

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....1st October 2009

1. Title of Item/Report

Children's Social Care Workload Pressures

2. Record of the Decision

Further to the meeting held on 9th July 2009 (Min 54/09 refers), Cabinet was advised of the latest position with regard to the recent growth in the number of social care referrals being received by the Council.

There had been a slight reduction in the number of referrals and assessments during July and August, which was common for this period of the year, and the number of referrals received in September and October will be critical in determining the future direction of the trend.

The number of child protection conferences remained high; which had translated into a continued rise in the number of children being subjected to a child protection plan. Whilst there had been a slight reduction in July in the number of children entering the looked after system, the overall numbers had exceeded 250 for the first time in 3 years.

Reference was also made to difficulties in being able to recruit to permanent positions within the section, the number of vacancies that existed and the impact of staff absent through maternity leave, sickness, secondment etc.

The budgetary impact of these pressures was being addressed as part the overall Medium Term Financial Plan and particular budget pressures regarding the independent fostering agency, the children's homes agency placement budget, social work staffing budget and child protection conferences and looked after children, was noted.

Members were advised of the potential implications on authorities following the introduction in June 2009 of unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment by Ofsted, with all local authorities scheduled to receive one of these inspections before 31st March 2010. There was evidence in some inspected authorities so far that work load pressures had contributed to poor outcomes in these inspections.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:-

1. Note the continued workload pressures within the social care system and the associated impact this is having on caseloads, performance and budget.
2. Receive further update reports on a bi monthly basis in order to continue to monitor the impact of these workload pressures.
3. Note the update relating to Ofsted inspections of contact, referral and assessment.

3. Reasons for the Decision

There is a significant and continuing rise in social care workload which could potentially impact on the Council's ability to effectively safeguard children, fulfil statutory duties and remain within allocated budget.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By Midnight, Friday, 9th October 2009

Proper Officer  
05 June 2009