

Progress Report for DfE

Background

Peterborough City Council's Safeguarding and Looked after Children's Services were inspected in March 2010. Ofsted judged the overall effectiveness of Peterborough's Safeguarding Services to be 'inadequate'.

An Improvement Notice was issued in June 2010 against key indicators in the areas concerned. A number of key issues for immediate action and improvement were also identified in the subsequent unannounced inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment arrangements in March 2011. These included variations in the quality and timeliness of assessments, poor management oversight and direction, irregular staff supervision and inadequate assessment of risk.

A subsequent Safeguarding Inspection in August 2011 identified a number of unresolved issues identified in previous inspections. Ofsted deemed the capacity for improvement to be inadequate. A further Improvement Notice, due to poor performance was issued on 5th February 2012.

Having considered the evidence from the Ofsted Inspection of 2013, the progress report from the Improvement Board and its Chair together with advice from officials, the Improvement Notice was lifted by Edward Timpson, Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Children and Families in June 2013. A further progress report was requested in December 2013.

This report is an update of the progress made in social care since the Improvement Notice was lifted on the 6th June 2013. The council was asked to demonstrate continued sustainability.

This report covers the 6 month period from May 2013 - October 2013, given our data reporting timelines. To understand the trajectory of recovery and sustainability, it has been necessary, in places, to report the data from October 2012 – October 2013.

Ofsted Action Plan and Delivery Plan

We refreshed our Children's Services vision and priorities in June 2013 under our delivery plan (*Appendix 1*) encompassing:

- *Providing children with early support*
- *Helping families with problems and keeping children safe*
- *Giving the best opportunities to children and young people in care*
- *Working in partnership with schools and others to make sure children succeed*
- *Supporting our staff to be outstanding*

The Ofsted Action Plan, based on the recommendations from the 2011 inspection, was completed in March 2013 and signed off by the Improvement Board as being finalised.

The Ofsted Action Plan was then refreshed to include new priorities for action especially around raising the quality of practice and findings from national Serious Case Reviews. This refreshed Action Plan is attached at *Appendix 2*.

We completed our regional self-assessment in May 2013, which was moderated in July 2013. The moderating DCS commented "In the self assessment, there are no significant safeguarding concerns that are not addressed via action planning. Some elements of the peer review may be helpful after the impact of the Ofsted Action Plan has been embedded." This report demonstrated our strengthened performance in a number of critical areas within children's social care including the timeliness and management of our assessments.

Leadership and Governance

The new DCS was appointed in December 2012.

The new Assistant Director of Safeguarding was appointed in June 2013.

There is now a permanent, new third tier management structure.

We have experienced, like all local authorities, some difficulty in recruiting Team Managers and after an unsuccessful targeted recruitment, have made interim internal appointments with a 'grow our own' approach. We have provided these new Team Managers, promoted internally, with increased support and learning and training opportunities. They are however not experienced front line managers and need a lot of support in their decision making and capacity to provide quality supervision.

The council continues to support social care through significant investment including an additional £1 million investment in our Child Sexual Exploitation Team and the current financing of additional support to bolster management capacity and experience.

The Lead Portfolio Holder, the Cabinet and the Chief Executive continue to provide clear direction and leadership. There is high visibility of the Lead Portfolio Holder and elected councillors in the service through attendance at our Safeguarding Assurance Days and fortnightly meetings with the Assistant Director of Safeguarding and the DCS.

In addition our Members of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Safeguarding Group visit the teams on a monthly basis and report back to the Senior Leadership Team. There is then a follow up report to this.

A new and experienced independent chair was appointed to the Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board (PSCB) in December 2012. We have also appointed a new Business Relationship Manager which combines the training function to give the Board added impetus. The new chair has brought a renewed challenge to agencies to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.

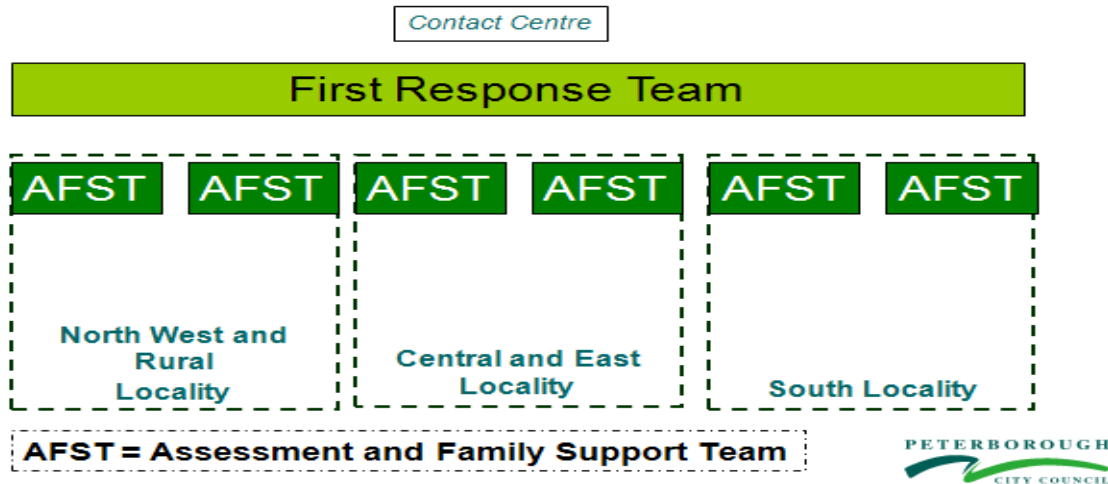
A PSCB development day was held on 16 April 2013 where clear priorities and objectives for the work of the Board were compiled.

Reconfiguration of the front door

In September, we made some changes to the Referral and Assessment Family Support Service that has enabled strengthened information sharing and decision making processes in respect of our responses to referrals and Child Protection enquiries.

We have replaced the Referral and Assessment teams and Family Support Teams with a First Response Team and six Assessment and Family Support Teams facing outward to three localities.

New organisational structure



The First Response Team, together with our Contact Team, screens all incoming contacts offering guidance and redirection where appropriate to referees. They seek and share information to make threshold decisions to determine the most appropriate response to the contact. The team will conduct Section 47 enquiries on new referrals in liaison with the MARU. Our arrangements with the MARU have been strengthened with tele-conference facilities and greater information sharing.

