

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES & TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 7
10 JUNE 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.

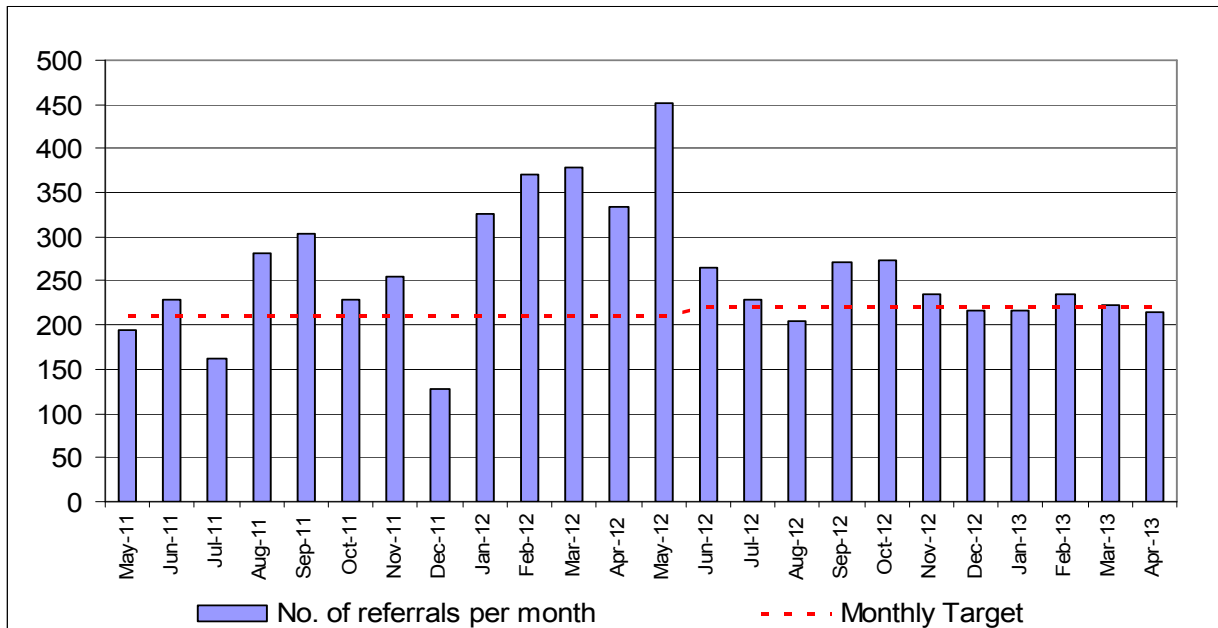
- 4.2 The Council’s progress is closely monitored both internally and externally by this Committee, the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group and the External Improvement Board.

