

Childrens Social Care and Safeguarding Demand Data.

This appendix sets out some of the data we hold to demonstrate changes in demand and work progression across the services. It is a small sample of the data collected.

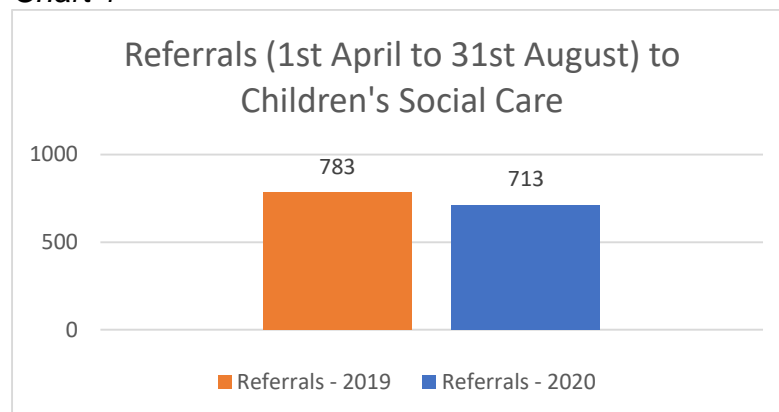
Throughout lockdown and continuing we report weekly and now fortnightly data sets to the Department of Education. This being submitted by all Local Authorities has contributed to the forecast modelling mentioned at the end.

1. Compass and Assessment Data.

Below are a series of data charts that looks at the referrals coming into Compass and then the assessment team in the period 1st April to 31st August 2020, and then how that work saw changes over the following stages of assessment.

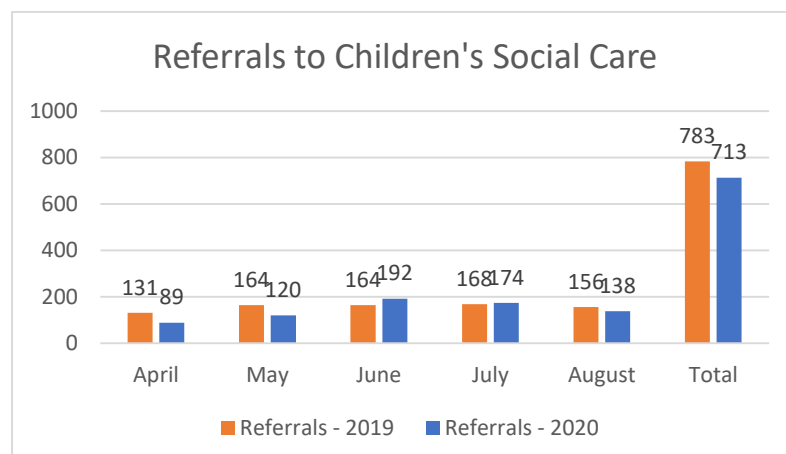
Initially there is a drop in the total number of referrals. This drop occurred mostly in April and May and went back to more expected numbers in June when schools went back.

Chart 1



Between 01/04/2020 and 31/08/2020 there were 713 referrals to Children's Social Care. This is 8.9% fewer referrals than the 783 received during the same period in 2019.

