



# Corporate Parenting Board

## 11 September 2014

**Time** 5.30 pm      **Public Meeting?** YES      **Type of meeting** Oversight  
**Venue** Committee Room 4 - Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton WV1 1SH

### Membership

**Chair** Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)  
**Vice-chair**

#### Labour

Cllr Paula Brookfield  
Cllr Susan Constable  
Cllr Jas Dehar  
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre  
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss  
Cllr Rita Potter  
Cllr Martin Waite

#### Conservative

Cllr Christine Mills  
Cllr Patricia Patten

#### Liberal Democrat

Quorum for this meeting is three Councillors.

### Information for the Public

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

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Wolverhampton WV1 1RL

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

# Agenda

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

- | <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Title</i>  |
|-----------------|---|
| 1               | <b>Apologies for absence (if any)</b>   |
| 2               | <b>Declarations of interest (if any)</b>  |
| 3               | <b>Minutes of the previous meeting (3 July 2014)</b> (Pages 1 - 6)<br>[For approval]  |
| 4               | <b>Matters arising</b><br>[To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2014]   |
| 5               | <b>Work Programme 2014/15</b> (Pages 7 - 8)<br>To consider the proposed Work Programme for the 2014/14 Municipal Year]  |
| 6               | <b>Performance Monitoring - Looked After Children (LAC)</b><br>[To receive a report on Performance Monitoring data in respect of the Looked After Children service][TO BE CIRCULATED] |
| 7               | <b>Looked After Children (LAC) Transitions Team - Annual Report</b> (Pages 9 - 26)<br>[To consider the Annual Report of the Looked After Children (LAC) Transitions Team]             |
| 8               | <b>Adoptions Team - Annual Report</b> (Pages 27 - 48)<br>[To consider the Annual Report of the Adoptions Team]  |
| 9               | <b>Corporate Parenting Pledge - Refresh</b> (Pages 49 - 60)   |
| 10              | <b>Exclusion of the public and press</b><br>[To pass the following resolution:  |

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information on the grounds shown below]

## Part 2 – exempt items, closed to the public and press

- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 11 | <b>Councillors visits to establishments</b><br>[To receive details of any visits to establishments undertaken by Councillors since the last meeting] |
|----|--|

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# Corporate Parenting Board Minutes - 3 July 2014

## Attendance

**Chair** Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)

Cllr Paula Brookfield  
Cllr Susan Constable  
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre  
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss  
Cllr Rita Potter  
Cllr Martin Waite

## Employees

Emma Bennett	Assistant Director, Children, Young People and Families, Community
Alison Hinds	Head of Service, Looked after Children, Community
Lorraine Millard	Designated Senior Nurse Safeguarding, Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group
Darren Martindale	COPE Team Manager/ Virtual School Head, Community
Puja Taloy	Participation Officer, Community
Carl Craney	Democratic Support Officer, Delivery

## Representatives of the Children in Care Council

Sekia Biye  
Angel Bryan  
Kyron Hughes  
Shaideen Malcolm

*Item No.*    *Title*

**1        Apologies for absence (if any)**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Jas Dehar, Mrs Christine Mills and Mrs Patricia Patten.

a)       Chair's Announcement

The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, introduced Alison Hinds, head of Service, Looked after Children, to the Board.

**2        Declarations of interest (if any)**

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre declared personal interests in any matters pertaining to pertaining to Woodthorne School (Chair of Governors), Central Learning Partnership (Heath Park, Moseley Park and Woden Primary Schools) [Director], City of Wolverhampton College (Governor) and Graiseley Primary (Governor).

**3        Minutes of the previous meeting (12 March 2014)**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**4        Matters arising**

The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson referred to Minute No. 5 (Health care Services Annual Report) insofar as it referred to waiting lists for referral to the CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service) and advised that at a recent Families in Focus meeting this had been identified as an issue insofar as it related to those children who were not in the care of the local authority. Emma Bennett explained that a piece of work was currently being undertaken on pathways for access. There was an issue in the City inasmuch as there was no Tier 2 provision due to capacity. It had originally been planned that this would be picked up by the MAST Teams but the Behaviour and Mental Health Workers had been lost with effect from April 2014 following the withdrawal of the DSG grant for schools. Lottery funding had been applied for to provide for early interventions with the 10 – 14 year old age group (Headstart Scheme). If successful trial schemes would be rolled out across the City and the possibility existed of further lottery funding in 2015/16.

