



Children and Education Select Committee
28 November 2013

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Services

To provide an introduction to the responsibilities of Safeguarding and Child Protection.

Introduction:

1. Safeguarding Children – “the action we take to promote the welfare of children and protection from harm – is everyone’s responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play” – Working Together 2013. Safeguarding in its wider sense refers to those matters that impact on a child and young person’s health and wellbeing in a way that could or would adversely affect their future life opportunities.

Working Together 2013 is the overarching multi-agency statutory guidance outlining definitions, roles and responsibilities in relation to the safeguarding of children. It defines safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as:

- Protecting children from mal-treatment
- Preventing impairment of children’s health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe effective care; and
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Although safeguarding is everyone’s business, organisations have specific accountabilities and responsibilities in relation to vulnerable children and young people and those at risk of significant harm. The Local Authority has a lead responsibility in assessing need and determining where services are required under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and in the making of decisions about action to be taken to protect children under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

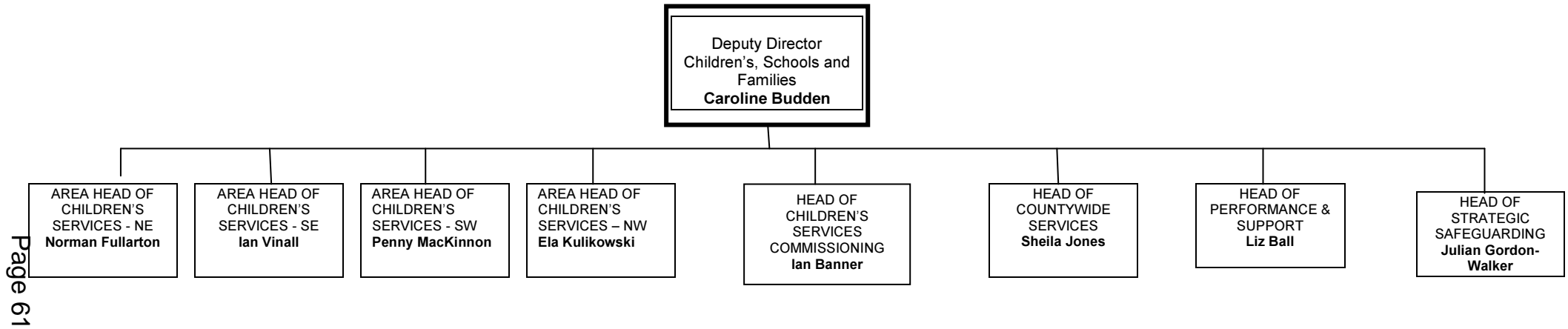
Context

2. In accordance with the Children’s Act 1989 and 2004 Local Authorities retain the lead role for safeguarding children in their area including ensuring that there is a local Safeguarding Children’s Board in place. It is

the Board's role to ensure that individual agencies and/or bodies provide effective safeguarding services.

3. Within Surrey County Council, the Children and Family's Directorate has a lead function for the well-being of children and young people. The Children's Services and Safeguarding Division are responsible for the lead child protection functions of the local authority. The key functions are delivered through eight service arms, four being the geographical Area team model with responsibility for operational matters and the other arms having County wide and strategic lead responsibilities. This is illustrated at Appendix A.

Appendix A



We operate an area model of assessment and intervention services based on four geographical quadrants within the county. Each area being made up of:

