

<b>CREATING OPPORTUNITIES &amp; TACKLING INEQUALITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>Agenda Item No. 9</b>
<b>14 JULY 2014</b>	<b>Public Report</b>

## **Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services**

**Contact Officer(s) – Sue Westcott**  
**Contact Details - 863606**

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT FOR SOCIAL CARE PRACTICE AND PERFORMANCE**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to continue to update the committee on the progress of performance and improvement in Children's Social Care. This was a recommendation of the Children's Services Improvement Programme Scrutiny Task and Finish Group on its conclusion in March 2014.

#### **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 by this Committee and the Internal Improvement Board.

#### **5. KEY ISSUES**

##### **5.1 Highlights (as of May 2014)**

- Increase in CAFs
- Fewer contacts
- Timescales for initial assessments on target
- Improvement in timescales for core assessments
- Decrease in re-referrals
- Number of CP and LAC high
- Update on reconfiguration
- Recruitment and retention

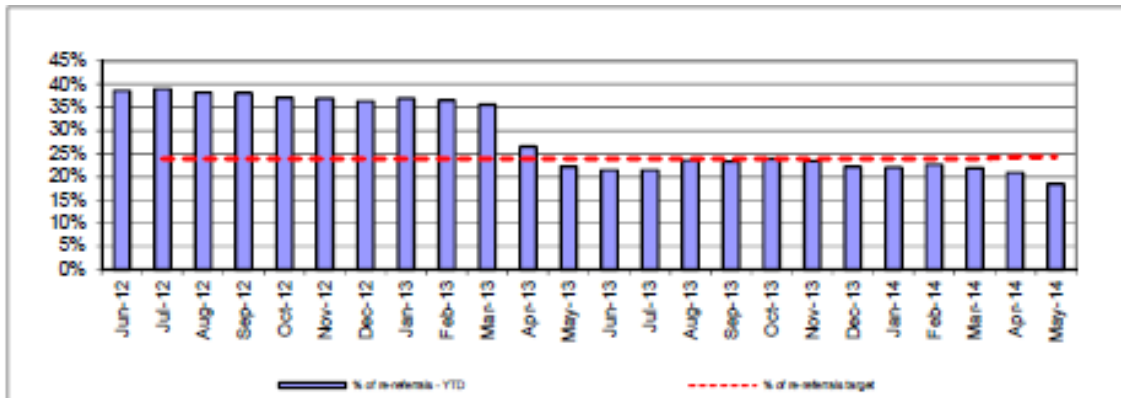
##### **5.2 Referrals**

There were 254 referrals in May 2014 which is slightly higher than the previous month of 221. However the rolling 12 month rate has decreased to 584.0 from a high of 808.0 in December 2012. The target is a rate of 601.6 per 10,000. To meet this target we would need to reduce the number of referrals over 12 months to 2,647. This equates to an average of 220 per month.



### 5.3 Re-referrals

The number of re-referrals remained in line with the previous month at 42 from 46 last month. This means that the re-referral rolling rate is at 18.5%, comfortably below the 24.3% target by 5.8%.



### 5.4 Number of Initial Assessments

267 initial assessments were completed in the month; higher than the 230 in April.



