

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES & TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Agenda Item No. 9
22 JULY 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 June 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

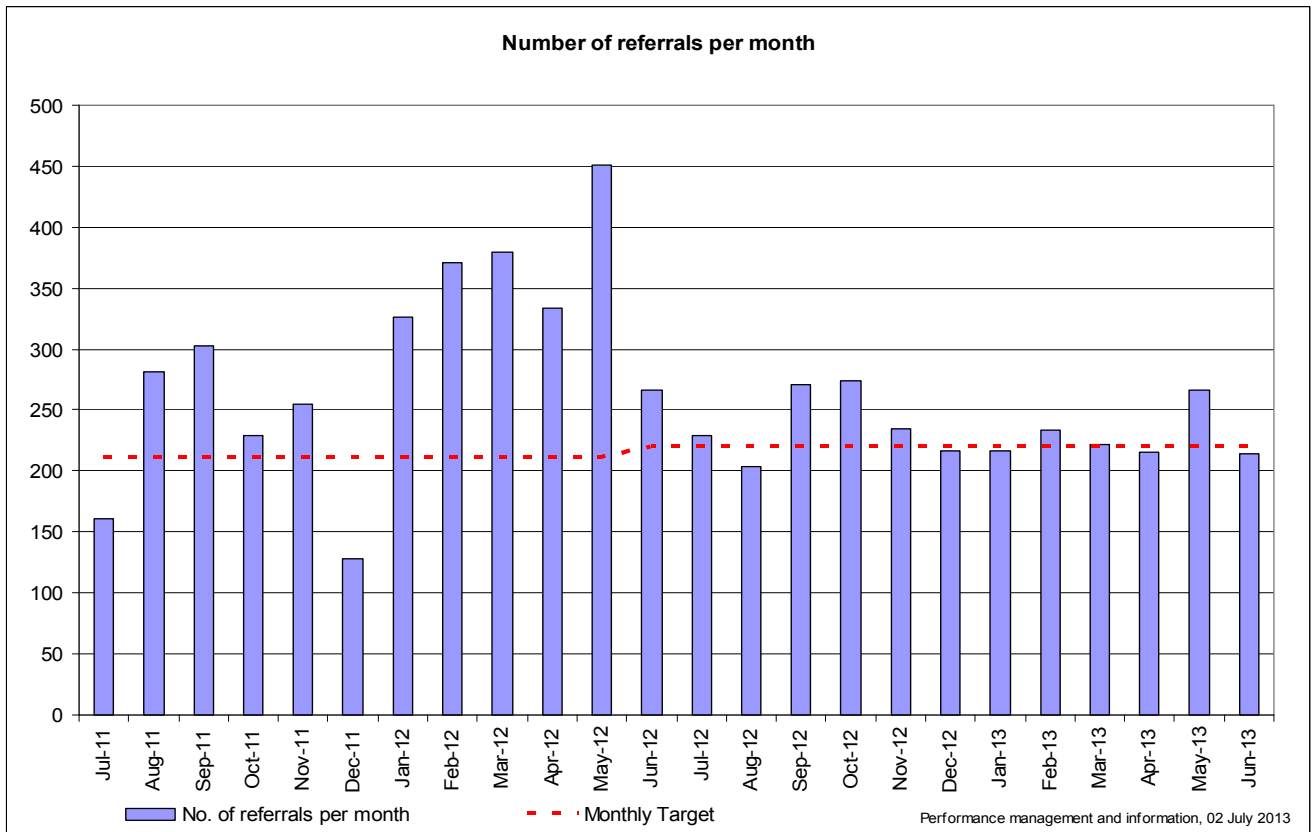
- 4.2 The Council's progress is closely monitored both internally and externally by this Committee, the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group and the External Improvement Board.

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Highlights

- 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
- Decrease in number of Children subject to a Child Protection Plan
- Low number of agency staff

