

<b>CYP SELECT COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>Report Title</b>	Report on Safeguarding Services	
<b>Key Decision</b>	No	Item No. 5
<b>Ward</b>	All	
<b>Contributors</b>	Stephen Kitchman, Director Children's Social Care	
<b>Class</b>	Open	Date: 11 <sup>th</sup> January 2017

## **1. Purpose and Summary of the Report**

1. This report provides an overview of safeguarding activity between June 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2016. The report will not comment on Child Sexual Exploitation as this is the subject of a separate stand-alone report to the CYP Select Committee.
2. The report will cover the following areas:
  - Policy and legislative context.
  - Referral activity
  - Overview of children subject to child protection plans
  - Enquiries made under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 where there are concerns that children are at risk of significant harm.
  - Safeguarding children from inappropriate conduct by people who work with them in a voluntary or paid capacity.
  - Serious Case Reviews.

## **2. Recommendations**

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

### **3 Policy and Legislative Context**

3.1 Children's Social Care is governed and delivered under the auspices of statutory legislation, regulation and guidance. The key legislative framework and guidance for this are outlined below via:

- [The Children Act 1989](#) imposes a statutory duty on local authorities to safeguard children in their area.
- [The London Child Protection Procedures 2016](#) have been adopted by all London Local Authorities and LSCBs.
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015](#), HM Government, provides a national framework and the core requirements which agencies and professionals must satisfy in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

### **3. Numbers of Referrals to Children's Social Care**

3.1 Table 1 below indicates the number of referrals received by Lewisham's Children's Social Care (CSC) to end of October 2016. There was a drop in the number of referrals in July from June (250 vs 187, a difference of 63). Numbers began to rise again in July and have increased up to 216 as at the end of October 2016. The reduction in numbers is likely to coincide with school holidays and numbers have subsequently increased to usual monthly averages.

3.2 As part of the review of Early Help and MASH in Lewisham a revised access to services protocol has been developed to better inform and distinguish the type of services and intervention models that apply to the particular needs of children and their families seeking help and support.

3.3 This includes guidance on making appropriate and relevant referrals to Children's Social Care through the Multi- Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH.) The implementation of the new MASH in January 2017 will ensure greater consistency in the application of thresholds and in decision making, thereby better improving the involvement of other partner agencies to identify and respond to the needs of children. Understandably the launch and communication of the new MASH arrangements are likely to have an impact on the number of referrals received from January 2017 onwards. We will ensure that processes applied are kept under review and scrutiny to ensure that children receive a seamless service from the point of contact onwards.