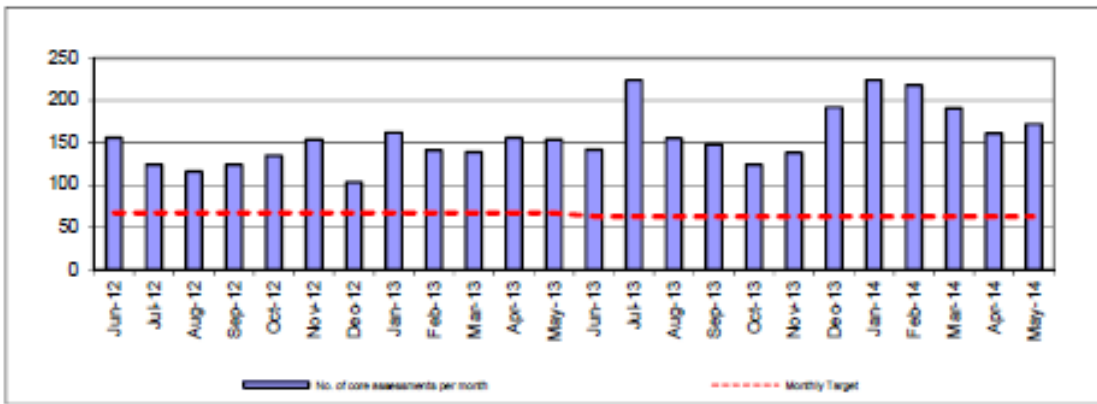
### 5.5 Initial Assessments in Timescale

More were however completed in timescale: 81.3 % compared to 79.6% in April. This means the year to date figure has increased to 80.5% which is in line with performance at the same time last year at 81.0%. This indicator is above the target of 77.6% and equates to good performance.



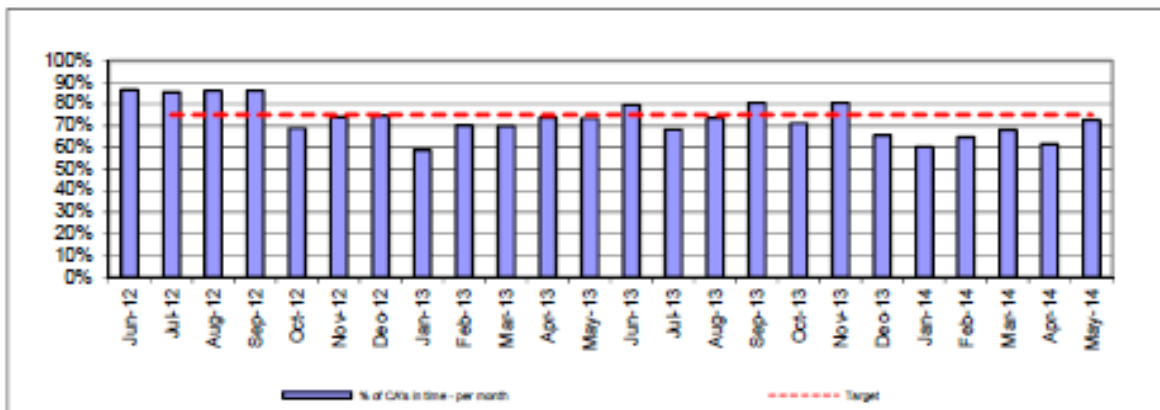
### 5.6 Number of Core Assessments

172 core assessments were completed in the month; higher than the 161 completed in April.



