

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**Report**

Committee/Panel:	Children and Families Advisory Panel
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Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of performance against key indicators for safeguarding and children in care, as at April 2010.
- 1.2. Improvements have been seen in some previously poorer performing indicators during 2009/10, including placement stability, repeat child protection plans and attainment for children in care. However, increased demand for services has contributed to a fall in the timeliness of assessments.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. The National Indicator Set (introduced in 2008/09) are the key measures determined by central Government to monitor the performance of local authorities in delivering services. There are 70 National Indicators (NIs) to measure outcomes for children and young people, 18 of which specifically relate to safeguarding and children in care.
- 2.2. Regular monitoring of performance against these NIs is well established through the Children's Services Department Integrated Planning and Performance Framework. This includes a monthly scorecard and analysis of performance at Performance Action Groups.
- 2.3. This report is based on monitoring data for the 12 months to the end of March 2010. Provisional 2009/10 data for social care indicators will be available in May/June 2010.

3. Increase in social care activity

- 3.1. There has been a significant increase in children's social care activity nationally and locally, prior to and since the Baby P case was brought to public attention in October 2008. Increases in activity bring particular practice and resource pressures to the Children and Families branch. It

is also important to note that increases in the number of children in care (which is linked to the number of children in need of protection) brings with it significant additional financial pressures.

- 3.2. While this is being described nationally as the 'Baby P effect', most informed commentators identify three dimensions to the cause of the increase, not least since it began before the Baby P case reached public attention:
 - undoubtedly the case has raised awareness and made some referrers/agencies more risk-averse (although the consensus is that the cases do meet the criteria for referral);
 - there is a view that the recession has put more financial pressure on poorer families, which has an impact on child neglect and abuse;
 - there is also a strong argument that improvements in communication, systems and services (particularly access to Sure Start Children's Centres) following the Children Act 2004, has revealed cases that have always been at risk but never notified.
- 3.3. All of which imply that the increase is a good thing for the children concerned, as they are being protected from harm and their welfare promoted.
- 3.4. The performance data in this report reflects these national pressures, which are particularly evident in some of the measures for timeliness of assessments. However, in reflection of this, the Government have recently changed the timeliness target for initial assessments from seven working days to 10 working days (*Working Together to Safeguard Children*, 2010).

4. Performance overview

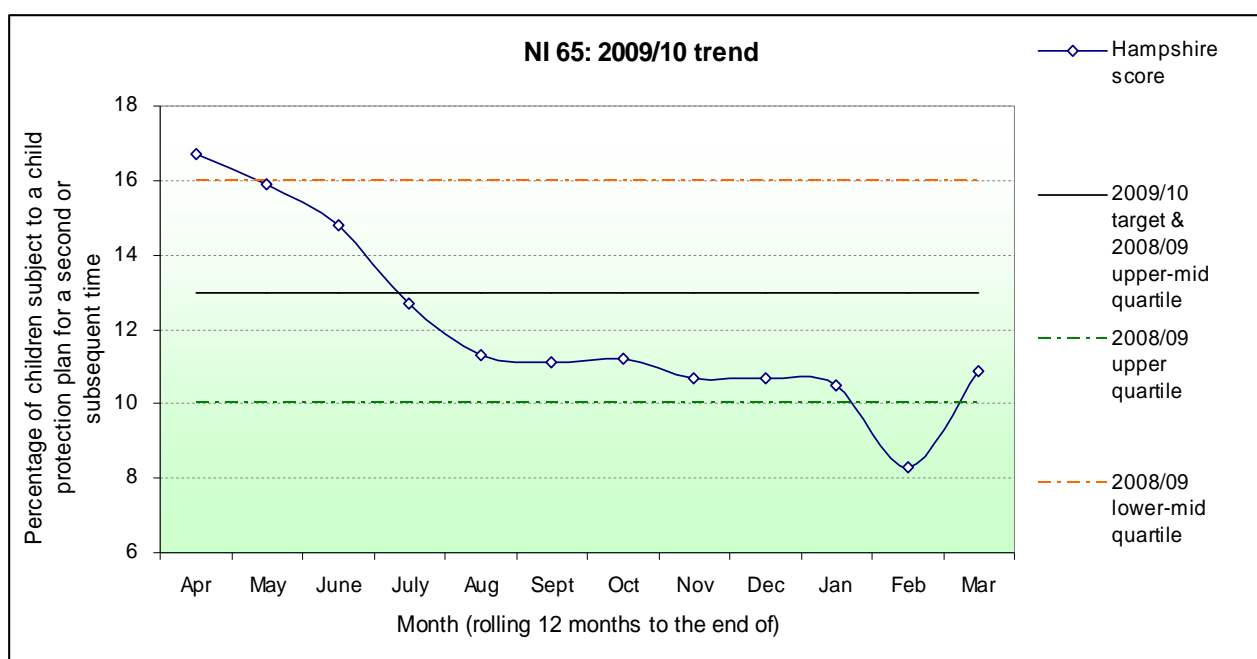
- 4.1. Based on internal monitoring data for the 12 months to the end of March 2010, 39% of NIs for safeguarding and children in care have improved from the 2008/09 published figures; 56% have worsened; and 5% are new (therefore trend data is unavailable). The improvement trend has slowed in comparison to the end of 2008/09, when 72% of these indicators showed improvement from 2007/08.
- 4.2. Targets for 2009/10 were established for 17 out of 18 NIs for safeguarding and children in care. Monitoring data indicates the following performance against targets:
 - 23% of targets have been achieved to date;
 - 67% are at risk of not being achieved;
 - 5% have not been achieved to date;
 - 5% have no target established.
- 4.3. It should be noted that six of these targets were established as part of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) 2008-11 and as such, are extremely challenging. In 2008/09, none of these six LAA targets were achieved. In 2009/10, one has been achieved to date. Activities to address areas for improvement are outlined in sections 4 and 5 of this report.

