

User Guide: Children in Need and Children Receiving Care and Support, administrative records in Wales



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This guide is for new and existing researchers to assist with working on the Children in Need and Children Receiving Care and Support dataset.

It is intended as a starting point to help guide researchers who are looking to use the Children in Need and the Children Receiving Care and Support datasets as part of an approved data linkage research project, and to provide feedback into future dataset development and documentation.

This document is correct at the point of publication.



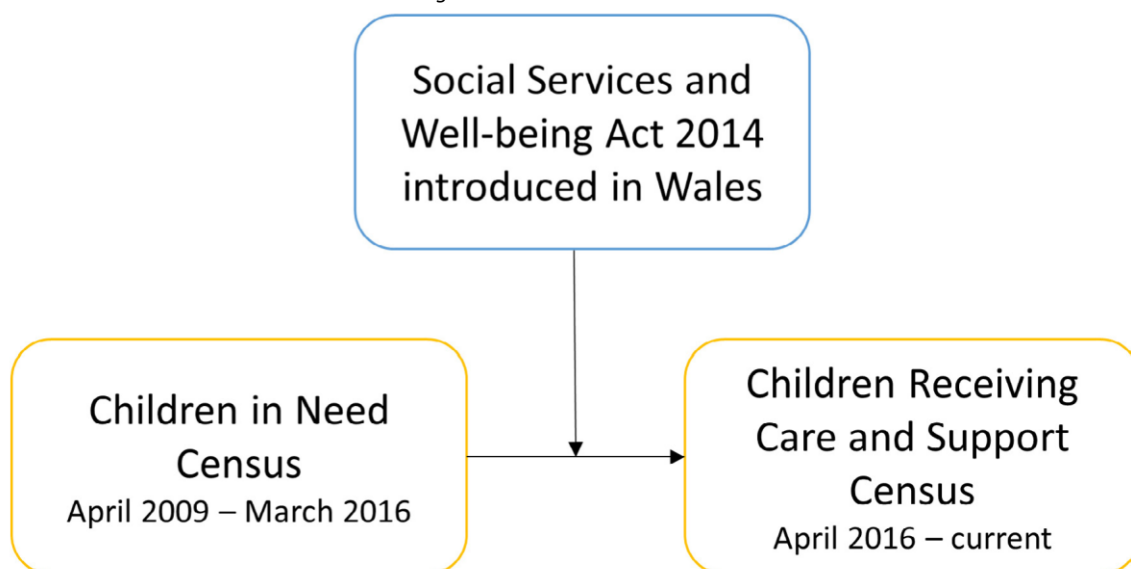
Introduction to the dataset

The dataset is accessible to accredited research users from the [SAIL Databank](#) either as a stand-alone dataset or as part of a pre-defined project linkage or datasets.

In Wales, several administrative data sources include information relating to the needs of children and the social care support they receive. However, only two data sources include information about all children receiving social care support, including those who are not looked after.

The first covers April 2009 to March 2016 and is named the Children in Need (CIN) census. In April 2016, following the introduction of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, further data collection took place under it as the renamed Children Receiving Care and Support (CRCS) census (Figure 1). More detail about this change is provided in Appendix 1. In the 2014 Act the definition of a 'Child in Need' was repealed for Wales. As a result, modifications to the inclusion criteria has resulted in the the CRCS only capturing children with a care and support plan, whilst the CIN census had a broader coverage. For this reason, caution should always be taken when using them as a combined dataset, despite use of the same data variables. CRCS census guidance is published annually for each data collection to clarify amendments to definitions.

Figure 1: CIN and CRCS datasets



Linkage of these population-level datasets to other administrative data allows us to build a partial longitudinal picture of the experiences of vulnerable children. It has the potential to facilitate a greater understanding of the long-term implications of adverse childhood experiences and social services contact for health and education outcomes. Linkage of social care and family justice data can also provide insight into the long-term experiences of those children who have contact with both systems.

Studies involving children receiving social care often rely on small sample sizes or single yearly data collections¹⁻³. Consequently, there is limited use of longitudinal research to capture the pathways that children take into and beyond social care⁴. The increasing availability of the English CIN data⁵, and emerging health and education data linkage for England⁶, have begun to address this. Efforts to capitalise on largescale administrative datasets to inform policy and practice in child welfare are also evident in a number of international contexts^{7,8}. Welsh Government have been working to evaluate the implementation of the 2014 Act⁹, but to date, the data-level impact of the change in legal framework between the two datasets has not been quantified, nor has research been undertaken to demonstrate the value of linkage to health records.

The Welsh Government shares the CIN data from the 2010 – 2016 returns and the CRCS data covering the returns from 2017 onwards within the secure research platform at the Secure Anonymised Information Linkage (SAIL) Databank. The structure and potential use of these datasets have previously been described elsewhere¹⁰. The addition of children’s social care data within the SAIL Databank enables increased access to this data and the potential for rich and novel longitudinal studies through linkage to health, education, and family justice datasets.

This work demonstrates successful data linkage of the Welsh CIN and CRCS datasets in the SAIL Databank to other health datasets. It can be used to facilitate interdisciplinary work aiming to use the Welsh CIN or CRCS data collections which have not previously been described.

How is this data collected?

