

**Corporate Parenting Board
Meeting**
Thursday, 18 July 2019

Dear Councillor,

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - THURSDAY, 18TH JULY, 2019

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Thursday, 18th July, 2019 meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No Item

- 6 **Adoption Annual Report (Pages 3 - 26)**
 [To receive the Annual Adoption Report.]
- 7 **Annual Fostering Report 2018-2019 (Pages 27 - 68)**
 [To receive the Annual Fostering Report 2018-2019 for approval.]
- 11 **Performance Monitoring Information (Pages 69 - 80)**
 [To receive the Performance Monitoring Information Report.]

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the democratic support team:

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CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Corporate Parenting Board 18 July 2019
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Report title	Adoption Annual Report April 2018-March 2019	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John Reynolds Children and Young People	
Wards affected	All wards	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services	
Originating service	Children's Services	
Accountable employee	Alison Hinds	Head of children and Young People in Care
	Tel	01902 553035
	Email	Alison.hinds@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report has been considered by	Children's Leadership Team	11 July 2019

Recommendation for action:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Receive the Adoption Annual Report and provide feedback on the Adoption Service over the 12-month period between April 2018 and March 2019.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides the Corporate Parenting Board with the Adoption Agency's Annual Report for April 2018 to March 2019.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The statutory regulations require that elected members should be informed of the Adoption Agency's activity on a regular basis. This annual report covers adoption performance during the period April 2018 to March 2019 and provides an update on the work of the adoption team.
- 2.2 This report also includes information about the progress made towards Wolverhampton forming a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA).

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 The Adoption Annual Report April 2018 – March 2019 details the work of the adoption team during this period, how this work fits into the regional and national agenda and highlights some key performance indicators which have contributed to positive outcomes for children and young people in care.
- 3.2 The City of Wolverhampton continues to have an optimistic view of adoption as a way of seeking permanence for children in care who are unable to live with their birth family. The report details how the adoption team have continued to enable more children to experience the stability of adoption. Additionally, the report details the success the team have in placing harder to place children.
- 3.3 The Adoption Scorecard performance for 2015-2018 shows an improvement in the timeliness of adoption over the three-year period compared to previous reporting period. The performance over this period is positive given the harder to place characteristics of many of the children that have been placed for adoption, including children over five years old, children placed as part of a sibling group and children of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 The total approved budget for the Adoption Service for 2018-2019 was £4.1 million, the actual outturn for the year was £4.1 million resulting in an overspend of £16,000.
- 4.2 Any costs associated with the Adoption Service were contained within the budget above.
- 4.3 There are no other direct financial implications as a result of this report.
[JD/12072019/L]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.
[TC/10072019/Z]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 An equalities analysis has been completed and there are no equality implications. Adoption is one of the permanence options considered for children in the care of the City of Wolverhampton where there are no alternative options of care available within their birth family. Prospective adopters are recruited, assessed and supported to provide stability and permanence to enable them to meet the diverse needs of the children in the care of the City of Wolverhampton Council with a plan of adoption.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 There are no environmental implications.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 There are no human resource implications.

9.0 Corporate Landlord implications

9.1 There are no Corporate Landlord implications.

10.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications

10.1 There are no Health and Wellbeing implications.

11.0 Schedule of background papers

11.1 There are no relevant background papers to this report

12.0 Appendices

12.1 Appendix 1: Adoption Annual Report

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**CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
C O U N C I L**

**ANNUAL ADOPTION AGENCY REPORT
APRIL 2018 – March 2019**

AUTHOR: Alison Hinds

1. Introduction

This report provides the Corporate Parenting Board with the Adoption Agency's Annual Report for April 2018 to March 2019. The statutory regulations require that elected members should be informed of the Adoption Agency's activity on a regular basis. This annual report covers adoption performance during this period and provides an update on the work of the team.

This report also includes information about the progress made towards Wolverhampton forming a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA).

The report was presented to the Children in Care Council on 26 June 2019.

Up until March 2019 when the service transferred to the RAA, the Adoption Service was located within the People Directorate of the City of Wolverhampton Council. The Adoption Service was responsible for:

- The recruitment of a sufficient pool of adopters from a range of backgrounds, and the assessment and training of prospective adopters to meet the assessed needs of children
- The identification of children for whom the possible plan is adoption and to work alongside the children's social workers to match children with their adoptive families and ensure permanence is achieved without drift and delay;
- The provision of an effective and efficient Adoption Panel conducted in accordance with the regulations;
- The provision of a comprehensive range of support services to children, birth families and adoptive parents;
- The provision in the disclosure of information and facilitating contact for adopted adults and birth families.

As of 1 April 2019, the responsibility for delivering the above services transferred to the RAA, Adoption@Heart.

2. Adoption Inspection

All Adoption Services became regulated in 2003, under the Care Standards Act 2000 and were subject to inspections against National Minimum Standards. The inspecting Authority is OFSTED.

In January 2017 Wolverhampton's Children's Services were subject to inspection under the revised Ofsted Single Inspection Framework. The outcome of this inspection was that Children's Services were rated Good with a sub judgement of Good for Adoption.

In relation to adoption, Ofsted made the following recommendation:

Ensure that once children are placed with adoptive families there is no unnecessary delay in applying for an adoption order.

The Children and Young People's (CYP) Action plan included actions to address the recommendation as follows:

- Adoption applications to be made 10 weeks after a child is placed in the prospective adoptive household (unless it is recorded on the child's file that there is a reason why this should not happen)
- Annex A's to be completed by the child's social worker and lodged with the court at the same time as the adopters lodge their adoption order application
- CareFirst activity to be utilised to ensure timescales are met
- Three monthly audits take place to ensure adoption applications and Annex A's are being lodged at 10 weeks. With all children who are placed for adoption being tracked on a monthly basis

Where there are occasional circumstances where adoptive parents do not feel ready to lodge their adoption application at 10 weeks, liaison takes place with the child's social worker to explore how the placement can be supported to enable the adopters to feel confident to lodge at an appropriate time.

A process has been agreed with the Court in relation to lodging the application for the Adoption Order and the Annex A at the same time. It is currently taking approximately three months from lodging the application to Court hearings. However, more birth parents are contesting the making of an Adoption Order and this can contribute to delay children ceasing to be in the care of the Local Authority.

3. The National Agenda

In 2012, the Government launched an Adoption Reform Programme. It focused on concern regarding the length of time taken for children to be placed for adoption. This resulted in a raft of reforms and measures being implemented to increase and speed up adoption these include:

- An Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay, March 2012, which introduced the Adoption Scorecard
- Further Action on Adoption: Finding More Loving Homes, January 2013 which introduced the National Adoption helpline; First4Adoption and a six months two stage process for assessing adopters
- The Adoption Leadership Board was launched in April 2014
- Children and Families Act 2014; includes the introduction of care proceedings limited to 26 weeks apart for exceptional cases, promotes Fostering for Adoption, repeal of due consideration to ethnicity in placing children in England, and adopter led matching with access to adoption registers.
- Regionalising Adoption, June 2015; outlined how the development of Regional Adoption Agencies will create a wider pool of adopters who could potentially meet the needs of child/ren for whom they were considering suitable for adoption and adoption support would be easily accessible,

additionally the Government aspired to develop a system with a spirit of innovation and excellence at its heart

- Adoption: A Vision for Change policy paper 2016 identifies how the Government wants to invest in the workforce with plans to equip the workforce with the professional skills and knowledge to navigate complex assessment, analysis and decision making and enable adoptive families to access the right support
- The strategy also details how, by 2020, the government will: end delay for vulnerable children in care by providing larger local pools of approved adopters by making sure every single council is part of a regional adoption agency by 2020, backed by £14 million
- Transform support on offer for adoptive families by becoming the first country in the world to provide vital therapeutic services to all adopted young people up to the age of 21 - as well as the family and friends who care for them - backed by a new commitment totalling over £49 million
- The Education and Adoption Act 2016; measures in the Act allow the Government to require local authorities to decide for their adoption functions to be carried out by another adoption agency, allowing for regional approaches.
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017 which came into effect in May 2017 includes the following;
 - Improving decision making, and support for looked after and previously looked after children in England and Wales, including adopted children;
 - The key changes in relation to services for adopted children is the Virtual School Head's charge to make advice and information available to adoptive parents. The act includes the provision for improving understanding among Designated Teachers in maintained schools and academies and any other person the authority considers appropriate, for promoting the educational achievement of relevant children.

4. Regionalising Adoption Agencies

The City of Wolverhampton along with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and Sandwell Children's Trust were accepted by the Department of Education as an early adopter project to work together to design and develop a Regional Adoption Agency.

A decision was taken in May 2018 to proceed with a hosted model for the Regional Adoption Agency, a due diligence process was undertaken which resulted in an agreement that the City of Wolverhampton Council would host the RAA. This proposal was agreed by Cabinets in all areas in December 2018.

Significant planning took place prior to 1 April 2019 to ensure appropriate preparation for the implementation and launch of the hosted model in Wolverhampton. Adoption@Heart was launched on 1 April 2019 as planned, with staff from Walsall Dudley local authorities and Sandwell Children's Trust transferring to the City of Wolverhampton Council under TUPE arrangements.

All adoption services from all three local authorities and the Sandwell Children's Trust are now delivered through Adoption@Heart. Adoption @Heart sits within the Children and Young People in Care Service. Adoption@Heart is overseen by a monthly management board with representation from Wolverhampton, Dudley, Walsall and Sandwell and in attendance is the Service Head for Adoption@Heart. This board reports to the Strategic Commissioning Board which is attended by the Director of Children's Services in all four areas.

Future Adoption Annual and Interim Reports to the Corporate Parenting Board will be prepared and presented by the Service Head for Adoption@Heart, Mark Tobin.

5. Delivering local adoption services

Adoption in the Black Country Consortium

Adoption in the Black Country (ABC) Consortium was made up of, Sandwell Children's Trust, and Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton local authorities (LA).

The original remit of Adoption in the Black Country (ABC) was to recruit adopters for the four LA's with specific marketing strategies to target the recruitment of adopters for older children, sibling groups and those of black and minority ethnic groups. The enquiries received at ABC were equally shared throughout the four local authorities.

Joint adoption preparation training for prospective adopters took place throughout the year delivered by staff across all four areas.

Joint family finding meetings took place monthly to explore potential links between approved adopters and children within the consortium.

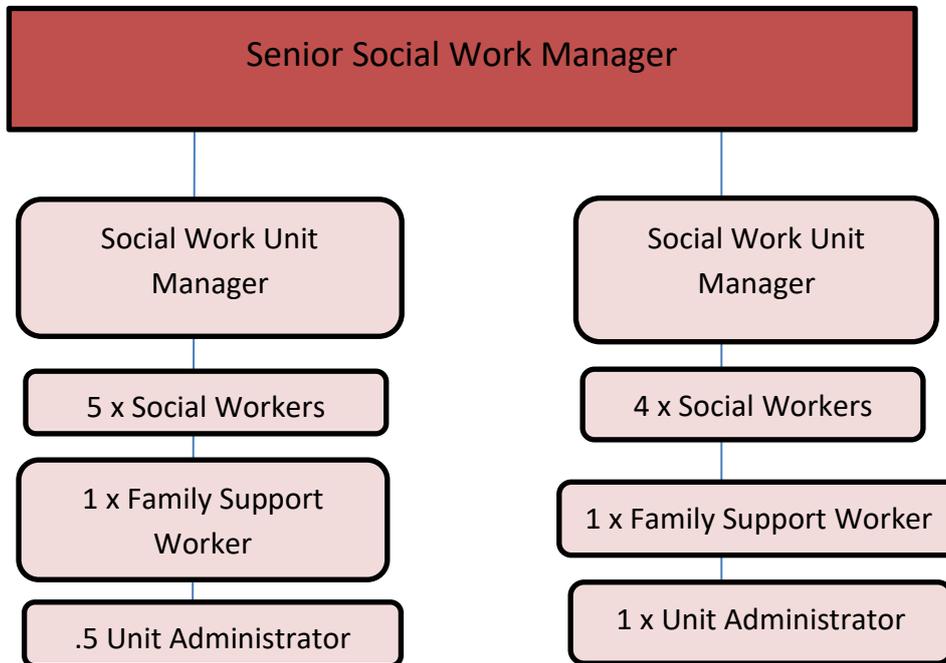
Post approval training in the consortium offered training to local adopters.

ABC Consortium members jointly purchased services from Voluntary Adoption Agencies to support the delivery of adoption services. Adoption UK as an adopter led support service, provided annual memberships for all approved adopters in ABC and offered access to support groups within the Black Country for adopters.

On behalf of ABC the Voluntary Adoption Agency, After Adoption, have delivered independent counselling for birth families affected by adoption and facilitated access to records for adopted adults.

Adoption Team. City of Wolverhampton

Adoption Team structure (April 2018-March 2019)



The above diagram details the structure of the adoption team prior to transfer to Adoption@Heart.

All the adoption social workers are qualified, and experienced in adoption work, and all are registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC). They are qualified under the Restriction on the Preparation of Adoption Reports Regulations 2005, as all have all been qualified for at least three years and have the required experience in adoption work.

Staff receive regular supervision and the Social Work Unit Managers sat alongside the team thereby being available for consultation and advice in between planned supervision sessions. Additionally, the Senior Social Work Manager was situated close by and had an open-door policy offering consultation and guidance as necessary.

All staff have now been transferred into Adoption@Heart.

Staff have annual appraisals and their training needs are regularly reviewed and they are actively encouraged to undertake appropriate learning opportunities. Staff are expected to share learning outcomes to benefit the team and when relevant with social workers in the wider service.

Attendance at quarterly social work briefings and an annual joint children and adult social work conference plus mandatory training is part of the workforce development plan for social workers.

All the Adoption staff have expertise regarding the impact of attachment, loss and separation and trauma for adopted children. Training events over this period have included Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy, Therapeutic Life Story Work, Foetal Alcohol training and direct work training.

6. Recruitment and Assessment of adopters

Prospective adopters are recruited to meet the needs of children with a care plan of adoption. Adoption in the Black Country Consortium's (branded as Adoption@Heart since September 2017) recruitment strategy endeavoured to recruit adopters for older children, who may have experienced neglect and or abuse and now need a permanent adoptive home; sibling groups and those of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups where children require adoptive parents who can reflect or promote their heritage. The enquiries received were equally shared throughout the three local authorities and the Children' in the consortium.

Recruitment activity by the ABC Consortium generated 40 referrals up until the end of February 2019 for the City of Wolverhampton Council for an initial assessment to be undertaken. This an increase from 36 from the previous 12 months.

In February 2018 the new branding of the RAA Adoption@Heart was launched along with all new marketing collateral, website, social media and digital/printed marketing. All marketing and recruitment this year has been under this branding in preparation for the launch of the RAA in April 2019.

At the heart of the Government's adoption reform programme is a shorter two-stage approval process for prospective adopters. The aim of this process is to allow potential adopters first to learn more about adoption, and then to move quickly through the approval process. Whilst remaining rigorous, the approval process is time-bound and ensures that prospective adopters have a greater role in the process. There is also a fast-track process for some previous adopters and approved foster carers.

After completion of the initial pre -stage, prospective applicants who are likely to meet the needs of children needing an adoptive placement are invited to submit a 'Registration of Interest' and they begin Stage One of the adoption process. This stage is adopter led and should be completed in two months, however. During this period, it is a time for prospective adopters to complete DBS and medicals while statutory checks and references are taken. If all checks are satisfactory, applicants are advised that they are, or are not, able to move to Stage Two.

Stage Two has required timescales of four months, applicants are engaged in the preparation training and assessment during this stage.

ABC jointly delivered adoption preparation training to prospective adopters. The programme included information on early life trauma, loss, attachment, abuse, adoptive parenting 'parenting plus', post adoption contact, post adoption support and guest speakers were in attendance. The adopter's feedback on this training is positive and they report feeling better prepared for the journey to adoption.

Wolverhampton utilised independent social work assessors to complete Stage Two Prospective Adopter Reports (PAR's). The adopters were also allocated a Wolverhampton Supervising Social Worker from the adoption team to support them during the assessment and keep them linked to the adoption service.

During April 2018- February 2019 40 referrals were received from ABC; Initial visits were then undertaken by a City of Wolverhampton Stage One social worker.

The target set for 2018-2019 was to approve and support 25 new adopter households. During April 2018-2019 26 adopter approvals were achieved, this is positive performance.

7. Former Foster Carers who adopt

During April 2017-2018 the process for approving finance for former foster carers was amended. The central principle is that financial support can be payable in accordance with the regulations to help secure a suitable Adoption, Special Guardianship or Child Arrangement Order where such an arrangement cannot be readily made because of a financial obstacle.

Former foster carers who adopt are eligible for transitional support. The transitional arrangement is the payment of the core fostering allowance for two years plus the means tested child's allowance.

There were six foster carers during April 2018-2019 who were adopted the children that they were fostering. This enabled children in the fostering household to have their permanence secured by their current carers.

8. Early Permanence

Early Permanency Placements were an initiative introduced under the Children and Families Act (2014).

Early permanence is an umbrella term which includes both Fostering for Adoption and Concurrent Planning placements. Both schemes enable a child in care to be placed with foster carers who are ready and willing to adopt them later, if the Court decides they cannot live with their birth family. It is intended to speed up a child's journey through care and minimise the disruption of repeated moves to different families. This aims to enable children to experience a loving and secure home in which they feel safe and settled as quickly as possible. Early permanence placements can limit delay and secure good outcomes for children whether they are rehabilitated home, or they are adopted.

Wolverhampton remains ambitious about utilising early permanence placements, as outlined above, they minimise the requirement for a further placement move and speeds up permanency for children. Wolverhampton has made seven early permanence placements via Foster for Adoption (FFA) or concurrency placements during April 2018-2019.

9. Permanency via Adoption

When children are placed in the care of the local authority it is imperative that they are placed in safe, permanent homes as quickly as possible. In most circumstances, children can be reunited with their families, but in some cases, children find homes with relatives or adoptive families.

To pursue permanence in a timely manner, permanence planning is embedded in practice and provides oversight and scrutiny in care planning options for children. There are a range of activities that support this practice. The Senior Social Work Manager for Adoption attends a weekly admission to care panel, this enables cases to be tracked and allocated as early alerts. Family finders regularly attend permanency planning meetings that are coordinated where there is a potential care plan of adoption for a child. Monthly family finding meetings enable children's plans for adoption to be discussed and early inhouse matches proposed. These arrangements will be continued when the adoption services transfer to Adoption@Heart, to ensure early permanence placements continue to be considered and actioned where appropriate.

10. Family Finding

A Family Support Worker (FSW) assists in progressing family finding actions by taking photographs, filming DVD's of children and completing a child's profile. Where there is not a match for the child with Wolverhampton or ABC prospective adopters the FSW refers the children to Adoption Link (Link Maker), a web-based family finding service that approved prospective adopters can view once a child is subject to a Placement Order granted by the Court.

