

Safeguarding Activity Trends Report

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services, Cath McEvoy

Lead Member for Children's Services, Councillor Wayne Daley

1. Purpose of report

To provide analysis of social work activity trends and case allocation as well as highlighting national developments regarding the Department for Education safeguarding indicators.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1) **Identify any issues for further scrutiny.**

3. Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the 'Living' and 'Learning' sections in the Corporate Plan.

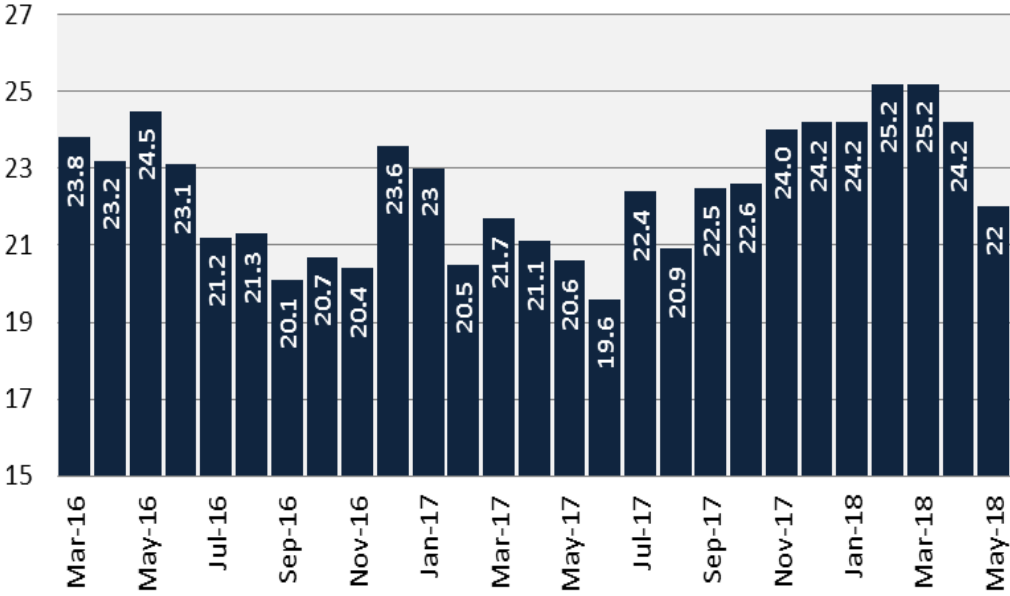
4. Key issues

CASELOADS ANALYSIS

- 4.1 Systems are in place to closely monitor the Integrated Children's System (ICS) with regard to unallocated cases, and social care locality team caseloads. As part of this process, a list of all open cases was extracted on 22nd May 2018.
- 4.2 Using the information from the caseload extract, there were 2,516 cases open to Children's Services on this date (compared to 2,434 in the last report – a 3% increase). Of those open cases, 70% (1,753) were being held open on a child in need basis, 15% (385) were cases involving children looked after by the County Council (17 of which are also subject to a Child Protection Plan), and 15% (384) were cases of children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP). All cases needing social work intervention are allocated to a named social worker.

- 4.3 All child protection cases are allocated to suitably skilled, experienced and qualified social workers and the capacity in the teams is closely monitored with managers demonstrating good oversight of cases. Systems are in place to ensure that appropriate professionals from the full range of agencies are involved in planning and review meetings.
- 4.4 Team workloads are also regularly evaluated and information systems are in place so that figures can be regularly reviewed. At the time of writing, there were 22 cases per full-time equivalent social worker, which is a slightly better rate compared to the previous report (22.5 in September 2017). There are 10 social workers with caseloads of 30 or more (a similar figure to September 2017).
- 4.5 In order to allocate new cases appropriately, individual social worker workloads are regularly evaluated. The workload weighting matrix factors in case complexity, numbers of families, ongoing assessments and car mileage. Currently, 74% of social workers have a caseload weighting score that was within the desired region for their level of experience and role. Each team’s matrix is discussed at monthly performance clinics with the relevant senior managers and high caseload weightings are appropriately challenged.