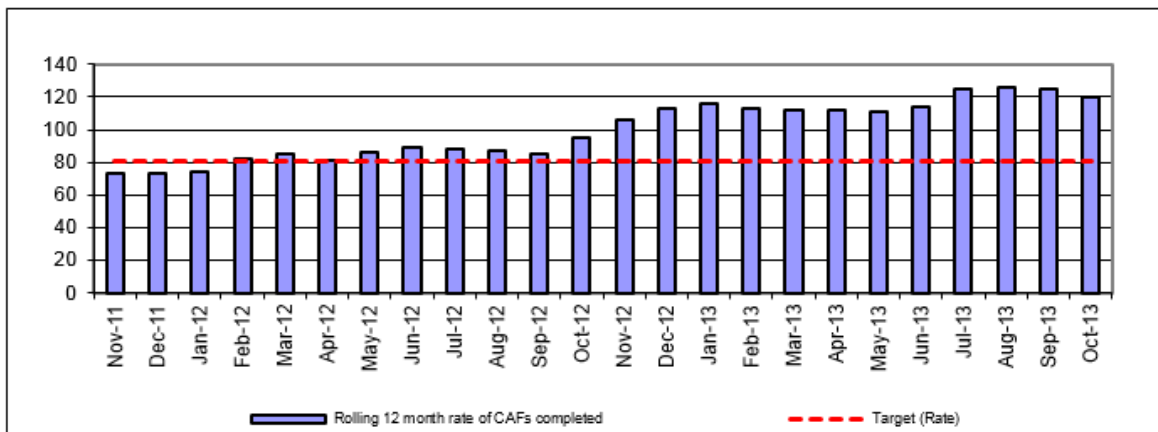
Should a contact become a referral, then the Assessment and Family Support Teams will carry out the Initial and Core assessment, if appropriate. This means that there is increased continuity for children and families and consistency of case management with fewer changes of social worker.

The Assessment and Family Support Teams are now aligned to the three locality areas that are used corporately and by partner agencies to deliver services to the community. This will ensure greater working relationships with schools and neighbourhood communities. Cases are now being transferred into the teams according to where the families live.

Social Care Performance Data

Early Intervention Assessments (CAFs)

The Peterborough Children and Families Commissioning Board has developed a simplified, but comprehensive early help assessment with partner agencies. This change has contributed to the significant increase in the rate of new Early Help assessments registered each month per 10,000 population, as illustrated by the chart below:



The main presenting issues for these early intervention assessments between 1 April and to date were behaviour and relationship problems within the family. The top five services offered for support were nursery/pre-school provision, housing advice and support, children centre provision, our 0-19 service and a Team Around the Child Meeting to assess need.

Our e-Caf is due to go live on 9 December 2013 which will give us greater information and ability to review CAF plans, with training for practitioners.

Alongside the multi-agency training programmes, the team also completes a safeguarding and quality compliance audit for all Early Intervention Assessments which is completed by our partners. This consists of the following elements:

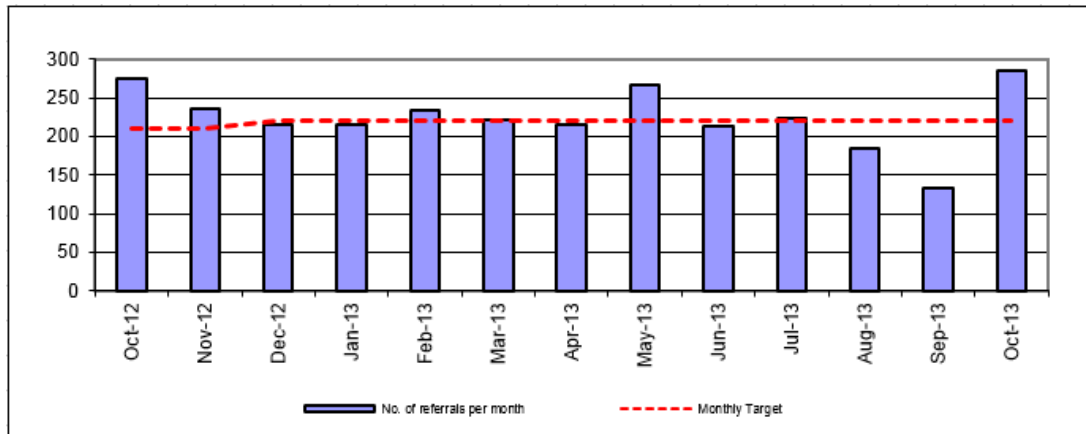
- Every Early Intervention Assessment submitted to the local authority for registering is read by a co-ordinator within the CAF Team in order to ensure that no safeguarding concerns are raised in the documentation. All co-ordinators have received up-to-date child protection training and assess any safeguarding concerns against the Peterborough Threshold Document. Any concerns raised are dealt with immediately by follow-up contact with the practitioner who initiated the Early Intervention Assessment. Where concerns remain, these are escalated as appropriate – a process that includes a discussion between the team manager responsible for Early Help Assessments and appropriate colleagues within Children’s Social Care.
- All comments made by children or young people and their parents or carers recorded on an Early Help Assessment or within any notes of Team Around the Child meetings submitted to the local authority are recorded by the CAF team. All of these comments are screened and any issues that are raised about either the experience of the Early Help Assessment or TAC process are addressed by the team as appropriate. These comments are also used to help to inform training and support sessions offered by the team to practitioners who complete these assessments.
- 10% of all Early Help Assessments completed are selected on a monthly basis at random. Each is assessed using the National Quality Framework for the Early Intervention Assessment process
- Six months following the registration of the Early Intervention Assessment, all lead professionals are contacted for an update on the impact of the Early Intervention Assessment. Returned document scores are recorded and comments discussed by the team. Follow-up action taken is then taken where required.

Multi-Agency Support Groups (MASGs)

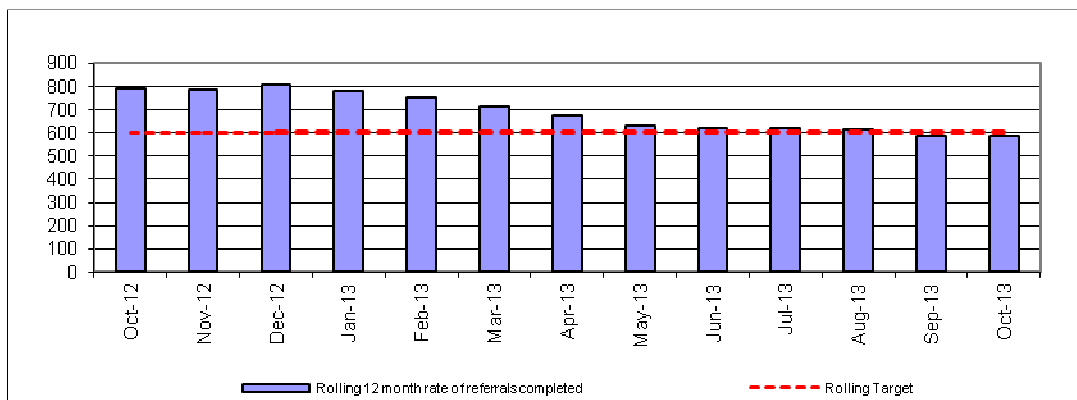
Our multi-agency groups within the localities have, since their inception, offered support to more than 300 families. Whenever a family is presented to MASG, a simple Distance Measured tool is used to track progress made after support services have been in place for a period of time – typically 12 weeks. Analysis of the outcomes identified indicated that of the 221 families where interventions monitored by MASGs had come to an end, there was evidence of improved outcomes that could be attributed to actions by MASGs in 91 cases. Services put in place by the MASGs have included Family Group conferences, family mediation, spot purchased family support services during family crises and parenting support programmes through the voluntary sector. Participants at each MASG include community health services, children’s services, housing, neighbourhood services, early years, educational psychology, connecting families and social care. We have entered our multi-agency support groups for an LGA award.

