

Agenda Item 32.

TITLE	Children's Services Performance Indicators
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 September 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 June 2023.

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)	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.

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.

List of Background Papers

n/a

Contact Sudeshna Banerjee, Rachel Oakley	Service Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Standards
Telephone No Tel: 0118 974 8286	Email sudeshna.banerjee@wokingham.gov.uk, rachel.oakley@wokingham.gov.uk



Children's Services Dashboard

Quarter 1 2023-24

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Introduction

This report covers Children’s Services performance during April 2023, May 2023, and June 2023, which will be referred to as quarter three (Q1) throughout this report.

Dashboard Item 1 – Funded Education, Health & Care Plans

Measure	2022-23	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Direction of Travel
Current EHCPs placed in borough (snapshot at end of period)	1075	976	971	1017	1075	1135	↑
Current EHCPs placed out of borough (snapshot at end of period)	513	499	499	471	513	534	↑
EHCPs issued within 20 weeks of the referral (excl. exceptions)	57.1%	63.6%	51.1%	33.3%	73.6%	85.5%	↑

What does this show us?

The number of Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) funded by Wokingham Borough Council where the children have an educational placement both in the borough and out of the borough has increased slightly since last quarter.

The EHCPs issued within 20 weeks continued its upward trajectory, with an average timeliness of 85.5%. This is ahead of WBC’s target of 70% and compares favourably to national average of 49% and statistical neighbours of 55%.

Analysis

There continues to be a high demand within the ‘SEND system’ for Education, Health, and Care needs assessments, which has resulted in the increase of the number of EHC Plans maintained by WBC.

Whilst the total number of EHC needs assessments requested during April to June 2023 was 95, 18% lower than the same period in 2022, the SEND Team has cumulatively received (January to June 2023) approximately 18% more requests than in 2022. This places pressure on both the SEND Team and Education Psychology service to meet all statutory timelines. Despite this, there has been exceptional performance in progressing from a low of 37% in November 2022 to an average of 85%. This is a result of improved joint working with the SEND Team and EP service.

There continues to be challenges however with the provider commissioned by Wokingham Borough Council, particularly in relation to occupational therapy assessments where late advice (reports) can impact on timeliness.

Next steps

Regular performance meetings have been set up with the Performance Team to ensure accuracy of data and support with performance management. Regular meetings have also been diarised with the provider commissioned to deliver statutory advice and provision (speech and language and occupational therapy) to identify and troubleshoot any issues that may impact timeliness.

The Head of SEND is working closely with finance and data colleagues to predict future demand into the SEND system to support an early intervention approach.

Dashboard Item 2 – Early Help

Measure	2022-23	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to Early Help	1591	488	312	415	376	397	↑
No. Early Help Assessments	1398	374	329	324	370	309	↓
Avg. length of time in days between referral and assessment completion	28	31	25	32	28	19	↓

What does this show us?

The number of Early Help referrals increased by 5.6% from the previous quarter but is 18% lower than the number of referrals for the same period last year.

The number of assessments has decreased by 17.4% compared to the same period last year.

The average length of time taken to complete an assessment is shorter than in the previous quarter and same quarter last year, which reflects a positive shift in terms of timeliness. Although there are no nationally set timescales our local practice standards target 30 days.

What is the background to this?

There are no targets for the number of referrals received by Early Help, or the number of assessments carried out.

What action is the service taking?

The Integrated Early Help Service provides targeted support to children and families at the point of presenting need, to try to prevent problems becoming more acute and requiring escalation into statutory services.

The service will continue to carefully monitor demand and ensure there is capacity to address any identified increases.

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	2022-23	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Direction of Travel
No. of Contacts progressed to Referral	1607	354	391	355	507	374	↓
% of referrals to which are repeat referrals within 12 months	20.2%	24.8%	18.0%	21.0%	17.9%	17.1%	↓
% Assessments completed within 45 working days	66.7%	68.6%	78.6%	69.2%	50.9%	73.9%	↑

What does this show us?

In Q1 2023-24, referrals decreased by 26.2% in comparison to the previous quarter, however they remain higher than same period last year. There were 64 repeat referrals within 12 months out of 374 referrals.

Timeliness of Assessments completed within 45 working days has increased by 23% in Q1, and 5.3% higher than the same period last year. 74% of Assessments were completed within 45 working days.

