

Children's Services - making better use of routinely collected data to support service planning, delivery and evaluation? Opportunities, barriers and gaps.

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# Protecting vulnerable children in Scotland

- By the end of the first decade of this century 4.3% of all children in Scotland (under 16 years) were referred to the children's hearings system (SCRA 2011). Majority on care and protection grounds (3.7%)
- Circa 15% on supervision for 5+ years
- 2,571 children on Child Protection Registers 31 July 2011 (2 per cent increase from 2010)
- Scotland has high levels of child poverty and children living with parental substance misuse - between forty and sixty thousand children are affected by parental drug use (University of Glasgow 2002)

Strong links between measures of deprivation and child welfare referrals to agencies, especially for poverty and neglect (Drake and Pandy 1996, Winter and Connolly 2005)

## At the same time - gap in research

- Overall lack of research on the effectiveness of 'service-as-usual' especially the every-day practice embodied in multi-agency intervention that is central to the policy and practice context in Scotland
- More evaluation of specific programmes to address maltreatment and neglect but limited (MacMillan et al 2009)
- Key question: what works, for whom, and in what contexts?

## Taking a long view

- Impact of social issues
- Families and communities
- Policy and Law
- Services and Intervention
- Longitudinal perspective required to better understand outcomes and pathways through multiple services many of these children experience
- Linking administrative data can help to begin to identify pathways, the impact of services and outcomes for children that can inform practice now.

## Meeting children's needs for care and protection: SCCPN Seminar Series January to June 2011

- Funded by the Scottish Universities Insight Institute
- Report available at:
- Full Report -  
<http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Portals/50/ChildProtection.pdf>
- Short Report -  
<http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Portals/50/Child%20protectionFinalShortReport.pdf>

# Programme Team

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7. Mike Palmer, Deputy Director, Public Health Division, Scottish Government
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1. What needs to be in place to ensure that data that is routinely collected about children and families on a national and local basis can be collated, cross-referenced and used:
  - to improve operational decision-making and planning
  - as the basis for longitudinal research into outcomes for children?
2. What are the core constituents of a robust longitudinal design that would be fit for the evaluation of the efficacy of everyday professional intervention aimed at improving the lives of vulnerable children?

## Administrative data - exiting the 'silo'

- Multi sectors
- Multi-level
- Rare events
- Adult outcomes
- Policy changes
- Directly relevant at operational and planning levels

(Jonson-Reid and Drake 2008)

Linking data from two or more data sets gives a more holistic view of children's development

100% linkage if there is a common, unique identifier

Probabilistic (via demographic data) more complex



## Not more data!

- Consensus - wealth data collected and not used to full extent within and between agencies - both at national and local level
- Phil Anderson, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Australia - <http://www.aihw.gov.au/>

Outlined potential to undertake major data-linkage projects to address key questions, for example, to understand the operation of multiple pathways to children and families receiving help and the transition between services and the educational outcomes for different groups of children on protection orders.

Feedback loop to practitioners/managers/policy makers important - improves quality and completeness of data

## Example: Canada

- Manitoba Population Health Research Repository
- De-identified, individual level data on health care, education and social service contacts (includes income assistance data)

Higher number of risk factors (defined as child welfare service contact, teenage mother at first birth, poverty) associated with poorer academic and social outcomes

(Brownell et al 2010)

