

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

**Venue** MS Teams

## Membership

**Chair** Cllr Beverley Momenabadi (Lab)

### Labour

Cllr Mary Bateman  
Cllr Paula Brookfield  
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar  
Cllr Asha Mattu  
Cllr Rita Potter

### Conservative

Cllr Udey Singh  
Cllr Wendy Dalton  
Cllr Stephanie Haynes  
Cllr Mak 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:

**Contact** Shelley Humphries  
**Tel/Email** Tel: 01902 554070 or [shelley.humphries@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:shelley.humphries@wolverhampton.gov.uk)  
**Address** Democratic Services, Civic Centre, 1st floor, St Peter's Square,  
Wolverhampton WV1 1RL

Copies of other agendas and reports are available from:

**Website** <http://wolverhampton.moderngov.co.uk>  
**email** [democratic.services@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@wolverhampton.gov.uk)  
**Tel** 01902 550320

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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               | <b>Apologies for absence</b>  |
| 2               | <b>Declarations of interests</b>  |
| 3               | <b>Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2021</b> (Pages 3 - 8)<br>[To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2021 as a correct record.]   |
| 4               | <b>Matters arising</b><br>[To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2021.]   |
| 5               | <b>Schedule of Outstanding Matters</b> (Pages 9 - 10)<br>[To receive the Schedule of Outstanding Matters.]  |
| 6               | <b>Grandmentor Scheme Update</b><br>[To receive a presentation on the progress of the Grandmentor Scheme.]  |
| 7               | <b>Annual Fostering Report 2020-2021</b> (Pages 11 - 48)<br>[To receive the Annual Fostering Report 2020-2021 for approval.]  |
| 8               | <b>Foster Carers' Forum</b><br>[To receive a verbal update on the activities of the Foster Carers' Forum.]  |
| 9               | <b>Performance Monitoring Information</b> (Pages 49 - 56)<br>[To receive the Performance Monitoring Information Report.]  |
| 10              | <b>Exclusion of the Press and Public</b><br>[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

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 11 | <b>Councillor Visits to Establishments - Schedule of Visits</b><br>[To receive verbal feedback on any visits to establishments undertaken by Councillors since the last meeting.] |
|----|---|

## **Attendance**

**Chair** Cllr Beverley Momenabadi (Lab)

### **Labour**

Cllr Mary Bateman  
Cllr Paula Brookfield

Cllr Jasbinder Dehar  
Cllr Rita Potter

### **Conservative**

Cllr Udey Singh  
Cllr Wendy Dalton

Cllr Stephanie Haynes

### **In attendance**

Emma Bennett  
Fiona Brennan  
Michelle Cummings  
Esther Douglas  
Casey Gavin  
Alison Hinds  
Jazmine Walker

Director of Children's and Adult Services  
Wolverhampton CCG  
Corporate Parenting Officer  
Social Worker and Foster Care Trainer  
Trainee Systems and E-learning Assistant  
Deputy Director of Social Care  
Head of Children and Young People in Care

Foster Carers, members of CliC and a care leaver in an apprenticeship role also attended as guests.

*Item No.*    *Title*

**1        Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Asha Mattu.

**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 25 March 2021**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2021 be confirmed as a 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**

Shelley Humphries, Democratic Services Officer presented the Schedule of Outstanding Matters report. The report outlined progress on matters previously considered by the Board. It was noted that Councillors had been provided with a list of dates for Children in Care Council meetings and a form to pre-book attendance. The deferred item from the last meeting was the Experience of an Apprentice item and had been rescheduled for item 11 of this meeting.

Resolved:

That the Schedule of Outstanding Matters report be received.

**6        National Independent Review of Children's Social Care**

Members of the Care Leavers' Independent Collective delivered a presentation to support the National Independent Review of Children's Social Care report. The published report had outlined that the National Independent Review of Children's Social Care had been set to take a fundamental look at the needs, experiences, and outcomes of the children it supports, and what is needed to make a real difference. As part of the review, a survey had been shared with Wolverhampton's young people in or leaving care to gain an understanding of their views on the children's social care offer. The presentation summarised the analysis of outcomes from the survey.

A concern was raised around quicker access to mental health care and counselling services however reassurances were offered that this had been noted in the outcome of the survey and would be addressed as part of the response. It was noted that the response to COVID had an impact on many services normally delivered face to face, such as mental health and counselling however virtual means were being offered where possible and a therapeutic service had been commissioned in conjunction with Barnardo's.

In terms of young people's awareness of services, it was acknowledged that young persons' advisors and social workers would be prompted to make young people aware of services available.

It was acknowledged that the percentage of young people who felt comfortable and confident raising a complaint was positive although it was queried how this could be raised to 100% as all young people needed to be confident to voice their concerns. It was noted that raising young people's awareness of their rights was key to bolstering confidence. Exploring ways of expanding the sources from which children and young people could learn their rights and how to ensure YPAs, carers and social workers reinforce the message they were safe to voice their concerns was suggested.

It was thought that the percentage who felt they received good support with physical health was disappointing and it was important to explore reasons for this. Fiona Brennan agreed to liaise with health colleagues and requested an invite for the Strategic Health Steering Group to be extended to young people to gain their feedback and insight. It was also noted that Total Respect training for health colleagues would be beneficial.

It was acknowledged that the survey had been distributed to all young people wherever they were placed which prompted a query on what the breakdown of placement type was for the children currently in the care system. It was noted figures were already provided in the Performance Monitoring Information Report however this information couldn't be broken down any further as the placements were anonymous.

Resolved:

1. That the National Independent Review of Children's Social Care be noted.
2. That young people be invited to participate and provide feedback in a meeting of the Strategic Health Steering Group.

## **7 Corporate Parenting Board Work Plan 2021 - 2022**

Michelle Cummings, Corporate Parenting Officer presented the Corporate Parenting Board Work Plan 2021 – 2022 for approval and highlighted salient points. The Work Plan outlined the schedule of reports to be submitted to Corporate Parenting Board over the coming municipal year along with associated reporting timelines.

In response to a query regarding providing an interim fostering report in addition to the annual report it was noted that this was not a statutory requirement as it was with the adoption paper, however a briefing note update could be provided if required.

Resolved:

That the Corporate Parenting Board Work Plan 2021 – 2022 be approved.

## **8 Foster Carer Engagement**

Esther Douglas, Social Worker and Foster Care Trainer delivered a presentation outlining the activities undertaken around Foster Carer Engagement. The presentation showcased an extensive calendar of events, forums and workshops designed to increase engagement, train, inform and bring foster carers together.

It was acknowledged that the pandemic had affected much of the activity however training and other services moved online where possible to ensure continuation of service, proving more beneficial in some instances. A Foster Carer portal had been established to allow digital access to training, shared documents and information and training had been delivered on how to use it.

It was reported that a number of social activities had taken place such as a Christmas party, carol services, a Picnic in the Park fun day as well as the ongoing Back to Eden Community Allotment Project to inspire young people to cultivate their own produce.

Black History Month had been observed with various events including the publication of the Diverse Fostering Cookbook inspired by contributors' childhood memories of favourite dishes they wanted to share and the Story Time Project with inclusive storylines and characters to also promote engaging with children by reading with them.

A number of foster carers also contributed to the presentation as guest speakers providing accounts of their experiences in fostering and working alongside social services. Guests included a same sex couple who wished to share their positive fostering journey and communicate that anyone who wanted to provide a loving home for a child could become a foster carer and potentially change a young person's life.

The presentation also provided a timetable of the proposed training, support and development for the coming year.

The work was commended by all present and Board members invited foster carers to make use of the Ettingshall and Goldthorn Hill allotments for the Allotment Project if they wished.

Resolved:

That the presentation showcasing Foster Carer Engagement be received.

## 9 **Performance Monitoring Information**

Alison Hinds, Deputy Director for Social Care presented the Performance Monitoring Information report and highlighted salient points.

It was noted that, following the report on improving figures for those in education, employment or training, there had been a 2% improvement seen since the last Performance Monitoring Information report.

It was moved that, in the interest of time, any further questions be forwarded to Alison Hinds via Democratic Services outside of the meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the Performance Monitoring Information be received.
2. That any further questions be forwarded to Alison Hinds, Deputy Director for Social Care via Democratic Services outside of the meeting.

10 **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.

11 **Experience of an Apprenticeship**

A guest speaker delivered a presentation which provided an account of their experiences in apprenticeship roles within the Council.

The presentation outlined their experience of work prior to the apprenticeship and how they learned of the opportunity to apply for the role. An account was given of the experiences working in the role and plans for what to do next to progress along a career pathway. The presentation also gave an overview of what was offered to care leavers once they began an apprenticeship within the Council, including the Grand Mentor Scheme.

During the lockdown, the remainder of the apprenticeship continued working from home and the apprentice's team developed virtual workshops to support children and young people returning to schools after reopening. They reported that the experience had been life changing and had provided them with opportunities to gain skills and build themselves as a professional.

The guest speaker's hard work was commended by all and it was acknowledged how valuable the ring-fenced apprenticeships were in supporting care experienced young people along pathways into employment opportunities.

Resolved:

That the presentation on the Experience of an Apprenticeship be received.

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

It was reported that no visits had been undertaken recently however it was planned to resume once the lifting of restrictions had become more certain.

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<b>CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Board</b> <b>8 July 2021</b>
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<b>Report title</b>	Schedule of Outstanding Matters	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Beverley Momenabadi Children and Young People	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's and Adult Services	
<b>Originating service</b>	Governance	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer
	Tel	01902 554070
	Email	shelley.humphries@wolverhampton.gov.uk

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**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.

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	<b>Current Position</b>
10 June 2021	That young people be invited to participate and provide feedback in a meeting of the Strategic Health Steering Group.	Michelle Cummings, Corporate Parenting Officer	In progress

## 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 Any other implications

6.1 There are no other implications arising from this report.

## 7.0 Schedule of background papers

7.1 Minutes of previous meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board and associates.

<b>CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Board</b> <b>8 July 2021</b>
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<b>Report title</b>	Annual Fostering Report 2020-2021
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Beverley Momenabadi Children and Young People
<b>Wards affected</b>	All wards
<b>Accountable director</b>	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's and Adult Service
<b>Originating service</b>	Children and Young People in Care Service
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Lisa Whelan                      Service Manager Tel                                      01902 553067 Email                                 Lisa.whelan@wolverhampton.gov.uk
<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Children and Young People's Leadership Team    17 June 2021

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**Recommendation for decision:**

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Approve the attached Annual Fostering Report 2020-2021

**Recommendations for noting:**

The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to note:

1. The development, progress, and future objectives of the Fostering Service.

## **1.0 Purpose**

1.1 To inform of the developments, progress, and future objectives of the fostering service.

## **2.0 Background**

2.1 This report provides a description of the structure, aims and duties of the City of Wolverhampton Fostering Service and details the performance of the service over the last twelve months. The National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services (2011) requires that all Fostering Services provide written reports to their Executive or Trustees on a regular basis. In the case of Local Authorities, the 'executive' is the Elected Members of the City of Wolverhampton.

2.2 The Fostering Service is located within the Children and Young People Directorate of the City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC). The Fostering Service recruits, supports, and develops foster carers to care for and support vulnerable children placed in their care.

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

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

2.4 The Fostering Service was last inspected by Ofsted as part of a Single inspection of Children's Services in January 2017 and was rated 'Good'.

2.5 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 imposes a duty on Local Authorities to find enough appropriate Fostering provisions in its local area. The Fostering Service is committed to provide stability, care, and security to children in care and ensure that foster carers can meet the individual needs of children. As such the Recruitment Marketing Strategy outlines how we aim to provide placement choice. The importance of placing children within their family and friend's network, within their community and with their siblings remains paramount in securing stability for the child as well as ensuring their education is not disrupted and their well-being promoted.

