



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** will be held in the
Council Chamber - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham
RG40 1BN on **THURSDAY 17 JUNE 2021 AT 7.00 PM**

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 9 June 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: Although non-Committee Members and members of the public are entitled to attend the meeting in person, space is very limited due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. You can however participate in this meeting virtually, in line with the Council’s Constitution. If you wish to participate either in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams, please contact Democratic Services. The meeting can also be watched live using the following link:

<https://youtu.be/68YorNmMIJo>



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

Prue Bray
Norman Jorgensen
(Chairman)
Morag Malvern

Anne Chadwick
Rebecca Margetts (Vice-
Chairman)
Jackie Rance

Pauline Helliar-Symons
Andrew Mickleburgh

Substitutes

Sam Akhtar
David Hare
Alison Swaddle

Phil Cunnington
Sarah Kerr

Guy Grandison
Barrie Patman

Parent Governor Representatives

Vacancy, Parent Governor Representative
Vacancy, Parent Governor Representative

Diocesan Representatives

Vacancy, Roman Catholic Representative
Vacancy, C of E Representative

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
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1.

APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest.

3.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 March 2021.

7 - 14

4.

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

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|------------|---------------|---|------------------|
| 5. | | MEMBER QUESTION TIME
To answer any member questions. | |
| 6. | None Specific | CHILDREN'S SERVICES RESPONSE TO COVID-19
To receive and consider a report containing information about the Children's Services response to Covid-19. | 15 - 24 |
| 7. | None Specific | CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
To receive and consider the Children's Services Performance Indicators report. | 25 - 36 |
| 8. | None Specific | UNICEF APPLICATION
To receive and consider a report giving details of the Unicef application. | 37 - 40 |
| 9. | None Specific | SCHOOL PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND OFSTED REPORTS
To receive and consider the School Performance Indicators and Ofsted reports. | To Follow |
| 10. | | FORWARD PLAN
To receive and consider the Committee's Forward Plan. | 41 - 44 |
| 11. | | EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC
That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) as appropriate. | |
| 12. | None Specific | SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN – PART 2
A report containing details of schools causing concern will be considered in a Part 2 report. | To Follow |

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 22 MARCH 2021 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.40 PM**

Committee Members Present

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

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: UllaKarin Clark (Executive Member for Children's Services)

Officers Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Carol Cammiss, Director of Children's Services
Adam Davis, Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Early Help
Sal Thirlway, Assistant Director Learning Achievement and Partnerships

55. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

56. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 February 2021 were confirmed as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

Matters arising

Councillor Mickleburgh asked for an update on the reasons for the high number of permanent exclusions (page 10) and for data in relation to the number of permanently excluded children in the Borough (including a breakdown of SEND, gender, age and ethnicity). Sal Thirlway, Assistant Director Learning Achievement and Partnerships agreed to circulate this information to the Committee via email.

In relation to the comments arising from the Child Exploitation report, Adam Davis, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help agreed to include the data required at the last meeting in future reports in a Part 2 session.

57. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

58. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

59. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

60. REVIEW OF COVID-19 RESPONSE

Adam Davis presented the Review of Covid-19 Response report which was set out in agenda pages 17-24.

Some of the points made during the presentation are listed below:

- During the pandemic Children's Services continued to report to a range of forums and bodies, including the Department of Education (DfE), Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership and Corporate Parenting Board (CPB);
- One of the challenges in relation to social care had been to reach a balance between keeping the children protected and ensuring the safety and welfare of staff;
- The majority of child protection visits continued to be face to face (95%);
- There had been a reduction in the number of contacts received at the Front Door and also a reduction in the number of contacts that progressed on for a social care assessment. However, in the last two weeks there had been an increase in the number of contact referrals;
- Engagement with Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers continued during the pandemic, with particular attention to Care Leavers during the Christmas period;
- Engagement with Foster Carers continued and only one placement with a Foster Carer had to end because of Covid;
- Ongoing communication and contact with schools was maintained throughout the pandemic, with weekly meetings and discussions with headteachers and senior school leaders about the management of schools and delivery of education in a pandemic context;
- Schools were supported in relation to access to ICT and equipment to assist remote learning;
- Schools were being supported to develop the Wellbeing for Education Return programme designed by the DfE;
- Schools were supported in the development of the asymptomatic lateral testing;
- Schools had continued access to the help provided by the School Improvement Team;
- Support and guidance was given to schools in relation to the delivery of Free school meals;
- Home to school transport continued to be provided to those eligible;
- The mental health and wellbeing of children and young people was supported and included the provision of Kooth (an online counselling and emotional well-being support service provided for young people aged 11-18) and other material more appropriate for younger children;
- There had been an amazing level of commitment and flexibility from the staff. It was now important to mitigate the impact of working remotely, particularly for social workers.

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

- In response to a question Adam Davis stated that one of the challenges had been relation to recruitment of staff to cover potential gaps as a result of Covid;
- In response to a question Sal Thirlway stated that on reflection, taking stock at the beginning of the pandemic would have been beneficial, as the speed of changes from the central government was considerable;
- Councillor Blumenthal asked about the uptake of Kooth and any feedback. Adam Davis stated that this had been successful and it was agreed that any data would be shared with Members;
- Councillor Clarke provided an update on the usage of Kooth:
 - during the period 1 July 2020 to 31st December 2020 and across the Borough there were:
 - 1606 log-ins
 - 392 new registrations
 - 61 chats with Kooth Counsellors, 626 therapeutic messages exchanged

- 364 article reviews and 1,934 forum views
- the majority of the new registrations were in the age bracket 11 - 13
- 71 % of log-ins were outside core office hours with between 7 to 9 pm being the most popular hours.
- Wokingham Borough accounted for 67 % of all new log in across Berkshire West.
- In response to a question Sal Thirlway stated that all CIC were provided with a laptop. The criteria for access to a laptop in schools was the eligibility for a free school meal, targeting those most disadvantaged;
- Sal Thirlway clarified that the service had been agile in commissioning home to school transport providers when needed and when not needed;
- Carol Cammiss, Director of Children's Services stated that the Council also utilised the wider refurbishing laptops scheme to provide laptops to those that needed them. In addition, dongles were provided to strengthen Wi-Fi connections for young carers;
- Carol Cammiss agreed to speak to the CCG about undertaking a survey to determine how useful the use of Kooth had been;
- Councillor Mickleburgh asked what was the impact of Covid on children's development and he also asked how the £100k grant for Early Years was being used;
- Sal Thirlway stated that the impact of Covid on children's development was still being analysed, both regionally and at a national level. An initial survey showed that schools had noticed a slowdown in language usage and comprehension. He stated that the grant for Early Years was a business grant to prevent closures;
- Councillor Mickleburgh asked if the lack of clear pattern in complex cases (referred to in page 18) and increase in calls for services was cause for concern. Adam Davis stated that sometimes it was difficult for small local authorities to establish patterns or themes; he stated that it was important to remain curious and support the social care team in their work;
- Carol Cammiss informed that Public Health England was undertaking a research piece of work to understand the impact of Covid on 1-3 year old children's social development. Information about this would be shared with the Committee when available;
- In response to a question Sal Thirlway stated that there was a good take up of schools' staff take up of the lateral flow test. He informed that the test was not compulsory.

