

**Strong Families, Children, and Young
People Scrutiny Panel Meeting**
Wednesday, 13 July 2022

Dear Councillor

**STRONG FAMILIES, CHILDREN, AND YOUNG PEOPLE SCRUTINY PANEL - WEDNESDAY,
13TH JULY, 2022**

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Wednesday, 13th July, 2022 meeting of the Strong Families, Children, and Young People Scrutiny Panel, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda No Item

- 7 **Children and Young People Social Work Self Evaluation (report to follow)**
(Pages 3 - 66)

[Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Children's Social Care, to present report]

- 8 **Draft Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (LACS) action**
plan (report to follow) (Pages 67 - 86)

[Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Children's Social Care, to present report]

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the Democratic Services team:

Contact MeetingContact

Tel MeetingContact_2

Email democratic.services@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Address Democratic Services, Civic Centre, 1st floor, St Peter's Square,
Wolverhampton WV1 1SH

Encs

This page is intentionally left blank

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Agenda Item No: 7 Strong Families, Children, and Young People Scrutiny Panel 13 July 2022
--	--

Report title	Children's Service Self-Evaluation 2022-2023	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Beverley Momenabadi	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable Director	Emma Bennett	
Originating service	Children's Services	
Accountable employee	Alison Hinds Tel Email	Deputy Director +44 1902 553035 alison.hinds@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board	26/05/22 31/05/22

Recommendation for decision:

The destination meeting is recommended to:

1. Endorse the Children's Service Self Evaluation 2022-2023.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the Self Evaluation (SEF) 2022-2023 in relation to Children's Services in Wolverhampton. This summary includes details of the SEF 2022-23. The full document is attached as Appendix1.

2.0 Background

2.1 The completion of an annual Self Evaluation of Children's Services is a requirement of Ofsted under the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) and is prepared in Wolverhampton at the end of each financial year and then refreshed bi-annually at the end of September. The Self Evaluation for 2022-23 has been completed and shared with SEB and with Ofsted. Included in our SEF are reflections on our achievements in 2021-22 and priority areas for development for 2022-23.

3.0 Achievements in 2021-2022:

- Continued management of overall demand across the social care system meaning the right support is offered to children, young people and their families at the right time and at the earliest opportunity.
- Embedding of Social Worker in Schools pilot project
- Power2 team working with young people up to the age of 25 at risk of exploitation, now a permanently established team
- Embedding of Partnership Missing and Exploitation Hub with strong partnership working arrangements
- Established support offered to families who have no recourse to public funding has resulted in families achieving an immigration outcome earlier and therefore enabled children to achieve a sense of permanence and have access to services earlier when they are given right to remain.
- Reduced reoffending rates for young people remains spectacular, alongside a reduction in custodial sentences and numbers of young people on Remand
- Winner of Children and Young People Now Award 2021 in the Care Leaver category for the impact of the House Project on improved outcomes for young people, and finalist in the Children in Care category for our Aspire2Uni programme
- Expansion of apprenticeships ringfenced for care leavers at City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) and establishment of inclusive apprenticeships within the council to support young people needing additional flexible apprenticeship support
- Improved education outcomes for children in care including increased numbers of young people attending university and graduating with excellent degrees. In Wolverhampton we have 3 times the national average number of care leavers attending university

- Three quarters of children in care are now placed with foster carers approved by CWC with sustained good performance in long and short term placement stability for children in care
- 45 young people live in Staying Put arrangements with their former foster carers
- Successful implementation of Local House Project, 21 young people have now been part of the House Project, with 12 now living independently, a further 4 are now living in accommodation suitable to their needs, and we have 2 in our current cohort planning to move into their own properties
- Opening of a co-production hub, providing a venue for young people to call their own, accommodating the House Project, a drop in for care leavers, The Reach Café, and a base for co-production with children and young people
- Successful implementation of MASH24, our combined MASH EDT service
- Pathway launched to support young parents in need of additional support in early parenthood
- Expansion of the use of Family Group Conferencing to strengthen opportunities for children to live within their families
- Reflective discussions, regular supervisions and management oversight are consistently recorded on children's records (noted by Ofsted)
- Consistently good quality records are kept for children with the voice of children and young people being strong throughout all records, underpinned by strong analytical evidence-based assessments and plans that are SMART and child centred (noted by Ofsted)
- Social workers spend meaningful time with children and build positive relationships. Creative direct work with children enables them to understand their experiences (noted by Ofsted)
- More children are being placed utilising early permanence options working closely with Adoption@Heart, with 44 Adoption Orders granted in the year and most children being adopted by adopters approved by Adoption@Heart

4.0 Areas for development in 2022-2023

- 4.1 The Practice Improvement Plan, Aiming for Excellence, has successfully embedded good consistent practice across Children's Social Care Services, as noted by Ofsted. This methodology will continue to be utilised to enhance practice further, helping us to focus on our evolving practice priorities which are informed by our quality assurance work.

4.2 In addition, across Children and Young People's service we will:

- Embed an integrated offer across Children's and Adult services to enable our families to thrive including development of a single front door
- Continue to embed Restorative Practice across Children's Services, looking particularly at developing restorative approaches to child protection conferences, and extending training to partners, enhancing consistency to our strength based relational approach to practice
- Embed ease of access to a range of services for children and families through the Family Hub offer via Strengthening Family hubs
- Achieve target of 'turning around' 453 families as part of the extended Supporting Families Programme as part of our Strengthening Families approach
- Embed the expansion of the use of Family Group Conferencing to strengthen opportunities for children to live within their families
- Extend the Social workers in Schools project for a further year and review and evaluate to inform future practice models
- Develop a programme of intervention and support to work with parents who have had previous children taken into care, to increase opportunities for any future children to remain cared for by their birth parents
- Strengthen even further the stability of our placements for children and young people in care
- Ensure recruitment and retention of foster carers remains strong; monitor impact of our recruitment campaign, extend the Foster Families United model, and develop the additional benefits offered to foster carers – especially those caring for older and more complex children
- Implement internal residential provision for our most complex young people, increasing placement sufficiency
- Extend our pilot project "Back on Track," diverting young people from criminality as early as possible
- Embed further opportunities for co-production with children and families in the city, particularly for those open to the Strengthening Family service to ensure their views shape our service planning
- Embed the key priorities of our Equalities action plan to ensure delivery of inclusive services that tackle inequalities which some children and young people face

- Further development of social care support to our SEND children through the strategic lead of our Designated Social Care officer (DCSO), now a full-time dedicated post, our SEND champions across Childrens Services and our specialist case worker in IASS
- Improve support and opportunities for all of our most vulnerable young people to be able to access and sustain a range of EET opportunities
- Embed the Culture of Inclusion Programme to support the inclusion and educational engagement of vulnerable learners supported by the extended role of the VSH
- Improve the consistency of the quality of PEPs continuing to support the educational outcomes of our children in care

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 There are no financial implications for this report.

[JG/05072022/V]

6.0 Legal implications

6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.

[SB/05072022/U]

7.0 Equalities implications

7.1 The SEF is a summary of the impact of services offered to our children, young people and families in the city. It highlights areas of good practice and areas which we believe need more focussed work. It provides analysis of performance information. This analysis demonstrates the difference we are making to the lives of our diverse children and young people in the city, many of whom face significant disadvantage; thus affording them greater opportunity to grow up in strong families where children can grow up well and achieve their full potential.

8.0 All other Implications

8.1 There are no other implications.

9.0 Schedule of background papers

9.1 there are no background papers.

10.0 Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1: SEF 2022-2023

This page is intentionally left blank

Wolverhampton Children and Young People's Self-Evaluation 2022-23

Page 9

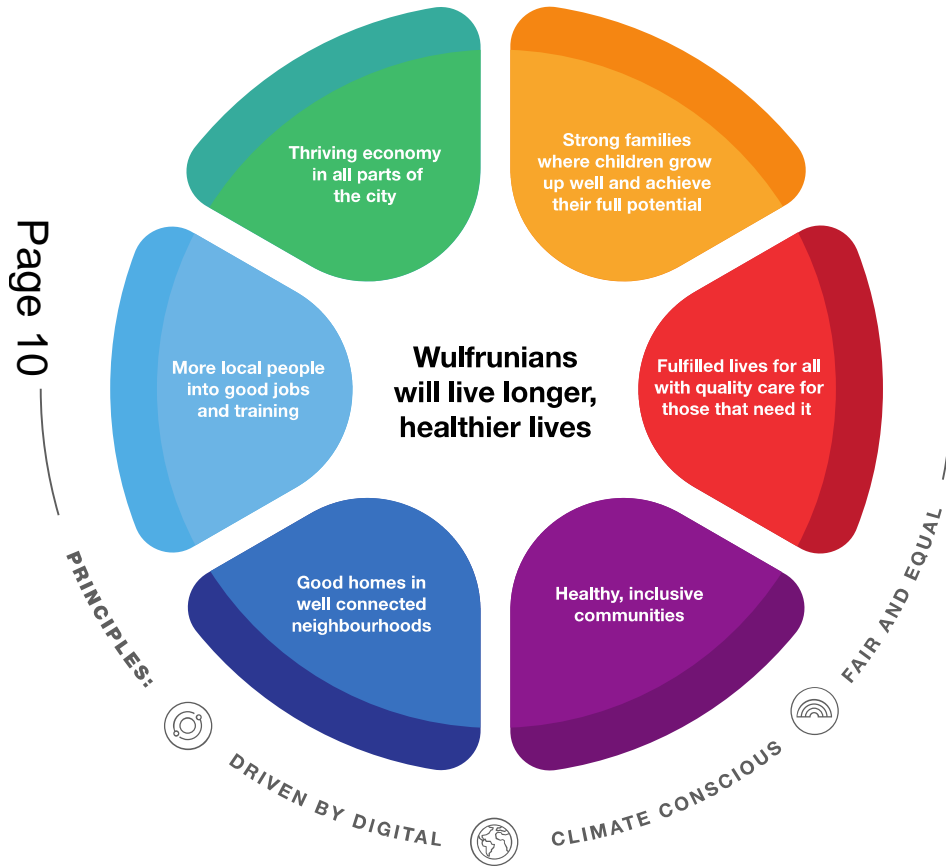
EMMA BENNETT
ALISON HINDS

Executive Director for Families
Deputy Director, Children's Social
Care

wolverhampton.gov.uk

Our City, Our Plan

Strategic Council Priorities



Children & Families Plan



Foreword

- 2021/2022 has been a year that has required ongoing flexibility and adaptability in how we have worked with our children, young people and families, alongside managing the effects of the Covid19 pandemic
 - Our workforce has responded positively and remained committed to ensuring relationships with children, young people and families are prioritised, and children in the city are safeguarded and cared for. We have embedded a culture of high support and high challenge not only with children and their families but also with each other as colleagues
 - The social work and workforce health checks are positive, with colleagues feeling well supported and committed to continuing their careers in Wolverhampton
 - We continue to work closely with partners, strengthening our already solid relationships to safeguard our vulnerable children in the city
- We were able to flex and respond to fluctuations in demand across the system, and have maintained our focus on ensuring we work with families at the earliest opportunity, utilising the powers of state intervention only at the appropriate level and for the length of time required. We know that the importance of our strength based relational approach to practice has underpinned all we do and is making a difference to the lives of children and their families.
- Children in care have experienced even better placement stability this year with continuing good outcomes, and care leavers have benefit from consistently good quality care.
 - We have continued our journey of transformation embedding innovative areas of work into practice. Examples include: our local House Project for care leavers, our Social Work in Schools project, our multi-agency Missing and Exploitation Hub, and our MASH 24, all of which are demonstrating a difference and supporting positive outcomes for young people

Foreword continued:

- As a strong stable experienced leadership team we know ourselves well. We are confident in our approach, open to challenge and ongoing learning and development of ourselves, and the services we deliver to children and young people and their families in the city. As a service we continue to be supported to prioritise the need to improve outcomes for children and young people in the city supported by our senior and political leaders
- This year has seen opportunities for external observation and validation of our self assessment of practice
- Our YOT and ILACS inspections have been verification of our good ,with outstanding areas of practice which is where we self assess ourselves.
- Our SEND inspection noted how we know ourselves well, highlighting areas of good practice and areas requiring a written statement of action to progress.
- Our opportunity to be one in the 10 local authorities taking part in the deep dive as part of the Independent Care Review , observed area of practice innovation, and highlighted our management of demand as a spotlight on good practice nationally in the report published on 23 May 2022.
- We have been nominated as finalists in the MJ national awards on 24 June 2022 in two award categories; The House Project for Best Social Housing Initiative, and Power2 for Innovation In Children's and Adults Services
- We have also been nominated as finalists in the LGC national awards on 20 July 2022 for Transformation of Children's Services
- We have some significant key strategic priorities over the next 12 months including: implementation of the recommendations from the National Care review, developing and embedding the national framework for delivery of family work through Family Hubs , establishment of two new internal residential provisions for 4 of our young people in care with complex needs ,and development of a Families front door
- We will continue on our journey of aiming for excellence in social work practice utilising our QA framework to support our understanding of ourselves
- Our restorative approach to practice will continue to underpin all we do to ensure we deliver consistently high quality effective innovative services to build family strength and resilience and improve opportunity for our children and young people in the city

The City Of Wolverhampton

The City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to having strong families where children grow up well and achieve their potential this is a central component of the Our City Our Plan. There are 263,357 people who live in the City, 62,276 of these are children under the age of 18.

The City is home to people from all over the world – one third of the population is from Minority Ethnic backgrounds and 19% of residents were born outside of the UK. There are around 90 languages spoken in the City.

The number of children receiving formal support has incrementally decreased across all areas of Children's Social Care over the last 6 years. As a result of our Children's Service Transformation work In order to achieve this the Children's Service has embedded its early Intervention offer, and there has been a focus on relational practice making a difference through restorative practice. Additionally, robust management oversight ensures the right children are received into care and once in care, plans for permanency are progressed with a sense of urgency.

Children receiving support as at end of March 2022

522 Children and young people in care
253 Children who have a Child Protection Plan
742 Children who have a Child in Need Plan
219 Children in Assessment



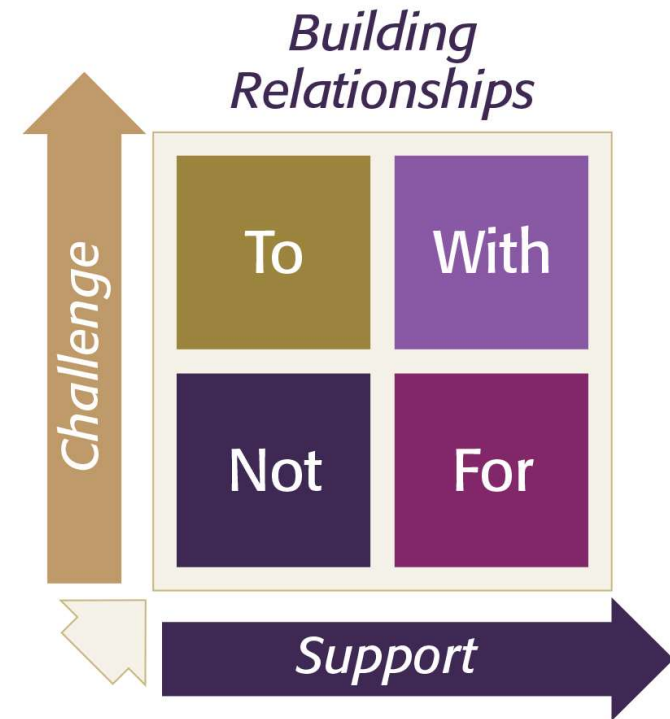
Our Values for Children's Services

- To develop respectful and empowering relationships with children, young people and families
- To ensure children are at the centre of everything we do
- High aspirations, high expectations

The Children's Service began adopting a restorative approach to practice in November 2016. All practitioners are trained in the approach, and it is embedded into practice. It is now being rolled out and embedded across the council and is being extended to our partners.

The approach emphasises the importance of building effective relationships, working with families rather than doing things to them or for them, to help families make sustainable change.

Restorative Practice is a high support, high challenge model that supports practitioners to be clear about concerns and set clear expectations, whilst providing support to help families achieve these goals.



There are good examples of employees using the approach to help family members understand how their actions impact on their loved ones. This has been effective in increasing the family's motivation to change.

Children's Transformation Programme Vision

- **Ambitious and innovative approach to transformation**
- **Promote opportunity, equity and inclusivity**
- **Co-production and engagement at its heart**
- **Support and empower children, young people, families, communities and our workforce.**

Clear, consistent and relevant **communication** with all stakeholders will be key to this success.

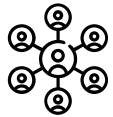
Champion **creativity** in delivery.

- **Make a difference** to specific groups who are most in need of our support.
- **Ensure committed and enthusiastic leadership** when striving to **achieve** outcomes and will build **trust** with the those affected by its outputs.



How is leadership & management contributing to excellence?

