

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

6 SEPTEMBER 2012

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mrs McCoy

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE WORKLOAD PRESSURES

1. Summary

Following the death of Peter Connelly in Haringey and the subsequent progress report by Lord Laming, many Local Authorities across the country have reported an upsurge in the numbers of social care referrals being received.

It is also considered likely that the current economic climate is at least partially responsible for this rise, as financial hardship puts families under increased pressure and stress.

This trend has been mirrored locally with a marked rise in numbers of referrals which has translated into significant workload pressures throughout the social care system.

The purpose of this report is to continue to keep Cabinet updated on these pressures further to the previous report on 14 June 2012. This report is based on information until the end of June 2012 (most recent available information).

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is requested to:

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 quarterly basis in order to continue to monitor the impact of these workload pressures.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

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. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in paragraphs 9 and 11 of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of paragraphs 12 - 17 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in paragraph 16 of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, in accordance with paragraph 18 of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code).

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SUMMARY

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RECOMMENDATIONS

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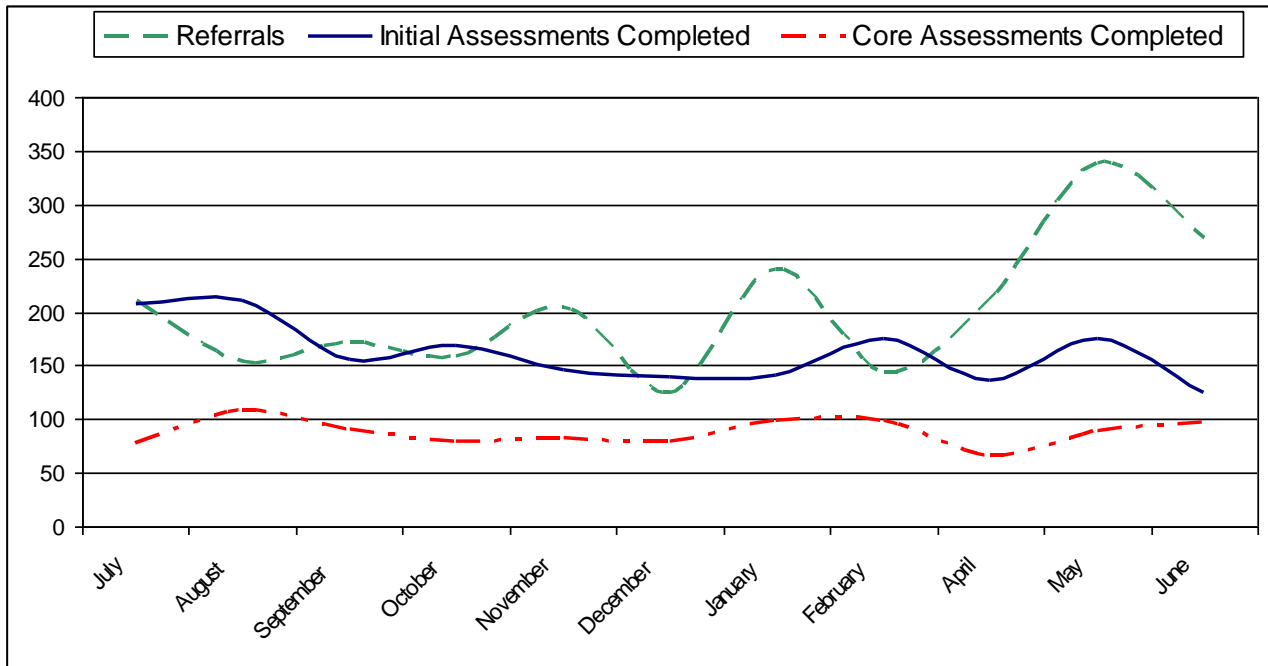
DETAIL

Referrals and Assessments

1. There was a further significant upsurge in referrals during the quarter, with May being the busiest month on record with 338 referrals being received and a further extremely busy month in June with 269 referrals.
2. This rise in incoming work is reflected in the numbers of initial and core assessments being undertaken, although the majority of the impact is likely to be reflected in the second quarter (July to September) period.
3. This sustained level of workload pressures places the service under great pressure, and is reflected in a negative impact on a variety of performance indicators relating to timeliness of assessment completion and also the allocation of cases, as addressed later in the report.

