

Agenda Item 44.

TITLE	Children's Services Performance Indicators
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 November 2021
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Helen Watson

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 December 2021.

Background

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

Analysis of Issues

Please see Appendix A.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe funding pressures, particularly in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	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 (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)
N/A

Public Sector Equality Duty
Please confirm that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and if an equalities assessment has been completed or explain why an equalities assessment is not required.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
N/A

List of Background Papers
N/A

Contact Sudeshna Banerjee	Service Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Standards
Telephone No 07789921032	Email Sudeshna.Banerjee@wokingham.gov.uk

CHILDREN'S SERVICES DASHBOARD – QUARTER 3 2021-22

This report covers Children's Services performance during October, November and December 2021, which will be referred to as quarter three (Q3) throughout this report.

Dashboard Item 1 - Education, Health & Care Plans

Measure	2020-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Q1 21-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Direction of Travel
Current EHCPs placed in borough (snapshot at end of period)	814	746	814	827	806	865	↑
Current EHCPs placed out of borough (snapshot at end of period)	434	421	434	437	462	511	↑
EHCPs issued within 20 weeks of the referral	75%	59.5%	78.4%	86.4%	87.7%	71.8%	↓

What does this show us?

The numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) funded by Wokingham Borough Council placed in the borough have increased this quarter.

The EHCPs between the same period last year and this quarter have risen by 18%.

The percentage of plans issued within the 20-week period has decreased by 16% from last quarter, however this has significantly improved from Q3 20-21.

What is the background to this?

The total number of requests for October to December 2021 is 94, compared to 85 for July to Sept 2021.

Timeliness of EHCPs issued within 20 weeks had started to decline sharply from 91% in October 2021 to 55% in December. But there have been few delays from receiving information from other partners due to their service capacity combined with the increase in requests received. Without the information received in due time, the timelines of the assessment process administered with SEND is restricted.

As Wokingham do not have a FE college, most of post-16 cohort were placed in out of Borough provisions.

What action is the service taking?

Focus remains on continuing the timeliness of EHC Plans for children. But it may be a challenge in the future again if the reports are not received timely from our partners.

What is the national context?

This quarter's timeliness is well above national average (55.6%) and statistical neighbours (57.4%).

Dashboard Item 2 – Early Help

Measure	2020-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Q1 21-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to Early Help	1118	395	222	449	314	362	↑
No. Early Help Assessments	1095	304	263	321	337	281	↓
Avg. length of time in days between referral and assessment completion	24	25	26	19	23	30	↑

What does this show us?

The number of referrals has increased from the previous quarter but not as high as in Q1. This quarter has seen an 8% decrease in referrals compared to the same period last year.

The length of time taken to complete an assessment has increased compared to the previous quarters and the average for 20/21, but it is in line with the statutory guidance.

What is the background to this?

There are no targets for the number of referrals received by Early Help, nor any for the number of assessments carried out, as they are considered on a case-by-case basis. According to CSC's Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating system for performance management, an average of 30 days or less between referral and assessment completion is in target (Green), 31 to 35 is Amber, and 36+ is of concern (Red).

What action is the service taking?

Early Help will continue to carefully monitor demand and ensure there is capacity to address the increase of the demand and further improve timeliness despite the increases in demand. A designated person is assigned to monitor cases on the waiting list and parents are kept informed.

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	2020-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Q1 21-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to CSC	1383	303	414	416	327	383	↑
% of referrals to CSC which are repeat referrals within 12 months	21.8%	18.2%	20%	14.9%	15.9%	19.1%	↑
% assessments completed within 45 working days	72.8%	80.1%	73.3%	70.6%	61.8%	69.9%	↑

What does this show us?

There has been a 17% rise of referrals this quarter.

The proportion of referrals to Children’s Social Care which are repeat referrals has increased this quarter as well. In Q3, 73 out of 383 referrals were repeat referrals within 12 months.

Timeliness of assessments completed within 45 working days increased this quarter. In Q3, 214 out of 306 assessments were completed within 45 working days.

What is the background to this?

When an agency shares info with the local authority on a Multi-Agency Referral form, or a member of the public shares concerns about a child this is considered a Contact. A Contact progresses to a Referral when a decision has been taken to complete an Assessment. There is no target for the number of Referrals to Children’s Social Care as each Contact is individually assessed.

Children’s Social Care aims for less than 20% of its referrals to be repeat referrals within 12 months and strives for 90% of assessments to be completed within 45 days.

Repeat referrals are within target this quarter, with the average rate of 17% over the course of the year. Assessment timeliness has increased compared to last quarter.

What action is the service taking?

The increase of referrals coupled with a high rate of staff sickness in Q3 has been a challenge for the social care teams. This has been further impacted by staff turnover as we started exiting the pandemic. We are reviewing the number of Contacts that have not progressed to Assessment to ensure that thresholds are being applied consistently. We will review all assessments that are approaching 45 days to ensure completion in timeframe where possible.

