

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

16 March 2022

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

Venue Council Chamber - 4th Floor - Civic Centre

Membership

Chair Cllr Val Evans (Lab)
Vice-chair Cllr Sohail Khan (Con)

Labour

Cllr Qaiser Azeem
Cllr Olivia Birch
Cllr Rashpal Kaur
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur
Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Anwen Muston
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman

Conservative

Cllr Simon Bennett
Cllr Stephanie Haynes

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 Earl Piggott Smith
Tel/Email 01902 551251 email:earl.piggott-smith@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
Tel 01902 555046

Some items are discussed in private because of their confidential or commercial nature. These reports are not available to the public.

If you are reading these papers on an electronic device you have saved the Council £11.33 and helped reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

Agenda

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Welcome and Introductions**
[The Chair to welcome everyone to the meeting.]
- 2 **Meeting procedures to be followed**
[The Chair will explain how the meeting will proceed, how questions are to be asked and any matters of meeting etiquette.]

BUSINESS ITEMS

- 3 **Apologies**
- 4 **Declarations of Interest**
- 5 **Minutes of previous meeting (15 February 2022)** (Pages 3 - 12)
[To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2022 as a correct record]

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- 6 **Mandatory Vaccinations for Social Care Homes - verbal update**
[Becky Wilkinson, Director Adult Services, to present]
- 7 **Adults Social Work and Workforce Health Check 2021** (Pages 13 - 24)
[Jennifer Rogers, Principal Social Worker, to present the report]

Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Agenda Item No: 5

Minutes - 15 February 2022

Attendance

Members of the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Qaiser Azeem
Cllr Simon Bennett
Cllr Val Evans (Chair)
Cllr Stephanie Haynes
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur
Cllr Sohail Khan (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Anwen Muston

Members of Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel that attended via Teams

Cllr Olivia Birch
Cllr Rashpal Kaur
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman

In Attendance

Cllr Linda Leach

Cabinet Member for Adults

Employees

Emma Bennett	Executive Director of Families
Sandra Ashton-Jones	Head of Mental Health
Susan Eagle	Commissioning Officer
Rachel King	Head of Vulnerable Children
John Linighan	Learning Disabilities Commissioning Officer
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Welcome and Introductions**
Cllr Val Evans, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised it was being live streamed to the press and public. A recording of the meeting would be available for viewing on the Council's website at a future date
- 2 Meeting procedures to be followed**
Cllr Evans explained the protocol to be followed during the meeting for asking questions and reminded everyone that microphones should be muted and cameras off, unless they have been invited to speak.

3 **Apologies**

No apologies received.

4 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

5 **Minutes of previous meeting (19 October 2021)**

The panel members voted and approved the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2021 as being a correct record.

6 **Mandatory Vaccinations for Social Care Homes - verbal update**

Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families, gave a verbal update on the changes to the Government's mandatory vaccine policy for social care workers. The Executive Director of Families advised the panel that the Government has stated that there will be a consultation on the mandatory vaccinations policy for the extended group of NHS staff and the wider health and social care. As a result, the mandatory vaccination programme which required health and social care staff who either worked in a CQC registered home or would be visiting to be vaccinated has stopped.

The Executive Director of Families advised the panel that employees covered by either the previous legislation or likely to be by any future legislation have been contacted to advise them that the Council is awaiting the outcome of the consultation.

The Executive Director of Families suggested that a further update on the mandatory vaccination policy is presented to a future meeting of the panel at the end of the consultation period.

The panel thanked the presenter for the update.

Resolved:

The panel agreed to receive a further update on the mandatory vaccinations policy at a future meeting.

7 **Supporting our vulnerable adolescents at risk of exploitation**

The Chair invited Sandra Ashton-Jones, Head of Adult Service - Mental Health and Rachel King, Head of Children's Service, to present the report.

The Head of Adult Service advised the panel that the presentation would give an update on the support offered to young people and adults in Wolverhampton who are either at risk of exploitation or who are being exploited and covers individuals or large groups of people. The Head of Adult Service outlined the different forms and situations where exploitation can occur, for example, modern slavery and human trafficking, sexual and criminal exploitation. The term 'exploitation' is defined as a form abuse where someone is forced or coerced into doing things for the benefit of others.

The Head of Children's Service commented on the partnership response to the issue of exploitation and specific actions taken from October 2019 to February 2021.

The Head of Children's Service advised the panel that nationally there had been a focus on familial abuse where harm happens outside the home. In the past the focus of the service was on abuse taking place within families.

The Head of Children's Service advised the panel that a review in October 2019 looked at how partners were working together to address all forms of exploitation. This review led to the introduction of the Partnership Exploitation and Missing Hub, which went live in February 2021. The Hub brings together professionals from services that have contact with children and adults either at risk or being exploited to able to share real live time information.

The Head of Children's Service advised the panel that the service provides for the consistent and systematic sharing of relevant and timely information across the whole age range to better understand the issue of risk and threat in the city. The introduction of the Hub has enabled co-ordinated support packages to be offered to address all forms of exploitation through different interventions and for that activity to be disrupted. The Head of Children's Service commented on the links between adults and children's service and highlighted the importance of the additional police resource in supporting the work of the Hub. The Hub also has strong links with colleagues in health and voluntary sectors.

