

# Strong Families, Children, and Young People Scrutiny Panel

15 March 2023

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

**Venue** Council Chamber- Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton WV1 1SH

## Membership

**Chair** Cllr Rita Potter (Lab)  
**Vice-chair** Cllr Adam Collinge (Con)

### Labour

Cllr Paul Sweet  
Cllr Qaiser Azeem  
Cllr Lovinyer Daley  
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre  
Cllr Carol Hyatt  
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur  
Cllr Louise Miles  
Cllr Lynne Moran

### Conservative

Cllr Stephanie Haynes  
Cllr Andrew McNeil

Wolverhampton Youth Council  
Cyril Randles - Church of England –  
Diocese of Lichfield Representative

Quorum for this meeting is four Voting Members.

## Information for the Public

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the Scrutiny Team:

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# Agenda

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

- | <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Title</i>   |
|-----------------|--|
| 1               | <b>Welcome and Introductions</b><br>[The Chair to welcome everyone to the meeting.]  |
| 2               | <b>Meeting procedures to be followed</b><br>[The Chair will explain how the meeting will proceed, how questions are to be asked and any matters of meeting etiquette.] |

### MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 3 | <b>Apologies</b>   |
| 4 | <b>Declarations of interest</b>  |
| 5 | <b>Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2023</b> (Pages 3 - 16)<br>[To approve the minutes of the Strong Families, Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel meeting, held on 11 January 2023, as a correct record]. |
| 6 | <b>Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2023</b> (Pages 17 - 22)<br>[To approve the minutes of the Strong Families, Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel meeting, held on 6 February 2023, as a correct record] |
| 7 | <b>Cross Party Scrutiny Review Group - Draft Mins 13.12.22</b> (Pages 23 - 26)<br>[To approve the minutes of the meeting as a correct record]  |

### DISCUSSION ITEMS

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 8  | <b>Family Hubs and Start for Life Offer Programme</b> (Pages 27 - 38)<br>[Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Children's Services, to present report]                   |
| 9  | <b>2022 Children's Social Work and Workforce Health Check</b> (Pages 39 - 56)<br>[Courtney Abbott, Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner, to present report] |
| 10 | <b>Young Opportunities (YO!)</b> (Pages 57 - 80)<br>[Andrew Wolverson, Deputy Director - Commissioning & Transformation, to present report]                          |
| 11 | <b>School Exclusion and Suspensions</b> (Pages 81 - 92)<br>[Brenda Wile, Deputy Director of Education, to present report]  |

# Strong Families, Children, and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Agenda Item No: 5

## Minutes - 11 January 2023

### Attendance

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

Cllr Rita Potter (Chair)  
Cllr Paul Sweet  
Cllr Qaiser Azeem  
Cllr Adam Collinge (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Stephanie Haynes  
Cllr Lovinyer Daley  
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre  
Cllr Carol Hyatt  
Cllr Andrew McNeil  
Cllr Louise Miles  
Cllr Lynne Moran

#### In attendance

Cllr Burden, Cabinet for Education and Skills

#### Employees

Earl Piggott-Smith  
Emma Bennett  
Alison Hinds  
James Barlow  
Phil Leivers  
Darren Martindale  
Amanda Sherrard  
Brenda Wile

Scrutiny Officer  
Executive Director of Families  
Deputy Director of Children's Social Care  
Finance Business Partner  
Head of Education Excellence  
Service Manager – Vulnerable Learners  
Corporate Analytics Manager  
Deputy Director of Education

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

*Item No.*     *Title*

- 1     **Welcome and Introductions**  
Cllr Rita Potter, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised it was also being live streamed to the press and public.
- 2     **Meeting procedures to be followed**  
Cllr Potter explained the process to be followed during the meeting for asking questions.
- 3     **Apologies**  
Apologies were received from the following member of the panel:

Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur

4 **Declarations of interest**

The following members of the panel declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 8.

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre

5 **Minutes of the previous meeting ( 5 October 2022 )**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2022, subject to the agreed changes, be approved as a correct record.

The panel agreed the following amendment to minutes – Agenda 7 Youth and holiday offer in the City – page 5

"The holiday programme covered a period of ten weeks which included some of the school holidays. The Council contributed additional funding to cover the remaining weeks."

"During the Christmas and New Year period holiday activities were offered for part of this holiday period in response to parents' comments."

6 **Update from Cross Party Scrutiny Review Group: Written Statement of Action**

The Chair invited Brenda Wile, Deputy Director of Education, to present the report.

The Deputy of Director of Education outlined the background to the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) and to the establishment of the review group to monitor the progress. The Deputy Director of Education gave a summary of the progress against the actions that was presented to members of the Cross-Party Scrutiny Review Group on 13 December 2022.

The Deputy Direction of Education advised the panel that there is an 18-month period set by CQC to achieve the actions in the WSOA.

The Deputy Direction of Education advised the panel that a meeting of the review group was held in December 2022 following a second monitoring visit by the DfE and the Care Quality Commission.

The Deputy Director of Education gave a summary of the information presented to the group which highlighted the good progress being made against the agreed actions. The CQC and DfE outcome letter commented that Wolverhampton partners had demonstrated that there is effective governance co -production and strategic leadership in place to support the delivery of WSOA.

The review group acknowledged the progress made and highlighted the achievements made since the WSOA was produced.

The review group had a specific concern about the delay in introducing a replacement IT system. The Deputy Director of Education advised the working group about the interim arrangements to address the concern until a new IT system is introduced. The feedback from the working group on this issue was included in a report to the SEND Partnership Board for their consideration.



The Deputy Director of Education was confident that the remaining actions will be achieved within the timescale.

The panel were invited to comment on the report.

The panel acknowledged the scale of the work completed and the good progress made to date. The panel commented on the importance to continue engaging with parents about planned changes to the service.

The panel highlighted a concern about the impact of delays in the CAHMS assessment. The Deputy Director of Education advised the panel that the issue of delays was a key focus of the discussion earlier in the day at a meeting of the SEND Partnership Board.

The panel queried the reference to issue of identifying children with SEND needs in the timely manner in primary and secondary schools and the view that the process was too long due to delays in the assessment and wanted further details.

The Deputy Director of Education commented on the ongoing challenges in this area and advised the panel of the plans for improving the service. The Deputy Director of Education acknowledged the need for Council and other partner organisations to get better at identifying young people of school age with SEND needs more quickly and that the issue is due primarily to delays in the CAMHS assessment process.

The panel discussed the different factors contributing to delays in the CAMHS assessment process and suggested that the report should make clear the complexity of the process itself and the differing priorities and resources of schools and the professionals organisation involved.

The Deputy Director of Education accepted the challenges presented the different levels of experience and expertise among SENCOs and in response a support group was set up to provide resources information and guidance free for all schools, rather than as part of an SLA, to improve the quality of practice.

The panel thanked the presenter for the report.

**Resolved:**

The panel agreed to note the report and welcomed the progress made on the WSOA.

**7 Performance, Budget Monitoring and MTFs**

The Chair invited Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families, to introduce the presentation.

The Executive Director advised the panel about the changes to the presentation of budget and performance information into a single report, rather than separately. The aim is to present the information in a way which makes it clear the budget expenditure, the impact on performance of Council services, and the link to specific performance against local and national data sets.

The report focuses on services to children and young people, and highlights information which was previously included in the 2022-2023 Performance and Budget monitoring update – Quarter 2.

The Executive Director advised the panel that the presentation would provide an update on the in- year performance and budget position and a summary of the draft budget for 2023 – 2024 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The panel comments would be included in a consolidated report and presented to Scrutiny Board. A further report would then be presented to the Cabinet as part of the budget consultation process.

The Executive Director advised the panel that an integrated performance and budget monitoring report is presented to Cabinet on a quarterly basis. The recent report presented to Cabinet on 16 November 2022 predicted a forecast budget overspend across the Council of £1.5 million, which was mainly due to the 2022-2023 pay award.

The Executive Director gave a summary of the Quarter 2 performance of the Council against 56 KPIs in the Our City: Our Plan performance framework document. The Executive Director advised the panel that 33 of the KPIs have shown improvement or have seen similar performance, 17 are yet to be updated and 6 have seen a decrease in performance compared to the previous quarter.

The Executive Director gave further details of the performance of the service in Quarter 2 in the following areas, children’s social care, education, and NEET.

The Executive Director commented on the summary forecast budget position for the families and children service areas and invited James Barlow, Finance Business Partner, to present the detailed budget report.

The Finance Business Partner advised the panel about efforts to improve the budget scrutiny process and welcomed comments on the approach and the 2023-2024 Draft Budget and MTFS 2023-2024 to 2025-2026 overview report.

The Finance Business Partner commented that overall Children’s and Education Services is projected to have an underspend of £1.1 million. The Finance Business Partner advised that the main areas of underspend were in speciality support and the closure of internal residential childcare provision, and the budget is being maintained while the new provision is being prepared.

The Finance Business Partner gave an overview of the key highlights of the 2022-2023 budget and MTFS report that was approved by Council on 2 March 2022. The Council is required to set a balanced budget and regular updates are presented to Cabinet to advise them of changes. The reported forecast budget deficit of £12.6 million in 2023 – 2024 and is predicted to rise to £25.8 million over the medium term to 2025 – 2026. The Finance Business Partner advised the panel that work will continue to bring forward proposals to set a balanced budget for 2023-2024.

The Finance Business Partner commented on the earmarked reserves within the remit of the panel and provided a web link with further details.

The Executive Director commented on the strategic risks report presented to Cabinet on 16 November 2022 and gave details about those risks within the remit of the panel. The Executive Director highlighted that a key risk to the service is the underspend on staffing due to challenges in recruiting social workers.

The Executive Director added that there is a national shortage of social workers generally and specifically in child protection and commented on the challenges this presents to the service.

The Executive Director updated the panel on progress of a plan to create peripatetic team that would help to fill vacancies in social work team, at a lower cost to the Council than using agency workers. The Executive Director commented on the challenges in recruiting experienced social workers to work in the peripatetic team and highlighted other initiatives being considered to mitigate against this and other risks outlined in the report.

The Executive Director commented on the work being done to manage the demand on the service and gave examples of areas contributing to the increase and areas of success which has led to an underspend on the budget.

The Executive Director commented on the strategic risks relevant to the panel that was reported to Cabinet on 16 November 2022.

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

The panel congratulated the Executive Director on the continued good management of Council finances.

The panel commented on the importance of maintaining earmarked reserves referred to the report at an appropriate level.

The panel queried if the projected underspend of £1.1 million in the overall Children's and Education Services budget was ringfenced for Children's Services purposes or would it be used to reduce the reported budget deficit.

The Finance Business Manager commented that at the end of the year any budget underspends would be go back into the corporate budget for next year's budget. There would however be discussions with the service areas about retaining any underspend for future years as part of the budget planning process. The details of changes would be included in the budget out-turn report. The proposal would be included in a future report to Cabinet to consider and approve.

The panel supported the view that the budget underspend should be used to support children and families.

The panel requested a briefing paper on the outcome of the decision.

The panel requested a briefing paper to provide an update on the budget underspend position in March 2023 following the meeting of Cabinet.

The panel expressed concerns about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on residents and queried what extra support would be provided to support families, in addition to the Supporting Families Grant.

The Finance Business Partner commented that previous underspends in Children Services have been built up over the years offset future pressures on the service. The overall budget for the service has been well managed and the level of demand in some specialist services has reduced, which has allowed these funds to be built up over time.

The Finance Business Partner commented that in response to the larger than expected pay award the plan will be to use £1 m of the supporting families to help offset budget pressures across the service in the current financial year. This is one off grant payment.

The panel commented that in view of the challenges of the rising inflation and the cost-of-living crisis whether the Children's and Education Services budget was sufficient and if there were other plans to respond the issue.

The Finance Business Partner advised the panel that the Council is allocated grants by Government and some of the payments are ring fenced and those that are not ring fenced can be used without restrictions. There have been underspends on the children services in the last few years, especially on the recruitment and funds have been added to the Children's and Education Services budget to offset budget pressures in the future. The Finance Business Partner commented on the example of the impact of the pay award which was larger than forecast. The plan is use £1 million of the underspend on to Children's and Education Services budget to support the Council budget in this financial year. The plan would be to add the funds back into the budget in the following year.

Alison Hinds, Deputy Director Social Care, commented on the work being done with other partners to support families with the challenge of the cost-of-living crisis. The Deputy Director Social Care advised the panel that this work is supported by a financial wellbeing strategy which helps ensure available resources and external grants are being used to support residents across the City feeling the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

The panel queried the rationale for calculations presented for the increase in the forecast budget deficit of £12.6m (2023-2024) to £25.8m over the medium term to 2025-2026. The panel asked for details of the financial pressures which have contributed to the estimates detailed in the presentation.

The Finance Business Partner commented that the estimates given are like those given in previous budget forecasts and further details are available in the October 2022 finance report presented to Cabinet. The Finance Business Partner commented on the challenges when calculating estimates from the number of one year funding settlements, and the impact of the recent pay awards and significant increase in inflationary costs as examples of the funding pressures.

The Finance Business Partner reassured the panel that the Council has a good track record of forecasting budget estimates, and a prudent approach is taken when considering the level of grant income that is expected as it cannot be assumed that previous grant awards will be increased in line with inflation or indeed if the grant will continue. The figures in the report are based on current assumptions and estimates of future funding levels and expenditure. The aim of presenting the budget deficit estimates is to make Councillors aware of the budgetary challenges.

The Finance Business Partner reassured the panel about the work being done to set a balanced budget which the Council has a good track record of achieving.

The panel queried when details about grant funding would be published and if advance notice is given of the level of the award.

The Finance Business Partner advised the panel the Council will sometime get an indication of the settlement figure based on the departmental budget reports. The details of the final budget settlement figures are published in January 2023.

The panel thanked the presenters for the presentation.

**Resolved:**

1. The panel comments on the draft budget and its alignment to the priorities of the Council to be noted.
2. The panel comments on the Draft Budget and MTFS 2023-2024 to 2025-26 to be noted and included in the feedback report on budget consultation response when presented to Scrutiny Board.
3. The Finance Business Manager to advise the panel of the outcome of discussion about the Children's and Education Services current budget underspend being taken forward to 2023- 2024.

8 **Education Performance in Wolverhampton Schools and Settings 2021-2022 (report to follow)**

The Chair invited Cllr Burden, Cabinet for Education and Skills, to introduce the report. The Cabinet Member commented on the positive findings in the report, and the progress made over the years to improve educational attainment scores. The Cabinet Member commented that 88 per cent of Wolverhampton schools were rated by Ofsted overall as being either good or outstanding as of November 2022. The figure is above the West Midlands average of 85 per cent and in line with national rates.

The Cabinet Member commented on the progress of Wolverhampton schools at each of the key stages, highlighting the excellent performance at Key Stage2, where Wolverhampton was rated above the national average in reading, writing and arithmetic.

The Cabinet Member invited Phil Leivers, Head of Education Excellence, to present the detail of the report.

The Head of Education Excellence, commented on improvements to the layout of the report and that in response to recent comments from a panel member that further changes to include more analysis to better understand the impact on work of the service will be added to the next annual report to the panel.

The Head of Education Excellence commented that education is a key priority for the Council and outlined the development of the strategy over the years. The Head of Education Excellence advised the panel that a holistic approach was taken to improving educational achievement which looks at how the Council supports children and their families both at home and in schools.

The Head of Education Excellence commented on the positive impact of the continued investment in core education services compared to other authorities, which has contributed to the sustained improvements in performance.

The Head of Education Excellence highlighted the key educational achievements during the period 2021- 2022 and commented specifically on the progress made by pupils at Key Stage 2, 4 and 5.

The Head of Education Excellence advised the panel that there is a wider review of post 16 education qualifications and advice given to support decision about future pathways. The review led by the City of Wolverhampton Council includes representatives from schools and other education providers. The Council will publish the review findings and recommendations in March 2023.

The panel were invited to comment on the report.

The panel welcomed the report and congratulated the presenter on the performance of schools.

The panel queried the Council's relationship with schools and how successes about improved educational performance is shared with them. The Head of Education Excellence commented that results of Ofsted attainment scores are included in a weekly school bulletin.

The panel queried what was being done to capture the experiences of those pupils who perform better during assessments rather than focusing on exam performance as a success measure, in the annual report.

The Head of Education Excellence welcomed the comment about the importance to consider the voice of students and agreed to consider how this information could be collected and presented.

The panel commented on the importance of getting data presented at school level as there was concern that the use of averages in the report makes it difficult to differentiate between the performance of schools to help Councillors understand where further support is needed. The panel commented on the importance of improving education standards across all Wolverhampton schools and using this school level information to decide where Council resources should be best used.

