

Question to Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee – 6 July 2022

At its recent conference the LGA reported that the number of children seeking special educational needs and disability support (SEND) has risen by nearly a quarter in a year.

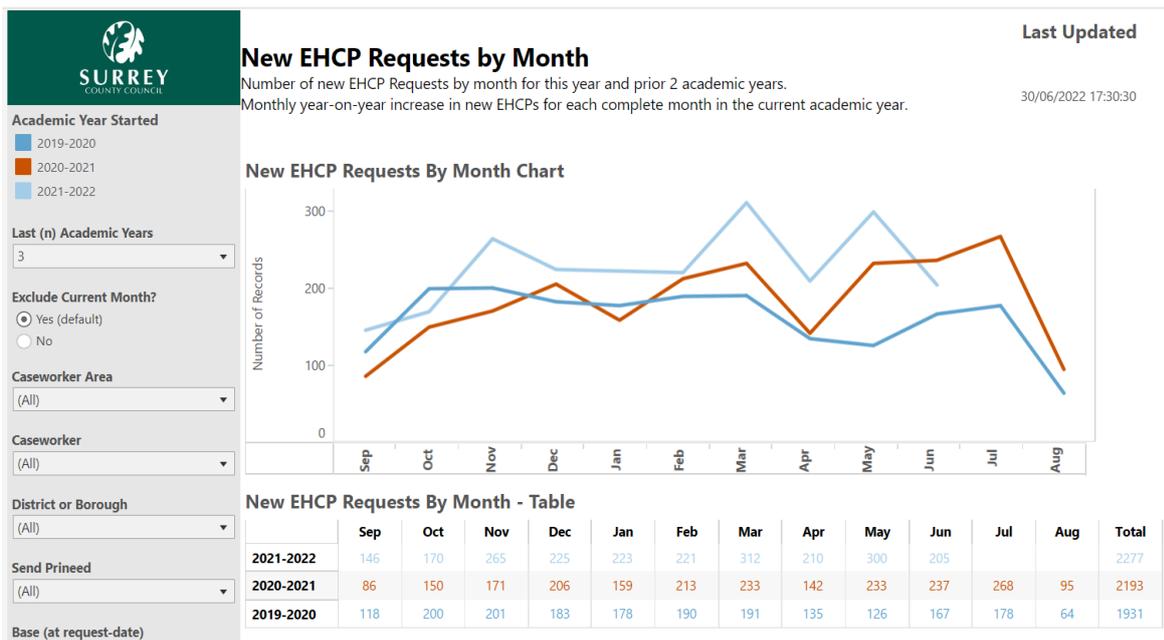
1. What is the level of requests for EHCP assessment by quadrant (South East, South West, etc) by month in Surrey in each of the past 12 months, and what is the growth by quadrant in each of the last 12 months?
2. By Surrey quadrant, what percentage of requests are completed on time (i.e., in 20 weeks) – by month – for each of the past 12 months compared to the target?
3. If the current target is not being met what actions are underway to remedy this situation?
4. How many children – per Surrey quadrant - are not in school because of delays in processing their EHCPs and identifying a place at an appropriate school?
5. How long is it likely to be before the target will be met?

Fiona Davidson

Response**Question 1 Response:**

The Department for Education's latest national benchmarking survey published in May 2022, indicates that Surrey's rate of growth of EHCPs was 9% in 2021, compared to a national average rate of growth of 10%. Nationally, the number of requests for assessment grew by 23% compared with 8% in Surrey. However, data so far this year shows a 21% increase locally on 2021 (we do not yet have national comparative data). The number of requests coming into the local authority tends to have peaks around November, March and May. The majority of needs assessment requests are submitted by schools and this trend therefore represents work cycles in schools. Not all needs assessment requests are agreed; in 2021, Surrey agreed to assess 78% of the requests received. For comparison, the tables below provide data on the last three years, by county and by quadrant.

Table 1: All Quadrants new EHCP requests by month (end of June 2022)



The tables below confirm that all quadrants have experienced growth over the last year however, this has been greatest in the South East and North East.