### Number of Referrals (individual month)

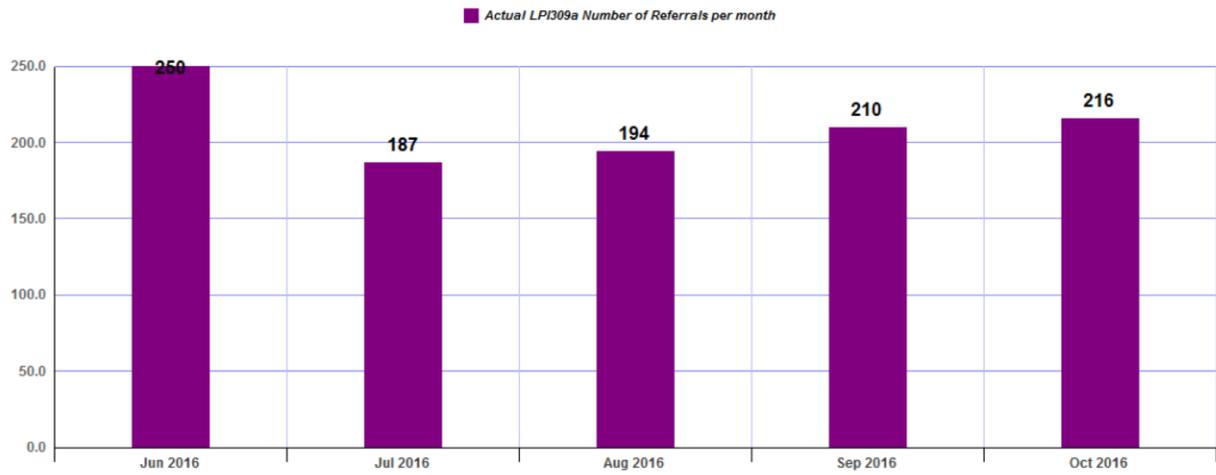


Table 1

Source: LCS

#### 4. Enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989

- 4.1 A section 47 (Children Act, 1989) enquiry is undertaken where there is a concern that a child is at risk of, or has suffered, significant harm.
- 4.2 Tables 3 and 4 indicate the numbers of section 47 enquiries completed each month by the social work teams within the Referral and Assessment Service, and the proportion of those that then progress to an Initial Child Protection Conference in order to plan to protect children from harm.
- 4.3 These numbers can be influenced by seasonal events, for example the summer holidays affected the August figure for numbers of enquiries conducted as schools often refer to Children's Social Care (a drop of 51 from the July figure of 102). However, the proportion of enquiries which result in a need for a case conference is relatively stable (from 28.7 to 33.9). This is a lower percentage conversion rate than our statistical neighbours and the inner London average, although the rate has steadily increased in Lewisham over the last six months (by 5.2). This is an area that is subject to ongoing scrutiny by Service Managers. Both previous and current audit activity has indicated that management decision making in initiating S47 enquiries has been appropriate.

LPZ 518: Number of s47 enquiries each month

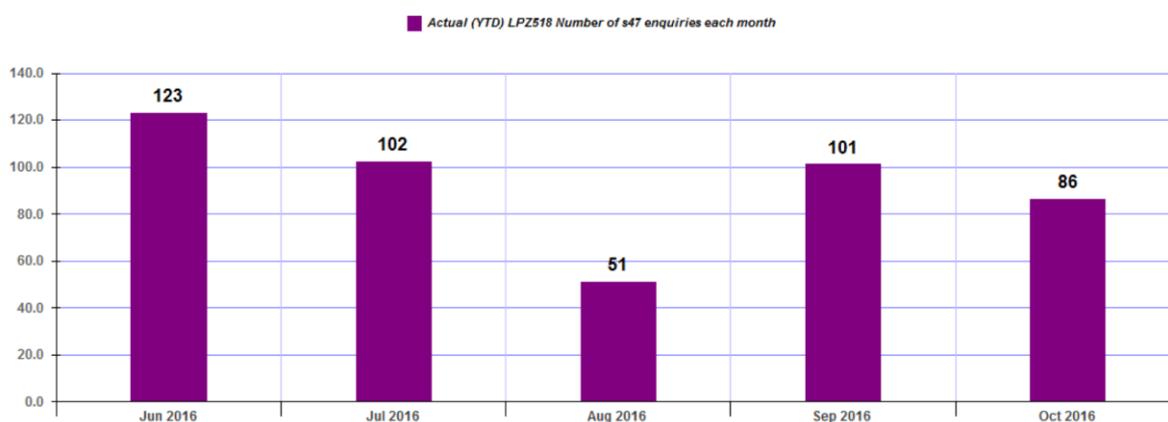
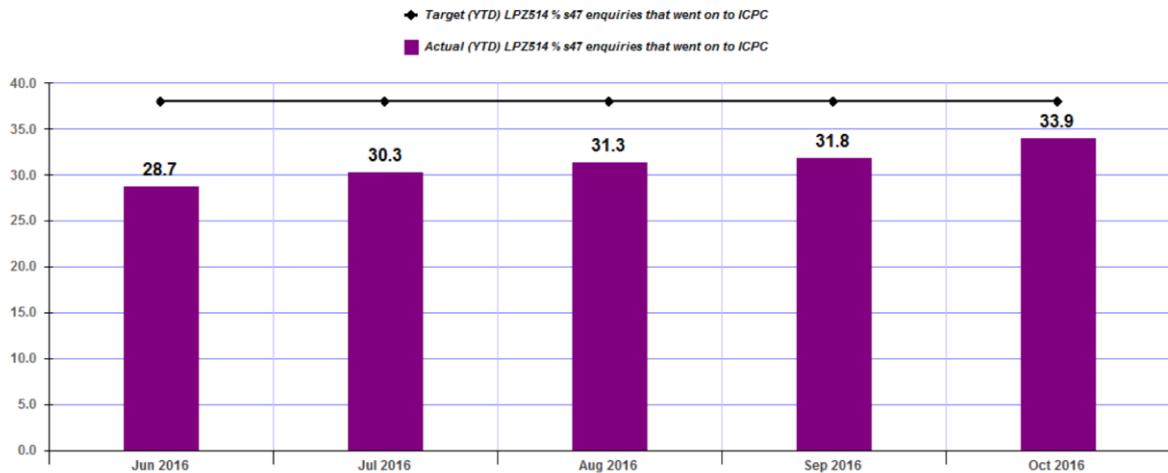