The panel suggested that the first year of school validated results should be used as a baseline to assess the performance of schools in future years and the impact of the strategy. The panel commented that the data could also be used to analyse the data based on ethnicity and demography to better understand those groups of children who are underperforming.

The Executive Director of Families reassured the panel that there is a focus on improving education outcomes for all children and young people and extra resources are being used to support children and families through education and children services. The Executive Director of Families agreed to consider the comment about the inclusion of school level data in future reports but commented that a challenge is that academies are not required to share pupil level data with the Council, for example attendance figures, and other pupil data involves small numbers such as exclusions, which present a further challenge. The Council has regular meetings with DFE that can be used to escalate matters if a school does not want share pupil data. The Executive Director of Families commented that the matter can also be raised with the Regional Schools Commissioner but added that the Council has generally very good relationships with all academies within the City.



The panel queried the reason for Wolverhampton's attainment statistics for achieving the expected standard in Reading, Writing and, Maths at Key Stage 1 being below the average for the national and regional average levels, but above the rate for statistical neighbours in the table. The Head of Education Excellence advised the panel that the scores for Key Stage 1 were not included in the assessment as it was based on teacher assessment which were not externally moderated like the other key stages.

The Head of Education Excellence commented that progress was being made to improve educational performance at Key Stage 1 and acknowledged that there was acceptance that more work is needed to improve the attainment scores for Reading, Writing and, Maths.

The panel queried the level of influence the Council has over academies, where there are concerns about educational performance issues, for example, the underachievement of boys compared to girls. In reference to the earlier conversation the panel also queried if the Council offers educational resources and support free to academies to support the progress of children in Wolverhampton.

The Head of Education Excellence outlined the current training offer from the Council which is open to all schools and other support provided to schools based on a service level agreement. The panel were advised that academies were also able to purchase support from independent education training providers. The Head of Education Excellence advised the panel that training sessions on citizenship and language is oversubscribed by academies.

The panel suggested that a future report on educational performance should include an analysis of the amount of the support given to academies as a proportion of the support given to maintained schools in the City.

The panel thanked the presenter for the report and congratulated the schools on the improved performance against local and national measures.

The panel asked for more detailed information to assess changes in educational performance over time to better understand the impact of the work being done to improve outcomes for children and young people.

The Head of Education Excellence advised the panel that the data is based on the information published by the DFE for local authorities and added that further analysis to provide school level data could be done. However, this would be subject to getting schools to agree to allow the information they provide to be used in the way needed. There are discussions ongoing with schools to agree a draft data sharing agreement that would allow the data to be used and published.

The panel suggested that a briefing paper to update panel on progress on collating the data needed be presented to a future meeting. The panel discussed the need to recognise the role of school governors in allocating resources and the limited role of the local authority in such circumstances to influence such decisions because of legislative changes.

The panel discussed the value and importance of early years education.

The Executive Director of Families outlined the range of early years initiatives provided in recognition of the important contribution of early years to improving

educational outcomes for children. The Executive Director suggested a future report on the work of the early years multi agency group could be useful to present to the panel at a future meeting.

The panel thanked the presenters for the report and the presentation.

**Resolved:**

1. The panel agreed to note the annual report findings and the improved educational performance of Wolverhampton schools in 2021 -2022.
2. The panel comments on the content of the annual report to be considered when presenting the next annual report.
3. The panel comments on the performance of schools and academies to be noted.
4. The Head of Education Excellence to provide information requested by the panel either as a briefing paper or a future meeting.
5. The Executive Director of Families to present a report on the work of early years multi agency group in supporting early years development to a future meeting of the panel.

9 **Virtual School Head Annual Report 2022**

The Chair invited Darren Martindale, Virtual School Head, to present the report.

The Virtual School Head advised the panel that the draft annual report 2022 was being presented for comment before being considered for approval by Cabinet. The Virtual School Head advised the panel the presentation will give a summary of annual report which details the educational outcomes and achievements of children and young people in care and care leavers from September 2021 to July 2022 in Wolverhampton.

The annual report also highlights, future priorities for 2022 - 2023, and areas for development of the work being done by the Council and other partners to support the achievement of children and young people in care.

The Virtual School Head advised the panel of the statutory responsibilities of the Virtual School Head and explained that the data in the report is based on the Department of Education definition of 'looked after child' which states that this is a child or young person "who have been continuously looked after for at least 12 months up to and including 31 March 2022".

The Virtual School Head commented that the vast majority of looked after children attend schools rated as either 'good' or 'outstanding' and explained the small number of children attending a school rated as 'inadequate' would only do so for a limited period and a specific reason. A decision about moving a child from a school with an Ofsted rating of 'inadequate' would be based on what is in the best interest of that child.



The Virtual School Head commented on the main educational achievements of children in care in the annual report.

The Virtual School Head referred to an earlier discussion where it was highlighted that research suggest that exam-based system disproportionately affect pupils who are already disadvantaged. The Virtual School Head commented that this view is supported by the results of the high GSCE attainment scores at Key Stage 4 for looked after children based on teacher assessment during the pandemic, which has subsequently fallen this year following the return to exam-based assessments.

The Virtual School Head commented on the overall improved educational performance in GSCE attainment. The Virtual School Head commented on the support given to children to allow them to pursue other interests, for example, some children have been given tuition lessons to allow them to develop their musical skills. The service is working to improve the local arts and cultural offer for children in care.

The Virtual School Head commented that they were not having issues with schools not accepting applications from children in care and highlighted the good working relationship with schools. The Virtual School Head added that there is a good understanding among schools about their corporate parent responsibilities and the value of attachment trauma informed practice.

The Virtual School Head advised the panel that two local schools were nominated for The Alex Timpson ARC Attachment Award in 2022 in recognition of their good work in this area, and Low Hill Nursery School was successful in the early years category.

The Virtual School Head gave an overview of the post 16 education outcomes and highlighted the success of nine care leavers who graduated from university in 2022, the highest number to date.

The Virtual School Head commented on the areas for development detailed in the main report to build on the educational achievements in 2022. The Virtual School Head added that the service is developing a more comprehensive dataset to track the educational progress of children, and this has been supported by a virtual school performance dashboard.

The Virtual School Head advised the panel that a review of attachment and trauma aware practice in schools is being considered with the aim of achieving a more consistent practice.

The Virtual School Head commented on the key objectives for 2022-2023, highlighting efforts to increase the participation of young people in arts and culture in care and other enrichment activities with the aim of extending the offer to all children with a social worker. The Virtual School Head agreed to report progress against the key objectives in next year's annual report on the work being done to improve the life chances of children and young people in care, or who have previously been in care.

The panel thanked the presenter for the very encouraging report and the achievements of the service in supporting children and young people care.

The panel queried the reference in the report to 20 per cent of pupils recorded as persistently absent and asked for more details about the factors behind this and profile of young people involved.

The Virtual School Head reassured the panel that the majority of young people have specific and genuine reasons for their absence, but there is small minority of young people with higher levels of needs which the service struggles to provide the appropriate level of educational support, which can result in either suspensions or lower attendance.

The Virtual School Head added that the long-term impact of persistent school absence, while a concern, based on experience of young people in this situation still do well educationally and it does not necessarily impact on the rest of their life.

The panel queried the process for developing smart educational targets for a young person as part of drafting their Personal Education Plans (PEP). The PEP details how the professionals responsible for the looked after child will assist their academic success and results.

The Virtual School Head commented on the work being done to strengthen the auditing framework in response to this issue and highlighted plans to involve Social Care Managers to try and improve this issue. The Virtual School Head is also working closely with school-based education leads to talk about the issues and this work is supported by additional training material.

The panel discussed the importance of high-quality teaching delivered in a way that is non-threatening and makes clear what it is children must learn, to improving educational attainment standards.

The Virtual School Head supported the comment and added that the shift in approach from DFE is reflected in the flexibility given to how local authorities were able to decide how to use their school-led tutoring grant. The approach builds on the flexibility given to local authorities by DFE on the use of pupil premium funds.

The panel thanked the presenter for report and the excellent progress made by children and young people in care.

**Resolved:**

1. The panel wanted to formally record their congratulations to the Virtual School Head and the professionals who have contributed to work that has helped support children in care and the improvement in educational achievements detailed in the annual report.
2. The panel comments on the draft Virtual School Head Annual Report 2022 report to be noted.

10

**Strong Families, Children and Young People - Draft Scrutiny Work Programme 2022- 2023**

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

The Scrutiny Officer advised the panel of future agenda items detailed in the work programme report.

The Scrutiny Officer advised the panel that the work programme will be updated to include actions agreed earlier in the meeting.

The Scrutiny Officer invited the panel to comment on the draft work programme and to suggest future agenda items.

**Resolved:**

The panel agreed to note the report.

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# Strong Families, Children, and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Agenda Item No: 6

## Minutes - 6 February 2023

### Attendance

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

Cllr Rita Potter (Chair)  
Cllr Paul Sweet  
Cllr Qaiser Azeem  
Cllr Adam Collinge (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Stephanie Haynes  
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre  
Cllr Carol Hyatt  
Cllr Andrew McNeil  
Cllr Louise Miles  
Cllr Lynne Moran

#### Employees

Earl Piggott-Smith  
Emma Bennett  
Alison Hinds  
Bill Hague  
Laura Gittos  
Jaswinder Kaur

Scrutiny Officer  
Executive Director of Families  
Deputy Director of Children's Social Care  
Head of Business and Support Services  
Head of Governance  
Democratic Services Manager

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

*Item No.*     *Title*

- 1     **Welcome and Introductions**  
Cllr Rita Potter, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised it was also being live streamed to the press and public.
- 2     **Meeting procedures to be followed**  
Cllr Potter explained the process to be followed during the meeting for asking questions.
- 3     **Apologies**  
Apologies were received from the following member of the panel:  
  
Cllr Lovinyer Daley
- 4     **Declarations of interest**  
There were no declarations of interest recorded.

5 **Determined Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2024-2025**

The Chair invited Bill Hague, Head of Service, School Business and Support, to present the report. The Head of Service advised the panel that the report is being presented for pre-decision scrutiny before it is considered for approval by Cabinet on 22 February 2023.

The Head of Service advised the panel that every seven years the service undertakes a public consultation on the admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools. The aim is to ensure the admission arrangements are fair, equitable and easy to understand.

As part of the review the admission arrangements for secondary and primary schools operated by academy trusts in Wolverhampton was considered to check how their admission arrangements differ to the processes used by the Council's.

The Head of Service advised the panel that several academy trusts have taken advantage of the option to include children of school staff in their school admission criteria list. The change has been considered to be helpful for academies in the recruitment and retention of teaching staff, particularly in those subject areas where there is a shortage.

The Head of Service advised the panel that in accordance with the requirements of the Schools Admission Code (2021) an external consultation was held about adding this change as a sixth criteria to the school admission arrangements list. The Head of Service advised the panel that 69 people completed the survey and overall, 62 per cent of respondents supported the change to the admission criteria.

The Head of Service added that the proposed change is likely to have minimal impact on other families as the numbers involved are likely to be small.

This change has now been made to the revised oversubscription criterion relating to children of staff.

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

The panel while welcoming members of the public who took part in the consultation commented that the figures for responses only represent a very small percentage of the total number of applications from parents.

The panel queried where most of the challenges are in terms of demands on the service.

The Head of Service commented about the pride in Wolverhampton representing schools in the West Midlands region on the Department for Education (DFE) working group for school admissions. The group helps shape national school admission policy.

The Head of Service commented that issue that takes most time is managing the impact on the service of the option in the school admission code which allows parents to apply to change school at any time during the year.

This presents a challenge as there no responsibility in law for local authorities to co-ordinate in year admissions applications.

The Head of Service commented that Wolverhampton took decision that there is a professional and moral obligation to continue to coordinate in year school admissions. The policy means that if a parent living in Wolverhampton needs to change school, they can apply to the Council rather than having to contact the school to check what spaces are available. The Head of Service advised the panel however that this policy creates exceptional amounts of work as the service receives over 3000 in-year applications every year.

The Head of Service commented that without such a policy there is a risk of more children missing education due to delay in finding them a suitable school place and outlined the range of work done with colleagues to support families and reduce the risk further.

The panel wanted reassurance that parents of looked after children would not be affected by the change in the admission criteria.

The Head of Service confirmed that children and young people in care and in former children and young people in care are in the highest criteria, also the evidence from academies suggest that the change has not led to any concerns locally from parents about the policy as the numbers involved is very small.

The panel discussed the policy financial support available to families to help with travel costs if their child is allocated a place at the nearest school with places and the criteria to qualify for assistance. The panel discussed All Age Travel Assistance Policy and issue of home to school transport for children of compulsory school age.

The Head of Service explained the policy and legislation relating to providing financial support to families with home to school travel costs and the advice given to parents to help them make an informed decision when making submitting their preferences for a school.

The panel discussed the issue of financial support available for families with school travel costs and reference was made to the Education Act 1996.

The Act states that there is no legal duty on local authorities to provide financial support for children of compulsory school age (5-16) and that it is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to ensure that their child gets to and from school they have been allocated.

The Head of Service agreed to share a copy of the current All Age Travel Assistance Policy which details the criteria for parents to qualify for free school travel assistance with the panel.

The panel agreed to add the All-Age Travel Assistance Policy as future agenda item as it was outside the focus of the task which is the pre-decision scrutiny of the revised school admissions arrangements.

The panel thanked the presenter for the report.

Resolved:

1. The panel support the Co-ordinated Admission Schemes for secondary and primary school admissions at the normal year of entry for 2024-2025.

2. The panel support proposed change to the admission arrangements including the oversubscription criterion relating to children of staff for community and voluntary controlled schools for 2024-2025.
3. The panel agreed to add a report on the All-Age Travel Assistance Policy to the work programme.

## 6 **School Appeals Update**

The Chair invited Laura Gittos, Head of Governance, to give the presentation.

The Head of Governance advised the panel that it would be joint presentation with Jaswinder Kaur, Democratic Services and Systems Manager.

The Democratic Services and Systems Manager advised the panel that School Standards and Framework Act 1998, gives responsibility for the making arrangements for appeals against the refusal of a school place with the admission authority of the school.

The school and the admission authority must act in accordance with the School Admission Appeals Code 2022 and other relevant legislation.

The Democratic Services and Systems Manager advised the panel that the aim of the code is to ensure that school appeals are conducted in a fair and transparent way. The code is prescriptive in terms of deadlines to be met for hearing appeals.

The Democratic Services and Systems Manager explained the school appeal arrangements and the additional processes to assist parents, for example, the service will contact parents in advance of the appeal to check if they want to submit any additional evidence, if they are familiar with using Microsoft Teams and to explain the different stages of the appeal process so parents understand what will be happening.

The Democratic Services and Systems Manager outlined the school appeal process and advised the panel that the appeal will be heard by three independent appeal panel members who have received full training on the code. The appeal panel members will be supported by a clerk who will record the proceedings and offer impartial advice to all parties.

The Democratic Services and Systems Manager explained the process after the appeal hearing and advised that a parent after receiving the decision letter can make a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman if they feel either the Council or the panel has not followed the proper procedures in the appeal hearing.

The Head of Governance outlined the findings from a review of the School Appeals Unit conducted with the Democratic Service and Systems Manager. The Head of Governance gave details of the action planned or taken against each of the areas identified for development.

The Head of Governance advised the panel that the School Appeals Unit is a statutory service and is looking to develop and improve it further.

The panel were invited to comment on the presentation.



The panel queried how the views of parents are captured to find out what they think about the appeal process and how it is used to improve the service.

The Democratic Service and Systems Manager advised the panel that the colleagues do ask parents for feedback about their experiences at the end of the appeal hearing. In addition, the service regularly reviews its processes to see what improvements can be made to ensure that the policy is fit for purpose.

The panel queried the support provided to parents whose first language is not English or who may not be able to best articulate their case at the appeal hearing.

The Democratic Service and Systems Manager advised the panel that all parents and guardians are made aware in advance that they can bring a representative with them should they wish to support them. The appeal decision is based on the evidence submitted at the meeting.

The Democratic Service and Systems Manager added that as part of the service pre-checks are done with parents to check they understand the process and can represent themselves and if required an interpreter will be provided.

The Democratic Service and Systems Manager commented that team members are encouraged to think about using different language in pre-check meetings with parents to try to ensure that the parent or guardian can properly take part in the appeal.

The panel queried the impact of in-year school appeals applications on the service in terms of workload. The Democratic Service and Systems Manager advised the panel that the main pressure on the team is dealing with appeals for September intake but is also aware of the increase in the number of in-year school appeals applications.

