



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE will be held in

David Hicks 1 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40
1BN on **WEDNESDAY 2 NOVEMBER 2022 AT 7.00 PM**

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive

Published on 25 October 2022

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: Non-Committee Members and members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting or participate in the 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/jFxFvczKA4I>

Please note that other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting. The use of these images or recordings is not under the Council’s control.

Our Vision
<i>A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business</i>
Enriching Lives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion excellent 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 enable healthy choices for everyone. • Engage and empower our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity for the Borough which people feel part of. • Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.
Providing Safe and Strong Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people. • Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to reduce the need for long term care. • Nurture our communities: enabling them to thrive and families to flourish. • Ensure our Borough and communities remain safe for all.
Enjoying a Clean and Green Borough
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play as full a role as possible to achieve a carbon neutral Borough, sustainable for the future. • Protect our Borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas for people to enjoy. • Reduce our waste, promote re-use, increase recycling and improve biodiversity. • Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.
Delivering the Right Homes in the Right Places
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future. • Ensure the right infrastructure is in place, early, 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, where it is needed most, to live independently in their own homes.
Keeping the Borough Moving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways. • Tackle traffic congestion and 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 in offering affordable, accessible public transport with good transport links.
Changing the Way We Work for You
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be relentlessly customer focussed. • Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around our customers. • Communicate better with customers, 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.
Be the Best We Can Be
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an organisation that values and invests in all our colleagues and is seen as an employer of choice. • Embed a culture that supports ambition, promotes empowerment and develops new ways of working. • Use our governance and scrutiny structures to support a learning and continuous improvement approach to the way we do business. • Be a commercial council that is innovative, whilst being inclusive, in its approach with a clear focus on being financially resilient. • Maximise opportunities to secure funding and investment for the Borough. • Establish a renewed vision for the Borough with clear aspirations.

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

Andrew Mickleburgh (Chairman)	Shirley Boyt (Vice-Chairman)	Morag Malvern
Beth Rowland	Anne Chadwick	Graham Howe
Pauline Helliard-Symons		

Substitutes

Alistair Neal	Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	Gary Cowan
Chris Johnson	Alison Swaddle	Laura Blumenthal
Rebecca Margetts		

Parent Governor Representatives

Vacancy, Parent Governor Representative
Vacancy, Parent Governor Representative

Diocesan Representatives

Richard Lamey, Church of England Representative
Vacancy, Roman Catholic Representative

Community Representative

Sarah Clarke, SEND Voices Wokingham

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
25.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.	
26.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 September 2022.	7 - 16
27.		DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest.	
28.		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

29.		MEMBER QUESTION TIME To answer any member questions	
30.	None Specific	APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS To receive a report seeking to ratify the appointment of co-opted members to the Committee.	17 - 20
31.	None Specific	YOUTH COUNCIL UPDATE To receive a verbal update on the work of the Youth Council.	Verbal Report
32.	None Specific	IMPACT OF THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS To received a verbal update on the impact of the cost of living crisis for children and young people in the Borough.	Verbal Report
33.	None Specific	INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER (IRO) ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22 To receive and consider the IRO 2021/22 Annual report.	21 - 46
34.	None Specific	LOCAL AREA DESIGNATED OFFICER (LADO) ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22 To receive and consider the LADO 2021/22 Annual report.	47 - 64
35.	None Specific	CHILD PROTECTION ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22 To receive and consider the Child Protection Annual Report for 2021/22.	65 - 90
36.	None Specific	UPDATE FROM THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES To receive a verbal update from the Executive Member for Children's Services on the work of Children's Services.	Verbal Report
37.	None Specific	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS To receive and consider the Key Performance Indicators report.	91 - 102
38.	None Specific	FORWARD PROGRAMME To consider the Committee's Forward Programme of work.	103 - 106
39.		EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for	

items 40 and 41 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.

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|------------|---------------|--|------------------|
| 40. | None Specific | ACCOMMODATION ISSUES LINKED TO
UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN
A report containing details about the arrangements for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children will be discussed in a Part 2 session. | 107 - 126 |
| 41. | None Specific | SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN
A report containing details of schools causing concern will be considered in a Part 2 session. | 127 - 134 |

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 7 SEPTEMBER 2022 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.43 PM

Committee Members Present

Councillors: Andrew Mickleburgh (Chairman), Shirley Boyt (Vice-Chairman), Morag Malvern, Anne Chadwick and Pauline Helliard-Symons

Other Councillors Present

Councillor Prue Bray, Alison Swaddle (substitute) and Jackie Rance (via Teams)

Officers Present

Matthew Booth, SEN Consultant

Neil Carr, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist

Gillian Cole, Service Manager Schools

Adam Davis, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help

Sal Thirlway, Assistant Director for Learning, Achievement and Partnerships

Helen Watson, Director of Children's Services

Also Present

Sarah Clarke, SEND Voices Wokingham

13. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Graham Howe.

Alison Swaddle attended the meeting as a substitute.

14. CO-OPTED MEMBER

The Chair announced that Sarah Clarke would be joining the Committee as a co-opted member. Sarah is the Chair of the SEND Voices Wokingham. SEND Voices Wokingham is the Borough's parent carer forum representing the voices of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. SEND Voices is one of the key stakeholders in the SEND Innovation and Improvement Programme (discussed later in the Agenda).

15. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 June 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The following updates were provided:

The Chair stated that, for future meetings, officers would produce a short report summarising the actions taken against the decisions reached by the Committee. This report would be included in the Agenda.

The Chair confirmed that a briefing note on Home to School Transport had been circulated to Members. A further copy would be circulated to any Members who had not received the first communication.

The Chair confirmed that officers had made further efforts to attract diocese and parent governors to sit on the Committee. To date, no progress had been made, but officers would continue to seek to fill the vacancies.

Officers confirmed that the Youth Council was happy to engage with Members. Consideration was being given to facilitating this engagement which could include attendance at one of the Committee's meetings.

Officers also confirmed that residents at the new Care Leavers accommodation in London Road were happy to engage with Members (including the Corporate Parenting Board). Consideration was being given to the most appropriate mechanism to facilitate this engagement.

The Chair asked about engagement of the Committee re the outcomes of the process for improving return home interviews. It was confirmed that an action plan had been developed which could include reference to the Committee.

Helen Watson provided an update on the potential bid to the Government for capital funding to meet the needs of children with very complex needs. Work was ongoing and officers were hopeful that a bid could be submitted, though there was no guarantee of success.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

17. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

18. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

19. SEND INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME (SEND IIP) UPDATE

The Committee consider a report, set out at Agenda pages 29 to 35, which provided an overview of progress relating to the delivery of the SEND Innovation and Improvement Programme (SEND IIP).

Sarah Clarke – Chair of SEND Voices Wokingham, introduced the report alongside WBC officers. Sarah confirmed that SEND Voices Wokingham was the parent carer forum representing the voices of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The report reminded Members that the SEND IIP had been established to deliver the SEND Strategy 0-25 (2021-24). The aspiration of the SEND Strategy was to ensure that the Borough was a great place for children and young people with SEND to grow up. There were already a number of good services in place alongside a range of private and publicly funded resources and an active and engaged parent carer forum. This was supported by a number of outstanding independent, voluntary, community and charity sector organisations. The SEND IIP was co-produced by WBC and this range of key stakeholders.

The SEND IIP meets every three months to review progress made by its four working groups which met monthly to drive improvements to services and support for children with SEND.

In the ensuing discussions, Members raised the following points:

What were the key messages being presented to the Committee? It was confirmed that the four working groups were working hard to deliver improvements on the ground. The four working groups focussed on:

- Strengthening local provision and quality of practice – better outcomes from appropriate, sustainable local provision;
- Efficient and effective processes, e.g. timeliness and quality of Educational, Health and Care Plans;
- Effective transitions at all ages, key stages and between different types of provision;
- Impact, intelligence and sufficiency – predicting need, strategic commissioning, performance management and effective use of resources.

Matthew Booth, SEN Consultant, stated that SEND impacted on every part of the Council. Members and officers needed to maintain a focus on continuous improvement. Positive change had been delivered but there was still room for improvement in order to achieve effective transitions for children and young people of all ages.

In 2021 there were a number of issues relating to transport – how had services improved in 2022? It was confirmed that there had been a significant focus on transport during the year, e.g. through improved letters to parents, improved processes and greater consistency of drivers and escorts. Although there had been overall improvement, work was ongoing to focus on outstanding issues in order to deliver a consistent high quality service for families.

What was the composition of the SEND IIP Board and how were the members selected? It was confirmed that the Board contained representatives from the education sector, health partners, SEND Voices, the voluntary and community sector, Children's Services officers and the Executive Member for Children's Services. A list of Board members would be circulated to the Committee.

One of the working groups was focussing on improving Education, Health and Care Plans. Were there any issues relating to academies? It was confirmed that the approach was the same for pupils at maintained schools and academies.

Was the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) involved in developing the SEND IIP? It was confirmed that SENDIASS was more involved in providing impartial guidance and support to parents and children up to the age of 25 with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The experience and feedback from SENDIASS had been embedded into the improvement programme. It was suggested that SENDIASS be invited to a future meeting of the Committee.

One of the key challenges facing WBC related to matching SEND provision to growing levels of demand within the Borough. How was this challenge being addressed? It was confirmed that the majority of out-of-Borough expenditure related to special schools and residential places for children. Officers were continuing to explore options for the delivery of two new special schools within the Borough.

How was data being used to demonstrate progress relating to transitions? It was confirmed that various data sets were being used to build a picture of the experiences of children and young people as they transitioned at every stage. Data was also being collected on the experiences of young people and families through a range of activities. These included the outcomes of annual reviews, employment and training data. SEND Voices supported this work and had carried out a local survey which generated 440 responses from a cross section of the community. The new Ofsted inspection regime required that the views of children and young people be an integral part of the process, so this work would be of great benefit moving forwards.

Helen Watson confirmed that an update report on SEND and the Safety Valve Programme would be submitted to the Executive at its September meeting.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) progress relating to the delivery of the SEND Innovation and Improvement Programme (SEND IIP) be noted and welcomed;
- 2) the positive role played by SEND Voices Wokingham in driving progress be recognised;
- 3) the Chair and Vice-Chair be authorised to work with officers to develop recommendations from the Committee on the SEND IIP, for submission to the Council's Executive;
- 4) the recommendations to the Executive include a focus on accountability for all SEND services, including shared services;
- 5) the Committee's comments emphasise the view that SEND improvement and innovation is the shared responsibility of all Members and officers at WBC – part of everyone's business;
- 6) a list of SEND IIP Board members be circulated to the Committee;
- 7) a representative from SENDIASS be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee.

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

The Committee received an update from Prue Bray, the Council's Executive Member for Children's Services. The update focussed on three key issues, as follows:

Review of the Budget process – the Council's financial situation would not be totally clear until January 2023, following the Government's funding announcement at the end of December. However, there were a number of ongoing pressures including the impact of the war in Ukraine on energy prices, the rising level of inflation and the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic which included increased demand for SEND services. The Borough also had to deal with increasing numbers of unaccompanied and asylum seeking children.

Home to School Transport – arrangements and communication had improved compared to 2021. However, the budget was under severe pressure and would overspend in 2022. The

Council received 400 applications for transport in June 2022 which was twice the usual number. The increasing number of arrivals from places such as Hong Kong was also placing pressure on the provision of school places. This increased the pressure on the Home to School Transport budget.

Lack of local capacity for SEND provision (as discussed earlier). It was hoped that a new specialist school would be able to open in September 2023, but at this stage there was no guarantee of funding from the DfE. The DfE had offered to assist local authorities in addressing spending pressures relating to SEND.

Councillor Bray thanked officers and partners for the progress made on improvement areas.

In the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following points:

The ongoing pressure on the SEND budget was noted. What plans were being developed to increase the level of provision within the Borough? As discussed earlier, plans were being developed for two new specialist schools in the Borough. Although Addington was full, discussions were ongoing in relation to additional capacity. Officers were also exploring the potential for additional resource units within mainstream schools. Although there were positive developments it was recognised that there would always be a requirement for some acute provision outside the Borough.

In relation to funding, the High Needs Block was regularly overspent and the position was deteriorating year on year. What steps were being taken to address this issue? It was confirmed that a lot of work was going on locally and nationally relating to the High Needs Block. The Government had stated an expectation that the High Needs Block should balance over a three year period.

What was the latest position relating to the proposed extension of Bohunt? It was confirmed that Bohunt was due to submit a bid shortly – supported by WBC. The bid would be considered initially by the Regional Schools Commissioner.

Matthewsgreen Primary was due to open shortly. Was it being filled by catchment area children? It was confirmed that the school would be filled from the youngest year group up. There needed to be a balanced approach to ensure that other school budgets were not unbalanced by the opening of the new school.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Prue Bray be thanked for attending the meeting to answer Member questions;
- 2) In relation to future meetings, Member questions to the Executive Member be submitted in advance, if possible.

21. UPDATE ON CHILDREN'S STRATEGY DELIVERY

The Committee considered a report, set out at Agenda pages 17 to 28, which gave details of progress relating to the update/refresh of the Children's Services Strategy (2021/24).

The report stated that the focus of the Children's Services Strategy was to improve outcomes for all children and young people in the Borough. The strategic priorities and key actions in the Strategy were aligned with the Borough's Community Vision and were

designed to ensure that the Council and its partners worked together to ensure that children and young people were at the heart of all activity.

The report reminded Members of the Strategic Priorities in the Strategy and the business areas driving delivery. The report also highlighted key delivery successes to date, including:

- Establishment of a Serious Violence and Exploitation Board;
- A new approach to Corporate Parenting, including improved opportunities for Member engagement;
- A more effective performance cycle, driving improvement through learning;
- Stabilisation of the Social Care workforce – including growing our own through the ASYE programme;
- Launch of the new Emotional Wellbeing Hub in Wokingham, providing a single “front door” for access to support;
- Establishment of an Education Partnership for Wokingham, bringing together education providers to drive improved educational outcomes.

In the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following points:

The successes achieved to date were welcomed. However, it was also recognised that there were significant ongoing challenges including the rise in demand and increased complexity of cases. There were also ongoing issues relating to staff retention. It was becoming more difficult to fill specific posts such as occupational therapists.

In relation to the list of outcomes for children and young people, it was suggested that point 10 be amended to read “Have parents **or siblings** with mental health needs **and/or physical disabilities**”.

In relation to the Emotional Wellbeing Hub, were there plans for more schools to participate in the programme? It was confirmed that WBC had received Government funding for a Mental Health in Schools Team which was one of the few in the country to be managed within the local authority rather than by a health partner. At present, there was no additional funding to expand this scheme.

In relation to the focus point on children and young people living in low income families, was Children’s Services inputting into the Borough’s Anti-Poverty Strategy? It was confirmed that Children’s Services officers were involved in the Strategy, e.g. through school holiday activities – food programmes and local community events. Officers were also supporting schools in “poverty proofing” the school day – removing barriers to learning which existed because of the impacts of living in poverty.

RESOLVED: That progress on delivering the Children’s Services Strategy 2021/24 be noted and welcomed.

22. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee considered the dashboard of Key Performance Indicators for Children’s Services, set out at Agenda pages 55 to 68. The report gave details of Children’s Services performance during April to June 2022 (Q1). The report included eight dashboards with performance data, background, national context and any actions being taken to address indicators which were not moving in the right direction.

During the discussion of the report, Members raised the following points:

Dashboard 2 – Early Help – Improved performance was welcomed. The number of Early Help referrals increased by 40% from the previous quarter and 9% from the same period in 2021. The number of assessments increased from the previous quarter by 25% and 15% compared to the same period last year.

Dashboard 4 – Child Protection – WBC set a best practice standard of carrying out each Child Protection visit within 10 working days of the previous visit. Performance of 74% in Q1 against a target of 80% constituted high performance against a stretching target.

Dashboard 7 – Children missing from Home/Care. It was confirmed that 8 children missing from care in Q1 constituted a positive direction of travel compared to the previous two quarters.

RESOLVED: That the Q1 2022/23 Key Performance Indicator report be noted.

23. FORWARD PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its forward work programme, set out at Agenda pages 69 to 72. During the ensuing discussion, Members raised the following points:

The Chair suggested a brief Part II report to the November 2022 meeting on accommodation issues linked to unaccompanied/asylum seeker children and young people coming into the Borough. A more detailed report could then be submitted to the meeting in January 2023. This could include an assessment of emotional/mental health issues. Prue Bray confirmed that a report on children in care, linked to this issue, had been considered recently by the Corporate Parenting Board. That report could provide a useful introduction for Members at the O&S meeting on 2 November.

Pauline Helliard-Symons reminded Members that the Committee used to receive a summary of Ofsted reports for all schools in the Borough and suggested that these reports be reintroduced. Members did not support this proposal but agreed that officers explore the potential for including hyperlinks to recent Ofsted reports within the regular reports.

The Chair suggested a report to the March 2023 meeting providing an update on the first six months of care leaver CAMHS provision.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the Committee receive an introductory Part II report on unaccompanied children/asylum seekers at the meeting on 2 November 2022;
- 2) the recent Corporate Parenting Board report on unaccompanied children be appended to the report as an introduction for Members;
- 3) officers consider including hyperlinks to recent Ofsted reports in the Agenda papers for future meetings;
- 4) a report be submitted to the March 2023 meeting providing a six month update on care leavers CAMHS provision.

24. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

25. SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN

This item was considered in a Part II session.

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee Action Tracker 2022/23

CSO&S 7 September 2022		
Agenda Item	Action	Update
15 Minutes of previous meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate the briefing note on Home to School Transport • To seek to find volunteers to fill the co-opted members vacancies • To facilitate a visit to the Care Leavers house in London Road • To invite the Youth Council to attend a meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed • Ongoing • Completed
19 SEND Innovation and Improvement Programme (SEND IIP) update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • circulate the IIP membership list to the Committee • invite SENDIASS to a future meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing • Ongoing
23 Forward Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to include hyperlinks to recent Ofsted reports in the agendas • to submit a report about unaccompanied asylum seeking children to the November meeting • to circulate the CPB report on unaccompanied asylum seeking children to the Committee Members • to add a six month update on the bespoke provision of CAHMS for CIC and Care Leavers to the March agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed • Completed • Completed • Completed

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TITLE	Appointment Of Co-opted Members
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 November 2022
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Assistant Director, Governance - Andrew Moulton

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

A wider diversity of views provided within the membership of the O&S Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee ratifies the appointments of two co-opted members as follows:

- Sarah Clarke, Chair of SEND Voices Wokingham (non-voting); and
- Richard Lamey, Church of England representative (voting rights for education matters only)

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The report outlines the process for the appointment of co-opted members to the CSO&S Committee.

The Local Government Act 2000 requires local education authorities which maintain Church of England Schools to include at least one representative of the Church of England on any relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Subcommittee. Similar provision is included for Roman Catholic Schools that are maintained.

The nomination for the Church of England representative must be made by the appropriate Diocesan Board of Education and for the Roman Catholic Church the nomination must be made by the Bishop of the appropriate Diocese.

Background

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, representatives of the Church of England Diocese and Roman Catholic Diocese, together with Parent Governor Representatives will automatically be entitled to be members of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. When considering Education related issues these representatives will automatically be entitled to sit on the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and/or any of the other Committees or Task and Finish Groups and vote on such matters.

The CSO&S may also appoint non-voting co-opted members as necessary. Greater engagement from members of the local community is welcomed and enriches discussions, thus improving the overview and scrutiny process.

The Committee has sought, for a number of years, to recruit co-opted members to fill in the vacancies for governors and church representatives, without success. The

Committee therefore welcomes the interest of the two volunteers to take on the positions of co-opted members in the Committee.

Co-opted members are subject to the same rules of Code of Conduct that apply to elected members, as set out in chapter 9.2 of the Council's Constitution.

The Committee is asked to ratify the appointments of:

- Sarah Clarke – Chair of SEND Voices Wokingham; and
- Fr Richard Lamey – Church of England representative

These appointments are for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year.

Upon ratification of the appointments, the above named co-opted members will be required to adhere to the Code of Conduct, in the same way that elected Members are expected to, as set out in the Council's Constitution.