Page 16



Stable, cohesive leadership group



Visible and accessible to the workforce



Drive innovative practice



Understand practice at all levels which informs priorities and practice development



Strong oversight of performance management information

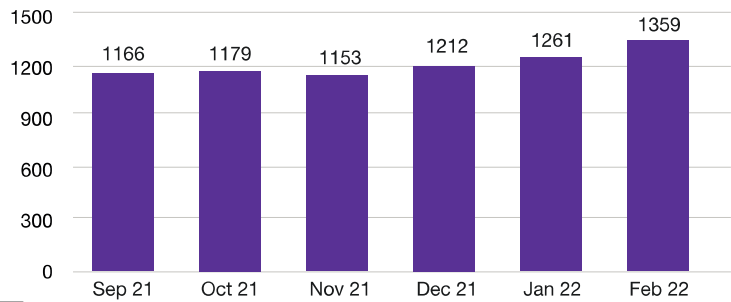


Agents for change through the transformation programme



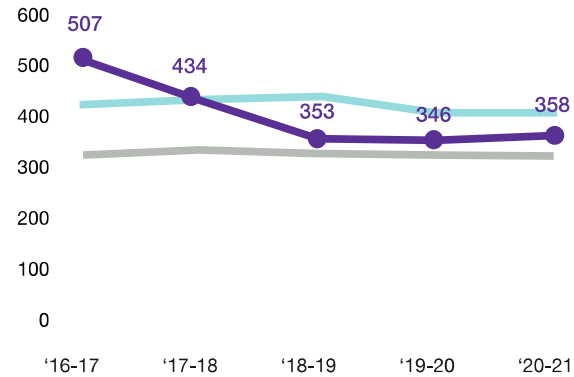
Children receiving support

Early help



No. as of 25 March 2022
1378

Rate of open CIN per 10,000 children aged 0-17



No. as of 25 March 2022
765

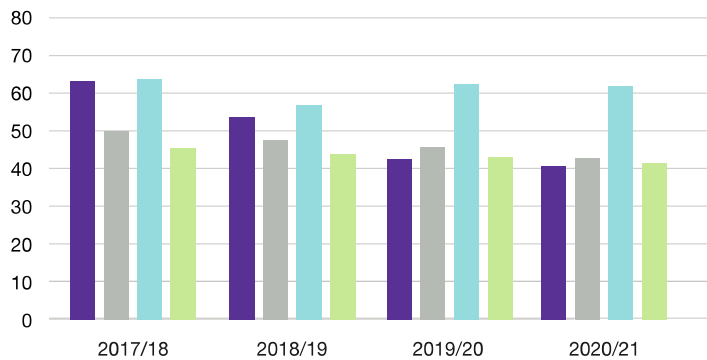
Rate as of 25 March 2022
282

— Stastical Neighbours — England — LA

Page 17

Children Subject to a child protection plan

Rate per 10,000



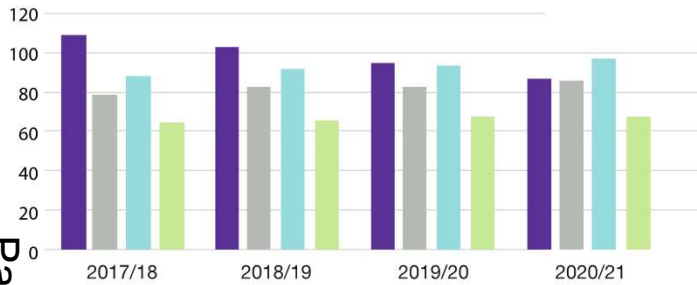
No. as of 25 March 2022
258

Rate as of 25 March 2022
42.2

■ Wolverhampton ■ West Midlands ■ Stastical Neighbours ■ England

Children receiving support

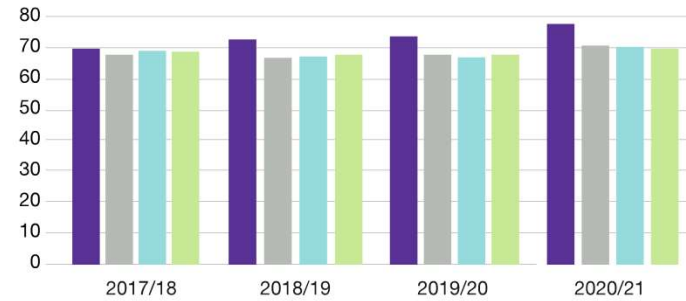
Children & Young People in Care
Rate per 10,000 children aged U18



No. as of
25 March 2022
517

Rate as of
25 March 2022
84.5

Long Term Placement Stability %

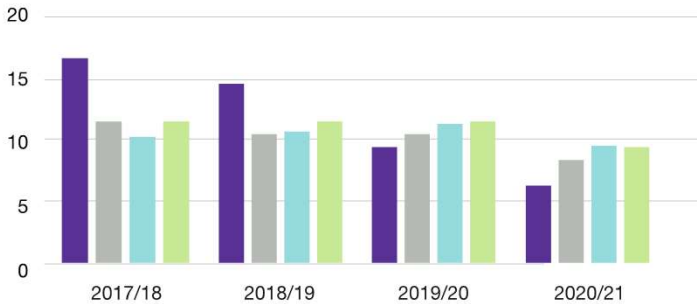


% as of
25 March 2022
72.7

Page 8

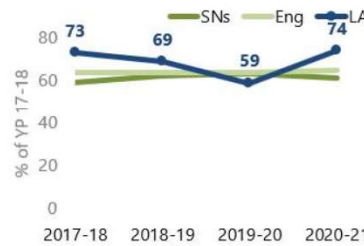
Short Term Placement Stability %

Percentage of children with three or more placements during the year

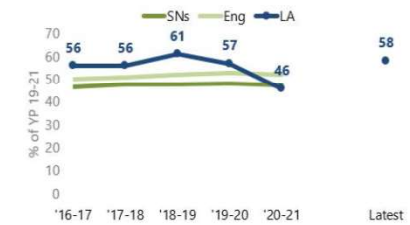


% as of
25 March 2022
6.2

Education Employment or Training of 17-18 year olds



Education Employment or Training of 19-21 year olds



■ Wolverhampton ■ West Midlands ■ Stastical Neighbours ■ England

Where do we demonstrate excellence?



MASH 24 ensures consistency of practice at all times **and families experience the same support regardless of the time**



Work with extra familial harm through the exploitation hub and the Power 2 service with young people up to age 25 is unique **ensuring our most vulnerable young people have access to specialist co-ordinated support**



Audit and Quality Assurance Framework is strong **demonstrated through the progress in our Aiming for Excellence Plan and evidenced in practice**



Accommodation for care leavers including House Project (CYP Now Awards Winner) **offering innovative options for care leavers to have the best transition to adulthood**



Young People's Engagement **ensuring the child's voice is at the centre of everything we do**



Placement Stability better than statistical and national averages **meaning more children living stable lives**



Right service, right level, right time principle which ensures our demand management is good with confident application of thresholds **demonstrated through more children remaining with their families**



Restorative Practice **embedding our culture of doing with families and not to families**

Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services, report published: 18 May 2022



Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

Ofsted conducted a short inspection between 21 March and 1 April 2022.

- The outcome offers external reassurance that the needs of children and young people in the city are being met with overall effectiveness graded as Good
- The impact of leaders on social work practice has improved from Good to Outstanding
- The experience of children in need and protection has improved from Requires Improvement to Good
- The experience of children in care and care leavers remains Good with some outstanding practice in supporting care leavers

Quality Assurance



Page 21

Practice weeks take place three times a year with all senior managers undertaking "practice conversations" with practitioners, observing practice, obtaining feedback from parents, children / young people, and carrying out dip samples of records. Workers receive immediate feedback and learning opportunities, and senior managers understand how interventions are experienced by children and families first-hand. It aligns with our restorative practice approach and supports a culture of continual learning, improvement, curiosity, and reflection.

As part of our Quality Assurance framework, we triangulate wider service information with our practice week audit activity and incorporate feedback from compliments and complaints, data, and young people / families, as well as linking learning from the safeguarding service, local dip audits and DHRs / CSPRs. This helps us to identify themes and trends and to indicate where quality assurance activity should focus next.

The Aiming for Excellence Plan ensures that performance information and analysis informs our quality assurance activity, and our practice newsletter and a remedial action tracker is helping to close the feedback loop.

Quality Assurance feedback from practice weeks

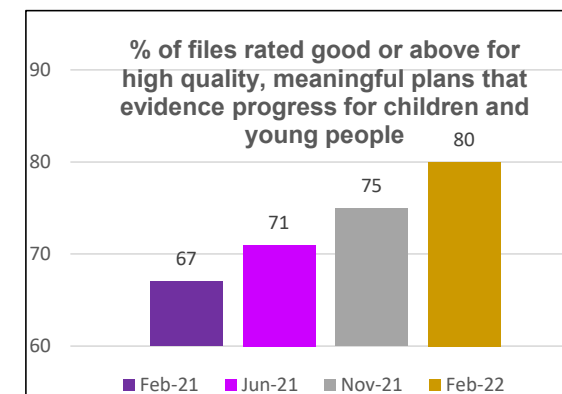
Some of our key areas of strength as identified through audit in practice weeks during 2021/2022:

- Practitioners know the children and families they work with well.
- Direct work through the establishment of relationships is linked to sustained changes.
- Risk is identified, children are safe, and services are making a positive difference
- Evidence of strengths-based approaches and collaborative working

There has also been improvement in specific areas of practice over the year, for example the number of high quality, meaningful care plans that evidence progress for children rated good or above has increased over the last 12 months. This is a key area on the Aiming for Excellence Plan and actions that have supported this progress have included refresher workshops led by the Advanced Practitioners and the sharing of good examples within teams as part of reflective sessions.

Evidence of relationship-based practice has also improved, from 79% of files rated good or higher in this area in June 2021 and 80% in Nov 2021, rising to 88% in Feb 2022.

Our Practice Improvement Plan, Aiming for Excellence is in place and is being utilised as a tool to support excellent practice. The plan is reviewed regularly by colleagues across the service at a range of leadership tiers and is integral to our QA process. This self-assessment demonstrates that through our strength based relational approach to our work we are making a difference to the outcomes for children and young people across the city. Over the next 12 months our key priority is to continue to embed consistency of excellent practice across all areas. We are committed to our restorative approach to practice and will continue to embed this in all our interactions. We are working closely with all colleagues in Social Care to develop a positive culture which incorporates the need for good quality written records to be regarded as an essential integral part of the excellent work we do with children and young people and their families. The impact of reflective discussions and supervisions form part of children's records.



Learning from our Child Safeguarding Practice Review

Learning identified from considering Child R



- The Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together (WST) agreed to undertake a Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) by considering a case to be referred to as Child R .
- Child R was 8 days old when they were taken to A&E with significant head injuries. There had been ongoing concerns about parental neglect of Child R 's older siblings. At the time of Child R 's birth all of the children were the subject of child protection plans.
- Both parents had learning needs and some mental health issues and there was known to be conflict in their relationship. Allegations of historic domestic abuse were not made by the parents until after Child R 's injuries.

The police investigation concluded without any charges. The children are the subject of care proceedings.

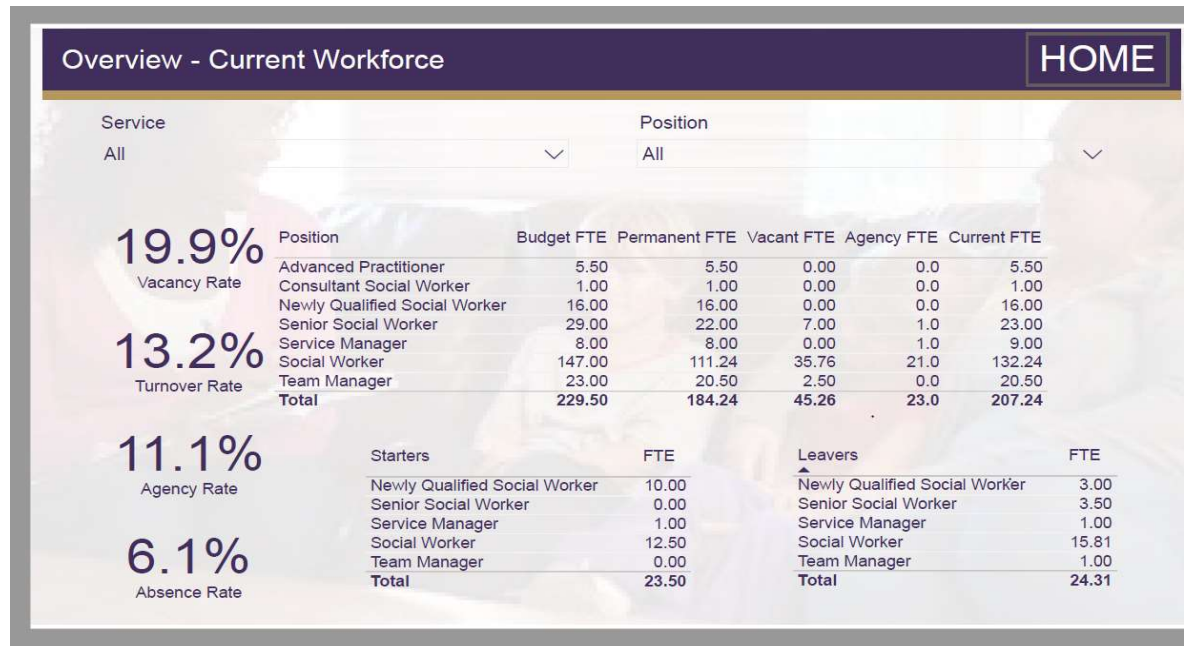
Professionals were aware of regular parental arguments which were thought to be an unhealthy feature of their relationship, this was not considered to be domestic abuse at the time.

Learning from Child R

- When undertaking assessments and making plans for children, there must be a full understanding of the parents' histories and vulnerabilities, and consideration of the impact on their functioning and parenting ability
 - Professionals need to explore and understand a child's lived experience, including considering what they may be communicating by their behaviour. When a baby is expected, there needs to be specific consideration of their likely lived experience
- Page 25
- Professionals need to recognise and consider the cumulative harm to children who experience long term neglect
- Domestic abuse can be subtle. All professionals need to understand how it may manifest
- When neglect is a known issue for children in a family, consideration should also be given to the risk or occurrence of other types of abuse
 - There is a need to ensure that safe sleeping and safe handling information is shared in an appropriate way with families by all involved professionals
 - COVID-19 had an impact on the family stressors and on the support provided
 - All professionals need to be reminded that when there is an injury to a non-mobile baby, child protection procedures need to be followed

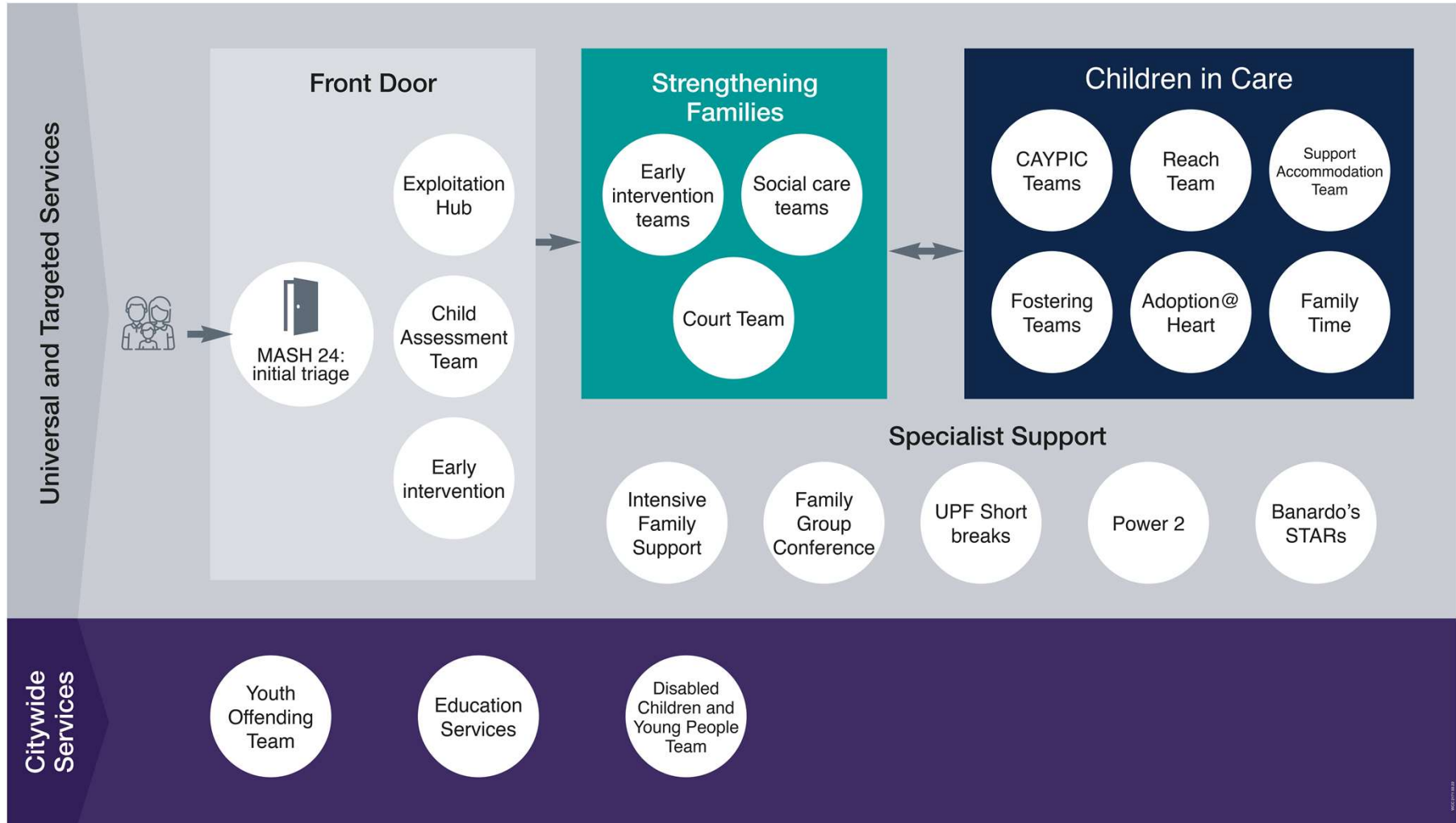
Workforce

Wolverhampton’s children’s social work vacancy rate now stands at 19.9% which is a slight increase from the September 2021 figure of 18.7% and is above the 2021 national vacancy rate of 16.7%, but similar to the regional average of 18.2%. This remains a significant improvement compared to March 2019 when 28% of children’s social work posts locally were unfilled. A number of vacancies in Children’s Services are currently secondments caused by maternity leave and additional roles or projects such as the Social Workers in School (SWIS) project. Secondments are opportunities for progression and are therefore an important element of the local retention strategy. The number of true remaining vacancies currently is just 11.5 (which includes the Peripatetic Team). The local turnover rate of 13.2% is also lower than the national average of 15.4%. We have been successful in converting a number of agency social workers into permanent employees, with at least 6 recent appointments. We have taken steps to recruit to a new permanent team of nine peripatetic social workers who can quickly fill vacancies for a six-to-twelve-month period reducing our reliance on agency staff and stabilising teams. Other actions being taken to support the recruitment of social workers in Children’s Services includes offering interviews within a week of an application being received, which should ensure more timely appointments into post and reduce the amount of time vacancies are left unfilled.



