

Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

27 July 2023

Time 6.00 pm **Public Meeting?** YES **Type of meeting** Scrutiny
Venue Committee Room 3 - 3rd Floor - Civic Centre

Membership

Chair Cllr Qaiser Azeem (Lab)
Vice-chair Cllr Stephanie Haynes (Con)

Labour

Cllr Paul Sweet
Cllr Lovinyer Daley
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Carol Hyatt
Cllr Jenny Cockayne
Cllr Jane Francis
Cllr Sally Green
Cllr Jeszemma Howl
Cllr Lamina Lloyd

Conservative

Cllr Christopher Haynes

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:

Contact Earl Piggott-Smith
Tel/Email Tel: 01902 551251 or earl.piggott-smith@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Address Scrutiny Office, Civic Centre, 1st floor, St Peter's Square,
Wolverhampton WV1 1RL

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Agenda

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Welcome and Introductions**
[The Chair to welcome everyone to the meeting.]
- 2 **Meeting procedures to be followed**
[The Chair will explain how the meeting will proceed.]

MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

- 3 **Apologies**
- 4 **Declarations of interest**
- 5 **Minutes of the previous meeting (15 March 2023)** (Pages 5 - 20)
[To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record]

PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

- 6 **Education, Skills and Employment Strategy** (Pages 21 - 50)
[Laura Collings, Head of Policy & Strategy, to present report]

[This item is being considered as pre-decision scrutiny and will therefore not be available for Call-in once a decision has been made by the Executive].

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- 7 **Wolverhampton Children and Young People's Self-Evaluation 2023-2024**
(Pages 51 - 102)
[Alison Hinds, Deputy Director Social Care, to present report -

The panel are asked to consider the following recommendations:

- a) to receive and comment on the Wolverhampton Children and Young People's Self-Evaluation 2023-2024 report
- b) to note the achievements for 2022/2023 and priorities for 2023/2024

- 8 **Principal Social Worker Annual Report 2022 - 2023** (Pages 103 - 122)
[Jennifer Rogers, Principal Social Worker, to present report]
- 9 **Children and Young People - Draft Scrutiny Work Programme** (Pages 123 - 128)
[Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, to present report]

Strong Families, Children, and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Agenda Item No: 5

Minutes - 15 March 2023

Attendance

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

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

Co-opted Members (5)

Wolverhampton Youth Council

Employees

Alison Hinds	Deputy Director of Children's Social Care
Jennifer Rogers	Principal Social Worker
Brenda Wile	Deputy Director of Education
Jameel Mullan	Inclusion and Attendance Service Manager
Courtney Abbott	Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner for Children and Adults
Alice Vickers	Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager

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 members of the panel:

Cllr Lynne Moran

Cllr Lovinyer Daley

Apologies were also received from Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families.

4 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

5 **Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2023**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2023 be approved as a correct record.

6 **Minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2023**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2023 be approved as a correct record.

7 **Cross Party Scrutiny Review Group - Draft Mins 13.12.22**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2022 be approved as a correct record.

8 **Family Hubs and Start for Life Offer Programme**

The Chair invited Alison Hinds, Deputy Director of Children's Services, to present report.

The Deputy Director advised the panel that the presentation will give an overview of the work being done to deliver the vision for early years healthy development through the setting up the Family Hubs network in Wolverhampton.

The Deputy Director advised that following a review of early years healthy development a report was published in March 2021.

The Deputy Director commented on the overall findings from the review and highlighted evidence of a strong commitment across the early years sector to improve how families are supported and areas where improvements in practice were needed to respond to the concerns of families.

The Deputy Director commented on the importance of the first two years of a child's life in terms of the development of their language skills and cognitive function, as examples and the long terms difference making an investment at this stage can make.

The Deputy Director commented on the three objectives of the Family Hub programme.

The Deputy Director advised the panel that Wolverhampton was among the 75 local authorities invited to submit applications to join the Governments Family Hubs programme. The programme has been funded by a Government grant of £300m for the next three financial years to support deliver a range of activities. The application made by Wolverhampton Council was successful and will help to implement quicker changes and improvements in how services are delivered to children and families across the City.

The Deputy Director commented on the importance of the programme in supporting parents and carers to help them nurture their babies and children and to get the appropriate level of support needed to improve long term outcomes in terms of health and education.

The Deputy Director added that the programme also aims to contribute to a reduction in health inequalities for babies, children, and families across England by sharing management information that will influence practice in the future.

The Deputy Director advised the panel about the range of services that Family Hubs are being encouraged to think about delivering as part of the offer, many of which are already being delivered across the City.

The Deputy Director advised that the panel that there are eight Strengthening Families Hubs which currently deliver a range of services with statutory partners such as the police, health visitors, midwives as part of targeted support offer to families. The aim will be to use the Family Hub programme to extend this offer to other families much earlier.

The Deputy Director added that the Council will be expected to deliver specific programmes, for example, infant feeding support, early language support.

The Deputy Director outlined the priority workstreams for the Family Hubs programme and details of the funding arrangements. The plans for delivering the programme will be informed by a local needs assessment. The work will be led by colleagues in Public Health.

The Deputy Director advised the panel that the Council is required to publish a Start for Life offer by April 2023 and that a draft has been completed. In addition, the Council is also required to establish a Parent Carer Panel.

The Deputy Director advised the panel about a planned programme of work to upgrade existing buildings to make them more accessible to parents and carers and to deliver a wider range of services.

The Deputy Director commented on the governance arrangements for the programme to ensure that is delivering against the vision and underlying principles.

The Deputy Director outlined the plans to communicate the changes to services the public, how they can access services and range of support that will be available in the Family Hubs. The Deputy Director advised the panel that two existing Strengthening Family Hubs in Low Hill and Graiseley wards will be re-launched as Family Hubs in April/May 2023. There are plans to identify other possible sites for other Family Hubs during the year.

The Deputy Director commented that to achieve the aim of making families aware of the new offer from Family Hubs a change in the culture of Strengthening Family Hubs will be needed as the current focus of the service offers targeted social work interventions where a family would have an allocated strengthened family worker or social worker.

The panel were invited to comment on the presentation.

The panel thanked the presenter for report.

The panel welcomed the plans to establish Family Hubs but suggested that the offer should be available in all wards supported by Government funding.

The panel congratulated the successful bid for funding to deliver the programme.

The panel had concerns about the delays in the Government allocating funding and the impact this is likely to have on when the Family Hubs network will be fully operational and delivering against the key priorities.

The panel also queried the potential for the Family Hubs to offer an outreach support service to families in the local community and more generally about plans to reach families who may not have easy access to them.

The Deputy Director reassured the plans about the timing of the rollout of Family Hubs and advised that the expectation is that five of the hubs will be running by late summer 2023 which will be a good start to the programme.

The Deputy Director agreed with the need to work with a range of community and voluntary organisations, and statutory organisations such as local schools. The Deputy Director reassured the panel that the service will be engaging with local organisations and advised the panel that the aim will be to complement and build on the current offer to families and make them more accessible.

The panel queried the plans for making families aware of the Family Hubs programme and how it will be promoted.

The Deputy Director commented on the importance of getting the communication right with families so that they understand the changes in how the new services will be delivered and how to access them. The Deputy Director reassured the plan that there is a communication plan, which will include the use of different methods, for example, leaflet drops in the areas where Strengthening Family Hubs will be changing to Family Hubs to explain the changes.

The panel suggested offering incentives to encourage parents to visit the Family Hubs and highlighted the importance of engaging with new parents at earliest opportunity and to promote the extended offer.

The Deputy Director welcomed the idea and reassured the panel that the service is working closely with health visitors and midwives in Strengthening Family Hubs and the introduction of Family Hubs will provide an opportunity to engage with more families.

The panel commented on the importance of improving housing provision and highlighted the impact on family welfare of poor living conditions and queried the work being done to engage with providers.

The Deputy Director acknowledged the issue and commented that housing support will be part of the Family Hubs offer.

The panel queried data about the current level of integration between families and the Strengthening Families Hubs and the plans for marketing the offer. The panel also asked for details about the plans for preparing the Health Needs Assessment.

The Deputy Director reassured the panel that the service has baseline data about the level of engagement by families with Strengthening Families Hub. The Deputy

Director added that the data for Family Hubs will not be directly comparable as the focus will be reaching a different group of families.

Furthermore, the DfE has encouraged Councils involved in the Family Hub programme to gather data about how the service will be working to improve current levels of engagement.

The Deputy Director advised the panel that work on the Health Needs Assessment has started and the process will involve looking at local and national data sets from various organisations.

The panel queried if the current functions delivered by Strengthening Family Hubs will remain or moved elsewhere

The Deputy Director confirmed that the services delivered by Strengthening Family Hubs will remain and the plan is to run them alongside the Family Hub offer so families can access both general support and get access to more targeted support from social workers or strengthening family workers, if needed.

The panel thanked the Deputy Director for the presentation.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on the presentation to be noted and actioned where appropriate.
2. The panel agreed to receive an update on the progress of the opening of Family Hubs at a future meeting.

9

2022 Children's Social Work and Workforce Health Check

The Chair invited Courtney Abbott, Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner, to present report.

The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner advised the panel that presentation summarises the findings from the main report. The annual health check report covers social work and general workforce working within children's social care teams.

The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner advised the panel that the report aims to identify areas of strength and areas requiring greater focus to support workforce development planning and continuous improvement. The survey was open for six weeks between September and October.

The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner commented that the overall findings were generally positive and there was evidence of significant improvements since the previous annual report.

The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner commented on the low response rate to the survey despite a range of initiatives aimed at improving the situation.

The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner gave detailed comments on the main areas of strength and development based on an analysis of the survey

responses. The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner shared a range of quotes from employees about their views of working for the Council.

The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner advised the panel that an action plan has been developed to address areas of concern. The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner highlighted specific action focused on improving the survey response rate, for example, giving social workers protected time to complete the survey.

The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner advised the panel about work being done to improve recruitment and retention in the workforce, for example, benchmarking pay and incentives.

The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner commented on overall positive views from employees about working with colleagues and across teams and the impact that their work is having on young people and their families.

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

The panel thanked the presenter for presentation and report.

The panel commented on a recent visit by Cllrs to a local MASH team where the issue of managing workload pressures as part of a specialised small team working to strict deadlines. The issue of workload pressures was also highlighted as an ongoing issue in the survey responses. The panel queried the timeline when it is expected that employee numbers would stabilise to provide sufficient cover, while accepting the high turnover rate and recruitment challenges in the sector.

Jennifer Rogers, Principal Social Worker, acknowledged the challenge locally and nationally in the recruitment and retention of social workers. The Principal Social Worker commented that the turnover rate of social workers across Wolverhampton is lower than the national average and generally there is stability within the children and young people in care service.

The Principal Social Worker accepted the specific challenges in the MASH service and child protection teams where there is a struggle in recruiting experienced social workers. The Principal Social Worker highlighted the inherent stressful nature of social work and the issue of secondary trauma which adds to the challenge when trying to recruit and retain workers.

The Principal Social Worker outlined the range of work being done to support existing social workers, for example, trauma informed supervision and monitoring casework workload numbers to be able to respond in a more flexible way that takes account of planned holidays and changes in demand.

The Principal Social Worker added that career progression opportunities have been recently created internally for Child Protection Lead Practitioner in recognition of the skills and experience needed. The aim is to help better manage workload issues due to difficulty in recruiting experienced social workers.

The Deputy Director of Children's Services commented on the national shortage of a good quality agency social workers. The Council is working closely with regional colleagues to agree a memorandum of understanding to encourage experienced

emergency social workers to stay within the local authority network rather than accept a temporary move to another authority outside the region.

The Deputy Director of Children Services reassured the panel that the service is working hard across the region to address gaps and highlighted the important contribution of quality agency workers to achieving this aim.

The Deputy Director of Children Services commented on longer term plans for improving the recruitment and retention of social workers and highlighted plans to present a rebrand of what it is like to work for Wolverhampton at a social work recruitment fair on 20 March 2023.

The panel queried the support for new and recently qualified social workers and the possible impact of increased workloads on ability to take up training and career progression opportunities. The panel were concerned about the impact this may have on future retention and recruitment of social workers, adding to workload pressures.

The panel suggested that the survey question asking people if they would recommend CWC as an employer to a friend should be amended to ask why they would not recommend CWC to a friend. The panel commented that this would provide useful information that could help shape plans for improving the recruitment and retention of social workers.

The Principal Social Worker welcomed the suggested and agreed to include the question in next year's survey and the option of 'unsure' as response to the question.

The panel queried the impact of home working on the recruitment and retention of social workers.

The Principal Social Worker commented that the impact of home working on newly qualified social workers and added that there was sometimes a reluctance to ask for help from more experienced social workers who they did not know well.

In response, the idea of having dedicated time in the office to help build working relationships is being considered in recognition that social work is a difficult job and the need for someone to have the opportunity to have an informal debrief with colleagues, where they have experienced secondary trauma or get some advice with a case.

The Principal Social Worker commented on the benefits of hybrid working to social workers and to the service more generally.

The panel queried the reference in the report to City of Wolverhampton Council being involved in commissioning a regional leadership course for women of colour which will start in Spring 2023. The panel asked for details of the evidence used to support the decision.

The Principal Social Worker commented that the decision was based on an analysis of equalities data on grade and progression within social work which showed the higher grade the smaller the number of women of colour.

The panel asked for details about the number of people who completed the survey and asked for the information to be included with percentage figures.

The panel also queried the plan to use Teams rather email for communication as there was a concern that this would mean less accountability.

The Principal Social Worker commented details of the numbers of eligible people who were sent a survey link is in paragraph 3.1 of the report. The Quality and Improvement Advanced Practitioner advised the panel that 93 social workers and 78 members of the wider workforce responded to the survey.

The Principal Social Worker reassured the panel that in reference to using Teams Channel rather than emails it was considered to be more interactive and has led to better engagement. The panel were advised that Teams would be used mainly to send reminders and to promote future events.

The panel discussed the presentation of the data and agreed that in the interest of full transparency the actual number and the percentage should be included in a future report.

The panel thanked the presenters for the report.

Resolved:

1. The panel comments on the findings of the Children and Young People's Service social work and wider workforce health check 2022 to be noted.
2. The panel support the proposed actions to improve social work practice as detailed in the report.
3. The Principal Social Worker agreed to include the suggested changes by the panel in the next report.

10

Young Opportunities (YO!)

The Chair invited Alice Vickers, Co-Production and Youth Engagement Manager, to present report.

The Co-Production and Youth Engagement commented on the development of the Youth Engagement Strategy (#YES) and the range of programmes aimed at improving the wellbeing of all children and young people living in Wolverhampton.

The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager commented that as a result of the success on co-production work with young people the service has been funded by Adult Social Care to support their plans to undertake similar work with social care service users.

The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager gave a summary of the key performance indicators and successes of the #YES programme since August 2022 to date against the following themes – Being Connected, Being You and Being Healthy.

The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager commented on the success of the National Make Your Mark Vote in Wolverhampton in January 2022 where 10,500 children and young people across the City took part and chose their top four themes.

The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager commented on the leading role of young people in allocating grants to commission services with an estimated value of £2.5m. This work was supported by the new co-production hub which has provided the opportunity for young people to get together.

The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager highlighted the increase in the number of activities for children and young people over the summer holidays.

The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager advise the panel about progress in the development with young people of the YO! Wolves website. The website will provide information about activities and support to young people and their families. The website will also have a separate dedicated sections and related information for young people, which is intended to be jargon free and easy to navigate.

The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager gave further details of the planned activities and funding to support the delivery of the themes.

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

The panel thanked the presenter for the excellent report.

The panel queried if there was any specific funding for children in care who may need help with transport costs to take part the planned activities.

The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager acknowledged the issue of transport costs for children and young people in care and care leavers and more generally for families in financial difficulties. The service has been working with regional partners such as West Midlands Combined Authority, who have responsibility for transport provision within the city and with colleagues represented on the West Midlands Children's Participation Leads Network to improve the situation. The group is working together to see what extra support can be given for care leavers and to share best practice.

The Deputy Director of Children Services commented on the importance of children, particularly children in care being able to take part in activities across the City and the role of the Council as corporate parent to think about supporting this aim. The Deputy Director commented on other short-term activities to support young people with transport costs.

The panel queried the possibility of using a fund managed by West Midlands Combined Authority to prevent loneliness to support children in care. The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager confirmed that a bid was submitted to the fund but was unsuccessful. A further application will be made in the next funding round bid.

The panel queried the lack of awareness among providers about applying to the Holiday Activities Fund to deliver summer holiday activities and there was concern from residents about the uneven availability of the offer to young people in some areas of the City.

The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager commented on the work being done to work with providers to deliver the Holiday Activities Fund and 42

organisations have successfully bid for funding. As a result of the huge level of interest a best value exercise was done on the applications submitted.

The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager reassured the panel about work being done to make sure all areas are covered.

There are discussion with schools across the region to use funding from Governments National Youth Guarantee Offer and Sport England to target schools which could be used as locations to deliver activities. However, a big issue for providers is the difficulty in finding relevant and safe provision in the area to deliver services. The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager suggested that a report on the spread of holiday activity provision could be presented to a future meeting.

The panel asked for details of the Government funding from National Youth Agency to set up professional standards for youth training and the preparation being made to deliver the Governments National Youth Guarantee Offer.

The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager commented on the success of a recent celebration event for people who have recently qualified in youth training. The group has been supported by the Wolverhampton's Community Action Team to help develop voluntary sector organisations.

The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager offered to present an update on progress of youth workers programme to a future meeting.

The panel queried the work being done to encourage providers or community groups to stay active in the area without long term funding and specifically work being done to help organisations become more resilient. The panel also queried work being done to empower and support residents to have a say in which activities are delivered.

The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager commented that there is a provider forum where providers can showcase different ways to engage and work with local communities. There is a draft service specification which will outline the responsibilities of the providers and how should show how they will contribute to the priority themes and standards.

The Co-production and Youth Engagement Manager commented about using the process to signpost families and encourage them to access other opportunities. The aim will be that when provider activities are full, they can encourage young people to access the services offered from other local providers with spare capacity. The service is also encouraging smaller groups to work together and submit bids from the Council and to apply to other funding bodies as part of efforts to build community resilience.

The panel thanked the presenter for the report.

Resolved:

1. The panel endorse the outcomes of the Youth Engagement Strategy 2020 – 2023 and the principals for developing the Young Opportunities brand.
2. The panel comments on the presentation to be noted.

3. The information requested by the panel to be presented to a future meeting

11 **School Exclusion and Suspensions**

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

The Deputy Director introduced Jameel Mullan, Inclusion and Attendance Service Manager, who would also be contributing to the presentation.

The Deputy Director explained that the report was presented in response to a request from the panel for detailed information on school exclusions rates and suspensions, with a specific focus on how pupils with protected characteristics are represented in the data.

The Deputy Director advised the panel that data on exclusions, suspensions and attendance is published annually and the information in the presentation covers the academic year ending 2022.

The Deputy Director advised the panel that the presentation will explain the findings from the analysis of the data and the action being taken and or planned in response.

The Deputy Director commented that the presentation would give a summary of the findings from the Inclusion Summit in October 2022. The Deputy Director commented on progress made in drafting the Inclusion Framework Development, and the Alternative Provision Framework documents and their contribution to reducing the number of exclusions.

The Deputy Director commented on the work being done to engage with all schools to create a shared ownership of the issue. The aim of plan is for schools to work towards achieving the highest standards in respect of inclusion.

The Deputy Director gave further details about the development of the Alternative Provision Framework, which is due to be implemented in April 2023. The Deputy Director advised the panel that alternative provisions are settings where young people who need some additional support after being excluded to enable them to continue their learning journey. There are 18 quality standards that are used to measure performance and to provide a level of assurance about the quality of the current offer.

The Deputy Director commented that a directory of alternative providers across Wolverhampton will be published shortly which schools can also use to commission services on a temporary basis.

The Deputy Director advised the panel that the presentation slides are based on EDI Education dashboard. The dashboard has been developed to provide an analysis of the data based on age, gender ethnicity, religion and SEND against key performance indicators, for example, EDI KPI measure - *permanent exclusions (all) ethnicity group compared to Census data 0-17 population with starting point and current snapshot.*

The Deputy Director commented that the Inclusion Summit held in October 2022 was a very successful event and was attended by high profile local key speakers and national figures.

The feedback from school staff who attended the event was very positive. The Deputy Director advised that panel young people were involved and led a series of the workshops. The event was attended by 100 people.

The panel were invited to comment on the presentation and specifically their views of the data and what additional information would be helpful in a future report when reviewing progress against the performance targets.

The panel welcomed the reference to the work done to agree a data sharing agreement with schools.

The panel highlighted concerns about the findings in the presentation about permanent exclusions by gender which showed that males are three times more likely than females to be excluded and the persistence of this trend over time.

The panel queried the reasons for the high level of exclusions among male pupils and the factors that have contributed to this situation and the contribution of the inclusion strategy in tackling the issue.

Jameel Mullan, Inclusion and Attendance Service Manager, commented that main reason for permanent exclusion is persistent disruptive behaviour. The Inclusion and Attendance Manager added that there has also been an increase in cases of violence and assaults involving young people, reflecting the trend regionally and nationally of increases in the level of aggression in schools.

The Inclusion and Attendance Service Manager advised the panel that detailed analysis shows an increase in the level of assaults against young people and adults.

The Inclusion and Attendance Service Manager added that there is more work to be done to understand if the increase is linked to pupils returning to school after having had a period of absence due to the pandemic. There is further research being done which involved analysis of data and interviews with young people to better understand the issue and help identify young people known to the service who may be at risk of permanent exclusion.

The findings on the research are expected to be completed in September 2023. The Inclusion and Attendance Service Manager agreed to present the findings to a future meeting of the panel.

The panel commented that it would have been helpful to include the sample size numbers in the presentation slides to better understand the issue and suggested it should be added to future reports.

The panel queried the EBSNA pathway for pupils with SEND referenced in the presentation. The Deputy Director of Education advised the panel that the service offers support to young people who are not attending school because they have emotional or mental health challenges.

The Inclusion and Attendance Service Manager added the EBSNA refers to Emotionally Based School Non attendance and advised the panel that the service offers a bespoke pathway for children that have a medical or emotional reason that means they are unable to attend mainstream school. The service was launched in January 2023.

The panel queried the expected difference in terms of attendance rates by young people that should be expected in the future because of the programme.

The Inclusion and Attendance Service Manager confirmed this was the aim and added that the service has created a reflective supervision session with school which provides different levels of support provided by a range of professionals. In addition, schools can also access more support resources if needed.

The panel welcomed the introduction of the service.

The panel commented on the link between a pupil's experience at school and poverty and queried if this issue has been considered in the analysis of school exclusion data. The panel suggested that free school meals data could be a possible proxy indicator of poverty.

The panel suggested it would be helpful in future presentations to include national school exclusion data as a comparator to better assess and understand local performance and progress.

The panel commented on the importance of recognising the primary responsibility of Headteachers and school governors for reducing school exclusion rates, while accepting the wider collective responsibility of Wolverhampton Council to support children's educational development.

The panel also cautioned about comparing the exclusion rates between local schools without considering the impact of other factors.

The Deputy Director welcomed the idea of using free school meals in the analysis of school exclusions data. The Deputy of Director advised the panel that school exclusion rates analysed on a ward basis can be provided to panel members on request.

The panel queried the range of categories used in the analysis of exclusion by ethnicity and suggested care should be taken in how such data is presented and used. The panel were concerned about the risks of making decisions based on a small sample size and suggested caution should be used when deciding actions to be taken. The panel commented on the importance of understanding the specific underlying factors that may be contributing to the increase in the rate of permanent exclusion and that any conclusions are supported by evidence.

The Deputy Director accepted the comment about the importance of including numbers against the percentage figures presented and the inclusion of national comparator data.

The Deputy Director highlighted the successful reduction in permanent school exclusion numbers from 20 to 23 pupils in the autumn term (September – December 2022).

The Deputy Director accepted the need to be careful about conclusions based on the data stated about exclusions by ethnicity.

The panel suggested a future report should also include a table to show changes in exclusion rates on termly basis to better understand changes over time.

The Deputy Director welcomed the suggestion and agreed to consider the idea.

The panel queried if data collected from schools as part of the sharing agreement could be used to compare performance against national exclusion data sets. The panel commented on possible challenge in persuading schools to share data with the Council.

The Deputy Director acknowledged the challenge as there is no legal requirement on schools to provide exclusion data.

The Deputy Director commented on the findings of recent exclusion published data for Autumn Term 2021/2022 in primary, secondary and special schools and the good progress made to reduce the number of exclusions. The Deputy Director commented on the contribution of schools and others in achieving this success.

The panel commented on the importance of understanding the reasons for exclusions within a specific area and not assume the contribution of factors such as living in deprived areas or the poor educational performance of a school when considering the numbers of reported exclusions.

The Deputy Director agreed with comment and added that schools may have a different threshold level for permanent exclusion compared with a neighbouring school and it was therefore important not to make assumptions based on areas level of social deprivation.

The panel queried the link between the high rate of permanent exclusion and the lower rate of suspension detailed in the chart and suggested if an increase in suspensions would result in lower rates of permanent exclusions. The panel also queried if the evidence presented suggested schools were choosing to use the option to suspend pupils as means of reducing the number of permanent exclusions.

The Deputy Director commented that the reference to use of suspensions (previously called fixed term exclusions) was an interesting observation and agreed to ask the Inclusion and Attendance Service Manager to investigate the matter further and report findings to the panel.

The panel commented on the different thresholds for suspensions and permanent exclusions, highlighting that the use of suspension as a sanction as part of efforts to improve behaviour with the aim of bringing them back into education. In contrast a permanent exclusion may be because of single incident rather than a series of events over time. The panel suggested the reasons for exclusion or suspension should be included in future reports to better understand the issue.

The panel discussed the threshold for exclusion and suggested that a pattern of persistently disruptive behaviour and not a single incident could also result in a decision to permanently exclude a pupil.

The panel highlighted concern about the issue of 'grey exclusions' where the school asks the parent to remove their child because of concerns about their behaviour to avoid them being excluded or encouraged to consider home education as an option. The panel expressed concern about the educational welfare of pupils in this situation and lack of local authority oversight of such decisions.

The Deputy Director had similar concerns about this type of exclusion and advised the panel that the Council will investigate if notified by parent and the school will be asked to explain the reasons for decision where a child is home educated.

The Deputy Director outlined further steps that would be taken to get reassurance about the reasons and to check parents understand the implications of this decision.

The Deputy Director acknowledged the challenge presented by schools having different threshold for the permanent exclusion of pupils.

The panel thanked the presenters for the report.

Resolved.

