

Analysis of the increasing number of referrals into the safeguarding service.

The Scrutiny Panel has asked for analysis of the increasing number of referrals into the service. The table below shows the trend that the Panel had identified in Autumn 2020.

Ref.	Indicator	Owner	Outcome (what impact will monitoring these measures have on the experience of our children?)	Dec-19	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	% change from Nov-20	% change from Dec-19	Do T	12-month avg	12-month max	SN	ENG	SE region	Target 17-18	Target 18-19	Target 19-20
ME	Number of new referrals of Children In Need (CiN)	Julian Wallis Jazya Sakhaiat	Referrals for children in need of help and support are accepted appropriately by the service.	309	406	318	300	286	270	342	388	263	357	368	449	351	↓ -22%	↑ 14%		342	449	399	357	460			
MI	Percentage of all contacts that become new referrals of Children In Need (CiN)	Julian Wallis Jazya Sakhaiat	Children and families receive the help they need at the right time, and from the best possible resource - in line with the established continuum of need.	25%	29%	26%	25%	25%	23%	24%	26%	20%	22%	24%	25%	23%	→ -7%	→ -5%		25%	29%	Local	Local	Local			
ME/MI	Number of new referrals of Children in Need (CiN) rate per 10,000 (0-17 year olds)	Julian Wallis Jazya Sakhaiat	Referrals for children in need of help and support are comparable with other local authorities like Southampton.	61	80	63	59	56	53	67	76	52	70	72	88	69	↓ -22%	↑ 13%		67	88	Local	Local	Local			

The numbers should be seen in the context of the overall volume of activity that the MASH Is experiencing. The MASH has seen an increasing number of Contacts coming into the service throughout September through to December compared with the same time period in 2019;

No of Contacts 2020

September 1607
 October 1555
 November 1787
 December 1507

No of Contacts 2019

September 1219
 October 1354
 November 1323
 December 1258

The 12 month average percentage for conversion from contact to referral is 25% and the average for September to December 2020 is similar at 24%. So, we can see the high number of contacts having a corresponding impact upon the number of referrals, rather than any significant change in decision making. We can see a corresponding higher rate of initial child protection conferences (4m average 9 per 10,000; 12m average 8 per 10,000) and new looked after children episodes (4m average 17; 12m average 14).

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Statistical neighbour and regional comparisons show that Southampton continues to undertake a proportionately higher level of statutory work in comparison to SN averages and regional bench marks and it is likely that the pandemic has exacerbated this.

The data has been separated out below to show further insight into the increase of contacts to the service and to look at the the patterns from both schools and police.

