

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES & TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 8
9 SEPTEMBER 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 since the last committee meeting in July 2013.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the progress made with continued improvement.

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 Single Delivery Plan
- The Ofsted Action Plan which focuses effort on what we must prioritise
- The leadership of Members and officers in delivering the required changes

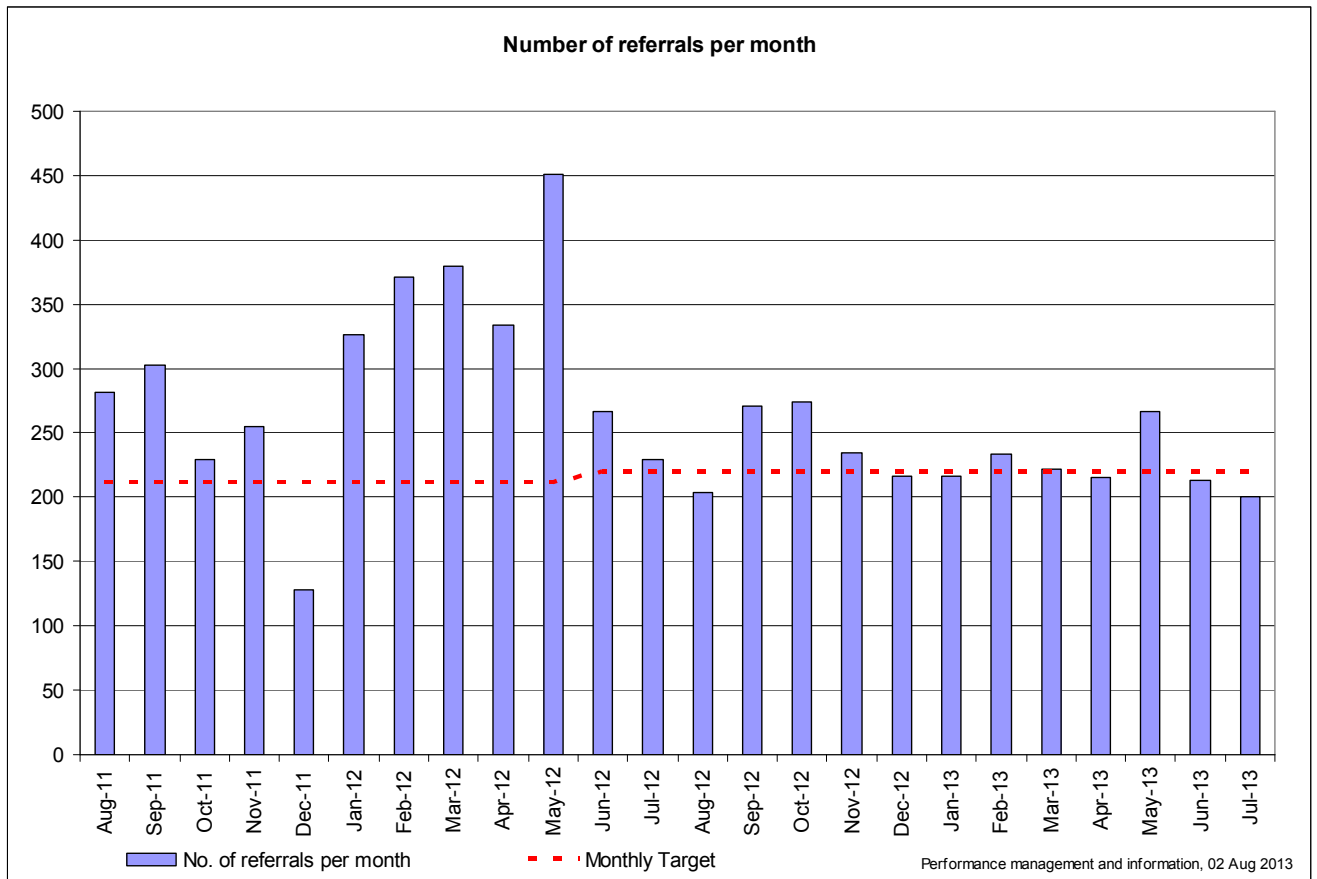
- 4.2 The Council's progress is closely monitored both internally and externally by this Committee, the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group and the External Improvement Board.