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

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

N/A

List of Background Papers

WBC's Constitution

6.3.9

[\(NOTE – This section may be subject to change following the Annual Council meeting \(moderngov.co.uk\)\)](#)

9.2

[CHAPTER 9 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Contact Luciane Bowker	Service Governance
Telephone No 07783828181	Email luciane.bowker@wokingham.gov.uk

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TITLE	Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report (2021-22)
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 November 2022
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Helen Watson

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

This Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report (2021-22) provides quantitative and qualitative information about the profile and quality of corporate parenting for children in care (CIC) in Wokingham and the impact of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service. It highlights the issues affecting children in care in the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION

That this report is considered by the Overview and Scrutiny panel. For information and questions.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Children in Care profile and activity - 2021-22

- At the end of the year there were 136 children in care compared to 102 at the end of March 2021. This is a rate of 33 per 10,000.
- 93 children came into care compared to 50 last year.
- 58 children left care compared to 49 the previous year
- The gender split was 63% male and 37% female.
- The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) increased from 7 in April 2021 to 26 in March 2022
- There was an increase in older children aged 16 and 17 (non-UASC) coming into care - 33 compared to 8 the previous year.
- There was a significant increase in the percentage of children in care who were accommodated under S20 (62 compared to 24 last year). 23 of these children were UASC. In light of recent Ofsted observations around our service provision for UASC, this may be an issue that we need to scrutinise further or audit
- 16 children were subject to Placement Orders at the end of the year compared to 9 in March 2021.
- 22 children who were in care were also subject to child protection plans

Impact of IRO Service:

Despite the service having reduced capacity at times during the year, the IROs have maintained good performance on timeliness of reviews with 361 out of 368 (98%) reviews being held on time.

The IROs are continuing to provide formal challenge but have been able to deal with most issues informally. There has been a reduction in the number of formal challenges in the last year, which we believe is in part is due to three reasons: the increased activity of IROs between reviews; the fact IROs are more routinely being invited to listen in to permanency planning meetings; and lastly the good working relationships and access to team managers that the IROs have establish - which often enables problems to be resolved at an early stage.

Promoting child's voice and participation:

IROs have maintained a high number of children being involved in their reviews, speaking for themselves or using an advocate to be their voice. Reviews are held in different parts when required, to ensure they are child focused while also enabling the participation of birth parents and carers.

Signposting to Advocacy and Independent Visitors (IVs): The Children's Advocate has supported 79 children in care to participate in their reviews. She has also had 179 contacts with 136 children in care between reviews (although some were repeat contacts with children). Wokingham has recently reviewed its contract with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to provide an independent visiting service for children in care. Sixteen children in care have been matched with independent visitors through NYAS, a service which helps them build relationships, develop independence, try new activities, or share things they like doing.

Background

The role of the Independent Reviewing Officer was established by the Adoption and Children Act 2002, s.118 (amended s.26 of the Children Act 1989) with the responsibility of reviewing placements and plans for children in care.

The IRO has a crucial role to play in ensuring that the local authority fulfils its responsibilities as a 'corporate parent' for all the children that it looks after. The IRO should ensure that the child is offered stable care that is sensitive and appropriate to each individual's personal needs so that the child is able to flourish and achieve. The plan for each child must demonstrate how the services provided have fully taken account of the child's wishes and feelings.

The IRO Handbook (2010) sets out two clear and separate aspects to the IRO role;

- chairing the child's review and
- monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis.

In exercising both parts of this role, the IRO must ensure that the child's current wishes and feelings have been established and considered.

Analysis of Issues

The overall trend is that the number of children in care has been increasing, however the numbers in Wokingham are still lower than the average rate of our statistical neighbours (46.30) and when compared to the England average (67). The chart below shows the rates per 10,000 over the last four years.

The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in care in Wokingham increased significantly in the second half of last year, to 15 at the end of December 2021 and then to 26 by the end of the year. These young people have a range of UASC educational, care and emotional needs.

There was an increase in older children aged 16 and 17 (non UASC) coming into care - 33 compared to 8 the previous year. Some of these young people were presenting as homeless or experiencing a breakdown of family relationships. Although work is done via the Compass team

to try to help young people return home, this is not always possible. This increase could also be linked by the new housing protocol and the process of joint assessment by housing and social care with children's rights advice available to young people about their options. Further work is needed to understand the reasons and will be an area for audit in the coming year.

In terms of the legal status of young people in care, there was a significant increase in the percentage of children in care who were Accommodated under S20 - 62 compared to 24 last year - 23 of these children are UASC. An audit has been commissioned to explore this.

There were 16 children were subject to Placement Orders at the end of the year compared to 9 in March 2021. Most of these children have experienced neglect and trauma and their behaviour can be very dysregulated and unsettled and this may mean it takes longer for them to reach legal permanence through adoption. An adult has been completed and the timeliness of plans for this group of children is being monitored.

There have been some issues with the performance/timeliness of initial health assessments and the notifications to health that children are in care, and this is being monitored.

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

Not applicable

Cross-Council Implications

For information.

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.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

Please state clearly what the impact of the decision being made would be on the Council's carbon neutral objective.

List of Background Papers
IRO Annual Report 2021-22

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WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Independent Reviewing Officers

Annual Report

2021 to 2022

The Contribution of Independent Reviewing Officers to Quality Assuring and Improving
Services for Children in Care

Governance and sign off		
Meeting	Date of meeting	Actions or outcome
Children's Departmental Leadership Team	27 July 2022	
Corporate Parenting Board		

Report completed by:

Liz McAuley, Service Manager, Quality Assurance and Safeguarding

Date of this report: June 2022

Date of next report: June 2023

	Executive summary
1.	<p>Purpose of this Annual Report:</p> <p>This Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Annual Report (2021-22) provides quantitative and qualitative information about the profile and quality of corporate parenting for children in care (CIC) in Wokingham and the impact of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service. It highlights what the IRO service is worried about, what is working well and identifies areas for improvement.</p>
2.	<p>Children in Care profile and activity - 2021-22</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of the year there were 136 children in care compared to 102 at the end of March 2021. This is a rate of 33 per 10,000. • 93 children came into care compared to 50 last year. • 58 children left care compared to 49 the previous year • The gender split was 63% male and 37% female. • The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) increased from 7 in April 2021 to 26 in March 2022 • There was an increase in older children aged 16 and 17 (non-UASC) coming into care - 33 compared to 8 the previous year. • There was a significant increase in the percentage of children in care who were accommodated under S20 (62 compared to 24 last year). 23 of these children were UASC. In light of recent Ofsted observations around our service provision for UASC, this may be an issue that we need to scrutinise further or audit • 16 children were subject to Placement Orders at the end of the year compared to 9 in March 2021. • 22 children who were in care were also subject to child protection plans
3.	<p>Impact of the IRO Service:</p> <p>Being a consistent person in the child's journey through care: In Wokingham we have an experienced and stable team of IROs with many children having had the same CP Chair and/or IRO throughout their care journey. Throughout 2021-22, the IRO service adapted to the challenge of living with COVID-19 and has been able to flex and change as the pandemic has progressed. We are now in a new phase of conducting more face-to-face meetings while also retaining virtual and hybrid options.</p> <p>Maintaining timely reviews: despite the service having reduced capacity at times during the year, the IROs have maintained good performance in terms of the timeliness of reviews, with 361 out of 368 (98%) reviews being held within timescales.</p> <p>Providing oversight and challenge: The IROs are continuing to provide formal challenge but have been able to deal with most issues informally. There has been a reduction in the number of formal challenges in the last year, which we believe is in part is due to three reasons: the increased activity of IROs between reviews; the fact IROs are more routinely being invited to listen in to permanency planning meetings; and lastly the good working relationships and access to team managers that the IROs have establish - which often enables problems to be resolved at an early stage. Some of the challenges this year have been about providing life story work for children who are adopted. Others have related to children in long term care</p>

	<p>maintaining connections with family networks, (having photos, memory boxes etc). Another theme has been around ensuring life journey work has taken place to help children understand their heritage and the reasons as to why they are in care.</p> <p>Promoting child's voice and participation:</p> <p>IROs have maintained a high number of children being involved in their reviews, speaking for themselves or using an advocate to be their voice. Reviews are held in different parts when required, to ensure they are child focused while also enabling the participation of birth parents and carers.</p> <p>Signposting to Advocacy and Independent Visitors (IVs): The Children's Advocate has supported 79 children in care to participate in their reviews. She has also had 179 contacts with 136 children in care between reviews (although some were repeat contacts with children). Wokingham has recently reviewed its contract with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to provide an independent visiting service for children in care. Sixteen children in care have been matched with independent visitors through NYAS, a service which helps them build relationships, develop independence, try new activities, or share things they like doing.</p> <p>Highlighting broader issues which affect children in care: The IRO service uses performance data and quarterly reports to highlight issues they are noticing for all children in care. In 2021-22 the IROs have noted the increase in placement orders and delays in some children reaching adoption; deficits in placement choice for children with complex needs; risk outside of the home for some children in care; and challenges around the consistency of life story work being completed.</p>
4.	<p>The key strategic priorities of the IRO service in 2022-23 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ To consistently provide good quality reviews for children in care. This will include making sure that children know the plans for their care and that they have reports which they can access. Furthermore, the service will seek to work with colleagues in children's social care to ensure that social worker reports are robust and always provide an updated assessment of the child's needs at each review. Finally, the service will work to ensure that the voice of the child and their lived experience is understood and informs the Care Plan. ❖ To raise awareness about and promote the role of the IRO. This will include work to promote awareness about the purpose of care planning and reviews to children, parents, carers, social workers and other agency colleagues. ❖ To demonstrate the effectiveness of the IRO service with clear examples of what difference it is making by seeing children and overseeing the review process. This will include clearly demonstrating challenge and follow up when care plans are not progressing as planned, as well as raising issues within the system or low performance which affect more than one child in care.
5.	<p>Author's key recommendations</p> <p>That this report is shared with the Corporate Parenting Board and the Independent Scrutiny and Impact Group of the Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership and that any learning is incorporated in the Quality Assurance Activity for 2022-23.</p>

1. Introduction

- 1.1.** All Officers and Councillors in Wokingham have a duty to ensure that the needs of children in care are being met and that children grow up feeling loved, cared for, feel safe and have the same opportunities as their peers. There should be a commitment from all members of the council to advocate for the needs of children in care, promote and provide opportunities that allow children to develop and grow and to overcome the adverse experiences they may have experienced in their life before coming into care.
- 1.2.** This Annual Report provides quantitative and qualitative information about the Independent Reviewing Officer Service in Wokingham and the quality of corporate parenting for children in care (CIC) in the borough during the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. It highlights what the IRO service is worried about, what is working well and identifies areas for improvement.
- 1.3.** The highlights of the report will be discussed with the Children in Care Council and the key findings will be presented to the Children's Services Senior Management Team, the Quality Assurance Board, the Corporate Parenting Board and the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children's Partnership, Independent Scrutiny and Impact Group.

2. Purpose of the Independent Review Service and the legal context

- 2.1.** The role of the Independent Reviewing Officer was established by the Adoption and Children Act 2002, s.118 (amended s.26 of the Children Act 1989) with the responsibility of reviewing placements and plans for children in care.
- 2.2.** The IRO has a crucial role to play in ensuring that the local authority fulfils its responsibilities as a 'corporate parent' for all the children that it looks after. The IRO should ensure that the child is offered stable care that is sensitive and appropriate to each individual's personal needs so that the child is able to flourish and achieve. The plan for each child must demonstrate how the services provided have fully taken account of the child's wishes and feelings.
- 2.3.** The IRO Handbook (2010) sets out two clear and separate aspects to the IRO role;
 - chairing the child's review and
 - monitoring the child's case on an ongoing basis.In exercising both parts of this role, the IRO must ensure that the child's current wishes and feelings have been established and considered.

2.4. Service structure

The IRO service is managed by the Service Manager of the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Team who reports to the Assistant Director, Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Standards (QASS) within Children's Services. The team is structurally located outside of the direct line management of children's social care. The staffing structure is set out below. This arrangement provides;

- Capacity for chairing both child protection conferences and child in care statutory reviews and covering periods of leave and sickness.
- Continuity for children receiving services in the child protection arena who then come into the care system.
- Independence from the line management of children's social care cases.
- Capacity to manage the administrative processes and to work to statutory timescales.

2.5. Staffing Establishment on 31 March 2022

Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Team	Administration Team
1x Service Manager (full time)	1 Team leader
4x Full time equivalent Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) / Child Protection Chairs	2 Children in care administrators
1x Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) / Child Protection Chair (3 days)	

- 2.6. All the IROs have significantly more than the five years' post qualification experience as required under Regulation 46 (The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations) (2010). The IRO service has remained stable with no changes of staff this year. All the IROs are experienced and passionate about their role and they provide a consistent IRO presence for children at their reviews. The team consists of all white British females. Although the team members are from different parts of the UK and have different life experiences, we are conscious that this profile does not match the population of children in care. The team is currently undertaking a programme of systemic training, and as part of this learning we have been using the social graces model¹ to help us to reflect on our own background, experience and unique identity and how we can better understand the unique identity of the children we work with in our day to day work.
- 2.7. The IROs are supported by the administrative team, who organise review meetings and circulate decisions and reports. The Administration Team Leader manages the administrators, oversees the administrative activity and tracks monitors the internal performance of the team.
- 2.8. IROs receive monthly one to one supervision and participate in WBC's performance review system, which is an opportunity to highlight good practice, performance, identify any learning needs and development opportunities. The IROs from the West of Berkshire authorities meet periodically to share good practice and liaise with colleagues from CAFCASS and the joint legal team. The IRO manager attends the South East Regional IRO Managers' Partnership (SEIROMP) and the Berkshire Managers Meeting (which also includes a liaison meeting with a representative from the joint legal team and the CAFCASS Berkshire manager).
- 2.9. The IROs have benefited from the specialist training programme on trauma informed practice and systemic training. The training has helped them to be aware of signs of trauma and how to respond when children become dysregulated or withdrawn within reviews – as well as how to avoid further exclusion at school or from carers giving notice. They have also attended IRO learning sets with an external facilitator which have covered topics relevant to the role, such as themes from the National Panel Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. The IROs in Wokingham, are part of the SEIROMP Community of Practice which is a community of IROs across the SE region, with a range of experience, skills and subject matter expertise with a common goal to create positive change together with the aim of ultimately improving the lives of children and

¹ John Burnham Social Graaaccceess model

young people in care. The workshops delivered in 2021-22 have been on the role of the IRO and the call for change from the Care Review, Exploitation, and Child Focused Meetings.

- 2.10.** All children in care are allocated an IRO when the team is informed that they are in care. It is the intention that the IRO allocated at this point will be as consistent as possible throughout the time the child is in care. Where children had previously been on a child protection plan, their CP chair becomes their IRO. The IRO Handbook recommends that caseloads for IROs should be between 50 and 70 children in care. Since April 2021 the number of children in care has risen from 104 to 136 at the end of March. There has also been an increase in children on Child Protection (CP) Plans. IROs have a dual role in Wokingham, so the increased numbers of children in care and on CP Plans has impacted on the workload of the team who now have on average 60 children per full time worker. During the year the team has also been impacted by two periods of long-term sickness and one vacancy for a part time CP chair.
- 2.11.** Access to independent legal advice is a requirement of the statutory guidance. Arrangements are in place for IROs to have access to impartial independent legal advice through a representative from the joint legal team, which does not work directly within Wokingham. This has been used twice in 2021-22.

3. Profile of Children in Care - Statistical data for 2021-22

3.1. Number of Children in Care

At the end of the year 2021-22, Wokingham Borough Council had 136 children in its care, which is a rate of 33 per 10,000. This represents a significant increase from 102 children in care at the end of the previous year. The numbers have ranged from 104 in April 2021 to 136 in March 2022.

Table A: Number of children in care and rates per 10,000

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2021/22 Numbers	104	109	111	112	118	114	111	110	118	123	124	136
2021/22 Rate per 10,000	25.2	26.4	26.9	27.1	28.6	27.6	26.9	26.7	28.6	29.8	30	33

Rates per 10,000 are used as a method of benchmarking local authorities' children in care against other authorities which have similar characteristics – known as statistical neighbours. Figures are expressed as a ratio and are calculated by dividing the local authority's actual numbers by its total child population's estimate sourced from the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The overall trend is that the number of children in care has been increasing, however the numbers in Wokingham are still lower than the average rate of our statistical neighbours (46.30) and when compared to the England average (67). The chart below shows the rates per 10,000 over the last four years.

3.2 Ages of children coming into care

The table below shows the spread of ages of children coming into care with the biggest group being between 16 and 17 years old, followed by 10-15 years old. This represents a change from the previous year, when more younger children were coming into care. Some of the older cohorts are unaccompanied asylum seekers but a larger number are young people presenting as homeless or experiencing a breakdown of family relationships. Although work is done via the Compass team to try to help young people return home, this is not always possible. This increase could also be linked by the new housing protocol and the process of joint assessment by housing and social care with children's rights advice available to young people about their options. Further work is needed to understand the reasons and will be an area for audit in the coming year.

Table B: Ages of Children coming into care (at the point they came into care)

	Apr-Jun 21	Jul-Sept 21	Oct-Dec 21	Jan-Mar 22	Total
Total	18	19	23	33	93
Age under 1	4	4	1	1	10
Age 1 – 4	1	1	4	4	10
Age 5 – 9	2	5	4	5	16
Age 10 – 15	5	3	8	8	24
Age 16 – 17	6	6	6	15	33

3.3 Legal Status of children coming into care

Table C: Legal Status when coming into care (all children at the point they came into care)

	Apr-June 21	Jul-Sept 21	Oct-Dec 21	Jan-Mar 22	Total
Total	18	19	23	33	93
Interim Care Order	5	11	1	6	23
Police Protection	1	0	4	1	6
Section 20	11	8	17	26	62
Emergency Protection Order	0	0	0	0	0
Remanded to LA accommodation	1	0	1	0	2
Short Breaks	0	0	0	0	0

During 2021-22, 23 children came into care as the result of an application to the court for an Interim Care Order. This is a slight increase from 21 in 2020-21. 62 children came into care through a voluntary arrangement under Section 20 (a significant increase from 21 the previous year). Two young people were remanded to local authority accommodation. The number of

children coming into care under Police Protection Orders and Emergency Protection Orders due to being at risk of immediate harm remains the same as the previous year (six). The main change is the rise in Section 20 and this links with the number of older children accommodated above. An audit is planned to explore the underlying reasons for this trend.

4. Profile of Children in Care

4.1. Legal Status of children in care

The legal status of children in care at the end of the year has remained similar to 2019-20 in terms of the overall split. The majority are subject to Care Orders, which reflects that they are in permanent long-term arrangements. There has been an increase in the number of children accommodated under Section 20, but when looking at this figure as a percentage of the total cohort, the proportion of children being accommodated in this way is comparable to last year (16% and 17%). There has been an increase in the proportion of placement orders, which increased from 9% to 12%. While some children are reaching permanence through adoption in a timely way, for others there has been some disruption to the adoption placements and more pace is needed to secure permanence in a timely way. An audit has been completed to explore this and an action plan is in place. As a part of this work, IROs will be key in escalating children where there is drift and delay.

Table D: Legal Status of all children in care on 31 March 2022

Legal Status	Mar-22		Mar 21	
Total	136		102	
C1 – Interim Care Order	30	25%	25	22%
C2 – Full Care Order	34	44%	45	25%
E1 – Placement Order granted	16	13%	13	12%
J1 – Remanded to Local Authority Accommodation or to Youth Detention Accommodation	1	17%	1	1%
V2 – Single Care of accommodation under Section 20	55	16%	17	17%
V4 – Accommodated under agreed short-term breaks	0	0	1	1%

4.2. Gender of children in care at end of year

Table E: End of quarter snapshot of gender of children in care

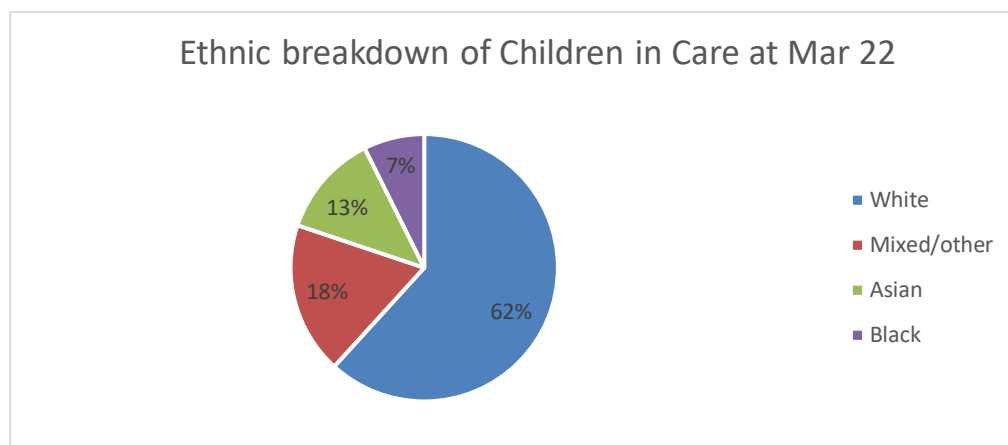
Gender	Jun-21		Sept-21		Dec-21		Mar-22	
Male	71	63%	79	69%	76	64%	86	63%
Female	41	37%	35	31%	42	36%	50	37%

The children in care population in Wokingham continues to consist of higher numbers of boys than girls, a pattern which has remained consistent throughout 2021-22 and is in line with the previous year. This is in part due to the number of UASCs represented in our cohort, who are

currently all male. This is a notably different gender balance when compared to children on CP plans, where 53% are female and 46% are male (1% unborn).

