



Briefing for:	Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee
Title:	Assessments January 2011
Lead Officer:	Hilary Corrick, Independent Member
Date:	24th January 2011

1. INTRODUCTION

In September 2009 Members took part in a training session on Initial Assessments, and as part of that session looked at the performance data for Haringey. This report is an update on that data and includes information about assessments available for the training session. The data used are nationally available data submitted in May each year to the Department for Education. Officers will be able to update Members about end of 2010 figures, especially in respect of timescales, which will be an area of concern for Members.

2. BACKGROUND

The Children Act 1989 placed a duty on local authorities **to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area**. Safeguarding has two elements: the need to protect the child and the need to prevent harm to them. Promoting a child's welfare has the wider meaning of maximising a child's opportunities for development.

A child is defined as **in need** if they are unable to achieve a satisfactory level of health and development without the provision of services, or are disabled.

In 2000 the Government published a **Framework for Assessment** to provide a systematic way of analysing, understanding and recording what is happening to children within their families and the wider context of where they live in order to support clear judgements as to whether:

- a child is in need;
- suffering or at risk of significant harm;



and what actions must be taken and what services would best meet the needs of this particular child in this individual context.

The framework was based on evidence drawn from research and theories from a wide range of disciplines and experience of policy and practice.

Principles which underpin the Framework:

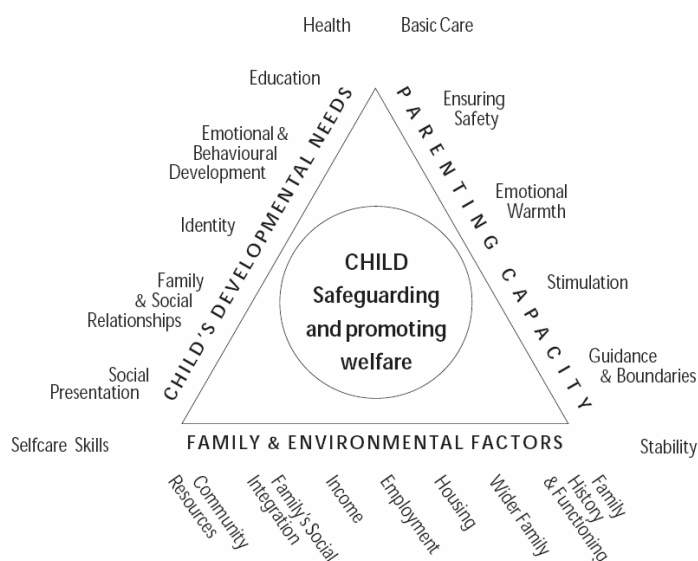
- child centred;
- based on child development;
- consider the whole context of the child's life;
- involve working with children and families;
- focus on strengths as well as identifying difficulties;
- are inter-agency;
- a process not an event;
- do not delay the provision of services;
- ensure equality of opportunity;
- are grounded on evidence based knowledge.

Conceptual map

The Framework for Assessment provides a conceptual map for gathering and analysing information about a child, its family and the context in which they live. It requires a good understanding of the

- developmental needs of children;
- capacity of parents or carers to respond appropriately to those needs;
- impact of wider family and environmental factors on parenting capacity and child development.

ASSESSMENT TRIANGLE





Process of Assessment

- Within one working day of a new referral or new information received about an open case, a decision must be made about what response is required.
- A decision to gather more information constitutes an Initial Assessment and this is deemed to have started from the point the referral or new information was received.

An Initial Assessment (IA) should include the following elements:

- Seeing the child, alone if age appropriate;
- Meeting family members;
- Gathering information from other agencies, usually at least two, and always with the permission of the parent unless there are grounds for believing the child to be at risk of significant harm.
- Analysing information gathered;
- Discussion with manager;
- Decision about action and services needed and to be offered;
- Feedback to referrer and family in writing.

