

Cabinet

15 OCTOBER 2012

**CABINET MEMBER
FOR CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

*Councillor Helen
Binmore*

**ANNUAL CHILD PROTECTION REPORT
1 APRIL 2011 TO 31 MARCH 2012**

**Ward:
ALL**

This report is for information only. To inform Cabinet of child protection activity over the preceding financial year and to advise on the strategy for the next 12 months.

The report was considered by Education Select Committee in April 2012.

CONTRIBUTORS

Children's Social Care
Division

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

**HAS THE REPORT
CONTENT BEEN
RISK ASSESSED?
N/A**

**HAS A EIA BEEN
COMPLETED?
N/A**

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report highlights the following issues:

- Activity continued to rise following the previous report, with the number of children with child protection plans peaking at 250 in April 2010. This is now back down to levels consistent with our statistical neighbours
- All child protection cases have remained allocated to a social worker despite of the high demand.
- A detailed action plan has been implemented in response to the increased numbers of children with child protection plans, to safely manage the demand and reduce activity in line with that of our statistical neighbours.
- Child protection remains a priority for the Council, and despite the savings agenda the number of qualified social workers delivering a child protection service has increased by 2 over the past year

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 This is a revised and updated edition of the Child Protection Report presented to the Education Select Committee in April 2012. This update has been completed by Anna Carpenter, Safeguarding Review and Quality Assurance Manager.

2.2 This report details information about child protection activity in the Borough from April 2011 through to March 2012 comparing our performance with that of our statistical neighbours and providing a tri-borough perspective where this information is available. The report references the work undertaken primarily within the key front-line operational services – the Contact and Assessment and Family Support and Child Protection Services.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 It is a fact that in society, children may be harmed and seriously injured by their parents and carers. This may take the form of physical injury, sexual abuse, developmental impairment, neglect or emotional abuse. The increasing prevalence of drug and alcohol misuse by parents significantly impacts on child protection numbers. Increased awareness of the impact of domestic violence on children's self image and confidence has widened the scope of child protection to include those children affected. However, the number of children in need of protection relative to the total child population remains very small.

3.2 Child protection involves the identification and multi-agency assessment of the care provided to children who may be at risk of harm from their parents/ carers, together with the development of a plan to reduce the risk of harm to those children by the coordination and provision of services. Child protection also requires continuous monitoring of the effectiveness of this plan, and prompt action to seek a court order to remove children in those circumstances where the level of risk cannot be satisfactorily mitigated.

3.3 The services primarily involved in this are:

- **Family Support and Localities Service**

The 'Localities' service provides children and their families in the borough with an early help preventative service. One of the core objectives of this service is to intervene and prevent vulnerable families becoming dangerous and/or neglectful families who would then require a child protection response.

- **Contact and Assessment (CAS)**

CAS responds to new referrals by screening all communication with the Department; it decides what should be passed on to other services and, where necessary, follows-up with an assessment or child protection enquiry. CAS will investigate child protection referrals and, where required by the enquiry, call an initial child protection conference to bring together all agencies working with children. Where the risk to children is immediate and high, staff will take emergency action to support the implementation of effective interventions including removal of children where necessary.

Currently, there is work being undertaken between the Family Support and Localities Service and CAS to consider how the front door to children's services can be a more family friendly and efficient service.

- **Family Support and Child Protection (FSCP)**

Where further work is necessary, the FSCP service assumes responsibility for the case. Their role is to coordinate the on-going work to reduce the risk to the children. Where progress is insufficient and the children remain at risk they will take the case to court seeking a court order for their removal.

- **Safeguarding and Quality Assurance (SQA)**

This service coordinates child protection case conferences, and provides independent chairs for case conferences and independent reviewing officers, if a child becomes 'looked after' (formerly known as "in care"). The service provides an independent check on the

appropriateness of the child protection plan and the quality of service provision. It is also responsible for providing an overview of child protection activity to inform strategy and operational planning in relation to child protection through regular audits. The Safeguarding Unit has begun the process of becoming an integrated tri-borough service, a new Head of Safeguarding, Review and Quality Assurance has been appointed and she will continue to the work to develop a fully integrated service.

- **Legal Services**

If at any point the risk to children is so significant the assessment concludes they should not remain at home, either the CAS or FSCP service may make an application to court to seek the removal of the children from the care of their parent/s. Legal Services provide specialist advice and guidance in making this decision, where necessary, coordinating submission of the written application and evidence, and briefing the barrister representing the Local Authority in the proceedings.

