EVALUATION OF SOCIAL CARE, SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND NON-ENROLMENT & EXCLUSION OF CHILDREN IN ALL ENGLISH STATE SCHOOLS: ADMINISTRATIVE DATA COHORT STUDY

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Objectives

All children have a right to education, but research indicates that those receiving children’s social care (CSC) and special educational needs (SEN) services are at increased risk of non-enrolment in school, including through off-rolling (illegal exclusion), and through formal exclusion for disciplinary reasons. We aimed to use administrative data to estimate the association between CSC history and (1) non-enrolment and (2) exclusion in secondary school.

Methods

Using the National Pupil Database (data on all English state school enrolments), we identified a cohort of 1,059,781 pupils in aged 11 in 2011 and 2012. Children were categorised as having a history of being children in need (CiN), on child protection plans (CPPs) or looked after (CLA) using linked data from CSC services. SEN status (Action/Action+/Support or Statement/Education, Health & Care Plan) was identified from school records. We estimated the proportion of children (1) not enrolled and (2) formally excluded across ages 12 to 16 by CSC and SEN history. We then assessed with regression modelling the associations between CSC and SEN history and non-enrolment and exclusion in years 10/11. We also examined variation in overall non-enrolment and exclusion rates between local authorities and regions.

Results

Of children without CSC history, 3.8% had 1 or more non-enrolments across ages 12 to 16. This proportion was higher among children with a history of being CiN (8.1%), on a CPP (9.4%) or being CLA (10.4%). The odds of non-enrolment in years 10/11 were higher among those with CLA history vs non-exposed peers (OR 4.76, 95% CI 4.49–5.05) as well as in those with CPP (3.60, 3.39–3.81) and CiN history (2.53, 2.49–2.58). SEN history further increased non-enrolment odds. These associations and interactions persisted after adjusting for confounders. Non-enrolment rates were highest in the London region and varied significantly between local authorities. In total, 40% of CLA and those with CPP history were formally excluded at ages 12 to 16, as were 32% with a history of being CiN, compared to 12% of the non-exposed group. A similar interaction between CSC and SEND history as for non-enrolment was observed for formal exclusions.

Conclusions

Our findings show that children with CSC history (especially those with SEN) are more likely to be non-enrolled and to be formally excluded in secondary school than other children. Work is needed to understand the non-enrolment and exclusion mechanisms, which may include illegal off-rolling and other exclusionary practices, to improve the education of children with CSC and SEN history.

REFERENCES