Until the end of 2009/10 the timescale for IAs was completion within seven working days. From 2011/12 the timescale will be ten working days, and in 2010/11 both timescales are measured.

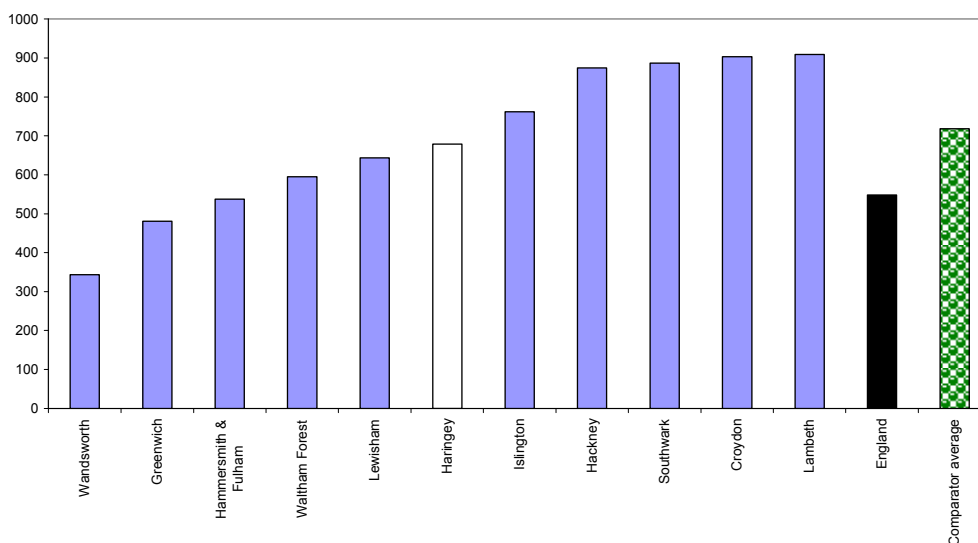
A Core Assessment is a more in-depth assessment which may take up to 35 working days from the end of the IA, or when a Section 47 enquiry (Child Protection) has commenced, or when new information has been received.

The format of the assessment documentation has been designed in age bands to support the understanding of children's developmental needs.

3. REFERRAL RATES

We discussed referral rates at the last meeting of the Panel and the proportion of referrals which proceed to an IA. Nationally figures are available for all local authorities for 2009 – 2010:

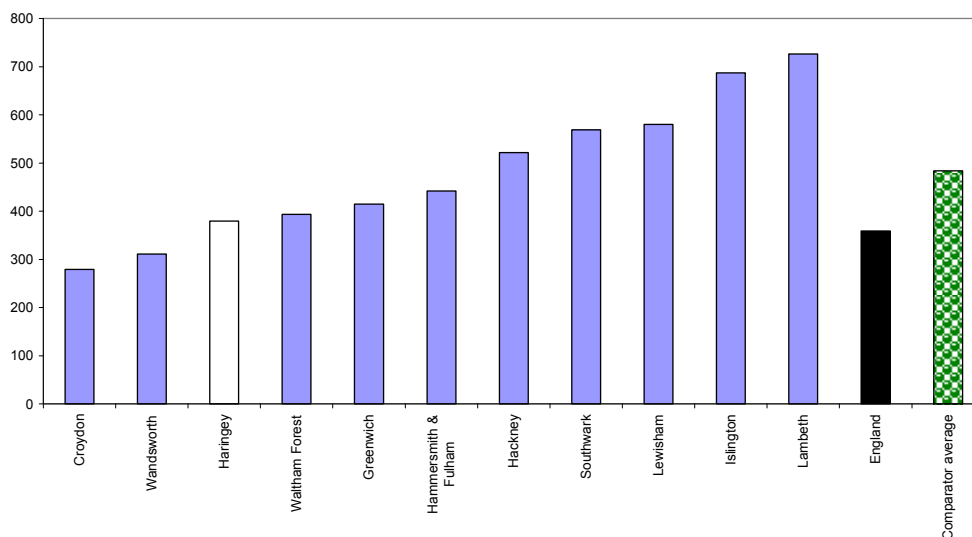
Referrals per 10,000 children, 2009/10



Haringey’s level of referrals per 10,000 children in the authority (678.7) is an increase from the previous year, 08/09, when it was 575. It is below the average for its comparator group (717.9).

