



USERS' NEWSLETTER

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Cost Calculator Education Module

Local authorities can now accurately compare the costs of a full range of education activities including supporting children with Special Educational Needs using version 7.5 of the Cost Calculator for Children's Services (CCfCS). The software now includes an Education module in addition to the Social Care: Looked After Children module available previously.

Developed through a Knowledge Transfer Partnership between the Centre for Child and Family Research and the Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate at Coventry City Council, the Education module includes unit costs for activities such as assessing and reviewing a child's Special Educational Needs. These unit costs are built up on a bottom-up basis, e.g. the number of hours social workers and education officers spend on doing certain activities multiplied by the hourly costs of employing the staff, taking into account salary and on-costs plus strategic/management overheads and capital overheads.

The Education module is designed to work with data readily available from management information systems commonly used in education such as Capita One and Tribal. It can be used to generate reports about the costs incurred for individual children or for groups of children over a time period of the user's choice, for example, a selected school year, financial year or calendar year.

Users can calculate the costs of:

- Processes relating to the universal experience of children in the education system, including finding, ongoing and leaving education provision;
- Processes relating to the experience of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), including Statutory Assessment for SEN, Disputes including the SEN and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST), and the Annual Review of SEN; and
- The Complex Cases Panel, a professional decision-making panel for children requiring multi-agency support from education, health and social care.

Commenting on the work that has been undertaken over the past two years, Research Associate Si Chun Lam said: 'We have established a robust set of unit costs for education and social care services in Coventry; customised the existing Cost Calculator model to calculate the true costs of provision for Looked After Children and modelled education processes undertaken by Children's Services. Over the past few months, these activities have been programmed into the Cost Calculator.'

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Si Chun continues: 'The Cost Calculator and the underlying costing methodology developed by Loughborough University has recently been used in a number of projects within the authority, including establishing the true unit costs of a spectrum of Short Break services across the local authority, Primary Care Trust and voluntary sector to inform the authority's future development of Short Breaks under the Aiming High for Disabled Children agenda; and analysing the financial arrangements for a major residential contract using 'What If' analysis.'

Coventry will continue the work by establishing reporting requirements across education, social care, commissioning

and finance, with a view to developing customised reports suitable for their needs. In addition, a training programme is planned in order to ensure the continued use of the Cost Calculator in Coventry beyond the partnership.

For more information on the Coventry project, contact Si Chun Lam - email: SiChun.Lam@coventry.gov.uk; telephone: 024 7678 5737.

For details on Version 7.5 of the CCfCS, see page 3, and for more details about Coventry's work on Short Breaks, see page 5.

Cheshire Children's Placement Panel Unit Costs

Researcher Anna Jones, working at Cheshire County Council as part of the Knowledge Transfer Partnership between Loughborough University and the authority, has recently undertaken work to calculate the unit costs of Cheshire's Children's Placement Panel (CPP) using the Cost Calculator methodology.

Held once a week, the CPP aims to ensure consistency in decision-making for out-of-county placements across three operational areas and to highlight the needs across the county so that each operational manager is aware of issues in other areas. For each case being discussed at the CPP, three social care managers and a social worker must attend.

The panel is used to enable better decision-making on cases where provision for placements is costly. To obtain endorsement for a high cost placement the child must meet the following criteria:

- every attempt has been made to keep the child either with their birth family, extended family, friends or foster carers,
- a child's behaviour is such that it cannot be contained within their current environment,
- admission must be part of an agreed care plan and that a higher cost placement is seen as a positive way forward, and
- the child requires a level of supervision or help which can only be provided in such a placement.

Panel members and administrators completed a

questionnaire designed to identify the activity they undertake for the CPP including preparatory activities, attending the meeting and any activity resulting from it.

The total activity time for each professional involved in the panel meeting was calculated and this figure multiplied by the unit cost per hour for that professional. The costs for all professionals involved were added together giving a total for each child discussed at panel and a total for those costs that apply to the whole meeting, for example a panel member's travel time.

Anna discovered that prior to a panel meeting a social worker is required to provide a panel application form, placement request form, care plan, review and core assessment; and that the majority of this work has to be completed regardless of whether a child's case is discussed at panel.