Data captured by the CIN and CRCS returns are collected by each local authority each year, and each local authority then passes the collated financial year’s worth of data to the Welsh Government. Welsh Government stores personal information for each child in education (name, address, date of birth) in its Pupil Level Annual School Census, separately from the CRCS return data. The Unique Pupil Number (UPN) links these records together so that educational achievement can be published annually for children receiving care and support. However, as children under the age of three are unlikely to have a UPN, Welsh Government could not identify them. As a result, the SAIL Databank did not receive records relating to unidentified children and so approximately 3000 records per return year are missing. However, these missing numbers are not limited solely to children under three years of age, and we show the breakdown of missing records by age group in Table 1 and Table 2.

A key feature of the CRCS and CIN censuses is that they only report on children who have a care or support plan in place for the former, and an open case for the latter, continuously for the previous three months - i.e. on or before 1 January to 31 March each year. These censuses collect individual records on all children in need, including those looked after by a local authority or those on the child protection register.

More detail on the differences between the CIN and CRCS censuses, along with the implications of the change in legal framework on the two datasets, is detailed fully in **Appendix 1**.

Table 1: Percentage of children in need per age group per year missing from SAIL records

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Unborn	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Under 1	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
1 to 4	65.1	63.7	57.1	62.1	59.1	60.4	62.3
5 to 9	1.8	3.6	3.9	3.9	4.0	4.3	2.5
10 to 15	2.5	1.1	1.0	0.8	1.1	0.7	1.1
16 to 17	20.5	14.4	13.2	13.0	11.1	9.6	11.3
18 to 20	43.9	36.3	29.3	20.1	15.3	13.8	16.8
21 and over	62.7	54.0	48.6	50.0	43.7	42.1	30.8
Total	23.7	22.7	21.2	22.0	20.7	20.5	20.6

Table 2: The percentage of values either missing or entered as unknown for variables across the CIN and CRCS censuses.



2009- 2010- 2011- 2012- 2013- 2014- 2015- 2016- 20172010 2011
2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018

Children's characteristics	Language	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
	Asylum-seeking status	9.8	0.0	3.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) 2011	13.9	18.8	25.5	29.5	35.4	41.4	44.4	49.9	52.2
Children's health	Health surveillance checks (5 and under)	25.0	13.7	13.7	10.4	2.4	1.2	2.7	0.4	0.4
	Dental checks (5 and over)	23.1	17.6	12.5	14.4	3.2	2.7	3.6	4.5	1.1
	Immunisations	22.4	9.9	6.9	8.0	1.5	0.7	1.7	0.5	0.0
	Mental illhealth (10 and over)	10.3	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.1
Case information	Youth offending (10 and over)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.7	0.0
	Child substance misuse (10 and over)	10.1	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0
Parental characteristics	Substance/ alcohol misuse	19.1	1.3	1.5	1.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.0
	Learning disabilities	19.2	1.7	1.4	1.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.0
	Mental illhealth	18.9	1.6	1.4	1.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.0
	Physical illhealth	19.1	1.6	1.5	1.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.0
	Domestic abuse	13.3	0.4	1.5	1.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.5	0.0



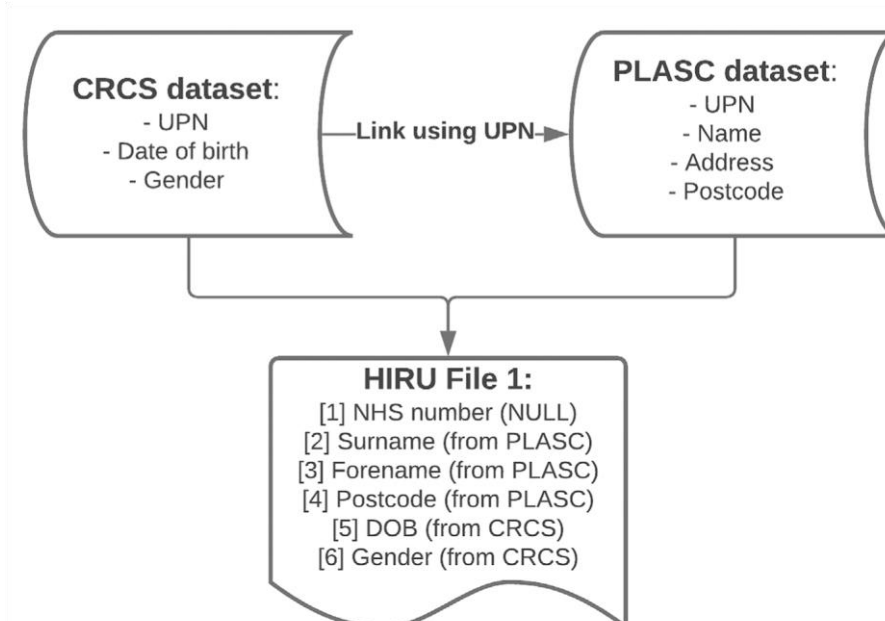
Key linkage information

The anonymisation and linkage process for the CIN and CRCS census data held within the SAIL Databank differs from the standard process.

Usually, individuals are assigned an anonymised linking field (ALF) based on their National Health Service number, name, sex, date of birth and postcode. ALFs can then be used to link person-level datasets. However, for the CIN and CRCS the NHS number is not used to assign an ALF. Welsh Government stores the census return data separately from each child's personally identifiable information, and instead links the two datasets using the Unique Pupil Number (UPN) to access children's names and addresses. These are used by a trusted third party (Digital Health and Care Wales) to probabilistically match children to an ALF¹¹.