- **Contact service and transport/escorting costs**

The Local Authority is required to provide supervised contact for those children who become looked after by an order of the court. In these circumstances a contact order will usually be made, which specifies the amount of contact allowed between the parents and the children. We provide supervised contact through the in-house service currently based at the Askham Centre. Contact is normally for up to two hours, and between three and five times a week. It also requires an escort to bring the child to the Centre and a contact supervisor to monitor and note the interactions between the parent/s and the child, and produce notes which may be used in court. The cost implications are therefore significant, extending beyond the supervision time to include the transport costs and the cost of escorting children, many of whom reside outside the Borough, to and from the Centre.

- **Placements for children**

The Council must provide a placement for children who need to be removed from the care of their parents. Ideally and in the main this will be with a foster family; although, in certain circumstances, a residential placement may be necessary.

- **Schools and other external agencies**

Schools have an important role in the identification of children needing child protection services and in monitoring children where a child protection concern exists. In areas where there is a concentration of children with child protection concerns, some

schools have reported difficulty in monitoring children without taking staff away from other tasks.

- **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**

The LADO take lead responsibility for managing allegations against professionals. Working in partnership and in consultation with the Head of Safeguarding Unit, the LADO provides specialist advice, support and consultation to all multi-agency service heads. The LADO also has responsibilities for safer recruitment.

- **The LSCB**

The LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Board) is the statutory mechanism for agreeing how partner agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The Board, which has an independent chair, is made up of senior managers from all the key agencies working with children within the Borough.

The role of the Board is to strengthen and improve multi-agency participation in safeguarding processes within the Borough as well as scrutinising, auditing and quality assuring child protection practice within the Borough.

As of the 1st April 2012, the LSCB became a Tri-Borough LSCB, rationalising these functions across the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster City Council. The main benefits of this are supporting the strategic planning of multi-agency safeguarding across a three borough landscape enabling an overview that can aid in commissioning, standardising practice and improve safeguarding practice.

4. ACTIVITY REPORT

- 4.1 In the 12 months, ending March 2012, there were 1,391 referrals to children's social care, which in turn led to 1,294 initial and 690 core assessments being undertaken.¹ (Initial assessments are undertaken with ten days and constitute a preliminary fact-finding and risk assessment, core assessments are much more complex multi-agency pieces of work taking up to 35 days.)
- 4.2 Where child protection concerns were identified 622 strategy discussions were held and this led to 411 child protection enquiries (section 47 investigations). Where ongoing concerns were established this resulted in 159 Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) being

¹ Note: As of the 1st February 2012 Initial and Core Assessments have been replaced by the Single Assessment 'Freedom and Flexibilities' Pilot

held within the period. It is of significant note that 90 percent of convened Initial Conferences resulted in the child being made subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP), indicating that the appropriateness of the concerns and the need for a safeguarding plan is robust.

2011/12	No of Strategy Discussions	Strategy Discussions leading to Section 47	No of ICPC	% s47 leading to ICPC	ICPC within 15 days	% ICPC within 15 days	ICPC leading to CPP	% ICPC leading to CPP
RBKC	Not available	378	115	30.4	111	96.5	96	83.5
LBHF	622	411	159	38.7	77	48.4	144	90.6
WCC	674	339	135	40.0	100	74.0	119	88.0

- 4.3 As of March 31st 2012 there were 137 children subject to a child protection plan. The table below provides comparative data shown as rates per 10,000 children.

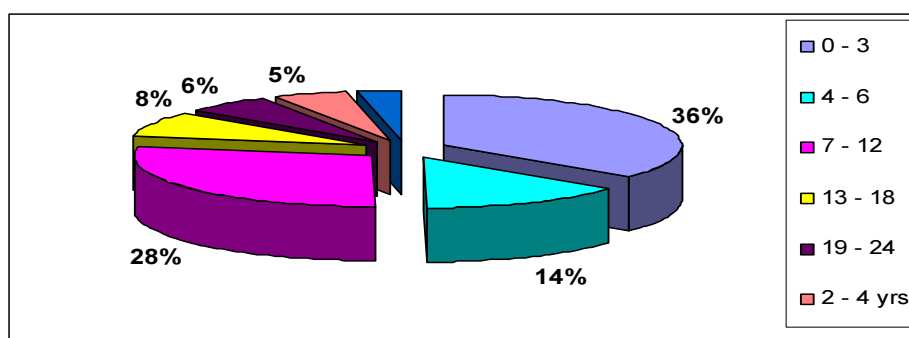
CP Plans open at Year end per 10,000 children	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
RBKC	18.5	24.4	28.9	30.4	26.1
LBHF	47.0	54.9	74.9	48.6	42.0
WCC	23.4	39.8	38.5	28.0	26.6

- 4.4 The total numbers of children subject to a child protection plan fell from 151 in March 2011 to 137 in March 2012. There has been a significant decline in the numbers over the past 2 years following a steep increase in response to the Peter Connelly case. There has also been a significant focus on developing robust child protection plans which has contributed to greater stability.
- 4.5 The information below is based on our reported performance measured against the average reported by our tri-borough partners.