The Head of Children's Service advised the panel that there is a daily morning briefing meeting chaired by the Exploitation Hub Manager with colleagues from the wider partnership. The aim of the briefing is to review all overnight missing episodes of all young people and vulnerable adults and to consider any significant incidents from the police that require some level of response and coordination.

The Head of Children's Service briefed the panel about the work of the Power2 team and outlined the impact and benefits of the initiative. The Head of Children's Services gave details from three case studies and commented on how the intervention from the service has led to a reduction in the risk of exploitation or in criminal activity and an increase in levels of re engagement in education, employment training, improved attendance score and a reduction in missing episodes among the people involved.

The Head of Children's Service commented that there has been a significant increase in the numbers of vulnerable adults and children been identified at risk of exploitation and highlighted the benefits of increased awareness and training across the partnership.

The Head of Adult Service thanked the panel for the opportunity to brief them about the work of the Hub.

The Head of Adult Service advised the panel that the work of the Hub is being seen as best practice locally and nationally as not many authorities are working with adults or people beyond the age of 18 who are at risk of exploitation. The Power2 team operates alongside the Exploitation Hub which became operational in December 2019. The work of the team was initially funded by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and is focused on supporting vulnerable young people up to the age of 25 who are at risk of or who being exploited or where there is a risk of family breakdown or care.

The panel were invited to comment on the presentation and report.

The panel thanked the presenters and congratulated the service on getting recognition of the positive work being done in Wolverhampton nationally and by other local authorities of the decision to bring together children's and adults safeguarding services.

The panel queried the size of the reduction in number of missing episodes referred to in the report and the action taken to follow up and share this information with key agencies, where there are concerns about a young person goes missing every few days. The Head of Children's Service advised the panel that there is a statutory duty to talk to children when notified about missing episodes. The Head of Adult Service commented that there are more missing episodes cases recorded as the police are recording them differently than a few years ago. The Head of Adult Service added that the service is managing to reduce and disrupt some missing activity and explained that where children are concerned that the local authority will do a return home interview or at least offer them one. This offer will be in addition to the police wellbeing visit to the young person.

The Head of Adult Service explained that there had been discussions with colleagues where adults have gone missing and the idea of extending the welfare offer when they return home. However, this is not a statutory function.

The Head of Adults Service added that a meeting is planned next week to think about developing protocols for missing adults and explained that there are also several existing national protocols which cover this situation. There are plans to develop local protocols to respond issues involving adults who have gone missing from either from care home or hospital.

The Head of Children's Service advised the panel that if there is a concern about an adult being exploited then a screening tool would be completed which will inform a decision about the need to complete a safeguarding referral form.

The panel queried the process for making referrals to the Hub. The Head of Children's Service advised that the panel that most referrals to the Hub are received from partner agencies such as the police. The Head of Children's Service explained that anyone can make a referral or a self-referral into the Hub and then discussions held, and a co-ordinated response planned.

The panel queried the criteria of the term 'vulnerable adult' and asked for more details. The Head of Adult Service advised the panel that the definition of a vulnerable adult in terms of Adult Safeguarding is someone who has needs for care and support, is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect and as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or the risk of it. The Head of Adult Service added that the service adopts a more inclusive approach and would consider all the persons circumstances when assessing their level of vulnerability. The service also supports adults who have experienced life trauma which could make them at risk of being exploited or vulnerable to abuse.

The Head of Adult Service advised the panel that when a person has mental capacity the law refers to their right to make unwise decisions and the service would need consent to work with a person.

The service would offer advice and support to a person in this situation which they would be free to accept and provide appropriate information if they do change their mind in future about wanting help. The Head of Adult Service added that the service would try to work with the person to build a relationship which may help to change their mind about accepting support, but without being intrusive.

The panel queried the situation in the case study of the adult moving to a location outside Wolverhampton about the responsibility of the Council to follow up and check on their progress and the arrangements for monitoring the situation. The Head of Adult Service commented that in the case study example the person was referred into the National Referral Mechanism and ongoing support would be provided through this arrangement. The NRM has contracts with several different volunteer organisations to provide support and if a person needed a package of care, then this would be provided as part of the scheme. The Head of Adult Service added that the person's social worker in Wolverhampton would maintain contact and stay involved with the case and provide ongoing care if needed. The Council would be involved in providing care if they needed ongoing health care, in liaison with the Health Trust in the area the person is moving to.

The panel welcomed the setting up of the Hub and highlighted the value of multi-agency services working together to deliver a service and sharing information and the benefits to the public.

The panel discussed the challenge of trying to measure the effectiveness of the impact of multi-disciplinary working, by using case studies referred to in the presentation, and welcomed the decision to invest in offering the range of support through the Hub.

The Head of Adult Service commented that there is an evaluation report which demonstrates the cost avoidance or savings because of the intervention by the Hub. The Head of Adult Service highlighted the cost savings for a young person who previously would have been detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act and may have required an ambulance call out and other support services that would have been involved compared to the cost of providing support by the Hub. The Head of Adult Service added the service can demonstrate the financial benefits of the work done by the Hub and the personal benefits to the individuals.

The panel queried the action that would be taken when a young person who initially refuses the offer of help but contacts the service at a future date needing help. The Head of Children's Service that there will be safeguarding considerations in cases involving children and young people and the service would have a responsibility to continue to be involved and offer support. In addition, there is a self-referral option to the MASH service which anyone can use. The Head of Children's Service added that the service is doing a lot of work is being done to raise awareness with the public about the risks of exploitation. The work is supported by work of West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit who help to co-ordinate and raise awareness across the sector about issues such as 'county lines activities (where gangs transport drugs to towns along 'deal lines')' and the exploitation of young people.