Sickness levels that we experienced in Q4 have now been resolved, this together with steps taken in line with our improvement plan means that assessment timescales have significantly improved. Performance for June 2023 shows 80% of assessments completed in timescale which shows an upward trend.

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.

CSC aims for less than 20% of its referrals to be repeat referrals within 12 months and strives for 80% of Assessments to be completed within 45 days.

Re-referrals are lower this quarter compared to the previous quarter. Re-Referrals are audited by the service if over target to provide assurance that appropriate services have been provided. While Re-Referrals were lower in Q1, we are satisfied that appropriate decisions were made.

What action is the service taking?

We are maintaining momentum to ensure assessments are completed in timely manner.

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	2022-23	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Direction of Travel
Children subject to CP Plans (snapshot at end of period)	157	135	123	134	157	157	↔
% Of children coming onto a CP plan for a second or subsequent time ever	21%	11.8%	0.0%	18.6%	24.5%	13.8%	↓
% Of child protection visits within timescale (10 working days)	72%	74%	64%	73%	72%	78%	↑

What does this show us?

The number of children on a Child Protection Plan (CPP) has remained the same this quarter as in previous quarter but higher than the same period last year (figures show an increase of 14%).

29 children became subject to a CPP in Q1 2023-24, 4 of these children had a previous plan, compared to 53 children becoming subject to CPP and 13 having a previous plan in Q4.

The proportion of CP visits completed within timescales has increased in Q1 2023-24 (78%) compared to (72%) in Q4 and (74%) in the same period last year.

What is the background to this?

The service aims to have less than 22% of children starting a CPP for a second or subsequent time ever. The reduction to 13.8% is a positive indicator of children and families having the support they need following the stepdown from a previous period of CP planning. This provides a good indication that thresholds to step down from CP planning are being correctly applied due to the progress made in reducing risk of significant harm.

Wokingham sets itself a best-practice standard of carrying out Child Protection visits within 10 working days of the previous visit. This has been an area of focus for the service to develop and achieve the target of 80% of visits in timescale. It is positive to note this indicator or good performance continues to go in the right direction with 78% of visits taking place in timescale in Q1.

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 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	2022-23	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Direction of Travel
No. Children in Care (snapshot at end of period)	137	135	142	140	137	123	↓
No. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)	40	26	32	41	40	37	↓
% visits to children in care within timescale	80%	75%	78%	81%	85%	85%	↔
% children in care who have more than 1 allocated social worker in 12m (snapshot at end of period)	37%	33%	39%	36%	37%	41%	↑

What does this show us?

The number of children in care at end of Q1 has fallen compared to Q4 and 10.2% lower than the same period last year.

There has been consistency in the percentage of visits to children in care taking place within timescale. 380 of 446 visits carried out in Q1 were within 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 child will transfer to the Here4U Team if the plan is for them to remain in our care long term. However, we have had social workers leaving, going on maternity leave, and long-term sickness which has resulted 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 focused interventions offered to our families and young people via the Compass service has also aided in achieving this more positive position.

Whilst it is our ambition for the change in social worker to be as low as possible, and every effort is made to limit the disruption caused for each child, if a change of social worker is unavoidable, we acknowledge that there will always be some occasions where a change of social worker will be in the best interest of the child.

What action is the service taking?

The number of visits carried out within timescale has increased quarter-on-quarter this year. Q1 2022-23 showing as 85% compared to 75% in Q1 2022-23. This is very encouraging and positive progress. 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, 47.1 for statistical neighbours and 53 for the South-East, with the Wokingham rate being significantly lower at 33 in March 2022.

If Wokingham were looking after the South-East regional average rate (53 per 10,000) we would have at least 220 children in care.

Dashboard Item 6 – Care Leavers

Measure	2022-23	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Direction of Travel
% of care leavers aged 18-24 ‘in touch’ (snapshot at end of period)	92%	98%	99%	99%	92%	92%	↑
% of care leavers aged 18-24 ‘in touch’ and who are NEET	32%	30%	29%	39%	32%	31%	↓
% of care leavers 18-24 ‘in touch’ in suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of period)	95%	99%	97%	97%	95%	95%	↔

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.

The number of care leavers not in education, employment, or training has reduced slightly.

The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has remained the same as previous quarter but lower that same period last 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 and sustained at 92% and above over the year. 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.