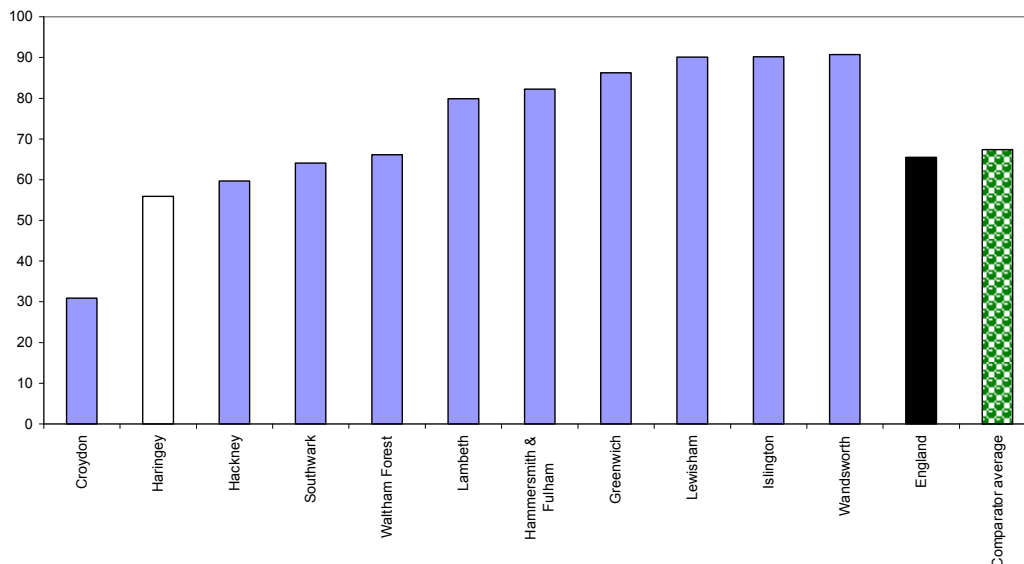
4. INITIAL ASSESSMENTS

Initial Assessments per 10,000 children, 2009/10



Haringey’s level of IAs per 10,000 children (379.6) is below the average for its comparator group (483.7), although it increased from the previous year (255).

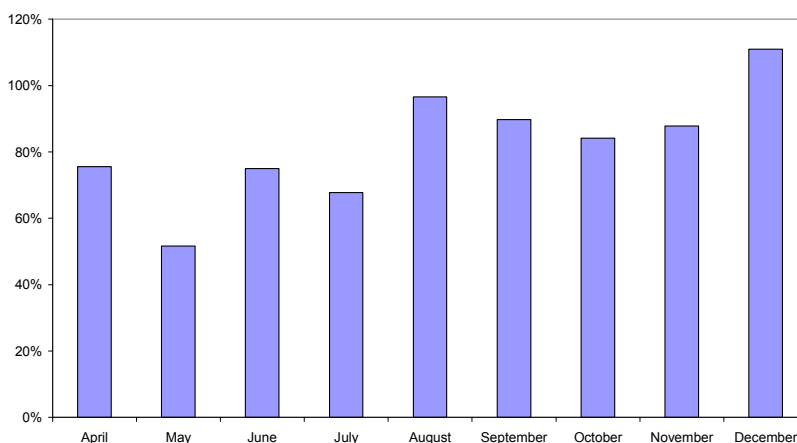
Initial Assessments as a proportion of referrals (former NI 68), 2009/10



Haringey’s figure for Initial Assessments as a proportion of referrals (56%) is below average for its comparator group (67%), although it had increased from the previous year (44%). This raises concerns for Members about eligibility thresholds and partnership working, suggesting that more referrals are being received that do not meet thresholds.

