

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES AND TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 9
7 JANUARY 2013	Public Report

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer(s) – Sue Westcott
Contact Details - 863606

CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

1. PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Improvement programme.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 To note the progress made on the core strategy.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

3.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy identifies "Improving Health" and "Supporting Vulnerable People" as priorities. Improvement in Children's Social Care is key to the delivery of these priorities.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Following an Ofsted Inspection in August 2011, the Council has engaged in a programme to secure rapid improvement. This improvement will be driven by three key elements:

- The Children's Services Improvement Programme
- The Core Strategy which focuses effort on what we must prioritise
- The leadership of Members and officers in delivering the required changes

4.2 The Council's progress is closely monitored both internally and externally by this Committee, the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group and the External Improvement Board.

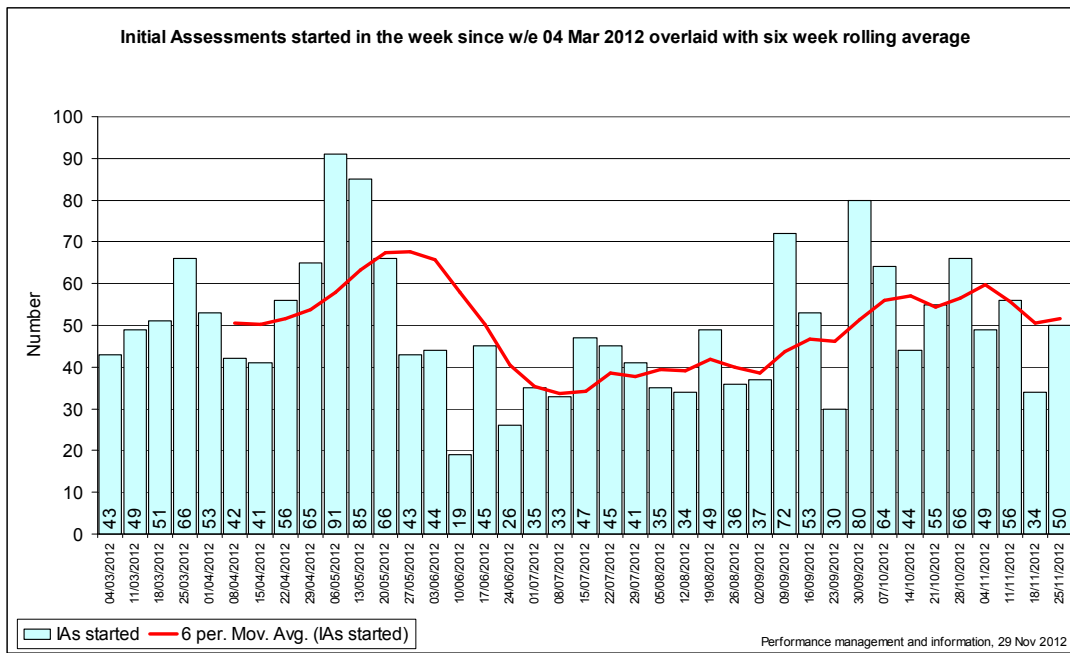
5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Highlights