4.3. Ethnicity of children in care

Figure 2: Ethnic breakdown of children in care March 2022



The chart above shows the ethnic breakdown of children in care in Wokingham at the end of March 2022. It shows a slightly higher percentage of white British children when compared to last year. The percentage of Black children is in line with last year, but there is an increase in Asian children (7% to 13%), as well as a slight increase in those described as mixed/other (from 17% to 18%). These figures include the higher number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in care at the end of the year. In Wokingham, a project is underway to try to capture more detail for the group of young people described as mixed/other as they represent a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The table below shows a higher percentage of Black, Asian and mixed/other children in care compared with the local child population. This may require further exploration or audit in the coming year.

Table F: Ethnic Breakdown of all children in Wokingham

	Ethnic breakdown of children in Wokingham as a whole	Ethnic breakdown of the children in care Mar-22
White	82.4%	62%
Mixed/other	6.25%	18%
Asian	9.73%	13%
Black	1.63%	7%

Practice example:

IROs undertook two audits looking at Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and White British children to identify what information they know about the child's identity using the systemic 'SOCIAL GRACES' model (GRRAAACCEEESSS, John Burnham; 1993). This audit showed that information about country of origin, ethnicity, religion dietary needs and language, is usually known and recorded for UASCs but there are gaps about ability/disability, sexuality and class. Information about disability, learning needs, diagnosed health issues is more difficult to find and there is often no option for us to seek this information from other agencies as they have no history in this country.

The second audit found that for White British children information about gender, age, geography, ability, education, appearance generation and economic background was well known but there were gaps in the understanding of and descriptors for spirituality, religion, ethnicity, race and culture. In the sample of children, there was a pattern of children mostly originating from the local area, coming from backgrounds of generational problems and involvement with services, low educational attainment and families in struggling economic circumstances. Half of the children came from Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) families where the parents have settled locally but who may have had grandparents or ancestry who travelled around. Both audits highlighted the importance of asking open questions and finding out how people want to be described in terms of their race, ethnicity and culture. The audits also indicated the importance of asking if religion or spirituality is important to children and being creative in how IROs describe the culture of white British children - who might identify with a type of music, a football team, being outdoors or having animals around. In response to this work the IROs have been trying to capture the unique stories of children and write about their identity (in the broadest sense) within the review minutes.

4.4. Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers in Care

Table G: Unaccompanied Asylum seekers in care - month end snapshot

	Q1 2021			Q2 2021			Q3 2021			Q4 2022		
UASC	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
No	7	8	11	14	14	13	12	14	15	15	17	26

The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in care in Wokingham increased significantly in the second half of 2021-22, to 15 at the end of December 2021 and then to 26 by the end of March. Those who came into our care prior to December were spontaneous arrivals or came via the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) on voluntary basis as and when we had capacity. In February 2022 the NTS became mandatory for Wokingham and our number of 'transfer in' UASC's increased. In November 2021, an asylum hotel opened in Wokingham for adults and families. A number of UASCs were identified to be living in the hotel, following them being age assessed in Kent (their port of arrival) as being over 18. They then subsequently disputed their assessed age on arrival in the hotel in Wokingham and the Local Authority made a reassessment and deemed these young people to be under 18. There has been some press coverage about unlawful age assessments being undertaken at the point of arrival, which were subsequently overturned.

The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in care in Wokingham increased significantly in the second half of last year, to 15 at the end of December 2021 and then to 26 by the end of the year. Some were spontaneous arrivals and others identified via a local refugee hotel, following them being age assessed in Kent as being over 18 and then disputed their age on arrival in the hotel in Wokingham. There has been some press coverage about unlawful age assessments being undertaken at the point of arrival and in the cases of these two young people, Wokingham Borough Council deemed these young people to be

under 18. Some children were placed via the National Transfer Scheme in the earlier part of the year.

During the year we have had three UASCs aged 12, 13 and 14 years arriving in the area. These children are notably younger than the UASC cohort we have received in previous years. In response to this, the local authority has initiated care proceedings to ensure the children in question have legal security, and so the local authority is able to exercise parental responsibility. The young people come from different countries, including Afghanistan, Vietnam, Sudan, and Iraq. They have different ethnic, religious and cultural identities. They have had different upbringings and levels of education in their home country but have all experienced insecurity, loss and trauma. IROs report that although these children's' homelife, family connections and journey to this country is explored in the reviews, often young people are reluctant to open up until they feel safe and feel they can trust authority figures.

Now that Wokingham has a significant cohort of UASCs, IROs have been working to improve their knowledge and expertise in this area of practice. As part of this, the IRO team have attended training which has highlighted common issues experienced by UASC -including exploitation, the emotional turmoil of past trauma and the future uncertainty of not being given leave to remain. The team also have regular updates from the Children's Advocate who is trained in age assessments and attends the first review for all UASC to check their rights and all legal options are being considered. The Ofsted focused visit in April 2022 also challenged the effectiveness of our service in meeting the emotional needs of these children in care. The new Looked After Children CAMHS Service which is being commissioned will be considering the unique emotional and trauma needs of UASC and the IROs feel this will be a helpful additional resource.

Case example:

In one review, the IRO tried to understand whether one young person was experiencing any struggles with his emotional wellbeing. What we knew was that as an unaccompanied asylum seeker, his journey had been hard, he had experienced significant traumas and loss and that he missed his family and friends. He said that he had some rough times but at this time he was happy. He explained that he had spent four days on the sea in a small boat in fear that he may die. The young person was reassured that it is OK to speak to someone or ask to if he has any worries at all. He said he was stressed when he was put in the hotel and he was frightened but he was now feeling happier, relaxed and ok.

4.5. Children in receipt of a series of short breaks

Table H: Number of children who are Children in Care under s20(4) as the result of the number of overnights spent in short breaks provision.

	Apr–Jun 20	Jul–Sept 20	Oct–Dec 20	Jan–Mar 21
LAC in receipt of short breaks	2	1	1	1
	Apr–Jun 21	Jul–Sept 21	Oct–Dec 21	Jan–Mar 22

LAC in receipt of short breaks				
	1	0	0	0

Some children with complex health needs or significant disabilities who live with their families but are in receipt of packages of overnight care have looked after status under section 20(4) of the Children Act (1989). When the short breaks last more than 75 nights, an Independent Reviewing Officer is assigned to them, and they are reviewed on the same frequency as other children in care. During the year, there was one child who exceeded the 75 night threshold, which is less than in the previous year and lower than our statistical neighbours.

Having explored this with Social Care colleagues, they explained that the children who were previously part of this cohort, are now in the care of the Local Authority on a full-time basis, as their needs could no longer be met within the community.

There are also a number of children with disabilities in receipt of overnight short break packages, just none that exceed 75 nights, a continuous period of 17 days or 24 hours in one episode at present. These are the parameters set out in the Short Breaks Guidance that should lead to you triggering a Child in Care status, either on an ongoing basis (75) or for the period they are in the placement (17 days/24 hours). The group of children in question are currently being supported under section 17(6). This means that they are considered Children in Need and have an allocated Social Worker in the Children with Disabilities Service. Their packages of support are subject to regular review via Child in Need processes and an annual re-assessment. Should need for overnights be determined to increase, this is taken to the Children with Additional Needs Multi-Agency Panel (CANMAP). Decisions from this panel are recorded on the child's records and a tracking of overnights is managed in service. It is pertinent to note that the overall numbers of children requiring this higher level of intervention are low, therefore tracking in this way is feasible and manageable.

Children in care on child protection plans

Table I: Children in Care on Child Protection Plans

	Apr-Jun 20	Jul-Sept 20	Oct-Dec 20	Jan-Mar 21
Total	10	2	10	18
	Apr-Jun 21	Jul-Sept 21	Oct-Dec 21	Jan-Feb 22
Total	12	9	12	22

In the end of March 2022, there were 22 children on dual plans which is higher than the position at the end of the previous year and the table above shows a pattern of higher dual plans at the end of the year. This is due to a number of children in court proceedings who are placed with parents in assessment processes or where review child protection conferences were pending to remove the child protection plan. The team follows the Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership child protection procedures, so that when a child who was subject to a child

protection plan comes into care, they will have their first child in care review joint with the review child protection conference. This process provides continuity of planning and also reflects the need to manage risk while longer term care options are being assessed.

Children leaving care and reasons

Table J: Children Leaving Care and Reasons

	Apr–Jun 21	Jul–Sept 21	Oct–Dec 21	Jan–Mar 22
	8	16	18	16
Adopted	0	1	1	0
Return to parents, planned	1	6	5	0
Return to parents, unplanned	2	1	1	3
Reached the age of 18	5	5	6	5
Special Guardianship orders granted	0	1	3	7
Ceased for other reasons (CAO =Child Arrangements Orders and CCC= criminal conviction/custody)	0	2 - CAO	2-CAO	1 (CCC)
			Total	58

The IROs have a role in monitoring the journey of children to permanence (which can be a range of options from adoption to return home to parents). The table above show that 21 ceased to be in care due to becoming 18, but 33 children left care and achieved permanence in a planned way due to having Special Guardianship Orders with friends and family carers; being adopted or returning home to parents in a planned way. The IROs have highlighted the children on placement orders who have not yet achieved permanence through adoption. An audit was completed on these cases and IROs are maintaining oversight as some are delayed due to the adoption placement disrupting. For a small number of this cohort, the plan for adoption has changed. The table below shows that a lower number of children will leave care due to reaching 18 so the number of children in care may remain high.

Table K: Projection of children Leaving Care within 2 years

	Mar '23	Mar '24
No of Children to reach age of 18 expected to leave care	20	10

5. Impact of IRO Service- Chairing the Child's Review

5.1 Timeliness of Child's Reviews

The child's first review must take place within 20 working days of them coming into care. The second review must take place no later than three months (91 days) after the first review, and subsequent reviews must take place no more than six months (183 days) apart. 368 reviews took place which was an increase from 337 the previous year. 98% were in timescale. Despite capacity issues at times during the year, we have maintained the same performance as last year. 2% of

reviews were late, which represents seven children. These reviews were rearranged within a short period, with the length of delay having little or no impact on the future care of the children involved. The internal monitoring systems by the CIC administrators are helping to maintain good performance on timeliness.

Table L: Children in care Reviews in timescale

2021-22	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
No. Reviews	18	43	19	39	29	45	22	32	38	31	30	32
No on time	18	43	19	39	28	44	22	31	37	29	29	32
% on time	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	97%	98%	100 %	97%	97%	94%	97%	100 %
No. Reviews			No. in timescale					% in timescale				
368			361					98%				

5.2 Writing up and circulating review decisions and reports

The IRO has five days to write up the decisions made at the review, at this point the manager for the case has 5 days to raise any queries or objections. Once the manager has indicated their agreement, the IRO then has 15 days to complete the full record of the review, which should be circulated within 20 days of the review taking place. Over the past year, the IROs were starting to make progress on improving their performance in this area but this dropped in quarter four when the team were dealing with a significant increase in children in care and higher caseloads, alongside one staff member being on long-term sick leave, and a part time CP chair vacancy arising. We have reviewed and strengthened our current tracking system to send earlier calendar reminders to IROs.

Table M: Completion of administrative tasks

2021-22	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Average per year
IRO /CIC Review Decisions sent within 5 days	60%	70%	78%	47%	64%
CIC Review Reports distributed within 20 days	66%	66%	61%	51%	61%

The IROs have been working on ensuring the decisions from child in care reviews are child focused and they have also continued to write their child in care review reports directly to children. This is done in a style that is meaningful to children. The records also form part of their file which they may access when they are older, so the IROs feel that it is important to write them in a style which is accessible to the child. It was noted in the recent focused visit that some children reported not receiving their reports, and we have subsequently identified that sending the full reports via

secure email may be a barrier to them being accessed. In addition, we believe that reports sent to carers may not always be reaching the children as intended. In response to this, in the coming year IROs will be sending a summary letter by post to children in an age-appropriate format, explaining their plan and what decisions the review agreed. It is our intention that this physical letter will also help contribute to life story work.

5.3 Supporting the participation of children in their reviews

One role of the independent reviewing officer is to ensure that children in care actively participate in their reviews and the planning for their futures. Children need to know that their views are valued and heard and IROs need to give children the opportunity to communicate with them in advance of the review. The IROs have been creative in their approach to contacts and visits with children. The number of children attending with an advocate to help communicate their views increased. A small number struggle to participate but IROs seek to obtain their views/voice from others and in the last year no children had a review where no views were conveyed.

Table N: Children's Participation in their reviews

		Apr-Jun 21		Jul-Sept 21		Oct-Dec 21		Jan-Mar 22	
Participation	Participation Codes	80		113		92		93	
Child under 4 at time of review	PN0	20	25%	22	19%	15	16%	19	20%
Child attends and speaks for themselves	PN1	31	39%	38	34%	30	33%	44	47%
Child attends and an advocate speaks for them	PN2	5	6%	8	7%	7	8%	2	2%
Child attends and conveys his or her view symbolically (non-verbally)	PN3	0	0	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%
Child physically attends but does not speak for him or herself, does not convey his or her view symbolically (non-verbally) and does not ask an advocate to speak for him or her	PN4	0	0	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%

Child does not attend but an advocate speaks for them	PN5	10	13%	13	12%	18	20%	16	17%
Child does not attend but conveys feelings by facilitative medium	PN6	14	18%	31	27%	21	23%	12	13%
Child does not attend and views are not conveyed	PN7	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Practice example:

IROs have been creative in how they support children to participate, a small number have chaired their own review; some had had special ending reviews to celebrate children returning home to parents. For one review everyone shared some food from the young person's home country at his last review before turning 18.

5.4 Consulting with children, parents and carers:

Consultation documents provide children and parents and carers with an opportunity to give their views in advance of the meeting and help them to participate, particularly in circumstances where it may not be able to attend. IROs are also communicating with young people via text and WhatsApp, but IROs feel the best approach is for the IROs to meet children in person to ascertain their views. For some this has been through going to a café, playing a game or kicking a football in the garden, allowing children to talk. They also speak to the parents and carers in advance on reviews. This helps ensure that children and parents are comfortable accessing a virtual meeting and provides an opportunity to discuss how they wish to participate. We had hoped that the new CICC app will enable children to access consultation documents online, but this has not been possible. Improving consultation with parents and children using a range of technology/paper methods for consulting with children and young people will continue to be explored in the coming year.

5.5 Reviewing the Child's Care Plan

The IRO handbook states that;

The IRO should be provided with or have access to any relevant reports/plans or background information, including the current care plan, the report from the social worker (which should be available at least three working days before the commencement of the review), the current health plan or medical assessment report and the current personal education plan (PEP).

The social worker's report for the review is the document which provides an overview and updated assessment of the child's needs. Following the feedback from the recent Ofsted focused visit, work is underway to improve the report format so that there is space for more for significant updates, in depth assessment and analysis of the child's needs.

The Health Assessments are completed and uploaded on mosaic for the IRO to view. The IROs are aware that there have been issues with the Initial Health Assessments (IHAs) for Wokingham being completed within the 20-day timescale but were reassured that many were close to the 20-day target. Action is being undertaken to improve the situation, including a monthly meeting between the provider, Berkshire Health Care Trust and operational meetings with service managers. IROs are also going to check at the pre meeting before the first review that social workers have completed the notification for an IHA.

The review process also considers the child's educational needs, progress and development and whether any actions need to be taken or are likely to become necessary before the next review, in order to ensure that the child's educational needs are met and not neglected. PEPs are completed by schools with input from, the virtual school. The IRO will review the current PEP in advance of the review and liaise with the social worker and virtual school if there are any issues. IROs have access to the E-PEP recording system.

The IRO service feels assured that children in care are well supported by colleagues in the Virtual School and by child in care health colleagues who have built up relationships with children in care over time. There are also online resources for children in care BHFT website; <https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/6955> and the KOOTH app. The Child in Care Nurse attends the Children in Care Council and the annual Oakwood CIC fun day.

The IROs feel that children in care have a good support from the Virtual School and when there are issue arising at school the VS can be a point of contact. Members of the Virtual School (VS) attend reviews on a regular basis and the VS employs a Level 6 Careers Guidance qualified Post 16 Officer, who links with all Year 12 and 13 children in Care and Care Leavers. She also attends the Year 11 PEPs to offer advice, guidance and transition support and has a lead for supporting UASCs. Extra ESOL tuition has been offered to all UASCs and many other post-16 learners access 1:1 tuition in variety of subjects. They prioritise English and Maths tuition where a young person has not yet achieved their GCSE grade 4 and have also provided A Level tuition in various subjects to support more able students.

5.6 Supporting children in care to have access to an Independent Visitor

One of the roles of the IRO in reviews is to talk to children about having an Independent Visitor. At the end of 2021-22, 16 children in care were matched with independent visitors through National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) and four young people were in the process of being matched. In April 2021 the contract was extended by 10% to provide three additional places. Although extra capacity was added and referrals have been coming though, the overall number of matches/young people with an IV has not increased beyond 17 matches. This is partly due to some 19 years olds wanting to end their involvement with an IV, some young people moving placements and a change to the longstanding IV coordinator for Wokingham, which may have slowed down some of the activity. Overall, the service provided is well regarded by young people and carers and we hope that the increase in children and young people coming into care, we have retained the capacity to match up to 21 children and young people with an IV in the coming year. Independent visitors can continue to visit young people up to the age of 21 by agreement and this helps support care leavers in their transition to independence.

5.7 Promoting Advocacy and Children's Rights for Children in Care

Wokingham employs a Children's Advocate who works with children in care and care leavers. In 2020-21 she had 181 contacts with children in care (an increase from 163 last year). These contacts are in reviews and between reviews, supporting some in court, or in mental health provision and helping some younger children to write a letter to the judge in care proceedings.

Table O: Advocacy activity – Children in Care

	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
Young People (YP)	No of YP	Contacts with YP	No of YP	Contacts with YP	No of YP	Contacts with YP	No of YP	Contacts with YP
Children in care	21	41	31	45	27	49	29	46
Care Leavers	6	26	10	23	5	28	7	21
TOTAL	27	67	41	68	32	77	36	67

Themes of contacts with Children in Care

- Legal issues - including age assessments for young people, support in legal processes
- Attending professionals' meetings
- Issues with Care plans, placements, contact arrangements, housing options, standards of care and children's rights issues.

Themes of contacts with Care Leavers:

- Complaints to Housing and Adult Social Care
- Placement / Housing/Accommodation issues
- Support accessing resources
- Legal issues including a name change and understanding of legal order
- Helping young people to mediate with other professionals

6 Impact of IRO Service – Oversight and challenge between reviews

6.1 IRO oversight

The role of the IRO is to monitor the progress on the child's care plan between reviews and this should be evidenced by seeing the footprint of the IRO on the child's record. For some children, where the plan is progressing on time with no issues the IRO may have less involvement between reviews, but for other children where there is drift or delay, the IRO should be actively involved. We have been recording the activity on case notes since 2020. During 2021-22 there were 525 IRO case notes recorded on children's records. IROs are now routinely invited to permanency planning meetings and placement stability meetings which helps them keep informed of the care planning and possible moves for children in care. They feel that this activity has helped the IROs keep an overview and be aware of the rationale behind care plans.

IROs have also held early reviews when that has been needed and maintained their involvement post 18 and post adoption to ensure actions such as life story work has been completed. IROs are also having pre meetings with social workers (which is a requirement in the IRO handbook) and midway reviews on some cases when they are required (this is not a requirement but is good practice). Our internal reporting on case notes suggests that IROs are still recording some of their pre-meetings and monitoring on case notes rather than on Mosaic steps and so this activity is more difficult to evidence and needs to be more consistent.

