

Disabled children: numbers, characteristics and local service provision

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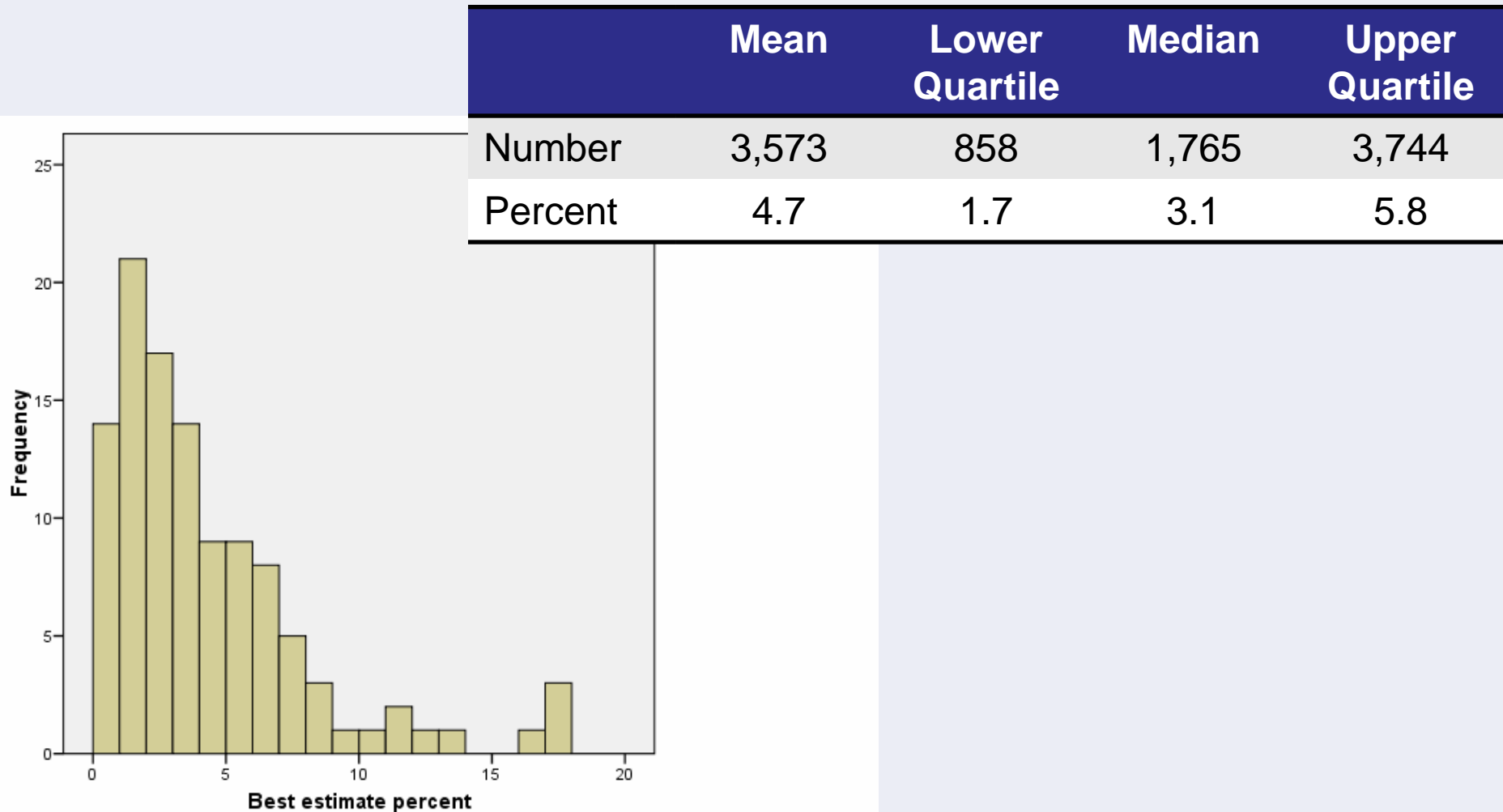
Aims of the study

- To assess the prevalence and characteristics of children with disabilities in England and the services provided to them
- To analyse and report on how disability is defined and recorded
- To examine the difficulties that local authorities may have in providing this information
- To suggest what might be done to address these difficulties

Methods

- Initial scoping work with 4 local authorities
- Design and piloting of electronic survey
- Survey sent in January 2008 to all 150 Directors of Children's Services, and copied to the person best placed to complete it
- After reminders, response rate of 77%
- Follow up telephone calls to 10 of the 35 non-responding authorities

Findings: assessing prevalence



Estimate or count?

	Frequency	Percent
Estimate	32	29
Count	76	69
Not known if estimate or count	2	2
Total	110	100
Not answered	5	

Sources for count

	Frequency	Percent
Children Act Register	23	30.3
Social care	37	48.7
SEN:	57	75.0
<i>with statement</i>	(27)	(35.5)
<i>with/without</i>	(17)	(22.4)
<i>statement</i>	(13)	(17.1)
<i>not stated</i>		
PCT	14	18.4
Other sources	12	15.8
Total	76	100.0

Alternative sources

	Mean	Standard Deviation
All SEN pupils (Primary/Secondary)	9,255	7,005
FRS estimate: 7.3%	5,352	4,144
Survey	3,573	5,377
Limiting long-term illness: Census 2001	3,183	2,342
OPCS estimate: 3.2%	2,346	1,817
In receipt of Disability Living Allowance	1,894	1,494
Total pupils with SEN statements: 2007	1,527	1,223

Upper and lower bounds

	Number			Percent		
	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile
Lower bound	1034	1424	2298	2.58	2.96	3.32
Upper bound	1833	2617	4156	4.79	5.44	5.97

Assessing local service provision

- Q. How many children with disabilities known to the children with disabilities team(s) are receiving social care services?

- Q. How many children with disabilities receive the following services? (list of 10)

- Q. How many children with disabilities receive specialist services provided by the PCT?

- Q. How many children with disabilities receive the following services provided by the PCT? (list of 7)

Difficult to obtain comparable information

- Differing definitions of disability
- Mainstream access or specialist referral
- Sharing information between agencies
- Different categorisations and interpretations of services
- Timeframe for service provision
- Multiple service use

What would help in calculating a figure for disabled children?

	Count	Percent
Shared or compatible databases between agencies	102	91
Reaching agreement on definitions/criteria	96	86
Sufficient resourcing for maintaining database(s)	86	77
Good communication between agencies	86	77
Importance of this information recognised	83	74
Good IT systems	81	72
Active, well-maintained Children Act Register	66	59
Other (e.g. more guidance from central government; data protection protocols)	23	21
Total	112	100

Conclusions

- It is not possible at present to provide reliable national information on disabled children and the services they receive
- Without such information, it is difficult to assess and compare how well needs are being met
- There is no single 'correct' definition of disability
- But central government needs to agree a common definition for comparable data to be collected
- It will take time (and resources) to develop better systems, but there is recognition that this needs to happen