

CITY OF  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
COUNCIL

# Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

13 January 2021

**Time** 6.00 pm **Public Meeting?** YES **Type of meeting** Scrutiny  
**Venue** Microsoft Teams Meeting

## 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 Paul Sweet  
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar

### 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

Copies of other agendas and reports are available from:

**Website** <http://wolverhampton.moderngov.co.uk/>  
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# Agenda

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

*Item No.*     *Title*

**1            Welcome and Introductions**

[The Chair to welcome everyone to the meeting. The Scrutiny Officer will then read out a list of those invited to the meeting to confirm who is in attendance.]

**2            Meeting procedures to be followed**

[The Chair will explain how the meeting will proceed, how questions are to be asked and any matters of meeting etiquette.]

### MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

**3            Apologies**

**4            Declarations of interest**

**5            Minutes of the previous meeting ( 11 November 2020 ) (Pages 3 - 12)**

[To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record]

**6            Matters arising**

[To consider any matters arising from the minutes]

### DISCUSSION ITEMS

**7            Spotlight Review - Safeguarding the most vulnerable (Pages 13 - 28)**

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

**8            Children's Social Care Self Evaluation (Pages 29 - 70)**

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

**9            Welfare Rights Briefing (Pages 71 - 76)**

[Alison Hinds, Deputy Director, Children's Social Care and Helen Winfield, Head of Community Financial Support to present report]

**10          Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel 2019 20 - Draft Work Programme (Pages 77 - 86)**

[Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, to present report]

## Attendance

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

Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur  
Cllr Beverley Momenabadi  
Cllr Rita Potter (Chair)  
Cllr Clare Simm  
Cllr Udey Singh  
Cllr Rashpal Kaur  
Cllr Sohail Khan (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Paul Sweet

### Co-opted Members

Cyril Randles Church of England – Diocese of Lichfield Representative  
Syed Naqvi and David Omoehiomwan - Wolverhampton Youth Council

### Employees

Earl Piggott-Smith  
Julia Cleary  
James Barlow  
Emma Bennett  
Robert Hart

Martin Stevens  
Alison Shannon

Scrutiny Officer  
Systems and Scrutiny Manager  
Senior Accounting Officer  
Director of Children and Adult Services  
Head of Service - Inclusion and  
Empowerment  
Scrutiny Officer  
Chief Accountant

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

*Item No.*      *Title*

### 1      **Welcome and Introductions**

Cllr Rita Potter, Chair, welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting and advised it was being live streamed to the press and public. Cllr Potter advised that she was not expecting any exempt or restricted items on the agenda. A recording of the meeting would be available for viewing on the Council's website at a future date.

### 2      **Meeting procedures to be followed**

Cllr Potter explained the protocol to be followed during the meeting for asking questions and reminded everyone that microphones should be muted and cameras off, unless they have been invited to speak.

Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, invited all attendees to introduce themselves to confirm they were present at the meeting.

3 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from the following member of the panel:

Cllr John Rowley

4 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

5 **Minutes of the previous meeting (9.9.2020)**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9.9.2020 be approved as a correct record.

6 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

7 **Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-2022 to 2023-2024**

James Barlow, Finance Business Partner, presented the report and referred the panel to recommendations asking for comments on the draft budget medium term financial strategy and also the budget issues relevant to the remit of the panel. The comments will be included in a report to Scrutiny Board after they have been approved by the Chair and Vice Chair as part of the response to the annual budget scrutiny for their consideration.

The Finance Business Partner outlined the key parts of the draft budget medium term financial strategy report budget 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 and stated the Council has a legal requirement to set a balanced budget each year.

The Council was able to set a balanced budget for 2020-2021 without the use of General reserves which was approved by Council on the 4 March 2020 and at that time it was noted that budget reductions totalling £15.5 million were required in 2021-2022 of £15.5 million rising to around £20 million over the medium term to 2023-2024.

The Finance Business Partner commented that the budget was prepared prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has had a major impact on Council.

The Finance Business Partner outlined details of the net revenue expenditure budget for the Council was £248.2 million for the 2020-2021 and the report outlined the budgets for those services relevant to the remit of the panel and referred to the chart which gave a breakdown of annual expenditure.

The Finance Business Partner commented on the various one-off grants the Council has received to date to support the costs of Covid-19 and that these grants were considered to sufficient to support the costs in the short-term with a small shortfall of £324,000 (2020-2021). This figure does not include costs arising from the second national lockdown and further restrictions.

The Finance Business Partner commented on the main assumptions underpinning the report and the expectations of future government announcements in December 2020 about any additional funding that will be given to local authorities to help meet costs associated with second lockdown.

The Finance Business Partner outlined the estimated updated budget deficit without the impact of Covid-19 was £4.5 million in 2021-2022. However, if the Council does not receive funding from the government to cover costs pressures and lost income relating to Covid-19 then the budget deficit is estimated to be in the region of £23.2 million for 2021-2022, rising to £40 million over the medium-term period to 2023-2024. In the event that Government do not provide sufficient funding to support these pressures, the Council would need to undertake a fundamental review of all services to identify savings would be needed to set a balanced budget.

The Finance Business Partner commented on the expenditure and income figures detailed in the report for the service.

Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services, commented on the strategic vision for supporting children and young people within the City and the priorities for the service. The panel were briefed on the publication of the Relighting Our City recovery plan. The plan details the response by the Council to the challenges to the City arising from the pandemic. The panel were also briefed on specific areas of work aimed at creating and promoting more opportunities for children and young people in line with published strategic priorities.

The panel were invited to give feedback to Cabinet on the Draft Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2021-2022 to 2023-2024.

The panel queried the Council's approach to commercialisation and the work being done to boost social value contracts and encouraging the use of local services and local businesses to help retain more spending within the City.

The panel also queried the Council's procurement strategy and in particular work done with neighbouring authorities to negotiate better value when contracting for services or goods.

The Director of Children's Services commented on the contracting work undertaken regionally and sub-regionally to procure and commission services to help reduce costs, for example, there is regional framework for residential placements for children and young people. In addition, there is also a regional framework for foster placements and supported accommodation for care leavers which is helping to reduce costs. The Director of Children's Services gave other examples of joint work being done with neighbouring authorities to reduce costs.

The panel queried the impact of the recent announcement about the vaccine on the future assumptions about the budget challenges detailed in the report. The Finance Business Partner commented that impact on current budget assumptions will depend how the vaccine programme is rolled out and other linked factors. The Council will continue modelling work based on different scenarios of the Government's response to Covid-19 when assessing the impact on future finances and specifically a decision by Government about whether it will fully fund the additional costs resulting from Covid-19. The service will continue to monitor policy changes in relation to Covid-19 or Government policy and will adjust the budget assumptions as necessary. At the date of drafting the Council is waiting for a decision on future Government grants to local authorities, which is expected in December 2020.

The panel queried the possibility of using Council reserves to meet the budget shortfall. Alison Shannon, Chief Accountant, commented that the Council is confident

of being able to manage the projected budget shortfall of £4.5 million due to work being done to identify efficiencies. However, the projected shortfall with Covid-19 of £23.2 million for 2021-2022 would need a fundamental review of all services.

The Chief Accountant commented that the key cost pressure is the impact of Covid-19 on the Council was the reduction in income, particularly in the collection of council tax and business rates. The use of reserves is a last resort and the Council is working hard to avoid the need to consider this option.

**Resolved:**

The panel agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

- 8 **Outcome from Wolverhampton Youth Council Survey ( report to follow)**  
Syed Naqvi and David Omoehiomwan, representing Wolverhampton Youth Council, presented the key findings of the survey of young people and their experiences of education during the first lockdown. Syed outlined the challenges to collecting survey responses during the Covid 19 restrictions. The findings are based on responses from 344 young people. The majority of responses were received from young people in Year 9 to Years 11.

The survey was promoted to secondary schools during a five-week period. The survey focused on the educational experiences of home education of young people during the first national lockdown. Young people were asked to comment on their experiences of interactive home learning and to make suggestions that would improve their experience in the future.

Syed and David commented on the list of recommendations for future home learning during a lockdown. The importance of interaction with the schoolteacher in offering emotional and educational support was highlighted as being important issue for young people. The survey highlighted the range of difficulties reported when working remotely, for example, young people lacking the necessary equipment at home such as laptops, printers and microphones needed to take part in online teaching sessions. An issue highlighted in the survey was the need for young people to get consistent feedback from teachers and this was a recommendation to improve online teaching experience in the future.

The panel thanked both presenters for their report and supported the recommendations for the future of home learning during a lockdown or where they need to work from home. The panel were invited to comment on the presentation.

The panel queried the reasons why young people surveyed were having difficulties in contacting their teacher. The Director of Children's Services commented that national guidance has been issued to schools since September 2020 about the requirement to develop a remote a learning plan. All schools in Wolverhampton have completed their plans. The service has also worked with schools to quality assure their remote learning plans. In view of the survey findings this issue will be discussed with schools to share their experiences of what has been learnt from young people about what worked and what didn't during lockdown and how we can enhance and highlight good practice in remote learning going forward.

The Director of Children's Services commented on the range of work done to keep as many pupils as possible in school, which is a priority for the service and the ongoing conversations with individual schools around lockdown. There is agreement that teaching is best when it is done face-to-face and that some subjects cannot be taught remotely. The service is working really closely with schools to make sure that when young people are sent home to self-isolate that as much as possible a positive learning experience for them.

Resolved

1. The panel agreed to support the recommendations from the survey.
2. The panel suggested a further survey should be done in near future to assess progress in the areas highlighted as areas of concern and presented to a future meeting of the panel.

9

### **SEND Self-Evaluation**

Rob Hart, Head of Service Inclusion, presented the report on Wolverhampton's self-evaluation of services for special educational needs and disabilities in preparation for an inspection by Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in 2021. In preparation for the planned inspection detailed work has been done to complete a self-evaluation exercise to identify areas of strength and for development as part of Wolverhampton's process of continuous improvement. The current self-evaluation was signed off by members of SEND Partnership board in August 2020.

The inspection will evaluate how effectively the Council and other local partner agencies in the local area are meeting their respective responsibilities to children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The Head of Service Inclusion outlined work done since the five year SEND Strategy was drafted in response to the SEND reforms. The Head of Service Inclusion presented a short video to summarise the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and to set out the range of work being done in Wolverhampton to achieve the priorities detailed in the SEND strategy.

The Head of Service Inclusion commented on the findings of carer and parents and the work done to help children with educational needs and disabilities and their families to access the right level of support needed. The aim is to achieve change by talking and listening to people and help children and young people to live ordinary lives and take part in everyday social and leisure activities. The findings from a survey highlighted the need for more social and leisure options for young people and to overcome barriers due to issues such as the lack of transportation and financial challenges.

The Head of Service Inclusion commented on the importance of young people being able to access fun activities.

The Head of Service Inclusion commented on another finding from the survey which identified areas in need of improvement such as education support employment opportunities.



The number of children with special educational needs is increasing and this is predicted to increase in the future. There is concern about the number of children in this group who have excluded from school population. There was also concern about the number of young people in the criminal justice system and in care and child protection plans. There is a commitment from members of the Partners in Education Health to promote inclusion and maximise opportunities for children and young people to become more independent with a focus on abilities and disabilities. Details about the Wolverhampton Local Offer document is available online.

The Head of Service Inclusion referred to the video presentation which set out the some of the challenges and also the Council's priorities in relation to special educational needs and disabilities in the City. The inspection of the local area's effectiveness will not focus on any particular service and will consider how effective how partner organisations are working together to implement the SEND reforms introduced in 2015. The review will also include assessing the work of health providers and commissioners and also public health.

Wolverhampton is one of only two areas in the West Midlands who are still waiting to be inspected. The Head of Service Inclusion advised the panel that the document is part of our preparation for the inspection and highlighted the importance of having a self-evaluation of the service.

The Head of Service Inclusion offered reassurance to the panel that the necessary work has been done to prepare for inspection and that there is shared understanding among partners of our strengths and also areas for development. There is also a commitment to drive improvements forward.

Cllr Dr Mike Hardacre, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, emphasised the importance of work done to prepare for a joint inspection by CQC and OFSTED during 2021. The Cabinet Member advised the panel that EHCPs are regularly reviewed and offered reassurance of a commitment to get children and young people the right provision and support at an early stage. The Cabinet Member suggested the reporting the findings of the inspection report when published should be presented to a future meeting of the panel.

The panel welcomed the report and supported the work done to prepare for the inspection.

Resolved:

The panel agreed to note the report.

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### **Spotlight Review - Education**

Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services, presented a report which gave an update on work done since the briefing giving to the panel in September 2020 on education and children services.

The Director of Children's Services advised the panel that previously all schools and education centres were closed at the start of the Covid 19 pandemic but did remain open to vulnerable children and also those of key workers. The restrictions were relaxed over time before schools were allowed to reopen fully at the start of the new term in September. All Wolverhampton schools have remained open since the start



of term. The Director of Children's Services commented on the efforts to encourage and support joint working during lockdown among schools which has helped to support education provision for all children and young people across the City.

This effort has been supported by a number of working groups which have focused on key issues such as developing arrangements for baseline assessments.

The education service continues to regularly engage with education providers and teachers who have attended engagement sessions. In addition, the previous weekly Headteachers bulletin is now published twice weekly to update schools on any changes to national guidance. This has been a joint effort involving the work of colleagues in Education Services, Public Health, Health and Safety, HR.

The Director of Children's Services praised the response from schools and the shared commitment from partners across the City to work together to keep children and young people in education as long as it is safe to do so. The Director of Children's Services commented on the school attendance rates and reported that average attendance is now about 90 per cent, which is very encouraging. There have been increasing number of Covid-19 cases in schools which has affected attendance rates, but this is still largely in line with the national attendance rates. There is further analysis work to be done on the attendance data. The Director of Children's Services commented on the concern among some parents who remain cautious about sending their children to school if they're displaying any kind of symptoms whether that is a general cough or cold or similar to the signs of a possible Covid-19 infection.

The service is working closely with those families to assure them about the safety measures which have been introduced and to encourage them to bring their children to school. The Director of Children's Services commented on impact of school attendance after the change in Government guidance to parents who are assessed as being clinically extremely vulnerable.

