

Time 5.30 pm **Public Meeting?** YES **Type of meeting** Oversight

Venue MS Teams

Membership

Chair Cllr John Reynolds (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Paul Sweet
Cllr Martin Waite
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Rashpal Kaur
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Zee Russell

Conservative

Cllr Paul Appleby
Cllr Udey Singh

Quorum for this meeting is three Councillors.

Information for the Public

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

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Tel/Email Tel: 01902 554070 or shelley.humphries@wolverhampton.gov.uk
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Some items are discussed in private because of their confidential or commercial nature. These reports are not available to the public.

Agenda

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

- | <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Title</i> |
|-----------------|--|
| 1 | Apologies for absence |
| 2 | Declarations of interests |
| 3 | Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2020 (Pages 3 - 8)
[To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2020 as a correct record.] |
| 4 | Matters arising
[To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2020.] |
| 5 | Schedule of outstanding matters (Pages 9 - 12)
[To receive the Schedule of Outstanding Matters.] |
| 6 | Adoption Service Interim Report (Pages 13 - 36)
[To receive the Adoption Service Interim Report for Adoption@Heart.] |
| 7 | Performance Monitoring Information (Pages 37 - 44)
[To receive the Performance Monitoring Information Report.] |
| 8 | Exclusion of the Press and Public
[That in accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972] |

PART 2 - ITEMS NOT OPEN TO THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

- | | |
|---|--|
| 9 | Councillor Visits to Establishments - Schedule of Visits
[To receive verbal feedback on any visits to establishments undertaken by Councillors since the last meeting] |
|---|--|

Attendance

Chair Cllr John Reynolds (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Rashpal Kaur

Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Zee Russell

Cllr Paul Sweet
Cllr Martin Waite

Conservative

Cllr Paul Appleby

Cllr Udey Singh

In attendance

Fiona Brennan
Wendy Harrison Frazer
Alison Hinds
Shelley Humphries
William Kidd
Shaquille Spence
Alice Vickers

Designated Nurse, Children and Young People in Care
Consultant Counselling Psychologist - CAMHS
Deputy Director of Children's Social Care
Democratic Services Officer
Head of Children & Young People in Care
Participation Officer
Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager

The Corporate Parenting Board also welcomed three members of the Care Leavers' Independent Collective (CLiC).

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Emma Bennett.

2 Declarations of interests

There were no declarations of interest made relative to the items under consideration at the meeting.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2020

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2020 be confirmed as correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

5 Schedule of outstanding matters

Alice Vickers, Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager presented the Schedule of Outstanding Matters report. The report provided a progress update on matters previously considered by the Board.

It was noted that a workshop had been held to record the pledges made by Board members to children and young people in care. It was noted that if anyone felt uncomfortable recording themselves, a written pledge could be provided.

Resolved:

1. That the Schedule of Outstanding Matters be noted.
2. That written pledges could be provided in lieu of a video recording.

6 Care Leavers' Forum

Members of the Care Leavers' Independent Collective delivered a presentation outlining the need for access to travel and PPE. The presentation supplied an overview of the benefits to care leavers and young people in care in having access to these things and the potential impact of being without.

It was acknowledged that the lack of PPE could cause young people to receive unwanted attention for not wearing a mask in public places and to feel unsafe. Having access to PPE would provide them with peace of mind that they were doing the right thing in preventing the spread of the virus as well as making them feel safe.

It was highlighted that a stock of the reusable masks produced for the Council's Relight campaign may still be available and these would be provided to the young people in the short term.

It was agreed that having to make the choice between paying for travel to access work or school and buying essentials was a hardship and that action needed to be taken on behalf of the young people.

It was noted that conversations were ongoing with travel providers as part of the REACH work with the hope that there would be something in place by the Christmas period.

One of the CLiC members asked what support would still be on offer for young people once the restrictions from COVID were lifted. The young people were assured that there were no planned changes or cutbacks and work ongoing to ascertain what post-COVID support would look like.

Social isolation as a result of the pandemic had also emerged as an issue and it was noted that the Co-production Hub drop-in centre was ready to open as soon as lockdown restrictions lifted. The Hub was a facility where young people could meet with their YPA, make something to eat, meet other young people and seek advice.

In response to a query around how the Council would address digital exclusion for young people, it was noted that digital access was a high priority and Councillor Beverley Momenabadi, in her capacity as the ICT Champion, had been exploring ways to provide data, dongles and laptops for young people to gain internet access. It was noted that there were a number of workstreams ongoing around supporting young people into employment, education and training and the opportunities presented by new use of digital platforms would also be explored.

Resolved:

1. That the Care Leavers' Forum presentation be received.
2. That Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Social Care investigate available stock of Relight branded masks to provide to young people in care and care leavers.
3. That the ongoing work towards gaining access to travel for care leavers continue and a scheme be in place by Christmas 2020.

7 Performance Monitoring Information

Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Social Care presented the Performance Monitoring Information Report and touched on key points.

Children in care numbers continued to reduce although the service were mindful about ensuring the right children remained in care where appropriate. It was noted that there was a high proportion of BME and older children in care – 60% were age 10 and above.

Placement stability was continually improving. There was a new electronic recording system Eclipse in use and data had now been migrated so each individual had only one record with all their information in one place. The migration had been successful however some tweaks were required to ensure accuracy in reporting.

Participation in reviews was encouragingly high and ways to engage young people were ever evolving. The use of Teams had been beneficial as it was simpler for

young people to access their review and fewer people physically in the room which made them feel more at ease.

The data showed there had been fewer adoptions throughout the pandemic, however there had been delays in hearings due to the closure of the courts. It was noted that children were being placed, there had just been delays in formalising arrangements with a final order.

Social worker caseloads had reduced allowing more time to spend with children and young people. The in-house fostering scheme and Family Values project had changed the way foster carers were trained. The work of the foster carers was commended and it was suggested that a token of appreciation be sent from Corporate Parenting Board to show recognition of this work.

Resolved:

That the Performance Monitoring Information Report be noted.

8 **The REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16-25 Annual Review 2020**

Alice Vickers, Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager presented the REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 – 25 Annual Review 2020 report and highlighted salient points.

It was reported that the REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 - 25 had been live for the last 24 months and a comprehensive review of services had taken place every 12 months. The latest consultation with care leavers had taken place in August 2020 and the steering group held an official review in September 2020.

The review also served to ensure that the existing offer was still fit for purpose and to establish what was working well and the report provided an overview of this process, which had included care leavers and the steering group, and outcomes. The report also outlined a number of additional offers that had been proposed following the consultation, including access to travel which had been picked up by members of CLiC earlier in the meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the revisions made to the REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 – 25 be approved.
2. That the publishing of the revised REACH Local Offer for Care Leavers Aged 16 – 25 be approved.
3. That the process of the review be noted.

8 **The House Project Wolverhampton**

Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Social Care presented the House Project Wolverhampton Report and highlighted salient points. The report provided Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the progress of the House Project during its first year.

It was outlined that the House Project framework allowed young people to be supported into independence by gaining the practical skills to renovate and move into

their own home whilst connecting them with other young people taking part in the project which provided the additionality of peer support. The theory of change that underpins the project was based upon improving young people's outcomes and wellbeing, supporting positive changes to enable care leavers to live successful and healthy adult lives.

It was reported that it had been a challenging year and much for the progress had been hindered by lockdown and social distancing, however the project had adapted by moving as much as possible onto a virtual platform to build the community ethos that the project hoped to achieve. It was reported that the first cohort had progressed well and the Authority were beginning to engage with the second cohort of young people. A hub building had been kindly donated by Reconomy, a Telford-based company involved with the House Project, whose chief executive hailed from Wolverhampton and so had an interest in its community projects for young people.

The project and its accompanying support networks were commended as it was felt that the sense of community and shared experience was an excellent way to combat feelings of loneliness and isolation. It was thought that the project had exceeded all expectations and gratitude was expressed to all partners who had contributed and helped the project succeed through difficult times.

Resolved:

1. That the annual update report on the Wolverhampton House Project be received.
2. That the Corporate Parenting Board note the progress of the Wolverhampton House Project within the first twelve months.