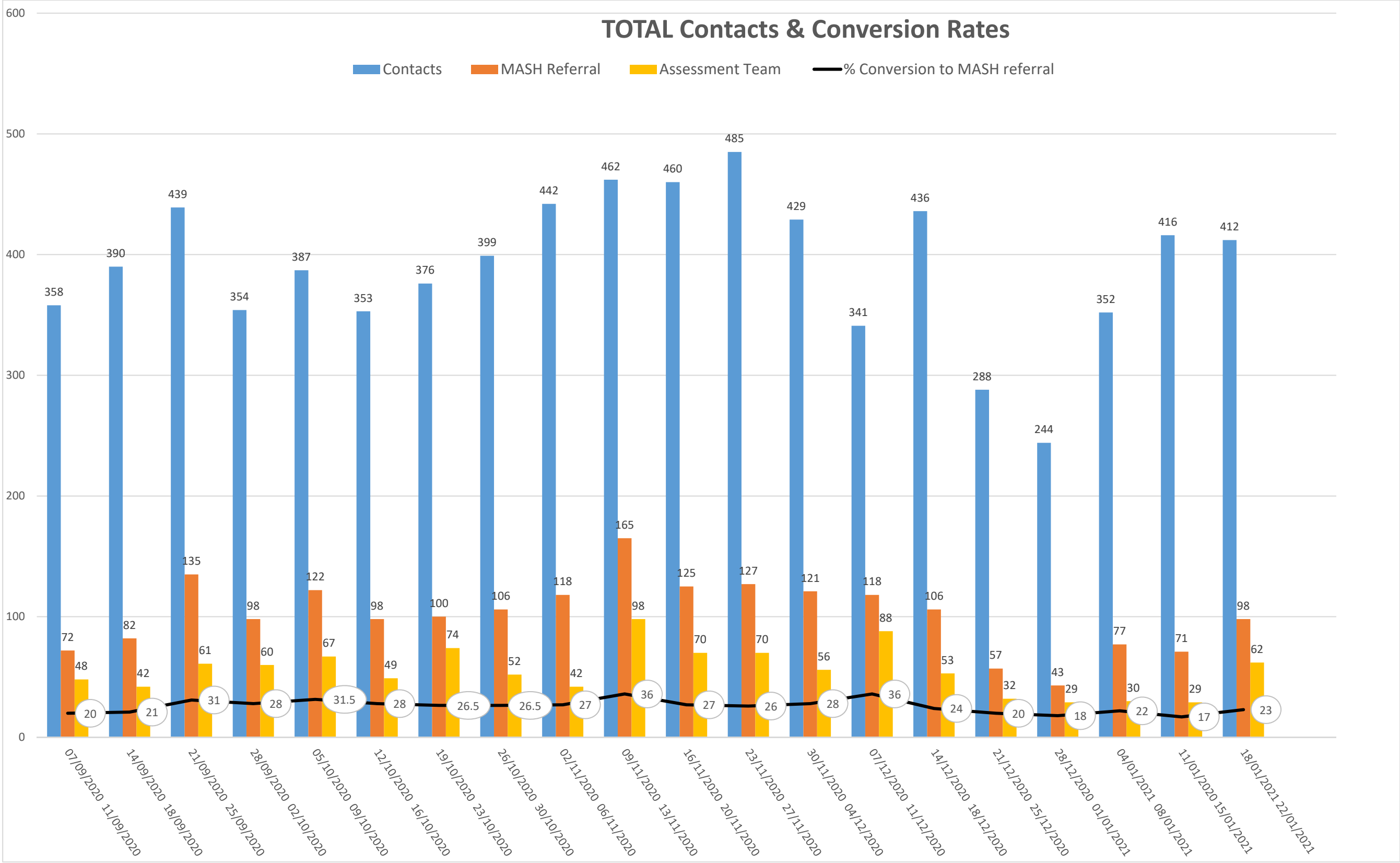
The first chart shows the numbers of contacts received into MASH on a week by week basis, with the number converted to a referral. It also shows the number of referrals going to the Assessment service and the conversion rate which was particularly high from the end of September through to the beginning of December. The themes being reported from MASH relate to higher incidents of domestic abuse, physical abuse, alcohol and drug misuse and parental mental health issues leading to neglect. We think that the 'hidden harm' affecting some children during lockdown was identified after the end of the lockdown and the school holidays.

The second chart is of particular interest when looking at the pattern of contacts into MASH from schools. It demonstrates the fall in referrals when schools are closed through either lockdown or school holidays. This is of concern as it suggests that we again have 'Hidden Harm' which is not identified as children are not being seen. The conversion rate froms school contacts is generally high as schools are aware of the Continuum of Need Threshold for statutory assessment and intervention and will refer lower level concerns to Early Help.

