



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
1B Non **WEDNESDAY 22 MARCH 2023 AT 7.00 PM**

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 14 March 2023

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://youtube.com/live/prD-462l27Y?feature=share>

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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 (Chair)	Shirley Boyt (Vice-Chair)	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 Representatives

Sarah Clarke, SEND Voices Wokingham

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
58.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.	
59.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 31 January 2023.	7 - 20
60.		DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest.	
61.		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	

62.		MEMBER QUESTION TIME To answer any member questions.	
63.	None Specific	CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE INDICATORS To receive and consider a report containing details of Children's Services Performance Indicators.	21 - 34
64.	None Specific	UPDATE FROM THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES To receive a verbal update from the Executive Member for Children's Services.	Verbal Report
65.	None Specific	CARE LEAVERS CAMHS PROVISION UPDATE To receive and consider a report containing an update on the Care Leavers CAMHS provision.	To Follow
66.	None Specific	FOSTERING TRANSFORMATION UPDATE To receive and consider the Fostering Transformation Update report.	35 - 44
67.	None Specific	SEND STRATEGY REFRESH To receive a verbal update on the SEND Strategy.	Verbal Report
68.	None Specific	FORWARD PROGRAMME To receive and consider the Committee's Forward Programme of work.	45 - 46
69.		EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) as appropriate.	
70.	None Specific	SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN A report containing details of schools causing concern will be discussed in a Part 2 session.	47 - 58
71.	None Specific	SCHOOL SUFFICIENCY UPDATE This item will be discussed in a Part 2 session.	Verbal Report

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent

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

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 31 JANUARY 2023 FROM 7.00 PM TO 10.40 PM**

Committee Members Present

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

Councillors Present Online

Councillors: Beth Rowland

Other Members Present

Sarah Clarke, SEND Voices Wokingham
Fr Richard Lamey, Church of England representative

Other Councillors Present

Councillors: Prue Bray

Officers Present

Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist
Gillian Cole, Service Manager for Schools
Adam Davis, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Early Help
Sarah Desson, Child Friendly Project Officer
Zoe Storey, School Admissions and Transport Manager
Sal Thirlway, Assistant Director for Learning, Achievement and Partnerships
Helen Watson, Interim Director of Children's Services
Ming Zhang, Interim Assistant Director for Learning, Achievement and Partnerships

Others Present

David Gussi, Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership Chairman
Holly Mackinnon, Wokingham Youth MP
Terri Walsh, SEND Voices Wokingham

43. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

44. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 November 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

45. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

46. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

47. MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no Member questions.

48. YOUTH COUNCIL UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal report from Holly Mackinnon, Wokingham Youth MP. She was supported by Sarah Desson, Child Friendly Project Officer.

Some of the main points made by Holly Mackinnon are listed below:

- The main focus of the Youth Council this year was youth engagement in politics, informing young people about political systems and issues that affect them;
- On Thursday 23 February a Youth Politics event was going to be held, Sir John Redwood was invited as a guest to talk about his political career. Also a debate with local councillors from different political parties was being organised to talk about different issues that interested young people;
- Some of the issues that were of interest were: climate change, lowering the voting age, cost of living crisis and mental health;
- The Youth Council was interested in securing a place in the Borough News publication and possibly other publications;
- The Youth Council was planning on organising a Youth Summit in Wokingham. They were seeking support from WBC to run this event. It was hoped that this event would improve collaboration with different schools, giving an opportunity for young people to talk to each other about the issues that interested them;
- Another idea was to run debate events simulating House of Parliament debates, for young people to engage in discussions with local councillors;
- Recent meetings of the Youth Council and WBC had included topics such as: domestic violence, waste collection and the recycling scheme in the borough. The Youth Council valued the opportunity to share their views with WBC and be included in consultations. They wished to continue to be given the opportunity to feedback their views to WBC on policies and consultations;
- The Youth Council wanted to work together with WBC to build a better Wokingham.

Some of the comments made during the discussion that followed Holly Mackinnon's presentation are listed below:

- Members were very impressed with the presentation and the ideas that had been put forward;
- Members suggested that the Youth Council could write columns for local newspapers, they believed this would be well received. Another suggestion was to use the weekly email newsletters that the Council sent to residents that signed up to it;
- Members suggested communicating with schools in the borough to inform them of the work of the Youth Council;
- Helen Watson, Director of Children's Services informed that the Youth Council had participated in the Borough Vision event, which had happened the day before, and that the engagement had been very positive;
- Helen Watson suggested that the Youth Council may be interested in taking part in the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP), acting as scrutineers of the BWSCP;
- Sarah Desson informed that the Vision event had included various people from different backgrounds talking about what they envisaged for Wokingham in 20 years time.;
- Sal Thirlway, Assistant Director for Learning, Achievement and Partnerships offered to include messages from the Youth Council into the weekly newsletter that was sent from his department to all school in the borough;
- Fr Richard Lamey had attended the Vision event and confirmed that it had been very positive. He added that social media was a good way to communicate the Youth Council's messages to the borough;

- In response to a question Holly Mackinnon stated that the Youth Council would like to be involved in consultations about the development of policies within WBC. She added that young people were interested in a wide variety of issues and it should not be assumed that young people were not interested in issues such as waste collection, for example;
- In response to a question Holly Mackinnon stated that there were around 20 members of the Youth Council, but this number varied. There were representatives from five Wokingham secondary schools currently. However, there was a desire to involve all schools, in particular all the secondary schools in the borough for a more even representation;
- Sarah Desson informed that schools' engagement varied, and she believed more work needed to be undertaken to engage schools;
- Sarah Desson informed that she had been in attendance at some of WBC's internal meetings, in an effort to inform different departments about the Youth Council and their desire to take part in consultations;
- Holly Mackinnon stated that the Youth Council would like to organise a hustings debate with borough councillors, perhaps inviting Politics A-Level students to take part;
- The Chairman suggested that all councillors should receive regular updates on the work of the Youth Council and welcomed ideas to facilitate this;
- Holly Mackinnon stated that a Youth Council Annual Report could be shared with the Council;
- Councillor Rowland offered to liaise with the Youth Council to organise a regular slot for them to address a meeting of full Council;
- Councillor Boyt suggested that the Youth Council could produce a charter (similar to the one included in the Tenants report) to include in their annual report;
- Holly Mackinnon informed that currently, there was a national manifest for young people. She agreed that this was a good idea and there was an ambition to develop something like a 'young people wish list for the borough', this idea was being explored;
- The Chairman added that the Youth Council could submit questions to any of the formal meetings of the Council through the questions process.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee expressed his gratitude for the work of the Youth Council and the presentation received.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The report be noted; and
- 2) The Mayor's Office would be requested to organise a regular slot for the Youth Council Annual Report to be presented at Council.

49. BERKSHIRE WEST SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

David Gussi, Chair of the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership (BWSCP) presented the 2021/2022 annual report of the BWSCP.