10 **Wolverhampton Children and Young People in Care Health Annual Report**

Fiona Brennan, Designated Nurse for Children and Young People in Care and Wendy Harrison-Frazer, Consultant Counselling Psychologist for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) presented the Wolverhampton Children and Young People in Care Health Annual Report and highlighted salient points. The report summarised the key areas of development and outcomes achieved by local health service providers during the identified time frame and provide assurance.

In addition to the information within the report, there had been no reported changes to the offer for CAMHS however the pandemic and lockdown had changed the format of delivery. Many young people were being seen via virtual means however other cases were seen in person where appropriate.

In response to a query around how accurate video assessments were in comparison to face to face, it was noted that face to face was preferable to gain the additionality of reading body language or eye contact and a virtual conversation could not replace an examination. All appointments were triaged, RAG rated and risk assessed to determine if they needed to be seen face to face. It was agreed that in some cases, a virtual appointment was better than none.

In respect of the 3% refusal rate figures, it was acknowledged that it was sometimes unknown specifically why young people did not wish to engage. Efforts were always increased to try and reach out but sometimes it had to be accepted that it was their

choice. In terms of CAMHS appointment cancellations, it was noted that these were still high but not high as previously due to the use of virtual assessments.

It was noted that all appointments recorded as 'did not attend' or DNA were flagged with social workers to then communicate with foster carers and find out reasons why children were not being brought to appointments and resolve the issue. It was noted that the decision that CAMHS cases would be closed following three missed appointments, however this was no longer the case as it was agreed that it was not the child's doing and the carers needed to hold accountability for ensuring children had access to their appointments.

The work undertaken by health partners and the provision of extra was commended, particularly under such difficult circumstances.

Resolved:

That the Wolverhampton Children and Young People in Care Health Annual Report 2019 – 2020 be received.

11 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved:

That in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information contained in paragraph 2 of the Act, namely information that is likely to reveal the identity to an individual.

12 **Councillor Visits to Establishments - Schedule of Visits**

Alice Vickers, Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager advised that residents from K2I and Upper Pendeford Farm had been contacted and Upper Pendeford Farm had expressed an interest in taking part in a virtual visit. It was advised that invites would be going out shortly to members of Corporate Parenting Board to take part.

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Corporate Parenting Board 21 January 2021
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Report title	Schedule of Outstanding Matters	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John Reynolds Children and Young People	
Wards affected	All wards	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services	
Originating service	Governance	
Accountable employee	Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
	Tel	01902 554070
	Email	shelley.humphries@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Recommendation for action:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Receive and comment on the Schedule of Outstanding Matters.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to appraise the Board of the current position with a variety of matters considered at previous meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board.

2.0 Background

2.1 At previous meetings of the Board the following matters were considered and details of the current position is set out in the fourth column of the table.

Date of Meeting	Subject	Lead Member / Officer	Current Position
19 November 2021	That Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Social Care investigate available stock of Relight branded masks to provide to young people in care and care leavers.	Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Social Care	Face masks have been sourced and distributed.
19 November 2021	That the ongoing work towards gaining access to travel for care leavers continue and a scheme be in place by Christmas 2020.	The Reach Leaving Care Team	The Reach Leaving Care Team are monitoring the uptake of the current offer of transport with YPAs through supervision. In respect of a wider offer a meeting has been booked with Transport for West Midlands.

3.0 Financial implications

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

3.2 The financial implications of each matter will be detailed in the individual report submitted to the Board.

4.0 Legal implications

- 4.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.
- 4.2 The legal implications of each matter will be detailed in the individual report submitted to the Board.

5.0 Equalities implications

- 5.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 The equalities implications of each matter will be detailed in the individual report submitted to the Board.

6.0 Climate Change and Environmental implications

- 6.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.
- 6.2 The climate change and environmental implications of each matter will be detailed in the individual report submitted to the Board.

7.0 Human resources implications

- 7.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.
- 7.2 The human resources implications of each matter will be detailed in the individual report submitted to the Board.

8.0 Corporate Landlord implications

- 8.1 There are no direct Corporate Landlord implications arising from this report.
- 8.2 The Corporate Landlord implications of each matter will be detailed in the individual report submitted to the Board.

9.0 Health and Wellbeing implications

- 9.1 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.
- 9.2 The Health and Wellbeing implications of each matter will be detailed in the individual report submitted to the Board.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

- 10.1 Minutes of previous meetings of the Board and associates.

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CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Corporate Parenting Board 21 January 2021
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Report title	Adoption Service Interim Report	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor John Reynolds, Children and Young People	
Wards affected	All wards	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services	
Originating service	Adoption@Heart	
Accountable employee	Mark Tobin	Head of Service, Adoption@Heart
	Tel	07970 266496
	Email	Mark.tobin@adoptionatheart.org.uk
Report has been considered by	Children and Young People's Leadership Team	7 January 2021

Recommendation for action:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Receive the Adoption Service Interim Report for Adoption@Heart.

Recommendation for noting:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to note:

1. The progress made by the Regional Adoption Agency.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This interim report fulfils the obligations in Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) and Adoption Service Statutory Guidance (2011) Adoption and Children Act 2002 to report to the “executive side” of the local authority. This has guided the structure and information set out in the report attached at Appendix 2.
- 1.2 It is important to note that data and information within this report is accurate as of 30 September 2020.
- 1.3 Section two and three of the report is specific to adoption performance relating to the City of Wolverhampton Council children. Sections four onwards relate to service performance for the partnership as a whole.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Adoption@Heart is a Regional Adoption Agency providing adoption services on behalf of Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton Councils. The service is hosted by Wolverhampton and went live on 1 April 2019. Following a directive from the Department for Education in 2015 all local authorities in England are required to enter into regional arrangements for their adoption services by 2020.

3.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.

- 3.1 The report (Appendix 1) provides the detail of performance and the progress the new service has made from 30 September 2019 to 31 March 2020 & 01 April 2020 to 30 September 2020.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 The budget for 2020-2021 is £5,011,257, the agreed contributions from each of the partners are shown below:

Partner Organisation	2020-2021 Budget £
Dudley MBC	1,280,978
City of Wolverhampton Council	1,327,964
Walsall MBC	1,180,299
Sandwell Children’s Trust	1,222,016
Total	5,011,257

- 4.2 Any costs associated with the delivery of the service will be contained within the above allocation. Should additional costs be identified over and above the allocation then discussions will take with partners to agree additional contributions to fund the service.
[JB/08012021/M]

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 The collaboration agreement which outlines the requirements of all partners was agreed with oversight from the council's legal service, prior to the service becoming operational in April 2019. This remains the underpinning legal agreement. Primary legislation is in place requiring all councils in England to enter into regional arrangements by 2020.
[SB/08012021/V]

6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 There are no equalities implications to highlight at this stage.

7.0 Climate Change and Environmental implications

- 7.1 There are no climate change or environmental implications in place at this stage.

8.0 Human resources implications

- 8.1 Staff in the service are employed by the City of Wolverhampton Council following a Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) exercise in April 2019.

9.0 Corporate Landlord implications

- 9.1 The Adoption@Heart service is located at Priory Green Offices, Pendeford. There are no property portfolio implications at this stage as the service will remain at this location for the foreseeable future.

10.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 10.1 The health and wellbeing implications at this stage are coronavirus and staff in the service are currently working from home and continuing to work remotely to stop the spread of the virus. Individual Risk Assessments have been carried out and the service is using the live dedicated coronavirus webpages on City People, to keep up to date with advice and information.

11.0 Schedule of background papers

- 11.1 Appendix 1: Interim Annual Adoption Report

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Report title: **Adoption Service Report**

- **30 September 2019 to 31 March 2020 &**
- **01 April 2020 to 30 September 2020**

Date of report: 24 December 2020

To: City of Wolverhampton Council

Produced by: Mark Tobin
Head of Service

Service: Adoption@Heart



1. Introduction and Purpose of the Report

This report fulfils the obligations in Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) and Adoption Service Statutory Guidance (2011) Adoption and Children Act 2002 to report to the “executive side” of the local authority. This has guided the structure and information set out in the report below.

The report jointly covers the full year 2019/20 and the interim period of six months 1 April to 30 September 2020.

