

2020/21 Q3 – CHILDREN’S SERVICES, EDUCATION & SKILLS

Key Activities Q3

Work with and challenge schools’ performance to ensure that all are good or outstanding

Ofsted has currently suspended all inspection activity until Easter 2021. At this stage it is unknown when they will commence re-inspection. They continue to visit schools to examine the response to Covid-19 but this does not contain a judgement.

All examinations were suspended in 2020 and therefore there will be no new Island wide data relating to early years, end of primary education, GCSE or A levels until examinations are recommenced in 2021.

Much of the work of the school improvement team has been switched to supporting the response to the coronavirus pandemic. Schools on the Island have performed consistently well during the pandemic with higher proportions of children being in attendance than seen nationally. The school improvement team worked alongside schools’ leaders to prepare for the re-opening of schools from the beginning of the autumn term. This work was successful with all schools on the Island reopening in full. Attendance throughout the autumn term has been higher than seen nationally.

The school improvement team is working with public health and the media team to advise headteachers when there is a suspected or confirmed positive case. Where bubbles of children have to self-isolate the school improvement team are supporting schools to switch to remote learning. For primary aged pupils they have developed the first two days of lessons plans, linked to national curriculum year objectives, to assist schools. A multi-agency programme is being delivered based upon national initiatives to support students’ well-being as they return to schools. All well-being leads in all schools have been offered two free twilights of training to attend to support this activity.

School improvement officers have also reverted to more traditional activity however the focus of this will be on how each school is adapting the curriculum to ensure children and young people can make rapid progress to access age related education. In addition, the school improvement team are continuing to work alongside governors with headteacher and other senior leader appointments. There is also a focus on making sure children from disadvantaged groups make strong progress. In schools currently judged inadequate or requiring improvement by Ofsted the school improvement team is also working on core school improvement activities to strengthen provision. This work will stand Island schools in good stead for when Ofsted recommence inspection activity.

Maintain focus on children's safeguarding practice to ensure a high quality of service with effective systems to protect children and keep them safe

The investment in the Transformation Programme continues with the focus on keeping more children safely at home. The implementation of this programme has continued throughout quarter three, with the delivery of advanced practice models, roll out of further strengths-based plans and further development of multi-disciplinary team approach, despite some of the challenges experienced throughout lockdown.

	CONTACTS	REFERRALS	% PROGRESSED TO CIN REFERRALS
Q1 2018/19	3522	869	24.7%
Q2 2018/19	3319	923	27.8%

Q3 2018/19	4096	1101	26.9%
Q4 2018/19	3280	920	28.0%
Q1 2019/20	3346	972	29.0%
Q2 2019/20	3601	1074	29.8%
Q3 2019/20	3130	975	31.2%
Q4 2019/20	2923	994	34.0%
Q1 2020/21	2709	877	32.4%
Q2 2020/21	3138	998	31.8%
Q3 2020/21	2793	927	33.2%

As with other local authorities, the number of contacts decreased initially during the coronavirus pandemic lockdown as most children remained at home but has since risen as children returned to school and national lockdown ended. However, the percentage that progressed to a referral remained in line with previous quarters and demonstrates consistent thresholds being maintained at CRT/MASH. It is to be noted that there is an increase in the complexity those cases that have escalated into statutory services.

The latest published data has the rate of referrals for the Isle of Wight at 974.7 per 10,000, the highest across the Isle of Wight's statistical neighbours (average 531.87) and above the England average of 544.5. This is why continued investment into early help and prevention is a priority to support families before they reach a point of being referred to children's social care and maintaining the capacity to deliver the HIOW strength based approach is vital.

	The number of children subject to child protection planning	% timeliness of Initial Child Protection Conferences (within 15 days)	% of repeat child protection plans (within 2 years of previous)	% of review child protection conferences held within timescales
Q2 2018/19	155	98	0	100
Q3 2018/19	170	80	19.6	98
Q4 2018/19	167	91	12.5	100
Q1 2019/20	133	100	12.5	94.9
Q2 2019/20	128	89	20.8 (13.3 within 2 years)	100
Q3 2019/20	123	89	8.6	100
Q4 2019/20	126	81	8.8	96.9
Q1 2020/21	136	91	9.2	100
Q2 2020/21	146	92	10.5	100
Q3 2020/21	158	79	13.2	100

- It should be noted that due to small numbers involved percentages can sometimes be misleading

During Covid-19, there has been an increase in the number of children subject to child protection planning-in line with national trends. Child protection conferences were enabled to be held virtually, thus ensuring continuity of multi-agency safeguarding planning. The Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) timeliness dipped below the target of 85 per cent, although a number of these conferences were delayed by one or two days for appropriate reasons (such as the need for additional information, or due

to family illness) and these were agreed by the Lead Independent Reviewing Officer and Service Manager for Operations. No children were at risk as a consequence. Review conferences were all achieved within timescales.