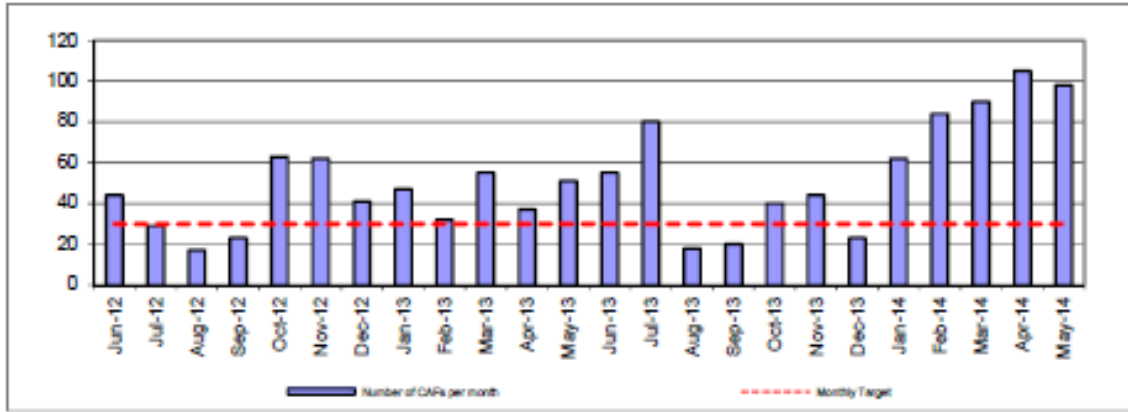
### 5.7 Core Assessments in Timescale

The percentage of cores completed in timescale rose by over 10% this month to 72.7% from 61.5% in April. The year to date figure at 67.3% is still 7.8% below target, but performance has steadily increased as old cores have been closed down.



### 5.8 CAFs

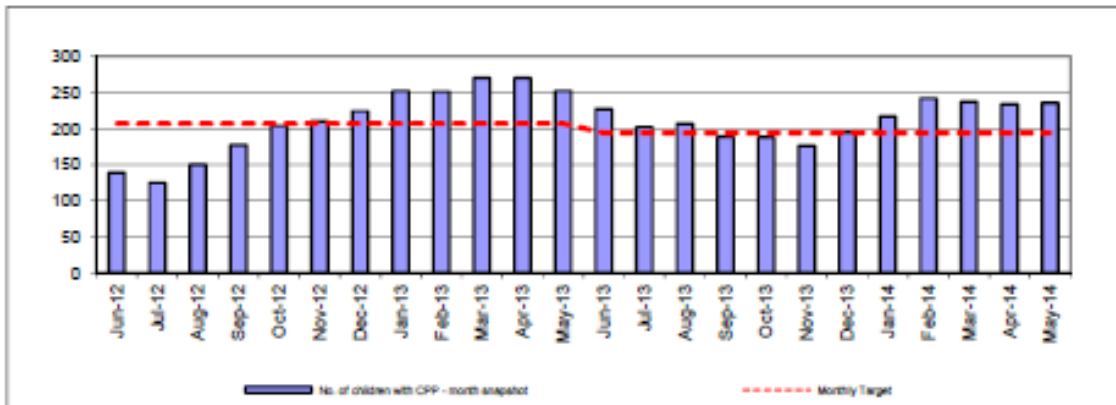
98 CAFs were completed with a rolling rate of 159.8. This has already exceeded the new target which was a 10% stretch target and denotes good performance.



### 5.9 Child Protection Plans

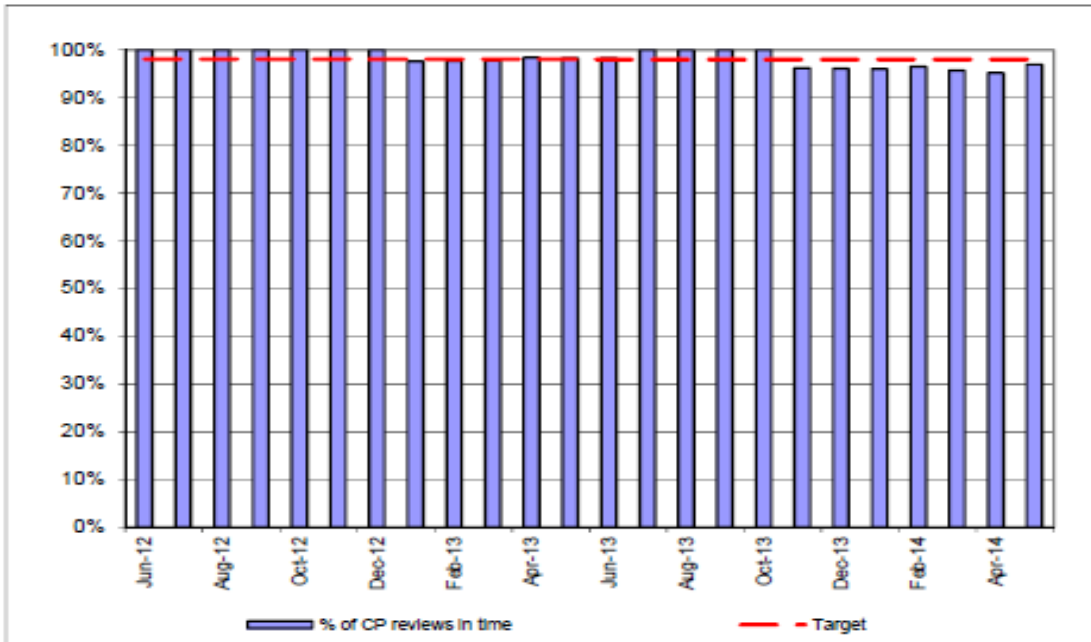
The number of children subject to a child protection plan has decreased to 236 at the end of May. This indicator is a rate of 52.4% per 10,000 which is still 21.7% higher than the target of 43.1%.

