

CHILDREN'S SERVICES DASHBOARD – QUARTER 1 2019-20

Dashboard Item 1 - Education, Health & Care Plans

Measure	2018-19	Q1 2018-19	Q1 2019-20	Direction of Travel
Current EHCPs in borough (snapshot at end of period)	560	n/a	577	↑
Current EHCPs out of borough (snapshot at end of period)	349	n/a	365	↑
EHCPs issued within 20 weeks of the referral	30%	33%	0%	↓

What does this show us?

The numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) funded by Wokingham Borough Council are increasing, for both children and young people educated within Wokingham, and those educated outside. The modest increase in funded EHCP numbers between the end of 2018-19 and the end of Quarter 1 2019-20 masks the fact that, since January 2018, funded EHCP numbers in Wokingham have risen by almost 9%.

Alongside the increases in numbers of funded EHCPs, the percentage of EHCPs issued within 20 weeks of the referral has steadily fallen. Since September 2018, no EHCPs have been issued within 20 weeks of the referral, leading to the 30% reported for 2018-19 (itself a reduction of 66 percentage points from 2017-18) and the 0% reported for quarter 1 2019-20.

What is the background to this?

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.

What action is the service taking?

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.

What is the national context?

For the calendar year 2018, 60.1% of new EHC Plans across England were issued within 20 weeks.

Dashboard Item 2 – Early Help

Measure	2018-19	Q1 2018-19	Q1 2019-20	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to Early Help	840	186	203	↑
No. Early Help Assessments	638	204	184	↓
Avg. length of time in days between referral and assessment completion	40	32	35	↑

What does this show us?

The numbers of referrals to the Early Help service has risen slightly; 203 in quarter 1 2019-20 compared to 186 in the same period in 2018-19. Meanwhile, the number of completed Early Help assessments has decreased slightly compared to quarter 1 2018-19.

The average length of time it is taking to complete Early Help assessments has fallen in quarter 1 2019-20 compared to the 2018-19 average, but has risen compared to the quarterly average for the same period in 2018-19.

What is the background to this?

Over previous months, Early Help workers had been under additional pressure due to the volume of social work support activity the service was undertaking (such as supporting supervised visits for children who enter care, undertaking parenting assessments and providing co-working support for children who are subject to child in Need or Child Protection Plans).

What action is the service taking?

All out of timescale assessments have been reviewed and the service is ensuring that appropriate focus is given to Early Help and prevention activity.

Early Help assessment timeliness will continue to be monitored monthly as part of our internal performance monitoring.

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	2018-19	Q1 2018-19	Q1 2019-20	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to CSC	1,787	471	463	↓
% of referrals to CSC which are repeat referrals within 12 months	21.7%	18.5%	32.4%	↑
% assessments completed within 45 working days	67.4%	47.3%	87.1%	↑

What does this show us?

The number of referrals to Children’s Social Care (CSC) has fallen slightly; 463 in quarter 1 2019-20 compared to 471 for the same period in 2018-19.

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

The timeliness of initial assessments completed following a referral to CSC has improved significantly in recent months.

What is the background to this?

The front-door team were dealing with unprecedented demand in 2018-19, which impacted on the team’s ability to meet their target (90%) of assessments completed within timescales. While demand remains high, the impact has been lessened by appropriate resourcing in the front-door team.

What action is the service taking?

The service regularly monitors assessment timeliness alongside factors indicative of demand to ensure that staffing levels within the front-door team are appropriate.

The service also regularly monitors the percentage of referrals into CSC for children who have been the subject of a previous referral in last 12 months, as this may be indicative of the quality of services provided. 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.

What is the national context?

Nationally, in 2018-19, 82.7% of assessments were completed within 45 days, and 21.9% of referrals were re-referrals to CSC within 12 months.

Dashboard Item 4 – Child Protection

Measure	2018-19	Q1 2018-19	Q1 2019-20	Direction of Travel
Children subject to CP Plans (snapshot at end of period)	124	148	131	↓
% of children starting a plan who had a previous one in the last 2 years	8.7%	10.4%	13.2%	↑
% of child protection visits within timescale	65.2%	65.4%	79.0%	↑

What does this show us?

The number of children on child protection plans is around 6% higher at the end of quarter 1 than at the end of 2018-19, but is lower than at the end of Q1 2018-19.

Of those children who came onto a child protection plan in quarter 1 2019-20, 13.2% had been subject to a previous child protection plan within the last 2 years. This is around 5 percentage points higher than the 2018-19 figure.

More child protection visits are now happening within mandated timescales; in quarter 1 of 2019-20, 79% of visits were in time.

What is the background to this?

The number of children on child protection plans does vary from month to month. However, it is important to note that the number of child protection plans increased massively in a short time after October 2017, and have remained at relatively high levels since.

The numbers of children coming onto a child protection plan in a quarter are usually fairly low (38 in quarter 1), so activity involving larger families can cause big swings in performance from period to period.

The timeliness of child protection visits has been a big focus of the service over recent months. We have been confident that children are being visited, but have recognised that recording of visits has been poor.

What action is the service taking?

Where children become subject to child protections plans for a second or subsequent time, Service Managers go back through the case files to look for any points of learning that can be applied to future cases.

We have reconfigured the way visits are recorded on our management information system to promote and facilitate better recording of visits. Monthly monitoring and scrutiny of this indicator takes place.

What is the national context?