Members were praised the work undertaken by Children' Services during the pandemic and asked that this message and their thanks be passed on to the staff.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

61. DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY AT SCHOOLS

Sal Thirlway presented the Diversity and Equality at Schools report which was set out in agenda pages 25-46.

Some of the points made by Sal Thirlway are listed below:

- The School Improvement Service, as part of Learning Achievement and Partnerships commenced a programme with schools to respond to the issue of racial equity in schools which arose following the death of George Floyd in May 2020 and other related incidents at the time;
- The programme started in the 2020 summer term, engaging with schools and developing a work plan in partnership with schools;

- Three key areas of focus were identified:
 - Learning – to understand the issues and improve awareness
 - Outcomes for pupils, staff and parents – to achieve positive change
 - Workforce – to promote a diverse workforce
- The report contained the results of a Racial Equity Survey, to which 32 schools had responded. This data was being used to shape the proposals;
- This was the start of a journey hoping to achieve racial equity in schools.

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

- Councillor Croy stated that the Committee had requested a review of how racism incidents are measured in schools in the Borough, in recognition of the fact that currently there is no way to compare and evaluate the situation because schools do not use the same report format and standards. In his opinion the report was valuable but it did not address the issue of reporting racial incidents. He was concerned that he could no longer find the reporting page in the internet; *(subsequently Councillor Croy found the relevant page <https://wsh.wokingham.gov.uk/learning-and-teaching/mea/equality-act-2010/racist-incidents/>);*
- Sal Thirlway apologised that the report had not addressed the issue of reporting racial incidents in schools. However, he stated that schools were no longer obliged to report such incidents to the local authority, therefore the local authority was not able to compel schools to report back to the Council;
- Sal Thirlway stated that it was hoped that this programme would build relationships with schools and encourage them to share their data with the local authority. He also stated that the ambition was to have a consistent approach across the Borough;
- In response to a question Sal Thirlway stated that 32 responses was an average level of response to a survey, especially in the context of the pandemic;
- In response to a question Sal Thirlway stated that he was not aware of formal national standards for reporting racial incidents, there were guidelines;
- Councillor Mickleburgh asked if other factors such as social-economic status, housing and family structure were going to be included for monitoring, along with ethnicity. Sal Thirlway confirmed that the intention was to include other factors that influenced children's lives;
- Councillor Mickleburgh asked for a breakdown in the data relating to exclusions, such as gender and age; he also asked if there were examples of good practice in tackling this issues that the local authority could learn from. Sal Thirlway agreed to provide this information to the Committee via email;
- Councillor Mickleburgh asked if it was possible for Members of the Committee to attend as observers the workshops which were being organised for the summer. Sal Thirlway agreed to contact the organisers about this possibility;
- In response to a question Sal Thirlway stated that there were no specific targets in relation to school exclusions;
- Councillor Blumenthal asked for information in relation to exclusions criteria. Sal Thirlway stated that each school would have its own behaviour policy. However, schools would contact the Council's Education Welfare Service when a pupil was at risk of permanent exclusion and schools and parents would receive support during the process;
- Councillor Blumenthal asked if any targeted work was being planned to address the minority groups more at risk of permanent exclusion. Sal Thirlway stated that this

was proposal was part of the work to understand and address the complexities of the issue;

- Councillor Bray stated that permanent exclusions were a complex process, and she informed that SEND children were more at risk of permanent exclusion than others. She asked if SEND, school attendance and family support was being considered as part of this work;
- Sal Thirlway stated this particular piece of work was focusing on racial equity;
- Councillor Helliar-Symonds stated that every school should have an anti-bullying policy and she wondered if those policies included racial bullying. Sal Thirlway stated this could be checked by the School Improvement Team;
- Councillor Croy asked the service to ask schools what forms they were currently using to record racial incidents. Sal Thirlway agreed to ask schools;
- Councillor Richards asked if the proportional representation of the workforce was supposed to reflect the regional make up of ethnicity in the Borough and wondered how this worked in line with potential changes in demographics;
- Sal Thirlway recognised that communities changed year on year, what the programme was trying to achieve was an improvement in aligning the workforce proportions to reflect the diversity within their community;
- Councillor Bray reported that most secondary schools seemed to tackle racism in their anti-bullying policies.

Councillor Croy stated that this report, although valid, had not addressed the initial request from the Committee to which was to review the reporting of racial incidents at schools, in an effort to find a consistent approach to enable measurement and comparison.

Sal Thirlway stated that this report intended to raise awareness of the issues around race and equality in schools.

Carol Cammiss pointed out that schools could not be compelled to report racial incidents to the local authority, and that it may be more productive to undertake this discussion in another forum. She offered to discuss this further with Councillor Croy outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

62. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

Sal Thirlway presented the Elective Home Education (EHE) report which was set out in agenda pages 47-68.

Some of the points made by Sal Thirlway are listed below:

- The local authority had a statutory oversight of children and young people's education, employment and training up to the age of 18, including those being home educated;
- EHE was an active choice, and parents chose this option for a variety of reasons;
- Since the pandemic started there had been an increase in the number of EHE, in line with the national picture;
- Three main reasons had been identified for this increase:
 - Covid anxiety
 - Successful experiences of home education during lockdown
 - Consistency and stability – rather than stop/start throughout Covid, looking to return to school once the pandemic is over;

- When families chose to home educate, the Education Welfare Service offered support to schools and families to make sure this was the right decision to deliver that child's education, assessing suitability;
- 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 had made sure that all new families that decided to Electively Home Educate were seen to ensure they were making an informed decision and life choice (and not being off-rolled);
- There were 57 families left to visit this academic year and then all families would have been visited either in person or virtually;
- EHE families were not compelled to engage with the local authority, but most agreed to engage voluntarily;
- The service was exploring the reasons why certain parts of the Borough had seen a higher number of families choosing to electively home educate their children.

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

- It was noted that the figures for Bearwood Primary were missing from Fig 2 (page 50), Sal Thirlway agreed to provide this information;
- Councillor Bray asked if the raising number of EHE registrations for Bohunt was because the school was off rolling children with low attendance and children who did not have good prospect for their exams; she also asked if parents were choosing to home educate their children because of concerns in relation to religious education and sexual education in schools;
- Sal Thirlway stated that the service was trying to understand the reasons for the peak of EHE in Bohut, this was not yet known;
- Sal Thirlway was not aware of religious or cultural reasons for EHE, he pointed out that parents had the option to remove their children from religious lessons;
- In response to a question from Councillor Richards, Sal Thirlway stated that EHE was different from supporting remote home education during lockdown. EHE was an active decision to remove children from school and educate them at home;
- In response to a question from Councillor Richards, Sal Thirlway stated that should families decide to revert back to school education, they would have to follow a normal in-year school admission application process, there was no guarantee that they would be able to return back to the original school;
- Sal Thirlway stated that schools would undertake assessments of any child joining the school to ascertain their level and what support they may need in their learning;
- In response to a question Sal Thirlway stated that many EHE children took national exams/qualifications and some schools supported this;
- Given that this year there would be no exams and grades would be based on teachers' assessment, the Chairman was interested to know how EHE children would obtain their grades. Sal Thirlway stated that he was expecting guidance from the government in relation to this issue;
- In response to a question Sal Thirlway stated that the local authority welcomed continued engagement and offered advice and guidance to EHE children and families; where the local authority believed that the home provision was not sufficient (which was rare), there was the option to serve a 15 day notice.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

63. FORWARD PLAN

The Chairman informed that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee would be considering the suggestions that had been put forward for the next municipal year at its next meeting.

