

CYP SELECT COMMITTEE		
<b>Report Title</b>	Annual Report on Safeguarding Services	
<b>Key Decision</b>	No	Item No. 6
<b>Ward</b>	All	
<b>Contributors</b>	Stephen Kitchman, Director Children's Social Care	
<b>Class</b>	Open	Date: 1st March 2016

## 1 Purpose and Summary of the Report

1.1 Select Committee of 18<sup>h</sup> March 2015 agreed that this report should be presented as an annual report on Safeguarding within the Borough.

1.2 This report provides an overview of safeguarding activity based on the calendar year 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015. The report will not comment on the following topics as these are the subject of a separate stand-alone report to the CYP Select Committee:-

- Outcome of the Ofsted inspection in October 2015.
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Annual Report of Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board.

1.3 This report will cover the following areas:

- Policy and legislative context.
- Overview of children subject to child protection plans and associated trend data over the last 5 years.
- Enquiries made under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 where there are concerns that children are at risk of significant harm.
- Overview of applications made to the court to remove children from primary carers.
- Safeguarding children in specific circumstances.
- Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers to safeguard children.
- Safeguarding children from inappropriate conduct by people who work with them in a voluntary or paid capacity.
- Role and function of the Lewisham Safeguarding Children's Board.
- Serious Case Reviews.
- 

## 2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note and comment on the contents of the report.

### 3 The policy and legislative context

3.1 There are a number of key policies and legislation that govern work to ensure children are appropriately safeguarded; the main safeguarding framework is governed by:

- The Children Act 1989 imposes a statutory duty on local authorities to safeguard children in their area.
- The London Child Protection Procedures 2014 are followed by all London local authorities.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015, provides a national framework and the core requirements which agencies and professionals must satisfy in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

### 4 Overview of children subject to child protection plans

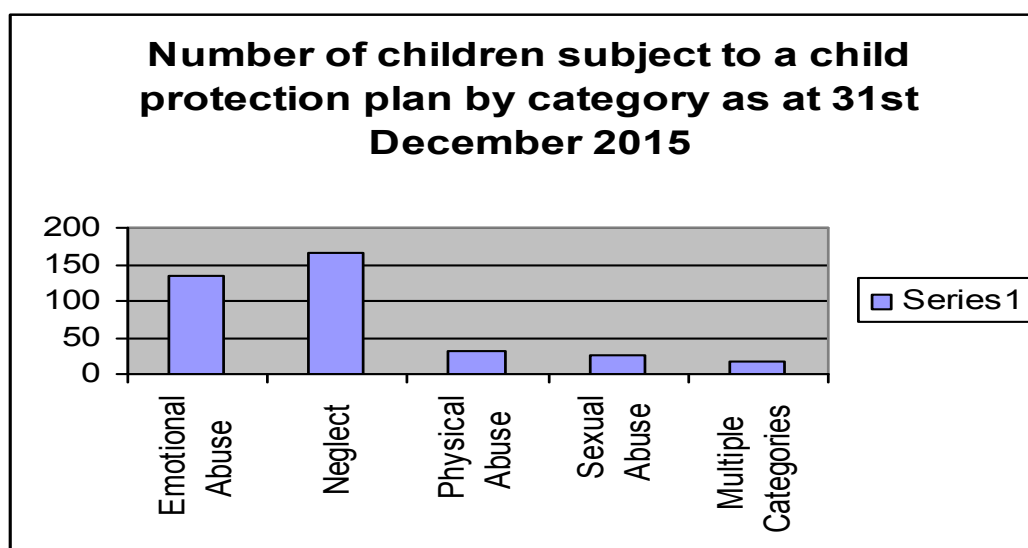
4.1 Children's Social Care works with children who are at risk of significant harm. Following assessments, some children are believed to be at a higher risk of harm due to the level of care provided by their parents or carers. For these children child protection plans and formal multi-agency case conference arrangements provide the framework by which risk is managed.

4.2 When children become subject to a child protection plan, the conference is required to specify the category of harm suffered by the child, namely:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect

4.3 The number of children subject to a plan varies depending on how many plans are started or ceased at any given time. On 31 December 2015, there were 375 children in Lewisham subject to a child protection plan. The table below shows the categories of abuse.

