



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** will be held virtually on
MONDAY 22 MARCH 2021 AT 7.00 PM

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 12 March 2021

The role of Overview and Scrutiny is to provide independent “critical friend” challenge and to work with the Council’s Executive and other public service providers for the benefit of the public. The Committee considers submissions from a range of sources and reaches conclusions based on the weight of evidence – not on party political grounds.

Note: The Council has made arrangements under the Coronavirus Act 2020 to hold this meeting virtually via Microsoft Teams. The meeting can be watched live using the following link: <https://youtu.be/VbZq5FBefFc>

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WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Our Vision

A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business

Enriching Lives

- Champion outstanding education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background.
- Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to complement an active lifestyle.
- Engage and involve our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity which people feel part of.
- Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.

Safe, Strong, Communities

- Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people.
- Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to prevent the need for long term care.
- Nurture communities and help them to thrive.
- Ensure our borough and communities remain safe for all.

A Clean and Green Borough

- Do all we can to become carbon neutral and sustainable for the future.
- Protect our borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas.
- Reduce our waste, improve biodiversity and increase recycling.
- Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.

Right Homes, Right Places

- Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future.
- Build our fair share of housing with the right infrastructure to support and enable our borough to grow.
- Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment.
- Help with your housing needs and support people to live independently in their own homes.

Keeping the Borough Moving

- Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways.
- Tackle traffic congestion, minimise delays and disruptions.
- Enable safe and sustainable travel around the borough with good transport infrastructure.
- Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners to offer affordable, accessible public transport with good network links.

Changing the Way We Work for You

- Be relentlessly customer focussed.
- Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around you.
- Communicate better with you, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough.
- Drive innovative digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.

Appendix Acronyms

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EYFS	Early Years Foundations Stage
FGB	Full Governing Body
KS1	Key Stage 1
KS2	Key Stage 2
MAT	Multi Academy Trust
NLE	National Leader of Education
NLG	National Leader of Governance
RI	Requires Improvement
RSC	Regional Schools Commissioner
SDP	School Development Plan
SEF	Self Evaluation Form
SIB	School Improvement Board
SIO	School Improvement Officer
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
TSA	Teaching School Alliance
WLP	Wokingham Learning Partnership

MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillors

Alison Swaddle (Chairman)
Prue Bray
Ken Miall

Malcolm Richards
Andy Croy
Andrew Mickleburgh

Laura Blumenthal
Pauline Helliard-Symons

Substitutes

Shirley Boyt
Guy Grandison
Sarah Kerr

Carl Doran
David Hare
Abdul Loyes

Michael Firmager
Emma Hobbs
Barrie Patman

Parent Governor Representatives

Vacancy
Vacancy, Parent Governor Representative

Diocesan Representatives

Vacancy, Roman Catholic Representative
Vacancy, C of E Representative

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
52.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.	
53.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 February 2021.	7 - 16
54.		DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest	
55.		PUBLIC QUESTION TIME To answer any public questions A period of 30 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions submitted under notice. The Council welcomes questions from members of the public about the work of this committee. Subject to meeting certain timescales, questions can relate to general issues concerned with the work of the Committee or an item which is on the Agenda for this meeting. For full details of the procedure for submitting questions please contact the Democratic Services Section on the numbers given below or go to www.wokingham.gov.uk/publicquestions	

56.		MEMBER QUESTION TIME To answer any member questions	
57.	None specific	REVIEW OF COVID-19 RESPONSE To receive and consider a report containing details of the service's response to Covid-19.	17 - 24
58.	None specific	DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY AT SCHOOLS To receive and consider the Diversity and Equality at Schools report.	25 - 46
59.	None specific	ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION To receive and consider a report outlining details of Elective Home Education in the Borough.	47 - 68
60.		FORWARD PLAN To consider the Committee's Forward Plan for the next municipal year.	Verbal Report

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent

A Supplementary Agenda will be issued by the Chief Executive if there are any other items to consider under this heading

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 2 FEBRUARY 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.54 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Alison Swaddle (Chairman), Malcolm Richards, Laura Blumenthal, Prue Bray, Andy Croy, Pauline Helliar-Symons, Ken Miall and Andrew Mickleburgh

Officers Present

Matthew Booth, SEN Consultant
Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Carol Cammiss, Director of Children's Services
Adam Davis, Assistant Director Children's Social Care
Nick Hammond, Service Manager Intelligence and Impact
Kelli Scott, Interim Service Manager, Children with Disabilities and Early Help
Sal Thirlway, Assistant Director Learning Achievement and Partnerships

41. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor Malcolm Richards was appointed Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year.

42. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor UllaKarin Clark.

43. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 November were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at a later date; subject to a change on page 18 under the third bullet point so that it would read as follows:

Councillor Richards asked if there were any statistics available in relation to the educational outcomes for Wokingham's children who were attending colleges; he believed that children who stayed at a school sixth form tended to do better academically.

44. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

45. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

46. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

47. UPDATE FROM THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

48. CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Children's Services Performance Indicators report was presented by Nick Hammond, Service Manager Intelligence and Impact.

Members were pleased with the report format and the timeliness of the information provided.

The following comments were made in relation to each dashboard:

Dashboard Item 1 – Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)

- In response to a question Nick Hammond stated that the reason for the decline in the timeliness of EHCPs issued within 20 weeks of referral in Q3 was due to a number of factors, including an increase in complexity of needs which slowed down assessments, and staff changes. However, this was already improving with 100% completion having been achieved in December and January;
- In response to a question Sal Thirlway, Assistant Director for Learning and Partnerships stated that the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) team had been operating with a number of locum staff which had now moved on. Permanent staff had now been recruited, however the churn of staff had impacted on the timeliness of assessments.

Councillor Blumenthal suggested that a key be added to report to make it clearer if the arrows are being benchmarked in relation to national or local indicators.

Dashboard Item 2 – Early Help

- Nick Hammond stated that the number of referrals and assessments for Early Help services has significantly increased;
- Members were interested to know if this increase was occurring as a result of the pandemic;
- Adam Davis, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care stated that an increase in referrals had been expected after the summer, but that it had not materialised. The service was starting to look at themes and how to group it into categories;
- In response to a question Adam Davis stated that the service was conscious of the impact on staff of the different way of working;
- Adam Davis stated that the service was currently managing the demand for services, but this was kept under review;
- Adam Davis stated that given the significant increase in the number of referrals, it was positive that the average length of time between referral and assessment had only gone up only marginally.

Dashboard 3 – Children's Social Care Front Door

- Nick Hammond stated that there had been a reduction on the number of referrals in Q3;
- Members were interested to know how the service would deal with a Child In Care (CIC) who lost a loved one during the pandemic. Adam Davis stated that this would be dealt with in the same way as with any bereavement involving a CIC;
- In response to a question Adam Davis stated that measures had been put in place to deal with potential increase in demand; such as providing additional support for front door, by drawing up resources from other areas. There was capacity within the service;
- In response to a question Adam Davis stated that it was possible that there were unidentified needs due to the current lack of direct contact with children.

Dashboard Item 4 – Child Protection

- Nick Hammond stated that there was a significant increase in the number of children with plans in Q3;

- Nick Hammond pointed out that there was a commitment to carry out face to face visits as much as possible, with the percentage of virtual visits being below 6%;
- In response to a question, Adam Davis stated that only a small number of people had been worried about Covid security during visits;
- In response to a question Adam Davis stated that further analysis was needed to understand the impact of the pandemic on the percentage of children starting a plan who had a previous one in the last two years.

Dashboard Item 5 – Children In Care

- Nick Hammond drew attention the significant improvement in the percentage of CIC who have more than one allocated Social Worker in 12 months;
- Members were very pleased to note the improvement and asked what led to it. Adam Davis stated that the service had undertaken a lot of work to improve recruitment, retention and creating stability;
- In response to a question Adam Davis stated that having a stable workforce was a continuous aspiration;
- Members were interested to know if there was a reason that the number of CIC in Wokingham was significant lower than other areas in the South East and if there was a danger that children were being missed out;
- Adam Davis stated that the service had looked into this and there were various different themes: the demographics; the prevention services being really good; the high number of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) and the high number of adoptions;
- In response to a question Adam Davis stated that CIC had different visit requirements (in relation to frequency) depending on each individual circumstance.

Dashboard Item 6 – Care Leavers

- Members were interested to know if Care Leavers were being given priority into the new employment and work experience initiative being promoted by the Council, and if there were any particular concerns about how they were coping during the pandemic;
- Adam Davis was not aware of any ring-fencing for Care Leavers in relation to the Kick Start Programme;
- Adam Davis stated that Care Leavers were receiving additional support during this time from Here4You and PA's;
- Members were concerned by the number of Care Leavers who were Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) and asked how the service was looking to improve this situation;
- Carol Cammiss, Director of Children's Services stated that a new member of staff had recently been employed to specifically look at this. Options around work experience, working with local businesses, training opportunities and others would be considered. She also stated that this was something that the service was committed to improving, she believed that improvements would be seen in the next six months;
- Carol Cammiss stated that Virtual School had recently extended its offer Post-16 education, it was expected that this would make a significant difference to the numbers.

Dashboard Item 7 – Children Missing from Home/Care

- Members were concerned about the high number of Permanent Exclusions, especially during the pandemic when less children are attending school. Sal Thirlway stated that the service was working with schools, trying to understand the reasons for this number, he offered to provide an answer outside of the meeting;

- Members asked that a breakdown of the number of children with SEND who are permanently excluded be provided every quarter, and if possible also by gender and ethnicity;
- Members asked if permanently excluded children were being able to access learning remotely. Sal Thirlway stated that those children who were permanently excluded were placed in alternative schools/provisions and there was an effort to minimise the disruption to their education;
- Members asked if there was a correlation between the number of children missing from education and the current pandemic. Sal Thirlway believed that it was unlikely that the five children missing from education listed in the report were as a result of the pandemic;
- Sal Thirlway explained that under the current rules parents were not compelled to send their children into school, therefore those children would not be classified as missing from education;
- Members asked to receive information in relation to school attendance data. Carol Cammiss agreed to provide a report with this information;
- In response to a question Sal Thirlway stated that around 12% of the children who would normally attend school were currently attending school. The current attendance for children with EHCP or with a Social Worker was around 41% to 42%;
- Sal Thirlway stated that the service was working and engaging with families of children who were eligible to attend school but choosing not to attend, to ascertain what was best for the child;
- Carol Cammiss stated that the situation was constantly under review, it was necessary to balance the needs of certain children to be in school with the school's ability to operate under the current restrictions;
- Adam Davis stated that number of CIC attending school under this lockdown is significantly higher than previously, at around 60%.