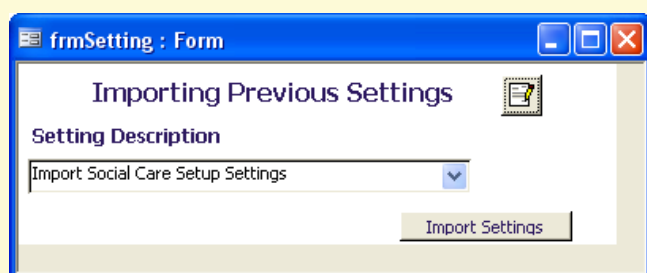
Anna explained: 'Since this work began in Summer 2008, there has been a change in procedures and as such, panel meetings are now carried out via telephone. Therefore, waiting and travel times cease to apply. The work has highlighted a large reduction in costs as a result of this change in procedure and provided justification for continuing to carry out the placement panel via telephone.'

She concludes: 'We will now adapt the methodology to calculate the unit costs of the two types of joint commissioning panel in Cheshire County Council - the Local Joint Commissioning Forum and the Children's Joint Commissioning Panel.'

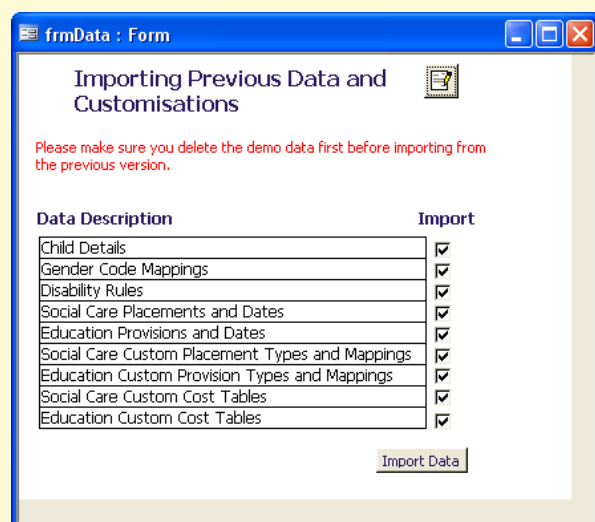
Updates and Improvements

In upgrading to version 7.5 of the Cost Calculator, users can now bring across all the data they have imported and the customisations they have already set up. To utilise this facility, be sure to retain your previous version of the Cost Calculator when the new one is installed. For example, you can install the new version in a different folder.

The sub-menu 'Import from Previous Version' is accessed from the Main Menu under System Administration.



It gives you two options, the first allowing you to 'Import Settings from Import Setup form' (see above) and the second letting you bring in all your 'Data and Customisations' (see image below). Please note that before using the second of these you must first delete the pre-loaded example data.



As with other aspects of data importing and editing, the first step in using these options is to press the 'Edit' button. This ensures the procedures can be operated only by users with Data Administrator status. **Details are in Appendix B of the CCfCS V7.5 User Guide (download: <http://www.ccfcs.org.uk/Documents/User%20Guide.pdf>)**

Updates in version 7.5 include the addition of cost sheets for

2007-8 both for London and for Out of London authorities. A further feature, described on page 4, is that the CCfCS is now able to import new variables being included in the SSDA 903 data collection for the first time in 2008-9.

To allow the Cost Calculator to handle support placements in addition to main placements, a 'Support Placements' variable is now required to distinguish them. If your placements are all main placements, with the coding 'True' or 'False' all values of this variable should be 'False'. A support placement is costed at the fee or allowance paid, since all social care services are deemed to form part of the provision of the main placement.

Further information is in Section 6.3 of the CCfCS V7.5 User Guide.

A looked after child whose only entry in the data set is a Legal Only change (Reason New Episode code L) was previously not picked up by the Cost Calculator because the child's data do not include a start date for the placement. Such a child is now imported by CCfCS version 7.5, with the placement start date being set to the date of the legal only change. The example data set ImportMain.xls now contains two children with legal only changes to allow users to inspect how they are handled by the Cost Calculator. **Details are in Section 9.2 of the CCfCS V7.5 User Guide.**

Age-related allowances can now be specified in six categories: 0-4, 5-10, 11-12, 13-14, 15-15 and 16 Upwards. These allowances are added *only* if the payment used in the cost calculation is the average weekly allowance from the right hand column of the unit cost sheet, because if a specific figure for the weekly allowance has been imported with the placement data the Cost Calculator interprets this as being the full payment cost. Age related allowances are added only for in-house foster care, kinship and adoption placements. Two children in the example data set provide examples of when the age related allowance is or is not added – **see Section 9.1 of the CCfCS V7.5 User Guide.**

Annual Returns Data and the Cost Calculator

Data submitted for the looked after children annual return to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (SSDA 903 Return) includes key information for the Cost Calculator on looked after children and their placements. The Cost Calculator import mechanism is designed to directly accept either the XML file that authorities submit or Excel files containing SSDA 903 variables.

