



Teenagers falling through the gaps

Technical report

July 2020

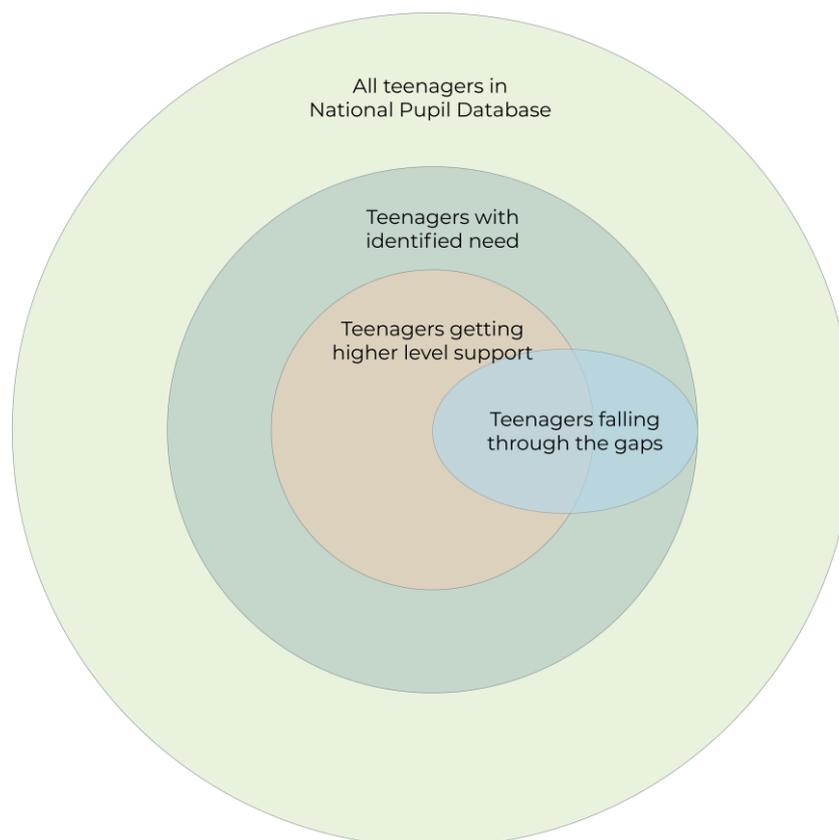
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Introduction

This analysis attempts to estimate the numbers of vulnerable teenagers known to school and children's services in the 2017/18 cohort of children in the National Pupil Database. It also attempts to quantify the numbers receiving high levels of support for their needs as well as those where their support is unclear or they have lost contact with mainstream services (those 'falling through the gaps' – see figure 1).

Figure 1: Conceptual map of groups of teenagers included in this analysis



The basis for these numbers is the cohort of children aged 13 or over at the start of the 2018 academic year who are in school in the spring term school census of that year (hereafter 'the NPD sample'). This is equivalent to individual level data on approximately 2 million teenagers, providing information on:

- > Teenager's demographic characteristics including age, gender, ethnicity, FSM eligibility and deprivation of their home postcode
- > Teenager's school histories
- > SEN needs
- > PRU contact time
- > Absence - both authorised and unauthorised
- > Exclusions - both fixed and permanent

Note: this is not limited to teenagers in secondary and special schools but also includes forms of alternative provision and other school types included in the NPD.

We have also linked these records to information on social care contact from the Children in Need and Looked After Children censuses. This provides further information on:

- > Referrals to children's services
- > Time spent as a child in need
- > Time spent on a child protection plan
- > Time spent in care

While this is a wide set of vulnerabilities, its coverage remains limited and so the counts below are likely conservative estimates of the true scale of vulnerable teenagers in this cohort. This is particularly true of children not in school during the year as well as those in FE or independent schools not covered by the pupil census. Furthermore this dataset cannot cover children with wider vulnerabilities such as involvement with the youth justice system or those in contact with CAMHS as these are not currently linked to the NPD at an individual level.

Results

Teenagers with any currently identified need in this cohort

Here we include teenagers in this NPD cohort with:

- > Any identified SEN at January 2018
- > Any referral or open episode with children's services (including being in care) during 2017/18
- > Any fixed/permanent exclusion during 2018
- > High levels of absence from school during 2018 - those missing more than 15% of possible sessions during the year
- > Any contact time with a PRU at any school census date during 2018
- > Teenagers in year 10 at the Spring Census 2018 who are not in the next Spring Census
- > Teenagers who have missed at least one entire term of school over the last 2 years

The table below demonstrates the number of teenagers that fall into each of the categories:

Table 1: Numbers of teenagers in the NPD cohort with any identified needs

Group	Number of teenagers
Any identified SEN	278,822
Any CIN referral/episode	122,466
Any fixed exclusions	107,758
Any permanent exclusions	4,133
High levels of absence	139,542
Contact with a PRU at any 2018 school census date	14,908
Missing from spring term year 11	11,717
Missed at least 1 entire term in last 2 years	7,170

- > Taken together 479,095 teenagers have any of the above identified needs and 142,737 have more than one.