Dashboard Item 8 – Children's Services Workforce

- Nick Hammond stated that had been a significant improvement in the permanency of workforce;
- In response to a question Carol Cammiss stated that Social Workers left for a range of reasons, the service conducted exit interviews and tracked the reasons. She pointed out that the numbers were much improved from previous years, and that there was now a stable workforce;
- In response to a question Adam Davis stated that the service was looking to review the offer to keep it attractive to the workforce. The service was always looking at new ways of recruiting new and experienced Social Workers and retaining staff by providing a supportive environment.

RESOLVED That the report be noted and that data on permanent exclusion of children with SEND and school attendance would be provided to the Committee.

49. SEND STRATEGY

The SEN Strategy report was presented by Matthew Booth, SEN Consultant.

Sal Thirlway stated that the service had undergone an inspection in 2019 which had identified the need for producing a new SEND Strategy to replace the existing one.

Some of the comments made by Matthew Booth during his presentation are listed below:

- The consultation had now finished and the results would be shared with the Committee;
- The Local Authority has huge legal responsibilities in relation to the education of SEND children, but limited resources to deliver services. Therefore, it was important to work in partnership with all the stakeholders;
- There was an aspiration that Wokingham continue to be a great place for children and young people with SEND to grow up;
- The strategy contained a needs analysis with facts and figures. The understanding of the needs was continuing to improve, including predicting what the needs might be in the future;
- There had been support from stakeholders in relation to co-producing the strategy and also challenges in relation to the delivery of the strategy;
- The number of children with EHCPs and SEND needs was growing at a much higher pace than the population growth;
- Feedback from carers and parents was included in the strategy;
- Wokingham's position in relation to SEND challenges was similar to those faced by other local authorities;
- The priorities (as listed in the report) intended to improve services for children and young people with SEND and their families;
- There was an effort to improve provision within the Borough;
- Improving transitions was one of the areas that the strategy was focusing upon;
- Using data more efficiently was part of the strategy;
- The details of how the strategy was going to be measured were explained in the report, including key performance indicators;
- 50 full responses to the consultation were received, which was positive; the feedback received was encouraging and challenging;
- Conversations with partners were being undertaken to decide how the services would be resourced, in the context of the financial demands to deliver the strategy; funding models were being reviewed;
- The public sector equality duty would be further refined for the final assessment.

During the discussion of the item the following comments were made:

- In response to a question Matthew Booth stated that one of the main differences between this strategy and the previous one was the element of co-production and engagement with partners; he believed it was also more evidence based;
- In addition, Carol Cammiss stated that the previous strategy was educationally centred, whereas this was a local area partnership piece of work;
- Members noted that the number of boys with EHCPs and SEND needs was significantly higher than the number of girls; and asked if there was a reason for this and wondered if girls were being missed out and potentially not getting the help which they needed;
- Members also asked if the data could be broken down further, by gender and ethnicity;
- Matthew Booth stated that Health professionals had explained that behaviour signifiers showed up earlier for boys for certain disorders; there was concern by Health partners that girls were being diagnosed later;
- Members suggested that there could be cultural reasons that girls were not having their needs identified and suggested that this be investigated;
- Members questioned why there had been a drop in the number of EHCPs after KS2;
- Matthew Booth stated that educational professionals had explained to him that at KS2 education became more formal, thus was important to address needs so that the

children did not fall further behind; he also added that KS2 had the highest volume of children in education;

- In response to a question Matthew Booth stated that one of the major strands of work in the action plan was a resource space review, to maximise the utilisation of local places;
- Members believed that the new strategy was much improved from the previous one, and congratulated Carol Cammiss and her team on the work they had undertaken to produce the strategy;
- Members questioned the statement that Wokingham was a great place for children to grow up, in that there were some areas of deprivation in the Borough, and perhaps this was not a statement that was true for everyone. Matthew Booth stated that some parent and carers groups had also pointed out that there was much improvement still needed in the services provided for SEND children in the Borough in relation to that statement. This may still be reviewed in order to strike the right nuance;
- Sal Thirlway stated that SEND Improvement Board would continue and that strategy would be co-delivered in partnership with stakeholders;
- Carol Cammiss stated that improving the outcomes for children was the focus of the service.

RESOLVED That the Committee noted and supported the SEND Strategy.

50. CHILD EXPLOITATION

The Child Exploitation report was presented by Kelli Scott, Interim Service Manager, Children With Disabilities and Early Help.

Kelli Scott stated that the report provided an overview of what constituted child exploitation and Council's response to it through contextual safeguarding.

Kelly Scott stated that the strategic response to Child Exploitation involved a series of partnership meetings at strategic level, aiming to understand and mitigate risk factors at an individual and community level through relationship based practice and disruption techniques.

Kelly Scott stated that the operational response to Child Exploitation was delivered through: Early Help provision; Statutory Social Work Services; KICKS Project; Youth Mentoring; Positive Pathways Project and Youth Offending Service.

During the discussion of the item the following comments were made:

- Members noted that the report did not contain data and asked if this could be provided;
- Kelly Scott stated that a decision had been made not to include data in order to avoid potential identification;
- Carol Cammiss stated that the data was confidential and she would investigate the possibility of being able to share this data;
- In response to a question Kelli Scott stated that partnership working was being developed in relation to contextual safeguarding;
- Members were concerned that it was not possible to know the scale of the problem without knowing the numbers. Carol Cammiss agreed to look into the possibility of presenting the data in a Part 2 session;

- In response to a question Kelli Scott stated that professionals were increasingly able to recognise/identify and respond to child exploitation, and therefore aware of more cases;
- In response to a question Kelli Scott stated that there was generally more awareness of child exploitation resulting from national and local campaigns.

Members recognised that this was a difficult area of work and thanked Kelli Scott for the report.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The report be noted; and
- 2) Future reports on Child Exploitation would include data whenever possible and the use of Part 2 to enable this would be explored.

51. COMPASS TEAM UPDATE

Adam Davis presented the Compass Team update report.

Adam Davis stated that the Compass Team had been set up to address gaps that had been identified in the provision of services. The focus of the team was to work with children at the edge of care and to support children to remain in placements for as long as appropriate.

The report contained details about the staff in the team and how it was developed.

Adam Davis stated that positive results had already been achieved since the establishment of the team.

Members suggested the inclusion of figures on outcomes to measure the impact of team in future reports.

In response to a question Adam Davis stated that he believed that the team had the appropriate number of staff at the moment, but this would be kept under review.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

52. MEASURES TAKEN TO REDUCE THE NEED FOR CHILDREN TO RETURN TO A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

Adam Davis presented the Measure taken to reduce the need for children to return to a child protection plan report.

Adam Davis pointed out to the statistics in the report, including benchmarking.

Adam Davis stated that Childrens Services monitored the number of children becoming subject to a protection plan on a monthly basis and there was a specific indicator for the numbers becoming subject to a Protection plan for a second or subsequent time. This number fluctuated and could be influenced by a number of factors. Benchmarking against other Local Authorities and our statistical neighbours is an important component in assessing where we are. Despite “in year” peaks, Wokingham Borough Council remains below the average of statistical neighbours (communities that are similar). We collect information about children becoming subject to Child Protection plans either in the

previous 2 years and ever in their lifetime in order to test the impact of recent interventions and decision making, to give an idea of how practice is improving or otherwise.

During the discussion of the item the following comments were made:

- In response to a question Adam Davis stated that the term statistical neighbours referred to local authorities that had similar population demographics and they may not be neighbouring authorities;
- Members questioned the impact of the pandemic in relation to putting children on plans. Adam Davis did not believe that there was a more risk averse approach which was resulting in more children being put on a plan. He stated that decisions were made in a multi-agency process.

Members were pleased with the impact of the measures being put in place to reduce the need for children to return to a child protection plan and thanked Adam Davis for the report.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

53. FORWARD PLAN

Members asked about the vaccination programme in relation to Addington School. Carol Cammiss stated that there had been an issue with the interpretation of the legislation, this had now been resolved.

Members noted that it was positive that all staff in Foundry College and Northern House had now been vaccinated.

The Chairman asked that a date for the Briefing be identified in March, before the next meeting.

Members asked that 'inclusion' be included in the Diversity and Equality at Schools item. Carol Cammiss suggested to add inclusion as an item later on in the year. Members agreed with this approach and felt that it was important to gather data around diversity and equality issues in schools in order to monitor it.

The Chairman stated that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee would be discussing ideas for the forward plan for the next municipal year at its next meeting. Some Members suggested the following items:

- Work opportunities for Care Leavers
- Update on the take up of the provision of free sanitary products
- Virtual School update

54. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Carol Cammiss addressed the Committee and made the following statement:

Our education community has suffered a number of losses recently, with the passing of staff across a number of schools. Two members of staff, the Care Taker at St Teresa's Catholic Academy, the Co-Head of Year 10 from Bulmershe School have died from Covid related illnesses. Additionally Jay Blundell, Headteacher at the Foundry College, passed away at the weekend following a short period of illness.

All of these colleagues will be missed by their own school community as well as the broader education system within the Borough; and our thoughts are with their families, friends, colleagues and pupils who knew them well, at this very sad time. We are working with all schools to provide support from our educational psychology service and our school improvement service.

The Chairman asked Carol Cammiss to pass on the Committee's sympathy to the schools involved.

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TITLE	Review of Covid-19 response
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 March 2021
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To provide an update and review of Children's Services response to Covid 19.

RECOMMENDATION

This document is for information and update.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

In response to Covid 19, Children's Services amended how it delivered its services. This was to ensure that both workers and children were safe, schools and settings were supported, risks mitigated and statutory duties achieved. Our changes were informed by Government advice, national restrictions and Public Health guidance on social distancing and good hygiene and Department of Education Covid specific guidance and amendments to legislation.

Children's services have reported to a range of forums and bodies in relation to its work in a covid context, this has included, the Department of Education, OFSTED, Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Corporate Parenting Board. On the 5th November 2020 a report was shared at Children Overview and Scrutiny Board which provided an overview of our educational support to schools and settings and a summary of the changes and adaption undertaken within Children's Social Care. This is also included a summary of audits undertaken in April and June 2020 looking at our social care practice in a Covid context.

