

CITY OF  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
COUNCIL

# Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

25 September 2019

**Time** 6.00 pm      **Public Meeting?** YES      **Type of meeting** Scrutiny  
**Venue** Committee Room 3 - Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton WV1 1SH

## Membership

**Chair** Cllr Rita Potter (Lab)  
**Vice-chair** Cllr Sohail Khan (Con)

### Labour

Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur  
Cllr Beverley Momenabadi  
Cllr Clare Simm  
Cllr Rashpal Kaur  
Cllr John Rowley  
Cllr Paul Sweet  
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar  
Cllr Paula Brookfield

### Conservative

Cllr Udey Singh

Quorum for this meeting is four Voting Members.

## Information for the Public

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

**Contact** Earl Piggott-Smith  
**Tel/Email** Tel: 01902 551251 or earl.piggott-smith@wolverhampton.gov.uk  
**Address** Democratic Services, Civic Centre, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton WV1 1RL

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# Agenda

## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*    *Title*

### MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

- 1            **Apologies**
- 2            **Declarations of interest**
- 3            **Minutes of the previous meeting (19 June 2019)** (Pages 3 - 10)  
[To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record]
- 4            **Matters arising**  
[To consider any matters arising from the minutes]

### DISCUSSION ITEMS

- 5            **Cabinet Member Briefing - Cllr John Reynolds** (Pages 11 - 14)  
[Cllr John Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, briefing]
- 6            **Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Self - Evaluation** (Pages 15 - 18)  
[Adrian Leach, Head of SEND, to briefing paper]
- 7            **Early Years Update - Outcome of Peer Review** (Pages 19 - 38)  
[Amanda Newbold, Head of School Improvement, to present report]
- 8            **2019 Children and Young People Workforce Health Check** (Pages 39 - 50)  
[Louise Haughton, Principal Social Worker, to present report]
- 9            **2019 Children's Social Work Health Check** (Pages 51 - 64)  
[Louise Haughton, Principal Social Worker, to present report]
- 10          **Children, Young People, and Families Scrutiny Panel - Draft Work Programme 2019-20** (Pages 65 - 68)  
[Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, to present report.]

## Attendance

### Members of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Cyril Randles  
Cllr Celia Hibbert  
Cllr Beverley Momenabadi  
Cllr Rita Potter (Chair)  
Cllr Clare Simm  
Cllr Udey Singh  
Cllr Rashpal Kaur  
Cllr Sohail Khan (Vice-Chair)

### IN ATTENDANCE

Cllr John Reynolds

Cabinet Member for Children and Young  
People

### Co-opted Member

Wolverhampton Youth Council

### Employees

Earl Piggott-Smith  
Meredith Teasdale, Director of Education  
Mai Gibbons  
Rachel King  
Louise Haughton  
Robert Hart  
Andrew Scragg  
Emma Bennett

Scrutiny Officer  
HealthWatch Representative  
Senior Commissioning Officer  
Head of Service Specialist Support  
Principal Social Worker  
Interim Principal Education Psychologist  
Youth Service Participation Worker  
Director of Children's Services

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## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*    *Title*

- 1        **Apologies**  
Apologies were received from the following:
- Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur  
Cllr Roger Lawrence  
Cllr John Rowley  
Cllr Paul Sweet

**2 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

**3 Minutes of the previous meeting ( 27 March 2019 )**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**4 Matters arising**

Minute 5 – Wolverhampton Joint Autism Strategy

Rob Hart, Head of Inclusion Support, advised the panel that further to the discussion about the need to include in the strategy a reference to celebrating the achievements of people with a diagnosis of autism, a number of actions had been taken forward in response to this comment.

The Head of Inclusion Support advised the panel that autism awareness training for council employees and those in other organisations has been developed. The training will emphasise both the range of talents and abilities that people with autism have, and also the positive achievements.

**5 HeadStart Sustainability Planning Update**

Mai Gibbons, HeadStart Contracts Manager, presented a briefing based on the findings of the HeadStart Sustainability Consultation report. The HeadStart Contracts Manager outlined the five key sustainability priorities when funding from The Big Lottery ends in 2021.

The HeadStart Contracts Manager advised the panel that as part of sustainability planning work a consultant had been appointed to help determine which parts of the current programme could continue in the future, the challenges in trying to do this and the views from a range of stakeholders about the impact of the work. The briefing includes a summary of the main findings from the local evaluation. A copy of the full final report will be circulated to the Scrutiny Panel members for information.

The HeadStart Contracts Manager advised the panel that Big Lottery have commissioned a formal national evaluation to assess the impact and learning from all six partnerships that have been funded to 2021.

The HeadStart Contracts Manager outlined the five key priorities agreed by members of the HeadStart Partnership Board that would be taken forward as the sustainability plan for HeadStart. The HeadStart Contracts Manager outlined the progress made to date against the key priorities.

The panel queried if any of the local community or voluntary organisations could apply for funding from other lottery funded sources to continue their work. Emma Bennett, Director for Children's Services, advised the panel that discussions have been held with representatives of Big Lottery regionally to consider joining up other funding opportunities. The plan will be to facilitate future funding bids for the voluntary sector rather than applying for individual bids. The panel expressed concern about the progress of consortiums signing agreements and whether they would be ready to submit funding bids to sustain their funding in the future. The Director for Children's Services advised the panel that there was confidence that the necessary progress would be made by the remaining consortiums to have an

agreement signed. The panel were advised that smaller organisations would be involved in submitting a funding bid led by larger organisations. This approach would ensure that they would be part of the bid and have specific funding allocated to them if successful.

The panel queried the involvement of schools and expressed concern about the ability of schools to contribute funding to either continue current funding or to apply the learning from the evaluation of the HeadStart programme. The Director for Children's Services advised the panel that the service is aware of the financial challenges facing schools and other options are being considered to build on the work of the programme. Discussions are ongoing with headteachers involved about the development of a toolkit for schools.

The panel thanked HeadStart Contracts Manager for the briefing papers.

Resolved:

1. The panel welcomed the progress reported and agreed to receive an update on progress against the sustainability priorities in June 2020.
2. HeadStart Contracts Manager to share a copy of the full HeadStart Sustainability Consultation report with the Scrutiny Panel for information, when published.

## 6 **Elective Home Education England - CWC response to consultation (report to follow)**

Rob Hart, Head of Inclusion Support, briefed the panel on the draft response from the City of Wolverhampton's Council to the Government's response to the consultation on the proposed changes to how children who are Electively Home Educated are monitored and supported.

The Head of Inclusion Support outlined the background to the issues which led to the Government to consider making changes to the current arrangements. The panel had expressed serious concerns about the current arrangements when a report on the national consultations was presented to them on 5 September 2018.

The Head of Inclusion Support advised the panel that the Department of Education undertook a consultation inviting suggestions and comment about whether current arrangements for children who are home educated was adequate and also views on the national guidance. The findings were published in April 2019. The Government made four further proposals that were included in the public consultation. The public consultation ends on 24 June 2019.

The Head of Inclusion Support advised the panel of the national response from local authorities to the proposed changes and gave a summary of the response from the City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) to each specific proposals that Government had invited comments on. The Head of Inclusion Support, was supportive of first three proposals but did express concern about the financial implications on introducing a duty on local authorities to provide support to home educating families, should they request it. The panel were advised that the panel that CWC currently offer advice and guidance but there was concern that an example given in the consultation document that support could include assistance with the cost of examination fees and also doing checks on private tutors would require extra funding and additional employees support, if implemented.

The panel expressed their disappointment at the Government's response to the consultation and the failure to address the concerns expressed in September 2018 about a lack of independent assurance about the quality of education given to children who are home educated.

The panel welcomed the introduction of a register for children who are home educated but expressed concerns about the lack of power for the local authority to intervene when there is evidence to suggest a parent is not providing suitable education. There is no definition of the term 'suitable education' in the legislation.

The Head of Inclusion Support advised the panel that CWC can issue a School Attendance Order where there are concerns. (School Attendance Orders are issued to parents of children who are outside the school system when the local authority has reason to believe that children are not receiving an education. The School Attendance Order will name the school the child must attend and will direct the parents to register the child at the named school.)

At present 38 parents are choosing not to engage with the local authority, however, the concern of the service is among those families where the reasons given for wanting to home educate suggest that the full implications of the decision, have not been properly considered.

The panel discussed the range of support offered to families who are home educating their children. The panel queried how the local authority can verify that a child is getting a suitable education and also checks done where there are safeguarding concerns, in particular children who move into the area but do not notify the local authority. The Director for Children's Services advised the panel that the Council has access to other information where families are not engaging with support services. The information is shared between local authorities to monitor children moving between different areas. The Director for Children's Services advised that a risk assessment is done where there are safeguarding concerns about a child or young person and that support is given where needed. The Director added that the service has good working relationships with families who have home educated their children for many years.

The panel queried the support offered to families where a home educated child has special education needs. The Head of Inclusion Support advised that the Council will work with the family to implement an education, health and care (EHC) plan and they can access to specialist support if it is identified as part of the child's EHC plan, when they have a child who is home educated.

The panel were advised that CWC has responsibility to provide alternative education to a child who has been excluded from school within six days. Meredith Teasdale, Director of Education, explained the role of the Council in ensuring that schools meet their responsibilities to support a pupil who has been excluded from school. The panel queried the funding implications for schools where a parent decides to home educate their child.

The Director of Education advised that part of the school funding formulae is based on a census count of the number of pupils in each local authority reported annually in

October, which is then used to calculate the budget allocated to the school in the next financial year.

The panel discussed the reporting of exam results to the Council and the issues caused when the information is not provided. The Director of Education advised that some parents who have chosen to home educate for philosophical reasons may not want to engage with the education system and therefore may not see the value in participating in school examinations delivered by the state.

The Head of Inclusion Support advised the panel that young people aged 14-16 do have other options if they want to take an exam. The young person could approach a college or training provider, with having attended a school previously.

The panel discussed concerns about safeguarding matters and general welfare for young people who are home educated. The panel discussed the benefits of children socialising and working with other children on projects and expressed concern that this may have on children who are home educated, particularly in the future. The Head of Inclusion Support advised the panel families who have home educated for many years have established community that work together to support each other, and children have the opportunity to socialise with other young people.

John Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, commented that he shares the concerns about the current arrangements for monitoring the progress of children who are home educated. The Cabinet Member added that the issue of concern is for parents who have decided to home educate their child without have an established support network and or seeking advice without considering alternative options to address concerns they may have. The Cabinet Member commented on the parents who have successfully home educated their children, who have secured a place at University.

The panel agreed to note the report.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on the response of the City of Wolverhampton Council to the consultation on children who are Electively Home Educated to be considered.
2. The panel remains concerned that the Government proposals do not provide a level of reassurance that children are receiving suitable education and support the issues highlighted in the consultation response drafted by City of Wolverhampton Council.
3. The panel support the Government's proposals as detailed in the report, however there are concerns about the financial implications of proposed duty on local authorities to provide support for home educating families and would welcome further clarification on this matter.
4. Panel members were encouraged to respond to the Government consultation document before it ends on 24 June 2019.

7

### **CYP Strategic Priorities and Improvement Plan (report to follow)**

Louise Houghton, Principal Social Worker, presented the findings of the report and invited members to comment on the progress made towards achieving the priorities detailed in the Children and Young People Service Improvement Plan. The Principal



Social Worker also gave a summary of the 2019-20 priorities and strategic plans and invited members comments on the draft.

The Principal Social Worker advised the panel that significant progress have been made to deliver actions and milestones listed in the improvement plan but added that further work is needed to show evidence of impact and for other tasks listed, which have not yet been completed. The Principal Social Worker commented on the achievement in reducing demand on children services and reaping the benefits of investment in early intervention.

The Principal Social Worker commented on progress made in reducing social work turnover rates during the last six months, which has benefits for young children in care by providing stability which has helped to reduce the risk of breakdown in placement arrangements. The Principal Social Worker commented on the work being planned to give support to foster carers.

The panel commented that rate of progress and achievement is lower than expected and would like to see more specific examples of measures to assess the impact of the work being done. The Principal Social Worker explained that changes had been made to the content of future reports to be able to measure the impact of the work being done in improving the lives of children and families and delivering better outcomes.

The Director of Children's Services added that the new improvement plan will include performance measures and there was an acceptance that current measures are too focused on operational areas. The future improvement document will be more strategic and have less details of work being done at the operational level. The panel suggested that the report should be changed to include information as references refer to colour coded changes, but less helpful when it is printed in black and white. The Director of Children's Services agreed to consider adding extra information to allow members to assess progress towards improvement targets in a future report.

The panel agreed to note the report.

Resolved:

The panel comments on the report to be considered and changes made to the layout and content when an update report on Children and Young People Service Improvement Plan is presented at a future meeting.

## 8 **Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel Draft Work Programme 2019-20**

Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, presented an update to the draft work programme. Panel members were invited comment on the draft and suggest other topics that could be added.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that a briefing meeting has been arranged for the Chair and Vice -Chair to discuss idea for topics that could be added to the work programme.

The panel agreed to add the issue of apprenticeships to the list of topics.



The Director for Children's Services suggested deferring the report Children and Young People Positive Engagement Strategy to date in October and adding an extra date to help manage the work programme.

The panel agreed to make the changes to the draft programme.

Resolved.

1. A new date in October 2019 to be added to the panel work programme.
2. The panel to be advised of the date when details have agreed with the Chair and Vice Chair of the panel.
3. The issue of apprenticeships to be added to the panel work programme as a future item.

## 9 Youth Justice Plan

Rachel King, Head of Service, introduced the draft report and outlined the main achievements and areas for further action during the previous 12 months. The Head of Service explained the background to the requirement to produce an annual report. The panel were advised that the plan and future priorities will be officially submitted to the Youth Justice Board by 5 August 2019 for approval.

The Head of Service commented on the main findings of the Youth Justice Plan 2019-20 and the performance against the three national indicators – the number of first-time entrants into the youth justice system, the number of people who reoffend after their first offence, and the number of people who receive a custodial sentence as opposed to a community service. The Head of Service advised that Wolverhampton Reoffending Live Tracker toolkit had been introduced in April 2018 to provide more up to date information and the results had shown a reduction in the levels of re-offending during the first 12 months.

The Head of Service commented on the areas of the service that will be given significant priority for action in the future. The Head of Service highlighted the disproportionate numbers of black Asian minority ethnic identified within the youth justice system and the activities planned to build self-confidence and support to work with young people in a trauma informed way. The service is trying to develop a diverse offer and embed a preventative approach when working with young people.

The panel welcomed the report. The panel queried the reason for not including more recent data showing the performance of the service against national indicators and also neighbouring authorities. The Head of Service acknowledged this issue and explained that the information is provided by the Youth Justice Board.

The introduction of the live tracker is an attempt to get more timely information. The use of the live tracker is not compulsory for the Youth Justice Board so not everyone is using the system. The panel discussed changes to the presentation of the data to show progress made towards meeting national performance measures.

The Head of Service agreed to look at options for presenting the data in response to concerns expressed. However, the format of the report is prescribed by the Youth Justice Board which limits the extent of any changes.

The Head of Service advised that the Youth Justice Board decide the family group of authorities against which performance of Wolverhampton should be compared with.

Resolved:

1. The Head of Service agreed to consider the panel comments about the presentation of charts showing performance against the key national indicators and provide information requested.
2. The panel agreed to note the report and welcome the progress made and improved performance against national indicators.

The meeting closed at 19:40.

**Children Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel**

25.9.19

Agenda Item No: 5

**Questions for Cllr John Reynolds – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People**

- 1) Can you talk about your priorities for your portfolio – what areas of work would you welcome the support of scrutiny panel members to help improve services and outcomes for children and young people in Wolverhampton?
- 2) What are your plans for promoting the welfare of all children, particularly those who are considered to be most vulnerable?
- 3) To what extent is the Council and other organisations offering a holistic approach when considering the needs of children and young people?
- 4) Improving the population's mental health and wellbeing and preventing mental illness and suicide is a key priority for Wolverhampton – can you give examples of the work being done at the strategic level to ensure that professionals and others have the skills and training needed to identify children and young people with complex mental health or special needs, at an early stage?
- 5) How well do you think Wolverhampton is performing against national and local performance targets for reducing waiting times from the initial assessment stage and the actual delivery of the appropriate children support services for children and young people in schools?
- 6) What are the key challenges to reducing the waiting time between assessment and the delivery of the appropriate service to children and young people? What more needs to be done to further reduce waiting times?
- 7) What more can be done to support staff working in Wolverhampton JobCentre Plus to help young people with disabilities or illnesses find suitable training and employment opportunities?
- 8) Can you talk about current and future plans of the Council to better identify and support children and young people who display challenging behaviour in schools?
- 9) Where are the major gaps in current service provision to vulnerable children and young people and what work is being done to improve the situation?

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# Briefing Note

**Title: SEND Self Evaluation**

**Date: 16 September 2019**

**Prepared by: Adrian Leach**

**Job Title: Head of SEND**

**Intended Audience: Joint Education and Children's Leadership**

Internal  Partner organisation  Public  Confidential

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## 1. Purpose

1.1 Over the last two months there has been a significant redevelopment of the SEND (Special Educational Needs) self-evaluation designed to link it more directly to the area inspection framework. This paper is intended to inform members of the panel about the revised self-evaluation for SEND in the city of Wolverhampton. The members of the panel are requested to:

- Note the breadth and purpose of the SEND Area Inspection.
- Note the self-evaluation and the key areas of strength and development identified.
- Note current work underway and plans to address areas for development

## 2. Overview

2.1 The SEND Area Inspection is an inspection of the local area's effectiveness in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people who have special education needs and/or disabilities. The framework for inspection was published in April 2016. Inspections are undertaken jointly by OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) who provide an external evaluation of the local area to review how well it carries out its statutory duties and consider whether children and young people achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes such as being able to live independently, secure meaningful employment and be well prepared for their adult lives.

2.2 The inspection leads to a report which:

- provides children and young people, parents, elected council members, providers and local leaders an assessment of how well the local area is doing against the framework criteria
- provides the Secretary of State for Education information about well the local area is performing its role in line with the statutory responsibilities in the Code of Practice
- promotes improvement in the local area, its education, care and health provision



- Where relevant, requires the local area to consider the actions that it should take in light of the report and prepare a written statement that sets out those actions and the timetable for them.
- 2.3 It should be remembered that the inspections under the framework will evaluate how the **local area** meets its responsibilities, and not just the local authority. The local area includes the local authority, clinical commissioning groups (CCGs), public health, NHS England for specialist services, early years settings, schools and further education providers.
- The starting point for inspection is an expectation that the local area should have a good understanding of its own effectiveness. Leaders are required to accurately assess how well the local area meets its responsibilities, including an understanding of areas of strength and those requiring further development. This is the local area's self-evaluation. In reaching judgements inspectors will pay attention to the rigour and accuracy of the self-evaluation.

