

Agenda Item 63.

TITLE	Children's Services Performance Indicators
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 March 2023
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 2022.

Background

Wokingham Borough Council is responsible for effective delivery of services to the children and young people in the community.

The key performance indicators are monitored to improve the quality of the delivery of the services.

Analysis of Issues

Detailed analysis in the report

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and 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)			
Next Financial Year (Year 2)			
Following Financial Year (Year 3)			

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

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.

Climate Emergency – This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030

Please state clearly what the impact of the decision being made would be on the Council's carbon neutral objective.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

List of Background Papers

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Introduction

This report covers Children’s Services performance during October, November and December 2022, which will be referred to as quarter three (Q3) throughout this report.

Dashboard Item 1 – Funded Education, Health & Care Plans

Measure	2021-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
Current EHCPs placed in borough (snapshot at end of period)	783	865	912	976	973	1018	↑
Current EHCPs placed out of borough (snapshot at end of period)	416	511	514	507	499	471	↓
EHCPs issued within 20 weeks of the referral	75.1%	71.8%	69.0%	63.6%	50.6%	40.7%	↓

What does this show us?

The number of Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) funded by Wokingham Borough Council where the children are placed in the borough has increased slightly since last quarter. The total number of funded EHCPs at end of December 22 (1628) compared with the same period last year (1491) has risen by 9%. Whilst this is a significant increase, it is slightly lower than the national picture, with a published rate of increase of 9.9%.

The percentage of plans issued within the 20-week period continues to decrease, though there has been a slight increase in the figures for December 2022 (45%).

What is the background to this?

The total number of requests during October to December 2022 is 113, an increase on the previous quarter, when it was 92. This is likely due to being the autumn term.

There have been delays in receiving information from other partners which are attributed to service capacity issues, combined with the increased volume in requests received. When information is not received on time, the timelines of the assessment process administered with SEND is restricted.

The provider commissioned by Wokingham Borough Council to Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy assessments and advice reports are struggling with their capacity for therapists. The Speech and Language reports are often submitted on time but there is currently a large backlog of children waiting for OT reports. The Educational Psychologist Service are currently only doing statutory work to attempt to keep up with the rise in assessment requests. However, in line with many other LAs, they are experiencing challenges with staffing and struggling to recruit to improve capacity. Without the Educational Psychologist report the SEND service are unable to move to the next stage in the process and make a decision on whether to issue an EHCP. This means that the rest of the timeline is already delayed and we are required to give parents their statutory timescales (15 calendar days) to review a draft EHCP if it is issued in order to make representations for the Council to consider.

As Wokingham does not have a Further Education college, most of the post-16 cohort were placed in out of Borough provision.

What action is the service taking?

The service's focus remains on continuing to enhance the timeliness of EHC Plans. The SEND Team is proactively working with the partners to improve the information submission timescales. The SEND Team works as quickly as they can once information is received to move it onto the next stage and attempt to stay within the 20-week deadline. The challenge of timeliness was highlighted with both internal team and the external SEND partners committing to make this a priority for their services.

The service expects significant improvements to the timeliness of EHC Plans in Q4 2022-23 as a result of the actions taken above.

What is the national context?

This quarters' timeliness is now below both the 2021 national average (59.9%) and that of statistical neighbours (61.08%).

Dashboard Item 2 – Early Help

Measure	2021-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to Early Help	1474	362	349	488	312	415	↑
No. Early Help Assessments	1233	281	294	374	330	320	↓
Avg. length of time in days between referral and assessment completion	23	30	25	22	30	29	↓

What does this show us?

The number of Early Help referrals increased by 33% from the previous quarter and is 14% higher than the number of referrals for the same period last year. The number of assessments decreased slightly from the previous quarter and increased by 14% compared to the same period last year.

The average length of time taken to complete an assessment has not changed and remains within statutory timescale.

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 the Children's Services Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating system for performance management, an average of 30 days or less between referral and assessment completion is on target.

What action is the service taking?

The Early Help Service provides targeted support to children, young people, and families at the stage of a problem first arising, to try to prevent the need for statutory intervention at a later point. The service will continue to carefully monitor demand and ensure there is capacity to address any identified increases. A designated person is assigned to monitor any 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	2021-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
No. of Contacts progressed to Referral	1575	383	447	395	406	376	↓
% Of referrals to which are repeat referrals within 12 months	17.8%	19.1%	20.6%	24..8%	18.0%	21%	↑
% Assessments completed within 45 working days	67.4%	69.9%	67.0%	68.6%	78.6%	69.2%	↓

What does this show us?

In Q3 2022-23, referrals have decreased slightly by 1.8% when compared to the previous quarter. There were 79 repeat referrals within 12 months out of 376 referrals.

Timeliness of Assessments completed within 45 working days has decreased. In Q3, 234 of 338 Assessments were completed within 45 working days. This correlates with higher than usual levels of staff leave and sickness during this quarter.

What is the background to this?