1. The panel comments on the presentation to be noted and an update provided on specific suggestions of changes to the content to a future meeting.
2. The panel agreed to add the issue of school exclusions to the panel work programme for 2023 – 2024 and to receive an update on progress against planned actions detailed in the presentation.
3. The Deputy Director of Education to share a final draft of the City of Wolverhampton's Inclusion Framework and the Quality Assurance Framework for Alternative Provision with the panel when available.

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CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel 5 July 2023
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Report title	Education, Skills and Employment Strategy 2030	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Louise Miles	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable Director	Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families	
Originating service	Policy and Strategy	
Accountable employee	Laura Collings Tel Email	Head of Policy and Strategy 01902550414 laura.collings@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Strategic Executive Board Economy and Growth Scrutiny Panel	2 May 2023 21 June

Recommendation(s) for decision:

Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel is recommended to:

1. Consider and comment on the Education, Skills and Employment strategy 2030, at appendix 1, as pre decision scrutiny.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the development of a new Education, Skills and Employment (ESE) strategy which sets out the Council's approach to supporting local people into good quality careers and work.

2.0 Background

2.1 We want to ensure local people can access new opportunities in our city, and that employers have access to a talent pipeline which meets their needs and helps the city to grow. A key priority in Our City: Our Plan is to 'Support local people into good jobs and training'. Across the city's education, skills and employment system there are many encouraging signs and much to positive about.

- 89% of the city's schools are rated good or outstanding by OFSTED.
- We are delivering first class learning facilities with a seamless learner offer through the City Learning Quarter.
- There are growing sectors in digital, creative industries and professional services bringing new jobs as well as established clusters in advanced manufacturing and aerospace.
- Thousands of fantastic employment opportunities in our foundational sectors of health and social care, hospitality and retail, and logistics which provide vital services to local people.
- The city is a national leader in low carbon research and development through the new National Brownfield Institute at the University of Wolverhampton.

2.3 However, some of our residents find it harder than others to access learning and work opportunities in our city. There remain areas of challenge, many of which are not unique to Wolverhampton and arise from a legacy of deindustrialisation and more recently the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and cost of living crisis. This strategy sets out how working alongside our partners we can leverage our collective influence to improve skill levels and employment outcomes for local people.

3.0 Education, Skills and Employment Strategy 2030

3.1 Across our communities, employers and partners there is a common desire to build a system where children, young people and adults thrive, which adopts a whole life approach to learning and work, where children are ready to learn, achieve well and attain good numeracy and literacy skills. A system which recognises achievement and provides opportunities for progression and the development of highly skilled individuals, with fulfilling careers and employment prospects for local people. To deliver on this the strategy will focus on five overarching priorities.

- Children have the best start in life

- High quality education which prepares young people for work
- Post 16 provision which meets the needs of city employers
- Lifelong learning and employment pathways to good quality work
- A new employer support offer

3.2 Our priorities are supported by the three cross cutting principles.

- **Climate Conscious:** Harnessing the potential of the transition to a green economy by equipping local people with the skills they need to access jobs in low carbon sectors.
- **Driven by Digital:** Ensuring that every resident has the digital skills they need to gain, retain and progress in work.
- **Fair and Equal:** Inclusive and accessible lifelong learning and employment opportunities for all in our city.

4.0 Strategic Framework

4.1 The plan focuses on aligning strategic objectives with operational delivery and performance. Each of the five overarching priorities includes:

- A policy position outlining the Council's key areas of focus, challenge, and opportunity under the priority.
- Key activity highlighting planned projects, investment and activity which will support delivery of the priority areas.
- Key indicators which demonstrate how we will develop evidence-based activity and measure our impact.

5.0 Consultation and Engagement

5.1 The ESE strategy builds on already extensive engagement with residents and key stakeholders. Including:

- In depth work with young people through our Wolves at Work 18-24 programme to understand barriers to employment.
- Education and skills providers through our recently completed review of post 16 provision in the city.
- Employer perspective from the development of the West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan
- Wider engagement with residents through our Cost Living support, Healthy Lifestyles survey and other citywide engagement.

5.2 A consultation process on the strategy will be held throughout June, July and August 2023 to gain further input on our proposed priorities. This will include focus groups and workshops with young people and Youth Council, refugees and migrants, equality groups, adult learners and public sector partners. In addition, there will be a digital survey to give all residents and stakeholders opportunity to provide their views.

6.0 Performance Framework

6.1 The Council continues to use a variety of means in which to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of operations against organisational strategic priorities and statutory requirements. Using data and analysis across all areas of the business, the Council actively encourages a golden thread of performance monitoring throughout all parts of every service.

6.2 Contained within the draft strategy is an emerging city performance framework which aligns key indicators to each of the five overarching priorities. Further work will be undertaken to refine these throughout the consultation period. The final framework will also be aligned to the Our City: Our Plan performance framework.

6.3 The framework will provide high-level city data on key priorities, benchmark city performance against national and regional data, highlight the impact of targeted interventions and inform strategic decision-making.

7.0 Evaluation of alternative options

7.1 Option 1 would be to not to develop an overarching framework for the Council which sets out key priorities relating to education, skills and employment. This could mean that local people are not able to access the existing and emerging opportunities in our city and local business do not have access to a talent pipeline which supports their growth.

7.2 Option 2 and the chosen option is to develop an Education, Skills and Employment strategy for the Council which will provide a framework to maximise economic prosperity for local people.

8.0 Reasons for decision(s)

8.1 The priorities and activity identified in the strategy have been developed through a robust evidence base and engagement with residents and city stakeholders.

9.0 Financial implications

9.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with the strategy itself although the subsequent actions, projects and programmes will have financial implications. Any further budget approvals will be sought in line with the Financial Procure Rules.

9.2 All costs associated with engagement and the preparation of the plan will be accommodated within existing resources.

[LD/13062023/Z]

10.0 Legal implications

10.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

[SZ/13062023/P]

11.0 Equalities implications

11.1 An equalities analysis for the strategy will be undertaken and mitigations to any negative impacts identified. Fair and Equal is one of the three cross cutting principles of the refreshed plan. All activity noted in the plan will also be subject to individual equalities analysis.

12.0 All other Implications

12.1 The strategy has implications across the Council, including climate change, health, and wellbeing and digital which will continue to be considered and managed as part of the delivery of this plan.

12.2 Health and wellbeing is an important part of everyday life. It is integral to leading a happy and healthy lifestyle. There is an inextricable link between health and employment prospects. Through this strategy and Our City: Our Plan priorities we will ensure that our communities are stronger, healthier, and thriving places to live.

12.3 The plan is aligned to the Digital Wolves strategy setting out how as a city and as a council we can support local people to develop the digital skills they need to gain and sustain employment.

1.1 The performance framework for each thematic area of the plan will enable continued oversight of the indicators that underpin the central commitment to Wulfrunians living longer, healthier lives.

13.0 Schedule of background papers

13.1 N/A

14.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Education, Skills and Employment Strategy 2030

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Education, Skills and Employment Strategy 2030

Draft for Consultation

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Foreword

We want all of our residents and businesses to benefit from the new investment and new opportunities in our city. We will deliver this aim through inclusive growth, increasing access to good quality jobs, raising skill levels and improving health and wellbeing outcomes for all in our city.

This includes an emphasis on support for young people as they make the transition from school into further learning or work and support for adults, both in and out of work, to connect to and progress in employment and training. We also recognise the key role of employers in creating opportunities that are high quality and sustainable with decent levels of pay and conditions for workers.

This Strategy presents a major opportunity to improve the chances, opportunities and aspirations of local people and their economic prosperity. It sets out a collaborative approach to meet future skills and employment needs in the city, linking up new and emerging business sectors with the city's training and skills offer to create a local talent pipeline which stimulates growth.

Introduction

Skill levels in the city have been steadily increasing with the numbers of local people securing higher level qualifications at record numbers. However, there remain areas for improvement and the current education, skills and employment system in the city faces a number of challenges arising from a legacy of deindustrialisation, low aspirations, pockets of entrenched worklessness, relatively low pay, low skill levels and more recently the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and cost of living crisis.

Through consultation with our communities and partners there is a common desire to build a system where children, young people and adults thrive, which adopts a whole life approach to learning and work, where children are ready to learn, achieve well and attain good numeracy and literacy skills. A system which recognises achievement and provides opportunities for progression and the development of highly skilled individuals, with fulfilling careers and employment for local people.

To deliver on this vision we will focus on five overarching priorities.

- Children have the best start in life
- High quality education which prepares young people for work
- Post 16 provision which meets the needs of city employers
- Lifelong learning and employment pathways to good quality work
- A new employer support offer

Our priorities are supported by three cross cutting principles of climate conscious, driven by digital and fair and inclusive.

We are taking a long-term holistic view for education, skills and employment. We need to deliver a system fit for the future; and a system which benefits everyone. We can achieve this by working collaboratively to leverage our community assets, raise aspirations and improve outcomes.

Working with Our Partners

The Council can facilitate local education, skills and employment partnerships but our success is dependent on a strong partnership between employers, education and skills providers, voluntary and community sector and local anchor organisations. This strategy is not owned by one organisation but by all stakeholders who have a role to play in improving the economic prosperity of people in Wolverhampton.

This Strategy provides a framework for action through which the Council and partners can work together to maximise the benefits of growth for our residents and to achieve the wider priorities of Our City: Our Plan. We will build on our strong, local partnerships and good practice to put our resources to the very best possible use.

Our ask of city partners is:

- Continue to engage meaningfully with our different communities in the city to understand their needs and ensure pathways into employment, training and education are created.
- Continue to engage with our local businesses across different sectors to understand their short, medium and long-term skills needs.
- Ensure that we align our activity with robust data so that the decisions we make are evidence based and our resource is targeted at those most in need.
- To work with the Council to design and deliver innovative solutions to some of the skills and employment challenges in the city.

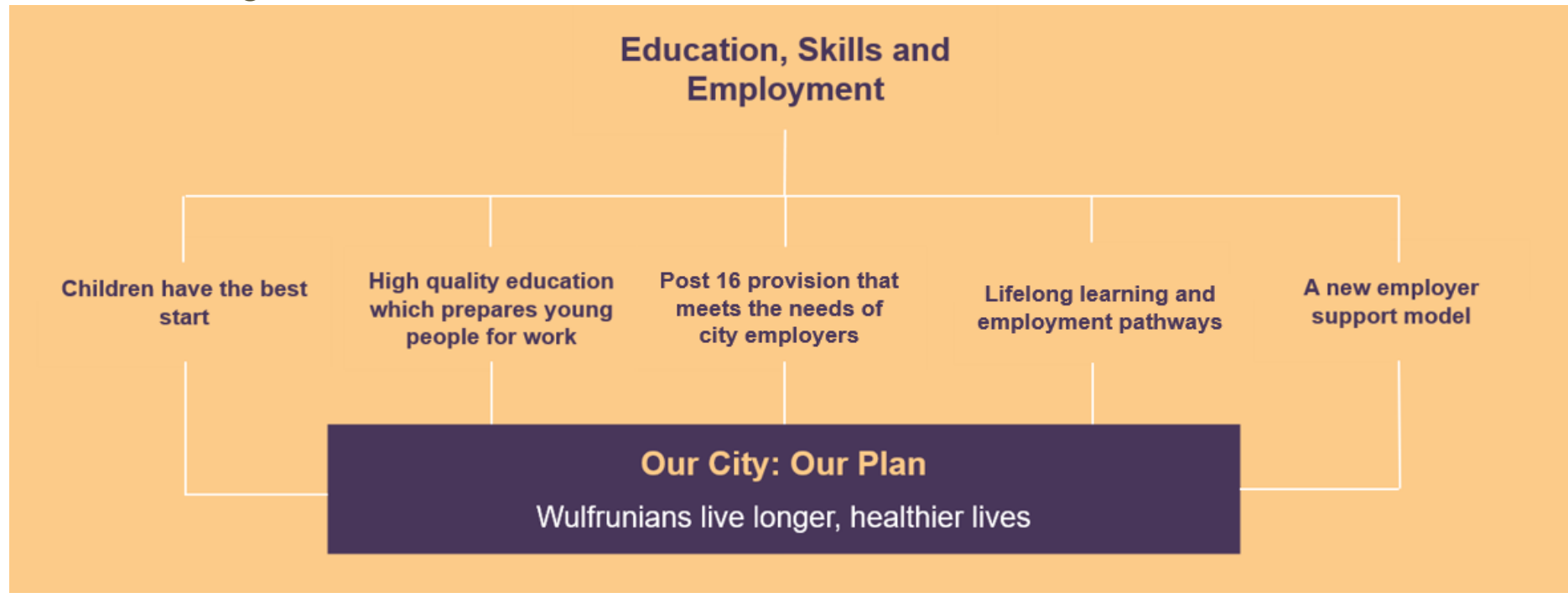
Our City: Our Plan

Our City: Our Plan is the Council's overarching strategic framework. It sets out how we will work with our partners to improve outcomes for local people.

This strategy supports delivery of Our City: Our Plan through its focus on supporting families from the earliest point, providing high quality education and lifelong learning opportunities that improve skill levels and open up opportunities to better work.



Plan on a Page



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OUR PRINCIPLES

We will underpin our work with the following key principles;



CLIMATE FOCUSED

We will grasp the opportunities of a green industrial revolution and meet the challenges of supporting high carbon sectors, their workers and our residents through the transition to net zero. Growing our green skills base so that local people can access new and higher paid jobs in the low carbon economy.



DRIVEN BY DIGITAL

Digital skills are now more important than ever to securing employment. Many businesses will see their operations transform in the coming years through the adoption of digital technology. Through joined shared data practices deliver insight led skills and employment services to local people.



FAIR AND INCLUSIVE

Ensuring communities have the skills to benefit from growth. Addressing educational and skills disparities across our communities and the issue of social mobility. Providing inclusive and accessible lifelong learning for all in our city. Working with our city employers to embed fair pay and employment.

Children have the best start in life

The first 1001 days from conception to the age of two sets the foundations for many aspects of a child's life, including their cognitive, social and emotional development. Parents and carers have a crucial role in ensuring children have access to positive early life experiences and a strong start to learning by providing a nurturing, secure and healthy environment. Building on the learning which has taken place at home, high quality early years settings are a key enabler of positive outcomes for children equipping them with core skills in literacy and numeracy as well as social and emotional skills. The benefits of early years education are particularly acute for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Children who receive these strong foundations typically go on to do better at school, secure better employment, undertake further learning and have improved health and wellbeing outcomes. The mental health and wellbeing of mums, dads, partners and carers is also important for the development of the baby. It is important that parents and carers get the right type of support to help them give their babies the best start in life. Wolverhampton has a strong city-wide Family Hub offer which brings together a number of key services to provide vital support and opportunities for families to learn and grow together.

Areas of Focus

Wolverhampton has consistently high levels of funded early years provision with age 2 at 99% and age 3 and 4 at 95% of settings rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' in 2022. This is above both regional and national average for provision at age 2 and age 3 and 4.

Studies show positive links between access to early education and a child's long term educational attainment. To ensure children in our city benefit from the excellent early years provision we will continue to work with our partners to increase overall uptake of funded childcare entitlement. In 2022;

- The proportion of eligible 2-year-olds accessing their funded entitlement was at 76% surpassing the national average but slightly below the regional average;
- 90% of 3- and 4-year-olds accessed free early years education which is below the national average of 92%.

More children accessing early education will help to sustain the increase in outcomes at Early Years Foundation Stage which have risen steadily over the last 10 years, in 2022 61.9% of children achieved a 'Good' level of development at reception stage. There is still work to do to close the gap on the national average and reduce the variation in outcomes across different localities in the city and pupil groups. Wolverhampton has high levels of deprivation in some areas and one of the most common disparities is between

disadvantaged pupils and their more affluent peers. Closing the attainment gap across all pupil groups is vital to improving outcomes.

Challenging the health, environmental and social factors which impact strongly on educational outcomes remains a high priority. Health and social care as well as community providers play an important role in supporting good early development of children. This is particularly important in Wolverhampton where incidence of smoking and obesity in early pregnancy are high compared to national averages. Through joined up multi agency working we will continue to strengthen families where children need extra support or are at risk, and to mitigate the negative effects of the wider determinants of educational outcomes.

Going Forward

To deliver against our action areas, we will:

- Deliver joined up multi agency support at the earliest opportunity through our family hubs, delivering our Start for Life offer.
- Roll out a programme of activity which promotes the importance of the first 1001 days of a child's life, and how everyone in Wolverhampton can play a part in developing resilient children who are ready to learn and are school ready.
- Launch a programme of targeted engagement through our Family Hubs across the city to drive uptake of funded early years provision to ensure all eligible children can benefit.
- Continue to build relationships with parents and carers through local forums to increase parental engagement on the importance of good early development for children.
- Continue to support Early Years settings across the city to deliver consistently high-quality provision.
- Provide more free opportunities for parents and carers to develop their skills and support children to learn through our Family Community Learning offer
- Take action to improve mental health and wellbeing in the city including support for families to enable children and young people to thrive.

City Indicators

To help shape and inform our key activity under this priority we will monitor the following city indicators.

- % of Early Years and Childcare settings rated Good or Outstanding
- % of take up of 2-year-olds benefitting from early education
- % of pupils achieving the Early Learning Goals in Communication and Language and Literacy at Early Years Foundation Stage

High quality education which prepares young people for work

Our Education Excellence strategy 2021 – 2024 sets our strategic framework for driving improvement across all education settings in the city as well as driving up attainment levels. The strategy sets out a vision to create an inclusive education system which promotes the highest standards for all children and young people, closes the attainment gap and allows every pupil to achieve their full potential. In 2023, 89% of the city's schools were rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by OFSTED, an increase of 14% points since 2014. This is compared to 88% nationally and 86% in the West Midlands. We will build on this upward trend ensuring that all children whatever their background leave the education system with the skills, confidence, and drive to succeed.

Preparing young people for the world of further education, training, and work in an increasingly uncertain economy with rapidly changing skills needs requires a greater focus on high quality careers information, advice and guidance which is aligned to local labour market need. We will support all young people to make successful transitions into adulthood in particular those who are looked after, with special education needs, disabilities or vulnerabilities. Children and young people's emotional wellbeing, physical and mental health are vitally important and underpin positive outcomes in childhood and success as an adult.

What do we need to focus on?

The Covid 19 pandemic forced an unprecedented interruption in education for thousands of children and young people across the city. Despite the difficult times of the pandemic, the city's KS2 and KS4 have continued to show positive trends, but there is still work to do to bring levels of attainment in line with the national average, so that more of our young people leave school with the qualifications they need to succeed.

Moving from secondary education at 16 into further education, training and employment is a critical transition point for young people. It is important that we support young people to make the best possible decisions on their future employment prospects. This is a real area of strength for the city with our participation levels at 16 and 17 being some of the best in the country. Going forward we will have a continued focus on consistent and effective transition planning at years 11. Explored under our priority three on post 16 education is a proposal to enhance support at year 13 so that all young people get the support they need to make a successful move into work.

We also know from employer feedback as part of the development of the West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan that essential or 'soft' skills are as important to being successful in the workplace as qualifications. These essential skills include communication, team working, innovation and problem solving as well as more general office etiquette. To support young people to develop these critical skills we will develop a best in practice work experience offer in Wolverhampton as

part of a wider career's advice, information, and guidance offer. Working with families, local employers and schools we will ensure that our young people can access hands on experience of the workplace.

Low aspirations hold back some of our young people in the city. This can be due to a range of factors including intergenerational workless, and there are some parts of our city where consecutive generations of families have struggled gain and sustain employment. This can be down to a range of factors including economic restructuring of the local economy over many decades. In addition to our enhanced work experience offer we will also bolster mentoring opportunities through a targetted programme to raise aspiration across the city.

The Wolverhampton Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Education Needs and Disabilities 2020 – 2023 was co-developed with the Wolverhampton SEND Partnership Board. It sets out how we will ensure that all children and young people with SEND and their families have the opportunity to achieve a good quality, ordinary life. Through this strategy and our partnerships, we continue to work with education providers and the city's Education, Employment and Skills Board to improve availability of and access to inclusive employment pathways and opportunities for all children and young people.

Going Forward

To deliver against our action areas, we will:

- Through our #YES and Hy5 Youth commitment we will continue to help our young people be healthy, be connected and be heard, valuing their contribution in making Wolverhampton a great place to grow up and learn.
- Continue to deliver consistently high-quality services to children and families.
- Co-produce a post 16 transition policy and supporting activity programme with partners in the city to ensure young people receive the very best support to help them make a successful transition from secondary education into further and higher education, training or employment.
- Support the Black Country Careers Hub to go beyond the Gatsby Benchmarks to ensure students leave schools and colleges with the employability skills businesses need.

- Continue to be a Cornerstone Employer within the BC Careers Hub, offering opportunities for young people within our schools and colleges to experience first hand employment experience within the city council.
- Through our Education Excellence strategy, we will have a continued focus on the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers and education leaders, strong school improvement offer and effective transition planning at all key stages and phases.

City Indicators

To help shape and inform our key activity under this priority we will monitor the following city indicators.

- % of schools in the city that are rated Good or Outstanding
- Average Attainment 8 score per pupil
- % gap in Attainment 8 score gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children
- Levels of 16-17 year olds Not in Education, Employment or Training
- % of 16- and 17-year-olds with SEND in education, employment or training
- Gatsby Benchmarks

Post 16 education provision that meets the needs of city employers

The options for post-16 education, training and learning are now very diverse. The range of pathways allow more choice to suit different strengths, learning preferences and aspirations. Since 2015, school leavers are required to continue full-time education, training, apprenticeships; or to undertake part-time education or training whilst in employment until they reach age 18. Training providers, colleges and universities have a key role to play in increasing opportunity and prosperity, whilst also developing skills that meet the needs of the local and regional economy.

Traditionally skills policy has been highly centralised and driven largely by central government, often this approach has failed to recognise the needs of local labour markets. We want to develop a place-based approach to post 16 education which supports a range of learning styles, needs and careers ambitions. An inclusive, accessible model of post 16 education which supports traditional academic routes but also embraces vocational centred further and higher education which is delivered in partnership with business and industry.

Areas of Focus

In 2023, the Council alongside city training and education providers conducted a review of post 16 provision in the city with the purpose of understanding whether the current offer met the needs of learners and local employers. The review identified areas of good practice, as well as opportunities to better prepare our residents for available jobs and future careers.

While our participation levels for 16- and 17-year-olds are amongst the best in the country these levels are not sustained and there is a drop off in participation in education, training, or employment post 18 which is demonstrated by the high level of youth unemployment in the city. Our attainment rate as a city at Key Stage 5 are below the national average with results at A level in 2022 being a C+ in Wolverhampton compared to a B nationally. Raising attainment rates at key stage 5 will be critical to improving participation rates. We will enhance transition support for young people at 18 to ensure they have the support they need to make a successful move into further education or work.

Many young people still follow traditional academic routes when they leave secondary school. We know that across our business base and more widely residents there is a lack of awareness about technical and vocational, education and training pathways. We will raise awareness of these pathways and boost careers advice and transition support at key points in the learner journey.

A key challenge to developing a more coherent skills offer is that funding of post 16 provision is complex, with numerous funding streams and criteria. This makes skills pathways for local people difficult to follow, and often encourages providers to shape

provision to meet funding criteria rather than focus on learner and employer need. Working collaboratively with industry, employer representative bodies and education and skills providers we must move towards a more agile and place-based skills system in the city.

Demand for technical skills in new sections of our economy is growing rapidly. Digital skills will have increasing prominence; there are anticipated to be increases in demand for workers skilled in AI, automation, and software engineering skills, as well as data analysis and modelling skills, particularly as homes and businesses move to becoming “smart” with smart energy solutions, demonstrating the interconnectivity between digital and green skills needs. As part of our wider skills offer, we will seek to increase the amount and range of higher-level technical provision at levels 3-5 in skills gaps areas in the city, to ensure we are responding to the labour market growth in higher skilled occupations.

Going Forward

To deliver against our action areas, we will:

- Work with schools, colleges, training providers and other partners to implement the recommendations of the Wolverhampton Post 16 review to establish a new model of place-based post 16 provision in the city.
- Work with secondary schools sixth City of Wolverhampton College to review the employment and careers support offer for 18-year olds and the way young people’s participation is tracked to ensure clear and consistent support is provided as they transition from young person to adult.
- Establish the City of Wolverhampton Post 16 Pathways Partnership to bring together education and training providers to ensure that there are consistently strong academic, technical, training and engagement pathways in high quality settings across the city, and meet the needs of local employers.
- Build stronger links between business, education and local public sector anchor institutions to ensure alignment of local labour market need and the city’s post 16 offer.
- Work with partners to promote technical level qualifications, including T levels and apprenticeships as positive study choice with clear articulation of career pathways.

- Work with our partners to deliver high quality careers information, advice and guidance throughout every stage of the education system, to prepare children, young people and adults as they transition in to work and progress throughout their careers.

City Indicators

To help shape and inform our key activity under this priority we will monitor the following city indicators.

- KS4 and KS5 attainment
- Destination data, year 14 onwards
- % of care leavers in education, employment or training
- % of 19 year olds with a level 3 qualification
- Number of apprenticeship starts
- %of young adults (18-24) claiming unemployment benefits

Lifelong learning and employment pathways to good quality work

Many young people today will work 50-55 year careers with participation in the labour market until they are in their 70's. Alongside this advances in technology and innovation, as well as changes to the way we work (facilitated in some part by the pandemic), have caused us to reassess the skills we need to thrive in the workplace. In the future many people will need to upskill or reskill two or three times over their working lives. As a result, we now must place a stronger emphasis on lifelong learning and skills development. This includes working closely with industry to develop sectoral career pathways, strengthening our all-age careers advice and guidance offer, and improving the availability and accessibility of adult learning.

To support our lifelong learning offer we are investing in state-of-the-art learning facilities in the city to ensure our residents have access to first class facilities to grow and build their skills. The City Learning Quarter a partnership between the Council and City of Wolverhampton College will co-locate the college, Adult Education Service and city centre library in one location. This isn't just about new physical space but a new seamless learner offer for the city, which will support new school leavers, those looking to upskill and local people who want support to move back into work.

Areas of Focus

Some of our residents find it harder than others to secure work and good quality careers. This is reflected in the levels of economic inactivity and workless households across the city. Barriers to employment can be driven by several factors from caring responsibilities, ill health, or low skills. Around 1 in 10 adults in the city have no formal qualifications. The city adult learning offer plays a crucial role in supporting local people to develop the core skills and behaviours they need to gain, retrain and progress in work. The benefits of adult learning are much wider than just improving resident's qualifications and skills, also making a positive impact on health and wellbeing, community cohesion and confidence.

