

Question from the Task Group:

What advantages and/or disadvantages have been identified in operating a countywide Referral and Assessment team, following its restructuring from a 'patch-based' service?

Response from the Portfolio Holder for Safeguarding and Director for Children's Services:

Options for the future organisation of the Referral and Assessment Service including the development of a multi-agency safeguarding contact and referral service are being considered at the moment. This includes a Lean Review of initial access arrangements being led by the corporate Transformation Team. Options including advantages and disadvantages will be circulated for consultation in March. A few advantages/disadvantages are noted below. This is not an exhaustive list.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Easier to ensure a consistent service in terms of application of thresholds and prompt responses.• Concentration of expertise in one place. More opportunities for cross fertilisation of ideas and reflection between Assistant Team Managers.• Economies of scale – for example could have 1 CAF co-ordinator/ 1 police officer/1 health worker – would be more costly to achieve this if there were 4 Referral and Assessment Teams• Greater flexibility in terms of providing cover for staff sickness or holidays	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not making the most of local knowledge/having a locality focus which includes links with safeguarding teams• Not as responsive/sensitive to local needs• More travel time for staff – also has cost implications• More difficult to manage any sudden increase in work pressures or work loads

One future model might be a 'centralised' multi agency contact and referral team with the assessment part of the process being undertaken more locally. It will be important that any restructuring is child focussed rather than service focussed.