

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015 / 2016

**CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
18th January 2016**

Agenda Item No: 6

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR,
COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Author: Ann Batley, Interim Service Director Children Services
E Mail: Ann.batley@rctcbc.gov.uk
Tel: 01443 490400

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Scrutiny with information about the effect of using non social work qualified staff have on a number of Welsh Government Performance Indicators.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members review the information contained within the report and identify whether there are any areas that raise specific concerns.

3. BACKGROUND

CSSIW have raised the issue about this Council's use of "unqualified workers" in comparison to the use of "unqualified workers" by other Local Authorities. They have not suggested that this is inappropriate but have highlighted that our position differs from others in Wales.

The term "unqualified" in this context refers to the use of non social work qualified staff to undertake assessments, a practice that exists across Children and Adult Services. From the Council's perspective it is important to note that in all cases both adult and children services managers are required to allocate cases to competent staff that are appropriately qualified/experienced to undertake the duties required. The term "unqualified" therefore needs to be clarified. In terms of Children Services the use of non social work qualified staff came to prominence in 2005 when the recruitment of qualified social workers was extremely difficult and the then Children Service's management team decided that rather than have large numbers of unallocated cases, there were other, appropriately qualified and experienced staff, that could be recruited to

deliver a more effective and efficient response. This resulted in a new post, Assessor Care Manager (ACM) being created. The job description for this post (see Appendix 1) was very prescriptive and required the post holder to either have a Children and Young People Level 3 in Health and Social Care (QCF) or be committed to achieve this qualification within two years of being allocated an assessor. It also requires the post holder to carry out the tasks of assessment and care management, in keeping with the grade, by holding a case load which involves co-ordinating care service provision for individuals within the financial parameters determined by the Authority

The Welsh Government performance indicators include measures that specifically apply to the allocation of cases to qualified social workers in comparison to those allocated to someone other than a social worker. The performance indicators affected are:

- SCC007a -% of referrals during the year that are allocated to a social worker for initial assessment
- SCC007b % of referrals during the year that are allocated to someone other than a social worker for initial assessment.
- SCC011a % of initial assessments that took place during the year where there is evidence that the child has been seen by the social worker
- SCC011b % of initial assessments that took place during the year where there is evidence that the child has been seen alone by the social worker
- SCCO13ai % of open cases of children on the child protection register who have an allocated social worker.
- SCCO13aaii % of open cases of children looked after who have an allocated social worker.
- SCCO13aaiii % of open cases of children in need who have an allocated social worker.
- SCCO13bi % of open cases of children on the child protection register who are allocated to someone other than a social worker where the child is receiving a service in accordance with his/her assessment or plan
- SCCO13bii % of open cases of children looked after who are allocated to someone other than a social worker where the child is receiving a service in accordance with his/her assessment or plan
- SCCO13biii % of open cases of children in need who are allocated to someone other than a social worker where the child is receiving a service in accordance with his/her assessment or plan

In the 2014-2015 Annual Evaluation report CSSIW referred to the fact that "While virtually all (95%) looked after children in Wales have a qualified social worker, 63% of looked after children in Rhondda Cynon Taff do so"

However, it should be noted that the cases allocated to workers other than a qualified social worker by RCT (together with those allocated to social work staff), are monitored regularly through monthly formal supervision and in respect of Child Protection cases through the Cwm Taff Safeguarding Board via the annual report process (see Appendix 2).

4. **NUMBERS OF ASSESSOR CARE MANAGERS**

The number of ACMs used over the years has fluctuated as is shown in the table below:

	Assessment Care Planning	Disabled Children Team	After Care
2015	27	4	1
2014	28	6	1
2013	26	5	2
2012	27	4	0
2011	33	5	0

Fifteen ACMs have in the last five years qualified as social workers either through secondment or by their own means and rejoined the service as qualified social workers.

At present within Children Service there are 32 ACM posts staff on the staffing structure with only 24 of these posts filled at the current time. This equates to:

- 4 staff in MASH
- 19 in Assessment Care Planning and Disabled Childrens Team
- 1 in Aftercare

To convert an ACM post to a qualified social work post costs only £7,368. This is made up of:

