



<b>Briefing for:</b>	Children's Safeguarding Policy and Practice Advisory Committee
<b>Title:</b>	OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN SUBJECT TO CHILD PROTECTION PLANS
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

At the September 2013 meeting of the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee members were concerned about outcomes for children subject to Child Protection Plans (CPP). Statistical data presented to members at the January meeting showed that the rate per 10,000 children on a plan has fallen to its lowest since 2007, and that at the end of November 2013 there were 100 children fewer subject to a plan than at the end of March that year.

As we have discussed in the Committee on other occasions, there is no ideal rate, no right or wrong number of children on a plan. Nevertheless, it is always useful to consider what life is like when the plan ceases for children who have been subject to a plan, and whether those outcomes are what was intended. The Committee commissioned me to explore this issue on their behalf.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Ofsted considers that in most cases children should not be subject to a Child Protection Plan for more than 2 years: if a child is still not considered safe within its own family after a significant period of work, then perhaps the plan is not working and maybe the child should not be within the family, or maybe the child is safe enough and should no longer be subject to the high level of scrutiny involved in being subject to a plan. Ofsted is also concerned about children who have been on a plan, the plan ends, only for another plan to be required within a short period of time to keep the child safe – does this mean that the changes within the family were only cosmetic and nothing had really changed? In 2012/13 only 4.6% of CPP in Haringey related to a child who had been subject to



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a plan in the past, the third lowest figure in the country. This may demonstrate good performance, though Ofsted has historically been concerned about very low figures on this measure as possibly demonstrating high thresholds for CPP, or that children remain too long on a plan.

There is a further issue to consider when thinking about outcomes for children subject to a Child Protection Plan. If a child is removed from its family, then natural justice, and the Courts, would expect that before this happens the family has been given every opportunity to make the changes necessary to ensure the child's safety and wellbeing within the family. This should include an early help offer, and a robust Child Protection Plan. Only if these interventions have not achieved positive outcomes for the child should the local authority consider removing a child and placing the matter before the Court.

Some London boroughs are using the *Strengthening Families* model as part of their early intervention programme. This aims to foster a spirit of collaborative working between professionals and families. All local authorities, including Haringey with *Haringey 54000*, are aware that it is best for children – cost effective too - to help families at the earliest possible time, and prevent the need for more costly long term services.

When a child is made the subject of a Child Protection Plan, following an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC), the plan will specify the frequency of visits, both announced (by appointment) and unannounced. In Haringey, this will often be weekly in the first instance, and may fall to a lower frequency after the first review conference, but will never be less than 2 weekly.

For 2013/14 onwards, local authorities are required to report to the DfE whether each child subject to a Child Protection Plan was visited during the year within the timescales set out in the child's plan. These data will be submitted by Haringey following the end of the financial year, and will be published by the DfE with other authorities' data some time between September 2014 and January 2015. This will give an indication of how Haringey compares to other LAs on visit timescales.

At the end of 2012/13 Haringey's rate of children subject to CPP was 47 per 10,000. This compared to an average of 40 for Haringey's comparator



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group and 38 for England. Haringey's rate was higher than the group average, but within a range of 26 (Wandsworth) to 67 (Greenwich).

The rate of children ceasing to be subject to CPP in Haringey in 2012/13 was 64. This compared to an average of 45 for the group and 46 for England. Haringey's rate was much higher than the group average. The range was 34 (Waltham Forest) to 69 (Greenwich).

Given that the number of children subject to CPP had reduced by 100 by the end of November, the rate at that point is likely to have been about 29, very much lower than at the end of March. At the next inspection, Ofsted may want to see evidence both that children whose plans ceased in that period are safe, and that the low rate of children currently subject to CPP does not indicate that thresholds for planning are too high.

### **3. SAMPLE**

I decided to take as our sample all the children who ceased to be the subject of a child protection plan in January 2014. This was 26 children in 17 families. I looked at what the situation was for the child at the point of the Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC), the debate within that conference and what planned outcomes could be deduced from the initial child protection plan. I then looked at the child's situation at the end of the plan.

I thought Members would be interested to see the range of problems / issues faced by the families in the sample.

The following table shows the cases.[ Included in the exempt appendix]



#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members

1. Commission a further look at this cohort a year on (excluding those moved out of area) to see what the longer term outcomes are.
2. Review data following publication of 2013/14 CiN census data in Sept to January 2015, to pay particular attention to rate of current, starting and ceasing CPP, visit timescales, repeat CPP, proportion closed soon after ending CPP.
3. Ensure that there are strategies to consider the individual needs of children, especially where there is an age gap, within the child protection process.
4. Support the development of parenting courses for young, vulnerable parents in pregnancy and while their babies are under a year.
5. Ensure the availability of individual and group work for very vulnerable children over 5 to develop keep safe strategies, emotional capacity and resilience.