

**REPORT TO:** Children, Young People and Families Policy  
and Performance Board  
**DATE:** 21<sup>st</sup> February 11  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Children & Young People  
**SUBJECT:** Child in Need Referral & Assessment  
Performance 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, following the report presented on 24<sup>th</sup> May 10. This report focuses on Quarters 1 and 2 of 2010/11

The current performance in relation to the completion of Initial and Core Assessments within timescales, stands at 67.8% for Initial Assessments within 7 days 81.6% within 10days, and 83% for Core Assessments. This Data has not been completely quality assured and is currently subject to a 'data tidy' exercise and is likely to improve. This is compared to an end of year total in 2009/10 of 80.3% of IA's within 7days and 93.7% of Core Assessments.

It is important that members have a good understanding of this performance and is 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 the lack scrutiny into safeguarding practices and the poor understanding of issues impacting on performance.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATION that Policy and Performance board:

- i) Note the content of the report
- ii) Halton Safeguarding Children Board continues to scrutinise and support the work of the Children's Trust in relation to the development of Team around the Family and the progress of the TAF Action Plan.
- iii) Halton Safeguarding Children Board supports the work of the Pan Cheshire group, in relation to the volume of Police CAVA's and establishing appropriate pathways.
- iv) An update report on year end data is presented to PPB in six months time.

### 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The development of Team Around The Family Services with emphasis on the CAF plus model and robust and early intervention is progressing well though it is too early to show impact on referrals and contacts to Children's Social Care. Pathways between the Integrated Working Support Team and Children's Social Care duty team have recently been agreed. Processes are being joined up with positive communication being developed across the services and therefore the continuum of need. The Ofsted Unannounced Inspection Framework for Contact, Referral and Assessment has increased emphasis on the CAF process and the two services are working together to ensure that we are able to evidence a joined up approach.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 **ANALYSIS ( Data available in Appendix 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.

- In the first two quarters of this year there was a total of 782 referrals. 465 or 60% of these were received in the first quarter. It is not unusual to have spikes in referral rates but this does impact on completion rate of Initial Assessments within timescales.
- The total number of referrals for 2009/10 was 1126 the current projection based on Quarters 1 and 2 therefore is that there will be an increase in referrals rates by the end of the year.
- Police generated 344 or 43.9% of referrals via the CAVA notification process.
- The main reasons for referral were Family Dysfunction, 45.6% (357), Domestic Abuse 22.5%(176) and Neglect 19 %(149).
- Only 5% or 41 of the 782 referrals received had previously had a CAF.
- To date 246 or 23.4% of the 782 referrals to CSC closed within 3 months. 56% of the cases closed within 3 months were originally police referrals via the CAVA notification process.

### 3.4 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 3a, 3b and 4 of Halton's Level of Need Criteria.

- There were additionally 715 contacts during the period. 246 or 34.5% of these contacts were generated by Police CAVAS, which did not meet the levels of needs at 3b to 4.

### 3.5 Caseloads and Social Work Capacity

The total number of open CiN cases as of 31<sup>st</sup> October 10 was 709

There are currently 4 social worker vacancies within the CiN service, which have been advertised, and in addition to long term absence and maternity leave this equates to a 20% reduction in social worker capacity. On a positive note the vacancies are due to promotions and the creation of three social work posts to support the Team around the Family service.

Below is a table of social worker case Loads within CiN as of 31st October 2010. 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	SW 1	0	26	0	26
	SW 2 (TAF)	4	6	0	10
	SW 3	0	24	4	28
	SW 4	2	20	2	24
	SW 5	3	27	0	30
	SW 6	0	11	8	19
	SW 7	0	32	1	33
	SW 8 (CWD)	5	10	2	17
	CSWs	0	15	0	15
	Pr M	0	1	0	1
<b>Team Total</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>203</b>
CC2	SW 1 (duty)	0	13	3	16
	SW 2	0	27	0	27
	SW 3	1	20	2	23
	SW 4	2	25	12	39
	SW 5	3	20	4	27
	SW 6		21	1	22
	CSWs	0	34	0	34
<b>Team Total</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>188</b>
CC3 /CC4	SW 1	3	29	4	36
	SW 2	2	25	6	33
	SW 3	1	29	0	30
	SW 4	0	19	4	23

	SW 5	0	7	3	10
	SW 6	2	14	2	18
	SW 7	3	8	4	15
	SW 8	1	12	0	13
	SW 9	0	11	0	11
	SW 10	2	23	9	34
	SW 11	5	21	7	33
	CSWs	0	40	0	40
	Pr M	4	0	0	4
	<b>Team Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>300</b>

- 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 85 and 141 respectively as of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010.
- The Safeguarding unit is currently developing 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 will further strengthen the response to Children in Need and ensure that appropriate services are being provided to ensure children are safeguarded.

