

Safeguarding Activity Trends Report

Report of the Interim Director of Children's Services, Andrew Johnson

Lead Member for Children's Services, Councillor Wayne Daley

1. Purpose of report

To provide analysis of social work activity trends and case allocation as well as highlighting national developments regarding the Department for Education safeguarding indicators.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1) **Identify any issues for further scrutiny.**

3. Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the Health and Wellbeing and Stronger Communities and Families priorities included in the Corporate Plan.

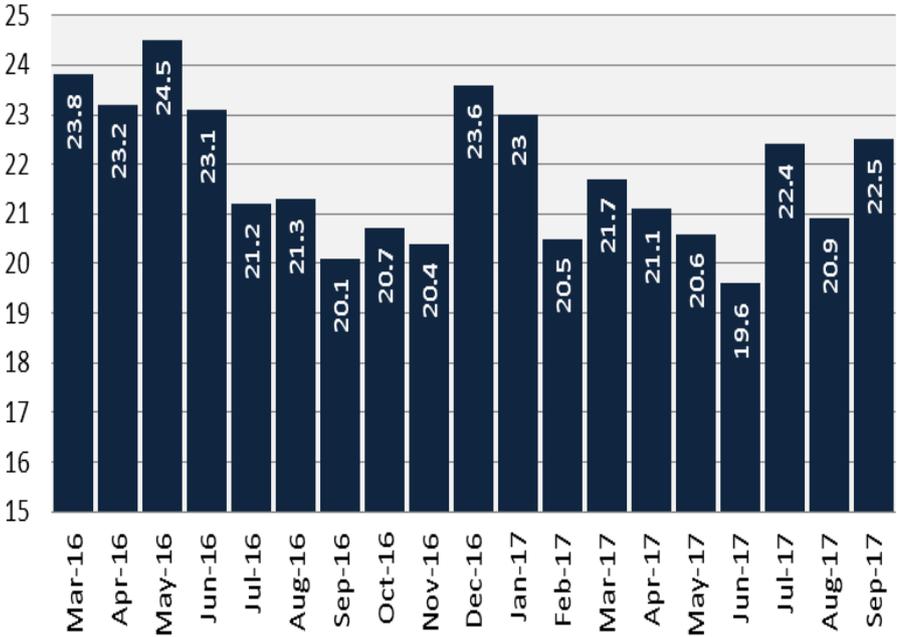
4. Key issues

CASELOADS ANALYSIS

- 4.1 Systems are in place to closely monitor the Integrated Children's System (ICS) with regard to unallocated cases, and social care locality team caseloads. As part of this process, a list of all open cases was extracted on 25th September 2017.
- 4.2 Using the information from the caseload extract, there were 2,434 cases open to Children's Services overall, and of those, 73% (1,773) were being held open on a child in need basis, 16% (392) were cases involving children looked after by the County Council (17 of which are also subject to a Child Protection Plan), and 12% (286) were cases of children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP). All cases needing social work intervention are allocated to a named social worker.

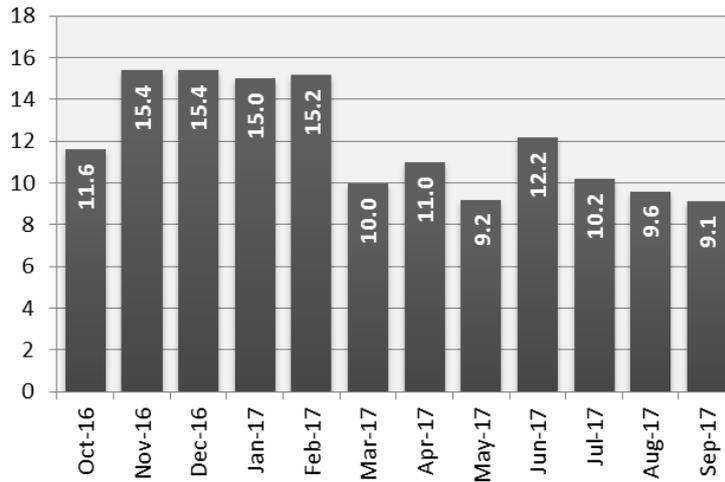
- 4.3 All child protection cases are allocated to suitably skilled, experienced and qualified social workers and the capacity in the teams is closely monitored with managers demonstrating good oversight of cases. Systems are in place to ensure that appropriate professionals from the full range of agencies are involved in planning and review meetings.
- 4.4 Team workloads are also regularly evaluated and information systems are in place so that figures can be regularly reviewed. At the end of September 2017, there were 22.5 cases per full-time equivalent social worker, which is a poorer rate compared to the previous report (20.6 in May 2017). At the end of September, 10 social workers had caseloads of 30 or more (although has now reduced to 7). This is partly due to an increase in the number of referrals in September as well as a number of social workers either leaving the authority or joining other teams within the authority.
- 4.5 In order to allocate new cases appropriately, individual social worker workloads are regularly evaluated. A workload weighting matrix has been developed to factor in case complexity, numbers of families, ongoing assessments and car mileage. At the end of September, 74% of social workers had a caseload weighting score that was within the desired region for their level of experience and role. Each team’s matrix is discussed at monthly performance clinics with senior managers with high caseload weightings appropriately challenged.