Graph 1 – Average caseloads per social worker at month end



- 4.6 As at 21st May 2018, there were 9.2 full-time equivalent agency workers employed (a similar level to the end of September 2017). In order to recruit, retain and develop a stable workforce of social workers, there is a targeted recruitment campaign underway to attract newly qualified and experienced staff to Northumberland, and a social work academy will be launched in the next few months for workers in their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). As well as this, a Continuous and Professional Development (CPD) pathway is being developed for aspiring senior practitioners and managers.
- 4.7 Work with children in need is supported both by practical guidance and a policy framework. Assessments of children in need routinely record information, conclusions and decisions, and the majority are completed within the nationally-

prescribed timescale and in May 2018 (so far), 98.7% of referrals had a decision made on them by a team manager within 1 working day.

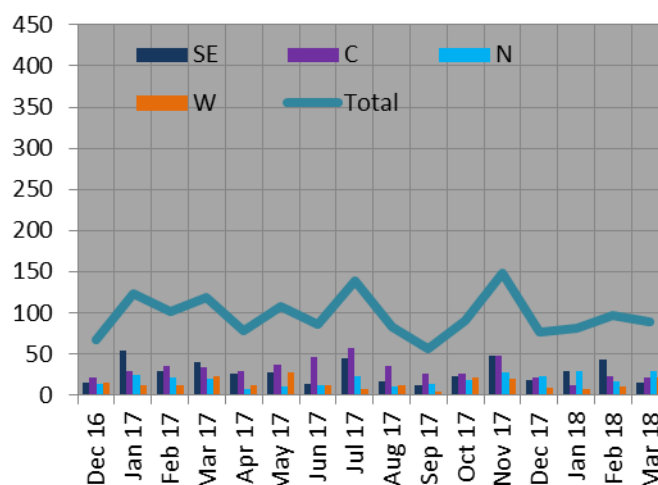
- 4.8 Systems are in place to ensure that where staff are absent from work, their work trays (within ICS) can be picked up, checked and actioned, with the system generating alerts for workers to pick up tasks where necessary.

5.2 EARLY HELP

The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) states that “early intervention involves identifying children and families that may be at risk of running into difficulties and providing timely and effective support”. The terms ‘early intervention’ and ‘early help’ are often used interchangeably, and describe a range of services, programmes or interventions to help children and families resolve problems before they become more difficult to reverse or require more interventionist support (such as social work).

The number of Early Help Assessments (EHAs) undertaken each month in Northumberland is outlined in Graph 2. The most recent EHA registration figures are for the 12 months leading up to the end of March 2018. Across this period, there were a total of 1,137 EHAs initiated – which when equated to the under eighteen population gives a figure of 193 per 10,000 – higher than the latest national rate reported by the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) of 178. Although there has been a slight reduction in numbers of EHAs compared to last year, the Early Help Strategy is being updated and will address some of the issues and challenges that have been raised.

Graph 2 – number of EHAs undertaken per month



5.3 RECENT TRENDS WITHIN THE CHILD PROTECTION PROCESS

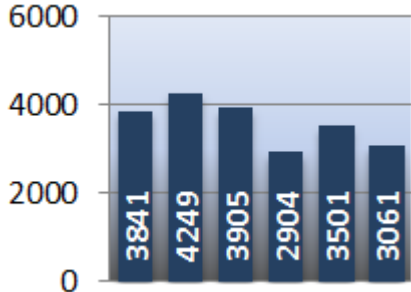
It is generally accepted that an initial contact is one received by children’s services about a child where there is a request for general advice, information or a service¹. It may, or may not be accepted as a referral. A referral (as defined by Department for Education) is ‘a request for services to be provided by local authority children’s social care and is either in respect of a child not previously known to the local authority, or one where the case was previously open but is now closed’.

