

2016/17 Performance
Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee
13th July 2017

Purpose of the report

This summary report highlights performance issues and achievements arising in 2016/17 for Children's Services.

It draws on benchmarking data as well as the performance and risk information presented quarterly to the Committee through the performance scorecard. The quarter 04 2016/17 performance scorecard is attached to this report as supporting information for the Committee's consideration.

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Report Sponsor: Alison Williams, Director of Children's Services

Note: All changes in performance levels are shown as a percentage increase/decrease in order to apply a consistent unit of measure across the report as well as to show the significance of the change.

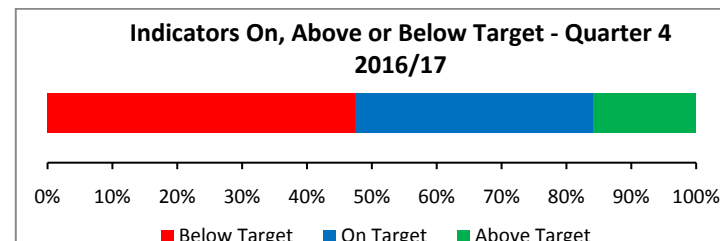
Summary of key performance

As reported throughout 2016/17, a number of key measures remain off target. These continue to relate to:

- the issues affecting Social care workforces nationally and workforce development, in particular:
 - a high number of newly qualified social workers
 - difficulty of recruitment and retention in this sector
 - issues relating to quality and consistency of practice
- and pressures on the system:
 - rates of children requiring support, protection or care
 - placement availability, particularly for children with complex needs, and stability (moves)
 - children coming back into the system at the same level or an escalated level
- these pressures have then also had an effect on timeliness resulting in significant drift and delay for children.

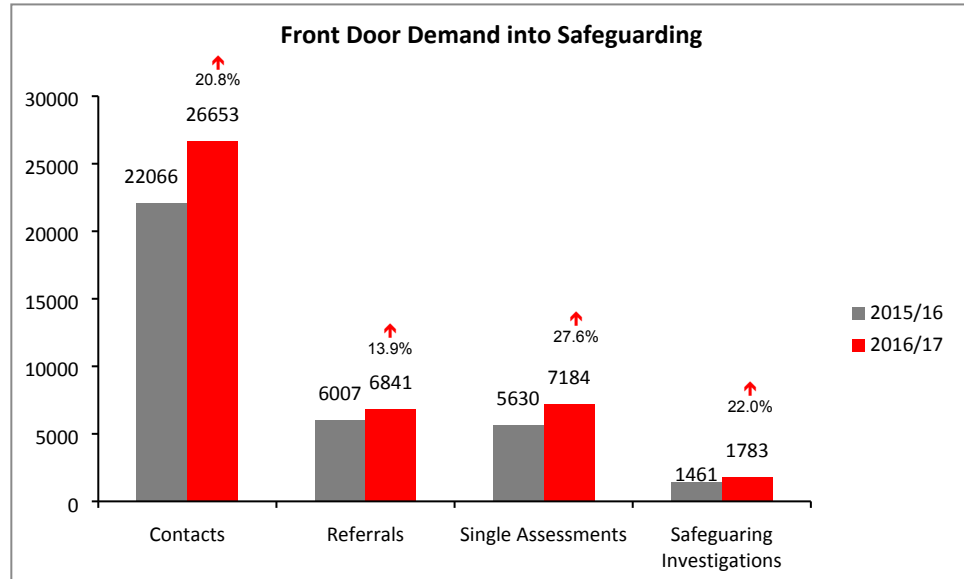
There was an Ofsted inspection of our Children's Social Care Service between 27th February–23rd March 2017. The final report was published in June 2017 and will be reported on separately to this report. However, there is a serious and pressing need for continued focus on this area of the business in order to keep children safe and improve outcomes for our most vulnerable children and we are working closely with the DfE and Ofsted.

Benchmarking information for 2015/16 has recently been published for education providing us with a current picture of how we are performing compared with other similar authorities. Overall performance is good, however, for some groups of children there are significant concerns regarding the widening gap in attainment, increasing absence and exclusions and the high proportion not in education, employment or training. A number of work streams are currently being developed in response to reduced resources and the continued and widening outcomes gap for vulnerable and high needs children. Support will be targeted at these groups in order to more successfully impact issues for these children. The majority of work streams will be underway by Autumn and a full re-shaping of education will be completed by Christmas.



Overall demand and pressures on the service

Front Door



As has been reported throughout the year, there have been increased pressures visible across the system throughout 2016/17.