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Highlights

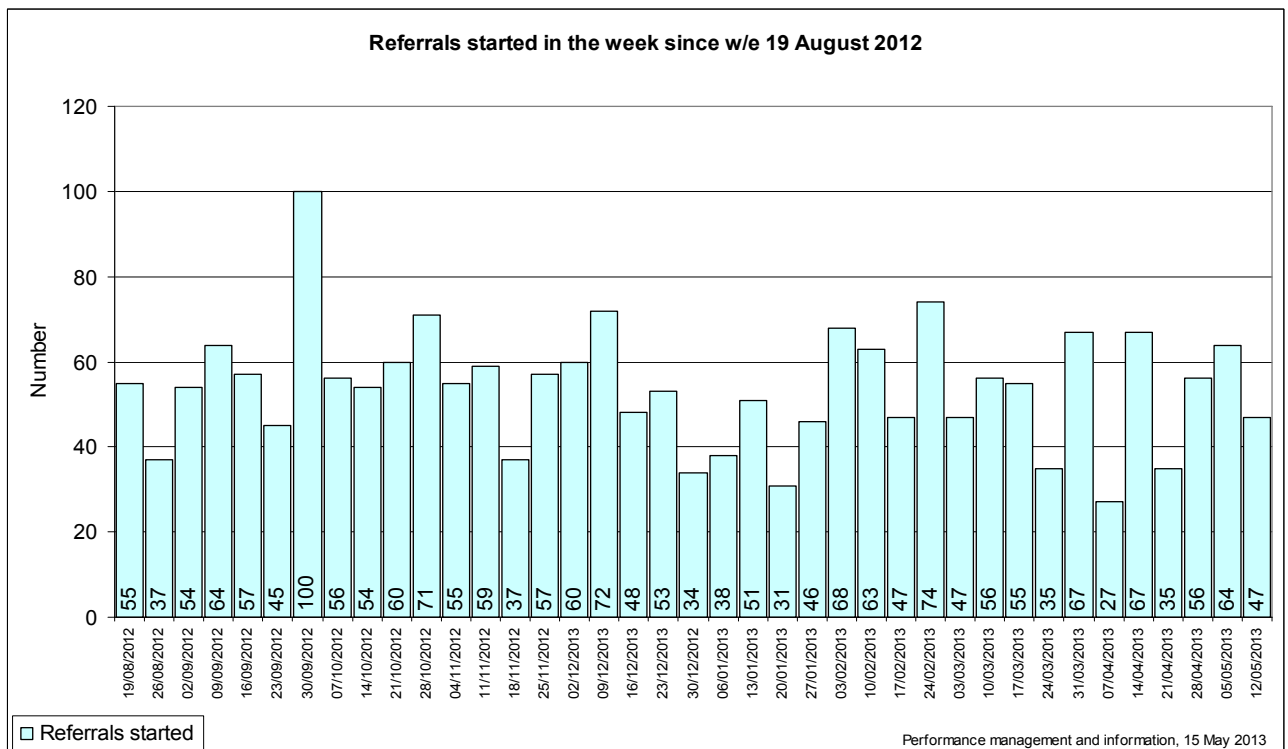
- Referrals remaining steady
- Decrease in number of re- referrals
- High number of Core Assessments completed and in timescale
- Slight decrease in number of Initial Assessments completed in timescale
- High number of Children subject to a CP plan
- Rise in number of children accommodated
- Low number of agency staff
- Launch of Children’s Services Joint Commissioning Board

5.2 Referrals



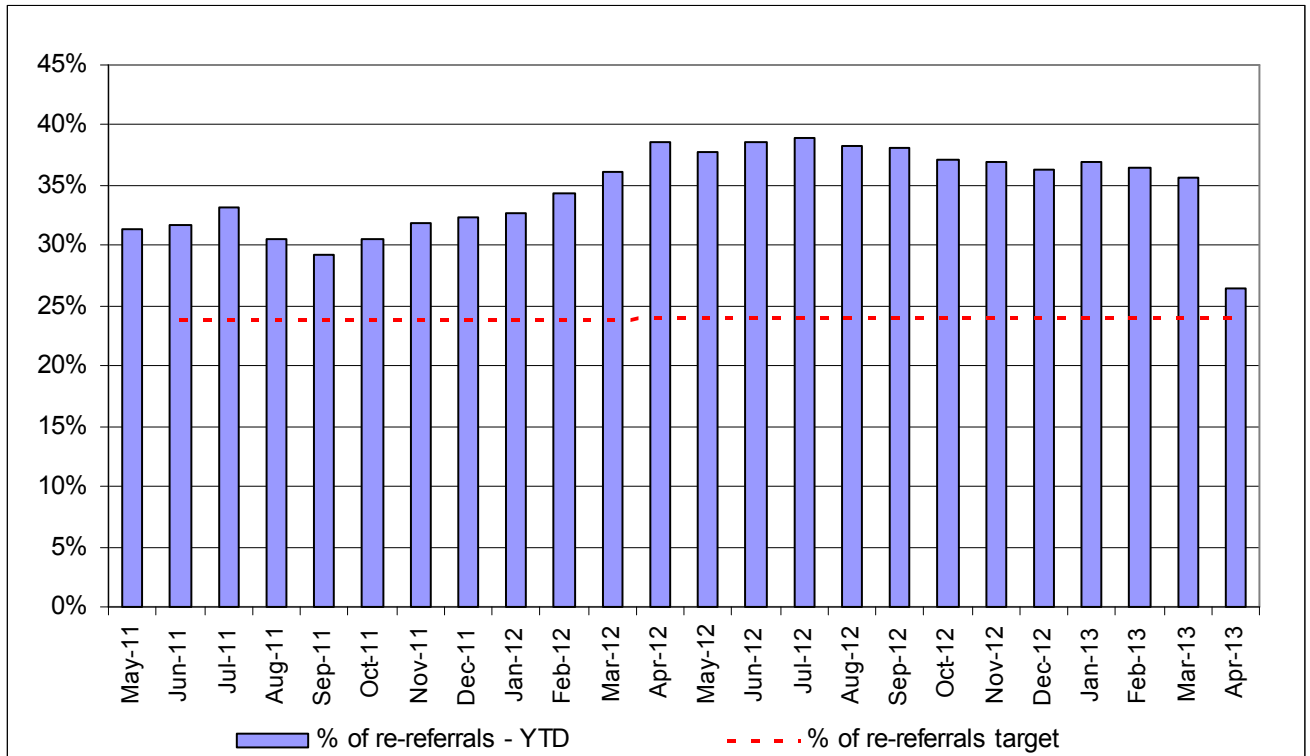
The number of referrals per 10,000 of the child population remains stable showing 215 being started in April which is just below the monthly target of 220 for the next two months.

