



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMISSION 10 March 2009

Report of the Corporate Director for Children and Young People

Performance Report NI 59 and NI 60

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Children and Young People Commission note the contents of the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 Following the Performance Surgery on 22/12/08, it was agreed that this area of performance, and the associated issues, should be considered by the Children and Young People's Commission.
- 2.2 The implementation of a new social care electronic record system (in line with a national programme) to meet government requirements has significantly affected the ability of social care staff to complete assessments to timescale. The result has been deterioration in the Council's performance on indicators NI 59 (initial assessments) and NI 60 (core or detailed assessments). This new electronic system is called the Integrated Children's System (ICS).
- 2.3 The performance of both indicators in Quarter 3 has shown a slight deterioration on the position for the last quarter. Given the nature of the issues impacting on performance which are set out in the report, this was to be expected. The Children and Young People's Department has identified a number of key actions in order to improve performance. Insufficient time has elapsed for these to take effect in time for an improvement to be achieved in Quarter 3. The performance indicators continue to be very closely monitored and it is anticipated that there will be a small improvement in the completion of initial assessments to timescale in Quarter 4. It is not anticipated that there will be improvements in the number of core assessments to timescale in the final quarter.
- 2.4 Attached to the report is the action plan that was developed in line with a recommendation from the Performance Surgery. The action plan also contains comments on progress.

**For more information
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Background papers:

Performance Report 22/12/08
Action Plan NI59 NI60

List of appendices:

Implications Appendix 1
Performance Report Appendix 2
Action Plan Appendix 3

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. The Children and Young People's Department has secured funding from the Extended Services Grant to fund 2.5 additional social care workers in the reception services. This will support the service to meet a key requirements of the extended services core offer which is swift and easy access to services. The department has also sought to address the additional demand on social care worker time that have resulted from the implementation of ICS by identifying within the budget for 2009/10 funding for an additional half time worker per team.

Legal

2. The Local Authority is required to undertake assessments within prescribed timescales and has a duty to respond and assess in situations of child protection and children in need.

Personnel

3. The children's social care workforce is under significant pressure arising from the pressures described in the report. The initial response service and locality teams are significantly affected. The workforce is committed to providing a quality service and is concerned about not meeting assessment timescale requirements. Performance on timescales was very good prior to the introduction of the national system. There is a danger that both sickness and staff turnover rates will be affected. Managers within the service are working to both support staff and improve performance locally.

Equalities impact

4. Service responses do have to be prioritised to ensure that children at risk of significant harm and are in need of protection receive a prompt service. This can mean a delay in meeting requests for services to meet lower level needs.

Corporate Priorities

5. Safeguarding is a key element of assessments of the council and the lower performance does constitute a risk in this area.

PERFORMANCE SURGERY – NI 59 and NI 60**DECEMBER 2008****PART A – OVERVIEW**

Title of Indicator: NI 59 – Initial assessments for children’s social care carried out within 7 days of referral

NI 60 – Core assessments for children’s social care that were carried out within 35 working days of commencement

Indicator definition: See Annex A

Portfolio: Children & Young People

Scrutiny Commission: Children & Young People

Accountable Officer: Maureen Darbon

Assistant Director: Rachel Dickinson

1. How is the indicator underperforming?

See Annex B - Underperformance checklist.

PART B – ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PERFORMANCE (To be completed by Accountable Officer)

2. Are the performance results ‘true’ results?

NI 59

The performance indicator is in the context of a very busy front-line service, dealing with all new referrals to social care, many of which will be related to concerns about children requiring a speedy response in circumstances which can be hostile and challenging for staff, and which can require complex and difficult decisions to be made.

The performance information is sufficiently robust to be taken as an accurate indicator of performance for initial assessments. There are some issues in respect of data inputting which are linked to the introduction of the Integrated Children's System, which is highlighted below.

NI 60

An over ambitious target was set this year of 88% as the problems associated with in putting core assessments on ICS were not anticipated. The performance at the end of period 2 was 81.8% which still put the authority in the "very good" band but I would anticipate that this will continue to decline slowly over the rest of the year.

The number of Core Assessments being undertaken has fallen this year because the criteria for actioning them was changed in line with other local authorities as Derby was completing far more than other authorities in the country.

