recorded immediately.
—if from the children's Schools	What problems did you have in obtaining complete and accurate data?	E: Failure to match a substantial number of children with LEA records. Failure to identify some children on LEA records.	B: Information from schools not always prompt. D: Children's results should be placed on file immediately (not happening at present). Intend to implement (no date agreed).
... (if individual children's results not derived from your own database) enter them on a computer database?	Yes		
	No	E	E
	Which:		
	Who maintains & updates?		
...(if individual children's results are derived from the LEA or schools) enter them on the children's case files and/or LAC forms?	Yes	D: To EIR2	B: The SWFIT LAC module is currently being rolled out. It will contain schools/education information. D: To EIR2
	No	E	E
...maintain a simple, accurate and up-to-date list of schools and the Looked After Children currently attending them?	Yes	D, E	B: Not at present. In future will be up-to-date D, E
	No		

Question:	Where/how did you/do you/will you...	For the December 1999 MAP return	Now/In future
...notify the LEA when a child becomes or ceases to be looked after or changes placement? How quickly does notification take place?	How:	D: Only happens periodically, when stats are requested. E: Notification at time of admission	B: Children's Services & LEA have combined. D: Sharing database E: Notification at time of admission
	How quickly:	E: Within 7 days	B: Immediate D: Within 2-3 days of event. E: Within 7 days
Does the Education Department have an accurate list of children currently Looked After?	Yes	D, E	E
	No		B: Not currently. Being worked on with deadline of end October 2000.
	Where:	D: Education Dept E: In Pupil & Governor Unit	D: Education Dept/Social Services E: With designated teacher in each school
	Who updates it and when?	D: Social Services, periodically	D: Shared database should be updated within 2-3 days of event. E: Designated teacher in liaison with SSD or case worker
What was/is the main issue or problem for you in compiling exam results data?		E: Collection of data by case worker and low completion rates of LAC forms	B: LEA does not have direct access to SIMS system data maintained within schools. SWIFT does not store the schools of LAC children. E: Acceptance of corporate responsibility for LAC by LEA and individual schools/teachers.
How did you/will you use exam result information on the education of Looked After Children?	routinely include and discuss at statutory reviews?	D, E	B, D, E
	identify problems requiring intervention?	D	B, D, E
	monitor performance and outcomes on a team and/or authority wide basis	D	B, D, E
	for Children First and other national audits/returns	D, E	B, D, E
	other		B: Best Value Reviews
	Comment:	D: We have two systems, one for management information and stats, one for individual care planning	B: Data available by April 1 2001 D: We have two systems, one for management information and stats, one for individual care planning E: The development of a Quality Assurance Unit and Independent LAC chairs would ensure this.
Would you be willing to require social workers	Yes	D	D, E
	No	E	

Question:	Where/how did you/do you/will you...	For the December 1999 MAP return	Now/In future
to obtain a copy of the annual school report of each school-age LACH and keep it on the case file?	Comment:	E: Not currently required — may be done occasionally	<p>B: Requires further discussion regarding need for all parties involved in the care of the child (i.e. parents, carers, social worker, child, school) to clarify the process and responsibilities.</p> <p>E: Would depend on co-operation of schools re issue of confidentiality, but should be the basis of reviewing a child's PEP.</p>