### 3. Background and context

- 3.1 In order to ensure the information required by Ofsted and CQC is clear and readily available in a format that matches the areas of focus covered in the inspection framework, a significant change to the Self Evaluation Form (SEF) format has been made. This has been done deliberately to ensure that the SEF maps across to the Joint Area Inspection Handbook more directly and to ensure that the evaluative nature of the SEF is robust and consistent.
- 3.2 It should be remembered that the self-evaluation is intended to be a living document and as such should be regularly revisited, monitored, updated and refined. Monthly SEF and inspection preparation meetings are planned until the end of 2019. As the inspection framework covers the local area and it is not an inspection of the local authority the SEF is jointly owned and developed by the members of the SEND Commissioning and Partnership Board.
- 3.3 The new document and the evaluations made within it will require a process of co-produced validation. This is being undertaken during the "Spotlight of SEND" visioning day on the 4 October 2019 by parents, carers, young people and a broad range of professionals from across the system.
- 3.4 As the inspection framework considers three overarching questions for children and young people who have special educational needs and /or disabilities the revised self-evaluation is organised into these three aspects.
1. How effectively does the local area identify children and young people who have SEND?
  2. How effectively does the local area assess and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND?
  3. How effectively does the local area improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND?

3.5 Against each of the three inspection aspects, 1,2 and 3, the revised self-evaluation enables leaders from across the partnership as well as parent/carers and other stakeholders to:

- review effectiveness and evaluate its current position
- analyse the evidence base and ensure a robust range of evidence is used to inform the evaluation process
- consider the impact of its strategies and actions on children and young people
- assess the next steps required to further improve outcomes for children

#### **4. Strengths and Areas for Development**

4.1 The SEF identifies some key strengths and areas for development in Wolverhampton. Among the strengths are:

- Senior leaders are committed to the reforms.
- Close working partnerships between health, social care and education
- A SEND Data Dashboard
- Joint commissioning (though needs underpinning)
- There is a strong multi-agency approach particularly in the early years
- EHCP quality is good and timeliness is in-line with national average. In addition, Wolverhampton has a self-imposed 16-week timescales for EHCPs for children and young people who are looked after.
- Wolverhampton Impartial Advice and Support Service (WIASS) is well regarded nationally.

4.2 Identified Areas for Development are:

- Co-production both at a strategic and an individual level.
  - In response a co-production charter is being developed to demonstrate the city's commitment to working with children, young people and families.
  - The charter contains a toolkit to support professionals to understand what co-production is, what its benefits are and how to do it effectively.
- The Local Offer is still not used by parents, professionals, or commissioners as intended.
  - In response a promotion and marketing campaign including posters and flyers is being undertaken over the next six months to raise awareness.
  - This will be accompanied by another round of awareness raising for professionals.
  - Parent feedback and audit sessions are scheduled to understand the barriers to use as part of the annual improvement cycle.
- Outcomes for children with an EHCP
  - Strategic moderation of EHCPs is undertaken to ensure that outcomes are appropriate and "school friendly".

- SENCO Network meetings are being revised to focus on understanding and sharing of good practice.
  - There is an ongoing commitment to increase the proportion of children and young people with an EHCP in mainstream schools which increases educational opportunity.
- The City's Short Breaks offer is under review in response to concerns raised by parents.
  - The interim review of short breaks was presented to the SEND Commissioning and Partnership Board on the 11 September 2019 and recommendations are being considered.
- High rates of exclusions in the city which disproportionately affects children and young people with SEND needs.
  - The inclusion Service have developed school inclusion dashboards to understand and challenge as appropriate practice in the city's secondary schools.
  - Through the SENCO networks (as above) we will be able to promote good inclusive practice more successfully
  - New peer to peer challenge and support processes are being established in order to allow earlier and more effective intervention where appropriate.
- Tell it once approach not embedded in all areas
  - Work to be undertaken to build on areas of joint assessment and effective team around the family practice in the early years
  - Future procurement of information and case management systems will need to support a more integrated approach.

4.3 The areas for development are monitored by the SEND Commissioning and Partnership Board and progress is reported to the board as part of the overall reporting on delivery of the city's strategic priorities for SEND.

## 5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The reformatting of the SEF highlighted a number of evidence gaps which are being worked on currently by all partners. The Area SEND Self Evaluation is due to be formally signed off by the SEND Commissioning and Partnership Board in October 2019.
- 5.2 The self-evaluation along with the SEND joint strategic needs analysis, parent carer surveys and input from the "Spotlight on SEND" co-production and visioning day will be used as the basis for the development of the 2020-2025 SEND Strategy and our understanding of Wolverhampton's priorities for the next five years.
- 5.3 A progress report on actions will be shared with the scrutiny panel before the end of November 2019.

# Briefing Note

**Title: Early Years Update - Outcome of Peer Review**

**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

**Prepared by: Amanda Newbold**

**Job Title: Head of School Improvement**

**Intended Audience:**

Internal  Partner organisation  Public  Confidential

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## 1. Purpose or recommendation

To report on the outcome of the Early Years Peer Review which took place in the city between 25 – 28 June 2019.

## 2. Background and context

On 12 December 2017 the Department for Education (DfE) launched *Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential: A plan for improving social mobility through education*. This plan had one overarching ambition: no community left behind.

Within the plan, Ambition 1 is to close the word gap in the early years. Children with strong foundations start school in a position to progress, but too many children still fall behind early, and it is hard to close the gaps that emerge. It is important to tackle these development gaps at the earliest opportunity, particularly focussing on the key early language and literacy skills, so that all children can begin school ready to thrive.

A key strand within this social mobility action plan is to focus on sector-led improvement across early years provision that is driven through peer challenge and support. To develop and embed this approach the DfE is working with the Local Government Association (LGA) who have significant experience and expertise in developing and delivering programmes of peer review that support improvements to service delivery and outcomes.

## 3. Overview

The LGA peer team was invited by City of Wolverhampton Council to conduct a review of early years provision with a specific focus on speech and language. The review was not a formal inspection, it was a supportive but challenging ‘critical friend’ approach designed to assist the Council and our partners in celebrating our strengths and identifying our own areas for improvement. The key purpose of the review was to stimulate local discussion about how the Council and our partners can become more effective in delivering improved outcomes for children.

The peer challenge allowed external colleagues from across Local Government to review the city’s early years system through a number of themes aligned to the ten elements in the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) Maturity Matrix (a self-assessment tool to measure

progress in delivering a system-wide approach to improving outcomes for children in the early years), with a particular focus on speech, language and communication skills.

The Key Lines of Enquiry were:

1. PLAN: Strategy, including leadership voice and culture
2. LEAD: Partnerships, with an emphasis on joint workforce planning
3. LEAD: Community ownership and engagement
4. EVALUATE: Evaluation including using and generating evidence

A self-assessment was provided to the peer review team, along with a bank of evidence. During the four days spent in the city, the review team spoke to a cross-section of senior officers and frontline staff, elected members, partners and they observed early years practice.

**Appendix 1** is the report from the LAG Peer Review Team. The following points the recommendations that the team made to the Council.

1. Collectively ensure that the early years governance arrangements and the strategy review are evidence based and support a whole system and whole family approach
2. Create a shared clear vision for your early years services which is supported by a simple and widely understood definition of your collective offer
3. Actively involve parents and communities in shaping and delivering services
4. Communicate broadly your defined offer and the pathways for families with young children
5. Develop a performance dashboard with a shared data set from all partners reflecting the whole child's development
6. As part of your emerging whole system approach, seek opportunities to increase joint commissioning across early years services
7. Follow through your intention to create a joint workforce planning and development approach
8. Develop a clear Speech Language Communication Needs (SLCN) offer with a closing the gap plan which is supported by the speech and language therapy service

#### 4. Next steps

- a) The report has been considered by the joint Education and Children's Leadership Team and the recommendations have been formulated into a draft action plan showing the themes highlighted as seven priority areas: governance, vision, co-production, partnerships, evaluation, commissioning and joint workforce plans. **Appendix 2** is the draft action plan which will be shared with early years partners across the city to ensure a common approach to the system priorities.
- b) The recommendations from the LGA Peer Review will be embedded into a comprehensive action plan which will ensure the continued delivery of the Early Years Strategy, 2017-2021. The revised plan will include aspects of work relating to the Early Outcomes Fund and Professional Development Programme, the Early Help Strategy, the SEND Strategy and Public Health priorities linked to the Healthy

Child Programme. Work is underway to embed the peer review recommendations into the action plan and this will be presented to the Strengthening Families Board on 13 November 2019.

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# **City of Wolverhampton Council, Early Years (Speech, Language and Communication) Peer Challenge**

Date from 25 to 28 June 2019

**Feedback Report**

## Executive Summary

It was clear throughout the entire challenge process that the importance of a child's early years is recognised across the partnership. It is also noticeable that the City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) includes this as a key theme within its Council Plan which outlines its vision for the city. This recognition is underpinned by committed leadership and staff at all levels, many of whom showed true passion regarding the services they provide.

Although partnership working is developing, there is not a clear, collective shared vision for early years services supported by an integrated whole systems approach. There are opportunities that should be taken to sharpen the strategic governance, development and evaluation of system wide early years services. In view of the importance of whole system working, a distinction is made throughout the report of using the words 'early years' when discussing the system, as distinct from 'Early Years' Team' when discussing the Council's specifically titled team.

Numerous effective initiatives were evidenced, including some examples of good inter agency projects / joint working 'on the ground' e.g. the strengthening families hubs. These individual initiatives are already in place and can help form the basis for a co-ordinated whole system approach. The Council also has a proactive approach to developing services, despite facing budget challenges, and it is noticeable that early years education performance has improved in recent years despite these pressures.

One particular aspect of whole system/partnership working is that there is currently a lack of clarity regarding what comprises the collective early years 'offer'. This lack of clarity is caused in part by reductions in the previous range of universal services in recent years. It would aid both partners and families if there were clarification of the offer and communication regarding the pathways for accessing services. Allied to this, it is important for partners to remember that the decrease in universal services mentioned may impact across all whole system outcomes.

Initiatives have been undertaken to enhance parental contribution to the design and development of services e.g. the Parent Champions and Parent Ambassadors schemes. This has resulted in some good work and support to families. However, the impact, awareness and understanding of the role of Parent Champions and Ambassadors does not appear high and community engagement generally as regards design and development is not well developed. An important part of the whole systems approach is the contribution from all partners including parent, community and voluntary groups. Their contribution should be fully recognised and harnessed.

Joint commissioning requires significant development across early years services. Although there is expertise within individual services there was little evidence of this being used in a collective whole system approach. One particular aspect of commissioning is the Healthy Child Programme which is intended to provide a framework to support collaborative work and more integrated delivery - although the 0-5 element is usually led by health services (midwives, GP's and Health Visitors). Commissioners across the system need to be clearer about the contribution they expect from the Healthy Child Programme, how this will be delivered and to monitor services in a collective fashion.

The Council and partners have already identified the desirability of joint workforce planning and development. This is the subject of a specific workstream under the revised arrangements agreed by the Children and Families Together Board in December 2018. Work on this is at a very early stage but it is hoped that it will be possible, when fully underway, that advantage will be taken of opportunities to harness skills and expertise across the system

The evaluation of activities requires development so that it can be used to stimulate action. The self - assessment provided correctly states that currently *'Collective data is not currently being used to inform change and learning from local interventions and does not always lead to improvement across services'*. Effective evaluation will be helped by the creation of a clear, collective shared vision for early years services together with a shared understanding of what comprises the collective offer.

Overall, therefore, there is a mixture of numerous examples of existing good practice together with further opportunities that should be taken to enhance services and outcomes. In addition to the true passion and proactive approach demonstrated, one of the major advantages that the Council and its partners has is that there is good self-awareness of this mixture and the self-assessment provided is an accurate reflection of the progress made and the challenges facing early years services. By using this self-awareness and passion, coupled with the creation of a collective strategy and whole system approach, the Council and its partners should have a good base for future development and impact upon the early years of the children of Wolverhampton.

### **Key recommendations**

There are a range of suggestions and observations within the main section of the report that will inform some 'quick wins' and practical actions, in addition to the conversations onsite. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the Council:

- 1. Collectively ensure that the early years governance arrangements and the strategy review are evidence based and support a whole system and whole family approach:** A review of the early years strategy is already underway. The resultant strategy should be a clear plan as to what partners will do collectively and the outcomes they seek. This strategy should be supported by overall governance arrangements that provide robust drive, monitoring and challenge at all levels for system wide early years services
- 2. Create a shared clear vision for your early years services which is supported by a simple and widely understood definition of your collective offer:** In order for the early years strategy to be effective, it should be clearly linked to an overall vision as to what partners are trying to achieve and an agreed understanding as to what will be offered collectively
- 3. Actively involve parents and communities in shaping and delivering services:** All elements of partnership working need to be embraced and include a wide range of stakeholders. The inclusion of parents and community / voluntary groups in design and delivery has fallen over time and steps should be taken to encourage and facilitate their involvement

4. **Communicate broadly your defined offer and the pathways for families with young children:** There is not a shared understanding as to what the collective offer is or how it can be accessed. Clarification and communication of this would aid joint working and, most importantly, help families access services
5. **Develop a performance dashboard with a shared data set from all partners reflecting the whole child's development:** Whole system monitoring, accountability and challenge would be enhanced through the creation of a 'Whole Child' dashboard that is shared and is an integral part of the governance arrangements. It is understood that the early years steering group is already working on this
6. **As part of your emerging whole system approach, seek opportunities to increase joint commissioning across early years services:** Joint commissioning is currently not well developed and working together on joint commissioning projects would aid a whole system approach and synergy between partners
7. **Follow through your intention to create a joint workforce planning and development approach:** Your recognition of the benefits of joint workforce planning and development is welcomed by the peer team who encourage you to build on your early work as soon as possible in order to harness talent across the system
8. **Develop a clear Speech Language Communication Needs (SLCN) offer with a closing the gap plan which is supported by the speech and language therapy service:** The overall early years strategy should explicitly cover the importance of speech and language and have a clear offer for families which is supported by specialist expertise in the speech and language therapy service.

### **Summary of the peer challenge approach**

Independent external evaluation and feedback from the sector has endorsed peer challenge as an approach that promotes learning from a sector-led improvement perspective. All local authorities and their partners are constantly striving to improve outcomes for children, but an external and independent view can help to accelerate or consolidate progress.

On the 12th December 2017, the Department for Education (DfE) launched *Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential: A plan for improving social mobility through education*. A key strand within the DfE social mobility action plan is a focus on sector led improvement across Early Years provision, driven through peer challenge and support.

The DfE has worked with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) to develop this sector led improvement offer.

The challenge team was sourced specifically to address the four primary areas of focus highlighted by City of Wolverhampton Council. The team consisted of senior colleagues with significant experience of leading and managing early years services within local government, health and education, supported by an experienced LGA challenge manager.

### **The peer team**

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced officer peers. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and their participation was agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge were:

- Candida Brudenell, Lead Peer - Assistant Chief Executive / Corporate Director for Strategy and Resources at Nottingham City Council and former Strategic Director of Early Intervention
- Rebecca Bibby, Early Years Peer - Head of Service for Starting Life Well and Helping Families at Salford City Council
- Moira Hunt, Education Peer - Interim Headteacher at Navigate Resources Ltd and former Head Teacher of Lister Primary School
- Michelle Morris, Speech and Language Specialist Peer - Consultant Speech and Language Therapist, Early Intervention Foundation Associate and Designated Clinical Officer at Salford CCG
- Mandy Sheffield, Health Peer - Head of Safeguarding at NHS Wakefield Clinical Commissioning Group
- Bob Ross, LGA Review Manager

### **The process**

The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent 4 days onsite at Wolverhampton during which they:

- Spoke to more than 70 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders.
- Gathered information and views from more than 24 meetings, visits to key sites in the area and additional research and reading.
- Collectively spent more than 225 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than 6 weeks in Wolverhampton.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their on-site visit on 28 June 2019. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time. We appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing.

## Scope and focus

You identified four primary areas of focus for the peer challenge that were agreed at the beginning of the scoping process and through the self-assessment using the Early Years, Speech, Language and Communication Maturity Matrix:

- Strategy – including leadership voice and culture
- Partnership – with an emphasis on joint workforce planning
- Community ownership – engagement
- Evaluation – including using and generating evidence

## Main findings

### 5.1 Strategy – including leadership voice and culture

There is a clear recognition across the partnership of the importance of a child's early years. This is formally recognised in the Council Plan which has '*Children and young people get the best possible start in life*' as one of its six key priorities. Leaders and staff at all levels actively support this recognition by demonstrating a genuine passion for the services they provide. People seen throughout the challenge process were able to articulate clearly their work and the direct effect it has on families and young children. This passion is a major strength for the City of Wolverhampton.

There is good self-awareness regarding the progress made and challenges facing early years services. A self-assessment was provided to the peer team which accurately reflects these. Partners already have in place a number of effective initiatives and have also identified areas where further development is required. These include the need to review the existing early years strategy, plus the measures approved by the Children and Families Together Board to enhance the working arrangements to take the strategy forward. These steps are supported by the peer team, but there are a number of points below that the team would like to stress in support of the actions being taken.

Firstly, it is evident that within the Council there is strong collective leadership across Education and Children's services. Relationships are very good and there is effective joint working and planning at this senior level, including regular joint officer management team meetings. Broader partnership working continues to develop and there are some examples of good joint working. However, the governance across the partnership does not support a real 'whole system' approach. There is a variety of reasons for this - most noticeably the need for a revised early years strategy (which has been recognised) that has a whole system approach, a collective vision for the services, and enhanced monitoring and challenge, including at Board/ Member level.

In view of the importance of whole system working, a distinction is made throughout this report of using the words 'early years' when discussing the system, as distinct from 'Early Year's Team' when discussing the Council's specifically titled team. It is crucial that the review of the early years strategy results in a strategy that is clearly a collective responsibility and not just that of the Early Years Team. It should be a clear plan as to what partners will do collectively and the desired outcomes they have identified jointly. This strategy should be supported by overall governance

arrangements that provide robust drive, monitoring and challenge for system wide early years services including at Board level.

To support the above approach, it will first be necessary to create a shared clear vision for early years services which is supported by a simple and widely understood definition of the collective partnership offer. This need is due in part to changes to universal services provision that have resulted in a lack of clarity regarding what is on offer and this needs to be re-affirmed. By doing so there will also be benefits to future monitoring and challenge. Once created, leaders should develop simple key messages that explain clearly to all partners, families and stakeholders, the vision, strategy and full offer.