To support parents to bring their children to school the School Attendance Team have been given extra resources to work with families in supportive manner, which has worked well. There is a reluctance from the service to act against parents who have concerns and the approach will be to continue working with them on building confidence in the safety measures that have been introduced in schools. The service has also used social media sites to target certain communities to get key messages to support parents to bring their children to school. The Director of Children's Services advised the panel that school attendance is mandatory, unless a child is clinically extremely vulnerable.

There has been a significant increase in parents choosing elective home education due to concerns about Covid 19 since September. The increase is similar to the number seen in other areas of the country. The Council has been advised that following the end of previous consultation on changes in home school education policies the Government are expected publish new guidance.

The Director of Children's Services commented on the range of support available to schools and colleges to help vulnerable learners in addition to specialist support given to children with special educational needs and disabilities who might experience the most difficulty in returning to school. The Director of Children's

Services advised the panel that the Wellbeing for Education Return training programme is being rolled out to other schools after a trial.

The Director of Children's Services commented on the arrangements for managing outbreaks of Covid 19 in schools. The total number of positive cases in education settings has stabilised. The work has been supported by Public Health colleagues who offer a telephone helpline for schools in addition support from DfE.

The Director of Children's Services commented on the findings from a Digital Divide survey which highlighted a key issue of lack of access to devices. The service is working with colleagues across the Council to address the issue of the digital divide for children. The findings from the survey will be used to target support available to young people and to inform the approach to remote learning. The service monitors the situation when a school bubble has had to self-isolate and ordered laptops from DfE. A self-evaluation tool to support schools in monitoring and evaluating remote learning has been developed.

The Director of Children's Services gave a summary of the range of projects aimed at helping young people gain skills as part of work done to reduce levels of youth unemployment.

The Director of Children's Services briefed the panel on the decision made by the Council to provide free school meals during October half-term to approximately 16,000 children and young people.

A local strategy for delivering free school meals will be developed for Christmas holiday. The Director of Children's Services praise the contribution of schools to the success of the free school scheme by either issuing vouchers or buying food for families, who responded at short notice.

The panel queried the increase in the number of parents choosing to home educate their children and also when new Government guidance was expected. The Director of Children's Services responded that the Council is making representations to the DfE of the need for a policy change and comments submitted as part of earlier consultation which set out a number of options being considered at the time. The issue of home education has also been raised by Association of the Directors of Children's Services who also have concerns about the current policy. A key proposal in the consultation was the introduction of a statutory register of children being home educated. Wolverhampton already has a register of parents or carers who are home educating their children and can follow up any issues of concern.

The panel queried the impact of Head Teachers Bulletin and how effective it was in getting key messages out to schools. The Director of Children's Services agreed to follow this up with schools and report back findings to a future meeting of the panel.

Cllr Dr Mike Hardacre, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, wanted to formally praise the work of led by the Director of Children's Services to ensure that free school meals and vouchers were provided over half term at short notice

The panel welcomed the comprehensive report and congratulated the service on the work done.

**Resolved:**

The panel agreed to note the report.

**11 Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together Partnership - Annual Report 2019/20**

Andrew Wolverson, Head of Children's Strategy and Partnerships, introduced the report and explained the changes made to the arrangements for presenting the safeguarding annual report. The Head of Children's Strategy and Partnerships advised that there is no longer an independent chair of the Safeguarding Board. The Executive Partnership Board is chaired by one of the three statutory partners.

The Head of Children's Strategy and Partnerships advised that Vicky Murphy was appointed as the Independent Scrutineer and will be presenting a report on the effectiveness of the partnership working arrangements during the last 12 months. Vicky Murphy explained the structure of the report and highlighted the commitment to safeguarding among members of the partnership board and also the excellent quality of the work being done every day to support the most vulnerable people in society.

The panel were invited to comment on the report.

The panel queried possible safeguarding issues for people who may be at risk but who are self-isolating and therefore not seen by other people. The Head of Children's Strategy and Partnerships responded that this issue has been highlighted in the report and added that a number of campaigns have focused on issues such as domestic violence and financial abuse to raise public awareness. This work has been supported by initiatives aimed at mobilising existing frontline services to engage with people who may not have contacted the service in the past. In addition, Health Visitors are responding to safeguarding concerns by visiting people more quickly when issues are reported.

The panel discussed the issue of examples of either distraction burglary or people visiting older people pretending to work for the Council and asking for bank details to do shopping on their behalf. The panel commented that such incidents are reported to Cllrs who raise them with the police, but they often don't find out the outcome of the complaint. The panel suggested that it would be helpful in the future to get a future report on any action that has been taken in response to such complaints. The Head of Children's Strategy and Partnerships agreed to discuss the matter with Becky Wilkinson and the Chief Inspector responsible for neighbourhood policing and report findings back to a future meeting.

The panel thanked the presenters for the report which was very comprehensive.

**Resolved:**

The panel agreed to note the report.

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

Julia Cleary, Scrutiny and Systems Manager, briefed the panel on background to the development of the work programme and invited to panel to comment on the document and also suggest new topics that could be added.

Resolved:

The panel agreed to note the report.



# Scrutiny Presentation Safeguarding the Most Vulnerable

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Agenda Item No: 7

ALISON HINDS

Deputy Director of Children's  
Social Care

- Supporting vulnerable children
- Children's Social Care Self Evaluation



# **SUPPORTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN DURING COVID 19**

# Response to Covid 19: temporary working model

- 23 March 2020, all workforce including social workers advised to work from home due to lockdown restrictions, including the MASH
- Majority of staff adapted well to agile flexible working
- All staff already had tablets or laptops and phones and adapted well to the utilisation of programmes and apps for communication
- Alternative methods to communicate with children and families were put in place

# Risk Assessments

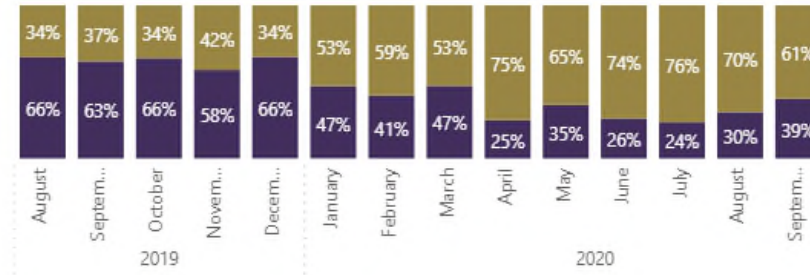
- All children known to social care risk assessed according to their need for safeguarding and their vulnerability
- All risk assessments signed off by managers and placed on file
- All children were rag rated red, amber or green according to outcome of risk assessment

- All children rag rated red continued to be seen face to face in their own home in line with statutory requirements
- All children rag rated amber and green contacted by other means of communication including TEAMS and WhatsApp
- Daily performance information provided to ensure oversight that children continued to be seen according to their risk assessment
- Regular review of risk assessments

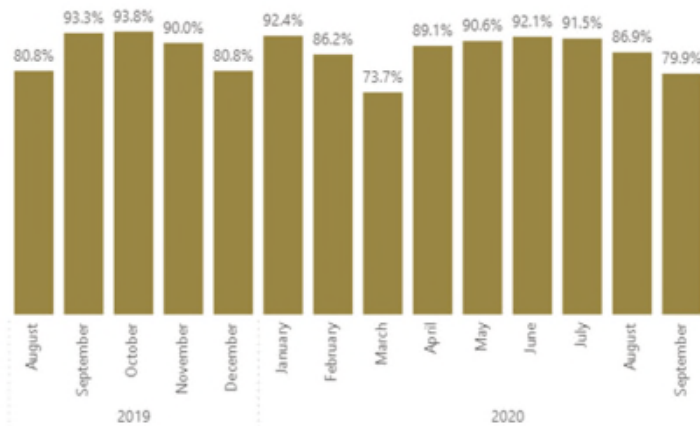
# Vulnerable children visits

Initial Visit (Visit within 5 working days of referrals form start)

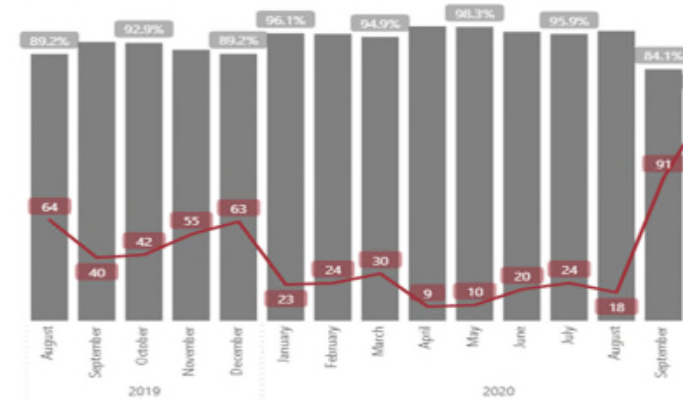
Initial Visit Pass/Fail ● Fail ● Pass



CP Visit Timescales



CYPIC Visits in Timescale



# Vulnerable children attending school

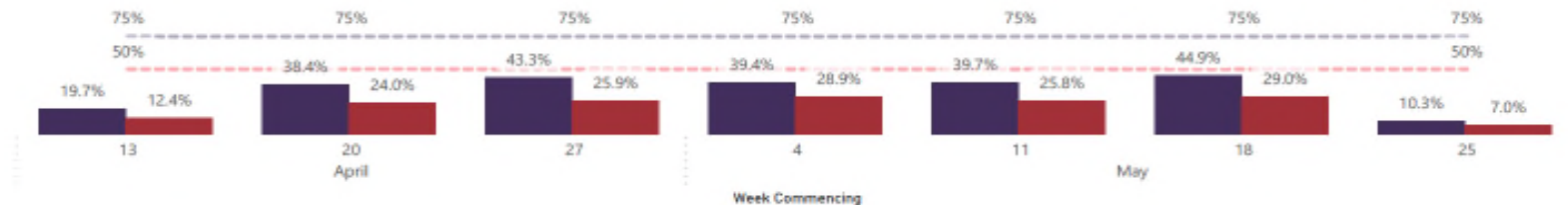
- Vulnerable children encouraged to attend school. Laptops made available for online learning where required, by DfE
- All parents of children with a social worker who were being supported at Child in Need and Child Protection written to, to encourage sending their children to school
- Children in care also regarded as vulnerable and expected to attend school
- Performance information provided to ensure monitoring of school attendance of vulnerable children



# Vulnerable children attending school – Performance Information

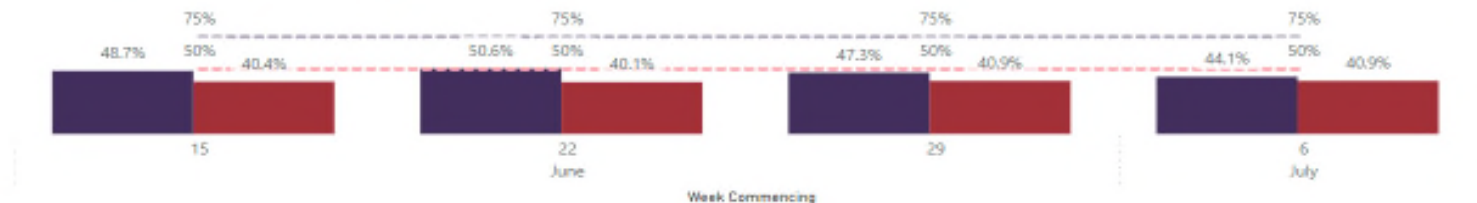
% Attendance for unique individuals each week (Count of unique individuals attending in the week divided by the total at week end)

● Red RAG School Age % ● LA Vulnerable % ● Red RAG Target ● LA Vulnerable Target



% Attendance for unique individuals each week (Count of unique individuals attending in the week divided by the total at week end)

● Red RAG School Age % ● LA Vulnerable % ● Red RAG Target ● LA Vulnerable Target



# Meetings

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- Meetings, including child in care reviews, core groups, child in need meetings, and child protection conferences, all continued using Microsoft Teams
- Found: better multi agency attendance and positive feedback, particularly from children and young people in care
- Family time for children in care continued to be supported virtually initially .Now increased opportunity for face-to-face family time with reopening of the Family Time Centre
- Adoption and fostering panels conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams

# MASH

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- Referrals to MASH saw significant decrease during early days of lockdown
- Referrals from schools decreased with most referrals being made by police
- High incidence of referrals involving domestic abuse, due to children being at home and there being more incidences of them witnessing or being involved in these incidents

# Support to care leavers

- Additional £20 per week to personal allowance in line with increased universal credit
- Face to face visits continued to young people living alone
- All young people who turn 18 given option of remaining in placement and supported by social worker

# Children in Care

- Stability of placements improved
- Particularly internal foster placements
- K2I remained open to accommodate children in care
- Participation groups continued virtually
- Children continued to move to adoptive families subject to risk assessments
- Increased use of early permanence placements
- Health assessments undertaken virtually: positive feedback

# Change to statutory guidance

- April 2020 issuing of national temporary guidance:
- Corona Virus (Covid19) guidance for children's social care services
- Supported the temporary model already implemented
- Utilisation of amended guidance agreed by Director of Children's services
- 25 September 2020 further updated guidance issued reducing use of flexibilities



# Additional support

- Extension of Stay Safe Be Kind helpline to families experiencing financial and emotional vulnerabilities
- Pathways to support developed according to need
- Free school meal vouchers provided to eligible children during summer holidays and October half term
- Winter Grant received to support families experiencing food and fuel poverty as a result of Covid 19.
- Free school meals vouchers to benefits eligible families and others experiencing poverty over Christmas

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# Wolverhampton Children and Young People's Self-Evaluation 2020-21 Mid year review November 2020

## COVID -19

The period covered for this mid-year review is April-September 20. During this period we have responded to the impact caused by the national pandemic, Covid -19 :

- All staff have been supported to work from home since the national lockdown on 23 March.
- All children open to social care were immediately assessed to ascertain the need for ongoing face to face visits, based upon safeguarding and vulnerability
- A temporary delivery model was implemented(supported by amendments to regulations ) ensuring contact was maintained with all children and families, including utilisation of virtual methods such as WhatsApp
- Face to face visits continued for children, young people and families where the outcome of assessment required this
- Performance management information was developed to supported oversight of visits including frequency and type
- As restrictions were lifted all children were seen face to face
- Vulnerable children were actively supported to attend school
- Although face to face family time was initially suspended this was reintroduced once restrictions were lifted .
- Meetings such as CiN meetings core groups , conferences and child in care reviews have been held virtually utilising TEAMS. This remains in place

## ECLIPSE

A new electronic children's record has been implemented, successfully going live on 21 September .Eclipse enables the whole of the child's journey to be recorded on one system, from early intervention to children in care and care leavers . The migration of data and launch of the new system only impacted on a small number of performance reports during September.

