



# Measuring outcomes and performance in child protection services

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# Practice and policy context

- New public management
- Audit, inspection and quality assurance
- Integrated children's system (ICS)
- Institutional and professional risk
- Compliance and blame culture
- Evidence-based practice
- Child welfare inequalities

Hood, 1991; Munro, 2004, 2011; Bywaters, 2014; Bywaters et al., 2015

# Performance-based accountability

	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Quality</b>
<b>Effort</b>	How much did we do?	How well did we do it?
<b>Effect</b>	Did anything change?	Was it change for the better?

based on Freidman, 2001



# Socio-technical systems design

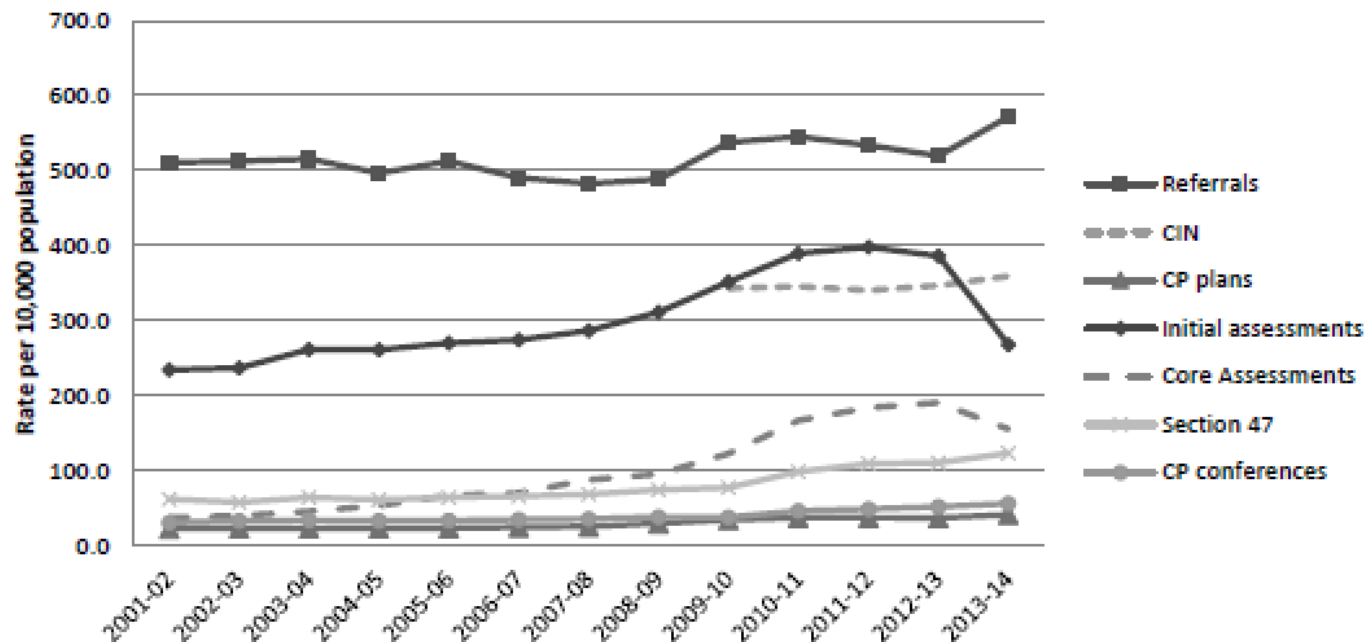
- Majority of human error down to systems not individuals
- Measures should be derived from purpose of service – from service user’s point of view
- Design systems to deliver ‘value work’, e.g. services being delivered ‘right first time’ without fragmented workflows, referrals, hand-overs etc.
- Bad design leads to failure demand – often caused by focusing on cost

