WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Child Protection

Annual Report

2022-2023

Report completed by:

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Date for next report: May 2024

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Executive Summary

1.	**Purpose of this Annual Report:** To provide an overview of children subject to child protection plans; the activity relating to child protection conferences and the role of child protection chairs in quality assuring the safety planning for children at risk of ongoing significant harm; and the contribution of multi-agency partners.
2.	**Profile of Children on Child Protection Plans and conference activity 2021-22:** • At the end of March 2023 there were 156 (37.8 per 10,000) children subject to a child protection (CP) plan. This is slightly less than the year ending 2022-23, where there were 164 children subject to a CP plan. • However, there was a slight increase in the *total* number of children made subject to a CP plan during the year. Between 2021-2022 there were 199 children in total for the year. Between 2022-2023 there have been 201 subject to a child protection. • 27 children were subject to dual plans across the year. The main reason for these dual plans was the commencement of care proceedings. There are two children who are currently looked after and subject to CP plans due to the risk posed by harm outside the home. • Of the 201 children subject to a child protection plan between 1/4/22 and 31/03/23, 17% had a previous child protection plan. This is lower than the previous year, when 20% had a previous plan. The Wokingham figure of 17% is now lower than the England average of 22.10% and the Southeast average of 23.50%. • Neglect represents the highest proportion of CP Plans (65%) in Wokingham, followed by emotional abuse (24%), with a smaller percentage of children being on CP Plans under Physical or Sexual abuse. At the end of the year, 8% of CP Plans were for sexual abuse which is double the national average of 4%. Physical abuse only represented 2% of CP plans, which is notably lower than the national average of 6%. • The Department for Education commissioned report ***"Learning for the future: final analysis of serious case reviews, 2017 to 2019" (December 2022)*** states that three quarters of the children subject to serious case reviews identified as having suffered neglect in some form, and highlights the complexity of neglect. This is something which has been identified within safeguarding practice reviews across the BWSCP area for 2022-2023. • The consistent use of tools to support practitioners identify and respond to cases of neglect is a current focus of our improvement activity. • There are currently 14 children subject to a CP plan under the category of sexual abuse, representing 6 families. • When looking at these cases it highlights how complex assessments of sexual abuse are for practitioners. Given the increase in the numbers of children subject to a plan under this category it may be useful to consider a multi-agency assessment of this cohort, in order to review the consistency of responses to plans. As part of the Aisha and Ciara safeguarding review, recommendations were made around our learning around sexual abuse. These recommendations have been highlighted to staff, such as tools from the Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse. *Conference Activity* • Further improvement is needed on the timeliness of providing CP reports to the CP Chair and parents in advance of conferences. For ICPCs (where reports should be

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	shared within 2 days) a 73% rate of compliance was recorded, which is an increase from last year (69%). For RCPCs (where reports should be shared within 5 days) the compliance rate was just 21.67%, which is far lower than last year (36%). This does have an impact on the chairing of conferences as it means that chairs, parents and professionals do not get adequate time to collate and respond to these important reports. This particularly impacts on parents who have learning difficulties and neurodiversity. • Timeliness of ICPC for the year was 89.36%. This is an increase from 2021-2022 (82%), this is a KPI and will continue to be closely monitored. We will continue to work closely with colleagues across the service. • We can see from the data that quarter 1 and 4 have dragged our overall ICPC timeliness down. In quarter 1 there needed to be some learning around timescales between strategy discussions and ICPC and use of strategy discussions.
3.	**Emerging themes about the Child Protection system:** **Use of Categories and increase in cohort of neglect:** • As stated above, neglect represents our largest cohort of children subject to a CP plan. At present, of the children subject to a CP Plan, 65% of these fall under the category of neglect. This is a significant increase on last year (56%) and much higher than our statistical neighbours (44%). There is a need to consider whether children and young people are subject to a CP plan under the right category and why we have such a large cohort of children experiencing neglect. This also puts the spotlight on the challenges around working with neglect and the multiple factors which may be present for these children. • As highlighted, we also have 8% of children subject to a CP plan under the category of sexual abuse, whilst our statistical neighbours only have 2%. These cases have all been reviewed individually by the QAST Service Manager, and it was felt that the category had been selected correctly in each case. Historically sexual abuse is underused as a category, in part because of how challenging it is for victims to disclose this type of abuse and for professionals to recognise it, alongside indicators which could imply other concerns about a child's life. **Quoracy and involvement of agencies:** Quoracy has declined again this year. The child protection process is based on multi-agency arrangements and although local relationships with partner colleagues are positive with regular dialogue, we need to continue to monitor the contribution of each agency and to address any capacity issues or barriers which might exist. Last year 17% of conferences were inquorate, but this year this figure rose to 22%. To put this in a broader context, in 2020-2021 only 12.5% of conferences were inquorate. This has been a theme since the pandemic and so we may need to be considering what more we can do to highlight the importance of conferences and multi-agency attendance. **Length and accessibility of CP plans provided to conference and parents:** • The length of plans was noted by Ofsted in our most recent ILACS inspection. This is

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something which is being looked at as a matter of urgency, and Chairs and Managers have been approached for feedback to move this matter forward. We are also consulting with families about which version of the plans they feel would work for them.

Children at risk of exploitation outside the home:

We do not have a CP plan category for children who are at risk of exploitation from outside the home. It is therefore difficult to analyse the prevalence or trends in relation to these risks, and whether children at risk of exploitation are coming to ICPCs, or whether they are being managed under child in need plans or via the child exploitation and missing process (EMRAC). Ensuring that appropriate meetings and pathways are made use of for children who are at risk of exploitation was noted as a recommendation in one of the Wokingham CSPRs. Further work is planned for the coming year to develop an agenda which can be used within CP conferences and Child in Need meetings. We will also consider how we can extract better data on exploitation as a risk factor for young people on CP Plans, by using the CP chairs QA tool.

Harm outside of the home remains an important issue for the Children's Service directorate as a whole, and continues to be an area of strategic focus – as evidenced by the ongoing work of the strategic Exploitation Task and Finish Group. One of the Child Protection conference Chairs attends the harm outside the home sub-group of this project, and as part of this work a strategic pathway will be considered for children and young people.

Regarding the national context, the *Working Together to Safeguard Children* guidelines are about to be reviewed, and it may be that as part of this work the DfE review how child protection categories and conferences should consider exploitation. However, there has been no indication from Central Government as to whether this will be considered.

Locally it was agreed that after the "David" CSPR that children at risk of significant harm from exploitation would be considered at ICPC in the absence of another pathway for managing these cases. This was highlighted within the recent ILACS inspection, which noted that "*there is no clearly defined approach to children who are at risk from exploitation".* As stated, strategically this is something which is being worked on at present.