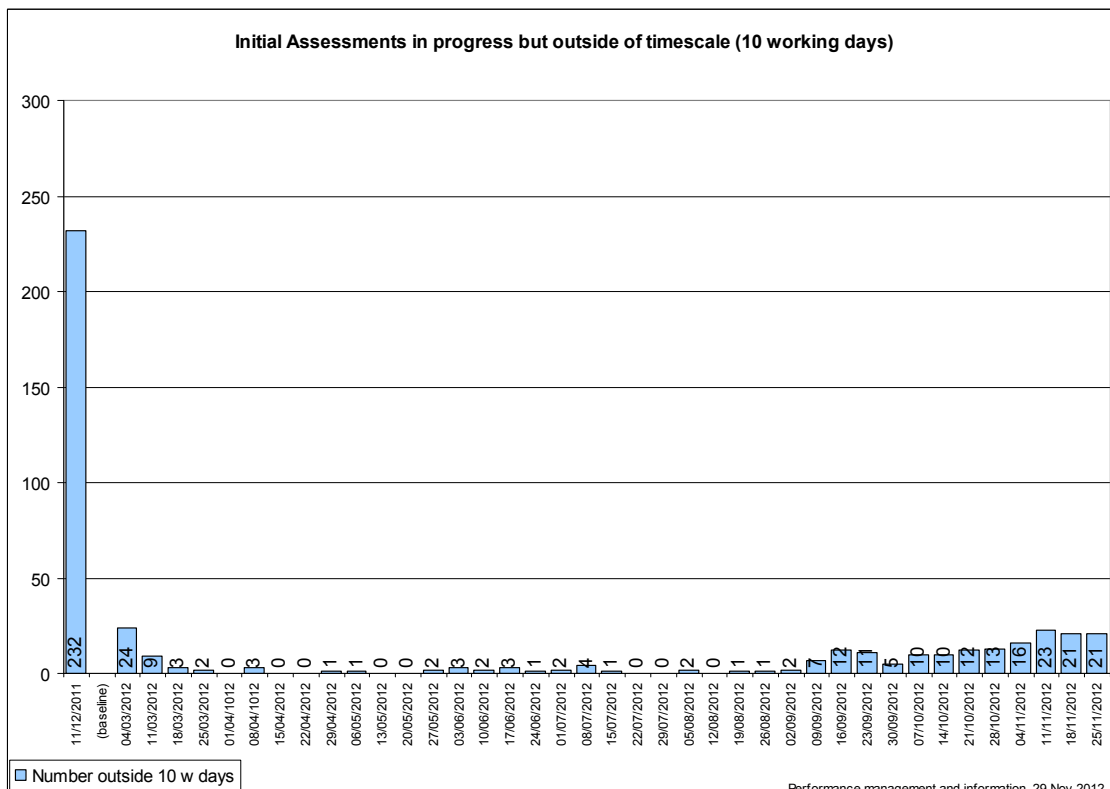
- Strong performance continues on timeliness in the referral and assessment service. Our year to date figures in September show we have completed 97.1% of initial assessments within 10 days and 85.9% of core assessments within 35 days. There continue to be few outstanding assessments and those completed out of timescale only miss the due date by a few days.
- The underlying figures for completion of core assessments in October do, however, show a deterioration to 70% completed on time. This is principally in the long-term teams and is largely (paradoxically) due to chasing down the numbers incomplete out of timescale.
