

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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

STATISTICAL REPORT: SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

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

This report covers the period from 1 October 2012 to 31 December 2013.

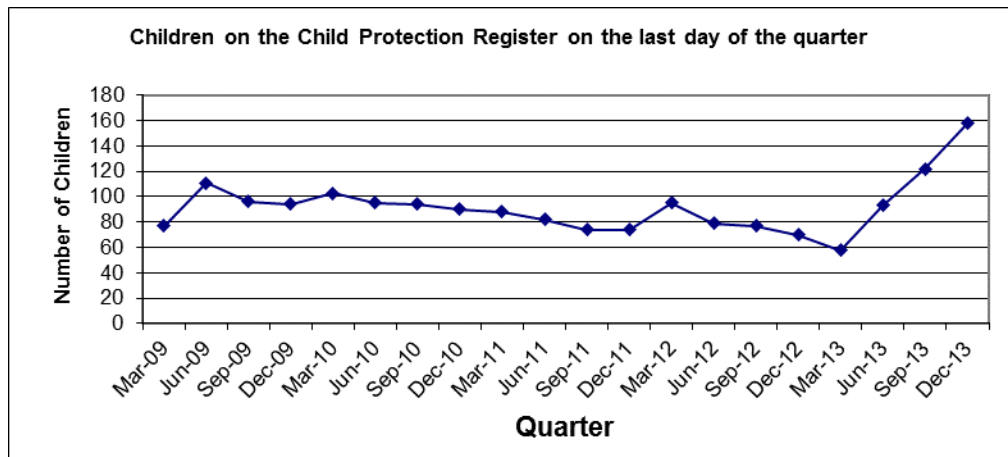
2.00 CHILD PROTECTION REGISTER

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 within statutory timescales.