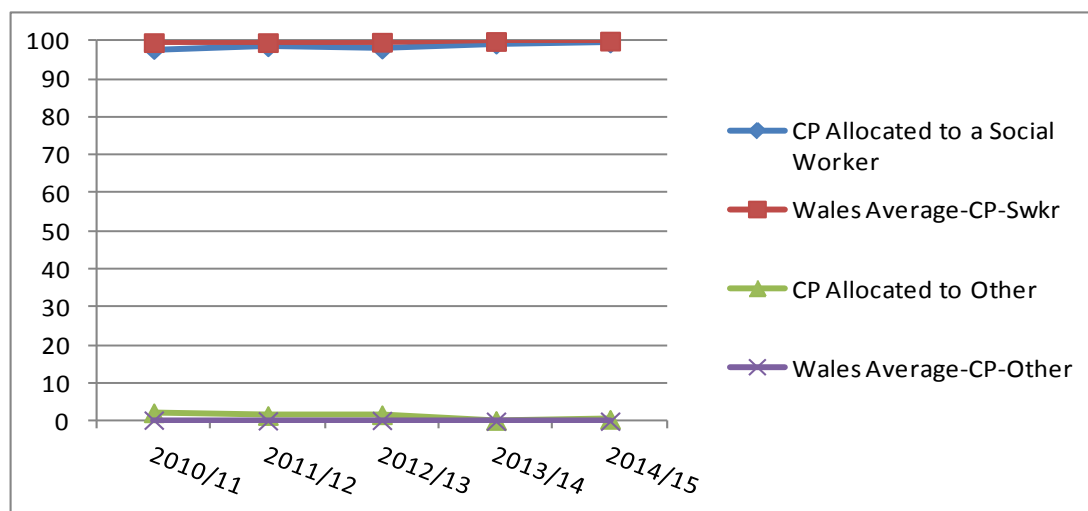
Post Title	Grade	Salary	NI	Super	Total
Assessor Care Manager	GR9	£27,123	£2,441	£5,777	£35,341
Social Worker	GR11	£32,778	£2,950	£6,982	£42,710
				Variance	£7,368

The clear priority for the service is to focus on delivering effective assessments and ensuring that all staff continue to be appropriately qualified for the services they deliver. Before filling any outstanding ACM vacancies Children Services will continue to review the use of these compared to qualified social workers to determine if they are positioned within the most appropriate parts of the service and will convert these posts to qualified social worker posts if required.

5. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The following graphs show the numbers of Child Protection, Looked After Children and Child In Need cases allocated to qualified social workers and ACMs over the last five years. They also show the Wales average for this period.

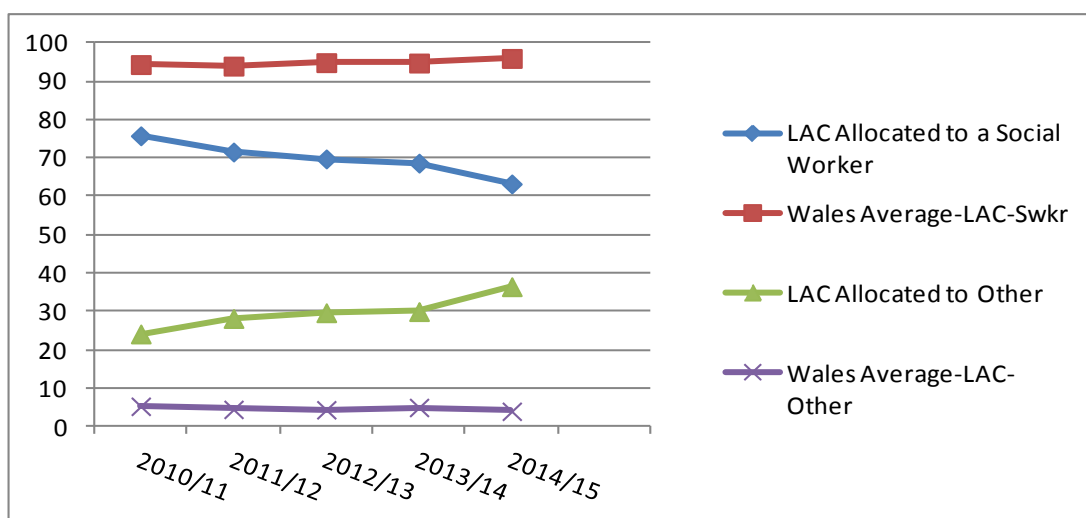
Child Protection Allocations (SCCO13ai and SCCO13bi)					
	CP Allocated to a Social Worker	Wales Average-CP-Swkr	CP Allocated to Other	Wales Average-CP-Other	Total Number on CPR
2010/11	97.79	99.60	2.21	0.28	339
2011/12	98.50	99.60	1.50	0.10	420
2012/13	97.90	99.70	1.70	0.20	363
2013/14	99.20	99.90	0.20	0.00	471
2014/15	99.50	100.00	0.49	0.00	449



The above graph shows RCT's performance in respect of children on the Child Protection Register (CP) who are allocated to qualified or ACM staff, in comparison to the all Wales average for Child Protection allocations.