Chart 2

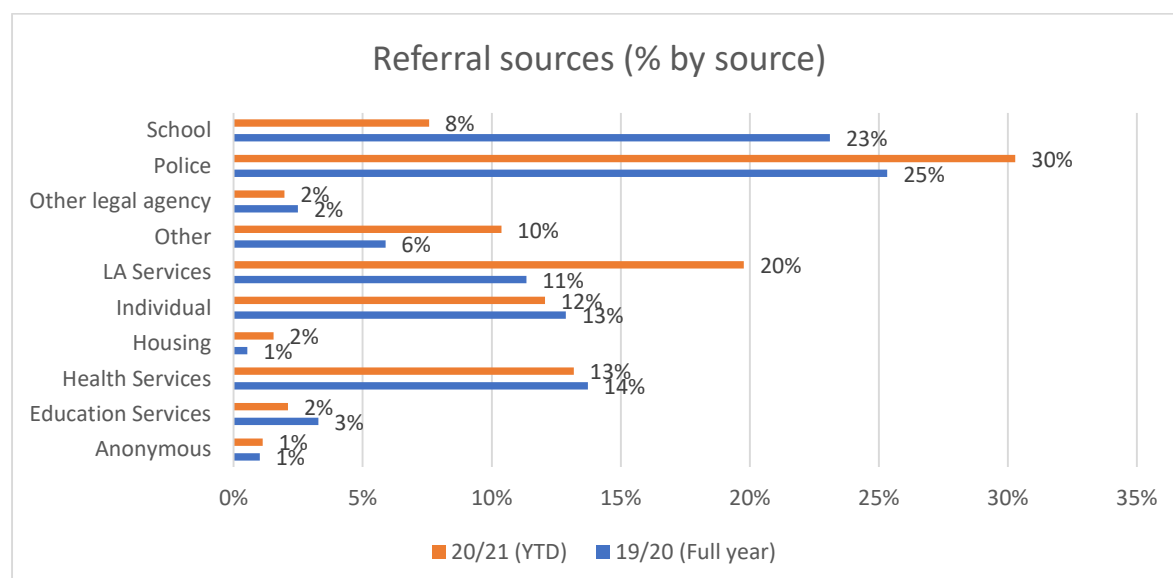


April and May saw a significant fall in referral numbers compared to 2019. The fall appears to be, at least partly, attributable to lockdown and the closure of schools. The low level in April and May was a significant concern to us, reflected the difference partners visiting makes to safeguarding children.

The chart below demonstrates the increase in police referrals – indicating the seriousness of an issue that has required police intervention. In addition, the chart below shows that during 19/20 school referrals made up 23% of all referrals received. This dropped to only 8% for the period from April – August 2020. Demonstrating the importance schools play in safeguarding children, and the increase in June when children went back was significant.

From June – August, referral numbers appeared to increase back to pre-Covid levels, and an increase in the proportion of referrals from agencies such as Police and Early Help services suggests that a network of support was available to identify vulnerable children and make social care referrals. This clearly demonstrates the importance of the partnership approach to safeguarding children. The relationship between police and Childrens social care has always been strong, but this was further strengthened during this period both at an operational and strategic level, as the seriousness of concerns became apparent.

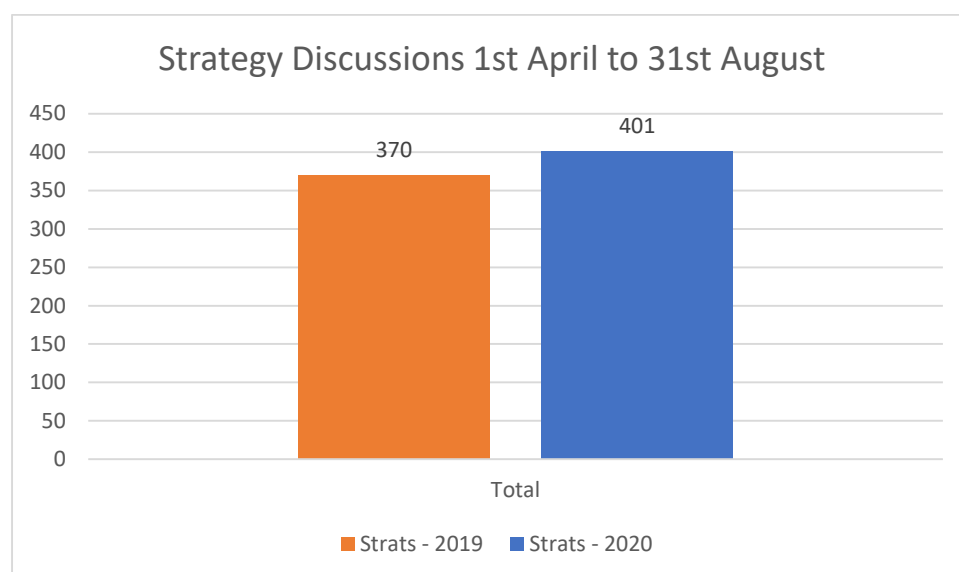
Chart 3



Understanding the complexity of cases being referred to social care can be challenging using data alone, however there is some evidence to suggest that despite a slight fall in referrals, the level of need in referred children has increased. Referrals by police indicate incidents that require police intervention.