David Gussi believed that Youth Councils were a great idea, and to illustrate his opinion he shared a personal story. He stated that 40 years ago he was the chair of the Youth Council in Wellingborough, at a time when there was no institutional support for youth councils. At the time the Youth Council raised some money for mental health support for young people and set up a counselling service for young people called Serving Six, which was still going today.

David Gussi was appointed chair of the BWSCP in July 2022, after this report date. Some of the points made during his presentation are listed below:

- The BWSCP was set up under the Children's and Social Work Act 2017 which required local authorities to work with local police forces and Health in an executive group to promote children's safeguarding;
- The BWSCP includes Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham. It is accountable to each local authority, Thames Valley Police and each authority's Chief Executive Officer;
- He believed that it was important to present this report to Youth Council for scrutiny;
- The report set out complex safeguarding contexts, safeguarding had expanded significantly in recent years;
- The three local authorities were very different so it was important to make local decisions where possible;
- He pointed out that this report was much more measured and honest than other such reports in other areas;
- He informed that the Integrated Care Board (ICB) had recently been established, the participation of Health during the period covered by the report had not been as significant as desirable.

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

- Councillor Chadwick asked for clarification on acronyms. It was explained that BOB stood for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire;
- Councillor Chadwick asked what was the Child Exploitation Indicator Tool (mentioned on page 22 of the agenda);
- It was explained that this was a tool that was used to measure indicators of risk to children. Such indicators were used for prevention of harm;
- Councillor Bray, Executive Member for Children's Services informed that a Harm Outside of the Home Strategy was currently being developed, and this could be shared with the Committee when ready;
- Helen Watson offered to provide examples of the tools used to measure indicators of risk in writing, outside of the meeting;
- Councillor Chadwick made reference to page 24 of the agenda and asked for more information about the findings that there was no evidence that social media was a contributing factor for serious violence;
- David Gussi explained that a thematic review had been undertaken in Reading which had reviewed 13 incidents involving serious violence, and the review found that there was no evidence that use of social media had caused/contributed to those 13 incidents;
- Councillor Rowland expressed concern about reports in the news that children as young as 9 years old were being exposed to pornography online. She asked if Wokingham's primary school children were watching pornography and what could be done about it;
- David Gussi stated that he did not have specific statistics in this respect for Wokingham's children. BWSCP provided advice on its website about the safe use of the internet. However, the issue of online safety was beyond the scope of the partnership, it was a national issue;

- Sarah Clarke, representing Wokingham SEND Voices stated that SEND children were more vulnerable than other children and asked how they were being supported by the partnership;
- David Gussi explained that the partnership's job was to hold others to account, for example to monitor Wokingham's SEND Board and SEND Strategy to make sure they were having an impact in children's safeguarding;
- The Chairman asked if issues such as: increase in poverty, the growing number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and serious youth violence were impacting the priorities going forward;
- David Gussi confirmed that poverty and the cost of living crisis were issues that had to be monitored in relation to vulnerability. Also of concern, was the number of young people and parents with mental health needs arising from the aftermath of the pandemic;
- Councillor Boyt was pleased to note the initiative in relation to prevention of risk during Reading Festival. However, she was concerned that not all schools had taken part in this initiative and asked that all schools be encouraged to take part in it;
- David Gussi stated that there was a colleague from the Royal Berkshire Hospital that was promoting this with schools;
- It was suggested that the Youth Council could be involved in this initiative;
- In response to a question David Gussi stated that he liked the style of the current report. Going forward, he was keen to establish accountability by the three partner agencies across the area. He believed that the future reports should be presented for scrutiny earlier, and it was important to include the voices of vulnerable children in the report;
- Councillor Malvern suggested including the annual report as a standing item in the forward programme;
- Councillor Bray expressed concern over the police participation in the Wokingham area, given the fact that the other areas in the partnership were much larger. She suggested that more frequent feedback on the work of the partnership be brought to the Committee;

The Committee voted in favour of the recommendations, and that the final wording would be agreed via email with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The Committee recommends that Wokingham Youth Council is invited to take part in the scrutiny of BWSCP;
- 2) The Committee recommends that the Executive supports the Online Safety Bill, specifically in respect of the concerns relating to children's exposure to online pornography;
- 3) Requests the development of a mechanism for regular updates on the matter of children's safeguarding, to include information about the development of priorities;
- 4) Requests regular updates from the Community Safety Partnership, focusing on children related work.

50. ANNUAL WOKINGHAM BOROUGH SEND SURVEY

The Annual Wokingham Borough SEND Survey was presented by Sarah Clarke and Terri Walsh, both representatives from Wokingham SEND Voices.

Some of the comments made during their presentation are listed below:

- SEND Voices Wokingham is an independent organisation of parent/carers of SEND children (0-25 years of age) in Wokingham. This organisation's purpose is to represent the voice SEND children, parents and carers;
- The role of SEND Voices is to act as a critical friend and work with the local authority;
- This survey was the first annual survey undertaken by SEND Voices, and it was used to ask about everything to do with SEND;
- Smaller surveys had been undertaken in the past, but the idea was to continue to undertake annual surveys going forward, and to track improvement;
- The annual survey had been sent out to all parents, carers and voluntary organisations that worked with SEND children. 440 responses had been received, which was a good level of response;
- One of the key findings from the survey was that there were a number of services in the borough available for SEND children and families:
 - Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS),
 - Autism Spectrum Service for Information, Support and Training (ASSIST),
 - Short breaks team – gaps were identified in this service, but it was noted that some new members of staff had made a positive improvement
 - SENDIASS training – made a real difference for families
 - Preparing for adulthood booklet
- The report also identified some areas for improvement, as written in the report.

Councillor Helliar-Symonds expressed serious concern about the transport service provided to SEND children around the borough.

Sarah Clarke clarified that two surveys had been carried out: the SEND Annual Survey and a SEND Transport Survey. She informed that improvements had been made in relation to SEND transport, however there was some work to be done to improve training.

Sal Thirlway recognised that although improvements had been made in SEND transport, more improvement was needed. Work was ongoing to keep improving the service. He would raise the issue of training with Corporate Transport Unit (CTU).

In response to a question from Councillor Chadwick, Sarah Clarke clarified that answers to the question in the survey about communication had revealed that many parents were finding that they were having to re-tell their story to lots of different professionals. Therefore, it could be concluded that communication between professionals and families could be improved.

It was confirmed that answers to Member's questions that had been emailed prior to the meeting would be circulated via email with the minutes.

Councillor Chadwick asked if it was the delays in the production of Educational Psychology reports that was causing the delays in issuing Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP). Terri Walsh informed that there was a shortage of Educational Psychologists and Speech and Language Therapists, this was a national issue and it did cause delays.

Councillor Chadwick noted that there was a theme in the survey around difficulties in finding information. Sarah Clarke stated that every local authority was supposed to have a

website where parents could find information. The improvement of the website was part of the improvement plan and was linked to the Safety Valve Programme.

Councillor Bray informed that the Council's website was being completely replaced next year, with a new supplier. As part of this work, there would not be updates on the current website, unless absolutely necessary. The service was conscious that the new website needed to be more user friendly.