The graph demonstrates that within RCT there has been a year on year improvement in the number of children on the Child Protection Register who are allocated to a qualified worker. This has been achieved against a background of increasing numbers of children on the Child Protection Register, 32% increase in the numbers between 2010 and 2015, but with a reduction recently as the new service model is introduced..

LAC Allocations SCCO13aai -SCCO13bii					
	LAC Allocated to a Social Worker	Wales Average-LAC-Swkr	LAC Allocated to Other	Wales Average-LAC-Other	Total Number LAC
2010/11	75.83	94.40	24.17	5.30	553
2011/12	71.60	94.00	28.20	4.50	594
2012/13	69.80	94.90	29.70	4.40	621
2013/14	68.70	94.80	30.00	5.00	651
2014/15	63.28	96.00	36.49	4.00	621

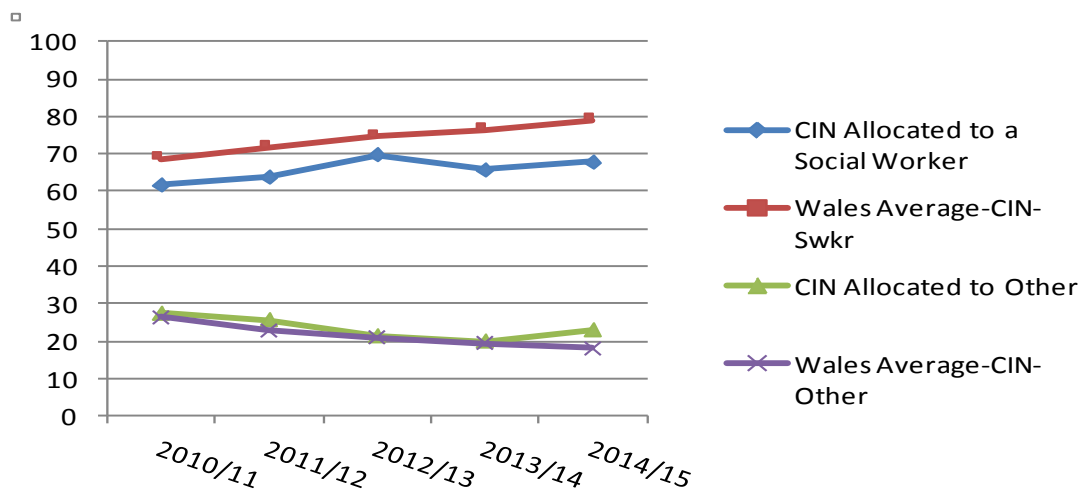


The above graph shows RCT's performance in respect of Looked After Children (LAC) who are allocated to qualified or ACM staff, in comparison to the all Wales average for Looked After Children allocations.

While the Wales Average performance for this indicator has remained fairly static, RCT's performance could be interpreted as having dropped year on year since 2010. The performance has undoubtedly been affected by the growing LAC population, 12% increase in numbers since 2010, and by the high increase in the numbers of children on the Child Protection Register during the same time period. In recent years it is pleasing to note that these figures are now reducing in accordance with the remodelling priorities for the service i.e. safely reducing LAC numbers.

It is also important to re emphasise that in RCT Looked After Children are allocated to appropriately qualified and experienced workers and those that are not qualified social workers are allocated the looked after children who are in long term stable placements and where the risk has been assessed as being very low.

CIN Allocations SCCO13aiii- SCCO13biii					
	CIN Allocated to a Social Worker	Wales Average-CIN-Swkr	CIN Allocated to Other	Wales Average-CIN-Other	Total Number CIN
2010/11	61.70	68.70	27.42	26.30	1441
2011/12	63.80	71.70	25.70	22.80	1498
2012/13	69.80	74.50	21.40	21.00	1454
2013/14	65.70	76.40	20.00	19.50	1526
2014/15	67.80	79.00	23.00	18.00	1588