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Highlights

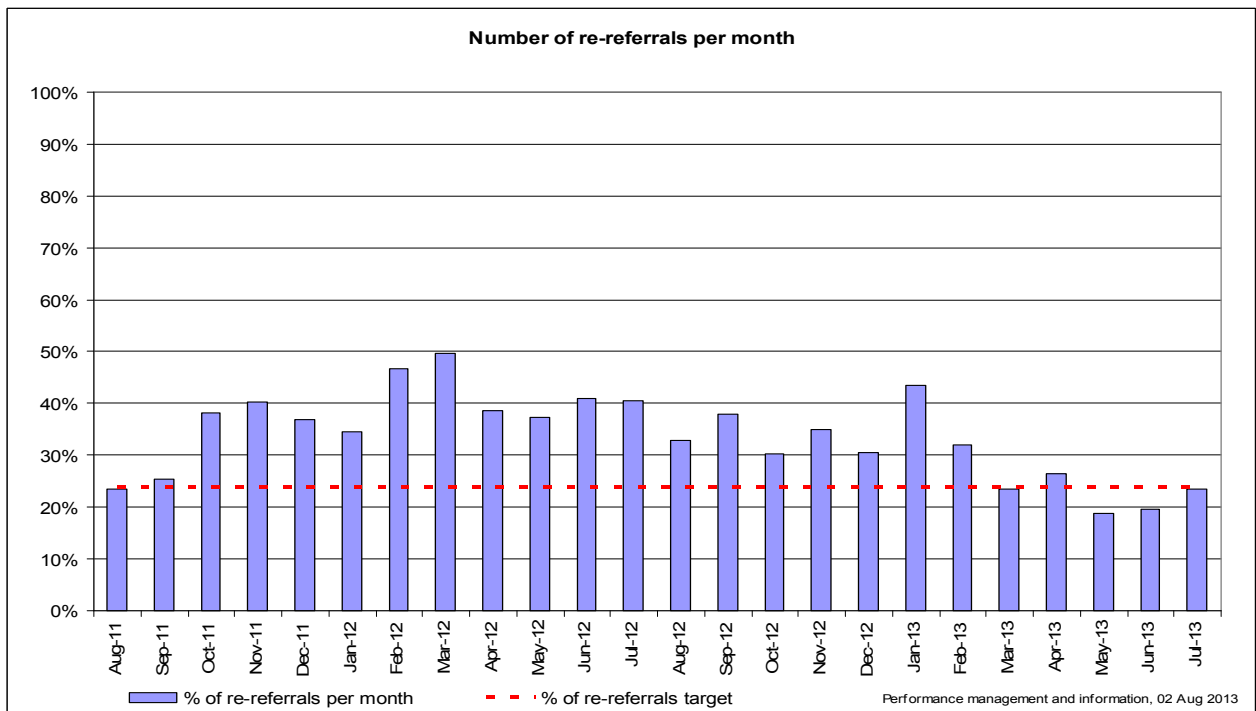
- Slight decrease in referrals
- Continued decrease in re-referrals
- Initial Assessments in timescales reduced
- Number of CAFs increased
- Raising quality