Councillor Bray added that it was recognised that better communication with parents was needed, so that they understood better why certain decisions had been made. She believed that engaging in co-production of letters to parents with SEND Voices, for example, was part of the improvement process.

Councillor Bray announced that Wokingham SEND Voices had recently achieved charitable status and this was very good news.

Sarah Clarke added that acquiring the charitable status was positive as it allowed the organisation to apply for funding to support families.

In response to a question about co-production, Sarah Clarke confirmed that they had been very involved in the production of the Written Statement of Action and SEND Improvement Plan. She believed that what was missing at the moment was the production of a '*you said we did*' type of document in a language that parents could easily understand.

Councillor Malvern asked what was being done to speed up communications and letters to parents. Sarah Clarke stated that some letters were complex due to the fact that they had to include legal information. There was a co-production working group, which was part of the SEND IIP, trying to speed things up.

The Chairman asked if there were any strands of work that SEND Voices believed the Committee should be monitoring in the next year. Sarah Clarke stated that issues around inclusivity in mainstream schools needed to be monitored. She believed that the children in mainstream schools that did not quite meet the threshold for an EHCP should be better supported, and this would result in savings in the long term. This concept was called the 'ordinarily available' and schools, health and social care should be encouraged to engage with this concept and offer support.

Sal Thirlway stated that broadening inclusivity was part of the SEND IPP and the local authority was looking at ways to support schools to support children in mainstream schools. He informed that, statistically, Wokingham had more children with SEND and EHCPs in mainstream schools than most other local authorities.

Sarah Clarke suggested that it was possible that so many children with EHCPs were in mainstream schools because there was no specialist placements available for them. It would be interesting to look at this data more closely.

Councillor Boyt was interested to know if Wokingham was looking to learn from best practice in other local authorities. Sarah Clarke informed that there were 152 parent/carer forums in England, Wokingham fed into one of the regions – SE19 in the Southwest. The region fed into a national network where there was opportunity to talk to ministers and take part in other important work at a national level. Additionally, there was a lot of work within the region where best practice was shared.

Fr Richard Lamey confirmed that support for families was very welcome, as it could be very difficult to go through the application process for an EHCP.

Helen Watson was in support of the idea to produce a 'you said we did' document.

The Chairman asked for more information about the process of ceasing SEND support. Sarah Clarke informed that this process was done on a case by case scenario. However, she pointed out that this linked with the work to be developed around inclusion, where some children, with the right support may be able to step down from an EHCP and be placed in a mainstream school.

It was clarified that EHCPs did come to an end at the age of 25.

Councillor Bray commented that changes over time in an individual's EHCPs were to be expected, if there was no change, this would be a sign that there had been no improvement. EHCPs were reviewed at least annually, and at transition points. She believed that there was more work that could be done to improve the reviews of EHCPs.

Sarah Clarke agreed that some work needed to be done to improve the quality of reviews. She pointed out that timeliness of reviews had improved in recent years.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

51. SEND VOICES WOKINGHAM SCHOOL TRANSPORT SURVEY 2022

The SEND Voices Wokingham School Transport Survey 2022 was presented by Sarah Clarke and Terri Walsh.

Sarah Clarke informed that SEND transport had been one of the key issues that parents had complained about in the past. The service had been completely re-commissioned in September 2021 and there had been a lot of issues at that time. The introduction of a new SEND Transport Process and Panel had brought much improvement to the service.

The survey had been undertaken in November and December 2022. 100 responses had been received which represented 24% of the cohort, this was considered a good level of response.

Councillor Boyt asked for information about the issues which had been identified in relation to training for drivers and escorts. She wondered if the issue was the churn in staff within providers.

Councillor Helliard-Symonds pointed out that the local authority spent a significant amount of money on home to school transport and it was important to get it right. She recognised that there had been improvements, but she was still concerned about the lack of training and understanding on the part of drivers. She highlighted comments and concerns about safeguarding and wellbeing recorded within the report.

Councillor Helliard-Symonds proposed that future iterations of the SEND Transport Survey report be brought to the Committee for review.

Sarah Clarke informed that the intention was to run surveys annually. She added that Wokingham SEND Voices surveys were run independently from the local authority, and as such did not have enforcement powers.

Terri Walsh stated that SEND Voices would like to recommend that:

- CTU kept them informed of commissioning negotiations going forward,
- That training for drivers and escorts included SEND specifically, not just safeguarding; and
- That SEND Voices be involved in the production of letters to parents.

Helen Watson pointed out that often in such surveys, it was sometimes a minority of people who were dissatisfied with the service that responded. There was a large number of people who were satisfied with the service. She advised that she would discuss with CTU the issues raised at this meeting.

Councillor Bray explained that CTU did not sit within Children's Services, therefore an effort had to be made to work together to deliver the best possible service. She informed that Zoe Storey, School Admissions and Transport Manager was the Officer responsible for linking CTU with Children's Services.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The Committee would welcome the SEND Voices Wokingham Transport Survey report in future years;
- 2) The Committee recommended that the CTU:
 - a) informed SEND Voices at an early stage about commissioning providers;
 - b) included specific SEND training for drivers and escorts
 - c) SEND Voices be involved in the production of letters to parents.

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

Councillor Bray informed that the proposal on the Safety Valve had been made to the DfE and the DfE had instructed the Council not to divulge any information about the negotiations until the outcome was revealed.

The outcome of the bids for two new special schools in the borough was expected at the end of January, however this had not yet been announced.

In relation to the cost of living crisis, the Committee was informed that Sally Watkins, Chief Operating Officer, Councillor Rachel Bishop-Firth, Executive Member for Equalities, Inclusion and Fighting Poverty and Emma Cantrell, First Days CEO had met after that last CSO&S meeting. Emma Cantrell had produced some guidelines for schools on how to reduce the cost of a school day, Sally Watkins' team was working on rolling this out to schools.

Emma Cantrell was also working on developing a second-hand uniform shop for schools. Although some schools already had second-hand uniforms, this was a more cohesive offer.

The Council would continue to fund pre-school meals until May. It was believed that more funding from the government would be received for free school meals, but this was not yet known.

Councillor Helliar-Symonds asked if the Council was considering as possible sites for the new SEND schools and suggested the old site of the Farley Hill School and a site within the Garrison site as possible sites.

Councillor Bray informed that although there had been comments about the use of the site in the Arborfield Garrison, there had been no conversations with the relevant developer about it and it was not certain that the site was suitable. The Farley Hill site was under active consideration.

Helen Watson confirmed that everything was in place for the opening of the new SEND school in Winnersh in September 2023. Members were delighted that this new school would have sprinklers.

Sarah Clarke sought reassurance that the commissioning for the new school was on track, as this could take time. Helen Watson explained that the commissioning for the new school was linked to the outcome of the Safety Valve Programme. Councillor Bray added that the detail of expenditure in schools would be included in the Budget papers which were due to be submitted to Budget Council in February.

RESOLVED That the verbal report by the Executive Member for Children's Services be noted.

