

To: Councillor Asare (Chair)  
Councillors McEwan, Ballsdon,  
Cresswell, Eden, Gittings, Griffith,  
Keane, Lanzoni, Magon, Naz, Mpofu-  
Coles, O'Connell, DP Singh and  
Woodward

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6 January 2026

Your contact is: Jemma Durkan - Committee Services

**NOTICE OF MEETING - ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE 14 JANUARY 2026**

A meeting of the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee will be held on **Wednesday, 14 January 2026 at 6.30 pm** in the **Council Chambers, Civic Offices, Reading**. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

**AGENDA**

Page No

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests they may have in relation to the items for consideration.

**2. DELEGATED DECISIONS**

5 - 6

**3. MINUTES**

7 - 12

**4. PETITIONS**

Petitions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been received by Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.

**5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS**

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Questions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's Powers & Duties which have been submitted in writing and received by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services no later than four clear working days before the meeting.

**6. SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2027/2028** 13 - 76

A report inviting the Committee to determine:

- The admission arrangements for Community Primary Schools in Reading for the school year 2027/28
- The coordinated scheme for primary and junior schools for the school year 2027/28
- The coordinated scheme for secondary schools for the school year 2027/28
- The Relevant Area 2027
- The primary phase catchment areas for the school year 2027/28

**7. SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN** 77 - 90

A report outlining the current policy context for suicide prevention and domestic abuse in England and in Berkshire.

**8. ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS REPORT 2024/25 FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE** 91 - 106

A report telling the Committee how many complaints were received in 2024/25 and were dealt with using either the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure or the Statutory Complaints Procedure for Adult Social Care, summarising the main types of Complaints received and providing some examples where improvements have been made as a result of learning from these complaints.

**9. DIRECTORATE OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS & COMPLIMENTS REPORT - 2024-25** 107 - 122

A report outlining the work that Children's Services have carried out to improve customer relations, focusing on complaints and compliments and covering Subject Access Requests, for the year 2024/25.

**10. READING SAFEGUARDING ADULTS ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25** 123 - 178

A report seeking approval for the publication of the Reading Safeguarding Adults Report 2024/25 on the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adult Board website.

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Committee	Directorate	Date of meeting	Minute number	Item title	Decision	Officer delegated to	Lead Councillor portfolio	Expected timescale for decision
ACE Committee	DCASC	02/07/25	8	Supported Living Framework Tender	<p>That the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, the Director of Finance, and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be given delegated authority, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Procure and enter into a contract with successful tenderer(s) for the support/care services to be provided. The contract would be for up to 10 years (5 initial years and then up to 5 further years);</li> <li>· Negotiate with the successful tenderer(s) to mobilise the contract, vary the contract, extend the contract at the appropriate time and otherwise contract manage the contract throughout its lifecycle.</li> </ul>	Exec Director of Community and Adult Social Care Services;#Director of Finance/s151 officer;#AD of Legal & Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer/Returning Officer	Adult Social Care	Tender documents published on 26/09/2025 so the period is now open to receive applications. On track to formally award and initiate mobilisation in early January, with the contract commencing from 1st April.
ACE Committee	DCASC	02/07/25	9	Homecare Framework Tender	<p>That the Executive Director of Communities and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, the Director of Finance, and the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services to be granted delegated authority to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Procure and enter into a contract with the successful tenderer(s) for the support / care services to be provided. The contract would be for up to 10 years (5 initial years and then up to 5 further years).</li> <li>· Negotiate with the successful tenderer(s) to mobilise the contract, vary the contract, extend the contract at the appropriate time, and otherwise contract manage the contract throughout its lifecycle.</li> </ul>	Exec Director of Community and Adult Social Care Services;#Director of Finance/s151 officer;#AD of Legal & Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer/Returning Officer	Adult Social Care	Tender documents published on 26/09/2025 so the period is now open to receive applications. On track to formally award and initiate mobilisation in early January, with the contract commencing from 1st April.

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# Agenda Item 3

## ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 15 OCTOBER 2025

**Present:** Councillor Asare (Chair);  
Councillors McEwan (Vice-Chair), Ballsdon, Eden, Gittings, Griffith, Keane, Lanzoni, Naz and O'Connell

**Also in attendance via Microsoft Teams:** Councillor Magon

**Apologies:** Councillors Cresswell, DP Singh, Mpofu-Coles and Woodward

### **11. DELEGATED DECISIONS**

The delegated decisions were noted.

### **12. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

In reference to Minute 3, Councillor Eden provided an update on her visit to Hartland Academy. The Chair requested that if members wanted to visit the school to contact Councillor Eden or the Chair so that this could be organised.

### **13. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES**

The minutes of following meetings were received:

Health and Wellbeing Board – 14 March 2025 and 11 July 2025

### **14. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS**

A question on the following matter was submitted by a member of the public.

Questioner	Subject	Reply
Peter Evans	SEND Placements in Reading	Cllr Rachel Eden

It was noted and acknowledged during the meeting, that the full written response had not been read out at the meeting in order to allow for a supplementary question to be raised. A complete and updated response was formally published and made available on the Reading Borough Council website on what date.

### **15. JOINT TARGETED AREA INSPECTION UPDATE**

## **ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 15 OCTOBER 2025**

The Committee received a report and verbal update on progress made following the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of multi-agency responses to children in Reading who were victims of domestic abuse. The inspection took place between 24 February and 14 March 2025 and had been carried out by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). The inspection outcome was previously reported to the Committee in July 2025.

The Committee was reminded that the inspection had identified an Area of Priority Action relating to inconsistent information-sharing between partners, which was found to result in delays for children and poor-quality risk assessments. An Improvement Notice was subsequently issued to Reading Borough Council (RBC) on 31 July 2025, and a Department for Education (DfE) Improvement Advisor was appointed.

The Committee was updated on the implementation of both single agency and multi-agency action plans. Over 85% of actions were completed or in progress.

Improvements included:

- Enhanced timeliness of strategy meetings and child protection visits.
- Establishment of an Integrated Assessment Service within Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC).
- Relaunch of the QA Framework and Practice Standards.
- Introduction of a new performance framework and PowerBi dashboard.
- Improved escalation processes and oversight mechanisms.

Representatives from partner agencies provided updates on their respective single agency action plans:

- Health (BOB ICB): 15 actions had been identified, with 12 on track and 3 completed. Impact measurement was ongoing, particularly around access to Child Protection Information Sharing systems and capturing the voice of the child.
- Probation: Two actions had been identified, focusing on improving communication around intervention timelines and embedding the voice of the child in assessments. Dip sampling was underway to evaluate impact.
- Thames Valley Police: Improvements had been made in strategy meeting participation, information-sharing, and Operation Encompass. Challenges remained in automating school notifications and enhancing MARAC processes.
- Children's Services: Phase one of the Rapid Improvement Plan was 92% complete. Phase two would focus on quality of practice and workforce development. A new supervision agreement was being rolled out, and a Foundations of Practice programme was being launched.

## **ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 15 OCTOBER 2025**

Steve Crocker, DfE Improvement Advisor, provided an overview of progress, noting positive early action and improved systems. He highlighted ongoing challenges including workforce experience, partnership complexity, and financial pressures.

Members of the Committee asked questions regarding staffing, supervision, and measuring impact. Officers responded with details of workforce development plans, supervision frameworks, and performance monitoring.

The Committee noted the progress that had been made and the collaborative efforts across agencies to improve safeguarding outcomes for children in Reading.

**Resolved - That the progress in the delivery of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) Partnership Action Plan at Appendix 1 be noted.**

### **16. DENTISTRY UPDATE**

The Committee received a presentation from Hugh O'Keeffe, Head of Pharmacy, Optometry and Dental Services at the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB), providing an update on NHS dental services across the region.

Mr O'Keeffe outlined the organisational changes affecting dental commissioning, noting that BOB ICB would merge with Berkshire East (Frimley ICB) to form the Thames Valley ICB from April 2026. Preparations for this transition had begun, with both areas operating as a cluster from October 2025.

The Committee was informed of national contract changes that had been introduced in 2022 and 2024 aimed at improving patient access and supporting dental practices. These had included increased UDA payments, incentives for new patient registrations, and flexible commissioning options.

Locally, the ICB had taken steps to address challenges caused by contract handbacks and reductions. Approximately 70,000 UDAs had been recommissioned from April 2024, with procurement underway for five new practices in Oxfordshire - one of which had already opened.

The Flexible Commissioning Scheme, now in its third year, had enabled practices to convert part of their contract to support vulnerable patient groups. Over 37,000 new patients had been seen under the scheme, with 52,000 total attendances. Priority groups included asylum seekers, care home residents, and patients with learning disabilities.

Mr O'Keeffe also reported on the Children's Oral Health Improvement pilot, which aimed to reduce hospital admissions for tooth extractions. The pilot would be delivered through new practices in Oxfordshire and aligned with the local authority's Supervised Toothbrushing initiative.

## **ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - 15 OCTOBER 2025**

The Committee heard that BOB ICB had participated in a national blood pressure monitoring pilot, with over 1,000 patients screened in dental settings. This formed part of wider efforts to integrate dental services into preventative health care.

Urgent dental care access remained a key focus. Following a government commitment to increase urgent appointments by 700,000 nationally, BOB ICB had commissioned additional sessions across 36 practices, including four in Reading. A new incentive scheme was being launched to further expand urgent care provision.

Contract delivery had improved significantly, with no contract handbacks reported in the past year. UDAs delivered in 2024–25 rose to 1.8 million, representing 90.4% of commissioned activity, and 95.7% when including the New Patient Premium.

The Committee noted that a national consultation on substantial dental contract reforms from April 2026 had recently closed. Proposed changes included embedding urgent care into core contracts and incentivising ongoing oral health management.

In response to questions, Mr O'Keeffe confirmed that:

- The ICB was working with NHS 111 to direct patients to urgent care sessions.
- Outreach and engagement with local authorities was ongoing to support children's oral health.
- Waiting times for specialist services remained a challenge, with re-commissioning planned to address capacity issues.

**Resolved – That a further report be provided to the Committee in 12 months time and to include data specific to the Reading area.**

### **17. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS POLICY 2027/2028 CONSULTATION**

The Committee considered a report to determine a proposed consultation on the relevant admission arrangements for 2027-28. Specifically, the consultation would consider the following elements for the academic year 2027/28 (September 2027 to July 2028):

- The admission arrangements for Community Primary Schools in Reading.
- The coordinated scheme for primary and junior schools.
- The coordinated scheme for secondary schools.
- The Relevant Area.
- The primary phase catchment areas.

Copies of the schemes, policies, relevant area and maps were appended to the report.

The report explained that the consultation would include proposed Publish Admission Number reductions for three schools: Micklands Primary School, Moorlands Primary School

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES - 15 OCTOBER 2025**

and Whitley Part Primary School. Other proposed amendments for 2027/28 were also proposed to comply with the School Admission Code 2021.

The Consultation would last for a minimum of six weeks and would take place between 1 October 2025 and 31 January 2026 in the determination year. The Committee noted that the outcome of the consultation and final documents would be presented at the January 2026 meeting for a final decision.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That the proposed consultation on the relevant admission arrangements for 2027-28 including the schools below, be approved:**
  - a) The proposed reduction of Published Admission Number at Micklands Primary School.**
  - b) The proposed reduction of Published Admission Number at Moorlands Primary School.**
  - c) The proposed reduction of Published Admission Number at Whitley Park Primary School.**

(The meeting closed at 8.05 pm)

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## Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



**Reading**  
Borough Council

Working better with you

14 January 2026

<b>Title</b>	<b>SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2027/28</b>
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report</b>	Lara Patel, Executive Director Children's Services
<b>Report author</b>	Brian Grady, Director of Education
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Rachel Eden, Lead Councillor for Public Health and Education
<b>Council priority</b>	Promote more equal communities in Reading
<b>Recommendations</b>	1) That the Committee determine the relevant admissions arrangements for 27/28

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report invites the Committee to determine:
  - 1.1.1. The admission arrangements for Community Primary Schools in Reading for the school year 2027/28.
  - 1.1.2. The coordinated scheme for primary and junior schools for the school year 2027/28.
  - 1.1.3. The coordinated scheme for secondary schools for the school year 2027/28.
  - 1.1.4. The Relevant Area 2027.
  - 1.1.5. The primary phase catchment areas for the school year 2027/28.
- 1.2. These admissions arrangements for 2027/28 comply with the School Admissions Code 2021.

### 2. Policy Context

- 2.1. School admissions are subject to statutory requirements, set out in law and particularly the School Admissions Code 2021, published by the Government and approved by Parliament. As part of those requirements, local authorities must draw up schemes for coordinating admissions to all maintained schools in their area. The purpose of coordinated schemes is to ensure that every parent/carer of a child living in Reading who has completed and submitted an on-time application receives one offer of a school place at the conclusion of the normal admissions round. The schemes set out a process and timescale to enable the offer of a single school place. They do not affect

the right of individual admission authorities to set and operate their own admission arrangements, but they do include arrangements for resolving multiple offers, where a place can be offered at more than one school. Reading Borough Council is the admitting authority for community and voluntary controlled schools within the borough.

- 2.2. In addition, the Council is also required to determine the admission policy for community schools which includes the number of places to be made available at each school and the oversubscription criteria to be applied where there are more applicants than places available. Where the over-subscription criteria include catchment areas these must also be approved. The governing bodies of academies, free schools, voluntary aided and foundation schools are required to determine their own admission number and oversubscription criteria. Those schools also operate their own arrangements as part of the coordinated scheme – and where they are oversubscribed, continue to decide which applicants best meet their oversubscription criteria.
- 2.3. The School Admissions code of 2021 section 1.45 says all admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements at least every 7 years. Reading Borough Council last consulted on the policy in 2018 and therefore we had to consult this year.
- 2.4. The Consultation ran from the 17 October to the 30 November 2025.
- 2.5. The documents must be determined by the 28 February 2026 to ensure Reading is compliant with the school admissions code and published on the relevant Reading Borough Council website by 15 March 2026.

### **3. The Consultation**

- 3.1. The consultation took place between 17 October and 28 November 2025 (a total of 6 weeks)
- 3.2. The consultation was promoted on social media. It was also sent out to the relevant area and community primary schools were asked to send it out to their parents. It was also regularly shared on all RBC staff through staff briefings.
- 3.3. There was a total of 17 responses, which is a reduction on previous consultation response rates. In 2018 94 responses were received.
- 3.4. Most respondents were in favour of the proposed changes.

### **4. The Proposal**

#### **4.1. Primary Co-ordinated scheme 2027-28 – Annex A**

- 4.1.1. Proposed change 1 on page 5 – Clarify that any change of preference submitted by via online application must after the 15 January be done by emailing the Reading School Admissions Team

There were 17 responses to the survey with 82% in favour of this change

- 4.1.2. Proposed change 2 on page 7 – Parents/carers who submitted a paper application and provided an email address will also receive an email with a formal offer. Any paper applications without an email address will receive details of their offer by letter (posted 2nd Class)

There were 17 responses to the survey with 88% in favour of this change

Respondents were asked to provide any additional comments regarding the Primary Co-ordinated Scheme, there were none made.

4.1.3. The Primary Co-ordinated scheme has been amended to take into account the changes in the date and the proposals that were considered above.

#### **4.2. Secondary School Co-ordinated scheme 2027-28 Annexe D**

4.2.1. Proposed change 1 on page 5 – Clarify that any change of preference submitted via online application must after the 15 January be done by emailing the Reading School Admissions Team.

There were 17 responses to the survey with 88% in favour of this change

4.2.2. Proposed change 2 on page 7 – Parents/carers who submitted a paper application and provided an email address will also receive an email with a formal offer. Any paper applications without an email address will receive details of their offer by letter (posted 2nd Class)

There were 17 responses to the survey with 94% in favour of this change

Respondents were asked to provide any additional comments regarding the Secondary Co-ordinated Scheme. There were 2 responses around concern about the catchment area and admissions boundaries for grammar schools. However, it is not in the remit of the Local Authority to set the catchment areas for the Grammar Schools as they are their own admissions authorities.

4.2.3. The secondary school co-ordinated scheme has been amended to reflect the changes in the date and the proposals that were considered above.

#### **4.3. Admissions Policy for Infant, Junior and Primary Schools 2027/28 - Annexe B**

4.3.1. Proposed change 1 page 15 – It is proposed that there will be a reduction to the Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for the following community and voluntary controlled schools

<b>School</b>	<b>Pre OSA PAN</b>	<b>Current PAN</b>	<b>Proposed PAN for 27/28</b>
Micklands Primary School	60	30 (amended by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for 2025 & 2026)	30
Moorlands Primary	60	30 (amended by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for 2025 & 2026)	30
Whitley Park Primary School	90	60 (amended by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for 2025 & 2026)	60

There were 17 responses to the survey with 59% in favour of this change, 29.4% stated that they didn't know.

Respondents were asked to provide any additional comments regarding the policy. No other specific issues, concerns, or suggestions were raised in the responses provided.

There is minimal concern expressed about the proposed primary admissions policy for community schools 2027.

- 4.3.2. By reducing Published Admission Numbers, these proposals will allow the schools identified to organise in the most structurally viable way and enable them to achieve financial viability, which will in turn, directly support the quality of education at these schools.
- 4.3.3. Proposed reductions in Published Admission Numbers are not expected to impact on the availability of local school places for parents. Reading as a Local Authority with duties to ensure sufficiency of school places plan on an overall minimum 5% surplus of school places in order to accommodate in year admissions. We are reviewing planning for in-year admissions and consequently will be considering revising overall minimum planning surplus in future years, including benchmarking with other neighbour and statistical neighbour LAs.
- 4.3.4. School census and demography data evidence that Reading Borough Council has sufficient school places to meet the needs of children over the next five years, with a current projected 12.9% surplus of school places in the primary phase.
- 4.3.5. The policy has been amended with the 3 new PAN's as above.

#### **4.4. The Relevant Area - Annexe E**

- 4.4.1. The School Standards & Framework Act 1998 requires Local Authorities to establish Relevant Area(s) for admission policy consultations. The Relevant Area is the area in which admission authorities must consult with schools regarding their proposed admission arrangements before finalising them.
- 4.4.2. Once the relevant area has been determined, any school or academy proposing to change arrangements will need to consult with all other interested parties within this area in line with the Schools Admission Code.

Respondents were asked to provide any additional comments regarding the relevant area. Most respondents did not provide comments or left the feedback section blank, indicating either general acceptance or lack of strong opinions regarding the Relevant Area 2027 document.

- 4.4.3. The only change to the relevant area was an update to reflect the date for the school year 2027/28

#### **4.5. Primary designated catchment areas - Annexe C**

- 4.5.1. There were no changes to the designated catchment area, therefore we consulted on the areas as they were.

Respondents were asked to provide any additional comments regarding the catchment areas, most respondents did not provide any comments or feedback on the Primary designations 2027 document, with several explicitly stating they had no comments

- 4.5.2. The primary designated catchment areas had been updated only to reflect the date for the school year 2027/28.

### **5. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 5.1. The admission schemes contribute to the aims of ensuring that there are good education, leisure and cultural opportunities for people in Reading.

5.2. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. These priorities are:

- Promote more equal communities in Reading
- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future

5.3. In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:

- Putting residents first
- Building on strong foundations
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading

5.4. Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website - [Council plan - Reading Borough Council](#). These priorities and the Council Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

5.5. Providing sufficient school places and ensuring fair and equitable access to a good quality local school place helps the Council achieve its objectives to promote more equal communities in Reading and secure Reading's economic and cultural success

## **6. Environmental and Climate Implications**

6.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

6.2. Effective school admission arrangements combined with sufficient school places ensure that where possible, children are placed as near as possible to their local school. This minimises transport related to school attendance and is a positive contributor to addressing environmental and climate implications of school travel.

## **7. Community Engagement**

7.1. We have a statutory duty to consult every 7 years on the coordinated scheme for school admissions. We last consulted between 17 October 2018 and 10 December 2018 as per the School Admission Code. Therefore, we are required to consult this year. Consultation arrangements are set out in the documents appended to this report.

## **8. Equality Implications**

8.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken. The EqIA is included in Annex F. The results of the screening assessment evidence no negative impacts have

been identified for persons with a protected characteristic. Compliance with the School Admissions Code (2021) will ensure that as a public authority Reading Borough Council will have determined school admission arrangements which work to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

## **9. Other Relevant Considerations**

- 9.1. None

## **10. Legal Implications**

- 10.1. The admissions arrangements (Annexe A & C) and Primary Admissions Policy for Community Schools 2027 (Annexe B) attached to this report ensure that Reading Borough Council demonstrates compliance with the School Admissions Code (2021).

## **11. Financial Implications**

- 11.1. None arising directly from this report. Reductions in Published Admission Numbers at identified schools are expected to help schools set balanced budgets.

## **12. Timetable for Implementation**

- 12.1. To ensure compliance with the requirements of the School Admissions Code 2021, admission arrangements and accompanying documentation must be determined by Reading Borough Council as the Admissions Authority by the 28 February and published on the relevant RBC website by 15 March 2026.

## **13. Background Papers**

- 13.1. There are none

## **Appendices – delete if there are none**

1. **Annexe A - Primary 2027 Coordinated Scheme**
2. **Annexe B - Primary Admissions Policy for Community Schools 2027**
3. **Annexe C - Primary\_Designations\_2027**
4. **Annexe D -Secondary 2027 Coordinated Scheme**
5. **Annexe E -Relevant Area 2027**
6. **Annexe F - Annexe G - Equality Impact Assessment**



**Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Primary, Infant and Junior Schools for the 2027/2028 academic year.**

**For September 2027 entry**

**Determined on**

## Contents

Introduction.....	2
Applications.....	3
Late Applications .....	4
Changes of preference .....	4
Change of Address.....	5
Processing Applications .....	5
Exchange of information .....	5
Resolving multiple offers .....	5
Informing schools .....	6
Informing Parents.....	6
Waiting Lists .....	7
Withdrawing a place.....	7
Requests for admission outside the normal age group.....	7
Disputes between Parents.....	8
In-Year Admissions .....	9
Timetable for the Primary & Junior School Admissions Round 2027-2028.....	9

## Introduction

The Reading coordinated scheme was consulted between **17 October and the 28 November 2025**.

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Primary, Infant and Junior Schools for the **2027/2028** academic year.

This Scheme is made under section 84 of the Standards and Framework Act 1998 and in accordance with the school Admissions (Admissions Arrangements and Coordination of admissions arrangements (England) Regulations 2014.

The purpose of this coordinated scheme for primary/infant/junior school admissions is to ensure that every parent/carer of a child **resident in Reading Borough**, who has applied, receives **one offer** of a school place at the conclusion of the normal admissions round. At its heart is clear communication between Reading school admissions, other Local Authorities, community, and all state schools in Reading.

Parents/carers who live in the Borough of Reading **must** apply to Reading school admissions if they require a place for their child in any state school as part of a routine admissions round, including schools in other local authorities, academies and free schools. Applications cannot be submitted to a school or to the local authority in which the school is situated. Parents/carers living within any other local authority areas must apply through their own local authority admissions service.

Coordination with Reading school admissions does not affect the right of individual admission authorities to set and operate their own admission arrangements. Admission authorities for Reading schools will need to comply with the timetable set out below.

These arrangements deal mainly with a child's first admission to school during the school year from **September 2027 to August 2028**. The children concerned are those born between **1 September 2022 and 31 August 2023**. The place offered is a full-time place from **September 2027**.

Admission to Junior School in September is for children born between **1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020**.

**National Offer Day for Primary and Junior Admissions is 16 April 2027**

## **Applications**

Reading Borough Council will put in place procedures that, where possible, ensure all parents/carers living in the Borough of Reading (with a child eligible to start school in **September 2027**) will be aware of the application process. Children on roll at a Reading nursery school/early years setting in **September 2026** will receive information about how to apply in **November 2026**.

Children living in Reading and attending an infant school will be sent information about the application process for admission to a junior school.

Parents/carers are encouraged to apply online via the Reading Parent Portal. The site will be open from **1 November 2026 until 15 January 2027**.

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Primary, Infant and Junior Schools for the **2027/2028** academic year.

Parents/carers will be invited to list four schools and rank them in order of preference. Parents/carers may also give reasons for their preferences. Parents/carers may list any state schools, including those outside the local authority; this includes academies, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled Schools.

The Reading common application form (and the online terms and conditions) will include a statement requiring parents to confirm they have read the *Guide for Parents and Carers* and accept the policies and procedures in that document.

Parents/carers should return their completed forms directly to the school admissions team at **Reading Borough Council**.

Parents/carers will complete the common application form online by the agreed deadline. The school admissions team will validate the application address. Validation, where possible, will be by reference to Council Tax data held by the **Council**. Where this is not possible, proof of residence will be required in the form of ownership documents or tenancy agreement.

Where, as part of its admission arrangements, a school requires additional information, parents/carers may also choose to complete a supplementary form to support their application. This should be submitted separately to the school. The *Guide for Parents and Carers* will identify those Reading schools for which a supplementary form may be necessary. These forms will be available from **the relevant Reading Borough Council website**. Supplementary forms are not applications and parent/carers must apply to Reading school admissions either on the common application form or online.

The National Closing Date is **15 January 2027**.

### **Late Applications**

Applications received after the closing date will be treated as 'late' applications. However, if the late submission of the application is caused by extenuating circumstances, (e.g. sudden illness or death of a close family member or the family having very recently moved to the area) the application may be accepted as "on time". The reason for late submission must be supported with documentary evidence received before **1 February 2027**.

Where no evidence is provided, it will be assumed that the application could reasonably have been submitted by the closing date. In such cases, the application will be treated as late and considered after all on time applications have been allocated.

All applications received from the 2 February are considered late and will be passed to the appropriate admission authority in Reading (or to the appropriate local authority) approximately two weeks after National Offer Day.

In these cases, parents/carers will be informed about the outcome of their application as per the timetable below, after National Offer Day. Unsuccessful applications for oversubscribed schools will be added to the waiting lists of those schools and ranked according to their oversubscription criteria.

Late applications will be processed approximately two weeks after national offer day. The first round of post-National Offer Day allocations will be at the end of May **2027 (This is Subject to change)**. After this date late application will be processed regularly. In each case, the cut-off date for consideration in each round of allocations will be 1 week prior to the allocation date.

### **Changes of preference**

Where the parent/carer wishes to change their preferences, they must submit a new application form (paper or online). If received by the school admissions team before **15 January 2027** it will be accepted as on time and will replace any previous application. Any preferences to be retained from a previous application should be listed on subsequent applications.

**Any change of preference after the 15 January must be done so by emailing the Reading School Admissions Team.**

Changes of preference received after **15 January 2027** will be treated as late applications in the way described above. However, applications for late change of preference where there are extenuating circumstances (e.g. sudden illness or death of a close family member or the family having very recently moved to the area) may be treated as on time, provided written evidence is supplied to support the late submission. This should be received by the school admissions team before **1 February 2027**. If no evidence is provided, the application will be treated as late. Any application for change of preference(s) received after **1 February 2027** will replace any previous application and be marked as late.

**Parents are advised to** think very carefully about submitting an application after this date, particularly if **they** have already submitted an on-time application.

Approximately two weeks after National Offer Day, late changes of preferences will be passed to the appropriate admission authority in Reading or to the appropriate local authority to be considered.

## Change of Address

As required by the School Admissions Code 2021, changes of address made after **15 January and before 1 February 2027** may be considered as on time. If an applicant changes address after **1 February 2027** they will need to submit a new application, based on the new address. The new application will be marked as late, and their previous application may be withdrawn. Documentary evidence of the change of address will be required.

## Processing Applications

### Exchange of information

As per the timetable below, the Reading school admissions team will forward applications to other local authorities and admission authorities in Reading. At the same time other local authorities will forward applications to Reading for their residents to be considered for Reading schools.

Depending on the arrangements agreed with the governing body of each school, the school admissions team will provide the school with relevant information to enable them to rank against their oversubscription criteria, as per the timetable. Reading school admissions will not pass on the details of the parent/carer's preference ranking to the school, and no school will be told about other schools a parent has listed.

As per the timetable, each admission authority in Reading will rank the applications according to their published oversubscription criteria and return ranked lists to the school admissions team.

### Resolving multiple offers

As per the timetable, Reading school admissions will inform other local authorities of places offered in Reading schools to their residents. During the exchange of information, Reading school admissions will consider all cases where a child can be offered more than one of their preferences. In such cases, a place offered will be at the school a parent/carer listed highest in preference.

If a place cannot be offered at one of the preferred schools listed by the parent/carer, a place will normally be offered at the nearest school in the borough of Reading with a place available. If the offered school is one where Reading Borough Council is not the admission authority, this will be in consultation with the governing body of the school in question. If the nearest school with places is a faith school, parents/carers will be offered this as an option. Should the parent/carer be unhappy with a faith school being offered, they will be informed of other schools with available spaces (which may be further from their home).

Where no places are available at any Reading schools, parents/carers will be informed, and alternative schools (outside Reading Borough) may be offered. Such an offer will depend on availability and the agreement of the appropriate admission authority. This will not preclude

parents/carers from requesting an alternative school, nor from lodging an appeal for their preferred school with the admission authority.

### Informing schools

As per the timetable, the school admissions team will send each Reading primary and infant school a list of pupils to be offered a place at their school. This will be confidential to the school and must not be passed on to parents/carers.

### Informing Parents

On **National Offer Day**, parents/carers who submitted an 'on time' online application will receive an email with a formal offer and may view their offer online.

Parents/carers who submitted a paper application **and provided an email address will also receive an email with a formal offer. Any paper applications without an email address will receive details of their offer by letter (posted 2<sup>nd</sup> Class).**

The letter will:

- Inform parents/carers of their child's offered school.
- Inform parents/carers how to accept the offer and the deadline for accepting.
- Provide information on school transport.

If the school offered is not their first preference, parents/carers will also be supplied with the following information:

- Where they can find information showing how places were allocated at oversubscribed schools in Reading.
- How to submit an appeal.
- If the place offered is not their highest preference school(s), the child's name will be added to the waiting list(s) of any school(s) they listed higher in preference. Parents/carers are required to advise Reading school admissions if they do not wish their child's name to remain on a waiting list.

### Waiting Lists

Two weeks after National Offer Day, 'waiting lists' will be administered for schools with more applicants than places available. A child's position on a waiting list is determined by the oversubscription criteria of the school. When a place becomes available, it will be offered to the child who is top of the waiting list. A child's position on a waiting list may go up or down for several reasons (e.g. pupil withdrawals or new and revised applications). When a place is allocated from the waiting list, the child's current allocation (for a lower preference school) will be removed and allocated to another student, if appropriate. It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school admissions team if they no longer wish for their child to remain on the waiting list of a school. It will be assumed that a child is to remain on the waiting list of all schools listed higher in preference to one offered (unless the parent/carer indicates otherwise).

Waiting lists for all schools in the Reading Borough, will be kept until **31 August 2028**. After this date, the policy of the individual school(s) will be followed. When the coordinated admissions round ends, on **31 August 2027**, waiting lists will continue to be managed as part of the In-Year admissions process and follow the individual policy of the school.

### **Withdrawing a place**

If the offered place is not accepted within four weeks of national offer day, Reading school admissions will send a reminder and allow a further seven days for a reply. If there is still no response, the offer may be withdrawn. If it arises that a school offer was based on fraudulent, or intentionally misleading information (which denied the place to another child), the place will be withdrawn.

### **Requests for admission outside the normal age group**

Parents/carers may request their child be admitted outside the year group suggested by the child's date of birth (i.e. admission to Reception, rather than Year 1, in **September 2028**). In such cases, applicants should apply using the common application form by **15 January 2027**. They should **also** complete the offset request form (having read the separate guide). The offset request form should be submitted to the school admissions team before **1 February 2027** to be considered prior to National Offer Day. The application will be forwarded to the relevant admissions authority of the listed schools for consideration and the school admissions team will seek the views of the child's early years setting. Each case will be carefully considered by the admissions authority. Parents/carers will be informed of the decision in writing before the National Offer Day, setting out clearly the reasons for the decision. Any request received after **1 February 2027** will be processed after National Offer Day.

If the offset request is agreed, parents/carers must formally accept it. Following this, their application submitted for **September 2027** is withdrawn. Parents/carers are not told which school their child was allocated before accepting/declining the offset. A new application must then be submitted in the following year for entry from **September 2028**.

Requests for schools outside Reading will be referred to the relevant local authority for consideration under that Council's scheme.

One admission authority cannot be required to honour a decision made by another admission authority on admission outside the normal age group. Therefore, if an application for **2028** entry lists different schools to the application withdrawn in **2027**, it will (if required) be forwarded to different admissions authorities for their consideration. Where this is the case, the offset request form must be resubmitted.

### **Disputes between Parents**

Anyone with parental responsibility may apply for their child's school place and list up to four preferred schools. However, the child's address on the application should be recorded as the place they spend most of the week as set out in our definition of 'Home Address'.

When completing application forms, parents/carers must tick to confirm they have parental responsibility for the child and that their application is made with the agreement of all parties having parental responsibility.

Where parents disagree over which school preferences should be named, we recommend starting the following process as early as possible as national closing dates are fixed and cannot be extended under any circumstances:

- We urge parents to work together in the best interests of their child, and it is advised that the applicant should inform all other parties who have parental responsibility before submitting the application.
- All parties should agree with the school preferences to be listed. Any disagreements should be resolved before an application is submitted.
- If parents are unable to reach an amicable agreement, they should seek legal advice or recourse through the Family Court.

The local authority will only process one application per child and will only make one offer of a school place.

Where more than one application is received, the local authority (or local authorities if parents submit applications to more than one) will contact both applicants to advise that more than one application has been received, and request they complete one application with one set of preferences for their child.

All evidence must be received by published closing dates, at which point a decision will be made as to which application is processed. The local authorities concerned may contact early years or education settings noted in the application, or other professionals working with the child where applicable, to assist in their decision making. Any evidence provided after the closing date which affects the content or processing of the application, may render the application late, and delay an offer of a school place.

We will not mediate between parents where there is a dispute. Only one application will be accepted, and the final decision will rest with the local authority after all submitted evidence has been considered.

### In-Year Admissions

The In-Year admissions arrangements for the school year, September **2027** - July **2028** will use the determined policies of **2027/2028**.

Parents/carers seeking admission for their child into Year 1 – Year 6 of a primary/infant or junior school in Reading Borough must apply to Reading school admissions. Parents/carers may apply direct to some voluntary-aided, academy or free schools in the Borough, however, most of these schools have opted to be part of the coordinated admission arrangements and applications are normally submitted to the Reading school admissions team. A list of schools to which a direct application is necessary is available from the [relevant Reading Borough Council website](#). Where a school listed is in another local authority, the parent/carer will be advised to apply directly to that local authority, and the application for that school will follow the relevant local authority's scheme.

### Timetable for the Primary & Junior School Admissions Round **2027-2028**

Action	Date
<i>Guide for Parents and Carers</i> to be placed on Website.	By <b>2 September 2026</b>
Information sent to Early Years Providers to share with parent <b>(date can be subject to change)</b>	By <b>1 November 2026</b>
Online Reading Parent Portal for admissions open. <b>(opening date can be subject to change)</b>	<b>1 November 2026 – 15 January 2027</b>
National Closing date for receipt of applications.	<b>15 January 2027</b>
Late/change of preference applications accepted in extenuating circumstances, written support must be submitted at time of application.	<b>1 February 2027</b>
Application details sent to voluntary-aided/Academies schools in Reading and other local authorities. Own Admissions Authority schools to provide Reading school admissions team with a list of children ranked according to the school's oversubscription criteria.	During <b>February 2027</b>
Coordination between other local authorities of offers that can be made to their residents in Reading schools.	By <b>2 April 2027</b>

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Primary, Infant and Junior Schools for the **2027/2028** academic year.

Action	Date
National Offer Day - Offer notifications sent to Reading Residents	16 April 2027
Deadline for parents to accept.	1 May 2027
Late applications for over-subscribed schools added to the waiting lists/change of preferences processed.	From 3 May 2027
Coordination with other LA's ends.	31 August 2027
Waiting lists held for Reading schools.	Until at least 31 July 2028

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Primary, Infant and Junior Schools for the 2027/2028 academic year.

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**Reading**  
Borough Council  
Working better with you



**ADMISSION POLICY FOR COMMUNITY INFANT, JUNIOR**  
**AND**  
**PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2027-2028**

For September **2027** entry  
Determined on

## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Other admitting authorities within Reading Borough Council .....	3
Cohort .....	3
Admission of children outside the normal age to Reading Borough Council Community Primary Schools .....	3
Oversubscription Criteria for Community Primary and Infant Schools .....	4
Priority within the Oversubscription Criteria .....	5
Oversubscription Criteria for Community Junior Schools – Geoffrey Field Junior School .....	6
Priority within the oversubscription criteria .....	7
Notes relating to the above oversubscription criteria .....	7
Note 1 – Category 1 – Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children .....	7
Children who were previously in state care outside England .....	7
Note 2 – Category 2 Medical/Social Reasons .....	8
Note 3 – Category 3 – Siblings .....	8
Note 4 – Category 3 – Siblings .....	8
Catchment area .....	9
Tiebreaker .....	9
Multiple births (twins, triplets etc.) .....	9
Parent/Carers .....	10
Home address .....	10
Split living arrangements .....	11
Siblings .....	12
Deferring a Place .....	12
Part Time Admissions .....	13
Waiting Lists .....	13
Returning Crown Servants and Armed Forces Personnel .....	13
In-Year Admission Arrangements for the School Year 2027-2028 .....	14
Appeals .....	14
Admissions Numbers – Reading Community Infant, Junior and Primary Schools .....	14

## **Introduction**

Reading Borough Council is the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools within the borough.

This document sets out the local authority's admission arrangements for entry to schools in September **2027**.

The Reading coordinated scheme was consulted between **17 October and the 28 November 2025**.

These arrangements comply with the School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Coordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, the School Admissions Code 2021 and the School Admissions Appeals Code 2021.

## **Other admitting authorities within Reading Borough Council**

Voluntary aided schools, free schools and academies are their own admission authorities and are required to publish their own proposals for consultation (if required) and determine their own admissions arrangements. Details of their proposals and/or determined arrangements should be obtained from each individual school.

**National Offer Day for Primary and Junior Admissions is 16 April 2027**

## **Cohort**

Applications for children born between **1-9-2022** and **31-8-2023** will be considered for admission to a reception class in **2027** as part of the **2027/2028** routine admission round.

Applications for admission to junior schools in September **2027** will be considered for those born between **1-9-2019** and **31-8-2020**.

## **Admission of children outside the normal age to Reading Borough Council Community Primary Schools**

Children are normally allocated school places according to their chronological age. However, parents may request their child be placed outside of their normal age group, for example, if the child has experienced problems such as ill health or special educational health needs but does not have an Educational Health Care Plan. In addition, the parents of a summer born child may choose not to send that child to school until the September following their fifth birthday and may request that they are admitted out of their normal age group; to Reception rather than Year 1, in September **2028**.

Reading Borough Council, as the Admission Authority for community primary schools, will consider each case individually and determine what is in the best interest of the child, taking account of:

- The parent's/carer's views.
- Information about the child's academic, social, and emotional development from their current setting.
- The child's medical history and the views of a medical professional (where relevant).
- Whether the child has previously been educated out of their normal age group.
- Whether the child may have fallen into a lower age group had they not been born prematurely.
- DfE document 'Advice on the admission of summer born children'.
- DfE document 'School Admissions Code'
- LGO document 'Summer born admissions'.
- The views of the head teacher at the school(s) concerned
- The views of the child's early years setting (if attending one)

To request a child's admission be delayed to September 2028, parents/carers need to read the offset guide and complete the required form. It is recommended they make an application for a reception place in the normal way for September 2027 by 15 January 2027 so that the application can be considered. Each case will be reviewed, and parents/carers will be informed of the decision in writing before the National Offer Day, setting out clearly the reasons for the decision. If the request to delay admission is agreed, the parents/carers must issue a formal acceptance, declaring their intention to proceed on this basis. In this case, the application submitted for September 2027 entry will be withdrawn (before a reception place is offered) and a new application must then be submitted (for entry in September 2028) when the next primary admissions round opens in November 2027.

Parents/carers will not be made aware of the school they would have been allocated before the decision is accepted or declined. The decision made by Reading school admissions panel is not binding on any other Admission Authority and therefore schools may come to different decisions based on the evidence. If the request is refused, parents must decide whether to accept the offered place for Reception 2027 or refuse it and make an in-year application for a Year 1 place in September 2028.

### **Oversubscription Criteria for Community Primary and Infant Schools**

Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) naming a community primary or infant school will be allocated a place above all other children.