Table 2: North East Quadrant (end of May 2022)

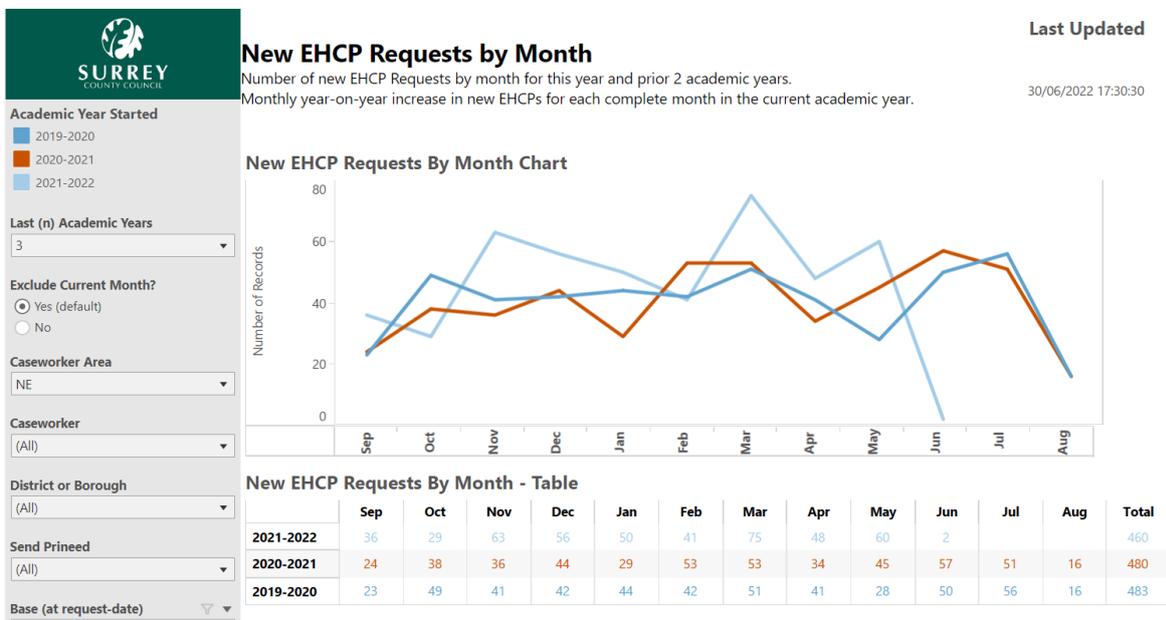


Table 3: North West Quadrant (end of May 2022)

