

CYP SELECT COMMITTEE		
Report Title	Report on Safeguarding Services	
Key Decision	No	Item No.
Ward	All	
Contributors	Director Children's Social Care	
Class	Open	Date: 13 th July 2017

1. Purpose and Summary of the Report

1.1 This report provides an overview of safeguarding activity between January 1st 2017 and May 31st 2017. The report does not comment on Child Sexual Exploitation as this is the subject of a separate stand-alone report to the CYP Select Committee.

1.2 The report will cover the following areas:

- Policy and legislative context of safeguarding activity.
- Referrals received
- 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.
- The actions described in this report are consistent with the Council's corporate priorities as set out in the Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2020. The safeguarding activities outlined in the report also align with the Council's priorities regarding young people's Achievement and Involvement, Protection of

Children and Community Leadership and Empowerment. The activities and their outcomes are also in line with the Children and Young People's Plan 2015-18 particularly around children staying safe, being healthy and active and raising achievement and attainment.

4 Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Early Help

- 4.1 The most significant development to how we provide safeguarding services locally has been the refocusing of the MASH and provision of a new Early Help Team all working to the partnership's threshold for service document, the 'Continuum of Need,' which was launched in January 2017. In February 2017, the use of the Common Assessment Form (CAF) as a referral and assessment tool was discontinued and the Early Help Module (EHM) for recording, tracking and reporting on all new referrals to Children's Social Care, serviced through the new MASH and Early Help teams, was introduced. This new online referral form is the main tool for all hard copy safeguarding referrals as other access routes are safely phased out; telephone enquiries remain. Requests for targeted support also come through this route so that we provide the right help to match the referral concern.
- 4.2 As part of the Council's investment in a safe and responsive "front door" into Children's Social care the new Early Help team provides advice and support to other parts of the professional network. Increased resourcing to the MASH has provided additional social work and management capacity. This is mirrored by additional capacity from the key agencies represented within the MASH setup. This investment will improve the response to referrers and support families by providing the right help, from the right worker in a timely way

5 Numbers of Referrals to Children's Social Care

- 5.1 The table 1 below indicates the number of referrals received by Lewisham's Children's Social Care (CSC) to the end of May 2017. The referral rate is consistent month on month in +/- 50 range. The dip in April coincided with the School's Easter holiday. There is a lower level of conversion from contact to referral as previously reported but this remains an area for scrutiny. Current analysis suggests that the introduction of the new referral pathways outlined above, has led to some initial teething difficulties, as all contacts are routed through the MASH, resulting in increased numbers of contacts being recorded.

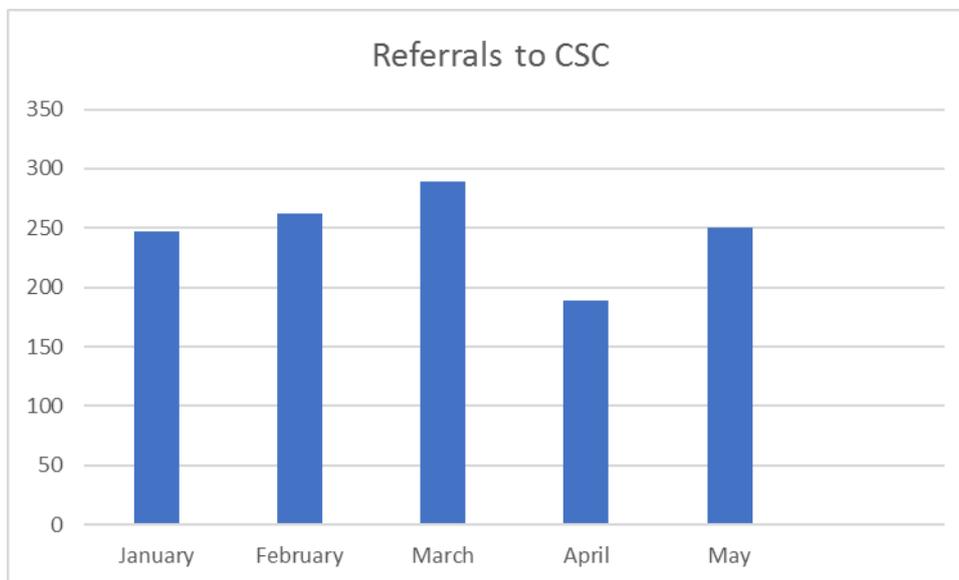


Table 1

5.2 The following 3-month snapshot demonstrates referral source by agency. The overall picture shows the majority of referrals originating with Police and Schools, Health services generate a small percentage of referrals within this cohort of children.