2.6 The Fostering Service seeks to provide a comprehensive and excellent quality foster care to all children in the care of the City of Wolverhampton. Foster carers provide children in care a positive experience of family life within an environment that promotes their physical, emotional and health needs. Working in partnership with Health, Education and other allied professionals enables foster carers to provide a warm, safe, and caring family environment ensuring that the children's emotional health and development is promoted. Foster carers ensure children in care have access to available opportunities to promote children's attendance and their academic achievements, thus maximising all opportunities for children to achieve their full potential.

### 3.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.

- A Net Gain of 23 foster carers have been achieved considering both mainstream and connected carers and that some have transferred to SGO during the year. Success in all areas has impacted on the overall net gain of carers.
- Permanence in general, 18 SGO orders have been achieved.
- Placement stability has steadily increased throughout 2020/21 in both short-term and long-term placements.
- Despite the Covid pandemic, robust and effective recruitment. Continued increased enquiries supported through sophisticated media campaigns and digital advertising including a TV advert.
- Assessment timeliness has been affected by the Covid pandemic; however, performance remains positive compared to previous years.
- Wolverhampton have been part of the Black Country Fostering Project, whereby 4 authorities have worked collaboratively to assess services with a view to developing and sharing resources.
- The new model of fostering “Foster Families United” has been further developed and there are currently three teams, each led by an experienced carer, supporting up to five fostering families in each team.

### 4.0 Progress on Key Objectives 2020/21

Objective	Outcome
To achieve the target of a net gain of 27 Mainstream Foster carers to provide for the diverse range of children’s needs in 2020-2021.	A net gain of 23 carers was achieved. The actual number of carers recruited was 31 (14 mainstream and 17 connected) however with 8 de-registrations throughout the year, the year ended with a net gain of 23
To complete connected assessments in timescales as directed and achieve a net gain of connected foster carers whilst acknowledging that successful conversion to SGO’s will impact on overall gains.	There have been 17 connected carers approved during 2020-21. Whilst, 11 carers have converted to SGO
To achieve 10 Special Guardianship Orders.	18 Special Guardianship orders were achieved – 8 conversion of connected to SGO and 3 conversion of mainstream to SGO)
To embed a Special Guardianship Team within the Support function of the Fostering Service with a designated senior social worker leading a team including a social worker and administrator with Welfare knowledge to deliver support both during	A designated Special Guardianship Team was developed with the fostering support team, led by a senior social worker with oversight by the team manager. Two social workers complete special guardianship reports in respect of connected carers and provide support to strengthening

Objective	Outcome
<p>SGO assessment, developing a robust support plan and maintain oversight post SGO to ensure plans are reviewed from both a support and financial perspective. An action plan has been formulated and will be reviewed quarterly to ensure all objectives are on track and SGO carers are appropriately supported.</p>	<p>family's teams in completing reports. All SGO support plans are scrutinised by the SGO team before they are signed off. The team also monitor support plans and review financial plans in conjunction with welfare rights. The SGO received some additional funding during the Covid pandemic, via the DfE and this allowed the service to recruit an additional worker, who provided support to SGO carers.</p>
<p>To develop and embed an SGO carers portal to share pertinent information regularly with SGO carers.</p>	<p>A SGO portal is now live and available to all SGO carers. Items include policies/documents, SGO training information, an events calendar, and a booking system if a chat with support staff is required. A library of podcasts and news items are also featured.</p>
<p>To further expand and embed the Foster Carer Portal to promote access by all carers to the offered training opportunities, Information, Policy &amp; Procedures, and developmental information.</p>	<p>The Foster Carer portal continues to expand and is regularly updated with news items and pertinent information to share with carers. This has been a key form of communication with carers during the Covid 19 pandemic and video clips of how carers have managed home schooling etc. have been shared on the portal and on city people.</p>
<p>Wolverhampton Fostering will continue to work collaboratively with authorities within the West Midlands consortium, sharing ideas and pertinent information and engage in any projects set up to further expand the concept of shared resources.</p>	<p>Service and Team managers attend the regional meetings, where authorities from across the West Midlands share information, ideas and support each other with recruitment strategies.  The BCF Project was commended.</p>
<p>To further develop existing and new carers to provide for children's needs, promote understanding, resilience of carers and placement stability by reviewing policies to include short breaks/respice, buddy system and additional benefits available to foster carers.</p>	<p>Despite the Covid pandemic, carers have been supported through fostering forum groups, virtual training, disruption meetings to consider support to maintain placements and ongoing communication via the foster carer's portal. Referrals for buddy support were addressed and short breaks were offered to several carers to provide additional support to placements. The annual fostering conference moved on-line in two parts with a focus on supporting mental health of children in care.</p>
<p>To continue to review recruitment materials and processes and continue to implement the recommendations from the Family Values Project undertaken by iMPower whilst being open minded to all ideas and development opportunities that will enhance</p>	<p>The Family Values steering group has met monthly throughout 2020-2021. Despite Covid and social distancing restrictions, recruitment events have progressed on-line whilst fostering has been promoted on social media and a TV advert on Sky was shown during December 2020.</p>

Objective	Outcome
<p>and improve the Fostering Service which include visiting other authorities particularly those who have recruited high numbers of foster carers and achieved significantly improved outcomes.</p>	<p>Fostering continues to work collaboratively with other local authorities and managers attend quarterly fostering meetings within the West Midlands consortium whilst Black Country Fostering authorities commenced a second project to focus on how authorities could share resources to support foster carers.</p> <p>During 2020-2021 Wolverhampton attended an event organised by iMPower to discuss progress within the service with authorities who have previously been part of an iMPower project.</p>
<p>The focus on Private Fostering needs to continue to be strengthened and the profile promoted to increase awareness and understanding of this often-misunderstood area of care. Further training opportunities to be offered across Children's Social Care, with partner agencies and the voluntary sector and to ensure the quarterly forum is well attended by champions from partner agencies and all relevant materials shared.</p>	<p>See Private Fostering Annual Report</p>
<p>In the light of the Covid 19 pandemic and the uncertainty of working arrangements, develop virtual practices and opportunities for foster care recruitment, assessment, supervision, and training.</p>	<p>The Fostering Service has continued to work "virtually" throughout the pandemic. Supervisions between foster carers and social workers have been undertaken either via Microsoft Teams or face to face, as restrictions eased. Recruitment events have without exception been undertaken virtually via social media platforms whilst additionally, promotional information has been shared throughout via the carer's portal, social media, chronicle adverts and on the council website. All assessments for potential carers have included at least one face to face visit before presentation at the fostering panel.</p>
<p>To further develop virtual fostering panels going forward to ensure increased attendance and minimise travel arrangements for those who reside a distance away.</p>	<p>All Fostering panels have been undertaken virtually via Teams throughout the pandemic. Panel members have all been receptive to the changes and IT equipment has been provided to support panel members.</p>
<p>The "Foster Families United" (FFU) project to expand during 2020 with a target of two further teams of up to seven carers led by an experienced Level 4 carer to be implemented by end June 2020 with a further step-down team by the end of September 2020 working</p>	<p>During 2020-21, three FFU teams were developed, each led by an experienced Level Four carer, with at least four fostering families in each team. In May 2020, a young person was stepped down and placed with a foster carer, who was part of an FFU team. The Covid pandemic restricted face to face</p>

Objective	Outcome
<p>in conjunction with K2I Residential unit, with the expectation that staff will work closely with K2I and Children's care plans in identifying appropriate foster placements. The team carer will plan activities for the carers and will provide additional support in line with the model. Further consideration to be given to how family and friends carers can be incorporated within the model. Progress regarding this pilot will be shared with senior managers in June 2020. Media campaigns have begun in respect of this project and it will feature in both mainstream and targeted events and on job sites throughout the year.</p>	<p>meetings/activities arranged by the lead carer, however telephone support continued and ensured that carers felt supported, particularly at times of crisis or placements at risk of breakdown. Foster Families United is promoted at all fostering events, with two targeted campaigns throughout the year. It is reported by the marketing manager that FFU is a major incentive for prospective applicants.</p>

## 5.0 Key Objectives 2021-2022

- To achieve the target of a net gain of 25 foster carers to provide for the diverse range of Children's needs.
- To further improve the support services available to special guardians.
- To increase the number of children linked and matched with their long-term foster carer.
- To develop a fully electronic operational carers' register, reflecting the carers status and related compliance record for each carer which provides at a glance compliance information on carers with regard to minimum standards and fostering regulations.
- To devise a Placement Matching Policy, to guide best practice when a child comes into our care or needs to move to a new home. This will ensure that children and young people are placed at the outset with carers who understand their needs and provide them with a sense of belonging regardless of their diverse needs.
- To continue to develop the foster carers portal, including all information to support carers and children and young people in their care, particularly key cultural events of all faiths to reflect the diverse needs of our children and young people in care.
- To develop and implement an action plan focussed on Standards of Practice, to include processes at foster home reviews, further improve the quality of foster homes, and ensure supervising social workers and children's social worker across all of children's services are working together to improve children's outcomes.
- To develop an electronic Performance Dashboard to measure our progress and achievements and ensure we maintain good practice standards.

- Ensure that vacant carers are regularly reviewed, and carers are supported in returning to their roles if they have been dormant for a period and remain compliant with fostering regulations and minimum standards throughout their vacancy/dormancy.
- The Foster Families United model will be refreshed and relaunched with a priority to recruit external carers to lead FFU teams to support foster families within their teams.
- To ensure the success of the Family Values Project is realised as the project ends and practice moves to business as usual.
- To lead the BCF Project and ensure the key activities are achieved and the potential financial and non-financial benefits are realised.

## **6.0 Financial implications**

- 6.1 The annual approved budget for the fostering service for 2020-21 is £6.5 million
- 6.2 The costs associated with the Foster Families United Model are contained within the existing budget for the fostering service.
- 6.3 As more foster carers are recruited and approved in-house costs will increase but cost reductions will be seen against other placement budgets such as residential and independent fostering arrangements.
- 6.4 The average weekly cost of an in-house foster placement is £310 this is a saving of £3672 when compared to the average weekly cost of a residential placement and £456 when compared to the average weekly of an Independent fostering arrangement.  
[JG/25062021/F]

## **7.0 Legal implications**

- 7.1 The legal relevant legislation and guidance is contained within the body of the report. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.  
[SB/29062021/L]

## **8.0 Equalities implications**

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

## **9.0 Environmental implications**

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

## **10.0 Schedule of background papers**

10.1 The full annual fostering report 2020-2021 has been attached as an appendix and contains full details of the service with objectives 2020-2021

## **11.0 Appendices**

11.1 Appendix 1: Annual Fostering Report 2020-2021

**FOSTER  
FAMILIES  
UNITED**  
BY YOU



CITY OF  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
COUNCIL

**ANNUAL FOSTERING REPORT**

**APRIL 2020– MARCH 2021**

**Author: Lisa Whelan– Service Manager – Children and Young People in Care Service**

## Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	2
<b>2. Functions/roles within the Fostering Service</b> .....	3
<b>3 Project development</b> .....	5
<b>4 Service Delivery</b> .....	7
<b>5 Quality Assurance within the Fostering Service</b> .....	18
<b>6 Summary</b> .....	24

