

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES & TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 6
11 MARCH 2013	Public Report

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Improvement programme and present the refreshed Delivery Plan.

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

Ofsted have since inspected our safeguarding services recently, details of which are in a separate report to this Committee.

- 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.

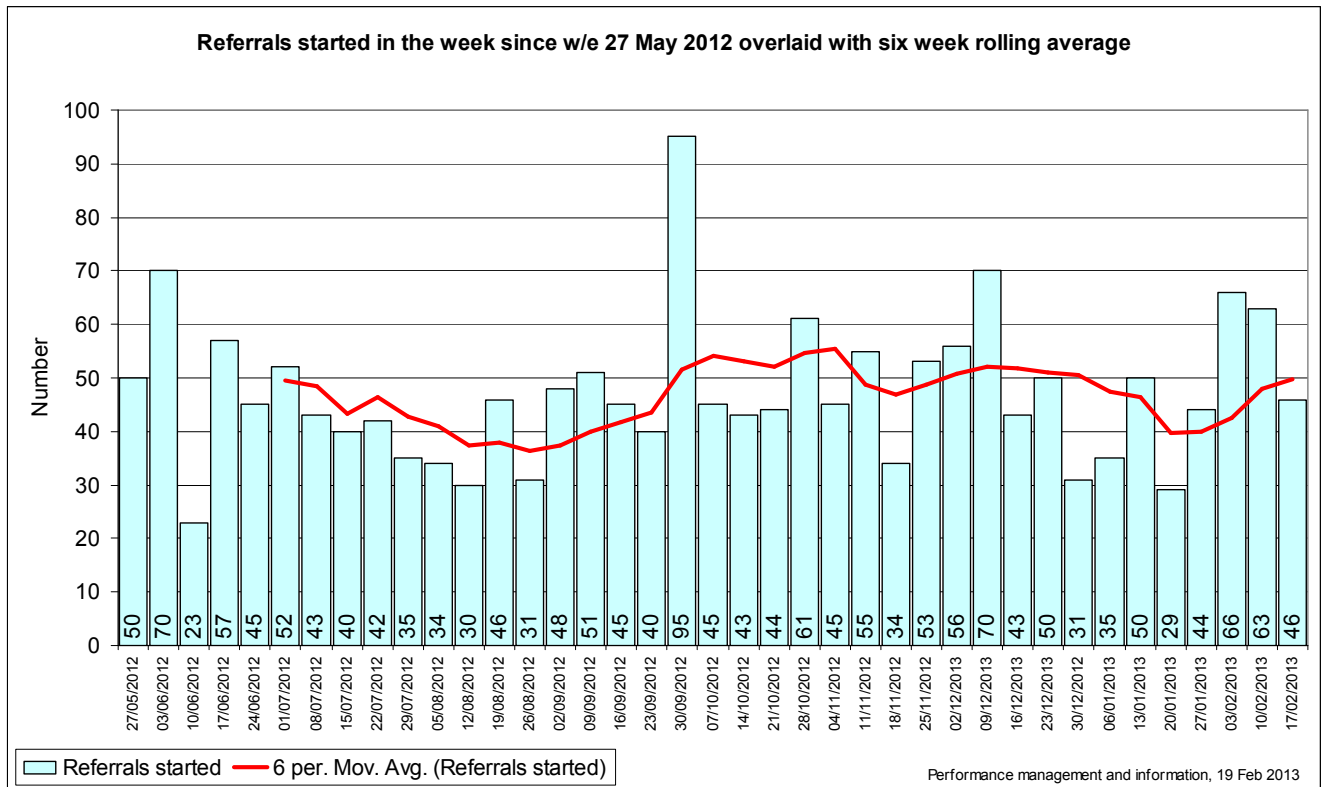
5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Highlights

- Children Services has a refreshed vision and new single delivery plan (appendix 1)
- The number of referrals starting in a week is running at an average of approximately 50 a week from an all time high of 70 in December.
- The number of initial assessments within timescale in January 2013 has decreased slightly but the year end position remains relatively stable at over 90% which is fantastic performance.
- The number of Core Assessments in January 2013 remains high at almost double the target and is higher than our statistical neighbour. This is attributable to the large number of Strategy meetings being conducted which necessitate opening a Core on Liquidlogic.
- The number of Children becoming subject to a plan has slightly decreased in January 2013, but remains high at over 35.3 % higher than target.
- The number of CAFs is increasing
- Re- referrals is high