Table 2

Source: LCS

### LPZ 514: % sec 47 enquiries that went on to ICPC



**Table 3**

Source: LCS

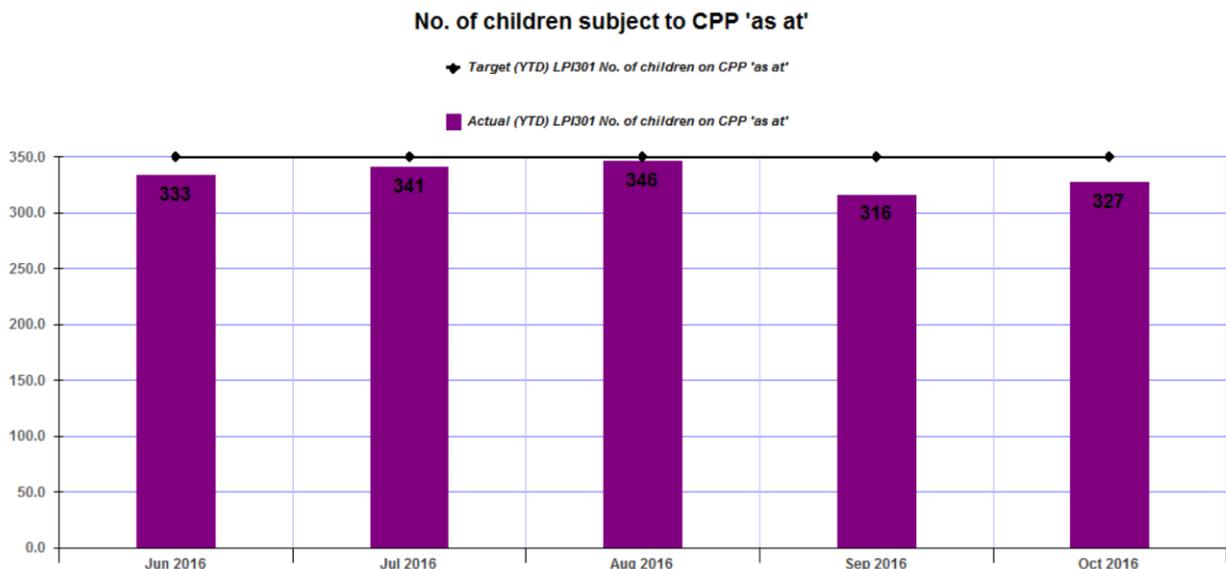
## 5. Children Subject to Child Protection Plans

5.1 Children become subject to child protection plans as a result of the decision making of a multi-agency child protection conference convened in line with guidance set out in statutory guidance as well as the London Child Protection Procedures (2016). These conferences are chaired by experienced and skilled Child Protection Conference Chairs within the Quality Assurance Service. The reason for convening such a conference is that the child is deemed to be either suffering or at risk of significant harm following both a full assessment of the child's needs and, as a consequence of any s.47 enquiry undertaken. For these children, child protection plans and formal multi-agency case conference arrangements provide the framework by which risk is managed and plans of protection are put into place to ensure that the child does not suffer future harm.