## 1. Introduction

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

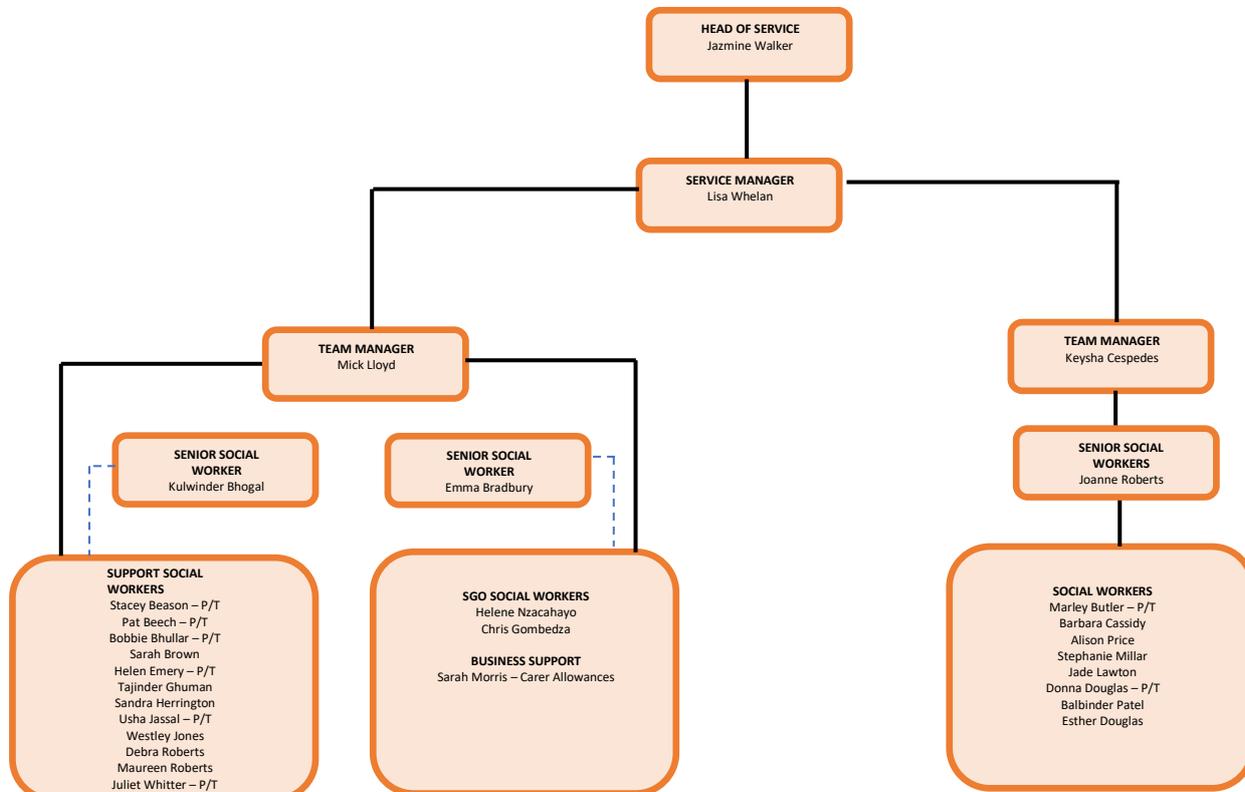
## 2. Functions/roles within the Fostering Service

### Social work staffing

2.1 The Fostering Service has a full complement of 22 full time equivalent qualified social work posts, and 1.5 equivalent unqualified posts. The Fostering Service is divided into two teams:

- **Recruitment and Assessment (Mainstream and Connected)** – All Recruitment activities are progressed, with support from a marketing executive. The team has responsibility for completing Form F assessments (combination of external and in-house assessors) and Form C assessments (all completed in-house), Private Fostering Assessments and Stepparent Adoption Assessments.
- **Fostering Support** – The team are responsible for the supervision of all foster carers (Mainstream and connected) Training spans across both services, however within supervision, it is expected that all carers personal development plan and training needs are identified. The Special Guardianship function sits within the support team and all SGO reports for C&YPiC are completed, whilst all SGO support plans completed across all teams are reviewed before they are filed in court. The financial part of SGO support plans are reviewed annually or when there is a significant change in a SGO carers circumstances.

2.2 Each team is managed by the Team Manager and each team manager is supported by senior social workers who supervise up to 4 social workers and manage half a caseload of casework.



The tables below reflect the demographics of the Children in Care within Wolverhampton and the staff within the Children and Young People in Care service. The CYPiC workforce is generally representative of the CYPiC children in terms of their ethnicity. Just over a fifth of the employee ethnicities are unknown, however it indicates an underrepresentation of White and mixed employees and an overrepresentation of Asian and Black employees when compared to the breakdown of the children in care.

Ethnicity - Group	CYPiC Cohort	CYPiC Employees	Foster Carers
White	64.50%	42.20%	59.60%
Asian	3.80%	10.00%	6.30%
Black	10.40%	16.40%	9.20%
Mixed	17.30%	9.30%	2.40%
Other	4.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Unknown	0.00%	22.10%	22.40%

2.3 In addition to the two social work teams there are two other teams which work closely to support the work of the Fostering Service. These are the Personalised Support Team (PST) and Independent Reviewing Officers.

2.4 The PST sits within the Commissioning Service. It works in conjunction with the Fostering Service and is responsible for all placement searches for children and young people needing a foster or residential placement. The PST hold the register of internal foster carers which details all placements and highlights any vacancies, the register is routinely updated by the PST and the Fostering Service. The register is available to the Emergency Duty Team who can make out of hours placements. All short-term placements are made via this team by the social worker completing a Placement Information Request via the electronic record on Eclipse. This should include the history of the child together with the presenting circumstances that have led to a placement being sought. In addition, the wishes and feelings of the child and their birth family should be included so that we can identify a suitable foster placement; for example, the right location to maintain access to school and contact with family members, and where possible matching the cultural and religious needs of the child. Each entry on the foster carer register includes a carer profile and a copy of the carer's Form F, which is available for social workers to discuss with children and young people.

2.5 There are two part-time Independent Reviewing Officers who undertake all reviews of Foster Carers' households. The Independent Reviewing Officers are managed within the Safeguarding Service. The Independent Reviewing Officer completes a Foster Home Review report annually which is shared with the Fostering Team and the Fostering Panel. The independent Reviewing Officers routinely meet with the Fostering Service throughout the year to discuss and concerns or performance related issues.

## **Staff training**

2.6 There is a Workforce Development Plan in place which includes a wide range of training and development opportunities for staff throughout the year. This includes staff briefings and Children in Care staff conferences. All members of staff are supported with their continual professional development. During 2020/21 one member of staff in the Fostering Service has undertaken stage one of the Practice Educators award whilst one member of staff has completed level two through Wolverhampton University. During 2020/21 all staff continue to attend bi-monthly Reflective Fostering sessions “Supporting Therapeutic Parenting” facilitated by a CAMHS Social Worker, this model complemented the training the same worker also delivered to foster carers. Likewise, the innovative approach to the supervision between carers and supervising social workers is currently being developed within the Fostering Service. Advanced Practitioners offer city-wide reflective sessions and workshops which can be accessed by fostering staff.

## **3 Project development**

### **The Family Values Project**

3.1 The Family Values project has been in place since July 2017. It is a project developed following the report completed by iMPOWER with an aim to improve sufficiency and enable more children in care to be cared for by in-house foster carers given independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) had been used more frequently than would have been wanted.

3.2 The Family Values project was developed and three workstreams were set up – ENQUIRY GENERATION, ENQUIRY HANDLING and SUPPORT offered to existing and newly approved foster carers. Each workstream meeting meets regularly and is underpinned by a plan reviewed at each meeting to chart progress and achievements and to consider future objectives to focus on. A steering group meets monthly to oversee the progress of the project and tracks completed and outstanding tasks for further focus. It was agreed that the steering group would continue to meet monthly April 2020 – March 2021.

3.3 The Fostering Service is a customer-facing function, providing support and development to foster carers. It is by improving the customer-facing function, providing support to and development for foster carers. It is by improving the customer-facing offer that the council can improve its recruitment and retention, which enables growth and improved outcomes and cost for the council.

3.4 The project concluded its third year on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 and this report charts the progress made and the impact of the project on recruitment and support of foster carers. The project has created energy and has served as a platform for ideas beyond the original objectives set at the outset. It has been agreed that the project will continue meeting monthly and reporting to end July 2021. After July 2021 the project will move into business as usual (BAU).

3.5 During 2020-21, the project has continued to expand workstreams, a focus on Recruitment and Assessment is ongoing, whilst during the year we have added a

carers for disabled children and young people workstream, which has included a representative from Voice 4 Parents. Momentum has grown during the year for a Placement Matching workstream following a trend seen in placement disruption meetings and further supported by data, reflecting that without careful matching at the outset of a placement, the potential for disruption at a later date is increased. This is an invaluable piece of work for both carers and children.

3.6 After July 2021, the project will move into business as usual, there will be monthly meetings to review progress and targets throughout the year. It is proposed that the following workstreams will remain in scope:

- Foster Families United
- Carers for Disabled Children and Young People
- Placement Matching

2.7 Wolverhampton Fostering Service continues to meet during the year with other local authorities, who historically have been part of projects via iMPower. This enables ongoing shared learning and it is proposed there is a further meeting in September 2021.

### **The Black Country Fostering (BCF) Project**

2.8 The BCF Project feasibility study was undertaken from August 2019 - June 2020 and funding was secured in November 2020. The BCF Project started February 2021. The Project aims to deliver some fostering services as a shared resource across the four Black Country authorities: Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. This will enable the four local authority/trust to develop the potential for a future alliance. It is anticipated improved partnership working will lead to less competition across borders in the Black Country and between local authorities/trust and IFAs and improved outcomes for children.

2.9 The aims of the project are to:

- Improve the life chances of Children and Young People in Care
- Greater placement choice and matching
- More children live locally
- More children continue to attend the same school
- Greater placement stability
- Quality of foster care for children
- Overall reduction in spend across the mainstream fostering budget

2.10 The key activity includes:

- Joint delivery of internal training for mainstream foster carers
- Joint commissioning of external training
- Joint delivery of training for Panel members
- Joint commissioning of a Client Recruitment Management (CRM) System
- Shared Performance Dashboard
- Develop relationships which recognise individual local IFA's as partners in contributing to total placement sufficiency requirements in the region

## 4 Service Delivery

### Recruitment of foster carers

4.1 The Service has responsibility for marketing, enquiry generation, recruitment, assessment, and training activities. Within the team is a dedicated marketing person from the Council's Corporate Communications Team. An annual marketing activity plan ensures that recruitment campaigns are planned and spread throughout the year. This year our initial enquiries from prospective foster carers have mainly come via the website, phone, and Facebook leads. The enquiries are recorded and screened by our specialised customer service officer or our dedicated marketing person. If the initial enquiry is recommending eligibility to foster, then our Recruitment and Assessment Team will book an Initial Assessment. If the Initial Assessment proves positive the Full Form 'F' Assessment is completed by an assessor sourced via You Recruit. A proportion of Form F assessments are completed by Wolverhampton fostering social workers, whilst all Independent Fostering Agency carers seeking to transfer are all completed in-house.

4.2 From April 2020 the team adopted new ways of working in line with government guidelines during the covid pandemic. A calendar of face to face recruitment events was soon replaced with a series of online information events. These were promoted through a digital marketing campaign, advertising on google, social media and partner websites. During September and January, we also ran a targeted Sky TV advert. Also, our 'Life in Lockdown' campaign used real footage supplied by foster carers showing the fantastic job they were doing during the pandemic. The fostering team also produced a 'Tiktok' video, thanking our carers, which reached many thousands on social media. The Recruitment and Assessment Team continue to increase the capacity of the foster carer population and the quality of care offered. Through new ways of working and an adapted marketing and recruitment strategy the service has maintained a healthy pipeline of enquiries with an increasing number of those coming via recommendations from our current foster carers and from Independent Fostering Agencies.

4.3 Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 our enquiries remained high with 419 first contacts (initial leads) recorded throughout 2020/21, our highest yet. Of these 355 have been made via our website, accounting for 85% of all first contacts. Facebook continues as the most popular source of enquiry accounting for 35% closely followed by Google search at 31%. A total of 53 Initial Assessments were completed during the year.