6.2 IRO challenge and dispute resolution

There has been a reduction in the number of challenges in the last year which is in part due to the increased activity of IROs between reviews, being invited to listen in to permanency planning meetings and having access to team managers which enables problems to be resolved at an early stage. The other reason may be the capacity of the team being stretched at times and some areas of concern not being recorded in the IRO challenge step on mosaic. We have reviewed our escalation procedures and feel that when IROs bring challenge on specific issues such as financial issues or documents not being completed, the matters are usually resolved at the first stage and rarely become protracted and usually support learning. However, for more complex issues such as the care plan drifting or progressing to permanent legal orders or care arrangements, the IROs need to escalate higher and to maintain pace when following up on previous challenges to prevent further drift and delay. Examples in the previous year have been in relation to children on placement orders, section 20 or placed with parents and this has been found in some of our audit activity. We have also identified the need for a more formal process for the team to bring challenge about issues which affect groups of children in care. We have requested a meeting to enable IROs to speak directly to the senior leaders, on a quarterly basis to have an opportunity to share information and raise any themes about placement sufficiency or services which affect children in care.

Table P: IRO Challenges 2021-22

2021-22	Number of challenges	Informal mosaic step	Formal mosaic step	Resolved without further escalation	Escalation required
Q1	8	1	7	5	
Q2	16	11	5	14	1
Q3	7	2	5	7	
Q4	3	2	1	3	
Total	31	17	14	23	2 (level 2 to Service Manager)

6.3 Themes identified in challenges:

The most common challenges relate to missing or poor documentation, reports not being completed on time/not being provided to meetings, or IROs not being informed of significant events such as placement moves or court decisions. In such cases, the challenge may not directly impact on the child but is designed to highlight the issue to managers with a view to improving practice. The remainder of challenges are made because there is a direct impact on the child and their care plan progressing. These include placement issues, contact arrangements, education and health needs not being met and the care plan drifting.

6.4 Compliments and good practice:

Areas of good practice have also been identified by the IROs and passed back to the individual workers and their managers. They are recorded in the compliments log. In addition, the IROs have received some positive feedback in 2021-22.

Compliments from partner agency colleague:

Can I share thanks to you xx, for chairing the meeting today. I was particularly impressed with the care you took to ensure parent was well informed and felt part of the meeting. It felt like quite a calm meeting even when tough things were being discussed.

Compliment from an attendee about IRO

'I wanted to highlight how well (IRO) chaired the meeting and I love the way she brings out all the positives for the young people in their review meetings'.

Feedback to IRO from a fostering agency about CS staff following the final review at 18 –

'Thanks WBC and all involved with (young person) for the excellent service provided by Children Services as a whole - this has made the outcomes for (young person) the best they could be – both the child and the carers have received nothing but a high standard of service'.

6.5 Feedback from children about reviews

What children and young people told us	What we have done
Shortly after the end of the reporting year, we had feedback from a group of children in care about not receiving their review reports.	<p>We checked on this and found reports were being sent out by secure email and that sometimes the e-mails were not being opened by carers and young people as it can be complicated to open the secure e-mails, and secure emails can't be opened on phones.</p> <p>In response, IROs are now posting out letters to each child/young person following their review which gives a summary of the review. IROs are also checking that they have all received your previous review reports when they speak to children prior to the next meeting.</p>

7. Emerging themes in 2021-22

Theme	What is being done in response
There was an increase in older children aged 16 and 17 (non UASC) coming into care - 33 compared to 8 the previous year.	Although their involvement may be short, for older children, IROs are involved in ensuring a permanence plan is agreed and that work to assist the young person returning home is explored. Young people have joint housing /social care assessments via the new housing protocol and the Children's Advocate is involved to help them understand their options. We would recommend an audit to explore this trend.
There was a significant increase in the percentage of children in care who were Accommodated under S20 - 62 compared to 24 last year - 23 of these children are UASC.	IROs are monitoring legal status in reviews and in relation to permanence. For most older UASCs S20 is appropriate and younger UASCs are now subject to Care Orders. We will monitor this percentage and will undertake an audit of S20 cases if required.
16 children were subject to Placement Orders at the end of the year compared to 9 in March 2021. Most of these children have experienced neglect and trauma and their behaviour can be very dysregulated and unsettled.	An audit was undertaken to explore this. The IROs are monitoring these children closely and an action plan in place. The L&D service are rolling out training for foster carers on attachment and trauma informed practice. This will be an area of focus for the IROs in bringing challenge to reduce the number where permanence is delayed.
There have been some issues with the performance/timeliness of initial health assessments and the notifications to health that children are in care, and this is being monitored.	This is being monitored by the ISIG and the CPB and IROs are checking they have been set up prior to the first review and will check completion dates at each review. They are satisfied that children are having IHAs and have noted the action to improve timescales could be improved.
There has been a significant increase in the number of UASC children in care – with a range of UASC educational, care and emotional needs.	The Children's advocate has attended all first reviews for UASCs. The IROs are working to increase their knowledge and are keen to see a dedicated CAMHS offer for children in care with an offer for asylum seeking young people being established.
At the end of the year 22 children were on dual plans which reflects that for some children there may be a number of assessments, placements with parents or contact arrangements	Our process of the CP chair becoming the IRO assists with this transition and enables multi agency safeguarding arrangements being in place for a short time once a child comes into care.

which require the oversight of a CP Plan for a time.	
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8. Conclusion

Throughout 2021-22, the IRO service adapted to the challenge of living with COVID-19 and has been able to flex and change as the pandemic has progressed. We are now in a new phase of doing more face-to-face meetings while retaining virtual and hybrid options. The service has had a challenging year, dealing with capacity issues within the team alongside a significant increase in children coming into care and on CP Plans. It was positive that Ofsted noted the quality of the reports written to children and we are rectifying the issues about them reporting that they do not receive their reports. We are fortunate to have a stable team of experienced IROs who know the children well and have journeyed with some children and their families from CP conference to leaving care. We have reviewed our priorities and plans for the coming year and aim to maintain our performance on reviews and to deliver the IRO roles and responsibilities set out in the IRO handbook to a good standard for the benefit of children in care in Wokingham.

9. The key strategic priorities of the IRO service in 2022-23

- ❖ **To consistently provide good quality reviews for children in care** and make sure children know the plans for their care and have reports which they can access and to work with colleagues in children's social care to ensure that social worker reports are robust and provide an updated assessment of the child's needs at each review, and that the voice of the child, their lived experience is understood and informs the Care Plan.
- ❖ **To raise awareness about and promote the role of the IRO**, the purpose of care planning and reviews to children, parents, carers, social workers and other agency colleagues.
- ❖ **To demonstrate the effectiveness of the IRO service** with clear examples of what difference they are making by seeing children and overseeing the review process. This includes, clearly demonstrating challenge and follow up when care plans are not progressing as planned or when they notice issues within the system or low performance which affect more than one child in care.

TITLE	Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report 2021-22
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 November 2022
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Helen Watson

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

This report provides a summary of the activity relating to the management of allegations against adults who work and volunteer with children in Wokingham Borough for 2021-2022. It sets out how children are safeguarding in activities with adults in positions of trust. This report also provides analysis of the data and highlights the themes identified by the Designated Officer (LADO).

RECOMMENDATION

That this report is considered by the overview and scrutiny panel. For information and questions.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Allegations Criteria: The Allegations procedure applies whenever it is alleged that a person who works with children has, in any connection with her/his employment or voluntary activity has:

- Behaved in a way that has or may have harmed a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that he or she would pose a risk of harm to children.
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

Local Authorities are required to '*have designated a particular officer, or team of officers to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people that work with children*'. The 2015 Working Together guidance changed the title from Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to Designated Officer, but there has been no change to the overall function. In line with most Local Authorities in the South East, Wokingham has continued using the title of 'LADO' as it is a well-established and understood term.

The LADO has the responsibility to oversee the allegations management process, to ensure it remains effective and meets the dual demands of both protecting children and ensuring staff subject to allegations are treated fairly. The LADO is also responsible for ensuring that the investigative response is consistent, reasonable and proportionate.

In Wokingham, the LADO function is situated within the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service. The role is carried out by a named designated officer. There is one full time LADO who also chairs child protection conferences two days per week. Over the course of 2021-2022 there have been personnel changes and a period of vacancy from October 2021 – March 2022 due to recruitment issues. Although the core business and day to day management of allegations was maintained, the service was stretched. A permanent LADO was recruited and came into post on 04.04.22.

Background

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 requires all organisations that provide services for children or employ staff, contractors or volunteers who work with children to have a procedure for handling allegations against staff. More detailed guidance is set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Analysis of Issues

There has been an increase in the number of enquiries and allegations in 2021-2022 compared to 2020-2021, which reflects the ending of lockdown restrictions and social distancing measure in schools, nurseries, sports clubs and other settings.

The types of enquires and allegations and the outcomes relating to them, also appear to be in line with pre-pandemic activity and this report has included the statistics for the last three years to show the impact of Covid-19 on the workload.

The enquiries/allegations relating to staff in Education and Early Years sectors have been predominantly related to suitability issues and concerns outside of the workplace, and there being a transferrable risk to children in their work setting. Within this category, there was also a high level of "Code of Conduct issues", where staff did not necessarily cause harm to a child, but they did not adhere to the settings policies or processes.

The second highest category of enquiries/allegations, related to physical abuse/ physical contact between adults and children has remained consistent throughout the last three years and continues to emphasise the need for clear codes of conduct and behaviour management policies all settings.

The main category of concern for allegations which reach the criminal threshold was sexual abuse or online sexual offences relating to the downloading of indecent images of children.

The majority of allegations are concluded in one month, some take up to three months and a small percentage take longer if there are criminal investigations or court proceedings.

Inter-agency working arrangements remain strong with Thames Valley Police and the LADO has regular interactions with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the social care duty team, the early year advisory team, Wokingham Brough Council (WBC) schools HR, and the WBC school improvement team.

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

Not applicable

Cross-Council Implications

Not applicable

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.
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Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>

Please state clearly what the impact of the decision being made would be on the Council's carbon neutral objective.

List of Background Papers

LADO Annual Report 2021-22

Contact Liz McAuley	Service Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Standards
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WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Allegations against adults who work or volunteer with children

Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report

2021-2022

Report completed by:

Nicola Vines

Local Authority Designated Officer

Liz McAuley

Service Manager

Date of this report: May 2022

Date for next report: May 2023

Executive summary

Purpose of this report

This report provides a summary of the activity relating to the management of allegations against adults who work and volunteer with children in Wokingham Borough for 2021-2022. This report also provides analysis of the data and highlights the themes identified by the Designated Officer (LADO).

Highlights:

Volume of work:

- There has been an increase in the number of enquiries and allegations in 2021-2022 compared to 2020-2021, which reflects the ending of lockdown restrictions and social distancing measure in schools, nurseries, sports clubs and other settings.
- The number of enquiries increased from 167 to 199, a 19% increase in enquiries when compared to 2020-21. The number of allegations increased from 38 to 44, which is a 15% increase when compared to the previous year.
- The types of enquires and allegations and the outcomes relating to them, also appear to be in line with pre-pandemic activity and this report has included the statistics for the last three years to show the impact of Covid-19 on the workload.

Capacity of the service:

- Over the course of 2021-2022 there have been personnel changes and a period of vacancy from October 2021 – March 2022 due to recruitment issues. Although the core business and day to day management of allegations was maintained, the service was stretched. A permanent LADO was recruited and came into post on 04.04.22. Having a permanent LADO in post will provide full capacity going forward and will be in a position to undertake further service development.
- Inter-agency working arrangements remain strong with Thames Valley Police and the LADO has regular interactions with the MASH, the social care duty team, the early year advisory team, Wokingham Brough Council (WBC) schools HR, and the WBC school improvement team.

Origin of referrals:

- It is evident from the data that those agencies who maintained a service throughout the Covid-19 period, such as social care and the police, generated a consistent volume of enquires and referrals to the LADO, when other settings were closed.
- In 2021-2022, the highest volume of referrals in the last year have come from schools. Whilst this has doubled since last year, it is comparable with pre-pandemic levels.
- In 2021-2022, the volume of referrals from residential units that care for our most vulnerable young people dropped significantly, and this indicates that some training to raise awareness about allegations and the referral procedure might be required for this sector.

The adult subject of allegations/concerns:

- The highest volume of enquires which did not meet the threshold for an allegation related to staff in education settings where there were low level concerns about conduct and behaviour management and were dealt with by the school's internal procedures.
- Whilst the highest number of allegations where the threshold of harm was met, related to staff in early years settings and often led to disciplinary investigations and action.
- Allegations against foster carers and residential care home staff have remained at similar levels to 2019-2020 but higher than before the pandemic.

- Allegations against adults working in faith groups and sports associations returned to pre - COVID-19 pandemic levels.

Nature of concerns:

- The enquiries/allegations relating to staff in Education and Early Years sectors have been predominantly related to suitability issues and concerns outside of the workplace, such as concerns about the mental health of staff, or about their own children being subject to Child Protection Plans and there being a transferrable risk to children in their work setting. Within this category, there was also a high level of “Code of Conduct issues”, where staff did not necessarily cause harm to a child, but they did not adhere to the settings policies or processes.
- The second highest category of enquiries/allegations, related to physical abuse, in particular concerns around pushing, pulling and throwing objects in schools and for smacking in early years settings. The volume of enquiries/allegations that related to physical contact between adults and children has remained consistent throughout the last three years and continues to emphasise the need for clear codes of conduct and behaviour management policies all settings.
- The main concern for allegations which reach the criminal threshold was sexual abuse or online sexual offences relating to the downloading of indecent images of children.

Themes/lessons arising from the activity in 2021-22:

- **Impact of COVID-19:** The level of enquiries and referrals received in 2021-22 when compared with the previous two years, shows the clear impact of lockdown restrictions and either the closing of services/activities or a move over to virtual services and social distancing measures. Careful monitoring will be required over the next two years to determine if there are longer term impacts of COVID-19 in relation to the type and level of referrals that are received.
- **Settings that refer more frequently:** There are schools for whom we receive higher levels of referrals than others due to having an open ethos of referring all incidents and concerns to the LADO which might benefit from LADO oversight. Although this contributes to a high volume of enquiries, the LADO feels it is useful to have oversight of the low level incidents schools and dealing with which may prevent the occurrence of more serious incidents.
- **Referrals by residential care homes and foster carers:** There has been a significant reduction in referrals from both residential care home settings and foster carers. This data suggests these groups are a training priority.
- **Allegations relating to staff from sports groups:** Allegations against adults working in sports groups and associations returned to pre -COVID-19 pandemic levels. Now that a new permanent LADO is in post, there is an opportunity to build and strengthen relationships between the LADO and the full range of sports groups in the Borough and the ‘Get Berkshire Active’ umbrella body which maintains links with the designated leads for a variety of sport clubs. This will ensure that there are open lines of communication and assistance, and advice can be provided.

- **Handling of foster carer allegations:** Over the last year, the LADO service has noticed that there has been improvement in how managers in the family placement team are responding to allegations and using the foster carer allegations policy. They are undertaking standards of care investigations, concluding the process with the fostering panel, and sending a letter to the foster carer stating the outcome.
- **Broadening of allegations criteria:** There has continued to be a rise in referrals relating to the personal lives of adults who work and volunteer with children and transferrable risks to their workplace which require involvement of the LADO. Analysis of the work undertaken on fourth suitability criteria this year indicates that 'suitability' can at times be mis-interpreted to mean code of conduct issues within school that have not caused a child harm, and care needs to be taken to ensure our threshold is being correctly applied. These referrals require careful consideration, so that proportionate action is taken to address transferrable risk. Ongoing and careful monitoring of allegations under the fourth suitability criteria will be needed in the coming year.
- **Inter-agency working** arrangements remain strong with Thames Valley Police and the LADO has regular interactions with the MASH, the social care duty team, the early year advisors, WBC schools HR, and the school improvement team. There has been an identified need for an education safeguarding lead within WBC who could provide training and respond to some of the issues about conduct and behaviour which are being identified in educational settings.

Key priorities of the service for the coming year:

1. To maintain core business, providing a robust process for managing and reporting on allegations and other safeguarding concerns which require the involvement of the LADO, and to retain the option of virtual meetings, as they are efficient and working well.
2. To raise awareness and deliver training to promote and educate organisations, employers and carers across the children's workforce about how to report and manage allegations.
3. To continue to attend the Berkshire LADO Network, the South East Regional LADO Group and link in with the National LADO group to keep up to date and share good practice.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the management of allegations against adults who work and volunteer with children in Wokingham Borough, specifically including the activity and outcomes for 2021-22.

2. Background and context

- 2.1 Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 requires all organisations that provide services for children or employ staff, contractors or volunteers who work with children to have a procedure for handling allegations against staff. More detailed guidance is set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- 2.2 Local Authorities are required to *'have designated a particular officer, or team of officers to be involved in the management and oversight of allegations against people that work with children'*. The 2015 guidance changed the title from Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to Designated Officer, but there has been no change to the overall function. In line with most Local Authorities in the South East, Wokingham has continued using the title of 'LADO' as it is a well-established and understood term.
- 2.3 The LADO has the responsibility to oversee the allegations management process, to ensure it remains effective and meets the dual demands of both protecting children and ensuring staff subject to allegations are treated fairly. The LADO is also responsible for ensuring that the investigative response is consistent, reasonable and proportionate.
- 2.4 In Wokingham, the LADO function is situated within the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service. The role is carried out by a named designated officer. There is one full time LADO who also chairs child protection conferences two days per week. Over the course of 2021-2022 there have been personnel changes and a period of vacancy from October 2021 – March 2022 due to recruitment issues. Although the core business and day to day management of allegations was maintained, the service was stretched. A permanent LADO was recruited and came into post on 04.04.22.
- 2.5 Allegations Criteria: The Allegations procedure applies whenever it is alleged that a person who works with children has, in any connection with her/his employment or voluntary activity has:
1. Behaved in a way that has or may have harmed a child.
 2. Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
 3. Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates that he or she would pose a risk of harm to children.
 4. Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.
- 2.6 The fourth point in the criteria (above) which was added to the 'Working Together' guidance in 2020 provides a framework for managing concerns arising about a person's behaviour within their own family. In addition to criminal activity outside of the workplace which could pose a risk of harm to children in their care or workplace.
- 2.7 Meetings: If the criteria for an allegation, as set out above in 2.5, is met, the LADO would convene an Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers (ASV) Meeting in order to gather information, evaluate risk and decide on actions required going forward. This meeting was

historically known as a LADO Strategy Discussion, but the term was changed in 2019 to distinguish it from a child strategy meeting.

2.8 There are three strands to the management of an allegation:

- A police investigation of a possible criminal offence;
- Enquiries and assessment by children's social care about whether a child is in need of protection or services;
- Investigation and consideration of disciplinary action by the employer or regulator in respect of the individual.

2.9 There is one full time Designated officer (LADO) who manages the allegations process and provides advice and training. The post holder also chair child protection conferences. Over the course of 2021-2022, the LADO role has been covered by two locum workers; one longstanding locum who was in post from 2019 to October 2021 and a short-term locum providing cover in quarter four. The Service Manager of the Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Team who is an experienced LADO, also provided cover for four months while recruitment took place. A permanent LADO was recruited and came into post on 04.04.22. Although the day to day management of allegations has been covered and some induction and training was provided during 2021-22, having a permanent LADO in post will provide stability going forward and facilitate further service development.

3. Statistical data: April 2021-March 2022

3.1 This report provides statistical data on the number, nature, and outcomes of allegations. It also provides analysis on themes and trends relating to the children's workforce who operate within Wokingham Borough and the effectiveness of inter-agency working arrangements.

3.2 The report provides historical statistics for the last 3 years, so that data can be compared to both before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. What can be seen is that referral and enquiry levels are returning to pre COVID-19 pandemic levels and through comparing the figures from the last three years, the impact of periods of lockdown and social distancing is evident.

Table 1: Number of Enquiries/Referrals:

Total number of enquiries and allegations passed on to LADO	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
	199	167	220
Allegations which progressed under allegations process	44	38	41

3.3 In 2021-2022, 199 total enquiries were received. This represented a 19% increase in enquiries when compared to the figures for 2020-21, when 167 were received. The number of enquiries that progressed to ASV meetings increased to 44, which represented a 15% increase when compared to the figures for 2020-21.

3.4 During the year 2021-2022 there were 44 initial ASV Meetings and in addition 11 Review Meetings convened to manage and review allegations which met the threshold for LADO

involvement. In addition, there were three Freedom of Information Requests, and 12 Early Years checks from Ofsted.

- 3.5 At the start of 2021, there remained 11 active criminal investigation cases carried over from previous years that through the year remained part of the LADO's work, in terms of chasing, reviewing and in some instances attending meetings to consider any press communications. There were three new criminal cases started through the year.

