

# QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

**DIRECTORATE:** Health & Community  
**SERVICE:** Consumer Protection  
**PERIOD:** Quarter 4 2005/06

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This monitoring report covers the Consumer Protection Division's fourth quarter period up to 31 March 2006. It describes key developments and progress against all objectives and performance indicators for the service.

Given that there are a considerable number of year-end transactions still to take place a Financial Statement for the period has not been included within this report in order to avoid providing information that would be subject to further change and amendment.

The way in which traffic lights symbols have been used to reflect progress to date is explained within Appendix 5.

## 2.0 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Officers of the Bereavement and Registration Services have attended meetings with Members, colleagues from Risk Management, the local Clergy and the local Funeral Directors in order that all possible preparations for a flu pandemic, in terms of its effect and consequences for this network of services and the people they serve, might be identified and put into place.

Since the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February all initial telephone enquiries from Halton's Consumers have been handled by the North West Consumer Direct Contact Centre, which is operated by Cumbria County Council. Halton's advisors now receive the more complex referrals from Consumer Direct that require local investigation/intervention, and are able to provide an enhanced service locally that focuses on the hard-to-reach members of the community.

A national web-based system, RON (Registration on Line), for use with all aspects of civil partnership registration was introduced by the General Register Office on 6 March 2006. All such registrations are therefore stored on a national database.

### 3.0 EMERGING ISSUES

Complaints received by the Ombudsmen regarding the headstone safety regimes of some Councils, have highlighted inappropriate actions that have been taken to ensure the implementation of related legislation. The advice contained in the report produced by the Ombudsmen on the subject, will be used to inform any necessary amendments to this Council's policy for safe headstones.

Initial feedback from the local Clergy on proposals to review the working arrangements of the Council's crematorium is positive.

Registration of births will be made using the General Register Office's national web-based system, RON (Registration on Line), at the end of 2006. Eventually, marriage registrations and death registrations will also be added to the national database via RON.

### 4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES

|              |          |  |          |  |            |  |          |
|--------------|----------|--|----------|--|------------|--|----------|
| <b>Total</b> | <b>4</b> |  | <b>2</b> |  | <b>N/a</b> |  | <b>2</b> |
|--------------|----------|--|----------|--|------------|--|----------|

(Appendix 1)  
Improve access to the (Consumer Protection) Service for the socially excluded

This objective comprised four key milestones, three of which have been achieved on schedule. The fourth related to the production of an action plan, informed by research undertaken during the year. The Action Plan was not produced before the end of the financial year due to the sickness absence of the project lead officer.

Transfer of statutory (Registration) officers to local authority employment  
 Legislation to regularise the employment position of registration staff and transfer them to local authority employment did not progress through this session of Parliament. This objective will need to be deferred until the required change to primary legislation comes in to force. All preparatory work has been completed in readiness for the legislative change.

### 4.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES

|              |          |   |          |   |            |   |          |
|--------------|----------|---|----------|---|------------|---|----------|
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1</b> |  | <b>1</b> |  | <b>N/a</b> |  | <b>0</b> |
|--------------|----------|---|----------|---|------------|---|----------|

(Appendix 2)  
 All other objectives / milestones were achieved over the course of the year.

## 5.0 SERVICE REVIEW

The Registration Service was the subject of an internal audit in December 2005. The auditor concluded that the control environment was adequately designed and that established controls were consistently applied. Five recommendations were made, three of which were of low priority and two medium priority. Work has begun to address the recommendations.

## 6.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

|              |          |   |          |   |            |   |          |
|--------------|----------|---|----------|---|------------|---|----------|
| <b>Total</b> | <b>8</b> |  | <b>8</b> |  | <b>N/a</b> |  | <b>0</b> |
|--------------|----------|---|----------|---|------------|---|----------|

(Appendix 3)

All key performance indicator targets were met over the course of the year.

## 6.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS


|              |          |   |          |   |            |   |          |
|--------------|----------|---|----------|---|------------|---|----------|
| <b>Total</b> | <b>9</b> |  | <b>9</b> |  | <b>N/a</b> |  | <b>0</b> |
|--------------|----------|---|----------|---|------------|---|----------|

(Appendix 4)


All other performance indicator targets were met over the course of the year.

## 7.0 APPENDICES



Appendix 1- Progress against Key Objectives/ Milestones  
Appendix 2- Progress against Other Objectives/ Milestones  
Appendix 3- Progress against Key Performance Indicators  
Appendix 4- Progress against Other Performance Indicators  
Appendix 5- Explanation of traffic light symbols

| Service Plan Ref.          | Objective  | 2005/06 Key Milestone  | Progress  | Commentary  |
|----------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Consumer Protection</b> |  |  |   |   |
| 08                         | Develop initiatives to tackle the problem of under-age sales in Halton | <p>Undertake at least 2 test purchasing exercises by end March 06 to detect illegal sales of age-restricted products</p> <p>Conduct research with Halton pupils by end Jan 06 to identify how such youngsters obtain age restricted products</p> <p>Educate at least 50% of traders selling age-restricted products on their legal obligations by March 06</p> <p>Conduct research with local traders to identify ways to assist them to comply with legislation governing age-restricted products by end Oct 05</p> <p>Review ongoing need for Validate and offer to year</p> |  | <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed - analysis due 06/07</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed - analysis due 06/07</p> <p>Review found 66% take up from yr 11 and 13% take up from 6<sup>th</sup> form therefore we should not continue to</p> |


