

# Child Protection Annual Report 2024-25

<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	11 September 2025
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Heather Codling
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	12 June 2025
<b>Report Author:</b>	Nicola Robertson

## 1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This is Child Protection Annual Report
- 1.2 To report upon the performance of services for children and young people subject to a child protection plan between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, providing breakdown and commentary regarding the quality of practice within West Berkshire's child protection conference process and to make recommendations for any required remedial action.

## 2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 For Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to be informed of Child Protection Activity over the last financial year 2024-2025.

## 3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	No financial implications, this is an Annual Report
<b>Human Resource:</b>	No HR implications, this is an Annual Report
<b>Legal:</b>	There are no Legal implication from this Annual Report.  The report does ensure compliance with statutory duties under the Children Act 1989, Working together to Safeguard Children 2023, and other legislation.
<b>Risk Management:</b>	There are no Risk Management Implications, this is an Annual Report

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<b>Property:</b>	There are no property implications, this is an Annual Report			
<b>Policy:</b>	There are no Policy implications, this is an Annual Report.			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	x			<p>This is West Berkshire Child Protection Annual Report for 2024-2025, there are no proposed decisions required.</p> <p>To note: Practice standards and the Pan Berkshire CP Procedures ensure there is equitable experiences for children and their families within the conference process.</p> <p>Conferences are held taking account of family member needs in relation to their welfare/safety and adult and child advocacy is provided where appropriate and relevant.</p> <p>Conference venues are held within locations which can be easily accessed by all and where required interpreters are arranged to support families where English is not their first language.</p>
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	x			Annual report, therefore, no proposed decisions required
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>		x		No significant environmental impact identified.

<b>Health Impact:</b>	x			Improvement in practice will contribute to keeping children safe and improved outcomes for children and young people subject to a CP plan.
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		x		No significant ICT impact identified.
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>		x		No significant digital services impact identified.
<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>	x			Supports priorities related to vulnerable children.
<b>Core Business:</b>	x			Strengthens the council's ability to meet statutory obligations and deliver high-quality services.
<b>Data Impact:</b>		x		No significant data impact identified.
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	<p>There has been ongoing engagement with families and professionals attending conferences to inform service improvements.</p> <p>The primary focus of all the Child Protection Chairs is to ensure that the needs and safety of children are kept at the forefront within conferences and the voices of the child(ren) themselves are central to this and evident within all work undertaken within child protection procedures.</p> <p>This is achieved in a number of ways; encouraging and supporting children and young people to attend conferences where it is appropriate to do so and ensuring they have been provided with independent Advocacy where relevant and from feedback provided by children and other professionals attending the conferences. This feedback is included within this report.</p> <p>The information and data captured within the report evidences a clear understanding throughout the organisation of the importance of ensuring that children's views are considered and taken into account within work completed with them and their families.</p>			

## 4 Executive Summary

### 4.1 Overview

- 4.2 As of March 2025, 208 children were subject to Child Protection (CP) Plans in West Berkshire. This figure has remained stable compared to the previous year and, while still above national averages, the rate per 10,000 children is now more aligned with regional and national benchmarks.
- 4.3 The average length of time children remain on a CP plan has risen this year to one year. In response we have re-established the CP surgery led by the Service Manager for Quality Assurance and Safeguarding (QAAS) Service and the Service Manager for

Family Safeguarding to review all CP plans which have been in place in excess of a year. The aim of these reviews is to quickly identify where drift or delay maybe occurring and to ensure that CP plans are being driven through in a time way for children.

- 4.4 The percentage of children in WBC who returned to a CP plan within 2 years of the previous period of CP ending is 21% as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. The England average is 13%. An audit was undertaken as a test of assurance. No escalations were required for concerns relating to safeguarding/the safety of the children from the audits. All practice was felt to currently be appropriate to identified need.
- 4.5 The most predominant category of harm used in West Berkshire is Emotional Harm and is largely due to the high number of children on CP plans in West Berkshire because of domestic abuse occurring in the home.
- 4.6 75% of Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs) and 84% of Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPCs) were held within the statutory timeframe over this period, this is a drop on the previous year and is due to a number of factors, which are listed in full on page 15 of this report. The quality of the Social Worker reports for conference is largely good and they are generally shared in a timely way with families. There is a need however to ensure that they are always shared face to face.
- 4.7 There were 940 CP Chair's Report audits completed over this period and of these 73% (75%) found the standard of practice across the Child Protection Conferences by all agencies met good. Where it was identified practice did not meet good, where necessary these issues were addressed by the Chair with the relevant professional/agency. The breadth of the Issues Resolutions raised over this period demonstrate the depth of monitoring the Chairs undertake within the cases they hold. Often the CP Chair has been the consistent professional involved within a child's family and this has been a key factor in keeping children sighted and plans on track over this period.
- 4.8 Participation and engagement by parents and professionals within the conference is good and some examples of feedback received from them in relation to their experience of the conferences are provided within the body of the report. The vast majority of feedback received is positive, however where an issue is raised this is always addressed to the CP Chair's best ability. QAAS has also developed a set of practice standards for CP conferences over this period to ensure consistency of experience for families involved within this process.
- 4.9 There is very good promotion and take up of advocacy for children subject to CP plans and a small proportion of parents have also been supported by adult advocates where appropriate.