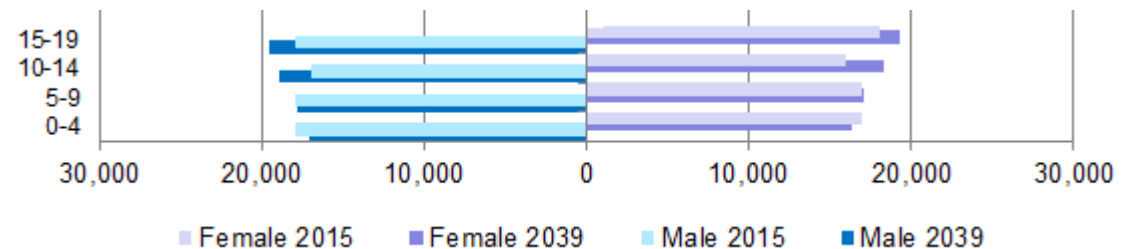
There are more children and young people at most 'stages' of social care than can be accounted for by demographic growth; this is also seen nationally.

Work at the front door has diverted more demand away from Social Care in 2016/7 with 1.5% (3,753) less contacts moving through to referral as the result of stronger triage and appropriate sign-posting to the right level of support for children.

However, there were a higher number of contacts than in 2015/16 resulting in a greater number of children going on to receive assessments and safeguarding investigations despite this work.

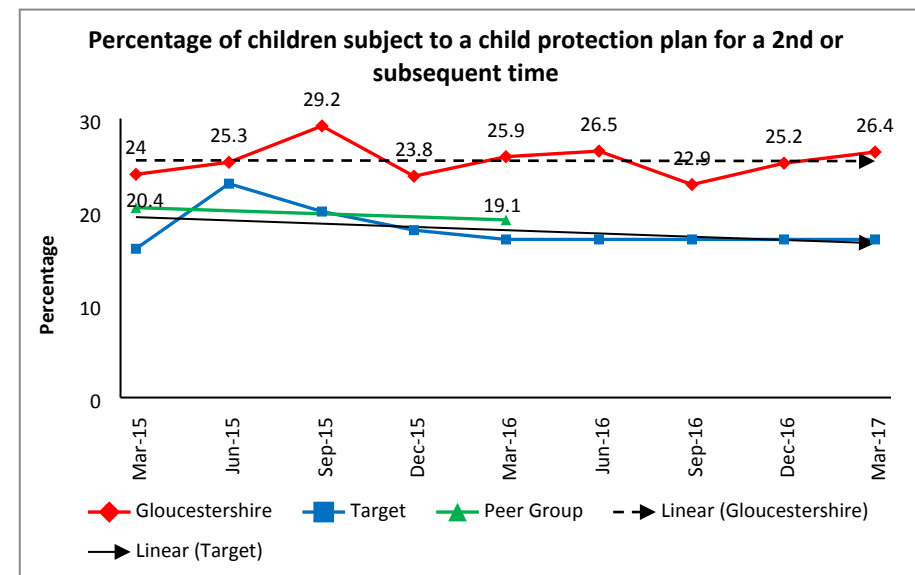
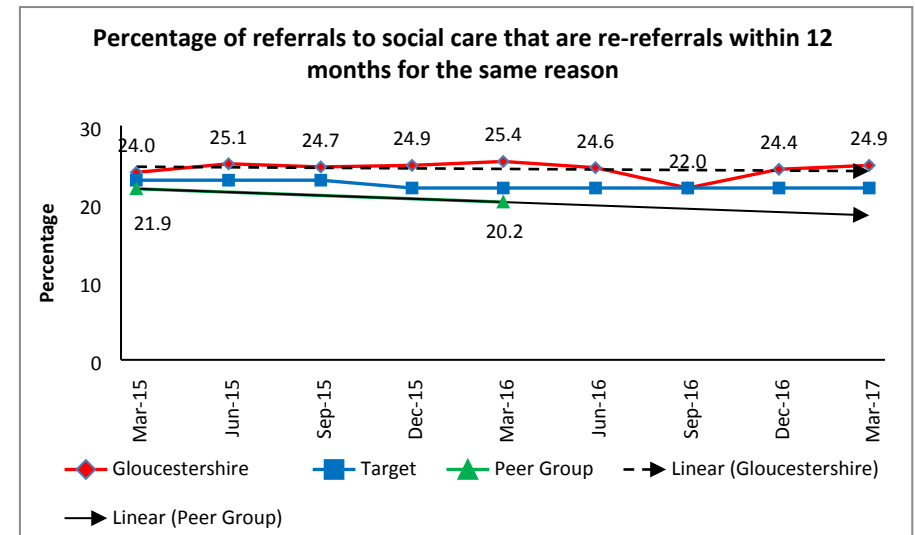
The 0-19 year old population is projected to experience moderate growth over the next two decades. With numbers of children in the Social Care system already over and above population growth, level of demand on Social Care may continue to be impacted. Innovative and strong Early Help initiatives and partnership working will therefore be all the more vital in coming years.