5.2 Referrals



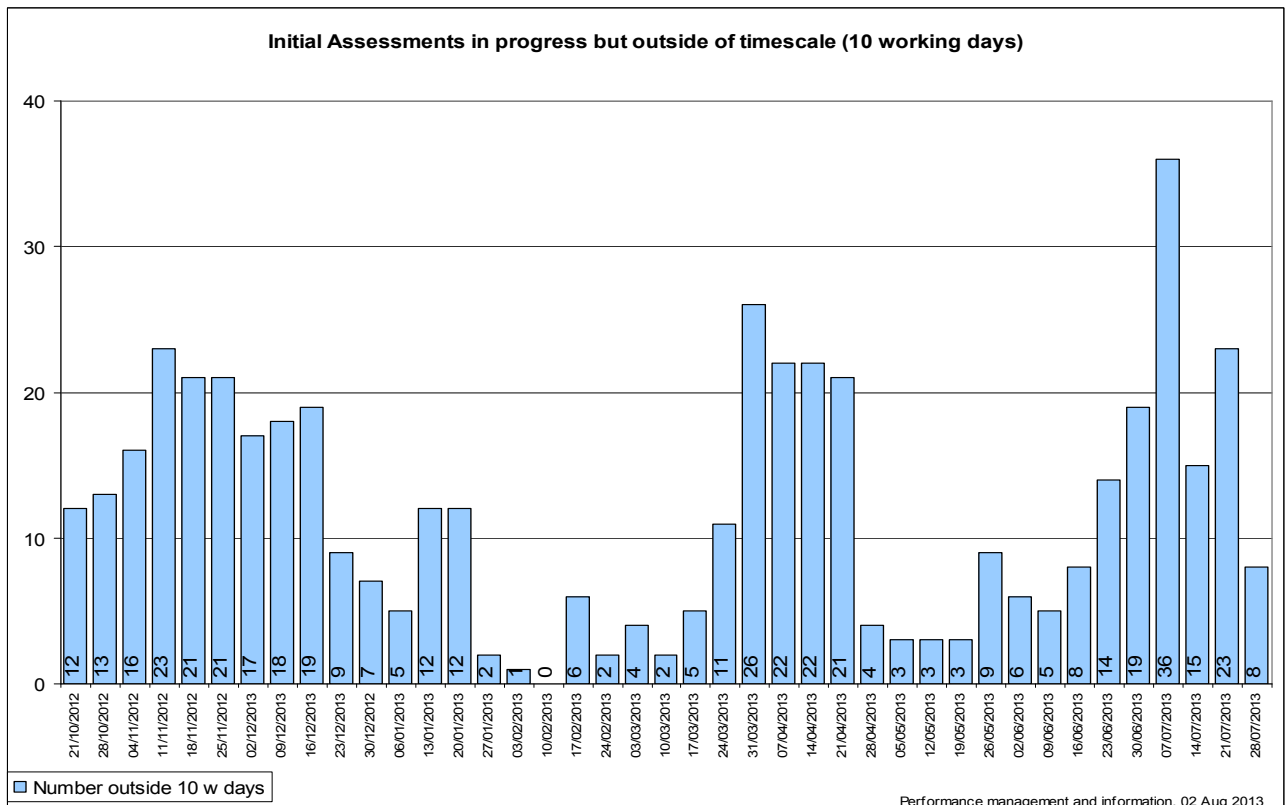
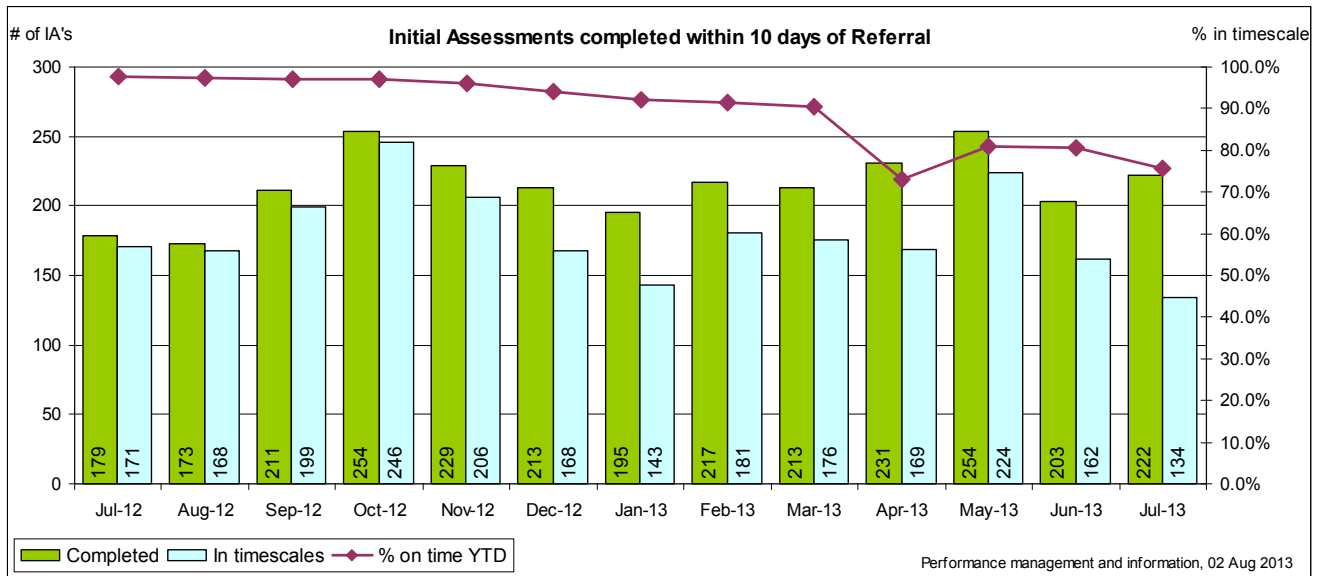
The number of referrals has continued to show a decrease with a reduction in July to 208 from 214. The rate is 616.7, being the lowest rate seen since January 2012.