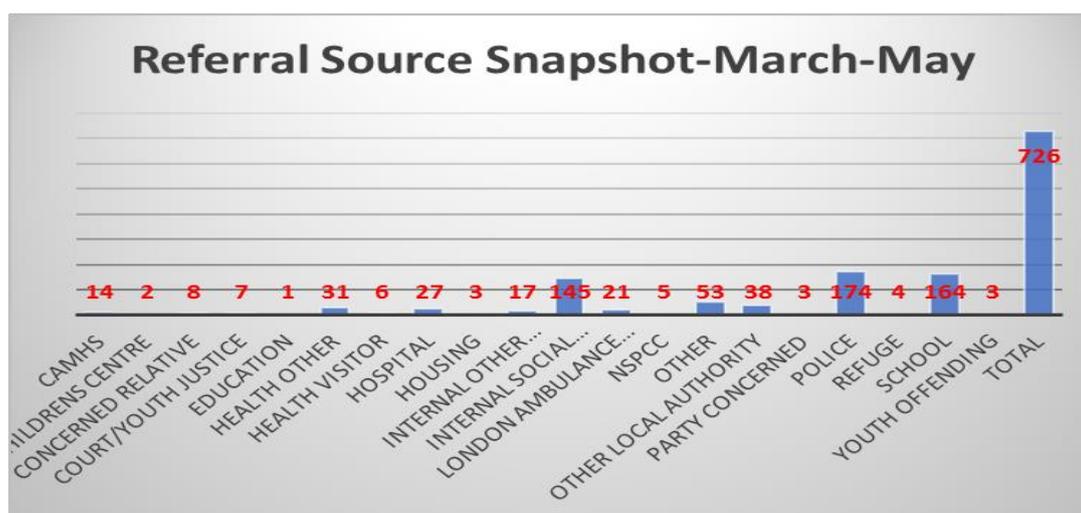


Table 2

6 Enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989

6.1 A section 47 enquiry is the response undertaken when there is a concern that a child is at risk of, or has suffered, significant harm. These enquiries can also follow when a child is taken into Police Protection or is made subject to an Emergency Protection Order. The investigation enables CSC to decide whether further action is needed to protect the child/ren. 517 children and young people were subject to Section 47 enquiries in 2017 up until 31st May. Of these 146 individual children were subsequently made subject to Child Protection Plans.