**APPENDIX ONE – PROGRESS AGAINST KEY OBJECTIVES/ MILESTONES  
Consumer Protection Department**

| Service Plan Ref. | Objective   | 2005/06 Key Milestone  | Progress  | Commentary   |
|-------------------|---|--|---|--|
|                   |   | 11 pupils and V1th form by end Dec 05  |   | offer to 6 <sup>th</sup> form pupils – they can get paperwork at HDL   |
| 09                | Improve access to the Service for the Socially excluded | <p>Provide advice surgeries to 1 of the most deprived wards for a trial period of 3 months beginning April 05</p> <p>Undertake research with representatives from the 5 most deprived wards to identify how access can be improved by end Aug 05</p> <p>Produce an action plan using research with the 5 most deprived wards by end Sept 05</p> <p>Raise the profile of the Service within the 5 most deprived wards by end March 06</p> |  | <p>An advice service has been provided on an approximately fortnightly basis in Windmill Hill via the Benefits Bus. The take-up of the service was low despite posters being supplied to local shops, leaflets being supplied to local school children and posters being supplied to the relevant housing association. The surgeries have been discontinued.</p> <p>A series of events in the deprived wards were attended in May and June and a very simple postal questionnaire was sent to all households in the target wards, with a final return date of the end of October.</p> <p>Although the Action Plan was produced by mid-April 06, this milestone was not achieved on target and this failing alone has resulted in a red traffic light for this Objective.</p> <p>In addition to the advice surgeries referred to above the Service has attended a Pamper Day in Castlefields and events at both Halton College sites, where</p> |

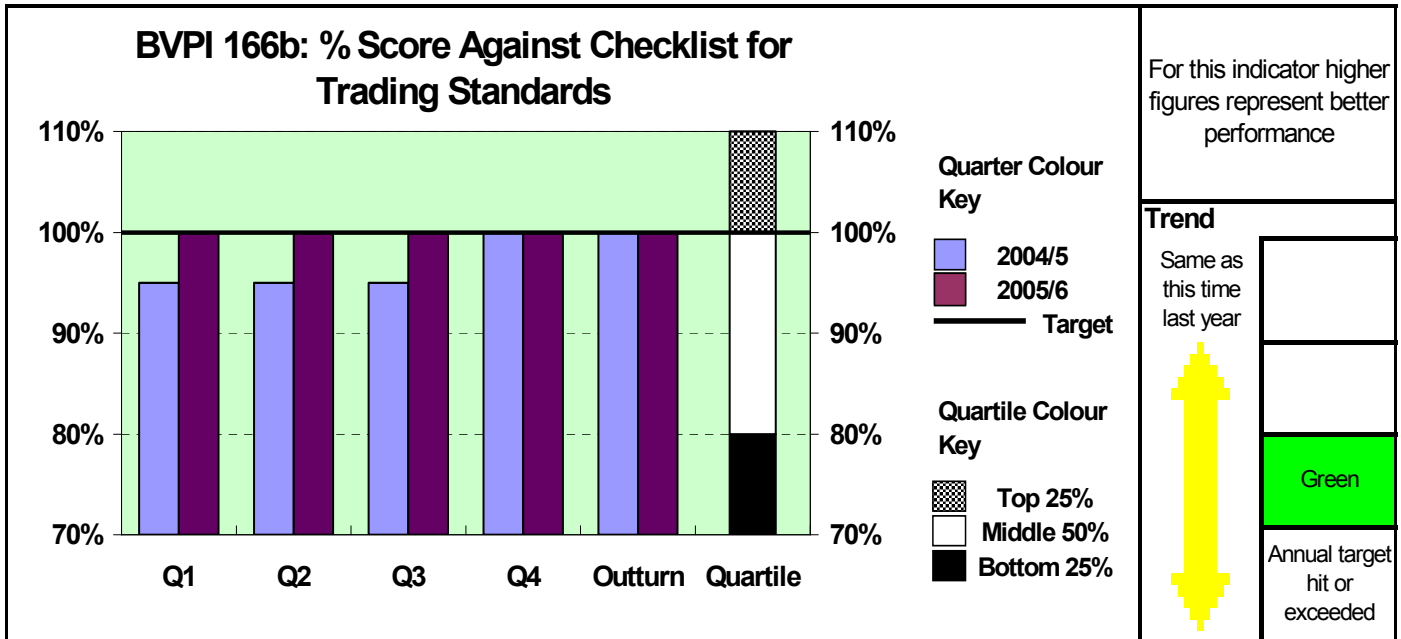
**APPENDIX ONE – PROGRESS AGAINST KEY OBJECTIVES/ MILESTONES  
Consumer Protection Department**

| Service Plan Ref.           | Objective  | 2005/06 Key Milestone  | Progress  | Commentary  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---|---|
|                             |  |  |   | attendees included people living in the target wards.   |
| <b>Registration Service</b> |  |  |   |   |
| 11                          | Provision of Civil Partnership registration                  | Legislation in place by end 2005   |  | Five civil partnerships have been registered.   |
| 12                          | Transfer of statutory officers to local authority employment | Job descriptions prepared and jobs graded by July 2005. New contracts signed Sept 2005 |  | Job descriptions have been prepared. However no further progress can be made until primary legislation is agreed by Parliament. |