The number of initial contacts received in Northumberland has reduced recently with 3,061 contacts received in the quarter ending March 2018 (compared to 3,501 in the previous quarter – a 13% reduction). 1,117 of these were accepted as a referral within the social care teams in the most recent quarter - a 36% conversion rate (the latest national rate is 31%).

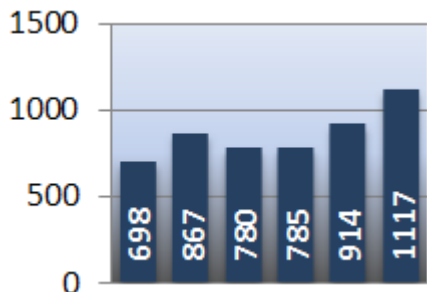
¹ ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 5 Report, p20

Over the past twelve months there have been a total of 3,596 referrals accepted by Northumberland’s social care teams, which when equated to the most recent child population figures gives a rate of 609 per 10,000 – higher than the latest (2016/17) national rate (of 548), and regional rate (of 600). This figure represents a 9% increase compared to last year (557). Graphs 3a and 3b show the number of contacts and referrals received by Children’s Services in each of the past six quarters.

Graph 3a – Contacts per quarter



Graph 3b – Referrals per quarter

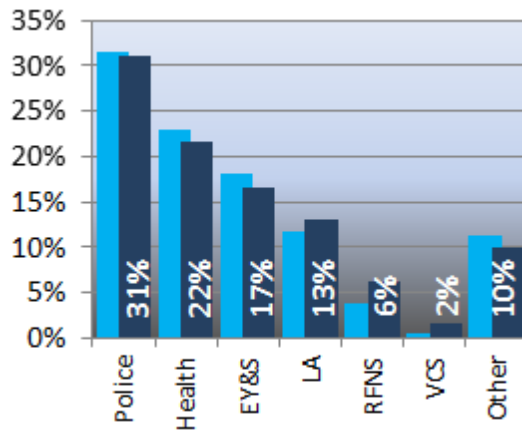


Graph 4 shows the proportion of referrals received by the social care teams for the past two quarters by agency type. In the most recent quarter (compared to the previous quarter) there was an increase in the proportion of referrals from LA services² (13%), relatives, friends, neighbours and self [RFNS] (6%) and voluntary and community sector [VCS] (2%) and a reduction in the proportion of referrals from early years and schools [EY&S] (17%), health professionals (22%) and ‘other’ agencies (10%)³. The proportion of referrals from the police (31%) remained at around the same level compared to the previous quarter.

Graph 4 – Referrals by agency type

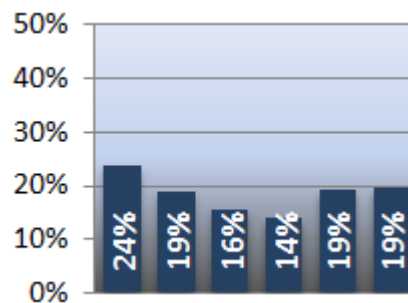
² LA referrals include the Emergency Duty Team (EDT), other local authorities, Housing, Education Welfare Officers, the Youth Offending Team, the Substance Misuse Team as well as referrals from Northumberland social workers

³ Other agencies include Probation, CAFCASS, Prison service, Courts, plus anonymous referrers



A re-referral is defined as a second referral on a closed case within 12 months of a previous referral. In Northumberland, 19% of referrals received in the quarter ending March 2018 were counted as re-referrals, with this representing a similar proportion to the previous quarter. This figure is slightly below the national figure (21%), and is line with the regional average.

Graph 5 – Re-referrals within 12 months

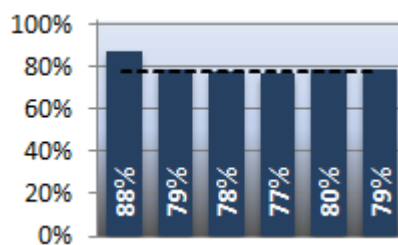


In the most recent quarter the proportion of re-referrals within 3 months of the previous referral was 4% (note this figure includes the percentage re-referred within 1 month). This figure is the same as the previous quarter.