Projected Population Growth 2015-2039 - Gloucestershire

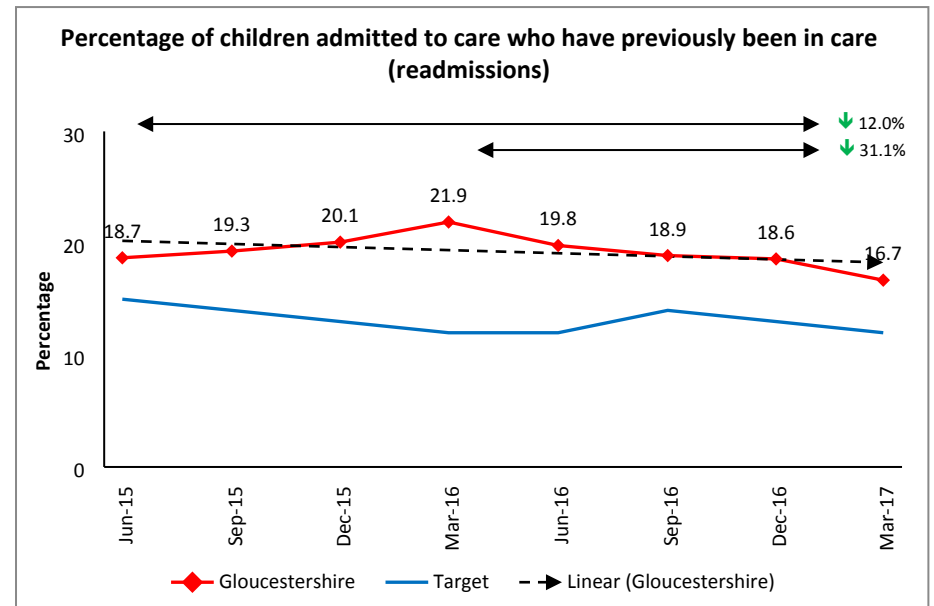
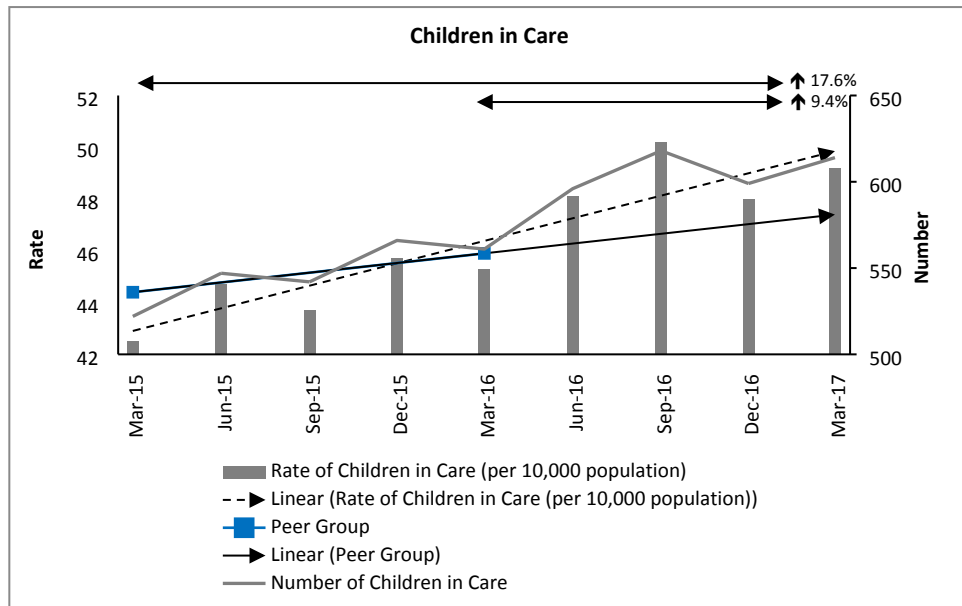