- 4.4. The most significant reason for this 'slow down' in performance during 2009/10, has been the continued increase in demand for services. The number of children in care rose by 4% between October 2008 and September 2009, whilst the number of children subject to child protection plans increased by 37% during the same period.

5. Key improvements in 2009/10

- 5.1. There has been significant improvement in the proportion of children who are subject to a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time (NI 65), which has fallen to 10.9% for the 12 months to the end of March 2010. This indicates that the 2009/10 LAA target of 13% has been achieved. In addition, Hampshire performance is expected to be in line with the England average, which was 10.7% in 2008/09. The percentage of repeat child protection plans has fallen consistently throughout the year, as shown in the below chart:

Chart 1: NI 65 trend 2009/10

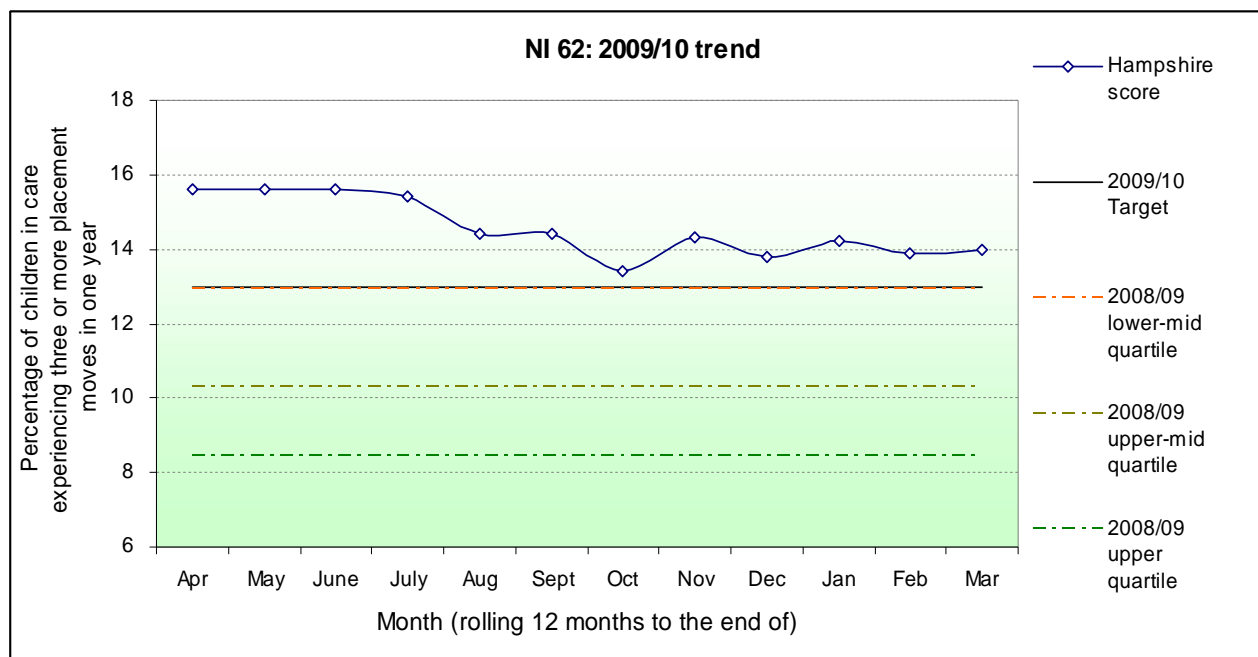


- 5.2. However, some of this improved performance is likely to be as a result of the increase in the number of child protection plans over the last two years; and an increasing proportion of plans lasting two years or more (measured by NI 64). The percentage of child protection plans lasting two years or more rose from 5% in 2008/09 to 7.1% for the 12 months to the end of March 2010.
- 5.3. The Independent Reviewing Service has reported that the child protection planning process has improved over the last year. In addition, any poor progress against plans is raised on a case by case basis by Independent Reviewing Officers following the Child Protection Conference.
- 5.4. Improvement has been evidenced in the proportion of referrals going on to initial assessment (NI 68). This has remained fairly steady throughout the year, showing consistency in the referrals passed through Hantsdirect to referral and assessment teams. Performance is at 51.3% for the 12

months to the end of March 2010, exceeding the 2009/10 target (55%) and remaining better than the England average (good performance is deemed to be between 50% and 55%).

- 5.5. The proportion of children in care experiencing three or more placement moves in one year (NI 62) has steadily improved during 2009/10, as shown in the chart below. However, performance for the 12 months to the end of March 2010 is 14%, indicating that the LAA target for 2009/10 has not been achieved (13%).

