



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Children’s Services Dashboard

Quarter 3 2023-24

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Introduction

This report covers Children's Services performance during October 2023, November 2023, and December 2023, which will be referred to as quarter three (Q3) throughout this report.

Dashboard Item 1 – Funded Education, Health & Care Plans

Measure	2022-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Q2 23-24	Q3 23-24	Direction of Travel
Current EHCPs placed in borough (snapshot at end of period)	1075	1017	1075	1135	1176	1199	↑
Current EHCPs placed out of borough (snapshot at end of period)	513	471	513	534	548	581	↑
EHCPs issued within 20 weeks of the referral (excl. exceptions)	57.1%	33.3%	73.6%	84.1%	80.9%	47.6%	↓

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 has decreased compared to the previous quarter, with an average timeliness of 47.6%. This is below WBC's target of 70% and currently compares unfavourably to the national average of 50.7% but is higher than statistical neighbours of 39.27%.

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.

The total number of EHC needs assessments requested during October to December 2023 was 114, 48% higher than Q2 (77 requests) and similar to Q3 in 2022 (112 requests). This compounded pressure on the Education Psychology service as well as therapy assessments through CYPIT.

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

To reverse this trend, the SEND Service held a meeting with the Performance Team and Principle Education Psychologist, with the following developments:

- A new 'timeliness' dashboard has been developed (currently in beta form), that provides live data and can be used as a supportive tool by SEND Managers to monitor and step in if any EHC Plans appear to be at risk of being overdue.

- An EHC assessment request dashboard has also been produced- which will help with short-, medium- and long-term planning, to support staff to prioritise, and request additional capacity to assist with peaks in demand.

- Through Commissioning, we will continue to monitor (and raise concerns if required) the timeliness of statutory advice through CYPIT, which currently impact overall EHCP timescales”.

Regular performance meetings have 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	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Q2 23-24	Q3 23-24	Direction of Travel
No. of referrals to Early Help	1591	415	376	397	367	479	↑
No. Early Help Assessments	1395	324	367	311	360	312	↓
Avg. length of time in days between referral and assessment completion	28	28	33	30	34	33	↓

What does this show us?

In Q3, the number of Early Help referrals increased by 31% compared to Q2 and is 15% higher than the number of referrals for the same period last year.

In Q3, the number of assessments has decreased by 13% compared to Q2 and 4% compared to the same period last year.

The service has been able to reduce the average length of time taken to complete an assessment between this quarter and the last, albeit it remains slightly longer than in the same quarter last year. This is reflective of the challenges that have been experienced by the service in terms of the management of a sustained volume of activity with a reduced workforce.

Although there are no nationally set timescales our local practice standards target is 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 continues to carefully monitor demand and take steps to build capacity to respond to identified increases. Whilst recruitment to the vacant posts previously highlighted was successful, the service remains three staff members down; two long-standing staff members have recently left to take up other work/training opportunities and a third remains away from the office due to health reasons. The service expects to be fully staffed by March 2024.

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	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-23	Q2 23-24	Q3 23-24	Direction of Travel
No. of Contacts progressed to Referral	1607	355	507	405	445	417	↓
% of referrals to which are repeat referrals within 12 months	20.2%	21.0%	17.9%	20.0%	18.2%	21.2%	↑
% Assessments completed within 45 working days	66.7%	68.5%	52.8%	73.7%	67.6%	89.0%	↑

What does this show us?

417 referrals were recorded in Q3 (2023-24) which is a decrease of 6.2% in comparison to the previous quarter but higher than same period last year. There were 88 repeat referrals within 12 months (21.2%).

Timeliness of Assessments completed within 45 working days increased by 21.4% this quarter and 20.5% higher than the same period last year.

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.

The data has been interrogated which led to targeted work to improve timeliness.

There has been a huge focus in the last quarter in terms of monitoring timescales, and we have been able to target specific areas where improvement was needed and reduced the number of days assessments were open.

What is the national context?