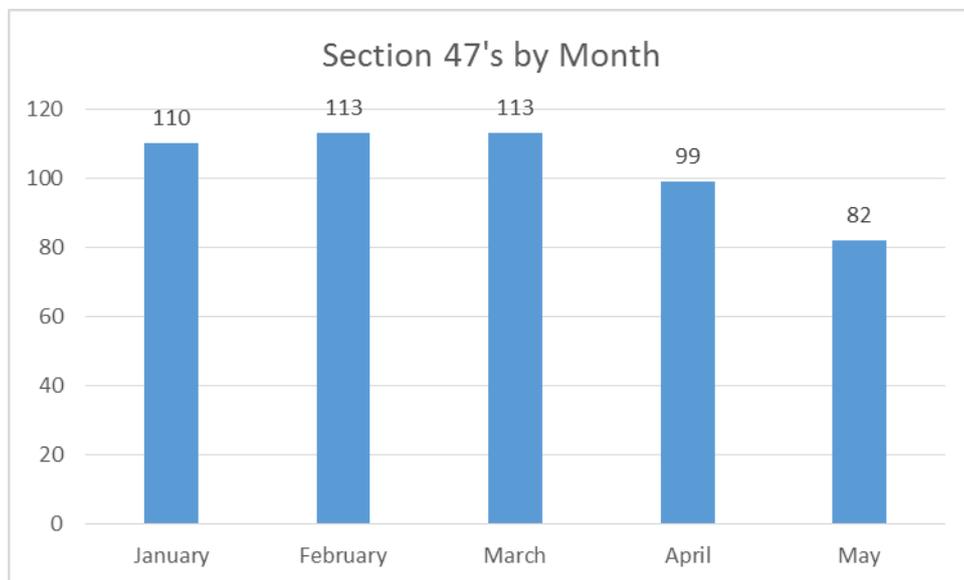


Table 3

6.2 There is a relatively even split between genders with females being only 5% more likely to be subject to a Section 47 process in the period. There is a greater disparity in ethnicity profiles within the cohort at first glance but the Lewisham demographic places that in context. 78% of the Lewisham school population is from BME communities but there is an over-representation of Black African children within initiated Section 47's investigations and an over-representation of White British children when Section 47's recommend Child Protection conferences, which are demonstrated on a later table. We are currently undertaking a dip sample audit in relation to West African families subject to Section 47 processes in particular, to examine the circumstances of the referral and satisfy ourselves that the response is proportionate to the concern. A recent independent audit of management decision making within MASH did not identify that referrals were being progressed to Section 47 inappropriately and that safeguarding activity was appropriate. A review audit will look at this activity again in September 2017 as we benchmark our processes. Overall in this period the number of Section 47 enquiries per 10,000 children in Lewisham at 193 (May 2017) has gradually been getting nearer to the agreed target of 160 and the national average of 148.