- We have seen significant improvement in recording of visits to children with a plan at 94% on time and statutory visits to looked after children with 97% on time. Each week a list is provided to the Assistant Director of missed visits and explanations sought. A new report has been produced which highlights the length of time any visit is outstanding to assist this process.

5.2 Initial Assessments

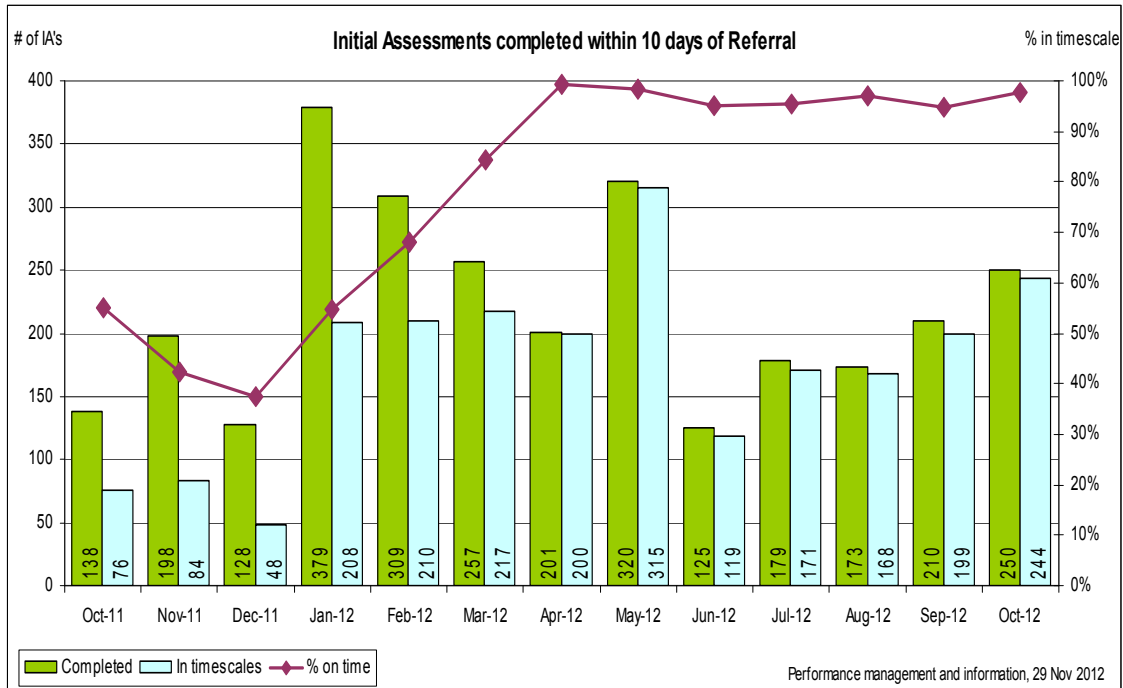
Assessment volumes have slightly reduced in November compared to September and October.