The Head of Children's Service gave further examples of the support service and interventions aimed at helping young people considered to be vulnerable and at risk of exploitation. There are plans for more localised campaigns in know hotspot areas in Wolverhampton on issues such as modern-day slavery and human trafficking.

The panel thanked the presenters for the report.

Resolved:

The panel agreed to note the presentation and the progress of work being done to support vulnerable adults at risk of exploitation.

8 **Care and Support Provider Fee Review 2022 - 2023 and Market Sustainability (report to follow)**

Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families, introduced the report and advised the panel that it was being presented for pre-decision scrutiny before it is presented to Cabinet Resources for consideration and approval of the proposed fee increase.

The Executive Director of Families advised the panel that the Council has a duty to ensure that the care needs of residents in Wolverhampton are met. This work includes reviewing the sufficiency of externally commissioned care fees and if the current fees enable provision of care and for the Council to purchase them and inform an annual review of fees. The annual fee review covers adults externally commissioned care and support service areas and direct payment cost rates.

The Executive Director of Families outlined the scope of the fee review proposals.

The Executive Director of Families advised the panel that the overall increase of £4.1 million in fees will be met from the growth in Adult Services which will include the funds for the proposed fee review.

The Executive Director of Families commented on the implications of major reform of social care and the proposed introduction of a fair cost of care policy. The plans will require the Council to draft several policies by the end of September 2022 as part of the reforms, for example, a market sustainability plan for external care provision and a fair cost of care tool to demonstrate how self-funders costs are aligned to the fees funded by the Council.

The Executive Director of Families briefed the panel about the national picture of the demand for social care provision in Wolverhampton and commented on the increase in demand for social care, particularly during the pandemic. The Executive Director of Families commented that the service has engaged with providers to get their feedback about the proposed fees and highlighted other factors which have also been considered, for example, the national shortage of care staff as well as retention issues and the continued impact of Covid 19.

The Executive Director of Families advised the panel that in response to the national challenges in the home care and domiciliary care sectors and the concerns of providers, care fee rates were increased mid-year in 2021 to maintain sufficiency. The Executive Director advised the panel that a new rate for Direct Payment Self Employed will be introduced in recognition that there are direct payments Personal Assistants who are self-employed and with different costs to those employed and to

the encourage the growth of the sector. A fee proposal includes a recommendation for the rate for people who are self-employed.

The Executive Director of Families commented on the benefits of the change and gave a summary of the recommendations that Cabinet Resources Panel will be asked to approve.

The panel were invited to scrutinise the proposals.

The Chair thanked the presenter for the report.

The panel welcomed the proposal to introduce direct payments for the self-employed and supported the principal of the initiative.

The panel expressed concern about the situation where people would have to consider selling their home to meet their care costs.

The panel commented on the need for consistency in the level of training and care provided and highlighted the importance of self-employed people being properly trained and working to agreed standards. The panel expressed concern about increases in cost of living and inflation which add to the pressure of vulnerable people being able to meet the cost of homecare.

The Executive Director of Families, commented that the issue of quality relates both to the quality of the agencies and the quality of the workforce in terms of their skills, training and qualifications.

The Executive Director of Families reassured the panel that all care homes are inspected by CQC and in addition there is the Quality Assurance Team, part of the commissioning team, who work closely with providers to ensure they are prepared for inspections and offering support when there are concerns about the quality of provision. The team work to maintain a positive working relationship with residential and homecare providers. In addition, intelligence about the quality of care provided by the sector is also informed by complaints or safeguarding concerns reported to the service.

The Executive Director of Families added that future reforms to the health and social care sector will provide further assurance about the quality of provision and the extra responsibilities on local authorities. There is work being done to develop locally agreed quality care standards. The Executive Director of Families offered to present details to a future meeting of the panel about this work. The Executive Director of Families highlighted other examples of other initiatives aimed at improving the quality of care provided and responding to the workforce challenges facing the social care and health sector.

John Linighan, Commissioning Officer, commented on the valuable information picked up by members of the Quality Assurance Team, which was particularly useful during the pandemic, and helped the service to get a better understanding of their issues. The service has worked with providers to resolve issues which has helped to improve the quality of practice and the care given. The Commissioning Officer added that the fee review recognises the impact of increased inflation costs, and the other cost of living increases on the finances of care providers.

The service accepts that these providers are a business and the need for them to have enough profit to reinvest into improving the quality of care.

Sue Eagle, Commissioning Officer, endorsed the concerns highlighted in the previous comments and added that the adult care service has experienced a huge increase in the demand as more people wanted to receive care in their own home. This provision of homecare was already a strategic priority for the service to promote independence for people for as long as possible before the pandemic. The Commissioning Officer commented on the impact of challenges during the pandemic of ensuring people who were medically fit could be discharged home from hospital safely.

Sue Eagle, Commissioning Officer, reassured the panel that the service continues to meet with care providers and quality assurance officers check that they are compliant with their own processes and agreed policies. The CQC also continue to monitor the quality of care provided.