Seddon, 2008; Woods et al., 2010;  
Gibson and O’Donovan, 2014

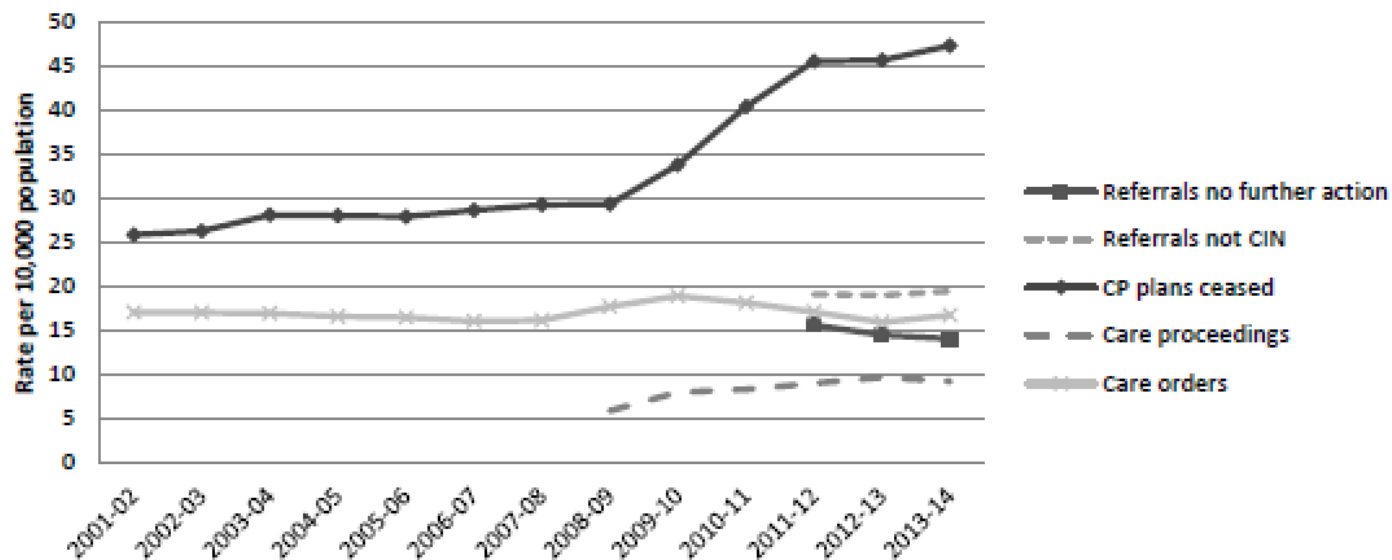
# Exploring child protection measures

- Publically available datasets – performance measures, finances, workforce data and Ofsted inspections
- Trends of local authority performance indicators over time
- Associations between quantity and quality indicators, including Ofsted ratings
- Impact of an ‘inadequate’ Ofsted rating on performance