Month	Referrals	Initial Assessments	Core Assessments
July	211	207	78
August	154	211	108
September	172	155	90
October	158	168	79
November	204	146	82
December	124	139	79
January	239	141	99
February	144	175	98
March	202	172	81
April	211	136	67
May	338	175	89
June	269	125	97

Figure 1: Referral and Assessment Trends



Child Protection

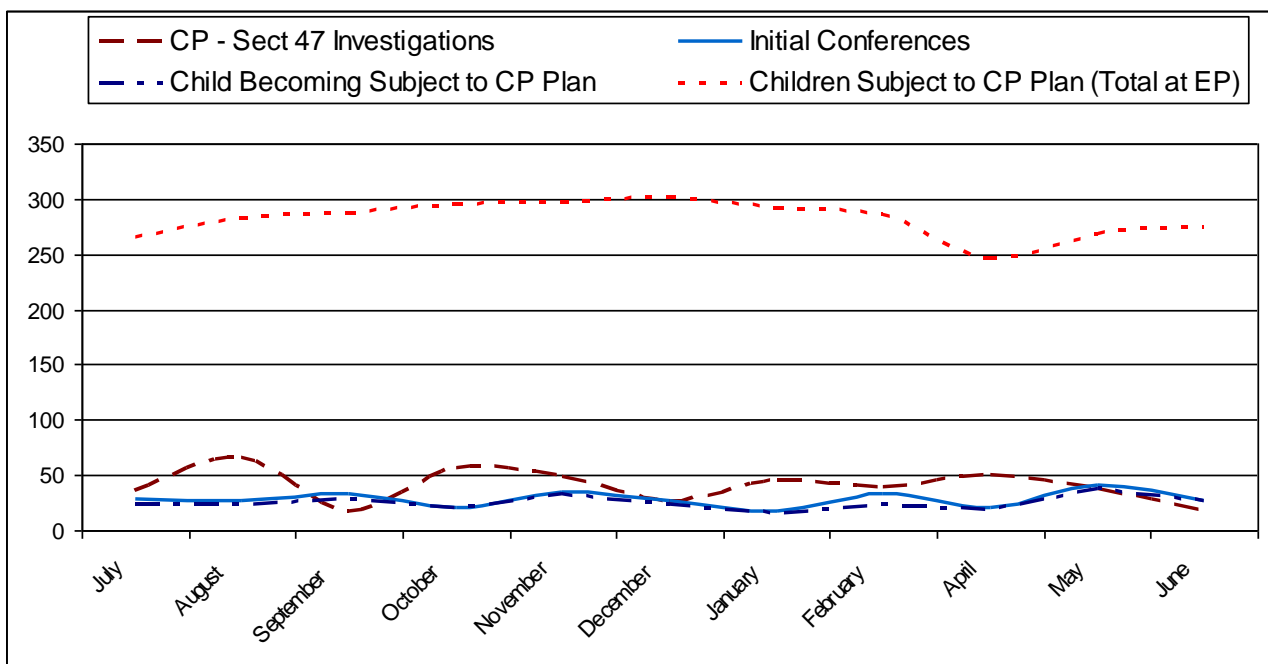
4. The overall number of children who are subject to a child protection plan has continued on an overall downward trend, reaching 247 in June.
5. There was a relatively high level of activity in terms of section 47 investigations and child protection conferences during April and May which led to a slight rise in children becoming subject to a child protection plan during May but this has not impacted significantly on the overall trend.
6. The ‘conversion rate’ ie the percentage of referrals that subsequently led to a child protection plan for April to June was 6.3% compared with 3.8% for January to March. This is the subject of ongoing monitoring and scrutiny by the Children’s Social Care Performance Clinic and any significant themes arising from this work will be included in future reports to Cabinet.