Safeguarding

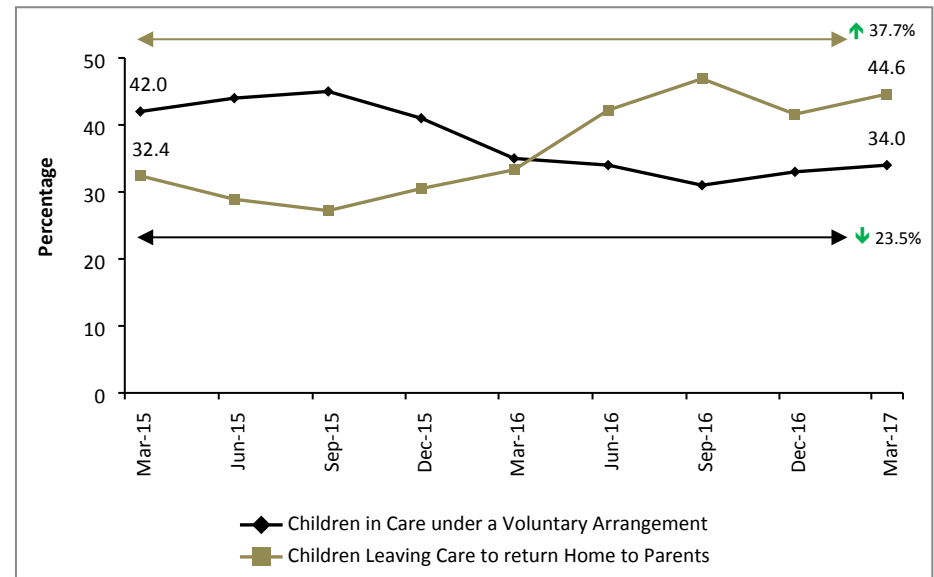
- ↑ The number of children in need has increased by 19.3% from 2048 to 2444 in 2015/16.
- ↓ Children subject to protection plans is the only area where we have seen a decrease, with 457 children subject to a plan in March 2017 compared with 580 children in March 2016 (a reduction of 26.9%).
- However, we have still, as yet, failed to impact upon either the proportion of children being re-referred to us or those experiencing a second or subsequent protection plan. Both of the indicators have remained stuck throughout 2015/16 and 2016/17 with further concerns and risk to around a quarter of children who have previously been known to us or who have received some form of support or protection before. Work is being undertaken to strengthen assessment and planning to ensure that it clearly identifies and targets the key risks to children and includes clear actions for work with families to address these and to sustain change.
- ↓ While we have struggled to tackle the percentage of children returning to a protection plan for a second or subsequent time, the percentage of children returning to a plan within two years has decreased by 67.9% in 2016/17 (from 18.3% to 10.9%). This would suggest that change is taking longer to break down or, that different issues and risks are emerging throughout later stages of childhood. This may indicate that further work with families is needed to develop tools that can be applied to a range of problems and behaviours to help them to better manage new issues for themselves as they arise.
- ↑ The number of children on protection plans for more than two years doubled in 2016/17 from 7 children to 14. This equates to 3.1% of all children on protection plans and places our performance in the third quartile. There is only one other authority in our peer group who performs more poorly in this area. All of these children have been reviewed in order to tackle drift and delay and appropriate actions are now being taken to either step down the cases or to escalate them via legal processes. We have also strengthened triggers within our systems in order to ensure that more detailed reviews are undertaken for children subject to protection plans for more than 9 months.



Looked after Children and Children Leaving Care



- ▼ At the end of March, 614 children were looked after in care; a growth of 9.4% (53 children) compared with March 2016. This increase is at a steeper rate to that experienced by our peer group.
- ▲ The number of children leaving care to return home to live with parents has increased by 37.7% since March 2015.
- ▼ At the same time, children coming into care under a voluntary arrangement and children being readmitted to care have both decreased. The number of children in care under a voluntary arrangement has dropped by 23.5% since March 2015 due to focussed work in this area to reduce inappropriate use of this type of arrangement. and 12.0% respectively since March 2015. Readmissions to care have decreased by 31.1% in 2016/17 from 21.9% to 16.7%.
- ➔ The number of children adopted and leaving care under a special guardianship order in 2016/17 were both consistent with 2015/16 levels.



Looked after children - stability

Finding the right placement first time for looked after children has been impacted by the number of children in care overall, placing pressure on the availability of suitable placements, particularly for those children with the most complex needs.

