

REPORT TO: Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board
DATE: 31st October 2011
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Children & Young People
SUBJECT: Child in Need Contact, Referral and Assessment Analysis
WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to afford Members the opportunity to scrutinise Referral and Assessment activity and provide an update on issues impacting on current performance within the Children in Need (CiN) service. This report focuses on the performance in relation to year end for 2010/11 with some comparisons on year end data for the year 2009/10.

1.2 It is important that Members have a good understanding of this performance and are satisfied that adequate strategies are in place to ensure that the children of Halton are safeguarded. Ofsted Inspections of Contact, Referral and Assessment processes in other Local authorities have criticised the failure to scrutinise safeguarding practices and the poor understanding of issues impacting on performance.

1.3 Children's Social Care is made up of a number of services. The CiN service provides contact referral and assessment services to Children in need and those in need of protection, including those Children with a disability who require a social worker. The Permanence team provides services to children in care who have a plan of permanence and the Young People's team provides services to care leavers and Children in Need who are 16+. The fostering team and adoption team undertake family finding and recruitment of carers.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) **The content of the report is noted.**
- ii) **Halton Safeguarding children's Board continues to scrutinise the work of the Children's Trust in relation to the Team Around the Family and Early and Support Services**
- iii) **Halton Safeguarding Children's board supports the work**

of the Pan Cheshire Strategic Group in relation to establishing appropriate CAVA pathways once pilots are complete

- iv) An Update Report is on Q1 and Q2 performance is presented to PPB in six months**
- v) Further analysis is undertaken to understand the increase in referrals.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Referrals

A referral is a request to Children's Social Care for a service or advice that is accepted by Children's Social Care for allocation for assessment.

- There were 1419 referrals received, compared to 1216 in 09/10. This is an increase of 15%
- Police generated 556 or 40% of referrals through the police CAVA system.
- Approximately 598 or 43 % of the referrals to CSC closed within three months. of the cases closed 226 or 44% were originally police referrals via the CAVA notification process.
- The main reasons for referral continue to be Family Dysfunction 49%, Domestic Abuse 21% and 17% Neglect.

3.2 Contacts

A contact is a request to Children's Social Care for a service or advice that is not accepted for allocation for assessment as it does not meet the criteria for access to assessment at Levels 3b and 4 of Halton's Level of Need Criteria.

- There were additionally 1372 contacts during the period. 425 or 30%of these contacts were generated by Police CAVAS, which did not meet the levels of needs at 3b to 4.

3.3 Completion of Assessments

The performance in relation to the completion of Initial and Core Assessments within timescales for the end of year stands at 79% for Initial Assessments within 7 days 88.8% within 10days, and 91% for Core Assessments. This Data has not been completely quality assured and may be subject to slight alteration. This is compared to and end of year total in 2009/10 of 80.3% of IA's within 7days and 93.7% of Core Assessments.

There has been an increase in the numbers of assessments completed this year, 1330 Initial Assessments have been completed compared to 1126 for 09/10, an increase of approximately 18%. 591 Core Assessments have been completed compared to 477 in 09/10, an increase of approximately 24%.

The number of Initial Assessments that subsequently become Core Assessments has shown a small increase from 42% in 09/10 to 44% 10/11. This conversion rate is one indication of appropriate of referrals, i.e. if referrals are appropriate then it is likely that they will need a sustained intervention, however 66% of referrals did not go on to a more detailed Core Assessment. It is also possible that not all cases that require a Core Assessment are receiving one and this will be monitored via the Independent review of Child in Need cases.

3.4 Caseloads and Social Work Capacity

The total number of open CiN cases as of 31st March 10 was 657.

There are currently no social worker vacancies within the CiN service following a successful round of recruitment.

Below is a table of social worker case Loads within CiN as of 31st March 2011. This gives a snapshot of caseloads as they do change from day to day. A Caseload management tool has been developed to aid discussion in supervision about caseloads and assist in understanding the workload for individual workers.

Team	Worker	CiC	CiN	CP	Total
CC1 Runcorn	SW P/T		9		9
	SW2	1	15	2	18
	SW3 TAF		5		5
	SW4	1	23	6	30
	SW5	4	20	2	26
	SW6	5	23	2	30
	SW7		22	6	28
	SW8	3	22	1	26
	SW students		9		9
	CSWs		4		4
	Prac Manager		2		2
Totals		14	154	19	187
CC2 Runcorn	SW1	1	10	5	16
	SW2	1	24		25

	SW3	1	15	1	17
	SW4	1	27	3	31
	SW5	1	31	1	33
	SW6		17	2	19
	SW7		16		16
	SW students		19		19
	CSWs		17		17
	Prac Managers	1	3		4
Totals		6	179	12	197
CC3 Widnes	SW1	5	23	6	34
	SW2	1	20	2	23
	SW3		14	7	21
	SW4		19	3	22
	SW5	1	13	1	15
	SW6	2	15	4	21
	SW7	2	13	7	22
	SW8		20	10	30
	SW9		14	5	19
	SW students		14		14
	CSWs		16		16
	Prac Manager		1		1
Totals		11	182	45	238

- Despite the increase in Referrals the vast majority of cases are managed on a CiN basis and overall Child Protection (CP) Plan numbers and Children in Care (CiC) numbers have remained stable. At year end CP plans were at 77 and CiC 127. There has been an increase in the number of CP plans in the first two months of this year and they currently stand at 84. It is not unusual for there to be spikes in numbers due to the nature of the work.
- The Safeguarding unit has developed a system for the independent review of CiN cases similar to the challenge and the over view that is provided for Children subject to Child Protection Plans and Children in Care. This has further strengthened the response to Children in Need and ensures that appropriate services are being provided at the appropriate level of need.