53. EDUCATION UPDATE

Sal Thirlway presented the Education Update report. He stated that the report contained a broad overview, at strategic level, of education services provided by the local authority in the borough.

The report highlighted 10 key service areas:

- Virtual School
- Education Welfare Service
- School Improvement Service
- SEND 0-25 Vulnerable Learners Service
- Education Psychology Service
- Adult Education Service and NEET Prevention Team
- Early Years and Childcare
- School Admissions
- School Place Planning
- CAMHS Pheonix School

A consultation about the SEND review had recently been undertaken and an action plan was being developed to reflect the findings of this consultation.

At a strategic level, the local authority was also preparing for the future. A recent white paper on education, which was now postponed, had outlined some areas of focus: good teachers, school attendance and the move towards further academisation of schools.

Wokingham's schools, providers and partners had a high level of commitment to education, and as such Wokingham was a good place to learn. However, it was recognised that there was some work to be done in relation to closing the gap between high achievers and the most vulnerable learners.

The Chairman thanked Sal Thirlway and his team for their work in producing such a comprehensive report. He noted that the Committee already regularly scrutinised most of the key areas highlighted in the report.

Councillor Howe pointed out that this document would be a useful way to disseminate the work undertaken by Children's Services to other councillors in the Council. He observed that the report could include more options, and thought it was overly negative in some areas.

In response to a question about SEND services being available from 0-25, Sal Thirlway explained that consistency in terms of naming of services.

Councillor Chadwick asked where the NEET support services were located. Sal Thirlway explained that the NEET support services had moved online since the pandemic. Bespoke meeting places could be arranged as and when needed.

Councillor Bray informed that the Virtual School had undergone a voluntary peer review recently and the feedback had been positive. The service was in the process of recruiting a new Virtual School Headteacher. She also informed that the Adult Education and NEET services had undergone an Ofsted inspection and the result had been a Good rating.

Councillor Bray wished to highlight that a lot of work had been undertaken to strengthen the support and relationship between the local authority and elective home educated children.

Councillor Howe suggested that a future iteration of the report should include a vision and or objectives for each key area.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) The report would be circulated to all councillors; and
- 2) Future iterations of the report would include a vision and/or objectives for each key line of work.

54. TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The Travel Assistance Policy Implementation report was presented by Zoe Storey. She informed that the overall cost of providing this service was going up, it was anticipated that it would £5 million by the end of 2023.

She highlighted that over the years Children's Services had strived to contain this budget through many measures such as looking for savings, and redirecting reserves to offset the overspend.

The new policy had removed the majority of the discretionary spending, it also better explained the eligibility criteria. Additionally, a review of routes had been undertaken to better manage resources.

The report identified pressures in relation to an increase on demand for services, fuel costs, driver wages and inflation.

Zoe Storey acknowledged the issues raised during the meeting, in particular about the training of drivers and she stated that she would speak with the Community Safety Team Manager about it to find a solution.

In response to a question Zoe Storey informed that work would be undertaken in the future to develop independent travel training. This training would start, but not be limited to, with special schools. A training provider was still being sought.

Zoe Storey confirmed that post-16 students were asked to contribute to the cost of their transport to school or college.

Sarah Clarke asked if Officers were considering pickup points for SEND students. Zoe Storey informed that pickup points were relatively new to Wokingham, and this was for mainstream students only. Should a decision be made to consider pickup points for other cohorts, there would be a consultation.

Sarah Clarke made reference to the number of pupils moving into the borough this year and asked how the service planned for such increases and how this year compared to other years.

Zoe Storey stated that the number of children moving into the borough had increased significantly in the last 18 months. This was due to the fact that many families had moved in from Hong Kong and Ukraine, the service could not have predicted immigration.

Sarah Clarke asked why Bohunt school, given that it was a new school in a newly built area, did not have safe walking routes to it. Zoe Storey informed that those children attending Bohunt for whom there was no safe walking routes were not living in the new buildings, they lived in old stock houses in rural areas. However, she agreed that a piece of work needed to be undertaken to assess the routes and decide if it was possible to make them safe.

Councillor Boyt asked how parents had received the introduction of pickup points. Zoe Storey stated that they had not received any formal complaints.

The Committee wished to formally record their appreciation of the work which had been carried out to implement the new policy, Zoe Storey and her team had done a great job and were thanked for their dedication and hard work.

Councillor Helliars-Symonds commented that part of the reason for the overspend in this budget was the fact that some SEND children had to be transported outside of the borough to specialist places.

Councillor Helliars-Symonds asked that a recommendation be made for the Committee to receive an update on actions undertaken to address the issue of training of drivers and escorts.

Sal Thirlway advised that it would be more appropriate to invite and give CTU the opportunity to discuss the issues raised during the meeting.

Sarah Clarke stated that the SEND Travel Survey had been shared with CTU, so they were aware of the issues raised.

Councillor Bray informed that a significant amount of money had already been spent by the Council to make safe walking routes to Bohunt. She believed that consideration in relation to safe walking routes should have been taken at the time of planning for a new school. She vowed to include this consideration when planning for new schools in the future.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) Members note the contents of this report;
- 2) The Committee will receive an update on actions being undertaken to address the issues identified in relation to training of drivers and escorts;
- 3) The Committee supported the SEND Voices School Transport Survey and welcomed the opportunity to review future iterations; and
- 4) The Committee expresses its concern to the Executive at the significant direct financial costs to Children's Services of insufficient safe walking routes, including serving Bohunt School.

55. FORWARD PROGRAMME

The following items were added to the Forward Programme:

22 March 2023

SEND Youth Forum

Update on the progress of SEND training for drivers and escorts

20 June 2023

Cost of living crisis update – with Youth Council participation

Attendance issues in schools

Sal Thirlway explained that although the government's white paper which focused on school attendance was on hold, there was an expectation that local authorities worked with schools on the issue of attendance. Sarah Clarke asked that care be taken when collecting school attendance data so that SEND children were not disadvantaged. She informed that there was inconsistency - some schools gave permission to attend medical appointments and others did not.

Ming Zhang, Interim Assistant Director for Learning, Achievement and Partnerships was of the opinion that school attendance was very important and it should be discussed at a future meeting.

56. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for item 57, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of the schedule 12A of the Act.

57. SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN

This item was considered in a part 2 session.

58. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, wished to thank Sal Thirlway, who was leaving the Council. Sal Thirlway's work and commitment during his time in WBC was much appreciated and he wished him well in the future.

Agenda Item 63.

TITLE	Children's Services Performance Indicators
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 March 2023
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 December 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 unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

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

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

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

Public Sector Equality Duty

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

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.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

List of Background Papers

Contact Sudeshna Banerjee, Rachel Oakley	Service Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Standards
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Introduction

This report covers Children's Services performance during October, November and December 2022, which will be referred to as quarter three (Q3) throughout this report.