Use of Split Conferences

Over the last year, the number of requests for conferences to be held in a "split" format has increased - typically because of the involvement of domestic abuse in the case. This has led to challenges in the management and chairing of the conferences. The specific number of conferences held in a split format cannot be drawn from existing performance data, which limits our current understanding of the trend. However, work is underway to ensure that we can collect data on this going forward, and it is our ambition to provide more accurate reporting in future quarterly reports.
There is a need for clarity for both Chairs and frontline staff as to what circumstances a split conferences should take place. Currently, there is no reference to this issue in either the BWSCP procedures or WBC's internal practice standards. This is therefore something that may need to be addressed, so we can ensure that there is consistency in the way we handle such requests. Whilst requests have mainly been made in response to cases where domestic abuse is a feature, general parental relationships and families where there is more than one father have also been put forward as reasons for the need to split a conference. When we agree that conferences should be split, core groups follow the same format, which creates more work for

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	the frontline teams. It is therefore imperative that as a service we take consistent and informed decision on the matter.
3.	**Capacity and impact of the CP Conferencing service:** The workforce in the QAST team has remained stable for the most part. There were some members of the team who were absent due to long-term sick leave for periods of time in 2022-23. However, we maintained a fully permanent team over the course of the year. **Offering high quality hybrid and face to face meetings:** We have one dedicated conference room at WBC Shute End which is Teams enabled. This allows face to face and hybrid conferences to take place effectively. This room is felt to be well set up to manage family's needs and supports the overall management of conferences. We had hoped to have two dedicated rooms, as being limited to one can sometimes impact on options for how conferences are managed. Whilst we can use other MS Teams enabled rooms, these are not dedicated to conferences and have their limitations. **Promoting the child's voice in conferences:** The child protection agenda puts the focus on the voice of children being at the beginning of the conference. Social Workers are expected to engage with children and to use direct work techniques to gather the children's views, helping the conference to understand their lived experience, as well as capturing the needs of babies and non-verbal children who are not able to express their views. The Wokingham Advocate is an additional resource to help the conference gain an understanding of the child's perspective and to help young people who want to be supported to attend the conference and present their views themselves. The Advocate had 104 contacts with 33 children subject to the child protection process during the year, which is an increase on the previous year. This work has involved attending conferences with children and young people or on their behalf, sharing the voice of the child in conferences, and attending professionals' meetings on their behalf. It was agreed that the advocate should not attend ICPCs, so that the assessing social worker can focus on the voice of the child. They will become involved from the first RCPC if a child is referred for advocacy. At the ICPC the social worker will take the lead in seeking the voice of the child.
4	**The key strategic priorities of the CP conferencing service in 2022-23 are:** • **To consistently provide good quality child protection conferences** which promote the child's voice, the participation of parents and partners, and which produce a clear and concise plan which sets out the desired outcomes for the child and review conferences; to help drive forward the plan for the child. This will include reviewing and embedding of consistent practice standards. • **To raise awareness about child protection processes and the wider issues relating to best practice, and the learning from local and national child safeguarding practice reviews cases**. This will include work to promote awareness about the purpose of CP conferences and to promote participation by families and partner agency colleagues and consider the issues around quoracy. In Wokingham we have had two significant reviews published during 2022-23 which have provided learning about harm outside of the home and insight into young people with EHCP (education and health care plans) and the importance of

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	considering special educational needs alongside child protection. These safeguarding reviews also highlight neglect as significant areas of concern and learning. • **To demonstrate the effectiveness of the CP conferences** with clear examples of what difference CP chairs make in overseeing CP plans for children. This will include clearly demonstrating challenge and follow up when CP plans are not progressing as planned; when the child's voice is not being presented to the conference; when parents are not receiving reports in advance of meetings; or where the partnership arrangements are not working as expected. Our recent OFSTED ILACS report highlights the need for CP Chairs to utilise their skills and experience in driving change. Consistency of oversight between conferences is a particular area of improvement for the service to respond to, to make sure that plans are making a difference in reducing risk to children. The quarterly and annual reporting mechanisms enable annual CP data to be shared with managers, senior leaders in Children's Services and the Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership.
5.	**The areas of practice we plan to focus on in the coming year are:** 1. To incrementally increase the number of ICPCs and RCPCs being held in person with parents, while retaining virtual options. While doing so, monitor quoracy and agency participation, and report this to the Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership (BWSCP) and the Independent Scrutiny and Impact Group (ISIG), with a view to increasing the level of attendance and reports from partners in order to deliver high-quality child protection conferences. QAST manager and members of the team to liaise with key partner agencies quarterly to gather feedback on CP conferences and any barriers to participation from partners and to create stronger links across the partnership. There needs to be a clear plan to address this issue given our worries around the overall decrease in quoracy. 2. Chairs to make best use of pre-review meetings with social workers and parents by sharing any agenda and checking that parents have received relevant reports. Chairs will also ensure that parents understand how the conference process will work and what the safety plan is for the child. 3. Chairs need to complete midway reviews on children subject to a child protection plan as this was highlighted in the recent OFSTED ILACS inspection as an issue. At present we are identifying a consistent way to do this. We are considering the best way to evidence this on the child's file, this could be achieved either by a separate case note heading or an individual step. We need to make sure that the solution can draw out data in order to evidence improvement. 4. To promote the new version of the child protection plan once the format is agreed and review the quality of child protection plans. 5. There is a need to use the experience of the child protection chairs in reviewing our own work together as a team. Learning from one another and creating stand-alone opportunities to review practice together on a quarterly basis.

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	6. To maintain an overview of key performance indicators (ICPCs within 15 days) for Children on CP plans for a second and subsequent time and cases of note, such as: - conferences which do not result in a child protection plan, or; - where the plan ceases at the first review, or; - where the child protection plan is not progressing, or; - when children are on CP Plans for one year or more. - Where children are subject to child protection plans for two years or more (the aim being to maintain consistent oversight to appropriately address drift on these cases) 7. For the CP Chairs to maintain close oversight on cases of concern, children on dual plans and children on CP for over nine months. Chairs to bring challenge on individual cases if they identify any concerns about practice or timeliness. 8. To provide quarterly inductions to new social workers and bitesize training for social workers, managers, and other partners to raise awareness about child protection conferences, preparation, reports and participation.
5.	**Author's key recommendations** That this report is shared with the Children's Services Leadership Team, the Quality Assurance Board the Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership and that any learning is incorporated in the Quality Assurance Activity for 2023-24

1. Introduction and purpose of this report

This annual report provides an overview of children subject to child protection plans. This comprises all activity relating to child protection conferences; the role of child protection chairs in quality assuring the safety planning for children at risk of ongoing significant harm; and the contribution of multi-agency partners.

2. Staffing structure

2.1 *Working Together to Safeguard Children* states that child protection conference chairs should be independent of operational and/or line management, and accountable to the Director of Children's Services.

The team is structurally located outside of the line management of children's social care, to provide a greater degree of independence from the line-management of the case.

2.2 The responsibility for the activity and the development of the service is held by the Service Manager for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding. The staffing establishment on 31 March 2023 was one Service Manager for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding, and five full-time equivalent child protection chairs/independent reviewing officers (IRO).

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There are currently four full time post holders and one team member working 3 days per week. The (Local Authority) Designated Officer, has a dual role as a child protection (CP) conference chair, two days per week and this has added extra capacity to the team. The whole team has remained permanent for 2022-23.

2.3 The staff employed can perform a dual role. IROs provide continuity for children receiving services in the child protection arena who then come into the care system.

The team of independent chairs is made up of five females, all of whom are White British. As a team we are conscious of the need to understand the unique needs and those we work with, across all ethnicities and backgrounds.

2.4 The Chairs are supported by an administrative team who arrange and send out invites, minute conferences and circulate decisions and reports. The administrators are managed by the Administration Team Leader who puts in place systems and processes, and monitors performance.

3. Statistical Data for 2022-2023

3.1 Numbers of children subject to Child Protection Plans

At the end of March 2023 there were 156 (37.8 per 10,000) children subject to a child protection (CP) plan, this is less than the year ending 2022 where there were 164 children subject to a CP plan at the end of year. This represents a slight decrease from the end of last year. Overall, for the year the number of children subject to a child protection plan is slightly higher than the previous year.

There was a slight increase in the total number of children subject to a child protection plan for the year. Between 2021-2022 there were 199 children in total for the year. Between 2022-2023 there have been 201 subject to a child protection.

