Department for Education

WARRINGTON Borough Council

Data and Digital Solutions Fund
Project 1 (B) (II)

Creating or improving specific data sets: Children who are subject to pre-proceedings

Final Report (December 2023)

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Glossary

Care proceedings – Care proceedings are court proceedings issued by the children's services department of the local authority where an application is made for a care order or supervision order in respect of a child. If children's services believe a child is at risk of significant harm, they can apply to court for permission to take action to protect the child – these are known as care proceedings.

CCI – Consistent Child Identifier

CIN – Child in Need

CIC – Child in Care

CO – Care Order

CP – Child Protection

CSC – Children's Social Care

DDSF – Data and Digital Solutions Fund

DfE – Department for Education

EPO – Emergency Protection Order

FGC – Family Group Conference

ICO – Interim Care Order

ID – Identifier

LA – Local Authority

LAC – Looked After Children

LFJB – Local Family Justice Board

MOU - Memorandum of Understanding

PLO (Public Law Outline) – Public Law Outline as set out in Practice Direction 12A of the Family Court Procedure Rules. Both pre-proceedings and care proceedings run under this direction.

PLWG – Public Law Working Group

Pre-proceedings – The pre-proceedings process is a phase of work aimed at avoiding care proceedings. It is sometimes described as a 'last chance' for parents to make the changes they need to; otherwise, children's services may need to go to court to start care proceedings.

SGO – Special Guardianship Order

Foreword

For many years, I and many others in the sector have been curious about why local authorities are not required to provide returns in relation to pre- and care proceedings. Through the CIN Census and 903 return, we capture such a wide range of insights from a child's experiences, so why not include a child's journey through the Public Law Outline?

In recent years, many have been thinking about how we approach this work. The Public Law Working Group's report titled "Recommendations to Achieve Best Practice in the Child Protection and Family Justice Systems" (2021) was crucial in guiding Local Family Justice Boards (LFJB) and local authorities towards best practices. Since its publication, our own LFJB in Cheshire and Merseyside have used this report to consider how we measure our performance and the data we need to collect.

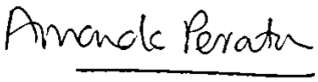
Over the last two years, I have appreciated the increased focus on this area by the Department for Education (DfE), and it has been a huge privilege for Warrington to spearhead what I consider such a crucial piece of research. I really encourage people to take time to consider all the reports produced over the course of this project. Together, they provide us with a unique opportunity to consider our practice locally, regionally, and nationally.

Whilst Warrington have led this piece of work, we always considered it was essential to engage in a national conversation with local authorities across the country. The establishment of a national network of local authority 'regional champions' alongside key stakeholders from across the family justice system has clearly created a strong foundation for this project and ensured that a wide range of perspectives have been obtained. It has also been hugely encouraging to see how local authorities across the country have embraced this project. The high levels of engagement we have seen clearly demonstrates the importance that local authorities place on this work.

It is important to note that this is the first time any attempt has been made to develop and collect a national dataset on pre- and care proceedings. To see the culmination of all this work together in this final report with the development of a national dashboard is truly groundbreaking. The size and scale of this task was huge, and I would like to extend my thanks to the national champions network for all their work and making the project such a great success.

Having comparable performance data is such an important way for us to measure the effectiveness of our practice, and we are already starting to see the impact of this work. Local authorities and regional groups are already starting to consider the reports and what this is telling them about practice. It is already helping local authorities review their overall performance and the effectiveness of their practice.

This report concludes a number of important recommendations, including the introduction of a national statutory return on PLO data, which the DfE will now carefully consider. While there is still much more work to do, such large-scale participation in this research phase should bode well for future buy in and implementation of any recommendations within this report. We look forward to feedback from the DfE on the recommendations being made and from all the other Data and Digital Solution Fund projects and how all this work can be built on in the future.



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This report could not have been produced without the input from several agencies and local authorities. In preparing this final report, we have been assisted by many working in or with experience of the family justice system and Public Law Outline across the whole of England.

A special thanks to North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough; Manchester City Council; Lancashire County Council; Hull City Council; Doncaster Metropolitan Borough; Birmingham Childrens Trust; Walsall Council; Essex County Council; Hertfordshire County Council; Hackney Borough Council; Hammersmith and Fulham Borough Council; Haringey Borough Council; Bath and North East Somerset Borough Council; Wiltshire County Council; East Sussex County Council; and Hampshire County Council for supporting the project as regional champions.

We extend our warm thanks Dr Sara Rothera, an associate for research in practice who acted as a critical friend to the project in our reflection and decision making. We also thank Cafcass and HMCTS case management team for the support and contribution to the project.

We would also like to thank all local authorities across the country for their engagement in this project and finally, the DfE for their support to complete this piece of research.

Introduction

In May 2022, in response to the independent review of children's social care and the national review into the murders of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson, the government committed to take action to drive forward three data and digital priority areas:

1. Improving children social care (CSC) data collection and how it is shared to inform decision making.

2. Improving case management systems (CMS) to reduce burdens on the frontline and support practice.

3. Using technology to achieve frictionless sharing of information between safeguarding partners.

The commitment puts local government and partners in the driving seat of reform through a CSC Data and Digital Solutions Fund. With a view to step forward in CSC and enable better use of data and advances in technology, this will allow significant progress for children and unlock better use of resources.

The "Improving children social care data collection and how it is shared to inform decision making" strand of this work acknowledges there are gaps in data collected by local authorities locally, regionally, and nationally in some key areas. Pre-proceedings and the Public Law Outline (PLO) have been identified as one the priority areas which needs to be addressed through this project.

We recognise that a key challenge for children's social care nationwide is delays in public law cases in the family court, and more needs to be done across the practice system to increase timeliness. We also know that effective practice in pre-proceedings plays a crucial role in supporting timeliness of care proceedings too. Prior to the launch of this project, some work had already been conducted in this space – the 2021–22 CSC COVID-19 Recovery Fund data collection pilot project had already undertaken efforts in this area. The new project was expected to build on the work undertaken in 2021–22.

At the start of this project, the DfE supplied a list of bronze, silver, and gold data indicators that they wanted to explore as part of building a PLO dataset **(Appendix A).** The research aims to fulfil the following objectives:

1. *An assessment of which data indicators outlined in the list of bronze, silver, and gold indicators would be feasible for reporting on a national basis without further system change.*

2. *A list of the blockers and challenges faced by local authorities to collecting, recording, and reporting the bronze, silver, and gold level data indicators.*

3. *A ranked list of the identified blockers and challenges, in priority order of those that must, should, and could be addressed to collect the bronze, silver, and gold data from local authorities across England.*

4. *A set of recommended implementable and realistic solutions to overcome blockers and challenges that would enable the collection and reporting of bronze, silver, and gold level data at a national level.*

Alongside developing a national dataset on PLO as a national group, our aim is to gain a better understanding of practice at the pre-proceedings stage and the challenges related to this. This research aims to have a far-reaching impact on improving local practice and decision-making to providing wider insight to enable evidence-based policy making – for the benefit of the wider system and most importantly for vulnerable children and families.

Executive Summary

This research project has centred around the establishment of a national progress hub made up of a national network of local authority 'regional champions' and other key stakeholders in the family justice system, including HMCTS and Cafcass. To ensure the views and perspectives could be gathered from as many local authorities as possible, all upper tier local authorities were also asked to provide a single point of contact (SPOC) for the project.

Several ambitious targets were set for this project, including the completion of a National Readiness Survey across all upper tier local authorities in England, and attempting to complete the first ever national return on a child's journey through the Public Law Outline (PLO). 84% of local authorities responded to the National Readiness Survey, and 84% of local authorities provided some form of data as part of the national return. Such high levels of engagement in this project demonstrate the importance local authorities and key stakeholders have placed on this work.

While 84% of local authorities were able to provide some data for the national return, as we progressed through the project, local authorities found it increasingly difficult to report on the data indicators provided. 84% of local authorities provided bronze level data, 78% provided some of the silver level data, and 65% provided some gold level data. We also identified a vast difference in local authorities' capacity to report on the different metrics. We found some local authorities have large teams of data analysts that support this work, while some have very limited capabilities. We also found that a wide range of professionals were involved in providing the data returned, with 33% of the data collected by professionals that sit within children's social care (case progression managers/service managers and heads of service), 24% by data intelligence teams, and 18% by legal teams. This variation means there may have been different interpretations of the same data point, and we found a significant amount of data cleansing was needed when generating the national reports.

A key finding from the research is that without substantial changes to existing systems, local authorities will only be able to easily report on 15 of the original indicators provided by the DfE. This represents just 48% of the measures provided at the beginning of this project. Local authorities identified a wide range of barriers and challenges to providing the data requested. The three key challenges preventing local authorities from providing data were as follows:

- Local authorities were not currently capturing the data indicators.
- Workforce capacity meant the local authority did not have the resources to be able to collect and report on some of the data points.
- Challenges with current case management systems (CMS) meant many local authorities were reliant on using manual systems and spreadsheets to collect the data. This made the collections very time-consuming.

Outcomes and recommendations

During this project, several regional and national performance reports have been completed. The importance of these reports cannot be underestimated as they have provided the first ever set of comparable data of a child's journey through the PLO. The national progress hubs have scrutinised this data, explored emerging patterns and themes, and considered what best practice could look like. A detailed analysis of the data has also been shared with the DfE, local authorities, and key stakeholders. The project has concluded with the development of a fully interactive national dashboard, which the DfE will now review, along with the other recommendations made in this report.

The central recommendation from this research project is that a quarterly statutory national dataset is introduced. Having considered all the data points collected, the national progress hub has recommended 8 of the original indicators to be removed, 3 are slightly amended, and the 3 new indicators not previously included are added. This will make the final recommended dataset.

We are suggesting the implementation of this statutory return should take place over 2 to 3 years, with Phase 1 commencing in April 2025 and Phase 2 in April 2026. We recommend the method for collection should be for all agencies to transfer data into a central portal which is then stored in a data warehouse to be processed into digital reports. We also recommend that before going live with Phase 1, it would be sensible to pilot the collection and reporting of the indicators with a number of local authorities and regions to ensure any teething issues are addressed before this becomes a full national collection.

It is important to note that meeting these timescales will be heavily dependent on the outcome of other key recommendations made within this report. We consider the two following recommendations must also be fully addressed before a statutory return could be successfully introduced.

- **The implementation of a consistent child identifier (CCI)**

A CCI is a number that is given to a child which can be used across all agencies' CMSs to identify a child. Our research shows there will be significant challenges implementing a multi-agency PLO dataset without a CCI in place. Phase 1 will use data solely from local authority case CMSs, while Phase 2 will see data input from local authorities, Cafcass, and HMCTS. All three agencies will need a CCI for this. Matching data across datasets has proved difficult due to inconsistencies with misspelling of names, incorrect DOBs etc. We welcome that DfE is exploring the potential for a Consistent Child Identifier to test whether it can positively address these challenges https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-multi-agency-information-sharing

- **Development of case management system (CMS) and engagement with CMS providers**

Before a statutory national return can be introduced, significant changes will need to be made to local authority CMSs, and this would need significant additional resources and funding. Without these changes, many local authorities will find it incredibly time-consuming to capture and provide the data needed. Alongside this, Cafcass and HMCTS will also need funding in place to enable them to make changes to their own CMSs as well.

Unfortunately, local authority CMS providers engagement in this project has been limited. It is recommended that a working group will be needed to keep CMS providers up to date on proposed dates for a PLO statutory return to commence, so they have time to prioritise the work. We also need to fully understand what CMS providers are saying about the predicted lead in time for introducing changes to their systems. If CMS providers are unable to implement universal changes to CMS systems, then consideration needs to be given for extra funding to be made available to local authorities. This ensures that they have the necessary resources to meet the data requirements.

Potential areas of best practice

The data collected with this research and discussions within the national progress hub have provided a unique opportunity for the wider sector to think together about potential areas of best practice, particularly within pre-proceedings.

It is recognised that in a previous report produced by Public Law Working Group report (2021), it was recommended that pre-proceedings should be completed within 16 weeks. However, there has been a clear view from the national progress hub that 16 weeks does not always allow sufficient time for pre-proceedings to be completed. We have also noted that there is currently

very limited guidance or statutory timeframes within pre-proceedings. Other frameworks for working with children, including those under CIN plan, CP plan, and Children in Care, all have clear statutory timescales for when visits and meetings should take place. The national progress hub has considered what best practice could look like in this area. From reviewing practice across the country and analysing the performance data, the following suggestions have been made:

- The pre-proceedings letter and plan should be sent to parents within 5 days of decision to enter pre-proceedings.
- Initial pre-proceedings meeting should take place within 15 days from decision to enter pre-proceedings.
- Pre-proceedings review meetings should take place every 6 weeks.
- The timescale for concluding pre-proceedings should be 26 weeks.
- There should be scope for exception reporting to allow cases to go outside of 26 weeks where there is purposeful delay.

We recognise this recommendation is a change from guidance issued from the Public Law Working Group (2021) and is an area that the DfE and wider sector will certainly reflect on further.

This report in the wider context of the other Data and Digital Solution Fund (DDSF) projects

It is clear there is a huge amount the DfE and wider sectors will need to digest from this report. Alongside this, it is important to note there are 11 other projects being undertaken as part of the DDSF, and some of these have very close links with this project. It will therefore be crucial this report is considered in conjunction with the other DDSF projects and their recommendations.

Once the DfE has considered all these reports, it will inform wider decision made and the future endorsement of recommendations made in this report. Given the success of the regional champion and national progress hub model in this project, we recommend that after the DfE have considered the next steps, this same group could be utilised for further pieces of work in this area.

Methodology

Overview

The approach to this project has been underpinned by the development of a national champions' network made up of local authority 'regional champions. Other key stakeholders in the family justice system, including HMCTS and Cafcass, have also been part of the national project team. All upper tier local authorities were also asked to provide a single point of contact (SPOC) for the project. This is to ensure that views and perspectives have been gathered from as many local authorities as possible.

In addition to this, we had two local authority system champions representing the two largest case management providers, Liquid Logic and MOSAIC, to consider current reporting capabilities and consider what changes to systems might be needed in the future.

Appendix B provides an overview of the wider project team.

Our approach to this project has involved collating a range of qualitative and quantitative data from local authorities. Our champion network worked closely with local authority SPOCs to ensure that we achieved a high percentage of returns for both data collections and survey responses.

Data Collections

The aim for this research project has been to produce the first ever national dataset on a child's journey throughout the whole PLO process. All data for this research was based on data from Quarter 3 of 2022–23 (this was the most current full quarter data immediately prior to the project start date). Local authorities were asked to complete 3 data returns.

Table 1. Summary of local authority returns.

Dataset	No. of local authorities providing a return	% of local authorities providing a return
Bronze level indicators	127	84
Silver level Indicators	119	78
Gold level Indicators	99	65

National Readiness Survey

The National Readiness Survey was sent to all upper tier local authorities so we could gather a clear picture on local authorities' ability to report data on children subject to either pre- or care proceedings, this can be found in **Appendix C**. Table 2 below shows we had a positive response to the survey, with 84.9% of local authorities responding.

Table 2. Local authority engagement in national readiness survey

Region	Number of LAs	Survey responses	% of surveys completed
Yorkshire and Humber	15	15	100.0%
North East	12	12	100.0%
East Midlands	10	10	100.0%
South West	15	15	100.0%
North West	23	22	95.7%
London	33	27	81.8%
East	11	8	72.7%
West Midlands	14	9	64.3%
South East	19	11	57.9%
Total	152	129	84.9%

The survey has provided us with valuable insights into the reporting capabilities of England's upper tier local authorities. This report has already set out a national picture in terms of local authorities' overall readiness to provide the different levels of data. It also suggested what other stakeholders, such as Cafcass and HMCTS, could contribute to a national PLO dataset and ways to make this happen. The information provided has supported the National PLO Data Champion group in considering the recommendations being made in this final report.

National Progress Hubs

A national progress hub was developed for this project made up of our local authority champions group and key stakeholders. Local authority champions included representation from local authority legal services, heads of service, service managers, and case progression managers. The progress hubs took place monthly and have provided a space for discussion and thinking about each data return and together the group have worked collectively to develop the recommendation made within this report.

Our regional champions also sought views from local authority SPOCs in their regions to ensure wider feedback from local authorities was also fed directly into the project. Having a national pilot group to test reporting on the different data levels has also helped us to understand the potential barriers on a national level and formed the basis for our recommendations.

Overview of reports completed and wider work undertaken to support the research.

This final report focuses on addressing specific questions set by the DfE at the beginning of this project. However, it is important to note that during the project, several reports have been produced at different stages over the year. These reports have provided a detailed analysis behind the data metrics we have been asked to capture. The following reports have been published throughout the project: -

Table 3. Summary of performance reports published during the project.

Report	Date Published	Brief Description
Bronze Level Data National Report	31/03/2023	The bronze data indicators were collated from the returns and processed into a performance report across England. This showed comparative data between the 9 regions and against the research average and rates. This report was also used to provide some analysis around what the data was telling us.
Bronze Level Data Regional Reports	31/03/2023	The bronze data indicators were collated from the returns and processed into a performance report across each region. These show comparative data from the LAs in the region and against the research average and rates. These reports were also used to provide some analysis around what the data was telling us.
Silver Level Data National Report	30/06/2023	The bronze and silver data indicators were collated from the returns and processed into a performance report across England. This showed comparative data between the 9 regions and against the research average and rates. This report was also used to provide some analysis around what the data was telling us.
Silver Level Data Regional Reports	30/06/2023	The bronze and silver data indicators were collated from the returns and processed into a performance report across each region. These show comparative data from the LAs in the region and against the research average and rates. These reports were also used to start to provide some analysis around what the data was telling us.
Gold Level Data National Report	31/08/2023	The bronze, silver, and gold data indicators were collated from the returns and processed into a performance report across England. This showed comparative data between the 9 regions and against the research average and rates. This report was also used to provide some analysis around what the data was telling us.
Gold Level Data Regional Reports	08/09/2023	The bronze, silver, and gold data indicators were collated from the returns and processed into a performance report across each region. These show comparative data from the LAs in the region and against the research average and rates. These reports were also used to provide some analysis around what the data was telling us.

These reports were completed in conjunction with the national champions group.

At the beginning of the project, we planned to publish national reports following each data collection. However, once the project started, we decided to publish regional reports so local

authorities could see the benefits of having compatible data between local authorities in their region. It has also allowed each region to scrutinise and consider performance and practice. Moreover, this has helped local authorities recognise the importance of providing data, engaging in this project, and raising the profile of the project nationally.

Show and tell presentations

Over the last 10 months, we have completed 8 'Show and Tell' sessions hosted by the DfE. This platform gave us a chance to keep interested parties up to date about the stages of the project and what we found from the research data. Within these sessions, we provided highlights from the bronze, silver, and gold data; demonstrated road maps to tell individual journeys for children through data; spoke about the technical issues to developing a national dataset; and started to identify potential areas of best practice from the data. Copies of these reports and PowerPoint presentations have been distributed to all local authorities. If anyone would like access to these reports again, please contact the DfE.

Wider activity undertaken to support the project

- 8 national workshops for local authorities with Liquid Logic and MOSAIC have been delivered to demonstrate how to make changes to the systems to capture digital data. Representatives from 75 different local authorities attended these workshops.
- DIY packs were created by the local authority Case Management Champions, which local authorities can use to guide them to update case management systems.
- Meetings with case management providers to look at changes needed universally to enable systems to be able to digitally capture PLO data.
- Workshop with chairs of the 9 regional Association of Directors of Children's Services to encourage conversations at regional levels to continue collecting data in PLO.
- Co-opted on to the Presidents PLO working group, to update and inform them on the project.
- Provided reports to the judiciary nationally for discussions on data at this level.

Individual journeys for children through PLO

One of the outcomes of the project was to see if we could show a child's journey through PLO by using data. Once we had a full dataset, we developed road mapping for children **(Appendix D).**

This mapping and technique provide a visual tool that can help see a child's journey in PLO from start to finish. We think this could potentially be a useful tool for auditing purposes and for use in group supervision. It offers a platform for reflection on best practices and identifies areas where further developments may be needed.

PowerPoint offers an add-on feature that generates timelines and roadmaps for you once you have organized the data metrics into a table, or you can use the graphics tools to create your own.

An assessment of which data indicators outlined in the list of bronze, silver, and gold indicators would be feasible for reporting on a national basis without further system changes

Part of the first objective was to identify which of the local authorities across England could currently produce the PLO data metrics that were tested as part of this research project in **Appendix A**. This has been mapped out in separate excel workbook, which has been provided to the DfE. This workbook shows which local authorities can and cannot report on each dataset.

There are several reasons for this. A small number of local authorities has built PLO data into their current case management systems. Therefore, they can return the data from when they started this process using digital systems. Some have manual trackers, and the data is collected in this, so they can report on specific metrics. Many local authorities have not been collecting some of the data metrics outlined in **Appendix A,** such as dates of letters sent to parents and whether an FGC has taken place, resulting in the lack of this data. A small number of local authorities has not been collecting any data for children in PLO, and some local authorities reported they do not have the resources or capacity to provide this data.

Currently, the majority of local authorities in England would need to use manual methods to collect the data from excel and word trackers and audits from case files. This process takes a lot of time and resources, posing an additional burden to local authorities. A small number of local authorities has transitioned to digital collection of PLO data and can now submit the data required. Since the start of the project, local authorities are more aware of how useful data is for children in PLO and are just starting in the journey to adapt case management systems or trackers to collect data. From speaking with local authorities that are now using just digital methods to collect and report PLO data, the average time to develop these systems was between 12 and 18 months.

Another point in Objective 1 of this project was to provide a clear description of each data indicator that has been collected as part of this research project. Table 4 below provides more details, and these were the definition developed for the bronze, silver, and gold collections in this project.

Table 4. Table of clear description of the data indicators

DfE Data Definitions	Data Metrics Needed	Clear Description of Data Definition
Children's demographics in pre-proceedings and care proceedings	Child ID	Unique identifier number for each child.
	Family ID	Unique identifier number for each family group (a family group is described as a group of children linked by parents all starting and ceasing pre- or care proceedings at the same time)
	Date of Birth	The date of birth should be recorded in a DD/MM/YYYY format (i.e., day/month/year as a four-digit number) If an expected birth date is available for an unborn child, enter this date; otherwise, leave blank.