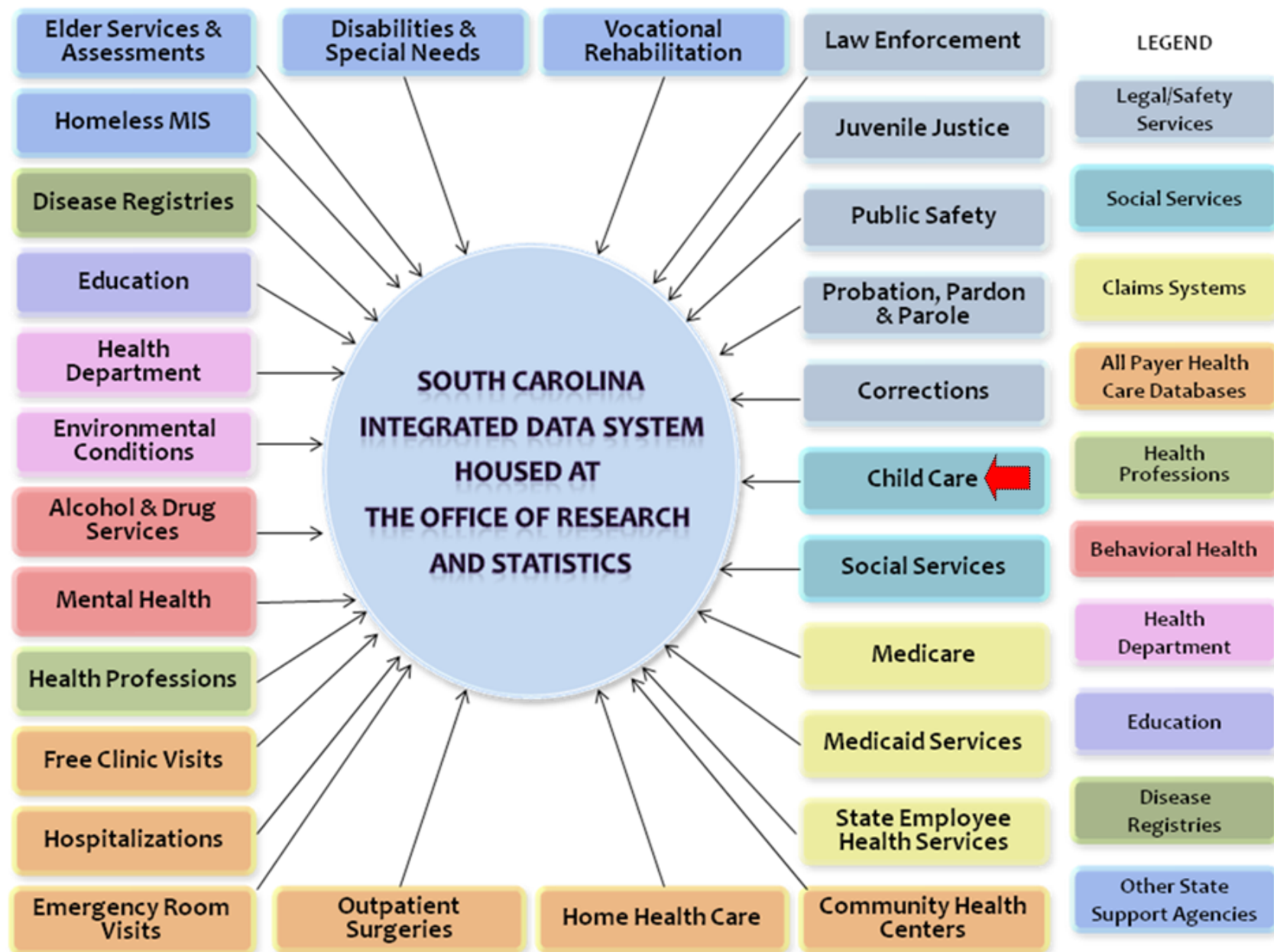
## Example:USA

- South Carolina - Integrated Data System
- Began in 1996 'unduplicating' identifiers and allocating a randomly generated link number that is not associated with a specific service
- Used for all subsequent service use
- At stage of Statistical analysis - no personal identifiers

Range of data sets - Office of Research and Statistics has responsibility for integrating data

(Bailey 2003)

## South Carolina's \*Integrated Data System, goal is to enhance Child Care



## Examples from Scotland

- **Children Looked After Statistics (CLAS)**

### Educational Outcomes for Looked After Children

Attendance rate 87.8% cf. all school children 93.2%

Exclusion 365 per 1,000 cf. 45 per 1,000 for all school children

Initial destination school leavers

59% positive destination cf. 87% all school leavers at follow up  
44% cf. 85%

Linking LA children's data, provided by SWS in local authorities, with educational data from schools (publicly funded), SQA and SDS.

Scottish Government - exploring potential linkage with health data

May allow potential comparison with population norms for health and education outcomes (via *Growing Up in Scotland* or the *Scottish Longitudinal Survey*).

- Child Protection data - individualised 'child level' return

## Potential to link to Scottish Children's Reporter Data

- At minimum - tell us how many children in Scotland are involved in both systems
- McGhee and Waterhouse (2007) in a valid sample of 207 children referred to the reporter on care and protection grounds, 14% were on the child protection register.
- Aggregate picture of overall number children where there are protection concerns

## Policy and operations

- **Policy context** - integrated services to respond to children's needs for care and protection
- Child protection - It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright (2002)
- Substance misuse - Getting our Priorities Right (2002)
- Getting it right for every child (Girfec) framework to respond to the needs of all children
- Updated and developed National Child Protection Guidance (2010)
- **Operational context:**
  - 32 local authorities
  - 8 police forces (currently)
  - 14 regional health boards
  - 30 multi-disciplinary child protection committees
  - Third sector and private service providers

- Diversity of data collection and use of data within and between these agencies
- Australia - development of cross state data dictionaries to facilitate consistency  
<http://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/181162>
- Children in Need Statistical Return in England - records the extent of service to children and families receiving voluntary support.
- Seminar suggests - LAs consider collaborating to agree on one consistent method of recording information for all support and protection referrals and develop a consistent set of data fields or a map of equivalent fields.



# Ethical?

- Privacy concerns - SHIP
- Accountability
- *‘Historically client consent has not been sought for the use of such data by agencies or researchers restricting their analyses to such administrative data. This can be framed..... in the concept of “beneficence”, which stresses that the good of a research endeavor must outweigh potential harm. Research and assessment of data within agencies is a longstanding and recognised ethical necessity, supporting accountability’*  
(Jonson-Reid and Drake 2008, p.398)
- Avoid data linkage and mining for its own sake - focus on clear questions that will be of benefit to vulnerable children and families

## Major gap in administrative data

- Nature and intensity of services provided
- Children's well-being and development at regular intervals
- Codify some data on intervention?
- Girfec - framework to assess child well-being?
- Core National Minimum Dataset for all children in England-  
discussions being led by June Thoburn, University of East  
Anglia
- Potential for similar in Scotland

- High Level Policy Outcome:

We have improved the life chances for children,  
young people and families at risk

- Administrative data may be a **step** on the ladder!

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- \*Melissa Jonson-Reid is the Director of the Brown Center for Violence and Injury Prevention, George Warren Brown School of Social Work, Washington University. She has received funding to complete studies linking administrative data and provided the South Carolina example as part of her presentation at the SCCPN/SUII seminar series 2011.