Table 2: Child Protection Activity 2011/12					
Month	Child Protection (Section 47) Investigations	Conferences	Reason for Conference	Children becoming subject to Child Protection Plan	Children subject to Child Protection Plan (Total)
July	36	28	E - 1 N - 7 N&P - 1 N&S - 2 P - 8 P&E - 5	24	266
Aug	66	27	E - 6 N - 9 N & E - 1 N&P - 1 N&S - 2 P - 2 P&E - 3	24	283
September	18	33	N - 15 N&E - 1 N&P - 2 P - 3 P&E - 4 S - 4	29	287
October	57	20	N - 12 P - 7 S - 1	20	295
November	49	34	E - 1 N - 16 N&P - 1 N&S - 3 P - 12	33	296
December	26	26	E - 3 N - 9 N&P - 2 P - 7 S - 3	24	301
January	46	18	N - 7 P - 6 S - 2	15	292
February	39	33	E - 4 N - 12 N&S - 1 P - 6 S - 1	24	286
March	28	20	E - 2 N - 12 P - 4 S - 2	20	273

April	50	21	N – 7 P - 12	19	247
May	37	41	N – 31 P – 1 S - 6	38	268
June	18	27	E – 2 N – 12 P – 12 S - 1	27	247

Table 3: Reason for Conference	
Key	Reason
E	Emotional Abuse
N	Neglect
P	Physical Abuse
S	Sexual Abuse

Figure 2: Child Protection Trends



Looked After System

- Despite the further rise in incoming work, the overall number of looked after children reduced slightly, to 337 in June.
- This is reflected in an overall reduction in new admissions to the looked after system during the quarter.
- The reason for the overwhelming majority of admissions to the looked after system continues to be 'abuse or neglect' which means that there is little option to these children entering the looked after system.

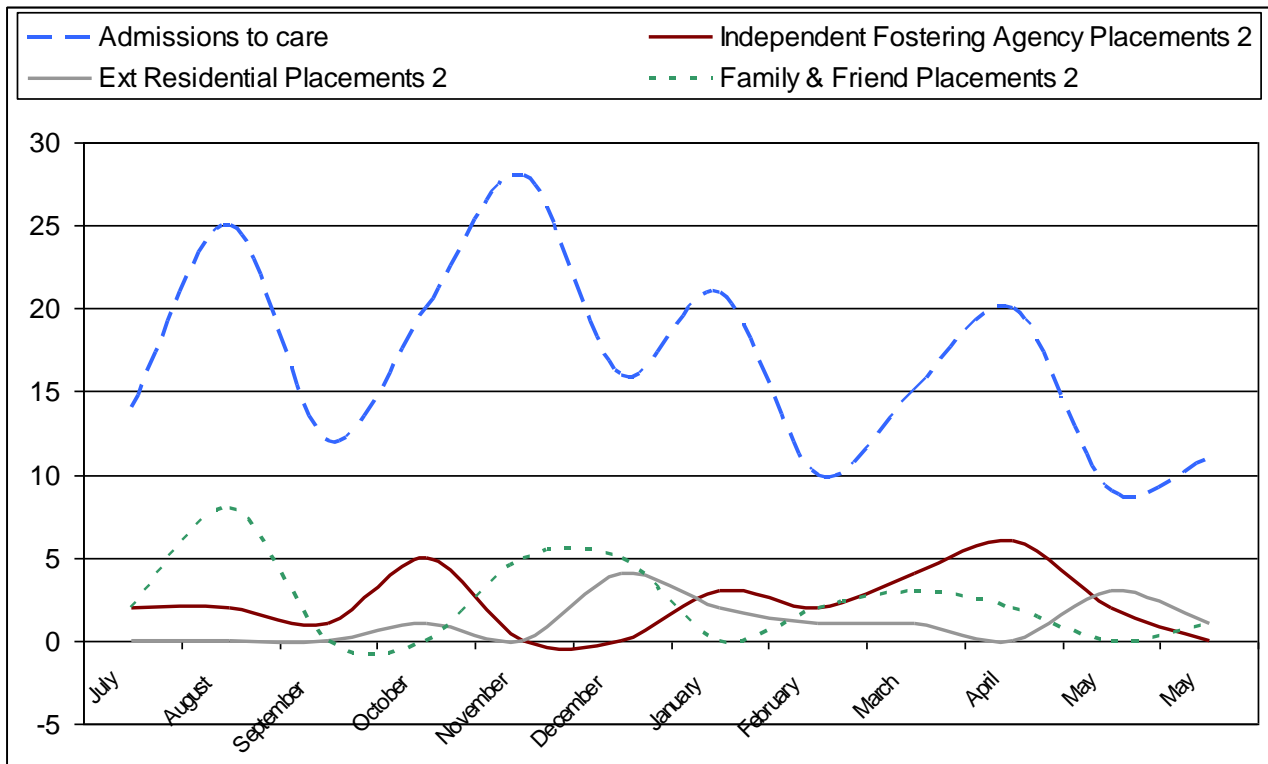
10. The 'conversion rate' ie the percentage of referrals that subsequently led to a child becoming looked after was 1.3% for April to June compared with 5.8% for January to March. This will continue to be monitored closely by the Children's Social Care Performance Clinic. Should any significant trends become apparent, these will be included in future reports to Cabinet.

