

# Children's Services – Strategic Risk Monitoring Report

Quarter Q4, 2023/24

RISK	IMPACT / CONSEQUENCE				
LIKELIHOOD	Insignificant (1)	Minor (2)	Moderate (3)	Major (4)	Critical (5)
Almost certain (5)	5	10	15	20	25
Highly likely (4)	4	8	12	16	20
Probable (3)	3	6	9	12	15
Possible (2)	2	4	6	8	10
Rare (1)	1	2	3	4	5

## Summary overview

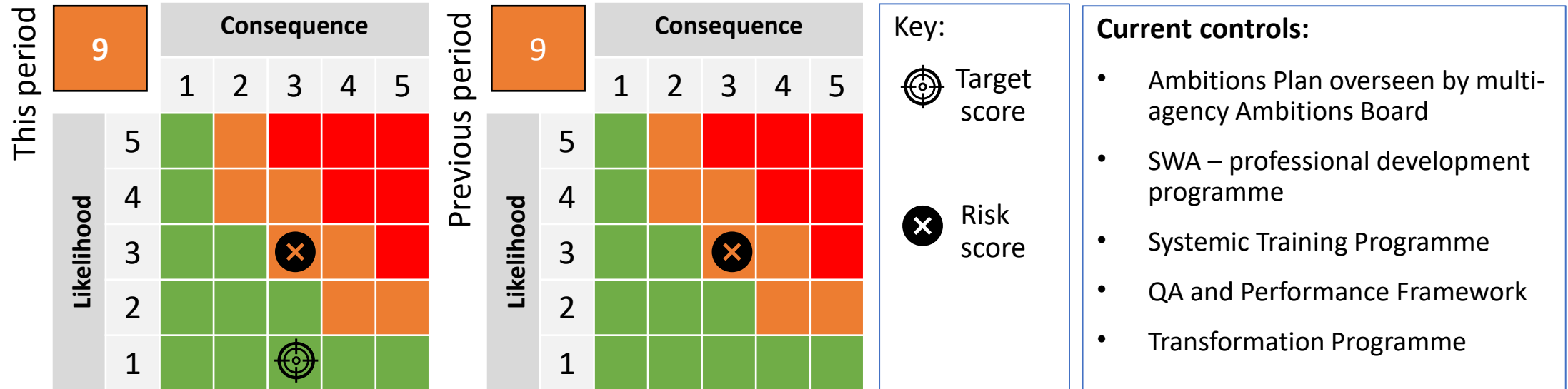
Ref	Risk Owner	Strategic Risks (shortform title)	Residual risk score	Direction of travel
SR 7.5	Ann James	Insufficient workforce capacity in Children's services	Medium 12	⇨
SR 7.7	Ann James	Failure to develop sufficient placement capacity	Medium 12	⇨
SR 7.4	Kirsten Harrison	Increasing EHCP demand and capacity threaten outcomes for vulnerable children (SEND)	Medium 12	⇨
SR 7.2	Ann James	Ineffective Social Care Practice	Medium 9	⇨

## SR 7.2 Ineffective Social Care Practice

Ineffective social care practice, management oversight and review processes resulting in drift and delay for children and young people in situations of harm.