It is important to note that data and information within this report is accurate as of 30 September 2020.

Adoption@Heart is a Regional Adoption Agency, providing adoption services on behalf of Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton Councils. The service is hosted by Wolverhampton City Council and became operational 1 April 2019.

2. Number, type and age of children waiting for adoption and length of time waiting

As at 31 March 2020 there were 24 children subject to placement orders, but not yet placed with an adoptive family.

As at 30 September there were 35 children on placement orders and not yet placed with an adoptive family. One child has had a change of plan and was awaiting revocation of their placement order.

Of the remaining 34 children, eight were provisionally linked with adoptive parents but not yet formally matched. A further 16 were matched and due to be placed. Of these, two children were already living with their adoptive families, having been placed under foster for adoption regulations. 10 children were in active family finding not linked to adopters as at 30 September.

The breakdown of timescales since Placement Orders were granted for the 34 children on placement orders (not placed for adoption) at 30 September 2020 is below:

Less than 3 months:	3
Between 3 and 6 months:	11
Between 6 and 12 months:	8
Between 12 and 24 months:	10
Children waiting over 2 years:	2

2.1 Children Made Subject to Placement Orders

In year 2019/20

April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Total
0	3	5	1	1	0	10

Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	Total
2	2	0	1	7	1	13

23 Placement Orders granted in year

As at 30 September 2020:

Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Total
2	6	3	1	2	0	14

During the three previous years, the number of Placement Orders granted were as follows:

Financial Year:	16/17	17/18	18/19
	55	40	52

The number of Placement Orders Granted has reduced considerably in the 18-month period in comparison with previous years performance.

2.2 Children Subject to Should be Placed for Adoption (SHOBPA) decisions

As at 31 March 2020 there were 18 children with the decision to be placed for adoption (SHOBPA), but not yet subject to a placement order.

As at 30 September this number was 21

2.3 Number of Children who had a SHOPBA during the period

April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Total
2	2	5	4	1	0	14

Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	Total
5	1	3	1	4	2	16

30 children had SHOBPA decisions in the year.

As at 30 September 2020:

Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Total
2	4	3	3	0	2	14

Financial Year:	16/17	17/18	18/19
	59	45	53

The number of SHOBPA decisions in the 18-month period is significantly below the number given over the three previous years.

2.4 The Numbers of Children who had a Change of Plan in the Period

There were no children subject to a change of plan away from adoption during the 6-month period to 31 March 2020 or the 6 months to 30 September 2020. Three children had a change of plan in the previous 12 period.

2.5 Number of Children Placed for Adoption during the period

For 12 months to 31 March 2020:

Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep
2	3	1	2	1	0

Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	Total in year
2	2	2	6	3	1	25

For the six months to 30 September 2020:

Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Total
0	1	3	2	0	1	7

Children Placed in Previous Years:

Financial Year:	16/17	17/18	18/19
Children Placed:	45	45	42

Analysis:

The number of children placed in the 18-month period to 30 September 2020 is significantly lower in comparison to previous years, but consistent with the reduction in SHOBPA decisions and Placement Orders.

3. Number of Children Adopted

The number of children legally adopted by their adoptive parents in the full year 2019/20 was 46.

The number adopted in the first six months of 2020/21 was 6.

Number of children adopted in the three previous years is below:

Financial Year:	16/17	17/18	18/19
Children Adopted:	47	40	41

The number of children adopted in the 12-month period 2019/20, is consistent with the previous year performance. Due to the time delay in a child being placed and adopted, many of these children will have been placed prior to Adoption@Heart being operational. The numbers adopted in the 6-month period to 30 September 2020 is very low and reflective of the low numbers of children placed in the previous year. It is expected that the full year number of

children adopted will be lower, due to court delays created by Covid-19. The numbers of children leaving care nationally, via adoption, has reduced continuously since 2017.

Adoption Scorecard Performance

In 2014, as part of its’ Adoption Reform Agenda, the government introduced Adoption Scorecards to track local authority performance and to tackle delay in the adoption system. Scorecards are produced for a 3-year rolling average, with the latest data being published for April 2018 - March 2019 (Published April 2020).

The current indicators are:

A10 – number of days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. The current threshold is 426 days.

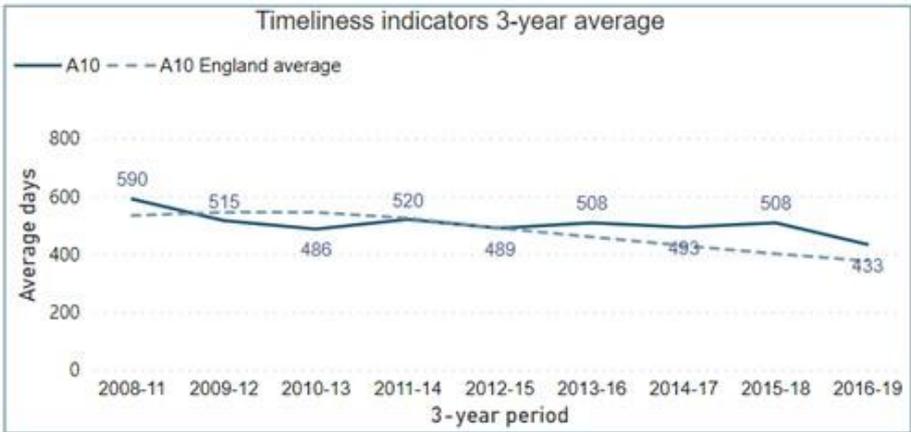
A2 – the number of days between receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and the Agency decision about a match to an adoptive family. The current threshold is 121 days.

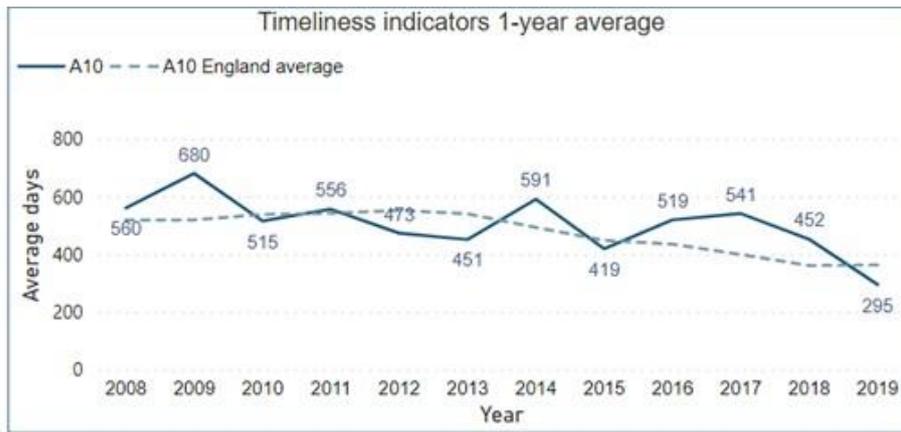
The in year average timescale for 46 children adopted in the year 2019/20 was

A10 - 295 Days

A2 - 148 days

A10: Average time (in days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family adjusted for foster care adoptions:				
2019 average days: 295	2019 England average: 363	Average time in 2019 was shorter than in 2018	2016-19 average days: 433	2016-19 England average: 376