5.3 Re-referrals



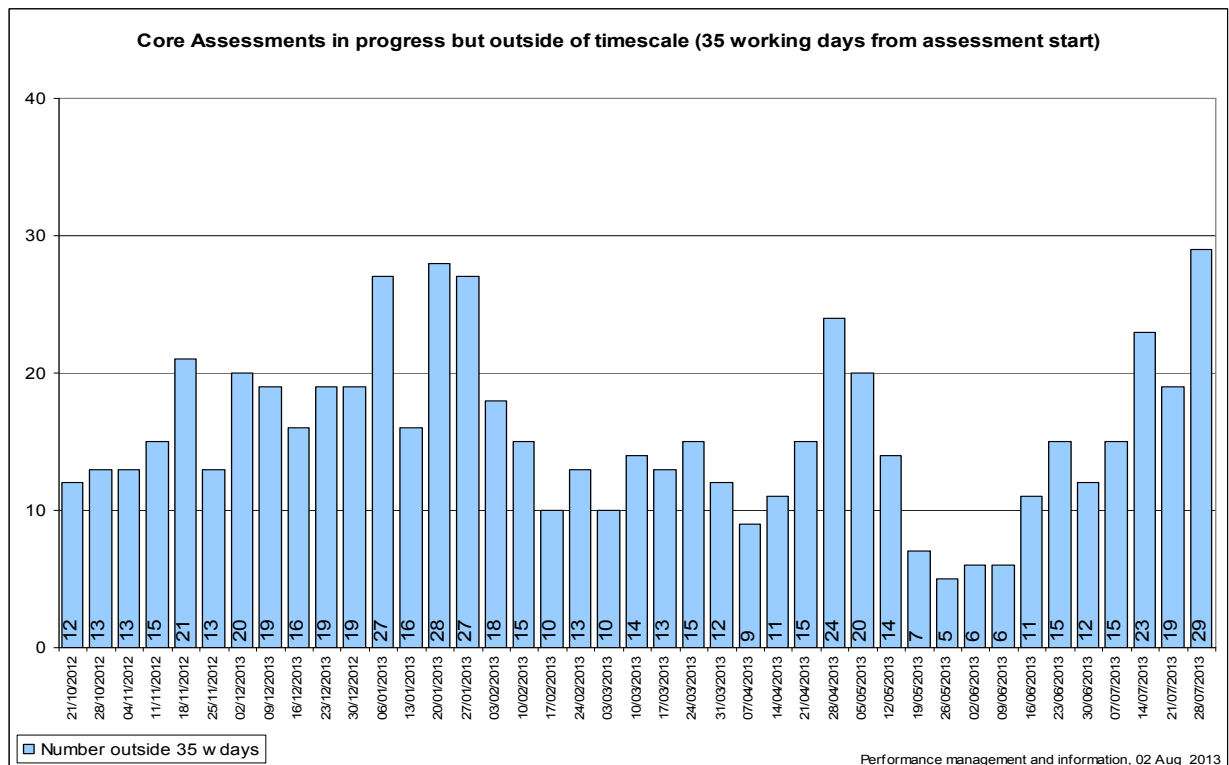
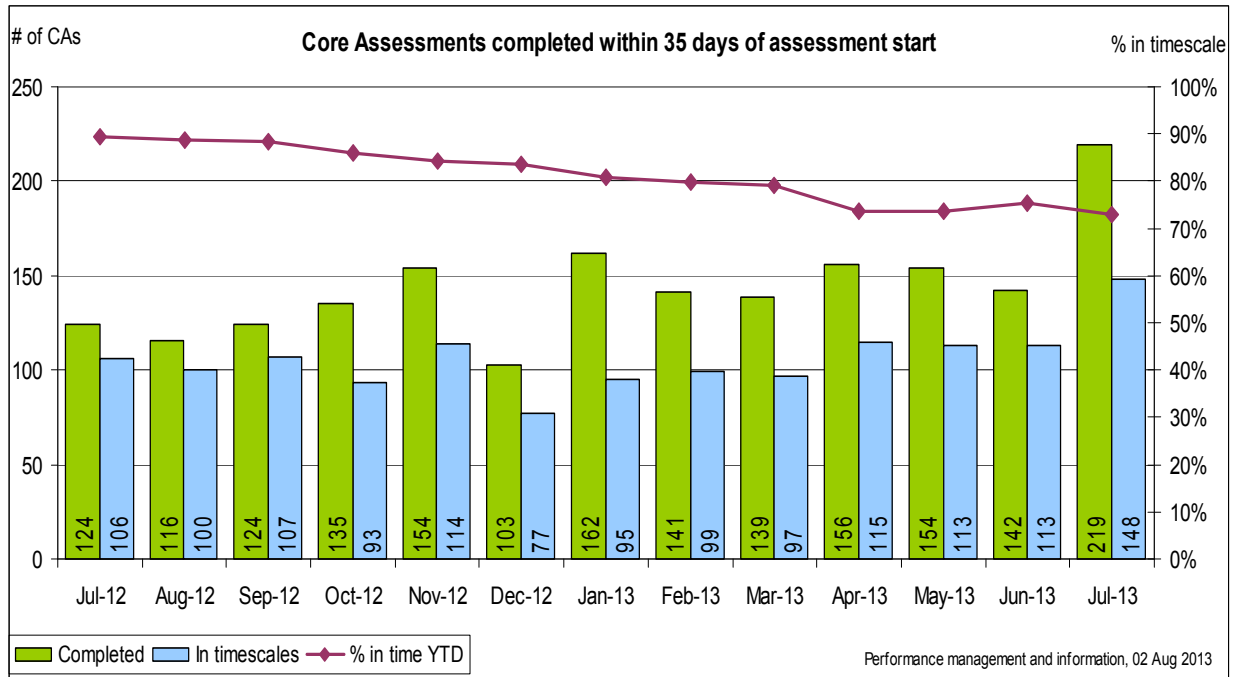
Out of the 208 referrals, 47 were repeats within 12 months (22.6%). This takes the re-referral year to date percentage to 21.7% which is 2.2% lower than target for the second consecutive month and now well within target.