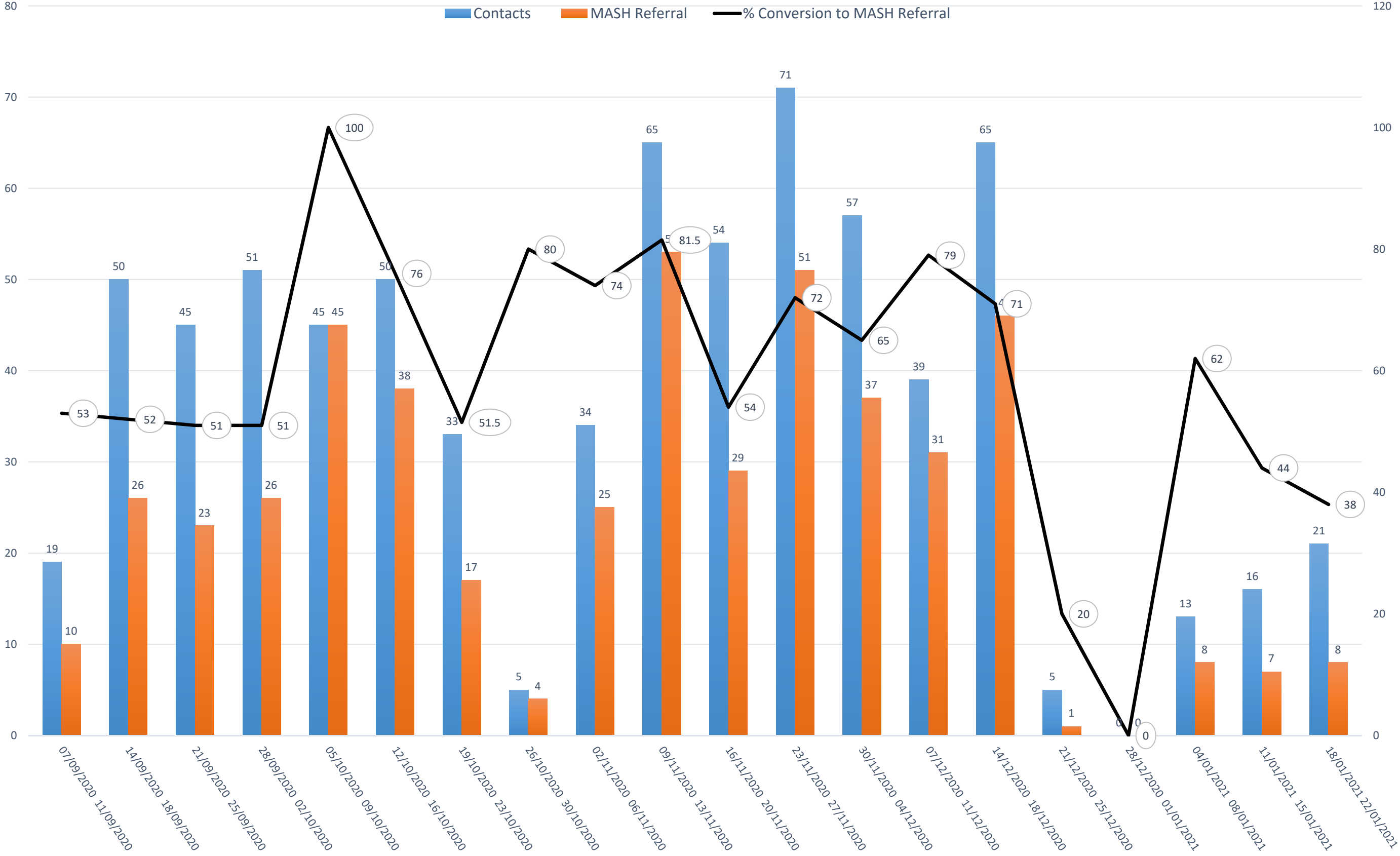
The third chart shows the Contacts (PPN1s) from the Police on a weekly basis. It demonstrates the extremely high numbers of PPN1s received and the low conversion rate, suggesting the inappropriate threshold being used by the Police. This is a HIPS wide issue which is currently being discussed by safeguarding partners.

Operationally, the MASH continue to process contacts in timeframes remaining compliant with the one working day decision making in Working Together 2018. The MASH remains stable despite the partner agencies working remotely to ensure all information is gathered to make the right decisions for children and their families. The Quality Assurance unit continue to audit MASH regularly and the service undertakes it's own dip-samples, the result of which is that decision making is 'Good'. A partnership audit programme in the MASH is starting in January 2021. The Assessment Service who receive a majority of the referrals is regularly monitored to ensure our response to referral information is both proportionate and of good quality.

In conclusion, Southampton data shows a statistically high level of statutory intervention and in response the service is reviewing the local early help offer and putting measures in place to support better and more effective social work. In Autumn 2020, the number of referrals was affected by the level of contacts made to the service, after the first lockdown and the school holiday period. To try to mitigate a further peak, after the current lockdown, the service is working hard to share information about vulnerable children appropriately with schools and to foster effective multi-agency responses to children that are identified as being vulnerable during the lockdown.



School Contacts & Conversion Rates



Police PPN1 Contacts & Converion Rates