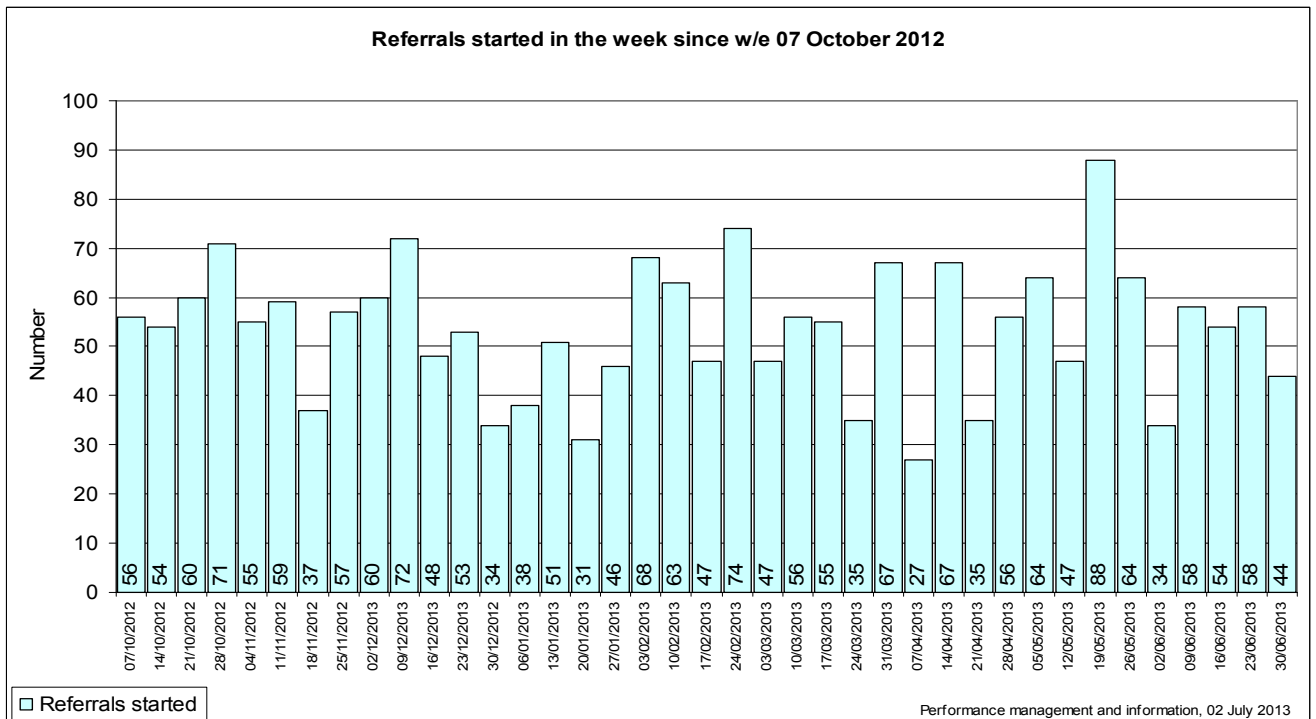
5.2 Referrals



Following a spike in the number of referrals in May the number reduced to 214 in June in line with recent months .the rate is 621 per 10000 which is just 3 % above target .This is the lowest rate since January 2012.

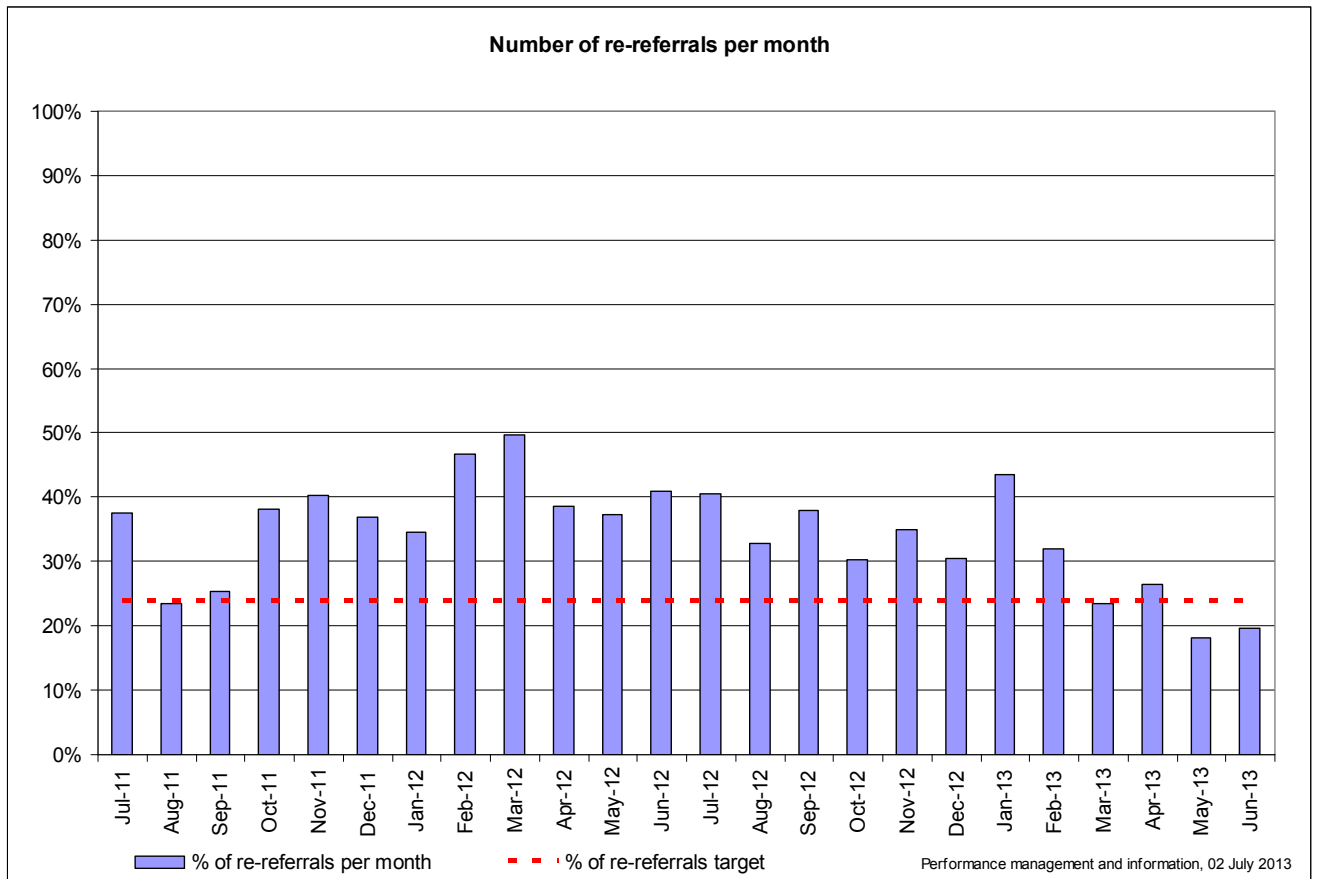
There has been a reconfiguration of the front door placing more staff and focus on the interrogation of the referral at the point of contact. This has led to a decrease in the number of referrals and an increase in the number of CAFs.