The Heads of Service are now taking the decision to convene a conference so we can thoroughly test out the threshold. The service will focus on working with children under our Children in Need procedures and raising the profile with partner agencies. We are introducing a tool kit for practitioners working with neglectful families and restoring professionals' confidence in social care, to work with children without having a child protection plan.



### 5.10 Child Protection Visits

Almost 100% of child protection visits have been completed in timescale. The small percentage that have not been completed in timescale were due to a family being out of country and a visit being made within days of the expected date.

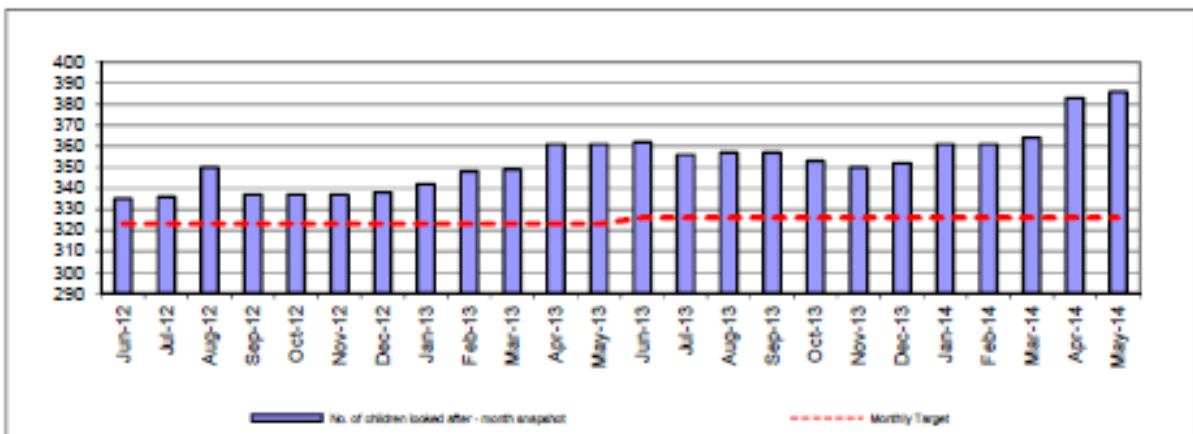


### 5.11 Looked After Children

At the end of May 2014, the number of looked after children was at 386. This is the highest rate in the previous two years and due to transient populations and a number of cases that have not been worked effectively over the last six months. It is also a sign of a service that is becoming risk adverse which we are trying to reverse whilst working with the PLO process. In order to meet the target of 80.0 per 10,000, the looked after children number needs to be 360.

We have audited all children subject to Section 20 to see if there is any drift and are now checking out the findings. Early indicators are that plans are clear.

The number of admissions at 14 is slightly higher than previous months and is just above our target of 11. The number of care leavers at 4 was in line with the previous month which still signifies a high number of adolescent children still within the LAC population.