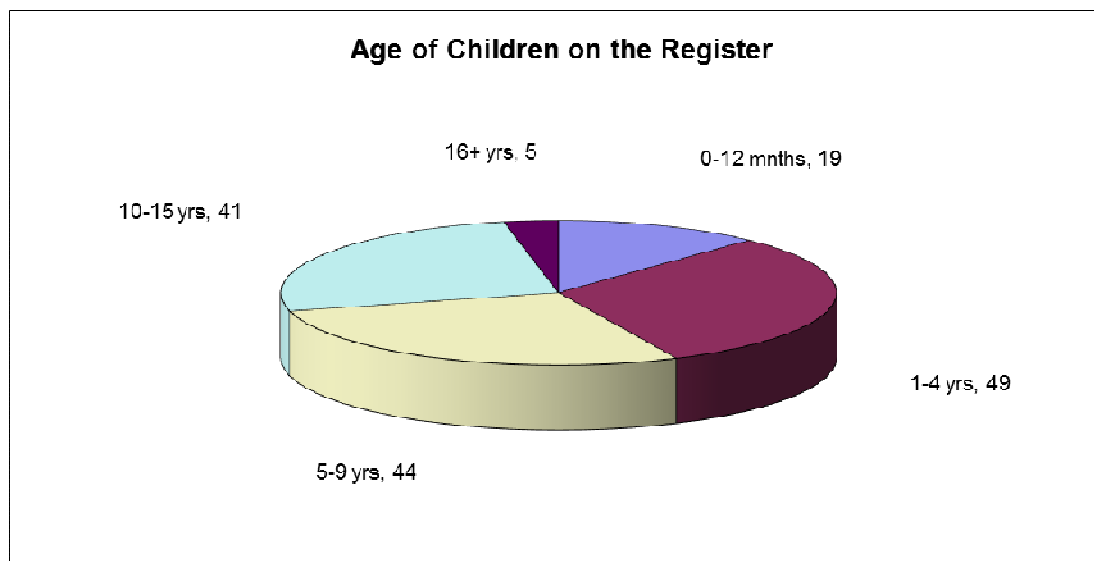
Numbers on the Register

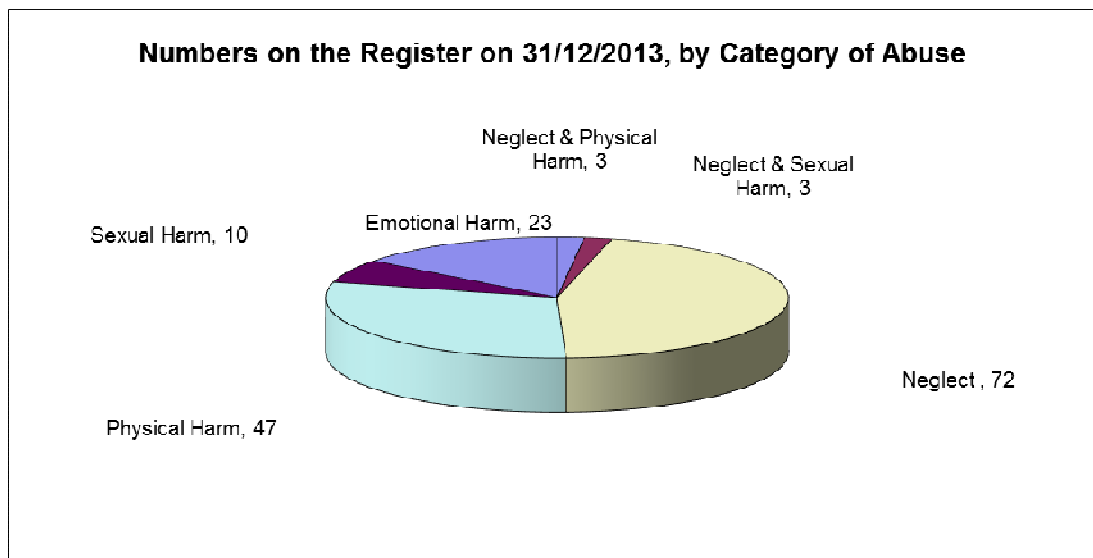
- 2.01 Prior to the period covered by this report, the trend for child protection registrations in Flintshire was a steady decline, to a low of 58 at the end of March 2013. Comparisons with other Councils in Wales show that 8 out of 22 authorities also experienced a drop in their register numbers around this time. In Flintshire this was partly due to the deregistration of several large sibling group families in the period leading up to March. Because each child in the family is counted separately, a small number of large sibling groups removed from the register can have a significant impact on the Child Protection Register.



2.02 From March 2013 the number of registrations has increased sharply, to a high of 158 to the end of December 2013. This is in line with the trend across Wales.

2.03 The numbers on the Flintshire Register over the period can be broken down into age, gender and category of abuse. 43% of children on the Register were under 5 years old; this is an increase of 5% in Flintshire since September 2012, and is close to the Wales average of 45%.





The significant numbers of children experiencing emotional harm only 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.

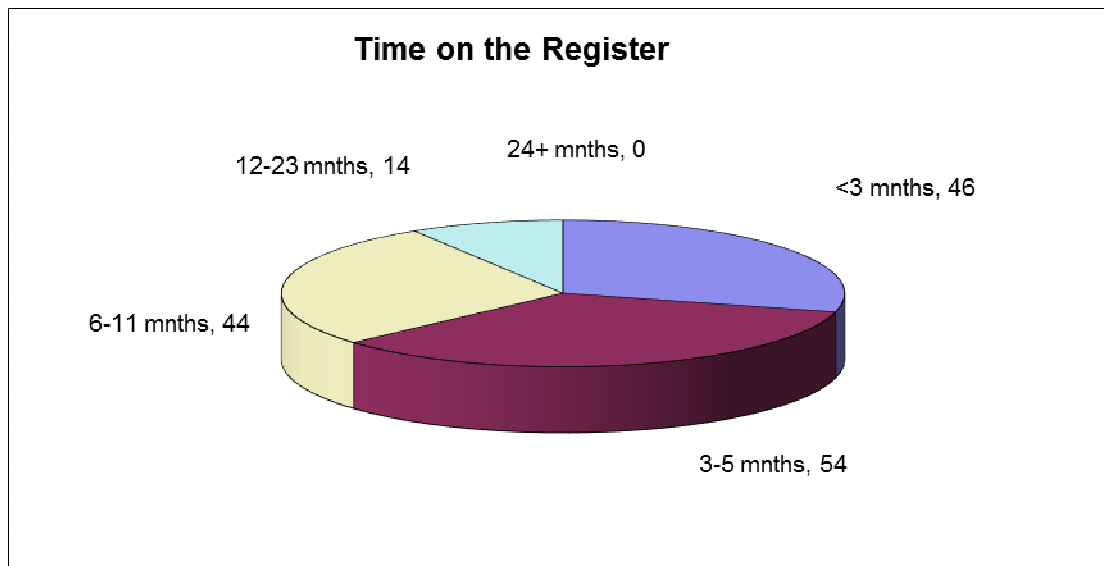
Across Wales, the highest number of registrations was in categories involving neglect, and the lowest in categories of sexual abuse. A similar pattern is seen in the Flintshire Register, at 46% for neglect and 6% for sexual abuse.