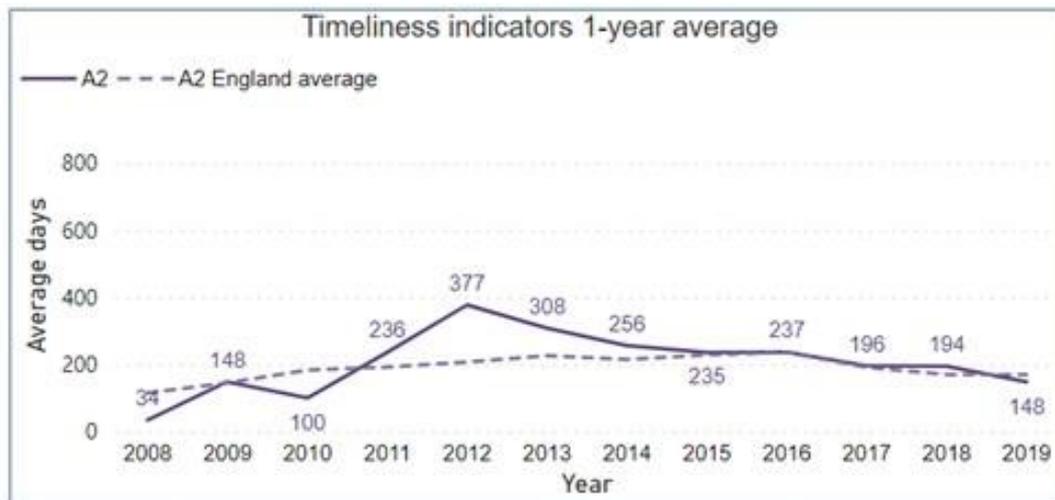
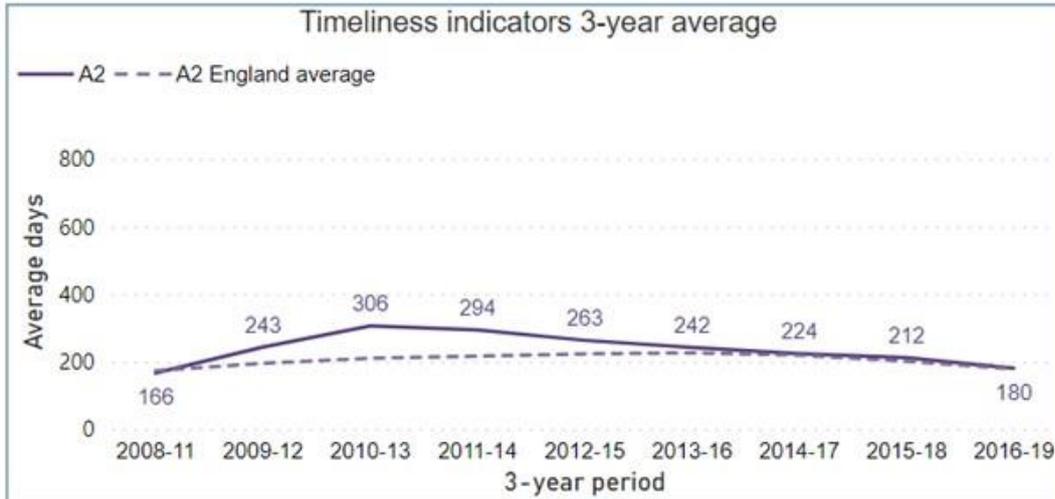




The A10 performance is significantly under threshold (426 days) and national average for the children adopted in the single year 2019/20. The 3-year average is slightly above threshold and 3-year average. There is evidence of improved timeliness for children adopted over the last 3 years.

A2: Average time (in days) between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family

A2: Average time (in days) between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family:				
2019 average days: 148	2019 England average: 170	Average time in 2019 was shorter than in 2018	2016-19 average days: 180	2016-19 England average: 178



A2 Performance for both single year and 3-year average is above threshold (121 days) and national average evidencing delay from the point of obtaining a legal order to matching children with adopters. The one-year performance is below national average and the 3-year average is consistent with the national average over 3 years. There is evidence of consistent gradual improvement in timeliness relating to this indicator over a 6 to 7-year period.

3.1 Early Permanency

There were six children placed in early permanence placements via Foster for Adopt in the 6-month period up to 30 September 2020. No children were placed via this regulation in the previous year.

4. Recruitment of Adopters

4.1 New Enquiries

For the period from 1st April 2020 to 30th September 2020, 283 new enquiries were received by the Adoption@Heart Recruitment Team.

This is in comparison to 139 enquiries received last year in the same period. 349 enquiries for the entire year.

During the year 2020/21 adoption enquiries have increased during the Covid-19 crisis and this reflects a national increase also experienced by other agencies.

4.2 Information Events

115 Adopter households attended virtual information events in the year 2019/20.

57 adopter households attended virtual information events took that place in the six months to September 2020, compared with 61 (mix of single and couples) households in the previous six months.

Due to Covid-19 Information Events were run virtually and the service offered a combination of phone consultations and virtual information events from June 2020. 106 adopters (units not individuals have received information in 6 months via this combined approach.

4.3 Initial visits

The number of initial assessment visits carried out to potential adoptive parents is as below:

Full year 2019/20:	128
Six months April to September 2020:	68

4.4 Registrations of Interest

The number of Registrations of Interest to adopt received were as below:

Full year 2019/20	64
Six months April to September 2020	42

Analysis:

The service has improved on year one performance in the first six months of year two, with a 31 percent increase in the number of Registrations of Interest.

Of the figures above six ROI's (three in each period) were received from foster carers adopting children in their care.

4.5 Current position

At the end of the period (30 September 2020), there were 19 families in Stage One, three in between Stage One and Stage Two, and 18 in Stage Two.

4.6 Timescales in Stage One

Stage One has a timescale threshold of 8 weeks or 56 days. 26 stage one's have ended in this period and the average duration (including fast track applications but excluding families who withdrew during stage one) is 48 days. 15 out of the 26 were completed outside of timescales which evidences the need for further work in reducing stage 1 delay. Covid-19 as led to additional adopter led delay in the current year.

4.7 Timescales in Stage Two

Stage Two has a timescale of 16 weeks or 112 days from commencement of the process to the Agency Decision regarding the match. 31 have ended in this period with an average duration of 113 days. 11 out of the 31 stage were completed outside of timescales. This is acceptable performance although every effort is made to avoid stage 2 delay.

4.8 Adopters Approved

There have been 34 adopters approved in this period compared with 34 in the previous six months (51 for full year 2019/20).

Analysis:

There is evidence of improved adopter recruitment performance in the first six months of the year 2020/21. The total number of approvals in the first year of operation was 51, therefore 34 approvals in the six-month period evidences an increase of 33 percent. This together with the numbers in stage one and two at 30 September, suggest that the projected overall number of approvals for the full year should increase to between 60 and 70. There has been some delay in receiving checks and medicals due to Covid-19, which could impact on performance.

4.9 Adopters Required

The service expects to place between 120 and 130 children in the current year and the targeted performance is to place 60 percent in house with this reducing incrementally to 30 percent over the next 3 years. In order to achieve this target performance will need to improve to 80 to 100 approvals over the next 3 years.

4.10 Partner adoptions

The service undertakes four Step Parent Adoption cases for each local authority each year. This will be considerably below the demand for each local authority. Work has been undertaken to embed consistent practice in screening enquiries in the local authorities and

Adoption@Heart staff offer consultation on all enquiries received. To date the numbers referred to the service are in the table below:

LA / Trust	2019/20 Full Year	2020/21 6 Months
Walsall	3	1
Sandwell	4	1
Dudley	4	0
Wolverhampton	1	1

5. Marketing Report

Marketing figures for this period are:

- 283 enquiries
- 49 phone consultations and 57 virtual information events attended
- Between 1 April 2020 and 30 September 2020, we had a total of 10,752 website visits – made up of 8,415 unique visits.

Marketing Activity

Despite the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, marketing activity has remained a priority in line with the national message that recruiting adopters and placing children with adopters remains a priority.

A summer campaign took place across July and August, which featured a digital advert impression campaign with a range of print and radio coverage across four weeks and a series of blog posts from Adoption@Heart Social Workers, detailing their working week from home. A myth busting social media campaign also took place across Facebook.

The national ‘You Can Adopt’ campaign launched on the 16 September 2020, which seeks to bust myths around who is eligible to adopt and explore what the adoption process involves.

The adoption process can seem confusing and complicated for those who are interested, so the campaign encourages agencies to work together to make sure prospective adopters receive the same message regardless. Adopters need to have the same message, process and experience, when it comes to their adoption journey.

Additionally, the campaign aims to target potential parents from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, as these children traditionally wait longer to be matched. We have to work effectively together to address the reasons why this is the case and we need to be better at reaching into the community to find those people who might be interested but aren’t coming forward.

It also highlights that especially during the coronavirus pandemic, there are still children out there who are looking for their new family. A pilot campaign also launched in October across Birmingham and London, which urges potential black adopters to come forward. Two enquiries have been received so far from Home for Good, as part of this drive.