Members considered the list of items that were within the agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.

Councillor Croy believed that the Committee should be able influence plans/policies and not just review items.

Councillor Bray stated that it would be good to be able to consider Children's Services strategies at an early stage, as part of the Committee's work programme.

Members noted that the Committee's membership could change in May and it was important to maintain flexibility within the work programme.

Carol Cammiss stated that the work undertaken by Children's Services was heavily regulated and statutory, therefore there was an element of repetition.

Councillor Helliar-Symonds informed that Executive Members would be invited to the first Overview and Scrutiny meeting in the new municipal year, in order to discuss their plans for the year ahead.

Members asked to review the Secondary School Strategy and the school admissions allocations at an early stage.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The Committee endorsed the suggestions being considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee;
- 2) The Committee wishes to influence new policies and strategies through pre-decision scrutiny of draft proposals relating to Children's Services;
- 3) The work programme will remain flexible and open to new suggestions.

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Agenda Item 6.

TITLE	Children's Services Response to Covid-19
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 June 2021
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To provide an update and review of Children's Services delivery and 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 and the 22nd March 2021 reports were 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 document provides a further update.

Background

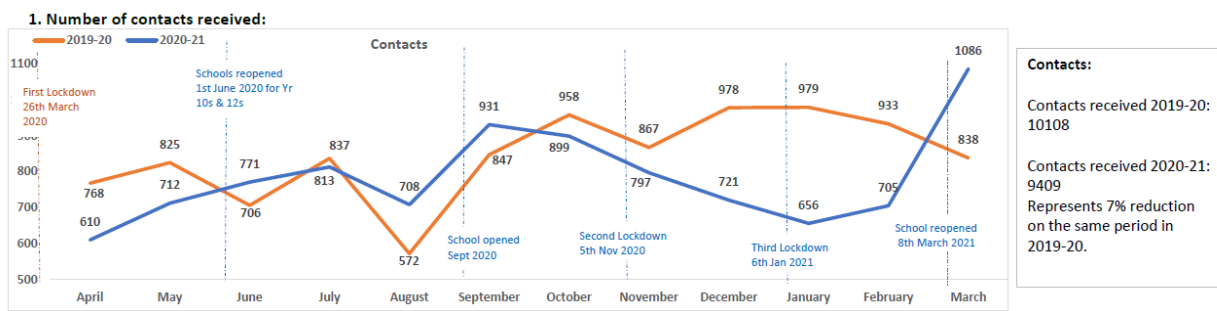
The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic represents a time of severe pressure across society, which we know presents heightened levels of risk for some children. It is, therefore, especially important that these children continue to receive the services and support they need. Wokingham's aim has been to:

- 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

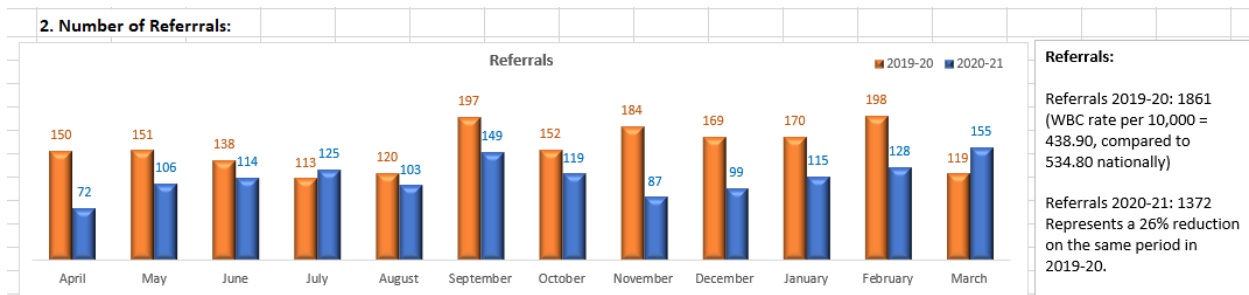
Analysis of Issues

Overview of Social Care activity

All cases that are open to Children Social Care commence their journey as a Contact to our Duty Triage and Assessment Team (DTA). DTA is often referred to as the ‘Front Door’. A Contact is where information is shared about a child with the Front Door, as a self-referral, a member of the public or another agency for example; Health, Police, a School. The information about the child in the Contact is reviewed by a duty manager and a decision is made about the outcome. This can include no further action, signpost to other services, or progress to a referral.

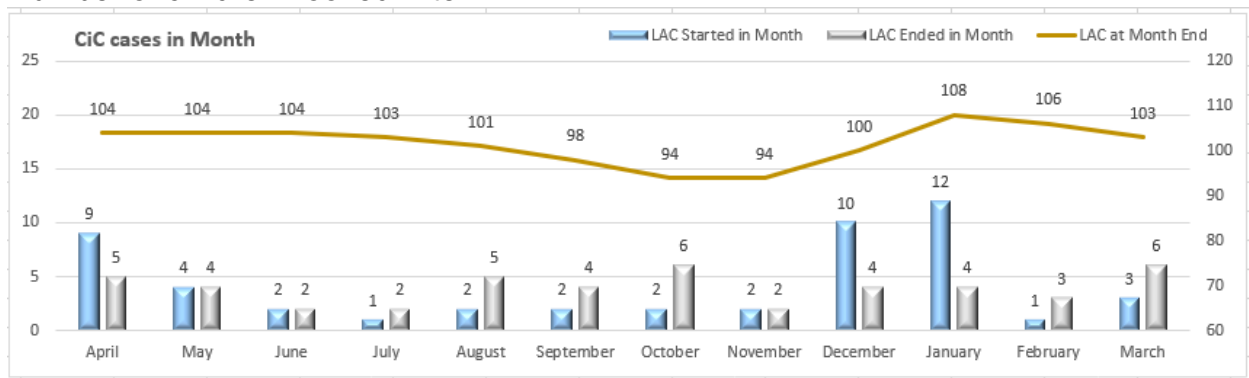


Throughout the year we have kept an overview on the number of Contacts made with our ‘front door’ to ensure that we were ready and prepared for any potential increase in children requiring a service. The table above provides a full year summary of Contacts and indicates that there was a decrease overall in the number of Contacts received by the front door during 20/21, in particular from October-20 until January-21. Throughout the year we worked closely with our partner agencies to ensure that children were being referred when there was an identified need. The data indicates that during the year 20/21 there was a 7% reduction in the total number of contacts received.



When a Contact progresses to an Assessment, this is considered a Referral. The table above indicates that during the year 20/21 for 11 months there was a reduction in the number of Contacts that progressed to a Referral, when compared to the previous year. Over the year this equated to a 26% reduction.