Children can also be featured in Children Who Wait magazine published by Adoption UK specifically utilised for harder to place children. However, this medium is no longer as successful as it used to be due to the use of other web-based family finding services which are now more widely used by prospective adopters.

Wolverhampton Adoption Team attended eight exchange events, which included events in London, Manchester, Leeds and Walsall, profiling children who are regarded as harder to place; i.e. children over the age of three, sibling groups and children of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME). These events are opportunities to feature profiles of children who are waiting to be matched to suitable adopters and are attended by prospective adopters and their social workers. These events support adopter led matching as prospective adopters can express an interest in finding out more about the children profiled at the event.

During 2018-2019 Wolverhampton attended two activity days held across the region where eight children attended, including a sibling group of three for a pre – link which

progressed successfully. Activity Days are opportunities for children with a plan of adoption and prospective adopters to meet informally and spend some time together with a view to the initiation of potential matches taking place.

Wolverhampton continues to be creative in family finding activity; one such example is a collaboration with Ricochet production company who worked in partnership with Channel 4 filming a series of adoption activity events. Wolverhampton secured parental permission to feature two harder to place, older children. The children attended an activity day which was filmed for a documentary. This resulted in one successful match and viewers witnessed the emerging relationship between the child and the prospective adopters during the programme.

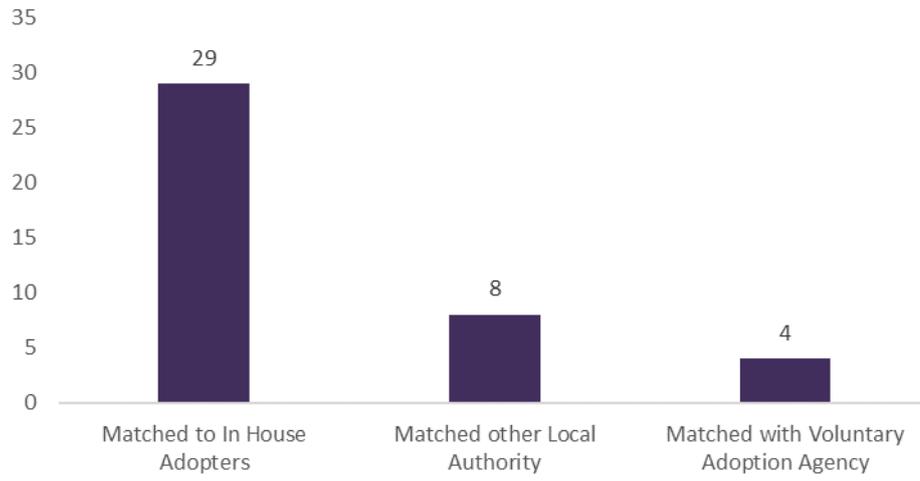
The link that was initiated at this event was presented to the Adoption panel in February 2018. On the 12- month anniversary of moving into his adoptive family the child, along with his parents met the Queen, as part of a celebration of adoption at Coram BAAF's new office. It was a lovely day enjoyed and celebrated by all. The child has since been adopted.

Prior to a prospective adoptive family being identified, Family Support Workers (FSW's) begin 'moving on work' with older children, the work is child centred and individualised and continues once a family is identified to support the smooth transition to their new family.

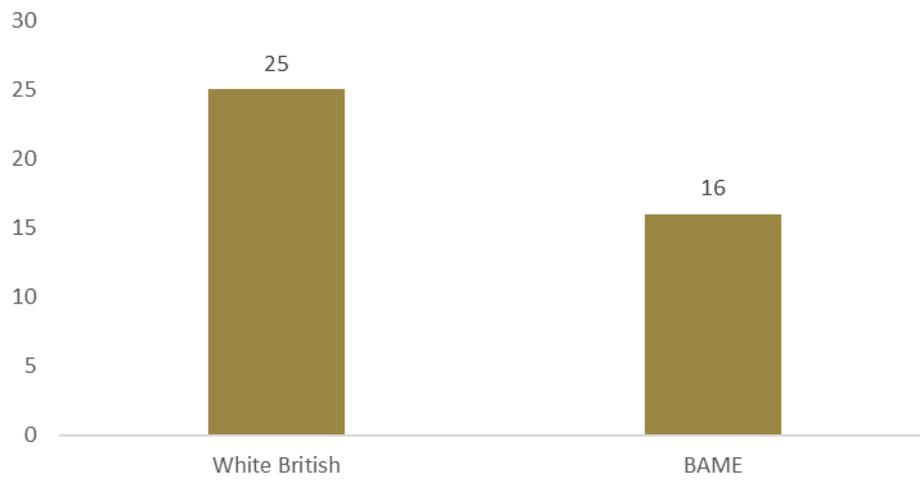
Wolverhampton linked 41 children for adoption during 2018-2019:

Linked with in house adopters	29
Linked with other Local Authority	8
Linked with Voluntary Adoption Agency	4
White British/ European	25
BAME	16
Single children	25
Sibling groups of two	16
Children with Disability	0
Aged over 5	7
0-2	27
Female	13
Male	28

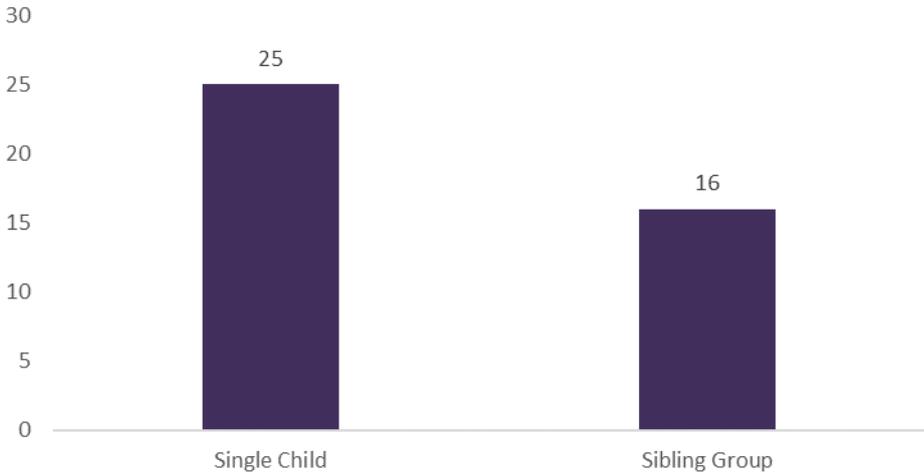
Match Type



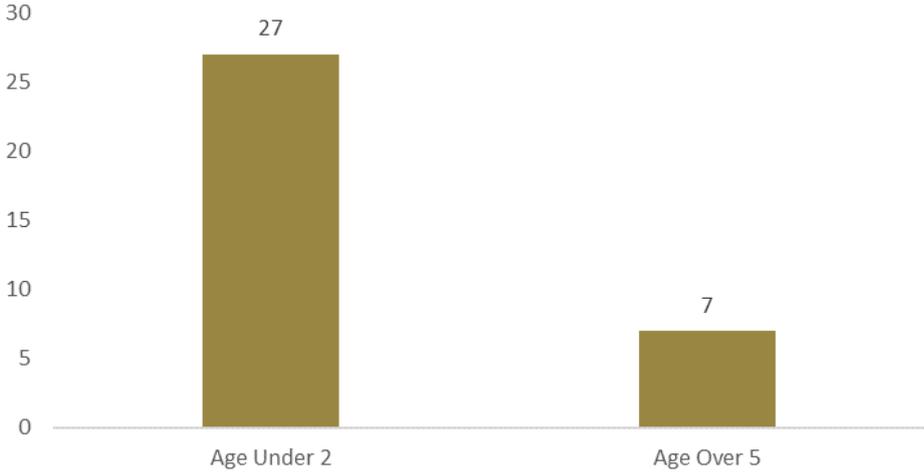
Ethnicity of Matches



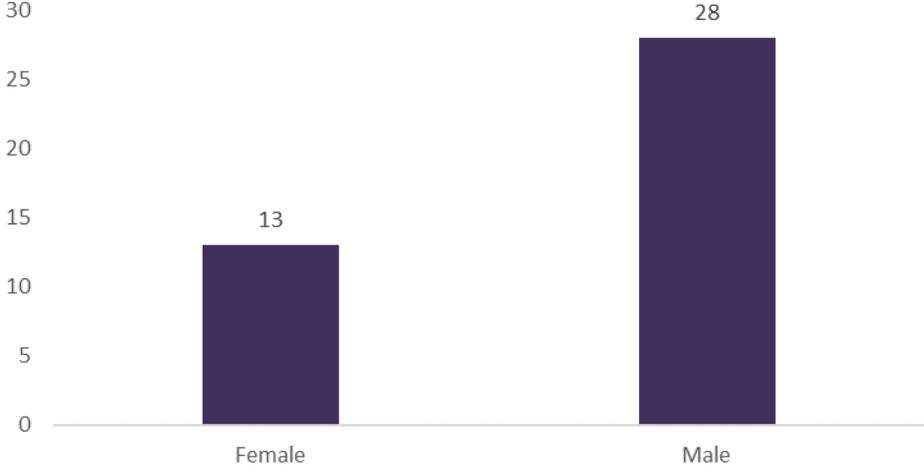
Sibling Groups



Age Groups



Gender of Matches



11. Adoption Scorecard

In 2018 the rate of children and young people in care in England continued to increase. After small rises of 1% each year between 2014 and 2016, the rise in 2017 was 3% and another 3% in 2018. At 31 March 2018 there were 75,420 children and young people in England, an increase of 1,930 on 2017, and an increase of 7,350 on 2013.

Between 2015-18 there were 12,900 children who were adopted from care (14%)

Adoption Scorecards have been published by the Department for Education on an annual basis since 2012. They measure local authorities' performance against two key indicators.

The **A1** indicator measures the average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family for children who have been adopted. A low number of days represents a good performance.

The **A2** indicator measures the average time between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family. A low number of days represents a good performance.

In 2014 a new indicator was introduced; **A10**. This measures the average time between a child entering care and being placed with their prospective adopters adjusted for foster carer adoptions (where times for children who are adopted by their foster carers are stopped at the date children were placed with their foster carers).

Wolverhampton's A1 Indicator equates to 617 days (this is a further year on year decrease of 7 days from 2014-2017) against a target of 426 days, against an English year average of 486. Initial reporting for the single year 2018/19 increased to 799 days. This was due to the number of older children that were adopted by their foster carer.

Furthermore, when the A1 timeliness is adjusted where times for children who are adopted by their foster family are stopped at the date the child moved in with the foster family (A10) (2015-2018) it reduces to 521 days, compared to 412 English average. Initial reporting for the single year 2018/19 shows that the A10 indicator decreased to 367 days.

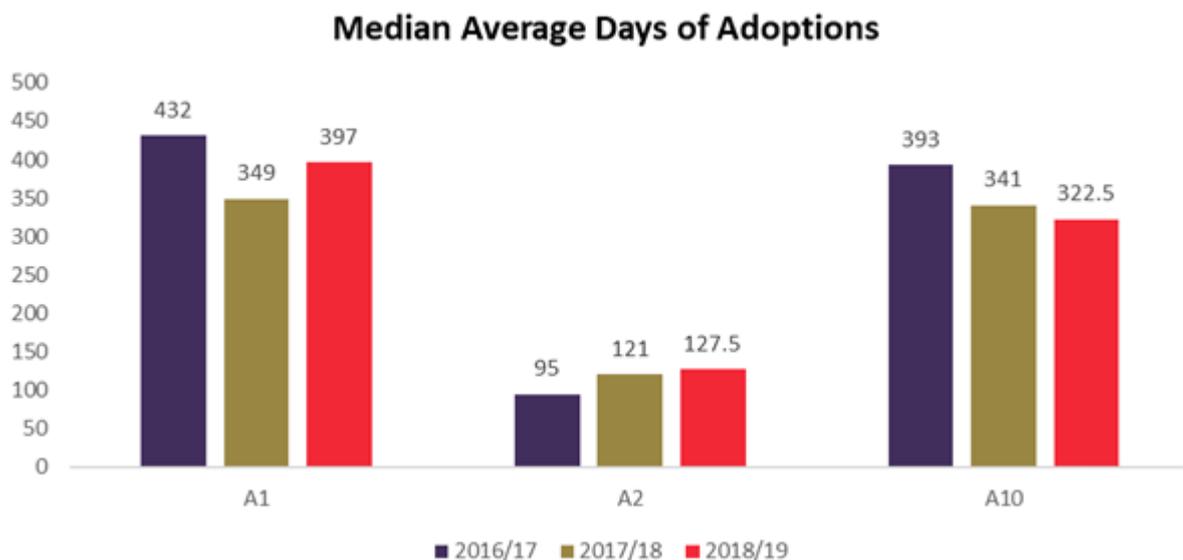
Wolverhampton's A2 indicator is 212 days (a further year on year decrease of 13 days from 2015-2018) against a target of 121 days and an English average of 201. Initial reporting for the single year 2018/19 saw performance decrease to 152 days.

Despite a significant improvement in performance year on year, Wolverhampton's adoption scorecard for 2015-2018 continues to be rated 'double red' for A1 and A2 indicators.

No local authority in England has met the over ambitious government 426-day target, therefore Wolverhampton is not an outlier in this area. The Adoption Leadership Board alongside Coram BAAF are canvassing Central Government and the Department for Education (DfE) regarding the 426-day target.

The average duration between entry into care and being adopted increased in the year 2018/19. Despite decreases by over six months between 2013 and 2018, in 2019 the average increased in line with A1 timeframes to two years and nine months due to the number of long-term children awaiting adoption who were adopted in the year.

Once a child has been matched with adopters, the time to adoption has decreased slightly from eight months in 2018 to seven months in 2019.



Despite an increase in the mean average number of days for A1, the median average decreased in 2018/19. The median average for A1 and 102 are lower than national targets with A2 within 6 days of the national target.

There are 9 adoptions that took over 1500 days, of these 9, 7 were adopted by foster parents.

The City of Wolverhampton Council Adoption Team has always been ambitious about adoption. The use of a three-year average for the scorecard indicator presents a challenge for the authority, and Wolverhampton constantly balances the need for swift placement with not giving up on finding families for older children, and children with complex needs. There are occasions where timescales have been sacrificed in the interest of placing older children, sibling groups and children with complex needs.

Black children and children of mixed ethnicity appear to be slightly over-represented in the children in care population. Children of Asian ethnicity are slightly under represented. In Wolverhampton 2015-2018, 35 children or 16% of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children leaving care were adopted compared to an England average of just 7%.

Wolverhampton continues to pursue adoption for children aged five years and older. In 2015-2018, 45 or 11% were adopted compared to an England average of 5%.

A yearly conversation with Ofsted explores the adoption scorecard and they recognise Wolverhampton's ambition and note the year on year improvement.

12. Interagency Placements

Four interagency placements of children from other local authorities were made with City of Wolverhampton adopters all of which were single placements.

13. Disruption of Adoptive Placements

There have been no adoption disruptions in 2018-2019, this is significant given the number of harder to place characteristics children placed during his year.

14. Adoption Order

There were 43 adoption orders granted in 2018-2019 an increase on 3 orders from the previous year.

The characteristics are set out below:

Single children	19
Sibling groups of two	12
Early permanence placements	4
Foster carers adopting	13
BAME	16
Aged over 5	15
0-2	22
Female	15
Male	28

Of the 43 adoption orders granted 22 passed the A1 indicator of 426 days and 26 passed the English average of 520 days.

In relation to the 43 children, 23 passed the A2 indicator of 121 and 33 passed the English average of 220.

15. Outliers

As outlined in the report there are a number of children who are deemed as hard to place due to their age, ethnicity, and health issues, for example. These children therefore do not always follow the pattern of those children that are deemed as easier to place and are successfully linked within A1 and A2 indicator timescales, they can be referred in statistical data as outliers. An outlier can be defined as a piece of data or observation that deviates drastically from the given norm or average of the data set. An outlier can cause serious problems in statistical analyses.

When considering the 2015-2018 adoption scorecard there are 33 children with 23 boys and 10 girls who we have identified as outliers for statistical purposes with A1

indicators over 900 days. They include two sibling groups of three, and nine sibling groups of two.

There are limited numbers of adopters willing and able to consider a sibling group of three, this can be exacerbated if they are an all-male sibling group of three as adopters invariably prefer a mixed gender group. A sibling group of three boys went on to be adopted by their foster carer after extensive family finding was unsuccessful. The A1 indicator was 1258 days and the A2 indicator was 952 days which was adjusted to zero when the foster carer adopted them.

A second sibling group of three had extensive family finding without success, the plan was to rescind the Placement Order however while completing paperwork a decision was made to remove the children from their foster placement due to safeguarding concerns and a subsequent sibling assessment recommended the youngest child was placed singularly. The sibling group of two and the remaining child were linked, and both sets of adopters applied for Adoption Orders and the Adoption Orders were granted the same day. The A1 indicator was 1355 days and the A2 indicator was 951 days. The adoptive placements are progressing well.

There are 16 children out of 23 aged five and over as part of a sibling group which equates to 69 percent. One sibling group A1 indicator is 1131 days and A2 indicator is 684 days; the adopters separated prior to the granting of the adoption order, a further assessment was undertaken prior to the children being adopted which impacted on the A1 indicator.

There are 10 single children with nine boys and one girl. The characteristics includes a child aged two; a child of mixed White British and African Caribbean ethnicity who had a query re diagnosis of foetal alcohol, a three-year-old Black Caribbean female and two four-year-old White boys. The remaining six children were all over five years old.

16. Children Awaiting Placement/Placement Orders at 31 March 2019

There were 27 children with placement orders at 31 March 2019 with one child in an early permanence placement,

17. Additional Functions of the Adoption Team

In addition to the functions outlined above, the Adoption Team continued to offer services;

- Support for birth family members - pre- adoption
- Notified adoption service, for e.g. step parents
- Inter-country adoption service
- Voluntary relinquishments

18. Adoption support services

Adoptive families adopted adults or birth relatives can ask for an assessment of need at any time after the adoption.

The Adoption Support Fund (ASF) was established by the Government in May 2015 as they became aware that access to therapeutic support following adoption was required. In January 2016, the government announced that the Adoption Support Fund could be used to provide therapeutic support for children from the point at which they are placed with their adoptive families and not just post order.

Children who require specialist assessments are now eligible for a separate amount up to £2,500. The level of demand for the ASF has been far higher than anticipated and so to address this the Department for Education introduced a fair access limit of £5,000 per child. Over 80 percent of applications to the fund fall within this limit. Since May 2015, the average spend per child has been around £3,500 for City of Wolverhampton ASF applications. Where a child has an exceptional need for therapeutic support over £5,000 and up to £30,000, funding is still possible on a 'match funding' arrangement with the relevant local authority to ensure families receive the support, in 2018-2019 Wolverhampton match funded £4799. Amounts over £500 are approved by City of Wolverhampton Resource Panel.