3. What factors contribute to performance?

The major factor that has impacted on performance for both indicators has undoubtedly been the introduction of the Integrated Children's System (ICS). This is an electronic recording system, introduced nationally, which aims to standardise and improve social care practice and performance. There are detailed government requirements of the system and dates for its implementation, which if not met, would have led to financial penalties for the authority. Other Local Authorities are also reporting the same problem with ICS.

NI 59

The reception teams were the first part of social care to implement ICS. At the point at which ICS was implemented in October 2006, the performance on initial assessments (NI 59) was at 76% and performance subsequently dropped to the level indicated in Annex B.

There are a number of aspects to this implementation, but significantly the extra time required for social workers to input into the system for initial assessments has been measured at 55.8 hours per week across the two teams and has required an extra 15 hours of management time per week.

Further to this, the Child Protection element of the system has been implemented from 1/10/08 and the time required to collate the report for an initial child protection conference is significantly greater than previously with reports taking 2 to 3 days to complete.

There have also been significant system and network issues which have impacted on the speed and functioning of ICS.

The resource available for the training and support of staff has also been limited.

The implications for the reduction in performance has been that prioritisation has to take place in terms of response and that in situations where there is a lower level of risk or need, the response may not have been as prompt as previously. Further to this, information on lower levels of need may not be as promptly entered onto the system, which can lead to delays in feedback and response to service users and other agencies.

In terms of systems and information, taking into account the inputting issues, performance reports are generally forwarded promptly and in a helpful format to lead officers and front-line managers.

The speed and effectiveness of the council network that if improved would be of assistance to front-line staff.

NI 60

The introduction of the Core Assessment process on ICS in May, 2008 has increased the amount of time it takes to produce a core assessment by approximately four times for newly trained staff. So a social care worker with very good word processing skills would have been able to word process a typical core assessment on a family with two children easily in a day and it is now taking them up to four days. This is because the system demands the author to go into over 500 different screens for each child, is slow and sometimes parts of the assessment are deleted and have to be inputted again. The final reports are between 30 and 50 A4 pages in length.

A social care worker with poor word processing skills before core assessments were completed on ICS would have hand written their assessment and given it to a clerk to word process for them. It is not possible for clerks to word process reports for social care workers on the ICS system because of the number of questions it asks the author and the number of different screens it goes into. The author of the report would have to be sitting next to the clerk and dictating as they inputted. This would not save time.

Obviously, as social care workers become more familiar with the system their speed in completing the assessments does improve to a certain extent however, a lot of the slowness is inherent in the system itself.

4. What is causing the indicators to under perform?

NI 59

Further to the issues identified in the previous section, the levels of staffing in the service have reduced following previous service cuts and across the two teams currently stand at 9.5 social workers, 2 FTE Community Care Workers, and 2 managers. The workers will spend an average 2 or 3 days per week on duty and will be required to complete all work and initial assessments that they have picked up from duty.

Given the impact of ICS, any staffing vacancies and sickness have an impact and in this year, there has been 2 months where there has been one manager for the two teams and there has been sickness which again will impact on the capacity and ability to meet the targets.

The complexity of the work and the requirements on social care have undoubtedly increased. There are also increased pressures and anxieties at the current time following the tragedy of Baby P in Haringey which have had a significant impact on social care workers, both in terms of the media portrayal of social work and with increased referrals and pressure from other agencies.

The completion of assessments to timescales is affected by other parties and agencies in that if there are delays in their actions or responses, this will affect completion to timescale.

In terms of resources and capacity issues, there is a clear and identified need for more operational staff, as identified by the increased time requirements of ICS.

There are also training and development issues in terms of staff, their ability to utilise the electronic system and to focus on the practice issues arising out of it.

In terms of reviewing the target, this was set below pre-ICS performance levels, but also aiming to improve on current performance which has remained static. It would seem appropriate to review the target for this year.

NI 60

In addition there are currently significant numbers of posts not filled in the city for a variety of reasons e.g. vacancies and long term sickness. Social Care Workers in Derby have on average more children allocated to them compared to our near neighbours.

5. What actions could be taken to improve performance?

NI 59

A range of methods have been attempted to improve the recording and performance issues in the reception services including:

- ICS system modifications identified by staff and implemented by information section where possible. Wider system modifications reported to Anite
- System version upgrades by Anite, the system provider
- Re-training of staff, although ongoing support options are limited by ICS project resource limitations
- Reviewing and modifying business processes in reception
- Reviewing recording performance
- Duty system modifications to try and free staff to have time to clear backlog, including targeting staff with the greatest back log to have a clear week from duty
- Regular management information reports on overall and individual performance. It does remain the case that there are significant differences in individual performance and between the teams.
- Use of the above information to set individual targets for workers
- Use of admin staff to input information to the system where possible
- Meeting with Information Section staff to identify and rectify recording output anomalies
- Provision of headphones for staff as requested

Further to the above, a specific training and development day for reception staff focussing on initial assessments to timescales has been scheduled for 19th December.

