

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

7 MARCH 2013

**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 10 January 2013. This report is based on information until the end of December 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. Receive a full Ofsted Action Plan for consideration in June 2013.
4. Note the Children and Young People Select Committee will be presented with regular reports and updates regarding the action plan.

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).

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

7 MARCH 2013

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE WORKLOAD PRESSURES

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 10 January 2013. This report is based on information until the end of December 2012 (most recent available information).

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. Receive a full Ofsted Action Plan for consideration in June 2013.
4. Note the Children and Young People Select Committee will be presented with regular reports and updates regarding the action plan.

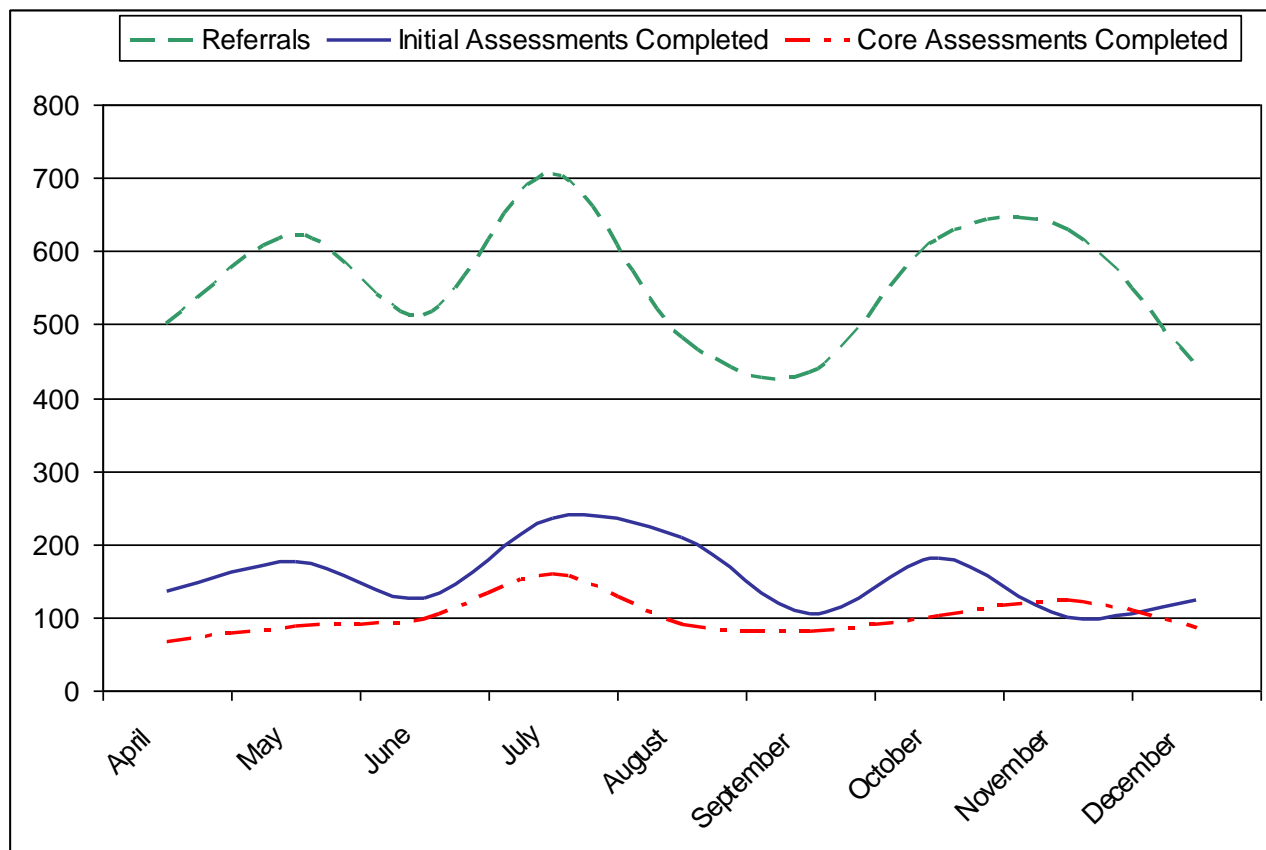
DETAIL

Referrals and Assessments

1. There has continued to be significant referral activity during the quarter, with the overall number of referrals (1692) being higher than the first two quarters of the year.
2. There were a particularly high number of referrals during October and November (618 and 630 respectively).
3. This sustained level of workload pressure continues to place the service under great pressure and is reflected in the impact on the completion of initial and core assessments during the quarter. It is likely that the figures for December will be partly explained by staff leave during the Christmas holiday period however.