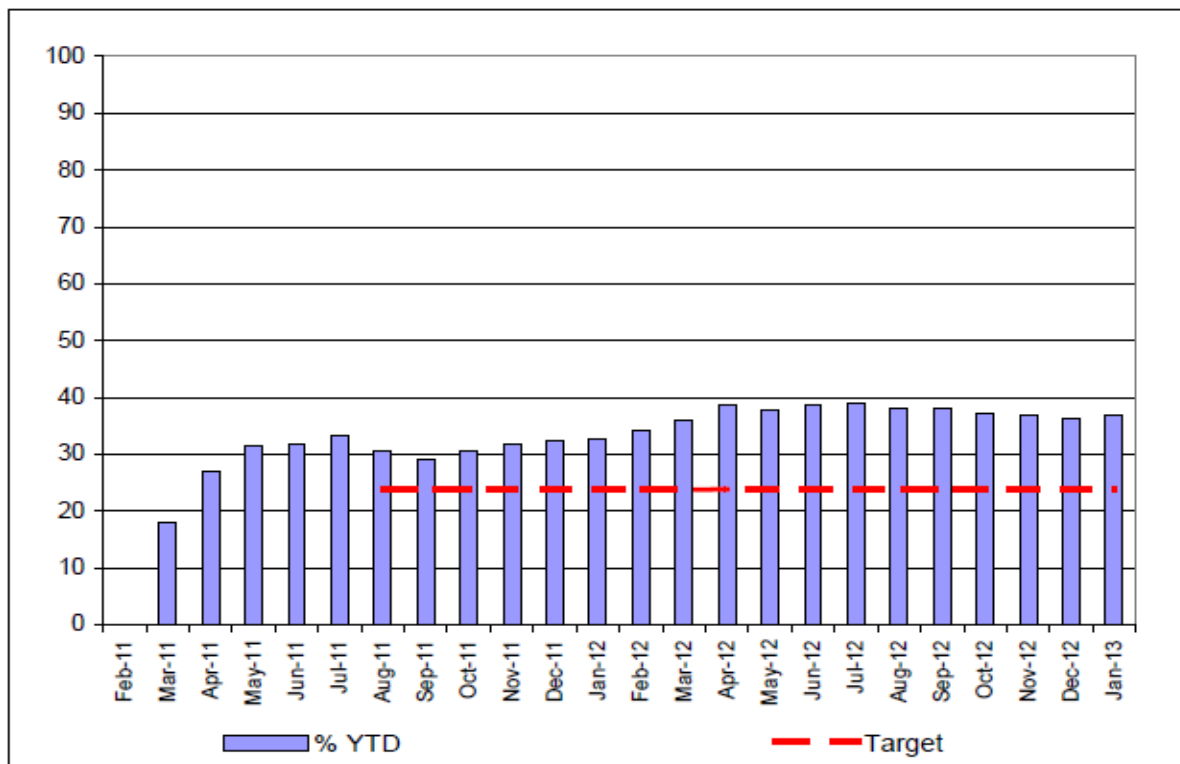
- The Ofsted Inspection conducted from 28 January to 6 February 2013 identifies that there are no children at risk of significant harm in the service (see separate report)

