



Corporate Parenting Board

27 November 2013

Time 17:30 hours **Public meeting?** Yes **Type of meeting** Other

Venue Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton WV1 1SH

Room Committee Room 4 (3rd floor)

Membership

Chair Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Phil Page
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Martin Waite

Conservative

Cllr Mrs Christine Mills
Cllr Mrs Patricia Patten
Cllr Paul Singh

Liberal Democrat

The quorum for this meeting is

Information for the Public

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Agenda

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

1. **Apologies for absence**
2. **Declarations of interest**
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting (25 September 2013)**
[For approval]
4. **Matters arising**
[To consider any matters arising from the minutes]
5. **Performance Monitoring – Looked After Children**
[To receive a report on Performance Monitoring for Looked After Children] **[TO BE CIRCULATED AT THE MEETING]**
6. **The Role of Foster Carers’ in the Development of Skills of the Fostering Service**
[To enable the Board to have a clear understanding of training and development needs of foster carers]
7. **Virtual School - Looked After Children Education Team Annual Report**
[To comment on the Annual Report for 2012/2013]
8. **Annual Report Safeguarding Service Looked After Children 2012- 2013**
[The annual report for 2012/13]

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

9. **Exclusion of press and public**
[To pass the following resolution:

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information on the grounds shown below]

Part 2 – exempt items, closed to the press and public

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Grounds for exemption</i>	<i>Applicable paragraph</i>
10.	Members Visits to Establishments [To receive details of any visits to establishments undertaken since the last meeting]	Information relating to any individual	1



Corporate Parenting Board Minutes – 25 September 2013

Attendance

Members

Cllr Val Gibson (Chair)
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Mrs Christine Mills
Cllr Mrs Patricia Patten
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Martin Waite

Staff

Daphne Atkinson	Fostering Team Manager - Community
Emma Bennett	Interim Assistant Director, Safeguarding, Business Support and Communities - Community
Steve Cox	Interim Head of Looked After Children – Community
Sharon Green	LAC Transitions Team Manager - Community
Dr Roberta Fry	Consultant Clinical Psychologist – Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Lorna Tull	Corporate Parenting Officer – Community
John Welsby	Assistant Director, Children and Families - Community
Carl Craney	Democratic Support Officer - Delivery

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

1. **Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Philip Page and Paul Singh.

Chair's announcements

The Chair welcomed Councillors and Officers to the meeting. She invited Councillors and Officers to introduce themselves. Introductions were duly made.

2. **Declarations of interest**

No declarations of interest were made in relation to items under consideration at the meeting.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting (26 June 2013)**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. **Matters arising**

With reference to Minute No. 42(ii) (13 March 2013) and Minute No. 4 (26 June 2013), the Chair, Cllr Val Gibson enquired as to when the report in connection with "Setting Up Home Supports Grants and Support" (Minute No. 41) would be presented to the Board. John Welsby advised that a report on this subject would be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

5. **Consultation Meeting with Wolverhampton Carers', Residential Workers and Other Carers' – 31 July 2013 – topics Identified for further consideration.**

Resolved:

1. That reports on the following topics be considered at the next meeting:
 - Improving Communications between Social Workers' and Foster Carers';
 - The Role of Foster Carers' in the Development of Skills of the Fostering Service;
 - Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers'
2. That a report on Wolverhampton's Learning and Development Programme for Foster Carers' be considered later in the meeting;
3. That the views of Foster Carers' be sought early in the new year on the proposals to improve communications between them and Social Workers'

6. **Wolverhampton Fostering Service Foster Carers' Training**

Daphne Atkinson presented a report which detailed the learning and development programme provided by the Council for Foster Carers' in Wolverhampton.

Cllr Hodgkiss enquired as to how the identity of the person undertaking on line training opportunities could be verified and confirmed. Daphne Atkinson explained that the on line training was only made available via a secure connection to nominated users and that the success or otherwise was established by the Training Co-ordinator and also witnessed through performance monitoring.

Cllr Paula Brookfield questioned whether any Foster Carers' declined to attend training events or to participate in training activities and the remedies available to the Council to address such instances. Daphne Atkinson assured the Board that there were only very few instances when this had been an issue and that in those cases assistance and encouragement were offered. She reminded the Board that certain elements of the programme were compulsory and, that ultimately, Foster Carers' could be referred back to the Fostering Panel and discharged. All Foster Carers' were also subject to an annual performance review.

Cllr Paula Brookfield referred to the elements of the training package which addressed sexual abuse and severe neglect and enquired as to whether both foster Carers' were required to attend these elements. Daphne Atkinson responded that this was an expectation from Ofsted and was one of the reasons that training for all members of the household was offered. Flexible arrangements for training elements were now available to encourage attendance at training events.

Cllr Rita Potter enquired as to whether Foster Carers' were required to enter into any type of formal training agreement which could require fees to be repaid in the event that they left the Council's employment within a specified time period. Daphne Atkinson advised that no such arrangements were in place and that during her employment with the Council there had only been one case where a Foster Carer had left the employment of the Council after obtaining a professional qualification. She explained that the Foster Carers' were a very loyal group of employees and often only left the Council's employment if they went on to adopt a child.

Cllr Paula Brookfield enquired as to whether there were specialist Foster Carers' for such specific groups as young babies or those entering care for the first time. John Welsby reported that this issue would be addressed in the Recruitment and Retention Policy report to be considered at a future meeting of the Board.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted;
2. That the congratulations and thanks of the Board be extended to all employees involved in the delivery of training to Foster Carers' and to all Foster Carers' for participating in training and development;
3. That the Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, write formally to all Foster Carers' to inform them of the Board's sentiments on this matter

7. **Performance Monitoring – Looked After Children**

John Welsby circulated Performance Monitoring information in respect of Looked After Children and explained the current position.

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre enquired as to whether the rise in the number of Looked After Children was linked to the level of deprivation in Wolverhampton. John Welsby advised that the level of Looked After Children in Wolverhampton was at a higher level than the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) family group and that comparisons had also been undertaken against the %age of the population in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance. Cllr Dr Hardacre expressed concern that the family group was not a reasonable comparison given that some of the Authorities within the group were coastal or port authorities and that only Sandwell MBC could be considered on a like for like basis, in his opinion. The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, reminded the Board that the numbers of children in care had risen across the country.

Cllr Paula Brookfield requested that the comparison data in relation to those in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance with children in care be circulated to the Board. Cllr Martin Waite queries as to whether there was causation rather than a correlation between the number of residents in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance and the number of children in care. John Welsby confirmed that to be the case. Cllr Paula Brookfield questioned as to whether any research had been undertaken with regard to the reasons behind the increase in the looked after children population. John Welsby reminded the Board of the independent analysis undertaken by the Dartington Social Research Unit for the Council which had confirmed that the Council was pursuing care proceedings in relation to those children at risk. Furthermore, it would not be possible for a meaningful comparison to be undertaken unless a full case work analysis was carried out by all authorities in the family group.

