

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
BY THE DEPUTY OF ST OUEN
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 4TH JULY 2017**

Question

Will the Minister provide a breakdown of the number of referrals to Children's Services from January 2016 to date on a monthly basis? Furthermore, with reference to the Minister's media release dated 9th February 2017 concerning an unprecedented rise in such referrals from November 2016, will the Minister advise how long temporary staff worked within the Children's Initial Response Team (CIRT) to manage the workload of that team, whether there remains a requirement for additional staff to assist CIRT, and what measures, if any, does the Minister propose to take to enable CIRT to deal with any instances of increased workload in the future?

Answer

Referrals coming into children's social work come via the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for information gathering across agencies, analysis and onward transmission to the most appropriate service including assessment by the Children's Initial Response Team (CIRT) when a child may be considered 'in need' and require a social work service.

Referrals coming into MASH and to children's social work services are outlined below:

Referrals	MASH	Children's Social Work
January 2016	109	46
February	107	42
March	98	67
April	118	65
May	138	81
June	109	68
July	139	105
August	119	70
September	149	75
October	172	93
November	259	167
December	77	47
January 2017	179	124
February	116	76
March	235	141
April	127	63
May	210	100

May 2017 is the most recent month with completed validated figures.

The caseload across the service has risen from 474 in January 2016, to 776 in November 2016 and at May 2017 to 844.

At the time of the aforementioned press release in February 2017, staff across children's social work were deployed to assist at the 'front door' in the assessment and support of children and families considered to be in need of a social work assessment. This included all children's social workers – there are 43 full-time equivalent officers on the permanent establishment of the service. These staff remained in their respective teams reporting to their team managers.

CIRT, like other teams in the service, continues to have a number of temporary/agency staff in post while permanent posts remain unfilled. Recruitment for qualified social workers continues on a regular basis in an effort to fill posts. However, when posts cannot be recruited to, temporary backfill will take place to allow continuity of operational service. A number of temporary staff have applied for permanent posts with the service.

The restructure of the children's service recognises the heavy burden placed on CIRT and the 'front door' and this issue will be addressed as part of the new structure of the service.

The service redesign will support equity of caseloads across the teams and ensure consistency of service to all of the children and families being supported. In the new structure there will be four children in need teams, all of which will provide an intake service on a programmed rota basis.