Graph 1 – Average caseloads per social worker at month end



- 4.6 The number of agency workers employed at month end has reduced recently with 9.1 FTE agency workers employed at the end of September (compared to 12.2 at the end of June).

Graph 2 – Number of FTE agency social workers at month end

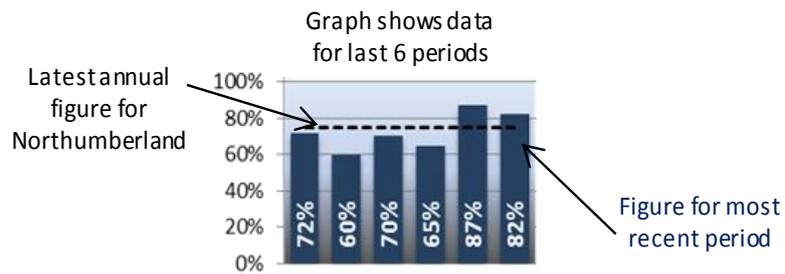
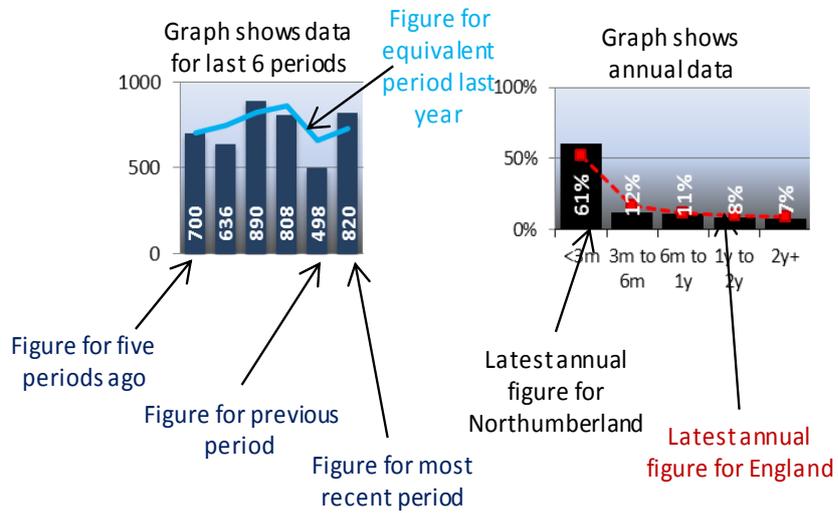


- 4.7 Work with children in need is supported both by practical guidance and a policy framework. Assessments of children in need routinely record information, conclusions and decisions, and the majority are completed within the nationally-prescribed timescale and in September 2017, 99.4% of referrals had a decision made on them by a team manager within 1 working day.
- 4.8 Systems are in place to ensure that where staff are absent from work, their work trays (within ICS) can be picked up, checked and actioned, with the system generating alerts for workers to pick up tasks where necessary.

