

Agenda Item 22.

TITLE	Children's Services Performance Indicators
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 September 2019
WARD	None Specific
LEAD OFFICER	Director of Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

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 June 2019.

Background

At the previous Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny meeting in June 2019, a new performance dashboard was presented. Following feedback from that meeting, a slightly different approach has been taken with regards to presenting the indicators contained in the dashboard. The new approach is intended to provide more clarity around trends, the background to any issues, and the actions Children's Services are taking to address them.

A full report covering the broad scope of Children's Services is included as an appendix to this report.

Analysis of Issues

At the end of June 2019, the Children's Services Dashboard and the underlying indicators have identified four areas to highlight. Information on these is given below.

1. Timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plans

The percentage of EHCPs issued within 20 weeks of the referral has been steadily falling since September 2018; no EHCPs have been issued within 20 weeks of the referral since that time.

Over the last 12 months, the service has struggled to appoint appropriately qualified and experienced workers and since early 2018 has been operating at less than 50% capacity. This has severely impacted the service's ability to issue EHC Plans within the required timescales.

Following decisions by the council in 2018-19 to significantly improve the budget of the service, actions have been taken and the SEND care management team is now fully staffed. We will continue to monitor the numbers of EHCPs to ensure resource levels remain appropriate.

It is intended that the 20 week assessment timeliness will achieve 100% target by early 2020, and the indicator will be monitored monthly to track progress against this target.

2. Referrals to Children's Social Care that are repeat referrals within 12 months of a previous referral

The percentage of referrals coming into CSC for children who have been the subject of a previous referral in last 12 months (32.4%) has increased in 2019-20 compared to the overall 2018-19 figure (21.7%), and the figure for quarter 1 2018-19 (18.5%).

In May 2019, concern over the deterioration in performance against this measure prompted the Quality Assurance Operational Group to make this the subject of an audit. A report is due to the Quality Assurance Board in late September to present the findings of the audit, after which any lessons will be further communicated and built into practice.

3. Timeliness of Child Protection visits

More child protection visits are now showing to have happened within mandated timescales; in quarter 1 of 2019-20, 79% of visits were in time, compared with 65.4% in quarter 1 2018-19. Improving this indicator has been a big focus of the service over recent months. We have always been confident that children are being visited, but have recognised that recording of visits has been poor which has led to poor performance against this indicator.

We have reconfigured the way visits are recorded on our management information system to promote and facilitate better recording of visits. Alongside this, monthly monitoring and scrutiny of this indicator takes place to ensure that performance continues to improve.

4. 12 months rolling turnover of qualified social workers and use of agency staff

Stability across the social work workforce is improving, with turnover falling by 5 percentage points between the end of 2018-19 and quarter 1 2019-20. The percentage of agency social workers in Children's Services has also fallen slightly between the end of 2018-19 and the end of quarter 1 2019-20.

Children's Services has struggled to recruit to vacant social worker posts over the last few years, meaning that a high number of social workers have been agency staff. At the end of quarter 3 2018-19, the social worker workforce was 35% agency staff. This has fallen in recent quarters as permanent social workers have been successfully recruited and the service has managed to get on top of the sudden and unexpected increases in demand.

Turnover has also been high amongst permanent social workers, which has meant that many children open to Children's Social Care have experienced a change of social worker. This too has improved in recent quarters, falling by as much as 12 percentage points since quarter 3 2018-19.

The recruitment and retention policy is being further developed to ensure Wokingham can not only recruit high quality social workers, but can retain them as well. Alongside this, work is underway to enable Wokingham to 'grow our own' social work staff, using our existing, high quality offer for those on an assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) to train and keep good social workers.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council continues to face severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of reductions to public sector funding and growing pressures in our statutory services. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions of approximately £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)	N/A		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A		

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

Cross-Council Implications
N/A

List of Background Papers
N/A

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