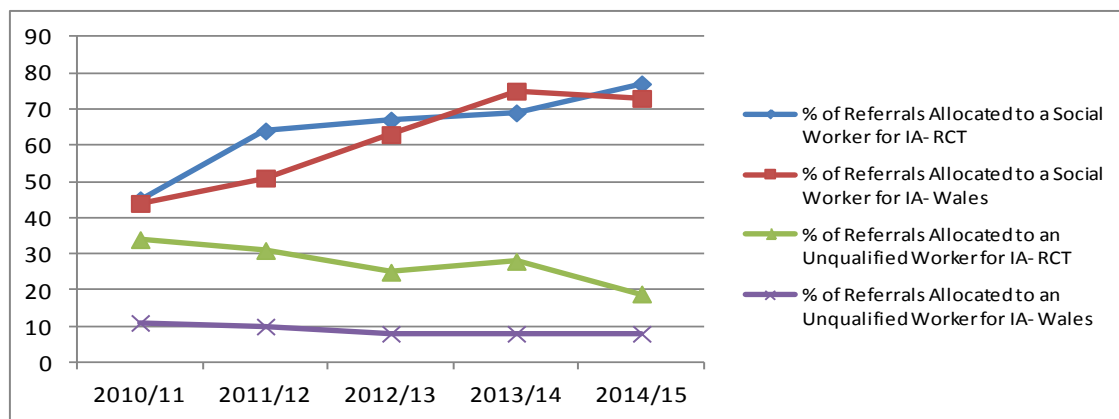


The above graph shows RCT's performance in respect of Children in Need (CIN) who are allocated to qualified or ACM staff, in comparison to the all Wales average for Children in Need allocations.

The graph demonstrates fluctuating performance for RCT in relation to this indicator, compared to a steady improvement in respect of the All Wales Average.

As with Child Protection and Looked after Children, RCT has seen an overall increase in the number of Child in Need cases being worked with. Given the different levels of need and risk allocation of Looked After and Child Protection cases to a qualified worker have to be prioritised over Child in Need cases.

% of Referrals Allocated to a Social Worker/Unqualified Worker as part of an Initial Assessment				
	% of Referrals Allocated to a Social Worker for IA- RCT	% of Referrals Allocated to a Social Worker for IA- Wales	% of Referrals Allocated to an Unqualified Worker for IA- RCT	% of Referrals Allocated to an Unqualified Worker for IA- Wales
2010/11	45	44	34	11
2011/12	64	51	31	10
2012/13	67	63	25	8
2013/14	69	75	28	8
2014/15	77	73	19	8



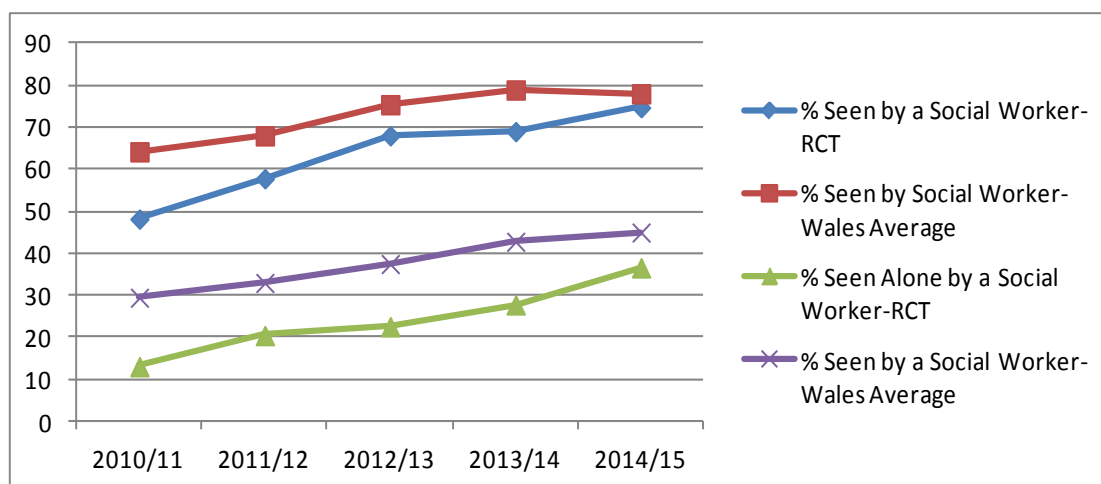
The above table and graph shows RCT's performance regarding the % of referrals that are allocated to Social Workers/ACMs for an Initial Assessment in comparison to the All Wales average for this indicator.

As the graph demonstrates, performance for Part A of the indicator has improved year on year since 2010, with 2014/15 performance exceeding the Wales Average. Improvements in performance can also be seen in respect of Part B, which the % of referrals allocated to ACMs falling from 34% in 2010/11 to 19% in 2014/15.

Overall, RCT allocated 96% of all referrals received for an Initial Assessment compared to a Wales Average of 81%.

There is also a local indicator that shows children seen and or seen alone by a social worker as part of an initial assessment which is affected by the use of qualified, ACM staff. This was a Performance Indicator that was previously set by Welsh Government.

