How Safe Are our Children? Data Briefing

April 2013

Introduction
The NSPCC’s report How Safe Are Our Children compiles the most robust and up-to-date data that exists across each of the four nations in the UK and this brief should be read alongside the report.

The purpose of this briefing is to:

- Outline areas and data we considered and did not include and why we chose not to include it in this report How Safe Are Our Children (Section 1);
- Summarise observations on the availability and comparability of data presented as part of the 19 Indicators (Section 2);
- Summarise observation on the availability and comparability of data presented as part of the risks section of the report (Section 3).

Details on the data sources are set out underneath each Indicator in the main report and are not replicated here.

Section 1

NHS Data

A wealth of NHS data is made publically available through the NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care. We attempted to analyse information on the number of children who are admitted to A&E or hospital for reasons that could point to maltreatment having occurred. We were not able to identify publicly available data that would be useful for assessing the scale of child maltreatment.

We considered the following data sets:

Hospital Episode Statistics

Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) are published annually in England. Specific Accident and Emergency Statistics are published as experimental statistics for A&E departments, single speciality A&E departments, minor injuries units and walk in centres in England.

Data classifications include “patient groups” and “primary A&E diagnosis”. Patient groups comprise: other, other accident, not known, sports injury, road traffic accident, assault, deliberate self-harm, firework injury and brought in dead. On the face of it, “assault” may be a category to investigate in more detail, but in 2011/12 89.3% of classified A&E attendances fell into categories ‘other’ and ‘other accident’ and only 1.1% of attendances were classified as ‘assault’. Assault covers a wide range of injuries, possibly including child maltreatment. However we would also expect maltreatment related incidents to be classified as ‘other’ or ‘other accidents’.

1 HES Online http://www.hesonline.nhs.uk/Ease/servlet/ContentServer?siteID=1937&categoryID=1976

2 2011/12 NHS Accident and Emergency (Experimental Statistics), 2011-12, table 12
Primary A&E diagnosis data contains 38 different primary diagnoses, however there are none that could be unambiguously related to child maltreatment. For example a burn or a head injury could due to neglect or abuse or simply an accident that has nothing to do with child maltreatment at all.

An age breakdown is published, however data is published in deciles rather than for each age group.

**Hospital Admission Statistics**

Hospital Admission data is published. For example data for finished admission episodes includes assault categories (Y06 neglect and abandonment; Y07 other maltreatment syndromes).

The data release notes that police and crime survey figures show that physical injuries are only sustained by the victim in around a half of all assault cases. In those cases that do involve injury to the victim the injury tends to be relatively minor - such as bruises, cuts or scratches. Only in around one in ten cases of assault does the victim require medical attention, and only in a minority of those cases is the victim admitted to hospital. This means that the figures are not indicative of overall assault trends.

In addition this data is only available for England and Wales, but not for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

**Home Office and Ministry of Justice data**

**Crimes of assault recorded by police**

Assaults recorded by the police are published across the UK nations. Northern Ireland is the only country to break this data down by the age of the victims. For England, Wales and Scotland we are not able to identify the number of children that were victims of assault. We understand that this information is recorded by the police, but it is not collected or published centrally. The Home Office is developing a new data hub system that will collect more detailed information from police forces so this could be something to look into for future publications.

**Convictions data**

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) publishes data on court proceedings in England and Wales against offenders for certain offence categories. This data is potentially interesting to see how many recorded offences lead to a court case and conviction. However only a few of the offence categories covered in the report are covered in the published court proceedings data. Furthermore, there are difficulties in comparing convictions data and offences data as the former refer to the number of offenders and the latter refer to the number of victims. The MoJ and Home Office stated in the recent sexual offending report “figures between the police and court sources will differ, as there will be crimes involving more than one victim or more than one offender, or

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3 Ibid, table 6
possibly multiple victims and offenders relating to a single crime. It is not currently feasible to track individual cases from initial recording by the police through the CJS.\textsuperscript{5}

**Serious case reviews/significant care reviews/case management reviews/child practice reviews data**

The Department for Education (DfE) produced a series of biennial overview reports on all the serious case reviews carried out in England. However, the way in which serious case reviews are produced is changing under the new Working Together guidance and it is uncertain as to whether the overview reports will continue to be published in the future.