This report will provide an update of our ongoing response to Covid 19

Background

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic represents a time of severe pressure across society, which we know presents heightened levels of risk for some children. It is, therefore, especially important that these children continue to receive the services and support they need. Wokingham's aim is to:

- continue to prioritise the safeguarding, and protect the welfare, of vulnerable children and young people

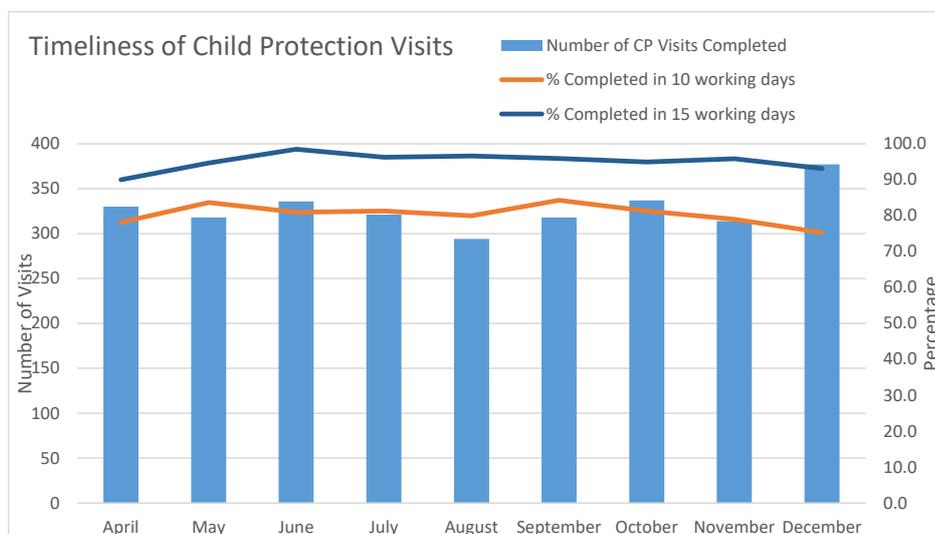
- maintain delivery of children’s social care during the pandemic
- support schools and settings to maintain children and young people’s learning during the pandemic

Social Care

During the Covid period children social care have observed a reduction in the number of Contacts that that it receives at the Front Door (Duty Triage and Assessment Team). There has been a 9% reduction in a Contact which is when an agency shares information via a Multi-Agency Referral form, or the service is contacted in relation to the concerns of a child. There has also been a 30% reduction in the number ‘Contacts’ that progress on for a social Care assessment. In relation to more complex cases our data and intelligence do not identify a clear pattern. The cases of note are from different sources and present with different issues. While some may share similar age and stage in development, the pattern we have identified is that the cases are diverse in their context and nature. In response to this lack of tangible pattern, our staff need to be curious and astute to the cases that present and are open. In response to these variables and reductions in Contacts, we have shared this overview with our partners and have also communicated with the public and voluntary sector.

After the introduction of the initial lockdown in March 2020, individual risk assessments were introduced to determine whether face to face or virtual visits were appropriate. Child Protection cases were not deemed suitable for virtual visits unless in exceptional circumstances. Visiting and engaging with children has been a key focus of our work throughout the year and our data indicates that over 95% of all visits carried out to children on Child Protection Plans since April 2020 have been conducted face-to-face.

Children subject to a Child Protection plan have been seen consistently within a 15 working day timescale (the majority within 10 days); exceptions have tended to be down to periods of self-isolation and a Teams preference not to conduct a visit with a different Social Worker for the sake of a few days.

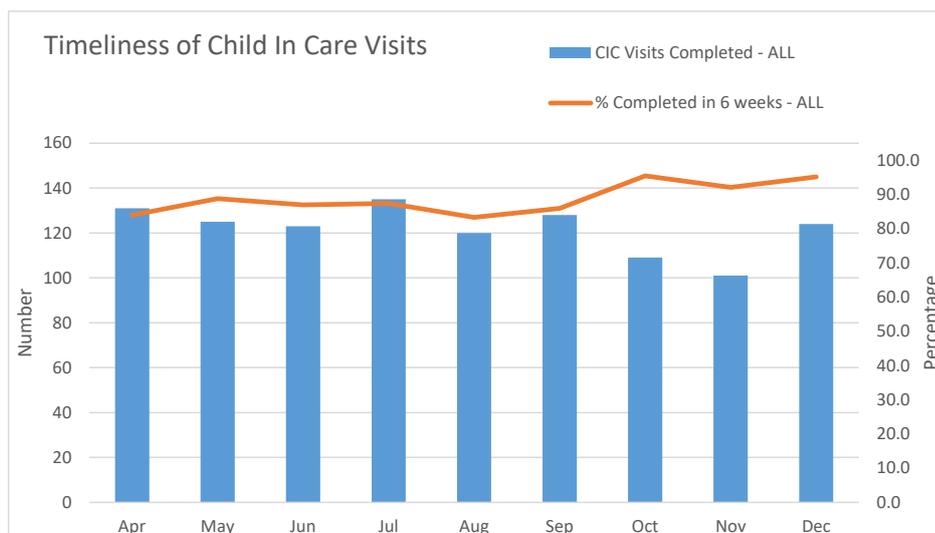


Visiting children looked after children and Care leavers

Whilst there have been no blanket changes to our social work practice and care of our looked after children and care leavers, coronavirus brings additional risks and a layer of complexity that may necessitate some different ways of working.

Since the lockdown in December all meetings and looked after reviews are taking place remotely by phone, and where possible video call. Whilst allocated workers endeavour to visit our children and young people in their placements regularly, and in line with statutory timeframes (wherever possible), there have been some adjustment to this. Where adjustments are required this has been done in consultation with the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), the child and the child's placement. Workers are also using a range of other social media to remain in contact with their children and young people between visits. Since 'What's App' has been installed on the work phones this remains a popular way to communication with our children and care leavers. Workers can now quickly 'check in' to ensure that children and young people are well and have all that they need and reassure them that we are holding them in mind.

Children in Care have been seen consistently every 6 weeks, except where their plans allow for a longer time between visits.



Care leavers are a particularly vulnerable group of young people. Coronavirus (COVID-19) heightens this, because care leavers may be financially vulnerable and at risk of increased levels of anxiety and isolation. During periods of national restriction this is extenuated as informal support networks and direct contact are impacted. Some of our care leavers are still finding the Covid-19 restrictions difficult. Our Personal Advisors (PA) have been creative in undertaking visits with our more anxious care leavers who are worried about the spread of the Covid-19 virus. These have included taking young people on walks and being in the open fresh air. In turn they have experienced a high-quality engagement by changing the way we conduct the visits. The introduction of technology has also seen a higher level of engagement and young people being available to engage and meet virtually with their PA's.

Foster carers

We are grateful to all foster carers who have continued to care for our looked after children and manage their busy lives while keeping them safe and complying with the restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We recognize the importance of maintaining a stable home for children wherever possible. In most cases, we expect that children will continue living with their foster carers, observing government guidance on self-isolation and social distancing in the event that someone is either symptomatic or the household is self-isolating. To date only one placement has been destabilized due to Covid.

Education

Since the start of the pandemic Wokingham Borough Council has provided continuous support to schools and settings via a daily email update briefing to headteachers with information and guidance, and weekly leadership roundtable held for all headteachers to explore responses to matters of the moment and share best practice.

We have also provided a programme of three roundtable sessions per week for key school staff to develop responses to things such as provision of remote education, managing assessment, effective gap closing, and we will be focussing on Mental Health and Well Being for all during this spring term.

We have been in regular contact between schools and attached officers to gather intelligence to inform where and what support is required and provided ICT support to build system capacity/ confidence with delivery of teaching via new platforms, including training for a wide range of school staff on new technologies.

In addition, a Covid Task Group has been working to build capacity in supporting the response is co-ordinating information and support for schools across teams and monitoring the direct impact of Covid transmission on school delivery and attendance. We have also organised a dedicated email address whereby schools can obtain quick responses to Covid related queries and concerns.

The School Improvement Team and the Educational Psychology Team have worked in partnership to co-deliver the DfE Well Being for Education Return Programme – a series of workshops and practical materials to support the Emotional and Mental Health and Well-Being of pupils and staff. These sessions continue through to March 2021.

Since the start of the year additional extraordinary round tables have been held with school leaders to address system responses to Lateral Flow Testing set up, s44 Health and Safety at Work Act letters from staff and trade union activity, staffing availability, Covid Secure risk assessments for operation, remote learning requirements and digital devices.

These sessions have given headteachers instant access to School Improvement team support for locally based decision making and guidance; Wokingham Borough Council Health and Safety officers and guidance on working from home as well as support for risk

assessment quality assurance and walk throughs; access to the Council's Public Health consultant advice and information generally and on the new variant; and facilitated Military support for Lateral Flow testing logistics where requested.

Remote Learning

Throughout the pandemic, and specifically during the first and second school lockdowns, our school improvement service have provided advice and support for school in respect of remote learning. This has included advice and guidance as well as direction to resources to support schools delivering their curriculum online.

In the autumn term of 2020 the DfE announced the Get Help With Technology Scheme to support laptop allocations for Y3-Y11 pupils. We estimate that DfE originally allocated around 700 laptops to WBC schools/academies as part of this scheme. The allocations were subsequently reduced, then later restored.

The great majority of these laptops have now been ordered by schools. Most are now delivered, but some primary schools are still waiting for laptops to arrive that they were only able to order recently. Schools are making a variety of local arrangements to ensure children have access to devices, e.g. loaning out existing school laptops, sourcing devices from local community.

Since March 2020, WBC have provided 235 laptops to Children with a Social Worker through a DfE Covid scheme and 50 laptops to Children in Care/Care Leavers through an ongoing Council-funded scheme.

We continue to provide laptops to Children with a Social Worker (Children in Care/Care Leavers, Child in Need and Child Protection) using WBC funds (although the funding source for CIN + CP laptops isn't yet known). Since we have already provided a large number of laptops to young people in this group, the numbers currently being requested are fairly low.

Throughout the pandemic WBC Children's Services have continued to liaise with colleagues across the Council and local Charities (including First Days) that are working together to repurpose donated laptops to distribute them to those in need.

Free School Meals and Home to School Transport

We have responded quickly to meet the needs of children eligible for Free School Meals and/or Home to School Transport.

In respect of Free School Meals, we have provided support to schools in relation to advice and guidance on ensuring that FSM contractors are able to continue to provide meals to pupils who are isolating, ordering via the initial government arrangement with EdenRed during the first lockdown, and providing access to WBC commissioned services to support the maintenance of FSM delivery for those isolating and for children not at school during lockdown periods.

During subsequent lockdown, we have worked with providers on ensuring appropriate voucher schemes and hamper style deliveries were available to parents. WBC has made

full use of the Covid Winter Grant to support and fund FSM during school holiday periods and the Council has committed to supporting the continuance of FSM during holiday periods not covered by central government funding.

In respect of Home to School Transport we have had to be agile in our response to lockdowns where they have affected school attendance. We have ensured that all children eligible for a school place and eligible for HTST have continued to receive the service and have worked with providers to support their loss of income where we have suspended delivery where transport has not been needed. We have provided this support to ensure that provision is available as we have come out of such lockdown periods.

Emotional well being

The mental well-being of children remains a priority for both Social Care and Education. If a child/young person is receiving help from CAMHS they are able to access additional telephone contact if things become more difficult.

Berkshire West CCG, Wokingham LA, West Berkshire LA and Brighter Futures for Children have jointly commissioned the online counselling service Kooth.