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre referred to section 5.2 of the Performance Management information (LAC: Starts including journey to care) and expressed his concern that 30% of the children were unknown to the Council prior to referral. John Welsby reported that this was due to an increase in complex cases or cases of great concern which had been drawn to the attention of the Council.

Cllr Martin Waite referred to section 6 of the Performance Monitoring information (Adoptions) and reminded the Board that any difficult to place cases could have a detrimental effect on the performance figures. John Welsby confirmed this to be the case but commented that it had always been a commitment of the Council to seek the most appropriate placement regardless of the effect on the performance figures. The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson suggested that the performance of the Council in relation to adoptions was also influenced by the performance of the Court's in dealing with adoption cases. John Welsby advised that the performance in the

Wolverhampton Court's had shown a marked improvement and, in recently published statistics, was the most improved in the country. Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre suggested that in the event of more complex cases and an increase in the number of referrals achieving the target performance would become increasingly difficult. John Welsby confirmed this to be an accurate assumption. Following a further question from Cllr Paula Brookfield, John Welsby advised that it was not challenges to adoptions but requests for further assessments, often in the case of family members, previously unknown to the Council, which caused delays in the process.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

8. **Looked After Children – Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Annual Report**

Dr Roberta Fry presented the Looked After Children – Children and Adolescent Services (CAMHS) Annual Report.

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre welcomed the report but drew to the attention of the Board the statistics in Figure 1 (number of Referrals Referred According to Profession) inasmuch as the number of referrals from the Education Service seemed to be minimal when, given that children should be attending some form of educational establishment from the age of 3, he expected a greater number of referrals via this route. Dr Roberta Fry explained that in many cases referrals would come via Social Services following an initial referral from Education Services. She assured the Board of the great and valuable contribution made by the Education Service to work in protecting children considered to be at risk.

The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, commented on the need for all partners to accept their respective roles and responsibilities in dealing with Looked After Children rather than considering the issue to be the responsibility of the Council.

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss enquired as to the measurement of outcomes from the CAMHS and as to whether Dr Fry considered the service provided successful outcomes for its clients. She also enquired as to whether sufficient resources were available to the service. Dr Roberta Fry responded that resources had been reduced and that an increase would be welcomed. With regard to the measurement of outcomes she advised that the standard measurement procedure was utilised but that the degree of success could only be measured by the degree of honesty and openness expressed by the young person and their carers'. John Welsby advised the Board that a reduction in the number of breakdowns in relationships in residential care could be viewed as a testimony to the work undertaken by CAMHS. Steve Cox commented on the

very successful working relationship with CAMHS and also on the existence of the virtual "CAMHS".

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

9. **Wolverhampton LAC Transitions Team Annual Report – April 2012 – March 2013**

Sharon Green presented the LAC Transitions Team Annual Report – April 2012 – March 2013. Steve Cox reminded the Board that the Leaving Care Service had been restructured in July 2013 to form the LAC Transitions Team having previously been provided by external organisations including Shaftesbury Care and Spurgeons. Under previous arrangements planning for leaving care had been targeted at 15 year olds but this work now commenced much earlier. He advised on the close working relationship with supported housing providers which assisted in the identification and provision of suitable accommodation for care leavers. He reported also on work with the Young Men's' Christian Association (YMCA) for arrangements for host placements with care leavers entering into lodgings. Partnership working was also undertaken with employment and education providers to secure appropriate placements for care leavers.

Cllr Rita Potter enquired as to the arrangements made for those care leavers who were not ready to leave care or required a period for adjustment. Sharon Green explained that each care leaver was treated as an individual and their specific requirements were tailored accordingly. She advised that the Council could maintain a relationship with individuals for a number of years after the person left care. John Welsby reported that the Government encouraged local authorities to not discharge care leavers too early and that, historically, Wolverhampton had a good record in this regard. Cllr Paula Brookfield commented that having witnessed the previous system she commended the new system whole heartedly and would watch its progress with interest. Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre congratulated the Officers concerned with the revised service and commented that, in his opinion, it was much better than the previous arrangements.

Cllr Paula Brookfield enquired as to the percentage of care leavers who declined to keep in contact with the Council and also the arrangements for keeping in contact with any care leavers who were in Youth Offenders institutions. Sharon Green explained that regular attempts were made to re-engage with care leavers who had lost contact and that with those in custody contact was maintained. Cllr Patricia Patten questioned whether the necessary checks were undertaken in respect of those who provided lodgings for care leavers. Sharon Green confirmed that all appropriate checks were conducted by the YMCA.

The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, enquired as to the data in the pie charts detailed at Section 7.7 of the report. Sharon Green explained that the charts represented the accommodation situation of young people who had left care in the last 12 months and after a further 6 months. Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre referred to those care leavers who had special educational needs and who would disappear from the system once they had attained the age of 19 years but that the Education Care and Health Bill which was currently progressing through Parliament would require contact to be maintained until the care leaver attained the age of 25 years and enquired as to whether this issue was being discussed by the Council and the NHS. Sharon Green reported that a specialist worker had been appointed in the Adult Services section of the Community Directorate to progress work on transitions from leaving care. John Welsby confirmed that this Officer was looking at the effects of the Bill across the Council.

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss reminded the Board that at the meeting with the Children in Care Council held in 2012 concerns had been raised with regard to the different allowances paid to those in residential care compared to those in foster care and as to when a report on this issue would be considered. Steve Cox assured the Board that this matter was being addressed and would form part of a report to be considered at the next meeting. Daphne Atkinson and John Welsby commented on discussions which had been held with young people on this issue and that it was one of a number of issues to be addressed in the revisions to the Recruitment and Retention policy. The issue was complicated further when private fostering arrangements were used.

Cllr Paula Brookfield enquired as to the financial responsibility for the provision of accommodation once a care leaver attained the age of 18 years. John Welsby explained the position inasmuch as the funding followed the individual.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted and that a further progress report be submitted in 12 months' time;
2. That the congratulations of the Board be extended to the LAC Transitions Team for the work it was undertaking.

10. **Exclusion of the press and public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information contained in paragraph 1 of the Act, namely

information relating to any individual.

11. **Members Visits to Establishments**

No Member visits to establishments had been undertaken since the last meeting of the Board.

Lorna Tull reported on correspondence with members of the Board in relation to visits to establishments. She advised that a rota of visits would commence in October 2013 and on the information which would be provided prior to any visit.