The linkage process that Welsh Government uses to generate the file for the trusted third party is shown in Figure 2. Children are automatically allocated a UPN on their first entry to the state-funded school sector in England or Wales, usually when a pupil joins a nursery or primary school. It is an identifier only for use in an educational context during a child's school career. There is no requirement for independent schools to assign UPNs, though some do this voluntarily. The statementing Local Education Authority allocates a UPN for pupils with additional learning needs attending a non-maintained special or independent school^{12,13}.

Figure 2: The method used by Welsh Government to generate the file used by the trusted third party in the linkage process.



This ALF allocation method via UPN means that the data held in the SAIL Databank have no ALF information for babies and infants up to two years of age, as there is no universal entitlement to publicly funded provision under this age¹⁴. Some targeted publicly funded provision is offered under the Welsh Government's Flying Start programme¹⁵ with part-time childcare available for two- to three-year-olds in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Despite the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 modifying the definition of children eligible for a service provided by their local authority, the collection method and date inclusion criteria are the same for both the CIN and CRCS censuses. The 2014 Act also modifies the definition of an 'open case', affecting the general inclusion criteria for the censuses in the following ways:



Children in Need Open Cases

For the CIN census, 'open' refers to cases in which the local authority took some sort of action during the financial year (1 April to 31 March) or, as of 31 March in a collection (financial) year, was planning to take action sometime in the future. Such cases may include young people aged 18 or over who are still receiving care and accommodation or postcare support (leaving care services) from children's services and unborn children if they are felt to be 'at risk'.

Other included cases are children supported via adult teams, children receiving nursery provision funded solely by children's social services, children receiving contracted-out provision from voluntary organisations that are funded by children's social services, children who are privately fostered, and children who are waiting for a service at the census date.

Children Receiving Care and Support Open Cases

Within the CRCS census, 'open' refers only to cases in which there is an active care and support plan that has been provided following an assessment and eligibility test undertaken by social services. Children are only eligible for a care and support plan when their needs for care and support can and can only be met by the local authority providing, arranging, or making direct payments for care and support. Therefore, unlike the CIN census, the CRCS census does not include details on children waiting for a service or an assessment, unborn children, or any individual over the age of 18. However, the CRCS census will capture young carers (under 18) who have a carers' support plan if they are providing care to someone else. Some of these young carers may be receiving care and support themselves in addition to acting as young carers for another individual.



Key variables

Both census datasets are in long format, with each child having one row per return year. Between 2010 and 2016, the CIN census data held inside the SAIL Databank consists of 108,449 rows, reflecting data for 41,933 distinct children. For the CRCS census, 2017 and 2018 collection years, there are 25,972 entries for 17,831 unique children. There is a slight overlap with 10,552 children present in both the CIN and CRCS censuses, with both combined datasets containing information relating to 49,350 unique children.

Unlike the English CIN dataset⁵, and as previously mentioned, Welsh local authorities do not report all open cases over 12 months. They only report those receiving care or support between 1 January and 31 March in a return year. For example, for data collected from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013, support was in place on or before 1 January 2013 and remained on 31 March 2013. The Welsh data collections are also never retrospectively updated, unlike the English dataset where rows often have case closure dates added in later collections. However, in some instances, where a single year is inconsistent with previous years' records, they are revised by Welsh Government (Knowledge and Analytical Services).

Children's characteristics

Both CIN and CRCS censuses contain information about child gender, date of birth (week of birth in SAIL), ethnicity, and asylum-seeking status. Classification of ethnic group tends to follow the NHS data dictionary rather than those of the Office for National Statistics. The CRCS census also contains information about the preferred language of the child. Accessing these variables inside SAIL requires a specific request at the data application stage. The data owner — in this case, Welsh Government — must review the request to ensure that the proposal is proportional and appropriate.

For children with an ALF in SAIL, the LSOA (lower super output area) in which they live is accessible. Each LSOA comprises households within postal codes aggregated to reach a minimum number of people that satisfy statistical disclosure control requirements. LSOAs can be used with the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) to understand the deprivation profiles of the neighbourhoods in which children present within the dataset reside. However, the LSOA present in the CIN and CRCS datasets is not necessarily the LSOA that a child resided in when interacting with social services and is more likely to be the LSOA of their most recent residence. For children looked after in foster or residential care this may be the address of their placement. This is because LSOAs are assigned based on the postcode that is given to the secure third party who carry out the matching process, and any postcode retrieved via the UPN linkage method is a child's most recently reported postcode in the PLASC (Pupil Level Annual School Census). The child's home postcode will be available in the CRCS census from 2023 – 2024. Our suggested mitigation strategy for researchers interested in LSOA characteristics is to link the census data to the Welsh Demographic Survey Dataset (WDSD) and search for the corresponding LSOA at the time of the child's first census appearance.

A significant difference between the CIN and CRCS census is the coverage of child age groups. The CIN census includes pre-birth child protection registrations, and these children are not assigned gender in the return. A child must have been born to be eligible for inclusion in the CRCS census, so no children in CRCS should have a missing gender field. As the CIN dataset currently held by SAIL does not include any records for children under one year of age, there are no records for CIN without a gender flag. The result is that the CIN dataset held by SAIL consists of 56% male and 44% female children, and this proportion is the same for the CRCS census.