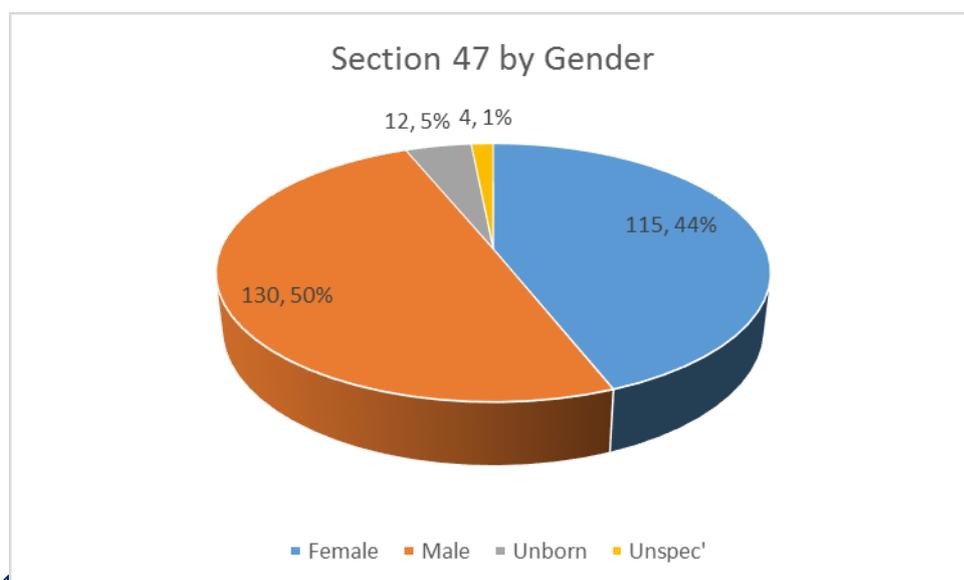


Table 4

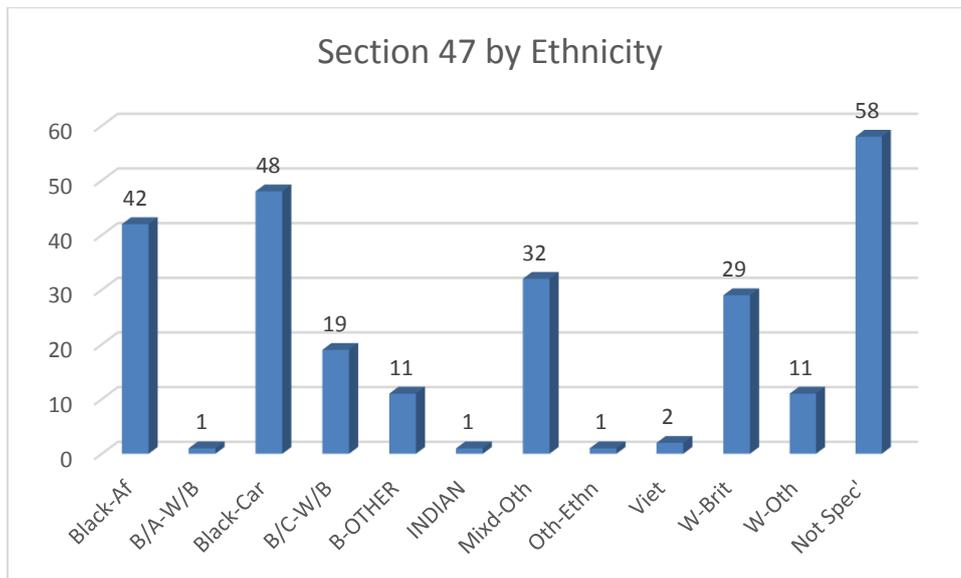


Table 5

7 Children Subject to Child Protection Plans

- 7.1 When Section 47s conclude that children require a social work child protection response this is progressed to an Initial Child Protection Conference. Children become subject to child protection plans via a multi-agency child protection conference which utilizes our Strengthening Families approach, so that families can understand and respond to the concerns raised. Conferences are chaired by our Child Protection Conference Chairs who are sited within the Quality Assurance Unit. The Child Protection Plan formulated at Conference addresses the specific areas of concern for individual children. By setting down the framework and process by which families work with the involved professional network, a focused response to family recovery is provided which prioritizes the child's safety.
- 7.2 When children become subject to a child protection plan, the conference specifies the category of harm that the child has been exposed to:
- Physical Abuse
 - Emotional Abuse
 - Sexual Abuse
 - Neglect
- 7.3 For some children and young people their exposure crosses more than one category and there can be sub-category references or as on the chart below the category of "multiple" concerns.
- 7.4 In the period January to June 2017- 146 individual children became subject to Child Protection Plans. Neglect remains the most likely reason for children and young people to be placed on a Plan with Emotional Abuse the second main

category in Lewisham. There is a significant numerical difference between children on CP Plans for Neglect and Emotional Abuse and the remaining children who are placed on Plans due to Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse. Most children within the Neglect and Emotional Abuse categories will often be living with families where there are substance and alcohol dependency problems, issues of domestic abuse, mental and physical health issues all culminating often in sustained and chronic neglect. The risks associated with prolonged neglect is such that the current Ofsted Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) programme is focussed on how well issues of neglect are identified by the children’s partnership locally and how well it is subsequently responded to. In conjunction with the Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board we have developed an updated Neglect Strategy and Children’s Social Care has focussed audit activity within our monthly and thematic audit programmes to capture the quality of our neglect response. There is a need to further explore the lower numbers categorised under both Sexual and Physical Abuse to assure ourselves that this group of children and young people are not a hidden demographic whose needs are unmet, or who are receiving a service but are categorised under more global headings such as Neglect due to a range of vulnerabilities within the family.