% of Children Seen/Seen Alone by a Social Worker as part of an Initial Assessment				
	% Seen by a Social Worker- RCT	% Seen by Social Worker-Wales Average	% Seen Alone by a Social Worker-RCT	% Seen by a Social Worker-Wales Average
2010/11	48	64	13	30
2011/12	58	68	21	33
2012/13	68	75	23	38
2013/14	69	79	28	43
2014/15	75	78	37	45



The above table and graph shows RCT's performance regarding the % of children who are either Seen or Seen Alone by Social Workers as part of an Initial Assessment compared with the All Wales average.

As the graph demonstrates, performance for both parts of the indicator has improved year on year since 2010, with 2014/15 performance almost achieving the Wales Average for Part A of the indicator (children seen by a Social Worker) and the gap being closed in respect of Part B of the indicator (children seen alone by a Social Worker).

6. **CONCLUSION**

The service continues to allocate cases to appropriately qualified staff and is now focussing on improving early intervention and prevention services to reduce crisis interventions. It is pleasing to note that we are already seeing early signs that we are safely reducing LAC numbers. The use of ACM staff will continue to need monitoring in the light of the performance indicators set by the Welsh Government and the new requirements within the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014, i.e. either a registered social worker/social care professional holding a professional qualification or a person holding a social care qualification having to be responsible for preparing and revising a care and support plan.

In summary those non social work qualified workers appointed by the authority gain considerable experience and skills in working with children through the training and monitoring they receive. Although not social work qualified they are regarded as being suitably qualified to undertake the role to which they have been appointed. Although the focus is now on reducing the numbers of individuals requiring crisis intervention our reliance on the role of the ACM will, for the foreseeable future, remain in its present state as it is greatly valued within the service and recognised as beneficial to the organisation and service users.

JOB DESCRIPTION & PERSON SPECIFICATION

Group:	COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES
Section:	CHILDRENS SERVICES
Sub Section:	ASSESSMENT AND CARE PLANNING
Post Title:	ASSESSOR CARE MANAGER
Vision Post Number:	2759
Grade:	9
Responsible to:	TEAM MANAGER
Posts Reporting to this Post:	NONE
Team:	INITIAL ASSESSMENT TEAM
CRB Required Level:	ENHANCED
Location:	RHONDDA PRINCIPAL OFFICE
Date of Description:	MAY 2012

KEY OBJECTIVES

- To assist in the provision of effective fieldwork services to children and their parents/carers.
- To provide a service which is anti-discriminatory on grounds of race, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, religion or nationality
- To assist in the provision of effective services to support children to continue to live at home or return to family members.

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITY

1. To receive regular supervision in accordance with Divisional guidelines.

2. To participate in training and staff development programmes as thought appropriate by the Line Manager.
3. To contribute to assessments and plans under the guidance of the Consultant Social Worker.
4. Responsible for some LAC cases where stability is well established and where statutory monitoring only is required.
5. To hold case responsibility for Children in Need work, where it has been assessed that there is low risk that the child(ren) will require child protection or looked after services.
6. Responsible for identified aspects of a child's care plan.
7. Carry out Reviews on own cases and from Review System within statutory timescale.
8. Undertake initial screening assessments where the information provided needs further clarification to determine the appropriate course of action
9. To work in collaboration with social work colleagues and partner agencies.
10. To complete a Referral for service allocation where appropriate.
11. To offer information and advice including assistance in a referral to another agency or organisation, where appropriate and relevant, to enable the referrer to deal with their concerns.
12. To undertake direct work with children and their families as directed by a Consultant Social Worker or Team Manager in support of a Child Care Plan.
13. To supervise contact as advised by the Line Manager.
14. Assist in maintaining the Management Information System for own caseload..
15. OTHER:
16. Computer literacy and the skills necessary to work with information management systems and produce good quality data in a variety of formats. The ability to work with word processing packages at a speed commensurate with the responsibilities of the role
17. To demonstrate through personal and professional example a commitment to equality of opportunity for all groups of staff and service users and to challenge discrimination, racism, sexism and other forms of unjust behaviour

18. To acquire and disseminate knowledge and ensure the team understand about different groups, races and cultures which inform service delivery and to understand the impact of racism and discrimination on children and their families
19. To ensure that all complaints from service users are dealt within the framework of the Council's Complaints Procedure
20. To ensure all matters in respect of child protection are dealt with promptly, effectively and in line with the child protection procedures
21. To ensure that recorded information is well organised, up to date and provides concise and accurate information and evidence of practice about a child's circumstances and plans
22. To share information about children with other agencies in order to safeguard them and promote their welfare in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act .
23. The post holder is expected to be committed to the core Council values of public service, quality, equality and empowerment and to demonstrate this commitment in the way they carry out their duties
24. To take reasonable care for the health and safety of yourself and other persons who maybe affected by your acts and omissions and to comply with all health and safety legislation as appropriate (NB The exact responsibilities will depend on the post)

To undertake such other duties and responsibilities commensurate with the grade, as may be reasonably required by the Service Director.