Analysis has been undertaken of the contacts and referrals coming into reception and one significant area is the number of domestic violence referrals received from the police, many of which do not immediately require a social care visit, but does take significant time to process. Liaison is taking place with the police through the local safeguarding board to consider more effective ways of responding to domestic

violence and ensuring greater clarity and definition for those that do require a referral to social care.

There is no capacity in other areas of social work to release staff time to reception as those other areas are also under significant pressure.

Whilst many of the actions above are ongoing, the lack of adequate operational resource within the social care service, particularly in light of ICS and current operational pressures is the major factor influencing the performance on initial assessments.

NI 60

Unfortunately, the use of the ICS system is centrally driven by the Department for Children, Schools and Families so it is not possible to abandon its usage. As stated above familiarity with the system will improve performance but as staff are not regularly undertaking the assessments, this will take some time. I would anticipate that performance will drop further in periods three and four as more social care workers have received training and started to undertake Core Assessments on ICS.

More social care staff in post would assist with the performance of Core Assessments when they are trained and familiar with the system.

PART C – RESULTS OF PERFORMANCE SURGERY (For completion following the surgery)

6. What were the main causes of underperformance discussed?

1) The main factor in relation to performance of both NI 59 and 60 is the implementation of the Integrated Children's System:

- a) Data input - performance and the quality of information have decreased since the system has been in operation. Officers are reviewing cases within the required timescales but delays arise at the data input stage - the time it takes to input the information into the system means that not all cases show as being completed on time.
- b) System rollout - the expansion of the ICS to cover more work areas means that more staff require training and support on how to use the system. Staff new to the system are usually slower at inputting than those who have used the system for longer.
- c) System upgrades – there are issues with the performance and functionality/user-friendliness of the system. These are being addressed through system upgrades however these take time.

2) Volume of work – the complexity and volume of work has increased and this is further exacerbated by the recent child protection cases highlighted in the news nationally.

3) Resources - linked to point two, there is a lack of operational resource and this coupled with the fact that frontline caseloads are the highest that they have been for the last five years results in social care workers in Derby having higher numbers of children allocated to them compared to our geographical neighbours.

4) Targets - the targets were set before the full implementation of the ICS and would otherwise have been realistic.

7. What actions were agreed to improve performance? Has an action plan been prepared?

1) Targets are to be reviewed during the target setting process planned for March and April 2009.

2) Processes are to be reviewed – the use of administrative staff to support the input of information into the ICS is to be considered, particularly in relation to copying information stored in one sibling's record to another sibling's record if the notes are relevant to both children.

8. What are the resource implications of these actions?

None.

9. What are the timescales?

Target setting – March to April 2009.

Processes – A further action plan will be developed by end of January 2009. Actions already identified within the report will continue.

10. When will progress be reported to Scrutiny?

Quarter three progress against NIs 59 and 60 will be reported to Scrutiny on 10 March 2009.

Audit Commission Definitions

NI 59: Percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out within 7 working days of referral

Is data provided by the LA or a local partner?	Y	Is this an existing indicator?	Y
Rationale	This process indicator is included as a proxy as robust data is not available for outcomes of improved child safety. Initial assessments are an important indicator of how quickly services can respond when a child is thought to be at risk of serious harm. As the assessments involve a range of local agencies, this indicator would also show how well multi-agency working arrangements are established in local authority areas.		
Definition	<p>The number of initial assessments completed in the period between 1 April and 31 March, within seven working days of referral, as a percentage of the number of initial assessments completed in the period between 1 April and 31 March.</p> <p>A <i>referral</i> is defined as a request for services to be provided. The response may include no action, but that in itself is a decision, and should be made promptly and recorded</p> <p>An 'initial assessment' is defined as a brief assessment of any child who has been referred to social services with a request that services be provided. An initial assessment is deemed to have started either at the point of referral to a social services department, or when new information on an open case indicates that an initial assessment should be repeated. Initial assessments may lead to three types of outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. no further action; ii. the immediate provision of services; iii. a more detailed type of assessment (known as a 'core assessment') being carried out. This may be carried out even where there is immediate provision of services. <p>The expected timescale for the completion of an initial assessment is a maximum of 7 working days from the start of a referral.</p> <p>The indicator is based on data collected through CPR3 (Child Protection and Referrals – England item 2, line 1 (initial assessments completed within 7 working days of referral) and line 2 (other initial assessments completed in the year)</p> <p>The worked example for England shown below uses actual data derived from the CPR3 return in 2006/07. Refer to the equivalent cells for other years.</p>		