The oversubscription criteria take no account of the parent's/carers order of preference. Applications for each school named by the parents/carers will be ranked according to the criteria set out below if there are more applications than places available.

Category		Notes
1	A 'looked after child' or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements, or special guardianship order including those who appear	Provided appropriate evidence is submitted – See Note 1.

	[to the admission authority] to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. A looked after child is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).	
2	Families who have strong medical or social grounds for their child's admission to a particular school.	See Note 2.
3	Children whose permanent home address is in the catchment area of the school and have a sibling at the school at the time of application, who is expected to be attending the school when the child is due to start school.	This category may apply in other circumstances - See Notes 3 and 4.
4	Children whose permanent home address is in the catchment area of the school.	
5	Children whose permanent home address is not in the catchment area of the school but have a sibling at the school at the time of application, who is expected to be attending the school when the child is due to start school.	See Note 4.
6	Children in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) at the time application who attends the nursery unit at the school.	
7	Other Children	

### Priority within the Oversubscription Criteria

Within each of the above categories 1-5 and 7, priority will be given to children who are in receipt of the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), Service Premium or Pupil Premium (PP) at the time of application. To be considered for these priorities, parents/carers will be required to complete a Supplementary Information Form which **must be endorsed by the child's current school or nursery** confirming that they receive Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), Service Premium or Pupil Premium (PP) for the child. This form must be completed and returned to the school admissions team prior to **1 February 2027** in order that this priority may be awarded on time for the routine admissions round. Any applications received later than this date will be awarded the priority after national offer day.

### Oversubscription Criteria for Community Junior Schools – Geoffrey Field Junior School

Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) naming the school will be allocated a place above all other children.

The oversubscription criteria take no account of the parents/carers order of preference and applications for each school named by the parents/carers will be ranked according to the

criteria set out below if there are more applications than places available.

Older siblings still attending the linked junior school will be considered as siblings for admission to the infant school.

Category		Notes
1	A 'looked after child' or a child who was previously looked after but immediately after being looked after became subject to an adoption, child arrangements, or special guardianship order <sup>91</sup> including those who appear [to the admission authority] to have been in state care outside of England and ceased to be in state care as a result of being adopted. A looked after child is a child who is (a) in the care of a local authority, or (b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions (see the definition in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989).	Provided appropriate evidence is submitted – See Note 1.
2	Families who have strong medical or social grounds for their child's admission to a particular school.	See Note 2.
3	Children whose permanent home address is in the catchment area of the school and have a sibling at the school, or Geoffrey Field Infant School at the time of application who is expected to be attending the school when the child is due to start school.	This category may apply in other circumstances - See Notes 3 and 4.
4	Children whose permanent home address is in the catchment area of the school.	
5	Children whose permanent home address is not in the catchment area of the school but have a sibling at the school or Geoffrey Field Infant School at the time of application, who is expected to be attending the school when the child is due to start school.	See Note 4.
6	Children who are attending Geoffrey Field Infant School at the time of application.	
7	Other Children.	

#### Priority within the oversubscription criteria

Within each of the above categories 1-5 and 7, priority will be given to children who are in receipt of the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), Service Premium or Pupil Premium (PP) at the time of application. To be considered for these priorities, parents/carers will be required to complete a Supplementary Information Form which **must be endorsed by the child's current school** confirming that they receive Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP),

Service Premium or Pupil Premium (PP) for the child. This form must be completed and returned to the school admissions team prior to 1 February **2027** in order that this priority may be awarded on time for the routine admissions round. Any applications received later than this date will be awarded the priority after national offer day.

**Notes relating to the above oversubscription criteria.**

**Note 1 – Category 1 – Looked After Children and Previously Looked After Children**

A ‘Looked After’ child is a) in the care of a local authority, or b) being provided with accommodation by a local authority in the exercise of their social services functions as defined in Section 22(1) of the Children Act 1989 at the time of making an application for a school place.

A previously ‘Looked After’ child is a child who was looked after but has been adopted or became subject to a child arrangements order or special guardianship order immediately following having been ‘Looked After’. Confirmation will be required from the local authority that last looked after the child that the child was looked after immediately prior to the issuing of one of the following orders:

An adoption order is an order under the Adoption Act 1976 (see Section 12 adoption orders) and children who were adopted under the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (see Section 46 adoption orders).

A ‘child arrangements order’ is an order settling the arrangements to be made as to the person with whom the child is to live under Section 8 of the Children Act 1989 as amended by Section 14 of the Children and Families Act 2014.

Section 14A of the Children Act 1989 defines a ‘special guardianship order’ as an order appointing one or more individuals to be a child’s special guardian (or special guardians).

**Children who were previously in state care outside England**

A child is regarded as having been in state care outside of England if they were in the care of, or were accommodated by a public authority, a religious organisation, or any other provider of care whose sole or main purpose is to benefit society.

The care may have been provided in an orphanage or other setting, but the child may have been adopted and is no longer in state care. Evidence of the previously looked after status and/or the adoption will be requested. Where such evidence is not available, the admissions authority will work closely with **Reading Borough Council** Virtual School for Children Looked After to make a pragmatic decision based on the information available to ensure a consistent local approach.

**Note 2 – Category 2 Medical/Social Reasons**

When applying under criterion 2, families who have strong medical or social grounds for their child’s admission to a particular school must provide written evidence. This should come from an independent professional aware of the case relating to the child, parent/carer or other children living at the same address (e.g. doctor, hospital consultant or psychologist

for medical grounds or registered social or care worker, housing officer, the police or probation officer for social needs). This evidence must: be specific to the school in question, show why that school is the most suitable, what facilities will benefit the child, and why no other school can offer the same support. It is not enough for the professional to report what the parent/carer has told them.

If failure in awarding this priority would result in no appropriate school being allocated, the panel, after taking considering the evidence submitted, the parental preference and the catchment school, will allow categorization of medical/social grounds to the most appropriate school. This applies to those children whose social/medical needs can be met by more than one school but not many schools. For example, when reasons are due to mobility issues and a number of schools are equal distance and failure to award this would result in no appropriate school being allocated.

In addition, this category includes children who are subject to a child arrangement order or special guardianship order awarded to a family member in order to prevent the child being taken into care by a local authority. A copy of the order must be provided.

No individual officer will take responsibility for determining whether a case is ranked in the category. A panel of officers in the form of the School Admissions Panel will make the final decision. Evidence must be provided by **1 February 2027** to be considered as on time for National Offer Day. If evidence is received by the team after this date, then it is at the discretion of the panel whether to accept these documents for 'on time' allocations. The admissions team will not prompt parents to send evidence to support admission under this category, but they may ask for further evidence if this is required to make a decision. If evidence is received before the **1 February 2027** parents will be informed in writing, before National Offer Day as to whether this has been granted. This is not a guarantee of a place at a particular school.

#### **Note 3 – Category 3 – Siblings**

Children whose home address is in the former catchment area of a school and have a sibling at the school and that sibling was admitted to the school from the same address will be treated as category 4 of the oversubscription criteria.

#### **Note 4 – Category 3 – Siblings**

If parents/carers applied for a place at their catchment area school for their child and it was not possible to offer a place at that school because the school was oversubscribed, a sibling protection applies. Where the child was admitted to a lower preference Reading community primary school or allocated a place by the authority at an alternative Reading community primary school, the application for any younger siblings for that school will be treated as 'catchment area' and considered under category 4. Where a parent does not list all schools in the catchment area for the home address at the time of application and a place would have been offered at a catchment area school had it been listed, they forfeit the right to sibling protection. Parents/carers must inform the admissions team at the time of application if they consider this exemption applies.

Where a space is allocated as part of an in-year admission at a school listed second preference or lower, or if a school closer to the child's home address was available to parents and was refused, parents forfeit the right to this sibling protection for future admissions. Parents will be informed at the time of allocation if this right has been forfeited.

### **Catchment area**

The catchment area of the schools can be seen from attached maps. These are a guide only. Exact catchment area information for individual addresses can be found on Reading Borough Council's website <https://my.reading.gov.uk/>

### **Tiebreaker**

If a school does not have enough places for all children in a particular category, places will be allocated to those living nearest the school. The distance is measured in miles as a straight line between the Ordnance Survey data point for the child's home address and the school using Reading Borough Council digital mapping software. This distance is measured to three decimal places. In the rare event that it is not possible to decide between the applications of those pupils who have the same distance measurement, the place will be offered using random allocation. A member of Committee Services staff for Reading Borough Council will supervise the selection process.

### **Multiple births (twins, triplets etc.)**

Places are offered according to the oversubscription criteria. However, where this would result in splitting children of multiple births, the other sibling(s) will be offered a place in most cases. In very exceptional circumstances, where the admission of more than one additional child to the year group causes prejudice to the provision of efficient education and efficient use of resources, it may not be possible to offer a place to all multiple birth children.

In cases where siblings attending the same year group, but with different birth dates are split by the oversubscription criteria, only one child will be offered a place. This applies to children during Key stage 1 (up to and including Year 2) if admission would take a class over 30 pupils. Selection will be made randomly by a representative of Reading Borough Council's Committee Services. The parents may decline the offer and seek places for all siblings at another school or accept the place for one of the siblings. In the latter case, the other sibling's name(s) will be added to the waiting list. If admission is in Key Stage 2, or the admission of the other siblings will not contravene infant class size regulations, then each case will be considered. Often, the other child/children will be offered a place (on the condition that the admission will not prejudice the provision of efficient education and efficient use of resources).

### **Parent/Carers**

A parent/carer is any person who has parental responsibility or care of the child. Parental responsibility for a child is set out in the Children Act 1989. Normally this parent/carer

would reside with the child at the permanent home address stated on the application.

### **Home address**

Applications are processed based on the child's single permanent home address where the child lives, with parent(s) or a carer/legal guardian, on the closing date for applications. By applying, the parent/carer/legal guardian is confirming the child will be living at that address on National Offer Day. An address will not be accepted where the child is resident, other than with a parent or carer, unless it is part of a private fostering or formal care arrangement.

Checks will be made to determine whether an address declared on the application form is that of a second home, with the main home being elsewhere. Some residential arrangements will be considered temporary. In such cases, the School Admissions Team will examine available evidence to determine whether, on balance, the declared home address may be considered the child's permanent home for the purpose of admission. Any circumstance where the declared address is to be accepted as the permanent home, despite another home being owned or otherwise available for occupation, should be declared at the point of application. Without being exhaustive these this might include:

- an owned property being a considerable distance from the preferred school, indicating that the family had permanently relocated to the new home; or
- an owned property that is uninhabitable and cannot reasonably be made habitable in the period leading up to admission to the school; or
- an owned property that is in the process of being sold and the family live permanently in the declared property; or
- a situation, following divorce or separation, where the family home cannot be occupied by the applicant or otherwise treated as the child's permanent home.

Where the declared address is rented and the applicant has no claim on any other property, the declared address may be considered temporary if there is evidence to suggest the applicant has chosen to rent the property solely for the period necessary for their child to be admitted to a particular school.

Reference to Reading Borough Council tax records will be made to determine a single address for consideration of a place under criteria 4 or 5. It is for the applicant to satisfy the admissions authority that they live at the address stated.

Applicants will be asked to declare that the address used is expected to be their place of residence beyond the date of the pupil starting school. Applicants are required to advise of any change of circumstance at any time prior to the child starting school. If the applicant does not declare such arrangements (or a different address is used on the application where the child does not usually live), it will be considered that a false declaration has been made. This may result in a decision being taken to decline to offer a place at a particular school, or to withdraw the offer of a place. In deciding whether an allocation was based on a misleading or fraudulent application, an admissions panel will consider any supporting evidence giving reasons why the move was necessary prior to the child starting school.

It is important to declare if there is to be a change of address prior to the child starting school. If the applicant already owns a property which is in the process of being sold, the admissions team are able to accept the address of the new property only on submission of the appropriate evidence in support (e.g. completion of contracts letter on both the new property and, where possible, disposal of their current property). The deadline for submission of evidence to support a move is **1 February 2027**.

If the applicant is renting the property, the tenancy agreement must be dated **1 February 2027** or prior, to be accepted as on time. If the tenancy agreement expires prior to National Offer Day, the applicant must provide evidence showing that they still reside at the property past that date. If the applicant moves to a new rented property after the **1 February 2027**, the application will be marked late and considered after National Offer Day.

A temporary address cannot be used to obtain a school place. Temporary addresses will only be considered where evidence is provided of a genuine reason for the move e.g. flooding or subsidence.

Reading school admissions reserves its right to carry out further investigation, request additional evidence and to reject applications (or withdraw offers of places) if it believes it has the grounds to do so. In such cases, the applicant will have recourse to the independent appeals process. Where it is believed an address provided is not the only address, the Corporate Audit & Investigation Team may be called upon to investigate further.

### **Split living arrangements**

Where a family claims to be resident at more than one address, justification and evidence of the family's circumstances will be required (e.g. formal residence order, child arrangements order or legal separation documentation). The application must be completed by the parent using the address which is owned, leased or rented and where the child lives for the majority of the school week. This is based on the number of school nights a child spends at the address (from Sunday at 6pm to Friday at 9am).

Where children live across two addresses, families cannot use whichever address would advantage their child's admission into a certain school.

Where there is an equal split or there is any doubt about residence, the School Admissions Team will assess and make a judgment about which address to use for the purpose of allocating a school place. Where necessary, further information may be requested, for example:

- any legal documentation confirming residence
- the pattern of residence
- the duration of the current arrangement

- confirmation from the current school or early years setting of the primary contact details and home address supplied to it by the parents
- the address where child benefit or other benefit (if applicable) is paid
- where the child is registered with their GP
- any other evidence the parents may supply to verify the position.

It is recommended that consensus is reached by both parties (and the child) regarding the school preferences listed. It should be noted that only one offer letter will be sent to the main applicant, unless otherwise requested and agreed by both parties.

The information provided to determine the home address will be considered by an admissions panel of at least two officers and their decision is final.

### **Siblings**

For the purposes of admissions criteria during the main primary admission round, 'siblings' are older siblings already attending the preferred school. However, Geoffrey Field Junior School will consider a younger sibling attending Geoffrey Field Infant School. In-year applications will consider younger siblings, but not a sibling attending the nursery class of a school.

Siblings are children who have the same parent (or stepparent/cohabiting parent) and live together as a family unit at the same permanent home address. If they do not live at the same address, then they are not treated as siblings for the purpose of admission.

A child who is part of a multiple birth (e.g., twins) is not classed a sibling for the purpose of ranking by oversubscription criteria. However, where application of the oversubscription criteria would result in splitting children from a multiple birth, the other child/children will usually be admitted to the school.

### **Deferring a Place**

Upon receipt of an application, the local authority is legally required to offer every child a full-time Reception place to start in the September following their fourth birthday. In Reading schools, places are offered on a full-time basis from September 2027 as a "rising 5" admission. Children do not reach statutory (compulsory) school age until the September, January or April following their fifth birthday. When children are offered "rising 5" places, parents/carers may decide to defer their child's start until January 2028 or April 2028 (depending on their child's birth date). In such cases, the offered school must hold the child's place. However, schools are not obliged to hold a place where a parent/carer wishes to defer beyond April 2028 (i.e., September 2028) as this pushes the child's start into the following academic year. Any parent/carer wishing to defer entry to September 2028 (i.e. to miss out Reception entirely and start their child in Year 1) must forfeit their child's September 2027 school offer and re-apply for a Year 1 place in July 2028. They should also

consider that places may not be available if their preferred school has become oversubscribed by this time.

### **Part Time Admissions**

Parents/carers may request their child be admitted on a part time basis for an initial period (but not beyond the point at which their child reaches compulsory school age). Where a parent/carers chooses this option, they cannot insist on part-time provision that is individually tailored to their needs. Parents/carers must consult with the Headteacher of the allocated school to agree the best arrangement for both child and school.

### **Waiting Lists**

Approximately two weeks after National Offer Day 'waiting lists' will be created for Reading schools. Children will be added to the waiting list of any school their parents/carers listed higher in preference to the school they were offered. A child's position on the waiting list is determined by the oversubscription criteria. The list will be re-ranked whenever new children are added following late applications or changes of preference. When a place becomes available, it is offered to the child ranked highest on the waiting list. After 1 September 2027, children identified for placement as part of the Fair Access Protocol can be placed above those on the waiting list. Positions on the waiting lists may go up or down due to pupil withdrawals, new or revised applications. Reading school admissions will keep waiting lists until end of July 2028 (end of Term 6 for Reception classes). After this date, the waiting lists will be abandoned. Parents/carers must then re-apply for a place in Year 1 as an in-year admissions applicant if they are still interested in obtaining a place for their child.

### **Returning Crown Servants and Armed Forces Personnel**

Families of Crown servants returning from overseas to live in the Reading Borough or applicants relocating in the armed forces may apply for a place in advance of their move provided the application is accompanied by an official letter confirming the posting to the UK and the expected relocation date. A school will be offered in advance of a move and held until the appropriate time. If the schools listed on an application form are oversubscribed, the family will need to provide an address to be ranked accordingly.

Where a parent is unable to provide confirmation of a relocation address, an indication of the area may be provided, narrowed down as far as possible, to which the family intend to return. Preferences will be processed but applications will be considered under criterion 7 (other children) until the parent is able to provide confirmation of the new address (e.g. proof of exchange of contracts or a signed rental agreement). If a place cannot be offered at a preferred school, an alternative school will be offered, and parents will be advised of the right of appeal for a place at the preferred school. It is the responsibility of parents to keep the school admissions team informed of any changes to their planned address during the application process.

## **In-Year Admission Arrangements for the School Year 2027-2028.**

The In-Year admissions arrangements for the school year, **September 2027- July 2028** will use the determined policies of **2027/2028**.

Parents/carers seeking admission for their child into Year 1 – Year 6 in a community primary school in Reading Borough, must apply to Reading school admissions using the In-Year Application form. Parents/carers may apply direct to some voluntary-aided or academy schools in the Borough, but most of these schools have opted to be part of the coordinated admission arrangements and applications are normally submitted to the Reading school admissions team. A list of those schools to which a direct application is necessary is available from the website.

If there is a place in the parent's/carer's preferred school, the place will be allocated, however, if there are more applications than places available the oversubscription criteria (as outlined above) will apply with places allocated to the child(ren) ranked highest. **Please note, for in-year admissions Category 6 of the Oversubscription Criteria for Community Primary and Infant Schools does not apply.** The remaining applicants will be added to the waiting list which will also be ranked according to the oversubscription criteria. Children allocated according to the Fair Access Protocol will take precedent over children on the waiting list.

Those children new to the area, or who have moved within the borough, will be able to start at the school as soon as possible after their move. If the request is to move schools within the borough without a move of home, these children will normally be expected to start at the beginning of the following term.

Waiting lists for admission in Years 1 to 6 will be held until 31 December **2027** after which parents/carers must reapply for their child to remain on the waiting list until July **2028**. The waiting list will be abandoned after 31 July **2028** and parents/carers must reapply if they are still seeking a place for September **2028**.

### **Appeals**

If it is not possible to offer a place at the preferred school(s), parents/carers will be advised of their right of appeal.



**Admissions Numbers – Reading Community Infant, Junior and Primary Schools.**

The following are the proposed admission numbers for **2027**

<b>School</b>	<b>September 2027 - Admission Number</b>
Alfred Sutton Primary	90
Caversham Park Primary	30
Caversham Primary	60
Coley Primary	30
Emmer Green Primary	60
EP Collier Primary	60
Geoffrey Field Infant	90
Geoffrey Field Junior	90
Katesgrove Primary	90
Manor Primary	45
Micklands Primary	30
Moorlands Primary	30
Oxford Road Community	30
Park Lane Primary	60
Redlands Primary	30
Southcote Primary	90
St Michael's Primary	60
Thameside Primary	60
The Hill Primary	60
The Ridgeway Primary	60
Whitley Park Primary School	60
Wilson Primary	60



**Primary Schools Designated Areas (Catchments) for  
Primary, Infant and Junior Schools in Reading for the  
2027/2028 academic year.**

**For September 2027 entry**

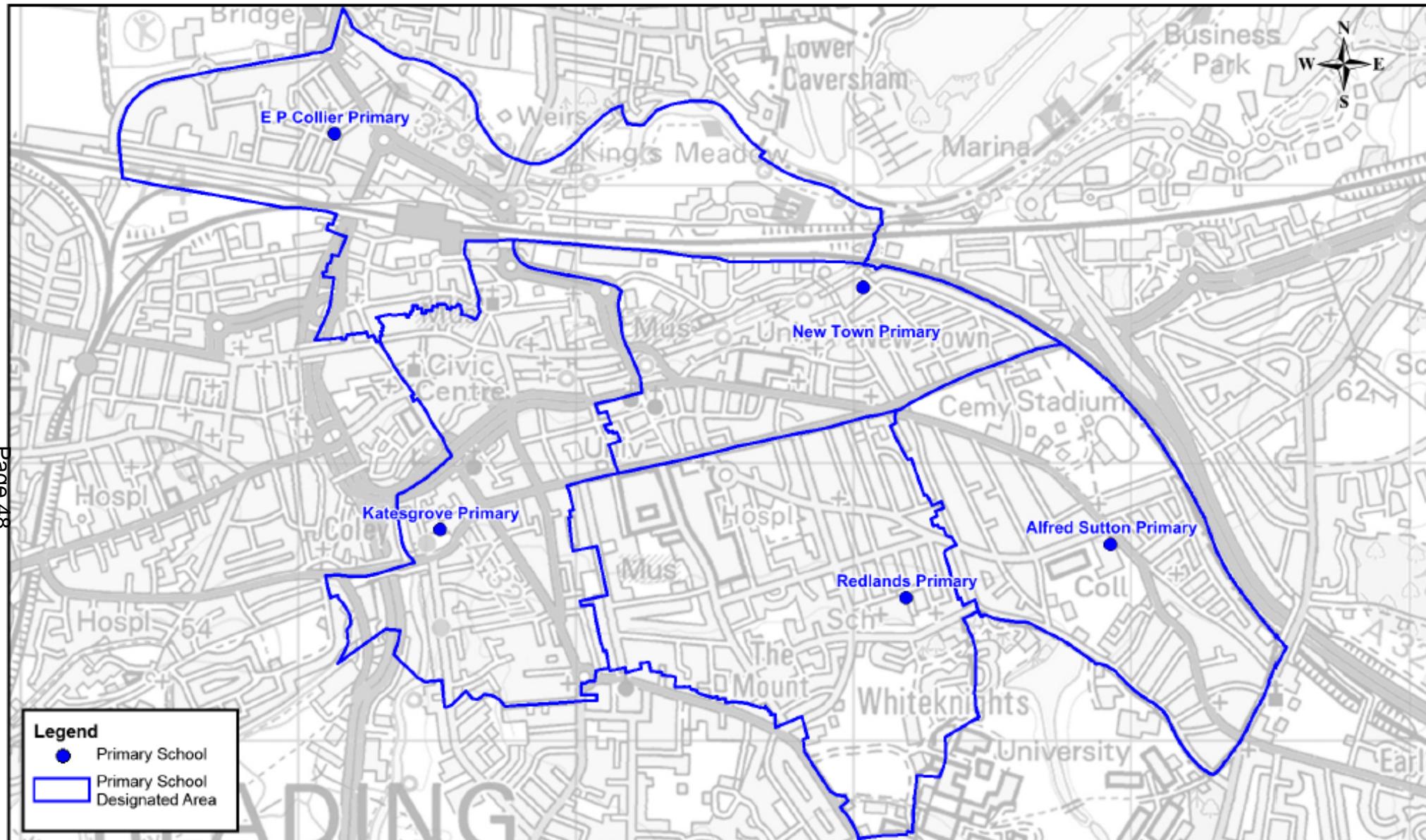
**Determined on**

The maps on the following pages show the primary school catchment areas. It includes catchments for Reading Borough Council maintained and other state maintained schools.

Please note, not all schools have a catchment area.

Some areas do not have a catchment school due to schools removing the catchment criteria from their policy.

The maps do not include parish catchments for schools. A parish catchment is an address which falls in the area of an ecclesiastical parish church.



**Title: Primary Schools Designated Areas**

Central and East Reading

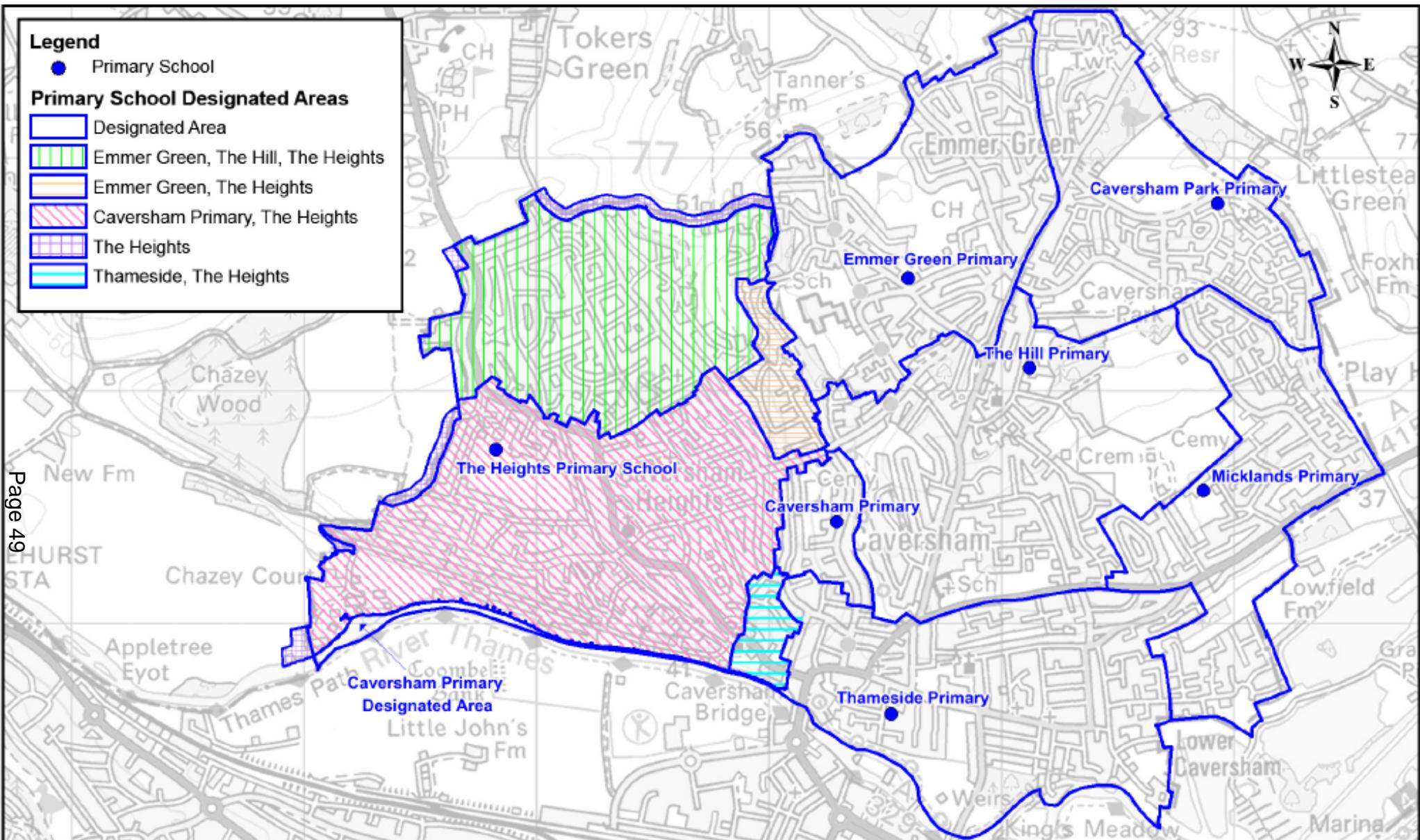
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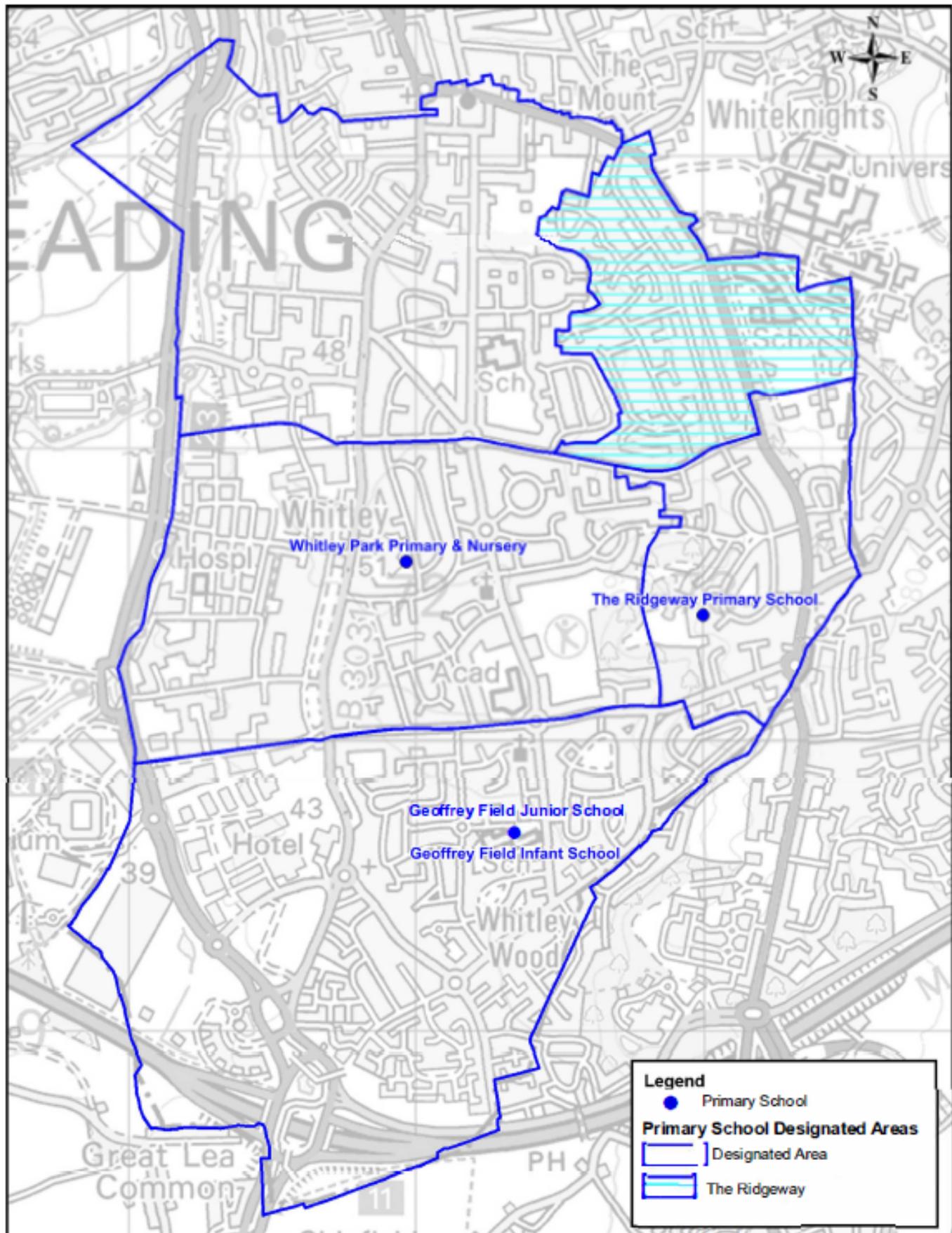
Date: 09/08/2018 Scale at A4: 1:18500

Produced by GIS & Mapping Services

Ref:7223 - G:\Mapinfo\Datasets\Client datasets\Education & Community\School Admissions\updated primary schools\designated areas maps







Title: Primary Schools Designated Areas  
South Reading

Dr. No.: GIS00013

Produced by GIS & Mapping Services

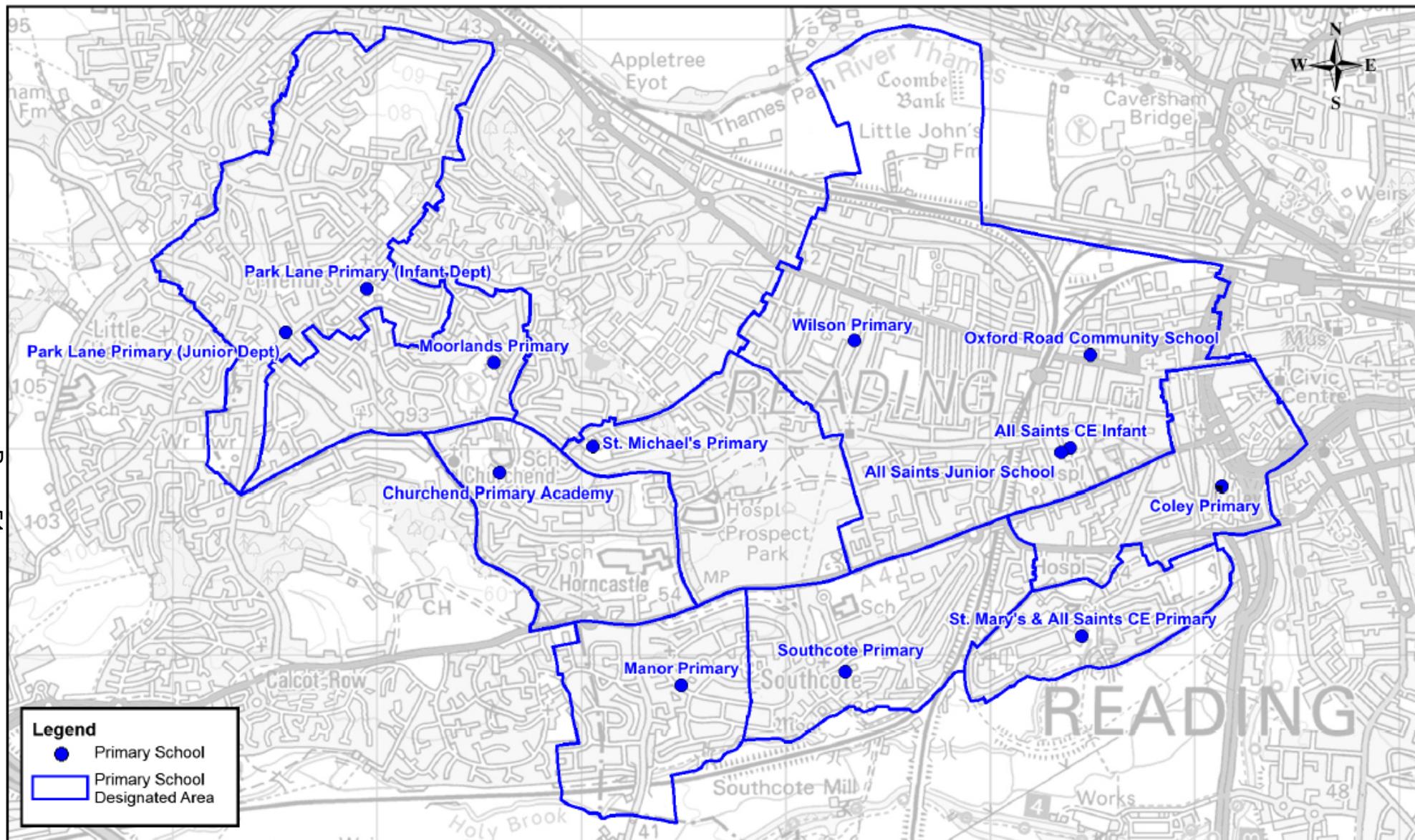
Date: 09/08/2018 Scale at A4: 1:18000

Ref: G4M/NDIC/D/Edu & Commu/School Admissions/updated primary/designated

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Reading  
Borough Council  
Working better with you



**Title: Primary Schools Designated Areas**

West Reading

Drg.No.: GIS00014

Date: 09/08/2018 Scale at A4: 1:25000

Produced by GIS & Mapping Services

Ref:7223 - G:\Mapinfo\Data\Client datasets\Education & Community\School Admissions\updated primary schools\designated areas maps



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**Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council  
Secondary Schools for the 2027/2028 academic year.**

**For September 2027 entry**

**Determined on**

## Contents

Introduction.....	3
Applications .....	4
Late Applications .....	5
Changes of preference .....	5
Change of Address.....	6
Processing Applications .....	6
Exchange of information .....	6
Resolving multiple offers .....	6
Informing schools .....	7
Informing Parents.....	7
Waiting Lists .....	8
Withdrawing a place.....	8
Requests for admission outside the normal age group.....	8
Disputes between Parents.....	9
In-Year Admissions .....	10
Timetable for the Secondary School Admissions Round 2027-2028.....	10

## Introduction

The Reading coordinated scheme was consulted between **17 October and the 28 November 2025**.

This Scheme is made under section 84 of the Standards and Framework Act 1998 and in accordance with the School Admissions (Admissions Arrangements and Coordination of admissions arrangements (England) Regulations 2014.

The purpose of this coordinated scheme for secondary school admissions is to ensure that every parent/carer of a child **resident in Reading Borough**, who has applied, receives **one offer** of a school place at the conclusion of the normal admissions round. At its heart is clear communication between Reading school admissions, other local authorities, community, and all state schools in Reading.

Parents/carers who live in the Borough of Reading **must** apply to Reading school admissions if they require a place for their child in any state school as part of a routine admissions round, including schools in other local authorities, academies and free schools. Applications cannot be submitted to a school or to the local authority in which the school is situated. Parents/carers living within any other local authority areas must apply through their own local authority admissions service.

Coordination with Reading school admissions does not affect the right of individual admission authorities to set and operate their own admission arrangements. Admission authorities for Reading schools will need to comply with the timetable set out below. As all schools in Reading are foundation, voluntary aided or academies, the governing body of each school will consult (if necessary) and determine their own admission arrangements for **September 2027**.

These arrangements deal mainly with a child's admission to secondary school during the school year from **September 2027 to August 2028**. The children concerned are typically those born between **1 September 2015** and **31 August 2016**. The place offered is a full-time place from September 2027.

**National Offer Day for Secondary Admissions is **1 March 2027****

## Applications

Reading Borough Council will put in place procedures to, where possible, ensure all parents/carers living in the Borough of Reading (with a child eligible to start secondary school in **September 2027**) will be aware of the application process. Eligible children living in

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Secondary Schools for the **2027/2028** academic year.

Reading will receive information about the process in early September **2026**. Children who attend Reading schools, but who are not resident in Reading, will be advised to apply to their home local authority.

Parents/carers are encouraged to apply online via the Reading Parent Portal. The site will be open from **1 September 2026 until 31 October 2026**.

Parents/carers will be invited to list four preferred schools and rank them in priority order. Parents/carers may also give reasons for their preferences. Parents/carers may list any state schools, including those outside the local authority; this includes academies, voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools.

The Reading common application form (and the online terms and conditions) will include a statement requiring parents to confirm they have read the *Guide for Parents and Carers* and accept the policies and procedures in that document.

Parents/carers should return their completed forms directly to the school admissions team at **Reading Borough Council**.

Parents/carers will complete the common application form online by the agreed deadline. The school admissions team will validate the application address. Validation, where possible, will be by reference to Council Tax data held by the **Council**. Where this is not possible, proof of residence will be required in the form of ownership documents or tenancy agreement.

Where, as part of its admission arrangements, a school requires additional information, parents/carers may also choose to complete a supplementary form to support their application. This should be submitted separately to the school. The *Guide for Parents and Carers* will identify those Reading schools for which a supplementary form may be necessary. These forms will be available from **the relevant Reading Borough Council website**. Supplementary forms are not applications and parent/carers must apply to Reading school admissions either on the common application form or online.

National Closing Date is **31 October 2026**.

### **Late Applications**

Applications received after the closing date will be treated as 'late' applications. However, if the late submission of the application is caused by extenuating circumstances (e.g. sudden illness or death of a close family member or the family having very recently moved to the area) the application may be accepted as "on time". The reason for late submission must be supported with documentary evidence received before **1 January 2027**.

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Secondary Schools for the **2027/2028** academic year.

Where no evidence is provided, it will be assumed that the application could reasonably have been submitted by the closing date. In such cases, the application will be treated as late and considered after all on time applications have been allocated.

All applications received from the **1 January 2027** are considered late and will be passed to the appropriate admission authority in Reading (or to the appropriate local authority) approximately two weeks after national offer day.

In these cases, parents/carers will be informed about the outcome of their application as per the timetable below, after National Offer Day. Unsuccessful applications for oversubscribed schools will be added to the waiting lists of those schools and ranked according to their oversubscription criteria.

Late applications will be processed approximately two weeks after national offer day. The first round of post-National Offer Day allocations will be **April 2026 (This is Subject to change)**. After this date, late application will be processed regularly. In each case, the cut-off date for consideration in each round of allocations will be 1 week prior to the allocation date.