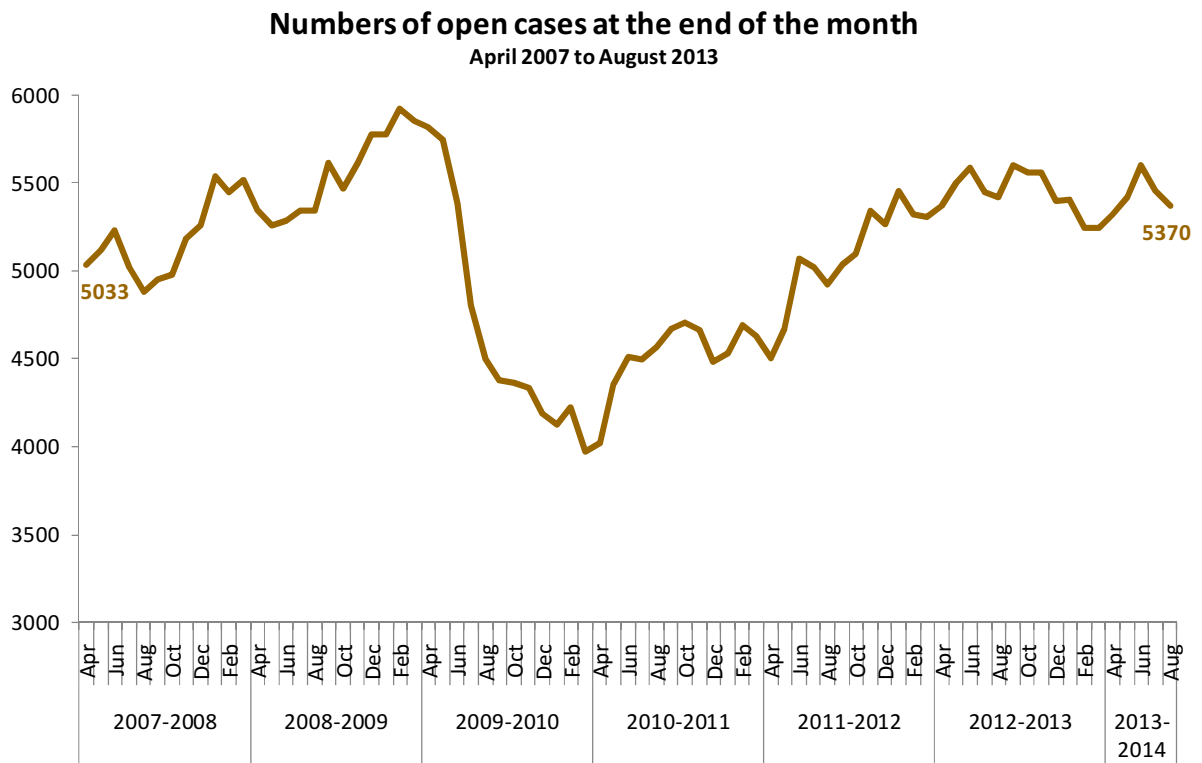
- Duty and assessment Team
- Child in Need team
- Child Protection and Proceedings Team
- Looked After Children's Team.

3. DEMAND

All partners are experiencing a sustained increase in high need and complex cases as families present with a multitude of challenges and difficulties. However, demand needs to be thought about as something more than just numbers, the 'ins and outs'. The figures below very easily tell a story of numbers going up and down and volume in terms of numbers of open cases in the safeguarding system that have changed and been reshaped significantly since 2007/8 but actually in terms of total number are now not dissimilar (Graph 1). What is more helpful is to consider the volume in relation to the types of cases that were and are now open within the system most notably looked after children (Graph 2), and those subject to a CP Plan (Graph 3) the latter demonstrating the most stark upward trend changing from a starting position of 437 children subject to a plan in 07/08 to 915 in August 2013. So that although technically there are only 37 more open cases in the system now than there was in 2007/08, there is a far greater number of children with a higher level of need and complexity being worked with by the Service and its Partners.

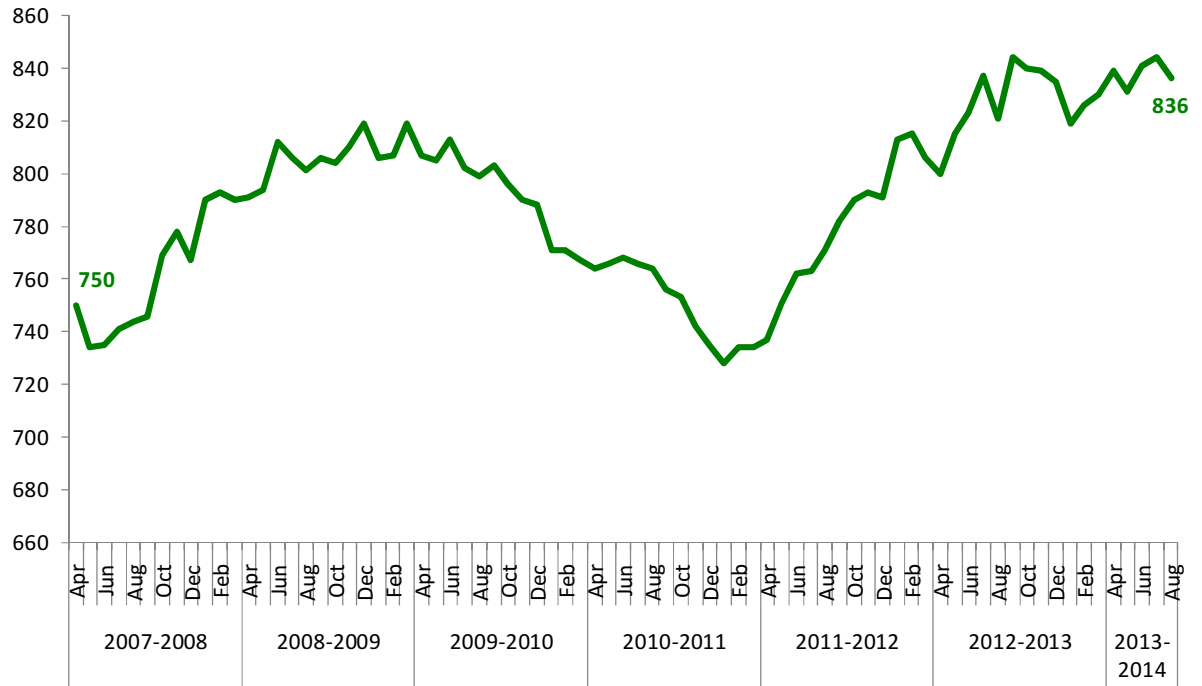
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Graph 1