Communication Leads across Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall are working together in marketing the service across the region, utilising their knowledge, resources and opportunities to promote the service across the region.

The remainder of the year will see increased marketing activity with the National Campaign combined with localised activities over the Autumn.

6. Requirements on the Preparation of Adoption Report Regulations

6.1 Complaints

There have been three formal complaints about the service since 1 April 2019.

One of these was from adopters in stage one of the recruitment process, where a decision was made not to proceed. Their complaint related to this decision and delays in communicating this in a timely way. The complaint was partly upheld due to the delay, but the decision not to invite to stage two was not changed. Learning has been identified with a view to avoiding delay in communicating decisions and discussed with the relevant staff.

The second stage one complaint was from an adoptive parent who had received unauthorised contact from a birth parent, who had obtained their contact details. The child was placed by Wolverhampton prior to April 2019. Following an investigation by the Head of Service, it was concluded that the information had not been disclosed from within the council as had been suggested by the complainant. It is not known how the birth came to have the adopters contact information. The complaint also highlighted issues in communication during the service transition process with the adopter regarding post adoption contact. This part of the complaint was upheld and learning discussed with the relevant Team Manager.

A third formal complaint has been received from an individual who made an enquiry to adopt but was not invited to proceed to registration of interest due to significant vulnerabilities identified at initial visit. A meeting took place between this individual and the Head of Service in Autumn 2019, however the complaint has escalated to stage two and is currently with the Ombudsman.

6.2 Staffing

Total number of staff, numbers in each team, vacancies, capacity issues, use of agency staff:

The service employs 32 qualified Social Workers on a permanent basis along with seven agency Social Workers, who are providing additional capacity due to vacant posts, sickness, maternity leave and additional demand created by Covid-19. Two agency Social Workers are funded for twelve months to provide additional family finding capacity.

There are three Team Managers, with one each covering the thematic service areas. One of these posts (Family Finding) was vacant until September 2020, but a seconded Manager in that role has now been permanently appointed. The panel team have two Panel Advisors (one of these is vacant and currently covered by an agency Social Worker), along with a Panel Co-ordinator and three Panel Administrators, one of which is currently vacant.

The Business Support Team have a Manager, a recently created Senior Business Support Officer post along five Business Support Officers. There are currently two BSO vacancies in the team.

Vacancy rates have remained low since the service went live and despite Covid-19, sickness and absence rates have been minimal during the first six months of 2020/21.

Ongoing consideration is being given to staffing capacity in relation to demand on the service, in particular for Family Finding and Adoption Support.

6.3 Referrals to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)

There have been no referrals to the IRM in either period.

7. Development of Adoption@Heart

7.1 Practice

Since February 2020, a programme of Practice Development Work has addressed the developmental needs of the service. From this work additional practice guidance has been implemented with a view to raising standards of practice and increasing performance and innovation, as the service becomes more established. Key areas of focus to date have been:

Adoption Support

To develop a measurable, outcomes-based vision for Adoption Support Services, ensuring that services are focused on achieving outcomes.

Ensure that we have the right systems and processes to deliver the right level of the service to the right families, based on levels of need.

Provide adopters with easier access to and better support from other agencies.

To deliver a more responsive birth parent support service and promote birth family relationships.

Improve services for adopted adults.

Early Permanence in placing children

Raising awareness and knowledge about early permanence and embedding the early permanence policy, practice and delivery in house and across partner organisations, through opportunities for training and development to ensure that knowledge is up to date and is widely shared.

Adopter Recruitment

Streamline processes and shorten timescales for all parts of the adopter assessment journey from Enquiry to ADM approval. With the aim that 90% of all assessments are completed in the required 6-month timescale. Development of Stage One and Stage Two processes to address delay and facilitate Adopter Self-Learning in Stage One and Stage Two.

Increasing adopter engagement and consultation

To influence service delivery through the development of an Adoption Advisory Board. Adopter Voice is commissioned to support A@H with this work. Increased communication with adopters through their journey by the development adopter database and a plan of regular communication.

7.2 Family Finding Activity

The tables below contain the total numbers of children placed by the service during the year 2019/20, as well as the six months to 30 September 2020/21.

Full Year 2019/20 – Children Placed:

LA / Trust	In House	Inter-agency	Total Placed
Sandwell	20	21	41
Wolverhampton	10	13	23
Walsall	11	8	19
Dudley	9	8	17
(Total)	50	50	100

1 April to 30 September 2020 – Children Placed:

LA/ Trust	In House	Interagency	Total placed
Sandwell	4	17	21
Wolverhampton	6	9	15
Walsall	7	11	18
Dudley	5	3	8
Total	22	40	62

For comparative purposes, the performance of each LA / Trust in placing children is in the table.

2018/19 – Children Placed by LA / Trust (year prior to Adoption@Heart going live):

LA/ Trust	In House	Interagency	Total placed
Sandwell	8	28	36
Wolverhampton	29	13	42
Walsall	16	12	28
Dudley	16	16	32
Total	69	69	138

Early Permanence

In the full year 2019/20, five children were placed via Foster for Adoption.

20 children have been placed via Foster for Adoption in the first six months of 2020/21, five of these children were Wolverhampton children.

Analysis

The overall number of children placed in the year 2020/21 has increased pro rata by over twenty percent, compared with the previous year performance, despite the impact of Covid-19 on children’s transitions. The service is likely to place around the same number of children in total as the combined total of the four partners in the year prior before the RAA was formed.

In the first year of operation, forty one percent of children placed were from Sandwell and consequently numbers placed for the other three partners were considerably lower. This was due to the fact that more Sandwell children were waiting on Placement Orders at the point the service became operational. In the first six months of the current year, this has levelled out with thirty three percent of children placed being from Sandwell.

The numbers of children placed for both Walsall and Wolverhampton have significantly increased in the current year to date. The number of children placed by Dudley remains lower than in the previous year and this should be seen in the context of the numbers of children waiting to be placed for adoption, which are also lower for Dudley. These are provided in the table below.

Inter-agency usage has remained high during both periods, with sixty four percent of children placed externally in the current year to date. The increased numbers of adopters entering the process in the same period would indicate that the number placed in house should increase, as these adopters become approved during quarters three and four of the current year.

Foster for Adopt usage has significantly increased during the first six months of 2020/21. This increase is the result of development work done within the service and across the partnership.

7.3 Adoption Panels

Adoption panels have operated since early April 2019 across the four Local Authority / Trust locations on a weekly basis. Panels have approved 51 Adopters and matched 107 children in the year 2019/20 (100 children placed in year). In the first six months of 2020/21 panels have matched 67 children with adoptive parents (62 placed with adopters) and approved 34 adopters.

Panels have been robust in raising issues about practice where appropriate.

The service now has four panel Chairs, having recruited a further Chair in addition to the three who transferred in April 2019. The two Panel Advisors and the Panel Coordinator have driven the development of robust quality assurance processes and the Head of Service has held quarterly meetings with the Chairs. A joint staff / panel member development day took place in January 2020 and another is scheduled for December 2020.

In April 2020 Covid-19 restrictions led to the need for panels to be run virtually, rather than face to face. Despite initial challenges in moving to this new way of working, the panel team and Chairs worked effectively together in ensuring panels were able to run smoothly via Microsoft Teams. Consideration is currently being given to the benefits of the virtual panel system and to what extent the system might remain virtual once restrictions are lifted. There have been clear benefits regarding adopter attendance and reducing regional travel for professionals.

ADM processes are now embedded and there have been less delays in progressing decisions due to resource challenges.

Following challenges in ensuring panels are quorate during the first-year, additional panel members have been recruited from within the local authorities. This has reduced dependence on independent panel members, improve quoracy and enable effective involvement by partner agencies in panel delivery. There are some ongoing challenges regarding the quality of documentation and adherence to timescales, which are being addressed.

7.4 Partnership Working

Considerable progress has been made during the 18 months since the service went live in strengthening engagement and communication across the partnership. This has improved the interface between the service and partners and improved the understanding of it being a shared service, rather than a separate entity.

Practice workshops were held in all partner services during the quarter four of 2019/20. Further workshops are planned for Autumn 2020.