Three new SSDA 903 variables that are being collected for the first time from 2008-9 can now be imported by the Cost Calculator version 7.5. These variables are: Provider code, Placement location code and SDQ score, together with some new Placement codes.

The CCfCS cost calculations distinguish provision by public bodies (provider codes PR1, PR2 and PR3) as against agency provision (codes PR4 and PR5) and take account of whether location is IN or OUT of the local authority area. The CCfCS generates an indicator of emotional or behavioural difficulties, namely:

If SDQ >= 17, EBD = TRUE, otherwise EBD = FALSE

Please note that you can still import pre 2008-9 placement data without provider or location codes. You should import these data first and then append your 2008-9 placements including the new variables and placement codes.

To enable you to try out how the CCfCS import mechanism handles a XML file or the new SSDA 903 variables, additional example data sets are included with version 7.5. Remember that you can install extra copies of the Cost Calculator using different folders. This allows you to try our different import procedures without overwriting your authority's data that you have imported. Full details about the SSDA 903 variables and the XML import procedure are in Sections 6.2 and 7.5 of the User Guide.

A future version of the CCfCS will also utilise data being collected in the new CiN Census, and will be able to directly import the XML file in which authorities submit their return.

'Care Matters' Conference



CCFR held an international conference in July 2008 at Keble College, Oxford, entitled 'Care Matters: Transforming Lives – Improving Outcomes'.

The conference was supported by the Department for Children, Schools and Families

(DCSF) and the British Academy, and incorporated the 8th International Looking After Children Conference. It addressed the themes in the White Paper 'Care Matters: Time for Change' which forms the basis for the Children and Young Persons Act 2008. Over 250 delegates attended the 3 day event.

Researchers from CCFR made several presentations on the Costs and Outcomes programme of work.

To download presentations and papers from the conference, please visit www.transforminglivesconference.org.uk

Coventry Launch

On 3rd November 2008, the Cost Calculator for Children's Services was launched in Coventry City Council. In Coventry, the Cost Calculator now combines fully customised costs for social care (looked after children) and education (special educational needs).

Managers across the Children, Learning and Young People's Directorate, representing looked after children, disabilities, education, commissioning, finance, safeguarding were able to see for themselves how the Cost Calculator could help them with their work and the key benefits of the Calculator.

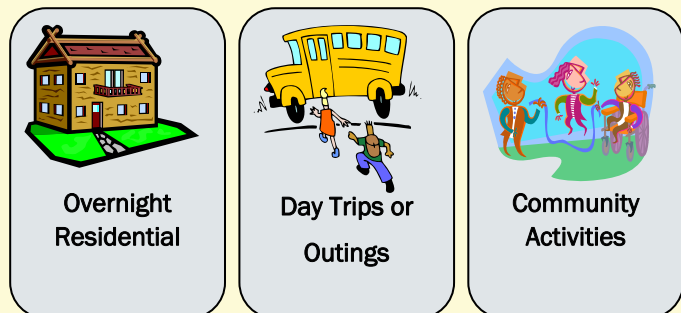
This generated a huge amount of interest, and steps are now being taken to establish further reporting requirements and a training programme to ensure continued use of the Calculator.

To download presentations and information from the launch, please visit: <http://www.ccfcs.org.uk/research-and-development/coventry/>

Short Breaks for Children and Young People with Disabilities

As part of the work to develop the market for Short Breaks for children and young people with disabilities, Coventry City Council undertook an analysis to establish the true unit costs of a spectrum of existing services – including commissioned and in-house residential, family based and day care short break services. To ensure that comparisons between local authority, Primary Care Trust, as well as private and voluntary sector provision were made on a fair and equitable basis, Coventry City Council adapted the 'bottom-up' methodology underlying the Cost Calculator for Children's Services (CCfCS) for its calculations.

To share this information with children with disabilities and their families, these costs were converted into a card game that could be 'spent' against an imaginary budget. This enabled them to construct a pattern of Short Breaks that best meet their needs during different times of the year, e.g. during the school term, weekends and summer holidays.



Example cards

Coventry is now in the process of translating the choices expressed by children and families into a plan of action, using a Short Breaks Provision Model that dynamically matches and scales people's choices with the unit costs of services and available funding.

For more information, contact Si Chun Lam -
email: SiChun.Lam@coventry.gov.uk;
telephone: 024 7678 5737.