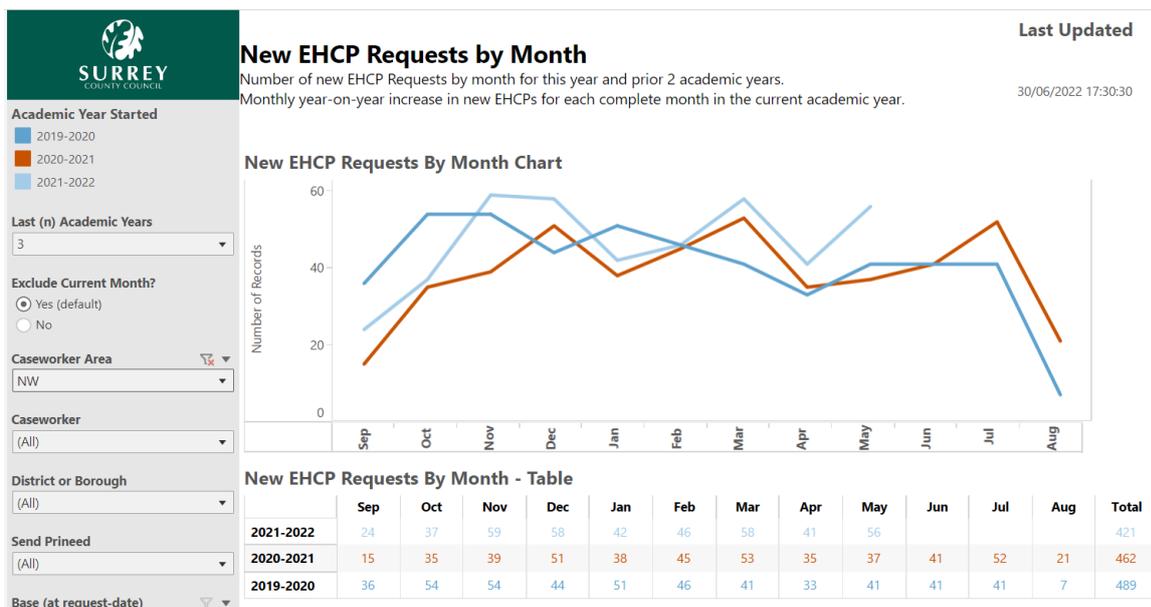


Table 4: South East Quadrant (end of May 2022)