		If no date of birth or expected date of birth is not available, leave blank.
	Gender	Identify the child's gender as male, female, or unknown (where the information isn't available or the child is unborn). A local authority may be unsure as to which gender should be recorded for a child. Where this occurs, gender should be recorded according to the wishes of the child. Please use codes: a) Male b) Female c) Not stated/recorded (or unborn) d) Neither
	Ethnicity	Provide the child's ethnic origin. Specify ethnicity using codes within the Department for Education's common basic dataset (CBDS). Ideally, use the twenty ethnic groups (or refused/not obtained) below. Please use codes: a) WBRI b) WIRI c) WIRT d) WOTH e) WROM f) MWBC g) MWBA h) MWAS i) MOTH j) AIND k) APKN l) ABAN m) AOTH n) BCRB o) BAFR p) BOTH q) CHNE r) OOTH s) REFU s) NOBT
	Disability	Indicate if the child has a disability according to the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. This defines a disabled person as a person with a 'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. Please use codes: a) Yes b) No c) Unknown
Date of child's most recent referral	Date child referred to LA	Provide the date of this referral to children's social care services. A referral is defined as a request for services to be provided by local authority children's social care via the assessment process outlined in working together 2018. The date should be recorded in a DD/MM/YYYY format (i.e., day/month/year as a four-digit number).
Child's Child in Need primary need category	Child's Child in Need primary need category	Please enter the child's latest primary need for the latest Children in Need episode. It should not be left blank. Only one reason can be recorded. Please use codes: N1 - Abuse or neglect N2 - Child's disability N3 - Parental disability or illness N4 - Family in acute stress N5 - Family dysfunction N6 - Socially unacceptable behaviour N7 - Low income N8 - Absent parenting N9 - Cases other than children in need N0 - Not stated

Most recent CIN date (where applicable)	Date of most recent CIN Plan	This is the date that the CIN Plan was started following the Child and Family Assessment being completed and the outcome being that the child/ren were to have intervention under section 17, with an allocated Social Worker. The date should be recorded in a DD/MM/YYYY format, i.e. day/month/year as a four digit number. As per 4.11 CIN Plan dates group in CIN Census Guidance
Date of most recent CP plan (where applicable)	Date of most recent CP Plan	Please record the most recent episode where child is/was subject to CP Plan. The date should be recorded in a DD/MM/YYYY format (i.e., day/month/year as a four-digit number).
Date of legal planning meeting. This will support us to work out length of time spent in pre-proceedings. It will also help us to measure the total local authority case duration for children in pre-proceedings.	Date decision made to enter Pre-Proceedings	This is the date of legal meeting/panel that agreed to commence pre-proceedings. The date should be recorded in a DD/MM/YYYY format (i.e., day/month/year as a four-digit number).
Date of initial PLO meeting/pre-proceedings meeting	Date of Initial Pre-Proceedings Meeting	This is the first pre-proceedings meeting following the legal meeting/panel that agreed to commence pre-proceedings. The date should be recorded in a DD/MM/YYYY format (i.e., day/month/year as a four-digit number).
Date pre-proceedings process ended	Date Agreed to Step down/issue	This is the date of legal meeting/panel that agreed to end pre-proceedings to either step down or issue care proceedings. The date should be recorded in a DD/MM/YYYY format (i.e., day/month/year as a four-digit number).
Outcome of legal planning meeting. This shows us the proportion of pre-proceedings ending in issue.	What is the Outcome of Pre-Proceedings	Either Decision to: Please Use Codes: a) Decision to Issue Care Proceedings: b) Decision to step down;
Whether the child has been on the Child Protection Plan within this referral period.	How many times has the child been subject to a Child Protection Plan during this referral period?	Please provide a numeric value for the number of the times the child has been the subject of a Child Protection Plan during this referral period. If none, please put 0.
Repeat periods of PLO.	How many previous periods of pre-proceedings have there been in the child's lifetime?	Please provide a numeric value. If there have not been any previous periods, please put 0.
	How many previous periods of care proceedings have there been in the child's lifetime?	Please provide a numeric value. If there have not been any previous periods, please put 0.
Date pre-proceedings letter is sent to parents outlining concerns, i.e., start date of the PLO process (also known as the letter before proceedings)	What is the date that the pre-proceedings letter and plan was sent to parents?	If the case has not been in pre-proceedings, please leave blank. Please use the UK date format: DD/MM/YYYY.
Date 'Letter of Issue' is sent to parents informing them of an immediate application to court (in urgent situations)	What is the date that the letter to issue care proceedings was sent to parents?	If care proceedings have not been issued, please leave blank. Please use the UK date format DD/MM/YYYY.
Number of review pre-proceedings meetings held with parents following initial meeting.	How many review pre-proceeding meetings have been held with parents following the initial meeting?	Please give a numeric value for the number of meetings that took place with parents, excluding the initial meeting.
Parental legal representation during pre-	Did parents have legal	Please select Yes / No / Unknown.

proceedings and/or at point of issue	representation during pre-proceedings?	
	Did parents have legal representation at the point of issue?	Please select Yes / No / Unknown / Not in care proceedings.
Reason for short notice applications	Were care proceedings issued on a short notice application?	Please select Yes / No / Unknown / Not in care proceedings. A short notice application is an urgent application for the court to hear the case within the next 2–5 days.
Reason for short notice applications	What was the reason for any short notice applications?	Please choose the main reason from this list: (A) Applications under the Children Act 1989 where without such an order, a child's immediate safety would be compromised, including where there is an immediate threat of child abduction. (B) Applications for Emergency Protection Orders where the criteria for such or order is met. (c) Other If a short notice application has not taken place, please select 'No short notice applications'. A short notice application is an urgent application for the court to hear the case within the next 2–5 days.
Court reference (where applicable)	If in care proceedings, what is the court reference number?	This is the court number which is given to a family group when care proceedings are issued. This may be stored on the case management system or held in legal files. If the case is not in care proceedings, please leave blank.
Number of hearings	How many court hearings have taken place whilst in care proceedings?	This includes the initial IRH and final hearing. Please give a numeric value. If case is not in care proceedings, please leave blank.
Application Type The type of order being applied for by the local authority on behalf of the child: Care Order / Supervision Order / Placement Order / Special Guardianship Order / Emergency Protection Order	What was the LAs initial care plan for the child at the initial hearing?	Please choose one option from this list: A – Interim / Care Order B – Interim / Care Order – Placement with parents C – Adoption D – Interim / Supervision Order E – Special Guardianship Order F – Private Law Order G – Other If case is not in care proceedings, please select 'Not in care proceedings' Please note 'Care order – placement with parents' means that the public care order was granted but that the child remained in their parent's care, rather than in another placement.
	Was the LAs initial plan approved at the initial hearing?	Please select Yes / No / Unknown
Outcome of PLO ceasing and was the LAs plan approved/not approved. Any changes to final care outcome compared to the lead application.	Was the LAs final plan approved at the final hearing?	Please select Yes / No / Unknown
	What was the LAs final care plan for the child at the final hearing?	Please choose one option from this list: A – Care Order B – Care Order – Placement with parents C – Adoption D – Supervision Order E – Special Guardianship Order F – Private Law Order G – Other If not yet at the final hearing, please select 'Not yet at final hearing – still in care proceedings'. This will indicate that the case is still active in care

		proceedings.
Was family group conferencing used?	Was a family group conference / meeting held whilst the child was subject to pre-proceedings and/or care proceedings?	Please select Yes / No / Unknown
Number / changes of social workers	Please list the total number of allocated social workers whilst the child was subject to pre-proceedings and/or care proceedings.	Please list the number of different allocated social workers whilst the child was subject to pre-proceedings and/or care proceedings. Please provide a numeric value. For example, if there was no change and only one allocated social worker throughout, please list '1'. If there have been two social workers at different times, please state '2'.
Date of application to court / date legal proceedings are issued.	Date of issue to court	Please state the date that the LA sent the application to court. Please use the DD/MM/YYYY format.
Involvement of experts during pre-proceedings – number and type of assessment. Was this supported/opposed by the LA and Cafcass?	Number of assessments during pre-proceedings: - Family cognitive assessment	Can you tell us the different types of expert / specialist external assessments that were completed whilst the family was in pre-proceedings? These are assessments which have been carried out by external agencies or professionals where the LA has paid for this assessment. These do not include internal assessments which the LA has completed. Please complete each column and please respond with numeric values. If none, please put 0. Please note this will be a family level response. Guidance – For example, in a family group where there are 3 fathers and 1 mother, this means there will be 4 parents involved. If there have been drug and alcohol tests on 3 of the parents due to concerns, put the number 3. If there has been a PAMS assessment on one of the fathers – but not on any other parent in the family group, please put the number 1.
	- Family psychological assessment	
	- Family child psychological assessment	
	- Family psychiatric assessment	
	- Family independent social work assessment	
	- Family PAMS assessment	
	- Family residential parenting assessment	
	- Family drug / alcohol testing report	
	- Family paediatric assessment	
	- Family forensic assessment	
	- Family other expert / specialist assessment	
Involvement of experts during care proceedings – number and type of assessment Was this supported/opposed by the LA and Cafcass?	Number of assessments during care proceedings: - Family cognitive assessment	Please can you tell us the different types of expert / specialist external assessments that were completed whilst the family was in care proceedings? These are assessments that have been carried out by external agencies or professionals where the LA has paid for this assessment. These do not include internal assessments which the LA has completed. Please complete each column and please respond with numeric values. If none, please put 0.
	- Family psychological assessment	

	- Family child psychological assessment - Family psychiatric assessment - Family independent social work assessment - Family PAMS assessment - Family residential parenting assessment - Family drug / alcohol testing report - Family paediatric assessment - Family forensic assessment - Family other expert / specialist assessment	Please note this will be a family level response. Guidance – For example, in a family group where there are 3 fathers and one mother, this means there will be four parents involved. If there have been drug and alcohol tests on 3 of the parents due to concerns, put the number 3. If there has been a PAMS assessment on one of the fathers – but not on any other parent in the family group, please put the number 1.
Identification of carers/assessment of family care options (e.g., viability/fostering assessments) – Pre-proceedings	How many screenings, viabilities or dual-fostering assessments were completed during pre-proceedings?	Please give a numeric value. If none, please put the number 0. Please note this will be a family level response.
Identification of carers/assessment of family care options (e.g., viability/fostering assessments) – Care proceedings	How many screenings, viabilities or dual-fostering assessments were completed during care proceedings?	How many screenings, viabilities or dual-fostering assessments were completed during care proceedings, which had not been done in pre-proceedings? Please give a numeric value. If none, please put the number 0. Please note this will be a family level response.
Whether the child has seen the submitted evidence	Has the child has seen the submitted evidence?	Has the child has seen the submitted evidence. Please select Yes / No / Too young / Unknown.
Date legal proceedings ended	What was the date that the final order was approved?	This is the date the final court hearing takes place where an order is approved and sanctioned by the court. Please use the DD/MM/YYYY format. If not applicable, please leave blank.
Has Cafcass made contact with the child before the initial hearing?	Has the children's guardian made contact with the child prior to the initial hearing?	Please choose one of these options: A – Yes – face-to-face B – Yes – virtually C – No – Urgent application D – No E – LA does not collect this data
Has Cafcass shared its final recommendation with the child?	Has the children's guardian shared their final recommendations with the child?	Please select Yes / No / LA does not collect this data.
Case closure date	If the case has now closed to children's services, please provide the case closure date.	If the case has now closed to children's services, please provide the case closure date. If the case is still active, please leave blank. Please use the UK date format – DD/MM/YYYY.

Another point to Objective 1 was to consider which of the collected indicators could local authorities return without further system changes. Table 5 outlines the bronze, silver, and gold indicators provided by the DfE, which we believe could be collected by not making any further system changes. From this project, we consider local authorities would only be able to report on 15 specific data points out of a possible 32 without further system changes being made. It is important to note that from our research, a number of local authorities are still only able to collect some of the data metrics below using excel spreadsheets and manual trackers. This would therefore require manual inputting by a number of local authorities and create additional burden for them.

If you look at these metrics below, they only tell part of a child's story in PLO, namely pre-proceedings, and it is just data held by local authorities.

Table 5. List of data indicators that could be collected without having to make any further systems changes.

DfE Data Definitions	Indicator Level	Data Metrics Needed	Collection details
Children's demographics in pre-proceedings and care proceedings	Bronze	Child ID; family ID; date of birth; gender; ethnicity; disability	LAs collect this data already on case management systems.
Date of child's most recent referral	Bronze	Date child referred to LA	LAs collect this data already on case management systems.
Child's Child in Need primary need category	Bronze	Child's Child in Need primary need category	LAs collect this data already on case management systems.
Most recent CIN date (where applicable)	Bronze	Date of most recent CIN plan	LAs collect this data already on case management systems.
Date of most recent CP plan (where applicable)	Bronze	Date of most recent CP plan	LAs collect this data already on case management systems.
Date of legal planning meeting	Bronze	Date decision made to enter pre-proceedings	LAs collect this data already on case management systems or in trackers.
Date of initial PLO meeting / pre-proceedings meeting	Bronze	Date of initial pre-proceedings Meeting	LAs collect this data already on case management systems or in trackers.
Date pre-proceedings process ended	Bronze	Date agreed to step down/issue	LAs collect this data already on case management systems or in trackers.
Outcome of legal planning meeting. This shows us the proportion of pre-proceedings ending in issue.	Bronze	What is the outcome of pre-proceedings	LAs collect this data already on case management systems or in trackers.
Whether the child has been on the Child Protection Plan within this referral period.	Silver	How many times has the child been subject to a Child Protection Plan during this referral period?	LAs collect this data already on case management systems.
Outcome of PLO ceasing and was the LA's plan approved/not approved. Any changes to final care outcome compared to the lead	Silver	Was the LA's final plan approved at the final hearing? What was the LA's final care plan	LAs collect this data already on case management systems or in trackers.

application.		for the child at the final hearing?	
Number / changes of social workers	Gold	Please list the total number of allocated social workers whilst the child was subject to pre-proceedings and/or care proceedings.	LAs collect this data already on case management systems.
Date of application to court / date legal proceedings are issued.	Gold	Date of issue to court	LAs collect this data already on case management systems or in trackers.
Date legal proceedings ended	Gold	What was the date that the final order was approved?	LAs collect this data already on case management systems or in trackers.
Case closure date	Gold	If the case has now closed to children's services, please provide the case closure date.	LAs collect this data already on case management systems or in trackers.

An overview of blockers and challenges faced by LAs to collecting, recording, and reporting the bronze, silver, and gold level data indicators

As outlined above, without substantial changes to existing systems, local authorities would only be able easily report on 15 indicators provided. This only represents 48% of the indicators provided by the DfE at the beginning of this project. This clearly demonstrates significant changes will be required to both local authority and case management systems to ensure a much larger range of indicators can easily be captured and reported on in the future. Based on current reporting capabilities, it would make the implementation of any potential future statutory return a difficult and time-consuming task for many local authorities. This will be important for the DfE to keep in mind, when considering any future statutory return and the timescales for implementation.

A key part of the project has been to develop a greater understanding of the key blockers and challenges facing local authorities in collecting, recording, and reporting on the different data indicators provided. The national readiness survey helped us to identify common barriers that local authorities encountered when collecting this data.

At the point of each data submission, local authorities were also asked to complete a survey detailing the barriers and challenges they faced with data collection. Extensive discussions also took place in the monthly national progress hubs on these issues.

Within these surveys, local authorities were asked how easy or difficult it was to collect the bronze, silver, and gold level data. Knowing this has helped support our final recommendations but also helped us predict the quality and accuracy of data being returned during the research project. The table below shows the percentages across the country on local authorities' ability to return the data indicators.

Table 6. Local authorities' current ability to report on bronze, silver, and gold level data.

Data Indicators	% of LAs that would easily be able to report on	% of LAs that would report – but would be time-consuming	% of LAs not ready to report on – would be very difficult
BRONZE LEVEL	**43%**	**50%**	**7%**
SILVER LEVEL	**6%**	**65%**	**29%**
GOLD LEVEL	**1.5%**	**44%**	**54.5%**

***These figures are based only on responses from local authorities that completed the survey for each data submission.**

Key blockers and challenges that were identified.

I. Local authorities not currently capturing data indicators.

The most challenging barrier reported in the National Readiness Survey was that local authorities have not been capturing some of the PLO data points needed to be tested.

It is important to note that this is the first time any attempt has been made to develop a national dataset on PLO. One of the aims of this project was to involve all local authorities and to help them start to think about the types of data they may be expected to report in the future. So,

while high numbers have reported they aren't capturing some data indicators, this project itself has helped local authorities to consider what they are currently capturing and areas they might need to develop.

A considerable number of local authorities are currently reliant on manual spreadsheets to capture information. This is in part due to the issues outlined in Chapter 3 with case management systems. Another key factor to note is that some of the indicators identified for this collection are not captured by local authorities or better captured by a different stakeholder within the family justice system (i.e., HMCTS). There is a significant amount of time and burden placed on all parts of the practice system when manual spreadsheets are required.

II. Workforce capacity, meaning that local authorities do not have the resources to collect and report on certain data points consistently due to variations in professional roles responsible for reporting the data

This in part relates to challenges highlighted in terms of point (i) above and also point (iii) below, in respect of having systems and resources in place to support a PLO collection. From conversations with the DfE, they are keen to avoid increasing burden on local authorities. However, the reality is that different local authorities will have various levels of burden depending on the maturity of their data capturing and who is capturing this. There is a wide variation in the capacity that local authorities have. Some have a large team of data analysts that support this work, and some have extremely limited capability.

The result from the national survey clearly shows that children's social care across England are all at different stages in terms of being able to capture and report PLO data.

After the initial bronze data return, we found we needed to make a lot of data assumptions and exclusions, which raised questions about the quality of the data being provided. Because of this, we thought it was important to understand who was providing the data returned. Due to the inaccuracies in data, we wanted to understand more about who was providing the data for the return. For the silver return, we asked who was collecting data. We found a wide variety of people were directly involved in the data collections.

Examples include social workers, team managers, service managers, heads of service, legal officers, business intelligence officers, and data analysts.

- Data intelligence teams account for 24% of all those involved in the data collections.
- Legal teams also make up a significant proportion, with 18% of the total.
- 33% of the data had been collected by teams that sit within children's social care: case progression managers (15%); service managers and heads of service (10%); and social workers/team managers (8%).

This variation means there may be different interpretations of the same data points. This has been shown through the data cleansing that was needed when generating the national reports. To ensure data cleansing is completed at source, our recommendations will detail the most efficient way to report on data for this to then be processed into reports.

To have a consistent collection from across the county, our recommendations will consider whether specific people and teams with specific skills should undertake PLO collections, such as data analysts.

III. Challenges with current case management systems

Throughout the project, there has been a significant focus on CMSs and their current and future ability to enable digital capturing and reporting on a wide range of data indicators. The National

Readiness Survey and discussions within the national progress hubs have clearly identified several key themes in relation to CMSs that need to be addressed. The following have been included.

- Current CMS does not support the reporting of data around PLO.
- LAs can make changes to their CMS and data reporting software, but the lead in time for these changes are not within the timescales of this.

When thinking about the time required to make changes to CMS systems, most local authorities reported that small changes could have been done within a couple of weeks. Larger changes such as building new workflow and setting new data reports up could take a lot longer from 3 to 24 months, depending on resource and time availability. A couple of local authorities that have built new workflows in CMS, to encompass the PLO data points, took around 18 months to develop and go live with. This will be important to consider in terms of time frames for implementation of recommendations in this report.

Table 5 above shows us a clear picture of local authorities' current capabilities, demonstrating how a significant number of local authorities will likely struggle to provide certain data based on their current CMS reporting capabilities. The national project team believes that making changes to CMSs is a fundamental issue that needs to be addressed to improve local authorities' ability to report on any data indicators.

IV. Challenges engaging with current CMS providers as part of this project

This project has allowed us to delve deeply into how case management systems support or hinder our ability to digitally capture data for children in PLO. It is identified that 52% of the data indicators we tested are not currently able to be extracted from the CMS. Therefore, considerable work will need to be undertaken by CMS providers to develop specific workflows in PLO to improve reporting and to ensure children can be recognised as being in PLO from the front page. It is important to note that local authorities might incur costs to purchase the upgraded version of the software.

As part of the project, we have tried to engage with CMS providers to get them to consider the changes that need to be made**.** We found the providers were cautious around making a number of changes.

Given the importance of this research, we asked the DfE to support us in raising the profile of this work with CMS providers. To support the project, Claire Coutinho, the former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing), wrote to CMS providers asking them to engage in the project and consider the changes that will be required from their systems.

Since this, we only had engagement from some providers who are looking at scheduling in changes. However, at present, lead in times for these changes are, with some providers, over 12 months. This is something that causes concern and, based on engagement within the scope of this project time, could significantly impact on the timeliness of implementation and recommendations the DfE makes.

V. Challenges with data protection and data sharing agreements

One of the most time-consuming and complex tasks in this project was getting to a position were all LAs in England were happy to share their data. A data protection impact risk assessment was completed with a detailed process workflow map. This concluded that data sharing agreements were needed with all champion LAs as they were data controllers and that all other LAs could be issued a statement of what the data was for, the process for movement of data, and how this was to be stored and then destroyed.

What was established was that each LA has their own thresholds around data protection, and in some regions, there was a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collectively agree on

any data reported outside of their region. This caused significant delays in LAs sending data for the purposes of this project, and it took five months to update MOUs and establish individual data sharing agreements with LAs that requested this, on top of the data sharing statement issued.

In terms of being able to share the digital report, we were unable to achieve this in the timescales for this project, due to the extra work around cybersecurity that would have been needed to be built into the data protection impact risk assessment and again getting 153 LAs to sign up to this.

In terms of moving towards a PLO dataset being a statutory return, we would advise that a team of experts start this work as soon as possible to prevent any future delays in the commencement of a PLO statutory data return.

A ranked list of the identified blockers and challenges, in priority order of those that must, should, and could be addressed to collect the bronze, silver, and gold data from LAs across England.

Table 7 below outlines the following:

- A list of the blockers and challenges faced by local authorities to collecting, recording, and reporting the bronze, silver, and gold level data indicators.

- A ranked list of the identified blockers and challenges, in priority order of those that must, should, and could be addressed to collect the bronze, silver, and gold data from local authorities across England.

- A set of recommended implementable and realistic solutions to overcome blockers and challenges that would enable the collection and reporting of bronze, silver, and gold level data at a national level.

In terms of the priority in which solutions should be implemented, the **MUST** are ones that have to be addressed for a PLO dataset to be created with the least burden on agencies. The **SHOULD** are ones that need to be addressed but other providers would need to agree or further funding and work is needed. The **COULD** are ones that can be addressed, but they are not recommended by the champions group to go into a future PLO National Dataset. Finally, the **N/A** mean there are no blockers and challenges to be addressed.

Table 7. A list of the blockers and challenges faced by local authorities to collecting, recording, and reporting the bronze, silver, and gold level data indicators.

DfE Data Definitions	Indicator Level	Data Metrics Needed	Blockers and barriers to overcome	Implementable and realistic solutions	In priority order of those that must, should, and could be addressed
Children's demographics in pre-proceedings and care proceedings	Bronze	Child ID Family ID Date of birth Gender Ethnicity Disability	Not all agencies have the same consistent identifier for children. Not all case management systems provide a family ID.	HMCTS and Cafcass to be given LA DfE code and child case management system number at point of application and this added to their case management system. Or a consistent child identifier number to be developed that all agencies use. Case management providers to make changes t0 allow for family ID's.	**1 - MUST** **2 – MUST**
Date of child's most recent referral	Bronze	Date child referred to LA	None	N/A	**N/A**
Child's Child in Need primary need category	Bronze	Child's Child in Need primary need category	None	N/A	**N/A**
Most recent CIN date (where applicable)	Bronze	Date of most recent CIN Plan	None	N/A	**N/A**
Date of most recent CP plan (where applicable)	Bronze	Date of most recent CP Plan	None	N/A	**N/A**
Date of legal planning meeting. This will support us to work out the length of time spent in pre-proceedings. It will also help us to measure the total local authority case	Bronze	Date decision made to enter pre-proceedings	Not all LAs collect this digitally on their case management systems yet; some only record this on a manual tracker.	Allow LAs time to make changes to case management systems to capture this. Ask software providers to update software so this is collected in case management systems.	**3 - MUST**

duration for children in pre-proceedings					
Date of initial PLO meeting / pre-proceedings meeting	Bronze	Date of initial pre-proceedings meeting	Not all LAs collect this digitally on their case management systems yet; some only record this on a manual tracker.	Allow LAs time to make changes to case management systems to capture this. Ask software providers to update software so this is collected in case management systems.	**4 - MUST**
Date pre-proceedings process ended	Bronze	Date agreed to step down/issue	Not all LAs collect this digitally on their case management systems yet; some only record this on a manual tracker.	Allow LAs time to make changes to case management systems to capture this. Ask software providers to update software so this is collected in case management systems.	**5 - MUST**
Outcome of legal planning meeting. This shows us the proportion of pre-proceedings ending in issue	Bronze	What is the outcome of pre-proceedings?	Not all LAs collect this digitally on their case management systems yet; some only record this on a manual tracker.	Allow LAs time to make changes to case management systems to capture this. Ask software providers to update software so this is collected in case management systems.	**6 - MUST**
Whether the child has been on the Child Protection Plan within this referral period	Silver	How many times has the child been subject to a Child Protection Plan during this referral period?	None	N/A	**N/A**
Repeat periods of PLO	Silver	How many previous periods of pre-proceedings have there been in the child's lifetime? How many previous periods of care proceedings have there been in the child's lifetime?	Not all LAs collect this digitally on their case management systems yet, some only record this on a manual tracker, and some have never captured this. Data may be inaccurate for years to come, as LAs move from manual trackers to digital data capture in PLO.	Allow LAs time to make changes to case management systems to capture this. Ask software providers to update software so this is collected in case management systems.	**7 – MUST**
Date pre-proceedings letter is sent to parents outlining concerns, including the start date of the PLO process (also known as the letter before proceedings)	Silver	What is the date that the pre-proceedings letter and plan was sent to parents?	Very few LAs collect this data and the research dataset showed that this data metric offered no comparison on a national scale and did not add value to a child's journey in PLO	Allow LAs time to make changes to case management systems to capture this. Ask software providers to update software so this is collected in case management systems.	**1 - COULD**
Date 'letter of issue' is sent to parents informing them of an immediate application to court (in urgent situations)	Silver	What is the date that the letter to issue care proceedings was sent to parents?	Very few LAs collect this data and the research dataset showed that this data metric offered no comparison on. a national scale and did not add value to a child's journey in PLO. This is seen to be a guide in best practice rather than in a dataset.	Allow LAs time to make changes to case management systems to capture this. Ask software providers to update software so this is collected in case management systems	**2 - COULD**