Table 2: Outcomes of Initial Evaluations:

Outcomes of Initial Evaluation	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
Allegations which met the threshold required to progress under the allegations process.	44	38	41
Enquiries relating to standards of care or conduct concerns which required evaluation by the LADO and liaison with other agencies but were referred back to the employer for internal investigation of a practice or conduct issue.	71	42	91
Enquiries which did not require involvement from the Wokingham LADO service and were referred to LADOs in other local authority areas; to children's services or adult safeguarding; requests for information from regulatory bodies such as Ofsted and the DBS.	83	77	90
Total Enquiries/Allegations	199		
Ofsted checks on Early Years applicants.	12	14	26
Freedom of Information requests (not included in total enquiries)	3	2	1

- 3.6 The table above shows the breakdown of enquiries and allegations compared to the previous years.

- 3.7 There was a notable increase in the last year compared to 2020-21, in enquiries that were referred back to the employer for investigation, that did not result in harm to a child but related to conduct concerns or standards of care. The increase in these types of incidents is reflective of the increase of in-person teaching. The figures for 2019-2020 have been included, so that comparison can be drawn between the year in which Wokingham had the highest restrictions in terms of social distancing/ online meetings or lessons, and the years either side when restrictions were lower.

Table 3: Comparator data – Other Berkshire Local Authorities and Trusts. *(*to be added when date becomes available)*

Area	Total Enquiries 2021-22	Total Allegations 2021-22	Total Enquiries 2019-20
Wokingham	199	44	220

Bracknell	271	35	206
Achieving for Children (RBWM)	Not received *		
Positive Futures for Children (Reading)	Not received		216
West Berkshire	Not received		237
Slough Children's Trust	219	15	208

3.8 Having met with the LADOs for each of the above areas it is clear that there are differences between how they each process referrals. Despite previous agreements made between the LADOs, it appears that some hold "evaluation meetings" in the first instance, only progressing to an allegation after this if required.

The workload generated by those referrals remains the same, however the statistics for ASV meetings will be lower than in the Wokingham area where any referral that leads to a multi-agency meeting is referred to as an allegation.

4 Source of all enquiries and allegations by referring agency

Table 4: Source of all enquiries/referrals

Agency referring	2021-2022	2020-21	2019-20
	Total	Total	Total
Cafcass	0	0	0
Early years/pre school	23	15	19
Education	80	43	68
Faith group	2	1	4
Foster carer	0	11	8
Health	2	14	2
NSPCC	1	1	6
Ofsted	8	2	9
Other	27	11	20
Police	6	12	10
Probation	0	0	1
Residential Unit	9	18	30
Social Care	36	32	36
Sports organisation	5	2	2
Voluntary organisation	0	5	5
Youth Offending Service	0	0	0
Total	199	167	220

- 4.8 The above statistics suggest that during the COVID-19 pandemic, those settings that offered a similar service throughout, such as Police and Social Care, continued to refer at similar rates over the last three years.

The increase in referrals from both Education and Early Years settings in 2021-22, reflected the increase of in-person care, lessons and teaching. The ongoing referral trends will need to be monitored to consider whether they are attributable to the longer-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 4.9 The referrals received from the category “Other” predominantly relate to agencies requesting information and from parents, who raised concerns for the standards of their children’s care, emotional abuse and incidents of physical abuse.
- 4.10 The volume of referrals from residential care homes and foster carers has dropped significantly in the last year, and both of these groups will be focused on for targeted training over the coming year.

5 Subject of referrals across all enquiries/referrals that have progressed to allegations (by workforce)

Table 5: Adult subjects of allegations by profession

Role/profession of person subject of an allegation	2021-2022	2020-21	2019-20
Education staff	12	11	24
Early years staff	15	8	4
Foster carers /Residential care staff	9	10	5
Health staff	1	7	2
Social Care Staff	1	0	0
Police	1	0	0
Other including vol sector, sport and faith groups	5	2	6
Total	44	38	41

- 5.8 The number of adults subject to allegations increased on the previous year and was comparable to the increase in referrals.
- 5.9 It is significant to note that the rate of Early Years referrals that led to allegations was higher than those for Education but came out of a lower proportion of enquiries/referrals. This might reflect that Early Years settings were not referring lower-level concerns. This needs to be kept under review and Early Years settings will need to be targeted when trainings are listed.

There has been a significant decrease in health staff being referred. This may be reflective of the ongoing nature of virtual health services and the resolution of repeated concerns being raised for one health setting in the previous year.

- 5.10 The rise in allegations against staff in sports or faith-based settings is reflective of those activities having reopened.

6. Nature of concerns

- 6.1 The table below sets out the breakdown of the categories for all enquiries and referrals that have required evaluation by the LADO in 2021-2022. Of the 199 enquiries/referrals received by the LADO for Wokingham Children's Services, 12 were requests for information and a further seven were DBS check requests. The number of enquiries that required evaluation therefore totalled **180**.

Table 6: Category of concern - all enquiries

Type/Category of all enquiries evaluated by LADO	2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020
Emotional	6	6	5
Online Sexual Activity Offences	3	8	9
Neglect	11	20	8
Physical	45	45	37
Sexual	20	28	31
Unsuitable Adult Behaviour	95	60	89
TOTAL	180	167	179

Table 7: Categories of concern – all allegations.

Type/category of all Allegations	2021-2022	2020-21	2019-20
Emotional	1	5	3
Online sexual activity offences	2	5	2
Neglect	0	4	1
Physical	14	14	18
Sexual	9	6	9
Unsuitable Adult Behaviour	18	4	8
Total	44	38	41

- 6.2 A high proportion of enquiries last year related to 'unsuitable adult behaviour' which involved the suitability of a person to work with children due to circumstances outside of the work place,

such as their own children being subject to Child Protection processes, mental health difficulties, criminal investigations not related to offences against children, or living with others for whom there might be a risk by association. Included in this category were concerns regarding processes not being followed correctly and code of conduct concerns.

- 6.3 A high level of enquiries raised in respect of physical abuse continued in 2021-22. These occurred most often in education settings and involved the pushing, pulling or grabbing of students or pushing or throwing of equipment that came into contact with a student and at times caused alarm or injury.
- 6.4 The evaluations relating to “emotional harm” related to incidents of shouting, bullying or behaviour which was frightening to a child and concerns of neglect occurred predominantly in Early Years Settings and related to standards of care or children not being appropriately supervised.
- 6.5 Allegations of sexual abuse remained in line with previous years and related to both Education and Early Years settings although there is a year-on-year decrease in allegations of Online Sexual Abuse, by those who work with children in Wokingham.
- 6.6 There were three allegations in 2021-22 which progressed to criminal investigations. These cases related to online sexual abuse images, an allegation of sexual abuse against the subject’s own child, and concerns of grooming and sexualised messages/images being shared by the subject of the allegation who was in a position of trust with young people.

7. Outcomes

- 7.1 Guidance requires that all cases should be tracked to conclusion with a final outcome recorded to show whether the allegation has been substantiated or not. This outcome should then be fed back to the member of staff and the child or parents concerned. The outcome categories are defined in Working Together and Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance.

Table 9: Outcomes for the 44 allegations:

Outcome of allegations following investigation	2021-2022	2020-21
Substantiated	14	9
Unsubstantiated	10	4
False	1	0
Unfounded	3	8
Malicious	0	0
Other - inconclusive or not yet concluded	5	17
No role for LADO	11	Not Recorded
Total	44	38

- 7.1 There was a significant number of allegations that were concluded quickly in 2021-22. This was positive for both the referrer but also for the member of staff, for whom the allegation was dealt with swiftly.
- 7.2 The table above notes some outcomes as ‘no role for LADO.’ This means the concern was evaluated but was not deemed to reach LADO threshold for involvement after the initial ASV meeting. This outcome category has been added for clarity.

7.3 The allegations that were recorded as “other,” included three criminal cases where police investigations were not concluded, and two cases for which updates have been requested but not received.

7.4 Criminal cases continued to be reviewed by the LADO monthly. There were eleven criminal cases that were brought forward from 2020-2021, with only one criminal case concluded in the year 2021-22. Two further cases that have closed shortly after the year ended, that will be included in the quarter one report.

7.5 The criminal case that concluded resulted in no conviction, was followed up with a review ASV meeting to determine if there were any additional safeguarding concerns remained and a risk assessment was undertaken.

8. Timescales for conclusion

Table 10: Timescales for conclusion

Timescale for conclusion	2021-2022	2020-2021
Within 1 month	175	137
1-3 months	11	16
4-6 months	0	3
6-12 months	0	0
Still ongoing/unresolved	13	11
Total	199	167

8.1 The LADO monitors allegations from the initial referral until a case is concluded, and also checks progress on any actions between ASV meetings. The conclusion of cases has improved in the year 2021-22 from the previous year. A high proportion of enquiries were signposted or referred to other area LADOs or teams. Other enquiries were closed shortly after initial checks were undertaken.

8.2 Many allegations that led to an ASV meeting were usually concluded in one month. Holding ASV meetings virtually has had an impact on the efficiency of the allegations process and may also have contributed to the improved timeliness of closures.

8.3 The matters that took one to three months to resolve related to those cases where internal investigations and cases open longer than three months were allegations lengthy police investigations, criminal proceedings or investigations following criminal outcomes.

9. Themes from the activity in 2021-22

- **Impact of COVID-19:** The level of enquiries and referrals received in 2021-22 when compared with the previous two years, shows the clear impact of lockdown restrictions and either the closing of services/activities or a move over to virtual services and social distancing measures. Careful monitoring will be required over the next two years to determine if there are longer term impacts of COVID-19 in relation to the type and level of referrals that are received.

- **Settings that refer more frequently:** There are schools for whom we receive higher levels of referrals that others due to having an open ethos of referring all incidents and concerns to the LADO which might benefit from LADO oversight. Although this contributes to a high volume of enquiries, the LADO feels it is useful to have oversight of the low level incidents schools and dealing with which may prevent the occurrence of more serious incidents.
- **Referrals by residential care homes and foster carers:** There has been a significant reduction in referrals from both residential care home settings and foster carers. This data suggests these groups are a training priority.
- **Allegations relating to staff from sports groups:** Allegations against adults working in sports groups and associations returned to pre -COVID-19 pandemic levels. Now that a new permanent LADO is in post, there is an opportunity to build and strengthen relationships between the LADO and the full range of sports groups in the Borough and the 'Get Berkshire Active' umbrella body which maintains links with the designated leads for a variety of sport clubs. This will ensure that there are open lines of communication and assistance, and advice can be provided.
- **Handling of foster carer allegations:** Over the last year, the LADO service has noticed that there has been improvement in how managers in the family placement team are responding to allegations and using the foster carer allegations policy. They are undertaking standards of care investigations, concluding the process with the fostering panel, and sending a letter to the foster carer stating the outcome.
- **Broadening of allegations criteria:** There has continued to be a rise in referrals relating to the personal lives of adults who work and volunteer with children and transferrable risks to their workplace which require involvement of the LADO. Analysis of the work undertaken on fourth suitability criteria this year indicates that 'suitability' can at times be mis-interpreted to mean code of conduct issues within school that have not caused a child harm, and care needs to be taken to ensure our threshold is being correctly applied. These referrals require careful consideration, so that proportionate action is taken to address transferrable risk. Ongoing and careful monitoring of allegations under the fourth suitability criteria will be needed in the coming year.
- **Inter-agency working** arrangements remain strong with Thames Valley Police and the LADO has regular interactions with the MASH, the social care duty team, the early year advisors, WBC schools HR, and the school improvement team. There has been an identified need for an education safeguarding lead within WBC who could provide training and respond to some of the issues about conduct and behaviour which are being identified in education settings.

10. Author's key priorities in 2022-2023:

1. To maintain core business, providing a robust process for managing and reporting on allegations and other safeguarding concerns which require the involvement of the LADO, and to retain the option of virtual meetings, as they are efficient and working well.

2. To raise awareness and deliver training to promote and educate organisations, employers and carers across the children's workforce about how to report and manage allegations.
3. To continue to attend the Berkshire LADO Network, the South East Regional LADO Group and link in with the National LADO group to keep up to date and share good practice.

TITLE	Child Protection Annual Report 2021/22
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 November 2022
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Helen Watson

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

This report provides an overview of children subject to child protection plans; the activity relating to child protection conferences and the role of child protection chairs in quality assuring the safety planning for children at risk of ongoing significant harm and the contribution of multi-agency partners in their duty to safeguard children in the borough.

RECOMMENDATION

That this report is considered by the Overview and Scrutiny panel. For information and questions.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Consistently high number of CP plans during the year. Since April 2021 there has been between 161 and 179 children on CP plans. This is an increase on the previous year when it was between 139 and 161. At the end of 2021-22 there were 164 children (40.6 per 10,000), who were the subject of a Child Protection (CP) plan; an increase from 149 children at the end of 2020-21. During the year 199 children became subject to a CP plan compared to 158 in 2020-21. This increase in children on CP plans has been experienced by other LAs in Berkshire and the South East, and a recent audit of children on plans for a second and subsequent time suggests thresholds are being applied appropriately.

Capacity and Impact of the CP Conferencing service:

The workforce in the QAST team has remained stable and has continued to provide independent oversight and a consistent approach to chairing child protection conferences. CP Chairs have a dual IRO role in Wokingham, so the increased numbers of children in care and on CP Plans, along with the complexity of cases, has impacted on the workload of the team during 2021-22.

We are able to offer high quality hybrid meetings. The conference rooms have been upgraded to Teams meeting rooms so there is more capacity for fully face to face attendance or hybrid CP conferences with the CP Chair, parents and social worker attending in person and other professionals on Teams.

Promoting the child's voice in conferences:

The child protection agenda puts the focus on the voice of children being at the beginning of the conference. Social Workers are expected to engage with children and to use direct work techniques to gather the children's views, helping the conference to understand their lived experience, as well as capturing the needs of babies and non-verbal children who are not able to

express their views.

Advocacy: The Wokingham Advocate is an additional resource to help the conference gain an understanding of the child's perspective and to help young people who want to be supported to attend the conference and present their views themselves.

Background

Working Together to Safeguard Children, states that child protection conference chairs should be independent of operational and/or line management, and accountable to the Director of Children's Services. The team is structurally located outside of the line management of children's social care, to provide a greater degree of independence from the line- management of the case.

Analysis of Issues

Managing complex child protection issues and parental issues:

38% of ICPCs noted a combination of domestic abuse, mental health and substance misuse present for parents. This demonstrates the challenge for social workers working to safeguard children while also trying to engage parents who are dealing with enmeshed problems and who may not be ready or able to engage with services which could help. We do not record poverty or debt as a parental factor, but it is likely that many parents will struggle to manage the cost of living pressures in the coming year.

Managing complex family circumstances:

The CP Chairs are noting a greater complexity within CP conferences with families with different make ups, often meetings have to be arranged to accommodate different birth fathers for each child, separated and acrimonious parents, and the team have to take care about what information can be shared between attendees. This requires more split meetings, redacted minutes for some parents, longer conferences, and additional preparation for CP Chairs who are calling each parent before the conference.

Quoracy and involvement of agencies:

Quoracy has declined within the year. The child protection process is based on multi-agency arrangements and although local relationships with partner colleagues are positive with regular dialogue, we need to continue to monitor the contribution of each agency and to address any capacity issues or barriers which exist. Particularly the involvement of drug and alcohol, domestic abuse and mental health services.

Length and accessibility of CP plans provided to conference and parents:

The length of plans was noted by Ofsted in the last Focussed Visit, and in a recent audit and we have recently set up a working group to address this issue. We also want to ensure that plans are concise and easy to understand for parents who may have literacy needs, learning difficulties or where English is not their first language.

Children at risk of exploitation outside the home:

We do not have a CP plan category for children who are at risk of exploitation outside the home. It is therefore difficult to analyse the prevalence or trends in relation to these risks, and whether children at risk of exploitation are coming to ICPCs, or being managed under child in need plans, or under the child exploitation and missing process (EMRAC). This theme about having the appropriate meetings to cover the issues which are pertinent to these risks was noted in one of the Wokingham Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. Further work is planned for the coming

year to develop an agenda which can be used within CP conferences and Child in Need meetings. We will also consider how we can extract better data on exploitation as a risk factor for young people on CP Plans, by using the CP chairs QA tool.

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

Not applicable

Cross-Council Implications

Not applicable

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.

Climate Emergency – ***This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030***

Please state clearly what the impact of the decision being made would be on the Council's carbon neutral objective.

List of Background Papers

Child Protection Annual Report

Contact Liz McAuley

Service Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Standards

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**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Child Protection Annual Report 2021-22

Report completed by:

Liz McAuley, Service Manager, Quality Assurance and Safeguarding

Date of this report: July 2022

Date for next report: June 2023

1.	<p>Purpose of this Annual Report:</p> <p>To provide an overview of children subject to child protection plans; the activity relating to child protection conferences and the role of child protection chairs in quality assuring the safety planning for children at risk of ongoing significant harm and the contribution of multi-agency partners.</p>
2.	<p>Profile of Children on Child Protection Plans and conference activity 2021-22:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the end of 2021-22 there were 164 children (40.6 per 10,000), who were the subject of a Child Protection (CP) plan; an increase from 149 children at the end of 2020-21. During the year 199 children became subject to a CP plan compared to 158 in 2020-21. A total of 682 children were considered at CP conferences held over the course of the year which is significantly higher than 595 in 2020-21 and 627 in 2019-20. At the end of 2021-22, 22 children on CP plans were in care with the same CP Chair/IRO maintaining oversight. This was an increase from 18 at the end of March 2021. Of the 199 children who became subject to a CP Plan in the year, 5.7% had a subsequent child protection plan within 24 months which was a significant decrease on 12% the previous year. Of the 199 children subject to a child protection plan between 1/4/21 and 31/03/22, 29% had a previous child protection plan, which is significantly higher than March 2021 when it was 18.5%. Wokingham is now higher than England and the South East average. Neglect represents the highest proportion of CP Plans, followed by emotional abuse, with a smaller percentage of children being on CP Plans under Physical or Sexual abuse. At the end of the year, 5% of CP Plans were for sexual abuse which is slightly higher than the national average (4%). Over the past two years, the percentage of CP plans under the category of neglect has decreased from 63% to 56%, which is closer to the national average. Further improvement is needed on the timeliness of providing CP reports to the CP Chair and parents in advance of conferences. For ICPCs (reports shared within 2 days) this is 69% and for RCPCs (shared within 5 days) it is 36%. <p>Although the practice of sharing draft reports with parents in advance of meetings is now more embedded, the performance on meeting the procedural timescale remains low. A pilot carried out last year had made some progress, but further work is needed to improve this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The data on multi agency reports and attendance at conferences in 2021-22 suggests that agency attendance at child protection conferences has increased for all agencies except for drug and alcohol services, which is lower. This may be due to meetings being held virtually. <p>We do not have pre pandemic data to compare. In spite of this, quoracy has decreased and this may be due to the attendance at RCPCs where the attendance of health professionals has reduced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participation of parents increased in the year from 86% to 91% which may reflect the practice of holding virtual meetings. The QAST team's performance on the timeliness of initial conferences was 82% (a decrease from 85%) which was due to a number of pressures within the service in quarter four. 100% of review child protection conferences were held on time. The team's internal performance on child protection plans being sent out within 24 hours was 95% and

	minutes being sent within 20 working days was 87%. This performance was impacted by staff sickness in quarter four.
3.	<p>Emerging themes about the Child Protection system:</p> <p>Consistently high number of CP plans during the year: Since April 2021 there has been between 161 and 179 children on CP plans. This is an increase on the previous year when it was between 139 and 161. CP Chairs have a dual IRO role in Wokingham, so the increased numbers of children in care and on CP Plans, along with the complexity of cases, has impacted on the workload of the team during 2021-22. This increase in children on CP plans has been experienced by other LAs in Berkshire and the South East, and a recent audit of children on plans for a second and subsequent time suggests thresholds are being applied appropriately.</p> <p>Managing complex child protection issues and parental issues: 38% of ICPCs noted a combination of domestic abuse, mental health and substance misuse present for parents. This demonstrates the challenge for social workers working to safeguard children while also trying to engage parents who are dealing with enmeshed problems and who may not be ready or able to engage with services which could help. We do not record poverty or debt as a parental factor, but it is likely that many parents will struggle to manage the cost of living pressures in the coming year.</p> <p>Managing complex family circumstances: The CP Chairs are noting a greater complexity within CP conferences with families with different make ups, often meetings have to be arranged to accommodate different birth fathers for each child, separated and acrimonious parents, and the team have to take care about what information can be shared between attendees. This requires more split meetings, redacted minutes for some parents, longer conferences, and additional preparation for CP Chairs who are calling each parent before the conference.</p> <p>Quoracy and involvement of agencies: Quoracy has declined within the year. The child protection process is based on multi-agency arrangements and although local relationships with partner colleagues are positive with regular dialogue, we need to continue to monitor the contribution of each agency and to address any capacity issues or barriers which exist. Particularly the involvement of drug and alcohol, domestic abuse and mental health services.</p> <p>Length and accessibility of CP plans provided to conference and parents: The length of plans was noted by Ofsted in the last Focussed Visit, and in a recent audit and we have recently set up a working group to address this issue. We also want to ensure that plans are concise and easy to understand for parents who may have literacy needs, learning difficulties or where English is not their first language.</p> <p>Children at risk of exploitation outside the home: We do not have a CP plan category for children who are at risk of exploitation outside the home. It is therefore difficult to analyse the prevalence or trends in relation to these risks, and whether children at risk of exploitation are coming to ICPCs, or being managed under child in need plans, or under the child exploitation and missing process (EMRAC). This theme about having the appropriate meetings to cover the issues which are pertinent to these risks</p>

