

# Children in Need (CIN) Census Review Steering Group

*The CIN census is being reviewed following the completion of the 2009-10 return and the publication of final data on 30 November 2010.*

The ultimate aim of the review is to compare the costs and burdens of completing the CIN census against the value of the resulting data, allowing for improvements that can feasibly be made, with a view to informing a decision on the future life of the collection.

## Remit and Modus Operandi of the CIN Census Review Steering Group

In fully reviewing all aspects of the current CIN census the Steering Group will:

- establish the national requirements of information on Children in Need and justify the usefulness of centrally collected data at both a national and local level
- determine the cost / benefit of the data collection bearing in mind the burdens on data providers
- take into account the recommendations of the review by Professor Munro on child protection

These factors will be considered in the context of the priorities of the data users and providers that constitute the Steering Group membership. To do this, the Steering Group will consider issues relating to:

- how relevant is the information to the frontline in driving performance and in support of public decision making. What are the local benefits?
- what are the national requirements and to what extent does national collection assist in local decision making
- in what way does the collection support the Munro review on child protection
- measurement of the costs of collection and submission burden, or where barriers exist, suggesting feasible methods for overcoming them

- whether the data is of sufficient quality and fit for purpose
- can the local burden be reduced, for example, through changes to timing, frequency, collection methods or other improvements?

Improvements to the data collection mechanism can also be considered, but any discussions will need to take into consideration the substantial unresourced costs that would be required to develop and implement an alternative to COLLECT.

The Steering Group will meet three times (on 9 December, 20 January and 17 February) to allow a reasonable time for discussion and reflection on previous meetings. LAs that are not represented on the Steering Group will be able to voice their opinions through the LA Focus Group, which next meet on 11 and 12 January, and Focus Group members will be asked for their comments on the Steering Group's recommendations.

## Outputs

The key output will be a short paper that makes recommendations on the future of the CIN census and, if appropriate, suggest a viable alternative. It will be the Department for Education's responsibility to liaise with LAs and Management Information Suppliers (MIS) to confirm the feasibility of implementing the recommendations. The department will present the final recommendations to Ministers. The minutes from each meeting will be made publicly available at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/researchandstatistics/statisticalreturns/cincensus/a0013657/children-in-need-cin-census>

## Membership

The Steering Group comprises frontline LA representatives involved in children's services data who have been part of the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS), Star Chamber Scrutiny Board (SCSB) or the LA Focus Group. The Steering Group also involves specialists familiar with LA data systems as well as data users from research bodies, charitable organisations and Other Government Departments.

DfE will be represented by analytical colleagues from both Data Services Group (responsible for the collection of data from the CIN census) and Analysis & Research Division (responsible for designing the CIN census to reflect policy requirements). Policy colleagues from Children in Care, Safeguarding and Special Educational Needs and Disability divisions are also represented on the Steering Group, but are not expected to attend all of every meeting.

The Group is chaired by Nigel Nicholds from Norfolk LA / SCSB, who is also a member of the SSRG Children's Services Standing Committee