Nationally, there is a child protection plan rate of 45.3 per 10,000 children. In Wokingham, this was 35.1 at the end of quarter 1.

Dashboard Item 5 – Children in Care

Measure	2018-19	Q1 2018-19	Q1 2019-20	Direction of Travel
No. children in care (snapshot at end of period)	114	107	117	↑
% visits to children in care within timescale	68.4%	76.4%	79.2%	↑
% children in care who have more than 1 allocated social worker in 12m (snapshot at end of period)	65.0%	62.6%	69.2%	↑

What does this show us?

The number of children in care remains relatively stable, but there has been significant improvement in the number of visits taking place within timescales.

The percentage of children in care who have had more than 1 allocated worker in the previous 12 months has risen by 4 percentage points since the end of 2018-19.

What is the background to this?

There was some concern in 2018-19 that visits to children in care were not being recorded in a timely manner and that performance was artificially low as a result. Some work was done alongside social workers to remove barriers to recording, with the expectation that the visit timeliness indicator would begin to move in line with the anecdotal reality.

The Ofsted report published in July 2019 drew attention to repeated changes of social work for children, “making it difficult for them to establish and maintain meaningful relationships with [social workers]”. The turnover of staff and the high proportion of agency workers across front-line teams makes Wokingham vulnerable in this regard.

What action is the service taking?

The visit timeliness is monitored on a monthly basis to ensure the expected improvements in performance are being seen since the barriers to recording have been removed. Team Managers are also provided with a weekly dataset to assist them in identifying where cases may be falling out of visiting timescales.

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.

What is the national context?

The national rate of Children in Care per 10,000 is 64.0. In Wokingham, the equivalent figure is 31.4.

Dashboard Item 6 – Care Leavers

Measure	2018-19	Q1 2018-19	Q1 2019-20	Direction of Travel
% of care leavers 'in touch' (snapshot at end of period)	94.4%	96.7%	94.7%	↓
% of care leavers aged 18-24 who are NEET (snapshot at end of period)	45.8%	43.3%	39.5%	↓
% of care leavers in suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of period)	91.7%	93.3%	88.2%	↓

What does this show us?

There has been little change in the percentage of care leavers that we are in touch with compared to the end of 2018-19, though it's slightly down on quarter 1 2019-20.

The percentage of care leavers aged 18-24 who are NEET has reduced since the end of 2018-19; an improvement of 6 percentage points.

The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has deteriorated since the end of 2018-19, falling by 3.5 percentage points.

What is the background to this?

Wokingham generally maintains good relations with care leavers, and is in touch with the vast majority. However, due to the age of the children and their individual preferences, it is not always possible to remain in contact; some children actively refuse contact with the service.

In May and June, there were a number of incidences of care leavers being placed into bed and breakfast accommodation, which is not classed as suitable accommodation.

What action is the service taking?

The service takes steps to understand the reasons why Care Leavers are not in education, employment or training - some will be due to a disability or maternity leave which means they will remain NEET for a long period of time. Care Leavers are visited regularly and supported to engage and remain in education, employment or training, as appropriate.

Conversations have been taking place with Housing colleagues to ensure that all care leavers can be placed in suitable accommodation, and to reduce the need to place care leavers in bed and breakfast accommodation.

What is the national context?

Nationally, 93% of care leavers are in touch with their LA; 39% of care leavers are NEET, and; 84% are in suitable accommodation. Wokingham compares favourably to all these.

Dashboard Item 7 – Children Missing from Home/Care

Measure	2018-19	Q1 2018-19	Q1 2019-20	Direction of Travel
Children missing from home/care	123	34	20	↓
% return home interviews carried out on time	38%	73%	50%	↑
Children missing from education (snapshot at end of period)	13	n/a	8	↓

What does this show us?

The number of children going missing from home or care has fallen in quarter 1, based on an annualised average against 2018-19.

More return home interviews are happening within timescales, improving by 12 percentage points from 2018-19 to quarter 1 2019-20.

There are 5 fewer children missing from education at the end of quarter 1 2019-20 than there were at the end of 2018-19. These are children who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise.

What is the background to this?

Return Home Interviews are carried out by a Return Home Interview Coordinator who is based in the Early Help Service. Ofsted spoke positively about the quality of interviews in their latest inspection report.

Although a child may agree to an interview taking place initially, it is often hard to engage them in completing the interview within timescales. This is particularly the case with older children or children in care placed outside the Borough.

Ofsted judged the LA's oversight of children who are missing education to be effective in their latest inspection report.

What action is the service taking?

It has been recognised that on some occasions our process flow for missing children upon return has not been as efficient or effective as it could be which has erroneously led to reported delay. A full review of the missing child process is underway.

Children missing in education will continue to be tracked by the Virtual School

What is the national context?

There is no national data available for comparison.

Dashboard Item 8 – Children’s Services Workforce

Measure	2018-19	Q1 2018-19	Q1 2019-20	Direction of Travel
12 months rolling turnover of qualified social workers	22%	24%	17%	↓
% agency staff across qualified social work workforce (snapshot at end of period)	29%	29%	28%	↓

What does this show us?

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 fallen slightly between the end of 2018-19 and the end of quarter 1 2019-20.

What is the background to this?

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.

What action is the service taking?

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.

What is the national context?

Nationally, the percentage of agency social workers across the entire social work workforce is 15.4%, which is considerably lower than Wokingham’s 28%.

The national 12-month rolling turnover of social workers is 16.2%. Wokingham is moving into line with this national average.