The increase in the number in-year school appeals in Wolverhampton is like that experienced in other urban cities.

The panel commented on the importance of working proactively with Wolverhampton Homes to make parents aware of the demand on school places and the need to prepare for a possible appeal if they are not successful with their application.

The Head of Service commented on the challenge in dealing with the rapidly changing situation about the number of school places available at a school and as a result it can be difficult to give timely advice to families on current vacancies.

The Head of Service commented on the statistics from the monthly monitoring of surplus places in the city which suggest that the cohort of children will generally increase by around 10 forms of entry, this is equivalent to finding places for an extra 300 pupils per year group which the service is trying to manage.

The panel congratulated the presenters on the performance of the school appeals service and supported the planned improvement work outlined in the presentation.

The panel discussed the membership of school appeal panels and supported efforts to ensure that it is reflective of the local community and in terms of having people with a wider breadth of professions and experiences.

The panel thanked the presenters for the report and congratulated them on the performance of the service.

Resolved:

1. The panel agreed to note the report.
2. The panel comments on the presentation to be noted.
3. The Head of Governance and Democratic Service and Systems Manager to update the panel on progress of the School Appeals – Development Plan at a meeting in six months.

**SEND Written Statement of Action -**  
**Cross Party Scrutiny Review Group** Agenda Item No: 7  
**Minutes - 13 December 2022**

## Attendance

### Members of the SEND Written Statement of Action - Cross Party Scrutiny Review Group

Councillor Adam Collinge  
Councillor Dr Michael Hardacre  
Councillor Stephanie Haynes  
Councillor Louise Miles  
Councillor Rita Potter

### In Attendance

Brenda Wile	Deputy Director of Education
Helen Bakewell	Head of Inclusion & Empowerment
Laura Noonan	Electoral Services Manager
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer

*Item No.*    *Title*

1        **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

2        **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any matter on the agenda.

3        **Notes of the Previous Meeting (27.9.22)**

The notes of the previous meeting on 27.9.22 were approved as a correct record.

The group discussed the role of the group and concern was expressed about the risk of duplication with work being done by other groups with a responsibility for reviewing progress against the actions detailed in the Written Statement of Actions (WSOA).

The Scrutiny Officer commented on the remit of the group and advised that any changes would need to be presented to Cabinet for approval.

The group discussed the likely date of the next OFSTED inspection and agreed to await the outcome of this report before agreeing a further date to meet.

4        **Culture of Inclusion Update Report November 2022 - presentation**

The Chair invited Brenda Wile, Deputy Director of Education, to give the presentation. The Deputy Director gave a short presentation commenting on the background to the Culture of Inclusion Project, the specific aims of the group, the five workstreams and the key achievements to date.

The agenda items for 5,6, 7 and 8 were presented for background information.

The Deputy Director of Education commented on the future activity in supporting and building on the achievements in meeting the objectives detailed in the WSOA.

The Deputy Director of Education commented on the positive feedback following monitoring inspection visits by Ofsted which highlighted the significant progress made in achieving actions detailed in the WSOA.

The Deputy Director of Education commented on the work being done to consult with young people with SEND about the planned changes in a series of workshops.

The group asked for a copy of the action plan developed during the sessions to be shared and commented that this is a good example of positive public engagement work.

The group were invited to comment on presentation and supporting documents.

The group welcomed and acknowledged the progress made in addressing issues detailed in the WSOA.

The group expressed concerns about the delay in introduction of a new IT system and that it has been identified as being a key risk in the presentation.

The group queried if employees had made any requests for specific support or assistance in the meantime. The group also queried if the Council's IT services has been involved in checking that the new system will meet the needs of the service and address the concerns highlighted in the inspection.

The group asked for assurance about plans for ensuring employees responsible for delivering the service are confident in using the new system and how information about changes to the system will be publicised to parents of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) children and young people.

The Deputy Director of Education referred the group to supporting documents about inclusion work and added that further details will be available on progress of actions linked to the Local Offer and Communication workstream to a future meeting.

The Deputy Director of Education commented that no additional resources are currently needed to support the Capital One system and advised the group that the project is being support by the Council's ICT team, which was not possible under the previous contract arrangements.

The Deputy Director of Education acknowledged that time would be needed to train professional and parents in using the new IT system and ongoing training for everyone to be able use it. The level of training will depend on the choice of the new system and what, if any, additional resources are needed.

The group discussed the challenges facing families who may not have good quality internet access and commented on the need to consider the issue of 'digital poverty' when developing the new IT system.

The group discussed the factors contributing to the delays in completing the education, health and care plan (EHCP) and highlighted that a reduction in delays in the assessment process is dependent upon information provided by health professionals and the school Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) (the SENCO is a teacher with responsibility for assessing, planning and monitoring the progress of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)) , while accepting the responsibility of the Council in working with partner organisations to meet deadlines in the assessment process.

The groups discussed the long-term benefits of investing funds on SEND children and young people at an early stage and the important role of schools in funding this work with the appropriate level of resources and specialist training. The panel discussed concerns about inconsistency of practice and the early identification of SEND children and young people between schools.

The Deputy Director of Education acknowledged the challenges presented by SENCOs with different levels of skills and experience and advised the group about the free online resources available to all schools and to members of the SENCO network to help improve the situation.

The Deputy Director of Education commented on the range of challenges facing classroom teachers and how this may impact in the difficulty in identifying the difference between the poor behaviour of a child and behaviour linked to SEND or other additional needs.

The group discussed plans for a new Ofsted inspection framework and the difficulties this will create when assessing the progress against the current WSOA which was based on the previous inspection framework.

The group discussed the date of the next meeting of the group and agreed to consider this further following the next planned inspection by Ofsted which is expected in March 2023.

Resolved:

1. The SEND WSOA Scrutiny Review Group welcomes the progress and achievements made in response to the WSOA.
2. The SEND WSOA Scrutiny Review Group agreed to discuss a date for the group to meet next following the visit by Ofsted to review progress of the WSOA in March 2023.
3. The SEND WSOA Scrutiny Review Group comments on the presentation to be noted and information provided where agreed.
4. The members of SEND WSOA Scrutiny Review Group to submit the achievement and concern from the presentation to be included in the report to SFCYP and Cabinet updating them on progress against WSOA.

No panel comments.

6 **Written Statement of Action Update presentation - November 2022**

No panel comments.

7 **Wolverhampton Adviser Monitoring Review**

No panel comments.

8 **Guidance - Area SEND inspections: framework and handbook**

No panel comments



# Family Hubs and Start for Life Offer Programme

**Strong Families, Children, Young People Scrutiny Panel**  
15 March 2023

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Presenter:

**Alison Hinds**  
Deputy Director of Children's  
Services

Agenda Item No: 8

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



# The Best Start for Life A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days

## The Early Years Healthy Development Review Report

### What the review heard:

- The commitment and passion from those working with families to help them give their baby the best start for life is impressive.
- A strong commitment from across early years charities, organisations and the workforce to improving how we support families during the 1,001 critical days.
- Sometimes, professionals and volunteers do not know what good joined up services would look like for that family.

### What the review heard:

- Some families don't have confidence in the services and support in their area and it isn't clear who is accountable at either a local or a national level for ensuring every baby is given the best start for life.
- It can be hard to know what's available in your local area, hard to know where you can go to get help and hard to find advice you can trust online. Parents and carers don't have data and information about their baby in a form they can access easily and share readily

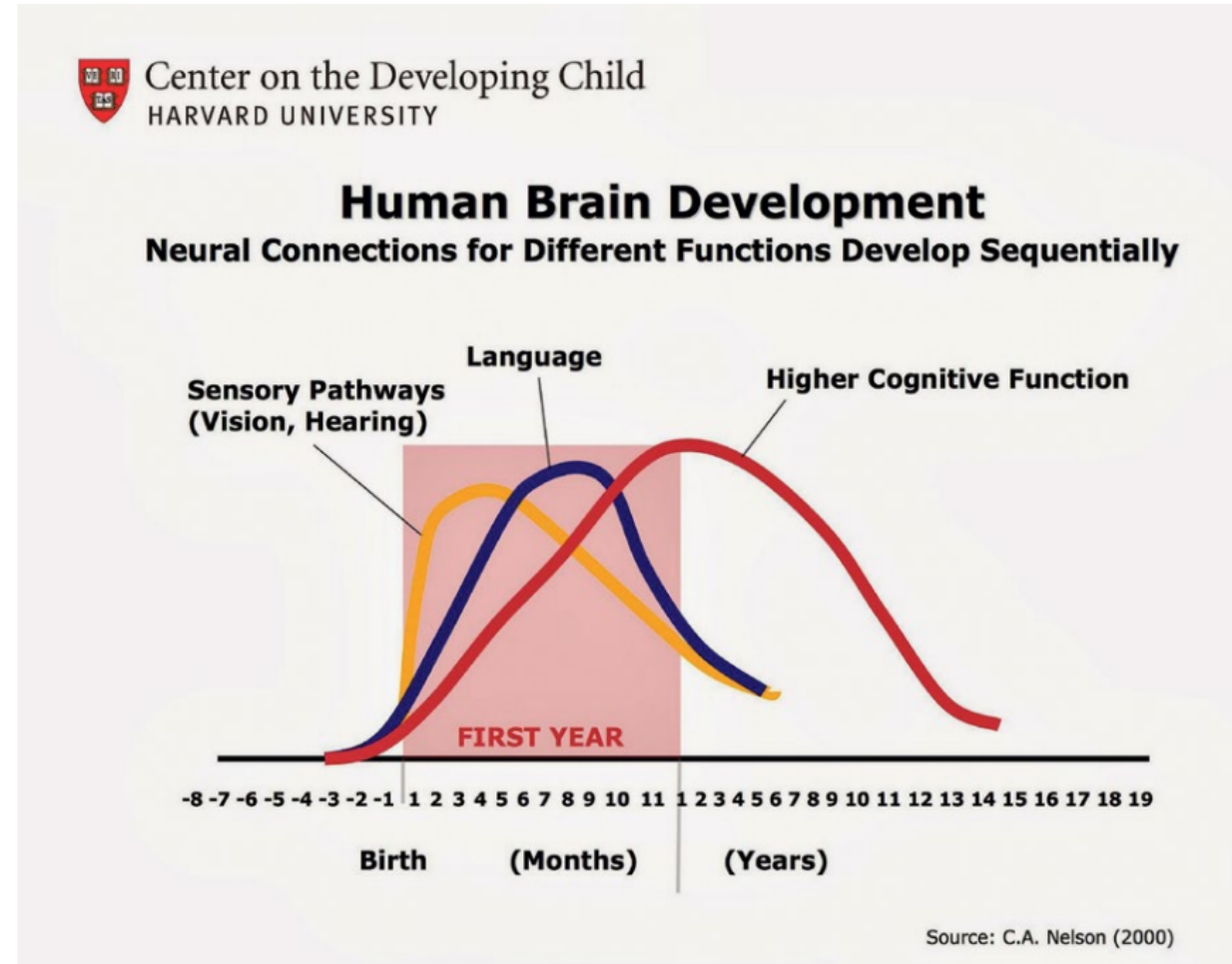


# Why the 1,001 critical days are critical

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*Science tells us that a child's experiences from conception through their first five years will go on to shape their next 50. It tells us that the kind of children we raise today, will reflect the kind of world we will live in tomorrow. It tells us that investing in the start of life is not an indulgence, but economically, socially and psychologically vital to a prosperous society."*

**– Jason Knauf, CEO of the Royal Foundation, December 2020**

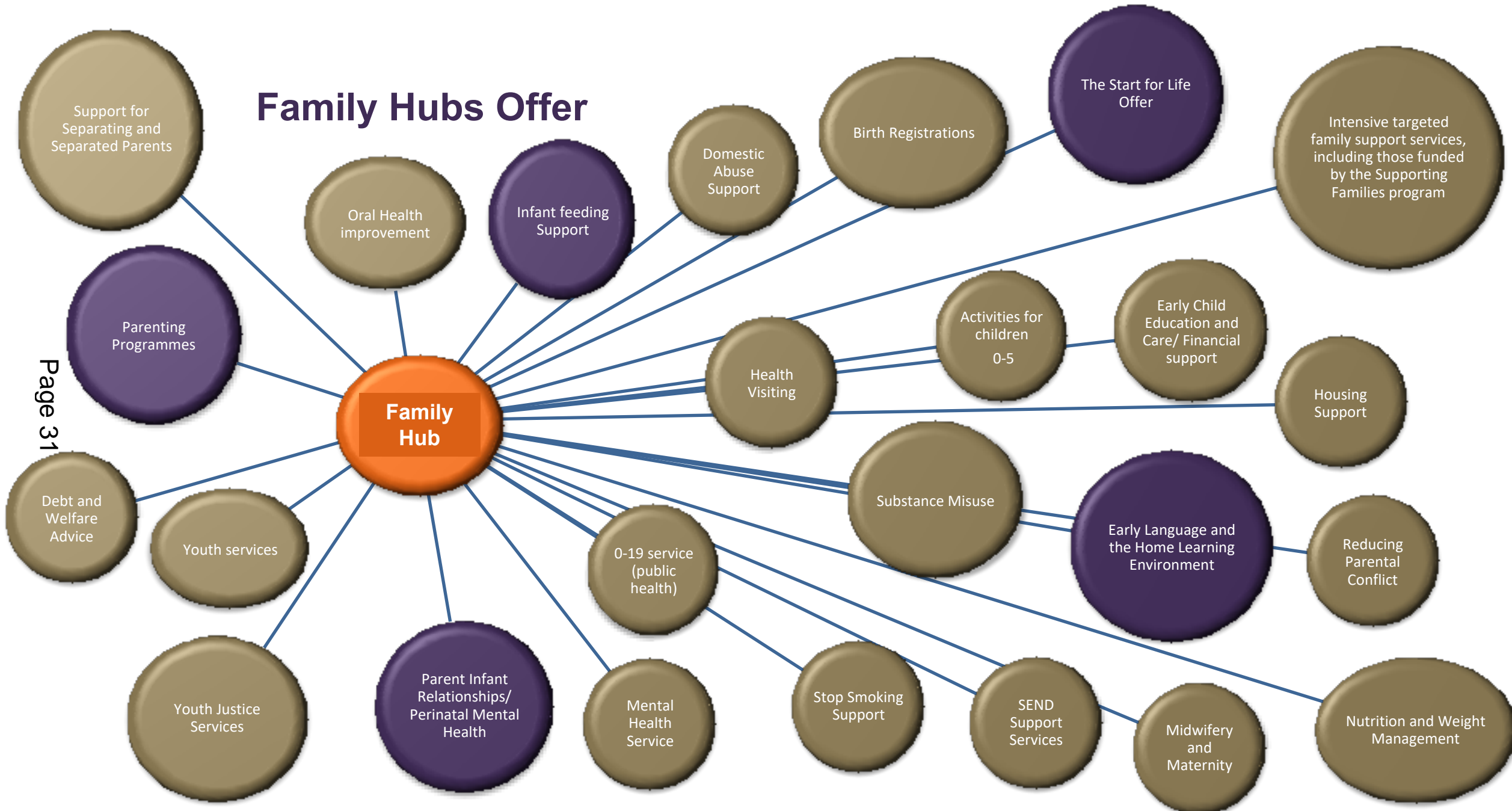


# Family Hubs

## Programme Objectives:

- Provide support to parents and carers so they are able to nurture their babies and children, improving health and education outcomes for all.
- Contribute to a reduction in inequalities in health and education outcomes for babies, children and families across England by ensuring that support provided is communicated to all parents and carers, including those who are hardest to reach and/or most in need of it .
- Build the evidence base for what works when it comes to improving health and education outcomes for babies, children and families in different delivery context.