The screenshot shows the 'Fostering for Wolverhampton' website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Home', 'Foster Families', 'Contact Us', 'About Us', 'FAQs', and 'Contact Us'. Below the navigation bar is a banner image of a woman and a child, with the text 'Online Fostering Information Events Book your place now'. Below the banner is a contact form titled 'Interested in Fostering? Contact us now...'. The form includes fields for 'Full Name', 'Phone Number', 'Email Address', and 'Subject Line'. There is also a 'Submit your message' button. To the right of the form, there is a 'Data Protection' section with a checkbox and some text.

4.4 The Fostering for Wolverhampton online presence continues to be strong and the stand-alone website, which was introduced in 2018, has been invaluable during these difficult times. The programme of digital advertising campaigns is driving people to the website with the average position being between the 1st and 4th page within Google search results. There were over 24,877 visits to the website last

year, 68 daily. This has reduced by over 40% from the year before (2019/20) but is still an increase on the previous year.

4.5 Recruitment continues to be sustained by three main periods of campaign activity throughout the year in Foster Care Fortnight in May, and recruitment weeks in September and January. With no option of physical face to face events this year, these have been promoted through targeted digital advertising through Google AdWords and Facebook and other sites, social media posts and public relations, a chronicle wrap, a local Sky TV ad, radio advertising, email marketing and targeted local advertising on third party websites such as Zoopla, Autotrader and AA.



4.6 The May 2020 fostering recruitment fortnight resulted in 63 initial enquiries, most of these enquiries were generated through Facebook leads. These enquiries resulted in 19 being eligible to be progressed, 12 went onto initial assessment which were conducted over the phone due to restrictions and 12 progressed to full formal assessment. Of these 5 became approved foster carers.

4.7 The Autumn 2020 Fostering recruitment drive during September and October resulted in 86 initial enquiries, 23 of these enquiries were progressed by the assessment team and 9 went into initial assessment. Of these 4 progressed to formal assessment and 4 became approved foster carers.

4.8 In January 2021 the Fostering recruitment week resulted in 42 people making an initial enquiry. 10 of these were progressed by the recruitment team and 5 initial assessments were completed, 3 people went into formal assessment and 3 became approved foster carers.

4.9 We also attend the Regional Fostering Marketing Working Group, currently online, which is attended by 13 local authorities across the west and east midlands. Here we share examples of best practice and explore ways of working together across the region. The group regularly produce joint promotional fostering films. Currently the production of the next regional fostering film which was due September 2020 is on hold, but we are optimistic that filming can resume over the coming months.

4.10 We all know that foster carers can portray a realistic and positive view of fostering, we use several foster carer champions who work with the Recruitment and Assessment Team to support the innovative marketing and recruitment campaigns. This year foster carers have supported us with films and personal stories for our 'Life in Lockdown' campaign and our recruitment campaign during LGBT Awareness month. Alongside this, approved foster carers also support our online information sessions and preparatory "Skills to Foster" training for new applicants.

- 4.11 Web and telephone enquiries continue to be routed through Customer Services and fostering recruitment team are available to respond immediately to callers who want more information and will arrange initial visits to further discuss. Training sessions are continuing to be offered by the social workers in the recruitment and assessment team to the Customer Service officers. Read only access of the Fostering Portal is shared with Customer Services staff to keep them updated with the latest news/campaigns to enhance their awareness & understanding, customer services and the fostering service continue to develop their relationship to improve outcomes and timeliness for responding to initial enquiries regarding prospective carers.
- 4.12 Our regular information events used to be held throughout the year which provided opportunities for prospective foster carers to meet the Recruitment Team to find out more about fostering, have now been replaced by regular planned online information events via Microsoft Teams. We hold on average 2 sessions per month and prospective foster carers are asked to book on via our website. Our foster carer champions also attend these online events and can give first-hand advice about becoming a foster carer. Attendance has been steady throughout the year and the events are proving successful. We are planning to continue this approach over the coming months.
- 4.13 Targeted Facebook advertising is ongoing throughout the year and is refreshed regularly for each campaign. The Fostering for Wolves Facebook page is also regularly updated with news, video case studies and events and shares national news and information from the Fostering Network. We have also held some Facebook Live events which have received over 7,000 views.
- 4.14 Foster carers receive a weekly allowance to cover all living costs associated to the child/ren they care for. Wolverhampton rates follow those recommended by the Department for Education (DfE); and are paid in accordance to the child's age. Foster carers are expected to open a bank account (preferably and ISA) in which they must save a weekly amount for the child's future. The specified amount of money to be saved for children and the pocket money rates are again age related and are provided annually by the Fostering Service to all foster carers. Birthday, holiday, and festival allowances are paid in addition to the above.
- 4.15 The Fostering Fees model is one which rewards foster carers in unity with their skills, experiences and expertise in meeting the needs of children in care; in addition to the number of children placed, this is with a view to further encourage foster carers to consider sibling placements where they have capacity in their home.
- 4.16 **Assessments**
- 4.17 The assessment is completed over an average timescale of six months inclusive of stage 1 and stage 2 which now run concurrently. Historically these processes followed each other however by running concurrently the time to approval has reduced by two months from eight months, the assessment is then presented to the Fostering Panel who recommend their approval which is subsequently ratified by the Agency Decision Maker. If an assessment is aborted

at stage one a letter is sent to the applicants by the agency decision maker, explaining the rationale for the decision.

4.18 Assessments are part of the core work of the Recruitment and Assessment Team which enables the building of a comprehensive picture of the applicants. Evidence based, and analytical assessments are completed on all prospective foster carers to help understand their motivation and ability to care for children who have experienced loss, separation, and trauma. Caring for such children requires foster carers with a degree of resilience and patience in understanding the needs and presenting behaviours of children who have experienced childhood trauma including neglect and abuse. In addition, to collating information the assessment explores the applicant's own experience of childhood, their parenting skills, understanding of safeguarding children and ability to create a warm and nurturing home for children.

4.19 The full fostering Form F Assessment is commissioned from an Independent Social Worker sourced via You Recruit. Review meetings are held to review ongoing assessments and any concerns highlighted within set timescales, thus ensuring panel dates can be adhered to.

4.20 Foster carers are approved under a generic approval category for children and young people between the ages of birth and 18 years. If there is a smoker within the fostering household, they will be approved for five to 18 years. This approval enables foster carers to care for children on a temporary and permanent basis. In addition, consideration, can be given to respite care and emergency placements.



4.21 The preparation course follows the "Skills to Foster" programme, devised by the Fostering Network. Wolverhampton continues to be part of the Black Country Consortium, along with Sandwell, Dudley, and Walsall. The authorities work in partnership offering two places to any of the other local authorities on every course they run. Each of the local authorities delivers the course a varying number of times, with Wolverhampton running the course six times yearly. Wolverhampton usually runs the Skills to Foster course every other month offering applicants the maximum flexibility to attend at a time most convenient to themselves. This was adapted during 2020/21 to take account of the covid pandemic, with courses extending during the day from 8am-10pm including weekends.

4.22 Skills to Foster continues to be attended as part of the assessment process for all foster carers. There were ten courses delivered in 2020/21 to both mainstream and connected carers. In total, during 2020/21 28 households attended the preparation courses with 21 progressing onto the full assessments.

4.23 There are currently 11 Form F (Mainstream assessments) underway and 9 Form C (Connected).

#### 4.24 Support

4.25 The Support Team has responsibility for providing supervision, support, and post approval training to all mainstream and family and friends foster carers. The assessments of existing foster carers who wish to secure permanent placements for the children in their care are also undertaken within the service.

4.26 As of 31st March 2021, there were 182 approved mainstream fostering households, which offered a total of 201 placements. Of these, there are 16 fostering households currently dormant due to ill health or home improvements being undertaken, it is unlikely that they will all resume fostering, however they will all be contacted monthly for an update on their situation.

4.27 Family and Friends Foster Care remains an area of growth and as of the 31st March 2021 there are 51 approved households offering 101 placements.

4.28 All approved foster carers are allocated a qualified supervising social worker. Following approval, the supervising social worker is responsible for supervising and supporting carers, ensuring that they have the necessary guidance, support, challenge, and direction to maintain a quality service, including safe care practices. This includes an agreement that they must work within the agency's policies, procedures, and guidance. Two supervising social worker posts have been protected within the support team to exclusively support and supervise Family and Friends (Connected Carers).

4.29 Training is a continual process and all approved Wolverhampton foster carers are offered new and refresher training courses to update their skills on a regular basis. Foster carers are required to complete the evidenced based Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS) workbook within the first year of approval (first eighteen months for family and friends foster carers). During 2020-21, 14 TSDS workshops were run. At the end of March 2020 out of the 182 approved mainstream foster carers, all have either completed or are in the process of completing TSDS. Newly registered foster carers are being supported to achieve the standards within twelve months of approval. This is facilitated by the TSDS workshops.

4.30 To develop and enhance the training and development of foster carers there is a full-time training social worker within the Fostering Team. Her role is to strengthen the importance of continual development and to ensure that foster carer's training is targeted to meet the needs of children placed. Completed training will be recorded on the foster carer's file and reviewed during supervision and their Personal Development Plan (PDP).

4.31 The support package offered to all Wolverhampton's foster carers includes:

- Fostering Handbook contains pertinent information useful to carers and is regularly updated to reflect any changes.

- Carer profiles have been completed and filed on both carers' records and on the foster carers' register which supports the PST when identifying placements.
- Foster carers' training needs are identified as part of their PDP and reviewed regularly during supervision. The PDP's assist in identifying gaps in foster carers skills and knowledge and to ensure that they can meet their obligations in accordance with their Fostering Agreement.
- Approximately eighty different courses are provided to Wolverhampton foster carers each year, these courses are provided by both internal and external providers and include on-line courses.
- Therapeutic Parenting Training courses are held three times yearly (one evening course) whilst the Nurturing Programme is held three times per year.
- A focus on Restorative Practice has been incorporated into all training events.
- Approved foster carers who live a distance from Wolverhampton are offered the opportunity to complete their training on-line, via a local training provider -AC Education.
- "Buddy Scheme" in place and all Level 3 carers provide buddy support to less experienced foster carers. 30 foster carers were trained as buddies with 65 to date paired up with newly approved or less experienced foster carers. All newly approved foster carers receive weekly visits for six weeks following approval at panel.
- Fostering Families United support networks (see outline below).
- The Foster Carers Portal allows all carers access to pertinent information regarding training and events and is interactive, supporting the recording of fostering logs and regular updates.
- The Foster Carer Forum meets monthly, all foster carers are invited to attend.
- Special events for foster carers and their families including an Easter Egg Hunt, Summer Picnic in the Park, and a Christmas party. Due to the Covid pandemic the 2021 Easter Egg Hunt and 2020 Christmas Party were held on-line, whilst the Summer Picnic in the Park was cancelled, however will be held in Summer 2021.
- A Fostering Christmas Carol Service – Faith, Hope and Healing was held online during December 2020.
- Foster Carers' Conference. Due to the Covid pandemic this event was split into two half days and presented on-line during 2020 – the focus "Wound to Scars. Part One focussed on supporting children during lockdown and in helping children cope with community racial trauma whilst the guest speaker at part two, was Lemn Sissay MBE, author, poet and broadcaster who as a previous child in care reflects on his experiences growing up.
- The "Love of Fostering Awards" an annual where carers were recognised for their commitment to fostering throughout the year. Due to the Covid pandemic, the 2020 event did not go ahead, however an event is planned in December 2021.
- Foster Talk offer support to all of Wolverhampton's approved foster carers including; legal and expenses advice, insurance cover, a 24-hour legal advice helpline, a 24-hour counselling support helpline, an education support line, a Social Work support helpline and access to discounts and exclusive offers via the use of a MAX card.