Referrals started in the week



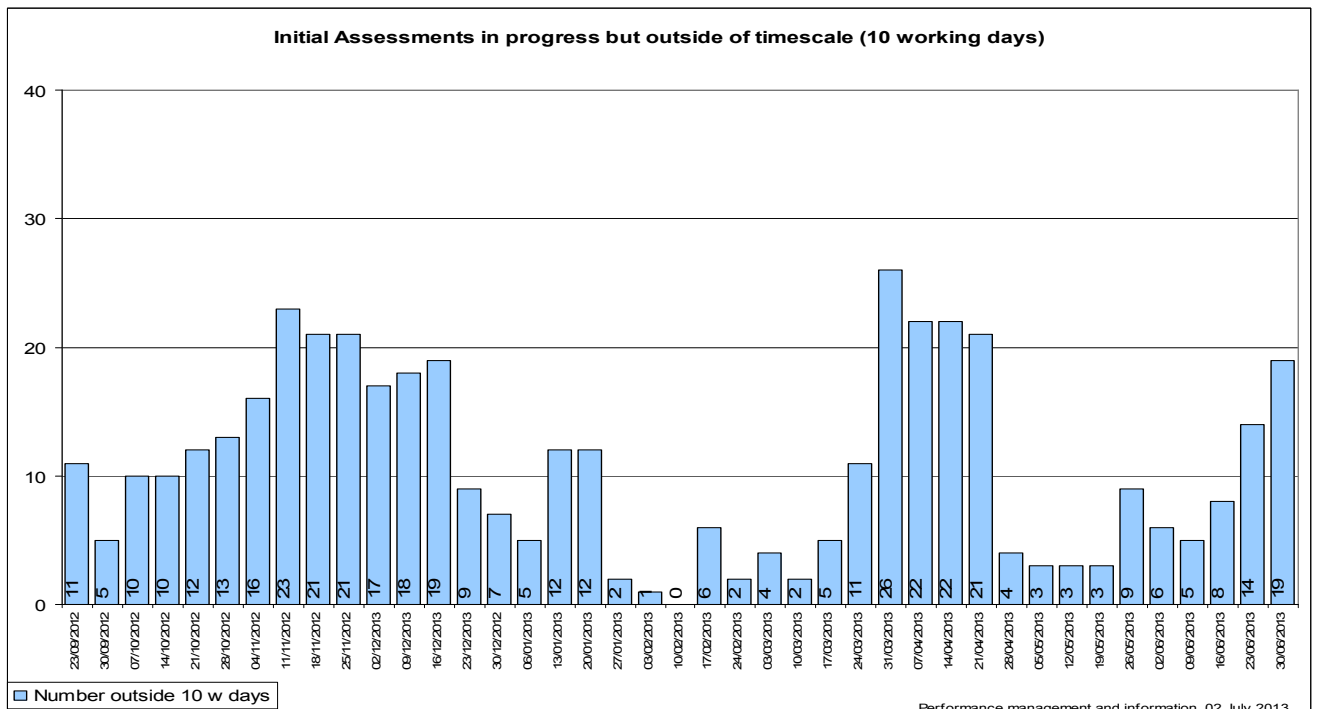
The number of referrals has remained relatively steady at an average of approximately 55 per month. There has been a slight reduction in the number of referrals at the end of this reporting period to 47.