Corporate Parenting Board

25 November 2013

Report Title	The role of Foster Carers in the development of skills of the Fostering Service.	
Cabinet Member with Lead Responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children Young People and Families	
Wards Affected	All	
Accountable Strategic Director	Sarah Norman, Community	
Originating service	Children Young People & Families/Looked After Children	
Accountable officer(s)	Daphne Atkinson	Fostering Team Manager (01902 – 553070) daphne.atkinson@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Corporate Parenting Board only	

Recommendations for noting: To consider and review the details of development and training for foster carers approved by Wolverhampton City Council (WCC).

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To enable the Corporate Parenting Board to have a clear understanding of training and development needs of foster carers.

2. Background

- 2.1 Corporate Parenting Board requested information on how foster carers can be involved in developing the fostering service through the provision of training.

3. The Role of Foster Carers in the Development of Skills of the Fostering Service and the future training and Development Programme for Foster Carers

- 3.1 Corporate Parenting Panel has previously received information regarding training delivered to foster carers by Wolverhampton Fostering Services (September 2013). This paper further builds on the work being undertaken to ensure Wolverhampton Foster Carers are very much an integral part in the development of the fostering service. The information and examples below supports foster carers involvement in the fostering service, and our commitment to provide opportunities for them to develop their skills and future career paths.

3.2 Recruitment of foster carers

- 3.2.1 Because foster carers can bring the role to life by sharing their experiences and portray a realistic, but not off-putting view of fostering, we use five core foster carers who are currently working with our marketing and communication officer to lead the new marketing and recruitment campaign. Alongside this, approved foster carers also led information days and preparatory training for new applicants.

- 3.2.2 Two foster carers are being recruited to directly respond to the enquiries along with City Direct. They will help to filter the first enquiry, and then to act as first response to carers after the enquiry stage, prior to the initial visit. This will hopefully impact upon our ability to respond to enable training to take place quickly

3.3 Retention

- 3.3.1 Existing foster carers, who are trained as buddies/ mentors, support newly approved or inexperienced carers for up to six months. This not only enables carers to develop and enhance themselves, but this has a positive knock on effect on recruitment and retention.

3.4 24 hour helpline

- 3.4.1 This line is staffed by approved foster carers who offer an invaluable support service, guidance and advice to carers that might be experiencing difficulty with their placement, or just needing information, or sign posting to other services.

3.5 Training facilitation

3.5.1 Foster carers have a very active role in various training sessions, including the pre-approval, Skills to Foster Training, in conjunction with the fostering supervising social worker.

3.6 Children Workforce Development Council Workbook

3.6.1 Foster carers lead support groups to assist new carers to explore evidence to support the completion of their standards workbook.

3.7 Support Groups

3.7.1 Foster carers co-ordinate a range of thematic groups such as, moving on, black and ethnic minority groups, family and friends group.

3.8 Safeguarding Child Protection allegations

3.8.1 Experienced foster carers provide advice and support, and act as advocates throughout investigations, and also accompany foster carers to fostering panel as necessary.

3.9 Men Supporting Men group

3.9.1 This new resource will be led by a cohort group of men and aims to provide a full support service to all male carers in the way of advice, topic related workshop and training sessions, as well as mentoring all our newly approved male carers.

3.9.2 There will be a small amount of funding initially required to create website and relevant newsletters/flyers for advertising and promoting this new resource service.

3.10 Accredited Courses / Qualifications

3.10.1 Although we have had several foster carers who have completed NVQ Level 3 in either Health and Social Care or Early Years, which has given them the opportunity to seek employment within various childcare settings to fit around their fostering commitments, it has been acknowledged for some time that many foster carers wish to further their skills and knowledge via a more formal, recognised or academic qualification. To this end we are exploring further opportunities for our foster carers to develop and enhance their skills and their individual career paths.

3.10.2 With that aim, we are in the process of accessing more details of the new partnership arrangement between the Open University and The Fostering Network. The scheme will enable foster carers to access a range of courses and opportunities to enable them to attain formal qualifications.

3.10.3 The Open University approach to learning will hopefully remove some of the barriers to professional development that foster carers have previously faced. Therefore, it will make it easier for foster carers to access formal academic training and gain qualifications. This in turn can only help our carers develop their skills and abilities in caring for vulnerable children, as well as giving carers the confidence to obtain recognised professional qualifications.

3.11 Level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People's Workforce

3.11.1 This qualification appears to be the ideal course to enable foster carers to develop their individual career pathways. The diploma is aimed at those who wish to work, or currently work with children aged 0-19 years. It consists of assessments and work base assignments and observations. The modules cover a wide range of topics applicable to working with young people, which would enhance carers skills and knowledge whilst working with children and young people. There are 3 pathways of learning within this diploma, and carers would have to pick the route which is most applicable to their fostering role.

3.11.2 Mature students are not expected to have completed Levels 1 and 2 prior to starting the diploma, if they can evidence written competence via an initial assessment and have previous qualifications.

3.11.3 If we were to consider offering funding to carers to gain this qualification, we would have to put into place very strict criteria for application. We would only consider carers that are already currently active with supporting the department with recruitment, training, support and similar fostering activities. Following the qualification, carers would also be expected to continue this support and use their newly acquired skills and knowledge to support other foster carers and the fostering team in a variety of ways.

3.11.4 Fees for this course currently stand at £1,425 per year. However, there is an advanced learning loan system for those over 24 years old.

3.12 Level 1 Award in Childcare

3.12.1 This is a possibility for some of our carers who wish to progress in their career, but currently have no formal qualifications. It is a short part-time course run by Walsall College covering all the basic elements of working in any childcare field. The natural progression would be through Level 2 to the Level 3 Diploma.

3.12.2 Walsall College are prepared to offer this course specifically to a group of our foster carers. Fees are yet to be agreed.

3.12.3 Whilst it is acknowledged that further qualification might be part of individual foster carer's career progression, consideration would need to be given to the implication of such an initiative for the future retention of foster carers.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The total approved revenue budget for 2013/14 for the Fostering Service is £4.5 million, of which £148,000 has been set aside to fund any costs associated with the training of foster carer's.
- 4.2 Any costs that may arise as a result of implementing the training proposals mentioned in the body of the report will be met from within this current allocation.

[NM/11112013/V]

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Fostering Service, in accordance with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, delivers the Council's statutory functions under the Children Act 1989, particularly with regard to the duty to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation to meet the needs of its looked after children population.

[TC/15112013/E]

6. Equalities Implications

- 6.1 The work of the Fostering Service helps to support the outcomes of some of Wolverhampton City's most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people. There is a clear duty placed upon Wolverhampton City Council to contribute towards improving and enhancing the lives of looked after children.

7. Environmental Implications

- 7.1 There are no known environmental implications.



