

Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group

Recommendations for future in-house auditing, research and consultation

August 2007



QA Research



1. Introduction

As set out in the initial invitation to tender, Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group asked QA to recommend how the audit could be undertaken annually.

Our recommendations for in-house audits which gather and present information in a user-friendly and easily updatable format are outlined below. This report also suggests ways in which further research and consultation can be undertaken annually or on an ad-hoc basis.

2. Mapping Supply

QA will provide Sunderland with a template Excel file. The file will contain separate sheets for the data required to inform the audit. This can be populated in-house on an annual basis.

The table below outlines the datasets referred to within the audit and gives details of the sources used to obtain the information.

Dataset	Source
Number of Leisure Centres, Libraries and Playgrounds	Sunderland Council web site (accessed during February 2007) http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/pages/page.asp?theme=1 http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/public/editable/themes/lifelong-learning/Community-Libraries.asp http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/Public/Editable/Themes/Leisure/leisure-centres.asp
Deprivation by SOA	Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004 http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1128440 (SOA Level ID 2004)
Claimant Count Figures	Claimant Count data from nomisweb.com (ONS), January 2007 dataset http://www.nomisweb.co.uk (go to advanced query then find 'claimant count' on the list of datasets available)
Population figures	Due to the more extensive breakdown by age, 2001 census data was used and can be downloaded from nomisweb.co.uk (ONS). More accurate and up to date figures were requested from Sunderland PCT but without reply. ONS data supplied by Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group http://www.nomisweb.co.uk (go to advanced query then find 'census of population' – standard tables – geography (2003) – cell (search for ethnic group - Sex and age by ethnic group)
Eligibility for free school meals / SEN figures	Sunderland CIS joanne.hunt@sunderland.gov.uk (CIS)
Ethnicity data	Also from 2001 census (ONS) datasets provided by Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group http://www.nomisweb.co.uk (go to advanced query then find 'census of population' – standard tables – geography (2003) – cell (Age by sex and resident type – total columns provide data)
Private childcare providers by type	Sunderland CIS and Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group http://www.childcarelink.gov.uk/whitebox/cis.asp?cisid=5058 Sophie.Maddison@sunderland.gov.uk

Numbers of children attending schools and private settings	Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group Sophie.Maddison@sunderland.gov.uk
Average childcare costs	Sunderland CIS (information as submitted to Daycare Trust) Sophie.Maddison@sunderland.gov.uk
Places and vacancies	Sunderland CIS http://www.childcarelink.gov.uk/whitebox/cis.asp?cisid=5058 Sophie.Maddison@sunderland.gov.uk
Looked After Children – numbers	Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group sent a fax. We do not have an electronic version Sophie.Maddison@sunderland.gov.uk
Housing information	Interim Strategy for Housing Land, Sunderland Development and Regeneration Team regeneration@sunderland.gov.uk 0191 553 1164

In order to improve and facilitate data collection in the future, Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group could do the following:

- It was clear that some data held by the council and the CIS was stored by SOAs, wards or postcodes, rather than cluster areas. This meant that analysis needed to be carried out to match and link datasets together. Having data in the same format, by cluster area and in Excel spreadsheets, would make collation and reporting easier in the future. Liaison between the CIS and Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group could ensure that templates exist and formats are the same in the future.
- We received several different files which contained childcare provision data and sometimes conflicted with each other. The CIS need to provide Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group with up to date information on childcare providers and which are active or inactive. It was apparent that lists of active childminders were held by the CIS, while Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group had data on the number of places and types of childcare available. These two data sets should be combined to include the following information: name of provider, address with postcode, status (active/resigned), number of places for specific age groups (see comment below), number of vacancies, cluster area, type of provider. In addition to this, the names within the two datasets were often not typed in the same format e.g. Mr John Smith in one spreadsheet and John Smith in another, making it difficult to match using queries in Access.
- Age bands used by Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group and CIS should be broken down further from 0-4 and 5-8 year olds, to 0-2, 3-4, 5-7 and 8 year olds as different types of childcare are used for these age groups e.g.

nursery grant support for 3-4 year olds; after school provision for 5-7 and also 8 year olds.

- QA Research used 2001 census population data in this audit report. We understand that the Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group uses mid-year population estimates for much of its analysis. However, this means that working out proportions of, for example, 3 and 4 year olds accessing the NEG will not be 100% accurate. In addition to this, further breakdown of population into individual age bands is difficult with mid-year estimates as they have pre-set age bands. Obtaining accurate and up to date population statistics from Sunderland PCT on an annual basis would ensure any further analysis is precise rather than estimated. If this is not obtainable for the full population, use of this data for 0-19 year olds would be beneficial as it would allow proportions of population accessing the Nursery Education Grant, for example, to be calculated.
- Information on Looked After children was provided by fax and included age (up to 18), date of birth, Date BLA, date started school, school name for some but not all, type of school and UPN. Some of the data was missing and as there were no postcodes or clusters listed we were unable to allocate each child to a specific cluster area. In the future, it would be more beneficial for Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group to collate this data in Excel or Access format ready for analysis. We recommend the following details are collected: age as of (date), DOB, Date BLA, School and type of school (if applicable), home postcode, cluster and UPN.
- Free School Meals data and SEN data was supplied by ward and postcode. Supply by cluster would be more useful to ensure continuity between datasets.

3. Assessing Demand

There are a number of ways in which The Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group could use existing materials and channels to undertake in-house research and consultation on a smaller scale if necessary.

Contact with parents / carers

Parents surveyed were asked whether they were happy for their details to be passed on to Sunderland Extended Services and Attendance Group so they can receive further information and / or be contacted again. Just over one quarter - equating to 142 parents / carers - said they were. This bank of parents / carers could therefore be followed up and invited to take part in future research and consultation work.

An alternative or additional channel that could be used to enable parents / carers to be consulted across the City would be to liaise with Children's Centre Co-ordinators and ask them to be gatekeepers helping distribute surveys or helping to recruit for groups of parents.

Example quantitative methods

- Parents / carers could be sent short self-completion surveys or receive them from Children's Centre workers. The short surveys would contain key questions taken from the 2007 survey. This will enable key questions to be compared over time. The questions would mainly relate to current childcare use / future demand and barriers to childcare.
- Again using key questions from the 2007 survey the team could consider undertaking an annual telephone survey but on a smaller scale. Whilst not being as statistically robust as the original survey, this would enable key comparisons of data to be made over time.

Example qualitative methods

- Group consultation or workshop events could be undertaken. Held locally at Children's Centres, parents / carers could be invited to have their say on childcare generally. More specific questions about new developments in childcare and youth provision locally could also be raised.

Staff training

- QA is happy to consultancy support or can offer training in a range of skills such as questionnaire / script design, focus group / facilitation training to enable staff to develop new skills and enable them to complete elements of work themselves. Further details of our training packages are available on request.