Referrals

Number of Referrals

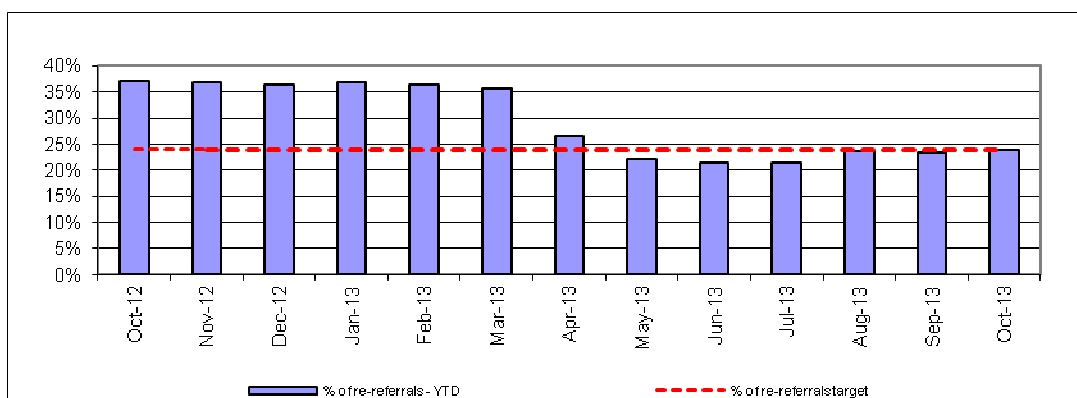


Rolling 12 month Rate of Referrals



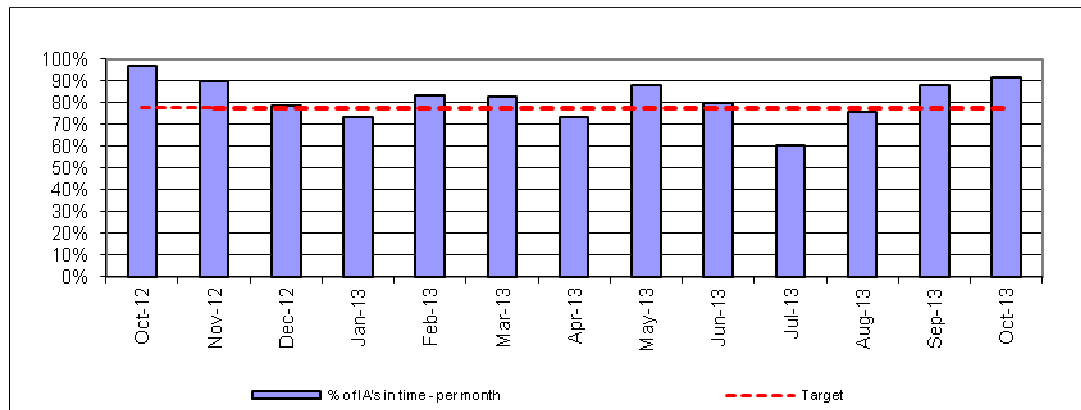
There had been a decline in the actual number of referrals during the summer period owing to schools closing, rising to 284 in October 2013. The average percentage of referrals at year end brings us to 587 per 10,000 of the child population and is within target for the fifth consecutive month.

Re-referrals

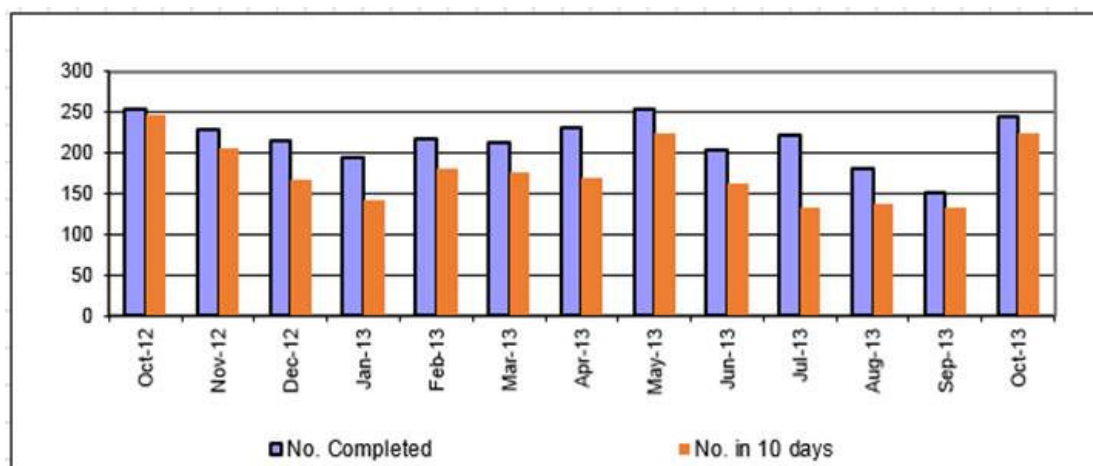


The percentage of referrals where a previous referral has occurred within the last 12 months has dropped. At 23.9%, (October 2013), this is exactly on target.

