

Data Tools to inform local responses to Covid-19: Learning from other areas

#4 of the Responding to Covid-19 Series

Based on a session delivered by Anne Pinney, True Colours Data Champion

Covid-19 and the regulatory context

GDPR Regulations do not prevent the sharing of information for the purpose of keeping children and young people safe. In fact, during Covid-19, the regulatory context was clear that educational providers and local authorities should use and share data in order to monitor and protect vulnerable children and young people.

Department for Education Guidance on '*Supporting vulnerable children and young people during the coronavirus outbreak*' (22 March 2020) instructed educational providers, working together with other partners, to take the following actions:

- identify vulnerable children and young people
- determine whether attendance at educational provision is appropriate and follow up where children and young people are absent
- consider how best to support vulnerable children and young people's welfare and education, both remotely and on-site
- consider how to respond to potential increased safeguarding concerns

The term 'vulnerable' refers to children and young people assessed as being in need under s17 of the Children Act, including Looked After Children and Children in Need; those with an EHC plan; and/or children and young people who have been otherwise assessed as vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities, which may include adopted children, those living in temporary accommodation and young carers, amongst others.

Likewise, the Notification from the Secretary of State to healthcare organisations, GPs, local authorities and arm's length bodies (1 April 2020) emphasised that they should share information to support efforts against coronavirus (Covid-19). The document stated, "we want to ensure that health organisations, arm's length bodies and local authorities are able to process and share the data they need to respond to coronavirus." This increased flexibility is due to be reviewed on 30 September and may be extended beyond that time.



Data tools to help identify vulnerable children and young people

There are a range of data tools available and we have highlighted three that may be particularly valuable:

1. Children’s Commissioner’s Local Vulnerability Profiles

The Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s latest data in childhood vulnerability, at the council level, may help local authorities understand which groups of children may be most at risk. These local vulnerability profiles are a live resource, with regular updates.

The profiles include three groups of data:

- i. Estimated prevalence of underlying needs among children (please see figure 1 below for an example)
- ii. Profile of vulnerable children known to services – CiN, LAC, SEND, AP
- iii. Profile of highly vulnerable babies and toddlers

Figure 1: Underlying needs data in Vulnerability Profile for Barking and Dagenham

Select Local Authority:		Barking and Dagenham			
Estimated prevalence of underlying needs among children in Barking and Dagenham					
Group	Indicator	Estimate	Rate	Percentile rank amongst LAs (0 = Lowest rate, 100 = Highest rate)	Source
Children in at risk households with multiple vulnerabilities	Modelled prevalence of children in households with any of so called 'toxic trio'	13,081	206.3 per 1000 0-17 yr olds	86	CCO prevalence estimates
	Modelled prevalence of children in households with all 3 of so called 'toxic trio'	857	13.5 per 1000 0-17 yr olds	97	CCO prevalence estimates
Children in households suffering domestic abuse	Modelled prevalence of children in households where parent suffering domestic abuse	4,445	70.1 per 1000 0-17 yr olds	72	CCO prevalence estimates
Children in households suffering from mental	Modelled prevalence of children in households where parent suffering severe mental health problem	9,951	157 per 1000 0-17 yr olds	86	CCO prevalence estimates
Children in households suffering from	Modelled prevalence of children in households where parent suffering alcohol/drug dependency	2,849	44.9 per 1000 0-17 yr olds	83	CCO prevalence estimates
Children in poverty	Children eligible for free school meals	6,844	17.4%	63	DfE statistics
	Estimated local unemployment rate (%)	6%	6%	92	DfE statistics
	Income deprivation affecting children indicator (IDACI) - average score	0.238	N/A	84	MHCLG statistics
	Households with children claiming universal credit	5,943	175.31 per 1000 households with children	74	DWP statistics
Children living in crowded spaces	Rate of overcrowded households (occupancy rating for bedrooms of less than -1)	13.5%	13.5%	95	2011 Census
	Flats/maisonettes as a proportion of housing	30.2%	30.2%	74	2011 Census
	Population-based projected rate of overcrowded households in 2018	16.27%	16.27%	97	CCO estimates
Children in households at risk from additional pressure	Number of live births	3,700	58.4 per 1000 0-17 yr olds	83	ONS statistics
	Live births to mothers under 18	22	0.3 per 1000 0-17 yr olds	61	ONS statistics
Children without internet access	Children in households where no home broadband above 2mbps is available at the premises	9	0.1 per 1000 0-17 yr olds	36	Ofcom statistics
	Children in households where no internet above 10mbps (neither home broadband nor mobile data) is available at the premises	669	10.5 per 1000 0-17 yr olds	64	Ofcom statistics

The local vulnerability profiles can be downloaded for free [here](#)

2. LGINform reports

Local Government Association’s LGINform website provides up-to-date data tables on a wide range of local area data, including:

- Covid-19 confirmed cases
- Children needing support – primarily SEND, AP and those known to children’s social care

- Language barriers and digital exclusion
- Household type and overcrowding
- Households in need of support
- Long-term illness or disability

To search LGInform for local area data, click [here](#)

3. **New Philanthropy Capital local and regional profiles**

The NPC Covid-19 data dashboard is aimed primarily at charities and funders and brings together data on health conditions, housing, deprivation and other indicators of vulnerability, as well as data on Covid cases and deaths.

Data tables are available at a regional and local authority level. The data is being updated frequently and now includes new data on the needs and demographics of families supported during the pandemic.