	<p>was noted in one of the Wokingham CSPRs. Further work is planned for the coming year to develop an agenda which can be used within CP conferences and Child in Need meetings. We will also consider how we can extract better data on exploitation as a risk factor for young people on CP Plans, by using the CP chairs QA tool.</p>
4.	<p>Capacity and Impact of the CP Conferencing service:</p> <p>Stable team: The workforce in the QAST team has remained stable and has continued to provide independent oversight and a consistent approach to chairing child protection conferences.</p> <p>We are able to offer high quality hybrid meetings: The conference rooms at Wokingham library have been upgraded to Teams meeting rooms so there is more capacity for fully face to face attendance or hybrid CP conferences with the CP Chair, parents and social worker attending in person and other professionals on Teams.</p> <p>Promoting the child's voice in conferences: The child protection agenda puts the focus on the voice of children being at the beginning of the conference. Social Workers are expected to engage with children and to use direct work techniques to gather the children's views, helping the conference to understand their lived experience, as well as capturing the needs of babies and non-verbal children who are not able to express their views.</p> <p>Advocacy: The Wokingham Advocate is an additional resource to help the conference gain an understanding of the child's perspective and to help young people who want to be supported to attend the conference and present their views themselves. The Advocate had 33 contacts with 62 children subject to the child protection process during the year, which is an increase on the previous year.</p>
5.	<p>The key strategic priorities of the CP conferencing service in 2022-23 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consistently provide good quality child protection conferences which promote the child's voice, the participation of parents and partners, and which produce a clear and concise plan which sets out the desired outcomes for the child and review conferences; to help drive forward the plan for the child. • To raise awareness about child protection processes and the wider issues relating to best practice, and the learning from local and national child safeguarding practice reviews cases. This will include work to promote awareness about the purpose of CP conferences and to promote participation by families and partner agency colleagues. In Wokingham we have had two significant reviews in 2021-22 which have provided learning about sexual abuse, neglect and harm outside of the home. • To demonstrate the effectiveness of the CP conferences with clear examples of what difference CP chairs in making in overseeing CP plans for children. This will include clearly demonstrating challenge and follow up when CP plans are not progressing as planned, or when the child's voice is not being presented to the conference, when parents are not receiving reports in advance of meetings or the partnership arrangements are not working as expected.

	The quarterly and annual reporting mechanisms enable this information to be shared with managers, senior leaders in Children's Services and the Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership.
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1. Introduction and purpose

1.1 This annual report provides an overview of children subject to child protection plans. This comprises:

the activity relating to child protection conferences, the role of child protection chairs in quality assuring the safety planning for children at risk of ongoing significant harm, and the contribution of multi-agency partners.

2. Staffing structure

2.1 Working Together to Safeguard Children, states that child protection conference chairs should be independent of operational and/or line management, and accountable to the Director of Children's Services.

The team is structurally located outside of the line management of children's social care, to provide a greater degree of independence from the line- management of the case.

2.2 The responsibility for the activity and the development of the service is held by the Service Manager for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding. The staffing establishment on 31 March 2022 was one Service Manager for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding, and five full-time equivalent child protection chairs/independent reviewing officers (IRO).

There are currently four full time post holders and one team member working 3 days per week. The (Local Authority) Designated Officer, has a dual role as a child protection (CP) conference chair, two days per week and this has added extra capacity to the team.

2.3 The staff employed are able to perform a dual role. IROs provide continuity for children receiving services in the child protection arena who then come into the care system.

The team of independent chairs is made up of six females; all are white British. One CP Chair is a part time worker. The team is conscious that it is not ethnically diverse, but all have different perspectives and backgrounds and seek to learn about the unique lived experiences of others.

2.5 The Chairs are supported by an administrative team who arrange and send out invites, minute conferences and circulate decisions and reports. The administrators are managed by the Administration Team Leader who puts in place systems and processes, and monitors performance.

3. Statistical Data - 2021-22

Numbers of children subject to Child Protection Plans

- 3.1** At the end of 2021-22 there were 164 children (40.6 per 10,000), who were subject to a Child Protection (CP) plan; an increase from 149 children at the end of 2020-21. During the year 199 children became subject to a CP plan compared to 158 in 2020-21. The range over the year has been between 171 in July 2021 and 159 in January 2022.

Table 1: Numbers of children subject to Child Protection Plans

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
No Children subject to CPP at end of months	161	166	169	171	166	166	163	161	160	159	168	164	n/a
Rates per 10,000 population	39.8	41.1	41.8	42.3	41.1	41.1	40.3	39.8	39.6	39.3	41.6	40.6	n/a
No Children who became subject to CPP in month	23	27	13	10	6	13	13	22	8	20	21	23	199
No of Children who ceased to be subject to CPP in month	11	22	10	8	11	13	17	28	9	23	13	28	184

- 3.2** During the year, 184 children ceased to be subject to a CP plan, compared to 151 in 2020-21. Of the children ceasing to be subject to a child protection plan, 159 stepped down to child in need plans (an increase from 107 in 2021), 33 children came into care (an increase on 20) and 22 moved or were transferred out, which is an increase from 18 the previous year.

Child Protection conferences by type

Table 1 - Child protection conferences by type, 2021-22

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
ICPC	19	26	14	10	6	14	12	20	10	21	26	23	201
RCPC	25	47	37	51	27	42	37	42	27	63	32	55	485

- 3.3** A total of 686 children were considered at CP conferences held over the course of the year. This is significantly higher than 595 in 2020-21 and 627 in 2019-20. 201 children were the subject of an initial conference (an increase from 165 in 2020-21) and 485 were considered at review child protection conferences, an increase from 397 in 2020-21.

There have been 16 pre-birth conferences over the last year. This is an increase from 11 in 2020-21. Eight children were transferred in from other local authorities, and seven moved or transferred out. A 'paper review' takes place for children who have transferred out as the responsibility has transferred to the receiving local authority.

Profile of Children on Child Protection Plans: ethnicity, age, gender and disability

Ethnicity

Table 2: Children subject to CPP by ethnicity

Ethnic group	No on CPP – England 2019-20	No. on CPP – WBC Mar 22	WBC as a whole	WBC Children in care
White	73%	55% (91)	82.4%	62%
Mixed	9%	5% (8)	6.25%	18%
Asian or Asian British	7%	5% (8)	9.73%	13%
Black or Black British	5%	0% (0)	1.63%	7%
Other Ethnic Groups and unknown or refused ethnicity	6%	35% (57)		

Department for Education (2020 Characteristics of children in need in England) not 100%

It can be noted that the percentage of white British children on plans (55%) is significantly lower than England at 73%. The percentage of children of mixed heritage decreased from 7% to 5% this year and is lower than the England average at 9%.

There was a decrease in the percentage of Black/Black British from 2% to 0% at the end of the year. Asian or Asian British (5%) is also lower than England but 'other ethnic groups' has increased from 4% to 35% which is significantly higher than previous years and with the England average. This data has been checked three times, but it may need to be checked again as it indicates an unusual trend. There is also some disparity with the ethnic breakdown of children on CP plans and population of children in care in the borough, with no children on CP plans being Black or Black British compared with 7% children in care in Wokingham. This may require further exploration, through auditing activity in the coming year.

A project is also underway to try to capture more detail in the way ethnicity is recorded to better represent the group of young people described as mixed/other due to them representing a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

3.7 Age

The age profile of children subject to Child Protection Plans is based on a snapshot at the end of the year. The end of year split is broadly in line with the previous year, and also in line with the national statistics. We do however have more 5-9 and 10-15 year olds compared to national statistics.

Table 3 – Children subject to CPP by age at 31/03/22

Age	Unborn	0-1	1-4	5-9	10-15	16 +
No of children – Wokingham (March 21)	0	17 (10%)	27 (17%)	67 (41%)	60 (36%)	5 (3%)

No of children - England	2%	9%	25%	29%	31%	5%
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Department for Education (2020 Characteristics of children in need in England)

3.8 Gender

Table 4: Children subject to CPP by gender

Gender	No on CPP WBC Mar 22	No on CPP – WBC Mar 21	No on CPP – England 2020-21
Female	53% (88)	51% (77)	48%
Male	46% (75)	48% (72)	50%
Unborn	1% (1)	1% (1)	2%

Department for Education (2020 Characteristics of children in need in England)

Of the 164 children subject to Child Protection Plans at the end of March 2022, 88 (53%) were female; an increase from 77 (51%) in March 2021 and slightly higher than the average for England (48%).

There were 75 (46%) males, lower than the average for England (50%). One CP plan at the end of the year (1%) was for an unborn child. The gap in male and females on CP plans has grown slightly since the previous year when the split was 51% female and 48% male.

3.9 Children with Disabilities on CP Plans

At the end of March 2022, 13 children on child protection plans were recorded on mosaic as having a health need or disability. There was one child on a CP plan allocated to the children with disabilities team. which was a reduction from three children on CP plans at the end of 2020-21.

3.10 Children in care on CP Plans (dual plans)

At the end of 2021-22, 22 children on CP plans were in care with the same CP Chair/IRO maintaining oversight. This is an increase from 18 at the end of March 2021. The team follows the Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership child protection procedures, so that when a child who was subject to a child protection plan comes into care, they will have their first child in care review joint with the review child protection conference.

The aim is for children to only have a CP Plan and Care Plan (dual plan) for a short period and if possible, to cease by the time of the first child in care review. This process provides continuity of planning and also reflects the need to manage risk while longer term care options are being assessed.

The reason for this higher number at the end of the year appears to be due to a number of children in court proceedings who are placed with parents in assessment processes, or where review child protection conferences were pending to remove the child protection plan.

4. Activity in relation to Child Protection Plans

Children on CP Plans for second and subsequent time

- 4.1** The tables below show the proportion of children that have been made subject to a plan for the second or subsequent time in 24 months and second or subsequent time ever. This indicator requires careful monitoring as it may suggest that the decision to end the child protection plan had been premature or that the step-down arrangements were not robust enough.

A system is in place whereby requests for Child Protection Conferences involving children who have previously been on a plan are flagged with the Service Manager for Safeguarding and the S47 is then reviewed with the team manager to understand the reasons for the case coming back into the child protection processes.

An audit has been commissioned to provide more detailed analysis of the reasons for this, and so learning can be identified to apply to current cases which are approaching step down and closure.

Table 5: Children subject to a CPP for a second or subsequent time (within 24 months)

Indicators	WBC Jun 21	WBC Sep 21	WBC Dec 21	WBC Mar 22
Children who became subject of a CPP for a second or subsequent time in 24 months	9.5%	7.2%	0%	5.7%

- 4.2** Of the 199 children that became subject to a CP Plan in the year, 5.7% had a subsequent child protection plan within 24 months, a significant decrease on 12% the previous year. Children who cease to be subject to CP Plans have a trajectory as part of their plan. This provides a pathway towards closing the case and includes a step down to a child in need plan for at least three months. This helps to ensure that the work done on the CP plan has been continued, and that there is a family and professional network in place to support the children beyond case closure.

Table 6: Children subject to a CPP for a second or subsequent time (ever) 2021-22

Indicators	WBC Jun 21	WBC Sep 21	WBC Dec 21	WBC Mar 22	England	South East
Children who became subject of a CPP for a second or subsequent time ever	16.6%	20.89%	3.5%	28.9%	21.9%	23.4%

Department for Education (2020 Characteristics of children in need in England)

- 4.3** Of the 199 children subject to a child protection plan between 1/4/21 and 31/03/22, 29% had a previous child protection plan. This is significantly higher than March 2021 when it was 18.5%. Wokingham is now higher than the England and South East average.

- 4.4** This indicator has been rising throughout the year and it is more difficult to identify trends when children come back into the process after a significant period without a CP Plan. One reason may be that many families are vulnerable to chronic issues such as domestic abuse, mental health problems and substance misuse. These issues can re-emerge as they have additional pressures, larger families, new partners and changing circumstances.

Table 7: Child protection plans lasting 2 years or more

Indicator	WBC Jun 21	WBC Sep 21	WBC Dec 21	WBC Mar 22	England	South East
Children who have ceased to be the subject of a CPP who remained on a plan for 2 years or over	0.5%	0%	0%	3.7%	3.6%	0%

Department for Education (2020 Characteristics of children in need in England)

- 4.5** Good performance is indicated by a low percentage; however, it is recognised that some children need to be subject to a child protection plan for longer. At the end of March 2021-22, six children (three families) who had been subject to a plan for over two years. This is an increase from one at the same time last year and is higher than the England average.

The reasons are primarily related to cases going into pre proceedings (PLO) and court proceedings after a significant time on CP plans, or when there has been a change of circumstances or new concerns requiring additional work on the CP plan. These cases are monitored via a tracker system within CSC by the QAST team and are highlighted in weekly performance data.

In completing this annual report, we have identified that the DfE calculate this differently from the way in which we have historically counted children on plans for over two years. When children have been on plans twice, the DfE add the length of the first and second plan and when this is done, it shows that Wokingham is low in the country in terms of national performance. Going forward, we need to ensure we monitor this indicator in the same way as the DfE.

Chairs receive a weekly report indicating the length of plans and the manager is reviewing the plans over one year in supervision with a view to avoiding plans reaching the two year point. At the time of writing the number of CP plans for two years has reduced.

4.6 Duration of CPP's which ceased during the for year

Table 1 – CPP's ceased in the year

		0-3 months		3-6 months		6-12 months		1-2 years		2 years and over	
	Total CPP	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%

England CPP ceased 2019-20	66,970	12,520	18.7%	7,610	11.4%	28,350	42.3%	16,100	24%	2,400	3.6%
Total CPP ceased 2020-21	148	26	18%	7	5%	65	44%	49	33%	1	1%
WBC CPP ceased Apr 21- Jun 21	43	2	5%	15	35%	16	37%	9	21%	1	2%
WBC CPP ceased Jul 21- Sept 21	32	5	16%	2	6%	12	38%	13	41%	0	0%
WBC CPP ceased Oct 21- Dec 21	48	0	0%	4	8%	25	52%	15	31%	4	8%
WBC CPP ceased Jan 22- Mar 22	61	9	15%	1	2%	33	54%	18	30%	0	0%
Total CPP ceased 2021-22	184	16	10.3%	22	12%	86	47%	55	30%	5	2.7%

Department for Education (2020 Characteristics of children in need in England)

- 4.7** The table above shows the duration of CP Plans for the year. Of the 184 children who ceased to be subject to a child protection plan during the year, the majority had been on a CP Plan for 6-12 months (47% increase from 44%). This is followed by 30% requiring 1-2 years on a CP plan, which is in line with the previous year.

2.7% of children had been on plans for two years, an increase from 1%. 10.3% had been subject to a plan for three months, a decrease from 18% which may indicate good practice (not stepping down too soon) or children who come into care remaining on CP plans for longer. Analysis indicates that this is due to cases being in pre court (PLO) or court proceedings and requiring a dual plan for longer.

5. Performance on child protection conferences

Timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences

Table 2 – ICPC taking place within 15 working days of strategy discussion, 2021-22

2021-22	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
No. of ICPC	19	26	15	10	6	14	12	21	10	21	27	25	206
No. of ICPC's held within timescales	18	18	13	7	6	14	7	21	10	17	21	13	165
% completed within timescales	95%	69%	87%	70%	100%	100%	58%	100%	100%	81%	78%	52%	80%

- 5.1** The table above shows that 80% of conferences were held within 15 days of the strategy discussion that initiated the Section 47, a decrease from 84% last year. There have been several months with 100% held within the timeframe.

There is a well embedded system in place for social workers to provisionally book ICPCs as soon as the strategy meeting has been held and the S47 initiated. The child protection administrators closely monitor the timescales and this approach works well. The main reasons for delay are:

- requests for ICPC's being made too late to set up conferences within the 15 days
- the availability of parents or other professionals particularly in school holiday periods
- capacity issues within the QAST team in quarter four.

Timeliness of Child Protection Reviews:

Table 3 : Child Protection Review timescales

Indicators		WBC Jun 21	WBC Sep 21	WBC Dec 21	WBC Mar 22
Child protection reviews within timescales		100%	100%	100%	100%
Indicators	WBC 2021-22	England 2019-20		South East 2019-20	
Child protection reviews within timescales	100%	91.5%		89.5%	

Department for Education (2020 Characteristics of children in need in England)

- 5.2** The table above shows the percentage of Review Child Protection Conferences that were reviewed within statutory timescales during 2021-22 and the previous years and compares performance.

This is a snapshot of the number of children with a CPP on 31st March who at that date had a plan continuously for the previous 3 months. Systems are in place to book conferences at approximately five months into the CPP, to allow for time if a conference has to be reconvened.

The performance indicator is cumulative and reports that 100% of conferences have been held in timescale, which is higher than comparators (England 91.5% and South East 89.5%). This was a busy year for the team working with higher numbers on CP plans and an increase in children in care, so we are very pleased with the performance on timeliness of review conferences.

Timeliness of social worker reports to conference:

Table 11 – Social worker report received at least 2 days before initial conference, 2021-22

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Annual
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No of ICPC	19	26	15	10	6	18	12	21	10	21	27	25	210
No of reports in timescale	15	10	10	6	5	9	8	21	10	8	19	23	144
% Of reports in timescale	79%	39%	67%	60%	83%	50%	67%	100%	100%	38%	70%	92%	69%

5.3 The table above shows the performance on providing a completed signed off report to the CP Chair and the parents within 2 days of the conference. This performance measure denotes good practice in preparing for the meeting and being aware of all the information in advance. The performance for the year based on the average is 69%. The monthly scores indicate that practice is inconsistent.

5.4 The table below for RCPCs to be submitted within 5 days 36% annual average. Although the practice of sharing draft reports with parents in advance of meetings is now more embedded, the performance on meeting the procedural timescale remains low.

A pilot carried out last year with one team and although some progress had been made, the highest monthly score was 53% so further work is needed to improve this indicator, which as noted above is evidence of good practice and preparation.

Table 12 – Social workers report received at least 5 days before review conference, 2021-22

	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Annual
No of RCPC	25	47	37	51	29	46	37	43	30	63	34	56	498
No of reports in timescale	11	13	11	10	12	14	17	18	12	20	18	21	177
% Of reports in timescale	44%	27%	30%	20%	41%	30%	46%	42%	40%	32%	53%	38%	36%

5.5 Berkshire Child Protection Procedures set a timescale for ICPC reports to be provided to the parents and the Chair two working days before the ICPC, and five working days before the RCPC.

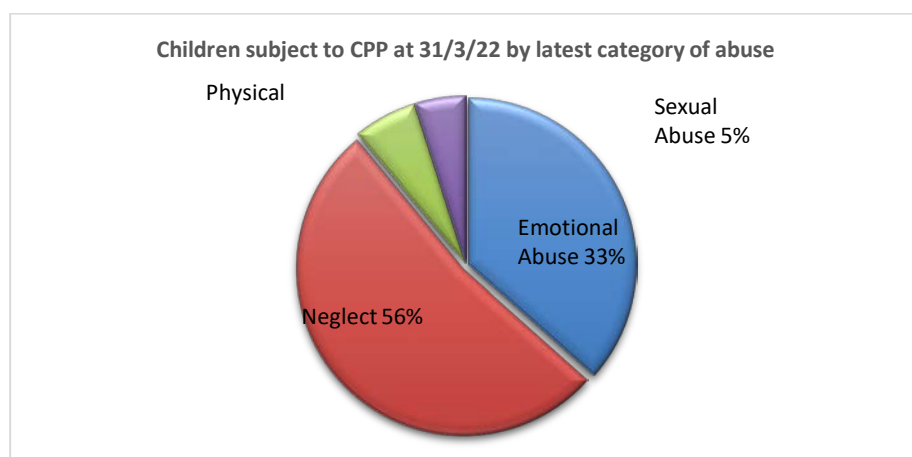
This timescale was recently reviewed in the procedures group and the decision was made to retain the five-day timescales, which are felt to be beneficial to parents and help them prepare for conferences. The performance for reports to ICPCs has varied throughout the year. Not receiving reports impacts on the preparation of the family, the Chair and the quality of the conference and is often a noted in feedback and complaints from parents.