Table 4: Looked After System Activity (2011/12)						
Month	Admissions	Reason for Admission	Overall LAC Population	Independent Fostering Agency Placements	External Residential Placements	Family and Friend Placements
July	14	N1 – 6 N5 – 6 N8 - 2	306	2	0	2
August	25	N1 – 19 N2 – 2 N3 – 1 N4 – 1 N5 – 1 N8 - 1	314	2	0	8
September	12	N1 – 7 N4 – 3 N5 - 2	311	1	0	0
October	20	N1 – 7 N2 – 1 N4 – 6 N5 – 2 N6 – 4	311	5	1	0
November	28	N1 – 21 N3 – 2 N5 – 4	325	0	0	5
December	16	N1 – 11 N3 – 1 N4 – 3 N5 - 1	336	0	4	5
January	21	N1 – 14 N2 - 1 N4 – 3 N6 – 3	346	3	2	0
February	10	N1 – 8 N5 – 1 N6 – 1	348	2	1	2
March	15	N1 – 12 N3 – 1 N5 – 1 N6 – 1	342	4	1	3

April	20	N1 – 14 N4 – 1 N5 – 4 N6 - 1	344	6	0	2
May	9	N1 – 3 N4 – 1 N5 – 2 N6 – 2 N8 - 1	342	2	3	0
June	11	N1 – 8 N4 – 3	337	0	1	1

Table 5: Reason for Admission	
Code	Definition
N1	Abuse or Neglect
N2	Disability
N3	Parental Illness or Disability
N4	Family in Acute Stress
N5	Family Dysfunction
N6	Socially Unacceptable Behaviour
N7	Low Income
N8	Absent Parenting

Figure 3: Looked After System Trends



Staffing and Allocations

11. Following the completion of the interviews arising from the Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation (EIT) review of children's social care, all team manager posts are now appointed to on a substantive basis. It is worth noting that this is the first time all team manager posts have been filled since workload pressures reporting began in 2009.
12. In terms of social work posts, as of the end of June there was one vacancy, reflecting the overall improvement in the recruitment and retention climate.
13. It should be borne in mind that there continues to be a number of workers absent at any given time for a variety of reasons such as maternity leave, secondment and sickness. In addition, a high proportion of staff remain relatively inexperienced so it will take some time to reach full capacity. Notwithstanding these points, the overall staffing situation remains positive overall.
14. At the end of June, there were 4 child protection, 3 looked after children and 56 children in need cases awaiting allocation.
15. Clearly all cases should be appropriately allocated to a named social worker, but this needs to be balanced with the need to ensure workers have manageable caseloads commensurate with their ability and level of experience. Cases continue to be distributed across all the social work teams as evenly as possible in order to spread the workload and there continues to be little or no spare capacity within the system.
16. A series of regular workload pressures meetings led by the Corporate Director and Head of Service monitors and oversees the pressures relating to all aspects of children's social care services on an ongoing basis, and as part of this scrutinises the staffing and allocation situation.
17. As a result of the increasing pressures and need to ensure cases are safely allocated and progressed in a timely manner, there were 6 supernumerary staff employed within the referral and assessment, specialist and targeted social work teams as of the end of June. These posts are agreed on a strictly time limited basis and are subject to ongoing monitoring and review by Corporate Director and Head of Service.