The City of Wolverhampton Adoption Support Service has undertaken post approvals Assessment of Need and review assessments which resulted in making 50 applications to the adoption support fund. The total approved funding was £156,734.00

Therapy services have included filial therapy, Circle of Security therapeutic parenting course; therapeutic life story work and psychotherapy. Reviews are undertaken to identify family satisfaction and clinical outcomes.

The Adoption Team continued to offer a therapeutic parenting programme based on the Circle of Security model which runs for eight weeks and was attended by five adoptive parents and was very successful in extending their understanding regarding impact of abuse while developing greater awareness about attachment and barriers to implementing therapeutic parenting. The feedback from adopters was impressive, and all scored it highly. They welcomed the opportunity to share difficulties with other adopters in similar situations and they commented on how it not only assists in understanding their child but challenges their parenting. The City of Wolverhampton Adoption service ran a monthly adoption support group where adopters can share highlights and challenges of parenting in a safe reflective environment.

19. Post adoption contact

The post adoption contact (PAC) coordinator manages more than 400 post adoption contacts. Post adoption contact assists children in understanding their history and along with the life story book helps children to make sense of what happened in the past and to help them remember important people who were involved earlier in their lives.

20. Post Approval Training

ABC provided post approval training to adopters; this year training has included Education Issues for Adopted Children; Talking about Adoption: Therapeutic Life Story Work and Child to Parent Violence; for adoptive families struggling with violence in the home.

21. Commissioned Adoption Support Services

Additional adoption support services were commissioned from Adoption UK/PAC. Adoption UK ran local support groups on a bi-monthly basis, the meetings schedule speakers and presentations and also provide a time to socialise with other adopters. Adopters were also able to access Adoption UK training workshops and a lending library.

Wolverhampton had a Service Level Agreement with an Independent Adoption Agency (After Adoption) to provide an independent support service to birth relatives whose child is being placed for adoption or who has been adopted and to provide birth record counselling. This was managed via Adoption in the Black Country to ensure service delivery during the period.

22. Adoption and Permanency Panel

City of Wolverhampton Council Adoption and Permanence Panel considered approvals of prospective adopters, Family and Friends carers and matching of adoptive and long-term fostering placements.

The Adoption and Permanence Panel complied with 2002 Children's Act, Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013; Fostering Regulations 2011; Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England)(Miscellaneous) Regulations 2013 and guidance relevant to both adoption and fostering. Panel members from the Central list with both adoption and fostering experience participated in the permanence panel.

23. Panel membership

The Panel continued to function well supported by its committed members and support staff. There were 21 panel members on the Central list who could sit on both the Adoption and the Fostering panels. There were two panel Chairs and four Vice Chairs. As per the transfer arrangements to the RAA the panel function for approvals of adopters and matching has been transferred to Adoption@Heart as on 1 April 2019. All panel members were given the opportunity to move to Adoption@Heart Central list and become a panel member for Adoption@Heart.

24. Panel Business

Panel met regularly during 2018-2019, with at least two opportunities a month for adoption matters to be heard. This meant matters could be dealt with in a timely manner avoiding any delay for children.

The Agency Decision Maker sat twice a month to consider whether children should be placed for adoption decisions but was also able to make emergency decisions as necessary and when required outside this timeframe.

25. Adopter approval

There were 26 approvals of prospective adopters in this reporting period. This is good performance and exceeded the target set of 25 approvals.

26. Children's decisions

There has been a slight decrease in the number of children for whom Wolverhampton is pursuing a plan of adoption.

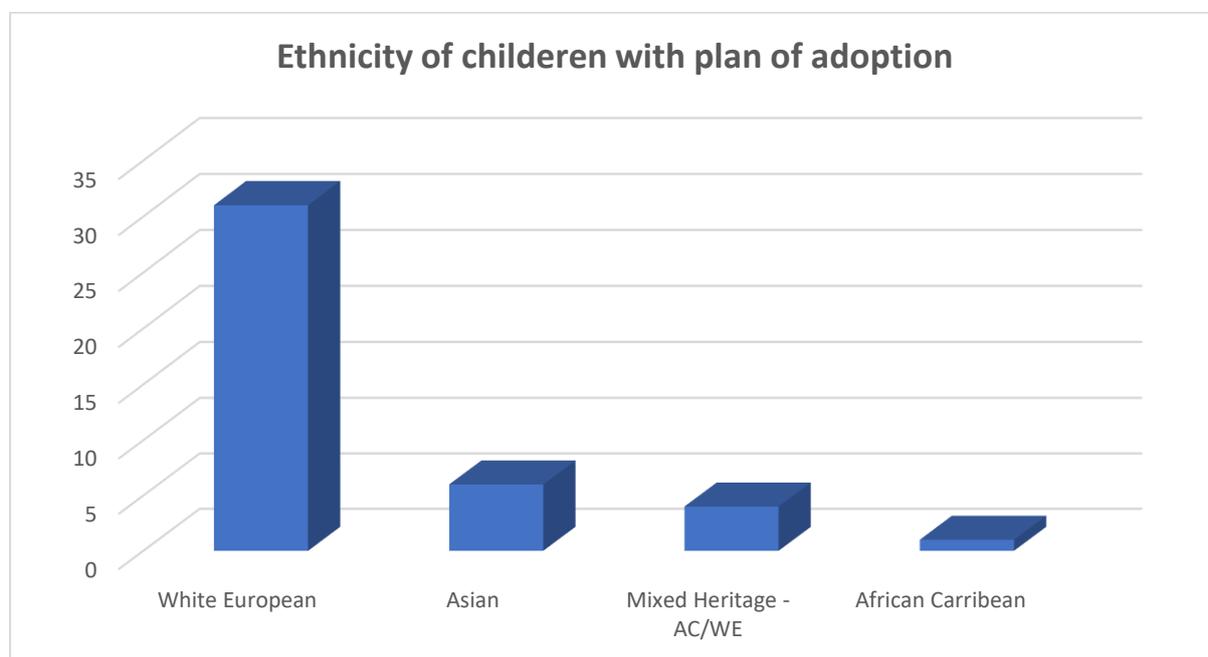
43 Children had Should Be Placed for Adoption decisions made. Of these

27 were in zero-two age range.

13 were in three – five age range

3 were six + age range

The table below gives a breakdown of the ethnicity of children with a plan of adoption for this reporting year.



27 Rescinds

There have been 11 plans of adoption for this period rescinded. All children were over 4 years old with 8 older than 7. Only one child had their adoption decision rescinded after being placed with a potential adopter.

28 Matches of children with prospective adopters

During this reporting period April 2018 to March 2019, 41 children were matched with prospective adopters.

There has been great effort to keep sibling groups together. The placement of sibling groups is not without its challenges. However, we have managed to place seven sibling groups of two, and one sibling group of three.

29 Complaints/compliments

Wolverhampton Adoption Team received five complaints, plus three informal complaints that were dealt with at a service level.

Wolverhampton Adoption Team received 7 compliments during 2018-2019. Adopters complimented on the range of services provided.

30 Strategic issues and future service development

- To actively support the development of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA). Regionalising the service is consistent with the Government agenda and will widen the pool of adopters for Wolverhampton's children in care and will enable us to provide a regional adoption support service which will continue to be accessible and responsive to the needs of adopters.
- Increase the recruitment of adopters who can consider offering Early Permanence Placements to children either through concurrency or foster to adopt.
- Improve recruitment of adopters willing to adopt children deemed harder to place; including older children, children with disabilities and Black and minority ethnic children and boys.
- Fully utilise the adoption support fund to support families.
- Embed the culture of participation, ensuring feedback from service users is captured, analysed and used to inform service improvement

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Corporate Parenting Board 18 July 2019
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Report title	Annual Fostering Report 2018 - 2019	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John Reynolds Children and Young People	
Wards affected	All wards	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services	
Originating service	Children's Services	
Accountable employee	Lisa Whelan Tel Email	Service Manager – Children and Young people in Care 01902 555097 Lisa.whelan@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to has been considered by	Children's Leadership Team	11 July 2019

Recommendation for decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Approve the attached Annual Fostering Report 2018-2019

1.0 Purpose

1.1 To Inform of the developments, progress and future objectives of the Fostering Service.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Fostering Service is located within the People Directorate of the City of Wolverhampton Council. The Fostering Service recruits, supports and develops Foster Carers to care for and support vulnerable children placed in their care. These placements include children placed with Friends and/or Family (Connected Persons Carers) by the Local Authority. The Fostering Service also assesses and monitors Private Fostering arrangements.

2.2 The activity of the service works in conjunction with the following legislation:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011
- The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and case Review 2010 and Update 2013

2.3 The Fostering Service seeks to provide a comprehensive and excellent quality foster care to all children looked after by the City of Wolverhampton. Foster carers provide children in care a positive experience of family life within an environment that promotes their physical, emotional and health needs.

2.4 Foster carers work in partnership with Health, Education and other allied professionals to ensure best outcomes for children and young people in foster placements. Working in partnership enables Foster Carers to provide a warm, safe and caring family environment ensuring that the children's emotional health and development is promoted and there is access to available opportunities to promote children's attendance and their academic achievements thus maximising all opportunities for children to achieve their full potential.

2.5 In March 2017 iMPower were commissioned by City of Wolverhampton Council to support the development of the in-house fostering service. The goal being to enable greater in-house placement sufficiency, and better use of resources. The project concluded in May 2017 with a recommendation that the low levels of enquiry generation was the primary cause of the limited in-house foster carers growth. The Family Values was developed and workstreams set up. A steering group meets monthly to oversee the progress of the project and tracks completed and outstanding tasks for further focus.

3.0. Summary

3.1 The Fostering Service was restructured in November 2018 as part of a wider Children's Service's restructure and there are now two teams within the service focussed on Recruitment and Assessment and Support. The Fostering Service continues to benefit from experienced managers and the compliment of social workers remains stable with no agency workers currently employed. Both teams have made significant progress during the year with many development and improvements made across the service as described and outlined above. The latter part of the year saw a new project "Foster Families United" introduced and alongside promotion for this a pilot project based on the model has had a very positive and encouraging start. As always, the fostering service is engaged in continuing to strive for further improvements.

3.2 The Family Values Fostering review project which concluded in May 2017 stated that the city of Wolverhampton provides placements that are better value for money and can offer more positive outcomes for children and young people. Three key areas of growth to increase and improve capacity were identified:

- Increasing enquiry generation.
- Improving enquiry handling.
- Developing the support and supervision offer.

3.3 Whilst the Family Values project has provided structure and parameters with clear objectives, participation in the workstreams and steering group has provided opportunities within these arenas to explore other ideas for improvement and development, "Foster Families United" and Level 3/4 panels for carer progression are just two examples. The project has certainly elicited energy and excitement and given such positive progress during the year culminating in a net gain of 21 carers the thought continues that there is a real opportunity to continue to increase our cohort of mainstream and connected carers within a Fostering Service that is fully open to challenge and change. It is only by exploring and embracing these opportunities that we will truly as a service achieve our potential with our overall aim to improve the outcomes for the children and young people in our care.

4.0 Key Achievements 2018-2019

4.1 A Net Gain of 21 foster carers has been achieved considering both mainstream and connected carers and that some have transferred to Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) during the year. Success in all areas has impacted on the overall net gain of carers.

4.2 20 SGO orders have been achieved.

4.3 Continued increased enquiries supported through sophisticated media campaigns and digital advertising.

4.4 A designated Fostering website continues to share pertinent information and is regularly updated.

- 4.5 Governance for the Family Values project well established, a steering group and work streams meet monthly to monitor progress of the project.
- 4.6 The "Truth be Told" film promoting Fostering has been released in collaboration with the West Midlands consortium.
- 4.7 The Foster Carer newsletter is published monthly and includes a section "Fostering story of the month" Good news stories are routinely sought from Foster carers and Social Workers.
- 4.8 An Easter Egg hunt was held at Bantock Park with Halloween, and Christmas parties held at Bert Williams Centre, all were well attended and enjoyed by Foster Carers and Children and Young People.
- 4.9 Increased participation by Foster carers in Advertising campaigns and in the Family Values workstreams.
- 4.10 A policy outlining Escalation to Level 3 - 4 for Foster carers has been shared and panels set up quarterly to consider applications from carers who apply to be Level 3 or 4 carers.
- 4.11 The complete Foster Carers register highlighting vacancies and the status of all placements has been shared with the Placement Team, Emergency Team and managers working out of hours in order that ALL can make Internal Placements as appropriate.
- 4.12 All Foster Carers currently on the "Dormant" list are regularly contacted and whilst unable to offer a full-time placement have facilitated respite to support other Foster Carers requiring a break.
- 4.13 The Training Programme for Foster Carers 2019-2020 has been revised, new courses and developmental days added to the calendar offering an increased variety of subjects and with built in Forums to maximise carers potential to attend both.
- 4.14 Customer Service Officers trained in aspects of Fostering in order that they handle enquiries effectively and sharing pertinent information to Fostering to support applications. The Fostering newsletter is shared with Customer Service Officers to further enhance their awareness of the service.
- 4.15 Enquiries are tracked effectively to pin-point origins of referrals to better inform campaigns going forward.
- 4.16 The use of Twitter has increased to maximise the Fostering Service capacity to reach a wider audience using Social Media.
- 4.17 Therapeutic Reflective sessions running twice monthly for Fostering Social Workers and facilitated by a CAMHS Social Worker to compliment the model of training (18 week-Nurturing Attachments Training Programme) to Foster Carers.

- 4.18 The Personal Development Plan for Foster Carers to support their development and future training needs filed as a separate document to compliment Supervision.
- 4.19 Free Swimming lessons for Children and Young People in Care agreed by City of Wolverhampton Council.
- 4.20 Improved interface between the Fostering service and Housing which will improve opportunities for the service to support current carers and prospective carers in applying for House moves/bigger properties.
- 4.21 Fostering Social Worker trainer trained in Restorative practice will deliver Restorative training to the Fostering Panel Members.
- 4.22 Therapeutic Parenting Training courses will be offered three times yearly to foster carers.
- 4.23 All newly approved foster carers are allocated a “buddy” and receive weekly visits from their Supervising Social Worker.
- 4.24 The new model of fostering “Foster Families United” has been developed and a pilot hub of carers reflecting the model with encouraging progress and outcomes thus far.
- 4.25 Private Fostering Forums have been set up quarterly and attended by Private Fostering Champions from partner agencies.
- 4.26 A visit to North Yorkshire Local Authority provided opportunities to observe progress of a Fostering Service within a different demographic.
- 4.27 A pop-up shop has been secured in the Mander Centre with Wolverhampton having access at agreed times throughout the year to promote Fostering and use as part of Fostering Fortnight. The shop has been well utilised and has secured referrals to further progress.
- 4.28 A Foster Home Review Improvement Plan has been implemented which has secured improvements in the completion of basic requirements in respect of carers i.e. unannounced visits, delegated authority and safer care statements.

5.0 Key Objectives 2019-2020

- 5.1 To achieve the target of a net gain of 28 Mainstream Foster carers to provide for the diverse range of children’s needs.
- 5.2 To complete connected assessments in timescales as directed and achieve a net gain of connected foster carers whilst acknowledging that successful conversion to SGOs will impact on overall gains.
- 5.3 To achieve 30 Special Guardianship Orders.
- 5.4 To fully launch the Foster Carer Portal to enable access by all carers to the offered training opportunities, Information, Policy and Procedures and developmental information.

- 5.5 To further develop existing and new carers to provide for children's needs, promote understanding, resilience of carers and placement stability by reviewing policies to include short breaks/respite, buddy system and additional benefits available to foster carers.
- 5.6 To continue to review recruitment materials and processes and continue to implement the recommendations from the Family Values Project undertaken by iMPower whilst being open minded to all ideas and development opportunities that will enhance and improve the Fostering Service which include visiting other authorities particularly those who have recruited high numbers of foster carers and achieved significantly improved outcomes.
- 5.7 The focus on Private Fostering needs to continue to be strengthened and the profile promoted to increase awareness and understanding of this often-misunderstood area of care. Further training opportunities to be offered across Children's Social Care, with partner agencies and the voluntary sector and to ensure the quarterly is well attended by champions from partner agencies and all relevant materials shared.
- 5.8 The pilot linked to "Foster Families United" project commenced on 1 May 2019 and consists of an experienced foster carer acting as a hub carer with three fostering families linked. All carers will be supervised by the same supervising social worker who has recently been appointed to the project whilst a CAMHS practitioner will provide clinical supervision to all within the pilot. The hub carer has planned activities for the carers and is providing additional support in line with the model. Progress regarding this pilot will be shared with senior managers in August 2019. Media campaigns have begun in respect of this project and it will feature in both mainstream and targeted events throughout the year.

6.0 Financial implications

- 6.1 The annual approved budget for the Fostering Service for 2018-2019 is £5.6 million.
- 6.2 The costs associated with the Foster Families United project are contained within the existing budget for the Fostering Service.
- 6.3 As more foster carers are recruited and approved in-house costs will increase but cost reductions will be seen against other placement budgets such as residential and private fostering arrangements.
- 6.4 The average weekly cost of an in-house foster placement is £382, this is a saving of £3,378 when compared to the average weekly cost of a residential placement and £404 when compared to the average weekly cost of a private fostering arrangement.
[NM/08072019/I]

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 The legal relevant legislation and guidance is contained within the body of the report. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.
[TC/12072019/T]

8.0 Equalities implications

- 8.1 The Fostering Service works with foster carers and colleagues from a diverse background to meet the needs of children and young people from a diverse background in respect of ethnicity, culture, age and disability.

9.0 Environmental implications

- 9.1 The Fostering service has a high profile and accesses organisations across the city to promote and develop opportunities to recruit new foster carers and hold events for both carers and children and young people.

10.0 Human resources implications

- 10.1 There are no Human resources implications.

11.0 Corporate Landlord implications

- 11.1 The Fostering Service works with the Housing Organisations to ensure any foster carers access any local authority housing appropriately particularly with regard to requests for larger properties.

