

CABINET	AGENDA ITEM No.7
15 DECEMBER 2014	PUBLIC REPORT

Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Cllr Sheila Scott	
Contact Officer(s):	Sue Westcott – Executive Director of Children’s Services	Tel. 01733 863606

CHILDREN’S SERVICES DIRECTOR’S UPDATE

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM : Sue Westcott, Executive Director of Children’s Services	Deadline date : N/A
<p>1. To note the contents of this report:</p> <p>Key points (as of October 2014):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued increase in early intervention assessments (CAFs) • Conversion rate from contact to referral 20% lower than same time two years ago • Majority of referrals had a single assessment completed and in timescale • Re-referral rate staying low • Continuing high number of Child Protection enquiries • High number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan • Continued increase in Looked After Children (383) 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 Quarterly updated Director’s report to Cabinet.

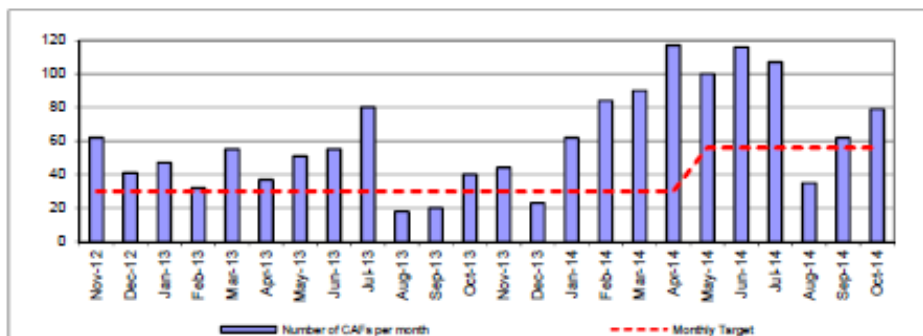
2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 To report to Cabinet on Children’s Services improvement.

3. SOCIAL CARE PERFORMANCE

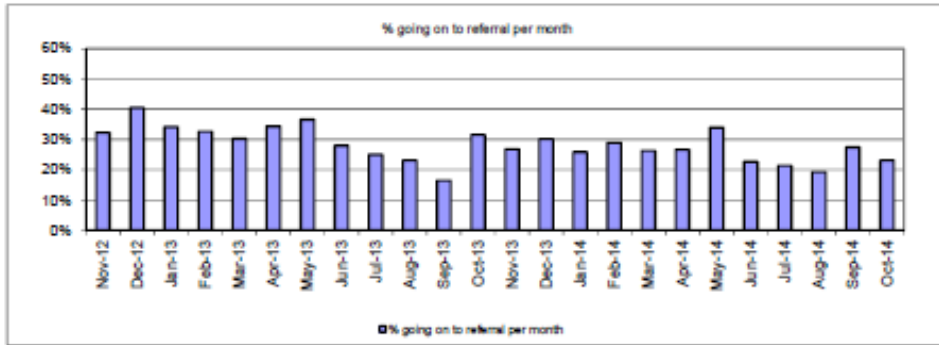
3.1 Early Intervention Assessments (CAFs)

79 early intervention assessments were opened in October which is higher than the previous month and notably higher than the same time last year (40 in October 2013). The rate per 10,000 at 204.2 is 38.1% higher than the target.



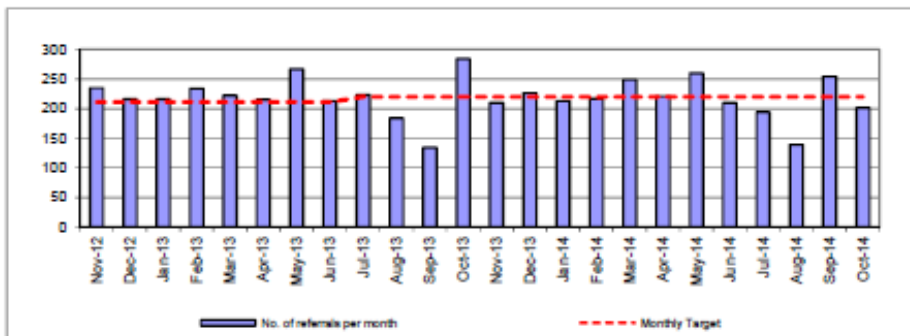
3.2 Number of Contacts

October data shows 870 contacts coming in to the service of which 201 went on to referral. This is a conversion rate of 23.1% which is lower than the same time last year (31.6% in October 2013).