Number of children Looked After



The number of children who are looked after by Wokingham Childrens Services has remained relatively stable during the year 20/21. The table above highlights the number of children who become looked after and those who ceased being looked after in year. Children cease being looked after for a number of reasons, this includes reaching 18 years old and becoming a care leaver, returning home to birth parents, adoption and special guardianship order.

Focused updates on areas of Children Social Care

Children in Care and Care leavers

The extent of the impact of the pandemic and 'lockdown' on the care system and care experienced young people is yet to be fully understood. As lockdown measures begin to ease, we are starting to think how we can best understand what children and young people have been experiencing during the lockdown period as well as how children and young people can be best supported to resume 'normal' life, or the 'new normal', over the coming months and years and this will be our focus going forward.

For our children in care and care leavers we continue to provide a service as we did prior to the lockdown measures. All visits to our children in care are face to face at a minimum of 4 weekly, virtual visiting is used only in exemptions whereby a risk assessment has been undertaken. The Here4u team office has remained open throughout and recently there has been an increase in the staff attending the office, which is subject to ongoing health and safety assessments. The office is also now open to our care leavers and they can now visit by appointment. Our personal advisors have just completed the first 'in person' post lock down 'independent life skills workshop' for our care leavers. Our personal advisors remain committed to being creative about how we engage our care leavers and how they use technology ie WhatsApp to stay in touch.

We continue to work with our partner agencies for example Housing, Health and the NEET team to reduce the risk of homelessness, poverty, unemployment and mental health issues. The emotional wellbeing of our care leavers and children in care remains an area of focus. Kooth Online Counselling Service for 11 – 18 years (up to 19th birthday) has been available for them alongside the support they receive from CAMHS. For our older care leavers, their personal advisors are signposting them when required to talking therapies or their GP. They are also making use of the online APP Head Space, that provides emotional

well-being support. We also communicate with our care leavers through a newsletter providing updates on support and activities that are available to them.

The Fostering team

We know that these are unsettling, unprecedented and challenging times for everyone - not least those involved in caring for and supporting children in foster care. We are extremely grateful to our foster carers who provide support and stability to children and young people as foster care in their homes.

During the pandemic, we wanted to ensure that all our foster carers have access to the support they need from the fostering team. This includes: -

- Every household has been risk assessed so that the multi -agency team involved with each placement have a clear understanding of the needs in that home.
- Support is being provided through home visits, telephone calls and video calls as much as is needed by the child's social worker and the fostering supervising social worker.
- Our virtual school are sending out updates about online learning events to our foster carers to support children and young people in placement.
- Our fostering team are sending out regular newsletter to keep carers up to date with new opportunities, highlight the support and information on offer and maintain a strong link between staff and the carers.

There remains a high demand for foster placements, and we have seen an increase in the number of children who are placed with family and friends' carers. Whilst this is positive, it has resulted in an increase in the number of assessments being completed.

Fostering fortnight took place between the 10th -23rd May and we were able to complete our marketing activities which was successful with 9 inquiries. This is only slightly down from last year during Covid whereby we received 10 inquiries.

Bridges: Respite and Residential care for children with disabilities

Bridges has remained open since the start of the pandemic. For several families this service has been a real lifeline when other short breaks services were forced to close. Initially it had to reduce capacity due to members of the team having to shield and restrictions on the numbers of people allowed in the building. Bridges now has a full complement of staff back at work and has been able to work with families to ensure that all but three of the children have been able to have their short breaks reinstated. The children who are currently not using the service opted for Direct Payments which their families felt may suit them better through the restrictions. Bridges has also been able to introduce a small number of new children but still has a waiting list owing in part to the fact that the restrictions on the numbers allowed into the building at any given point in time have not yet been lifted. Whilst the impact of the pandemic has proved challenging, and changes to working practices such as the use of PPE has been an adjustment for the children, the team have worked hard to ensure that the children's experiences have continued to be positive.

Early Help

Throughout lockdown the Early Help service has continued to provide telephone and online support to families. As lockdown eases, our face to face work is increasing as staff start to return to working with children and families in their own homes and in community based settings, where it is safe to do so. We have seen an increase in children struggling to return to education and cases involving parental conflict and we work closely with our Early Help Hub partners to provide the right support to families at the right time.

Improvements in technology have enabled us to provide evidence based parenting support group's directly to families in their own homes. Due to the success of this new approach, we will continue to deliver online groups alongside our face to face offer when our centres re-open over the coming weeks, in line with changes in Government Guidance.

Staff supporting the Duke of Edinburgh scheme have been busy finding creative ways to help young people to achieve their bronze, silver and gold awards virtually, and we have increased numbers of young people waiting to sign up. Whilst we haven't been able to run the Explorers Extreme groups for young people with physical and learning disabilities, families have accessed online support and the young people are looking forward to getting back together safely over the coming weeks.

Our Supervised Contact Service has provided a safe space for families to have contact with their children and we are delighted to have moved into our brand-new premises, The Palm Centre in Wokingham. The new purpose-built space offers a calm, comfortable and child friendly environment to support Children in Care and their families to have positive and meaningful contact. Families are allocated one of four spacious contact rooms that are fully equipped with a range of age-appropriate toys and games, comfortable furniture, their own kitchen, dining, and toilet facilities and a private garden. Feedback from children, families and professionals has been extremely positive.

Education

Support for Schools & Settings

We have continued to provide support for schools and early years settings through a range of activities undertaken by Learning, Achievement & Partnerships.

We have maintained contact with schools via the daily update emails to all headteachers, and early years settings. This has provided localised intelligence to schools, as well as providing summaries and links to Government guidance and signposting to additional resources and information to support schools' approaches.

We have continued to facilitate weekly headteacher briefing drop-in sessions, which have both a thematic approach as well as enabling headteachers to raise concerns, share practice or ask questions. There are also additional themed sessions delivered for other school staff. Both of these types of events have been and continue to be well attended.

We have worked with the Thames Valley Health Protection Team to offer all Wokingham Early Years settings a visit to support their covid risk management arrangements.

During the pandemic the Education Welfare Service has 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 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.

Attendance at school has remained positive with between 84% and 96% attendance of all children on a daily basis (data between 10th May – 28th May inclusive); and highs of 91% of pupils with an EHCP attending and 85% of children with a social worker attending throughout the period. Attendance for children eligible for Free School Meals has been between 85% and 93% of children attending on a daily basis for the same period.

Wokingham Total Attendance (all schools)	10-May	11-May	12-May	13-May	14-May	17-May	18-May	19-May	20-May	21-May	24-May	25-May	26-May	27-May	28-May
All Pupils	94 %	94 %	94 %	86 %	90 %	93 %	93 %	93 %	88 %	92 %	90 %	90 %	90 %	89 %	86 %
Children with EHCP	91 %	91 %	90 %	83 %	88 %	91 %	91 %	90 %	90 %	90 %	89 %	86 %	87 %	84 %	82 %
Children with a Social Worker	83 %	85 %	85 %	81 %	83 %	83 %	82 %	83 %	82 %	83 %	84 %	83 %	84 %	85 %	79 %
Children with FSM eligibility	93 %	93 %	90 %	82 %	88 %	91 %	90 %	92 %	87 %	90 %	88 %	87 %	88 %	88 %	85 %

Schools and Settings Surge Testing

At the time of submitting this report (14/06/21) we are engaged in the delivery of community based Covid Surge Testing within the wards of:

- Bulmershe and Whitegates
- Evendons
- Norreys
- Wescott

These areas were selected because they have experienced higher rates of transmission and a faster increase in cases in the recent period.