Table 1: Child protection conferences by type (2022-23)

	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	
ICPC	16	21	48	55	Total for the year **556**
RCPC	114	88	93	107	
Pre-birth ICPC	3	1	0	2	
Transfer In	1	5	0	2	
	134	115	141	166	

A total of 556 conferences took place in 2022-23, compared to 686 In 2021-2022 - indicating a significant reduction in the number of conferences taking place. Given the potential significance of this reduction in activity, it is our intention to seek further verification of the data. This will be completed for the next quarterly report. The proportion of section 47 inquiries leading to CP conferences has dropped every year now for the past three years. This year it was 21.4% and last year it was 27%. It may be that we need to look at those cases which did not come to conference and consider the thresholds as part of our learning to understand why there has been such a significant drop.

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3.2 The Ethnicity of Children on Child Protection Plans

Table 2: Children subject to CPP by ethnicity

Ethnic group	No. on CPP Q1 2022-23	No. on CPP Q2 2022-23	No. on CPP Q3 2022-23	No. on CPP Q4 2022-23	No on CPP England 2021-22
White	79% (107)	84% (103)	79% (106)	82% (128)	75%
Mixed	8% (11)	6% (8)	11% (15)	9% (14)	10%
Asian or Asian British	5% (7)	5% (6)	5% (6)	5% (8)	7%
Black or Black British	4% (5)	4% (5)	4% (5)	3% (5)	6%
Other Ethnic Groups and unknown or refused ethnicity	4% (5)	1% (1)	1% (2)	1% (1)	2%

Last year it was noted that we had a low proportion of children subject to a child protection plan who were defined as White (55%), however this year the percentage rate has grown to 82%, which is slightly higher than the England average (75%). The Wokingham Borough population is recorded as being mainly White, with 79.9% of the population overall defining themselves as White (Office for National Statistics and Wokingham JNSA). The numbers of children subject to a child protection plan who are Asian or Asian British is lower than last year, as is the number of children defined as Black or Black British. We must always be mindful of general population in Wokingham and how this affects the families we work with within this cohort. It was raised within the thematic audit of cases of concern whether we were always considering children's diversity adequately within assessments. Diversity is not just about ethnicity, but it is important to highlight that there are unique experiences for ethnic minorities.

3.3 The age of Children on Child Protection Plans

Table 3: Children subject to Child Protection Plan by age (31/03/23)

Age	Unborn	Under 1	1-4	5-9	10-15	16+
No of children – Wokingham March 23	0 (0%)	14 (10%)	30 (19%)	38 (24%)	64 (41%)	10 (6%)
% of children - England 2021-22	2%	9%	25%	29%	31%	5%

The age profile of children subject to Child Protection Plans is based on a snapshot at the end of the year. The largest number of children subject to a CP plan are between age 10-15. This is broadly in line with what we would expect to see, given that according to the ONS, the number of children under 15 in Wokingham has increased by 18%. In March 2023 10 children who are subject to a plan aged 16 +, of these, 7 children are subject to a plan due to some element of either CSE (child sexual exploitation) or CCE (criminal exploitation). This highlights the importance of ongoing work currently being completed regarding harm outside the home, and the absense of a separate pathway for these children. It is of note that two of the young people are also looked after.

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3.4 The Gender of Children on Child Protection Plans

Table 4: Children subject to Child Protection Plan by gender[1]

Gender	No on CPP – Q1 2022-23	No on CPP – Q2 2022-23	No on CPP – Q3 2022-23	No on CPP – Q4 2022-23	No on CPP – England 2021-22
Female	57.0% (77)	58.5% (72)	53% (72)	47% (74)	48%
Male	42.2% (57)	40.7% (50)	46% (61)	51% (79)	50%
Unborn	0.7% (1)	0.8% (1)	0.75% (1)	2% (3)	2%

Of the 156 children subject to a child protection plan at the end of March 2023, 47% were female, which is a decrease from last year (53%). This is more in line with the national average for England. 51% of children were male and this represents a slight increase in the number from last year of 48%. Overall, there are slightly more females than males in Wokingham as a whole.

3.5 Children with Disabilities on Child Protection Plans

At the end of March 2022, two children from the Children with Disabilities Team were subject to a child protection plan. At the time of writing, accurate data on the numbers of disabled children on CP plans for the year was unavailable, however this will be obtained for the next quarterly report. It will be important to consider the current low numbers in more depth alongside the number of section 47 inquiries being completed. Disabled children are more vulnerable to abuse than other children, due to other factors like requiring additional care, such as intimate care or challenges around communication. Despite this, nationally they are underrepresented within the child protection process.

3.6 Children in care on Child Protection Plans (dual plans)

At the end of year 2022-2023, there were 27 children in total who have been subject to a dual plan over the space of the year. There were 6 children still subject to dual plans at the end of March 2023. There are varying reasons for this, however most children are subject to a dual plan for a very short period due to the cross over between care proceedings and the child protection process.

There are 3 children who are accommodated under section 20 who are currently subject to a child protection plan. Two are subject to a plan due to harm outside the home and exploitation concerns and one due to other child protection concerns within their home where they visit. Two are younger children and are currently in the process of having care proceedings issued.

These figures are far lower than last year when there were 22 children on dual plans at the end of the year. As highlighted earlier on in this report, the management of harm outside the home does not have a separate process, so for two of the looked after children this is the only way we can highlight the seriousness of the concerns. As noted earlier in this report, recent CSPRs have also reaffirmed this approach, by making specific recommendations around the

[1] *Source: Department for Education (2020 Characteristics of children in need in England)*

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use of multi-agency forums/CP Planning to strengthen the monitoring of young people at risk of CSE or CCE.

The aim is for children to only have a CP Plan and Care Plan (dual plan) for a short period and if possible, to cease by the time of the first child in care review. This process provides continuity of planning and reflects the need to manage risk while longer term care options are being assessed.

Overall, we had significantly less children on dual plans at the end of this year.

4. Activity in relation to Child Protection Plans

4.1 Children on Child Protection Plans for second and subsequent time.

The tables below show the proportion of children that have been made subject to a plan for the second or subsequent time in 24 months, and second or subsequent time ever. This indicator requires careful monitoring as it can alert us to instances where decisions to end a child protection plan have been premature, or where step-down arrangements have not been robust enough.

A system is in place whereby requests for Child Protection Conferences involving children who have previously been on a plan are flagged with the Service Manager for Safeguarding and the S47 enquiry is then reviewed with the team manager to understand the reasons for the case coming back into the child protection process.

The service manager for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding is also made aware of requests for conference where a child had previously been subject to a child protection plan.

Of the 201 children that became subject to a CP Plan in the year, 4.9% had a subsequent child protection plan within 24 months, a slight decrease on 5.7% the previous year. The year prior to this recorded 12%, which seems to suggest that we are reducing the need for repeat plans over time. Children who cease to be subject to CP Plans have a trajectory as part of their plan. This provides a pathway towards closing the case and includes a step down to a child in need plan for at least three months. This helps to ensure that the work done on the CP plan has been continued, and that there is a family and professional network in place to support the children beyond case closure.

At the end of the year 23.6% of CP cases involved those who became subject to a plan for a second or subsequent time ever, which means we are now closer to the overall national average of 22.1%. This is lower than the previous year when it was recorded as 32.3% at the end of quarter 4. Overall, for the year, 17% of children subject to a child protection plan were previously on a plan. At the end of 2022 this indicator was at 20%, which suggests that a difference is being made in the child protection planning process and the step-down process, in terms of preventing this vulnerable cohort from returning to the CP process. Wokingham is now lower than the average for the South-East regarding this indicator.

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Table 5: Children subject to a CPP for a second or subsequent time within 24 months

Indicators	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22- 23
Children who became subject of a CPP for a second or subsequent time in 24 months	0	0	3	7

Table 6: Children subject to a CPP for a second or subsequent time ever

Indicators	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	England 2021-22	Southeast 2021-22
Children who became subject of a CPP for a second or subsequent time ever	11.8%	0%	31%	23.60%	22.10%	23.50%

4.2 Child Protection Plans lasting for two years or more.

Table 7: Child protection plans lasting 2 years or more.

