

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

TO:	ADULT, CHILDREN'S & EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	6 NOVEMBER 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	8
TITLE:	SAFEGUARDING ACTIVITY REPORT		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR GAVIN	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SERVICE:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES	WARDS:	ALL
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JOB TITLE:	INTERIM HEAD OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES	E-MAIL:	Vicki.lawson@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update of the key activity areas for 2013/14 within Children's Social Care as reported through the National Returns that all local authorities have to submit to the Department of Education in July and August each year about the previous reporting year. It updates on the performance for Quarter 2 as at 30 September 2014
- 1.2 The report also updates on auditing activity and highlights priority areas for the service and scrutiny.
- 1.3 Graphical Trend Data is attached at Appendix A.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION:

- 2.1 That the report is scrutinised.

3. OVERVIEW

- 3.1 The Children in Need Census is an annual collection of data on children who have been referred to local authority social care services because their health or development is at risk of being significantly impaired without additional support. All local authorities return this data to the Department of Education (DfE).

- 3.2 Additionally local authorities collect and submit data to the DfE for the annual children looked after return (also known as SSDA903).
- 3.3 The returns covers the financial year (1st April to 31st March), is returned in July/August each year following validation submitted by all local authorities during April, May and June each year.
- 3.4 This report summarises Reading's performance using three year trend data where applicable and highlights area for priority and scrutiny.
- 3.5 The report also updates on performance as at September 2014
- 3.6 The report also comments on auditing activity which considers the quality of work undertaken.

4. HEADLINES CIN CENSUS RETURN 2013/14 and SEPTEMBER 2014 PROGRESS

- Number of referrals to Childrens Social Care shows a rising trend which gives an indication of volume which has increased since the initiation of the MASH in August 2012.
- *As at September 2014 the number of referrals monthly has fluctuated more than previous years (from 83 to 159) and this is being monitored alongside the work in MASH to embed an Early Help Co-ordinator.*
- % of referrals going onto Initial Assessments shows a decrease which is associated with further information gathering at referral stage to determine whether a referral is appropriate for Social Care Intervention. It has been agreed to co-locate an Early Help co-ordinator in MASH from September 2014 to ensure that if a service is required at a lower level through Early Help there is a strong transition process to step down.
- % of Initial Assessments completed in 10 days and % of Core Assessments completed in 35 days cannot be benchmarked due to a change nationally to a 45 day timescale for completing assessments. *The September 2014 rolling figure for Single Assessment is 77.2 %.*
- Of the 1197 assessments completed the three highest presenting factors were Domestic Violence at 275, Neglect 192 and Physical Abuse at 133.
- *As at September 2014 Domestic Violence and Neglect remained high and sexual abuse was showing an increase which may be due to a growing awareness of this in the public domain.*
- Number of S47 Enquiries (Duty to conduct Section 47 (S47) Enquiries where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, the local authority is required under S47 of the Children Act 1989 to make enquiries, to enable it to decide whether it should take any action to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child and decisions are taken in conjunction with the police) decreased.

- *As at September 2014 the number of Section 47 Enquiries fluctuated which is reflective of the fluctuating referral numbers (monthly between 22 and 66)*
- The number of Initial Child Protection conferences increased therefore it is likely that the initiation of the MASH and greater information sharing resulted in less but more appropriate S47 enquiries that lead to ICPC. 84% of ICPC were held within the 15 day national target.
- *As at September 2014 numbers of Children on a Child Protection Plan was showing a continued increase over the reporting year from 153 to 184. It is noticeable that 22 of these were children (and their families) moving into Reading already subject to a plan*
- Child Protection Plans lasting two years or more is decreasing. There is a thorough audit cycle embedded of which Child Protection plans that are 15 months plus are audited.
- *As at September 2014 this number had decreased from 11 children to 7 and alternative plans are being considered*
- % of Child Protection Plans that were reviewed on time showed a marginal decrease which equated to 2 reviews out of time by one day.
- *As at September 2014 99% of plans were reviewed on time. There was one out of time as agreed by the manager to enable the parent to attend.*
- Child Protection Visiting: Pan Berkshire procedures set the visiting pattern at no more than 10 working days for children to be seen who are on a Child Protection Plan. The DfE indicator is calculated that if one visit in the year is out of timescale (i.e. Day 11 or beyond) the child's visits by the social worker are then classed as out of time for the rest of the reporting year. (One strike and you are out). The indicator is perverse in that if the visiting pattern is set with a longer timescale the likelihood of having a higher percentage return is greater. Some authorities are classing the visiting pattern as 6 weeks. Many local authorities have raised concerns with this indicator as the return figure has been low. Reading has submitted a figure of 23.9%.
- *As at September 2014 the % of visits on time is 76% as per a local indicator that looks at actual visiting patterns and frequency of visiting is monitored closely.*
- Priorities for 2014/15 are the development of the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) with full integration alongside Thames Valley Police (TVP), Health, Adult Safeguarding and other partners.
- *As at September 2014 a project board is established and chaired by the Director of Children's Services.*