**Table 1**



**5 Table 2 Trends of children subject to a child protection plans**

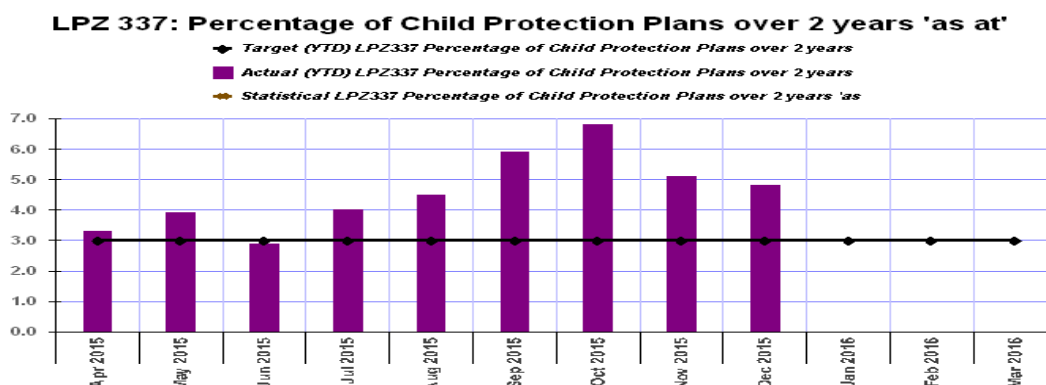
<b>Category of Abuse</b>	<b>31/12/2011</b>	<b>31/12/2012</b>	<b>31/12/2013</b>	<b>31/12/2014</b>	<b>31/12/2015</b>
Emotional Abuse	66	77	138	144	134
Neglect	89	99	104	162	167
Physical Abuse	28	34	48	14	32
Sexual Abuse	11	6	14	26	26
Multiple Categories	13	17	6	16	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>375</b>

- 5.1 There has been a marked increase in the number of children subject to a child protection plan over the last 5 years. Since 2011-2015, the numbers of children subject to a child protection plan has increased by 55%. This trend has increased pressure on Children Social Care (CSC) and the wider partnership with agencies providing intensive services and co-ordination to vulnerable children. Research by the Association of Directors Children’s Services show that the number of children subject to a Child Protection plan has risen by over 60% nationally.
- 5.2 The additional workload has led to the recruitment of an extra team of Social Workers and one Team Manager in the Family Social Work Service. The capacity of the Child Protection Chairs and minute takers has also been enlarged by 20% to cope with extra demand. Resources were diverted from the Referral and Assessment Service and the Early Intervention Team. These arrangements are currently being reviewed by the Departmental Leadership Team.
- 5.3 Lewisham has more children per 10,000 of the population subject to a child protection plan than its statistical neighbours. The rate of children subject to a child protection plan for Lewisham is 56.1 per 10,000 compared to 42.5 for our statistical neighbors and 42.9 for the national average, as at November 2015.
- 5.4 Various causal factors have been explored, such as practice decisions, throughput and over cautious decision making by child protection chairs. Audits undertaken by the Quality Assurance Service have shown that decision making is on the whole appropriate. This was endorsed by Ofsted.
- 5.5 The numbers of children subject to a plan can increase if child protection plans are of a significant duration. The Local Authority measures the percentage of children subject to a child protection plan for two years or more. This measure is important because high numbers against this indicator suggests that children may be remaining on a plan without evidence of required change. The percentage of children subject to a child protection plan for 2 years or more in Lewisham was 5.1 % compared to the statistical neighbours average of 1.8% in November 2015. A study of these cases showed that there was some evidence that some plans could have been ended earlier, which related to conference decision making; this also coincided with the recruitment of new child protection chairs. An additional challenge is to ensure that the plans are sufficiently clear, focused and subsequently followed through to impact on required change. The Ofsted Improvement Plan 2016, has actions to help address this issue which includes a development and training programme for child protection chairs to address consistency of quality of child protection plans. It is anticipated that the training will

also lead to quicker cessation of plans when the key risks are mitigated. We will also be implementing a first line manager development programme, including supervision development, which is linked to our Teaching partnership with both Greenwich and Southwark Local Authorities based at Goldsmiths.

- 5.6 In order to ensure children do not drift on a plan, a nominated manager of the child protection chairs reviews every child on a plan for more than two years to check progress. This activity is captured in a report which is presented to the Senior Management Team in Children’s Social Care at the monthly quality assurance meeting. Work on proportionate decision making with new child protection chairs has already started and resulted in the reduction of the percentage of children subject to a plan for 2 years or more. The can be seen in Table 3 below.