NI 59: Percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out within 7 working days of referral (*continued*)

Formula	$\left(\frac{x}{y}\right) * 100$ <p>Where:</p> <p>x = The number of initial assessments completed, in the period between 1 April and 31 March, within seven working days of referral. (Source – CPR3, Part A – Item 2, line 1 Initial assessments completed in 7 days)</p> <p>y = The overall of initial assessments completed in the period between 1 April and 31 March. (Source – CPR3, Part A – Initial assessments, Item 2, line 1 'Initial assessments completed in 7 days' + line 2 'Other initial assessments')</p>		
Worked example	<p>If in the year to 31 March 2007, 305,000 initial assessments are undertaken, of which 208,700 are completed within 7 days of the referral, then</p> <p>$(208,700/305,000) * 100 = 68.0\%$.</p>	Good performance	Good performance is typified by higher percentages.
Collection interval	Annual for year to 31 March	Data Source	CPR3 statutory return from local authorities to the DCSF
Return Format	Percentage	Decimal Places	One
Reporting organisation	DCSF publish national and LA level data		
Spatial level	Single tier and county council		
Further Guidance	<p>Statutory guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children available at www.ecm.gov.uk/socialcare/safeguarding</p> <p>Data collection guidance for CPR3 available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/datastats1/guidelines/children/returns.shtml</p> <p>This is the same calculation as JAR/APA indicator 2020SC.</p>		

NI 60: Percentage of core assessments for children's social care that were carried out within 35 working days of their commencement

Is data provided by the LA or a local partner?	Y	Is this an existing indicator?	Y
Rationale	<p>The indicator measures the percentage of core assessments which were completed within 35 working days. Core assessments are in-depth assessments of a child, or children, and their family, as defined in the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families. They are also the means by which section 47 (child protection) enquiries are undertaken following a strategy discussion.</p> <p>The Assessment Framework specifies that core assessments should be completed within 35 working days. It is important that local authorities should investigate and address concerns in a timely and efficient way, and that those in receipt of an assessment have a clear idea of how quickly this should be completed. Successful meeting of the timescales can also indicate effective joint working where multi-agency assessment is required.</p>		
Definition	<p>The percentage of core assessments that were completed within 35 working days of their commencement.</p> <p>A 'core assessment' is defined as an in-depth assessment which addresses the central or most important aspects of the child's needs. It is required to be carried out after a decision is taken to undertake a s47 enquiry. This is an enquiry carried out under s47 of the Children Act 1989, which sets out the local authority's duty to investigate where it suspects a child in the area may be suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. A core assessment may also be undertaken under s17 of the Children Act 1989.</p> <p>A 'core assessment' is deemed to have commenced at the point at which the initial assessment ended, or strategy discussion decided to initiate enquiries under s47 of the Children Act 1989, or where new information on an open case indicates that a core assessment should be undertaken. The indicator is measured in calendar days using a non-inclusive method i.e. it does not count both the start and the finish date. Hence, the start date for the core assessment is classified as day '0'.</p> <p>The expected timescale for the completion of a core assessment is a maximum of 35 working days, recognising that where specialist assessments are required they may not take place within this timescale.</p> <p>The core assessment is normally regarded as complete when the team manager has deemed the assessment findings complete enough to authorise a formal core assessment record.</p> <p>This indicator is based on information collected through CPR3 (Child Protection and Referrals (England)) – Item 3, line 1 (core assessments completed within 35 days of initial assessment) and line 2 (other core assessments completed in the year). The references relate to the CPR3 return in 2006/07. Refer to the equivalent cells for other years.</p>		

