

## CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE ACTIVITY AND STAFFING REPORT: OCTOBER 2009

### INTRODUCTION

This is the October report regarding activity and staffing capacity in the Children's Social Care section of the Safeguarding Division. In future this monthly report will be circulated to the Director of Children's Service and Learning, the Chief Executive, Councillors Walker and Holmes and the Leader of the Council. It is suggested that a quarterly report will go to the Administration's Policy Guidance Group, and the first report will go in December. It will be presented to the Children's Trust Board on 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2009, when the agenda is scheduled to focus solely on the Stay Safe outcome area.

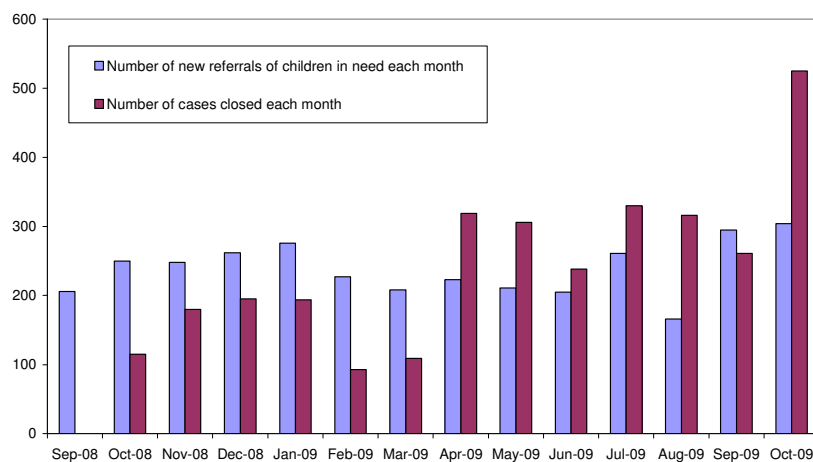
We are reporting that:

- The number of referrals was the highest since this report began but the number of cases closed was also the highest figure during the period monitored, therefore our total number of cases open has decreased. New referrals require a great deal of intensive work to assess a child and ensure their safety.
- This is the highest number of Initial Assessments on time (76%) in the period monitored (See IA performance).
- We are interviewing 5 qualified social workers, and recruitment is ongoing both for permanent social workers, and for agency social workers to cover vacancies. Those applying for permanent posts are newly qualified social workers who require a great deal of support. The agency staff we are using are often very experienced and skilled social workers who contribute a great deal to the service, and some eventually apply for permanent posts.
- Due to high numbers of agency staff the budget is overspent by £386,000 on the new money (£800K). Whilst every effort will be made to find this in this financial year, we are doubtful we can find this money.

**CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE ACTIVITY****1 REFERRALS**

	Sep-08	Quarter 3 07/08	Quarter 4 07/08	Quarter 1 08/09	Jul-09	Aug-09	Sep-09	Oct-09
<b>Number of new referrals of children in need each quarter / month</b>	203	748	718	678	267	167	295	304
<b>Number of cases closed each quarter / month</b>	n/a	478	403	902	336	317	261	525
<b>Number of open cases of children in need at the end of each quarter / month</b>	2089	2359	2674	2450	2381	2231	2265	2044
<b>Net increase/decrease in number of open cases since previous quarter / month</b>	n/a	increased by 270	increased by 315	decreased by 224	decreased by 69	decreased by 150	increased by 34	decreased by 221
<b>% of new referrals during the quarter /month where Domestic Violence is recorded as a factor</b>	48%	42%	43%	38%	37%	47%	43%	38%

Referrals and cases closed, September 2008 to October 2009



### Number

The number of referrals in October was the highest during the period monitored.

### Closures

Closures remain high. The focus in teams of safely closing cases where social work intervention is no longer needed to keep a child safe has contributed to lower caseloads.

### Initial Assessments (IAs)

There is an improvement programme in place to address IA performance – this involves both resolving the ‘backlog’ of out of date IAs alongside ensuring that new IAs are completed within timescales.