### 5.12 Update on Re-configuration of the front door

The First Response Team (FRT), having been one team previously, was reconfigured, moving colleagues from Family Support Teams to become three teams in March 2014. The assessment activity (initial and core assessments) was placed back with the FRT and changes made to the management capacity within the service. Corporate Management Team put in place additional resources in the form of an additional team manager and two social workers (back fill for the two CSE workers) for a six month period to add capacity and to support the transition process. At the

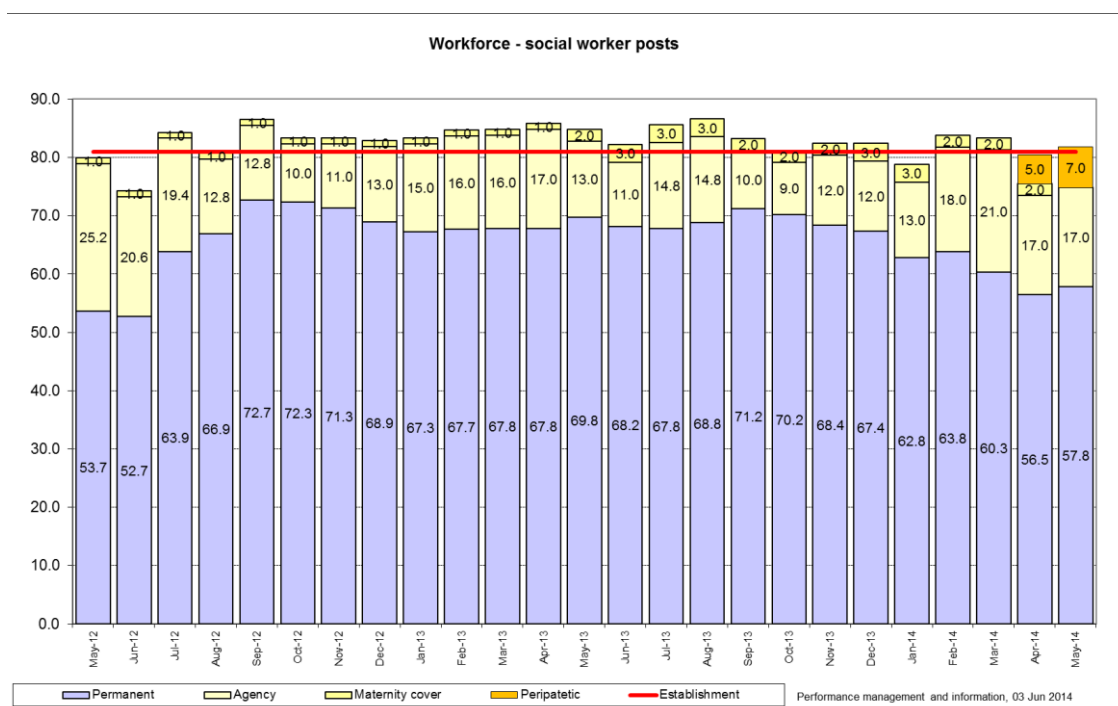
same time, the responsibilities of the Head of Service (Referral, Assessment, and Family Support) were split with an additional Head of Service post being created (one responsible for the First Response Service and the other responsible for Family Support).

A Child and Family (single) assessment has been developed during the period since then and will be implemented mid-June 2014.

Changes were made to the management teams of both the First Response and Family Support teams at the end of May, with one locum manager leaving FRT and one manager from Family Support swapping teams with a manager from First Response (in order to make best use of their relative skills and experience). The First Response Service now has a relatively new team manager group in that they have only recently come together, but they have a great deal of relevant experience between them and they are already working well together.

Negotiations are progressing to secure a health practitioner post in the FRT and also a CAF/Connecting Families co-ordinator to further develop the work that the team undertakes.

### 5.13 Staffing



As at 03 June 2014 the current vacancy rate is 18.2 FTE against an establishment of 81. This figure includes pipeline leavers and pipeline starters. Presently there are 17 locum and a peripatetic locum social work team.