5.2 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

- 5.3 The number of children subject to a plan varies depending on how many plans are started or ceased throughout the year. On 31<sup>st</sup> October 2016, there were 327 children in Lewisham subject to a child protection plan which is a decrease of 19 children since 31<sup>st</sup> July 2016 when the figure was 346.
- 5.4 This figure (327) is in line with our statistical neighbours and has 'out performed' the indicative target we set to reduce numbers (which was 350). This reduction is monitored to ensure that children are still being made subject to plans where it is appropriate to do so. However, small numbers of families with large sibling groups can make a significant impact upon the number of children who are subject to plans, hence the slight increase in October by 11 children to 327 children subject to plans.
- 5.5 There are a number of reasons for the overall decrease in the year, the Child Protection Conferences are increasingly held within a Strengthening Families model of multi-agency working, with a focus upon the risks children are or may experience in a more direct way. This then provides the relevant framework as to how the multi-agency conference recognises risk and, importantly, seeks to address it via the plan for the child. Moreover, when children have been made the subject of a Supervision Order in care proceedings they are removed from a plan as the Supervision Order plan is sufficiently robust given that it was agreed by the Family Court as part of proceedings to protect the children involved.



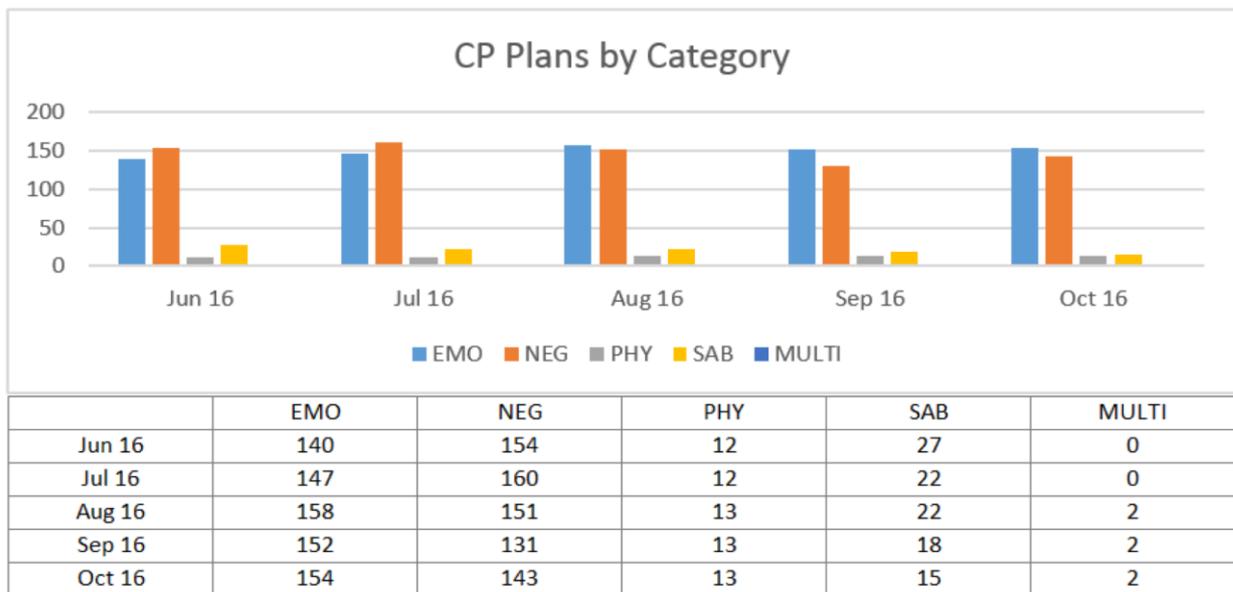
**Graph 3**

Source: LCS

5.6 The vast majority of children subject to Child Protection Plans fall within the category of neglect and/or emotional abuse. These children will often be living with families where there are drug and alcohol problems, domestic violence, mental health issues and issues of chronic neglect. This then presents significant challenges for all services as the children and adults have high levels of complex need. Due to this, the Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has agreed to focus upon neglect as one of the key priorities for the 2016/17 Business Plan.