Kooth is an online counselling and emotional well-being support service providing young people aged 11-18 years (up to 19th birthday) in Berkshire West with a safe and secure means of accessing support with their emotional health and wellbeing needs from a professional team of qualified counsellors. Kooth has no referrals, thresholds or waiting lists. Young people can access this service anonymously by signing onto the Kooth site.

Some of the main Challenges of working in the current context and the impact of Covid 19

- Balancing adaptations to practice promoting staff welfare and keeping children safe
- Predictive modelling with regard to demand - requires us to be as agile and resilient as possible to respond to changes
- Early response to fast changing Public Health England advice and guidance
- Ensuring any adapted activities reflect the needs of the child
- Delays to court proceedings and expectations around contact for children with their family
- Non-accidental injuries to pre-mobile children. Challenges in relation to identifying patterns given small numbers and fast-moving situation
- Mitigating the impact of remote working on the Children's Services Workforce.
- The need to continue to develop and support the workforce to deal with these issues and challenges
- Being prepared for uncertainty
- Impact on partner services for children with disabilities e.g. Short breaks and holiday schemes
- Some restrictions on visiting some children in some provisions
- Maintaining and supporting schools and settings in respect of significant and rapid changes in government guidance

What has worked well in the current context of Covid 19

- The commitment of our staff and their ability to adapt to the changing context and continue supporting and safeguarding children
- Enabled SMART working for all staff through Microsoft Teams.
- Maintained COVID-compliant office space for a small cohort of workers (including Social Workers, Admin, and Team/Service Managers) at both Shute End and Here4U.
- Assured and maintained appropriate levels of PPE to enable Social Workers to visit children
- The high level of face-to-face visits completed where possible.
- Regularly updated and published Practice Standards guidance for Social Work staff to ensure their safety while practicing Social Work.
- Introduced Personal Risk Assessments for Clinically Vulnerable staff to assess suitability of making face-to-face visits.
- Provided a regular Director's Briefing throughout the pandemic
- Introduced Mental Health First-Aiders across the organisation.
- Carried out a survey of staff.
- Adapted practice and used PPE to ensure Bridges Resource Centre could remain open, offering respite to children with disabilities.
- Introduced Virtual Visiting across our broad range of visit activity where necessary including the rollout of WhatsApp to children and staff - but continued face-to-face Child Protection visits where safe to do so.
- Adapted quickly to holding virtual/hybrid Child Protection Conferences, Child in Care Reviews and Child in Need meetings.
- Provided daily Covid related updates to schools and Headteachers
- Proactively worked with schools and Social Workers to allocate DfE laptops and internet access to those most in need as quickly as possible.
- Contacted all Young Carers and put support plans in place where necessary.
- Children in Care Council sent postcards to all Children in Care, signposting to support.
- Allocated an additional £5,000 for the support of Care Leavers over Christmas
- Creation of a £100k grant fund to support Early Years provision
- Schools round table and thematic online drop-in events

Analysis of Issues

Over the last year the social care and education teams have become adept at delivering their statutory duties and responsibilities within a pandemic and the varied local and national restrictions that have been in place during this time.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)			
Next Financial Year (Year 2)			
Following Financial Year (Year 3)			

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

Public Sector Equality Duty
Please confirm that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and if an equalities assessment has been completed or explain why an equalities assessment is not required.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

List of Background Papers

Contact	Service Social Care and Early Help Learning, Achievement & Partnerships
Telephone No Tel: 0118 974 6128	Email adam.davis@wokingham.gov.uk sal.thirlway@wokingham.gov.uk

TITLE	Diversity and Equality at Schools
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 March 2021
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To inform Committee Members of the Racial Equity in Schools programme being delivered by Wokingham Children's Services School Improvement Team in partnership with Wokingham schools.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Committee Members note the content of the report.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The death of George Floyd in May 2020, and other race related incidents (current and historical at the time), sparked an international movement which became known as the Black Lives Matter movement.

The School Improvement Service as part of Learning, Achievement & Partnerships commenced a programme with schools to respond to the issue of Racial Equity in Schools.

Activity undertaken as part of this programme has included:

- The development of a Racial Equity in Schools Programme
- Roundtable discussions with Headteachers and school leaders
- Training courses for senior leaders, governors and staff
- Dissemination of resources to support activity related to racial equity.
- A survey of schools on racial equity

This report gives detail related to the above and sets out the intent to develop a Racial Equity in Schools Strategy for the Borough in partnership with schools and settings.

Background

On the 25th May 2020, an African-American man, George Floyd, was killed in the Powderhorn community of Minneapolis, Minnesota. While Floyd was handcuffed and lying face down on a city street during an arrest, a white American Minneapolis police officer, kept his knee on the right side of Floyd's neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds; according to the criminal complaint against Chauvin, 2 minutes and 53 seconds of that time occurred after Floyd became unresponsive.

The death of George Floyd, and other race related incidents (current and historical at the time), sparked an international movement which became known as the Black Lives Matter movement.

As across the country, in Wokingham there were some community tensions and public sharing of experiences of people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Some of these experiences related to ex-school children, current school children and some past and present teaching staff.

In addition to individual schools seeking to respond supportively to this sharing and challenge, the School Improvement Service as part of Learning, Achievement & Partnerships commenced a programme with schools to respond to the issue of Racial Equity in Schools.

Summer Term 2020

During the summer term of 2020 we instigated an initial communication with schools via our Education News and Governor Digest detailing a number of resources available to them to assist in supporting work with pupils following George Floyd's killing and the Black Lives Matter (BLM), protests.

We also met with a teacher who shared with us the letter she had written to her governors about her own experiences of racism and her views on how children in schools can be better equipped to understand racism and how schools can respond and move towards becoming anti-racist establishments. Through these meetings we discussed a number of plans for work with schools and the way in which the work should be approached.

Autumn Term 2020

During the Autumn term of 2020 as our work progressed we launched the Racial Equity in Schools programme, and worked with a number of schools and school leaders on the development of principles, aims and actions for the work. These were:

Principles:

Our principles are based on the way in which we want everyone engaged in the programme to operate. We were clear that as a system we needed to be humble in our approach and not be the 'professional expert', thus the principles underpinning this work are:

- Work in partnership with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic school staff, and others who have particular expertise in this area, listening to and learning from them
- Engage in this work with a genuine desire to effect change, mindful that doing this work without careful thought and genuine commitment risks causing further harm to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic school staff and children
- Work on our own understanding of racism and our personal role within a society in which there is systemic racism
- Encourage school staff to do this personal learning and reflection work themselves, and in discussion with their colleagues, as an essential foundation for working on racial equity in their school

Aims:

Our aims for this work are divided into three areas:

- Learning (racial literacy)
 - To develop young people and school (and LA) staff who are aware of their unconscious racial bias and work to be actively anti-racist - a positive force for social justice
 - To develop school curriculums that are fully inclusive of people of colour and their role in British history and culture, and in subjects across the curriculum, and which present a positive and rounded picture of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people
 - For children and school (and LA) staff to understand the history that has led to today's multiracial Britain, and the presence of people of colour in Britain throughout our history
 - For children and school (and LA) staff to understand the ways in which racism (including systemic racism) works and the history related to it. (School/LA staff and older children to have understanding of terms such as white supremacy and white privilege)
- Outcomes for pupils, staff and parents
 - For children from all racial groups to achieve at least as well as White British children, and to leave our schools confident and articulate
 - For children from all racial groups to receive, proportionately, no more sanctions for behaviour, and exclusions, than White British children
 - For all children, staff and parents to feel comfortable and happy in our schools and able to be their authentic selves – part of the school community
- Workforce.
 - For our children to be taught by a racially diverse teaching staff
 - For a representative proportion of our schools to be led by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic headteachers, senior leaders and governors so that school provision is shaped by people of colour, and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children have leadership role models

Whilst these aims are ambitious we believe this is appropriate if we really want to see change. They are long term.

The purpose of developing these aims, principles and actions was to pin down what we think the work actually is and what we should call it. We were mindful that, because this is a difficult subject, unless we're very clear about what the work is, we and our schools

could easily miss doing the work that really needs to be done to make a difference. Because having conversations about this work can be uncomfortable, it is easy for conversations to become diluted and diverted.

It was decided to use the term ‘racial equity’ to label this work. We have used the word ‘equity’ for some time in relation to work across the borough to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, so it is a term that our schools are familiar with. We liked the fact that equity involves working to understand and to give people what they need to enjoy full, healthy and happy lives. It requires consciously reviewing and amending the elements of provision to enable social justice.

During the course of the Autumn Term we continued to engage with schools through thematic roundtable discussions with headteachers and through the Head Teacher and Governor briefing sessions held that term.

We also undertook an end of autumn term Racial Equity Survey to which 32 schools completed the survey. Key responses were:

“Following the renewed focus on racism around the world as a result of George Floyd’s killing and the Black Lives Matter protests, to what extent have teaching staff at your school been engaging in learning, personal reflection and discussion about racism?”

- Not at all yet 6
- Not involving all teaching staff but some interested staff have been doing this work 9
- We have started some work on this involving all teaching staff 11
- We have done quite a lot of work on this involving all teaching staff 4
- Other comments



“To what extent do you feel confident to lead staff in learning, personal reflection and discussion about racism?”

- Very confident 6
- Reasonably confident 14
- Not very confident 8
- Not at all confident 4



Spring Term 2021:

During this spring term we are delivering two half day training sessions in March with Reading International Solidarity Centre (RISC) to support us to develop a strategy for our work with schools going forward. The whole WBC School Improvement team attended the first of these (at the point of writing this report), together with others representing different stakeholders: governors, headteachers, deputies and teachers. We also ensured that one of the council's equalities leads also attended so that we can ensure our programme is linked with borough-wide work.

In addition to this work, three workshops for school staff and governors have been arranged, to be led by Amjad Ali, a local senior leader, consultant and founder member of the BAMEed Network. The first of these will take place on the 29th March; the second will be in the first half of the summer term, and the third in the second part of the summer term. We are encouraging attendees to come to all three, as each will build on the previous one.

The sessions will enable participants to:

- develop their understanding of racial equity
- develop their ability to have conversations about racial equity with colleagues in school, and to facilitate their colleagues' learning and thinking

To date, around 45 teachers/ HTs have requested invitations to the workshops.

Future plans

The survey suggests there is a great range of expertise in our schools, including some leaders who feel they have expertise but who may not have engaged in the necessary personal reflection and learning that we feel is required to do this work effectively. We will continue to share the practice of schools who are approaching this work with staff personal learning and reflection as the foundation.

Following the two sessions with RISC, we will produce a draft strategy for our future work with schools. The draft will be shared with stakeholders for their comments.