When an agency shares information 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 CSC as each Contact is individually assessed.

A higher number of Referrals is expected this time of the year – this is in line with neighbouring authorities.

CSC 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.

Re-referrals are slightly above target this quarter. Re-Referrals are audited by the service if over target to provide assurance that appropriate services have been provided. While Re-Referrals were higher in Q3, we are satisfied that appropriate decisions were made.

What action is the service taking?

There is a focus on improving performance following the dip in the last quarter due to high levels of absence.

What is the national context?

The statistical neighbour and England averages in 2021-22 for assessments completed within 45 days are 87.4% and 84.5% respectively.

The national average for repeat referrals within 12 months is 21.5% and the statistical neighbour average is 20.7%.

Dashboard Item 4 – Child Protection

Measure	2021-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
Children subject to CP Plans (snapshot at end of period)	164	160	164	135	123	134	↑
% Of children coming onto a CP plan for a second or subsequent time ever	20%	0.0%	32.3%	11.8%	0.0%	11.9%	↑
% Of child protection visits within timescale (10 working days)	74%	72%	77%	74%	64%	73%	↑

What does this show us?

The number of children on a Child Protection Plan (CPP) has increased this quarter but it is significantly lower than the figure for the same period last year.

42 children became subject to a CPP in Q3 2022-23 and 5 of these children had a previous plan.

The proportion of CP visits completed within timescales has increased significantly in Q3 2022-23 (73%) compared to (64%) in Q2.

What is the background to this?

CSC places great emphasis on preventing the need for children to return to a CPP. The Service aims to have less than 22% of children starting a CPP for a second or subsequent time ever.

It is noted that the number of visits within 10 days has increased this quarter although it is an area of focus for us given the reduction in number of children on CPP, however we are satisfied that despite visits being out of timescale children are being seen regularly and appropriate steps taken where it has not been possible to gain access to the child.

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 a flexible approach in order to have the capacity to deal with demand as it rises or remains consistent.

What is the national context?

Wokingham's figure for Child Protection Plans per 10,000 at the end of 2021-22 (Q4) was 39.7, which is below the England average of 42.1 in 2021-22.

Across 2021-22 Wokingham's figure for repeat referrals to CPP is 20.5% which is below the national average (23.3%) and statistical neighbours (22.9%).

Dashboard Item 5 – Children in Care

Measure	2021-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
No. children in care (snapshot at end of period)	136	118	136	135	142	140	↓
% visits to children in care within timescale	76%	77%	76%	75%	78%	81%	↑
% children in care who have more than 1 allocated social worker in 12m (snapshot at end of period)	25%	21%	25%	33%	35%	44%	↑

What does this show us?

There has been consistency in the percentage of visits to children in care taking place within timescale. 401 out of the 493 visits carried out in Q3 were in timescale.

The percentage of children in care who have had more than one allocated worker in the previous 12 months has increased since last quarter. The change in social workers is not necessarily a negative as once permanency has been resolved the plan, if long term fostering, would be transferred to Here4U. Additionally, we have had social workers leaving, going on maternity leave, long term sickness resulting in a change of social worker.

What is the background to this?

Wokingham's children in care figures are historically lower than those of statistical neighbours and regional averages, which reflects the boroughs' demographic, and our approach to only taking children into care when all other safe alternatives have been explored and found not viable.

The target is to have less than 10% of children allocated to 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.

What action is the service taking?

The number of visits carried out within timescale has increased quarter-on-quarter this year. CSC emphasises a child-focussed approach to social work; in some instances, visits will be allowed to go outside of timescale to ensure that children are visited by the same social worker to provide reassuring continuity in relationships and case planning.

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.

What is the national context?

The rate of Children in Care per 10,000 at the end of March 2022 is 70.0 for England, and 47.1 for statistical neighbours, with the Wokingham rate being significantly lower at 33 in March 2022. If Wokingham was at the National average the number of looked after children would be 275.

Dashboard Item 6 – Care Leavers

Measure	2021-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
% of care leavers aged 18-24 'in touch' (snapshot at end of period)	99%	94%	99%	98%	99%	99%	↔
% of care leavers aged 18-24 'in touch' and who are NEET	34%	32%	34%	30%	29%	39%	↑
% of care leavers 18-24 'in touch' in suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of period)	97%	97%	97%	99%	97%	97%	↔

What does this show us?

The percentage of care leavers in touch has remained consistent with the Service often maintaining a good working relationship with those formerly in care.

There has been an increase in the number of care leavers not in education, employment, or training.

The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has remained the same as last quarter, and same as Q3 in the previous year.

What is the background to this?

The target is to stay in touch with at least 90% of care leavers, 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 Care Leavers we are not 'in touch' with but who are entitled to a service and have refused to engage are now sent a birthday and Christmas card to remind them of services available should they wish to re-engage.

The Service aims to have high levels of care leavers in education, employment, or training, despite the increased challenging economic situation. Care Leaver employment, education and training figures have remained consistently high throughout 2022-23.