Indicator	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23	England 2021-22	Southeast 2021-22
Children in CPP for 2 years or over end of the period	0%	0%	2%	1%	3.70%	0%

When considering the numbers of CP plans that last for 2 years or more, good performance is generally indicated by a low percentage; however, it is recognised that some children may need to be subject to a plan for longer for valid reasons. At the end of March 2022-23, there were two children (one family) who had been subject to a plan for over two years. This is a decrease from one at the same time last year (when 3 were recorded) and is lower than the England average. The percentage of plans lasting for two years or more for the year is 1.3%, which compares to 4% last year, and suggests there is now better oversight of such cases. To strengthen this moving forward we need to make sure that the child protection chairs are using their skills to monitor children who have been subject to a plan for over a year. Embedding practice standards around midway reviews is also likely to continue to drive better outcomes in this respect.

Long term CP cases tend to be complex, with multiple issues. As per the previous year, the case highlighted above was in pre-proceedings and care proceedings have now been issued

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but the children remain at home. This evidences that that there is a clear plan in place to manage the long-term concerns for the children. There are currently 7 children which will hit the 2-year marker in August this year and they have been highlighted with Team Managers and the CP Chairs. There are internal processes to monitor long term CP cases and we can see that this is making a difference. The data around length of plans is also discussed at data performance meetings. The indicator Child Protection Plans lasting 2 years or more which cease during the year" is one of the Corporate Key Performance Indicators for 2023-24 which will add a further level of scrutiny.

4.3 Performance regarding child protection conferences

The table below shows the duration of CP Plans for the year. Of the 144 children who ceased to be subject to a child protection plan during the year, the majority had been on a CP Plan for 6-12 months. This is in line with the previous year's data, which also evidenced a similar pattern.

A low number of children overall were de-planned after two years (only 6 children in total). Given that our numbers of subsequent plans ever are low, this indicates that plans seem to be stepping down at the right times. When plans are longer, this tends to be focussed on PLO and care proceedings where there is no order.

Table 8. Performance on child protection conferences

		0-3 months		3-6 months		6-12 months		1-2 years		2 years and over	
Indicators	Total CPP	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
England CPP ceased 2020-21	65,200	11,250	17.30%	7,100	10.90%	28,080	43.10%	16,370	25.10%	2,410	3.70%
CP Ceased Q1 22-23	46	13	28%	4	9%	12	26%	11	24%	6	13%
CP Ceased Q2 22-23	33	2	6%	4	12%	14	43%	13	39%	0	0%
CP Ceased Q3 22-23	32	0	0%	6	18%	14	44%	12	38%	0	0%
CP Ceased Q4 22-23	33	4	12%	0	0%	12	36%	17	52%	0	0%

4.4 Timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences

Table 1: ICPC taking place within 15 working days of strategy discussion (2022-23)

Indicators	**Q1 2022-23**	**Q2 2022-23**	**Q3 2022-23**	**Q4 2022-23**
No. of ICPC's held within timescales	14	21	46	45
No. of ICPC	18	21	46	56
% of ICPC completed within timescales	77.77%	100%	100%	80.35%

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The table above shows the performance by quarter regarding ICPC timeliness. In terms of the annual overall performance, 89% of ICPCs were held within timescales. This is an improvement on last year, when only 80% were held within timescales.

There is now a well embedded system in place for social workers to provisionally book ICPCs as soon as the strategy meeting has been held and the S47 is initiated. The child protection administrators closely monitor the timescales, and this approach works well.

The main reasons for delay are requests for ICPC's being made too late to set up conferences within the 15 days and the availability of parents or other professionals, particularly in school holiday periods.

During quarter 1 there were also issues within the longer-term teams around their understanding of timescales from strategy meeting to ICPC. There has been learning around this, and the issue appears to have been resolved during later quarters.

Overall, we can see in quarter two and three that improvements were made regarding this indicator. Whilst we have recorded a dip in quarter 4, in the main these ICPCs were only a couple of days off the 15-day target, which still impacts the overall data. This is a KPI so there will continue to be rigorous oversight.

4.5 Timeliness of Child Protection Reviews:

Table 10: Child Protection Review timescales

Indicators	Q4 21-22	Q1 22-23	Q2 22-23	Q3 22-23	Q4 22-23
Child protection reviews within timescales	100%	100%	100%	100%	99%

The table above shows the percentage of Review Child Protection Conferences that were reviewed within statutory timescales during 2021-22, alongside the previous year's data for Q4, for comparative purposes.

This is a snapshot of the number of children with a child protection plan on 31st March, who at that date had a plan continuously for the previous 3 months. Systems are in place to book conferences at approximately five months into the CP plan, to allow for time if a conference must be reconvened.

The performance indicator is cumulative and reports that 99% of conferences have been held in timescale, which is higher than comparators. This was despite two Chairs being absent due to long-term sick leave in quarter 2.

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4.6 Timeliness of social worker reports to conference

Table 11: Social worker reports received at least 48 hours before ICPC (2022-23)

Indicators	Q1 2022-23	Q2 2022-23	Q3 2022-23	Q4 2022-23
No of ICPC	18	21	46	56
No of ICPC's with reports received at least 48 hours before the conference	17	14	30	42
% of reports received at least 48 hours before conference	97%	59%	67.20%	75%

The table above shows the performance on providing a completed signed off report to the CP Chair and the parents within 2 days of a conference. This performance measure denotes good practice in preparing for the meeting and being aware of all the information in advance. The performance for the year based on the average is 73%, this is a slight improvement on last year of 69%. The monthly scores indicate that practice is inconsistent.

Table 12: Social worker reports received at least 5 days before RCPC (2022-23)

Indicators	Q1 2022-23	Q2 2022-23	Q3 2022-23	Q4 2022-23
No of RCPC	117	89	93	107
No of RCPC's with reports received at least 5 days before the conference	23	23	20	22
% of reports received at least 5 days before conference	20%	19%	22%	21%

The table above for RCPCs submitted within 5 days of conference shows a 21% annual average for this performance indicator. Although the practice of sharing draft reports with parents in advance of meetings is now more embedded, the performance on meeting the procedural timescale remains low.

Berkshire Child Protection Procedures set a timescale for ICPC reports to be provided to the parents and the Chair two working days before the ICPC, and five working days before the RCPC.

The performance for reports to ICPCs has varied throughout the year. Not receiving reports impacts on the preparation of the family, the Chair and the quality of the conference and is often noted in feedback and complaints from parents.

Further improvement is needed on the timeliness of providing CP reports to the CP Chair and parents in advance of conferences. For ICPCs (where reports should be shared within 2 days) this is 73%, and for RCPCs (where reports should be shared within 5 days) it is 21%. For RCPC we have seen a significant drop from last year's figure of 36%. This continues to impact on the quality of preparation before conferences and it is not clear why this continues to be an issue. It is recognised that the social work teams face pressures, but this leads to the efficacy of RCPC

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being undermined.

5.Categories of Abuse and Parental Risk Factors

5.1 Categories of harm

At the conclusion of a conference, professionals decide which category of abuse captures the type of significant harm children have suffered or may suffer. Recording a category of abuse in the conference a category helps to identify trends.

Neglect represented the highest proportion of CP Plans at the end of year (65%), followed by emotional abuse (24%), with a smaller percentage of children being on CP Plans under Physical or Sexual abuse. At the end of the year, 8% of CP Plans were for sexual abuse which is double the national average (4%). Physical abuse only represented 2% of child protection plans with the national average being 6%.