* Data as at 26/4/2022

City of Wolverhampton Children's Service Operating Model



Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub: MASH24

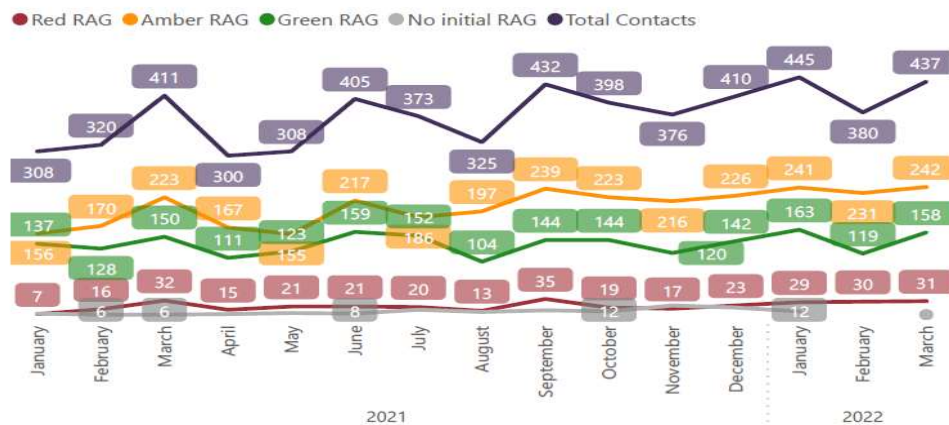
In June 2021 the MASH24 was launched offering consistency of practice and response over 24 hours negating the need for an Emergency Duty team. MASH24 continues to perform well. It consists of Children and Adult Social Care, Early Intervention, Police, Wolverhampton Homes, Recovery Near You, Probation Service, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, Black Country Partnership Foundation Trust and Education representation.

The Children’s MASH service ensures that all referrals are triaged by managers in a timely manner and threshold decision is applied. Children who may be at risk of significant harm are safeguarded appropriately and there are positive links with the Child Assessment Team.

MASH have taken steps to become very visible within other agencies to help and discuss the contact process. Visits have been made to health services, including the 0-19 service, midwives, and mental health services. DSL events have taken place on a quarterly basis, and meetings regularly take place with Wolverhampton Homes, Police and Recovery Near You. This has helped to build positive relationships whereby threshold conversations can happen as required. MASH have been working closely with the Early Intervention teams to help ensure that there is support in place for partner agencies completing the Early Help Assessment to build confidence not only in the computer systems, but also in talking to parents and offering support. Education champions will support this practice .

Page 28

MASH Contacts



As of the end of March 2022 the number of contacts shows a high of 437 which has significantly increased from February’s figure of 380 and is also higher than March 2021’s figure of 411. Between April 2021 and March 2022 there were an average of 382 contacts into MASH, this is an increase in the average number of contacts when compared to the same period the previous year (Avg. 308). Although higher than the previous year, these rates are now in line with pre-pandemic levels and referrals are in line with statistical neighbours. Multi-agency dip sampling activity confirms referrals are being made appropriately.

Referrals:

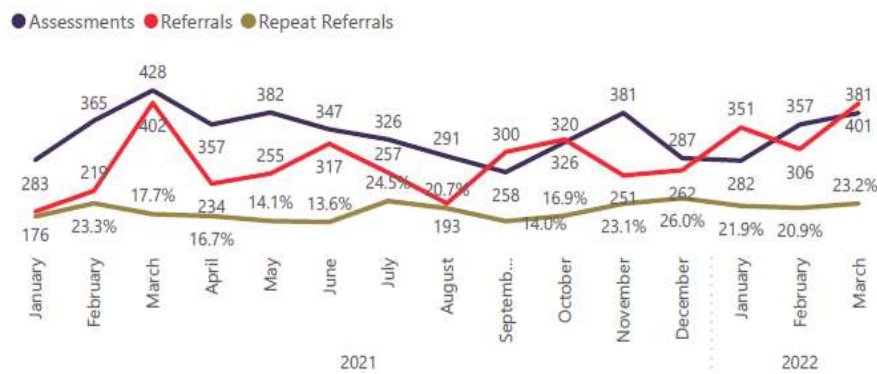
Referral rates are 564 per 10,000 which is in line with statistical neighbours. Referral rates have increased to 406 which is a jump from February's figure of 306. Head teachers have reported that as children have started to settle back into schools they have been talking more about events that may have taken place during lockdown. This has resulted in an increase in Early Help and Child in Need assessments.

The peak in referrals for the 2021/22 year occurred in March 2022 with 401 referrals in the month, this is consistent with the number of referrals received in March 2021.

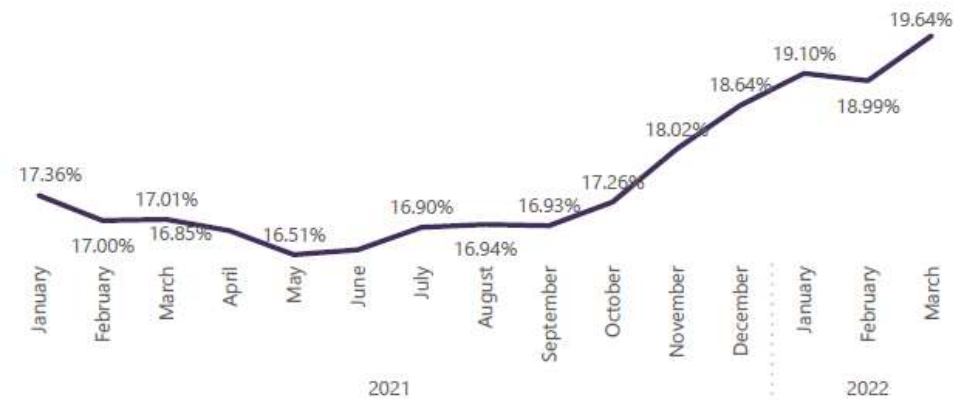
The percentage of repeat referrals in the rolling year is currently lower than any year prior to the pandemic. In 2021 statistical neighbours had a re-referral rate of 22.53% and the West Midlands rate was just over 20%. The usual re-referral rate nationally for the last five years has been around 22%. Currently the rolling year rereferral rate for Wolverhampton is 19.6%.

Page 29

Assessments Completed and Referrals Started



Repeat referrals (Rolling 12 Month)



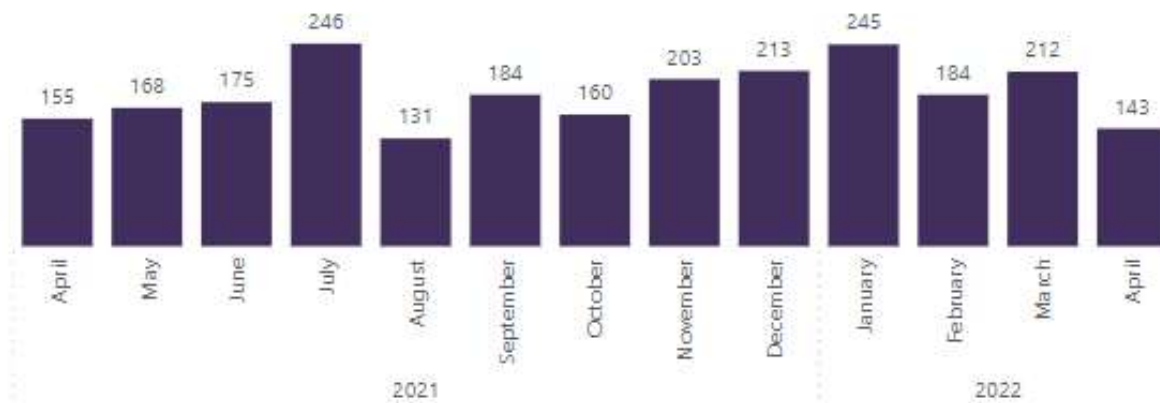
Supporting through Early Intervention

Early Intervention (EI) services are offered through eight locality based strengthening family hubs. At the end of March 2022, 1039 children were being supported by Strengthening Families workers. Early Intervention is currently working with 229 children that are open to statutory social work services at Child in Need, Child Protection and Public Law Proceedings threshold; providing targeted interventions, direct work with children and young people, supporting victims and child witnesses of Domestic Abuse, and addressing 'Supporting Families' factors that are impacting such as worklessness or school attendance.

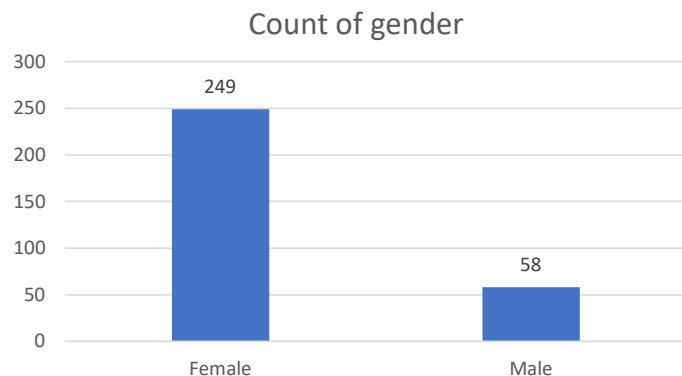
Both audit activity and performance data indicate that Strengthening Families workers make a difference. At the end of an intervention and period of working with us most families are closed because sustained progress has been achieved. 6.5% of families were stepped up to social work locality teams at point of closure during 2021/22.

2021/22 saw an average of 190 referrals to Early Intervention per month.

Number of children with completed referrals with outcome 'EI' by month



Early Intervention achievements, building family strength and resilience



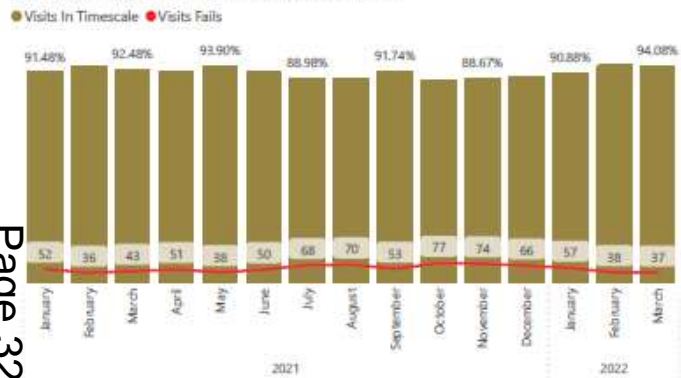
- The Journey of Change parenting programme has been implemented in digital, virtual and physical formats. The virtual and face to face programme has reached over 300 parents in the last 12 months.

- Play Workers provide opportunities for young people to engage in a range of positive activities across the City. Alongside increased detached youth work provision through our partner Base 25, they have helped to divert young people who may have been at increased risk of criminal exploitation and have worked well with hub officers and other partners to engage young people and support the reduction of youth violence.
- Strengthening families workers have delivered the Freedom Programme and McEwan Programme on a one to one basis and, in both virtual and face to face groups for women affected by Domestic Violence or families affected by sexual abuse.
- Adult Education is now delivered from at Strengthening Families Hubs. This includes ESOL courses, supporting parents to help their children learn courses and entry level courses for college.
- A building community resilience pathway has been launched that has engaged partners from universal and voluntary sectors to help families remain independent within communities.
- The service has participated in family hub research with Sheffield Hallam University looking at how outreach activities can increase engagement with families who have English as a second language and families with children with SEND.

Working with our Children in Need

As at the end of March 2022 there were 742 children open as CiN with 94% of children having a visit within the expected timescale. Visits are set to take place at a minimum of once a month. Some children were seen more frequently as per their CiN plan.

CiN Visit Timescales (Excluding Short Break CiN)

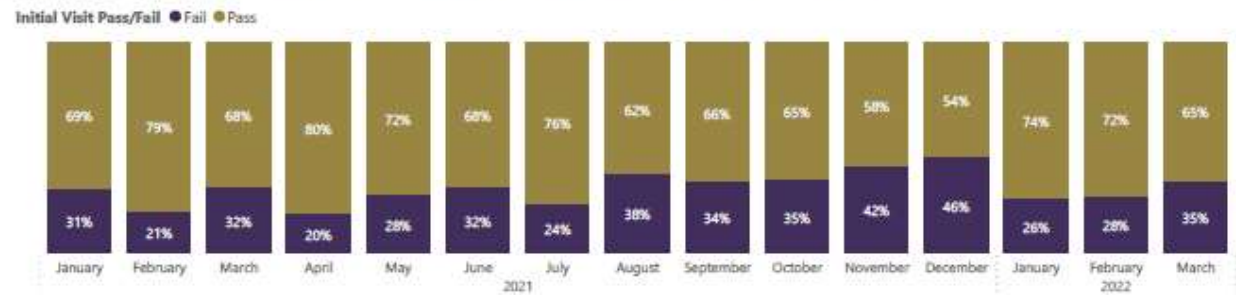


Performance data and some QA activity indicates that social workers alongside partners achieve positive outcomes with families through CiN planning. Most CiN plans are closed within 12 months of starting as improvements have been achieved and risks have reduced for children.

Page 32

The service believes it is important to see children quickly once a referral has been accepted in order to ensure children are safe and to enable support to be delivered in a timely manner. This reduces the risk of needs and concerns escalating. Performance has been fairly consistent in relation to the number of children who are seen within 5 days of referral over the year and most new children are seen within 7 days. An assessment of their circumstances is usually completed within 10 days and where a CiN plan is required the first meeting is completed within 4 weeks.

Initial Visit (Visit within 5 working days of referrals form start with outcome of assessment or Strat)



Child Protection Investigations

Number of Section 47' Starts (With completion date)

● S47 in Month ● S47 in last 12 months



Number of ICPC Starts (With completion date)

● ICPC in Month ● ICPC in last 12 months



S47 to ICPC Conversion

● S47 Conversion (In Month) ● S47 Conversion (Rolling 12 Month)



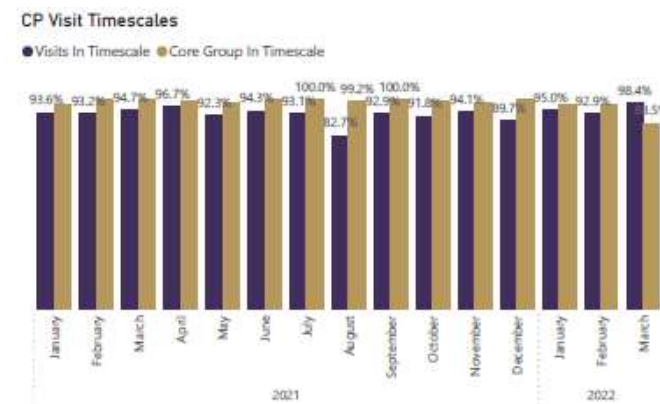
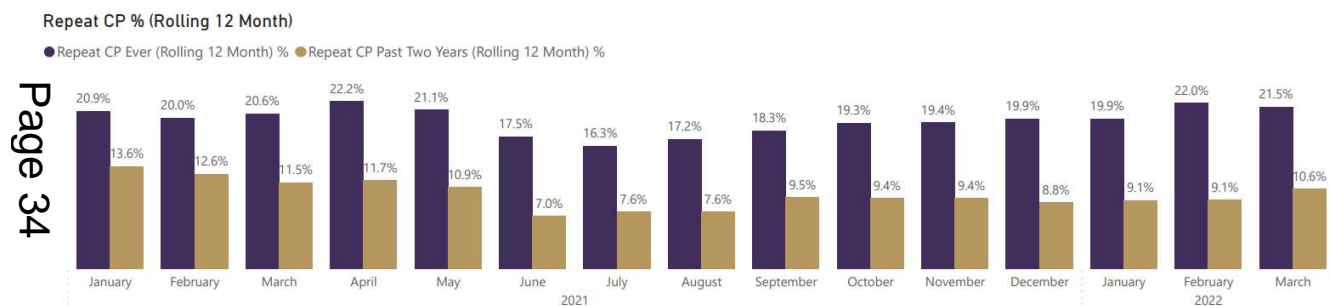
Page 34

Where child protection concerns are raised investigations are undertaken in a timely manner and child protection procedures adhered to well. The number of child protection investigations has decreased in the 12-month rolling period and is below statistical neighbours and national averages. As at March 2022, 29% of section 47 enquiries completed within the previous 12 months result in an ICPC, this has seen a gradual decrease from 35.9% in April 2021.

When undertaking a section 47 enquiry social workers can access responsive support services from Early Help, Housing, Drug and Alcohol services, the Exploitation Hub and Domestic Abuse services. As a result, risks have often decreased before the end of the enquiry, negating the need for an ICPC.