Chart 2: NI 62 trend 2009/10



- 5.6. Targeted work to improve placement stability continues, with activities including:
- recruitment of additional foster carers to meet rising numbers of children in care and the needs of particular groups, including teenagers;
 - increasing access to specialist training and support for foster carers;
 - improving the electronic records management system and the quality of care planning;
 - implementing a new Quality Improvement Framework and case file audit procedure, including annual self-assessment, regular monitoring of quality through local performance action groups, and a cycle of case file auditing;
 - regular monitoring of caseloads through audit and Area Performance Action Groups/Children and Families Management Team.
- 5.7. Significant improvements have been demonstrated in the attainment of children in care, particularly at Key Stage 2. Provisional figures for 2008/09 show the best results to date, despite not achieving the challenging LAA targets. A comparison between 2007/08 and 2008/09 results and the England average is shown in the below table (note: England average for 2008/09 is not yet published):

National Indicator	Hampshire 2007/08	England average 2007/08	Hampshire 2008/09	Target 2008/09
NI 99: children in care achieving level 4 in English at Key Stage 2	35%	46%	47.6%	59%
NI 100: children in care achieving level 4 in maths at Key Stage 2	31%	44%	50%	61%
NI 101: children in care achieving five or more GCSEs grade A*-C, including English and maths	4.9%	Not published	7.6%	12.3%

- 5.8. Plans are in place to build upon these improvements and address continuing issues of poor school attendance for children in care (not measured by an NI). Activities include:
- implementing the second phase of the project to increase regular access to data on outcomes for children in care;
 - establishing an internal solution for monitoring attendance of children in care, in order to provide same day data for action by Education Welfare Officers;
 - developing guidance and protocols (using a retrospective case study approach) to ensure that children in care attend school and have provision that meets their needs;
 - expanding upon guidance, training and support for Designated Teachers, including identifying 'Lead' Designated Teachers in each cluster, who are able to provide peer support to schools with less experience of working with children in care