5.2 Referrals started in the week



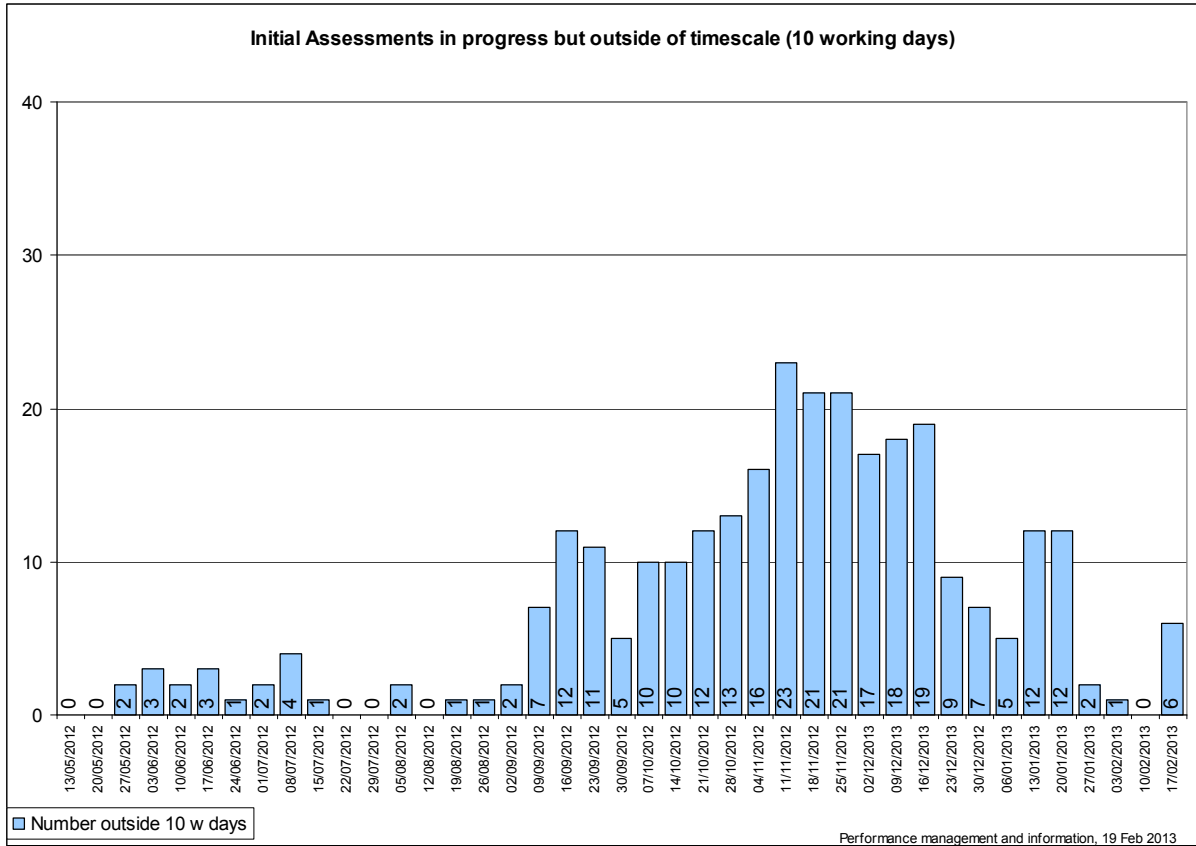
5.3 Re-referrals

The percentage of re-referrals at the end of January 2013 is 36.9% against a target of 21%. We are conducting an audit to ascertain the reasons for this .We consider it is the large number of repeat domestic violence incidents.

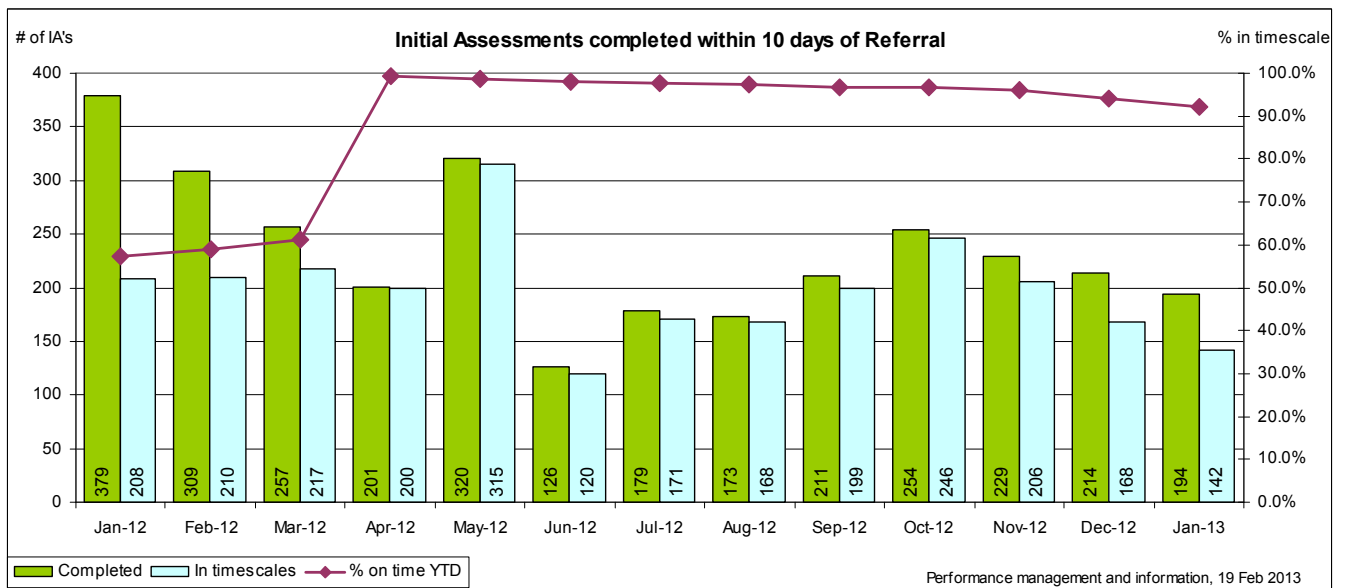


5.4 Initial Assessments

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, but is now reducing to an average of about 10.