The Council's Adult Education Service has a focus on widening participation in learning for those furthest from the labour market and supporting them to move towards further learning, skills and employment. The Service works closely with ACL partners in the voluntary and community sector to deliver learning opportunities directly within communities this can include basic English and Maths as well as ESOL. Provision seeks to support those with low or no skills to advance their employment prospects in an inclusive and accessible environment. There are many fantastic employment pathways across the city for local people in our foundational sectors (hospitality, health, social care, logistics and retail) which provide vital employment opportunities to residents as well as our higher growth sectors.

Working with the City of Wolverhampton College, University of Wolverhampton, and other training providers we will also look to further increase the number of residents with higher level skills. Just over half of residents (54.1%) are qualified at level 3 or above, compared with 60% nationally. As a result, employers in the city often face skills shortages, with hard to fill vacancies particularly in roles that require advanced or higher skills. Narrowing the qualifications gap is important for individuals if we are to increase the economic prosperity of local people. People with a level 3 qualification are more likely to be employed, earn more when employed and less likely to claim out of work benefits than those qualified at level 2 or below. People with higher level qualifications who develop higher level skills throughout their working lives are more resilient to labour market change. Analysis of job postings in Wolverhampton over the past 6 months show that, on average, vacancies requiring a level 3 qualification have an advertised salary nearly £6,000 higher than those requiring a level 2 qualification.

We will continue to work closely with industry to develop sectoral career pathways, strengthening our all-age careers advice and guidance offer, and improving the availability and accessibility of adult learning. We will develop a single front door for all skills and employment support in the city reducing the complexity, making it easier for local people to find and access education and training opportunities. This will ensure that local people can develop new skills, improve performance in their current role, support progression at work, increase income, change careers and meet employers' skills needs. The opportunities secured through the West Midlands Deeper Devolution Deal will ensure we have much greater flexibility of skills funding and policy at a local level to deliver our ambitions.

Going Forward

To deliver against our action areas, we will:

- Grow and diversify our adult and community learning offer to support local people to develop English, maths, ESOL, digital and other skills to increase their employability and wellbeing.
- Provide wrap around support and dedicated work coaches for local people looking for work or to retrain through our dedicated employment service, including targeted support for those 18-24 and 50+.
- Through our Wolverhampton Anchor Network, we will develop skills plans for the digital, health and wellbeing, cultural and creative and green sectors in the city so we can align training and education opportunities to the industries of the future.
- Deliver employment support programmes for our most vulnerable residents, including adults with learning disabilities.

- Building on the city's Youth Skills Hubs we will launch our city centre Adult Skills Hub at i10 which will support local people into work, improve their career prospects and gain new skills.
- Provide a one stop shop for employment and skills support in the city through our Wolves Workbox digital platform making it easier for local people to find advice and support, and for businesses to advertise and fill their vacancies.
- Continue to build closer links between the Council and Department for Work and Pensions, including greater data sharing to understand customer needs, monitoring impact of city employment support and to deliver joint interventions to support local people back into work.
- Work with regional employers and the West Midlands Combined Authority to influence and implement the West Midlands Local Skills Improvement Plan so that business and local people have the skills they need to thrive and succeed.

City Indicators

To help shape and inform our key activity under this priority we will monitor the following city indicators.

- % of population with no qualifications
- % of working age population qualified to level 3 and 4
- % of population in skilled occupations
- Number of working age adults (16-64) claiming unemployment benefits
- Total £ spent in Wolverhampton and number of participants on Adult Skills and Community Learning courses funded through the devolved Adult Education Budget

A new model for employer support

Wolverhampton is home to thousands of businesses which offer fantastic employment opportunities. Our economy has emerging sectors in professional services, creative and digital as well as green technologies and sustainable construction which have the potential to create new local jobs with higher wages. There are already well-established sectors in advanced manufacturing aerospace and logistics. Through our inward investment offer we continue to attract national and international businesses to locate to the city bringing with them new jobs and strengthening local supply chains. Working with regional and national partners across the public and private sector we will deliver joined up and insight led initiatives that support all of our city businesses to grow.

To help our businesses maximise the opportunities in our local economy we need to establish a talent pipeline of well skilled people who can meet the needs of local businesses. There is a positive link between the number of high skilled workers in an area and the generation of new and innovative ideas and ways of working which support higher output and productivity. Improving the city's economic growth and tackling poor levels of productivity, relies in part on boosting the skills of the workforce. To do this we want to forge ever closer links to our local businesses base so that we can work together to fill skills gaps and plan for future skills needs. Working collaboratively to build a flexible, adaptable and resilient skills system which is able to respond to existing and emerging opportunity areas. We will align our education and skills system with our business support offer to ensure local people have the skills employers need now and in the future.

Areas of Focus

Despite the pandemic, the number of active businesses in the city increased from 8,715 in 2019 to 8,780 in 2020. This represents 0.7% growth, a higher rate of growth when compared to national (+0.5%). A report from the British Business Bank in November 2022 identified the city as the top local authority in the West Midlands to start a business. We will continue to support new and existing businesses in our city to understand their business support needs and simplify routes to independent growth advice and finance.

A key priority for our city employer offer is to raise levels of productivity to generate more and better jobs for local people. Wolverhampton's output gap (GVA per head in Wolverhampton compared to national average) was £2.7bn for 2020 and since 2004 economic output in the city has increased by £2bn. This output gap reflects that the Wolverhampton economy is less productive and dynamic than the national average.

Addressing the output gap and increasing productivity is made more challenging due to global economic instability driven by the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis. The rapid shift to digital technologies and the climate crisis will also change the way businesses

operate. Working with the West Midlands Combined Authority we will roll out a new package of support for city businesses which will help them to transition to the low carbon economy and harness the power of digital innovation.

The city's business base is predominantly comprised of micro and small businesses with up to 15 employees. This can make upskilling existing employees, recruiting new ones to meet skills gaps and understanding future skills needs challenging. We will roll out a programme of support to help businesses with their recruitment and work force planning so we can link more local people and businesses with opportunity.

Going Forward

To deliver against our action areas, we will:

- Build on our city charter and work with employers and other city partners to champion inclusive employment practices to ensure there is a pathway to success for all residents in our city.
- Be the best place in the region to start and grow a business bolstered by a new, first-class employer support service shaped by city businesses.
- Leverage the Wolverhampton Pound's spending power so millions more are spent in our city to create job and business opportunities.
- Support local businesses with workforce recruitment and planning particularly in those sectors which face recruitment and retention challenges.
- Support local companies to upskill and reskill their staff in order to improve productivity, diversify and growth their business.
- Support local people who want to start their own business through our city centre business support hub, IGNITE which offers new business workspace and start up support.
- Launch a new social value policy to leverage maximum return from city investment for local people to generate new jobs and opportunities.

City Indicators

To help shape and inform our key activity under this priority we will monitor the following city indicators.

- Business that survive one year in city
- Businesses that survive five years in the city

Delivering the Strategy

This strategy is a 'living' document and we will regularly review and refresh it to ensure that it continues to reflect the priorities of local people and capture the fast-changing nature of the local economy and impact it is having on the city's residents.

We will use this plan to align service area plans and operational activity with the strategic objectives in our priority areas. It will support decision making and determine how we use the resource we have to deliver the best outcomes, in the most effective and efficient way. We will monitor and closely manage our performance against this plan, use it to drive delivery of our objectives.

Supporting the plan is our corporate performance framework. A set of key indicators aligned to our priority areas informed by national and local data sets. This framework will be reported alongside an update on deliver of this plan to Cabinet on a quarterly basis.

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Wolverhampton Children and Young People's Self-Evaluation 2023-24

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EMMA BENNETT
ALISON HINDS

Executive Director for Families
Deputy Director, Children's Social
Care

Agenda Item No: 7

Our City, Our Plan

Strategic Council Priorities



Children & Families Plan



The City Of Wolverhampton

The City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to having strong families where children grow up well and achieve their potential this is a central component of the Our City Our Plan. There are 264,407 people who live in the City, 63,051 of these are children under the age of 18.

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

Progress
The number of children receiving formal support has incrementally decreased across all areas of Children's Social Care over the last 8 years as a result of our Children's Service Transformation work. In order to achieve this, the Children's Service has embedded its early Intervention offer, and there has been a focus on relational practice making a difference through restorative practice. Additionally, robust management oversight ensures the right children receive the right level of intervention.

Children receiving support as at end of March 2023 (difference from 21/22 year end)

- 501 (-21) Children and young people in care
- 230 (-23) Children who have a Child Protection Plan
- 718 (-24) Children who have a Child in Need Plan
- 163 (-80) Children in Assessment
- 1380 (+341) Children receiving Early Help



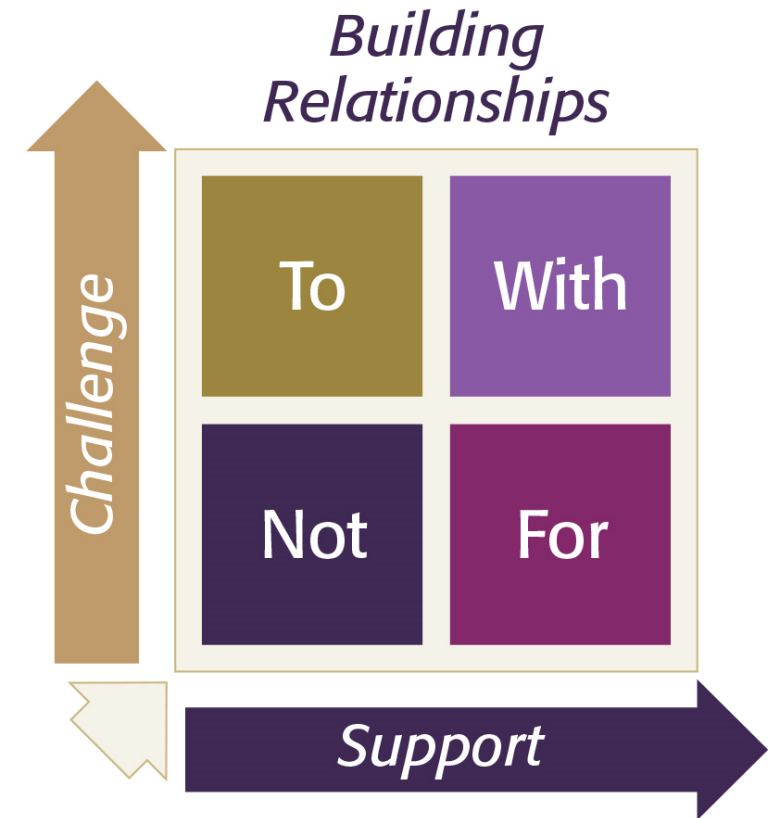
Our Values for Children's Services

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

Our restorative approach is firmly embedded in all our practice. All children's services' practitioners are trained in the approach, and it is being rolled out and embedded across the council and extended to our partners.

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

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



There are good examples of employees using the approach to help family members understand how their actions impact on their loved ones. This has been effective in increasing families' motivation to change.

Our restorative approach to practice will continue to underpin all we do to ensure we deliver consistently high quality effective innovative services to build family strength and resilience and improve opportunity for our children and young people in the city

Where do we demonstrate excellence?



MASH 24 ensures consistency of practice at all times **and families experience the same support regardless of the time**



Work with extra familial harm through the exploitation hub and Power 2 service with young people up to the age of 25, and Creating Safety Project is unique
Ensuring our most vulnerable young people have access to specialist co-ordinated support



Audit and Quality Assurance Framework is strong
demonstrated through the progress in our Aiming for Excellence Plan and evidenced in practice



Accommodation for care leavers including House Project (CYP Now Awards Winner) **offering innovative options for care leavers to have the best transition to adulthood**



Young People's Engagement **ensuring the child's voice is at the centre of everything we do**



Placement Stability better than statistical and national averages
meaning more children living stable lives



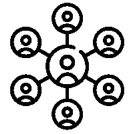
Right service, right level, right time principle which ensures our demand management is good with confident application of thresholds **demonstrated through more children remaining with their families**



Restorative Practice **embedding our culture of doing with families and not to or for families**

How is leadership & management contributing to excellence?

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**Stable,
cohesive
leadership
group**



**Visible and
accessible to
the workforce**



**Drive
innovative
practice**



**Understand
practice at
all levels
which informs
priorities and
practice
development**



**Strong oversight
of performance
management
information**



**Agents for
change
through the
transformation
programme**



Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services, report published: 18 May 2022



Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

Ofsted conducted a short inspection between 21 March and 1 April 2022.

- The outcome offers external reassurance that the needs of children and young people in the city are being met with overall effectiveness graded as Good
- The impact of leaders on social work practice improved from Good to Outstanding
- The experience of children in need and protection improved from Requires Improvement to Good
- The experience of children in care and care leavers remained Good with some outstanding practice in supporting care leavers

Appropriate action has been undertaken and the 5 areas for improvement have been completed

Quality Assurance

Practice weeks take place three times a year with senior and operational managers undertaking "practice conversations" with practitioners, observing practice, obtaining feedback from parents, children /and young people, and carrying out dip samples of records. Workers receive immediate feedback and learning opportunities, and senior managers understand how interventions are experienced by children and families first-hand. It aligns with our restorative practice approach and supports a culture of continual learning, improvement, curiosity, and reflection. Moderation also takes place to check consistency.

As part of our Quality Assurance framework, we triangulate wider service information with our practice week audit activity and incorporate feedback from compliments and complaints, data, and young people and families, as well as linking learning from the safeguarding service, local dip audits and DHRs / CSPRs. This helps us to identify themes and trends and to indicate where quality assurance activity should focus next.

The Aiming for Excellence Plan, (our practice improvement plan), focusses on six key areas where practice is inconsistent, and includes performance measures and information to inform our quality assurance activity. Our practice newsletter and a remedial action tracker is helping to close the feedback loop. The plan is overseen by colleagues across the service at a range of leadership tiers and is integral to our QA process. In January 2023, a full review of the areas on the Excellence Plan identified significant progress in some areas and resulted in a refresh of the plan with new areas identified or a refocus of the existing area, all informed by QA activity and data. The 2023-2024 Aiming for Excellence Plan was relaunched in February 2023.

Aiming for Excellence Plan 2023-2024 - CYP



Findings from QA / practice weeks and a review of the Excellence Plan

Some of our key areas of strength as identified through audit in practice weeks during 2022-2023

- Practitioners know the children and families they work with well.
- Direct work through the establishment of relationships is linked to sustained changes.
- Risk is identified, children are safe, and services are making a positive difference
- Evidence of strengths-based approaches and collaborative working
- Social workers feel they are receiving good, reflective supervision and direction

Evidence of improved practice – identified by the Aiming for Excellence Plan 2022-2023:

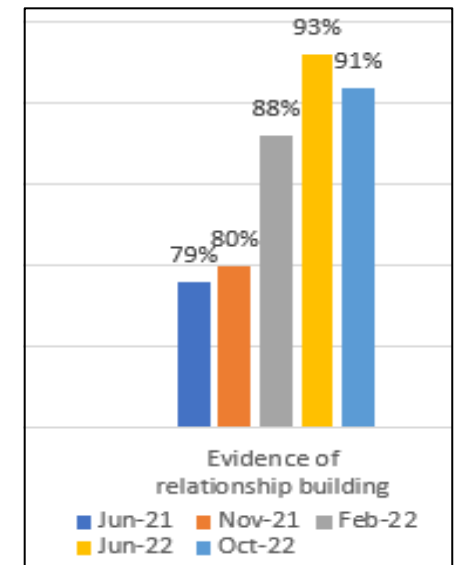
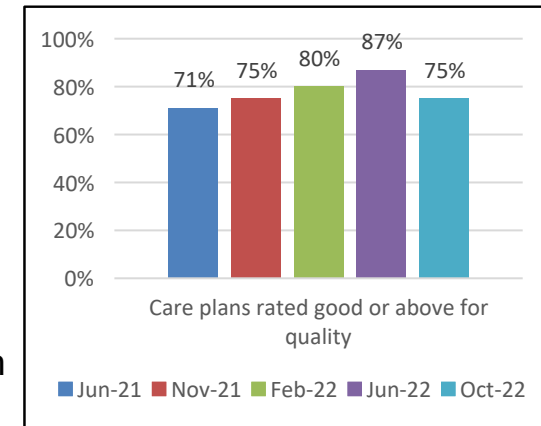
- Meaningful plans that evidence progress is now considered a consistent area of strength, as a result of actions such as refresher workshops on good care planning
- Relationship building and strengths-based practice are now areas of strength, driven by activity led by our Senior Restorative Practice lead, however use of family meetings remain an area for improvement and will be part of actions to unlock the potential of family networks
- Purposeful and succinct recordings and reflection on practice have progressed well with all actions completed. The introduction of writing “to” the child and sessions on good recording has supported this. However, timeliness of recording is a recurrent theme when triangulating data and audit activity. This is largely due to staffing challenges not practice concerns so will be overseen by CYP performance meetings

Areas for further development – identified by the Aiming for Excellence Plan 2022-2023:

- Although direct work and evidence of the voice of the child is consistently strong, the use of life journey work remains an area for further improvement, as well as ensuring assessment tools are integral to analysis, chronologies in particular

New Key Actions include:

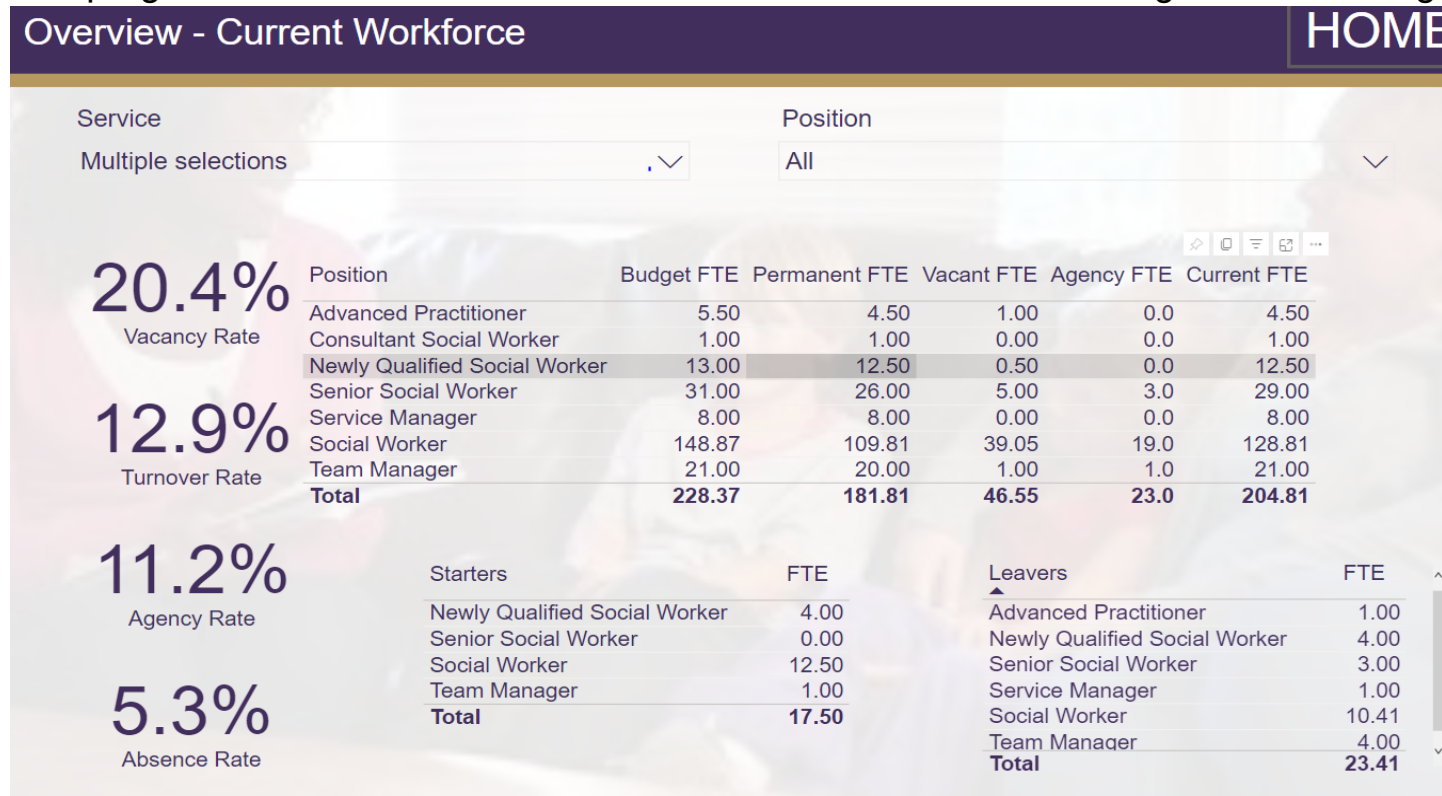
- Working groups to explore barriers/issues in using assessment tools / chronologies and identify solutions
- Review policy around timeframe for family meetings to remove this as a possible barrier
- Review approach to life journey work and how we work with children to understand and be proud of their uniqueness



Workforce

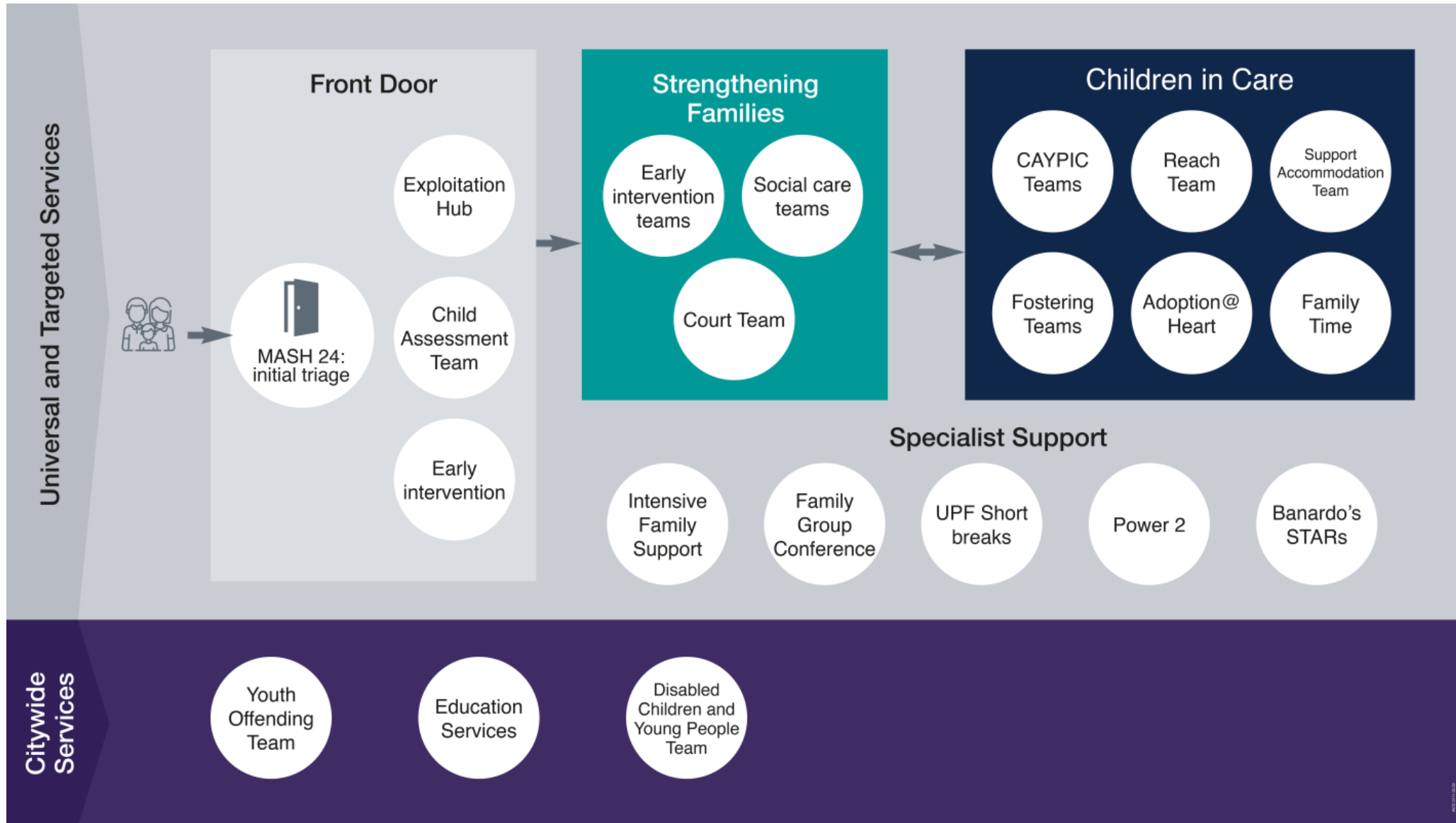
Wolverhampton’s children’s social work vacancy rate now stands at 20.4% which is an increase from the October 2022 figure of 17.2% and is slightly above the 2022 national vacancy rate of 20%, but just below the regional average of 21%. This remains a significant improvement compared to March 2019 when 28% of children’s social work posts locally were unfilled. A number of vacancies in Children’s Services are currently secondments caused by parental leave and additional roles or projects such as the Social Workers in School (SWIS) project. Secondments are opportunities for progression and are therefore an important element of the local retention strategy. Turnover remains lower than national and regional averages and is currently 12.9% (national rate was 17.1% in 2022; 16.4% regionally). The number of true remaining vacancies currently is 20 (excluding the Peripatetic Team). We continue to take a strong approach to recruitment and retention and some additional actions that have taken place in recent months includes rebranding to promote CWC as an employer of choice, agreement to reimburse SWE fees and blue light card, increased number of social work apprenticeships from 2023 and creation of a new progression opportunity (Child Protection Lead Practitioner) to support the Strengthening Families service, where most workforce challenges and vacancies are being experienced. Attendance at a recruitment fair has also resulted in a high number of applications for the current NQSW campaign and we are also putting in place sponsorship to support a number of our final year international students to apply for our ASYE programme as a trial. We have also been successful in converting a number of agency social workers into permanent employees.