5.3 Referrals started in the week



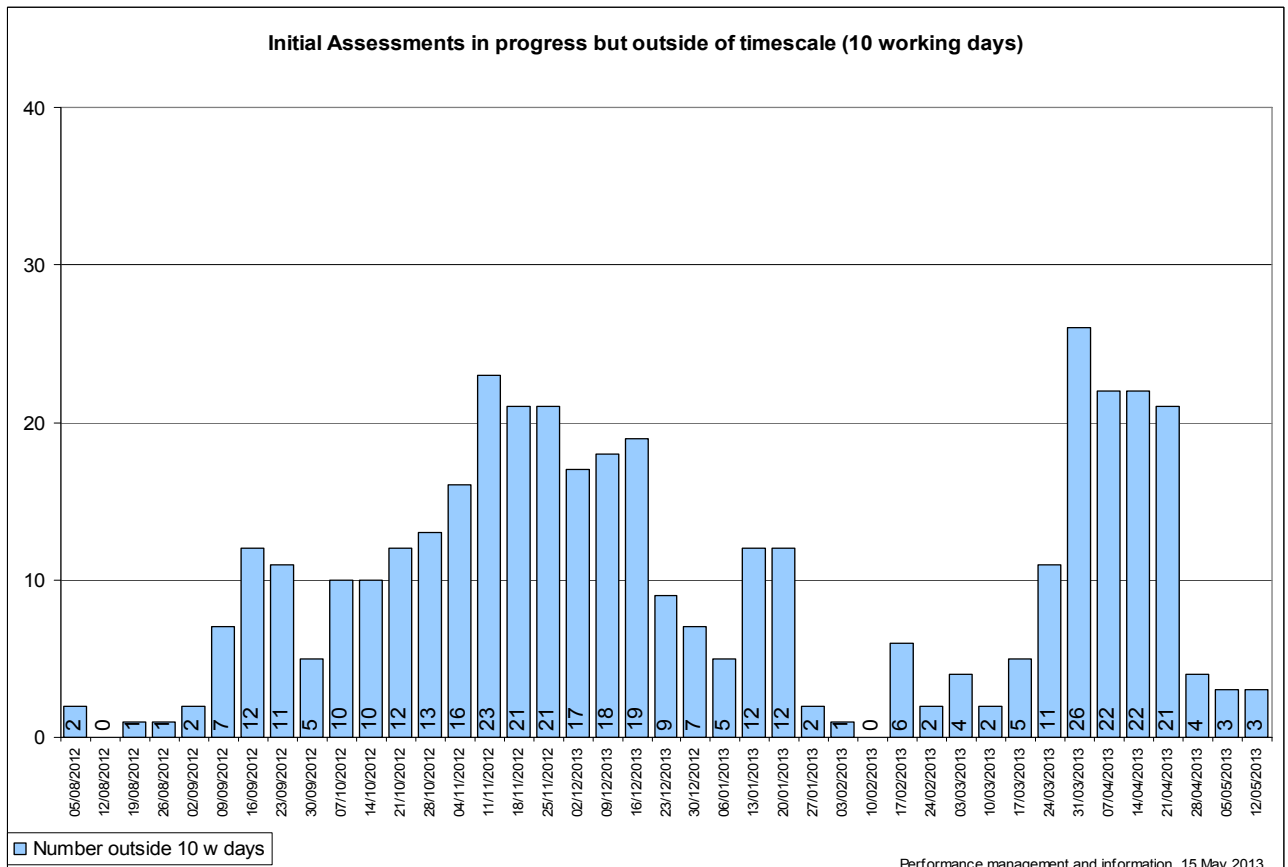
The number of referrals has remained relatively steady at an average of approximately 55 per month. There has been a slight reduction in the number of referrals at the end of this reporting period to 47.