	Aug-09	Sep-09	Oct-09
<b>IAs Commenced</b>	106	195	190
<b>IAs Completed in timescale</b>	69	106	142
<b>IAs Completed in Timescale excluding the backlog of outstanding IAs</b>	65%	54%	76%
<b>IAs Complete in Timescale including the backlog of outstanding IAs (this is the national indicator)</b>	22%	34%	41%

We are monitoring IA timescales in two ways to fully understand our current performance. We are monitoring performance in relation to IAs started and completed within the month, (76%) and IAs completed which were started outside of the monthly reporting period (41%).

**Core Assessments (CAs)**

Core assessments should be completed in 35 working days. Core Assessments are under similar scrutiny. Core assessments are being monitored in two ways: including and excluding the backlog of outstanding CAs.

Performance, taking into account the backlog of outstanding IAs is 20%, and without is 80%.

**2 CHILD PROTECTION**

	Sep-08	Quarter 3 07/08	Quarter 4 07/08	Quarter 1 08/09	Jul-09	Aug-09	Sep-09	Oct-09
<b>Number of S47 enquiries (Child Protection investigations) started during each quarter / month</b>	30	121	135	127	48	53	53	89
<b>Number of children with a Child Protection (CP) Plan at end of each quarter / month</b>	106	135	142	188	187	177	170	169
<b>Number of children with a CP plan at the end of each quarter / month per 10,000 children in city</b>	24.9	31.7	33.4	44.2	43.9	41.6	39.9	39.7

As at the 31st March 2009, the rate of children subject to CP plans per 10,000 children was 36.5 for our Statistical Neighbour group and 31 for the country as a whole. We are more deprived than the average for our comparator group so we would expect a slightly higher level of children subject to CP plans. Our current level is therefore in line with other authorities.

The number of Child Protection Inquiries was high this month. This indicates that we are working with the children the most at risk and with the most complex needs, and that our increased scrutiny of cases and investment in training is beginning to have an impact. The number of children with a Child Protection Plan fell slightly this month, but is still much higher than a year ago (53% higher – 57 children). Children on child protection plans require intensive social work support to manage high levels of risk safely.

### 3 CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER (CHILDREN IN CARE)

	Sept-08	Quarter 3 07/08	Quarter 4 07/08	Quarter 1 08/09	Jul-09	Aug-09	Sept-09	Oct-09
<b>Number of children looked after at quarter / month end</b>	283	277	287	303	323	319	320	319
<b>Number of children newly looked after during quarter / month</b>	12	33	28	41	26	11	8	10
<b>Number of children ceasing to be looked after during quarter / month (including young people becoming 18, children returning home and care orders discharged)</b>	18	29	18	25	6	15	7	11
<b>Net increase / decrease in numbers looked after at quarter / month end</b>	minus 6	minus 6	plus 10	plus 16	plus 20	minus 4	plus one	minus one
<b>Number of children looked after per 10,000 children in city et end of quarter / month</b>	66.5	65.1	67.4	71.2	75.9	74.9	75.2	74.9

The number of children looked after at the end of October remains higher than a year ago, although the sharp increase reported in the first half of the year has not continued, and the figures have now stabilised.

The courts and our legal services report that the children whom we are bringing to court are appropriate. The admission of children in care to the care system is labour intensive skilled work. Although 10 children left care, these are more likely to have been in lower cost placements, such as long term foster care, supported lodgings or even placed at home while a care order is discharged. Our indicators for children in care's placement stability are improving indicating that social workers are prioritising work with children coming in to care. The increasing numbers of children coming into care has budget implications.

**4 CARE PROCEEDINGS AND PRE-PROCEEDINGS (AS SNAPSHOT)**

	Pre Proceedings	Care Proceedings	Secure
End December 2008	25	38	2
End April 2009	7	31	4
End May 2009	8	30	3
End June 2009	10	30	1
End July 2009	21	30	1
End September 2009	20	34	2
End October 2009	25	35	Nil

“Pre-proceedings” are situations where families are told that the local authority is considering making an application to court. The local authority Legal Advisor is involved at this stage.