Dashboard Item 1 – Funded Education, Health & Care Plans

Measure	2021-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
Current EHCPs placed in borough (snapshot at end of period)	783	865	912	976	973	1018	↑
Current EHCPs placed out of borough (snapshot at end of period)	416	511	514	507	499	471	↓
EHCPs issued within 20 weeks of the referral	75.1%	71.8%	69.0%	63.6%	50.6%	40.7%	↓

What does this show us?

The number of Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) funded by Wokingham Borough Council where the children are placed in the borough has increased slightly since last quarter. The total number of funded EHCPs at end of December 22 (1628) compared with the same period last year (1491) has risen by 9%. Whilst this is a significant increase, it is slightly lower than the national picture, with a published rate of increase of 9.9%.

The percentage of plans issued within the 20-week period continues to decrease, though there has been a slight increase in the figures for December 2022 (45%).

What is the background to this?

The total number of requests during October to December 2022 is 113, an increase on the previous quarter, when it was 92. This is likely due to being the autumn term.

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 provider commissioned by Wokingham Borough Council to Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy assessments and advice 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 experiencing challenges with staffing and struggling to recruit to improve capacity. 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 (15 calendar days) to review a draft EHCP if it is issued in order to make representations for the Council to consider.

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. The SEND Team works 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. The challenge of timeliness was highlighted with both internal team and the external SEND partners committing to make this a priority for their services.

The service expects significant improvements to the timeliness of EHC Plans in Q4 2022-23 as a result of the actions taken above.

What is the national context?

This quarters' timeliness is now below both the 2021 national average (59.9%) and that of statistical neighbours (61.08%).

Dashboard Item 2 – Early Help

Measure	2021-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to Early Help	1474	362	349	488	312	415	↑
No. Early Help Assessments	1233	281	294	374	330	320	↓
Avg. length of time in days between referral and assessment completion	23	30	25	22	30	29	↓

What does this show us?

The number of Early Help referrals increased by 33% from the previous quarter and is 14% higher than the number of referrals for the same period last year. The number of assessments decreased slightly from the previous quarter and increased by 14% compared to the same period last year.

The average length of time taken to complete an assessment has not changed and 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?

The Early Help Service provides targeted support to 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	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
No. of Contacts progressed to Referral	1575	383	447	395	406	376	↓
% Of referrals to which are repeat referrals within 12 months	17.8%	19.1%	20.6%	24..8%	18.0%	21%	↑
% Assessments completed within 45 working days	67.4%	69.9%	67.0%	68.6%	78.6%	69.2%	↓

What does this show us?

In Q3 2022-23, referrals have decreased slightly by 1.8% when compared to the previous quarter. There were 79 repeat referrals within 12 months out of 376 referrals.

Timeliness of Assessments completed within 45 working days has decreased. In Q3, 234 of 338 Assessments were completed within 45 working days. This correlates with higher than usual levels of staff leave and sickness during this quarter.

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.

A higher number of Referrals is 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 slightly above target this quarter. Re-Referrals are audited by the service if over target to provide assurance that appropriate services have been provided. While Re-Referrals were higher in Q3, we are satisfied that appropriate decisions were made.

What action is the service taking?

There is a focus on improving performance following the dip in the last quarter due to high levels of absence.

What is the national context?

The statistical neighbour and England averages in 2021-22 for assessments completed within 45 days are 87.4% and 84.5% respectively.

The national average for repeat referrals within 12 months is 21.5% and the statistical neighbour average is 20.7%.

Dashboard Item 4 – Child Protection

Measure	2021-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
Children subject to CP Plans (snapshot at end of period)	164	160	164	135	123	134	↑
% Of children coming onto a CP plan for a second or subsequent time ever	20%	0.0%	32.3%	11.8%	0.0%	11.9%	↑
% Of child protection visits within timescale (10 working days)	74%	72%	77%	74%	64%	73%	↑

What does this show us?

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

42 children became subject to a CPP in Q3 2022-23 and 5 of these children had a previous plan.

The proportion of CP visits completed within timescales has increased significantly in Q3 2022-23 (73%) compared to (64%) in Q2.

What is the background to this?

CSC places great emphasis on preventing the need for children to return to a CPP. The Service aims to have less than 22% of children starting a CPP for a second or subsequent time ever.

It is noted that the number of visits within 10 days has increased this quarter although it 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 figure for Child Protection Plans per 10,000 at the end of 2021-22 (Q4) was 39.7, which is below the England average of 42.1 in 2021-22.

Across 2021-22 Wokingham's figure for repeat referrals to CPP is 20.5% which is below the national average (23.3%) and statistical neighbours (22.9%).

Dashboard Item 5 – Children in Care

Measure	2021-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
No. children in care (snapshot at end of period)	136	118	136	135	142	140	↓
% visits to children in care within timescale	76%	77%	76%	75%	78%	81%	↑
% children in care who have more than 1 allocated social worker in 12m (snapshot at end of period)	25%	21%	25%	33%	35%	44%	↑

What does this show us?

There has been consistency in the percentage of visits to children in care taking place within timescale. 401 out of the 493 visits carried out in Q3 were in timescale.

The percentage of children in care who have had more than one allocated worker in the previous 12 months has increased 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 social workers leaving, going on maternity leave, long term sickness 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 2022 is 70.0 for England, and 47.1 for statistical neighbours, with the Wokingham rate being significantly lower at 33 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	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
% of care leavers aged 18-24 'in touch' (snapshot at end of period)	99%	94%	99%	98%	99%	99%	↔
% of care leavers aged 18-24 'in touch' and who are NEET	34%	32%	34%	30%	29%	39%	↑
% of care leavers 18-24 'in touch' in suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of period)	97%	97%	97%	99%	97%	97%	↔

What does this show us?

The percentage of care leavers in touch has remained consistent with the Service often maintaining a good working relationship with those formerly in care.

There has been an increase in the number of care leavers not in education, employment, or training.

The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has remained the same as last quarter, and same as Q3 in the previous year.

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 Care Leavers we are not 'in touch' with but who are entitled to a service and have refused to engage are now sent a birthday and Christmas card to remind them of services available should they wish to re-engage.

The Service aims to have high levels of care leavers in education, employment, or training, despite the increased 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 decreased 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 an increase in UASC over 16 and the opening of the London Road accommodation.

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?

National averages at the end of March 2022 shows 92% of care leavers (19-21 years) were in touch with their Local Authority; 38% of care leavers (19-21 year) were NEET; and 88% were in suitable accommodation. The DfE does not currently collect or publish data on Care Leavers over 21 years old.

Dashboard Item 7 – Children Missing from Home/Care

Measure	2021-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
Children missing from home	81	21	34	29	31	43	↑
Missing Episodes - % of return home interviews accepted (out of number of return home interviews required)	30%	37%	39%	33%	33%	57%	↑
Missing Episodes - % return home interviews carried out on time	32%	60%	44%	40%	60%	78%	↑
Children missing from care	16	x	14	8	9	15	↑
Missing Episodes - % of return home interviews accepted (out of number of return home interviews required)	18%	33%	39%	75%	50%	47%	↑
Missing Episodes - % return home interviews carried out on time	86%	100%	44%	33%	100%	90%	↑
Children missing from education at the end of the period (not currently on a school roll)	8	12	8	9	18	6	↓
No. of permanent exclusions	13	4	7	x	x	9	↑

x Less than 4, suppressed to preserve confidentiality

What does this show us?