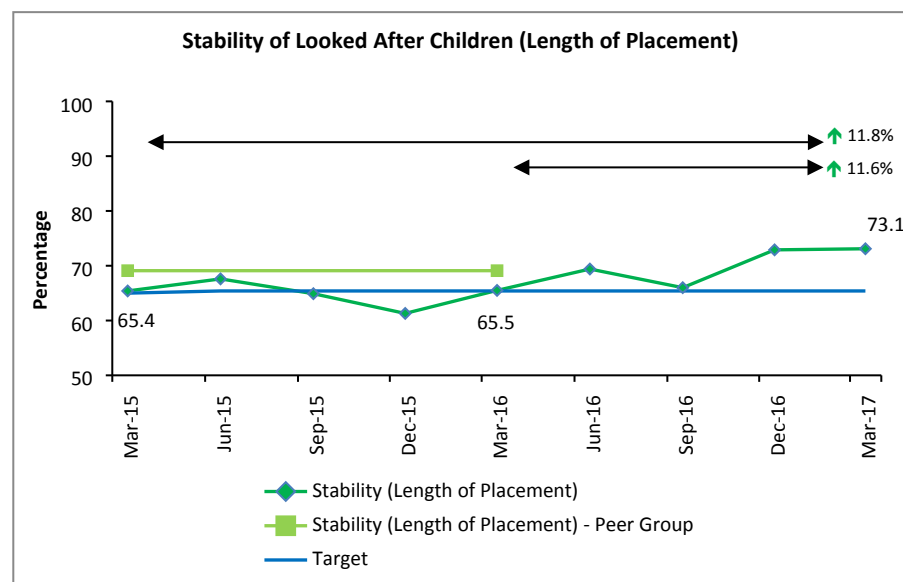
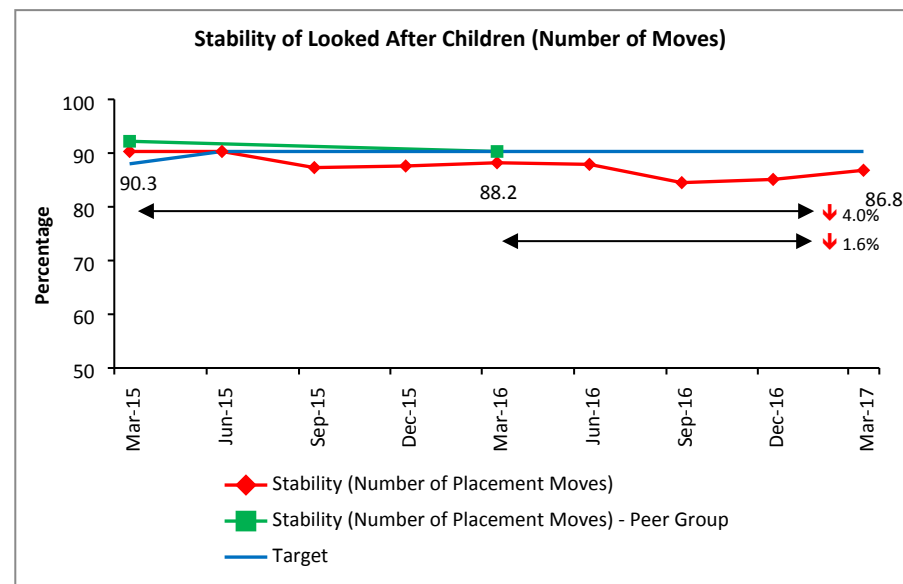
↑ While stability is improving, the number of children being affected by more than 3 placement moves is still much higher than it was 2 years ago (85 children in March 2017 compared with 53 children in March 2015).

In addition to the number of children affected by placement moves, there are two further key concerns:

- 1) The extent of the picture of instability that is beginning to emerge through performance reporting. Children experiencing more than 3 placement moves have also had up a number of children in need plans and protection plans and have also been in care a number of previous times. In addition, the number of moves experienced reaches into double figures for some of these children.
- 2) The short time period within which children are moving between placements i.e. intense period of instability before a suitable placement is found, and the placement/accommodation type used.

There are long-term initiatives being developed to support stability of placements for children. As a short-term measure, to ensure close scrutiny, management oversight and high support, the Resource Panel will be extending its remit and will review all placement moves for this group of children.

↑ The percentage of children experiencing long term stability once they are in a settled placement has steadily increased in 2016/17, up 11.8% compared with March 2016. Performance is also 5.9% above the peer group average.