5.6 Further improvement is needed on the timeliness of providing CP reports to the CP Chair and parents in advance of conferences. For ICPCs (reports shared within 2 days) this is 69%, and for

RCPCs (shared within 5 days) it is 36%.

Although the practice of sharing draft reports with parents in advance of meetings is now more embedded, the performance on meeting the procedural timescale remains low. A pilot carried out last year had made some progress, but further work is needed to improve this indicator.

6. Categories of Abuse and Parental Risk Factors



- 6.1** At the conclusion of a conference, professionals decide which category of abuse captures the type of significant harm children have suffered or may suffer. Recording a category of abuse in the conference than in traditional types of conference but recording a category helps to identify trends.

The chart above shows that neglect makes up the highest percentage, followed by emotional abuse, with a smaller percentage of children being on CP Plans under Physical or Sexual abuse. At the end of the year, 5% of CP Plans were for sexual abuse which is higher than the national average of 4%.

Table 13: Child Protection Plans at end of quarter by latest category of abuse

Latest Category of Abuse	WBC Jun 21	WBC Sep 21	WBC Dec 21	WBC Mar 22	England Percentage 2020-21
Emotional Abuse	35% (59)	40% (66)	39% (84)	33% (54)	38%
Neglect	55% (93)	51% (86)	52% (112)	56% (92)	50%
Physical Abuse	8% (14)	7% (11)	7% (15)	6% (10)	6%
Sexual Abuse	2% (3)	2% (3)	3% (6)	5% (8)	4%
Multiple Categories	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	2%

Department for Education (2020 Characteristics of children in need in England)

- 6.2** At the end of quarter two, there was a decrease in plans under the category of neglect and Wokingham was closer to the England average. By the end of the year however, the percentage rose to 56% compared to 50% for England.

Neglect encompasses physical and emotional neglect, or failure to protect. It is often linked to parental issues such as substance misuse, mental health or a combination of factors which result in a child's needs not being met. The breakdown of parental risk factors below provides further detail.

Table 4 : Parental factors and sub-categories of Child Protection Plans: 2021-22

Parental risk factors	ICPCs - 214	RCPCs - 491
Domestic abuse (DA)	150 (70%)	254 (52%)
Mental Health MH)	106 (49%)	212 (43%)
Drug and Alcohol (D&A)	76 (35%)	150 (30%)
DA, MH and D&A present	82 (38%)	60 (12%)

- 6.3** Domestic abuse is the most prevalent factor at ICPCs and RCPCs, followed by mental health and substance misuse. Anecdotally, there is a view that many of the situations being referred are more complex, and that harm to some children is of a more serious level.

We can measure complexity to some degree by highlighting conferences where there are multiple parental risk factors impacting on children. The table above shows that 38% of ICPCs noted all three risk factors above were present. This demonstrates the challenge for social workers working to safeguard children, while also trying to engage parents who are dealing with enmeshed problems and who may not be ready or able to engage with services that could help.

The CP Chairs are noting a greater complexity within CP conferences from families with different make ups. Meetings often have to be arranged to accommodate different birth fathers for each child, separated and acrimonious parents, and the team have to take care when sharing information between attendees.

This requires more split meetings, redacted minutes for some parents, longer conferences, and additional preparation for CP Chairs who are calling each parent before the conference.

Table 15 - Parental risk factors per quarter

Parental risk factors – 2021-22	Q1 ICPCs (68)	Q1 RCPCs (104)	Q2 ICPCs (30)	Q2 RCPCs (131)	Q3 ICPCs (44)	Q3 RCPCs (106)	Q4 ICPCs (72)	Q4 RCPCs (150)
Domestic abuse (DA)	34 (50%)	55 (52%)	14 (47%)	70 (53%)	25 (56%)	51 48%	43 (60%)	78 (52%)

Mental Health issues (MH)	34 (50%)	27 (26%)	17 (57%)	58 (42%)	28 (62%)	43 (40%)	27 (37%)	84 (56%)
Drug & Alcohol issues (D&A)	18 (26%)	38 (47%)	15 (50%)	28 (21%)	19 (42%)	34 (32%)	24 (37%)	50 (33%)
DA, MH and D&A present	10 (15%)	17 (16%)	10 (33%)	13 (10%)	15 (33%)	11 (10%)	17 (24%)	19 (13%)
Emotional abuse present	45 (66%)	49 (47%)	19 (63%)	74 (56%)	35 (77%)	56 (53%)	50 (69%)	99 (66%)

7. Conference Quorum and partner agency involvement

Table 5 – Conference Quoracy, 2021-22

2021-22	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Inquorate	15 (9%)	41 (25%)	19 (13%)	46 (20%)	121 (17%)
Quorate	157 (91%)	118 (74 %)	130 (87%)	177 (79%)	582 (83%)
Not known or transfer out conference	0	2 (1%)	5 (3%)	4 (1.7%)	11 (2%)

7.1 The table above shows the performance on quoracy, defined as the attendance of two other agencies in addition to children's social care. In 2021-22 quoracy increased slightly from 81.5% to 83%. Some children have a small number of professionals involved, (e.g., for pre-birth conferences some will always be inquorate due to only involving a midwife). In such cases the conference will go ahead, however, in other situations the Chair may decide not to proceed, such as when key professionals are missing.

The service aims for a high percentage of quorate conferences. 17% of conferences were inquorate, an increase from 12% in 2020-21 and closer to 19% in 2019-20. Some are recorded as not known or were transfer out conferences, held as paper reviews due to the conference being held in another area.

8. Administration of Child Protection Conferences

Table 18 - Completion and distribution of conference plans and minutes by QAST team

2021-22	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual average
Number of Conferences	176	164	150	211	701
CP plans sent within 24 hours of the conference	167 (95%)	164 (100%)	139 (93%)	195 (92%)	665 (95%)
CP Minutes sent within 20 working days of the conference	167 95%	162 (99%)	140 (93%)	144 (68%)	613 (87%)

- 8.1** The administration team prepares conference invitations, reports and conference packs, minute taking, typing up and circulating child protection plans and records). The administrators collate the details of children on Child Protection Plans on a weekly basis. The administrators also manage the list of children on child protection plans who are temporarily resident in the WBC. Although there is room for improvement, the systems in place for completing distributing minutes and plans are working well. The dip in performance in quarter four is due to staff sickness.

9. Child Participation in the conference process

- 9.1** The table below captures the overall percentage of child participation which includes attendance, as well as the views of the child being represented by an advocate or another adult at the meeting.

The child protection agenda puts the focus on the voice of children being at the beginning of the conference. Social Workers are expected to use direct work techniques to gather the children's views and present them at the ICPC's.

The needs of babies, younger children and non-verbal children with disabilities or communication issues should also be presented to help the conference focus on the child. The Wokingham Advocate is an additional resource to help the conference gain an understanding of the child's perspective and to help young people who want to be supported to attend the conference and present their views themselves.

Advocacy: The Wokingham Advocate is an additional resource to help the conference gain an understanding of the child's perspective and to help young people who want to be supported to attend the conference and present their views themselves. The Advocate had 33 contacts with 62 children subject to the child protection process during the year, which is an increase on the previous year.

This work has involved:

- attending conferences with children and young people or on their behalf
- sharing the voice of the child in the conference
- attending professionals' meetings on their behalf.

Table 19 - Child Participation in the conference process

Participation	End 2021-22	End 2020-21
CP9 - Percentage of CPC Participation - Children aged 7-11	93%	90%
CP10 - Percentage of CPC Participation - Children aged 12+	96%	94%

10. Participation of parents

Table 19 – Parental participation

Participation - Parents	End 2021-22	End of 2020-21
CP8 - Percentage of parents attending CP Conferences	91%	86%

10.1 Parents are invited to attend conferences. When they are not able to do so, the CP Chairs endeavour to ensure that their views are presented and heard in the conference. This increased from 86% to 91% in 2021-22.

10.2 Throughout the pandemic, when safe to do so, the team offered parents the opportunity to attend in person if they desired to do so or did not have access to reliable technology. The take up of face-to-face meetings was low, and since the government restrictions changed in March 2022, we have been promoting face to face initial conferences.

The number of parents attending is slowly increasing, but this has been impacted by high rates of Covid since March. Many parents still report that they prefer the convenience of virtual meeting, the common reasons being not having to travel or arrange childcare. Some parents also feel safer and more comfortable attending meetings from their own homes. The Chairs, however, feel that meeting parents at ICPCs in person is beneficial, and will progress the plan more effectively than virtual meetings.

11 Parental feedback

11.1 The QAST team has sought and analysed feedback from family members and professionals attending conferences at several points in the year. The team has used a mix of electronic feedback forms which we collate and read. Additionally, the team sought direct feedback by phoning parents twice over the year.

Although these samples were small, the team felt it was a useful exercise because the conversations provided some helpful feedback and are now exploring ways in which the team can demonstrate how the feedback is helping to improve the service.

12. Challenge and oversight

12.1 During the year, the CP chairs recorded 420 case notes on by way of CP chair oversight. There have been seven challenges recorded on Mosaic, in addition to more informal exchanges by conversations and email. This is a decrease from seventeen in 2020-21, but chairs continue to raise issues informally and in the course of their preparation for conferences.

They have also been holding pre-meetings with social workers, joining meetings to review the danger statements and safety goals before conferences, and this has helped to iron out issues in advance.

Challenges have related to:

- missing documentation/paperwork
- core groups not being held between conferences
- the plan not progressing for the children
- concern about lack of progress on CP Plans

12.2 Compliments and good practice:

Areas of good practice have also been identified by the CP Chairs and passed back to the individual workers and their managers. They are recorded in the compliments log. Additionally, the CP Chairs have received some positive feedback in 2021-22.

Compliments from conference participants:

'I thought that the Chair was amazing. She kept on task, had empathy and respect for everyone at the meeting and I felt she put everyone at ease at a difficult time'.

'The Chair was very professional in handling the conference, she went straight to the point. She ensured that confidentiality was maintained throughout. Furthermore, all professionals involved contributed positively to ensuring the success of the conference.... We didn't know what to expect from the conference as that was the very first time, we came across the term "child protection" As parents we felt that we are the ones that have parental responsibility and therefore should be protecting our children.... As a family there has been a lot of positives for us, there has been lessons learnt and adjustments made which has had a positive impact on our family relationship'.

'I wanted to feedback was how much he appreciated you as the chair and felt that you were the first person to identify that the parent's mental health was a significant issue that needed addressing. I think that he found your approach respectful and supportive.'

Compliment from CP Chair to a social worker:

"I wanted to highlight the excellent work that you have done - Your report provided a balance of what is going on and highlighted the gaps in the work that needs to be completed. Your approach to this family is respectful and gentle, both of which have enabled you to undertake direct work with the children and work on triggers with the parents."

13. Emerging themes about the Child Protection system in 2021-22

• **Consistently high number of CP plans during the year:**

Since April 2021 there has been between 161 and 179 children on CP plans. This is an increase on the previous year when it was between 139 and 161. CP Chairs have a dual IRO role in Wokingham, so the increased numbers of children in care and on CP Plans, along with the complexity of cases, has impacted on the workload of the team during 2021-22. This increase in children on CP plans has been experienced by other LAs in Berkshire and the South East, and a recent audit of children

on plans for a second and subsequent time suggests thresholds are being applied appropriately.

- **Managing complex child protection issues and parental issues:**

38% of ICPCs noted a combination of domestic abuse, mental health and substance misuse present for parents. This demonstrates the challenge for social workers working to safeguard children while also trying to engage parents who are dealing with enmeshed problems and who may not be ready or able to engage with services which could help. We do not record poverty or debt as a parental factor, but it is likely that many parents will struggle to manage the cost of living pressures in the coming year.

- **Managing complex family circumstances:**

The CP Chairs are noting a greater complexity within CP conferences with families with different make ups, often meetings have to be arranged to accommodate different birth fathers for each child, separated and acrimonious parents, and the team have to take care about what information can be shared between attendees. This requires more split meetings, redacted minutes for some parents, longer conferences, and additional preparation for CP Chairs who are calling each parent before the conference.

- **Quoracy and involvement of agencies:**

Quoracy has declined within the year. The child protection process is based on multi-agency arrangements and although local relationships with partner colleagues are positive with regular dialogue, we need to continue to monitor the contribution of each agency and to address any capacity issues or barriers which exist. Particularly the involvement of drug and alcohol, domestic abuse and mental health services.

- **Length and accessibility of CP plans provided to conference and parents:**

The length of plans was noted by Ofsted in the last Focussed Visit, and in a recent audit and we have recently set up a working group to address this issue. We also want to ensure that plans are concise and easy to understand for parents who may have literacy needs, learning difficulties or where English is not their first language.

- **Children at risk of exploitation outside the home:**

We do not have a CP plan category for children who are at risk of exploitation outside the home. It is therefore difficult to analyse the prevalence or trends in relation to these risks, and whether children at risk of exploitation are coming to ICPCs, or being managed under child in need plans, or under the child exploitation and missing process (EMRAC). This theme about having the appropriate meetings to cover the issues which are pertinent to these risks was noted in one of the Wokingham CSPRs. Further work is planned for the coming year to develop an agenda which can be used within CP conferences and Child in Need meetings. We will also consider how we can extract better data on exploitation as a risk factor for young people on CP Plans, by using the CP chairs QA tool.

14 Summary:

Throughout 2021-22, the CP chairs and conferencing team adapted to the challenge of living with COVID-19 and have been able to flex and change as the pandemic has progressed. This has been helped by having a stable workforce and experienced CP chairs. We are now in a new phase of doing more face-to-face meetings, while retaining virtual and hybrid options. Moving back to where we were pre-pandemic seems a long way off, but we feel this needs to be done with incremental change over time. The service has had a challenging year, dealing with capacity issues within the team alongside a significant increase in children coming into care and on CP Plans. We have reviewed our priorities and

plans for the coming year, which are set out below. The child protection process is based on multi-agency arrangements, and although local relationships with partner colleagues are positive and we have regular dialogue, we need to continue to monitor the contribution of each agency and to address any capacity issues or barriers which exist.

The key strategic priorities of the CP conferencing service in 2022-23 are:

- **To consistently provide good quality child protection conferences** which promote the child's voice, the participation of parents and partners, and which produce a clear and concise plan setting out the desired outcomes for the child. For review conferences to help drive forward the plan for the child.
- **To raise awareness about child protection processes and the wider issues relating to best practice and the learning from local and national child safeguarding practice reviews cases.** This will include work to promote awareness about the purpose of CP conferences, and to promote participation by families and partner agency colleagues. In Wokingham, we have had two significant reviews in 2021-22 which have provided valuable learning about sexual abuse, neglect and harm outside of the home.
- **To demonstrate the effectiveness of the CP conferences** with clear examples of what difference CP chairs in making in overseeing CP plans for children. This will include clearly demonstrating challenge and follow up when CP plans are not progressing as planned, or when the child's voice is not being presented to the conference, when parents are not receiving reports in advance of meetings or the partnership arrangements are not working as expected.

TITLE	Key Performance Indicators
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 November 2022
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Helen Watson

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Children's Services performance indicators underpin the council's priorities and principles to focus on every child reaching their potential and looking after the vulnerable.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Children's Services performance indicators be noted.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The timing of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee means that the information reported against in each performance indicator relates to the position at the end of September 2022.

Background

Wokingham Borough Council is responsible for effective delivery of services to the children and young people in the community.

The key performance indicators are monitored to improve the quality of the delivery of the services.

Analysis of Issues

Detailed analysis in the report.

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.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

Please state clearly what the impact of the decision being made would be on the Council's carbon neutral objective.

List of Background Papers

n/a

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Introduction

This report covers Children's Services performance during July, August and September 2022, which will be referred to as quarter two (Q2) throughout this report.

Dashboard Item 1 – Funded Education, Health & Care Plans

Measure	2020-21	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Direction of Travel
Current EHCPs placed in borough (snapshot at end of period)	783	806	865	912	976	973	↓
Current EHCPs placed out of borough (snapshot at end of period)	416	462	511	514	507	499	↓
EHCPs issued within 20 weeks of the referral	75.1%	87.7%	71.8%	69.0%	63.6%	50.6%	↓

What does this show us?

The numbers of Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) funded by Wokingham Borough Council where the children are placed in the borough has decreased slightly since last quarter. The total number of EHCPs between the same period last year and this quarter have risen by 16%.

The percentage of plans issued within the 20-week period continues to decrease.

What is the background to this?

The total number of requests during July to September 2022 is 87, lower than previous quarter, when it was 116. This decrease would be expected year on year for this quarter as it includes the summer holidays where schools are shut and so requests are minimal.

There have been delays in receiving information from other partners which are attributed to service capacity issues, combined with the increased volume in requests received. When information is not received on time, the timelines of the assessment process administered with SEND is restricted.

The CCG who provides Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy reports are struggling with their capacity for therapists. The Speech and Language reports are often submitted on time but there is currently a large backlog of children waiting for OT reports. The Educational Psychologist Service are currently only doing statutory work to attempt to keep up with the rise in assessment requests. However, in line with many other LAs, they are understaffed and struggling to recruit. Without the Educational Psychologist report the SEND service are unable to move to the next stage in the process and make a decision on whether to issue an EHCP. This means that the rest of the timeline is already delayed and we are required to give parents their statutory timescales to review an EHCP if it is issued.

As Wokingham does not have a Further Education college, most of the post-16 cohort were placed in out of Borough provision.

What action is the service taking?

The service's focus remains on continuing to enhance the timeliness of EHC Plans. The SEND Team is proactively working with the partners to improve the information submission timescales. However, the SEND Team is very limited in what they can do to improve this as it sits with external teams. The SEND Team work as quickly as they can once information is received to move it onto the next stage and attempt to stay within the 20-week deadline.

What is the national context?

This quarter's timeliness is now below both the 2021 national average (57.9%) and that of statistical neighbours (57.89%).

Dashboard Item 2 – Early Help

Measure	2021-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to Early Help	1474	314	362	349	489	312	↓
No. Early Help Assessments	1233	337	281	294	375	328	↓
Avg. length of time in days between referral and assessment completion	24	23	30	25	22	30	↑

What does this show us?

The number of Early Help referrals decreased by 36% from the previous quarter and is about the same as the number of referrals for the same period last year. The number of assessments decreased from the previous quarter by 12.5% and decreased by 2.6% compared to the same period last year.

Whilst the average length of time taken to complete an assessment has increased this quarter, this remains within statutory timescale.

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. According to the Children's Services Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating system for performance management, an average of 30 days or less between referral and assessment completion is on target.

What action is the service taking?

Early Help Service provides targeted support to the children, young people, and families at the stage of a problem first arising, to try to prevent the need for statutory intervention at a later point. The service will continue to carefully monitor demand and ensure there is capacity to address any identified increases. A designated person is assigned to monitor any cases on the waiting list and parents are kept informed.

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	2021-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Direction of Travel
No. of Contacts progressed to Referral	1575	328	383	447	395	406	↑

% Of referrals to which are repeat referrals within 12 months	17.8%	15.9%	19.1%	20.6%	24.8%	18.0%	↓
% Assessments completed within 45 working days	67.4%	61.8%	69.9%	67.0%	68.6%	78.6%	↑

What does this show us?

In Q2 2022-23, the referrals have increased by 2.7% when compared to the previous quarter. There were 73 repeat referrals within 12 months out of 406 referrals.

Timeliness of Assessments completed within 45 working days have improved. In Q2, 271 of 345 Assessments were completed within 45 working days. In August 88% of the Assessments completed were in timescale.

What is the background to this?

When an agency shares information with the local authority on a Multi-Agency Referral form, or a member of the public shares concerns about a child, this is considered a Contact. A Contact progresses to a Referral when a decision has been taken to complete an Assessment. There is no target for the number of Referrals to CSC as each Contact is individually assessed.

Higher number of Referrals are expected this time of the year – this is in line with neighbouring authorities.

CSC aims for less than 20% of its referrals to be repeat referrals within 12 months and strives for 90% of Assessments to be completed within 45 days.