5. RECENT TRENDS WITHIN THE CHILD PROTECTION PROCESS

5.1 STANDARD DATASET

Guide to the graphs:

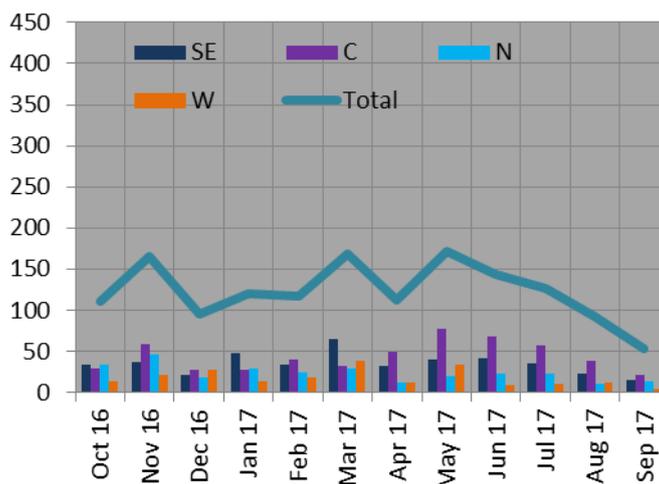


5.2 EARLY HELP

The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) states that “early intervention involves identifying children and families that may be at risk of running into difficulties and providing timely and effective support”. The terms ‘early intervention’ and ‘early help’ are often used interchangeably, and describe a range of services, programmes or interventions to help children and families resolve problems before they become more difficult to reverse or require more interventionist support (such as social work).

The number of Early Help Assessments (EHAs) undertaken each month in Northumberland is outlined in Graph 3. The most recent EHA registration figures are for the 12 months leading up to the end of September 2017. Across this period, there were a total of 1,478 EHAs initiated – which when equated to the under eighteen population gives a figure of 250 per 10,000 – higher than the latest national rate reported by the Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) of 178. The recent reduction in EHAs is due to the impact of school holidays, and there is an expectation that the figures will increase in October.

Graph 3 – number of EHAs undertaken per month



5.3 RECENT TRENDS WITHIN THE CHILD PROTECTION PROCESS

It is generally accepted that an initial contact is one received by children’s services about a child where there is a request for general advice, information or a service¹. It may, or may not be accepted as a referral. A referral (as defined by Department for Education) is ‘a request for services to be provided by local authority children’s social care and is either in respect of a child not previously known to the local authority, or one where the case was previously open but is now closed’.

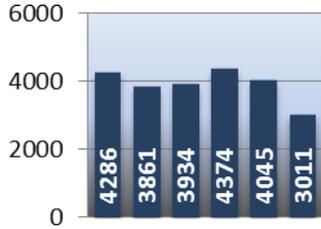
The number of initial contacts received in Northumberland has reduced further recently with 3,011 contacts received in the quarter ending September 2017. 785 of these were accepted as a referral within the social care teams in the most recent quarter - a 26% conversion rate (the latest national rate is 31%).

Over the past twelve months there have been a total of 3,130 referrals accepted by Northumberland’s social care teams, which when equated to the most recent child

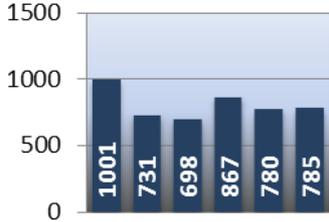
¹ ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Phase 5 Report, p20

population figures gives a rate of 517 per 10,000 - lower than the latest (2015/16) national rate (of 532), and regional rate (of 623). This figure represents a reduction compared to last year, and is due to increased numbers of referrers being signposted to the early-help services instead of children’s social care. Graphs 4a and 4b show the number of contacts and referrals received by Children’s Services in each of the past six quarters.

Graph 4a – Contacts per quarter



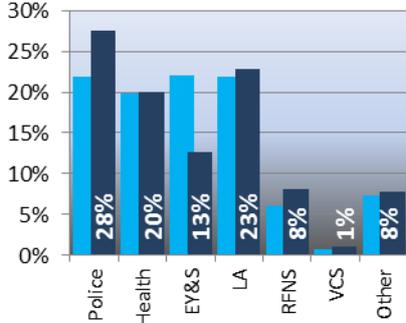
Graph 4b – Referrals per quarter



In the quarter ending September 2017, 96% of referrals went on to be assessed by a social worker, above the national average of 74%, and represents a slight reduction compared to the previous quarters.

