



children's services at the NFER



The NFER's Children's Services Team was established in 2005, with a dedicated group of researchers, statisticians and information officers who work on projects related to this developing sector, reflecting the changing practices of services for children and young people in the light of the British government's policies.



Shaping the future of Children's Services policy

NFER has worked on many projects relating to Children's Services, demonstrating the relevance of its research to a variety of sectors – including health, education and social services, police and youth justice. NFER works in partnership with schools, local authorities and their Children's Trust partners and government departments.

NFER's work with local, regional and national government is used to shape and inform policy and practice at all levels.

Early impact of children's services

NFER is a member of the Local Authority Research Consortium (LARC) with local authorities, Research in Practice (RiP), the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Local Government Association (LGA). In its first year, LARC investigated the early impact of integrated children's services. With an initial focus on three key groups of vulnerable children in 14 local authorities, the study set out the main messages for policy-makers, strategic managers and decision-makers responsible for services to children and young people. In its second year, a total of 33 local authorities have joined the consortium, and will focus on the CAF process and how it might support the achievement of better outcomes for children and young people.

Vulnerable children

NFER research into vulnerable children includes work about looked-after children, pupils with medical needs, gypsies/travellers, asylum seekers, young carers and school refusers. Projects have included:

- investigating how to narrow the gap between vulnerable groups and all children and young people
- examining the impact of migration on schools and children's services
- exploring the educational needs of Gypsy Traveller children and identifying best practice in schools and local authorities to support improvement.

Impact of integrated children's centres

The Big Lottery commissioned NFER's Welsh Unit to assess the impact of Integrated Children's Centres (ICCs) in Wales on the social and economic development of local communities. The research evaluates the extent to which the centres' aims are achieved, the nature and impact of their activities and the extent to which ICCs promote multi-agency working, and the effectiveness of management structures at strategic and operational levels.

'[The survey data] was a very useful tool, immediately supporting our evidence to inspectors about the school context and demonstrating our progress since the last inspection. I was also able to use the information to show the progress we have made since the anti-bullying survey.'

Primary headteacher



Comparing statistical neighbours for ECM

Our statisticians and researchers developed the statistical neighbour benchmarking tool, which allows local authorities to compare themselves to their statistical – rather than geographical – neighbours on Every Child Matters outcomes. The tool is backed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and endorsed by Ofsted.

Working with Children's Trusts

To better understand local issues and to inform future planning, local authorities and their Children Trust partners have commissioned NFER to conduct a number of research and evaluation projects. Examples include, surveys of children, young people and their parents to inform local planning and commissioning decisions and a project exploring attainment performance in the borough's primary schools at key stage 2.

'NFER has carried out a number of surveys and reports for Hammersmith and Fulham. These have always been tailored carefully to our needs and have provided us with an excellent foundation for strategies and service development.'

Carole Bell, assistant director commissioning,
Children's Services at London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham

How we can support you

NFER can support local authorities and Children's Trusts in the planning and evaluation of services. The range of experience and expertise at NFER allows it to offer independent, innovative and rigorous services to clients, specifically tailored to their requirements.

Research, statistics and information services

Our research team works directly with children, young people, families, local authority officers, teachers and local communities on national, regional and local projects. Researchers are based in our offices in Slough, York and Swansea and have worked on projects with Scottish, Welsh and English local authorities.

With decades of experience in the field, the NFER's Statistics Research and Analysis Group supports its researchers in offering clients advice and support on the kind of sampling, research design and analysis best suited to their needs.

NFER's information services, EMIE at NFER and the International Information Unit, help education and children's services departments to share information and effective practice on management and policy issues.

EMIE at NFER provide local authority children's services with information, including research findings, via their web-pages and email alerts. They also manage a database of thousands of documents describing local authority policy and practice and maintain links with key organisations involved in local government administration.

The NFER's International Information Unit manages contributions to the European information network for education (Eurydice) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It serves policy makers at European, national and local government level. The unit offers an enquiry service, current awareness bulletins and access to comparative publications and descriptions of national education systems

Contact and more information

For more information about our Children's Services work visit:
www.nfer.ac.uk/childrens-services or
www.nfer.ac.uk/emie

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