



Cabinet

8 FEBRUARY 2010

**CABINET MEMBER
FOR CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

Councillor Sarah Gore

**REPORT ON THE INCREASED DEMAND FOR
CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES
FOLLOWING THE BABY PETER CASE**

**Wards
All**

This report outlines the financial impact in Hammersmith and Fulham of increased social care costs following the Baby Peter case.

CONTRIBUTORS

DChS
DFCS
ADLDS

Recommendations:

- 1. To note the service reviews and other mitigating action within Children Services to address spending pressures within the Complex Needs division.**
- 2. To note that the 2010-11 estimates contain a growth proposal of £1m in recognition of the continued spending pressure faced by the Complex Needs division following the Baby Peter case.**
- 3. To approve a virement of £1m in 2009-10 from reserves to support spending pressures faced by the Complex Needs division following the Baby Peter case.**

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The publicity surrounding the death of Baby Peter (Nov 2008) generated a heightened awareness of children's need for protection by both the public and professionals and has led to a significant increase in referrals and child protection activity nationally and locally. Appendix A sets out the operational impact on the Complex Needs division since November 2008.
- 1.2 This report outlines the financial impact in Hammersmith and Fulham, including the need for additional funding and mitigating measures introduced within the Complex Needs division and the Children's Services Department to contain spending pressures in 2008-09, 2009-10 and in 2010-11
- 1.3 The 2008-09 outturn position for CHS was an overspend of £0.562 million (excluding asylum costs). The increased social care activity that followed Baby Peter's death and other pressures within the Complex Needs division contributed to the department's outturn position with an overspend of approximately £1m.
- 1.4 The areas of pressure during 2008-09 can be separated into three key areas of staffing, transport and contact costs as set out below, (excluding legal costs that were funded corporately).

	£000
Additional social work costs in order to address the increase in referrals as a result of the recent Baby Peter publicity	545
Complex Needs Transport: Extra expenditure on contact and transport of Looked After Children.	350
Increased Contact costs as a result of court directed arrangements.	100
Total	995

- 1.5 The department contained the outturn position to £0.562 million through use of alternative funding opportunities and some in-year savings.

2. 2009-10 REVENUE POSITION

- 2.1 As part of the analytical review of the 2008-09 outturn it was identified that the continuing increased demand pressures would need to be countered by significant spend reductions within the department in order to contain the overspend as much as possible. A Budget Action Plan was prepared and

implemented in order to deliver total cost reductions of £1.1m, including (initially) £0.25 million within Complex Needs for 2009-10.

- 2.2 However, as set out in Appendix A, the pressure on the service as a result of the Baby Peter case continues to increase. The general “front door” indicators of new work coming into the Department are: the number of Initial Child Contacts, Initial Assessments, and Core Assessments; these have all shown between 20% and 30% increases as compared with last year.
- 2.3 In addition, key indicators relating to the number of child protection investigations undertaken, the number of initial child protection conferences, the number of children on the child protection list, and the number of care proceedings have shown a much higher rate of increase of between 55% - 85%.
- 2.4 All of this increased volume, together with other spending pressures within Complex Needs incurs additional expenditure. However the department is responding by attempting to minimise unbudgeted expenditure and to ensure that it can demonstrate increased value for money in the delivery of these services.

3. COMPLEX NEEDS SERVICE REVIEWS AND ACTION PLANS

- 3.1 One of the reviews that has been initiated has been a review of the transport arrangements for looked after children which has resulted in the introduction of a number of controls, greater scrutiny of new contact arrangements and a review of existing ones. As a direct consequence of this review, the monthly costs associated with transport have decreased by an average of 50% during the year with a reduction of 60% in the number of journeys undertaken in the same period.
- 3.2 In addition the service had an action plan associated with the achievement of an MTFs headcount target for the division of 5% [14 posts] .This has been more than doubled to the deletion of 31 funded posts during 2009-10.
- 3.3 The full list of prioritised service reviews is set out below
 - Review of the Contact Service
 - Further review of the structure of the Division
 - Review of social work caseloads
 - Review of the Emergency Duty Team [Out of Hours Service]
 - Review of the service to 18+ care leavers,
 - Review of Preventative Services
 - In conjunction with Joint Commissioner, review of joint funded placements.