# Family Hubs Offer



# Priority Workstreams

## Priorities:

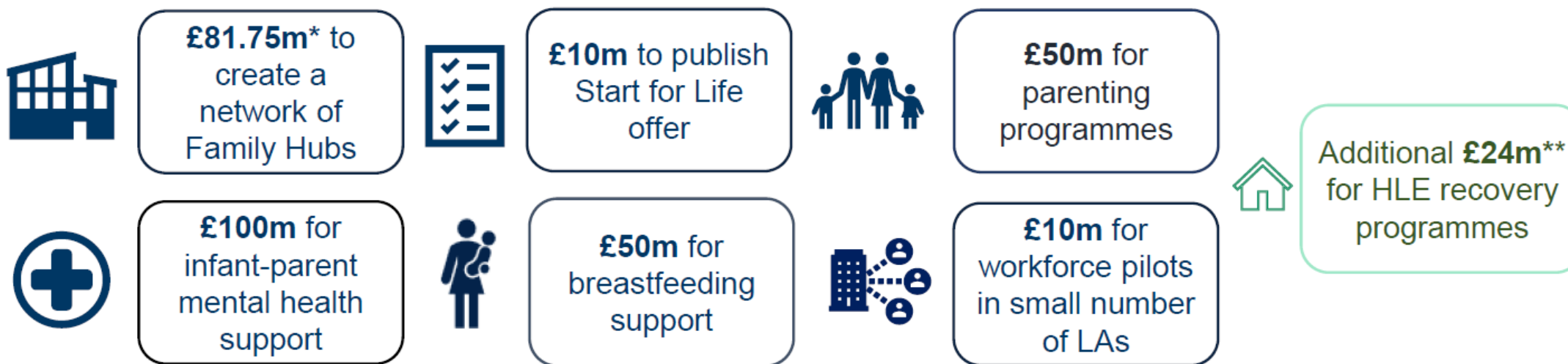
- Local Needs Assessment Public health
- Management Information Design and Collection
- Start for Life Offer
- Parent, Carer Panel
- Buildings upgrade

# Funded Areas

## Investment and Funding

At the Autumn Budget, the Government committed £301.75m for 75 upper-tier local authorities to deliver start for life and family help services over the next three financial years.

The package contains funding for the following components:



\* This funding is in addition to previous £39.5m family hubs funding which includes the £12m transformation fund

\*\* This forms part of the £153 million of new funding announced June 2021 to aid early years educational recovery

# Finance

Funding Strand	% of Total Funding	Year 1	Year 2		Year 3		Total (Y1-Y3)	
			Lower Range	Upper Range	Lower Range	Upper Range	Lower Range	Upper Range
Family Hubs Programme Spend	19.6%	£177,576	£287,532	£303,604	£240,688	£253,428	£705,796	£734,608
Family Hubs Capital Spend	4.9%	£43,941	£71,150	£75,127	£59,558	£62,711	£174,649	£181,778
Parenting Support	15.7%	£142,242	£230,319	£243,193	£192,796	£203,001	£565,357	£588,436
Home Learning Environment	9.1%	£81,993	£132,764	£140,185	£111,134	£117,017	£325,891	£339,194
Parent-Infant Relationships and Perinatal Mental Health	31.1%	£281,766	£456,237	£481,739	£381,908	£402,123	£1,119,911	£1,165,628
Infant Feeding Support	16.2%	£146,772	£237,654	£250,938	£198,936	£209,466	£583,362	£607,176
Publishing Start for Life Offers and Parent Carer Panels	3.5%	£31,710	£51,345	£54,215	£42,980	£45,255	£126,035	£131,180
<b>Total</b>		<b>£906,000</b>	<b>£1,467,000</b>	<b>£1,549,000</b>	<b>£1,228,000</b>	<b>£1,293,000</b>	<b>£3,601,000</b>	<b>£3,748,000</b>

## Next steps and initial milestones

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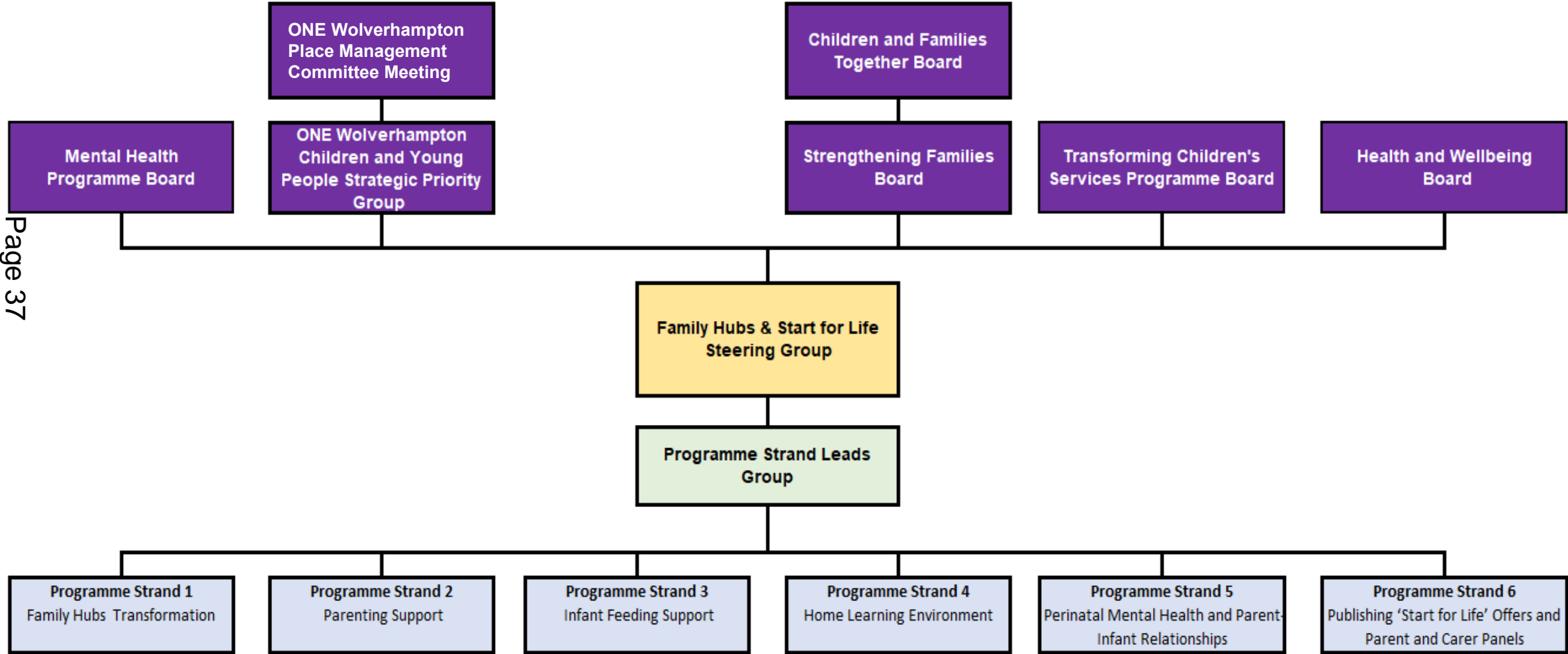
# Vision & Underlying Principles

Page 36

- To build on the relational approach and champion the family hub model.
- Develop best practice around integration of services for families.
- A centre point of support.
- Reflecting the locality in their variety.



# Governance



## Performance Monitoring

There will be three elements of reporting:

- programme delivery returns
- financial returns
- management information

Taken together, these reporting expectations will provide us with the data we need to:

- monitor programme delivery
- develop the evidence base
- understand what good delivery looks like
- identify areas where additional support is required



## Strong Families, Children, Young People Scrutiny Panel

15 March 2023

<b>Report title</b>	Children's Social Work and Workforce Health Check 2022	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Beverley Momenabadi, Children and Young People	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families	
<b>Originating service</b>	Children's Services	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Jennifer Rogers Tel Email	Principal Social Worker 01902 553209 <a href="mailto:Jennifer.Rogers@wolverhampton.gov.uk">Jennifer.Rogers@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
	Courtney Abbott Tel Email	Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner 01902 554485 <a href="mailto:Courtney.Abbott@wolverhampton.gov.uk">Courtney.Abbott@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Children's Services Leadership Team Children's Education Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board	16 February 2023 16 February 2023 28 February 2023

### Recommendations for decision:

The Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Note and comment on the findings of the Children and Young People's Service's social work and wider workforce health check for 2022.
2. Provide comment, feedback and challenge on the proposed actions to improve practice conditions for and the health of social work and wider workforce.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) carries out a survey each year to check the “health” of its social workers and this forms part of Children’s Services ongoing self-assessment. A survey is also circulated more widely to include all the frontline children’s workforce within the council. This report presents an overview of the findings of both surveys, progress since last year 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. Regular health checks help organisations identify areas of strength and areas requiring greater focus as well as assisting with workforce development planning and supporting the continuous improvement of social work and wider support for children, young people and families.
- 2.2 Good practice carried out by a “healthy”, motivated workforce can lead to improved outcomes for people and families as well as reduced demand and costs. This year services and teams across Children’s Services have continued to ensure that statutory social work and wider support services for children and families are delivered at the right level, effective, take place in a timely way and support families to make sustainable change.
- 2.3 The surveys were refreshed in 2021 and aligned with the Local Government’s Association (LGA) standards for employers of social workers in England and have also taken into account the questions asked in the national health check survey.
- 2.4 This report provides a summary of the main findings and also any actions that are planned or in progress to address the key areas for improvement.

## **3.0 Overview, key findings and key actions**

- 3.1 The health check was circulated via an online survey between 12 September to 21 October 2022. The link was sent to 268 social workers and 285 non-social work qualified employees at grade five and above, including managers. The wider workforce is very diverse and is made up a variety of roles such as educational psychologists, family support workers, the virtual school team and strengthening families workers.
- 3.2 Response rates for both surveys were lower than in previous years with a 35% response rate for social workers (compared to 44% in 2021 and 55% in 2020) and 27% in the workforce (34% in 2021 and 39% in 2020). However, it is important to recognise that this may reflect the challenges teams are facing. To improve take up and ensure responses better reflect the views of the workforce next year, there will be protected time at the

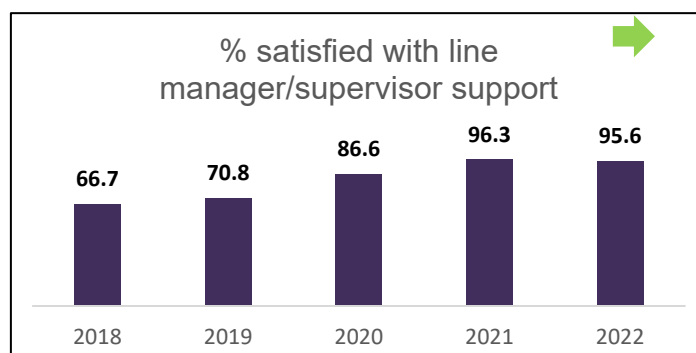
September 2023 social work briefing to ensure workers can complete the survey, as well as dedicated time in wider team meetings.

- 3.3 Feedback from social workers and the wider workforce will be gathered during briefings this year to identify what would encourage them to complete the survey so changes can be made. Additionally, a team's channel will be established to enhance communication, promote the survey, allow for discussion and give easy access to the survey link. There will be more updates provided to the workforce this year to tell them about progress on identified actions, for instance utilising the monthly newsletter as well as workforce briefings, and a continued "you said...we did" approach will help to demonstrate how the survey can make a positive difference for practitioners.
- 3.4 The findings of this year's health checks are mostly positive, but there is a recognition that improvements in some areas can be made.

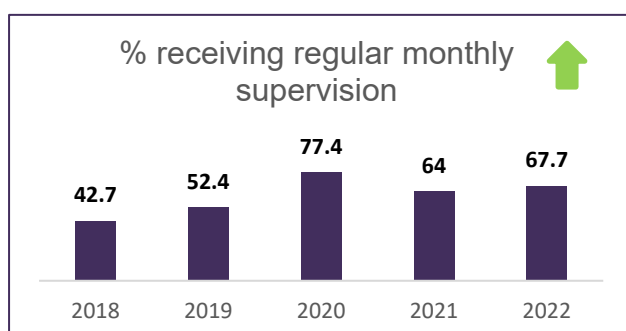
### **Social Work**

- 3.5 Nationally social work recruitment and retention continues to be a significant challenge and social work is on the national occupational shortage list. Wolverhampton's Children's Services has a robust recruitment and retention plan which includes, amongst a number of other key actions, attendance at recruitment fairs, investment in a mixed economy of routes into social work including Frontline, Step Up and apprenticeships and a strong social work training and development offer. Additional actions are also in progress, including rebranding to attract social workers to CWC as an employer of choice, creating a new opportunity to support progression for those social workers who do not want traditional management roles and reviewing the pay and incentives for social workers across the region/nationally.
- 3.6 CWC is part of regional work to support the recruitment and retention challenges and CWC is committed to a regional memorandum of understanding to help reduce the "churn" being experienced with agency social work. These actions should help to stabilise teams, limit reliance on agency staff, reduce hours worked over contract and should consequently support social worker wellbeing and improve stress levels and retention rates.
- 3.7 The Government has recently provided a response to a number of reviews of children's social care and has set out its national long term strategy, which includes actions to support workforce challenges and a number of consultations on key areas. CWC is currently reviewing the proposals and providing responses to the consultations as appropriate.
- 3.8 In the 2022 Health Check survey, for the second year, almost all social workers are happy with the support they receive from their manager, which has greatly improved over the past few years. This has been due to the actions taken to invest in social work leadership training, for instance CWC has developed a first year management portfolio programme to support new managers across the workforce, and practitioners who want to develop their leadership skills have been put forward for the national Social Work

Leadership Pathways Programme during 2022. CWC has also been part of commissioning a regional leadership course for women of colour which will be starting in Spring 2023.



- 3.9 Both frequency and quality of supervision has improved this year, with frequency being higher than any year other than 2020 and quality showing a year on year improvement. Due to the nature of work, supervisions may sometimes have to be cancelled at last minute by either the manager or the social worker due to crisis or unexpected events for the children, young people and families they support. This would be reflected in workers who responded that they receive supervision “most months” instead of monthly (29%).
- 3.10 Ongoing actions taken since previous health checks have contributed to these improvements, which has included commissioning supervision training for managers. Regular audits of supervision records to measure quality and frequency have also supported ongoing improvement. Additionally, senior leaders pledged to have better oversight of frequency and quality of supervision within their service areas, which would have also had an impact.

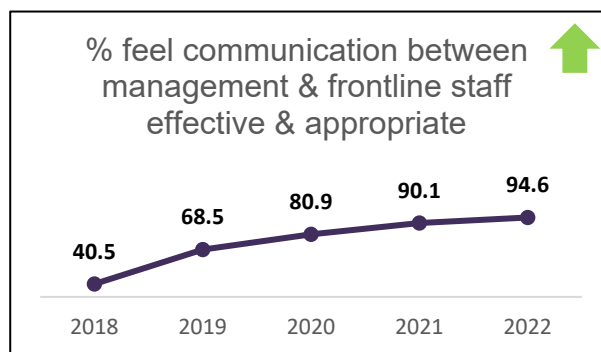


- 3.11 The 2022 health check survey suggests that overall, social workers are working either fewer or the same number of hours over their contract than last year. The majority of social workers (67%) are reporting that their workloads are manageable and while this is a decline from 2021 (78%), it is still better than 2019 when less than 60% said that they had manageable workloads. It is recognised that staffing challenges, some of which are due to secondments which are a great way for staff to develop and progress, are having an impact on workloads across particular teams / service areas.

3.12 Most social workers reported that they never, rarely or only occasionally feel unmanageable levels of stress due to work. However, this has decreased by around 12% since last year. Positively most said that they are able to discuss stress, well-being and workload with their manager and agree satisfactory ways forward, but where this was not the case, staffing challenges were a factor. The activity around recruitment outlined in paragraph 3.5 and 3.6, will help stabilise teams and create more manageable workloads, which in turn should help reduce stress levels.

3.13 There has been continued improvement in communication between senior managers and frontline teams as well as those who feel they would be, or have been, consulted on changes that would impact their work (72% compared to 61% in 2021). Actions taken by the senior leadership team to build on their communication and engagement strategy has ensured the service has continued to be as visible as possible despite the challenges of virtual working. This has included:

- Regular practice weeks where senior managers meet directly with social workers on a 1:1 basis to discuss and observe practice. From September 2022 these have started to take place face to face again
- The monthly newsletter continues to keep the workforce informed on any current or expected changes that will impact them
- Regular social work / workforce briefings
- The annual joint Adults and Children's Social Work conference in November 2022 was face to face – the first time since covid
- A renewed commitment to consultation/engagement this year—for example there are currently discussions underway with the workforce to review the principles of hybrid working

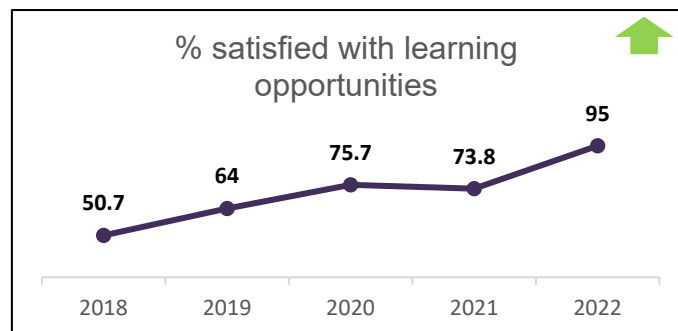


3.14 Almost all, 98%, said that CWC has a clear model of social work practice which promotes relationship working and a strengths-based approach to achieve the best outcomes for individuals and families. This high response rate is due to a number of factors, but mostly because of the work carried out over the last year by the dedicated Senior Restorative Practice Lead who has further embedded Restorative Practice into everyday practice and worked with multi-agency partners to start to share this approach more widely, including the return of multi-agency Restorative Practice training in 2022.