- Facilitating Step up/Step down work between Early Help Services and the MASH by the location of an Early Help co-ordinator in the MASH.
- *As at September 2014 this job was established and out to advert*

5. HEADLINES SSDA903 RETURN and SEPTEMBER 2014 PROGRESS

- **Adoption 1 - The percentage of children who ceased to be looked after who were adopted** - There was an increase in the number of adoptions by 8 children from 18 to 26
- *As at September 2014 12 children had been adopted*
- **Adoption 2 - The percentage of children who ceased to be looked after because of a special guardianship order** - There were 17 children ceased to be looked after by an SGO which continues the upward trend by one child
- *As at September 2014 5 children had been made subject to a Special Guardianship Order*
- **A1 - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)** - This shows that the average time between entering care and moving in with an adoptive family was longer however there was an increase in the number of children which will have impacted adversely on the indicator. Statistics for the last 3 yrs show that RBC has improved both the numbers and percent of looked after children adopted. **The success in placing children who are older, part of a sibling group, have disabilities, behavioural issues or parents with mental health issues in adoptive placements has increased the average timescales to achieve the milestones along the adoption process.**
- 12 of the 26 children adopted between 2013/14 were aged between 4-10yrs including at the time of the order 8 were 5-10 yrs.
- Of the 10 children who it took longer than 12 months to place, 9 had at least one of the factors identified above in their profiles making placements more difficult to find.
- **A2 - Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days)** - This shows the average time between a court agreeing a child should be adopted to finding a matched family took **longer however this correlates** with the information about the harder to place children detailed above.
- *As at September 2014 there are still challenges with meeting the DFE indicators however the average days for a child entering care to moving in with their adoptive family has decreased by 165 days from August 2014 to September 2014*

- **Placement 1** -The percentage of children looked after with three or more placements during the year ending 31 March 2014 - This shows an increase in children moving placements and seven more children moved more than three times than the previous year. A piece of work will take place to identify these children and consider what features they present with and what type and provider of placement they had to understand what has contributed to their instability.
- *As at September 2014 the percentage of children has decreased from 9 % to 8.5% equating to 2 less children (17 in total)*
- **Placement 3** - The percentage of looked after children at 31 March placed outside LA boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live - This shows an increase of 5 children who have had to be placed more than 20 miles away and a piece of work will be undertaken to look at the features of these young people and why the provision for them was not available locally. This work will be fed to the commissioning team and into the Sufficiency Document which is a document that the Local Authority has to produce to consider what placements will be needed for children who are Looked After and plan accordingly.
- *As at September 2014 68 children out of 196 were placed more than 20 miles from their home address 34.7% increasing from 31.7%*
- **L1** - The proportion of children leaving care over the age of 16 who remained looked after until their 18th birthday - This shows a static figure in the context of a declining number of children in care and is an indicator which is indicative of children remaining in their placements until they are ready for independence. This figure will be monitored throughout the coming year.
- **L2** - The proportion of young people aged 19 who were looked after aged 16 who were not in employment, education or training - This cannot be benchmarked against previous years as it is a new definition to cover the position at 20th and 21st birthdays as well as 19th.
- **L3** - The proportion of young people aged 19 who were looked after aged 16 who were in suitable accommodation - This cannot be benchmarked against previous years as it is a new definition.
- **L4** - The percentage of young people aged 19 who were looked after aged 16 who were in higher education - This cannot be benchmarked against previous years as it is a new definition.
- The features of the care leavers not in suitable accommodation is known as each of these young people has unique and complex stories including offending. It is acknowledged that accommodation for 16 plus remains a priority issue in Reading and work is underway with housing and commissioning to improve the offer in Reading including remand provision.