## QUANTITY OF EFFORT: How much did we do?



## QUANTITY OF EFFECT: Did anything change?

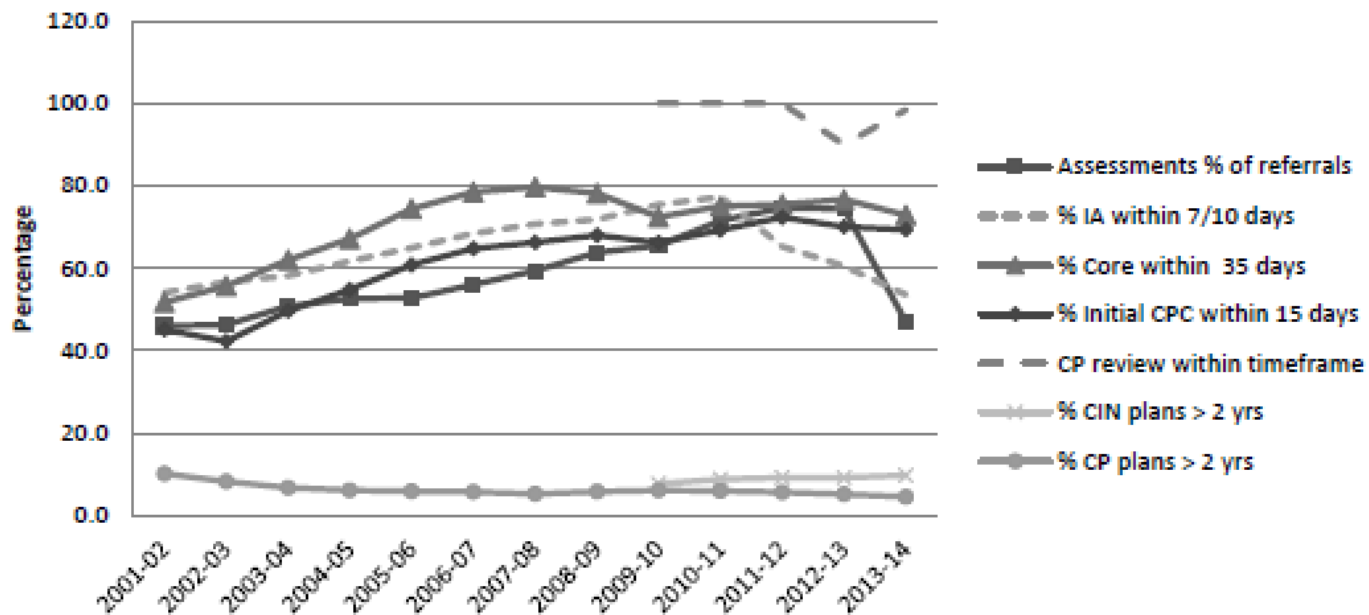




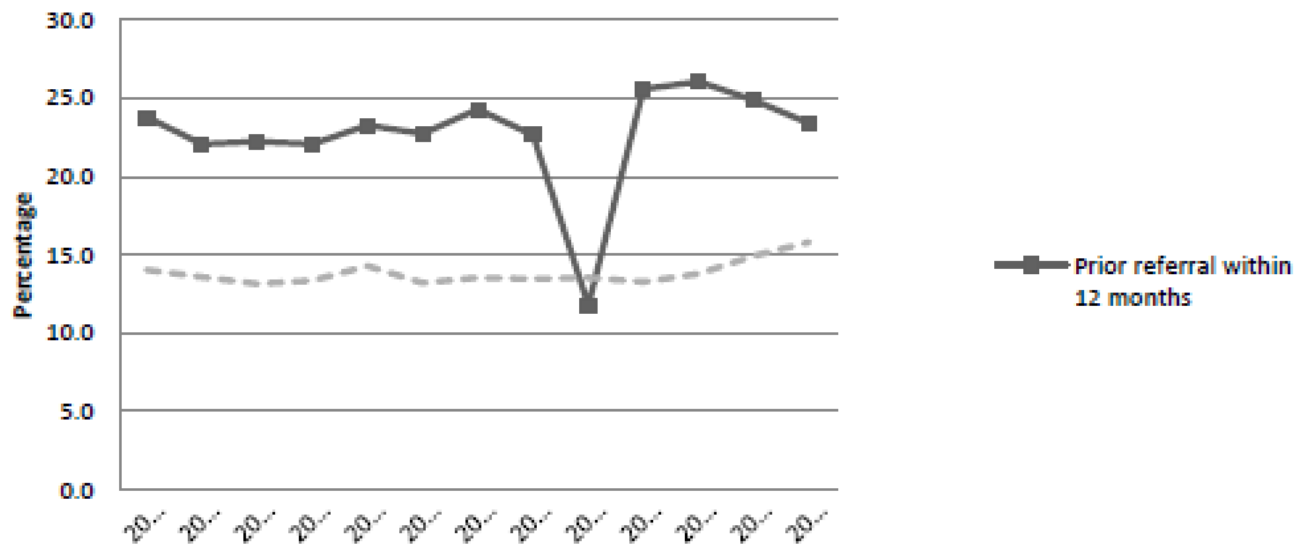
# Trends in quantity indicators

- Trends in quantity indicators
- Overall increase in quantity of work
- More emphasis on CP interventions
- Noticeable rise in CP activity post-2007
- Spike in care orders 2007-2010
- Effort and effect indicators show workflow in different parts of the system