The rate of children subject to child protection planning is 66.3 per 10,000, the second highest in the Isle of Wight statistical neighbours group and above the England national average of 43.7 (based on latest available data 2019). In Q3 a virtual peer inspection was undertaken as part of Children's Services Quality Improvement Framework, this evidenced that appropriate thresholds were in place across the service with a focus on child protection planning demonstrating that plans were being progressed effectively by social workers.

Average caseload numbers across the service continue to be stable. However, the Children's Assessment and Safeguarding Teams, responsible for assessment, child protection and child in need planning have seen increased demand over quarter two and three. This is being safely addressed through additional investment by the council in temporary agency social workers and the recruitment of more permanent social workers.

	Children in Care	% Looked after children reported missing	Care leavers supported	% Care leavers in Education, Employment or Training
Q2 2018/19	240	2.0	119	56.3
Q3 2018/19	239	2.2	121	58.7
Q4 2018/19	244	2.9	117	64.0
Q1 2019/20	256	2.0	110	63.6
Q2 2019/20	256	2.3	109	67.0
Q3 2019/20	260	1.6	114	66.0
Q4 2019/20	267	1.1	110	68.0
Q1 2020/21	274	4.1	113	68.0
Q2 2020/21	277	3.0	110	66.0
Q3 2020/21	276	3.0	114	67.5

The number of children in care remains a significant pressure on the service with regards to costs of placements. Numbers have increased in the first three quarters of 2020/21 related mainly to parental mental ill-health, with a number of children coming into care as a result of an emergency protection order. The average rate of children in care per 10,000 in 2019 in England was 65, and the Isle of Wight was second highest out of its statistical neighbour group at 98.

49 per cent of children in care are placed with Isle of Wight Council foster carers and an active recruitment campaign continues, with more new fostering households approved. The ongoing Transformation Programme is focussed on keeping children safely at home and returning them home when it is safe to do so.

There is a very small cohort of children that go missing regularly, usually these children are late returning to placement. Robust processes continue to be in operation in terms of multi-agency high risk strategy meetings and return conversations for children who go missing. A child exploitation risk assessment (CERAF) is undertaken with each child and medium/high risk children are considered at a multi-agency risk assessment conference to ensure that information is shared, and effective collaborative plans are in place that reduces the risks to children.

The recruitment of experienced permanent and agency social workers continues to be a challenge locally and nationally. Whilst there have been some delays in recruitment due to national demand, the situation will improve in Q4 with a number of temporary new starters. This will continue to allow social workers to undertake direct work with families with effective interventions which sustain change to safeguard children and improve their outcomes. At the end of Q3 agency social workers made up 8 per cent of the qualified social worker workforce. Due to a robust recruitment and retention strategy, action

plan and working group, the Isle of Wight continues to have lower rates of social worker vacancies, turnover and use of agency staff when compared nationally.

Work with and challenge schools in financial deficit to secure a more sustainable position for the schools and the council

Schools continue to be monitored through receipt of their formal three year budget plans, which for 2020/21 the deadline was extended to the 30 June to allow for Covid-19 related delays and to overcome logistical issues in relation to governor sign off of proposed budgets and all schools honoured this deadline. The mid- year refresh of school budgets was completed by all schools on time for the 30 November deadline. At March 2020 year end, thirteen schools were in deficit and the November 2020 mid-year budgets indicate this reducing to eight over the remainder of 2020/21 (a slight improvement of one since the original submissions), through implementing active budget recovery plans, assisted by increases in school formula funding factors. The formal approval of the funding formula in January 2020 increased the amount of funding allocated to schools through the Dedicated Schools Grant. School budget plans and balances were reviewed by the Director of Childrens Services in July, and mid-year November submissions indicate that original agreed recovery profiles are still on track. Indicative funding allocations and modelling on the 2021/22 funding formula are well developed to be finalised in January 2021 following recent final allocations from government and this should provide further funding stability for local schools.