Sue Eagle, Commissioning Officer commented that social workers remain involved when a person is receiving homecare to assess the level of care needed, and that the package of care is appropriate for that person to remain in their own home.

John Linighan, Commissioning Officer, added that the demand for homecare support has been unprecedented and people have been presenting with more complex health and care needs. As a result, care providers have had to be more responsive, particularly during the pandemic.

John Linighan, Commissioning Officer, commented on the importance of having a sustainable care market and the responsibility of the Council to keep to a minimum the number of people waiting for care in their own homes and to support providers to remain responsive to changes in demand.

The panel queried the increase in the demand for homecare during the pandemic and implications of this trend for the future sustainability of the care sector and the costs for residents in care establishments if fewer people than expected consider this option.

The Executive Director of Families commented that there will always be a need for residential care, which may have reduced during the pandemic and changed the way hospital patient discharges are managed. The Executive Director of Families commented that as a result people have wanted to be supported in their own home rather than move to a residential care home, but it is difficult to say how this trend may impact on projections of future demand.

The Executive Director of Families added that the situation will hopefully be clearer after the work being done to prepare a market sustainability statement by the end of September 2022. The document will provide more information about expected future care needs and what will be required from the care sector to respond to this.

Sue Eagle, Commissioning Officer, commented that in terms of demand for care, the situation is being closely monitored and agreed that the pandemic has changed demand for people wanting more homecare.

The service is working closely with colleagues in public health to understand the changes in population which will be included in the market position statement and reviewing the numbers of people going into the different care settings.

John Linighan, Commissioning Officer, supported the view about the reduction in numbers going into residential care compared to pre-pandemic levels and the possible implications of this change on the future sustainability of residential care home sector. The Commissioning Officer added that people are likely to be moving into care much later in life with greater care needs which will have an impact on the costs of care providers as people with higher needs will require staff with better training and investment in services to provide the care and support needed. The Commissioning Officer commented on the mapping work being done to collect the information.

The panel thanked the presenters for the report. The panel requested a draft of the provisional market sustainability plan for external care provision to be shared with the panel in September 2022. The Executive Director of Families agreed to provide the information.

Resolved:

1. The panel agreed to note the report and support the recommendations detailed in the report.
2. The Executive Director of Families to present a draft of the provisional market sustainability plan for external care provision to a panel meeting in September 2022 for comment.

9 **Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel 2021 - 2022 Draft Work Programme**

The Chair invited Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, to present the report.

The Scrutiny Officer advised the panel about the details of the next agenda for the final panel meeting on 16 March 2022. The panel were invited to comment on the agenda and suggest topics or issues that they would like the reports to cover.

The panel asked for an update on the previous discussion from the police representative and the community safety team on planned work and suggested it would be helpful to get an update on progress. The Scrutiny Officer agreed to follow up the enquiry and update panel members.

The panel thanked the presenter for the report.

Resolved:

1. The panel agreed to note the report.
2. The Scrutiny Officer to update the panel on progress following the previous discussion on crime and community safety issues.

This page is intentionally left blank



Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel

16 March 2022

Report title	Adult's Social Work and Workforce Health Check 2021	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Linda Leach, Adult Services	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Executive Director for Families	
Originating service	Adult's Service	
Accountable employee(s)	Jennifer Rogers	Principal Social Worker
	Tel	01902 553209
	Email	Jennifer.rogers@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report has been considered by	Social Work Development Board	11 January 2022
	Leadership Team	20 January 2022
	Strategic Executive Board	10 February 2022

Recommendations for action or decision:

The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Note and comment on the findings of the Adult's social work and wider workforce health check for 2021 and progress since 2020's health check.
2. Provide comment, feedback and challenge on the proposed actions to improve the health of the social work workforce and conditions for practice.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) carries out a survey each year to check the “health” of its social workers and this forms part of Adult Services’ ongoing self-assessment. For the last three years a survey has also been circulated more widely to include all the frontline adult’s workforce within the council. This report presents an overview of the findings of both surveys and concludes with actions to address the main areas for improvement.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Health checks were a key recommendation of the National Social Work Task Force, which was set up by government after the death of Baby P. There was recognition that the whole system impacts on individual social workers and also on the overall quality of social work practice and regular health checks help organisations identify areas of strength and areas requiring greater focus. It also assists with workforce development planning and supports a culture of continuous improvement.
- 2.2 A “healthy”, motivated workforce which has good retention rates and manageable workloads has the potential to make a huge difference. For instance, adults and carers will experience fewer changes in worker, and there will be more time for developing relationships and preventative, strengths-based working. Costs, such as that spent on recruitment, will also reduce.
- 2.3 The surveys have been refreshed this year and aligned with the Local Government’s Association (LGA) Standards for employers of social workers in England and has also taken into account the questions asked in the national health check survey.
- 2.4 This report provides a summary of the main findings, including areas which have progressed as a result of actions taken over the last 12 months, and also any actions that are planned or in progress to address the key areas for improvement.

3.0 Overview and key findings

- 3.1 The health check was circulated via an online survey between 14 September to 1 November 2021. It was sent to 117 social workers and 290 non-social work qualified employees at grade five and above who work directly with adults and carers, or who manage those teams. The wider workforce is very diverse and is made up of a variety of roles such as social care workers, day opportunities team leaders, reablement assistants, welfare rights officers, direct payments officers and occupational therapists.
- 3.2 It was noted last year that response rates could be higher and one key action was to provide protected time at a briefing so that practitioners did not see this as an additional task to be completed. As a result, response rates for both surveys this year are slightly higher with a 55% response rate for social workers, compared to 52% in 2020, and a 41% response rate for the workforce survey compared to 33% last year.