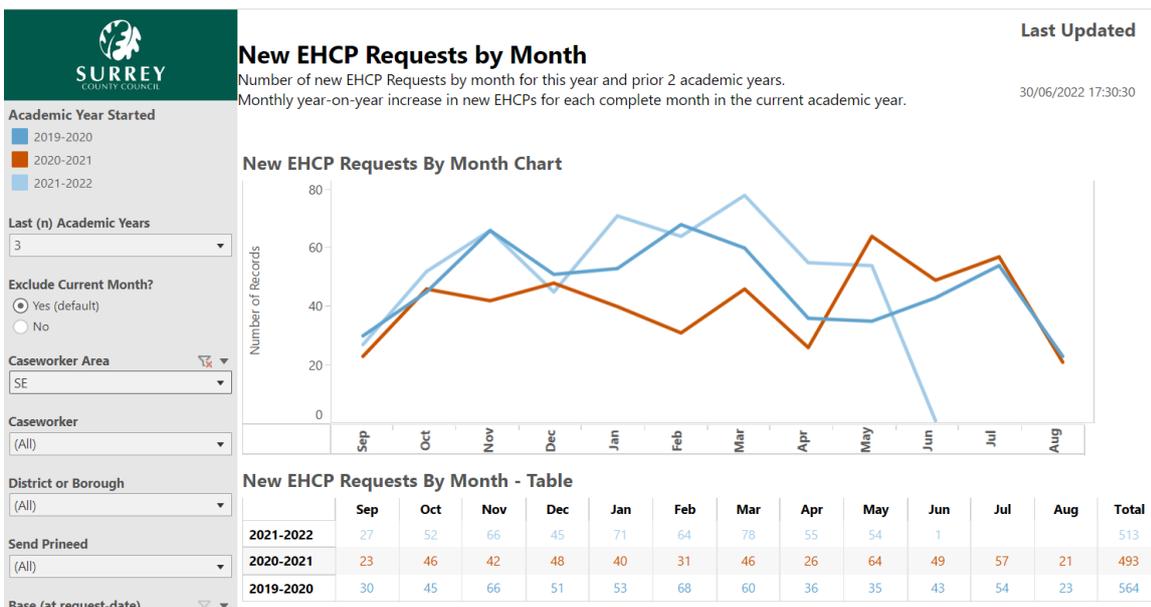
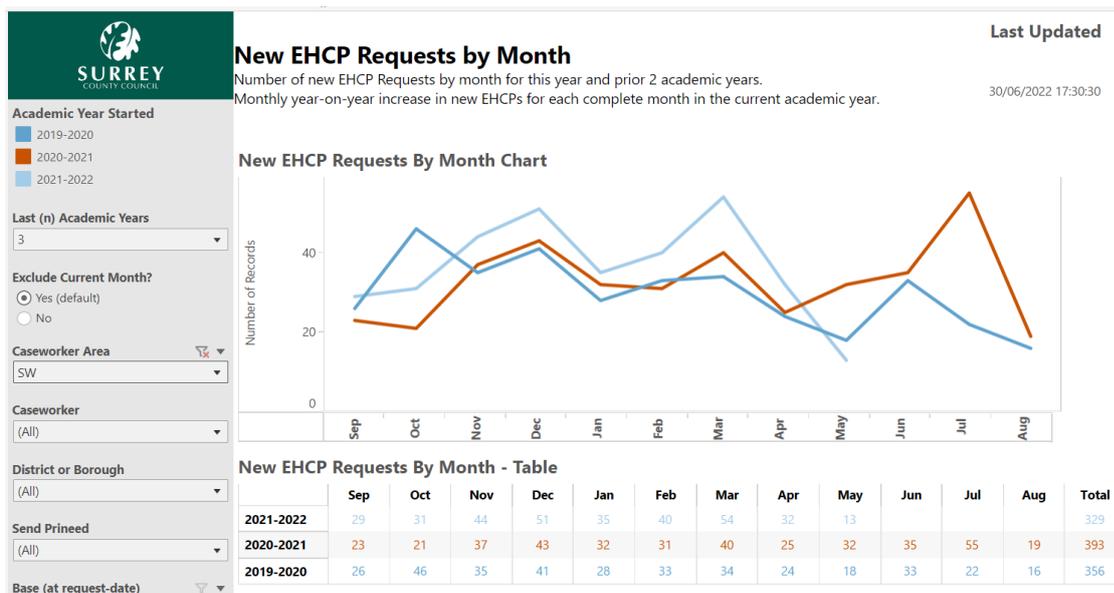