Number of review pre-proceedings meetings held with parents following initial meeting.	Silver	How many review pre-proceeding meetings have been held with parents following the initial meeting?	Not all LAs collect this digitally on their case management systems yet; some only record this on a manual tracker.	Allow LAs time to make changes to case management systems to capture this. Ask software providers to update software so this is collected in case management systems	**8 – MUST**
Parental legal representation during pre-proceedings and/or at point of issue	Silver	Did parents have legal representation during pre-proceedings? Did parents have legal representation at the point of issue?	Very few LAs collect this data and the research dataset showed that this data metric offered no comparison on. a national scale and did not add value to a child's journey in PLO. This is seen to be a guide in best practice rather than in a dataset.	Allow LAs time to make changes to case management systems to capture this. Ask software providers to update software so this is collected in case management systems	**3 - COULD**
Reason for short notice applications	Silver	Were care proceedings issued on a short notice application?	This is not data that is collected by LAs on-case management systems and is recorded in court bundles. However, HMCTS do currently capture this at family level when an application is made.	Allow HMCTS time to adapt their case management system so they can report at child level.	**9 – MUST**
Reason for short notice applications		What was the reason for any short notice applications?	The research dataset showed that this data metric offered no comparison on a national scale. This is due to the reasons being very broad and not granular enough to show trends or comparisons. The timescales for an application to be classed as a short notice is also confusing. If there was a more prescriptive list, this would then be useful in a PLO dataset.	Allow HMCTS time to adapt their case management system so they can report at child level. Further research and work around short notice applications to enable collections in the future.	**4 – COULD** **1 - SHOULD**
Court reference (where applicable)	Silver	If in care proceedings, what is the court reference number?	This is issued by the court when the application is made. This is for a for the family group and not currently recorded for individual children. LAs do not routinely capture this on case management systems this is within court bundles. It is easy for human error to occur when recording a number given, meaning when trying to match	Allow HMCTS time to adapt their case management system so they can report at child level. Create an agreed consistent child identifier that all agencies use; this then means data from a number of agencies can easily be matched.	**5 – COULD** **10 – MUST**

			data in a portal, this could bring up many errors. An alternative consistent child identifier is being suggested to be instead of using the court reference number.		
Number of hearings	Silver	How many court hearings have taken place whilst in care proceedings?	This is not data that is collected by LAs on case management systems and is recorded in court bundles. However, HMCTS do currently capture this at family level when an application is made.	Allow HMCTS time to adapt their case management system so they can report at child level.	**11 - MUST**
Application Type The type of order being applied for by the Local Authority on behalf of the child: Care Order / Supervision Order / Placement Order / Special Guardianship Order / Emergency Protection Order	Silver	What was the LA's initial care plan for the child at the initial hearing? Was the LA's initial plan approved at the initial hearing?	This is not data that is collected by LAs on case management systems and is recorded in court bundles. However, HMCTS do currently capture this at family level when an application is made.	Allow HMCTS time to adapt their case management system so they can report at child level.	**12 - MUST**
Outcome of PLO ceasing and was the LA's plan approved/not approved. Any changes to final care outcome compared to the lead application.	Silver	Was the LA's final plan approved at the final hearing? What was the LA's final care plan for the child at the final hearing?	This is not data that is collected by LAs on case management systems and is recorded in court bundles. However, HMCTS do currently capture this at family level when an application is made.	Allow HMCTS time to adapt their case management system so they can report at child level.	**13 - MUST**
Was family group conferencing used?	Gold	Was a family group conference / meeting held whilst the child was subject to pre-proceedings and/or care proceedings?	Not every LA in England use family group conferencing service. Some LAs have no form of family conference or family network service, so social workers will complete family finding work. This show a disbalance across the country in terms of ability and resources in place to family find. It is not always the LAs fault if a family group conference has not taken place; this is currently held	Change language to has family and friend finding been carried out. Allow LAs time to make changes to case management systems to capture this. Ask software providers to update software so this is collected in case management systems. Further research and work around family group conferencing is needed nationally. If this is going to be a measure at some point in the future to compare best practice every LA should have the same resources and opportunities to complete family group conferencing.	**6– COULD** **2 - SHOULD**

			with parents' consent which is not always given.	Policy changes also needs to be considered as this is not a statutory requirement and parents and carers cannot be forced to hold these; consent is needed.	
Number / changes of social workers	Gold	Please list the total number of allocated social workers whilst the child was subject to pre-proceedings and/or care proceedings.	This is already captured by LAs on case management systems. It is also already reported go the DfE in terms of changes of social workers whilst a child is open to children's services.	N/A	**N/A**
Date of application to court / date legal proceedings are issued.	Gold	Date of issue to court	This is not data that is collected by LAs on case management systems and is recorded in court bundles. However, HMCTS do currently capture this at family level when an application is made.	Allow HMCTS time to adapt their case management system so they can report at child level.	**14 - MUST**
Involvement of experts during pre-proceedings – number and type of assessment. Was this supported/opposed by the LA and Cafcass?	Gold	Number of assessments during pre-proceedings: - Family cognitive assessment - Family psychological assessment - Family child psychological assessment - Family psychiatric assessment - Family independent social work assessment - Family PAMS assessment - Family residential parenting assessment - Family drug / alcohol testing report - Family paediatric assessment	This is not data that is collected by LAs on-case management systems and not always in trackers. Manual audit of case files would be needed to extract this granular data. Alternate metric being suggested.	Allow LAs time to make changes to case management systems to capture this. Ask software providers to update software so this is collected in case management systems. Instead of naming the assessment ask for a count per families, this will show outliers who may use experts more than other LAs or regions. Allow LAs time to make changes to case management systems to capture this.	**7 – COULD** **15 - MUST**

		- Family forensic assessment - Family other expert / specialist assessment			
Involvement of experts during care proceedings – number and type of assessment Was this supported/opposed by the LA and Cafcass?	Gold	Number of assessments during care proceedings: - Family cognitive assessment - Family psychological assessment - Family child psychological assessment - Family psychiatric assessment - Family independent social work assessment - Family PAMS assessment - Family residential parenting assessment - Family drug / alcohol testing report - Family paediatric assessment - Family forensic assessment - Family other expert / specialist assessment	This is not data that is collected by LAs on case management systems and not always in trackers. Manual audit of case files would be needed to extract this granular data. HMCTS do capture the different types of expert assessments and a formula could be created to count these. Alternate metric being suggested.	Allow LAs time to make changes to case management systems to capture this. Ask software providers to update software so this is collected in case management systems. Allow HMCTS time to adapt their case management system so they can report at child level. Instead of naming the assessment ask for a count per families, this will show outliers who may use experts more than other LAs or regions. Allow HMCTS time to adapt their case management system so they can report at child level.	**8 – COULD** **16 - MUST**
Identification of carers/assessment of family care options (e.g., viability/fostering assessments) – Pre-proceedings	Gold	How many screenings, viabilities or dual-fostering assessments were completed during pre-proceedings?	This is not data that is collected by LAs on case management systems and is recorded in trackers or court bundles.	Allow LAs time to make changes to case management systems to capture this. Ask software providers to update software so this is collected in case management systems.	**9 – COULD**
Identification of carers/assessment of family care options (e.g., viability/fostering assessments) – Care proceedings	Gold	How many screenings, viabilities or dual-fostering assessments were completed during care proceedings?	This is not data that is collected by LAs on case management systems and is recorded in trackers or court bundles. When in care proceedings this is captured on HMCTS case management system.	Allow HMCTS time to adapt their case management system so they can report at child level.	**10 – COULD**

Whether the child has seen the submitted evidence	Gold	Has the child seen the submitted evidence?	This is not data that is collected by LAs on case management systems and is not practice that is routinely followed and would be on a case-by-case basis. How do you capture data for newborns and those of a younger age. We are curious what age would be appropriate for a child to start seeing evidence from.	Further conversations, research, and work around children seeing submitted evidence and if this supports timely PLO process. Consideration into trauma and emotional support for children to see this would need serious considerations, as well as the person who should do this with the child.	**3 – SHOULD**
Date legal proceedings ended	Gold	What was the date that the final order was approved?	This is not data that is collected by LAs on case management systems and is recorded in court bundles. However, HMCTS do currently capture this at family level when an application is made.	Allow HMCTS time to adapt their case management system so they can report at child level	**17 - MUST**
Has Cafcass made contact with the child before the initial hearing?	Gold	Has the Children's Guardian made contact with the child prior to the initial hearing?	LAs do not collect this as this is a task completed by Cafcass. This is a new data point that has started to be collected by Cafcass and so data was not available for quarter 3 of 2022/23 How do you capture data for newborns and those of a younger age. We are curious what age would be appropriate for a child to start seeing evidence from.	Allow Cafcass time to adapt their case management system so they can report on this.	**11 – COULD**
Has Cafcass shared its final recommendation with the child?	Gold	Has the Children's Guardian shared their final recommendations with the child?	LAs do not collect this as this is a task completed by Cafcass. Cafcass do not routinely capture this in one place to be able to share this data.	Allow Cafcass time to adapt their case management system so they can report on this.	**12 – COULD**

			How do you capture data for newborns and those of a younger age? We are curious what age would be appropriate for a child to start seeing evidence from.		
Case closure date	Gold	If the case has now closed to children's services, please provide the case closure date.	None	N/A	**N/A**

Recommendations

I. Development of a National PLO Dataset – Phase 1

A static dashboard showcasing comparative graphs of the recommended dataset can be found in **Appendix E.**

We are recommending that a statutory national PLO dataset is introduced in two phases. In terms of timescales, we are recommending that the dataset is built in 2 phases over 2 to 3 years to ensure we get it right. We recommend that Phase 1 is implemented and a statutory PLO data submission commences in April 2025. This will be at the start of a financial year and give LAs time to make the changes needed to collect the data being requested.

We are recommending that the PLO dataset is reported quarterly and that the data is processed into interactive charts, which local authorities and agencies involved in PLO have access to via a digital link. This enables data to be as current as possible, identifies themes or trends through the year, and makes viewing of the reports accessible and dynamic.

It is important to note that timescales for implementation will depend on other key recommendations within this report being addressed. For a national dataset that measures a child journey throughout PLO to be developed, key stakeholders will need to be able to report the data they collect for the child. A fundamental issue we to address before the national PLO dataset can go live is the ability of case management systems to capture this data. Without changes being made, we consider it would place a considerable burden on local authorities.

Also, HMCTS do not currently collect data at child level and therefore would need time and resources to update their own case management system to allow this.

Due to these factors, careful consideration has been taken on how we could build a full PLO dataset over time to monitor a child's journey from start to end.

The table details the recommended dataset that the national champion group is suggesting to be collected in Phase 1.

From Local Authorities – In Phase 1

- Unique child identifier
- Family ID
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Date child referred to local authority
- How many times in child's lifetime have they been on a Child Protection Plan
- How many previous periods of pre-proceedings have there been in the child's lifetime?
- Category of harm when entered pre-proceedings
- Case status when entered pre-proceedings (i.e., Section 20, CP, CIN)
- Date decision made to enter pre-proceedings
- Date of initial pre-proceedings meeting
- How many review pre-proceeding meetings have been held with parents following the initial meeting?
- What is the outcome of pre-proceedings
- Date agreed to step down/issue

II. Development of National PLO Dataset – Phase 2

Phase 2 of the development of a national PLO dataset will then start to include data held on care proceedings which Cafcass and HMCTS collect on children. We recommend that Phase 2 is implemented, and a statutory multi-agency PLO data return commences in April 2026. This will be at the start of a financial year and give LAs, HMCTS, and Cafcass time to make the changes needed to collect the data being requested.

Phase 2 includes all the data metrics in the table in Phase 1, as well as the data metrics in Phase 2 that are in the tables at the side.

When stepping into care proceedings, data is already collected by HMCTS at family level, and it therefore makes sense that these metrics are reported by HMCTS rather than local authorities.

Local authorities, Cafcass, and HMCTS will all start to report data into a portal on children who are subject PLO.

This will mean that we can produce a dataset for every child that's in PLO from the start of their journey in pre-proceedings to the end of their journey, if they enter into care proceedings.

You will see in the table to the side which agency the data shall be collected from and the boxes that are shaded in green show you whether this is an alternative data metric from the ones collected in this research piece or whether it's a new data metric that wasn't previously collected.

You can see what national dashboard could look like once data has been collected and processed in **Appendix E** (bar the new CAFCASS metric).

From Local Authorities – In Phase 2

- How many previous periods of care proceedings have there been in the child's lifetime?
- Category of harm when entered pre- or care proceedings.
- Case status when entered pre- or care proceedings (i.e., Section 20, CP, and CIN)
- Number of expert assessments per family in pre-proceedings
- Was a repeat or addendum parenting assessment ordered during care proceedings?

From HMCTS - In Phase 2

- Consistent child identifier
- Date of case issued to court
- Were care proceedings issued on a short notice application?
- What was the LAs' initial care plan for the child at the initial hearing?
- Was the LAs' initial plan approved at the initial hearing?
- How many court hearings have taken place whilst in care proceedings?
- Number of expert assessments per family in care proceedings
- Was the LAs final plan approved at the final hearing?
- What was the LAs final care plan for the child at the final hearing?
- What was the date that the final order was approved?

From Cafcass – In Phase 2

- Consistent child identifier
- Has the children's guardian and social worker had a case discussion prior to the initial hearing?

III. Data metrics to be removed

When analysing the data metrics, 8 data indicators were identified that did not contribute to the PLO dataset in terms of measuring performance, comparability, and immediate benefit. Thus, we are recommending that the data indicators below are removed from any future national statutory return on PLO data.

1. Was a family group conference (FGC) held?

Children's social care: 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' (2023) places an emphasis on family networks and enhancing our approach to engaging with the broader family. With this report in mind, we recognise the importance of looking at measuring this in all areas of work with children and families.

When comparing the data collected, we found that the approach of local authorities to FGC varied greatly, and a specific FGC service is not commissioned or used by all local authorities in England. Because of this, we consider it unfair to measure this metric when not all local authorities use an FGC service. Some local authorities also have a different approach to FGC or use different language for the meetings they have involving a child's wider family and friends. Some use the term family network meetings, and some do not have any approach, and the social worker contacts extended family and friends.

We also looked at the issue of consent. To hold a family group conference, you need consent of parents unless this is requested in an order at court.

The champion group felt that this would be a good national measure if all local authorities were using this service and if this was made a statutory requirement. This would also be in best practice, holding one as early as possible in the child journey. However, until the issue of consent and statutory requirement is looked at, this is not currently a comparative measure.

2. How many screenings and viabilities have taken place in pre- and care proceedings?

When we collected the data and produced a report, it was clear that it was particularly challenging to show comparative data on how many screenings, viabilities, or family assessments may have taken place on children. This is because every case is different for each family, and small families may only have one- or two-family assessments, whereas large families may have many more family assessments taking place. Therefore, when we look at how many family assessments are taking place, disparities emerge in some regions. However, we can't say that they are outliers because some regions may have bigger family groups than other regions who have more single children. Therefore, this isn't a reliable data metric that shows accurate comparisons or national compliance data.

3. Date letter of pre-proceedings and immediate issue sent to parents

The regional champions considered that this indicator shows little significance when measuring timeliness. In fact, it was not needed or used in the data processing to present the indicators specified. The date of initial legal gateway/meeting where the decision is made to enter pre-proceedings and the initial meeting taking place can be used as the performance indicators.

There was an in-depth discussion between the regional champions around the start date for pre-proceedings, as some felt the start date should be at the first meeting. Most of the champions group considered that pre-proceedings should start from the date the decision was made at legal gateway/meeting.

The data tells us that there can be considerable delay between the date the decision was made to entre pre-proceeding and the first meeting taking place. For example, we observed from the data that the initial meeting has not taken place for 8–12 weeks following the legal decision being made. This would mean a considerable delay for a child.

Because of this, the consensus was that the start date should be when the decision was made at legal gateway/planning meeting. The champions group felt that this would support the timeliness of pre-proceedings and ensure children cases do not have drift. If we don't measure from this point, then we are unable to have comparative data. Therefore, it is important to measure the start of pre-proceedings from the date the legal decision was made to enter this process.

4. Parental representation in pre- and care proceedings.

The regional champions deemed that this indicator shows little significance when measuring timeliness and effectiveness of pre-proceedings.

The wider discussions around this data indicator were around the lack of lawyers to represent parents in pre-proceedings. This was a key issue which caused delays in initial meetings taking place, or further case management hearings needed for parents to have sufficient time with their lawyer. This is due to the limited funding through legal aid for lawyers. In some regions, there are significant challenges for parents to find representation. This is an area which we recommend further work and research into, if we are going to ensure parents have fair representation in pre-proceedings and support effective timescales.

5. What was the reason for the short notice application?

Given the current list of reasons for short notice applications, when looking at the processed data on a national and regional scale, this told us that the major reason was due to immediate safety of the child. There was also more use of emergency protection orders in some areas than others. However, it did not offer us any kind of comparative data.

Further discussion with the regional champions concluded that further work was needed around developing a prescribed list of reasons for short notice applications. This then would help to understand if reasons such as child injury are valid. It was also discussed that there needed to be some clarity on time frames that would warrant a child's case to be a short notice application, before this data indicator is used as a comparative measure in a dataset.

6. Number and change of social workers

While changes in social worker can cause delay, it is important to note that local authorities have different operating models and transfer points for children and families; for example, some local authorities have a model where a child moves to a new team when care proceedings start. This means that there will be wider issues than staff retention that impact this figure. This makes it difficult for local authorities to make direct comparisons between the number and changes in social worker count. Therefore, we do not recommend this metric to be captured in a national dataset. However, it is a measure that might be helpful for individual local authorities who may want to capture locally to measure and review practice.

7. Has the child has seen the submitted evidence?

This is not practice that is routinely followed and would be on a case-by-case basis. There is no data for this indicator that currently exists. Evidence can be traumatic and damaging for children to see. Further conversations, research, and work around children seeing submitted evidence and if this supports timely PLO process should take place. Consideration into trauma and emotional support for children to see evidence would need serious consideration, as well as the person who should do this with the child.

8. Case closure date

It usually takes some time from stepping down from pre- or care proceedings to the closure of a case in children's services, making it unlikely to be captured in the same reporting quarter. This is currently captured in CIN census and can potentially be matched with PLO data, particularly when looking at the timescale for case closure, provided that there is a consistent child identifier to match data.

IV. Data metrics altered

We are also recommending that 3 of the data indicators are altered in a future statutory PLO data collection rather than removed. These can still provide us some data in the indicator areas, but the altered metric will offer data that can then become useful for comparative purposes, identifying themes, and to enable data to be matched in a data warehouse from different agencies.

1. CIN Status

The champions group did not feel this told us anything in a national collection other than abuse and neglect is the most common reason to be in pre- or care proceedings, which is already known.

It is suggested that it would be more useful to know the category of harm that the child has suffered when entering PLO so this would include the category of harm when the child went into pre-proceedings and the category of harm when the child entered care proceedings. By knowing this category of harm as we build a dataset over a year, it could be particularly helpful towards preventative work. This is if we pick themes up regionally and nationally in terms of when children suffer harm in more than one category. For example, is there an increase in emotional harm to children with an element of domestic violence in sporting seasons, such as World Cups or Olympics, when we know there may be more alcohol consumed and possibly more and violence due to this.

2. Type and number of expert assessments in pre- and care proceedings

When the data was collected naming the assessments, this offered no comparative data. This area of social work practice is case specific. One case may need 1 or no experts, one may need 4, if there are more parents or each parent is being drug tested for example.

Instead of naming the assessment, it would be more useful to have a count of expert assessments per family. - 40 -his will identify outliers who may use experts more than other local authorities or regions, and reasons for this can be explored at local and regional level.

3. Child ID

This metric is needed to have a count of children in a national dataset. However, there are challenges using this as an identifier for children. The first challenge is, if 30 local authorities use the same case management system, there could be 30 children with the same ID number. Within this project, we combined the child ID with the local authority code that the DfE use, so as to differentiate each child. Although this technique could be used for future collections, it cannot be used to match data between Cafcass and local authorities, with Cafcass having a different ID for the child. This is the same with matching HMCTS data as they currently only use a family ID.

This means for the first phase of the development of a national dataset in PLO, you could use child ID and DfE local authority code. However, when the second phase begins, we must be able to exchange enough unique information about a child to effectively link records.' Or have a consistent child identifier to enable data to be matched in a data warehouse across agencies.

V. Data metrics added

We also recommend that the DfE introduce 3 new data indicators to be added into a statutory national PLO dataset. These are set out below with an explanation of how these are useful in terms of measuring performance, understanding intervention process children have been through in children's social care, and also to support data around delays.

1. Status of child – Section 20, Child Protection, Child in Need.

Following the sliver collection and the data being processed, conversations took place with the regional champions about the number of times children had been subject to a CP plan. The highest number was once on a plan, which was expected. However, the second highest number was zero times on a plan.

The regional champions felt that the high number of children who had never been on a CP plan but were in pre- or care proceedings were likely to be children that had been accommodated under Section 20. Due to this, we tested this out on a much smaller scale with 17 local authorities in the dashboard **(Appendix E),** and this did show that a number of children were Children in Care under Section 20.

Knowing this in a dataset would help local authorities to consider children that had escalated from referral or CIN into pre- or care proceedings, without the process of children protection for the purposes of developments and learning.

2. How many times has a child been subject to a CP plan in their lifetime?

We added this indicator into the silver collection to help us understand if children and families were being supported through CP prior to stepping into PLO. We considered this for two reasons: (1) to consider if children are being stepped up into pre-proceeding too quickly, such as moving from a CP plan into pre-proceedings in a matter of weeks; and (2) to consider children who had been subject to multiple CP plans and if they should have stepped into pre-proceedings earlier.

3. Was a repeat or addendum parenting assessment ordered during care proceedings?

This was a metric that the regional champions wanted to collect due to the increase in requests to complete repeat and addendum parenting assessments in court, which add to delays in care proceedings. With the relaunch of the PLO in January 2023, there is a renewed emphasis on front loading assessment and intervention in pre-proceedings. It is anticipated that with this being a data indicator that is used as a comparative measure, all agencies will carefully consider the need for repeat or addendums and support care proceedings to conclude within 26 weeks.

VI. Implementation of Consistent Child Identifier (CCI)

We recommend that it is crucial for the DfE to develop a CCI to have a statutory national PLO dataset that supports data from the start to the end of children's journeys in PLO.

A CCI is a number that is given to a child which can be used across all agencies and case management systems to identify a child. There is currently no CCI that could be used by multiple agencies to match data across different systems. To have a robust and effective PLO dataset

that measures performance and supports improvements in practice, there is a need for all key stakeholders to report data they hold of children under PLO.

There is an existing consultation being led by the DfE to consider the implementation of a CCI across the practice system. Our research shows that there will be significant challenges implementing a multi-agency PLO dataset without a CCI. In this project we have seen too many inconsistencies in data, to enable fuzzy matching to be accurate.

During the development of a PLO dataset, the first phase could work using the child ID from the case management system and local authority DfE code. However, this will only tell part of the story for children who progress into care proceedings.

To proceed into the second phase of the development of the PLO dataset, having a CCI for all agencies is crucial in being able to match data in a data warehouse, so as to enable the building of reports. There are several other projects running within the Digital Data Solution Fund work regarding datasets in children's services. Moving to a CCI for all agencies will support being able to match datasets together and support the sharing of information in terms of safeguarding children.

VII. Timescales and approach to implementation

We recommend that the timescales and approach to a statutory national PLO dataset is considered by the DfE to ensure the success of the commencement of this project. This whole project has been focussed on developing a digital platform for PLO. Work has already started in many local authorities to support them to capture data digitally through case management systems, and case management system providers are aware of the changes that will be needed. To have an effective digital PLO dataset, there needs to be changes made in the way local authorities, Cafcass, and HMCTS report.

Each agency and local authority are at various stages in their ability to capture and report on data for children within the umbrella of PLO. We have seen from the challenges that there are vast variations in the time and resources needed for local authorities and other agencies to make changes to their case management systems; the average time for this is 18 months.

This is why we are recommending that the lead in time for Phase 1 is between 12 and 15 months and the lead in time for Phase 2 being 27 months. This gives time for local authorities, Cafcass, HMCTS, and case management providers to make changes to systems. It will also allow preparation time for the DfE to look for a data warehouse and a program that can develop digital reports.

We have learnt from this project that if data is not cleansed at source, then assumptions and exemptions must be made which means many children are excluded from the data. We will not have correct numbers, rates, and averages worked out. Therefore, we recommend that the method for collection should be for all agencies to push data into a portal which is then stored in a data warehouse to be processed into to digital reports.

We also recommend that before going live with Phase 1, it would be sensible to pilot the collection and reporting of the indicators with a number of LAs and/or regions to ensure any teething issues are addressed before this becomes a full national collection. This could be done in January 2025 and use Quarter 3 of 24/25 financial year. If these recommendations are acted on, the LAs and regions would need as much notice as possible to prepare for this.

VIII. Engagement with CMS providers

The future success on the implementation of a PLO data is heavily reliant on CMS providers making changes to their systems. Unfortunately, at this time, CMS providers engagement in this project has been limited. To support the development of a PLO dataset, changes will be needed universally to systems at the point of source. It is recommended that a working group will be needed to keep providers up to date on proposed dates for a PLO statutory return to commence so they have time to prioritise the work needed to support the data being captured in case management systems.

IX. Required resources

This section details the resources that we recommend are needed to support the success of a statutory national PLO data commencing.

Local authorities

As already highlighted in this report, there is a vast difference in the capacity that local authorities have to report on this data. Some have a large team of data analysts that support this work, and some have very limited capabilities. As noted above in VIII, significant changes are needed in systems by CMS providers to support reporting and reduce the need for manual spreadsheets. Without these changes, a number of local authorities are going to find it incredibly time-consuming to capture and provide the data needed.

If CMS providers are unable to make these changes universally, at no cost to local authorities, then consideration needs to be given for extra burdens and for money to be made available to ensure they can provide the data required.