Children's health

Both censuses currently record information relating to child health, and these fields have prescriptive associated guidance. For example, for a child to receive a flag under one of the disability categories, the impairment must have a “substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”¹⁶. The disability categories specified in CIN and CRCS are those described in the guidance for the Equality Act 2010¹⁷. Children may have multiple disabilities, and so multiple fields may be selected simultaneously. 25% of children in CIN have a flag for disability, and the percentage is the same for CRCS.

It is important to note, that in the CRCS census 2022 – 2023 onwards, child health surveillance checks,



immunisations, dental checks, substance misuse and mental health will only be available in the CLA dataset. The child health surveillance checks field is only used for children aged five and under on 31 March in a return year, and the Child Health Surveillance Programme covers these checks. A child is considered up-to-date if child health surveillance or child health promotion checks have taken place by 31 March, even if they took place later than they should have done. They are also considered up-to-date if the child has missed all checks except the most recent. The general data quality of this field is variable (see Appendix 2).

In the CIN and CRCS censuses, a child is considered up-to-date on their immunisations if their vaccination history aligns with the Schedule of Childhood Immunisations^{18, 19}. Children do not need to receive their immunisations at the ages provided by the Schedule; they only need to have received them. Across all CIN years, in our sample, 75% had up-to-date immunisations, which improved to 83% for CRCS.

For a child to be recorded as up-to-date with dental care, they need to have had a dental check during the 12 months before the 31 March in a return year. For CIN, 74% are recorded as up-to-date with dental care, reducing slightly to 70% for CRCS.

Only children aged over 10 are eligible to be flagged for a mental health problem in the CIN and CRCS censuses. This field includes problems diagnosed by a medical practitioner, children receiving Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, or children waiting for services. Children are also recorded if they report experiencing mental health problems without a concrete diagnosis. 7.5% of entries in CIN report some mental health problem, increasing very slightly to 8.4% of entries in CRCS.

Case information

Very little case-specific social care services information is available in CIN or CRCS, with no recording of individual episodes within cases (e.g. if a case is closed and shortly after this closure a second case is opened). They also do not record any dates relating to actions taken, except in CRCS, where the date of entry to the child protection register is recorded. Due to the lack of critical dates within both censuses, they have limitations for standalone longitudinal research. For children looked after, other social care and family justice datasets provide fuller information so are more useful for longitudinal research.

Both censuses use 'need for care and support' as a broad indicator for the reason that a child is present in the dataset. However, a child might be eligible for care and support for a combination of reasons — guidance notes¹⁶ for the CRCS and CIN census indicate that the return should use the primary reason for social services involvement. However, these can be arbitrary judgements and are inconsistently applied in some years and local authorities^{20, 21}. For example, one local authority sees a drop in need due to abuse and neglect from 85% to 15% in the space of one year (from the 2011 to 2012 return). In the 2011 – 2012 return, the same local authority reports a sizeable increase in need due to family dysfunction from 2% to 67%. This holds for the 2013 return but need code usage reverted to its previous state in 2014. It is also possible for the need code to differ between census return years for the same child, between the CIN and CRCS returns, and from the Looked After Children census return for the same year. For a full breakdown of the need codes and their descriptions, please see Appendix 3.

There are also yes/no flags for looked after status, youth offending, child substance misuse, and if the child is on the child protection register. However, as previously discussed, if there is a change to one of these statuses outside the census return dates (31 March), the data is not recorded or retrospectively updated.

The youth offending flag indicates that a plan is in place or in development with the Youth Offending Team. It is important to note that this flag can only be used for children over the age of 10 – the age of criminal responsibility in Wales – on 31 March in a given return year. The same age constraint also applies to the flag for children with substance misuse problems.

The CIN census also includes limited data regarding the referral of a child entered into the return. This includes the source of the referral, and the factors present. Appendix 4 provides a breakdown of the referral source codes.