**Table 3**

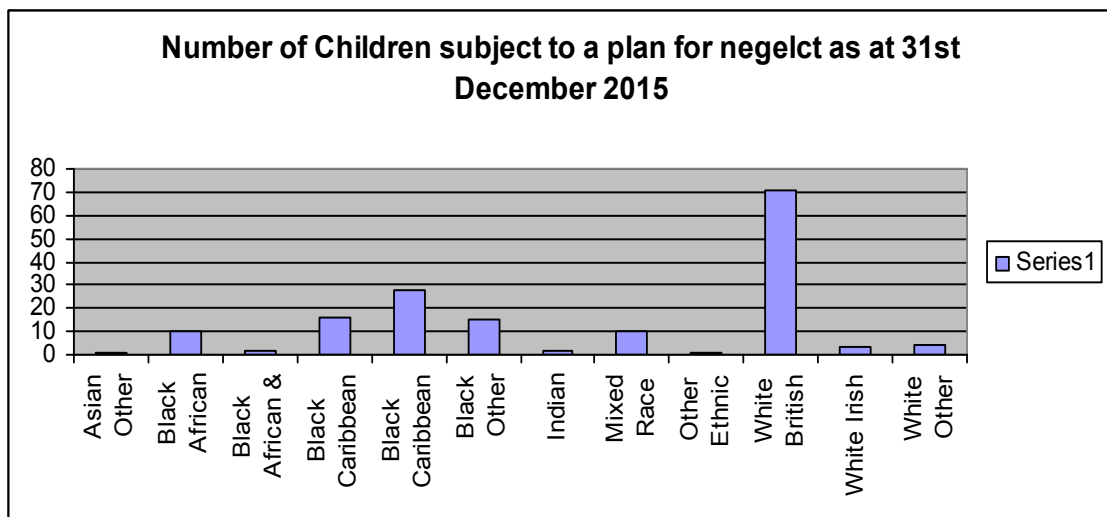


- 5.7 This is a complex indicator that requires a balance between evidence of sustained progress and change for a child being achieved and the number of children overall subject to the scrutiny of a child protection plan. If child protection planning fails to test sustained change, there is a real danger that families may revert to harmful behaviours, once the plan has ended.

The Local Authority monitors the percentage of children subject to a child protection plan for a second and subsequent time. Lewisham has fewer children compared to statistical neighbours against this indicator. In November 2015, 11% of children were the subject of second or subsequent episodes of child protection planning compared to 13.2% for our statistical neighbours and 16.6% national average.

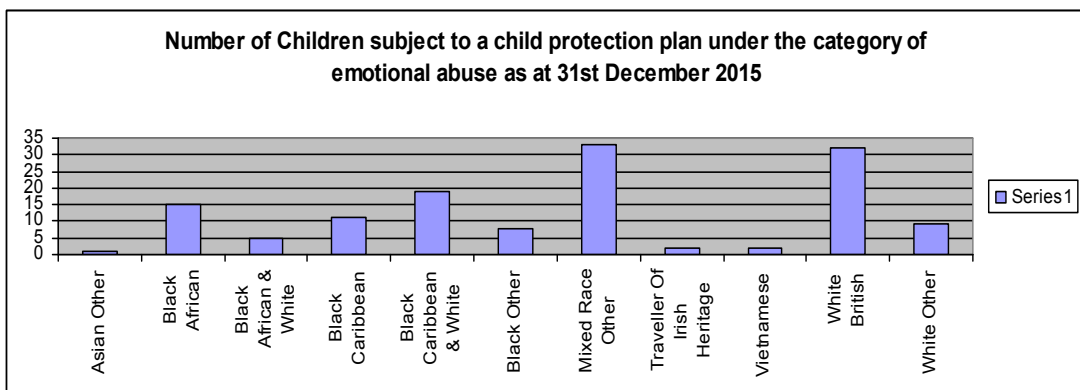
- 5.8 Lewisham is likely to continue to have slightly higher numbers of children subject to a plan for two years or more, because unlike statistical neighbours, the practice in Lewisham has been to track the welfare of children who are the subject of a Supervision Order under a child protection plan. The court grants a Supervision Order at the end of care proceedings if the threshold of harm is proven but where a judge decides that it is in the best interest of the child to remain with his or her parents or a member of their family.
- 5.9 The percentage use of categories of children subject to a plan has remained roughly the same over the last 5 years. Neglect has featured as the largest category during this period as outlined above in Table 2.