12.0 Health and Wellbeing implications

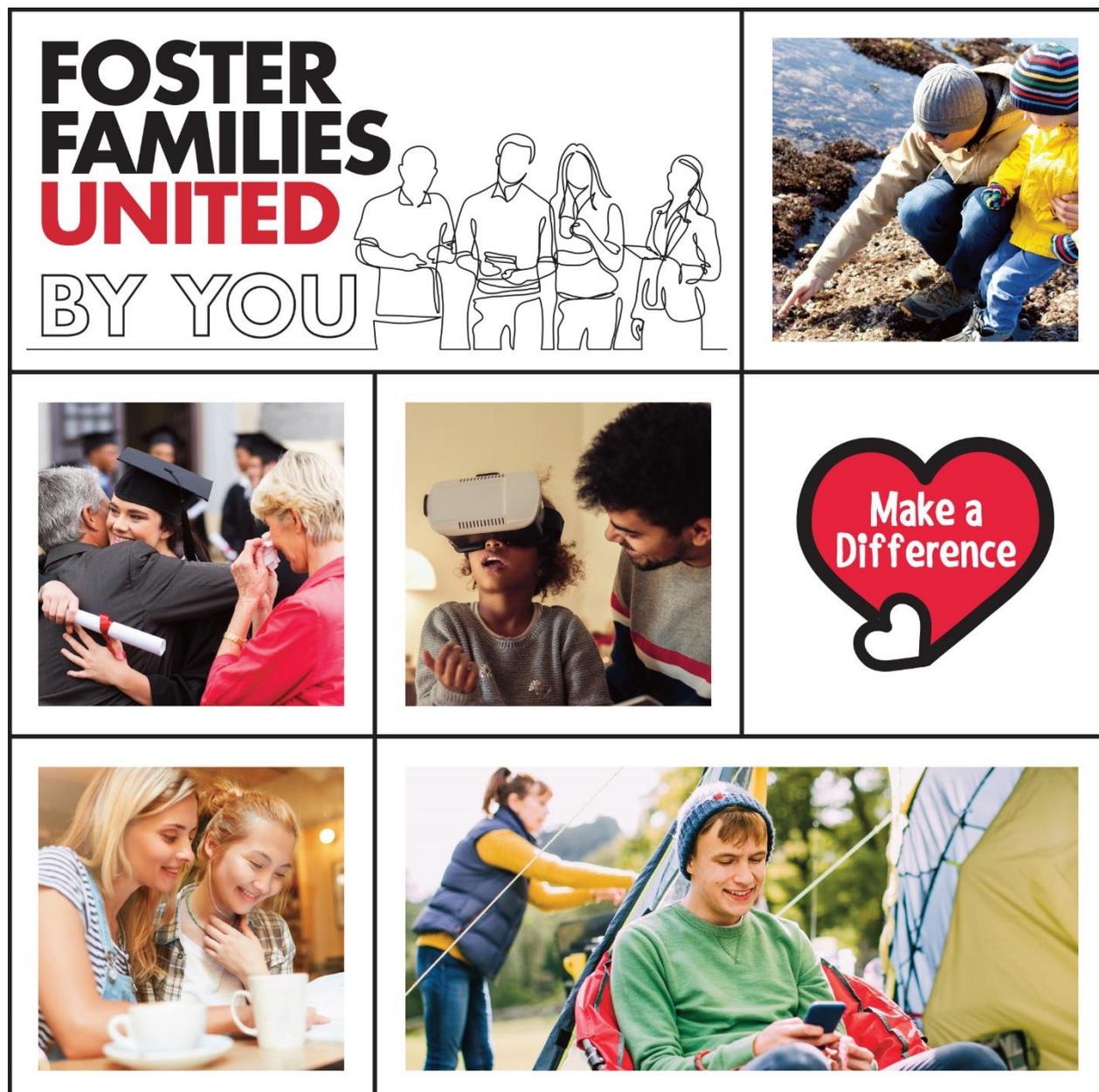
- 12.1 The Health and wellbeing of Wolverhampton Foster carers is considered through regular supervision and any issues are addressed by supervising social workers in conjunction with children's social workers as appropriate. Complaints are addressed within corporate timescales.

13.0 Schedule of background papers

- 13.1 The full Annual Fostering Report 2018-2019 had been attached as an appendix and contains full details of the service with set objectives 2019-2020.

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CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL



ANNUAL FOSTERING REPORT

APRIL 2018– MARCH 2019

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1. Introduction:

- 1.1 This report provides a description of the structure, aims and duties of The City of Wolverhampton Fostering Service and details the performance of the service over the last twelve months. The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011) requires that all Fostering Services provide written reports to their Executive or Trustees on a regular basis. In the case of Local Authorities, the 'executive' is the Elected Members of the City of Wolverhampton.
- 1.2 The Fostering Service is located within the People Directorate of the City of Wolverhampton Council. The Fostering Service recruits, supports and develops Foster Carers to care for and support vulnerable children placed in their care. These placements include children placed with Friends and/or Family (Connected Persons Carers) by the Local Authority. The Fostering Service also assesses and monitors Private Fostering arrangements.
- 1.3 The activity of the service works in conjunction with the following legislation:
- Children Act 1989
 - Children Act 2004
 - Children & Young Persons Act 2008
 - Care Standards Act 2000
 - Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011
 - The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services 2011
 - The Children Act 1989 Guidance & Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review 2010 & Update 2013
- 1.4 The Fostering Service was last inspected by Ofsted as part of a Single inspection of Children's Services in January 2017 and was rated 'Good'.
- 1.5 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 imposes a duty on Local Authorities to find enough appropriate Fostering provisions in its local area. The Fostering Service is committed to provide stability, care and security to looked after children and ensure that Foster Carers can meet the individual needs of children. As such the Recruitment Marketing Strategy outlines how we aim to provide placement choice. The importance of placing children within their family and friend's network, within their community and with their siblings remains paramount in securing stability for the child as well as ensuring their education is not disrupted and their well-being promoted.
- 1.6 The Fostering service seeks to provide a comprehensive and excellent quality foster care to all children looked after by the city of Wolverhampton. Foster carers provide looked after children a positive experience of family life within an environment that promotes their physical, emotional and health needs. Foster carers work in partnership with Health, Education and other allied professionals to ensure best outcomes for children and young people in foster placements. Working in partnership enables Foster Carers to provide a warm, safe and caring family environment ensuring that the children's emotional health and development is promoted and there is access to available opportunities to promote children's attendance and their academic achievements thus maximising all opportunities for children to achieve their full potential.
- 1.7 In March 2017 iMPower were commissioned by City of Wolverhampton Council to support the development of the in-house Fostering Service. The goal being to enable greater in-house placement sufficiency, and better use of resources. The project concluded in May 2017 with a recommendation that the low levels of enquiry generation

were the primary cause of the limited in-house Foster Carers growth. The Family Values project was developed and three workstreams were set up – **ENQUIRY GENERATION, ENQUIRY HANDLING and SUPPORT**. Each workstream meeting meets twice monthly, on occasions weekly and under pinned by a plan reviewed at each meeting to chart progress and achievements and to consider future objectives to focus on. A Steering group meets monthly to oversee the progress of the project and tracks completed and outstanding tasks for further focus.



2 **FUNCTIONS/ROLES WITHIN THE FOSTERING SERVICE**

2.1 **Personalised Support Team**

This team sits within the Commissioning arm of the People Directorate. It works in conjunction with the Fostering Service and is responsible for all placement searches for children and young people needing a Foster or Residential placement. The Placement Team hold the register of Internal Foster carers which details all placements and highlights any vacancies, the register is routinely updated by the Placement Team and the Fostering service. The register is available to the Emergency Duty Team who can make out of hours placements. All short-term placements are made via this team by the Social Worker completing a Placement Information Request via the electronic record on Care First. This should include the history of the child together with the presenting circumstances that have led to a placement being sought. In addition, the wishes and feelings of the child and their birth family should be included so that we can identify a suitable foster placement; for example, the right location to maintain access to school and contact with family members, and where possible matching the cultural and religious needs of the child.

2.2 **Recruitment, Initial Assessments, Training, and Assessment of Foster Carers**

The Service has responsibility for marketing, recruitment, training and assessing activities. Within the team is a dedicated marketing person from the Council's Marketing and Communication Services. The Recruitment Team host all the recruitment events and complete all Initial Assessments of prospective Foster Carers following enquiries made via City Direct, through the website and call centre and enquiries made at all the recruitment events which are planned throughout the year. If the Initial Assessment proves positive the Full Form 'F'



Assessment is commissioned to Core Assets for completion. Any Independent Fostering Agency transfers to Wolverhampton are completed in-house by Fostering Social Workers.

2.1 **Generic or Mainstream Fostering**

The Fostering Service has a pool of generic Foster Carers to care for Wolverhampton's vulnerable children requiring a foster placement. The assessment is completed over an average timescale of six months inclusive of stage 1 and stage 2 which now run concurrently. Historically these processes followed each other however by running concurrently the time to approval has reduced by 2 months from 8 months, the assessment is then presented to the Fostering Panel who recommend their approval which is subsequently ratified by the Agency Decision Maker.

2.2 **Support and Development**

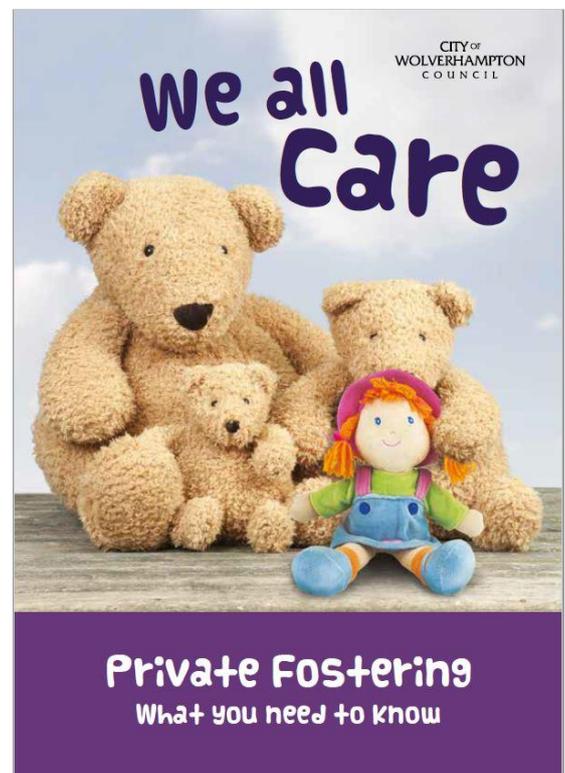
The Service has responsibility for providing supervision, support and post approval training to all mainstream and Family and Friends Foster Carers. The assessments of existing Foster Carers who wish to secure permanent placements for the children in their care are undertaken within the Service. A new Linking and Matching Policy & Procedure has been written and is now utilised by all Children's Social Care staff.

2.3 **Connected Persons Carers (Friends & Family)**

The Service is responsible for the assessment, training, and support of Connected Persons Carers and Special Guardianship carers. All Connected Persons Assessments are presented to the Fostering Panel who recommend their approval which is subsequently ratified by the Agency Decision Maker.

2.4 **Private Fostering**

This is regulated under the Children (Private Arrangement for Fostering) Regulations 2005. The Service is responsible for raising awareness with the public, professionals, parents and children. The assessments, training, and support of Private Foster Carers is also the responsibility of the Fostering Service. There are 2 Private Fostering Champions within the fostering service who regularly attend team meetings across Children's services, and Private Fostering Champions within the teams of our partner agencies and the voluntary sector and workshops are held to further increase awareness and understanding. The Fostering service supports Private Fostering Week in July each year and refreshes all material/leaflets whilst Private Fostering champions within the service deliver workshops and attend meetings to increase awareness and understanding. Private Fostering Forums are held quarterly where information is shared, and updates noted with regards to referrals and enquiries.



2.5 **Special Guardianship**

The responsibility for the assessment and support of Special Guardianship Orders is that of the Fostering Service. This encourages a more joined up approach between teams with the completion of assessment being a joint activity between the Social Worker in Fostering and the Social Worker for the child. If the Care Plan for the child recommends Long Term Fostering with either mainstream or Family and Friends as a permanency option a Special Guardianship Order should be encouraged where this is



deemed to be in the child's best interests, essentially removing the child from the care system, and transferring parental responsibility to the carer. A tracking tool has been devised and there is monthly oversight of progress to ensure permanency is achieved via SGO in a timely manner.

2.6 **Post Approval Training of Foster Carers**

Approximately eighty different courses are provided to Wolverhampton Foster Carers each year, these courses are provided by both internal and external providers and include on-line courses. The team has a full time Social Worker as a Training and Development Social Worker to assist in developing the learning opportunities for Foster Carers. The Social Worker is assisted by a Family Support Worker who facilitates some specific training events i.e. Buddy Training. During 2018/19 Thematic Training days were introduced offering a day's training with different workshops to attend and a Foster Carers Forum during the same day, this will maximise carers opportunities to attend multiple training combined with forums.

2.7 **Independent Reviewing Officers**

There is one Independent Reviewing Officer who undertakes all reviews of Foster Carers' households. The Independent Reviewing Officer is managed within the Safeguarding Service. The Independent Reviewing Officer completes a Foster Home Review annually which is shared with the Fostering Team and the Fostering Panel.

2.8 **Social work staffing**

There was a restructure of Children's Social Care in October 2018 and the Fostering Service has a full complement of 17.5 full time qualified Social Work posts, and 1.5 equivalent unqualified posts. The Fostering Service is divided into two teams

- Recruitment and Assessment (Mainstream and Connected)
- Support

Each team is managed by a Team Manager and each team manager is supported by a Senior Social Worker who supervises up to 4 social workers and manages half a caseload of casework.

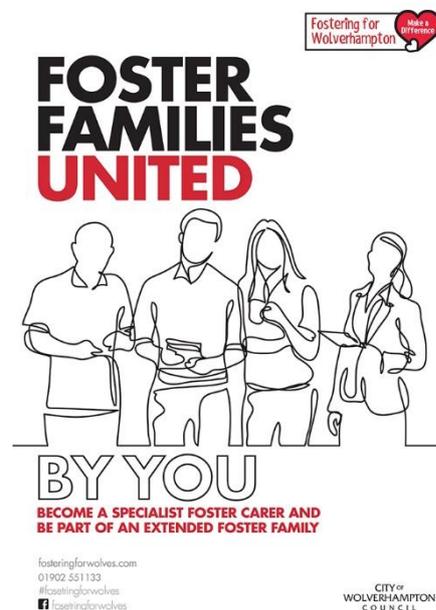
2.9 Staff training

There is a Workforce Development Plan in place which includes a wide range of training and development opportunities for staff throughout the year. This includes staff briefings and Looked After Children staff conferences. All members of staff are subject to yearly individual annual appraisal and reviews. During 2018/19 Two members of staff in the Fostering Service have undertaken stage one of the Practice Educators award whilst two members of staff have completed level Two through Wolverhampton University. All staff are currently attending bi-monthly Reflective Fostering sessions “Supporting Therapeutic Parenting” facilitated by a CAMHS Social Worker, this model will complement the training the same worker is also delivering to all Foster Carers likewise the innovative approach to the Supervision between carers and Supervising Social Workers currently being developed within the Fostering Service. Advanced Practitioners offer city-wide reflective sessions and workshops which can be accessed by Fostering staff.



2.10 Foster Families United

A new scheme “Foster Families United” was introduced following the presentation of a briefing note at Children’s Leadership Meeting” The project is a new approach based on a family model centred around one foster home which acts as a hub carer offering planned and emergency respite, advice, guidance, training and support to up to 5 carers within the hub. The hub empowers families to support each other and overcome potential problems before they escalate and offers children and young people a more positive experience of care. An enhanced support, training and financial package is offered with the same dedicated supervising social worker to all carers within the hub and clinical supervision from a CAMHS practitioner building on the therapeutic training offered.



3 FAMILY VALUES PROJECT

The Family values project has been in place since July 2017. It is a project developed following the report completed by iMPower with an aim to improve sufficiency and enable more looked after children to be cared for by in-house Foster Carers given that there has been an increased demand for Looked after children's placements and to maintain sufficiency, independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) have been used more frequently than would be wanted.

The Fostering Service is a provider to the council, with Foster Carers as professional staff delivering support to vulnerable children. It is by improving the quality of this role that the service can help deliver better outcomes for children and reduce the costs for City of Wolverhampton.

The Fostering service is also a customer-facing function, providing support and development to Foster Carers. It is by improving the customer-facing function, providing support and development to Foster Carer. It is by improving the customer-facing offer that the council can improve its recruitment and retention, which enables growth and improved outcomes and cost for the council.

The Key growth opportunity areas for the service are –

- Increasing Enquiry Generation
- Improve Enquiry handling
- Develop the support and supervision offer to existing and new Foster Carers.
-

The project concluded its second year – 31st March 2019 and this report charts the progress made and the impact of the project on recruitment and support of foster carers. The project has created energy and has served as a platform for ideas beyond the original objectives set at the outset.

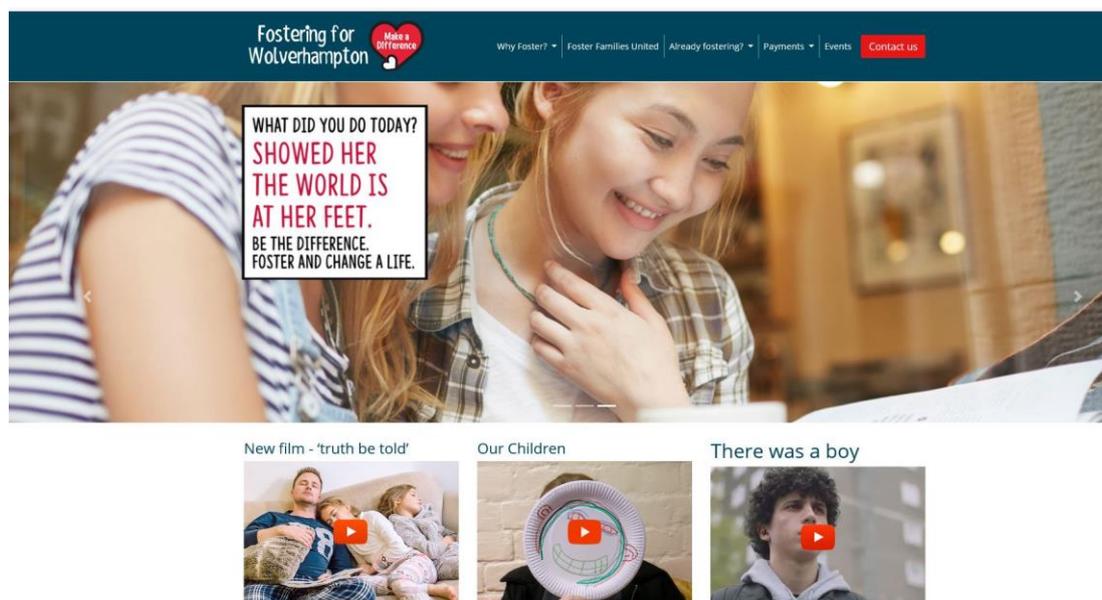
4 RECRUITMENT (ENQUIRY GENERATION)

4.1 The Recruitment and Assessment Team continue to increase the capacity of the foster carer population and the quality of care offered. Through a comprehensive marketing and recruitment strategy that works creatively with foster carers and the wider public in 2018/19, the service has enhanced the quality of enquiries with an increasing number of those coming from Independent Fostering Agencies.

4.2 Between 1st April 2018 and 31st March 2019, marketing activity has generated 349 initial leads, these are via events, the fostering website, Facebook, telephone and word of mouth. 152 of these initial enquiries have passed the initial screening and have been progressed by the Assessment team within the Fostering Service. A total of 59 Initial Assessments were completed during the year.

4.3 The Fostering for Wolverhampton online presence continues to support the recruitment of foster carers particularly since the launch of the new website which was introduced earlier in 2018. The programme of digital advertising campaigns is driving people to the website with the average position of the ads being on the 2nd, 3rd or 4th page within google search results. Facebook campaigns continue to drive people to the website to

make an enquiry and this has resulted in 23 leads which have been followed up. Since the launch of the website to date there have been 28,006 visits.