The children and family (C & F) assessment was implemented in March 2014 replacing initial and core assessments, with managers making a judgement about whether it should be completed within 10, 25 or 45 working days of the referral to children’s services. Graph 6 (below) shows the proportion of assessments completed by the deadline set by the team manager.

Performance has hovered slightly around the service target of 80% in recent quarters, with 79% being completed in timescale (compared to 80% in the previous quarter). Whilst this isn’t measured nationally, Northumberland completes a higher proportion of assessments in 45 working days (93%) compared to other local authorities in England and the North East (both 83%). Again, senior managers are not tolerating poor quality assessment and are sending them back where they do not meet the standard required, which sometimes leads to the assessment going out of time scale whilst the quality is improved. At the time of writing, 21 assessments were overdue.

Graph 6 - % assessments completed in timescale



5.4 Child Protection

A Section 47 (S47) enquiry refers to enquiries conducted under the provisions of Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

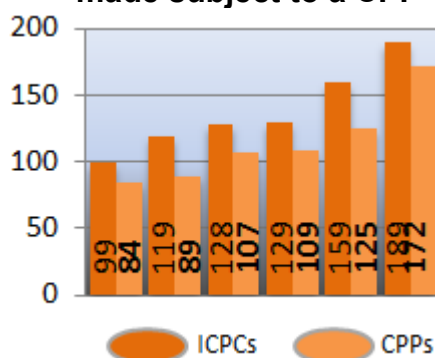
In the year ending March 2018, there were 1,244 S47 enquiries completed, equating to 211 per 10,000; higher than the latest national average of 157. This rate represents an increase compared to last year where the S47 rate was 168 per 10,000.

In the most recent quarter, 53% of all S47s led to an initial child protection conference (ICPC) – which is above the latest annual figure of 46%, and also above the latest national average (2016/17) of 41%. The most recent quarterly figure is an increased proportion compared to the previous quarter (44%).

Over the previous year, 605 children were the subject of an ICPC, equating to 103 per 10,000 - above the national average (2016/17) of 65. Of these, 513 children were then made subject to a Child Protection Plan – equating to 87 per 10,000 – again, above the national rate of 56 and the regional rate of 79. This equates to 85% of children made subject to an ICPC went on to start a CPP; in line with the national average of 86%.

In the most recent quarter ending March 2018, there were 189 children subject to an initial child protection conference (see graph 7) which represents an increase from the previous quarter; with 172 being made subject to a child protection plan (CPP) – a 91% conversion rate.

Graph 7 – number of children subject to ICPCs and numbers subsequently made subject to a CPP



In the publication “Working Together to Safeguard Children”⁴, it recommends that social work managers convene ICPCs within 15 working days of the most recent strategy discussion that triggered the Section 47 enquiry. In the year ending March 2018, 85% of

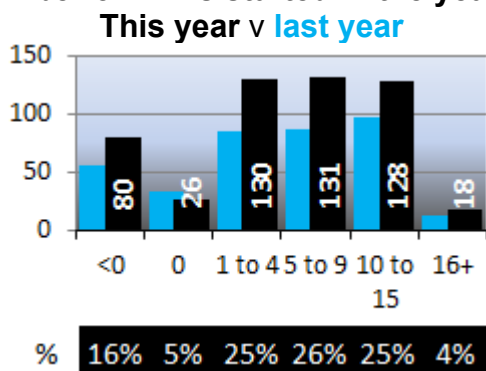
⁴ Working Together to Safeguard Children, March 2015, page 38

ICPCs were held within this standard – better than the previous year’s figure (of 74%), the national average (2016/17) of 77%, and in line with the regional average (of 86%).