5.4 Re-referrals

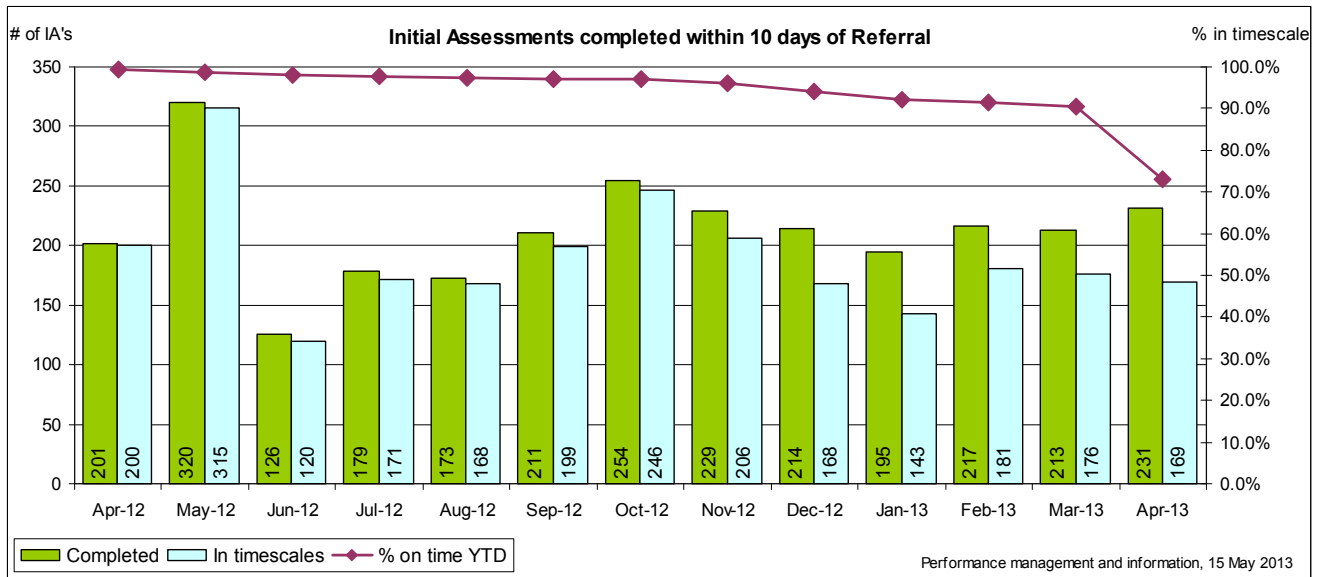


There has been a marked decrease in the number of referrals in April 13 and this trend is continuing into May at 26.5 %. This is the lowest year to date figure seen over the last two years. This could be due to a greater focus on the completion of the work or a sense that we have worked through some of the cases that previously had not been worked satisfactorily given the difficulties in the service.