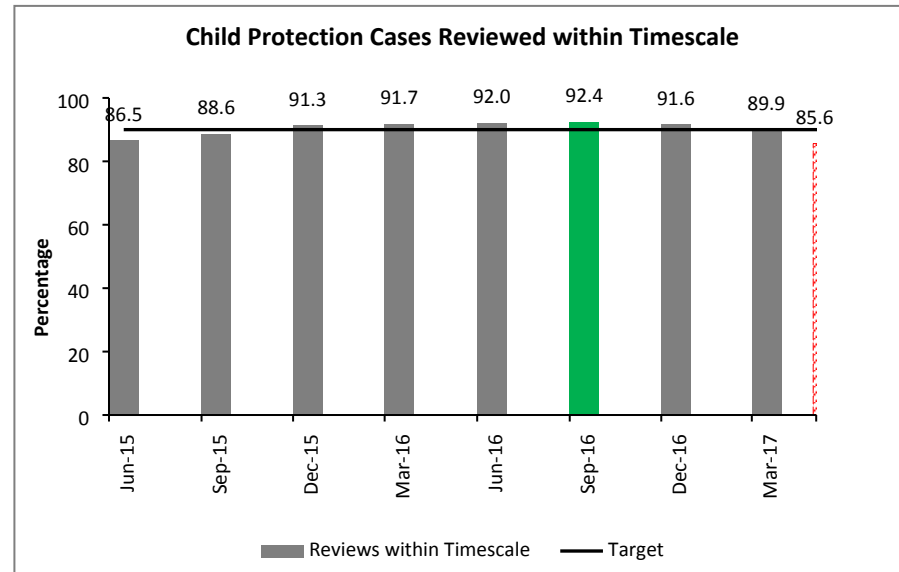
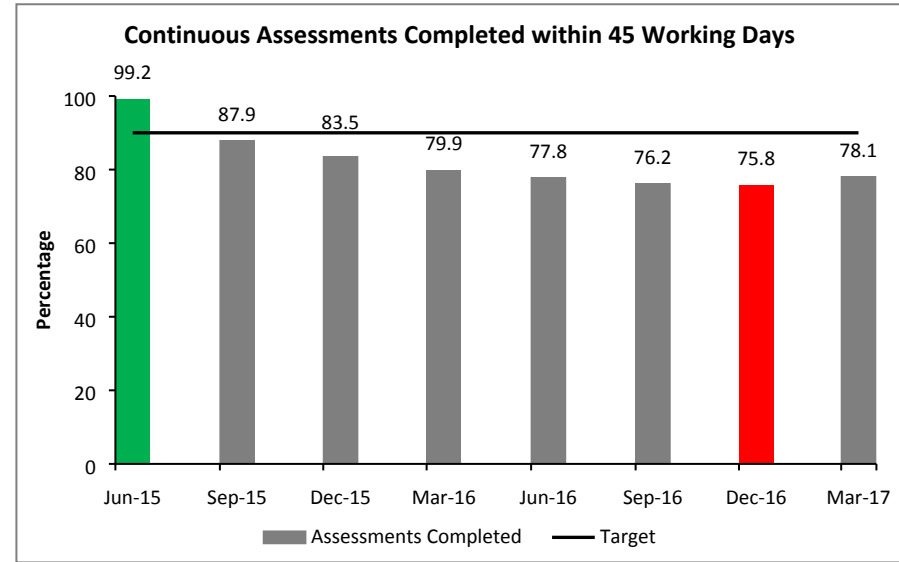
Performance of the service (timeliness)

Completion of Single Assessments within 45 working days improved for the first time in two years in quarter 4. Assessments completed within 45 working days during February and March reached 83.4% and 84.5% respectively.

However, there are still a number of assessments which have not been completed for a significant period of time resulting in delay and potential risk for these children. All of the children have been identified and team managers will be reviewing these cases with social workers to ensure that assessments are progressed, children are stepped down or cases closed as appropriate.

Timeliness of child protection reviews had been steadily increasing over the 18 months from April 2015-September 2016. However, performance has dipped due to drops in reviews conducted within timescale in October, November, January and February. A further decline in timeliness has been seen during April and May 2017 with rolling year performance dropping to 85.6% at the end of May.

Timeliness has been impacted by capacity issues, high demand, late requests for conferences and lack of efficiency around the duty system and business processes. A high number of conferences were also booked that then did not proceed which affected being able to service those conferences that did need to proceed in a timely way. The duty system has now been tightened up and capacity has been increased which should result in a swift improvement in performance. This will be closely monitored with the Children's social care leadership team through the monthly performance reporting.



Performance of the service (quality and outcomes)

Education and Skills

Gloucestershire has good schools, and educational performance in the majority of areas exceeds regional and national averages. Overall attainment for children throughout their school years is particularly strong, and 95.6% of the County's schools are rated as Good or Outstanding by OFSTED. In addition, the percentage of 16-18 year olds not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) has continued to reduce to a current low of 3.6% in line with the peer group average.