All staff were trained virtually in its usage, and roll out has been supported by champions in each area.



## The City Of Wolverhampton

The City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to ensuring children and young people have the best start in life and as such this is a central component of the Council Plan 2019-2024. There are 263,357 people who live in the City, 62,276 of these are children under the age of 18.

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

The number of children receiving formal support has decreased across all areas of Children's Social Care. This report will evidence an increase in good frontline practice, resulting in good outcomes for children. We hope the impact of this is that more families can enjoy family life independent of state intervention.

### Children receiving support as at end of September 2020

575 Children and young people in care  
316 Children who have a Child Protection Plan  
710 Children who have a Child in Need Plan (Oct. Figure)



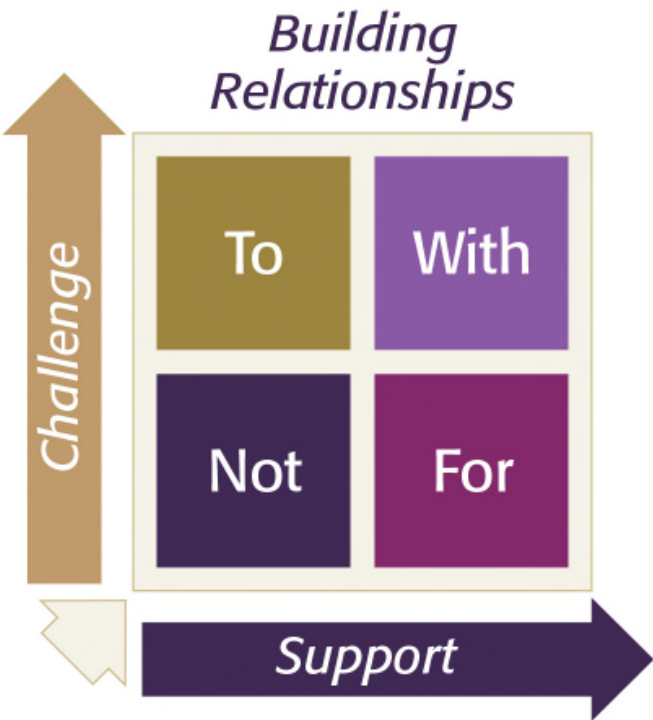
### Our Values for Children Services

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

The Children and Young People’s services began adopting a restorative approach to practice in November 2016. All frontline practitioners receive three days training in the approach.

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

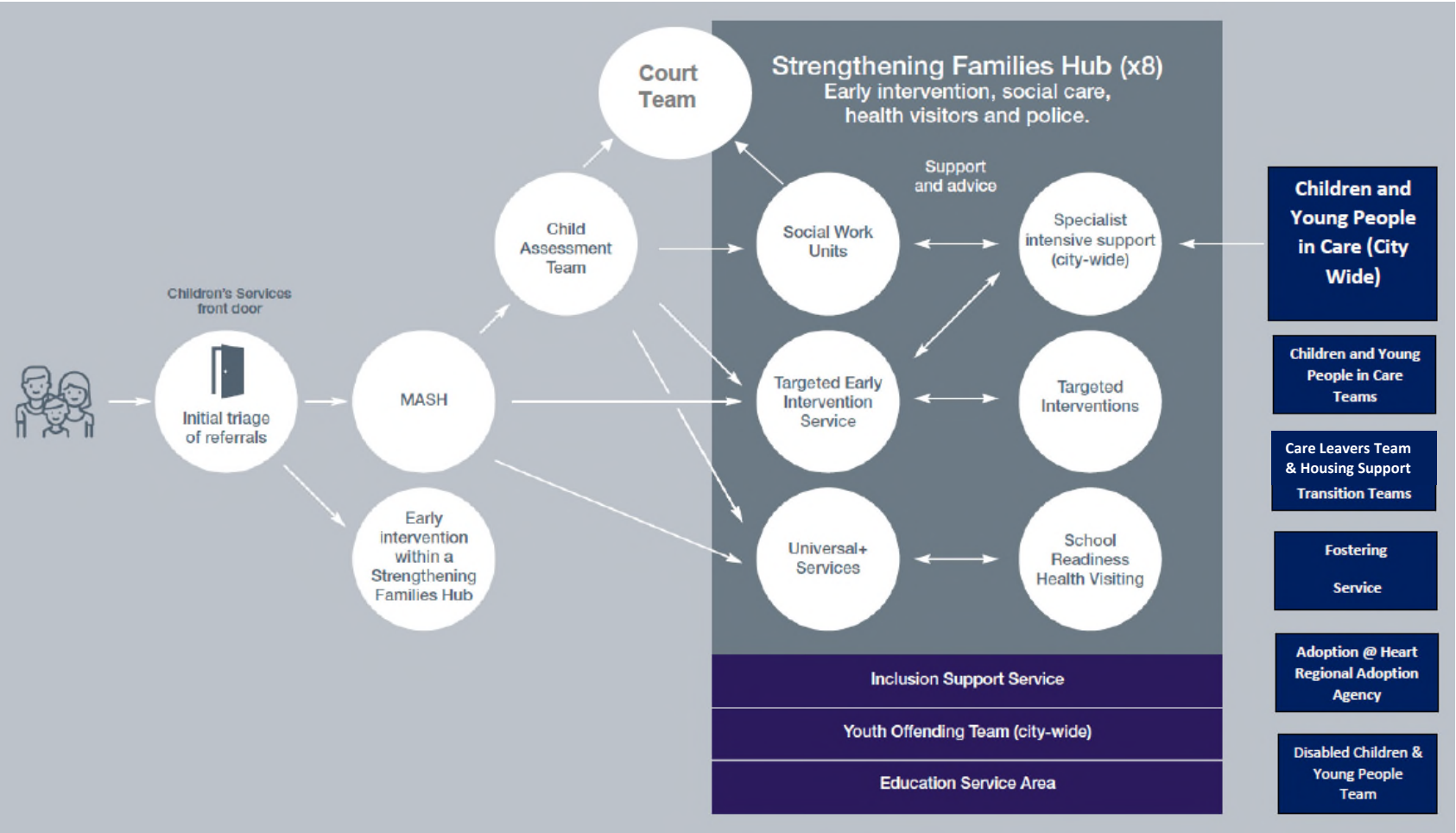
Restorative Practice is a high support, high challenge model that supports practitioners to be clear about concerns and set clear expectations, whilst providing support to help families achieve these goals.



All new employees receive training in Restorative Practice. There are good examples of employees using the approach in family meetings to help family members understand how their actions impact on their loved ones. For some this has been effective in increasing the family's motivation to change. Many employees also use restorative solution circles to generate ideas to work creatively with children and families where they feel the plan has not been effective in supporting change.



# City of Wolverhampton Children and Young People's Service Operating Model



**City of Wolverhampton Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, Report published: 31 March 2017**



**Inspection Findings**

Children’s Services in Wolverhampton are Good

Children who need help and protection	Requires improvement to be good
Children looked after and achieving permanence	Good
Adoption performance	Good
Experience and progress of care leavers	Good
Leadership, management and governance	Good

Since the Inspection, an Ofsted focused visit was undertaken in September 2018. This focussed on Assessments , Children in Need and Child Protection Plans. This highlighted the following areas for development; progress against these areas is embedded within the main body of this self-assessment.

1. In locality team hubs, many assessments did not sufficiently describe the changes and emerging needs being experienced by children and families.
2. Plans were not sufficiently effective in reducing needs. They did not adapt to changing circumstances. Actions to address children’s unmet needs were not sufficiently clear or specific. nor did they include achievable actions and outcomes.
3. Social workers in some locality teams experienced excessively high caseloads.
4. While supervision was regular in locality team hubs, and social workers valued the support they received, supervision was not being used effectively to improve practice. Supervision was not sufficiently detailed or reflective.

## Children and Young people get the best start in life Plan on a page for 2020-2021

### Strengthening families where children are at risk (Enables children to remain safely within families)

- Increase the use and engagement with family group conferencing to prevent family breakdown and reduce reliance on services.
- To embed regular reviews of family time arrangements ~~in order to~~ ensure family time is meaningful and a positive experience for young people
- Embed the new in-house children's home (Key to Inspiration) to reduce the number of young people in external residentials and improve placement stability for children in care.
- Implement the contextual safeguarding action plan across the city ~~in order to~~ improve safeguarding responses across the partnership where risks are extra-familial
- Establish and cement the utilisation of the co-production hub as a base for participation and co-production with children across the city. To include the Youth Council, the Children in Care Council, the Care Leaver Forum, The House Project and the care leaver drop in.
- Ensure all children in care have an understanding of their heritage and identity
- Embedding of Regional Adoption Agency Adoption@ Heart
- Increase the opportunities for children and young people to be supported outside of the relationship with their social worker
- Improve timeliness of completion and submission of social care advice for EHCP assessments for children in care, and children open to the Disabled Children and Young People's team
- Review the Domestic Violence Perpetrators' Programme and consider the development of an in-house programme that will support both male and female perpetrators
- Ensure assessment, planning, support and interventions are of good quality and demonstrates improved outcomes for children, taking into consideration any issues that arise from protected characteristics by implementing the practice improvement plan.
- Embed a learning culture within the service to ensure practitioners and managers seek support when facing difficulties and a greater level of consistency of practice at all levels.

### Strengthening families where children are at risk (Less children and young people become involved or remain involved in the youth justice system)

- Continue to embed trauma informed practice across the Youth Offending Team to support young people effected by trauma.
- Continue to develop a non-statutory 'prevention' offer within the YOT to reduce the number of first-time entrants into the youth justice system.
- Embed the Child First, Offender second approach in community referral order panels to reduce the criminalisation of children and young people in care and care leavers.

### Strengthening families where children are at risk (Children experience permanent and stable placements)

- Embed and evaluate the practice and interventions in the Power2 team
- Support the sufficiency of suitable placements for children in care
- Embedding an extended choice of housing options or young people in care and care leavers, including an internal supported lodgings programme and The House Project

### Education that fulfils potential

- Further increase the range and number of opportunities for care leavers aged 16-25 to be in education employment or training (EET)
- Oversee and coordinate delivery of the Culture of Belonging Programme to promote educational engagement of vulnerable learners
- Raising attainment and improving educational outcomes for children and young people in care, with a specific focus on Key Stage 4
- Increase the use of Early Help Assessments for children where there are issues relating to attendance or behaviour at school

### Strong resilient and healthy communities

- The universal, early help and targeted support offer is developed and communicated well to partners to ensure children and families receive effective early help by the right service at the right time.
- Support children and families at the earliest opportunity bringing in relevant and appropriate services where required. Risk is responded to appropriately and proportionately.
- Whole service review of approach to working with domestic abuse, approach to include how we are working with victim's and the use of written agreements
- Review the success of the freedom programme and consider how male victims of abuse can be supported.
- All Children who are involved with Strengthening Families [Early Intervention or Social Care] to have their needs understood and met in terms of culture, background, religion, sexual orientation, nationality and immigration status and disability
- Increase skill and strengthen practice around transitional safeguarding ~~in order to~~ build resilience for young people approaching adulthood
- Promote awareness and understanding of autism and neurodiversity and improve skills of professionals working with people with autism across the city, as part of the city's autism strategy.
- Establish mental health support team for schools.
- Develop and implement a pathway to improve support for emotionally-based school non-attendance.
- Improve the identification, assessment and planning in relation to SEN for children requiring SEN Support, so that there is greater consistency and more effective planning across agencies.

Quality Assurance

Audit Period	O	G	Total	RI	I	Total	Overall total
2018-2019	3	37	40 (40%)	43	17	60 (60%)	100
Sept 2019 (audits)	2	9	11 (40%)	15	1	16 (60%)	27
Sept 2019 (dips)	7	19	26 (65%)	11	3	14 (35%)	40
Sept 2019 (obs)	2	8	10 (91%)	0	1	1 (9%)	11
Dec 2019 (audits)	5	19	24 (64%)	12	1	13 (36%)	37
Dec 2019 (obs)	3	18	21 (91%)	2	0	2 (9%)	23
Dec 2019 (dips)	2	21	23 (62%)	14	0	14 (38%)	37
Feb 2020 (audits)	1	22	23 (85%)	4	0	4 (15%)	27
Feb 2020 (obs)	2	6	8 (100%)	0	0	0	8
June 2020 (audits)	2	10	12 (66.5%)	6	0	6 (33.5%)	18

Trajectory	Improving the number of good/outstanding audits.	The number of inadequate and RI audits is also decreasing.
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The Children and Young People’s service has significantly improved the way in which audit is undertaken across the service. Practice weeks have been introduced since September 2018. We review the model after each practice week to ensure we are getting the best from it. All senior managers including the Director of Children’s Services now spend four days over two weeks undertaking; audits alongside practitioners, observing visits, meetings and practice, and spending time with teams. This provides workers with immediate feedback, allows managers to understand how interventions are experienced by children and families first-hand ,and increases the visibility of senior managers. During June 2020 we undertook pilot practice days virtually owing to Covid-19 restrictions. This was well received by the workforce and will inform future practice weeks whilst we are in the pandemic.