Table 5: South West Quadrant (end of May 2022)



Work is underway to help schools consider what support is available without the need for an EHCP. The Learners’ Single Point of Access (LSPA) offers guidance to schools about how a child’s needs can be met within ordinarily available provision in school, with some additional support as appropriate. We are also issuing guidance for schools on expectations of what schools should be offering at Sen support though ordinarily available provision so that there is more clarity on the level of need that requires an EHCP.

Question 2 Response:

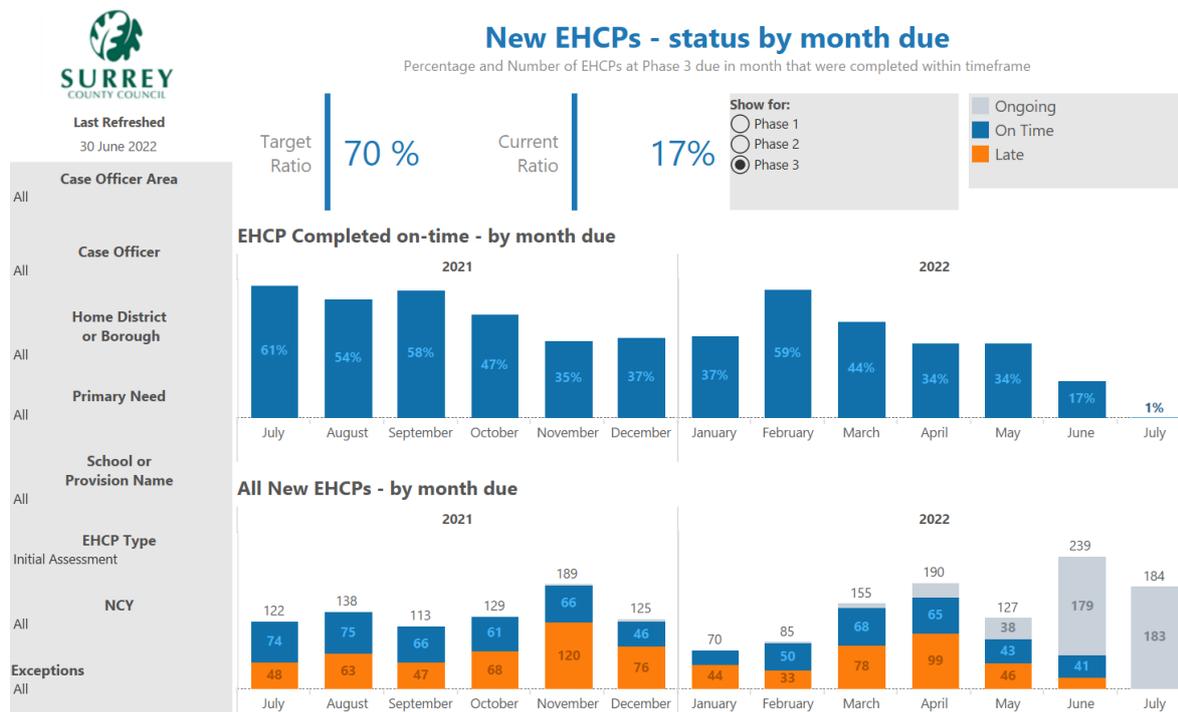
There is a statutory duty to complete the EHC needs assessment process and where agreed, issue a plan within 20 weeks. The DfE’s national benchmarking data indicates that in 2021, 59.9% of new EHC plans nationally were issued within 20 weeks. This compares to a figure of 65.3% in Surrey.