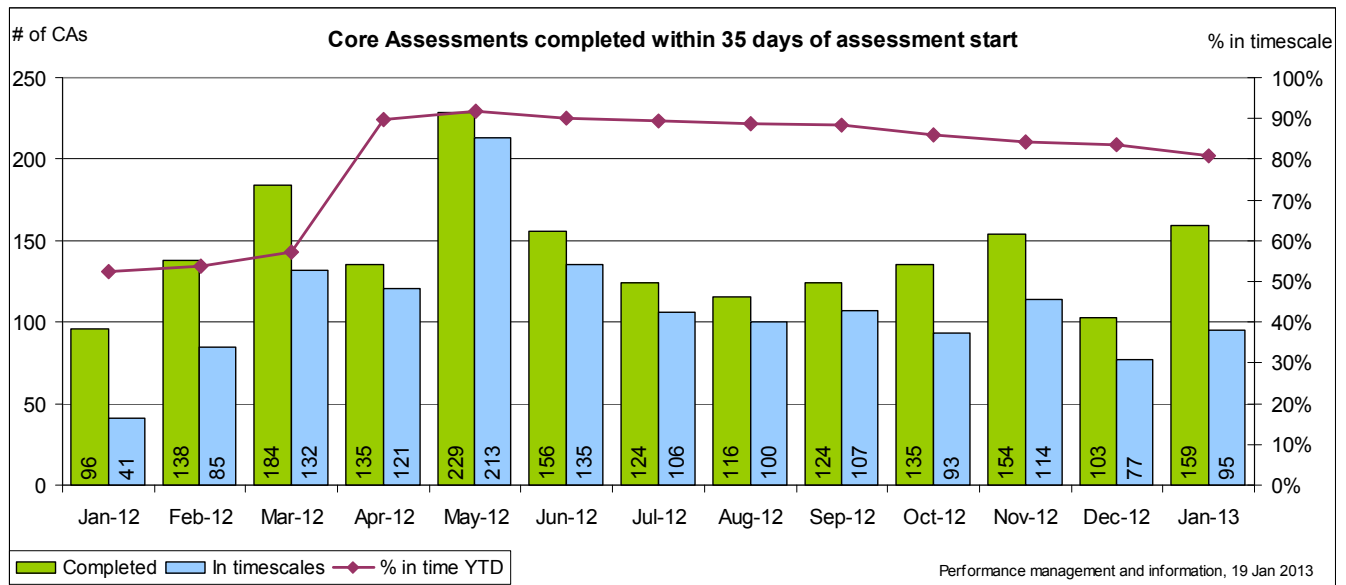


Nonetheless timeliness of initial assessments remains extremely strong averaging 92% all year.



5.5 Core Assessments

The number of Core assessments completed in timescale has decreased commensurate with a rise in the number completed.