- 4.4 There have been continued traditional targeted campaigns, including New Cross Hospital, University of Wolverhampton, West Midland Police, West Midlands Fire Service, Housing Associations and Nuffield Health. The marketing team continue to be in the early stages of talks with Marston's and Aerospace in Wolverhampton regarding recruitment campaigns for their staff. Wolverhampton are regularly holding events within Costa Coffee shops in the city and there was a stand at the City Jobs Fair. A more formal event was held at the Molineux Football Ground, all were successful in returning quality applicants. Generally, throughout the year campaigns have targeted "Now People" to include professional and aspirational residents.
- 4.5 The May 2018 fostering recruitment fortnight resulted in 17 online enquiries, 4 phone enquiries and 49 face to face enquiries. These enquiries resulted in 12 moving forward to initial assessments.
- 4.6 The September 2018 the Fostering recruitment drive resulted in 12 online enquiries, 5 phone enquiries and 13 face to face enquiries. 21 of these enquiries were progressed by the assessment team, 9 of these were closed following the initial enquiry, 8 had positive Initial Assessments and were allocated to Core assets for the completion of a Form F assessment. All attended the Skills to Foster training in November. To coincide with September's recruitment, drive a Fostering Pop up Shop opened in the Mander centre. The shop opened August-September 2018 and December 2018-January 2019, 4 applications received from the shop have been successful at panel and thus approved as foster carers.
- 4.7 In January 2019 the Fostering recruitment week resulted in 43 people attending the 8 events with 11 making face to face enquiries and 32 people given information at events. There were 30 online enquiries and 5 phone enquiries. 10 Initial Assessments were completed following this recruitment week.
- 4.8 The regional fostering film "There was a boy" was launched in Birmingham earlier in the year and used in the fostering recruitment fortnight campaign. In March 2019 a further

regional film was launched “Truth be told” which already has been viewed 20,000 times. Both films were produced regionally with local authorities working collaboratively and the films used successfully for external promotions and training purposes. A Care Leavers video was produced, and foster carer Mo Powell was filmed with Supervising Foster Carer Kulwinder Bhogal, again both were used for training and promotional purposes.

4.9 The foster carer newsletter is published monthly and includes all relevant information to inform foster carers whilst including a section “fostering story of the month” Good news stories from foster carers and social workers are routinely sought and included as appropriate.

4.10 We all know that Foster Carers can portray a realistic and positive view of fostering, we use several Foster Carers Champions who work with the Recruitment and Assessment Team to support the innovative marketing and recruitment campaigns. Alongside this, approved Foster Carers also support Information sessions and preparatory “Skills to Foster” training for new applicants.



4.11 Telephone enquiries continue to be routed through Customer services and Fostering Recruitment Social Workers are available to respond immediately to callers who want more information and will arrange initial visits to further discuss. Training sessions are continuing to be offered by the social workers in the recruitment and assessment team to the customer service officers. The fostering newsletter is shared with customer services staff to keep them updated with the latest news/campaigns to enhance their awareness & understanding, customer services and the fostering service continue to develop their relationship to improve outcomes and timeliness for responding to initial enquiries regarding prospective carers. A Foster Carer listens to recordings of calls to quality assess and suggests any changes to be made to scripts/information shared.

4.12 The Recruitment and Assessment Team includes a dedicated fostering marketing person and there is a Marketing and Communications plan in place for on-going recruitment campaigns.

4.13 Recruitment continues to be sustained by three main periods of campaign activity throughout the year in Foster care fortnight in May and a recruitment week in September and January. These campaigns comprise a week or two weeks of information events at venues throughout the city using the recruitment bus and

information stands. These are promoted through targeted digital advertising through Google AdWords and Facebook and other sites, social media posts and public relations, a chronicle wrap, radio advertising, email marketing and communication through organisations including Wolverhampton Hospitals NHS Trust, West Midlands Police, Wolverhampton Homes, Costa Coffee, University of Wolverhampton, West Midlands Fire Service and Bromford Housing.

- 4.14 Regular information events are held throughout the year which provide opportunities for prospective foster carers to meet the recruitment team to find out more about fostering. These are held on the first Friday of every month when we host a fostering Friday roadshow in Queen Square and other high footfall locations. Also, bi-monthly information evenings are held at the Molineux.
- 4.15 Targeted Facebook advertising is ongoing throughout the year and is refreshed with the new artwork developed for each campaign. The Fostering for Wolves Facebook page is also regularly updated with news, video case studies and events and shares national news and information from the Fostering Network.
- 4.16 We also attend the Regional Fostering Marketing Working Group attended by 13 Local Authorities across the west and east Midlands and share examples of best practice and explore ways of working together across the region.
- 4.17 There are currently 18 Form F (Mainstream assessments) underway and 14 Form C (Connected)



5. SKILLS TO FOSTER (Preparation Training)

- 5.1 The preparation course follows the “Skills to Foster” programme, devised by the Fostering Network. Wolverhampton continues to be part of the Black Country Consortium, along with Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall. The Authorities work in partnership offering two places to any of the other local authorities on every course they run. Each of the local authorities delivers the course a varying number of times, with Wolverhampton running the course six times yearly. Wolverhampton runs the Skills to Foster course every other month offering applicants the maximum flexibility to attend at a time most convenient to themselves.
- 5.2 In total, during 2018/19 33 households attended the preparation courses with 28 progressing onto the full assessments, 6 applicants were not approved or dropped out

of Assessment process, 3 decided not to foster after all, 1 dropped out as her son moved back home 1 was due to finances and the references received cancelled 1 applicant out.

- 5.3 During 2018/19 the Sufficiency Strategy continued to review every aspect of the recruitment process to achieve ambitious targets to grow local capacity of available in-house Foster Carers. The need to increase the proportion of foster care placements with internal Foster Carers remains. There have been significant improvements over the last five years as set out in the table below;

Type of Placement	Number of Looked After Children Placed					
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Family and Friends	45	50	62	71	78	95
Internal Foster Carer placements	158	171	186	193	201	185
IFA placements	382	343	268	247	226	198

6. Assessments:

- 6.1 Assessments are part of the core work of the Recruitment and Assessment Team which enables the building of a comprehensive picture of the applicants. Evidence based, and analytical assessments are completed on all prospective Foster Carers to help understand their motivation and ability to care for children who have experienced loss, separation and trauma. Caring for such children requires Foster Carers with a degree of resilience and patience in understanding the needs and presenting behaviours of children who have experienced childhood trauma including neglect and abuse. In addition, to collating information the assessment explores the applicants own experience of childhood, their parenting skills, understanding of safeguarding children and ability to create a warm and nurturing home for children.
- 6.2 References are sought from a variety of relevant organisations, in addition to personal references supplied by the applicants.
- 6.3 The full fostering Form F Assessment is commissioned from an Independent Provider, currently this is Core Assets who are contracted until 2020. Quarterly meetings are held to review ongoing assessments and any concerns highlighted within the context of the contract.
- 6.4 Mainstream Foster Carers care for children and young people initially on a short term basis until their permanency plan is secured. This plan may include children returning to parents, or being placed long term with Friends, Family or Mainstream Foster Carers.
- 6.5 Foster Carers are approved under a generic approval category for children and young people between the ages of birth and eighteen years. If there is a smoker within the Fostering household, they will be approved for 5 to 18 years. This approval enables

Foster Carers to care for children on a temporary and permanent basis. In addition, consideration, can be given to respite care and emergency placements. To bring all Foster Carers in line with the approval category all Mainstream Foster Carers have received a revised Fostering Agreement.

- 6.6 As of 31st March 2019, there were 177 approved mainstream fostering households, which offered a total of 185 placements. There were 4 Foster Carers on Adoption Leave who have offered adoptive placements or Special Guardianship to a further 4 children. In addition, there are eight fostering households currently dormant due to ill health or home improvements being undertaken, it is unlikely that they will all resume fostering however one has advised they will be ready to foster again in September 2019. There are two further households who have chosen to be dormant due to family issues.

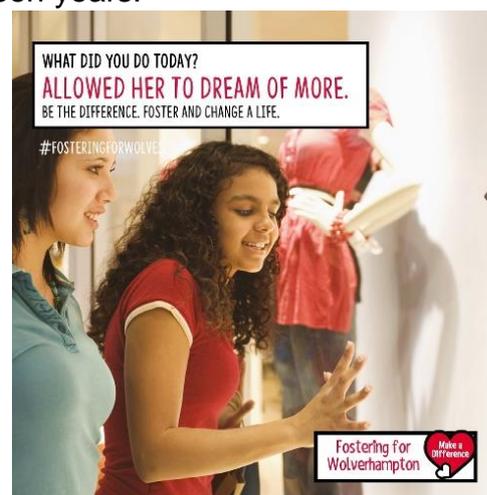
Family and Friends Foster Care is an area of growth and as of the 31st March 2019 there are 36 approved households offering 95 placements.

7. Permanency through Long Term Fostering:

- 7.1 The City of Wolverhampton Fostering Service seeks to achieve permanency for children and young people with a Care Plan of Long-Term Fostering. Children needing permanent placements who are placed with Foster Carers who cannot offer Long Term care are referred to the Personalised Support Team. Placement Meetings will be convened to include the Child's Social Worker and the Supervising Social Worker. Internal Foster Carers availability will be explored to offer permanency. Where there is no availability external provision would be sought. Those children who are placed with Foster Carers who wish to proceed to securing permanency in their care will have their Care Plan discussed at the Placement Meeting and subsequent Looked After Children's Review within the first year of placement. The Looked After Review paperwork where the linking & matching is ratified will be presented to the Fostering Panel. Permanent carers make a commitment to care for a child or young person until they reach the age of independence. These carers often go on to provide 'Staying Put' arrangements for young people to remain in the household post eighteen years.

- 7.2 This year the Fostering Service has secured 10 Long-Term placements for children via the Linking and Matching process. 1 of the Long-Term Placements were for sibling groups of two children. Most of the Long-Term placements were secured for children with their current Foster Carers which were provided by both internal (5) and external resources (5).

- 7.3 The Child's Social Worker together with the Fostering Supervising Social Worker are responsible for progressing permanency for the child within the first year of placement where their plan is that of permanency outside the family. A new policy & procedure to reflect the Linking and Matching process was agreed in April 2018. Training has been provided on the new Linking and Matching Procedure.



8. Family and Friends Foster Carers: (Connected Carers)

- 8.1 Local Authorities have a responsibility to consider members of the child's family, or friends (Connected Persons Carers) during Care Proceedings and when a child is facing the possibility of becoming looked after.
- 8.2 The Family and Friends Team work together with Locality Teams advising and completing joint Viability Assessments of prospective Family and Friends Foster Carers. The location of some relative Foster Carers can place an added pressure on the Service due to the time involved in travel. We currently have 20 out of city placements.
- 8.3 Family and Friends Foster Carers put themselves forward to care for children who are connected to them by association or relationship. They are assessed by the Service as to their suitability to provide appropriate care in accordance with the Fostering Regulations 2011. From April 2018 – March 2019 there were 23 Family and Friends Carers approved which provided a total of 95 placements for Children in Care.
- 8.4 During the period of 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019 there were 23 positive Form C Assessment approvals. These assessments were completed within internal resources. A further 25 Form C Assessments were commenced or completed. Some were of negative outcome and others did not progress to Panel for assorted reasons i.e. change in Care Plan or applicant's withdrawal during the assessment process. There were 16 ongoing Form C assessments on 31st March 2019 which were all being undertaken by the Social Workers within the Recruitment and Assessment Team.
- 8.5 The Family and Friends Team have undertaken 103 Viability Assessments of which 15 were Schedule 4 (temporary approval) Assessments from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019.

Family Group Conferences/Family Meetings are required as part of the process for Family and Friends Foster Carers, to reduce the number of referrals for multiple Viability Assessments for the same child. This should, subsequently reduce the number of assessments which do not progress onto a full assessment during Care Proceedings. It will also allow for assessments to be allocated at the earliest opportunity to avoid delay in allocation, completion and restrictions in Panel availability.

- 8.6 Schedule 4 Assessments whereby Family and Friends Foster Carers are granted temporary approval require allocation of a Social Worker to supervise and assess the placement suitability within a sixteen-week timescale. An extension of eight weeks continues to be applied where required and a clear process is now being followed via Panel and Head of Service to reduce the number of unregulated placements. These are likely to occur due to a delay in checks and references, rather than assessment completion. There are currently 9 Schedule 4 assessments within the service, all progressing to completion of a Form C.
- 8.7 In previous years, Family and Friends Foster Carers have been reluctant to attend training and maintain records given the nature of their relationships as the majority are grandparents. However, over the last year there has been a continued increase in numbers of Friends and Family Carers accessing training courses and completing their Training, Support and Development Standards.

Skills to Foster continues to be attended as part of the assessment process for connected carers. There were 10 courses delivered in 2018/19 to both Mainstream and Connected carers. These were attended by 33 prospective Foster Carers. To ensure there is frequent availability of the Skills to Foster Training there are plans for the course

to continue to be held 10 times a year with the training being evenly distributed during the year.

9. Short Breaks (Shared Care) Foster Carers:

- 9.1 There is one approved short break Foster Carer providing shared care placements for disabled children. The Short Break Carers are usually professionals who work full time. They offer regular breaks to parents and carers who have children who have disabilities so that they can have a break from their caring responsibilities. We continue attempts to enhance this area within the recruitment and communication strategy for 2019/20 and will incorporate expertise from within the Disabled Children and Young Peoples service to the marketing campaigns.



10. Special Guardianship:

- 10.1 In June 2014, the responsibility for the assessment and support for Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's) moved to the Fostering Service. Where the care plan is for the child not to return home, Family and Friends Foster Carers are encouraged to apply for Special Guardianship Orders, thereby replacing a Care Order and Looked After Child status, giving parental responsibility to the carer.
- 10.2 There is a full-time SGO Support Social Worker dedicated to the role of supporting and advising Foster Carers and Family and Friends Carers about the details of caring for children under the Special Guardianship Order should they consider this to be a future option. The SGO Support Social Worker is also able to discuss on-going support plans to ensure that the needs of the child and Special Guardian continue to be met.
- 10.3 There is a step by step flow chart to assist Social Workers in the SGO process to allow for a smooth transition. This also provides guidance on administrative tasks needing to be undertaken post the SGO being granted; this is fundamental in capturing the child's journey through care and informing any future support.
- 10.4 SGO's also feature within the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE's) Programme and Social Work Briefings to improve knowledge regarding family care arrangements, Special Guardianship and current policies in place. In addition to this the SGO Support Social Worker holds monthly Permanency Clinics which allows Children's Social Workers to drop in to discuss the available permanency options. This is further supported by the Fostering and Adoption Advanced Practitioner who delivers city wide workshops to discuss permanency options.
- 10.5 Prospective Family and friends Foster Carer's are expected to attend the Skills to Foster preparation course which has been designed to meet the needs of prospective Foster Carers, this also informs them of the permanence options, processes and assessments involved. The SGO Support Social Worker has now implemented an SGO Training Module specifically for Family and Friends Foster Carer's which runs directly after each preparation course. This has been planned to inform the prospective Foster Carers of their options at the earliest opportunity.

- 10.6 The Supervising Social Worker and the Child's Social Worker jointly complete the Special Guardianship Report. The SGO Support Social Worker completes the Support Plan with the Social Workers involved and shares this with the Foster Carers or Family and Friends Foster Carer's. Special Guardians can now access all training that is currently offered to our internal Foster Carers and Family and Friends Foster Carers.
- 10.7 The Support Plan is reviewed annually by the SGO Support Social Worker who currently sits within the Family and Friends Foster Carers Team and post-SGO support remains high on the agenda for this current fiscal year. A total of 20 Special Guardianship Orders were granted in year 2018/19 with 16 currently in the assessment process to be filed during this year. The target to achieve 30 SGO orders 2019/20 is well on course and it is expected given the current progress that the target will be exceeded.

11 Performance

- 11.1 The 2018/19 target was to achieve a net gain of 26 mainstream foster carers. Between 1st April 2018 and 31st March 2019, we achieved the following; -

Approved Foster Carers	24
Number of de-registrations	10
• This resulted in a net Gain of 14 Mainstream Foster Carers.	

- 11.2 With 24 mainstream approvals and 10 de-registrations the overall net gain of foster mainstream foster carers was 14.
- 11.3 The number of children placed with internal carers has increased. There were 82 more children placed in internal foster care provision on 31st March 2019 than in IFA placements. When comparing end of year dates for 2017/18 and 2018/19 a weekly cost saving of £21,837 was made in the foster care placement budget (excluding unit costs for supplying internal foster care)
- 11.4 On 31st March 2018 there were 46 friends and family foster carer households. By 31st March 2019 this has increased to 53. This is an increase of 7 friends and family households taking those connected placements which converted to SGO as 23 connected assessments were approved in the year. This increase in households has resulted in an additional 10 children being placed with friends and family carers between the same dates.

Period	Approvals at panel
April 2015 - March 2016	18 approvals
April 2016 - March 2017	11 approvals
April 2017 - March 2018	19 approvals
April 2018 - March 2019	23 approvals

Timescales of Recruitment of new Foster Carers

Year	Number of Mainstream Approvals	Average Days for Approval	% of Cases Approved in Timeframe
2015/16	21	278	56% (8-month target)

2016/17	22	217	72% (8-month target)
2017/18	20	227	50% (8-month target)
2018/19	24	170	67% (6-month target)

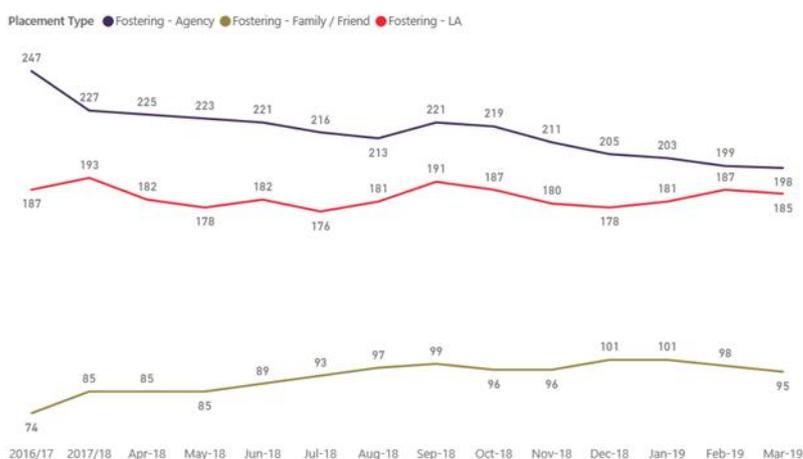
11.5 In the year there were 24 foster carers approved at an average timescale of 170 days. This is the largest number of approvals in any of the last four years and the lowest average days. The average days decrease is in line with a reduction in target from 242 days (8 months) to 183 days (6 months).