The statistical neighbour and England averages in 2022-23 for assessments completed within 45 days are 83% and 82% respectively.

The national average for repeat referrals within 12 months is 21% and the statistical neighbour average is 22%.

Dashboard Item 4 – Child Protection

Measure	2022-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Q2 23-24	Q3 23-24	Direction of Travel
Children subject to CP Plans (snapshot at end of period)	157	134	157	157	144	123	↓
% Of children coming onto a CP plan for a second or subsequent time ever	21%	18.6%	24.5%	13.8%	17.4%	23.3%	↑
% Of child protection visits within timescale (10 working days)	72%	73%	72%	78%	75%	78%	↑

What does this show us?

The number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP) has fallen this quarter and is lower than the same period last year (figures show a decrease of 8.2% when compared to Q3 2022-23). 30 children became subject to a CPP in Q3 2023-24, 7 of these children had a previous plan, compared to 23 children becoming subject to CPP and 4 having a previous plan in the last quarter.

The proportion of CP visits completed within timescales has increased this quarter (78%) compared to (75%) in Q2 and is higher than the same period last year (73%).

What is the background to this?

The increase seen in the % of children becoming subject to a CP Plan for a second or subsequent time needs to be seen in the context of the lower number of children subject to CP Plans at the end of Q3. Three families were made subject to repeat CP Planning. Previously these children were subject to Child Protection Plans over 2 years ago and were registered under different categories of harm. Child Protection Conference Chairs are proactive in their oversight of children on repeat CP plans and know that they must raise any concerns about the progress of the plan with the service manager.

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.

What action is the service taking?

Although performance for Child Protection visits has increased in Q3 we are aware that there are some children that we have difficulty accessing but there is management oversight of this and plans in place to mitigate the risks for these children.

What is the national context?

Wokingham's figure for Child Protection Plans per 10,000 at the end of 2022-23 was (38), which is below the England average of (43) in 2022-23.

Across 2022-23 Wokingham's figure for repeat Child Protection Plans (CPP) was 21% which is below the national average (24%) and that of statistical neighbours (26%).

Dashboard Item 5 – Children in Care

Measure	2022-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Q2 23-24	Q3 23-24	Direction of Travel
No. Children in Care (snapshot at end of period)	137	140	137	123	135	132	↓
No. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)	40	41	40	37	40	38	↓
% visits to children in care within timescale	80%	81%	85%	85%	86%	87%	↑
% children in care who have more than 1 allocated social worker in 12m (snapshot at end of period)	37%	36%	37%	41%	49%	54.2%	↑

What does this show us?

The number of children in care at end of Q3 has decreased by 2.2% compared to Q2 and 5.7% lower than the same period last year.

There has been consistency in the percentage of visits to children in care taking place within the timescale. On a positive note, a slight increasing trend is observed. Out of the 455 visits conducted in Q3, 397 were within the 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 of social worker is not always necessarily negative. It can take place organically when a child transfers over from one team, when proceedings have been concluded and the long-term care plan has been confirmed, they then transfer to the Here4u team where they will be supported until 18 and beyond 18 as care leavers. Within the Here4u team there has been relative stability within the work force however recently we had one social worker move on from the service. We had another take up a secondment opportunity and there was some long-term sickness/ maternity leave.

What is the background to this?

Wokingham's children in care figures are historically lower than those of statistical neighbours and regional averages, which could be influenced by 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 children through Early Help and the Compass service also aides 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 in the last year. Q3 2023-24 shows 87% compared to 81% in Q3 last year. 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.

We also need to recognise that sometimes with our older children they refuse to be seen or make themselves available to social workers which can impact on timeliness of visits. In these instances, the service continues to make all efforts to secure the child's engagement.

What is the national context?

The rate of Children in Care per 10,000 at the end of March 2023 is (71) for England, (51) for statistical neighbours and (57) for the South-East, with the Wokingham rate being significantly lower at (32).

If Wokingham were looking after the South-East regional average rate (57) per 10,000 we would have at least 235 children in care.