## Quality Assurance

**Key areas of strength include;** social workers know their children and families well and can easily tell their stories and the purpose of our work with them, with good relationships evident .There is continued evidence of the use of strengths-based approaches. Timely permanence planning is starting early, and collaborative working between partner agencies remains strong. Child protection planning is working well with appropriate use of strengthening family and edge of care support. Children in care are experiencing increased placement stability and are participating in their reviews and planning. They are supported well in education with the appropriate use of PEPs. Care leavers have a range of support available to them and outcomes in terms of EET, and accommodation is good.

**Green shoots include;** overall, planning is good, but more work is needed to ensure needs and outcomes are clear, SMART, are child focussed and include the voice of the child. Performance data indicates planning is effective however, planning documents need strengthening. Evidencing the work we are doing with children needs to be improved to ensure all direct work is recorded and incorporated into plans. There is some evidence that management oversight could be better evidenced in some records.

**Areas for development include;** more evidence of the use of specialist assessment tools (although this is starting to improve) is required, family meetings are to be routinely implemented. Ensure all children and young people have an up to date and good quality chronology on file. Explore using other agencies to engage families/children and young people.

**A Practice Improvement Plan** is now in place for all social work teams. The plan is reviewed regularly at a range of leadership tiers including team managers meetings and the Children's Leadership Performance meeting.

Workforce

The City of Wolverhampton Council is bucking the national trend in the recruitment and retention of children’s social workers. In Wolverhampton, the picture is positive, and the numbers of permanent social workers is heading in the right direction. Wolverhampton’s vacancy rate now stands at just 15.8%. . This marks a significant improvement on March 2019 when 28% of children’s social work posts locally were unfilled.

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## School exclusions

The rate of permanent exclusion from schools in Wolverhampton has been significantly higher than the national average since 2015/6. In response to this and to more broadly promote educational engagement of vulnerable learners, we have developed the Culture of Belonging Programme, following extensive engagement with all stakeholders. This is a whole system approach which focuses on three key areas: supporting more inclusive schools; having a clear pathway to multiagency support; and ensuring there is a positive alternative for children who need it.

The Inclusion Team work closely with schools and alternative providers in the city, along with School Admissions and other key partners, to ensure that permanently excluded pupils are referred to alternative provision in a timely manner. Transitions between schools and alternative providers are supported throughout the process and excluded children, and their parents/carers, are enabled to express their wishes and feelings throughout. We have invested in increasing capacity within this team so that it can undertake more preventative work and work more closely with Strengthening Families teams. We have worked with schools to establish the Inclusion Support and Alternative Provision Panel, where pupils at risk of disengagement or exclusion are discussed and support is available, including school-to-school support, support LA services and outreach, or alternative provision.

Permanent exclusions numbers have fallen year-on-year since 2016/17, and when schools were closed in March 2020, we were at a lower level than the equivalent point of previous years.

Since 2018 there has been an increase in the proportion exclusions due to reasons related to drug, alcohol and banned items, and a reduction in exclusions due to persistent disruptive behaviour.

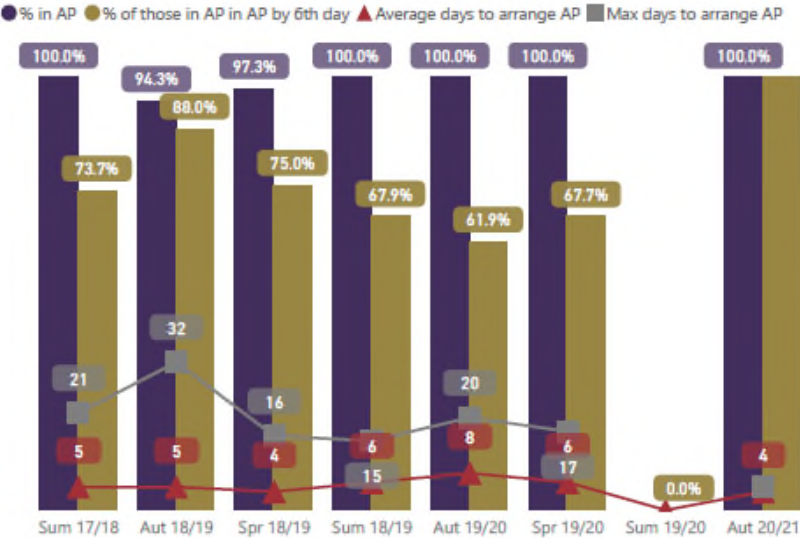
The bottom table shows numbers and impact of exclusion prevention meetings (EPM) held, by academic year. The use of EPMs has increased and shows a high degree of success, with 92% of those in 2019/20 who had one not being excluded within 3 months.

Indicator	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Primary (exc. Withdrawn/Overtured/Pending)	22	18	15	0
Secondary (exc. Withdrawn/Overtured/Pending)	104	100	64	4
Special/PRU (exc. Withdrawn/Overtured/Pending)	1	1	2	0
X-City	9	12	2	0
Pending Permanent Exclusions		3		
Withdrawn/Overtured	2/5	4/1	2/0	0/0
Average number of Days taken to arrange Provision	6	5	8	6
Fixed Period Exclusions	2464	3015	1645	164

Exclusion prevention meetings	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Meetings Held	79	105	74	4
% Meetings that did not result in Permanent Exclusion within 3 months	84%	87%	92%	100%
% Meetings but still resulted in Permanent Exclusion within 3 months	16%	13%	8%	0%
% Permanent Exclusions with no meeting within 3 months	91%	89%	93%	100%

All permanently excluded pupils are offered alternative provision, as shown in the graph below. The % of pupils offered provision by the 6th day of a permanent exclusion dropped from Autumn 2018 to Autumn 2019. This was largely due to the closure of one AP provider in the city. Since then we have worked with PRUs and other providers to improve timeliness of placing excluded pupils.

Statutory Timeliness for Permanent Exclusions



## Children Missing Education and Electively Home Educated

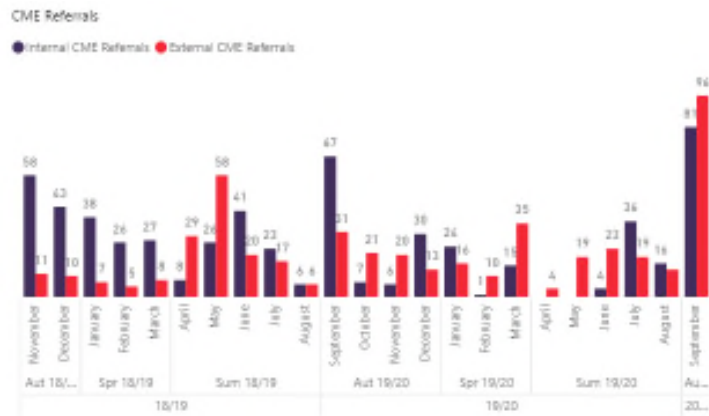
The Attendance Team conduct investigations into all children who are reported as missing from education (CME) in a timely and efficient manner. The bar graph below relates to children who have applied to a Wolverhampton school but have not started at the school after 4 weeks. School admissions are monitored and supported for these children and School Attendance Orders (SAOs) are issued where appropriate. The Attendance Team have robust systems in place to monitor CME, conducting lateral checks, making home visits where appropriate, and liaising with key partner agencies. A sharp rise in CME investigations in September 2020 was largely due to a significant number Eastern European families who returned to Eastern Europe over the summer period (likely to be linked to COVID19). It is not considered to be linked to the rise in EHE.

Since schools reopened to all pupils in September 2020 there has been a significant rise in parents electing to home educate their children. The attendance team is offering advice support and challenge to all parents who make an enquiry about EHE. Additional Education Welfare Officers have been appointed to ensure additional monitoring and support is available to EHE families and for any other attendance issues that are related to Covid - 19. Where we have concerns that the decision to home educate is not a positive one for the child, we will challenge schools.

One of the aims of the Culture of Belonging Programme is to reduce the number of pupils leaving school to become home educated. We continue to work on this, so that if there is a need for support, challenge or advice this is available before a child is off-registered.

A pathway has been developed to identify and support children with emotionally-based reasons for non-attendance at school.

The graphs below illustrate the numbers and outcomes of internal CME investigations by school term, and numbers of children who are EHE by calendar month.





## Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

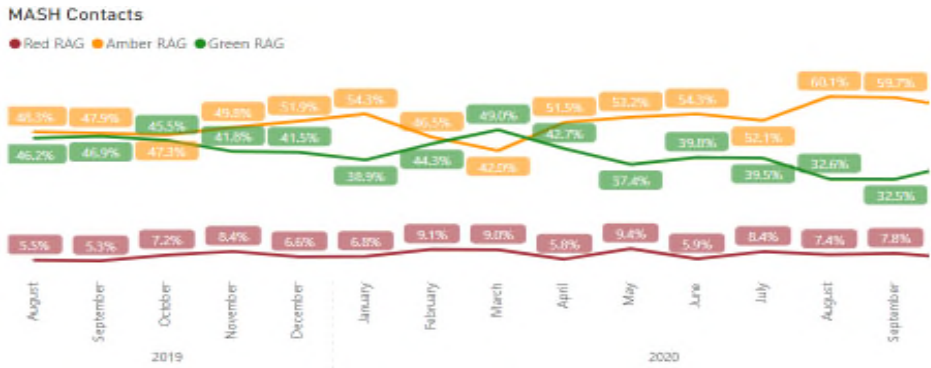
The City of Wolverhampton MASH continues to perform well. It consists of children and adult social care, early intervention, Police, Wolverhampton Homes, Recovery Near You, Probation Service, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, Black Country Partnership Foundation Trust and Education representation. Since March 2020 the MASH has continued to work virtually. Partners in the MASH are all working well as a team remotely.

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

Between March 2020 and August 2020 there were an average of 255 contacts into MASH, this is a reduction in the average number of contacts when compared to the same period the previous year (Avg. 299). This reduction is likely to have been significantly affected by Covid-19 Pandemic. September has seen an increase to 369 which is higher than the same month the previous year (320), this increase is to be expected in September but also indicates that contacts are resuming after the reduction in the summer. Since April the largest number of contact into the MASH has been from the Police (26%), this is partly due to the closure of schools prior to the summer holidays.

MASH have taken steps to become very visible within other agencies to help and discuss the contact process. Visits have been made to health service, including the 0-19 year old service, midwives, mental health services. DSL events have taken place on a quarterly basis, and meetings regularly take place with Wolverhampton Homes Police and Recovery Near You. This has helped to build positive relationships whereby threshold conversations can happen as required. Circular review systems are in place to consider any contacts which are not accepted to ensure that the family receive the right help at the right time.

MASH have been working closely with the Early Intervention teams and the Early Help Navigators to help ensure that there is support in place for partner agencies completing the Early Help Assessment to build confidence not only in the computer systems, but also in talking to parents and offering support. An Early Help Navigator for Health has been appointed to extend this good practice.



## Early Intervention

Early Intervention services are offered through eight locality based strengthening family hubs. At the end of August 2020 1051 children were being supported by Strengthening Families workers. Figures at the end of August also demonstrate that families receive support from a Strengthening Families' worker for between 52 – 153 days, this is consistent with the differing needs of the families. Early Intervention is currently working with 304 children that are open to statutory social work services at Child in Need, child protection and public law proceedings threshold; providing targeted interventions, direct work with children and young people, supporting victims and child witnesses of Domestic Abuse, and addressing 'Troubled Families' factors that are impacting such as worklessness or school attendance.

The reduction in the number of children open to Early Intervention across the year is due to a combination of factors including; roll out of Early help training for partners, the appointment of early help navigators and a reduction of referrals in March due the Covid 19 pandemic. There has been a reduction in the number EI referrals in the past twelve months (Avg. 273 per month) when compared with the previous year. (Avg. 367 per month).

An online parenting programme was developed and utilised as part of our early intervention support to families during the lockdown months. This enabled families to access parenting support as and when and formed part of our Stay Safe Be Kind Covid-19 support for vulnerable families in the City.

**Parent Champions:** is a volunteer, peer to peer model that informs and engages disadvantaged families at the earliest possible point that have not previously engaged with early support services. This is a universal offer overseen by Strengthening Families and identified within the Early Help Strategy. There are currently 65 Parent Champions (PC) who have been trained, 14 of whom are currently active. The main support areas offered are:

- Stay and Play group
- support group for parents
- support parents on a 1:1 basis
- home learning activities
- support SEND activities
- A nominated PC sits on the Voice4Parents board
- support to care leavers who are parents

**Freedom programme: delivered within the Strengthening Families Hubs**

The Freedom Programme examines the impact of attitudes and beliefs on the actions of abusive men and the responses of victims and survivors. The aim is to help them to make sense of and understand what has happened to them. The Freedom Programme also describes in detail how children are affected by being exposed to this kind of abuse and very importantly how their lives are improved when the abuse is removed.

In the last 12 months there have been 916 women who have engaged with and completed the Freedom programme. The table below breaks this down by locality cross the City.

**Future planning:** Given the success of engagement with the Freedom programme the service is exploring the introduction of a domestic abuse programme for male victims of domestic abuse.