THE CONTENTS OF THE DOCUMENT WILL BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW FROM TIME TO TIME IN CONSULTATION WITH THE POST HOLDER. JOB DESCRIPTIONS MAY BE AMENDED TO REFLECT AND RECORD SUCH CHANGES.

Protecting Children and Vulnerable Adults is a core responsibility of all staff. Staff are expected to alert their line manager to any concerns they may have regarding the abuse or inappropriate treatment of a Child or Young Person, or Vulnerable Adults.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

This Person Specification sets out the knowledge and/ or qualifications and/or qualifications, past experience and personal competencies that would be ideal for this particular post.

The **Knowledge/ Qualifications and Experience** sections describe what is required in terms of the technical ability that is needed to do this job successfully.

The **Competencies** section describes the kinds of non-technical skills, abilities and personal characteristics that the ideal person for this particular role would have. The competencies describe how that person would ideally work with other people and how they would approach their responsibilities.

The **Special Conditions and Professional Requirements** section describes any other qualities appropriate to the particular circumstances associated with this role.

ATTRIBUTE	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE
KNOWLEDGE / EDUCATION	Commitment to complete NVQ Level 3 in Care within two years of the date of appointment An understanding of the needs and issues relating to children and their families in providing an inclusive service Knowledge of the legislation relating to working with children and their families	Possession of the NVQ Level 3 in Care
EXPERIENCE	Experience working with children and families	
COMPETENCIES		
1. Looking After the Service Users` Best Interests	Is able to look broadly at the options possible and works alongside the service users to seek out possibilities Sets up/supports care packages that genuinely meet identified needs as much as possible	
2. Encouraging Professional Development	Is open to alternative methods of development,e.g training,coaching,reading,mentoring,experiential learning	

3. Achieving Results	<p>Is flexible,can switch tasks/roles/priorities to deal with new demands,changes or new information</p> <p>Has clear aims and objectives,and understands how these link to wider Council objectives and Key Performance Indicators</p>
4. Working with Team Members	<p>Is flexible and considerate in helping colleagues to achieve their goals.</p> <p>Builds lasting,positive and supportive relationships based on trust</p>
5. Working with Partners	<p>Keeps partners informed and up-to-date with what is happening with Service Users</p> <p>Works to overcome conflicting viewpoints for the best interest of the Service User</p>
6. Communicating Effectively	<p>Produces clear,accurate and up-to date reports and records</p>
7. Working with Change	<p>Makes changes and ideas a reality,and helps to make them work</p> <p>Is willing to try new ways of working and is flexible to them</p>
8. Earning Service Users` Trust	<p>Respects Service Users` individuality feelings and beliefs,their rights to privacy and to make choices</p> <p>Prepares well for contact with Service Usres to ensure productive interactions</p>
9.	
10.	
SPECIAL CONDITIONS AND PROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS	<p>Enhanced CRB check</p>

Rhondda Cynon Taf Children's Services

Appendix 2



Audit Of Child Protection Cases Held By Assessor Care Managers During 2014/2015

INTRODUCTION:

The Assessor Care Manager (ACM) role is well established within RCT Children's Services. The below shows the number of SP, SW and ACM staff in post within ACP (including DCT, MASH and the East and West IAT's). At present we are over establishment in terms of our social work numbers in ACP and the remodelling currently taking place will seek to agree and appoint to a sustainable staffing structure across Children's Services.

At present there are 3 ACM's from Children's Services undertaking the Social Work course and they are on target to qualify this summer.

Ratio of qualified to unqualified staff

	ACM	Social Worker	Senior Practitioner
31/03/2015	31.4	63.8	26.5

ACM job descriptions state that if they needed to carry Child Protection cases they could, but only with the following agreement:

- If risk of significant harm was identified on any of the Child in Need cases they were responsible for, then they would report this to their Team Manager. The manager must ensure that a qualified social worker takes responsibility for the Section 47 investigation.
- The accountability of any Child Protection cases held on their caseload would remain with the Team Manager.
- The Team Manager (or the Team Manager's representative) as part of this accountability, would attend all core groups, case conferences and any reviews in accordance with Divisional guidelines and statutory responsibilities.

PURPOSE OF AUDIT:

A number of audits of the child protection cases held by ACM's have been undertaken since the post was established. The purpose of these audits is to ensure that the conditions stipulated in their job descriptions have been adhered to. The audit is undertaken on an annual basis to check that the specific requirements set down within the ACM's job description have been implemented.