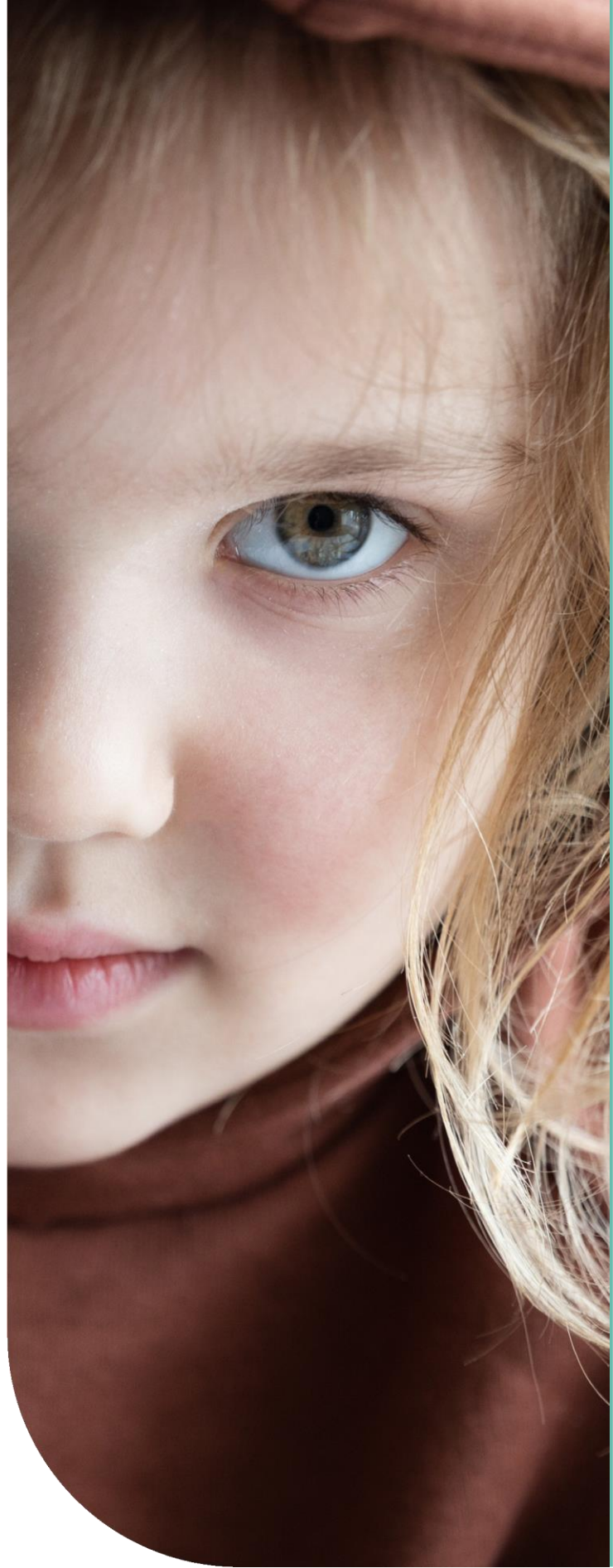


Child protection register

All children who have unresolved child protection issues or are currently the subject of an inter-agency protection plan enter the child protection register. For the CIN census, between 2009 – 2010 and 2015 – 2016, 10.8% of entries reported children on the register. For CRCS, 2016 – 2017 and 2017 – 2018, this was slightly higher at 13.3%. Between 2009 – 10 and 2015 – 16, the Children in Need return provides no granular information about the child protection register entry — such as the start date or reason — and instead relies on a yes/no indicator. Prior to 2016 – 2017, more detailed information was collected via the performance management of children's social services (PM1) data collection. One change brought about by the Social Services and Well Being Act (Wales) 2014 was that the CRCS census records more detailed information about the date a child was added to the child protection register and the reason for this addition.

Exclusions from school

The Children in Need census provides some information about school exclusions for children in the return. Due to the academic year not being in line with the CIN census collection dates this data reflects the previous academic year, rather than the current year. For example, for the 2013/2014 CIN return the school information provided was for the 2012–2013 academic year. Data provided includes the number of times that a child was permanently excluded at any time during the academic year, including cases where a child was excluded before the start of the academic year and remained excluded when the academic year started. Fixed-term exclusions are also recorded, including both the number of fixed-term exclusions and the total number of days excluded as part of fixed-term exclusions. The CRCS census does not contain any school exclusion information, though this data can be obtained by joining the CRCS tables to the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC), which can also provide the dates associated with both permanent and fixed-term exclusion events.



Parental characteristics

In addition to child-centred information, both CIN and CRCS censuses provide limited health and situational information regarding parents of children in need and children receiving care and support. These flags apply to all



parents and carers of the child, with no guidance regarding situations where a child might have limited contact with one or both parents.

For the CIN census, 2009 – 2010 to 2015 – 2016, 45% of entries record some parenting capacity problem. For the CRCS census, 2016 – 2017 to 2017 – 2018, this is 47%.

What can the data be used for?

When linked to other data sets, the available children's social care datasets enable researchers to study predictors and outcomes of social care service use. Administrative data sets can provide fuller coverage than sample studies, show data over time, and avoid some forms of reporting bias^{22, 23}.

There are a wide range of research questions that could be answered from these datasets. Knowledge about predictors and outcomes of social care services is especially lacking for Wales, as the relatively few social care studies that have used linked administrative data sets have looked only at England^{24, 25}.

Research questions could focus on:

- Health and education outcomes, including the comparison of children in different service categories (child protection, looked after, others)
- Comparisons of outcomes for different durations and intensities of social care involvement (e.g. using placement data from the looked after children return)
- The possible impact of policy changes (e.g. further exploring the interesting finding in this paper about GP contact)

The data

Welsh Government release yearly reports for the CIN and CRCS censuses,²⁶ and the most recent CRCS reports have taken steps to compare the similarities and differences between subsequent return years.

Government statisticians also undertake some linkage of data sets. The most recent report covers the March 2021 CRCS census available at GovWales. It includes data about the educational attainment of children receiving care and support and reports more directly on the data items in the CRCS census. From the report, we can see that the total number of children in the CRCS census has increased year-on-year from 2017 to 2021. Proportions of looked after children and children on the child protection register have remained stable since 2019.

Welsh Government publishes statistics that also report high-level aggregated figures for the CIN and CRCS datasets on StatsWales. However, the user is limited to the filtering and aggregation criteria that are available on the website. To date, no external research has been published using individual-level Welsh CIN or CRCS datasets. This is most likely due to limitations in data access and quality that existed prior to the datasets being made available within the SAIL Databank, as well as a generally under-developed quantitative research base in the social care field²⁷.