Data is also not available across the four nations for comparable time periods. In 2012 Scotland published its first analysis of significant case reviews, from 2007-2011, and in 2013 Northern Ireland published an overview of case management reviews, from 2003-2008. However the differing time periods covered prevent a direct comparison with the English data. Wales has recently changed from carrying out serious case reviews to child practice reviews; and has not produced any quantitative analysis of reviews for a number of years.

The lack of consistent and comparable data across the four nations meant that, although the reports contain very useful information, the decision was made not to include it within our indicators.

**Child sexual exploitation**

The Office of the Children’s Commissioner (OCC) in England has recently published interim findings of an Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups.\textsuperscript{6} This inquiry found at least 16,500 children were identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation during one year and 2,409 children were confirmed as victims of sexual exploitation in gangs and groups during the 14-month period from August 2010 to October 2011. No comparable data was available for any of the other three nations which is why this survey data was not included in the How Safe Are Our Children Report.

**Female Genital Mutilation**

Due to the hidden nature of FGM there is a prevalence and trend data. The most cited estimate comes from research in 2007 by the FORWARD organisation which used data from the 2001 census to estimate that over 20,000 girls in England and Wales were at risk of undergoing the procedure.\textsuperscript{7}

The study also claimed that nearly 66,000 women who have experienced FGM are living in England and Wales. Since the study there has been an increase in migration into England and Wales from areas where FGM is particularly prevalent, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, meaning that the numbers of children living with or at risk of FGM is likely to have grown. The Imkaan organisation conducted research on ‘harmful practices’ in 2011 and found that around 7,000

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\textsuperscript{6} November 2012, “I thought I was the only one. The only one in the world” The Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation In Gangs and Groups

\textsuperscript{7} Dorkenoo, E; Morison, L and McFarlane, A (2007) A Statistical Study to Estimate the Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation in England and Wales London: FORWARD UK. This included nearly 16,000 girls under the age of 15 at high risk of WHO Type III FGM and over 5,000 at high risk of WHO Type I or Type II.
women who have suffered female genital mutilation give birth in London each year. The research observes that if the babies born are female they are also at risk of FGM in the future.

Children’s views

There is no publicly available data on children’s own views about how safe they feel from abuse and neglect. There is some survey evidence about how safe children feel, such as the Tellus4 survey completed in England and Wales in 2010, however this survey did not consider abuse or neglect.

Teenage Partner Violence

Teenage partner violence data is very limited. Estimates for England, Wales and Scotland were published in 2009 for the first time. We did not consider there to be sufficient data for a separate indicator at this time.

Children Going Missing

There was no robust data available to include in our report. A recent All Party Parliamentary Group reported in June 2012. The Inquiry reported “During the course of the Inquiry, the panel was told of serious shortcomings in the data collected on children who run away from care. The children’s minister, Tim Loughton MP, admitted that it was impossible to know the true extent of the problem as the data collected by police, care services and Ofsted was “raw and erratic”. Indeed, the Department for Education recorded only 930 instances of children going missing from care last year, whilst police data showed an estimated 10,000 individual children going missing from care in a year. This is a startling discrepancy and severely hampers agencies’ and professionals’ ability to effectively intervene and protect vulnerable children.”

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8 Roy, S; Ng, P; Larasi, I, Dorkenoo, E; McFarlane, A (2011) The missing Link: A joined up approach to addressing Harmful Practices in London: Greater London Authority
10 Christine Barter, Melanie McCarr, David Berridge and Kathy Evans (2009) Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships
11 APPG Inquiry into children missing from care (June 2012) http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/u32/joint_appg_inquiry_-_report...pdf
The table below summarizes observations on the availability and comparability of data presented as part of the indicators.