- Other analysis of performance in respect of Looked After Children is below which is predicated on numbers and not percentages as there will have been a different number of children looked after each year. Identified priority areas for further work are:
 - a. Rising number of Looked After Children with criminal offences.
 - b. Timeliness of Health Assessments which has already been identified for specific partnership work and the Interim Head of Service has met with Sally Murray, Head of Children's Commissioning Support Berkshire NHS Central Southern Commissioning Support Unit and agreed a way forward

Reduction in completed SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) which has been identified as an area for development and a recent bid for Public Health Funding has been successful to drive this forward.

Updating the Sufficiency Statement (The **Children Act 1989** (s.22G) places a requirement on local authorities to, "take steps that secure, as far as reasonably practicable, **sufficient accommodation** within the authority's area which meets the needs of children that the local authority is looking after, and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the local authority's area ('the sufficiency duty').

6. AUDIT ACTIVITY

- 6.1 Following on from the Quarter 4 report presented to ACE in respect of auditing activity the audit plan remains in place, is regularly reviewed and updated in light of performance updates. Results from audits are discussed at quarterly performance meetings and action plans are put into places which are shared with teams in managers' meetings and in individual team meetings.
- 6.2 Audit moderation groups are in place for managers to discuss the audit process monthly and to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the overarching standards so that there is a shared appreciation of 'what good looks like'. Managers are appreciative of the opportunity to discuss findings and to audit together as a group, ensuring better consistency and transparency in the process.

Internal Audits

- 6.3 In Quarter 1 2014, 63 cases were audited by managers in social care against a benchmark of good. 1 case (1.6%) needed immediate improvement, with the remaining being rated as requiring improvement (old adequate rating) or better. 66.7% were rated as good or better. Immediate feedback has been given to each social worker involved and corrective action plans are in place where needed. No child was found to be unsafe/at risk during the audit process. The quality of recording of personal information (i.e. front sheets/relationships etc) is improving across the board. Children's views are routinely recorded in assessment and planning however improvements would be made if social workers scanned on the tools they used with children.
- 6.4 A number of themes have arisen which have been shared with team managers for actions within the service as below:

Chronologies are more evident on file, but practitioners need to demonstrate that they are using the information in their assessments

Recording is not completed immediately following visits

Work continues to be required (particularly at the start of processes) to ensure that Fathers are involved in assessment, decision making and planning for their children.

- 6.5 With respect to Child in Need cases, work is underway between the statutory long term teams and the Children's Action Teams to ensure that cases are appropriately located to ensure that plans are reviewed and services offered in a consistent way.
- 6.6 There were pockets of outstanding practice in assessment and planning for children with child protection plans - 89% of cases were found to be good or better in this area.
- 6.7 Children's plans were generally reviewed well and evidenced in Looked After Children reviews, however, children's care plans need to be updated regularly to evidence the changes made.

External (Independent Audit)

- 6.9 Children's Social Care continues to have a programme of external audit. Six cases are examined in depth by an external auditor each quarter. This is a qualitative audit of the case file, supplemented by discussion with the social worker and manager. Of these cases one child protection case was rated as good and the second needed improvement to bring the case up to the standard needed. One child in need case was rated as good, with the other needing improvement. Both looked after children cases needed some work to raise them to a good standard.
- 6.9 The auditor found that the new assessment format (Child and Family single assessment) is useful and whilst it covers the domains of the assessment framework it also highlights the "child's story and lived experience". This appears to be being used well. Issues that affect parenting including historical factors and parental issues remain a central part to the assessment.
- 6.10 The auditor found that the Signs of Safety supervision forms support supervisors to be more analytical rather than task focused and that there is now evidence that social workers are updating child protection plans between conferences which make the plan more relevant to the presenting concerns. However, although more chronologies are in place, they still require regular updating and this is noted in a number of the cases audited.
- 6.11 Following the audit corrective action plans have been agreed with workers who are aware of the actions they need to take and these actions will be checked for compliance in due course.

7. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

7.1 The work of children's social care is aligned with the strategic priorities of Reading Borough Council and the Reading Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-16.

8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

8.1 A wide range of partners and parents, carers, young people and families accessing social services were actively involved in the planning around their own case but are also engaged in the development of the work as a whole, and it is our ambition to further improve this through the work of the service user evaluation programme.