**Table 4**



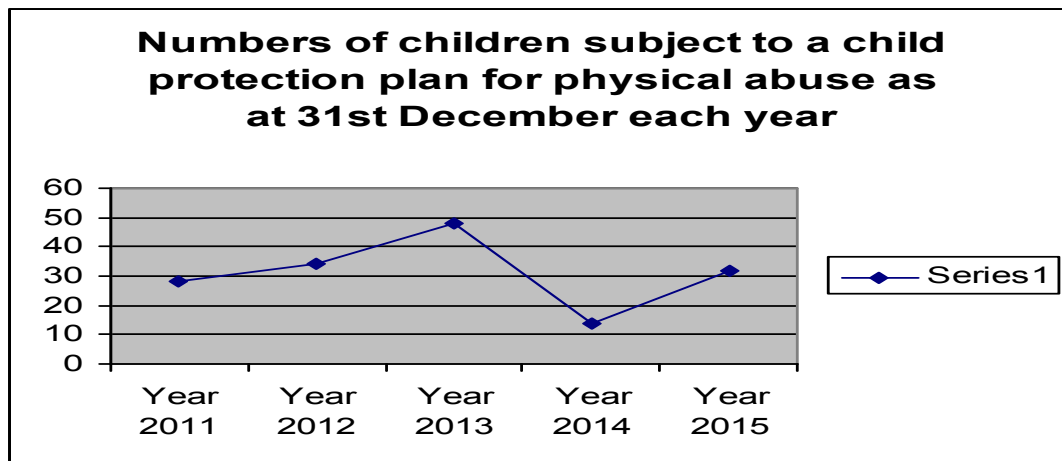
- 5.10 A snap shot in December 2015 shows that White British children are consistently over represented in this category given that 60% of the 0-19 population and 77% of the school population are Black and Minority Ethnic in Lewisham.
- 5.11 Although the underlying factors impacting on White British families in this cohort need to be further scrutinised, evidence suggests these plans relate to substance abuse, poor parenting, inter-generational neglect and learning disability.
- 5.12 Most children assessed as being emotionally abused have been exposed to domestic abuse. White British children feature disproportionately in this cohort but children of mixed heritage also feature highly in this category.

**Table 5**



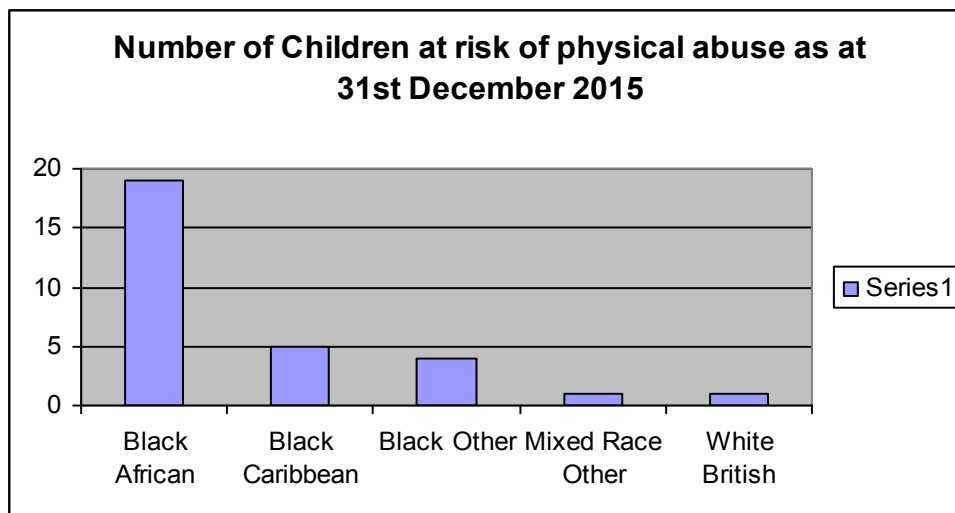
- 5.13 Since September 2015, an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate has been located in the Referral and Assessment Service to offer support and advice and prevent further occurrences of domestic abuse. Social Workers routinely attend MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) to discuss service user needs related to domestic abuse. The MARAC is a monthly risk management meeting where professionals share information relating to high risk situations where domestic abuse is a concern and develop a multiagency risk management plan.
- 5.14 The third largest category of children subject to a plan is usually physical abuse. On the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 we had an unusual tally where the numbers of children subject to a plan for physical abuse equaled that for sexual abuse.