The number of children going missing from home or care (53) shows an increase in Q3 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 (17 acceptances out of 27 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 (7 acceptances out of 11 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 decreased significantly in this quarter and is 50% 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. The number of permanent exclusions shows the highest in this Quarter and November was the highest number of permanent exclusions. This is more than double the number of PEX in comparison to Q3 of 2021-22.

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 decreased in this quarter compared to the previous quarter as admissions service managed to find places for all the children who were waiting for a school place at the start of the academic year.

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	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
12 months rolling turnover of permanent qualified social workers	12%	14%	19.43%	20.99%	18.85%	13.33%	↓
% agency staff across qualified social work workforce (snapshot at end of period)	21%	16%	26%	28%	23%	28%	↑

What does this show us?

During Q3 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.

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TITLE	Fostering Transformation Update
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 March 2023
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Helen Watson

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Strengthening the fostering service to meet the needs of more Children in Care, supporting them to stay close to family, friends, community, and those who care for them most.

RECOMMENDATION

This report is for information only.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Council faces several challenges in relation to placement sufficiency:

- Offering suitable placements in foster households through existing providers will be difficult over the next three years particularly for older children, children with complex needs, children with disabilities and sibling groups.
- The number of children in care is increasing while nationally demand for residential children's home placements and Independent Foster Agency (IFA) placements outstrips supply in the external market.
- The low number of IFA placements and children's homes placements in Wokingham.
- Increasing numbers of children with more than three placement moves.
- A lack of local provision in borough resulting in more children being placed out of borough than in borough.

In response to these challenges Children's Services has commissioned a review of the current Fostering Service.

The 'Fostering Transformation Steering Group' (FTSG) was set up to lead and provide oversight and governance to an agreed programme of work to review the Council's current fostering arrangements, and, if necessary, develop a future model of delivery which is evidence based and needs led.

The FTSG is chaired by the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) and AD, Children's Services, Social Care and Early Help and has members from Commissioning, Performance, Finance and Corporate Parenting.

The Steering Group formally reports to the Children's Services Directorate Leadership Team (CDLT). The Steering Group provides regular highlight reports and/or updates against the major milestones of the project plan. These updates are provided via the Project Manager.

In addition, there is regular engagement and consultation with The Lead Member for Children's Services.

The final report and business case will be presented to CDLT for approval in April 2023.

1. Background

Consultation with all members of the fostering service, carers, other social care professionals and finance and data officers alongside consideration of the 2021-24 Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy and the Oct 22 Update Report has led to the understanding that Wokingham Fostering would benefit from:

- A greater focus on foster carer recruitment, utilisation and permanence.
- Ensuring that we continue to have competitive fees, allowances and benefits.
- Bringing carers to the forefront of everything we do.
- Preparing and supporting carers to meet the needs of more children and young people.
- A targeted UASC fostering recruitment strategy aligned with further developing local after care accommodation and resources.
- Using Family Finding as part of the carer recruitment drive.
- Updating the Recruitment & Retention Strategy to consider recent needs analysis, carers', and children's feedback.

Like many fostering services, Wokingham Fostering has struggled to recruit the target 10 carers a year over the last 2 years. Some new carers have struggled to settle in to the role, feeling isolated and unprepared coming out of Covid. The new fostering manager has already addressed some of these issues by installing a Buddy Scheme for applicants and new carers and revising the pre-approval training.

Carers report that the Covid period has limited their social interaction outside of well attended formal events. They would like more opportunities to network, get support from, and offer support to other carers. They have also asked to be more involved in the running of the service. To this end 6 carers are now attending the fortnightly Recruitment & Retention Board that is overseeing the delivery of the fostering transformation project.

Lastly, and most importantly there is a growing Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) fostering population that is mainly being cared for through Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA) at some considerable distance from the local authority. Engagement events have already begun with some community groups to publicise Wokingham's needs, but this will need particular focus if we are going to start to build in-house and/or local fostering resource.

2. Needs Analysis

The last year

All fostering

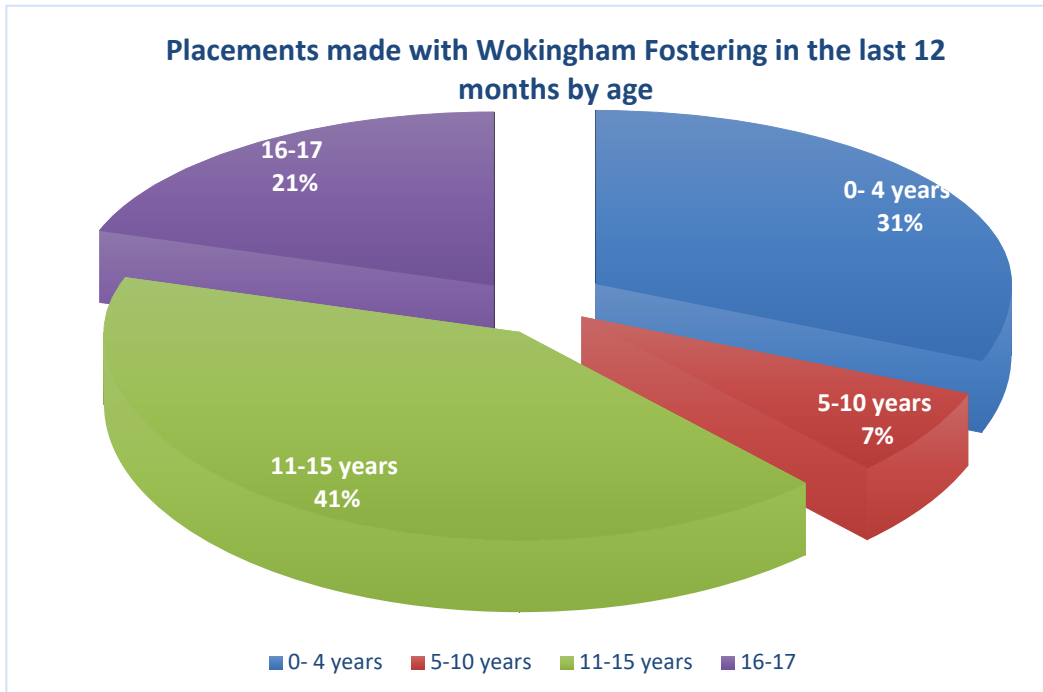
In the last 12 months (Mar 22- Feb 23), 50 fostering placements were made. Of these, 25 children were placed In-house (including Connected Persons) and 25 were placed with IFAs. 2 children were part of a sibling group and placed together with in-house carers.

UASC

Of the 25 children placed in IFAs over the last 12 months, 21 were UASC. Only one young UASC was placed in-house.