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*Data as at 30/03/2023

City of Wolverhampton Children's Service Operating Model



Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub: MASH24

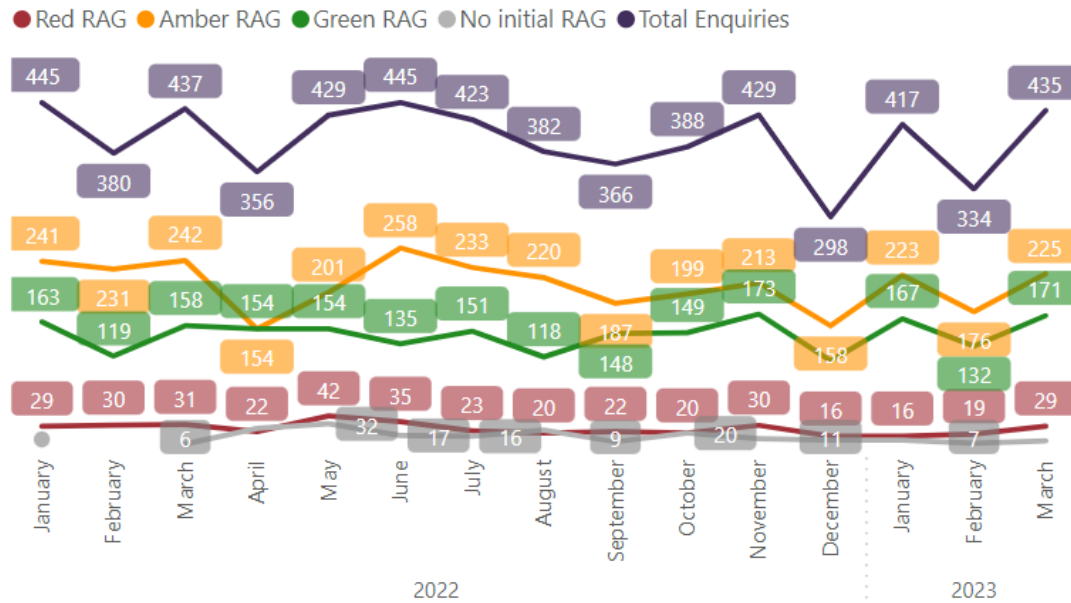
The MASH24 was launched in June 2021 offering consistency of practice and response over 24 hours negating the need for an Emergency Duty team. MASH24 continues to perform well. It consists of Children and Adult Social Care, Early Intervention, Police, Wolverhampton Homes, Recovery Near You, Probation Service, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, Black Country Partnership Foundation Trust and Education representation.

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

MASH have taken steps to become very visible within other agencies to help and discuss the contact process. Visits have been made to health services, including the 0-19 service, midwives, and mental health services. DSL events take place on a quarterly basis, and meetings regularly take place with Wolverhampton Homes, Police and Recovery Near You. This has helped to build positive relationships whereby threshold conversations can happen as required. MASH have been working closely with the Early Intervention teams to help ensure that there is support in place for partner agencies completing the Early Help Assessment to build confidence not only in the computer systems, but also in talking to parents and offering support. Education champions support this practice.

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MASH Enquiries



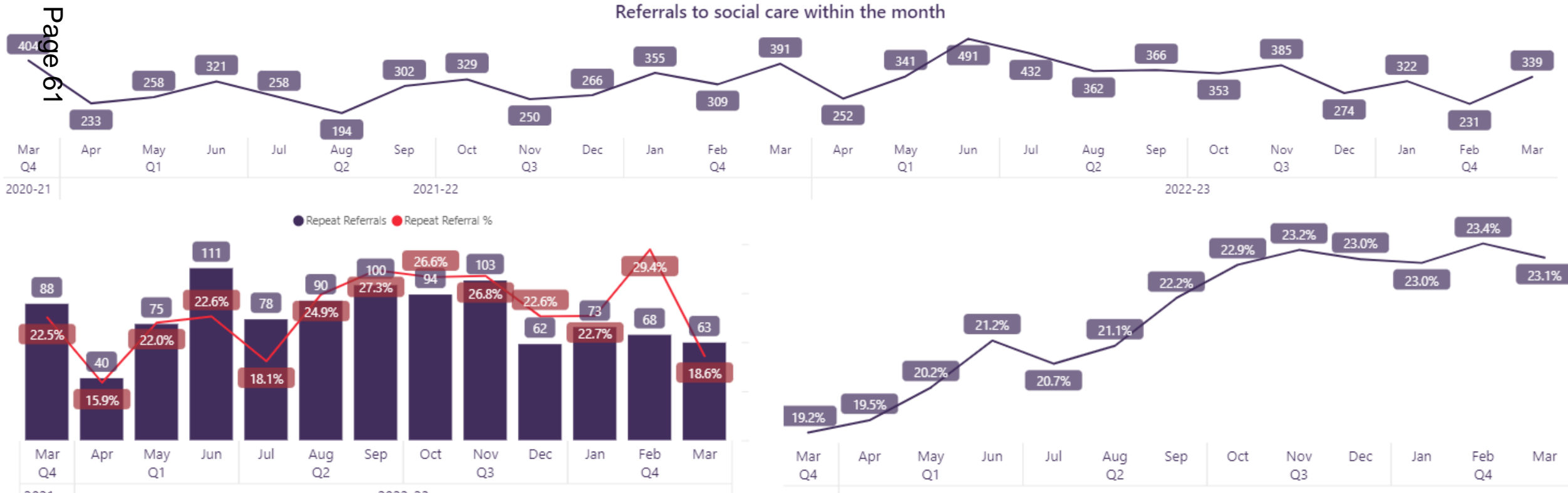
Data for the 2022-23 year shows the number of MASH enquiries ranging from 298 to 445 received within a month. The average number of MASH enquiries received per month for the year is 387.

435 enquiries were received in March 23, remaining consistent with the number of enquiries received in March 22.

Referrals

The referral rate per 10,000 for the last 12 months at the end of March 2023 was 657.9 which is above the latest published figure for our statistical neighbours (608.27), West Midlands (502.70), and England (537.70). The peak in referrals this year occurred in June 2022 with 491 referrals in the month, this is the most referrals received in a month over the last 2 years. We have since seen a reduction in the number of referrals remaining consistent with the number of referrals received in the same period last year. At the end of March 23, the percentage of repeat referrals (rolling 12 month) was 23.1%, a notable increase from the percentage reported for the 21/22 year (19.2%). Statistical neighbours had a re-referral rate of 20.16% and the West Midlands rate is 19.10%.

Action taken: 20% of repeat referrals (July-Sept 2022) were dip sampled. This amounted to 60 dips in total. In terms of findings, across all dips there were no issues found of premature close or poor quality/incomplete work that led to a repeat referral. All families had only one additional cycle of repeat help. There has also been a review of the data sets used as KPI's for repeat referral, this was updated and implemented following February's 2023 CYP performance meeting and had an immediate impact on reduction of % of repeat referral for the month of March. A pilot has also been implemented with revised processes in MASH and strengthening of consent discussions.

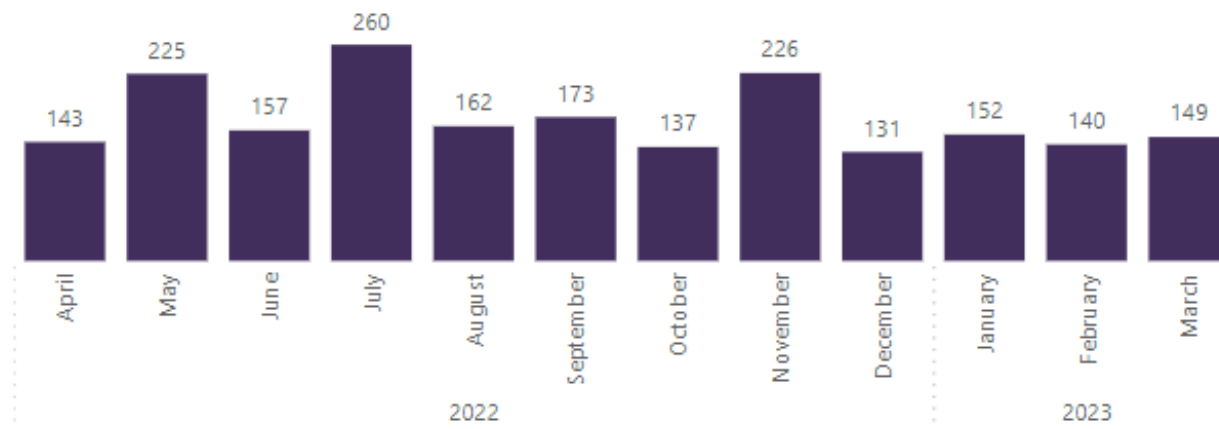


Supporting families through Early Intervention

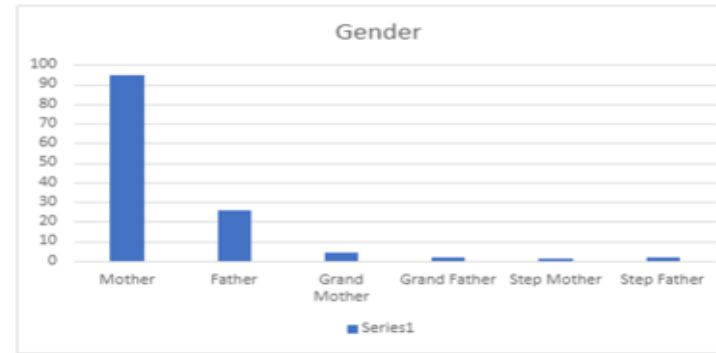
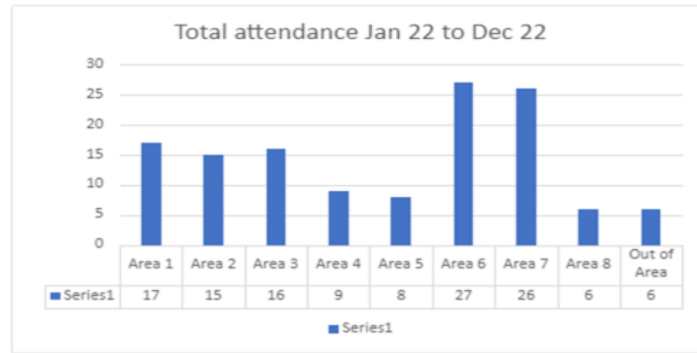
Early Intervention (EI) services are offered through eight locality-based family hubs. At the end of March 2023, 1380 children were being supported by Strengthening Families workers, an increase of 341 when compared to 21/22 year end. Early Intervention is currently working with 180 children that are open to statutory social work services at Child in Need, Child Protection and Public Law Proceedings threshold; providing targeted interventions, direct work with children and young people, supporting victims and child witnesses of Domestic Abuse and addressing 'Supporting Families' factors that are impacting.

Both audit activity and performance data indicate that Strengthening Families workers make a difference. At the end of an intervention and period of working with us most families are closed because sustained progress has been achieved. 4.8% of Early Help closures in the 2022-23 year resulted in a step up to social work locality teams, a reduction in comparison to the 6.5% seen during 2021/22. This demonstrates we are working with families at the right level and early interventions are making a difference to outcomes. 2022/23 has seen an average of 171 referrals to Early Intervention per month, a reduction from the average of 190 seen during 2021/22.

Number of children with completed referrals with outcome 'EI' by month



Early Intervention achievements, building family strength and resilience



- The Journey of Change data chart shows the breakdown of face-to-face attendance and family members across the city.

- The Journey of Change Parenting Programme has been delivered across the city both virtually through our Universal online modules and Targeted face to face offer reaching over 622 families. Data indicates that we are starting to see more extended family members accessing the programme from the previous year.
- To date, we have trained over 20 practitioners in educational establishments to allow them to offer Journey of Change to their parents. In addition, we also now have 4 Family Learning Workers that will help to further embed our offer.
- Our recently launched Parenting Website has seen over 400 families access information and support.
- Our wider parenting offer over the last year has seen the introduction of Reducing Parental Conflict. 47 Professionals have been trained in Level 1 and 2 Reducing Parental Conflict awareness and workshops on the RPC Toolkit. In addition, there have been 5 designated SPOCS who have achieved level 3.
- A Reducing Parental Conflict eLearning module has now been designed and is live for any professional to access on the learning Hub . Further Partnership Training is planned for the year ahead.

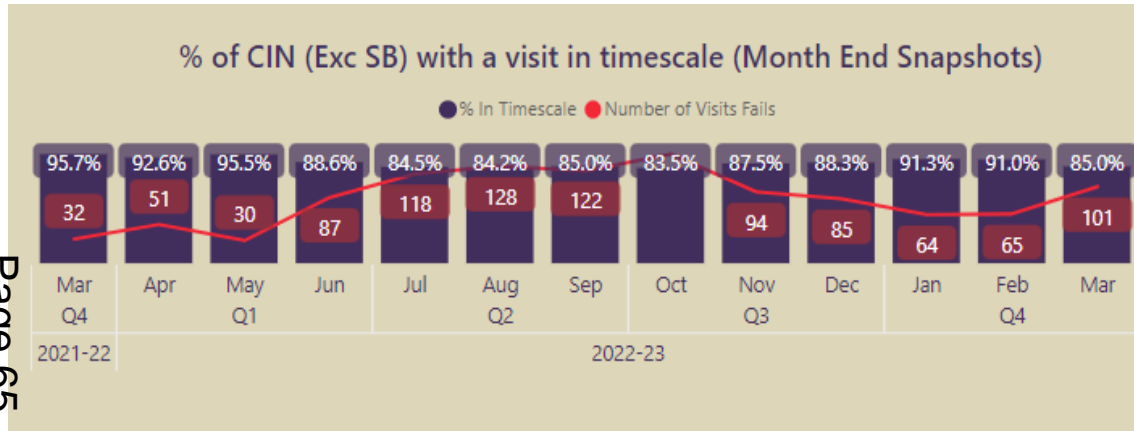
Family Hubs Delivery

- As one of 75 areas in England benefiting from the Government's investment in the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme, Wolverhampton is establishing eight Family Hubs across the city, at the locations of the existing Strengthening Families Hubs, as places of integration for local partners who can develop a shared approach to working with families and their children aged 0–19 years (up to 25 for SEND) – where families can access a range of connected services in the community.
- Low Hill and Dove were launched as Family Hubs site on 9th May 2023 and there are clear opening milestones for a further 5 hubs.
- Core services will be offered from the Hubs that incorporate a first 1001 days pathway- to improve coordination of interdisciplinary services to promote timely access to support for the most vulnerable families. Via Partnership Agreements the following services will be provided; Antenatal/Postnatal Care & Support, New Birth Registrations, Infant Feeding, Child Development Clinics & Support, Perinatal Mental Health Support, Stay & Play Sessions, Parenting Programmes. Additionally, Housing Services, Benefits & Welfare Rights Advice, Positive Activities, Targeted and Specialist Support, Domestic Abuse Support, Adult Education, Financial Wellbeing Services, Young Carer Support and Child Protection Case Conferences will be part of an enhanced offer.
- Revised opening hours and the development of outreach sites and a virtual offer will increase access and availability outside of traditional delivery patterns and bring the voluntary sector in as equal partners.
- Locality Partnership Boards have been established consisting of senior representatives from all local partners – both statutory and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and will identify priorities for the communities underpinned by locality JSNA and intelligence, develop the local offer and evaluate the impact of early help services on outcomes for children and young people.
- Integrated Leadership Teams (ILT) are being developed consisting of operational managers from all key local partner agencies working with families and will operate each of the hubs with the aim of streamlining and developing joint plans and evidence-based practice in response to their understanding of local need.
- Forums for each family hub are in development where parents and carers, young people and other community members will provide feedback and design and develop services to help improve their lives and their community. Parents and carers will be an integral part of each ILT.
- An Organisational Development Lead will work across the partnership to coordinate delivery of a multi-agency, graduated training offer that encompasses an I Thrive approach from signposting through to delivery of research-based programmes and ensures there is a consistent relational approach embedded across all sectors working with children and families.

Working with our Children in Need

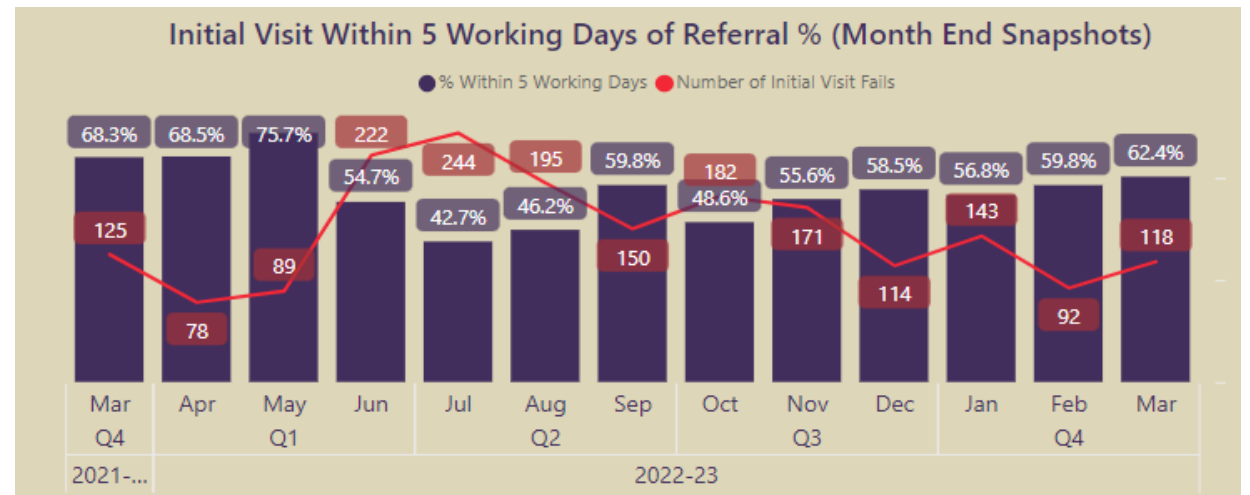
As at the end of March 2023, there were 718 children open as CiN with 85% of children having a visit within the expected timescale, this is a reduction of 10.7% when compared to the percentage seen at the end of March 2022. In Wolverhampton visits are set to take place at a minimum of once a month with some children seen more frequently as per their CiN plan. The service has responded well and ensured that there is a concerted effort to get visits recorded for all children in a timelier way. We are satisfied that children and families are being seen appropriately.

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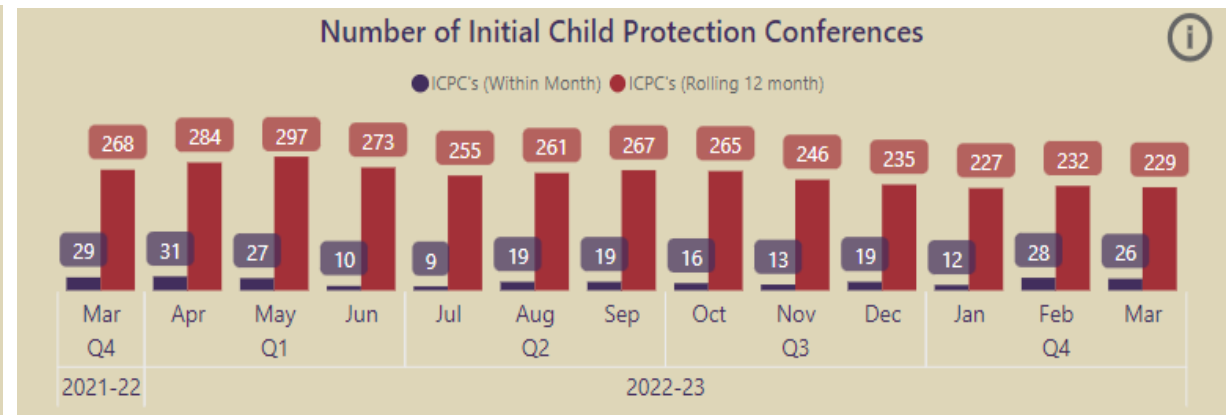
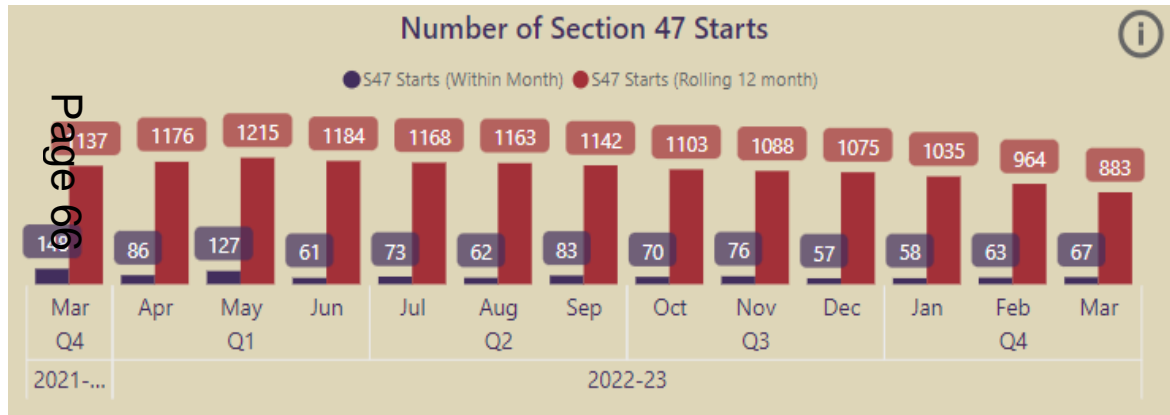
Performance data and QA activity indicates that social workers alongside partners achieve positive outcomes with families through CiN planning. Most CiN plans are closed within 12 months of starting as improvements have been achieved and risks have reduced for children. We have seen a dip in performance with regard to visits in this area and in visits to children subject to CP planning due to social work capacity pressure due to vacancies in Strengthening Families teams. We are confident that this has not impacted on the safety and outcomes for children. For all children where visits are delayed there is rigorous management oversight. For most children the delay is in recording rather than children being seen.

The service believes it is important to see children quickly once a referral has been accepted in order to ensure children are safe and to enable support to be delivered in a timely manner. This reduces the risk of needs and concerns escalating. Performance has been fairly consistent in relation to the number of children who are seen within 5 days of referral over the year and most new children are seen within 7 days. An assessment of their circumstances is usually completed within 10 days and where a CiN plan is required the first meeting is completed within 4 weeks.

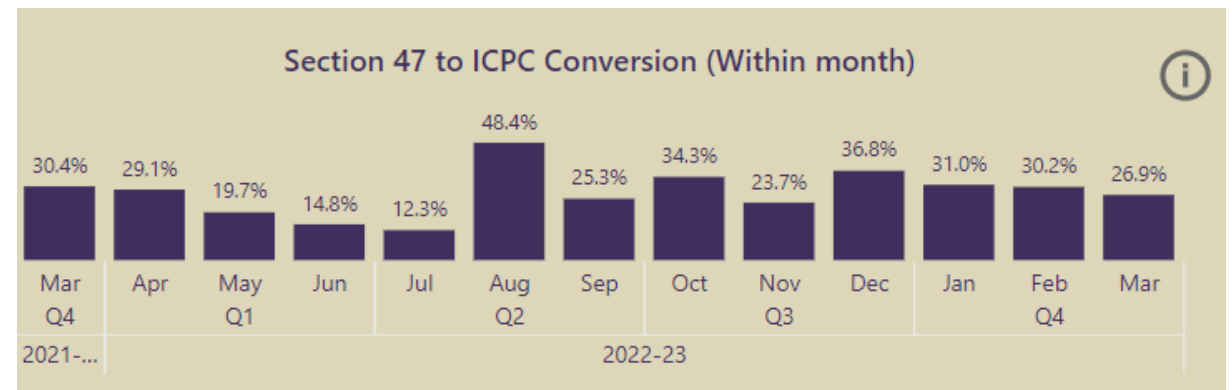


Child Protection Investigations

Where child protection concerns are raised investigations are undertaken in a timely manner and child protection procedures adhered to well. The number of Section 47 investigations in the rolling 12-month period saw a decrease from 1137 at 2021/22-year end to 883 at the end of March 23. We have seen a month-on-month reduction from May 22's figure of 1215, where this was higher than the year end figure for 21/22. 27% of Section 47 enquiries completed within the 2022-23 year resulted in an ICPC. This change in performance is a response to embedding a more restorative approach at our front door, and coincides with a change in manager.



When undertaking a section 47 enquiry social workers can access responsive support services from Early Help, Housing, Drug and Alcohol services, the Exploitation Hub and Domestic Abuse services. As a result, risks have often decreased before the end of the enquiry, negating the need for an ICPC.



Safeguarding our Children in Need of Protection

There were 230 children subject of a child protection plan at the end of March 2023. The safeguarding manager monitors child protection decisions and is confident that threshold is being applied appropriately. The proportion of young people becoming subject of a child protection plan over the rolling 12-month period that are repeats within 2 years has reduced from 9.7% at the end of March 22 to 8.1% at the end March 23. In the main, families are sustaining the changes made whilst children have been subject to child protection planning. The majority of children subject to repeat child protection planning is due to their experience of neglect and/or domestic abuse. A strategic partnership approach to understanding the impact of neglect on children led to the development of the WeCAN toolkit to support the identification of neglect its use is now embedded across the partnership.

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Services such as Intensive Family Support, Power2 (a multi-professional service to support teenagers at risk of multiple factors) and Partnering Families (a health service to support new parents who have previously had children removed from their care) are well utilised and help children to remain safely within their birth families.

At the end of the 2022/23 year, 84.3% of children and young people on a Child Protection plan had a visit in timescale, this is significantly lower than the previous year with 99.6% in timescale at the end of 21/22. Similarly in this area there is a concerted effort being made to ensure recording is being done in a timely way.

Repeat CP ever has reduced from 21.1% to 18.9% and the percentage of repeat CP in the past two years has reduced from 9.7% to 8.1%.

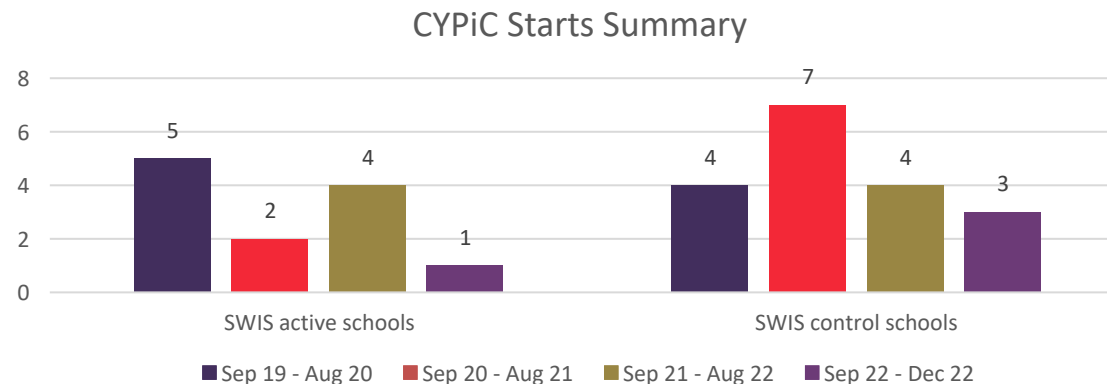


Working with schools to support children and their families at the earliest opportunity

The Wolverhampton Social Workers in Schools (SWIS) project started in November 20 funded by Department for Education (DfE) is part of a larger scale evaluation (21 local authorities and around 300 schools across England).