Graph 5 shows the proportion of referrals received by the social care teams for the past two quarters by agency type. In the most recent quarter (compared to the previous quarter) there was an increase in the proportion of referrals from the police (28%) and relatives, friends and neighbours and self [RFNS], and a reduction in the proportion of referrals from early years and schools [EY&S] (13%). Referrals from health professionals (20%), LA services² (23%), voluntary and community sector [VCS] (1%) and ‘other’ agencies (8%)³ remained at around the same level compared to the previous quarter.

Graph 5 – Referrals by agency type



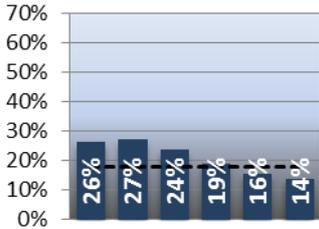
² LA referrals include the Emergency Duty Team (EDT), other local authorities, Housing, Education Welfare Officers, the Youth Offending Team, the Substance Misuse Team as well as referrals from Northumberland social workers

³ Other agencies include Probation, CAF/CASS, Prison service, Courts, plus anonymous referrers

For context, in 2015/16, 28% of referrals in England were received from the police, 17% from schools (not including Early Years), 14% from Health and 13% from LA services.

A re-referral is defined as a second referral on a closed case within 12 months of a previous referral. In Northumberland, 14% of referrals received in the quarter ending September 2017 were counted as re-referrals, which continues the trend of re-referrals reducing over the past five quarters. This figure is now below both the national and regional figures (22% and 21% respectively) and it is felt that this is due to ongoing improvements at the front door with regards to having one single point of contact, better triage arrangements and an improved transition from early help to social care.

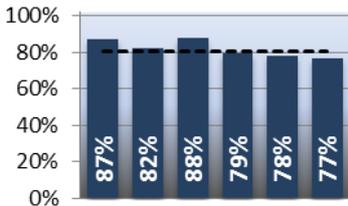
Graph 6 – Re-referrals within 12 months



In the most recent quarter the percentage of re-referrals within 3 months of the previous referral was 3% (note this figure includes the percentage re-referred within 1 month). This figure has reduced from the previous quarter (4%).

The children and family (C & F) assessment was implemented in March 2014 replacing initial and core assessments, with managers making a judgement about whether it should be completed within 10, 25 or 45 working days of the referral to children’s services. Graph 7 (below) shows the proportion of assessments completed by the deadline set by the team manager. Performance has reduced slightly recently with 77% being completed in timescale in the most recent quarter (compared to 78% in the previous quarter). This dip in performance is due to a number of factors including some social workers being absent from work and are therefore unable to complete assessments they have begun, agency workers leaving without giving notice; both of which have impacted on completing the assessments to timescale. Senior managers are not tolerating poor quality assessment and are sending them back where they do not meet the standard required, which sometimes leads to the assessment going out of time scale whilst the quality is improved. At the time of writing, 18 assessments were overdue.

Graph 7 - % assessments completed in timescale



5.4 Child Protection

A Section 47 (S47) enquiry refers to enquiries conducted under the provisions of Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

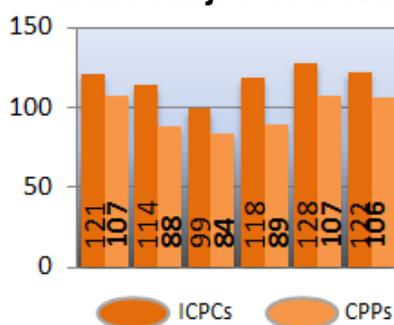
In the year ending September 2017, there were 1,043 S47 enquiries completed, equating to 176 per 10,000; higher than the latest national average of 148. Although higher, this rate represents a reduction compared to last year where the S47 rate was particularly high (234 per 10,000). It is felt that having one single point of contact and better triage arrangements a consistent will further reduce the number of S47s to be in line with the national rate of 157 per 10,000.

In the most recent quarter, 49% of all S47s led to an initial child protection conference (ICPC) – which is above the latest annual figure of 47%, and also above the latest national average (2015/16) of 42%. The most recent quarterly figure is a decreased proportion compared to the previous quarter (53%).