Given that the Service continues to see cases of increased complexity, it assesses and closely monitors them to ensure children receive the right help and support and therefore reduce the need for a second referral.

What is the national context?

The statistical neighbours and England averages for assessments completed within 45 days are 89% and 87.6% respectively. The Wokingham percentage of repeat referrals within 12 months in Q3 is better than the England average of 22.6% and the statistical neighbours average of 23.9%.

Dashboard Item 4 – Child Protection

Measure	2020-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Q1 21-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Direction of Travel
Children subject to CP Plans (snapshot at end of period)	161	161	149	169	166	160	↓
% of children starting a plan who had a previous one in the last 2 years	11.8%	8.7%	2.7%	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	↔
% of child protection visits within timescale	80%	78%	80%	73%	71%	72%	↑

What does this show us?

The number of children on a CPP has slightly reduced this quarter and is in line with the figure for the same period last year.

There were 43 children who became subject to a CPP in Q3 and none of these had a previous plan in the last 2 years.

The proportion of CP visits occurring within timescales has increased very slightly in Q3 to 72%.

What is the background to this?

Subject to thresholds, CSC places no limits on the number of children that may be eligible for Child Protection Plans; the figure is for information purposes only. The Service aims to have less than 5% of children on a plan for a second time in the last two years: in Q3 there were none.

CSC places great emphasis on preventing the need for children to return to a Protection Plan. There has been a rise in plans in the first quarter this year and an increase in repeat plans at the same time. But in the last two quarters, there has been a trend of decline in both areas.

Wokingham sets itself a best-practice standard of carrying out each Child Protection visit within 10 working days of the previous visit. The service has a target of 80% of visits within this timescale.

What action is the service taking?

The Service will continue its work towards the timeliness targets and maintain its flexible approach so as to have the capacity to deal with demand as it rises or remains consistent.

What is the national context?

Wokingham's Child Protection Plans per 10,000 at end of Q3 was at 40.7 which is below the England average of 42.8. Since 2020, the increase in our numbers have placed us above our statistical neighbour's average of 32.5.

Dashboard Item 5 – Children in Care

Measure	2020-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Q1 21-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Direction of Travel
No. children in care (snapshot at end of period)	106	104	106	112	113	119	↑
% visits to children in care within timescale	79%	84%	76%	83%	76%	76%	↔
% children in care who have more than 1 allocated social worker in 12m (snapshot at end of period)	21%	18%	21%	20%	34%	22%	↓

What does this show us?

The number of children in care have slightly increased this quarter.

There has been consistency in the percentage of visits to children in care within timescale, representing 323 out of the 425 visits carried out in Q3.

The percentage of children in care who have had more than one allocated worker in the previous 12 months had decreased since last quarter.

What is the background to this?

Wokingham's children in care figures are lower than statistical neighbours and regional averages, which reflects our approach of only ever taking children into care as a last resort.

The timeliness of visits taking place has remained the same as Q2.

The target is to have less than 10% of children allocated more than one social worker in a twelve-month period. Whilst it is our ambition for this indicator to be as low as possible, we acknowledge that there will always be some occasions where a change of social worker will be in the best interests of the child. The allowance of 10% is therefore in line with Wokingham CSC's strong emphasis on child experience.

What action is the service taking?

The number of visits carried out has increased quarter-on-quarter this year. CSC emphasises a child-focused approach to social work; in some instances, visits will be permitted to go outside of timescale to ensure that children are visited by the same social worker in order to provide reassuring continuity. Furthermore, greater weight is being placed on visits and their recording as part of the service's performance scrutiny so that the figures reflect the work carried out by social workers.

The breakdown of face-to-face visits and virtual visits is as follows:

	Children in Care				All visits carried out by CSC	
	F-to-F	Virtual	Total	% Virtual	All visits	% Virtual
Apr-21	111	8	119	6.7	731	8.9
May-21	116	3	119	2.5	699	7.9

Jun-21	128	8	136	5.9	801	6.4
Jul-21	126	9	135	6.6	751	6.9
Aug-21	131	4	135	3.0	709	2.3
Sept-21	129	7	136	5.1	752	3.6
Oct-21	140	2	142	1.4	787	3.9
Nov-21	129	4	133	3.0	825	3.5
Dec-21	156	13	169	7.7	842	7.6

In the event of positive COVID cases, CSC carries out risk assessments ahead of visits in order to establish if a face-to-face visit is possible or a virtual visit more appropriate.

What is the national context?

The rate of Children in Care per 10,000 in 2021 is 67.0 for England and 46.3 for statistical neighbours. The Wokingham rate is significantly lower, at 24 per 10,000.