Surge testing involves testing as many people (who do not have symptoms) who live, work or study in a specific area as possible.

Positive tests with a high enough viral load will be sequenced to identify any further spread, enabling a better understanding of the variant and identifying if there are any more cases of this particular strand of the virus in the area.

We are working with schools and early years settings to encourage staff and children over the age of 12 who are working in or going to a school or early years setting in the target wards to undertake a PCR Covid-19 test during the surge testing period even if they are not showing symptoms. We are arranging delivery and collection of testing kits for staff and pupils aged 12+.

Emotional Wellbeing Offer

Wokingham Borough Council has reviewed how we support children with emotional wellbeing needs, and the review has considered the major changes that children and young people have experienced since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council and partners have co-designed a new Emotional Wellbeing Model which will see the implementation of a series of improvements to the service offer to ensure children and young people receive the right support at the earliest opportunity. Families have told us that not knowing where to go is a barrier to young people accessing support around their emotional wellbeing and Wokingham Borough Council is committed to providing its families and young people with the option of a clear point of access for emotional wellbeing support and to provide a forum for professional support.

In summer 2021 Wokingham Borough Council, in partnership with Berkshire Healthcare Foundation trust, will be launching this model as a new way for Children and Young People with mild to moderate mental health needs to access support. This will be accessed via the 'Emotional Wellbeing Hub' our front door to emotional wellbeing support. A further element of the model includes a new Emotional Wellbeing service which is also accessed via the hub. This will consist of Primary Mental Health Workers providing direct support to children and young people and education/training support to schools and local professionals. This EWB service will work in partnership with our other local services which support children and young people's emotional wellbeing, such as Youth Counselling Services (ARC and Kooth) and the local Mental Health Support Team.

The main changes and improvements to the model are:

- **For CYP/ Parents / Carers:** A new single point of access (or "front door") for families looking for support around emotional health and wellbeing, but who may not know where to go, supporting families and young people to get help more quickly and effectively.
- **For local Professionals and Partners:** A Wokingham multi- disciplinary Emotional Wellbeing Forum will be established to help identify the best way to meet the needs of local children and young people and their families. The Forum will meet weekly with a range of partners with mental health expertise attending. Members of the Forum will provide knowledge, consultation, and support to lead professionals who would like to discuss the emotional health and wellbeing support options for a child or young person they are working with.
- **For All:** A joined up, holistic approach to providing the right services at the right time by the right agency, promoting access to early intervention and support and reducing the need for more specialist support in the future.

The expected benefits of the model:

- Effective support to children and young people around their emotional wellbeing needs.
- Prevention of needs escalating and having a significant negative impact on children and young people's lives and requiring specialist support.

- Improved and simplified access so that support can be accessed at the earliest opportunity
- Support for lead professionals to obtain case specific consultation, advice, guidance, and brokerage of support for children and young people on their caseload.
- Promote and raise awareness of the new and improved service to families, schools, and health professionals
- Promote the benefits of the new hub that will provide one front door to multidisciplinary teams and a continuity of care
- Promote how families can get in contact and how schools and health professionals can refer children and young people they feel would benefit from the service.
- Improved data collection to understand demand and need

New Provision – Online Youth Counselling

In response to increasing demand during 2020, WBC commissioned and launched ‘Kooth’ a 24/7 online counselling service. This was a new service within the existing mental health and wellbeing offer. The service went ‘live’ in July 2020 and Officers are in the process of extending the current contractual arrangements to ensure the service provision is able to continue. We are also exploring with the Provider the option of extending the service to young people up until the age of 25.

Mental Health Support Teams

In September 2019, WBC established a Mental Health Support Team (MHST) as part of the national Trailblazer Project for children, young people and their families in order to deliver services within an education setting. The team consisted of trainee Educational Mental Health Practitioners (EMHPs) and throughout 2020 they undertook training to become qualified EMHPs. The new service launched in January 2021 and is set to work with 12 selected local pilot schools. Funding for the MHST is in addition to the funding for other local EHWP services and has been made possible as a result of Wokingham submitting a successful funding bid to NHS England. The team is expected to cover a population of around 8,000 children.

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
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
N/A

List of Background Papers
N/A

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Agenda Item 7.

TITLE	Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Q4 2020-21 Report
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Overview and Scrutiny Committee
WARD	N/A
LEAD OFFICER	Stephen Goss

<p>OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY That due diligence is being performed in the provision of children’s social care services</p>
<p>RECOMMENDATION That the committee accept and note the report.</p>
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT An update on the performance of CSC in the exercise of WBC’s children’s social care responsibilities.</p>

CHILDREN’S SERVICES DASHBOARD – QUARTER 4 2020-21

Dashboard Item 1 - Education, Health & Care Plans

Measure	2019-20	Q4 19-20	Q1 20-21	Q2 20-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Direction of Travel
Current EHCPs in borough (snapshot at end of period)	706	706	749	723	746	814	↑
Current EHCPs out of borough (snapshot at end of period)	405	402	404	427	421	434	↑
EHCPs issued within 20 weeks of the referral	29.6%	35.1%	88.0%	72.1%	59.5%	77.8%	↑

What does this show us?

The numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) funded by Wokingham Borough Council is at its highest since at least April 2020. The funded EHCP numbers between the same period last year (1,108) and this quarter (1,248) have risen by almost 13%.

The percentage of plans issued within the 20-week period has improved by 18% from last quarter.

What is the background to this?

The increase in the number of new assessment requests continues, with a quarter-on-quarter increase since Q2, 108 more than the same period last year, and a 7% increase in

the average from 2019-20. Following a dip last quarter, timeliness has returned to the high levels earlier in the year, which is a significant improvement on 2020-21.

Following disruption due to staff turnover last quarter, performance has again improved. This is despite the greater complexity of concerns seen this year and the additional duties imposed on the SEND service by the government in regard to completing risk assessments.

What action is the service taking?

Focus remains on enhancing the quality of EHC Plans for children. The steps taken to contend with the increase in workload and case complexity as well as the new responsibilities imposed by the government are showing results.

What is the national context?

This quarter’s timeliness is well above national average (55.6%) and statistical neighbours (57.44%).

Dashboard Item 2 – Early Help

Measure	2019-20	Q4 19-20	Q1 20-21	Q2 20-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to Early Help	203	239	224	274	395	223	↓
No. Early Help Assessments	184	197	250	234	303	266	↓
Avg. length of time in days between referral and assessment completion	35	42.3	38	24	28	25	↓

What does this show us?

For the first time this year, there has been a decrease in referrals to the Early Help service. This Quarter has seen a 7% decrease in referrals on the same period last year and a 44% decrease on last quarter. There has been a 12% decrease in the number of Early Help assessments completed this quarter, compared to last.

The length of time taken to complete an assessment has improved in Q4.

What is the background to this?