2011-12	Rate of Referrals per 10,000	Rate of re-referrals per 10,000	IA's as a percentage of Referrals	CA completed within 35 Days	Section 47 rates per 10,000	ICPC per 10,000	Children added to CP Plans per 10,000	Rate of CP plans per 10,000*
RBKC	667.3	137.3	76.0%	72.3%	124.8	38.0	31.7	26.1
LBHF	532.0	87.1	93.0%	No longer measured	128.8	49.8	45.1	42.0
WCC	588.7	73.0	68.5%	No longer measured	167.0	33.6	29.7	26.6

4.6 At the time of the previous report the rate of Child Protection Plans was very high. In the course of the past year there has been considerable effort to ensure children do not remain subject to CP plans for long periods of time. This has been achieved through ensuring plans are robust and the setting up of a multi-agency Child Protection Panel which reviews long term CP plans.

Month End	Time on CP plan 0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 18	19 - 24	2 - 4 yrs	4+ yrs	Total
Feb-11	40	24	46	22	9	20	2	163
Apr-11	19	40	30	22	16	18	2	147
Jun-11	33	42	37	19	8	11	2	152
Aug-11	25	46	40	24	12	11	2	160
Oct-11	33	34	36	9	15	10	2	139
Dec-11	25	32	57	13	13	13	2	155
Feb-12	31	30	54	19	14	12	4	164
Mar-12	49	19	39	11	8	7	4	137



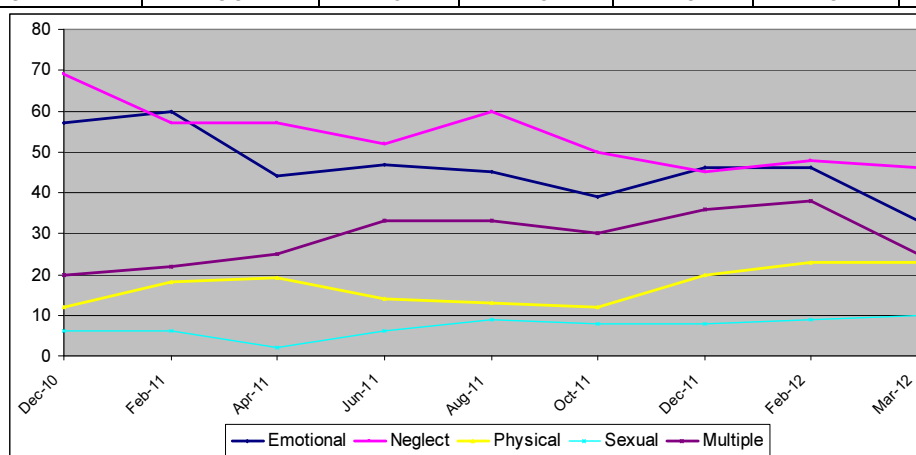
The table below shows the numbers and percentages of children subject to a child protection plan by age range. As can be seen, 25% are age 3 or under.

Month End	0 - 1	%	2 - 3	%	4 - 8	%	9 - 14	%	15 +	%
Mar-10	40	17%	38	16%	75	32%	71	30%	14	6%
Oct-10	29	17%	25	15%	52	30%	59	35%	6	4%
Apr-11	21	14%	21	14%	43	29%	54	37%	8	5%
Oct-11	20	14%	16	12%	47	34%	49	35%	7	5%
Mar-12	21	15%	14	10%	43	31%	46	34%	13	9%

4.7 Those children over 14 who are subject to child protection plans are mainly siblings of younger children. Where this is not the case, this is usually attributable to immediate harm such as physical abuse, sexual abuse and, increasingly, exposure to domestic violence.

4.8 The majority of children subject to a Child Protection Plan are recorded under the category of Neglect followed by Emotional Abuse, with increasing recognition of the impact of domestic violence. As is seen in the table below the category of Sexual Abuse remains low, however there is some evidence of an increase in recognition and response regarding this area of abuse.