9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no legal implications to this report, although the Children's Social Care work enables the Council to meet the statutory duties set out in the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004 and the Childcare Act 2006.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

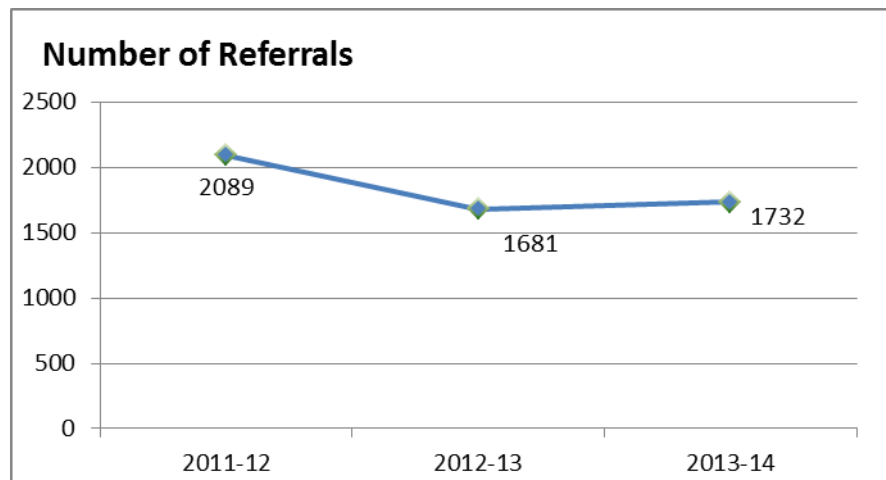
There are no new financial implications outlined in this report.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

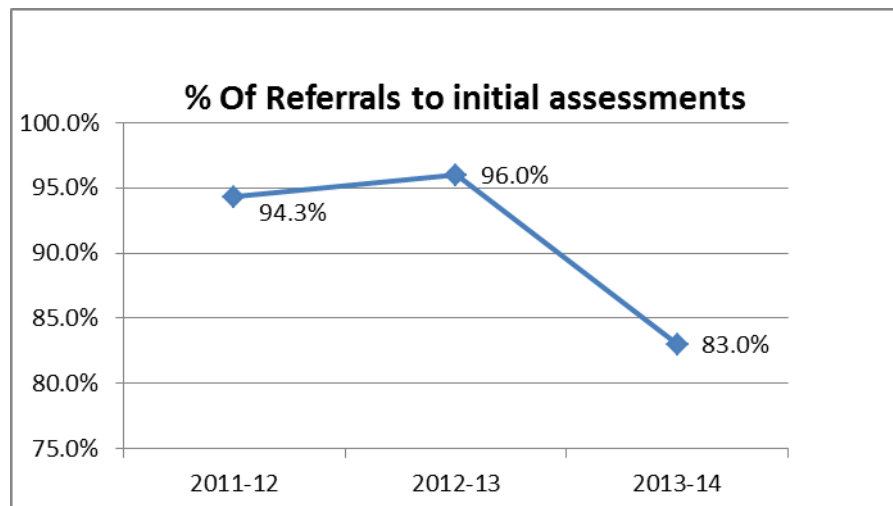
ACE Appendix 1

2011/12-2013/14 CIN CENSUS DATA COMPARISON - CHILD IN NEED

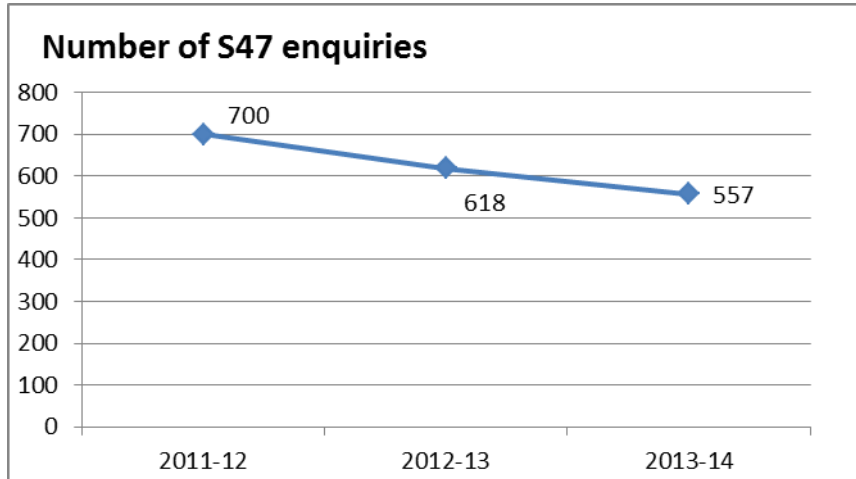
NUMBER OF REFERRALS TO CSC	
YEAR	No of Referrals
2011-12	2089
2012-13	1681
2013-14	1732