Formula	<p>The percentage of core assessments that were completed within 35 working days of their commencement is calculated as follows:</p> $\left(\frac{x}{y}\right) * 100$ <p>Where:</p> <p>x = of the number of core assessments in the denominator, the number that had been completed within 35 working days of their commencement. Source: CPR3 Part A Item 3, line 1</p> <p>y = the total number of core assessments completed of children receiving core assessments in the year. Source: CPR3 Part A Item 3, line 1 plus line 2</p>		
Worked example	<p>If 2500 core assessments are completed in the year, of which 2200 are completed within 35 working days of their commencement, then</p> $\left(\frac{2200}{2500}\right) * 100 = 88\%$	Good performance	<p>High. The bandings for 2006-07 described performance as:</p> <p>0 < 60 Investigate Urgently, 60 < 70 Ask questions about performance 70 < 75 Satisfactory 75 < 80 Good 80 < 100 Very Good</p>
Collection interval	Annual for year to 31 March	Data Source	CPR3 statutory return from local authorities to the DCSF. DCSF publish national and LA level data.
Return Format	Percentage	Decimal Places	One
Reporting organisation	DCSF based on data reported by local authorities.		
Spatial level	Single tier and county council		
Further Guidance	<p>Statutory guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children available at www.ecm.gov.uk/socialcare/safeguarding</p> <p>Data collection guidance for CPR3 available at www.dcsf.gov.uk/datastats1/guidelines/children/returns.shtml</p> <p>Indicator replaces current PI PAF CF/C64 (2007/08)</p>		

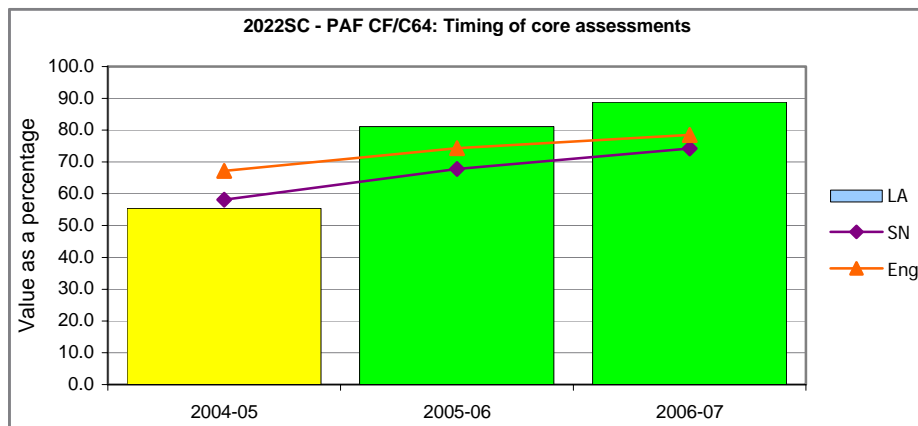
Underperformance Checklist

Name of Indicator: NI 59 and 60

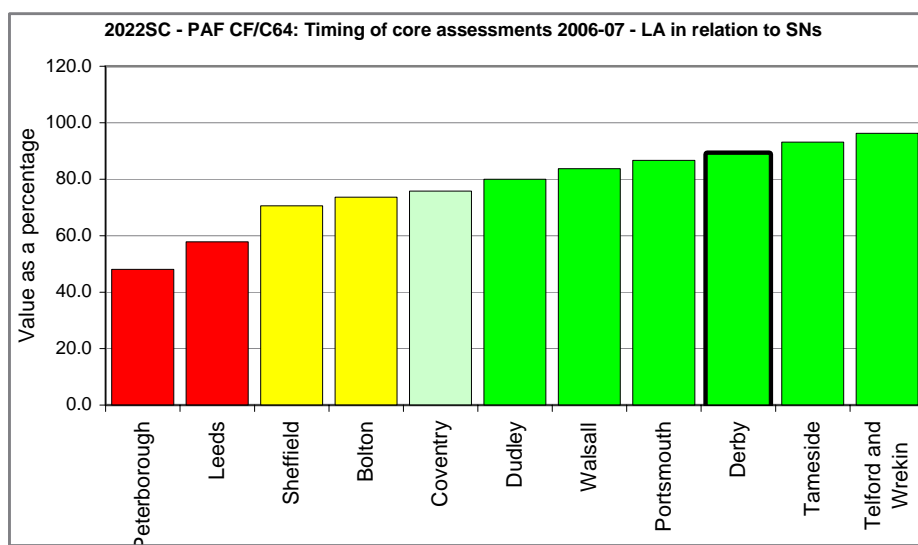
Criteria	Evaluation		Comments
	Yes	No	
<p>Is the indicator failing to meet target?</p> <p>Is the indicator 'red' or 'amber'</p>	Yes		<p>NI 59 – In quarter two performance was 62.8% compared to the target of 70.0%. The current year end forecast is 64.4% which also falls below the target. The indicator is therefore classified as 'red'.</p> <p>NI 60 - In quarter two performance was 81.8% compared to the target of 88.0%. The current year end forecast is 86.2% which also falls below the target. The indicator is therefore classified as 'red'.</p>
<p>Was the target the unrealistic?</p> <p>Was the target stretching enough or has the target been missed by a significant amount?</p>	No		<p>NI 59 – the target of 70% for this indicator is below the performance of recent years but has been identified as a priority indicator in the CYPP:</p> <p>2005/06 – 73.0% 2006/07 – 62.8% 2007/08 – 61.1%</p> <p>NI 60 – the target of 88% looks realistic in comparison to past year's performance:</p> <p>2005/06 – 81.1% 2006/07 – 88.8% 2007/08 – 90.0%</p>
<p>Is the direction of travel deteriorating?</p>	Yes		<p>NI 59 - At 62.8%, Q2 performance did deteriorate from Q1 (66.5%).</p> <p>NI 60 – At 81.8% Q2 performance has deteriorated from Q1 (93.0%).</p>
<p>Do we compare poorly with other authorities?</p> <p>Are we in the bottom or lower median quartile compared to all unitary authorities?</p>	No		<p>NI 59 - There is no comparative information available.</p> <p>NI 60 – We perform well against peers as shown overleaf. In 2006/07 we achieved 3rd position out of 11 group authorities.</p>