5.4 Initial Assessments



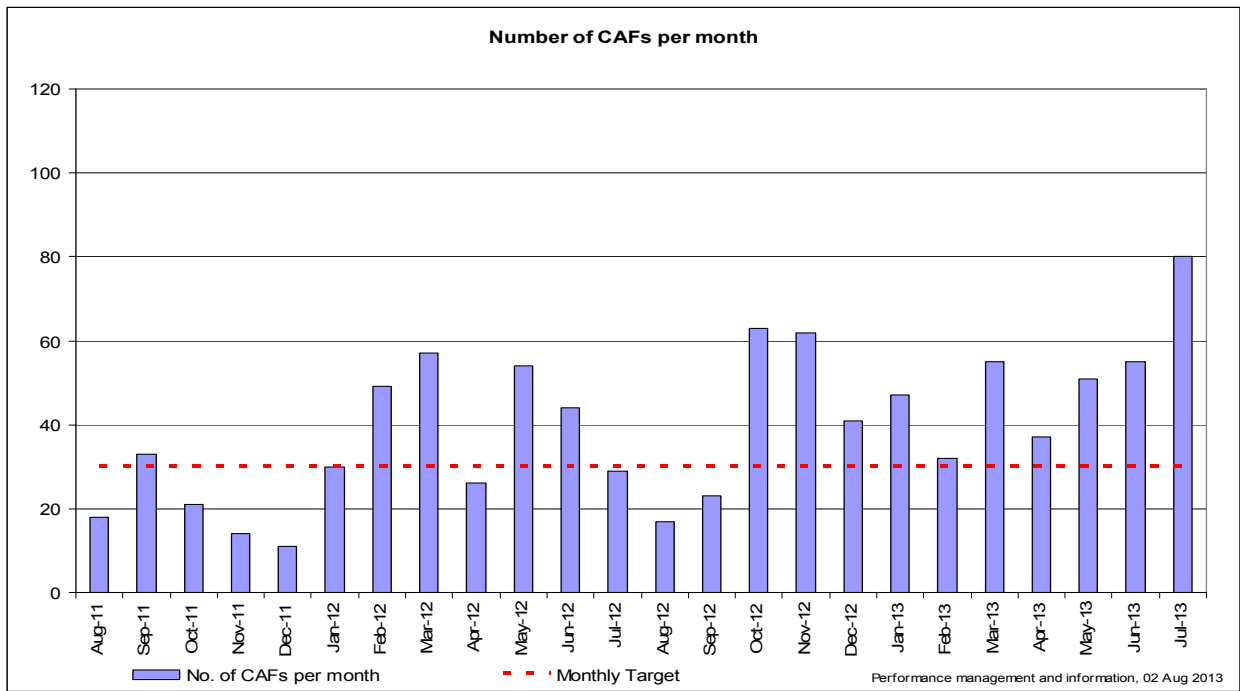
222 initial assessments were completed in the month, of which 134 were in time with 88 outside. This is 1.9% below the year to date target, but significantly lower than this time last year when the percentage was 97.6% in timescale. This is down to the reconfiguration of the front door with the move to an enhanced screening function and staff moving to the Family Support Team. There had also been two members of staff leave to a neighbouring authority for additional money and one permanent member of staff departing for personal reasons. This change and staff shortage impacted upon timescales. The Head of Service is working hard to restore the performance. There are currently 36 unallocated cases owing to staff shortage and these are being allocated. We have now recruited agency staff to fill the gaps in the service.

5.5 Core Assessments



124 core assessments were completed in the month of which 106 were in timescale. The year to date figure for Core Assessment timescales is 77.6% which is above target by 2.5%, although it is lower than last year at 89.3%. The number of core assessments remains relatively stable.

