

CHILDREN'S SERVICES DASHBOARD – QUARTER 4 2019-20

Dashboard Item 1 - Education, Health & Care Plans

Measure	2018-19	Q4 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Q4 19-20	Direction of Travel
Current EHCPs in borough (snapshot at end of period)	560	560	577	581	612	706	↑
Current EHCPs out of borough (snapshot at end of period)	349	349	365	402	381	402	↓
EHCPs issued within 20 weeks of the referral	17%	0%	0%	12.3%	14.0%	35.1%	↑

What does this show us?

The numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) funded by Wokingham Borough Council continues to increase. The funded EHCP numbers between the end of 2018-19 (934) and the end of Quarter 4 2019-20 (1,121) have risen by almost 20%.

In the first quarter of 2019-20, no EHCPs were issued within 20 weeks of the referral. However, Quarters 2, 3 and 4 2019-20, have seen consistent improvement in the number of plans issued within the 20-week timescale.

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.

What action is the service taking?

This continues to be a priority focus. The service has now cleared the backlog of EHCP plans that were already overdue at the beginning of Quarter 4, and is using a weekly tracker tool to ensure that draft plans still within the timescales are progressed at the correct pace. The effect of the backlog of overdue plans diminished in each month of Quarter 4, and subsequently the timeliness performance indicator improved with each month (12% plans in January, 43.5% plans in February and 66.7% plans in March were completed within 20 weeks). Early signs for Quarter 1 2020-21 are encouraging: In April 2020, following the clearing of the backlog in the previous quarter, 18 of 19 (95%) of the EHCPs issued were within timescales.

What is the national context?

For the calendar year 2019, 60.4% of new EHC Plans across England were issued within 20 weeks, compared to 6% in Wokingham. This is a substantial drop from the 30% seen in 2018.

Dashboard Item 2 – Early Help

Measure	2018-19	Q4 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Q4 19-20	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to Early Help	840	192	203	159	251	239	↓
No. Early Help Assessments	638	183	184	176	181	197	↑
Avg. length of time in days between referral and assessment completion	40	33.7	35	25	33	42.3	↑

What does this show us?

The numbers of referrals to the Early Help service has fluctuated between Quarter 1 and Quarter 4 2019-20, with a dip in Quarter 2. Meanwhile, the number of completed Early Help assessments was at its highest in Quarter 4.

The average length of time taken to complete Early Help assessments has risen in Quarter 4; however, average time in 2019-20 has improved on the preceding year, currently taking 33.8 days.

What is the background to this?

The number of referrals from month to month ranged between 50 and 80. Just under a third of referrals in Quarter 4 2019-20 were step down from CSC.

CSC provides an Early Help service which is focussed on tailoring provision to each individual child. Consequently, the number of Early Help assessments on a monthly basis does not always correspond to the fluctuations in Early Help referrals. Assessments differ in the length of time, meaning an assessment completed one month may have been referred quite a time before. It should be noted that the end of quarter 4 captures the start of lockdown, and this resulted in a number of staff not being available for work, impacting on assessment timeliness. 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. Nonetheless, CSC's flexible, child-centred approach has ensured a consistently high rating of service by both young people and parents.

What action is the service taking?

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; this is under review. As a result of the Covid-19 Lockdown, Early Help has seen an increase in its caseload, which will no doubt be reflected in subsequent quarterly figures. The advantages of this and any benefits to be derived from permanent changes will be considered post-Lockdown.

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	Q4 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Q4 19-20	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to CSC	1,787	410	463	419	495	495	↔
% of referrals to CSC which are repeat referrals within 12 months	21.7%	22.9%	32.4%	25.1%	20.2%	24.7%	↑
% assessments completed within 45 working days	67.4%	84.3%	87.1%	76.3%	71.6%	60.2%	↓

What does this show us?

The number of referrals to CSC was consistent across Quarters 3 and 4 2019-20. However, following the implementation of Lockdown towards the end of Q4, a substantial decrease in the number of referrals occurred, which has continued to date and therefore will not reflect the true level of service need in the Borough.

The percentage of referrals coming into CSC for children who have been the subject of a previous referral in last 12 months has increased again in Quarter 4 after a decrease in Quarter 3 and the figure for 2019-20 reflects a 3.9% increase on 2018-19.

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?

Prior to Lockdown, the figures for 2019-20 suggested demand was increasing above the already high-levels experienced in 2018-19 (despite lockdown leading to fewer referrals at the end of Q4, the figures remain the same as in Q3). Work has been done to ensure that the front-door team is resourced to meet this growing demand.

What action is the service taking?

