

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report To: Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny
Committee - 2 March 2010

Subject: Safeguarding Vulnerable Children and Young People in
Manchester

Report of: Director of Children's Services

Summary

- To update the committee following previous reports tabled during 2009 on the progress to date in strengthening the local multi-agency arrangements to safeguard children, including multi agency audits.
- To feedback the results of the Unannounced Ofsted inspection of Children's Services Contact Referral and Assessment Services.
- To note progress in social work staffing arrangements, District developments, the introduction of the First Response Service (FRT), and preparation for the Ofsted Announced Inspection.

Recommendations

The committee discusses the contents of this report and progress to date and determines the frequency of further reports.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

Reports to Committee 3rd March 2009, 19th May 2009 and the 10th November 2009.

Appendix:

Unannounced letter
Action Plan

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an up-date on progress in improving safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable children and young people. It builds on earlier reports to the CYPOS (March, May, and November 2009), and the Executive Committee (July 2009). Regular reports on the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements will continue to be made available in accordance with the recommendations from the Report of Lord Laming (March 2009).
- 1.2 Since the last report Children's Services has been subject to an Ofsted unannounced inspection in November of the Contact, Referral and Assessment arrangements to safeguard children. The routine and regular inspections of regulated services such as Children's Homes and Early Years have continued and the Family Placement Service was inspected in November of last year. This is the subject of a separate report to this committee. Ofsted's provisional rating of children's services in Manchester for 2008-09 was confirmed as adequate and published in December 2009.
- 1.3 In the coming quarter we anticipate:
- *An announced inspection into arrangements to safeguard children and children looked after; and*
 - *The outcome of evaluations of Manchester Safeguarding Children's Board (MSCB) Serious Case Reviews, which have been submitted to Ofsted.*

2.0 Progress

- 2.1 Following on from the work commissioned by the MSCB and undertaken by a former HMI Inspector at the beginning of last year, a lot of work has been done to strengthen the work of the MSCB, the Executive Board and the links with the Children's Board. The oversight of safeguarding arrangements across all agencies has been improved with marked progress in the following areas:
- The arrangements for contact and referral into Children's Social Care; and
 - A greater understanding by multi agency partners of child protection and safeguarding procedures with a clearer and more consistent understanding of when and how to make contact with children's social care services
- 2.2 In line with recommendations from Lord Laming's last report that the "DCSs... and other senior service managers must regularly review all points of referral where concerns about a child's safety are received to ensure they are sound in terms of the quality of risk assessments, decision making, onward referrals and multi agency working..." reinvestment monies have been used to establish a social work First Response Team (FRT). The Team responds to all incoming work (Contacts) to Children's Social Care and is staffed by six social workers, three family support workers and three team managers. The team deals with all contacts and undertakes initial enquiries ensuring the work requiring a statutory social work response goes forward into District social work teams.

- 2.3 The FRT commenced work in July 2009 becoming operational across the City from the September. An interim review was held on the 3rd November 2009 which identified the positive impact the Team had made in reducing unnecessary work progressing from the FRT into the District social work teams. Furthermore, the increased capacity at the front end of the Service has enabled greater consistency in identifying and assessing children on a continuum of need. Those children identified as in need of a Social Worker get a speedier social work response. Contacts not requiring statutory social work intervention are followed up with appropriate community resources for immediate support to the child and family. There is now a greater challenge to multi agency partners to undertake a CAF (Common Assessment Framework) and raise the profile of 'Lead Professional'. The FRT challenge the impact and effectiveness of CAF's that have been undertaken. The interim Review did find the full impact of the service was being compromised by the difficulties some districts had in providing experienced social worker to staff the FRT which is being addressed now that district social worker staffing arrangements have increased and stabilised. A more detailed review will shortly take place which will include multi agency partners. This review will make recommendations as to the future development structure and function of the FRT, so as to further improve services to children and families.
- 2.4 In addition to the above, Manchester Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) requested a report to establish how partner agencies quality assure their contacts with FRT with the intention of ensuring that those contacts coming to the attention of Social Care are appropriate and sufficiently detailed. Secondly a task and finish group led by Health, was commissioned to clarify how social work and other services fit within the Continuum of Need. A report will be presented to the MSCB in Feb 2010 with the conclusions of these discussions. This will help establish which services provide the skill and competencies to meet the needs of children at different levels.
- 2.5 Following on the initial multi agency audit last year it was also agreed by the MSCB that annual multi agency audits would be completed. A multi agency audit tool has been developed and following its acceptance by the MSCB a further multi agency audit will be completed in the next quarter. These audits will continue to drive improvements in multi-agency arrangements to safeguard children.
- 2.6 This improved understanding of referral and assessment processes has been helped by continued development work within Children's Social Care. During the autumn refresher training in the National Assessment Framework (NAF) was delivered to Duty and Assessment Teams and has met with very positive feedback. Compliance with the standards of practice required by the NAF has been a regular area for improvement identified by Serious Case Reviews. As part of the preparation for the Unannounced Inspection Duty and Assessment Team Managers have met regularly to discuss how the service across the City is being delivered and how services can be improved. This has led to improved practice and greater City wide consistency. District Managers have concentrated on ensuring they actively manage the service they offer. This