CYPiC Starts Summary

Cohort	Sep 19 - Aug 20	Sep 20 - Aug 21	Sep 21 - Aug 22	Sep 22 - Dec 22
SWIS active schools	5	2	4	1
SWIS control schools	4	7	4	3



Five social workers are based within the school environment of five active schools to develop early relationships and a partnership approach with school staff, young people and their families. Overtime this involvement has grown to include wider community by implementing the resilience pathway

The social workers work with young people supported by Child in Need, Child Protection planning and in assessment. Social workers complete the majority of Section 47's and start working with families from initial point of referral. However, their knowledge of the school and existing family relationships often enables them to hold informal discussions before any referral is made, and where necessary signpost to early help or community services if appropriate.

The SWIS team have been able to work closely with children and families and other professionals to help families improve their circumstances and reduce concerns about children's wellbeing and safety. This has also enabled social workers to gain insight into how schools operate and the structures that govern them as well as enabling schools to gain an understanding of social care thresholds and criteria.

Feedback from all schools is very positive, with one Head Teacher saying that she can't imagine not having a social worker, and another saying that he would like more than one. Schools have reported a greater understanding of the social work role and feel that communication is much better. Schools have benefited from joint training opportunities and participating in solution circles with social workers and strengthening families workers. School have been able to develop their early help offer further and are feeling more equipped to support children and young people at the earliest opportunity.

Training to up skill school staff delivered by the SWIS project has included Restorative practice, exploitation, equalities, getting it right and trauma informed practice.

Workshops for young people include sessions about healthy relationships, social media, harmful sexual behaviour, resilience and self-esteem ,and emotional wellbeing. This has been supported by micro-commissioning initiatives.

Our partnership approach to tackling violence and exploitation

In order to improve how we work together to identify and protect young people at risk of or experiencing exploitation in all its forms, we have redesigned our whole system to ensure that support is joined-up and effective. This has included a revised threshold document to clearly identify the extra familial risks associated with exploitation and an updated exploitation screening tool to ensure it supports the identification of all forms of exploitation. Training via a suite of online modules is also available to all staff across the safeguarding partnership.

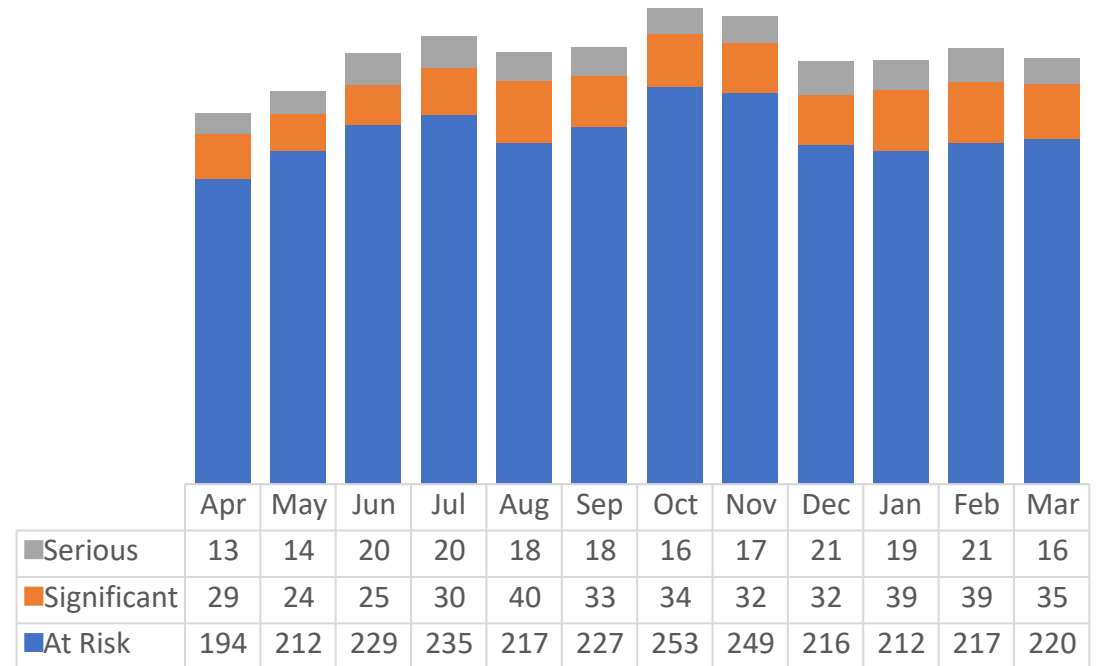
We deliver a strong effective all age Partnership Missing and Exploitation Hub. All referrals supported by a completed screening tool are risk assessed within the MASH, including information and intelligence from the Partnership Missing and Exploitation Hub. All young people identified at risk (even where risks are low) receive support from either Early Intervention or Social Care. Daily partnership briefings are being held to discuss all young people and vulnerable adults at risk of exploitation.

Positive impact since the launch of the Partnership Missing and Exploitation Hub :

- Daily briefings are attended by Police, Children and Adult social care, YOT, Missing Return Officer, Early Intervention, Education, Community Safety Partnership, Health and the Violence Reduction Unit, third sector
- In 2022/23, 3504 discussions have taken place, 402 screening tools have been completed for children and 68 for adults, all seeing an increase from 2021/22 where there were 3137 discussions and 352 screening tools for children and 28 for adults.
- Review of missing young people is embedded into the daily briefings leading to more effective disruption
- Timely response to concerns from a wide range of professionals
- Co-ordinated information sharing/ intelligence gathering – developing a profile of activity across the city to inform prevention and disruption activity

Our Response to Exploitation

- The Partnership Missing and Exploitation Hub has resulted in an enhanced co-ordinated response to all forms of exploitation. There has been an increase in the identification of those at risk since 2021. This is because of increased awareness and better co-ordination across the partnership. The identification of adults at risk of exploitation has also increased, with more multi-agency exploitation screening tools being completed and resulting in Adult exploitation meetings.
- At the end of March 2023, the breakdown of types of exploitation young people are known to be at risk of/involved with include: 137 Child Sexual exploitation (CSE), 140 Child Criminal Exploitation/Gangs (CCE), 27 county Lines (CL) and 11 Modern Slavery (MS) – *young people can experience more than one type of exploitation.*
- In total there were 51 people open to MACE/Adult Exploitation meetings at the end of March 2023 ,40 young people and 11 adults.
- Emerging operational themes and areas of concern are escalated to the Child Exploitation and Missing Operational Group (CEMOG) and exploitation remains a priority for the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Partnership.



Supporting our Vulnerable Adolescents at Risk of Exploitation

The Power2 team work with young people at risk of exploitation and engaged in high risk-taking behaviours. The team is multi-disciplinary with social workers (children and adults), speech and language therapist, educational psychologist, substance misuse worker, play/ drama therapist and keyworker support commissioned from the voluntary sector. Young people and their families receive an intensive service for 6-12 months, using trauma informed practice to take adverse childhood experiences into account (ACEs).

Power2 work with :

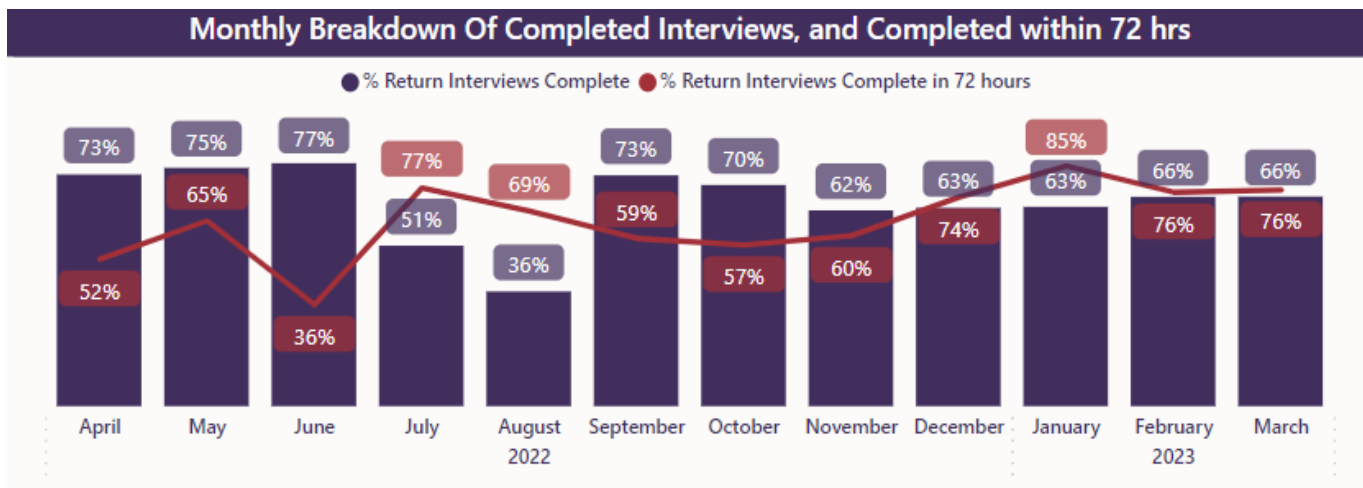
- Young people aged between 11 and 25 years of age who are at risk of exploitation;
- Young people where there is current or recent escalation in high risk-taking behaviours;
- Young people where there has been support and interventions implemented to decrease risk, which have not proved effective;
- Young people transitioning into adulthood who would not ordinarily meet the adult social care criteria for support.

Positive outcomes:

- Reduction in CSE risk
- Reduction in number/ length of missing episodes
- Step down from child protection to child in need
- No further offending behaviour
- Re-engagement in education, employment or training
- Reduction in self harm
- Improved mental health



Our response to children who are missing



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

Across the year the number of missing incidents peaked in October and November 2022 reaching 130 incidents in November, however this figure dropped in the following month to 69 where it remained consistent to the level seen throughout most of the year. The average missing incident per month 2022/23 is 82 which is higher than the average number of missing incidents for 2021/22 which was 71 per month. All missing episodes are now discussed in the daily briefing.



The number of missing episodes followed up with a missing return interview is monitored on a monthly basis. Whilst not all of these are completed within the 72 hour timescale, there remains a commitment to always persist in engaging with young people. Due to the consistently higher number of missing episodes, we have added additional resource to support work around missing and focus on increasing the number of return interviews completed within 72 hours. This additional resource has been in place by October 2022 ensuring more children who have had a missing episode are seen within 72.

Strengthening families through specialist support services

The Specialist Support service continues to enable children to remain safely at home through a range of services that help families repair relationships, find solutions to the issues that are affecting children, develop safe, effective boundaries and support parents and carers to make significant lifestyle changes. The service focuses on good quality direct interventions with the City's most vulnerable children and families.

The service offer includes:

- Intensive Family Support, provided by strengthening family workers
- Families Working Together team that promotes family meetings, family group conferencing and mediation
- Short break offer which forms part of our early intervention and edge of care offer.

Sustained Outcomes 12 months after intervention

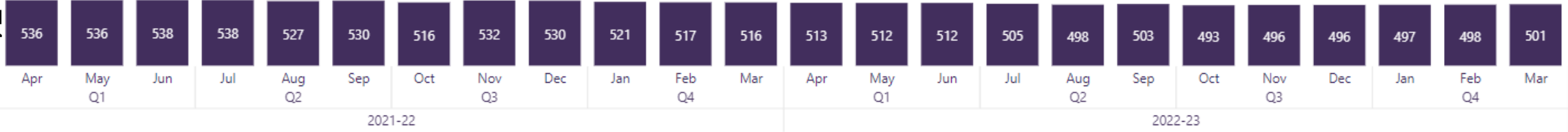
A key aim of specialist support is to provide sustained outcomes for families on the edge of care, prevent re-referrals and family and or placement breakdowns. By tracking social care status (across Specialist Support services) after support/work is completed this shows that 81% of young people's social care status had either stepped down/closed/improved (58%) or remained the same (23%) after 12 months.

Children and Young People in Care

There is a clear vision that is shared across the Children and Young People in Care(CYPIC) service which is focused on achieving permanence and stability for children. There is now greater emphasis on tackling issues within the family unit and offering support at an earlier stage, preventing the need for children and young people to enter care. This work, together with the co-location of early intervention and statutory social work teams and the introduction of a relational and strength-based practice framework has contributed to year-on-year reductions in the number of children in care. The total number of CYPIC at the end of March 2023 is 501, 79.5 per 10,000 (0-17 population), which has reduced from 522 CYPiC (82.8 per 10,000) at the end of March 2022.

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Number of Children and Young People in Care (Month End Snapshots)

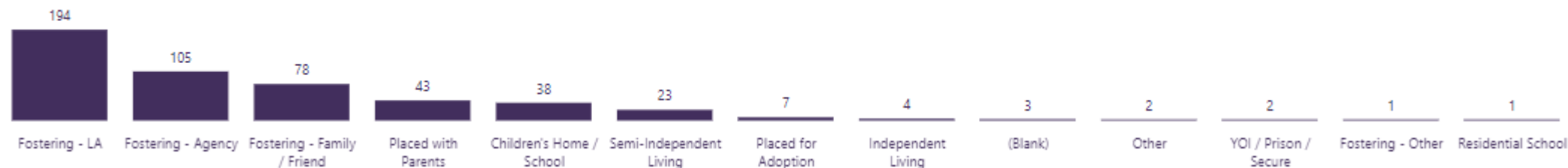


Robust decision-making processes are in place to ensure that when children cannot be cared for at home, their entry into care is planned appropriately ensuring there is a care plan in place that focuses on achieving early permanence in a timely manner. The effectiveness of care planning had been evidenced by good timeliness in proceedings and improved timeliness for children with a plan of adoption.

Stability for our Children and Young People in Care

In Wolverhampton we believe that wherever possible children should live with families in or close to our city. The Family Values project focussed on increasing the number of internal fostering households, and improving the offer of support to increase the retention of foster parents.

Placement Breakdown for Children & Young People in Care



In 2022/2023, 18 new foster parents were approved, 6 of these were family and friends and 12 mainstream foster parents, however, Wolverhampton saw an overall net loss of 13 carers with a number of long standing foster parents retiring from the role.

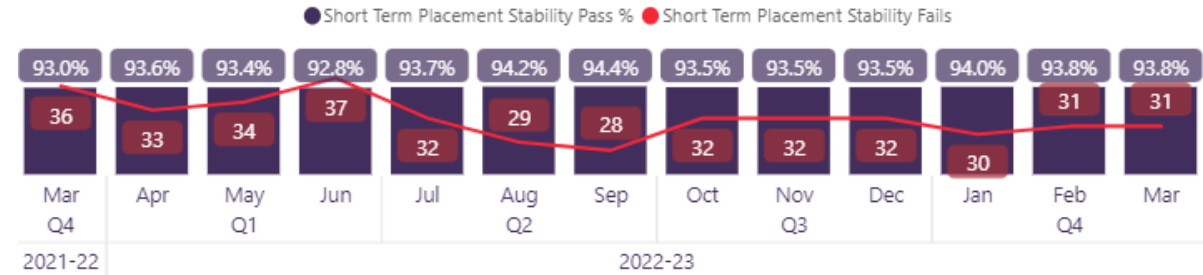
The gap between internal and agency placements has continued to grow over the past 12 months. Currently, Wolverhampton has 89 more internal placements than agency. This is the widest gap seen throughout the year. At the end of March 23, there were 378 children placed in foster homes with 78 of these children placed with family and friends. This position supports our priority to enable more children to live within a family environment close to home.

Supporting our foster parents to provide stable placements enabling positive outcomes for children and young people in care

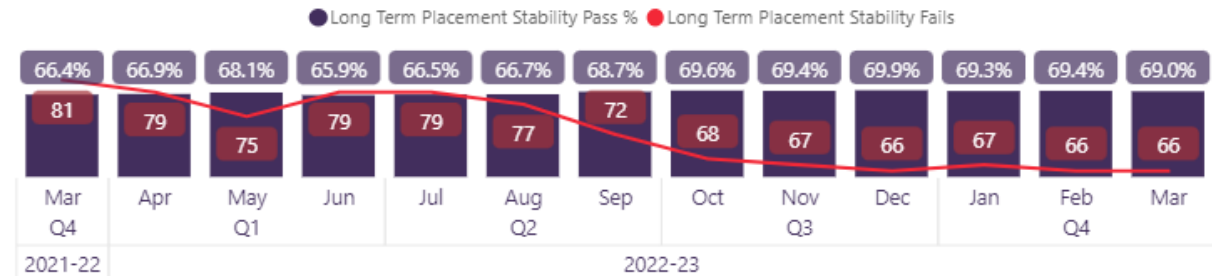
Placement stability percentages remain higher than regional, statistical neighbours and national averages. The table below shows the latest published comparator data:

Area	Long Term Placement Stability	Short Term Placement Stability
Wolverhampton	75.0%	94.0%
West Midlands	71.0%	91.0%
Statistical Neighbours	70.6%	90.7%
England	71.0%	90.0%

% of CYPIC with less than 3 placements in the last 12 months



% of CYPIC living in same placement for at least 2 years



. In order to achieve even better placement stability, plans include:

- Fostering Families United - Foster parents work together in small teams supported by their supervising social worker.
- A therapeutic training programme delivered to all foster parents.
- Fostering social workers have also all been trained in this model to ensure consistency of support, advice and consultation. The training is now being delivered to children’s social workers in order that this consistent approach to parenting can be embedded across the service. Regular support sessions continue to take place for foster parents and staff to discuss and reflect on their experiences.

Achieving permanence through adoption

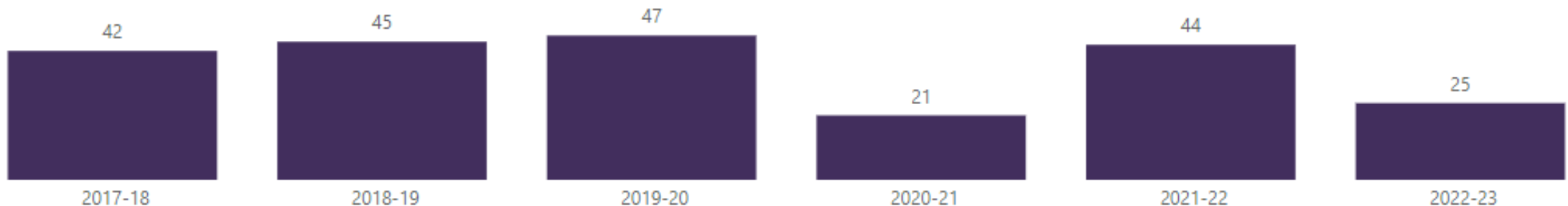
Adoption@Heart (A@H) enables adoption services delivered through our strong partnership approach, across the Black Country

Timeliness in 2022/2023 has improved across the groups. A1 has decreased to 509 days from 514 at the end of March 22. A10 has decreased from 514 to 508 days and A2 has also decreased to 184 from 189 days at the end of March 22, although all still remain above target.

Wolverhampton continues to be appropriately optimistic when planning for adoption for children who are unable to live with their birth family. This includes children who may be regarded as harder to place and hence may take longer to identify a suitable adoptive family.

A reduction in Adoption Orders granted in 2020/21 was a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure and backlog in the courts. 25 adoption orders have been granted in 2022/23 at the end of March compared to 44 last year. There have been 9 children placed with their adopters, at same point in 2021/22 a total of 36 children had been placed. We are working closely with A@H to ensure children are matched and placed in a timelier way to increase the number of children placed through interagency placements if required.

Number of Adoptions



A@H has approved 42 adopters across 2022/23. There are a further 87 families in the process of stage 1 and 51 families currently in stage 2, plus an additional 26 approved and available to be linked with a child.

Achieving good health and wellbeing for our children and young people in care

Physical Health

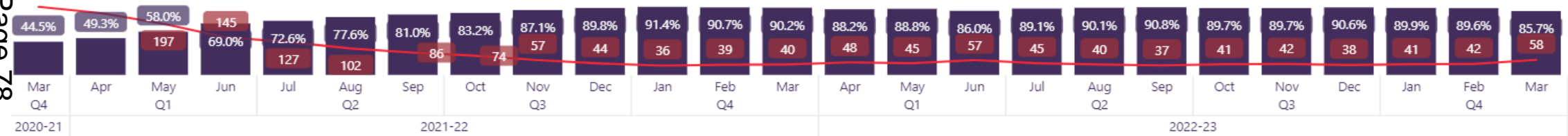
The health and wellbeing of CYPiC is a priority. All new children into care have Health Passport.

In 22/23, the proportion of children in care with a dental check in timescale reached 90.8% in September 22 and has remained consistent throughout the remainder of the 22/23 year. The proportion of children in care with a review health assessment in timescale has increased to over 90% in Q4, with a reduction in the number of fails from the start of the 22/23 year.

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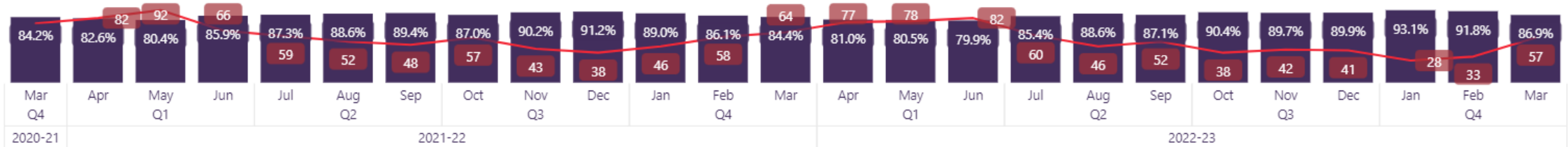
% of CYPiC with a dental in timescale (Month End Snapshots)

● % In Timescale ● Dental Fails



% of CYPiC with a review health assessment in timescale (Month End Snapshots)

● % In Timescale ● Review Health Fails



All CYPiC have health assessments unless they have refused to attend. We continue to work closely with health colleagues to ensure we have strong systems in place to avoid delay in completion. Further work continues to help us improve timeliness of initial health assessments.

Supporting Good Emotional Health and Wellbeing for Children and Young People in Care

At the end of March 2022, the average SDQ score for Wolverhampton was 13.7, seeing an improvement on the average score for the previous year. This score is considered 'normal' and shows Wolverhampton positively in comparison to statistical and national comparators and evidences yearly improvement since 2016. For 2020/21 Wolverhampton was ranked as the 54th best performing authority for this indicator. This helps us to understand and meet the needs of all our children and young people in care.

Emotional and Behavioural Wellbeing - SDQ average scores	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Wolverhampton	14.4	13.7	13.7	13.4	13.4	13.7
West Midlands	13.9	13.7	14.3	14.2	13.3	13.3
Statistical Neighbours	14.26	14.3	14.7	14.5	14.0	14.0
England	14.1	14.2	14.2	14.1	13.7	13.8

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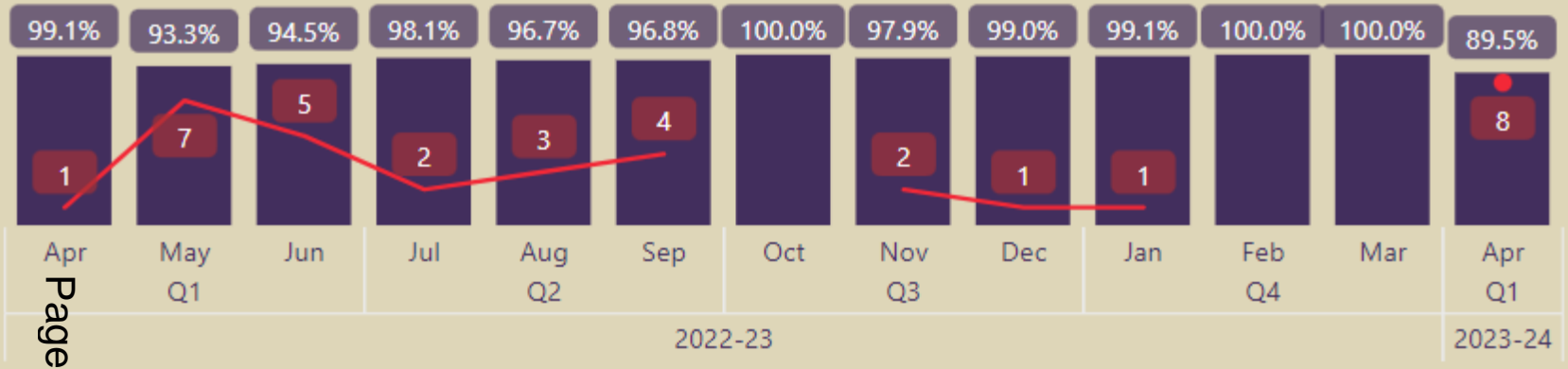
Access to emotional health and wellbeing services is one of our Care Leavers Independent Collective's priorities for 2022/23, to ensure young people are equipped with skills to cope with adversity and to engage with available support. As such our Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-25 makes commitments to support CYPIC and Care Leavers' health and emotional well-being and resilience. We have recently agreed to commission "Ask Jan" an emotional wellbeing offer and App for Care Leavers 19 and above. CYPIC and Care Leavers up to the age of 19 have access to Kooth.

A commissioned family therapeutic service to support the specialist therapeutic needs of children young people and their families is in place . This service not only strengthens the support to children and families to enable them to continue living together but also offers therapeutic services to children in care and care leavers. The service has been operational since May 2021 and complements the services offered by the universal emotional wellbeing services and CAMHS.

Working with Children and Young People in Care to Achieve positive Outcomes

Review Participation % (Reviews taken place in month)

● Pass % ● Number of review participation fails



There is strong evidence of children contributing to their plans and participating in their Children and Young People in Care reviews. Children participate in their review by either speaking for themselves or chairing their own review.