A particular aspect of communicating the offer is to ensure that there are clear pathways, as during the peer challenge it was apparent that these are not commonly understood. It is important that parents understand the ways into the system and partners understand and support transitions through it.

Another specific aspect that should feature in the strategy review, is the need to identify and articulate a clear speech and language offer which is outcome focussed and supported by a closing the gap plan. At present the Speech and language Therapy (SLT) service is commissioned to deliver specialist services under a specification which needs updating as part of the strategy review implementation. The expertise within SLT could be used to increase significantly the reach of language and communication support if additional time was commissioned from the service to help others who deliver targeted and universal interventions. This could take the form of creating communication friendly environments, developing skills in other services and providing support for others delivering language enrichment activities. Some of this is already happening e.g. a training course for encouraging families to support communication at home has been developed by early help staff but this is not quality assured by SLT and there is no set of evidence based core messages or a focus on the home learning environment. To close the word gap at a population level there should be a systematic way to identify language and communication needs, with standardised tools and a city-wide offer of intervention groups supported, but not delivered, by SLT. This should be accompanied by clear pathways through to specialist services if targeted interventions are insufficient to close the gap

In common with many other geographical areas nationwide, there did not appear to be a shared understanding across the partnership of 'readiness for school'. Co-producing and articulating such an understanding would be valuable to support the continuity of a child's learning journey and better support collective working by early years professionals. It is suggested that there be an explicit discussion amongst partners as to the agreed shared expectations of children's school readiness that best enables effective transition into school. This should also include ensuring how schools can be best placed with the right information from previous settings and other professionals about individual children.



The peer team would also like to recognise that there is a proactive approach to developing services, initiating projects, bidding activities etc. It is noticeable that there has been improved education performance in recent years despite budget pressure. Such a proactive attitude at all levels should greatly assist the further development of the early year's strategy and its implementation.

## **5.2 Partnership – with an emphasis on joint workforce planning**

The need for partnership working is well understood and valued, with good personal working relationships evident. Within the Council there is particularly good partnership working between the Early Years and SEND teams. There are also some examples of good inter agency projects / joint working 'on the ground' e.g. strengthening families hubs, the GEM centre which supports overall early years work and is a valued asset. Strong feedback was also received from private, voluntary and independent (PVI) settings, together with schools, regarding the work of the Early Years Team.

There are also various examples of joint partnership initiatives and partnership bids that have been undertaken to help promote partnership working e.g. the successful Early Outcomes Fund bid across four authorities and which has '*Eradicate siloed working by developing a multi-agency Speech, Language, Communication and Literacy vision, strategy and pathways underpinned by individual authority improvement plans*' as its priority 1. This bid should help support collective governance and multi-agency training.

There is a good level of awareness that partnership working needs to develop further to achieve a whole systems approach. This applies at five levels: governance / senior partnership, commissioning, operational, workforce and community as discussed below.

**Governance / Senior Partnership:** At a governance/senior partnership level, collective monitoring and constructive challenge across the system requires development. Although there were some examples of senior review (such as the changes agreed by the Children and Families Together Board in December 2018) there was little evidence of regular robust monitoring at a senior partnership level. The governance arrangements should support such an approach and monitoring and challenge would be aided by a performance dashboard with a shared data set from all partners reflecting the whole child's development.

**Commissioning:** There is commissioning expertise in each partner and individual service teams. However, early years joint commissioning requires significant development as part of an early year's whole system approach. One particular aspect of commissioning is that there are tensions and ambiguity regarding the expected contribution and level of performance under the Heathy Child Programme. In order to help resolve this issue, commissioners across the system need to have a clearer collective understanding regarding the contribution they expect from the Programme.

**Operational:** At an operational level, services delivering early years are often run in parallel rather than a truly 'joined up' approach. The peer team found examples of services that were identifying the same and/or similar gaps in provision, such as parenting support, and then separately identifying interventions and training to address these gaps. Allied to this, professionals were able to describe their own teams' role and services but often not how they connected to or complemented other services. They also used discrete professional language which can be confusing. Communication on the early years offer across the system would naturally support integrated working and prevent duplication and parallel working.

**Workforce:** this area has been specifically identified as a priority as there is currently very limited joint workforce planning and development. A workstream is underway, although this is at an early stage, but it is hoped that it will be possible, when fully underway, that advantage will be taken of opportunities to harness skills and expertise across the system. In addition to the Early Outcomes Fund bid mentioned above there has also been a successful bid for training for health visitors which will help overall workforce development. One further specific aspect is that there have recently been very few opportunities provided for PVI training - who can be viewed as part of the wider partnership workforce. However, there are two cohorts of PVIs expected to benefit from training for early language, literacy and numeracy through the Professional Development Programme.

**Community:** Community engagement is discussed in section 5.3 below where it is noted that there is scope for considerable development in this area. It is important that partnership working operates as broadly as possible and recognition should be given of all partners contributions to improving early years services, including that provided by community and voluntary groups.

Although several areas of development have been identified to create a whole systems approach, partners generally are keen to work together collectively to improve early years outcomes and the suggestions made are to build on the base that already exists.

### **5.3 Community ownership – engagement**

The Council has been proactive in developing Parent Ambassador and Parent Champion schemes to help promote the importance of child development and support to parents e.g. Champions share information with parents/carers regarding how to choose childcare and promote health messages including to difficult to reach families. An additional coordinator has been appointed due to the expansion of the scheme. However, the actual impact of these roles has not been evaluated. There is also a need to increase awareness of their activities and how the services are accessed, as this was very inconsistent across the partnership and settings.

The Council is also proactive in encouraging the take up of funded places and, obviously, this should continue. Despite these positive initiatives there was very limited evidence of direct parental involvement in the development of strategy or services. The self-assessment recognises this and flags up that 'there are opportunities to learn from SEND colleagues where the parental voice is strong'.

Similarly, there is also considerable scope to improve the involvement of communities and community groups in co-production. There is currently no structured community engagement strategy and action plan. Methods to harness the views, talents and commitment of these key stakeholders in designing and delivering early years services should form part of the new early year's strategy.

The need for a universal parenting programme is recognised by partners and some work has been undertaken across the partnerships to ensure that services are working together and not duplicating or delivering differing interventions. There is still a tendency for some of this to duplicate or appear dis-jointed, and partners should critically appraise parenting programmes and select that which will be the one promoted across the board.

It was recognised that the SEND Service have done considerable work around engagement and co-production with children and families. This is a model that they and the peer team feel can be shared used as a model to effectively engage with parents. As an example, at the GEM Centre parents of children with disabilities have been supported by professionals and these parents have subsequently self-organised into a group that supports new parents accessing the services.

#### **5.4 Evaluation – including using and generating evidence**

A 'light touch' approach was agreed and adopted regarding the Evaluation theme during the challenge process. This is primarily because there is already very good self-awareness regarding this, with the self-assessment correctly stating that although there is a wide range of performance data available, '*Collective data is not currently being used to inform change and learning from local interventions and does not always lead to improvement across services*'. As stated earlier in the report, the peer team also identified that there is little evidence of evaluation of performance across the partnership as part of a whole systems approach.

Effective evaluation will probably not be possible until the review of the early year's strategy is complete and with clear outcomes and accountabilities having been developed. It is understood that, in anticipation of this, a set of joint indicators which can be monitored collectively is being developed. The use of this set of indicators should be incorporated into the governance of the early years strategy, including at Board level. However, it was also noted that the strategy review is already stimulating examination of evidence and impact of activities as reflected in the self-assessment

Another aspect of evaluation is that greater use should be made of sharing performance monitoring information with frontline services. This will help stimulate awareness and improvement and it is noticeable that nursery schools are pro-active in using their performance data to enhance their provision and performance.

There is limited use of existing evidence based intervention tools. It appears that services are developing their own interventions, which do not have an evidence base, as opposed to using existing intervention tools used elsewhere that have a recognised evidence base e.g. the interventions identified through the Early Intervention Foundation. An example of this is the parenting intervention that is currently being developed to deliver a universal and targeted parenting offer.

## **Next Steps**

We hope that you will find the above to be a considered and true reflection of the discussions we had with you, your staff, your partners and families in Wolverhampton. I'm sure that you and your colleagues will now want to consider how you can incorporate the team's findings into your ongoing planning. Relevant details are included below should you wish to access further support either via the LGA or your own regional networks.

For further improvement support you can contact the LGA's Principal Advisor, Helen Murray, Telephone 07884 312 235 e-mail [Helen.Murray@local.gov.uk](mailto:Helen.Murray@local.gov.uk) or the LGA's Children Improvement Adviser Claire Burgess, telephone 07854 407337, e mail [claire.burgess23@gmail.com](mailto:claire.burgess23@gmail.com)

The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) have been commissioned by the Department for Education to provide further bespoke post challenge support to a limited number of councils. If you wish to be considered for this, please contact Ben Lewing at the EIF Email: [ben.lewing@eif.org.uk](mailto:ben.lewing@eif.org.uk).

Once again, thank you for participating in this review and please pass on our gratitude to everyone involved, particularly Amanda Newbold and Tanbir Duhra for their excellent preparation work and assistance throughout the challenge.

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| What do we know?<br><i>Feedback from the peer review</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | What is the desired outcome?<br><i>What do we hope to see in 12 months?</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | What do partners need to do now?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | How will we know it is working?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | How will this be monitored and evaluated?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| June 2019 evaluation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Desired impact                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Outputs /KPIs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Scrutiny and assurance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p><b>EY system 1: Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>strategic governance, development and evaluation of the systemwide early years services require clarity and enhancement in order to support a real ‘whole system’ approach</i></li> <li>- <i>there is an accurate self-evaluation of the progress made and the challenges facing services</i></li> <li>- <i>there is also a good self-awareness of where good practice exists and where there are further opportunities to be taken</i></li> <li>- <i>leaders and staff demonstrate a passion for the services they provide, this is a strength</i></li> <li>- <i>relationships are very good and there is effective collectively leadership, joint working and planning between Education and Children’s services; broader partnership working continues to develop</i></li> <li>- <i>there is little evidence of evaluation of performance across the partnership</i></li> <li>- <i>governance does not support the whole system approach but the joint bids and initiatives should help promote collective governance</i></li> </ul> | <p>A clear plan sets out what partners will do collectively and what desired outcomes they seek.</p> <p>Governance arrangements provide robust drive, monitoring and challenge at all levels for system wide early years services.</p> <p>The EY strategy explicitly covers speech and language.</p>                                                      | <p><b>Collectively ensure that the early years governance arrangements and the strategy review are evidence based and support a whole system and whole family approach.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Draft a revised early years strategy using the information from the review</li> <li>1.2 ensure evidence-based activities support the vision and plans, refer to EIF for advice</li> <li>1.3 all partners to agree a system wide governance arrangement for the strategy (membership /ToR reflect the partnership)</li> <li>1.4 establish clear accountability structures and joint indicators at the board level (see 5.1 and 5.2)</li> <li>1.5 schedule regular and robust monitoring and challenge opportunities for the board</li> <li>1.6 include monitoring reports on the impact of the joint bids (in 1.5)</li> </ul> | <p>A collective vision exists for all early years services in the system.</p> <p>The revised ‘collective’ early years strategy and partnership action plan is in place.</p> <p>The partnership offer is widely understood.</p> <p>Outcomes – measured for the ‘whole child’ – improve as a result.</p> <p>Enhanced monitoring and challenge is undertaken by the board and by members.</p> | <p>Minutes from board meetings show this has been developed and agreed.</p> <p>Documentation and updates are presented to the board.</p> <p>Surveys and other means of feedback are reported to the board.</p> <p>See EY 5 (below)</p> <p>Minutes from board meetings show that challenge informs strategy.</p> |
| <p><b>EY system 2: Vision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>all partners recognise the importance of a child’s early years</i></li> <li>- <i>partners can articulate their work and the direct effect it has on families and children</i></li> <li>- <i>there is a lack of clarity regarding what comprises the collective early years offer</i></li> <li>- <i>universal services have reduced in recent years</i></li> <li>- <i>partners have already identified effective initiatives and areas for development</i></li> <li>- <i>there is a lack of understanding of readiness for school</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>The early years strategy is linked to the overall vision of what partners are trying to achieve.</p> <p>An agreed understanding of what is offered collectively is present.</p> <p>A shared definition of readiness for school is created and this supports joint working.</p> <p>Outcomes are not declining because of the reduction of services.</p> | <p><b>Create a shared clear vision for your early years services which is supported by a simple and widely understood definition of your collective offer.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 develop and agree <b>simple</b> key messages to articulate the vision, strategy and offer to all</li> <li>2.2 identify all current services and provision which make up the universal offer</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p>Key messages are published:<br/>*vision*<br/>*strategy*<br/>*universal offer*.</p> <p>Partners and families understand the messages and as a result they access appropriate services and provision.</p> <p>Gaps and duplication in the system are avoided because of clear pathways.</p>                                                                                                | <p>Published documents and the impact of comms/media campaigns are reported to the board.</p> <p>Take up of services and appropriate referral rates increase.</p> <p>Provision maps contribute to commissioning and better value for money.</p>                                                                 |

| What do we know?<br><i>Feedback from the peer review</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | What is the desired outcome?<br><i>What do we hope to see in 12 months?</i>                                                        | What do partners need to do now?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | How will we know it is working?                                                                                                                          | How will this be monitored and evaluated?                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| - the CWC council's plan key theme '...best start in life' is supported by leaders and staff                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                    | 2.3 share and map universal provision and intervention pathways using a common language across services<br>2.4 re-affirm the offer by effectively communicating the messages (in 2.1) and the pathways in (2.3) across frontline services, the community and parents<br>2.5 co-produce a 'readiness for school' definition and ambition                                                                                                                                               | A clear vision, and a shared understanding of pathways, contribute to more effective evaluation.                                                         | Collective performance information is presented to board and is challenged appropriately.                                            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | A clear SLT offer, which is outcome focussed, with a closing the gaps plan in place.                                                                     | Specific presentation on the effectiveness of the SLT pathway and service outcomes.                                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Explicit work on shared expectations for school readiness supports better transition into schools.                                                       | Feedback from schools, families, services and PVIs - before and after definition is in use.<br><br>Sample of transition case studies |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Partners can describe how services connect and complement each other.                                                                                    | Employee feedback and local reviews demonstrate a common understanding.                                                              |
| <b>EY system 3: Co-production</b><br>- initiatives such as Parent Champions and Parent Ambassadors allow parent contribution to the development of some services<br>- awareness, understanding and impact of these roles is not high<br>- community engagement in design and development is not well developed<br>- there is some good work and support for families<br>- involvement of parents and community/voluntary groups has fallen over time | A wide range of stakeholders are involved in service design and delivery.<br><br>Services meet the needs of children and families. | <b>Actively involve parents and communities in shaping and delivering services.</b><br><br>3.1 facilitate parental and community engagement by structuring co-production into early years plans and strategies<br>3.2 evaluate the impact of parenting champions and parent ambassador schemes<br>3.3 increase awareness of successful activities which engage and support parents<br>3.4 increase access to services, learning from the engagement work which exists in SEN services | Parent, community and voluntary groups make a contribution which is recognised and harnessed.                                                            | Surveys and other means of feedback are reported to the board.<br><br>Parental / community representation at board level.            |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Parent champion / ambassador schemes are improved or expanded, after evaluation, to provide even greater reach.                                          | Minutes show that impact reports of these projects are presented to the board and inform future service delivery.                    |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Parents know how they can be involved in supporting their children and supporting other families, as well as how they can be supported by other parents. | Case studies are reported to the board.<br><br>Take up of services increase or decrease accordingly.                                 |

| What do we know?<br><i>Feedback from the peer review</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | What is the desired outcome?<br><i>What do we hope to see in 12 months?</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | What do partners need to do now?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | How will we know it is working?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | How will this be monitored and evaluated?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>EY system 4: Partnerships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>partnership working is developing, there are some good examples of interagency / joint working exist, for example through the EOF bid</i></li> <li>- <i>there are particularly good relationships between EY and SEND teams</i></li> <li>- <i>the council has a proactive approach to developing services, despite budget challenges</i></li> <li>- <i>there is not a shared understanding as to what the collective offer is or how it can be accessed, and so services run in parallel but are not joined up</i></li> <li>- <i>PVIs highly regard the work of the EY team</i></li> <li>- <i>joint projects and initiatives should aid multi-agency training</i></li> <li>- <i>early education performance has improved in recent years</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Initiatives such as the strengthening families hubs, schools and nursery moderation, Gem centre, EY team are successful</i></p> | <p>Clear communication of the collective offer helps families access services.</p> <p>Clear communication of the collective offer promotes joint working and reduces duplication.</p> <p>Schools receive the right information from previous settings about individual children.</p> <p>Multi agency training strengthens the workforce.</p> <p>The clear offer for families is supported by specialist expertise in the S&amp;LT service.</p> | <p><b>Communicate broadly your defined offer and the pathways for families with young children</b></p> <p>-----</p> <p><b>Develop a clear Speech Language Communication Needs (SLCN) offer with a closing the gap plan which is supported by the speech and language therapy service</b></p> <p>4.1 critically appraise the parenting programmes and select one for the partnership</p> <p>4.2 work across services to increase take up amongst hard to reach groups including for universal health checks and funded education places as well as targeted provision such as extended education and early help /prevention services</p> <p>4.3 maximise the reach of the grant funded projects through cross-partnership joint training</p> <p>See also 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5</p> | <p>The partnership adopts a city-wide, evidence based, parenting programme.</p> <p>Outcome gaps are closed due to the availability of targeted services.</p> <p>A comprehensive and quality assured training offer is in place and is accessed by staff across services.</p> <p>Increased take up of 2s and 3s funded education leads to improved outcomes for vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Increased take up of health checks lead to appropriate and timely referrals and support.</p> | <p>Board minutes / impact report on the programme.</p> <p>Outcomes improve for vulnerable groups (see EY 5).</p> <p>Training records show an increase in the CPD offer and take up.</p> <p>Outcomes improve for vulnerable groups (see EY 5).</p> <p>Take up of services and appropriate referral rates increase.</p> |
| <p><b>EY system 5: Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>evaluation requires development so it can stimulate action</i></li> <li>- <i>the early years steering group are working on the shared dashboard</i></li> <li>- <i>collective data is not currently being used to inform change and learning from local interventions and does not always lead to improvement across services</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>Whole system monitoring, accountability and challenge is enhanced through the creation and use of the 'whole child' dashboard.</p> <p>The dashboard is integral to the strengthened governance arrangements.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p><b>Develop a performance dashboard with a shared data set from all partners reflecting the whole child's development.</b></p> <p>5.1 partners agree a data set which measures the outcomes for the 'whole child'</p> <p>5.2 share outcome indicators and performance data with frontline services (see also 1.4 and 5.1)</p> <p>5.3 increase awareness of performance and use this to ensure services and provision are designed to improve outcomes</p> <p>5.4 embed the use of evidence-based intervention tools across the system (see also 1.2, 4.1 and 6.1)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>Performance dashboard is established and is used for monitoring and service improvement at all levels.</p> <p>Frontline services adapt to respond to rises/falls in performance data.</p> <p>EIF and other tools are used to inform and guide practice.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>Board minutes show that the dashboard is reviewed. The dashboard leads to challenge and promotes scrutiny.</p> <p>Service monitoring reports demonstrate evaluation and response.</p> <p>Reports highlight the use of evidence-based intervention tools.</p>                                                       |