### **Changes of preference**

Where the parent/carer wishes to change their preferences, they must submit a new application form (paper or online). If this is received by the school admissions team before **31 October 2026** it will be accepted as on time and will replace any previous application. Any preferences to be retained from a previous application must be listed on any subsequent application.

**Any change of preference after the 15 January must be done so by emailing the Reading School Admissions Team.**

Changes of preference received after **31 October 2026** will be treated as late applications in the way described above. However, applications for late change of preference where there are extenuating circumstances (e.g. sudden illness or death of a close family member or the family having very recently moved to the area) may be treated as on time, provided written evidence is supplied to support the late submission. This should be received by the school admissions team before **1 January 2027**. If no evidence is provided, the application will be treated as late. Any application for change of preference(s) received after **1 January 2027** will replace any previous application and be marked as late.

**Parents are advised to** think very carefully about submitting an application after this date, particularly if **they** have already submitted an on-time application.

Approximately two weeks after national offer day, late changes of preferences will be passed to the appropriate admission authority in Reading or to the appropriate local authority to be considered.

### **Change of Address**

As required by the School Admissions Code 2021, changes of address made after **31 October 2026 and before 1 January 2026**, may be considered as on time. If an applicant changes address after the **1 January 2027**, they will need to submit a new application based on the new address. The new application will be marked as 'late' and their previous application may be withdrawn. Documentary evidence of the change of address will be required.

### **Processing Applications**

#### **Exchange of information**

As per the timetable below, the Reading school admissions team will forward applications to other local authorities and admission authorities in Reading. At the same time, other local authorities will forward applications to Reading for their residents to be considered for Reading schools.

Depending on the arrangements agreed with the governing body of each school, the school admissions team will provide the school with relevant information to enable them to rank applicants using their oversubscription criteria, as per the timetable. Reading school admissions will not pass on the details of the parent/carer preference ranking to the school, and no school will be told about other schools a parent has listed.

As per the timetable, each admission authority in Reading will rank applications according to their published oversubscription criteria and return ranked lists to the school admissions team.

### **Resolving multiple offers**

As per the timetable, Reading school admissions will inform other local authorities of places offered in Reading schools to their residents. During the exchange of information, Reading school admissions will consider all cases where a child can be offered more than one of their preferences. In such cases, a place offered will be at the school a parent/carer listed highest in preference.

If a place cannot be offered at one of the preferred schools listed by the parent/carer, a place will normally be offered at the nearest school in the brough of Reading with a place available. If the offered school is one where Reading Borough Council is not the admission authority, this will be in consultation with the governing body of the school in question. If the nearest school with places is a faith school, parents/carers will be offered this as an option. Should the parent/carer be unhappy with a faith school being offered, they will be informed of other schools with available spaces (which may be further from their home).

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Secondary Schools for the **2027/2028** academic year.

Where no places are available at any Reading schools, parents/carers will be informed, and alternative schools (outside Reading Borough) may be offered. Such an offer will depend on availability and the agreement of the appropriate admission authority. This will not preclude parents/carers from requesting an alternative school, nor from lodging an appeal for their preferred school with the admission authority.

### Informing schools

As per the timetable, the school admissions team will send each Reading Secondary school a list of pupils to be offered a place at their school. This will be confidential to the school and must not be passed on to parents/carers.

### Informing Parents

On **National Offer Day**, parents/carers who submitted an 'on time' online application will receive an email with a formal offer and may view their offer online.

Parents/carers who submitted a paper application **and provided an email address will also receive an email with a formal offer. Any paper applications without an email address will receive details of their offer by letter (posted 2<sup>nd</sup> Class).**

The letter will:

- Inform parents/carers of their child's offered school.
- Inform parents/carers how to accept the offer and the deadline for accepting.
- Provide information on school transport.

If the offered school is not their first preference, parents/carers will also be supplied with the following information:

- Where they can find information showing how places were allocated at oversubscribed schools in Reading.
- How to submit an appeal.
- If the place offered is not their highest preference school(s), the child's name will be added to the waiting list(s) of any school(s) they listed higher in preference.

Parents/carers are required to advise Reading school admissions if they do not wish their child's name to remain on a waiting list.

### Waiting Lists

Two weeks after National Offer Day, 'waiting lists' will be administered for schools with more applicants than places available. A child's position on a waiting list is determined by the oversubscription criteria of the school. When a place becomes available, it will be offered to the child who is top of the waiting list. A child's position on a waiting list may go up or down for several reasons (e.g. pupil withdrawals or new and revised applications). When a place is allocated from the waiting list, the child's current allocation (for a lower preference school) will be removed and allocated to another student, if appropriate.

It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school admissions team if they no longer wish for their child to remain on the waiting list of a school. It will be assumed that a child is to remain on the waiting list of all schools listed higher in preference to one offered (unless the parent/carer indicates otherwise).

Waiting lists for all schools in Reading Borough will be kept until the end of **31 December 2027**. After this date, the policy of the individual school(s) will be followed. When the coordinated admissions round ends, on **31 August 2027**, waiting lists will continue to be managed as part of the In-Year admissions process.

### **Withdrawing a place**

If the offered place is not accepted within four weeks of national offer day, Reading school admissions will send a reminder and allow a further seven days for a reply. If there is still no response, the offer may be withdrawn. If it arises that a school offer was based on fraudulent, or intentionally misleading, information (which denied the place to another child), the place will be withdrawn.

### **Requests for admission outside the normal age group**

If your child is currently educated outside their normal age group, you will need to ask the admission authority of your preferred Secondary schools to agree for this to continue.

You should do this before the normal admissions round closes for your child's normal age group. This will be on 31 October of the year your child starts year 5, rather than year 6. This is so you know the outcome of the decision in time to submit an application for your child's normal age group, should your request be turned down.

In deciding what is best for your child, the admission authority will take into account that your child is currently being educated outside of their normal age group.

### **Transgender Students**

Where a transgender pupil wishes to apply for a single-sex school, they must do so in the normal way (outlined in this policy) by completing the Common Application Form. Reading school admissions will coordinate these admissions; however, it is for the admissions authority of the school(s) listed on the application to decide on the case. Where a place is refused, parents will be notified of their right to appeal.

### **Disputes between Parents**

Anyone with parental responsibility may apply for their child's school place and list up to four preferred schools. However, the child's address on the application should be recorded as the place they spend most of the week as set out in our definition of 'Home Address'

When completing application forms, parents/carers must tick to confirm they have parental responsibility for the child and that their application is made with the agreement of all parties having parental responsibility.

Where parents disagree over which school preferences should be named, we recommend starting the following process as early as possible as national closing dates are fixed and cannot be extended under any circumstances:

- We urge parents to work together in the best interests of their child; it is advised that the applicant should inform all other parties who have parental responsibility before submitting the application.
- All parties should agree with the school preferences to be listed. Any disagreements should be resolved before an application is submitted.
- If parents are unable to reach an amicable agreement, they should seek legal advice or recourse through the Family Court.

The local authority will only process one application per child and will only make one offer of a school place.

Where more than one application is received, the local authority (or local authorities if parents submit applications to more than one) will contact both applicants to advise that more than one application has been received and request they complete one application with one set of preferences for their child.

All evidence must be received by published closing dates, at which point a decision will be made as to which application is processed. The local authorities concerned may contact early years or education settings noted in the application, or other professionals working with the child where applicable, to assist in their decision making. Any evidence provided after the closing date which affects the content or processing of the application, may render the application late, and delay an offer of a school place.

We will not mediate between parents where there is a dispute. Only one application will be accepted, and the final decision will rest with the local authority after all submitted evidence has been considered.

### **In-Year Admissions**

The In- Year admissions arrangements for the school year, **September 2027- July 2028** will use the determined policies of **2027/2028**.

Parents/carers seeking admission for their child in Year 7- Year 11 of a secondary school in the Reading Borough should in most cases apply to Reading school admissions. Most secondary schools in the borough have opted to be part of the coordinated admission arrangements. A list of the schools to which a direct application is necessary may be

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Secondary Schools for the **2027/2028** academic year.

obtained from the **relevant Reading Borough Council website**. Where a school listed is in another local authority, the parent/carer will be advised to apply directly to that local authority and the application for that school will follow the relevant local authority's scheme

### **Timetable for the Secondary School Admissions Round 2027-2028**

Action	Date
<i>Guide for Parents and Carers to be placed website</i>	By <b>2 September 2026</b>
Information sent to Primary Schools to share with parent	By <b>8 September 2026</b>
Online Reading Parent Portal for admissions site open. <b>(opening date can be subject to change)</b>	<b>1 September 2026 – 31 October 2026</b>
National Closing date for receipt of applications.	<b>31 October 2026</b>
Late/change of preference applications accepted in extenuating circumstances; written support must be submitted at time of application.	By <b>31 December 2026</b>
Application details sent to secondary schools in Reading and other local authorities. Own Admissions Authority schools to provide Reading school admissions team with a list of children ranked according to the school's oversubscription criteria.	During <b>December 2026- January 2027</b>
Coordination to finish between other local authorities of offers that can be made to their residents in Reading schools.	<b>By 13 February 2027</b>
National Offer Day - Offer notifications sent to Reading Residents	<b>1 March 2027</b>
Deadline for parents to accept.	<b>15 March 2027</b>
Late applications for over-subscribed schools added to the waiting lists/change of preferences processed.	From <b>18 March 2027</b>
Coordination with other LA's ends.	<b>31 August 2027</b>
Waiting lists held for Reading schools.	Until at least <b>31 December 2027</b>

Coordinated Admissions scheme for Reading Borough Council Secondary Schools for the **2027/2028** academic year.



### Relevant Area

The School Standards & Framework Act 1998 requires Local Authorities to establish Relevant Area(s) for admission policy consultations. The Relevant Area is the area in which admission authorities must consult with schools regarding their proposed admission arrangements before finalising them.

Once the relevant area has been determined, any school or academy proposing to change arrangements will need to consult with all other interested parties within this area in line with the Schools Admission Code.

Reading's last consultation ran from 17 October until 9 December 2018 and was determined on the 14 February 2019 to ensure that schools and academies use the defined relevant area to inform their statutory consultation process on admission arrangements.

Reading has reviewed the current relevant area and as there is no change, this will be retained for school year **2027/28**. The relevant area was determined as follows:

1. Admissions Authorities must consult on admission arrangements for primary/infant and junior schools with

- Headteachers and Governing Bodies of all schools in Reading Borough
- Neighbouring Local Authorities – Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council
- Diocesan Authorities - Oxford Church of England Diocese, Portsmouth and Birmingham Catholic Diocese
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation Secondary Schools within 8 kilometres (5 miles) of the Reading Borough border
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation primary/junior/infant schools within 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) of the Reading Borough border

2. Having first consulted with the appropriate Diocese, **primary** Voluntary Aided schools must consult with:

- Reading Borough Council
- All primary/infant and junior and maintained nursery schools in Reading Borough

- Neighbouring Local Authorities – Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation primary/junior and infants' schools outside Reading Borough within 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) of the school

3. Primary Academies and Foundation and Trust schools must consult with

- Reading Borough Council
- All primary/infant/junior and maintained nursery schools in Reading Borough
- Neighbouring Local Authorities – Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation primary/junior and infants' schools outside Reading Borough within 3.2 (2 miles) kilometres of the school

4. Secondary Academies and Foundation schools must consult with:

- Reading Borough Council
- All primary/junior and secondary schools within Reading Borough
- Neighbouring Local Authorities – Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation Secondary Schools within 8 kilometres (five miles) of the Reading Borough border
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation primary/junior schools within 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) of the Reading Borough border

5. Having first consulted with the appropriate Diocese, **Secondary** Voluntary Aided schools must consult with:

- Reading Borough Council
- All primary/junior and secondary schools within Reading Borough
- Neighbouring Local Authorities – Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation Secondary Schools within 8 kilometres (5 miles) of the Reading Borough border
- All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation primary/junior schools within 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) of the Reading Borough border

# Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

For advice on this document please contact Clare Muir on 72119 or email [Clare.Muir@reading.gov.uk](mailto:Clare.Muir@reading.gov.uk).

Please contact the Project Management Office at [pmo@reading.gov.uk](mailto:pmo@reading.gov.uk) for advice and/or support to complete this form from a project perspective.

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Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed: School Admissions Arrangements 27-28

Directorate: Brighter Futures for Children  
Service: School Admissions

Name: Victoria Hannington  
Job Title: School Admissions Manager  
Date of assessment: 18/9/25

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## Version History

Version	Reason	Author	Date	Approved By

## Scope your proposal

- **What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?**

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School admissions are subject to detailed requirements, set out in law and particularly the School Admissions Code 2021, published by the Government and approved by Parliament. As part of those requirements, local authorities must draw up schemes for coordinating admissions to all maintained schools in their area. The purpose of coordinated schemes is to ensure that every parent/carer of a child living in Reading who has completed and submitted an on-time application receives one offer of a school place at the conclusion of the normal admissions round. The schemes set out a process and timescale to enable the offer of a single school place. They do not affect the right of individual admission authorities to set and operate their own admission arrangements, but they do include arrangements for resolving multiple offers, where a place can be offered at more than one school. Reading Borough Council is the admitting authority for community and voluntary controlled schools within the borough.

In addition, the Council is also required to determine the admission policy for community schools which includes the number of places to be made available at each school and the oversubscription criteria to be applied where there are more applicants than places available. Where the over-subscription criteria include catchment areas these must also be approved. The governing bodies of academies, free schools, voluntary aided and foundation schools are required to determine their own admission number and oversubscription criteria. Those schools also operate their own arrangements as part of the coordinated scheme - and where they are oversubscribed, continue to decide which applicants best meet their oversubscription criteria.

The School Admissions code of 2021 section 1.45 says all admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements at least every 7 years. Reading Borough Council last consulted on the policy in 2018 and therefore we must consult this year.

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- **Who will benefit from this proposal and how?**

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As above by law we have to have a scheme for coordinating admissions to all maintained schools in their area and a lawful admissions policy for all our community schools. The families of Reading will benefit from this policy.

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- **What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?**

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It is proposed that there will be a reduction to the Pupil Admissions Numbers for 3 community and voluntary controlled schools

By reducing published admissions numbers, these proposals will allow the schools in question to organise in a more structurally viable way and enable them to achieve financial viability, which will in turn, directly support the quality of education at the school.

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- **Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?**

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Individuals/Service Users - good quality service from School admissions, and a fair school admissions process for all.

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## Assess whether an EqIA is Relevant

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; advancing equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

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- Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some groups may be affected differently than others (due to race, disability, sex, gender, sexuality, age, religious belief or due to belonging to the Armed Forces community or care experience)? Make reference to the known demographic profile of the service user group, your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.

No                    The School admissions code is to ensure that all school places for maintained schools and Academies (excluding maintained special schools and special academies<sup>6</sup>) are allocated and offered in an open and fair way

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- Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Make reference to your complaints, consultation, feedback, media reports locally/nationally.

No

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If the answer is Yes to any of the above, you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment.

If No you **MUST** complete this statement.

An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because: The School Admissions code is very clear. The purpose of the Code is to ensure that all school places for maintained schools and Academies (excluding maintained special schools and special academies<sup>6</sup>) are allocated and offered in an open and fair way.

Admission authorities and local authorities must also comply with the regulations and legislation set out in the Appendix to this Code.

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**X**

Completing Officer

**X**

Lead Officer

## Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

- **Consultation**
- **Collection and Assessment of Data**
- **Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive**

Think about who does and doesn't use the service? Is the take up representative of the community? What do different minority groups think? (You might think your policy, project or service is accessible and addressing the needs of these groups, but asking them might give you a totally different view). Does it really meet their varied needs? Are some groups less likely to get a good service?

How do your proposals relate to other services - will your proposals have knock on effects on other services elsewhere? Are there proposals being made for other services that relate to yours and could lead to a cumulative impact?

**Example:** A local authority takes separate decisions to limit the eligibility criteria for community care services; increase charges for respite services; scale back its accessible housing programme; and cut concessionary travel.

Each separate decision may have a significant effect on the lives of disabled residents, and the cumulative impact of these decisions may be considerable.

This combined impact would not be apparent if decisions are considered in isolation.

### Consultation

How have you consulted with or do you plan to consult with relevant groups and experts. If you haven't already completed a Consultation form do it now. The checklist helps you make sure you follow good consultation practice.

[Consultation manager form - Reading Borough Council Dash](#)

Relevant groups/experts	How were/will the views of these groups be obtained	Date when contacted
As part of the school admissions code the relevant area are the following:	Via an online consultation	The consultation will take place between 17 October and 28 November 2025
Headteachers and Governing Bodies of all schools in Reading Borough		
Neighbouring Local Authorities - Oxfordshire County Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council		
Diocesan Authorities - Oxford Church of England Diocese, Portsmouth and Birmingham Catholic Diocese		
All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation Secondary Schools within 8 kilometres (5 miles) of the Reading Borough border		
All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation primary/junior/infant schools within 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) of the Reading Borough border		
All Academies, Voluntary Aided or Foundation Secondary Schools within 8 kilometres (five miles) of the Reading Borough border		

## Collect and Assess your Data

Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.

(Please delete relevant ticks)

- **Describe how this proposal could impact on racial groups**
- **Is there a negative impact? / No**

---

An admission authority **must not** discriminate on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation, against a person in the arrangements and decisions it makes as to who is offered admission as a pupil.

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- **Describe how this proposal could impact on Sex and Gender identity (include pregnancy and maternity, marriage, gender re-assignment)**
- **Is there a negative impact? / No**

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An admission authority **must not** discriminate on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation, against a person in the arrangements and decisions it makes as to who is offered admission as a pupil.

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- **Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability**
- **Is there a negative impact? / No**

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An admission authority **must not** discriminate on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation, against a person in the arrangements and decisions it makes as to who is offered admission as a pupil.

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- **Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)**
- **Is there a negative impact? / No**

---

An admission authority **must not** discriminate on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation, against a person in the arrangements and decisions it makes as to who is offered admission as a pupil.

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- **Describe how this proposal could impact on age**
- **Is there a negative impact? No**

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- **Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief**
- **Is there a negative impact? No**

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An admission authority **must not** discriminate on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation, against a person in the arrangements and decisions it makes as to who is offered admission as a pupil.

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- **Describe how this proposal could impact on the Armed Forces community (including reservists and veterans and their families)**
- **Is there a negative impact?** No

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The School admissions code allows Admissions Authorities to give priority to the Armed Forces community. Therefore this would have an positive impact.

In Reading we have a limited number of families from the Armed Forces applying for School places

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- **Describe how this proposal could impact on care experienced young people and adults.**
- **Is there a negative impact?** No

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School Admissions only cover statutory School age children

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## Make a Decision

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you **MUST** assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

### 1. No negative impact identified - Go to sign off

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- How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?

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Monitoring through the school admissions process will consider equality considerations, compliance with the School Admissions code and to ensure no negative impacts as a result of this policy and arrangements.

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06/01/2026

Victoria Hannington

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06/01/2026

Brian Grady

Completing Officer

Signed by: S-1-12-1-4139171795-1183399052-2079477639-2797310850/e7c2abb6-aa5d-489d-ab6c-87cb04a32e1

Lead Officer

Signed by: S-1-12-1-4139171795-1183399052-2079477639-2797310850/e7c2abb6-aa5d-489d-ab6c-87cb04a32e1

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## Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



**Reading**  
Borough Council

Working better with you

14 January 2026

<b>Title</b>	Suicide Prevention in Reading
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report</b>	Melissa Wise, Executive Director Communities & Adult Social Care Dr Matthew Pearce Director of Public Health
<b>Report author</b>	Martin White, Consultant in Public Health
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Rachel Eden, Lead Member - Education and Public Health
<b>Council priority</b>	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That ACE Committee notes the contents of this paper; the progress made on the suicide prevention action plan and the resources allocated to this area of work to ensure continued delivery.</li> </ol>

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report outlines the current policy context for suicide prevention and domestic abuse in England and in Berkshire. It presents data about the current incidence and prevalence of suicides in Reading along with a summary of what is known about domestic abuse and suicide at a local level. It summarises what is known about the links between suicide risk and interpersonal violence including domestic abuse and the best available evidence for preventative action. The main themes and current challenges that face local systems are identified through the lens of a violence prevention approach.
- 1.2. A summary of progress on the local suicide prevention action plan is provided with details of how the Health in All Policies approach and the new operating model for the Public Health team will address this important area of work.

### 2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The National Suicide Prevention Strategy for England 2023 – 2028 was launched in September 2023 with the aim to reduce the England suicide rate within two and half years. It has a cross-sector action plan that sets out priorities for action that include improving data and evidence; providing tailored and targeted support to priority groups including children and young people, middle aged men, pregnant women, new mothers, and those who have self-harmed. It also includes addressing risk factors; online safety, media, and technology; providing effective and appropriate crisis support; tackling means and methods of suicide; providing timely and effective bereavement support and making suicide everybody's business.

2.2. It builds on the previous strategy and recognises the emerging evidence that links domestic abuse and gambling with suicide risk; it notes the studies that demonstrate that domestic abuse is a risk factor for suicide amongst victims, perpetrators, and children. Measures are outlined to improve data; measure the effectiveness of interventions to support children who experience domestic abuse and to improve the response of the NHS to staff and patients. The strategy aligns with other government policy such as the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan 2022 and emphasises the need for multi sectoral collaboration with training for professional curiosity when working with individuals at risk.

2.3. When it was launched the strategy was supported by limited government funding and it remains dependent upon local authorities, the NHS, and voluntary organisations for its continued implementation. The previous strategy required local authorities and public health teams to lead by developing local multi agency suicide prevention action plans to implement the national strategic intention. While this latest strategy has been supported by some funding it has been argued that the strategy lacks sufficient detail, needs more robust funding and mandatory training.

2.4. The national strategy and its action plan are translated locally through the Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy 2021-26 and the local Reading suicide prevention action plan. It should be noted that suicide prevention action planning is taking place in other fora across the Thames Valley and that there are voluntary commissioning arrangements between the local authorities, academic institutions, NHS trusts and voluntary sector that maintain near real time monitoring through the Thames Valley Police and ongoing bereavement support through AMPARO.

2.5. National policy for Domestic Abuse is based on the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This has led to increased reporting, new protections, and a focus on non-physical abuse. The Act provided a legal definition and also legally recognised children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right for the first time. This is where they see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse, and are related to either the perpetrator or victim.

2.6. The Act was a step towards ensuring consistent victim centred support. It placed specific statutory duties on local authorities along with statutory guidance that set out detailed requirements about the provision of support within safe accommodation and ensuring a coordinated, strategic approach to prevention. This included:

- the production of a needs assessment
- the development of a local domestic abuse strategy
- the establishment of Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Boards with prescribed member organisations and a reporting schedule.

The guidance provides a framework for implementation of the duties to support all victims with an emphasis on disadvantaged population groups.

2.7. In March 2022, a cross-government Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy and Domestic Abuse Plan was announced. In it the government underscored its policy commitment with a National Statement Of Expectations For Commissioning Violence Against Women And Girls Services. There are five expectations for local strategies and services. They should:

1. Put the victim/survivor at the centre of service design and delivery.
2. Have a clear focus on perpetrators in order to keep victims and survivors safe.
3. Take a strategic, system-wide approach to commissioning, acknowledging the gendered nature of VAWG.
4. Are locally led and safeguard individuals at every point.

5. Raise local awareness of the issues and involve, engage, and empower communities to seek, design, and deliver solutions to prevent VAWG.

### 3. The Proposal

#### Epidemiology, national and local data

3.1. It should be noted that inferences drawn from the small numbers that underpin the data about suicides should be treated with caution to avoid placing vulnerable people at risk. While the national rates move slowly with marked upticks that coincide with economic downturns for example, the at-risk population groups remain unchanged and there remains a strong case for maintaining the focus of preventative action at a local level.

3.2. The Office for National Statistics most recent data about suicides in England and Wales from 1981 to 2024 was published on 3rd October 2025. The statistical methods that were used for this were changed to account for the lag period for registrations and to allow for a more reliable comparison between years. The adjusted registration period of within 15 months of the end of the occurrence year shows that suicide occurrence rates have been fairly stable from 2018 to 2023 when the rates were 10.7 and 10.4 per 100,000.

3.3. In 2024 in England alone there were 5717 suicides registered, a rate of 11.1 per 100,000. Of these 4231, 74% were males and 1486 26% were females. Males are 3 times more likely to die by suicide in England than females. The highest age specific rates were in males aged 50 to 54 years with a rate of 26.8 per 100,000 and in females aged 45 to 49 years with a rate of 7.9 per 100,000.

3.4. From 2022 to 2024 in Reading all rates were similar to those in England.

*Chart 1 Suicide Indicators Reading profile*



Chart 1 shows that for all indicators Reading is similar to England. The all-persons rate was 10.4 per 100,000, for males it was 14.4 and for females it was 6.5 per 100,000.

## Chart 2 All person suicide trends in Reading 2001 to 2004

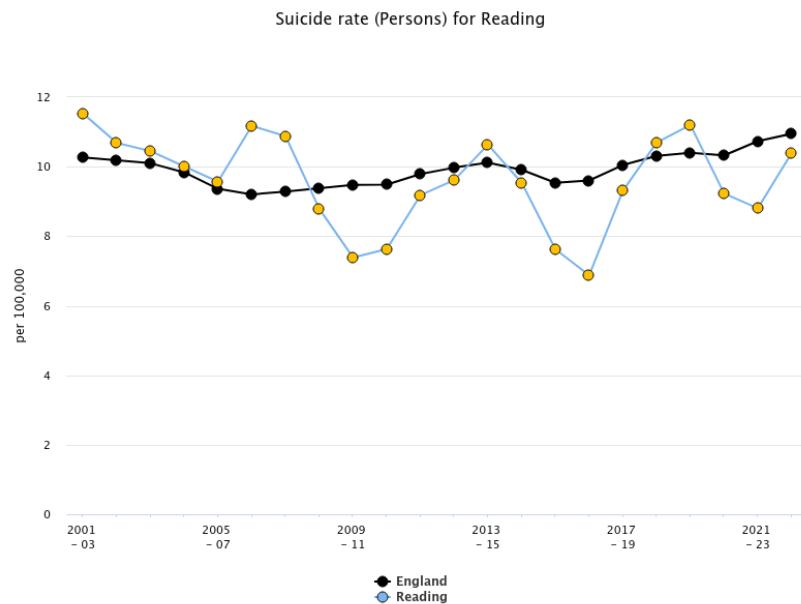


Chart 2 presents the trend lines over a 20-year period that evidences how small local numbers vary when compared with the statistically more reliable larger regional and national data sets. This shows how an inference of locally rising rates may be misleading.

## Chart 3 Rates of suicide in Reading compared with the South East Region 2022-2024

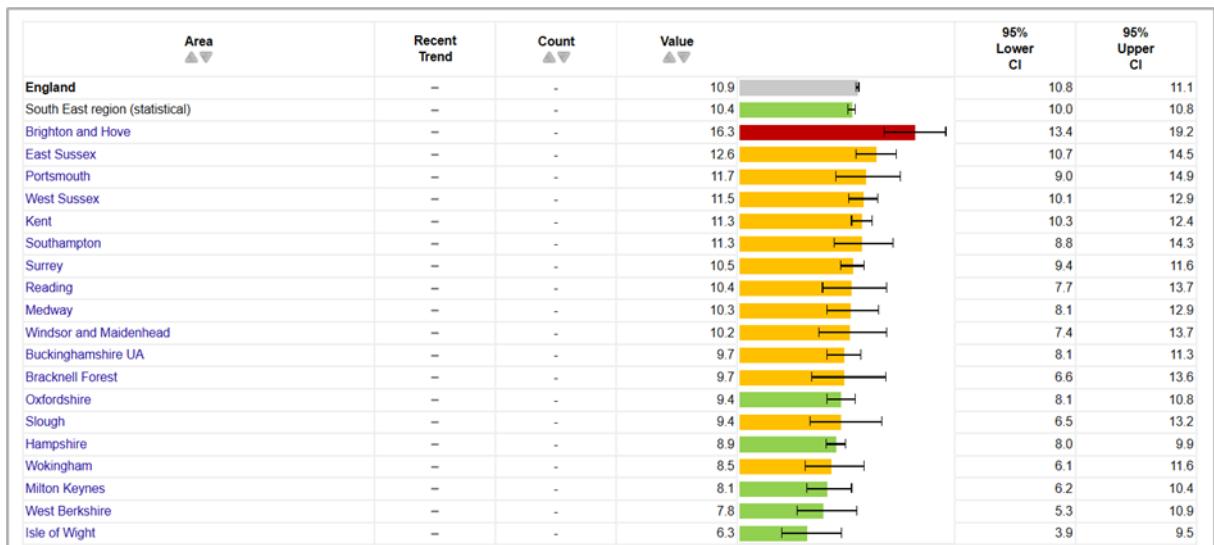


Chart 3 shows how Reading compares with other local areas in the South Eastern region. It can be seen that the confidence intervals overlap with all other areas and shows that Reading is not an outlier for high rates of suicide.

3.5. These charts are based on data about confirmed suicides that are based on coroner's conclusions. The estimated average time from the event to an inquest and a conclusion is 144 days. This lag presents a challenge for effective prevention action such as timely bereavement support with 72 hours and the early identification of novel methods or clusters, which is three or more potentially linked cases within a short time frame. The monitoring of near real time data at a local level is dependent on an arrangement with Thames Valley police and a part time post that is funded by combined local authority

public health grant funding. This generates a monthly bulletin that summarises police incident reporting about suspected suicides.

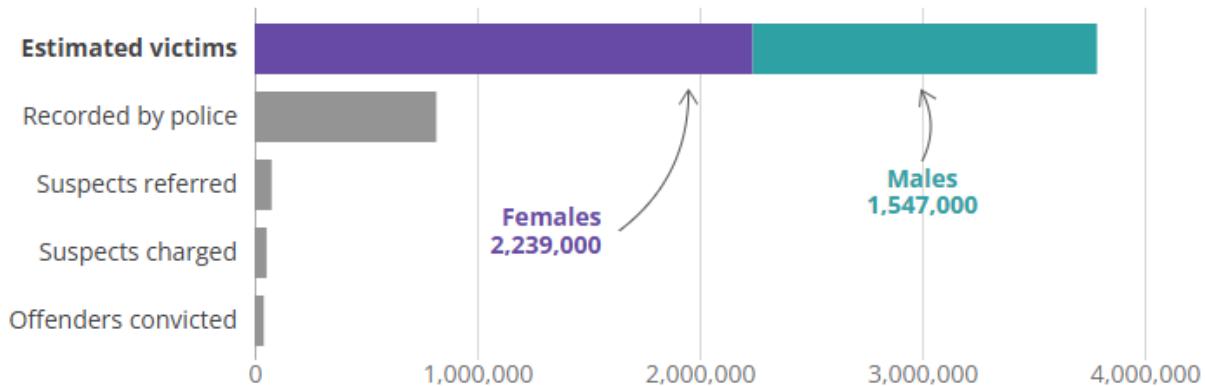
### **Children and Young people.**

- 3.6. An analysis of 2011 census data by the Office for National Statistics Suicide published in February 2025 was based on 8 million children and young people in England and builds a picture of those groups who are at a higher risk of dying by suicide. The rates were higher for males and for children in households where the parent carers held a degree level qualification. An analysis of 4 million children and young people aged 10 to 18 years old found that males with special educational needs (SEN) without a statement such as School Action plans, Statutory Assessment or Early Years Intervention were 1.5 higher than those with no recorded SEN provision.
- 3.7. It should be noted that the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide (NCISH) has produced analysis that cautions against the use of risk assessment in some contexts. A study from 2016 notes that the numbers of suicides amongst children and young people is low but rises in late teens. It lists a number of factors that contribute to suicide in young people and that 15% of the reported antecedents of a young person suicide was abuse and or neglect.

### **Domestic abuse**

- 3.8. National data about domestic abuse comes from a variety of official and unofficial sources, each with their strengths and limitations. The data is based on estimates from surveys, reports of cases in the criminal justice system and insights gained from surveys by a range of charities about violence against women and girls including domestic abuse. The combination of these sources builds an overall picture but for a number of reasons it is likely that there will be underreporting.
- 3.9. In 2025 work was underway to develop a new measure of domestic abuse and new survey questions were added to the Crime Survey for England and Wales in April 2023 as part of a split-sample trial until March 2025. Half of respondents are asked new questions, and the other half are asked the existing questions.
- 3.10. The ONS bulletin on Domestic Violence from November 2025 brings together the latest data about domestic abuse from a range of different organisations and summarises the latest figures from the Crime Survey for England and Wales. The main points are:
  - The Crime Survey for England and Wales estimated that 3.8 million people (7.8%) aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the survey year ending (YE) March 2025.
  - An estimated 2.2 million females (9.1%) and 1.5 million males (6.5%) experienced domestic abuse in the last year.
  - There was no statistically significant change in the prevalence of domestic abuse experienced in the last year, compared with the previous year; comparisons cannot be made before YE March 2024 because of the introduction of new survey questions to measure domestic abuse.
  - The police recorded 816,493 domestic abuse-related crimes in England and Wales in the year ending March 2025; a decrease compared with the previous year (851,062), which reflects recent changes in police recording practices.
  - There were 54,987 domestic abuse-related prosecutions in England and Wales in YE March 2025 compared with 51,183 in YE March 2024.

**Chart 4 Prevalence of domestic abuse in the last year, for people aged 16 years and over, England and Wales, year ending March 2025**



Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales from the Office for National Statistics

- 3.11. The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) National Policing Statement from July 2024 about violence against women and girls provided a summary of available data and further insight at a national level about domestic abuse and suicide at a national level. It set out clearly the scale and severity of violence against women and girls which accounts for approximately 20% of all recorded crime with domestic abuse which affects 1 in 12 women in the UK. The link between domestic abuse and suicide is emphasised, more people died by suicide following domestic abuse than were killed by a partner.
- 3.12. The NPPC national statement references the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor Services SafeLives Insights Dataset 2022-23 that indicates the scale of the problem, across a three-year dataset between 2020 and 2023 the numbers of suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse had increased from 51 out of 222 in 2020/21 to 72 out of 259 in 2021/22 and to 93 out of 723 in 2022/23.
- 3.13. Of 262 deaths recorded between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 it was found that 8 were suspected suicide following domestic abuse (SVSDA). From 2020 to 2024 there were 1012 domestic abuse related deaths of which 354 deaths were SVSDA. In 2023-2024, 37% of deaths were SVSDA that is 80 deaths out of 262. 73% of victims were female between 25 and 54 years.
- 3.14. As police forces work to follow guidance and improve case identification and submission these reports provide an insight of how the growing awareness suggests that a substantial proportion of suicides may be linked to domestic abuse.
- 3.15. In section 8 of the NPCC December 2024 report about Domestic Abuse, it was observed that there has been a gradual decrease in domestic abuse over the past decade, but an increase in sexual assault. 2.2% of people aged 16 years and over, around 2 million victims, the majority of whom are women, had experienced domestic abuse in the past year; 3.1% around 1.5 million people had experienced stalking and 2.1% around 1 million people had experienced sexual assault.
- 3.16. With the limitations outlined above, data provided by the Thames Valley Police Service Improvement Unit was presented at a meeting of the Domestic Abuse Board for the Reading Community Partnership in May 2025. It helps to build a local picture of need and risk driven by interpersonal violence in Reading and the extent to which domestic abuse may be a factor in suicides that have happened in the borough.
- 3.17. In Reading there were 457 domestic occurrences involving children in 2024-25, a fall from the peak of 625 in 2020-21. In 2024-25 there were 1139 domestic abuse crimes and non-crimes in Reading, again a fall from the high of 1327 in 2021-22. There was also a fall in all domestic abuse crimes and incidents from a peak of 1085 in Q3 of 2022-23 to 966 in Q4 of 2024-25 and fall in the records of all coercive crimes with adult

victims from a peak of 52 in Q1 2021-22 to 22 in Q4 of 2024-25. It is unclear why there appears to be a downward trend given a heightened awareness.

- 3.18. It should be noted that when compared with other local authorities across Berkshire the available numbers of domestic abuse crimes and non-crimes for the period of 2019 to 2025 are significantly higher in both Reading and Slough. The number of Domestic Abuse repeat victims in Reading rose to 243 in Q4 2024-25 from 211 in Q3. The number of repeat victims heard at Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences in Reading had risen to 63 in the period April 2024 to March 2025 from 59 in January 2024 to December 2024. It is unknown how many cases involved children in the household.
- 3.19. An informal sample of incident reporting data from the Thames Valley Real Time Surveillance System provides further detail at a local level based on what is known about suspected suicides and the circumstances at the time of death. Domestic abuse is not yet a discrete recording category, but a summary of records covering 2022 to 2024 recently shared by the Thames Valley Police Suicide Bereavement Support Liaison Coordinator have shown that domestic abuse appeared to be implicated in 2 cases from 2022, 5 cases from 2023 and 2 cases from 2024.

### **Data about domestic abuse and suicide**

- 3.20. The availability of data remains a challenge and the extent to which domestic abuse is a factor in suicide is still being uncovered as national and local stakeholders continue to raise awareness and lobby for more resources to be committed to answering fundamental questions. There are gaps both at a national level and at a local level in Reading about what is known about how many victims of domestic abuse die by suicide. The picture becomes clearer as police reporting systems and multi-agency collaboration improves. There are gaps in what is known at a local level across all communities, about:
  - who the high-risk groups are
  - where the high-risk points in the abuse cycle might be
  - how many perpetrators die by suicide
  - how many children living in affected households
  - what interventions might reduce the risk of deaths by suicide.
- 3.21. The emerging picture along with research and evidence gaps is reflected in a 2021 NCISH report into suicides by middle aged men which found that 7% of middle-aged men who died by suicide had been victims of domestic abuse and 10% had been perpetrators. Data from Australia showed that 25% of suicides between 2009 and 2016 had been impacted by domestic abuse. The NPCC report cited above observed that in 2023 nationally there were more suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse (93) than there were intimate partner homicides (80).
- 3.22. The fourth annual report of the national Domestic Homicide Project published in March 2025 examines all deaths identified by the police as domestic abuse related with findings about 262 deaths recorded between April 2023 to March 2024. Of these 98 (36%) were suspected suicides following domestic abuse. This was the second year in a row when the proportion of suspected suicides following domestic abuse was more than unexpected deaths, intimate partner homicides, and adult family homicides.
- 3.23. Since 2011 Community Safety Partnerships have had a responsibility to establish Domestic Homicide Reviews and a multi-agency panel to learn from a death, to highlight ways of improving responses to domestic abuse and to identify how local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard victims. The reviews take place even if a suspect is not charged with an offence or they are tried and acquitted. A Home Office quantitative analysis of 153 domestic homicide

reviews from October 2022 to September 2023 highlighted the significant link between domestic abuse and suicide and underscored the impact of domestic abuse as a contributing factor to suicide. 80 of the 158 victims (51%) had been in an intimate partner relationship with the suspect. In 60% of cases the victims were females and in 88% of cases suspects were men. It was also found that children aged under 18 stayed in 41% of households where the victim died by suicide.

### **Effective Prevention**

- 3.24. Preventing suicide and domestic abuse is complex. It requires a multi-faceted approach that recognises that one size does not fit all and that the structural drivers of poverty and discrimination contribute to the social gradient that appears amongst cases and the greater risk amongst those experiencing socio economic deprivation. It is the case that the highest rate of suicide is consistently amongst men, particularly middle-aged men. The reasons for this are complex but it is clear that any effective suicide prevention strategy and action plan will need to address those who are in crisis as a result of debt, housing difficulties, bereavement, loss of income, divorce and separation and may also have problems with drugs and alcohol.
- 3.25. An important study from 2021 by the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Homicide (NCISH) at the University of Manchester listed prevention measures that are effective against cumulative risk including family and parenting support, economic protection with access to services including voluntary and community, crisis support and collaboration across services. The opportunities for prevention amongst men include
  - the adaptation of interventions to suit men's needs
  - safer prescribing in accordance with national guidelines
  - recognition of risks after self-harm
  - bereavement support that is tailored for men
  - improved online safety
- 3.26. When considering what effective preventative actions can be taken at a local level, the World Health Organisation violence prevention approach provides a helpful model, see Appendix 1. In its typology of violence, suicide is included as self-directed violence and domestic abuse is included as interpersonal violence. The model proposes four steps that seek to improve the health and safety of everyone by addressing the underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood that an individual will become a victim or a perpetrator of violence.
- 3.27. The WHO Ecological Framework included in Appendix 2 addresses the complexity of how different factors combine to explain why some population groups are at a higher risk. It views the outcome as the interaction of individual history and biology, personal relationships, the community context and societal factors and cultural norms that are all treated with equal importance.
- 3.28. The iceberg model of self-harm and suicide below positions suicide to the end of a continuum of self-harm where much occurs beyond service provision and in the community. It helps to make the case for why suicide prevention should be integrated into other local strategies and programmes across the life course and for prevention to include opportunities at a community level.