Adoption@Heart managers are attending key meetings relating to children's care planning and tracking.

Virtual working has improved engagement, due to reduction in travel and impact on time.

Establishment of an Operations Group has improved operational communication at Head of Service and Service Manager level.

A partnership event for all staff is planned for November 2020 (delayed from May due to Covid-19).

8. Adoption Support

During April 2019 to March 2020, the service made 226 ASF applications. In the six months to September 2020, 145 applications have been made to the fund. The split of these according to which area the adopter lived, in is outlined in the table below:

Local Authority	ASF Applications 2019/20	ASF Applications 2020/21 – year to date April to September
Dudley	82	38
Sandwell	40	26
Walsall	58	40
Wolverhampton	46	41

Adoption@Heart is responsible for the following post adoption contact arrangements. The table shows the number of children and the work generated, as some children will have multiple post adoption recipients.

Post Adoption Contact 2019/20 – Full Year

Council	Number of Adoptee	Number of Contacts for Adoptee
Dudley	343	966
Sandwell	544	1083
Walsall	683	1786
Wolverhampton	351	1022

Post Adoption Contact 2020/21 Year to Date:

Council	Number of Adoptee	Number of Contacts for Adoptee
Dudley	357	941
Sandwell	535	1068
Walsall	772	1860
Wolverhampton	400	860

Referrals / Enquiries for Adoption Support

There have been 94 referrals for assessment of need between April 2019 - March 2020 and a further 43 during the period April to September 2020. All of them have resulted in delivering specialist intervention, commissioning therapeutic services either inhouse or with external providers. Additionally, there have been a significant number of reviews of therapeutic intervention and we have made 288 applications to the ASF for new and continued therapeutic services.

In House Therapeutic Provision

The service has an in-house Adoption Support Therapist who delivers therapeutic intervention which includes; Therapeutic Life Story work, DDP informed practice, delivery of parenting programmes including Nurturing Attachment Parenting Programme, plus training sessions. The total ASF claims from work undertaken amounts to £38,314.33.

9. Accountability

Management board

The service has continued to have in place two key layers of governance with a Management Board attended by Assistant Directors and a Strategic Commissioning Board attended by Directors of Children's Service.

The Strategic Commissioning Board has continued to meet quarterly, supported by the commissioning lead from Dudley. The Chair of this board transferred to Sandwell in October 2020, due to a change of DCS in Dudley who previously chaired.

In May 2020 an Operations Group was established on a trial basis, with a view to increasing engagement, oversight and operational involvement of Heads of Service and other managers from each partners service. This group has met monthly chaired by the Head of Service for Adoption@Heart. Consequently, the Management Board has met bi-monthly given part of its function is now delegated to this group.

Further discussion will take place with the Strategic Commissioning Board in January 2021 about the governance arrangements moving forward.

Report completed by:



Mark Tobin
Head of Service

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CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

**Data as at:
30 November 2020**

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Agenda Item No: 7

City of Wolverhampton Council - Corporate Parenting Report

Current CYPiC Profile

Current CYPiC per 10,000 population

94

Wolverhampton CYPiC per 10,000 Year End 2019/20

94

West Mids CYPiC per 10,000 pop 2019/20

82

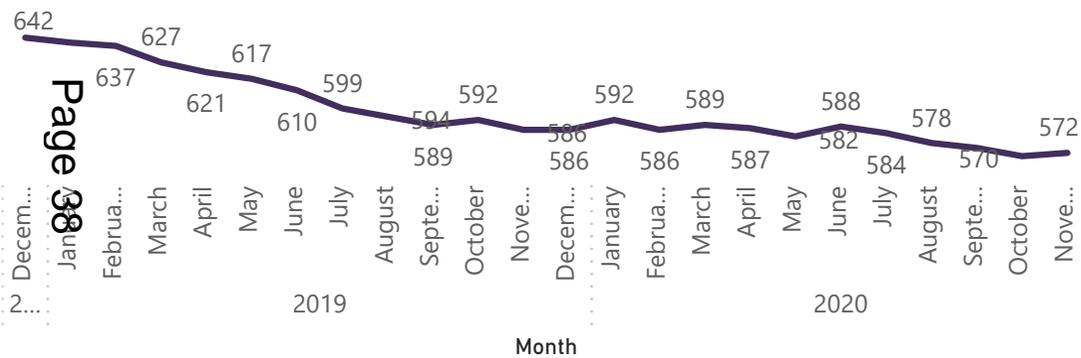
Stat Neighbours CYPiC per 10,000 pop 2019/20

93

England CYPiC per 10,000 pop 2019/20

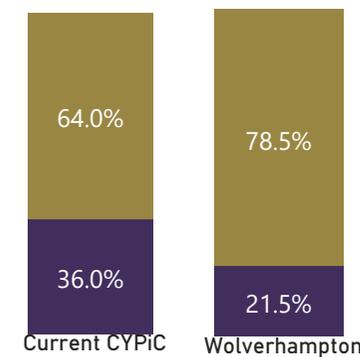
67

Number of Children and Young People in Care in Wolverhampton



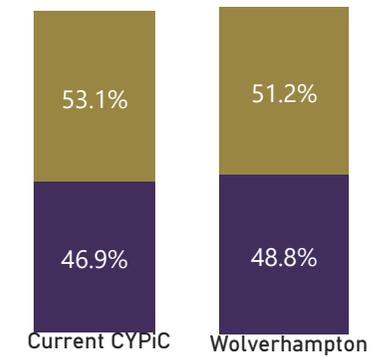
Ethnicity Comparison

- BME
- White



Gender Comparison

- Female
- Male



Age Breakdown

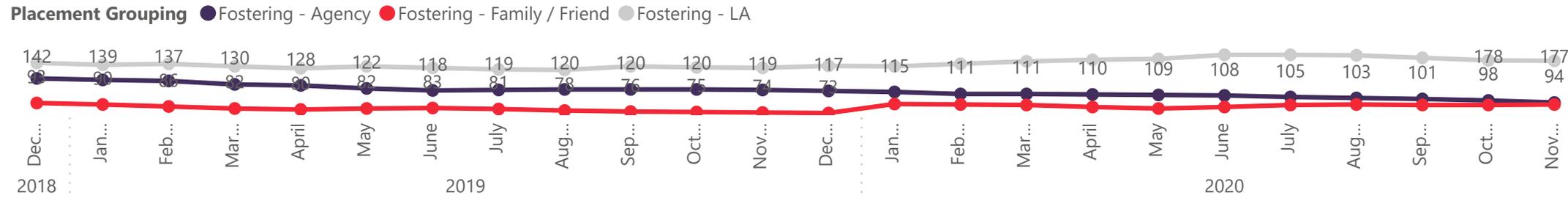


The numbers of children and young people in care have decreased further in the year to date from 589 in March to 572. There continues to be an increase in the number of children leaving care and the rate of children entering care has decreased. Just over 60% of Wolverhampton's children and young people in care are aged 10 and above with 28% aged 15 or above. There is an over representation of BAME children in the current children and young people in care cohort compared to the overall city population of 0-18 year olds. Over representation is also apparent with males when compared to the overall Wolverhampton population of 0-18 year olds.

