

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **SOCIAL AND HEALTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

STATISTICAL REPORT: SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.01 To provide Social and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee with statistical and contextual information in relation to safeguarding and child protection.

This report covers the year from 1 October 2011 to 30 September 2012.

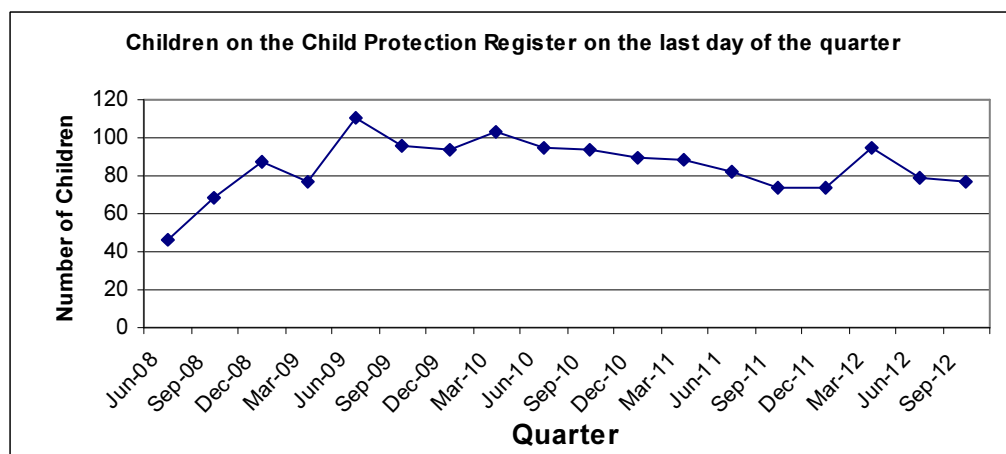
2.00 CHILD PROTECTION REGISTER

The purpose of the Child Protection Register is:

- to provide a record of all children in Flintshire with unresolved child protection issues and who are currently the subject of an inter-agency protection plan; and
- to ensure that the plans are formally reviewed every six months.

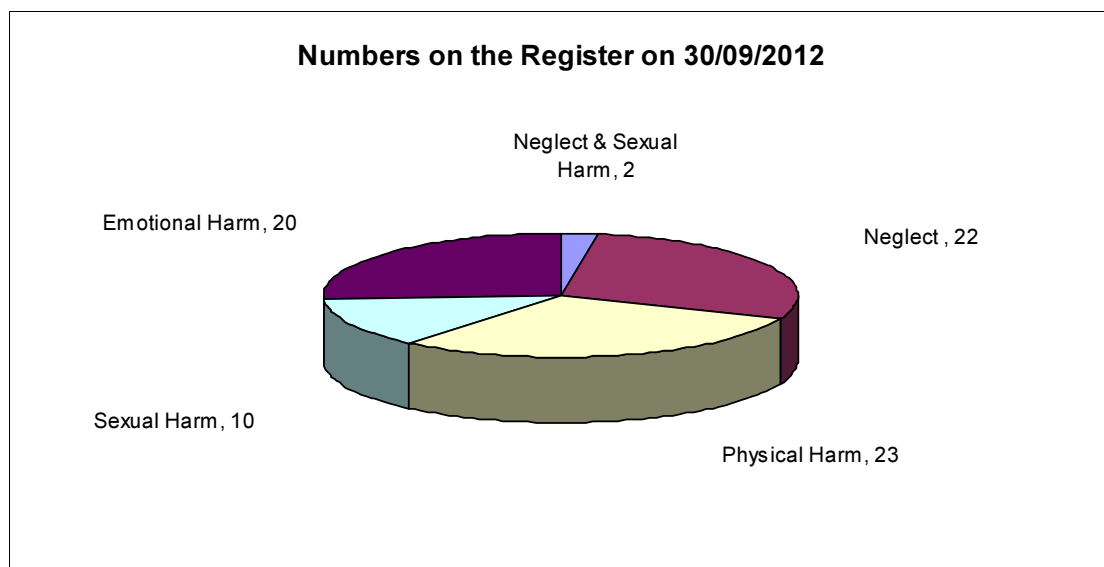
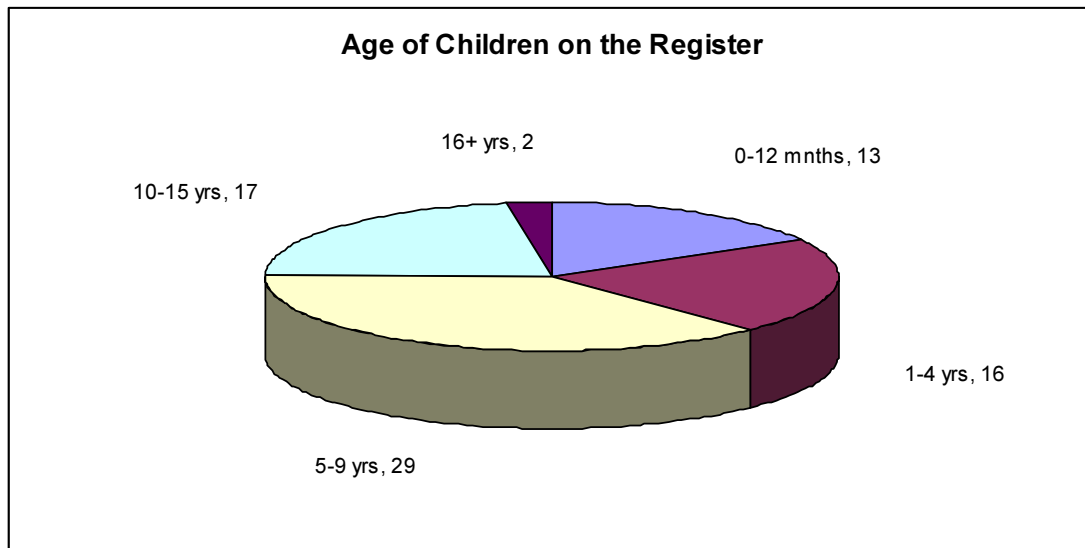
Numbers on the Register