#### 4.10 Key Themes and Learning

- 4.11 Mental health and domestic abuse continue to be the most prevalent concerns. Parental mental health was a factor in 58.1% of cases, while child mental health concerns rose to 26.9%. Domestic abuse was present in 58.5% of cases.
- 4.12 The percentage of children returning to a CP plan within two years was 21%, which is higher than the national average of 13%. Most repeat plans were linked to persistent

domestic abuse and parental vulnerabilities. Audits indicated that in 80% of these cases, repeat plans were not avoidable. The most common reason for a second CP plan was the non-abusive parent forming a new relationship with someone who also exhibited abusive behaviours.

- 4.13 Timeliness of statutory meetings has declined, with 75% of Initial CP Conferences and 84% of Review CP Conferences held within required timeframes. Delays have been predominantly due to staff sickness and timeliness of reporting. In response, the CP Surgery has been reinstated to address drift in long-standing plans.

#### 4.14 Quality and Impact of Practice

- 4.15 A total of 940 CP Chair audits were completed, with 73% rating practice as good. Where standards were not met, CP Chairs intervened directly raising challenge. Social work practice showed that 87% of ICPC and 88% of RCPC reports were shared on time. Report quality was strong, with 88% rated as 'Good'.
- 4.16 The consistent presence and challenge from CP Chairs have been instrumental in maintaining focus on the child and driving plans forward. Thematic audits, such as those on chronologies and repeat plans, led to tangible improvements in consistency.
- 4.17 Quality Assurance and Safeguarding (QAAS) Service also introduced new practice standards to ensure a consistent experience for families.

#### 4.18 Feedback and Participation

- 4.19 Children and families were actively engaged in the CP process. A total of 94 children attended their own CP conferences, an increase from the previous year.
- 4.20 Advocacy was provided in 125 conferences for parents and was widely promoted for children.
- 4.21 Feedback from families was overwhelmingly positive, with many reporting feeling heard, supported, and respected.
- 4.22 Professional feedback was also strong, with 313 professionals submitting responses that praised the clarity, compassion, and leadership of CP Chairs. Concerns raised, such as delays or missing professionals, were followed up and addressed.
- 4.23 QAAS continues to review and improve feedback mechanisms to ensure all voices are heard and acted upon.

## 5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The qualitative and quantitative data within this report evidences a breadth of good practice and improvements achieved.
- 5.2 The Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Service continues to maintain focus upon the need to ensure that the children and young people within West Berkshire achieve good outcomes and has made further improvements within how services are delivered with this aim.

5.3 Annual Report at Appendix 1

## 6 Other options considered

6.1 This is an Annual Report, therefore no other options considered.

## 7 Conclusion

7.1 West Berkshire Council has demonstrated strong performance in working with children subject to a child protection plan and their families, with plans for continued improvement.

7.2 The feedback from families and partner agencies is overwhelmingly positive.

7.3 The Service continues to audit and explore learning to ensure on going improvements are made to ensure children and young people are safe and safeguarding concerns are addressed and minimised.

7.4 For the coming year there are a number of recommendations outlined in the report which the service will take forward.

7.5 Families First Partnership Reforms will bring some changes to this area, developing Child Protection Safeguarding Leads, West Berkshire are in consultation stages around how this will be developed and embedded.

## 8 Appendix

8.1 Child Protection Annual Report 2024-2025

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### Background Papers: Annual Child Protection Report 2024-25

#### Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐ No: ☐

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position ☐

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months ☐

Item is Urgent Key Decision ☐

Report is to note only ☐

**Wards affected:** All

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