There are no targets for the number of referrals received by Early Help, nor any for the number of assessments carried out, as they are considered on a case-by-case basis rather to an arbitrary quota. According to CSC’s Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating system for

performance management, an average of 30 days or less between referral and assessment completion is in target (Green), 31 to 35 is Amber, and 36+ is of concern (Red).

With 172 fewer referrals and 37 fewer assessments than last quarter, performance is better and remains within target. The average time taken for completion has remained largely in line with the previous two quarters and is noticeably quicker than the same period last year as well as the 2019-20 average. There have been an unprecedented number of referrals and assessments in 2020-21, with a 25% increase in the former and a 43% increase in the latter.

What action is the service taking?

CSC will continue to carefully monitor demand so as to ensure there is capacity to deal with it and further improve timeliness in spite of the increases in demand.

What is the national context?

Comparative national figures are not available for Early Help activity and timeliness.

Dashboard Item 3 – Children’s Social Care Front Door

Measure	2019-20	Q4 19-20	Q1 20-21	Q2 20-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to CSC	1774	495	275	357	297	397	↑
% of referrals to CSC which are repeat referrals within 12 months	26.9%	24.7%	27.3%	22.4%	18.5%	18.9%	↔
% assessments completed within 45 working days	74.0%	60.2%	62.9%	77.7%	80.1%	73.2%	↓

What does this show us?

The proportion of referrals to CSC which are repeat referrals has remained consistent this quarter. In Q4, 75 out of 397 referrals were repeat referrals within 12 months.

Timeliness of assessments completed within 45 working days decreased this quarter. In Q4, 225 out of 397 assessments on new referrals were completed within 45 working days.

What is the background to this?

There is no target for the number of referrals to Children’s Social Care as each is individually assessed. Nonetheless, there has been a 7% decrease in contacts made to the service, with a corresponding 6.5% decrease in the ration of contacts to referrals in 2020-21 compared with the previous year. CSC aims for less than 20% of its referrals as repeat

referrals within 12 months and strives for 90% of assessments to be completed within 45 days.

CSC is within target for repeat referrals this quarter and assessment timeliness has been good, if below target, across 2020-21 compared to last year. With the exception of a slight increase in Q1, there has been a consistent decrease in re-referrals over the course of the last year.

What action is the service taking?

A 36% increase in referrals on last quarter, coupled with staff leave as restrictions are lifted has produced a slight drop in timeliness in Q4. Performance is therefore likely to improve in Q1 2021-22.

Given that the Service continues to see cases of increased complexity, it assesses and closely monitors them to ensure children receive the right help and support and therefore reduce the need for a second referral.

What is the national context?

The South East and England averages for assessments completed within 45 days are 85% and 84% respectively. The Wokingham percentage of repeat referrals within 12 months (18.9%) in Q4 is below the England average of 22.6% and the South East average of 26%.

Dashboard Item 4 – Child Protection

Measure	2019-20	Q4 19-20	Q1 20-21	Q2 20-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Direction of Travel
Children subject to CP Plans (snapshot at end of period)	142	146	132	128	161	149	↓
% of children starting a plan who had a previous one in the last 2 years	11.8%	9.6%	3.3%	0%	25.5%	9.5%	↓
% of child protection visits within timescale	71.0%	75.9%	80.8%	81.9%	78.4%	79%	↔
% of child protection visits within 4 weeks (DfE Lockdown metric)	-	-	100%	100%	-	-	↔

What does this show us?

The number of children on a CPP has decreased this quarter and is slightly higher than the figure for the same period last year.

In Q4 the percentage of children starting a CPP who had a previous one in the last two years decreased and is in line with Q4 last year. There were 42 children subject to a CPP in Q4 and 4 of these had a previous plan in the last 2 years.

The proportion of CP visits occurring within timescales has increased slightly in Q4 to 79%.

What is the background to this?

Subject to thresholds, CSC places no limits on the number of children that may be eligible for Child Protection Plans; the figure is for information purposes only. The Service aims to have less than 5% of children on a plan for a second time in the last two years: in Q2 there were none.

CSC places great emphasis on preventing the need for children to return to a Protection Plan – as can be seen in performance across previous quarters. After a surge in figures, the number of children on CP Plans has returned to the level it was at last year and is in line with the 2019-20 average. The decrease in plans has also seen a decrease in repeat plans, and the figure corresponds to Q4 2019-20.

Wokingham sets itself the highest best-practice standard of 10 working days since the previous visit in which to carry out a Child Protection visit – although not statutorily required to do so. The service has a target of 80% of visits within this timescale (which was achieved in Q1 and Q2) Following the pressures last quarter, performance has improved to 1% of target.

What action is the service taking?

The Service will continue its work towards the second plan and timeliness targets and maintain its flexible approach so as to have the capacity to deal with demand as it rises or remains consistent.

The breakdown of face-to-face visits and virtual visits is as follows:

	Child Protection visits				All visits carried out by CSC	
	F-to-F	Virtual	Total	% Virtual	All visits	% Virtual
Oct	325	12	337	3.6	782	6
Nov	298	16	314	5.1	743	10
Dec	349	21	370	5.7	787	13.9
Jan	340	31	371	8.4	743	26.6
Feb	355	19	374	5.1	791	17.8
Mar	357	19	376	5.1	820	13.7

What is the national context?

Wokingham's Child Protection Plan per 10,000 rate at 31st March was at 36.9 which is below the England average of 42.8, and the South East regional average of 41.2.

Dashboard Item 5 – Children in Care

Measure	2019-20	Q4 19-20	Q1 20-21	Q2 20-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Direction of Travel

No. children in care (snapshot at end of period)	100	100	105	101	104	106	↑
% visits to children in care within timescale	81%	83%	86%	86%	84%	76%	↓
% children in care who have more than 1 allocated social worker in 12m (snapshot at end of period)	N/A	54%	67%	46%	18%	21%	↑

What does this show us?

The number of children in care has remained largely consistent over successive quarters and has varied little over the last two years.

There has been consistency in the percentage of visits to children in care within timescale, representing 351 out of the 464 visits carried out in Q4.

The percentage of children in care who have had more than one allocated worker in the previous 12 months had increased marginally since last quarter.

What is the background to this?

While Wokingham's children in care figures are out of step with statistical neighbours and regional averages, taking children into care is always a last resort for CSC.

The number of visits taking place has continued to increase quarter-on-quarter in 2020-21, with 133 more visits in Q4 than in Q3. This jump has impacted slightly on timeliness, which nonetheless remains high.

The target is to have less than 10% of children allocated more than one social worker in a twelve-month period. As CSC places emphasis on child experience, in a number of incidences change is in the best interest of the child. The figures for Q3 and Q4 are a substantial improvement on those for Q4 2019-20 and the start of 2020-21.

What action is the service taking?

The number of visits carried out has increased quarter-on-quarter since Q4 2019-20. CSC emphasises a child-focussed approach to social work; in some instances, visits will be permitted to go outside of timescale to ensure that children are visited by the same social worker in order to provide reassuring continuity. Furthermore, greater weight is being placed on visits and their recording as part of the service's performance scrutiny so that the figures reflect the work carried out by social workers.

Social worker stability for children in care has greatly improved in 2020-21 and the Service will continue to work towards reaching the target of 10%.