The following chart shows the numbers of initial assessments open and out of timescale. This has been consistently around the 20+ mark for the last few weeks. We are trying to ensure that work is completed and closed off to an adequate standard rather than slavishly meeting the 10 day timescale. This will, however, require focussed attention as the risks of slowly re-acquiring a backlog of assessments is self-evident.

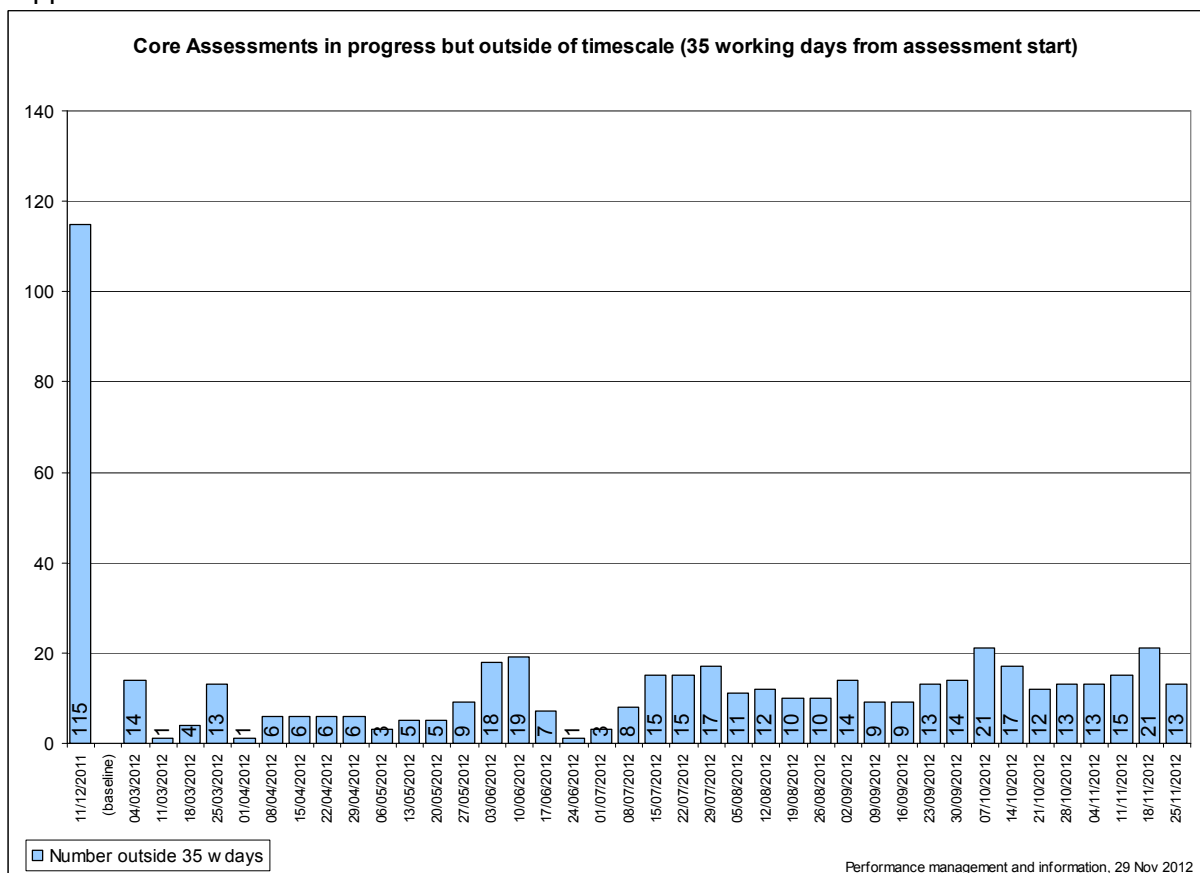


Nonetheless timeliness of initial assessments remains extremely strong averaging 97% all year.