Work is underway to ensure that the tail-off in the number of referrals to Children’s Social Care that coincided with the implementation of lockdown (and has continued into Quarter 1 2020-21) is modelled in terms of how this will impact the front-door in the future. Early indications suggest that a sudden surge in demand is unlikely, but increased demand compared to previous ‘normal’ levels will be seen for some months. The service is also seeking to understand the impact that the lockdown is having on families, and whether this will lead to a cohort with increased needs.

What is the national context?

The South East and England averages for assessments completed within 45 days are 82% and 83% respectively. The Wokingham percentage of repeat referrals within 12 months (21.1%) is below the England average of 22.6% and the South East average of 25.1%.

Dashboard Item 4 – Child Protection

Measure	2018-19	Q4 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Q4 19-20	Direction of Travel
Children subject to CP Plans (snapshot at end of period)	124	132	131	129	145	146	↑
% of children starting a plan who had a previous one in the last 2 years	8.7%	11.4%	13%	24%	5%	9.6%	↑
% of child protection visits within timescale	65.2%	74.1%	79.0%	73.6%	69.7%	72.7%	↑

What does this show us?

The number of children on child protection plans has increased by 1 between the end of Quarter 3 2019-20 and the end of Quarter 4.

Of those children who came onto a child protection plan in Quarter 4 2019-20, only 9.6% had been subject to a previous child protection plan within the last 2 years.

The number of children protection visits completed on time has returned to previous levels after a slight decrease 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 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. In Quarter 4 there were 3 families who became subject to a plan for a second or subsequent time.

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. This has proved demonstratively effective, and further efforts have been made to achieve visits with resistant families, alongside addressing issues which had previously resulted in recording issues. Plans were put in place early on in lockdown to ensure children subject to protection plans could continue to be visited safely.

Contact was also made with schools and educational settings to understand which vulnerable children took up their offer of a place during lockdown, and what the situation was for those who didn't.

What is the national context?

Wokingham's Child Protection Plan per 10,000 is 32.1, which is in line with Statistical Neighbours (35.0). Wokingham and its neighbours are slightly below the England average of 43.7, but the Borough's current rate is a distinct increase on 2017-18, when the figure was 12.1, compared to an England rate of 43.3.

Dashboard Item 5 – Children in Care

Measure	2018-19	Q4 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Q4 19-20	Direction of Travel
No. children in care (snapshot at end of period)	114	112	117	114	105	100	↓
% visits to children in care within timescale	68.4%	74%	79.2%	74.3%	80.0%	81%	↑
% children in care who have more than 1 allocated social worker in 12m (snapshot at end of period)	65.0%	61%	69.2%	70.2%	66.7%	54%	↓

What does this show us?

The number of children in care has fallen between the end of Quarter 3 2019-20 and the end of Quarter 4; there has also been 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 12.7 percentage points since the end of Quarter 3 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 quarterly figures were therefore not accurately reflecting performance. Strong effort has been made with social workers to remove barriers to recording, so that the data better reflects the work they are doing. Furthermore, particular effort has been put into improving workforce stability, which is reflected in the notable drop in the percentage of children allocated with more than one social worker.

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 subsequently improved, and has continued to do so into Quarter 1 2020-21. All children in care were risked assessed at the beginning of lockdown to ensure that those who needed face-to-face visits were identified and had plans put in place for those visits to happen safely. For those with a lower identified risk, plans for virtual visits were put into place following agreement with Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and the placement providers.

The stability of the workforce is key in the allocated worker indicator. Emphasis on recruitment of permanent staff to address this has yielded positive results.

What is the national context?

The rate of Children in Care per 10,000 is 65.0 for England and 53.0 for the South East. The Wokingham rate for 2019-20 is significantly lower, at 28.0 per 10,000.

Dashboard Item 6 – Care Leavers

Measure	2018-19	Q4 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Q4 19-20	Direction of Travel
% of care leavers 'in touch' (snapshot at end of period)	94.4%	95.8%	94.7%	89.0%	87.0%	91.8%	↑
% of care leavers aged 18-24 who are NEET (snapshot at end of period)	45.8%	42.3%	39.5%	44.3%	37.2%	33.3%	↓
% of care leavers in suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of period)	91.7%	91.5%	88%	80%	94%	86.9%	↓

What does this show us?

There has been an increase in the percentage of care leavers that remain in touch with CSC compared with previous quarters in 2019-20. The percentage of care leavers aged 18-24 who are NEET has decreased since the end of Quarter 3 2019-20 and marks a notable improvement on Q4 last year and 2018-19 as a whole. Since Quarter 4 2018-19, the percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has fallen by 7 percentage points.