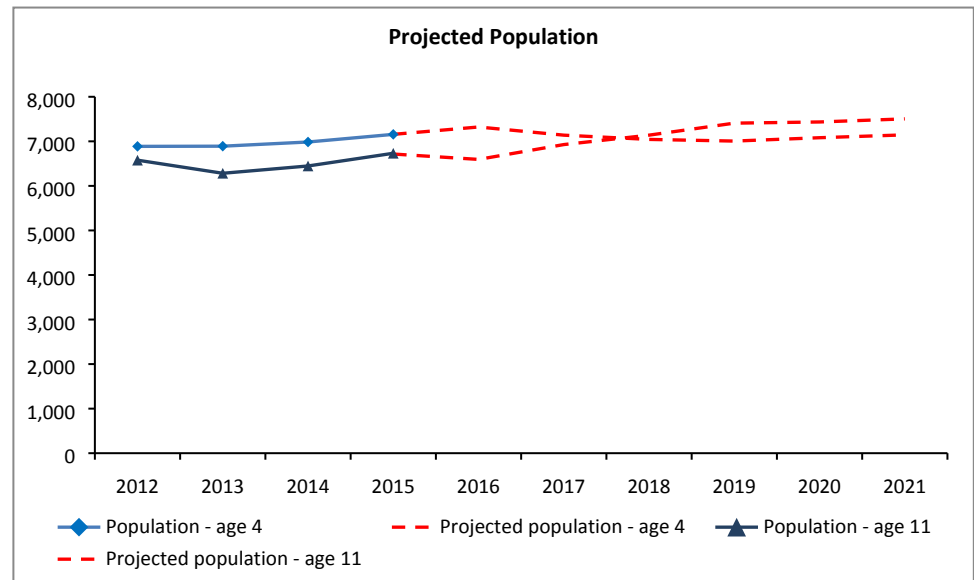
However, for some groups of vulnerable young people (disadvantaged, special educational needs, children in need and black pupils) attainment is much lower, particularly at GCSE level. Only 10.5% of children in need and 23.3% of children in care gained 5 A-Cs at GCSE (incl. English and Maths) compared with the overall attainment of Gloucestershire's pupils at 66.1%. The gap between the attainment of vulnerable children and the overall performance of Gloucestershire's children is much wider than in other similar Counties.

Absence and exclusion rates (for 2014/15) had increased from previous years, particularly in relation to permanent exclusions and interim figures for 2015/16 suggest this trend is continuing. The percentage of children in need classed as persistent absentees is significantly higher than in other Counties. 34.4% of children in need and 13.1% of children in care are missing more than 10% of school days each year. This is bottom quartile performance.

In addition, the percentage of care leavers classed as NEET (not in education, employment or training) has increased (43.6% at the end of the 2015/16 academic year compared to 40.8% at the end of 2014/15) and is in the bottom quartile when compared with other areas.

Improving the educational outcomes for vulnerable and high needs children is a key priority for us. There is a need to work with the whole education system: the DFE, regional schools, the Commissioner, multi-academy trusts, academies and schools to address these issues. Activity will be appropriately targeted on these children with the greatest need.

In terms of the overall school population, following a high birth rate a few years ago, there was increased pressure on primary school places in Gloucestershire in 2016. A similar pressure will occur on secondary school places in 2019.

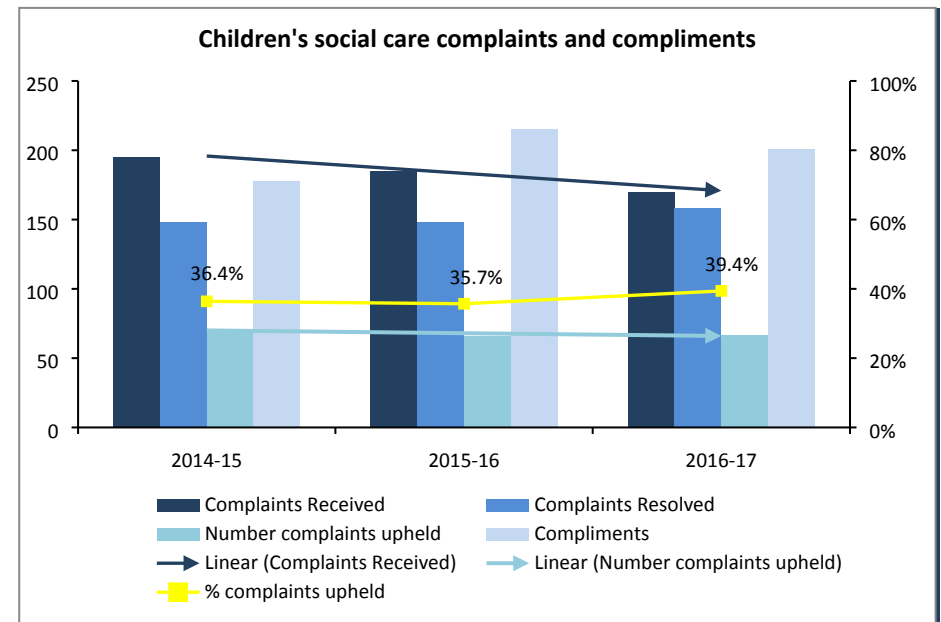
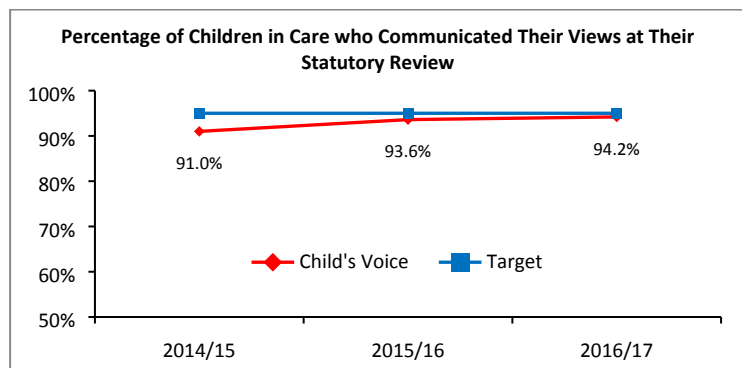