The new cohort of NQSWs are currently being recruited and these will form 15% of the 81fte establishment. This is 5% increase on last year's cohort. This will decrease the number of agency staff on a 'grow your own' principle.

A permanent Team Manager has been recruited for the vacant post in Looked after Children and has now started the post. After a further interview, there has been an appointment to the vacant Leaving Care Team Manager post subject to references and employment checks.

Both of these appointments have been a result of the recent national advertising campaign that has been embarked upon in the Guardian.

Further adverts are being organised in the Local Press for Team Managers in First Response, Family Support, Fostering and Conference and Review. This will then be followed by adverts for two Heads of Service posts in the Guardian for Family Support and QA and Safeguarding.

The Social Work Careers website has been refreshed completely from the original Head and Heart Website. There was also extensive radio advertising for social worker posts.

Advanced Practitioners have been offered the opportunity to succession plan to be developed for Team Manager opportunities in the future. The career progression scheme has been launched.

Our existing Team Manager for Conference and Review has stepped up as Head of Quality Assurance and we are back filling her role as Team Manager. This post will be recruited to permanently and carry the Principal Social Worker role.

#### **5.14 Adoptions**

A new way of working was introduced in the last year to ensure that children become a legal part of their adoptive family at the earliest opportunity. The past year has seen the adoption service embrace the changes brought about by the adoption reform agenda, and continue to grow and develop. This has led to an increase in activity in all areas of the service. There were 27 adoption orders granted in the period 2013/14. This compares to a total of 18 in the year 2012/13, representing a 50% increase. 29 adoptive families were approved in 2013/14. This compares with a total of 22 for 2012/13.

Growth in activity has continued into 2014/15. Within the first few months of this new financial year, 7 children have been adopted and 6 new adoptive families approved. There are also 21 children placed with their adoptive families and for these children an Adoption Order is imminent. The service is on track to exceed last year's outstanding performance and achieve an even greater number of successful adoptions for an increased number of children in care.

#### **5.15 Liquidlogic System**

After a period of development and testing, a new suite of some 25 forms were introduced into the Liquidlogic application on 28 May 2014. These new forms are designed to be more user-friendly and concise and to reduce the number of screens that a social worker would need to access in order to complete a specific task.

Additionally, the move towards Single Assessment has been undertaken, with a new Single Assessment Form introduced to the system on 16 June 2014, replacing the existing Initial and Core Assessment Forms.

#### **5.16 Raising Quality of Practice / Getting to Good**

A practice development programme has been established which is aimed at developing and embedding good quality children's social care practice across all the teams. The subject areas being covered during April and May, 2014 include:

- Reflective Supervision
- Assessment Practice
- Managing Risk
- Care Planning
- Team Manager Leadership
- Single Assessment
- Special Guardianship
- Managing Workflows

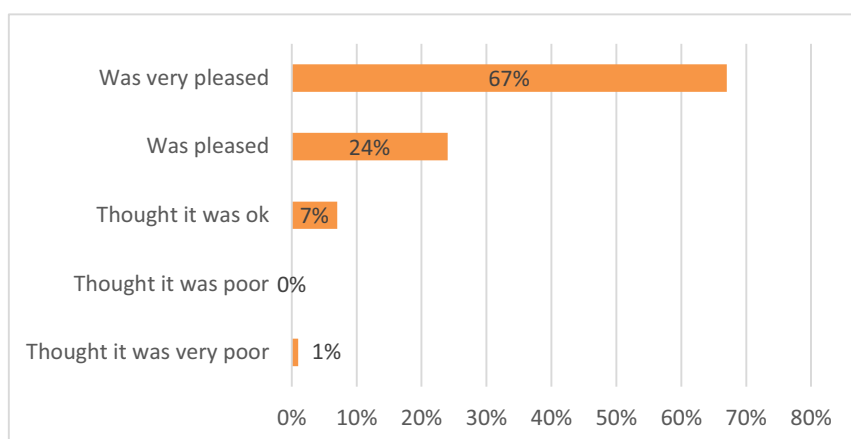
The methodology ranges from Practice Workshops, mentoring and coaching, information dissemination to action learning sets. These practice developments are being led by the practice development consultants, team managers and heads of service.