work not only resulted in Ofsted noting positively that senior managers knew and understood their services, but has also led to significant improvements in the quality of the service and the confidence and morale of front-line staff.

3.0 Unannounced Inspection Findings

- 3.1 Manchester's unannounced inspection took place on the 17th & 18th of November 2009. Prior to this, a self assessment had been undertaken of the contact, referral and assessment services and teams across the City which had identified a number of areas for improvement. These were in line with what the unannounced inspection also identified with measures and actions all ready in place and acknowledged by the inspection findings.
- 3.2 The Inspection report noted eight positive areas of work reflecting good responses to contacts and referrals with good interagency co-operation and a service responsive to the needs of local communities. Child protection procedures were seen to be properly followed by qualified staff, meaning children at risk are properly safeguarded. They were impressed that the MSCB receives regular reports on safeguarding activity and were seen to be actively supporting interagency activity particularly in its support of the FRT as mentioned above. They specifically highlighted that senior managers clearly knew their services and the successful action taken to address staff shortages by the securing of additional resources was seen in a very positive light.
- 3.3 Ofsted noted one priority action for improvement which related to some assessments which had not been completed. Whilst the report was critical of this it was noted that these cases had been risk assessed and prioritised so as to ensure children were actively safeguarded. Action is underway to address this as a matter of priority and the number of incompleting assessments has reduced.
- 3.4 There were then eight areas for development which focussed mainly on the levels of new staff within the service and the need to support them in the delivery of a quality service. The impact on services in terms of timeliness and quality of assessments when there is staff turn over or staff are inexperienced was noted as well as the need to continue to strengthen recording in a timely way. The limitations of the electronic recording system (MiCare) which supports the Integrated Children's System (ICS) was also noted as were the low numbers of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) with partner agencies continuing to refer children to social care where earlier inter-agency preventative action would have been expected. Ofsted noted that the Children's Board acknowledged this and is taking action to "...strengthen the use and impact of the CAF and increase access to preventative services."
- 3.5 The service's strengths were identified as good staff accessibility to managers leading to high staff morale; the very positive impact of the First Response Team; good opportunities from training and development, including learning from Serious Case Reviews; and the systematic and increasingly effective performance management and audit processes.

3.6 On the whole, the outcome of the inspection can be regarded as positive. It was in line with the services own self assessment and endorsed actions being taken to improve the service. Over 70 Unannounced Inspections have now taken place across the country with a large proportion having 2 or more priority actions.

4.0 Staffing

4.1 *Staffing* the new senior post of Head of District Delivery was advertised and successfully appointed to, Tony Decrop being the successful candidate. The key performance objective for the new post is to strengthen early intervention and prevention through multi-agency arrangements with a neighbourhood focus and to improve the overall performance of children's social care.

4.2 *The recruitment and retention of increased numbers of social work staff.* All districts now have consistent baseline staffing levels which enables each service to develop a more effective, efficient approach to service delivery based on need. As well as establishing the FRT there has been an increase in the number of social work posts in the district teams. Both these developments reflect nearly £900K of new investment into the social work service. The six week recruitment programme and a drive to offer permanent roles to existing and good agency staff has been extremely successful with only three District social work vacancies being covered by agency staff at the end of December. Many of these appointments have been to newly qualified Social Workers with initial high learning and developmental needs. All newly qualified practitioners have dedicated training days to help them develop their skills and the Advanced Social Work Practitioner (ASWP) role has been developed in order to assist with the day-to-day supervision and management of social workers. Greater stability of the work force will strengthen the corporate parenting of looked after children and the delivery of value for money placement choice and stability.