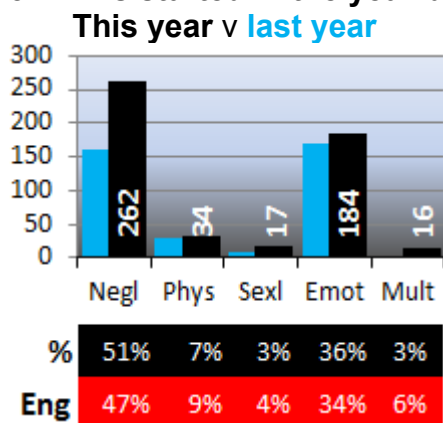
Graph 8a shows the age groups of children starting CPPs in the year ending March 2018 (compared to year ending March 2017). 80 cases (16% of all CPPs started in the year) were unborn babies, with 26 (5%) being babies. 130 children (25%) were aged between 1 and 4 years old, with 131 (26%) being aged between 5 and 9. A further 128 children (25%) starting CPPs were aged between 10 and 15 years old, with 18 (4%) aged 16 or over.

Graph 8b shows the breakdown of the category of abuse for all CPPs started in the year ending March 2018. 262 children (51% of CPPs) were allocated the category of ‘neglect’ (compared to 47% nationally), with 34 cases (7%) labelled as physical abuse (9% nationally), 17 (3%) being due to sexual abuse (4% nationally), 184 children (36%) considered emotional abuse (34% nationally) and 16 (3%) being labelled with multiple abuse types (6% nationally).

Graph 8a – number of CPPs started in the year by age group



Graph 8b – number of CPPs started in the year by category of abuse

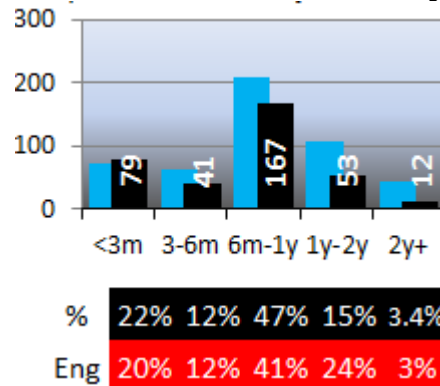


Of the 513 CPPs that started across the year ending March 2018, 82 children (16%) had previously had a CPP (compared to 19% nationally), with 40 children (8%) having had a CPP started within two years of a previous CPP ending.

Of the 352 CPPs ending in the year (see Graph 9), 79 (22%) ended within up to three months of the plan starting (compared to 20% nationally), 41 (12%) ended between three and six months (12% nationally), 167 (47%) ended between six and twelve months (41% nationally), 53 (15%) ended between one year and two years of the plan