Resolved:

That the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel be requested to consider the access arrangements to the CAMHS service and to identify any issues for further consideration.

## 5 **Dates and Times of Meetings - 2014/15 Municipal Year**

Resolved:

That meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board be held on the undermentioned dates commencing at 17:30 hours in the Civic Centre, Wolverhampton:  
11 September 2014;  
14 October 2014;  
19 November 2014;  
21 January 2015;  
11 March 2015.

## 6 **Performance Monitoring - Looked After Children (LAC)**

Emma Bennett presented Performance Monitoring Information based on an extract from high level information from May 2014. She advised that the format of the information had been amended to better represent the outcomes and indicators.

With regard to the information relating to Number of Looked After Children per 100,000 population, Emma Bennett reported that 15 children had been admitted into the care of the local authority on one day in May 2014, including a family of nine and a further family of five. She advised that there was now a multi -agency “edge of care” meeting which endeavoured to keep families together and children out of local authority care where possible and practical. She further advised that she oversaw personally all new LAC admissions and care proceedings. With regard to the large families, Cllr Paula Brookfield enquired as to whether intervention had been made at too late a stage. Emma Bennett explained, in general terms, the particular case histories of both large groups.

With regard to the information relating to Health Checks, Emma Bennett reported that this was an area of concern and that discussions were underway between both the Council and the Wolverhampton City Clinical Commissioning Group (WCCCG) and the WCCCG and the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust to address these concerns. She advised that it was, however, possible that the figures were being affected detrimentally by Out of City placements. Cllr Paula Brookfield enquired as to whether it would be possible to separate out the report to reflect In City and Out of City placements. Emma Bennett explained that the report included details relating to any Out of City placements within a 20 mile radius of Wolverhampton. Lorraine Millard assured the Board that the issues were being addressed and actioned.

Cllr Martin Waite enquired as to who was responsible for ensuring that LAC received the appropriate health checks. Emma Bennett advised that a process was in place which ensured that both Social Workers and Independent Responsible Officers were alerted to the anniversary of health checks and that this ensured that all appropriate arrangements were made in good time. Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre questioned the position on the age at which LAC / Care Leavers and Young Offenders on remand remained the responsibility of the local authority. Emma Bennett undertook to arrange for the circulation of a Briefing Note in connection with this issue.

With regard to the information relating to PEP's up to date and School Attendance, Emma Bennett reported that for the information to include school attendance information this would need to be inputted manually. Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre drew to the attention of the Board that the method of calculation relating to school attendance had been changed by the Department of Education and that authorised study leave was now treated as an unauthorised absence. He also enquired as to whether there were individual Education Plans and Personal Education Plans or whether they were presented as a combined document. Emma Bennett confirmed the latter to be the case.

With regard to the information to Adoptions, Cllr Paula Brookfield commended the expeditious manner in which adoptions were being processed but enquired as to rates of placement failure. Alison Hinds advised that the Council had a very low rate of placement failure and that this had been the case historically.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted;
2. That a Briefing Note be circulated in connection with the age at which Lac / Care Leavers and Young Offenders on remand ceased to be the responsibility of the local authority.

## **7 Role and remit of the Corporate Parenting Board**

Resolved:

1. That in the absence of any newly appointed Councillors consideration of this item be deferred;
2. That as all Councillors had Corporate Parenting responsibilities the PowerPoint presentation be amended and circulated via the respective political groups to all Councillors;
3. That the respective political groups be requested to consider inviting the Children in Care Council to make a presentation to group meetings.

## **8 Children in Care Council**

[Representatives of the Children in Care Council, as listed above, together with Puja Taloy, Participation Officer, were present for this item.]

Angel Bryan, on behalf of the Children in Care Council (CiCC), advised that it wished to re-visit and refresh the Council's Corporate Parenting Pledge. She requested that the Board divide into three groups to discuss various elements of the current Pledge with the representatives from the CiCC. Following the division into Groups the Board considered feedback on the following areas of concern:

- Care Leavers;
- Education / Employment;
- Out of City Young People / New Looked after Children;
- Complaints;
- Other issues including working in partnership in the Black Country and further training for staff.