5.3 Re-referrals

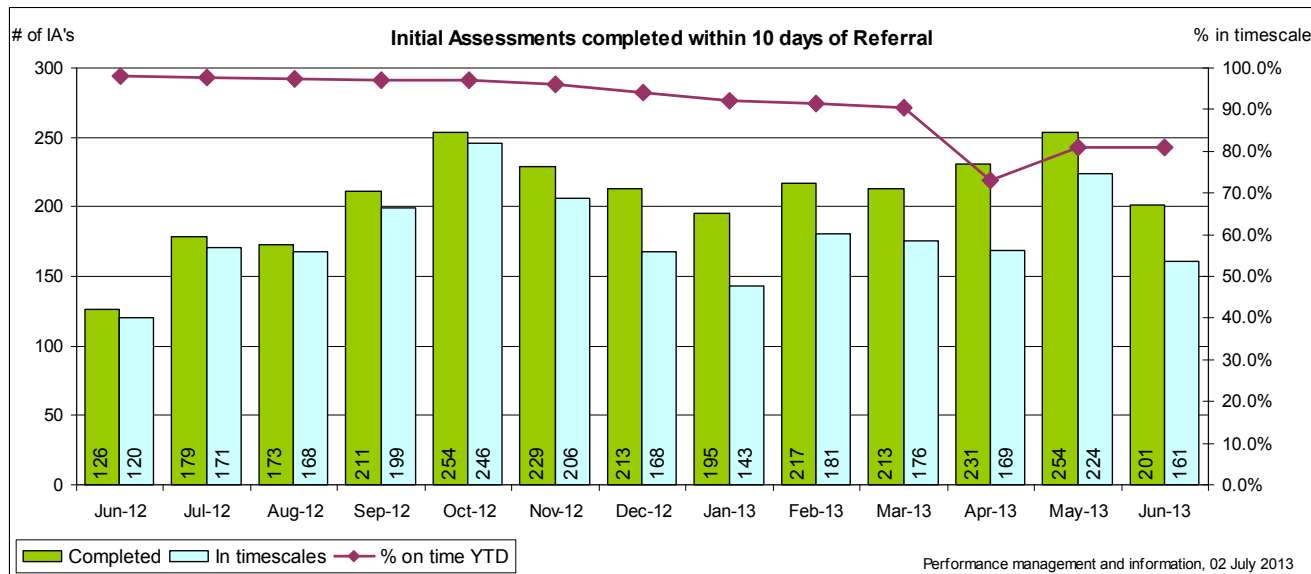


There has been a marked decrease in the number of referrals in April 13 and this trend is continuing into May at 26.5 %. This is the lowest year to date figure seen over the last two years. This could be due to a greater focus on the completion of the work or a sense that we have worked through some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