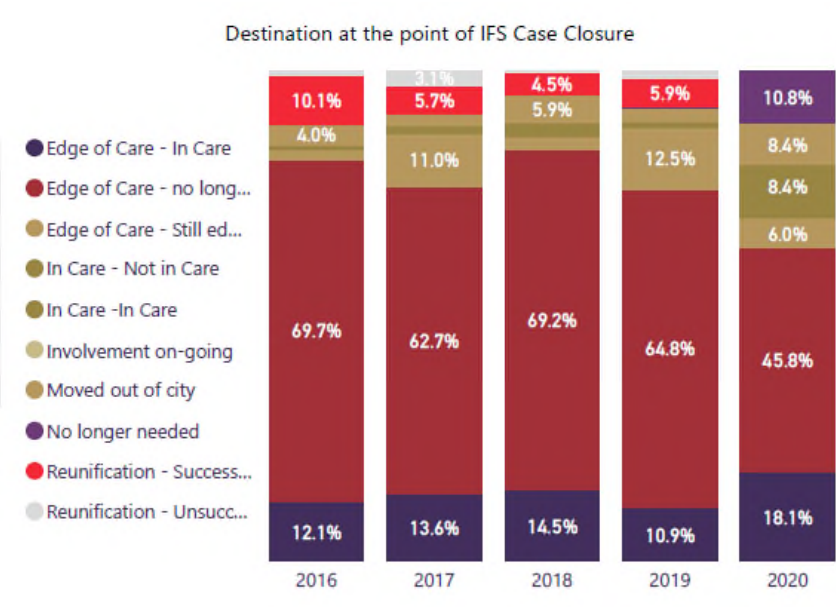
No face-to-face programmes have been delivered during this period due to the restrictions implemented due to Covid-19

Locality	01.04.19. - 31.03.20.	
	One Count	All Sessions
1	27	117
2	19	58
3	47	151
4	16	74
5	31	145
6	11	65
7	22	110
8	36	196
Total	209	916

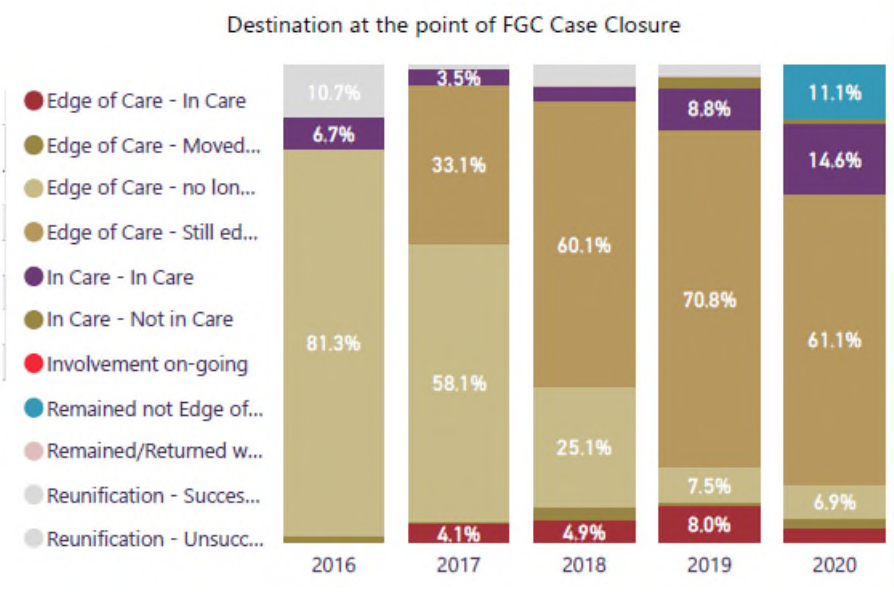
## Specialist Support

The Specialist Support service continues to enable children to remain safely at home through a range of services that help families repair relationships, find solutions to the issues that are affecting children , develop safe, effective boundaries and support parents and carers to make significant lifestyle changes. The service focuses on good quality direct interventions with the city’s most vulnerable children and families. The service offers Family Group Conferencing and mediation which forms part of our early intervention and edge of care offer.

Intensive Family Support



Family Group Conferencing



## Children in Need

As at the end of October 2020 there were 704 children subject to CiN planning.(we were unable to accurately report on September's figure due to migration to Eclipse). 90% of children had a visit within the expected times scales as at the end of August which are set at a minimum of once a month. Some children were seen more frequently as per their CiN plan.

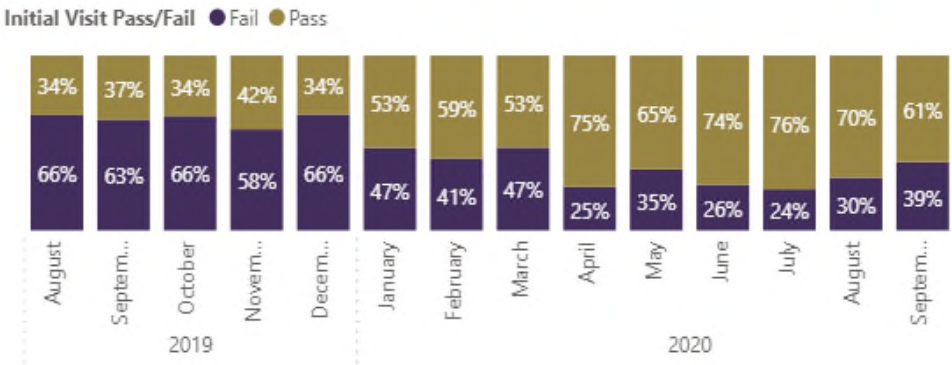
84% of assessments are completed within 45 days.



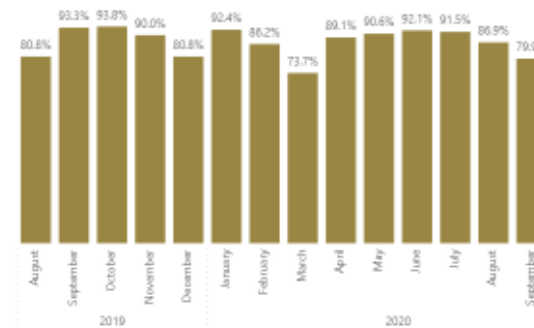
There was a decline in relation to CIN visits in March as teams transitioned into a different way of working due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Since that point performance has improved and we are more confident children are being seen regularly according to the frequency of their plan

There has been steady improvement in the number of children who are seen within 5 days of referral over the summer, however this has decreased during the system migration period. This remains an area of performance which is monitored closely

Initial Visit (Visit within 5 working days of referrals form start)



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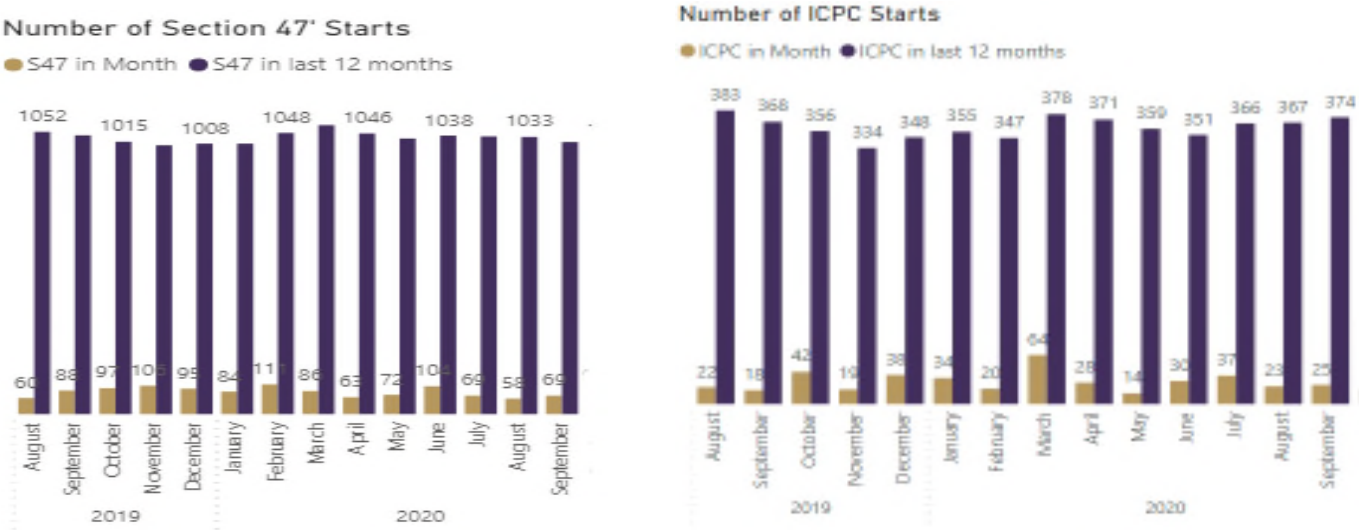


Core groups take place regularly and have continued to be well attended, by partners utilising virtual meetings in TE (from their care) are well utilised and help children to remain safely within their birth families.

ing place but due to inaccurate use of new form utilised to record these visits, some have been showing as out of timescale. Guidance has been issued to all  
e needs to be consistent across all strengthening family teams.

ce to support teenagers at risk of multiple factors) and Partnering Families (a health service to support new parents who have previously had children removed

# Child Protection Investigations



Where child protection concerns are raised investigations are undertaken in a timely manner and child protection procedures adhered to well. The number of child protection investigations has decreased in the 12-month rolling period. As of September 2020, 38% of investigations completed within the year result in an ICPC. It is important for children and families that concerns are addressed in a safe and proportionate manner. A range of work is being undertaken to ensure this is the case, including work with partners within the MASH and peer challenge of S47's between Team Managers to increase challenge and learning. Following a dip in conversion rates, a DIP sample was completed of S47's undertaken in the MASH and strengthening family teams. The outcome of this was that we were reassured that the section 47's completed were largely felt to be appropriate.

# Child Exploitation

In Wolverhampton Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is overseen by the Safeguarding Service however, it is a recognised as a child protection issue and is not treated as a stand-alone, or a specialist issue. This enables the workforce to be more confident in identifying and responding to CSE as it is part of everyday practice.

## Local CSE Figures

Quarter	No of YP	At Risk	Significant	Serious
Apr-June 18	139	122	15	2
Jul-Sept – 18	140	122	17	1
Oct-Dec 18	131	7	12	2
Jan- Mar 19	132	116	10	6
Apr-Jun 19	99	78	14	7
Jul-Sept 19	98	83	8	7
Oct – Dec 19	92	73	14	5
Jan – Mar 20	86	71	8	7
Apr – Jun 20	124	107	13	4
Jul – Sep 20	146	132	10	4

Professionals in Wolverhampton continue to identify young people at risk of CSE and provide preventative intervention through MASE, direct intervention or support from voluntary/specialised services.

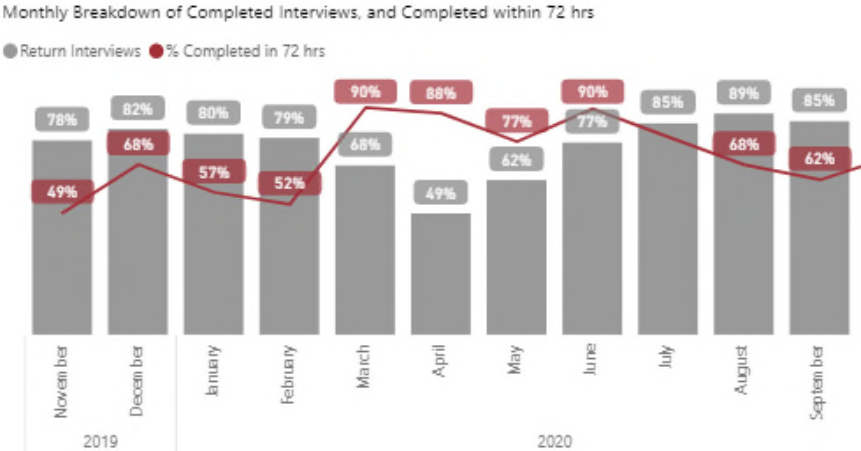
In the last quarter, 90% were identified as being at low risk and therefore are supported in their understanding of risk through preventative intervention undertaken via early help, voluntary services and Child in Need (CIN) services; this is in keeping with statistical data from others in the combined authority area. The remaining 7% are significant risk and 3% at serious risk, young people who are deemed significant to serious risk are in receipt of specialist support usually via Children’s Social Care and/or Intensive Family Support; these young people are also subject of a discreet Multi-agency Sexual Exploitation plan which seeks to protect and reduce their risk. Where risks increase despite intervention plans, alternative protection options are explored; for example, the use of civil injunctions and other disruption tactics. Where there are a number of perpetrators and/or locations identified of concern disruption will discussed and implemented through the CSE Missing Operational Group and through complex strategy meetings.

Disruption activity is of the utmost importance. Investigations for individual victims continue, recognising frameworks/orders which can support victims such as the Child Abduction Warning Notices and the National Referral Mechanism for young people trafficked for sexual exploitation.



# Missing

The number of missing episodes has increased steadily over the last few months, due to the police changing their processes regarding missing and absent classification.



As part of the return interview, the CSE screening tool is always completed to ensure consideration is given to missing young people being at risk of CSE.

The number of missing episodes followed up with a missing return interview is monitored on a monthly basis. Whilst not all of these are completed within the 72 hour timescale, there remains a commitment to always persist in engaging with young people. As a result of this, on average most missing return interviews are completed within 5 days of the young person's return unless the meeting was declined. When interviews were not completed within the 72 hour timescale, this was mainly due to the young person not being able to be contacted, or because the young person had gone missing again.

# Tackling Violence and Exploitation

Wolverhampton has taken the bold stance of committing to a fresh approach to address issues of violence and exploitation (V&E) in the city, as set out in our strategy. The ever-evolving landscape of exploitation requires a more flexible and agile approach across partners and a commitment to tackle violence and exploitation in its entirety. A review of our local response to exploitation and contextual safeguarding in 2019 clearly identified opportunities to improve how we work together to identify and protect young people at risk of or experiencing exploitation in all its forms.

The complex and exploitative world of Organised Crime Groups (OCGs), which are often driven by money, power or control, leaves the door open for adults or children to be enticed or coerced into situations they then struggle to remove themselves from. As a result, they can become victim to multiple forms of exploitation and in response, we have redesigned our whole system to ensure that the support that they receive is joined-up and effective.

This has included revising our threshold document to clearly identify the extra familial risks associated with exploitation and updated our exploitation screening tool to ensure it supports the identification of all forms of exploitation. All referrals supported by a completed screening tool will be risk assessed within the MASH, including information and intelligence from the newly established Partnership Exploitation and Missing Hub.

Our multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding young people at serious and significant risk of exploitation have been extended from responding to sexual exploitation, to ensuring young people experiencing all forms of exploitation are afforded the same level of support and protection. Similarly, the strategic Criminal Exploitation and Missing Operational Group now has a remit to disrupt perpetrators and locations involved in all forms of exploitation.

We have produced a comprehensive set of training modules which have been made available to all staff across the safeguarding partnership. The new working arrangements as outlined above will be in place in February 2021 and in readiness, a number of workshops are being held during December 2019 and January 2020 to brief safeguarding leads across agencies.