Resolved:

1. That the Children in Care Council be thanked for attending the meeting and facilitating the discussions and that the Chair be requested to send a suitably worded letter to the CiCC expressing the Board's thanks;
2. That the Children in Care Council be requested to consider further the various issues raised during the group discussions and feedback sessions and report back to a future meeting.

## 9 **Work Programme 2014/15**

The Board considered a report which outlined a proposed work programme which would enable it to fulfil all statutory requirements and the Council to fulfil its Corporate Parenting Responsibilities. The programme also aimed to align the work of the Corporate Parenting Panel with that of the Children in Care Council. The report also identified suggested dates for visits to be undertaken to residential homes. In addition to the themes identified, it was also intended to submit a Performance Monitoring report to each meeting of the Board.

[The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson left the meeting. Cllr Julie Hodgkiss in the Chair.]

A number of Councillors expressed concern in relation to the proposed work programme inasmuch as it appeared to propose consideration of a series of Annual Reports which could be viewed as limiting oversight on particular themes to once per year. The scheduling of the meeting with Foster Carers' in advance of consideration of the Annual Fostering Service report was also questioned.

Resolved:

1. That consideration of the Work Programme be deferred until the next meeting;
2. That the report be amended to reflect the points made in the discussion;
3. That with regard to visits to establishments a letter be prepared and circulated to all members of the Board addressing the accessibility of the various establishments, proposed travel arrangements and whether the visits were to be accompanied or unaccompanied.

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**Proposed Corporate Parenting Board Programme 2014-15**

**Corporate Parenting Meetings**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>11 September 2014</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leaving Care</li> <li>2. Adoption – Annual Report</li> <li>3. Corporate Parenting Strategy Refresh</li> </ol>
<b>23 October 2014</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fostering Report – Annual Report</li> <li>2. Meet with foster carers – fostering report</li> </ol>
<b>19 November 2014</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Health of LAC – Annual Report</li> <li>2. CAMHS – Annual Report</li> <li>3. IROs/Safeguarding – Annual Report</li> </ol>
<b>21 January 2015</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Virtual School Report</li> <li>2. Interim Adoption Report</li> </ol>
<b>11th March 2015</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Annual Report and outcomes of Children &amp; Young People in Residential</li> <li>2. Annual Report on Participation including consultation and engagement of LAC</li> </ol>

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# Corporate Parenting Board

## 11 September 2014

<b>Report title</b>	LAC Transitions Team's Annual Report 2013-14	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Sarah Norman, Community	
<b>Originating service</b>	LAC	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Sharon Green	Senior Consultant Social Worker
	Tel	01902 553097
	Email	sharon.green@wolverhampton.gov.uk

### **Recommendation(s) for action or decision:**

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to: Receive and note the annual report of the LAC Transitions Team for the year 2013-14

#### **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The annual report provides an overview of the team's activities for the year together with a commentary on our performance and plans for the future. It provides members of the corporate parenting panel an opportunity to scrutinise the services provided by the team.

#### **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Each team within the looked after children's service is required to produce an annual report. This is the second operational year of the team and our first opportunity to report on a full years progress.

#### **3.0 Financial implications**

- 3.1 The LAC Transitions Team budget for the 2013/14 financial year was £1.3 million. The outturn for 2013-14 was £1.4 million

- 3.2 There are two items within the report that will have significant financial implications during the current financial year. These are the potential to make savings of £143,000 through the extension of the in-house supported accommodation service (reported at section 7.5 of the annual report), and the costs associated with the need to update the staying put policy and procedures to reflect the changes in the Children and Families Act 2014 which both widen access to staying put and allow the young person to stay in such an arrangement until they are 21.
- 3.3 The council's current staying put policy and procedure ends this arrangement on 31 August following the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday to allow young people to complete their education. This change introduces the potential for significant increased costs to the Council which the Staying Put Implementation Grant of £26,000 is unlikely to meet.

[DK/29082014/D]

#### **4.0 Legal implications**

- 4.1 There are no known legal implications associated with this report. RB/22082014/K

#### **5.0 Equalities implications**

- 5.1 There are equality implications associated with the work that the LAC Transitions team undertake as we work with many young people with protected characteristics in the equality act. An equalities analysis has not been undertaken but this will be redressed following advice from the equalities team in the near future.