Percentage of Initial Assessments in timescale

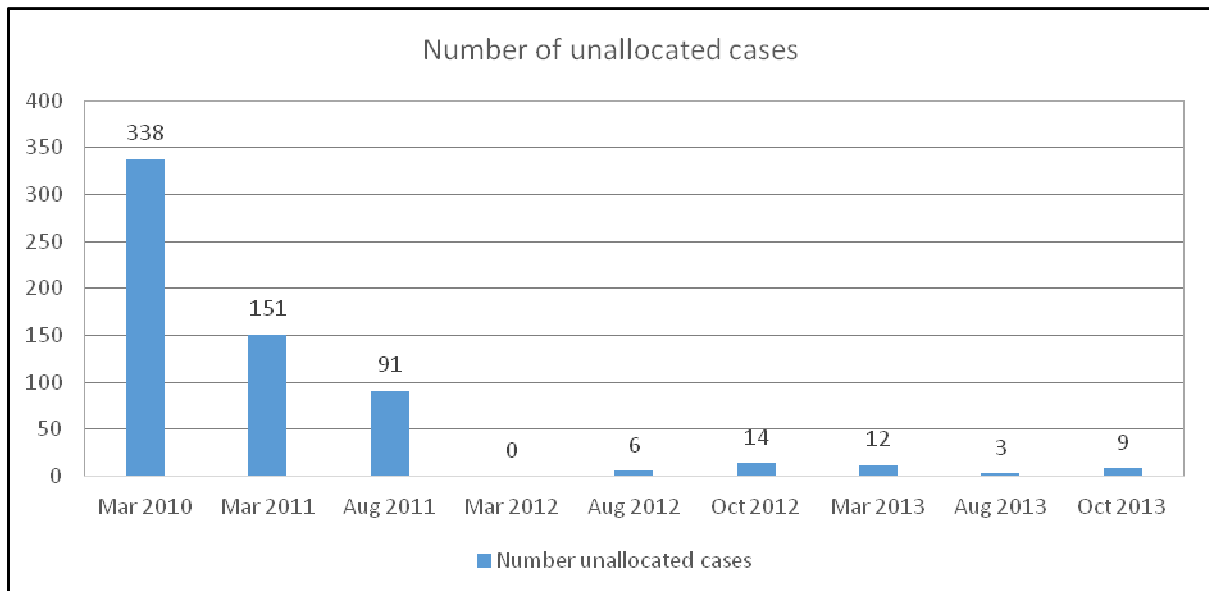


Number of Initial Assessments Completed



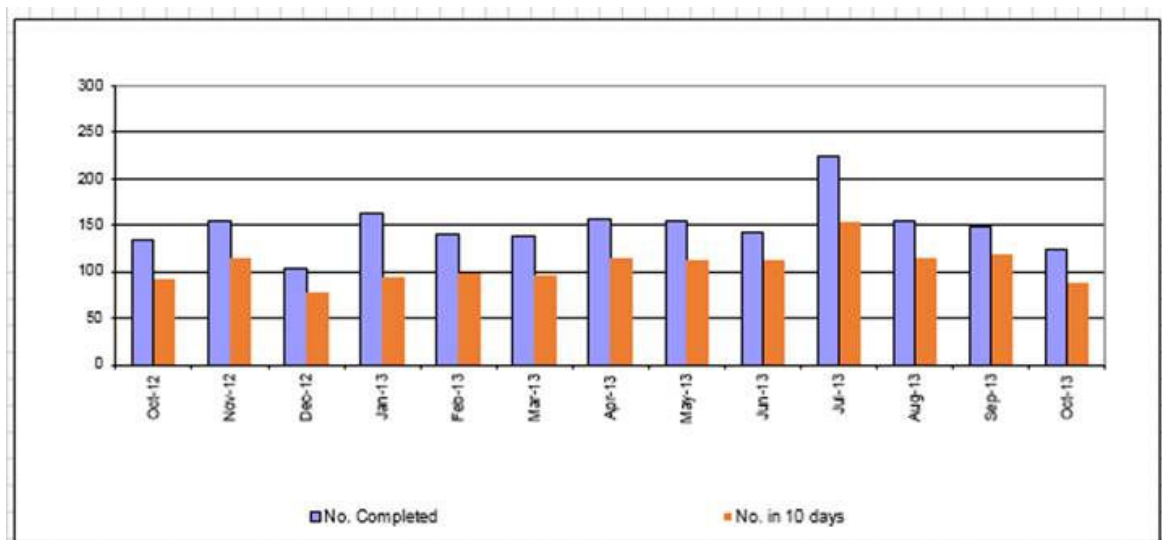
The number of Initial Assessments completed within timescale at 224 out of 244 in October 2013, was higher than previous months with 91.8% of assessments within timescale. The chart shows some fluctuation with the changes to the front door, but brings the year to date figure to 79.6% within target and up again to those reached in this time last year. This is well within the statistical neighbour of 73.9% and English average of 75.5% with a further 5 months to run.

Unallocated Cases

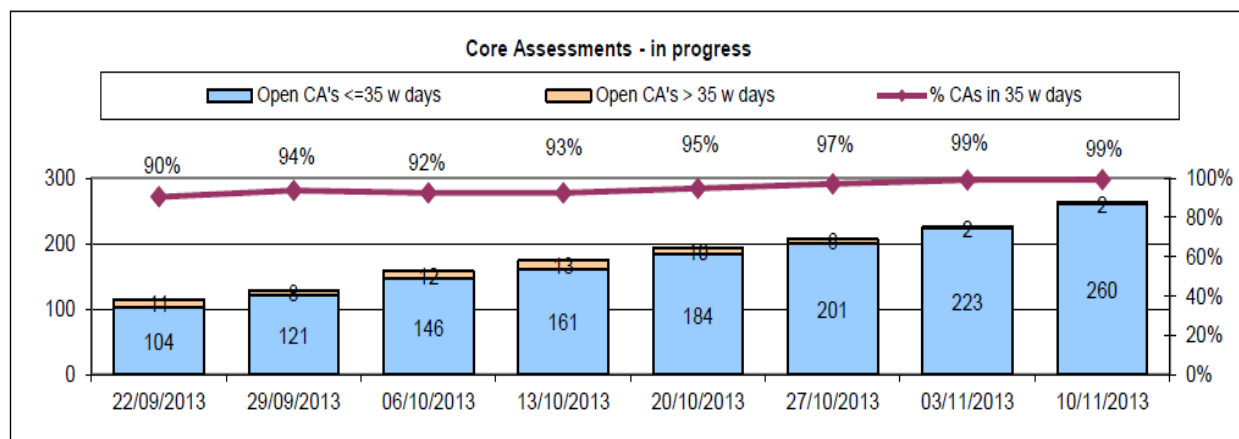


The target each month is a maximum of 20. As you can see, we have been consistently under that since March 2012. There will always be cases that need to be allocated as they come through the front door. At any one point, there may be up to 20 at the point the data is captured.

Core Assessments Completed



Number of Core Assessments

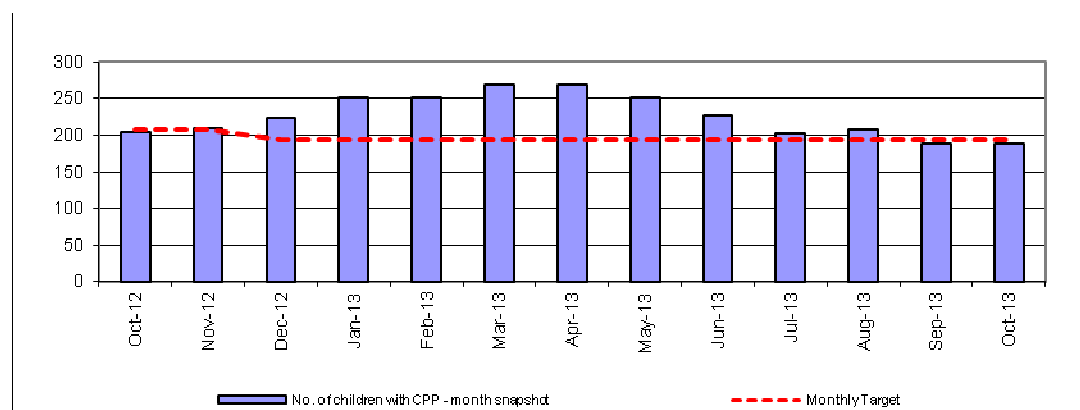


The number of Core Assessments completed continues to be high and significantly above target. The rolling 12 month rate is 400 per 10,000 of the population, which is significantly higher than our target of 173 per 10,000 of the population. This is because we complete a Core Assessment for all children with complex needs rather than move to a Children in Need plan under an Initial Assessment. This is good practice and demonstrates a rigour of assessment. Many other local authorities undertake the majority of their referrals under an Initial Assessment. Notwithstanding this, the number is overly high and we are asking managers to review the social workers' caseloads to close and/or de-escalate to a Common Assessment Framework. This builds on an audit of some 32 Children in Need cases.