| What do we know?<br><i>Feedback from the peer review</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | What is the desired outcome?<br><i>What do we hope to see in 12 months?</i>                                                                                                                                                                                            | What do partners need to do now?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | How will we know it is working?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | How will this be monitored and evaluated?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>EY system 6: Commissioning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- joint commissioning requires significant development across early years services</li> <li>- there is commissioning expertise in each partnership and service team</li> <li>- there is little evidence of expertise within individual services being used in a whole system approach</li> </ul> | <p>Joint commissioning projects aid whole system approach and synergy between partners</p> <p>S&amp;LT specification is current, and its reach is maximised.</p> <p>The Healthy Child Programme (HCP) supports collaborative work and integrated service delivery.</p> | <p><b>As part of your emerging whole system approach, seek opportunities to increase joint commissioning across early years services</b></p> <p>6.1 partners agree an outcome focussed speech and language offer with a closing the gap plan (see EY 4)</p> <p>6.2 update the specification for commissioned SLT services as part of the EY strategy review</p> <p>6.3 all relevant partners to clarify what is the contribution of the Healthy Child Programme and what are the expected performance levels</p> <p>6.4 HCP outcomes are visible in the dashboard (see 5.1)</p> | <p>Commissioners are clear about what is expected from the Healthy Child Programme, how this will be delivered and monitored collectively.</p> <p>A systematic and standardised way to assess SLCN is established alongside a city-wide offer of intervention groups supported by SLT.</p> <p>Training for families to support communication at home is evidence based and quality assured by SLT. Communication friendly environments are in place across services.</p> | <p>HCP is embedded into the EY strategy and plans and governance arrangements allow effective monitoring.</p> <p>Assessment tool is in place and reports demonstrate its impact.</p> <p>SLT report on outcomes from the groups that the SLT service is supporting (skill development of other providers offering language enrichment activities / quality assurance / outcomes)</p>                         |
| <p><b>EY system 7: joint workforce plans</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-there are committed leaders and staff at all levels</li> <li>- the council and partners have identified the desirability of joint workforce planning and development</li> </ul>                                                                                                         | <p>The benefits of joint working are realised and built upon so that talent is harnessed across the system.</p>                                                                                                                                                        | <p><b>Follow through your intention to create a joint workforce planning and development approach</b></p> <p>7.1 complete the project timeline and explore which workstreams afford opportunities for joint workforce training</p> <p>7.2 use the grant funded projects to understand the current and future training needs and inform and stimulate cross-service training opportunities</p> <p>7.3 partners to develop a 3-year joint workforce plan</p>                                                                                                                      | <p>Skills and expertise across the system are utilised through a joint workforce plan.</p> <p>Health visitor training supports the early identification of SLCN / the need for referrals to SLT services.</p> <p>PVI training programme contributes to improved education outcomes, including for the most vulnerable children.</p> <p>The joint workforce plan is based on need and is aligned to the collective delivery of the universal offer.</p>                   | <p>Board minutes show the plan is established and reviewed.</p> <p>HV data reports.</p> <p>Take up of services and appropriate referral rates increase.</p> <p>Report to the board on the impact of the EOF and PDP projects in relation to the workforce development and CPD offer.</p> <p>Board minutes show the workforce plan is developed and reviewed alongside the offer and pathways documents.</p> |

**Children, Young People and  
Families Scrutiny Panel**  
25 September 2019

|                                                |                                               |                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Report title</b>                            | Children's Workforce Health Check 2019        |                                                   |
| <b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b> | Councillor John Reynolds, Children's Services |                                                   |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                          | All                                           |                                                   |
| <b>Accountable director</b>                    | Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services |                                                   |
| <b>Originating service</b>                     | Children's Services                           |                                                   |
| <b>Accountable employees)</b>                  | Louise Haughton                               | Principal Social Worker                           |
|                                                | Tel                                           | 01902 555534                                      |
|                                                | Email                                         | louise.haughton@wolverhampton.gov.uk              |
|                                                | Jennifer Rogers                               | Advanced Practitioner for Quality and Improvement |
|                                                | Tel                                           | 01902 555704                                      |
|                                                | Email                                         | jennifer.rogers@wolverhampton.gov.uk              |
| <b>Report has been considered by</b>           | Children's Services Management Team           | 11 July 2019                                      |
|                                                | Social Work Development Board                 | 12 July 2019                                      |
|                                                | SEB                                           | 13 August 2019                                    |

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**Recommendations for action:**

The Panel is recommended to:

1. Note and comment on the findings of the Children's Workforce Health Check for 2019
2. Provide comment and challenge on proposed actions to improve the health of children's service's workforce

## 1.0 Purpose

1.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) carries out an online survey each year to check the “health” of its social workers. This year the survey was also sent out to the wider children’s workforce. This was an action from the engagement action plan in 2018. This report presents an overview of the findings of this survey and concludes with areas identified for improvement and to improve practice in the city.

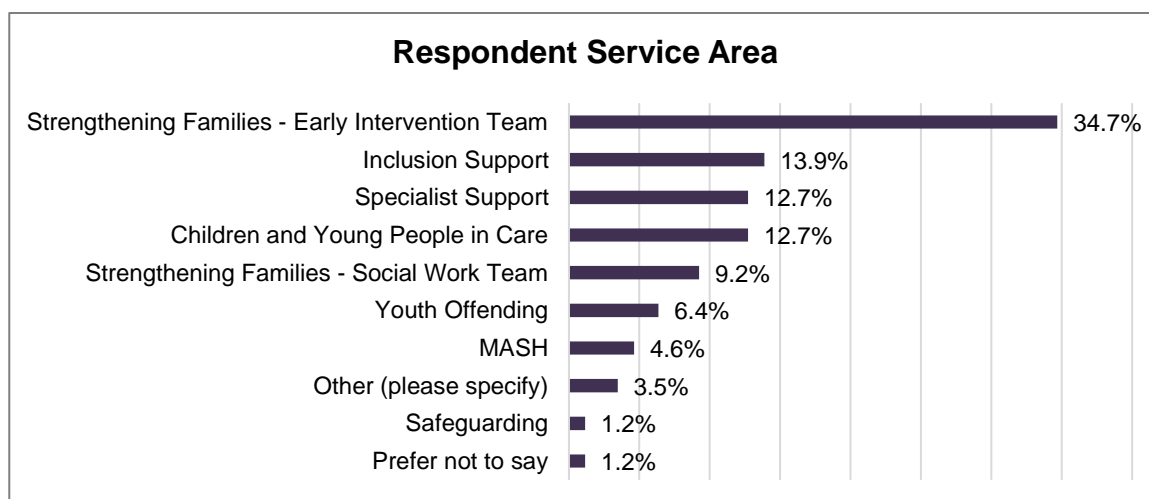
## 2.0 Background

2.1 Good practice carried out by a “healthy”, motivated workforce can lead to improved outcomes for people and families as well as reduced demand and costs. The national Social Work Task Force final report, published in November 2009, recommended a framework to assist employers and practitioners to assess the “health” of their organisation on a range of issues affecting the workload of social workers and to support the implementation of a set of national Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework.

2.3 The framework identifies five key topics to support organisations to undertake a self-assessment to identify current strengths and areas that require improvement. The five key topics are:

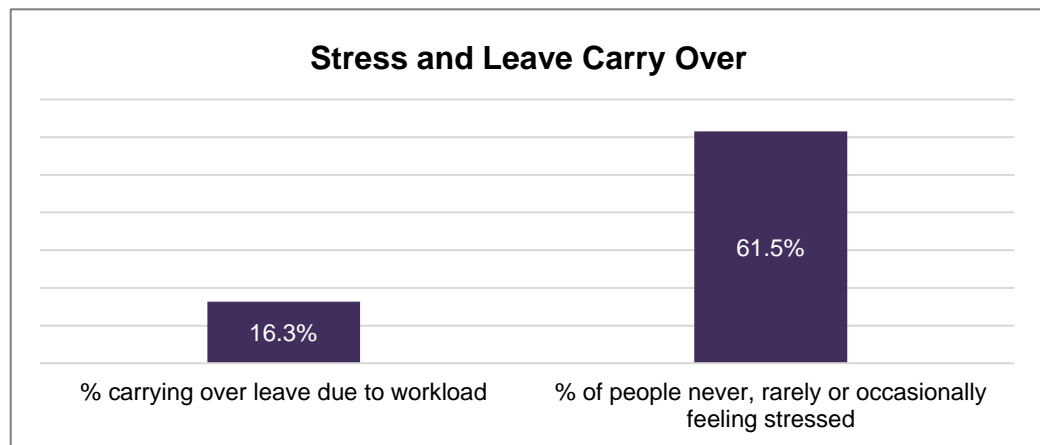
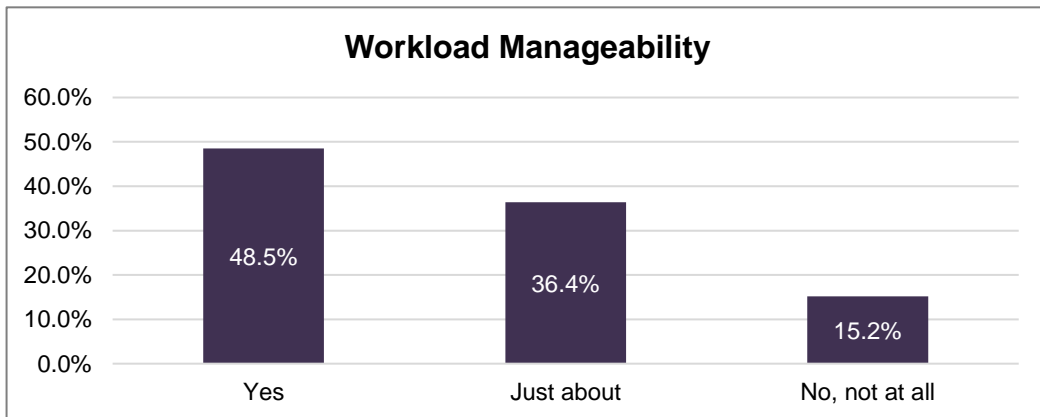
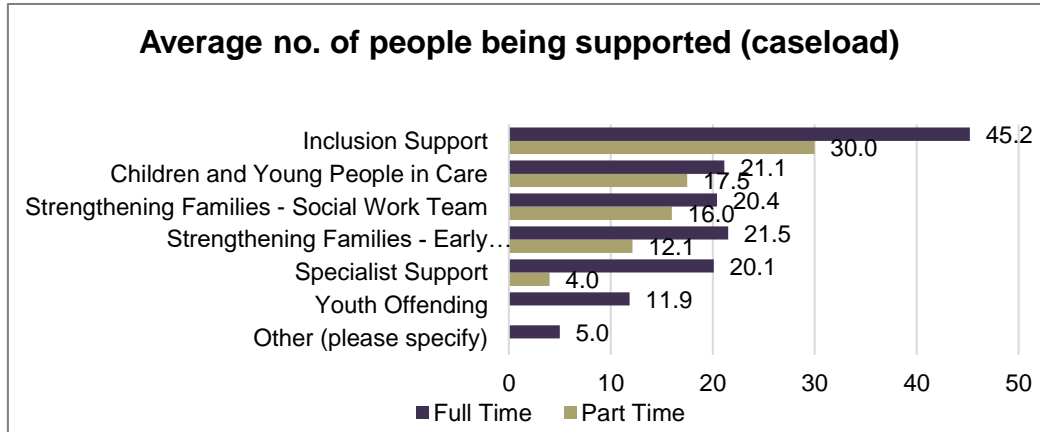
- Effective workload management
- Pro-active workflow management
- Having the right tools for the job
- A healthy workplace
- Effective service delivery

2.4 The survey was sent out to 301 employees between 1 April – 15 May 2019. Non-social work qualified employees at grade five and above who work directly with children and young people or manage teams that do were invited to complete the survey. This is a very diverse workforce and is made up a variety of roles such as Educational Psychologists, Family Support workers, the Virtual School team and Strengthening Families Workers. There was a total of 173 responses (57%) from across all of the service areas.

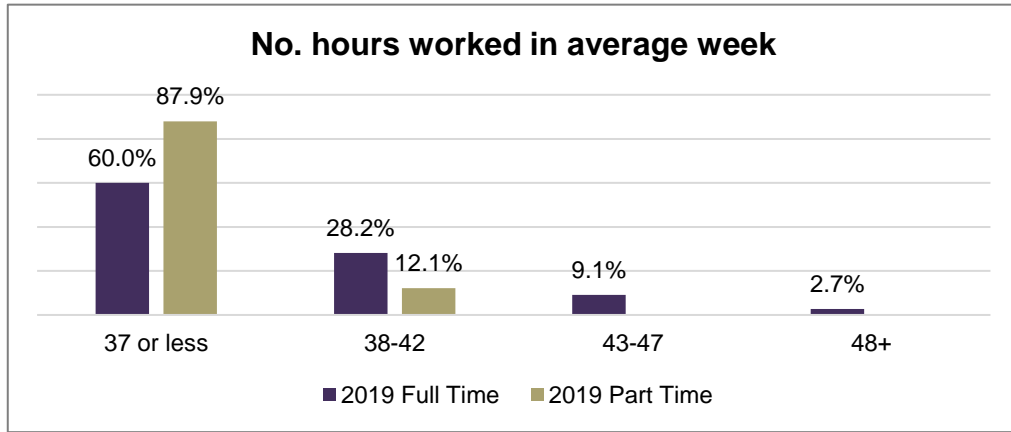


### 3.0 Overview and key findings

3.1 The average number of people being supported (caseload) varies because of the variety of job roles. As this is the first survey of the non-social work qualified workforce this will provide a benchmark for monitoring future trends as it is not possible to draw comparisons between the different service areas. Nearly 85% felt that their workload is manageable and the majority never, rarely or occasionally experience stress. Sickness due to stress at work was not particularly high. Most do not carry over annual leave because of the demands of their job.

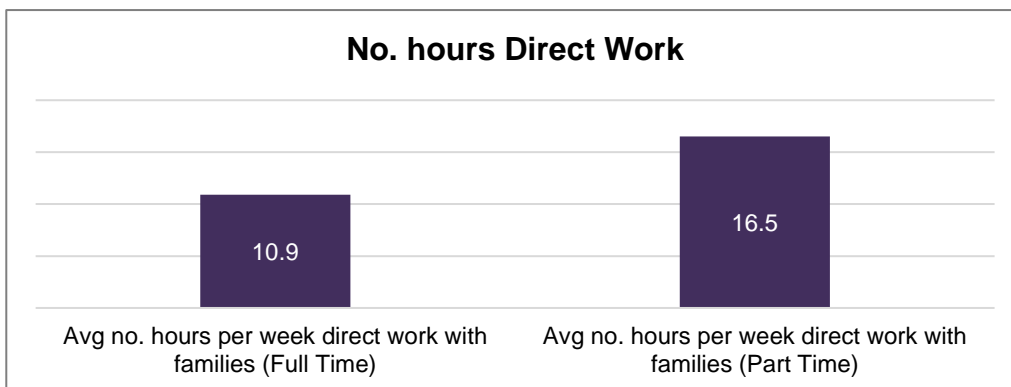


3.2 There were a number of respondents who stated that they work over their contracted hours to keep up with their workload. The average hours worked by full time employees was 38.9 hours a week, however part time employees averaged 6.9 hours over their contracted hours. Just over 12% of part time employees work between 38-42 hours, which is high.



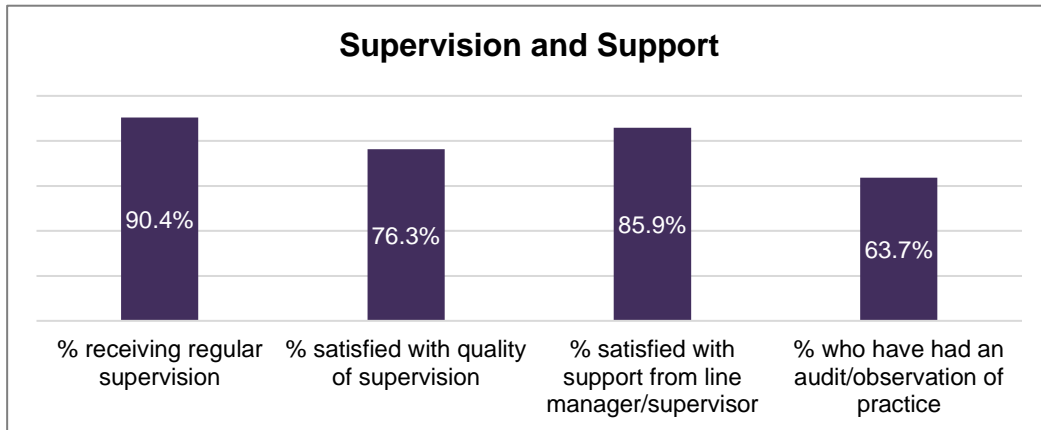
3.3 The average number of hours spent working directly with children, young people and families is 16.5 hours for full time employees and 10.9 hours for part time employees. Due to the diversity of roles it is difficult to draw conclusions about these results but will provide a benchmark for future surveys. However, a number of respondents indicate that they spend a large proportion of their time inputting data onto systems. When asked what they would change about their job if they could common responses included:

- More time for direct work
- Less paperwork
- Fewer systems

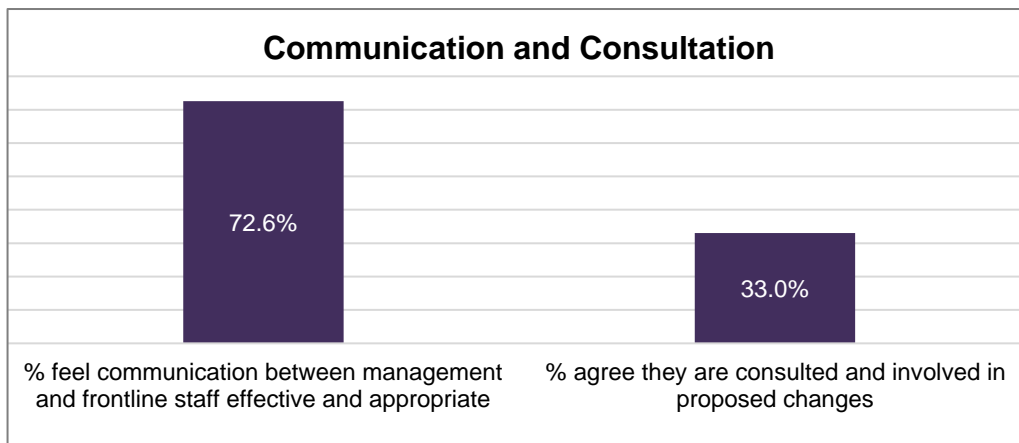


3.4 Almost all respondents said they receive regular supervision. The vast majority are satisfied with the support they receive from their manager and with the quality of discussions in supervision, with only 2% saying they are dissatisfied with this. Over 60% have had an observation of practice as part of practice weeks and 85% of those who had been observed said they found it a positive experience. Some said that it provided them with an opportunity for reflection and to get some independent feedback.