Appendix G: SCHOOL TESTS & EXAMINATIONS FACT SHEET for Wales & England

	Age	School Year	Key stage	Exam	When?	Expected level	Targets for 2002 (NAW)	National Learning Targets for 2002 (DfEE)
PRIMARY	4-5	Reception	KS1	Baseline Assessment	September/October	None specified	None	
	6-7	2		SATS	May	Level 2 or higher in English or Welsh + Maths + Science	None	
	10-11	6	KS2	SATS	May	Level 4 or higher in English and/or Welsh + Maths + Science	70-80% of cohort attaining level 4 in each relevant core subject	4 or above—English 80%, Maths 75%
SECONDARY	11-12	7	KS3	Reading Test and/or Cognitive Abilities Test (not all schools); may be other tests in some areas	September/October	Standard Age Score (SAS) of 100	None	
	13-14	9		SATS	May	Level 5 or higher in English and/or Welsh + Maths + Science	70-80% of cohort attaining level 5 in each relevant core subject	5 or above—English & Maths: 80%, Science & IT: 75%
				GCSE Options	Usually Spring or Summer	Pupils choose which GCSEs to enter for—determines content of their course in Y10-11		
	15-16	11	KS4	GCSE	May/June	5 passes including English or Welsh + Maths + Science	54% of cohort attaining 5 or more A*-C grades; 91% of cohort attaining 5 or more A*-G grades	50% of cohort attaining 5 or more A*-C grades; 95% of cohort attaining 1 or more A*-G grades
ANY	ANY	Especially Year 4	ANY	Reading Tests		Standard Age Score (SAS) (100 = expected for age) or correct 'Reading Age of ..-year-old'		
				Maths Tests		SAS		

Notes:

- In key stages 1-3, pupils are given levels or scores by teacher assessment as well as by test.
- A pupil's SATS results are the test levels attained in each of the core subjects at a given Key Stage.
- Occasionally a pupil may be said to have attained a single SATS level at a given Key Stage. This may be *EITHER* the Core Subject Indicator defined as *at least* the given level in *each* core subject *OR* an average of the test levels in the core subjects examined. The Core Subject Indicator has official status only in Wales.
- Reading and Maths Tests: practice varies between LEAs and even within LEAs. Most primary schools and many secondaries will administer several times, if not annually, especially in Y4, and they provide an important interim indication of progress between end-of-key-stage SATS tests.
- In year 11, pupils may also take NVQ, GNVQ, GCSE Short Course and CoEA examinations, as well as any others approved by NAW.

Produced by: Data Analysis Network for Children's Services (DAN)

with the kind assistance of Mike Jones, Information Officer, City & County of Swansea Education Dept.

DAN, c/o Mike Gatehouse, Jasmine Cottage, Pennorth, Brecon, Powys LD3 7EX.

Tel: 01874-658557. e-mail: mgatehouse@enterprise.net

Key Stages, Tests & Subjects examined

Level	KS1	KS2	KS3	KS4
Test/Exam	SATS	SATS	SATS	GCSE
Core subjects	English or Welsh*	English <i>Welsh*</i>	English <i>Welsh*</i>	English <i>Welsh*</i>
	Maths	Maths	Maths	Maths
	Science	Science	Science	Science
Other subjects			Foundation subjects	Foundation subjects
				Other subjects

* Pupils in Welsh medium schools take *either* English or Welsh at KS1, and *both* English and Welsh in KS2, 3 & 4

Appendix H: DAN Brief Report to National Assembly for Wales

Notes for SSI-W on education data for Children First

These notes are based on a discussion of education variables held recently by some of the 6 member local authorities of DAN. The discussion is continuing and will not be complete until late September. However, it was felt to be important to send in at least some thoughts to the National Assembly as soon as possible.

Time periods. Most education data relates to the school year. Children's lives once they reach school age and many of the significant life-events are determined on a school year, not a calendar, still less a financial year basis. Arguably all data on looked after children would be easier to collect and interpret if the basis was made the school year (approx. September 1 - August 31).

If this is not possible (because of the requirements of other frameworks) to collect all the data in this way, then at least the education-related variables should specify 'during the last school year' as their time period or 'at the end of the last school year' as their point time.

Time period versus time point. Specifying clearly either a period or point of time for each indicator would significantly improve clarity.

Performance, progress or outcome? Part of the difficulty with some of the existing indicators is that they attempt to measure 'performance' in terms of specific outcomes rather than progress. They are what you might call 'measures in a hurry', which attempt to capture immediately the outcomes for children at particular time-points rather than looking at the progress (or lack of) the children make over a period of time. And they judge the performance against that of the population in general or that of 'children from similar backgrounds living in their area', rather than against the previous attainment of the looked after children themselves.