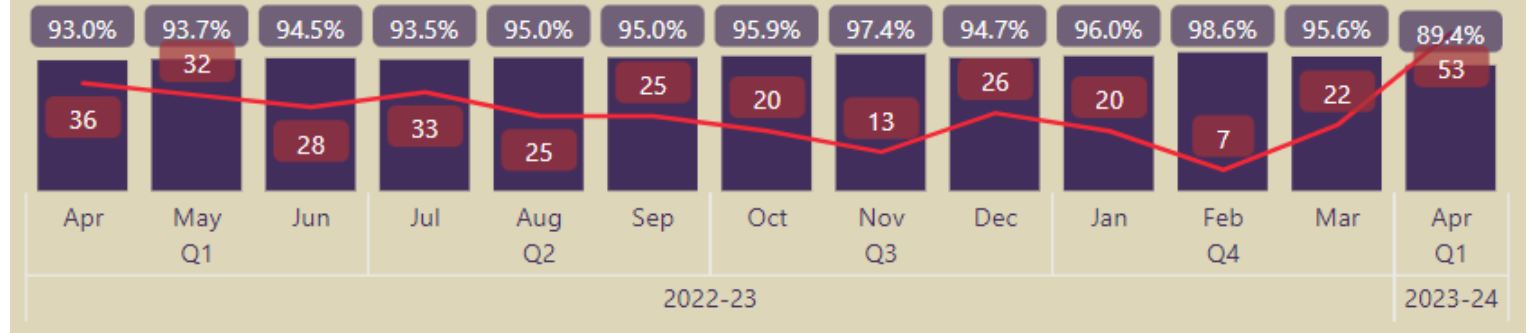
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Social work visits to Children and Young People in Care fulfil a range of critical roles and functions not least to build and maintain relationships with children but also to enable the child's circumstances to be observed and monitored. Visits are carried out at least once every 6 weeks or once every 12 weeks in a stable placement.

During the year the vast majority of children received visits from their social workers within statutory timescales. Audits have continued to identify evidence of excellent relationship building and direct work, also noted by Ofsted.

% of CaYPIC with a visit in timescale (Month End Snapshots)

● % In Timescale ● Number of Visits Fails

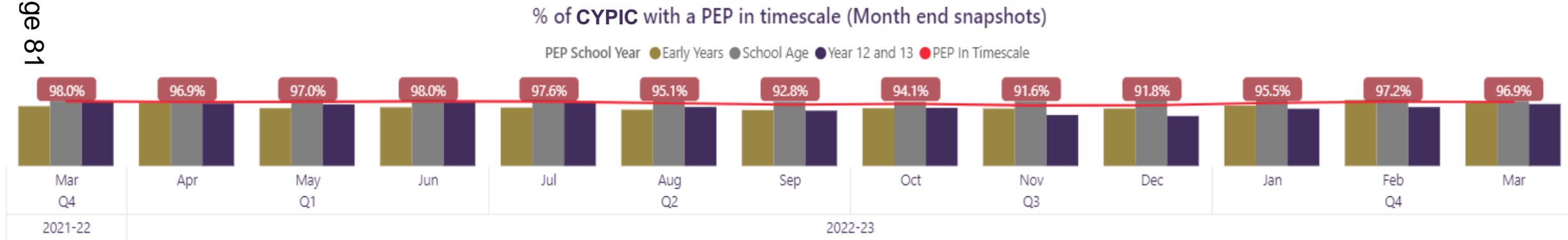


Impact of our work with Children and Young People in Care

The work undertaken by social workers alongside the Virtual School and other professionals, as well as strategic activity is contributing to improved education and employment outcomes for children and young people. At GCSE, 19% of eligible children in the cohort achieved grade 4 or above in both English and Maths in 2022. While not as high as it was in 2020 and 2021 (when pupils were not required to sit exams), it is higher than the two previous years. No children and young people in care were permanently excluded from school in 2021-22, and suspensions have significantly reduced for this cohort.

Nine Wolverhampton care leavers graduated from university in 2022, six of whom achieved a 2:1 honours degree, while seven started university courses. 25 of our Care Leavers currently attend university with a further 2 taking a break from studies for a year due to becoming new parents. The number of care leavers accessing university has increased year on year.

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The pupil premium is used effectively to ensure children are achieving well. Personal Education Plans (PEP's) completion rates are high, and the Eclipse Electronic PEP is supporting a detailed understanding of progress that children are making in schools as well as identifying areas that require additional support.

Extension to the role of the virtual school head

Utilising funding allocated for this purpose to increase staffing – a restructure of virtual school management and a new dedicated school improvement advisor (SIA) for children with a social worker. Key developments in this area include:

- Close partnerships between Education/the Virtual School and Children’s Social Care are resulting in focussed support and intervention for children with CIN and CP plans. The SIA sits on the secondary Inclusion Support & Alternative Provision Panel. Although the SIA role is essentially strategic and advisory, over 40 young people have been referred for 1:1 advice and guidance
- Data on school attendance, as well as SEND, is now produced and reviewed on a monthly basis for this cohort and shared with social work teams. Exclusions data is currently being added to the report
- The SIA has worked with Independent Reviewing Officers to review CIN and CP plans and identify additional questions to be asked of colleagues in schools during case conferences, to give a true reflection of the child’s current school experience and progress
- Schools educating the highest proportions of vulnerable children have been identified, using the council’s vulnerability matrix, and support is being offered to over 35 primary, secondary special school and PRUs : trauma and attachment training, signposting to specialist programmes through partner agencies such as VRU, and advice on individual cases. Training on meeting the educational needs of children with a social worker has been delivered to school governors, early career teachers, new head teachers, SENCOs, designated safeguarding leads and designated teachers in schools
- Schools have been supported to review their trauma-informed practice using a detailed audit tool and 20 schools now have action plans with clear targets in this area. Several schools (approx.15) have set the development of their trauma-informed practices as a school priority and committed to accessing whole school training in this area from either the Virtual School or other partner organisations

Growing our EET Team

It was recognised that some vulnerable groups would benefit from more bespoke support and coordination, to help them into positive education, employment, training (EET) destinations. Therefore, we have created two SEND EET advisors and one EET Advisor for children who are, or have been subject to, CIN or CP planning. The advisors all started in their new positions in April 2023 and are utilising the council’s vulnerability matrix to identify young people who are in need of a more targeted support. Now part of the Virtual School Team, under the line-management of the EET Coordinator for Children and Young People in Care, they are working closely with the school improvement advisor for children with a social worker, Connexions, schools and other key partners. Data reports have been created to give greater understanding of the size and characteristics of each cohort.

In addition to this identified cohort, referrals will be received from Connexions, SENSTART and social care, for young people experiencing complex barriers to EET and who require additional support.

Supporting positive outcomes for Care Leavers

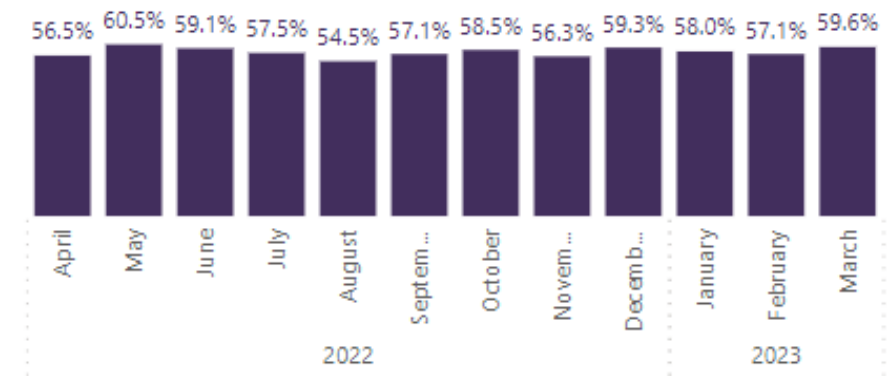
Social workers, young people's advisors, family support workers, CYPiC mentors, housing support workers, and an education, employment and training (EET) co-ordinator, EET advisor and 2 care experienced apprentices facilitate excellent joint working arrangements to support young people into independence. Young people are aware of their entitlements as detailed in the Local Offer for Care Leavers - Reach. Key information leaflets and booklets are incorporated into a post-16 independence pack, and the information is on the care leavers' Facebook page and CYPiC website. The teams are committed to increasing partnership working with young people and empowering them to develop confidence and achieve their aspirations; this has been enhanced this year with the launch of the capacity to co-produce pathway plans with young people within Eclipse. The Reach Offer has been revised and improved to increase support to care leavers evidencing strong relationships across the council and with partner agencies.

In our recent Ofsted inspection services to care leavers were described as outstanding.

The majority of our care leavers are remaining open to us post 21 as young people want to benefit from ongoing support from their YPA. We have expanded the number of YPA's to reflect this and expanded to two teams.

Engagement in a variety of EET opportunities available is given a high priority within the service. Young people have priority interviews for apprenticeships within the council and now care leavers can apply at the internal application stage. The offer of apprenticeships has now been extended for those up to 25 years of age. The council offers 10 inclusive apprenticeship opportunities and is working towards an employment pathway framework and supported internships. There is also a work experience pathway in place for care leavers aged 18 to 25 within the council. The number of apprenticeships within CYPiC Service has increased from two to five over the last two years and senior managers have committed to continue to increase this number across Children's Services. In addition, Reconomy, our House Project private company partner, offer five apprenticeship positions for care leavers. The proportion of Care Leavers in EET at the end of March 23 is 59.6%, remaining consistent with the percentage seen at the same point last year.

Care Leavers in EET (19-21 yrs)



Housing options to support children in care and care leavers

Care leavers have a choice of accommodation provision including; Supported accommodation provision managed by Green Square Accord Housing, Wolverhampton Homes accommodation supported by our own Housing Support Service, Staying Put (over 18), Independent Accommodation (over 18) and local quality assured and monitored Supported Accommodation provisions. Additionally, up to 10 young people per year are supported into their own accommodation by our Local House Project.

The Housing Support Service has access to up to 33 Wolverhampton Homes flats, 2 crash pads and 2 training flats. Each young person has a designated housing support worker (HSW) who remains with them throughout their time in the service. Support hours vary, with a maximum of 30 hours per week, as the young person progresses, the number of hours decrease. The HSW draws up an individual support plan for each young person.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, 5 young people have moved into independent living, all of which are still maintaining their tenancy 6 months on. We currently have 7 UASC's living in our Housing Support Service. The service has seen an increase in young people accessing the service with 13 moving into the service during the same period. 27 young people have been part of the House Project with 17 now living independently and 10 living in accommodation appropriate to their needs. Our Cohort 5 is well underway with 8 young people in attendance.

Our Supported Lodgings Service has 3 hosts. There are currently 36 (an increase from 30 in September 2022) young people in Staying Put, with a further 3 already agreed and 5 being considered. This is lower than previous, but this is due to the agreements running to their natural end and young people moving into their own accommodation or remaining with their Staying Put Carers. From April 2022 to present, there have been 77 referrals for Mentoring Support.

Due to this wide-ranging offer of accommodation options the percentage of young people in suitable accommodation is at 93%



THE
HOUSE PROJECT
Wolverhampton

Support for our UASC

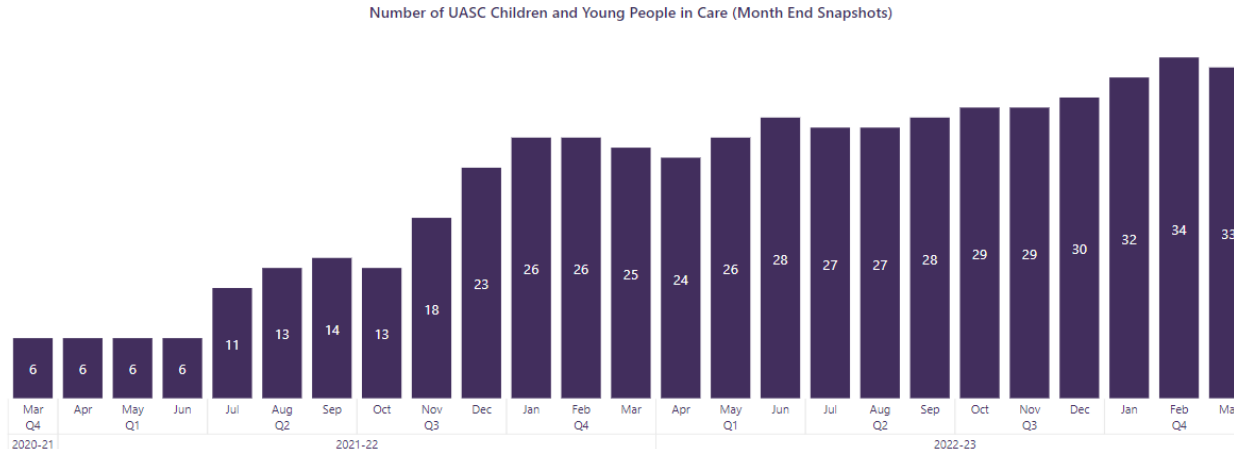
As of end of March 2023, we now support 33 UASC who are CYPiC and 28 UASC care leavers. This has increased from the end of the previous year where we were supporting 25 UASC CYPiC and 22 Care leavers

The Royal Wolverhampton School is a free school with additional boarding facilities and has worked with 13 UASC since 2015, having supported three UASC to transition to University. The Royal is a diverse and multi-racial school serving both the city of Wolverhampton and local areas and international countries. The Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC) work in close partnership with the Royal School. Where possible and appropriate, we place our young people at this school

Monthly UASC Health and Wellbeing panel, chaired by CYPiC Service Manager and consists of the RMC, Senior social worker, CAMHS and CYPiC named nurses. The panel reviews the health and wellbeing needs of all UASC. We have developed a UASC training package for all social workers Four sessions have been delivered this year. Coram have also commissioned age assessment training and Wolverhampton social workers are routinely attending so we can increase our pool of social workers who are age-assessed trained. Social worker and YPA's regularly attend UASC training via the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership to help support their knowledge and expertise

We have a UASC champion who sits within the Reach leaving care team as a Young Person Advisor (YPA). We have also funded an additional YPA post from UASC funding ,to support with securing immigration status for our young people. In addition the Grand Mentor scheme extends to our UASC

The Refugee & Migrant Centre provide invaluable support to our young people as a universal service but additionally have provided case work, mentoring, legal advice and support, ESOL courses, group work and support our UASC with everyday living, education, health and wellbeing and immigration advice and support



Our strong corporate parenting approach

The Council believes it is important to invest in children and young people in care - the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leaver Independent Collective (CLIC) have co-produced our Corporate Parenting Strategy (March 2022). The implementation of the strategy is supported by the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board (CPPB) chaired by the Council's Deputy Chief Executive. The CiCC and CLIC both produce an annual survey, the outcomes of which are used to inform the Corporate Parenting Action plan.

Some of our significant achievements that we have worked on with children in care and care leavers this year include:

- Effective utilisation of the Oasis Co-Production Hub including the launch of the Reach Café, allowing care leavers a weekly safe space to drop in, meet with staff and get a variety of support options available to them
- Continue to promote and extend the reach of our Total Respect training to ensure effective training is provided to new internal staff, Councillors, and partner agencies
- Achieved in conjunction with the Black Country ICB “Free Prescriptions” Offer for care leavers in the city and a dedicated transitions nurse
- A range of bespoke work experience opportunities within the local authority and wider partnerships are supported through our internal system and through the CPPB
- An active and well attended Care Leavers Week, 24th October – 28th October 2022 where a total of 12 activities took place across the City. A total of 63 young people took part, with over 100 attendances at activities across the week. One of the highest attendances recorded for City of Wolverhampton Council
- Christmas 2022 saw the development of the first Amazon Wish List . Over 700 donations of presents, gifts, food and gift vouchers were received in one of the biggest donations ever seen in Wolverhampton
- The I Awards took place on January 27th 2023, with over 450 nominations received. The event was sponsored by Local Businesses and Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Members

Participation and co-production with our Children in Care Council and Care leavers Forum

Achievements for CiCC in 2022/23 include:

- Presented Total Respect at the wider Inclusion conference
- Planning the co-produced annual I Awards for 2023
- Presented to the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Children in Care Annual Survey.
- Reflected on the annual survey to see what can be done differently to increase responses for the next annual survey including having an age cap of 17 years.
- Developed a Child in Care of the Month Award to promote the positive and inspirational developments of children in care
- CiCC members highlighted as Fostering Champions for this year Foster Carer Conference
- Contributed to the Foster Carer Handbook

Achievements for CLIC in 2022/2023 include:

- Presented the I Awards 2022
- Working with the Reach Team to secure additional funding for an Education, Employment and Training Coordinator for Care Leavers
- Securing funding from the ICB for free prescriptions for Care Leavers
- Developing support for care leavers with health colleagues
- Planning the co-design of Care Leavers' Week for 2022
- Chair of CLIC winner of Young Citizen of the Year 2022
- Presenting the challenges for care leavers to the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board.

Both groups are working collectively on refreshing their Total Respect training and recruitment process for children's staff. They are also collaborating with the Head of Children's Commissioning on the Council's Sufficiency Strategy.

In addition they are working in partnership on the Stable Home, Built On Love Consultation, both regionally and locally.

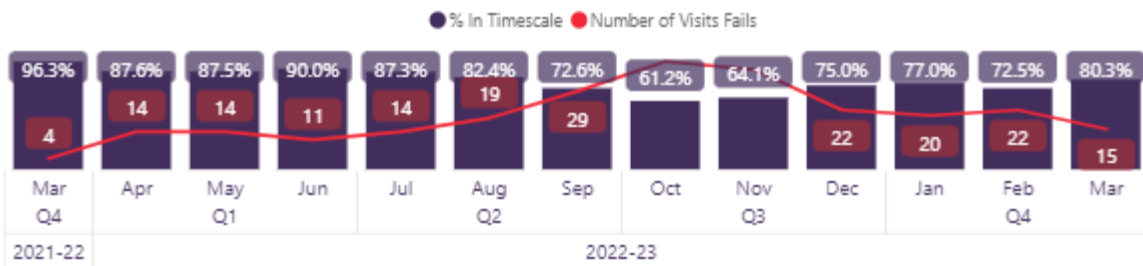
The CiCC and CLIC continue support the HY5 (SEND youth forum) to develop their own Total Respect training so they can influence professionals about what is like to live in the city with SEND, as the CiCC and CLIC have been able to do with sharing what it is like to be care experienced.

Supporting our children and young people with disabilities

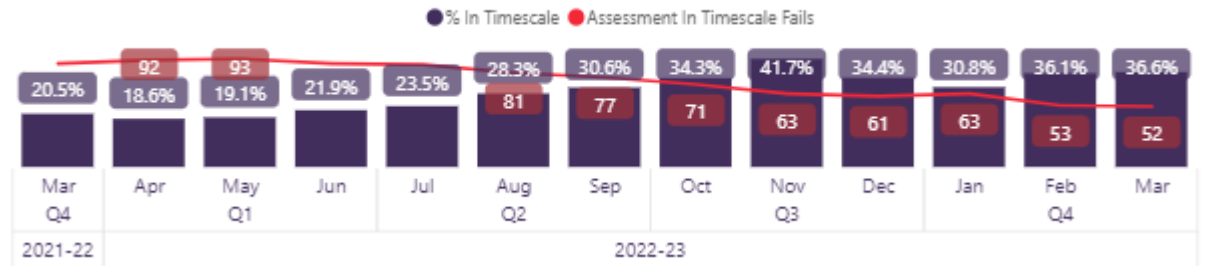
- The establishment of a Designated Social Care Officer ensures that the needs of our SEND children are promoted at the earliest opportunity, with champions being established across the service. Only when it is assessed that specialist support is required to a child with a disability will a worker from the Disabled Children and Young Person's (DCYP) team be allocated
- Young people up to the age of 25 allocated to DCYP team are successfully supported on their journey to adulthood and benefit from social work support during this crucial transition period. A strong partnership working approach between adult and children's social care, and health supports the needs of our most complex young people
- Through Voice4Parents, the views of parents of our SEND children are integral to ensuring we are responsive in our service provision and planning
- During the year, children generally received visits from their social workers within statutory timescales. However, there were significant dips in performance from September 2022 to February 2023 (during which time the team had 3 different Team Managers). A permanent Team Manager started in February 2023, and we have seen an increase in timeliness since this time. The decline in assessments undertaken since September 2021 also reflects this pattern and challenges within the team. There is now an improvement plan in place to ensure performance improves and is maintained
- Despite dips in performance, support to children with disabilities through the DCYP team is strong and we are confident we understand their needs and know them well. Ofsted recognised the whole family approach to support children, their carers and wider family's needs

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% of CIN (Exc SB) with a visit in timescale (Month End Snapshots) - DCYPT

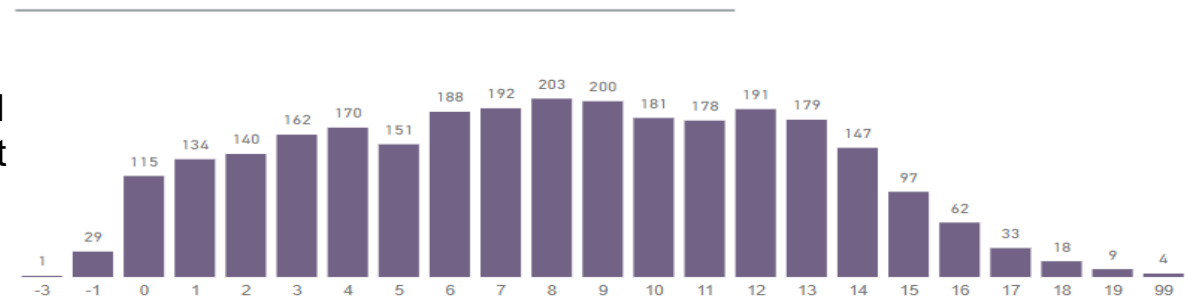


% of CIN with an assessment in timescale (Month End Snapshots) - DCYPT



Supporting our SEND children and young people in education

EHCPs by NCY



There are 2778 children and young people with an EHCP in Wolverhampton. The highest primary need being Social, Emotional Mental Health accounting for 22.5% and ASD being the 2nd highest primary need of 20.2%

In 2021 SEND SEF highlighted a range of areas of developments which informed the current Culture of Inclusion Programme. The programme continues to be monitored through the SEND Board with monthly highlight reports showing key milestones and progress. In September 2021 the SEND Inspection highlighted six areas of significant weakness, whilst these areas were already highlighted within the Culture of Inclusion Programme a Written Statement of Action was produced and signed off in March 2022. Both the SEF and WSOA have been aligned to ensure all actions are responded to and monitored through the SEND Board

To support the identification of vulnerable learners, a 'Vulnerability Matrix' has been developed across our IT systems in Children's Social Care and Education, for services to be able to track the involvement of teams (both past and current) to help monitor support needs.

Social Care SEND champions have been introduced within social care teams to support understanding of SEND services and the SEND Code of Practice across social care and early help. To support the development of the WSOA various posts have been created across Education and Children's Social Care to enable the strategic and operational developments around SEND, including a Designated Social Care Officer, Local Offer Post and QA officers

Supporting inclusion of all children in school

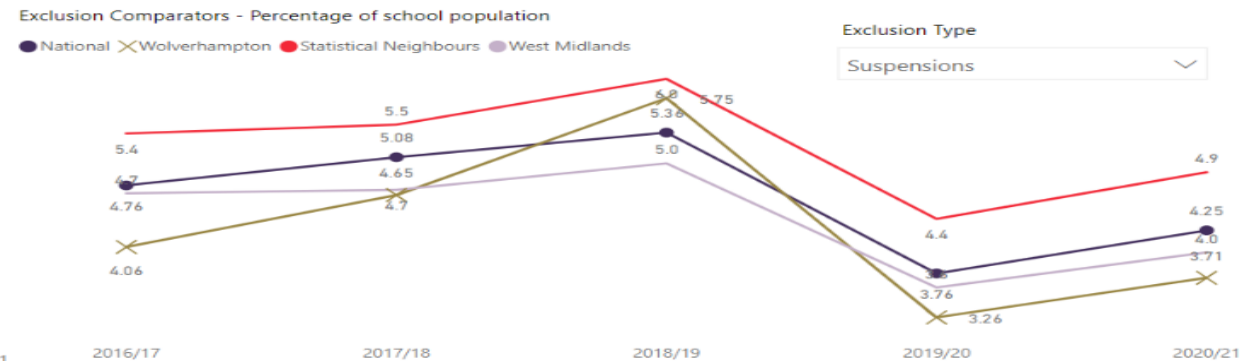
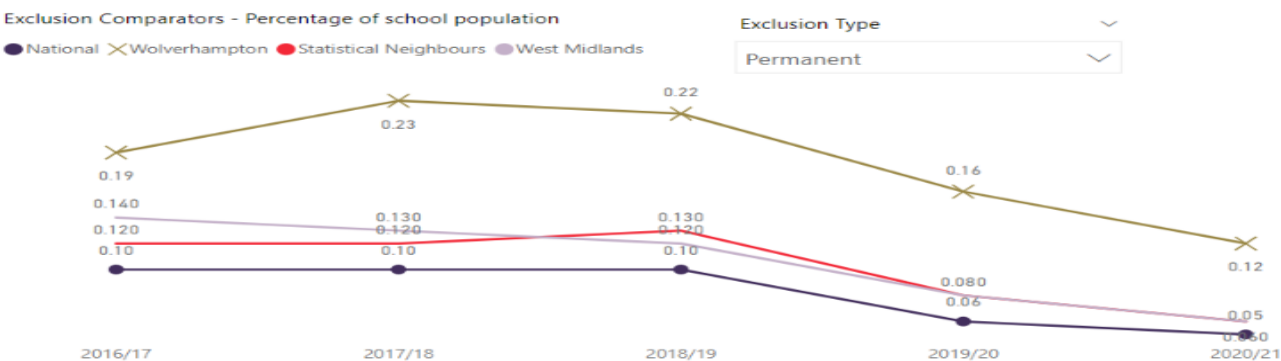
We received 109 referrals to the Primary and Secondary Inclusion Support and Alternative Provision Panel (ISAPP) from September 2022 to end of April 2023, to access additional support for children and young people rather than opting for suspension or exclusion. This includes access to preventative placements and/or pre-exclusion meetings. Of 55 pre-exclusion meetings, only 6 young people went on to be permanently excluded. We have also provided a Graduated Response Framework to schools that launched in September 2022 this has helped to reduce the number of referrals for exclusions.

Education services are developing an Alternative Provision Framework that incorporates the new SEND & AP framework improvement plan.

This will enable schools and settings to access a wider range of educational support options for children and young people needing short term placements relevant to their needs including SEN support. We have launched a new Emotional Based Non-Attendance Pathway due to an increase of referrals relating to anxiety and low attendance. There have been 34 referrals for this pathway so far.

The Inclusion Team attends the Exploitation Hub daily briefing to identify vulnerability risks so that additional support can be put in place to prevent exclusion or to consider placements. Where required the team will also work with social care and the police to consider whole school approaches to reduce the risk of exclusion.