City of Wolverhampton Council - Corporate Parenting Report

CYPiC Placement Analysis

Number of placements for current CYPiC in past 12 months



There continues to be more children placed with internal foster carers than agency carers



% CYPiC placed more than 20 mile + from home
11%

2019/20 = 12%
2018/19 = 13%
2017/18 = X
2016/17 = 11%

% CYPiC with less than 3 placements in last 12 months
93.8%

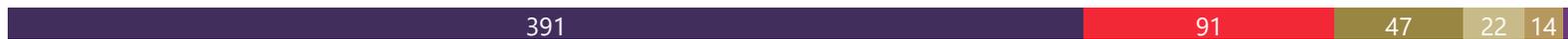
2019/20 = 91%
2018/19 = 86%
2017/18 = 84%
2016/17 = 87%

% CYPiC in same placement for 2 years or more
74.8%

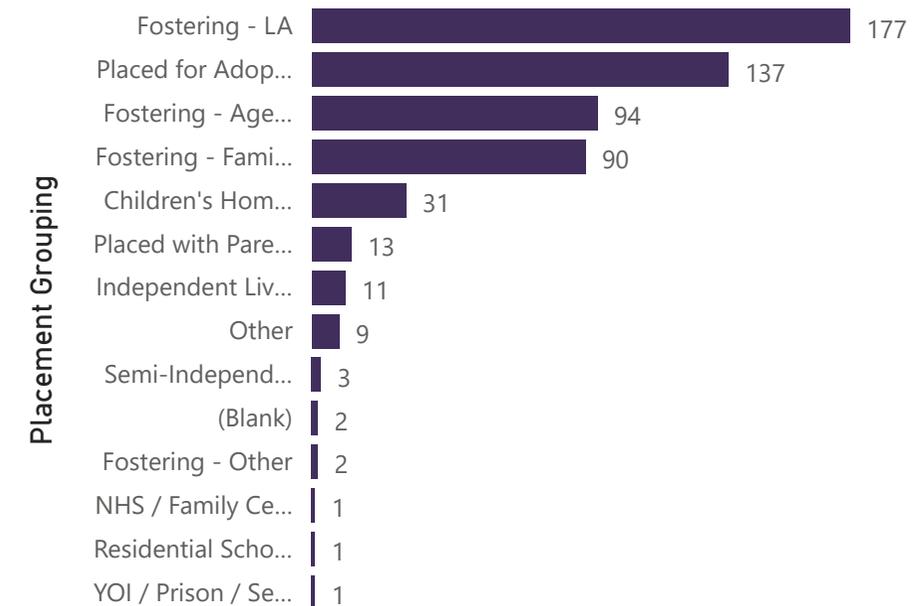
2019/20 = 74%
2018/19 = 73%
2017/18 = 70%
2016/17 = 65%

Number of placements for current CYPiC in past 12 months

Placements in last 12 months ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 ● 6 ● 7



Current CYPiC by Placement Type



Through the performance of the Family Values Project, the number of mainstream placements continue to stay higher than those with agency foster carers. Both the long and short term placement stability continue to improve with an increase to 94% for the percentage of CYPiC with fewer than 3 placements during the last 12 months from 86% during 2018/19. We are continuing the process of realigning the reporting and as such some placement types will be over-represented in the above figures.

City of Wolverhampton Council - Corporate Parenting Report

Assessments, Reviews, Visits



CYPiC with an up to date assessment

Where a new assessment has been completed within 12 months



2019/20 = 78.36%
2018/19 = 41.03%

● Fail ● Pass



CYPiC with an up to date review

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



2019/20 = 97.27%
2018/19 = 95%

● In Timescales ● Not in Timescale



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CYPiC who participated in the review

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



2019/20 = 89%
2018/19 = 89%

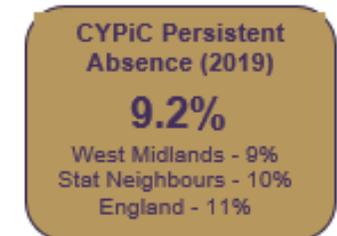
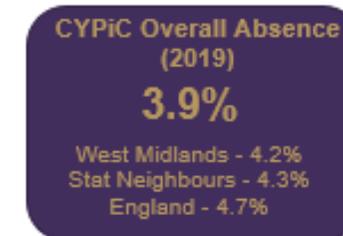
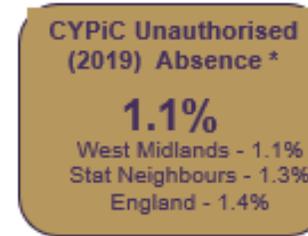
Assessments continue to see a reduction as a result of the system migration, while reviews continue to improve throughout the year with 93% of children recorded as having an up to date review.

Due to the migration to the new system there has been a significant decrease in the percentage of reviews where the child was present or contributed, this is due to recording issues within the system and are being addressed by the service.

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Education

KS2 Expected Standard	Maths	Reading	Writing	Reading, Writing and Maths
CYPiC Wolverhampton 2019	47%	50%	58%	42%
Wolverhampton 2019	74%	70%	77%	64%
CYPiC West Midlands 2019	50%	51%	52%	38%
CYPiC Stat Neighbours 2019	54%	49%	52%	38%
CYPiC England 2019	51%	49%	50%	37%
KS4	9-4 Pass in English and Maths	Attainment 8	Progress 8	
CYPiC Wolverhampton 2019	15%	20%	-1%	
Wolverhampton 2019	58%	45%	0%	
CYPiC West Midlands 2019	18%	20%	-1%	
CYPiC Stat Neighbours 2019	18%	20%	-1%	
CYPiC England 2019	18%	19%	-1%	



CYPiC with an up to date PEP

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

The 2019 KS2 and KS4 results show that Wolverhampton CYPiC has improved in line with comparator performance. There remains a significant gap between the performance of CYPiC and all Wolverhampton children however small numbers in the cohort can make these measurements volatile. For further information about the education attainment of CYPiC in Wolverhampton please refer to the Virtual School Head teacher annual report.

Attendance data has been updated for 2019. This is taken from published data that was released in April 2020, and shows that performance is in line with or better than comparator groups. Wolverhampton are in the upper quartile nationally (best performance) for children and young people in care overall absence.

CYPiC with an up to date PEP performance has decreased in November. There are some issues with the accuracy of the recording of PEP data within the new Eclipse system. This continues to be addressed by the Social Care Systems team to develop forms for more accurate reporting.

PEP's - All Ages



2019/20 = 93%
2018/19 = 89%

PEP's - Early Year's



2019/20 = 72%
2018/19 = 63%

PEP's - Year 12 & 13



2019/20 = 81%
2018/19 = 75%

● Fail ● Pass

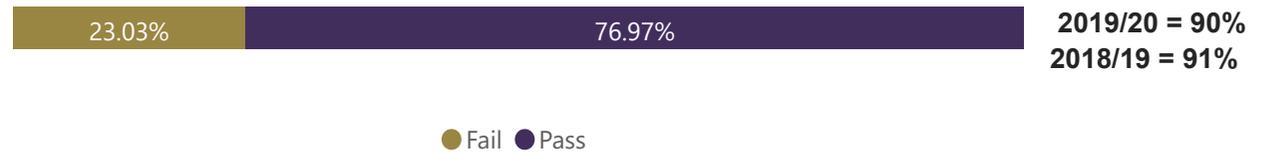
City of Wolverhampton Council - Corporate Parenting Report

Health & Dental - This data is internal CWC data and reflects different timescales to the data provided by health



CYPiC with an up to date review health check

Where a review health check has been completed within 12 months



CYPiC with an initial health check

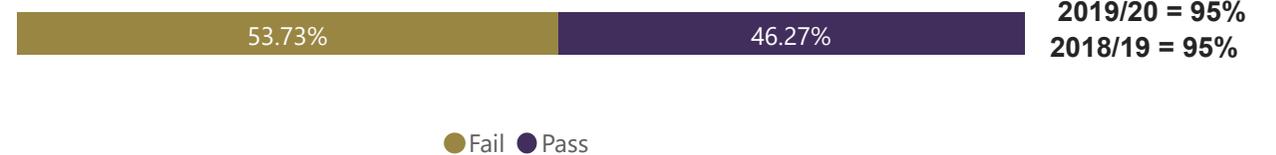
Where a health check has been completed within 20 working days of entering care (rolling 12 months)



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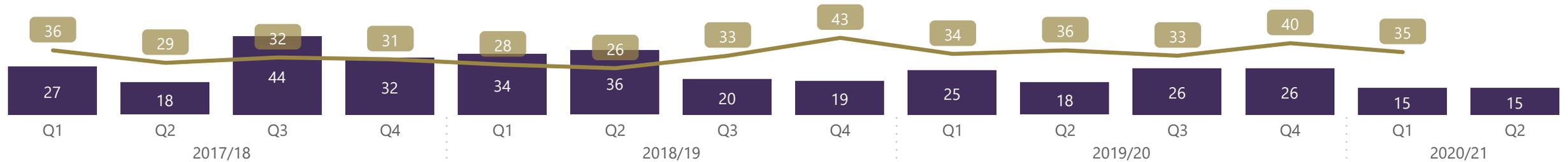
CYPiC with an up to date dental check

Where a dental check has been completed within 12 months



Care Applications

● Number of children subject of Care applications ● Timeliness of care applications (Avg. Duration)



The percentage of dental checks completed has been consistently declining as a result of the current situation regarding Covid-19 as dentists have been closed. Medical checks which were previously an area of strength have yet again seen a further decline to 76% in the month, there have been system issues as a result of the migration to the new social care system which has impacted on recording of health and dental checks. Of the new CYPiC in the past 12 months 25% had a health assessment within the first 20 working days, although this would not affect the other health percentages, however this remains an area of concern and continues to be flagged as an area of concern in internal performance management meetings. We will be expecting to see an increase in the length of care proceedings due to the impact of Covid-19. There has also been a delay in timeliness due to the court initially not being able to manage proceedings virtually.