The DfE commissioned report ***"Learning for the future: final analysis of serious case reviews, 2017 to 2019*** (December 2022) states that three quarters of children subject to serious case reviews nationally were identified as having suffered neglect in some form. The report also highlights the complexity of neglect. This is something which has been identified within our own CSPRs for 2022-2023. This is currently an ongoing area of learning for Wokingham in terms of future training. For example, our current forward plan is considering how to improve the use of tools to support consistent assessment and planning around neglect cases.

At the end of last year, 55% of children were subject to a child protection plan under the category of neglect, so there continues to be an upward trend in the use of this category.

Table 13: Categories of Harm

		Wokingham	Wokingham	England	Statistical Neighbours	South East
		2022-23	**2021-22**	**2021-22**	**2021-22**	**2021-22**
Children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March	Number	156	164	50920	461.7	8550
Rate of children who were the subject of a child protection plan at 31 March per 10,000 children	Rate	37.8	39.7	42.1	38.53	43.1
Neglect (latest)		65%	56%	47%	44%	53%
Physical Abuse (latest)		2%	6%	6%	4%	4%
Sexual Abuse (latest)		8%	5%	4%	2%	3%
Emotional Abuse (latest)		24%	33%	41%	48%	39%

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Multiple (latest)	0%	0%	2%	0%	1%

Neglect remains our highest category of CP plan, with 65% of children on a plan under this

Neglect encompasses physical and emotional neglect, or failure to protect. It is often linked to parental issues such as substance misuse, mental health or a combination of factors which result in a child's needs not being met.

This is far higher than our statistical neighbours and it may be that we need to complete a targeted audit of cases subject to a plan under the category of neglect. The purpose of the audit would be to consider whether children are on a plan under the correct category, and to identify common themes around neglect in those cases. It may be that this could link into the evaluation of neglect tools as part of strategic learning around developing more consistent practice around neglect.

5.2 Parental Risk Factors

Domestic abuse remains the most prevalent factor at ICPCs and RCPCs, followed by mental health and substance misuse. There remains a high level of complexity in the cases being presented to conference. There is a far wider understanding of both the impact and the different forms domestic abuse takes. We now have a domestic abuse coordinator and strategically there is larger focus on domestic abuse. A domestic abuse scrutiny group has now been created; this is a multi-agency working group which aims to audit cases where there domestic abuse has been a feature (three times a year). The purpose being to act as a critical friend to improve to continue to improve practice.

We can measure complexity to some degree by highlighting conferences where there are multiple parental risk factors impacting on children. Where there are multiple factors impacting on children, it is likely that these cases will me more complex and this is in line with our own safeguarding reviews for 2022-2023. These safeguarding reviews highlighted the complexity of neglect, the challenges in identifying other forms of abuse alongside neglect and the need to understand the impact of special educational needs on children at risk of harm outside the home.

The CP Chairs are noting a greater complexity within CP conferences from families with different make-ups. This has led to more requests for conferences to be split. This requires more split meetings, redacted minutes for some parents, longer conferences, and additional preparation for CP Chairs who will typically need to call each parent separately before the conference. At present there is no guidance set out within either the Berkshire West Safeguarding procedures, or Wokingham's internal practice standards. To make practice in this area more consistent, we may need to consider codifying the circumstances under which conferences should be split. When conferences are split, this does have a knock-on effect for the front-line teams, as the expectation is that core group meetings are split, and this creates double the work around managing those meetings. It is therefore imperative that such decisions are made in a consistent and informed manner.

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It is fully acknowledged that in cases where domestic abuse is present it will be necessary to consider the risk to the victim, and therefore the possibility of a split conference. It may also be necessary to split conferences if the risk to the child may be increased, should the conference go ahead in a standard format. At present, conferences are sometimes split due to parents being separated or more than one father being involved. This may well perpetuate the network not working together. At present we do not have data on the number of split conferences carried out. This would need to be obtained manually in order to ascertain the trends fully.

Table 14: Parental Risk Factors 2022-23

Parental risk factors – 2022-23	**Q1 ICPCs (20)**	**Q1 RCPCs (114)**	**Q2 ICPCs**	**Q2 RCPCs**	**Q3 ICPCs (46)**	**Q3 RCPCs (89)**	**Q4 ICPCs (58)**	
Domestic abuse (DA)	9 (45%)	53 (46%)	12 (44%)	46 (52%)	22 (48%)	40 (45%)	28 (48%)	45 (41%)
Mental Health issues (MH)	11 (55%)	43 (38%)	15 (55%)	47 (53%)	15 (33%)	44 (49%)	30 (52%)	56 (51%)
Drug & Alcohol issues (D&A)	5 (25%)	36 (31%)	2 (7%)	36 (41%)	14 (30%)	35 (39%)	19 (33%)	43 (39%)
DA, MH and D&A present	5 (25%)	8 (7%)	2 (7%)	18 (20%)	8 (17%)	15 (17%)	9 (15%)	24 (22%)
Housing			4 (15%)	22 (11%)	4 (9%)	13 (15%)	10 (17%)	26 (24%)

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Table 15: Participation of parents and children

Indicators	Q1 2022-23	Q2 2022-23	Q3 2022-23	Q4 2022-23
Conferences where a parent attended	131	99	130	142
All Initial and review conferences	130	109	141	161
CP8 - % of CPC Participation - Parents attendance	97.70%	87%	92.00%	88%
Indicators	**Q1 2022-23**	**Q2 2022-23**	**Q3 2022-23**	**Q4 2022-23**
Children aged 7-11 who participated in conference	38	43	42	50
Initial and review conferences with child aged 7-11	38	43	42	48
CP9 - % of CPC participation - children aged 7-11	100%	100%	100%	96%
Indicators	**Q1 2022-23**	**Q2 2022-23**	**Q3 2022-23**	**Q4 2022-23**
Children aged 12+ who participated in conference	36	23	41	55
Initial and review conferences with child aged 12+	35	22	39	53
CP10 - % of CPC participation - children aged 12+	97.22%	97.40%	95%	96.30%

6. Conference Quorum and partner agency involvement

6.1 Conference Quoracy

Quoracy has declined again this year. The child protection process is based on multi-agency arrangements and although local relationships with partner colleagues are positive with regular dialogue, we need to continue to monitor the contribution of each agency and to address any capacity issues or barriers which exist. Last year 17% of conferences were inquorate, and this year that figure has grown to 22% of conferences. This has been a theme since the pandemic and there is concern that we may need to be considering how we highlight the importance of conferences and multi-agency response to attendance. To put this in perspective, in 2020-2021 only 12.5% of conferences were inquorate, which is notably lower than this year's figure of 22%.