As part of the strategy, we will want to support the sharing of good practice between schools. We have learnt that there are several teachers in our schools who are very passionate about this work, are leading excellent work in their schools, and are keen to be involved in the LA work.

Analysis of Issues

In terms of outcomes, we know that currently in Wokingham some minority ethnic groups are over-represented in exclusions data (fig 1. 2018/19 data return), and that there are some groups whose academic achievement is a concern. We also know that a high number of children from some minority ethnic groups are known to Wokingham Children's Social Care. We know from teacher and student voice that not all children and staff feel comfortable and happy and able to be their authentic selves in our schools.

Fig 1. Ethnicity Breakdown across Wokingham Schools 2018/19

Characteristic	2018/19 total in WBC	2018/19 WBC fixed_excl (numbers)	2018/19 WBC fixed_excl_ (percentage)
Ethnicity Minor Any other Asian background	527	*	0.2%
Ethnicity Minor Any other black background	117	8	6.8%
Ethnicity Minor Any Other Ethnic Group	256	5	2.0%
Ethnicity Minor Any other Mixed background	673	11	1.6%
Ethnicity Minor Any other white background	1579	14	0.9%
Ethnicity Minor Bangladeshi	110	*	0.9%
Ethnicity Minor Black African	645	19	2.9%
Ethnicity Minor Black Caribbean	98	13	13.3%
Ethnicity Minor Chinese	209	0	0.0%
Ethnicity Minor Gypsy Roma	139	12	8.6%
Ethnicity Minor Indian	1842	*	0.2%
Ethnicity Minor Irish	95	5	5.3%
Ethnicity Minor Pakistani	1266	18	1.4%
Ethnicity Minor Traveller of Irish heritage	42	*	2.4%
Ethnicity Minor White and Asian	629	*	0.3%
Ethnicity Minor White and Black African	264	6	2.3%
Ethnicity Minor White and Black Caribbean	415	53	12.8%
Ethnicity Minor White British	17663	445	2.5%

(Note * is used where the number is less than 5 so that individual children cannot be identified)

In terms of actions, our learning told us that a vital first step, if change is going to be meaningful, effective and sustained, is personal reflection and learning. We agreed that initially the work is about hearts and minds - about helping school staff to understand what it's like to be a BAME person in the UK/ Wokingham and examine their own unconscious bias within a society which privileges white people. It is our view that this hearts and minds work is an essential foundation for any other racial equity work in school.

It is an anticipated outcome of this programme of work that exclusion rate disparity will reduce and educational outcomes for some groups will improve in line with their peers.

The LA has received strong support from several HTs for this work. We know that some schools have made use of the RISC racial literacy resources list that we have shared, and the survey shows that many schools are thinking about and engaged in this work – in some cases the LA focus on this will have prompted or strengthened this focus. One school has already appointed a 'racial equity' governor, which perhaps reflects our focus, and use of this term to describe the work.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
N/A

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)
N/A

Public Sector Equality Duty
An equalities assessment will be undertaken during this term as part of the of the Equity in Schools Strategy development.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

List of Background Papers
Racial Equity Update: Survey Responses.

Contact Sal Thirlway	Service Learning Achievement and Partnerships
Telephone No Tel: 0118 908 8238	Email sal.thirlway@wokingham.gov.uk

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Racial equity update: survey responses

- 32 schools have completed the survey – thank you very much!
- Following the renewed focus on racism around the world as a result of George Floyd's killing and the Black Lives Matter protests, **to what extent have teaching staff at your school been engaging in learning, personal reflection and discussion about racism?**
 - **Not at all yet** 6
 - **Not involving all teaching staff but some interested staff have been doing this work** 9
 - **We have started some work on this involving all teaching staff** 11
 - **We have done quite a lot of work on this involving all teaching staff** 4
 - **Other**



Racial equity update: survey responses

Some comments relating to staff learning:

- We have agreed that as a school, the first step will be for us to improve the 'racial literacy' of our staff through training and ensure that they are well read and well informed so that they feel able to contribute to our racial equity work. Our racial equity governor and I have begun by looking at the RISC racial literacy materials and also other sources in preparation for introducing this work as a whole school initiative
- We share weekly questions to start conversations around race and anti-racism with all staff. We have had INSET training with all teaching staff in regards to racial inclusion. This has become a weekly agenda item for all staff meetings and the Governors equality and diversity working group.
- We have been having discussions in staff meetings and have suggested books for the staff to read.
- Personal reading and then recommendations to whole staff.

Racial equity update: survey responses

Some comments relating to staff learning:

- The staff have been engaged in some initial discussions and currently their views are being gathered. A member of the SLT is focusing on unconscious racial bias and the impact that this can have on curriculum design for her MEd change project and dissertation so she is gathering baseline research data and reading around the subject.
- I think as a school serving a diverse community we are some way towards achieving 'hearts and minds' and certainly have a diverse staff, governing body and PTA in place for example. Our appointment of a Parent Support Advisor from a BAME group has been a positive step in supporting understandings. We also specifically recruited to our FGB from BAME groups to better reflect our community - this has also been a positive.
- We have had two training sessions on equality, including unconscious bias.

Racial equity update: survey responses

- To what extent do you feel confident to lead staff in learning, personal reflection and discussion about racism?

○ Very confident	6
○ Reasonably confident	14
○ Not very confident	8
○ Not at all confident	4



Racial equity update: survey responses

Some comments relating to leaders' confidence:

- My confidence would improve if I had a better knowledge base.
- Leaders of schools need more time to reflect on the complicated issues involved in racism - we need a better understanding and need to be empathetic towards others, especially the black community.
- We are conscious we want to get it right so are ensuring we show empathy and respect in our approach.
- There is trust and respect amongst staff so I am confident that discussions will be open, honest and will support us in moving forwards.

Racial equity update: survey responses

- Other than staff learning about racism, has other racial equity work been taking place at your school in recent months?

We have engaged in work relation to:

- | | | |
|----|--|-----------|
| 38 | ○ Reviewing and developing the curriculum | 24 |
| | ○ Reviewing and developing resources and displays | 17 |
| | ○ Developing understanding of the ethnic and cultural communities that the school serves | 15 |
| | ○ Reviewing policies and practices in terms of impact on racial equity, including unintended impact (e.g. Policies such as those relating to behaviour, uniform, racist incidents. Practices such as charity initiatives, diversity events, assemblies, speakers, trips and visits) | 14 |
| | ○ Developing our teaching about racism | 13 |
| | ○ Considering our school vision/ ethos in relation to racial equity | 13 |
| | ○ The way we relate to BAME pupils, such as: considering our approach to pronouncing children's names; working to know and understand our BAME children really well | 9 |
| | ○ Recruitment | 8 |
| | ○ Gathering views from pupils, parents and staff, including those from BAME communities, about inclusivity and anti-racism at our school | 4 |

Racial equity update: survey responses

Some comments about other work in school:

Initial steps

- Classes have discussed racism as a consequence of the BLM protests.
- ^ωWe have begun to plan opportunities to teach racial equity but very early days.
- We do not necessarily feel confident at this stage of the process but we are very clear as to what our aims are:
 1. Improve diversity and representation - Whose stories do we tell and who tells them? Making sure BAME pupils see themselves reflected in our curriculum, all year round.
 2. Re-examining how certain subjects are taught through a western or colonial lens, and re-framing this: Not necessarily changing what we teach, but how we teach it.
 3. Teaching explicitly about racism and anti-racism (present and past) within our curriculum and in a British context, all year round.

Racial equity update: survey responses

Some comments about other work in school:

Parents and governors

- Parents have been engaged by including items linked to BLM and anti-racism in the Headteacher's newsletter.
- We share news, books, questions with our community through our weekly newsletter.
- We shared the Yoopies #Stronger United "A parents guide to Black Lives Matter".
- The Trust has set up a working group for staff (and also one for parents).
- Racial Equity was discussed at our November FGB meeting and we have appointed a Racial Equity Governor to work with the headteacher on leading this work.

Racial equity update: survey responses

Some comments about other work in school:

Resources and curriculum

- We have invested considerably in a new collection of BAME books, some of which have been sponsored by parents. Our teaching staff evaluated the texts we use to ensure the children from all races represented in school could see themselves in the stories.
- Discussions around reviewing our books and curriculum, including an awareness of the resources used e.g. for assemblies, ensuring they are representative of all groups of people.
- We have started a review of our curriculum to look at the significant people we study to ensure we have diversity and equity and that those we study represent the nationalities and heritage of our school community, across all subjects.

Racial equity update: survey responses

Some comments about other work in school:

Black History Month

- The sharing of the book "Young, Gifted and black" in class assemblies during BHM and is now available in each classroom for children to read
- ^NDuring BHM, children in Year 5 and 6 learned about the discrimination that black people faced as they arrived in Britain on the Empire Windrush in 1948.
- In assemblies during BHM, I focused on historical and contemporary black figures whose work/achievements have shaped UK history & culture. One assembly focused on the boycotting of the Bristol Bus Company in 1963 and how this was a watershed moment in the run up to the passing of the Race Relations Act in 1965. Details about each assembly were shared in our Newsletters to parents and included a little information about some of the less well known figures so that parents could learn about them too.

Racial equity update: survey responses

What form(s) of support from the LA would be most useful to you during spring/ summer 2021 in order to further this work in your school?

- CPD supporting staff to develop their understanding of race and racism, to reflect on their unconscious racial bias, and to have conversations about race in the classroom 29
- CPD for headteachers and leaders to support them to be able to lead on this work 26
- CPD supporting staff to learn about the history that has led to today's multi-racial Britain, and the presence of people of colour in Britain throughout our history 21
- Network meetings to support the sharing of learning and practice 19
- CPD to support staff to review and develop the curriculum 18
- CPD to support staff to review policies and practices 18
- CPD to support staff to review resources 15

Racial equity update: survey responses

Are you happy for the suggested aims, principles and actions to be used as the foundation for this work in Wokingham schools?

(The suggested aims, principles and actions can be found here: <https://wsh.wokingham.gov.uk/learning-and-teaching/racial-equity/>)

44

- Yes** **30**
- No** **2**

Several schools commented that the link didn't work for them – apologies for this. The two schools that selected 'No' commented that this was only because they weren't able to view the document.

Racial equity update: survey responses

Would you like to make any further comments about this work?