11.6 Of the 24 approvals in the year, 16 were approved within timescale (183 days). The shortest time taken to be approved was 131 days, the longest time taken was 274 days. There was a reduction of 73 days in the longest time taken to approve a foster carer between 2017/18 and 2018/19. The longest time taken to approve a foster carer in 2018/19 was shorter than the average time taken to approve a foster carer in 2015/16.

11.7 There was a difference between the rate of foster carers being approved in the second half of the year compared to the first. In the first 6 months of the year only 10 approvals were made compared to 14 in the second half. Despite this, cases approved in the second half of the year took slightly longer to approve, 161 days in the first six months and 177 in the final six months.

11.8 In the year the local authority lost 10 mainstream foster carers who de-registered. Out of these 10, 2 were due to a Special Guardianship Order for a child who was placed with them long term. Reasons for the other 8 de-registrations was due to either resignation as carers or retirement. All were offered exit interviews but other than one was declined.

11.9 Placement of Children in Care with Internal Foster Carers



11.10 The gap between the number of children placed with internal foster carers and those placed with agency foster carers has increased substantially in 2017/18, which is a strong result.

11.11

Date	Children in Mainstream Foster Care	Children in Friends and Family Foster Care	Total Internal Foster Care	Children placed with IFA	Difference
31st March 2016	186	59	245	261	-16
31st March 2017	187	74	261	247	+14
31st March 2018	193	85	278	227	+51
31st March 2019	185	95	280	198	+82

11.12 Despite a net gain of 21 foster carers this has only resulted in a gain of two additional children placed with internal foster carers in the year. The gap has widened due to the reduction in children in IFA placements, which reduced by 29 placements over the period. Since 31st March 2016 there are an additional 30 children placed internally and 63 fewer children placed with IFA's.

11.13 The shortfall in IFA placements can be accounted for during the past 12 months by the increase in the number of children living independently, and an overall decrease in the number of children and young people who are looked after.

Positive Outcomes for Children

11.14 In 2018/19, 13 children left care due to a Special Guardianship Order to their former foster parent.

11.15 Two of these were mainstream carers and 11 were friends and family carers.

11.16 In comparison in 2017/18 only 4 children left care due to a Special Guardianship Order to a foster carer. All were to friends and family carers.

11.17 Further to this in 2018/19 14 children were adopted by their foster carer compared to 5 in 2017/18.

11.18 Overall this equates to 27 children leaving care to live with their foster carer in 2018/19 compared to 9 in 2017/18.

11.19 Although these are extremely positive outcomes for the children it also shows that a net gain has been achieved against a higher-level foster care cessation than in previous years. It also shows that pressure from other projects can have a knock-on effect on Family Values performance.

Finance

Date	Total Weekly Cost of Children in Mainstream Foster Care	Total Weekly Cost of Children in Friends and Family Foster Care	Total Weekly Cost of Internal Foster Care	Total Weekly Cost of Children placed with IFA	Total Weekly Cost of Foster Care	Change Since Previous Year
31st March 2016	£64,728	£20,532	£85,260	£202,797	£288,057	
31st March 2017	£65,076	£25,752	£90,828	191,919	£282,747	-£5,310
31st March 2018	£67,164	£29,580	£96,744	£176,379	£273,123	-£9,624
31st March 2019	£64,380	£33,060	£97,440	£153,846	£251,286	-£21,837

11.20 Taking a snapshot of placements at the 31st March from each year, on 31st March 2019 there was a weekly saving of £21,837 in spend on foster care placements compared to 31st March 2018.

11.21 Taking a snapshot of the end of June 2017, when the family values project started and comparing it to 31st March 2019, there is a weekly cost saving of £31,234. If this saving was replicated over a year it would show a yearly saving of £1,624,168.

11.22 It should be noted that this saving is calculated purely on placement costs and does not incorporate any additional unit cost attributed to placing children internally.

12 Support (Post Approval supervision, support and reviewing)

12.1 The support workstream made good progress throughout the year, a renewed training programme was introduced for the year which included themed training and development days incorporating foster carer forums. This has achieved a higher level of attendance both at training and forums.

12.2 A Therapeutic Parenting Training Programme has been delivered throughout the year which gives foster carers insight in how to provide care to children and young people considering their experiences prior to foster care. This is upskilling carers and supporting resilience and is seeing significant improvement in placement stability.

- 12.3 Restorative Practice Training has been completed by 24 carers and there will be further training events ongoing. The restorative approach is incorporated into every training event with a check-in and check-out and a section during training to discuss restorative practice.
- 12.4 Carer profiles have been completed and filed on both carers' records and on the foster carers register which supports the placement team when identifying placements and advising social workers of the carer's details. A separate stand-alone personal Development Plan has been devised and are currently in the process of being completed in respect of all foster carers.
- 12.5 There have been several special events for foster carers and their families throughout the year including an Easter Egg Hunt, Summer Picnic in the Park, Halloween Party and a Christmas party. These events have all been well attended and there has been exclusively positive feedback from carers and children in care. A Foster carers conference was held in July 2018 where there was a variety of speakers including the poet and broadcaster Lemm Sissay, an Educational Psychologist and young people discussing their "lived experience" of foster care. The "Love of Fostering Awards" were held in December 2019 where carers were recognised for their achievements throughout the year.
- 12.6 There is a "Buddy Scheme" in place and the buddying scheme was revised during the year and training offered to all level 3 carers in providing buddy support to newly approved or less experienced foster carers. 35 foster carers were trained as buddies with 15 to date paired up with newly approved or less experienced foster carers. All newly approved foster carers receive weekly visits for 6 weeks following approval at panel.
- 12.7 A portal for foster carers has been developed by ICT and the support workstream during the year. Technical difficulties have delayed implementation however the portal will be launched in July 2019 at the annual foster carers conference. The portal will allow all carers access to pertinent information regarding training and events and will be interactive, supporting the recording of fostering logs.
- 12.8 The Fostering administrators maintain a database which records complaints, allegations, DBS completions, Health & Safety, Delegated Authority and unannounced visits. The team manager and senior social worker supply updated information to ensure accuracy of the database. There continues to be regular contact between dormant carers and fostering and there are currently 8 dormant carers.
- 12.9 A Foster Carers Level 3/4 panel has been set up quarterly where foster carers present their application alongside their supervising social worker to be considered for escalation from level 2 to level 3 or level 3 to level 4. Two panels have been held so far with 4 carers to progress from level 2 to 3 agreed.
- 12.10 Implementation of a new scheme was agreed following the presentation of a briefing note at Children's Leadership Meeting in February named "Foster Families United" The project is a new approach based on a family model centred around one foster home which acts as a hub carer offering planned and emergency respite, advice, guidance, training and support to up to 5 carers within the hub. The hub empowers families to

support each other and overcome potential problems before they escalate and offers children and young people a more positive experience of care. An enhanced support, training and financial package is offered with the same dedicated supervising social worker to all carers within the hub and clinical supervision from a CAMHS practitioner building on the therapeutic training offered. This scheme will be launched during Fostering Fortnight in May 2019. The scheme will be both incorporated into main fostering events and specifically targeted events throughout the year.

- 12.11 The Key to Inspiration residential unit is due to open soon where children and young people in care will be placed for assessment and will then be “stepped down” or moved into appropriate placements. The Fostering Service will be looking to recruit new carers to take more complex placements and will work closely with Key 2 Inspiration with a view to providing step down placements.
- 12.12 All approved Foster Carers are allocated a qualified Supervising Social Worker. Following approval, the Supervising Social Workers is responsible for supervising and supporting carers, ensuring that they have the necessary guidance, support, challenge and direction to maintain a quality service, including safe care practices. This includes an agreement that they must work within the agency’s policies, procedures and guidance. One Supervising Social Worker post has been protected within the support team to exclusively support and supervise Family and Friends (Connected Carers)
- 12.13 Our focus is placement stability, reducing placement moves and improving outcomes for children. All our Foster Carers have direct access to local partners in health and education who also provide them with advice and support. Foster Carers provide placements for children and young people who present challenges and have a range of complex needs. All Foster Carers are offered support to meet these challenges. In addition, the Fostering service provides specific training to Foster Carers to help them understand and manage the child’s presenting needs.
- 12.14 Wolverhampton has a commissioning arrangement with Foster talk who offer support to all of Wolverhampton’s approved Foster Carers including; legal advice and expenses, insurance cover, a 24-hour legal advice helpline, a 24-hour counselling support helpline, an education support line, a Social Work support helpline and access to discounts and exclusive offers via the use of a MAX card.
- 12.15 Newly approved Foster Carers are reviewed after six months and then annually thereafter by an Independent Reviewing Officer. This will involve the Foster Carer meeting with the Independent Reviewing Officer who will discuss the activity of a Foster carer to ensure they continue to be suitable. The Independent Reviewing Officer will seek the views of the Foster Carer, the child in placement (subject to age and understanding), the Child’s Social Worker, the child’s Independent Reviewing Officer, the Supervising Social Worker and any other appropriate person during the review process. Views are collected using Consultation Questionnaire’s. The review is also an opportunity for the Foster Carer to review the service and support given to the children placed. An early Foster Home Review maybe requested by the Fostering Service where there are concerns about Foster carers practice or where there have been allegations.

- 12.16 During the period 1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019, 175 Foster Home Reviews were undertaken as detailed below. During the same period, last year, 173 Foster Home Reviews were undertaken.
- 12.17 Throughout this review period 35 newly registered Foster Carers have been reviewed, being family and Friends Foster Carers. All newly approved Foster Carers are reviewed within six months of first registration.

Mainstream Foster Carers	172
Connected Persons	37
Shared Care Foster Carers	1

- Overall, the Reviews have remained positive and the standard of Foster Care delivered to children and young people remains good. Last year concerns were raised that supports to newly approved carers were poor however additional support particularly in the first six weeks post approval has seen a decrease in complaints.
- Completed unannounced visits have increased to 87%
- A high percentage of carers have completed their TSDS workbook.
- Regular supervision of Foster Carers is of a good level.
- Overall, the Reviews have remained positive and the standard of Foster Care delivered to children and young people remains good.

13 FOSTER CARER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

O

- 13.1 Training is a continual process and all approved Wolverhampton Foster Carers are offered new and refresher training courses to update their skills on a regular basis. Foster Carers are required to complete the evidenced based Training, Support and Development Standards work book within the first year of approval (first eighteen months for Family and Friends Foster Carers). The Fostering Service provides eight to ten mandatory training courses twice a year for all new Foster Carers and a range of development training opportunities. Over 2018/19 25 Foster carers completed Restorative Practice training whilst during 2019/20 all remaining Foster carers will be offered the opportunity to complete this training. Therapeutic Parenting Training courses are held twice yearly whilst the Nurturing Programme is held 3 times per year.
- 13.2 Foster Carers' training needs are identified as part of their Personal Development Plan (PDP) and reviewed regularly during supervision. The PDP's assist in identifying gaps in Foster Carers skills and knowledge and to ensure that they can meet their obligations in accordance with their Fostering Agreement. Failure to attend identified training would result in the Foster Carer being in non-compliance with the Fostering Agreement and could place their continuing approval at risk. The PDP is now completed as a separate document and stored on the document hub for each Foster carer.
- 13.3 Approved Foster Carers who live a distance from Wolverhampton are offered the opportunity to complete their training on-line or with a local training provider where the funding has been agreed.

- 13.4 To access training Foster Carers can book courses through their Supervising Social Worker or by calling the office by telephone and speaking with their Supervising Social Worker, a Unit Administrator or the Duty Social Worker. There is also availability for Foster Carers to book on-line training via the Safeguarding Hub.
- 13.5 To develop and enhance the training and development of Foster Carers there is a full-time Training Social Worker within the Fostering Team. Her role is to strengthen the importance of continual development and to ensure that Foster Carer's training is targeted to meet the needs of children placed. Completed Training will be recorded on the Foster Carers file and reviewed during Supervision and their PDP.
- 13.6 The Fostering Service holds an Annual Conference for all Foster Carers to attend, this includes professional speakers during the morning, speaking to the whole group about issues such as attachment, cultural considerations and sibling placements and small group training workshops in the afternoon. This event is used to network and demonstrate to Foster Carers that they are valued in their role. A conference for Foster Carers was held July 4th, 2018 where Lemm Sissay gave a presentation reflecting on his experiences in care. Feedback for conferences has been exclusively positive. There is a further conference planned for July 10th, 2019.
- 13.7 In December 2018, there was an award ceremony held to celebrate the successes of fostering and to award Foster Carers for their commitment to fostering by recognising their length of service. The event was supported by Senior Management and Local Authority Members. Entertainment was provided by individual and group singers. Following the event many Foster Carers contacted the Fostering Service to inform that they thoroughly enjoyed their evening.
- 13.8 The Foster Carer Forum and Support Groups have been amalgamated to encourage attendance as this was historically poor. There have been 10 Support and Focus Forums planned during this year, these are taking place during Training development days and in the evenings to try and ensure accessibility to Foster Carers who work. Attendance of the Support and Focus Forum continues to grow.
- 13.9 There is an updated Fostering Handbook of which a hard copy has been sent out to all Foster carers. The handbook contains pertinent information useful to carers and is regularly updated to reflect any changes.
- 13.10 At the end of March 2019 out of the 177 -approved mainstream Foster Carers, all have either completed or are in the process of completing the Training, Support and Development standards (TSDS). The Foster Carers who are in the process of securing Adoption or Special Guardianship Orders are not required to complete the TSDS. Newly registered Foster Carers are being supported to achieve the standards within twelve months of approval. This is facilitated by the TSDS workshops.

14 Fostering Panel:

- 14.1 The work of the Fostering Panel is governed by the Fostering Services Regulations 2011. The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, The National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011. The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015. The Panel must advise on:
- Reviews of approvals (Regulation 28), and monitor their effectiveness
 - Oversee the conduct of assessments

- Give advice and make recommendations on any other matters referred

- 14.2 The Fostering Panel makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker who is the Head of Service, for Looked after Children within ten working days of the panel meeting. The Head of Children in Need and Child Protection deputises in the absence of The Head of Service Looked After Children.
- 14.3 The Fostering Panel also have a quality assurance role, offering feedback on the quality and content of reports submitted and the presentation and knowledge of the social workers attending, by way of a Performance Management Form. The quality assurance extends to how the Panel Members are prepared for their task.
- 14.4 The Adoption and Permanence Panels were introduced to the panels the previous year and offered greater opportunities for the development of Wolverhampton's Permanency Policy however these will cease to become part of the Fostering Service since the introduction of Adoption at Heart on 1st April 2019. The Adoption & Permanence Panel complies with regulations During the year 2018/19, Members were asked to give feedback via one performance form completed by the Panel and fed back to the Management Team. This covers the quality of the paperwork submitted; practice and procedural issues and the overall analysis of reports submitted. All visitors attending the Panel were asked to complete a feedback form to inform on the overall service offered by the Fostering Panel. Despite making the feedback forms available in a variety of ways, e.g. in the invitation letter, not everyone was prepared to complete the form.
- 14.5 It continues to be a busy period for the Fostering Panel, with a steady flow of Foster Carer approvals, resignations and deregistration of Foster Carers. There has been a steady increase in the number of placements made with Family and Friends Foster Carers as in the previous year. Foster Carer's first annual reviews have been presented to panel, as have reviews requiring change of approval category, and reviews following concerns and guidance relevant to both Adoption and Fostering: Adoption agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012. The Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous amendments) regulations 2013. The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (amendments) Regulations 2015; The Fostering Regulations 2011. Panel Members from the Central List with both adoption and fostering experience makes up the Permanence Panel. The composition of Fostering Panels, terms of reference and functions are set out in the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011. This constitution and terms of reference provides the framework for the operation of the Adoption and Permanence Panel. It is reviewed annually.

Adoption at Heart was introduced 1st April 2019 and all matters related to adoption will be addressed through Adoption at Heart therefore the Fostering Service will from 1st April 2019 only be responsible for all Fostering Matters.

Going forward there will be two Fostering panels a month and one Virtual Fostering panel.

- 14.6 In line with good practice, and the Fostering Regulation (2011), there is an independent Chair and five Independent Panel Members, two with fostering experience, one a previous Foster Carer. Two Independent Members are also the Vice Chairs. The Panel attendance remains high, demonstrating a high commitment from Members who have been Panel Members with Wolverhampton for some time. Two Panel Members have

been trained up this year to Vice Chair positions and all three can sit on either Adoption or Fostering Panels as Vice Chairs.

- 14.7 The Central List consists of two previously Looked After Children, Foster Carers, Adoptees, Adopters; a birth relative who managed to trace his adoptive siblings and those that were Looked After and a Councillor. There was at this time last year an over representation of women on the Panel and attempts made to resolve this have been successful with more men appointed with a panel membership now more reflective of the communities in Wolverhampton, and the children for whom we are responsible. The number of Members to the Central List remains constant we are always looking to embrace new enquiries.
- 14.8 The Panel has access to legal and medical advice as required. It is not a statutory requirement for a legal advisor to be present, but legal advice must be accessible where required.
- 14.9 From 1st April 2019, Wolverhampton Fostering Panel will meet twice a month and the Permanence Panel once a month. Over the review period there has been 27 meetings to meet the demands of the service. 24 of these meetings were planned with a further 3 being on call as additional Panels. This exemplifies the versatility and ability of the Panel and its Member to rise to the challenges presented.

In the main the work of the Fostering Panel focused on approvals of fostering assessments, Foster Carers de-registration due to safeguarding concerns, and not fostering due to remaining dormant, first and subsequent foster home review of Foster Carers, including changes of approval category, as were Family and Friends Foster Carers matters and Matches for Long Term Fostering. Children's Long Term Fostering Best Interest Decisions are agreed through the Virtual Panel since 2013. The approval of a plan of Long Term Fostering and match at the Fostering Panel is not a function of the Fostering Panel.

- 14.10 Development over this period continues to provide a flexible approach to the use of resources, historically the Adoption Panel as appropriate is utilised as an Adoption and Permanency Panel. This is so that there is a throughput and progress of children's permanency cases which would otherwise sit on a waiting list. This involves the formal matching of Looked After Children who have a plan of Long Term Fostering with Long Term or Permanent Foster Carers, and those who are placed with Family and Friends Foster Carers. This has offered the Service greater flexibility and expediency in securing permanency for Looked After Children.

All Panels have now fully embraced paperless working; with the Panel matters being filtered through a dedicated secure site on the Share Point site. It is also accessible to the Agency Decision Maker ratifying the decisions and Panel Members. Visitors or observers to the site also have temporary access to follow the panel deliberation. All Panel matters are now dealt with electronically. Visitors from within and outside the agency have complimented us on the progress we have made with operating a paperless system, with a wealth of links to additional services for Members to access on the site.

- 14.11 Fostering matters have been heard at both the Fostering Panel and the Permanence Panel giving a total of 27 Panels throughout the year. There are usually six items to the Panel agendas, with the capacity to hear up to four first foster home reviews and other notifications in addition. Panel admin are to be commended for enabling this to happen,

especially with the complex and difficult tasks of recording the Panel meetings. The minutes produced for the Panels are of a very high standard.