This report is PUBLIC  
[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]



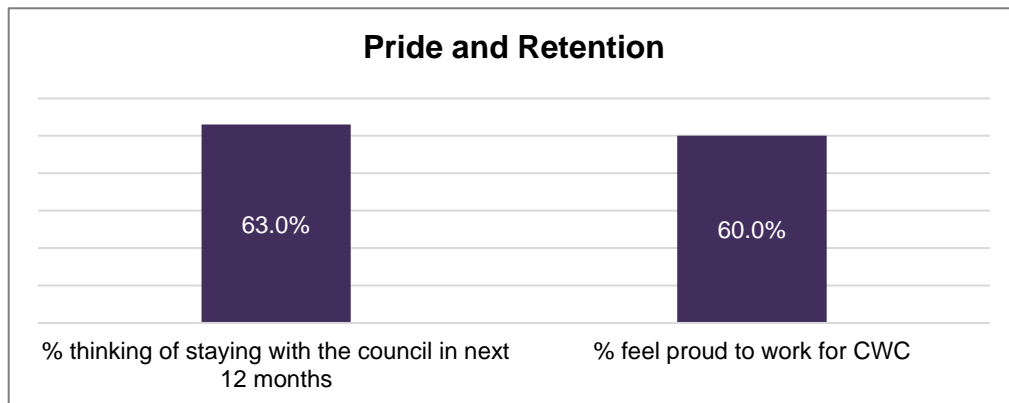
3.5 Over 70% felt that there is effective and appropriate communication between frontline staff and management and responses indicate that team meetings are generally taking place either monthly or weekly. Just over 90% said that they felt able to contribute to their team meeting agenda. 33% agreed that they are involved in and consulted about proposed changes and about the same number disagreed with this, with the majority neither agreeing or disagreeing with this statement. A lot of work has taken place in the last 12 months to improve communication with the children’s workforce, including the introduction of coffee and conversation sessions, the publication of a fortnightly e-bulletin and increased visibility of senior managers in teams. However, this is an area that will continue to be developed as part of the Engagement Plan which was finalised in June 2019.



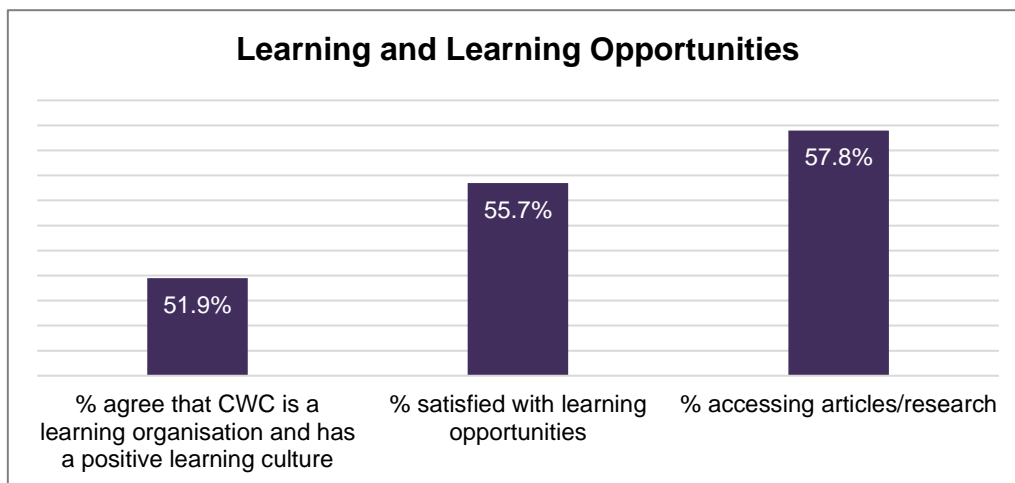
3.6 The majority of respondents (70%) said they are enthusiastic about their job, feel their skills are being utilised effectively and are proud to work for CWC. Most are planning to stay with CWC in the next 12 months, with only 18% thinking of leaving to start a new job/career. Some comments about what made them feel positive this year included:

- Good learning and development opportunities
- Supportive colleagues

- “Senior managers are more accessible and seen at ground level (e.g. coffee mornings)”



3.7 Most agreed that CWC is a learning organisation with a positive learning culture and over 55% said they were satisfied with the learning and development opportunities available. However, about 20% of respondents said they were not satisfied and would welcome more learning and development opportunities and time to undertake training. A significant number (35%) neither agreed nor disagreed.



#### 4.0 Recommendations and actions

- 4.1 An action plan has been produced as a result of this survey to address the key areas highlighted in this report. This plan will be overseen and reviewed by the Children’s Workforce development board. The findings of the Health Check and actions will be shared with teams and will inform workforce development plans for the coming year. The plan incorporates improvement actions including:
- Supporting the roll out Eclipse later in 2019 to reduce the amount of time spent inputting onto systems and more proportionate recording which should help to achieve a better work / life balance
  - Ensuring robust workload discussions take place in supervision to ensure workloads are manageable and working hours are reasonable. The quantity and quality of supervision will be monitored through audit and dip sampling.

- Implementing the Engagement Plan to further improve communication with the workforce
- The workforce development team will continue to work with Heads of Service to explore training needs and further opportunities for the workforce. The introduction of the social work apprenticeship programme offers the opportunity for those eligible across the children's workforce to apply to gain a professional / recognised qualification.
- The Principal Social Worker's team will support with the delivery of a development day for non-social work qualified roles and service areas

## **5.0 Financial implications**

- 5.1 Sickness, unplanned absence from work and difficulties recruiting and retaining staff could all result in additional expenditure for the Council. The total approved budget for Children's services is £51.5 million of which the staff related element is £31.1 million. The expenditure on agency staff has reduced from £2.9 million in 2016-2017 to £2.4 million in 2018-2019.  
[JB/06082019/T]

## **6.0 Legal implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report.  
[TC/02082019/X]

## **7.0 Equalities implications**

- 7.1 Social Care is a diverse profession and the makeup of the social care teams in Wolverhampton is largely representative of the local community. The diversity of the children that are supported by Child in Need / Child Protection and Children and Young People in Care teams are also largely representative of the diversity of the city as a whole.

## **8.0 Environmental implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising out of this report.

## **9.0 Human resources implications**

- 9.1 There are no human resource implications arising out of this report.

## **10.0 Corporate landlord implications**

- 10.1 There are no specific corporate landlord implications arising out of this report.

## **11.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 11.1 Appendix A: Children's Workforce Health Check 2019 Dashboard



Click link below to see full Children's Workforce Health Check Survey Report 2019



Children's  
Workforce Health Cl

# Children's Workforce Health Check e 2019

CITY OF  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
COUNCIL

Our mission:  
Working as one to  
serve our city

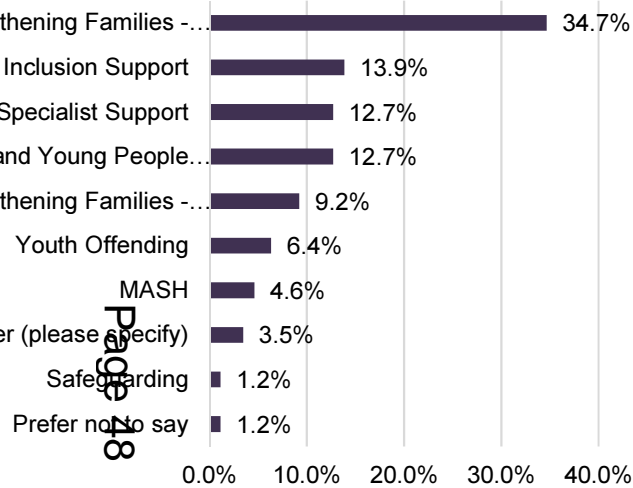
Page 47



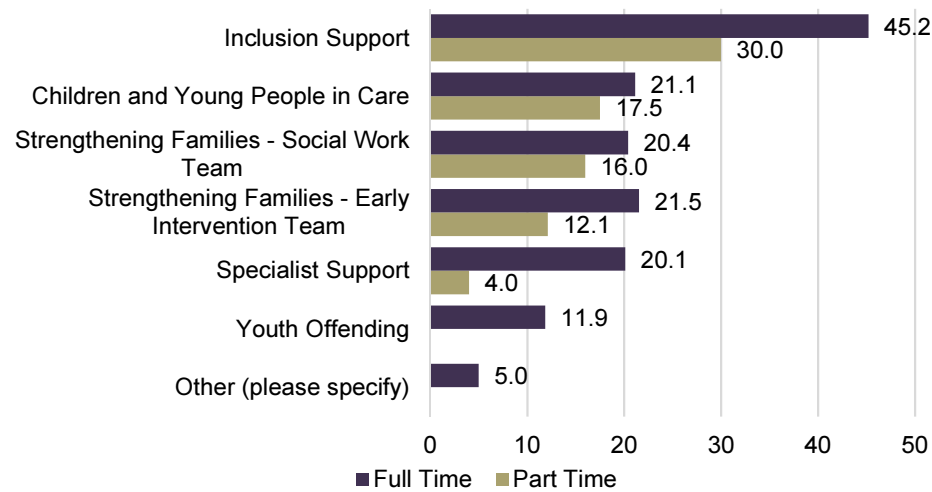
# Children's Workforce Health Check 2019

## Effective Workload Management

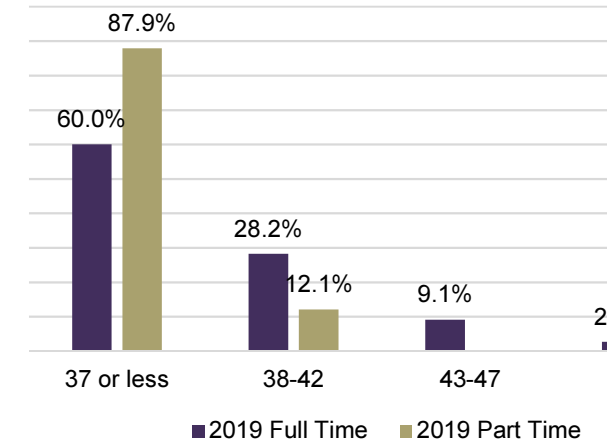
### Respondent Service Area



### Average no. of CYP being supported\*

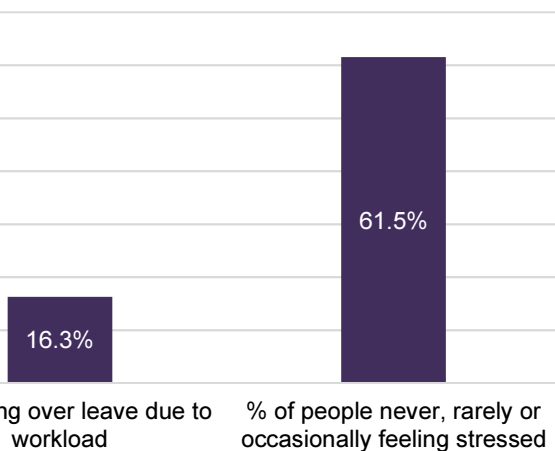


### No. hours worked in average week

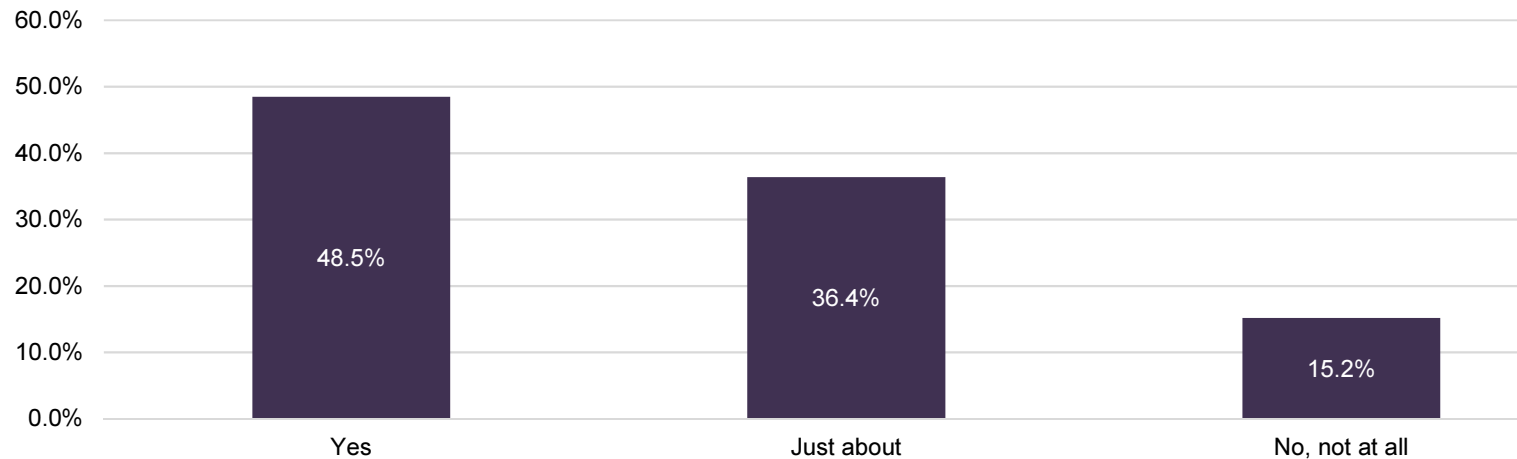


\* This question refers to what would traditionally have been called a 'caseload'.

## Stress and Leave Carry Over



## Workload Manageability

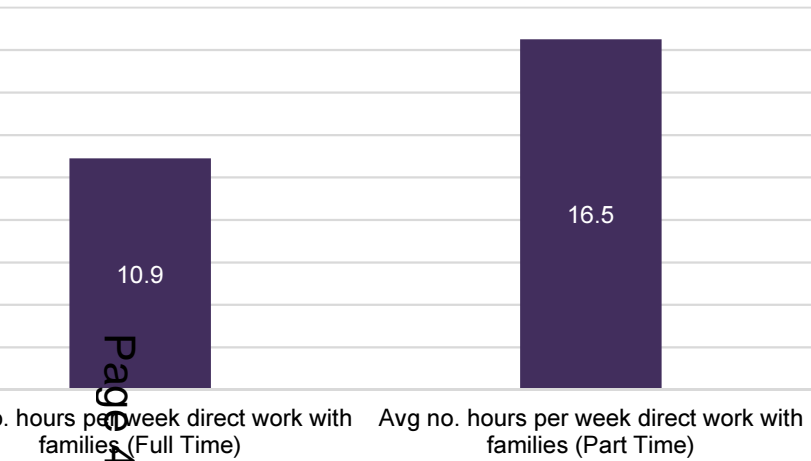




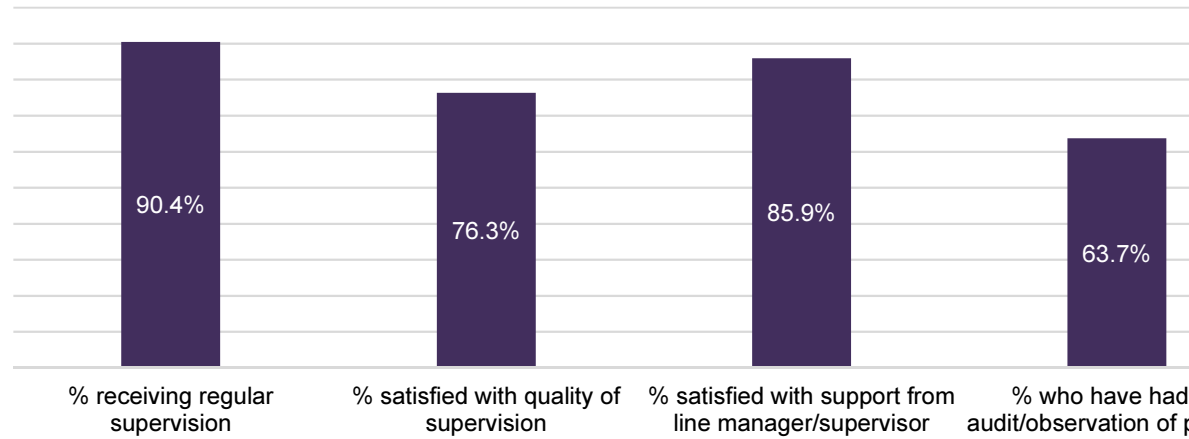
# Children's Workforce Health Check 2019