Iceberg model of self-harm and suicide



3.29. In current practice at a local level, the strongest available evidence for effective suicide prevention drives the restriction of access to the means and the provision of timely bereavement support within 72 hours for those connected to a suspected suicide. The NCISH 10 Ways to Improve Safety identified methods for mental health services that link strongly with wider system actions including early identification and intervention in cases of depression, effective management of self-harm and substance abuse; training about how to respond to suicidal ideation and referral to support services; 24/7 crisis services; follow up care post discharge from mental health services; therapeutic interventions and building coping skills; community and social support; public awareness and stigma reduction; data driven and targeted approaches; collaboration and policy integration

3.30. The successful prevention of domestic abuse and suicide in other countries that have achieved significant reductions in female suicides when compared with the UK with the current reliance on collaboration between the NHS and police. They may indicate priorities for prevention activity here in Reading.

3.31. Australia and Canada have proactive screening for interpersonal violence and domestic abuse by trained GPs with a national hotline and community-based programmes that are nuanced for racially minoritised groups and shelter counselling.

3.32. In Chile and India policy innovation has focussed on addressing the root causes rather than the immediate impact on individuals. For example, by limiting the availability of alcohol and empowering women to become economically independent. Community engagement in South Africa and India has leveraged their equivalent of the voluntary community social enterprise sector. This has bolstered support for marginalised groups that experience difficulty in gaining access to trauma informed counselling; addressed the cultural norms that exacerbate abuse and provided suicide prevention training for community health workers.

3.33. The Domestic Abuse Commissioner's policy paper from January 2025 entitled 'Shifting the Scales: Transforming the criminal justice response to domestic abuse' makes 11 recommendations that align with these recurrent evidence-based themes and places an emphasis on adequate resourcing for:

- data and accountability
- multi-agency working

- the prioritisation of domestic abuse
- regular training to improve police response
- establishing of a systemwide culture of professional curiosity that avoids missed opportunities for preventative action.

### **Progress against the Reading suicide prevention action plan**

3.34. There are other suicide prevention forums in the local system, and their activity supports local action in Reading. These include the Pan-Berkshire suicide prevention group, the Thames Valley Suicide Prevention and Intervention Network (SPIN) with Oxford University, the Integrated Care Board and NHS trusts. The linkage with the Pan-Berkshire planning group is important. The Berkshire Directors of Public Health have agreed to continue funding for the important underlying functions that the Pan Berkshire group leads with an allocation from their public health grant. This funds the continuation of high-level Berkshire system priorities and actions such as data monitoring and analysis of first responder incident reporting; the bereavement support service through AMPARO; the development of a near real time surveillance system and a new suicide audit of coroner's records for Berkshire.

3.35. The Reading local suicide prevention action planning group was restarted in 2023 following the COVID 19 pandemic and staffing changes. The group was convened and chaired first by Brighter Futures for Children and then more recently by the Public Health team. The group has continued to meet on a quarterly basis with attendance from between 6 to 15 partner organisations representing stakeholders across the local system. The meetings have included briefings from the Public Health team about data, policy, and evidence. Visitors also provide updates about a range of national and regional strategic priority areas and partners update each other on their work that is linked to the priority areas included in the action plan. These have included the target hardening of potentially high frequency locations in Reading such a car parks and bridges, incidence of suicide on the local rail network and more recently presentations about domestic abuse and gambling harms.

3.36. Over this period the group has planned to collaborate on a review of the local action plan for Reading. It was reviewed in 2023 with Appendix 3 presenting the current plan on a page.

3.37. From 2026 onwards the Reading suicide prevention group and the local suicide prevention action plan will be resourced through the Health in All Policies approach for Reading Borough Council and the establishment of a new operating model for the Public Health team. This will include an Advanced Public Health Practitioner post that is dedicated to Public Mental Health and Suicide Prevention and will lead the action planning group to drive the review and implementation of the prevention action plan. The role will be supported by a proportionate investment from the public health grant through the Closing the Gap 2 contracts with the local voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, Reading Samaritans and the Compass Recovery College.

## **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

4.1. The prevention of suicide and domestic abuse contributes to the Council Plan 2025-28 through the priority of Thriving Communities and the safeguarding and support of the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children. Raising awareness of effective prevention and securing resources to facilitate interagency collaboration are encompassed by the plan's objectives to reduce inequalities in health and life expectancy: tackle social and economic inequalities in partnership with the voluntary and community sector and reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, working with Thames Valley Police and other partners.

4.2. Suicide Prevention and the Promotion of adult and children's mental health and wellbeing fall within the implementation plans of Priority 4 and 5 of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2030.

4.3. The Berkshire Suicide Prevention Strategy has a vision to reduce deaths by suicide in Berkshire across the life course and ensure better knowledge and action around self-harm' it has a focus on tailoring approaches to improve mental health in specific groups with 5 core priority areas agreed across the six authorities in Berkshire:

- Children and Young People, including the impact of trauma and adversity, recovery from COVID-19, neurodiversity, LGBTQ+, and transitions
- Self-harm; as a risk factor, groups vulnerable to self-harm, hospital admissions, mental health, young people, and self-harm
- Female suicide deaths; including perinatal mental health, domestic abuse, parental, or carer stress
- Economic factors; including the impact of COVID-19, debt and poor mental health, benefits, socio-economic disadvantage, and gambling
- Supporting those who are bereaved or affected by suicide, including local suicide bereavement support, specialist suicide bereavement support, and those impacted by suicide in the workplace

## **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

5.1. There are no environmental and climate implications arising from this report which is for information only.

## **6. Community Engagement**

6.1. At this stage of development, no consultation, community engagement, or information is required.

## **7. Equality Implications**

7.1. This paper is for information only and there is no relevant decision that requires an Equality Impact Assessment.

## **8. Other Relevant Considerations**

8.1. There are a number of other issues that are relevant for this report:

- Violence prevention is a Public Health priority, the scale of violence against women and girls and levels of interpersonal violence are a cause for concern as is the gendered nature of domestic abuse the burden of which falls disproportionately on females.
- The impact on the Human Rights of victims is considerable, for women and girls particularly those from marginalised groups, who have the right to life; right to be free from inhuman or degrading treatment and the right to justice and an effective remedy.
- Although relatively small in number the prevention of suicides amongst children and young people in care is a safeguarding priority and a duty of the council as a corporate parent to strengthen the opportunities for partners in the local system to learn together and inform professional practice and cultures based on the findings from safeguarding reviews inquests and coroner's regulation 28 notices.
- Domestic abuse and linked suicides together and separately present risks to Community Safety, particularly for women and girls and will be a priority for Community Safety Partnerships. At a local level, the recommendation from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner will depend on advocacy through multi agency collaborations for trauma informed training and specialist skills for first responders

and the criminal justice system along with primary prevention that intervenes at community level and acts on awareness and the determinants of health.

**9. Legal Implications**

9.1. Not applicable.

**10. Financial Implications**

10.1. Not applicable.

**11. Timetable for Implementation**

11.1. Not applicable.

**12. Background Papers**

12.1. There are none.

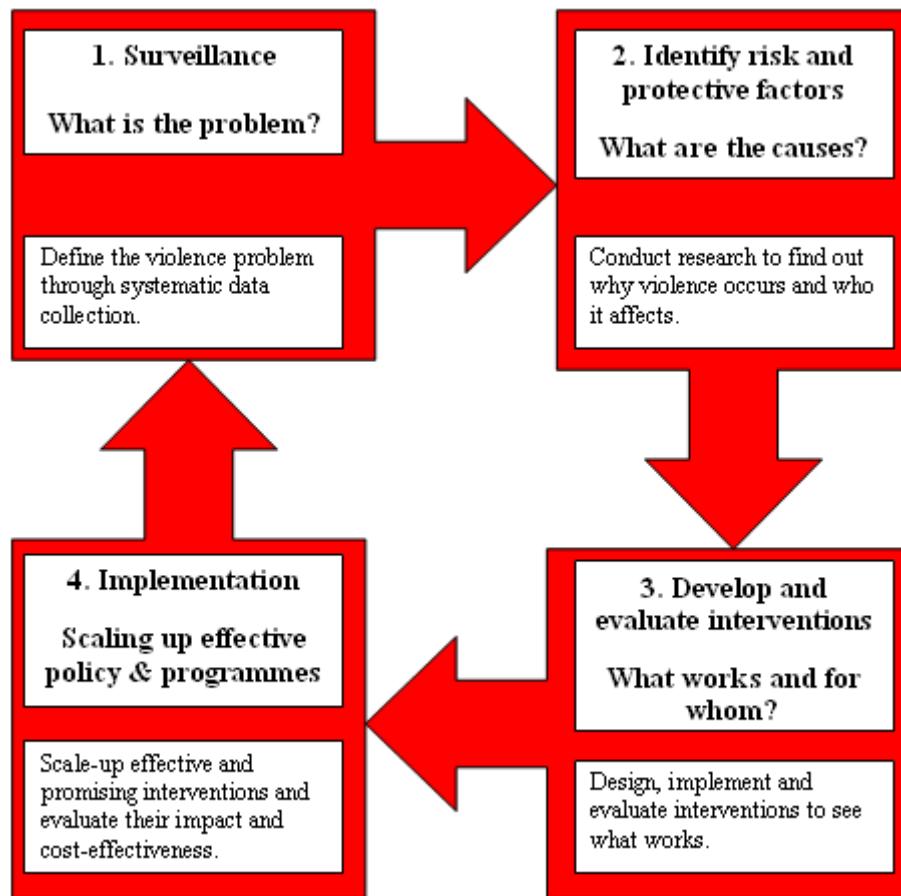
**Appendices**

1. **The WHO Violence Prevention Alliance Public Health Approach**

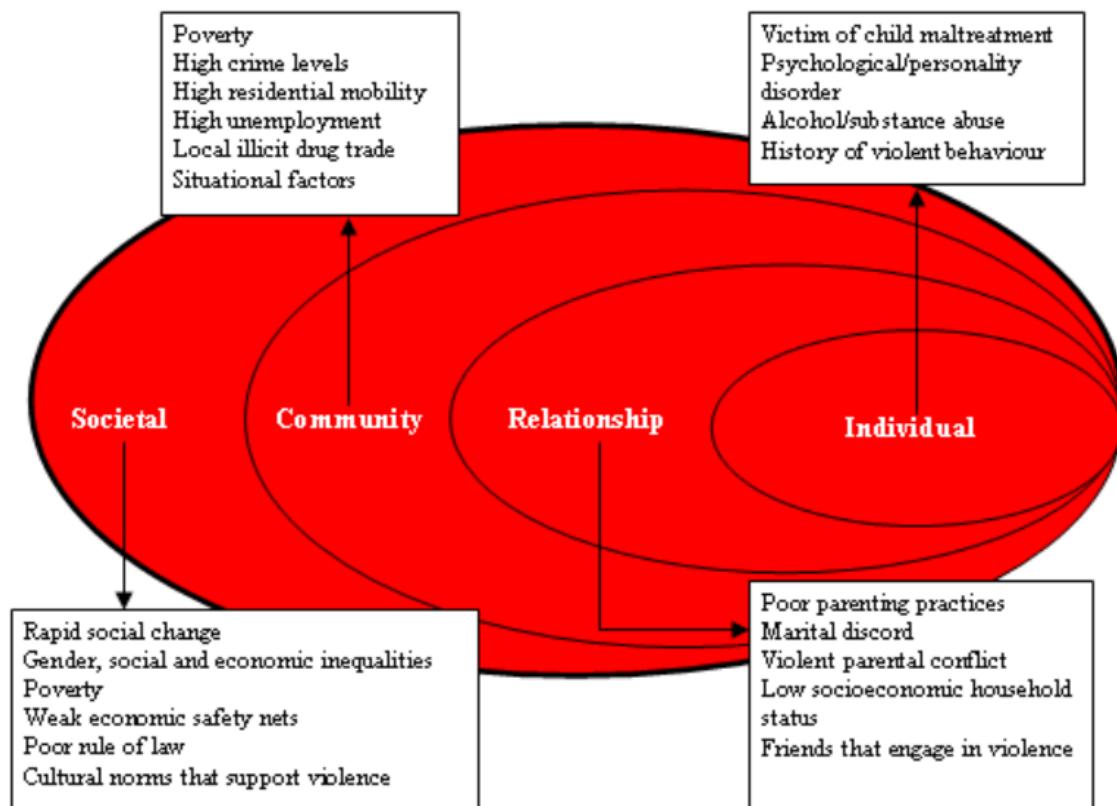
2. **The WHO Violence Prevention Alliance Ecological Framework**

3. **Reading Suicide Prevention Action Plan on a Page 2023 to 2024**

## APPENDIX 1 The WHO Violence Prevention Alliance Public Health Approach



## APPENDIX 2 The WHO Violence Prevention Alliance Ecological Framework



## Reading Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2023 to 2025 activity highlights on a page

### APPENDIX 3 Reading Suicide Prevention Action Plan on a Page 2023 to 2024

Training	Domestic Abuse and Suicide	Children and Young people	Gambling Harms
<p>1. Suicide Prevention First Aid Kit for building confidence amongst frontline staff to respond positively to suicidal ideation amongst service users coproduced with Reading Borough Council staff and shared widely with partner organisations.</p> <p>2. Piloted Suicide First Aid Lite courses to support frontline staff self care and effectively signpost for suicidal ideation.</p> <p>3. Development of Suicide First Aid Lite training programme in response to requests from partner organisations across the local system including ACRE</p> <p>4. Training of two more accredited SFA trainers in the Compass Recovery College to maintain local provision of SFA and MHFA training for local partners.</p>	<p>5. Presentation to Reading Domestic Abuse Board, Suicide Prevention Action Planning group about data, evidence and a public health approach to violence prevention. July and August 2024</p> <p>6. Presentations to Lead Councillor Briefings.</p> <p>7. Draft papers for Adult Social Care and Education Board January 2026</p>	<p>10. Increase adoption of Mental Health Support Teams in Reading Schools</p> <p>11. Offer of training for Senior Mental Health Lead for Reading Schools.</p> <p>12. Promoting the well being of looked after children.</p> <p>13. Share learning with system partners based on data and evidence from child death overview panels and the National Child Mortality Database.</p>	<p>17. Presentations of data and evidence about local costs and risks.</p> <p>18. Presentations to Reading Mental Health and Wellbeing Network Group about Gambling Harms and Asian men</p> <p>19. Preparation for the Gambling levy and a Health in All Policies approach to gambling harms in Reading.</p>
<p>Media, Communications and Awareness</p>	<p>8. Local uplift of World Suicide Prevention Day in October.</p> <p>9. Local uplift of Mental Health Awareness month in May.</p>	<p>14. Share learning from LEDER programme to identify areas for improvement to prevent suicides</p> <p>15. Consider findings from NIHR funded study to adapt suicide safety plans to reduce self harm, suicidal thoughts and behaviours amongst autistic people.</p> <p>16. Work with DFE and UUK to support universities to embed suicide safer guidance and PAPYRUS guidance</p>	<p>19. Public Health Grant support for Together UK hubs at Reading railways stations.</p> <p>20. Closing the Gap 2 commissioning of men's mental health</p>

## Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



**Reading**  
Borough Council

Working better with you

14 January 2026

<b>Title</b>	Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2024/25 for Adult Social Care
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Nayana George – Information Rights Services Manager
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Gittings, Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Healthy Environment
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That the Committee notes the content of the report</li> <li>That the action taken in response to learning from complaints, as described in the summary of Adult Social Care Complaints &amp; Compliments 2024/25, attached Appendix A to the report, be noted.</li> </ol>

### 1. Executive Summary

1.1. Adult Social Care recognises that there will be occasions when complaints are made. This report tells you how many complaints were received in 2024/25 and were dealt with using either the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure or the Statutory Complaints Procedure for Adult Social Care. It also summarises the main types of complaints we have received and provides some examples where we have improved as a result of learning from these complaints.

### 2. Policy Context

2.1. Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 require that Local Authorities operate a complaints procedure. In September 2009, the Department of Health introduced a complaint procedure to cover both adult social care and health services. This meant a 3 stage complaints procedure became a 1 stage complaints procedure. Following investigation of the complaint by the Council, if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome the complainant is advised to contact the Customer Relations & Information Governance Service Manager, to share their concerns with a view to possibly reviewing them with a senior manager or proceed to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

2.2. Complaints relating to Adult Social Care that fall outside of the scope of the statutory process are investigated in accordance with the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. Reading Borough Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure gives an opportunity for those who are not 'qualifying individuals' under the social services legislation, to still be able to complain about Adult Social Care.

2.3. Qualifying individuals are defined in national guidance as the Service User or their appointed representative which can be a family member, friend, or Advocate. The timescale for responding to complaints is between 15 working days and three months, depending on the seriousness and complexity of the complaint. The guidance provides

a risk matrix to assist the Customer Relations & Information Governance Service Manager, who is the designated Complaints Manager for the Council, to assess the complaint.

- 2.4. The Council's Customer Experience Strategy includes key focus on complaints and listening to customers. It is part of our policy framework and strategic objectives.
- 2.5. Compliments can be an indicator of when the Council has performed well and can highlight the positive outcomes for the public who are in contact with us or that we provide a service to.

### **3. The Proposal**

- 3.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of complaints and compliments activity and performance for Adult Social Care for the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- 3.2. During this period the service received 59 statutory complaints, which is an 18 % increase over the 50 received in 2023/24, and 13 corporate complaints, which is an increase of 85% over the 7 received in 2023/24. We received one Stage 2 request for a corporate complaint in 2023/24, however we did not receive any requests for a corporate Stage 2 investigation during this period.
- 3.3. The main themes for the period 2024/25 for corporate complaints are:
  - Financial Issue = 6 (46.1%)
  - Quality of Service Provided = 4 (30.8%)
  - Staff Conduct = 2 (15.4%)
  - Communication = 1 (7.7%)
- 3.4. The main themes for the period 2024/25 for statutory complaints are:
  - Quality of Service Provided = 23 (38.9%)
  - Staff Conduct = 10 (16.94%)
  - Communication = 10 each (16.94%)
  - Financial = 9 (15.2%)
- 3.5. A summary of Adult Social Care Complaints and Compliments 2024/25 is at Appendix A. This will also be made publicly available through the Council's website after this committee meeting, in January 2025.
- 3.6. The Appendix highlights some examples of learning from complaints in the past year along with key service improvements as a result of the complaints received, which the Committee is invited to note.

### **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

- 4.1. The Complaints Service provided by the Customer Relations Team contributes to the Service's aims to enhance emotional wellbeing and deliver outstanding services for service users who may be dissatisfied with the Adult Social Care service and those needing protection through Adult Safeguarding. It does this by providing an impartial and supportive service to service users and their families who wish to complain or raise a concern and ensuring that there is learning from complaints.
- 4.2. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. These priorities are:
  - Promote more equal communities in Reading
  - Secure Reading's economic and cultural success

- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future

4.3. In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:

- Putting residents first
- Building on strong foundations
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading

4.4. Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website - [Council plan - Reading Borough Council](#). These priorities and the Council Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

## **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

5.1. There are no environmental and/or climate implications arising from this report.

## **6. Community Engagement**

6.1. Information about the complaints or compliments process is provided verbally to service users via the Social Care Teams as well as the Customer Relations Team. Leaflets on the procedures are also widely distributed by the Social Care Teams and available in a variety of formats and languages on request.

6.2. Service Users and their carers are reminded of their right to complain or make a compliment, and a leaflet is given out when the social care worker first meets with them. Service users and/or their representative can also register a complaint via the web, email direct to the Customer Relations Team, in person, by phone, in writing or via an advocate.

6.3. State here whether any consultation, community engagement or information is required, or has been carried out voluntarily to help report authors consider the views of external people in preparing the report.

6.4. Translation services are provided for complainants whose first language is not English and advocacy support is available for service users who wish to make a complaint.

## **7. Equality Implications**

7.1. The Customer Relations & Information Governance Service Manager will ensure that the statutory complaints/compliments process is accessible to all customers regardless of their race, gender, disabilities, sexual orientation, age or religious belief.

7.2. The statutory complaints process is designed to ensure that any concern or issue faced by the service user, or their representative is addressed in a timely and impartial manner.

7.3. Due to the safeguards in process outlined above, there is no requirement to complete an Equality Impact Assessment in relation to this report.

## **8. Other Relevant Considerations**

8.1. There are none.

## **9. Legal Implications**

9.1. The Statutory foundations for the Adult Social Care Services Complaints Procedures are The Local Authority Social Services Act (1970), The Human Rights Act (1998), Statutory Instruments 2009 No.309 National Health Service, England Social Care,   
Page 93

England, the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.

**10. Financial Implications**

10.1. There are no Capital or Revenue implications arising from this report. The Council's Customer Relations Team provides value for money in effectively discharging the complaints process for the Council by attempting informal resolution of complaints. There are no specific financial risks arising from this report

**11. Timetable for Implementation**

11.1. Not applicable.

**12. Background Papers**

12.1. There are none.

**Appendix A:** A summary of Adult Social Care Complaints and Compliments 2024/25

# ADULT SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS & COMPLIMENTS

## 2024/25

### SUMMARY REPORT

#### Introduction

This is a summary report of the data for complaints/compliments received by Adult Social Care for the financial year 2024/25.

The Council welcomes feedback through the complaints/compliments process which, as well as providing the opportunity to identify where services have not been provided as they should be, it also provides customer insight and helps identify any deficiency in practice, policies, and procedures. It is from these that the Service and those who work in it can continue to learn and improve practice and service delivery.

#### Statutory Complaints Procedure

General complaints about Adult Social Care received from service users or their approved representatives (Family Member, Advocate or Power of Attorney) are dealt with through the statutory procedure. This will be one investigation by a senior officer in the relevant service area (Team Manager) and then signed off by either a Service Manager or Assistant Director.

At the Complainant's, or their representative's, request, an external, independent investigator can be appointed to investigate if the Information Rights Services Manager deems the complaints to be at medium or high risk. The following Risk Matrix is used to assess the complaint.

#### **Risk Matrix**

The matrix below is used by the Customer Relations Team in confirming the level of risk once an expression of concern has been considered within the formal complaints procedure.

		LIKELIHOOD OF RECURRENCE				
		RISK	Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely
SERIOUSNESS	Low	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate
	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High
	Mod erate	Low	Moderate	High	High	Extreme
	Mod erate	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Extreme
	High	Moderate	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
	High	Moderate	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme

#### **Time Limits**

<b>Level of Risk</b>	<b>Maximum Time Limit for Completion</b>
Immediate resolution	1 working day – confirm outcome
All accepted as formal complaints	Acknowledge within 3 working days
Low	15 working days
Moderate	25 working days
High	65 working days
Extreme	Up to 6 months

If the complainant feels that the issues they have raised remain unresolved, they have the right to request a meeting with the Service Manager/Assistant Director and the Information Rights Services Manager or refer their complaint to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

The Statutory Complaints process encourages the complainant and the Local Authority to consider resolving a complaint or concern informally through a face-to-face meeting or telephone discussion. It is the complainant's right to request the presence of the Information Rights Services Manager at any face-to-face meeting.

Some complaints may require immediate action including whether the matter should be considered as a safeguarding issue. If it is a safeguarding issue, the relevant procedures would take precedence over the complaints procedure.

### **Corporate Complaints Procedure**

The Corporate Complaints Procedure deals with complaints which do not meet the criteria for investigation through the Statutory Procedure (for example the complaint is made by a Provider or a family member who does not have consent from the service user to make the complaint) and is a 2-stage process. The first stage provides an opportunity for a local resolution of any problems which may arise, and it is expected that the majority of complaints will be resolved at this level, usually within 20 working days or less. Where the problems cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at a local level, Stage 2 of the process involves the investigation of the complaint by a more senior member of staff, usually within 30 working days or less and with a formal sign off by an Assistant Director.

Where the complainant feels that the issues they have raised remain unresolved, they have the right to refer their complaint to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

### **Summary of Compliments and Complaints Activity, Quality Assurance & Learning**

This report details information for the past year together with analysis of the data, quality assurance and information on service developments as a result of learning from complaints. Under the current monitoring system, information about complaints received directly by teams is reported to the Customer Relations Team upon receipt. This is to ensure that the Information Rights Services Manager is aware of all current complaints in order to monitor their progress and highlight cases that can be resolved through Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) to Team Managers and senior staff.

**Please Note:** The following tables include information for those complaints received and investigated at Stages 0 and 1 only, as complaints which go on to Stage 2 would count as being a duplicate complaint received for reporting purposes.

For information, the service did not receive any requests for a complaint to be investigated further at Stage 2 during this reporting period.

## **Corporate Complaints Received**

Total Number of Corporate Complaints Received	Total No. Received	Change	Stage 0	Stage 1
2020/21	17	(+31%)	2	15
2021/22	20	(+18%)	6	14
2022/23	10	(-50%)	2	8
2023/24	7	(-30%)	3	4
2024/25	13	(+85%)	2	11

## **Spread of Complaints Received across Teams**

Team	2024/25	% of Total	2023/24	% of Total	2022/23	% of Total
Community Mental Health Team	1	0	0	0	1	10%
Commissioning	2	14.3%	1	14.3%	3	30%
Deputy's Office	1	0	0	0	1	10%
FAB Team	1	14.3%	1	14.3%	0	0
Finance	2	28.55%	2	28.55%	0	0
Localities Team	0	0	0	0	3	30%
PBST	4	14.3%	1	14.3%	0	0
Public Health	0	0	0	0	1	10%
Safeguarding	1	28.55%	2	28.55%	0	0
Short-Term Team	1	0	0	0	0	0
Wellbeing	0	0	0	0	1	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **Themes of Complaints Received**

Theme	2024/25	% of Total	2023/24	% of Total	2022/23	% of Total
Communication	1	7.7%	1	14.3%	1	10%
Financial Issue	6	46.1%	2	28.6%	0	0
Lack of Support	0	0	0	0	0	0
Policy Issue/Procedure	0	0	0	0	3	30%
Quality of Service Provided	4	30.8%	3	42.9%	3	30%
Staff Conduct	2	15.4%	1	14.3%	3	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>

### How Complaint was Received

Method	2024/25	% of Total	2023/24	% of Total	2022/23	% of Total
E-mail	3	23.1%	4	57.1%	3	30%
Letter	2	15.4%	1	14.3%	2	20%
Telephone	0	-	2	28.6%	2	20%
Webform	8	61.5%	0	-	3	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Corporate Complaints Responded To

**Please Note:** As with the Complaints Received, this information relates to complaints which were responded to at either Stage 0 or Stage 1 but does not include any which were escalated to Stage 2 as these would be a duplication of the original complaint.

### Outcomes for Complaints Investigated Formally to an Outcome

Outcome	2024/25	% of Total	2023/24	% of Total	2022/23	% of Total
Upheld	5	38.4%	1	14.30%	1	10%
Partially Upheld	1	7.7%	0	-	0	-
Not Upheld	4	30.8%	3	42.85%	6	60%
No Outcome	1	7.7%	0	-	2	20%
Multiple Outcomes	2	15.4%	3	42.85%	1	10%
<b>Total No. Sent Out</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Timescales for Complaints Investigated Formally to an Outcome

	2024/25	% of Total	2023/24	% of Total	2022/23	% of Total
Total No. Sent Out In Timescale	9	69.2%	6	85.7%	7	70%
Total No. Sent Out Over Timescale	4	30.8%	1	14.3%	3	30%
<b>Total No. Sent Out</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Part 2 - Statutory Complaints

### Statutory Complaints Received

#### Total Number of Statutory Complaints Received

	Total No. Received	% Change over previous year	Stage 0	% Of total received	Stage 1	% Of total received
2020/21	71	-15.5%	33	46.5%	38	53.5%
2021/22	93	+31.0%	50	53.8%	43	46.2%
2022/23	89	- 4.3%	58	65.2%	31	34.8%
2023/24	50	-55.1%	18	36.0%	32	64.0%
2024/25	59	+18.0%	18	36.0%	32	64.0%

#### Total Number of Statutory Complaints Received, Split by Teams

Team	2024/25	% of Total	2023/24	% of Total	2022/23	% of Total
Advice & Wellbeing Hub	7	11.6%	5	10%	2	2.2%
Community Mental Health	0	0	0	0	1	1.1%
Commissioning	2	3.2%	7	14%	13	14.7%
Community Reablement	2	3.2%	2	4%	1	1.1%
Deputy's Office	0	0%	0	0	0	0
Discharge to Assess Team	0	0%	0	0	3	3.4%
DoLS	0	0%	0	0	1	1.1%
Finance	0	0%	0	0	1	1.1%
Financial Assessments & Benefits	5	8.5%	2	4%	0	0

Team	2024/25	% of Total	2023/24	% of Total	2022/23	% of Total
Independent Living	0	0%	0	0	1	1.1%
Learning Disabilities	11	18.6%	2	4%	0	0
Localities	1	1.7%	4	8%	27	30.4%
Long-Term Team	0	0%	4	8%	2	2.2%
Mental Health Team	10	16.9%	2	4%	12	13.6%
Occupational Therapists	0	0%	3	6%	0	0
Personal Budget Support	3	6.0%	3	6%	8	9.0%
Physical Disabilities and Older Persons' Team	10	16.7%	1	2%	0	0
Preparation for Adulthood Team	0	0%	0	0	8	9.0%
Primary Care Network	0	0%	0	0	1	1.1%
Provider Services	1	1.7%	0	0	0	0
Public Health	0	0%	0	0	0	0
Review Team	6	10.2%	2	4%	3	3.4%
Safeguarding Adults	1	1.7%	5	10%	2	2.2%
Shared Lives Team	0	0%	0	0	1	1.1%
Short-Term Team	0	0%	6	12%	2	2.2%
Supported Living	0	0%	1	2%	0	0
Transformation Team	0	0%	1	2%	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Total Number of Statutory Complaints Received, Split by Theme

Theme	2024/25	% of Total	2023/24	% of Total	2022/23	% of Total
Assessment Process	1	1.7%	0	0%	0	0%
Communication	10	16.9%	2	4%	12	13.5%
Complaints about provider	3	5.1%	0	0%	0	0%
Data Breach	0	0%	0	0%	1	1.1%
Failure to Resolve Issue	2	3.4%	0	0%	1	1.1%
Financial Issue	9	15.3%	3	6%	10	11.2%
Lack of Support	0	0%	0	0	7	7.9%

Theme	2024/25	% of Total	2023/24	% of Total	2022/23	% of Total
Policy Issue/Procedure	0	0%	0	0	7	7.9%
Quality of Service Provided	13	22.0%	40	80%	40	44.9%
Staff Conduct	10	16.9%	4	8%	12	13.5%
Service Provision	11	18.7%	0	0%	0	0%
Time Taken to Resolve Issue	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100%</b>

### How the Complaints were Received

Method	2024/25	% of Total	2023/24	% of Total	2022/23	% of Total
E-mail	45	76.3%	29	58%	48	53.9%
Letter	1	1.7%	6	12%	9	10.1%
Telephone	5	8.5%	11	22%	20	22.5%
Webform	8	13.5%	4	8%	12	13.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Statutory Complaints Responded To

Please note all 59 complaints were investigated to an outcome, none were withdrawn.

### Outcomes of Statutory Complaints Investigated Formally to an Outcome

Outcome	2024/25	% of Total	2023/24	% of Total	2022/23	% of Total
Upheld	10	17.0%	9	19.1%	28	31.8%
Partially Upheld	9	15.2%	2	4.3%	9	10.2%
Not Upheld	18	30.5%	18	38.3%	31	35.2%
No Outcome	1	1.7%	0	-	4	4.5%
Multiple Outcomes	21	35.6%	18	38.3%	16	18.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Timescales for Responding to Statutory Complaints

**Note:** For the statutory complaints, we worked to an initial 15 working day response date extending to no more than 25 working days.

	2024/25	% of Total	2023/24	% of Total	2022/23	% of Total
Total No. Responded to in Timescale	34	57.6%	33	70.2%	62	70.5%
Total No. Responded to Over Timescale	25	42.4%	14	29.8%	26	29.5%
Total	59	100%	47	100%	88	100%

### Learning & Service Improvements following Complaints received

Complaints and concerns provide essential and valuable feedback from our service users and customers. Listening to customers and reflecting on examples of where we have not got it right can reveal or highlight opportunities for improvement (for example, a deficiency in practice, communication or service delivery). Even if a complaint is not upheld, lessons can be learnt from that complaint with service developments and improvements as a result. The complaints process and the feedback gained is an integral part of the quality assurance process, which feeds into the development and monitoring of services. Learning from complaints are reviewed by the Adult Social Care's Care & Quality Board to ensure lessons have been understood and are embedded into practice. Below are some examples of learning from complaints in the past year along with key service improvements as a result of the complaints received.

#### **Examples of complaints and learning:**

Summary of complaint	Outcome	Learning
There was no contact to carry out R financial assessment before a letter dated 05 September 2024 was received confirming the financial assessment had been completed, despite being informed by Adult Care Services that Janet and Robert would be contacted to carry out the financial assessment.	Partially upheld	Unless indicated otherwise by the adult social care worker (on the financial assessment referral) the Financial Assessment and Benefits Officer completing the Financial Assessment should contact the service user (or their representative) directly when they carry out the assessment - for example, over the phone - to explain the financial assessment outcome and what that means in terms of invoices and how to pay.
There were no care charges invoices received between care starting in September 2024 and 19 March 2024.	Upheld	When reviewing Care Assessment and Support Plans, Adult Care Managers should ensure that there are appropriate next actions in place from the Care Assessment

		and Support Plan to purchase ongoing care, so as to avoid delays in paying provider invoices and avoid delays in raising invoices to service users for their assessed contributions.
Unhappy with the visit to mother on xxxx by, Social Work Apprentice; and the information shared about mother's care and support needs and how they are met at the care home.	Upeld	Care and support – completed. • Team Manager to monitor progress with assessment and outcomes for Mrs M – in progress. • All workers to be reminded of professionalism and clear, honest and respectful communication – completed.
a) Non-compliance with the Care Act 2014 namely section 27 (delay to review of care and support plan or of support plan). b) Secondly that RBC are not following s42 of the Care Act 2014 (safeguarding Enquiry by local authority)	Upeld  Not Upeld	Team Managers to ensure review of care and supports needs to be carried out without delay especially where safeguarding concerns are raised.  <u>S42</u> concerns raised have all been thoroughly investigated and it was concluded on all occasions that the concerns did not meet the three-parts safeguarding test.

### Service Improvements – in 2024/25:

- Adult Social Care has reduced the waiting time for a Care Act assessments
- There has been a reduction in the length of wait for a review and the number of people whose review is overdue
- Adult Social Care has Increase the number of carer assessments and the reduction in the length of wait for an assessment for the Service Users
- Has made improvements in the business intelligence data, enabling understanding of work allocated completed and due.
- There has been a reduction in waits for Safeguarding Concerns
- Increase in TEC in residents' home
- Increase the number of DoLs (Deprivation of Liberty safeguards) applications processed
- Robust Quality assurance of Provider Market is being carried out.

The Customer Relations Team carries out checks of all complaint responses to ensure the quality of the response and that the language and terminology used is made easy for the complainant to understand, particularly if the complainant has a disability. We have on occasion asked the investigating officer to translate reports and responses into Easyread.

Statistics indicate 100% of responses were checked by the Customer Relations Team before being sent out. The Information Rights Services Manager and her Team are also available to the complainant and the investigator for advice on best practice during the complaint investigation but remain impartial.

The Information Rights Services Manager will deliver training on investigating and responding to complaints on request. The Corporate Complaints Procedure is available on-line. The Adult Social Care statutory procedure is available on-line also. The Information Rights Services Manager attends Team Meetings to provide training and advice to Teams and Senior Managers when required. The Customer Relations Team has also improved processes to ensure upcoming responses are discussed and monitored at weekly meetings. The Social Care staff are in more regular contact with the Information Rights Services Manager and her team and are aware of their processes which has led to improved joint working for the benefit of the complainant. A case management system was introduced in July 2024 to assist with managing complaints across the Council and includes adult social care statutory complaints. Customers are able to log complaints via the RBC website into the new RBC case management system. A new webform was created and went live in July 2024.

## **Support Network**

The Information Rights Services Manager is the Chair to the Southern Region Complaints Managers' Group and a member of the National Complaints Managers' Group, which continues to support Customer Relations and Complaints Managers in sharing good practice, both nationally and locally. Where cases are complex the Information Rights Services Manager often seeks advice and guidance from Legal Services and the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's advice line.

## **Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)**

The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's role is to investigate complaints about maladministration or administrative fault that led to injustice for the complainant. In some complaints the LGSCO may find evidence of administrative fault but no resultant injustice. The LGSCO should not investigate complaints about policy changes where the decision has been properly made.

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman received 2 representations from dissatisfied service users for issues relating to Adult Care & Health Services, which is the same as the previous year. Of these 2 cases, one was about the Council refusing to give the compliant a direct payment to their partner to provide social care at home. The LGSCO did not find fault with how it decided it would not agree to the direct payment. However, the LGSCO found fault for the delay and issuing a care and support plan. The Council was asked to apologise to the complainant. The remaining case the LGSCO opened a case from the previous year about a disabled facilities grant and without investigating again asked the Council for an update of actions completed in the previous year.

The LGSCO did not issue any formal reports finding maladministration by the Council.

## **Compliments**

The Customer Relations Team own the recording of compliments for the Council as a whole. Staff are reminded and encouraged to pass on all compliments to the Customer Relations Team's generic mailbox. As of July 2024, customers are encouraged to log their compliments via an online form on the RBC website.

In the year 2024/25, 20 compliments were received by the following Adult Social Care Teams: In the previous year 12 were recorded.

Examples:

- GS attended an OT assessment for S, a woman with complex mental health needs resident in Supported Living accommodation at Focus House this week. I was present at the appointment as this lady's Support Worker. We were so impressed! Prior to meeting GS, S had been feeling extremely low in mood. We were both ready to give up hope of getting her OT assessment. GS was reassuringly professional and thorough and rapidly gained S's trust. He gave us confidence that we would receive an excellent service. GS was patient and sensitive to S's complex needs. She spoke after this appointment of feeling her mood had begun to brighten. We look forward to receiving equipment soon. We both want to express our gratitude and sing GS's praises. We need more like him!
- Can I take this opportunity to say a very much appreciated thank you to J for her involvement for securing much needed extra help for P & L I know P is very grateful and feels on the whole his situation in looking after L more manageable and bearable from my part living 70 miles away but trying to do all we can for P & L I too personally feel more relaxed about their situation so, once again a Huge thank you to J for her quick response and actions in what I know more than ever is a demanding job
- Dear S, I would like to personally express my heartfelt gratitude for your outstanding performance yesterday during AMHP assessment. You really went extra mile to get your facts right which I must say it's unique. Your work ethic and excellent output made you extra ordinary. Your dedication, exceptional efforts, hard work, and sincerity its worth emulating. Your excellence is highly valued and appreciated.
- We would like to commend J for all her help and advice during a stressful time regarding organising my Dads care. Both in person, email and telephone, J has worked quickly and efficiently going above and beyond, especially given how busy you all are. The help given was clear and concise for us to understand as we have not been through this before and we were never made to feel unsupported during this process. The warmth and understanding is a skill you cannot learn during staff training, J is an asset. As a family we would like to send our gratitude to J and hope this recognition can be highlighted to the management and J on our behalf.
- D recently did a review for KK, who is only 44 and disabled following a stroke. His wife is his main carer and struggles with her own health after a cancer diagnosis, as well as looking after her husband. D did a thorough review taking both husband and wife's needs into consideration and 'really listened' according to the s/u wife. She said she 'doesn't just sit there and nod her head, she really listens. She understands what you're saying to her'. She couldn't speak highly enough of D and it was so clear to me that D really made a difference to that family – by listening, taking a person-centred approach and advising the family what is possible. I personally think D is an absolute star and an asset to RBC, so I'm really happy to be able to put this on paper and share this feedback from a s/u as well

Some complaints can be sorted out by discussing your problem with your Social Worker or a manager. If you want to make a complaint, you can contact the Council by telephone, letter, in person, by e-mail or via the website. [Complaint](#)

Telephone the Customer Relations & Information Governance Service Manager on 0118 937 2905 or e-mail: [Socialcare.Complaints@reading.gov.uk](mailto:Socialcare.Complaints@reading.gov.uk).

If you wish to make your complaint to us in writing, our address is: The Customer Relations Team, Reading Borough Council, Floor 2 South Rear, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading, RG1 2LU.