4. CHILDREN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

4.1 However, the spending pressures faced by Complex Needs cannot be fully contained within the division. Both in 2008/09 and 2009/10 the department's financial position has been predicated upon the need to move funding in from other divisions to support the spending pressures faced.

4.2 A major area of consideration for the department is the need to drive efficiencies out of the commissioning process. The proportion of the Council's budget that is available for commissioning is about £6m. The presumption is that the Department will deliver 20% the target saving i.e. £1.2 over 5 years. So far the following initiatives are being worked on.

- * £70k from management costs
- * £170k from staff cost efficiencies
- * £270k recommissioning family support services
- * £260k recommissioning youth services

= £770k

4.3 In total, £860k of funding has been redirected into Complex Needs in 2009-10 to support spending pressures and as substitution for undeliverable MTFS initiatives.

5. 2009-10 FUNDING REQUIREMENT

5.1 In spite of the many initiatives introduced during the current year, the revenue forecast shows that further spending pressures on the department are expected to be sustained in the current year, and that activity levels higher than those reflected in the budget will also continue to rise. The following table sets out the spending pressures specifically relating to Complex Needs as a consequence of the Baby Peter case.

Reason	Estimated Cost
Cost of staff to accommodate the increase in referrals etc.	838,000
Increased care proceedings, courts fees and PLO	660,000
Increase court ordered supervision of contact	179,000
Increased security required to manage those new cases where parents are threatening	63,000
The cost of additional looked after children in fostering / residential placements	155,000
Serious Case Reviews	10,500
Independent Audit on the quality of safeguarding in Baby Peter type cases.	30,500
Total additional costs	1,936,000

- 5.2 In addition to the spending pressures set out above, the Complex Needs division is facing other pressures totalling £1.7m. However, the initiatives adopted by the department have reduced the overall departmental overspend to £1.3m
- 5.3 In light of the continuing pressure on the Complex Needs division of the Children Services Department it is recommended to draw down £1m from reserves to fund expenditure specifically related to the impact of the Baby Peter case.
- 5.4 The department would then be expected to deliver a balanced budget for 2009-10 and beyond.

6. 2010-11 FUNDING REQUIREMENT

- 6.1 Initial analysis has indicated that spending pressures affecting the child protection service could increase to £2.5m in 2010-11. The department's response to this has been three-fold. Significant efficiencies are to be derived from a number of service reviews within the Complex Needs [Complex Needs] division. In addition to this there will need to be a redirection of resources into the division from elsewhere in the department. Whilst these initiatives will deliver significant resources totalling £1.5m it is expected that a further £1m will be required and this is contained as a growth proposal in the 2010/11 estimates.

7. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES

- 7.1 The monthly Corporate Revenue Monitor Report has highlighted the budget pressures facing Children's Services over recent months. Cabinet have noted such pressures and have previously approved the draw down of £0.660m from balances to help the 2009/10 position. The report sets out the on-going spending pressures affecting the complex needs division and the response by the Children's Services department to contain expenditure as much as possible. It is proposed that an additional £1m draw down from balances be approved.
- 7.2 Provision has been made within the MTFs to finance £1m of growth in children's services relating to the baby Peter case from 2010/11 onwards and the further draw down in the current year would reflect the increased level of spend that could not have been fully anticipated when setting the estimates for the current year.
- 7.3 In order to achieve a balanced budget in the current year, Children's Services will have to produce further savings of £300k as set out in the CRM period 7. This will be monitored through the remainder of the year. The Council's general reserves stood at £14.8m as at 1st April 2009 and

Cabinet have so far approved that a total of £0.860m be drawn down in the current financial year. It is now proposed that a further £1m be drawn down. A budget recovery plan has been put in place to minimise all other emergent spend pressures.

8. COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES)

8.1 The comments from the Assistant Director (Legal and Democratic Services) have been incorporated into the appendix 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.	Financial Information	Dave McNamara	CHS, Cambridge House
2.	Child Protection Services – Background papers	Steve Miley	CHS, Cambridge House

Appendix A

REPORT ON THE INCREASED DEMAND FOR CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES FOLLOWING THE BABY PETER CASE

1 PURPOSE

1.1 The publicity surrounding the death of Baby Peter (Nov 2008) generated a heightened awareness of children's need for protection by both the public and professionals and has led to a significant increase in referrals and child protection activity nationally and locally. This report outlines the impact in Hammersmith and Fulham, covering both the increased child protection activity and the consequential additional costs.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Harm to children remains a serious problem in society. Children continue to be harmed by physical injury, sexual abuse, and their development may be impaired by neglect or emotional abuse. The increasing prevalence of drug and alcohol misuse by parents significantly impacts on child protection numbers. Increasing awareness of the impact of domestic violence on children's self image and confidence has widened the scope of child protection to include these children. These changes in society, together with increasing awareness by the public and professionals of the shared responsibility for protecting children by referring children who may be at risk of harm, has led to a higher number of children needing protection. Although the number relative to the total child population remains small.

2.2 Child protection involves the identification and assessment of the care provided to children who may be a risk of harm from their parents/carers; the development of a plan to reduce the risk of harm to those children by the coordination and provision of services; it also requires continuous monitoring of the effectiveness of that plan; and action taken to seek a court order to remove children where risks to children cannot be reduced by the child protection plan and services.

2.3 Since the publicity surrounding the Baby Peter case higher demand for child protection services has impacted on the following areas:

- **Contact and Assessment (CAS).** Our "front door service" responds to new referrals by screening all communication with the Department, deciding what should be passed on to other services and where necessary follows up referrals with an assessment or child protection enquiry. CAS will investigate child protection referrals and where indicated, call an initial child protection conference to bring all agencies working with children together. Where the risk to children is immediate and high, CAS will take emergency action to remove children.

- **Family Support and Child Protection (FSCP).** Where further work is needed, after the first case conference, the FSCP service will take the case over. Their role is to assess and coordinate work to reduce the risk to children. They will monitor the multi agency plan to ensure progress is being made; and where sufficient progress is not made and children remain at risk they will take the case to court seeking a court order for the removal of the children.
- **Safeguarding and quality assurance (SQA).** This service provides the coordination of child protection case conferences, the independent chairs of case conferences and if a child becomes looked after (formerly known as “in care”) the independent chair of the child’s looked after review meeting which reviews the plans for looked after children at regular intervals. The service provides an independent check on the appropriateness of the child protection plan and the quality of service provision. It is a regulatory requirement that this service is at “arm’s length” from the delivery of operational services.
- **Legal.** If at any point the risk to children is so significant that 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. Legal services provide specialist advice and guidance in the making of this decision, and coordinate where necessary the written application and evidence, and brief the barrister providing the advocacy for the Local Authority in the court proceedings.
- **Contact service and transport/escorting costs.** Where children become looked after by an order of the court a contact order specifying the amount of contact between the parents and the children will usually be made. This contact has to be arranged and monitored; this is done by our contact service at Askham Centre. Contact is usually for up to two hours, between three and five times a week; necessitating someone to bring the child to the centre, a contact supervisor to monitor and note the interactions between the parent and the child and then write up notes which may be used in court. The cost implications extend beyond the contact supervision time to include the transport costs and the cost of escorting the child to the contact centre. Two thirds of the fostering placements are outside the Borough boundary due to the difficulty in recruiting sufficient local foster carers. A significant cost of providing contact is transport and escorting costs.
- **Placements for children.** Where children need to be removed from the care of their parents the Council needs to provide a fostering placement for them or residential care if there are special circumstances which mean a foster carer could not manage the child. The average cost of a fostering placement is £23k per year plus staffing costs for an in house placement and £44k for a purchased placement from an independent provider (which includes the staffing costs). Where children cannot remain in fostering placements then the cost for residential care is

between £100k and £150k per year. Where for child protection reasons children need to be removed a significant proportion of the Local Authority costs arises from placement costs.

- **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; where there is a concentration of children with child protection concerns some schools have reported difficulty in maintaining the necessary level of attention and monitoring of children without taking staff away from other tasks.

3 THE INCREASED LEVEL OF DEMAND

3.1 Demand remains at a significantly higher level than a year ago and shows no sign of abating.

3.2 The general “front door” indicators of new work coming into the Department are: the number of Initial Child Contacts, Initial Assessments, and core assessments; these have all shown between a 20% and 30% increase as compared with last year.