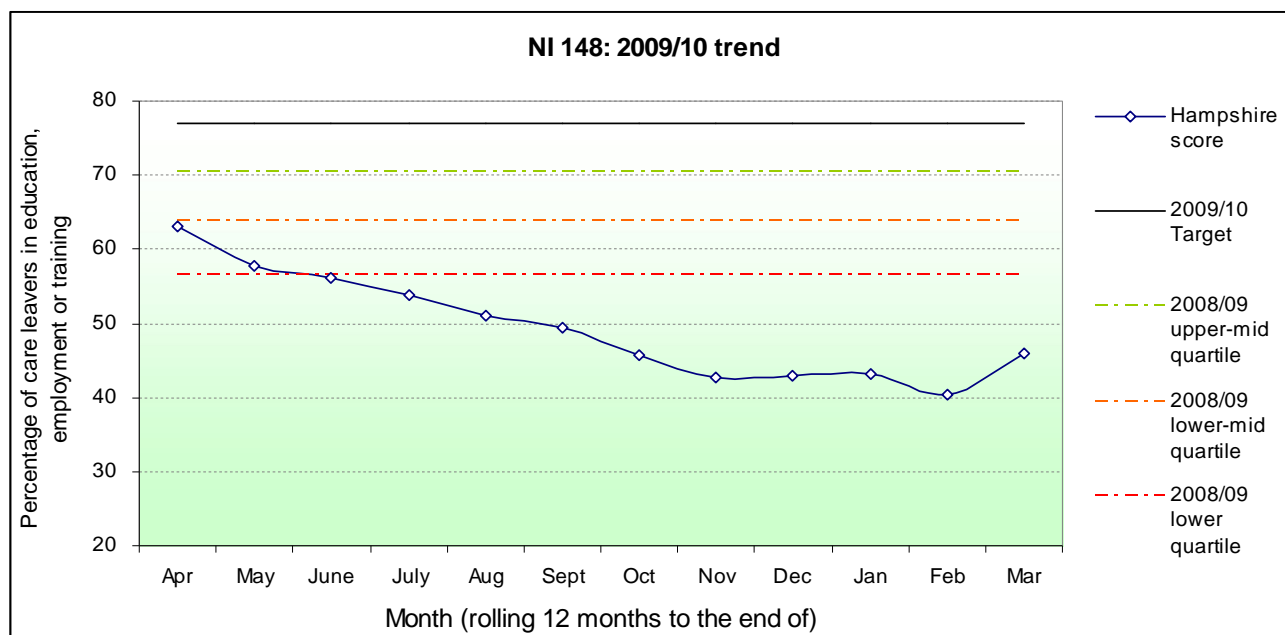
6. Areas for improvement in 2010/11

- 6.1. Increased demand for services has led to a fall in the timeliness of initial and core assessments, outlined in the table below:

National Indicator	Hampshire 2008/09	England average 2008/09	Hampshire performance 12 months to end of March 2010	2009/10 target
NI 59: percentage of initial assessments completed within seven working days of referral	65%	72%	56.6%	74%
NI 60: percentage of core assessments completed within 35 working days of commencement	83%	78%	77.7%	84%

- 6.2. The revised statutory guidance for safeguarding, *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2010) has extended the timescale for completing initial assessments to 10 working days from 1 April 2010. Performance for this indicator is 68.4% for the 12 months to the end of March 2010.
- 6.3. The proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation fell during 2009/10, from 90.2% in 2008/09 to 80.7% for the 12 months to the end of March 2010. At the same time, the recession appears to have had a significant impact on care leavers, with the percentage in education, employment or training falling each month between April 2009 and February 2010, before showing slight improvement in March 2010. The trend across the year is shown in the below chart:

Chart 3: NI 148 2009/10 trend



- 6.4. Activities to secure future improvement focus on earlier intervention, including:
- improving the quality and consistency of pathway plans;
 - establishing a joint working group between Children’s Services and Adult Services to ensure continuity of support, where required;
 - developing new apprenticeship schemes within the County Council;
 - working with 14-19 consortia to ensure that local provision is developed that meets the needs of vulnerable learners (including Foundation Learning opportunities and flexible start dates);
 - joint working to identify the child’s needs at an early stage – inviting Connexions Personal Advisers to children in care reviews from the age of 13 to participate in care planning;
 - sharing and developing best practice with other authorities.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. Demand for services has continued to increase in 2009/10, leading to a fall in performance in some indicators for safeguarding (particularly timeliness of assessments). However, improvements have been seen in

some of previously poorer performing and challenging NIs including placement stability, repeat child protection plans and attainment for children in care.