Safeguarding our Children in Need of Protection

There were 253 children subject of a child protection plan in March 2022. The Safeguarding manager monitors child protection decisions and is confident that threshold is being applied appropriately. The number of child protection cases that are repeats within 2 years over the rolling 12-month period is 10.6% for the end of March 2022 which is 0.9% decrease from March 2021. In the main, families are sustaining the changes made whilst children have been subject to child protection planning. An analysis of the children who have become subject to repeat child protection planning within two years has taken place. This found that in the majority of cases children were subject to repeat child protection planning due to their experience of neglect and/or domestic abuse. A strategic partnership approach to understanding the impact of neglect on children led to the development of the WeCAN toolkit to support the identification of neglect. In addition to this training within the service has offered to support practitioners working with families where domestic abuse is a feature.

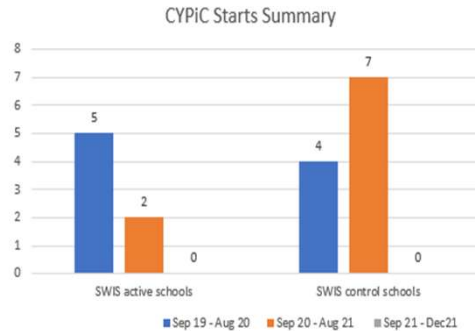


Performance for CP visits completed in timescale has been consistently above 90% across the previous 12 months, however, this saw a decrease in August which was due to higher vacancy rates resulting in a decline in timeliness of recording. Performance improved significantly the following month and the visit completion percentage at the end of March 2022 was 98.4%.

Core groups take place regularly and have continued to be well attended by partners utilising virtual meetings in TEAMS during Covid-19 restrictions. Services such as Intensive Family Support, Power2 (a multi-professional service to support teenagers at risk of multiple factors) and Partnering Families (a health service to support new parents who have previously had children removed from their care) are well utilised and help children to remain safely within their birth families.

Working with schools to support children and their families at the earliest opportunity

The Wolverhampton Social Workers in Schools (SWIS) project started in November 20 and is part of a larger scale evaluation (21 local authorities and around 300 schools across England) led by: -Department for Education (DfE), What Works for Children's Social Care and The Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE, Cardiff University)



CYPiC Starts Summary

Cohort	Sep 19 - Aug 20	Sep 20 - Aug 21	Sep 21 - Dec 21
SWIS active schools	5	2	0
SWIS control schools	4	7	0

- Five social workers are based within the school environment of five active schools to develop early relationships and a partnership approach with school staff, young people and their families. Overtime this involvement has grown to include wider community by implementing the resilience pathway to improve resilience levels amongst all parties.
- The social workers work with young people supported by Child in Need, Child Protection planning and in assessment. Social workers complete the majority of Section 47's and start working with families from initial point of referral. However, their knowledge of the school and existing family relationships often enables them to hold informal discussions before any referral is made, and where necessary signpost to early help or community services if appropriate.
- The SWIS team have been able to work closely with children and families and other professionals to help families improve their circumstances and reduce concerns about children's wellbeing and safety. This has also enabled social workers to gain insight into how schools operate and the structures that govern them as well as enabling schools to gain an understanding of social care thresholds and criteria.
- Feedback from all schools is very positive, with one Head Teacher saying that she can't imagine not having a social worker, and another saying that he would like more than one. Schools have reported a greater understanding of the social work role and feel that communication is much better. Schools have benefited from joint training opportunities and participating in solution circles with social workers and strengthening families workers. School have been able to develop their early help offer further and are feeling more equipped to support children and young people at the earliest opportunity.
- Training to up skill staff delivered by the SWIS project has included Restorative practice, exploitation, equalities, getting it right and trauma informed practice.
- Workshops for young people include sessions about healthy relationships, social media, harmful sexual behaviour, resilience and self-esteem and emotional wellbeing. This has been supported by HeadStart and micro-commissioning initiatives

Our partnership approach to tackling violence and exploitation

Wolverhampton has adopted a new approach to address issues of violence and exploitation (V&E) in the City, as set out in our Strategy. It is recognised that the landscape of exploitation requires a more flexible and agile approach across the partnership and a commitment to tackle violence and exploitation in its entirety. The Serious Violence Duty (July 2021) has also provided a clear focus for the partnership around the need to understand local issues and to further develop our strategy to prevent and reduce violence.

In order to improve how we work together to identify and protect young people at risk of or experiencing exploitation in all its forms, we have redesigned our whole system to ensure that support is joined-up and effective. This has included a revised threshold document to clearly identify the extra familial risks associated with exploitation and an updated exploitation screening tool to ensure it supports the identification of all forms of exploitation. Training via a suite of online modules is also available to all staff across the safeguarding partnership.

In February 2021, the Partnership Exploitation and Missing Hub (including young adults 18-25) was launched. All referrals supported by a completed screening tool are now risk assessed within the MASH, including information and intelligence from the Hub. All young people identified at risk (even where risks are low) receive support from either Early Intervention or Social Care. Daily partnership briefings are being held to discuss all young people and vulnerable adults at risk of exploitation.

Positive impact since the launch of the Hub (February 2021 - March 2022):

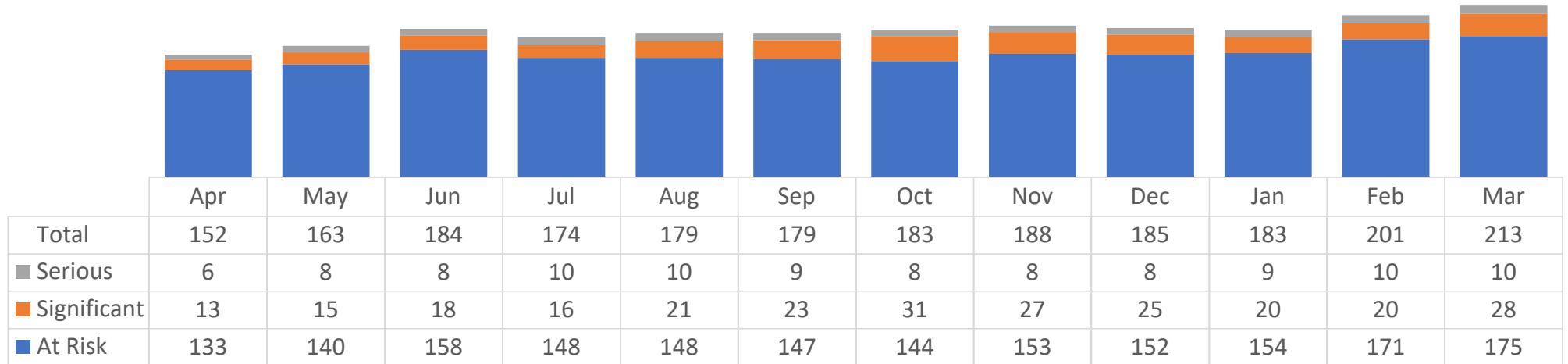
- Daily briefings are attended by Police, Children and Adult social care, YOT, Missing Return Officer, Early Intervention, Education, Community Safety Partnership, Health and the Violence Reduction Unit
- 1282 young people and Adults have been discussed in 4843 discussions
- Increase in identification of risk - 418 Exploitation screening tools have been received and discussed
- Review of missing young people is embedded into the daily briefings leading to more effective disruption
- Timely response to concerns from a wide range of professionals
- Co-ordinated information sharing/ intelligence gathering – developing a profile of activity across the city to inform prevention and disruption activity

Our response to Child Exploitation

Since the launch of the Partnership Missing and Exploitation Hub (February 2021), the co-ordinated response to all forms of exploitation has been enhanced. The annual exploitation problem profile for 2021 provides an overview of CSE, CCE, county lines and gang activity across the city. The Exploitation Problem Profile for 2021 shows an increase in the identification of young people at risk of exploitation. This is as a result of increased awareness and better co-ordination across the partnership.

Local Exploitation Figures 2021/22

Page 37



As of the end of March 2022, the breakdown of types of exploitation young people are known to be at risk of/involved with include; 121 Child Sexual exploitation (CSE), 123 Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), 45 County Lines (CL) and 38 Modern Day Slavery (MDS) (some young people experience more than one type of exploitation). Currently there are 42 young people with National Referral Mechanism (NRM) status as a result of being trafficked or modern-day slavery and 51 young people and adults open to MACE.

The referral pathway for exploitation has been strengthened to ensure that all young people identified as being 'at risk' will receive an offer of support, Emerging operational themes and areas of concern are escalated to the Child Exploitation and Missing Operational Group (CEMOG) and exploitation remains a priority for the Wolverhampton Safeguarding partnership.

Supporting our Vulnerable Adolescents at Risk of Exploitation

The Power2 team was established in December 2019 as a pilot project to work with young people at risk of exploitation and engaged in high risk-taking behaviours. The team is multi-disciplinary with social workers (children and adults), speech and language therapist, educational psychologist, substance misuse worker, play/ drama therapist and keyworker support commissioned from the voluntary sector. Young people and their families receive an intensive service for 6-12 months, using trauma informed practice to take adverse childhood experiences into account (ACEs). In January 2022, long term funding for the team was agreed.

Power2 work with :

- Young people aged between 11 and 25 years of age who are at risk of exploitation;
- Young people where there is current or recent escalation in high risk-taking behaviours;
- Young people where there has been support and interventions implemented to decrease risk, which have not proved effective;
- Young people transitioning into adulthood who would not ordinarily meet the adult social care criteria for support.

Positive outcomes:

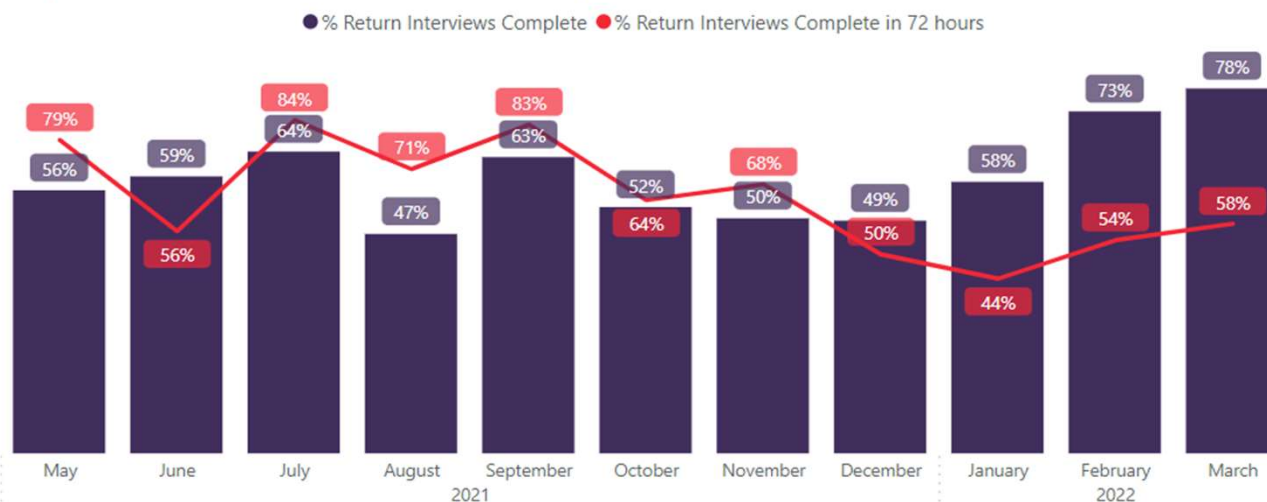
In October 2021, a detailed evaluation of the team was produced and evidenced the positive impact on young people and families

- Reduction in CSE risk
- Reduction in number/ length of missing episodes
- Step down from child protection to child in need
- No further offending behaviour
- Re-engagement in education, employment or training
- Reduction in self harm
- Improved mental health



Our response to children who are missing

Monthly Breakdown Of Completed Interviews, and Completed within 72 hrs



Page 39

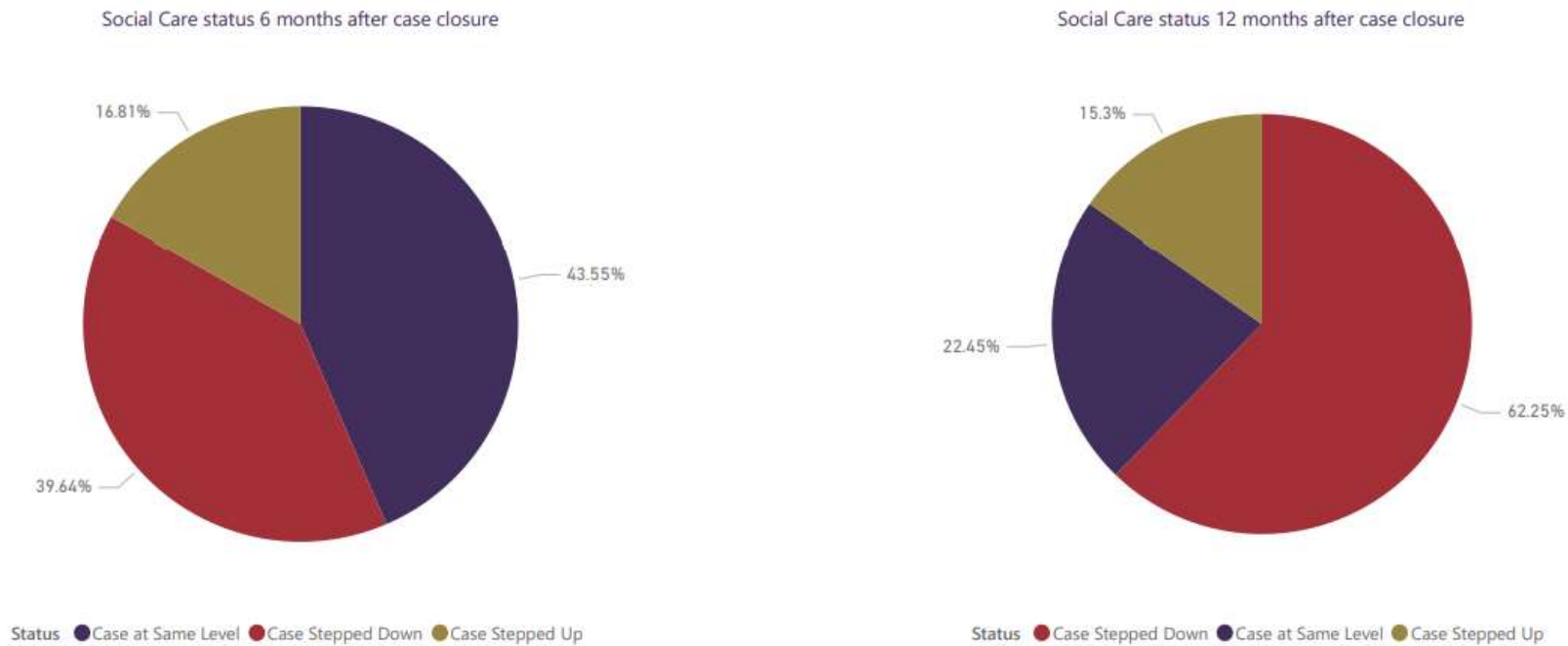
As part of the return interview, the exploitation screening tool is always completed to ensure consideration is given to missing young people being at risk of exploitation. Work is to be undertaken to clearly evidence the attempts that are made to engage with young people following a missing episode.

There has also been a significant increase in reported missing episodes. The average number of missing episodes per month during 2019 was 40, during 2021 the average was 67 with a peak of 98 in December. The average per month so far in 2022 is 71. All missing episodes are now discussed in the daily briefing.

The number of missing episodes followed up with a missing return interview is monitored on a monthly basis. Whilst not all of these are completed within the 72 hour timescale, there remains a commitment to always persist in engaging with young people.

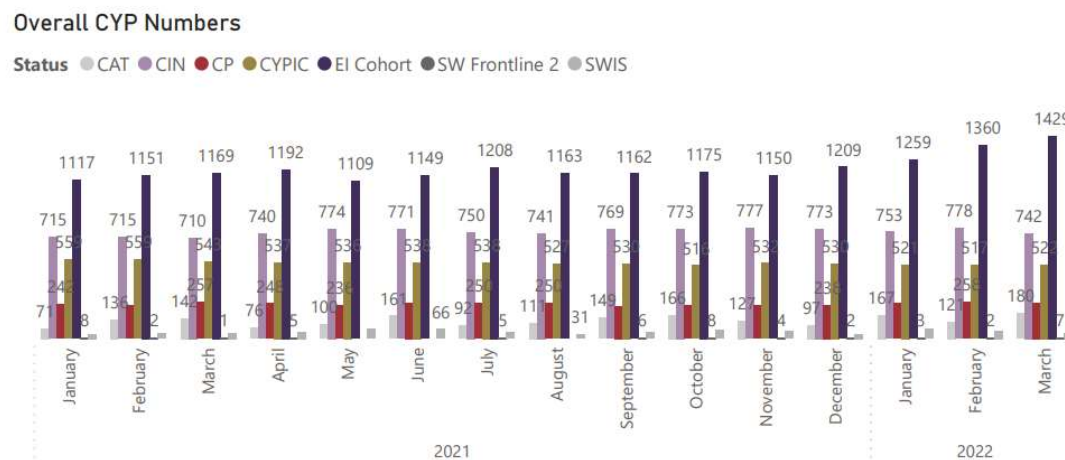
Strengthening families through specialist support services

The Specialist Support service continues to enable children to remain safely at home through a range of services that help families repair relationships, find solutions to the issues that are affecting children, develop safe, effective boundaries and support parents and carers to make significant lifestyle changes. The service focuses on good quality direct interventions with the City's most vulnerable children and families. The service offer includes Family Group Conferencing and mediation and a short break offer which forms part of our early intervention and edge of care offer. Sustained outcomes 12 months after intervention show 84.7% of young people's social care status had either remained the same (22.45%) or stepped down (62.25%). This performance demonstrates the difference that targeted early support to families can make, enabling children to remain within their own families.