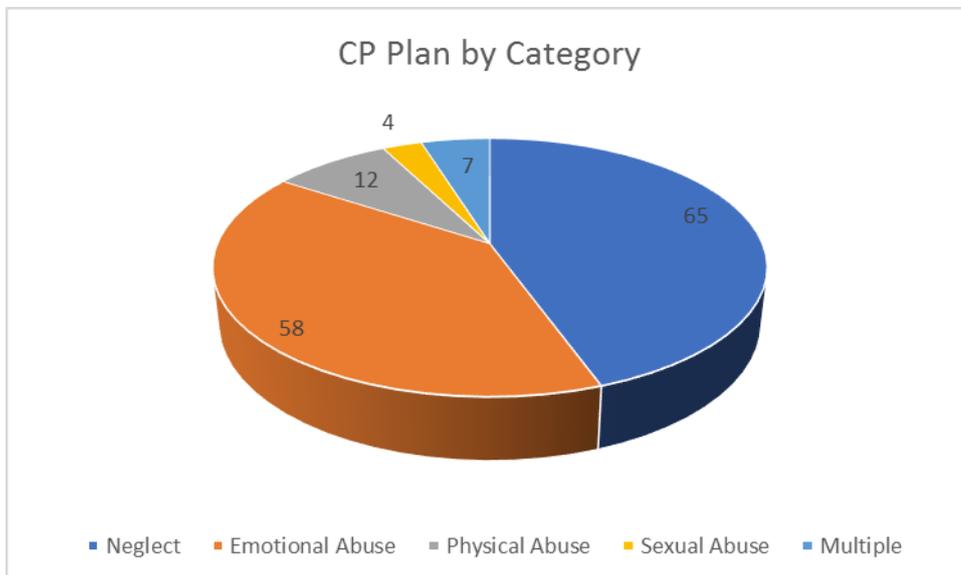


Table 6

7.5 The trend across the period has an overall downward trajectory for the total number of children on Child Protection Plans. There can appear to be significant variations month on month but this is often related to the addition (or removal from Plans) of sizeable sibling groups. Social Work is focused on achieving safe and meaningful change in children and young people’s experience within a defined period. The Service Managers for Family Social Work and Quality Assurance track cases monthly to ensure that cases do not “drift” on plans. Remedial social work and targeted support from the multi-agency network should demonstrate impact by the 2nd review conference at 9 months. This timeframe will allow work to be refocused at the Child in Need tier with parental engagement or alternatively examine whether legal proceedings should be considered.

7.6 The table below indicates the spread of ages for children and young people being made subject to Child Protection Plans in this period.

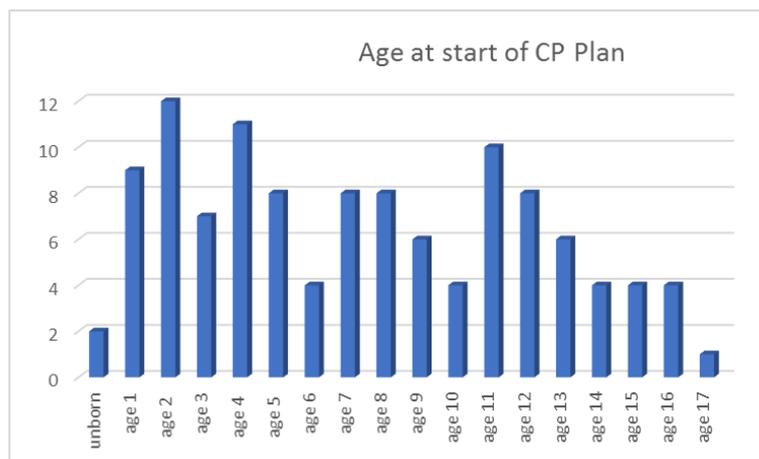


Table 7.

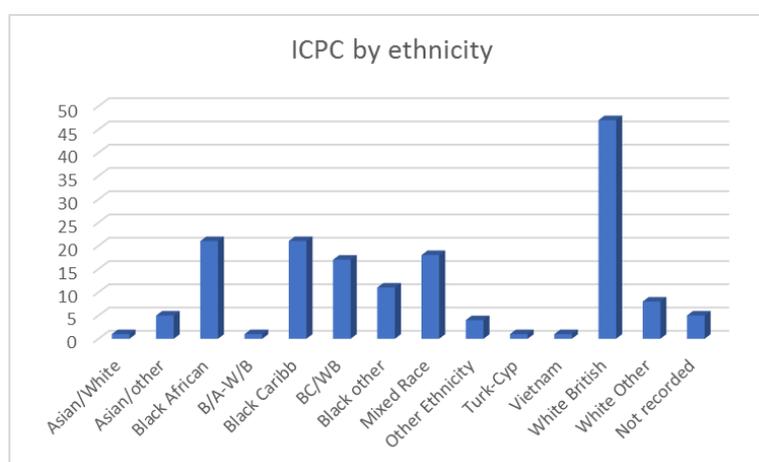


Table 8

7.7 Table 8 above partly tallies with the ethnicity profile mentioned above for S47 enquiries but there is divergence when we compare S47 enquiries for Black African and Black African/White British children. The group with the highest subsequent child protection conference activity is the White-British/White-Other cohort, although the volume of conferences is not significantly at odds with the volume of referrals. Analysis over a longer period suggests that this is a common feature locally. There is a need to understand the figures in relation this trend and our Quality Assurance manager is currently undertaking further enquiry within this area as concerns regarding Black African families appear to be more often resolved at enquiry or become subject to Child in Need rather than Child Protection processes.