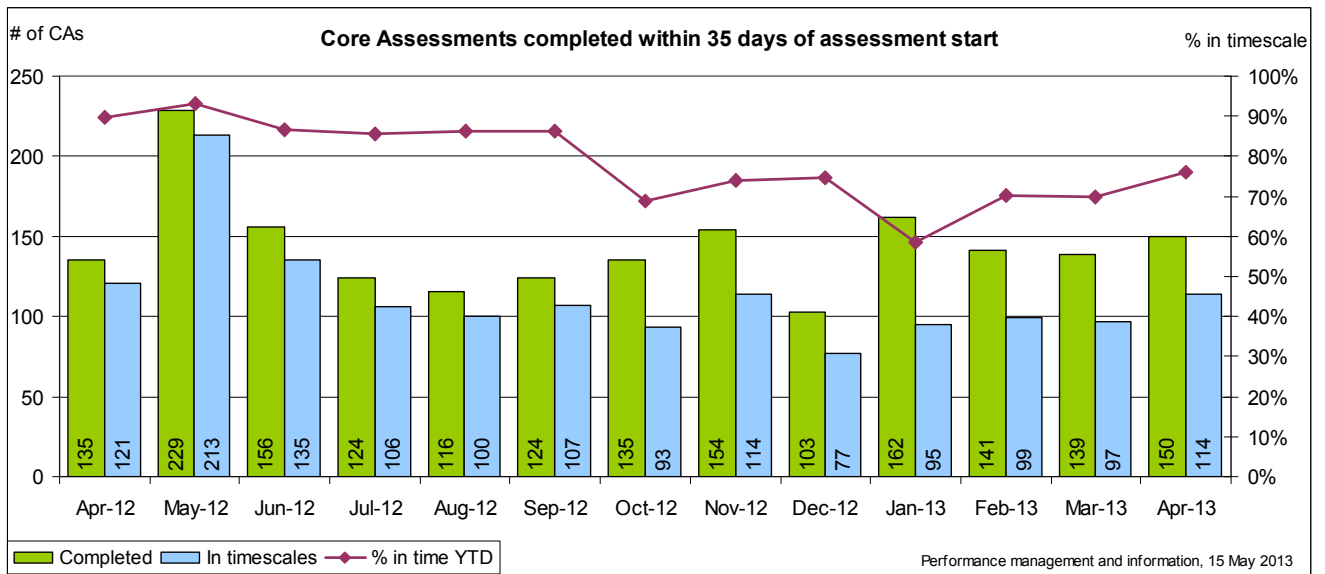
5.5 Initial Assessments



There has been a slight decrease in the number of initial assessments completed in timescale in April to 73.5%. This has risen again mid month and it has been partly due to the need to thoroughly complete the assessment so there is no re-referral. This is being closely monitored as it is imperative that this does not slip and this chart illustrates that only 3/4 assessments were outside timescale in the preceding three months.