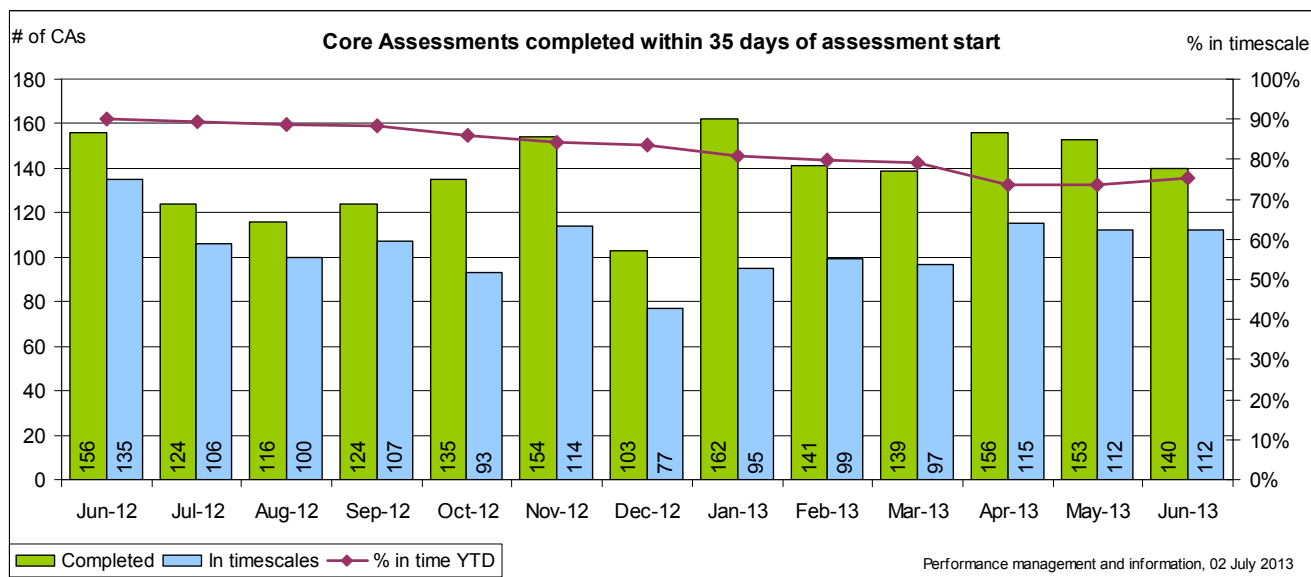
5.4 Initial Assessments



Initial assessments within timescale fell below 60%. This low figure is due to the reconfiguration of our frontline services. We have cut the three teams into two whilst strengthening the number of staff managing the contacts/referrals as they come in. This means greater interrogation of the contact/referral as it comes in which mitigates the need for an initial assessment. Nonetheless, performance has dropped and this must not continue.

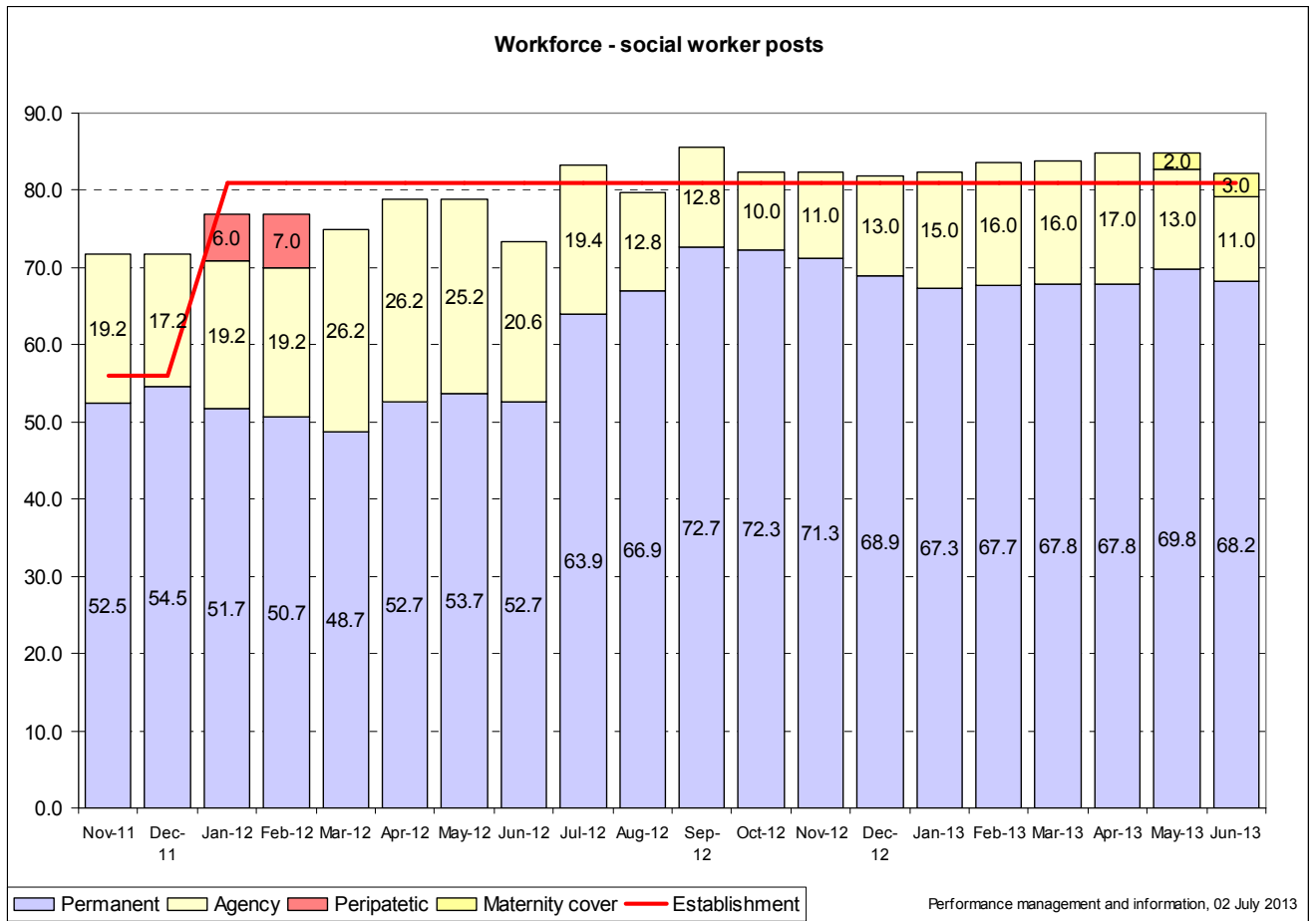


5.5 Core Assessments



Performance around timescales for Core Assessments has improved with 112 out of 140 in timescale, although this is still low in comparison to earlier months and performance has been declining owing to a move of the family support teams into three teams from four.