7.8 The Family Social Work teams have focused on the reasons for any child or young person being on a Child Protection Plan for more than two years. This has delivered dividends as the relevant families are responded to via Child in Need (CIN) processes or re stepped up to Pre-Proceedings work. However, there are still 24 children belonging to a small number of families who have been on Child Protection Plans for more than two years currently. For some of those the Court has not agreed the Care Plan of removal under Care Orders, while Children’s Social Care believes that risk is such that the CP Plan must be retained. This is a particularly difficult tension as families will often feel vindicated by their

perception that the Court has agreed that there is no risk when it is only that the Court has not found the threshold for permanent removal met. An additional perception amongst some in the multi-agency network is that Child Protection Plans are a more robust framework even where there is a concurrent legal Order in place.

- 7.9 One of the indicators related to post Plan activity is NI64. This does not count the number of children actively on a Child Protection Plan but counts children where the child protection plan has ceased and the child had been subject to a plan for 2 years or more. This indicator has risen with greater focus on progressing children to Child in Need processes or to other pathways to permanence for children and young people.
- 7.10 For some children and young people a further period on a child protection plan is not an indicator of poor support but a change in family circumstances. For some families the arrival of an additional child can tip them back into a previous pattern of neglect that had shown improvement; for others it can be the arrival of a new partner or the death of a previously protective adult such as an involved grandparent. The proportion of children subject to repeat child protection plans (13.9%) is below our statistical neighbours (14.9%) and the national average (17.9%) but remains an area for oversight and monitoring to ensure that child protection plans remain the most appropriate pathway to support and review the relevant families.

8 Serious Case Reviews (LSCB)

- 8.1 The three Serious Case Reviews the LSCB commissioned in 2015/16 related to:
- A mobile, troubled and very young family where the children sustained injuries
 - One young person's suicide
 - The death of a young person with disabilities who was subject to a CP Plan at the time of his death.

These have now been completed. Two of the reports have not been published as yet and the decisions on whether or how to publish remain with the Chair of the LSCB in conjunction with the National Panel who advise on serious case review publication. The learning from these reviews has been shared across agencies and will continue to be disseminated. Some of the key overall messages include:

- The need for clearer arrangements regarding the management and intervention with cases of neglect.
- The need for robust MASH and Early Help arrangements to be in place including clear mechanisms for step up/down to /from Children's Social care.
- Ensuring that children's voice and lived experience is always fully considered within assessments and interventions.
- The importance of supervision and support for practitioners to address challenge from parents/caregivers.

9 The Designated Officer (formerly the Local Authority Designated Officer - LADO)

- 9.1 The Designated Officer is a statutory role defined in statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children.' The Designated Officer is responsible for the management and oversight of allegations against people that work with children. It is not an investigative role but provides specialist advice and support to employers where an alleged offence is committed or an alleged offender is employed. The investigative responsibility is retained by the individual's employer or the Police if an offence has been committed.
- 9.2 The Designated Officer addresses co-ordination of enquiries and convenes strategy meetings which oversee child protection enquiries related to someone employed to work within the Children's workforce.
- 9.3 An annual report is provided to the LSCB on the work of the Designated Officer and due to the increasing activity related to this field of work capacity has been increased to ensure that safeguarding responsibilities are met.

10 Legal Implications

- 10.1 None

11. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 11.1 The police are key partners in safeguarding children.

12. Equalities Implications

- 12.1 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 as they relate to Child Protection Conferences. Children from Black African families are over-represented at initial enquiry stage within Section 47 investigations.

13. Environmental Implications

- 13.1 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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