3.3 Number of Referrals

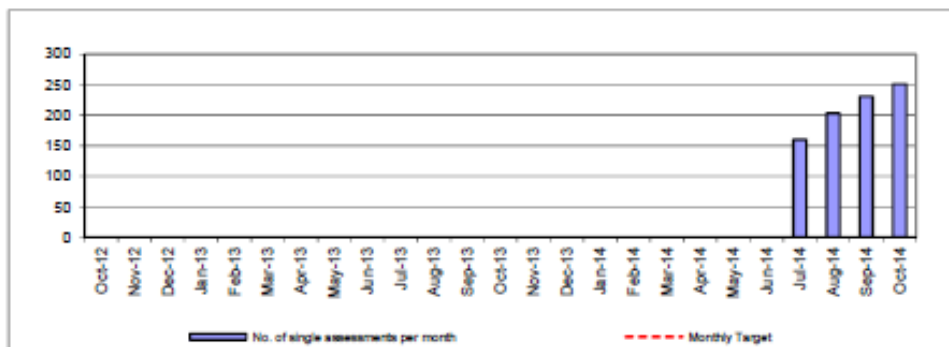
There were 201 referrals in October which is lower than the previous month (254 in September). The rolling 12 month rate per 10,000 has increased to 576.4 which is just 4.2% below target.



The re-referral rate remains lower than statistical neighbours indicating referrals being worked thoroughly.

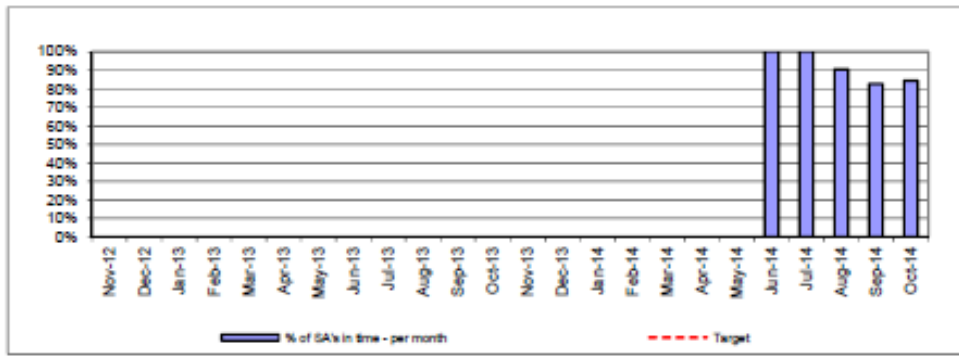
3.4. Number of Single Assessments

There were 251 single assessments completed during October. There is no comparable data to measure this by although 231 were completed in September.



3.5 Single Assessments Timescales

88.8% of single assessments completed up to the end of October have been in timescale. Staff sickness, jury leave, compassionate leave and maternity leave (10.5 posts) has impacted upon this including new staff commencing.



Exception reporting:

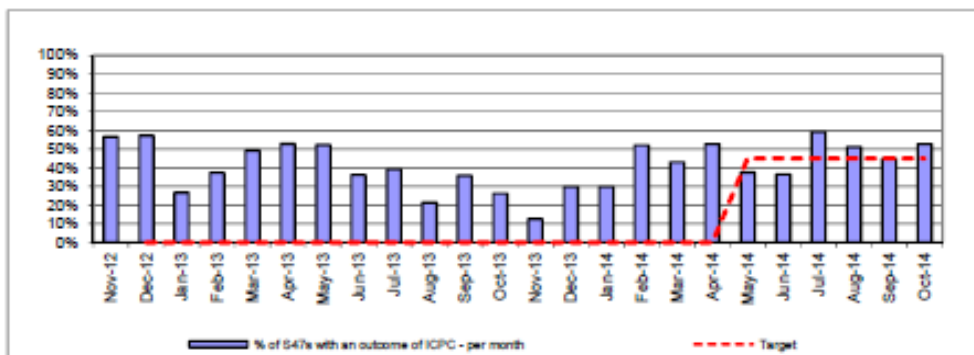
There were 39 single assessments not completed within 35 days which relate to 26 families. From a dip sample of 18 cases, 1 case was delayed due to unavailability of the child / family. In all other cases sampled a number of social work visits had been completed and information gathered from partner agencies within the 35 day assessment timescale. However the actual assessment had not been written up until after this timescale. In the majority of these cases plans and support were actioned prior to the written completion of the assessments. 7 cases were already open Child in Need cases, Looked After, or subject to Child Protection plans, and within the 35 day assessment period, ongoing work took place under those processes.