Month	Referrals	Number of Children	Initial Assessments	Core Assessments
April	501	469	136	67
May	623	591	175	89
June	512	490	125	97
July	706	653	235	158
August	482	452	210	90
September	435	418	104	80
October	618	581	181	102
November	630	591	100	124
December	444	429	124	85

Figure 1: Referral and Assessment Trends



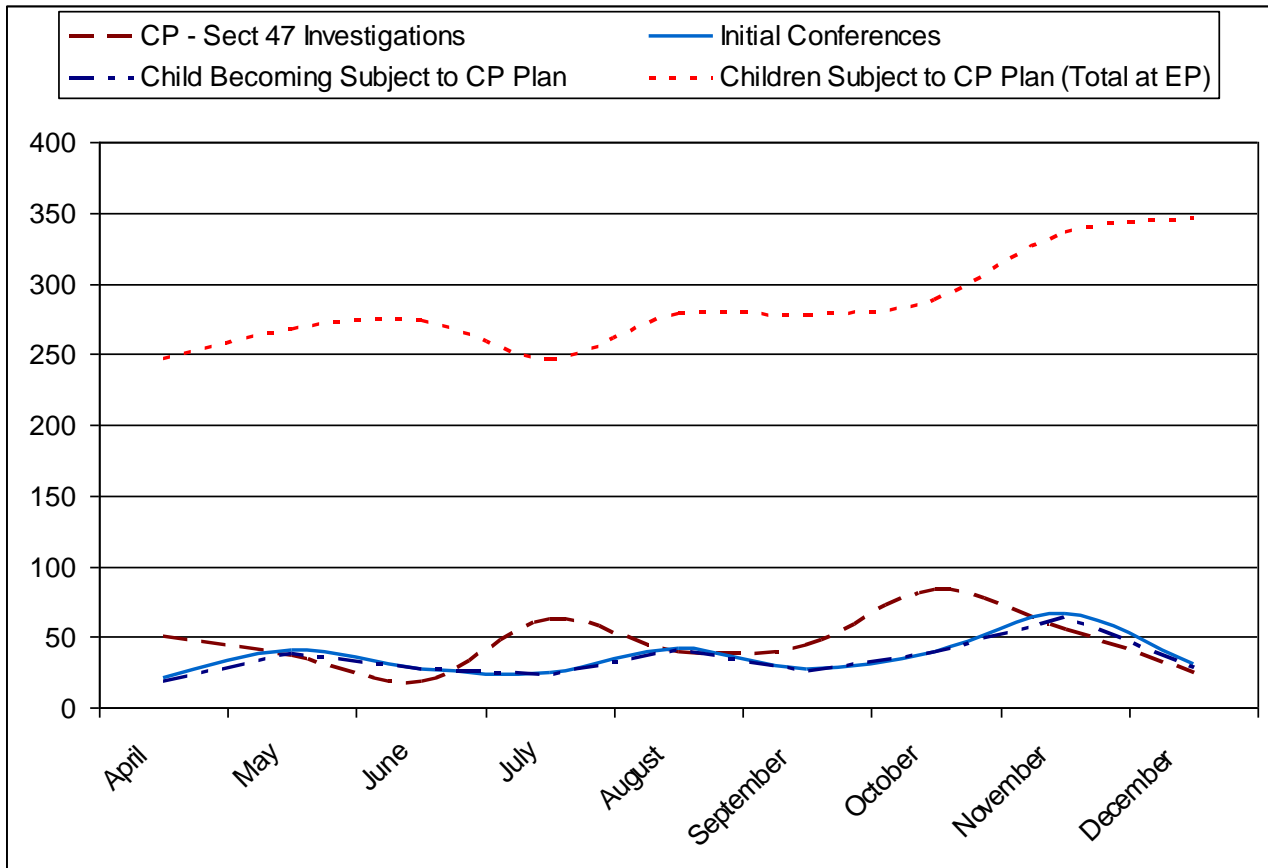
Child Protection

4. The overall number of children who are subject to a child protection plan has increased, significantly throughout the quarter, reaching an all time high point of 346 in December. This continues the trend seen throughout the year to date.
5. There were a particularly high number of section 47 investigations during the quarter, reflecting the increase in referrals, with October (84) being an exceptionally busy month. This is then reflected in the number of child protection conferences (66) and children becoming subject to a child protection plan (64) during November.
6. The 'conversion rate' ie the percentage of referrals that subsequently led to a child protection plan for October to December was 2.2% (37 children) compared with 3.4% (58 children) for July to September. This is the subject of ongoing monitoring and scrutiny and any significant themes arising from this work will be included in future reports to Cabinet.