- Initial child contacts¹ have increased from an average of 590 per month prior to 1st October 2008 to 700 per month in the period since then. (18%)
- Referrals² were averaging 125 a month in the six month prior to October 2008 and since then have averaged 153 a month. (20% increase).
- Initial Assessments³ have increased from an average of 106 per month in the 6 months prior to 1st October 2008 to 127 per month in the period since then. (19%)
- Core assessments⁴ have increased from an average of 40 per month in the first 6 months prior to 1st October 2008 to 53 per month in the period since then (32%).

3.3 As well as the general indicators noted above reflecting an increase in demand, so have the specific child protection indicators shown an increase as compared with last year; the key indicators are the number of child protection investigations undertaken, the number of initial child protection conferences, the number of children on the child protection list, and the number of care proceedings. These child protection indicators have shown a higher rate of increase than the general indicators listed in para 3.2 and have increased by 55% - 85%.

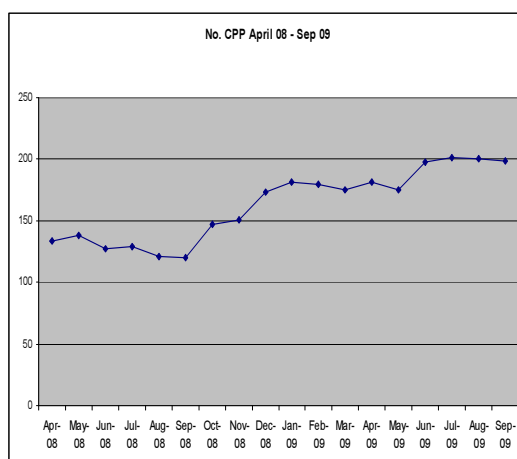
¹ A contact is a communication received by the Department about a child.

² A referral is defined as a request for services to be provided by the social services department

³ An Initial Assessment is the initial information gathering which must be done within 7 working days

⁴ A core assessment is defined as an in-depth assessment which addresses the central or most important aspects of the needs of a child and the capacity of his or her parents or caregivers to respond appropriately to these needs..

- The number of child protection enquiries has increased from an average of 23 a month to 36 a month – an increase of 56%.
- Initial child protection case conferences have increased from an average of 10 per month to 18.5 per month – an increase of 85%
- The number of children on the child protection list has increased from 121 a year ago to just over 200 today – an increase of a 65% (see table below)



3.4 Care proceedings. Not all child protection plans are effective in reducing risk to children and where the risk remains high then court action is needed to protect children. So a logical consequence of having high number on the child protection list is that a higher number of children in care proceedings will result. There is currently a high proportion of the looked after population involved in care proceedings. New tracking arrangement have been put in place and Legal Services estimate that there has been an increase of 11% in the number of care proceedings since the conviction in November 2008 of the mother of Baby Peter and her partner. This level of increase is actually much lower than reported nationally.

Care Proceedings

	Apr-09	May-09	Jun-09	Jul-09	Aug-09	Sep-09	Oct-09	Nov-09
Ongoing care proceedings at start of month	47	44	48	53	51	46	47	45
(number of children)	76	73	78	91	87	79	82	83
New care proceedings	1	4	8	7	0	3	3	

this month -								
(number of children)	1	5	16	10	0	6	12	

4 THE IMPACT OF THIS ADDITIONAL DEMAND

4.1 Regulatory requirements and Ofsted inspection have recently had a focus on the timescales for Initial Assessment and Core Assessments. Some Local Authorities have been heavily criticised in the unannounced Ofsted inspection for not meeting timescales; the referral must be completed in 24hrs, the Initial Assessment in 7 working days and the core assessment in 35 working days. In order to maintain the same quality of work and to meet the tight timescales for the increased number of referrals and child protection work the Department has required additional social worker hours to meet the increased demand and undertake the assessment and work with families. The timescales for these assessments have improved and are above the national average as shown in the following tables.