4.3 Social work retention has been of concern within the social work workforce as consistency in service provision is paramount when supporting children, and their families. The reasons behind staff turnover have been identified as primarily working conditions; heavy caseloads and the increasing national media scrutiny of social work. Whilst work still needs to be done the re location of a number of Teams to renovated or new buildings has led to an improvement in morale. The confirmation of the new staffing establishment and the recruitment to nearly all of the posts will also have a significant impact on reducing high staff workloads, whilst the work being undertaken to develop a consistent flow of qualified social workers into the City should ensure that vacant posts are regularly recruited to.

4.4 Career progression and employee development have also been prioritised as part of the transformation of the social work workforce development and social work practice across the City. Career pathways have been identified, highlighting the potential for clearer routes into the role of ASWP and management.

- 4.5 Reflecting the recommendations of the Social Work Task force, work is also under way to ensure a consistent supply of high quality newly qualified social workers by improving partnerships with the local universities. As part of these partnerships, alternative career routes and methods are being identified to support people in aspiring to a career in social work. In addition, we are developing our social work workforce through the use of secondments of experienced care managers and family support workers to complete the social work degree.

5.0 Announced Inspection Preparation

- 5.1 *Preparation for the Announced Inspection.* In the next quarter children's services are likely to be subject to an announced inspection. Ofsted will lead this inspection in partnership with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) who have responsibility for ensuring the quality of Health service delivery. Ofsted and the CQC will give up to two weeks notice prior to undertaking an Inspection of the City's Safeguarding and Looked after Children Services. Whilst child protection, corporate parenting and safeguarding arrangements are constantly being reviewed and improved some specific preparations are underway to ensure we are well organised for the announced inspection. A multi agency task group meets at least monthly to ensure that:

- An appraisal of service developments is complete and up to date;
- The multi agency programme of Inspection is up to date;
- The work on cleaning data is progressing;
- Multi agency staff briefings are progressing.

- 5.2 Each District Manager is now working with their Deputy District Managers to ensure all staff understand the inspection process and their contribution to a successful inspection. The process of completing this preparation has had very positive benefits for all agencies in terms of ensuing improved understanding of each others work, and clarifying areas where further work needs to be completed. A report will be made available to this Committee detailing the findings of the Announced Inspection.

6.0 The Further Development of the Children's Trust Arrangements

- 6.1 The Government has recently introduced national guidance for consultation for Children's Trust Arrangements and the Children & Young People's Plan. As part of Manchester's own developments and to propose how in the future, services for children and families will be transformed, a Children's Trust Blueprint has been published. At its heart it recognises local neighbourhoods as the focal point for the local delivery and commissioning of services with targeted services being commissioned and provided through universal settings. Schools and NHS provision will form hubs at a neighbourhood level to assess and identify need and, with a range of council services, provide integrated services to meet local identified need.
- 6.2 The above proposals will require a review of the current Children's Trust

governance and systems including district arrangements which is in line with both the proposed statutory guidance and the council's planned Target Operating Model, which is being supported by the Directorate of Transformation.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 As can be seen, a great deal of activity has taken place over the last several months to strengthen multi agency safeguarding arrangements. All indications are that the First response Team is having a positive impact in ensuring that vulnerable children receive an immediate and appropriate response.
- 7.2 The results of Inspections in the last quarter have been reasonably positive and reflect the hard work undertaken by staff and the continuing improvement in the delivery of services.
- 7.3 CYPOS members are asked to discuss and note the contents of this report.

16 December 2009

Ms Pauline Newman
Director of Children's Services
Manchester City Council
5th Floor Town Hall Extension
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Dear Ms Newman

Annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within Manchester City Council children's services

This letter contains the findings of the recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements within local authority children's services in Manchester City Council which was conducted on 17 and 18 November 2009. The inspection was carried out under section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will contribute to Ofsted's annual review of the performance of the authority's children's services, for which Ofsted will award a rating later in the year.

The inspection identified one area for priority action and a number of areas for development, which are detailed below.