It would be helpful for the DfE to identify which local authorities are more likely to struggle to provide this data. One idea is that, once final recommendations have been made, each region collates their local authority's readiness for this collection to be ready for the return. There could potentially be a role for the existing regional champions to support local authorities with identified needs, but how this would work in practice would need further consideration by the DfE.

Given the success of the regional champions model, clearly evidenced in this project, we would recommend that this national group could be utilised moving forward for any pieces of national work, following the recommendations that arise around a PLO dataset.

Cafcass and HMCTS

Cafcass and HMCTS will also need funding in place for them to make changes to their CMS and build an 'Application Program Interface' and to provide data into the portal, in readiness for the implementation of Phase 2 of the PLO dataset.

DfE

In VII, we recommend that the method for collecting and reporting the PLO dataset should be entirely digital. To implement this, we recommend that the DfE explore the options to have a digital software program that can process the data from a central data warehouse into interactive reports that can be viewed through a secure portal.

For this project, we used the software program Power Bi and developed a fully interactive report. Unfortunately, due to data protection issues, local authorities have only been provided static hard copy reports, which has limited their ability to see the full benefits of a dynamic report, such as being able to choose their statistical neighbours and comparing data. Whilst this has only been a research project, we consider there would be huge benefits once the DfE enables all stakeholders involved in the PLO dataset to access the fully interactive portal.

X. What Best Practice should look like?

This research project, the data collected, and national progress hub discussion have provided us with a unique opportunity to think together about potential areas of best practice with pre-proceedings specifically.

There is currently very limited guidance or statutory timeframes within pre-proceedings. Other frameworks for working with children (i.e., under CIN plan, CP plan, and Children in Care) all have clear statutory timescales for when visits and meetings should take place.

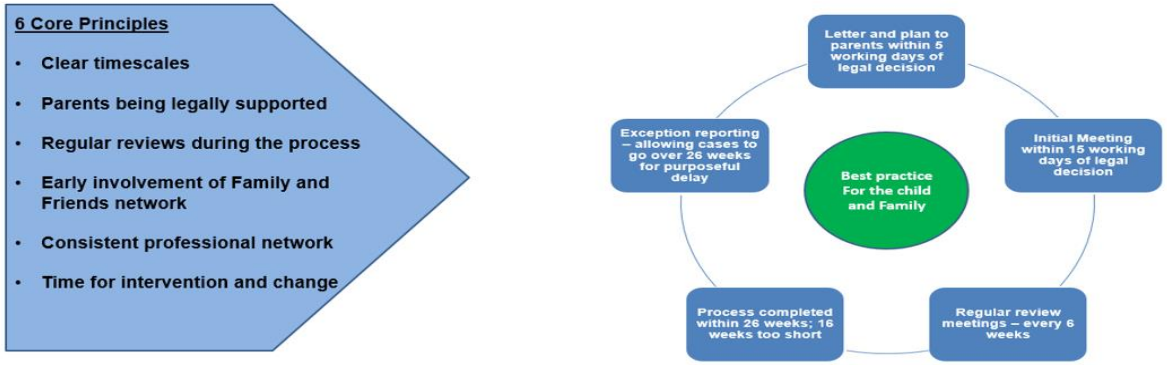
The Public Law Working Group report (2021) recommended that pre-proceedings should be completed within 16 weeks. However, research from this project and discussions within the national progress hub suggests 16 weeks does not always allow sufficient time for pre-proceedings to be completed. It is also important to note that since the PLWG report was published, further guidance has been provided by the President of the Family Court on the timeliness of care proceedings.

There has been a renewed focus on completing care proceedings within the 26-week timeframe. We know that strong and effective pre-proceedings are likely to result in care proceedings concluding in a timely way. With this in mind, local authorities are increasingly thinking about how all assessments are front loaded and completed before entering care proceedings. The national progress hubs consider that there will be times where purposeful delay in pre-proceedings is needed. This should reduce the need for further assessments in care proceedings and ensure care proceedings conclude in 26 weeks.

Therefore, our recommendation is that the timescale for pre-proceedings should be 26 weeks.

Once data was collected from all 3 phases of the project and individual data roadmaps were developed, it was clear what supported best practice in PLO for children and families. Below is a diagram of the core principles and suggested timescales for practice in pre-proceedings. We recommend that work is now completed to update the guidance or consider if policy change is needed to legislate timescales in pre-proceedings.

Diagram 1 – Core principle and timescales for pre-proceedings.



A case study setting out how this data could be collected and provided by a local authority once the recommendations have been implemented

A Case Study

This case study sets out how the recommended national statutory PLO data return could be collected and provided by Local Authorities, HMCTS and Cafcass once the recommendations have been implemented.

Following the outcome of this project, changes will have been made to a range of workflows in Case Management Systems, which will allow fully automated reporting on all areas identified in recommendations I and II.

As the system will be fully automated, there will no longer be a need for keeping manual spreadsheets or trackers. This will allow Local Authority Business Intelligence Teams to generate a range of different reports on a weekly, monthly, and quarterly basis. This will also give Local Authorities the opportunity to review performance across different teams and the across the service as a whole.

On a quarterly basis, the data will be extracted from Case Management Systems and quality assured by the business intelligence team and the head of service. If any errors/data exceptions are found in the data, these will be discussed and cleansed before submitting the final return into the portal, which will be managed by the DfE.

Alongside this, HMCTS and Cafcass will collect and submit the data metrics into the same portal, and they will be responsible for providing data for Warrington's children. The consistent child identifier will be used for submitting the data by all agencies; this allows for the data to be matched in the portal.

Once all data has been provided from all agencies, digital interactive reports will be generated by the DfE using a software program. Local Authorities, HMCTS and Cafcass will receive a link by email to gain access to the digital platform which will be fully interactive. This will allow Local Authorities to scrutinise their own performance data and compare their performance against other local authorities regionally and nationally.

Future Research in Public Law Outline

Family group conferencing

We know there is already a working group with the DfE looking at this area of practice. We would ask that they consider our comments about family group conferencing in Section 7 (III) and how we can report more effectively on this area.

Legal rep for parents in pre-proceedings

We consider this a significant area that needs further exploration. We have already noted at 7(III) that there are significant challenges for parents and carers to instruct lawyers in pre-proceedings. The data has shown us that this does cause delay in pre-proceedings for children. Further research is required to understand the full extent of these challenges both regionally and nationally.

Short notice applications

This project has shown that there are vast interpretations of the timeframes for short notice applications. The data has also identified that the reasons for short notice applications is too broad. This data prevents us from having a detailed understanding of the reasons for the application. The DfE have recently started a piece of work around this area of the family court, and we would ask that they consider our comments about short notice applications and how we can report more effectively on this area.

Children seeing submitted evidence

As already suggested earlier in this report, children seeing the submitted evidence to court is not common practice in social work, and if it was, this would be assessed on a case-by-case basis. We need to avoid re-traumatising children.

Another factor needing consideration is the age of the child. What age would be appropriate for a child to see evidence? How do you capture data for newborns and those children under the age of 3? What age would you start to report from? Given these questions, further work and research would need to be undertaken to consider if and when children should view the evidence.

Appendices

Appendix A – DfE Data Indicators

This appendix contains a list of the different data indictors provided by the DfE that needed to be considered as part of this research project. As you can see, they are categorized into three different categories: bronze, silver, and gold level indicators.

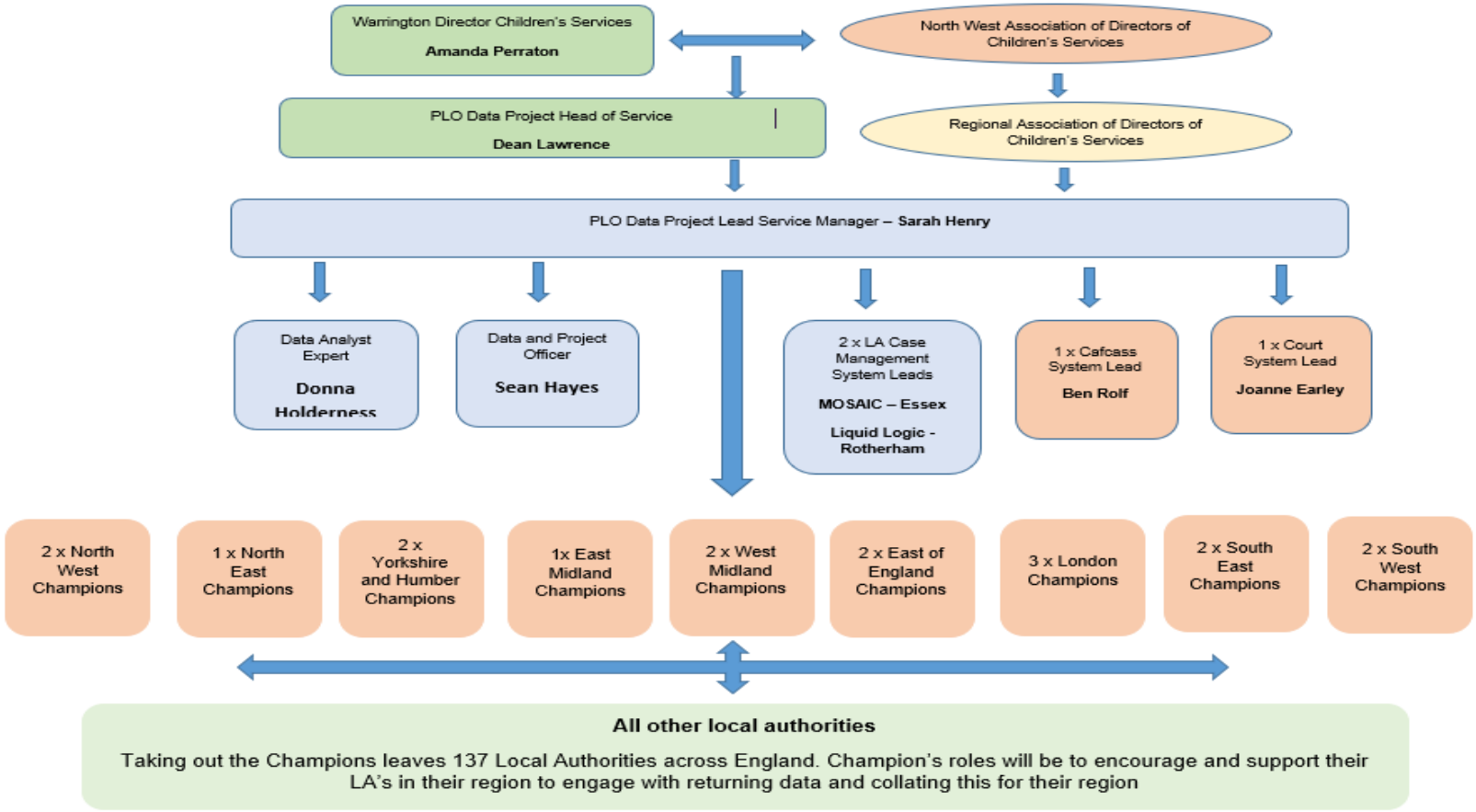
- Volume and rate of children in pre-proceedings including child demographics
- Length of time spent in pre-proceedings
- Total LA open case duration for children in pre-proceedings
- Proportion of pre-proceedings ending in issue

- Whether the child has been on a Child Protection Plan
- Repeat periods of PLO
- Number of review pre-proceeding meetings held with parents following initial meeting
- Parental legal representation during pre-proceedings and/or point of issue
- Number of PLOs that end in issue
- reason for 'short notice' applications
- Number of hearings
- Outcome of PLO ceasing e.g., was the LA plan approved / not approved
- Changes to final care outcome compared to initial lead application

- Was Family Group Conferencing used
- Changes of social worker
- Involvement of experts during pre-proceedings – inc. number, type and whether the expert was externally commissioned, supported / opposed by LA and/or Cafcass
- Number of externally commissioned and completed specialist assessments e.g., PAMS, cognitive/ psychological
- Identification of carers / assessment of family care options e.g., viability/fostering assessments completed during pre-proceedings
- Whether the child has seen the submitted evidence
- Whether Cafcass has shared its recommendations with the child

Appendix B – Project Team Structure

This provides an overview of the project team and the wider structure of the overall project. It also demonstrates how our approach and model of regional champions has given us the opportunity to engage with all local authorities in England as part of the project.



Appendix C – National Readiness Survey Report 30 May 2023

The full report and analysis from the National Readiness Survey is provided within this Appendix. It contains a range of quantitative and qualitative data on local authorities' readiness to provide data on a child's journey through PLO and what they consider the key barriers to be. The report and its findings were considered during the national progress hubs, and it has formed an important part of the recommendations made within this report.

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Digital Data Solution Fund
Developing A National Pre Proceedings Data Set
National Readiness Survey Results

Sarah Henry PLO Data Service Manager
Sean Hayes – PLO Data Project Officer

Hosted by

WARRINGTON Borough Council

Published 30/05/2023

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Introduction

- The National Readiness Survey was sent to all upper tier Local Authorities (LA) at the beginning of February 2023 and we closed the survey on the 15th May 2023.
- A key outcome for the project is to assess England's ability to report data on children subject to Public Law Outline (PLO) in either Pre or Care Proceedings. This survey provides a summary of response and provide us with valuable insights into the reporting capabilities of England's upper tier local authorities.
- It is helpful to explore how easy or difficult it was for each LA to collect the Bronze, Silver and Gold level data. Knowing this not only supports our final recommendations but also helps us to predict the quality and accuracy of data being returned for this research project.
- The survey has also helped us to identify common barriers that LAs encountered when collecting this data, and to identify possible future solutions. For example, Case Management Systems (CMS) which do not currently record certain data points. The project team is currently working with software providers to support changes to systems to improve their reporting capabilities.
- The information provided in this report will support the national PLO Data Champion group to make recommendations to the DfE on the a national data set. It will also help to set our clearly to the DfE the national picture in terms of local authorities overall readiness to provide the different levels of data. It will also suggest what other stakeholders such as Cafcass and HMCTS could contribute to providing data for and ways to make this happen.
- The report also considers the realistic for a data collection in PLO to begin under statutory compliance and how should the reports be presented i.e. on a digital platform or on a written report.

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Engagement in Survey

Region	Number of LAs	Survey responses	% of surveys completed
Yorkshire and Humber	15	15	100.0%
North East	12	12	100.0%
East Midlands	10	10	100.0%
South West	15	15	100.0%
North West	23	22	95.7%
London	33	27	81.8%
East	11	8	72.7%
West Midlands	14	9	64.3%
South East	19	11	57.9%
Total	152	129	84.9%

We received survey responses from 129/152 upper tier local authorities, meaning we have obtained the views of 85% of England's LAs.

This is an amazing response thank you to all LAs for your contributions.

This gives us valuable insight into England's ability to start collecting and reporting on the different PLO performance measures.

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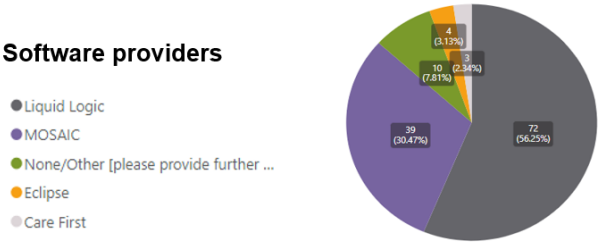
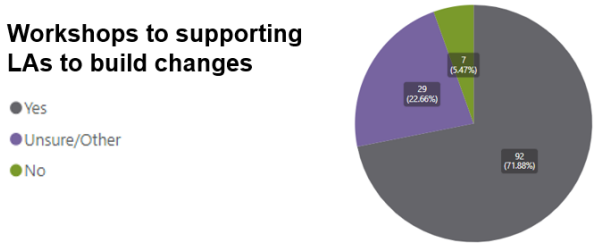
Case Management systems (CMS)

Software providers



Workshops to supporting LAs to build changes



We wanted to understand the CMS landscape across Children's Social Care in England. The survey shows us that the vast majority of LAs use Liquid Logic or MOSAIC – this software is used by 87% of LAs. Liquid Logic is the leading provider with 56% of LAs using this system.

This research will support the work we are doing with software providers to bring universal changes to systems for all users, which will help improve workflows and data capturing in case management systems. The team will also be working with the 13% of other providers to bring them into the project to look at making changes to their systems.

The case management leads in the project team have built new PLO workflows for Liquid Logic and MOSAIC, which capture the data points we have been asked to test out by the DfE.

The survey asked whether LAs would be interested in attending national workshops based on these new workflows. 72% stated they would be interested. To date representatives from 70 different LAs have attended planned workshops. More will be planned in the coming months.

The team have also developed DIY packs which LAs can use to develop their own internal case management systems. These have been distributed on 22nd May 2023.

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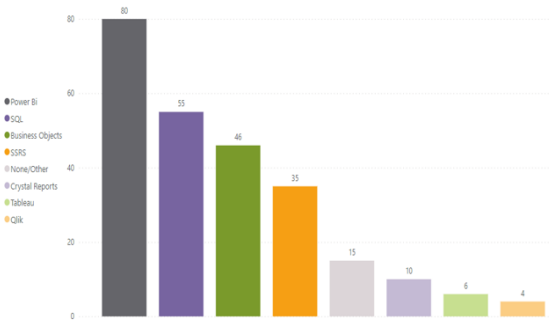
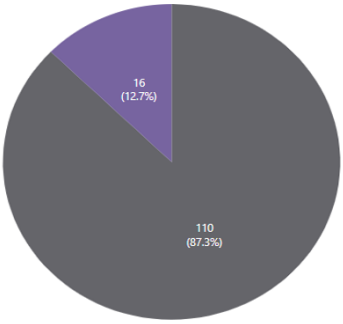
Business Intelligence and Data Warehouses





- The National readiness survey shows that LAs across England use a wide range of business intelligence software programs.
- Power BI is the most widely-used, and some LAs use more than one software program.
- It also shows that 87% of LAs use data warehouses, whereas 13% state they do not currently have this facility. This suggests that these LAs may store data in various systems, and this could present challenges for reporting.
- This is an important consideration when assessing LA's reporting capabilities. This will also help inform our recommendations on the resources needed when developing a national PLO data set, and whether Application Program Interfaces are built.

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Lead in times for CMS and Data reporting changes

"Depends on the scale of the change and whether we need Liquid Logic involved. If latter, that could be 12 months to get onto their development plan. If local, and small scale, we can do fairly quickly"

"This depends on the changes - small in-house changes can be quicker but larger in-house changes could take a little longer."

6 - 12 months (depending on complexity)

3 – 24 months (depending on complexity)

2 - 3 months

"It depends on the scale of the change, but we have a monthly change management board which can prioritise changes and devote resource to fast track."

"Once a change has been agreed, our ICT team ask for two days lead time for a straightforward amendment to the database. Multiple and/or complex changes will require longer."

- There was a varied response to these questions. The most common are presented on this slide. If it was a small change most LAs reported this could have been done within a couple of weeks.
- Larger changes such as building new workflow and setting new data reports up could take a lot longer from 3 to 24 months, depending on resource and time availability.
- A couple of LAs that have built new workflows in CMS, to encompass the PLO data points, took around 18 months to develop and go live with.
- Again this is another important factor when making recommendations at the end of the project.

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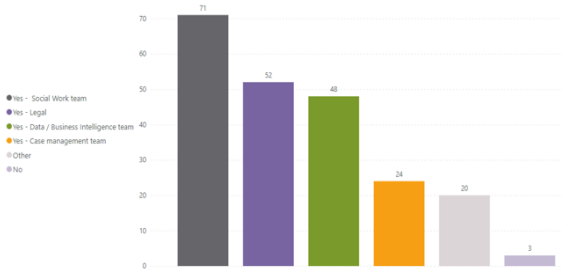
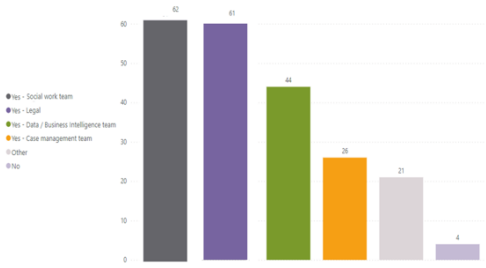
LA's Current Collection Of Data In Pre and Care Proceedings

Pre-proceedings



Care Proceedings



- These charts show where LAs currently store data relating to PLO, as you can see the data is stored in various places across a number of teams, this in itself would mean a lot of resources needed to be put in to collating data in PLO and creates challenges with time and staffing.
- Different trends also emerge when we look at the difference between records relating to pre-proceedings and care proceedings. In the majority of LAs, data pertaining to pre-proceedings seems to be held by social work teams, whereas for care proceedings this is held by Legal and the Social Work Team.
- If we were not relying on manual tracking for PLO cases, then the data reports would likely sit with Business Intelligence teams, to report in to Legal and Social Work teams.

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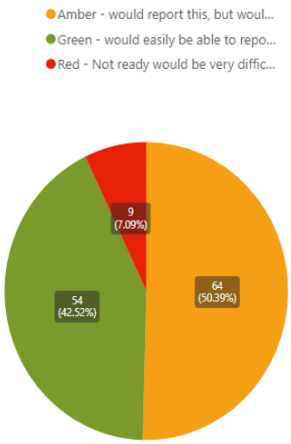
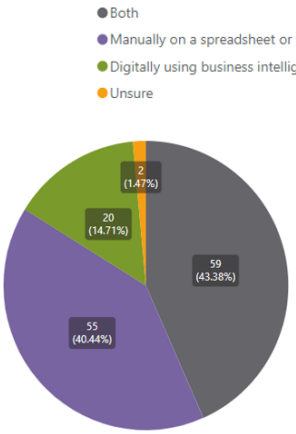
Methods and RAG rates of how LAs will collect the 3 level of data in PLO Bronze





- A majority of LAs used a combination of both digital and manual data collection (43%).
- For 40% of LAs this was a wholly manual process – the collection would have been more time-consuming for them.
- Only 14% of LAs were in a position to compile their return digitally at the time of this project.
- 42% of LAs RAG rated their ability to report as Green – stating they would be able to report on these metrics without difficulty.
- Only 7% of LAs rated themselves as Red and said this Bronze collection would prove very difficult.
- This suggests that many LAs could benefit from moving towards digital data capture in PLO. It seems that the vast majority of LAs record these Bronze data points already, but that reporting is largely manual process for many.

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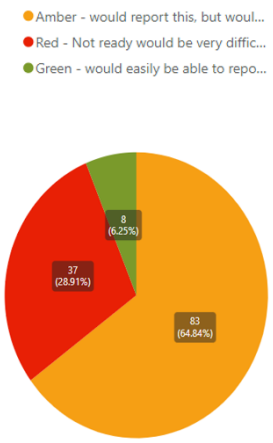
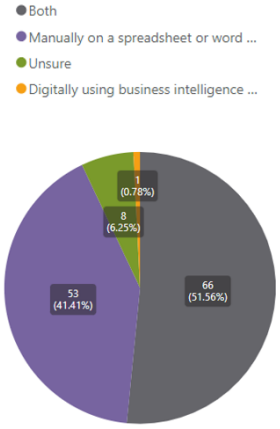
Methods and RAG rates of how LAs will collect the 3 level of data in PLO Silver





- LAs found the Silver data points more challenging to report on. As you can see from the RAG rating pie chart, 92% of LAs fed back that this would be difficult or very difficult to collect
- The proportion of LAs that RAG rated their ability to collect as Red increased significantly – up from 7% in the Bronze RAG rating to 28% in the Silver.
- 41% of LAs used exclusively manual methods to collect this data, for example from tracker spreadsheets.
- The proportion of LAs that were able to report on these data points using digital methods alone, also fell significantly down from 14.7% in the Bronze to 0.78% in the Silver.
- This suggests that for many LAs that already use digital reporting, their CMS are not currently set up to report on the Silver metrics which relate specifically to PLO.
  It is likely that certain data points were recorded on separate systems and collated manually. For example: in a legal bundle; on an Excel spreadsheet; from speaking with allocated workers etc.

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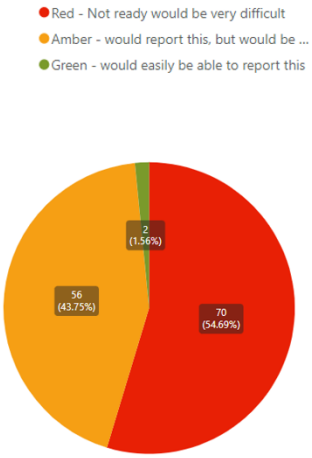
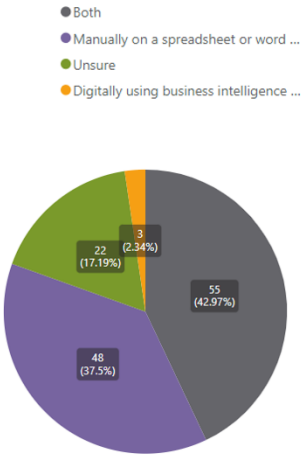
Methods and RAG rates of how LAs will collect the 3 level of data in PLO Gold





- The Gold data points presented further reporting challenges for LAs. 98% of LAs fed back that this would be difficult or very difficult to collect
- The proportion of LAs that RAG rated their ability to collect as Red increased significantly:
  7% (Bronze)
  28% (Silver)
  55% (Gold)
- This represents a 48% increase. These LAs stated their reporting systems are not set up to report on these metrics and that it would prove very difficult.
- 17% of LAs said they were unsure how they would locate the requested information.
- 45% of LAs rated themselves at Amber or Green, stating they would be able report on these Gold level metrics, though it may be a very manual and resource-intensive process. This suggests we will only get a 45% return on the Gold data, however, the project team feel this percentage will become lower when the LAs actually try to collect the data in June 2023.

