

CHILDREN'S SERVICES DASHBOARD – QUARTER 3 2019-20

Dashboard Item 1 - Education, Health & Care Plans

Measure	2018-19	Q3 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Direction of Travel
Current EHCPs in borough (snapshot at end of period)	560	537	577	581	612	↑
Current EHCPs out of borough (snapshot at end of period)	349	339	365	402	381	↓
EHCPs issued within 20 weeks of the referral	30%	0%	0%	12.9%	14.3%	↑

What does this show us?

The numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) funded by Wokingham Borough Council are increasing. The funded EHCP numbers between the end of 2018-19 (934) and the end of Quarter 3 2019-20 (1,066) have risen by almost 14%.

In the first quarter of 2019-20, no EHCPs were issued within 20 weeks of the referral. However, in Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 2019-20, a number of EHCPs were issued within the 20-week timescale; this indicates a short-term improvement in performance for this area.

What is the background to this?

The service's ability to issue EHC Plans within the required timescales is dependent on its ability to appoint appropriately qualified and experienced workers. After operating at less than 50% capacity since early 2018, the SEND care management team achieved a full staffing complement in Quarter 2 2019-20. At the end of Quarter 3, the service remained fully staffed.

What action is the service taking?

We will continue to monitor the numbers of EHCPs to ensure resource levels remain appropriate. The short-term improvements in EHCP timeliness are likely to continue, and we are hopeful that we will move more in line with the national picture by the end of the year.

Alongside this, the service is also re-introducing the co-production meetings for parents and other professionals, in order to capture the child/young person's voice as well as parent's voice.

What is the national context?

For the calendar year 2018, 58% of new EHC Plans across England were issued within 20 weeks.

Dashboard Item 2 – Early Help

Measure	2018-19	Q3 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to Early Help	840	293	203	159	251	↑
No. Early Help Assessments	638	202	184	176	181	↑
Avg. length of time in days between referral and assessment completion	40	39	35	25	33	↑

What does this show us?

The numbers of referrals to the Early Help service has fluctuated between Quarter 1 and Quarter 3 2019-20, with a dip in Quarter 2. Meanwhile, the number of completed Early Help assessments has remained relatively stable throughout the year.

The average length of time it is taking to complete Early Help assessments has risen in Quarter 3 2019-20 compared to Quarter 2, but performance in all quarters of 2019-20 has been better than the 2018-19 average. It is important to note that 33 days is still within the 35 day timeframe for completion.

What is the background to this?

There are stark differences in the number of Early Help referrals from month to month. October 2019 saw 110 referrals, compared to 39 in September. The main source of referrals in October were schools; the numbers of referrals coming from schools are affected by the summer holidays in August and September.

The number of Early Help assessments from month to month do not always correspond to the same fluctuations of Early Help referrals. The reason for this is that assessments differ in the length of time they take, so the assessments completed in a month can date back to referrals across a broad period of time. Also, not every Early Help referral will result in an assessment; Early Help work can happen alongside Social Care work meaning an Early Help assessment is not required, and on some occasions families do not engage with the Early Help service and an assessment cannot be completed.

What action is the service taking?

A review of Early Help is underway, which will, amongst other things, look to capture the activity that other agencies carry out in relation to Early Help. The current performance suite around Early Help focusses solely on what happens within the Early Help service, and doesn't take into account what our partners are doing to help children and families within Wokingham.

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	Q3 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to CSC	1,787	478	463	419	495	↑
% of referrals to CSC which are repeat referrals within 12 months	21.7%	19.9%	32.4%	25.1%	20.2%	↓
% assessments completed within 45 working days	67.4%	75.6%	87.1%	76.3%	71.6%	↓

What does this show us?

The number of referrals to Children’s Social Care (CSC) has increased by 19%; 495 in Quarter 3 2019-20 compared to 419 for Quarter 2.

The percentage of referrals coming into CSC for children who have been the subject of a previous referral in last 12 months has decreased in Quarter 3 after high levels in Quarters 1 and 2. This brings Wokingham more in-line with national figures.

The timeliness of initial assessments completed following a referral to CSC has declined since Quarter 1 2019-20, but due to the increase in numbers of assessments, whilst the percentage of assessments completed in 45 working days has decreased, the actual number completed in timeframes has increased.

What is the background to this?

The high-levels of demand experienced in 2018-19 appears to have become the normal level. Work has been done to ensure that the front-door team is resourced to meet this demand.

What action is the service taking?

In order to improve assessment timeliness, the front-door team has reviewed the way that work is allocated across the team and is trialling a new method that has proven successful in other authorities. Assessment timeliness is being monitored weekly to ensure that those reaching the statutory limit of 45 working days are prioritised and actioned accordingly.

A recent audit of 80 cases where a referral to social care was made within 12 months of a previous referral has led to an action plan that was approved and signed off by the Quality Assurance board in early December. The improvement in this measure across Quarter 3 indicates that the lessons learned from the audit and the initial actions taken are having a positive effect.

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	Q3 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Direction of Travel
Children subject to CP Plans (snapshot at end of period)	124	146	131	129	145	↑
% of children starting a plan who had a previous one in the last 2 years	8.7%	2%	13%	24%	5%	↓
% of child protection visits within timescale	65.2%	61%	79.0%	73.6%	69.7%	↓

What does this show us?