Data limitations and considerations

In the UK, linking routine social care data to other administrative data sets for research is a new endeavour. Even the use of standalone social care administrative datasets for research is relatively under-developed. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the data quality across the CIN and CRCS censuses is highly variable across different fields, years, and local authorities (see Table 1 and 2, Appendix 2).

However, the CIN and CRCS censuses provide rich situational information about a subset of children who have involvement with social services each year and they are likely the most complete datasets available for children in need in Wales and data quality and availability is improving year on year.

However, there are several limitations of these datasets and their coverage which should be considered:

Limited coverage of young age groups

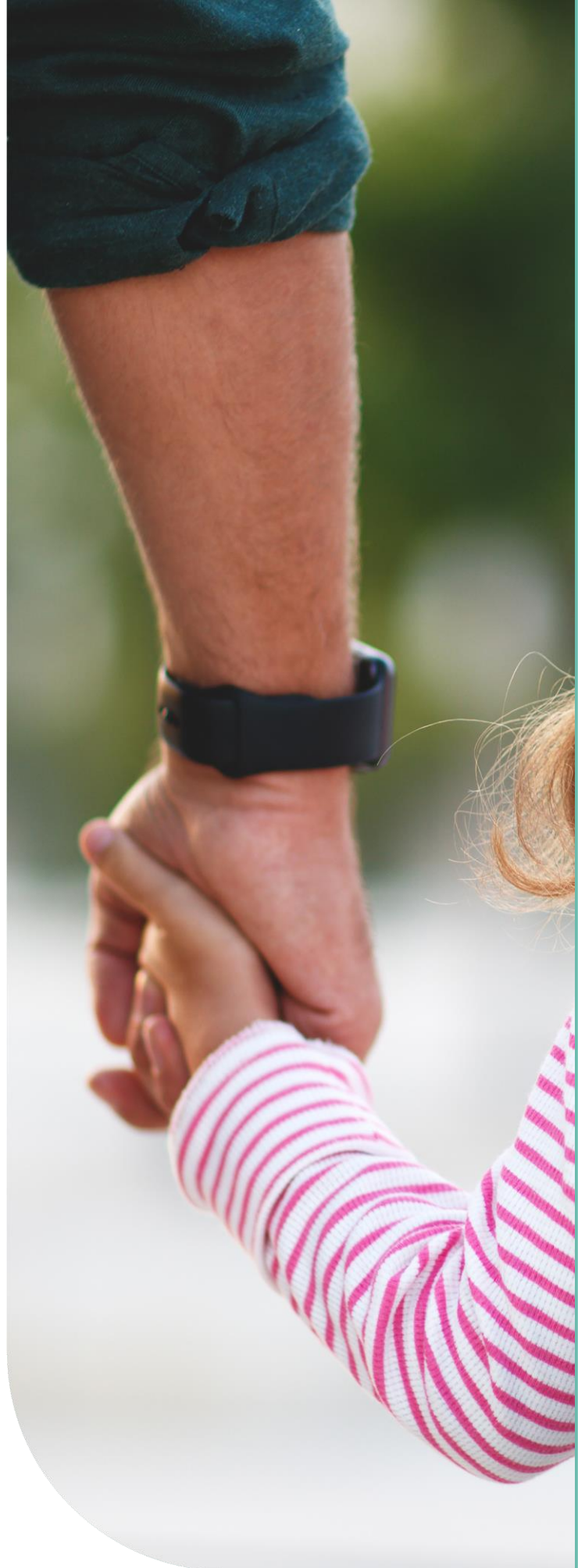
The primary and most pressing limitation of the CIN and CRCS datasets is that it currently hold minimal records for children under five years of age (see Table 1 and 2). In 2022, work was completed to bring in the whole extracts of both datasets to SAIL. However, the figures in Table 1 and 2 will still apply for the ALF – the whole extracts mean that we hold 100% of CIN and CRCS records across all age groups, but the percentages described as ‘missing’ will not have ALFs assigned. Therefore, we anticipate that future linkages of the majority of data for children under five years of age will not be possible due to the limitations of relying on the UPN to extract personal information. Welsh Government has recently reviewed the CRCS data collection, and revised guidance has been issued for 2023 onwards.

Small numbers

We also find that some fields have minimal numbers each year due to the nature of the data they hold; some examples are asylum-seeking, youth offending, and reasons for being on the child protection register. These small numbers mean that any study relying on them will have small statistical power; mitigation strategies for this issue should be considered early in the study process.

Validation and source

Any potential users of these datasets should also consider the validation and source of their target fields. Whilst the Welsh Government team responsible for these datasets undertake extensive validation checks on each return, including returning to local authorities to ask for further clarification, it is not possible for every field to be validated to 100% accuracy. For example, the variable relating to child mental-ill health includes diagnosed mental health problems, children waiting for CAMHS services who do not currently have a diagnosis, and also children who are not in the process of being diagnosed but who self-report a mental health





problem. Therefore, it would be inappropriate for a study to use this field as an indicator for diagnosed mental health problems within CIN or CRCS classes, particularly if, for example, the intention was to compare this to the rate of diagnosed mental health issues within the non-CIN or non-CRCS child population.