**Risk Owner:** Ann James, Exec. Director of Children's Services

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Stephen Davies



### Period comments:

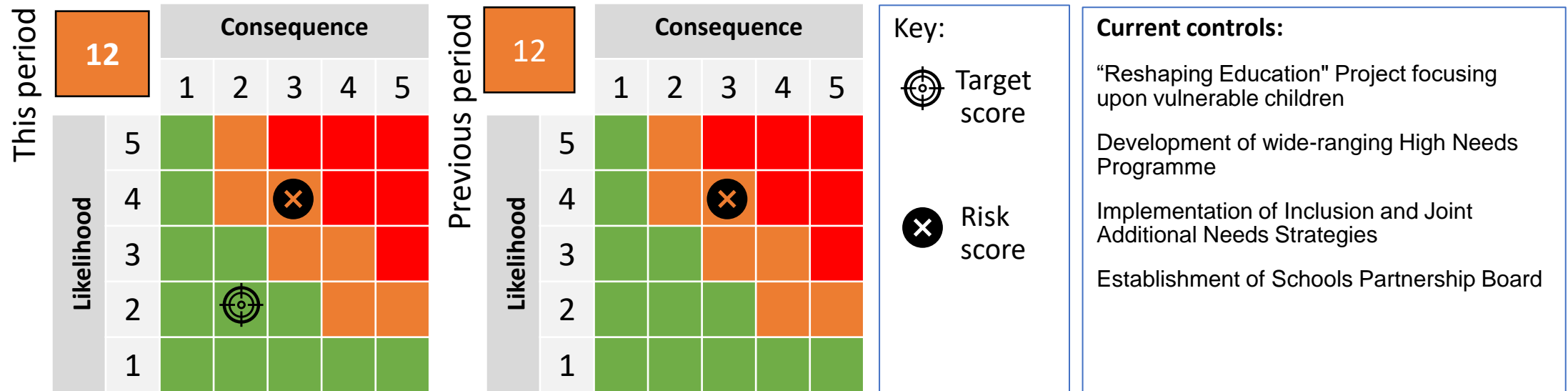
The Ambitions Plan overseen by the Ambitions Board continues to provide the framework for our improvement activity. Our latest quality assurance and performance data show a mixed picture. Over 60% of performance measures are at or within tolerance of target. In contrast the % of practice found to be good or better has declined over quarter 4. There is more to do to ensure the consistency of practice and pace improvement across localities, teams and different aspects of our work with children and families. We know that when teams are stable, with consistent leadership and systemic principles are applied, that our practice and outcomes for children and families are improved. With that in mind our risk scoring is unchanged.

## SR 7.4: Increasing EHCP demand and capacity threaten outcomes for vulnerable children (SEND)

The ability to meet statutory timelines for EHCP assessments, plan issue and annual amendments and the associated budgetary commitments, affecting the educational outcomes of vulnerable children, is at risk: financially, legally and reputationally through ever-increasing EHCP requests, workforce capacity to process these requests and the implications for the outcomes of future local area SEND inspections.

**Risk Owner:** Kirsten Harrison, Director of Education

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Philip Robinson



### Period comments:

We continue to see sustained demand for EHCPs, initially linked to consequences on children's learning and well-being from the Covid pandemic. There is now continued rise in need linked to the increasing loss of parental confidence in mainstream provision to meet needs and the financial challenges faced by schools, which is resulting in the inability of schools to fund resources that promote and support mainstream inclusion, for example, additional pastoral staff and teaching assistants. This is further compounded by recruitment challenges in the whole Education sector workforce.

Despite expansion in the capacity of the EHCP statutory workforce, ensuring training and support is in place to develop the new workforce is proving challenging with the continued demand and officer caseloads.

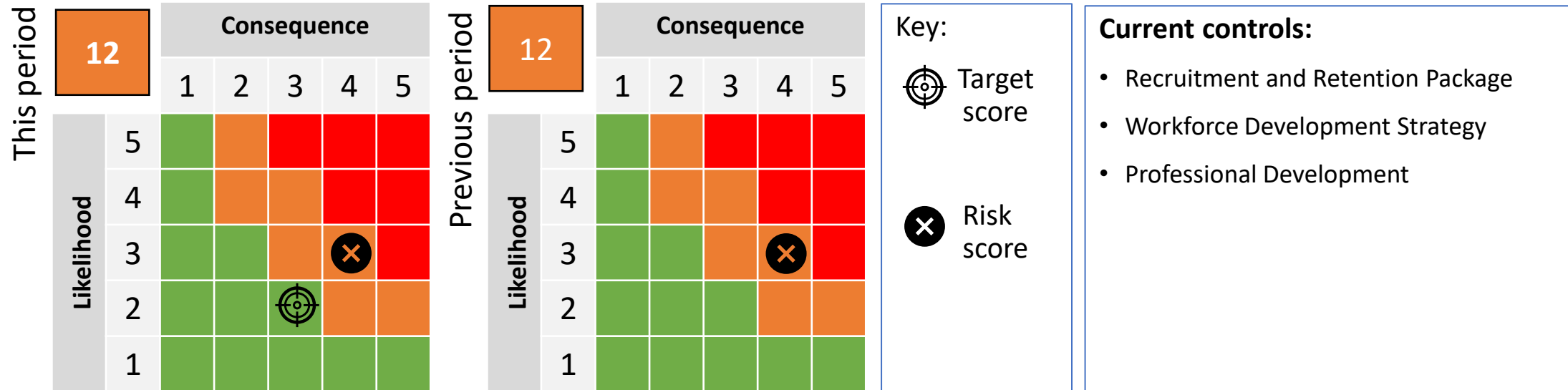
The major challenge regarding meeting statutory timeliness is the availability of educational psychologists to undertake the mandatory statutory assessment as part of the EHCP process. This workforce is challenged nationally and locally. We are undertaking creative approaches to recruitment and retention, but are still operating below a quarter below establishment staffing for educational psychologists. Our 'grow your own' workforce strategy will require a number of years to impact. We remain reliant on the locum pool to build capacity.