Work to deliver an Island Higher Education (HE) Prospectus by April 2020, based on current opportunities offered on Island.

The Island HE Prospectus (“Blue Sky Thinking. Your guide to higher education on the Isle of Wight”) was produced on time.

Encourage schools to work collectively in the delivery of improved sixth form provision on the Island.

As part of the i-Aspire project, the Isle of Wight Council is supporting an improvement in post-16 A level outcomes. The programme is currently suspended due to Covid-19 but will recommence as soon as it is possible.

Resolve the issue of surplus primary school places in the West Wight area.

This has now been resolved with the closure of All Saints primary school and the relocation of Yarmouth primary school

Through joint working across council services, work to ensure that care leavers housing needs are properly met.

Isle of Wight children's social care has developed a 'Pathways to Independent Adulthood' commissioned offer of supported accommodation. This is a tiered approach providing different levels of linked supported accommodation depending on need which leads to as full independence as possible. This includes a 'training' house whereby a group of four are supported to learn to live together as a household to prepare them for the private rented sector, a housing application or to buy a house together. The Council's decision, as corporate parents, to waive payment of council tax for care leavers is a key contributory factor to enable care leavers to live independently.

A new Homelessness Personal Advisor continues to support care leavers who are at risk of homelessness. In 2019, the England average was 39 per cent and statistical neighbours 41 per cent. On the Isle of Wight in September this was only fifteen per cent with only six care leavers spending one night or more in hotel bed and breakfast accommodation in the last twelve months. Our innovative supported accommodation approach is part of the Council's Local Offer.

The Local Offer for Care Leavers sets out the support provided to care leavers to access employment, education or training. The team works with Island Futures, Job Centre Plus and the Isle of Wight College. Each care leaver has an individual pathway plan, which is updated regularly and ensures support is tailored to young people's needs. Young people report that lockdown provided them with the time and space to think about their futures and to start making plans in terms of education, employment and training.

Grow the number of foster carers and adoptive parents on the Isle of Wight.

Enabling children to remain safely at their family home is the focus of our social work practice. Securing island foster care and adoptive homes for island children when they cannot remain safely at home is a priority. During 2019/20 the service successfully recruited and approved nine new fostering households. During the first three quarters of 2020/21 the service has successfully recruited and approved eight new fostering households; this is against the backdrop of a pandemic and lockdowns. The service has enhanced and developed its digital and online presence, undertaking virtual information sessions to ensure we retain a high profile with our community. At the end of quarter three, there are a total of 150 registered foster carers in the Isle of Wight constituting 93 fostering households with four more undergoing assessment

The Fostering Service has a marketing strategy for 2020/21; with a target to recruit fifteen fostering households.

The recruitment areas of focus for 2020/21 are:

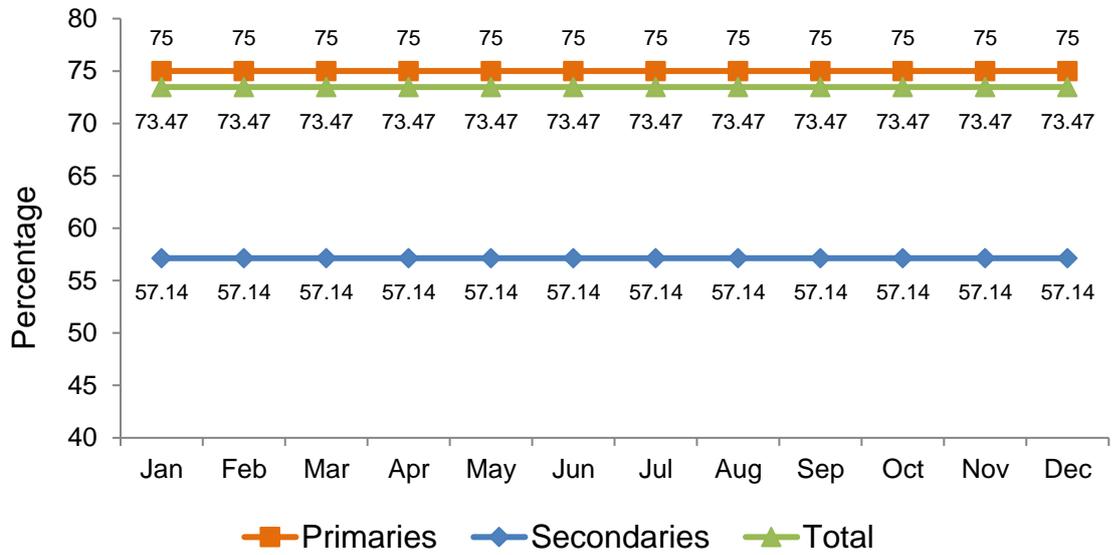
- An increase in mainstream foster carers*
- An increase in foster carers for teenagers and more complex children*
- More targeted and timely assessments of prospective foster carers*