Table 16: Conference Quorum, 2022-23

Indicators	Q1 2022-23	Q2 202-23	Q3 2022-23	Q4 2022-23	Total
Inquorate	30	28	20	25	103
Quorate	104	83	104	131	422
Don't know	2	4	15	12	33

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6.2 Partner Agency Involvement

Since 2019-20, the QAST service has been collecting more detailed information about the contribution of partner agencies to the child protection conferencing process. In 2022-223 the contribution from key agencies was mapped, and an annual comparison is set out below. The quarterly detail for 2021-22 can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 17 : Partner agency attendance and reports comparison to previous year ICPC

ICPCs	Total 2022-23	Q1 2022-23	Q2 2022-23	Q3 2022-23	Q4 2022-23
Total no of ICPC checklists completed	**214**	**20**	**21**	**46**	**58**
Health visitor/school nurse attendance	203 (95%)	20 (100%)	21 (100%)	39 (85%)	51 (88%)
Health visitor/school nurse reports	199 (93%)	19 (95%)	21 (100%)	35 (76%)	51 (88%)
Probation attendance	26 (12%)	3 (15%)	3 (14%)	8/32 (25%)	5 (9%)
Probation reports	141 (66%)	10 (50%)	16 (76%)	21/32 (66%)	26 (45%)
Police attendance	190 (89%)	18 (90%)	16 (76%)	30 (65%)	26 (45%)
Police reports	186 (87%)	20 (100%)	21 (100%)	33 (72%)	36 (62%)
Drug/Alcohol service attendance	6 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	2/29 (7%)	1 (2%)
Drug and alcohol service reports	9 (4%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	2/29 (7%)	0 (0%)
Education attendance	186 (87%)	15 (75%)	19 (90%)	37 (80%)	47 (81%)
Education reports	154 (72%)	17 (85%)	21 (100%)	37 (80%)	44 (76%)
GP attendance	No recorded	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	3 (7%)	0 (0%)
GP reports	Not recorded	16 (80%)	20 (95%)	28 (61%)	45 (78%)

Table 18: RCPC Partner agency attendance and reports comparison to previous year

RCPCs	Total 2021-22	Q1 2022-23	Q2 2022-23	Q3 2022-23	Q4 2022-23
Total no of RCPC checklists completed	491	114	89	89	110

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Health visitor /school nurse attendance	239 (49%)	62 (54%)	44 (49%)	48 (54%)	52 (47%)
Health visitor/school nurse reports	291 (59%)	67 (59%)	52 (58%)	55 (62%)	63 (57%)
Probation attendance	44 (9%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	3/41 (7%)	15 (14%)
Probation reports	285 (58%)	66 (58%)	52 (58%)	51 (57%)	60 (54%)
Police attendance	34 (7%)	4 (3.5%)	3 (3%)	0 (0%)	10 (9%)
Police reports	465 (95%)	109 (96%)	85 (95%)	82 (92%)	95 (86%)
Drug/Alcohol service attendance	34 (7%)	6 (5%)	3 (3%)	11/38 (29%)	4 (4%)
Drug and alcohol service reports	36 (15%)	10 (9%)	3 (3%)	7/38 (18%)	9 (8%)
Education attendance	420 (86%)	98 (86%)	66 (55%)	78 (88%)	93 (84%)
Education reports	359 (73%)	80 (70%)	53 (59%)	61 (69%)	90 (81%)
GP attendance	Not recorded	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
GP reports	Not recorded	100 (88%)	63 (71%)	81 (91%)	90 (81%)

6.3 Police involvement

Police attendance at ICPCs was 89% during the year, which is the same figure recorded for 2021-22. The previous QAST manager met with the police sergeant who oversees the police case conference representatives to discuss virtual and face to face meetings and police capacity. Police continue to prioritise attending ICPC which does support quoracy.

There are two full time police representatives to cover all the six Berkshire LAs. As a result, there are significant challenges in resourcing CP conferences, meaning that the representatives can cover more conferences if they are held virtually. When there is an active investigation, they will ask the officer for the case to attend. This has continued to be the case in 2022-23

Police do not routinely attend RCPCs but their performance on providing reports is high. Since the police reports were reviewed in 2020 feedback has been positive.

6.4 Health Involvement

Health visiting and school nursing colleagues consistently attend ICPCs and provide high quality reports to conference using their own templates. Due to resourcing issues, the organisation previously took the decision for school nurses not to be involved in core groups or RCPCs if there

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is no identified health need, and to send a letter of withdrawal. This is reflected in the attendance figures in the table above. This continues to be the case in 2022-23. This does affect quoracy for older children where often the school is the only main professional involved.

6.5 School Involvement

Schools attend conferences and provide reports using the multi-agency Signs of Safety conference report template. They often provide significant pastoral and nurture support for children in the school setting and provide a key role in monitoring the wellbeing of children on CP plans. They remain vital to the progression of child protection plans, often noticing patterns that would otherwise be missed. We can see that attendance is dipping in terms of consistency, and as noted earlier in the report, we may need to consider meeting with key colleagues about this issue and feeding back to the safeguarding partnership. The quarter 2 figures for RCPCs show that only 55% of conferences were attended by schools, and only 59% of reports required from schools were completed. Meaning their perspective and insight did not inform the conference process on these occasions. This would have a significant impact on our ability to manage conferences. This is despite the flexibility of being able to attend virtually.

6.6 Probation involvement

The Probation service provides an agency check and sends an email signposting to other officers if there is an open case. If there is an allocated probation officer, detailed reports are usually provided.

6.7 GP involvement

GPs rarely attend conferences, and this is in line with most other local authorities. GPs do for the most part complete reports, but there was a dip in quarter 1 and 2 regarding reports received. This information can be very important. It can highlight important health issues and often reflections about the parents are included.

6.8 Domestic Abuse and Substance Misuse

The figures in the table above indicate limited involvement of specialist domestic abuse and substance misuse agencies, despite the high prevalence of parents experiencing problems in these areas. This is the case for RCPC as well. Even when they are directly involved with parents' reports and attendance are rarely evident and given, we commission this service we need address this with them, as it has become the

7. Administration of Child Protection Conferences

The administration team prepares conference invitations, reports and conference packs, minute taking, typing up and circulating child protection plans and records. The administrators collate the details of children on child protection plans on a weekly basis. The administrators also manage the list of children on child protection plans who are temporarily resident in the borough.

In terms of our adherence to timescales for the completion and distribution of plans and minutes following conferences, this year's performance is not as positive as last years. In

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2022-23, 89% of plans were completed within timescales as opposed to 95% in 2021-22. In 2022-23, 64% of minutes were sent out within timescales as opposed to 87% in 2021-22.

There is a combination of issues that may have impacted on these figures, including long term sickness for Chairs as well as sickness and capacity within the admin team. When Chairs are on sick leave there is the capacity for other members of the team to complete the minutes on their behalf. However, when the admin team is under pressure, minutes may not come through for review until very close to the deadline - meaning CP chairs may not have sufficient time to complete them within timescales. This is an area where we need to improve for this year, with a much stronger commitment to getting plans and reports circulated within timescales.

Table 18 - Completion and distribution of conference plans and minutes by QAST team (Child Protection)

	No. of Conferences	No. of ICPCs	No. of Transfer Ins	No. of RCPCs	No. plans sent out within timescales	No. of minutes sent within timescales
April	16	2	0	14	15 (94%)	11 (69%)
May	29	4	0	25	28 (97%)	26 (90%)
June	23	3	1	19	21 (91%)	10 (43%)
Q1 Total	**68**	**9**	**1**	**58**	**64 (94%)**	**47 (69%)**
July	25	4	2	19	23 (92%)	19 (76%)
Aug	8	2	0	6	8 (100%)	6 (75%)
Sept	27	4	1	22	23 (85%)	15 (55%)
Q2 Total	**60**	**10**	**3**	**47**	**54 (90%)**	**40 (67%)**
Oct	25	9	0	16	22 (88%)	12 (48%)
Nov	24	6	0	18	20 (83%)	12 (50%)
Dec	18	10	0	8	17 (94%)	6 (33%)
Q3 Total	**67**	**26**	**0**	**41**	**59 (88%)**	**30 (45%)**
Jan	26	8	1	17	23 (88%)	24 (92%)
Feb	25	8	0	17	23 (92%)	18 (72%)
March	35	14	0	21	28 (80%)	21 (60%)
Q4 Total	**86**	**30**	**1**	**55**	**74 (86%)**	**63 (73%)**
Annual Total	**281**	**75**	**5**	**201**	**251 (89%)**	**180 (64%)**

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8. Participation in the conference process

8.1 Child Participation

The table below captures the overall percentage of child participation, which includes attendance, as well as the views of the child being represented by an advocate or another adult at the meeting.