- 45 • The main challenge is for all to see beyond the actual curriculum offer (which is of course important); not get caught up on superficial issues; but to be especially focused on how well all ethnic groups attain in schools. At the end of the day, educational attainment has a greater impact on life chances. If there are particular ethnic groups under attaining, then why? And most importantly, what are schools doing to address it? This can be the most challenging factor to overcome, because it can be due to underlying / subconscious biases of institutions and individual professionals. This is why addressing unconscious bias is so important.
- I think this is one of the most important reviews and pieces of work schools do in modern times.
- I think it is crucial as very young children are already aware of racial issues.
- I look forward to exploring and developing our own views as we work with Wokingham and other schools to help our pupils develop and challenge theirs.
- The challenge for our school will be the same as those we experience around disadvantage, in that equity must be woven through every aspect of the work of the school - curriculum, ethos, culture, values - and its significance on child development understood, appreciated and addressed by every member of the school community. This is something we have yet to achieve.
- I think it is a real positive step for society as a whole and to be able to support children to grow in their understanding of the wider world.
- Only concern is that as a school we have other key priorities for this academic year. However it would be useful to participate in training, in order to be prepared to develop this in 2021-22.

Racial equity update: next steps

Following sharing of the survey responses with headteachers and governors...

Short term – spring 1:

- Survey will remain live at start of term for any other schools who would like to complete it
- Work with RISC to develop an action plan for the work
- Explore with RISC and other providers options for racial literacy training and make arrangements for this

Medium term – spring 2/ summer:

- Racial literacy training, including exploring our own unconscious bias – for leaders and governors? (and LA officers)
- Network meeting/ Governor forum

TITLE	Elective Home Education
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 March 2021
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an overview of the current context and information regarding Elective Home Education within Wokingham.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee note the content of this report.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Wokingham Borough Council has statutory oversight for children and young people's education, employment and training up to the age of 18.

Wokingham Borough Council recognises the right of all parents to choose to educate their child at home and aims to develop positive and supportive working relationships with families of school-aged children who are being home educated.

Elective Home Education is defined when a parent withdraws their child from school to educate them themselves or never chooses to send their child to school.

Wokingham has seen an increase of 22.46% in Elective Home Education this academic year (fig1). In comparison with 133 local authorities the increase has been approximately 25% so we are slightly below but in line with the national picture.

Background

Wokingham Borough Council has statutory oversight for children and young people's education, employment and training up to the age of 18.

Wokingham Borough Council recognises the right of all parents to choose to educate their child at home and aims to develop positive and supportive working relationships with families of school-aged children who are being home educated.

Elective Home Education (EHE) is defined when a parent withdraws their child from school to educate them themselves or never chooses to send their child to school.

The Council is committed to understanding approaches to home education by outcomes, not on the basis that a different way of educating children must be wrong. It recognises that there are many approaches to educational provision and that the suitability of education varies from child to child – depending on their individual ability, aptitude and needs.

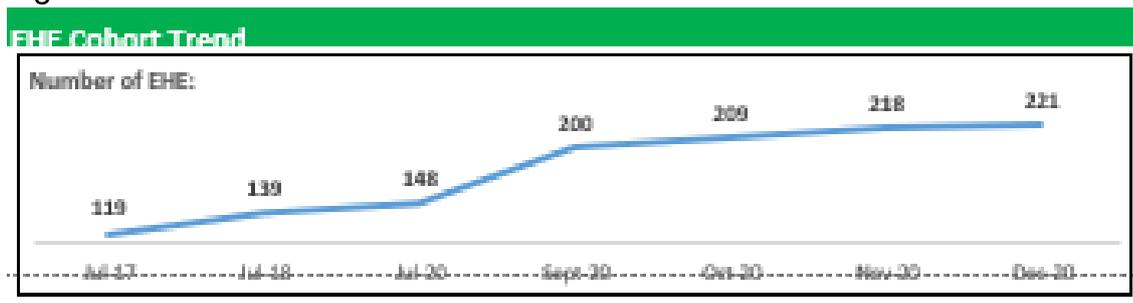
The Council's Virtual School and Education Welfare Service has responsibility for championing educational outcomes across the Borough. Within the Education Welfare Service (EWS), the Education Officer is the named officer responsible for Elective Home Education policy and procedures, who is available to offer advice and support to all families registered as Electively Home Educating within the Borough, overseen by the Principal Education Welfare Officer.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 requires parents to provide an efficient, full-time education which is suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the child and any special educational needs the child may have. There is no legal definition of what constitutes such education, or a legal requirement for parents to follow the National Curriculum, therefore Wokingham Borough Council follows national guidance and use professional opinion to judge the suitability of home education on a case-by-case basis.

Current Position

Wokingham has seen an increase of 22.46% in Elective Home Education this academic year (fig1). In comparison with 133 local authorities the increase has been approximately 25%, and across the SE Region there has been an overall 29% increase in total numbers recorded as being Electively Home Educated, so we are slightly below the regional and national picture.

Fig1 Cohort Trend



Whilst we have seen an increase in the numbers of parents choosing to Elective Home Educate their children, we understand that there are a variety of reasons for these parental choices that are not only around COVID-19 anxiety, but also include families that found they were able to electively home educate well during lockdown and want to continue with this as a lifestyle choice.

The Main reasons for given for the Elective Home Education rise since the start of the pandemic are:

- COVID anxiety
- Lockdown has been successful for Elective Home Education in some families
- Wanted consistency for education rather than stop/start throughout COVID – will be looking to return to school once pandemic is over.

During COVID the Education Welfare Service offered a free service to ALL schools to support attendance and engagement of vulnerable pupils and in addition to our pre-existing traded service agreements. Therefore, every school in Wokingham has been offered a service from us which has been in the form of register consultations and direct work with families. We have worked with 165 pupils and families to date this academic year.

During the course of the autumn term the Education Welfare Service assessed the suitability of education to over 164 families of the 221 electively home educating and has made sure that all new families that decide to Electively Home Educate are seen to ensure they are making an informed decision and life choice (and not being off-rolled). We have 57 families left to visit this academic year and then all families will have been visited this academic year either in person or virtually.

The Education Welfare Service has continued to offer home visits (following risk assessment), video calls, telephone calls, reports with photographic evidence to ensure that the education in place is suitable and effective. Support is offered immediately to all new Electively Home Educating families and an initial visit offered within the first few weeks. If there are concerns raised from the school at point of removal, these are addressed with the family.

The Officer has focused on building relationships with the Elective Home Education community that had wavered due to not having anyone in post for 3 years which has worked well, and we are continuing to improve this. 15-day notices are served in cases where education has been deemed unsuitable and support in moving the pupil back into a school setting, or the issue School Attendance Orders where this fails to drive the improvement or attendance needed, however it should be noted that these are very rare occurrences.

Data Reporting

The Education Welfare Service provides a monthly report which includes data on Children Missing Education and Elective Home Education. This report provides trend data as well as information at a school level in order to support Education Welfare Service involvement and prioritisation. It should be noted that Children Missing Education and Elective Home Education are different things, and the definition for Children Missing Education does not include Elective Home Education.

The current Elective Home Educated cohort of children equates to c1% of the total school population and the breakdown of Elective Home Education registrations by school attended prior to Elective Home Education is shown in the table below (fig2) (note: some parents choose to Electively Home Educate without ever sending their children to a school).

Fig2 Current Cohort

Number of EHE registrations by secondary school attended prior to EHE.							
Bohunt	Maiden Erlegh	Holt	St Crispins	Bulmershe	Waingels	Emmbrook	Oakbank
21	5	4	*	*	*	*	*

Number of EHE registrations by primary school attended prior to EHE.			
Beechwood	7	Grazeley	*
Shinfield St Marys	6	Keep Hatch	*
Coombes	5	Lambs Lane	*
All Saints	5	Evendons	*
St Sebastians	5	Polehampton Infant	*
Windmill	5	Crazies Hill	*
Wheatfield	5	Westende Junior	*
Earley St Peters	5	St Nicholas	*
Gorse Ride Junior	4	Polehampton Junior	*
Hillside	4	Loddon	*
Radstock	4	Finchampstead	*
		Highwood	*
		Rivermead	*
		Whiteknights	*
		Winnersh	*
		Woodley	*
		Willow Bank Infant	*
		Hatch Ride	*
		Farley hill	*
		Hawkedon	*
		Shinfield Infant	*
		St Dominic Savio	*
		Aldryngton	*

* Indicates where the number is lower than 4 and thus individual children could be identified so detail is not contained within the data excerpt.

Analysis of Issues

From the Elective Home Education report (Fig2), there are a high number of pupils withdrawn for Elective Home Education from Bohunt and Bearwood Primary. Some of this could be attributed to the high levels of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT), within these areas and cultural reasons for withdrawal, however it would be complacent to assume this and therefore further investigation is taking place with all of the families involved to find out the rationale for withdrawal and then a plan to support the families and/or schools will be formulated.

Where Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are Electively Home Educated, they tend to require extra support to ensure education is in place. Half termly visits are offered for the most vulnerable and we also provide correct materials where appropriate. Schools are supported to promote education to the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community by offering financial support to promote positive outcomes through 1:1 teacher support or behaviour focused interventions to keep them in school. The Education Officer offers regular 'surgeries' in schools or on the traveller sites to address any education matters.

The Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Community are supporting in finding ways to overcome barriers to full attendance. Relationship building has been a critical element of this built from regular site visits and communication with the 'elders' in the community. We have recently held a Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Forum in which we are looking to put a project in place with 5 pilot schools to improve engagement from this community which will include supportive curriculum advice, off the shelf PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education), lessons for schools, direct work with pupils who are at risk of exclusions and supportive community work.

Half termly the Education Officer chairs a vulnerable pupils meeting with multi-agencies, including Health, Children’s Social Care, Youth Offending Service, The Virtual School, The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Team and Foundry College. Cases of concern are brought to this meeting to plan and professional discussion around ‘stuck’ cases. This does at times include Elective Home Education cases but is not exclusive to this cohort of learners.

At all points of process, we monitor for inappropriate off-rolling and liaise with schools to ensure that pupils are put back onto roll should this happen. We are also required to identify unregistered schools and pass information on to the DfE.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
N/A

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)
N/A

Public Sector Equality Duty
As this report is for information purposes only an equalities assessment is not required.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
N/A

List of Background Papers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elective Home Education Policy 2020/21

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WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Elective Home Education Policy

UNCLASSIFIED

Document Control Information

Title: Elective Home Education Policy

Date: August 2020

Review date: August 2021

Version: 2

Classification: Unclassified

Owner: Melissa Perry, Principal Education Welfare Officer

Version	Date	Description
Version 1	March 2018	Policy originally produced in March 2018.
Version 2	August 2020	Policy refreshed throughout and updated to reflect the Department for Education’s guidance on Elective Home Education (April 2019).

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Executive Summary

Wokingham Borough Council has statutory oversight for children and young people's education, employment and training up to the age of 18.

Wokingham Borough Council recognises the right of all parents to choose to educate their child at home and aims to develop positive and supportive working relationships with families of school-aged children who are being home educated.

The Council is committed to understanding approaches to home education by outcomes, not on the basis that a different way of educating children must be wrong. It recognises that there are many approaches to educational provision and that the suitability of education varies from child to child – depending on their individual ability, aptitude and needs.