3.6 Section 47 Enquiries

The number of child protection enquiries completed during October, was 76 and 40 of them (52.6%) had the outcome of an initial child protection conference selected on the form. The year to date figure is 46.3% which is higher than at the same time last year (26.5% in October 2013).

Although this is higher than the English average at 47.3%, it is comparable to our statistical neighbours at 52.3%.

We are working with the police to reduce the amount of joint agency enquiries. The police accept that more enquiries could be undertaken as a single agency and then escalated if necessary.

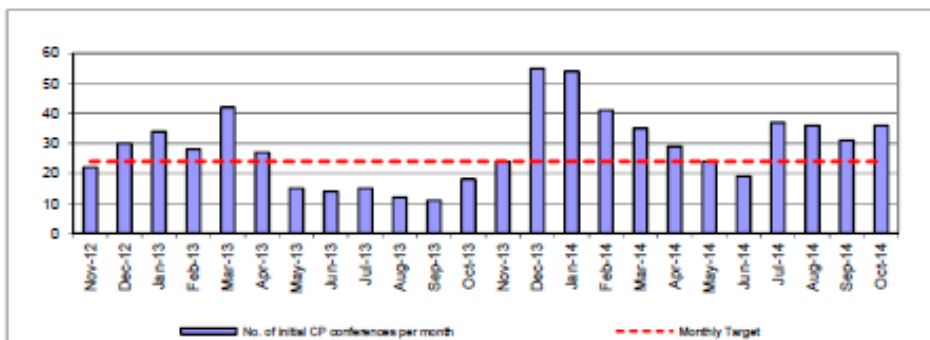


3.7 Child Protection Conferences

Only just over half of child protection enquiries resulted in in a child protection conference in October. The number of children becoming subject to a child protection plan is 37 for October, an increase of 7 from the previous month, but 4 below the number in August 2014.

The rolling 12 month rate per 10,000 at 80.7 is 51.1% above the target and much higher than the English average of 46.2% and our statistical neighbour average of 54.3% per 10,000 of the population.

The reasons for this are many: the increasing complexity of cases, changes of worker, multi-agency confidence in child protection meetings and lack of confidence in Children in Need procedures, diversity issues and the high number of cases of unborn babies at risk, domestic violence and substance abuse.



3.8 Number of Children subject to a Child Protection Plan

The number of children presented to Conference over this reporting period continues to be high. The main category children have been registered by is neglect. There has been a recent workshop to look at Child Protection thresholds and further work is planned to reduce the numbers by continuing to strengthen the Child In Need process.

3.9 Child Protection Conference Timescales

All children subject to a Child Protection plan have been reviewed within timescales. The data is showing that there have been late reviews as a result of the Conference process within Liquidlogic not being able to be finalised due to Child Protection minutes not being uploaded. This has been caused by a backlog, which, as at 3 December, has been cleared. The data should reflect this moving forward.

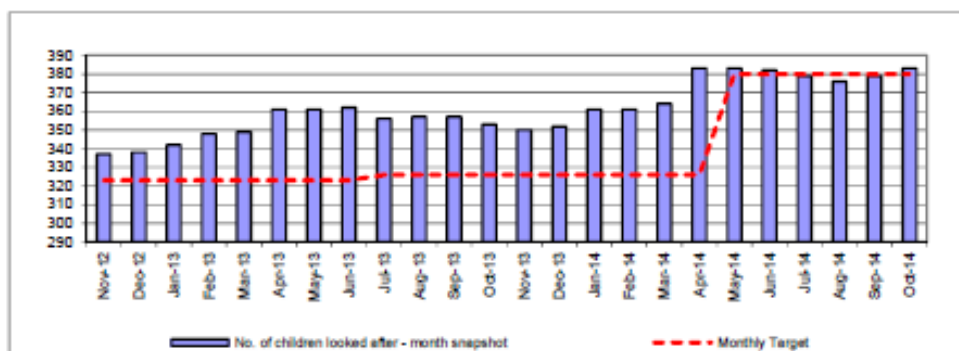
3.10 Child Protection Visits in Timescale

93.1% of children with a child protection plan received a statutory visit within timescale. This is an improvement from the previous month.