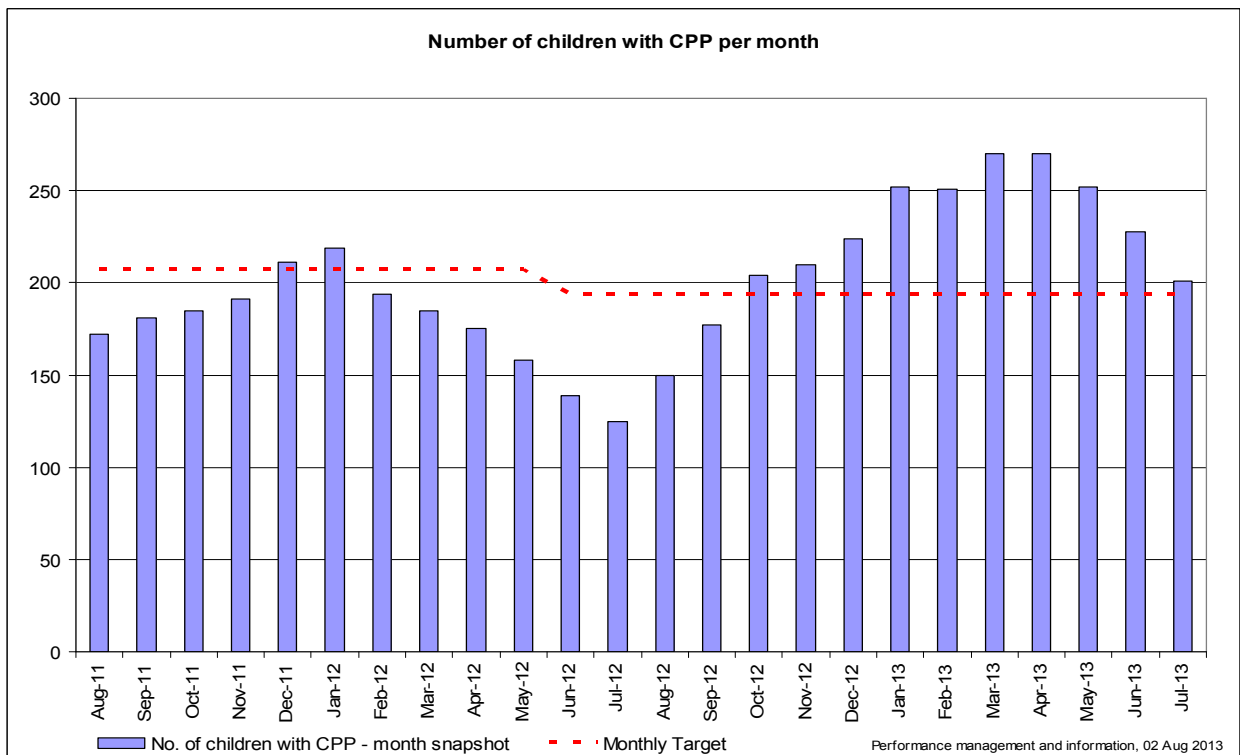
5.6 CAFs



The number of CAFs has increased by 25 from the previous month to 80 completed. The rate is 125.1 per 10,000 which is 54.8 % higher than our target of 80.8%.

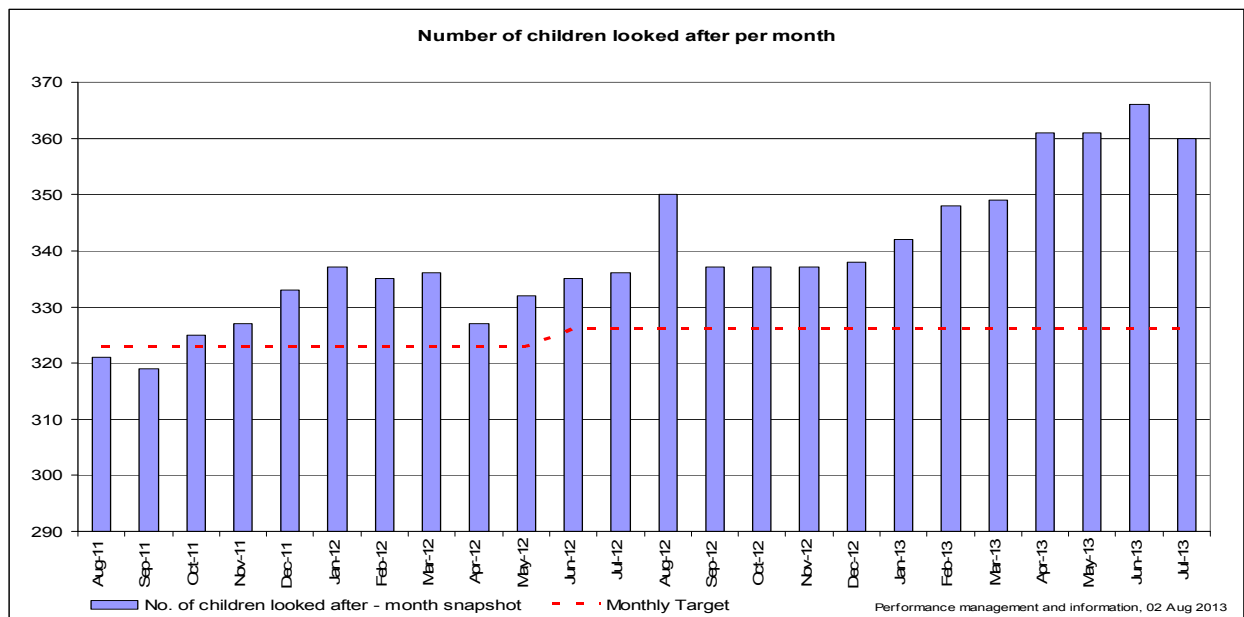
This illustrates that more assessments and interventions with family are taking place at an earlier stage and/or that need is being identified early on.

5.7 Child Protection Plans



The number of Child Protection Plans has continued to drop, now at 201 (from 227 in June 2013). The rate is 44.7 and is 1.1% above target. This number now needs to hold steady after a fall in July 2012 and a subsequent rise in January – May 2013. The numbers have stabilised owing to better gate-keeping by the CP chairs, ensuring children in need plans are in place and setting the decision making for conferences with team managers.