- Festivals/Cultural events have been promoted on the carers portal to ensure all faiths recognised, including Ramadam and Holi.

4.32 Newly approved foster carers are reviewed after six months and then annually thereafter by an Independent Reviewing Officer. This will involve the foster carer meeting with the Independent Reviewing Officer who will discuss the activity of a foster carer to ensure they continue to be suitable. The Independent



Reviewing Officer will seek the views of the foster carer, the child in placement (subject to age and understanding), the child's social worker, the child's Independent Reviewing Officer, the supervising social worker and any other appropriate person during the review process. Views are collected using consultation questionnaires. The review is also an opportunity for the foster carer to review the service and support given to the children placed. An early Foster Home Review maybe requested by the Fostering Service where there are concerns about foster carers practice or where there have been allegations.

4.33 During the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 188 Foster Home Reviews were undertaken as detailed below. Throughout this review period 33 newly registered foster carers have been reviewed, being family and friends foster carers.

Mainstream Foster Carers	147
Connected Persons	41
Shared Care Foster Carers	0

4.34 Overall, the reviews have remained positive and the standard of foster care delivered to children and young people remains good. However, some concerns have been raised about the quality of some information shared in reports to present to foster home reviews by both fostering and children's social workers. Whilst in part, the new Eclipse system has impacted, a piece of work to address this is currently underway with standards of practice to improve over the coming months.

4.35 A Foster Carers Level 3/4 Panel has been set up quarterly where foster carers present their application alongside their supervising social worker to be considered for escalation from Level 2 to Level 3 or Level 3 to Level 4. Three panels were held during 2020-21 with eight carers progressing from Level 2 to 3. The panels are facilitated by fostering service and team managers with foster carers and their supervising social workers attending to present their application for consideration. There is appropriate challenge at panels to ensure carers have completed training and are willing to engage in recruitment events and act as buddy's to less experienced carers before a decision is agreed.

4.36 Foster Families United was introduced in May 2019. The approach is based on a family model centred around one foster home which acts as a team carer offering planned and emergency respite, advice, guidance, training, and support to up to 6 carers within the team. The team empowers families to support each other and overcome potential problems before they escalate and offers children and young people a more positive experience of care. An enhanced support, training and financial package is offered with the same dedicated supervising social worker to all carers within the team and clinical supervision from a CAMHS practitioner building on the therapeutic training model offered. A pilot project in 2019 evidenced that the model increased placement stability and improved carer wellbeing.



4.37 It was agreed in December 2019 that three more Foster Families United Teams would be developed during 2020 including a step-down from Residential team, all led by experienced Level 4 carers. As at March 2021, three Foster Families United Teams (FFU) were operating with a fourth planned in June 2021. All teams are led by an experienced Level Four foster carer with at least 4 fostering families within each team. In May 2020, a young person was stepped down from residential care, placed with a foster carer, who joined one of the FFU teams, this placement has been successfully maintained to date.

#### 4.38 **Permanency through Long Term Fostering**

4.39 The City of Wolverhampton Fostering Service seeks to achieve permanency for children and young people with a Care Plan of Long-Term Fostering. Children needing permanent placements who are placed with foster carers who cannot offer Long Term care are referred to the PST to search for a long-term home for them. Placement meetings will be convened to include the child's social worker and the supervising social worker. Internal foster carers' availability will be explored to offer permanency. Where there is no availability external provision would be sought. Permanent carers make a commitment to care for a child or young person until they reach the age of independence. These carers often go on to provide 'Staying Put' arrangements for young people to remain in the household post 18 years.

4.40 This year the Fostering Service has secured thirteen Long-Term placements for children with Internal Foster Carers (eight carers) via the Linking and Matching process. One of the Long-Term Placements were for sibling groups of two children and two were for a sibling group of three. In respect of External Carers (IFA) the Fostering Service secured twelve long-term placements for children and young people (six carers). Five of these long-term placements were for sibling groups of two children.

4.41 The child's social worker together with the fostering supervising social worker are responsible for progressing permanency for the child within the first year of placement where their plan is that of permanency outside the family. A new policy & procedure to reflect the Linking and Matching process was finalised in May 2021 and a streamlined process now in place whereby a full report is

presented to the Agency Decision Maker for consideration and if a match agreed, panel are advised. Early indications from social workers are that this has significantly improved the process, particularly regarding timeliness.

#### 4.42 **Family and Friends Carers (Connected Persons Carers)**

4.43 Local authorities have a responsibility to consider members of the child's family, or friends (Connected Persons Carers) during Care Proceedings and when a child is facing the possibility of coming into care. They are assessed by the service as to their suitability to provide appropriate care in accordance with the Fostering Regulations 2011. All Connected Person's Assessments are presented to the Fostering Panel who recommend their approval which is subsequently ratified by the Agency Decision Maker.

4.44 From April 2020 – March 2021 there were 17 family and friends' carers approved which overall contributed to providing a total of 101 placements for children in care.

4.45 The Recruitment and Assessment Team work together with Strengthening Family Teams advising and completing joint Viability Assessments of prospective family and friends foster carers. The location of some relative foster carers can place an added pressure on the service due to the time involved in travel. We currently have 20 out of city placements.

4.46 The recruitment and Assessment Team have undertaken 83 Viability Assessments of which six were Schedule 4 (temporary approval) assessments from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.

4.47 Family Group Conferences/Family Meetings are required as part of the process for family and friends foster carers, to reduce the number of referrals for multiple Viability Assessments for the same child. This should, subsequently reduce the number of assessments which do not progress onto a full assessment during Care Proceedings. It will also allow for assessments to be allocated at the earliest opportunity to avoid delay in allocation, completion, and restrictions in Panel availability. This has been effective in reducing the number of assessments, from 103 in 2019-20 to 83 in 2020-21, and increased the number with positive recommendations.

4.48 Schedule 4 assessments whereby family and friends foster carers are granted temporary approval require allocation of a social worker to supervise and assess the placement suitability within a sixteen-week timescale. An extension of eight weeks continues to be applied where required and a clear process is now being followed via Panel and the Agency Decision Maker to reduce the number of unregulated placements. These are likely to occur due to a delay in checks and references, rather than assessment completion. There are currently four Schedule 4 assessments within the service, all progressing to completion of a Form C.

4.49 During the period of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 there were 17 positive Form C Assessment approvals. These assessments were completed within internal resources. There were 9 ongoing Form C assessments on 31<sup>st</sup> March

2021 which were all being undertaken by social workers within the Recruitment and Assessment Team.

**4.50** Family and friends' carers have access to all training courses offered by the services and complete their Training, Support and Development Standards and are supported to undertake learning and development to the same as mainstream foster carers.

**4.51 Special Guardianship**

4.52 The responsibility for the assessment and support of Special Guardianships is that of the Fostering Service. This encourages a more joined up approach between teams with the completion of assessment being a joint activity between a social worker in the Fostering Service and a social worker for the child. If the Care Plan for the child recommends Long Term Fostering with either mainstream or Family and Friends as a permanency option a Special Guardianship Order should be encouraged where this is deemed to be in the child's best interests, essentially removing the child from the care system, and transferring parental responsibility to the carer.

4.53 There are currently 258 established SGO carers in Wolverhampton. There is one full-time Senior Social Worker and two SGO Support Social Workers dedicated to the role of supporting and advising foster carers and family and friends carers about the details of caring for children under the Special Guardianship Order should they consider this to be a future option. The SGO support social worker is also able to discuss on-going support plans to ensure that the needs of the child and Special Guardian continue to be met. All finances relating to SGO plans are reviewed annually to ensure appropriate funding is in place. A designated business support worker supports the SGO function.

4.54 The SGO support social worker delivers an SGO training module specifically for family and Friends Foster carers which runs directly after each preparation course. This has been planned to inform the prospective foster carers of their options at the earliest opportunity.

4.55 There is a step by step flow chart to assist social workers in the SGO process to allow for a smooth transition. The supervising social worker and the child's social worker jointly complete the Special Guardianship Report. The SGO support social worker completes the Support Plan with the social workers involved and shares this with the foster carers or family and friends foster carers. A tracking tool has been devised and there is monthly oversight of progress to ensure permanency is achieved via Special Guardianship Order (SGO) in a timely manner.

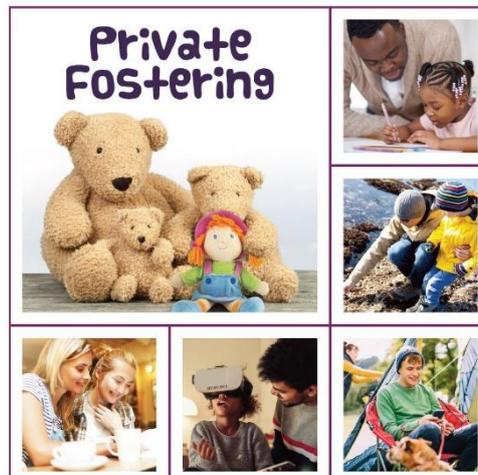
4.56 The Support Plan is reviewed annually by the SGO support social worker who currently sits within the Fostering Support Team and post-SGO support remains high on the agenda for this current fiscal year. Special Guardians can access all training that is currently offered to our internal foster carers.

**4.57** A total of 17 Special Guardianship Orders were granted across all teams in year 2020/21 with 38 currently in the assessment process to be filed during this year.

The target to achieve 25 SGO Orders 2021/22 is well on course and it is expected given the current progress that the target will be exceeded.

#### 4.58 Private Fostering

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



<https://www.wolverhamptonsafeguarding.org.uk/>

#### 4.60 Short Breaks

4.61 There is one approved short break foster carer providing shared care placements for disabled children. The short break carers are usually professionals who work full time. They offer regular breaks to parents and carers who have children who have disabilities so that they can have a break from their caring responsibilities. We continue attempts to enhance this area within the recruitment and communication strategy for 2021/22 and will incorporate expertise from within the Disabled Children and Young People's Service and Voice 4 Parents who attend a newly developed designated workstream within the family values progress to recruit carers for disabled children and young people and to extend short break opportunities across Childrens services.



## 5 Quality Assurance within the Fostering Service

### 5.1 Performance data

5.2 The 2020/21 target was to achieve a net gain of 26 mainstream and connected foster carers. Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, with 31 approvals (14 mainstream and 17 connected carers) and eight de-registrations we achieved an overall net gain of 23 foster carers.

Period	Approvals at panel	Number of de-registrations	Net gain
April 2018 -March 2019	23 approvals	0	23
April 2019- March 2020	25 approvals	3	22
April 2020-March 2021	31 approvals	8	23

5.3 In the year the local authority lost eight mainstream foster carers who were de-registered. Out of these eight, two were due to retirement. The other six were because of the carers converting to Adoption or Special Guardianship.

5.4 In terms of timeliness of assessments, we measure this for mainstream foster carers only. The below table shows, in the year there were 14 mainstream foster carers approved at an average timescale of 164 days with 11 approved within timescale (183 days). The shortest time taken to be approved was 96 days, the longest time taken was 321 days. Average timescales are higher than last year, however the Covid pandemic has undoubtedly had an impact on timeliness.

5.5 During 2020/21 the Sufficiency Strategy continued to review every aspect of the recruitment process to achieve ambitious targets to grow local capacity of available internal foster carers. There have been significant improvements over the last eight years as set out in the table below.