The inspection sampled the quality and effectiveness of contact, referral and assessment arrangements and their impact on minimising the incidence of child abuse and neglect. Inspectors considered a range of evidence, including: electronic case records; supervision files and notes; observation of social workers and senior practitioners undertaking referral and assessment duties; and other information provided by staff and managers. Inspectors also spoke to a range of staff including managers, social workers, other practitioners and administrative staff. I am grateful to you and your staff for your help and the time given during this inspection.

From the evidence gathered, the inspection identified a number of areas where the contact, referral and assessment arrangements were delivered satisfactorily in accordance with national guidance, in particular:

- Decision making in response to contacts and referrals in the cases seen was appropriate and timely. Referrers are kept informed of progress and outcomes.
- Practice and procedures for responding to child protection needs comply with statutory requirements and guidance, and ensure appropriate levels of involvement from all partner agencies.



- Child protection enquiries (Section 47 Children Act 1989) are undertaken in a timely way by qualified social workers. As a consequence children in need of immediate protection are safeguarded.
- Practice is sensitive to ethnic, linguistic and cultural needs of children and their families, for example through the use of interpreting and translation services. Operational staff and managers take a proactive approach in seeking to understand the diverse range of needs of communities in the area.
- Reporting on assessment and child protection activity and performance to the Manchester Safeguarding Children Board is regularly undertaken. The influence of the Board in promoting service improvement between partner agencies is demonstrated, for example in its support for the development of the First Response service.
- Senior managers are aware of the challenges faced by front line services and are taking robust action to minimise the impact of these such as securing additional resources which are being deployed effectively to meet the demand for services. Additional staff with appropriate qualifications, including some that are other than in social work, are deployed appropriately to cover elements of work in the absence of social workers arising from vacancies or long term sickness.
- A successful recruitment strategy has resulted in a high number of new appointments which have the potential to remedy the current shortfalls in the staffing establishment. However, these appointments are yet to be finalised.
- The Emergency Duty Service provides a satisfactory and responsive out of office hours service to children in need of protection with evidence of effective communication with daytime services.

From the evidence gathered, the following strengths and areas for development were also identified:

Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The First Response service provides robust scrutiny of contacts and effective initial screening of referrals. This recent development has already reduced levels of inappropriate referrals to district teams.▪ District and team managers are reported by staff to be accessible and providing a good standard of support. This contributes significantly to high levels of staff morale.▪ Staff have access to good opportunities for training in core responsibilities and benefit from information being disseminated effectively through regular team meetings.

- Learning from a recent serious case review has been translated into robust action by managers at all levels and resulted in improved management oversight of casework practice and more focused quality assurance processes.
- Performance monitoring at a strategic level and audits of front line practice are systematic and increasingly effective.

Areas for development

- Many social workers carry caseloads that are too high and include too many cases requiring complex work. This contributes to delays in progressing assessments and completing planned work which have been exacerbated, in some districts, by high rates of staff turnover during the past year.
- Newly qualified social workers acquire complex caseloads, including child protection cases and court proceedings, too soon in their careers. The structured induction to support these staff, for example the enhanced frequency of supervision, is not being consistently delivered.
- Staffing difficulties over the past 12 months have impacted adversely on the timeliness of the completion of both initial and core assessments. Current performance is below both national and statistical neighbour authorities.
- The quality of many initial and core assessments is variable and some are poor. Most are narrowly focused on the presenting problem, contain insufficient information and analysis, and include limited evidence of the views of children, parents or carers. While inspectors found no cases where the immediate risks of harm or safeguarding concerns had not been addressed appropriately, these weaknesses have the potential for children's needs not to be fully identified or met.
- Some strategy discussions or meetings between social care and police agencies are conducted by social workers with insufficient seniority or experience with the result that the criminal and welfare aspects of investigations are not always sufficiently balanced when determining the process for child protection investigations.
- Management decisions and case discussions conducted in supervision are not routinely recorded on the child's case file.
- Low numbers of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) assessments are undertaken. Partner agencies continue to refer children to social care where an inter-agency focus on prevention would have been expected. The Children's Trust Board acknowledges this and is taking action to strengthen the use and impact of the CAF and increase access to preventative services.
- Recording of assessments on to the computerised records system is not always carried out promptly leading to potential difficulties known to be associated

with gaps in recorded information about children. The new electronic recording system in social care is perceived by staff as difficult and time consuming to use.

This visit has identified the following area for priority action.