#### **6.0 Environmental implications**

- 6.1 There are no known environment implications associated with this report

#### **7.0 Human resources implications**

- 7.1 There are known no human resources implications associated with this report

#### **8.0 Corporate landlord implications**

- 8.1 There are no corporate landlord responsibilities arising from this report.

#### **9.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 9.1 There are no background papers.

**LAC TRANSITION TEAM**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**APRIL 2013 TO MARCH 2014**

CONTENTS	PAGE NO.
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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 2013-2014 has been an interesting, challenging and increasingly busy year for the team. We have made good progress in many of our aims for the year including the successful integration into the team of the supported accommodation service previously managed by NACRO, the establishment of a care leavers steering group and improvement in some key practice areas for example, working with young people who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation or who are missing through our links to the sexually exploited, missing and trafficked (SEMT) panel.

1.2 We have also seen improvement in respect of key performance indicators and improvements in respect of the quality of assessment and outcome focussed planning in respect of both care and pathway planning following the implementation of the single assessment documentation and the training associated with this.

1.3 Our progress has, however, slowed over the second half of the year in some areas, particularly strategically, as workloads have increased, given the rise in the number of looked after children and those qualifying for aftercare services, resulting in the service having to increasingly focus on practice to ensure that the needs of our young people are prioritised.

1.4 We welcome that these workload constraints have been recognised and redressed in the proposals for the LAC restructure though the provision of some additional posts and look forward to pressing forward strategically and achieving the objectives set out in the team's plan in the forthcoming year

1.5 This report details the vision of the LAC Transitions Team and the service we provide and comments on future goals

## **2 LAC TRANSITIONS TEAMS VISION**

2.1 The team's vision is informed by legislation, statutory guidance and departmental policy and guidance including The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and the Children and Young Person's Act 2008, Wolverhampton's Children and Young People's plan 2011 – 2014 and the Corporate Parenting Action Plan.

2.2 Our vision is to improve outcomes for Looked After young people aged 14 – 18 years and Care Leavers in all areas of the Every Child Matters agenda.

We aim to provide a service which:

- Is accessible to young people
- Is child focussed
- Encourages young people to reach their potential
- Encourages young people to participate in the development of the service
- Uses resources effectively and efficiently

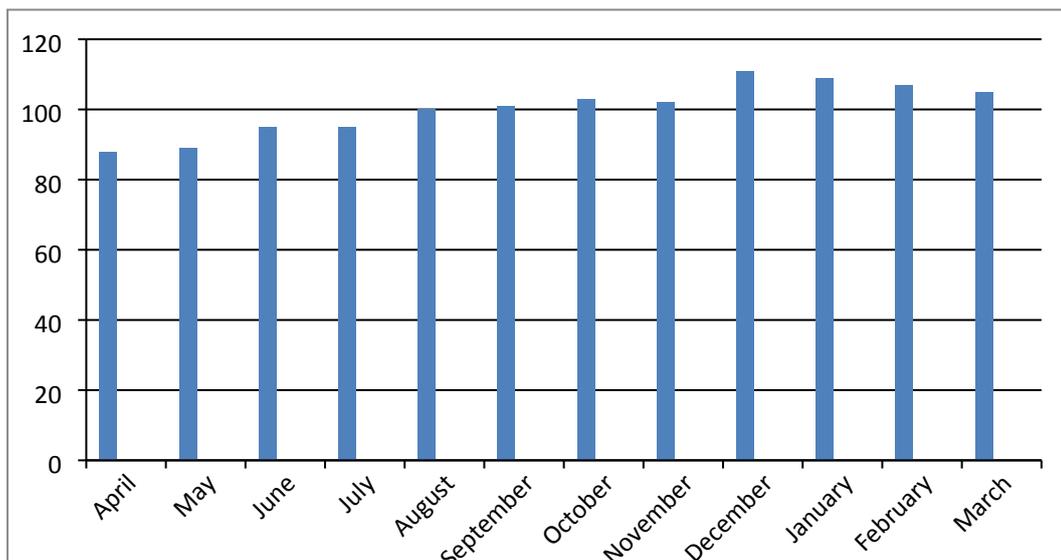
- Helps young people to prepare for and achieve independence
- Helps young people to avoid crisis and help them to identify and to respond to difficulties as they emerge
- Ensure young people know where to go for help and support
- Ensure young people are well supported by the team and our partner agencies
- Narrow the gaps between Looked After Children and Care Leavers and their peers in the community in all areas where these exist.
- Celebrates the success of young people

Our team plan details how we intend to achieve this.