The table below demonstrates the counts of these identified needs amongst this cohort:

Table 2: Numbers of teenagers in the NPD cohort with any identified needs, split by number of identified needs

Number of identified needs	Number of teenagers
0	1,581,255
1	336,358
2	96,836
3	31,376
4	10,826
5	3,160
6	519
7	20

Teenagers with identified high level needs in this cohort

Here we include:

- > Teenagers in this NPD cohort on Child Protection Plans (CPP) or children looked after (LAC) at any point in 2017/18
- > Teenagers in this NPD cohort with a statement at the Spring Census 2017/18
- > Teenagers in this NPD cohort recorded as attending a PRU at all 3 school census dates in 2017/18

Table 3: Numbers of teenagers in the NPD cohort with any identified high level needs

Group	Number of teenagers
Any time as LAC	16,595
Any time as CPP	7,303
Any statement/EHC plan	77,087
Contact with a PRU at all 3 2018 school census dates	8,343

- > **Around 102,694 teenagers have any identified high level needs. 6,495 have multiple identified high level needs.**

The table below demonstrates the counts of these identified higher threshold needs amongst this cohort of children:

Table 4: Numbers of teenagers in the NPD cohort with any identified high level needs, split by number of identified needs

Number of identified high level needs	Number of teenagers
0	1,957,656
1	96,199
2	6,356
3	139

Teenagers falling through the gaps

This at risk set of teenagers in this NPD cohort is made up of a combination of two groups:

- > Those where there are indications that they are struggling to access support or the quality of the support they are getting is uncertain. This comprises teenagers in this cohort with any of:
 - > Multiple CIN referrals but no open episodes during 2017/18
 - > Any time in an unregulated placement during 2017/18 - Note: this is a notable under count as many of these children in these settings are 16+ and not well covered by the school census
 - > Teenagers in care with multiple placement moves during 2017/18
 - > Teenagers with multiple fixed term exclusions or a permanent exclusion and identified SEN during 2017/18
 - > Teenagers permanently excluded in 2018 and not entering a PRU by Spring 2019

- > Those where they have lost contact with mainstream education/support. This comprises:
 - > Teenagers permanently excluded in 2018
 - > Teenagers with high levels of unauthorised absence in 2018 - Equivalent to missing more than 15% of possible sessions due to unauthorised absence
 - > Multiple missing from care episodes in 2018
 - > Teenagers in year 10 at the Spring Census 2018 who are not in the next Spring Census
 - > Teenagers that have missed at least 1 entire term over the past 2 years

Table 5: Numbers of teenagers in the NPD cohort with any indicators of losing contact or uncertain support

Group	Indicator	Number of teenagers
Teenagers getting uncertain support	Multiple CIN referrals but no open episode	1,660
	LAC and unregulated placement	417
	LAC & 2+ placement moves	2,562
	SEN + Multiple Fixed/any permanent exclusions	17,497
	Permanent exclusion not entering a PRU/mainstream school	826
Teenagers losing contact with mainstream education/support	Any permanent exclusions	4,133
	High levels of unauthorised absence	49,307
	LAC & 2+ missing incidents	1,911
	Missing from spring term year 11	11,717
	Missed at least 1 entire term in last 2 years	7,170

- > 22,042 teenagers in this NPD cohort have any of the forms of uncertain support listed above and 899 have multiple
- > 67,132 teenagers in this NPD cohort have lost contact with mainstream education/support in any of the above ways

Overall 81,282 teenagers in this NPD cohort are either getting some form of uncertain support or have lost contact with mainstream services in some way. 7,892 have at least one of each.

The table below demonstrates the numbers of children in this NPD cohort with different counts of these indicators:

Table 5: Numbers of teenagers in the NPD cohort with any indicators of losing contact or uncertain support

Number of indicators	Number of teenagers
0	1,979,068
1	68,283
2	10,593
3	1,963
4	374
5+	69

The dataset does not include children who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), whom we might also consider to be potentially falling through the gaps. We know from other sources that there were 42,000 16-17 year olds (at the end of December 2017)¹ who would not be in this cohort.

Adding these children who are NEET to the above figure of 81,282 would result in a total of approximately 120,000 teenagers potentially falling through the gaps.

We have reasons to believe that this is a lower estimate of the true number of children likely to be ‘falling through the gaps’. This is due to the fact that there are a number of key groups known to be extremely vulnerable but where the required data is not currently linked to allow them to be incorporated into this analysis without double counting. Key examples of these groups are:

- > Children in gangs: there are around 60,000 children aged 10-17 who self-identify as a gang member or know a gang member who is a sibling².
- > Children in secure mental health/criminal justice settings: around 1200 children each year are detained under the mental health act³ and there are approximately 700 children in custody aged 10-17 detained in youth custody⁴
- > Children at risk due to living in households with complex family needs - there are around 2.3 million children aged 0-17 living in households at risk due to their family circumstances⁵.

¹ Source: [NEET statistics Annual Brief 2018](#)

² Source: CCO - [The characteristics of gang associated children and young people](#)

³ Source: CCO - [Briefing: Children referred to secure tier 4](#)

⁴ Source: Youth Justice Board – [Youth custody data April 2020](#)

⁵ Source: CCO - [Childhood vulnerability in England 2019](#)

Local Authority level data

We have also produced LA level estimates of children in this ‘falling through the gaps’ group ([available to download here](#)). Here we provide estimated counts and rates of children in this cohort experiencing each of the above indicators for each local authority in England based, on the child’s LSOA of residence. *Note: this excludes around 4,000 children from these figures from the two million base cohort of this analysis due to no recorded LSOA of residence or being resident in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland but attending an English school.*

In these local authority estimates, we also present two estimates of children experiencing any of the above ‘falling through the gaps’ indicators, one including the estimated number of NEET children in the cohort and one excluding. Direct estimates of the numbers of children who are NEET are not published on a quarterly basis by local authority. As a result LA level rates are estimated using the annual local authority level 2018 NEET estimates¹ to distribute pro-rata the estimated 42,000 16-17 year old NEET children included in the analysis above.



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