The child protection agenda puts the focus on the voice of children being at the beginning of the conference. Social Workers are expected to use direct work techniques to gather the children's views and present them at ICPCs. The voice of the child in reports is often good and is immensely powerful for both parents and professionals to hear.

The needs of babies, younger children and non-verbal children with disabilities or communication issues should also be presented to help the conference focus on the child. The Wokingham Advocate is an additional resource to help the conference gain an understanding of the child's perspective and to help young people who want to be supported to attend the conference and present their views themselves.

The Advocate had 104 contacts with 33 children subject to the child protection process during the year, which is an increase on the previous year. This work has involved:

- attending conferences with children and young people or on their behalf
- sharing the voice of the child in the conference
- attending professionals' meetings on their behalf.

Due to capacity issues, the advocate cannot attend ICPCs, but will become involved from the first RCPC if a child is referred for advocacy. At the ICPC the social worker will take the lead in seeking the voice of the child.

Table 19 - Child Participation in the conference process

Indicators	Q1 2022-23	Q2 2022-23	Q3 2022-23	Q4 2022-23
Conferences where a parent attended	131	99	130	142
All Initial and review conferences	130	109	141	161
CP8 - % of CPC Participation - Parents attendance	97.70%	87%	92.00%	88%
Indicators	Q1 2022-23	Q2 2022-23	Q3 2022-23	Q4 2022-23
Children aged 7-11 who participated in conference	38	43	42	50
Initial and review conferences with child aged 7-11	38	43	42	48
CP9 - % of CPC participation - children aged 7-11	100%	100%	100%	96%
Indicators	Q1 2022-23	Q2 2022-23	Q3 2022-23	Q4 2022-23
Children aged 12+ who participated in conference	36	23	41	55
Initial and review conferences with child aged 12+	35	22	39	53
CP10 - % of CPC participation - children aged 12+	97.22%	97.40%	95%	96.30%

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8.2 Parent Participation

Parents are invited to attend conferences. When they are not able to do so, the CP Chairs endeavour to ensure that their views are presented and heard in the conference. Parent involvement in conferences increased again this year from 91% in 2021-22, up to 92.7% in 2022-23. This remains a positive trend.

Chairs work hard to engage parents prior to conference. We are increasing the number of face-to-face conferences. Overall engagement from parents is increasing.

We can see from the quarter 3 and 4 data that the attendance at ICPC of mothers at was 83% and 85% respectively. For father's it was 41% and 54%. For RCPC we saw a dip in attendance from mothers in quarter 3 to 72%, but in quarter 4 this rose slightly to 78%. For fathers it was 57% and 44%. Historically (nationally) there are challenges in engaging fathers, despite the importance of their engagement in developing plans. We are going to focus on "invisible father's" in Practice Week in June. The data from quarter 1 and 2 does not separate out the attendance of parents in this way. This is something that will be looked at for the next quarter.

8.3 Network Participation

Attendance from the network remains low at conferences overall as an average across quarter 3 and 4 22% of ICPC had a network member attend and 36% of RCPC. It is an important part of our practice model (Signs of Safety) to create a network around the child. This is an area which we need to consider in more depth with the Chairs and look at how we use our pre-meetings with the social worker to explore the engagement of the network.

8.4 Parental feedback

The QAST team has sought and analysed feedback from family members and professionals attending conferences at several points in the year. The team has used a mix of electronic feedback forms which we collate and read. Last year a Chair phoned parents at key points in the year, but this has not happened consistently this year. We do have feedback forms and need to identify a consistent method around obtaining this feedback.

9. Challenge and oversight

CP Chairs regularly provide oversight on their cases in the form of case notes and pre-meetings. They are also able to raise challenges on the system. CP Chairs are also involved in "Safety Meetings", where they can discuss the safety plans prior to the conference taking place. There is a need for CP Chairs to have some consistency around how they monitor cases and evidence this on files. We are in the process of updating our practice standards around expectations on mid-way monitoring, alongside how we evidence this on Mosaic, so that we are more able to draw out data to reflect the work that we do. At present there is not a heading on the system for midway monitoring for CP Chairs. This makes it hard to identify which case notes are midway monitoring. OFSTED raised in their most recent inspection that "Oversight of practice for children between child protection conferences is not consistently having an impact on the children's progress". This is why we need to be more consistent in our approach to evidencing the impact of our work. There were 70 case notes in quarter 3 and 84 in quarter 4. There is a need to make sure that data is collated for the year so that when we agree the midway monitoring that we can evidence the improvement in our challenge and oversight as a service.

Case notes have related to:

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- Communication with parents concerns around planning
- Midway reviews
- concern about lack of progress on cases beyond one year, where the plan is not progressing towards step down but has not had a legal panning meeting to consider pre proceedings/Public Law Outline (PLO).
- Communication with other professionals

CP Chairs frequently engage with social workers, parents, and professionals as part of their role. It would be clearer if the oversight also included a consistent way of monitoring CP Plans so that we were able to evidence the impact between CP Conferences. We have a hugely experienced team, and we need to utilise their skills more effectively.

10. Compliments and good practice:

Areas of good practice have been identified by the CP Chairs and passed back to the individual workers and their managers. They are recorded in the compliments log. Additionally, the CP Chairs have received some positive feedback themselves in 2022-23.
Some examples are presented below:

Compliments from conference participants:
"The way she prepared and managed the CPC, very to the point focusing on the children all of the time, amazed by how she ran the meeting and how she focused on support for the children, felt Chair was very professional. Conference the right length, all the professionals did a wonderful job to protect the children and get things sorted out. It was hard for us; Chair was able to challenge but also motivate us."

A parent fed back that they felt that the way that we did conferences in Wokingham was less "blaming" than they had experienced in the Local Authority they had transferred from and that they had never had things explained to them in a positive way.

Recent Feedback from Parents

"All very welcoming".

"Thanks for all support".

"Well run, focused, comprehensive."

Recent feedback from Professionals

"Chair was experienced and listened. Has escalated concerns raised appropriately".

"Positive outcome after lots of input from the group".

"Very good at drawing parent back to being child focused"

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11. Emerging themes in 2022-2023

Emerging themes about the Child Protection system:

Use of Categories and increase in cohort of neglect:

- As stated above, neglect represents our largest cohort of children subject to a CP plan. At present, of the children subject to a CP Plan, 65% of these fall under the category of neglect. This is a significant increase on last year (56%) and much higher than our statistical neighbours (44%). There is a need to consider whether children and young people are subject to a CP plan under the right category and why we have such a large cohort of children experiencing neglect. This also puts the spotlight on the challenges around working with neglect and the multiple factors which may be present for these children.

- As highlighted, we also have 8% of children subject to a CP plan under the category of sexual abuse, whilst our statistical neighbours only have 2%. These cases have all been reviewed individually by the QAST Service Manager, and it was felt that the category had been selected correctly in each case. Historically sexual abuse is underused as a category, in part because of how challenging it is for victims to disclose this type of abuse and for professionals to recognise it, alongside indicators which could imply other concerns about a child's life.

Quoracy and involvement of agencies:

Quoracy has declined again this year. The child protection process is based on multi-agency arrangements and although local relationships with partner colleagues are positive with regular dialogue, we need to continue to monitor the contribution of each agency and to address any capacity issues or barriers which might exist. Last year 17% of conferences were inquorate, but this year this figure rose to 22%. To put this in a broader context, in 2020-2021 only 12.5% of conferences were inquorate. This has been a theme since the pandemic and so we may need to be considering what more we can do to highlight the importance of conferences and multi-agency attendance.

Length and accessibility of CP plans provided to conference and parents:

The length of plans was noted by Ofsted in our most recent ILACS inspection. This is something which is being looked at as a matter of urgency, and Chairs and Managers have been approached for feedback to move this matter forward. We are also consulting with families about which version of the plans they feel would work for them.