### **3 Services Provided**

3.1 We are a multi-disciplinary team comprising of qualified Social Workers, Personal Advisors, a Senior Housing Worker and an Education, Employment and Training Coordinator. (See appendix 1 for Staffing Structure chart)

3.2 We provided services for Looked After Children and Young People aged 14 to 25.



3.3 The above table illustrates the number of Looked After Children receiving a service from the team. This demonstrates a rise in the average number of looked after young people on a social workers caseload from 17.6 in April 2013 to a high of 22.2 in December. This data also slightly underestimates actual caseloads as Social Workers will also carry some child in need cases e.g. where a young person who had been looked after subject to section 20 Children Act 1989 is rehabilitated home. In practice the caseloads were also not evenly distributed as we had three newly qualified social workers on the team who needed to be afforded some caseload protection. Given the high caseloads it was agreed in December 2014 that an agency worker could be

used across the three LAC teams. Our third share of this worker brought the average number of looked after children on a social workers caseload down to 19.68 in March 2014.

3.4 The Social Workers are responsible for assessing the needs of LAC and for planning how these needs will be met. The Social Workers are also responsible for leading their 'hub' which are central to facilitating collaborative working between themselves and the Personal Advisors.

3.5 Personal Advisors and Social Workers share responsibility for developing and implementing a Care Leavers 'pathway' to adult life. The pathway planning process changed slightly in summer 2013 with the introduction of new single assessment documents. Social workers retain responsibility for completing the assessment of need prior to the young person's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday but have gained the responsibility for recording the pathway plan for 16 and 17 year old Looked After Children. Each young person is required by statute to have a Pathway Plan when they are 16 years old. Personal Advisors contribute to the development of the pathway plan for 16 and 17 year old Looked After Children and continue to undertake direct work with them. They retain responsibility for reviewing and recording the pathway plan for care leavers over 18. Personal Advisors must visit Care Leavers, at a minimum of every 8 weeks.

3.6 The average caseload of a Personal Advisor has risen significantly throughout the year from 27 in April 2013 to 32/33 in March 2014. The Personal Advisors assume primary worker responsibility for young people aged 18-25 years and co-work with Social workers for Looked After Children from the age of 15 years and 9 months. This includes co-working with Social Workers from other teams as not all 14+ Looked After Children are transferred to the LAC Transitions Team e.g. where a LAC has younger siblings it is often best practice for the Social Worker on the LAC team to retain case responsibility for the whole sibling group.

3.7 The Employment, Education and Training (EET) Co-ordinator and Senior Housing Worker provided specialist advice and guidance to the Social Workers and Personal Advisors and undertake direct work with young people. The work of the team in the area of EET and accommodation is further detailed below

3.8 All assessment and planning completed within the team is child centred and involves the young person's family and friends, where appropriate, their carers' and other key professionals (see partnership section below).

#### **4 Improving Outcomes for LAC and Care Leavers**

4.1 The current structure of the team encourages earlier and better structured preparation for adult life and therefore improved outcomes for Looked After Children and care leavers. "A successful transition to independence is inevitably linked both to the quality of the care experience in general and the

specific support directed at the transition itself". (Rebecca Faith, Di Hart and Lisa Payne 2012). Previously with Social Workers and Personal Advisors working in separate teams referrals for Aftercare Services were regularly received late with the young person having received none or limited specific preparation for independence.

4.2 The multi-disciplinary nature of the LAC Transitions team redresses this. Our Social Workers and Personal Advisors work closely together in "Hubs" (See appendix 1) to ensure that planning for independence begins early, is collaborative, involves the young people, their carers' and others who support them and allows time for contingency planning when arrangements break down.

4.3 The "hub" arrangements also provides better continuity for the young people we work with as there is an expectation that all of the workers in the hub will have some knowledge about the young people in their hub and the young person will have some knowledge of the workers.

4.4 The structure also ensures that pathway plans are overseen and authorised by a qualified Social Work Practitioner.

## **5 Partnership work**

5.1 Practitioners continue to involve all key agencies from private, statutory and third sector organisations in assessing the needs of children and young people and planning how these needs will be met.