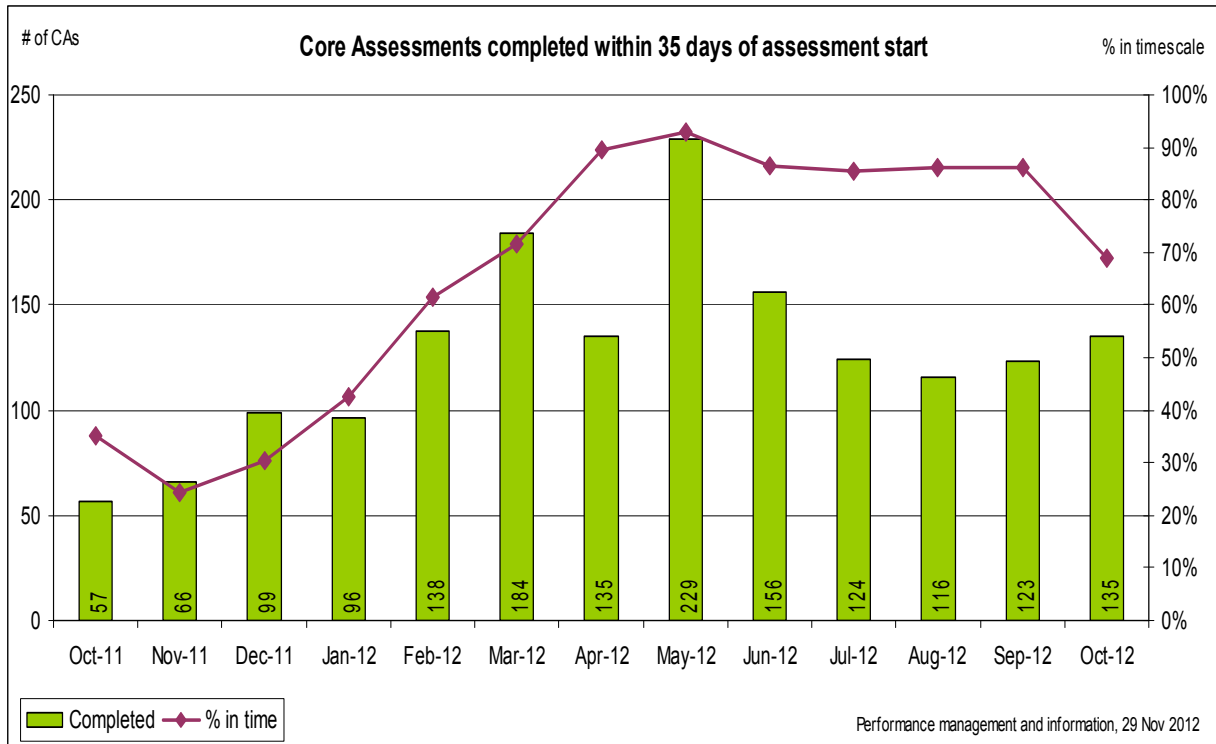


5.3 Core Assessments

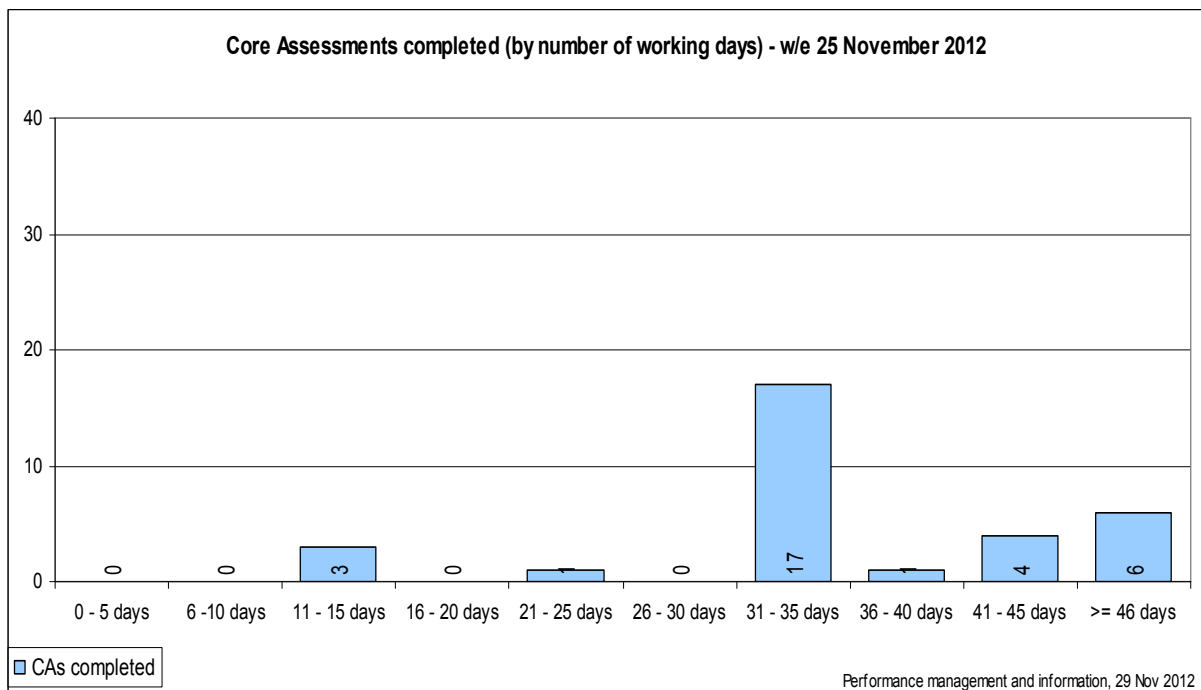
There remain very few core assessments out of timescale and these are largely in the family support teams and are re-assessments.



Timeliness remains very strong as can be seen by the following chart with 86% completed on time this year. However, as can be seen, October did show a deterioration in performance. Volumes of core assessments remain consistently too high (target 68 per month).



The spread of completion dates reflects that the predominant activity is around the 30 to 35 day mark and the 11 post 35 days have impacted on our % completion rate this month.