5.7 The proposed Neglect Strategy arising from this includes:

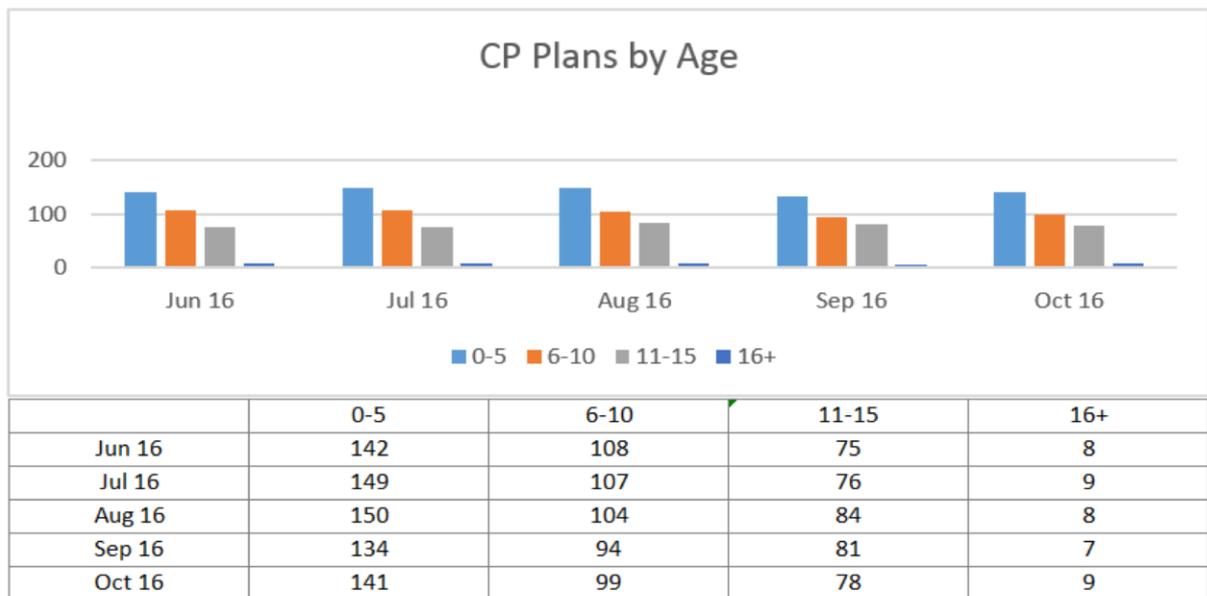
- Review of best practice and research in this area
- Multi-agency audit of local practice to address neglect in Lewisham
- A roll out of multi-agency training programme
- Deliver a conference to promote strategy and interventions to address neglect



**Graph 4**

Source: LCS

5.8 Table 5 below shows the ages of children who are subject to plans. Older children who are subject to Child Protection Plans are often from large families where neglect is apparent, or are young people at risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE) or another type of criminal exploitation. Interestingly, whilst the numbers of children subject to plans continues to decrease month on month, those children who are subject to plans of protection due to emotional abuse has risen (from 140 in June to 154 in October). This will be explored further by Child Protection Chairs in January 2017 to identify any themes or issues arising from the increase in this category.