**APPENDIX ONE – PROGRESS AGAINST KEY OBJECTIVES/ MILESTONES  
Consumer Protection Department**

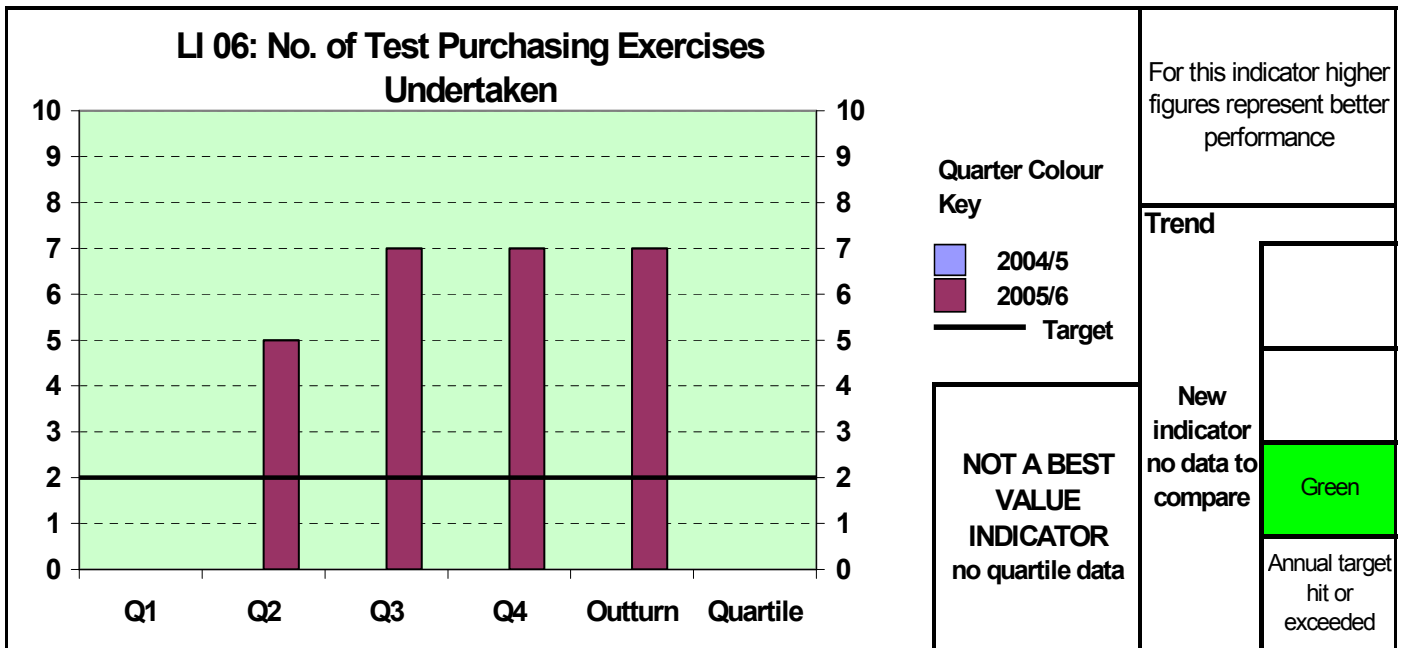
| Service Plan Ref.           | Objective  | 2005/06 Key Milestone  | Progress  | Commentary  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Registration Service</b> |  |  |   |   |
| 10                          | To survey our customers each year to ascertain their views on the quality and scope of services provided | <p>Survey all customers visiting the office a particular week in February 2006</p> <p>Survey all couples marrying during August 2005</p> <p>Analyse results by 31.12.2005</p> <p>Implement any service improvements from previous year's surveys by end 2005</p> |  | <p>Both surveys were completed on schedule and results analysed.</p> <p>Customers highlighted the need for better information on the location of the Town Hall and signage. This has been improved.</p> |

**APPENDIX TWO – PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER OBJECTIVES/ MILESTONES  
Consumer Protection Department**