We are currently developing ISAPP's role to enable schools to have a more proactive and accessible resource around further therapeutic and resilience support offers, and transition support for pupils for integration into mainstream schools



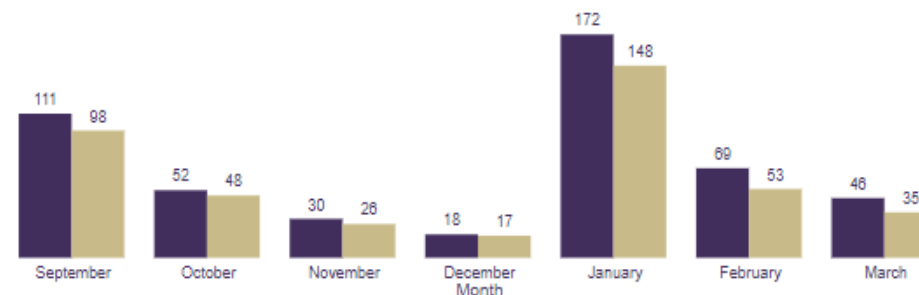
Children Missing Education and Electively Home Educated

Current Position for Children Missing Education (CME):

- 499 internal enquiries and 499 external enquiries have been received from schools for CME support from September 2022 to March 2023, of which the whereabouts were identified for 226 children and young people
- The CME tracking systems have been updated since the ILACS in March 2022 to enable the tracking of children and young people for a minimum of 3 months to ascertain their whereabouts, then added to the lost pupils' database. Where agencies have concern, the children will remain open and attempts made to continue to track until advised by Police, Social Care, HMRC, or NHS and risk assessed as deemed fit for closure.
- Referral process has been made more accessible via the development on an online referral form for both internal and external referrals (professional and public).

Open and Closed by Month

● Open ● Closed



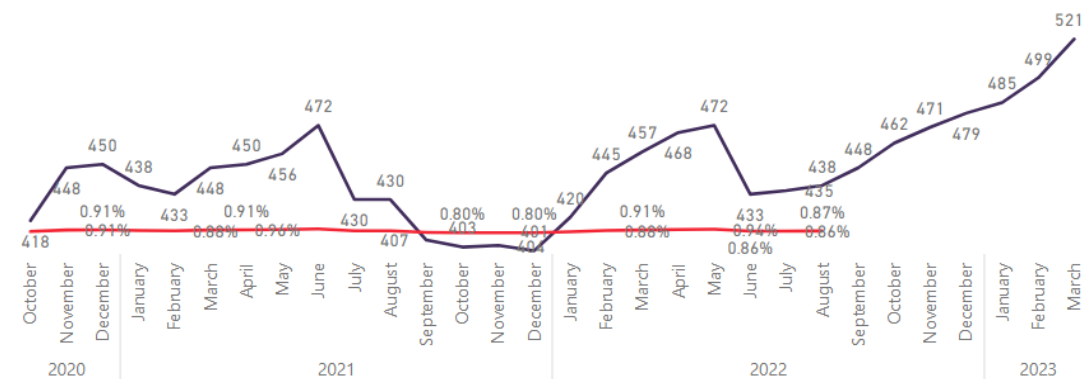
*Internal enquiries

Current Position for Elective Home Education (EHE):

- 529 children and young people are registered as EHE within the City.
- The Gold KIT Award has been awarded to 2 EHE staff by the Education Otherwise Association as a quality mark to reflect the collective experiences of EHE families reflecting the quality of support they have received.
- In the last 12 months over 90% of EHE families have been in contact and shared information around their EHE
- 3-way meetings take place as a preventative approach to support families and schools where families express an interest to deregister their child from school

End of month EHE Numbers

● Current EHE ● % school population (Jan Census)



Supporting positive EET outcomes. Wolves at Work: Skills, Jobs, Careers

- The council's Skills Service includes two specialist teams: Supported Employment (SET) and IPS Substance Misuse Employment Support
- SET works with residents aged 16 and over with disabilities, helping them into sustainable employment, and it also leads on Supported Internships (SIs), looking to at least double the number of SIs across the city over the next two years from 9 to 18
- The wider Wolves at Work team offers employment and skills support to residents aged 16+, with significant targeted support to the 16 to 24 cohort
- Between April 2022 and March 2023, 292 residents were supported into work, aged 16 to 24
- The council manages a city centre Youth Employment Hub, a partnership project with DWP, which provides a youth-friendly venue for young people seeking help to find work. In its first year, the Youth Hub worked with 394 young people, 29% of whom secured employment
- The council's Connexions team play an active role in supporting our vulnerable young people. There are Careers Advisors in every city High School, AP, special schools and college
- Every young person in care or known to a social worker or with SEND has 121 Careers IAG with a Careers Advisor and their own careers action plan
- Connexions also track the participation of all 16 to 18 year olds in the city, supporting those who are at risk of NEET or who are NEET
- As a result of this intensive work the city has been in the top quintile in the country for low levels of NEET and Not Known for the past 3 years, performing better than national, regional and statistical neighbours
- In qtr 4 2023, the level of NEETs was 3%, and 14% for young people with SEND
- Wolverhampton is a pro-active member of the Black Country Careers Hub, with Enterprise Co-ordinators working with all schools and colleges. The city schools perform above national levels against all 8 Gatsby benchmarks (the blueprint for careers activity)
- The city council is also a Cornerstone employer for the Black Country Careers Hub, pro-actively engaging with schools, e.g. social work practitioners going into our secondary schools to promote jobs and careers within social care

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential Achievements for 2022/23:

- We have worked with our voluntary and community partners in the city to deliver support to our most vulnerable households through the Financial Wellbeing Strategy supported by the Household Support Fund (HSF), and Holidays Activity Fund (HAF). Over 47,702 individual awards made to households with children in 2022/23 through the HSF to the value of £2.6 million
- The Holiday and Food Activity (HAF) programme which delivers in the main holidays to children eligible for FSM has been extended to children with SEND and those known to social care in the half term holidays. In Summer 2022 3107 children attended and in December 1951 children attended supported by 33 providers . This provision has been extended to support all children during the half term holidays and saw 2400 children attending in the February half term
- Working within our strong Wolverhampton partnership we have supported our newly migrated families temporarily living in Wolverhampton ensuring they receive the right level of support
- An internal and an external independent review of MASH 24 commissioned by Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together highlighted consistently good practice and strong application of threshold to safeguard children
- We have embedded a more integrated offer across Children's and Adult services to enable our families to thrive including development of one front door which is in pilot phase and integrates accessibility to services through our newly developed Family Hubs
- We have developed improved ease of access to a range of services for children and families through the development of the Family Hubs ,publishing our Start for Life Offer and establishing our Parent Carer Panels

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential Achievements for 2022/23:

- As part of our Strengthening Families approach our Supporting Families Programme achieved the target 453 families in sustaining change in 2022/2023
- We have embedded the expansion of the use of Family Group Conferencing to strengthen opportunities for children to live within their families
- We have continued to embed Restorative Practice across Children's Services looking particularly at developing restorative approaches to child protection conferences and extending training to partners enhancing consistency of our strength based relational approach to practice to support positive outcomes for children and their families
- We have embedded the Social workers in Schools project for a further year with a positive local evaluation which has informed potential future evidence based practice
- Reduced reoffending rates for young people remains spectacular, alongside a reduction in custodial sentences and numbers of young people on Remand
- We have extended our pilot project "Back on Track" diverting young people from criminality as early as possible
- We have established a Creating Safety project within the Youth Justice Service to add additional support young people at risk of exploitation

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential

Achievements for 2022/23 continued:

- We have strengthened opportunities for co-production with children in the city particularly for those open to the Strengthening Family service to ensure children's voices shape our service planning
 - We have developed social care support to our SEND children through the strategic lead of our Designated Social Care officer (DCSO), now a dedicated post, our SEND champions across Childrens Services and our specialist case worker in IASS ensuring children's need are met
 - We have expanded our support to, and opportunities for our most vulnerable young people to access a range of EET opportunities, including children in care, care leavers children with SEND, children who are or have been children in need or subject to child protection planning, and young people known to our Youth Justice Service
- We have established key priorities and key performance indicators in our Children's Equalities action plan to ensure delivery of inclusive services that tackle inequalities which some children and young people face
- We have embedded the Culture of Inclusion Programme to support the inclusion and educational engagement of vulnerable learners supported by the extended role of the Virtual School Head
 - We have established our co-production hub, providing a venue for young people to call their own, accommodating the House Project, a drop in for care leavers, The Reach Café, and a base for co-production with children and young people

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential,

Achievements for 2022/23 continued:

- We have monitored the impact of our recruitment campaign, extended the Foster Families United model, and developed additional benefits offered to foster carers – especially those caring for older and more complex children. Marketing material has been refreshed; the emergency carer policy has included incentivisation to take children in emergency. All foster carers have also received £650 to support the cost-of-living crisis
- We have strengthened even further the stability of our foster homes and improved education outcomes for children and young people in care
We have improved the consistency of the quality of PEPs supporting the educational outcomes of our children in care by strengthening the training in place and applying a more stringent QA process to support our understanding of quality of PEPS
- The oversight of children in care's health needs including dental health has significantly improved
- We have strengthened even further our Local Offer for care leavers to help us work with our care leavers to achieve independence as they enter adulthood
- Reflective discussions, regular supervisions and management oversight are consistently recorded on children's records (noted by Ofsted)
- Consistently good quality records are kept for children with the voice of children and young people being strong throughout all records, underpinned by strong analytical evidence-based assessments and plans that are SMART and child centred (noted by Ofsted)
- Social workers spend meaningful time with children and build positive relationships. Creative direct work with children enables them to understand their experiences (noted by Ofsted)

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential

Priorities for 2023/24:

1. As a strong stable experienced leadership team we know ourselves well. We are confident in our approach, open to challenge and ongoing learning and development of ourselves and the services we deliver to children and young people and their families in the city. As a service we continue to be supported to prioritise the need to improve outcomes for children and young people in the city supported by our senior and political leaders.

2. We will continue on our journey of aiming for excellence in social work practice utilising our QA framework to support our understanding of ourselves.

3. Our restorative approach to practice, including our focus on language, will continue to underpin all we do to ensure we deliver consistently high quality effective innovative services to build family strength and resilience and improve opportunity for our children and young people in the city.

4. We will continue on our journey of transformation of children's services enabling opportunities for creativity and innovation in practice improving outcomes for our children and families. Transformational projects include; the opening of two small family homes for children in care ensuring all internal residential provision for children in the city is of a high standard, the piloting of a multi agency team aimed at preventing future family breakdown with the anticipated impact of reducing the number of children repeatedly moved from the care of their parents, the implementation of a staying close project for care leavers, the development of Family Hub delivery across the city to support the Start for Life offer and enhance accessibility of support and opportunities to work with children at the earliest stage, and the implementation of a Families front door.

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential,

Priorities for 2023/24 continued:

5. We will adapt our service delivery to ensure our children young people and families can access the services they need at the earliest opportunity to strengthen and enrich all children's experience of childhood and family life, to enable to grow into happy strong resilient young adults

To do this we will:

- ensure improved accessibility of help and support through a family's front door and family hubs
- work with families to offer a range of options for family help as a DfE pathfinder authority
- utilise and expand our prevention programmes in our youth justice service to continue to divert young people away from the criminal justice system
- ensure our children and young people can be educated and supported in the school environment that is most suited to them and receive appropriate support to achieve their potential as they move into adulthood
- ensure the safety and well being of our children and young people to include ongoing robust safeguarding to include those at risk of extra familial harm

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential, Priorities for 2023/24 continued:

- ensure the sufficiency of foster homes and suitable family options where children are not able to live with their birth parents
- ensure that where a young person is not able to live within a family we provide good quality alternative provision through appropriately registered internal and external children's homes and supported accommodation
- develop the knowledge and skills of the workforce to support young people with SEND and care leavers to successfully transition into young independent adults

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CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Cabinet 26 July 2023
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Report title	Principal Social Worker Annual Report 2022-2023	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Chris Burden Children and Young People	Councillor Jasbir Jaspal Adult Services
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	All Wards	
Accountable Director	Emma Bennett, Executive Director of Families Becky Wilkinson, Director of Adults	
Originating service	Children and Young People's Service / Adult Services	
Accountable employee	Jenny Rogers Tel Email	Principal Social Worker 01902 555704 Jennifer.rogers@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report has been considered by	Directorate Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board Scrutiny Board	8 June 2023 20 June 2023 4 and 5 July 2023

Recommendations for decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Endorse the work of the Principal Social Worker (PSW) and the continued impact it has on social work practice across Children's and Adult's Services.
2. Approve the main priorities for the Principal Social Worker identified for 2023-2024.

Recommendation for noting:

The Cabinet is asked to note:

1. The work carried out in respect of quality assurance activity, the commitment to supporting the continual professional development of social workers and the actions taken to support the recruitment and retention of social workers which is helping the Council meet demand and supply needs now and for the future.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide a progress report on the work of the Principal Social Worker in promoting and improving the quality of social work practice and outline the key priorities for 2023-2024.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Designated Principal Social Workers (PSW) were first proposed by Professor Eileen Munro in her review of child protection in 2011, which identified the importance of better communication and understanding between social workers and senior management. Munro stated that Principal Social Workers should:
- A. Create a clear line of communication between frontline staff and senior management
 - B. Champion best practice
 - C. Encourage a “reflective approach” to social work
 - D. Support social workers to use their core skills and interventions which make a real difference to people
- 2.2 The role of a PSW is a statutory requirement in adults and Care Act guidance states that the PSW should be visible across the organisation, from elected members and senior management, through to frontline social workers, people with care and support needs and carers. Local authorities should make arrangements to have a qualified and registered social work professional practice lead in place to lead and oversee social work practice, support effective decision making and develop excellent social workers. This also includes overseeing quality assurance and improvement of social work practice as well as advising on areas of complex or controversial practice and on social work-related legislation, as well as ensuring the quality and consistency of safeguarding practice.
- 2.3 Social work is a unique profession and social workers are responsible for making potentially life changing decisions about individuals, often during very difficult and distressing circumstances. The role is extremely rewarding and the potential for making a positive difference for children, adults and families is immense. However, it is also emotionally demanding and can be subject to at times intense, often public, scrutiny and criticism. Austerity, increased demand, a culture of blame fuelled by the media and public figures as well as a national shortage of social workers resulting in increased workloads and stress, are all having a significant impact on the profession and outcomes for children, young people and adults. Research suggests that social workers and students see the profession as the worst ranked in society, well behind the respect other professions receive such as for doctors, nurses and lawyers¹. The average working life of a frontline social worker is just over seven years, compared to 25 years for doctors and 15 for nurses². The Principal Social Worker role is critical to help raise the profile of the

¹ Social Work England, A Report on the Social Work Profession, June 2020

² Curtis et al, 2010, British Journal of Social Work

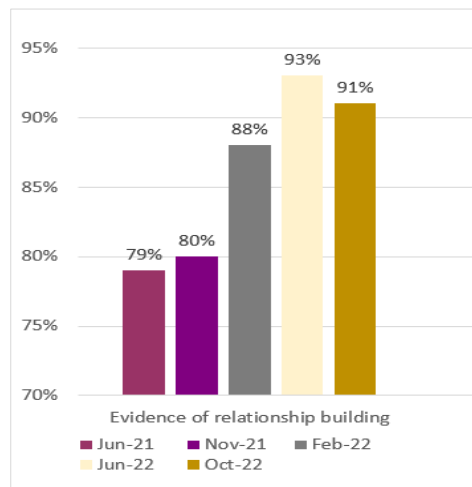
profession, creating a strong professional identity and challenge the blame narrative. PSWs call for change at a national, regional and local level, are key to transforming public perception, advocating for the wellbeing of social workers and attracting more into the profession. PSWs provide a strong collective voice on behalf of all social workers and strive to make a positive difference for the workforce and the people social workers support.

- 2.4 There has been a PSW with joint responsibility for Adult and Children's Services since March 2016. The decision to appoint one PSW across both service areas was informed by a commitment to promote a "think whole family approach", support better joined up working and inspire greater aspirations for children, families and adults with care and support needs.
- 2.5 The PSW role links to several of the Our Council Plan priority areas including strong families where children grow up well and achieve their potential and fulfilled lives for all with quality care for those that need it most. Strengths based approaches in social work also encourage a focus on community resources and building on the assets available locally to support families and people who need us, so there is also a role for the PSW in the healthy and inclusive communities priority.
- 2.6 The PSW reports directly to a Deputy Director responsible for commissioning and transformation with a dotted line to the Deputy Director in Children's Services and the Director of Adults Services (DASS). The work of the PSW is overseen and prioritised by the local Social Work Development Board. A degree of independence is required of the role in order to provide challenge within the organisation.
- 2.7 It is important that the role has a presence at, and is able to contribute to, national and regional PSW forums. These meetings are learning and development opportunities and also enables the Chief Social Workers for Adults and Children to share the direction of travel, answer questions and receive feedback from PSW's which can influence national policy and guidance. These events also provide opportunity for the sharing of good practice.

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 The PSW in Wolverhampton has responsibility for policies and procedures, the recruitment and retention of social workers and quality of practice, which includes leading on implementing and further developing the quality assurance frameworks for Adult and Children's Services. The remit of the PSW's team also includes support for inspection and CQC assurance activity. Although not directly leading on all projects involving social workers across the service, the PSW has a key role in promoting and supporting innovation in social work, such as the Social Workers in Schools project.

- 3.2 This year priorities have included building on the training and development offer for social workers that enables them to continue to develop their practice, as well as further developing the quality assurance frameworks and associated quality assurance activity for Adults, Children's Services and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The PSW and her team have continued to support excellence in social work practice and taken a lead role with Adults Services in preparing for the CQC regulatory framework from 2023-2024. There has also been significant activity once again this year to counter the challenges being faced in the recruitment and retention of social workers and also an ongoing focus on challenging inequality.
- 3.3 Highlights of the work undertaken by the PSW in the last 12 months since April 2022 is outlined below.
- 3.4 Quality of Practice – Children's Service**
- 3.5 Restorative Practice (RP) has been the overarching practice framework for the Children and Young People's Service since November 2016. It is a strengths-based approach that is about building, maintaining and repairing relationships. It is a way of being that supports working "with" children and families and not doing "to" them, identifying strengths but also being able to effectively challenge where necessary.
- 3.6 In June 2020 a Senior Restorative Practice (SRP) Lead was appointed to support the PSW in further embedding RP across the service. This year the main priority has been to re-establish face to face RP training which is now being delivered by champions from across various partners including police, health, education and the voluntary sector. This will provide a consistent and joined up approach to improving outcomes for children and families. Twelve champions have now been trained and the workshops resumed in November 2022, arranged via Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together (WST). Internal RP refresher training is also offered, with 211 practitioners across Children's Services completing it over the last twelve months. A 'building and maintaining relationships with children and families who are reluctant to social care support' workshop was also developed in 2022, providing staff with tools to help develop effective restorative relationships where circumstances are challenging. A priority this coming year will be changing language to support the restorative practice approach.
- 3.7 In this year's social work health check survey, 98.7% of social workers agreed that "Wolverhampton has a clear model of social work practice that promotes relationship working and strengths-based approach to achieve best outcomes for individuals and families". This is an increase from 93% in 2021. Respondents referred to the Restorative Practice approach with its emphasis on relationship based practice and the positive impact this has had, which was echoed by Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) during its inspection of CWC in 2022.
- 3.8 The impact of RP can also be seen in the outcomes from practice conversations (audits) where relationship-based practice is now a consistent area of strength and the number of files rated good or outstanding have been generally improving over the year:



3.9 A key part of quality assurance in Children’s Services continues to be practice weeks, which is a more restorative approach to undertaking traditional file audits. The Executive Director of Families, Deputy Director along with all Heads of Service, the PSW, Service Managers and Team Managers spend time over a week having conversations on a one-to-one basis with practitioners looking at a child’s file and reflecting on practice. The advantages include being able to hear about practice rather than just reading about it, being able to see and feel how teams are functioning and being able to offer social workers immediate feedback. Practice weeks are well received with 87% of social workers reporting that they are a positive experience and some comments have included:

- A. “It’s good to see what you are doing well and where you need to improve...good experience to gain feedback and develop my skills”
- B. “It made me feel like I was doing a good job...provides a safe space for reflection”

3.10 This year the PSW and her team have continued to embed the revised quality assurance framework for Children’s Services which, in addition to practice weeks and observations of practice, includes moderation workshops to check the consistency of auditing against the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) descriptors. There is also a process for triangulating intelligence from across the wider system, such as complaints, data, child safeguarding practice reviews, feedback from children and families etc, to help better inform the service’s understanding of social work practice and identify where further quality assurance may be needed. The PSW plans to develop quality assurance activity further in 2023-2024 by introducing a 360 approach during practice conversations where more direct feedback will be sought from young people / parents / families to better understand the impact of specific practice being audited.

3.11 A few of the key areas of strength, as identified through practice weeks during 2022-2023 include:

- A. Practitioners know the children and families they work with well.
- B. Direct work through the establishment of relationships is linked to sustained changes.
- C. Risk is identified, children are safe, and services are making a positive difference
- D. Evidence of strengths-based approaches and collaborative working
- E. Assessments have made things better for the child / young people and are timely, comprehensive, and are leading to appropriately focused help and effective interventions

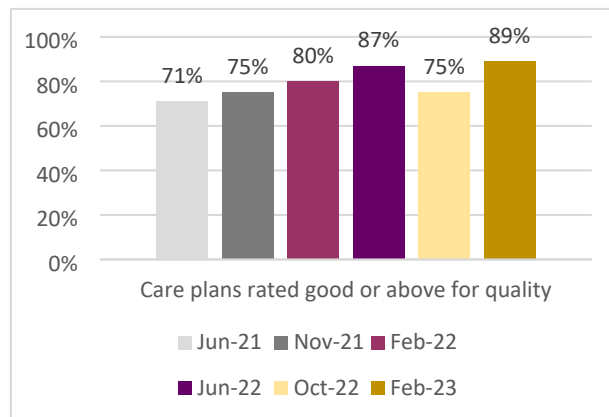
3.12 There has been a steady improvement in the quality of social work practice and this year's practice conversations (audits) are showing an increase in the number of files rated good or outstanding and a reduction in those rated requires improvement or inadequate:

Audit Period	Total rated Good or Outstanding	Total rated Requires Improvement or Inadequate
2019-2020	57%	43%
2020- 2021	72%	28%
2021-2022	82%	18%
2022-2023	91%	9%

3.13 The PSW is the lead for the Aiming for Excellence Plan, the service's practice improvement plan, which is supporting excellent social work practice by focusing on six key areas where intelligence is indicating that practice can be inconsistent. A team of Advanced Practitioners (APs), line managed by the newly appointed Deputy Principal Social Worker, play a key role in leading on the areas for excellence and improving practice. The APs also provide practical support to newly qualified social workers, students and social work teams, carrying out dips and embedding a reflective and learning culture across the service.

3.14 A review of the Aiming for Excellence Plan took place this year to assess the impact of actions taken and to identify where areas needed to be revised or removed from the plan if practice has improved. A number of areas are now considered consistent and as such have become areas of strengths, including practice in relation to care planning that can evidence progress and is supporting high expectations and aspirations for the child.

Actions that have supported this progress have included refresher workshops led by the APs and the sharing of good examples within teams and as part of reflective sessions.



- 3.15 This commitment to quality assurance and continual improvement and learning was recognised by Ofsted in their inspection in March 2022, commenting that “quality assurance arrangements are strong, with a comprehensive approach to learning from audits.” As a result, they concluded that “senior leaders know themselves very well and endeavour to meet the needs of children and families through high-quality effective services...This has led to a high level of consistent, strong social work practice.”
- 3.16 The PSW’s team will continue to support the service in preparing for future inspections, updating action plans and co-ordinating any improvement actions where appropriate.
- 3.17 Quality of Practice – Adult Services**
- 3.18 A refresh of the quality assurance framework for Adult Services was one of the key priorities in 2022-2023. This was in readiness for the new duty introduced through the Health and Care Act 2022 whereby the Care Quality Commission (CQC) will conduct reviews of local authorities adult social care performance. This will specifically look at its regulated functions under part one of the 2014 Care Act.
- 3.19 As part of this, the PSW and her team have successfully introduced a practice week model to Adult Services this year which is aligned to the 3 Conversations© approach and supports a culture of learning and reflection. Feedback from practitioners and managers has been positive with many reporting that it brings the person to life and is more strengths based compared to traditional auditing. Almost 80% of those who have had a practice conversation this year felt it was a beneficial experience, with comments such as:
- A. “The learning experience was very positive – I was able to identify areas of development as well as strengths. Having the time to talk through practice was incredibly beneficial as well as having an experienced practitioner to critically challenge me in a supportive way”
 - B. “Good space to reflect, discuss and learn”

C. “Some really reflective conversations”

3.20 Quality assurance activity in Adult Services during 2022-2023 has evidenced that overall social work practice is of a high quality and shows adherence to statutory duties with 90% of files rated good or outstanding during practice weeks:

Audit Period	Total rated Good or Outstanding	Total rated Requires Improvement or inadequate
2019 - 2020	83%	17%
2020 - 2021	78%	22%
2021 - 2022	92%	8%
2022 - 2023	90%	10%

3.21 Consistently good practice has also been evidenced over the year in many specific areas, such as in use of advocacy, Care Act eligibility, Making Safeguarding Personal, managing safeguarding risk, effective management oversight and involving the person in decision making as well as promoting dignity and demonstrating respect. Good outcomes have been evidenced for people with care and support needs over the year, with an average of 97% of files rated good or above for demonstrating that social work intervention has made a positive difference to the person.

3.22 There has also been improvement in practice. For instance, professional curiosity was an area which had improved to some extent by the start of 2022-2023 but was not a consistent strength. A session was arranged with noted academic Professor David Shemmings in June 2022 on professional curiosity, and the learning was reinforced at subsequent social work briefings, which also provided time for social workers to reflect and apply their learning to practice. By the end of the year there has been a steady increase in the number of files rated good or outstanding, with an average of 76% of files evidencing professional curiosity compared to just under 65% in 2021-2022. There has also been some improvement in the use of the Mental Capacity Act and the quality of mental capacity conversations with a number of actions having been taken to improve practice, including refresher training. However, this remains an area for further focus in 2023-2024.

3.23 Three Conversations©, the strengths-based approach introduced in 2018, is well embedded in practice. Three Conversations© is a way of working which replaces the traditional “assessment for services” mindset with a meaningful conversation about what matters to them, making connections to people and places that will help them and better support their wellbeing. Practice conversations evidence that use of strengths-based approaches continue to be applied consistently, with an average of 84% of social work

files rated good or outstanding in this area in 2022-2023. Over 80% of social workers in this year's social work health check survey also agreed that Wolverhampton has a clear model of social work practice that promotes relationship working and a strengths-based approach to achieve the best outcomes for individuals and families.