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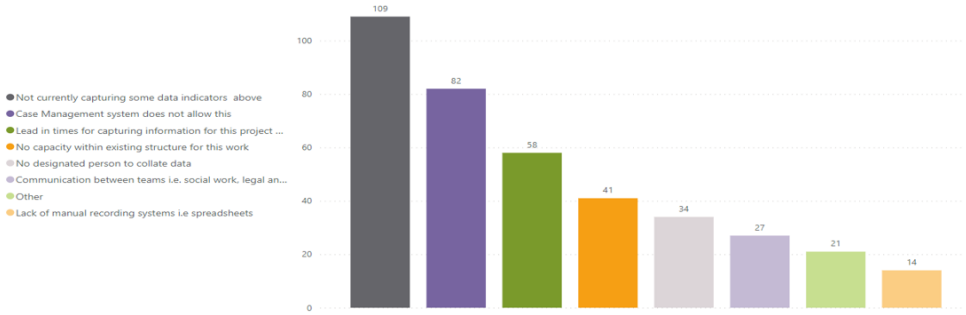
Barriers to Reporting



- LAs said they would encounter a variety of barriers when reporting on the PLO data points from Bronze to Gold.
- The most challenging barriers reported are that LAs have not been capturing some of the PLO data points needed to be tested. Also that their CMS does not support the reporting of data around PLO.
- LAs can make changes to their CMS and data reporting software, but the lead in time for these changes are not within the time scales of this project.
- Other common barriers include workforce capacity, meaning that LAs do not have the resources to be able to collect and report on some of the data points when moving into the Silver and Gold collections.
- There is a very small number of LAs that have no data recording system in place for children in PLO, including manual tracker such as spreadsheets.
- This clearly shows that Children's Social Care across England are all at different stages in terms of being able to capture and report PLO data. This will support final recommendations in terms of time scales for future reporting becoming statutory and also resources that would be needed to support this.

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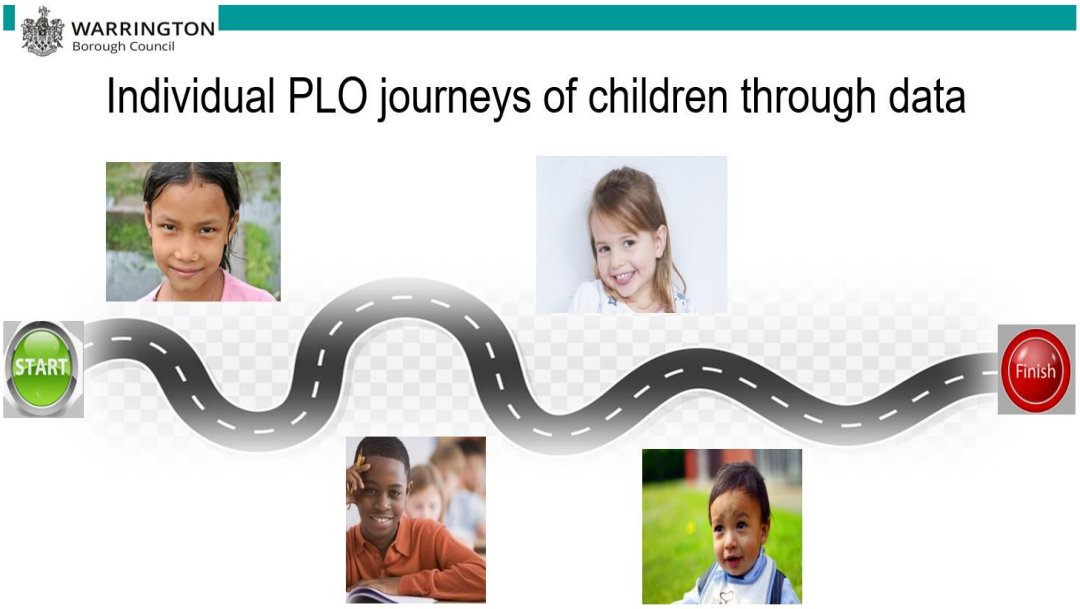
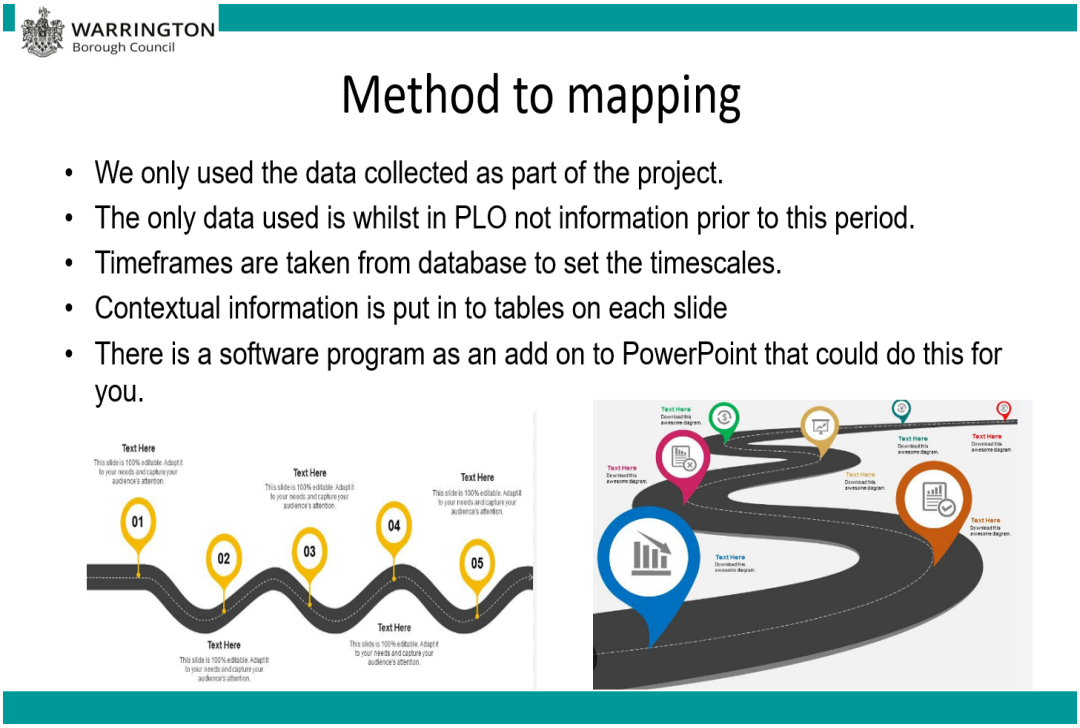
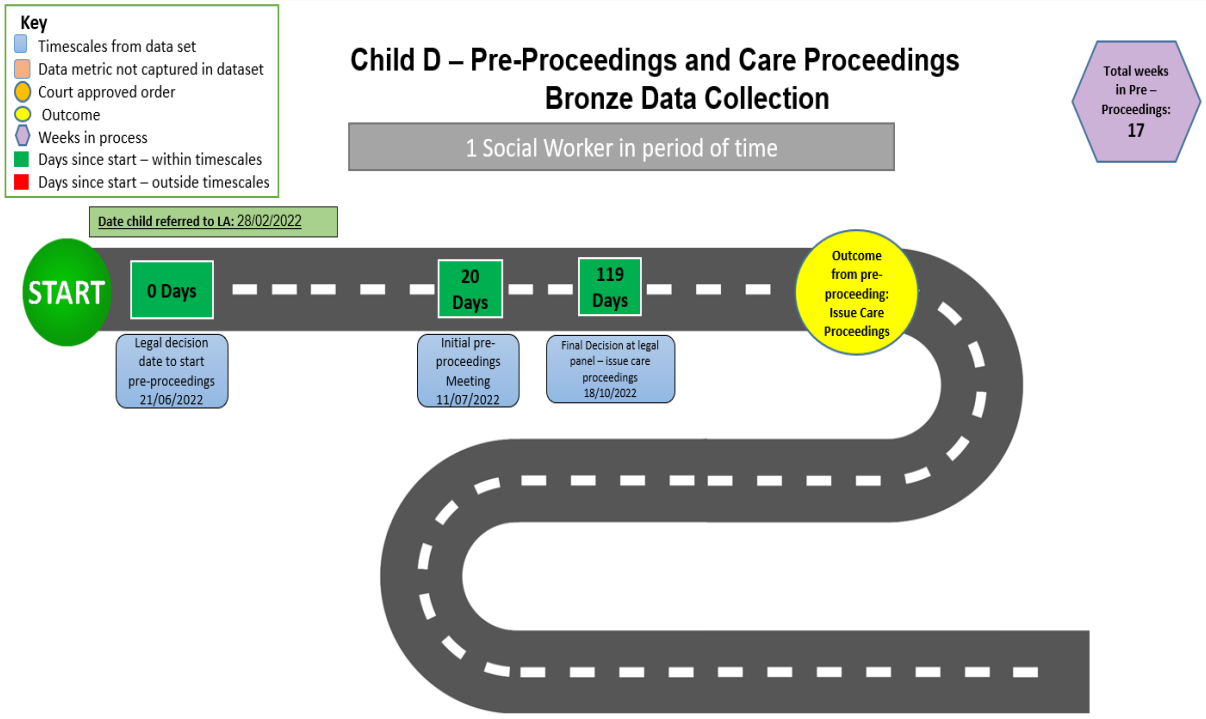
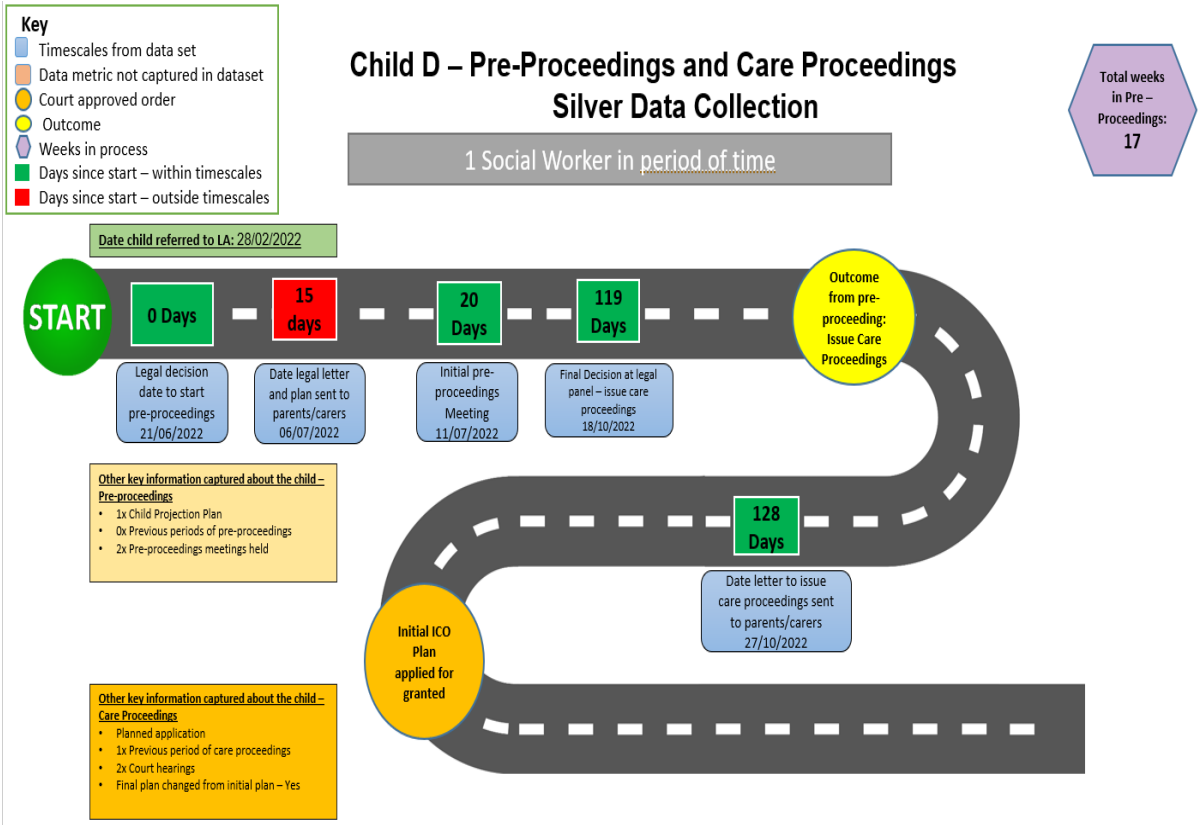
Appendix D – Individual Roadmaps

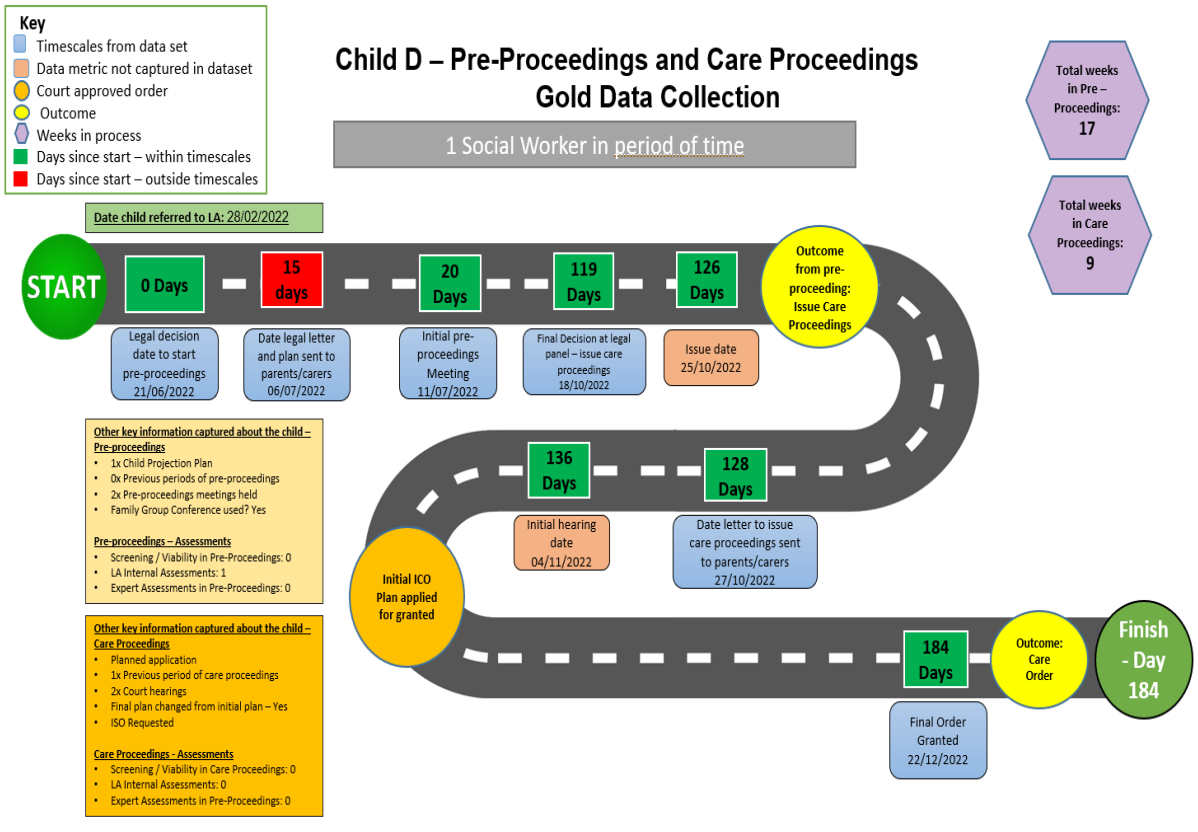
One of the outcomes of the project was to see if we could show an individual child's journey through PLO by using data. This appendix shows a mapping technique we have developed and provides a visual journey of a child's journey in PLO from start to finish. It is broken down into three sections and shows the same child's journey using the three different data level indicators: bronze, silver, and gold.





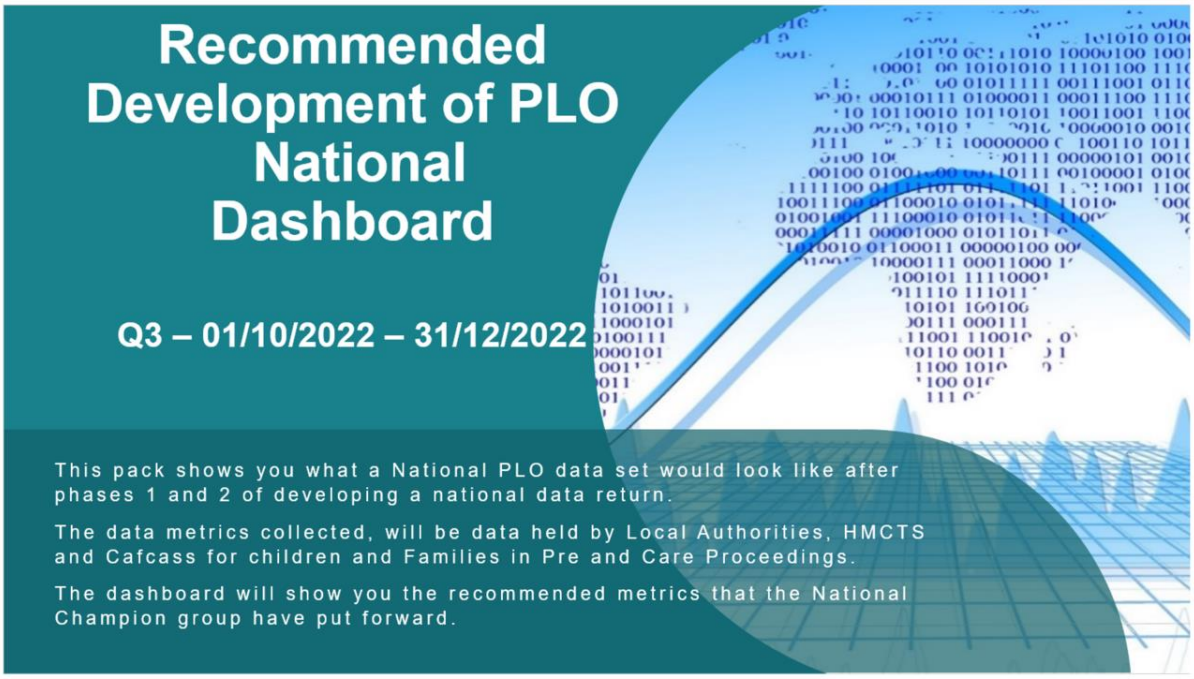

Key
Timescales from data set
Data metric not captured in dataset
Court approved order
Outcome
Weeks in process
Days since start – within timescales
Days since start – outside timescales
Child D – Pre-Proceedings and Care Proceedings
Bronze Data Collection
1 Social Worker in period of time
Total weeks in Pre – Proceedings: 17
Date child referred to LA: 28/02/2022
START
0 Days
20 Days
119 Days
Outcome from pre-proceeding: Issue Care Proceedings
Legal decision date to start pre-proceedings 21/06/2022
Initial pre-proceedings Meeting 11/07/2022
Final Decision at legal panel – issue care proceedings 18/10/2022

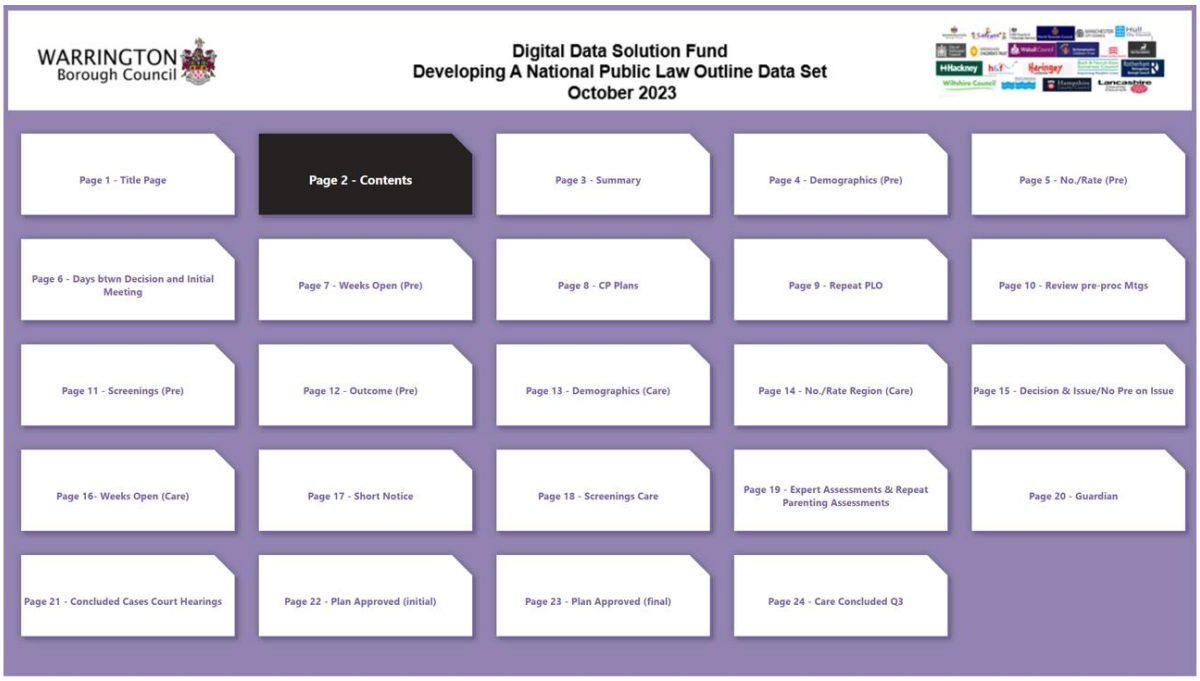

Key
Timescales from data set
Data metric not captured in dataset
Court approved order
Outcome
Weeks in process
Days since start – within timescales
Days since start – outside timescales
Child D – Pre-Proceedings and Care Proceedings
Silver Data Collection
1 Social Worker in period of time
Total weeks in Pre – Proceedings: 17
Date child referred to LA: 28/02/2022
START
0 Days
15 days
20 Days
119 Days
Outcome from pre-proceeding: Issue Care Proceedings
Legal decision date to start pre-proceedings 21/06/2022
Date legal letter and plan sent to parents/carers 06/07/2022
Initial pre-proceedings Meeting 11/07/2022
Final Decision at legal panel – issue care proceedings 18/10/2022
Other key information captured about the child – Pre-proceedings
1x Child Projection Plan
0x Previous periods of pre-proceedings
2x Pre-proceedings meetings held
128 Days
Date letter to issue care proceedings sent to parents/carers 27/10/2022
Initial ICO Plan applied for granted
Other key information captured about the child – Care Proceedings
Planned application
1x Previous period of care proceedings
2x Court hearings
Final plan changed from initial plan – Yes


Key
Timescales from data set
Data metric not captured in dataset
Court approved order
Outcome
Weeks in process
Days since start – within timescales
Days since start – outside timescales
Child D – Pre-Proceedings and Care Proceedings
Gold Data Collection
1 Social Worker in period of time
Total weeks in Pre – Proceedings: 17
Total weeks in Care Proceedings: 9
Date child referred to LA: 28/02/2022
START
0 Days
15 days
20 Days
119 Days
126 Days
Outcome from pre-proceeding: Issue Care Proceedings
Legal decision date to start pre-proceedings 21/06/2022
Date legal letter and plan sent to parents/carers 06/07/2022
Initial pre-proceedings Meeting 11/07/2022
Final Decision at legal panel – issue care proceedings 18/10/2022
Issue date 25/10/2022
Other key information captured about the child – Pre-proceedings
1x Child Projection Plan
0x Previous periods of pre-proceedings
2x Pre-proceedings meetings held
Family Group Conference used? Yes
Pre-proceedings – Assessments
Screening / Viability in Pre-Proceedings: 0
LA Internal Assessments: 1
Expert Assessments in Pre-Proceedings: 0
136 Days
128 Days
Initial hearing date 04/11/2022
Date letter to issue care proceedings sent to parents/carers 27/10/2022
Initial ICO Plan applied for granted
Other key information captured about the child – Care Proceedings
Planned application
1x Previous period of care proceedings
2x Court hearings
Final plan changed from initial plan – Yes
ISO Requested
Care Proceedings - Assessments
Screening / Viability in Care Proceedings: 0
LA Internal Assessments: 0
Expert Assessments in Pre-Proceedings: 0
184 Days
Outcome: Care Order
Finish - Day 184
Final Order Granted 22/12/2022

Appendix E– Recommended National Dashboard

Included here is a static example of our final recommended national dashboard. It provides an overview of the different reporting capabilities there could be in relation to both pre- and care proceedings. It is important to note the final developed dashboard is fully interactive and has a wide range of capabilities. For example, it allows comparisons between different local authorities and regions at the click of a button. The DfE has also been given a demonstration of this interactive dashboard.