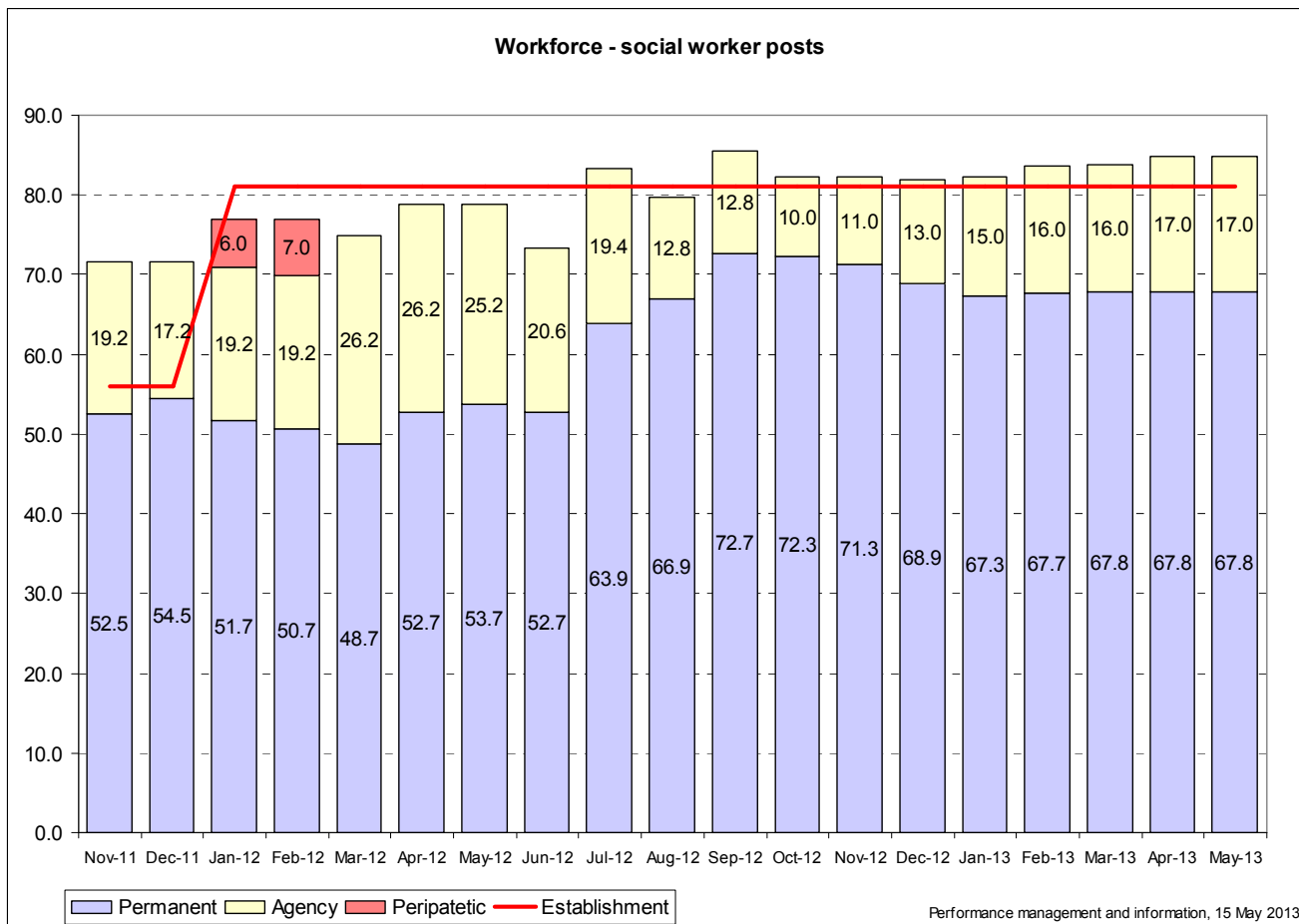


5.6 Core Assessments



Conversely a high proportion of core assessments were completed in timescale, rising from January 2013. This is excellent performance especially as the number of core assessments completed stood at 150.

5.7 Workforce



Workforce Social Work Posts:

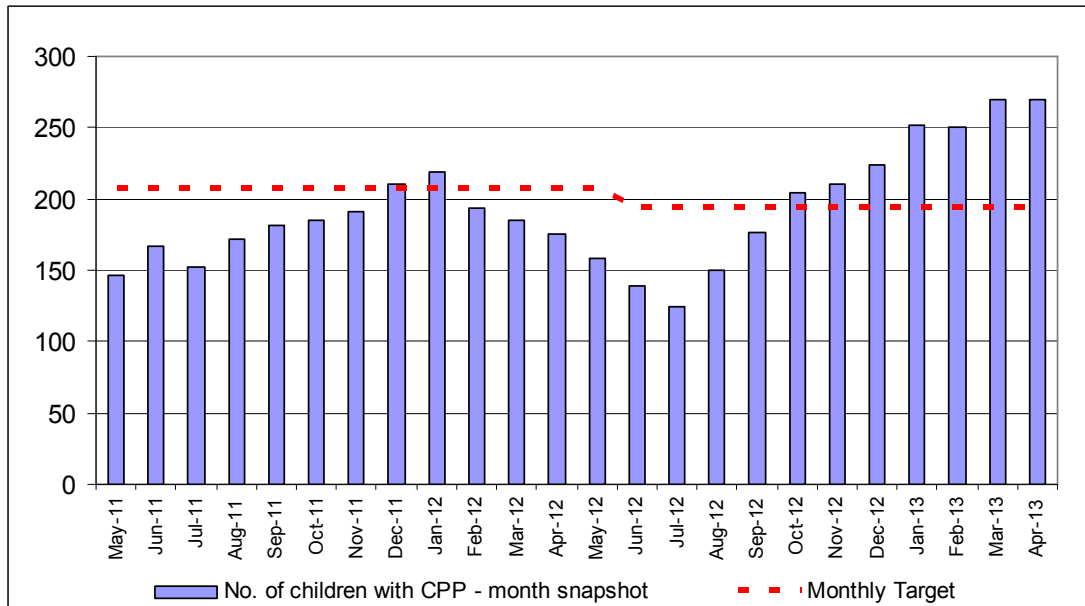
This chart shows the numbers of agency staff as 17. This includes 4 maternity leave covers and our 4 peripatetic workers. We have 9 new starters in the pipeline.

We also have a number of Team Manager posts that we are trying hard to recruit to without success.

We are considering whether we need to offer a market rate supplement for these posts.

Our recruitment campaign has been refreshed.