3.11 Number of Looked After Children

At the end of October, 383 children were looked after: a net increase of 4 compared to the previous month (379 in September).

The number of looked after children remains relatively high in relation to the previous two years and is currently equivalent to a rate of 85.1 per 10,000, compared to 79.0 for our statistical neighbours and 60.0 for the English average.



3.12 Number of Children ceasing to be Looked After

The number of Looked After Children has gone up because fewer children are being discharged from care because of their age. 7 children ceased to be Looked After during October. This is below the target level. The rolling 12 month rate per 10,000 at 31.6 remains lower than the target of 38.0. To meet the target, an average of 14 children would need to cease to be Looked After per month.

3.13 Looked After Children Reviews

There have been no out of date Looked After Children reviews.

3.14 Update on First Response/MASH

The First Response Screening team came into effect on 27th October 2014. This team consists of 1 team manager, 2 social workers and 1 support worker, with plans for a further support worker to join the team in December. The team is complimented by the 4 Child Sexual Exploitation workers.

Further discussion has taken place with regard to how the CAF coordinators supplement the work of this team in order to assist in triaging referrals and actively facilitate the setting up of CAFs when cases do not meet the threshold for Children's Services, but early coordinated help is warranted. From 1st December 2014, a CAF coordinator will be situated with the screening team for half a day every day.

The Missing from Home worker from the NEET team, has been based in the screening team for three mornings a week from 24th November 2014.

The job description of the joint funded health post has been agreed and is currently in job evaluation, following which, it can be advertised.

Links are established with the police Missing and CSE teams, but attempts to situate the team in the same room as the screening team have not been successful due to difficulties for the police in accessing their data base. It is planned for this technical issue to be resolved and for the Missing and CSE police officers to be based in the team before the end of December.

It was anticipated that a part time post from Women's Aid would be based in the team from November, however this has not happened. A decision with regard to the funding bid for a worker to be based in the screening team is to be made in December.

The MASH Project Board continues to meet and further work is needed to take forward plans to further develop links with adult services, housing, drug and alcohol services, and integrated offender management services. A meeting is arranged for the Head of Service and Team Manager to meet probation on 17th December 2014, to discuss furthering links with probation.