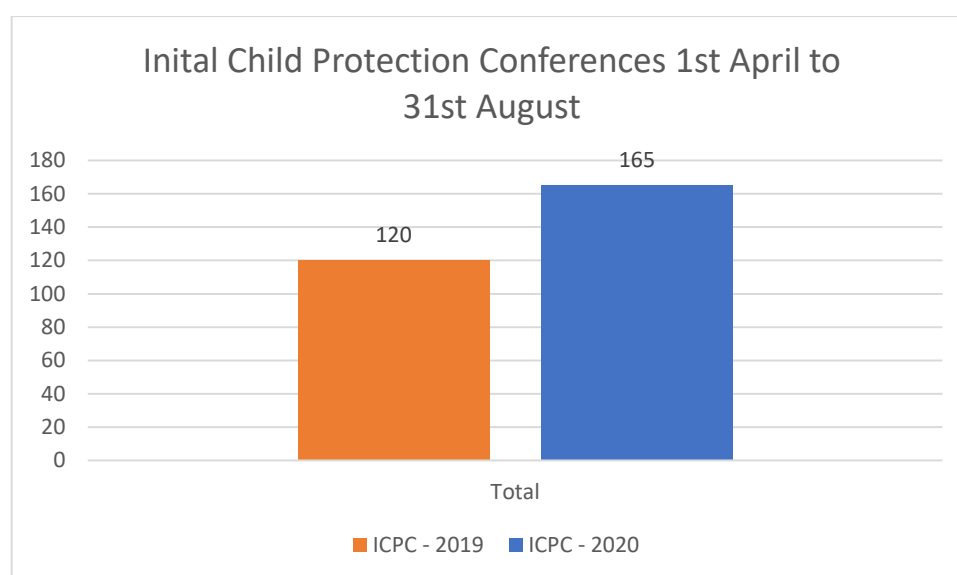
Strategy discussions, which are held following a referral where there are concerns of significant harm, and can lead to a Section 47 enquiry, increased by 8.4% during April to August 2020, compared to the same period in 2019.

Chart 4



There has also been a 37.5% increase in the number of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC) being held in between April - August 2020, compared to the same period in 2019. An ICPC is held when Children's Social Care and the police are still concerned about a child's being at risk of significant harm after a Section 47 enquiry has taken place. An increase here is an indicator that more children are potentially requiring a higher level of Social Care intervention. This is the significant indicator of demand increasing as once a child is on a Child Protection Plan the intervention is usually for 6 = months, often 12 = months and up to 2 years. This increase is the equivalent to 3 additional social work caseloads if they were only allocated child protection work (they work a mix of child protection and child in need)

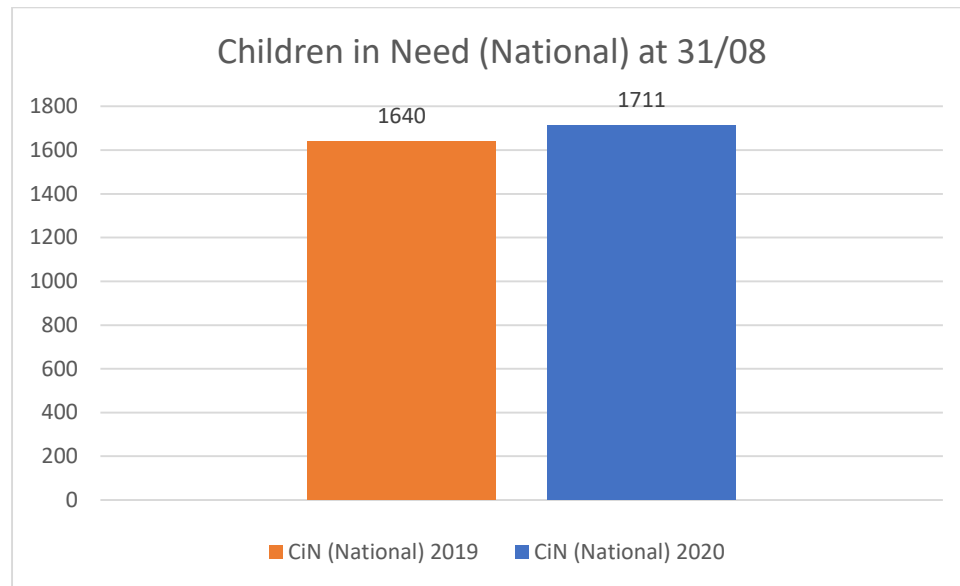
Chart 5



This is further evidenced by an increase in the number of children at all levels of the Social Care system, with a 4% increase in Children in Need from August 2019 to August 2020 (essentially showing all children open to Social Care).