## Effective Workload Management / Having the Right Tools for the Job / Healthy Workplace

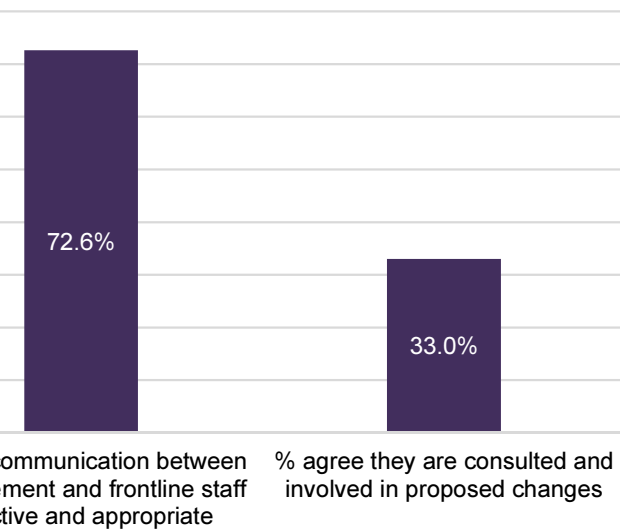
### No. hours Direct Work



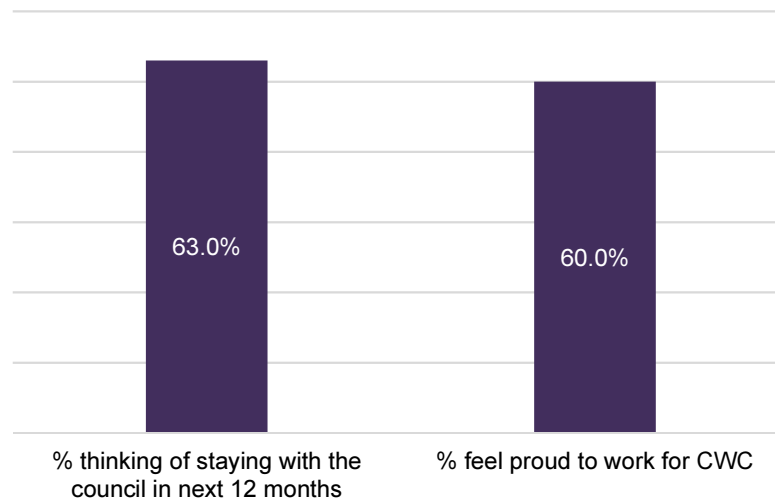
### Supervision and Support



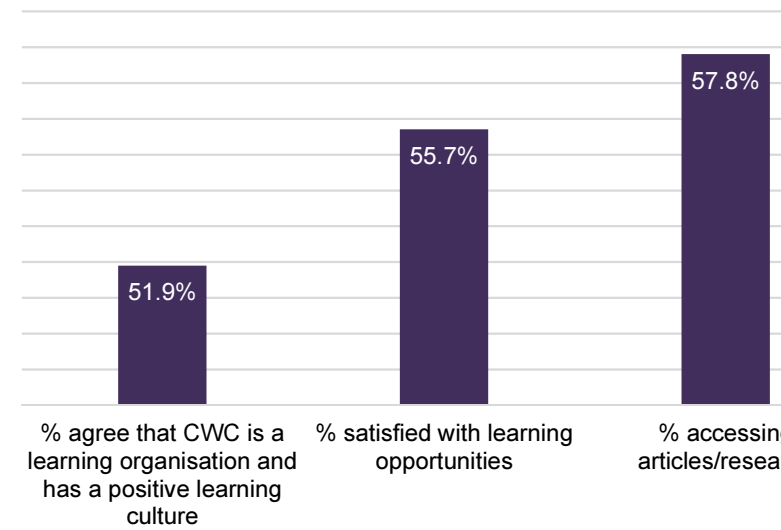
### Communication and Consultation



### Pride and Retention



### Learning and Learning Opportunities



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# Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

## 25 September 2019

|                                                |                                               |                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Report title</b>                            | Children's Social Work Health Check 2019      |                                                                                                |
| <b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b> | Councillor John Reynolds                      |                                                                                                |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                          | All                                           |                                                                                                |
| <b>Accountable director</b>                    | Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services |                                                                                                |
| <b>Originating service</b>                     | Children's Services                           |                                                                                                |
| <b>Accountable employees</b>                   | Louise Haughton                               | Principal Social Worker                                                                        |
|                                                | Tel                                           | 01902 555534                                                                                   |
|                                                | Email                                         | <a href="mailto:louise.haughton@wolverhampton.gov.uk">louise.haughton@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a> |
|                                                | Jennifer Rogers                               | Advanced Practitioner for Quality and Improvement                                              |
|                                                | Tel                                           | 01902 555704                                                                                   |
|                                                | Email                                         | Jennifer.rogers@wolverhampton.gov.uk                                                           |
| <b>Report has been considered by</b>           | Children's Services Management Team           | 11 July 2019                                                                                   |
|                                                | Social Work Development Board                 | 12 July 2019                                                                                   |
|                                                | SEB                                           | 13 August 2019                                                                                 |

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### Recommendations for action:

The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Note and comment on the findings of the Children's Social Work Health Check for 2019
2. Provide comment and challenge on proposed actions to improve the health of the social work workforce

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) carries out a survey each year to check the “health” of its social workers. This is part of our ongoing self-assessment in order to inform our improvement journey. This report presents an overview of the findings of this year’s survey.

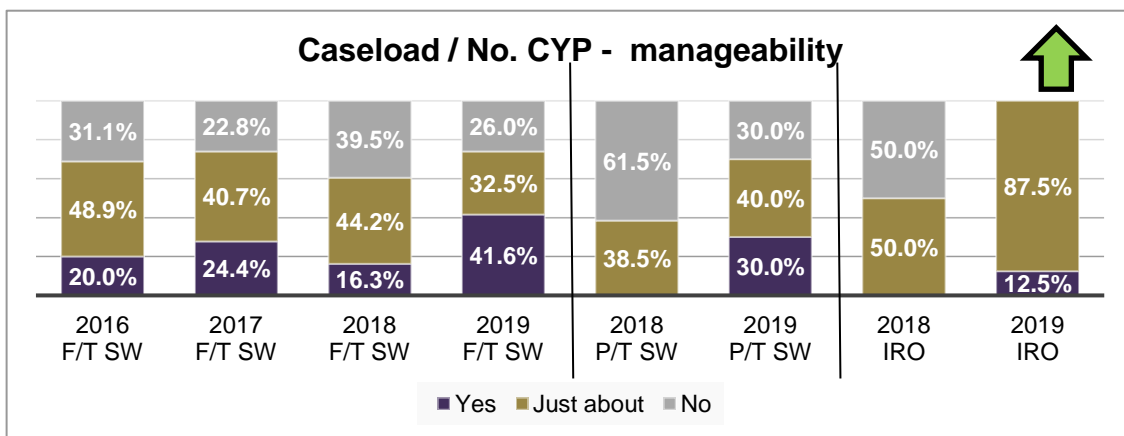
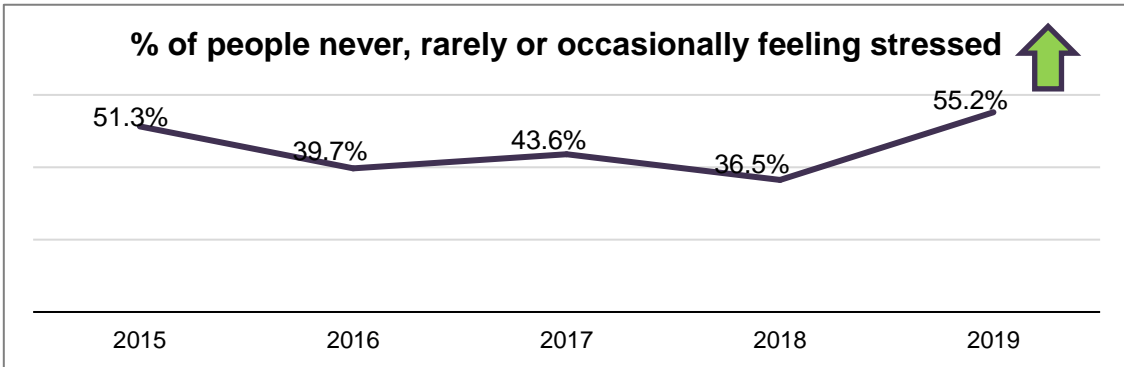
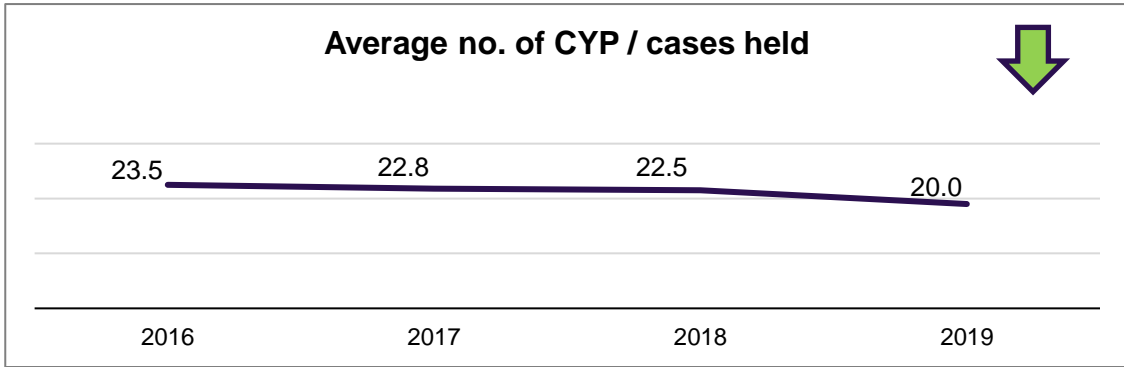
## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Good social work practice carried out by a “healthy”, motivated workforce can lead to improved outcomes for people and families as well as reduced demand and costs. This year a range of work has been undertaken to ensure that statutory social work services for children is delivered at the right level, is effective, takes place in a timely way and supports families to make sustainable change. The success of this work is evidenced in the reduction of demand across the Children and Young people service. Children in need numbers have reduced from 1,037 in 2017-2018 to 821 in 2018-2019, the number of children subject to a Child Protection plan have reduced from 379 to 330 and the number of children in care has reduced from 648 to 624.
- 2.2 The national Social Work Task Force final report, published in November 2009, recommended a framework to assist employers and practitioners to assess the “health” of their organisation on a range of issues affecting the workload of social workers and to support the implementation of a set of national Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework.
- 2.3 The framework identifies five key topics to support organisations to undertake a self-assessment to identify current strengths and areas that require improvement. The five key topics are:
- Effective workload management
  - Pro-active workflow management
  - Having the right tools for the job
  - A healthy workplace
  - Effective service delivery
- 2.4 The key findings are presented from each of the five topics and concludes with areas identified for improvement and to improve social work practice in the city.

## **3.0 Overview and key findings**

- 3.1 The Health Check was circulated to 205 social workers via an online survey between 1 April 2019 and 15 May 2019. A total of 123 responses (60%) were received. The response rate in 2018 was 44%.
- 3.2 The findings of this year’s Children’s Social Work Health Check is very positive, with progress evident in a number of key areas. Average caseloads/workloads are reducing and there has been a significant improvement in stress levels compared to previous years. It is important to acknowledge however that it is not just the number of cases that

are important when considering caseloads, but also the complexity of each situation. This is always monitored during supervision and the skills / experience of workers taken into account. This year social workers are saying that workloads are more manageable, which suggests that these discussions are more robust, and actions taken over the last 12 months are starting to have a positive impact on the health of the children's social work workforce.

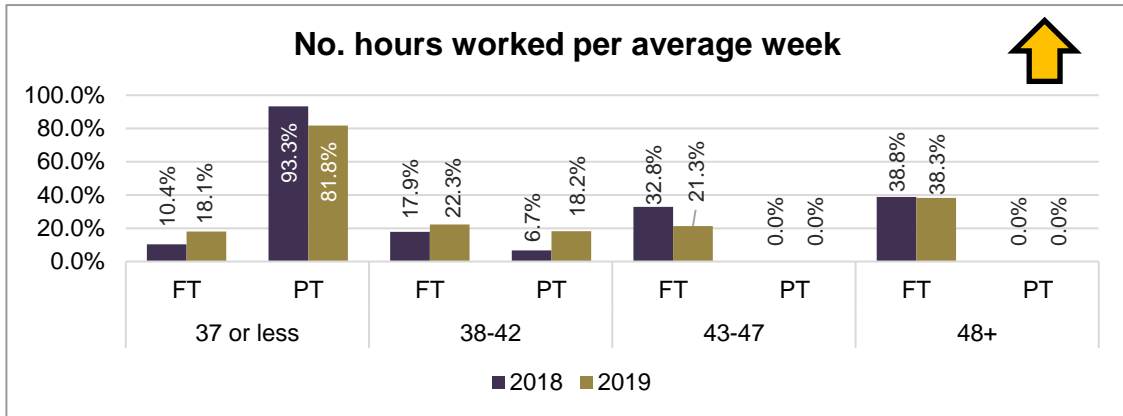


3.3 Fewer full-time workers are working 43-47 hours and more are working between 38-42 hours. However, about the same number as last year are working more than 48 hours which is a concern as caseloads are reducing. A further face to face consultation is taking place with social workers on the 19 August to find out more about what is contributing to long working hours for some.

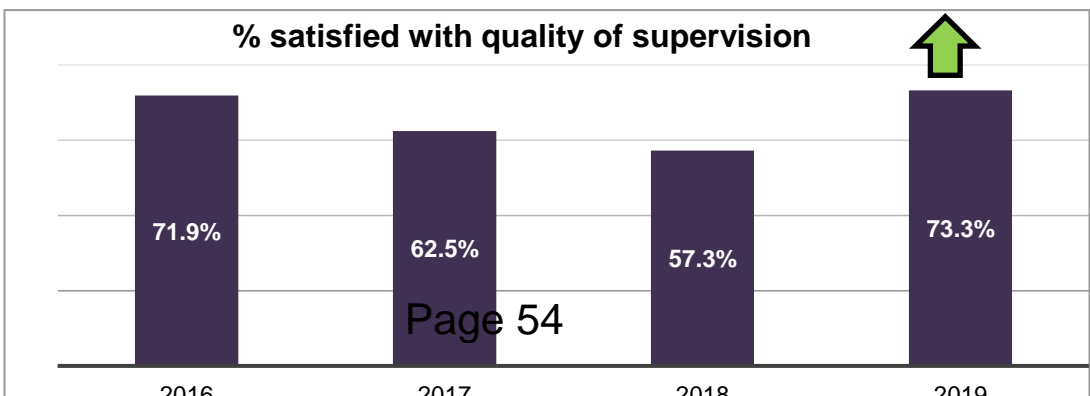
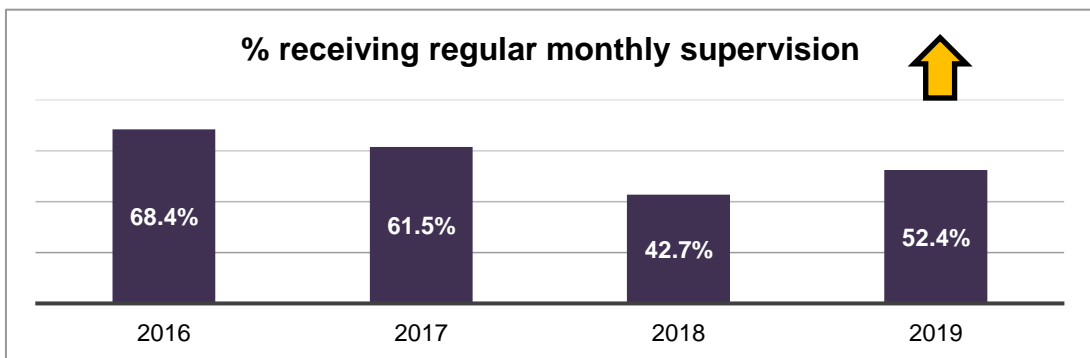
3.4 There is recognition that all managers at all levels of the organisation need to drive a change in culture to encourage a better work / life balance, alongside improving

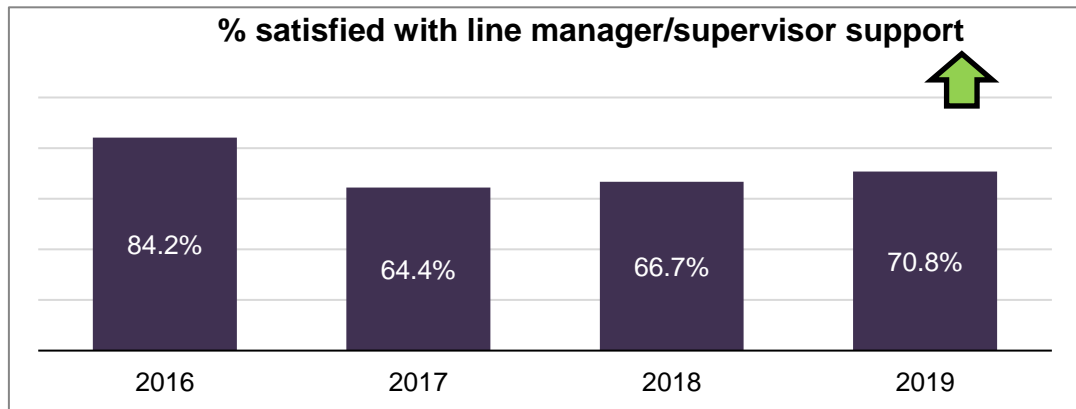


recording systems so less time is spent inputting and on administrative tasks. Social workers were asked to state what they would change about their job if they could and common responses included less paperwork, more manageable caseloads and a better work / life balance. It should be noted that 41% of social workers now feel that their caseload is completely manageable compared with just 16% last year.

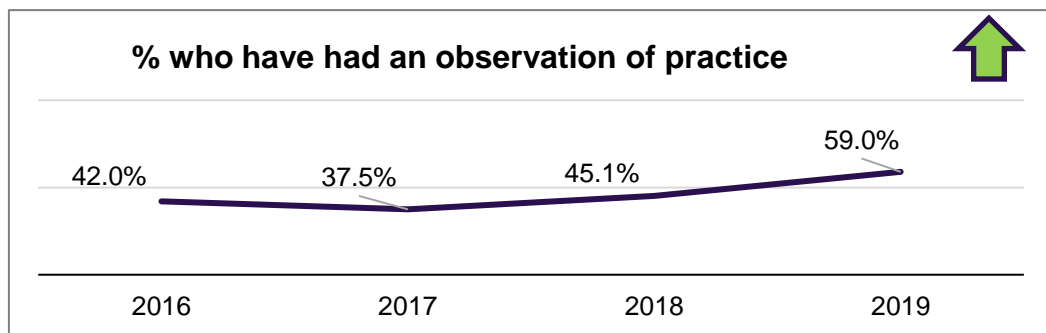


3.5 Just over half of social workers who took part in the survey said they are receiving regular monthly supervision. This has increased since last year but remains an area for further improvement. However, the quality of supervision is high, with only 4% stating they are dissatisfied, and just over 70% are happy with the support they receive from their manager / supervisor. This may suggest that while formal supervision may not be as regular as expected, there is good access to management support and informal supervision when required. This year Children’s Services will be introducing a supervision performance tool that will enable managers to see at a glance how many supervisions have been completed within a monthly timescale and this will highlight workers whose supervision is out of date. Service managers and Heads of Service will also have access to this data which will be monitored at CYP performance meetings.