The breakdown of face-to-face visits and virtual visits is as follows:

	Children in Care				All visits carried out by CSC	
	F-to-F	Virtual	Total	% Virtual	All visits	% Virtual

Oct	104	5	109	4.6	782	6
Nov	82	19	101	18.8	743	10
Dec	106	15	121	12.4	787	13.9
Jan	93	24	117	20.5	743	26.6
Feb	134	14	148	9.4	791	17.8
Mar	126	10	136	7.4	820	13.7

In the event of positive COVID cases, CSC carries out risk assessments ahead of visits in order to establish if a face-to-face visit is possible or a virtual visit more appropriate.

What is the national context?

The rate of Children in Care per 10,000 is 67.0 for England and 53.0 for the South East. The Wokingham rate for 2019-20 is significantly lower, at 28.0 per 10,000. If Wokingham was in line with the England rate, this would equate to 241 children in care.

Dashboard Item 6 – Care Leavers

Measure	2019-20	Q4 19-20	Q1 20-21	Q2 20-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Direction of Travel
% of care leavers 'in touch' (snapshot at end of period)	87%	92%	91%	91%	92%	96%	↑
% of care leavers aged 18-24 who are NEET	37%	25%	31%	35%	38%	40%	↑
% of care leavers in suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of period)	94%	87%	97%	97%	94%	92%	↓

What does this show us?

The percentage of care leavers that remain in touch with CSC is consistently high, as the Service tends to maintain a good working relationship with those formerly in its care. Currently 87 of the 91 care leavers remain in touch with CSC.

There has been a slight decrease in the number of care leavers in education, employment or training, the number now at 36, up from 32 last quarter.

The percentage of the 91 care leavers in suitable accommodation has decreased since last quarter.

What is the background to this?

The target is to have at least 90% of care leavers in touch, which continues to be achieved. Amongst the reasons for care leavers not being in touch with CSC are a simple refusal to engage with the Service and young people no longer needing the support provided by CSC.

The Service aims to have 52% of care leavers in education, employment or learning. Despite the increasingly challenging economic situation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, CSC has remained consistently above target for Care Leaver employment, education and training figures across 2020-21.

CSC endeavours to ensure at least 90% of care leavers are in suitable accommodation, which it continues to achieve. The slight decrease on last quarter reflects the fact that two care leavers are currently in custody, and one is in a bed and breakfast while he is awaiting appropriate accommodation to be found.

What action is the service taking?

CSC will continue to place emphasis on maintaining good relations with care leavers so that they can receive all the support they need, particularly during the current challenging times.

The Service places great importance on the futures of the children for which it has responsibility, and addresses each care leaver's situation, helping them either re-engage with education or find suitable employment opportunities where possible. Efforts in this have increased in response to the current economic situation.

At present the number of care leavers in emergency accommodation has noticeably decreased, and those in supported lodgings, living independently and semi-independently have increased.

What is the national context?

Nationally, 94% of care leavers are in touch with their LA; 36% of care leavers are NEET, and 87% are in suitable accommodation. Wokingham performs consistently in line or above comparable averages in regard to care leavers.

Dashboard Item 7 – Children Missing from Home/Care

Measure	2019-20	Q4 19-20	Q1 20-21	Q2 20-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Direction of Travel
Children missing from home	125	14	20	17	29	21	↓
Children missing from care	87	19	29	21	16	6	↓
% return home interviews carried out on time	48%*	50%*	54%*	50%*	80%*	50%*	↓
Children missing from education (not currently on a school roll)	5**	5	3	2	5	7	↑
No. of permanent exclusions	13	4	0	0	7	8	↑

*Combined figure for children missing from home and from care

** Snapshot figure at the end of 2019/20

What does this show us?

The number of children going missing from home or care (27) has increased as we enter the fourth quarter of 2020-21.

CSC aims to have 100% of Return Home Interviews (RHIs) taking place within timescale. The figures have increased significantly since the last half of 2019-20 and the first quarter of this year and are higher than the same period in 2019-20.

The number of children not currently on a school roll has increased in the fourth quarter of 2020-21.

The new school term having commenced in January, there have been 8 permanent exclusions in Wokingham schools so far this year.

What is the background to this?

It can be difficult to persuade children who have gone missing to engage with a Return Home Interview, making achieving the target for timeliness of 90% difficult to reach. Regardless, CSC's emphasis on tackling child exploitation risks has led to a focus on RHIs. While not always within the timescale, every child that goes missing is interviewed about the motivations and reasons behind their leaving.

Following a drop in the number of children not currently on a school roll, in the first Quarters of this year, the figure has increased as compared to the same period last year and the average for 2019-20. This reflects a concern across England that 20,000 children have dropped off the school roll since schools reopened last autumn.

What action is the service taking?

Children's Social Care works closely with the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children's Partnership and the issue of child exploitation remains a focus. The Service is currently examining the problem of and risks of child exploitation and working with neighbouring local authorities to gain insight and develop a joined-up approach.

Ofsted judged the LA's oversight of children who are missing from education to be effective in their last inspection report. The Virtual School and its new Head will continue to work to ensure as few children as possible are not on a school roll for as short a time as possible.

What is the national context?

It is estimated there has been a 38% rise in children not on a school roll from 2019-20. In Wokingham, moving from five last year to seven at the end of Q4 2020-21 would constitute a 40% increase.

Dashboard Item 8 – Children's Services Workforce

Measure	2019-20	Q4 19-20	Q1 20-21	Q2 20-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Direction of Travel
12 months rolling turnover of permanent qualified social workers	13%	8%	10%	8%	10%	9%	↓
% agency staff across qualified social work workforce (snapshot at end of period)	33%	37%	30%	30%	28%	30%	↑

What does this show us?

The rolling turnover has remained consistently between 8% and 10% for the past year.

What is the background to this?

Permanency of workforce has been a focus for CSC over the past year and as a result, turnover has improved on Q4 2019-20 and last year as a whole.

What action is the service taking?

Recruitment where the business case has been made continues for vacant and new posts across the service in order to keep dependency on agency workers low, ensure as little disruption for children and young people as possible, and provide consistency of service.

What is the national context?

The Borough is performing considerably better than Statistical Neighbours (21.1) and England/South East at 15%, with a rate of 7.4 in 2019-20.

Background

Obligatory quarterly report.

Analysis of Issues

CSC Continues to provide a high standard of service.

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
N/A

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.
N/A

List of Background Papers
N/A

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TITLE	Unicef Application
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 June 2021
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Joining the UNICEF Child-Friendly Cities and Communities programme will provide a framework for intensifying the borough's focus on ensuring that the voice of all children and young people in the borough is heard, and that they have a real say in the development of local services and facilities for them and for their families. This will help ensure that the needs and rights of children of all backgrounds and abilities are met, enhance community wrap-around support for children and young people through improved understanding of their lived experiences, and improve community cohesiveness. It contributes to realisation of the Council's Community Vision: "A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business."

RECOMMENDATION

That the Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes the features of the UNICEF Child-Friendly Communities programme, progress on the application to join the programme, and the opportunities councillors will have to be involved in the programme from the outset.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report provides information about the UNICEF UK "Child-Friendly Cities and Communities" programme, including how Wokingham will benefit from working with UNICEF, and why UNICEF are interested in working with us. It gives an update on the progress of Wokingham Borough Council's application to join the programme, and outlines how councillors will be able to become involved.