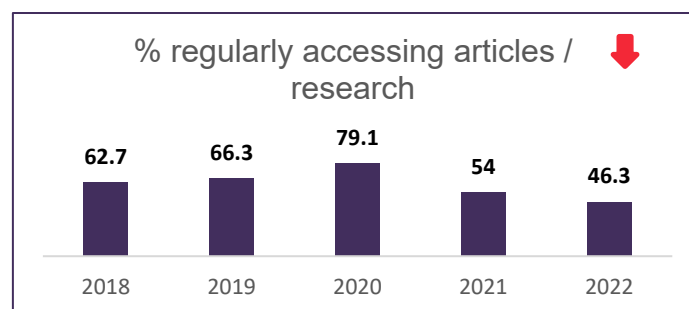
3.15 There has been a significant increase in the number of social workers who said that they are satisfied with learning and development opportunities and believe CWC is a learning

organisation with a positive learning culture. Actions were taken following last year's health check to improve this, which included:

- Organisational Development now circulates a monthly newsletter which outlines upcoming training and development opportunities – this helps practitioners plan their time and means they are more likely to be able to schedule in training (this was a key theme from last year's health check survey)
- In January 2022, two social workers were sponsored to do a part time PhD with the University of Wolverhampton
- A more structured process for advertising and applying for Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) opportunities was established and specific Q&A sessions set up
- The application and selection process for Practice Education was revised and shared with the workforce (this was another suggestion which came directly from the 2021 health check survey)
- Examples of training this year, some of which were identified by social workers themselves: professional curiosity with Professor David Shemmings, motivational interviewing, child on parent violence, Mental Capacity Act, relationship building and supporting young people who identify as LGBT+



- 3.16 There has been a decrease in the number of social workers who are regularly accessing research with 46% reporting this in 2022 compared to 54% in 2021. A common theme is that they do not have the time to do this on a regular basis. Social workers' time is limited and so actions have been identified that will help them find and access relevant research quickly and effectively. One way to do this will be by collaborating with the University of Wolverhampton to create "research circles" where social workers and academics will come together to explore research on a particular area that will help support practice.



- 3.17 Positively most social workers plan to continue working for the council for at least the next 12 months and fewer, 6.5% compared to 10.8% in 2021, said they planned to leave. There continues to be a strong sense of pride amongst social workers and the vast



majority (84% compared to 75% in 2021) would definitely recommend CWC as an employer to friends and family. Comments include:

- “I feel very valued”
- “Everyone works well together and there is a feeling of comradery”
- “Workers generally care that they are doing a good job looking after young people, and that feeling becomes infectious throughout the whole workforce”
- “Heads of services are welcoming and open to discussion”
- “There is such a comradery within the Council, and it is wonderful. People give up their time to volunteer and promote training or get a venture for young people off the ground. I have never known this before!”
- “CWC actively promotes cultural competence and diversity. It promotes an all-encompassing workforce which is excellent in its consideration of minority groups and making all members of the community feel included”

3.18 The majority, just over 80%, of social workers said CWC makes them feel encouraged and empowered to make time for self-care activities. There has been a real commitment over the past 2 years to supporting wellbeing across Children’s Services. For example, wellbeing has been a standard feature at briefings, in the monthly newsletter, in inductions and team meetings. Also, there is a commitment to explore the impact and use of clinical supervision and / or consider the use of trauma informed supervision training to support social worker’s wellbeing in the context of reducing the impact of secondary trauma / compassion fatigue and better supporting the emotional demands of the role.

3.19 Almost all felt that CWC was actively committed to tackling inequality in some way, which is likely due to the strong approach taken by Children’s Services over the last two years in addressing equality and diversity issues, reflecting the whole council’s approach. This includes the continued support of the cultural competency champion role and cultural competency workshops for staff as well as managers. This will continue to be a key focus and priority for Children’s Services this coming year and will be driven forward by the Service’s equality action plans.

## **Workforce**

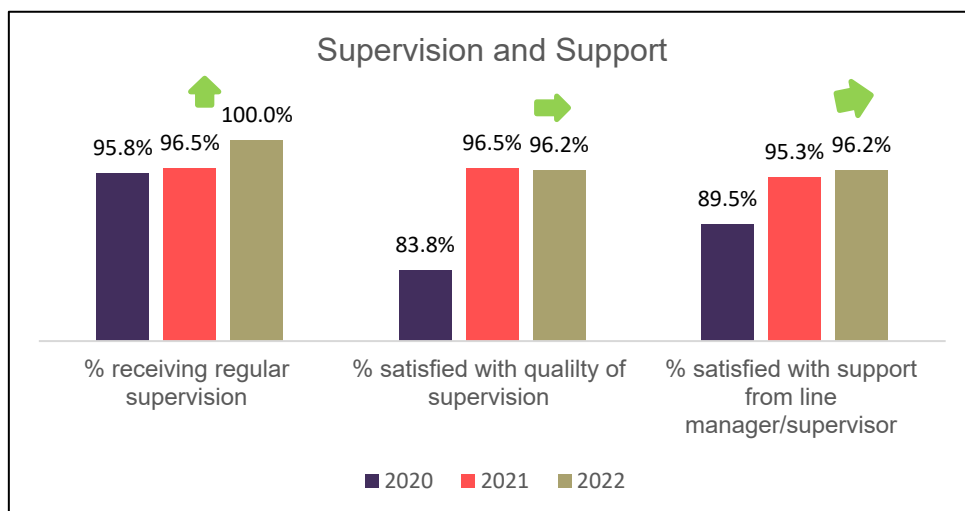
3.20 The wider workforce is very diverse and is made up a variety of roles such as educational psychologists, family support workers, the virtual school team and strengthening families workers, so workloads will vary across the service. The 2022 health check survey suggests that overall, practitioners are working either fewer or the same number of hours over their contract than last year. The vast majority, 89%, feel that their workloads are manageable. This is higher than last year (almost 82%) and moving back closer to 2020 results (92%).

3.21 Over 95% of respondents feel able to discuss their wellbeing, stressful situations and their workload with their supervisor / manager and agree satisfactory ways forward and 81% know where to get help within the council if concerned about their wellbeing. About 87% stated that they felt encouraged and empowered by CWC to make time for self-care

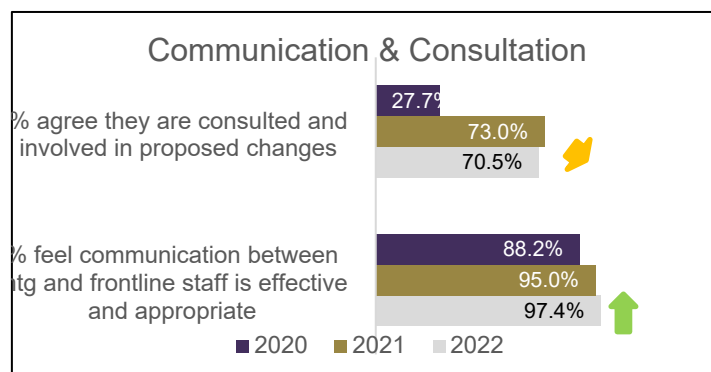
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[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]

and wellbeing activities. The vast majority report that they never or rarely experience unmanageable levels of stress, and this has increased since 2019 and 2020, which suggests that actions being taken is having a positive impact on the wellbeing of the workforce.

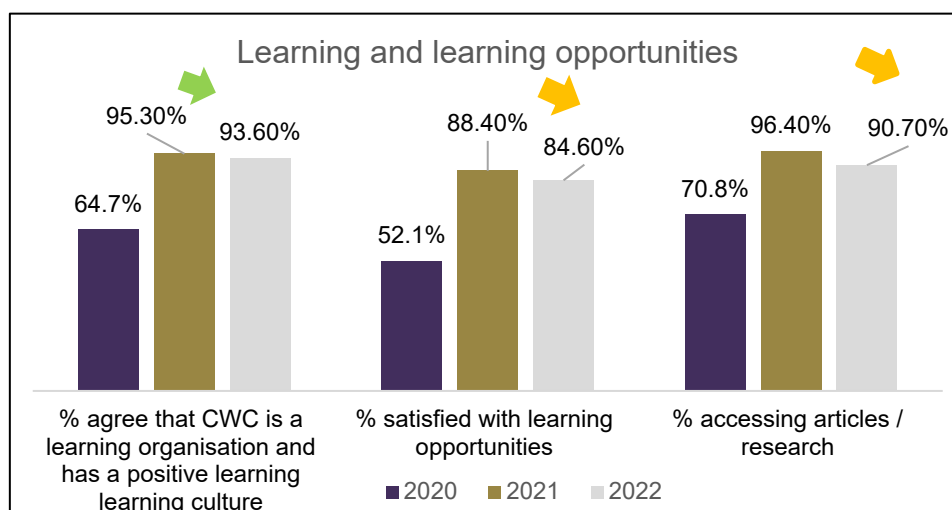
3.22 The frequency of supervision has improved year on year, with 100% this year receiving regular supervision and 96% saying that they are happy with the quality of their supervision. As with the social work response, ongoing actions taken since the 2020 health check have contributed to these improvements, which has included commissioning training for managers in supervision and leadership skills, a whole service commitment to restorative approaches led from the top down and regular audits on supervision records to support ongoing improvement.



3.23 As with social workers, the wider workforce reported that there is effective communication between senior managers and frontline staff with 97% agreeing with this, which has increased over the last four years. Slightly fewer (70.5% compared to 73% in 2021) felt involved in or consulted about any proposed changes this year, but this remains a significant improvement over 2020 when this was 28%.



3.24 The majority of practitioners remain satisfied with the learning and development opportunities available to them. While this is a slight decrease from 2021, it remains positive. The development of a formal career pathway for social work apprenticeships as well as returning to more face to face training opportunities and continued promotion of the Aspire to Leadership programme should contribute to improving this further in 2023.



3.25 Almost 90% of the workforce report that they are regularly accessing research and articles in order to support their practice. While this has declined slightly since 2021 (when this was 96%), it is still extremely high. In order to continue to support this, there will be information on Research in Practice in an upcoming social care workforce briefing in order to ensure that the workforce is aware that this is a resource available to them. Within Education, research is disseminated monthly which will continue.

3.26 78% said that they would recommend CWC as an employer to a friend, which is lower than 2021 when this was 86%. However, only two respondents answered “no.” There continues to be a strong sense of pride and more, over 77%, this year plan to continue to work for CWC over the next 12 months. Comments included:

- “My department and team are exceptional”
- “CWC is a good organisation to work for”
- “Having the opportunity to take on a secondment gave me new challenges and made me feel that I had a better future with CWC”
- “I enjoy hearing of colleagues’ achievements on City People and the CYP Roundup”
- “I enjoy supporting families and helping them to achieve better outcomes”
- “I love aspects of my job, the people I support and my colleagues (the ones I know) so I wouldn’t want to leave or change”

3.27 As with the social work survey, the vast majority (almost 99%) of respondents felt that CWC is actively committed to tackling inequality and discrimination in some way.

#### **4.0 Other notable progress and actions since the 2021 survey**

- 4.1 As well as the progress and actions taken since the last health check that are noted above, there was acknowledgement that more needed to be done to reduce the amount of time social workers spend recording or completing paperwork. A key action was to develop training which would support social workers develop skills of recording in a succinct and proportionate way and help social workers to make better use of their time.
- 4.2 Workshops were offered throughout 2022 and Advanced Practitioners (APs) have provided support to improve practice in this area, including how to make better use of technology. Audits have shown an increase in the quality of recordings rated good or above during 2022. In this year's health check the amount of time social workers say they spend working directly with children has increased once again. While this is all positive, Children's Services still see this as a key area of work so this will continue to be a focus.
- 4.3 This year, significantly more social workers said that they were aware of the Aiming for Excellence Plan (74% compared to 60% in 2021). The Aiming for Excellence Plan is the Improvement Plan for Children's Social Work services within CWC. It focuses on key areas where social work practice is inconsistent and identifies key actions and measures to track progress. Since September 2021, the Aiming for Excellence Plan has been shared at social work briefings, at managers' meetings, and as part of the newly developed practice newsletter that is sent out after each practice week. The Excellence Plan was also a standing item on team meeting agendas and workshops took place between November 2021 and March 2022. This has helped to ensure that social workers were aware of the service's priorities and how these would be met. It also enabled them to have team discussions around these areas for improvement and an opportunity to contribute to the service's improvement journey.
- 4.4 For both social workers and the wider workforce, results show that colleagues are more satisfied with the communication between senior managers and frontline staff than they were last year. Actions which have supported this include regular updates from senior managers, newsletters, and regular workforce briefings.

#### **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 which has been mentioned in the report. This will be overseen by the Social Work Development Board, Children's Services Leadership team and Children's Education 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 some are summarised below, along with other notable actions:

- There will be an opportunity during the next social work and wider workforce briefings to get feedback about what practitioners think about the surveys and what would motivate them to complete it in the future
- Continuation of a robust recruitment and retention strategy and action plan
- Review interview processes to ensure speedy recruitment and review some of the learning from past recruitment to improve the experience
- The promotion of a formal social work career pathway for social work apprenticeships to “grow our own” which will offer more progression / development opportunities for the wider workforce as well as helping to build sufficiency in social work teams
- Managers will continue to offer flexibility where needed to help people balance their work and home lives to reduce stress levels, including offering stress risk assessments where appropriate and identifying any relevant support
- The nature of social work and frontline social care generally 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 and 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 to reduce the time worked over contract
- The Principal Social Worker will explore the impact and use regionally of clinical supervision and consider trauma informed supervision training to support practitioner wellbeing in the context of reducing the impact of secondary trauma / compassion fatigue and better supporting the emotional demands of the role

## **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 the Children’s Services overall budget.  
[JG/15022023/Y]

## **7.0 Legal implications**

- 7.1 There are no legal implications as a result of this report.  
[SB/05022023/I]

## **8.0 Equalities implications**

- 8.1 Social work and social care is a diverse profession, and the makeup of the frontline Children’s and Young People’s Service in Wolverhampton is largely representative of the local community. The Council’s approach to fair recruitment is followed robustly for the recruitment of all posts within the Children and Young People’s Directorate. This includes anonymous application forms, progression of people with disabilities to interview and diverse recruitment panels. The health check survey asks practitioner’s views on the council’s approach to equality and diversity, and this has been mentioned in the report.

8.2 This survey was sent via e-mail and completed via an electronic device. While attempts are always made to ensure that all members of staff have access to and are able to complete the survey, when feedback from the workforce is gathered they will be asked if there are any barriers which prevents them from being able to do so in order to ensure support can be provided in 2023 and future surveys. Regular reminders and discussions around support required to complete the survey will also take place while the 2023 survey is open in order to support better access to all who require it.

## **9.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

9.1 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 what can be done differently or in addition to better support the wellbeing of the workforce.