5.6 Workforce

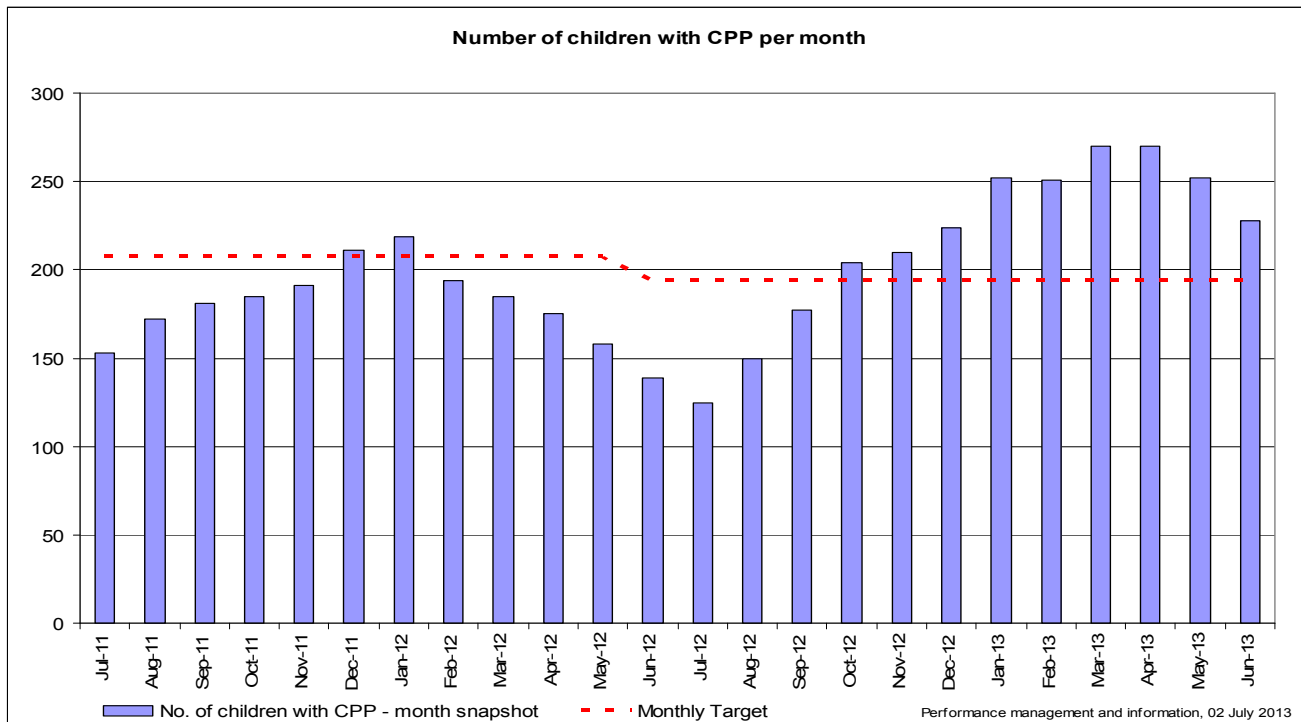


Workforce Social Work Posts:

We currently have 6.2 vacancies and 14 agency staff (because of maternity and our current CSE cases).