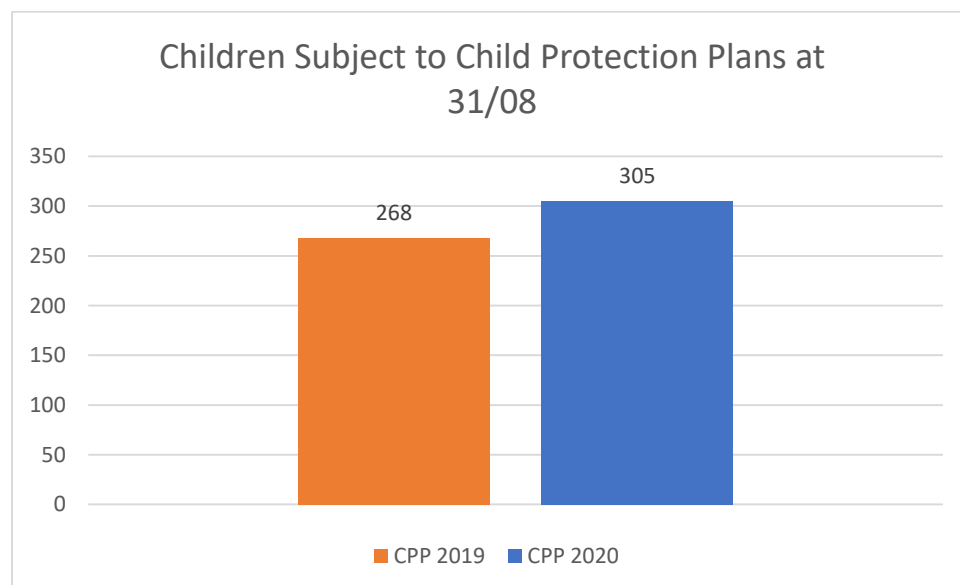
The impact here is felt by our 4 Case management Teams that cover the County.

Chart 6



Similarly, there has been a 13.8% increase in children subject to a Child Protection Plan from August 2019 to August 2020.

Chart 7



The increase in Child in Need and Child Protection work has been partially influenced by work not being able to be progressed in as a timely way due to partner agencies working virtually, home visits not being able to be undertaken consistently, direct work with children and parents in parenting assessments being impacted on by shielding / self isolation etc. This work was seen to be able to be progressed over the summer but may be further impacted by any local or national lockdown measures.

2. Looked After Children.

In the early stages of Lockdown it was predicted nationally that Local Authorities would expect an increase in the region of 10% to the number of children becoming looked after.

In Shropshire there has been a 12.6% increase in children looked after by the Council from August 2019 to August 2020.

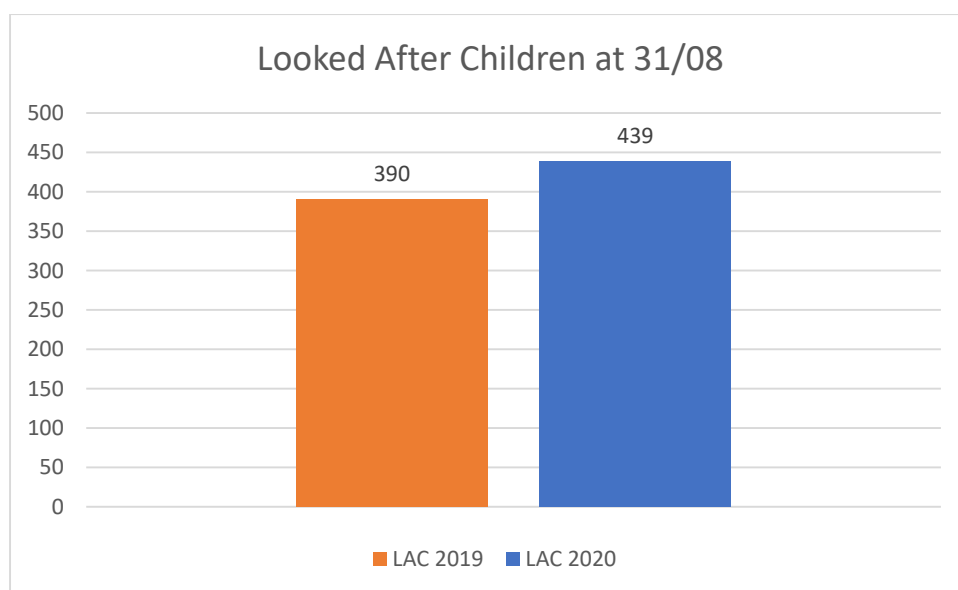
Numbers at the beginning of Covid 19 were holding reasonably steady at 399, the increase has occurred during Covid 19.