### QUALITY OF EFFORT: How well did we do it?



### QUALITY OF EFFECT: Was it change for the better?

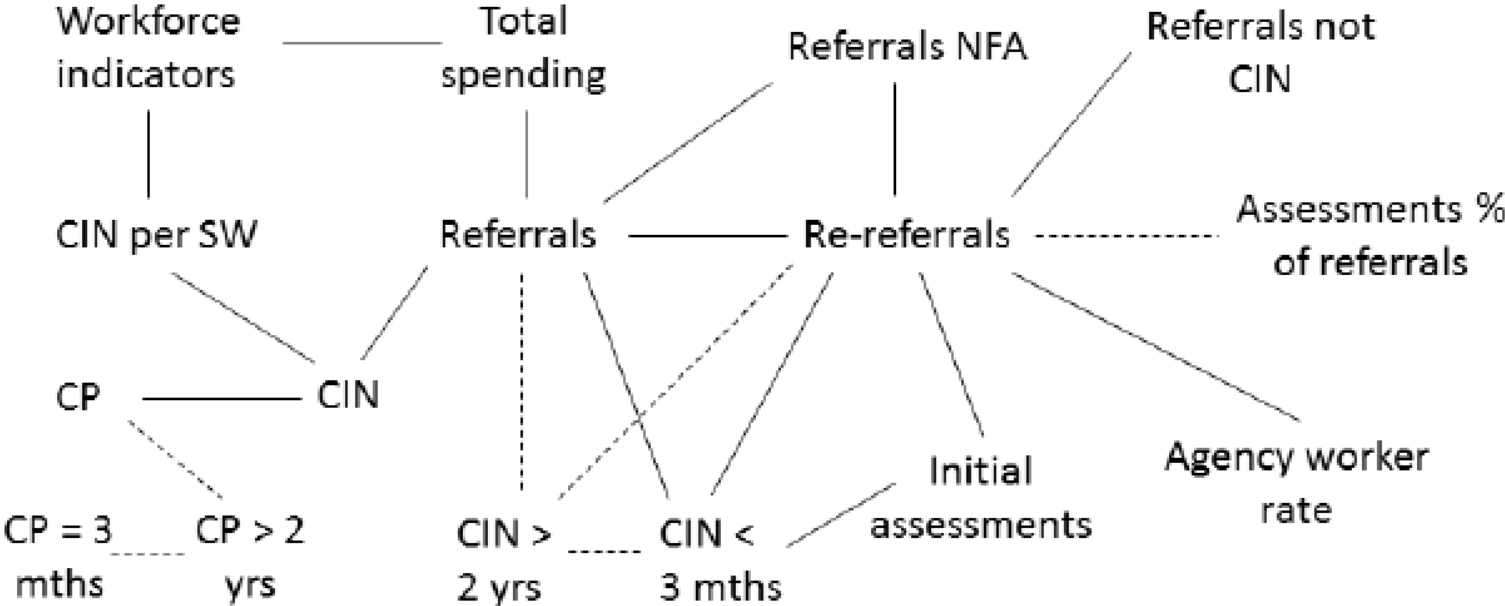




# Trends in quality indicators

- Timeliness measures show steady increase 2001-07, mostly to ceiling of about 80%
- Decline in initial assessment timeliness from 2007-13 (continuous single assessments introduced in 2013)
- Most CIN cases cease within 3 months, and most CP plans cease within 6-11 months
- Proportion of CP plans lasting over 2 years has been falling while the proportion of CIN plans lasting over 2 years has been rising
- Sharp dip in re-referrals in 2009-10
- Repeat CP plans in slow decline before rising steeply from 2010-14

# Relationships between quantity and quality indicators



—— Positive correlation  
 - - - - Negative correlation

# Indicators and Ofsted Ratings

Predictor variable	Coefficient
% of initial assessments taking place within 10 days in 2012	<u>-0.051</u>
Rate of Section 47s during 2012	0.001
% of referrals with a prior referral during 2012	<u>0.028</u>
Social worker vacancy rate 2012	0.004
Social worker agency worker rate 2012	<u>0.076</u>

# Ofsted and the inspection of children's social care

- Increasing numbers of inadequate ratings given by Ofsted – 16% of all SIF inspections 2013-14

Figure 2: Overall effectiveness judgement under the single inspection framework (%)



Percentages do not add to 100 because of rounding.

Ofsted (2015: 17)

- What happens to services after an inadequate rating?

Indicator	Movement in indicators from the first year of being <u>predicted</u> inadequate to the following year			
	Group A (n=16) Predicted BUT NOT rated inadequate 2010-12		Group B (n=12) Predicted AND rated inadequate 2010-12	
	<i>median change</i>	<i>% LAs where indicator rises</i>	<i>median change</i>	<i>% LAs where indicator rises</i>
Rates of CIN	-46.6	31	30.2	83
Rates of Referrals	-8.2	44	-0.85	50
Rates of Initial Assessments	-29.75	19	-54.2	27
Initial Assessments < 10 days	4.9	79	4.6	64
Rates of Core Assessments	12.1	67	38.5	100
Core Assessments < 35 Days	3.75	58	15.75	100
Rates of Section 47 inquiries	2.8	56	27.05	58
Rates of CP Conferences	2.7	62	6.2	58
Initial CP Conference < 15 days	3.9	53	0.5	50
Rates of CP plans	3.5	69	8.5	67
Review CP conference on time	-0.05	50	-0.15	50
Rates of Care Proceedings	0.1	56	-0.65	33
Rates of re-referrals	-2.45	31	-1.85	42
Rates of repeat CP plans	-0.25	44	2.1	83
Spending on CP services	18	50	537	75
Rates of CIN per social worker	-1.8	42	-2.2	42



# Implications

- The increasing focus on child protection is a particular problem for local authorities in areas of high deprivation, which are more reliant on non-statutory agencies to help manage demand.
- Local authorities in more affluent areas might have a greater tendency to use protective rather than preventative measures to work with families.
- Overall pressure on frontline services may partly be down to their 'filter-and-funnel' design, which means some families experience several assessments and even multiple case closures before their needs are addressed.
- Existing quality indicators tend to measure the timeliness of completing work processes, but these seem to have little bearing on outcomes.
- The Ofsted inspection process, with high numbers of local authorities rated inadequate, may be exacerbating the shift towards protective interventions in the sector.

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