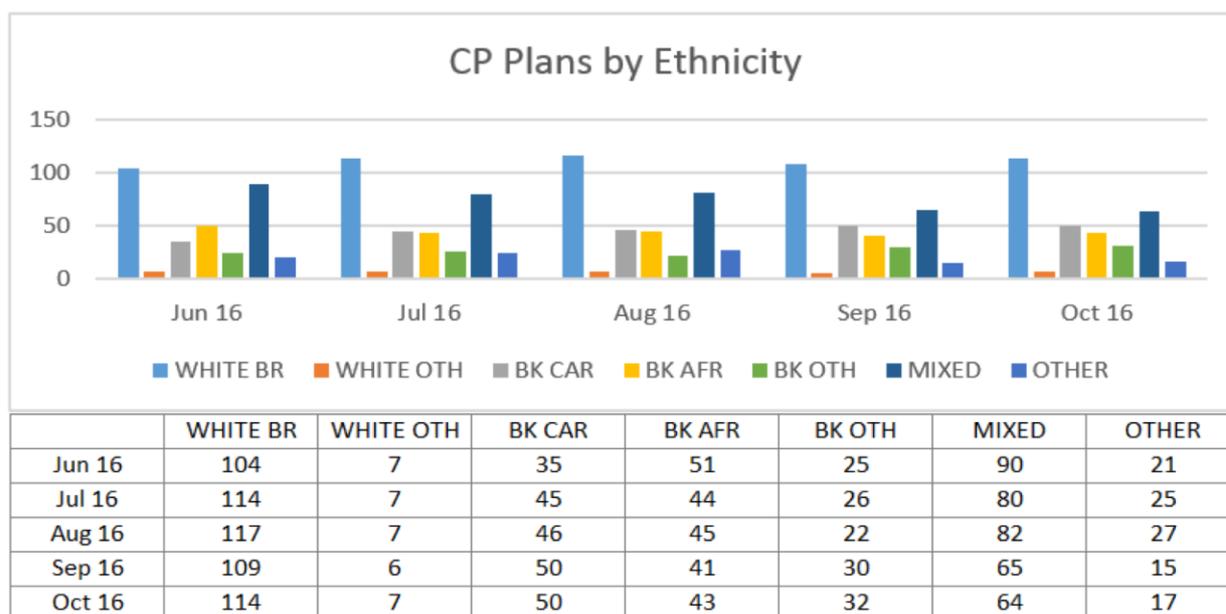
**Table 5**

Source: LCS

5.9 Table 6 below shows the ethnicity of those children subject to child protection plans. The profile reflects the diversity of the Borough and the challenges of dealing with families where English is often not the first language thereby necessitating the use of interpretation services to ensure that families and children understand the role of the conference and the processes that they are subject to.

5.10 A majority of children subject to plans are of White British ethnicity with those children who are of mixed ethnicity comprising the second largest proportion of children who are subject to plans. Those numbers of children who are of Black Caribbean ethnicity has seen an increase (from 35 to 50 children), whilst children of mixed ethnicity has seen a decrease (90 to 64).

5.11 It is too early to say what, if anything, is the reason for these small fluctuations, however, it is important to the delivery of services to ensure that they reflect the cultural needs of the families accessing them, and so, we will continue to monitor age, length of time subject to plans and ethnicity of families and children to ensure that services are reflective of their identified needs.