The seriousness of concerns referred to previously have impacted on this, as well as a number of large sibling groups becoming looked after, (4,5, and 6 children).

In addition, it has been difficult to progress plans for children in a timely way as usual due to the court system also having to make adjustments to the way they work and some delays in progressing final hearings. We have a number of children whose plans are due to be concluded and will then cease to be looked after.

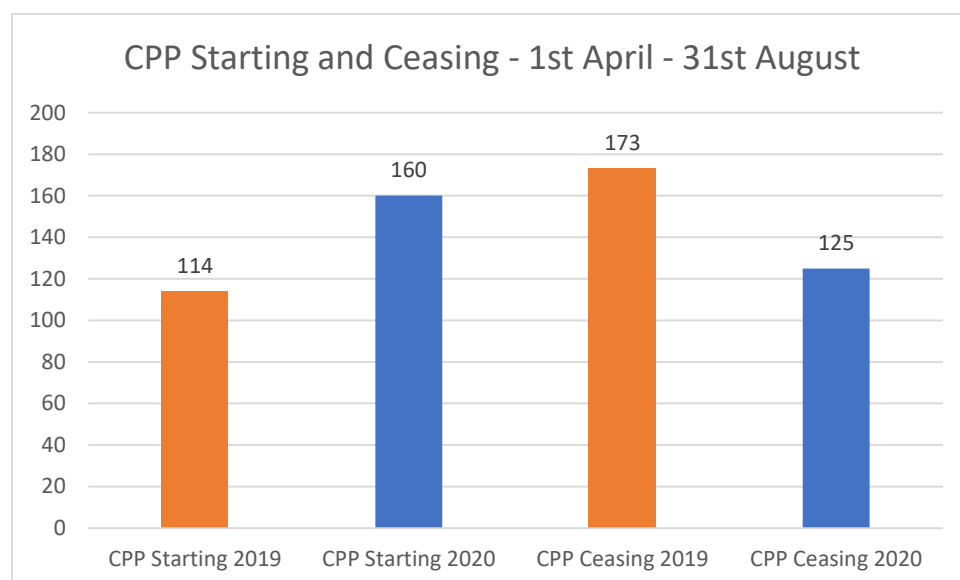
Looked after children and their plans being progressed are tracked and monitored by managers on a weekly basis. Potential drift and delay is overseen by Independent Reviewing Officers.

Chart 8



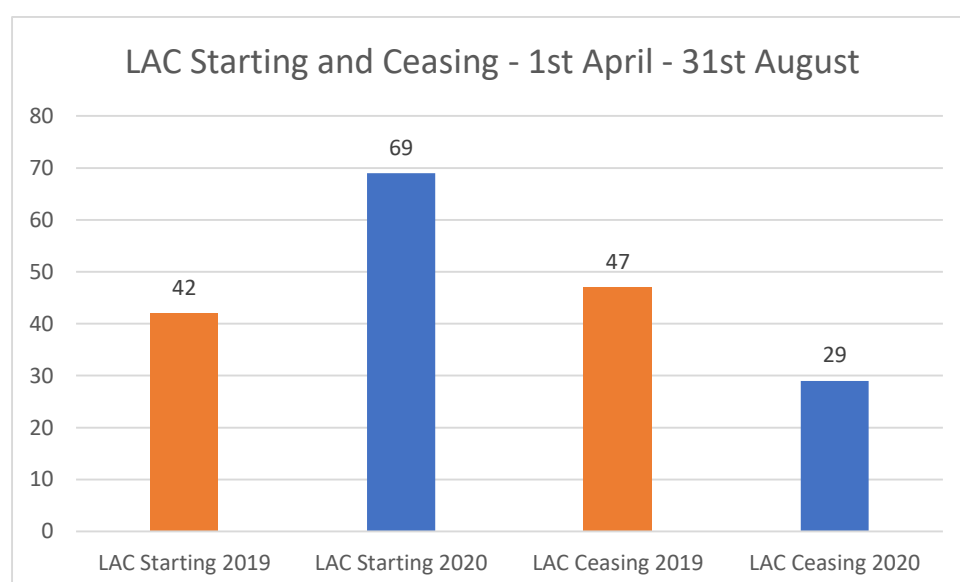
It can be seen from this data that there has been pressure on social care both from the front door, with an increase in the complexity of children's situations, and the ability to close work due to a reduction on the necessary support structures such as the court system. The following charts show that both CPP and Looked After Children have seen growth in demand, as well as a reduction in closing cases:

Chart 9



The number of CPPs starting has increased by 40%, while those plans ceasing has decreased by 27% against the same period in 2019.