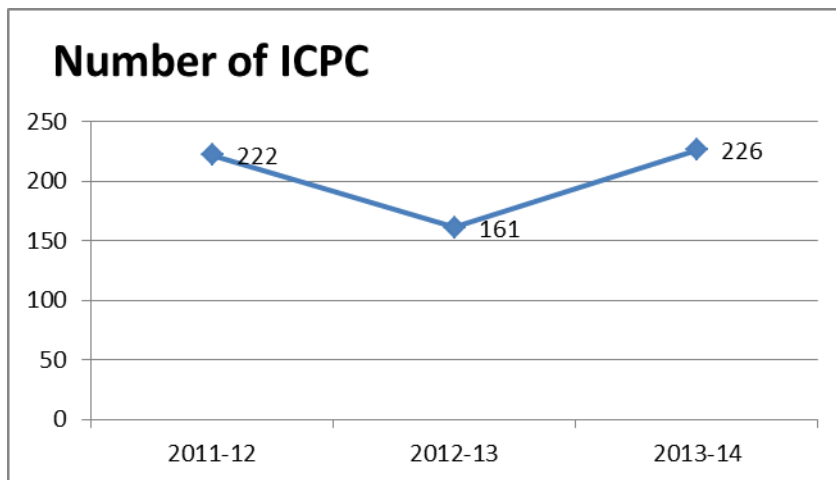
ASSESSMENTS - NI68	
% OF REFERRALS GOING ON TO INITIAL ASSESSMENTS	
YEAR	ASSESSMENT %
2011-12	94.3%
2012-13	96.0%
2013-14	83.0%



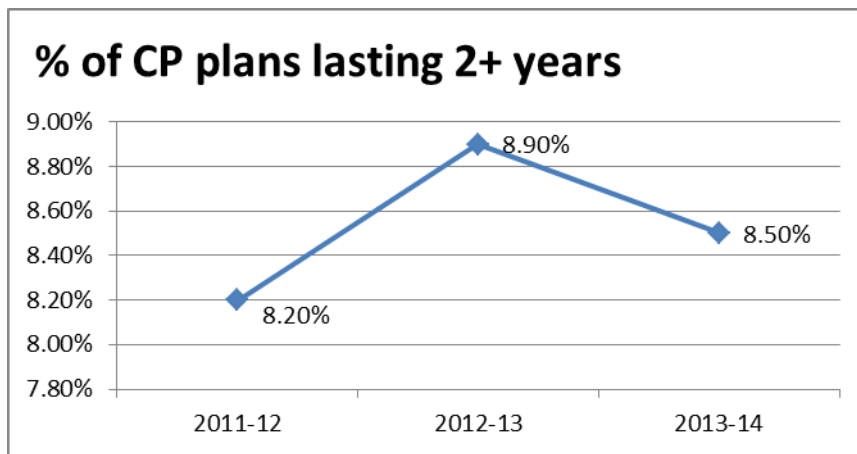
SECTION 47	
YEAR	Number of S47 initiated
2011-12	700
2012-13	618
2013-14	557



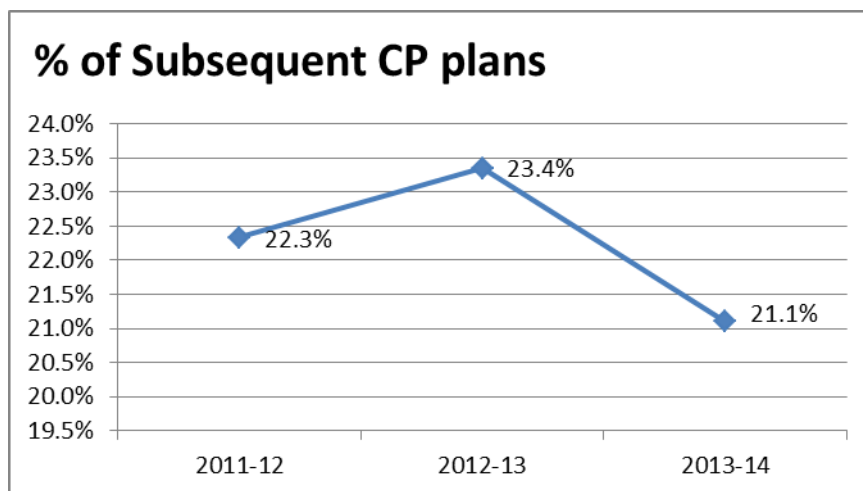
Initial Child Protection Conferences	
YEAR	Number of ICPC
2011-12	222
2012-13	161
2013-14	226