Month End	Emotional	Neglect	Physical	Sexual	Multiple	Total
Mar-10	73	96	18	2	49	238
Oct-10	62	71	12	5	21	171
Apr-11	44	57	19	2	25	147
Oct-11	39	50	12	8	30	139
Mar-12	33	46	23	10	25	137



Care Proceedings

4.9 We have had a slight increase in the number of care proceedings cases in the last year, with the monthly average number of cases in court now at 52, up from 49 in 2009. In total this relates to 82 children per month.

4.10 There has been a continuing concern in relation to the courts not making interim care orders when applications are made to remove children from home due to actual or suspected abuse. This trend has seen a significant rise in children remaining at home whilst

assessments are repeated or new assessments undertaken. This practice effectively slows down the ability of social workers to ensure that, when children are eventually removed from parental care, there are clear plans for permanency in place. Courts have been taking an average of 65 weeks to conclude care proceedings and there are frequent delays in progressing cases in a timely way.

- 4.11 In response to this, we have undertaken a significant piece of work – The Care Proceedings Pilot, with the Judiciary, the Clerks to the Judiciary and Cafcass, the organisation which represents the child in court, and agreed a new framework for managing cases in care proceedings which it is hoped will see care proceedings cases resolved within a timeframe of 26 weeks.
- 4.12 In addition to this, we have been one of the 4 Local Authorities who have commissioned assessments from the Family Drugs and Alcohol Court (FDAC). This is a specialist court, delivered through the Inner London family Proceedings courts, which works with parents who have substance misuse issues. A family identified for the FDAC process will have more direct contact with the judge in proceedings and will be offered intensive treatment within the court proceedings to manage their addiction issues,. To date, we have referred 6 families for FDAC intervention and the early signs are the process is resulting in improved outcomes for parents managing their substance misuse issues and therefore increased likelihood of children being able to remain within their family.

5. UPDATE ON WORK PLAN

- 5.1 The authority underwent its safeguarding and looked after children inspection in June 2011 where children's services were rated as one of the very best in the country with all of the inspection criteria receiving a good or outstanding assessment. We also underwent a thematic inspection of our children with disabilities service. This was also positive, though no actual ratings are given in thematic inspections .
- 5.2 As has been reported in preceding pages we have safely reduced the number of children on the child protection list. This has been achieved both through improvement in the confidence and experience of the workforce, particularly in the front-line services, and closer supervision and support to staff and managers. There have been changes to how child protection conferences are organised/recorded and monitored, which has allowed a move away from verbatim minutes for every meeting towards a summary record. We were successful in creating a system where the Safeguarding Unit took over the convening of review child protection conferences, freeing up social workers from this task.
- 5.3 We changed how child protection plans are formulated so that they focus on risk and express a clear sense of what outcomes are being

sought for children rather than wider 'children in need' issues which must be considered by the core group meetings.

- 5.4 We had discussions with partner agencies about ensuring their compliance with and attendance to core group meetings. More work is required in this regard though we have been able to establish a link between poorly attended conferences followed by poorly attended core groups. Professional attendance is monitored by the SQA service via a monitoring form completed by the child protection chair at the end of each conference. Child protection chairs are also alerted by social workers and/or their managers to persistent non attendee's at core group meetings. The follow up is robust and the data/information is fed back to the LSCB. Overall, there has been an improvement in this area.
- 5.5 There are ongoing considerations as to how we can improve our child protection services both in the way they are delivered within the current organisational structure, and whether a structural change can lead to better outcomes for vulnerable children, (i.e. the single front door mentioned above), and how we can learn about our service through feedback from children and their families. This will form part of the work plan for the coming year.
- 5.6 We have implemented a multi-agency CP panel whose primary role is to monitor those children who have remained subject to a CP plan for 12 months or more. This panel provide advice and specialist direction focussing on difficult to reach families and cases where plans have become stuck and/or difficult to achieve.
- 5.7 We have also implemented a system that provides social workers and managers with feedback on their cases so we can continue to build confidence in the workforce through constructive commentary about performance.
- 5.8 The Learning and Development Strategy with particular emphasis on post-qualifying specialist training has been rolled out and is fully subscribed. Hammersmith and Fulham is also the lead authority for the West London Pilot which is aiming to develop a range of sustainable improvements in both the recruitment, retention and professional development of social work staff.
- 5.9 We have made substantial changes to the Integrated Children's System (ICS) which has simplified the case recording requirements and freed up social workers to devote more time to direct work. We are also partners in the Department of Education's pilot, to allow for more flexible approaches to be taken in assessing children and their families by removing timescales and targets and leaving the authority to draw up its own good practice expectations.