Corporate Parenting Board

27 November 2013

Report Title	Virtual School - Looked After Children Education Team Annual Report	
Cabinet Member with Lead Responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children Young People & Families	
Wards Affected	All	
Accountable Strategic Director	Sarah Norman, Community	
Originating service	Children, Young People and Families/Looked After Children	
Accountable officer(s)	Anne Foster Tel Email	Acting LACE Team Manager 01902 551039 anne.foster@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Corporate Parenting Board only	

Recommendations for noting:

The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to comment on the Looked After Children Education Team (LACE) Annual Report for 2012/2013.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To enable the Corporate Parenting Panel to have a clear understanding of the work undertaken by the LACE team. The report comments on the progress and attainment of Wolverhampton students and on the support provided to students and schools in and out of the City.

2. Background

- 2.1 The LACE team tracks and supports the education of Wolverhampton Looked After Children, regardless of where they attend school, to ensure that they make good progress and achieve to their potential. The report includes the current structure of the team, achievement details of pupils and details of the support that is offered.

3. Wolverhampton Looked After Children (LAC) Virtual School Report 2012/13

- 3.1 This progress report summarises the academic outcomes of Wolverhampton LAC for the 2012/13 academic year and provides details of targeted work to support the progress of the current Wolverhampton LAC.
- 3.2 The main developments and changes throughout 2012/13 are as follows:
- The production of a newsletter sent to schools, MAST Teams, LAC teams and locality teams.
 - All LACE team workers have been linked to MAST Teams and/or specific schools. Regular meetings take place with a designated teacher.
 - LACE delivers a core offer to Wolverhampton Schools, this outlines the expectations and delivery of the team.
 - LACE have termly meetings with a Head Teacher Steering Group
 - LACE review and restructure has been completed.
 - Distribution of Pupil Premium.
- 3.3 At the end of the summer term there were 398 students in the LAC 'virtual school' in national curriculum years 0 to 13.
- 3.4 For those of statutory school age 40% were in external placements with 60% being educated in Wolverhampton provision. Amongst these 51% were in the primary phase and 49% in the secondary phase of their education. 13.3% were educated in special schools.
- 3.5 The following table relates to the number of LAC attending education and highlights the Ofsted rating for the schools as at October 2013.

	Number	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory/Requires Improvement	Inadequate
In city Primary	130	3	61	40	5
In city Secondary	68	3	33	32	0
In city Special	32	0	32	0	0
Out of city Prim	99	13	74	12	0
Out of city Secondary	67	6	43	10	8
Out of city Special	23	5	12	5	1

3.6 Results for the 2012/13 academic year

3.6.1 Year 6 / Key Stage 2

At the end of Key Stage 2 / year 6 measures for the academic year included:

- The proportion of LAC achieving level 4 and above in English
- The proportion of LAC achieving level 4 and above in maths

The outcomes for students completing year 6 in 2012/13 are shown below:

	Level 4+ English	Level 4+ maths
2009/10 Results	47%	47%
2010/11 Results	50%	50%
2011/12 Results	55.5%	55.5%
2012/13 Results	40.9%	59.1%

Out of 22 children:

9 (40.9%) have a statement for Special Educational Needs

5 (22.7%) of these children attend Special Schools.

3 children have transferred to Special Schools at secondary transition.

Of the 14 children who were entered for the SATs tests; 64.28% achieved Level 4 and above in spelling, grammar and punctuation, 64.28% achieved Level 4 and above in reading, 92.85% achieved Level 4 and above in maths.

3.6.2 Year 11 / Key Stage 4

The outcomes for students completing year 11/ Key Stage 4 in 2012 /13 are shown below:

- Total cohort is 33 pupils.
- 10 (33.3%) have a statement of Educational Special needs with 7 attending Special Schools.
- 21 pupils attended schools in Wolverhampton, 12 in out of city schools.

	1 A* - G GCSE	5 A* - C GCSE	5 A* - C GCSE (including English & maths)
2009/2010 Results	67%	47%	17%
2010/11 Results	88%	60%	12%
2011/12 Results	67.7%	58%	12.9%
2012/13 Results	66.7%	42.4%	24.24%

Some of this cohort found it very difficult to engage in education. However there has been an improvement in quicker allocation to provision and attendance at that provision. 29 pupils achieved a qualification.

3.7 Raised Participation Age: all pupils aged 16 plus are required to attend employment, education or training until the age of 17.

Out of 31 LAC aged 16 – 17:

- 27 young people are remaining at school or attending College.
- 3 young people are attending training with a provider
- 1 young person is attending army training

3.8 Supporting the 2012/13 Wolverhampton LAC.

Some of the ways in which these students are being supported include:

- Collection of school data to inform progression targets
- 1:1 specific interventions
- Continued provision of 1:1 tuition - typically one hour per week in maths or English
- Monitoring of use/impact of Pupil Premium
- Attendance at PEP meetings
- Liaising with other authorities.
- LACE Team linked to MASTs and directly to schools
- Training provided to key stakeholders
- Transition support for entry to secondary school
- Social story for all children starting school
- 2 year old offer for nursery
- Direct support to foster carers and social workers
- Introduction of ASDAN qualification in residential settings.
- All LAC aged 8 and over have a library card which enables them to have limited internet access.

3.9 Wolverhampton Schools Improvement Partnership (WSIP) Core Offer

3.9.1 WSIP fund 2 Education Support Workers in the LACE Team. Through consultation with a Head Teachers Steering Group a Core Offer has been introduced as support for all Wolverhampton Schools. This has been agreed, approved and implemented.

3.9.2 LACE Team Core Offer to Wolverhampton Schools 2013 – 2014:

- Each School will have an identified LACE link worker allocated via the MASTs.
- Link workers will be identified to schools at the beginning of each term via a letter.
- Link Workers will meet with their schools' designated teacher on a termly basis, 3 terms an academic year.
- Link Workers will attend the MAST/school planning meetings.
- LACE staff will attend at least one Personal Education Plan (PEP) meeting per LAC per school year and support the child, school and social worker in more complex PEPs or those not being undertaken in a timely manner.
- LACE will offer termly designated teacher training, 3 x an academic year.
- LACE will offer 1:1 support, based on a work programme to be agreed by the school and LACE worker. Support to include programmes on behaviour, anger management, self-esteem, confidence, in class support, reading, school admission meetings, college/training provider support, support in alternative provision and Special Personalised Learning Plan (SPLP).
- Schools will receive regular updates on the work programmes and a report at the end of intervention clearly identifying outcomes achieved.
- LACE will send all schools a termly newsletter, 3 x an academic year.
- LACE offer direct access to educational psychologist advice.
- LACE will offer social worker, other professionals and foster carer training and support in relation to the education and attainment issues for LAC.
- LACE will specifically monitor attendance and Pupils Not in Full Time Education Panel (PNIFTED) LAC and support both pupils and schools in these issues, targeting those with attendance of less than 85% or those not receiving 25 hours education per week.
- LACE will offer direct work with residential settings to improve attendance and educational outcomes.
- LACE will offer a transition programme for year 6.
- LACE offer continuity of support when LAC move school settings.
- LACE will engage a representative from Schools for key recruitment to educational posts within the team.
- LACE will meet termly with the LACE steering group, presenting a report detailing outcomes of this core offer and seeking feedback on progress and delivery issues
- Head of LAC and Manager of LACE will attend the Learning Community meetings on an annual basis to discuss LAC issues and the LACE core offer.