However even higher response rates would ensure that the views expressed are more representative of the whole workforce, although it is important to recognise that these rates may reflect the challenges teams have faced and are continuing to face due to Covid. To improve take up there will be more protected time to complete the survey next year, not just at briefings but also in team meetings. There will also be a revised approach based on the “you said...we did” format which will help to show the difference the survey has made.

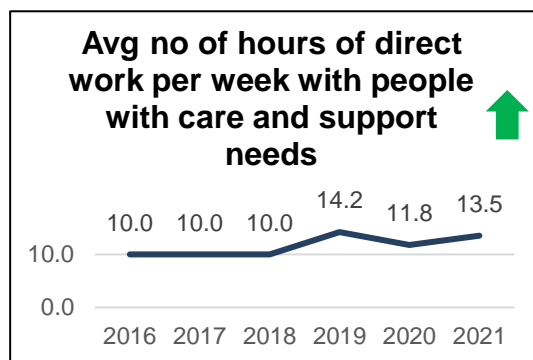
- 3.3 The findings of this year’s health checks are mostly positive, with improvement evident in a number of key areas as a result of actions taken by the service.

Social Work

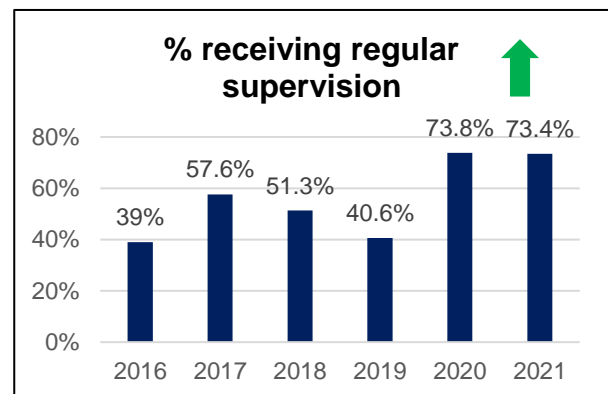
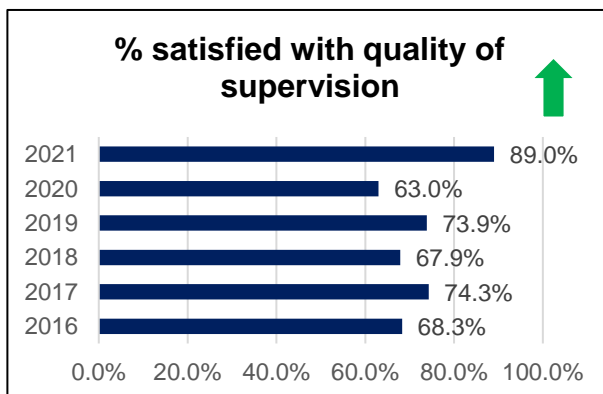
- 3.4 Nationally social work recruitment and retention continues to be a significant challenge and social work is on the national occupational shortage list. Wolverhampton’s Adults and Children’s Service has a well-established and effective recruitment and retention strategy which includes, amongst a number of other key actions, the investment in social work apprenticeships and a strong social work training and development offer, which this year has included PhD sponsorship opportunities. Covid has had a significant impact on adult social care, including social work, and has put pressure on the service in a variety of ways.
- 3.5 Positively however more social workers are saying that their workloads are manageable this year. This now applies to 75% of those who responded compared to 69% last year and is the highest this has been since 2018. Specific actions were taken since last year’s health check to improve workload manageability and included additional resources being agreed for 12 months to add extra capacity to support teams experiencing staffing challenges and increased demand during Covid. Workloads are monitored during supervision and the skill and experience of social workers, as well as the complexity of each situation, is taken into account. The revised supervision policy launched this year has reinforced this expectation.
- 3.6 There has been a slight increase in social workers working over their contracted hours. It is possible that continuous home working has created some ‘work creep’ with social workers feeling the need to answer calls or emails after work hours. A common theme in both surveys this year is a real desire to have more of a balance between working from home and in the office. A clear operating model encompassing a hybrid approach is currently being consulted on with service areas so that when it is safe to do so teams can start to use offices more often. This may be for supervision, collaboration time, team meetings and to support those workers who may be feeling isolated and struggling with their wellbeing, or who are new in post/role.
- 3.7 Actions were put in place as a result of the health check last year to ensure social workers felt more supported with their wellbeing and feelings of stress. Key actions included having a dedicated section for wellbeing on the monthly newsletter which, amongst other things, has promoted use of the council’s wellbeing hub and employee assistance programme.

The short-term additional staffing capacity, as mentioned previously, also intended to reduce stress levels as well as ensure workloads were more manageable. Consequently, in this year's health check those reporting they always or often feel stress due to work has reduced, although it is recognised that more action is needed to reduce this further over the next 12 months. The vast majority also reported that they know where to get help if they are concerned about their well-being and feel able to discuss their wellbeing, stressful situations or workload with their manager and agree satisfactory ways forward.