Outcomes	2018/19
Meetings	27
Matters Heard	142
Approvals	24
Deregistration	6
Resignations	9
Deferred	2 (F&F) 3 Mainstream
Foster Home R	30
Connected Person Carers	22
Matches	10
Long term F BID	28

14.12 Training is offered to Panel Members to ensure that they understand their full responsibilities as Panel Members and that they are also up to date with the requirements and legislation relevant to children in care. Over the last year there have been increased opportunities for Panel Members to undertake joint training with the Fostering and Adoption Team. Panel Members are required to undertake the mandatory training offered by the council. The Learning Hub is accessible to them via the Panel Pods site where they access Panel documents securely. The induction programme for new Panel Members continues to be strengthened and has been modified accordingly by the Panel Advisor. There have also been opportunities to take part in training set up by partner agencies, which several Members have utilised. Panel Members are also able to access the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Board training as required. On June 18th, 2018 all Panel Members were trained in Restorative Practice, they fed back that they found this training a useful exercise. Restorative Practice Training will be offered to newly appointed panel members over the coming year. Panel Members attended the Foster Carers Conference in July 2018 and are invited to this year's Foster Carers Conference on July 10th, 2019.

In October 2018 Panel Members held an Away day which they felt was a very productive day. Members discuss the Panel process and look at ways to make the Service more transparent for all who use the Service but more importantly for the many Adoptive Parent's and Foster Carers utilising the Service. The practice of having Adopters/Foster Carers and Social Workers into the meeting at the same time and appraising the Agency Decision Maker memo to be 'Hofstetter' compliant remains in place and is a successful change recently implemented.

14.13 Each Panel Member has a yearly appraisal which is conducted by the Panel Chair and the Professional Advisor. The appraisal consists of self- evaluation and a face to face meeting. The Panel Chair's appraisal is undertaken by the respective Agency Decision Maker for Adoption and Fostering. Other compliance requirements such as DBS checks and production of relevant practicing licences are also monitored under this process.

14.14 Complaints/Compliments: There have not been any major concerns received about the running of the panel. However, feedback forms from Panel Members and some Service

Users always point to a good service with areas for improvement for which we constantly try to improve. Waiting times for applicant's cases to be heard have improved, although this still needs to be monitored, as there is room for further adjustments.

14.15 The Fostering Panel Advisor left the Local Authority in March 2019 and the post is currently vacant despite advertising and interviewing for the position, no one has been successfully appointed. The post has been advertised again and interviews will take place in early July 2019. In the meantime, the post is covered on a temporary basis by an agency worker experienced in Fostering.

14.16 There have been no decisions referred to IRM during this review period.

Future Development:

- For the Fostering Panel to continue to develop the use of Business Meetings between the Management of the Fostering Teams and the Panel Service.
- To ensure joint training is available for Panel Members and Social Workers within the Fostering Team.
- Panel Members Away Days to be further developed and for an increase in the membership of the Central List, especially of male members and birth relatives.
- To ensure that the Restorative Practice Training completed in June 2018 is fully utilised within the Panel processes and for the Panels to remain consistent and effective in producing an appropriate and successful service to the Looked After population of the city.
- For Panel Members to attend the Foster carers conference in July 2019
- For Panel Members to be invited to Fostering Away days to share practice and to improve relationships between the panel and the Fostering Service.
- A Fostering Panel Advisor to be appointed at the earliest opportunity.

15 Complaints and Compliments

15.1 There were 4 formal complaints received about the fostering service during the year 2018 – 2019– This was lower than the previous year, however compares favourably with the national average of 18% of complaints that were from fostered children. There were also 4 informal complaints received which were managed and responded to at a lower level. The Fostering service received 4 compliments.

15.2 The complaints received were around poor communication, quality of service, agreed increased fees not applied and no respite offered. At the same time, there have also been 4 compliments in relation to the Fostering Service recognising Social Workers commitment in their job role to families and young people. The Fostering Service, upon investigating and reviewing complaints received continue to ensure that learning is disseminated to Staff and colleagues in order that adjustments and improvements can be achieved.

16.0 Private Fostering:

- 16.1 The Fostering Service is responsible for the assessment and monitoring of Private Fostering Arrangements in Wolverhampton, as stipulated under the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005.
- 16.2 There are two Private Fostering champions within the Fostering Service, they are responsible for increasing the awareness of Private Fostering and facilitating training both internally with all City of Wolverhampton employees and externally with partner agencies and the voluntary sector. This year has seen the introduction of Private Fostering Champions in Partner and Voluntary Agencies
- 16.3 As part of the Fostering Improvement Plan Quarterly Multi Agency forums have been set up to discuss the on-going importance of driving and developing processes that will ensure Private Fostering remains integral to our everyday practice. As Private Fostering Arrangements are in place throughout the City there continues to be a need to increase our awareness of these arrangements and report them through the correct channels, so they can be appropriately assessed in terms of safeguarding children. The Private Fostering Policy and Procedure was updated in January 2018
- 16.4 It remains the responsibility of all professionals to continue to raise awareness of what constitutes Private Fostering Arrangements and how to refer them for assessment and support. By taking a multi-agency approach we can together continue to raise the profile of Private Fostering thus increasing the number of referrals and safeguarding our children.
- 16.5 We recognise the complexities involved in understanding Private Fostering and what it entails and therefore wish to create a more collaborative approach and develop relationships across each sector in order that professionals can work together, answer queries and support each other in improving outcomes for children.
- 16.6 To coordinate the multi-agency, approach we facilitate a Quarterly Forum which is attended by representatives from Health, Education, Strengthening Families, Early Intervention, Specialised Support, MASH, Wolverhampton Homes and Marketing and Communications to attend the meetings. This meeting is historically poorly attended, it is hoped with the introduction this year of Private Fostering Champions from Partner Agencies that attendance will improve particularly from a multi-agency stance. Forums have been set up throughout 2019/20 in April, June, September and January.
- 16.7 Over the last year, the Service has continued to publicise Private Fostering through Schools, Health Services and at all fostering recruitment events. There has been a meeting with the Lead Safeguarding Officers to review and renew its publicity of their materials for through various uses.
- 16.8 The number of children and young people in Private Fostering Arrangements fluctuates, and this year there have been three notifications, none of which went on to Private Fostering Arrangements and five are currently on-going. All referrals received have been notified by the Children's Social Work Teams.
- 16.9 Management oversight is provided through supervision. In addition, the Private Fostering Assessment is approved by the Agency Decision Maker, Head of Looked After Children Services.
- 16.10 Private Foster Carers have access to the Fostering Service training.

16.11 An Annual Private Fostering Report is completed each year and presented to the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Board in the Autumn.

17.0 Financial Package for Foster Carers:

17.1 In January 2016 the new Fees and Allowances were introduced.

17.2 Foster Carers receive a weekly allowance to cover all living costs associated to the child/ren they care for. Wolverhampton rates follow those recommended by the Department for Education (DfE); and are paid in accordance to the child's age. Foster Carers are expected to open a bank account (preferably and ISA) in which they must save a weekly amount for the child's future. The specified amount of money to be saved for children and the pocket money rates are again age related and are provided annually by the Fostering Service to all Foster Carers. Birthday, holiday and festival allowances are paid in addition to the above.

17.3 The Fostering Fees model is one which rewards Foster Carers in unity with their skills, experiences and expertise in meeting the needs of Looked After Children; in addition to the number of children placed, this is with a view to further encourage Foster Carers to consider sibling placements where they have capacity in their home. All Foster Carers have been provided with a new Fostering Agreement which widens their approval categories from birth to eighteen years. The revised reward model will provide greater placement choice and reduce Wolverhampton's reliance on external provision.

17.4 Foster carers can apply at Level Two to be considered as Level Three carers if they meet the expected required and have the relevant experience and expertise. A panel to consider these applications has been set up and will be held quarterly ongoing. A policy and procedures have been written to reflect this, Foster carers have been consulted and have been informed that the policy is agreed and are advised of panel dates to submit their applications.

18. Working in Partnership / Feedback from User participation:

18.1 The Private Fostering Forums have been set up quarterly, this is to both raise awareness and guarantee that there is multi-agency approach to the professional responsibilities of notifying the Local Authority of Private Fostering Arrangements.

18.2 Senior Management and Lead Elect Members have continued to consult with Foster Carers in their attendance at Forums, events and recruitment. This has been a positive way of Foster Carers feeling they have had opportunity to share their views and experiences. Presence at the fostering events has provided Foster Carers with further recognition for the work they undertake with Looked After Children and, consequently this ensures Foster Carers feel valued by the Local Authority for their continued commitment.

19. Summary

- 19.1 The Fostering Service was restructured in November 2018 as part of a wider children's service restructure and there are now two teams within the service focussed on Recruitment and Assessment and Support. The Fostering Service continues to benefit from experienced managers and the compliment of social workers remains stable with no agency workers currently employed. Both teams have made significant progress during the year with many development and improvements made across the service as described and outlined above. The latter part of the year saw a new project "Foster Families United" introduced and alongside promotion for this a pilot project based on the model has had a very positive and encouraging start. As always, the fostering service is engaged in continuing to strive for further improvements.
- 19.2 The Family Values Fostering review project which concluded in May 2017 stated that the city of Wolverhampton provides placements that are better value for money and can offer more positive outcomes for children and young people. Three key areas of growth to increase and improve capacity were identified.
- Increasing enquiry generation.
 - Improving enquiry handling.
 - Developing the support and supervision offer.
- 19.3 Whilst the Family Values project has provided structure and parameters with clear objectives, participation in the workstreams and steering group has provided opportunities within these arenas to explore other ideas for improvement and development, "Foster Families United" and Level 3/4 panels for carer progression are just two examples. The project has certainly elicited energy and excitement and given such positive progress during the year culminating in a net gain of 21 carers the thought continues that there is a real opportunity to continue to increase our cohort of mainstream and connected carers within a Fostering Service that is fully open to challenge and change. It is only by exploring and embracing these opportunities that we will truly as a service achieve our potential with our overall aim to improve the outcomes for the children and young people in our care.

20. Key Achievements 2018/19

- A Net Gain of 21 foster carers has been achieved considering both mainstream and connected carers and that some have transferred to SGO during the year. Success in all areas has impacted on the overall net gain of carers.
- 20 SGO orders have been achieved.
- Continued increased enquiries supported through sophisticated media campaigns and digital advertising.
- A designated Fostering website continues to share pertinent information and is regularly updated.
- Governance for the Family Values project well established, a steering group and work streams meet monthly to monitor progress of the project.
- The "Truth be Told" film promoting Fostering has been released in collaboration with the West Midlands consortium.

- The Foster Carer newsletter is published monthly and includes a section “Fostering story of the month” Good news stories are routinely sought from Foster carers and Social Workers.
- An Easter Egg hunt was held at Bantock Park with Halloween, and Christmas parties held at Burt Williams Centre, all were well attended and enjoyed by Foster Carers and Children & Young People.
- Increased participation by Foster carers in Advertising campaigns and in the Family Values workstreams.
- A policy outlining Escalation to Level 3/4 for Foster carers has been shared and panels set up quarterly to consider applications from carers who apply to be Level 3 or 4 carers.
- The complete Foster Carers register highlighting vacancies and the status of all placements has been shared with the Placement Team, Emergency Team and managers working out of hours in order that ALL can make Internal Placements as appropriate.
- All Foster Carers currently on the “Dormant” list are regularly contacted and whilst unable to offer a full-time placement have facilitated respite to support other Foster Carers requiring a break.
- The Training Programme for Foster Carers 2019/20 has been revised, new courses and developmental days added to the calendar offering an increased variety of subjects and with built in Forums to maximise carers potential to attend both.
- Customer Service Officers trained in aspects of Fostering in order that they handle enquiries effectively and sharing pertinent information to Fostering to support applications. The Fostering newsletter is shared with Customer Service Officers to further enhance their awareness of the service.
- Enquiries are tracked effectively to pin-point origins of referrals to better inform campaigns going forward.
- The use of Twitter has increased to maximise the Fostering Service capacity to reach a wider audience using Social Media.
- Therapeutic Reflective sessions running twice monthly for Fostering Social Workers and facilitated by CAMHS Social Worker to compliment the model of training (18 week- Nurturing Attachments Training Programme) to Foster Carers.
- The Personal Development Plan for Foster Carers to support their development and future training needs filed as a separate document to compliment Supervision.
- Free Swimming lessons for Looked after Children agreed by City of Wolverhampton Council
- Improved interface between the Fostering service and Housing which will improve opportunities for the service to support current carers and prospective carers in applying for House moves/bigger properties.

- Fostering Social Worker trainer trained in Restorative practice will deliver Restorative training to the Fostering Panel Members.
- Therapeutic Parenting Training courses will be offered 3 times yearly to foster carers.
- All newly approved foster carers are allocated a “buddy” and receive weekly visits from their Supervising Social Worker.
- The new model of fostering “Foster Families United” has been developed and a pilot hub of carers reflecting the model with encouraging progress and outcomes thus far.
- Private Fostering Forums have been set up quarterly and attended by Private Fostering Champions from partner agencies.
- A visit to North Yorks Local Authority provided opportunities to observe progress of a Fostering Service within a different demographic
- A pop-up shop has been secured in the Mander Centre with Wolverhampton having access at agreed times throughout the year to promote Fostering and use as part of Fostering Fortnight. The shop has been well utilised and has secured referrals to further progress.
- A Foster Home Review Improvement Plan has been implemented which has secured improvements in the completion of basic requirements in respect of carers i.e. unannounced visits, delegated authority and safer care statements.

KEY OBJECTIVES 2019/20

- To achieve the target of a net gain of 28 Mainstream Foster carers to provide for the diverse range of children’s needs.
- To complete connected assessments in timescales as directed and achieve a net gain of connected foster carers whilst acknowledging that successful conversion to SGO’s will impact on overall gains.
- To achieve 30 Special Guardianship Orders.
- To fully launch the Foster Carer Portal to enable access by all carers to the offered training opportunities, Information, Policy & Procedures and developmental information.
- To further develop existing and new carers to provide for children’s needs, promote understanding, resilience of carers and placement stability by reviewing policies to include short breaks/respice, buddy system and additional benefits available to foster carers.
- To continue to review recruitment materials and processes and continue to implement the recommendations from the Family Values Project undertaken by iMPower whilst being open minded to all ideas and development opportunities

that will enhance and improve the Fostering Service which include visiting other authorities particularly those who have recruited high numbers of foster carers and achieved significantly improved outcomes.

- The focus on Private Fostering needs to continue to be strengthened and the profile promoted to increase awareness and understanding of this often-misunderstood area of care. Further training opportunities to be offered across Children’s Social Care, with partner agencies and the voluntary sector and to ensure the quarterly is well attended by champions from partner agencies and all relevant materials shared.
- The pilot linked to “Foster Families United” project commenced on May 1st, 2019 and consists of an experienced foster carer acting as a hub carer with three fostering families linked. All carers will be supervised by the same supervising social worker who has recently been appointed to the project whilst a CAMHS practitioner will provide clinical supervision to all within the pilot. The hub carer has planned activities for the carers and is providing additional support in line with the model. Progress regarding this pilot will be shared with senior managers in August 2019. Media campaigns have begun in respect of this project and it will feature in both mainstream and targeted events throughout the year.



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CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Corporate Parenting Board 18 July 2019
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Report title	Performance Monitoring Information	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John Reynolds Children and Young People	
Wards affected	All wards	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services	
Originating service	Insight and Performance Team	
Accountable employee	James Amphlett	Business Intelligence Manager
	Tel	01902 551033
	Email	James.Amphlett2@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be considered by	Corporate Parenting Board	18 July 2019

Recommendation for action:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Receive the report and request any additional indicators or data items that they would like to see reported in future performance updates.

Recommendations for noting:

The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to note:

1. The most recent performance relating to Children and Young People in Care and Care Leavers.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Corporate Parenting Board on the latest performance relating to Children and Young People in Care and Care Leavers.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Corporate Parenting Board has regularly received a performance report. The report in its current format has been presented to the Board since January 2015, with some additions and enhancements made to the report over time at the request of the Board.

3.0 Update

3.1 All current indicators in the report have been updated with data as at 31 May 2019. Please note that this data is provisional and may not directly reflect the end of year out turn which will not be confirmed until statutory returns are submitted at the end of July.