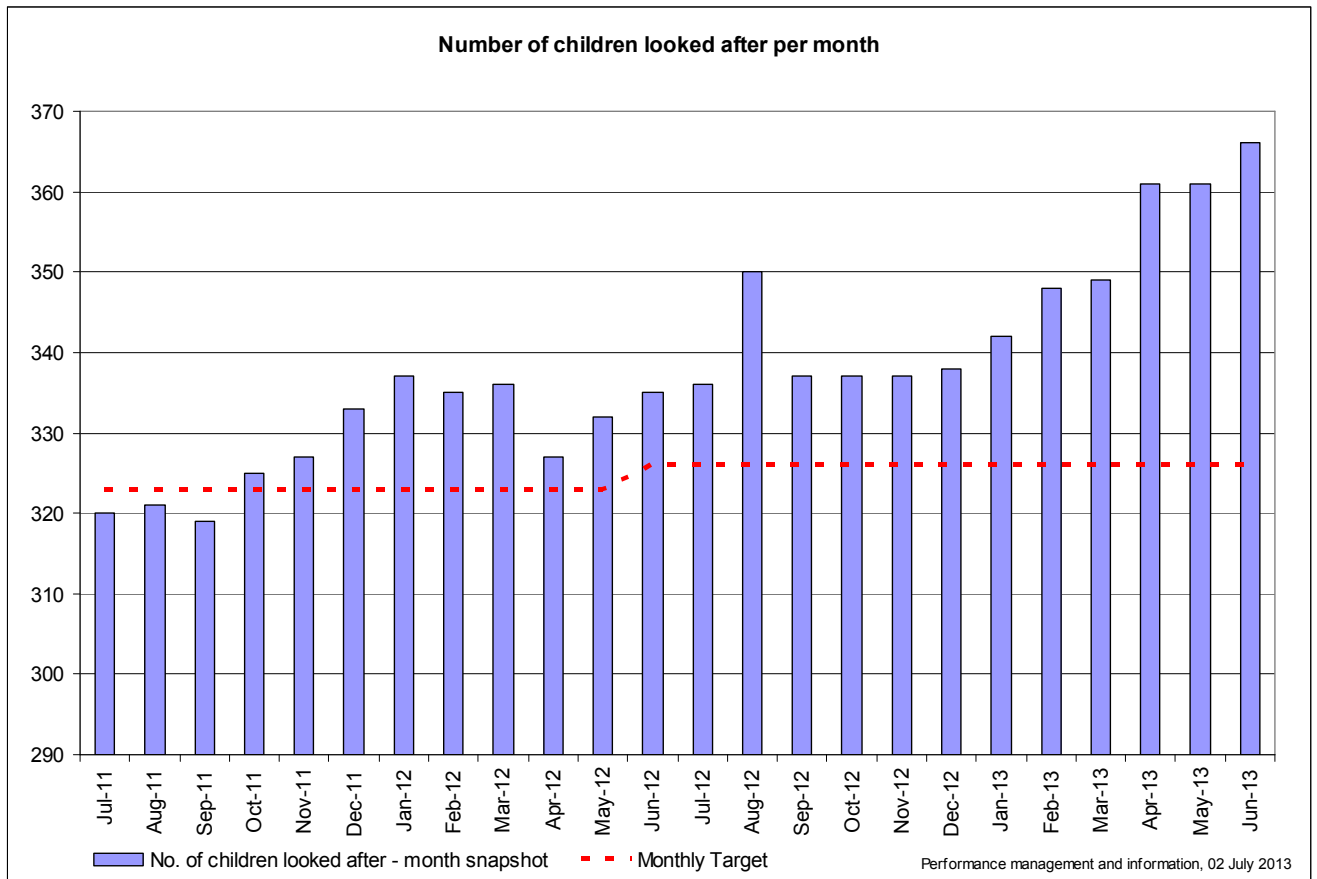
The number of agency staff within social care (excluding adoption and fostering) has dropped for the second consecutive month. There are currently 12.8 vacancies with 4 permanent (3 NQSW and 1 fully qualified) new starters in the pipeline and one permanent social worker due to leave during July. The number of agency staff (14) in place consists of 11.0 covering permanent vacancies and 3.0 covering maternity leave, this takes us under our establishment target of 81 by 1.8. We believe this is partly due to other authorities in the area who have received improvement notices offering higher rates in an effort to attract staff away from their current posts and partly due to the seasonal slowdown as we enter the summer months.

5.7 Child Protection Plans



The number of children subject to a CP Plan has decreased to 220 owing to greater scrutiny of decision-making and natural de-planning. We are developing a system within Liquidlogic that will evidence discussions with teams for requests for conference to enhance audit and scrutiny for ensuring the right children are being made subject to Child Protection planning.

5.8 Children Looked After



The number of Looked After Children is currently 358 which is the highest it has been since June 2011 owing partly to CSE cases and some cases which have been inadequately worked in the past coming back. There has however been a greater amount of legal planning meetings under the PLO process leading to the initiation of proceedings.

On the departure of the previous Team Manager of the safeguarding unit a large number of statutory minutes were identified as not being completed by the Independent Reviewing Officers. 150 hours of business support is being commissioned to complete this backlog. The back log has been reduced by nearly 50%.