City of Wolverhampton Council - Corporate Parenting Report

Adoption



CYPiC adopted within A1 indicator

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



2019/20 = 74%
2018/19 = 55%



CYPiC adopted within A2 indicator

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



2019/20 = 64%
2018/19 = 68%



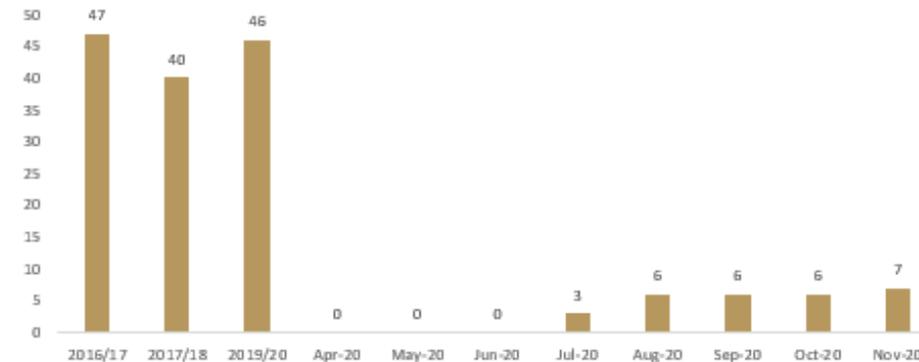
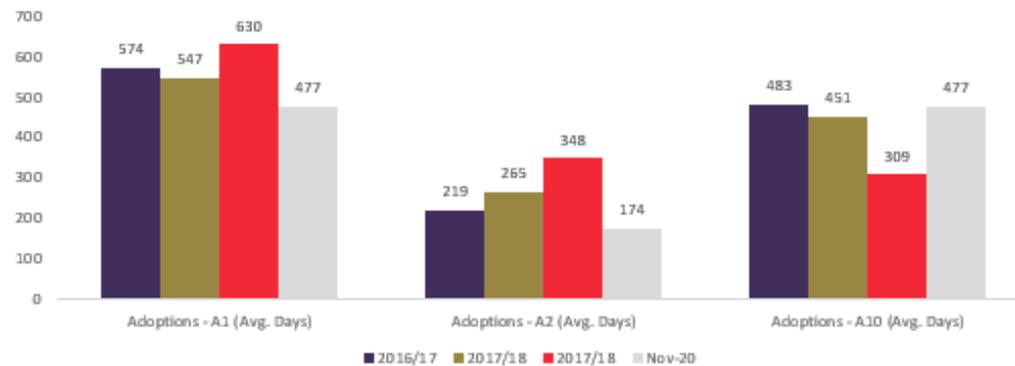
CYPiC adopted within A10 indicator

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



2019/20 = 89%
2018/19 = 73%

Average Days against Adoption Indicators



There have only been a small number of adoptions so far for the 2020/21 year as a result of the Covid-19 situation, this has led to only seven adoptions carried out by the end of November 2020.

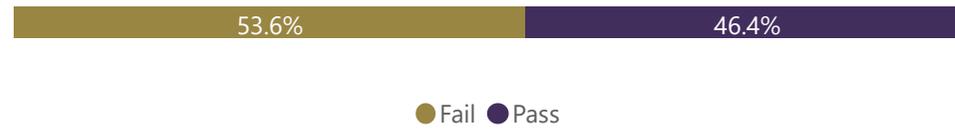
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Care Leavers



Care Leavers EET Status

Education, Employment and Training of Care Leavers aged 19-21

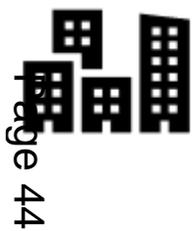
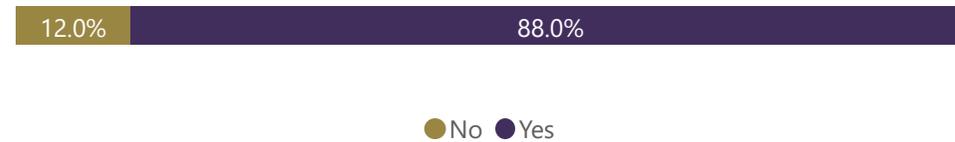


2019/20 Year Out-turn = 57%
 2018/19 Year Out-turn = 61%
 2019/20 West Midlands = 50%
 2019/20 Stat Neighbours = 48%
 2019/20 England = 53%



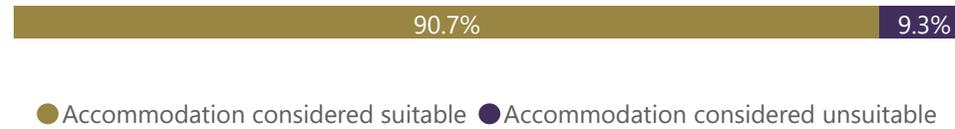
Care Leavers available to work

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



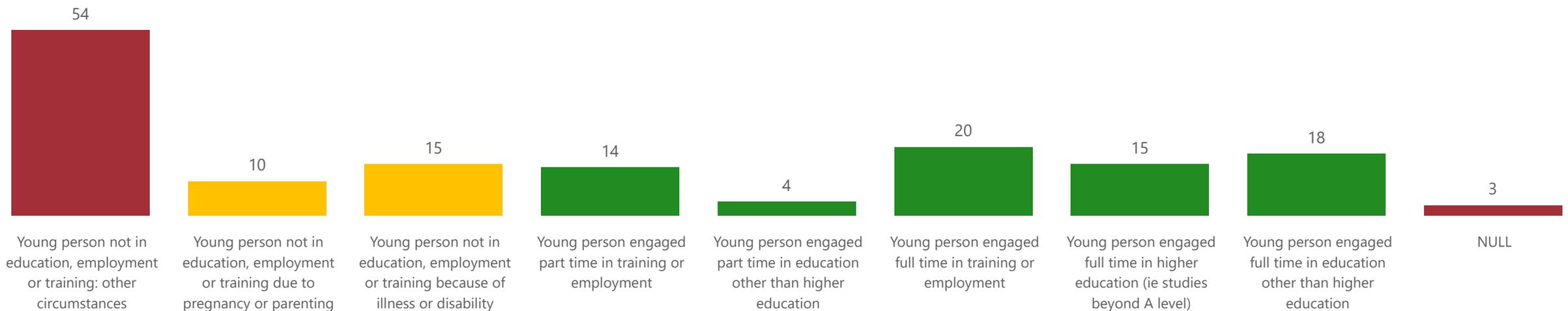
Care Leavers in suitable accommodation

Care Leavers aged 19-21 who live in suitable accommodation



2019/20 Year Out-turn = 91%
 2018/19 Year Out-turn = 88%
 2019/20 West Midlands = 85%
 2019/20 Stat Neighbours = 86%
 2019/20 England = 85%

Current Care Leaver EET Status (19-21)



Care Leaver outcomes continues to be an area of strength for the authority. At the end of November 2020 54% of 19-21 year olds were in Education, Employment or Training. Although this is a continued downturn when compared to last year, it is still higher than regional and national comparators. 88% of care leavers are available for work with 12% (30 young people) not available due to pregnancy or young motherhood, illness or disability or because they are in custody. The proportion of care leavers currently deemed to be in suitable accommodation is also included and shows that 91% of the cohort are currently in suitable accommodation.