Need code variable

The category of need code variable should also be used with caution. It is a subjective judgement made by the social worker who is completing the census return for the child, and we see that need code usage is inconsistent across years and local authorities. Studies that intend to classify children via this variable should consider this field to be of unknown accuracy. We would recommend that they consider deriving some other measure via data fields that are likely to have higher accuracy, e.g. child disability factors and parental capacity factors.

Differences between local authority practices

There are also differences in how local authorities operate and capture this data, alongside local authority level differences in the execution of the 2014 Act. Scoping work to understand the differences and how they can be mitigated would be a welcome addition to the knowledge base.

Change to full year coverage

From 2023 onwards, the CRCS data collection will expand to a full-year data collection, improving the coverage and some of the issues raised above. Data will include the date the latest period of care and support began, the date a plan closed, and the reason for closure. It is important to note that a move to full year reporting will increase the administrative burden at a local authority level.

The above considerations mean that there are limitations to the use of the CIN and CRCS censuses as standalone datasets for research on detailed child pathways or outcomes, or as longitudinal datasets. They are, however rich additional data sources best used to provide extra detail alongside other social care, health service, and family justice datasets. The changes in legal basis and data collection from the CIN to the CRCS censuses make it inappropriate to consider the two datasets as equivalent.

Accessing the data

The data are accessed via the [SAIL Databank](#) based in Swansea University Wales.

The following video gives a full overview of the SAIL application process. [Accessing SAIL](#)

ADR Wales does not hold datasets. This data is held securely and anonymously within the SAIL Databank. Subject to safeguards and approvals, data held within the SAIL Databank can be linked together to address important research questions. A list of the anonymous data held within the SAIL Databank can be found here: [Dataset Catalogue](#)

Prior research: Publications Register - [SAIL Publication Register](#)

Data User Register (Active projects) - [Data use register - SAIL Databank](#)



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Welsh Government and local authorities for collecting the Children in Need and Children Receiving Care and Support data and allowing researchers to access it.

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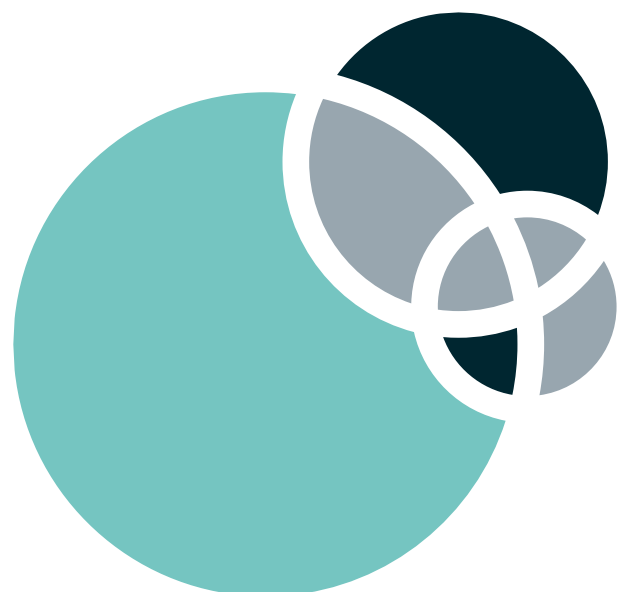
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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Policy and Practice related to CIN and CRCS datasets

Prior to April 2016, the core legal framework for children's social care provision in Wales was the Children Act 1989. Some elements still apply¹⁸ (for example, child protection investigations and care orders), and in England, this remains the main authorising legal framework. The Welsh 2011 White Paper²⁹ prepared the ground for changes in the legal framework by highlighting challenges faced by public services in Wales, including demographic changes, increased expectations from people who access care and support and continuing complex economic realities. The 2014 Act aimed to address these issues and, in doing so, hoped to give people greater freedom to decide which services they need while promoting consistent, high-quality services across the country.

The change in legal framework introduced by the 2014 Act necessitated a shift in the name of the existing CIN census. The definition of a 'Child in Need' exists within Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. This was repealed for Wales and not reintroduced in the 2014 Act; as a result, the legal definition of a 'Child in Need' no longer exists within the Welsh legal framework. As such, the successor to the CIN census is named the Children Receiving Care and Support (CRCS) census, and it describes eligible children under the 2014 Act with a care and support plan. The CRCS census uses the same periodic inclusion criteria as the CIN census - for a child to be captured in the CRCS return, they need to have a care and support plan from 1 January to 31 March in a given return year - but it has a slightly different structure and, crucially, modifies the legal definition for service eligibility, potentially capturing different classes of children than those recorded in the CIN census. However, it is also important to note that inclusion criteria may change over time. From 2023 onwards, the CRCS is changing to a full collection year. The class of children who are eligible for a care and support plan under the 2014 Act is smaller than the class of 'children in need' under the CIN census, as the 2014 Act definition does not include children who receive preventative services under Section 15 of the SSWB Act³⁰, whereas such children could be 'children in need' for the purposes of Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. This is best illustrated by comparing the numbers of children in the final year of the CIN collection, 2015-16, and the first year of the CRCS collection, 2016-17. The final year of the CIN collection covers 18,990 children, dropping to 15,930 children in the first year of the CRCS census. In England there is evidence that CIN activity is static or reducing whilst Child Protection activity is increasing³¹ and a similar pattern could account for some of the change we see in Wales; though the drop in numbers from 2015-16 to 2016-17 is unlikely to be solely due to this factor.