### 3.6 Court Activity.

Court activity also impacts significantly on the work of the CiN teams. In October 10 there were 28 sets of Care proceedings. This is not due to an increase in issuing of proceedings but reflects the difficulties in the courts at the present time. There are currently 9 sets of Care proceedings that have been ongoing in excess of 12 months, despite the Public Law Outline which states proceedings should be completed within 40 weeks. Ten sets of proceedings ended during this period, the average length of these proceedings was 55 weeks.

### 3.7 . Management Capacity

- Management capacity has been challenging over the past twelve months in the CiN service. There has been some improvement following improved terms and conditions and a strong recruitment campaign following a refresh of the Recruitment and Retention strategy. We currently have 2.5 Practice Manager vacancies, one of which has been appointed to and has a start date towards the end of January 11. The Principal Manager vacancy in Child Care Team 4 has been 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.
- 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.

- 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.

### 3.8 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. This was something that was identified as an area for development in the Unannounced Inspection of Contact Referral and Assessment that took place in May 2010, (see separate report tabled today).
- The development of Carefirst 6 and Electronic Social Care Records will improve these issues but they are some way off. The project stalled for several months between February and September this year due to a lack of resources. The project has again picked up momentum and is being monitored via a Strategic Project Board with regular reporting to Chief Officers Management Team.
- The roll out of mobile working (lap tops with 3 G cards) for all social workers to provide greater flexibility around completion of assessments has been brought forward and all workers in CiN teams have recently been provided with devices. It is too early to say what impact these will have but workers have received the laptops positively. Whilst flexible working is positive, managers will need to ensure that the devices do not result in social workers working excessive hours.

### 3.9 Summary

There is considerable pressure within the children in need teams, however it must be emphasised that whilst there may be problems and delays in the recording of assessment processes, all children are seen within ten days of referral. Assessments are generally of a high standard and this has been confirmed through the Case File Audit Process.

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.

The development of Team Around The Family with an emphasis on CAF plus model should help to reduce the number of referrals to Children's Social Care and ensure that children and their families receive positive interventions at an early stage. Two experienced social workers have been seconded to the teams to ensure that the levels of need are applied consistently and safely. There are early signs of positive working relationships and a commitment to providing services to families across the continuum of need.

#### **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 highlights 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.

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

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Working Together to Safeguard Children 20010	Grosvenor House	Vicky Buchanan
Halton safeguarding Board Child Protection procedures	Grosvenor House <a href="http://www.haltonsafeguarding.co.uk">www.haltonsafeguarding.co.uk</a>	Vicky Buchanan

**Name of Board:** Children's PPB

**Date of Meeting:** 21<sup>st</sup> February 10

**Report Title:** Child in Need Referral & Assessment Performance Analysis

**Author:** Gerald Meehan,  
Strategic Director  
Children & Young People's Directorate

<b>STANDARD SECTIONS – CHECKLIST</b>		
All reports must be submitted together with the following checklist fully completed		
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<p><b>Resource Implications</b></p> <p>The financial, manpower and land (buying or selling) considerations should be clearly detailed including any corporate implications of following the recommended course of action.</p>		N
<p><b>Social Inclusion Implications</b></p> <p>Any implications relating to social inclusion/anti poverty should be highlighted</p>	Y	
<p><b>Sustainability Checklist</b></p> <p>Any implications that affect the sustainability themes of economy society and the community and the environment should be included,</p>		N
<p><b>Best Value</b></p> <p>Any Best Value implications should be included.</p>		N
<p><b>Legal Implications</b></p> <p>Any Legal implications should be included.</p>	Y	
<p><b>Crime and Disorder Issues</b></p> <p>Any crime and disorder implications should be included.</p>		N
<p><i>Please review these potential effects, within the context set out overleaf, to compose your summary assessment</i></p>		



**Summary assessment of Implications:**

Referral and Assessment processes ensure Children in Need are safeguarded and protected from harm.