Empowerment and Feedback

- ▼ The overall number of children’s social care complaints received in 2016-17 has dropped year on year over the past two years.
- ➔ The number of complaints upheld or partially upheld in 2016-17 is consistent with 2015/16 levels. However, due to the reduction in the number of complaints overall, the percentage upheld or partially upheld has increased slightly. The performance and complaints teams are working together to look at complaints handling and learning.
- ▲ The number of compliments received exceeded the number of complaints received over each of the past 3 years.

The majority of complaints in 2016/17 were received related to the *Workforce – Quality* theme (176); a quarter of complaints under this theme were upheld. 27% of complaints about *Drift and Delay* were upheld (9 out of 33). Only 1 out of 48 complaints under the *Accessibility of Information/Management of Expectations* theme was upheld; this related to cost.

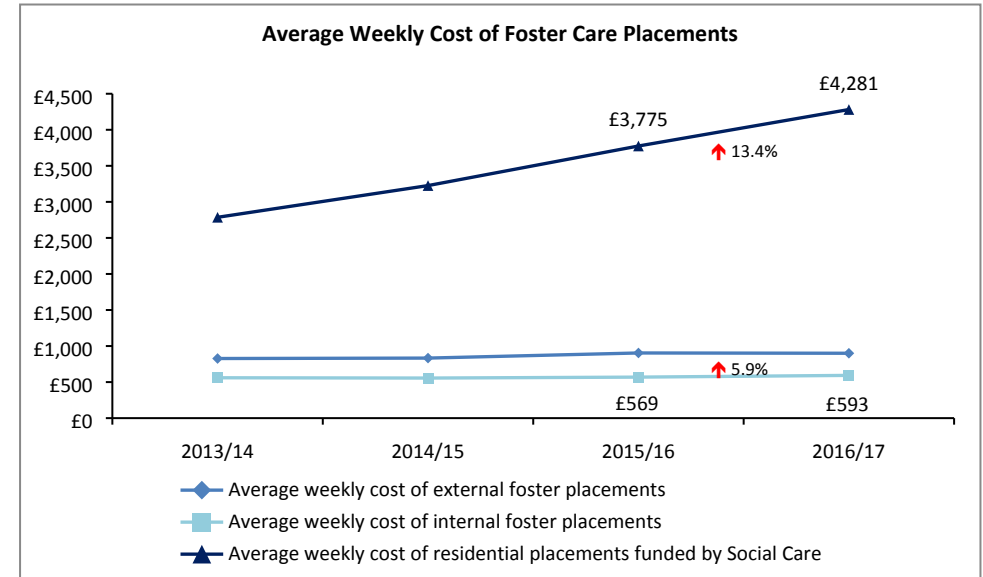
Complaint Themes	
Workforce - Quality	Communication
	Quality of service
	Staff attitude
Drift and Delay	Non delivery
	Delay in decision/provision of service
	Discrimination
Accessibility of information/ management of expectations	Cost
	Eligibility
	Unwelcome/disputed decision



Finance

The number of children in a residential setting has remained consistent with 2015/16. However, due to the use of secure placements for some of these children the average cost of placements has been much higher this year.

As forecast, due to the volume and complexity of children's cases being managed throughout this financial year, the budget has overspent by 3.9% (£3,833 million).



Risk

↑ Based on performance and benchmarking data the risk relating to worsening educational outcomes and a widening gap for vulnerable children increased from 'Moderate' to 'High'. Mitigating initiatives are underway which focus on these children with the greatest need.

The two Children's Social Care risks are currently being reviewed with a view to increasing risk levels. We are therefore reporting the position as at quarter 3 at this time.

There were no new risks added to the strategic risk register in quarter 4 2016/17.

Information on strategic risks is provided in the scorecard that accompanies this report.