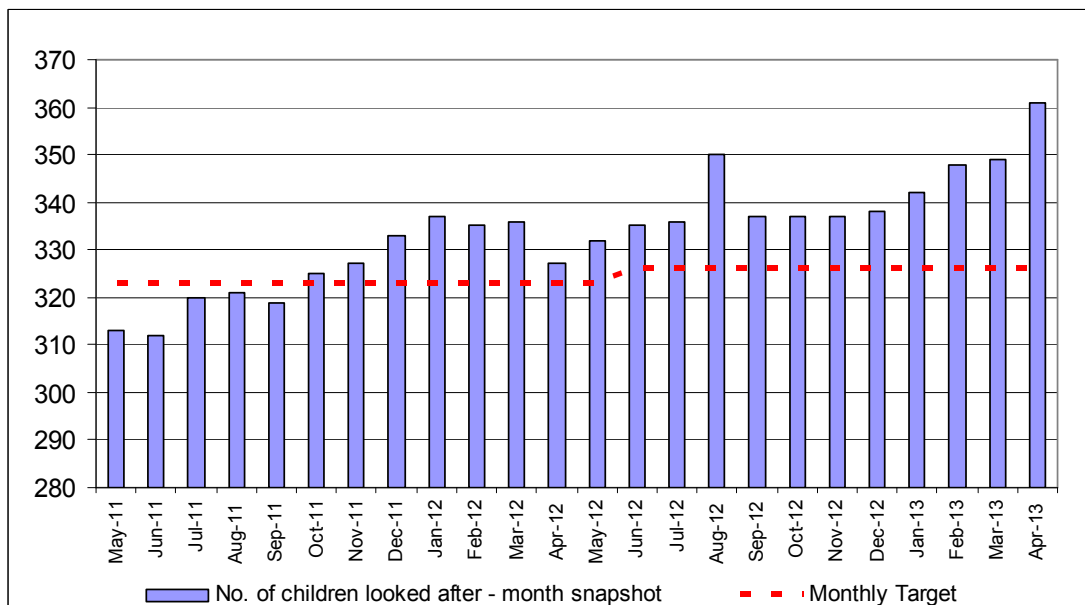
5.8 Child Protection Plans



The number of children subject to a plan remains at 270 and is above our current target.

An audit and review of numbers of CP Conferences has led to a greater focus by the Chairs of the significant harm in relation to each sibling and whether the threshold has been met for a Conference.

5.9 Children Looked After



The number of children looked after has also increased by 12 to 361; an all time high owing to the need to accommodate a number of vulnerable young women and large sibling groups.

5.10 Member Visits Update

A full schedule of Member visits is in place, with Members visiting teams across the whole of the department, including those based in Bayard Place, the Youth Offending Service, Clare Lodge and the residential homes. Staff welcome the visits as it is an opportunity to showcase the valuable work they are doing and Members enjoy the experience and gain a greater understanding of the services being provided.

5.11 **DfE**

Our self assessment and progress report was presented to the DfE on 1 May. We continue to await the Minister's decision to lift us out of special measures or not.

5.12 **Early Intervention Activity**

The Children and Families Joint Commissioning Board held its first stakeholder event on the 22nd April. There were over 100 attendees from the public, independent and voluntary sectors. The event included details of the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy, Ofsted feedback from the recent safeguarding inspection and Children's Services priorities going forward. Also the new chair of the Local Safeguarding Board Russell Waite talked about the focus of the board following the Ofsted inspection. A key area that was highlighted was the lack of focus on work with fathers and this will form part of the Board's continuing work.

Meetings have taken place with the Neighbourhoods team with the ward councillors for each of the play centres. An action plan for next steps towards asset transfer is being developed with an organisation called 'Can Do Communities'.

A Young Carers consultation event took place in March with 20 attendees.

A group of staff from adult and children's services are exploring the setting up of a transitions team 14-25 years to enable early identification of need and seamless transition of young people to adult services.

5.13 **LAC Inspection**

The new Ofsted framework for looked after Children and Safeguarding has been published. Ofsted will be inspecting some local authorities' looked after children service this month and June. They are targeting those authorities that did not do well in the last inspection and we are preparing for this possibility.

5.14 **Summary**

A continued improving picture which has been successfully reported to the DfE and will be used for the Minister to take a decision.

We intend to push forward with the development of our single assessment tool with a focus on high standards of practice.

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