Table 6 confirms that in the last calendar year, there has been variable performance month by month on the timeliness of issuing EHC plans.

This reflects a number of issues such as fluctuating vacancies in SEN and other professional teams who contribute to the needs assessment process. There is also an increase in the numbers of new staff in teams who require a support while they become fully operational.

Recognising the challenges both in Surrey and nationally regarding issuing EHCPs within the 20 week timeframe, Surrey has set itself a milestone of achieving 70% on time. However, the target is to achieve all within the 20 week statutory timeframe.

Table 6: All Quadrants new EHCP requests completed within 20 weeks by month (end of June 2022)



There is local variation between quadrants in timeliness of completing EHC needs assessments which reflects variations in staffing within both the Sen teams and linked professionals

Table 8: North East Quadrant new EHCP requests completed within 20 weeks by month (end of June 2022)

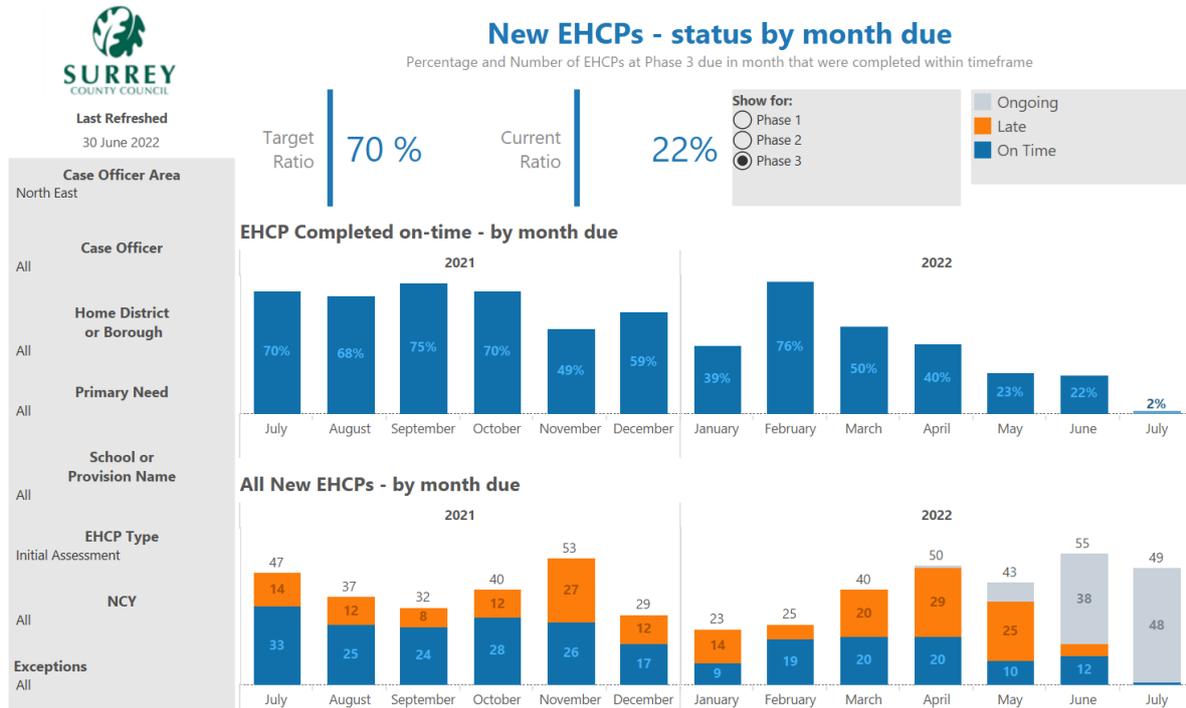


Table 9: North West Quadrant new EHCP requests completed within 20 weeks by month (end of June 2022)

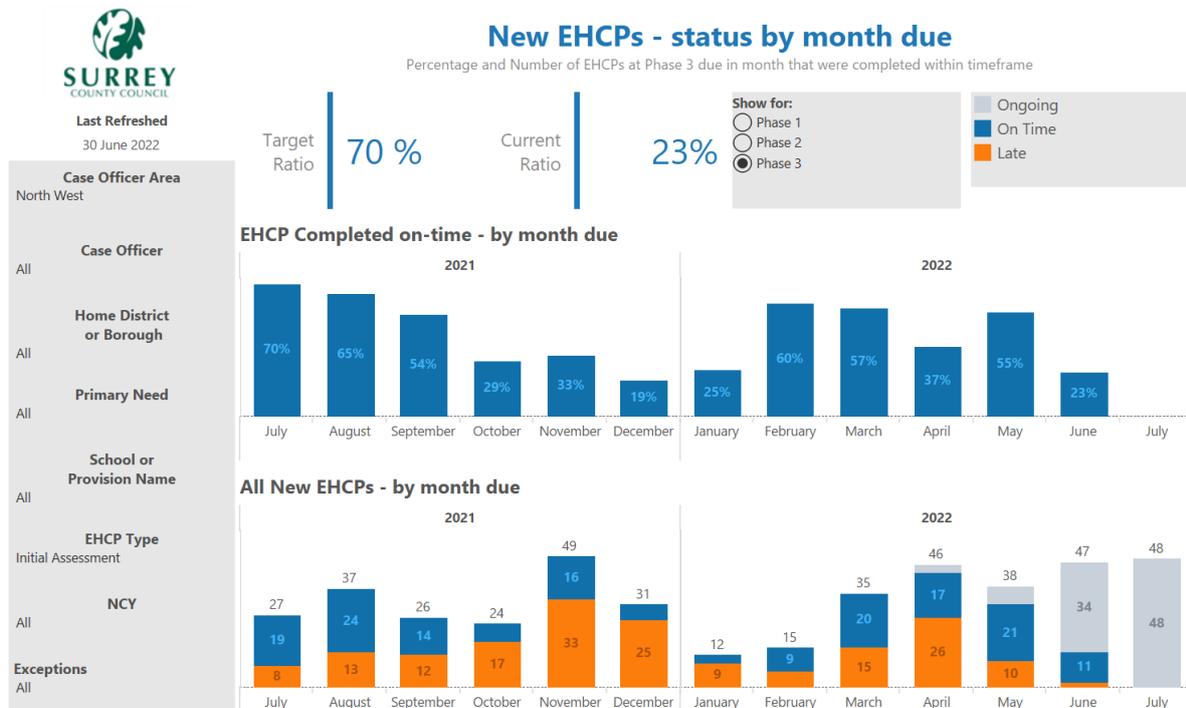


Table 9: South East Quadrant new EHCP requests completed within 20 weeks by month (end of June 2022)