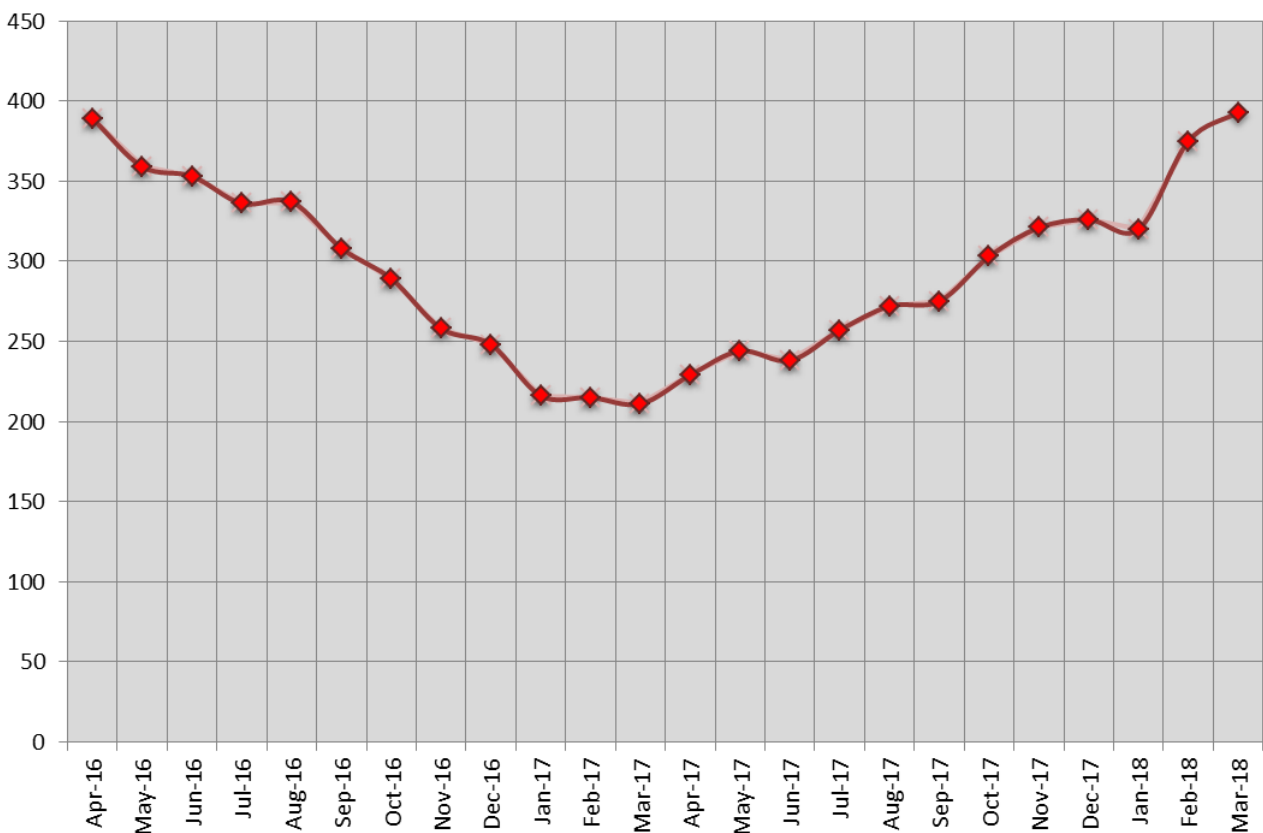
starting (24% nationally), and 12 (3.4%) of those ending started over two years before (3% nationally).

Graph 9 – number of CPPs ended by duration



At the end of March 2018, 393 children were subject to a CPP (see Graph 10), which when equated to the most recent population estimates equates to 67 per 10,000 of the under 18 population; above the national rate of 43 and regional average of 61 per 10,000. The reasons behind the increase in CPPs are being looked at; it should be noted that colleagues in other regional authorities have also described increases in their CP numbers in recent months.