## 5. STAFFING POSITION IN FRONTLINE TEAMS

### Social Workers

	Social Workers in Post - Dec 08	Permanent Staff	Temporary Staff	Social Workers as at 16 Oct 09	New Staff Establishment within Teams
Children in Need - East	11.8	13.3	4.0	17.3	20.0
Children in Need - West	8.0	9.7	3.4	13.1	16.5
Children in Need - Central	13.3	13.6	2.4	16.0	17.0
Children in Care	9.6	8.6	4.0	12.6	13.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>42.7</b>	<b>45.2</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>59.0</b>	<b>67.3</b>

### Senior Practitioners

<b>Children in Care Team:</b>	<b>CIN Central:</b>	<b>CIN East:</b>	<b>CIN West:</b>	<b>Children First</b>
<b>Establishment –3</b> 3 permanent in post	<b>Establishment – 4</b> 2 temporary in post 1 permanent 1 vacant	<b>Establishment – 4</b> 4 permanent in post	<b>Establishment - 4</b> 3 permanent in post 1 vacant	<b>Establishment - 2</b> 1 permanent 1 temporary in post

Interviews for Senior Practitioners taking place on 12<sup>th</sup> November

We are at a critical point for our financial planning. We have concentrated on putting staff in place to lower case loads, to improve performance particularly in relation to Initial Assessments, and to implement overall improvements to the service as a foundation for much needed improvements to outcomes for children and families.. This has been achieved by providing extra service manager capacity, providing cover for managers on long term sick leave, and paying for agency social workers, team managers and senior practitioners which cost more than directly employed social workers.

More details are provided in the financial summary at appendix 1.

### Team Managers

Children in Care Team - temporary manager (agency), interviews for permanent post this week

Adoption - temporary manager (internal TEA), interviews for permanent post this week

CiN Central – temporary manager, seconded from senior practitioner in Central CiN team, to be advertised imminently new appointment Feb-March

CiN East and CiN West - temporary manager (agency) for both teams, cover for Debs Barlow covering as service manager and cover for Dawn Maxwell covering as LSCB Board Manager

Children First – team manager, permanent

### Service Managers

Children in Care- Les Valentine - permanent

Children in Need, East-Trish Roscoe - permanent

Children in Need, West - Jane Martin, seconded from Commissioning. Planning and Performance Division

Children in Need, Central - Deborah Barlow, seconded from Team Manager post East, covering for Anne Davies who is on long-term sick leave

### Absence Figures

	CiN East	CiN West	CiN Cent.	CiC	Total
Sick Leave - short term	1	4	2	0	7
Sick Leave - long term	0	0	2	0	2
Maternity Leave	0	0	0	1	1

## 6. CASE: FTE RATIO

A major aim of current activity is to reduce the number cases worked by a full time equivalent qualified social worker. The ratio we are trying to attain is 25 cases per full time equivalent (fte) qualified social worker. Whilst additional staff will help achieve these levels in due course, in the short term the ratio may reduce only marginally, or even rise. This is because in order to achieve safer allocations, Social Work Assistants (unqualified), however experienced, will not carry caseload responsibility, and do not undertake initial assessments or core assessments. New definitions of what is expected of unqualified workers have been agreed by the management team.

The National Social Work Task Force, led by Moira Gibb, has been asked by Lord Laming to report on recommended numbers of children per qualified social worker, and we await this guidance, which may be lower than 25:1fte. We are developing a local Case Management System which will allow us to 'weight' cases according to complexity and assist local judgements about what constitutes a safe 'manageable' caseload. However, we note that at least one London Borough is advertising for social workers promising case loads of 12-15, and the recent national 'Panorama' documentary ('The Child Protectors', 02/11/09) suggested a guide figure of 13.

Current data show:

Teams	Total numbers of cases	Cases: full-time equivalent qualified social workers			
		Jul-09	Aug-2009	Sep-2009	Oct-2009
All case holding teams	2044	39.1	37.3	38.4	34
Children in Need teams Central, East and West	1470	41.4	33.6	35.5	31.6
Children in Care	274			26	21.7

This current fte staffing capacity includes a range of staff from qualified Social Workers, newly qualified Social Workers with protected case loads to Student Social Workers working under supervision.

**Felicity Budgen**  
**Interim Head of Service**  
**Safeguarding**

**(November 09)**