#### Commentary

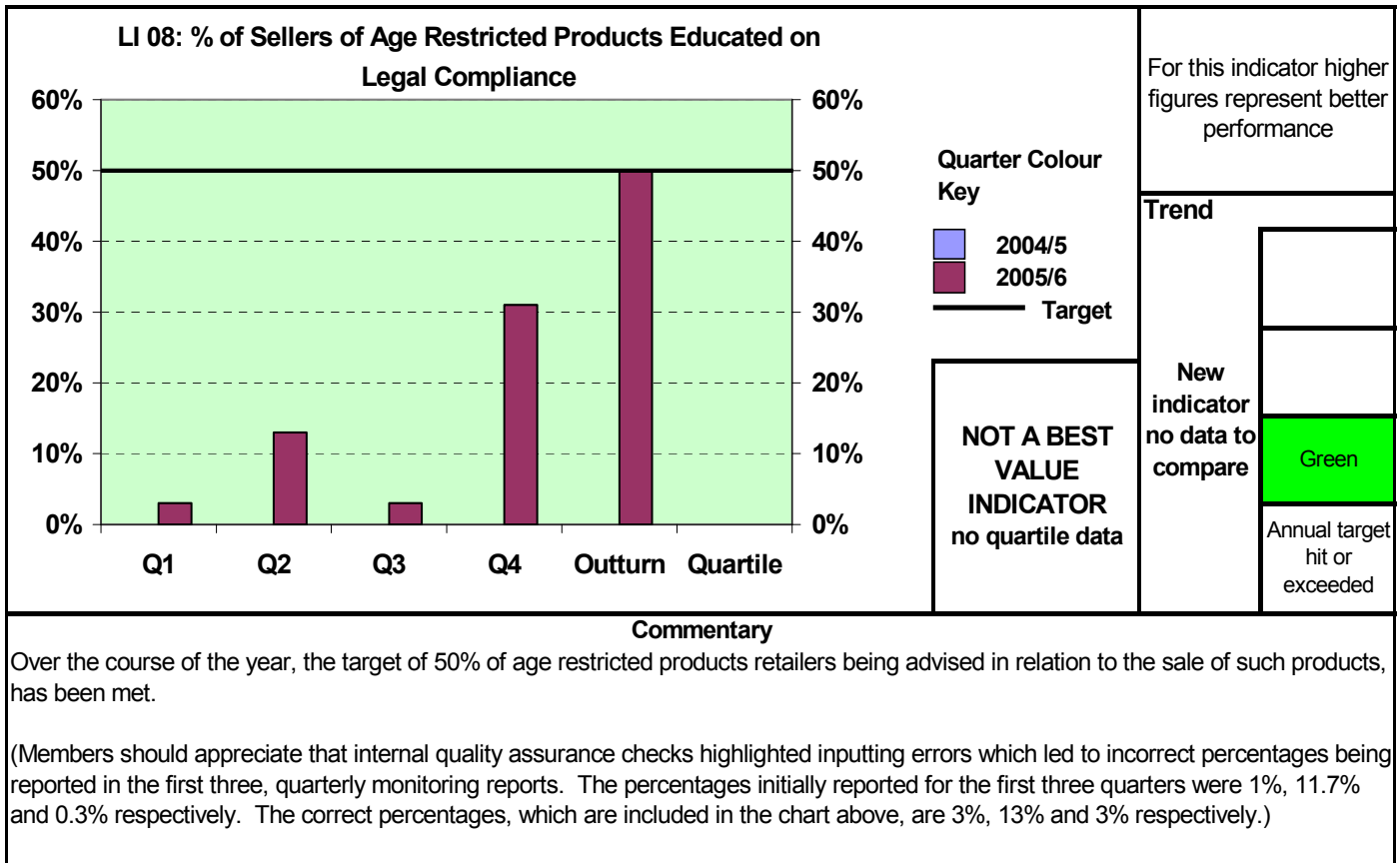
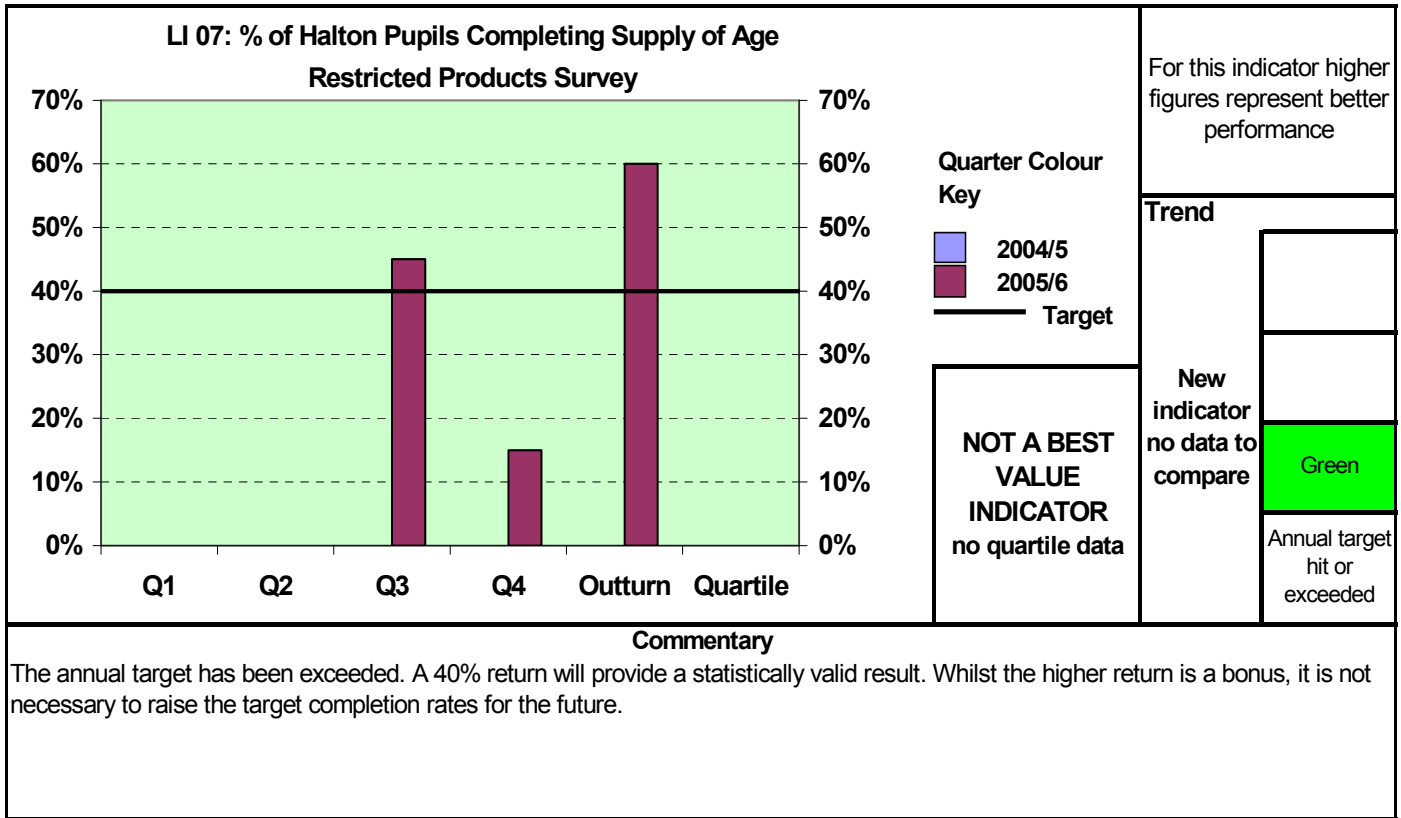
This "year-end" Best Value Performance Indicator provides an indication of the performance of Halton's Consumer Protection Service when measured against a checklist of enforcement best practice. The checklist has regard to written enforcement policies, risk based inspection programmes and sampling and surveillance regimes, educational and information programmes, customer complaint/enquiry processes, statutory notification processes, benchmarking and consultation arrangements and performance reporting mechanisms.