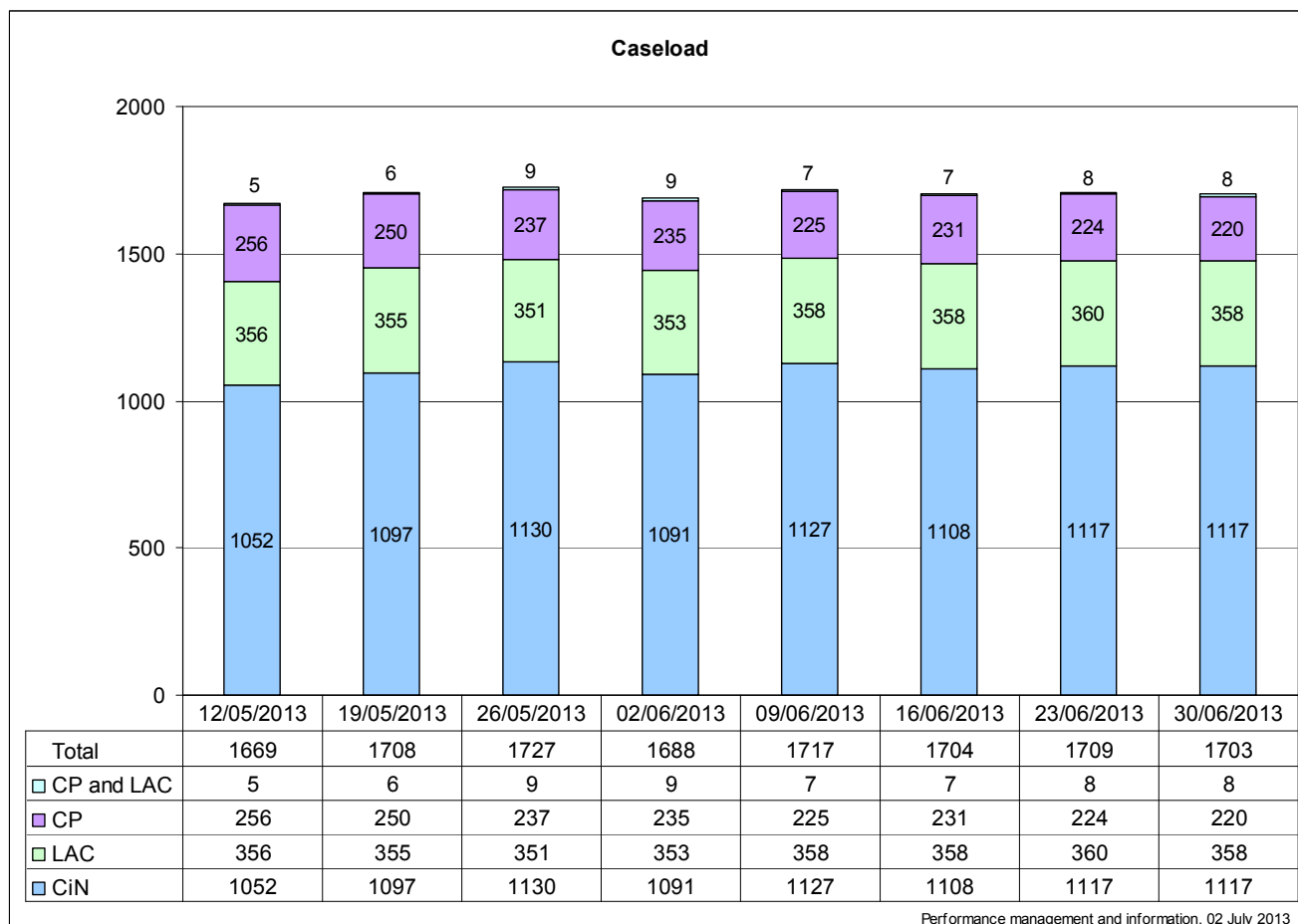
5.9 Leaving Care

The number of pathway plans has increased from 37% in May 2012 to 80% approximately, currently and improving. The aim is to be at or near 95% target by the end of July.

Statutory visits recorded out of time have fallen significantly over the last few weeks with none or one being recorded. This is significant improvement.

The focus on tackling the high number of NEET cases continues including the introduction of the Right Resolution service working with the City College on a pre apprenticeship course and places on the YOS funded Bridge course.

5.10 Caseloads



5.11 Member Visits Update

There were no Member visits in the last month but there are more visits planned

5.12 Early Intervention Activity

- Children's Centres - there are currently 156 families being supported through the targeted family support services. Of these, 49 (31%) have been identified as either child protection cases, looked after children or children in need. Demand for the targeted family support is growing and children's centres are currently reporting waiting times for new cases.
- Clare Lodge - Clare Lodge was inspected by Ofsted this month. The care provision received a good with outstanding features rating and the Education was considered good.
- Moving On into Work project - from the January cohort of 9, 1 has had their contract extended, 1 has gone on to the Prince's Trust Team programme, 3 are in full time employment and 1 in part time, 1 is at college, 1 doing a home tutored course and 1 is job seeking with our work club. Cross Keys Homes have just announced that they are creating 5 full apprenticeships in administration.
- Multi-agency support groups - 179 cases have now been heard at MASGs – challenging behaviour/difficulties with boundaries remains the most common issue identified, with Domestic Abuse continuing to feature strongly, and to a lesser but still significant extent, parental mental health issues. Feedback and support from partner agencies continues to be positive.

5.13 **Children & Young People Film Awards**

Our recent film awards events were very successful, showcasing the talent and skills of children and young people in the city.

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

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