Criteria	Evaluation		Comments
	Yes	No	
Has our position compared to our peers declined over the past 12 months?	N/A		Unclear as we do not have the latest 2007/08 comparative data.
Is the performance of the indicator moving in a different direction to the national trend? Only tick 'yes' if movement of the indicator is negative.	No		Performance has improved in line with / slightly above national trends.
Does the indicator support a corporate priority?	Yes		Both indicators support the Priority outcome 6.1 – Responding quickly and efficiently to local needs of children, young people and parents/carers.
Is this indicator included in our Local Area Agreement or assessed as part of CAA?	No		Neither indicator is included in our LAA but will be important for CAA as they focus on vulnerable children. NI 59 is included in the Children & Young Peoples Plan.
Has the indicator been previously highlighted as underperforming in the last 12 months?	N/A		Previously local indicators.

NI 60 - Additional comparative information



View LA in relation to SNs for 2006-07



Appendix 3

Action	Lead	Date	Status	Comment
Impact of ICS notified to DCSF nationally	AF EM AF/RD HOS	February 09	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter from regional DCS's to DCSF Ongoing feedback through ICS project GOEM notified Local feedback to Govt taskforce arising from Baby P
Review available operational resource in reception service.	GR/RD	February 09	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget identified for 3 temp social work posts Recruitment initiated
ICS operational impact reflected in budget planning.	AF	March 09	Completed	
Senior management meeting reception service staff.	AF/RD	February 09	Completed	
Reviewing system inputting requirements	GR	January 09	Partially completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial guidance given to staff Further review planned 2/3/09
Reviewing use of admin staff to support system inputting	EM/GR	February 09	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working group established through ICS project Local review for reception service 2/3/09

Restructuring of duty rota	SJ/BP	January 09	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts to complete successfully hampered by staff sickness
Monitoring and reviewing of social work caseloads.	GR	Ongoing	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monitoring of caseloads ongoing • Particular focus on Reception caseloads: monthly monitoring
Benchmarking with other local authorities	GR	January 09	Partially completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison with statistical neighbour authorities using Anite ICS system: 2 LA's with higher completion rates have not yet implemented ICS
Reception team development day	BP/SJ	December 09	Not completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original date cancelled due to operational pressures • Date set April 3/4/09
Liaison with partner agencies re appropriate content of referrals to social care, particularly in light of Baby P	GR	Ongoing	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing from DCS about pressures on social care arising from Baby P • Issue raised with Safeguarding Board • Individual agency issues taken up via local management
Guidance to be issued to staff re support available	GR	February 09	Not completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be completed following review meetings planned for 2/3/09

Continuation of current existing actions, including action plans	GR	Ongoing	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This includes focus on development plans and actions for individual staff
Data review	CN	January 09	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A data review and tidy exercise has been completed. This has led to slight improvements in overall performance figures