## **10.0 Appendices**

10.1 Appendix 1: List of Survey Questions



# 2022 Social Work and Workforce Health Checks - Children & Young People's Service

15 March 2023

Courtney Abbott  
Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner

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



## Background and progress from 2021

- Key recommendation of the National Social Work Task Force, set up by government after the death of Baby P
- Identify areas of strength and areas requiring greater focus; assists with workforce development planning and supports continuous improvement
- Survey live between 12th September to 21 October 2022
- Response rates lower in both Children's surveys—35% for Social Work and 27% for the workforce despite actions to address this

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Generally positive and some significant improvement since last year, including:

- **Improvement in quality and frequency of supervision this year** – supervision training for managers, regular supervision audits, first year management portfolio, leadership training
- **Significantly improved satisfaction with learning and development opportunities for social workers** – Regular training brochures, improved promotion of and access to specialist roles, more face-to-face training, PHD/ SW apprenticeship opportunities
- **More feel that they are / would be consulted and involved in proposed changes and are happy with communication between senior managers and frontline workers** – Consultation/engagement e.g. hybrid working, face to face practice weeks, monthly updates, HoS presence at briefings

## Areas of Strength

- Strong sense of pride – almost all saying they would recommend CWC as an employer
- More Children's workforce reporting manageable workloads this year
- For the second year, vast majority felt that CWC has a clear model of practice that promotes relationship working
- Vast majority of children's workforce never, rarely or only occasionally experience unmanageable levels of stress
- Frequency of supervision increased, with 100% of the Children's workforce reporting this
- Quality of supervision increased for social workers and remained the same for the workforce – >90% across both
- Satisfaction with learning and development opportunities increased significantly – actions from last year's Health Check to improve this has had positive impact
- As last year, almost everyone said CWC was actively committed to tackling inequality and discrimination in some way
- Effective and appropriate communication between senior management and staff with notable year on year improvement
- Social workers spending more time working directly with children, young people and families – actions taken since 2020 health check has supported this
- Most know where to go in the council to support their wellbeing and said CWC makes them feel encouraged and empowered to make time for self-care - they can discuss stressful situations / wellbeing with managers
- More social workers intend to stay with CWC in next year - majority across both surveys

## Areas for Improvement

- While most said that their workloads are manageable, there was a decline in this for social workers. Common themes - staffing challenges and demand / complexity
- Whilst most social workers reported that they never, rarely or only occasionally feel unmanageable levels of stress due to work, numbers have reduced
- Fewer across both surveys regularly access research/articles in 2022 in order to develop and support their practice - main theme around this was having the time to do this
- Workforce reported a slight reduction in the time spend working directly with children, young people, families but roles and expectations around direct work vary across the service
- Although the majority across both surveys plan to stay with CWC over the next 12 months, there is a proportion who are unsure - more manageable workloads would persuade them to stay

### Key actions:

- Improving response rates – e.g. consultation, exploring incentives, Teams channel, protected time, “you said...we did” and regular updates
- Recruitment and retention activity – rebranding, benchmarking pay/incentives, progression opportunities outside of management, review the interview / recruitment process, supporting different routes into social work
- Develop research circles with University of Wolverhampton to support research mindedness
- Explore the impact and use regionally of clinical supervision and/or consider the use of trauma informed supervision training to further support wellbeing

## What our employees said.....

- “I feel very valued”
- “Everyone works well together and there is a feeling of comradery”
- “Workers generally care that they are doing a good job looking after young people, and that feeling becomes infectious throughout the whole workforce”
- “Heads of Services are welcoming and open to discussion”
- “There is such a comradery within the Council, and it is wonderful. People give up their time to volunteer and promote training or get a venture for young people off the ground. I have never known this before!”
- “My department and team are exceptional”
- “Having the opportunity to take on a secondment gave me new challenges and made me feel that I had a better future with CWC”
- “I enjoy supporting families and helping them to achieve better outcomes”
- “I love my job, the people I support and my colleagues, so I wouldn’t want to leave or change”
- “I enjoy hearing of colleagues’ achievements on City People and the CYP Roundup”

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<b>CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL</b>	<b>Cabinet</b> <b>22 March 2023</b>
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<b>Report title</b>	Young Opportunities (YO!) – Our vision for young people and families	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Beverley Momenabadi Children and Young People	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families	
<b>Originating service</b>	Commissioning and Transformation	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Andrew Wolverson	Deputy Director of Commissioning and Transformation 01902 555550 Andrew.Wolverson@wolverhampton.gov.uk
	Tel	
	Email	
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Directorate Leadership Team	23 February 2023
	Strategic Executive Board	7 March 2023
	Children’s Scrutiny Panel	15 March 2023

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**Recommendations for decision:**

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve that the outcomes of the Youth Engagement Strategy (2020-2023 #YES) be embedded into business as usual.
2. Approve the principles for development of the Young Opportunities (YO!) brand which will support our vision for children, young people and their families to have access to a range of opportunities that build aspiration and resilience.



## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The Council, through its Our City: Our Plan sets out to ensure we have “Strong families where children grow up well and achieve their potential.” This ambition is realised through a number of programmes and initiatives across the city. This paper sets out how we propose to build on the YO! branding to ensure we have a joined up offer to children and families. The paper also sets out proposals for a pilot focussed on raising aspiration and widening opportunity.
- 1.2 Cabinet is asked to approve the embedding of the outcomes of the Youth Engagement Strategy (#YES) into business as usual and endorse the proposed Young Opportunities (YO! Wolves) approach to supporting opportunities for all children, young people and their families.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The #YES Strategy was designed to improve the well-being of all children and young people living in the city of Wolverhampton. It was set up as the Council’s commitment to young people aged 8-18 (and up to 25 for those with a Learning Disability or Care Leavers) to support them in living a happy and rewarding life. It recognised the importance of young people’s voice in shaping services, valuing their contribution in making the city a great place to bring up families.
- 2.2 The table below sets out the key performance indicators and successes of #YES:

#YES theme	Performance Measure	Action	Outcome
Being Connected	Increasing the number of young people participating and engaging effectively in their communities	The development of the #YES board	19 young people on the board – evaluating and challenging the #YES and HAF provision
		The #YES Grant for community sector to utilise to deliver opportunities to young people	36 providers are supporting this provision with over 9400 places available for young people
	Ensuring young people and their families have access to the right information and advice to make their own choices	The Launch of YO Wolves platform to offer information on Support services and activities	7727 new users to the YO Wolves site in December 2022
		Market and communication plan to develop the knowledge of the platform to families	45,000 leaflets delivered to city schools for distribution to pupils and families Web traffic up by <b>63%</b> compared to last year Social media reach over <b>33,000</b> Press advertising & PR Education Bulletin Posters via Providers

#YES theme	Performance Measure	Action	Outcome
Being You	Increasing engagement and participation, voice and influence of young people	The success of the Youth Council Elections, the strength of the #YES board in being the governance for not just #YES provision, but also the HAF provision	All schools represented on Youth Council, 19 young people on #YES Board, HY5 has a committed membership
	Co-Producing services for children and young people with children and young people	Coproduction activity supported by commissioning of services	Emotional Health and Wellbeing service Young Carers Strategy
Being Healthy	Encouraging physical activity and healthy eating	The promotion of physical activity and healthy eating is embedded in the application for HAF/#YES funding	Mystery Shopper activity and dragon den activity evaluate this with providers
	Improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disability	HY5 implementation and links to the SEND Partnership Board	HY5 has developed their own training for professionals on what it is like to be a child with Disabilities in Wolverhampton. They meet regularly with SEND partnership board have developed their own response to the written statement of action

2.3 January 2022 saw the launch of National Make Your Mark Vote in Wolverhampton. 10,500 children and young people voted with the top four themes being; Education and learning; Jobs, Money, Homes, and Opportunities; Mental health and wellbeing and Health and wellbeing

- 2.4 On 8 November 2020, the Government announced that the holiday activities and food programme (HAF), which has provided healthy food and enriching activities to disadvantaged children since 2018, would be expanded across the whole of England in 2021. The programme covers the Easter, Summer, and Christmas holidays. In Wolverhampton, this provision has been expanded by the #YES grants (since January 2022) to ensure all children in the city have access to holiday activity and food over the half term holidays which are not currently funded by the Department for Education HAF programme.
- 2.5 The YO Wolves website was the first phase of developing access to support, events and opportunities to children, young people, and their families. This platform has become a key feature of how families in Wolverhampton can access the HAF and #YES activities during the holidays. The brand of YO! Wolves was developed with young people.

### **3.0 Progress**

- 3.1 In August 2022 co-production activity was completed with all Wolverhampton's Youth Voice Groups, using the #YES themes. This work was to evaluate the #YES strategy and what needs to be developed from the learning from this program. This review and evaluation focused on the expansion of the provision to incorporate building on opportunities for families.
- 3.2 Following on from this work, research was undertaken by a Social Policy Student at Birmingham University on the impact of opportunities for families has on building resilience. This research was successful in securing £80,000 of funding which has been ringfenced to support the development of an Enrichment offer to families which it is hoped will build families life skills and support them in developing the aspirations to access a wider range of opportunities and support them in achieving their full potential.
- 3.3 The success of co-production with children and young people in Children's Services has led to the commitment to expand the team through the recruitment of two participation officers to implement a similar approach with adults. This will support our aim of a whole family focus of co-production and design.
- 3.4 Expanding on the successes of #YES, the brand of YO! Wolves incorporates support for the whole family under five pillars:
- Pillar 1 Physical and Mental wellbeing
  - Pillar 2 Youth Voice
  - Pillar 3 Doing Well
  - Pillar 4 Encouraging Life Skills
  - Pillar 5 Connecting Opportunities
- 3.5 It is proposed further development of the pillars and the co-production activity will be part of Wolverhampton's Make Your Mark planned in September 2023.

#### **4.0 Evaluation of alternative options**

- 4.1 Option one would be to make no change to the existing #YES and not develop the YO! Wolves offer. This would result in not recognising the developments that have been made to extending the offer under the YO Wolves and could diminish the investment made so far in the brand.
- 4.2 Option two would be to partially implement the recommendations of this report. This would result in a weakened offer and hinder any future expansion of the program to support families in making use of the opportunities showcased through this brand.

#### **5.0 Reasons for decision(s)**

- 5.1 The decision to embed #YES into business as usual and the learning to influence the YO! Wolves five pillars enables the success of the brand to grow using this knowledge base to inform future developments.
- 5.2 It is recognised that the city faces a number of challenges, some that existed before Covid such as youth unemployment and others that have been exacerbated by Covid and other factors such as mental health and the cost of living crisis. We also face challenges around young people becoming aligned to activity that leads to exploitation and in some cases gang affiliation.
- 5.3 There is significant work underway to tackle many of the issues outlined in the previous paragraph but they may be seen currently as isolated projects or programmes. The YO! branding offers an opportunity for us to provide a clear focus on what the city is doing to support children, young people and families across a broad spectrum.
- 5.4 The YO! branding also offers an opportunity to ensure we recognise all of the provision we have within the city delivered by a range of providers and ensure that families know where they can go for support that already exists within their local communities. It will also help in identifying where we have gaps in provision or support and determine what the city's response to this is going to be.
- 5.5 The funding and confidence shown by Adults Services in using the approaches to support co-production enables views and opinions of all family members in provision that affects them.
- 5.6 The expansion of the life skills and enrichment opportunities enables families to think big about their aspirations for themselves and have their 'best life.'

#### **6.0 Financial implications**

- 6.1 The report seeks approval for outcomes of the Youth Engagement strategy to be built into business as usual. The outcomes for 2023-2024 are detailed in the table at paragraph 2.1. These will be funded from existing approved budgets in 2023-24 for #YES and Holiday Activities Programme grant (HAF).

- 6.2 The approved gross expenditure budgets for #YES in 2023-2024 total £817,000. The funding for these budgets includes £305,000 approved use of reserves and £106,000 funding from HAF.
- 6.3 In December 2022, Department of Education (DfE) awarded the Holiday Activity fund to the amount of £1.9 million to cover a minimum of one week in Easter, four weeks over the summer and one week at Christmas in 2023-2024.
- 6.4 As the YO! Offer is developed further reports will be received by Cabinet detailing financial implications and funding.  
[JG/03032023/W]

## **7.0 Legal implications**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

[SB/05032023/Z]

## **8.0 Equalities implications**

- 8.1 The purpose of this report is to mitigate the impact of social, economic impact of access to support, opportunities, and aspirations which families in Wolverhampton may have as result of the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

## **9.0 All other implications**

- 9.1 None.

## **10.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 10.1 Appendix 1. Young Opportunities Wolverhampton presentation

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# Young Opportunities Wolverhampton



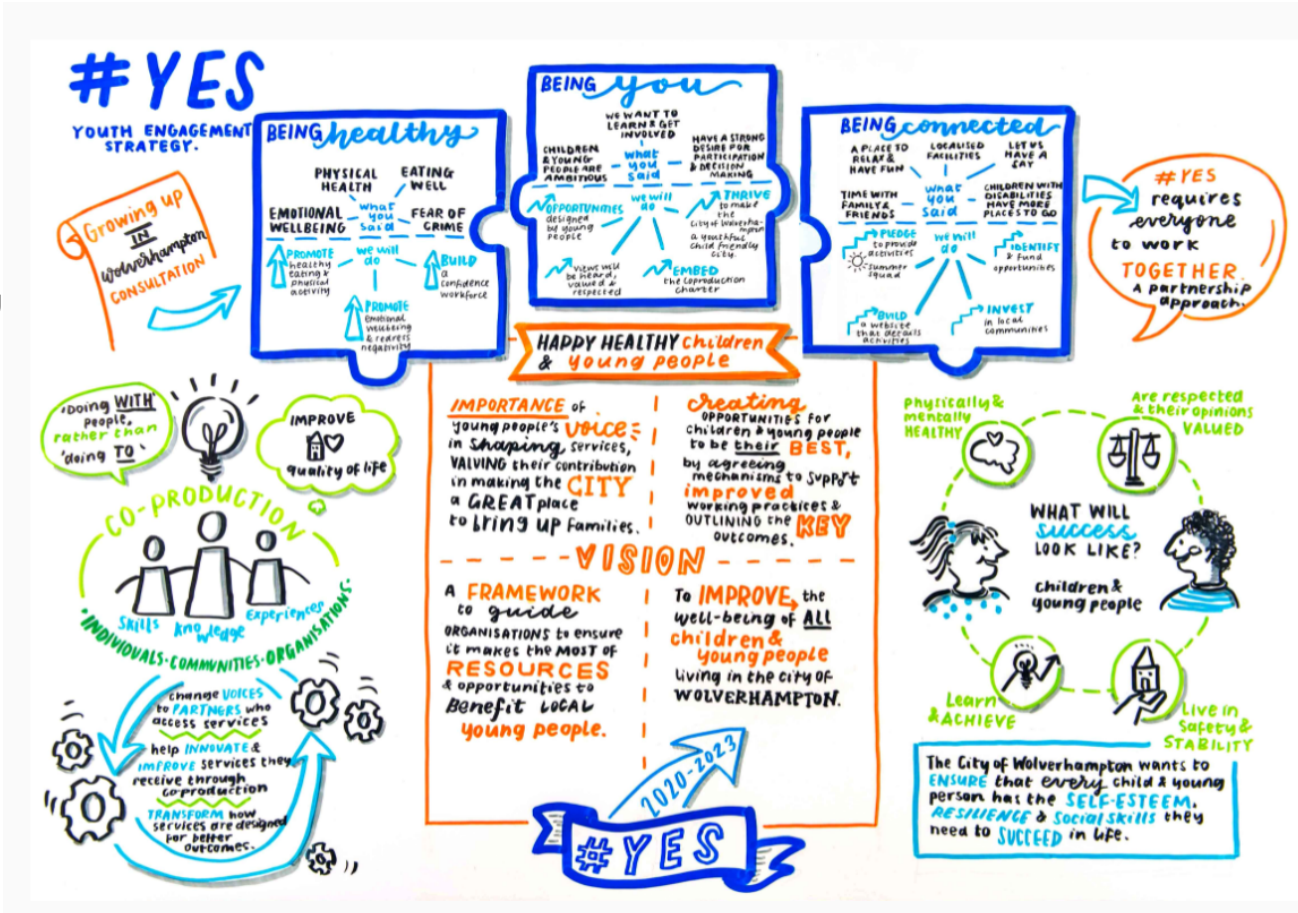
# Purpose

Endorse the  
embedding of #YES  
as Business as Usual

To approve the  
Vision for expanding  
the branding of YO  
Wolves

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# Learning from #YES



1. The decision to embed #Yes into business as usual and the learning to influence the YO! Wolves five pillars enables the success of the brand to grow using this knowledge base to inform future developments.
2. The funding and confidence shown by Adults Services in using the approaches to support co-production enables views and opinions of all family members in provision that affects them.
3. The expansion of the life skills and enrichment opportunities enables families to think big about their aspirations for themselves and have their 'best life'



# Participation and Engagement Achievements

- 10,000 young people take part in Make Your Mark
- Young people front and centre of decision making – awarding £2.5m of grants
- New co-production hub launched proving a focal point for young people to come together

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**ALL THE BELOW GROUPS  
MEET FORTNIGHTLY AT OUR  
OASIS CO-PRODUCTION HUB**

Youth MPs	Youth Council
Parent Carer Forum	Youth Police Crime Commissioners
Care Leavers Independent Collective	Care Leavers Independent Collective
Culture and Diversity Group	Children in Care Council
Blakenhall Ambassadors	Bilston Ambassadors
Children in Care Council	HY5 #YES board



# Deliver a full, fun and exciting programme of activities and opportunities for children and young people over the summer holidays

## Summer 2021

## Summer 2022

- 21 HAF providers
- 12,000 HAF places taken up
- 600 activities attend by young people with SEND
- 409 children and parents attended library activities
- Relight Festival had **19 events/shows** for young people and families – **3,090** attended with **1,583** HAF tickets (included in 5,000 figure above)
- Beat the Street Wolverhampton saw **9,600** people cover **61,000 miles** over four weeks between 20 July and 17 August
- Council catering team delivered over **7,500** packed lunches to HAF activities



- 46 HAF providers
- 28,468 HAF activities attended
- 1892 children and parents attended library activities
- 1713 activities attended at WV active Centres
- 551 children attended Strengthening families Hub activities
- Internal caterers delivered **10,225** packed lunches
- 482 children with SEND attended activities

***Over 32,000 activities enjoyed by children, young people and families.***



## Find events in Wolverhampton

Coming soon ..... Free and accessible holiday activities for all children and young people of school age living in Wolverhampton.