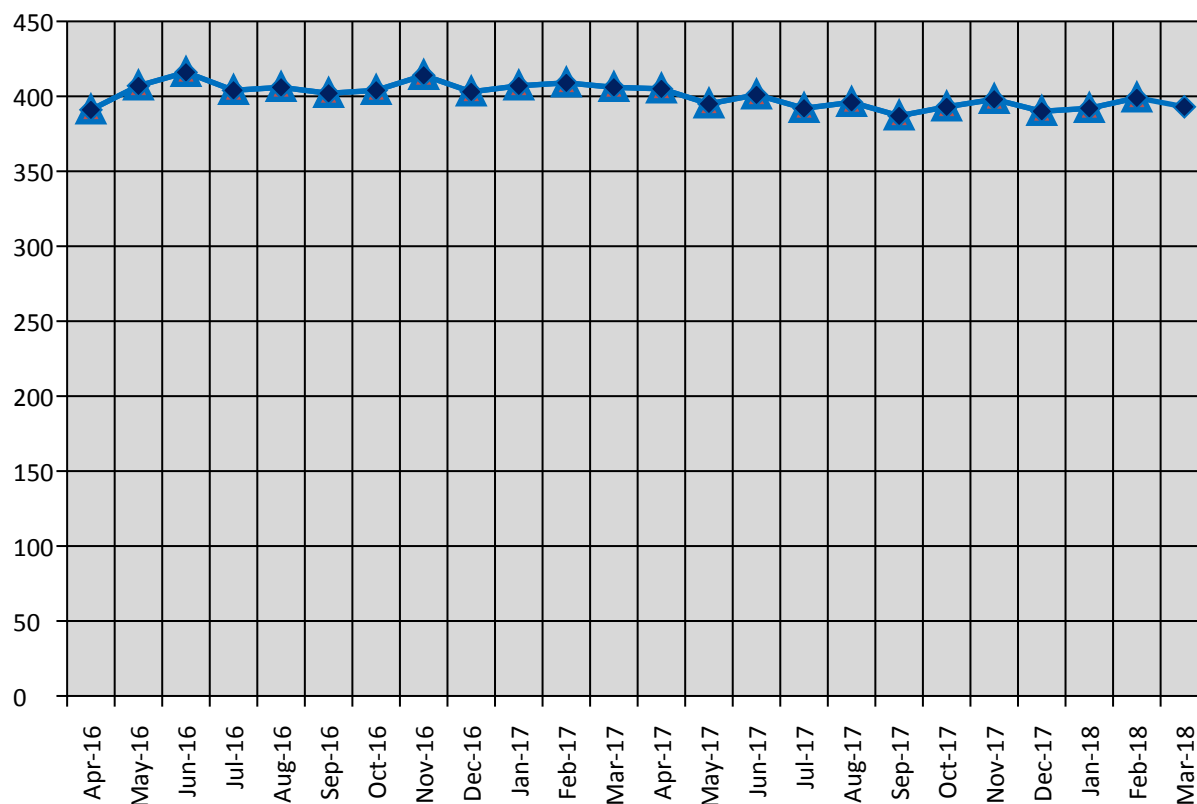
Graph 10 – Number of children with Child Protection Plans at month end



At the end of March 2018 2017, 393 children were in care (LAC) (see Graph 11), which when equated to the most recent population estimates equates to 67 per 10,000 of the

under 18 population; above the national rate of 62, but below the regional rate of 92 per 10,000.

Graph 11 – Number of children in care at month end



6. IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Policy:	Management of caseload allocation is a key part of safeguarding children.
Finance and value for money:	Figures provided in this report will allow managers to monitor the level of caseloads and activity on a quarterly basis in order to ensure resources are being allocated appropriately.
Legal:	The report includes information on Looked After Children cases, with a number of these being subject to care proceedings.
Procurement:	None.
Human Resources:	The council should continue to monitor the impact of resource investments with regards to workloads to ensure effective targeting to support staff and to improve performance. At present, there is a national focus on supervision, training and stress-levels of social workers.
Property:	None.
Equalities: (Impact Assessment attached)	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Risk Assessment:	The Laming Recommendations require that Directors must ensure that all cases of children assessed as needing a service have an allocated social worker and that Children's Services continues to prioritise and allocate the most at risk cases. This is the core element of the Ofsted inspection framework.
Crime & Disorder:	The prevalence of domestic violence and substance misuse are monitored during case reviews, and influence workload management decisions.
Customer Considerations:	The data in the report indicates the extent to which service user's needs are being met in the early stages of a case.
Carbon Reduction:	None
Wards:	None

7. CONSULTATION

The following have been consulted: Executive Director of Children's Services; Acting Head of Safeguarding.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Lord Laming – The Victoria Climbié Inquiry.
 Lord Laming – The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report
 Social Work Task Force – Building a safe, confident future
 HM Government - Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation
 Wood Report – Review of the role and functions of local safeguarding children boards
 ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Report Phase 5

9. Report sign off.

Finance Officer	N/A
Monitoring Officer/Legal	N/A
Human Resources	N/A
Procurement	N/A
I.T.	N/A
Executive Director of Education	Cath McEvoy
Portfolio Holder(s)	Wayne Daley

Report Author: **Brian Smeaton – Children's Improvement & Development Manager**
 (01670) 623583 brian.smeaton@northumberland.gov.uk