3.9.3 The core offer is monitored through a meeting each term with a Head Teachers Steering Group.

3.10 Pupil Premium

3.10.1 The Pupil Premium was introduced by the Government from April 2011. The amount in 2012/13 was £200 per term, per pupil, rising to £300 from April 2013. The LACE Team have to distribute this grant to all schools where there are Looked after Children from Wolverhampton. LACE distributes the Pupil Premium to each school every term.

3.10.2 The impact of this additional funding is monitored through the LAC Personal Education Plan (PEP). Schools record the impact of Pupil Premium and this is monitored through Ofsted.

3.10.3 An improvement plan for the educational attainment of LAC for the 2012/13 academic year has been approved and is now being monitored by the Children, Young People and Family Management Team.

3.11 Personal Education Plan (PEP)

3.11.1 The PEP continues to provide a robust statutory process for capturing essential information and influencing improved educational outcomes for children in care. A new PEP has been devised. The new electronic PEP document was launched in September 2012. This uses information from CareFirst and is partially pre-populated. This will mean that rather than recording information that is already available during PEP meetings the carer(s), designated teacher and social worker will be able to focus fully on discussing and recording appropriate agreed actions.

3.11.2 Importantly it will enable those with a shared accountability around the PEP process to recognise where barriers to improved outcomes exist and agree appropriate actions during the PEP meeting.

3.12 LACE has been very proactive this year in working to reduce the time that children spend out of an educational provision. LACE has a good communication link with all schools within Wolverhampton and with the MAST Teams. LACE liaises closely with other authorities and prioritises the needs of the Looked After Child. LACE attends meetings and advises to minimise exclusions and work with the schools for a solution.

3.13 LACE has representation at Key Stage Panels and presents the case of the young person to improve their outcomes at provisions that best suit their needs.

3.14 The educational psychologist service is available to advise and to assess the most complex of cases.

3.15 Targeted Intervention

3.15.1 Volunteer Reading Help (VRH) is a national charity that helps children who struggle with their reading to develop a love of reading and learning. Trained reading helpers support children by giving them an hour of quality, one to one time every week. Having initiated the scheme in Wolverhampton, LACE now works closely with VRH to identify individual students and schools to receive this additional literacy support.

The volunteers are currently working with 34 primary students in 10 of the city's schools. A further 7 schools are now at the planning stage to provide this additional support for up to 3 of our LAC each.

3.16 Star pupils and Successes

3.16.1 Many of the Looked After Children have succeeded greatly throughout the year and make good progress, despite the difficulties that they may have. The work and dedication of foster carers, residential staff, schools and social workers deserves a special mention.

- M achieved 11 GCSEs, 7 at A grade and 4 at B grade
- T achieved 10 GCSEs, 8 grade B and 2 grade C

3.16.2 At the Achieve Your Dreams award event on February 6th 2013, over 300 Young People received awards for their success throughout the year. The many successes of Wolverhampton's LAC that were celebrated ranged from sport, academic, art and special awards. LACE were involved in the organisation and the nominations of this event

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 The total approved net budget for 2012/13 for the Looked after Children's Service is £22.9 million.
- 4.2 The net budget for the Looked after Children's Education Team is £18,000, this is made up of an expenditure budget of £257,000 which is offset by an income contribution of £239,000.

[NM/06112013/O]

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 There is a legal responsibility for the local authority to promote education for children in care and care leavers.

[TC/151113/A]

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1 The work of the LACE Team supports some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in their education. Looked after Children, statistically, do not achieve as highly as their peers. There is an expectation that Wolverhampton City Council will contribute to raising standards of educational opportunities.

7. Environmental implications

- 7.1 There are no environmental implications



Corporate Parenting Board

27 November 2013

Report Title

**Annual report Safeguarding Service
Looked After Children 2012- 2013**

Cabinet Member with Lead Responsibility

Councillor Val Gibson
Children & Young People

Wards Affected

All

Accountable Strategic Director

Sarah Norman, Community

Originating service

Community/ Safeguarding, Business Support & Communities

Accountable officer(s)

Dawn Williams Head of Service, Safeguarding Children &
Young People
Tel 01902 55(0477)
Email Dawn.williams@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Report to be/has been considered by

Corporate Parenting Board only

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Utilise this report to inform strategic planning for Wolverhampton's Looked After Children population.
2. Hold the Safeguarding Service to account in their delivery of services to Looked After Children

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 Wolverhampton Safeguarding Service has statutory responsibility for overseeing and ratifying the care plans for Looked After Children (LAC) via the activity of the Independent Reviewing Officers. As a result, the service is duty bound to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an annual report that outlines the activity of the service, the impact for children and recommendations for service improvement that will enhance young people's experiences.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The annual report for 2012/13 is attached as appendix A. The Corporate Parenting Board has received annual reports in preceding years.
- 2.2 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 reinforced and strengthened the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), enabling more effective independent oversight and scrutiny of the child's case. It has ensured that the child is able to meaningfully participate in planning for their own care and that the care plan that the local authority prepares for them is based on a thorough assessment of the individual child's needs.
- 2.3 In March 2010 the Government issued new statutory guidance, The IRO Handbook, for Local Authorities and IROs on care planning and reviewing arrangements for LAC. The IRO Handbook states that the statutory duties of the IRO are to:
- monitor the Local Authority's performance of their functions in relation to the child's case;
 - participate in any review of the child's case;
 - ensure any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority;
 - perform any other function which is prescribed in regulations.
- 2.4 The guidance became effective on 1 April 2011, as a revision to the Children Act 1989. Volume 2 of the 'Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and Statutory Guidance 2010'. There is an expectation that IROs are more involved with children who are looked after, not just in the LAC review meeting. More contact with the child, the carers and the staff involved is also expected. This is particularly the case in matters where the IRO has concerns about the case and needs to monitor the matter between statutory reviews.
- 2.5 All looked after children, including children who are in an adoptive placement prior to an adoption order, are covered by the legislation. This applies to all children who are the subject of a care order (under section 31 of the Children Act 1989), or who are voluntarily accommodated for a period of more than 24 hours (section 20 of the Children Act 1989), including those described in this report as in short break care, or who are placed for adoption under the Adoption and Children Act 2002. It also covers those who are

compulsorily looked after, such as those remanded by the court to local authority accommodation. Since the publication of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) in December 2012, it has been the responsibility of the Local Authority to look after all young people who are remanded into custody. These young people now require an allocated IRO and LAC reviews in their place of custody.