In 2010/11 rates increased, particularly in Quarter 3 of the year:

IAs as a proportion of referrals (former NI 68), monthly for 2010/11



Although there have been fluctuations over the year, this graph shows an improving trajectory. The cumulative figure for the year so far is 79% (based on data in monthly performance pack). Weekly data is available.

5. CONTACTS AND REFERRALS

Many children are notified to the service, especially by the Police, for information only. There may be an enquiry about a child for example. Everything that is received is deemed a **contact** and recorded. Contacts



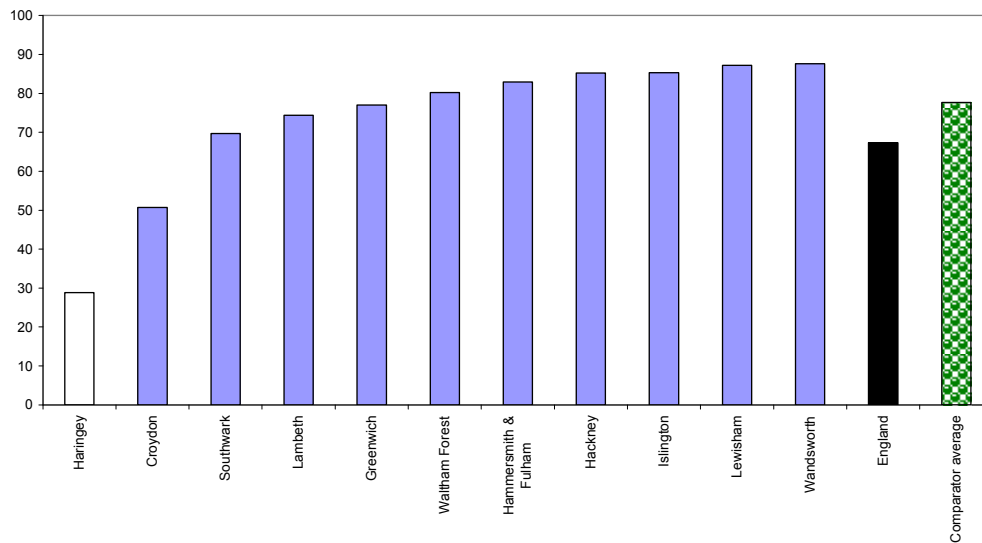
which require further action are designated as a 'referral' on the FWI system. Currently this constitutes an average of 25.3% of all contacts. A key indicator in the ability of the screening team to manage this process is the conversion rate from referral to assessment. Currently our conversion rate is 92%, some 20% above national Averages. This suggests that the First Response Service is very accurate in identifying those children who need further action.

Data is available on some inner London Boroughs and the proportion of contacts which become referrals, and the proportion of referrals which need assessment.

6. TIMESCALES

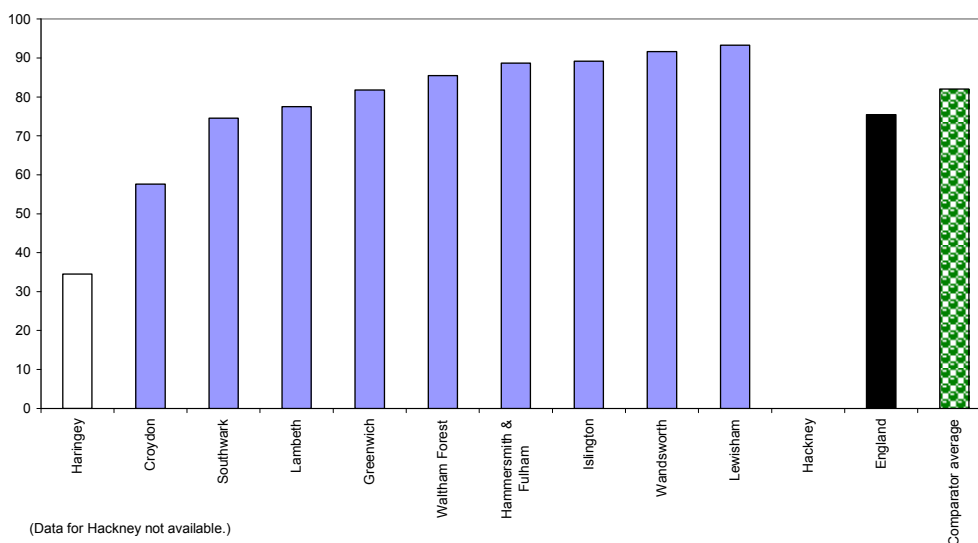
In 2009/10 the national timescale for Initial Assessments was to complete them within 7 days. From 2010/11 the measure will be 10 days. Many authorities began using the 10 day timescale in 2010. For 2009/10 both figures are available:

Initial Assessments within 7 days (former NI 59), 2009/10





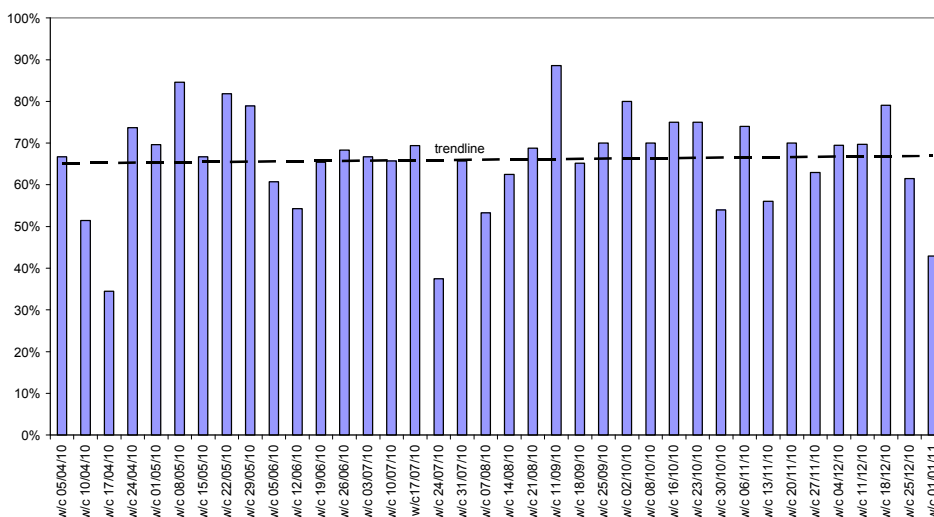
Initial Assessments within 10 days, 2009/10



Haringey’s timescales for both 7 days (29%) and 10 days (35%) for 2009/10 were the lowest in its group. The comparator average was 78% for 7 days and 82% for 10 days. Haringey’s figure for 7 days for the previous year was 79%, so this represents a considerable fall.

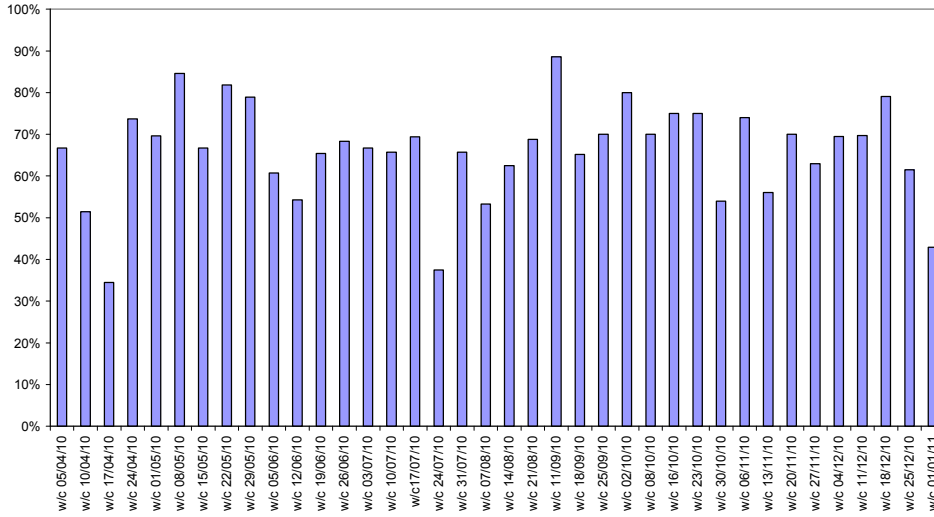
Weekly and monthly data for 2010 suggest that timescales are improving, though not yet up to the comparator average:

Initial Assessments completed in 10 days, weekly data for 2010/11

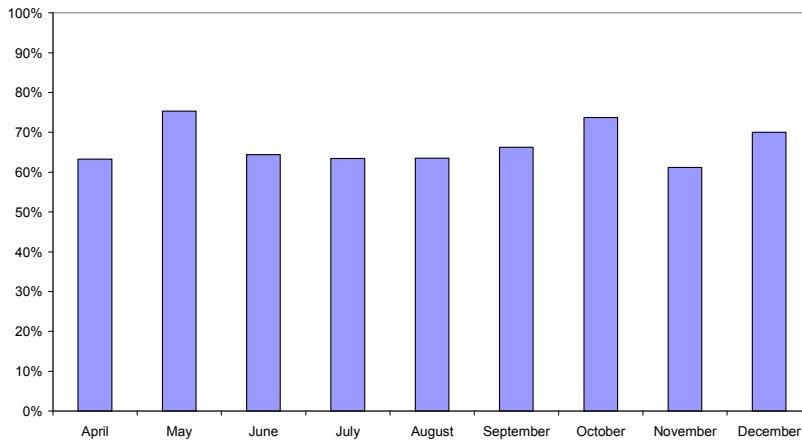




Initial Assessments completed in 10 days, weekly data for 2010/11



IAs completed within 10 days, monthly for 2010/11

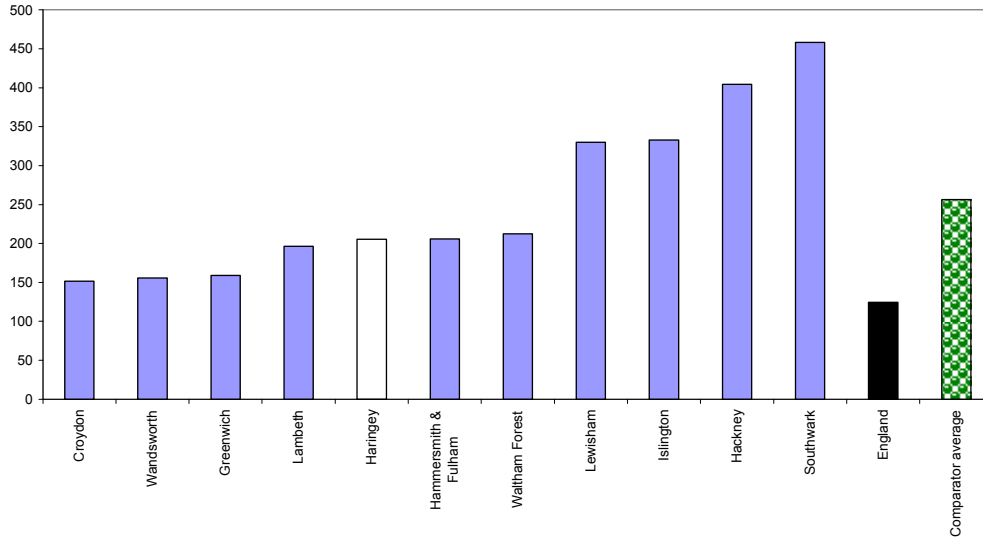


10-day timescales in 10/11 have improved from 09/10; the cumulative figure for the year so far is 67%.