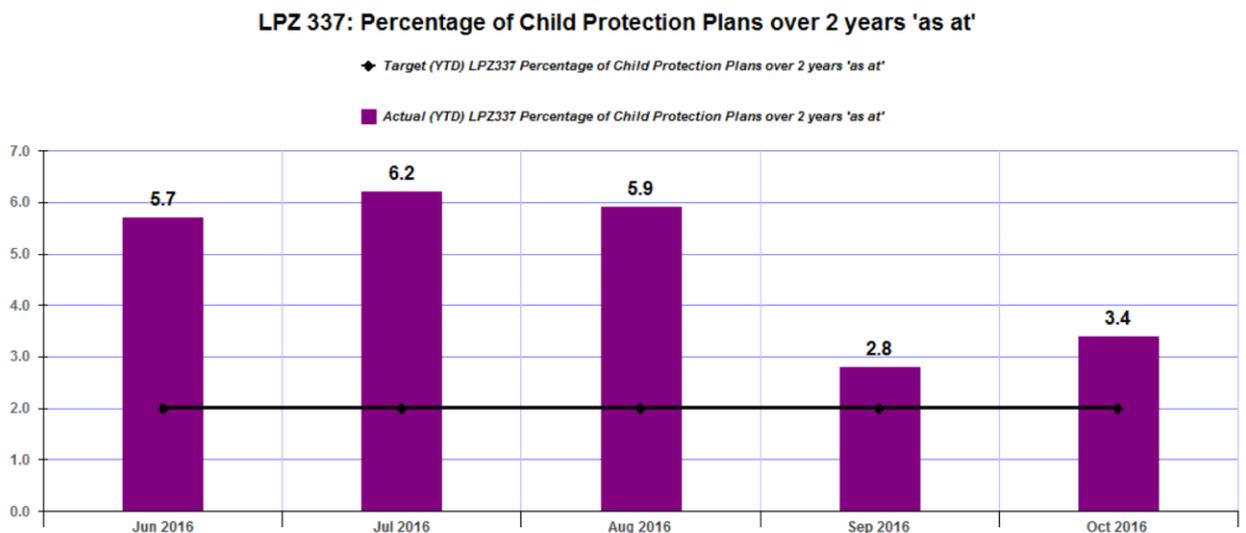


**Table 6**

Source: LCS

5.12 Table 7 below on page 8 shows those children who have been subject to plans for 12 months or more. Particular attention is paid to these children as it may indicate that there is delay in the provision of services, or a lack of focus on the plan itself to ensure that children are adequately protected. From this Table, it can be seen that there has been improvement in the numbers of children subject to plans for longer than 12 mths (from 5.7 in June to 3.4 in October 2016).

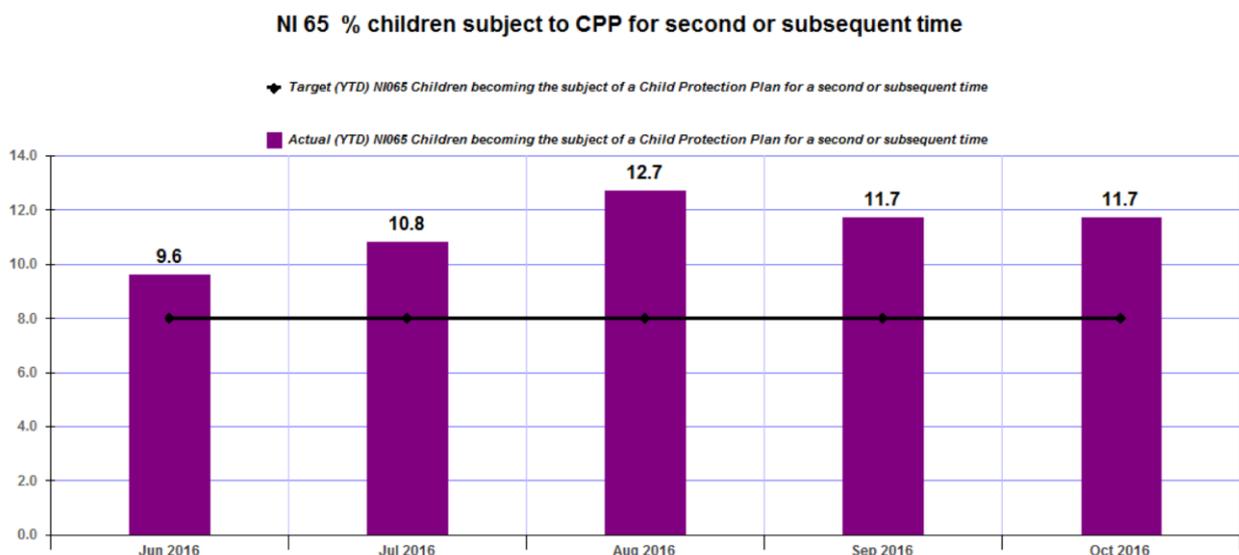
- 5.13 Senior Managers review these cases and address any issues which may mean that the plan is not as focused as it might be on the risks presented, in order to ensure that children are not subject to plans for an undue length of time. This year's Children's Social Care Business Plan has provided a focus on the duration of Child Protection Plans. Monthly meetings are held between the Service Managers for the Family Support Service and the Quality Assurance Service to review children on plans for 9 months or more and to ensure that Core Group Meetings are focused on the decisions and the plans formulated at conferences.
- 5.14 The Child Protection Conference Chairs are currently auditing Core Group Meetings for those children on plans for 12 months to ensure that progress for these children is monitored between conferences. The results of this audit will be included in the next Safeguarding Report to CYP Select Committee.
- 5.15 Table 7 below shows those children who have been subject to a child protection plan for 2 years or more. As can be seen, there is an improvement trend for this indicator since August 2016. Children should not be subject to plans for longer than is necessary as it indicates drift or delay in decision making in respect of their current and future welfare. However, there will always be a small proportion of children who are subject for longer than usual due to the complexity of issues they experience we review these children closely (see 5.14 above). Currently, there are 10 out of 321 (3.1%) children subject to a plan over 2 years, therefore, the indicator in Table 7 will continue to see improvement (i.e., downward trend).