3.0 Progress.

3.1 The annual report provides an outline of activity covering the period 2012/13 and determines actions to be progressed in 2013/14.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 The outturn for 2012/13 for the Safeguarding Service was £1.2 million, this was contained within the approved budget for the financial year.

4.2 The approved budget for 2013/14 is £1.3 million [NM/06112013/H].

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 None – the annual report has taken into account the legal requirements as outlined in The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and the IRO Handbook 2010.
[TC/19112013/G]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 The annual report recognises issues of equality for children who access the safeguarding service. There are no distinct equality issues as a result of completion of the annual report.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 None

9.0 Schedule of background papers

None

Wolverhampton

City Council



Annual report

Safeguarding Service

Looked After Children

2012- 2013

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The IRO Handbook (issued in March 2010) is the statutory guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review of looked after children (LAC). It states that the IRO Manager (the Deputy Head of Service for Safeguarding in Wolverhampton) should be responsible for the production of an annual report for the scrutiny of the members of the Corporate Parenting Board. It should also be available to the public on the Council website.
- 1.2 A separate integrated report which includes all of the work undertaken by the Safeguarding Review Managers (SRMs) in Wolverhampton has been developed, which also includes information on their role as Child Protection Conference Chairs (CPCs). This report which just considers LAC, will be taken to the Corporate Parenting Board. The chairs are all known locally as Safeguarding Review Managers (SRM) but they have the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) function. The SRMs are also responsible for regular file audits and for undertaking Regulation 33 visits to children's residential units.
- 1.3 This report covers the period from April 2012 – March 2013. This is the 4th annual report. The report follows the format recommended by the National IRO Managers Group. This group wishes to collate information from a national level, and the Wolverhampton SRM service is committed to this aim, so will be sharing the shorter LAC only report in order to assist the national group.
- 1.4 The Safeguarding service is based at the Priory Green Building in Pendeford, Wolverhampton. The team moved to the current location in December 2012, after a long period based at the Jennie Lee Centre. Priory Green provides a dedicated conference room, and a separate waiting area for families.
- 1.5 Dawn Williams is the Head of Safeguarding. She has responsibility for the SRM functions in order to maintain independence from the line management of cases and the allocation of resources within Children and Families Services. Nicki Pettitt is interim Deputy Head of Safeguarding (DHS) and she has line-managed the team for the later period of this report. This involves the provision of supervision to the SRMs and responsibility for the service including ensuring that conference and reviews are held on time and that they are correctly administered. The DHS also manages the IRO who undertakes foster care reviews. Dawn Williams has been in post since December 2012 and Nicki Pettitt since February 2013. As of December 2012, responsibility for the service rests

with the Assistant Director Safeguarding, Business Support & Communities, Rob Willoughby.

- 1.6 As prescribed by the national IRO Managers Group, this report will endeavour to 'highlight areas of good practice and areas which require improvement, identify emerging themes and trends, describe areas of work which the service has prioritised during the year, and will prioritise in the coming year.'
- 1.7 The SRMs have a key role in assuring the quality of the case planning for those children and young people who are looked after by the local authority. The purpose of this report is to provide information on the work undertaken by the SRMs in 2012 – 13 and to outline the priorities for the next year.

2. Purpose of service and legal context

- 2.1 The arrangements for the statutory reviews of looked after children (LAC) were amended and updated by Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002, which introduced the new statutory role of the Independent Reviewing Officer. The requirement for such a post came into force in September 2004.
- 2.2 The legislation required local authorities to appoint Independent Reviewing Officers (known as SRMs in Wolverhampton) with the remit of:
- chairing the authority's LAC reviews
 - monitoring the authority's review of the care plan
 - and where necessary, referring cases to the Children and Families Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) to take legal action as a last resort if the failure to implement the care plan might be considered to breach the child's human rights.

In addition, there is an expectation that the SRMs will quality assure the local authority's care planning for LAC.

- 2.3 Legislation for the reviewing of LAC and Child Protection cases is supported by detailed guidance which has been taken into account in making arrangements in Wolverhampton. The guidance includes Every Child Matters, Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and Statutory guidance, the IRO Handbook and Working Together 2010 and 2013. In Wolverhampton there are clear Child Protection procedures available on-line from the Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB).

2.4 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 reinforced and strengthened the role of the IRO, enabling more effective independent oversight and scrutiny of the child's case. It has ensured that the child is able to meaningfully participate in planning for their own care and that the care plan that the local authority prepares for them is based on a thorough assessment of the individual child's needs.

2.5 In March 2010 the Government issued new statutory guidance, The IRO Handbook, for Local Authorities and IROs on care planning and reviewing arrangements for LAC. The IRO Handbook states that the statutory duties of the IRO are to:

- monitor the Local Authority's performance of their functions in relation to the child's case;
- participate in any review of the child's case;
- ensure any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority;
- perform any other function which is prescribed in regulations.

2.6 The guidance became effective in April 1st, 2011, as a revision to the Children Act 1989. Volume 2 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and statutory guidance 2010. There is an expectation that SRMs are more involved with children who are looked after, not just in the LAC review meeting. More contact with the child, the carers and the staff involved is expected. This is particularly the case in matters where the SRM has concerns about the case and needs to monitor the matter between statutory reviews.

2.7 All looked after children, including children who are in an adoptive placement prior to an adoption order, are covered by the legislation. This applies to all children who are the subject of a care order (under section 31 of the Children Act 1989), or who are voluntarily accommodated for a period of more than 24 hours (section 20 of the Children Act 1989), including those described in this report as in Short Break Care, or who are placed for adoption under the Adoption and Children Act 2002. It also covers those who are compulsorily looked after, such as those remanded by the court to local authority accommodation. Since the publication of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) in December 2012, it has been the responsibility of the Local Authority to look after all young people who are remanded into custody. These young

people now require an allocated SRM and LAC reviews in their place of custody.