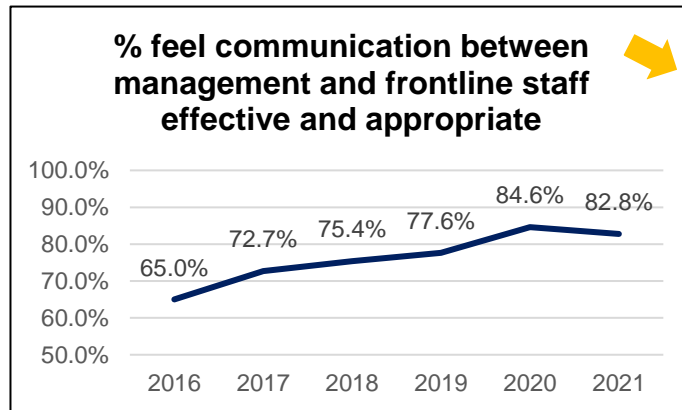
3.8 The majority of social workers have reported that Wolverhampton has a clear model of social work practice that promotes relationship working and a strengths-based approach to achieve the best outcomes for individuals and families. Positively social workers are also spending more time working directly with people this year.



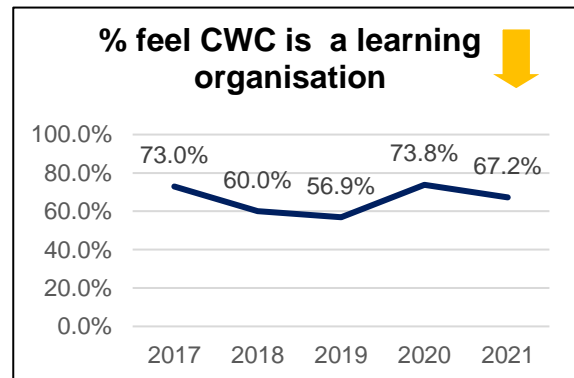
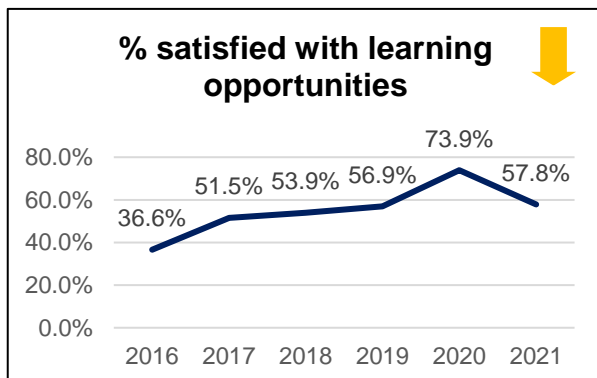
3.9 Far more this year are satisfied with the quality of supervision (89%), and this is the highest satisfaction rate since the health check survey started in 2017. This significant increase is likely due to actions taken over the last 12 months as a result of the last Health Check. One key action was the launch of the revised supervision policy and guidance in early 2021, alongside supervision training and a real commitment by the service to support teams and invest in supervision conversations. Despite the ongoing challenges posed by Covid, timeliness of supervisions remains a strength, although this could improve further. However almost 90% are satisfied with the level of support managers provide, which suggests that there is readily available support when social workers need it most. This is a significant increase from 2020 and 2019 (74% and 73% respectively).



3.10 The way senior managers communicate continues to be effective with 83% reporting this, which is just a very slight decrease from last year, but still higher than in the four years prior. The senior leadership team’s communication and engagement strategy has ensured the service has continued to be as visible as possible despite the challenges of virtual working. A regular presence at team huddles and monthly updates via the Adult Social Care newsletter has made a difference in this regard this year as well as regular social work briefings.



3.11 The majority are satisfied with the learning and development opportunities available, but there has been a slight decrease since last year. Not being given enough notice about training and wanting more progression opportunities were some common themes. Some ways in which this will be addressed is by better communication of progression opportunities such as the Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) and Practice Educator role and exploring options as part of the Adult Service’s redesign. The Organisational Development Team will also develop a brochure advertising all the training available over the year so that social workers can better plan their time and discuss their development needs as part of supervision and professional conversations.



3.12 The majority of social workers plan to stay with the council over the next 12 months. However, workloads, increasing complexity of situations and staffing challenges are issues some have raised this year which could affect retention.

The redesign is a key piece of work currently taking place which will review demand, workflow, systems as well as workloads and skill mix across the service to explore how adult social care in the city could work more effectively and efficiently without losing the person at the centre.