Dashboard Item 6 – Care Leavers

Measure	2022-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Q2 23-24	Q3 23-24	Direction of Travel
No. of Care Leavers (snapshot at end of period)	115	104	115	121	131	129	↓
No. of Care Leavers in Touch (snapshot at end of period) (18-24)	103	92	103	111	115	125	↑
% of care leavers aged 18-24 'in touch' (snapshot at end of period)	100%	99%	100%	100%	96%	97%	↑
No. of Care Leavers 'in touch' & NEET (snapshot at end of period)	35	39	35	37	50	43	↓
% of care leavers aged 18-24 'in touch' and who are NEET (snapshot at end of period)	33%	42%	33%	33%	43%	34%	↓
No. of Care Leavers 'in touch' and suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of period)	98	89	98	106	110	117	↑
% of care leavers 18-24 'in touch' in suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of period)	95%	97%	95%	95%	96%	94%	↓

What does this show us?

We have recently updated our policy on “Hard to engage and not in touch Care Leavers”. This is to ensure that there is clear expectation on the efforts we make to keep in touch with our care leavers.

43 (34%) of care leavers 'in touch' are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in Q3. Of the cohort 22 are “NEET other”, our focus is trying to get them into education/training/employment. The rest of the cohort is made up of young people unable to engage in Education/Employment due to their person situation which includes - custody, disability/health concerns and parenting commitments.

The percentage of care leavers in suitable accommodation has increased from the previous quarter.

What is the background to this?

The target is to stay in touch with at least 90% of care leavers, we are currently at 97% and we have sustained a strong position over the year with our lowest percentage being 96%. Amongst the reasons for care leavers under 21 not being in touch with CSC could be a refusal to engage with the Service or they have yet to develop mechanism to engage, or no longer needing the support provided.

In line with Corporate Parenting duties when Care Leaver turn 21, they can choose whether they want to access the service, if they do not contact the service for 12 months, our duty is to make contact once a year. This is done by sending a birthday and Christmas card to remind them of the 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's employment, education and training figures have remained consistently high throughout 2022-23. Currently 56% of our young people are in education, training, and employment with 34% 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 94% 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 future 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. Focus on this has 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. We also have an apprenticeship strategy which is actively being progressed to offer young people as much opportunities as possible.

The number of care leavers in unsuitable accommodation has increased over the course of this year. 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.

Social Care and Housing work closely together to ensure our care leavers are provided with suitable accommodation. The joint housing panel for young people has now been running for a year and is subject to a review to look at progress and any changes that might be needed to make it more effective.

What is the national context?

National averages at the end of March 2023 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	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Q2 23-24	Q3 23-24	Direction of Travel
Children missing from home	114	43	35	22	18	21	↑
Missing Episodes - % of return home interviews accepted (out of number of return home interviews required)	49%	57%	49%	60%	78%	56%	↓
Missing Episodes - % return home interviews carried out on time	45%	78%	45%	67%	64%	75%	↑
Children missing from care	22	15	7	8	9	5	↓
Missing Episodes - % of return home interviews accepted (out of number of return home interviews required)	33%	47%	33%	33%	22%	67%	↑
Missing Episodes - % return home interviews carried out on time	100%	90%	100%	100%	100%	100%	↔

What does this show us?

A total of 26 children were reported as missing from home or care in Q3.

The percentage of return home interviews accepted (for children missing from home) shows how many interviews were accepted of those who required one (10 accepted out of 18 interviews required).

The percentage of return home interviews accepted (for children missing from care) shows how many interviews were accepted of those who required one (4 accepted out of 6 interviews required) 1 young person had 5 missing episodes in this quarter.

Child Social Care 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. Another factor that can impact on the completion of return home interviews is the change of classification where all events are classed as Missing, where in the past it factored in Absent episodes (shorter periods e.g. returning late or not having been in contact for an hour or tow etc). This means where a young person has multiple events during a week, they may engage with one and not want to engage with further discussions if there are repeat incidents.