The number of Core Assessments in timescale has remained relatively stable at approximately 73.9% which is lower than our target, but within the statistical neighbour average of 69.5% and slightly below the national average of 76.7%. There is however five months to run before the published out-turn position.

The second chart illustrates the rise in the number of open core assessments from 104 to 260 which will be explained later when reporting on the number of Child in Need cases.

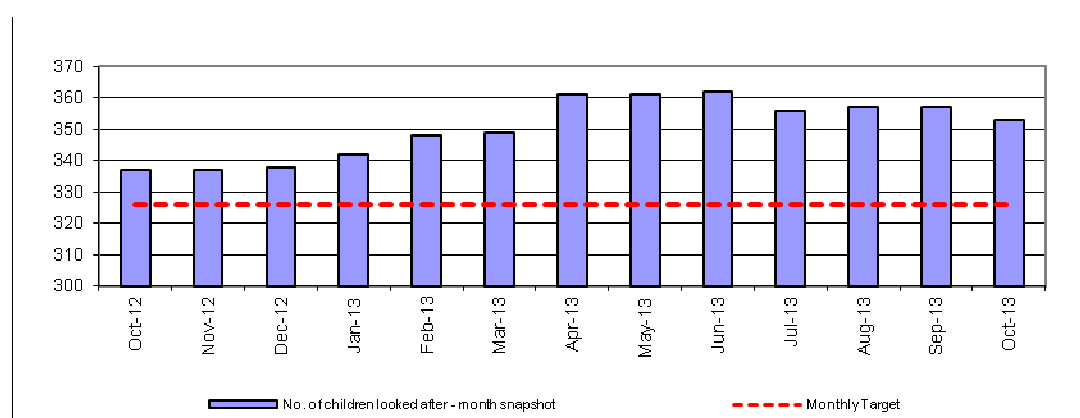
Children subject to a Child Protection Plan



Children subject to a plan per 10,000

The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan has fluctuated over the last year but stabilised since July 2013. The number increased to an all-time high in March 2013 to 270, declining to 188 in October 2013. This indicates that the threshold for conferences was not well defined. The number of children subject to plans is now where it should be, given that the rough indicator is half the LAC population (351/187). The target of 44.2 per 10,000 of the child population is now met. This has been achieved by reinforcing compliance around thresholds, greater interrogation of potential risks prior to conference, greater scrutiny by the chairs and decisions to go to conference made by the team manager only. The team manager now attends every conference.

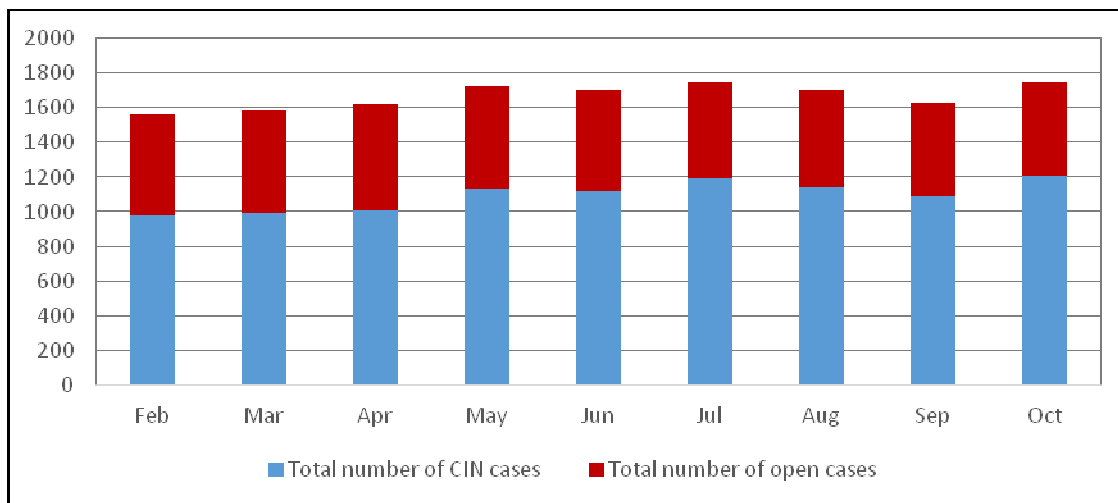
Children Looked After



The number of looked after children has remained relatively stable from 337 in October 2012 to 353 in October 2013. There was a rise in the number of children accommodated during April – June owing to the identification and accommodation of children subject to Child Sexual Exploitation and the fall in the number of young people exiting our care, which has dropped significantly given the age of the cohort in care.

This number is expected to rise in November following the identification and issue of a number of unborn babies where children have been previously removed.

Child in Need Cases



Recent audit findings (analysis of decision making at child protection conferences - May 2013) have suggested that child in need cases “may not receive the same rigour of approach and monitoring expected of those cases worked under child protection plans”.

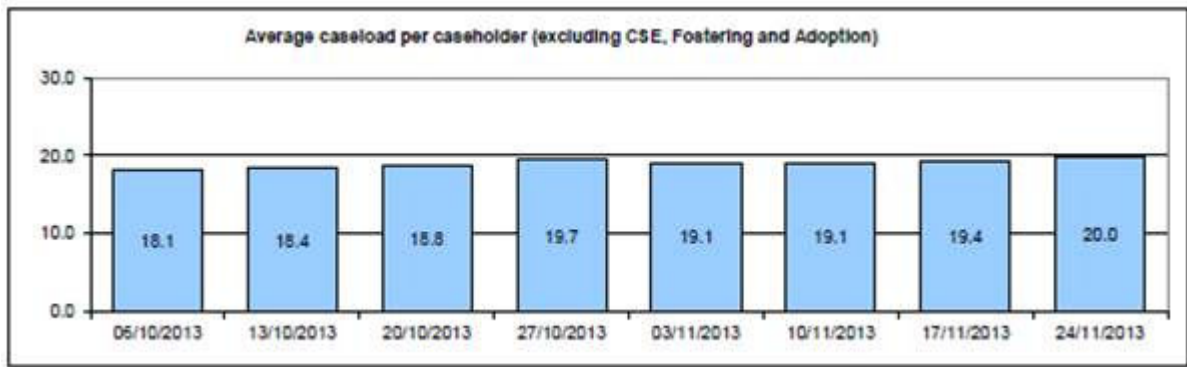
In February 2013, there were 977 open child in need cases. This had risen to 1,130 by May and there are now 1208 open child in need cases open to children’s social care in October 2013.