It will be recommended that the development of a National PLO statutory return will be established over 2 phases in the coming years. The first phase only involving Local Authorities and then the second phase involving Local Authorities, HMCTS and Cafcass, the data they will be returning is detailed below.

From Local Authorities – In Phase 1

- Unique Child Identifier
- Family ID
- Date of Birth
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Date child referred to Local Authority
- How many times in child's lifetime have they been on a Child Protection Plan
- How many previous periods of pre-proceedings have there been in the child's lifetime?
- Category of harm when entered pre-proceedings.
- Case status when entered pre-proceedings i.e.. Section 20, CP, CIN.
- Date decision made to enter pre-proceedings.
- Date of initial pre-proceedings meeting
- How many review pre-proceeding meetings have been held with parents following the initial meeting?
- How many viability assessment took place in pre-proceedings?
- What is the outcome of pre-proceedings
- Date agreed to step down/issue

From Local Authorities – In Phase 2

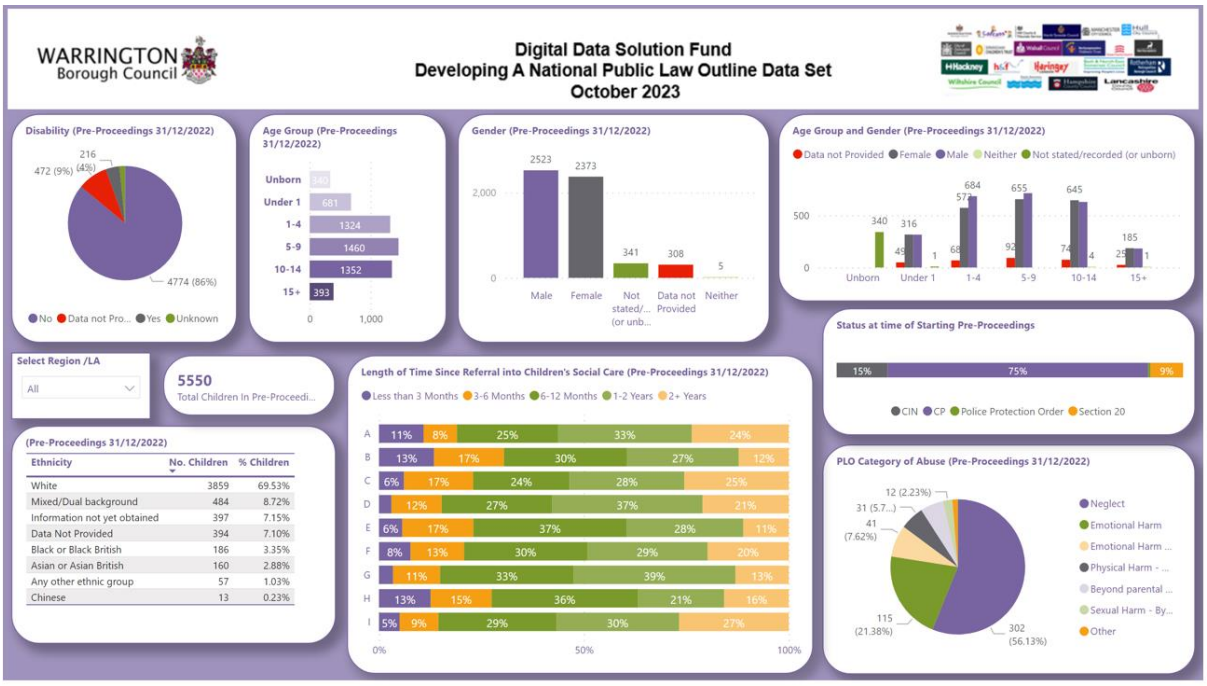
- How many previous periods of care proceedings have there been in the child's lifetime?
- Category of harm when entered pre or care proceedings.
- Case status when entered pre or care proceedings i.e.. Section 20, CP and CIN.
- Number of expert assessments per family in pre-proceedings
- Was a repeat or addendum Parenting Assessment ordered during care proceedings?

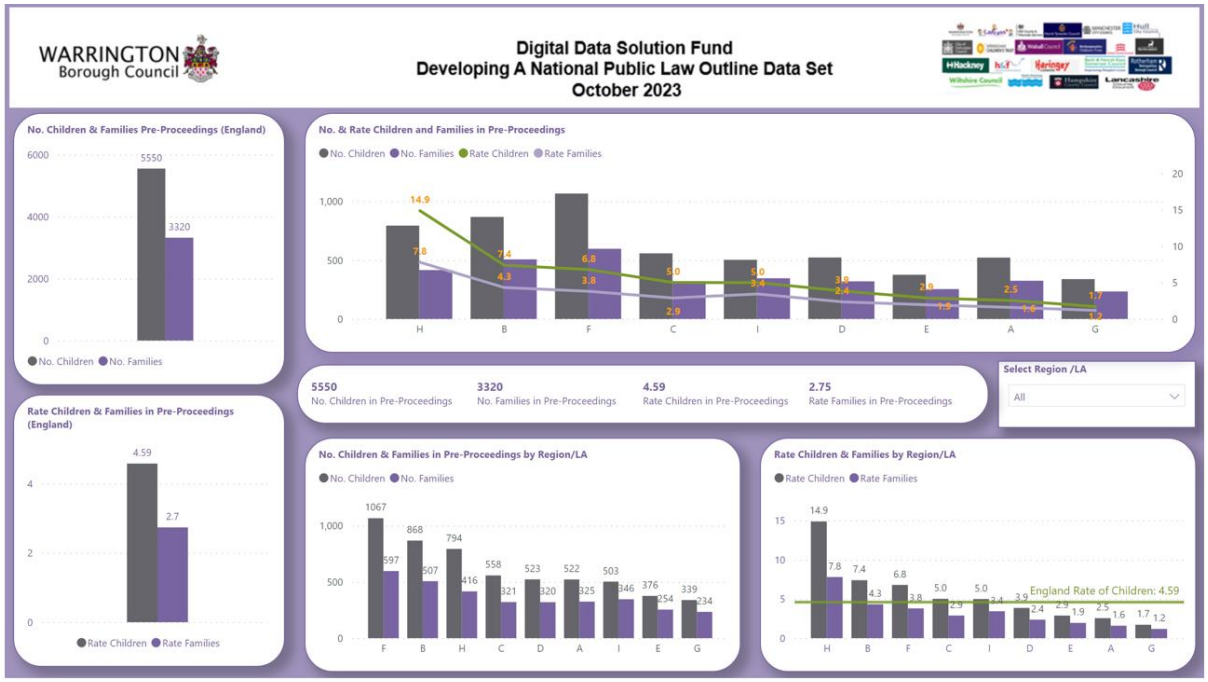
From HMTCS - In Phase 2

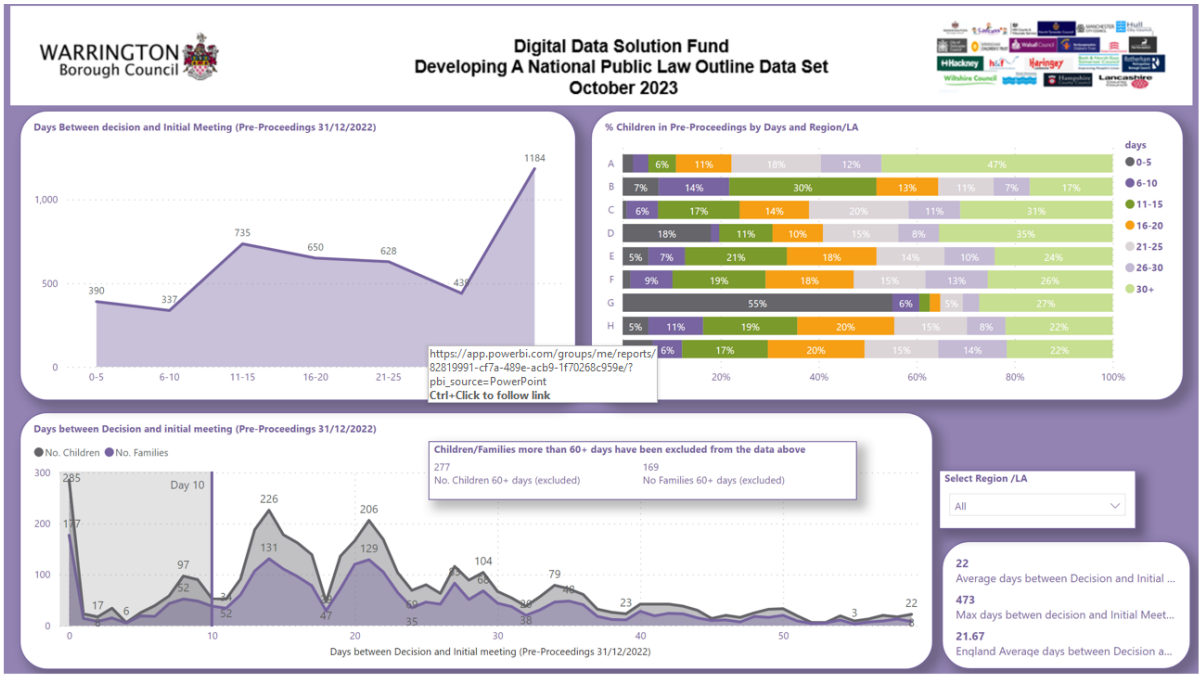
- Unique child identifier
- Date of case issued to court
- Were Care Proceedings issued on a short notice application?
- What was the reason for any short notice applications?
- What was the LA's initial care plan for the child at the initial hearing?
- Was the LA's initial plan approved at the initial hearing?
- How many Court hearings have taken place whilst in care proceedings?
- How many viability assessment took place in care proceedings?
- Number of expert assessments per family in care proceedings
- Was the Local Authorities final plan approved at the final hearing?
- What was the Local Authorities final care plan for the child at the final hearing?
- What was the date that the final order was approved?

From Cafcass - In Phase 2

- Unique child identifier
- Has the Children's Guardian made contact with the child prior to the initial hearing?
- Has the Children's Guardian shared their final recommendations with the child?




WARRINGTON Borough Council
Digital Data Solution Fund
Developing A National Public Law Outline Data Set
October 2023
No. Children & Families Pre-Proceedings (England)
No. Children
No. Families
Rate Children & Families in Pre-Proceedings (England)
Rate Children
Rate Families
No. & Rate Children and Families in Pre-Proceedings
5550
No. Children in Pre-Proceedings
3320
No. Families in Pre-Proceedings
4.59
Rate Children in Pre-Proceedings
2.75
Rate Families in Pre-Proceedings
Select Region /LA
All
No. Children & Families in Pre-Proceedings by Region/LA
Rate Children & Families by Region/LA
England Rate of Children: 4.59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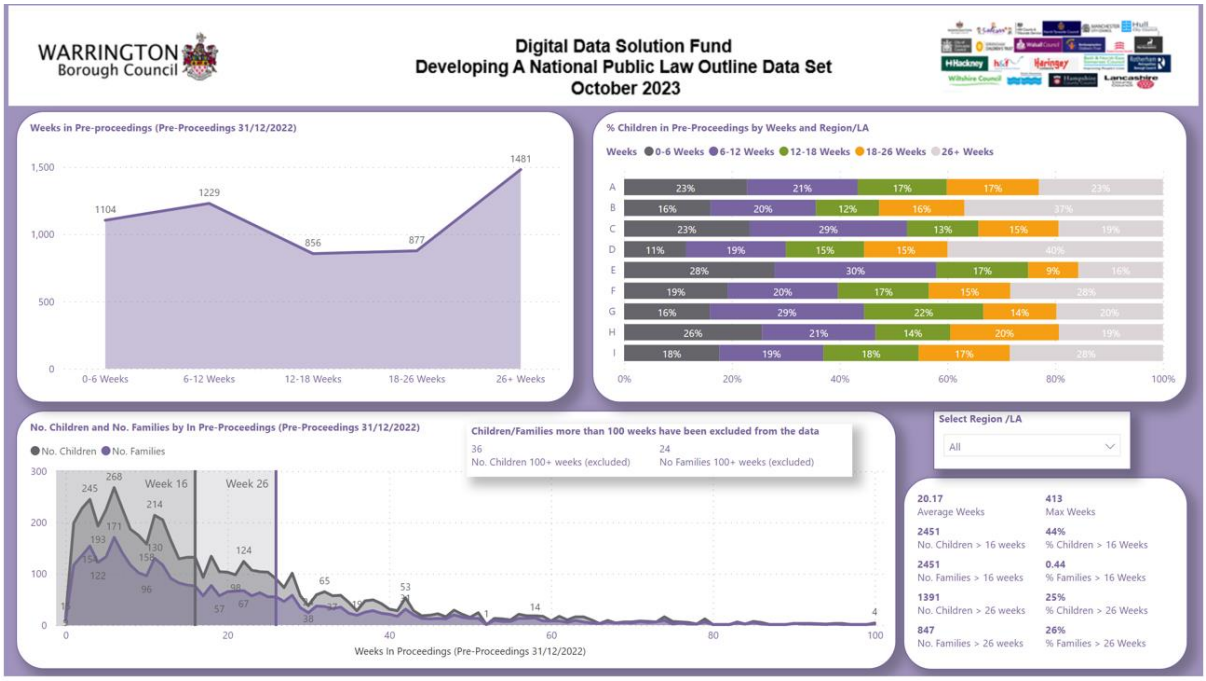
October 2023
Days Between decision and Initial Meeting (Pre-Proceedings 31/12/2022)
% Children in Pre-Proceedings by Days and Region/LA
days
0-5
6-10
11-15
16-20
21-25
26-30
30+
https://app.powerbi.com/groups/me/reports/82819991-cf7a-489e-acb9-1f70268c959e/?pbi_source=PowerPoint
Ctrl+Click to follow link
Days between Decision and initial meeting (Pre-Proceedings 31/12/2022)
No. Children
No. Families
Day 10
Children/Families more than 60+ days have been excluded from the data above
277
No. Children 60+ days (excluded)
169
No Families 60+ days (excluded)
Select Region /LA
All
22
Average days between Decision and Initial ...
473
Max days betwen decision and Initial Meet...
21.67
England Average days between Decision a...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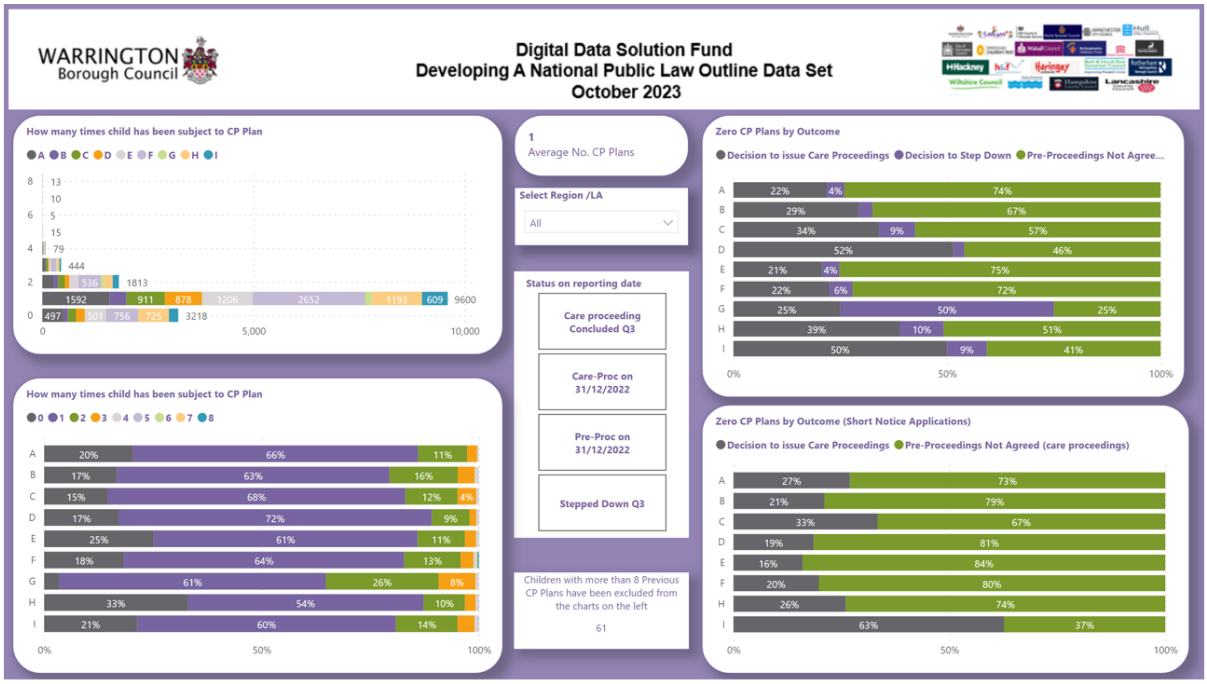
October 2023
Weeks in Pre-proceedings (Pre-Proceedings 31/12/2022)
1104
1229
856
877
1481
0-6 Weeks
6-12 Weeks
12-18 Weeks
18-26 Weeks
26+ Weeks
% Children in Pre-Proceedings by Weeks and Region/LA
Weeks 0-6 Weeks 6-12 Weeks 12-18 Weeks 18-26 Weeks 26+ Weeks
No. Children and No. Families by In Pre-Proceedings (Pre-Proceedings 31/12/2022)
No. Children No. Families
Week 16
Week 26
Weeks In Proceedings (Pre-Proceedings 31/12/2022)
Children/Families more than 100 weeks have been excluded from the data
36
No. Children 100+ weeks (excluded)
24
No Families 100+ weeks (excluded)
Select Region /LA
All
20.17
Average Weeks
413
Max Weeks
2451
No. Children > 16 weeks
44%
% Children > 16 Weeks
2451
No. Families > 16 weeks
0.44
% Families > 16 Weeks
1391
No. Children > 26 weeks
25%
% Children > 26 Weeks
847
No. Families > 26 weeks
26%
% Families > 26 Weeks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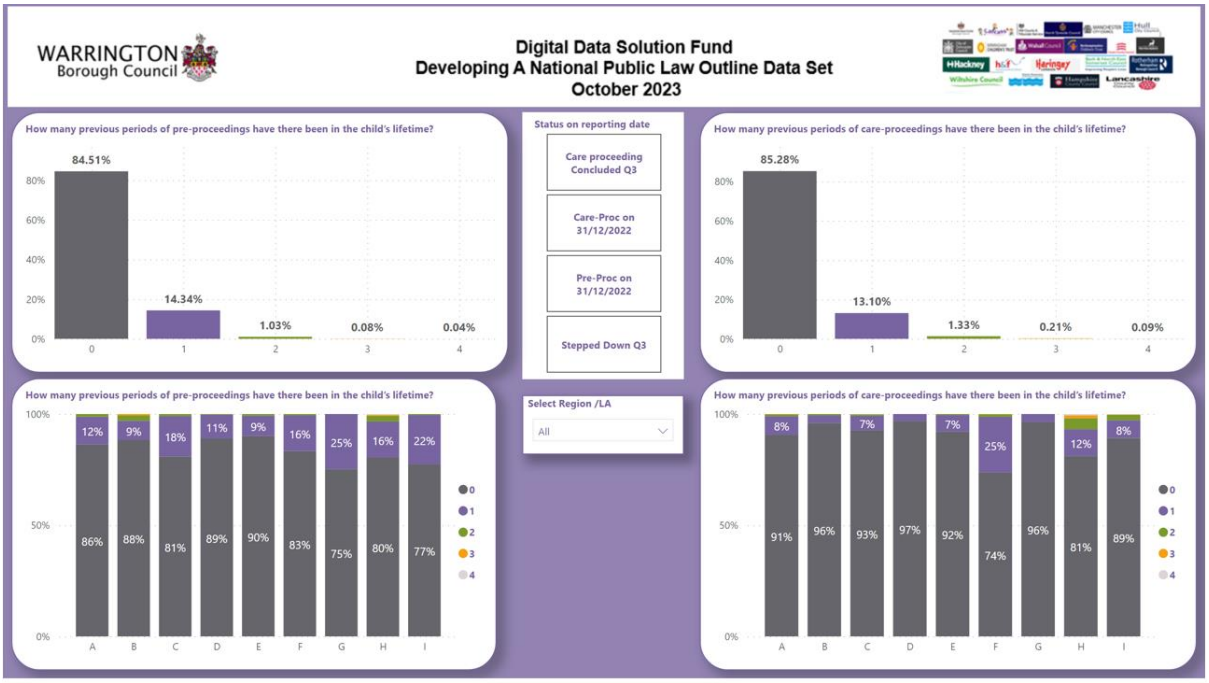
October 2023
How many times child has been subject to CP Plan
1
Average No. CP Plans
Select Region /LA
All
Zero CP Plans by Outcome
Decision to issue Care Proceedings
Decision to Step Down
Pre-Proceedings Not Agree...
How many times child has been subject to CP Plan
Status on reporting date
Care proceeding Concluded Q3
Care-Proc on 31/12/2022
Pre-Proc on 31/12/2022
Stepped Down Q3
Children with more than 8 Previous CP Plans have been excluded from the charts on the left
61
Zero CP Plans by Outcome (Short Notice Applications)
Decision to issue Care Proceedings
Pre-Proceedings Not Agreed (care proceedings)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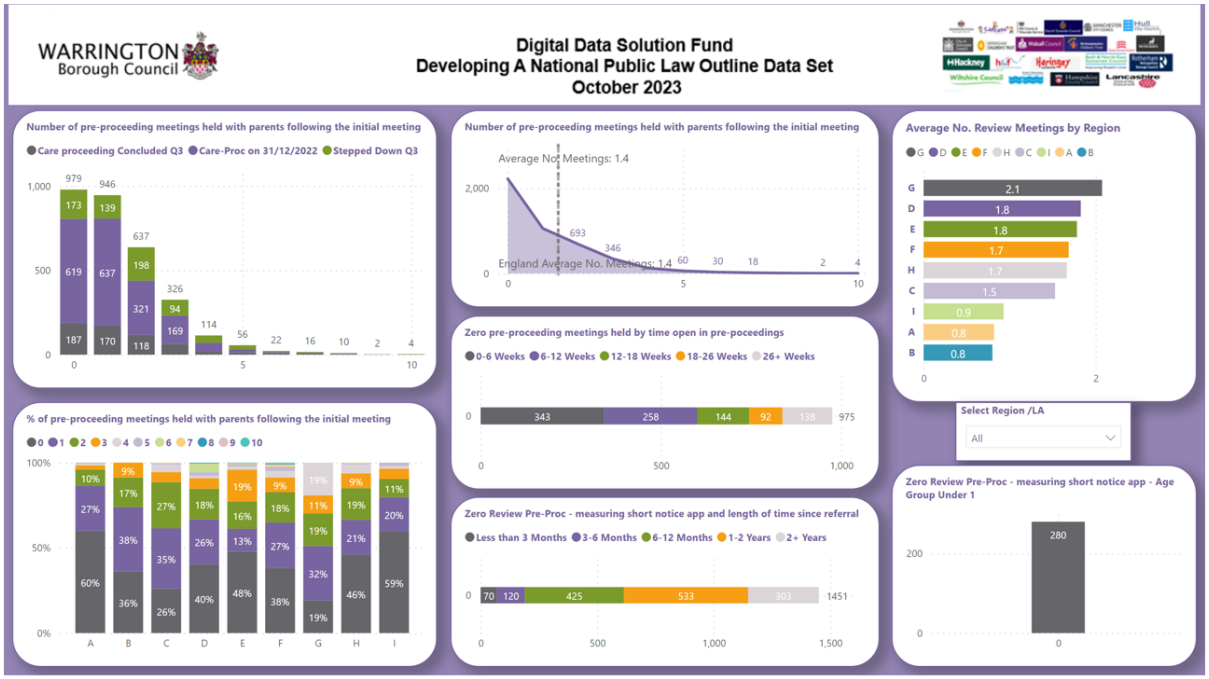
October 2023
How many previous periods of pre-proceedings have there been in the child's lifetime?
84.51%
14.34%
1.03%
0.08%
0.04%
Status on reporting date
Care proceeding Concluded Q3
Care-Proc on 31/12/2022
Pre-Proc on 31/12/2022
Stepped Down Q3
How many previous periods of care-proceedings have there been in the child's lifetime?
85.28%
13.10%
1.33%
0.21%
0.09%
How many previous periods of pre-proceedings have there been in the child's lifetime?
Select Region /LA
All
How many previous periods of care-proceedings have there been in the child's lifetime?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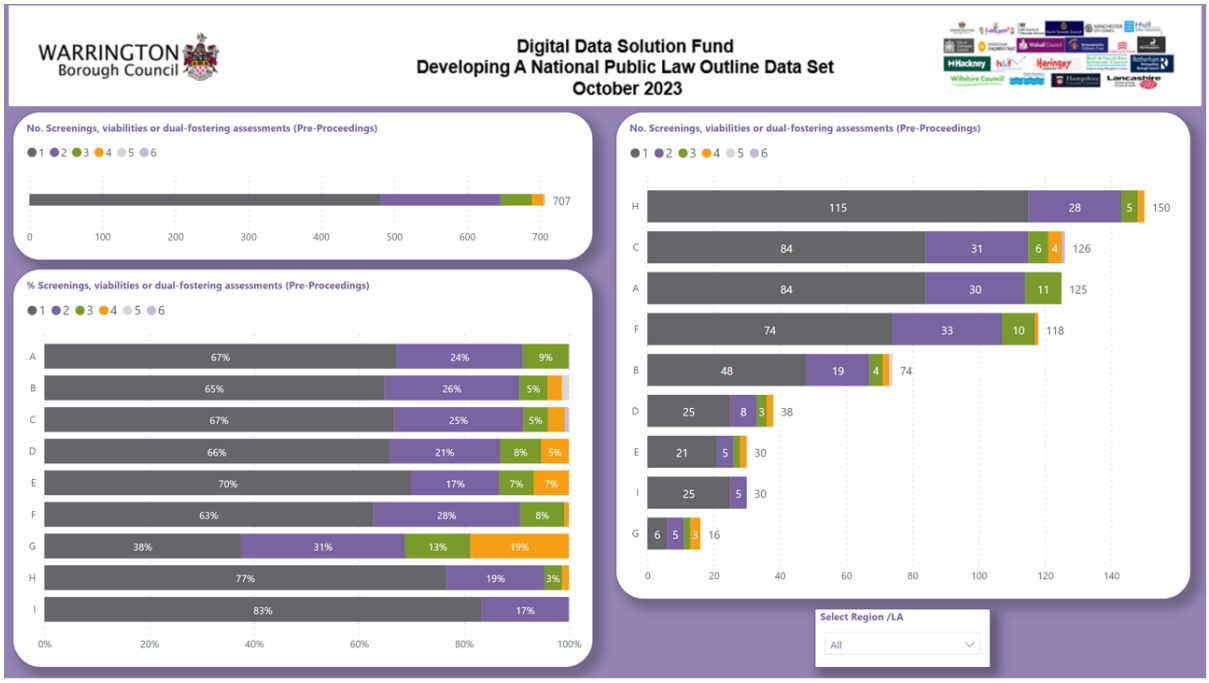
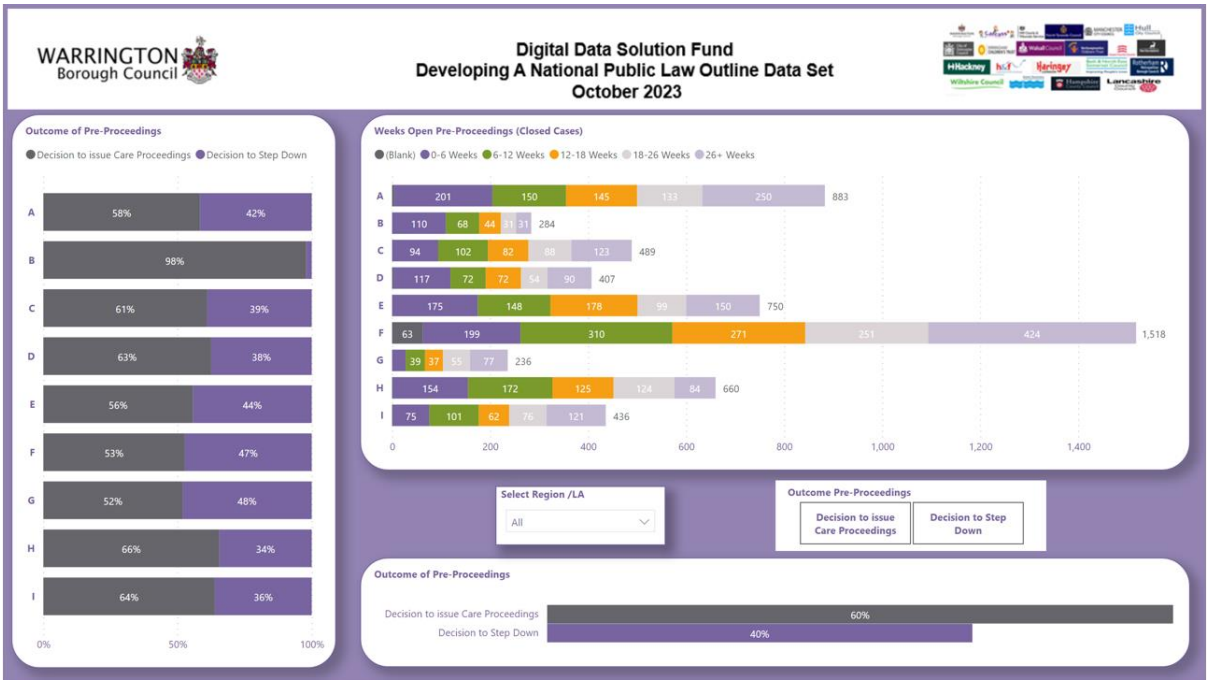
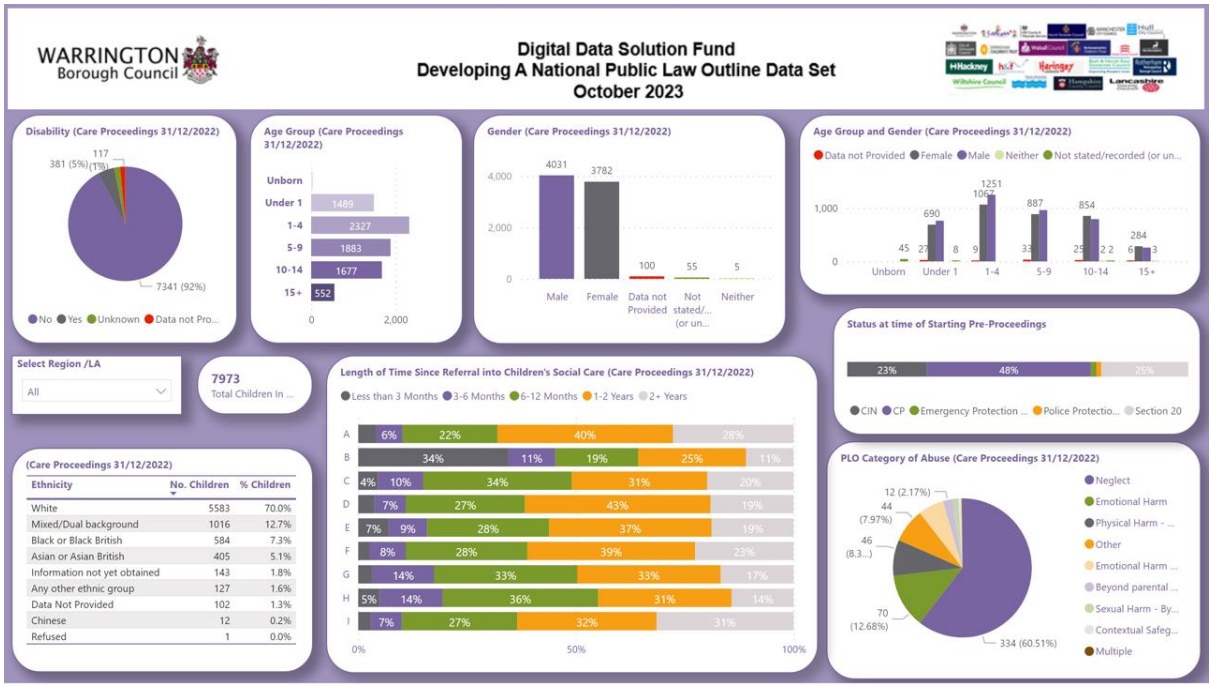
October 2023
Number of pre-proceeding meetings held with parents following the initial meeting
Care proceeding Concluded Q3
Care-Proc on 31/12/2022
Stepped Down Q3
Number of pre-proceeding meetings held with parents following the initial meeting
Average No. Meetings: 1.4
England Average No. Meetings: 1.4
Average No. Review Meetings by Region
Zero pre-proceeding meetings held by time open in pre-poceedings
0-6 Weeks
6-12 Weeks
12-18 Weeks
18-26 Weeks
26+ Weeks
% of pre-proceeding meetings held with parents following the initial meeting
Select Region /LA
All
Zero Review Pre-Proc - measuring short notice app and length of time since referral
Less than 3 Months
3-6 Months
6-12 Months
1-2 Years
2+ Years
Zero Review Pre-Proc - measuring short notice app - Age Group Under 1