Children and Young People in Care

There is a clear vision that is shared across the Children and Young People in Care service which is focused on achieving permanence and stability for children. The number of children in care in Wolverhampton has historically been considerably higher than comparator authorities, over the last ten years. There now is greater emphasis on tackling issues within the family unit and offering support at an earlier stage, preventing the need for children and young people to become looked after. This work, together with the co-location of early intervention and statutory social work teams and the introduction of a relational and strength-based practice framework has contributed to year-on-year reductions in the number of children in care. The total number of CYPiC at the end of March 2022 is 522 , 79.2 per 10,000 (0-18 population), this is a reduction from 543 CYPiC (82.4 per 10,000) at the end of March 2021.



Robust decision-making processes are in place to ensure that when children cannot be cared for at home, their entry into care is planned appropriately ensuring there is a care plan in place that focuses on achieving early permanence in a timely manner. The effectiveness of care planning had been evidenced by good timeliness in proceedings and improved timeliness for children with a plan of adoption.

Stability for our Children and Young People in Care

In Wolverhampton we believe that wherever possible children should live with families in or close to our city. The Family Values project focussed on increasing the number of internal fostering households, and improving the offer of support to increase the retention of foster carers.

Foster carers support has been enhanced by the introduction of therapeutic training, peer support for foster carers through Fostering Families United, the use of buddies, and restorative practice training. The ambition at the start of the project was to increase the net gain of fostering households approved by the City of Wolverhampton by 81 households by July 2021.

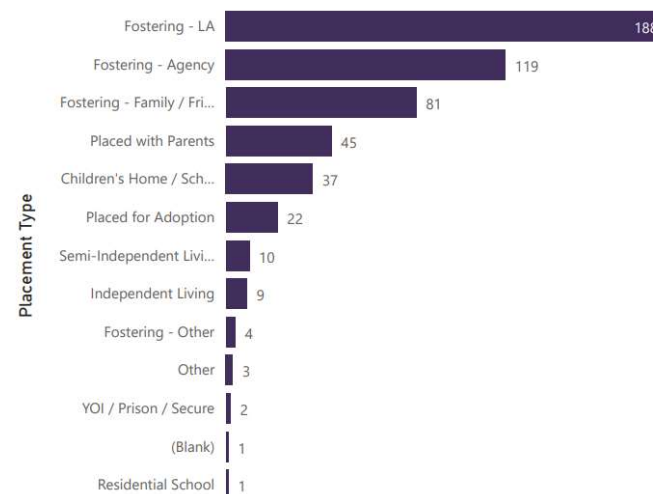
In July 2021 we had achieved an overall net gain of 72 .

The Family Values work continues with oversight from the Head of Children and Young People in care

In 2021/2022 18 new foster carers were approved, 9 of these were family and friends and 9 mainstream foster carers. However, Wolverhampton saw an overall net loss of 3 carers with a number of long standing foster carers retiring from the role; many of whom had delayed their retirement to offer their support during the early stages of the pandemic. Whilst our retention rates remain strong, we have reviewed our recruitment strategy and are also further reviewing the additional benefits that could be offered to our foster carers. Despite the net loss the gap of placements of children in external placements and those in internal placements continues to widen with most children placed with our internal foster carers.

At the end of March 2022 there were 307 children placed in foster homes with 81 of these children placed with Family and Friends.

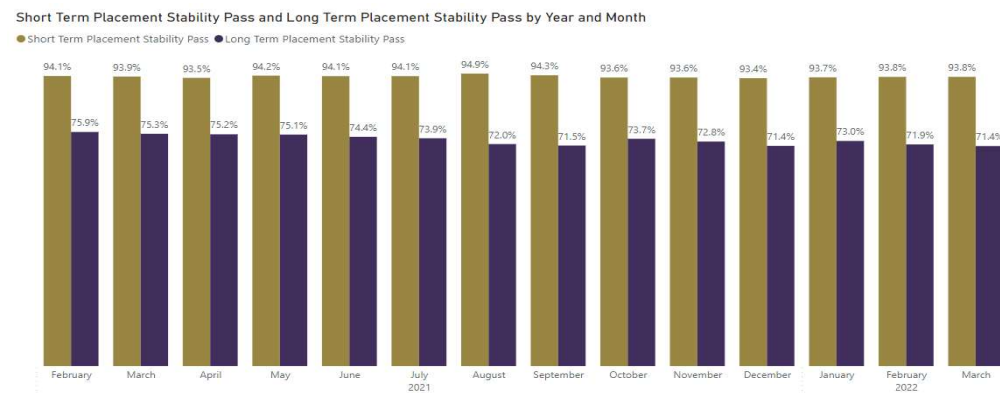
CYPiC Placements



Supporting our carers to provide stable placements supporting positive outcomes for CYPIC

- Placement stability percentages remain higher than regional and statistical neighbours and national averages. The table below shows the latest published comparator data as at the end of March 2022:

Area	Long Term Placement Stability	Short Term Placement Stability
Wolverhampton	71.4%	93.8%
West Midlands	71.0%	92.0%
Statistical Neighbours	70.6%	90.9%
England	70.0%	91.0%



- In order to achieve even better placement stability, plans include:
 - Fostering Families United - Foster carers work together in small teams supported by their supervising social worker. Foster carers have found the support from each other invaluable, and this has enabled them to care for children with some complex care histories. There are now 4 Fostering Families United teams in place with a plan to continue to expand this delivery model to all carers in the next twelve months.
 - A therapeutic training programme delivered to all foster carers. Fostering staff have also all been trained in this model to ensure consistency of support, advice and consultation. The training is now being delivered to children's social workers in order that this consistent approach to parenting can be embedded across the service. Weekly support sessions continue to take place for foster carers and staff to discuss and reflect on their experiences.

Achieving permanence though adoption

Year 3 of Adoption@Heart (A@H) has seen another successful year with adoption services delivered through our strong partnership approach.

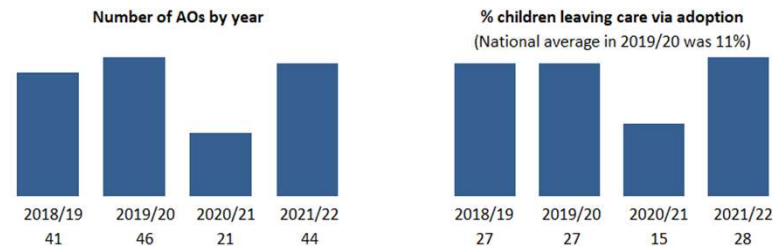
Timeliness in 2021/2022 has improved across the groups. A1 has decreased from 857 in 20/21 to 672 and A10 has also decreased from 819 to 672. A2 has increased slightly from 269 to 277 days and the same for A20 from 297 to 313, although all still remain above target. The average days from placement to Adoption Order has increased slightly to 265 days from 251 days, but still remains below the national average.

Wolverhampton continues to be appropriately optimistic when planning for adoption for children who are unable to live with their birth family. This includes children who may be regarded as harder to place and hence may take longer to identify a suitable adoptive family.

A reduction in Adoption Orders granted in 2020/21 was a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure and backlog in the courts.

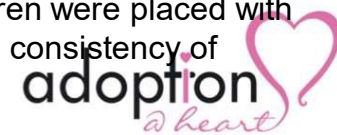
The court are now issuing hearing dates for adoption applications.

Thus, we can positively report 44 Adoption Orders were granted in 2021/22 with most children being adopted by adopters approved by Adoption@Heart.



A@H has approved 57 adopters in the year 2021/22 and at year end additional 26 approved and available to be linked with a child.

In 2021/22 34 Wolverhampton children were placed with their adopters (a decrease of 4 since 20/21). 22 of these children were placed with A@H adopters thus inter-agency usage is significantly lower than in the previous year (14 out of 38). This is allowing a consistency of support to adopters who are more likely to live locally.



In 2021/22 10 Wolverhampton children were placed via Early Permanence under Fostering to Adopt Regulations

Achieving good health and wellbeing for our Children and Young People in Care

Physical Health

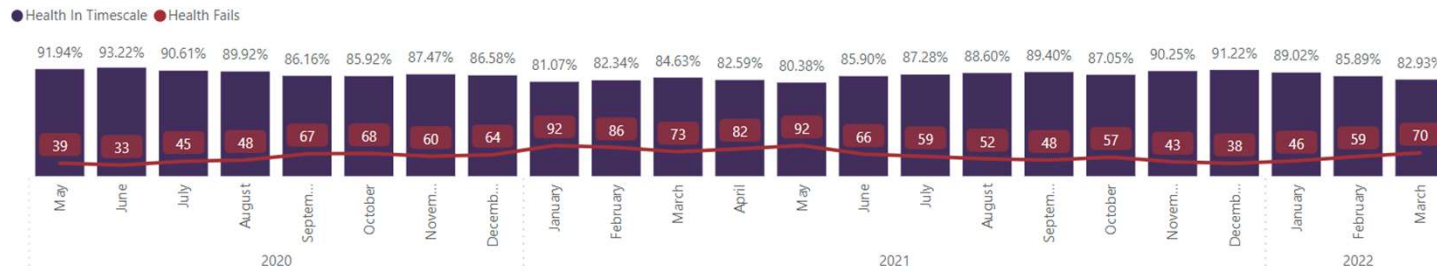
The health and wellbeing of CYPiC is a priority. All new children into care have Health Passports which were established with the support of partners in the CCG, ensuring health information is readily available to children and their carers.

The percentage of dentals completed in timescales saw a considerable dip April 2020-March 2021 which was directly linked to the pandemic. This position has gradually been improving with performance achieving pre-pandemic performance in January 2022. Ensuring children have good dental health remains a priority.

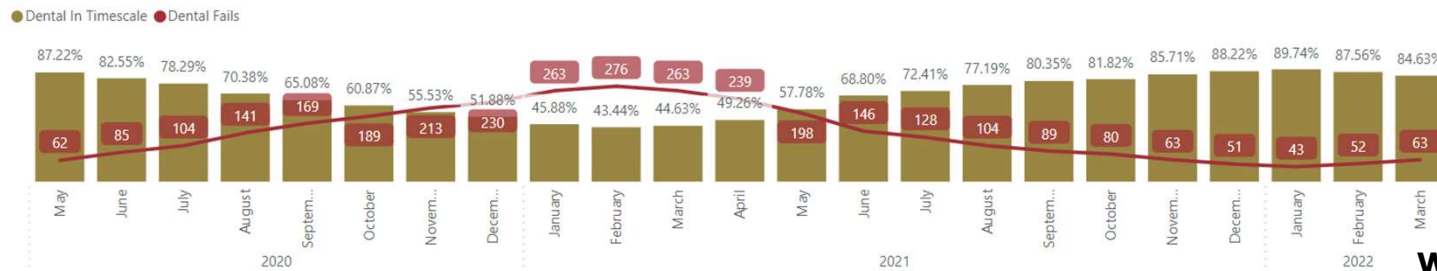
All CYPiC have health assessments unless they have refused to attend. However, the timeliness of review health assessments has fluctuated over the last 12 months. We continue to work closely with health colleagues to ensure we have strong systems in place to avoid delay in completion. Further work is being undertaken to improve timeliness of initial health assessments.

Page 45

Review Health Assessment Timescales



CYPiC Dental Timescales



Supporting Good Emotional Health and Wellbeing for Children and Young People in Care

At the end of March 2022, the provisional SDQ score for Wolverhampton was 13.3, seeing an improvement on the average score for the previous year. This score is considered 'normal' and shows Wolverhampton positively in comparison to statistical and national comparators and evidences yearly improvement since 2016. For 2020/21 Wolverhampton was ranked as the 54th best performing authority for this indicator. This helps us to understand and meet the needs of all our children and young people in care.

Emotional and Behavioural Wellbeing - SDQ average scores	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Provisional 2022
Wolverhampton	12.6	12.3	13.2	14.2	14.4	13.7	13.7	13.4	13.4	13.3
West Midlands	13.7	13.5	13.5	14.1	13.9	13.7	14.3	14.2	13.3	
Statistical Neighbours	14.77	14.51	14.52	15.16	14.26	14.3	14.7	14.5	14.0	
England	14	13.9	13.9	14	14.1	14.2	14.2	14.1	13.7	

Access to emotional health and wellbeing services is one of our Care Leavers Independent Collective's priorities for 2022/23, to ensure young people are equipped with skills to cope with adversity and to engage with available support. As such our Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-25 makes commitments to support CYPIC and Care Leavers' health and emotional well-being and resilience. We have recently agreed to commission "Ask Jan" an emotional wellbeing offer and App for Care Leavers 19 and above. CYPIC and Care Leavers up to the age of 19 have access to Kooth commissioned by the CCG.

A family therapeutic service has been commissioned to support the specialist therapeutic needs of children young people and their families. This service will not only strengthen the support to children and families to enable them to continue living together but will also offer therapeutic services to children in care and care leavers. The service has been operational since May 2021 and complements the services offered by the universal emotional wellbeing services and CAMHS.

Working with Children and Young People in Care to Achieve positive Outcomes

CYPiC Participation

● Reviews Participation Pass ● Reviews Participation Fail



Social work visits to Children and Young People in Care fulfil a range of critical roles and functions not least to build and maintain relationships with children but also to enable the child's circumstances to be observed and monitored. Visits are carried out at least once every 6 weeks or once every 12 weeks in a stable placement.

During the year the vast majority of children received visits from their social workers within statutory timescales. Audits have continued to identify evidence of excellent relationship building and direct work, also recently noted by Ofsted.

There is strong evidence of children contributing to their plans and participating in their Children and Young People in Care reviews. Children participate in their review by either speaking for themselves or chairing their own review.

Visits in Timescale

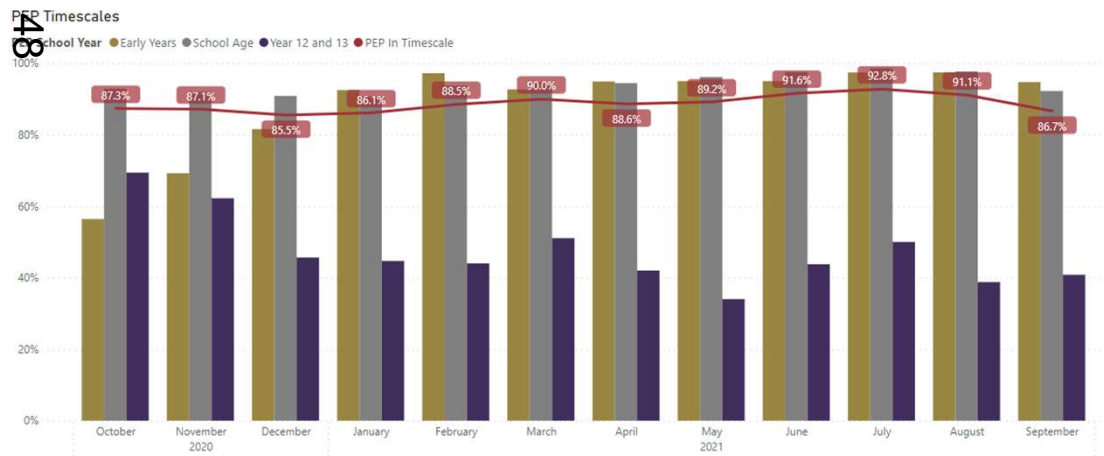
● Visits ● Visits Fails



Impact of our work with Children and Young People in Care

The work undertaken by social workers alongside the Virtual School and other professionals, as well as strategic activity is contributing to improved education and employment outcomes for children and young people. Previously, outcomes for the whole cohort at KS1 – 4 were broadly in line with national and regional averages. GCSE outcomes improved significantly for children and young people in care in 2020 and 2021 – in 2020, 25% of eligible children in the cohort achieved grade 4 or above in both English and Maths. In 2021, this figure rose further to 30%. We feel that this improvement is due to grades being based on teacher assessments rather than exams, alongside the consistent support provided to the pupils before, during and after the lockdown periods. School attendance is generally high. No children and young people in care were permanently excluded from school in the 2020/21 academic year, or in 2021/22 to date, and fixed term exclusions have significantly reduced for this cohort and pupils generally. 98% of children and young people in care in year 11 progressed into education, employment or training in September 2021.

Three Wolverhampton care leavers graduated from university in 2021, two of whom achieved a first-class honours degree and one completing her studies at level 5. We currently have 31 care leavers in higher education.



The pupil premium is used effectively to ensure children are achieving well. Personal Education Plans (PEP's) completion rates are high, and the Eclipse Electronic PEP is supporting a detailed understanding of progress that children are making in schools as well as identifying areas that require additional support.

Extension to the role of the virtual school head

In September 2022, the DfE announced funding and published non-statutory guidance to extend the role of the Virtual School Head (VSH) to all children with a social worker or who have ever had a social worker, so that more vulnerable children in every local authority can benefit from the support and leadership of a VSH.