- 5.10 In 2011, a specific group of operational managers from across children's social care, and leads from police and health formed a working group to understand why our performance in regard to sexual abuse is yielding very low numbers of referrals, assessments and child protection plans. This led to the creation of an advisory group of professionals who meet monthly to provide consultation to any professional who may be concerned about sexual abuse taking place within a family they are working with. This has strengthened practice and led to more informed and better evidenced assessments and interventions.
- 5.11. Work continues with identifying and intervening where there are concerns a child/young person is being sexually exploited. Those young people deemed to be most at risk or whose situations are dangerous are referred to the Barnardo's SE One project who provide assertive outreach, diversion and intervention. These are intensive programmes of support that can not be provided through a social work service. So far, 69 children have been considered through this programme at various levels of risk.

6. WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2012/13

Service User Feedback

- 6.1 We are developing more intelligent systems for collecting and analysing service user feedback to inform how we can improve services to children and their families. Each family who has received a service will now be sent a feedback form when their case is closed.

Care Proceedings Pilot

- 6.2 We have begun the care proceedings pilot mentioned earlier in this report. This is a Tri-borough work stream which has the full support of all three Local Authorities, as each Authority has had similar concerns as Hammersmith and Fulham in relation to the about delays in care proceedings.

The pilot requires that the Local Authorities ensure:

- All cases are allocated to an experienced social worker.
- Social work continuity is be provided as a priority.
- Social workers provide high quality written and verbal assessments and statements to the court.
- Social workers use feedback from the courts to address the need for continuous improvement of assessments.

- Social workers present their case confidently in court, demonstrating they are experts about the child and providing in-depth knowledge about the family situation.
- Social workers provide a detailed outline of the timescale for the child in their initial submission to court, with a narrative around the consequences of not meeting the recommended timescale.
- A Tri-borough Case Manager has been appointed to track and monitor cases and provide coaching and preparation guidance to all social workers.
- Social workers and their managers engage in post case review workshops with the courts and be open to critical reflection about the progress of pilot cases in reducing unnecessary delay.
- The courts provide judicial continuity for cases.
- The courts do not agree requests for unnecessary or repeat assessments which result in delay.

Quality Assurance Pilot

- 6.3 The FSCP service are the pilot for a new quality assurance system that will provide a more detailed assessment of the effectiveness, compliance and management of the service through a whole service audit and review. This comprehensive service review is based upon the system developed with our colleagues in the Safeguarding Adults Unit and implemented within the Community Division.

Freedom's and Flexibilities Pilot

- 6.4 The Contact and Assessment Service are leading on the Department of Education's 'freedoms and flexibilities' pilot. This will continue until October 2012, following which it is anticipated there will be changes to the statutory assessment framework and associated guidance (Working Together to Safeguard Children). An initial evaluation was undertaken in April 2012 with positive qualitative outcomes noted. The evaluation process is ongoing with an audit review planned for September 2012.

Single Front Door

- 6.5 The Contact and Assessment Service will work with the Localities Service in bringing the 'front door' of children's services together into a single front door for children's services.

Tri-Borough Safeguarding, Review and Quality Assurance Service

- 6.6 The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit will become a tri-borough function, with one overall senior manager responsible for the

strategic development of the safeguarding service and tri-borough LSCB.

Integrated Review and Quality Assurance System

- 6.7 The Integrated Quality Review System for children's services will be rolled out to include the Localities Service. This system is a peer case review system that ensures at least one case per manager in Family Services reviews a peers' case against 10 quality review questions. This has been in place in children's social care for 18 months and is considered to be very successful. The system is currently being updated to improve the quality of the data.

The Local Safeguarding Children's Board

- 6.8 As the LSCB is now tri-borough, a local multi-agency partnership group has been set up. This group meets quarterly and ensures local and sovereign issues are considered and discussed across local agencies and where necessary local actions taken. This group reports directly to the LSCB.

Services to Sexually Exploited Children

- 6.9 The Barnardo's SE ONE project will continue to deliver direct work to children and young people who at the highest risk of sexual exploitation by peers and adults. Consideration will be given to extending the service across the three boroughs.