Re-referrals are below target this quarter and lower than previous quarter. Re-Referrals are audited by the service if over target to provide reassurance that appropriate services have been provided. While Re-Referrals were higher in Q1 we are satisfied that appropriate decisions were made.

What action is the service taking?

While there was a dip in September, we continue to improve in timeliness of completion of Assessments.

What is the national context?

The statistical neighbours and England averages in 2020-21 for assessments completed within 45 days are 89% and 87.6% respectively. The national average for repeat referrals within 12 months is 22.6% and the statistical neighbours 23.9%.

Dashboard Item 4 – Child Protection

Measure	2021-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Direction of Travel
Children subject to CP Plans (snapshot at end of period)	164	166	160	164	135	123	↓

% Of children coming onto a CP plan for a second or subsequent time ever	20%	27.6%	0.0%	32.3%	11.8%	0.0%	↓
% Of child protection visits within timescale (10 working days)	74%	71%	72%	77%	74%	64%	↓

What does this show us?

The number of children on a Child Protection Plan (CPP) has decreased this quarter and is significantly lower than the figure for the same period last year.

21 children became subject to a CPP in Q2 2022-23 and none of these children had a previous plan.

The proportion of CP visits occurring within timescales has reduced in Q2 2022-23 to 64% from 74% in Q1.

What is the background to this?

We are seeing a significant number of CPP ending due to stepping down to Children in Need (CIN) Plans.

In Q2 it is positive to note that of the children who became subject to a CPP none of these had had a second or subsequent CPP ever.

CSC places great emphasis on preventing the need for children to return to a CPP. The Service aims to have less than 19.5% of children starting a CPP for a second or subsequent time ever.

It is noted that the number of visits within 10 days has fallen this quarter and is an area of focus for us given the reduction in number of children on CPP, however we are satisfied that despite visits being out of timescale children are being seen regularly and appropriate steps taken where it has not been possible to gain access to the child.

Wokingham sets itself a best-practice standard of carrying out each Child Protection visit within 10 working days of the previous visit. The service has a target of 80% of visits within this timescale.

What action is the service taking?

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

What is the national context?

Wokingham's Child Protection Plans per 10,000 at the end of Q4 was 40.7, which is below the England average of 41.4 in 2021. Since 2019-20, the increase in number of children subject to CP Plans has placed Wokingham above our statistical neighbour's average of 32.75.

Across 2021-22 Wokingham's repeat referrals to CPP is 20% which is in line with the national average (22.1%) and statistical neighbours (21.53%).

Dashboard Item 5 – Children in Care

Measure	2021-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Direction of Travel
No. children in care (snapshot at end of period)	136	114	118	136	135	142	↑

% visits to children in care within timescale	76%	74%	77%	76%	75%	78%	↑
% children in care who have more than 1 allocated social worker in 12m (snapshot at end of period)	25%	25%	21%	25%	33%	35%	↑

What does this show us?

There has been an increase of 24.5% in children coming into Care compared to Q2 2021-22, this is due to children being looked after and changes to NTS threshold increasing from the current level of 0.07% to 0.1% of a local authority's general child population.

There has been consistency in the percentage of visits to children in care taking place within timescale (397 out of the 506) visits carried out in Q2 were in timescale.

The percentage of children in care who have had more than one allocated worker in the previous 12 months has increased 2% since last quarter. The change in social workers is not necessarily a negative as once permanency has been resolved the plan, if long term fostering, would be transferred to Here4U. Additionally, we have had several social workers leaving resulting in a change of social worker.

What is the background to this?

Wokingham's children in care figures are historically lower than those of statistical neighbours and regional averages, which reflects the boroughs' demographic, and our approach to only taking children into care when all other safe alternatives have been explored and found not viable.

The target is to have less than 10% of children allocated to more than one social worker in a twelve-month period. Whilst it is our ambition for this indicator to be as low as possible, we acknowledge that there will always be some occasions where a change of social worker will be in the best interests of the child.

What action is the service taking?

The number of visits carried out within timescale has increased quarter-on-quarter this year. CSC emphasises a child-focussed approach to social work; in some instances, visits will be allowed to go outside of timescale to ensure that children are visited by the same social worker to provide reassuring continuity in relationships and case planning.

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.

What is the national context?

The rate of Children in Care per 10,000 at the end of March 2021 is 67.0 for England, and 46.3 for statistical neighbours, with Wokingham rate being significantly lower at 34 in March 2022. If Wokingham was at the National average the number of looked after children would be 275.

Dashboard Item 6 – Care Leavers

Measure	2021-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Direction of Travel
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% of care leavers 'in touch' (snapshot at end of period)	99%	97%	94%	99%	98%	99%	↑
% of care leavers aged 18-24 "in touch" and who are NEET	34%	27%	32%	34%	30%	30%	↔
% of care leavers "in touch" in suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of period)	97%	100%	97%	97%	94%	97%	↑

What does this show us?

The percentage of care leavers that remain in touch has increased slightly with the Service often maintaining a good working relationship with those formerly in care.

There has been a very slight decrease in the number of care leavers not in education, employment, or training - the number now is 29, compared to 26 in last quarter.

The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has increased 3% since last quarter.

What is the background to this?

The target is to stay in touch with at least 90% of care leavers, 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 high levels of care leavers in education, employment, or learning. Despite the increasingly challenging economic situation. Care Leaver employment, education and training figures have remained consistently high throughout 2022-23.

CSC endeavours to ensure at least 90% of care leavers are in suitable accommodation, which it continues to achieve.

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 individually, helping them either re-engage with education or training or supporting them to find suitable employment opportunities where possible. Efforts in this have increased in response to the current economic situation.

Monthly NEET meetings are held and each young person who is NEET has an action plan to try to get them into employment or training. Many of the young people who are NEET are young parents or have experienced mental health which impacts on their availability to access employment or training.

The number of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation has decrease over the course of this year. The number living independently and semi-independently has increased.

The increase in the use of semi- independent accommodation is attributed to increase in UASC over 16 and the opening of London Road.

Social Care and Housing work closely together to ensure our care leavers are provided with suitable accommodation. The joint housing panel for young people is now up and running.

What is the national context?

Nationally in March 2021, 95% of care leavers were in touch with their Local Authority; 41% of care leavers were NEET; and 88% were in suitable accommodation. Wokingham consistently performed above the benchmarking averages.

Dashboard Item 7 – Children Missing from Home/Care

Measure	2021-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Direction of Travel
Children missing from home	81	21	34	28	29	31	↑
% of return home interviews accepted (out of number of return home interviews required)	30%	37%	39%	50%	33%	33%	↔
% return home interviews carried out on time	32%	60%	44%	33%	40%	60%	↑
Children missing from care	16	x	14	11	8	9	↑
% of return home interviews accepted (out of number of return home interviews required)	18%	33%	39%	47%	75%	33%	↓
% return home interviews carried out on time	86%	100%	44%	100%	33%	100%	↑
Children missing from education at the end of the period (not currently on a school roll)	8	30	12	8	9	18	↑
No. of permanent exclusions	13	x	4	7	x	x	↓

x Less than 4, suppressed to preserve confidentiality

What does this show us?

The number of children going missing from home or care (40) shows a slight decrease in Q2 2022-23. These figures do not include children in care placed in Wokingham by other Local Authorities.

The percentage of return home interviews accepted (**for children missing from home**) shows how many interviews were accepted out of how many were required (7 acceptances out of 21 interviews required).

CSC aims to have 100% of Return Home Interviews (RHIs) taking place within timescale. The figures remain the same as previous quarter and slightly down compared with same period in 2020-21.

The percentage of return home interviews accepted (**for children missing from care**) shows how many interviews were accepted out of how many were required (2 acceptances out of 6 interviews required).

CSC aims to have 100% of Return Home Interviews (RHIs) taking place within timescale. The figures have increased significantly in Q2 compared to Q1. It is also in line with same period in 2020-21

The number of children not currently on a school roll has increased in this quarter but lower than the same period last year.

There were 13 permanent exclusions in Wokingham schools in the financial year 2021-22 (Apr 21- Mar 22) and 16 in total during the 2021-22 academic year (Sept 21-Aug 22). The figures are not comparable with the previous year as schools were then operating under pandemic restrictions.

What is the background to this?

It can be difficult to persuade children who have gone missing to engage with a Return Home Interview (RHI), achieving the timeliness target of 100% is therefore 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.

The number of children not currently on a school roll has increased this quarter compared to the last quarter, and low compared to the same period last year. The rise in number of children not on a school roll is due to high number of pupils moving into the area and waiting to get place in their preferred school.

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 problems and risks of child exploitation, working with neighbouring local authorities to gain insight and develop a joined-up approach.

The Ofsted focused visit in May 2022 identifies RHI and the learning from aggregated data as an area for improvement. An Action Plan is being drawn up in response to this area of improvement.

What is the national context?

Comparative national figures are not available for children missing education.

Dashboard Item 8 – Children's Services Workforce

Measure	Q4 20-21	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Direction of Travel
12 months rolling turnover of permanent qualified social workers	12%	14%	14%	19.43%	20.99%	18.85%	↓
% agency staff across qualified social work workforce (snapshot at end of period)	21%	14%	16%	26%	28%	23%	↓

What does this show us?

During Q2 2022-23, the percentage of 12 months rolling turnover of permanent qualified social workers and agency staff has increased significantly compared to the same period last year. However, we are beginning to see signs of this stabilising.

What is the background to this?

Permanency of workforce is a continuous focus for CSC.

What action is the service taking?

Recruitment of permanent social workers is ongoing via various mediums including social media, and specialist publications. We have also signed up to the refreshed Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) across the Southeast.

The MoC is an agreement between the 19 authorities in the Southeast to work in a cooperative and collaborative way. It is designed to help control costs and reduce churn of both agency and permanent social workers. It also aims to improve the quality of information sharing between authorities when supplying references for agency social workers.

Over the past 6 months we have successfully recruited 10 new ASYE Social Workers into the business

CSC have in post a worker whose primary focus is on recruitment and retention, as well as promoting and advertising vacancies as they occur. Providing support to team managers recruiting to post and streamlining the onboarding process.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2022/23 WORK PROGRAMME

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER / CONTACT OFFICER
2 November 2022	Appointment of Co-opted Members to CSO&S	To ratify the appointment of two new co-opted Members to the Committee	Decision item	Democratic Services/ Luciane Bowker
	Youth Council update	To provide an opportunity to hear the voice of the Youth Council at the Committee	Information item	Children's Services/ Helen Watson
	IRO Service Annual Report	To monitor the performance of the service.	Information item	Children's Services/ Liz McAuley
	Child Protection Annual report	To monitor the performance of the service.	Information item	Children's Services/ Liz McAuley
	LADO Annual Report (Local Area Designated Officer)	To monitor the performance of the service.	Information item	Children's Services/ Liz McAuley
	Key Performance Indicators	To monitor the performance of the service.	Challenge item	Children's Services/ Helen Watson
	Impact of the Cost of Living Crisis	To understand the impact of the cost of living crisis on children and young people in the borough and on Children's Services.	Challenge item	Children's Services / Sally Watkins

	Report and Q&A with the Executive Member for Children's Services	To receive an update from the Executive Member for Children's Services.	Regular update	Councillor Prue Bray
	Accommodation Issues Linked To UASC – Part 2	To understand the impact of the increasing number of UASC on the accommodation provision	Challenge item	Children's Services / Adam Davis
	Schools Causing Concern – Part 2	To consider the working being undertaken to support schools causing concern in a part 2 session.	Standing 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 January 2023	Travel Assistance Policy Implementation	Update on outcomes from implementation of the Travel Assistance Policies (formerly Home to School Transport policies).	Challenge item	Children's Services / Sal Thirlway
	Report and Q&A with the Executive Member for Children's Services	To receive an update from the Executive Member for Children's Services.	Regular update	Councillor Prue Bray
	Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership Report	To receive information about the work of the Partnership	Information item	Children's Services/ Helen Watson
	Schools Causing Concern – Part 2	To consider the work being undertaken to support schools causing concern in a part 2 session.	Standing 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
22 March 2023	Key Performance Indicators	To monitor the performance of the service.	Challenge item	Children's Services / Helen Watson
	Report and Q&A with the Executive Member for Children's Services	To receive an update from the Executive Member for Children's Services.	Regular update	Councillor Prue Bray
	Care Leavers CAMHS Provision Update	To receive an update on the implementation and delivery of the CAMHS provision for Care Leavers	Challenge item	Children's Services / Adam Davis
	Schools Causing Concern – Part 2	To consider the work being undertaken to support schools causing concern in a part 2 session	Standing item	Children's Services/ Sal Thirlway
	CSO&S Forward Plan	To consider the forward plan of the Committee	Standing item	Democratic Services/ Luciane Bowker

Unscheduled items:

- Fostering Transformation Update – January or March

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WOKINGHAM SCHOOLS

School	Phase	Date	Inspection Grade	Status/Organisation	Ofsted Link
Addington School	Special	Oct-17	Outstanding	maintained	Ofsted Addington School
Alder Grove	Primary			Keys Trust C of E	Ofsted Alder Grove Church of England Primary School
Aldryngton Primary School	Primary	Dec-11	Outstanding	maintained	Ofsted Aldryngton Primary School
All Saints Primary School	Primary	Sep-21	Good	Frays MAT	Ofsted All Saints Church of England Primary School
Ambleside Centre	Nursery	Nov-21	Outstanding	maintained	Ofsted The Ambleside Centre
Bearwood Primary School	Primary	Mar-19	Good	maintained	Ofsted Bearwood Primary School
Beechwood Primary School	Primary	May-18	Inadequate	Frays MAT	Ofsted Beechwood Primary School
Bohunt	Secondary	May-19	Good	Bohunt Trust	Ofsted Bohunt School Wokingham
Bulmershe School	Secondary	Nov-17	Good	maintained	Ofsted The Bulmershe School
CAMHS Phoenix	PRU Hospital	Oct-17	Outstanding	maintained	Ofsted CAMHS Phoenix School
Chiltern Way	Special	Oct-18	Special Measures	Chiltern Way	Ofsted Chiltern Way Academy Wokingham
Colleton Primary School	Primary	Jul-17	Good	maintained	Ofsted The Colleton Primary School
Coombes Primary School	Primary	Jan-22	RI	Keys Trust C of E	Ofsted The Coombes Church of England Primary School
Crazies Hill CE School	Primary	Mar-16	Good	Keys Trust C of E	Ofsted Crazies Hill Church of England Primary School
Earley St Peter's Primary School	Primary	Sep-21	Good	Keys Trust C of E	Ofsted Earley St Peter's Church of England Primary School
Emmbrook Infant School	Primary	Jan-19	Outstanding	maintained	Ofsted Emmbrook Infant School
Emmbrook Junior School	Primary	Apr-22	Good	maintained	Ofsted Emmbrook Junior School
Emmbrook School	Secondary	Mar-17	Good	The Circle Trust	Ofsted The Emmbrook School
Evendons Primary School	Primary	Jun-17	Outstanding	Bellevue Place Education Trust	Ofsted Evendons Primary School
Farley Hill Primary School	Primary	Oct-19	Good	maintained	Ofsted Farley Hill Primary School
Finchampstead Primary School	Primary	Oct-18	Good	maintained Cof E	Ofsted Finchampstead CoE VA Primary School
Forest School	Secondary	Jul-21	Good	Stand Alone Academy	Ofsted The Forest School
Foundry College	PRU	Feb-18	Good	maintained	Ofsted Foundry College
Gorse Ride Infant School	Primary	Nov-19	Good	maintained	Ofsted Gorse Ride Infants' School
Gorse Ride Junior School	Primary	Apr-22	Good	maintained	Ofsted Gorse Ride Junior School
Grazeley Parochial Primary School	Primary	Sep-19	Good	maintained Cof E	Ofsted Grazeley Parochial Church of England Aided Primary School
Hatch Ride Primary School	Primary	May-22	Good	Corvus	Ofsted Hatch Ride Primary School
Hawkedon Primary School	Primary	Oct-18	Good	maintained	Ofsted Hawkedon Primary School
Hawthorns Primary School	Primary	Jun-22	Good	maintained	Ofsted The Hawthorns Primary School
Highwood Primary School	Primary	Dec-21	Good	maintained	Ofsted Highwood Primary School
Hillside Primary School	Primary	May-18	Good	maintained	Ofsted Hillside Primary School
Holt School	Secondary	Jun-08	Outstanding	Stand Alone Academy	Ofsted The Holt School
Keep Hatch Primary School	Primary	Oct-18	Good	Frays MAT	Ofsted Keep Hatch Primary School
Lambs Lane Primary School	Primary	Jan-22	Good	maintained	Ofsted Lambs Lane Primary School
Loddon Primary School	Primary	Jan-18	Good	maintained	Ofsted Loddon Primary School
Maiden Erlegh School	Secondary	Mar-20	Outstanding	Maiden Erlegh Multi-Academy Trust	Ofsted Maiden Erlegh School
Montague Park	Primary	Jun-19	RI	GLF Trust	Ofsted Floreat Montague Park Primary School
Nine Mile Ride Primary School	Primary	Jun-22	Good	The Circle Trust	Ofsted Nine Mile Ride Primary School
Oakbank	Secondary	Jan-20	RI	Anthem Schools Trust	Ofsted Oakbank
Oaklands Infant School	Primary	May-22	Good	Corvus	Ofsted Oaklands Infant School
Oaklands Junior School	Primary	Apr-22	Good	Corvus	Ofsted Oaklands Junior School
Polehampton Infant School	Primary	Jan-11	Outstanding	Keys Trust C of E	Ofsted Polehampton Church of England Infant School
Polehampton Junior School	Primary	Nov-12	Outstanding	Keys Trust C of E	Ofsted Polehampton Church of England Junior School
Radstock Primary School	Primary	Jan-22	Good	maintained	Ofsted Radstock Primary School
Rivermead Primary School	Primary	Nov-18	Good	maintained	Ofsted Rivermead Primary School
Robert Piggott Infant School	Primary	Jun-18	good	maintained Cof E	Ofsted Robert Piggott CoE Infant School
Robert Piggott Junior School	Primary	May-18	Good	maintained Cof E	Ofsted Robert Piggott CoE Junior School
Shinfield Infant School	Primary	Feb-19	Good	The Circle Trust	Ofsted Shinfield Infant and Nursery School
Shinfield St Mary's Junior School	Primary	Feb-18	Good	maintained Cof E	Ofsted Shinfield St Mary's CoE Junior School
Sonning Primary School	Primary	Mar-16	Good	Keys Trust C of E	Ofsted Sonning Church of England Primary School
South Lake Primary School	Primary	Mar-13	Outstanding	maintained	Ofsted South Lake Primary School
St Crispins School	Secondary	Mar-17	Good	The Circle Trust	Ofsted St Crispin's School
St Dominic Savio Primary School	Primary	May-19	Good	maintained Catholic	Ofsted St Dominic Savio Catholic Primary School
St Nicholas Primary School	Primary	Apr-19	Good	Keys Trust C of E	Ofsted St Nicholas Church of England Primary, Hurst
St Paul's Junior School	Primary	Jun-11	Outstanding	maintained Cof E	Ofsted St Paul's CoE Junior School
St Sebastian's Primary School	Primary	Oct-21	Good	Keys Trust C of E	Ofsted Saint Sebastians Church of England Primary School
St Teresa's Primary	Primary	May-10	Outstanding	Frassati Catholic Trust	Ofsted St Teresa's Catholic Academy
The Piggott CE School	All through	Nov-17	Good	Stand Alone Academy	Ofsted The Piggott School
Waingels College	Secondary	Feb-18	Good	Stand Alone Academy	Ofsted Waingels
Walter Infant School	Primary	Nov-13	Outstanding	maintained	Ofsted Walter Infant School
Wescott Infant School	Primary	Dec-10	Outstanding	The Circle Trust	Ofsted Wescott Infant School
Westende Junior School	Primary	Jan-20	Good	The Circle Trust	Ofsted Westende Junior School
Wheatfield Primary School	Primary	May-17	Good	GLF	Ofsted Wheatfield Primary School
Whiteknights Primary School	Primary	Dec-18	Good	Bellevue Place Education Trust	Ofsted Whiteknights Primary School
Willow Bank Infant School	Primary	Jul-22	Good	maintained	Ofsted Willow Bank Infant School
Willow Bank Junior School	Primary	Jul-17	Good	maintained	Ofsted Willow Bank Junior School
Windmill Primary School	Primary	Jan-20	good	GLF	Ofsted Windmill Primary School
Winnersh Primary School	Primary	Jan-20	Good	maintained	Ofsted Winnersh Primary School
Woodley Primary School	Primary	Nov-18	Good	maintained Cof E	Ofsted Woodley CoE Primary School

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