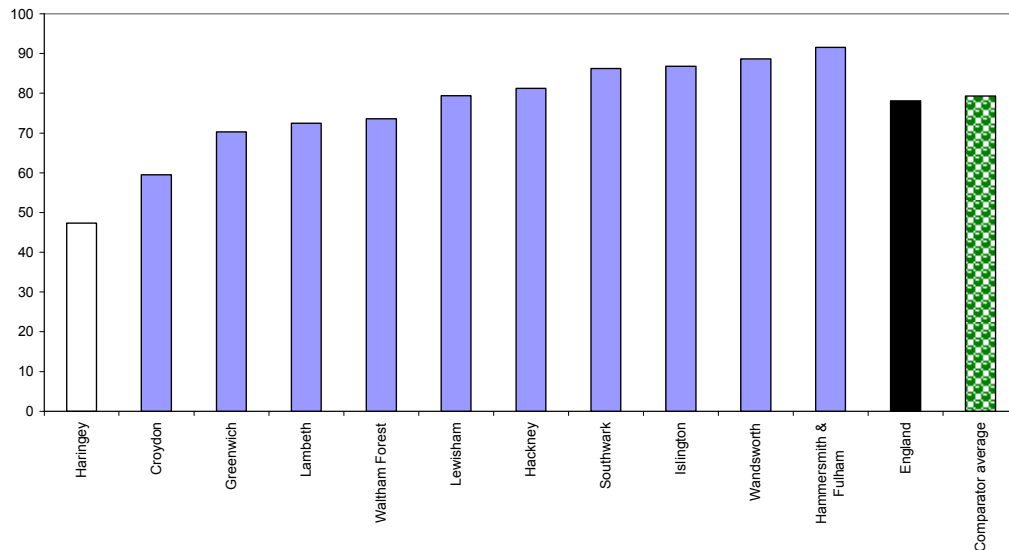
7. CORE ASSESSMENTS

Core Assessments per 10,000 children, 2009/10



Haringey's rate of Core Assessments per 10,000 children (205.5) is slightly below the average for its comparator group (256.4), although as with IAs this rose from the previous year (166).

Core Assessments within 35 working days (former NI 60), 2009/10

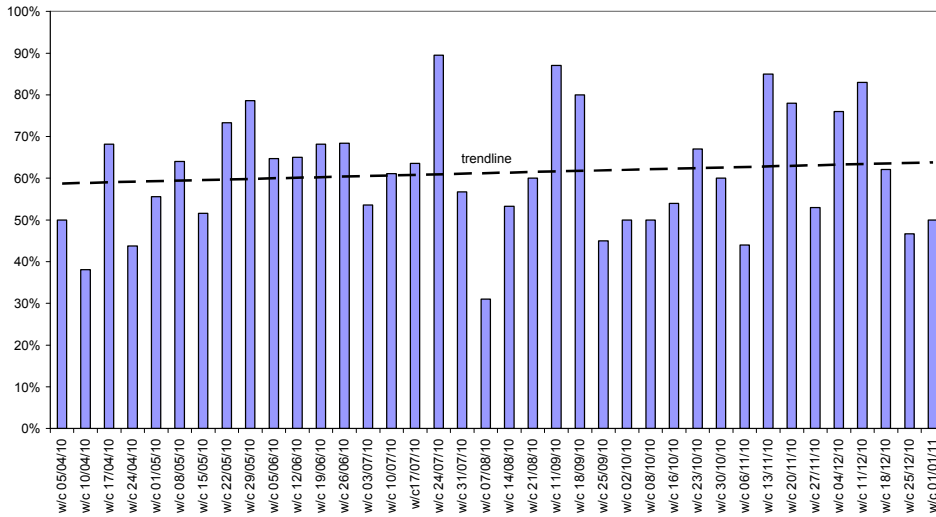


Haringey's CA timescales (47%) are the lowest in its group. The comparator average is 79%. Haringey's figure for 08/09 was much higher, at 83%.