## 5.17 Early Intervention and Prevention

The electronic version of the Early Help Assessment – E-CAF – continues to be rolled out successfully; training is being provided to partner agencies and the system is becoming established across the early help partnership.

We continue to monitor the impact of the CAF and the Team Around the Child [TAC] process, and brief questionnaires are sent to parents/carers and where appropriate, to young people, asking them to comment on the support they have received. These are sent out between 3 and 6 months after the initial CAF assessment. The response rate is typically between 10% and 15%, which while low is in line with most postal surveys of this kind.

A number of questions are asked; the table below illustrates the response to the question, ‘What do you think about the support that you have received over the last few months?’ and the responses are summarised in the table below:



The same survey asks respondents to comment on whether they think the original issues have improved, stayed the same or have become worse since the support through the CAF and the Team Around the Child approaches were put in place. 81% of respondents said things had got better, 14% that they had stayed the same while 5% said things had got worse.

Clearly a low response rate can only provide an indication of impact and the CAF team is looking at how we might use other communication mechanisms that could provide a higher response rate. Any such method would need to maintain confidentiality, while enabling the family to be identified should there be a need to follow up any comments that indicate that they have not received a good enough service, as is the case at present.

Despite the low response rate, these results do provide an encouraging indication of the positive impact of the multi-agency partnership in supporting children, young people and their families as a result of coordinated assessment and support.

Early Help and Connecting Families services are linked together through the Multi-Agency Support Group. Any lead professional working with a family who believes that the family would benefit from support through Connecting Families presents the assessment of needs [the CAF] to the Multi-Agency Support Group. This ensures that families being referred to Connecting Families meet the required criteria as well as providing an opportunity for any other relevant support services to be identified.

Responsibility for the commissioning of School Nursing services has now transferred to the local authority. We are in the process of negotiating performance targets with the provider of this service and are committed to ensuring that the service is able to demonstrate a more holistic approach to supporting positive outcomes for children and young people.

Working with our partners, we are developing a healthy child pathway which encompasses the life of the child from pre-birth to 18 years, drawing together maternity, health visiting, early years and



school nursing services and ensuring smoother transitions at key points along the pathway – from home to school, for example.

NEET performance locally remains very strong and the latest data indicates that Peterborough has fewer young people aged 16-18 who are NEET than our statistical neighbour average for the first time ever. The current rate of young people NEET in the city is 6.3%; the England average is also 6.3% while our statistical neighbour average is 7.5%. In addition, we know the status of over 97% of our young people, while the equivalent figure among our statistical neighbours and in England more generally is around 90%. Given that it is likely that a significant number of young people who have a status of 'Not Known' will be NEET, this suggests that local performance is even better in comparison with other areas. This has been subject to a successful OFSTED inspection.

Young people spending any proportion of this period of their lives out of education, employment or training tend to have much poorer lifelong outcomes than their peers so this is really good news in terms of the future prospects of our young people. This is also an area where local performance has historically been much poorer than statistical neighbours and is the result of a determined approach by schools, local colleges, council and voluntary agency provided services to work together to improve outcomes.

## **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.

## **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 6<sup>th</sup> September 2011
  - Ofsted Unannounced Inspection of contact referral and assessment arrangements 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2011
  - Ofsted Safeguarding and Looked after Children Inspection: Peterborough 21<sup>st</sup> May 2010
  - Ofsted Local Authority Arrangements for the Protection of Children: inspection report 8 March 2013

## **10. APPENDICES**

- 10.1 None

This page is intentionally left blank