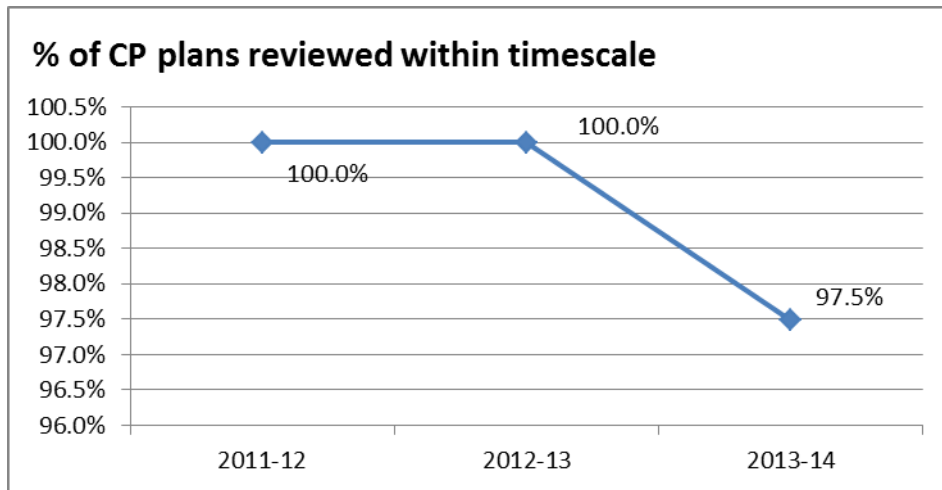
NI64		
CHILD PROTECTION PLAN LASTING 2 YEARS OR MORE		
YEAR	Number	%
2011-12	16	8.20%
2012-13	18	8.90%
2013-14	17	8.50%



NI65		
Child Protection Plan FOR 2nd OR SUBSEQUENT TIME		
YEAR	Number	%
2011-12	46	22.3%
2012-13	39	23.4%
2013-14	42	21.1%

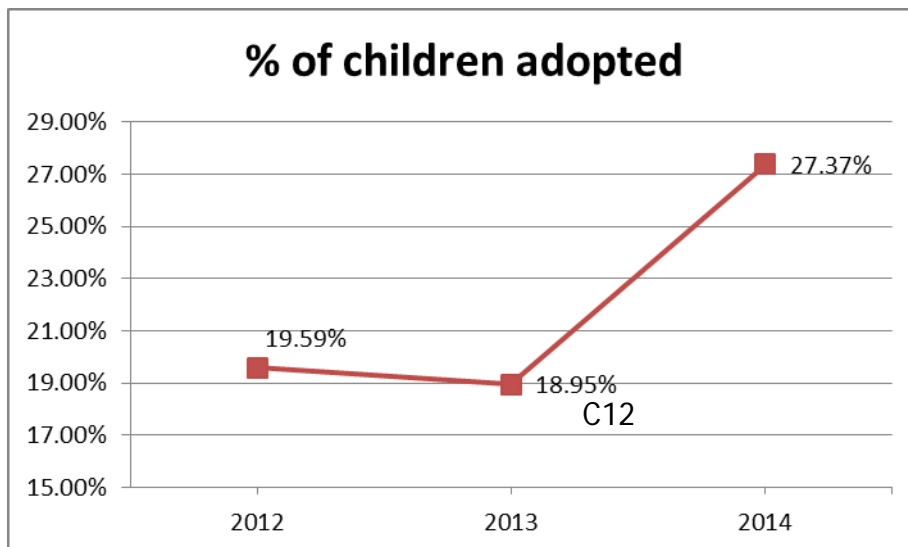


NI67		
Child Protection REVIEWS WITHIN TIMESCALE		
YEAR	CP ELIGIBLE	%
2011-12	134	100.0%
2012-13	125	100.0%
2013-14	116	97.5%