Initial Assessments % of IA completed within 7 working days of referral - NI59			Core Assessments % of CA completed within 35 working days of Initial Assessment - NI60		
	2008	2009		2008	2009
H&F	76.4	80.0	H&F	83.0	85.0
SN	77.7	78.5	SN	79.4	81.0
England	70.7	72.0	England	80.0	78.0

4.2 Section 3.3 shows that the biggest increase in demand is in the child protection areas – these are the more lengthy and time consuming processes for staff. The work with children on the child protection list usually last a year and can be up to two years. Care proceedings involves intensive work and numerous court statements and court appearances over a year. So the increases in general demand and the high increases in child protection work - particularly those families with children on the child protection list, coupled with the intensive work required in court proceedings, has led to the need for more staff to undertake the whole range of work from receiving referrals through to coordinating case conferences and finally undertaking care proceedings.

4.3 For children on the child protection list there are likely to be six formal multi agency meetings (case conferences or child protection planning meeting know as “core group” meeting) case conferences per year. In addition the case conferences require organisation and minuting; the high number of conferences has stretched agencies and up to a third of conferences have had to be rescheduled to ensure they are quorate adding to the additional administrative burden.

5 QUALITY OF CHILD PROTECTION WORK

5.1 It is clear that demand on the division is high. In such circumstances the quality of work can suffer. However the monitoring of timescales, internal audits and an

unannounced Ofsted inspection of CAA have all shown that the Department is maintaining the required quality standards. All the key services CAS, FSCP and SQA, with temporary additional posts, have been able to allocate the extra work, maintain timescales for Initial Assessment and core assessments, and maintain standards across a range of work which has tight internal and external scrutiny.

- 5.2 As part of the Laming report recommendations Hammersmith and Fulham undertook an audit of the child protection work undertaken with an external consultant. This work concentrated on children under the age of two who came to the attention of children's social care, (like Baby Peter). It was undertaken in 3 stages. The first stage was a full case file audit of all children 'under two' subject to a child protection plan and a random selection of case files of children 'under two' referred to children's social care.
- 5.3 The second stage of the 'under two' work involved a choice of 10 cases where there was evidence of good practice and where there were concerns about interventions. This work involved interviewing social workers, team managers and one other key professional. The outcomes of this thorough examination were - an endorsement of child protection practice in the borough as no child's case was seen to be presenting with concerns consistent with the criticisms made in the Baby Peter case. There were some recommendations that centred around practice areas in relation to thresholds in cases where care leavers become parents, consistent management oversight, Framework I and ICS issues and case progression. These are being tracked through an action planning system by the Safeguarding and QA unit.
- 5.4 The third piece of work involved an examination of 30 children's files where a child protection enquiry had been commenced within the contact an assessment service.
- 5.5 The key message from these audits was that frontline child protection practice was assessed as 'safe' with no cases of immediate concern noted.
- 5.6 The recent Ofsted inspection of the CAS service was an excellent result as Hammersmith and Fulham was one of less than half the Local Authorities in the country to get through this post Baby Peter examination with a positive result. The Ofsted inspection praised the work in Hammersmith and Fulham for the efficient arrangements for the allocation and oversight of cases, good systems of performance management and high morale among the staff. Unlike the majority of Ofsted inspection of this area of the child protection work there were no areas of "priority actions" required of the Department. The additional posts in CAS (as outlined below) were essential in achieving this excellent result.
- 5.7 The forthcoming safeguarding inspection (date to be determined but expected next year) will also be a significant test of the standards of child protection practice in the Department. This is the new Ofsted inspection regime put in place after the Laming report and will involve a thorough examination of the standards of child protection and looked after children. Eight inspectors visit the service for two weeks. This in depth assessment will be a thorough examination

of the child protection work in this Department and between the agencies working in this Local Authority.

5.8 Because of the size of this increased demand without additional posts it would not be possible to allocate the increased work and to maintain the necessary standards required for effective child protection work. Nor would the Department be in a good position to manage the forthcoming in depth Ofsted inspection of child protection work.

6 ADDITIONAL STAFFING NEEDED TO MEET THIS DEMAND

6.1 In order to manage this additional demand additional staffing resources have been needed in Contact and Assessment, Family Support Child Protection and Safeguarding Quality Assurance.