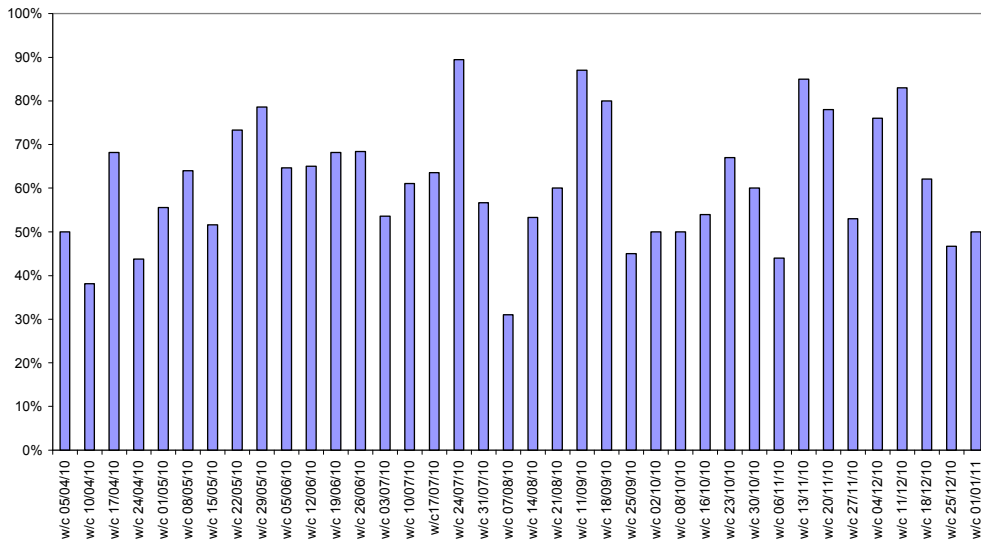


Weekly and monthly data for 2010 suggest that timescales are improving, as with IAs, though not yet up to the comparator average:

Core Assessments completed in 35 days, weekly data for 2010/11

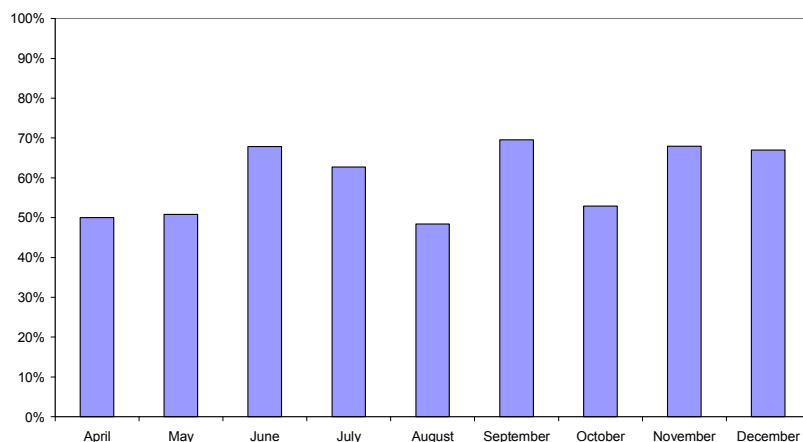


Core Assessments completed in 35 days, weekly data for 2010/11





CAs completed within 35 days, monthly for 2010/11



Timescales in 10/11 have improved from 09/10; the cumulative figure for the year so far is 61%.

8. SUMMARY

Members now have some familiarity with the complexity of issues managed by the First Response Service and have studied some Initial and Core Assessments. The data suggest that the service is able to identify those children needing assessment at an early stage, but is less good at completing those assessments in a timely way. Timeliness is important but Members may also wish to be assured about the quality of assessments.

There may be questions too about how realistic plans to improve timescales are, given that the monthly data suggest a rather static picture.