The 3 'critical activities' in this, as outlined in DfE guidance, are:

- Highlighting the barriers that children with a social worker face in education
- Enhancing partnerships between social care and education settings
- Provision of quality advice in evidence-based interventions to 'narrow the gap'

To this end, developments have included:

- Utilising funding allocated for this purpose to increase staffing – a restructure of virtual school management and a new dedicated school improvement advisor (SIA) for children with a social worker
- Developing a data set on children with a social worker and who have ever had a social worker at both school and pupil level; identifying attendance, exclusions, SEND status and a range of other vulnerability factors
- Funding an enhanced training package on attachment/trauma aware practice, to be offered to schools with high numbers of vulnerable pupils
- Training for school governors on meeting the needs of this cohort in schools
- Briefings to social care management teams, designated safeguarding leads, designated teachers
- Learning from the Social Workers in Schools (SWIS) project & attending multi-agency planning meetings to ensure that the virtual school is involved in future development of the project
- Planning to include the new SIA in school visits with Education Excellence, to ensure a joined-up approach to support/challenge of schools
- A wider, flexible CPD package for schools and partners is currently being developed

Supporting positive outcomes for Care Leavers

Social workers, young people's advisors, family support workers, CYPiC mentors, housing support workers, and an education, employment and training (EET) co-ordinator, EET advisor and 2 care experienced apprentices facilitate excellent joint working arrangements to support young people into independence. Young people are aware of their entitlements as detailed in the Local Offer for Care Leavers - Reach. Key information leaflets and booklets are incorporated into a post-16 independence pack, and the information is on the care leavers' Facebook page and CYPiC website. The teams are committed to increasing partnership working with young people and empowering them to develop confidence and achieve their aspirations; this has been enhanced this year with the launch of the capacity to co-produce pathway plans with young people within Eclipse. The Reach Offer has been revised and improved to increase support to care leavers throughout the pandemic, evidencing strong relationships across the council and with partner agencies.

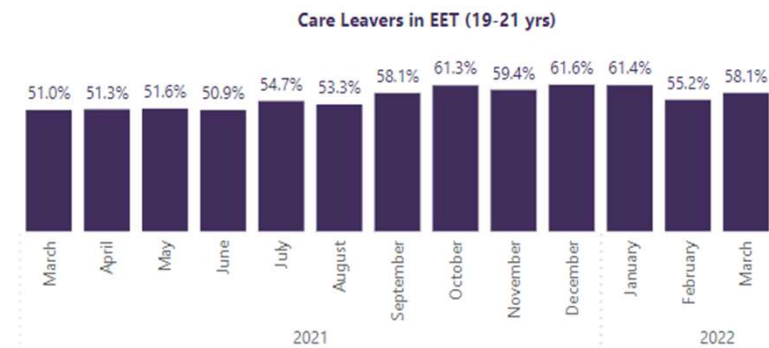
Our recent Ofsted inspection services to care leavers were described as outstanding.

We now have 501 care leavers open to the REACH team

The majority of our care leavers are remaining open to us post 21 as young people want to benefit from ongoing support from their YPA.

We have expanded the number of YPA's to reflect this and will be expanding to two teams this year

Engagement in the variety of EET opportunities available is given a high priority within the service. Young people have priority interviews for apprenticeships within the council and now care leavers can apply at the internal application stage. The offer of apprenticeships has now been extended for those up to 20 years of age. The council offers 10 inclusive apprenticeship posts. The number of apprenticeships within CYPiC Service has increased from two to five over the last two years and senior managers have committed to continue to increase this number across Children's Service. In addition, Reconomy, our House Project private company partner, are offering five apprenticeship positions for care leavers. The numbers of young people in EET at the end of 2021/22 is 58.1%, an improvement of over 7% when compared to the same point in the previous year. EET opportunities for care leavers nationally and locally have been significantly impacted upon by the pandemic. However, we have continued to work with care leavers and partners to support young people into available opportunities as soon as possible.



Housing options to support children in care and care leavers

Care leavers have a choice of accommodation provision including; Supported accommodation provision managed by Accord Housing, Wolverhampton Homes accommodation supported by our own Housing Support Service, Staying Put (over 18), Independent Accommodation (over 18) and local quality assured and monitored Supported Accommodation provisions. Additionally, up to 10 young people per year are supported into their own accommodation by our Local House Project.

The Housing Support Service has access to up to 33 Wolverhampton Homes flats, 2 crash pads and 2 training flats. Each young person has a designated housing support worker (HSW) who remains with them throughout their time in the service. Support hours vary, with a maximum of 30 hours per week, as the young person progresses, the number of hours decrease. The HSW draws up an individual support plan for each young person.

Page 51
Between April 2021 and March 2022, 11 young people moved into independent living in a flat with a bespoke package of support from the Housing Support Team, 4 of which are still maintaining their tenancy 6 months on. 21 young people have now been part of the House Project, with 12 now living independently, a further 4 are now living in accommodation suitable to their needs, and we have 2 in our current cohort planning to move into their own properties. Identification of young people for cohort 4 is underway. The House Project is shortlisted for the MJ Awards for the Best Social Housing Initiative in May 2022.

The co-production hub has opened which has enabled us to deliver group face to face sessions and enable our young people to develop communities of support with their peers.

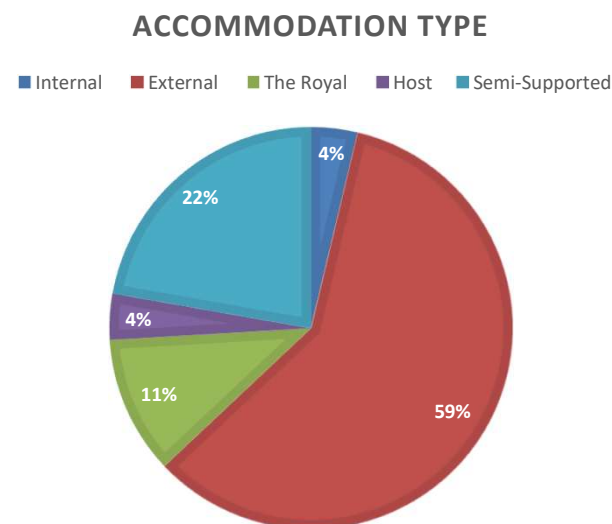
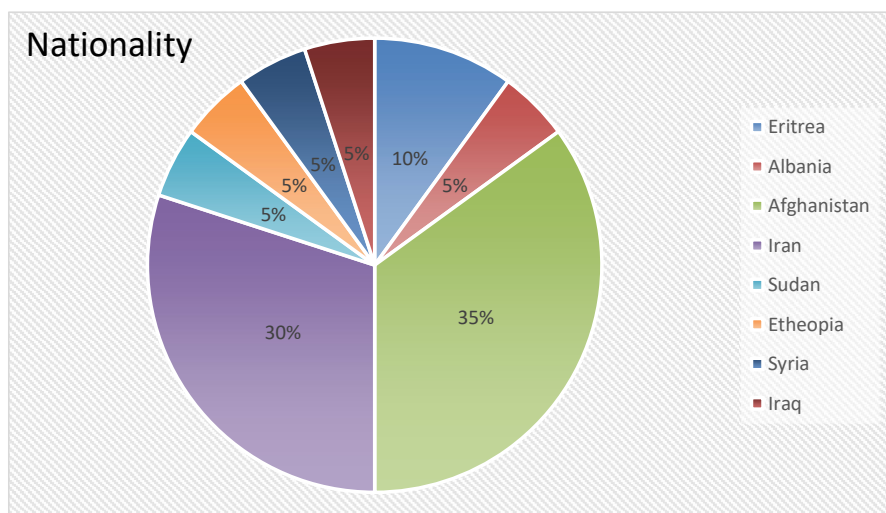
Our Supported Lodgings Service recruited 3 hosts during 2021, and we continue to market and further develop the service. There are 45 young people living in Staying Put arrangements with their former foster carers. During April 2021 and March 2022, there were 16 referrals for CYPiC for mentoring support. Due to this wide-ranging offer of accommodation options the percentage of young people in suitable accommodation remains at 94%.



Supporting our Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children to feel welcomed and cared for in our city

- As of 31 March 2021, we were supporting a total of 6 UASC children in care and 27 UASC care leavers.
- As of March 2022, we now support 56 UASC. 27 are children in care and 29 UASC care leavers. This is increase in 23 UASC this year overall and it is a result of our engagement in the National Transfer Scheme

Page 52



Support for our UASC

- The Royal Wolverhampton School is a free school with additional boarding facilities and has worked with 13 UASC since 2015, having supported three UASC to transition to University. The Royal is a diverse and multi-racial school serving both the city of Wolverhampton and local areas and international countries. The RMC work in close partnership with the Royal school, so where possible, we try and place our young people at this school.
- monthly UASC Health and Wellbeing panel, chaired by CYPiC Service Manager and consists of the RMC, Senior social worker, CAMHS and more recently to include CYPiC named nurses. The panel reviews the health and wellbeing needs of all UASC.
- developed a UASC training package for all social workers, delivered by our Advanced Practitioner. Four sessions have been delivered this year. Coram have also commissioned age assessment training and Wolverhampton social workers are routinely attending so we can increase our pool of social workers who are age-assessed trained. We regularly receive free UASC training via the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership which is accessed by social workers.
- We have a UASC champion who sits within the Reach leaving care team as a Young Person Advisor (YPA). We have also funded an additional YPA post from UASC funding and their role is to support with securing immigration status for our young people.
- The Grand Mentor scheme extends to UASC..
- The RMC provide invaluable support to our young people as a universal service but additionally have provided case work, mentoring, legal advice and support, ESOL courses, group work and support our UASC with everyday living, education, health and wellbeing and immigration advice and support

Our strong corporate parenting approach

The Council believes it is important to invest in children and young people in care - the Corporate Parenting Strategy is supported by the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board (CPPB) chaired by the Council's Deputy Chief Executive. The Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leavers Independent Collective (CLIC) both produce an annual survey, the outcomes of which are used to inform the Corporate Parenting Action plan.

The CPPB, CiCC and CLIC have co-produced a new Corporate Parenting Strategy approved by Cabinet in March 2022.

Some of our significant achievements that we have worked on with children in care and care leavers this year include:

- The opening of the Oasis Co-Production Hub which is a safe space with resources to support sessions and encourage face to face contact whilst also having the ability to operate “ hybrid” meetings to allow Care Leavers from outside the city to partake in sessions and provide feedback.
- Development of Total Respect training refresher sessions with new members of CiCC and CLIC to ensure effective training is provided to new internal staff, Councillors, and partner agencies.
- Commitment from Health Steering Group via CCG to develop a “Free Prescriptions” Offer for care leavers in the city.
- Ensuring care leavers have access to Council Tax exemption scheme.
- Development and implementation of easy access pathway to City of Wolverhampton Council apprenticeships which allows care leaving apprentices to apply at “ two-week stage” after internal redeployment candidates rather than waiting for the general external application date.
- Number of internal, ring-fenced apprenticeships have seen an increase. Currently Wolverhampton Homes offering 5 apprenticeships per year, CYPIC Service offer 5 , the Participation Team offer 1 and Strengthening Families Service offer up to 3.

Participation and co-production with our Children in Care Council and Care leavers Forum

Achievements for CiCC in 2022 include:

- Co-produced the new Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2022/2025
- Planning the co-produced annual I Awards for 2022
- Contributed to the National Care Review with the DfE review team
- Produced a survey gathering the views of young people about social care for the National Care Review with 66 young people responding
- Produced, launched and presented their Annual Report – to the Corporate Parenting Board
- Developed a Child in Care of the Month Award to promote the positive and inspirational developments of children in care
- Prepared their Annual Survey – with questions about the impact of virtual learning

Achievements for CLIC in 2022 include:

- Co-produced a care leavers offer conference at the Molineux to review the current offer and gathering views/insights from their peers to inform their work
- Planning the co-design of Care Leavers' Week for 2022
- Planning for support for Care Leavers Summer 2022
- Developed and implemented Care Leaver of the Month awards awarding a prize of £20 voucher for the winner
- Petitioned the Care Leavers Covenant on the level of support available to care leavers and developed this work to focus on mobile data

The CiCC and CLIC have continued to work collaboratively over the year with #YES groups to support the grant process for voluntary groups and organisations to offer Youth Service in the City.

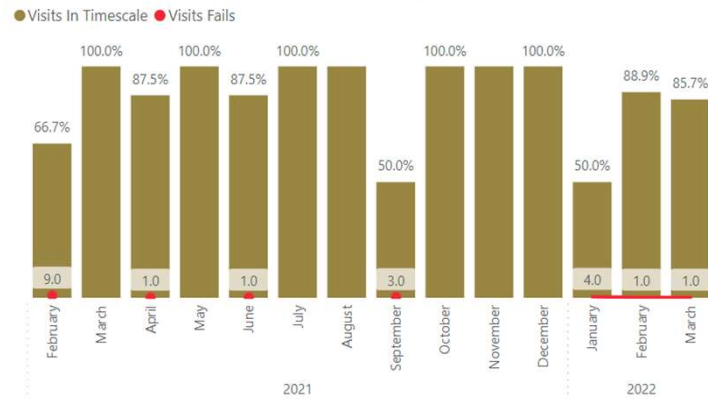
The CiCC and CLIC continue support the HY5 (SEND youth forum) to develop their own Total Respect training so they can influence professionals about what is like to live in the city with SEND, as the CiCC and CLIC have been able to do with sharing what it is like to be care experienced.

Both groups are working collectively on refreshing their Total Respect training and recruitment process for children's staff.

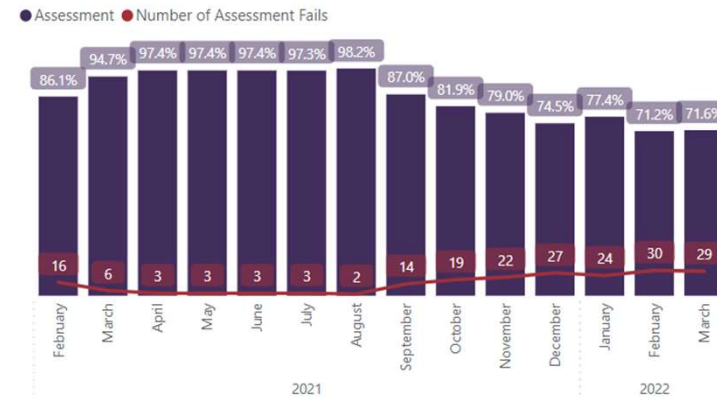
Supporting our children and young people with disabilities

- The establishment of a Designated Social Care Officer ensures that the needs of our SEND children are promoted at the earliest opportunity, with champions being established across the service. Only when it is assessed that specialist support is required to a child with a disability will a worker from the Disabled Children and Young Person's (DCYP) team be allocated.
- Young people up to the age of 25 allocated to DCYPT are successfully supported on their journey to adulthood and benefit from consistent social work support during this crucial transition period. At this time, in particular, a strong partnership working approach between adult and children's social care, and health supports the needs of our most complex young people.
- Through Voice4Parents, the views of parents of our SEND children are integral to ensuring we are responsive in our service provision and planning.
- During the year, children generally received visits from their social workers within statutory timescales. However, there were significant dips in performance in September and January at times where there has been staffing shortages which has quickly improved. The decline in assessments undertaken since September 2021 also reflects this pattern and challenges within the team. There is now an improvement plan in place to ensure performance improves and is maintained.
- Despite dips in performance, support to children with disabilities through the DCYPT is strong and we are confident we understand their needs and know them well. Ofsted recognised the whole family approach to support children, their carers and wider family's needs.

DCYPT - CIN Visit Timescales (Excluding Short Break CIN)



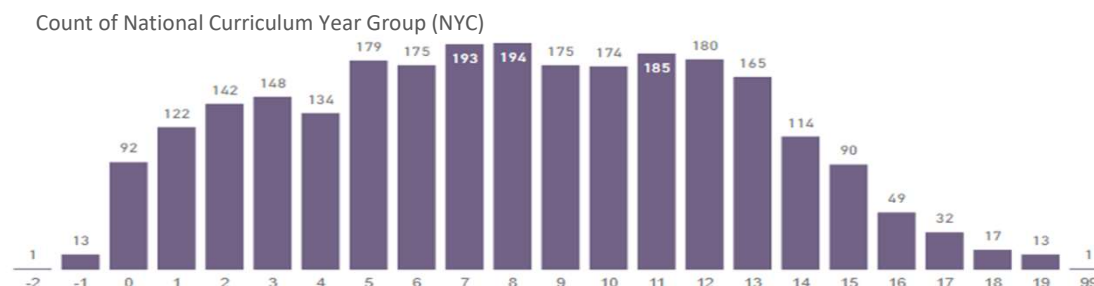
DCYPT - CIN Assessments in Timescale



Supporting our SEND children and young people in education

Current Position:

- There are 2588 children and young people attending Wolverhampton Schools with an EHCP. The highest primary need being Social, Emotional Mental Health accounting for 24% and ASD being the 2nd highest primary of 19%



- In 2021 SEND SEF highlighted a range of areas of developments which informed the current Culture of Inclusion Programme. The programme continues to be monitored through the SEND Board with monthly highlight reports showing key milestones and progress
- In September 2022 the SEND Inspection highlighted six areas of significant weakness, whilst these areas were already highlighted within the Culture of Inclusion Programme a Written Statement of Action was produced and signed off in March 2022. Both the SEF and WSOA have been aligned to ensure all actions are responded to and monitored through the SEND Board
- An initial sign that the areas of work are improving practice is demonstrated through changes in the EHC processes. Timeliness of EHCP's is improving, between December 2021 – May 2022 EHC needs assessments completed above 16 weeks decrease by 48% in just 4 ½ months
- To support the identification of vulnerable learners, a 'Vulnerability Matrix' has been developed across our IT systems in Children's Social Care and Education, for services to be able to track the involvement of teams (both past and current) to help monitor support needs.
- Social Care SEND champions have been introduced within social care teams to support understanding of SEND services and the SEND Code of Practice across social care and early help

Future Developments:

- The SEND SEF and WSOA are key priorities over the next 18 months along with embedding new processes in as business as usual, these include developing support for mainstream provision, strengthen the development of resource basis and work across Education, Health and Social Care to develop robust mechanisms for support
- Align the developments of the Schools White Paper and SEND Green Paper within the SEF and WSOA
- To support the development of the WSOA various posts are being created across Education and Children's Social Care to enable the strategic and operational developments around SEND, including a fulltime Designated Social Care Officer, Local Offer Post and QA officers