For this February half term 20-24 February 2023, all activities will be funded by the City of Wolverhampton Council's #YES Fund and will include a meal.

[Search for events](#)



## Find support near you



Looking for some help or support? Issues with bullying, relationships, body image or staying safe, employment, exam worries or eating healthily? Check out Yo! support services in and around Wolverhampton.

[Search for organisations](#)

## About Yo!



Yo! Young Opportunities - is about creating more opportunities for young people. Yo! provides access to events and services within Wolverhampton that offer opportunities to children, young people and their parents.

[Read more about Yo!](#)

- The YO! Wolves website was the first phase of developing access to support, events and opportunities to children, young people, and their families.
- This platform has become a key feature of how families in Wolverhampton can access the HAF and YO! activities during the holidays.
- This Brand of YO! Wolves was developed with young people.



## What next – Build on the brand

Create *'a single platform where young opportunities are promoted'*

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1.

Physical &  
Mental Wellbeing



2.

Youth Voice



3.

Doing well



4.

Encouraging  
life skills



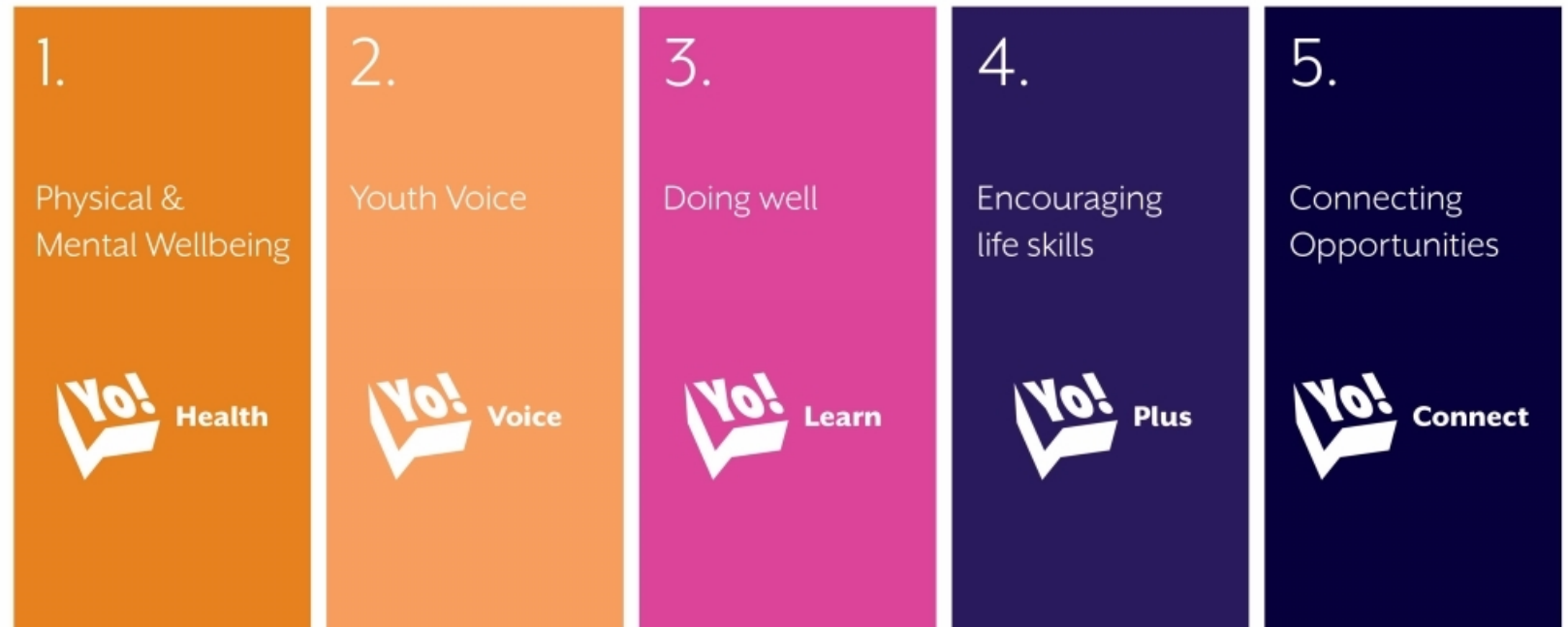
5.

Connecting  
Opportunities



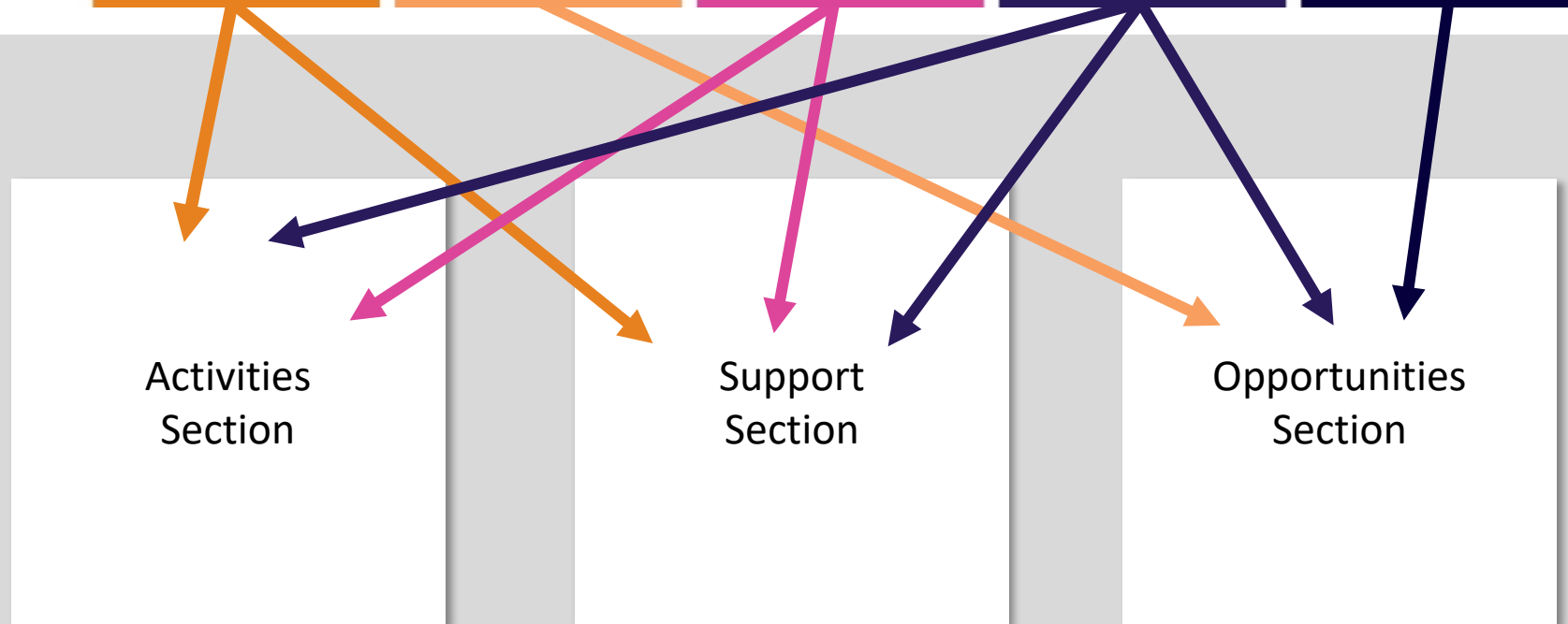
## 5 Pillars Council's view

The five pillars form the foundation of everything we do. They are both our bedrock and our mission statement and will ensure we remain focussed on delivering our goals. Each pillar has been assigned its own campaign identifier and colour to make it easily recognisable within the Yo! family.



## Website Young people's view

- Easy to navigate
- Easy to understand
- No jargon
- Recognised brand
- Established website



1.

Physical &  
Mental Wellbeing

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- Continue to invest in Emotional Well-being services and ensure access to support is easy
- Offer children and young people free access to all our WV Active Leisure Centres with a **£2 million** investment in their health and wellbeing
- Ensure children continue to receive access to great activities with a healthy meal in **every** school holiday through **£464,000** of funding in 2023-24
- Ensure our financial well-being strategy continues to support families who are struggling and minimises the impact of poverty on young people

# 2.

Youth Voice

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- To continue to develop the Youth Voice forums with ongoing investment of **£380,000** in participation and engagement for young people
- Increase participation across the 'families' theme with additional investment of **£83,000** to employ adults participation officers
- To embed Make Your Mark Wolverhampton in September 2023
- Roll out co-production training across the city in conjunction with parents and young people

# 3.

Doing well

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- Give children and young people the best possible education in city schools where **nine-out-of-ten** are OFSTED-rated good or outstanding – more than ever before – and supporting underperforming schools to improve
- Build on the success of Wolves at Work in helping nearly **600** local people into jobs last year
- Ensure a focus on the child's first 1001 days through our family hubs
- Further improve services for the city's 11,500 children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in our city - backed by **£640,000** council investment

4.

Encouraging  
life skills

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- Invest **£80,000** in a one-year enrichment pilot programme to offer exciting opportunities to some of our most disadvantaged young people
- Continue to develop the relationship with our uniformed organisations to ensure we develop a broad offer of life skills for our young people

5.

Connecting  
Opportunities

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- Develop access to information for families that is easy to find and easily accessible
- Ensure services are joined up through the development of a families front door
- Continue to work with voluntary and third sector organisations through initiatives like financial well-being and family hubs to ensure families are connected to their local community



## Ask of SEB

- Consider within their areas where the YO branding could be applied
- Consider to where they feel they could support and enhance with the Enrichment Programme



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# Inclusion in Education

March 2023



## Inclusion in Education (Exclusions, Suspensions and Attendance)

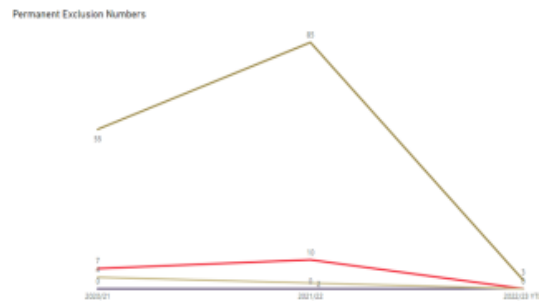
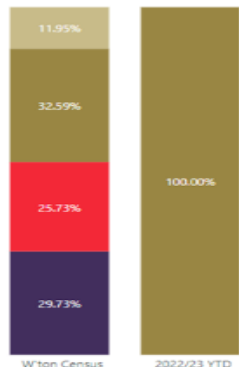
### Overview

- Development of EDI Education Dashboards
  - Examples included (Exclusions by age, gender, ethnicity, religion, SEND status):
    - What does this tell us
    - What action are we taking
- Inclusion Summit – October 2022
- Inclusion Framework Development
- Alternative Provision Framework
- Questions

## Development of EDI Education Dashboards - Sample

EDI KPI Measure		EDI Dashboard development is in progress to show how the Cities population represented concerning age, gender, ethnicity , religion and SEND			
Performance		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exclusions &amp; Suspensions</li> <li>Attendance</li> </ul>			
Exclusions Age	Starting point 2020 – 2021 Academic Year	2021-22 Academic Year	2022-23 Academic Year	Change (% point)	Census 2011 – population
0-4	0	0	%	+ 0	30%
5-9	10.6%	10.3%	%	- 0	26%
10-15	83.3%	87.6%	%	+ 0	33%
16-17	6.1%	2.1%	%	- 0	12%

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What does this tell us?

- The Exclusions rate is reducing in Wolverhampton for 5 – 9 age range
- The highest level of exclusions falls within the age 10-15 age group and has increased
- The dashboard will be able to show year-on-year comparative data

### Actions taken to date:

- Initial presentation delivered at the Inclusion Summit during October 2023
- Data accuracy and reporting work has been ongoing to ensure data is as accurately provided by schools and providers
- Data sharing agreement with schools is to be implemented April 2023
- Data can be cross referenced with the National data annually

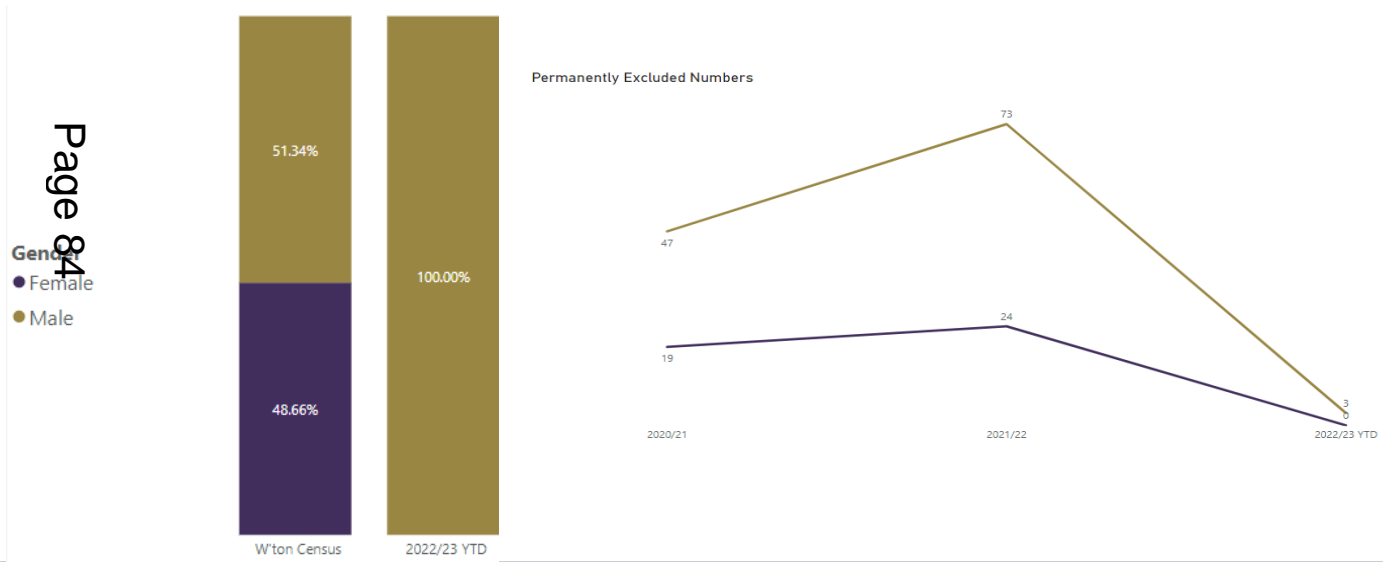
### Next steps:

- Share dashboards for wider review from September 2023

Performance

Over the last two academic years the proportion of males that are permanently excluded has remained higher than females and significantly higher than the city 0-17 population. Of the 3 excluded in September (22/23 academic year), all were males.

Exclusions Gender	Starting point 2020-21 Academic Year	2021-22 Academic Year	2022 – 2023 Academic Year	Change (% point)	Census 2011 - population
Male	71.2%	75.3%	%	+4.2%	51.3%
Female	28.8%	24.7%	%	-4.1%	48.7%



What does this tell us?

- Males are three times more likely to be excluded than females
- The percentages of exclusions by gender is consistent

**Actions taken to date:**

Secondary Inclusion Framework Workshop held on 3rd Feb 2023, with CEO's and School Leaders to address exclusions, focussing on overrepresented groups with SEND, Ethnic Groups etc  
 Recruitment of Senior Inclusion Officer (Seconded) who undertakes direct intervention with CYP at risk of being exploited / excluded (predominantly boys)

**Next steps:**

Follow up Inclusion Framework Workshop to be held on 31<sup>st</sup> March (6 weekly)  
 Project Support to be considered to achieve ambitions. This is being explored initially via Youth Futures and Mission 44.