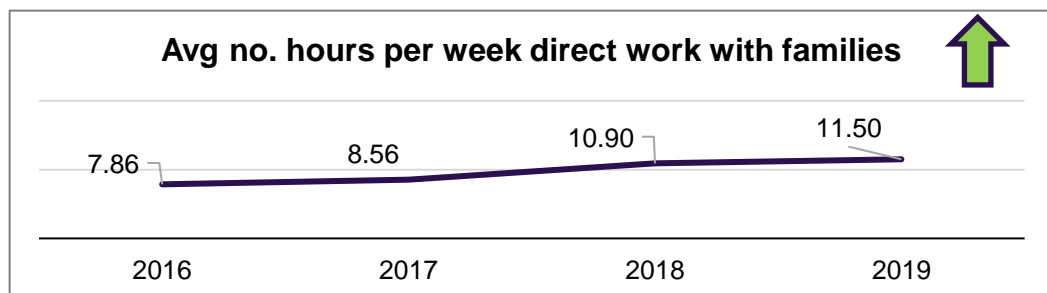




3.6 Almost 60% of social workers who took part in the Health Check said they had had an observation of their practice this year which is an improvement since last year (45%). This has been helped by the introduction of practice weeks. Nearly 85% of those who had been observed as part of practice weeks said they found it a positive experience which provided an opportunity for reassurance, professional development and constructive feedback.

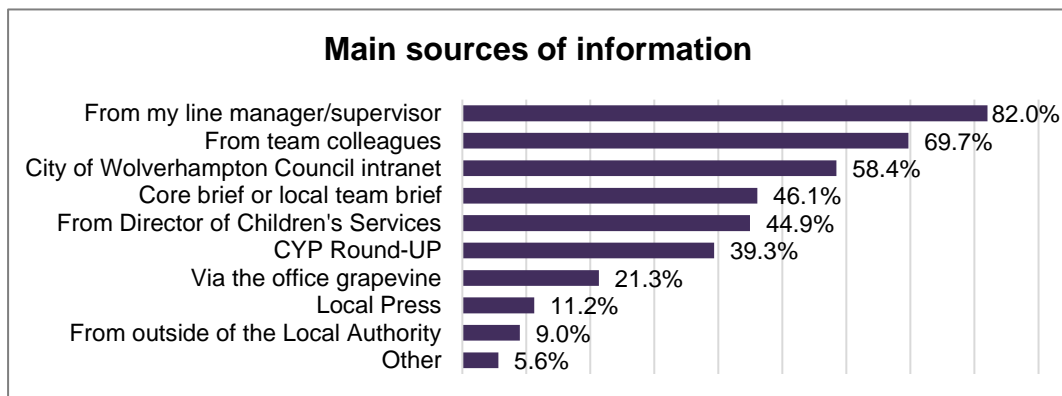
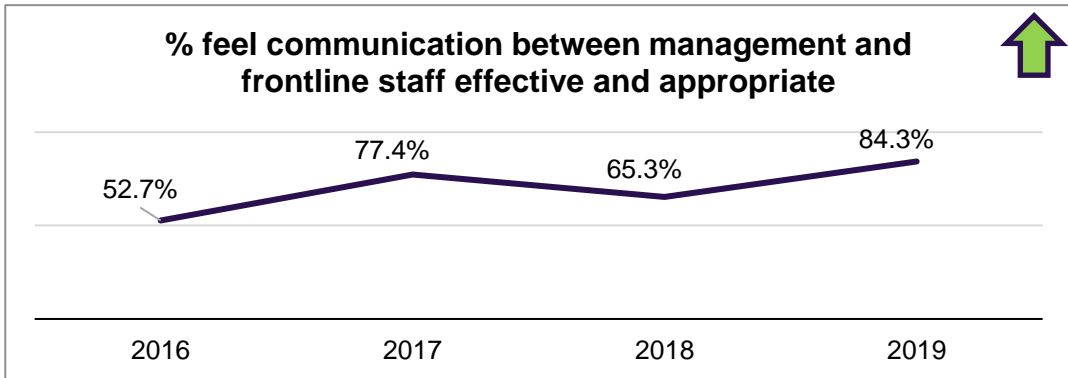


3.7 The average number of hours in a typical week spent undertaking direct work with children, young people and families has been increasing slowly over the last three years which is a positive trend. However, this is still lower than expected and this may be due to the wording of the question and an assumption that this refers to a specific intervention with a child / family rather than contact more generally. This question will be re-worded in next year's survey, and guidance provided.

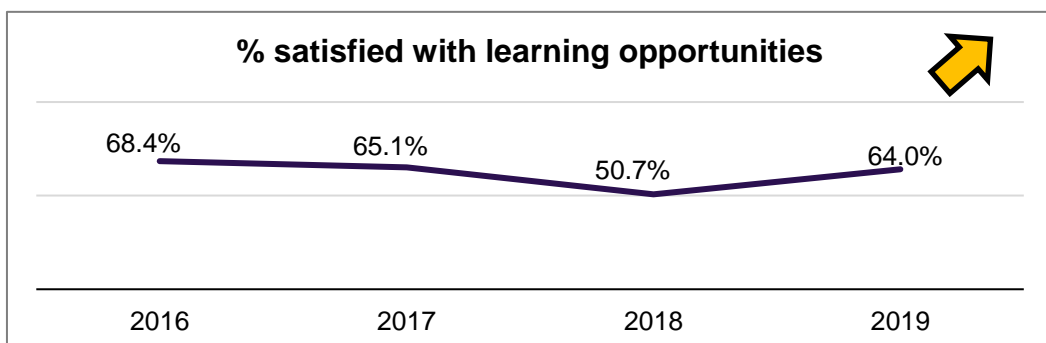


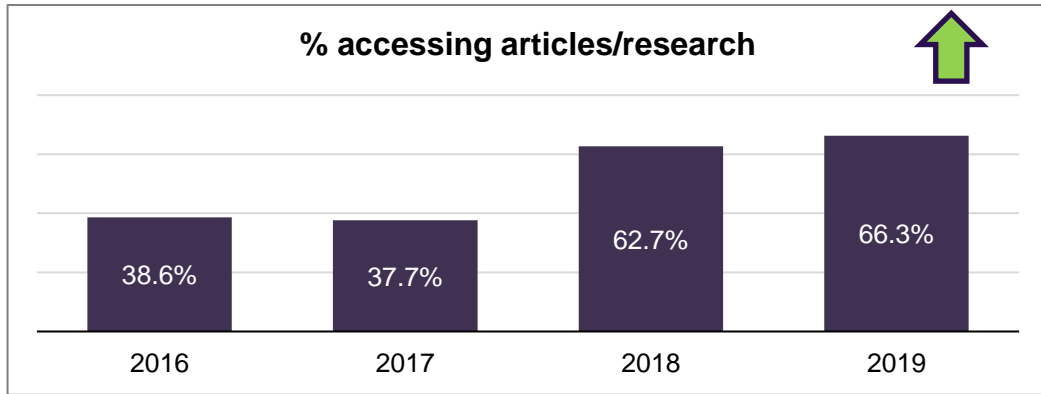
3.8 Communication between management and frontline staff has improved, with almost 85% stating that this is effective and appropriate, which is a significant increase from just over

65% in 2018. A lot of work has taken place in the last 12 months to improve communication with the children’s workforce, including the introduction of coffee and conversation sessions and the publication of a fortnightly e-bulletin alongside the usual social work briefings which take place four times a year. Team meetings are happening more often with 65% taking place every month compared to 45% last year. More social workers also feel consulted about and involved in proposed changes this year, with only 15% disagreeing with this, but this is an area that will continue to be developed as part of the Engagement Plan which was finalised in June 2019.



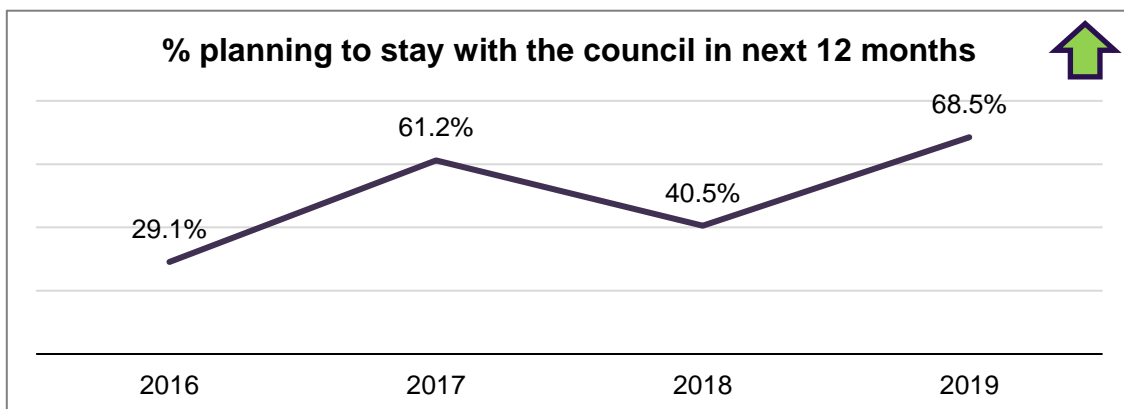
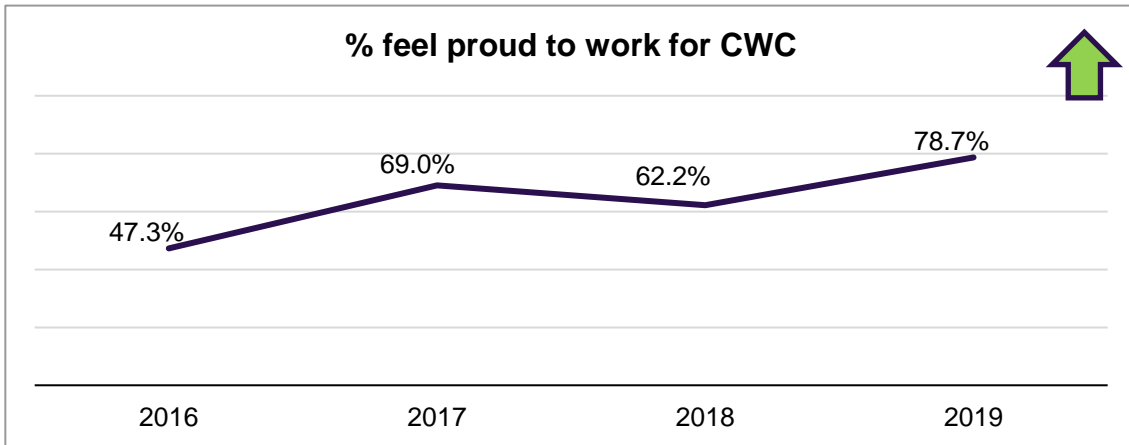
3.9 Almost 70% agreed that CWC is a learning organisation with a positive learning culture and more this year said that they are satisfied with the development opportunities available. Although team champions have not been widely used with only 6% of respondents saying they have accessed one, the number using articles and research to support and inform social work practice has continued to improve this year.





3.10 The majority, just over 75%, of respondents are enthusiastic about their job and feel their skills in their field are being used effectively. More social workers feel proud to work for CWC and there has been a significant improvement in the number who plan to remain with the council in the next 12 months, with only 18% of those thinking of leaving doing so to pursue a new job or career compared to 40% last year. Common themes that social workers said they felt positive about this year included:

- Training and learning opportunities
- The passion the service has for Restorative Practice
- Having a good ASYE programme.
- One respondent stated: "I have worked in other authorities and Wolverhampton cares about its employees"



## 4.0 Recommendations and actions

4.1 An action plan has been completed as a result of this survey to address the key areas of improvement. This will be overseen by the Social Work Development Board. The findings will also inform the workforce development plans for the coming year. The action plan and the Health Check findings will be shared with teams and presented at the next social work briefing in November 2019. Actions include:

- Increasing the frequency of supervisions and robustness of workload discussions. Senior managers will continue to monitor workloads and take action where required. The workload dashboard will continue to be reviewed monthly. The quantity and quality of supervision will be monitored through audit and DIP sampling. This year Children's Services have introduced a supervision performance tool that will enable managers to see at a glance how many supervisions have been completed within a monthly timescale and this will highlight workers whose supervision is out of date. Service managers and Heads of Service and will also have access to this data which will be monitored at CYP performance meetings
- Revisiting and developing the role of team champions. Work has already started in regard to the Restorative Practice Champions.
- Although workloads have reduced this has not resulted in a lower number of employees who work over 48hrs a week. Whilst this shows a very dedicated workforce it is recognised that actions are needed to help support social workers achieve a better work / life balance. A further engagement session will take place with social workers on this point in August to ensure senior leaders fully understand the problem and have the opportunity to solution find with the social work workforce. The implementation of Eclipse later in 2019 (a new recording system) should also help to reduce the amount of time that social workers spend completing administrative tasks and paperwork. Support from managers with time management and encouraging a culture where working long hours is not expected will also be prioritised.
- Managers and Heads of Service will book in all outstanding appraisals by 30 August 2019.
- Direct Work bags have been created for each team and training workshops have been arranged to ensure that all social workers understand how to best use them and record the work that they complete. This will support direct work with families and help embed restorative approaches further.

## 5.0 Financial implications

5.1 Sickiness, unplanned absence from work and difficulties recruiting and retaining staff could all result in additional expenditure for the Council. The total approved budget for Children's services is £51.5 million of which the staff related element is £31.1 million. The expenditure on agency staff has reduced from £2.9 million in 2016-2017 to £2.4 million in 2018-2019. [JB/06082019/T]

## 6.0 Legal implications

6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report. [SB/05082019/S]

## **7.0 Equalities implications**

7.1 Social Work is a diverse profession and the makeup of the social work teams in Wolverhampton is largely representative of the local community. The diversity of the children that are supported by Child in Need / Child Protection and Children and Young People in Care teams are also largely representative of the diversity of the city as a whole.

## **8.0 Environmental implications**

8.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising out of this report.

## **9.0 Human resources implications**

9.1 There are no Human Resource implications arising out of this report.

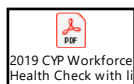
## **10.0 Corporate landlord implications**

10.1 There are no specific Corporate landlord implications arising out of this report.

## **11.0 Schedule of background papers**

11.1 Appendix A: Children's Social Work Health Check 2019 Dashboard

Link to the full Children's Social Work Health Check Survey Report 2019:



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# Children's Social Work Health Check e 2019

CITY OF  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
COUNCIL

Our mission:  
Working as one to  
serve our city

Page 61

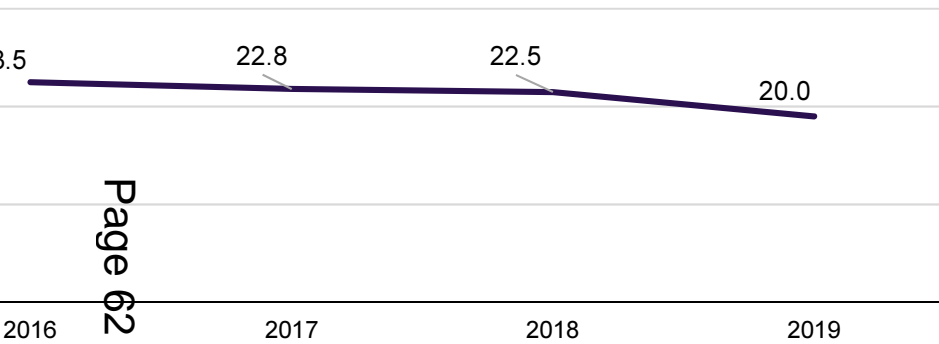




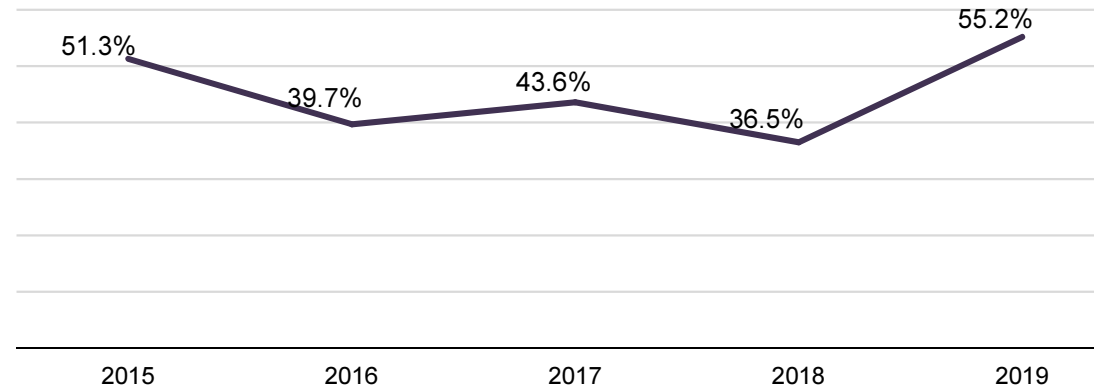
# Children's Social Work Health Check 2019