**Table 6**



5.15 These figures have fluctuated significantly. A consistent theme is that Black African children have featured significantly in this category

**Table 7**

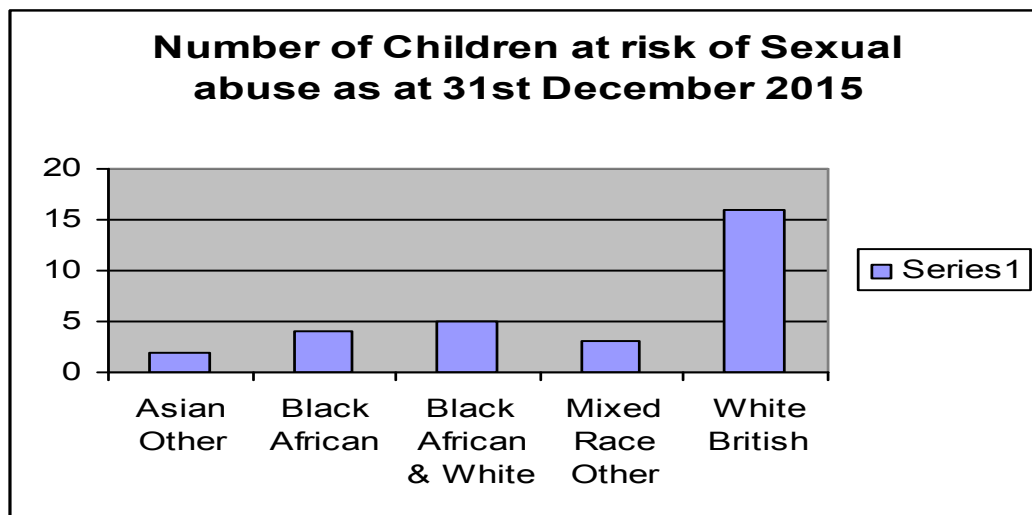


5.16 As such the Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) have agreed a multiagency strategy to tackle physical chastisement within the Borough with a focus on Black African families.

5.17 The numbers of children subject to a child protection plan for sexual abuse has ranged from 5%-7% of all children subject to a plan for the last 5 years. Where sexual abuse is identified, action is taken to remove the perpetrator from the family home and empower the non-abusive parent or carer where possible.

5.18 In a small number of cases, children who are at risk of sexual abuse are monitored by way of a child protection plan to provide additional safeguards. The table below shows the number of children subject to a plan for sexual abuse on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 by ethnicity; White British children are typically over represented in this category.

**Table 8**



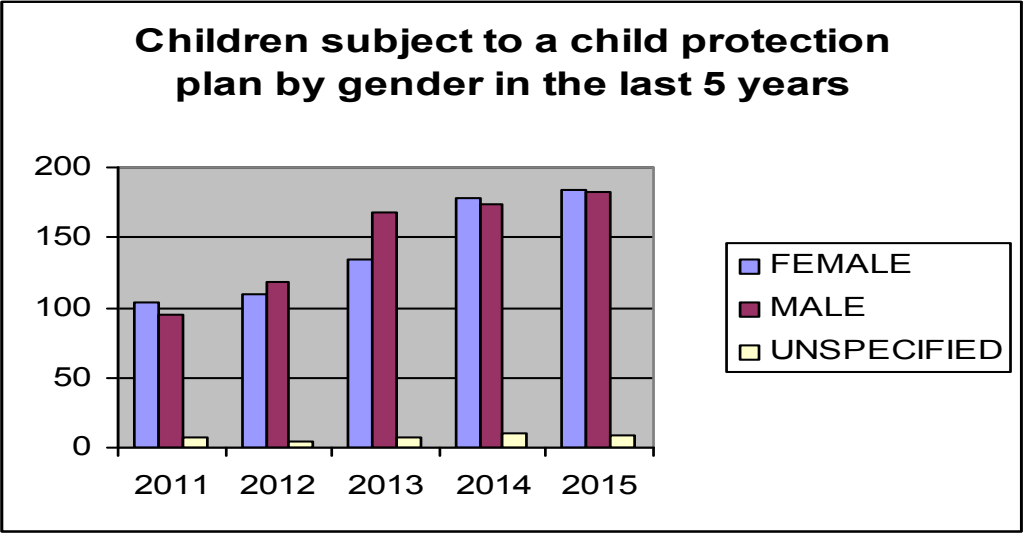
**6 Table 9 Ages of Children Subject to a child protection plan**