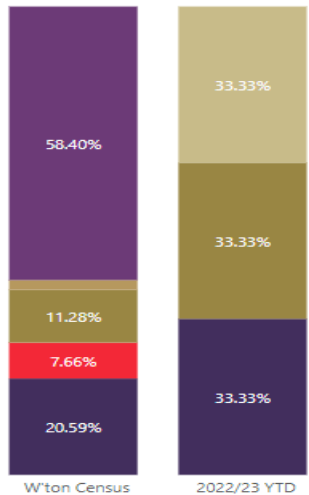


The highest proportion of permanent exclusions have been of a white ethnic background in 21/22 academic year; the percentage was 42.3% which is below the 0-17 population average of 58.4%. There has been an increase in black and mixed ethnic groups from 20/21 to 2021/22 academic year.

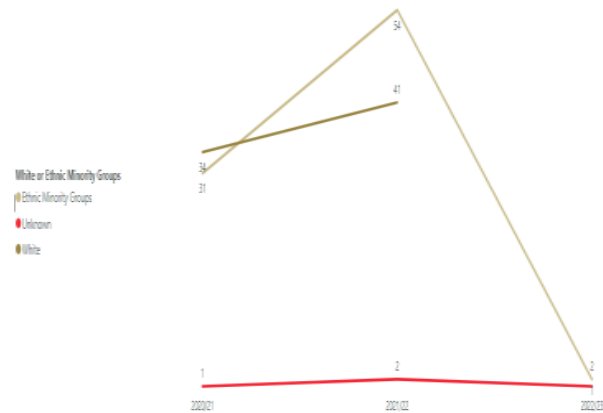
Exclusions Ethnicity	Starting point 2020-21 Academic Year	2021-22 Academic Year	2022 - -2023 Academic Year	Change (% point)	Census 2011 - population
White	51.5	42.3%	%-	-9.2%	58.4%
Asian	6.1%	7.2%	-%	+1.1%	20.6%
Black	15.1%	17.5%	-%	+2.4%	7.7%
Mixed	25.8%	28.8%	-%	+3%	11.3%
Other	0	2.1%	-%	+2.1%	2.1%
Not Known	1.5%	2.1%	-%	+0.6%	0

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- Ethnicity**
- Asian
  - Black
  - Mixed
  - Not Known
  - Other
  - White



Permanent Exclusion Numbers



**What does this tell us?**

- The highest percentage of exclusions were from a white ethnic background although proportionately this figure is below that of general population in this group
- There are a disproportionately high percentage of black students excluded
- The percentage of Asian students excluded is below half of the general population for this ethnic group
- The percentage of students from a mixed ethnic background is very high when compared with the census data for this group

**Actions taken to date:**

Over-representation of Black and Mixed groups highlighted at the Inclusion Conference and via ConnectED Forum (Oct/Nov 22)  
 Consultations and scoping of opportunity for grant funding via Mission 44 & Youth Futures Foundations for bespoke projects to support, champion and empower young people from underserved groups to succeed through narrowing opportunity gaps in education, employment and wider society.

**Next steps:**

Grant funding to be further explored via Inclusion Framework Workshops

EDI KPI Measure

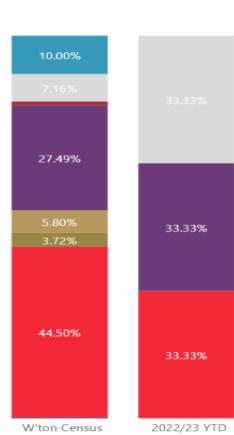
Permanent Exclusions (all) by Religion compared to census 0-15 population

EDI KPI Measure

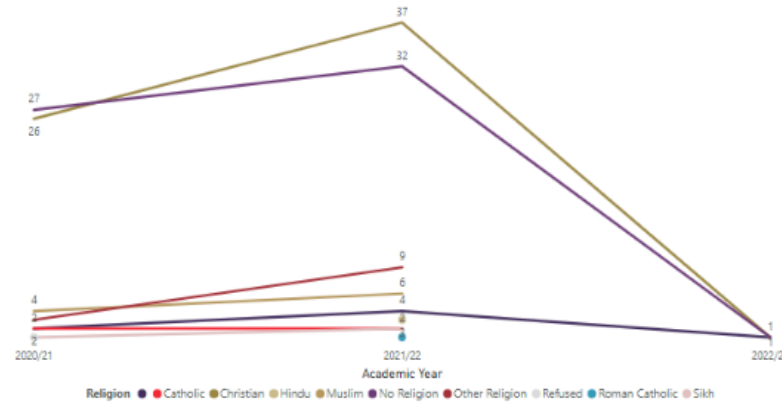
Over the last two academic years there has been a high proportion of students stating no religion or religion not stated. Where religion has been recorded, Christianity is under-represented compared census 0-15 population.

Exclusions Religion	Starting point 2020-21 Academic Year	2021-22 Academic Year	2022-23 Academic Year	Change (% point)	Census 2011 - population
Christian	42.4%	41.2%	%	-1.2%	44.5%
Buddhist	0	0	%	0%	0.3%
Hindu	0	3.1%	%	+3.1%	3.7%
Jewish	0	0	%	0%	0.0%
Muslim	6.1%	6.2%	%	+0.1%	5.8%
Sikh	1.5%	2.1%	%	+0.6%	10.0%
Other religion	4.6%	9.3%	%	+4.7%	1.0%
No religion	40.9%	34%	%	-6.9%	27.5%
Religion not stated	4.5%	4.1%	%	-0.4%	7.2%

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SEN Stage at Exclusion



What does this tell us?

- The percentage of students of Sikh religion are rarely excluded
- More excluded students claim to have no religion compared to Census data
- Only a very small percentage of students do not state their religion

**Actions taken to date:**

Over-representation of religious groups highlighted at the Inclusion Conference and via ConnectED Forum (Oct/Nov 22)  
 Consultations and scoping of opportunity for grant funding via Mission 44 & Youth Futures Foundations for bespoke projects to support, champion and empower young people from underserved groups to succeed through narrowing opportunity gaps in education, employment and wider society.

**Next Steps:**

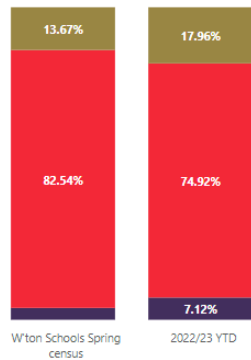
Grant funding to be further explored via Inclusion Framework Workshops

Performance

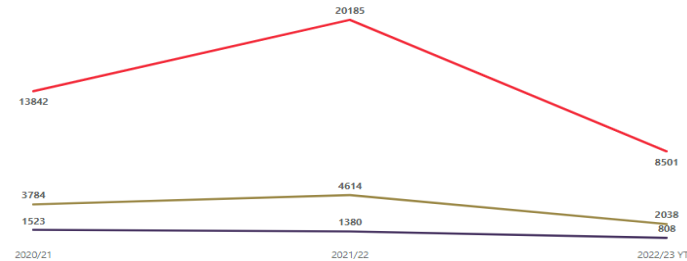
At the end of September (21/22 academic year) the attendance below 95% cohort has remained relatively stable at 18%. 3.9% above the spring school census. Those with an EHCP are represented more than the census percentage.

Attendance by SEN	Starting point 2020-21 Annual Year	2021-22 Annual Year	2022 – 2023 Annual Year	Change (% point)	Spring school census 2022
SEN Support (K)	19.8%	17.6%	%	-2.2%	13.7%
EHCP (E)	8%	5.3%	%	-2.7%	.8%
No Support (N)	72.2%	77.1%	%	+4.9%	82.5%

- Age group
- EHCP
- No SEN Support (N)
- SEN Support (K)



Attendance below 95% Numbers



What does this tell us?

- The number of students at SEN support stage is higher than expected compared with national data
- There is a 5 – 10% differential in the numbers of students in Wolverhampton receiving no SEND support than the expected level

**Actions taken to date:**

Updated Attendance Traded Service offer published to schools for 2022/23, including pre-ofsted audit support and trust packages  
 Identification of pupils using the vulnerability matrix, arranging and offering support where Attendance team have no involvement.  
 Launch of EBSNA pathway – training delivered to schools

**Next steps:**

Attendance Team to RAG rate schools with highest levels of absence and offer and arrange termly meetings with identified red schools, review actions to date and offering advice, guidance and support.

## Inclusion Summit

### Keynote speakers:

Cllr Sandra Samuels OBE, Mayor  
Young People  
Jay Blades  
Kevin Davis  
Cllr Anwen Muston  
Suzanne Brooks  
Inclusive Solutions  
Cllr Chris Burden

### Workshops:

- Race & Culture in the Curriculum/Governance
- Total Respect Training (CiC YP)
- Inspiring Change (SEND YP)
- Keys to Inclusion
- Supported Employment
- Dimensions of Inclusion

The Inclusion Summit's (held in October 2022) key aim was to promote inclusion within education, to influence and inspire schools and providers in the city to ensure that all children's needs are met through their learning experiences.

The Summit offered workshops in a number of areas, including:

- Race and Culture
- LGBTQ+
- Children in Care
- Medical and Health Needs
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

The event featured an extensive marketplace of relevant organisations/services supporting this agenda.

While the Summit was predominately for school leaders and SENCOs, others working with children and young people also benefited from attending the event, gaining an insight into promoting equality, diversity and inclusion within their organisations.

Over 100 people attended the event and strengthened the appetite for inclusive practice in the city.

Feedback that was received was very positive and further work has developed as a result of the summit.

The ambition is for the summit to become an annual event.

Some of the workshops were led by Children in Care, Care Leavers and Young People with SEND

## Inclusion Framework

### Framework of Delivery:

Educated in line with peers

Are not disadvantaged

Increased aspiration and want to learn

Maintain contact with mainstream

Retain links locally

Correct support & intervention

Staff training

Specialist resource & interventions

Feeling safe

Recognise the benefits

High quality effective provisions

Knowledge & tools available

Maintain existing placements

Co-produced & shared ownership

Best practice - national & regional

## City of Wolverhampton's Inclusion Framework

- Children and Young People gain access to the Right Support in the Right Place at the Right Time:
  - Improving outcomes for children and young people
  - Navigating systems and provision so that it is a positive experience for children and young people
  - Ensuring that investment into the system is delivering value for money
- Enabling access to high-quality education for all children and young people:
  - Redesign the Inclusion, Support and Alternative Provision Panel (ISAPP) and realign the panel to be led by local school leaders
  - Review the alternative provision offer in the city and to identify gaps within the system for our children and young people:
    - Consider the development and support and implementation of internal school based alternative provisions to reduce the risk of young people experiencing suspension or exclusion
    - Consider how to increase the capacity and recruitment of appropriately qualified staff available to work in schools through traded offers or options around deployment of staff from other settings
    - Further develop the Alternative Provision Directory within the city ensuring young people can access a hybrid approach within
  - Further develop the quality assurance process to ensure that schools are involved in the process
  - Explore the opportunity of submitting of grants for Youth Futures and Mission 44 who's vision is to create a fair and inclusive society where all young people are afforded the same opportunities and reach their full potential.
  - To work collaboratively with Wolverhampton schools, the DfE and OFSTED to ensure the framework is effective and enables good outcomes for all children and young people

## Alternative Provision Framework

Implementation Date April 2023

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Framework of Assessment:

Assessment & Understanding

Engagement and Relationships

Attainment and Progress

Learning Environment

Long Term Opportunities

QA Visits and Monitoring

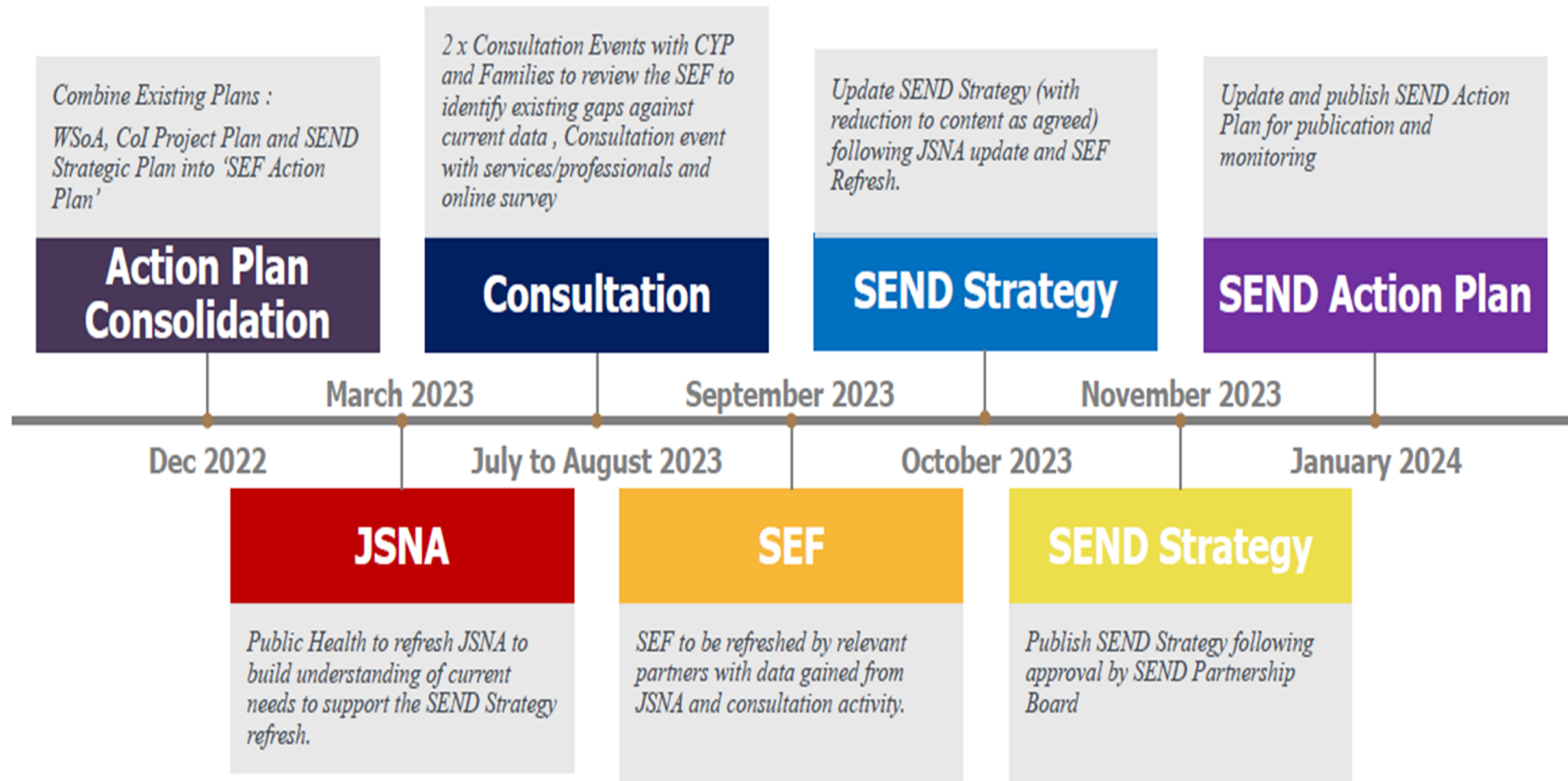
Directory of Provision

## Quality Assurance Framework for Alternative Provision

- Providing clear guidance for alternative provision in the City of Wolverhampton including:
  - Ofsted registered settings, offering full or part time placements
  - Unregistered settings, offering part time placements
  - Online or hybrid alternative provision &
  - Residential therapeutic alternative provision
- Enabling access to high-quality education for all children and young people:
  - Increased confidence in schools of the availability of local authority recognised alternative provision both city central, in the locality, and from neighbouring local authorities;
  - A focus on early intervention, some of which will be on the school's site, to prevent or reduce risk of suspension or exclusion;
  - A strong emphasis on time bounded interventions and specialist therapeutic offers, which present as positive options for young people struggling to engage with a mainstream education;
  - A focus on reintegration and support for young people and their families as they re-engage with mainstream education, training or employment.
  - A reduction in the number of children and young people being permanently excluded from school or suspended or on modified or part-time timetables.
  - Aligns to the thinking of the National SEND Review: Right Support, Right Place, Right Time

# SEND Strategic Developments

## Strategic Development Timeline



### SEND & INCLUSION STRATEGIC REVIEW 2023

The SEND is to be reviewed to incorporate the:

SEND Strategy

SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy

Inclusion Framework

SEND & Alternative Provision Improvement Plan (March 2023)



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