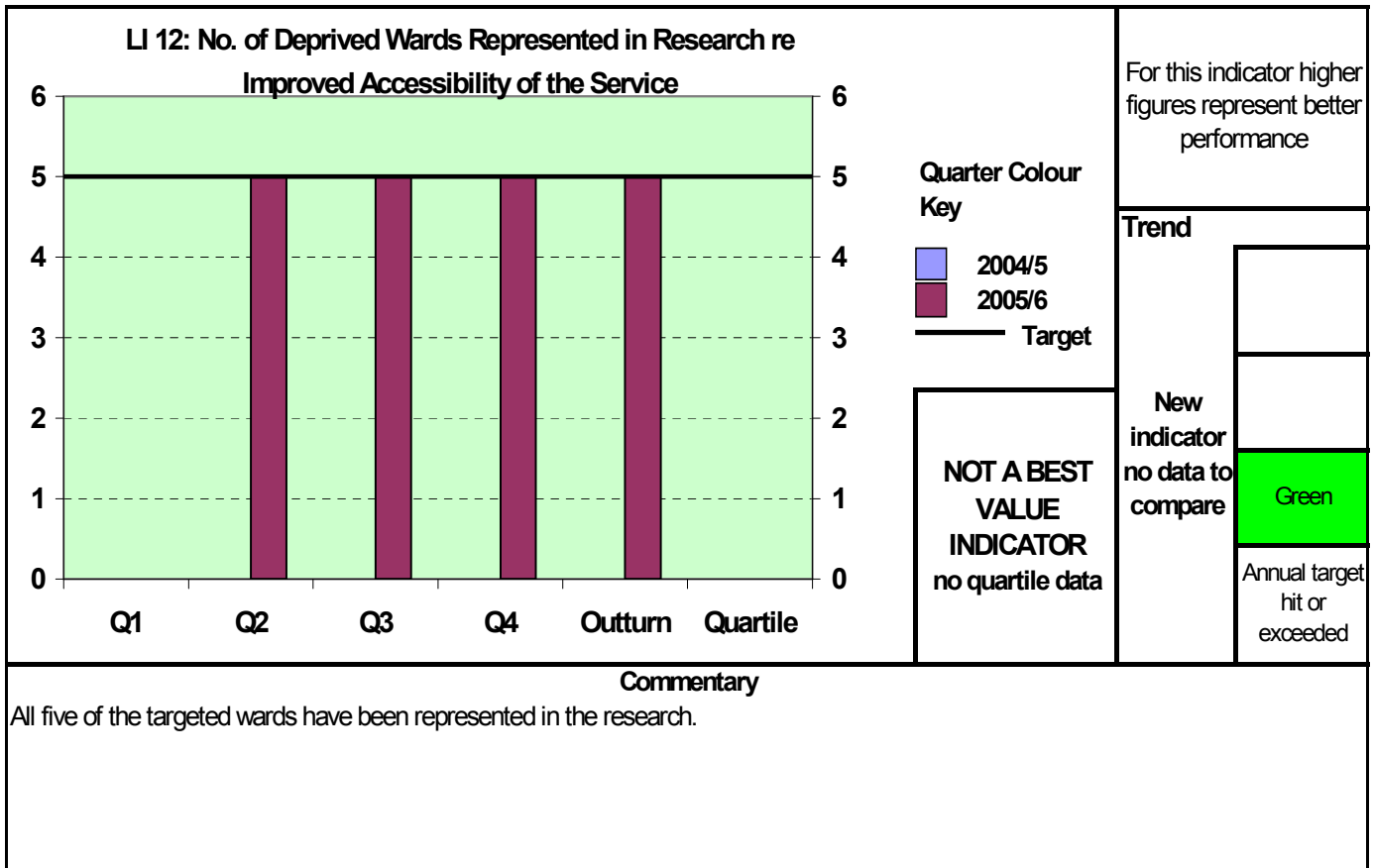
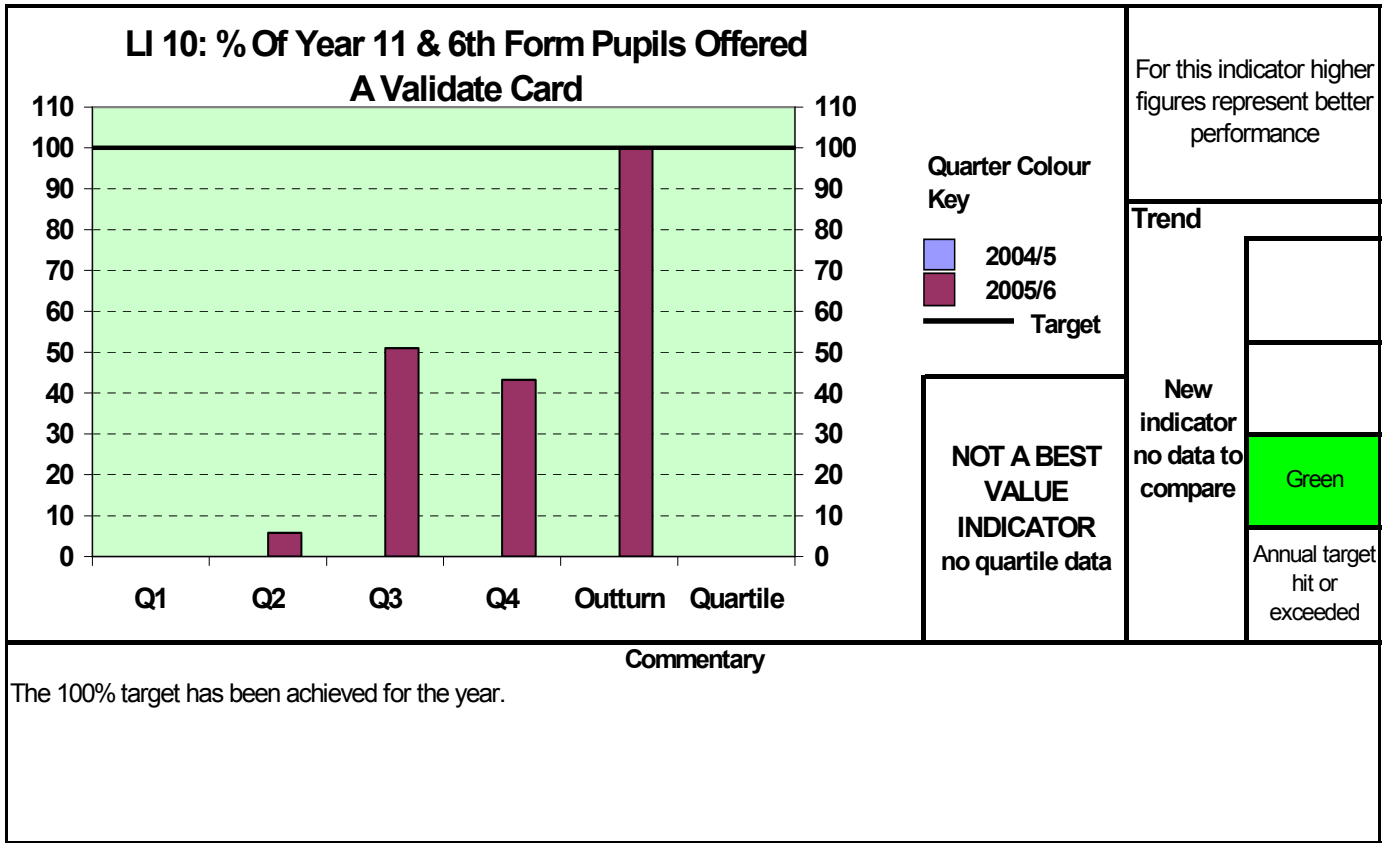