Your complaint will be recorded and if we cannot sort out the problem immediately it will be passed for further investigation and action. The Customer Relations Team can take your complaint over the telephone and explain the complaints procedure in more detail or send you a leaflet explaining how to complain. The leaflet is also available in Council buildings or via the Council's website. You can also use these contact details to tell us if you have a concern (but do not want to make a complaint) or if you want to make a compliment about a service.

<https://myaccount.reading.gov.uk/resident2/s/compliment>

## Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



**Reading**  
Borough Council

Working better with you

14 January 2026

<b>Title</b>	Directorate of Childrens Services Annual Complaints & Compliments Report – 2024-25
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report</b>	Lara Patel – Executive Director
<b>Report author</b>	Nayana George
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Councillor Wendy Griffith
<b>Council priority</b>	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the contents of the report and intended actions to further improve service delivery and the management of representations, particularly complaints, in children's services in Reading.</li> <li>2. Note the continuing work to raise awareness of all conflict resolution processes, including the statutory complaints process and encourage appropriate use by children, young people and their families.</li> </ol>

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report outlines the work that Children's Services have carried out to improve customer relations. The report's main focus is on complaints and compliments. Subject Access Requests (SARs) are also covered
- 1.2. This report details information for the year 2024/25, analysis of the data, quality assurance and information on service developments as a result of learning from complaints for Children's Services. In 2024/25 children's services were delivered by Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC), a wholly owned company formed for this purpose. On 1 October 2025, Children's Services were transferred back to Reading Borough Council.
- 1.3. Under the monitoring system, information about complaints received directly by teams are reported to the Customer Relations Team upon receipt. This is to ensure that the Information Rights Services Manager, who acts as the statutory Complaints Manager, is aware of all current complaints in order to monitor their progress and highlight cases that can be resolved through alternate dispute resolution (ADR)/mediation to team managers and senior staff.
- 1.4. Complaints, particularly in the emotive arena of children's services, are inevitable. The way that they are handled, however, can help reduce the number of escalating complaints and can improve parental and family understanding of the need for

intervention by children's services and the positive outcomes for children and young people.

## **2. Policy Context**

- 2.1. The NHS & Community Care Act 1990, Children Act 2004, Department of Health and Department for Education Guidance & Regulations requires that the children's social care service sets up and maintains a complaints procedure. They also require that the local authority operates the procedure within specified timescales and that methods of investigation, a summary of statistical information on complaints and a review of the complaints process are included in an annual report.
- 2.2. Children's Services operate a 3-stage procedure in respect of statutory complaints about children's social care made by 'qualifying individuals', as specified in the legislation. Qualifying individuals are defined in national guidance as a child or young person, their parent, carer or foster carer or 'anyone who could be seen to be acting in the best interests of the child'.
- 2.3. The timescale for responding to complaints at Stage 1 is 10 working days, which can be extended to 20 working days in certain circumstances. The RBC Information Rights Services Manager, who is the designated complaints manager for children's services, also has to be aware of all complaints as they are being dealt with.
- 2.4. The corporate complaints procedure gives an opportunity for those who are not 'qualifying individuals' under the social services legislation, to still be able to complain about other aspects of children's services and this route is used for all corporate and education (incl. SEND) complaints.
- 2.5. The Council's Customer Experience Strategy includes key focus on complaints and listening to customers. It is part of our policy framework and strategic objectives.

## **3. The Proposal**

- 3.1. The 'Children's Social Care Complaints 2024/25 – Summary Report' attached at Appendix A provides an analysis of the data for statutory complaints; it explains how complaints are managed and how the learning is used to improve services. This will be made public through both Reading Borough Council's and Brighter Futures for Children's websites.
- 3.2. The Council have worked closely to drive improvements in the services offered to children and young people and to signpost to information on advocacy, early resolution and the complaints procedures.
- 3.3. Nevertheless, we recognise there is always room for improvement, and we are continuously working to better the services offered to children and families.
- 3.4. During the financial year 2024/25 children's services received 66 statutory complaints, which is a decrease of 9 (13.6 %) against the 75 received in 2023/24.
- 3.5. To give this some context, in 2024/25, 3202 children were open to children's social care, so the number of statutory complaints represents 2.09%. This compares to 3589 open children and 2.06% for 2023/24.
- 3.6. Of the 66 complaints received:
  - 11 (16.67%) were resolved through alternative dispute resolution (ADR) by the social care teams at the start of the process, before progressing to a formal Stage 1. These 11 cases were closed off following a telephone discussion with the complainant and a short-written response either by letter or email.
  - The remaining 55 (83.33%) progressed to a formal Stage 1 investigation.

3.7. During this reporting period, 11 Stage 2 requests were received in respect of the Stage 1 investigations carried out in this reporting period.

- 1 of these was resolved through ADR.
- The remaining 10 progressed to formal Stage 2 investigation.
- 3 of the 10 Stage 2 investigations were also reviewed by a Stage 3 Review Panel.

3.8. Both the Customer Relations Team, and Children's Services Communications & Compliance and HR/Training teams have continued to raise awareness of the complaints process with both staff and the public.

#### **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

4.1. Customer relations contributed to RBC's aims to enhance emotional wellbeing and deliver outstanding services for children in need and those needing protection in Reading. It does this by providing an impartial and supportive service to children and families who wish to complain or raise a concern and ensuring that there is learning from complaints.

4.2. In 2024/25, RBC's Customer Relations Team and the Information Rights Services Manager administered this service on behalf of Brighter Futures for Children, under a Service Level Agreement. The BFfC Board, via its committees, had oversight of service delivery and on actions relating to lessons learned, as part of the Company's strategic aim to improve children's services in Reading.

4.3. The Council Plan has established five priorities for the years 2025/28. These priorities are:

- Promote more equal communities in Reading
- Secure Reading's economic and cultural success
- Deliver a sustainable and healthy environment and reduce our carbon footprint
- Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children
- Ensure Reading Borough Council is fit for the future

4.4. In delivering these priorities, we will be guided by the following set of principles:

- Putting residents first
- Building on strong foundations
- Recognising, respecting, and nurturing all our diverse communities
- Involving, collaborating, and empowering residents
- Being proudly ambitious for Reading

4.5. Full details of the Council Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website - [Council plan - Reading Borough Council](#). These priorities and the Council Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

#### **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

5.1. Not Applicable.

#### **6. Community Engagement**

6.1. Information about the complaints process is provided verbally to service users via Children's Services Family Help & Safeguarding teams and Independent Reviewing Officers, as well as by the Customer Relations Team. Full information is also on the websites [www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org](http://www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org) and [Make a complaint or compliment - Reading Borough Council](#)

- 6.2. Leaflets on the procedures are widely distributed and available in a variety of formats and languages on request to the Customer Relations Team or through the use of ReachDeck on BFfC's website.
- 6.3. In all children looked after reviews and all child protection conferences, the chair always mentions the complaints process so that our most vulnerable children are reminded of their right to complain and a leaflet is provided. Children and families are also able to register a complaint via the web, text, email directly to the Customer Relations Team, in person, by phone, in writing or via an advocate.
- 6.4. The Brighter Futures for Children website has a direct link to the complaints service, and the Customer Relations Team has published the details for the Information Rights Services Manager (as the Complaints Manager) and the Children's Services advocacy provider, Reconstruct. The Customer Relations Team signpost parents and carers who make complaints to advocacy providers in the community.
- 6.5. Translation services are provided for complainants whose first language is not English, and advocacy support is available for young people who wish to make a complaint.

## **7. Equality Implications**

- 7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
  - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2. The Information Rights Services Manager will ensure that the statutory complaints process is accessible to all customers regardless of their race, gender, disabilities, sexual orientation, age or religious belief.
- 7.3. The statutory complaints process is designed to ensure that any concern or issue faced by vulnerable children and their carers is addressed in a timely and impartial manner.

## **8. Other Relevant Considerations**

- 8.1. Not Applicable.

## **9. Legal Implications**

- 9.1. The statutory foundation of the children's social care services complaints procedures are the Local Authority Social Services Act (1970), The Children Act (1989), The Children Act (2004), The Human Rights Act (1998), Children (Leaving Care) Act (2000), Adoption and Children Act (2002), the Health and Social Care (Community Health and Standards) Act (2003). and The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (2006).
- 9.2. This statutory guidance for local authority children's services on representations and complaints, Getting the Best from Complaints, takes all of the above legislation into account.
- 9.3. It is a requirement of the Department of Health's standards and criteria for complaints management for children's social care that an annual report including complaints is presented to a public meeting.

## **10. Financial Implications**

10.1. There are no capital or revenue implications arising from this report. However, BFfC had an obligation to ensure the service provided by RBC's Customer Relations Team was value for money, that the SLA was regularly monitored and that all complaints were handled in a trauma informed, restorative and timely manner to minimise the likelihood of legal costs associated with escalation of complaints that could have been better resolved earlier.

## **11. Timetable for Implementation**

11.1. Not Applicable.

## **12. Background Papers**

12.1. 'Getting the Best from Complaints' Government Publication, August 2006.

## **Appendix A**

### **Children's Social Care complaints for Children's Services (Brighter Futures for Children) 2024/25**

#### **Summary report**

##### **Introduction**

This is a summary report of the data for statutory complaints received by Children's Services for the financial year 2024/25. The report shows there were 66 complaints statutory complaints received, a decrease of 9 (13.6%) compared to the 75 received in 2023/24.

This report will be made available to the public through the Reading Borough Council (RBC) and Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) websites.

In addition to the quality of service provided, there are many factors that can affect the number of complaints received such as satisfaction, customer expectations, awareness of the complaints process, and the extent of promotional activity.

A high number of complaints should not be interpreted simply as meaning that Children's Services provided a poor service, while at the same time a low number of complaints should not be interpreted as meaning people are satisfied with the service. When interpreting the statutory complaints statistics, it is important to take into account not just the number received but the number and proportion that are upheld.

Children's Services welcome feedback through the complaints process. As well as providing opportunity to identify where services have not been provided as they should be, feedback can also provide customer insight and help identify shortfalls in practice, policies and procedures. This contributes to learning and continuous improvement.

##### **Statutory complaints procedure**

Complaints dealt with through the statutory procedure involve three stages.

At Stage 1 complaints are investigated and responded to by a manager in the relevant service area.

If the complainant feels that the issues they have raised remain unresolved, they have the right to progress their complaint to Stage 2. Consideration of complaints at Stage 2 is normally achieved through an investigation conducted by an independent investigating officer and an independent person. The independent person is involved in all aspects of consideration of the complaint including any discussions in the authority about the action to be taken in relation to the child. At the conclusion of their investigation, the independent person and the investigating officer prepare independent reports for adjudication by a senior manager (usually the Director of Children's Social Care).

When Stage 2 of the complaint's procedure has been concluded and the complainant is still dissatisfied, they can request a review of the Stage 2 investigation, by a review panel at Stage 3. The Panel must consist of three independent people.

The statutory children's social care complaints process encourages the complainant and the local authority to consider Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) at every stage of the complaints process. This means resolving a complaint or concern informally through a face-to-face meeting or telephone discussion. Entering into ADR does not restrict the complainant's right to request a formal investigation at any stage. It is the complainant's right to request the presence of a customer relations manager at any face-to-face meeting.

## Summary of complaints themes

The top three themes for 2024/25 for all statutory complaints received were as detailed below. The figures for 2023/24 and 2022/23 have been given for comparison.

	2024/25		2023/24		2022/23	
Staff conduct	24	36.4%	26	34.7%	23	29.9%
Quality of service provided or received	13	19.8%	42	56.0%	17	22.1%
Service provision	12	36.4%	<i>Not in the top three in previous years</i>			

Examples of complaints recorded as **Quality of service provided or received** include the parent or carer disagreeing with the content of an assessment or care plan proposed for a child or young person and being given the opportunity to input to the assessment.

**Staff conduct** complaints are recorded as such when complaints are received about specific individual members of social work staff.

**Service Provision** complaints are concerns from parents or carers about contact arrangements with their child looked after and the child or young person being unhappy about the move to a different placement.

## Quality assurance

The Customer Relations Team carries out checks of all complaint responses to ensure the quality of the response and that the language and terminology used is easy for the complainant to understand, particularly if the complaint is from a child or young person.

All responses made during the year (100%) were checked by the Customer Relations Team before being sent out. The findings and recommendations arising from complaints were shared regularly with BFfC's Board via its Audit and Risk Committee, Senior Leadership Team and operational managers. The Information Rights Services Manager and the Customer Relations Team are also available to the complainant and the investigator for advice on best practice during the complaint investigation but remain impartial. Customer Relations Team staff undertook trauma informed practice training to align with Children's Services practice.

The Information Rights Services Manager delivers training on investigating and responding to statutory Stage 1 complaints and also on the corporate complaints procedure for Children's Services staff. The Information Rights Services Manager also attends team meetings to provide training and advice to front line staff. Training is available online and can be accessed by all social care staff through Children's Services training department and training portal. Take up of this on-line training is low, however, face-to-face training sessions for operational managers are available at request. Training for Children's Services staff in 2024/25 focused on the new complaints' management system.

The complaints procedure is promoted to external groups and publicity material is available to staff, children and young people on both RBC and BFfC's websites. Parents or carers with learning difficulties or other needs can access the information using the ReachDeck accessibility tool on the [BFfC website](#), or they can be signposted to local, impartial organisations, such as Reading's Information Advice and Support Service (IASS). ReachDeck will also translate and 'speak' web documents.

The Information Rights Services Manager attends Team Meetings to provide training and advice to Teams and Senior Managers when required. A case management system was introduced in July 2024 to assist with managing complaints across the Council and includes children's social care statutory complaints. Children and families are able to log complaints via the BFfC or RBC website into the new case management system. A new webform was created and went live in July 2024.

Children's Services senior managers receive weekly updates on all complaints which are live and under investigation.

Monthly reports of the Service Level Agreement were provided to the Children's Services Contract Manager. Monthly reports, a compliance dashboard, was shared with the BFFC Board, via its Audit and Risk Committee and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and for the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT).

## **Support network**

The Information Rights Services Manager participates in the Southern Region Complaints Managers' Group and is the current chair of the group and also attends the National Complaints Managers' Group. Both groups continue to support customer relations and complaints managers in sharing good practice, both nationally and locally. Where cases are complex the Information Rights Services Manager often seeks advice and guidance from the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's advice line or through Teams meetings with the LGSCO External Training & Liaison Manager.

## **Complaints activity statistics**

In the year 2024/25, children's social care received 66 statutory complaints, which is a decrease of 9 (13.6%) compared to the 75 received in 2023/24.

During this reporting period:

- 11 Stage 2 requests were received.
- One was dealt with through ADR/Mediation. The remaining 10 progressed to a Stage 2 investigation.
- Of these 10, 3 progressed to a Stage 3 investigation.

The above related to Stage 1 complaints received in this reporting year.

Of the 10 Stage 2 investigations:

- 5 agreed with the Stage 1 investigation and did not uphold the complaints;
- The remaining 5 Stage 2 investigations either upheld or partially upheld the complaints;
- Of the 3 cases that progressed to Stage 3, all 3 agreed with the Stage 2 investigation outcomes.

Of the 66 Stage 1 complaints received:

- 11 (16.66 %) were resolved as representations informally through alternative dispute resolution (ADR) (Stage 0) by the social care teams.
- 55 (83.33%) were investigated formally at Stage 1 to an outcome.

Of the 55 complaints investigated at stage 1, 32 (58.2%) were responded to within timescale, with the remaining 23 (41.8%) complaints responded to over timescale.

The above information is summarised in the following tables.

### **Stage 1 investigation outcomes:**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>2024/25</b>		<b>2023/24</b>		<b>2022/23</b>		<b>2021/22</b>	
Fully upheld	There is evidence to support the complainant's view	6	<b>10.9%</b>	7	12.3%	11	16.7%	7	14.0%
Partially upheld	The issues the complainant is raising are accepted, but it is out of Children's Services hands or remit to resolve the matter to the complainant's satisfaction	2	<b>3.6%</b>	2	3.5%	6	9.1%	8	16.0%
Not upheld	Where there is evidence to support the local authority's	16	<b>29.1%</b>	6	10.5%	21	31.8%	16	32.0%

Outcome	Explanation	2024/25		2023/24		2022/23		2021/22	
	account of events complained about								
No recordable outcome	There are conflicting accounts of an event with no evidence to support either party	0	0.0%	2	3.5%	1	1.5%	1	2.0%
Several outcomes	A combination of the above (where complaint has multiple strands)	31	56.4%	40	70.2%	27	40.9%	18	36.0%

**Total number of Stage 1 complaints (including those resolved by alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and eventually withdrawn) received in the last five years.**

Year	Number of complaints received	% Increase against previous year	Number of children open to Children's Services	% of complaints against open cases
2023/24	75	-2.60%	3589	2.09
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>-13.63%</b>	<b>3202</b>	<b>2.06</b>

**Outcomes for those investigated to a completion (excluding those resolved via ADR and those eventually withdrawn)**

Outcome	2024/25 Number	% of Total	2023/24 Number	% of Total	2022/23 Number	% of Total
Upheld	6	10.9%	7	12.3%	11	16.7%
Partially upheld	2	3.6%	2	3.5%	6	9.1%
Not upheld	16	29.1%	6	10.5%	21	31.8%
No outcome	N/A	0.0%	2	3.5%	1	1.5%
Multiple outcomes	31	56.4%	40	70.2%	27	40.9%
Total	55	100%	57	100%	66	100%

#### Timescales: Investigations

Reporting Year	Total Investigated to an Outcome	In Timescale	% of Total	Over Timescale	% of Total
2021/22	50	22	44%	28	56%
2022/23	66	28	42.4%	38	57.6%
2023/24	57	25	43.9%	32	56.1%
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>58.2%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>41.8%</b>

#### Timescales: Informal Resolutions

	Total Resolved Informally	In timescale	% of Total	Over Timescale	% of Total
2021/22	9	6	66.7%	3	33.3%
2022/23	10	5	50.0%	5	50.0%
2023/24	17	7	41.2%	10	58.8%
<b>2024/25</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>54.5%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>45.5%</b>

### Main theme of all complaints received during 2024/25

(NOTE: This includes all complaints received and resolved informally, withdrawn, and investigated to an outcome at Stage 1, but does not include complaints investigated at Stages 2 & 3, as these themes are duplicates of Stage 1)

Theme of complaint	2024/25 Number	% of Total	2023/24 Number	% of Total	2022/23 Number	% of Total
Assessment Process	1	1.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Communication	9	13.6%	6	8.0%	11	14.2%
Complaint about Placement	1	1.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Court Issues	1	1.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Failure to Resolve Issue	N/A	N/A	0	0	1	1.3%
Financial Issue	1	1.5%	1	1.3%	1	1.3%
Lack of Support	N/A	N/A	0	0	10	13.0%
Missed Appointment	1	1.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Procedure	N/A	N/A	0	0	14	18.2%
Quality of service provided	13	19.8%	42	56.0%	17	22.1%
Safeguarding	3	4.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Service Provision	12	18.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Staff conduct	24	36.4%	26	34.7%	23	29.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Who the complaint was received from:

Who made the complaint	2024/25 Number	% of Total	2023/24 Number	% of Total	2022/23 Number	% of Total
Advocate*	7	10.6%	1	1.3%	6	7.8%
Child *	0	0.0%	1	1.3%	0	0
Extended Family (Siblings, Aunts & Uncles, and Grandparents)	5	7.57%	9	12.1%	8	10.4%
Friend	0	0.0%	0	0	0	0
Landlord	0	0.0%	0	0	0	0
Parent (Incl. Adopted or Foster Parents & Guardians)	52	78.7%	63	84.0%	54	70.1%
Professional (Care Worker, Social Worker, etc)	1	1.5%	0	0	1	1.3%
Self **	1	1.5%	1	1.3%	8	10.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* These are complaints received directly from a child, usually under the age of 12, sometimes via an advocate.

\*\* These are complaints received from young people who are open to the service in their own right and are aged over 12.

The majority of complaints are from children's birth parents who disagree with social care involvement and outcomes from assessments and care plans and wish to challenge a

professional decision. Of the 66 complaints received 52 (78.7%) are from parents. Complaints of this nature are inevitable, however high-quality record keeping and clear communication with a clear distinction between fact and opinion reduces the opportunity for dispute.

**Statutory complaints received by team:**

<b>Team</b>	<b>2024/25 No. of Complaints</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2023/24 No. of Complaints</b>	<b>%</b>
Children Looked After Team	7	10.7%	8	10.7%
Children's Single Point of Access	3	4.5%	3	4.0%
Children & Young People's Disability Team	9	13.6%	15	20.0%
Early Help Team	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Edge of Care	1	1.5%	0	0.0%
Family & Friends	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Fostering Service	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Leaving Care Team	4	6.1%	2	2.7%
Occupational Therapy	1	1.5%	0	0.0%
Together for Families Teams	40	60.6%	47	62.6%
Under 5's Team	1	1.5%	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>

The three areas which received the highest number of complaints were the Together for Families Teams (TFF) with 40 (60.0%), the Children & Young Person's Disability Team (CYPDT) with 9 (13.6%), and the Children Looked After Team (CLA) with 7(13.6%). This can mainly be attributed to the high volume of children open to these services compared to others listed above and the volume of their direct contact with children and families.

**Methods used to make a complaint**

<b>Method</b>	<b>2024/25 Number</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>2023/24 Number</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>2022/23 Number</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
Email	49	74.6%	51	68.0%	51	66.2%
Letter	2	3.0%	1	1.3%	3	3.9%
Telephone	5	7.5%	17	22.7%	17	22.1%
Webform	10	14.9%	6	8.0%	6	7.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100%</b>

The above demonstrates that the complainants have a number of methods they can use to contact the Customer Relations Team with their complaints.

**Demographic Information:**

Ethnicity	2024/25 Number of Complaints Received	% of Total	2023/24 Number of Complaints Received	% of Total	2022/23 Number of Complaints Received	% of Total
Asian/Asian British	7	10.60%	2	2.7%	3	3.9%
Black or Black British	3	4.55%	4	5.3%	1	1.3%
Black or Black British / Black Caribbean	2	3.03%	3	4.0%	3	3.9%
Black or Black British / Black African	3	4.55%	2	2.7%	2	2.6%
Mixed Black & White	2	3.03%	0	0.0%	1	1.3%
Mixed Black & Asian	1	1.51%	1	1.3%	0	0/0%
Mixed White & Asian	0	0.0%	3	4.0%	3	3.9%
Mixed White & Black African	8	12.12%	1	1.3%	0	0.0%
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	5	7.58%	6	8.0%	6	7.8%
Mixed Other	2	3.03%	3	4.0%	3	3.9%
Not Stated	6	9.09%	14	18.7%	22	28.5%
Other White European	4	6.06%	1	1.3%	1	1.3%
White British	20	30.30%	34	45.4%	31	40.3%
White Other	3	4.55%	1	1.3%	1	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100%</b>

For equality monitoring purposes, staff have been encouraged to seek personal demographic information from people who make a complaint to help assess if there are groups of people who are proportionally complaining more or less and to explore the possible reasons.

The offer of the translation service and easy read versions of complaint responses are made available by the Information Rights Services Manager to those complainants who need these.

**Complaints from young people involving advocates**

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, 5 complaints were recorded as coming from young people via an advocate.

Children's Services staff ensure that children are given information on their advocacy and rights at each Children's Looked After review, they are also made aware of their right to complain about the service they receive.

The Information Rights Services Manager also meets Children's Services teams and managers to reinforce the importance of capturing verbal complaints. Staff are encouraged to record and analyse comments or concerns, as many children's and young people's issues are resolved this way rather than using the complaints process. If the young person is unhappy but does not wish to make a formal complaint, the Customer Relations Team also offers to try to resolve matters informally through mediation.

### **Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman**

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LG&SCO) received 8 representations from dissatisfied children and families for issues relating to Childrens Services. This is the same number as the previous year.

Of the 8 cases, the LGSCO assessed all 8 and investigated 3. One was upheld the other 2 were not upheld. Of the remaining 5 cases 2 were closed without further investigation and 3 were deemed premature and referred to the Council to complete the complaints process.

In respect of the one case upheld, the LGSCO asked the Council/BFFC to apologise and provided financial redress for distress and time and trouble. There were no formal public reports issued in 2024/25.

### **Learning from complaints**

Children's Services welcomes feedback from children and families to inform the improvement of services. All compliments and complaints are logged and learning is disseminated to managers. Issues arising from complaints, how the specific service has addressed them, and emerging themes were reported to the Children's Services Senior Leadership Team, the BFFC Audit and Risk Committee and BFFC Quality Assurance Improvement Committee in 2024/25.

### **Examples of learning**

#### **Children with Disabilities**

Stage 1 complaint following a Children's Service decision for a reduction in care package for a child. Whilst the reduction was proportionate, the complaint highlighted the lack of consultation with parents before the decision was made. Learning from the complaint was shared with the service, whereby practice was updated to ensure that if a significant amendment is made to a child's package of care, a single assessment would be completed to clearly evidence the change in need for the child and their family. This ensures that families are participating and kept informed of changes. Staff were reminded that Social Workers must take responsibility for sharing reasons for changes to packages of care and the outcome of panels in a timely manner with parents and carers.

#### **Corporate Parenting – Children in Care and Care Leavers**

Our Children in Care and Care Leaver teams considered complaints to their service over 2024/25 and took a range of actions in response to complaints. Learning was shared and explored in team and service meetings with the aim of improving communication, transparency, and collaborative practice.

This learning has collectively enhanced communication, accountability, and partnership working, leading to increased satisfaction among parents and carers, improved compliance with statutory duties, stronger multi-agency collaboration, and could

contribute to a reduction in the number of complaints and escalations. Specific actions included:

- Clearer communication with parents, carers and professionals. The impact has been improved trust and confidence among parents, carers and professionals. Clear updates also reduced uncertainty and demonstrated accountability, resulting in stronger relationships and fewer escalations. Parents, carers and professionals have shared that they feel more informed and respected, which supports partnership working and reduces repeat complaints.
- A strengthened focus on reflective practice to ensure language is supportive and empowering. As a result, language in reports and meetings is more strength-based and inclusive, promoting dignity and collaboration. Feedback from children and families has shown that families feel less judged and more engaged in planning, which has supported better outcomes for children.
- Improving the timeliness of assessments and information sharing and improving clarity regarding roles and expectations at the beginning of placements. Setting clear expectations at the start of placements reduced delays and improved the quality of assessments. Professionals reported greater confidence in meeting deadlines, and carers reported feeling better prepared for their role.
- Strengthened expectations that Social Workers send minutes of looked after reviews; Personal Education Plans and Family Contact Reports to families and professionals within reasonable timescale following meetings, ensuring transparency and continuity of care. Families and professionals have improved access to essential information in a timely manner, which has supported collaborative planning and reduced frustration.

## **Next steps**

Learning from complaints is embedded in Children's Services' new Quality Assurance Framework, launched in summer 2025. Learning from complaints will be a dedicated agenda item at Children's Services quarterly Making A Difference meeting, chaired by the Executive Director for Children's Services and attended by managers across children's services. Themes arising from complaints, as well as actions taken in response, will inform workforce development planning and training, and quality assurance and audit activities.

Learning from complaints is an integral part of our improvement journey. We will continue to seek out the voice of children and families and use these alongside our understanding of their lived experiences to drive improvements to consistently deliver good outcomes for children in Reading.

## **Subject Access Requests (SARs)**

The Customer Relations Team processes all SARs requests for Children's Services. These are open and closed children's social care cases (historical cases where paper and microfiche files are held at the records centre) and Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) cases.

In 2024/25 the Customer Relations Team received 58 requests for records, 17 less than the 75 requests received in 2023/24 relating to Children's Services.

Of the 58 requests received 20 requests were completed. 20 were declined as invalid requests. The remaining 15 cases are waiting to be processed as at the end of March

2025, this number would have altered by the time this report is presented at Adults, Childrens and Education Committee.

The main reasons for the backlog are as follows:

- Large volumes of paper files need to be copied from microfiche and scanned to PDF format before redactions can be completed.
- Information is held on case management systems as well as shared files and emails. These have to be searched, converted to PDF and redacted before the file can be shared with the requestor.
- The Customer Relations Team and the Information Governance Team carry out six monthly audits of open cases and contact the customer with updates on the progress of their case.

The Council has purchased new software for the redaction work; at the time of writing this report we had carried out user acceptance testing and training. There are some system limitations we are working with the supplier to resolve.

### **Compliments**

Compliments are not consistently formally recorded and logged centrally. Improvement is needed in this area to accurately capture the positive feedback that we receive from children, families and professionals which also provides valuable insight and learning into what is working well.

Examples of compliments received from parents, carers and young people during 2024/25 include:

- We want to say thank you from the bottom of our hearts. The Family Workers team is excellent and provides extraordinary ideas and guidance to individuals with autism – *parent feedback to a family worker*
- The centre has amazing staff. They are so nice, they are happy to talk about anything and I feel I can turn to them if I need someone to talk to – *a parent praising family group workers after attending events during the summer programme at one of our children's centres*
- Thank you so much for all your help with both of my children. The work you have done has definitely made a difference in and out of school – *feedback for an educational mental health practitioner*
- He was incredibly supportive and genuine, even taking the time to go for a coffee after a visit to Crown Court – *feedback from a parent to a social worker*
- I don't know where I would be without your help and I really appreciate what you have done for me. I don't know how to repay you – *young person to youth support worker*
- She is the best family worker in the world. Thank you so much for letting her be a part of my family because she is doing all that she can – *family feedback about one of our social workers*
- I have had so many questions, but everyone has been so helpful, supportive and responsible, even though our situation is unusual – *parent feedback to the SEND team*
- They helped me get back into education which was a struggle for me and showed me future opportunities that I could follow up on, which helped significantly – *young person about the support they receive from YJS*.

## Appendix B

### Contact information: How to make a complaint

Some complaints can be sorted out by discussing your problem with your social worker or a manager. If you want to make a complaint, you can contact the Customer Relations Team by telephone, letter, in person, by email or via the BFFC website on its [compliments and complaints](#) page.

Telephone the Customer Relations Team on 0118 937 2905 or e-mail: [socialcare.complaints@reading.gov.uk](mailto:socialcare.complaints@reading.gov.uk).

If you wish to make your complaint to us in writing, our address is:

Customer Relations Team  
Reading Borough Council  
Floor 2 South Rear  
Civic Offices  
Bridge Street  
Reading  
RG1 2LU

You can also text us with your complaint, type SPKUP & your message to 81722. Your complaint will be recorded and if we can't sort out the problem immediately it will be passed for further investigation and action.

The Customer Relations Team can take your complaint over the telephone and explain the complaints procedure in more detail or send you a leaflet explaining how to complain. Leaflets for adults and for children & young people are also available in council buildings or via the [Brighter Futures for Children website](#).

You can also make a complaint about children's social care via the Reading Borough Council website: [Complaints](#).

You can also use these contact details to tell us if you have a concern (but do not want to make a complaint) or if you want to make a compliment about a service you can do so here: [Compliment](#).

## Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee



**Reading**  
Borough Council

Working better with you

14 January 2026

<b>Title</b>	Reading Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2024/25
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To make a decision
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report</b>	Melissa Wise – Executive Director – Communities and Adult Social Care
<b>Report author</b>	Jo Purser – Deputy Director Adult Social Care Safeguarding, Quality and Practice
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Paul Gittings – Lead Member Adult Social Care
<b>Council priority</b>	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
<b>Recommendations</b>	That the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee endorse publication of the Reading Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2024/25.

### 1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report is being brought forward to seek approval from Committee for the publication of the Reading Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2024/25 on the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adult Board (SAB) website. The Council hosts the West of Berkshire SAB, working in partnership with health, police, and local authorities to protect adults at risk. The report provides an overview of safeguarding adults activity in Reading for the period April 2024 to March 2025. It highlights key performance trends, demographic insights, achievements, and priorities for the coming year.

### 2. Policy Context

2.1 Section 43 of the Care Act 2014 requires every local authority to set up a SAB with a statutory duty of the SAB being the publication of an Annual Report detailing its activities and effectiveness, which must be shared with key local bodies. Each of the three Local Authorities within the West of Berkshire SAB have agreed to publish their own report each year on the SAB website.

### 3. The Proposal

3.1 The proposal is to publish the Reading Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2024/25 on the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adult Board (SAB) website in accordance with the Council's statutory duty.

#### Key messages within the report

### 3.2 Safeguarding Concerns and Enquiries

A safeguarding concern is any situation where someone believes an adult:

- Has care and support needs,
- Is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and
- Cannot protect themselves because of those needs.

Anyone; individuals, professionals, or agencies can raise a safeguarding concern.

A safeguarding enquiry is the process of looking into a concern to decide:

- What happened,
- What risks exist, and
- What actions are needed to protect the person and prevent further harm.

Enquiries can be:

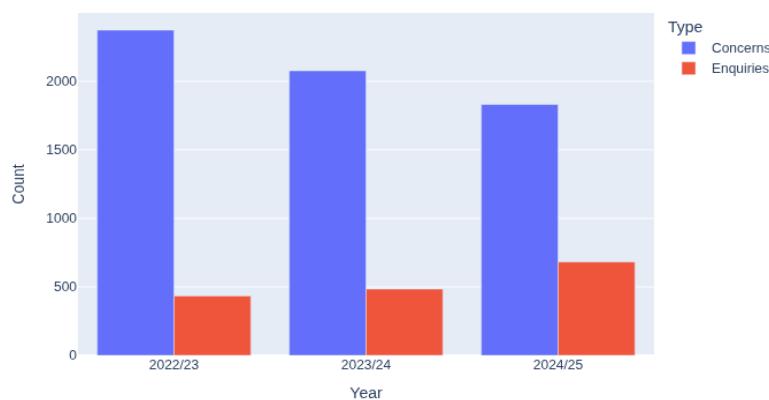
- Proportionate Enquiry: A lighter-touch approach under Section 42 of the Care Act, often resolved through conversations or basic information exchange.
- Level 1, 2, or 3 Enquiries: Increasingly complex interventions, involving strategy discussions or meetings with relevant agencies. Level 3 usually applies to high-risk or criminal cases.

The Local Authority leads this process, coordinating agencies, delegating tasks, and ensuring quality assurance.

### Activity (3-Year Trend)

Year	Concerns	Enquiries	Conversion Rate (%)
2022/23	2374	434	18
2023/24	2077	484	23
2024/25	1832	682	37

Safeguarding Concerns and Enquiries (2022-2025)



682 s42 Enquiries were opened this year which is an increase of 198 from the previous year (up 41%), with a conversion rate from Concern to s42 Enquiry of 37% (up 14% in the year) which is now higher than both the national average (Approx. 29%) and the South-East average (Approx. 34%) for 2023/24.

This is a positive change for Reading as our higher conversion rate evidences the targeted work, we have done to reduce the 'out of scope' referrals, clarifying criteria and raising awareness. As a result, inappropriate concern referrals have fallen significantly whilst more concerns raised meet the Care Act criteria or warrant intervention, meaning staff and agencies are identifying genuine risks rather than unnecessary referrals. It also indicates staff and partners understand safeguarding responsibilities and are raising concerns appropriately, which reflects good training and compliance. Ultimately, more enquiries mean more opportunities to investigate, plan, and prevent harm, reducing the likelihood of abuse continuing or escalating.

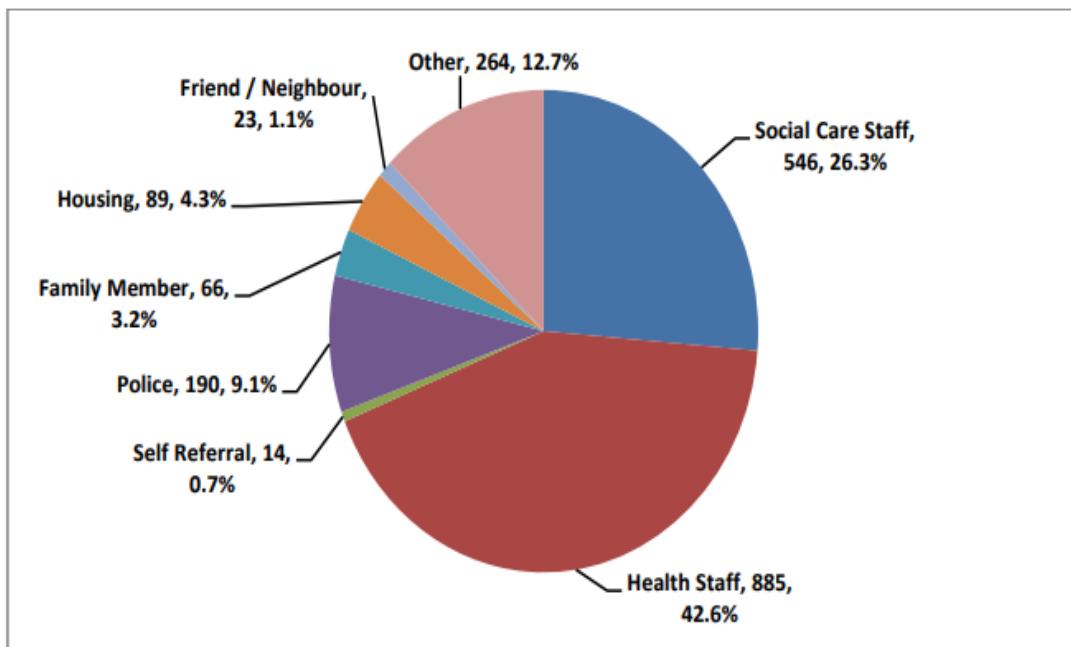
This conversion rate also makes Reading slightly higher compared to the other West Berkshire authorities for 2024/25 and on a par with other current comparator averages such as the South-East ADASS Q4 2024/25 benchmarking (Approx. 36.2%).

### 3.3 Referral Sources (2024/25)

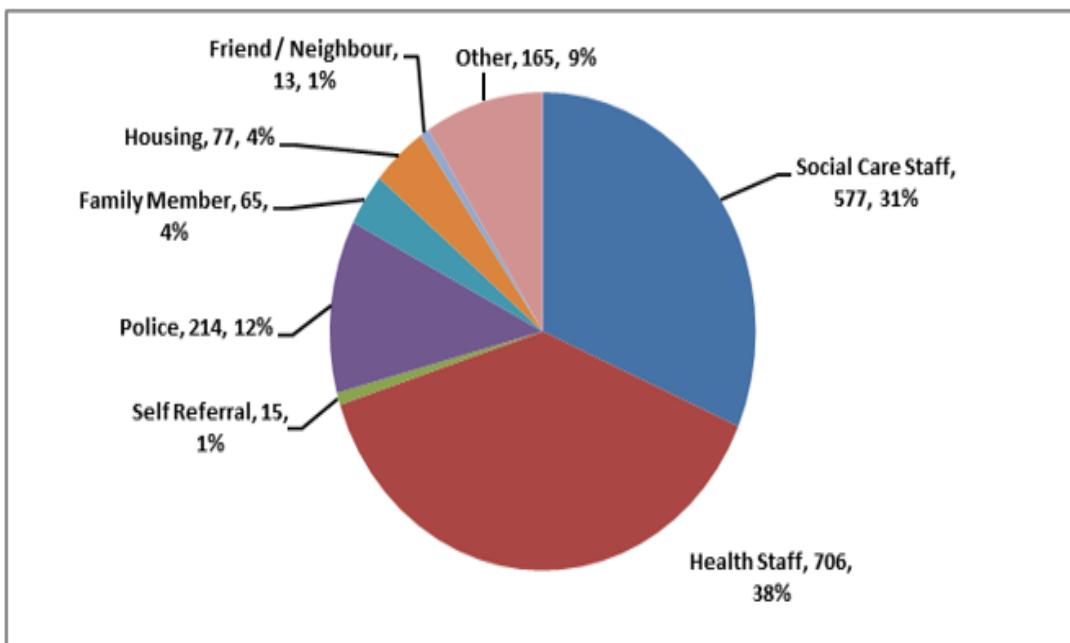
A referral is the mechanism by which a concern is raised. For professionals, the required route is via an online Safeguarding Referral form, via email or via the care recording system (mosaic) and submitted to the Safeguarding Adults Team. For members of the public an online form can be completed. If a referrer states that they are raising a safeguarding concern, then it is recorded as such but in the event the person is raising an issue, but has not suggested it is a safeguarding concern, then the Council's Safeguarding Adult Team use professional judgement to deciding whether to take it forward as a concern or not.

The tables below show referral sources from 2023/24 and for 2024/25.