## Effective Workload Management

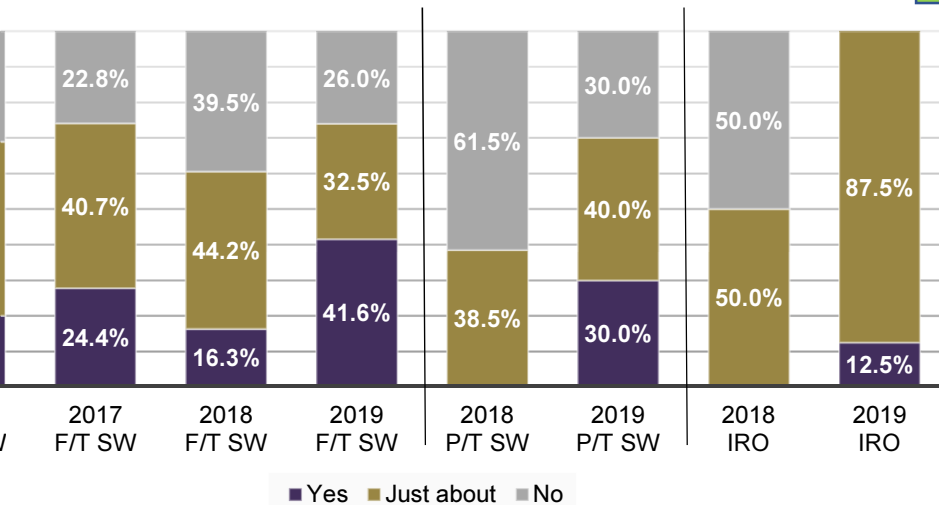
Average no. of CYP/cases held



% of people never, rarely or occasionally feeling stressed

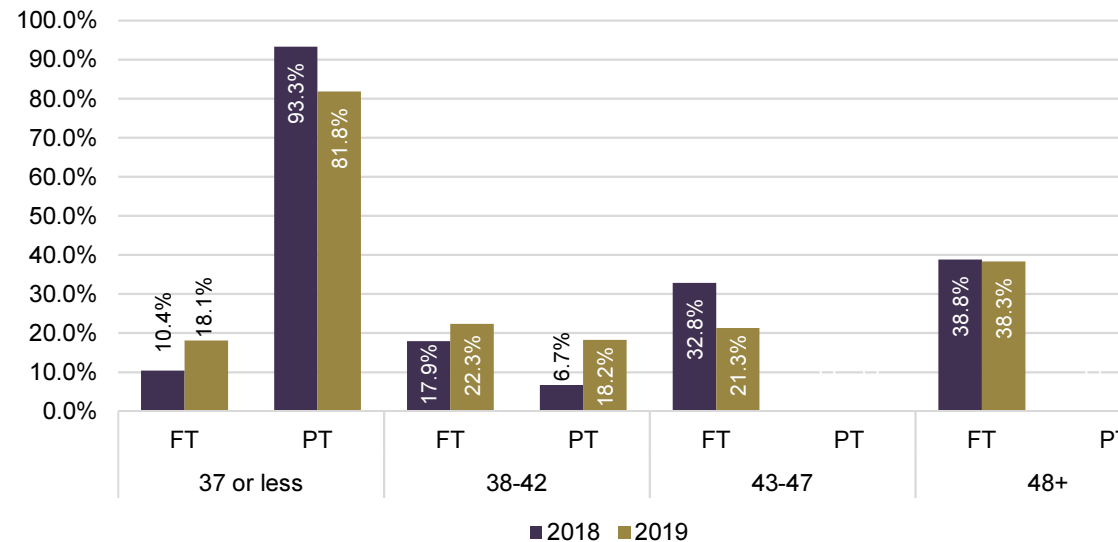


Caseload / No. CYP Manageability\*



prior to 2019, the question referred to caseload rather than number of people

No. hours worked per average week\*

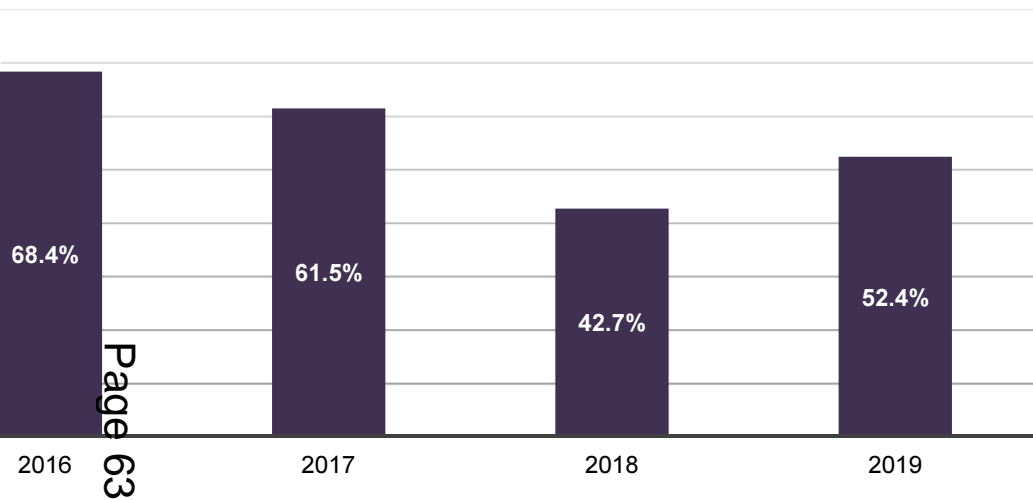


\* Breakdown for years prior to 2018 not available

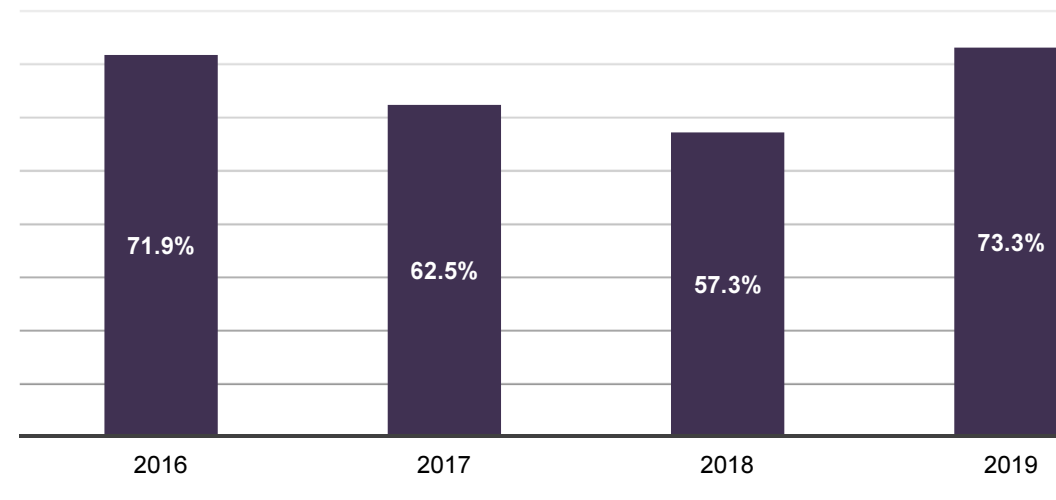
# Children's Social Work Health Check 2019

## Effective Workload Management / Having the Right Tools for the Job / Healthy Workplace

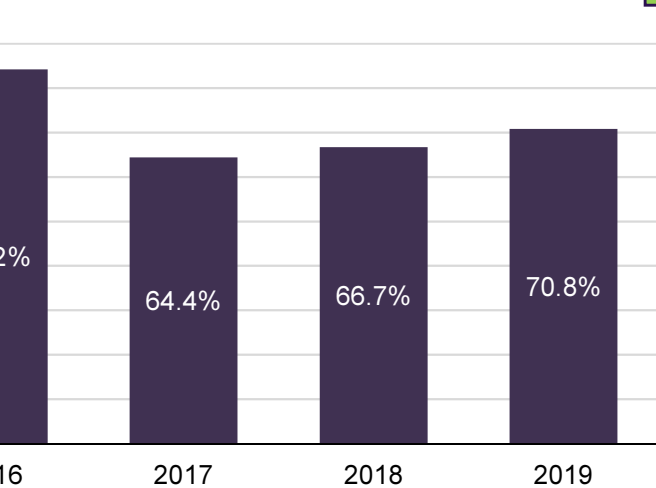
% receiving regular monthly supervision 



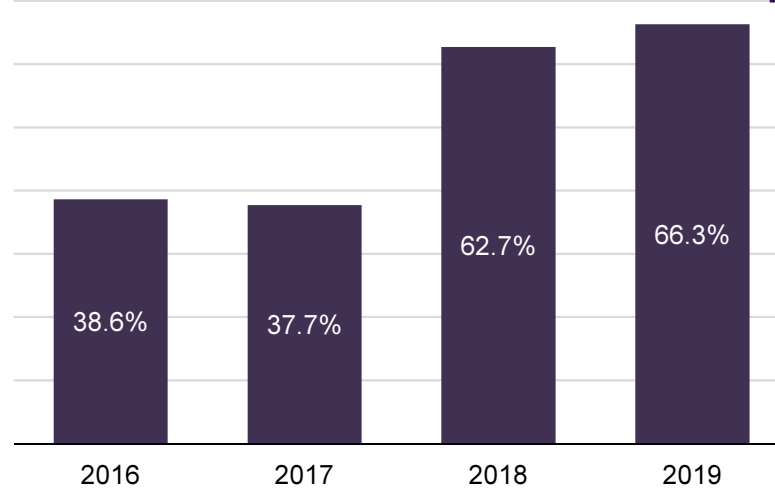
% satisfied with quality of supervision



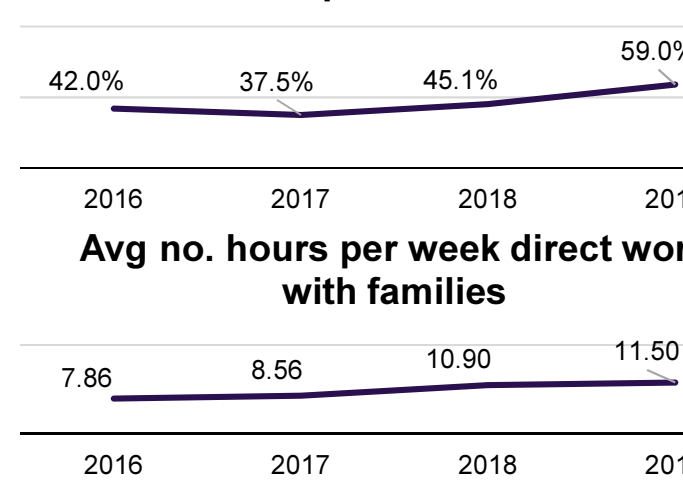
% satisfied with line manager/supervisor support 



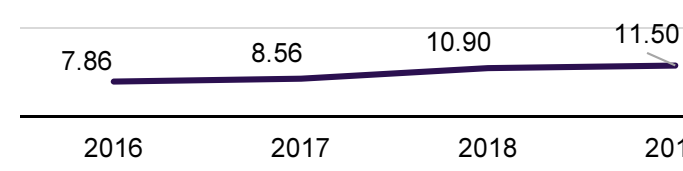
% accessing articles/research 



% who have had an observation of practice



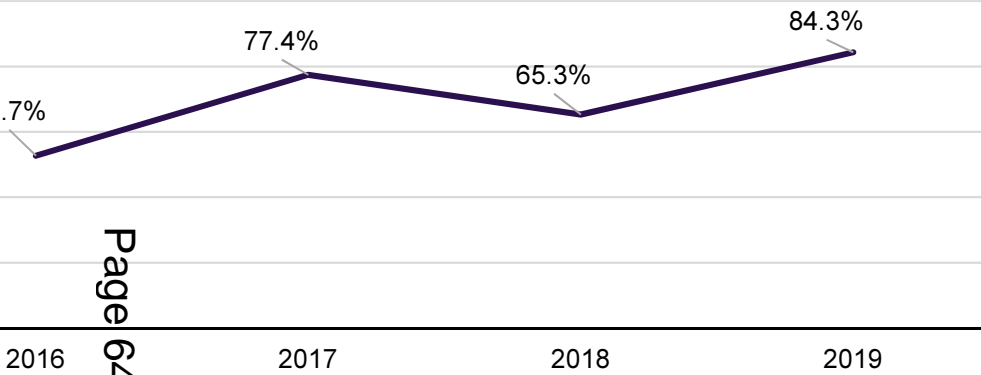
Avg no. hours per week direct work with families



# Children's Social Work Health Check 2019

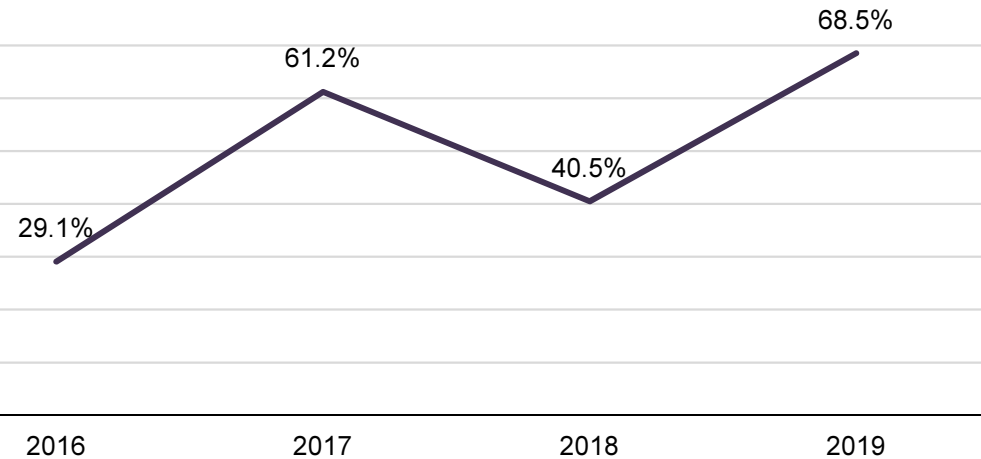
## Using the Right Tools for the Job / Effective Service Delivery

**% feel communication between management and frontline staff effective and appropriate**

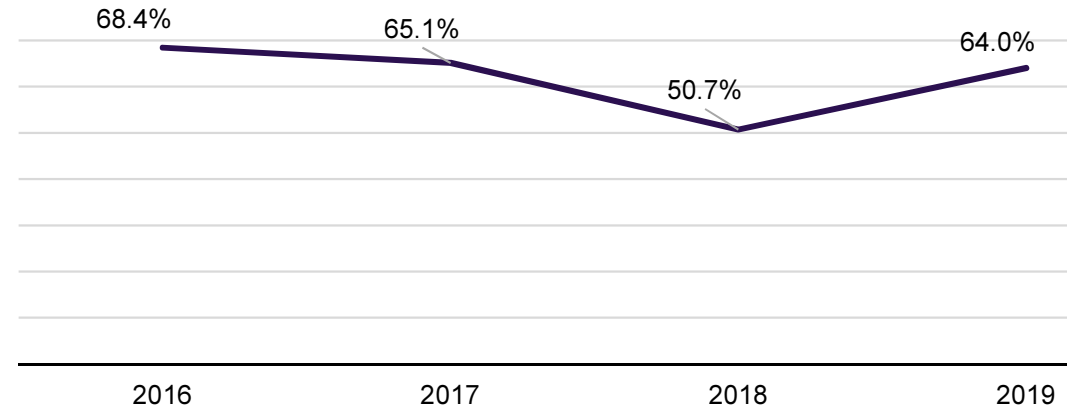


Page 64

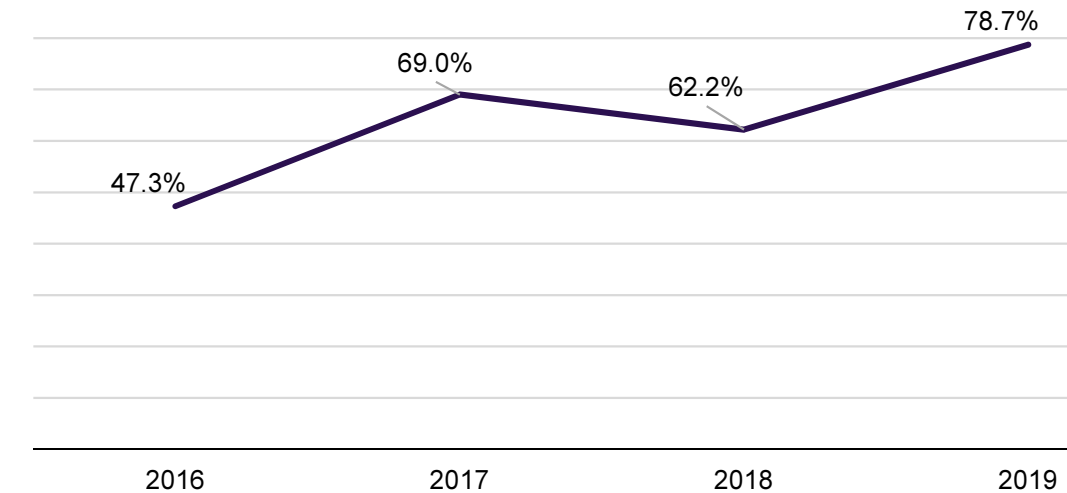
**% planning to stay with the council in next 12 months**



**% satisfied with learning opportunities**



**% feel proud to work for CWC**



**Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel – Draft Work Programme 2019-20**

The Panel will have responsibility for scrutiny functions as they relate to: -

Children in need/child protection, Looked after children, Early help 0-5, Early help 5-18, Youth offending, Children’s commissioning, School planning and resources and Standards and vulnerable pupils.

| Date of Meeting   | Item Description                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Lead Report Author                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Notes |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| 25 September 2019 | Cabinet Member Briefing - Cllr John Reynolds<br><br>SEND Self – Evaluation<br><br>Early Years Update – Outcome of Peer Review<br><br>Children’s Social Work Health check<br><br>Children’s Workforce Health Check 2019 | Adrian Leach<br>Head of Special Educational Needs and Disability<br><br>Amanda Newbold,<br>Senior School Improvement Advisor<br><br>Louise Haughton, Principal Social Worker<br><br>Louise Haughton, Principal Social Worker |       |
| 15 October 2019   | Children & Young People Positive Engagement Strategy (pre-decision scrutiny)                                                                                                                                           | Andrew Wolverson, Head of Service People                                                                                                                                                                                     |       |

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                               |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                  | <p>Transforming Children's Services Programme</p> <p>Cabinet Member Briefing – Cllr Michael Hardacre</p> <p>Headstart Sustainability (tbc)</p>                                                                                                               | <p>Andrew Wolverson, Head of Service People</p> <p>Ann Beach, Programme Manager</p>                                                                                             |                                                                                                                               |
| 27 November 2019 | <p>Children's Social Care Self-Evaluation Refresh 2019/20</p> <p>Draft Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2020 -2021</p> <p>School Organisation Review - Primary and Secondary School</p> <p>Wolverhampton Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements</p> | <p>Louise Haughton, Principal Social Worker</p> <p>Claire Nye, Director of Finance</p> <p>Bill Hague, Head of School Organisation</p> <p>Dawn Willams, Head of Safeguarding</p> | Briefing on a review of children and adults safeguarding arrangements in line with guidance set out in Working Together 2018. |
| 22 January 2020  | <p>Culture of Belonging (school exclusions)</p> <p>Update on alternative education provision and Pupil Referral Units</p>                                                                                                                                    | <p>Robert Hart, Head of Service Inclusion Support</p> <p>Adrian Leach<br/>Head of Special Educational Needs and Disability</p>                                                  |                                                                                                                               |

|               |                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                               |  |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|               | Unregistered independent schools and out of school settings                              | Amanda Newbold, Senior School Improvement Advisor, and Dawn Williams (Head of Safeguarding) Mark Heywood, Headteacher, The Royal – to be invited as a witness |  |
| 18 March 2020 | Review of Early Intervention and Prevention<br><br>School Improvement Report Annual Plan | Alison Montgomery, Head of Strengthening Families People<br><br>Amanda Newbold, Senior School Improvement Advisor                                             |  |

**Potential Future Items: -**

1. Apprenticeship and youth unemployment – Angela McKeever
2. Supporting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children briefing paper – Alison Hind

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