Prevention and early intervention are key themes within the 2014 Act, i.e. promoting preventative approaches within the community to address people's needs before they become critical. Preventative services that are designed to reduce the need for formal support can be met without a formal care and support plan. The new national eligibility criteria set out in the Act take account of the person's ability to meet the identified need alone; with the care and support of others who are able or willing to provide that care and support; or with the assistance of services in the community. A person's needs could be met through services available in the community that are accessible to them without a care and support plan. Children receiving information, advice, assistance, or other preventative and community-based services will not be counted in the CRCS census if they do not have a care and support plan.

Any child can be referred to the local authority for an assessment, but it is the local authority assessment which then determines whether the child needs to become subject to a formal care and support plan. The majority of referrals are received from schools, the police and health services, with a smaller proportion from family members or other services. Local authorities work with partner agencies and children not deemed to be in need of care and support from the local authority can be signposted/or referred to non-statutory services which help families. The local authority has a duty to assess the needs of a child 'in need of care and support' under s.21 of the 2014 Act, whereas there was no explicit statutory duty to assess under s.17 of the Children Act 1989³², though the House of Lords found that a duty existed in public law³³. In cases where local authority services have reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, the duty remains under s.47 of the Children

¹ The 2014 Act replaced Part III Children Act 1989 which covered children in need and looked after children, but other parts relating to private law (Part II), care orders (Part IV), and child protection (Part V) still apply.

Act 1989. For disabled children, s21⁷ of the 2014 Act assumes that they always have needs for additional or substitute care and support.

These significant differences in the underpinning legal frameworks and the wider census inclusion criteria mean that the CIN and CRCS censuses are not equivalent data collections as they do not capture the same classes of children. The CIN census covers all children receiving support financed from children's social services budgets, including those supported in their families or independently, and children on the child protection register. Children in need will have had an initial assessment, and children receiving respite care are also included in the count of children in need.

The CRCS census, however, is based on the definition of eligible children who have care and support, i.e. children (under the age of 18) who have needs for care and support that can and can only be met by the local authority providing or arranging care and support; following an assessment and eligibility test undertaken by social services. These children will have a care and support plan and will have some provision of care and support from the local authority. In addition to these differences in definitions, a recent Welsh Government process evaluation of the 2014 Act⁹ also finds some inconsistency and confusion amongst practitioners regarding the practical application of the change in definition and eligibility criteria.

Appendix 2 – Data item availability and quality

Most data items are present across all years, though there are varying levels of data quality per year. Fields with data quality issues are described in Table 2. Years with an asterisk (*) are CRCS census years, and without an asterisk are CIN census years.

		Available 2009- 2010- 2011- 2012- 2013- 2014- 2015- 2016- 2017information 2010 2011 2012	2013 2014 2015 2016 2017* 2018*							
Unique identifiers	System id / LA id	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	ALF ²	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Children's characteristics	Week of birth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Unborn child	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Gender	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Language								✓	✓
	Ethnicity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Asylum-seeking status	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	LSOA2011 ³	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Children's health	Disability - mobility	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Disability - manual dexterity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Disability - physical coordination	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Disability - continence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

² : Not every entry is assigned an ALF.

³ : Only for rows where an ALF has been assigned. LSOA2011 is also available for rows with an ALF by joining to the Welsh Demographic Service Dataset (WDSD).

Disability - Ability to lift/
carry/move objects

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

	Available Information	2009 2010	2010 2011	2011 2012	2012 2013	2013 2014	2014 2015	2015 2016	2016 - 2017 *	2017 - 2018 *
	Disability - Speech, hearing, eyesight	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Disability - Memory	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Disability - Risk perception	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	ASD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Health surveillance checks (5 and under)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Immunisations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Dental checks (5 and over)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Mental ill-health (10 and over)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Case information	Source local authority	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Need for care and support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Looked after child	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Source of most recent referral	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Recent referral as child previously on CPR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Recent referral as child previously looked after	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Recent referral due to parental substance misuse	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Recent referral due to parental SEND	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Recent referral due to parental mental ill-health	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

	Recent referral due to parental physical illhealth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Recent referral due to parental domestic abuse	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Youth offending (10 and over)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Child substance misuse (10 and over)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	CPR status	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Child protection register	Date of CPR addition								✓	✓
	CPR due to neglect								✓	✓
	CPR due to physical abuse								✓	✓
	CPR due to sexual abuse								✓	✓
	CPR due to Financial, Emotional or Psychological abuse only								✓	✓
	Available Information	20092010	20102011	20112012	20122013	20132014	20142015	20152016	2016 - 2017*	2017 - 2018*
Exclusions from school	Permanent exclusions (school-age children)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Fixed-term exclusions (school-age children)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Fixed-term exclusions – total number of days excluded (school-age children)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Parental characteristics	Substance/alcohol misuse	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Learning disabilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Mental ill-health	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Physical ill-health	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Appendix 3 – Need code descriptions and source of referral

These codes and definitions may change year-on-year, information can be found in the guidance documents for each CIN/CRCS census return year on [CensusGuidance](#).

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