Table 2: Child Protection Activity 2012/13					
Month	Child Protection (Section 47) Investigations	Conferences	Reason for Conference	Children becoming subject to Child Protection Plan	Children subject to Child Protection Plan (Total)
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	274
July	63	24	E - 4 E&S - 1 N - 15 P - 2 S - 1	23	247
August	39	42	E - 6 N - 27 P - 8	41	278
September	44	27	E - 3 N - 10 P - 12 S - 1	26	277
October	84	39	E - 9 N - 22 P - 7 S - 1	39	288
November	55	66	E - 5 N - 15 P - 33 S - 11	64	336
December	25	31	E - 4 N - 14 P - 8 S - 2	28	346

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

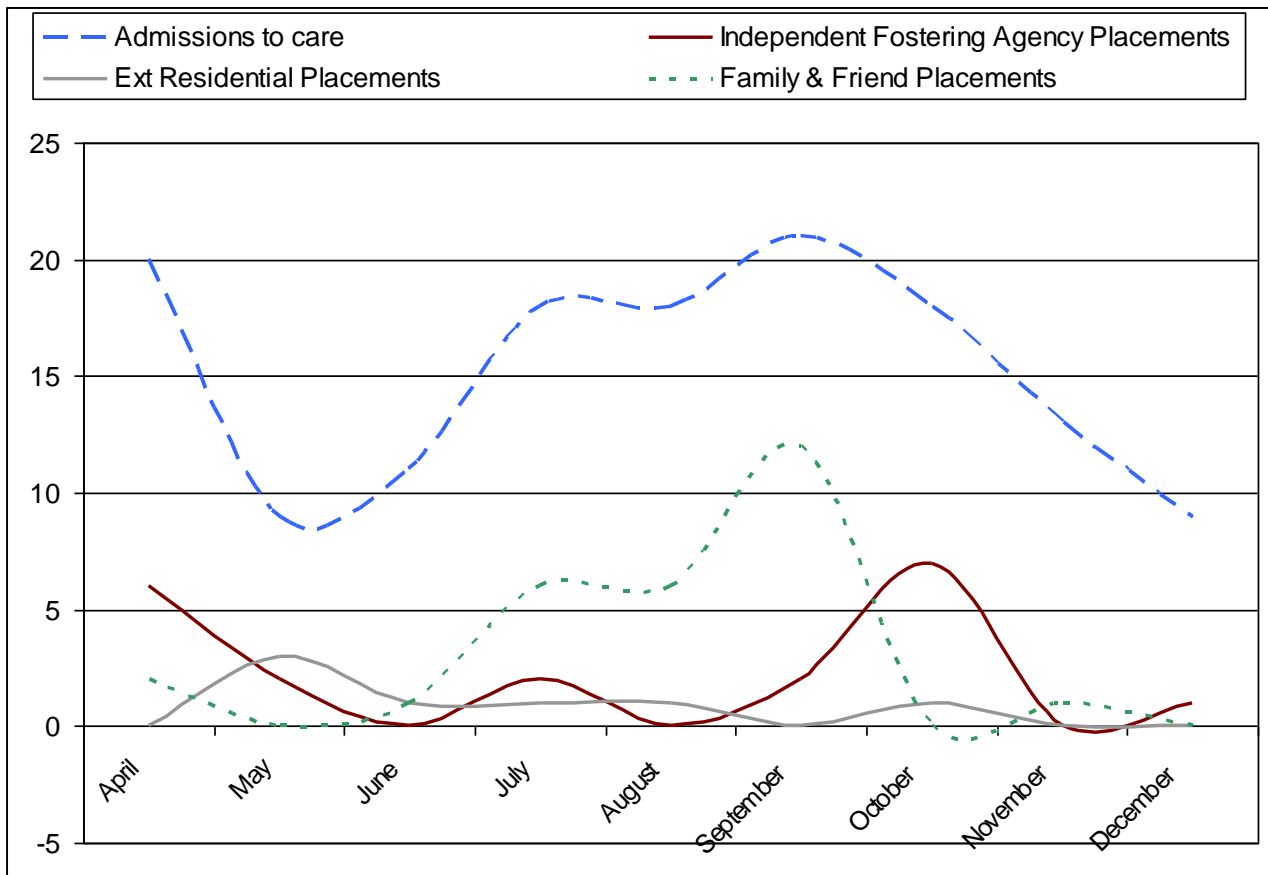
7. The overall number of looked after children has risen slightly during the quarter, reaching an all time high point in November of 357 and remaining at 356 in December.
8. Conversely, the number of new admissions to the looked after system fell significantly during the quarter, with 40 admissions overall as compared with 57 during the previous quarter.
9. 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 0.2% (4 children) for October to December compared with 1.1% (18 children) for July to September, reflecting the decrease in new admissions. This will continue to be monitored closely and any significant trends will be included in future reports to Cabinet.