Age	Date				
	31/12/2011	31/12/2012	31/12/2013	31/12/2014	31/12/2015
-1	7 (3%)	5 (2%)	7 (2%)	9 (2%)	7 (2%)
0-1 (under 2)	48 (23%)	49 (21%)	56 (18%)	70 (19%)	71 (19%)
2-4	40 (19%)	41 (16%)	56 (18%)	83 (23%)	64 (17%)
5-10	80 (39%)	82 (35%)	112 (36%)	114 (31%)	141 (38%)
11-14	27 (13%)	40 (17%)	54 (17%)	55 (15%)	71 (19%)
15+	5 (2%)	16 (7%)	25 (8%)	31 (9%)	21 (7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>375</b>

*\*Please note the percentages are rounded*

- 6.1 The numbers of pre- birth child protection conferences has plateaued over the last 5 years. The small numbers of pre-birth conferences relate to concerns identified regarding the care of the unborn or anticipated concerns regarding parental care post birth. We are currently in discussion with Southwark Council who are piloting an innovative project called Pause. Pause engages mothers who have had children removed from them to turn their lives around before they become pregnant again. Following an evaluation of Pause in Southwark, Lewisham will consider the development of our local Pause offer.
- 6.2 There has been a steady rise in the number of children aged 11-14 being subject to a child protection plan. This links to a focus on child sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation in the partnership. The strategic oversight of the interface between child sexual exploitation and drug dealing activity around 'County Lines' is being further developed by the LSCB Task Group on Child Sexual Exploitation in line with the recommendations by Ofsted in 2015.
- 6.3 The number of children subject to a child protection plan by gender has remained roughly equal over the last five years. There is no marked difference in categories of children subject to a plan by gender. (Please note the unspecified category in the table below relate to prebirth conferences).

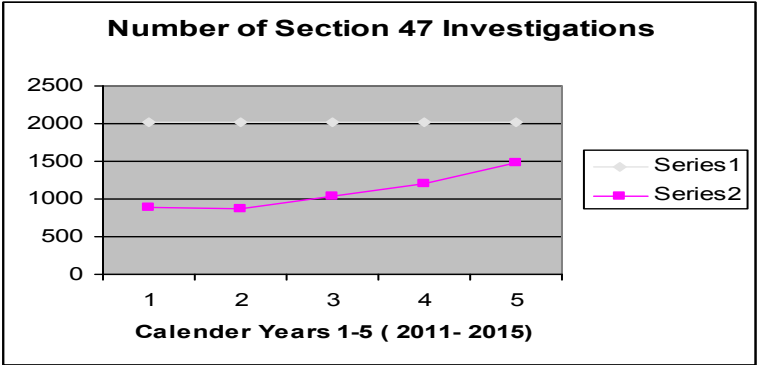
**Table 10**



**7 Enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989**

7.1 A Section 47 enquiry is undertaken where there is a concern that a child has suffered significant harm or is at risk of harm. There has been an overall increase in the number of children that have been subject to a Section 47 investigation over the last 5 years as shown in Table 10. Since October 2015 the numbers have started to fall slightly ( See Table 11) , however it is too early to say if this is an established trend.

**Table 11**





7.2 Table 11 also shows that compared to statistical neighbours, Lewisham is undertaking more Section 47 investigations per 10,000 of the population. The Service Manager for the Referral & Assessment Service completed an audit of all the cases in the month of November 2014 to ensure correct thresholds were in place for these enquiries. The audit found that Section 47 enquiries were being undertaken for appropriate reasons. The report was presented to the Departmental Management Team and to the Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board in March 2015. This area needs to be subject to continued scrutiny to ensure thresholds are being applied in line with best practice.

## **8 Court Applications**

8.1 The South London Care Proceedings Project is a joint initiative between the London Boroughs of Lewisham, Southwark, Greenwich and Lambeth. The objective of this project is to appropriately complete care proceedings within 26 weeks in line with Government targets. Lewisham has a higher rate of issuing care proceedings than our statistical neighbours and rates relating to this have remained consistent since 2011. The project has enabled Lewisham to reduce the average length of time that cases are in court, from 56 weeks in 2011 to 33 weeks by 2015. This has enabled the achievement of permanency for children in a shorter time frame, whilst reducing legal fees at the same time.