- 2.01 Prior to the period covered by this report, the trend for child protection registrations in Flintshire was a steady decline. However, in March 2012 there was a sharp increase in registrations, from 74 to 95. Although there the number of child protection referrals did not significantly increase in this period, a higher percentage of referrals resulted in an initial conference (See 2.05) In this period, there were referrals for several multiple sibling groups, and also four cases that came to conference where the mothers were just about to give birth. Since then, registrations have declined almost back to their original level.



2.02 Across Wales, the number of children on the child protection register increased slightly between March 2011 and March 2012.

2.03 The numbers on the Flintshire Register over the period can be broken down into age, gender and category of abuse. 38% of children on the Register were under 5 years old; this compares to the Wales average of 44%.



The significant numbers of emotional harm are often due to the impact of living within a home where domestic violence or abuse is a factor, although it is acknowledged that all forms of abuse against children will include an element of emotional abuse.

Across Wales, the highest number of registrations was in categories involving neglect, and the lowest in categories of sexual abuse. A similar pattern is seen in the Flintshire Register.

Category of Abuse	December 2011		March 2012		June 2012		September 2012	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Neglect, Physical & Sexual	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Neglect & Physical Harm	2	1	2	1	0	2	0	0
Neglect & Sexual Harm	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	0
Physical & Sexual Harm	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Neglect	14	19	11	20	6	13	9	13
Physical Harm	4	10	15	10	11	13	9	14
Sexual Harm	2	3	6	4	4	2	6	4
Emotional Harm	9	9	12	13	11	14	8	12
Total	32	42	46	49	34	45	34	43

Time on the Register

2.04 The following table indicates the time that children have spent on the register, in month bands:

Time on the Register at 30th September 2012

Age Band	Months on Register					Total
	<3	4-6	6-12	12-24	24+	
0-12 mnths	5	5	3	0	0	13
1-4 yrs	6	5	2	1	2	16
5-9 yrs	10	4	8	4	3	29
10-15 yrs	10	0	6	1	0	17
16+ yrs	0	0	2	0	0	2
Total	31	14	21	6	5	77

In September 2011, 14.9% of the total number of children on the Flintshire register were registered for over 12 months, and the figure for September 2012 was similar (14.2%).

40% of children were deregistered at their first review, the same as in September 2011.

The Children's Safeguarding Managers review cases that have been on the child protection register for twelve months or more, and reports to the Head of Social Services for Children. This process provides an additional layer of oversight to ensure children are not on the register longer than necessary. On 30 September 2012, five children had been on the register in Flintshire for more than 24 months. This involved two pairs of siblings, both of which were recommended for continued registration by the multi-agency group. The fifth child was a case that Flintshire were holding on our register for another local authority.

(Temporary Registrations occur until a transfer in conference has been held by the new authority).