Area(s) for priority action

- Some core assessments are unallocated and 39, while allocated, are not being progressed with some delays being up to three months. This is due to staffing shortages and workload pressures. Other agencies are involved with these children but have not been requested to increase their input during this period, resulting in some children potentially not being safeguarded effectively or receiving the services they need. However, the local authority has risk assessed and prioritised these cases.

The area for priority action identified above will be specifically considered in any future inspection of services to safeguard children within your area.

Yours sincerely



Heather Brown
Divisional Manager, Social Care Safeguarding

Copy: Sir Howard Bernstein, Chief Executive, Manchester City Council
Ian Rush, Independent Chair of Manchester Safeguarding Children Board
Cllr Sheila Newman, Executive Member for Children's Services, Manchester City Council
Andrew Spencer, Department for Children, Schools and Families

	Area for Development	Key Actions	Key Outcome	Lead Officers	Timeline
1.	<i>Many social workers carry caseloads that are too high and include too many cases requiring complex work. This contributes to delays in progressing assessments and completing planned work which have been exacerbated, in some districts, by high rates of staff turnover during the past year.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment of £380k to increase the District social work establishment with each team comprising of a Team Manager, Advanced Practitioner and five social workers. The recruitment of 46 staff from external applicants and existing agency staff into permanent posts since September 2009, as of the 31st December 2009, only 3 social work vacancies remaining Retention group established to oversee and monitor staff turnover, analyse exit interviews and why social workers were leaving, develop and implement measures to address these and consider bonus and incentive schemes to attract new and experienced workers to the City. 	<p>Stabilisation of the work force leading to reduced turn over and reliance on agency staff.</p> <p>Increasing length of service and experience from social workers.</p> <p>Improved understanding of social work processes.</p> <p>Capacity to manage complex cases within teams increased with work being completed on time.</p> <p>Improved timeliness and quality of Initial and Core assessments.</p> <p>Improved consistency of Social Worker for the child and family.</p>	<p>Tony Decrop - Head of District Provision</p> <p>Pam Moffat – Head of Workforce Planning and Development</p> <p>Mike Blackwell - Personnel Advisory Manager</p>	<p>Recruitment Campaigne September to December 2009.</p> <p>Secure into permanent positions January 2010</p> <p>Retention working group established December 2009</p>

2.	<p><i>Newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) acquire complex caseloads, including child protection cases and court proceedings, too soon in their careers. The structured induction to support these staff, for example the enhanced frequency of supervision, is not being consistently delivered.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manchester embarked on first pilot of the newly Qualified Social Work (NQSW) pilot due to complete in March 2010. Learning has identified need to increase level of supervision and support in the first 12 months. This will be provided by the new established post of Advanced Practitioner based in each team. Workforce development officer assigned to each District to provide tailor-made bespoke training based on needs of specific staff groups. Development of a case weight loading system to assist managers in the appropriate allocation of work based on experience and skills of Social Workers. Routine peer management audits of supervision files with 	<p>NQSW have reduced case loads, that increase as their experience and confidence develop.</p> <p>NQSW are more confident in their ability to manage their work well.</p> <p>Improved quality of written work in formal settings.</p> <p>Improved and more timely planning for children who are looked after or subject to formal Child Protection Plans.</p> <p>Improved and more timely assessments.</p> <p>To quality assure the standards of casework and recording.</p>	<p>Pam Moffat – Head of Workforce Planning and Development</p> <p>Mary Milton – Service Lead Safeguarding</p>	<p>First cohort of NQSW programme completed March 2010.</p> <p>New Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Programme launched and implemented April 2010</p>