Year	Number of Mainstream Approvals	Average Days for Approval	% of Cases Approved int Timeframe
<b>2015/16</b>	21	278	56% (8-month target)
<b>2016/17</b>	22	217	72% (8-month target)
<b>2017/18</b>	20	227	50% (8-month target)
<b>2018/19</b>	24	170	67% (6-month target)
<b>2019/20</b>	25	147	84% (6-month target)
<b>2020/21</b>	14	164	79% (6-month-target)

Type of Placement	Number of C&YPiC Placed							
	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Family and Friends	45	50	62	71	78	95	84	102
Internal Foster Carer placements	158	171	186	193	201	185	195	201
IFA placements	382	343	268	247	226	198	154	129



5.6 During 2020-21, the number of children placed with internal carers has increased. There were 174 more children placed in internal foster care provision on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 than in IFA placements. The gap has widened due to the reduction in children in IFA placements, which reduced by 25 placements over the period.

5.7 In addition to an increase of internal placements, the reduction in IFA placements can be accounted for during the past 12 months by the increase in the number of children living independently, and an overall decrease in the number of children and young people who are in care.

5.8 Taking a snapshot of placements at the 31<sup>st</sup> March from each year, there was a weekly saving of £24,351 in spend on foster care placements. The below table shows that the end of June 2017 when the Family Values project started compared to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021, there is a weekly cost saving of £55,584.

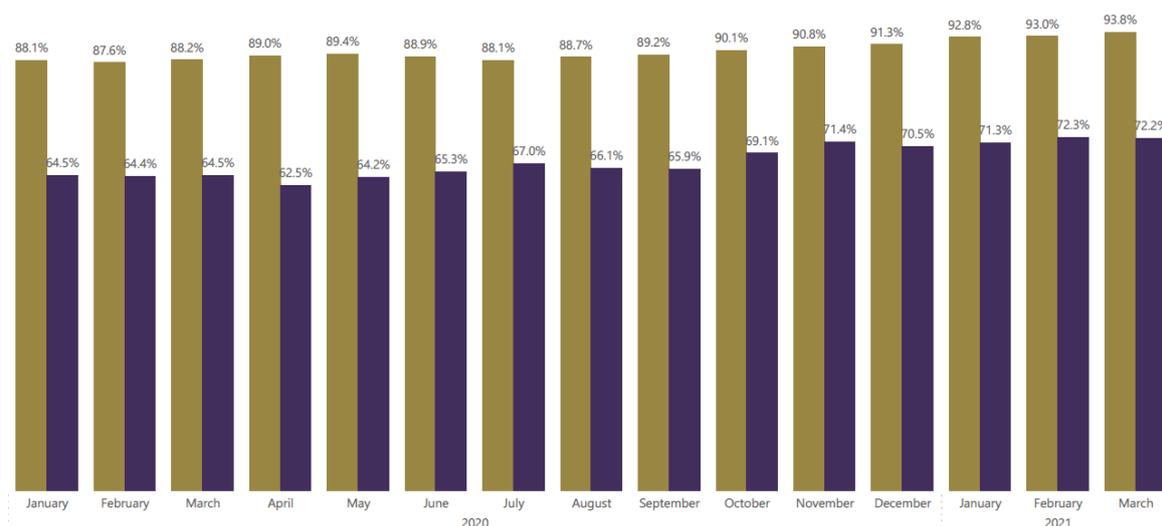
Date	Total Weekly Cost of Children in Mainstream Foster Care	Total Weekly Cost of Children in Friends and Family Foster Care	Total Weekly Cost of Internal Foster Care	Total Weekly Cost of Children placed with IFA	Total Weekly Cost of Foster Care	Change Since Previous Year
<b>31st March 2021</b>	£89,227	£22,211	<b>£67,016</b>	<b>£120,723</b>	<b>£209,950</b>	<b>-£24,351</b>

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

5.10 Placement stability has improved over the year both regarding Long-Term and Short-Term placements. See below the year end chart for placement stability. Placement stability is now better than statistical neighbours and national averages. In March 2021 72% 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 9% to 6% since 2020. Both of these indicators continue to demonstrate strong performance.

Short Term Placement Stability Pass and Long Term Placement Stability Pass by Year and Month

● Short Term Placement Stability Pass ● Long Term Placement Stability Pass



5.11 Further to the positive long term stability afforded to children who's care plans are fostering, the below table evidences, the number of children who have been enabled to remain with their foster carers either through adoption (5) or special

guardianship (10). Overall, this equates to 15 children leaving care to live with their foster carer via an SGO or Adoption Order in 2020/21.

5.12 Although these are extremely positive outcomes for the children it also shows that a net gain has been achieved against a higher-level foster care cessation than in previous years. It also shows that the positive impact of seeking permanency for children in our care can have a knock-on effect on Family Values performance.

5.13 There has been a huge increase in the number of Children linked and matched long term with their foster carers. This will continue to support long term stability to Children in care.

Type of permanence	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
SGO by FC	11	20	13	10
Adoption by FC	5	14	14	5
LT matches	17	10	9	25

5.14 During 2021-22 we will be developing a more sophisticated data base including a new carers register linked to Eclipse which should support rolling accurate data immediately. Currently the fostering administrators maintain a database which records complaints, allegations, DBS completions, Health & Safety, Delegated Authority, and unannounced visits. The team manager and senior social worker supply updated information to ensure accuracy of the database however it is reliant on the timeliness of information sharing whilst a database linked to Eclipse will update from all information input across the workforce.

### **5.15 Fostering Panel**

### **5.16 Wolverhampton Foster Panel 2020 – 21**

#### **5.17 Overview**

5.18 Wolverhampton's foster panel has a crucial role to play in the provision and monitoring of foster care for the children and young people of Wolverhampton City. At the end of March 2021 303 of the City's children and young people were living in foster families.

5.19 For the last few years, the Government has emphasised that foster care should be a positive option for many children and young people (Fostering Better Outcomes – Department for Education 2018).

5.20 In line with this Wolverhampton's Foster Panel is striving towards five overarching ambitions:

- 1) To ensure that children and young people are listened to and involved in decisions about their lives
- 2) Foster families receive the support and respect they need to care for children and young people
- 3) That there are enough good quality foster families for children and young people at the right time

- 4) That foster families are commissioned according to the needs of children
- 5) That children and young people experience stability and placements support them to achieve the same outcomes as every other child or young person.

5.21 Wolverhampton's Foster Panel therefore strives to ensure that the right foster carers are recruited to respond to the needs of the local community. Further that individuals wanting to foster have the right skills, resilience, and abilities to understand children and to drive forward their needs, views and wishes.

5.22 As a team the foster panel members are committed to ensuring that the voice of children and young people are accurately reflected when matters are being discussed and this approach is leading to significant changes to the way that Panel undertakes its business and to the way recommendations are made.

**5.23** The year 2020-21 has seen great change to the operation of the foster panel. As with all other local authorities, private and voluntary sector fostering organisations the pandemic has meant that direct face to face panel meetings have been replaced by virtual Microsoft Teams lead discussions. Accommodating this change has posed its challenges as there was very little time to plan the implementation of this 'virtual' process and panel has had to be flexible and embrace a system that has evolved with each meeting.

#### **5.24 Panel Central List / Recruitment**

5.25 Since July 2020 the membership of the central list has changed, and panel has benefitted from a successful recruitment campaign. Unfortunately, 2 existing independent chairs left the panel during 2020 however we were able to recruit a new independent chair – Sally Stokes - and panel now works well with the chairing responsibilities shared between Sally and Sue Partoon an existing vice chair.

5.26 In addition, several new panel members joined the panel, and this has ensured that panel is more diverse and reflective of the local community. We aim to build on this success and our focus over the next twelve months will be to further increase the diversity of the panel and include individuals who are themselves care experienced and have recent experiences of living with foster families.

**5.27** After many years of support to the foster panel Jo Williams – Panel Administrator – left the Fostering Service to take up a post in the Safeguarding and Exploitation Service. This move came as a direct result of the City wide Admin Review process. This was a great loss to the foster panel. Marie Humphries now provides business support to the panel and Marie's systematic approach is already having a positive impact on the operation of the panel and the speed with which wider development is taking place.

#### **5.28 Meetings**

5.29 Panel meetings albeit virtual have continued to be operated on a fortnightly basis with the addition of several extra panels being convened over the last twelve months.

**5.30** Panel member commitment to attending meetings remains high and the central list continues to develop and is vibrant

### **5.31 Training and development**

**5.32** Panel training and development is now inclusive and panel members have been able to access the same training development opportunities following their induction as their Council colleagues. There has been a big emphasis on prioritising Restorative Practice and all panel meetings are now restorative and reflective. Presently the independent chair and the vice chair of panel are working with operational managers to implement new panel processes. The hope is that not only will this improve partnership working between the foster panel and operational colleagues but will also lead to greater transparency and improved outcomes for local people.

### **5.33 Business process Developments – pace of change**

**5.34** As mentioned previously the Wolverhampton Foster Panel Microsoft Teams site is developing at speed and the site now has multiple uses for example a point of information exchange and operation portal for panel members and a point of access for managers. The 'Team site' has changed the operation of panel meetings and all associated panel process. The outcome is that all key information relating to panel, panel meetings, panel processes and panel information is managed securely in one area.

**5.35** As with the wider service area IT support to panel members working remotely has been increased and this has been assisted by the allocation of relevant IT equipment to each panel member.

**5.36** In addition, the development of panel business support processes has meant that it is easier to track and receive information as it passes through the foster panel system.

### **5.37 Moving forward / Next Steps**

#### **5.38 Key panel objectives are to**

- Review and increase the diversity of the foster panel membership and in line with this increase its reach to the Young People in Care Services. To actively promote the feedback from and the views of care experienced young people during panel meetings
- Further develop working together and partnership arrangements with the wider operational service, by attending team meetings, establishing regular networking opportunities, and hosting events which are open to all
- Continue to develop the business process of panel and to increase efficiency in line with the pace of change
- Further embed a restorative approach and to explore associated training for panel members such as unconscious bias and opportunities to embrace diversity and the impact of difference
- Continue to respond to the wider developments across the City Council in relation to 'Relighting the City' following 'Lockdown'

### **5.39 Complaints / compliments**

5.40 There were four formal complaints received about the fostering service during the year 2021-21. This was slightly lower than the previous year, however, compares favourably with the national average of 18% of complaints that were from children who live in foster homes. There were also three informal complaints received which were managed and responded to at a lower level. The Fostering service received seven compliments.

5.41 The complaints received were around staff conduct, quality of service, special guardianship allowances, and lack of respite provision. At the same time, there have also been seven compliments in relation to the Fostering Service recognising social workers commitment in their job role to families and young people. The Fostering Service, upon investigating and reviewing complaints received continue to ensure that learning is disseminated to staff and colleagues in order that adjustments and improvements can be achieved.

5.42 There were no IRM's during 2020-21.

## **6 Summary**

6.1 Like the rest of the country, in 2020-21, the function of the Wolverhampton Fostering Service has been characterised by the Covid 19 pandemic where all staff were based working from home since March 2020 and all visits and recruitment events were undertaken virtually. The Fostering Service continues to benefit from experienced managers and the compliment of social workers remains stable with no agency workers currently employed. Both teams have made significant progress during the year with many developments made across the service as described and outlined above. The foster carers have adapted brilliantly during the year despite the challenges of covid and have continued to support children and young people in care, with examples of innovative ways of delivering home schooling shared on the carers portal and across the city to inspire others. Recruitment events have taken place albeit virtually and a significant net gain of carers to end the year has been achieved. During 2020-21, the Black Lives Matter movement inspired the council to address issues of diversity and inequality and fostering held two half day carers conferences to reflect the impact, ensuring that children and young people's needs were at the heart of all placement opportunities.

6.2 The Family Values Fostering Review Project continued throughout the year with new workstreams developed including placement matching and carers for disabled children and young people workstreams, ensuring that the diverse range of children's needs could be met, these remain key priorities going forward. The project will move into business as usual in July 2021, however momentum to further improve and develop the service will continue, with a particular focus on standards of practice and support to foster carers.