Following a restructuring of fostering and adoption at the start of quarter one, the new combined permanence (fostering and adoption) is in operation. The service continues to work with Adopt South. As part of the departments transformation programme children's social care will be working closely with Hampshire Children's Services over the next twelve months to deliver the 'Modernising Placement Planning' workstream which will address the following areas to further enhance our sufficiency of placements and the quality of provision;

- Develop a culture of Trauma Informed Parenting*
- Change our foster carers' fees*
- Develop a 'Hive' foster care network*
- Develop Urgent and Extended Care Services*

Short Term Measures

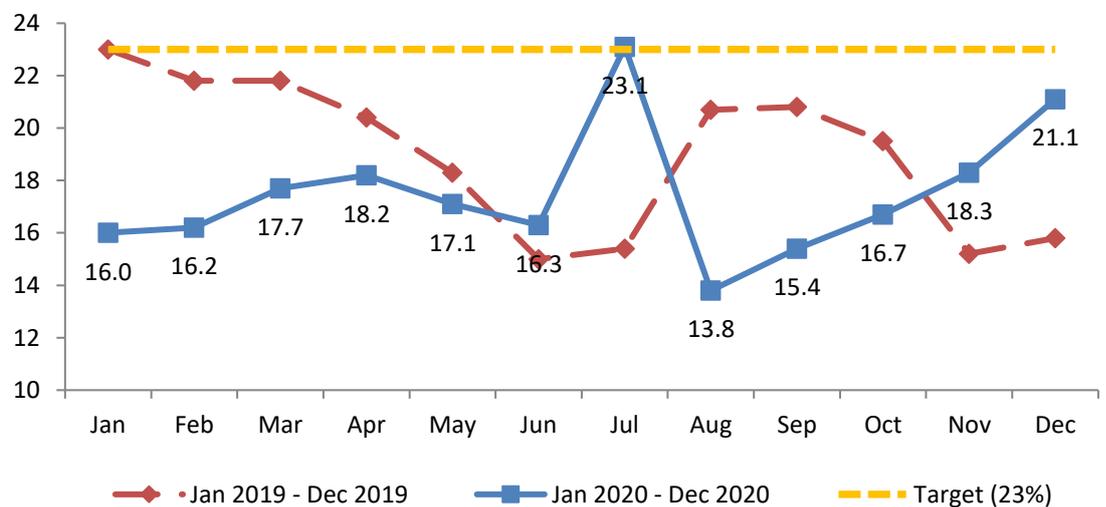
Percentage of schools graded as 'good' or outstanding in the most recent inspection (not including schools with no inspection score)



Ofsted inspections have been suspended during the coronavirus pandemic

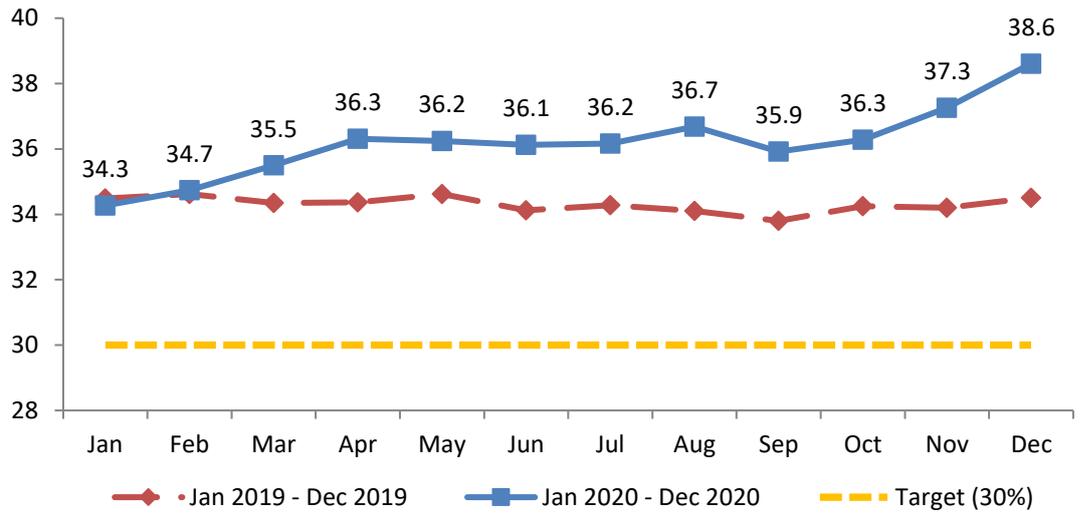
The Bay CE School is included within both primary and secondary statistics as it is an all through school that caters for 5 to 16 year olds.