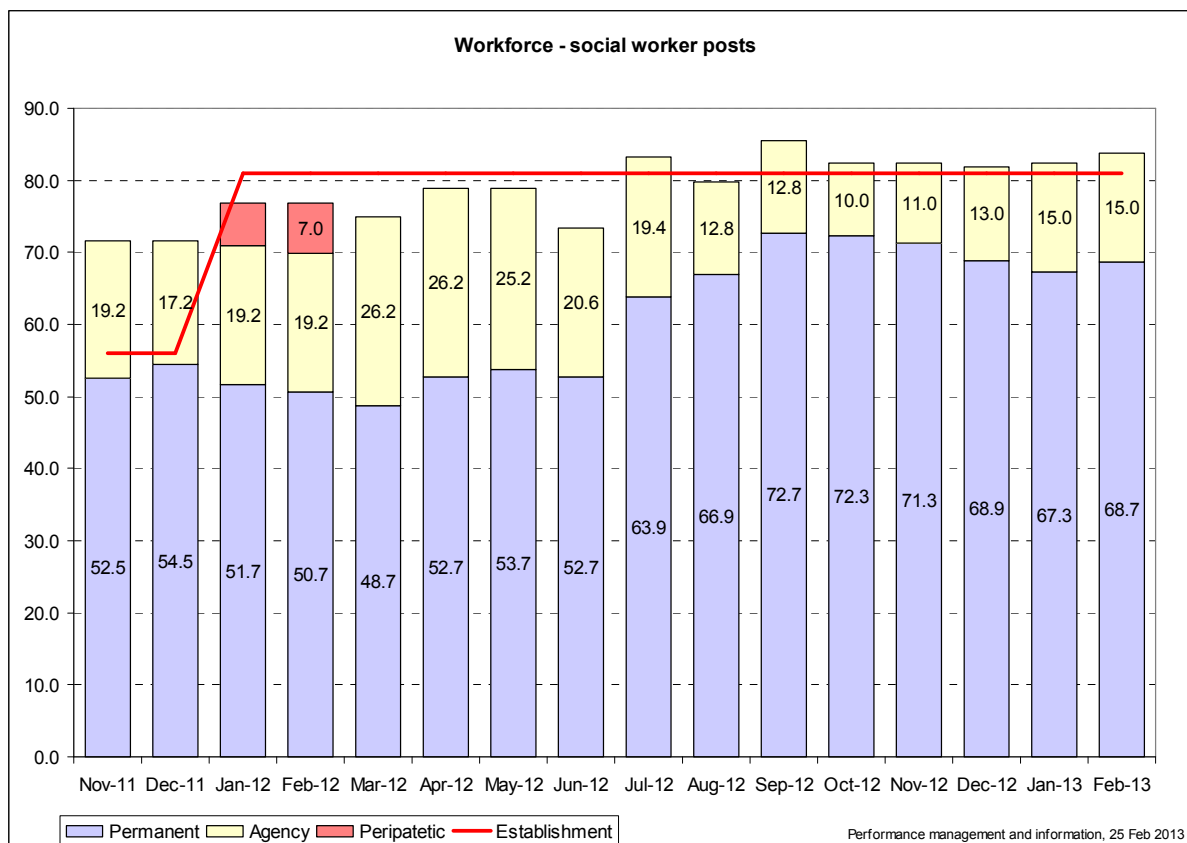
Timeliness remains very strong with 80% completed in timescale.

5.6 Workforce

The Head & Heart recruitment advertising campaign continues, however applications have reduced and we consider that the power of the logo has lost some of its initial impact. We have met with Hunter Lodge and agreed a strategy for a new marketing campaign targeted at team managers and demonstrating in the light of the OFSTED outcome a stronger and quality service.

The permanent vacancy rate is 12.3fte against the establishment of 81fte. (11 of which are covered by agency workers). This indicates a slight rise and is due to a slow down in the number of applications received for social worker posts and a small number of leavers. A refresh of the successful Head and Heart campaign is planned for the month of March to attract a new cohort of both experienced and newly qualified social workers to Peterborough. The refreshed campaign will detail our successes to date.

In November, CMT approved a variation to the terms and conditions of social workers to put them on a three month notice period. Upon agreement with the Employment Committee and the Unions, this was implemented during January. Management were keen to implement this approach to further improve recruitment and retention in Children's Social Care and aid workforce stability. This is now a contractual requirement for all new social workers. The existing social care workers employed on either pay scale 9 or 10 are shortly to be offered the equal opportunity to convert to this three month notice period. The advanced practitioners, who are currently on pay scale 12, already have a contractual three month notice period as this is standard practice for those on the Grade 12 pay band and above.



Workforce Social Work Posts:

The total fte for February 2013 is 83.7, made up of 68.7 fte permanent staff and 15 agency staff; three agency staff are covering maternity leave. This gives us a vacancy rate of 12.3 fte permanent staff with 1.3 posts not currently covered.

5.7 Member Visits Update

- Cllr Shaheed has been offered the opportunity to visit Claire Lodge anytime week commencing 11th March. A tentative date has been booked for 14th March; Brian Moss to confirm. (Brian is currently on annual leave)
- Cllr Shabbir will be visiting the Leaving Care Team on 28th February
- Alistair Kingsley and Cllr Harper visited floor two on Tuesday 12th February to see a demonstration of Liquidlogic and speak to staff about the end user experience

5.8 Refreshed Vision and Priorities

Children's Services DMT has refreshed its vision and priorities within an updated Improvement Plan which is now being referred to as the Delivery Plan. (see appendix 1)

Our vision is: "One Children's Service – Helping children be their best"

Our priorities are:

- Providing Children and Families with Early Support
- Helping Families with Problems and Keeping Children Safe
- Giving the best Opportunities to Children and Young People in Care
- Supporting our staff to be outstanding

I have set key actions for a delivery plan which is realistic and achievable and builds upon our improvement journey. The new improvement plan includes actions to improve our education attainment and to deliver on our Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy. Our CP External Improvement Board will continue to monitor our CP priorities and actions.

5.9 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
- A possible forthcoming LAC inspection which we are beginning to prepare for

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
 - Ofsted Local Authority Arrangements for the Protection of Children: inspection report 8 March 2013

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 Children's Services Delivery Plan