## SR 7.5: Insufficient workforce capacity in Children's Services

Insufficient workforce capacity and/or instability adversely impacting on pace and sustainability of improvement and contributing to discontinuity in social engagement with children and families

**Risk Owner:** Ann James, Exec. Director of Children's Services

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Stephen Davies



### Period comments:

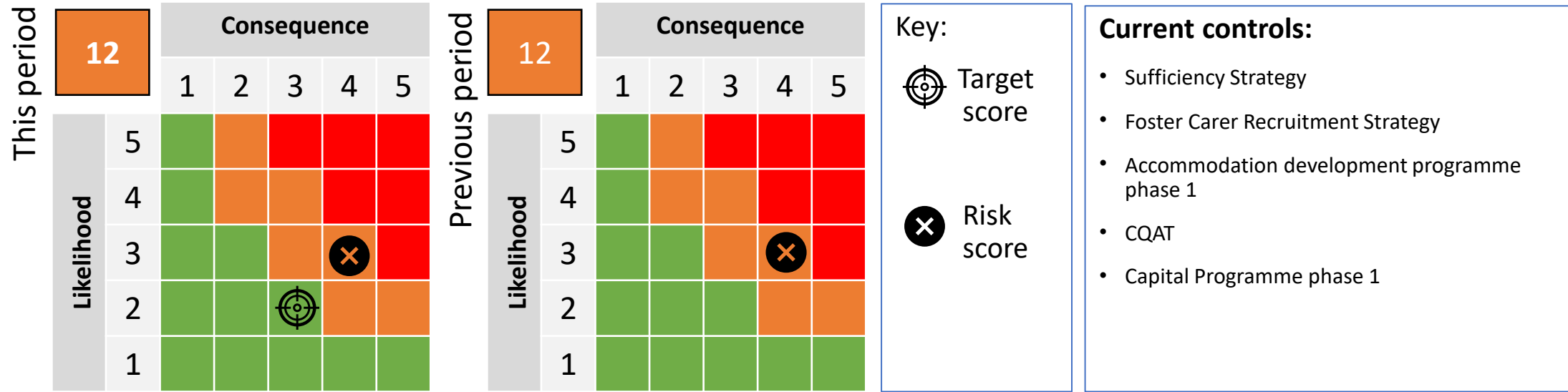
A stable and confident workforce, supported by regular supervision and management direction, is key to improving the quality of practice and outcomes for children. Q4 saw a continuation of the gradual improvements over the previous quarters but considerable challenges remain. Vacancies (20.7%) and turnover (16.6%) are improved however although our agency proportion has reduced (26.1%) it remains too high. Work continues with corporate colleagues to ensure our 'employment offer' remains competitive alongside the roll out of systemic and professional development via the Academy. Taking account of these factors our risk score remains unchanged.

# SR 7.7: Failure to develop sufficient placement capacity

Failure to develop sufficient placement capacity to meet the needs of looked after children

**Risk Owner:** Ann James, Exec. Director of Children’s Services

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Stephen Davies



**Period comments:**

Our revised Sufficiency Strategy Homes@theHeart provides the framework for our work to ensure we have the right placement options to meet the needs of children requiring care. The GCC/DfE joint funded capital programme has progressed to a registration application for Barnwood, to be followed in Q1 by London Rd. Redwell Rd has reached final design, with work progressing to finalise selection of a fourth site. The recruitment of the necessary workforce has also commenced with a Registered General Manager for Barnwood now in place.

We recently enhanced our arrangements for Unregistered Placements by establishing an Unregistered Panel chaired by the Director of Safeguarding and Care, and a High Cost/Complex Needs Panel chaired by the DCS, providing additional oversight of children considered at the former. The aim is to ensure we have a sufficient grip and oversight of the quality of care for children, avoiding drift and delay, whilst attending to cost containment and value for money. All panels are multiagency.

Despite the good progress with development of in-house provision and enhancement of our oversight arrangements, the market remains fragile and as such the risk score remains unchanged.