3.2 At the request of the Board data additional data around placement types and median adoption averages has been included.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4.2 The 2019-2020 budget for Children and Young People in Care is £30.6 million. Any costs associated with this report will be contained within this allocation.
[JD/11072019/O]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.
[TS/09072019/T]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 The report contains some demographic data, however, there are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

9.0 Corporate Landlord implications

9.1 There are no direct Corporate Landlord implications arising from this report.

10.0 Health and Wellbeing implications.

10.1 There are no direct Health and Wellbeing implications arising from this report.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

10.1 There are no background papers related to this report.

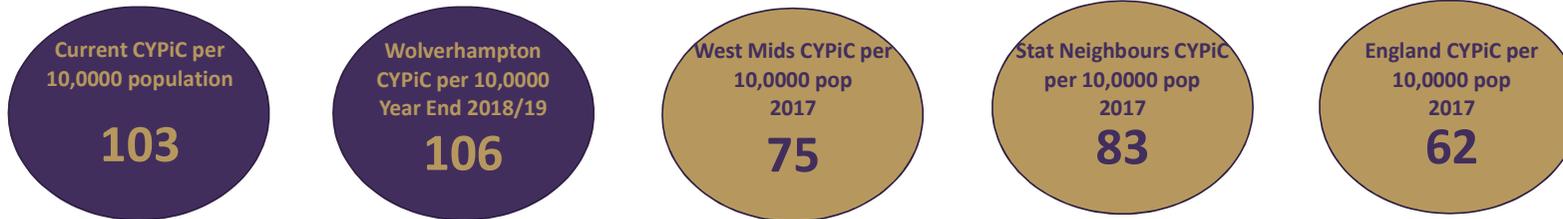
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CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

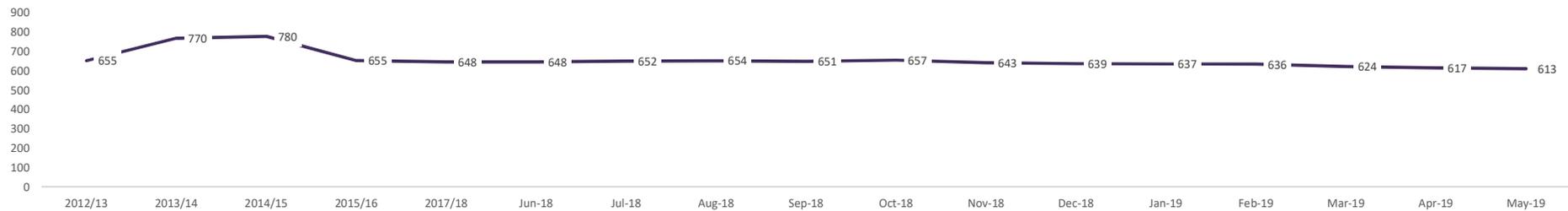
PERFORMANCE REPORT

JULY 2019
(DATA AS AT 31ST MAY 2019)

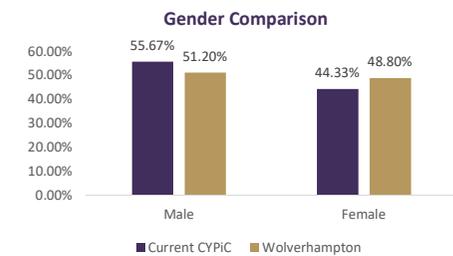
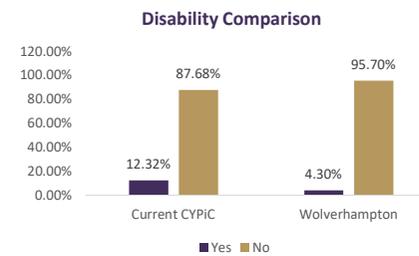
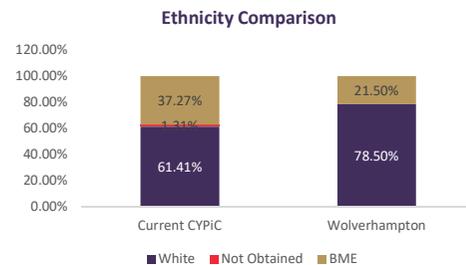
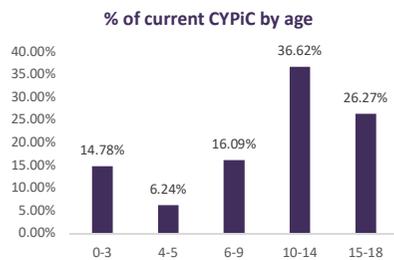
Current CYPiC Profile



Number of Children and Young People in Care in Wolverhampton



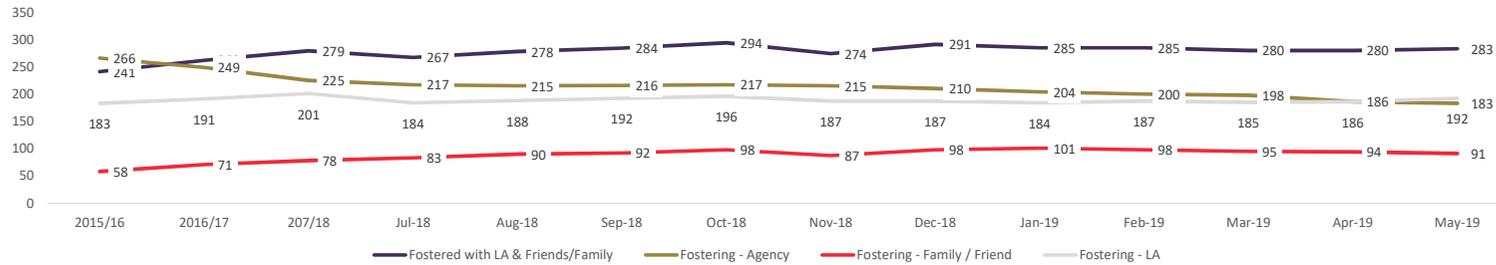
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The numbers of children and young people in care have decreased in the year to date from 624 to 613. This is due to an increase in the number of children leaving care over the past three months and the stability of the rate of children entering care that has been seen over the past 18 months. Over 62% of Wolverhampton's children and young people in care are aged 10 and above with 26% aged 15 or above.

CYPiC Placement Analysis

Breakdown of Foster Placements



There are now more children placed with internal foster carers than agency carers for the first time

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% CYPiC placed within 20 mile + from home
16%

2017/18 = 14%
2016/17 = 14%
2015/16 = 16%

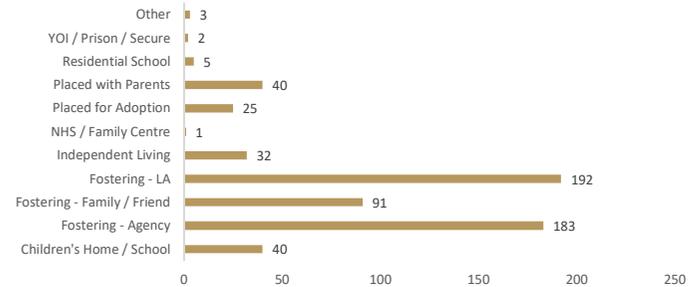
% CYPiC with fewer than 3 placements in last 12 months
87%

2017/18 Wolverhampton = 84%
2017/18 West Midlands = 89%
2017/18 Stat Neighbours = 90%

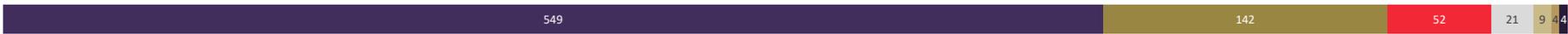
% CYPiC in same placement for 2 years or more
66%

2017/18 Wolverhampton = 70%
2017/18 West Midlands = 68%
2017/18 Stat Neighbours = 70%

Current CYPiC by Placement Type



Number of placements for those in care over the past 12 months



■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 ■ 6 ■ 7 or more

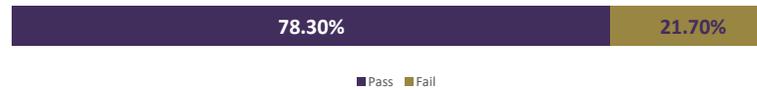
Through the performance of Family Values Project, a clear increase in placements with internal foster carers can be seen. Over the past six months the increase in internal carers has translated into a decrease in agency placements. For the first time Wolverhampton now has more children placed with internal mainstream carers than agency carers. The Family Values project has also saw a net increase of 21 internally approved foster cares in 2018/19/ This is the largest net increase seen in one year, 20 more than in 2017/18. There have been 5 mainstream carers approved so far in 2019/20.

There has been an improvement in the performance of long-term stability from 58% to 66%. Short term placement stability remains an area on concern for the authority and Wolverhampton are in the bottom quartile of national performance although improvements have been seen in the year. The vast majority of children who were looked after had two or less placements in the last 12 months. The majority of young people who have had multiple placements are 16 and 17 years olds who have moved between independent placements addresses.



CYPiC with an up to date assessment

Where a new assessment has been completed within 12 months



2017/18 Year Out-turn = 90%
2016/17 Year Out-turn = 83%



CYPiC with an up to date review

Where the First Review is within 20 working days. Second review within 3 months. Third and subsequent reviews every 6 months



2017/18 Year Out-turn = 92%
2016/17 Year Out-turn = 82%

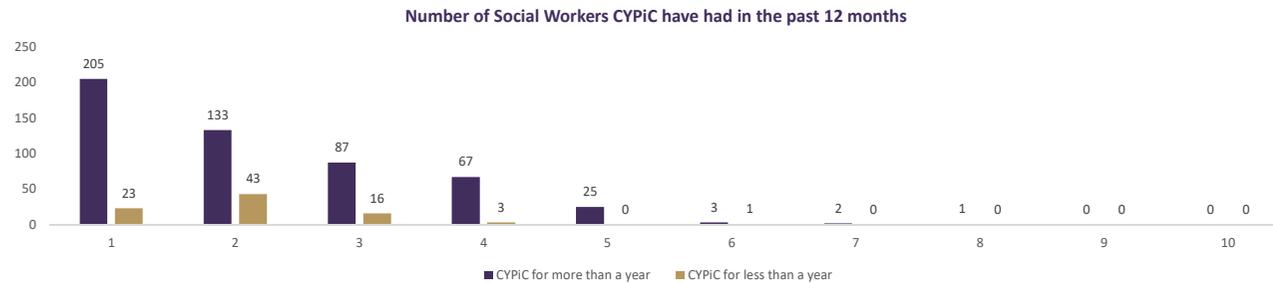


CYPiC who participated in the review

The proportion of CYPiC reviews where the child was present or contributed by other means in their review



2017/18 Year Out-turn = 94%
2016/17 Year Out-turn = 90%



The clear majority of Children and Young People in Care have an up to date assessment, review and visit. Over 88% of assessments and 93% of reviews and visits are up to date. There is a new system that allows workers and managers more access to understand which assessments, reviews and visits are due. It is hoped that this will help increase performance even further. Management within the Children and Young People in Care service are reviewing all outstanding assessments and discussing with social workers to ensure all young people have up to date assessments
17% of young people who have been looked after for more than a year and 5% who have been looked after for less than a year have had more than 3 social workers in the past 12 months. This is a decreasing trend.

KS2 Expected Standard	Maths	Reading	Writing	Reading, Writing and Maths
CYPiC Wolverhampton 2018	36%	50%	45%	21%
Wolverhampton 2018	76%	77%	75%	65%
CYPiC West Midlands 2018	46%	50%	47%	33%
CYPiC Stat Neighbours 22018017	49%	53%	48%	36%
CYPiC England 2018	47%	51%	49%	35%
KS4	9-4 Pass in English and Maths	Attainment 8	Progress 8	
CYPiC Wolverhampton 2018	12%	17%	-1%	
Wolverhampton 2018	58%	44%	0%	
CYPiC West Midlands 2018	18%	19%	-1%	
CYPiC Stat Neighbours 2018	20%	19%	-1%	
CYPiC England 2018	18%	19%	-1%	

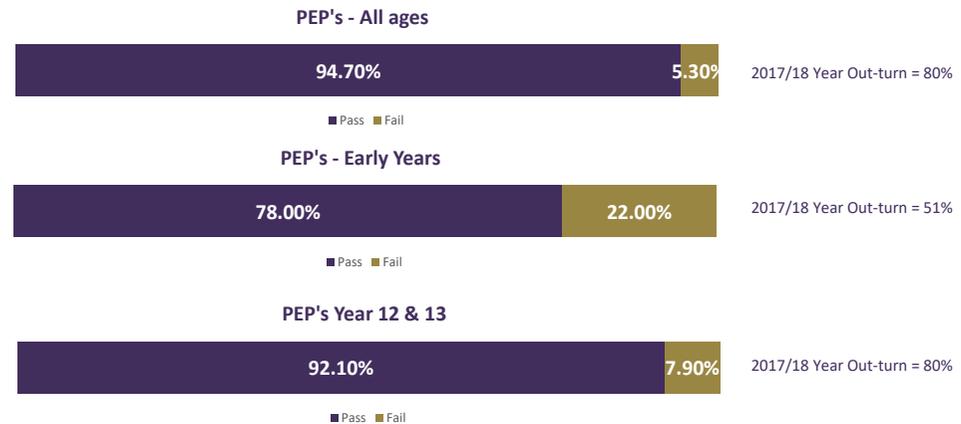


CYPiC with an up to date PEP

The proportion eligible CYPiC with an up to date Personal Education Plan (PEP)

The 2018 KS2 an KS4 results show that Wolverhampton CYPiC has fallen behind comparator performance. There remains a significant gap between the performance of CYPiC and all Wolverhampton children however small numbers in the cohort can make these measurements volatile. Wolverhampton is in the bottom quartile of performance for both CYPiC Expected Standard for Reading Writing and Maths and CYPiC 9-4 Pass in English and Maths. For further information about the education attainment of CYPiC in Wolverhampton please refer to the Virtual School Head teacher annual report.

Attendance data has been updated for 2017 - attendance of Wolverhampton CYPiC at school is better than that of comparators. please note there was an error in previous reports where persistent absence was under-reported.

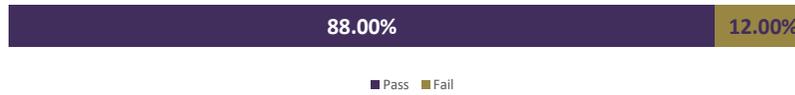


Health and Dental Checks and Care Applications



CYPiC with an up to date health check

Where a health check has been completed within 12 months

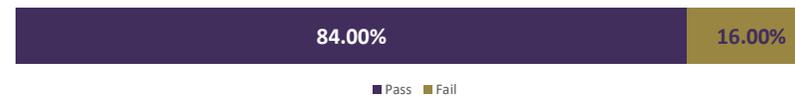


2017/18 Year Out-turn = 84%
2016/17 Year Out-turn = 84%



CYPiC with an up to dental check

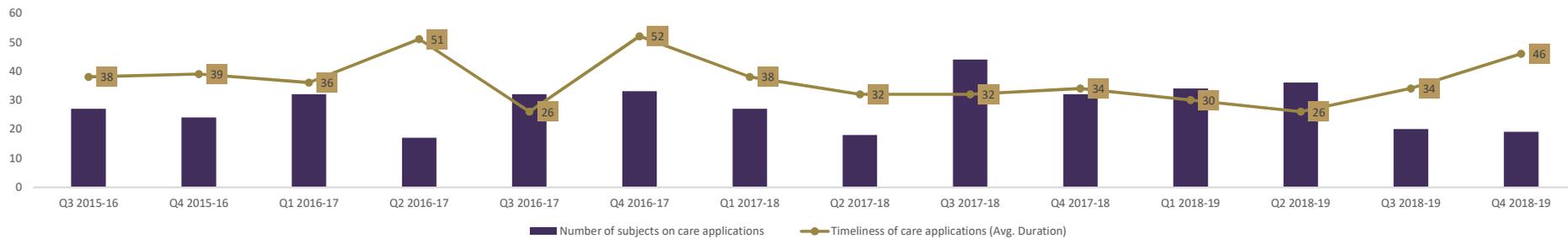
Where a dental check has been completed within 12 months



2017/18 Year Out-turn = 91%
2016/17 Year Out-turn = 89%



Care Applications



There has been a continued decrease in the percentage of dental checks. Medical checks which were previously an area of strength have also seen a decline of over 4% to 88% in the month. Team Managers are holding discussions with admin to support to ensure data is being inputted correctly. Admin should check returned medical forms for dental dates and add to Carefirst. Social workers should also be updating information following statutory visits.

Adoption



CYPiC adopted within A1 indicator

Average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family



2018/19 Year Out-turn = 55%
2017/18 Year Out-turn = 60%



CYPiC adopted within A2 indicator

Average time between receiving court authority to place and finding a match



2018/19 Year Out-turn = 68%
2017/18 Year Out-turn = 55%



CYPiC adopted within A10 indicator

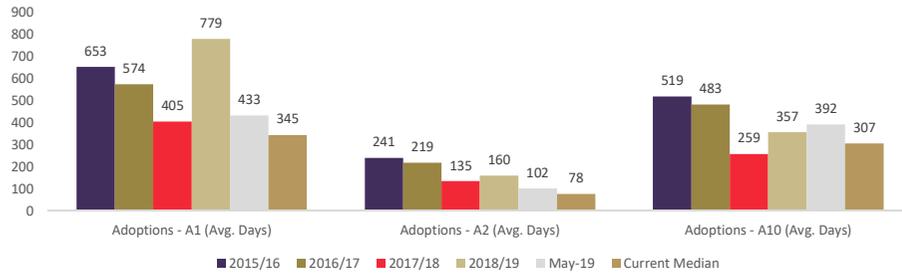
Average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (stopped at point of fostering for foster carers adoption)



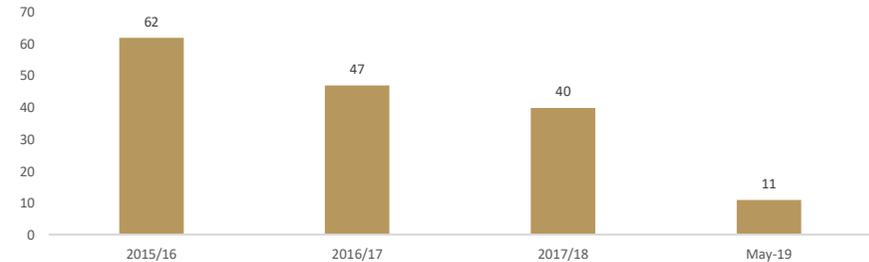
2018/19 Year Out-turn = 73%
2017/18 Year Out-turn = 63%



Average Days against Adoption Indicators



Number of adoptions



Adoption timeliness improved in 2018/19 against A2 and A10 adoptions indicators. Wolverhampton's A10 indicator is below national targets and A2 indicator average days is lower than at any previous year. This is promising performance especially when considering that Wolverhampton also compares favourably to comparators against the adoption of hard to place children. Average days for A1 continues to increase however this is due to the adoption of four long term hard to place children who took over 2000 days but were all placed with their foster carer. There has been a positive start to adoption performance in 2019/20 with 11 adoptions in the year to date and improved A1 and A10 timeliness. Overall managers are pleased with performance although there is caution for adoptions that are set to take place later in the year with how changes in process due to the setup and initiation of the Regional Adoption Agency effect timeliness as the service is imbedded

Care Leavers



Care Leavers EET Status

Education, Employment and Training of Care Leavers aged 17-21



2017/18 Year Out-turn = 60%
2016/17 West Midlands = 46%
2016/17 Stat Neighbours = 47%
2016/17 England = 50%



Care Leavers available to work

Care Leavers aged 17-21 who are available for education, training or employment



2017/18 Year Out-turn = 84%
2016/17 Year Out-turn = 82%



Care Leavers in suitable accommodation

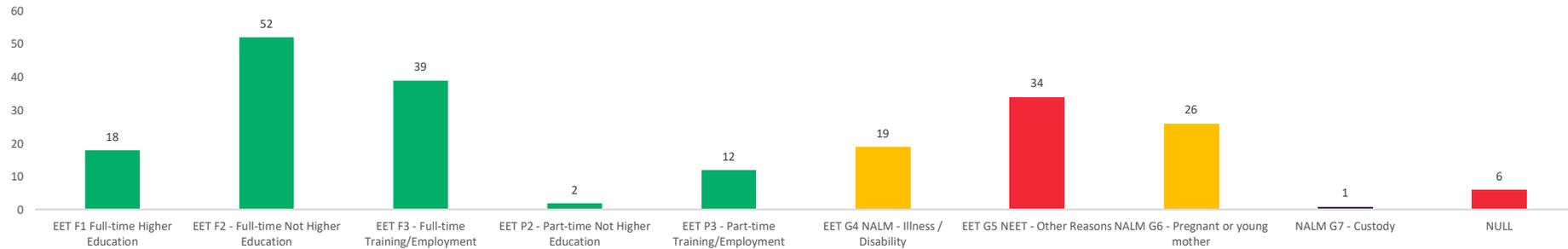
Care Leavers aged 17-21 who live in suitable accommodation



2017/18 Year Out-turn = 88%
2016/17 West Midlands = 82%
2016/17 Stat Neighbours = 83%
2016/17 England = 84%



Current Care Leaver EET Status



Care Leaver data continues to be an area of strength for the authority. At the end of May 2019 60% of 17-21 year olds were in Education, Employment or Training. 82% of care leavers are available for work with 15% (37 young people) not available due to pregnancy or young motherhood, illness or disability or because they are in custody.

The proportion of care leavers currently deemed to be in suitable accommodation is also included and shows that 90% of the cohort are currently in suitable accommodation.