

## **Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement**

Meeting to be held on 12 October 2012

Electoral Division affected: All
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### **Help Direct Information and Performance update**

Contact for further information:

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#### **Executive Summary**

Help Direct performance in the first quarter was below target. This report provides some further analysis of the context and possible impact of that under performance.

#### **Recommendation**

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report.

### **Background and Advice**

Since the Cabinet Committee's meeting on 30 August 2012, the Adult and Community Services Directorate has considered results of further analysis of Help Direct data and the wider context. This has been with the purpose of identifying evidence which might explain why the volume of Help Direct contacts and transactions were below target expectations during the first quarter and also what the potential impact may have been.

Firstly, we considered the potential for "seasonal variations".

The monthly numbers of contacts over the last year was examined for Help Direct, also comparing it with Welfare Rights and Care Connect activity by looking at "Average Contacts for the Services per Working Day" and counting:

- Welfare Rights - where information only was provided ie. not including referrals for further work,
- and contacts to Care Connect - where information only was provided and ISSIS (Integrated Social Services Information System) updates and new assessments were not provided.

These are shown in the table below.

	<i>Average Contacts for All Services per Working Day</i>	Av contacts per working day for HD	Average contacts per working day for CSC (providing info only)	Average contacts per working day for WR (providing info only)
April 2011	363	183	127	54
May 2011	338	167	112	59
June 2011	296	147	102	47
July 2011	318	157	100	61
August 2011	287	149	95	43
September 2011	282	144	93	45
October 2011	302	143	115	44
November 2011	300	133	121	47
December 2011	308	122	154	32
January 2012	309	140	114	56
February 2012	340	172	116	51
March 2012	293	149	85	59
April 2012	335	144	133	58
May 2012	259	134	77	47
June 2012	249	123	83	43
July 2012	293	142	110	41
August 2012	287	137	110	40
<b>Average</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>49</b>

These figures show that there is significant fluctuation in the average contacts numbers per day from one month to another in all three business areas. Specifically comparing the figures in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of each year shows numbers are much higher in May/June 2011 than against the same months in 2012. Proportionately the drop is very similar for both Care Connect and Help Direct for those two months.

Arguably this shows that there was generally lower demand from the public during those two months for information and advice services through these channels. There are no compelling explanations for this and it is probably not possible to identify causes retrospectively. It may indeed just be part of a relatively normal pattern of variation that arises from the behaviour of large populations over an extended period of time.

Secondly, we examined providers' comparative performances again. Close examination of the target figures for each of the 4 providers for the first quarter does, however, show that one Help Direct provider "over performed", whilst the other three underperformed. The greatest underperformance was by one provider who had a temporary shortfall in management capacity during that period, but this has now been rectified and their performance has improved significantly back to near target levels.

Thirdly, the Directorate has also considered the evidence available from Mosaic concerning the customer base for Help Direct. Mosaic is a classification and marketing tool developed by Commissioners which is increasingly used to increase understanding of target populations and who is actually accessing services. Although there is a spread across the population of people using Help Direct, the four groups with the highest level of use of the service is estimated to be:

- Lower income workers in urban terraces in often diverse areas
- Residents of small and mid-sized towns with strong local roots
- Owner occupiers in older-style housing in ex-industrial areas
- Elderly people relying on state support

Based on a snapshot survey this appears a similar pattern for both June 2011 and June 2012 and so Mosaic offers no immediate evidence that the pattern of contacts from different socio-economic groups changed significantly from one year to the next.

Finally, further consideration has also been given to the complexity of work that Help Direct providers are now undertaking. The evidence is qualitative, based on Help Direct providers' accounts about the increasingly complex and difficult circumstances of the people they now see compared to the early days of the programme. However, we have no quantitative data which would give us a reliable measure of the "complexity" of case work and so while it is plausible that more time spent on interventions in more complex situations might leave less capacity for dealing with simple enquiries, there is no way of us verifying this. However, in turn, it is probable that with increasing organisational and staff experience and profile, the providers are dealing with more complex situations with greater efficiency and effectiveness, but this would also be difficult to verify without significantly increasing the burden of data collection.

Feedback from providers offers compelling evidence of the impact Help Direct is making in people's lives to support the achievement of important changes. Help Direct providers who successfully intervene to prevent the need for more intensive and costly crisis based public services are of course achieving the original purpose of the programme.

### Current Performance

Performance for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter (April – June) was 10,541 contacts which was 16% below target of 13000. The number of issues dealt with during that quarter was also below target – 19% below where it should be.

Figures to end of August show that figures are improving.

#### **Contacts**

	<b>Target</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b><i>Behind</i></b>
Countywide	15833	14175	10.5%

#### **Transactions**

	<b>Target</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b><i>Behind</i></b>
Countywide	20833	19275	7.5%

This improvement gives no room for complacency but it suggests the recovery measures are making an impact and with continued progress future targets will be achieved.

### **Consultations**

N/A

### **Risk management**

There are no significant risks associated with this report.

### **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Quarterly Corporate Performance Monitoring and Improvement Report to CCPI - Appendix A (Help Direct Recovery Plan)	30 August 2012	Dave Gorman, Office of the Chief Executive, (01772) 534261

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A