WARRINGTON
Borough Council
Digital Data Solution Fund
Developing A National Public Law Outline Data Set
October 2023
No. Screenings, viabilities or dual-fostering assessments (Pre-Proceedings)
1 2 3 4 5 6
707
0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700
% Screenings, viabilities or dual-fostering assessments (Pre-Proceedings)
1 2 3 4 5 6
A 67% 24% 9%
B 65% 26% 5%
C 67% 25% 5%
D 66% 21% 8% 5%
E 70% 17% 7% 7%
F 63% 28% 8%
G 38% 31% 13% 19%
H 77% 19% 3%
I 83% 17%
0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
No. Screenings, viabilities or dual-fostering assessments (Pre-Proceedings)
1 2 3 4 5 6
H 115 28 5 150
C 84 31 6 4 126
A 84 30 11 125
F 74 33 10 118
B 48 19 4 74
D 25 8 3 38
E 21 5 30
I 25 5 30
G 6 5 3 16
0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140
Select Region /LA
All


WARRINGTON
Borough Council
Digital Data Solution Fund
Developing A National Public Law Outline Data Set
October 2023
Outcome of Pre-Proceedings
Decision to issue Care Proceedings Decision to Step Down
A 58% 42%
B 98%
C 61% 39%
D 63% 38%
E 56% 44%
F 53% 47%
G 52% 48%
H 66% 34%
I 64% 36%
0% 50% 100%
Weeks Open Pre-Proceedings (Closed Cases)
(Blank) 0-6 Weeks 6-12 Weeks 12-18 Weeks 18-26 Weeks 26+ Weeks
A 201 150 145 133 250 883
B 110 68 44 31 31 284
C 94 102 82 88 123 489
D 117 72 72 54 90 407
E 175 148 178 99 150 750
F 63 199 310 271 251 424 1,518
G 39 37 55 77 236
H 154 172 125 124 84 660
I 75 101 62 76 121 436
0 200 400 600 800 1,000 1,200 1,400
Select Region /LA
All
Outcome Pre-Proceedings
Decision to issue Care Proceedings
Decision to Step Down
Outcome of Pre-Proceedings
Decision to issue Care Proceedings 60%
Decision to Step Down 40%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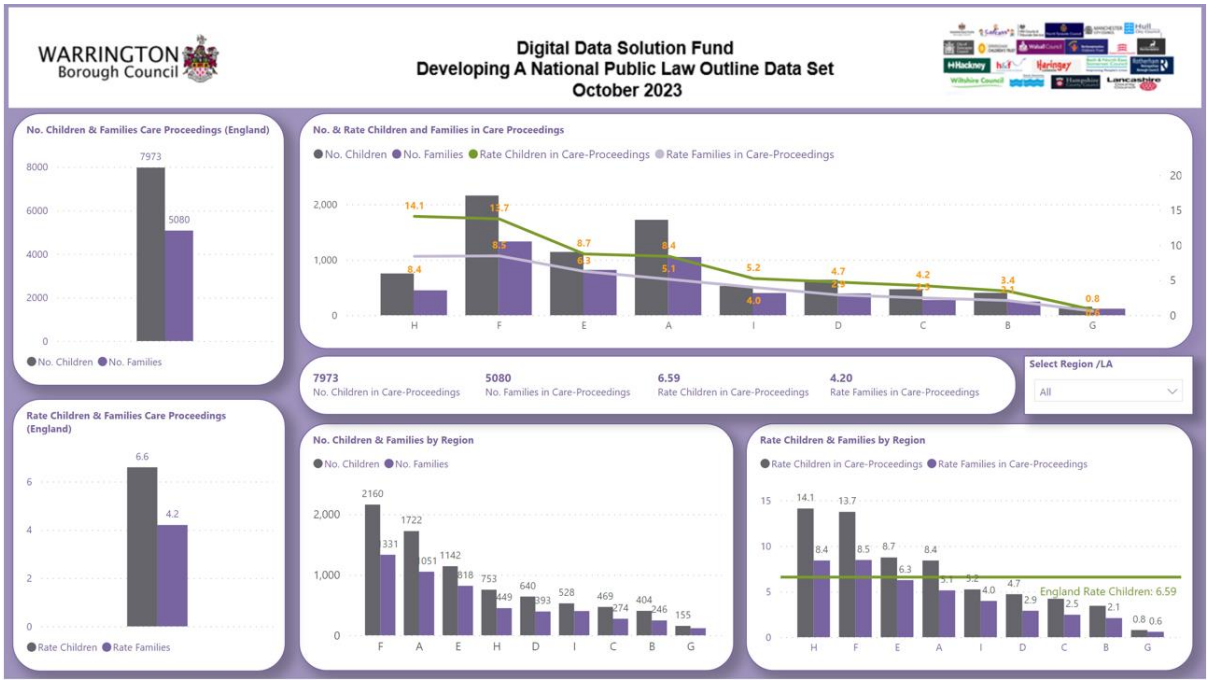
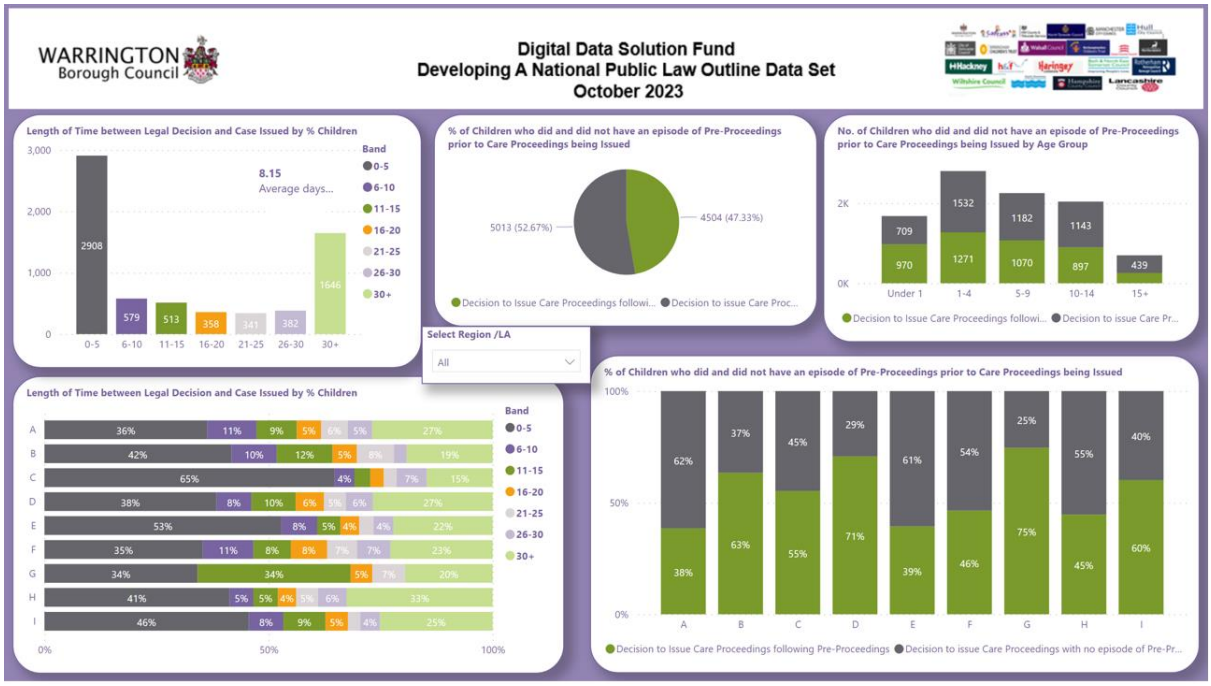
October 2023
Disability (Care Proceedings 31/12/2022)
117
381 (5%)
7341 (92%)
No Yes Unknown Data not Pro...
Age Group (Care Proceedings 31/12/2022)
Unborn
Under 1 1489
1-4 2327
5-9 1883
10-14 1677
15+ 552
0 2,000
Gender (Care Proceedings 31/12/2022)
4,000
2,000
0
4031
3782
100
55
5
Male Female Data not Provided Not stated/... (or un...
Age Group and Gender (Care Proceedings 31/12/2022)
Data not Provided Female Male Neither Not stated/recorded (or un...
1,000
0
Unborn Under 1 1-4 5-9 10-14 15+
Select Region /LA
All
7973
Total Children In ...
Length of Time Since Referral into Children's Social Care (Care Proceedings 31/12/2022)
Less than 3 Months 3-6 Months 6-12 Months 1-2 Years 2+ Years
A 6% 22% 40% 28%
B 34% 11% 19% 25% 11%
C 4% 10% 34% 31% 20%
D 7% 27% 43% 19%
E 7% 9% 28% 37% 19%
F 8% 28% 39% 23%
G 14% 33% 33% 17%
H 5% 14% 36% 31% 14%
I 7% 27% 32% 31%
0% 50% 100%
Status at time of Starting Pre-Proceedings
23% 48% 25%
CIN CP Emergency Protection ... Police Protectio... Section 20
(Care Proceedings 31/12/2022)
Ethnicity | No. Children | % Children
White | 5583 | 70.0%
Mixed/Dual background | 1016 | 12.7%
Black or Black British | 584 | 7.3%
Asian or Asian British | 405 | 5.1%
Information not yet obtained | 143 | 1.8%
Any other ethnic group | 127 | 1.6%
Data Not Provided | 102 | 1.3%
Chinese | 12 | 0.2%
Refused | 1 | 0.0%
PLO Category of Abuse (Care Proceedings 31/12/2022)
12 (2.17%)
44 (7.97%)
46 (8.3...)
70 (12.68%)
334 (60.51%)
Neglect
Emotional Harm
Physical Harm - ...
Other
Emotional Harm ...
Beyond parental ...
Sexual Harm - By...
Contextual Safeg...
Multiple


WARRINGTON Borough Council
Digital Data Solution Fund
Developing A National Public Law Outline Data Set
October 2023
No. Children & Families Care Proceedings (England)
8000
6000
4000
2000
0
7973
5080
No. Children No. Families
No. & Rate Children and Families in Care Proceedings
No. Children No. Families Rate Children in Care-Proceedings Rate Families in Care-Proceedings
2,000
1,000
0
20
15
10
5
0
14.1
13.7
8.7
8.4
5.2
4.7
4.2
3.4
0.8
8.4
8.5
6.3
5.1
4.0
2.5
2.1
0.6
H F E A I D C B G
7973
No. Children in Care-Proceedings
5080
No. Families in Care-Proceedings
6.59
Rate Children in Care-Proceedings
4.20
Rate Families in Care-Proceedings
Select Region /LA
All
Rate Children & Families Care Proceedings (England)
6
4
2
0
6.6
4.2
Rate Children Rate Families
No. Children & Families by Region
No. Children No. Families
2,000
1,000
0
2160
331
1722
051
1142
818
753
449
640
393
528
469
274
404
246
155
F A E H D I C B G
Rate Children & Families by Region
Rate Children in Care-Proceedings Rate Families in Care-Proceedings
15
10
5
0
14.1
8.4
13.7
8.5
8.7
6.3
8.4
5.1
4.0
4.7
2.9
2.5
2.1
0.8
0.6
England Rate Children: 6.59
H F E A I D C B G


WARRINGTON Borough Council
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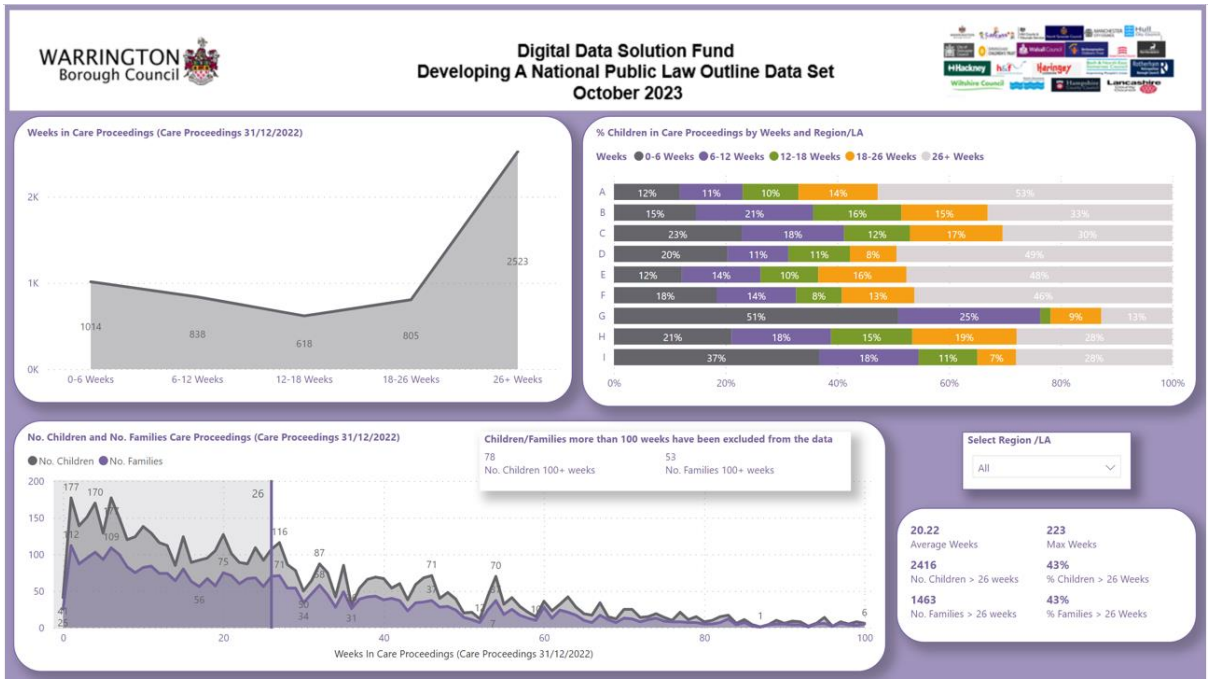
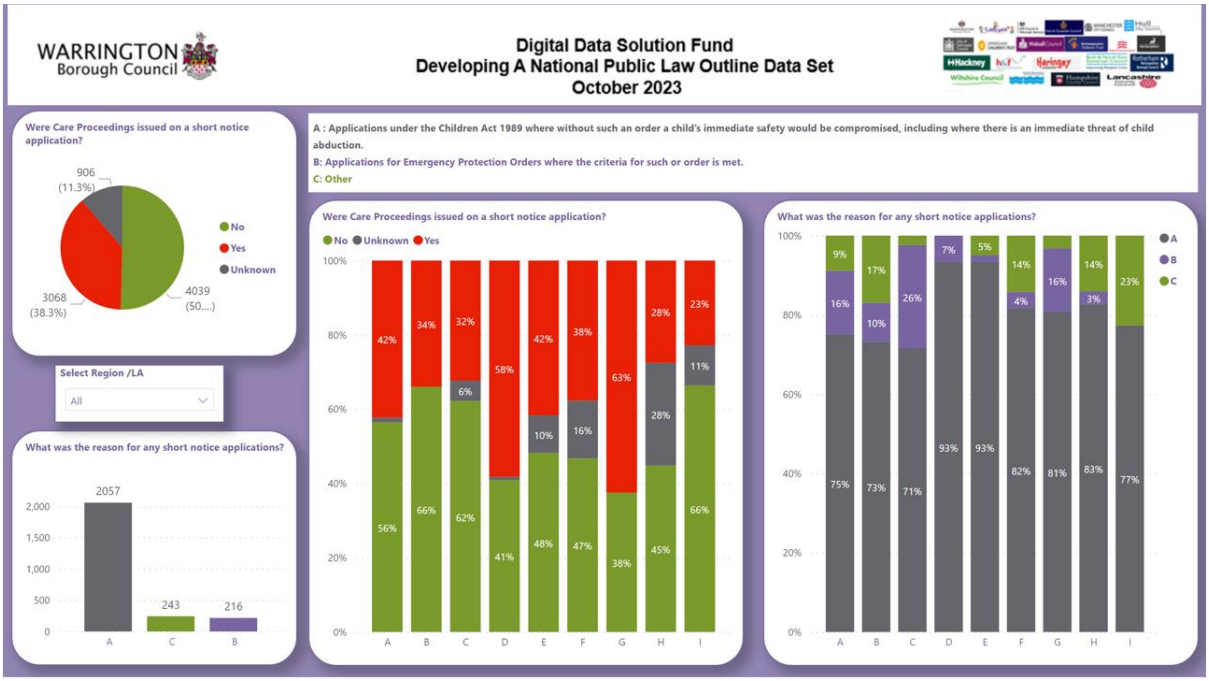
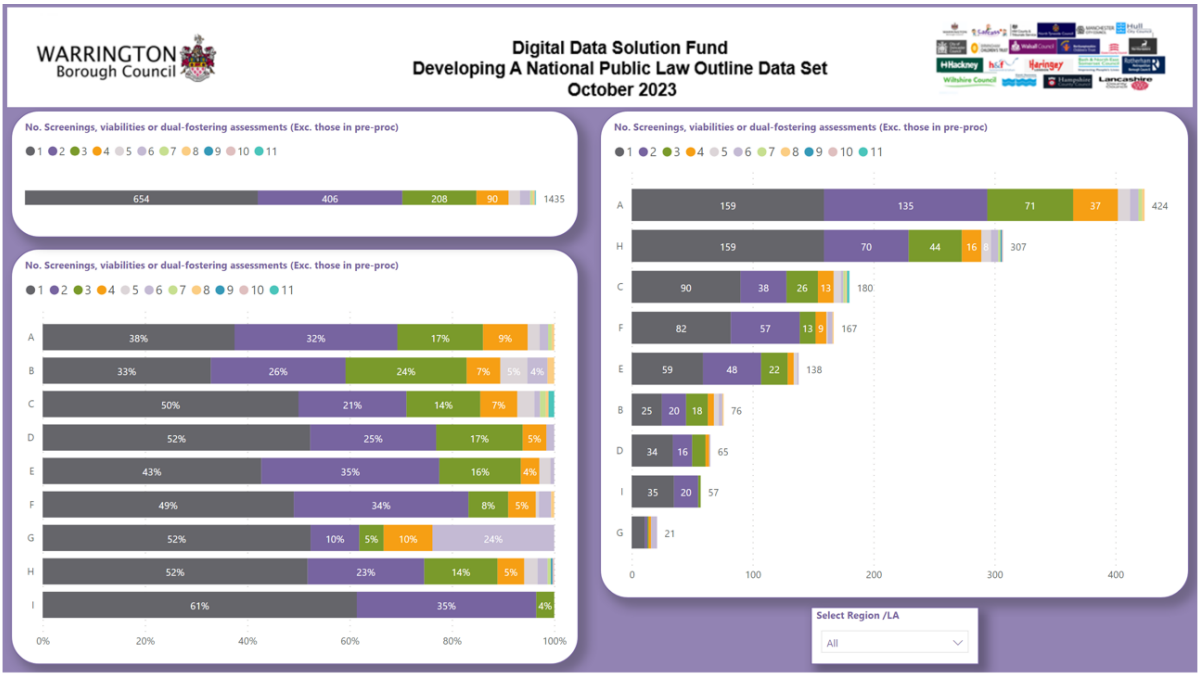
Developing A National Public Law Outline Data Set
October 2023
Length of Time between Legal Decision and Case Issued by % Children
8.15
Average days...
Band
0-5
6-10
11-15
16-20
21-25
26-30
30+
2908
579
513
358
341
382
1646
% of Children who did and did not have an episode of Pre-Proceedings prior to Care Proceedings being Issued
5013 (52.67%)
4504 (47.33%)
Decision to Issue Care Proceedings followi...
Decision to issue Care Proc...
No. of Children who did and did not have an episode of Pre-Proceedings prior to Care Proceedings being Issued by Age Group
Under 1
1-4
5-9
10-14
15+
Decision to Issue Care Proceedings followi...
Decision to issue Care Pr...
Select Region /LA
All
Length of Time between Legal Decision and Case Issued by % Children
% of Children who did and did not have an episode of Pre-Proceedings prior to Care Proceedings being Issued
Decision to Issue Care Proceedings following Pre-Proceedings
Decision to issue Care Proceedings with no episode of Pre-Pr...