Category of Abuse	December 2012		March 2013		June 2013		September 2013		December 2013	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Neglect, Physical & Sexual								3		
Neglect & Physical Harm									2	1
Neglect & Sexual Harm				3		3	1		2	1
Physical & Sexual Harm										
Neglect	12	16	11	12	20	22	30	28	33	39
Physical Harm	10	9	4	9	9	8	14	9	27	20
Sexual Harm	6	3	5	3	6	4	9	4	6	4
Emotional Harm	6	8	6	5	8	13	11	13	14	9
Total	34	36	26	32	43	50	65	57	84	74

Time on the Register

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

Time on the Register at 31 December 2013



In December 2013, 8.9% of the total number of children on the Flintshire register were registered for over 12 months. In comparison with the rest of Wales, children in Flintshire tend not to remain on the register for as long; 39% of deregistered children in the last 12 months were deregistered within six months of registration.

Children on the Register reaching the time of their third review are automatically reviewed under the new court and Public Law Outline and are subject to a legal advice meeting.

In addition, the Safeguarding Children Managers undertake a regular review of cases that have been on the child protection register for twelve months or more, and report the findings to the Head of Children's Social Services. This process provides an additional layer of oversight to ensure children are not on the register longer than necessary. On 31 December, no children had been on the register in Flintshire for more than 24 months. Protracted registration potentially indicates that the child protection plan needs addressing or the case escalating if parental change is absent.

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 2012	Jan-Mar 2013	Apr-Jun 2013	Jul-Sep 2013	Oct-Dec 2013
Number of All Referrals to Children's Services	190	175	246	211	196
Number of Child Protection Referrals	142	118	173	160	154
Number of Non-Child Protection Referrals	48	57	73	51	42
Child Protection referrals as percentage of total Referrals	74.7%	67.4%	70.3%	75.8%	78.6%

Overall, the number of referrals to Social Services for Children has remained fairly static since 2011, but the percentage of these which were child protection concerns has increased, from 53% in December 2011 to 79% in December 2013. This reflects the increasing complexity of the incoming work.

3.00 MONITORING PERFORMANCE IN SAFEGUARDING

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

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

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.

- 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 CSDMT (Community Services Directorate Management Team). 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 and is prioritised for allocation.
- 3.03 In Flintshire, all children in need who are not registered on the CPR are subject to a management review every 8-12 weeks. Additionally, cases which have been open for more than six months require a full ICS (Integrated Children's System) review every six months. This is measured by the national performance indicator:

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

Our outturn for 2012/13 was 74%, against an All Wales figure of 71%. Capacity in the teams has recently had an impact on performance

against this indicator; the increase in child protection activity has meant that this has been prioritised over the six monthly child in need reviews. The percentage of reviews of child in need plans carried out within timescales is running at 53% in the current year.

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 2012	Jan-Mar 2013	Apr-Jun 2013	Jul-Sep 2013	Oct-Dec 2013
Number of all Child Protection Referrals	142	118	173	160	154
Number of Conferences (children)	44	21	59	54	77
Percentage	31.0%	17.8%	34.1%	33.8%	50.0%

In line with the general increase in referral numbers this year, we have seen a corresponding increase in child protection referrals. The percentage of referrals that result in a child being the subject of a child protection conference has increased to 50%.

Whilst the Safeguarding Managers do not decide which cases will come to conference, they do have a view following conference as to whether the decision to bring the case to conference was appropriate. There were no concerns in the period in question regarding cases being brought to conference inappropriately.

- 4.02 Initial child protection conferences in the period have resulted in the following registration statistics. Registrations were generally in line with the number of child protection referrals.