However, it is clear that some of these measures cannot realistically be regarded as outcomes of the looking after process unless the children have been looked after for a certain length of time. So, for instance, school attendance and exclusions are measured for children 'looked after for more than 3 months'—presumably on the grounds that the schooling of children at the time they first become looked after is likely to be disrupted, whereas after 3 months or so the local authority should have sorted it out. Similarly, SATS and GCSE results are limited to 'children looked after for six months continuously'—though one might think that a far longer period of looking after would be required to make a significant difference to these results.

Identifying sub-sets of the population of looked after children. While these differing looking after time periods ('for more than 3 months', 'for 6 months continuously', etc.) are not unreasonable, they greatly complicate the process of extracting the data. Arguably they should be abandoned and a reasonable qualification appended to all the indicators (that evidently some children may have been looked after only intermittently, only for a short time or may only recently have become looked after, and that therefore the outcomes measured are indeed outcomes for the children but are not necessarily the *effects* of the way they are looked after).

Number of children not attending school. Presumably this means not merely absent, but not on the roll of any school. Should it ask about the alternative provisions in place (pupil referral unit, being taught at home, etc.)?

Absenteeism & attendance. Schools have to report the attendance statistics for each school on the end-of-year school report which goes to all parents/carers. It is well-known that some schools massage the data reported upwards to LEAs in order not to appear to have poor attendance rates, so data collected from LEAs may well be suspect. However it is less likely

that the data reported on individual children to their parents will be wrong, as it is in the school's interest to alert the parents to poor attendance in the hope of improving it. So LAs could (and in any case should) collect from their foster carers the school attendance data from end-of-year school reports on all looked after children. As absenteeism is a good general indicator of problems and likely poor educational performance, this would be a useful indicator. A target could be that all looked after children achieve at least 90% attendance rates. The indicator would be the average percentage attendance rate of school-age LACH during the previous school year, or the percentage of LACH falling below a given rate (e.g. 90%).

Not in expected year for age. Joy Rees found significant numbers of looked after children were not in the expected school year for their age (which has considerable bearing on SATS, GCSE and other results). Should this be captured?

Permanently excluded. Time point or period?

Numbers of fixed term exclusions. What is to be counted here? The number of looked-after children with at least one fixed-term exclusion during a time period or at a point in time?

The number of incidents of fixed-term exclusion for the population of looked after children during a time period?

Levels achieved in SATS and GCSE by children looked after for 6 months continuously.

As above, it seems unlikely that the qualification on the children adds as much to the accuracy of the indicator as it detracts because of the difficulty of accurately dividing the sample. Anyway, does 'for 6 months continuously' mean for the six months prior to a point time measurement, or for any continuous period of 6 months during a given period?

Anyway, what measure of 'levels achieved' is proposed? Shouldn't we look at numbers of LACH achieving their expected level in SATS (since SATS is defined in terms of expected levels at each Key Stage)? For all these exams we should ask whether the children (a) were entered for them (especially given the widespread suspicion that some schools are deliberately withholding children from exams where they believe their results will be poor and might depress the school average) and (b) actually sat them (since often children with difficulties absent themselves from exams)? Shouldn't we also use some of the thresholds widely used of the general population: how many achieve a C or better at GCSE in 5 subjects? How many achieve at least a C in English and Maths?

Targets: the target '50% of children looked after to achieve at least one GCSE or GNVQ by 2001' seems excessively modest. 'Children looked after to achieve no less than the average attainment of children from similar backgrounds living in their area' is extremely difficult to specify and measure. How do LAs decide who are children from similar backgrounds? Wouldn't it be better to state this as 'no less than the average attainment of the children in their school'? The data for all schools is now published as part of league tables, both for SATS and GCSE, so that this is measurable provided the LAs know which schools their LACH are attending.