Regardless of where a child is being educated, if it is not clear that a child is in receipt of a suitable education, the Council will take all reasonable steps to engage with the family to satisfy itself that provision is suitable. In cases where educational provision is unsuitable and fails to improve, Wokingham Borough Council has a duty to act to remedy the position – including through the use of safeguarding powers, where necessary.

As parents have for their own children, the Council has high aspirations for the educational outcomes of children and young people across the Borough and is committed to championing their rights to ensure they have fair access to suitable, effective full-time education which gives them the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Overall legal responsibility for a child's education rests with their parents, however the Council has moral, social and statutory duties to ensure that education is suitable and there are no risks to the child's welfare.

This document sets out the various roles and responsibilities in relation to Elective Home Education and outlines Wokingham Borough Council's policy and procedures.

Any questions or concerns about the contents of this policy should be raised with the Quality Assurance and Policy Team via email at: ImpactAndInspectionTeam@wokingham.gov.uk.

Policy Context

This policy is underpinned by national legislation and guidance:

- *Elective Home Education, Department for Education Guidance (April 2019)*
- *School Attendance, Department for Education Guidance (July 2019)*
- *European Convention on Human Rights (Article 2 of Protocol 1, Article 8)*
- *Education Act 1996, Sections 7, 319, 436A (inserted by the Education and Inspections Act 2006) and 437-443*
- *Education (Pupil Registration) Regulation 9(2) 1995*
- *Education Act 2002, Section 175(1)*
- *Children Act 1989, Sections 17 and 47*
- *Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006*
- *SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years*
- *Children and Families Act 2014, Section 42(2), Section 61*
- *School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures, Department for Education Statutory Guidance (January 2015)*
- *Data Protection Act 2018*
- *General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)*

It should be read in conjunction with other local procedures:

- *Children Missing Education (CME) Policy*
- *Wokingham Borough Council Levels of Need and Thresholds Guidance*

Systems affected and used to store information:

- CAPITA ONE
- MOSAIC
- Elective Home Education (EHE) Spreadsheet
- Child's Individual Files

This policy applies to all Wokingham Borough Council staff and external partner agencies (e.g. Health and Police) who have contact with compulsory school-aged children; and parents and their children, where they are of compulsory school age and education is accessed at home. The term 'parents' should be taken to mean those with parental responsibility for the child.

1. Introduction

All children have the right of fair access to a suitable and effective full-time education, however there is no legal requirement for this to take place in a school setting. Families are

permitted to provide an education for their children at home if they choose to do so, rather than sending them to school full-time (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996). This is referred to as Elective Home Education (EHE).

Where families elect to home educate, Wokingham Borough Council is committed to developing positive and supportive working relationships with them. This forms part of the Council's duty to ensure the needs of all children and young people are met – and enables safeguarding responsibilities to be fulfilled.

This policy aims to:

- Set out a clear, fair and proportionate procedural approach in relation to elective home education for professionals and families.
- Demonstrate that Wokingham Borough Council is committed to developing positive, supportive and respectful working relationships with all parents of school-aged children who are being home educated, without impeding families' right to home educate.

2. The Wokingham Context

The Council's Virtual School and Education Welfare Service has responsibility for championing educational outcomes across the Borough. Within the Service, the Education Officer is the named officer responsible for EHE policy and procedures, who is available to offer advice and support to all families registered as EHE within the Borough, overseen by the Principal Education Welfare Officer.

Wokingham Borough Council is committed to working with partner agencies to raise awareness of EHE and associated policies/procedures and is working with local partners (e.g. Health bodies, GPs and Social Care) to develop information sharing protocols to ensure that the most accurate reflection of children not attending school is generated. The Education Officer arranges training on the law and diversity of EHE methods for all Council staff and external partners who come into contact with home education.

3. The Law and Suitability of Educational Provision

The Council is committed to understanding approaches to EHE by outcomes, not on the basis that a different way of educating children must be wrong.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 requires parents to provide an efficient, full-time education which is suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the child and any special educational needs the child may have. There is no legal definition of what constitutes such education, or a legal requirement for parents to follow the National Curriculum, therefore Wokingham Borough Council will follow national guidance and use professional opinion to judge the suitability of home education on a case-by-case basis.

The following will be taken into account when assessing the suitability of home education:

- EHE should enable a child to participate fully in life in the UK by including sufficient secular education.
- The Council will interpret suitability in light of its general duties, particularly in relation to:
 - Section 13 of the Education Act 1996, relating to the development of their community.
 - Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, requiring that education functions are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- The fundamental right to an effective education (Article 2 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention of Human Rights), which achieves what it sets out to achieve.
- The individual child's ability and aptitude.
- The need for provision to ensure socialisation.
- The environment in which home education is being provided.
- Education should take up a significant proportion of the child's life, with allowances for holiday periods.
- There are many approaches to educational provision and what is suitable for one child may not be for another. The provision will likely involve variation and flexibility in the type of educational activity and when it is undertaken – reflecting the home educator's philosophy, approach or framework for the education of their child.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. Parents

The responsibility for a child's education rests with their parents. In England, all parents have the right to educate their child at home, should they wish to do so (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996).

Before electing to home educate, parents should consider the time, resource and energy they will need to dedicate to the child's education. Consideration should also be given to involving the child in the decision-making process.

Families should provide education that is of a satisfactory standard from the outset. Where families choose to home educate, parents assume full financial responsibility for the child's education – including bearing the cost of any public exams.

Parents may elect to home educate their child from a very early age so the child may never be enrolled at a school. They can also choose to exercise their right to home educate at any other stage up until the end of compulsory school age. Compulsory school age starts at the

beginning of the term after the child turns 5 and ends on the last Friday in June during the academic year in which the child turns 16.

There is no legal requirement for parents to inform Wokingham Borough Council of their intention to home educate. However, the Council encourages parents to:

- Notify Wokingham Borough Council when they elect to educate their child at home.
- Respond to informal requests made by Wokingham Borough Council for information about the child's education. Parents are asked to provide information such as plans, records of work and progress made, to satisfy the Council that a suitable and effective education is being provided.

Where a child is currently on a school roll, parents should inform the school, in writing, of their intention to home educate and request the child's removal from the school roll. This is not a legal requirement, however it will prevent prosecution for the child's non-attendance at a school where they are technically still on roll.

If parents employ others to educate their child at home, it is recommended they ensure that such people are qualified and suitable to have access to children, including requesting Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

Parents can submit evidence that a suitable education is being provided to the Education Officer at any time, in any format.

4.2. Wokingham Borough Council

Wokingham Borough Council recognises that home education is a key aspect of parental choice and is equal, in law, to education provided at school. The Council is committed to working with and supporting families who choose to home educate by providing advice and guidance, where requested – including exploring possible alternatives to suit families' individual needs.

Local authorities are not required to monitor the quality of home education on a routine basis. However, the Council has a statutory duty to make reasonable arrangements that enable it to establish the identities of children within the local authority area who are not in receipt of a suitable education (Section 436A of the Education Act 1996). Initially, the Council will request information informally from parents to determine whether the education provided satisfies legal requirements.

Where it is unclear to the Council how/if a suitable education is being provided, it will serve a 'notice to satisfy' to parents requiring them to provide evidence to that effect (Section 437(1) of the Education Act 1996). The notice period given by Wokingham Borough Council

shall not be less than 15 working days, beginning on the day that the notice is served. If parents fail to satisfy the Council that a suitable education is being provided, or the Council believes it is expedient that the child should attend school, then it will serve a School Attendance Order (see **Section 8**).

Wokingham Borough Council maintains and regularly reviews its Elective Home Education Policy. The Council also provides written guidance to parents who decide to home educate, along with details about the Council's complaints procedure.

While responsibility for a child's education rests with parents (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996), the Council has statutory oversight of the education, employment and training of young people up to the age of 18. In order to satisfy itself that parents are meeting their statutory duty, the Council maintains a database of all children known to be home educated, which is held under Article 6(e) of the GDPR (Public Task Basis). This enables a record of all contact made with parents and children to be kept and ensures that when a truancy sweep is undertaken by the Police and Education Welfare Service that no formal action is necessary. The objective of the database is not for the Council to interfere with parents' right to home educate, but is to help ensure that every child within the Borough is in receipt of a suitable education.

When a child registered as EHE in Wokingham moves out of the Borough, the Education Officer will inform the new local authority.

4.3. Schools

When written notification of an intention to home educate is received by a school, the school must submit a copy of this notification to the Education Welfare Service, accompanied by a *CME and Pupil Exit Referral Form* (available via the Wokingham Schools Hub), without delay.

Schools have a duty to inform the local authority of all deletions from the admissions register outside of standard transition times. Standard transition times are identified as the point when a child is enrolled at a school at the beginning of compulsory school age; between Years 1 and 2; and between Years 6 and 7.

5. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Parents of a child with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) have an equal right to elect to home educate. However, if on roll at a special school under arrangements made by the local authority, the child's name can only be removed from the admissions register with consent from Wokingham Borough Council. If the Council refuses to give its consent, then consent may be granted at the Secretary of State's direction.

Where parents provide education at home for a child with SEND who has an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), Wokingham Borough Council still has a statutory duty to maintain the EHCP and undertake annual reviews. Parents are welcome to attend annual reviews, but are not obliged to do so.

If the home education being provided for a child who has an EHCP is suitable, Wokingham Borough Council has no duty to arrange any special educational provision for that child. Where this is the case, the EHCP will simply set out the type of provision that the Council determines the child requires and state that parents have made their own arrangements under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996. Wokingham Borough Council will continue to monitor the suitability of the home education and ensure that the special educational provision specified in the EHCP is made available if the home education becomes unsuitable.

Should parents educating their child at home request a statutory assessment or reassessment of their child's SEND, Wokingham Borough Council will follow the same process as for all other requests. *See Wokingham Borough Council's [Local Offer for 0-25 Year Olds with SEND](#) for further details.*

Where parents and the Council agree that home education is the correct provision for a child with an EHCP, it should be clearly recorded in the EHCP that the child will be educated at home. Where this is the case, the Council will arrange the special educational provision set out in the plan, in consultation with parents. However, Wokingham Borough Council does not class this as EHE.

6. Safeguarding

Wokingham Borough Council has the same safeguarding responsibilities for children educated at home as for other children.

The Council recognises that EHE alone does not constitute a safeguarding risk, however, when a child becomes home educated, the Education Officer will liaise with relevant family members, professionals and agencies to determine whether there are any current safeguarding concerns for the child.

Where there are grounds for concern over the child's welfare, the Education Officer will discuss this with the parents in the first instance. Wokingham Borough Council is permitted to insist on seeing the child and will exercise its powers under safeguarding law, where this is deemed necessary to address a risk to the child's welfare (e.g. referral to Children's Social Care). This will be in line with Wokingham Borough Council's [Levels of Need and Threshold Guidance](#).