3.5 Work Flow.

Court activity continues to impact on the work of the CiN teams. In March11 there were 28 sets of Care proceedings. This is not due to an increase in issuing of proceedings but reflects the continued delays in the courts at the present time. There are currently 12 sets of Care proceedings that have been ongoing in excess of the 40 weeks laid down in the Public Law outline.

Children's Social Care are currently reviewing structures and as part of this process transfer points between CiN and the Permanence team will be reconsidered, given the considerable delays in the court process with a view to cases transferring at an earlier point.

3.6 **Management Capacity**

- Management capacity has improved over the past twelve months in the CiN service. There is currently 1.5 Practice Manager vacancies, and the four Principal Manager positions are filled.
- The Practice Manager vacancies create pressure in terms of supervision points, authorising assessments and other critical reports and documentation, the chairing of key meetings including Core Groups and CiC planning meetings and the duty manager rota. Additionally the practice managers currently in post are new to management and as such require additional support and mentoring which places additional pressure on Principal Managers.
- Working Together 2010 states that an assessment is deemed completed “.. once the assessment has been discussed with the child and the family and the team manager has viewed and authorised the assessment”. This in effect means that managers have to be available to authorise assessments on a daily basis and are spending increasing time in front of computers. It is hoped that the Munro review of Child Protection will have an impact in extending the timescales for assessment with increased emphasis on quality and less on process.
- Halton is committed to developing a ‘grow your own’ traineeship for social workers who are aspiring managers, building on the success of social work traineeship and student intake scheme.
- The Divisional Manager CiN continues to meet regularly with Principal Managers to focus on performance issues.

3.7 **Performance / Data**

- Considerable time is currently spent on ‘data tidy up’. This is exacerbated by the four systems that Social workers and their managers currently have to operate, Carefirst, ICS, team drives and Paper files. Most information has to be inputted at least twice on two separate systems.

- The development of Carefirst 6 is progressing well and the first team will go live within CiN on 6th June 11. This should have a positive impact on the workload of social workers removing the need for double inputting and multiple systems. It is likely that there will be a dip in performance initially whilst workers and managers get used to the new system.
- Electronic social care records are still some time off, however, a decision will be made to cease printing documents that are held on Carefirst 6 given that records will be on one system. All other documentation, letters, correspondence etc will be held on the paper file. This will reduce the burden on workers to maintain paper files as the primary record.

3.8 **Summary**

There continues to be considerable pressure within the children in need teams. It is a credit to the workers and managers that despite a significant increase in referrals and assessments completed, performance has been maintained to a high standard. Further analysis is required to understand these increases, and ensure that the CiN service does not become overwhelmed by the increase in workload.

The Munro Review of Child Protection recommends combining Initial and Core Assessments and increasing emphasis on working with and supporting families, appropriately, reducing the bureaucratic burden on workers and the emphasis on process. This has been broadly welcomed by all within the service and it is hoped that the Government will endorse this recommendation.

The numbers of Children in Care and Children subject to a Child Protection Plan remain stable and there is evidence of robust safeguarding and care planning processes. There are no unallocated cases. It is hoped that the work of the Pan Cheshire CAVA Strategic group and the pilots that are being undertaken will lead to a reduction in inappropriate referrals to children's social care. The CAVA pathways that are being developed which include the Integrated Working Support team will lead to earlier help and support being provided to families.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The work of the Child in Need teams is underpinned by Working Together 2010. The main purpose is to provide services to the most vulnerable children including those in need of protection. This is a statutory function that is measured through a series of national Indicators. The performance of these teams impacts on all aspects

of Children's Social Care and it is essential that we ensure that our safeguarding processes through the duty referral and assessment process remain robust.

5.0 **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The teams are currently awaiting their second Ofsted Unannounced Inspection which will have an impact on the councils over all rating. Whilst this report high lights some of the current difficulties and constraints it is important to emphasise that in Halton we have very high standards in respect of safeguarding children and robust responses to Child Protection issues.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

All Children in need are subject to regulated services which will be inspected by Ofsted. It is important that members have a good understanding of the work of the front line teams and are assured that Contact, Referral and Assessment processes are robust and safeguard children

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

If children and young people are not safeguarded from harm they will have poorer outcomes and less likely to achieve economic well being

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

If children and young people are not safeguarded from harm they will have poorer outcomes and less likely to thrive and be healthy

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

The performance of the Council's children services contact, referral and assessments teams is critical to keeping the most vulnerable children and young people in the borough safe

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 If Contact Referral and Assessment processes are not robust and do not ensure that children are safeguarded and protected from harm, then children will remain vulnerable to poor outcomes and the service will receive poor Inspection outcomes which will impact on the over all rating of the council.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The teams provide services to the most vulnerable children in the borough. The service is available to all children and their families who meet the criteria at level 3b / 4 of Halton's Level of need. This includes all protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010

9.0 **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

Not Applicable

10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Working Together to Safeguard Children 20010	Grosvenor House	Vicky Buchanan
Halton safeguarding Board Child Protection procedures	Grosvenor House www.haltonsafeguarding.co.uk	Vicky Buchanan