3. Quantitative information

- 3.1 The Service has an establishment of 11 SRM's. There was one vacancy by the end of the period of this report, which is being covered by an agency worker. Interviews in March 2013 were successful in appointing a permanent member of staff to this vacancy, who is due to start in July 2013.
- 3.2 Five of the SRMs have been in post for less than a year, but are experienced and committed to remaining in Wolverhampton long term. This will ensure a stable and increasingly experienced team moving into the future. Three of the SRMs have been employed in the service for in excess of 5 years.
- 3.3 Two of the SRMs only hold LAC cases, the other 9 have responsibility for both LAC reviews and CP conferences. The increases in the numbers of looked after children in comparison to the stable numbers of children on a CP plan will lead to a need to regularly review the makeup of caseloads.
- 3.4 One SRM is off with a long-term sickness, her post is covered by a second agency SRM. The appointment of a number of permanent SRM's, including the two additional posts agreed earlier in 2012, has had a positive impact on the workloads and morale of the team. However the persistent increase in the number of looked after children has not allowed the service to fulfil all of its functions as outlined in the IRO handbook.
- 3.5 At the end of 2011-12 there were **575** looked after children in Wolverhampton. On 31st March 2013 the figure had increased to **657**. There is no expected downturn as 2013 progresses, with the figures increasing by 14/20 per month during April and May 2013 respectively. During June 2013 the figure has exceeded 700 LAC. The numbers of children subject to a CP plan have increased by 26 during the year of this report.
- 3.6 While remaining above the national average, caseloads are smaller than they had been at this stage in the last reporting year due to an increase in the size of the team and the use of agency staff to cover vacancies and long-term sickness. The Annual Report 2011-12 had hoped to maintain caseloads of 60 – 70 children per SRM when the service is fully staffed. This has not been possible. The average caseload on 31.3.13 was 92 children.
- 3.7 The team has 10 full time SRM's and 2 half time SRM's. There are 2 men and 10 women. The team is made up of SRMs from different ethnic

backgrounds. (3 black/Asian, 2 black Afro/Caribbean/mixed heritage and 6 white British.) This adequately reflects the children we are serving. The looked after children of Wolverhampton were from the following backgrounds on 31.3.13. 67% white British, 4% Asian, 10% black Afro/Caribbean, 13% mixed heritage and 6% other.

3.8 The gender and age of the LAC in Wolverhampton is as follows (last years in brackets): Female 299/46% (265/46%) Male 358/54% (309/54%). Age: under 5 – 216/33% (189/33%) 5 -7 year olds 101/15% (84/15%) 8 – 11 year olds 118/18% (100/17%) 12 – 16 year olds 189/29% (177/31%) and 17 year olds 33/5% (24/4%). The proportions remaining fairly consistent year to year.

3.9 The legal status of the looked after children is as follows (last years in brackets): Care Order 302/46% (198/35%) Interim Care Order 150/23% (212/37%) Placement Order 114/17% (83/14%) Section 20 - 85/13% (74/13%). Remand 2 (0).

3.10 Staff changes have led to less continuity for LAC in regards to their allocated SRM, however consideration is given to this issue when new staff are appointed and caseloads need to change. The moving of cases has been kept to a minimum in the circumstances.

4. Qualitative information

- Under the provisions of the *Review of Children's Cases Regulations (1991)*³ local authorities are required to review the case of any child who is Looked After or provided with accommodation as follows:
- First review must take place within 28 days of the date upon which the child begins to be looked after or provided with accommodation;
- Second review must be carried out no later than 3 months after the first review; and
- Subsequent reviews shall be carried out not more than 6 months after the date of the previous review.

4.2 The date of the next review should be brought forward:

- If there is an unplanned change of placement or other substantial changes to the care plan.
- If the IRO has specific concerns about a child and directs that the review be brought forward.
- Any request from the child or parent(s) for a review to be brought forward should be given serious consideration.

4.3 In Wolverhampton between 1.4.2012 and 31.3.2013, 88.1% of looked after children cases were reviewed within timescale. This was a slight improvement on 85.8% in 2011- 12. This figure is in need of improvement in 2013 – 14. A target of 95% has been set and the SRM's are aware of the need to improve the statistic, as are the social work teams, particularly those with responsibility for most of the new LAC, as there is an on-going issue with notification.

4.4 A total of 1224 Looked after Children (LAC) reviews took place in the relevant period. This was an increase of 150 reviews held, as 1074 had been completed in the previous 12 months. The high number of reviews is continued evidence of the impact of children coming in into the care system and the on-going effort of the SRMs and support staff to meet the review timescales. (These statistics are taken from to NI66 return and includes all children who have been in care for 28 days or more, and does not include those placed for adoption.)

4.5 An SRM is allocated to all LAC within 24 hours of the Safeguarding Service being informed of that child's entry into care. Written information about the SRM and the reviewing service is shared with the child prior to their first review, in the form of child friendly postcard type information booklets. Children can make direct contact to their SRM's mobile phone by calling, by text or by email.

4.6 The majority of sibling groups, whether placed together or not, are allocated to the same SRM. This ensures consistency of information exchange, oversight of care planning and decision-making, including sibling contact, and is particularly of benefit when children have different social workers.

4.7 The involvement of children in their own reviews is regarded as an essential part of the process. *'A key task for the IRO will be to ensure that the review processes, and particularly review meetings, remain child and family centred'* (IRO Guidance, Adoption and Children Act 2002.) The SRM has an important role in ensuring that the child:

- can make a meaningful contribution to their review;
- speaks for themselves if they are able and willing to do so; and where this is not possible that their views are conveyed by someone else on their behalf or by an appropriate medium; and

- has been given the opportunity to make a written contribution to the meeting, particularly if they have chosen not to attend or are unable to attend for some other reason.

4.8 The recorded achievement in this area of activity is also a measure of local authority performance, although no longer a national performance indicator. (PAF C63, Participation in Reviews.) At 31 March 2012, the figure in Wolverhampton was 90.2% for the previous year. On 31st March 2013 it was 92.5%, which is a slight improvement. This is a positive figure considering the higher number of reviews held. The figure will need to continue to improve, and the target is 95% for 2013 – 14.

4.9 Children aged 7 and over receive a written invitation to their review meeting along with the consultation document inviting their contribution to the review. The SRM is required to speak with the child in private prior to the first review and before every subsequent review (regulation 36). The requirement for direct contact with the child extends to observation of babies and younger children.

4.10 SRMs are giving consideration to creative ways of encouraging children's participation in their reviews, including those who have taken on the challenge of leading (the term now used, rather than 'chairing') their own reviews. Some SRMs are encouraging older looked after children to type their own bit of the record of the meeting on a lap top during the meeting, which they are reported to like to do.

4.11 The ability to spend more time with the young person preparing for the review comes with a lighter caseload. This contact should continue to improve the numbers of children and young people participating in their reviews. It must be pointed out however, that caseloads remain much higher in Wolverhampton than the ideal level referred to in the IRO handbook of 50 – 70 children, so improvements in real participation and other qualitative improvements will be limited by the time available to the SRMs.

4.12 The Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance, Adoption and Children Act 2002, states that *'The IRO has an important role in ensuring that all parties to the review are able to make an effective contribution.'* In order to assist in this aim, age appropriate consultation papers continue to be sent to the child/young person, and to parents and carers, prior to a review. The child's consultation paper provides the SRM with a comprehensive picture of the child's feelings about the various aspects of their care and the services he/she is receiving, and assists the SRM in ensuring the child's voice is heard. This is also a way of ensuring that parental contributions are taken into account by the SRM, particularly if

they are unable or unwilling to attend the review. SRM's are also increasingly speaking with parents outside of the review meeting, if their presence is not in the best interests of the child, to ensure they can represent their reviews both in the meeting and in the record of the meeting.