Background

"Child-Friendly Cities and Communities" is a 3-5 year UNICEF UK programme that works with councils to put children's rights into practice. Joining the programme will afford WBC access to a wealth of support from recognised experts in the arena of children's rights-based work to put in place a plan to ensure that all children in the borough have a say and are truly heard and valued by their communities. Success in the programme will result in an international recognition as a UNICEF Child Friendly Community demonstrating the borough's commitment to young people and enhancing its reputation as a great place not only to bring up a child, but to be a child.

Children's Services have been working with UNICEF, our Executive Lead Member for Children's Services, internal partners, the Children and Young People's Partnership,

and children and young people over the past 6-8 months to craft a compelling application to join the programme. The application has been submitted to UNICEF for final comments before being formally put forward for consideration later this month.

From our initial conversations, UNICEF have been interested in working with Wokingham due to its particular demographic of being a wealthy borough but with significant pockets of deprivation resulting in wide differences in childhood experience and outcomes.

If accepted onto the programme, the work will begin swiftly to shape a plan which will engage the whole community in coming together to champion children's rights.

From the outset there will be opportunities for councillors to engage with children and young people, UNICEF colleagues, partners and the wider community to support and drive this important work.

Analysis of Issues

"Child-Friendly Cities and Communities" is a UNICEF UK programme that works with councils to put children's rights into practice.

The programme aims to create communities in the UK where all children, regardless of background or ability, have a meaningful say in, and truly benefit from, the local decisions, services and spaces that shape their lives and the lives of their families.

This is a global initiative which reaches close to 30 million children in 40 countries. UNICEF works in partnership with UK councils who are committed to working towards international recognition as a UNICEF Child-Friendly community.

During the 3-5 year programme, UNICEF supports councils to achieve measurable progress in embedding children's rights across a community using a child rights-based approach. UNICEF work in collaboration with councils, providing training, resources, and guidance throughout the journey.

The shape of the programme is developed and led by the local council working collaboratively with the wider community, including children and young people and local partners, with support from UNICEF.

Progress is measured through a mix of self-evaluation, child-led evaluation and by an independent panel of experts in human rights, child wellbeing and public services.

Currently UNICEF are working with:

- Aberdeen City Council
- Barnet Council
- Cardiff Council
- Derry City and Strabane District Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Newcastle City Council
- Redbridge Council

Why Wokingham and Why Now?

Putting children and young people at the heart of service development is a key priority for Children's Services and vital for the achievement of the Children's Services vision: "Wokingham is a borough in which all children and young people are safe and cared for, enjoy and achieve, are healthy and resilient, grow up ready for adulthood, and feel happy, hopeful and loved", and the Council Community Vision "A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business".

Wokingham is known as a thriving, wealthy and healthy borough, however this is not the lived experience of a small but significant proportion of children, young people and families for whom the differences in experience and life chances are stark.

Initial discussions with UNICEF in August last year focussed on these particular demographic challenges faced by Wokingham to narrow gaps in health and achievement, and how a partnership with UNICEF might support our work. UNICEF were positive about the difference our partnership could make and encouraged Wokingham to make an application to join the programme (only 2-3 councils are accepted onto the programme each year).

Children's Services in Wokingham are in a good place to engage with UNICEF and lead this high-profile partnership. An ambitious improvement programme is well underway, which will be enhanced by the support and insight UNICEF can offer. This, alongside a stable and experienced Children's Services leadership team and an increasingly stable, ambitious, and well-supported children's workforce, puts us in a perfect position to take this on now.

Councillor Involvement

If accepted onto the programme the first phase will be one of discovery and planning with UNICEF's support. During this and the implementation phase, there will be many opportunities for councillors to engage in shaping plans, and in training provided by UNICEF specialists. Children and young people will, of course, be at the heart of the planning, and will work with us to co-produce the actions they want. The journey will be one of learning and innovation which will enhance Council, partner and community relationships with children and young people, and, if successful, transform the way children and young people are viewed in the borough.

Application Progress

An intense period of work to shape the application to join the programme has been underway over the past 6-8 months. This has culminated in the final draft being submitted to UNICEF in the past two weeks. Once we have received final comments from UNICEF, we hope to submit the final application by the end of June and, if successful, begin work on the programme in September/October 2021.

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	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	N/A	N/A

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None

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

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
N/A

List of Background Papers
N/A

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2021/22 WORK PROGRAMME

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER / CONTACT OFFICER
17 June 2021	Children's Services Covid-19 response	To provide an update on the service's response to the pandemic.	To review the response to the pandemic.	Children's Services/ Carol Cammiss
	Children's Services Performance Indicators	To monitor the service's performance.	To review the service's performance.	Children's Services/ Carol Cammiss
	Schools Performance Indicators and Ofsted Reports	To review schools' performance.	To monitor the schools' performance	Children's Services/ Sal Thirlway
	Unicef Application	To review the application	To review the application	Children's Services/ Carol Cammiss
	Schools Causing Concern – Part 2	To monitor the work being undertaken to help schools which are causing concern.	To review the progress of schools causing concern.	Children's Services/ Sal Thirlway
	CSO&S Forward Plan	To consider the forward plan of the Committee	Standing item	Democratic Services/ Luciane Bowker
DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER / CONTACT OFFICER

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Agenda Item 10.

15 September 2021	Education update	Overview of work with schools reflecting on previous term's activities	Challenge item	Children's Services/ Sal Thirlway
	Secondary School Sufficiency	To consider the sufficiency of secondary school places	Challenge item	Children's Services/ Sal Thirlway
	CSO&S Forward Plan	To consider the forward plan of the Committee	Standing item	Democratic Services/ Luciane Bowker
DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER / CONTACT OFFICER
4 November 2021	Missing Children not in education	To consider the issue of children missing education	Challenge item	Children's Services/ Sal Thirlway
	Resource base units at schools – sufficiency review	To consider the sufficiency of school places	Challenge item	Children's Services/ Sal Thirlway
	Children's Services Strategy	To review the service's strategy	Challenge item	Children's Services/ Carol Cammiss
	CSO&S Forward Plan	To consider the forward plan of the Committee	Standing item	Democratic Services/ Luciane Bowker
DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER / CONTACT OFFICER
10 January 2022	Education update	To review the work with schools.	Challenge item	Children's Services/ Sal Thirlway

	Fostering Strategy	To review the strategy	Challenging item	Children's Services/ Adam Davis
	Early Years' Service review	To review the provision of Early Years	Challenging item	Children's Services/ Sal Thirlway
	CSO&S Forward Plan	To consider the forward plan of the Committee	Standing item	Democratic Services/ Luciane Bowker
DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER / CONTACT OFFICER
21 March 2022	Adoption services	To review the adoption services	Challenging item	Children's Services/ Adam Davis
	CSO&S Forward Plan	To consider the forward plan of the Committee	Standing item	Democratic Services/ Luciane Bowker

Currently unscheduled topics:

- Youth centres
- Planning of pre-school place provision – enough spaces for parents with government funding

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