Multi-Agency Advisory Group on Child Sexual Abuse

- 6.10 The department also run an advisory group for all professionals where they may be concerned about a child being sexually abused within their family home/placement or by a family member. The standing members of this group are all experienced multi-agency specialists in this area of work and provide a safe consultative space for anyone working with a child to think about issues and plan strategies they can take back to their managers and be more effective in their work with children. This has been seen as successful and will continue during the coming year.

Feedback from OFSTED

- 6.11 Last year's Safeguarding and Looked after Children inspection and the Child Serious Case review both provided action plans and work continues on implementation throughout the coming year.

Improved Child Protection Planning

- 6.12 Work started last year in relation to CP planning and intervention will continue to ensure that: CP plans and work with core groups become even more effective and timely with the focus on risk and outcomes; the protection of children commences at the point at which concerns arise; plans to intervene and deal with risk and maltreatment are within the child's timescale.

7. EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTION THIS YEAR

A child abused through sexual exploitation

- 7.1 B, 14 years old was referred to the Barnardo's SE One project by the Family Support and Child Protection Team social worker for the child after she was found by the police in the home of a man in his mid twenties. She was interviewed by the police and disclosed that the adult male who she was found with, knew her age and her groomed her into a sexual relationship with him. B met the adult male in his mid twenties when she was particularly vulnerable. She had just broken up with a boyfriend of her own age, her mother was very ill, so life at home was very unsettling. The adult male offered her alcohol and somewhere to stay to get away from home, which B felt at the time, was a welcome relief to the problems she was currently experiencing in her life.
- 7.2 Social Services were already involved with the family, due to a very complex family background where mother had a history of substance misuse and her children had experience neglect. Their mother is currently no longer abusing substances, but has multiple medical conditions both physical and psychiatric. She has difficulties in putting safe boundaries at home to keep her children safe. B worries about her mother's health a lot and often takes time off school to look after her.
- 7.3 Since the sexual exploitation took place, B has found it difficult to concentrate on attending school. Through communication between the social worker and the school, measures have been put in place to support B in improving her attendance. The social worker, the police and Barnardo's have all worked together to support B when she attended court to give evidence against the adult male. Through the professional network, B was able to feel supported, felt prepared for the court process and new what each agencies role in supporting her would entail.
- 7.4 Now B has given evidence in court, the police are no longer involved. Social Services, education and Barnardo's continue to work closely together to provide a supportive package for B. School are continuing to support her in improving her attendance, social worker is supporting

B's mother in improving the home environment, developing strategies so she can implement clear boundaries at home and incentives to support her daughter to improve school attendance. Barnardo's is offering B weekly sessions so she can go through the "Bewise" programme, to continue to develop her self-esteem and support her in making safe choices.

A case of child neglect

- 7.5 Child A was first referred to children social care in 2007 at the age of 2, His parents were struggling to care for him. There were significant concerns regarding the father's abuse of alcohol and mental health. The mother also had mental health issues and there was neglect of Child A's basic needs for routine, stability, food and a clean and stimulating home environment. The mother became pregnant with her second child and the couple separated, and father became the sole carer of Child A.
- 7.6 Child A was made subject to a child protection plan in March 2007 and father was provided with significant support to improve his parenting. Changes did take place and Child A was removed from a child protection plan in July 2008 and provided with child in need support.
- 7.7 However, in April 2010 concerns increased and the case was brought back to child protection conference. It was evident that Child A's eczema was not being treated and father's alcohol consumption had increased again. The father's agoraphobia appeared to be getting worse, and he was often short of money resulting in lack of food for Child A. A new child protection plan was commenced, but the father was unable to work with the professional network and there were increasing concerns for the safety and emotional welfare of Child A. We initiated care proceedings and Child A went into foster care for a period of time. A Family Group Conference was convened and relatives in Ireland were identified as potential carers for Child A. A full assessment was completed and the outcome was successful in that the relative carer was able to provide Child A with the physical and emotional care required. Child A was permanently placed with his new carer in November 2011 under a Special Guardianship Order. Child A has settled well with his new carer and is now attending school in Ireland, He has on-going family contact with his father and mother through visits in the UK and Ireland and uses a webcam to keep in touch, and sustain the relationship with his parents.

8. COMMENTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

- 8.1 The Executive Director has no comments of this report.

8. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW

8.1 The Director of Law has no comments of this report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

No.	Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext of holder of file/copy	Department/ Location
1.	Children's Social Care Performance & Management Reports	Steve Miley x 2300	145 King Street
2.	LBHF Assessment Pilot Report for DFE	Steve Miley x 2300	145 King Street
CONTACT OFFICER:		NAME: Anna Carpenter EXT: 5124	