This audit has looked at all the CPR cases held by ACM's throughout 2014/15. This is because as of the 31st March 2015 the number of allocations to ACM's throughout the year was low, and no allocations were made in the last quarter.

NUMBER OF CHILD PROTECTION CASES HELD BY ACM'S IN 2014/15:

The yearly figures were as follows:

Quarter 1- 30/06/14 – 2 out of 509 cases, equalling **0.39%** children on CPR allocated to an unqualified worker (ACM).

Quarter 2- 30/09/14 – 3 out of 519 cases, equalling **0.58%** children on CPR allocated to an unqualified worker.

Quarter 3- 31/12/14 – 1 out of 528 cases, equalling **0.19** children on CPR allocated to an unqualified worker.

Quarter 4- 31/03/15 – 0 out of 449 cases.

Despite the overall increase in CPR numbers in 2014/15, this did not result in a marked increase in allocations to unqualified staff (in the last quarter there were no allocations made), which is most likely attributable to improved staffing levels, the relatively large size of their existing caseloads, the inherent complexity of the work and an ongoing focus from management on allocating CPR cases to qualified staff.

This equates to 6 children from 5 families, supporting the evidence that the numbers of allocations to unqualified staff is heading in the right direction.

2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
10	9	8	10	9	5	6

This indicates that we are meeting our annual target of 1% of children on the Child Protection Register being allocated to an ACM's.

When analysing the minutes from the various meetings the following was found:

Initial Case Conferences 2014:

Case 1: 1 child

Category: Neglect

Case held by ACM from May 14 (covering no Core Groups), but from 20/6/14 the case was managed by a qualified member of staff. Conference attended by Team Manager and Senior Practitioner. SP identified as key worker and Core Group member within minutes and ACM had no further involvement. Proceedings were subsequently initiated. (Category: Neglect).

Case 2: 1 child

Category: Emotional Abuse

Attended by SW and 2 TM's. Receiving TM identified as key worker on interim basis until case could be allocated (staffing problems impacting on allocations at that time). ACM allocated case in June 2014. ACM is referred to in the minutes distribution list as a social worker, which is incorrect and needs to be monitored by chairs and minute takers.

Case 3: 1 child

Category: Neglect

Attended by TM and ACM. ACM identified as key worker in minutes and Core Group. The ACM is referred to in the minutes as a social worker, which is incorrect and needs to be monitored by chairs and minute takers.

Practice is ACM job description compliant.

Review Case Conferences 2014/15:

Case 2: 1 child

Category: Emotional Abuse

Involving 1 Review CP Conference. De-registration agreed. ACM and TM both attended.

Case 3: 1 child

Category: Neglect

Involving 1 Review CP Conference. ACM attended on their own. De-registration agreed (Education dissented). Case to be worked on a CIN basis.

Case 4: 1 child

Category: Emotional Abuse

Involving 2 Review CP Conferences. TM identified as key worker at Initial CP Conference and case subsequently allocated to SP. SP identified as key worker and Core Group member within first review minutes and case subsequently allocated to ACM. ACM became involved in Sep 14 and attended second review meeting. TM not present. De-registration agreed. The ACM is referred to in the minutes as a social worker, which is incorrect and needs to be monitored by chairs and minute takers.

Case 5 and 6: 2 children

Category: Neglect

Involving 2 Review CP Conferences. ACM involved from September 14 and attended first Review CP Conference with SP; both are identified in minutes as Core Group members. Case reallocated before second Review CP Conference to a SW, as the ACM qualified as a social worker and took up a post in another part of the service.

Summary:

The audit has highlighted that despite high CPR numbers within RCT, Team Managers will only seek to allocate to ACM's when staffing is a particular issue (occasionally identifying themselves as key workers in these circumstances) and only for a short period of time whenever possible. Recent data suggests that as the teams have become better staffed, the practice of allocating to ACM's has stopped altogether – although our predicted summer staffing gaps may impact negatively on this positive development.

Initial/Review Core groups 2014/15:

Case 2: 1 child

Category: Emotional Abuse

ACM involved from June 14, covering 3 Core Groups. The ACM attended all bar the last Core Group during their involvement (which was attended by the SP). Those sections of the minutes that make specific reference to the effectiveness or otherwise of the CP plan and the outstanding Core Assessment Actions to be completed, were left uncompleted.

Case 3: 1 child

Category: Neglect

ACM involved from the beginning of the registration period, covering 2 Core Groups. The ACM attended all of the meetings, accompanied by the SP in the first one. Those sections of the minutes that make specific reference to the effectiveness or otherwise of the CP plan and the outstanding Core Assessment Actions to be completed, were left uncompleted.