7. Procedures

See Appendix A: Elective Home Education Process Flow Chart

Upon notification of the intention to home educate being received from a school, the Education Welfare Service will write to parents to confirm their contact details; send parents a home education guidance document; and update Wokingham Borough Council's records accordingly. The Education Officer will check for the involvement of other agencies/professionals and liaise with them as appropriate – in line with information sharing protocols.

The Education Officer will contact parents to arrange a home visit within 12 weeks of receiving notification of the intention to home educate from the school – prioritising families where concerns are highlighted through the Education Welfare Service's initial checks. Parents are not legally obliged to allow a home visit or engage with the EHE Team, however they are encouraged to do so to enable the Council to satisfy itself that an efficient and suitable education is being provided.

During a home visit, the Education Officer will assess the suitability of the education being provided and offer advice/guidance around home education. Following the visit, the Education Officer will complete a report, which will be shared with parents and indicate whether the educational provision is deemed to be suitable.

Where a home visit has been agreed, but parents are not available when the Education Officer arrives, a compliment slip will be left and the Education Officer will write an informal request for information letter to the family to rearrange the visit or suggest alternative arrangements for providing information about the child's education.

If, following a home visit, the child's education is deemed suitable then annual home visits will be requested to ensure continuing suitability of provision – however parents can request more frequent contact and extra support (e.g. advice and guidance on curriculum or SEND, information on further education and examinations, additional funding, etc.) at any time.

7.1. Unsuitable Education or Failure to Provide Information

In cases where parents fail to respond to the Education Officer after 3 attempts to make contact, an attempted home visit and an informal request for information letter, a referral will be made to the Children Missing Education (CME) Officer to consider any further action. A referral to the CME Officer will also be made in cases where there is evidence to suggest that a child is not receiving any education. Parents will be informed in writing of any such referral.

Where a referral to the CME Officer is made, the child will remain on the CME register until it can be determined that they are receiving a suitable education. The CME Officer will attempt to contact the family to arrange a joint home visit with the Education Officer and may serve a 'notice to satisfy' to the parents, which must be responded to within 15 working days.

If evidence is not provided to satisfy the Council that the child is receiving a suitable education, a referral will be made to Children's Social Care and a School Attendance Order will be issued (*see Section 8*).

In cases where education provided at home is deemed insufficient, the Education Officer will agree a plan for improvement with the parents and discuss this with the Virtual Head Teacher. The Education Officer will then write to the parents outlining the concerns and confirming the agreed improvement plan. A meeting will be requested within 4-6 weeks, at a mutually convenient time, to review the plan and reassess the suitability of the educational provision. If the educational provision is still deemed unsuitable at the first review meeting, further improvements will be agreed and a second review meeting will be held within 2 weeks. If the educational provision is still deemed unsuitable at the second review meeting, consideration will be given to issuing a School Attendance Order.

8. School Attendance Orders

A School Attendance Order (SAO) is a notice which is served to parents, requiring them to register their child at a named school. A SAO will only be issued if, after all reasonable steps have been taken by Wokingham Borough Council and parents have been given reasonable time and opportunity to explain or improve education arrangements, the educational provision remains unsuitable.

Meetings will be offered to parents prior to a SAO being served, however it may be activated if sufficient evidence is not provided to satisfy the Council that a suitable education is being provided.

Parents may present evidence of a suitable education to the Council at any point following the issue of the SAO and apply to have it revoked. Where the Council refuses to revoke the order and parents are dissatisfied with this, they should follow the complaints procedure in the first instance. If the parents remain dissatisfied after exhausting the complaints process, they should refer the matter to the Secretary of State.

Regardless of whether or not parents have sought revocation and intervention by the Secretary of State, if they do not comply with the SAO then Wokingham Borough Council will consider prosecution. Where prosecution occurs, the Court will determine the suitability and

efficiency of the education being provided. This could involve the Court issuing a Parenting Order.

Wokingham Borough Council may consider seeking an Education Supervision Order (ESO) in addition, or as an alternative to prosecution to give the Council a formal supervisory role in the education of the child, by imposing a duty on parents to allow the local authority reasonable contact with the child.

A SAO will only be served where Wokingham Borough Council considers that the child's return to school would be appropriate. Where it is considered appropriate, School Admissions will be consulted and parents will be offered the opportunity to submit a preference for a particular school.

9. Ceasing Elective Home Education

When children return to school, move outside of the local authority area, or are no longer of compulsory school age, they will be removed from the Wokingham Borough Council EHE register.

Where young people who have been home educated reach compulsory school leaving age, the Council will send them an EHE Leaver's Evaluation Form asking them to provide feedback on the education they have received and the level of support offered by the local authority. Completion of the form is voluntary, but responses will assist Wokingham Borough Council in making improvements to procedures that support EHE.

The EHE Leaver's Evaluation Form will be accompanied by a letter signposting families to Elevate, which provides careers support and advice, along with assistance applying for Post-16 courses, apprenticeships and jobs.

10. Post-16 Provision

It is a legal obligation for all young people in England to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday. They must therefore participate in one of the following post-16 options:

- Full-time education (e.g. school, college, or home education).
- Apprenticeship.
- Full-time employment with formal learning

Wokingham Borough Council has oversight of children and young people's education up to the age of 18, to ensure that suitable provision is in place. Therefore, parents may be

contacted by the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) Prevention Team to enquire about the status of young people and provide support if necessary.

11. Complaints

Wokingham Borough Council is committed to developing good working relationships with parents who choose to educate their child at home and providing advice, guidance and support, as necessary. However, where parents have a complaint, in the first instance they should contact the Education Officer. If parents are not satisfied with the Education Officer's response, or the complaint relates to the Education Officer, they should contact the Principal Education Welfare Officer, who can also signpost to the Council's complaints process, where necessary.

12. Contacts

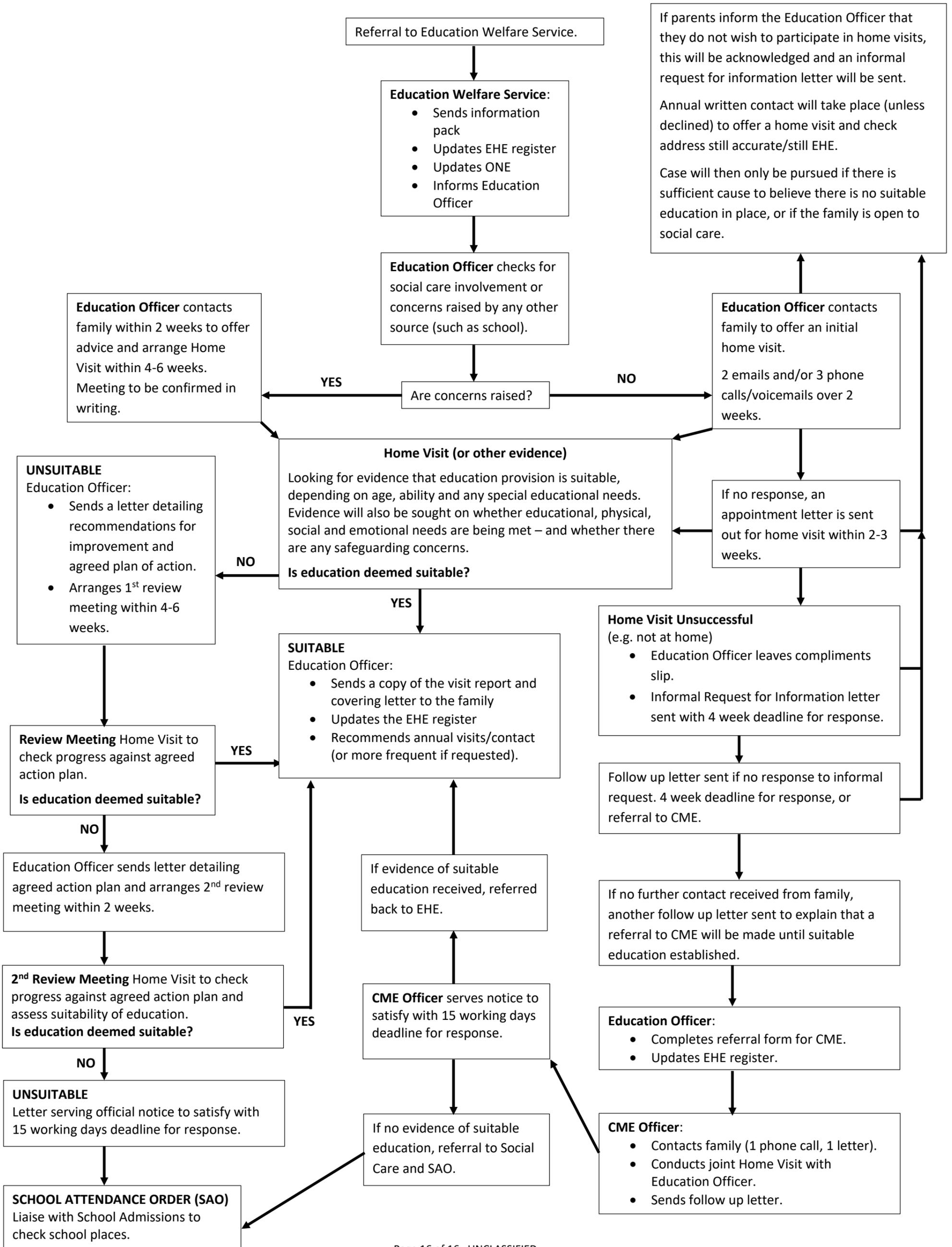
Key contacts in relation to EHE are provided below:

Education Officer	Learning & Achievement Partnership Alder Grove Church of England Primary School Alder Grove Shinfield RG2 9RA Tel: 0118 974 6055
Principal Education Welfare Officer	Alder Grove Church of England Primary School Alder Grove Shinfield RG2 9RA
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Team	Learning & Achievement Partnership Alder Grove Church of England Primary School Alder Grove Shinfield RG2 9RA
NEET Prevention Team	Learning & Achievement Partnership Alder Grove Church of England Primary School Alder Grove Shinfield RG2 9RA Tel: 07710 117650 Tel: 0118 974 6900

Elective Home Education Policy

Admissions Team	Shute End Wokingham RG40 1BN Tel: 0118 974 6000
Children's Social Care	Shute End Wokingham RG40 1BN Tel: 0118 908 8002

Appendix A: Elective Home Education Process Flow Chart



If parents inform the Education Officer that they do not wish to participate in home visits, this will be acknowledged and an informal request for information letter will be sent.

Annual written contact will take place (unless declined) to offer a home visit and check address still accurate/still EHE.

Case will then only be pursued if there is sufficient cause to believe there is no suitable education in place, or if the family is open to social care.