- 7.2. Assessment of NI performance as at April 2010 (based upon data up to 31 March 2010), highlights the following areas for improvement in 2010/11:
- placement stability for children in care (although much improved, this remains in the lower quartile for performance);
 - balancing performance against indicators for repeat child protection plans and child protection plans lasting more than two years;
 - timeliness of assessments;
 - outcomes for care leavers.
- 7.3. Activities for securing improvement have been integrated within a new Quality Improvement Plan for safeguarding and services for children in care. The Plan establishes key milestones and targets, with progress against the full plan monitored on a quarterly basis through the Care Matters Implementation Board and key indicators monitored on a monthly basis through Area Performance Action Groups and Children and Families Management Team.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate): 1.1 – improved educational attainment of children in care; and 1.5 – improved placement stability for children in care	
Enhancing our quality of place:	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- 1.1. Successful delivery of the improvement strategies outlined in this report will result in a positive impact on outcomes for some of the most vulnerable children and young people in the county

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- 2.1. No impact.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint/energy consumption?
No impact.
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?
No impact.

National Indicators for safeguarding and children in care

National Indicator	Hampshire 2008/09	Statistical neighbour average 2008/09	England average 2008/09	Hampshire performance for the 12 months to the end of March 2010	2009/10 target
Safeguarding					
NI 59: Initial assessments for children's social care that were carried out within seven working days of their commencement	65%	65%	72%	56.6%	74%
NI 60: Core assessments for children's social care that were carried out within 35 working days of their commencement	83%	76.6%	78%	77.7%	84%
NI 64: Children protection plans lasting two years or more	5%	5%	6%	7.1%	3.5%
NI 65: Children becoming the subject of a child protection plan for a second or subsequent time	17%	13.1%	13%	10.9%	13%
NI 67: Children protection cases which were reviewed within required timescales	100%	99%	99%	97.5%	95%
NI 68: Referrals to children's social care going on to initial assessment	59%	65%	64%	51.3%	55%
NI 70: Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people	109.81 per 10,000 (2008)	102.97 per 10,000 (2008)	121.54 per 10,000 (2008)	117.3 per 10,000 (2009)	No target
NI 71: Children who have run away from home/care overnight (self-assessed score out of 15)	7	9	10	9	7
Children in care					
NI 58: Emotional and behavioural health of children in care	21.1	13.6	13.8	N/A	14.6
NI 61: Timeliness of placements of children in care for adoption following an agency decision that the child should be placed for adoption	100%	71.2%	75.8%	83.8%	86%

Appendix C

National Indicator	Hampshire 2008/09	Statistical neighbour average 2008/09	England average 2008/09	Hampshire performance for the 12 months to the end of March 2010	2009/10 target
NI 62: Stability of placements of children in care: number of moves	16.4%	9.9%	10.7%	14%	13%
NI 63: Stability of placements of children in care: length of placement	71.3%	65.5%	67%	68.1%	69%
NI 66: Children in care cases which were reviewed within the timescales	92.6%	87.2%	90.9%	88.7%	93%
NI 99: Children in care reaching level four in English at Key Stage 2	35% (2007/08)	43.2% (2007/08)	46% (2007/08)	47.6% (2008/09)	59%
NI 100: Children in care reaching level four in Maths at Key Stage 2	31% (2007/08)	43.6% (2007/08)	44% (2007/08)	50% (2008/09)	61%
NI 101: Children in care achieving 5 A*-C GCSE (or equivalent), including English and Maths	4.9% (2007/08)	Not published	Not published	7.6% (2008/09)	12.3%
NI 147: Care leavers in suitable accommodation	90.2%	90.1%	89.6%	80.7%	87.3%
NI 148: Care leavers in employment, education or training	64.1%	63.9%	63%	45.9%	77%