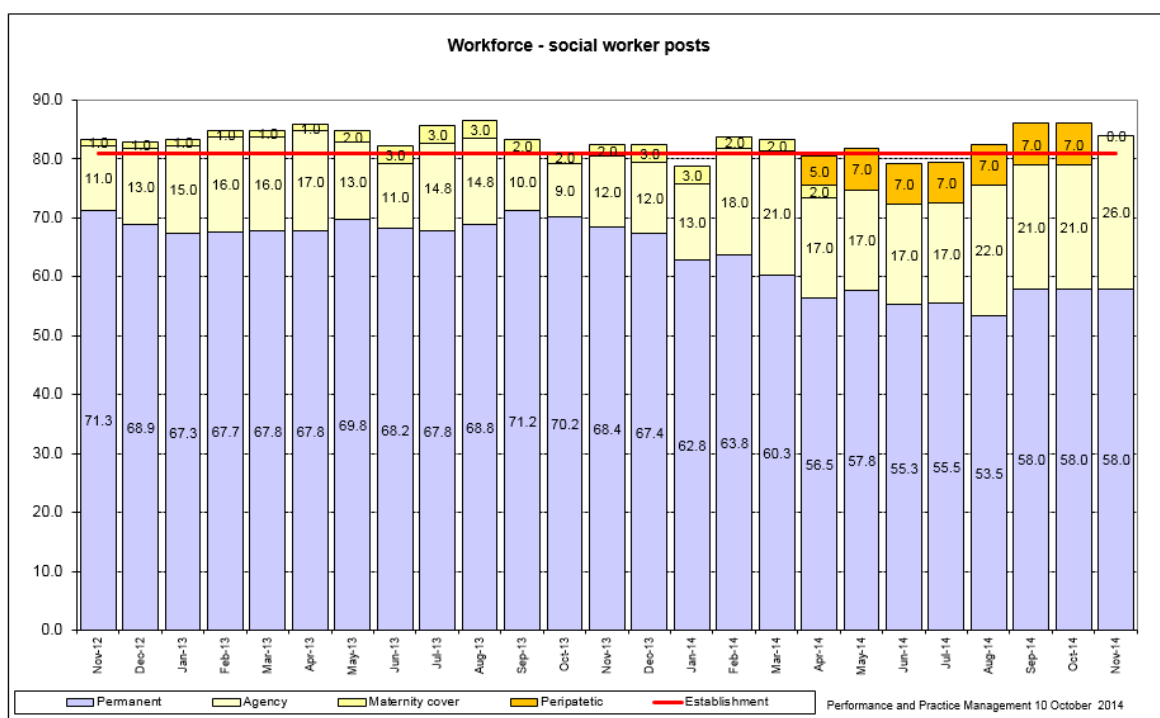
3.15 Workforce

The advertisement for our new Assistant Director has been successful, bringing forth three candidates, all of whom have been interviewed. The existing interim Assistant Director withdrew from the application process for personal reasons. One candidate will be placed before the Employment Committee on 4 December.

3 permanent Team Managers have been recruited to fill all of the vacancies within First Response. Necessary safer recruitment checks are in the process of being finalised with a view to starting posts in early 2015. This also means that the 3 interim Team Managers currently occupying posts will be given notice to leave; this will reduce agency costs as a result.

1 Social Worker has been appointed to a permanent post within Looked after Children. The candidate has accepted the role and safer recruitment checks will now be carried out. As a result of this appointment 1 agency Social Worker will be released from post.

The final NQSW has started in post within the Leaving Care Service. This also means that the agency Social Worker covering this post has left the service.



3.16 Raising Quality of Practice

During November and December 2014, an exercise is underway to ensure that all Court reports are robust and are submitted in a timely fashion so that Courts can make timely and informed decisions about children’s futures. The objectives of this exercise is to:

- To improve quality of Court reports and statements, including viability and regulation 24 reports
- To improve timeliness of Court reporting
- To improve preparation for and attendance at Advocates meetings and Court Hearings

Regular meetings are taking place between the Assistant Director and the Senior Lawyer to review the progress of this exercise.

Children in Need

From our 1,063 Children in Need profile, 410 are children from a different ethnicity, the highest proportion being White Other at 157. Our work with Eastern European families is becoming very time consuming with interpreters, different cultural norms and with a high prevalence of domestic violence.

An exercise is underway to improve the way in which Child in Need cases are brought to closure. All Child in Need cases which are over 9 months old from the point of referral and which have not recently de-escalated from Child Protection or have any other statutory requirement upon them, for example, Supervision Orders, are under review. The Principal Social Worker is supporting social workers to use the Risk and Safety tool to determine how safe it is to close or de-escalate cases and to assert at Child in Need reviews, case closure or step down recommendations.

It is currently estimated that in excess of 80 cases will close, due to this review, by the end of December 2014.

Additionally a Peterborough Safeguarding Children Board multi-agency task and finish group is currently reviewing the Children in Need process and how we can strengthen partnership working.

4. EARLY INTERVENTION & PREVENTION

Early Intervention Assessments (CAFs)

- The number of professionals engaging in the CAF agenda continues to increase with almost 400 practitioners now trained in eCAF with a further 40 booked onto courses up to the end of December.
- The autumn Term CAF forum held at the Fleet Community Centre was well attended and included presentations on Domestic Abuse from the Police, Adult Drug support from Aspire, the Restorative Justice Programme from YOS as well as an update on the SEND reforms.

Early Years

To support the development of Early Literacy the Early Years Team arranged an Early Literacy Event. Approximately 11 pre-schools and nurseries, 115 children and 70 parents attended the Early Years Literacy Event in Central Park on Wednesday 15th October 2014. This event was based on research which has demonstrated the impact of working with families when children are very young to support effective early literacy development.

Early Support for children who are disabled or have complex additional needs

A clear pathway for early support has been developed which aims to improve the delivery of services for children who are disabled or who have complex additional needs.

It promotes:

- Partnerships with parents, who are at the heart of decision making about their child
- Services working together
- Flexible key working which provides a single point of contact for families and professionals
- The provision of accurate up to date information in a format that is relevant to the family

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

As part of a comprehensive training programme we have commissioned a range of training aimed at up-skilling professionals which has included staff in schools. The programme has been designed to assist professionals develop the skills, knowledge and understanding to be better able to support children, families and young people, where substance misuse and linked emotional wellbeing may be an identified difficulty. The training commenced in September and has received very good feedback from professionals.

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