- 3.24 The redesign of adult social care in Wolverhampton, which is now underway, will build on this and consider what more is needed to enable this approach to work even more effectively. It will review demand, workflow, systems as well as workloads and skill mix across the service to explore how adult social care in the city could work more effectively and efficiently without losing the person at the centre.
- 3.25 Another key priority for the PSW this year was to promote a culture of co-production and personalisation in Adult Services. An example of this was the collaboration with Think Local Act Personal (TLAP), a national partnership committed to transforming health and care through personalisation and the voice of people with lived experience. The PSW submitted a proposal to TLAP, setting out the commitment to using their [Making It Real](#) "I/we" statements in Adult Service's 2021-2022 annual report (the Local Account). Making it Real is a framework of best practice for personalised care and support. It is an easy to read set of principles that focus on what matters to people. This year's [Local Account](#) has been shaped by a number of people with lived experience, and the Making It Real statements frame the report and have informed the service's priorities. The learning from this will now be taken forward by Adult Services as part of the redesign work and the commitment to further developing co-production and more personalised approaches.
- 3.26 The PSW has also continued to be part of regional practice reviews to support the peer challenge process and prepare CWC for future CQC assurance.

3.27 Workforce

- 3.28 The recruitment and retention of high-quality social workers is a key function that supports the delivery of good and safe social work practice. Effective recruitment and retention enables the development of a stable workforce, which in turn can improve the quality of work undertaken with children, young people, adults with care and support needs and families. However social work nationally is challenged by high turnover and vacancy rates, which can leave social workers trying to work with too many individuals. There is ongoing and increasing pressure on local authorities not only to recruit but also to retain experienced social workers and social work is on the national occupational shortage list.
- 3.29 The PSW continues to lead on the development and delivery of a robust and proactive recruitment and retention plan with colleagues from human resources, organisational development and the communications team. Some key activity this year has included attendance at recruitment fairs, piloting weekly interviews, delivering welcome events, as well as a continued investment in "grow your own" initiatives and other social work recruitment programmes.

- 3.30 There are many routes into social work, and it is important that that CWC takes a mixed economy approach to investing in the training of new social workers to not only meet its own sufficiency needs but also contribute to the needs of the region. Some of the programmes and initiatives that supports this include the West Midlands Social Work Teaching Partnership (WMSWTP), Step up to Social Work, the Frontline Programme and social work degree apprenticeships.
- 3.31 The new level six degree apprenticeship in social work was agreed in December 2018. It provides an exciting opportunity for existing social care employees to undertake a social work degree whilst remaining in full time employment. There are 13 social work apprentices currently on the social work degree apprenticeship programme in CWC and four who have completed their social work degree this year, three of whom have now moved into newly qualified social work (NQSW) positions. This year the PSW has formalised the social work degree apprenticeship as a career pathway to ensure that once apprentices have qualified, they will automatically be offered a social work position with CWC. This has encouraged more to apply for the programme in Children's Services this year and as a result five apprentices are being taken on instead of the usual three. However, a priority for next year is to promote this opportunity more in Adult Services.
- 3.32 Step up to Social Work and Frontline Programmes are post graduate fast track social work programmes for people interested in the profession who have a 2.2 Honours Degree or above. Step up to Social Work is co-ordinated regionally and is delivered in partnership with the University of Birmingham as a 14-month condensed course. The first cohort qualified in June 2021 and are now all employed as newly qualified social workers in Children's Services. This year CWC has supported a second cohort of Step-Up students and two of the three students have now been appointed into newly qualified posts. CWC plan to take on a third cohort in 2024.
- 3.33 Frontline is a fast-track training scheme for social workers in child protection, which aims to attract outstanding graduates who may not previously have considered a career in social work. Participants complete most of their theoretical training whilst in social work placements, this allows them to transfer their learning into practice immediately. Since starting in 2017, 29 participants have been through the programme or are currently on it. A further cohort has been agreed for next year.
- 3.34 The West Midlands Social Work Teaching Partnership (WMSWTP) is in its fifth year of delivery and is the largest in the country consisting of 27 partners. Social work teaching partnerships are designed to enhance partnership arrangements between higher education institutions and employers; attract more able students; embed the knowledge and skills (post qualifying standards) into academic curricula; support continuing professional development (CPD) for existing social workers and overall raise the quality of social work practice. This year CWC have benefitted from participating in the WMSWTP in a number of ways, for instance by being able to access over 20 training sessions including trauma informed selfcare, domestic abuse and coercive control, and the lived experience of young people in residential care, as well as being able to access

conferences about co-production and practice education. CWC booked 90 places on courses offered by the WMSWTP this year and feedback has been positive.

- 3.35 This year a revised Practice Educator strategy was launched locally which sets out the commitment to incrementally increase the number of statutory placements offered to social work students over the next three years. This is crucial to better prepare students for practising as social workers and also increases the number of students who are likely to consider applying for newly qualified positions with CWC, which supports recruitment. This year the number of statutory placements being offered has increased slightly (26 compared to 25 in 2021-2022), but it is forecasted that this can increase further to around 29 next year. Actions such as welcome events and an interview skills workshops led by the PSW has encouraged more final year students to apply for NQSW position with CWC. To date seven of the ten NQSWs posts that have been appointed to from a recent campaign were final year students with CWC.
- 3.36 To increase the number of students placements also requires existing, experienced social workers to act as practice educators. The role of a practice educator (PE) is a key part of Wolverhampton's social work development and career progression pathway and as such supports retention. This year practice education has been well promoted by the PSW's team and specific sessions delivered to encourage social workers to consider this opportunity to help progress in their career and develop their skills and knowledge. This has resulted in significantly more social workers expressing an interest in becoming a PE this year than in previous years and so 22 social workers will be undertaking the course in September 2023 (stage 1 and stage 2) compared to 16 in 2022.
- 3.37 Other actions taken to support recruitment and retention has included creating and launching a new campaign, co-produced with local social workers, to better promote vacancies and help CWC stand out in a highly competitive arena as a social work employer of choice. The "be the social worker you want to be" brand was launched at Compass Recruitment fair on 20 March 2023 with positive feedback. Promotional materials include quotes from and photos of social workers from across Adults and Children's Services. The local social work [microsite](#), which sets out the benefits of working for CWC and hosts social work vacancies has also been refreshed and now includes the new branding. This will be developed further to include photos of young people and people with lived experience to promote specific campaigns and use of videos from social workers explaining why they choose to work in Wolverhampton.
- 3.38 To further support recruitment and retention, particularly in the Strengthening Families service where turnover can be most challenging, the PSW has been instrumental in supporting the creation of a new progression opportunity. This is aimed at experienced social workers who want to be recognised for their expertise, but do not necessarily want to progress to other senior social worker roles. This new role would not have supervisory responsibilities but would enable the social worker to remain in a social work team and carry out complex child protection work. It links to the recommendation made by the National Independent Review of Children's Social Care to create a new Expert Child

Protection Practitioner role, which has been since been supported by the Government's response "Stable Homes Built on Love" (February 2023). The PSW has also introduced Advanced Practitioner roles for adult social workers, which are also progression and development opportunities.

- 3.39 The PSW has also led on proposals to reimburse social workers locally for the costs involved in renewing their annual professional registration with Social Work England (SWE) if they are required to do this as part of their job description. Proposals also included reimbursing costs of membership to the Blue Light card discount scheme to any eligible employees across social care. This will not only help to ensure CWC stands out in a highly competitive recruitment market along with other actions being taken but will also help promote CWC as a social work employer of choice.
- 3.40 At the end of March 2023 the local social work turnover rate in Children's Services was lower than national and regional averages at 12.9% (compared to 17.1% nationally; 16.4% regionally) however recruiting experienced social workers into vacancies remains a challenge.
- 3.41 In Adult's Services the turnover rate of social workers was also lower than the national average, with a rate of 10.1% by the end of March 2023, compared to 17.1% reported nationally.
- 3.42 The annual social work health check survey asks social workers for their views on working conditions and there is a strong sense of pride with on average 83% saying they would recommend CWC as an employer to family and friends. Some comments included:
- A. "CWC are proactive and forward thinking"
 - B. "Having been given the opportunity to progress in my career I have been more than happy over the last 12 months. I have gained a new pride and positivity in my role."
 - C. "A great organisational culture...Fantastic colleagues with vast skills and experience."
 - D. "Positive culture and learning opportunities"
 - E. "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"
- 3.43 Positively the majority of social workers said they plan to continue working for the council for at least the next 12 months and fewer said they definitely intend to leave compared to 2021. More manageable workloads would influence those who are unsure about staying. The adults redesign as well as other actions that are being taken to fill vacancies across both adults and children's services, will be key in ensuring workloads are manageable and will further support the retention of social workers. Recruiting and retaining social workers remains an ongoing priority for 2023-2024.

- 3.44 One of the key tasks of PSWs is to carry out an annual social work health check survey and ensure the Local Government Association (LGA) Standards for Employers of social workers are being upheld. The local social work health check was carried out between September and November 2022 and identified a number of key themes:
- A. Social work is a notoriously demanding profession, and, by its very nature, the role carries a certain level of stress. The number of those always or often feeling stress due to work has reduced or stayed the same this year except for children's social workers and feelings around manageability of workloads has had an impact on this
 - B. Quality of supervision is high with around 90% or above this year reporting satisfaction rates
 - C. Satisfaction with learning and development opportunities has increased significantly – actions from last year's Health Check to improve this has had a positive impact
 - D. There is effective and appropriate communication between senior management and staff with a notable year on year improvement
 - E. 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
 - F. Social workers are spending more time working directly with people
- 3.45 Action plans have been developed for both Children's and Adult Services to address areas for improvement.

3.46 Professional Standards and Practice Development

- 3.47 One of the PSW's priorities this year has been the training and development of social workers, ensuring that there is a good development offer that enables them to continue to develop their practice. All social workers are required to record evidence of continuing professional development (CPD) each year with the social work regulator Social Work England (SWE) in order to continue to practice as a social worker. It is imperative that social workers are highly skilled as it is known that good social work intervention can reduce the risk of children needing to be received into care and can enable adults with care and support needs to remain, or become, as independent as possible. It also ensures that council resources are being used appropriately and effectively and supports retention.
- 3.48 The PSW has continued to lead on social work development plans for adult and children's social workers and ensured that training opportunities have been offered in line with service priorities, as well as keeping practitioners up to date with changes in legislation and / or supporting with the challenges and complexities being faced in practice. Some examples of commissioned training offered in 2022-2023 has included: child on parent violence, working with perpetrators of domestic abuse/sexual abuse, assessing and supporting parents with learning difficulties, motivational interviewing, advocacy, trauma informed practice, supervision for managers, cultural competence, mental capacity act, supporting autistic people during care act conversations and s42

safeguarding enquiries. Training is also accessed through the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together partnership and webinars and articles are available through the subscription with Research in Practice and Research in Practice for Adults.

- 3.49 The PSW arranges three separate children's and adult's social work briefings a year. The sessions have a learning and development focus often chosen by social workers themselves but are also opportunities for senior leaders to share key updates. This year's briefings have featured sessions on learning from local Safeguarding Adult Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews; Liberty Protection Safeguards; supporting people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities; using language restoratively and supporting people who hoard. Social workers have also shared examples from their own practice and talked about approaches that have made a positive difference.
- 3.50 The annual joint adults and children's social work conference took place face to face in November 2022 with the theme of "For the love of social work: celebrating professional identity and contemporary practice". 308 social workers attended, which was the highest attended joint conference in the last five years. Leading social work professionals and authors of the book "Out of the Shadows: the role of social workers in disasters" Angie Bartoli and Maris Stratulis delivered a key note speech reflecting on the valuable role social workers play at times of crisis and tragedy. Lori Goossen, Principal Social Worker for Medway Council, also shared her expertise on secondary trauma and compassion fatigue within social work and the importance of self-care and professional support. There was also a workshop on virginity testing, honour based abuse and female genital mutilation and a session on social work with refugees and those affected by any type of border.
- 3.51 Feedback about the conference was overwhelmingly positive. Some comments included:
- A. "Inspirational and inspiring"
 - B. "Proud to work for Wolves"
 - C. "Thought provoking, empowering and very relevant"
- 3.52 This year's Social Work Health Check surveys showed that significantly more social workers across Children's and Adult Services feel satisfied with the learning opportunities available to them with over 90% reporting this compared to around 70% last year.
- 3.53 The PSW has also continued to act as the single point of contact between SWE and CWC for any local fitness to practice referrals. The role is critical in supporting SWE progress their investigations in a timely way, ensuring that the public is protected and reducing the impact on the wellbeing and productivity of all involved.
- 3.54 Raising the profile of social work and connecting with practice**
- 3.55 This year the PSW and her team have continued to celebrate good practice in monthly newsletters and raised the profile of the profession by recognising key events such as

World Social Work Day, which took place in March 2023. In response to the theme of the day “respecting diversity through joint social action,” the PSW invited noted academic Dr Neil Thompson to speak about anti-discriminatory practice. This was followed by a collaborative session with the University of Wolverhampton and a guest speaker from India which helped attendees reflect on international social work and the Social Graces tool. Over 200 attended and comments included how this year’s local World Social Work Day events were “powerful” and impactful”.

- 3.56 The PSW has promoted the British Association of Social Work’s (BASW) national Amazing Social Work Awards this year, encouraging nominations across Adult and Children’s Services in Wolverhampton. Three social workers from CWC have been recognised and awarded the title of “Amazing Social Worker” for 2023 and been featured on BASW’s social media as well as on CWC’s City People.
- 3.57 The PSW has also continued to maintain a connection to social workers and frontline practice, with more face to face visits to social work teams carried out this year and more planned in 2023-2024. The PSW is also connected to social workers during practice weeks, at workshops as well as other forums such as the quarterly “It’s Your Life” meetings in Adult Services. In this year’s social work health check, the majority of social workers across Adult and Children’s Services said they have access to advice and support from senior social work leaders, including the PSW, with less than 7% saying this isn’t the case.
- 3.58 The PSW also attends PSW regional and national network meetings for adults and children’s and contributes to work plans and workstream activity. From November 2022 the PSW became the co-chair of the Regional Children’s PSW Network and has been connecting with co-chairs nationally.
- 3.59 This year the PSW has also raised the profile of social work by working with the University of Wolverhampton to promote the PhD research being carried out by two social workers in Wolverhampton in a national webinar hosted by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE). The webinar series, developed on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care, highlighted local authorities who are demonstrating innovative and transformative practices. The webinar focussed on the importance of research-mindedness in social work practice and featured two senior social workers who are a year into their PhD research, having been sponsored by the Council to do this on a part-time basis. The research will explore honour based abuse and the use of physical chastisement as a way of disciplining children focussing on parents of African heritage.

3.60 Challenging inequality

- 3.61 Equalities has continued to be a priority this year with the PSW taking an active role in the Rainbow Staff Equality forum as lead ally. The PSW has also been leading on some academic research which will support the rainbow retirement workstream and is supporting the delivery of the Rainbow Families action plan to enable the whole Families

Directorate to improve the support it offers to individuals who identify as LGBT+. This will include identifying relevant resources and training for practitioners.

- 3.62 As well as the sessions offered on World Social Work Day, the PSW has also supported the regional PSW network to progress its ant-racist/ anti-discriminatory practice workstream and has been instrumental in the creation of an equalities statement. This is underpinned by a number of actions now being taken forward by both Adults and Children's PSW networks and supported by the WMSWTP. Actions include establishing a regional forum of social work practitioners, students, universities and Adults and Children's PSW networks to share experiences, reflect on the statement and identify best practice. This will result in a best practice guide to be shared across the region. Training will also be identified and commissioned regionally.
- 3.63 The PSW has also been supporting the regional West Midlands Association of Directors for Children's Services (WMADCS) to procure a training programme aimed at supporting women of colour into leadership roles. The LeadHERship in Colour programme is for women of colour whose next steps are progression to a Head of Service role (or equivalent seniority) in the next few years. It recognises that women of colour are underrepresented in management and senior leadership positions and reflects the regional commitment to address this inequality. Two employees from Children's Services have been successful at obtaining places on this programme, fully funded by the regional ADCS network. Those who were unsuccessful have been supported by the PSW onto local development programmes or other regional leadership courses and been offered mentoring and coaching.
- 3.64 As a result of the strong approach that has been taken to equality and diversity by the PSW, the Children's and Adult's leadership teams and their service areas, as well as the Council as a whole, the vast majority of social workers in this year's health check survey said that CWC is actively committed to tackling inequality and discrimination.

4.0 Key priorities for the PSW's work plan 2023-2024

- 4.1 In 2023-2024 the PSW will continue to ensure that social work development plans incorporate a good development offer for social workers that enables them to develop their practice. The PSW will work collaboratively with organisational development colleagues to ensure feedback is obtained and analysed following all training attended, which will better inform the social work development plans for 2024-2025.
- 4.2 The PSW will lead the delivery of the revised Aiming for Excellence Plan and Adult's Best Practice Plan, to ensure high quality, consistent social work practice with the support of the Deputy Principal Social Worker and Advanced Practitioners.
- 4.3 There is more to do to further embed Restorative Practice (RP) across Children's Services, with a particular focus on language and on re-establishing a steering group to bring partners together to ensure RP remains a key priority across the system.

- 4.4 The PSW will ensure that anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice continues to be prioritised in training. As lead ally the PSW will, alongside actions already mentioned within this report, promote the leadership equality pledges, support EDI strategy (including being visible and active in forums and EDI events), and actively challenge where needed.
- 4.5 The PSW will continue to take lead responsibility, along with human resources and organisational development, for the implementation of the recruitment and retention plan to support a mixed economy of routes into social work and strengthen current recruitment activity, ensuring the council is able to meet demand and supply needs now and for the future. The plan will also build on existing strategies and explore new ways to retain social workers to ensure social workers see the council as a place where they can develop their practice and career and feel valued, trusted and proud.
- 4.6 A key priority is the annual social work health check and the PSW's team will also continue to support a range of engagement activities between the Directors for Adult and Children's Services and social workers.
- 4.7 The PSW and her team will further develop the quality assurance frameworks and associated quality assurance activity for Adults, SEND and Children's Services. This will particularly focus on exploring how to better utilise feedback from children, young people, adults and families and introduce a 360 approach to practice weeks.
- 4.8 There will be continued preparation for future inspections and also ongoing support for Adult Services in readiness for the CQC regulatory framework.
- 4.9 There is a need for the PSW to continue to play a key role in the ongoing redesign of Adult's Social Care in 2023-2024, offering independent challenge and also advice about regional/national best practice specifically in relation to social work. The PSW will also work with the Director of Adult Services and Heads of Service to collaborate with the national group [SocialCareFuture](#) to learn and share from people with lived experience and other organisations to change the narratives around social care and drive forward co-production and personalisation.
- 4.10 Another key priority for this coming year will be to build on the existing partnership with the University of Wolverhampton and support the link between research and practice particularly with the creation of research circles.
- 4.11 The PSW will also lead on further supporting the wellbeing of social workers, specifically exploring trauma informed approaches to supervision in helping to reduce secondary trauma.
- 4.12 It is important that the PSW continues to maintain a presence in national PSW forums. These meetings are learning and development opportunities and provides opportunity for the Chief Social Workers for Adults and Children to share the direction of travel, answer questions and receive feedback from PSW's. These events also provide opportunity for the sharing of good practice.

- 4.13 The PSW will continue to be the local lead for the regional West Midlands Social Work Teaching Partnership, co-chair for the regional Children's PSW network and the single point of contact for SWE.

5.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 5.1 This report highlights the impact on the service, city and residents that the PSW role can bring, including ensuring the quality of social work practice and improved outcomes for people. There is evidence that this role has a positive impact on the profession and consequently the people being supported across Adult and Children's Services.
- 5.2 There is an option of not having a PSW, but it needs to be noted that the PSW role in adults is set out in statutory guidance. Without a PSW there could be a decline in quality of practice which would affect the lives of those children, young people and adults who seek social care support.

6.0 Reasons for decision

- 6.1 The role of the PSW contributes to a number of key priorities across Children's and Adult Services including Restorative Practice and strengths based practice which are approaches and models that enable social workers to build professional relationships with people who need services that help and promote an asset based approach to their practice. These approaches enable the workforce to strengthen families where children are at risk, promote the independence of older people and people with disabilities as well as safeguarding people in vulnerable situations.
- 6.2 The PSW provides dedicated resource to the recruitment and retention strategy which in turn should help the Council reduce the spend on agency staffing. The role is also responsible for raising the profile of social work in the city which also contributes to making the City of Wolverhampton a social work employer of choice.
- 6.3 The role provides the professional knowledge required to drive local and regional workforce development plans that will contribute to high quality, excellent practice.

7.0 Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising directly from this report. Any costs arising from the actions in the workplan, and priorities set by the PSW will be met from existing budgets.

[JG/09052023/H]

8.0 Legal implications

- 8.1 There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report.

[TC/05052021/B]

9.0 Equalities implications

- 9.1 Social workers provide support to the whole community covering all protected characteristics. This annual report highlights the actions being taken to ensure that social workers are supported to consider and tackle inequalities for all groups. The PSW will continue to ensure that issues relating to inequality for all groups of people with protected characteristics is incorporated into social work development plans.
- 9.2 From a gender perspective there are more female social workers across the children's and adults social work workforce (over 80%). In terms of ethnicity there is generally a slight over representation of social workers from a dual heritage, asian and black background compared to the local population. The Council's approach to fair recruitment is followed robustly for the recruitment of all posts within the Adults and Children and Young People's Directorate. This includes anonymous application forms, progression of people with disabilities to interview and diverse recruitment panels.

10.0 All other implications

- 10.1 There are no human resources implications. However, it is noted that close collaborative working has taken place over the last year on the implementation of the recruitment and retention strategy and action plan. This includes back-office support and attendance at social worker interviews and as part of recruitment campaigns.

11.0 Schedule of background papers

- 11.1 There are no background papers for this report.

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Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Chair: Councillor Qaiser Azeem

Vice Chair: Councillor Stephanie Haynes

Scrutiny Support: Earl Piggott-Smith

Remit, Function and Measures

- Ensuring that children have the best start in life and good early development
- Ensuring high quality education that closes the attainment gap
- Ensuring that children and young people grow up happy with good physical, social and mental health, and wellbeing
- Ensuring that every young person in the city is equipped for adulthood with life skills and ready for work
- Ensuring that families are strengthened where children are vulnerable or at risk
- % of Early Years and Childcare settings rated Good or Outstanding
- % of take up of 2-year-olds benefitting from early education
- % of schools in the city that are rated Good or Outstanding
- Average Attainment 8 score per pupil
- % gap in Attainment 8 score gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children
- % of 16 and 17 year-olds with SEND in education, employment, or training
- % of care leavers in education, employment, or training
- First time entrants into the Youth Justice System per 10,000 population
- Rate of children open to social care per 10,000 population under 18
- % of repeat referrals into Childrens Social Care with 12 months
- % of children and young people in care who have had 3 or more placements in the year
- % of EHC plans issued within 20 weeks

Item	Description	SEB Lead	Officer Report/Author Lead	Date of Meeting	Publication Date	Status
Wolverhampton Children and Young People's Self-Evaluation 2023-24	This is an annual report that is presented to the panel for comment.	Emma Bennett	Alison Hinds	27 July 2023	19.7.23	Programmed
Principal Social Worker Annual Report 2022 - 2023	This is an annual report that is presented to the panel for comment.	Emma Bennett	Jennifer Rogers	27 July 2023	19.7.23	Programmed
Education, Skills and Employment Strategy – Pre Decision Scrutiny	At the request of the Director, agreed by the Chair	Emma Bennett	Laura Collings	27 July 2023	19.7.23	Programmed
SEND Written Statement of Action - DFE/NHS monitoring	This will be a verbal update on the findings from the DFE/NHS monitoring visit on 6 July 2023	Emma Bennett	Brenda Wile	4 October 2023	26 September 2023	Programmed

meeting - update						
Childcare Sufficiency Assessment	This is an annual report that is presented to the panel for information and comment.	Emma Bennett	Phil Leivers	4 October 2023	26 September 2023	Programmed
WST Exploitation Thematic Review	At the request of the SEB lead	Emma Bennett	Andrew Wolverson	4 October 2023	26 September 2023	Programmed
WST Knife Crime Thematic Review	At the request of the SEB lead	Emma Bennett	Andrew Wolverson	4 October 2023	26 September 2023	
Cross Party Scrutiny Review Group - Written Statement of Action	The members of the working group to present an update following Ofsted visit to review progress against actions.	Emma Bennett	Brenda Wile	4 October 2023	26 September 2023	Programmed
Children's Social Care Reform -	To report on the new reforms – Pre-Decision)	Emma Bennett	Alison Hinds	4 October 2023	26 September 2023	Provisional

(Provisional – Pre-Decision Scrutiny)						
Performance, Budget Monitoring and MTFS	Standard item received as per last year	Claire Nye / Charlotte Johns	Alison Shannon / James Amphlett	22 November 2023	14 November 2023	Programmed
SEND and Inclusion Strategy	At the request of the SEB lead	Emma Bennett	Brenda Wile	22 November 2023	14 November 2023	Programmed
Youth and holiday offer in the City	Panel requested details of youth holiday offer and progress since earlier report.	Emma Bennett	Andrew Wolverson	22 November 2023	14 November 2023	Programmed
Family Hubs and Start for Life Offer Programme	The panel requested an update on plans to establish the programme and to review progress.	Emma Bennett	Alison Hinds	22 November 2023	14 November 2023	Programmed
School Exclusion and Suspension	The panel requested on update on	Emma Bennett	Brenda Wile	31 January 2024	31 January 2024	Programmed

	plans to reduce the number of school exclusions and suspensions.					
Education Excellence: Update and monitoring	The panel requested an update on progress following the presentation of a previous report draft in January 2023.	Emma Bennett	Phil Leviers	31 January 2024	23 January 2023	Programmed
Social Work and Workforce Health Check	This is an annual report that is presented to the panel for comment specifically on the survey findings from social workers and other workers in children's service.	Emma Bennett	Jennifer Rogers	13 March 2024	5 March 2024	Programmed
School's Organisation Plan	To report on the plan following	Emma Bennett	Brenda Wile / Bill Hague	13 March 2024	5 March 2024	Programmed

	request from the Chair.					
School Appeals	Panel requested a report following the item last year.	David Pattison	Laura Gittos / Jaswinder Kaur	13 March 2024	5 March 2024	Programmed

Future Work Programme

- Wolverhampton’s Youth Justice Plan 2023-2024
- Wolverhampton Holiday Activities and Food Programme Annual Report 2022/2023
- Children’s Residential Provision Business Case – Briefing Note in October 2023 (Alison Hinds), approved by the Chair.
- Pupil Premium Briefing Paper as requested by the Vice-Chair – September 2023 – Phil Leivers
- Pupil Premium Plus Briefing as requested by the Vice-Chair – July 2023 (tbc) – Darren Martindale
- Proposed visit to new Children’s Residential Care Homes (tbc) - Alison Hinds
- Proposed visit to Family Hub network (tbc) - Alison Hinds