Percentage of children who are subject to a repeat child protection plan (within two years of the previous plan) (Rolling 12 months)



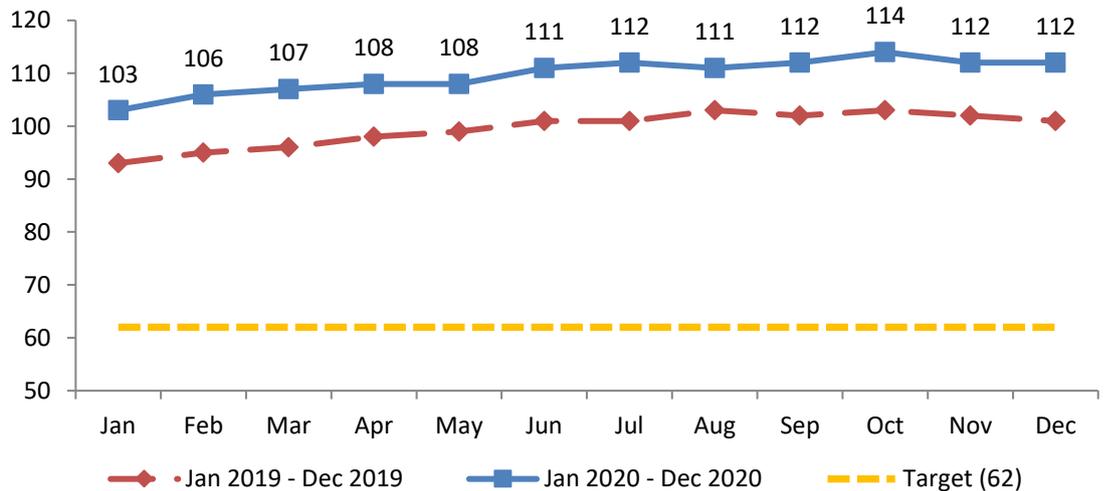
This remains within target although continues to rise, showing an increase since August 2020. Child protection conferences continue to be held virtually. For a minority of children, their family circumstances will have multiple issues which will present back on a plan. It is anticipated following Covid-19 lockdown and the impact on vulnerable families previously on a plan, that this is likely to increase.

Percentage of children with re-referrals within 12 months (Rolling 12 months)



Due to the complexity of the cases being referred during lockdown, cases remain open for longer impacting on rising caseloads.

Number of children looked after at month end (rate per 10,000 population) (Rolling 12 months)



The rate continues to rise locally as it does nationally. It is anticipated that Covid-19 and lockdown may disproportionately impact vulnerable families and could lead to a further long-term increase in this rate.

The rates and projections are factored into the Isle of Wight Sufficiency Duty report to inform future commissioning of places for children to live.

Strategic Risks

Failure to improve educational attainment			Assigned to: Director of Children's Services		
Inherent score	Target score	Current score	Previous scores		
			Sep 20	Jun 20	Mar 20 (pre-pandemic response)
16 RED	6 GREEN	10 AMBER	10 AMBER	11 AMBER	9 AMBER
No change to risk score					

Failure to identify and effectively manage situations where vulnerable children are subject to abuse			Assigned to: Director of Children's Services		
Inherent score	Target score	Current score	Previous scores		
			Sep 20	Jun 20	Mar 20 (pre-pandemic response)
16 RED	5 GREEN	7 AMBER	7 AMBER	7 AMBER	8 AMBER
No change to risk score					