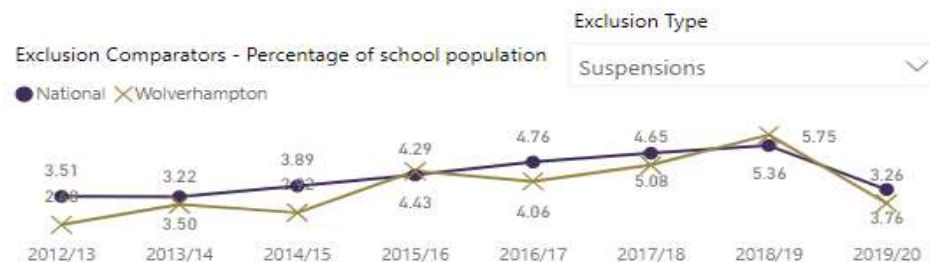
Supporting inclusion of all children in school

Current Position:

- The referrals to the Secondary Inclusion Support and Alternative Provision Panel (ISAPP) have increased to 93 this year to access additional support for children and young people rather than opting for suspension or exclusion. This includes access to preventative placements and/or pre-exclusion meetings; of 46 pre-exclusion meetings 41 young people were not permanently excluded
- ISAPP have moved to an Alternative Provision Framework that now enables schools and settings to access a wider range of educational support options for children and young people needing short term placements relevant to their needs including SEN support
- We have launched a new Emotional Based Non-Attendance Pathway due to an increase of referrals relating to anxiety and low attendance
- The Inclusion Team attends the Exploitation Hub to identify vulnerability risks so that additional support can be put in place to prevent exclusion or to consider placements. Where required the team will also work with social care and the police to consider whole school approaches to reduce the risk of exclusion

Future Developments:

- Embed the framework and pathway as business as usual, to also include a Graduated Response Pathway for supporting young people in mainstream settings with SEN support need that launches in Sept 2022
- Develop ISAPP's role in other processes such as managed moves, part-time therapeutic and resilience support offers, and transition support for pupils for integration in to mainstream schools



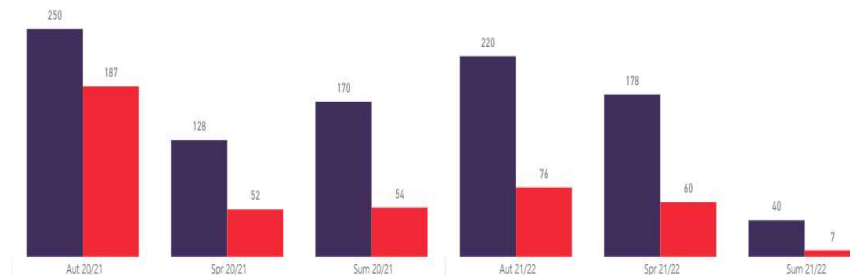
Children Missing Education and Electively Home Educated

Current Position for Children Missing Education (CME):

- 265 referrals have been received from schools for CME support since September 2021, of which the whereabouts were identified for 213 children and young people
- The CME tracking systems have been updated since the ILACS in March 2022 to enable the tracking of children and young people for a minimum of 3 months to ascertain their whereabouts, then added to the lost pupils' data base. Where agencies have concern, the children will remain open and attempts made to continue to track until advised by Police, Social Care, HMRC, or NHS and risk assessed as deemed fit for closure.
- Referral process has been made more accessible via the development on an online referral form for both internal and external referrals (professional and public).

CME Referrals

● External CME Referrals ● Internal CME Referrals



Current Position for Elective Home Education (EHE):

- 468 children and young people are registered as EHE within the City.
- The Gold KIT Award has been awarded to EHE staff by the Education Otherwise Association as a quality mark to reflect the collective experiences of EHE families reflecting the quality of support they have received.
- In the last 12 months over 90% of EHE families have been in contact and shared information around their EHE
- 3-way meetings have been introduced as a preventative approach to support families and schools where families express an interest to deregister their child from school

End of month EHE Numbers

● Current EHE ● % school population (Jan Census)



Future Developments:

- The service will recruit a dedicated full time CME officer post to support the monitoring and tracking of children missing education
- An EHE Dashboard is being developed to help centralise the tracking of attainment, suitability of education and safeguarding
- Preparation for the Children Not in School register is underway to set up the register and improve internal processes to meet the new legislation

Summary of achievements - 2021-2022

- Continued management of overall demand across the social care system meaning the right support is offered to children young people and their families at the right time and at the earliest opportunity.
- Implementation of induction for agency social workers
- Embedding of Social Worker in Schools pilot
- Power2 team working with young people up to the age of 25 at risk of exploitation, now a permanently funded team
- Embedding of Partnership Missing and Exploitation Hub with strong partnership working arrangements
- In 2021/22 Wolverhampton improved outcomes for 461 families, achieving 91% of the target (505)
- Youth Engagement Strategy, #YES, delivered through co-production with children, young people and their families across the city, with success in virtual engagement throughout the year
- Worked together with our voluntary and community partners in the city to deliver support to our most vulnerable households through the Household Support Grant (HSG) and Holidays Activity Fund (HAF).
 - The Easter, Summer and Christmas HAF saw 16,500 places available for children, over 6300 children accessing provision. Approximately 1800 children with SEND accessed provision. 12,000 activity packs distributed and over 30 local providers funded.
 - Over 46,500 individual awards made to households with children in 2021/22 through the Household Support Grant (HSG)
 - Established support offer to families who have no recourse to public funding has resulted in families achieving an immigration outcome earlier and therefore enabled children to achieve a sense of permanence and have access to services earlier when they are given right to remain.

Summary of achievements - 2020-2021 continued

- Reduced reoffending rates for young people remains spectacular, alongside a reduction in custodial sentences and numbers of young people on Remand
- Winner of Children and Young People Now Award 2021 in the Care Leaver category for the impact of the House Project on improved outcomes for young people, and finalist in the Children In Care category for our Aspire2Uni programme.
- Expansion of apprenticeships ringfenced for care leavers at CWC and establishment of inclusive apprenticeships within the council to support young people needing additional flexible apprenticeship support
- Improved education outcomes for children in care including increased numbers of young people attending university and graduating with excellent degrees. We have 3 times the national average number of care leavers attending university
- Three quarters of children in care are placed with foster carers approved by CWC with sustained good performance in long and short term placement stability for children in care
- 45 young people living in Staying Put arrangements with their former foster carers
- Successful implementation of Local House Project

Summary of Achievements 2021-2022 continued:

- Opening of a co-production hub, providing a venue for young people to call their own, accommodating the House Project , a drop in for care leavers, The Reach Café, and a base for co-production with children and young people.
- Successful implementation of MASH24, our combined MASH EDT service
- Pathway launched to support young parents
- Expansion of the use of Family Group Conferencing to strengthen opportunities for children to live within their families
- Reflective discussions, regular supervisions and management oversight are consistently recorded on children's records (noted by Ofsted)
- Consistently good quality records are kept for children with the voice of children and young people being strong throughout all records, underpinned by strong analytical evidence-based assessments and plans that are SMART and child centred (noted by Ofsted)
- Social workers spend meaningful time with children and build positive relationships. Creative direct work with children enables them to understand their experiences (noted by Ofsted)
- More children are being placed utilising early permanence options working closely with Adoption@Heart ,with 44 Adoption Orders granted in the year and most children being adopted by adopters approved by Adoption@Heart
- The oversight of children in care's health needs including dental health has improved since this was affected by Covid 19

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential

Priorities for 2022/23:

- Embed a more integrated offer across Children's and Adult services to enable our families to thrive including development of one front door
- Continue to embed Restorative Practice across Children's Services looking particularly at developing restorative approaches to child protection conferences . Extending training to partners enhancing consistency to our strength based relational approach to practice to support positive outcomes for children and their families
- Embed ease of access to a range of services for children and families through the Family Hub offer via Strengthening Family hubs
- Achieve target of 'turning around' 453 families as part of the extended Supporting Families Programme as part of our Strengthening Families approach
- Embed the expansion of the use of Family Group Conferencing to strengthen opportunities for children to live within their families
- Extend the Social workers in Schools project for a further year and review and evaluate to inform future practice
- Develop a programme of intervention and support to work with parents who do not continue to have the care of previous children to support children living in their families
- Continue to offer early permanence placements for children with a plan of adoption to enable them to live within their potential permanent as soon as possible
- Strengthen even further the stability of our placements for children and young people in care
- Implement internal residential provision for our most complex young people, increasing placement sufficiency
- Extending our pilot project "Back on Track" diverting young people from criminality as early as possible

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential

Priorities for 2022/23 continued:

- Embed further opportunities for co-production with children in the city particularly for those open to the Strengthening Family service to ensure children's voices shape our service planning
- Further development of social care support to our SEND children through the strategic lead of our Designated Social Care officer (DCSO), now a full time dedicated post ,our SEND champions across Childrens Services and our specialist case worker in IASS ensuring children's need are met
- Continue to improve support and opportunities for our most vulnerable young people to be able to access a range of EET opportunities, including children in care, care leavers children with SEND, children who are or have been children in need or subject to child protection planning, and young people known to our Youth Offending Team
- Embed the key priorities of our Equalities action plan to ensure delivery of inclusive services that tackle inequalities which some children and young people face
- Deliver the Holiday and Food Activity (HAF) programme to children eligible for FSM, children with SEND and those known to social care.
- Embed the Culture of Inclusion Programme to support the inclusion and educational engagement of vulnerable learners supported by the extended role of the VSH
- Improve the consistency of the quality of PEPs supporting the educational outcomes of our children in care
- Continue to ensure recruitment and retention of foster carers remains strong; monitor impact of our recruitment campaign, extend the Foster Families United model, and develop the additional benefits offered to foster carers – especially those caring for older and more complex children

wolverhampton.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Agenda Item No: 8 Strong Families, Children, and Young People Scrutiny Panel 13 July 2022
--	--

Report title	Inspection of City of Wolverhampton Local Authority Children's Services - Areas for Improvement Action Plan	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Beverley Momenabadi	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable Director	Emma Bennett, Executive Director for Families	
Originating service	Children's Services	
Accountable employee	Alison Hinds Tel Email	Deputy Director Social Care 01902 553035 Alison.hinds@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Childrens and Education Leadership Team	30 June 2022

Recommendation(s) for decision:

The Strong Families, Children, and Young People Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Note the action plan and proposed process for monitoring.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the findings from the recent Ofsted Inspection undertaken in Children's Services, the recommendations identified and how these will be actioned and monitored.

2.0 Background

2.1 Between 21 March and 1 April 2022, Ofsted undertook a short inspection (five-day visit) within Children's Services. This inspection covered the following services:

- Services for children and families needing help and protection
- Children and young people in care, and care leavers

2.2 The Inspection was undertaken in accordance with Ofsted's Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Framework.

2.3 Prior to arrival in Wolverhampton during the second week, the inspectors viewed a variety of evidence including our annual Self Evaluation, Policies and Performance Information.

3.0 Findings from the visit

3.1 Services for children and families in the City of Wolverhampton needing help and protection have improved and are now rated good. There is some outstanding practice in relation to care leavers and overall services for children in care have been sustained as good. The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families is now rated as outstanding.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

3.2 The following areas were identified as areas for improvement:

- The arrangements for tracking and monitoring children who are missing from education.
- The recording of return home interviews to identify wider patterns and trends.
- The virtual school should improve the quality of PEP's and address the persistent absence for some children in care.

- The virtual school needs to ensure that children in care receive career advice earlier so they can make better informed decisions about their futures.
- The quality of information provided to 16- and 17-year-old homeless children about their rights and entitlements including to become looked after.

3.3 The full report is attached as appendix1

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 An action plan has been developed to cover the five areas for improvement identified (appendix 2). This includes a timeframe, rag rating and lead officer.

4.2 The action plan will be overseen via the Children's Social Care and Education Leadership Team on a monthly basis and will be shared with Ofsted in August 2022 as required.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 Funding for the recruitment to a CME officer as per the action plan (appendix 2) has been identified and funded from current budgets within Education services.

[JG/05072022/M]

6.0 Legal implications

6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.

[SB/05072022/S]

7.0 Equalities implications

7.1 The Children and Young People Service provides support to the whole community where assessed needs are identified. The Ofsted Action Plan highlights how the City of Wolverhampton Council will ensure we meet our statutory requirements in relation to keeping children and young people safe.

8.0 All other Implications

8.1 There are no other implications arising from the report.

9.0 Schedule of background papers

9.1 There are no background papers

10.0 Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1: Inspection of Wolverhampton Children's Services Report, May 2022

10.2 Appendix 2: Ofsted action plan

This page is intentionally left blank

Inspection of City of Wolverhampton local authority children's services

Inspection dates: 28 March to 1 April 2022

Lead inspector: Andy Waugh, Her Majesty's Inspector

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

Services for children and families in the City of Wolverhampton needing help and protection have improved and are now good. There is some outstanding practice in relation to care leavers and overall services for children in care have been sustained. Since the previous inspection in 2017, senior leaders have led a relentless drive to improve services, which has led to innovative social work practice. This work continues, underpinned by senior leaders' determination to keep improving the experiences and outcomes for all children in the city.

A strength-based practice model is supporting social workers to make good decisions for children, which enables the majority of children to receive the right help at the right time. This is underpinned by a strong corporate and political commitment through additional financial investment, which allows for the development of innovative projects that make a positive difference for children.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has presented the local authority with challenges and pressures, it has not prevented the development of services and the enhancement of relationships with partners. Children increasingly receive interventions through an embedded early help offer, which has reduced the number of children requiring statutory services. A mostly stable permanent workforce, along with manageable caseloads, enables positive relationships to be built with children and families. Several successful projects, such as Power2 and the House Project, have had a

positive impact on children, diverting them away from the risks of exploitation and providing them with support to live independently.

What needs to improve?

- The arrangements for tracking and monitoring children who are missing from education.
- The recording of return home interviews to identify wider patterns and trends.
- The virtual school should improve the quality of PEP's and address the persistent absence for some children in care.
- The virtual school needs to ensure that children in care receive career advice earlier so they can make better informed decisions about their futures.
- The quality of information provided to 16- and 17-year-old homeless children about their rights and entitlements including to become looked after.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: good

1. Children receive the right help at the right time. The multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH24), which is a combined MASH and emergency duty team, provides a strong effective service that applies thresholds consistently well and directs families to the appropriate service in a timely way, including out of hours. MASH24 has effective systems for accepting and processing information to ensure accurate identification of risks to children and adults.
2. Managers have oversight at the point of receiving the contact, and the information is risk rated, with guidance for next steps. Partners share information in a timely way, which enables social workers to analyse all the information and make appropriate recommendations for future actions. Identity, including culture, race and how identity applies to presenting concerns, is routinely considered. Overall, management oversight is consistently recorded, with the correct thresholds applied. Children's needs are understood and signposted to early help services when appropriate. However, the gaining of parental consent or the rationale for overriding of consent are not consistently recorded.
3. Children benefit from comprehensive early help assessments, using family history to understand needs. However, analysis in assessments is not strongly focused on identifying risks and past concerns to inform planning. The views of children and parents are evident throughout the assessments. Early help plans and actions identify outcomes to help support children and parents to improve relationships and reduce risks. The number of early help interventions continues to increase, with a small minority needing to be stepped up to social care, indicative of successful interventions and outcomes for children at the early help level.

4. Effective domestic abuse triage arrangements are taking place daily. Initial screening is completed by experienced police officers to ensure that children at the appropriate level of risk are referred through to MASH24.
5. Children at risk of exploitation in Wolverhampton are benefiting from effective, prompt and careful consideration of their risks and needs through the daily exploitation meeting held in the Exploitation Hub. Child-exploitation screening tools are completed and appropriately used by partners alongside multi-agency referral forms. Children receive a swift response and are signposted to targeted support services or escalated to multi-agency child exploitation meetings when higher risk is identified.
6. Where concerns escalate for children, strategy meetings are held in a timely way. They are well attended by partners, with information shared leading to informed decision-making. The outcomes of strategy meetings are well recorded, with a clear rationale for next steps and actions that address risks to children.
7. Children's assessments are analytical and effective in identifying risks and needs. Managers provide strong oversight when assessments are allocated. They are focused on reviewing risks and provide clear direction about expectations and timescales. This means that children receive support at the right time. Assessments are updated to re-evaluate current needs and risks.
8. Children benefit from effective planning that addresses increased needs and reduces risks. Most plans include children's wishes and feelings. In the majority of child-protection and child-in-need plans, there is evidence of effective partnership working that contributes to the reduction of risk or needs for children.
9. Social workers visit children frequently in line with children's plans, to build trusting relationships and further understand their experiences. Through creative direct work, social workers gain insight into children's interests and abilities, and have a good understanding of their wishes and feelings.
10. In most cases, child-protection plans are effective at reducing risks for children. Plans are restorative and focused on the impact of actions on improving children's circumstances. The majority of children's plans are progressed in a timely way. Actions are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) and consistently reviewed and updated at well-attended monthly core group meetings.
11. The pre-proceedings process of the Public Law Outline is used effectively when risks to children are not diminishing. Pre-proceedings work is supported by skilled in-house Parent Assessment Manual assessors, promptly commissioned cognitive assessments and family group conferences, resulting in a significant number of children remaining with their family. Where concerns continue to escalate, early permanence is achieved for most children through timely care proceedings that have been fully informed by the completion of strong assessments in pre-proceedings.
12. Children at risk of exploitation and their families receive high-quality, intensive support to successfully reduce risk. Those children at higher risk of exploitation

and wider vulnerabilities receive high-quality support packages through the Power2 service and associated resources. This is helping Wolverhampton children to remain safely with their families. Performance-management arrangements are strong, supporting mapping activity and hotspot identification, and the tracking of individual children's circumstances.