6.2 In total 13 posts have been needed to manage the increased demand.

	Manager/Chair	Social workers	Screeener	Case conference Coordinator
CAS	1	4	1	0
FSCP	0	4	0	0
SQA	1	0	0	2
Total	2	8	1	2
Total number of temporary posts 13				

- In CAS – a team manager, screening office (screen the initial contacts), and four social workers to manage the increased front door demand.
- In FSCP – four additional social workers have been brought in to manage the increased number of children on the child protection list – now over 200 compared with 120 in September 2008.
- In SQA – 3 additional staff has been needed to chair and coordinate case conferences

7 ADDITIONAL CONSEQUENTIAL COSTS

7.1 In addition to the posts outlined above the increase in child protection demand has impacted on legal cost, contact costs, and placements costs.

7.2 Legal costs. Each set of legal proceedings can last a year or more and involve regular court hearing, culminating a final hearing lasting up usually 5 days or more. Care proceedings are particularly expensive. The Local Authority has to pay the court to initiate proceedings; the main payments are to the in house lawyer service who works closely with the social worker to assess and prepare the case, and payments to the external barristers who represent the Local

Authority in court. Additional costs arise from assessments commissioned by the Local Authority to strengthen the case, together with any expert assessments ordered by the court.

7.3 Contact costs. For each child who is involved in proceedings the court will order contact to be arranged between the child and the parents. Sometimes due to conflict between the parents the contact arrangements have to be separate. Contact costs can vary significant but can involve:

- transport costs (public transport, which is the default position, or taxi depending on the age of the child, distance, availability of public transport).
- escorting the child – where the foster carer cannot bring the child to the contact an escort will be used.
- supervision of the contact – all court directed contact has to be supervised and notes taken; this forms part of the overall assessment of the capability of the parents to meet the children’s needs.
- security costs – where there is a threat of parents abducting the child or threatening staff additional security needs to be brought in.

7.4 The aim is to always place children with a foster carer; however there is a shortage of local foster carers and two thirds of our foster carers live outside the borough. Where possible they take children to school but if they have children of their own or have other looked after children attending another school they may need support. An escort for the child can be provided and where necessary if public transport is not appropriate (usually due to distance or time) taxi support as well. Contact usually takes place after school for children of school age to reduce costs. Contact costs can be up to £300 per week. The increase in proceedings has led to additional pressure on the transport and contact expenditure.

7.5 Placement costs. Similarly the increase in proceedings has led to additional cost of placements that the Department would not otherwise have had.

7.6 Agency social workers. In the immediate aftermath of the publicity surrounding the criminal case and the Laming report, a number of social workers concluded that they no longer wished to work in child protection. In the FSCP service the number of agency social workers rose to 66% of the staffing (18 out of 27 social workers); agency social workers cost up to £15k per annum more than permanent staff. So there has been a significant impact on the staffing costs of the Department in this financial year.

7.7 Additional support measures (independent mentoring, a support group) and a retention bonus have been put in place and the number of agency staff has been significant reduced. So the cost of agency social workers should not be an ongoing problem if we can maintain these staffing level. There is an ongoing

cost of these support measures.

Service	Reason	Estimated Cost
Additonal Cost of Staffing	Cost of additional posts and agency oncosts to accommodate the increase in referrals etc.	838,000
Legal	Increased care proceedings, courts fees and PLO	660,000
Supervision of Contact	Increase court ordered supervision of contact	68,000
Security	Increased security required to manage those new cases where parents are threatening	63,000
Transport	Increased transport to get children to contact / school etc	111,000
Escorts	Required when foster carers cannot take children due to other children / commitments	included in above
Placement Cost	The cost of additional looked after children in fostering / residential placements	155,000
Serious Case Reviews		10,500
Audit of Under 2's	Independent check on the quality of safeguarding in Baby Peter type cases.	30,500
	Total additional costs	1,936,000

8 TOTAL FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 8.1 The total financial impact to date of the rise in child protection demand is £1,936k.
- 8.2 The great financial risk comes from a potential increase in children's placements costs. Hitherto the impact on the number of placements has not been significant in 09/10 as children are only now beginning to become looked after following a period of time on the child protection list and in proceedings. A number of children have or are expected to become looked after as a consequence of the increase in referrals following the Baby Peter case. There are currently 80 children in proceedings which is an 11% increase on previous years. Generally half of the children in proceedings are accommodated during proceedings and therefore an additional 5 children have been accommodated as a result of the increase post Baby Peter. These children have been placed where possible in foster care, either in house or agency. The cost of these placements in 09/10 is £155k.
- 8.3 Additional financial pressure arises from children on the verge of care proceedings. There are currently 40 children currently subject to Public Law Outline. This new procedure, introduced in April 2008, requires Local

Authorities to formally write to parents and meet with them and their solicitor where the concerns are such that the Local Authority is considering initiating care proceedings. If all of these children move to proceedings in 10/11 and 50% become accommodated in fostering placements the full year cost would be £620k. Therefore the full year cost of the additional placements will be £775k. This will be significantly more should any of these children need to be accommodated in residential placements.