Recommendations for deregistration at the first review must be endorsed by the Service Manager.

Child Protection Referrals

- 2.05 The table below shows the percentage of the total referrals to Children's Services which were Child Protection referrals.

Child Protection referrals as a percentage of all child referrals

Referrals	Oct-Dec 2011	Jan-Mar 2012	Apr-Jun 2012	Jul-Sep 2012
Number of All Referrals to Children's Services	196	220	176	204
Number of Child Protection Referrals	103	116	110	125
Number of Non-Child Protection Referrals	93	104	66	79
Child Protection referrals as percentage of total Referrals	52.6%	52.7%	62.5%	61.3%

Overall, the number of referrals to Social Services for Children has been on the increase since September 2011, and the percentage of these which were child protection concerns has kept pace with this.

3.00 MONITORING PERFORMANCE IN SAFEGUARDING

- 3.01 Children on the CPR allocated to a qualified social worker is subject to national monitoring via the Performance Measurement Framework.

<p>SCC/013 The percentage of open cases of children on the Child Protection Register who have an allocated social worker.</p>

Advice from CSSIW indicates that all children on the CPR should have an allocated social worker. Our performance in this indicator is consistently good, at 100%.

This indicator is considered by CSSIW to be a factor in identifying early signs of potential problems in Children's Social Services. We are advised that performance should be 100%. We monitor the allocation of child protection cases monthly via the Service Management Team and are confident of our good performance around this indicator.

- 3.02 Within Social Services for Children, unmet need is collated on a monthly basis together with staff availability. The Unmet need is reported at the Community Services DMT when the cabinet member is present and lists are overseen on a weekly basis. Unmet need is primarily a concern for the Duty and Assessment Team who have

limited ability to control their workflow. In the main unmet need relates to children in need cases and any unmet need in relation to child protection is of short duration is prioritised for allocation, by the relevant service manager. The unmet need and staff availability for the Duty Team for the period of this report are attached at Appendix 3.1 and 3.2.

- 3.03 All children in need who are not registered on the CPR but whose cases have been open for more than six months require a review every six months.

SCC/016 The percentage of reviews of child in need plans carried out in accordance with the statutory timetable.

Our outturn for 2011/12 was 85.9%; this was a good improvement on the previous year against a Corporate Improvement Target of 70%. The All Wales figure was 59.4%.

- 3.04 The improvement seen in this performance indicator over the last 12 months has been partly due to the implementation of the flagging system for notifying social workers of the due dates for forthcoming reviews, which has enabled them to prioritise their workload and meet the required timescales more effectively.

4.00 CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES

- 4.01 The percentage of child protection referrals resulting in an initial case conference has increased in the period.

Initial Child Protection case conferences as a percentage of all child protection referrals

	Oct-Dec 2011	Jan-Mar 2012	Apr-Jun 2012	Jul-Sep 2012
Number of all Child Protection Referrals	103	116	110	125
Number of Conferences (children)	35	52	27	33
Percentage	34.0%	44.8%	24.5%	26.4%

In line with the general increase in referral numbers this year, we have seen a corresponding increase in child protection referrals. The percentage of child protection referrals that proceed to initial case conference fluctuates between 24% and 44%, due to referrals for multiple sibling groups and unborn children, as previously mentioned.

Non-urgent child protection referrals from multi-agency partners such as the Police and Schools could be re-assessed in the Duty Offices, and re-categorised. All referrers are advised of the outcome decision.

- 4.02 Initial child protection conferences in the period have resulted in the following registration statistics. Registrations were generally higher last year, but that would be expected due to the increase in child protection referrals.

Initial conferences that took place in the Quarter, and the number of children registered at these conferences

	Oct-Dec 2011	Jan-Mar 2012	Apr-Jun 2012	Jul-Sep 2012
Number Of Children Conferenced -Initial	35	52	27	33
Number of Children Registered	29	40	21	29
Number of Children Not registered	6	12	6	4

- 4.03 Child protection conferences are subject to national monitoring via the Performance Measurement Framework, and the following indicator definitions apply:

SCC/014 The percentage of initial child protection conferences due in the year which were held within 15 working days of the strategy discussion.

Our performance for 2011/12 was 82.4%; this was a slight increase on the previous year, and still above the All Wales average of 77.4%.

Occasionally conference requests are made late to the Children's Safeguarding Team, or the Chair may decide to delay a conference in order to ensure that all the required information and attendees are available. However, in spite of the consistently high numbers of requests for conference, the Safeguarding Team are continuing to manage the scheduling of the majority of initial conferences within timescales. To the end of September 2012, 100% of initial conferences were held on time.