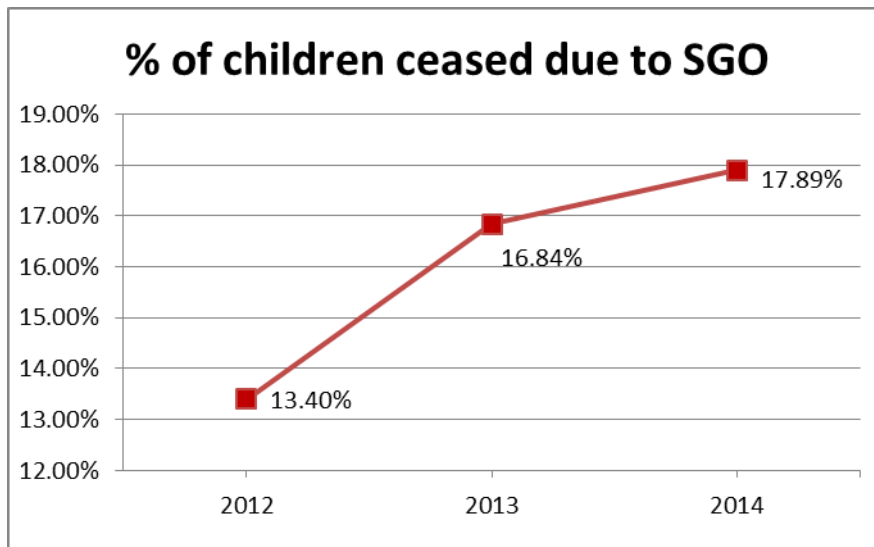
SSDA903 Returns 2011/12 to 2013/14

Adoption 1 - The percentage of children who ceased to be looked after who were adopted			
Year	%	No. adopted	Total ceased
2012	19.59%	19	97
2013	18.95%	18	95
2014	27.37%	26	95



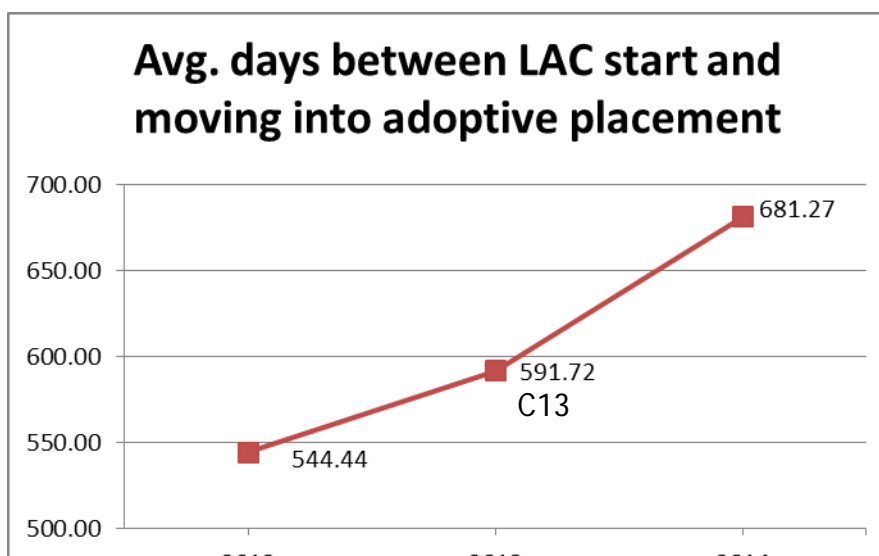
Adoption 2 - The percentage of children who ceased to be looked after because of a special guardianship order

Year	%	No. ceased to SGO	Total ceased
2012	13.40%	13	97
2013	16.84%	16	95
2014	17.89%	17	95

