



**Children and Families
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
25 March 2010**

**Report from the Director of
Children and Families**

Wards Affected:
ALL

Locality Service progress January 2009/10

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report shows the level of progress made by the newly established Locality Service between January 2009 and January 2010 in delivering the strategic priorities of the Children's Trust Board and National Performance Indicators.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are requested to note progress in performance and consider areas for further improvement

3.0 Background

- 3.1 This report is produced by the Head of the Locality Service and outlines the way in which front line Social Work services are delivered to Brent's children and families and the progress to date.
- 3.2 Children's Social Care Services re-organised in January 2009, creating a locality service to provide services to children who are in need (or in need of protection) but who remain at home and a care planning/children in care service to work with looked after children. Brent's Locality Social Care Service was designed to meet Brent Children's Trust Board's aspirations for integrated locality based services, as well as government initiatives and new legislation underpinned by the ECM (Every Child Matters) agenda.
- 3.3 The Locality Service delivers services to children and families from five locality teams across Brent, bringing a range of services together to respond to families with early signs of difficulties, and to provide high quality support

and intervention for those families with longer term needs. The 5 teams work with families with the most complex needs, including those needing statutory interventions. These children, young people and their families have needs within Level 3 of the Brent Levels of Need indicators, which were agreed by all agencies working with children and families in April 2008.

- 3.4 Each social care team provides a prompt response to referrals which meet this level of need, within its particular locality, working together with other agencies to improve outcomes for the child and family. The response is provided, as far as possible, on a 'one allocation' basis, with the Social Worker responding to the referral continuing to work with the family to address their problems. The work encompasses the work of the former Referral and Assessment teams, and some of the work of the Children in Need teams, and includes initial and core assessments, child protection investigations and plans, and other complex children in need work. Social Workers within the localities initiate care proceedings if other alternatives are not appropriate.
- 3.5 The main challenge the service has faced in its first year was an initial lack of qualified permanent social work staff and Managers in the service. When the service began there were extremely high levels of agency staff and vacant posts. Only 45% of Social Workers and Managers were permanent. This was at a time when a large number of children and families were transferring into the service. A number of recruitment campaigns have taken place and the management team took the decision to employ a large number of newly qualified Social Workers, supported by additional learning and development staff and Advanced Social Work Practitioners in order that we could fill posts. Additional financial incentives were offered in the form of a 'golden hello' and this coupled with the additional support on offer proved to be extremely popular. Currently 83% of locality Social Workers and Managers are permanent. The recruitment of permanent staff and Managers has enabled the service to begin to offer continuity for families and continue to improve the overall standard of service delivery as demonstrated below in section 5 and as reported by the no notice inspection completed by Ofsted in November 2009.
- 3.6 Some of the challenges for 2010/11 are to build upon existing relationships with partner agencies as well as to co-locate with Brent's Early Intervention Teams from 1 April 2010. The teams have already formed stronger working relationships within their localities and we plan to enhance this in 2010 by hosting locality network meetings to further strengthen these partnerships. Financial pressures will continue to have an impact on the service and the Locality Service is leading on a transformation project to reduce expenditure on families with no recourse to public funds and a service review of the Crisis Intervention & Support Team.

4.0 Performance Alerts

- 4.1 At the end of December 2009 there were 222 Children subject to a Child Protection Plan (formerly known as the Child Protection Register), against 174

the previous year. Prior to 2009 the numbers had never been above 195 which was in September 2002

- There has been a month on month increase in the numbers of children being the subject of a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time (National Indicator 65) since 1 April 2009. This rise equates to 18.3% (40 children in number from 21 families). This is a significant increase on the 2008/9 figure of 8.8% with the national indicator at 9% and statistical neighbour at 10.4%.

Our target for children becoming subject to a Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time was 9% of the total number. The Department for Children Schools & Families indicates that good child protection practice would mean an optimum of 10% of children who were made subject to a Child Protection Plan throughout any given year had also been subject to a plan in the past, therefore our performance in this area needs scrutiny. The Head of the Locality Service and Head of Safeguarding are planning an audit of these children to establish key indicators and lessons which are apparent from social work practice and that of other agencies. **(High risk)**

However it is evident that children subject to Child Protection Plans are being actively worked with, for example between October and December 2009 68 children from 40 families became subject to Child Protection Plans and 58 children from 37 families ceased to have Child Protection Plans.

- 4.2 Child Protection Review case Conferences (National Indicator 67) held on time throughout the year has been excellent with 100% of reviews taking place in time. This demonstrates an improvement from March 2009 when our overall year end performance was 99.3% against a target of 100%. **(Low risk)**
- 4.3 The numbers of repeat referrals to Social Care have remained high. At the end of 08/09 repeat referrals to Social Care stood at 26.50%. The January 10 position stands at 26.00 % against a target of 20%. This figure is 1.7% higher than the national average last year. **(High risk)**
- The impact of the death of baby Peter and subsequent national media coverage has led to an overall increase in referrals/re-referrals and this pattern is mirrored across the country and particularly in London. It is worth noting that further analysis is being undertaken to establish if systems issues resulting from the integrated children's system could have resulted in records being recorded as re-referrals when in fact they were merely follow up contacts on existing open cases.
- 4.4 The end year figures for 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010) based on the first 11 months figures), will demonstrate that the service will have received 10,853 contacts (this is a 17.6 % increase on 2008/2009) these contacts have led to 3,624 child referrals (this is a 19% increase on 2008/2009). Of those referrals received, 897 led to a s47 investigation. (Representing a 7.3% increase over the year). At the same time there has been a 64% increase in applications for legal proceedings with 54 applications being made or in the process of being made at the present time.

4.5 There has been an improvement in the number of initial assessments completed in 7 working days (National Indicator 59). In 2008/9 75% of assessments were completed within time. From 1 April 2009 to end January 2010 this has been increased to 80% against our target of 75%. This is against a national indicator of 78% and our statistical neighbours who average 79.4%. **(Low risk)**

4.6 There has been a significant improvement in the performance relating to the completion of core assessments within 35 working days (National Indicator 60). Between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2009 70% of core assessments were completed within timescale and from the 1 April 2009 to end January 2010 the percentage has increased to 83%, which exceeds our own target of 80%. **(Low risk)**

- This is above the national indicator of 70% and our statistical neighbours who achieve on average 81.7%. This improvement and that of initial assessments in point 5 above can be directly related to the new structure in that work is not transferred to a new Social Worker or Manager during the assessment period which provides for ongoing continuity of worker and therefore time is not lost in engaging and working with the child/family.

4.7 There has been a significant improvement in the number of initial child protection conferences held within 15 working days. Between 1 April 2008 and the 31 March 2009 we achieved 34% of conferences within timescale and the percentage from 1 April 2009 to end January 2010 is currently 77%. **(Low risk)**

- The national average for this indicator is 66%.

NI No.	Indicator	Outturn 08/09	Outturn at Jan 2010	Statistical Neighbours	Risks
NI 59	Percentage of initial assessments completed within 7 working days of referral.	78%	81%	79.4%	Low
NI 60	Timing of Core Assessments	70%	83%	81.7%	Low
NI 65	Children becoming the subject of Child Protection Plan for a second or subsequent time	8.8%	18.3%	9%	High
NI 67	Reviews of Child Protection Cases	99%	100%	99%	Low
NI 68	Percentage of referrals of children in need that led to initial assessments.	53%	50%	59.4%	Low
KIGS CH143	Percentage of referrals that are repeat referrals	27%	26%	24.6%	High
	Number of initial CP conferences held within 15 working days of start of Section 47	34%	77%	66%	Low

5.0 Background Papers

None

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