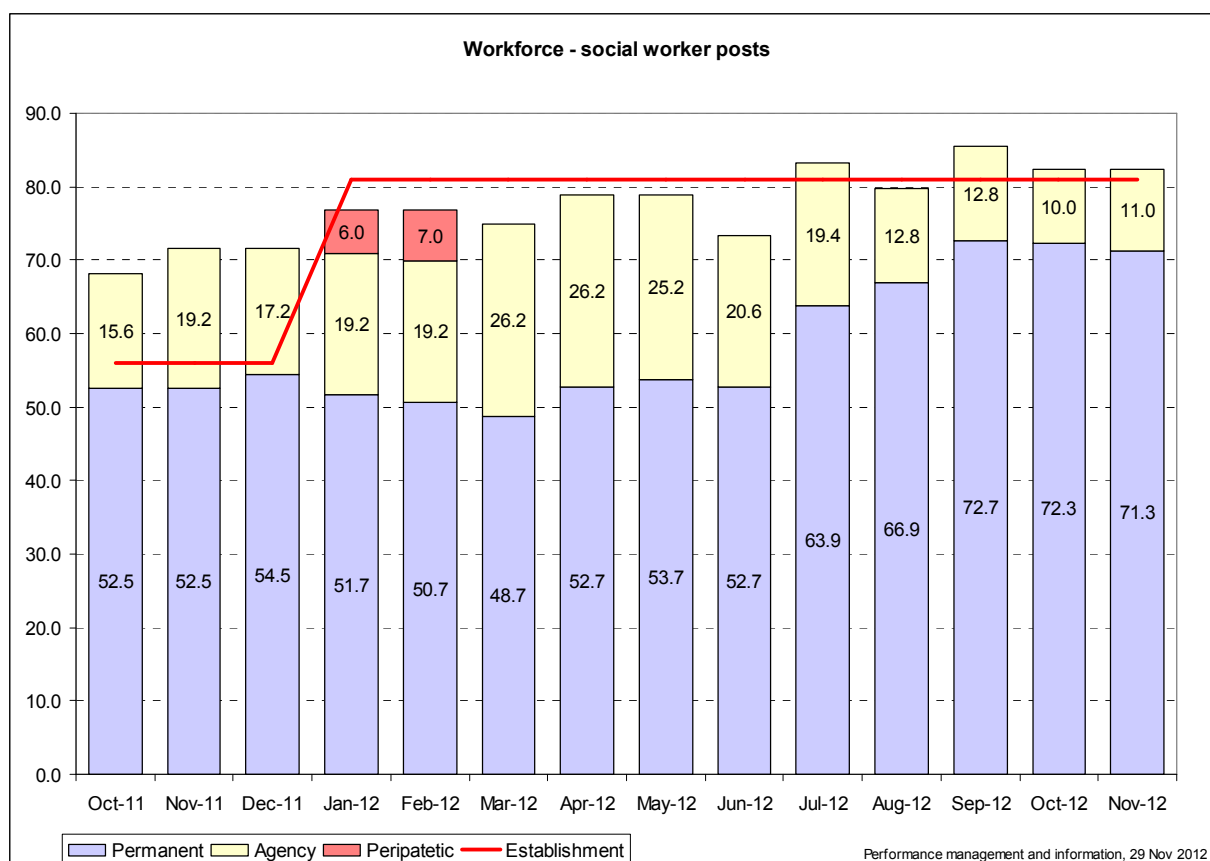
5.4 Workforce

The Head & Heart recruitment advertising campaign continues, however, during the last month applications have reduced which is not unexpected for the time of year.

The current social worker vacancy rate as at 26 November 2012 is 10.7fte (13%) against the establishment of 81fte. There are 1.4fte in the recruitment pipeline who have been offered a permanent post. The use of agency staff has significantly reduced since the start of the campaign and is currently running at 11.0fte (12% of the establishment). This has significantly reduced from February 2012 which sat at 26.2 FTE (32%).

Peterborough City Council attended both the COMPASS Careers Fair and the Community Care Live events during November, with a dedicated Head and Heart stand and promotional materials. There was much interest from NQSW's at these events and details were collected for when this recruitment campaign/cycle launches in the spring/summer. Interest was also seen from experienced social workers/managers who were particularly interested in the relocation package and cost of living in Peterborough. Results from a questionnaire have provided useful information on the top benefits social workers consider and also their favoured advertising channel. This will help inform the campaign going forward.

In November CMT approved a variation to the terms and conditions of social workers to put them on a three month notice period. This will help reduce the gap between a social worker's departure and the arrival of their permanent replacement.



5.5 Summary

Progress has been sustained throughout this period. The major challenges remain:

- Putting in place a permanent middle management tier
- Attracting capable first line managers
- Sustaining good performance of both timeliness and quality

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The cost of the improvement programme can be met from within existing budgets. Resources are available to secure improvement in the immediate and longer term.
- 6.2 The Secretary of State has the power to issue a statutory notice if he is not satisfied that sufficient progress is being made.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 Partner agencies, parents and children will be involved in the improvement activity.

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 This Committee will continue to receive a regular update on progress and the Task and Finish Group will meet monthly to support the improvement.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 9.1
- Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding: Peterborough 6th September 2011
 - Ofsted Unannounced Inspection of contact referral and assessment arrangements 3rd March 2011
 - Ofsted Safeguarding and Looked after Children Inspection: Peterborough 21st May 2010

10. APPENDICES

10.1 None