Over the previous year, 467 children were the subject of an ICPC, equating to 79 per 10,000 - above the national average (2015/16) of 63. Of these, 386 children were then made subject to a Child Protection Plan – equating to 65 per 10,000 – again, above the national average of 54. This equates to 83% of children made subject to an ICPC went on to start a CPP; below the national average of 87%.

In the most recent quarter ending September 2017, there were 122 children subject to an initial child protection conference (see graph 8) which represents an increase from the previous quarter; with 106 being made subject to a child protection plan (CPP) – an 87% conversion rate (which is more in line with the national picture).

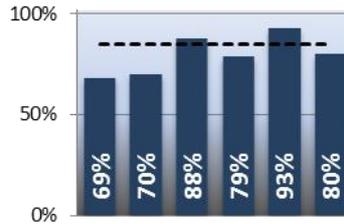
Graph 8 – number of children subject to ICPCs and numbers subsequently made subject to a CPP



In the publication “Working Together to Safeguard Children”⁴, it recommends that social work managers convene ICPCs within 15 working days of the most recent strategy discussion that triggered the Section 47 enquiry. In the most recent quarter ending September 2017, 80% of ICPCs were held within this standard (see Graph 9); a worse figure compared to the previous quarter (93%), but above the current national average of 75%.

⁴ Working Together to Safeguard Children, March 2015, page 38

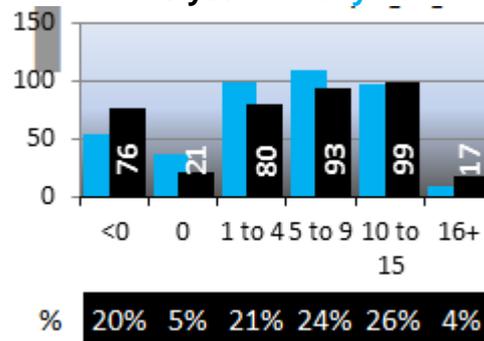
Graph 9 – % of ICPCs held within 15 days of the Section 47 enquiry starting



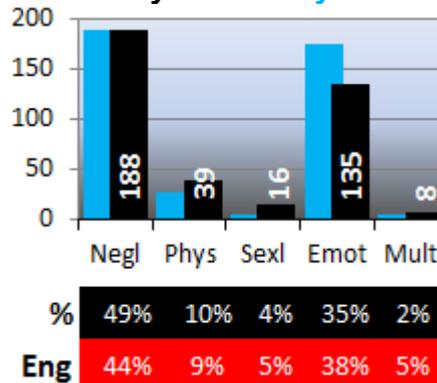
Graph 10a shows the age groups of children starting CPPs in the year ending September 2017 (compared to year ending September 2016). 76 cases (20% of all CPPs started in the year) were unborn babies, with 21 (5%) being babies. 80 children (21%) were aged between 1 and 4 years old, with 93 (24%) being aged between 5 and 9. A further 99 children (26%) starting CPPs were aged between 10 and 15 years old, with 17 (4%) aged 16 or over.

Graph 10b shows the breakdown of the category of abuse for all CPPs started in the year ending September 2017. 188 children (49% of CPPs) were allocated the category of 'neglect' (compared to 44% nationally), with 39 cases (10%) labelled as physical abuse (9% nationally), 16 (4%) being due to sexual abuse (5% nationally), 135 children (35%) considered emotional abuse (38% nationally) and 8 (2%) being labelled with multiple abuse types (5% nationally).

Graph 10a – number of CPPs started in the year by age group
This year v last year



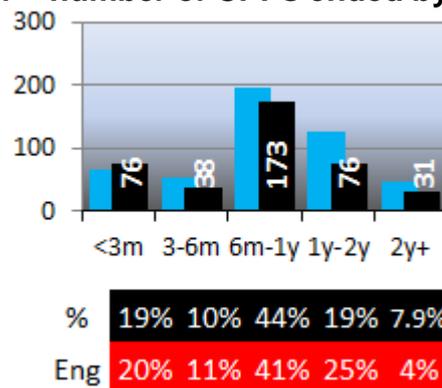
Graph 10b – number of CPPs started in the year by category of abuse
This year v last year



Of the 358 CPPs that started across the year ending September 2017, 46 children (12%) had previously had a CPP (compared to 18% nationally), with 16 children (4%) having had a CPP started within two years of a previous CPP ending.