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. We are also planning on joining a Working Group with Thames Valley Police to further develop our response to Children in Care who go missing.

Dashboard Item 7(b) – Children Missing Education

Measure	2022-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Q2 23-24	Q3 23-24	Direction of Travel
Children missing from education at the end of the period (not currently on a school roll)		6	19	40	24	17	↓
No. of permanent exclusions		9	8	x	7	x	↓

x Less than 4, suppressed to preserve confidentiality.

What does this show us?

The number of children not currently on role at a school during Q3 of 23/24, decreased in comparison with the previous quarter. Of the 17 CME cases, 10 are in the school place application process, 5 are waiting for a suitable special school placement and remaining children 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.

There are 21 permanent exclusions in financial year 22-23 (Apr 22- Mar 23) but 24 in total during the 2022-23 academic year to date (Sept 22-Aug 23). The number of permanent exclusions in financial year 23 – 24 up till Q3, show that this year the Permanent exclusions are less than the previous financial year. The start of the academic year 23-24 with only one term data available as yet (Sep 23-Dec 23), shows that the number of permanent exclusions are 40% less as compared to the previous year (sep22-Dec22). 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.

A wide range of proactive strategies and actions are taken to reduce the number of CME and PEX. These include:

- EWS half termly 1:1 consultation with either the Head Teacher or appropriate member of SLT for all secondary schools to specifically discuss young people who are at risk of PEX.
- EWS identify and discuss young people who are classed as CME on roll at their consultations with schools. This enables early intervention and support.
- The CME Officer will track CME not on roll and support parents around applying for school places; referring to the FAP panel if no school places are available; making parents aware of other education options, such as Elective Home Education; advising on parents' responsibilities around their child being educated and possible legal consequences; referring to other local authorities if the young person has moved out of area.

- Advice and guidance are given at meetings, and also offer to facilitate any meetings to get the right people together to enable a positive outcome.
- A Vulnerable Pupils Panel meets every half term to discuss young people who are on the CME database and pupils who are at risk of PEX.
- Attending Behaviour Leads and Safeguarding Lead meetings and give advice to school leaders on individual cases, finding good alternatives to PEX.
- Emergency annual reviews are called if a young person who is at risk of PEX has an EHCP.
- half termly (secondary schools) and termly (primary schools) consultation meetings.
- mediation meetings where the relationship between school and parents has broken down.

What is the national context?

The statistical neighbour and England averages from January 2023 census day for CME (children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school) are 0.14% and 0.31%. At the end of Q3 period, there were 17 CME, which was 0.06% - lower than statistical and national averages.

Dashboard Item 8 – Children's Services Workforce

Measure	2022-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	Q1 23-24	Q2 23-24	Q3 23-24	Direction of Travel
12 months rolling turnover of permanent qualified social workers		13.33%	10.53%	10.53%	13.33%	18.7%	↑
% agency staff across qualified social work workforce (snapshot at end of period)		26%	25%	25%	24%	26%	↑

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 13 (Jan 23 – Dec 23). We had 6 actual Perm leavers in Q3.

What is the background to this?

Permanency of workforce is a continuous focus for Children Social Care.

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.

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

In December 2023 we announced a £3k Market Supplement to be introduced to Children's Social Workers from April 2024 onwards. We anticipate this will reduce our turnover and contribute to an increase in permanent members of staff joining Wokingham.

In addition to attracting more experienced members of staff with our new Market Supplement; the recruitment plans for 2024 include 3 major projects with a key focus on 'growing our own'. We will be doing this via the following streams of recruitment:

- ASYE Recruitment: We aim to recruit 10 ASYE Social Workers in 2024.
- Frontline: We have recently partnered with Frontline and will be creating a pod of 5 student Social Workers in Wokingham who will be fast tracked through their degree and onto our ASYE scheme.
- Apprenticeships: Children's Services aim to mobilise the Social Work Apprenticeship Scheme to up to 4 colleagues within the service.

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