Budgetary Impact

18. These pressures have continued to have an impact on the Children, Education and Social Care budget in a number of key areas as follows.
19. Firstly the independent fostering agency budget, which is set at £3.319m for 2012/13. The current projected outturn at year end is £4.267m ie an overspend of £948k. Given that the number of placements has already exceeded the estimated number for the purposes of budgetary projections, there are no additional placements built into this figure.
20. Secondly the children's homes agency placements budget, which is set at £2.353m for 2012/13. The current projected outturn at year end is £3.720m ie an overspend of £1.367m. Given that the number of placements has already exceeded the estimated number for the purposes of budgetary projections, there are no additional placements built into this figure.
21. The social work staffing budget is currently part of the EIT review of Children's Social Care and this will result in a number of staffing changes. The outcome of this review is due to be implemented on 3 September 2012 and budget projections will therefore be included in future reports.
22. These issues continue to be considered through the medium term financial plan (MFTP).

EIT Review of Child Placements

23. The 'put yourself in the picture' marketing campaign continues to attract significant attention and there have been 354 fostering and 98 adoption enquiries since the beginning of the campaign in May 2011.
24. Since the start of the campaign there have been 15 new foster carer approvals, 2 of which are directly attributable to the campaign. There are a further 10 foster carer assessments being undertaken, 8 of which are directly attributable to the campaign.
25. Since the start of the campaign there have been 14 new prospective adopter approvals, 1 of which is directly attributable to the campaign. There are a further 4 prospective adopter assessments currently being undertaken, 1 of which is directly attributable to the campaign.
26. As previously reported, Piper House children's home is now formally open and fully occupied. Although Ayton Place children's home is complete and ready to open, there has been a slight delay in registering the home with Ofsted and consequently the home is now projected to open in September 2012.
27. Tees Valley Directors of Children's Services (DCS) are continuing to explore commissioning opportunities linked to residential or residential school placements for children with complex needs across the Tees Valley. Updates on progress in relation to this work will be included in future workload pressures reports to Cabinet.

EIT Review of Children's Social Care

28. All interviews arising from the EIT review have now been completed and all staff allocated to a post in the new structure.
29. All proposed changes and staffing moves are well underway and the review is on track for full implementation on 3 September 2012.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

30. As outlined above these workload pressures are continuing to have a significant impact on the CESC budget in 2012/13. This will continue to be monitored closely and highlighted in future reports to Cabinet. This will also form part of mainstream budget reporting through the usual channels.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

31. As outlined in previous reports, these workload pressures have resulted in a corresponding increase in the numbers of children subject to care proceedings. This in turn has placed a significant additional burden on Legal Services. Additional resources have been agreed previously in order to respond to this, although this will continue to be monitored closely.

RISK ASSESSMENT

32. There are three risks relating to this area of activity which have been already been identified and included in the service group risk register. These are listed below with their current risk score.
- Demographic changes and demand for services (CESC02)
Current score: 16
 - Finance & resource availability in all CESC Services (CESC07)
Current score: 12
 - Serious injury or death leading to a Serious Case Review (CESC14)
Current score: 20
33. These risks will continue to be monitored at Children's Trust Management Team (CTMT) and the risk scores amended as appropriate. Any resulting changes will be fed into the corporate risk register and highlighted in future reports to Cabinet.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

34. The safeguarding of children is a key component of the children and young people theme in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Improving outcomes for children by effective service delivery will also impact on their potential quality of life in adulthood.
35. The effective safeguarding of children and young people will also have a significant impact on the community safety agenda.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

36. This report has not been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment because it is not seeking approval for a new policy, strategy or change in the delivery of a service.

CORPORATE PARENTING

37. For those children who are looked after, the Council has a responsibility as Corporate Parent to ensure that their needs are appropriately met.
38. As service pressures and workload increases, this could potentially impact on the Council's ability to effectively fulfil its responsibilities as Corporate Parent.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

39. No consultation has taken place in relation to this issue at this stage.

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Background Papers

The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report HMSO 2009.
The Protection of Children in England: Action Plan HMSO 2009.

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors

Not applicable.

Property

There are no implications for Council property.