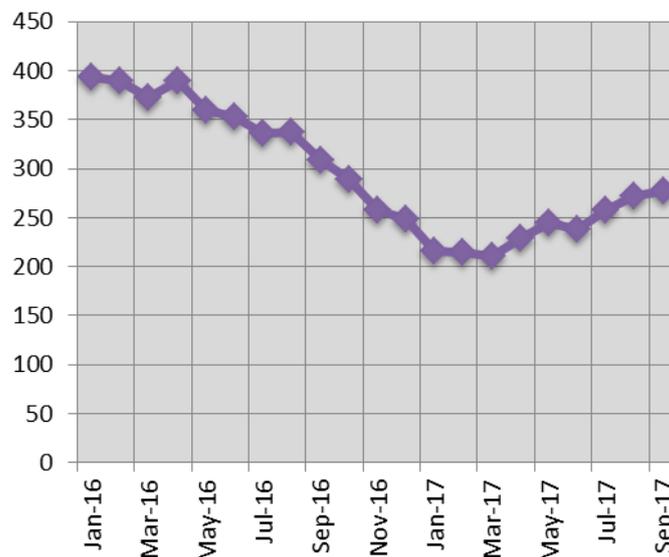
Of the 394 CPPs ending in the year (see Graph 11), 76 (19%) ended within up to three months of the plan starting (compared to 20% nationally), 38 (10%) ended between three and six months (11% nationally), 173 (44%) ended between six and twelve months (41% nationally), 76 (19%) ended between one year and two years of the plan starting (25% nationally), and 31 (8%) of those ending started over two years before (4% nationally).

Graph 11 – number of CPPs ended by duration



At the end of September 2017, 277 children were subject to a CPP (see Graph 12), which when equated to the most recent population estimates equates to 47 per 10,000 of the under 18 population; slightly above the national rate of 43 and below the regional average of 60 per 10,000.

Graph 12 – Number of children with Child Protection Plans at month end



At the end of September 2017, 397 children were in care (LAC) (see Graph 13), which when equated to the most recent population estimates equates to 67 per 10,000 of the under 18 population; above the national rate of 62, but below the regional rate of 92 per 10,000. Looking at the published figures over the last few years, the national rate of LAC has increased by 3% between March 2015 and March 2017. The Northumberland rate has increased by 13%, which is more in line with the regional increase (of 14%).

Graph 13 – Number of children in care at month end



6. IMPLICATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE REPORT

Policy:	Management of caseload allocation is a key part of safeguarding children.
Finance and value for money:	Figures provided in this report will allow managers to monitor the level of caseloads and activity on a quarterly basis in order to ensure resources are being allocated appropriately.
Legal:	The report includes information on Looked After Children cases, with a number of these being subject to care proceedings.
Procurement:	None.
Human Resources:	The council should continue to monitor the impact of resource investments with regards to workloads to ensure effective targeting to support staff and to improve performance. At present, there is a national focus on supervision, training and stress-levels of social workers.
Property:	None.
Equalities: (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment:	The Laming Recommendations require that Directors must ensure that all cases of children assessed as needing a service have an allocated social worker and that Children’s Services continues to prioritise and allocate the most at risk cases. This is the core element of the Ofsted inspection framework.

Crime & Disorder:	The prevalence of domestic violence and substance misuse are monitored during case reviews, and influence workload management decisions.
Customer Considerations:	The data in the report indicates the extent to which service user's needs are being met in the early stages of a case.
Carbon Reduction:	None
Wards:	None

7. CONSULTATION

The following have been consulted: Interim Director of Children's Services; Service Director Children's Social Care.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Lord Laming – The Victoria Climbié Inquiry.
 Lord Laming – The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report
 Social Work Task Force – Building a safe, confident future
 HM Government - Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation
 Wood Report – Review of the role and functions of local safeguarding children boards
 ADCS Safeguarding Pressures Report Phase 5

9. Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that relevant officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

Finance Officer	Julie Briggs
Monitoring Officer/Legal	Liam Henry
Human Resources	N/A
Procurement	N/A
I.T.	N/A
Executive Director	Andrew Johnson
Portfolio Holder(s)	Wayne Daley

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