One to two children per week?

Challenges in interpreting data on deaths from child abuse and neglect

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Are they all the same?

Peter Connolly

Kyra Ishaq

Daniel Pelka

Holly Wells Jessica Chapman

Victoria Climbie
How many children die as a result of child abuse and neglect?

- Farn (1980): 78 deaths ‘due to homicide and injury purposefully inflicted’ (OPCS data)
- Wilcynski (1994): 221-319 child deaths caused or contributed to by child abuse and neglect; 186-284 filicides
  - Maltreatment not the direct cause of death
  - Misdiagnosed ‘cot deaths’
  - Legal difficulties of proof
  - Child’s body never found

- 70% reduction in violent deaths of children
- England and Wales had a significantly greater reduction for “infant” homicides than every developed country except Japan

*Child Abuse Review* 2008; 17:297-312
Fatal assaults 1975-2014
Deaths per 100,000 population

Source: ONS Death registrations, England & Wales
English Serious Case Reviews

- Every case where abuse or neglect is known or suspected and either:
  - a child dies; or
  - a child is seriously harmed and there are concerns about how organisations or professionals worked together to safeguard the child;
- When a child dies in custody, secure accommodation or detained under the Mental Health Act
## Sources of data on fatal child maltreatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Death Registrations</td>
<td>Office for National Statistics</td>
<td>28 days – 19 years Grouped</td>
<td>Calendar Year Registration date</td>
<td>All deaths X85-Y09 Other codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police recorded homicides</td>
<td>Home Office</td>
<td>0-14 years (15-24 years) Grouped</td>
<td>Calendar Year Current recording</td>
<td>Homicides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious Case Reviews</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
<td>0-17 years Individual years</td>
<td>Financial Year Incident date</td>
<td>CA&amp;N Fatal &amp; Non-fatal Deaths in custody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Death Overview Panel</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
<td>0-17 years Aggregated</td>
<td>Financial Year Review date</td>
<td>All deaths Deliberately inflicted injury, abuse or neglect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Infant death rates from assault

- Fell from 5.6 to 0.7 per 100,000 (0.056 – 0.007 per 1,000 LB)
- 1970s: 33-36 deaths per year
- 2000s: 6-8 deaths per year
- Fall associated with change to ICD9
Infant death rates from all assault, undetermined intent and unknown causes

- Rates increased from 108 to a peak of 206 before falling to 36 per 100,000
- 1970s: 664 deaths per year
- 1980s: 1,225 deaths per year
- 1990s: 374 deaths per year
- 2000s: 239 deaths per year
Child (1-14) death rates from assault, unknown causes and undetermined intent

- Death rate from assault decreased from 0.6 to 0.2 per 100,000
- 1970s: 49-71 deaths per year
- 2000s: 16-19 deaths per year
Adolescent (15-19) deaths from assault, unknown causes and undetermined intent
Mortality rates 1 month – 14 years, England: assault & undetermined intent
Mortality rates from assault and undetermined intent: UK countries
Death registration data

Deaths, 0-19 years

2011

2012

2013

2014

- Assault
- Undetermined
- Pending
Death registration data

Annual number of deaths

- <1 year
- 1-4 years
- 5-9 years
- 10-14 years
- 15-19 years

Assault
Undetermined
Pending
Police recorded homicides, England: rate per million under 18s
Police recorded homicides

Average annual number of recorded homicides, 2011-14
CDOP Data 2011-15

Deaths categorised as deliberately inflicted injury, abuse or neglect

Accounting for 1.1-1.7% of all child deaths reviewed
Serious Case Reviews, England 2005-14

- Non-fatal cases
- Deaths related to maltreatment/ category unclear
- Direct maltreatment deaths
Fatal Cases: types of fatal maltreatment

- Violent Deaths
  - ‘Intentional’
    - Child Homicide
    - Fatal Assaults
  - ‘Non-Intentional’

- Maltreatment Deaths
  - Overt Filicide
  - Covert Filicide
  - Severe, persistent child cruelty
  - Fatal Physical Abuse
  - Extreme Neglect
  - Maltreatment-related Deaths
Reframing violent and maltreatment deaths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violent Deaths</th>
<th>Maltreatment Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Homicide</td>
<td>Overt Filicide 23 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (3%)</td>
<td>Covert Filicide 4 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatal Assaults</td>
<td>Severe, persistent child cruelty 2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>Extreme Neglect 4 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maltreatment-related Deaths 87 (44%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not maltreatment-related/Category not clear 22 (11%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2011-14 SCR data, n=197
Patterns of fatal maltreatment, England 2011-14
n=197
Violent Child Deaths, England, 2011-14

Rates per 100,000

- SCR data
- ONS data
- Home Office data

Graph showing the rates of violent child deaths per 100,000 across different age groups from less than 1 year to 15-17 years.
# Violent child deaths, 2011-14

## Annual Numbers (Rates per 100,000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>SCR Data N (Rate)</th>
<th>ONS Data N (Rate)</th>
<th>Home Office N (Rate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1*</td>
<td>26 (3.78)</td>
<td>18 (2.46)</td>
<td>18 (2.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>15 (0.56)</td>
<td>21 (0.73)</td>
<td>19 (0.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>6 (0.19)</td>
<td>12 (0.36)</td>
<td>9 (0.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>6 (0.19)</td>
<td>16 (0.50)</td>
<td>5 (0.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (0-14)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Collating and interpreting data on child maltreatment fatalities

- Don’t rely on a single data source
- Distinguish direct maltreatment fatalities from deaths related to maltreatment
- Agree age bands
- Agree categories for inclusion
- Audit the quality of data
Some conclusions

- The number of child deaths from violence and maltreatment has fallen
- There are around 50-80 deaths per year as a result of child maltreatment; 26-28 are directly caused by maltreatment
- Rates are highest in infancy, with a second peak in adolescence
- Be wary of anyone who claims to be able to tell you the true figure of child homicide!