- 3.13 Over 85% would recommend CWC as an employer and there is a strong sense of pride and positivity about working for the council. Some comments included: “coming from another local authority, I am naturally comparing the experience here at Wolverhampton. I am happy in my role and feel grateful to be employed by CWC”; “I think Wolverhampton is a great local authority to work for- I am particularly inspired by its celebration of diversity...it makes me proud to work here”; “I really appreciate Wolverhampton's care and consideration of staff wellbeing and safety throughout Covid”; “great learning and development...opportunities for career progression”; “Wolverhampton have been a very supportive council and I have an approachable management team which makes all the difference and makes me want to continue to work for CWC.”
- 3.14 Almost all felt that CWC was actively committed to tackling inequality, with only 6% disagreeing, which is likely due to the strong approach taken by Adult's Services this year in addressing equality and diversity issues, reflecting the whole council's approach. This includes the creation of a cultural competency champion role, cultural competency workshops for staff as well as managers and a Joint Social Work conference in October 2021 which focussed on the theme of celebrating diversity and challenging inequality, and which featured a variety of speakers with lived experience of discrimination and oppression.
- 3.15 The majority of social workers said CWC makes them feel encouraged and empowered to make time for self-care and wellbeing activities and there has been a real commitment over the past 12 months to support wellbeing across Adult's Services. Wellbeing continues to be high on the agenda at briefings, in the monthly newsletter, in inductions and in team meetings. A wellbeing framework is also being developed to support teams manage their wellbeing further by bringing resources together in one place and reinforce messages about wellbeing particularly for social workers. The move to a hybrid model of working where teams can access offices to spend purposeful time with their teams will also support the wellbeing of all social care teams in adults.
- 3.16 More this year (66%) agree that they feel consulted about and involved in changes or proposals that affect their role. This is a significant increase compared to the last two years when only 46% in 2020 and 29% in 2019 felt this way. However, there is still room for improvement and the senior leadership team plan to communicate frequently with teams about the adult redesign work and ensure teams are involved wherever possible.

Workforce

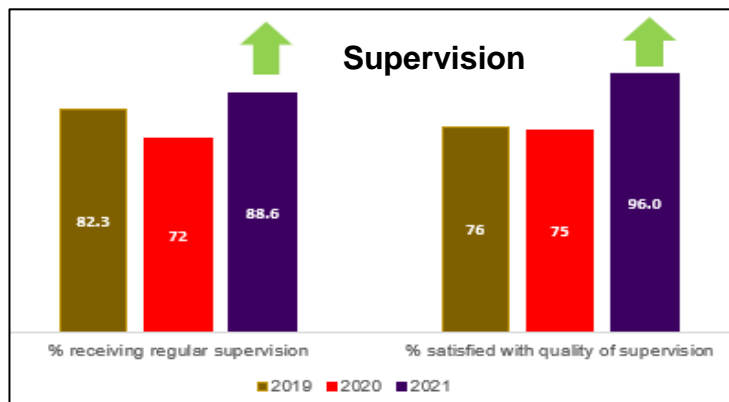
- 3.17 Around the same high number of people as last year are reporting that workloads are manageable, with 95% saying this compared to 96% in 2020.

There has also been an increase in the time spent undertaking direct work with people this year, with an average of 19.5 hours compared to 16.4 in 2020, and a decrease in those who always or often experience stress due to work.

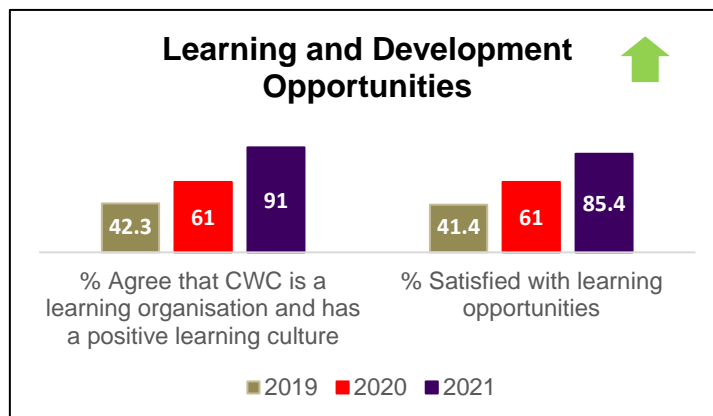
The vast majority (over 90%) know where to get help if they are concerned about their well-being and most feel able to discuss their wellbeing, stress, or workload with their manager to agree satisfactory ways forward.

3.18 There has been a slight increase in the average number of hours full time employees are working over their contracted hours (2.7 hours compared to 1.9 hours last year). Like the social work survey, a common theme is the desire to have a better balance between home and work to reduce the feeling of isolation and actions are in place to address this when it is safe to return to offices.

3.19 Timeliness of supervision has improved this year, and far more are satisfied with the quality of supervision compared to last year.

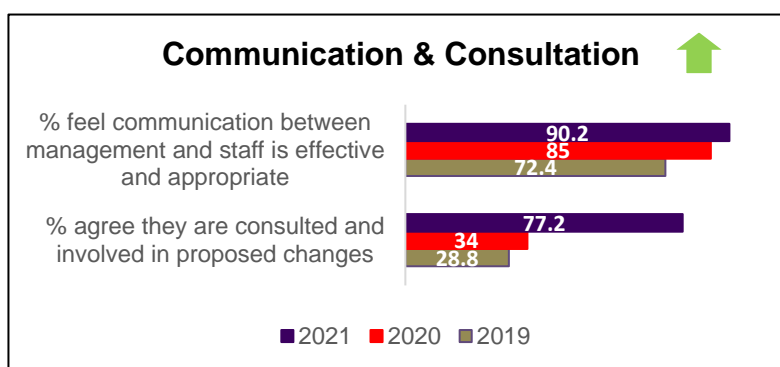


3.20 Far more are satisfied with learning and development opportunities this year and feel the City of Wolverhampton Council is a learning organisation with a positive learning culture. Access to the social work degree apprenticeship, the promotion of Research in Practice for Adults (RiPfA) and the commitment over the last year to support a variety of training opportunities seems to have supported this upwards trend.



3.21 Communication continues to be a strength with over 90% reporting that the way managers, including senior managers, communicate is effective and appropriate.