8.2 The main factors that continue to contribute to delay in concluding proceedings are:-

- Late presentation of absent fathers and alternative family members in cases where the children are unlikely to be returned to their mother.
- International elements, where alternative carers proposed by birth parents live abroad have to be assessed.
- Immigration Issues, where the alternative carer or non-abusive parent has no recourse to public funds.

## **9 Safeguarding Children in specific circumstances.**

9.1 Lewisham is a specified authority for Prevent work by central government to address radicalisation that affect children and young people. The Prevent Lead has established an action plan in conjunction with the Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board and is in the process of rolling out specialist training called WRAP to all Children's Social Care to help protect children from radicalisation. Where radicalisation is of concern liaison will be undertaken with the Prevent team regarding the need for child protection procedures within agreed pathways to protect these children.

9.2 Lewisham has dealt with two cases of enforced marriage and in both cases an order was obtained from the court to allow protective action.

9.3 Training has been provided to the partnership to increase awareness about Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Between 1 January 2015 and 31 December 2015, there have been no prosecutions or removals of children from parents due to FGM in Lewisham.

## **10 Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers**

10.1 Child protection work is stressful and requires personal dedication, resilience and high levels of support. There have been difficulties in recruiting permanent experienced staff to our long term Family Social Work (FSW) teams, which is a London wide problem. Where vacancies exist and casework could otherwise not be covered, agency social workers are used.

10.2 The challenges to recruitment and retention are:-

- Financial- Some experienced social workers elect to work as agency staff to earn more money.
- Work Life Balance - A large number of experienced social workers tend to be women. When they have young children, they leave frontline practice to have a better work life balance.
- Career Progression and Development- Some experienced social workers leave to become managers in other local authorities.

10.3 There are a number of newly qualified or Assessed and **Supported Year in Employment** Social Work practitioners in the FSW teams. The social workers who are fresh out of university have to pass the first year in employment before they are able to practice as fully qualified social workers. Advanced Practitioners are in place to guide them through their work.

10.4 In line with the need to recruit the best social workers for Lewisham children and fierce competition between authorities for social workers our workforce strategy is being completely refreshed. This will be subject of a separate report to Select Committee once completed in Spring 2016. Currently an all staff survey is being completed to inform the strategy as well as face-to-face staff consultation.

## **11 Safeguarding Children from inappropriate conduct by people who work with them in a voluntary or paid capacity**

11.1 Every local authority is required to have a LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) who deals with allegations against people who work with children. The allegations range from inappropriate conduct such as shouting at a child to more serious abuse. Between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015, the Lewisham LADO dealt with 99 allegations, of these 19 were substantiated and subsequent action was taken to safeguard children. An annual report setting out further details of investigations undertaken by the LADO is submitted each year to the LSCB for scrutiny.

## **12 Role and Function of the Local Safeguarding Children Board**

12.1 The LSCB oversees the safeguarding of children across Lewisham. Working Together 2015 states that the role of the LSCB is:

- To co-ordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area;  
and
- To ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each person or body for those purposes.

12.2 The guidance requires the chair to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area. This report is submitted to the Chief Executive, the Mayor, the local Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing board. The Annual Report for 2014- 2015 has already been presented to the Children and Young People's Select Committee for their scrutiny.

### **13 Serious Case Reviews**

13.1 Within the last calendar year the LSCB has commissioned one Serious Case Review in relation to a tragic incident when a young person committed suicide. Lewisham is also providing information to a serious case review commissioned by Croydon. These reviews are both currently in progress.

### **14 Financial implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **15 Legal implications**

There are no specific legal implication arising from this report. Lewisham CSC provides Children's safeguarding and support serves in accordance with the statutory framework provided by the Children Act 1989 and succeeding statutory requirements.

### **16 Crime and disorder implications**

The police are key partners in safeguarding children.

### **17 Equalities implications**

Equalities factors are addressed in the body of the report. The report identifies that the White British population of Lewisham is disproportionately affected by safeguarding issues..

### **18 Environmental implications**

None.

### **19 Background documents and originator**

If there are any queries on this report, please contact Stephen Kitchman on 0208 314 8140.