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<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Observations on availability and comparability of data</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Child homicides recorded by the police</td>
<td>Data is available for all four nations showing recorded homicide offences. However, published data for England and Wales is only for under 15s, whereas data on under 18s is available for Scotland and Northern Ireland. It would be useful for England and Wales to make data available for all under 18s as this would allow a comparison of rates between nations.</td>
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<td>2 Child mortality</td>
<td>Mortality data coded consistently under the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) which allows comparison over time within each nation. Differences in the death registration systems used in each nation may have an impact on the comparability of the data between nations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Child suicides</td>
<td>Statistics on child suicides come from mortality data. Mortality data coded consistently under the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) is available for all UK nations. Historical data is available for all UK nations and consistent recording methods allow comparison over time within each nation. However, data on suicides from mortality statistics is affected by difficulties in recording a suicide where intent is unclear. In relation to children in particular, there may be difficulties in recording a death either as a suicide or as an accident. Data is published with the age band 15 to 19 years, so data for children under 18 is not readily available. However the 15-19 band is available for all nations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Number of recorded sexual offences against children</td>
<td>Data is available for the four nations, dating back to 2004/05 for England and Wales and 2002/03 for Northern Ireland. Due to changes in legislation, trend data is not available for Scotland. Differing offence categories and legal systems across the UK make comparisons problematic. Data for England and Wales does not include offences related to indecent images, as this is information published together with other offences under the category—&quot;Obscene publications etc&quot;. Data on indecent images is available and included for Scotland and Northern Ireland. Differences in offence categories are a barrier to comparing data. The limitation that police-recorded crime statistics suffer from under-reporting and therefore do not reflect the actual number of offences committed applies to all nations.</td>
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<td>Number of recorded cruelty and neglect offences against children</td>
<td>Data is available for all four nations showing recorded offences for the last decade. Legislation, offence categories and recording methods are not identical across the UK and so direct comparisons need to be treated with caution. <strong>Differences in offense categories are a barrier to comparing data.</strong></td>
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<td>Self-reported prevalence of abuse and neglect</td>
<td>Data is available for all four nations, though small sample sizes in the devolved nations mean that it is problematic to report these separately. This measure draws on the findings of the NSPCC research report Child abuse and neglect in the UK today, published in September 2011. Some comparison can be made to data from an earlier NSPCC study completed in 1998/9.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contacts with ChildLine</td>
<td>ChildLine data covers the UK as a whole and comparable data on contacts is available for the previous three years. Due to the confidentiality of the service, very few young people tell a counsellor where they live, and therefore a UK nation breakdown of data is not possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contacts with the NSPCC helpline</td>
<td>Comparable data broken down by nation is available for 2010/11 and 2011/12. Referral data captures the local authority or agency the referral was made to. For advice contacts geographical location of the caller is captured where the information is given to us by the caller.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey data on online harm</td>
<td>We have only been able to present survey data – this is an emerging and rapidly evolving area. <strong>It would be useful to have more longer term trend data; more information about younger children's (under 9's) online behaviours and experiences; more research about the impact on children of what they seeing online in their online and offline lives; a better understanding of what makes a child more vulnerable or more resilient to online harm including an understanding of different groups children such as disabled children or children who are in care.</strong></td>
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**NSPCC Briefing**

Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP.
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<td>Violent incidents experienced by 10-15 year olds (Crime survey)</td>
<td>The survey only provides data for children aged 10 to 15 years old and only covers certain offence categories (violence and theft offences). The survey uses two different measures of crime due to difficulties in classifying some crimes against children. Methodological differences between the adult and children’s survey mean that direct comparison is not possible. Data is only available for England and Wales for the last three years. However comparison between the three years is not possible due to changes in the way the statistics are collected. The Scotland and Northern Ireland Crime Surveys do not include data for under 16s. There are two challenges – developing data that lends itself to comparison over time for England and Wales. It would also be helpful if Scotland and Northern Ireland developed comparable data.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Referrals to social services and assessments</td>
<td>The number of referrals are counted and published in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The number of children referred is published in England and Northern Ireland. It would be useful if all nations could publish the number of children referred as well as the number of referrals to children’s social services. Both Northern Ireland publish data on the source of 'child protection' and 'child in need' referrals respectively. It would be useful for England and Scotland to also publish data on the source of referrals. This information would enable an examination of how different professional groups and the public respond to children in need or at risk of suffering significant harm.</td>
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<td>Children in need due to abuse or neglect</td>
<td>Children in need (CIN) data showing children in need due to abuse or neglect is available for England and Wales. Northern Ireland data shows where further action is taken following a referral —this data will not necessarily be as focused on abuse or neglect as the England and Wales data. It would be useful if Northern Ireland data could give an indication of the &quot;further action&quot; that is due to abuse or neglect as opposed to other reasons. Scotland doesn't currently collate data about 'children in need'. It would be useful if this could be redressed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children subject to a child protection plan or on the child protection register</td>
<td>All four nations publish data on the number of children subject to CPPs or on CPRs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composition of child protection plans and child protection register</td>
<td>All four nations publish data on the reasons why children are subject to a CPP or are on a CPR, but there are differences in the classifications of categories of abuse between the nations. In March 2013 Scotland published data for the year ending July 2012 but with revised categories. These revised categories are, unfortunately, not comparable to earlier year however we note that two new categories include &quot;parental substance misuse&quot; and &quot;parental mental health problems&quot; which suggests an increased focus on risks.</td>
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<td>Re-registration onto the child protection register (returning to a child protection plan)</td>
<td>All four nations publish data on the number of children being re-registered on CPRs or returning to CPPs. The data is comparable. However the data on how long children are on a CPR before they are de-registered is not available for Wales. It would be really useful if Wales could publish data on how long children are on the child protection register at the point of deregistration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children looked-after due to abuse or neglect</td>
<td>Data is published for all four nations on looked-after children. Only England and Wales publish data on the number of children who are looked after due to abuse or neglect. Scotland and Northern Ireland only publish numbers of looked-after children, not the reasons why they become looked after. It would be helpful if Northern Ireland and Scotland published data on the children that are looked after due to abuse or neglect.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of looked after children who have three or more placements during the year</td>
<td>Data on the number of placements that looked-after children have is available for England and Wales. It would be useful if Northern Ireland and Scotland data on numbers of placements were collected and published.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child trafficking</td>
<td>Child trafficking advice centre data is available for the UK as a whole, for the past five years. CEOP estimates cover the UK and date back to 2005.</td>
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**Section 3**