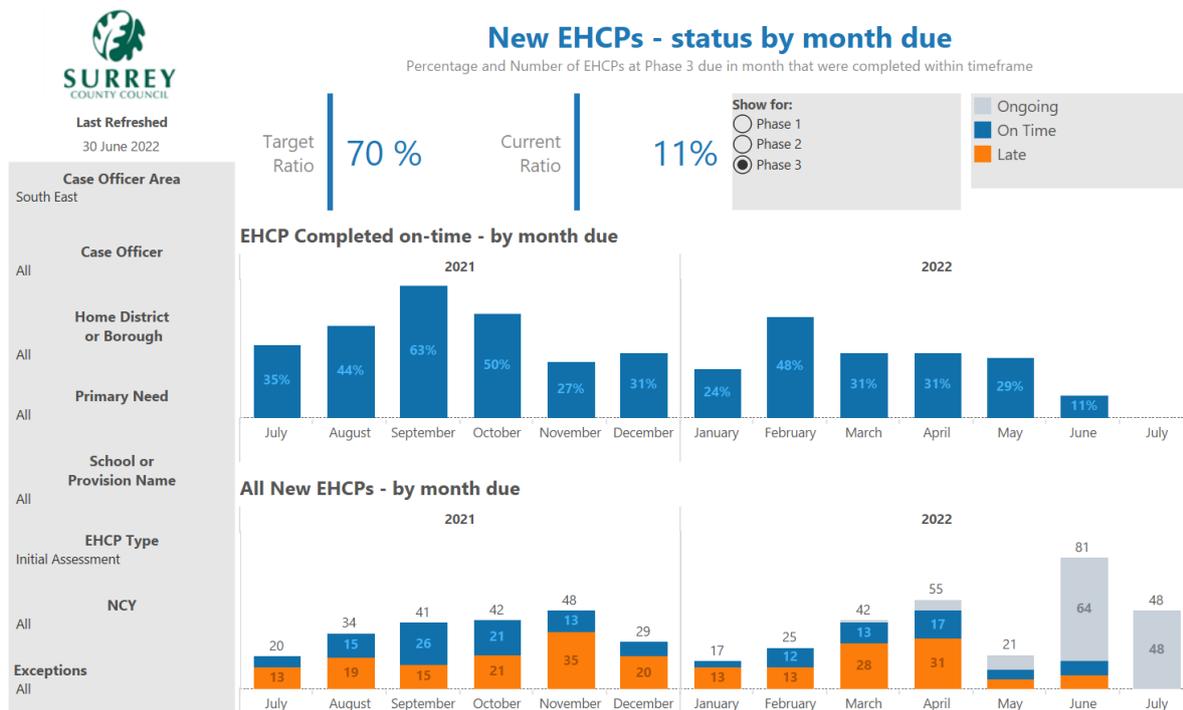
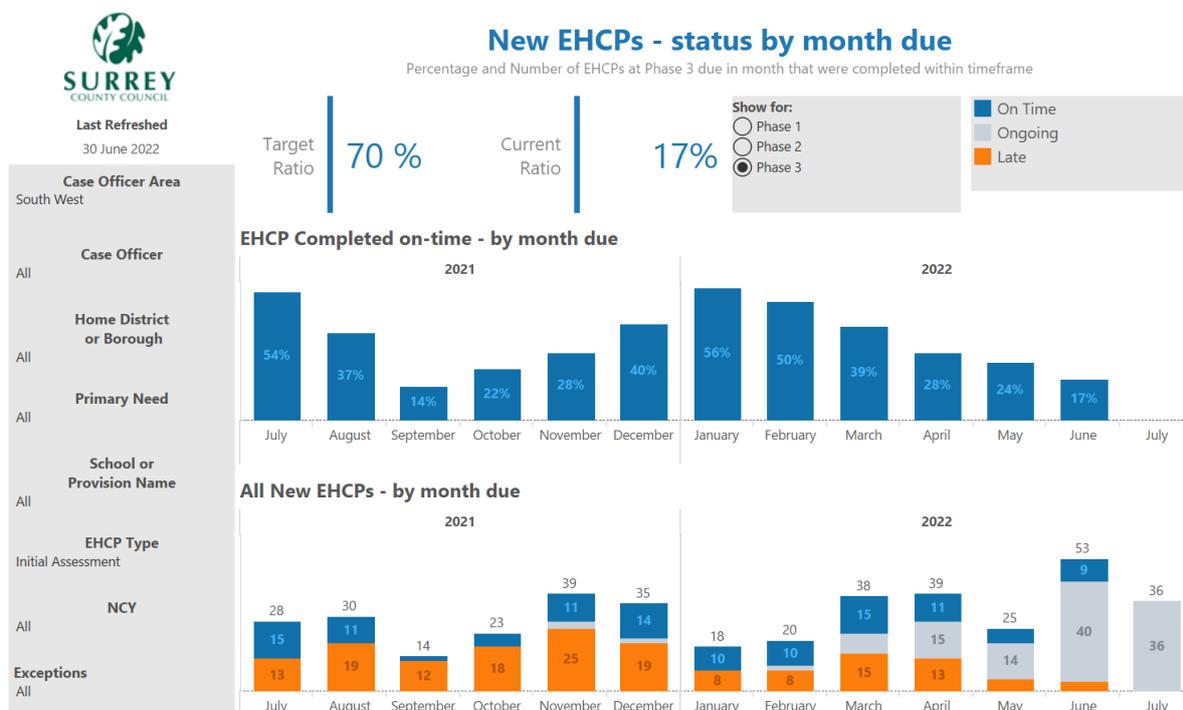