## Power2 – Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents

The Power2 team was established in December 2019 as a pilot project funded for 2 years to work with young people at risk of exploitation. It is a Multi-disciplinary team with social workers, speech and language therapists, education psychologists and keyworker support commissioned from the voluntary sector. Young people and their families will receive an intensive service for between 6 and 12 months using trauma informed practice, taking adverse childhood experiences into account (ACEs)

Power2 work with :

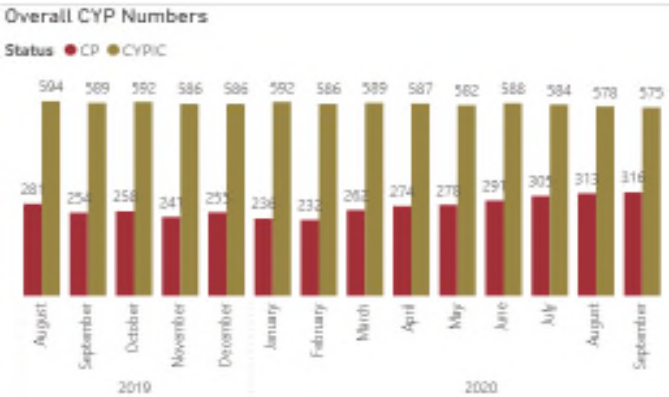
- Young people aged between 11 and 17 years of age who are at risk of exploitation;
- Young people where there are current or recent escalation in high risk-taking behaviours;
- Young people where there has been support and interventions implemented to decrease risk, which have not proved effective.

Power2 has recently expanded its offer to vulnerable young people aged 18-25. This expanded offer is a pilot with multi-agency funding secured until March 2021 when impact will be reviewed. Early indications of positive outcomes.

- Reduction in CSE risk
- Reduction in number/ length of missing episodes
- Step down from child protection to child in need
- No further offending behaviour

## Children and Young People in Care

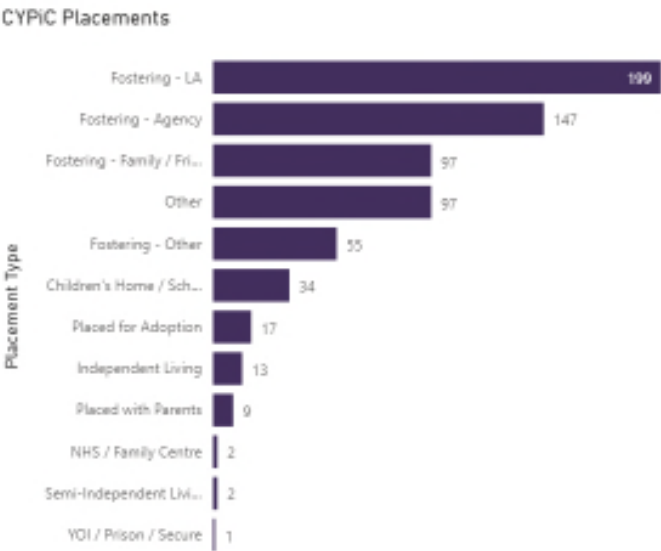
There is a clear vision that is shared across the Children and Young People in Care service which is focused on achieving permanence and stability for children. The number of children in care in Wolverhampton has historically been considerably higher than comparator authorities, over the last ten years. The rate increased annually from 2009 until 2014, reaching 807 at its peak. In May 2014, the Families R First Programme was introduced which put greater emphasis on tackling problems within the family unit and offering support at an earlier stage, preventing the need for children and young people to become looked after. This work, together with the co-location of early intervention and statutory social work teams and the introduction of a relational and strength-based practice framework has contributed to year-on-year reductions in the number of children in care. The number as at the end of September 2020 is 575. Due to the system migration in September, we could not report accurate CiN and Early Intervention numbers at month end, however as at the end of October these were 710 CiN on a plan, 73 CiN in assessment and 943 open to Early Intervention.



Robust decision-making processes are in place to ensure that when children cannot be cared for at home, their entry into care is planned appropriately ensuring there is a care plan in place that focuses on achieving permanence in a timely manner. Following the admissions to care process, care planning is subject to additional oversight through the Head of Service Permanence Oversight Panel. The effectiveness of care planning had been evidenced by good timeliness in proceedings and improved timeliness for children with a plan of adoption. However during this period we have seen a detrimental impact on care proceedings court due to the impact of covid19 on the functioning of the Court.

## Placements for Children and Young People in Care

In Wolverhampton we believe that wherever possible children should live with families in or close to our city. The Family Values project focusses on increasing the number of internal fostering households, and improving the offer of support to increase the retention of foster carers. The foster carers support has been enhanced by the introduction of therapeutic training, peer support for foster carers through Fostering Families United the use of buddies, and restorative practice training. The ambition is to increase the net gain of fostering households approved by the City of Wolverhampton by 81 households by 2021/22.



Mainstream foster carer approvals have increased year on year since the start of the Family Values programme. In 2019/2020 59 new foster carers were approved, with 27 of these mainstream carers and 34 family and friend carers approvals. We had an overall net gain of 27 carers and met our Family Values target for net gain. This enables us to place many more of our children with our own internal carers. The gap of placements of children in external placements and those in internal continues to widen.

Last year 126 more children in care were placed with our own internal foster carers than at the start of the Family Values project than three years ago.

The timeliness of approvals of foster carers has also improved with the average time of 147 days. Last year we approved the largest number of foster carers in the shortest amount of days in the last four years.

## Placement stability

- Improving placement stability remains a key priority. Stability is now in line with statistical neighbours and national averages . In September 2020 76% of children in care had been in the same placement for two years and the percentage of children with three or more placements in the past 12 months had decreased from 14% to 9%. In order to achieve better placement stability, plans include:
- Key 2 Inspiration which opened in June 2019 .This is a local authority short term children's home
- Fostering Families United is a support mechanism that offers foster carers a community of support and access to therapeutic advice. It was launched in May 2019. The aim is to support the stability of placements . Foster carers work together in small teams supported by an experienced foster carer team leader
- Foster carers have found the support invaluable and this has enabled them to care for children with some complex care histories. Due to the success of the pilot team, there are now 3 Fostering Families United Teams in place with a plan to continue to expand this delivery model to all carers
- A therapeutic training programme is being delivered to all foster carers . Fostering staff have all been trained in this model to ensure consistency of support, advice and consultation.
- Children placed in foster care have continued to experience strong secure foster placements during Covid-19 pandemic with foster carers showing strong resilience and support to our children in care



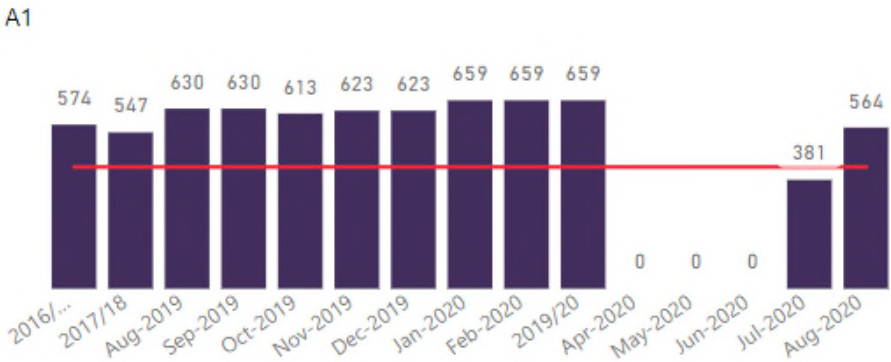
## Regional Adoption Agency - Adoption@Heart

From 1 April 2019 the City of Wolverhampton, Walsall and Dudley local authorities and Sandwell Children’s Trust began delivering their adoption services as one adoption agency, Adoption@Heart (A@H). The overriding factors that influenced the four agencies to work together to form a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) were: historic relationships, partnership arrangements already in place and geography. A@H is hosted by the City of Wolverhampton Council.

We are currently unable to report adoption information at the end of September due to the system migration. At the end of August 2020 there had been 6 Adoption Orders granted for children formerly in care.

Overall timeliness compares positively against 2019/20 for A1 (564 days from 659 days), and A2 (208 days from 306), A10 also compares favourably (363 days from 386). Wolverhampton continues to be appropriately optimistic when planning for adoption for children who are unable to live with their birth family. This includes children who may be regarded as harder to place and hence may take longer to identify a suitable adoptive family. The reduction in Adoption Orders granted is a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of courts. The court are now starting to issue hearing dates for adoption applications .

During Covid-19 we have continued to place children with their adoptive families following robust risk assessments .Six of these placements have been made in a fostering for adoption capacity. This is a positive position allowing children to be placed with their potential adoptive family much earlier.



## Adoption@Heart – Year One 2019-20

- A@H approved 51 prospective adopters in its first year.
- 127 children from across the Black Country were matched to adopters.
- 46 of these were Wolverhampton children.
- The timeliness of placing some children for adoption in this year was affected by the launch of Adoption@Heart. This was to be expected as part of the forming of a single agency. As processes and relationships develop the performance of Adoption@Heart will continue to improve.

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### March- September 2020

- 16 Wolverhampton children have been placed with their adopters
- Of these 16, 6 were early permanence placements placed under fostering to adopt arrangements
- It is positive to note that despite restrictions experienced through the lock down period children have continued to move into their adoptive families with introductions planned creatively, and subject to risk assessments

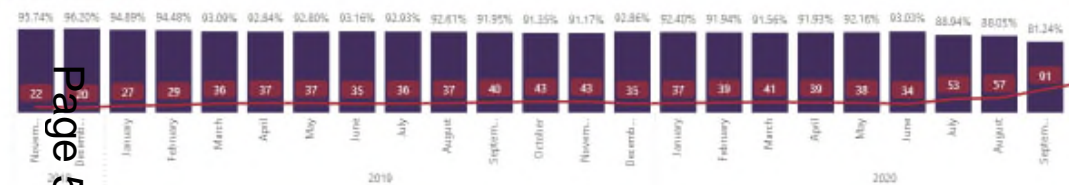
## The Health and wellbeing of Children and Young people in Care

Children and Young People in care have regular health and dental checks. All new children into care have Health Passports which have been established with the support of partners in the CCG, ensuring health information is readily available to children and their carers.

The percentage of both review health assessments and dentals completed in timescales has seen a dip since the beginning of 2020. We continue to work closely with health colleagues to ensure we have strong systems in place to avoid delay in completion. More recently the performance has been impacted by the migration to Eclipse .

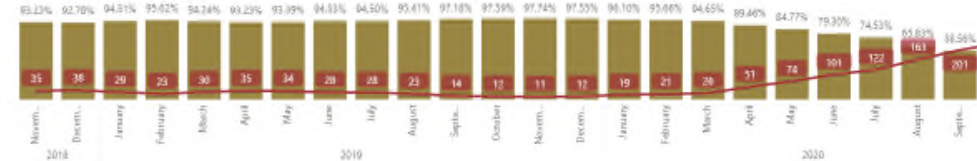
Review Health Assessment Timescales

● Health In Timescale ● Health Fails



CYPIC Dental Timescales

● Dental In Timescale ● Dental Fails



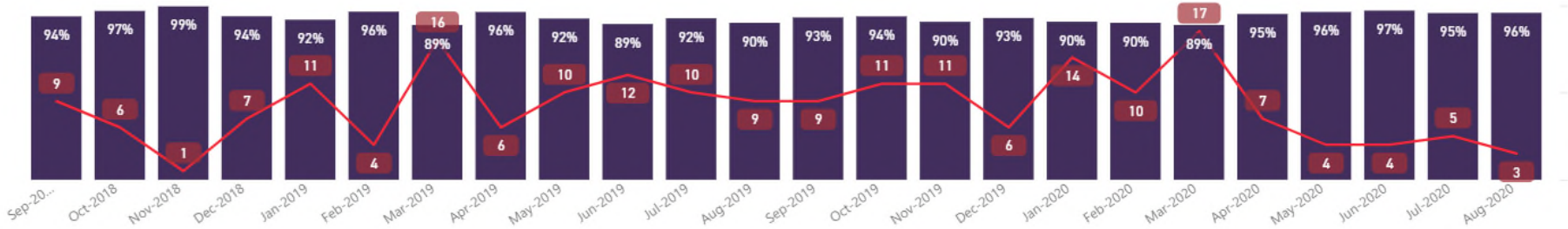
The 2018/19 SDQ score of 13.7 gives Wolverhampton an average of ‘normal’. This score shows Wolverhampton positively in comparison to statistical and national comparators. Wolverhampton is ranked as the 50th best performing authority in this area. Further to this, the percentage of children and young people who completed the questionnaire in 2019/20 increased to 99% with one unable to due to medical issues.

Emotional and Behavioural Wellbeing - SDQ average scores	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Provisional)
Wolverhampton	12.6	12.3	13.2	14.2	14.4	13.7	13.7	13.6
West Midlands	13.7	13.5	13.5	14.1	13.9	13.7	14.3	
Statistical Neighbours	14.77	14.51	14.52	15.16	14.26	14.3	14.7	
England	14	13.9	13.9	14	14.1	14.2	14.2	

## How we work with Children and Young People in Care

CYPiC Participation

● CYPiC Review Passes ● CYPiC Review Fails



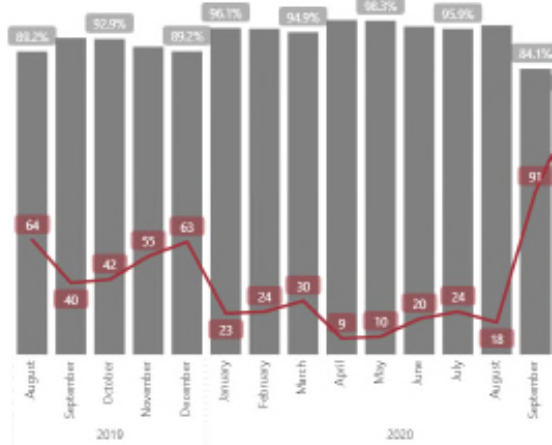
Social work visits to children and young people in care fulfil a range of critical roles and functions to enable the child’s circumstances to be observed and monitored. Visits are carried out at least once every 6 weeks or once every 12 weeks if in a stable placement.