Age

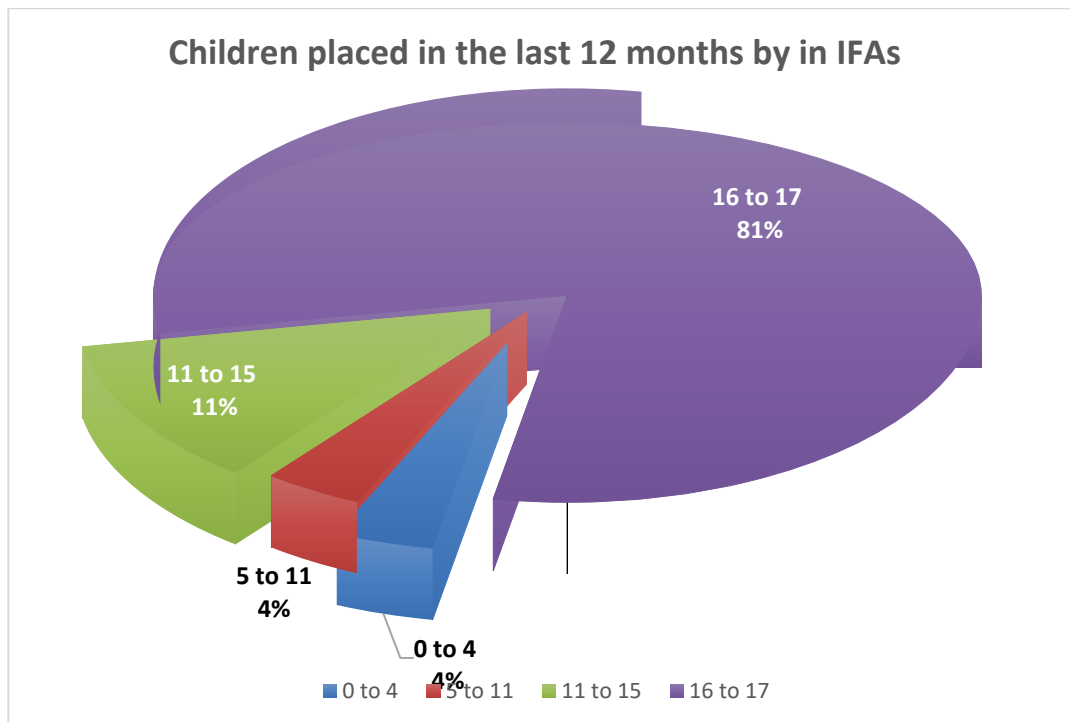
For in-house, the main age group placed was 11-15 years (41%) with the lowest age group being 5-10 years (7%). The average age of all children was 11 years 3 months.



In comparison, the average age for children placed with IFAs was 14 years 11 months. This is high because most of the placements were for UASC with an average age of just below 16.

4 non-UASC were placed with IFAs. 1 was part of a Parent & Child fostering arrangement and the other 3 were aged 7, 13 and 15 years.

This evidences that in-house fostering has been relatively successful in placing most non-UASC children referred to them, including children in the higher age groups. However, this data does not include all referrals made, just outcomes of placements made.



Permanence

In the last 12 months, 13 children exited Wokingham fostering via permanence:

- 7 Special Guardianship Orders (SGO)
- 4 Adoptions
- 2 Child Arrangement Orders (CAO)

In addition to these, more children were subject to SGOs and CAOs being awarded prior to their carers being approved as full-time foster carers.

Long Term foster matches are approved at the Permanency Panel rather than at Fostering Panel. There is little external family finding outside of children with particularly complex needs.

Overall picture

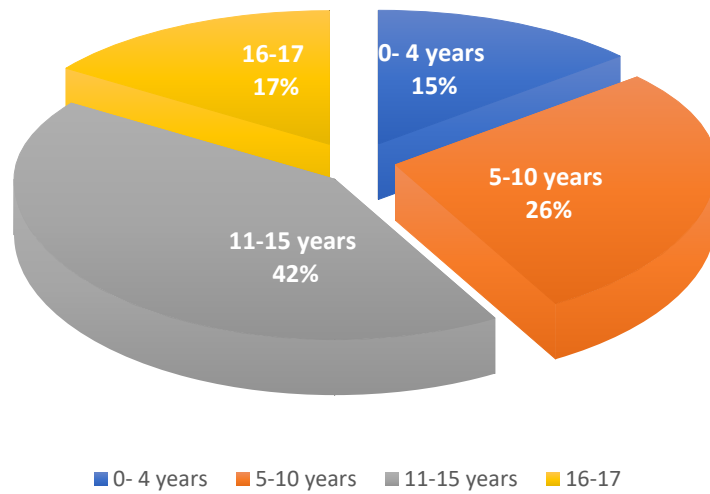
In-house

As of February 2023, there are 57 children being cared for by Wokingham Fostering. 43 children in mainstream fostering and 14 in Family & Friends (Connected Persons) homes.

The average age of these children is 11 years 1 month. The largest age group of children placed is 11-15 years (41% of children). The smallest age group is 0-4 years (15%).

12 young adults are with Staying Put carers, 2 of whom are UASC care leavers.