What is the background to this?

Wokingham generally maintains good relations with care leavers, and is in touch with the vast majority. The continued increase in numbers reflects this. 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, and Care Leavers are visited regularly and supported to engage and remain in education, employment or training as appropriate. Monthly multi-disciplinary meetings to review NEET Care Leavers are held with strategic oversight to enable managers and practitioners from social care and education to consider possible barriers and solutions to help encourage and support our Care Leavers into education, training or employment. Early intervention work with support from the Virtual Head Teacher is being explored to enable the services to identify and intervene with those at risk of future NEET at an earlier age.

Work to get care leavers into suitable accommodation was underway during Quarter 4, and all but 3 are now (June 2020) in suitable accommodation. Of the 3 who are not, one is in custody, one has been offered suitable accommodation but refused it, and one – who was an unaccompanied asylum seeker – has resisted all efforts to contact them, so their whereabouts and accommodation status cannot be verified.

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 performs consistently above comparable averages in regard to care leavers.

Dashboard Item 7 – Children Missing from Home/Care

Measure	2018-19	Q4 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Q4 19-20	Direction of Travel
Children missing from home/care	123	53	20	53	49	39	↓
% return home interviews carried out on time	38%	42.9%	50%	62.5%	50.0%	66.7%	↑
Children missing from education (snapshot at end of period)	7	7	8	5	4	5	↑

What does this show us?

The number of children going missing from home or care has fallen notably in Quarter 4 2019-20 in comparison to Quarter 3 and is considerably lower than the same quarter last year.

The Return Home Interviews (RHIs) taking place within timescale has increased substantially from Q3 to Q4, and Q4 2019-20 has shown the highest rate of timely interviews this year or last year.

The number of children missing from education has fallen since the end of 2018-19. CSC continues to work ardently to ensure that children across the Borough are not missing from education.

What is the background to this?

A total of 39 children went missing 88 times in Quarter 4. The seven Children in Care within this cohort went missing a total of 26 times; four of them for more than 24 hours.

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

What action is the service taking?

The Service is working closely with partners to ensure that missing children are given the opportunity to discuss the factors behind them going missing, whether through a formal return home interview or otherwise. The Berkshire West Safeguarding Children's Partnership and its various sub-groups meet quarterly to explore the issues around exploitation and ensure any emerging risks are identified.

Children missing in education will continue to be pursued by the Virtual School. Since lockdown began, the Service has also taken steps to understand the reasons why children in our most vulnerable cohorts are not taking up the school places that were offered. This has been done in conjunction with schools to ensure that parents are aware of their options and are in regular communication with teachers.

What is the national context?

There is no national data available for ~~20~~ comparison.

Dashboard Item 8 – Children’s Services Workforce

Measure	2018-19	Q4 18-19	Q1 19-20	Q2 19-20	Q3 19-20	Q4 19-20	Direction of Travel
12 months rolling turnover of permanent qualified social workers	22%	22%	17%	8%	8%	8%	↔
% agency staff across qualified social work workforce (snapshot at end of period)	34%	25%	28%	34%	31%	37%	↑

What does this show us?

Stability across the social work workforce is stabilising, with turnover halved since Q1, and remaining consistent at 8% since Q2.

The percentage of agency social workers in Children’s Services has fluctuated throughout 2019-20.

What is the background to this?

CSC struggled to recruit for vacant social worker posts in previous years, meaning that a high proportion of social workers were agency staff. Turnover in permanent staff has been steadily improving in recent quarters. Turnover in agency social workers is by nature high (CSC has had ten agency staff leave since January 2020), and the successful recruitment of permanent staff over 2019-20 – as demonstrated in previous Dashboard Items – is producing results.

What action is the service taking?

Distinction is drawn in CSC between vacancies where there is no member of staff in the role, and posts filled by agency social workers. Over the course of Q4, five Qualified Social Workers have joined the service, five Newly Qualified Social Workers have accepted offers, three Team Managers have been recruited, and five Assistant Team Managers appointed. Building on this, CSC will continue its recruitment drive in an effort to end the current dependence on agency staff.

A new Workforce Dashboard has been developed to provide up-to-date information on caseloads, turnover, sickness levels and vacancies across all the social work teams. This is integral in ensuring that cases are dealt with at the right level, and that the Service is equipped to meet the demands placed upon it.

What is the national context?

Wokingham’s percentage rate of social worker turnover for 2019-20 is 7.4 – a substantial drop on the previous year’s 31.6. As a result of the measures implemented over the course of the year, the Borough is performing considerably better than Statistical Neighbours (21.1) and England/South East at 15%.