6.3 Positive progress continues to elicit energy and excitement and given such positive progress during the year culminating in a net gain of 23 carers, the thought

continues that there is a real opportunity to continue to increase our cohort of mainstream and connected carers within a Fostering Service that is fully open to challenge and change. It is only by exploring and embracing these opportunities that we will truly as a service achieve our potential with our priority to improve the outcomes of the children and young people in our care.

#### 6.4 Key Achievements

- A Net Gain of 23 foster carers have been achieved considering both mainstream and connected carers and that some have transferred to SGO during the year. Success in all areas has impacted on the overall net gain of carers.
- Permanence in general, 18 SGO orders have been achieved.
- Placement stability has steadily increased throughout 2020/21 in both short-term and long-term placements.
- Despite the Covid pandemic, robust and effective recruitment. Continued increased enquiries supported through sophisticated media campaigns and digital advertising including a TV advert.
- Assessment timeliness has been affected by the Covid pandemic; however, performance remains positive compared to previous years.
- Wolverhampton have been part of the Black Country Fostering Project, whereby 4 authorities have worked collaboratively to assess services with a view to developing and sharing resources.
- The new model of fostering “Foster Families United” has been further developed and there are currently three teams, each led by an experienced carer, supporting up to five fostering families in each team.

#### Progress on Key Objectives 2020/21

Objective	Outcome
To achieve the target of a net gain of 27 Mainstream Foster carers to provide for the diverse range of children’s needs in 2020-2021.	A net gain of 23 carers was achieved. The actual number of carers recruited was 31 (14 mainstream and 17 connected) however with 8 de-registrations throughout the year, the year ended with a net gain of 23
To complete connected assessments in timescales as directed and achieve a net gain of connected foster carers whilst acknowledging that successful conversion to SGO’s will impact on overall gains.	There have been 17 connected carers approved during 2020-21. Whilst, 11 carers have converted to SGO
To achieve 10 Special Guardianship Orders.	17 Special Guardianship orders were achieved – 7 conversion of connected to

	SGO and 3 conversion of mainstream to SGO)
To embed a Special Guardianship Team within the Support function of the Fostering Service with a designated senior social worker leading a team including a social worker and administrator with Welfare knowledge to deliver support both during SGO assessment, developing a robust support plan and maintain oversight post SGO to ensure plans are reviewed from both a support and financial perspective. An action plan has been formulated and will be reviewed quarterly to ensure all objectives are on track and SGO carers are appropriately supported.	A designated Special Guardianship Team was developed with the fostering support team, led by a senior social worker with oversight by the team manager. Two social workers complete special guardianship reports in respect of connected carers and provide support to strengthening family's teams in completing reports. All SGO support plans are scrutinised by the SGO team before they are signed off. The team also monitor support plans and review financial plans in conjunction with welfare rights. The SGO received some additional funding during the Covid pandemic, via the DfE and this allowed the service to recruit an additional worker, who provided support to SGO carers.
To develop and embed an SGO carers portal to share pertinent information regularly with SGO carers.	A SGO portal is now live and available to all SGO carers. Items include policies/documents, SGO training information, an events calendar, and a booking system if a chat with support staff is required. A library of podcasts and news items are also featured.
To further expand and embed the Foster Carer Portal to promote access by all carers to the offered training opportunities, Information, Policy & Procedures, and developmental information.	The Foster Carer portal continues to expand and is regularly updated with news items and pertinent information to share with carers. This has been a key form of communication with carers during the Covid 19 pandemic and video clips of how carers have managed home schooling etc. have been shared on the portal and on city people.
Wolverhampton Fostering will continue to work collaboratively with authorities within the West Midlands consortium, sharing ideas and pertinent information and engage in any projects set up to further expand the concept of shared resources.	Service and Team managers attend the regional meetings, where authorities from across the West Midlands share information, ideas and support each other with recruitment strategies.  The BCF Project has commended.
To further develop existing and new carers to provide for children's needs, promote understanding, resilience of carers and placement stability by reviewing policies to include short breaks/respice, buddy system and	Despite the covid pandemic, carers have been supported through fostering forum groups, virtual training, disruption meetings to consider support to maintain placements and ongoing communication via the foster carer's portal. Referrals for

<p>additional benefits available to foster carers.</p>	<p>buddy support were addressed and short breaks were offered to several carers to provide additional support to placements. The annual fostering conference moved on-line in two parts with a focus on supporting mental health of children in care.</p>
<p>To continue to review recruitment materials and processes and continue to implement the recommendations from the Family Values Project undertaken by iMPower whilst being open minded to all ideas and development opportunities that will enhance and improve the Fostering Service which include visiting other authorities particularly those who have recruited high numbers of foster carers and achieved significantly improved outcomes.</p>	<p>The Family Values steering group has met monthly throughout 2020-21. Despite Covid and social distancing restrictions, recruitment events have progressed on-line whilst fostering has been promoted on social media and a TV advert on Sky was shown during December 2020.</p> <p>Fostering continues to work collaboratively with other local authorities and managers attend quarterly fostering meetings within the West Midlands consortium whilst Black Country Fostering authorities commenced a second project to focus on how authorities could share resources to support foster carers.</p> <p>During 2020-21 Wolverhampton attended an event organised by iMPower to discuss progress within the service with authorities who have previously been part of an iMPower project.</p>
<p>The focus on Private Fostering needs to continue to be strengthened and the profile promoted to increase awareness and understanding of this often-misunderstood area of care. Further training opportunities to be offered across Children's Social Care, with partner agencies and the voluntary sector and to ensure the quarterly forum is well attended by champions from partner agencies and all relevant materials shared.</p>	<p>See Private Fostering Annual Report</p>
<p>In the light of the Covid 19 pandemic and the uncertainty of working arrangements, develop virtual practices and opportunities for foster care recruitment, assessment, supervision, and training.</p>	<p>The Fostering Service has continued to work "virtually" throughout the pandemic. Supervisions between foster carers and social workers have been undertaken either via Microsoft Teams or face to face, as restrictions eased. Recruitment events have without exception been undertaken virtually via social media platforms whilst additionally, promotional information has been shared throughout</p>

	via the carer's portal, social media, chronicle adverts and on the council website. All assessments for potential carers have included at least one face to face visit before presentation at the fostering panel.
To further develop virtual fostering panels going forward to ensure increased attendance and minimise travel arrangements for those who reside a distance away.	All Fostering panels have been undertaken virtually via Teams throughout the pandemic. Panel members have all been receptive to the changes and IT equipment has been provided to support panel members.
The "Foster Families United" (FFU) project to expand during 2020 with a target of two further teams of up to seven carers led by an experienced Level 4 carer to be implemented by end June 2020 with a further step-down team by the end of September 2020 working in conjunction with K2I Residential unit, with the expectation that staff will work closely with K2I and Childrens care plans in identifying appropriate foster placements. The team carer will plan activities for the carers and will provide additional support in line with the model. Further consideration to be given to how family and friends carers can be incorporated within the model. Progress regarding this pilot will be shared with senior managers in June 2020. Media campaigns have begun in respect of this project and it will feature in both mainstream and targeted events and on job sites throughout the year.	During 2020-21, three FFU teams were developed, each led by an experienced Level Four carer, with at least four fostering families in each team. In May 2020, a young person was stepped down and placed with a foster carer, who was part of an FFU team. The Covid pandemic restricted face to face meetings/activities arranged by the lead carer, however telephone support continued and ensured that carers felt supported, particularly at times of crisis or placements at risk of breakdown. Foster Families United is promoted at all fostering events, with two targeted campaigns throughout the year. It is reported by the marketing manager that FFU is a major incentive for prospective applicants.

### Key Objectives 2021/22

- To achieve the target of a net gain of 25 foster carers to provide for the diverse range of Childrens needs.
- To further improve the support services available to special guardians.
- To increase the number of children linked and matched with their long-term foster carer.
- To develop a fully electronic operational carers register, reflecting the carers status and related compliance record for each carer which provides at a glance compliance information on carers with regard to minimum standards and fostering regulations.

- To devise a Placement Matching Policy, to guide best practice when a child comes into our care or needs to move to a new home. This will ensure that children and young people are placed at the outset with carers who understand their needs and provide them with a sense of belonging regardless of their diverse needs.
- To continue to develop the foster carers portal, including all information to support carers and children and young people in their care, particularly key cultural events of all faiths to reflect the diverse needs of our children and young people in care.
- To develop and implement an action plan focussed on Standards of Practice, to include processes at foster home reviews, further improve the quality of foster homes, and ensure supervising social workers and children's social worker across all of children's services are working together to improve children's outcomes.
- To develop an electronic Performance Dashboard to measure our progress and achievements and ensure we maintain good practice standards.
- Ensure that vacant carers are regularly reviewed, and carers are supported in returning to their roles if they have been dormant for a period and remain compliant with fostering regulations and minimum standards throughout their vacancy/dormancy.
- The Foster Families United model will be refreshed and relaunched with a priority to recruit external carers to lead FFU teams to support foster families within their teams.
- To ensure the success of the Family Values Project is realised as the project ends and practice moves to business as usual.
- To lead the BCF Project and ensure the key activities are achieved and the potential financial and non-financial benefits are realised.

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

**PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW**

**Data as at:  
31 May 2021**

Page 49

Agenda Item No: 9

# City of Wolverhampton Council - Corporate Parenting Report

## Current CYPiC Profile

Current CYPiC per 10,000 population

92

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

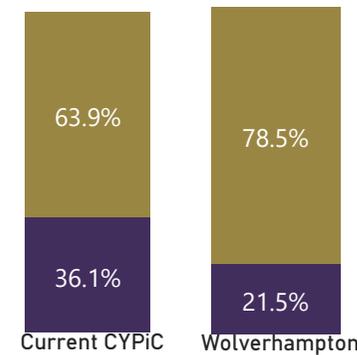
67

Number of Children and Young People in Care in Wolverhampton



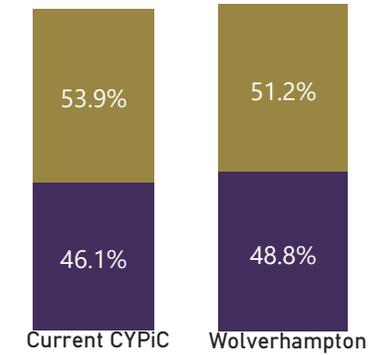
Ethnicity Comparison

● BME  
● White

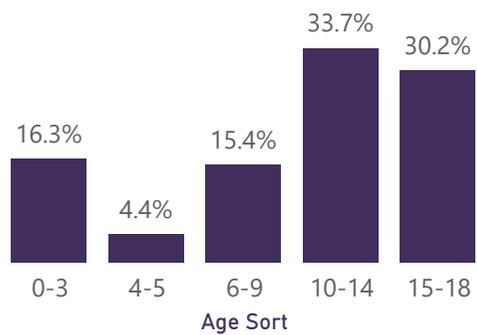


Gender Comparison

● Female  
● Male



Age Breakdown

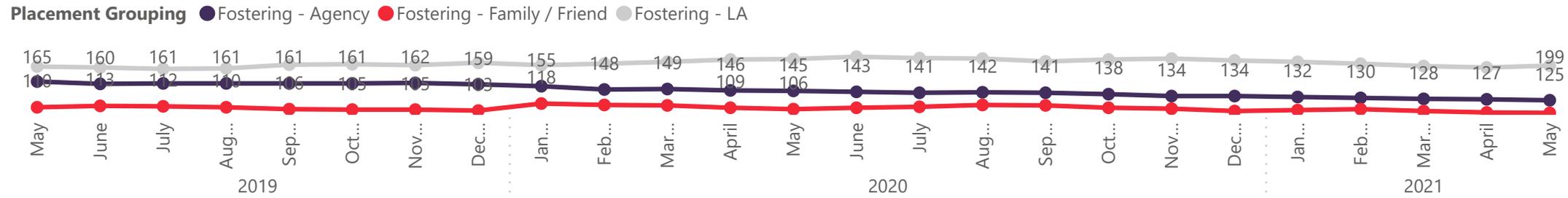


The numbers of children and young people in care have decreased further in the year to date from 589 in March to 540. The number of children leaving care and entering care has stabilised over the month. Over 60% of Wolverhampton's children and young people in care are aged 10 and above with 30% aged 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



age 51

**% CYPiC placed more than 20 mile + from home**  
**12%**

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

**% CYPiC with less than 3 placements in last 12 months**  
**94.3%**

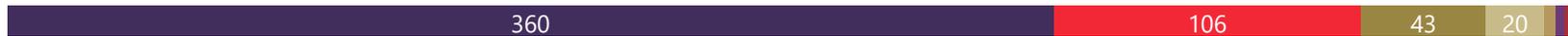
2019/20 = 91%  
2018/19 = 86%  
2017/18 = 84%  
2016/17 = 87%