SCC/015 The percentage of initial core group meetings due in the year which were held within 10 working days of the initial child protection conference.

The timeliness of initial core group meetings has improved from 92.8% last year to 95.5% at the end of March 2012. This compares favourably with the All Wales average of 85%.

SCC/034 The percentage of child protection reviews carried out within statutory timescales during the year.

The timeliness of child protection review conferences improved from 94.4% in 2010/11 to 98.3% at the end of March 2012. This was above

the All Wales average of 96.9%. We continue to monitor performance against this indicator against a Corporate Improvement Target.

It is important to note that occasionally it is necessary to reschedule conferences, for reasons out of the control of the Safeguarding Manager. Although it appears worrying in terms of statistics for a conference to be held late, we collect reasons for all late conferences, and occasionally reschedule because, in the interests of the child, it would be inappropriate for the conference to go ahead. These are usually cases where a family member or professional whose attendance the Chair feels is essential, is unable to attend, but can also be due to staff sickness, late request of the conference by the Social Worker, or family non-cooperation.

- 4.04 Work is continuing towards improving the timeliness of the submission of social work reports to Child Protection conferences. All late reports are notified to the member of staff concerned, and this is discussed with the Team Manager at team meetings.
- 4.05 Feedback forms to establish the quality of Child Protection conferences are distributed following child protection conferences. The analysis of these is presented in separate reports for the periods October 2011 to March 2012 and April 2012 to September 2012, (Appendix 2), and include suggestions to enable young people to better participate at child protection conferences and to improve the gathering of feedback from all attendees.
- 4.06 Flintshire and Wrexham LSCB recognises the importance of children and young people being involved in the discussions and decision making which relates to their own lives. It therefore believes that children and young people should be consulted and involved at each stage of discussion and planning as far as consistent with their welfare. With regard to Safeguarding Children, the LSCB believes that children should be given the opportunity to participate in, and when appropriate, attend Child Protection Meetings (including conferences and core groups).

In Flintshire, the Conference Buddy Scheme was introduced in recognition of the importance of children and young people being involved in the discussions and decision making which relates to their own lives. The scheme provides children and young people over the age of 10 with the opportunity to participate in, and when appropriate, attend Child Protection Meetings (including conferences and core groups).

Case Conference Referrals	Young Person Attended Meeting	Young Person did not attend meeting but wishes and	Non engagement

		feelings expressed	

- 4.07 The Safeguarding Unit have instigated some changes to the referral form, so that when a child protection service is requested by a social worker, the request is very specific in terms of whether or not it is appropriate for the child to attend their conference, and in cases where it is not appropriate for them to attend, we are still able to gather their views.
- 4.08 The Safeguarding Unit have also made some proposals to address the low return of feedback forms both from professionals and children/ young people, by using Survey Monkey to collect electronic feedback from professionals, and by utilising conference buddies to visit and collect feedback from families after the conference has taken place.
- 4.09 The Children's Safeguarding Managers continue to provide oversight to ensure that child protection plans are completed and core group meetings are held in-between case conferences. They read all core group meeting minutes and make reference in conference if these meetings are not held or if they have any queries in relation to the progress of or alterations to the Child Protection Plan. Six monthly audits of core group minutes take place. The most recent audit demonstrated that core group minutes were available on the system in 95% of the families subject to child protection registration.
- 4.10 The recommended visits to frontline services by Members and Senior Officers continue. This was a recommendation arising from the Victoria Climbié Inquiry. Visits during the reporting period were delayed due to the local government elections but one visit took place on the 10th October.
- 4.11 The feedback outcomes from these visits will be shared with the Lead Director for Children and the Chief Executive Officer.

5.00 CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING UNIT

- 5.01 In Social Services for Children, the Safeguarding Unit has been enhanced, with the bringing together of the Independent Reviewing Officers and Safeguarding Manager, and the recruitment of an additional Safeguarding Manager. As well as chairing Looked After Children reviews and Child Protection conferences, the Unit staff offer support and advice role to our frontline workforce. Safeguarding Unit staff have visited all Fieldwork and Children's Integrated Disability Service teams to share information about processes and good practice guidance for social workers preparing for conference. They are also available to staff for consultations about the structuring of reports.

- 5.02 Consultative work has taken place with a view to improving partnership working with the practice teams, and work continues on defining the roles and responsibilities of staff in the Unit.