Table 4: Looked After System Activity (2012/13)						
Month	Admissions	Reason for Admission	Overall LAC Population	Independent Fostering Agency Placements	External Residential Placements	Family and Friend Placements
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
July	18	N1 – 14 N2 – 1 N4 – 1 N5 – 1 N6 – 1	341	2	1	6
August	18	N1 – 12 N4 – 1 N5 – 2 N6 – 3	347	0	1	6
September	21	N1 – 19 N4 – 1 N8 – 1	349	2	0	12
October	18	N1 – 12 N4 – 4 N5 – 1 N6 – 1	353	7	1	0
November	13	N1 – 4 N3 – 5 N4 – 1 N5 – 1 N6 – 1 N8 – 1	357	0	0	1
December	9	N1 – 5 N4 – 3 N5 – 1	356	1	0	0

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. At the end of December, there were no substantive team manager vacancies and 1.4 full time equivalent (FTE) social worker vacancies, continuing to reflect the overall improvement in the recruitment and retention climate.
12. 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. Notwithstanding this, the overall staffing situation remains positive.
13. At the end of December, there were 6 child protection, 1 looked after child and 2 children in need cases awaiting allocation. In addition there were a significant number of children in need cases awaiting allocation within the referral and assessment team which are progressed on a risk managed basis.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. As a result of the ongoing pressures and need to ensure cases are safely allocated and progressed in a timely manner, there were 5.6 supernumerary social workers and 1 supernumerary deputy manager employed as of the end of December. 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

17. These pressures have continued to have an impact on the Children, Education and Social Care budget in a number of key areas as follows.
18. Firstly the independent fostering agency budget, which is set at £3.319m for 2012/13. The current projected outturn at year end is £4.283m ie an overspend of £964k. 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.
19. 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 £4.743m ie an overspend of £2.39m. 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. Thirdly, the social work staffing budget has been re-configured as part of the EIT review of Children's Social Care and this has resulted in a number of management/staffing changes. The implementation of the recommendations arising from the review will result in some transitional expenditure during this financial year. The current projected outturn is £3.44m ie an overspend of £332k.
21. These issues continue to be considered through the medium term financial plan (MFTP).

Ofsted Child Protection Inspection

22. Ofsted undertook the unannounced child protection inspection between 7 and 16 January 2013. This was the first inspection in the North East region under the new framework, which is generally acknowledged to be a harder test.
23. In the course of the inspection the inspectors looked at over 100 cases and were satisfied that appropriate action had been taken to protect all children at risk of immediate harm. There were a number of areas for further development identified, particularly in relation to the referral and assessment team, which reflects our own self assessment of the service. The overall judgement was adequate.
24. The report, which was published on the Ofsted website on 15 February 2013, contains a number of recommendations for immediate action which have all been addressed and work is currently underway to respond to the recommendations to be completed within 3 and 6 months respectively.
25. A full Action Plan will be brought to Cabinet for consideration in June 2013 and the Children and Young People Select Committee will be presented with regular reports and updates regarding the action plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

26. 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

27. 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

28. 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: 15
29. 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

30. 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.
31. The effective safeguarding of children and young people will also have a significant impact on the community safety agenda.

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

32. 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

33. For those children who are looked after, the Council has a responsibility as Corporate Parent to ensure that their needs are appropriately met.
34. 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

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

Name of Contact Officer: Shaun McLurg
Post Title: Head of Children and Young People's Services
Telephone No. 01642 527049
Email Address: shaun.mclurg@stockton.gov.uk

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.