**% CYPiC in same placement for 2 years or more**  
**70.1%**

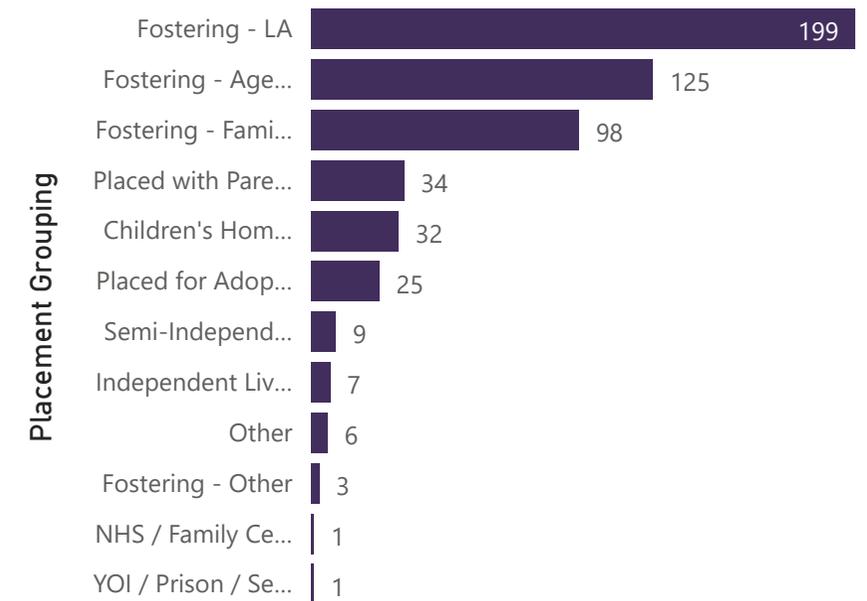
2019/20 = 74%  
2018/19 = 73%  
2017/18 = 70%  
2016/17 = 65%

Number of placements for current CYPiC in past 12 months

Placements in last 12 months ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 ● 6 ● 7 ● 9



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 stay strong at 94% for the percentage of CYPiC with fewer than 3 placements during the last 12 months from 91% during 2019/20.

# City of Wolverhampton Council - Corporate Parenting Report

## Assessments, Reviews, Visits



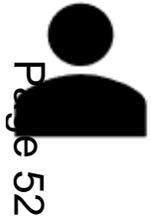
### CYPiC with an up to date assessment

Where a new assessment has been completed within 12 months



### 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



### CYPiC who participated in the review

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



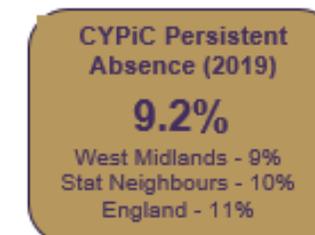
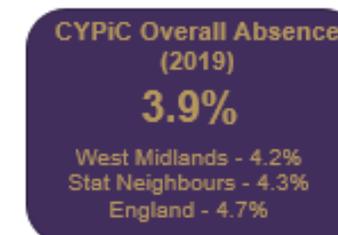
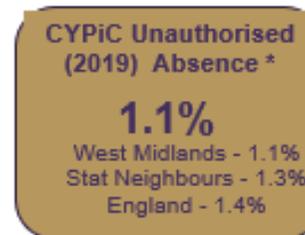
Assessments are 82.65% which is an improvement from 78.36% in the previous year, while reviews continue to stay strong with 97% of children recorded as having an up to date review.

CYPiC Review Participation has stayed at 89% in the month, this regularly sees improvements in the subsequent month as forms are updated on the system.

# City of Wolverhampton Council - Corporate Parenting Report

## 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 improved in May. Work is ongoing in the service to improve the PEP performance for the year 12 and 13 cohort.

### 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

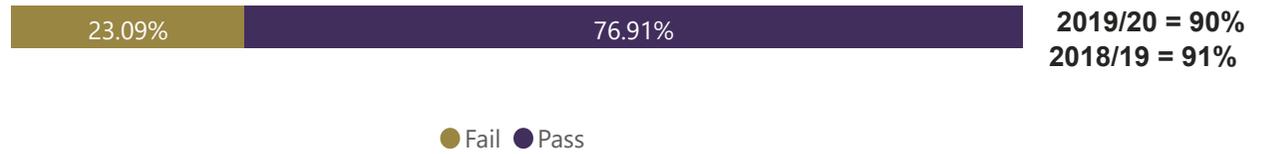
# City of Wolverhampton Council - Corporate Parenting Report

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)



## CYPiC with an up to date dental check

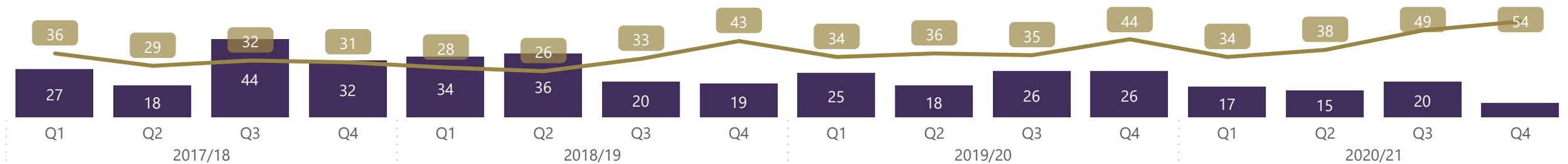
Where a dental check has been completed within 12 months



Page 54

### 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, although this has now started to slowly improve. Medical checks which were previously an area of strength have started to see improvements in the month, increasing to 77% in the month. Of the new CYPiC in the past 12 months 34% 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 (428 days)

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



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

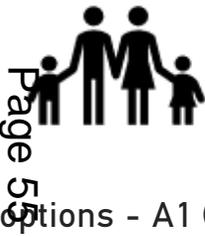


### CYPiC adopted within A2 indicator (122 Days)

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



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



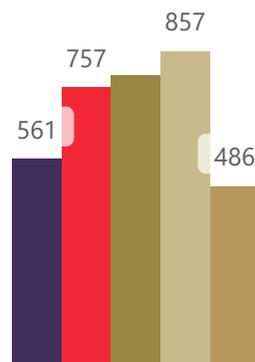
### CYPiC adopted within A10 indicator (428 Days)

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

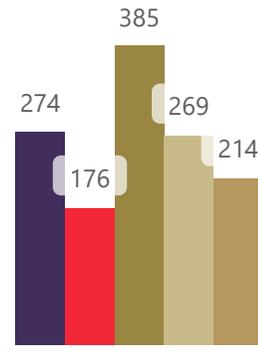


2019/20 = 89%  
2018/19 = 73%

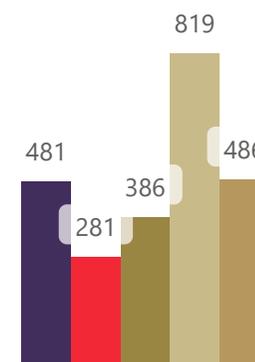
Adoptions - A1 (Avg. Days)



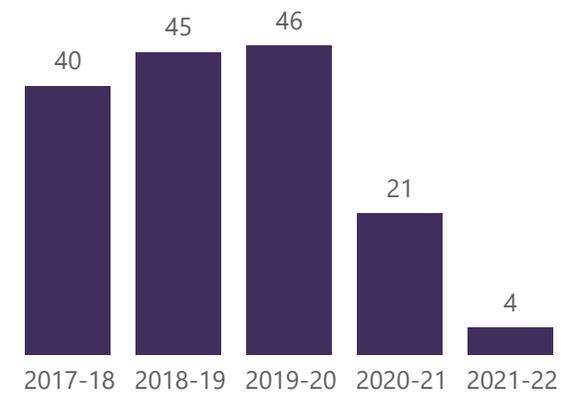
Adoptions - A2 (Avg. Days)



Adoptions - A10 (Avg. Days)



Number of Adoptions



There were four adoptions so far in 2021/22, this has been heavily impacted by Covid-19. Positively, the number of children placed with their adoptive families currently is 36

# City of Wolverhampton Council - Corporate Parenting Report

## 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%



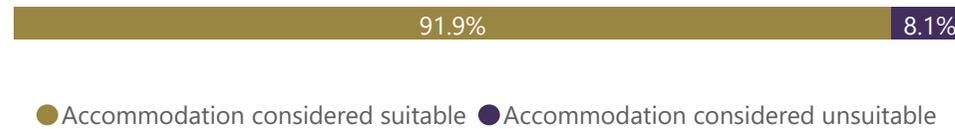
### Care Leavers available to work

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



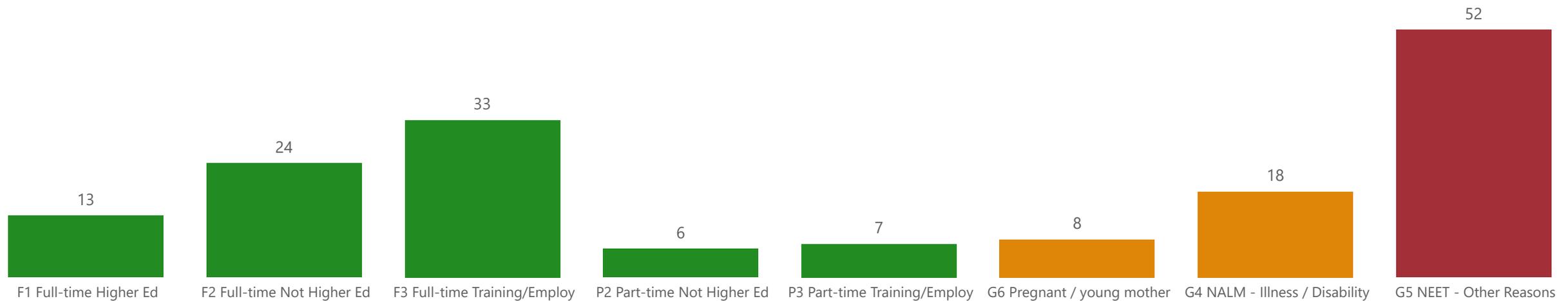
### Care Leavers in suitable accommodation

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 May 2021 51% of 19-21 year olds were in Education, Employment or Training. This is a downturn when compared to the previous year's out turn and a paper was presented to the board on 25th March 2021 outlining the current activity to support our Care Leavers and improve performance in this area over the coming months 89% of care leavers aged 17-21 are available for work. Of the 19-21 cohort 16% (26 young people) were 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 92% of the cohort are currently in suitable accommodation.