#### Safeguarding Concerns by Referral Source - 2023/24



## Safeguarding Concerns by Referral Source – 2024/25



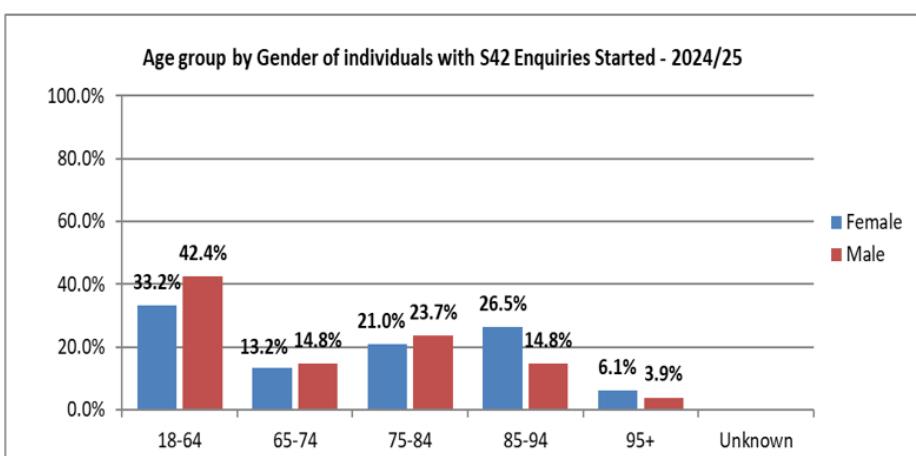
The largest percentage of safeguarding concerns for 2024/25 were once again referred from 'Health' staff although there was a drop of 4.1% over the year.

'Social Care Staff' were the next biggest source of referrals and saw a rise of 5.2% since 2023/24. The 'Social Care' category encompasses both local authority staff such as Social Workers and Care Managers as well as independent sector workers such as Residential / Nursing Care and Day Care staff. The 'Health' category relates to both Primary and Secondary Health staff as well as Mental Health workers.

The 'Police' (11.7%) are the next largest source of Concerns received. They have risen by 2.6% over the period. Thames Valley Police have continued with more robust safeguarding training practices, and this is having a positive effect on the quality of referrals as well as slowing down the number submitted.

The work RBC has undertaken with the fire service as a result of safeguarding adult reviews recommendations has seen an increase in the number of referrals received from the Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service (included in other). Social care staff have also increased their referrals due to a new safeguarding manual launched, increased training and a new duty system implemented within the adult safeguarding team which provides a quicker response from the safeguarding team.

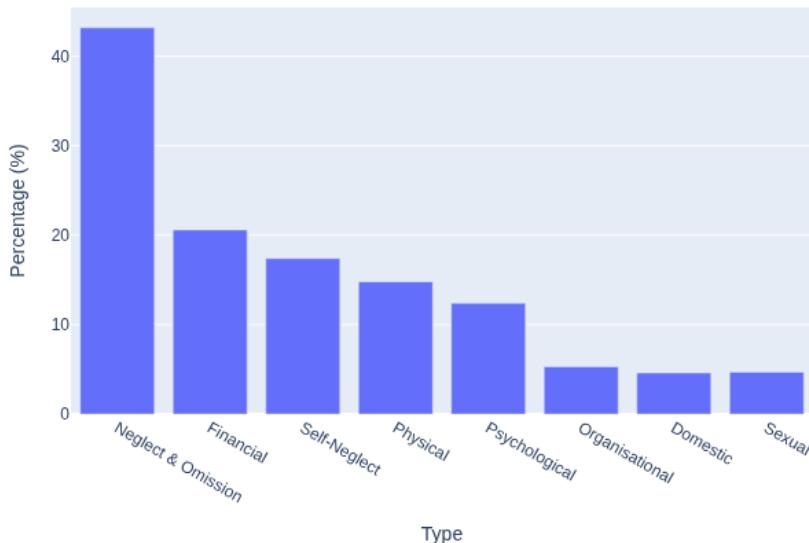
### 3.4 Enquiries by Age and Gender



When looking at Age and Gender together for 2024/25 the number of Males with enquiries is larger in comparison to Females in those age groups from 18 until 84. After 84 years of age the number of Males in each age group drops away. The largest proportion of enquiries is still in the 18-64 age group for both genders although Males make up 42.4% compared to Females 33.2%. Those Females in the 85-94 age group make up 26.5% of their total compared to only 14.8% in the Males group. Whilst this position hasn't changed from 2023/24 the comparison of enquiries for males and females and the difference across age groups doesn't appear to be reflected in our neighbouring authorities so further investigation into this needs to be carried out in 2025/26.

### 3.5 Types of abuse in Concluded Enquiries

Types of Abuse in Concluded Enquiries (2024/25)



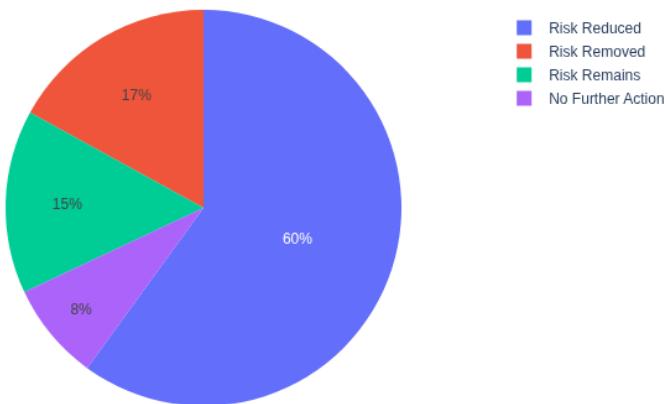
The most common types of abuse for 2024/25 were for 'Neglect and Acts of Omission' (43.2%), 'Financial or Material Abuse' (20.6%), 'Self Neglect' (17.4%) and 'Physical Abuse' (14.8%). The top five recorded types of abuse in Reading align with the national picture. In 2024–25, the most commonly recorded type of abuse in England was neglect and acts of omission, accounting for 40.8% of all identified risks.

'Neglect and Acts of Omission' is still the largest abuse type in the year for Reading and has increased by 8%. 'Organisational' has also risen by 1.9% although only makes up the 6th largest group (abuse type in only 5.3% of cases).

Types of abuse in concluded cases remains consistent with figures in 2023/24. However, there has been a decrease in 'Financial or Material' cases (down 4%) and now makes up 20.6% of abuse types which is the 2nd largest group. 'Psychological' has also seen a fall in numbers and makes up 12.4% of abuse types (down 6.6%). There has also been a slight fall in 'Domestic' (down 2.7%) although this only makes up 4.6% of the cases and is only the 7th largest group.

### 3.6 Outcomes of concluded enquiries

Outcomes of Concluded Enquiries (2024/25)



'Risk reduced' has increased due to teams increased intervention and creatively looking how risks can be managed whilst ensuring outcomes/wishes are met. 'Risk remains' has increased which reflects applying making safeguarding personal in supporting individuals who wish to continue making risky decisions however measures are undertaken to review safeguarding's and other mechanisms to monitor on-going risk. In the new mosaic safeguarding module, which launched in April 2025 practitioners can complete a risk assessment and provide detail on why risk remains.

### 3.7 Achievements in 2024–25

During 2024–25, the Council made significant strides in strengthening its safeguarding framework. A major achievement was the successful clearance of the backlog of safeguarding enquiries, which had previously posed challenges to timely intervention.

The introduction of a new duty system and the launch of a comprehensive safeguarding manual provided staff with clear guidance and improved operational efficiency. The implementation of the Mosaic module and an embedded feedback form enhanced case recording, allowed for better quality assurance. The Council also saw a notable increase in Persons in Position of Trust (PiPOT) referrals, rising from just 4 in the previous year to 26, reflecting improved awareness and compliance.

Training remained a priority, with over 620 staff completing fire safety training and 101 staff receiving specialist training on mental capacity, ensuring that frontline practitioners are equipped to manage complex safeguarding scenarios effectively.

### 3.8 Priorities for 2025–26

Looking ahead, the Council has identified key priorities to build on the progress already achieved in the last year.

**Priority 1:** Continued enhancement of the Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) approach, ensuring that safeguarding interventions remain person-centred and outcome focused.

**Priority 2:** Raising awareness of PiPOT across all agencies will be a major focus in 2025/26. It has been acknowledged like most local authorities and partner agencies; the Council need to raise the profile of PiPoT both as a directorate and corporately to recognise the need to raise a PiPoT referral. Past referrals have led to significant improvements and well-being in a person's life. Specialised training and general awareness workshops will be undertaken in 2025/26.

**Priority 3:** The development of transitional safeguarding pathways to support young people moving into adulthood.

**Priority 4:** Preventative work will remain at the forefront, with targeted initiatives addressing hoarding, self-neglect, and exploitation.

These priorities reflect a proactive strategy aimed at reducing risk, promoting independence, and improving the overall safeguarding experience for adults at risk. To support these priorities, we will continue our investment in workforce development, which is essential, particularly in areas such as MSP, PiPOT, and mental capacity training. Strengthening community engagement will also be critical to ensuring that safeguarding services remain inclusive and responsive to the needs of diverse populations.

#### **4. Contribution to Strategic Aims**

4.1 The work of the Safeguarding Adults Board and the achievements and priorities outlined in the report, strongly align with the overarching priority "Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children" because they directly contribute to creating safer environments, reducing harm, and promoting independence and dignity.

#### **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

5.1 There are no environmental and climate implications relevant to this report.

#### **6. Community Engagement**

6.1 This is an information only report and therefore no community engagement was undertaken.

#### **7. Equality Implications**

7.1 This is an information only report and no changes to services are proposed, therefore an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is not relevant.

#### **8. Other Relevant Considerations**

8.1 None

#### **9. Legal Implications**

9.1 There are no legal implications to this report.

9.2 The publication of the Reading Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2024/25 enables the Council to evidence the following safeguarding duties under the Care Act 2014.

#### **Section 42 Duty – Make Enquiries**

Local authorities must make enquiries (or cause them to be made) if they believe an adult has care and support needs (whether or not these are being met), is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result of those needs, is unable to protect

themselves. The purpose of the enquiry is to decide what action is needed to protect the adult.

### **Lead a Local Safeguarding System**

Local authorities must lead a multi-agency safeguarding system that; prevents abuse and neglect, responds quickly when it occurs, works collaboratively with health, police, housing, and other partners.

### **Establish a Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB)**

Every local authority must set up an SAB with core members that include the Local authority, NHS (Integrated Care Board), Police and develop and implement a joint safeguarding strategy.

### **Commission Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs)**

When an adult dies or suffers serious harm due to abuse or neglect and there is concern about multi-agency failings, the SAB must arrange a SAR to learn lessons and improve practice.

### **Provide Independent Advocacy**

If an adult is the subject of a safeguarding enquiry or SAR and has substantial difficulty in being involved, the local authority must arrange an independent advocate (unless there is an appropriate person to support them).

### **Share Information**

Relevant organisations must share information with the SAB when requested to support safeguarding work.

### **Apply the Six Principles of Safeguarding**

Empowerment – supporting informed decision-making,  
Prevention – acting early to stop harm,  
Proportionality – least intrusive response appropriate to risk,  
Protection – supporting those most in need,  
Partnership – working with communities and agencies,  
Accountability – transparency in safeguarding practice

## **10. Financial Implications**

- 10.1 The SAB is hosted by Reading Borough Council, under a partnership arrangement where funding contributions for the service are made by each partner. The total expenditure budget for the service is £205k, which is predominantly staff resource (both employed by RBC and on an interim consultant basis).
- 10.2 The table below outlines the annual contribution per partner for the 25-26 financial year, with total contributions c£120k. All partners are billed annually.

Partner	% Contribution	£ Contribution
Reading BC (Host)	16.07%	£19,204.40
West Berkshire Council	16.07%	£19,204.40
Wokingham BC	16.07%	£19,204.40
BOB ICB	16.07%	£19,204.40
Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust	9.52%	£11,376.40
Royal Berkshire Hospital	9.52%	£11,376.40
Thames Valley Police	16.66%	£19,909.75

**Timetable for Implementation**

11.1 Not applicable.

**11. Background Papers**

12.1 None

**Appendices**

1. Safeguarding Adults Annual Report 2024/25

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# **West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board**

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## **Reading, West Berkshire & Wokingham**

**Annual Report 2024-25**

If you would like this document in a different format, contact [sabwestofberkshire@reading.gov.uk](mailto:sabwestofberkshire@reading.gov.uk)

## Concerned about an adult?



If you are concerned about yourself or another adult who may be being abused or neglected, in an emergency call the Police on 999.

If you think there has been a crime but it is not an emergency, call the Police on 101 or contact Adult Social Care in the area in which the person lives.

In an emergency situation call the Police on 999.

If you think there has been a crime but it is not an emergency, call the Police on 101.

If you are concerned about yourself or another adult who may be being abused or neglected, contact Adult Social Care in the area in which the person lives, on the numbers, email address or by completed an online form below:

**Reading** – call 0118 9373747 or email at [CSAAdvice.Signposting@reading.gov.uk](mailto:CSAAdvice.Signposting@reading.gov.uk) or complete an online [form](#)

**West Berkshire** – call 01635 519056 or email [safeguardingadults@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:safeguardingadults@westberks.gov.uk) or complete an online [form](#)

**Wokingham** call 0118 974 6371 or email [Adultsafeguardinghub@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:Adultsafeguardinghub@wokingham.gov.uk) or complete an online [form](#)

For help out of normal working hours contact the **Emergency Duty Team** on 01344 351 999 or email [edt@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:edt@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

For more information visit the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board website:  
<http://www.saberkshirewest.co.uk/>

## Message from the Independent Chair

Welcome to the 2024-25 West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report. The board that I have the privilege of chairing consists of representatives from across the health and social care sector from the formal, informal and voluntary sector and its task is to oversee and help coordinate their efforts and responses to safeguard adults in the West of Berkshire area. This is a responsibility we take very seriously as we are aware that we are supporting and helping some of the most vulnerable members of our community and we recognise that the scale, impact and breadth of safeguarding issues is constantly growing. During the past few years society has witnessed an increased recognition of the impact of financial fraud and scams and an increasing recognition of domestic violence and exploitation of vulnerable adults. Members of the board and the services they represent work tirelessly to adapt, improve and develop services and support systems to best alleviate and prevent these issues against a backdrop of financial pressures and ever growing demands. I therefore want to extend my sincere thanks to every member of our community who dedicate their skills, energy and compassion to working in these complex areas. Some of these workers are volunteers who deserve even greater thanks, for example those people who run food banks and debt advice centres, are good neighbours or who simply look out and offer support to vulnerable citizens. Together with the employed health and social care staff they make a massive difference to many people's lives. Thank you all most sincerely.

Last year I was able to report that the board had been successful in seeking additional funding and I am pleased to be able to report that this funding has been used to appoint a new member of staff to the board to help us develop even more effective communication strategies and also to assist us with sourcing and analysing quality and assurance data, and I hope to be able to report on the impact of this in next year's report.

During the coming year we have new priorities to help protect vulnerable adults from exploitation and violence, and also to prevent financial exploitation more effectively. During this past year, as explained in this report, you will see how we as a board worked together to help embed a better understanding of the Mental Capacity Act within the practice of our statutory partners, and also to address the learning from the Fire Safety SAR from January 2024. The work undertaken in these and other areas is documented within this report and evidences the hard work and commitment of the board and its members.

As always, the work of the board could not happen without the commitment of colleagues who chair and attend the various subgroups and the board meetings; thank you to you all. It is also fair to say that the work of the board would come to a grinding halt without the energy and efforts of the board staff. In particular the Board Manager drives the work of the board and she does this skilfully and engagingly whilst being part time and thus I especially want to thank her for all she brings to the board.

People who elect to work in the health and social care field (and I wish to include our colleagues from the police and fire service) usually come into these professions because they want to make a difference to the lives of those in the communities that they serve. We do not always get it right every time and occasionally there are mistakes which we as a board necessarily end up focussing on, but I would like to end this foreword by highlighting the excellent demonstrations of care and compassion that occur on a daily basis, often simple acts of kindness which make such a significant difference to people. To all of us who came into these professions to make a difference and to 'do good', may we find energy and inspiration to keep going when things get tough, to support and look after ourselves and our colleagues, with the constant aim of ensuring our communities are served with the highest of standards

Professor Keith Brown MBE

Independent Chair, West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board



## About us

<b>What is the Safeguarding Adults Board?</b>  <span style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 136</span>	<p>The West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board (SAB) covers the Local Authority areas of Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham. The SAB is made up of local organisations which work together to protect adults with care and support needs at risk of abuse or neglect. Mandatory partners on the SAB are the Local Authorities, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board and Thames Valley Police. Other organisations are represented on the SAB such as health services, fire and rescue service, ambulance service, HealthWatch, probation and the voluntary sector. A full list of partners is given in <a href="#">Appendix A</a> the SAB structure in <a href="#">Appendix B</a>.</p> <p>We work together to ensure there are systems in place to keep adults at risk in the West of Berkshire safe. We hold partner agencies to account to ensure they are safeguarding adults at risk and promoting their well-being. We work to ensure local organisations focus on outcomes, performance, learning and engagement.</p>
<b>Who do we support?</b>	<p>Under the Care Action 2024, statutory adult safeguarding duties apply to any adult aged 18 years or over:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• who has care and support needs (irrespective of the level of those needs, whether or not those needs are being met and/or who is funding any provision)</li> <li>• is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect and</li> <li>• as a result of those care and support needs, is unable to protect themselves from the risk or experience of abuse or neglect</li> </ul>
<b>Our vision</b>	<p>Adult safeguarding means protecting people in our community so they can live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.</p> <p>Our vision in West Berkshire is that all agencies will work together to prevent and reduce the risk of abuse and neglect to adults at risk of abuse or neglect, whilst supporting individuals to maintain control over their lives and make informed choices without coercion.</p>
<b>What is safeguarding adults?</b>	<p>Safeguarding adults means protecting others in our community who at risk of abuse and neglect and unable to protect themselves because they have care and support needs, regardless of whether or not they are receiving support for these needs. There are many different forms of abuse, including but not exclusively: Disability hate crime, Discriminatory, Domestic, Female genital mutilation (FGM), Financial or material, Forced marriage, Hate crime, Honour based violence, Human trafficking, Mate crime, Modern slavery, Neglect and acts of omission, Organisational, Physical, Psychological, Restraint, Self-neglect, Sexual and Sexual Exploitation.</p>
<b>Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures</b>	<p>Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures are used in the West of Berkshire and their purpose is to support staff to respond appropriately to all concerns of abuse or neglect they may encounter: <a href="#">Berkshire Safeguarding Adults - Berkshire Policies &amp; Procedures for Safeguarding Adults</a></p>

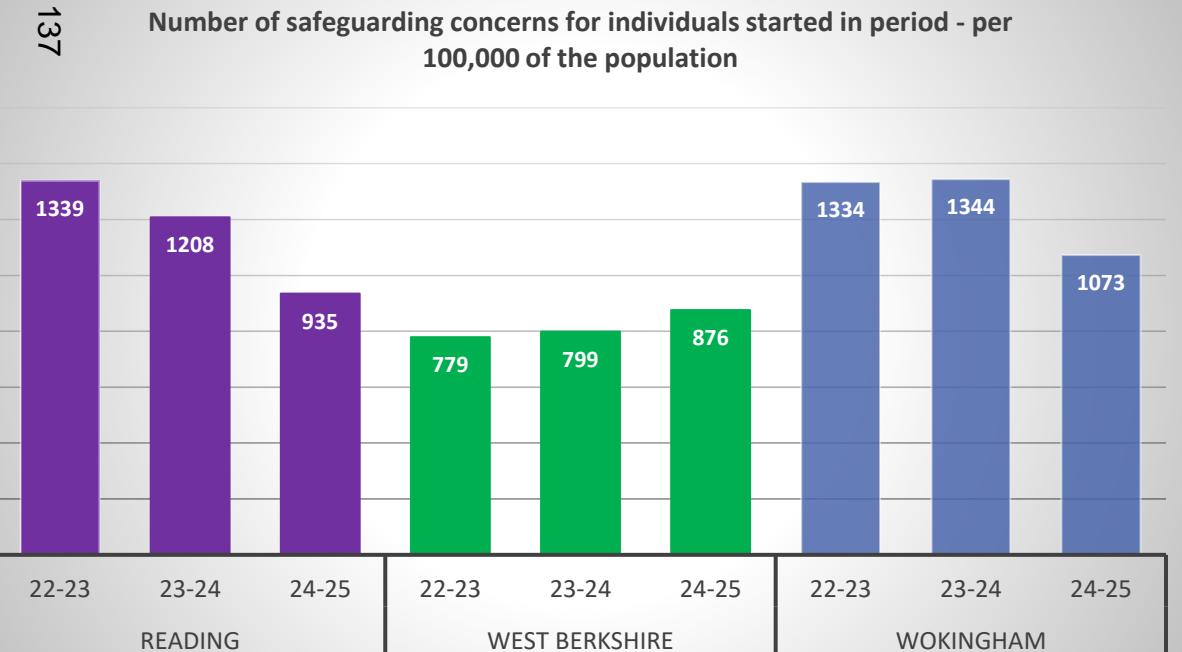
# Number of safeguarding adult concerns and enquiries 2024-25

The chart below shows that in 2024–25, the total number of individuals with safeguarding concerns (per 100,000 population) has decreased by 14% in the West of Berkshire compared to 2023–24, and by 16% compared to 2022–23.

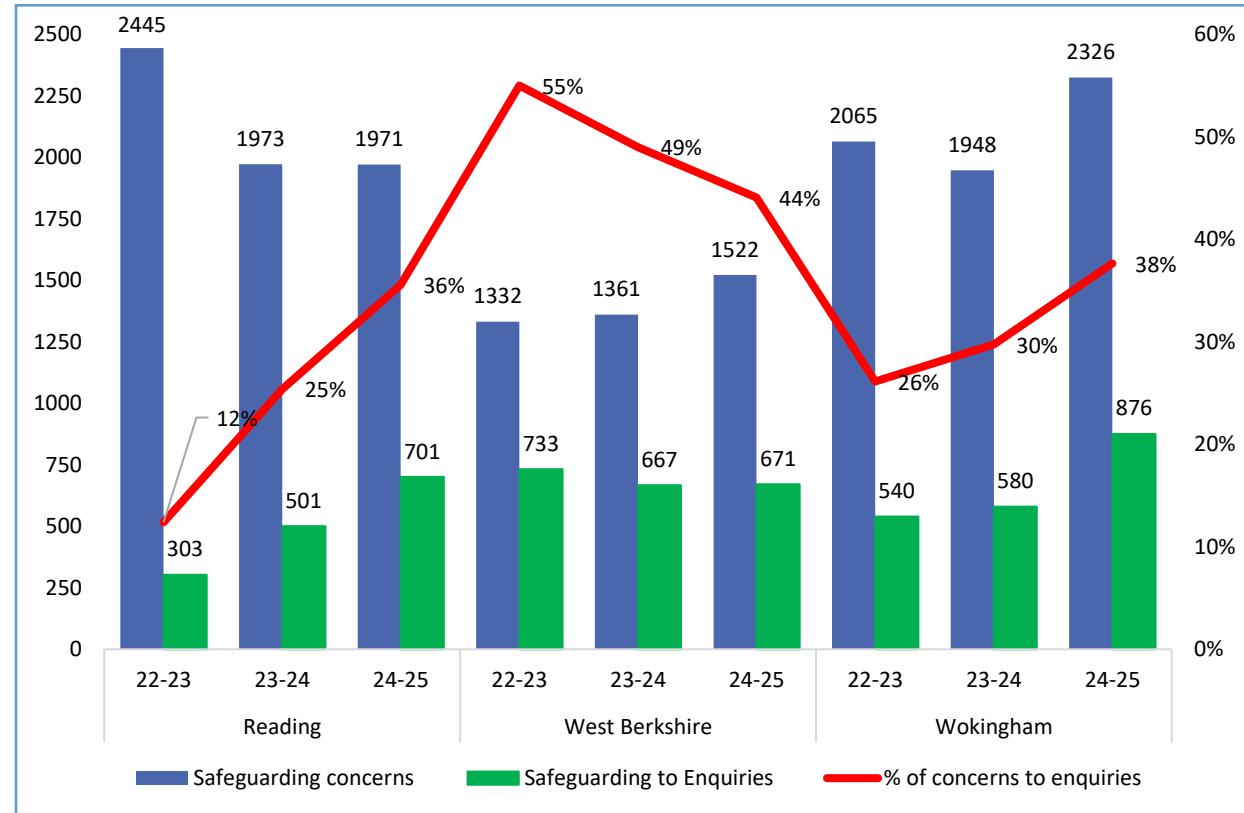
This is notable because it contrasts with the increase in the total number of safeguarding concerns raised. The key difference is that the chart only counts each individual once per reporting period, regardless of how many concerns are raised about them. In contrast, the total concerns data counts every instance a concern is logged, even if it's for the same person multiple times.

This suggests that while more concerns are being raised overall, they are increasingly about fewer individuals, possibly indicating repeat concerns for the same people.

Page 137



The table below demonstrates the number of safeguarding concerns, safeguarding enquiries and conversion rate between safeguarding concern and enquiry over the last three years by local authority.



In 2024-25 there were a total of 2248 enquiries started in the West of Berkshire an increase of 29% when compared with 2023-24.

- 701 enquires in Reading an increase of 40% compared with 2024-25
- 672 in West Berkshire a increase of 1% compared with 2024-25
- 876 in Wokingham an increase of 51% compared with 2024-25

# Safeguarding Concern Trends across the area 2024/25

## Types of Abuse

As in previous years neglect and acts of omission was the most frequent abuse type, equating to 30% of enquiries. This was followed by financial (15%), psychological or emotional abuse (14%) and physical abuse (14%).

Safeguarding enquiries increased overall in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24, with all categories showing a rise except for Discriminatory enquiries, which fell by 17%, and Sexual Exploitation, which remained unchanged.

Organisational saw the largest increase, rising by 148% compared to 2023/24, from 21 to 52. Reading Borough Council accounted for 38 of these enquiries. This was followed by Modern Slavery at a 143% increase, the numbers remain small at 17 enquiries, 1% of the total enquiries over 24/25.

In 2024-25 there was 99 enquiries with the abuse type of Sexual a 50% increase compared with the previous year.

For most enquiries (38%), the individual primary support reason was physical support, this is consistent with 2023/24. This was followed by no support reason (26%), Learning Disability Support (10%) and Mental Health Support (10%).

Support With Memory & Cognition has seen a 117% increase with 169 enquiries completed this year compared with 78 last year.

60% of enquiries relate to people over 65 years in age, this has seen a minor increase compared with last year (59%).

55% of enquires were in relation to women, this is consistent with previous years.

83% of enquires were for individuals whose ethnicity is White; this is a slight increase with last year (81%). The ethnicity of the remaining 17% of individuals is as follows: Not Known 7%, Asian 4%, Black 3%, Mixed 2%, Other 1%.

## Location of alleged abuse

62% of enquiries completed were where the alleged abuse took place in the persons own home, this is a slight increase compared with 23/24 (64%). Care Homes has the second highest outturn at 23%.

There has been a 2% decrease in enquiries completed where the location of abuse was in Service within Community (commissioned service in community setting) equating to a total of 47 enquiries.

There was a 72% increase in Other (public places/homes of other people) with 189 enquiries, compared with 110 in the previous year.

Referrer's, 42% of concerns were raised by Social Care followed by Health 31% Compared with 23/24 the highest increases in referrer type was seen in:

- 50% Other service user, a total of 3 concerns.
- 25% Self referral, a total of 50 concerns.
- 18% Police, a total of 426 concerns.

The SAB have set the following priority for 25/26: Addressing the Impact of Diversity on Abuse and Neglect, to understand and mitigate the impact of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disadvantage, and disability on abuse and neglect, and to develop effective strategies to address these issues.

## Risks and Mitigations

Challenges or areas of risk that have arisen during the year are recorded on our risk register, along with actions to mitigate the risks. These are some of the potential risks that we have addressed:

Risk	Impact	Mitigation
<b>Delay in Liberty Protection Safeguards implementation</b>	People are not afforded the safeguards the legislation offers via an appeal route to the Court of Protection.	SAB requested assurance; 2/3 LAs provided data, SAB concluded that delays require regional/national support.
<b>Non-compliance with QA Framework</b> <small>Page 139</small>	There remains a risk that, despite robust assurance from certain agencies, the SAB/Partnership cannot fully evidence safeguarding quality across the partnership as a whole	Incorporated into SAB Business Plan, priority for the SAB .
<b>Insufficient consideration of diversity</b>	There is a risk of ineffective safeguarding and unequal outcomes.	Set as SAB priority for 25/26.
<b>Limited lived experience integration</b>	There is a risk of reduced relevance, trust, and effectiveness.	SAB to develop and implement a Lived Experience Strategy in 2025/26.
<b>Challenges in cross-board collaboration with Community Safety partnerships, Children's Safeguarding Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Boards.</b>	Poor communication, missed opportunities, slower decisions.	SAB committed to strategic alignment; exploring joint meetings, protocols, and shared learning.

## Our priorities for 2024/25 and outcomes to those priorities were:

### Priority 1: Embedding a good understanding of Mental Capacity Act (MCA) within the practice of our statutory partners

#### Training & Awareness:

- MCA and Executive Function webinar held (11/06/24) with 128 attendees; [recording available on the SAB website](#) where there have been 251 views.
- MCA and Inherent Jurisdiction webinar delivered during Safeguarding Adults Week with 58 attendees; [recording available online](#), where there have been 40 views.
- SAB maintains a dedicated [MCA training calendar](#).
- MCA guidebooks purchased and distributed to all SAB statutory partners.

#### Partnership & Collaboration:

- Active involvement in the Integrated Care Boards Steering MCA Group; shared learning events.
- Promotion of MCA legal literacy training programme.
- SAB Chair engaged with local universities to encourage them to review MCA teaching content.

#### Public Engagement:

- MCA webpage launched for public access: [Mental Capacity Act 2005 – West of Berkshire](#).

#### Monitoring & Evaluation:

- MCA survey planned for January 2025 to assess impact; results presented to the SAB in June 2025 and [published](#).
- MCA-focused audit presented to SAB in June 2024.
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) waiting lists monitored by SAB

#### Resources & Communication:

- [SAB MCA webpage](#) reviewed and updated; resources shared across the partnership.
- MCA-related content integrated into SAB Business Plan, Risk and Mitigation Log, and Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) Action Log.

### Priority 2: Serious Violence and Exploitation, understanding the gaps from an adult safeguarding perspective.

#### Focus Area: Missing People – Exploring Application of the National Framework for England

##### Missing People Multi-Agency Response Guidance

- Launched in December 2023, developed from local learning in West Berkshire and national guidance.
- Guidance clarifies triggers for professional action, incorporating contextual risk factors.
- Guidance shared with Pan Berkshire Policy and Procedure Subgroup for consideration and potential wider implementation.
- SAB agreed in principle to signpost West Berkshire residents to a missing persons protocol. Decision pending on which platform will be used for signposting.

Carried over priority into 25/26 as it had been previously agreed by this SAB this will be a priority for several years the next action for this priority will be: Cuckooing – defining the problem and identifying solutions in response to the learning from the [Louis SAR](#). Followed by Sexual and Criminal Exploitation and Domestic Abuse and Stalking.

### Priority 3: Fire Safety – to address the learning from the Fire Safety SAR in January 2024 and to improve awareness across the West of Berkshire around the increased fire risks for vulnerable people.

- [Fire Safety SAR](#) published January 2024 informed targeted partnership actions.
- [Fire Awareness webpage](#) relaunched with equipment info.
- [Safe and Well referral form](#) updated to clarify consent.
- [Safe and Well Visit and Training data](#) integrated into SAB Dashboard for monitoring.
- [Self-Neglect Policy](#) updated to include fire risk.
- [Commissioning assurance](#) confirmed fire safety in contracts.
- [Awareness campaign](#) plans agreed launched in August 25/26.

# Achievements through working together continued....

## Strengthening Safeguarding Assurance

- Renamed the Performance and Quality Subgroup to Scrutiny and Impact Group to better reflect its assurance and learning role.
- Reading Borough Council cleared its backlog of safeguarding concerns, demonstrating transparency and improvement.
- Introduced a multi-agency audit framework and began internal audits of Section 42 enquiries.
- Advocacy Audit process agreed; findings to be presented to the SAB in September 2025.
- Enhanced SAB dashboard with DoLS waiting list KPIs and service user feedback metrics.



## Addressing Emerging Risks

- Reviewed advocacy arrangements for voluntary patients at Prospect Park Hospital; potential escalation to commissioners.
- Invited [Launchpad Reading](#) to represent rough sleepers, ensuring lived experience informs strategy.
- Escalated concerns to the [GLA](#) and government ministers regarding health and social care recruitment oversight.

## Strengthening Governance and Partnerships

- Strengthened links with Community Safety Partnerships, Health and Wellbeing Boards, and West Berkshire Children's Safeguarding Partnership to address cross-cutting issues.
- Reviewed SAB Constitution to better integrate equality and diversity; endorsed a revised Health and Wellbeing Board Protocol Agreement.
- Assumed hosting of Pan-Berkshire Policies and Procedures Subgroup; initiated full policy review.

## Embedding Trauma-Informed Practice

Explored trauma-informed training options; commissioning planned using underspend funds.

## Improving Communication and Engagement

- Endorsed a revised Communication and Publicity Strategy, aligning safeguarding priorities across the tri-borough area.
- Updated strategy to improve accessibility for neurodiverse individuals and streamline governance during incidents.
- Planned relaunch of SAB newsletter and development of easy-read formats for the annual report.

## Enhancing Learning from SARs

- SAR Subgroup maintained strong performance
- Developed a consolidated SAR Action Plan Tracker to monitor progress and accountability. Tracker showed 82% of SAR recommendations completed by year-end.
- [Bree SAR](#) led to system changes at Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, including a second opinion panel and enhanced training.
- Published SARs ([Vihad](#), [Louis](#)) using innovative formats like podcasts and presentation-style reports.
- Initiated peer review of SAR decision-making to improve transparency.

## Operational Development

- Created and recruited to a new Project and Communications Officer post.
- Maintained budget contributions; allocated underspend to training and staffing.

# Key Challenges in 2024/25

## Workforce and Capacity Pressures

- National decline in nursing degree enrolment, with some courses only 50% filled, poses long-term risks to health and social care staffing.
- Increased safeguarding referrals, notably a 22% rise in West Berkshire, strained local authority teams.
- Health settings, including Royal Berkshire Hospital, faced sustained operational pressures.

## Budget and Strategic Delivery

Despite a budget underspend, recruitment delays impacted delivery of communications and training.

The SAB newsletter was paused due to staffing constraints but is expected to resume mid-2025.

## Subgroup Capacity and Engagement

- Attendance issues affected several subgroups, notably the Scrutiny and Impact Group and the Policies and Procedures Subgroup.
- Resource constraints made appreciative inquiry methods for audits unfeasible.

## Advocacy and Information Sharing

- Inconsistent advocacy provision for voluntary patients at Prospect Park Hospital raised concerns; BHFT committed to further investigation and assurance was provided to the SAB.
- Awareness of the SAB's escalation process was found to be insufficient across the partnership. To address this, the SAB has committed to undertaking a comprehensive review and relaunch of the escalation process in 25/26.

## Technology and Data Challenges

- West Berkshire Council's case file system lacked the flexibility required for SAB Quality Assurance compliance; replacement planned for 2025.
- Reading Borough Council experienced delays in DoLS data reporting due to system limitations.

## Strategic Alignment with other Strategic Partnerships

- Efforts to strengthen links with other boards (Community Safety Partnerships, Berkshire West Children's Safeguarding Partnership) were hindered by scheduling and governance differences.
- Tri-borough structure can complicate decision-making and representation, especially on cross-cutting issues like homelessness and exploitation.

# Safeguarding Adults Week 2024



Ran from 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024 to 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2024 the SAB delivered 7 webinars with 263 attendees, focusing on professional development and safeguarding practice. Topics included online safety, domestic abuse, autism, intelligence sharing, and the Mental Capacity Act.

Was coordinated by a Task & Finish Group in place April 2024, which was supported by the Learning & Development and Communications Subgroups.

Attendance was slightly down from 2023 (358), but feedback remained strong, 100% of surveyed attendees would recommend sessions to colleagues.

Confidence in knowledge scores increased across all webinars.

The most popular session was: Mental Capacity Act & Inherent Jurisdiction (56 attendees).

Practical, case-based learning preferred by practitioners.

Daily emails promoted SAB procedures and toolkits; 6 webinars recorded and published on the [SABs Website](#).

The Subgroup is a core part of the SAB, bringing together representatives from Healthwatch, advocacy services, and key voluntary sector organisations across Reading, West Berkshire, and Wokingham. The subgroup's purpose is to ensure that the voices, experiences, and expertise of the sector are heard and considered in the SAB's priorities and learning. The subgroup gathers feedback from across the sector on issues impacting safeguarding adults, and reports these to the SAB. As the group's feedback is based on the lived experience and perspectives of diverse organisations and communities, some of the issues raised may be subjective or reflect the views of particular groups, rather than objective data. This subjectivity is both a strength, ensuring real-world concerns are surfaced, and a challenge, as it requires careful interpretation and context when informing Board decisions and reporting.

## Celebratory Points

- Considered Healthwatch's annual report and GP access report.
- Advocacy contract assurance was completed and raised at SAB.
- SAB Chair offered to attend local voluntary sector meetings
- Community sector representatives invited to join SAR panels; positive feedback shared by Reading Voluntary Action.
- New safeguarding forum launched in Reading to support voluntary sector engagement and training
- Local Authorities provided assurance on advocacy contracts and coverage.
- Agreement to improve annual feedback format to include both positive and constructive reflections.

## Emerging Issues

- Language barriers preventing access to health and social care services (Healthwatch).
- GP appointments difficult to access due to app-only booking systems (Healthwatch).
- Advocacy representation inconsistencies across local councils (Healthwatch).
- High thresholds for mental health support (noted by subgroup).
- Reduction in adult safeguarding forums (noted by subgroup).
- Financial abuse and contextual safeguarding identified as emerging trends (noted by subgroup).
- Limited feedback from safeguarding teams on concerns raised (view expressed by voluntary sector representatives).
- Sector-wide concern over sustainability due to funding pressures (view expressed by voluntary sector representatives).
- Concerns about the effectiveness of the SAB's Escalation Policy (Reading Voluntary Action) – escalation policy has since been reviewed and relaunched

# Website Engagement 24/25

The [SAB website](#) continues to be a vital tool for public engagement, professional development, and information sharing.  
The website saw: **6,621 total visits, 12,706 pageviews, 3,000 downloads.**

## Traffic Sources

Source	Visits	Bounce Rate	Average Time
Search Engines	3,364	54%	1:57 min
Direct	2,659	52%	2:36 min
Referrals	554	23%	5:12 min

Through our Pan Berkshire arrangement there is a website dedicated to the Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Policies and Procedures

<https://www.berkshiresafeguardingadults.co.uk/>

## Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
Visits	The number of times people visited the website.
Views	The number of times pages were looked at, includes repeat views.
Downloads	Files or documents saved from the website.
Bounce Rate	The percentage of visitors who left after viewing just one page.
Average Time	How long, on average, people stayed on the website.
Traffic Sources	How people found the website, e.g. via Google, direct link, or another site.
Referral	A visit that came from another website linking to the SAB site.