Many of the risk factors use a variety of datasets in an attempt to estimate number of children living with parents who experience specific risk factors.

The table below summarises what data type of data is available on risk factor in each of the four nations and the UK. The data is extremely limited and there is very little trend data available at all – in short we are unable to say whether most of the risk factors are getting more or less prevalent.
In section 3, factors which may indicate that children are at an increased risk to abuse and neglect are examined. Researchers have explored many of these factors, separately and together, but there is no agreement as to factors which should be included in the ‘definitive’ list of risk factors. The reason for this is complicated, much like child abuse and neglect. Different types of abuse and neglect are more commonly associated with specific risk factors, therefore creating complexity in the mapping of risk factors to specific types of abuse and maltreatment in general. Many risk factors are often not seen as risks when considered alone, but serve to indicate a heightened risk when combined with other risk factors. Other risk factors may indicate a risk, but what lies behind that risk is largely unexplained. It was not the intention of the report to provide the definitive list of risk factors, but to explore the more commonly understood risk factors and look at the data which exists for those risk factors.

Many of the risk factors examined in the report can be conceptualized as risks that impact on the parent, which in turn impacts on that parent’s ability to parent and safeguard their child. As evidenced in the prevalence sections of the report, much of the data that exists on these parental
risk factors is based on estimates, as even if official data is gathered, information whether that person has a child is not gathered. Further, it is often difficult to find datasets (either administrative data or survey data) that have multiple risk factors identified and whether that person is a parent. This lack of data leads to estimates for some risk factors that are quite very far apart — eg estimates of between 23,000\textsuperscript{12} and 250,000\textsuperscript{13} parents with learning disabilities. The report highlighted that it is a combination of parental risk factors that are found in the most serious cases of maltreatment and should be cause for heightened concern about children in those families. Researchers and policy makers would benefit from more datasets, both administrative and survey, which include even basic information about whether the individual is a parent. Starting to explore the co-occurrence of risk factors along with whether children are in the family can help understand the potential need. While asking sensitive questions about child abuse and neglect may not always be appropriate. Creating surveys and the gathering of administrative data which explores key risk factors should consider whether information about child abuse and neglect may be asked.

More needs to be done to accurately record how many children are experiencing these risks and to accurately record the co-occurrence of all these risks, alongside data about abuse and neglect of the child. If this data existed, services would be better able to target their interventions, researchers would be better able to explore the links between the different risk factors, and policymakers would be better able to target policy at the most vulnerable groups. Also it would be possible to monitor trends in risks factors.

For ease of reference the full list of sources we consulted for the risk factors is included in Annex A. We are expecting to learn from this exercise and if there are other sources we should be aware of please do get in touch with us. Our contact details are below.

For further information, please contact:
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Annex A


**Scotland Parental Domestic Violence:** National Statistics – 2010/11 *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey: Partner Abuse*. The percentages for each category recorded have remained at a consistent level.


**UK Parental Mental Health:** Mental Health Foundation (2010) *MyCare: The challenges facing young carers of parents with a severe mental illness*.