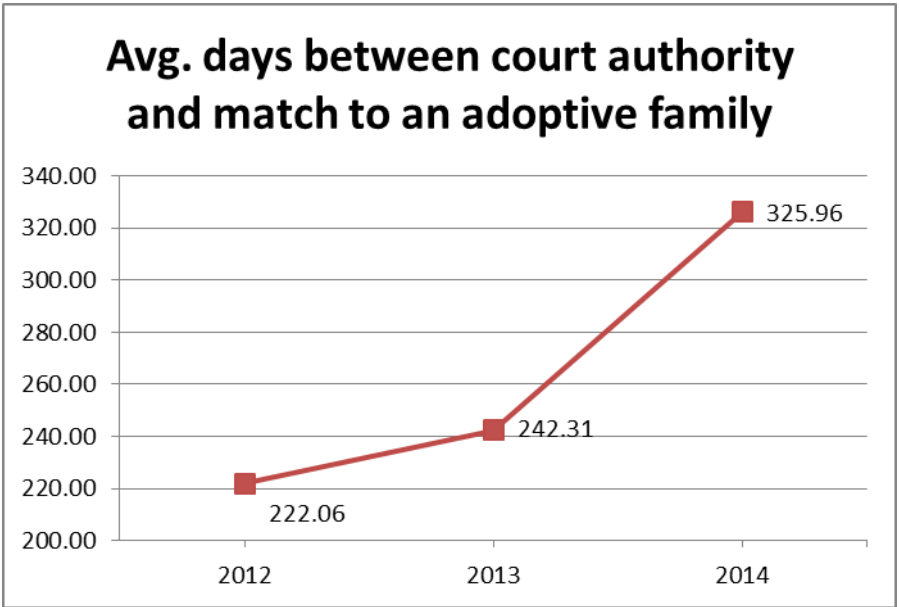


A1 - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family, for children who have been adopted (days)

Year	Avg. days	No. of days	No. of children
2012	544.44	9880	18
2013	591.72	10651	18
2014	681.27	17713	26



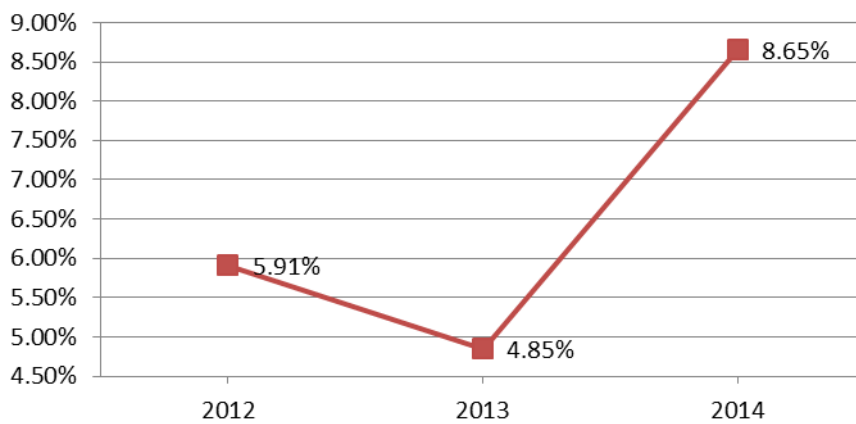
A2 - Average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family (days)			
Year	Avg. days	No. of days	No. of children
2012	222.06	3553	16
2013	242.31	3877	16
2014	325.96	8475	26



Placement 1 -The percentage of children looked after with three or more placements during the year ending 31 March

Year	%	No.of children	Total children
2012	5.91%	14	237
2013	4.85%	11	227
2014	8.65%	18	208

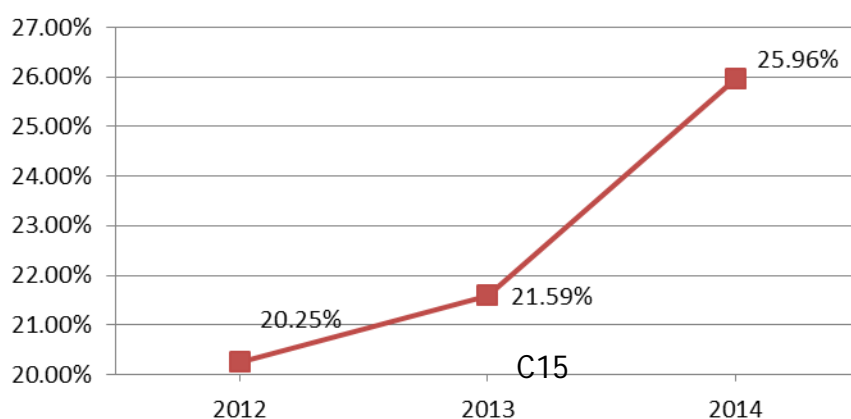
% of children looked after with 3 or more placements during the year



Placement 3 -The percentage of looked after children at 31 March placed outside LA boundary and more than 20 miles from where they used to live

Year	%	No.of children	Total children
2012	20.25%	48	237
2013	21.59%	49	227
2014	25.96%	54	208

% of children placed more than 20 miles at 31 March



L1 - The proportion of children leaving care over the age of 16 who remained looked after until their 18th birthday

Year	%	No.of children	Total children
2012	77.27%	17	22
2013	66.67%	16	24
2014	66.67%	14	21