Children currently placed in-house fostering (Feb 23) by age

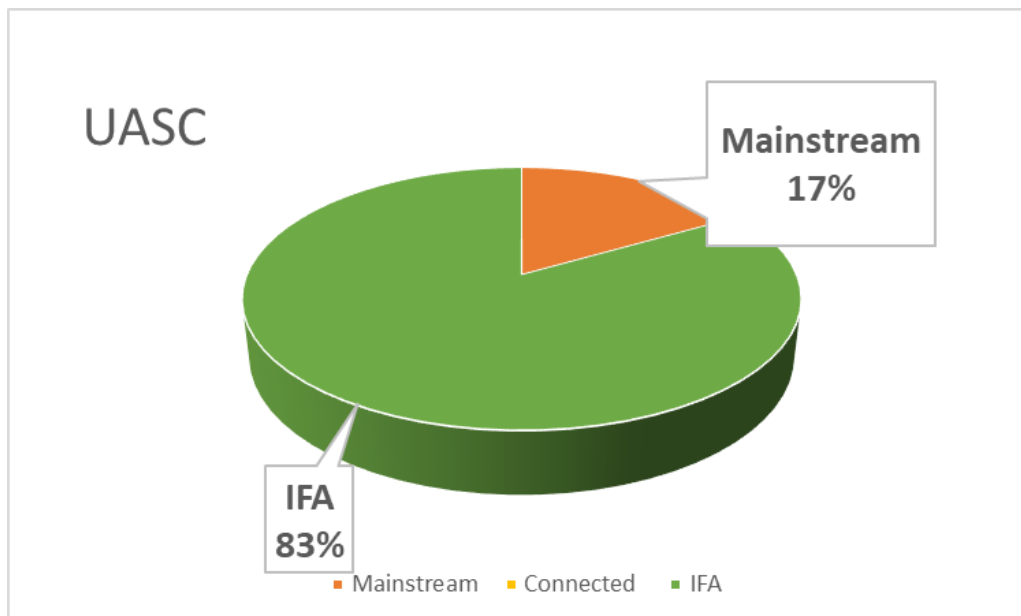


All fostering

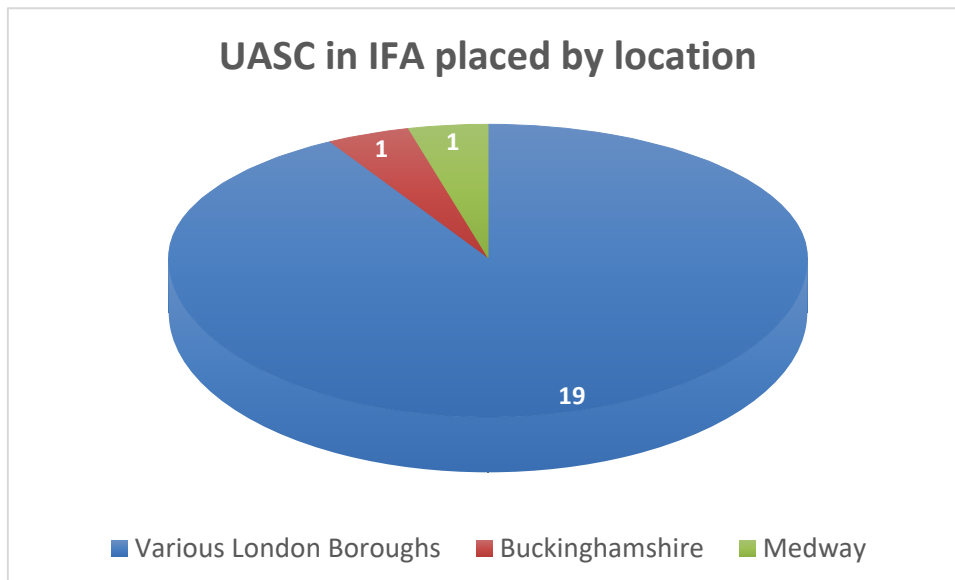
Of the 85 children or young people in foster placements, 57 are placed in-house and 28 are with IFAs. If we remove UASC children or young people, there are 59 children in fostering placements, 52 in-house and 7 IFA.

UASC

26 UASC children are cared for within fostering 21 in IFA and 5 in-house.



The 21 UASC with IFAs are all placed outside the borough with 19 young people in 16 different London boroughs.



These 21 placements are with 14 different IFAs.

3. Initial Findings

- Placements
 - High usage of in-house fostering with 74% of children in fostering, living with in house carers. Of these 32% are living in a Connected household.
 - The largest age group being cared for in-house is 11–15-year-olds at 41%.
 - Only 17% of UASC are living with in-house foster carers.
 - Limited carer availability in the service for new placements, especially for more complex children, sibling groups and unaccompanied young people.
 - No dedicated duty officer time.
 - Training and support offer needs to be tailored to both prepare new and develop current carers to meet more complex needs.
- Recruitment
 - New website being built to increase applications through a better representation of the fostering role and greater engagement with enquirers.
 - ‘Buddy’ system launched for applicants to support them through the process.
 - Pre-approval training to be revamped to address new carer preparedness.
- Permanence
 - Established Family & Friends Team leading on a good percentage of children living with Connected Persons via fostering or through early permanence through SGO prior to approval.
- Staff
 - ATMs with strong relationships with foster carers. Newly recruited experienced and committed fostering manager.
 - Mockingbird close to launch with Liaison worker appointed and potential Hub carers identified.

- Carers
 - Competitive carer allowances and benefits including paid council tax, annual bonus.
 - Outside of recruitment, carer participation in the service is low.

4. Interim Objectives

- Increase recruitment focus, improve the customer service, applicant response and reduce assessment times.
- Evidence to the carers the value we place on the foster carer role, and our commitment to their support needs.
- Improve carer utilisation, permanence options and increase SSW availability to work with carers.
- Support carers to maintain the children in their care and consider additional or more challenging children.
- Help prepare & develop carers knowledge, skills, resilience, and capacity to care for current and future children and young people, through understanding and supporting their training needs better.
- Enable unaccompanied young people to stay local to Wokingham to enhance their opportunities to settle well and establish themselves

5. Completed Milestones

- Initial findings presented
- Action plan developed
- Carer consultation started
- Carer led Recruitment & Retention Board established
- Staff discussions completed
- Carer utilisation work
- Panels and process observed
- UASC recruitment event at Islamic Centre

6. Next steps

Action	By When
Revised Marketing Plan	20/03/23
Costs and options to be finalised	20/03/23
Skills to Foster observations	14/03/23

Business case with final recommendations to be presented to Fostering Steering Group	31/03/23
Recommendations to be presented and considered by the Children's Services Directorate Leadership Team.	April 2023

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

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

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
n/a

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

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

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.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

List of Background Papers

Contact Adam Davis, Hayley Rees	Service Social Care and Early Help
Telephone No Tel: 0118 974 6128, Tel: 0118 974 6705	Email adam.davis@wokingham.gov.uk, Hayley.rees@wokingham.gov.uk

CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2023/24 WORK PROGRAMME

DATE OF MEETING	ITEM	PURPOSE OF REPORT	REASON FOR CONSIDERATION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER / CONTACT OFFICER
20 June 2023	SEND Youth Forum	To consider the work undertaken by the SEND Youth Forum	Information item	Children's Services / Ming Zhang
	School Sufficiency Update	To update the Committee.	Information item	Children's Services / Ming Zhang
	Impact of the Cost of Living crisis	To consider the work being undertaken to support children and young people in the borough in relation to the current cost of living crisis.	Information item	Children's Services/ Helen Watson
	Post Ofsted Update and Action Plan	To receive an update on the outcome of the Ofsted inspection and review the action plan.	Challenge 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/ Ming Zhang
	CSO&S Forward Plan	To consider the forward plan of the Committee	Standing item	Democratic Services/ Luciane Bowker
6 September 2023				
	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/ Ming Zhang

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Agenda Item 68.

	CSO&S Forward Plan	To consider the forward plan of the Committee	Standing item	Democratic Services/ Luciane Bowker
1 November 2023				
	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/ Ming Zhang
	CSO&S Forward Plan	To consider the forward plan of the Committee	Standing item	Democratic Services/ Luciane Bowker
8 January 2024				
	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/ Ming Zhang
	CSO&S Forward Plan	To consider the forward plan of the Committee	Standing item	Democratic Services/ Luciane Bowker
20 March 2024				
	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/ Ming Zhang
	CSO&S Forward Plan	To consider the forward plan of the Committee	Standing item	Democratic Services/ Luciane Bowker

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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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	Sep-22	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 CofE 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-22	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	Nov-22	Good	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 CofE Infant School
Robert Piggott Junior School	Primary	May-18	Good	maintained Cof E	Ofsted Robert Piggott CofE 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 CofE 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 Cecilias Primary	Primary			Keys Trust C of E	Ofsted St Cecilia's CofE 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 CofE 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	Feb-23	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 CofE Primary School

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