During the year the vast majority of children received visits from their social workers within statutory timescales. As with CP visits, there has been a reduction in the percentage for September, this has been affected by the migration to the new system. Visits have been taking place but due to the new form to record these visits, some have been showing as out of timescale where a box has not been selected. Audits have identified some evidence of excellent relationship building and direct work.

There is strong evidence of children contributing to their plans, and as at August 2020 96% of children participated in their Children and Young People in Care review, the majority of children participated by speaking for themselves and some children chaired their own review.

Visits in Timescale

● Visits ● Visits Fails



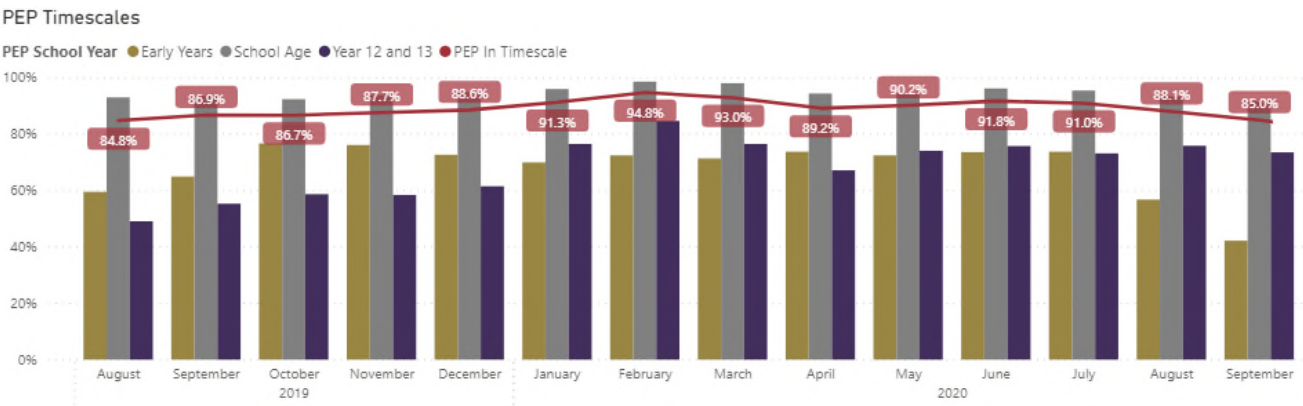
## Impact of work with Children and Young People in Care

Audits of files suggest that the work undertaken by social workers alongside other professionals and strategic activity is contributing to improved outcomes for children and young people. Children and young people in care are achieving educationally. Outcomes for the whole cohort at KS1 – 4 are broadly in line with national and regional averages, though KS1 and KS2 data are not available from the summer term due to assessments not being completed by schools. At GCSE, however, outcomes improved significantly for children and young people in care in 2020 - 25% of eligible children in the cohort achieved grade 4 or above in both English and maths. We feel that this improvement is due to grades being based on teacher assessments rather than exams.

School attendance is high with low levels of persistent absence. No children and young people in care were permanently excluded from school in the 2019/20 academic year.

Six Wolverhampton care leavers graduated from university in 2020, including one who achieved a first-class honours degree and three achieved upper second class (2.1) honours. We currently have 26 care leavers in higher education.

### Percentage of Children with a Personal Education Plan



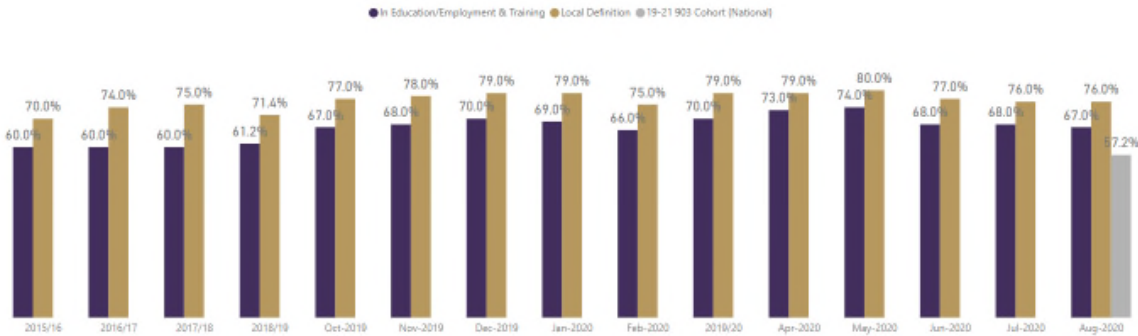
The pupil premium is used effectively to ensure children are achieving. Regular Personal Education Plans (PEP's) are in place for the majority of children and the recently developed Electronic PEP will support a detailed understanding of progress that children are making in schools as well as identifying areas that require additional support.

# Children and Young People in Care - Transitions

The City of Wolverhampton Council's (CWC) Reach teams'key purpose is to improve the life chances and achieve the best outcomes for young people in care aged 14-18 years and care leavers up to 25, by ensuring they have support to achieve their aspirations, meet their health, education, training and accommodation needs.

Co-location of social workers, young people's advisors, family support workers, housing team and an education, employment and training (EET) co-ordinator ,facilitates excellent joint working arrangements to support young people through transition. All young people are allocated a personal advisor prior to transition, to support transition planning and the development of a needs led pathway plan. There are good transition arrangements in place for young people accessing pre and post-18 services. Young people are aware of their entitlements as detailed in the Local Offer for Care Leavers, Reach. Updated information leaflets and booklets are incorporated into a post-16 transition pack, and the information is on the care leavers' Facebook page and CYPiC website. The team are committed to increasing partnership working with young people and empowering them to develop confidence and achieve their aspirations.

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The variety of EET opportunities available and take up of these are given a high priority within the service . Both internal and external partners work closely together to facilitate individual opportunities for young people. Young people have priority interviews for apprenticeships within the council, and the offer of apprenticeships has now been extended up to 20 years of age. CWC now offer 5 ring fenced apprenticeship posts for care leavers. The multi-agency EET panel enables maximisation of opportunity for young people who are not engaging. The numbers of young people in EET at the end of 2020 increased to 70% with our local definition in EET at 79%, both indicators continuing to improve throughout the year a real positive for care leavers in the city.



## Children and Young People in Care - Housing options

Care leavers have a choice of accommodation provision including; supported lodgings, YMCA Social Inclusion pathway with a range of supported accommodation provisions dependent on needs, Children and Young People in care Transitions Housing Support Service including training flats, Staying Put (over 18), Independent Accommodation (over 18) and local quality assured and monitored Supported Accommodation provisions. The housing support service has up to 33 flats, two crash pads and two training flats. Each young person living in one of these homes has a designated housing support worker (HSW) who remains with them throughout their time in the service. Support hours vary, but are to a maximum 30 hours per week, as the young person progresses, the number of hours decrease. The HSW draws up an individual support plan for each young person.

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Between April 2019 and March 2020, 11 young people moved into independence living in a flat with a bespoke package of support from the housing support team. Ten of these young people have maintained their tenancy for at least 6 months. The other young person is an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker who desperately wanted to live in his own flat. Despite support, this did not work for him and he returned to The Royal School as a boarder.

Currently, the percentage of young people in suitable accommodation is 91%.

## House Project

In addition, the Children and Young People's Supported Accommodation Service launched a Local House Project in October 2019, working in partnership with care leavers , the National House Project and Reconomy , a local business partner, and Wolverhampton Homes . This project takes a ground-breaking approach through its commitment to young people's ownership to enable young people leaving care to achieve successful independence. The House Project was co-designed with young people from the start, and works on cooperative principles through which adults and young people in, and leaving care ,work together to refurbish properties that become their homes, developing a long-term community of support. Ten young people formed cohort one with seven out of the ten young people who are either living in their own accommodation or have been allocated their own property. One member of the group is now a member of the National Care Leaver's Movement representing the local and national voice of care leavers. The young people for cohort two are now being identified.

An internal Supported Lodgings Service is currently in development . This will complement the varied range of accommodation options available to children and young people in care.

# Participation of Children in Care Council and Care leavers Forum

Children in Care Council (CiCC) has had 17 members in this period with 7 males and 10 Females. Care leavers Forum (CLF) has had 9 members with 3 male and 6 female. Both groups meet fortnightly.

## Success for CiCC in 2019/2020 includes:

- The Vice Chair of the CiCC recognised as Young Citizen of the Year
- All members attended the regional CiC Conference in Sandwell
- Presented a workshop with Strategic Senior Executive Board, outlining Co-Production
- 2 members of CiCC represented on the City's Youth Council
- 2 additional members of CiCC trained as Total Respect Train the trainers
- CiCC co-produced the CiC website
- CiCC hosted their first CiC Conference at The Way
- CiCC attended a 3 day residential with members from the other Wolverhampton Youth Voice groups
- CiCC consulted and coproduced the city Youth Engagement Strategy (# YES) and Co-Production Charter

## Success for CLF in 2019/2020

- CLF reviewed the Reach Local Offer for Care Leavers
- CLF contributed to the recruitment process for the Step into Social Work Program
- Attendance at National Care Leavers Benchmarking Forum Conferences throughout the year.
- CLF created and presented a Pitch to the National House Project, securing the project for the City
- CLF have secured 3 paid positions within the Council
- CLF delivered Total Respect Training to the Council's Private Sector Partners for the House Project Recomony
- A CLF member is a board member of the House Project Steering Group
- 2 CLF members sit on the Care Leavers Offer Steering Group
- A CLF member volunteered and gained leadership skills while support the Wolverhampton Youth Voice 3 day residential
- CLF hosted a launch for the Council's partnership with Volunteering Matters, Grandmentor Program

CiCC and CLF jointly in this period; co-produced guides on how to use Microsoft Teams for engaging in meetings with their social workers and IROs in preparation for Covid lockdown. The attendance at the Christmas party was raised from 8 Care Leavers in 2018 to 56 in 2019, through promotion and planning of activities. 4 UASC young people adapted and delivered a UASC version of Total Respect to 40 professionals from social care, health and education. The CiCC and CLF presented and facilitated a workshop with professionals as part of the review of the council's Sufficiency Strategy. The CiCC and the CLF also contributed to and attended the launch of the Youth Engagement Strategy (#YES) .

## Corporate Parenting

**The Council believes it is important to invest in children and young people in care and demonstrate this through:**

The Corporate Parenting Strategy is supported by the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board (CPPB) chaired by the Council's Deputy Chief Executive. At the beginning of the municipal year, a workshop facilitated by members of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and the Care Leavers Forum (CLIC) with members of the board established a 12-month plan which focused on the seven principles set out within the legislation.

Here are some of our significant events and achievements that we have worked on with children in care and care leavers this year:

- The annual 'I awards' event which celebrates the achievements of children in care.
- A week-long range of events to support and celebrate the annual Care Leavers Week
- Annual Christmas Party
- A joint training and agreed pathway of support for care leavers has been developed with the Skills and Transition Team.
- The CiCC and CLF meet twice a year with the CPPB and the Corporate Parenting Board
- The launch of a new Children in Care and Care Leavers Website
- A Corporate Parenting Social Value Group launched with Private Sector Organisations to support opportunities for care leavers

The Reach Local Offer for care leavers offer was reviewed in September 2020. It includes;

- Care Leavers exempt from paying Council Tax until the age of 25 if they live in the City of Wolverhampton
- Care leavers having guaranteed interviews for apprenticeships within the Council
- <http://www.wolveschildrenincare.com/>

## Summary of achievements in 2019-2020

- Integration of the Education and Children and Young People directorates, enabling a whole system approach to supporting children and young people and providing opportunities for closer working relationships between social care and education settings.
- Social work caseloads continue to stay at a manageable level
- Power 2 team established to work with young people at risk of exploitation
- Development of the Culture of Belonging programme to improve children's inclusion in schools
- Wolverhampton achieved its target of 'turning around' 2890 families as part of the Troubled Families programme.
- The Court Team is enabling greater continuity for children subject to proceedings and improved pre-proceedings work. Timeliness has improved for children who have been subject to pre-proceedings work.
- Establishment of the Youth Engagement Strategy, #YES, through co-production with children young people and their families across the city

## Summary of achievements in 2019-2020

- Increase in % of care leavers engaged in EET
- Increase in number of foster carers approved by CWC and increase in the number of children placed in internal fostering placements
- Improvement in long and short term placement stability measures for children in care placements
- Improved support offer to families who have no recourse to public funding has resulted in families achieving an immigration outcome earlier and therefore enabled children to achieve a sense of permanence and have access to services earlier where they are given right to remain.
- Multi agency emotional well being support service available specifically for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people up to age 25
- Launch of a Local House Project working with 10 care leavers in cohort one
- With support of young people and the House Project a co-production hub has been secured, providing a venue for young people to call their own, accommodating the House Project , a drop in for care leavers, The Reach Café, and a base for co-production with children and young people.

## Key improvements for 2020-2021

The Children and Young People directorate has a detailed strategic plan that outlines work to be undertaken in 2020-21 that will further strengthen the quality and impact of work with children, young people and their families. The key improvements for 2020-2021 are:

- Continue to improve workforce retention in order to provide children with greater consistency and establish a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, who are fully equipped to help children and families achieve positive outcomes
- Embed 'Practice Weeks' as part of the quality assurance framework to ensure senior managers have a clear reflection of the quality of frontline practice
- Continue to focus on the quality of practice delivered through a practice improvement plan. This includes improving assessment analysis and planning, improving the quality of direct work to strengthen the voice of the child and ensuring restorative practice is imbedded within supervision, promoting a focus on the impact of interventions on the lived experience of children and explicitly provide opportunity for critical reflection
- Ensure children in care have availability to good quality life story that meets their needs
- Review and refresh our targeted 'earliest' early help offer.