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 individually, helping them either re-engage with education or training or supporting them to find suitable employment opportunities where possible. Efforts in this have increased in response to the current economic situation.

Monthly NEET meetings are held and each young person who is NEET has an action plan to try to get them into employment or training. Many of the young people who are NEET are young parents or have experienced mental health which impacts on their availability to access employment or training.

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

The increase in the use of semi-independent accommodation is attributed to an increase in UASC over 16 and the opening of the London Road accommodation.

Social Care and Housing work closely together to ensure our care leavers are provided with suitable accommodation. The joint housing panel for young people is now up and running.

What is the national context?

National averages at the end of March 2022 shows 92% of care leavers (19 -21 years) were in touch with their Local Authority; 38% of care leavers (19-21 year) were NEET; and 88% were in suitable accommodation. The DfE does not currently collect or publish data on Care Leavers over 21 years old.

Dashboard Item 7 – Children Missing from Home/Care

Measure	2021-22	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
Children missing from home	81	21	34	29	31	43	↑
Missing Episodes - % of return home interviews accepted (out of number of return home interviews required)	30%	37%	39%	33%	33%	57%	↑
Missing Episodes - % return home interviews carried out on time	32%	60%	44%	40%	60%	78%	↑
Children missing from care	16	x	14	8	9	15	↑
Missing Episodes - % of return home interviews accepted (out of number of return home interviews required)	18%	33%	39%	75%	50%	47%	↑
Missing Episodes - % return home interviews carried out on time	86%	100%	44%	33%	100%	90%	↑
Children missing from education at the end of the period (not currently on a school roll)	8	12	8	9	18	6	↓
No. of permanent exclusions	13	4	7	x	x	9	↑

x Less than 4, suppressed to preserve confidentiality

What does this show us?

The number of children going missing from home or care (53) shows an increase in Q3 2022-23. These figures do not include children in care placed in Wokingham by other Local Authorities.

The percentage of return home interviews accepted (**for children missing from home**) shows how many interviews were accepted out of how many were required (17 acceptances out of 27 interviews required).

CSC aims to have 100% of Return Home Interviews (RHIs) taking place within timescale. The figures remain the same as previous quarter and slightly down compared with same period in 2020-21.

The percentage of return home interviews accepted (**for children missing from care**) shows how many interviews were accepted out of how many were required (7 acceptances out of 11 interviews required).

CSC aims to have 100% of Return Home Interviews (RHIs) taking place within timescale. The figures have increased significantly in Q2 compared to Q1. It is also in line with same period in 2020-21

The number of children not currently on a school roll has decreased significantly in this quarter and is 50% lower than the same period last year.

There were 13 permanent exclusions in Wokingham schools in the financial year 2021-22 (Apr 21- Mar 22) and 16 in total during the 2021-22 academic year (Sept 21-Aug 22). The figures are not comparable with the previous year as schools were then operating under pandemic restrictions. The number of permanent exclusions shows the highest in this Quarter and November was the highest number of permanent exclusions. This is more than double the number of PEX in comparison to Q3 of 2021-22.

What is the background to this?

It can be difficult to persuade children who have gone missing to engage with a Return Home Interview (RHI), achieving the timeliness target of 100% is therefore 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 problems and risks of child exploitation, working with neighbouring local authorities to gain insight and develop a joined-up approach.

The Ofsted focused visit in May 2022 identifies RHI and the learning from aggregated data as an area for improvement. An Action Plan is being drawn up in response to this area of improvement.

What is the national context?

Comparative national figures are not available for children missing education.

Dashboard Item 8 – Children’s Services Workforce

Measure	Q4 20-21	Q3 21-22	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Direction of Travel
12 months rolling turnover of permanent qualified social workers	12%	14%	19.43%	20.99%	18.85%	13.33%	↓
% agency staff across qualified social work workforce (snapshot at end of period)	21%	16%	26%	28%	23%	28%	↑

What does this show us?

During Q3 2022-23, the percentage of 12 months rolling turnover of permanent qualified social workers and agency staff has increased significantly compared to the same period last year. However, we are beginning to see signs of this stabilising.

What is the background to this?

Permanency of workforce is a continuous focus for CSC.

What action is the service taking?

Recruitment of permanent social workers is ongoing via various mediums including social media, and specialist publications. We have also signed up to the refreshed Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) across the Southeast.

The MoC is an agreement between the 19 authorities in the Southeast to work in a cooperative and collaborative way. It is designed to help control costs and reduce churn of both agency and permanent social workers. It also aims to improve the quality of information sharing between authorities when supplying references for agency social workers.

Over the past 6 months we have successfully recruited 10 new ASYE Social Workers into the business

CSC have in post a worker whose primary focus is on recruitment and retention, as well as promoting and advertising vacancies as they occur. Providing support to team managers recruiting to post and streamlining the onboarding process.

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