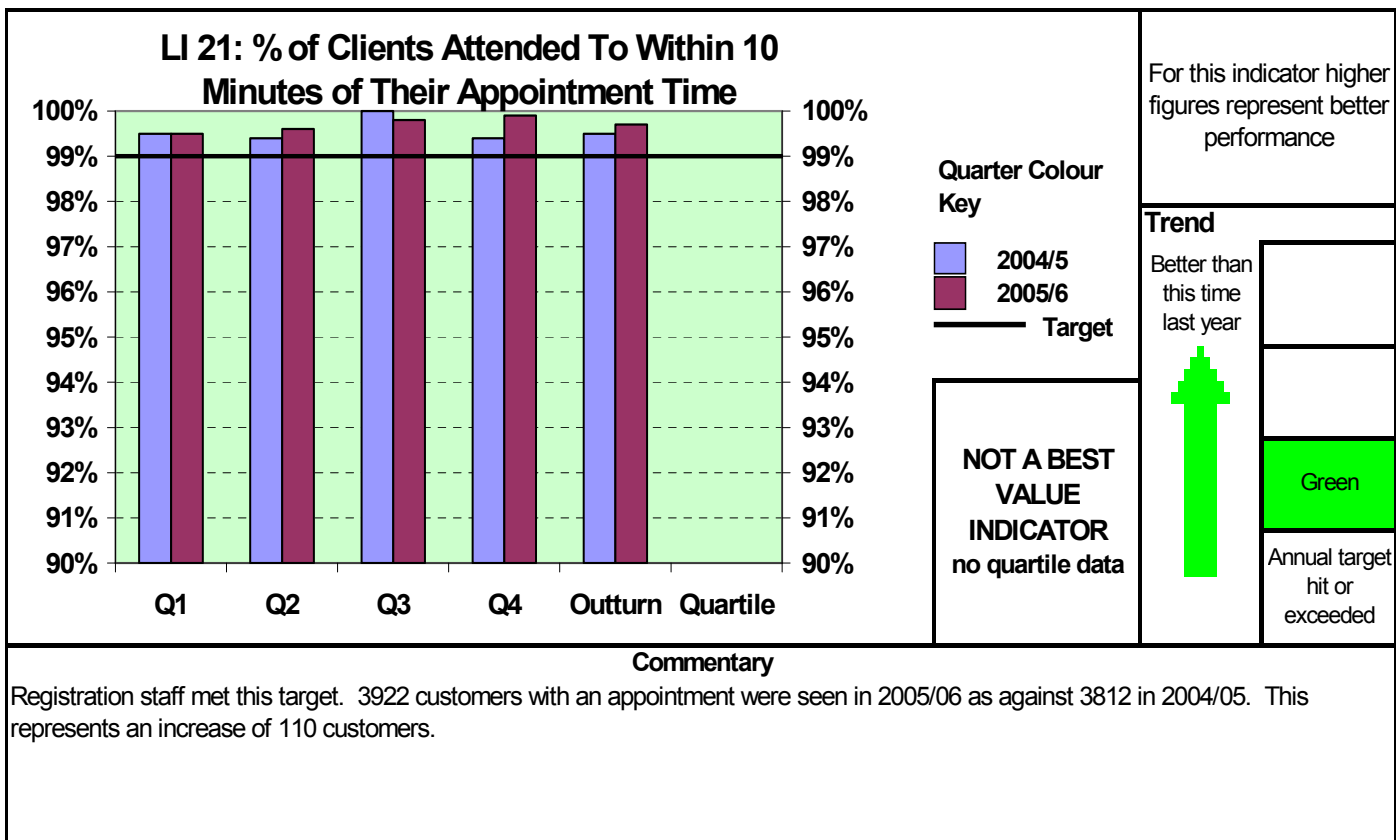
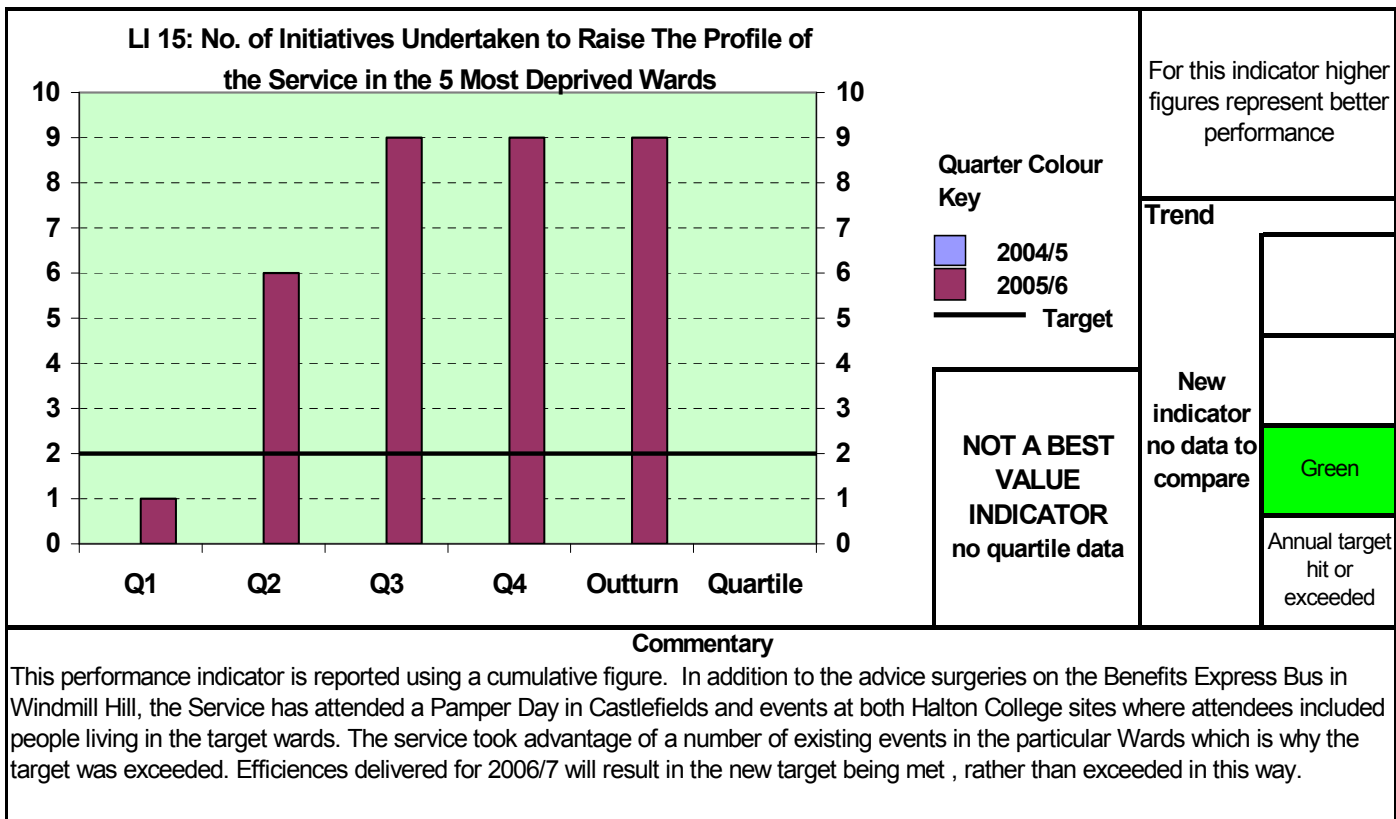
#### Commentary