This has improved year on year. More this year (77%) also agree that they feel consulted about and involved in changes or proposals about changes that affect their role. This is a significant ongoing improvement from the previous two years. This is largely due to the action taken following last year's health check where senior leadership team built on their communication and engagement strategy which has included twice yearly whole workforce briefings providing key updates, increased presence in teams and monthly updates via the Adult Social Care newsletter.



- 3.22 Like the social work survey, almost all feel that the City of Wolverhampton Council is actively committed to tackling inequality and discrimination, with less than 2% disagreeing with this.
- 3.23 Over 90% would recommend CWC as an employer and the vast majority said that they do not intend to leave Wolverhampton over the next 12 months. Comments included: “continuing professional development opportunities have been appreciated”; “CWC have ensured we had sufficient PPE to protect us and the residents”; “friendliness, support and comradery amongst employees”; “I feel like I am making a difference”; “I feel my job is worthwhile and I get a sense the council is genuinely looking to improve things where they can and are quite forward thinking”; “I have recently joined and already been put forward for training and development opportunities. I feel respected as an employee and valued.”
- 4.0 Other notable progress and actions since 2020 survey**
- 4.1 As well as the progress and actions taken since the last health check in 2020 that are noted above, there were other areas which have seen significant development.
- 4.2. Last year a key area for improvement was satisfaction with the induction received by new social workers or those transferring to a new team or service area. The induction process was reviewed and resources to support good induction conversations were created and launched in early 2021. Consequently, this year 100% of social workers said they were satisfied with the induction they received, a significant improvement from 2020 and 2019 when satisfaction levels were 53% and 41% respectively.
- 4.3 There has also been a significant improvement this year regarding access to support and guidance from a team champion. Last year less than 14% had accessed a champion whereas this year just over 40% stated they had.

This is due to the work that has taken place to refresh the champion roles and the renewed engagement by champions in areas such as carer support, cultural competence and mental capacity and Deprivation of Liberty safeguards (DoLS).

5.0 Next Steps

5.1 An action plan has been completed as a result of these surveys to address the key areas of improvement. This will be overseen by the Adult Leadership team. The findings will also inform the workforce development plans for the coming year and will be shared with teams. Progress on identified actions will be shared with the workforce during the year.

5.2 Key actions are highlighted within the report and are summarised below, along with other notable actions:

- A redesign of Adult Social Care will take place this year to ensure systems and resources are supporting teams to use their skills and time effectively whilst keeping people at the centre and supporting even better outcomes
- Continuation of recruitment and retention strategy including investment in social work and workforce training and development offer and routes into social work (for example social work apprenticeships)
- Finalise post Covid operating model to support a hybrid approach and ensure more flexibility for teams to enable them to have a better home/ office / work / life balance
- Managers will continue to offer flexibility where needed to help people balance their work and home lives to reduce stress levels further
- The nature of social work and social care means that there is sometimes a requirement to work out of hours or longer hours than usual. When this occurs, managers will ensure that social workers / practitioners have the opportunity to take that time back by leaving work early or coming in late another day or, if more time has been accumulated, taking an extra day off.
- Stress risk assessments to be continued to be offered when needed
- Every supervision includes a robust discussion around workload / workload management
- Training and progression opportunities to be better promoted and advertised and discussed as part of Professional Conversations to ensure continued professional development is seen as a priority
- The training plan for 2022-2023 will cover topics suggested by those who completed the health check survey, including the Mental Capacity Act, Liberty Protection Safeguards, No Recourse to Public Funds and direct payments training

6.0 Financial implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

6.2 Any costs arising from actions in the work plan and priorities will be funded from within existing approved Adult Services budgets.

[MK/11022022/W]

7.0 Legal implications

7.1 There are no legal implications as a result of this report.
[SB/27012022/B]

8.0 Equalities implications

8.1 Social work / care is a diverse profession and the makeup of the social work / care teams in Wolverhampton is largely representative of the local community. The diversity of the people that are supported by social care teams are also largely representative of the diversity of the city as a whole.

9.0 Climate change and environmental implications

9.1 There are no climate or environmental implications.

10.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications

10.1 The health and wellbeing of our workforce is a priority for the City of Wolverhampton Council. The purpose of this health check is to get feedback from social workers about how they feel about working for Wolverhampton and how leaders can work to make improvements where necessary to support the wellbeing of the workforce and ensure they feel supported.

11.0 Human resources implications

11.1 Senior managers are working closely with human resources to fill vacancies as soon as they are able, even if with agency workers, in order to help keep workloads manageable for social workers.

12.0 Corporate landlord implications

12.1 There are no corporate landlord implications arising from this report or the recommendations.

13.0 Covid Implications

13.1 Covid has had an impact on the workforce over the last two years. At present this survey suggests that there is now a real desire to have a better balance between home and office working. Sickness absence related to Covid, or due to requirements to self-isolate, has contributed to staffing challenges in Adult Services. Contingency plans are regularly reviewed, and additional short-term funding was made available last year to stabilise some teams due to absences and demand. The adult redesign will address any issues longer term.

- 13.2 As previously stated, social work and social care recruitment and retention is a national issue and social work is on the national occupational shortage list. Senior managers are aware of the impact Covid continues to have and are prioritising employee wellbeing and offering support in helping them balance their work and personal circumstances.

This page is intentionally left blank