## Top Pages Visited

Page	Views	Bounce Rate	Average Time
<a href="#">Practitioners</a>	5,176	51%	1:28 min
<a href="#">Public</a>	1,805	74%	1:03 min
<a href="#">Board Members</a>	332	31%	2:04 min

## Top Downloads

- [Learning from a Case: Ryan](#) – 121 downloads
- [SAR Bree Final Report](#) – 125 downloads
- [Case Study: RB](#) – 103 downloads

## Geographic Reach

- UK visitors: 6,202
- Top international visitors: Belgium (84), USA (74), India (25)

## Notable Trends

Compared to 23/24 year:

- /index page traffic increased by 34%
- [/report-a-concern](#) page saw a 133% rise
- [Safeguarding Adults Week](#) page traffic surged by 484%

Declines were noted in:

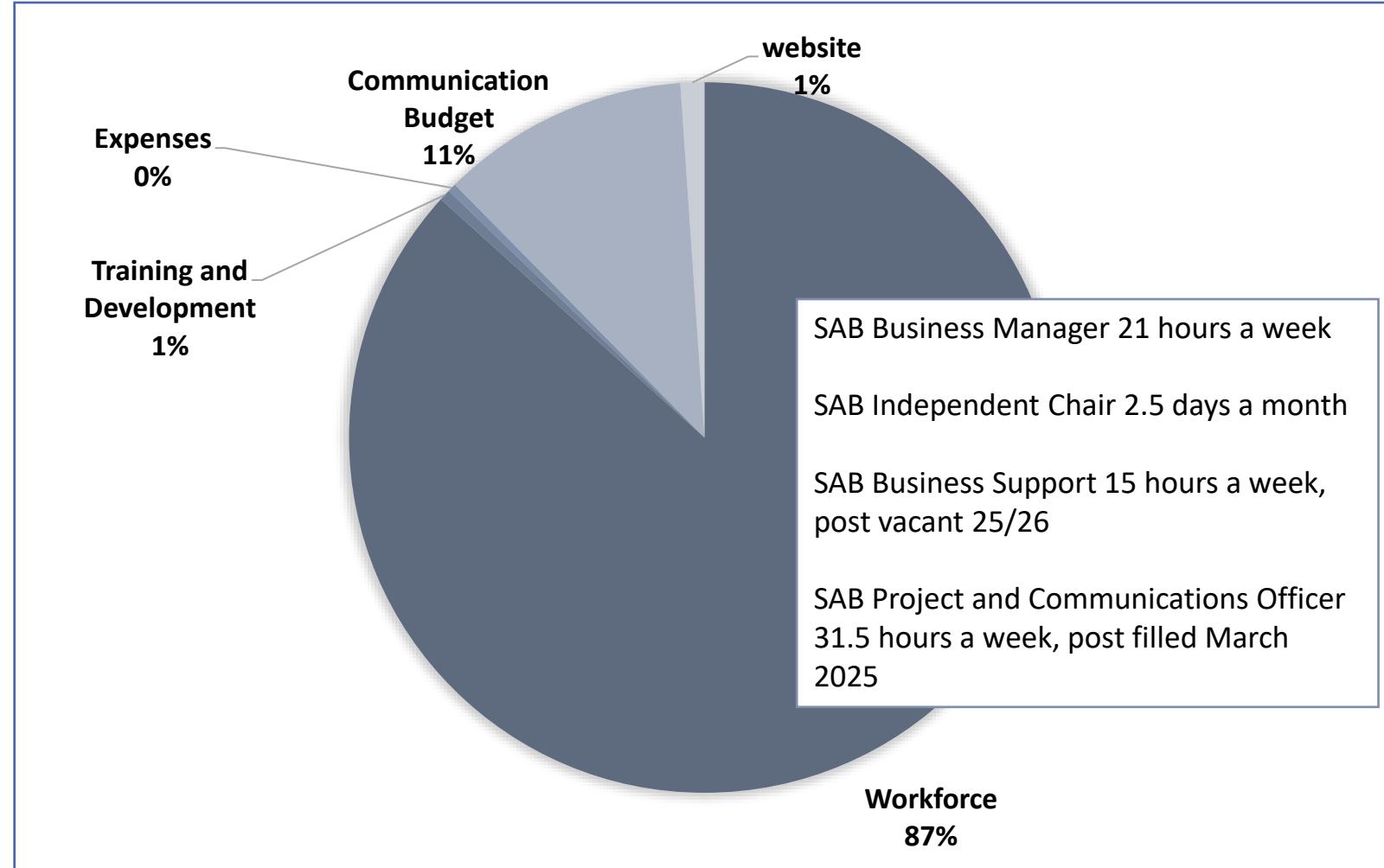
- [Types of Abuse](#) page: down 47%
- [Public section](#): down 39%
- [Workforce Development](#): down 99%

# Annual Budget and Financial Contribution, 2024/25

The 2024/25 annual budget for the Board was £119k the annual budget is established through a financial contribution from statutory partners. The SAB also had £48k carry over from previous years. The name of the agency and their contribution; shown as a percentage of the overall cost in the table below and the pie chart demonstrates where the money was spent.

Partner	Agreed % Contribution
Reading Borough Council	16.07%
West Berkshire Council	16.07%
Wokingham Borough Council	16.07%
Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, West of Berkshire ICB	16.07%
Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust	9.52%
Royal Berkshire Hospital	9.52%
Thames Valley Police	16.66%

The 2024/25 expenditure was £75k and the SAB have carried over £84k 2025/26. Which will be used to support the SAB to achieve its priorities.



The SAB has a legal duty to carry out a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) when there is reasonable cause for concern about how agencies worked together to safeguard an adult who has died, and abuse or neglect is suspected to be a factor in their death; or when an adult has not died but suffered serious abuse or neglect. The aim is for all agencies to learn lessons about the way they safeguard adults at risk and prevent such tragedies happening in the future. The SAB has a SAR Panel that oversees this work.

During the reporting year, the SAR Panel has worked on five SARs, of which two have been endorsed and published. The remaining three SARs are due to go to the SAB for endorsement and publication in 2025/26. The SAR Panel Chair and SAB Business Manager also considered two notifications that were not discussed at SAR Panel as there was no evidence that they met the criteria for a SAR.

To strengthen the SAR process, the SAR Panel has reviewed and updated its notification form. The revised form now includes a specific requirement for referrers to clearly outline how they believe the case meets the SAR criteria as defined in the Care Act. This change aims to improve the quality and relevance of notifications received and ensure that the Panel can make informed decisions about whether a SAR is warranted.

The SAR Panel remains focused on ensuring that it produces learning from SARs that is helpful to the partnership and will support improved practice both locally and nationally. The SAB has a dedicated webpage for its SAR process and published learning: [Safeguarding Adults Reviews | West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board](#)

## Louis,

Louis, aged 37, died on his birthday after years of cuckooing and exploitation. He had complex mental health needs and was known to multiple agencies. Despite contact with services including police, housing, mental health, and primary care, Louis fell through systemic gaps. His vulnerability was not consistently recognised or acted upon. He was described variably by professionals, with some seeing him as “challenging” and others recognising his fear and vulnerability. His family consistently viewed him as a victim.

Louis had diagnoses including Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder and Societal Conduct Disorder, and a history of trauma, substance misuse, and mental health crises.

## Key Learning

- **Safeguarding Failures**, Louis met the criteria for statutory safeguarding, but processes were not followed, and referrals were closed prematurely.
- **Multiagency Coordination**, agencies worked in silos, missing opportunities to share information and act collectively.
- **Unconscious Bias**, professionals’ perceptions of Louis may have been influenced by his mental health, substance use, and lifestyle, affecting decision-making.
- **Lack of Trauma Informed Care**, Louis’s care was overly medicalised, with little attention to his trauma history or holistic needs.
- **Strategic Disconnect**, safeguarding and community safety partnership boards lacked alignment, leading to conflicting processes and missed interventions.

## Recommendations

- Addressing Unconscious Bias (UB), the SAB should develop guidance for UB shared through learning events and briefings. **Update**, learning materials to be published in the autumn 2025.
- Strengthen Strategic Integration and Multiagency Response to Cuckooing. **Update**, priority for SAB 25/26.
- The Community Safety Partnership, in collaboration with the SAB, should lead a strategic review of its process around anti-social behaviour to ensure it reflects the complex needs of vulnerable adults. **Update**, priority for SAB 25/26.
- Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board to commission a multiagency tabletop review for key agencies to probe Thames Valley Police’s processes around the MASH, MIST and information sharing in relation to adults. **Update**, session held in August 2025, SAB will review the findings and agree next steps in 25/26.
- BHFT should confirm the review of 160 cases and implement measures to manage high caseloads to safeguard service quality and staff wellbeing. **Update**, signed off as completed August 2025
- The SAB should prioritise trauma-informed practice through ongoing training and development led by its learning and development group. **Update**, subgroup in the process of commissioning training.

Full report on the case of [Louis](#) and a [video](#) from the author.

## Vihad

Vihad, a man in his mid-fifties with a diagnosed learning disability and mental health concerns, died after being struck by a vehicle shortly after discharge from hospital. His history included multiple missing person incidents, breaches of a Sexual Harm Prevention Order and inconsistent engagement with health and social care services. He had moved from supported living out of area to live with a cousin in Reading, which was not a suitable arrangement due to safeguarding concerns.

### Key Learning Points

The SAR identified six thematic areas where improvements were needed:

- **Management Oversight**, there was a lack of coordinated oversight across agencies, which contributed to fragmented support and missed opportunities for timely intervention.
- **Understanding of Risk**, agencies did not consistently recognise or respond to the cumulative nature of risks associated with Vihad's behaviours and circumstances. Risk assessments were often treated in isolation, without a broader view of his history and needs.
- **Information Sharing**, communication between services, particularly across geographical boundaries was limited, which impacted the continuity and effectiveness of safeguarding interventions.
- **Use of Risk Management Pathways**, risk management protocols were not always applied consistently, and opportunities to escalate concerns or convene multi-agency responses were not fully utilised.
- **Culture**, a reactive approach to incidents often overshadowed a more holistic understanding of Vihad's needs, leading to short-term fixes rather than sustainable support.
- **Safeguarding System Limitations**, practitioners reported that existing systems did not always support proactive safeguarding, and that they felt constrained in their ability to coordinate care effectively.

### Recommendations:

- Reading Borough Council should review the current structure of its adult social care community teams to establish if they are correctly staffed and resourced to meet the growing demands placed upon the service. **Update**, signed off by SAB as complete June 2025.
- The importance of Risk Assessments when dealing with vulnerable patients should be emphasised to staff as a priority. **Update**, reviewed and relaunched SAB escalation policy and updated multi-agency framework guidance July 2025. Risk assessment is prominent in the SAB's priorities for 25/26.
- The SAB, through the development of their prevention strategy, should promote the importance of holding multi-agency meetings to share information and develop multi-agency risk management plans to manage or mitigate the risks posed to vulnerable adults. **Update**, reviewed and relaunched SAB escalation policy and updated multi-agency framework guidance July 2025. Risk assessment is prominent in the SAB's priorities for 25/26.
- Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board to commission a multiagency tabletop review for key agencies to probe Thames Valley Police's processes around the MASH, MIST and information sharing in relation to adults. **Update**, session held in August 2025, SAB will review the findings and agree next steps in 25/26.
- Ensure that carers needs in relation to Severe Multiple Disadvantage are recognised as part of the assessment and whole family process utilising a multidisciplinary approach to support people within this group and prevent high risk behaviours. Improve data recording to determine the impact of this area on carers and inform future service and support planning. **Update**, SAB audit scheduled for 25/26.

Full report on the case of [Vihad](#) and [podcast](#) from the author.

The SAB acknowledges that there are reoccurring themes from local and national learning from SARs that must be addressed. As in previous years we will continue to consider what the obstacles are in implementing recommendations and sustaining improvement and there will be a focus on good practice to promote learning, alongside an emphasis on good quality care principles and the role of effective support and supervision of the workforce to embed learning and inform future practice.

It is possible that changes to priorities will be made throughout the duration of this year in light of national and local learning in order to ensure that there is capacity within the partnership to deliver on the most pressing priorities for the West of Berkshire. Any change in priorities will be approved by the SAB.

Through its reflective learning practice, the SAB have identified the following priorities:

## Priority 1

Protection of Vulnerable Adults from Exploitation and Violence - understanding and addressing the gaps from an adult safeguarding perspective.

## Priority 2

Preventing financial exploitation of adults with care and support needs

## Priority 3

Addressing the Impact of Diversity on Abuse and Neglect, to understand and mitigate the impact of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disadvantage, and disability on abuse and neglect, and to develop effective strategies to address these issues.

## BAU

The Board will continue to carry out the following business as usual tasks in order to comply with its statutory obligations.

## Appendices

Reference	Description
Appendix A	<a href="#"><u>SAB Member Organisations</u></a>
Appendix B	<a href="#"><u>SAB Structure</u></a>
Appendix C	<a href="#"><u>Achievements by partner agencies</u></a>
Appendix D	<a href="#"><u>2024/25 SAB Business Plan</u></a>
Appendix E	<a href="#"><u>2025/26 SAB Business Plan</u></a>
Appendix F	<p>Partners' Safeguarding Performance Annual Reports:</p> <p><a href="#"><u>Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire West Integrated Care Board</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>West Berkshire Council</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Wokingham Borough Council</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service</u></a></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Reading Borough Council</u></a></p> <p>South Central Ambulance – submission pending as of publication date (17/12/25).</p>



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# Safeguarding

## Adults

# Annual Report

**2024-25**

## Contents

- 1. Introduction - 2**
- 2. Safeguarding Activity - 3 - 16**
- 3. Achievements - 17 - 19**
- 4. Improving the Future of Safeguarding Adults in Reading - 21-23**
- 5. Appendix 1: Risk Reduction Guidance: People who Live Alone or have Restricted Ability to Respond - 23-26**

## 1. Introduction

Reading Borough Council (RBC) hosts the strategic partnership arrangement between Reading, West Berkshire and Wokingham which forms the basis of the West of Berkshire Safeguarding Adults Board which operates across the 3 local authorities along with the other statutory partners in Health and the Police. The Board manager is supported by services in Reading including some administration, IT, payroll etc and is line managed by the Deputy Director (Safeguarding, Quality and Practice). The Board is led by an Independent Chair who works closely with the Board manager as an independent safeguarding expert.

RBC has a Safeguarding Adults Team (SAT) who undertake the role of the initial screening of referrals and concerns, decision making as to whether Care Act duties are enacted for persons to be assessed, whether signposting to other services is required, and determining whether to initiate a section 42 (s42.1) part one concern and (s42.2) part two enquiry. These interactions determine how to safeguard an individual at risk. All referrals are screened by SAT, if the referral requires a safeguarding concern (s42.1) all concerns will be completed by SAT unless making safeguarding personal supersedes this and if so, the concern is sent to allocated worker. s42.2 may be undertaken by SAT or allocated to the relevant team to carry out s42.2 duties.

## 2. Safeguarding Activity

### Reading Annual Performance Report 2024/25

The 2024-25 Safeguarding Adults Collection (SAC) records the details of safeguarding activity for adults aged eighteen and over who live in England. It includes demographic information about the adults at risk and the details of the incidents, that have been alleged and has been collected since 2015/16.

#### Section 1 Concerns and Enquiries

Table 1 shows the Safeguarding activity within Reading over the previous 3 years in terms of Concerns raised, s42 Enquiries opened and the conversion rates over the same period.

There were 1832 Safeguarding Concerns received in 2024/25 which is a decrease for the third year running (down 245 from the previous year and down 542 since 2022/23).

682 s42 Enquiries were opened this year which is an increase of 198 over the year (up 41%), with a conversion rate from Concern to s42 Enquiry of 37% (up 14% in the year) which is now higher than both the national average (Approx. 29%) and the South-East average (Approx. 34%) for 2023/24. This makes Reading slightly higher as compared to the other West Berkshire authorities for 2024/25 and on a par with other current comparator averages such as the South-East ADASS Q4 2024/25 benchmarking (Approx. 36.2%).

The conversion ratio has improved this year due to the number of Concerns falling significantly, coupled with the increase in Enquiries started. This was due to the continued focus on reducing the 'out of scope' referrals as well as updating the local processes to robustly record this data. The numbers of TVP referrals coming into the system have reduced by 5.7% over the past 2 years (although slightly up by 2.6% this year) and Health referrals have fallen 4.1% this year. This has resulted in only those with the assessed safeguarding criteria having been met progressing to further S42 enquiries. This is audited regularly locally, and issues addressed with external agencies.

There were 567 individuals who had an s42 Enquiry opened during 2024/25 which is an increase of 172 over the year. Enquiries for individuals have risen by 44% mainly because of the decrease in

inappropriate concerns raised coupled with putting through more of the remaining cases where further investigation was needed.

**Table 1 - Safeguarding Activity for the past 3 Years since 2022/23**

Year	Safeguarding Concerns received	Safeguarding s42 Enquiries Started	Individuals who had Safeguarding s42 Enquiry Started	Conversion rate of Concern to s42 Enquiry
2022/23	2374	434	358	18%
2023/24	2077	484	395	23%
2024/25	1832	682	567	37%

### **Section 2 - Source of Safeguarding Concerns**

As Figure 1 shows the largest percentage of safeguarding concerns for 2024/25 were once again referred from 'Health' staff (38.5%) although there was a drop of 4.1% over the year.

'Social Care Staff' were the next biggest source of referrals and make up 31.5% of the total which was a rise of 5.2% over the year. The 'Social Care' category encompasses both local authority staff such as Social Workers and Care Managers as well as independent sector workers such as Residential / Nursing Care and Day Care staff. The 'Health' category relates to both Primary and Secondary Health staff as well as Mental Health workers.

The 'Police' (11.7%) are the next largest source of Concerns received. They have risen by 2.6% over the period which is a slight increase in real numbers from 190 to 214 although this is still a lot lower than the numbers coming through in 2022/23 (had been 413 which was 17.3% of the total at the time). TVP have continued with more robust safeguarding training practices, and this is having a positive effect on the quality of referrals as well as slowing down the number submitted.

The 'Other' category includes sources such as the Fire Service, DWP, Berkshire Women's Aid and Age UK which made up 9% of all Concerns started this year (down 3.7%). The Fire Service has continued to make more referrals because of ongoing joint work with the service facilitated by improved connections and training courses run in tandem with Reading Borough Council. The SAR fire safety learnings has also contributed to the rise in referral

Increased training and ensuring the three-part safeguarding criteria is met which informs decision making to progress the initial screening to a concern is now only made by the safeguarding adult team duty social workers. Thus, the number of concerns has decreased and the amount of screenings progressed to a concern as also decreased. However, the s42.2 enquiries has increased by 198 in comparison with last year's figures. This gives RBC quality assurance that legal duties are applied in the correct way and all risks are managed through a full enquiry.

**Figure 1 - Safeguarding Concerns by Referral Source - 2024/25**

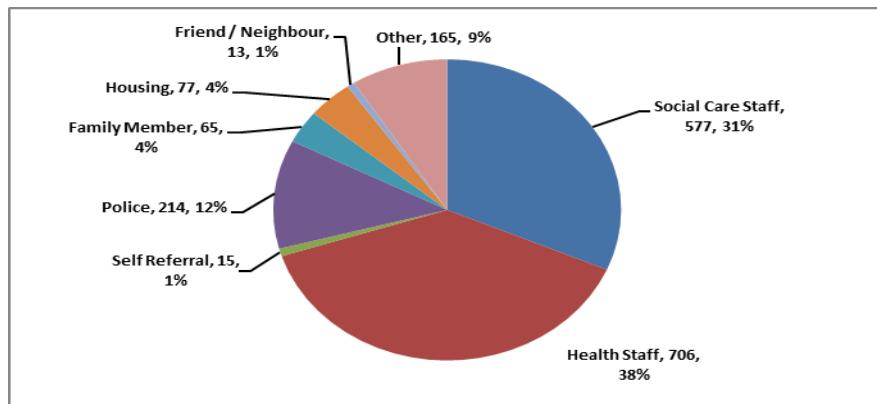


Table 2 shows a more detailed breakdown of the number of safeguarding concerns by Referral Source over the past 2 years since 2023/24.

In 'Social Care' the actual numbers coming in have remained fairly like last year, so as mentioned above; this proportionately now makes this group 31.5% of the overall total.

Numbers of referrals coming in from 'Health Staff' have decreased from 885 to 706.

Proportionately it now makes up 38.5% of the overall total (down from 42.6% in 2023/24). Most of the drop is found in the 'Secondary Health Staff' category (down 8% of all Health referrals).

'Other Sources of Referral' over the year now make up 21% of the overall total (up 2.6%). As a proportion of those in this category the biggest increase as mentioned previously has been in the 'Police'. Those referrals coming in from 'CQC' have also risen as a proportion (up 4.1%).

**Table 2 - Safeguarding Concerns by Referral Source over past 2 Years since 2023/24**

	Referrals	2023/24	2024/25
Social Care Staff	<b>Social Care Staff total (CASSR &amp; Independent)</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>577</b>
	Domiciliary Staff	95	108
	Residential/ Nursing Care Staff	239	250
	Day Care Staff	0	0
	Social Worker/ Care Manager	91	111
	Self-Directed Care Staff	2	2
	Other	119	106
Health Staff	<b>Health Staff - Total</b>	<b>885</b>	<b>706</b>
	Primary/ Community Health Staff	316	304
	Secondary Health Staff	483	329
	Mental Health Staff	86	73

Other sources of referral	Other Sources of Referral - Total	382	384
	Self-Referral	14	15
	Family member	66	65
	Friend/ Neighbour	23	13
	Other service user	2	0
	Care Quality Commission	11	27
	Housing	89	77
	Education/ Training/ Workplace Establishment	11	5
	Police	190	214
	Other	240	133
	Total	2077	1832

The work RBC has undertaken with the fire service as a result of safeguarding adult reviews recommendations has seen an increase in the number of referrals received from RBFRS. Social care staff have also increased their referrals due to a new safeguarding manual launched, increased training and a new duty system implemented within the adult safeguarding team provides a quicker response from the safeguarding team.

### Section 3 - Individuals with Safeguarding Enquiries

#### Age Group and Gender

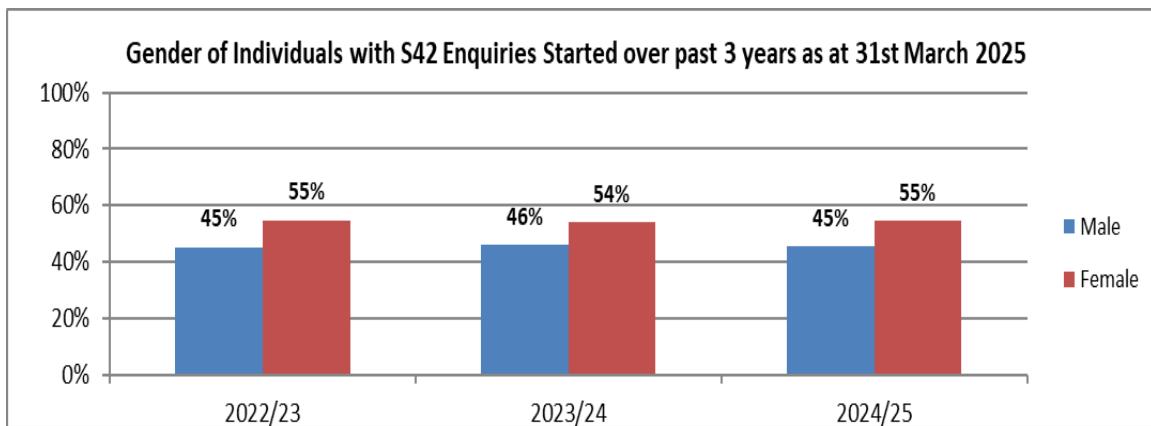
Table 3 displays the breakdown by age group for individuals who had a safeguarding enquiry started in the last 3 years. Most enquiries still relate to the 65+ age group which accounted for 63% of enquiries in 2024/25 which is higher than last year (was at 52% for 2023/24). The numbers in the 18-64 group however fell by 11%. In all the other age categories for the 65+ group the enquiries have all risen between 2%-4%.

**Table 3 - Age Group of Individuals with Safeguarding s42 Enquiries over past 3 Years since 2022/23**

Age band	2022/23	% of total	2023/24	% of total	2024/25	% of total
18-64	152	43%	191	48%	212	37%
65-74	46	13%	49	12%	79	14%
75-84	77	22%	69	18%	126	22%
85-94	66	18%	76	19%	120	21%
95+	17	4%	10	3%	29	5%
Age unknown	0	0%	0	0%	1	0.2%
Grand total	358		395		567	

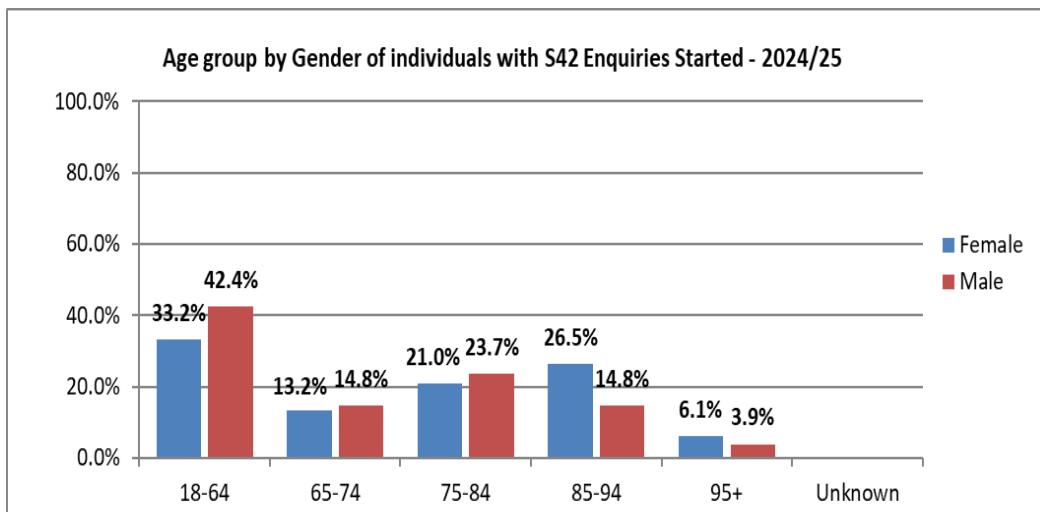
In terms of the gender breakdown there are still more Females with enquiries than Males (Females were up 1% to 55% of the total for 2024/25). This is shown in Figure 2 below (See Table A in Appendix A for actual data).

**Figure 2 - Gender of Individuals with Safeguarding s42 Enquiries over past 3 Years since 2022/23**



When looking at Age and Gender together for 2024/25 the number of Males with enquiries is larger in comparison to Females in those age groups from 18 until 84. After 84 years of age the number of Males in each age group drops away. The largest proportion of enquiries is still in the 18-64 age group for both genders although Males make up 42.4% compared to Females 33.2%. Those Females in the 85-94 age group make up 26.5% of their total compared to only 14.8% in the Males group. This breakdown is all shown below in Figure 3 (See Table B in Appendix A for actual data).

**Figure 3 - Age Group and Gender of Individuals with Safeguarding s42 Enquiries - 2024/25**



### **Ethnicity**

82.4% of individuals involved in s42 enquiries for 2024/25 were of a 'White' ethnicity with the next biggest groups being 'Black or Black British' (6.7%) and 'Asian or Asian British' (5.3%). The 'White' group has increased this year (up 2.4%). The 'Asian or Asian British' group has decreased by 0.5% as has the 'Black or Black British' group (down 2.7%). The 'Mixed / Multiple' group has risen slightly by 0.3%. Those 'Not Stated' have stayed similar over the year (around 1.9% of the total). This Ethnicity breakdown is shown in Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4 - Ethnicity of Individuals involved in Started Safeguarding s42 Enquiries - 2024/25**

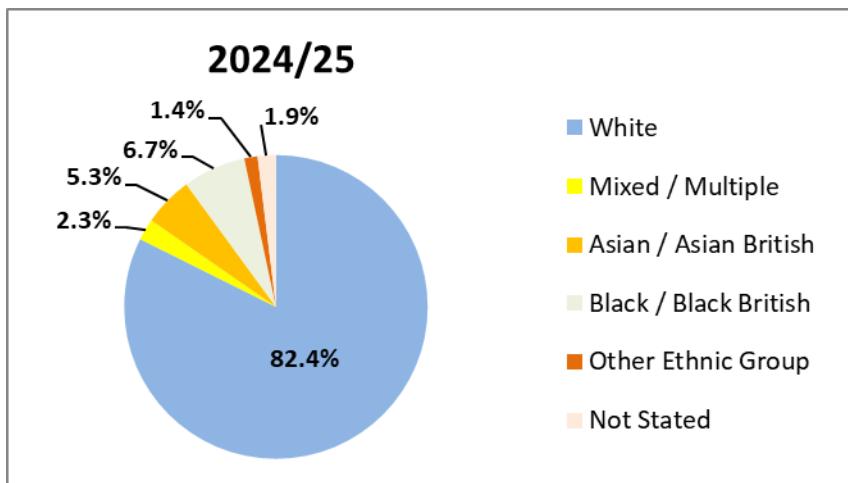


Table 4 shows the ethnicity split for the entire population of Reading compared to England based on the ONS Census 2021 data along with the % of s42 Enquiries for 2023/24 compared to 2024/25. Any Enquiries where the ethnicity was not stated have been excluded from this data to be able to compare all the breakdowns accurately (\*).

**Table 4 - Ethnicity of Reading Population / Safeguarding s42 Enquiries over 2 Years since 2023/24**

Ethnic group	% of whole Reading population (ONS Census 2021 data) *	% of whole England population (ONS Census 2021 data) *	% of Safeguarding s42 Enquiries 2023/24	% of Safeguarding s42 Enquiries 2024/25
White	67.2%	81.0%	80.0%	82.4%
Mixed	5.1%	3.0%	2.0%	2.3%
Asian or Asian British	17.7%	9.6%	5.8%	5.3%
Black or Black British	7.2%	4.2%	9.4%	6.7%
Other Ethnic group	2.8%	2.2%	0.8%	1.4%

The numbers evidence that people of 'White' ethnicity are referred more to safeguarding than those of different heritage. This does not reflect the community's population with more identifying from a global majority group. These numbers have increased over recent years, however continued engagement with the community is needed for the numbers to reflect the local population. This evidences that individuals of an 'Asian or Asian British' are less likely to be referred, contrary to those individuals of 'Black or Black British' heritage who have a higher referral rate than the England proportion and is on a par with the Reading population.

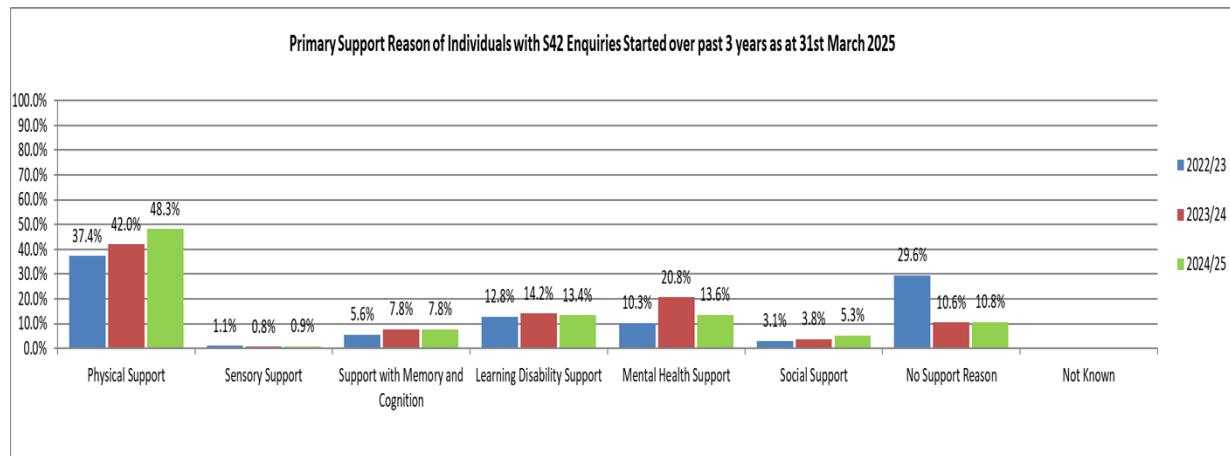
#### Primary Support Reason

Figure 5 shows the breakdown of individuals who had a safeguarding enquiry started by Primary Support Reason (PSR). The largest number of individuals in 2024/25 had a PSR of 'Physical Support' (48.3%) which is a 6.3% increase in its proportion over the year.

The 'Learning Disability Support' group has fallen this year by 0.8% (from 14.2% in 2023/24 to 13.8% in 2024/25). 'Mental Health' clients are still the second biggest group but have fallen considerably by just over 7% since last year (now only make up nearly 14%).

Those recorded as having 'No Support Reason' in 2024/25 (so could include self-funders or people who are not known to Adult Social Care) have remained at similar levels to last year (around 11%). This is due to the recording of this category improving to make sure data reflects the criteria within the statutory guidance and is only used when appropriate. (See Table C in Appendix A for actual data).

**Figure 5 - Primary Support Reason for Individuals with Safeguarding s42 Enquiry over past 3 years**



#### Section 4 - Case details for Concluded s42 Enquiries

##### Type of Alleged Abuse

Table 5 and Figure 6 show concluded enquiries by type of alleged abuse over the last three years. An additional 4 abuse types (\*) were added in the 2015/16 return.

The most common types of abuse for 2024/25 were for 'Neglect and Acts of Omission' (43.2%), 'Financial or Material Abuse' (20.6%), 'Self Neglect' (17.4%) and 'Physical Abuse' (14.8%).

'Neglect and Acts of Omission' is still the largest abuse type in the year and has increased by 8%. 'Organisational' has also risen by 1.9% although only makes up the 6th largest group (abuse type in only 5.3% of cases).

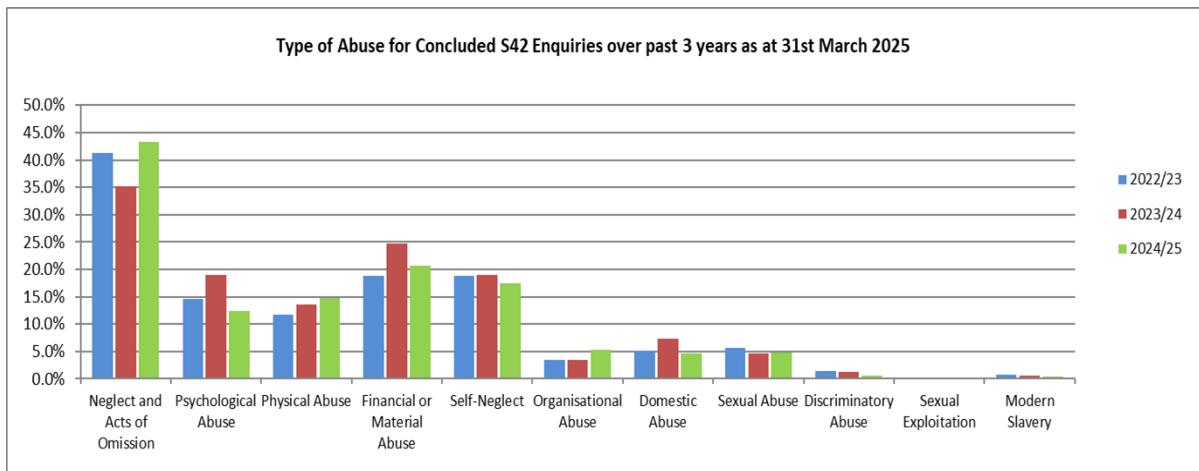
There has been a decrease in 'Financial or Material' cases (down 4%) and now makes up 20.6% of abuse types which is the 2nd largest group. 'Psychological' has also seen a fall in numbers and makes up 12.4% of abuse types (down 6.6%). There has also been a slight fall in 'Domestic' (down 2.7%) although this only makes up 4.6% of the cases and is only the 7th largest group.

**Table 5 - Concluded Safeguarding s42 Enquiries by Type of Abuse over past 3 Years since 2022/23**

Concluded enquiries	2022/23	%	2023/24	%	2024/25	%
Neglect and Acts of Omission	166	41.2%	178	35.2%	310	43.2%

Psychological Abuse	59	14.6%	96	19.0%	89	12.4%
Physical Abuse	47	11.7%	69	13.7%	106	14.8%
Financial or Material Abuse	76	18.9%	125	24.8%	148	20.6%
Self-Neglect *	76	18.9%	96	19.0%	125	17.4%
Organisational Abuse	14	3.5%	17	3.4%	38	5.3%
Domestic Abuse *	21	5.2%	37	7.3%	33	4.6%
Sexual Abuse	23	5.7%	23	4.6%	34	4.7%
Discriminatory Abuse	6	1.5%	6	1.2%	4	0.6%
Sexual Exploitation *	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Modern Slavery *	3	0.7%	3	0.6%	3	0.4%

**Figure 6 - Type of Alleged Abuse over past 3 Years since 2021/22**



Targeted Safeguarding training and a number of presentations delivered to Providers in 2024 including health to improve understanding of what constitutes making a safeguarding referral and this is reflected in the increase of neglect and acts of omission referrals from providers.

#### Location of Alleged Abuse

Table 6 shows concluded enquiries by location of alleged abuse over the last two years only.

Still by far the most common location where the alleged abuse took place for Reading clients has been the individuals 'Own Home' (56.3% in 2024/25) which has seen a drop of 5.3% compared to last year. There has also been a decrease in Hospital Locations recorded (down 2.2%) mainly in the 'Community Hospital' setting.

Those cases recorded as taking place in a 'Care Home - Residential' have risen by 6.1% (up to 20.6% of the total) as have those in a 'Care Home - Nursing' setting which have risen by 1.9% (up to 4.5%). Compared to Wokingham and West Berkshire however we are likely to still have more cases in a hospital environment (due to the proximity of RBH in our area) and less in a care home setting.

**Table 6 - Concluded S42 Enquiries by Abuse Location Type over past 2 Years since 2023/24**

Location of abuse	2023/24	% of total	2024/25	% of total
Care Home - Nursing	13	2.6%	32	4.5%
Care Home - Residential	73	14.5%	148	20.6%

Own Home	311	61.6%	404	56.3%
Hospital - Acute	15	3.0%	21	2.9%
Hospital - Mental Health	12	2.4%	14	2.0%
Hospital - Community	9	1.8%	1	0.1%
In a Community Service	6	1.2%	8	1.1%
In Community (exc Comm Svcs)	41	8.1%	64	8.9%
Other	25	5.0%	25	3.5%

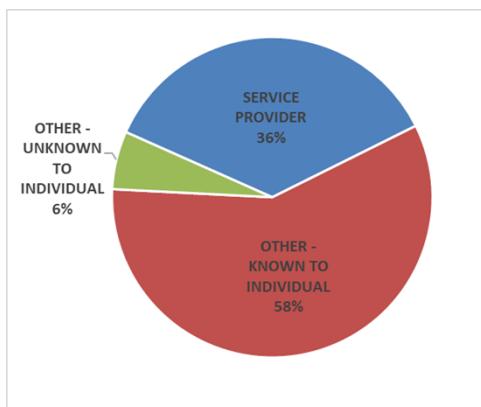
### Source of Risk

In terms of source of risk for concluded enquiries those related to a 'Service Provider' have risen 7% (36% of concluded enquiries). The 'Service Provider' category which was formerly known as 'Social Care Support' refers to any individual or organisation paid, contracted, or commissioned to provide social care.

Those related to a 'Known Individual' have fallen by 7% (58% of concluded enquiries) whereas those related to 'Unknown Individuals' have stayed the same (6% of concluded enquiries).

This is shown below in Figure 7.

**Figure 7 - Concluded Enquiries by Source of Risk 2024/25**



### Action Taken and Result

Table 7 below shows concluded enquiries by action taken and the results for the last three years whereas Figure 8 compares the last 2 years directly in terms of the concluded enquiry outcomes.

There has been a further 7% decrease this year in those with a recorded outcome of 'No Further Action Under Safeguarding' (decrease of 5% in those where 'No Risk was identified', a 1% decrease in those where the outcome was 'Inconclusive' and a 1% decrease in those where the 'Enquiry Ceased at an Individuals request').

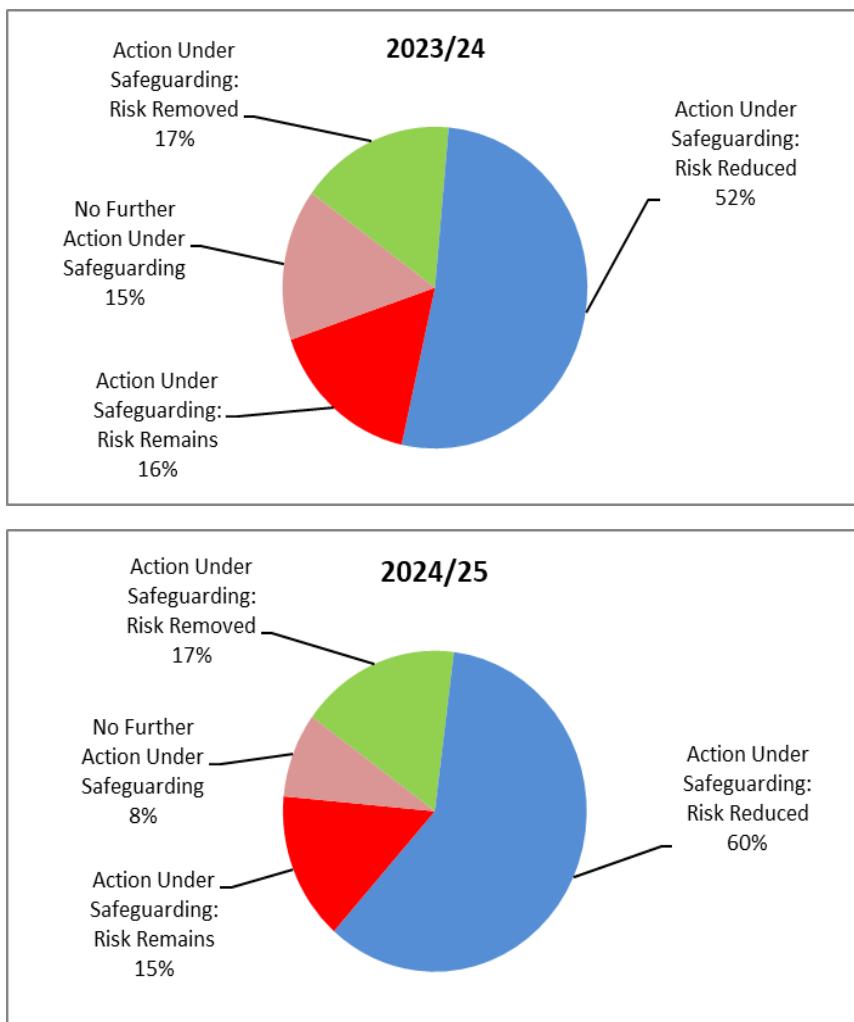
Those where a 'Risk was Removed' have increased by 0.6% (up to 17% of cases) compared to those where a 'Risk was Reduced' which have increased by nearly 8% (up to 60% of cases). Consequently, those where a 'Risk Remains' have decreased by just over 1% (down to 15% of cases).