Changes of placement which cause a change of school: it would be good and important to count those changes of placement which necessitate a change of school (on the presupposition that this considerably exacerbates the effects of a change of placement for school-age LACH).

Severity of placement change: it might be possible to develop a scale for measuring the 'severity' of a change of placement. So many factors are involved and a lot of the existing measures (frequency, whether planned or unplanned, etc.) fail to capture these. Such a scale might score 'severity' points for a range of circumstances such as:

- previous placement broke down with conflict.
- change of placement against wishes of looked after child.
- change of placement involves separating siblings.
- change of placement makes planned contact with family/siblings more difficult.

change of placement involves move away from neighbourhood/friends.
change of placement necessitates longer/more difficult journey to school.
change of placement involves change of school.
new placement unable to cater for known special needs of child.
new placement is temporary/emergency.

Reading & cognitive ability tests: the results of these should be considered as an additional education indicator, especially given the government's concerns about literacy. Some tests are now used in virtually all primary schools, although they may not be standard and they may differ from one LEA or even one school to another. However one would expect such tests to be a good indicator of future educational success and a useful pointer to special needs (especially dyslexia) and children for whom some early intervention is necessary.

Mike Gatehouse, DAN Co-ordinator
July 24 2000.

Appendix I: Sample recoding scheme for SSDA 903 Placement Types

Code	Major Type	Description	Place Type	Size	Location	Provider	Facilities Ed Obs Dis	Registration
1	Foster	With relative or friend within LA area	Family home	N/A	Own LAA	Relatives		Not subject to
2	Foster	With relative or friend in another LAA	Family home	N/A	Other LAA	Relatives		Not subject to
3	Foster	Already living with relatives within LA area	Family home	N/A	Own LAA	Relatives		Not subject to
4	Foster	Already living with relatives in another LA area	Family home	N/A	Other LAA	Relatives		Not subject to
5	Foster	Other place within LA area	Family home	N/A	Own LAA	Foster family		Local Authority
6	Foster	Other place in another LA area	Family home	N/A	Other LAA	Foster family		Local Authority
7	Community	Lodgings or independently (inc B&B, friends)	Lodgings or B&B	N/A	Own LAA	Landlord		None
8	Community	Residential employment	Lodgings or B&B	N/A	Own LAA	Employer		Not subject to
9	Residential: Local Authority	With observation/assessment dxc. Those with education facilities	Residential home		Own LAA	Local Authority	N Y ?	Local Authority
10	Residential: Local Authority	With education facilities	Residential home		Own LAA	Local Authority	Y ? ?	Local Authority
11	Residential: Local Authority	Hostel/semi-independent unit	Hostel/semi-independent unit		Own LAA	Local Authority		Local Authority
13	Residential: Local Authority	For <= 12 children	Residential home	<=12	Own LAA	Local Authority		Local Authority
14	Residential: Local Authority	For > 12 children	Residential home	?12	Own LAA	Local Authority		Local Authority
15	Residential: Voluntary Sector	With observation/assessment exc. Those with education facilities	Residential home		Own LAA	Voluntary Sector	N Y ?	Local Authority
16	Residential: Voluntary Sector	With education facilities	Residential home		Own LAA	Voluntary Sector	Y ? ?	Local Authority
17	Residential: Voluntary Sector	Hostel/semi-independent unit	Hostel/semi-independent unit		Own LAA	Voluntary Sector		Local Authority
19	Residential: Voluntary Sector	For <= 12 children	Residential home	<=12	Own LAA	Voluntary Sector		Local Authority
20	Residential: Voluntary Sector	For > 12 children	Residential home	>12	Own LAA	Voluntary Sector		Local Authority
21	Residential: outside Community Homes system	Voluntary home registered under S60 CA 1989, exc. Hostels	Residential home		Own LAA	Voluntary Sector		S60 CA 1989
22	Residential: outside Community Homes system	Voluntary Hostel/semi-independent unit	Hostel/semi-independent unit		Own LAA	Voluntary Sector		Not subject to
23	Residential: outside Community Homes system	Youth treatment centre	Youth treatment centre		Own LAA	Independent unspecified		Not subject to
26	Community	With parents under care order	Family Home		Own LAA	Birth family		Not subject to -- Legal Status will show if there is a care order
27	Residential: outside Community Homes system	Mother & Baby Unit/Home	Mother & Baby Unit or Home		Own LAA	Independent unspecified		Not subject to

