

**REPORT FOR: PERFORMANCE AND
FINANCE SCRUTINY SUB-
COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting:	18 January 2011
Subject:	Performance Update on National Indicators (NI) used in Children's Social Care Assessments (NI59 and NI60)
Responsible Officer:	Catherine Doran, Director of Children's Services
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	Councillor Krishna James – Performance Lead for Children and Young People
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

P&F members asked to be updated on action taken to improve performance on initial and core assessment indicators. This report sets out the action taken and the progress to date in improving performance.

FOR INFORMATION

Section 2 – Report

Background

Performance dropped for the indicators in the first half of 2010-11 as a result of the following factors:

- continued high level of referrals and child protection work
- temporarily reduced workforce in Referral and Assessment due to maternity and vacancies
- reconfiguration of the Referral and Assessment team following Government 'Working Together' guidance which stated best practice of qualified social workers completing initial assessments

Action and progress

The drop in performance was identified during the first quarter of the year and management action was taken to address the workforce issues and to increase monitoring. It has taken a number of months to turn performance round but significant improvements have been achieved in October and November. If current performance is maintained the target for core assessments should be met and the performance on the new initial assessment 10 day timescale is likely to rise to around 85% (detail provided below).

It is also worth noting that in November 2010, Ofsted visited for their second unannounced inspection of referral and assessment, which involved tracking a sample of child safeguarding cases through the system. Ofsted identified a significant number of strengths and no priority actions for Harrow, which is a strong result. The inspection did draw attention to the increased volume of activity (contacts and referrals) and noted 'inappropriate delay in progressing some contacts to referrals'. The service has responded to this with an investment in front-line staff in the Referral and Assessment team.

Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance was published in March 2010 following the Laming Review. The Director of Children's Services and Divisional Director immediately put changes in place to ensure that Harrow's safeguarding service was compliant. This meant that the effect of the reconfiguration fell into the beginning of the current financial year. Ofsted inspectors were initially satisfied with the Referral and Assessment set up (as was) in December 2009 and have concluded positively on the changes that were put in place following Working Together when they re-inspected in November 2010. The changes were not forced by an inspection but were proactive, in response to new guidance.

In addition, 2009-10 benchmarking information for assessments has been published by DfE during December which shows that average performance on assessments in England has dropped significantly due to pressures on the social

care system and tighter reporting requirements. Harrow's performance is well above London and statistical neighbour averages.

Detailed performance and comparators:

NI 59 Initial assessments:

For November, 93% (55 of 59) of initial assessments were completed within 10 days. October's performance was 89% (51 of 57). This improves the year to date performance to 79% (target - 'as high as possible'), and gives a 4 percentage point increase on the Q2 result.

NI 60 Core assessments:

For November, 86% (50 of 58) of core assessments were completed within 35 days. October's performance was 76% (32 of 42). This improves the year to date performance to 75% (target 83%) and also gives a 4 percentage point increase from the quarter 2 figure.

Harrow's statistical neighbours are largely outer London boroughs - **Barnet, Croydon, Ealing, Enfield, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Kingston, Merton, Redbridge, Slough**. DfE statisticians look at population characteristics and give us the 10 'closest fitting' other local authorities.

Looking at this group for initial assessments (NI 59), Ealing was top last year with 79%, Croydon was bottom with 51% and **Harrow was third with 71%**. (Note this is measuring against the 7-day timescale, which was the requirement in 2009-10).

On core assessments (NI 60), Ealing was again top with 86%, Croydon was again bottom with 60% and **Harrow was second with 84%**.

Financial Implications

In response to the pressures on this service an additional £84k budget was allocated during 2010/11 to fund additional social workers. This was financed from the additional budget allocated to children in 2010/11. Growth for these staff going forward is being considered as part of setting the 2011/12 revenue budget.

Performance Issues

These are outlined in the report.

Environmental Impact

N/A

Risk Management Implications

N/A

Corporate Priorities

This report relates to the Corporate Priority 'Improve Support for Vulnerable People'

Section 3 – Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 7 January 2011		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: David Harrington, Service Manager – Performance Management david.harrington@harrow.gov.uk, 020 8424 9248