Case 4: 1 child

Category: Emotional Abuse

ACM became involved in Sep 14, covering 4 Core Groups. The ACM attended all of the meetings. Could only find 2 sets of minutes on the system. Those sections of the minutes that make specific reference to the effectiveness or otherwise of the CP plan and the outstanding Core Assessment Actions to be completed, were left uncompleted.

Case 5 and 6: 2 children

Category: Neglect

ACM involved from September 14, covering 4 Core Groups. The ACM attended all the Core Groups during their involvement. Those sections of the minutes that make specific reference to the effectiveness or otherwise of the CP plan and the outstanding Core Assessment Actions to be completed, were left uncompleted.

Summary:

There is some evidence that Core Group minutes are not being recorded in a timely fashion by staff and are not being stored in the relevant drives, as it proved difficult while completing the audit to locate all the minutes in the locations they should have been. This practice needs to improve.

It was also routine for ACM's and qualified staff to leave certain sections of the Core Group template blank, perhaps feeling that they had covered these issues in the body of the meeting discussion. This practice needs to improve and / or the template revised to make it more relevant.

There was no evidence that Core Group minutes were being completed by staff other than Children's Services professionals, a practice it would be encouraging to see some improvement in.

ISSUES IMPACTING ON THE ALLOCATION OF CHILD PROTECTION CASES IN 2014/15:

As the figures below demonstrate, the total number of children registered on the Child Protection Register has recently started to reduce, compared with the same period last year, but the volume of cp work across the service remains high and activity is not returning to the figures seen a couple of years ago. The impact that this has had on already stretched teams is significant, resulting in pressure which can be felt across all parts of the service.

CPR	27/May	27/June	27/July	27/Aug	27/Sept	27/Oct	27/Nov	27/Dec	27/Jan	27/Feb	27/Mar	27/Apr
Current Year:	479	505	502	529	520	510	522	517	472	483	448	459
Last Year:	395	410	401	423	429	430	454	456	476	480	470	495
Var:	84	95	101	106	91	80	68	61	-4	3	-22	-36

In the last six months ACP had managed to appoint to social work and senior practitioner vacancies that it had struggled to fill for some time, and for the first time in a long time most teams were appropriately staffed. Unfortunately as a result of recent advertising internally and externally for social worker and senior posts, we are now in the position where we will be losing 7 social worker's and 7 senior practitioner posts within the next three months.

The vast majority of these staff have been qualified 4/5 + years, and undertake complex child protection and court work. Losing so many experienced staff from within ACP will create a significant pressure in terms of both allocation and wider support for the team managers/newly qualified staff, particularly as they are likely to be replaced by newly qualified staff, on whom there are restrictions imposed on undertaking Child Protection work until they have completed the appropriate training. A number of the vacancies will be felt in one area in particular (Cynon), which is a matter of concern and recruitment for these posts has already begun.

Until these posts are filled, ACP is likely to be in the position again of needing to initiate a program of short-term measures to help alleviate pressures. The remodelling currently underway in Children's Services is intended to deliver sustainable solutions to this type of issue.

Findings:

Evidence suggests that despite some challenging referral rates (which have started to reduce – albeit the impact of MASH on these is not yet known) high registration figures and unstable staffing conditions, every effort is being made by Team Managers to allocate Child Protection cases to qualified social workers and there has been a clear reduction in these cases being held by ACM's.

This audit continues to confirm that the Child Protection cases held by ACM's are being primarily managed as specified in the ACM's job description, although every

effort will continue to be made to ensure that Child Protection cases are allocated to qualified Social Workers.

Overall there is no evidence within the information seen that children receive a lower level of safeguarding because their key workers were ACM's, but the below recommendations should help to address those issues highlighted within the report as requiring further attention.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTINUING ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN:

- This audit will continue to be undertaken on an annual basis until no Child Protection cases are held by ACM's and to ensure that the ACM's are monitored as specified in their job description.
- The conversion of ACM posts to Social Work posts continues to be prioritised.
- Team Managers/Senior Practitioners need to attend Case Conferences with ACM's.
- Core Group minutes must be completed within a timely fashion and saved within the prescribed drives, so that they can be easily located.
- Consideration should be given to reviewing the Core Group template so that it is outcome focused and naturally aligned with the recently amended Child Protection Action Plan.
- Chairs and minute takers need to ensure that ACM's are not identified within minutes as qualified social workers.
- Consideration should be given to recording within Conference minutes the date on which Core Groups took place – making it easier to identify compliance issues.
- The results of this audit will be presented to both the Cwm Taf SCB Monitoring Sub Group and the Children's Services Management Team.

Julie Clark
Head of Assessment and Care Planning
April 2015