Code	Major Type	Description	Place Type	Size	Location	Provider	Facilities Ed Obs Dis	Registration
29	Residential outside Community Homes system	NHS and other establishments providing medical and/or nursing care	Nursing/medical care home		Own LAA	NHS		NHS
30	Residential outside Community Homes system	Young offender institution/prison establishment	Young Offender/Prison establishment		Own LAA	HM Prison Service		Not subject to
31	Community	Placed for adoption	Family home		Own LAA	Adoptive family		Local Authority
32	Residential: schools for SEN	Independent schools registered under Educ Act 1994 or 1993	SEN school		Own LAA	Independent unspecified		Education Act 1993 or 1994
33	Residential: schools for SEN	Independent schools dual registered under Education Act 1994/1993 and S63 CA 1989	SEN School		Own LAA	Independent unspecified		Dual registered Education Act 1994/1993 and S63 CA 1989
34	Residential outside Community Homes system	Private registered children's home	Residential home		Own LAA	Private Sector		Local authority
35	Residential outside Community Homes system	Family Centre	Family Centre		Own LAA	Independent unspecified		Not subject to
36	Residential: Local Authority	For children with disabilities	Residential home		Own LAA	Local Authority	? ? Y	Local Authority
37	Residential: Voluntary Sector	For children with disabilities	Residential home		Own LAA	Voluntary Sector	? ? Y	Local Authority
38	Residential: Schools for SEN	Maintained special schools provided by LEA	SEN School		Own LAA	LEA	Y ? ?	Local Authority
39	Residential: Schools for SEN	Independent Schools (approved under S11(3) Educ Act 1981 or S189 Educ Act 1993	SEN School		Own LAA	Independent unspecified		S11(3)a Education Act 1993 or S189 Education Act 1993
40	Residential: outside Community Homes system	Registered Care Home (Registered Homes Act 1984)	Residential home		Own LAA	Independent unspecified		Registered Homes Act 1984
41	Community	With parents not under care order	Family home		Own LAA	Birth family		None
42	Residential: outside Community Homes system	Small children's home not subject to registration	Residential home		Own LAA	Independent unspecified		Not subject to
70	Residential Agency	Within LAA	Family home	N/A	Own LAA	Agency		Local Authority
71	Residential Agency	In another LAA	Family home	N/A	Other LAA	Agency		Local Authority
90	Absent > 7 days from agreed placement	Refuge (S51 Children Act 1989)r	Refuge		Own LAA	Independent unspecified		S51 Children Act 1989
91	Absent > 7 days from agreed placement	Whereabouts unknown -other	Unknown		Unknown	Unknown		Unknown --not clear difference between 91 and 92
92	Absent > 7 days from agreed	Whereabouts unknown	Unknown		Unknown	Unknown		Unknown

Appendix J: Designing Information Profiles

DAN Workshop No.2, September 29 2000

Discussion Group Session Briefing

Procedure: Participants will divide into two groups, one to work on Health and one on Education. You will have 45 mins and the usual flip-charts to work with.

Purpose: each group will attempt to draw up a minimum list of the items of information, capable of being recorded on a single A4 sheet or card, to be kept in the case file of each looked after child, which summarise what needs to be known about, respectively, the education and the health of the child (so 2 sheets, one on education, one on health). The information should satisfy, as far as possible, the basic requirements of:

day-to-day case management of the case by the social worker;
background and context for statutory case reviews;
management and monitoring at team and authority level;
national requirements, especially Children First and the various performance indicator frameworks.

