

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Data on demand for Services</b>
<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 November 2018
<b>WARD</b>	None Specific
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Director of Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Effective response to increasing need for statutory child protection services is necessary to ensure that our most vulnerable children are protected from harm.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the recent increases in demand for services and possible reasons for this trend are noted, and the implications for effective service delivery considered.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

This report considers the recent substantial increase in demand for social care child protection services, the possible reasons for this trend, and how this compares with national and statistical neighbouring authority figures.

## **Background**

The demand for Child Protection Services has increased significantly over recent months placing substantial pressure on services.

Between March 2017 and March 2018 the number of children subject to a child protection plan almost trebled from 46 to 126 (or 174%). The increase has continued since March 2018 with the figure at the end of September 2018 standing at 159 – a 246% increase since March 2017.

This paper investigates possible reasons for increased demand in services for our most vulnerable children and young people, focussing on the increase in child protection plans between March 2017 and March 2018 (this period has been chosen so that comparisons can be made with statistical neighbour and national figures).

## **Analysis of Issues**

### **Increase in Child Protection Plans March 2017 – March 2018**

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 there were 46 children subject to Child Protection Plans in Wokingham Borough. This was 12.1 children per 10,000 population and placed Wokingham as the third lowest rate of children subject to Child Protection Plans out of

all 152 local authorities in the country, after the Isles of Scilly (approximate child population 400) and City of London (approximate child population 1,200).

With an approximate child population of 38,000, higher than our neighbours Reading and Bracknell, having the third lowest rate of children subject to Child Protection Plans in the country was curiously low for Wokingham Borough.

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 there were 126 children subject to Child Protection Plans in Wokingham Borough. This was 32.6 children per 10,000 population, an increase of 169% compared to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. This was the steepest increase of all the Local Authorities in the country, as shown in the Department for Education's publication – Children in Need Census, Statistical First Release.

Child Protection Plans in Wokingham Borough have historically been lower than our Statistical Neighbours (other local authorities the Department for Education has determined are similar and we can therefore more reliably compare ourselves to). Even with this increase in numbers, we still had fewer children subject to Child Protection Plans per 10,000 population than our Statistical Neighbours rate on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 (37.81 per 10,000 population). However, the growth in numbers has been marked, and in-depth analysis and research has been carried out since the increases began around October 2017 to try to understand this trend further.

The findings evidenced that numbers of children requiring social care intervention do fluctuate, and are very dependent on other factors, such as local decision making and priorities - both within Children's Social Care and our partners - Education, Police, Health and voluntary organisations - which is why numbers can be very different when comparing one local authority to another if they have different operating models for their services and different approaches to intervention. Other factors include changes in laws and legislation, feedback and ratings following inspections by Ofsted and the occurrence of high profile cases of child protection concerns in the national media, which are found to have a direct impact on numbers of notifications received by Children's Social Care and the response of services.

The findings also evidenced that factors identified as affecting children across the country in recent years, such as Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation, were not as prevalent in Wokingham Borough until later.

Reductions in Early Help Services and Universal Services (such as extra support in schools and other education services, police and health) put more pressure on statutory services and children are being referred to Children's Social Care requiring higher levels of intervention than in the past when more early intervention and non-statutory services were available.

Wokingham Borough Children's Social Care has to remain a responsive service and provide an appropriate level of intervention for the identified need. The number of Child Protection Plans has risen this year, as it has done at times in the past, and numbers are likely to continue to fluctuate as we react accordingly to the needs of children and families in our communities.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

*The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.*

	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)			
Following Financial Year (Year 3)			

<b>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</b>
N/A

<b>Cross-Council Implications</b>
N/A

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
N/A

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