**Table 7 - Concluded Enquiries by Action Taken and Result over past 3 Years since 2022/23**

Result	2022/23	% of total	2023/24	% of total	2024/25	% of total
No Further Action Under Safeguarding	17%	17%	15%	15%	17%	17%
No Risk was Identified	5%	5%	4%	4%	5%	5%
Inconclusive	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Enquiry Ceased at an Individuals request	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Risk was Removed	17%	17%	18%	18%	17%	17%
Risk was Reduced	60%	60%	68%	68%	60%	60%
Risk Remains	15%	15%	12%	12%	15%	15%

Action Under Safeguarding: Risk Removed	99	25%	83	17%	122	17%
Action Under Safeguarding: Risk Reduced	162	40%	263	52%	427	60%
Action Under Safeguarding: Risk Remains	53	13%	82	16%	107	15%
No Further Action Under Safeguarding	89	22%	77	15%	61	8%
<b>Total Concluded Enquiries</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 8 - Concluded Enquiries by Result, 2023/24 and 2024/25**



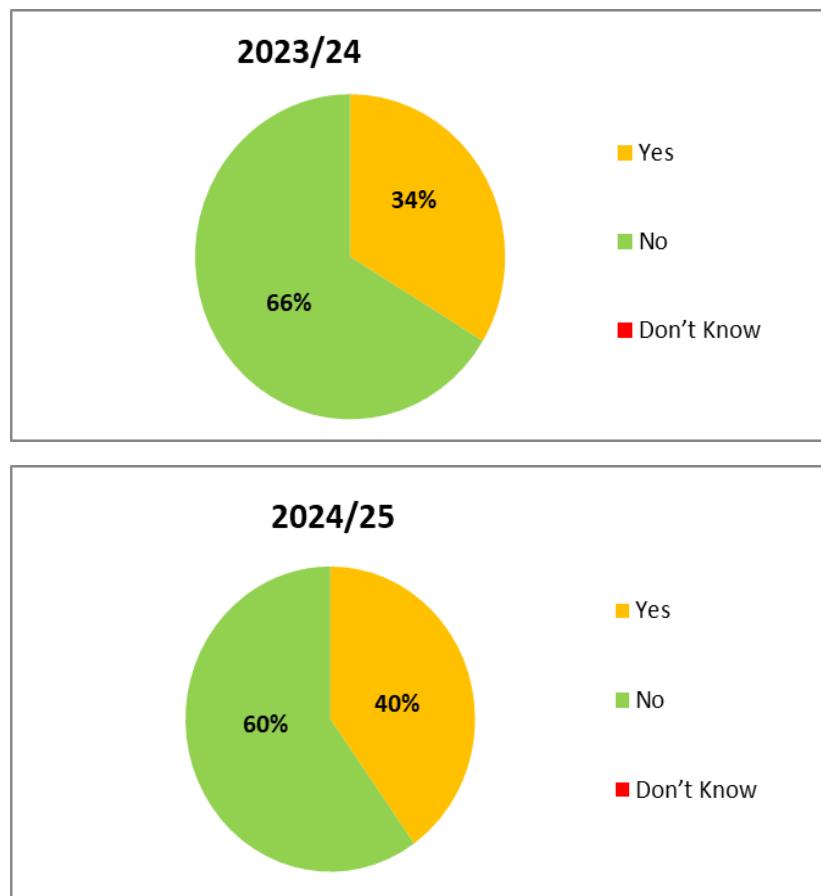
Risk reduced has increased due to teams increased intervention and creatively looking how risks can be managed whilst ensuring outcomes/wishes are met. Risk remains has increased which reflects applying making safeguarding personal in supporting individuals who wish to continue making risky decisions however measures are undertaken to review safeguarding's and other mechanisms to monitor on-going risk. The new mosaic safeguarding module which launched in April 2025 allows practitioners to complete a risk assessment and give analysis on why risk remains.

## Section 5 - Mental Capacity

Figure 9 shows the breakdown of mental capacity for concluded enquiries over the past 2 years since 2023/24 and shows if they lacked capacity at the time of the enquiry.

The data shows that over this year those that lacked capacity has increased by 6% (up to 40% of all service users). Over the past 2 years those concluded enquiries where the Mental Capacity was not fully identified have been reduced to zero as work has been completed to make sure capacity is always considered during the enquiry process.

**Figure 9 - Concluded S42 Enquiries by Lack of Mental Capacity over past 2 Years since 2023/24**



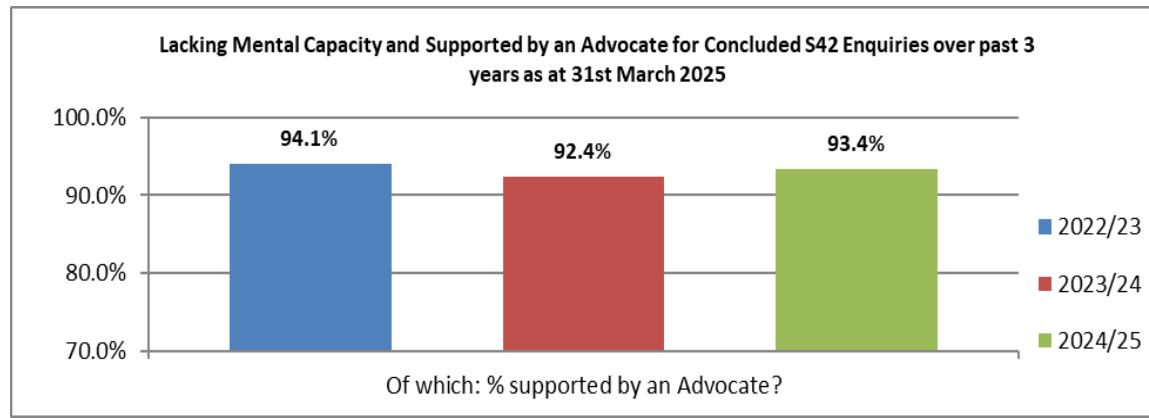
Of those 288 concluded enquiries where the person involved was identified as lacking capacity during 2024/25 there has been a 1% increase in those supported by an advocate, family, or friend than in the previous years (up to 93.4%). This has put Reading in line with our 2 comparator authorities based on preliminary 2024/25 figures as well as at a higher level than the national figure also. Approximately 75% of all those recorded as having an advocate for RBC are recorded as having an 'Informal Advocate'.

Table 8 and Figure 10 shows these numbers and proportions.

**Table 8 - Concluded S42 Enquiries by Mental Capacity over past 3 Years since 2022/23**

<b>Lacking Capacity to make Decisions?</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>
Yes	135	170	288
<i>Of which: how many supported by an Advocate?</i>	127	157	269
<i>Of which: % supported by an Advocate?</i>	94.1%	92.4%	93.4%

**Figure 10 - Concluded S42 Enquiries by Mental Capacity over past 3 Years since 2022/23**



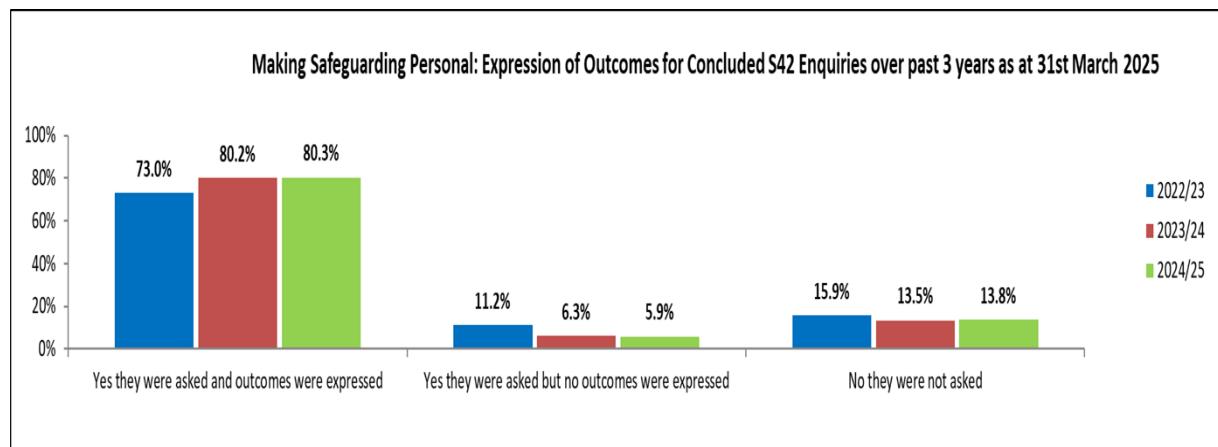
## Section 6 - Making Safeguarding Personal

As at year end, 86.2% of all clients for whom there was a concluded case were asked about the outcomes they desired (either directly or through a representative) although 5.9% of those did not express an opinion on what they wanted their outcome to be (in 2023/24 this overall figure was 86.5% of which 6.3% did not express what they wanted their outcomes to be when asked).

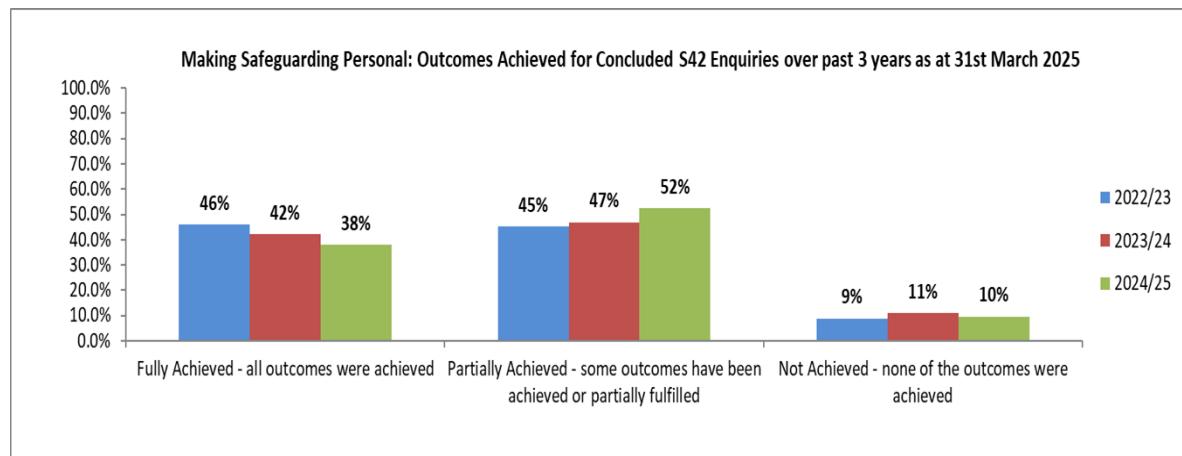
Approximately 93.2% of all those asked also expressed an opinion in 2024/25 which is a positive outcome and signifies a 0.5% increase since 2023/24 (up from 92.7%). Those who were 'Not Asked' are regularly audited to make sure recording is accurate in such areas. This also allows the authority to identify any reasons for service users not being asked and to act upon any issues raised. We carry out work at year end to look at reasons for non-engagement.

This is shown below in Figure 11.

**Figure 11 - Concluded Enquiries by Expression of Outcome over past 3 Years since 2022/23**



**Figure 12 - Concluded Enquiries by Expressed Outcomes Achieved over past 3 Years since**



Of those who were asked and expressed a desired outcome, there has been a further decrease of 4% (from 42% in 2023/24 to 38% in 2024/25) for those who were able to achieve those outcomes fully, because of the intervention by safeguarding workers.

However, a further 52% in 2024/25 (up 5% since 2023/24) managed to partially achieve their stated outcomes meaning 10% did not achieve their outcomes during the year which is on a par with the previous 2 years.

This reflects changes in the complexity of the cases and the way in which cases have been signed off. The sign-off process is now far more robust, and all decisions are monitored by the Safeguarding Lead to check for accuracy of recording. The new processes brought in since April 2025 should make a difference to this breakdown going forward. This is shown above in Figure 12.

RBC plan's to do more training in 2025/2026 regarding making safeguarding personal to build on the increase of the expression of outcomes recorded. The feedback form embedded in the safeguarding mosaic module will also give quality assurance individuals voices are heard.

## Appendix A

**Table A - Gender of Individuals with Safeguarding s42 Enquiries over past 3 Years since 2022/23**

Gender	2022/23	% of total	2023/24	% of total	2024/25	% of total
Male	162	45%	181	46%	257	45%
Female	196	55%	214	54%	310	55%
Total	358	100%	395	100%	567	100%

**Table B - Age Group and Gender of Individuals with Safeguarding s42 Enquiries - 2024/25**

Age group	Female	Female %	Male	Male %
18-64	103	33.2%	109	42.4%
65-74	41	13.2%	38	14.8%
75-84	65	21%	61	23.7%
85-94	82	26.5%	38	14.8%
95+	19	6.1%	10	3.9%
Unknown	0	0%	1	0.4%
Total	310	100.0%	257	100.0%
	55%		45%	

**Table C - Primary Support Reason for Individuals with a Safeguarding s42 Enquiry over past 3 Years since 2022/23**

Primary support reason	2022/23	% of total	2023/24	% of total	2024/25	% of total
Physical Support	134	37.4%	166	42.0%	274	48.3%
Sensory Support	4	1.1%	3	0.8%	5	0.9%
Support with Memory and Cognition	20	5.6%	31	7.8%	44	7.8%
Learning Disability Support	46	12.8%	56	14.2%	76	13.4%
Mental Health Support	37	10.3%	82	20.8%	77	13.6%
Social Support	11	3.1%	15	3.8%	30	5.3%
No Support Reason	106	29.6%	42	10.6%	61	10.8%
Total	358	100%	395	100%	567	100%

National Comparative information for safeguarding concerns and enquiries

- England Conversion Ratio Average approx. 31% in 23/24 (SE - 36%)

- RBC Conversion Ratio Average approx. 23% in 23/24
- RBC Conversion Ratio Average approx. 37% in 24/25
- Current SE ADASS Benchmarking puts median at around 36% up until Q4 24/25
- Conversion Rate (Enquiries/Concerns) = (Total SG Enquiries/Total SG Concerns) \* 100

**In 2023/24 when looking at the number of ‘Safeguarding Concerns’ completed and then how many of those go on to a ‘S42 Enquiry’ or ‘Other Enquiry’; nationally the conversion ratio figure was 31% with South-East figure being 36%. Conversion Ratio for Reading for 2023/24 was lower at 23% whereas in 2024/25 was now 37%. Preliminary data for Quarter 4 for the SE ADASS group showed the conversion ratio as 36% so we are around the median value of our comparators for 2024/25.**

- Gender breakdown for RBC for 24/25 (M = 45% and F = 55%)
- Gender breakdown for England and SE for 23/24 (M = 42% and F = 58%)

**Data for 2023/24 shows that the gender breakdown for Safeguarding Enquiries Started Nationally and for the South-East was very similar to Reading with slightly less Males (42%) and more Females (58%) in those 2 comparators as compared to Reading in 2024/25.**

- Risks Identified - RBC 24/25 - 92% of cases
- *Of Risks Identified* RBC Remain - 19% / Reduce - 65% / Remove - 16%
- Risks Identified - England and SE 23/24 - 78% of cases
- *Of Risks Identified* England Remain - 10% / Reduce - 66% / Remove - 24%
- *Of Risks Identified* SE Remain - 10% / Reduce - 67% / Remove - 23%

**In terms of Risk Outcomes, 78% of all Safeguarding Enquiries concluded were found to have risks identified Nationally and for the South-East in 2023/24 whereas in Reading for 2024/25 the figure was much higher at 92%. Of those identified 19% of Reading’s cases had some sort of risk ‘Remaining’ whereas Nationally and for the South-East this figure was more around 10%. ‘Reduction’ of risks was very similar across all 3 at around 66% on average. Those where risks were ‘Removed’ were around 16% in Reading for 2024/25 whereas for comparators for 2023/24 figures were closer to 23%.**

- PSR ‘No Support Reason’ - RBC 24/25 - 11%
- PSR ‘No Support Reason’ - England 23/24 - 16%
- PSR ‘No Support Reason’ - SE 23/24 - 11%

**Those recorded as having ‘No Support Reason’ when the Enquiry started (so could include self-funders or people who were not known to Adult Social Care prior to the safeguarding referral) made up 11% of all cases in Reading for 2024/25 which is the same as the proportion for the South-East for 2023/24. For England the figure was higher at 16% of all started Enquiries**

- Advocacy - RBC 24/25 - 93%
- Advocacy - England 23/24 - 75%

- Advocacy - SE 23/24 - 89%

**Where Capacity was assessed to be lacking; about 93% of all concluded Enquiries in Reading for 2024/25 had an identified Advocate recorded compared to 75% Nationally and 89% in the South-East for 2023/24.**

- MSP Asked - RBC 24/25 - 86%
- MSP Asked - England 23/24 - 87%
- MSP Asked - SE 24/25 - 90%

**In terms of Making Safeguarding Personal, 86% of those with a concluded enquiry in Reading for 2024/25 were asked for their wished outcomes as a result of intervention compared to 87% Nationally and 90% in the South-East for 2023/24.**

- RBC 24/25 - Fully - 38% / Partially - 52% / Not Achieved - 10%
- England 23/24 - Fully - 69% / Partially - 25% / Not Achieved - 6%
- SE 23/24 - Fully - 65% / Partially - 31% / Not Achieved - 4%

Of those asked, 90% within Reading for 2024/25 had their wished outcomes either 'Fully' or 'Partially' achieved as compared to 94% Nationally and 96% in the South-East for 2023/24.

## 1. Achievements

### Safeguarding Improvement Plan

In May 2024, a Safeguarding Improvement Plan was developed by the Deputy Director and Strategic lead for safeguarding to identify key areas to improve upon. These included:

- Addressing the significant back log in safeguarding concerns and section 42 enquiries
- Developing a robust duty system
- Developed and launched a Safeguarding Manual to clearly benchmark good practice and offer a range of tools to assist workers undertaking safeguarding enquiries
- Improved the adult social care safeguarding recording tool (mosaic)
- Introduced a feedback form so RBC can capture peoples experience of the safeguarding process and
- Improved awareness and recording of Persons in a Position of Trust (PiPOT) referrals.

Key successes

- A central PiPOT recording point was put in place in June 2024 and a PiPOT procedure/referral form was launched since its introduction and through the new safeguarding duty system and launch of the new manual has supported more

awareness of what constitutes a PiPOT referral to adult social care staff. This is reflective in the increase of referrals in comparison to 2023/2024. This has also been a topic of conversation at SAB subgroups and there was general agreement of better understanding of PiPOT needs to be embedded across all agencies. As a result, RBC will be commissioning PiPOT training for staff in 2025/26.

PIPOT Referrals	2023/24	2024/25
Total	4	26

- Customer Fulfilment Centre trained in May 2024 and any referrals to be sent to SAT for decision-making
- Presentations of the new RBC safeguarding duty pathway was presented to all provider sectors
- Dedicated weekly meetings with Prospect Park Hospital began in May 2024
- A dedicated a dedicated worker was allocated to complete and manage Royal Berkshire Hospital referrals
- By July 2024 the back log had been cleared and a new duty system was in place
- By the end of the financial year a new mosaic module was developed
- By the end of the financial year a safeguarding feedback form had been added to mosaic
- March 2025 the safeguarding Manual was completed

#### a) Hoarding and Self Neglect

RBC were able to secure a grant to create a Hoarding and Self-Neglect Protocol including a risk assessment tool and pathway, and a self-neglect training offer as well as a dedicated project worker to evaluate the local challenges and promote the work. Whilst recruiting a successful project worker took some time to achieve, the funding enabled RBC to define the self-neglect pathway to “Safe Environments” which included hoarding and other environmental factors impacting on a person’s ability to live safely within their normal place of residence.

This work was a priority for RBC for 2022/23 and into 2024 as it was identified there were several delayed discharges from hospital which were resulting from self-neglect and hoarding in the person’s own home and insufficient resources and an apparent lack of confidence by staff working with people who were self-neglecting and/or hoarding in being able to meet the needs of this safeguarding area of work.

With additional funding Adult Social Care were able to secure a part-time project lead and an OT/SW who could work directly with people who hoard. Additional capacity also enabled the creation and embedding of the self-neglect pathway including risk assessments. The new hoarding

protocol was created and shared with partners and the website updated in November 2022 to promote the protocol. Within 2023-24 the hoarding SW and Hoarding social care coordinator were aligned with the Mental Health Team to form a Hoarding team and have received on average 10 referrals a month, with 54 cases allocated over that period, and an average case load of between 12-15 cases and a waiting list of 6 cases, either waiting for allocation or further information. A pending action was agreed RBC would set up a monthly Hoarding multidisciplinary meeting for case discussion and service development to start September 2025.

**b) Safeguarding and Provider concerns. Fire Safety- to address the learning from the Fire Safety SAR in January 2024 and to improve awareness across the West of Berkshire around the increased fire risks for vulnerable people.**

Reading Borough Council has continued to work closely with Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service, Care Providers, and the Adult Social Care (ASC) operational team to ensure that training and awareness around fire safety is optimised within the community. Over 460 support workers employed by care agencies across the borough, and 160 adult social care professionals directly employed by Reading Borough Council have been trained by the fire service in relation to what to look for and how and when to refer a person in receipt of care for a 'Safe & Well' referral. This is also a mandatory training requirement for all staff to complete annually.

The previously reported changes to the council's adult social care system have now been embedded with the fire service continuing to report on the numbers of referrals being made for the Reading area. These figures remain high, and this is evidence of the positive impact the training and associated system changes are having on support the people of Reading in relation to fire safety.

The fire service has also completed a presentation at the council led Homecare and Supported Living forums on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2025 - both forums were well attended.

A new guidance has been launched called "Risk Reduction Guidance: People who Live Alone or have Restricted Ability to Respond" This guidance outlines key considerations for assessing and managing risks for individuals who live alone or have limited capacity to respond to emergencies such as fire, illness, or intruders. It emphasizes the importance of evaluating personal support networks, emergency response capabilities, environmental and fire safety, use of Technology Enabled Care (TEC), and mental capacity. Practitioners are advised to make referrals to the Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service where appropriate and to involve relevant stakeholders in risk assessments and contingency planning to ensure safety and well-being. The new guidance was widely shared in March 2025 alongside a well-received face to face learning from SARs and launch of new guidance session led by the PSW with Adult Social Care practitioners delivered online

There is however further work that is now being considered by the council to ensure that the important message around fire safety continues and to ensure that the message is accessible for as many of our residents as possible. This includes but is not limited to:

1. Revamping the fire service training video available to providers and council staff with regards to the 'Adult at Risk Programme' - a relaunch of this planned around September / October 2025.
2. Regular meetings between the fire service and council are continuing with a view to improving the TEC offer available regarding specialist and linked alarm systems with additional aims to enhance and strengthen collaboration and coproduction.
3. Professional relationships between the fire service and the councils Carers Lead are due to be established to ensure support, reach and knowledge of what the fire service can offer is

explored and expanded where possible. This will also include but is not limited to people from different ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and languages.

4. Ongoing work with Fire Service, Tec providers, Reading Borough Council Tenants services and Safety Compliance Teams, to share knowledge, improve communication and raise awareness and risk of fire amongst residents in Reading. This has seen an increase in requests from the Fire Service for Monitored Tec.
5. Sessions with operational staff to increase awareness of the importance of fire safety monitoring through Tec. From Period 3 2025-26 TEC uptake report shows that over 37% of our TEC installs from April-June 2025 were targeted at managing Fire risks. This reflects a steady increase in fire safety uptake.
6. Tenants survey on Fire Risk and Evacuation plans ongoing

### **c) Mental Capacity Act (MCA) and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) training**

Training on Mental Capacity and deprivation of Liberty Safeguards is a key part of the training offer for relevant staff across Adult Social Care in Reading. Much of it is commissioned from Edge Training and Consultancy who are experts on health and social care law and are widely used and well regarded across the sector. “How to Assess Mental Capacity” training for 72 RBC staff online training 3 hours duration.

In 2024/25 further mental capacity training was completed by 101 staff members. Mental capacity recording on mosaic was reviewed and an updated procedure was published to further support staff. A mental capacity drop-in 1:1 monthly session with the DoLS team manager was also introduced.

**MCA -**

<b>DoLS for beginners</b>	<b>Joint Legal Team</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>OT's MCA</b>	<b>Edge Training</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>MCA &amp; Mental Health interface</b>	<b>Joint Legal Team</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>MCA &amp; Self-Neglect</b>	<b>Edge Training</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>MCA How to assess</b>	<b>Edge Training</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>MCA &amp; Self-Neglect</b>	<b>Edge Training</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>MCA How to assess</b>	<b>Edge Training</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>OT's MCA</b>	<b>Edge Training</b>	<b>17</b>
		<b>134</b>

Reading staff now have access to a Mental Capacity Monthly Drop In to learn more about mental capacity, discuss practice and ask questions.

The Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) procedure was updated in 2023/24 as well as the procedure for the court application process (community DoL) supporting staff to identify deprivation of liberty and to ensure that restrictions are reduced when supporting a person's wellbeing and that the appropriate legal process is used. In 2024/25 RBC have undertaken work to embed a recording system for DoLS into mosaic this is now complete.

## 2. Improving Safeguarding services for Adults in Reading

The priority areas of focus for 2024/25 outlined in last year's report from Reading detailed:

- i) **Seeking to manage safeguarding referrals through a single point of contact for blue light agencies and self-referrals through the Customer Fulfillment Centre.**

**Progress:** Due to the high volume of safeguarding referrals into the Customer Fulfillment Centre (CFC), it was proposed referrals would flow into the hub to be screened, however this has yet to be fully achieved. The Safeguarding Adults Team continues to manage the referrals. However, all safeguarding referrals are now screened by the safeguarding adult team and CFC screen welfare referrals. The emphasis throughout the year has been on improving timescales for managing contacts and the timely completion of s42 enquiries. Work has commenced on depleting the safeguarding back log and there is a safeguarding improvement plan in place.

**As of October 2023** - 18% of Open S42 Enquiries were open for 'Less than 4 weeks' compared to 75% of Open Enquiries being open for '6 Weeks+'

**As of October 2024** - 55% of Open S42 Enquiries were open for 'Less than 4 weeks' compared to 27% of Open Enquiries being open for '6 Weeks+'

**As of April 2025** - 67% of Open S42 Enquiries were open for 'Less than 4 weeks' compared to 16% of Open Enquiries being open for '6 Weeks+'

- ii) **Engage with wider preventative programs and link with other workstreams such as those being led by Public Health to ensure any harm from abuse and neglect is prevented.**

**Progress:** There are examples through the year of wider preventative programs. The work by the Quality Concerns Managers described above details some of these. This continues to be a priority for 25/26, particularly in respect of multi-disciplinary preventive work such as the continuing work around hoarding and self-neglect, exploitation and modern slavery and other key areas of existing and emerging safeguarding priorities. The Suicide First Aid tool was incorporated into the safeguarding manual produced by RBC Public Health in partnership with adult social care and the Berkshire Heal Foundation Trust (BHFT). In June 2025 a joint presentation to staff by SAT, the principle occupational therapist and Public Health is planned. RBC now have a team dedicated to those who are experiencing hoarding

- iii) **Strengthen the interface between quality assurance and safeguarding to provide a proactive response to quality concerns and improvement through the Serious Concerns Process**

**Progress:** The Provider Quality Monitoring procedure was embedded in February 2024 and is being used effectively to monitor the improvement work needed with Providers where there have been safeguarding and care quality concerns identified. The Serious Providers/Standards of Care Framework ensure where care providers are not able to rectify concerns raised, or where the nature of those concerns is such that the Council puts restrictions in place. An amber or red flag is issued to place restrictions upon such providers with the potential of restricting or setting such conditions that may impact their ability to accept new packages of care/placements. The framework is supported by partners across health and social care including the Care Quality Commission, where regulatory activity is identified. SAT representative attends meetings and reports back on

safeguarding returns and monthly meets between SAT and QPM have been put in place and the strategic safeguarding adults lead and the team manager for QPM also meet monthly.

- iv) **Ensure that the voices of adults at risk are sought, heard and acted on and our approach to making safeguarding personal and co-production will be enhanced along with partners.**

**Progress:** The requirements of Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) to ensure that people experiencing interventions through safeguarding are consulted and involved at all stages has remained challenging. However, with improved management oversight there is clear evidence MSP is being applied, and this has also been highlighted in the annual SAB audit return completed by RBC. The learning from SARs and case audits has shown through the year, there has been significant improvement in 2024-25. A high percentage of audits found we undertake compassionate, professional and person-centred safeguarding enquiries. We know the people we work with well and this is evidenced within the audit findings. Audit evidence also shows that those people making safeguarding adult referrals are communicated with about the outcome of the enquiry.

In 2024/25 learning from SARs has continued in adult Social Care. Learning is disseminated using the Learning Briefings in team discussions, Practice Forums for Social Workers, Occupational Therapists and unregulated staff. The RBC Principal Social Worker delivered a good practice presentation which was well attended, positive feedback was received. The key messages included, good mental capacity practice, applying professional curiosity, unconscious bias and the importance of multi- agency input and planning

- v) **Revisit the safeguarding training pathway for staff employed by RBC particularly decision makers and we will audit compliance with safeguarding training.**

**Progress:** Safeguarding training was regularly monitored and reported on through the Workforce Board throughout 2024/25. Most of the training throughout the year was on-line, largely for efficiency and cost reasons, given the volume of training required in safeguarding across the Council and its partners. A further review of safeguarding training was commenced in 2024/25. As a result level 4 training was procured and delivered to safeguarding adult managers (SAM's) and SSW.

Attendance from 2024-25 on all SG Levels 1-4:

Safeguarding Adults Level 1	116
Safeguarding Adults Level 2	55
Safeguarding Adults Level 3	21
Safeguarding Adults Level 4	14
All	214

- vi) **Introduce an audit program to ensure continuous professional practice.**

**Progress:** In January 2023 work commenced to introduce an audit program across adult social care which included a focus on safeguarding audits. This was incorporated into the quality assurance framework for the Department approved later in July 2023 and an audit template for recording audits was also developed. Audits of a sample of safeguarding cases across the teams were

undertaken with managers and the themes from those audits were feedback to workers and their managers and underpinned the improvement work across safeguarding.

Embedding the audit work is a key focus for 2024/25 to ensure consistency of auditing practice through the introduction of moderation methodologies, auditing practice and training for managers and quality assurance to reflect inspection requirements issued by the Care Quality Commission.

**vii) Ensure SAB priorities are fully embedded.**

**Progress:** SAB priorities are linked and underpinned into the priorities of safeguarding in Reading. The learning from SARs and other directives issued by the SAB partnership and considered at monthly meetings of the Care and Quality Board along with learning from unexpected deaths and serious incidents.

This continues to be a priority for 2024/25 along with continued support of the Safeguarding Adults Board and its sub-committees.

**viii) Learning from SARs and other reviews are embedded into practice.**

**Progress:** As described in (vii) above.

The Reading MARM process has been updated, including a published Reading procedure and a video describing the Reading process which is available on the SAB website.

**ix) Respond to concerns regarding modern day slavery and exploitation and ensure these are fully explored and vulnerable service users protected.**

**Progress:** In February 2023 Adult Social Care in Reading launched and led “Operation Rivermead” in response to allegations of possible modern-day slavery in the delivery of services by 4 Providers who were commissioned to work with service users in Reading. All 4 Providers also operated in neighbouring authorities, and some provided jointly funded services across health and social care. Chaired by the Assistant Director for Safeguarding, Quality and practice in Reading and supported by a senior commissioner, and multi-disciplinary meetings were held involving representatives from the local authorities, Health, Police, the Home Office, the Care Quality Commission and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA). These meetings enabled sharing information about reports across the agencies represented and considered information received concerning all 4 Providers. Operation Rivermead continued to meet through 2023, concluding in November 2023.

### **Key three areas RBC will be focusing on 2025-2026**

In 2025/26 RBC safeguarding will be focusing on making safeguarding personal through training and learnings from the feedback form now available to those who have experienced the safeguarding process.

It has been acknowledged like most local authorities and partner agencies RBC need to raise the profile of PiPoT both as a directorate and corporately to recognise the need to raise a PiPoT referral. Past referrals have led to significant improvements and well-being in a person's life. Specialised training and general awareness workshops will be undertaken in 2025/2026.

Transitional safeguarding work will begin in partnership with public health to explore preventative measures and increased opportunities for young people navigating into becoming an adult. We want to improve collaborative working, open up opportunities within the council for possible employment and expand eligibility to services already benefiting our informal carers.

**REPORT END**



## **Risk Reduction Guidance: People who Live Alone or have Restricted Ability to Respond**

### **A. Introduction**

This guidance is for all practitioners who undertake Adult Social Care assessments, including needs assessments, reviews, risk assessments, care & support plans, safeguarding concern and enquiries and Occupational Therapy Assessments. It equally applies to council managed care and support plans, support plans arranged via direct payments, and those who fund their own care.

Both national and Local SARs have identified that people who live alone and/or who have restricted ability to respond to an emergency such as a fire, an intruder or the onset of a sudden illness require a risk assessment of their living arrangements and the support available to them, including Technology Enabled Care (TEC).

Please read the local [Fire Safety themed SAR published in 2024](#) to understand the local recommendations regarding fire safety.

Detailed advice and the link to a Safe and Well referral process on Fire Safety is available here: [Are you a referring agency? | Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service](#)

Throughout this guidance the term “emergency” will apply to a fire, an intruder or the onset of a sudden illness or fall. It also includes any unpredictable situation such as power cuts, water leaks, heating failure etc.

**All assessments and review processes must include consideration of the following fire safety and emergency factors:**

### **B. Consider the person you are assessing and reviewing:**

1. Who do they live with? Is there support within the home? What support do friends and family offer?
2. Who would call emergency services should there be an emergency?
3. Is the person able to see or hear indicators that there is a emergency, such as a fire alarm. Does the alarm work and is it tested?
4. Does the person have the physical or mental ability to respond to a fire or emergency? Can they do this 24 hours a day? Consider hearing aids which may be taken out and night and the effect of night-time medication.
5. Does the person have a pendant alarm and fire alarms that are linked to a call centre?

6. Have there been any changes in the person's independence skills since the last assessment or review? What impact does this have on their emergency safety?
7. Does the person use paraffin-based emollient creams, which could fuel a fire.
8. Are there times when the person is intoxicated or impaired by the use of alcohol or drugs.
9. Does the person smoke? Are there risks associated with where they smoke such as in bed or how they manage their smoking equipment (lighters) or dispose of ash.
10. Does the person have health equipment that can increase the fire risk: oxygen cylinders, air flow pressure relieving mattresses or incontinence aids? Are they stored safely?
11. Does the person sit or sleep near a potential source of fire?
12. Does the person have mental capacity to make decisions about where they live, their care and any identified risks.
13. Is there a lasting Power of Attorney in place who can support the person with their property? Or a family member that could support the person?
14. Does the person require a referral to the council's deputies team for support with their finances or property.
15. Do they have care and support from a provider? What does the care and support providers care plan say about fire or emergency risk? Does it seem safe? Is there a provider risk assessment?
16. If the person is in a placement, extra care or sheltered housing are regular fire drills taking place?
17. Is there a contingency plan to deal with emergencies?
18. Is there a requirement for a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP)? See [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005 \(FSO\)](#) (details of who is a responsible person and their duties can be found on this link). This legislation does not apply to single residential dwellings (e.g. bungalows, houses, flats, supported living or care homes)

**C. Consider heating in the home –**

1. Is it modern and safe?
2. Are there any naked flames left on when the person is alone?
3. Does the owner need to review or update the heating?
4. Do they need financial or practical help to update their heating. A referral to [Cosier Home Energy Advice](#) can be made.
5. Do they have a CO<sub>2</sub> alarm in place if they have a fuel burning appliance (e.g. a cooker, boiler or fireplace). If there is no working CO<sub>2</sub> alarm, refer to the Fire Service for a Safe and Well visit.
6. Have there been annual safety checks for gas and heating? This should be arranged by own home-owners (or their legal representatives), local authorities for council housing or housing associations.
7. Is there a lasting Power of Attorney in place who can support the review and upgrade of heating? Or a family member that could support the person?

**D. Consider the environment –**

1. Are there items that would fuel a fire next to or near a source of heat?

2. Is there any sign of self-neglect, hoarding or excess belongings. Please follow the [Hoarding Protocol](#) and associated pathways on TriX.
3. Do you have any concerns about the electrical overload or faults? Electrical Items not working or in poor condition, lack of supply, overloaded sockets, recharging batteries arrangements? Look out for daisy chaining of extension leads or scorch marks around plug sockets. This website gives more information [Overloading Sockets | Electrical Safety First](#)
4. Is the kitchen and its appliances safe? Are appliances clean and free from oil fat and food deposits? Consider the person's ability to use the appliances. Would stove guards or timers be helpful.
5. Does the person live in a high-rise accommodation?
6. Are the doors and windows secure and can the person lock/unlock them?

**E. Consider a safe and well referral to the Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service (RBFRS) [Safe and Well Service](#). This must always be done when**

1. The person lives alone.
2. The person is unable to respond independently to fire incidents.
3. The person is cared for in bed or has limited mobility.
4. The person has sight or hearing loss.
5. The person's mobility or ability to respond to emergencies has changed or deteriorated.
6. The person has reduced mobility or cognitive issues.
7. The person's environment is giving cause for concern (see sections C&D)
8. The picture below the equipment that can be given by the Fire Service as part of the Safe and Well visit outcome



**F. Consider Technology (TEC)**

1. What technology is in place to support the person?
2. Is there a pendant alarm is it accessible 24 hours a day? Are they able to press the button?
3. Is the person able to speak to the call centre? Is the base unit in the right place?
4. Are there suitable responders in place, can they attend when called?

5. Is the fire alarm and carbon monoxide device linked to the Apello system so that the fire service can be called even when the person cannot respond.
6. Has the fire service provided suitable equipment to reduce fire risk?
7. What does the council and the service provider say about the use of technology? is this safe?  
<https://intranet.reading.gov.uk/section/how-do-i/technology-enabled-care-tec-guidance>

### **Emergency Risks and Mental Capacity**

Where risks exist, including those that cannot be managed a risk assessment must be completed with the person, family and informal carers, care providers, partner agencies such as health practitioners and the fire service.

Practitioners must consider whether a mental capacity assessment is required and, where the person lacks capacity, make best interest decisions.

If risk cannot be managed and or the person lacks capacity to make a decision to remain in their home, accommodation with higher levels of care or oversite may be required.

Where risks cannot be resolved through risk assessment and mental capacity pathways the case may need to be considered under safeguarding or the MARM process. In some cases, legal advice or processes may be required. This must always be discussed with your supervisor and team manager.

### **Priority Service Register**

Home owners and families can also register with all the Utility Services for priority help see links below:

[Energy Supplier Priority Registration](#)

[Thames Water Priority Service Registration](#)

### **Read fire safety SAR and Learning Brief (links)**

Read the SAB [Fire Safety Awareness Information](#)

Adult at risk Training ([RBFR Fire Safety Training Video](#))

Search top tips on [RBFRS website](#)

### **Service Providers and Fire Safety**

DCASC's Quality and Performance Monitoring Team work with the Fire Service and service providers to ensure that providers have up to date knowledge about fire safety, the safe and well service and how to ensure that these services reach all people and communities regarding fire safety. For more information please contact [QPM@reading.gov.uk](mailto:QPM@reading.gov.uk).