Dashboard Item 6 – Care Leavers

Measure	2020-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Q1 21-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Direction of Travel
% of care leavers 'in touch' (snapshot at end of period)	96%	92%	96%	95%	96%	94%	↓
% of care leavers aged 18-24 "in touch" and who are NEET	40%	38%	40%	38%	30%	32%	↑
% of care leavers "in touch" in suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of period)	92%	94%	92%	97%	100%	97%	↓

What does this show us?

The percentage of care leavers that remain in touch have reduced slightly but the Service tends to maintain a good working relationship with those formerly in its care. Currently 88 of the 94 care leavers remain in touch with CSC.

There has been a slight increase in the number of care leavers not in education, employment or training - the number now at 28, a rise from 24 last quarter.

The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has slightly decreased since last quarter.

What is the background to this?

The target is to have at least 90% of care leavers in touch, which continues to be achieved. Amongst the reasons for care leavers not being in touch with CSC are a simple refusal to engage with the Service and young people no longer needing the support provided by CSC.

The Service aims to have 52% of care leavers in education, employment or learning. Despite the increasingly challenging economic situation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, CSC has remained consistently above target for Care Leaver employment, education and training figures across 2020-21.

CSC endeavours to ensure at least 90% of care leavers are in suitable accommodation, which it continues to achieve.

What action is the service taking?

CSC will continue to place emphasis on maintaining good relations with care leavers so that they can receive all the support they need, particularly during the current challenging times.

The Service places great importance on the futures of the children for which it has responsibility, and addresses each care leaver's situation, helping them either re-engage with education or find suitable employment opportunities where possible. Efforts in this have increased in response to the current economic situation.

The number of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation has decreased over the course of this year, and those in supported lodgings, living independently and semi-independently have increased.

What is the national context?

Nationally, 95% of care leavers are in touch with their LA; 41% of care leavers are NEET, and 88% are in suitable accommodation. Wokingham performs consistently in line or above comparable averages in regard to care leavers.

Dashboard Item 7 – Children Missing from Home/Care

Measure	2020-21	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Q1 21-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Direction of Travel
Children missing from home	74	29	21	25	21	34	↑
Children missing from care	46	16	6	5	9	19	↑
% return home interviews carried out on time	56%*	80%*	50%*	56%*	83%*	62%	↓
Children missing from education (not currently on a school roll)**	7	5	7	14	22	12	↓
No. of permanent exclusions	8	7	1	0	2	4	↑

*Combined figure for children missing from home and from care

** Snapshot figure at the end of the period.

What does this show us?

The number of children going missing from home or care (53) shows an increase as we enter the third quarter of 2021-22. Children missing from care includes looked after from other local authorities who reside in Wokingham.

CSC aims to have 100% of Return Home Interviews (RHIs) taking place within timescale. The figures had increased significantly in the last quarter but decreased this quarter. It is also lower than the same period in 2020-21.

The number of children not currently on a school roll has decreased in the third quarter of 2021-22.

The new school term having commenced in September, there have been 4 permanent exclusions in Wokingham schools so far this year.

What is the background to this?

It can be difficult to persuade children who have gone missing to engage with a Return Home Interview, hence achieving the target for timeliness of 100% is difficult to reach. Regardless, CSC's emphasis on tackling child exploitation risks has led to a focus on RHIs. While not always within the timescale, every child that goes missing is interviewed about the motivations and reasons behind their leaving.

The number of children not currently on a school roll has decreased in this quarter compared to the previous quarter as admissions service managed to find places for all the children who were waiting for a school place at the start of the academic year.

What action is the service taking?

Children's Social Care works closely with the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children's Partnership and the issue of child exploitation remains a focus. The Service is currently examining the problem of and risks of child exploitation and working with neighbouring local authorities to gain insight and develop a joined-up approach.

What is the national context?

Comparative national figures are not available for children missing education.

Dashboard Item 8 – Children’s Services Workforce

Measure	Q3 20-21	Q4 20-21	Q1 21-22	Q2 21-22	Q3 21-22	Direction of Travel
12 months rolling turnover of permanent qualified social workers	9%	12%	10%	14%	14%	↔
% agency staff across qualified social work workforce (snapshot at end of period)	23%	21%	17%	14%	16%	↑

What does this show us?

During Q3, the percentage of agency staff across qualified social workforce has increased this quarter.

What is the background to this?

Permanency of workforce has been a continuous focus for CSC, though we have seen an increased turnover across the whole organisation this quarter.

What action is the service taking?

Recruitment where the business case has been made continues for vacant and new posts across the service in order to keep dependency on agency workers low, ensure as little disruption for children and young people as possible, and provide consistency of service.

What is the national context?

The Borough have performed considerably better than statistical neighbours (16.92%) and England (13.5%), with a rate of 8.8 in 2020 for the staff turnover.

This page is intentionally left blank