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

	Oct-Dec 2012	Jan-Mar 2013	Apr-Jun 2013	Jul-Sep 2013	Oct-Dec 2013
Number Of Children Conferenced -Initial	44	21	59	54	77
Number of Children Registered	38	17	59	32	67
Number of Children Not registered	6	4	0	22	10

- 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.

Occasionally conference requests are made late to the Children's Safeguarding Unit, 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 Unit are continuing to manage the scheduling of the majority of initial conferences within timescales, by increasing their diary availability to 3-4 days per week, rather than the usual 2 days per week.

Our performance for 2012/13 was 97%; well above the All Wales average of 87.4%. So far this year, we have held 91.5% of initial conferences within timescales, although in the first 3 Quarters of this year we have already undertaken 40% more conferences than in the whole of last year, and this has had an impact on diary capacity.

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 98% at the end of last year to 99.4% at the end of December 2013. This compares favourably with the All Wales average of 88%.

All core group minutes are notified to the Safeguarding Managers via the Paris system. This enables the Safeguarding Managers to monitor adherence to the agreed child protection plan.

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 97.7% in 2012/13 to 98.3% at the end of December 2013. This was above the All Wales average of 97.7%.

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. Conferences may also be delayed to ensure that the family have adequate time to read through reports in accordance with the All Wales Child Protection Procedures.

- 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 by the Team Manager at team meetings.
- 4.05 The Flintshire & Wrexham Local Safeguarding Children Board (FWLSCB) recognises the importance of children and young people being involved in the discussions and decision making which relate 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 FWLSCB believes that children should be given the opportunity to participate in, and when appropriate, attend Child Protection Meetings (including conferences and core groups).

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).

5.00 CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING UNIT

- 5.01 In Social Services for Children, the Safeguarding Unit staff undertake the chairing of Looked After Children reviews and Child Protection conferences, and offer a support and advice role to our frontline workforce. Safeguarding Unit staff visit 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 Safeguarding staff are currently the gatekeepers for decisions under Part 4 All Wales Child Protection Procedures where an allegation is made against a professional. Referrals are made to the Safeguarding Unit from the Duty and Assessment Team, Safeguarding staff determine whether thresholds for convening a Part 4 meeting are met and then would attend such a meeting as a Safeguarding Advisor.
- 5.03 Safeguarding staff attend MARAC and MAPPA fora as statutory agencies offering child protection advice and acting as a conduit for information between all agencies. Staff also represent Flintshire Children's Services on the Flintshire Wrexham Local Safeguarding Children's Board (FWLSCB) including PQAA (Performance, Quality

Assurance and Audit) SubGroup, Regional Policies and Procedures, Child Death Review Panel, and Participation Groups.

- 5.04 Numbers on the register have been increasing over the past 12 months which has had an impact on all areas of the Safeguarding Unit and Fieldwork teams. Where possible we have been able to meet the 15 working day timescale for convening initial case conferences by adding extra days for conferencing. For the majority of Quarter 3, the Safeguarding Unit were holding conferences 4 days a week. This has had an impact on the availability of standing members; Police, Community Paediatricians and Senior Nurse for Safeguarding as well as other agencies. This in turn has sometimes had an impact on quoracy and some conferences have had to be cancelled for this reason. As a result of the increase, permission was given by the Head of Service to draft shortened minutes for all initial conferences. Full transcripts are available on request if cases go into court proceedings. Conference recommendations are circulated within 24 hours of conference in the majority of cases.

Police, Health and Community Paediatricians have indicated over the last 12 months that resources would not be available for attendance at review conferences. This again has had an impact on quoracy and concerns have been raised with FWLSCB but the situation currently remains the same.

- 5.05 The Safeguarding Unit have worked with Fieldwork team managers to improve the timeliness of reports for conference. Whilst this is not 100% as yet, the situation is improving. It is hoped that the introduction of a single conference report encompassing aspects of PARIS, Risk 2 assessments and outcome focussed planning will assist with time management and also cut down on the amount of paperwork being prepared in advance of conference. The Safeguarding Unit are also piloting the use of EGRESS switch with ICT. This will enable us to communicate with more agencies electronically for invitations, recommendations and minutes which will in turn cut down on resources, time and paper, and also expedite communication.
- 5.06 Child Protection enquiries and external enquiries continue to take up a huge amount of resource within the Safeguarding Unit although together with Fieldwork we are discussing whether these processes can be improved.