No exercises were planned or undertaken during Quarter 4, but the annual target has still been exceeded. Actual performance exceeded planned performance as additional exercises were undertaken as part of the national AMEC campaigns (Alcohol Misuse Enforcement Campaigns) which attracted modest Home Office funding plus Police support.













| Ref                                | Indicator   | Actual<br>04 / 05 | Target<br>05 / 06 | Quarter 4 | Progress  | Commentary  |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|---|---|
| <b>Consumer Protection Service</b> |   |                   |                   |           |   |   |
| LI 09                              | a) % of traders who sold during test purchase exercises surveyed on what assistance they require to improve compliance (new pi) | N/a               | 100 (of sellers)  | 100       |    | Work completed by end of quarter 3. No further exercises were planned or undertaken in quarter 4.   |
|                                    | b) % of traders who didn't sell during TP exercises surveyed on what assistance they require to improve compliance (new pi)     | N/a               | 20                | 20        |    | As above  |
| LI 11                              | No. of deprived wards receiving advice surgeries (new pi)   | N/a               | 1 (3 month trial) | 1         |    | Advice surgery was provided at Windmill Hill but due to a lack of demand the service has been discontinued.   |
| LI 16                              | % of Improving Access Action Plan implemented (resources permitting) (new pi)   | N/a               | 0                 | 0         |    | Due to the sickness absence of the project lead officer, the Action Plan was not completed by year-end, hence there was nothing to implement. However, since there was a 0% target for 05 / 06 there has been no failure to deliver the PI. |
| <b>Bereavement Services</b>        |   |                   |                   |           |   |   |
| LI 17                              | Carry out all cremations within 24 hours of receipt of written instructions.  | 100%              | 100%              | 100%      |   | Target achieved.  |
| LI 18                              | Carry out all interments within 48 hours of receipt of written instructions.  | 100%              | 100%              | 100%      |  | Target achieved.  |
| <b>Registration Service</b>        |   |                   |                   |           |   |   |
| LI 19                              | We will process applications for current certificates on the day of receipt.  | 98%               | 98%               | 98.3%     |  | The target for quarter 4 was not met due to the increased workload of the civil partnership act. However, the annual target was still achieved.   |

**APPENDIX FOUR – PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS  
Consumer Protection Department**

| Ref   | Indicator   | Actual<br>04 / 05 | Target<br>05 / 06 | Quarter 4 | Progress  | Commentary       |
|-------|---|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|---|------------------|
| LI 20 | We will process applications for historical certificates within 3 working days.   | 92%               | 90%               | 96.5%     |  | Target achieved. |
| LI 23 | Clients without an appointment will be offered an appointment or will be attended to, as soon as possible. We aim to attend to such clients within 10 minutes of arrival. | 96%               | 97%               | 100%      |  | Target achieved. |

**APPENDIX FOUR – PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**  
**Consumer Protection Department**

## Application of Traffic Light Symbols

|                     | <u>Objective</u>   | <u>Performance Indicator</u>  |
|---------------------|--|---|
| <b><u>Green</u></b> |  <p>Indicates that the <u>objective</u> <u>has been achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.</p>          | Indicates that the annual 05/06 target <u>has been achieved</u> or exceeded |
| <b><u>Red</u></b>   |  <p>Indicates that that the <u>objective</u> <u>has not been achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.</p> | Indicates that the annual 05/06 target <u>has not been achieved</u> .       |