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Children at risk of exploitation outside the home:
We do not have a CP plan category for children who are at risk of exploitation from outside the home. It is therefore difficult to analyse the prevalence or trends in relation to these risks, and whether children at risk of exploitation are coming to ICPCs, or whether they are being managed under child in need plans or via the child exploitation and missing process (EMRAC). Ensuring that appropriate meetings and pathways are made use of for children who are at risk of exploitation was noted as a recommendation in one of the Wokingham CSPRs. Further work is planned for the coming year to develop an agenda which can be used within CP conferences and Child in Need meetings. We will also consider how we can extract better data on exploitation as a risk factor for young people on CP Plans, by using the CP chairs QA tool.

Harm outside of the home remains an important issue for the Children's Service directorate as a whole, and continues to be an area of strategic focus – as evidenced by the ongoing work of the strategic Exploitation Task and Finish Group. One of the Child Protection conference Chairs attends the harm outside the home sub-group of this project, and as part of this work a strategic pathway will be considered for children and young people.

Regarding the national context, the *Working Together to Safeguard Children* guidelines are about to be reviewed, and it may be that as part of this work the DfE review how child protection categories and conferences should consider exploitation. However, there has been no indication from Central Government as to whether this will be considered.

Locally it was agreed that after the "David" CSPR that children at risk of significant harm from exploitation would be considered at ICPC in the absence of another pathway for managing these cases. This was highlighted within the recent ILACS inspection, which noted that "*there is no clearly defined approach to children who are at risk from exploitation".* As stated, strategically this is something which is being worked on at present.

Use of Split Conferences

Over the last year, the number of requests for conferences to be held in a "split" format has increased - typically because of the involvement of domestic abuse in the case. This has led to challenges in the management and chairing of the conferences. The specific number of conferences held in a split format cannot be drawn from existing performance data, which limits our current understanding of the trend. However, work is underway to ensure that we can collect data on this going forward, and it is our ambition to provide more accurate reporting in future quarterly reports.

There is a need for clarity for both Chairs and frontline staff as to what circumstances a split conferences should take place. Currently, there is no reference to this issue in either the BWSCP procedures or WBC's internal practice standards. This is therefore something that may need to be addressed, so we can ensure that there is consistency in the way we handle such requests. Whilst requests have mainly been made in response to cases where domestic abuse is a feature, general parental relationships and families where there is more than one father have also been put forward as reasons for the need to split a conference. When we

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agree that conferences should be split, core groups follow the same format, which creates more work for the frontline teams. It is therefore imperative that as a service we take consistent and informed decision on the matter.

Numbers of Conferences and conversion from Section 47 to ICPC

A total of 556 conferences took place in 2022-23 in 2021-2022 686 conferences took place. Indicating a significant reduction in the number of conferences taking place. This may need further checking but this is what the data states. The number of section 47 leading to CP conferences has dropped every year now for the past three years. This year it was 21.4% and last year it was 27%. It may be that we need to look at those cases which did not come to conference and consider the thresholds as part of our learning to understand why there has been such a significant drop.

12. Summary

Throughout 2022-23 we have maintained a stable team. We have worked towards offering more face-to-face conferences and providing flexibility for both parents and professionals in the form of hybrid meetings. This has worked well.

Moving forward into 2024 post the OFSTED report published May 2023, we need to be able to focus on utilising and evidencing the high level of experience we have within our team. There are key strategic areas where those agreed changes will have a positive impact on the team. These changes will focus on neglect, harm outside the home and how we use our current systems to evidence the work that we do.

The key strategic priorities of the CP conferencing service in 2022-23 are:

To consistently provide good quality child protection conferences which promote the child's voice, the participation of parents and partners, and which produce a clear and concise plan which sets out the desired outcomes for the child and review conferences; to help drive forward the plan for the child. This will include reviewing and embedding of consistent practice standards.

To raise awareness about child protection processes and the wider issues relating to best practice, and the learning from local and national child safeguarding practice reviews cases. This will include work to promote awareness about the purpose of CP conferences and to promote participation by families and partner agency colleagues and consider the issues around quoracy. In Wokingham we have had two significant reviews published 2022-23 which have provided learning about harm outside of the home and insight into young people with EHCP (education and health care plans) and the importance of considering special educational needs alongside child protection. The safeguarding reviews also highlight harm outside the home and neglect as significant areas of concern and learning.

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To demonstrate the effectiveness of the CP conferences with clear examples of what difference CP chairs in making in overseeing CP plans for children. This will include clearly demonstrating challenge and follow up when: CP plans are not progressing as planned, or when the child's voice is not being presented to the conference, when parents are not receiving reports in advance of meetings, or the partnership arrangements are not working as expected. The recent OFSTED report highlights the need for CP Chairs to utilise their skills and experience in driving change. Consistency of oversight between conferences is an area of improvement to make sure that plans are making a difference in reducing risk to children.

The quarterly and annual reporting mechanisms enable this information to be shared with managers, senior leaders in Children's Services and the Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership.

13. Plan for 2022-23

The areas of practice we plan to focus on in the coming year are:

1. To incrementally increase the number of ICPCs and RCPCs being held in person with parents, while retaining virtual options. While doing so, monitor quoracy and agency participation, and report this to the Berkshire West Safeguarding Partnership (BWSCP) and the Independent Scrutiny and Impact Group (ISIG), with a view to increasing the level of attendance and reports from partners to deliver high-quality child protection conferences.

2. QAST manager and members of the team to liaise with key partner agencies quarterly to gather feedback on CP conferences and any barriers to participation from partners and to create stronger links across the partnership. There needs to be a clear plan to address this issue given our worries around the overall decrease in quoracy. We need to agree which chair meets with which professionals to highlight quoracy and multi-agency practice and contribution. To continue to identify trends and challenge where attendance and reports are not evident.

3. To highlight the importance of school attendance at conferences with our colleagues in education. To create a process and monitor which schools do not attend or provide a report to understand and improve the attendance of schools. Action plan required to identify the best way to collate which schools are not providing reports or attending. IT and the manager for CP admin have been advised that we need to agree the best way to do monitor this. We will need to closely monitor this over the coming year to identify trends and raise awareness with individual schools. We will need to continue to highlight any data trends with senior managers so that we are able to address this effectively.

4. Chairs to make best use of pre-review meetings with social workers and parents by sharing any agenda and checking parents have received relevant reports. Chairs will ensure parents understand how the conference process will work and what the safety plan is for the child.

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5. Chairs need to complete midway reviews on children subject to a child protection plan as this was highlighted in the recent OFSTED inspection as an issue. At present we are identifying a consistent way to do this (case note heading versus individual mosaic step).

6. To promote the new version of the child protection plan once the format is agreed and review the quality of child protection plans.

7. There is a need to use the experience of the child protection chairs in reviewing our own work together as a team. Learning from one another and creating stand-alone opportunities to review practice together on a quarterly basis.

1. To maintain an overview of key performance indicators (ICPCs within 15 days) for Children on CP plans for a second and subsequent time and cases of note, such as:
   - conferences which do not result in a child protection plan, or;
   - where the plan ceases at the first review, or;
   - where the child protection plan is not progressing, or;
   - when children are CP Plans for one year or more.
   - Where children are subject to child protection plans for two years or more (the aim being to maintain consistent oversight to appropriately address drift on these cases). This remains a KPI and needs close scrutiny.

2. For the CP Chairs to maintain close oversight on cases of concern, children on dual plans and children on CP for over nine months. Chairs to bring challenge on individual cases if they identify any concerns about practice or timeliness.

3. To provide quarterly inductions to new social workers and bitesize training for social workers, managers, and other partners to raise awareness about child protection conferences, preparation, reports and participation.

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