Child in need cases are worked within several of the social work teams: Referral and Assessment; Family Support Services; Children at risk of Sexual Exploitation; and the Children with Disabilities team. The role of the social worker is to support families through robust child in need plans that minimise risk to children and young people. It is imperative that workers are pro-active in working with families in need to ensure that the risk of these children coming into the care system or the case progressing to child protection is reduced.

In September 2013, we audited a total of 15 child in need cases which were selected at random. Whilst 15 cases were comprehensively reviewed, many of these children were part of larger sibling groups, consequently the findings of the audit related to over 32 children. All of the cases audited related to children and young people aged between 0 to 18 years and 3 of the cases related to children with disabilities. The audit was undertaken using a bespoke audit tool that focused on:

- Quality of the child in need plans
- Involvement of young person; carer’s family
- Timeliness of child in need meetings
- Evidence of multi-agency working
- Frequency of statutory visits
- Quality of management oversight and supervision

Caseloads



There has been an increase in the overall size of social workers' caseloads. Whilst the average caseload remains slightly higher at 20, our Daily Dashboard shows significant increase in the more experienced social workers' caseloads, in some cases up to 37 (highest in AFST week beginning 24/11/13). This increase is a result of an additional 169 open cases in the system, predominantly children in need. From 6 October – 24 November, there has been no significant rise in the number of children subject to Child Protection and looked after.

We have interrogated the data and found that whilst there has been an increase in contacts and referrals in October there are a number of cases where an Initial and Core has been completed and then not signed off. This is due in part to the reconfiguration of the teams and the absorption of both the initial and core within the Assessment and Family Support Teams and the inexperienced new managers who are focussing on the new work coming through the door rather than closure concurrently. It has to be remembered that this caseload number is the number of children in a household. The social worker who carried 37 during this week had 2 families with 8 siblings.

There is no explanation for the rise in contacts and referrals in October and November. We have dip sampled them and found that they meet the threshold for progression into social care.

There has also been a dip in the number of de-escalations to CAF recorded; 5 in October 2013 against 26 in October 2012.

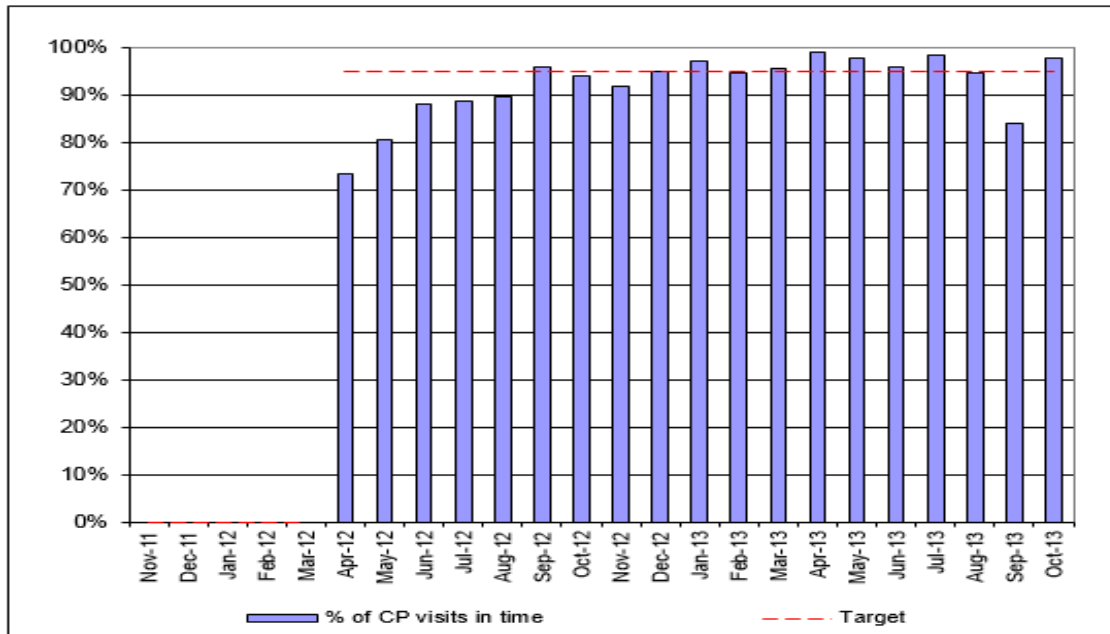
This is against a decrease in the number of re-referrals which evidences a greater working of cases to conclusion and not a premature closing off. Notwithstanding this, we do know that there are cases that need to be closed which we are working on to free the workflow.

We are addressing this through a clear Management Action Plan outlining:

- Individual Action Plan for each Team manager to close off at least 20 cases per team until the work is completed.
- The council has committed additional resource to assist with this closure. Additional capacity to come in and help close off cases with the social workers ensuring the transfer summary and audit tool is completed. An experienced Manager has been appointed to commence week beginning 2 December. These managers will also review whole caseloads to ensure that there are not cases that need to be closed off as there has, with the reconfiguration, been a rise in the number of cases on a social worker's caseload.
- An update ICS list of all cases open and not active has already been produced.

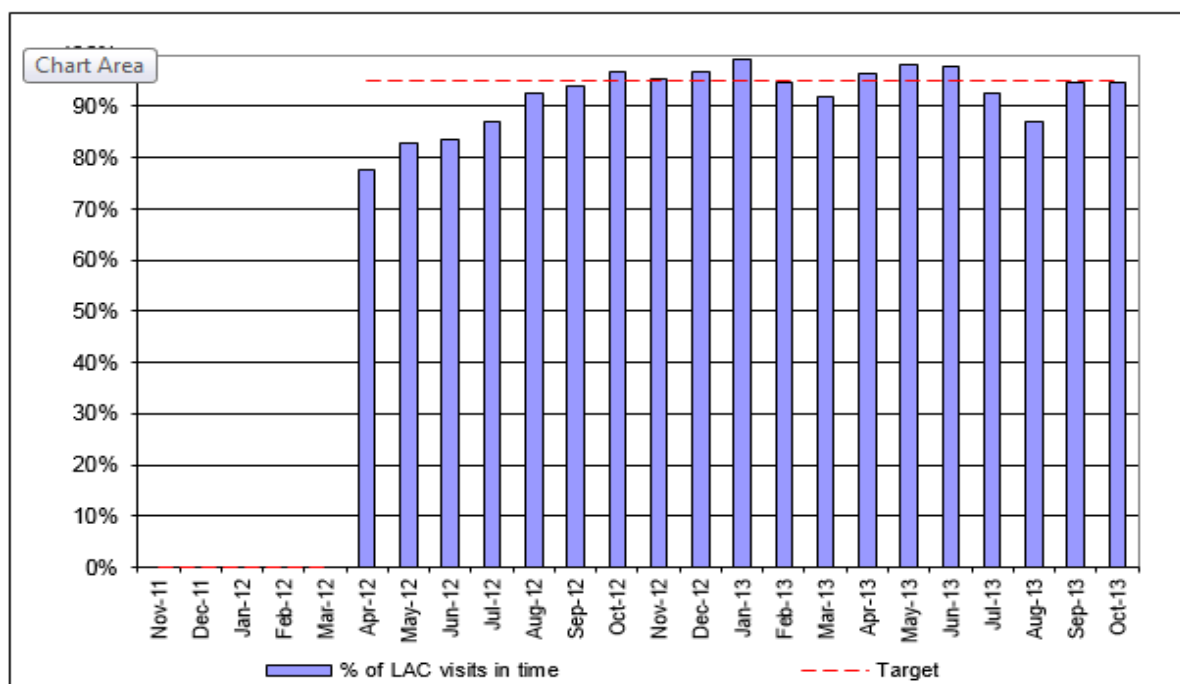
Statutory Visits in Timescale

Child Protection visits in timescale



Statutory visits for children subject to a Child Protection Plan has risen this month to 98% from 82% in September following compliance issues. The 2% equates to children who are missing from the country and cannot be located.