WARRINGTON Borough Council
Digital Data Solution Fund
Developing A National Public Law Outline Data Set
October 2023
Weeks in Care Proceedings (Care Proceedings 31/12/2022)
1014
838
618
805
2523
0-6 Weeks
6-12 Weeks
12-18 Weeks
18-26 Weeks
26+ Weeks
% Children in Care Proceedings by Weeks and Region/LA
Weeks 0-6 Weeks 6-12 Weeks 12-18 Weeks 18-26 Weeks 26+ Weeks
No. Children and No. Families Care Proceedings (Care Proceedings 31/12/2022)
No. Children No. Families
Children/Families more than 100 weeks have been excluded from the data
78
No. Children 100+ weeks
53
No. Families 100+ weeks
Weeks In Care Proceedings (Care Proceedings 31/12/2022)
Select Region /LA
All
20.22
Average Weeks
223
Max Weeks
2416
No. Children > 26 weeks
43%
% Children > 26 Weeks
1463
No. Families > 26 weeks
43%
% Families > 26 Weeks


WARRINGTON Borough Council
Digital Data Solution Fund
Developing A National Public Law Outline Data Set
October 2023
Were Care Proceedings issued on a short notice application?
906 (11.3%)
3068 (38.3%)
4039 (50....)
No
Yes
Unknown
Select Region /LA
All
What was the reason for any short notice applications?
2057
243
216
A : Applications under the Children Act 1989 where without such an order a child's immediate safety would be compromised, including where there is an immediate threat of child abduction.
B: Applications for Emergency Protection Orders where the criteria for such or order is met.
C: Other
Were Care Proceedings issued on a short notice application?
No Unknown Yes
What was the reason for any short notice applications?
A
B
C


WARRINGTON Borough Council
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Developing A National Public Law Outline Data Set
October 2023
No. Screenings, viabilities or dual-fostering assessments (Exc. those in pre-proc)
654
406
208
90
1435
No. Screenings, viabilities or dual-fostering assessments (Exc. those in pre-proc)
No. Screenings, viabilities or dual-fostering assessments (Exc. those in pre-proc)
Select Region /LA
All

WARRINGTON Borough Council

Digital Data Solution Fund
Developing A National Public Law Outline Data Set
October 2023

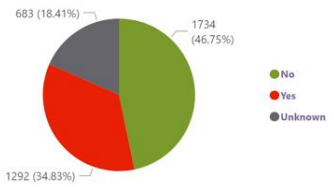
Select Region /LA

All

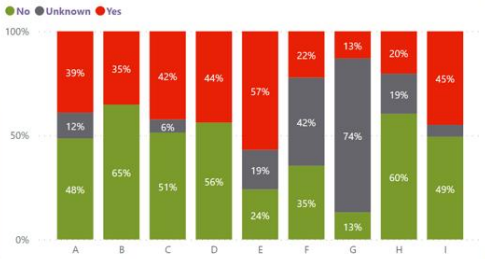
No. Expert Assess Pre	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total
1	75	24	50	19	20	51	13	69	22	343
2	72	13	37	15	7	30	4	16	5	199
3	39	3	19	4	9	28	11	6		119
4	17	4	18	4	8	11		4		66
5	14	1	9		4	4	2	1		35
6	9		4	1	1	1	8			24
7	3		2			3				8
8	2				1	2				5
9				1		1				2
10	1									1
11	4									4
14	1									1
18		1								1

No. Expert Assess care	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total
1	18	2	6	1	43	7	2	60	2	141
2	12	3	7	1	45	7		31	3	109
3	10	3	8	3	11	7	1	23	1	67
4	7	1	1	3	7	4	1	15	2	41
5	17	6	4	1	9	5		7	5	54
6	12	2	9		4	8		4		39
7	10	2	5		2	2		4	1	26
8	12	2	2		2	2		4		24
9	6	1	2	1			1			11
10	7	1				2	2	2		14
11	1	1	2			2		1		7
12	4		1		1			4		10
13	2									2
14	3		2							5
15		1	1					1		3
16	1	1	1					2		5
17			1					1		2
20	1				1					2
22			1							1
26		1								1

Was repeat or addendum Parenting assessments ordered in care proceedings



Was repeat or addendum Parenting assessments ordered in care proceedings



Total Expert Assess Pre

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total
633	98	336	92	127	311	112	140	32	1881

Total Expert Assess Care

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total
710	180	323	38	325	203	38	513	51	2381

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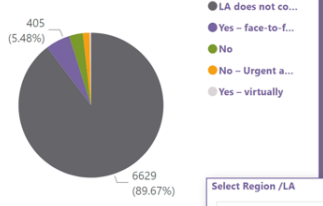
Digital Data Solution Fund
Developing A National Public Law Outline Data Set
October 2023

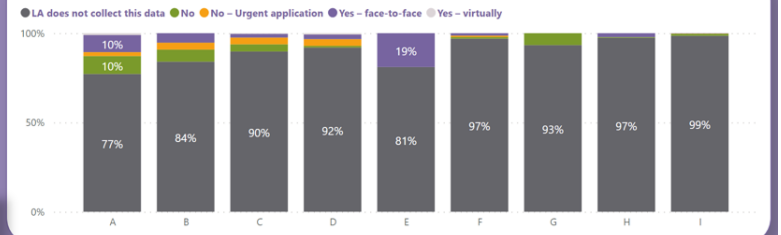
Has the Children's Guardian made contact with the child prior to the initial hearing?



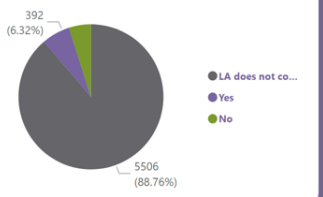
Select Region /LA

All

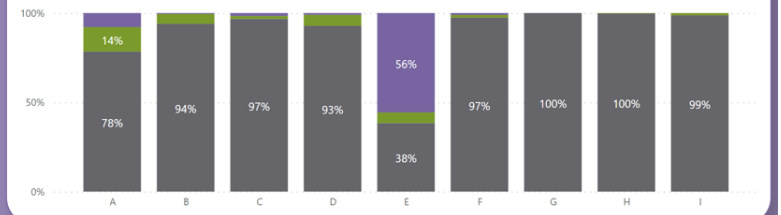
Has the Children's Guardian made contact with the child prior to the initial hearing?

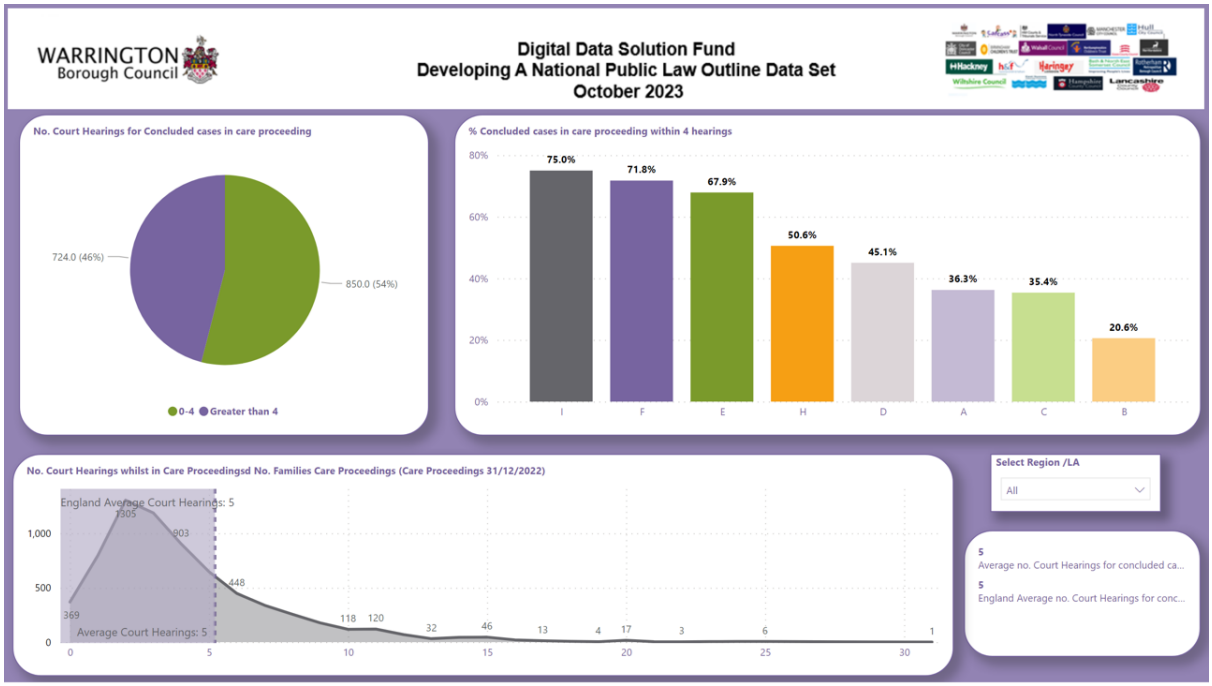


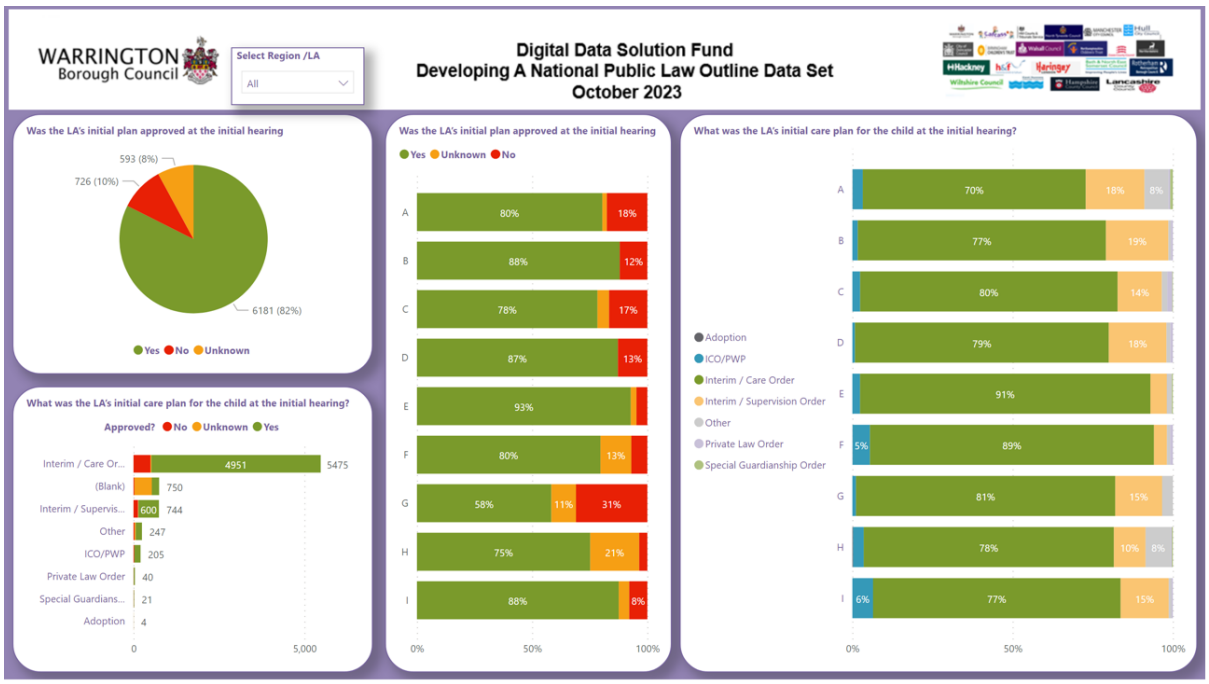
Has the Children's Guardian shared their final recommendations with the child?



Has the Children's Guardian shared their final recommendations with the child?




WARRINGTON
Borough Council
Digital Data Solution Fund
Developing A National Public Law Outline Data Set
October 2023
No. Court Hearings for Concluded cases in care proceeding
724.0 (46%)
850.0 (54%)
0-4
Greater than 4
% Concluded cases in care proceeding within 4 hearings
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
75.0%
71.8%
67.9%
50.6%
45.1%
36.3%
35.4%
20.6%
I
F
E
H
D
A
C
B
No. Court Hearings whilst in Care Proceedingsd No. Families Care Proceedings (Care Proceedings 31/12/2022)
England Average Court Hearings: 5
1,000
500
0
1305
903
448
369
118
120
32
46
13
4
17
3
6
1
Average Court Hearings: 5
0
5
10
15
20
25
30
Select Region /LA
All
5
Average no. Court Hearings for concluded ca...
5
England Average no. Court Hearings for conc...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Select Region /LA
All
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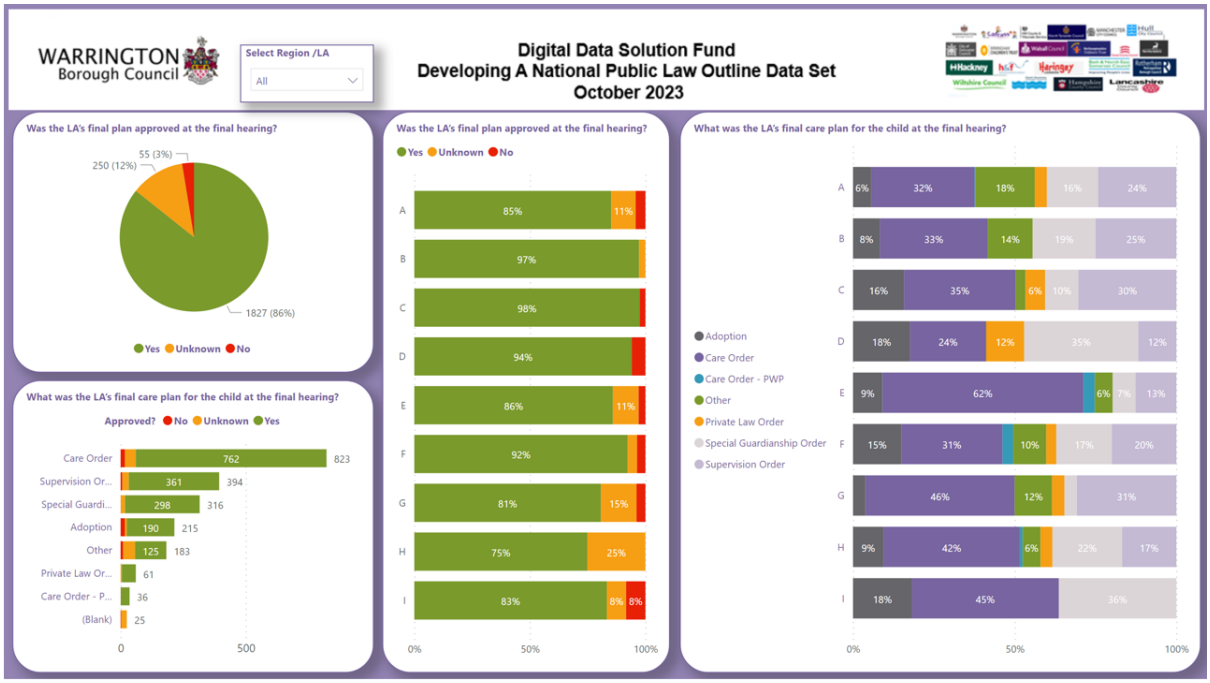
October 2023
Was the LA's initial plan approved at the initial hearing
593 (8%)
726 (10%)
6181 (82%)
Yes
No
Unknown
What was the LA's initial care plan for the child at the initial hearing?
Approved?
No
Unknown
Yes
Interim / Care Or...
4951
5475
(Blank)
750
Interim / Supervis...
600
744
Other
247
ICO/PWP
205
Private Law Order
40
Special Guardians...
21
Adoption
4
0
5,000
Was the LA's initial plan approved at the initial hearing
Yes
Unknown
No
A
80%
18%
B
88%
12%
C
78%
17%
D
87%
13%
E
93%
F
80%
13%
G
58%
11%
31%
H
75%
21%
I
88%
8%
0%
50%
100%
What was the LA's initial care plan for the child at the initial hearing?
Adoption
ICO/PWP
Interim / Care Order
Interim / Supervision Order
Other
Private Law Order
Special Guardianship Order
A
70%
18%
8%
B
77%
19%
C
80%
14%
D
79%
18%
E
91%
F
5%
89%
G
81%
15%
H
78%
10%
8%
I
6%
77%
15%
0%
50%
100%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Borough Council
Select Region /LA
All
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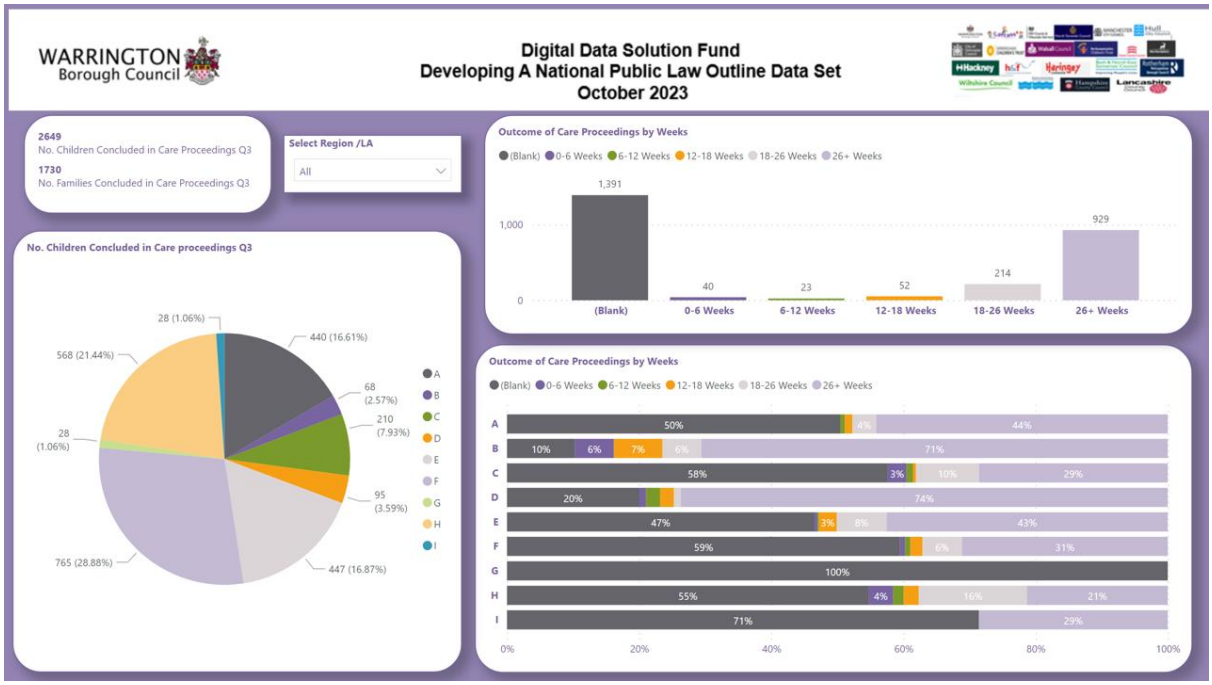
Was the LA's final plan approved at the final hearing?
55 (3%)
250 (12%)
1827 (86%)
Yes Unknown No
Was the LA's final plan approved at the final hearing?
Yes Unknown No
A 85% 11%
B 97%
C 98%
D 94%
E 86% 11%
F 92%
G 81% 15%
H 75% 25%
I 83% 8% 8%
0% 50% 100%
What was the LA's final care plan for the child at the final hearing?
Adoption
Care Order
Care Order - PWP
Other
Private Law Order
Special Guardianship Order
Supervision Order
A 6% 32% 18% 16% 24%
B 8% 33% 14% 19% 25%
C 16% 35% 6% 10% 30%
D 18% 24% 12% 35% 12%
E 9% 62% 6% 7% 13%
F 15% 31% 10% 17% 20%
G 46% 12% 31%
H 9% 42% 6% 22% 17%
I 18% 45% 36%
0% 50% 100%
What was the LA's final care plan for the child at the final hearing?
Approved? No Unknown Yes
Care Order 762 823
Supervision Or... 361 394
Special Guardi... 298 316
Adoption 190 215
Other 125 183
Private Law Or... 61
Care Order - P... 36
(Blank) 25
0 500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October 2023
2649
No. Children Concluded in Care Proceedings Q3
1730
No. Families Concluded in Care Proceedings Q3
Select Region /LA
All
Outcome of Care Proceedings by Weeks
(Blank) 0-6 Weeks 6-12 Weeks 12-18 Weeks 18-26 Weeks 26+ Weeks
1,000
0
1,391
40
23
52
214
929
(Blank) 0-6 Weeks 6-12 Weeks 12-18 Weeks 18-26 Weeks 26+ Weeks
No. Children Concluded in Care proceedings Q3
28 (1.06%)
440 (16.61%)
568 (21.44%)
68 (2.57%)
210 (7.93%)
28 (1.06%)
95 (3.59%)
765 (28.88%)
447 (16.87%)
A B C D E F G H I
Outcome of Care Proceedings by Weeks
(Blank) 0-6 Weeks 6-12 Weeks 12-18 Weeks 18-26 Weeks 26+ Weeks
A 50% 4% 44%
B 10% 6% 7% 6% 71%
C 58% 3% 10% 29%
D 20% 74%
E 47% 3% 8% 43%
F 59% 6% 31%
G 100%
H 55% 4% 16% 21%
I 71% 29%
0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%