In line with Corporate Parenting duties when young people turn 21, they can choose whether they want to access the service, if they don’t contact the service for 12 months, our duty is to make contact once a year to remind them of the service available to them. This is done via sending a birthday and Christmas card to remind them of service 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. Currently 69% of our young people are in education, training, and employment with 31% presenting as NEET. This is a positive picture however work is ongoing to further improve this.

CSC endeavours to ensure at least 90% of care leavers are in suitable accommodation, which it continues to achieve. It is positive to note that we have been able to achieve 95% and above over the course of the year.

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, 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 increased over the course of this year. However, has decreased slightly from Q4 to Q1. Although there is a decrease it is still a healthy picture at 95%. Work is ongoing to reduce this as much as possible, a housing strategy is in progress to reduce the need for young people to go into temporary accommodation which is not suitable. 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. The joint housing panel for young people is now up and running, now that this has been in place for a year, the panel is being reviewed to look at progress and what changes might be needed to make it more effective.

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 publish data on Care Leavers over 21 years old.

Dashboard Item 7(a) – Children Missing from Home/Care

Measure	2022-23	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Direction of Travel
Children missing from home	114	29	31	43	35	22	↓
Missing Episodes - % of return home interviews accepted (out of number of return home interviews required)	49%	33%	33%	57%	49%	60%	↑
Missing Episodes - % return home interviews carried out on time	45%	40%	60%	78%	45%	67%	↑
Children missing from care	22	8	9	15	7	8	↑
Missing Episodes - % of return home interviews accepted (out of number of return home interviews required)	33%	75%	50%	47%	33%	33%	↔
Missing Episodes - % return home interviews carried out on time	100%	33%	100%	90%	100%	100%	↔

What does this show us?

The number of children going missing from home or care (22) shows a decrease in Q1 2023-24. 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 (6 accepted out of 10 interviews required).

The percentage of return home interviews accepted (**for children missing from care**) shows how many interviews were accepted out of how many were required (6 acceptances out of 13 interviews required) 1 young person had 9 missing episodes in this quarter and is refusing RHI.

CSC aims to have 100% of Return Home Interviews (RHIs) taking place within timescale.

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.

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.

Dashboard Item 7(b) – Children Missing Education

Measure	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Direction of Travel
Children missing from education at the end of the period (not currently on a school roll)	9	18	6	19	40*	↑
No. of permanent exclusions	x	x	9	8	x	↓

x Less than 4, suppressed to preserve confidentiality.

*20 out of the 40 are no longer residing in the Borough

What does this show us?

Whilst the data above shows an increase in the number of children not currently on role at a school during Q1 of 23/24, behind the data sits some important context. Of the 40 CME cases, 20 are children who are reported to be no longer residing in our Borough, and as such the Local Authority is waiting for confirmation from the new home Authority that they are taking over the case or the child has returned to their Country of origin such as Ukraine. Of the remaining 20 cases, one young person is now being formally electively home educated and the following 19 are currently going through the school place application process, have been offered a school place and are waiting to start school, are waiting for a specialist SEND placement or are ongoing active CME cases.

There are 21 permanent exclusions in financial year 22-23 (Apr 22- Mar 23) but 18 in total during the 2022-23 academic year to date (Sept 22-Aug 23). The academic year 21-22 had 16 permanent exclusions which shows that the numbers are rising this year as compared to last. Reducing permanent exclusion is now one of the priorities of local area’s SEND and Inclusion work.

What is the national context?

Comparative national figures are not available for children missing education.

Dashboard Item 8 – Children’s Services Workforce

Measure	Q4 21-22	Q4 22-23	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q1 23-24	Direction of Travel
12 months rolling turnover of permanent qualified social workers	19.43%	10.53%	20.99%	18.85%	13.33%	21.12%	↑
% agency staff across qualified social work workforce (snapshot at end of period)	26%	25%	28%	23%	26%	25%	↓

What does this show us?

The rolling turnover of permanent staff over the past 12 months is showing an increase. Across the full 12 months, the actual number of Qualified Social Workers in CSC that have left permanent roles is 4 (July 2022 - June 2023).

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.

In 2022-2023 period (Q1 – Q4) we successfully recruited the following Permanent members of staff:

- 1 x Team Manager
- 2 x Assistant Team Managers
- 2 x Social Workers
- 10 x ASYE's
- 2 x Step Up students into ASYE posts

Our latest ASYE campaign will see an additional 4 x ASYE Candidates coming on board in September 2023.

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