		regular reports to the senior management team.			
3.	<i>Staffing difficulties over the past 12 months have impacted adversely on the timeliness of the completion of both initial and core assessments. Current performance is below both national and statistical neighbour authorities.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.5 Million investment to the First Response Team which reduces demand on front line duty and assessment teams ensuring effective screening of inappropriate referrals and increasing capacity to undertake good quality assessments in a timely manner. Successful recruitment of staff leading to less reliance on agency staff providing social work stability within Teams. 	<p>Improved recruitment and retention of social workers reducing the reliance on temporary agency staff</p> <p>Effective screening of all contacts to children’s social care.</p> <p>Improved performance in the timeliness of completion of initial and core assessments.</p>	<p>Tony Decrop - Head of District Provision</p> <p>Pam Moffat – Head of Workforce Planning and Development</p> <p>Mike Blackwell - Personnel Advisory Manager</p>	<p>Review of First Response Team completed March 2010</p>
4.	<i>The quality of many initial and core assessments is variable and some are poor. Most are narrowly focused on the presenting problem, contain insufficient information and analysis, and include limited evidence of the views of children, parents or carers. While inspectors found no cases where the immediate risks of harm or safeguarding concerns</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Externally commissioned trainer, Bruce Thornton providing training to on the National Assessment Framework (NAF) and assessment and risk tools to all front line staff, advanced practitioners and team managers. NAF training now part of 	<p>Improved quality of assessment leading to better focused plans and services.</p> <p>Improved outcomes for children and their families.</p>	<p>Pam Moffat – Head of Workforce Planning and Development</p> <p>Mary Milton – Service Lead Safeguarding</p> <p>Tony Decrop -</p>	<p>Assessment Framework Planning – delivered to District social work teams through out 2010</p> <p>Multi agency</p>

		discussions on electronic recording system (MiCARE).	Management decisions will be recorded in the MiCare electronic children's file Clear line management decision-making and accountability.	Meeting	22.12.09
7.	<i>Low numbers of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) assessments are undertaken. Partner agencies continue to refer children to social care where an inter-agency focus on prevention would have been expected. The Children's Trust Board acknowledges this and is taking action to strengthen the use and impact of the CAF and increase access to preventative services</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAF and Lead Professional (LP) have been implemented in Manchester since March 2008 in line with national guidance. Significant resources i.e. a CAF Project Manager and six CAF Coordinators have been employed to support district and city wide CAF and LP implementation. As a result of this infrastructure: The CAF Coordinators are collaborating with the First Response Team to ensure children and young people are offered a CAF when appropriate and that professionals support referrals with a CAF 1119 children and young 	<p>More children are supported by a common assessment with an identified Lead Professional</p> <p>Agencies drive and mainstream CAF which becomes part of day to day practice</p> <p>Increase number of children supported by a CAF prior to contact to children's social care</p> <p>Earlier identification of needs so that early intervention can improve outcomes</p>	<p>Rosemary Braithwaite - Common Assessment Framework Project Manager</p> <p>Donna Mair - Children's Trust Programme Manager</p>	<p>Year end performance report on CAF March 2010</p> <p>Report to Children Trust Leadership Team Embedding CAF next steps February 2010</p>

		<p>people are supported or have been supported by CAF (data for November 30th 2009)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is under way to support and embed the LP role and Team Around the Child activity 			
8.	<p><i>Recording of assessments on to the computerised records system is not always carried out promptly leading to potential difficulties known to be associated with gaps in recorded information about children. The new electronic recording system in social care is perceived by staff as difficult and time consuming to use.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of new recording templates supported by extensive training programme to be rolled out from March 2010. • From June 2010, planned roll out and implementation of new version of the computerised records system will improve its useability 	<p>MiCare electronic children's recording system improves in its usability</p> <p>Successful implementation of new version of computerised records</p>	<p>Colin Barr - ICS/MiCare Business Change Manager</p>	<p>Roll out of ICS 1C June 2010</p>
	Priority Action	Key Action	Key Outcome	Lead Officers	Timeline
1	<p><i>Some core assessments are unallocated and 39, while allocated, are not being progressed with some delays being up to three months. This is due to staffing shortages and workload pressures. Other agencies are involved with these</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful recruitment campaign and increase in social work establishment has reduced staff shortages and pressure on front line workers. • Action plan in place by 	<p>Good retention of social workers leading to stable teams</p> <p>All Core Assessments allocated and completed within timescales</p>	<p>Tony Decrop – Head of District Provision</p>	<p>Review of Social Work staffing establishment March 2010</p>

	<p><i>children but have not been requested to increase their input during this period, resulting in some children potentially not being safeguarded effectively or receiving the services they need. However, the local authority has risk assessed and prioritised these cases.</i></p>	<p>specific District to have all outstanding core assessments allocated and completed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly monitoring showing ongoing improvement for this specific District in completion and timeliness of Core Assessments. • Significant reduction of the 39 uncompleted core assessments • Review social work establishment 	<p>Children have access to support services that meet their assessed needs within agreed timescales</p>		
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