13. Disabled children have social workers who understand their needs well and work creatively to seek their views using a variety of tools to support children's communication needs. Where disabled children are at risk of harm, risks and needs are well understood and responded to effectively.
14. Children who are 16 or 17 years old and present as homeless are supported to find alternative suitable accommodation. However, they are not routinely and explicitly made aware of their rights and entitlements, meaning that they may not be fully aware of their options when making choices and decisions about their accommodation and care arrangements.
15. Where children are missing from education, the local authority carries out a range of checks to try to locate missing pupils as quickly as possible. However, on occasions, for some children who cannot be located, managers do not consistently take additional steps to inform key agencies such as Border Force or the police. In response to this shortfall, senior managers have strengthened the service by committing dedicated resources to ensure that risks to missing children are fully explored.
16. The number of children who are electively home educated has risen significantly. Managers have strong oversight of any parental decision for a pupil to become electively home educated, to assure themselves of the welfare of the child.

The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers: good

17. Children in Wolverhampton are supported to remain with their families when it is safe to do so. Strong edge of care services, such as the Star Project and Power2, complete effective work with children and families that makes a positive difference. As a consequence, children only come into care when it is in their best interests.
18. When children do come into care, they benefit from effective social work practice, supported by constructive management oversight and a clear focus on early permanence planning. This includes unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, who are supported into accommodation that, wherever possible, meets their religious and cultural needs.
19. Children benefit from timely applications to the family court. Assessments, statements and care plans are of a good quality. Inspectors were informed by both the judiciary and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service of the positive impact of timely care proceedings and the consistently good-quality work that has resulted in the right outcomes for children.

20. Social workers spend meaningful time with children and build positive relationships. Creative direct work with children enables them to understand their experiences. Children are helped to understand their own journeys into and through care, through sensitive later-life letters and life-story work.
21. Where children are moving to adoptive placements, introductions are carefully planned and supported by inventive practice tools to help to prepare children. Children's records are sensitively written and include their views, strengths and abilities. Should they wish to read their records at a later stage, children would understand why decisions were made about their care.
22. Children's assessments are regularly updated to reflect changes in circumstances. Care plans are reviewed, with additional quality assurance checks by independent reviewing officers (IROs) to monitor children's progress. Clear plans for permanence are formed as early as possible, including foster to adopt placements and other family members.
23. Children are supported and encouraged to attend their reviews. Their voices help inform their plans, which helps them progress with their independence and aspirations. IROs write reviews using accessible and child-friendly language, with some recommendations that are underpinned by research to enhance understanding of the reasoning and importance of achieving actions.
24. Achieving permanence is a priority for both children and young people staying put with their former foster carers. Children benefit from planning for their futures at the earliest opportunity, to enable a smooth and supportive transition to adulthood.
25. Children in care who are preparing for independence receive effective support to move on to independence from foster care and children's homes. The House Project enables children to gain independence skills, including financial and practical support, through a team approach to testing the young person's capacity before moving on to permanent accommodation.
26. Most children in care live in foster homes. Placement stability for children is strong. Children live with carers who understand their needs and promote their health and well-being, with referrals to specialist services when needed. Children's emotional well-being is supported through access to therapy and by specialist support for foster carers.
27. Foster carers feel welcomed and supported by the local authority. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the recruitment and support of foster carers have been sustained. The capacity of foster carers means there continues to be more children living with in-house carers than with independent foster carers. However, there are shortfalls in the quality of some foster carer assessments, the timeliness of foster carer reviews and the formal supervision of staff. Senior leaders cannot be assured that these placements continue to be suitable for children where this is the case. There are firm plans to tackle the drift in this area of the service.

28. Children's academic needs are mostly met by the virtual school. The use of pupil premiums is successful in enhancing children's education. Children who live outside Wolverhampton receive support equal to that of their peers. Children's attendance at school is generally good but the persistent rate of absence of some children is too high, meaning some children are missing significant parts of their education. The quality of personal education plans is variable, with managers not having a concerted grip on the overall quality assurance. The number of care leavers aged 19 to 21 years who are not in education, employment or training has recovered since the initial stages of the pandemic to be in line with the national average. The virtual school is becoming more aspirational in seeking to close the gap between children in care and their peers.
29. The majority of children in care who are at risk of harm as a result of going missing and exploitation receive a proactive response from social workers based on their individual assessments of risk. Return home interviews are mostly timely and comprehensive. They clearly capture information about children's safety and worries, to enable review and analysis of whether risk is reducing or escalating. Social workers frequently visit children after missing-from-care episodes to understand their experiences and to help children avoid attempts to exploit them. However, when children refuse a return home interview, it is not always evident why this is and what efforts have been made to understand and help reduce risks to individual children and to gather wider intelligence and learning.
30. Adoption is considered carefully and promptly for all children who are unable to return home to their birth families and who need a permanent alternative. Senior managers, through regular oversight, assure themselves that children receive an effective service from the regional adoption agency, Adoption@Heart.
31. A very small number of vulnerable disabled children are currently placed in homes registered only with the Care Quality Commission, with plans for the placements to be registered with Ofsted. Senior managers have oversight of these placements and there is increased visiting by social workers. Persistent efforts are made to find registered settings. A small number of older (post-16) children are placed in unregulated settings, which are meeting their needs.
32. Care leavers benefit from high-quality services that make them feel valued and listened to. They experience positive and trusting relationships with tenacious and highly dedicated personal advisers (PAs). Young people consistently told inspectors that their PAs are significant people in their lives, that their PAs don't give up on them and that they could not have succeeded without them, referring to them as 'like parents to me'. Young people in custody receive an excellent service through the Always Hope project, which draws on the probation and prison service to support young people returning to the community.
33. Young people are introduced to their PA at the age of 15 years and nine months, enabling the development of strong relationships. A seamless transition provides effective support into adulthood. The commitment of PAs to these young people has involved supporting them with appointments, and social events at weekends and evenings and responding to both positive developments and crises in young people's lives with equal vigour and attention.

34. Care leavers are consulted on the strategic direction of the local authority, and they are pivotal to key decisions. The care leavers independent collective and the Children in Care Council are a force for change and are fully integrated into commissioning, tendering, strategic overview, the corporate parenting board and interviews for all social work posts at all levels.
35. Young people's successes are celebrated at an individual level, for example through PAs and monthly children in care and care leavers awards, and at an annual I Award celebration of achievement covering children in care. Young people told inspectors that cultural activities, including the arts, music and self-identified interests, could be better funded and more encouraged by the local authority.
36. The majority of care leavers are living in safe accommodation that meets their needs. However, for the small number of care leavers who are in unsuitable accommodation, PAs increase their visiting patterns and managers have increased oversight to proactively support young people to find more permanent living arrangements.
37. The housing offer and associated commissioning is an area of significant strength in Wolverhampton. In partnership with local providers, care leavers have a range of housing options, from carefully scrutinised supported accommodation and emergency options through to independent living. The Wolverhampton iteration of the Housing Project has successfully supported three cohorts of young people into secure tenancies through intensive, and then tapered, support. This is repeated if young people are deemed not ready, rather than it being seen as a failure.
38. Young people's pathway plans (PWPs) are regularly updated when needs and circumstances change. They include multi-agency input and reference to the local offer to ensure that young people understand the support and entitlements available. PAs prioritise young people's culture and identity when understanding their experiences and worries, to bolster resilience and challenge discrimination. PWPs are written to, and in collaboration with, young people, with clear objectives and measures of success. For young people who are unaccompanied asylum seekers, a specific part of the PWP addresses legal status and contingencies if legal immigration status is denied. Safeguarding risks are considered and addressed well, including when care leavers are parents.
39. Most young people are engaged in education, employment or training (EET). This is against a backdrop of poverty, high local unemployment and the COVID-19 pandemic. The EET figures for 16- to 17-year-olds and 18- to 21-year-olds have either stabilised or improved. Young people are supported by dedicated EET advisers with strong local connections, guaranteed interviews for the 10 apprenticeships in the local authority, a thorough preparation for independence programme and repeated attempts by PAs to find the right opportunities for young people that suit their skills and abilities.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: outstanding

40. Since the inspection in 2017, leaders at all levels have continued to drive forward improvements, which has resulted in the delivery of consistently good-quality services that meet the needs of children and families. Senior leaders show determination and insight into how they use learning to constantly challenge themselves and improve services. At a strategic and corporate level, children's needs are prioritised. An aspirational transformation programme, supported by substantial financial investment, has been embedded and has improved services and practice. This is having a tangible impact on improving the experiences for vulnerable children and families. Creative projects are now established services and are effective in supporting children and families at the right time. These include: the innovative MASH24, which provides a consistent service every day of the year; the multi-agency exploitation hub and Power2 team, helping to support and divert children away from being exploited; and the House Project, which is highly effective in supporting young people to successfully live independently.
41. The unforeseen challenges and pressures brought on by the pandemic did not prevent the local authority from ensuring that the needs of vulnerable children continued to be prioritised. Leaders and managers across the service continued to encourage the strength- and relationship-based restorative social work model and, as a consequence, there has been a significant reduction in the number of children requiring statutory interventions.
42. Senior leaders have been relentless in engaging partners effectively, which has resulted in strong and effective strategic partnerships that have taken forward integrated approaches to MASH24 and early help intervention through the Strengthening Families hubs. The social workers in schools project has demonstrated a commitment to working closely with education partners, to support children before statutory services are required. In addition, leaders have responded to the findings of the recent inspection of the local area services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), with virtual school leaders working with SEND colleagues to ensure better oversight of education and health plans, to minimise the impact on looked after children.
43. Children, families and workers benefit from leaders who are committed to co-production and who incorporate their views when developing services. A corporate parenting panel challenges the views of leaders and enables the voices of children to be heard. Elected members are committed to and prioritise the needs of vulnerable children in the city. The Children in Care Council is routinely engaged in shaping new services, for example the improved supported accommodation provision.
44. Senior leaders know themselves very well and endeavour to meet the needs of children and families through high-quality effective services. They have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service, which has led to a culture that is open to challenge and learning. This has led to

a high level of consistent, strong social work practice being embedded across most service areas. During the inspection, leaders responded quickly to areas of the service that need improving, for example pledging dedicated staff to improve the service to children who are missing from education.

45. The local authority commissioning hub has responded creatively to the current and future demands on placement sufficiency. Detached youth work, outreach, an emotional well-being service and Power2 key workers have been commissioned to protect children and prevent care from being necessary, in a bid to shift resources to where families will benefit the most.
46. Children in care and care leavers benefit from proactive joint commissioning with partners that has provided a wide range of internal and external housing options. A detailed and comprehensive strategy is underpinned by meaningful consultation with young people and is shared with regional colleagues to drive improvements beyond the borders of the local authority.
47. Regular performance and quality assurance reports and meetings focus on compliance but also on what the findings indicate about the experiences of children. This informs an approach to audit priorities and practice improvement. Quality assurance arrangements are strong, with a comprehensive approach to learning from audits. There are a range of effective processes. Learning is shared with staff through 'learning' bulletins and regular practice weeks. However, the evidence of follow up on actions and 'closing the loop' on individual cases is not yet consistent.
48. Staff consistently described feeling valued and well supported by managers and senior leaders, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. Social workers are positive about the range and quality of training opportunities that help them develop their practice. Those staff who are newer and those with less experience are positive about their induction and the higher levels of training and support they receive from managers at all levels of the service.
49. Overall, stability of staffing is a strength and is a positive factor in the ability to maintain high-quality services for children. Nevertheless, managers remain committed to the recruitment and retention of staff. The local authority promotes its various pathways for current staff to become qualified, along with 'growing your own' through an effective assessed and supported year in employment programme. Where appropriate, unqualified staff are encouraged to consider a social work qualification, through an apprenticeship model. As a result, the majority of children benefit from stable and strong relationships with their social workers, who have manageable caseloads that enable them to strive to carry out quality work with children to improve children's circumstances and experiences.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This report is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022

Theme: 1. The arrangements for tracking and monitoring children who are missing from education.
Lead HofS: Helen Bakewell

Action	Who is responsible?	Timeframe	Update	Rag rating
Review process for fulfilling our duties in relation to reasonable enquiries to reflect good practice for those children missing from education	JM	August 2022	Complete: Process has been amended	
Review CME policy & Resources	JM/SS	August 2022	Review - date arranged for 7 th July 2022	
Recruitment to a CME Officer	JM	October 2022	12 month funding has been identified, recruitment is progressing and on track for completion date	

Theme: 2. The quality of information provided to 16-17 year old homeless children about their rights and entitlements including to become looked after.

Lead HofS: Louise Anderson

Task	Who is responsible?	Timeframe	Update	Rag rating
Recording all 16/17 year olds at risk of homelessness in MASH on Guardian	L A	31 July 2022	Systems are being updated	
Ensuring this cohort is aware of all their options linked to their rights & entitlements	L A	31 July 2022 31 July 2022	A revised joint protocol and pathway is being finalised in readiness for sign off for mid July 2022 Information for young people will be made available on City Council and Wolverhampton Homes websites	

Theme: 3. The recording of return home interviews to identify wider patterns and trends.

Lead HofS: Rachel King

Task	Who is responsible?	Timeframe	Update	Rag rating
Eclipse recording (form) – to include detail around how to engage YP, evidence of themes and trends etc. Mandatory free text boxes to be added.	SM/ SP	31 July 2022	<p>May 2022 – Missing return Officer is now recording information in a free text box around the attempts to engage a young person in a RHI and any intelligence or information gathered. Trends and themes are discussed within the Exploitation Hub.</p> <p>A change request has been submitted to the Eclipse user group to amend the RHI form so that it will include specific prompt questions that cover attempts to engage/ intelligence and themes.</p>	

Theme 4. The virtual school should improve the quality of PEP's and address the persistent absence for some children in care.

Lead HofS: Jazmine/Helen

Task	Who is responsible?	Timeframe	Update	Rag rating
QA module for PEPs on new system – to enable systematic process	HB	October 2022	<p>Procurement options are currently being looked in to.</p> <p>Agreement signed off to procure Invision.</p>	
Virtual School Team to continue to audit at least 1 PEP per child per annum. VSH to review all audit results, complete dip samples of audits, and report on findings	DM	31 July 2022	VSH to complete audit reviews, dip samples and report findings on a half-termly basis.	

PEP audit findings to be fed back to frontline managers by Virtual Head.	DM	31 July 2022	Complete Feedback meetings to be held following each review. Dates for reviews set for rest of this academic year. Virtual school head to present findings to CYPIC and Strengthening Families managers meeting half termly.	
QA process to involve Schools and Team Managers	DM	31 July 2022	Process to be published to schools and invites to be sent out to first Audit review – July 2022 Process to be shared at CYPIC and Strengthening Families managers meeting – July 2022	
Findings of PEP informal 'soft' Audits to be incorporated in SW Quarterly Report and practice weeks	DM/JR	Sept 2022	'Soft' PEP audits to be incorporated into the next Practice Week Report – to be shared in July. Plans for formal audits to be completed following recruitment of QA post and Audit tool, these will also be incorporated in to Practice Week	
Quality – social workers' training and engagement in PEP process	DM	On going	Online PEP training to be completed by all social workers, social care managers and IROs via training hub DM to bring completion data to CYPIC Managers meeting on a monthly basis until 100% is achieved Support sessions to be offered on a half-termly basis via VS. Training has been promoted	

			within the Care Team managers meeting on 9 th June 22	
Education – Learning and Development around attendance and role in PEP	DM	31 July 2022	Completed Twice-yearly training being delivered to Designated Teachers on the DT role including ensuring quality PEPs – next session 15 September 2022	
Persistent absence – process to be clear across services: Attendance of all CYPiC to be reviewed by Virtual School Team on a half-termly basis.	DM	Half-termly	Complete Process in place for pupils persistently absent or at risk of becoming PA .All are followed up with school/social worker/carer, an urgent PEP meeting convened if required, and action agreed to address attendance without delay. Welfare Call are commissioned to report daily on attendance of the out-of-city cohort. OOC pupils with attendance concerns are reported immediately to the relevant VS Team member for follow up as required.	
Using lessons learned from the pandemic	DM		Complete Process developed: School attendance of CYPiC is agreed based on risk assessments. The attendance of all CYPiC is closely monitored by Virtual School and social workers. Social care notify VS Team prior to any school change for a CYPiC, VS work with social care to	Green

			<p>ensure that appropriate education and attendance arrangements are in place.</p> <p>If child's placement is moved in an emergency, social worker liaise with VS at the first available opportunity. Any attendance concerns are addressed in PEP meetings and VS notified if support is required.</p>	
Corporate Parenting Apprentice to conduct consultation work with selected CYPiC who have experience persistent absence to inform future actions	Hannah Finch	31 October 2022	On track	

Theme 5. The virtual school needs to ensure that children in care receive career advice earlier so they can make better informed decisions about their futures.

Lead HofS: Jazmine/Helen

Task	Who is responsible?	Timeframe	Update	Rag rating
Information, Advice and Guidance section on PEP form currently only available to pupils at Key Stage 4 – to be widened to include year 8 and 9	DM	31 July 2022	VSH is currently liaising with SCS to agree changes to Eclipse	
Virtual School to participate at I Awards and Foster Carers Conference	DM	31 January 2023	Attendance at the awards event is planned for 2022/23 to promote	

to promote their role and the support they can provide to raise aspiration and achievements of children and young people			the VS via the education award(s) Confirm date of I awards with Hannah and ensure this is in the VSH diary	
--	--	--	---	--