Graph 2

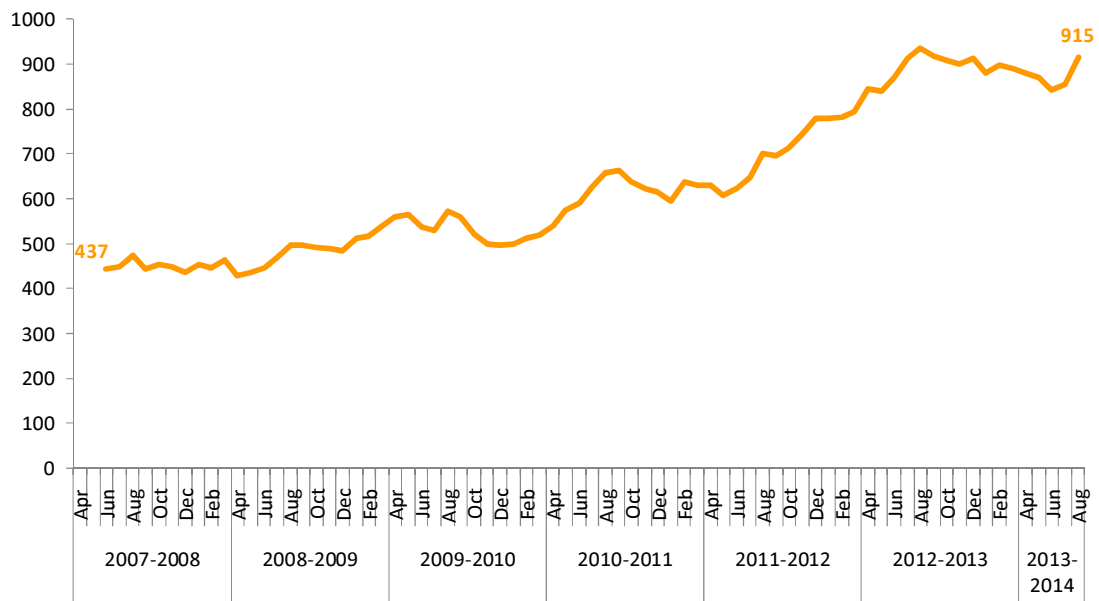
Looked after children numbers at the end of the month
April 2007 to August 2013



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Graph 3

Numbers of children who are the subject of a child protection plan at the end of the month
April 2007 to August 2013



4. PROCESS

Statutory guidance, Working Together 2013 provides the legislative requirements and expectations on individual services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It reinforces the premise that safeguarding is everybody's business and the importance of early assessment and early help. The Early Help Assessment should be undertaken in collaboration with families and the lead professional can come from a range of sources. Children and families may need support from a range of local agencies and services to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed via a statutory assessment (Children Act 1989). Early help should form part of a continuum of help and support.

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Where need is more complex, assessment and or support may be provided under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and where there are child protection concerns the local authority must investigate under Section 47. The Local Authority, with the help of other organisations, as appropriate, have a duty to make enquiries under Section 47 Children Act 1989 if they have reasonable cause to expect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, to enable them to decide whether action needs to be taken to safeguard and promote a child's welfare. Where following an investigation and assessment it is viewed that there are on-going child protection concerns, then a multi-agency child protection conference will be held. The purpose of this conference is to determine whether there needs to be a multi-agency child protection plan to ensure actions are identified and agreed that will bring about improvement of the child's circumstances.

The management of children and young people who are subject to a Child Protection plan will be led by a social worker although the Child Protection plan is a multi-agency plan of action with the family. The social worker who undertakes the role of lead professional will be based within one of the four area teams.

All children subject to a Child Protection plan will have regular reviews. These reviews are managed by Independent Child Protection Conference Chairs that are located within the strategic safeguarding arm of the Service. They, with others, undertake reviewing functions and contribute to the quality assurance system of the service.

The reports that follow are from this part of the Service.

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