## Key improvements for 2020-2021

- Implement Eclipse, a single child's record system. This will bring together recording systems for early intervention and statutory social work and enable practitioners to record the experience and journey of the child on one system
- Work with partners to implement the outcomes of the contextual safeguarding review to further safeguard children and young people at risk of exploitation
- Continue to improving placement stability including embedding of 'Fostering Families United'
- Continue to embed the Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption@Heart
- Continue to embed Restorative Practice across Children's Services
- Implement an emotional wellbeing service for children in the city
- Embed further opportunities for co production with children in the city
- Achieve an allocated target of 'turning around' 484 families as part of the extended Troubled Families Programme
- Further improve the quality of assessment, support and planning for children in need of support.

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# Children & Young People Services Welfare Rights Service

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January 2021

[wolverhampton.gov.uk](http://wolverhampton.gov.uk)

## CYP Welfare Rights

- There is one Welfare Rights Officer in CYP increased from a half-time post to a full-time post in 2008
- There is also a half-time Welfare Rights Officer in the Adults Transitions Team (18-25 years) which is part of CYP

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The Welfare Rights Officers provide advice and information to social workers in order to support families through the benefits claiming process; undertake complex casework to challenge DWP decisions and represent at Tribunals to secure rightful benefits entitlement

- It is recognised that Council services and resources are often required due to financial instability and in particular, a loss or underpayment of social security benefits. With the implementation of Welfare Reform measures such as the benefit cap, bedroom tax and Universal Credit, financial instability amongst social security benefit claimants has increased. Helping to ensure that families are in receipt of their correct benefit entitlement increases financial stability and independence and contributes towards a decrease in the need for Council services and resources.

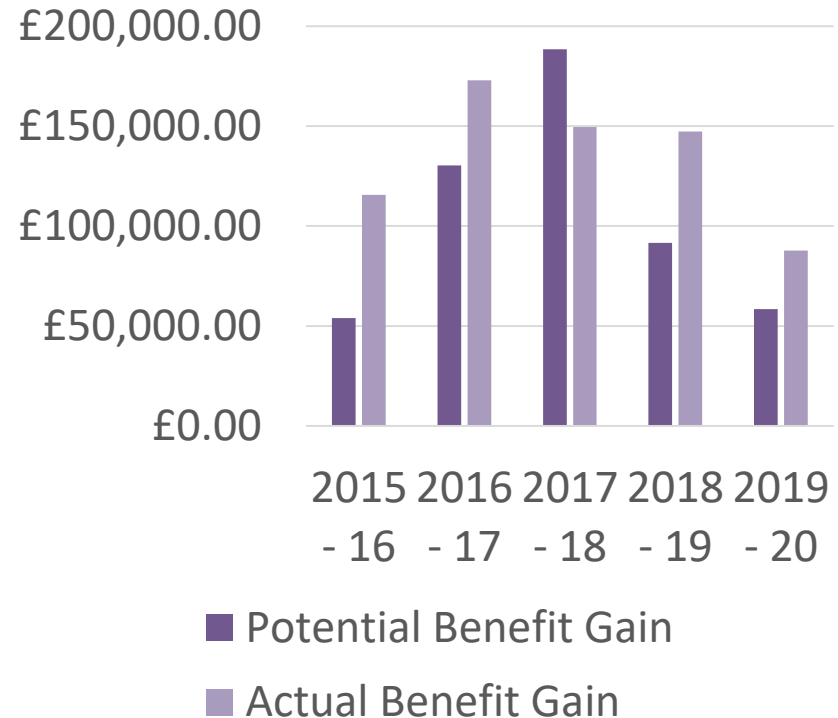
## Benefit Gains

- From 2015/16 to 2017/18 there was a steady increase in potential and actual benefit gains
- From 2017/18 there has been a decline in potential and actual benefit gains (see next slide)

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Year	Actual & Potential Total Benefit Gains
2015/16	£169,656
2016/17	£303,273
2017/18	£338,086
2018/19	£238,804
2019/20	£146,236

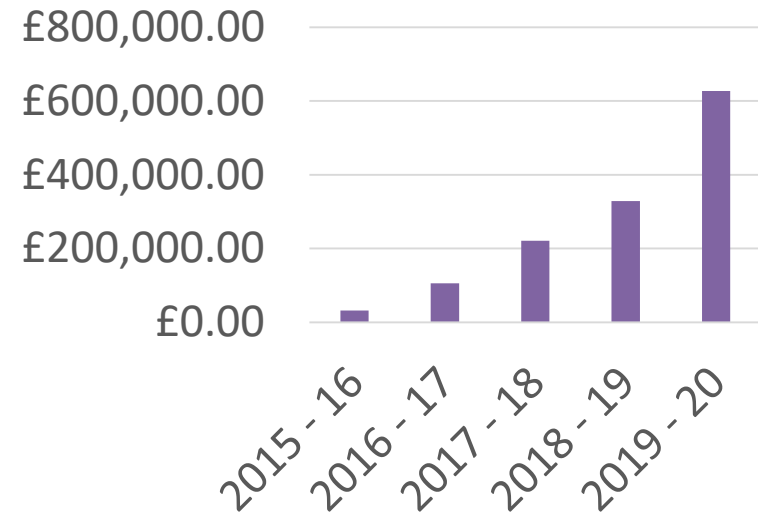
## Potential and Actual Benefit Gains



## Revenue Gains

- From 2015/16 the CYP Welfare Rights Officer started to undertake Financial Support Calculations (FSCs) for permanent placements for children and young people in care
- The more that benefits to the carers can be increased, the less the financial support from the Council is required
- From November 2017, when the FSC Policy was revised, there has been an increase in Revenue Gains but the Welfare Rights Officer time required to be spent on these assessments has impacted on other Welfare Rights work.

## Revenue Gains



Year	Revenue Gains
2015/16	£31,764.73
2016/17	£105,109.03
2017/18	£221,264.43
2018/19	£328,586.28
2019/20	£627,151.97



## Case Types

- From 2016/17 Case Type analysis was undertaken
- With additional resources there would be scope for increasing welfare rights work in all areas, particularly preventative work with Early Help and Children in Need

Financial Year	Adoption & Fostering	Children Early Help 0-5 yrs	Children Early Help 5-18 yrs	Children in Need	Looked After Children	Transitions 18-25 yrs	Total
2016-17	54	5	1	36	22	37	155
2017-18	96	2	0	25	19	77	219
2018-19	138	0	1	21	23	68	251
2019-20	141	0	0	17	17	76	251
2020-21 (up to 18/12/2020)	53	0	0	0	0	43	96
<b>Total</b>	482	7	2	99	81	301	972

In 2019/20 – 3 months vacant post. In 2020/21 – 2 months sickness (cover provided by WRS)

# Thank you

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January 2021



**Scrutiny Work Programme (draft)**  
**Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny**  
**Panel 2020-2021**

**Theme – Connected City**

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## Scrutiny – A New Approach – **Connected City**

1. A new approach to scrutiny was agreed at Scrutiny Board on 14 July 2020. Scrutiny Board agreed a cross cutting theme for all panels. The agreed theme was '**Connected City**'. Connectivity and digital considerations will be considered as part of all items added to the work programme.
2. **Roles and expectations** have been defined for the Chairs of Scrutiny Panels, Strategic Executive Board (SEB) leads and Scrutiny Officers; creating a collective understanding of scrutiny's role within the Council. These can be seen in Appendix A.
3. Effective **work planning and agenda setting** will take place to produce **jointly owned work plans**.
4. The first panel meetings will receive an update on the areas that fall within the scope of the panel. There will then be an introduction to the **connected city theme**. This will enable the Panel to consider items for the workprogramme in line with the '**Connected City**' scrutiny theme.
5. Regular briefings will be arranged with the Scrutiny Panel Chair, Vice Chair, SEB lead and scrutiny officer to enable a shared understanding of priorities and reviews of progress and recommendations.
6. **Improved communication:** 'You said we did' updates and publicity (including social media)
7. Creation of a **strong organisational culture** that supports scrutiny work that **adds real value** and **evidences impact**.
8. Outcomes and recommendations from all panels will then be fed back to Scrutiny Board to unify into one comprehensive report based on the connected city theme.



## **Work Programme considerations:**

- 1. Is the issue in the public interest?**
- 2. How does it link to the Connected City theme?**
- 3. How can scrutiny add value by looking at it?**
- 4. Where is the evidence to support looking at this issue?**
- 5. Can we evidence impact?**
- 6. Is there a change to National Policy?**
- 7. Does it affect citizens across the City?**
- 8. Are there performance concerns?**
- 9. Is it a safety issue?**

## Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Chair: Cllr Rita Potter	Vice Chair: Cllr Sohail Khan	SEB Lead: Emma Bennett	Scrutiny Lead: Earl Piggott-Smith
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Date of Meeting	Agenda Publication	Item Description	Lead Report Author	Council Plan Priority	Connected City	Notes
				Children and young people get the best possible start in life		
9 September 2020	1 September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CYP &amp; Families update - response to the Covid-19 Crisis and future plans relating to Children and Young People</li> <li>Work planning</li> </ul>				
11 November 2020	3 November 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy</li> <li>SEND Self Evaluation</li> <li>Education and Inclusion</li> </ul>	Finance business partner  Rob Hart/ Katrina McCormick			



		<p>Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together Partnership - Annual Report</p> <p>Outcome from Youth Council Survey</p>	<p>Andrew Wolverson Head of Children's Strategy and Partnerships and Vicky Murphy, Independent Scrutineer</p> <p>Andrew Scragg and Wolverhampton Youth Council</p>			
5 January 2021	23 December 2020	The Vision for School Organisation in Wolverhampton 2020-2022; Wolverhampton Education Place Planning	Bill Hague Head of School Business and Support			
13 January 2021	5 January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spotlight Review - Safeguarding the most vulnerable</li> <li>Children's Social Care Self Evaluation</li> <li>Welfare Rights Briefing</li> </ul>	<p>Alison Hinds/Cllr John Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People</p> <p>Alison Hinds</p> <p>Alison Hinds Helen Winfield</p>			

10 March 2021	2 March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spotlight Review - Supporting the Health and Wellbeing of children and young people</li> <li>Children's Workforce Health Check 2020</li> <li>2020 Children's Social Work Health Check</li> <li>Portfolio Holders Statement and Questions – Cllr Hardacre and Cllr Reynolds</li> </ul>	<p>Andrew Wolverson</p> <p>Courtney Abbott, Alison Hinds, Sonia Mahay</p> <p>Courtney Abbott, Alison Hinds, Sonia Mahay.</p>			
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- Determined Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2022-2023 – to be presented to panel in 2021 – Bill Hague
- SEND Strategy Action Plan – date to be confirmed

## Scrutiny Panel Remit & Functions

### Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

The scrutiny of the provision of all local authority services for children and young people including education, early intervention and prevention, social care, special needs and commissioned services and children's safeguarding including child exploitation

#### Specific responsibilities

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

- Children in need/child protection
- Children and young people in care and care Leavers
- Early intervention and prevention
- Youth offending
- Children's commissioning
- School planning and resources
- Standards and vulnerable pupils
- Family learning
- School improvement
- Special educational needs
- Early years
- Youth employment, skills and apprenticeships

## **General Role of the Scrutiny Board and Scrutiny Panels**

### **Within the terms of reference set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the Scrutiny Board will:**

1. Co-ordinate the work of the Scrutiny Panels and Scrutiny Review Groups.
2. Receive annual reports from the Councillor Champion and give consideration to the work undertaken and issues that the Councillor Champion wishes scrutiny to consider investigating further.
3. Maintain regular dialogue with the Cabinet on service improvement, performance management of cross-cutting issues, policy development and budgetary provision.
4. Oversee and ensure access to appropriate learning and development for scrutiny Councillors.
5. Discharge the call-in procedures relevant to its overarching role.

### **The Scrutiny Panels will:**

1. Maintain regular dialogue with the Cabinet, Scrutiny Board and Councillor Champions.
2. Ensure that members of the public and stakeholders are informed of and involved in issues within the remit of each Panel.
3. Discharge the call-in procedure relevant to their terms of reference.

## Appendix A: Roles and Responsibilities

### 1. Chair of Scrutiny Panel:

- To attend fortnightly meetings with the SEB lead and Scrutiny Officer
- To attend agenda setting meetings and other relevant briefings on a regular basis
- To contribute to the work planning for the panel and to bring forward relevant topics and issues for inclusion
- To chair meetings in a fair and open way and to encourage participation from panel members
- To attend Scrutiny Board (where appropriate) to provide feedback and updates on progress
- To prepare, when possible, questions in advance of a meeting to allow for healthy debate and to ensure that clear resolutions are made that add value and show impact
- To act as champion for scrutiny and to represent the best interests of the citizens of Wolverhampton

### 2. SEB Lead:

- Meet with the Chair, the Vice Chair and the Scrutiny Officer fortnightly to discuss upcoming issues, updates from previous meetings, workplans and any other relevant business as agreed by all parties.
- Recommend topics for inclusion on the workplan, working proactively with the Chair, Vice Chair and Scrutiny Officer to address any issues/opportunities/challenges that fit with the remit of the panel.
- To advise on the viability of any issues put forward by the panel for inclusion on the work plan.
- To attend relevant Scrutiny Panel meetings and provide an update at each meeting on any relevant issues within the remit of the panel. Also, attending Scrutiny Board (as appropriate) to provide feedback.
- To act as a champion for scrutiny in the Council and to encourage engagement with the scrutiny function and promote a healthy culture within which scrutiny can thrive

### 3. Scrutiny Officer:

- Provide support and guidance to the panel, its members, officers, partners and other stakeholders regarding the scrutiny function
- To ensure openness and transparency in the scrutiny function and to make sure that information is continuously shared and communicated between all relevant parties in a timely and suitable fashion
- To ensure that the appropriate persons are invited to meetings and that they are given adequate time to prepare and to provide guidance and support where appropriate
- To manage the administration of all relevant panels and meetings within statutory timescales
- To carry out research and information gathering exercises when required
- To provide advice on policy and legislation where appropriate
- To ensure that all resolutions are followed up and responses or actions fed back, monitored and recorded
- To act as liaison between the Chair and the SEB lead to ensure a shared understanding of priorities and work planning.
- To manage the agreed work plan and its outcomes to show impact and added value