5.2 We have also worked strategically with internal and external partners including Adult Services, Human Resources, Residential Services, Connexions, Wolverhampton Homes and other accommodation providers, NCAS, the Education and Business Partnership and Base 25 to improve service provision and have provided training for partners.

5.3 'Exchange' and joint training sessions continue to be undertaken with adult services to ensure that practitioners have a good understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, to identify and overcome challenges in the transition process and to generally improve working relationships between the teams. The outcome of this has improved the transitional experience for young people. Young people with additional needs who may need support from Adults' Services are identified and referred at 16 with co-working between the two services commencing by the time the young person is 17 ½ years old.

5.4 LAC Transitions have also been represented on several of the work streams for the 'transforming transition project' which is driving forward improvements in transition for young people with additional needs more generally. One of the changes arising from this work has been the establishment of a transitional panel attended by senior managers to ensure that any obstacles to a smooth transition are addressed in a timely fashion.

5.5 We have continued to work with Care Advisory Service members, regionally and nationally, throughout the year to keep up to date with changes in leaving care and benchmark practice so we can improve practice and influence policy makers.

5.6 Work has been undertaken with the Youth Offending Service to encourage effective collaborative working between the two services for young people at risk of offending. This has included the development of a joint protocol for care leavers subject to Detention Training Orders to ensure that an effective plan is in place for their release.

5.7 With a view to develop their knowledge and contacts, each practitioner has chosen a specialist area to promote partnership work. This enables us to provide a team with a vast and diverse bank of knowledge which can be shared with colleagues.

5.8 The team are also represented at a number of forums including CFUG, the Sexually exploited, Missing and Trafficked Panel and Wolverhampton's Young Peoples' Accommodation Forum.

5.9 The work with Human Resources, Base 25, Connexions, the Education and Business Partnership and other housing providers is detailed in the education and accommodation sections below.

## **6 Providing education, employment and training (EET) opportunities for Care Leavers.**

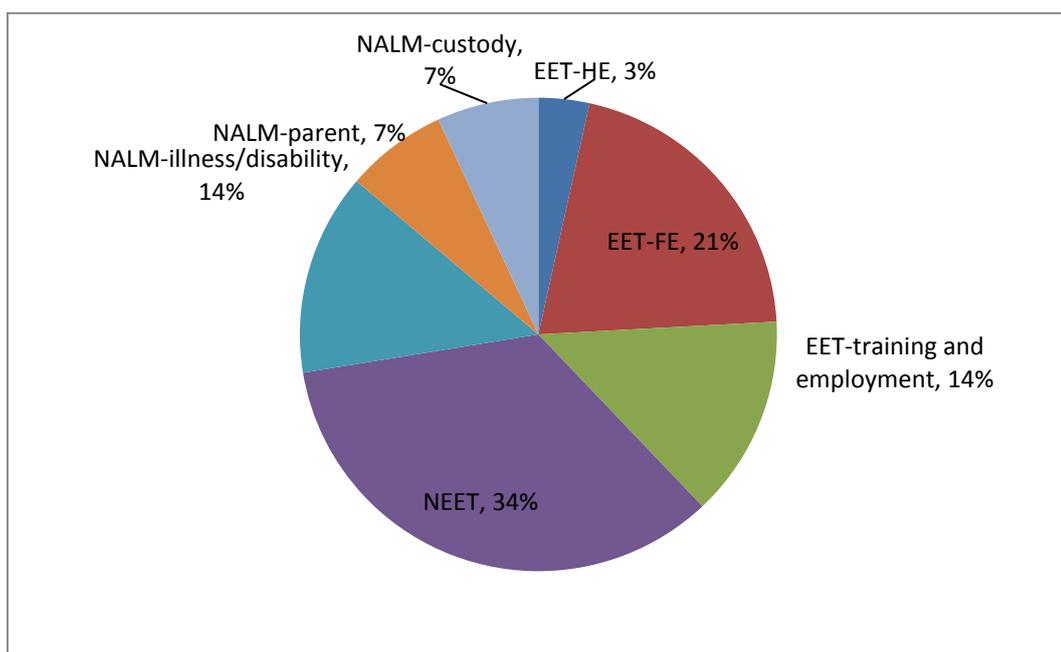
6.1 This has continued to a challenging area given the economic climate during the year, the impact of this on the labour market and because the vacant Education, Training and Employment Co-ordinator Post was not filled until late August 2013.