5.8 Children Looked After



A rise in the number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan generally denotes a rise in the number of children becoming accommodated as the threshold is lowered for care. The number of children accommodated at the end of June is at 360, a decrease of 2 compared to the previous month. The rate at 80.0 per 10,000 is 8.1% above target. We are working hard to stabilise this figure by ensuring that all assessments and support is in place prior to implementing the PLO, which is the spirit of the legislation. This needs to reduce by 6% to reach our target which is consistent with statistical neighbours.

5.9 Restructure

Plans are being developed to re-shape the referral, assessment and family support service, the first stage of which was implemented in June, with some of the team managers changing teams and additional resources being placed into the screening of contacts.

It is proposed that there will be an 'Access' team that will more robustly screen contacts and both gather and share information as appropriate, leading to more consistent and timely threshold decisions. Contacts not resulting in a social care assessment will receive a proactive response that might include: the provision of information, advice, or guidance; onward referral; or re-direction. The team will also conduct S47 Strategy discussions and hold S47 enquiries.

Assessment and Family Support teams will be developed utilising much of the resources currently in R&A and aligned to Locality boundaries in order to strengthen partnership and locality-based working and will hold all non-S47 assessments and casework. This will reduce the number of currently built-in transfers between teams and changes in case worker and ultimately lead to a better experience for children and families. Apart from moving much of the assessment activity (S17) currently held in R&A this means little disruption to the family support teams. A single assessment tool is being developed.

5.10 Quality Assurance

The quality of the service is measured through:

1. Senior Managers Monthly case File Audit
2. Discrete themed audits
3. Dip sample of Quality Assurance Exemplars on each case file
4. Dip sample of contacts and referrals
5. Individual case file audit
6. Practice Alerts from CP chairs and IROs to performance meetings
7. PSCB multi agency audits

8. Feedback for Child Protection CONFERENCES
9. Feedback from families
10. Safeguarding Assurance days

Some highlights from this activity

Since April 2012, between 20-25 cases have been audited each month by Senior Managers from a range of different categories from children in need to child protection. The findings of this report will be presented to the next meeting of the External Improvement Board. There is only one case which is now deemed inadequate and requires remedial action. This is being completed by August 2013.

The Audit of Leaving Care Services will be presented to the Corporate Parenting Group and illustrates that there has been an improvement in the completion of care plans, but that supervision cannot be evidenced.

The feedback from Child Protection Conferences is very positive with 100% of the parents saying they felt supported by the chair and 84% of respondents said that the social worker had shared their report with them prior to the conference. This is an increase from 62% in the last report measuring performance between 1st March and 31st May 2013.

Feedback from Child Protection Conferences is reported to the Board.

Multi – agency audit

There has been an audit of ten cases where the child had been the subject of a CP plan for a second and third time. The audit concluded that the decision making was consistent and the decision to remove the child from a plan was based on clear evidence of improved family relations and functioning.

5.11 Safeguarding Assurance Day

Our Safeguarding Assurance Day was held in the Looked After Children's team and the feedback from staff was positive.

5.12 Changes to ICS

Changes are being made to the ICS forms using the tool, Form Designer. This should greatly cut down and simplify the amount of form filling and duplication for social workers.

5.13 Early Intervention and Prevention

- Cherry Lodge and The Manor, our two homes which provide residential care and Short Breaks for children with disabilities have achieved the grade of 'good' in recent Ofsted inspections. Clare Lodge, our secure home for young women was also graded 'good' by Ofsted.
- Our local health commissioners (CCG) have agreed to look at ways we can jointly commission services to get better quality and value for the money we spend on children, stop any duplication and provide more joined up seamless services with better outcomes for children.
- We made our first Payment By Results claim for Connecting Families. We have worked with 165 families and identified another 177 families who look likely to meet the Connecting Families criteria; we are currently matching these.
- Through the 'Children and Families bill', we have a statutory duty to publish what we offer children and families with disabilities around Short Breaks, family information and special educational needs. We have developed our local offer on Short Breaks and activities to help

and support families, and consulted with local parent carer groups on this. In the autumn, we are planning two stakeholder events with Healthwatch and parent carer forums to develop our offer around special educational needs with all partners and, in particular, a single assessment that builds on the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) that includes health and educational needs.

- Health are now actively working with child and adolescent services to address the long waiting lists for treatment that we have been experiencing. It is proposed the waiting lists will be cleared by November 2013.

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 quarterly 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 None