The number of children on child protection plans has increased by 16 (12%) between the end of Quarter 2 2019-20 and the end of Quarter 3.

Of those children who came onto a child protection plan in Quarter 3 2019-20, just 5% had been subject to a previous child protection plan within the last 2 years.

Whilst more child protection visits are now happening within mandated timescales compared to previous periods, the percentage has reduced in Quarter 3 compared with previous quarters due to the higher numbers of children on a CP plan in Q3.

What is the background to this?

In previous quarters, large families becoming subject to a Child Protection plan for a second or subsequent time within 24 months have distorted the indicator. This can be seen in the significant decrease in Quarter 3, where 3 families and 3 children became subject to a plan for a second or subsequent time within 24 months.

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.

What was apparent was the level of activity and In early January, a line by line review of all out-of-timescale visits took place, identifying themes and considering approaches to improve performance around visit timeliness. effort undertaken to achieve visits with resistant families, alongside competing demands that resulted in recording issues.

What is the national context?

Nationally, there is a child protection plan rate of 45.3 per 10,000 children. In Wokingham, this was 38.9 at the end of Quarter 3.

Dashboard Item 5 – Children in Care

Measure	2018-19	Q3 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Direction of Travel
No. children in care (snapshot at end of period)	114	104	117	114	105	↓
% visits to children in care within timescale	68.4%	82.3%	79.2%	74.3%	80.0%	↑
% children in care who have more than 1 allocated social worker in 12m (snapshot at end of period)	65.0%	57.7%	69.2%	70.2%	66.7%	↓

What does this show us?

The number of children in care has fallen between the end of Quarter 2 2019-20 and the end of Quarter 3; there has also 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 fallen by 3.5 percentage points since the end of Quarter 2 2019-20.

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]”.

What action is the service taking?

In early January, a line by line review of all out-of-timescale visits took place, identifying themes and considering approaches to improve performance around visit timeliness. Performance has improved but recording issues were identified indicating that the current figure could be higher.

The stability of the workforce is key in the allocated worker indicator. Recruitment activity is underway to address this.

What is the national context?

The national rate of Children in Care per 10,000 is 64.0. In Wokingham, the equivalent figure at the end of Quarter 3 is 28.2.

Dashboard Item 6 – Care Leavers

Measure	2018-19	Q3 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Direction of Travel
% of care leavers 'in touch' (snapshot at end of period)	94.4%	98.5%	94.7%	89.0%	87.0%	↓
% of care leavers aged 18-24 who are NEET (snapshot at end of period)	45.8%	40.0%	39.5%	44.3%	37.2%	↓
% of care leavers in suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of period)	91.7%	95.4%	88%	80%	94%	↑

What does this show us?

There has been a decline in the percentage of care leavers that we are in touch with compared to the end of Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 2019-20.

The percentage of care leavers aged 18-24 who are NEET has decreased slightly since the end of Quarter 2 2019-20.

The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has remained stable since the end of Quarter 2 2019-20.

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.

Some care leavers are housed in temporary accommodation as part of their housing journey.

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.

Close working with housing colleagues has meant that fewer care leavers are in unsuitable 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	Q3 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Direction of Travel
Children missing from home/care	123	29	20	53	49	↓
% return home interviews carried out on time	38%	31.6%	50%	62.5%	50.0%	↓
Children missing from education (snapshot at end of period)	13	n/a	8	5	4	↓

What does this show us?

The number of children going missing from home or care has fallen in Quarter 3 2019-20 in comparison to Quarter 2.

A smaller percentage of return home interviews are happening within timescales, falling by 37.5 percentage points between Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 2019-20.

There number of children missing from education has been falling since the end of 2018-19. These are children are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise.

What is the background to this?

A total of 49 children went missing 82 times between them in Quarter 3. The 11 Children in Care within this cohort went missing a total of 20 times; six of them for more than 24 hours.

Although a child returning home 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	Q3 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Direction of Travel
12 months rolling turnover of qualified social workers	22%	30%	17%	8%	8%	↔
% agency staff across qualified social work workforce (snapshot at end of period)	34%	35%	28%	34%	31%	↓

What does this show us?

Stability across the social work workforce is stabilising, with turnover remaining at 8% across the previous two quarters.

The percentage of agency social workers in Children’s Services has fallen slightly between the end of Quarter 2 2019-20 and the end of Quarter 3.

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. A number of extra-establishment agency social workers have also been recruited to meet increased levels in demand.

Turnover amongst permanent staff has been steadily improving in recent quarters. However, turnover amongst agency social workers is high, and subsequently social worker changes for looked after children in particular remains high.

What action is the service taking?

A review of the establishment is under way with the intention of setting an appropriate budget for 2020-21 alongside the appropriate number of establishment social worker posts to meet the current levels of demand. A number of interviews for social work posts have taken place in early January 2020; following these, six job offers were made.

A retention and recruitment worker has also been recruited to assist with our approach to this.

What is the national context?

Nationally, the percentage of agency social workers across the entire social work workforce is 15.4%, which is lower than Wokingham’s 34%.

The national 12-month rolling turnover of social workers is 16.2%. Wokingham has now surpassed this national average.