**Table 7**

Source: LCS

- 5.16 Table 8 below shows the proportion of children who have been subject to a plan for a second or subsequent time. Children become subject to a plan for a second time possibly due to the Child in Need Plan (put in place when a child protection plan ends) if this was not sufficiently robust to ensure that risks to the child or children did not resurface. However it may also reflect a significant change in family circumstances which could not have been predicted when the first child protection plan ended. For example, the death of a protective family member (for instance, a grandparent), or the return to the household of a negative influence on the family or someone who presents a risk to the child or children.
- 5.17 The proportion of children subject to repeat child protection plans (11.7%) is below our statistical neighbours (13.2%) and is well within acceptable parameters. However, we continue to monitor closely this aspect of the child protection process.



**Graph 8**

Source: LCS

## 6. Serious Case Reviews (LSCB)

- 6.1 The LSCB has commissioned two Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) in the past twelve months, one in relation to a tragic incident when a young person committed suicide and another following the death of a young person who was subject to a Child Protection Plan at the time of his death. Lewisham has also provided information to a Serious Case Review commissioned by the LSCB in Croydon which has been published and presented to the LSCB in Lewisham.

6.2 The Lewisham SCRs are still underway and will be completed in early 2017 when the findings will be presented to the LSCB and summarised in the next Safeguarding Update to CYP Select Committee.

## **7. Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**

7.1 The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is a statutory role defined in Working Together 2015. The Designated Officer is responsible for the management and oversight of allegations against people that work with children. It is not an investigative role. The investigative responsibility lies with the individual's employer or the Police if an offence has been committed.

7.2 The Designated Officer will convene strategy meetings which will oversee the enquiries into any issues arising from a child being harmed by someone employed to work directly with children and young people, or who come into contact with children and young people in the course of their paid activity.

7.3 An annual report is provided to the LSCB on the work of the LADO, the Annual Report for 2015/16 has already been presented and the activity undertaken to the end of December 2016 from 1<sup>st</sup> April will be presented to the next LSCB in February 2017.

7.4 A review of the LADO capacity has been undertaken in line with the Ofsted Inspection Improvement Plan and temporary additional capacity has been put in place pending recruitment to a full time permanent position; previously there was 0.5 cover in place for this post.

7.5 The new arrangements will allow for a more extensive communications campaign and support, development and training regarding the LADO role and processes in order to encourage greater use of the function and appropriate referral activity.

## **8. Legal Implications**

8.1 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.

## **9. Crime and Disorder Implications**

9.1 The police are key partners in safeguarding children.

## **10. Equalities Implications**

10.1 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.

## **11. Environmental Implications**

11.1 None.

## **12. Background documents and originator**

12.1 If there are any queries on this report, please contact Stephen Kitchman, Director, Children's Social Care on

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