Inevitably there will need to be some compromise: the needs of practice should be paramount, followed by case review, then local management and finally national indicators. However, the aim of the exercise is to try to get tie together the four different sets of information requirements which may otherwise be treated separately and conflict with one another.

Material: Each group will have copies of: the EIRs; a list of the relevant Children First indicators; the Wandsworth Profiles (as examples, though you may feel that they are too long); the 'minimum dataset' for health proposed by Heather Payne.

The task:

draw up the list of information items

consider how the information will:

- be derived, stored, checked and updated
- relate to or replace (parts of) existing LAC materials
- relate to Personal Education Plans and Individual Healthcare Plans
- be potentially useful for all Children in Need, not just Looked After Children
- be used in day-to-day case management
- assist team and authority-level monitoring and management
- satisfy Children First and other information requirements

decide whether such a Profile would be useful and whether you would be willing to 'pilot' it in practice.

What we will do with the 'product':

Providing that the exercise is successful and your feedback is positive:

We will design two forms based on the information items specified and circulate draft versions for comment.

We will produce copies of the final versions for those authorities who wish to pilot them and, if necessary, reproduce the actual number of forms you require on the appropriate paper or card.

We will report on the exercise to those concerned with the revision of the LAC forms (especially the EIRs) and Assessment Framework so that they can take our suggestions into account.

Appendix K: Meetings & Conferences attended

DAN conferences & workshops

DAN Introductory Conference, Builth Wells, April 14 2000

Attended by 5 out of the 6 member authorities, with staff from the National Assembly, SSIW, WORD and the University of Loughborough LAC team. Sessions included:

- A reports from each authority on their computer-based information system(s)
- Discussion Groups to examine a Select Variable List¹¹ for Children First¹².
- 'Triggers' and 'Dividends'.
- Discussion Groups to examine key definitions.
- A discussion of DAN's future programme, which decided to focus initially on Education, then on Health and finally on Placement data.

DAN Education Indicators workshop, Haverfordwest, June 16 2000

Hosted by Pembrokeshire, the workshop was attended by the four southern authorities. Sessions included:

- Reports from member LAs on their experience of collecting education data.
- Discussion of education variables, definitions and triggers.
- Joy Rees from Children in Wales introduced the results of her research work on the education of children in public care.

DAN Education Indicators workshop, Caernarfon, September 5 2000

The workshop was repeated for the two northern authorities, with the participation of Wrexham and Gwynedd.

DAN Conference No 2, Builth Wells, September 29 2000

Attended by 5 out of 6 member authorities, with staff from the National Assembly, SSIW, WORD and the University of Loughborough LAC team. Conference sessions included:

Report on work to-date on education indicators.

Joy Rees (Children in Wales) on tracking education achievements of looked after children.

Tricia Skuse (Dartington & Loughborough University) on finding health and education data in case files.

Discussion groups on design of summary information 'profiles' for health and education.

Dr Harriet Ward (Loughborough University) on information, the assessment framework and revisions to LAC.

NAW informal response to DAN report on education indicators.

Dr Heather Payne (University of Cardiff) on improving the health of looked after children.

Discussion of member authorities' assessment of DAN and its future programme.

NAW initiatives on performance management.

Other conferences & workshops attended

NAW Performance Management Project: two workshops organised by the Nuffield Institute and, following completion of the Nuffield report, two workshops organised to further NAW's work on performance indicators.

NAW Conference on the Audit of LAC Systems in Wales.

Department of Health workshop: An Integrated Approach to Children's Services.

SE & SW Wales LAC Support Groups joint meeting.

LAC Wales Central Co-ordinating Group.

¹¹ Taken from 'Using data from the *Looking After Children* materials to measure and improve performance', Discussion Paper, by Anne Crowley, LAC Development Worker, the Welsh Office, March 1999

¹² See Appendix B