Table 10: South West Quadrant new EHCP requests completed within 20 weeks by month (end of June 2022)



Question 3 Response:

There is a recovery plan in place across all contributing services to address the recent decline in timeliness of completing EHC needs assessments within 20 weeks. The recovery plan is monitored at the Inclusion and Additional Needs Transformation Board.

Actions include an end-to-end review of the needs assessment process to speed up phases of the process where this is practical. For example, the decision to assess is made within 4 weeks rather the statutory timescale of 6 weeks which then enables Educational Psychologists (EPs) more time to provide their advice and still meet timescales. EPs are also developing more efficient and effective ways to provide advice as quickly as possible.

The SEN team and advice givers also have plans in place to increase their capacity.

The Educational Psychology service currently has a 37% vacancy rate (which reflects a national shortage of EPs). The service has prioritised its resource to meet statutory demand by reducing all other work and has engaged locum and agency EPs to enhance staffing levels. The service is developing a longer-term business plan to ensure a sustainable service and a recruitment strategy is underway to attract more EPs to the service.

Similar recovery plans are in place for our health colleagues.

The SEN team also has recruitment activity underway with an accelerated recruitment process in operation alongside the use of agency staff where necessary. The team has a number of new staff who are being carefully supported so that they can be fully operational as soon as possible.

There is also work underway to manage the demand for EHC needs assessments. The demand management activity includes needs assessment request triaging and ordinary available provision guidance as well as a wide range of early intervention support for schools to prevent escalation of need. This support includes help from education, health and social care.

Question 4 Response:

We are aware that some families are not content with the educational placement or provision their child may be receiving. A small proportion of children each year require a change of school placement to ensure a match of needs and provision (for example if needs change and the current school does not feel equipped or able to meet those needs with the right help and support). Some children may also be absent from school for example with related anxiety. For these types of reasons children may not access their current school placements. As of 4 July 2022 there are 11 children on SEN support who are either waiting to go on the roll of a school or who may be in education otherwise than at school (EOTAS).

Children with an EHCP awaiting an alternative school place are in receipt of education. They are either on the roll of a school and have education provided at school (with support from the Local Authority) or the school/Local Authority provides alternative provision where attendance at school is not appropriate.

Question 5 Response:

The timeliness activities noted earlier will enable the SEN team to meet deadlines, however, the impact of this work will depend on the success of the capacity building work. We are currently modelling the impact of this work so that we can be clear about when we will meet the 70% milestone and are aiming towards an in-month completion rate of 70% by December 2022.

**Liz Bowes, Chairman – Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture
Select Committee**

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