Chart 10



The number of children becoming looked after has increased by 64%, while the number ceasing has decreased by 38% against the same period in 2019.

3. Looked After Children and Care Leavers

Data on increase in demand

The number of children looked after increased from 399 on 31st March 2020 to 439 on 31st August 2020. There were 69 children who started to be looked after in this period compared to 42 in the same period in 2019; 29 children ceased to be looked after compared to 47 in the same period in 2019.

There was a larger increase in the number of younger children looked after (19% increase for children ages 0-4 and 13% increase of children age 5-9). We were able to ensure most babies were not separated from their mother, some with their father also, and were looked after in parent and child placements. There was also a small increase in the number of young people who became looked after age 16/17 where family breakdown led to them needing to be looked after due to homelessness.

The number of children where care proceedings were started increased in this period whilst the number ceasing was impacted on by court delays. We issued care proceedings in respect of 58 children (38 families) between March-July 2020, of which 15 were new born babies. Care proceedings were concluded in this period for 43 children (28 families). The Family Courts have to ensure the child and their parents have full opportunity for a fair hearing and so cases where the Family Court deemed that only a face to face hearing would be fair were postponed, as were hearings deemed to be lower priority if the child was with their permanent family already.

The two Looked After Children Teams hold 266 looked after children. We have had to agree some temporary additional social worker capacity to ensure all children continue to have an allocated social worker. These are in both the Looked After Childrens Teams and the Court Team.

Chart 11



4. Placements Team

4.1 Placement Stability

In terms of performance for our looked after children, placement stability for 3+ placements continue to be good, with only a marginal increase since last year. Shropshire 18/19 figure was 3.6% so 4.1% is a slight increase, Statistical neighbour average is 11.2% and England average is 10%.

Chart 12



Placement stability for same placement for two years or more in same placement has seen a decline, which is now showing as slightly below statistical neighbours. There is a context to this. The group of children which have seen the biggest change in placement stability is in the 15 + (most prevalent in the 17 + range) The figures below show long-term placement stability by age breakdown. Those in the 15 + category are those that have the greatest chance of transition onto semi-independent accommodation such as supported board and lodgings. There are also a higher number of children in this 15+ category and our 0-5 category, the impact is this reduces our long-term placement stability.

Chart 13



4.2 Use of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) Placements

The comparison for the same period in 2019 and 2020 is shown below:

01 September 2019		01 September 2020	
External Foster	56	External Foster	84
External Residential	36	External Residential	48
Semi Independence	11	Semi Independence	17
Residential School	15	Residential School	13

The increase in use of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements and Residential Placements has a direct impact on our placement Budget and contributes to the overspend reported. Although IFA placements remain a cost-effective option for looked after children.

Data for the end of August 2020 is showing that the Joint Adoption Service (JAS) has managed to approve 18 adopter households, compared to only 9 households for the same period of time last year. Matches for children have also increased this year, so far, we have approved 10 matches, compared to 8 for the same time last year. This is positive for our children achieving permanence through adoption.

5. Post lockdown forecasting:

Work has been undertaken nationally, both by the DfE and regional networks, to forecast demand for children's social care following the easing of lockdown restrictions and a full return to school. While there are numerous methodologies, most models

assume demand for support for children normally referred to social care by schools has been building up, and not entered social care through other agencies. This latent demand will potentially enter social care between September and November, increasing referrals, with demand returning to normal by December.

In Shropshire, if the models are accurate, there could be an additional 200 referrals made to social care between September and November. Based on the average number of referrals per month of 157, this could mean 224 referrals per month over the period. This will place considerable strain on the system.

The authors of the models are clear that the predictions are fallible, as assumptions have been made that may not accurately reflect the local situation. However, some increase in referrals may be a likely scenario based on the available evidence.