To access the interactive dashboard, please click [here](#)



Local Area Case Studies

Many local areas have adopted innovative approaches and accelerated joined-up working and data sharing during this time. There is a desire across the system to capture and build on this progress. As a report from the Early Intervention Foundation and Action for Children explained: "There was a strong sense... that partnerships had pulled together in this time of crisis, and that partnership working had improved significantly. For some, the crisis had, at least temporarily, unblocked longstanding issues in relation to data-sharing between public health, schools, children's centres and local authority early help services" (*Covid-19 and early intervention: Understanding the impact, preparing for recovery*, June 2020)

Stockton on Tees – Vulnerable Children Database

Stockton on Tees developed a Vulnerable Children Database in response to Covid-19. This was achieved through close partnership working between the LA, CCG, local service providers and individual Health Trusts. It started as a paper-trawl but since being digitized, the database has grown rapidly and now includes data on over 10,380 young people. It was a huge undertaking, with particular challenges around the different systems and mechanisms within LA and Health teams, however the shared commitment to this work made it possible.

The database includes:

- A summary column which shows 'involvements' identifying all the services that each young person is known to
- Who they were last seen by and by which agency/service
- NHS number and any other unique identifiers
- Personal information and contact details, extracted from MIS
- Age, school stage, school base and school year
- Covid-19 status - whether they are extremely vulnerable, shielding etc.

Stockton on Tees also developed a new Children's index as part of this work, including a RAGP (Red, Amber, Green, Purple) rating system to indicate the vulnerability of each child. This allows professionals to see at-a-glance how vulnerability is stacking up across the cohort and to monitor the changing status of individual young people. Every service now uses this RAGP-rated Children's index to promote greater alignment.



The data comes from a broad range of sources and teams, including:

- Children's social care (LAC, CP and CiN)
- Early Help
- SEND status – EHCP, SEN stage K
- VEMT status (Vulnerable Exploited Missing Trafficked)
- Risk of NEET (not in education, employment, training)
- CAMHS
- Community Health Services, including therapies
- Children's continuing care

The next phase will include expanding this data further to include amongst others more health information, youth offending service information, school attendance and exclusion information and young carer status. For looked after children in particular, they hope to import data on care settings by type and longevity.

Practical learning:

- Data is now imported electronically from internal MIS and spreadsheets from external sources
- ETL software used to import data from all sources, creating a single .csv extract
- Initially reported out via Excel, but moving to a Power BI report to be more accessible and interactive
- Weekly lists are sent to each Early Years setting and each Primary and Secondary School

Operational learning and impact:

- The local authority Early Help Team use the weekly lists as an engagement tool to work with individual schools
- The database allows greater monitoring of vulnerable children and the identification of any change in their relative risk status. It was described by colleagues as "already a game changer"

Strategic learning and impact:

- As part of this work, a Summary Strategic Report is provided weekly to the Children's Services Directorate's Leadership Team
- The database enables evaluations of the scale, variety and depth of children and young people's vulnerability across the Borough which supports strategic work and priority setting

- The database also supports the monitoring and assessment of the impact of resource-use
- This work also informs proactive alignment of resource with relative need

There is ongoing work to expand this database to continue to respond effectively to Covid-19 as well as a desire to extend this work beyond 30th September.

Oldham Council – Vulnerable children workstream

Oldham council similarly developed a vulnerable children workstream to support their response to Covid-19, with input from social care, education and health teams. From this, they have developed a daily action log to examine safeguarding needs and attendance of children at schools to ensure they know where vulnerable young people are and how they are doing during the lockdown period. This has been particularly valuable from a social care perspective.

The next stage of this process is to develop a broader and more integrated data set to feed into this work. School-based risk assessments have been connected to reasonable endeavours work, and parents and young people are being contacted to track whether their outcomes are being met through altered and remote provision during Covid-19. These findings will allow for a prioritisation of families' needs which will inform the stepping-up of services and form the basis of provision as services returns to some degree of normality.

As schools begin to return to normal, this work will not be fully maintained but Oldham have recognised the value in capturing a more integrated view of vulnerable children. Oldham have noted that their Covid response has accelerated the process of partnership working and enabled conversations between partners on how services should be delivered in the future. This integrated approach, which provides 'wraparound assurance' of the status of vulnerable children and young people, will be prioritised in the future. Post-lockdown, this work is likely to include a termly data report and discussion between the local authority, social care and schools with regards to safeguarding and meeting children's needs as schools reopen.



Learning from other areas:

Similar initiatives around data-sharing, cross-team collaboration and databases on vulnerability are being developed across the country, including in Northumberland, Devon and Oxford. In several areas, schools report weekly on all pupils with an EHC plan and/or social worker. Consequences of this work included:

- Social workers having a greater understanding of how children are experiencing the pandemic, including an understanding of the level of interaction between the child and their education setting

- The data sharing processes has increased and improved communication and collaboration between teams which has an impact on many other areas of work
- Developing a single RAG rating across health and social care was seen as leading to a reduction in waiting times for ASD assessments
- In Devon, the process was linked to increased communication with families and an increase in family confidence in data collection and sharing
- In Oxford, weekly meetings have taken place to discuss, RAG-rate and identify a lead professional for individual children. This operational approach allows careful monitoring for individual children. It also informs system leaders of emerging themes which supports future-planning and strategic thinking.