Looked after Children visits in timescale



This remains an area that fluctuates in performance.

To address this, there is a weekly monitoring report for managers identifying the due date and those that have not been completed in timescale. Some staffing pressure and sickness, particularly in the Leaving Care Team, have impacted upon this, especially to those care leavers that are deemed looked after but settled in placement, but where there is still a statutory responsibility. The Adolescent Intervention team and YOS has been assisting the leaving care team with the conduct of visits.

Progress in Fostering

A number of key initiatives have been set in place since April 2013:

- New Publicity Materials: a complete rebranding of the Fostering Service
- New Website: a totally new rebranded website
- Appointment of a Recruitment and Marketing Officer, with a strong marketing background
- Marketing Strategy: a detailed marketing strategy has been developed
- Change in the senior management arrangements of the service

The service has received over 170 enquiries into the service. This represents a 37% growth compared with the same point in 2012 and means that the service is on track to recruit a cadre of approved foster carers that is around 25% larger than at the beginning of the year, equating to a net gain of 24 new fostering households.

The service continues to develop an improved relationship with our existing and any new carers, minimising the number leaving for reasons other than retirement or through offering permanence to children they are currently looking after.

Progress in Adoption

The increased number of Adoption Orders made this year to-date (2 December 2013) demonstrates strong performance.

	Adopters approved	Children matched	Adoption Orders
2011 - 2012	6	6	7
2012 - 2013	17	16	19
			At 2 December 2013

Raising the Quality of Practice

Quality Assurance update

We have an ambitious annual quality assurance audit framework in place, and during the period from April - October 2013, the quality assurance team have undertaken a number of themed audits which has amounted to in excess of 535 children's cases being reviewed as part of the audit programme. The department's quality assurance action plan and the audit framework, both of which are up to date, demonstrate strong progress and are included as appendix 1 and 2.

The quality assurance framework and audit programme was refreshed in March 2013 and supported by an internal audit programme detailing the audit activity to support and develop quality practice. Progress against the audit programme is regularly monitored through the departmental management team.

The action plan is reviewed and updated on a monthly basis.

Regular case and themed audits have been undertaken to support improvements in practice and have included:

- Dip sample of decision making at the first point of contact with Children's Social Care monthly

- The robustness of child in need plans and multi-agency involvement (September 2013)
- Multi agency attendance and the quality of decision making within child protection conferences (October 2013)

All findings from the audits are cascaded across the organisation with clear actions plans and there is strong evidence of greater accountability and ownership amongst team managers.

Practice briefings are now well embedded and action learning sets have been developed to address areas for development.

There is still a need however to ensure children's views are always included in an assessment of need and the impact of the quality of parenting received well understood and incorporated into any assessment of need. This will further be enhanced by the introduction of children/young people and their parents' questionnaires/evaluation forms, which will be used at various points in the child's journey.

This will enable greater understanding on how the work we undertake impacts on children and their family's lives and act as a reference point from which to further develop relationship based practice.

Service Developments Conference & Review Service

Following a service evaluation, the service was restructured in November 2013. Previously there were distinct roles of Child Protection Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers. However it was agreed to appoint more chairs who could undertake a dual role in chairing Child Protection Conferences and Statutory Reviews. This enables the chair to understand the trajectory of a child's journey from being subject to a Child Protection Plan through to possible accommodation into care.

Grade descriptors and practice standards have also been introduced to assist in evaluating the quality of child protection plans and also the plans for children who are looked after. The grade descriptors were well received amongst children's services staff and their introduction was also supported by Peterborough's social work forum.

The conference and review service is now more closely aligned to the quality assurance team and PSCB, providing monitoring evidence of attendance at Conference and the provision of reports.

There is now in place a robust monitoring process detailing information on all agencies invited to child protection conferences, the quality of the reports submitted and whether the conference is actually attended. Where there is non-attendance this is followed up and explanation sought.

Where there are concerns about agency attendance these are followed up by meetings with partner agencies, senior management from Children's Services and the board's Independent Chair.

The details of attendance now form part of the PSCB multi-agency data set and are reported quarterly to the board allowing for appropriate scrutiny and challenge.

Early monitoring has already demonstrated improvements in attendance from agencies where there were identified concerns and the timeliness of reports being shared prior to the meeting.

The Social Work Forum

The Social Work Forum, established in May 2012, continues as a consultative and feedback body to the DCS and departmental management team. This ensures direct communication

between senior managers and a representative group of practitioners. The leader of the council attends this forum and the group can, and does, call senior managers to the table.

Performance Management and Supervision

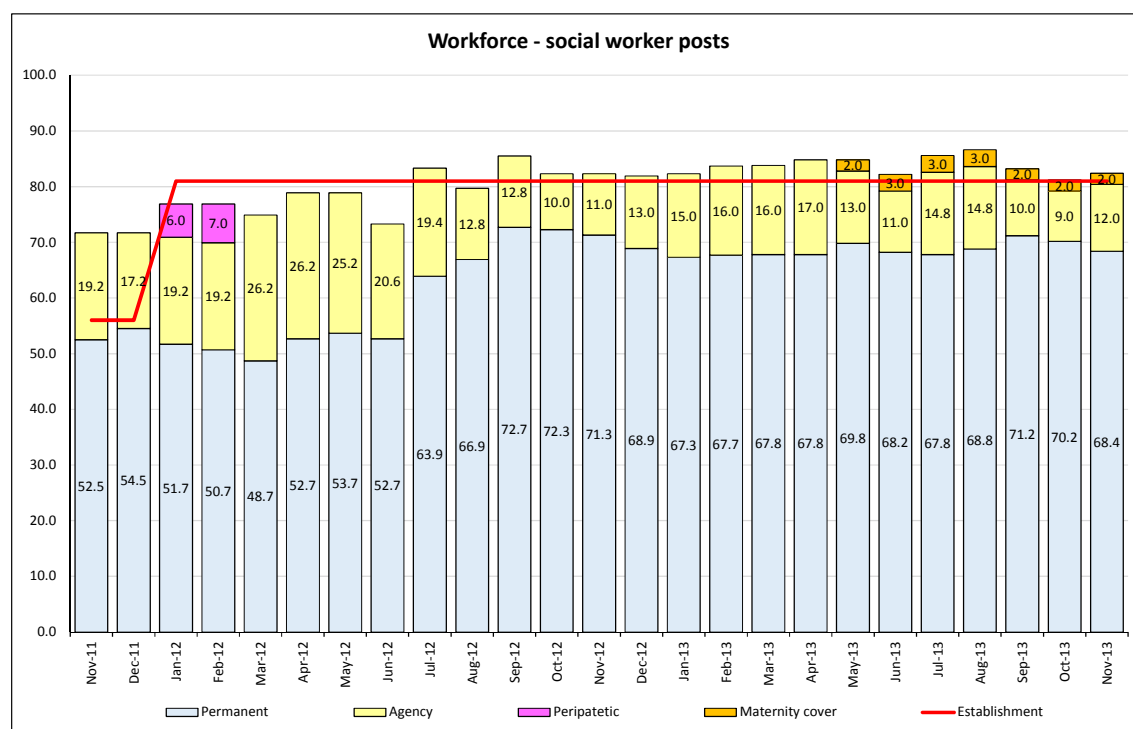
Our performance management arrangements for children’s social care are well established. High level performance management information is used to measure compliance and quality of practice. A suite of daily, weekly, and monthly reports continue to be produced including:

- Monthly Performance Management Information Monitoring Report
- Weekly report on Social Care Performance
- Daily Dashboard
- Weekly report on Unallocated Cases
- Weekly report on Statutory Visits to children in care and those subject to a Child Protection Plan
- Fortnightly staffing levels
- Legal Tracking sheet

These reports are used actively in weekly performance meetings, extended management team meetings, the team managers meeting and team meetings to inform and ensure performance remains on track.

Raising the quality of assessments has also been achieved through reduced caseloads and increasing evidence of reflective supervision on file, enhanced through training and learning sets.

Staffing



At the time of writing this report (2 December 2013), the number of permanent members of staff in post is 68.4 fte against an establishment of 81 which gives us a vacancy rate of 13.6 fte.

This is made up of:

- 12.6 fte vacancies plus one pipeline leaver

- The current number of agency staff totals within the 81 fte is 14.6 and this includes 2 covering maternity leave in Leaving Care.
- There are no new permanent social workers in the pipeline and ready to start. However, there are 2 Locums ready to start and will begin on 10 and 16 December 2013. 2 locums have agreed to remain in post to cover AFST work which will service to relieve the pressure. This brings the actual vacancy rate down (where no locum or permanent staff holder is in place to 1)

Against a national background to the shortage of qualified and experienced social workers throughout the country, Peterborough is experiencing some difficulties in attracting social workers. A few neighbouring authorities are offering cash incentives and some of our staff have been attracted to these inducements. To address this we refreshed our targeted advertising campaign in November when we went out to recruit, specifically in Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire and also in the specialist press.

Regional and Self-Assessment

Social Care are conducting a multi-agency self-assessment against the new Ofsted inspection judgements. This complements our adoption and school improvement self-assessment.

The PSCB will also be evaluating their performance against the new Ofsted guidance.

We have requested a lac peer review inspection in the spring to pilot the new regional methodology which we have helped develop. This will give us an independent assessment of our lac services against the new OFSTED judgement areas and indicators.

Early Intervention

The Children and Families Joint Commissioning Board oversees much of the work of agencies to support the needs of children and families through effective targeted early intervention services. An annual report covering progress made in improving outcomes for children, young people and their families against the areas of priority need identified in the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy is available separately.

Improving the Quality of Early Years Provision

We have been committed to improving the quality of childcare provision across the city as part of our determination to narrow the gap in Foundation Stage performance among our most vulnerable children and helping to ensure that they arrive at school ready to learn. Through the provision of targeted support and challenge to childcare providers, the quality of provision in the city, as assessed by Ofsted, has continued to improve over the last 12 months.

Supporting Vulnerable Young People and those who are NEET

We commission and provide a range of services working with vulnerable young people in the city. Our main provided services include:

- The Adolescent Intervention Service which works intensively with individual young people with complex needs and their families
- The Youth in Localities Service, which undertakes a wide range of community based youth work as well running targeted groups to work with young people who have particular needs – for example young women who have been identified as being at risk of sexual exploitation

- The NEET Service which works with schools and other partners to proactively target young people at risk of NEET and to work with those young people to identify constructive options for them as well as working with young people who are NEET and supporting them into employment, education or training

We also commission a range of services and work in partnership with a number of voluntary sector organisations to ensure that we are using every opportunity to provide young people with the support that they need in order to achieve improved outcomes.

Our most recent performance suggests that the percentage of young people NEET in October 2013 remains lower than at the same time last year, at 7.5%. It also remains the case that we know the status of a much higher proportion of our young people than either our statistical neighbours or the England average.

The most recent data available for the rate of first time entrants into the Youth Justice System in Peterborough shows that the rate has fallen to below that of our statistical neighbours for the first time. Local performance data indicates that this indicator continues to improve. Not only is this very encouraging, but we also believe that it is evidence of the success of the partners working with vulnerable young people and tackling issues that are often associated with offending such as being out of employment, education or training and problem alcohol and/or substance misuse.

Softer information on the effectiveness of some of our intensive support work with individual vulnerable young people is provided through our regular sampling of case work files. For example, the most recent sampling of 30 randomly selected young people receiving a service through our Adolescent Intervention Service found that:

- 6 demonstrated improvements in relationships at home
- 9 secured improved school attendance or engagement with different model of education – e.g. college
- 1 young person was no longer homeless
- 6 were referred to specialist mental health services
- 2 young people already in care were supported with the result that their placements became more stable
- 1 young person moved
- While in only 3 cases was there limited or no engagement

Troubled Families

Connecting Families is the local name for the Troubled Families programme. We have adopted a scheme whereby partner agencies have identified workers to become Connectors. These Connectors work intensively with families to address issues such as school attendance and anti-social behaviour. The Connectors form a virtual team who support each other by sharing their knowledge and skills. Access to Connecting Families is through the Multi-Agency Support Groups to ensure that services being provided are properly coordinated. Almost 100 families have now been worked with through the Connecting Families Programme. There are 10.5 FTE Connectors working within the programme from a wide range of organisations including the fire service, police, children's services and social housing, alongside Connectors from Peterborough and Fenland Mind and from Ormiston Trust and Drink and Drug Sense. The Connectors are a highly committed group of practitioners who have had considerable success in helping families to make significant changes to their circumstances.

In parallel to developing the Connecting Families approach, we have developed systems that enable us to bring together agency data. This has meant we can now evidence

achievement of agencies across the city in relation to work with children, young people and families.

Conclusion

Strong performance is evident across Children's Services and is being sustained.

Sue Westcott
Executive Director Children's Services
Peterborough City Council
December 2013