4.13 As expected, fewer children are now being reviewed by SRM's following the introduction of the Short Break Statutory Guidance (Section 20(4) of the Children Act 1989) in May 2011. 18 children continue to be reviewed by the SRMs under this guidance. The Deputy Head of Service will continue to monitor services to this distinct group of children to ensure their needs are met and will give consideration to the appropriateness of one SRM maintaining responsibility for the group to ensure consistency and the development of expertise and relationships.

5. Conduct of the organisation in relation to the review

5.1 From July 2013, more detailed quality assurance information will be collected on CareFirst, the electronic data base used, after every looked after review. This is a new way of recording and monitoring key information in Wolverhampton, and details will be available which includes:

- Quality of preparation for review by social worker, including report preparation, preparation of the child/young person and sign off by manager,
- Quality of care planning, including how up to date the care plan is,
- Quality of contribution by the child/ young person and other attendees, to review,
- Quality of management decision making on key issues affecting young people (care placements/school placements/funding issues)

5.2 These details are not currently available, other than on an anecdotal basis, or if issues have arisen which have resulted in a complaint being raised by a red or amber RAG.

5.3 The RAG system has not been used consistently in Wolverhampton for the period in question and data could only be extracted manually. It will however be completed in 100% of cases from August 2013 due to the new forms on the database requiring completion before review record is completed. The next Annual Report will be able to electronically draw on this new quantitative and qualitative information.

5.4 The SRMs are also to be asked, from July 2013, to complete a Recognition of Excellent Practice notification when there is evidence of exceptionally high quality practice underpinning all aspects of the case intervention. Statistics from this will also be available for the next Annual Report.

6. Conduct of the organisation in relation to the case

6.1 In 2012 – 13 no formal dispute resolution protocols were implemented in Wolverhampton. There is a RAG system that is an early alert system for identifying and raising issues with care planning for children and young people (and a way of recognising good practice) It is in place in Wolverhampton but it has not been consistently used by SRM's or recognised by social work teams and senior managers in Wolverhampton. A new quality assurance system, which links clearly with the new forms on the CareFirst database has been written and accepted by all parties, and will be in use from July 2013.

6.2 In a number of cases there have been Red RAGs issued and meetings held to address issues, which have resulted in positive benefits for children. The current system has not been consistently applied however.

6.3 Those cases that have been issued a red RAG tend to be highlighted as concerning due to drift in care planning and keys tasks not being undertaken. This is often because of changes of social worker.

7. Resource issues

7.1 The increase in the number of LAC over the last year has put a strain on the SRM service, on placements and on the social work teams. This increase and its impact will need to be monitored over the next 12 months.

7.2 The improved system of quality assurance information gathering to be implemented will provide greater information in next year's report on other resource issues.

8. Priority areas for improvement and action in the IRO service in the coming year.

8.1 The last annual report for the SRM service in Wolverhampton only considered the units work with looked after children. The work of child protection chairs was not included in the report. The key challenges and areas for development for the LAC reviews which were highlighted in that report were:

1. Full implementation of the IRO handbook.

2. Promotion of the voice of the child.
3. Timeliness of LAC reviews to be improved.
4. Review of the quality monitoring and problem resolution systems, including revising the criteria for red and amber notifications.
5. Improved participation of parents and carers in reviews.

8.2 As stated above, the size of caseloads has not made full implementation of the IRO handbook possible, although practice continues to develop and the SRM's work with looked after children has reportedly improved.

8.3 There has been an increase in the ability of the SRMs to meet with children in private before the review is held.

8.4 The new forms to be implemented on CareFirst will ensure that the child's views, wishes and feelings are better recorded. There is also an improved section for explicitly recording the views of parents and carers.

8.5 The new CareFirst forms will also provide improved information on the views of parents and carers on the service they have received from the local authority.

8.6 There has been an improvement in the timeliness of LAC reviews and an expectation that there is a further improvement during 2013 – 14.

8.7 The new forms on CareFirst, which will be in use from July 2013, make it mandatory for SRMs to complete the RAG notifications, which have been revised for the purpose.

8.8 Participation information is currently collected manually by staff in the SRM unit. From July 2013 this will be available from CareFirst in 100% of cases.

8.9 Areas for future development in the next year are as follows:

1. Implementation of a new Quality Assurance system for the unit, to include CP as well as LAC cases. The RAG system has been modified and will be launched as part of this implementation. The new system will be clear that any unresolved red RAG alert should move into the dispute resolution process. This will avoid duplication, provide clarity, improve communication and provide improved evidence of SRM scrutiny and monitoring of cases.
2. Continuing to improve the communication between the fieldwork services and the SRM admin team when a child becomes looked after.

This will improve the timeliness of LAC reviews and will enable improved communication before the review, to plan participation and meetings with the child/ren.

3. Young people will increasingly be invited to lead their own reviews. There is a plan to increase the involvement of children and young people in the planning for the review, including deciding who should be present and where it is held. This will be supported by guidance for the young person.
4. RAGs for LAC to be completed in 100% of cases from July 2013.
5. Working with fieldwork teams to improve the quality of care plans as a working document to improve outcomes for children.
6. Increased use of information from CareFirst in improving service delivery, data collection and practice development.
7. Implementation of Safeguarding Service Standards which are supported by policy and procedure specific to the service area.
8. To create an agile service which is enabled and supported via effective technology.
9. The development of a training pathway for the SRMs to ensure SRMs are competent and confident in their role
10. Utilise the CAFCASS /IRO Protocol to improve links with the court arena
11. To improve management oversight of IRO activity including greater challenge and feedback.
12. To develop and implement a consistent approach to the chairing & recording of LAC reviews
13. To develop a service evaluation/action plan as a result of the forthcoming Ofsted publication 'IRO Taking up the Challenge' due in May 2013.

10. Conclusion.

10.1 This report has highlighted the work of the SRMs in Wolverhampton from April 2012 to March 2013 and is an update on the last annual report. The unit has had increased capacity over this period, with the appointment of a number of permanent SRM's and an increase in team size by two SRMs. The retirement of both the Head of Safeguarding and the Deputy Head of Service

and a number of other long-term team members has created some insecurity, but the swift appointment of new managers has provided stability.

10.2 The service needs to increasingly evidence, through the enhanced quality assurance role and consistent recording of RAGs, that they are an effective service with a culture of intervening and challenging when there is drift and delay or issues effecting children's human rights and/or their safety.

10.3 The next report will cover the period from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.