Cost Calculator to be used in USA

CCFR are collaborating with Oregon Social Learning Center (OSLC) on a project designed to translate work on the Cost Calculator for Children's Services for application to child welfare systems in the United States. OSLC is a non-profit, independent research centre located in Oregon, USA, dedicated to increasing the scientific understanding of social and psychological processes related to healthy development and family functioning. OSLC have received funding for the project from the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), USA.

CCFR will firstly train OSLC researchers in the Cost Calculator methodology. US child welfare processes in both Oregon and California will be mapped, and pilot data on unit costs collected in these two research sites. The Cost Calculator software will be adapted to include these unit costs, and then implemented in the two states.

Discussing the work, Professor Harriet Ward said: 'There are currently no US-based mechanisms designed to easily evaluate variables that drive costs within child welfare services, which results in short-term, cost-cutting strategies

being favoured by policymakers. Use of the modified Cost Calculator will allow a more systematic understanding of the various costs associated with preventative interventions in child welfare services relative to the outcomes accrued.'

For more information, please contact Professor Harriet Ward, email: H.Ward@lboro.ac.uk

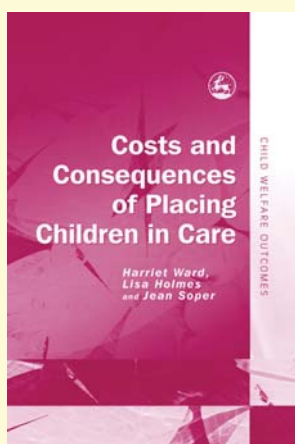
User Group Meeting

The second meeting for authorities using the Cost Calculator was held on 18 November 2008 at Loughborough University.

The small but keen group of attendees found it a stimulating day and left to return to their local authorities enthused with new ideas.

The various matters discussed are reported in this newsletter.

Costs and Consequences: New Book Released



CCFR researchers have released an important new book which describes the research underlying the CCfCS and the unit costs it includes.

The original research calculated unit costs for eight social care processes and used these to estimate the costs of care pathways for a sample of 478 children looked after over a 20 month period. The study

explored factors within both the children's characteristics and the service responses that contributed to cost variations. The relationship between need, cost and outcome was further explored by gathering recorded information from case files and qualitative interviews with a smaller sample of the children.

The study was successful in tracing how differences between authorities in both the needs of their care population and the patterns of service response could substantially affect the

cost of provision both for individual children and for groups. The authors go on to explain how the methodology for calculating the costs of care episodes and linking costs to outcomes has been developed into the Cost Calculator for Children's Services.

Professor Harriet Ward, lead author, said: 'The book is not about cutting costs or reducing services, but about ensuring that resources are optimally used to the advantage of the children and young people they are intended to support. At the heart of the book are the children and young people who entered the care of the six local authorities participating in our initial study and whose experiences formed the basis for our calculations. Case studies provide vivid illustrations of the extent of their needs.'

An ideal resource for social work managers, policy makers working in children's services and Cost Calculator users, 'Costs and Consequences of Placing Children in Care' is the fourth volume in the Child Welfare Outcomes series, edited by Harriet Ward and available to purchase from Jessica Kingsley Publishers at www.jkp.com.

Tips on Customising Unit Costs

There are three different elements of unit costs that can be separately customised in the Cost Calculator:

- Placement fees/allowances
- Salaries of social care personnel involved in supporting looked after children
- Activity figures - time taken for each of the eight social care processes

If you import data on the actual fees or allowances paid for individual placements, the Cost Calculator uses these actual figures rather than the averages supplied in the CCfCS. The values of the fees or allowances are imported together with the other data on placements. By contrast, the allowances paid to in-house foster carers for children of different ages are entered on the 'Age Related' unit costs sheet.

In using your salary information to calculate customised unit costs for each social care process you need a representative value for each salary scale. You can take the mid-point of the scale, or weight this value to reflect number of staff employed on each grade within the scale. You should use

your salary information along with the PSSRU schema to calculate a unit cost per hour (including salary, on costs, overheads and capital overheads) for each type of staff. Multiply these unit costs per hour by the appropriate activity figures and add the resulting values to obtain a unit cost for each of the social care processes.

Activity figures are the separate amounts of time taken by each type of social care personnel for every activity within the eight social care processes. These activities are broken down into direct and indirect tasks. The values used in the unit costs supplied with the Cost Calculator are averages based on a 'standard' case: a child with no additional support needs, placed with local authority foster carers within the area of the placing authority. You should identify similar average activity times and also variations for different placement types. To customise the conditional unit costs sheet you need variations for children with different needs, and for placements of different durations.