- 8.4 The increase in activity since the Baby Peter case has not diminished and therefore the Department has not been able to reduce the staffing to pre October 08 levels. It is expected that the continued public awareness and referrals from other agencies will cause the level of activity to be sustained for the coming year and possibly beyond. The full year impact of the additional staffing is £718k across the three teams affected.
- 8.5 The funding currently provided in 2009/10 for legal fees and staffing has been allocated on a one off basis from corporate contingency. The ongoing costs will not be able to be accommodated in the Children's Services budget for 10/11.

9 FUTURE PROJECTIONS

- 9.1 It is difficult to predict with any certainty the length of time that these additional costs will impact on the Department. There will be a continuing impact if there is either (a) continued higher referrals and child protection numbers and/or from (b) a potential increase in the number of looked after children arising from the current high number of children on the child protection list and (c) those where the Department has given formal notification that it will initiate care proceedings if parents do not cooperate with the child protection plan.
- 9.2 Regarding (a) the high referrals and child protection enquiries/numbers on the child protection list– the current high demand shows no sign of reducing though the number on the child protection list does appear to have reached a plateau.
- 9.3 Regarding (b) There is a statistical correlation between numbers on the child protection list and numbers of children removed through care orders as inevitably there are a proportion of children on the child protection list for whom the plans to reduce the risk to them are not effective (often due to parents resistance or difficulty in overcoming their misuse of drugs or alcohol) and so court action seeking removal has to be taken. So a higher number of children on the child protection list will subsequently probably mean higher numbers in court. In Hammersmith and Fulham since Baby Peter there has been an 11% increase in proceedings. But nationally the increase is reported to be between 55% and 75%. The family courts received 755 care and supervision order applications in July, 270 more than in the same month last year. The total for the period April to July was 2,826, almost 75% higher than the same period last year, and averages out at 707 per month, compared with 408 over the same time last year.

- 9.4 Regarding (c) Those children who the Department is worried about and are on the verge of taking to court are listed under the Public Law Outline. There are currently 39 children being dealt with under the Public Law Outline; it records those children where the Local Authority has serious concerns that unless steps are taken by the parents to rectify matters then the Department will have to go to court. The high number of children in this procedure suggests that in the course of the next year the number of care proceedings will rise.
- 9.5 There is a time delay between increased numbers on the child protection list and the full impact on the looked after children numbers; the Department will work with parents with the aim of reducing the risk to children; some time is needed to see if those plans are effective; however if repeated case conferences confirm that the risk to children remains high then the Department must consider stronger action. Any child who has been on the child protection list for over 15 months triggers a special review to assess if court action should be taken.
- 9.6 It is therefore likely that over the next year we will see the impact of high child protection list numbers on care proceedings numbers and the looked after population.

10 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 The analysis of the activity shows that there has been a general increase in demand (referrals and Initial Assessment's) and a significantly higher increase in the child protection activity (child protection enquiries, initial case conferences, children on the child protection list).
- 10.2 The increased number of care proceedings is lower than the national increase; but the number of children on the verge of care proceedings (under the Public Law Outline) reflects a growing pressure which could translate into care proceedings and more looked after children; it therefore needs to be carefully monitored.
- 10.3 Internal audits and Ofsted inspection results to date show that with the increase in staffing levels the quality of work has been maintained. The forthcoming in depth Ofsted inspection of safeguarding and looked after children (expected any time from Jan 2010 onwards) will be a key test of how the Department is managing the increased child protection demands.
- 10.4 The total financial impact of meeting this increased demand in this financial year is £1,936k.
- 10.5 The additional costs for 2010/11 are difficult to predict given how much of the costs are associated with looked after children's placements and the number of new looked after children is not accurately predictable.