6.2 Even with constraints against us we have progressed in this area, as follows:

- Monthly meetings between the Looked After Children's Education Service (LACES), LAC Transitions and Connexions have been maintained to identify those at risk of becoming 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) and promote appropriate intervention in response to this. This collaboration was particularly successful in ensuring the transition of year elevens into EET in September 2013 where 94.1% care leavers made the transition into year 12 and 84.1% remained in EET in March 2014. This cohort will continue to be tracked as they make the transition into year 13 this financial year together with the new year eleven cohort as they make their transition into year 12. We anticipate that this approach will incrementally improve our overall EET performance including increasing the number of our care leavers going to university.

- A strategic education meeting has been established on a quarterly basis to share information and drive forward the EET action plan. Membership includes representatives from the education and business partnership (EBP), Wolverhampton College, Fostering Team, Local Provider Services, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Connexions
- Human Resources have continued to circulate information to allow Care Leavers to apply for entry level internal job vacancies.
- We have worked closely with the EBP to ensure that Care Leavers take advantage of Wolverhampton apprenticeships and the agreement in place which guarantees them an interview.
- We have initiated work with the DWP partnership manager to work toward implementing the Governments expectations to improve cross service work to improve outcomes for care leavers as set out in the Care Leavers Strategy document, October 2013. All care leavers are now 'flagged' on DWP system to allow Job Centre staff to provide more flexible support and earlier access to the work programme for care leavers and to track and monitor the effectiveness of these changes on outcomes for care leavers.
- We have worked with Catch 22 to develop an action plan which should lead to the achievement of a Buttle Quality Mark in the next financial year

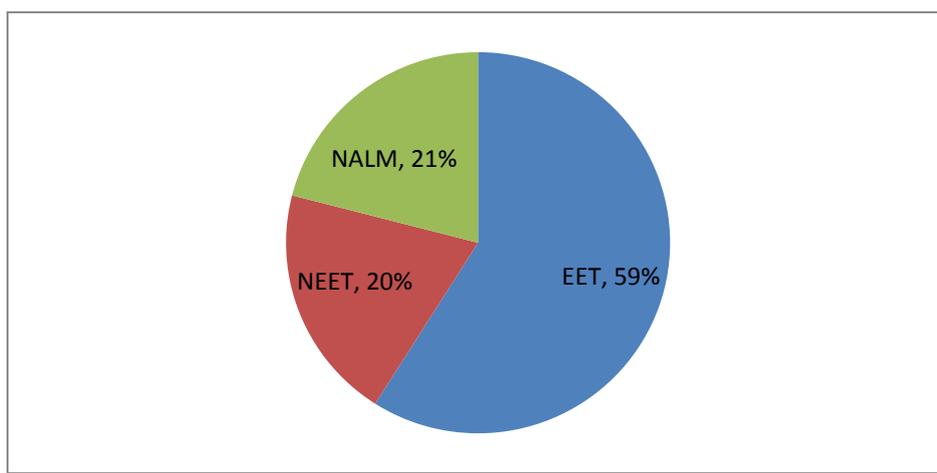
**6.3 Data in respect of EET in respect of NI 48 cohort on 7/4/2014.**



This pie chart represents the EET/NEET/ 'not available for the labour market' (NALM) data in respect of NI 148 cohort in April 2014. This is group represents the sample of 30, 19 year old Care Leavers reportable for National data collection purposes. Our performance in this area, with only 40% of the group in EET, reflects, at least in part the limited availability of EET provision for those aged 19 and over. (Please note chart marginally underrepresents %EET as each of the three EET areas have been rounded down on the chart to show representation as a whole number)

#### **6.4 Data in respect of Care Leaver Population over 16**

The chart below represents the EET situation for the 209 care leavers aged 16 plus for whom there was a EET classification on 7/4/2014.



#### **7. Providing accommodation options for Care Leavers**

7.1 Due to the diverse needs of Care Leavers, the LAC Transitions Team has access to a range of semi-independent and independent accommodation options. These are:

- Supported Lodgings
- Supported Accommodation
- Semi-independent Accommodation
- Independent Living in the Social or Private Rented sector, with flexible floating support as needed
- Enabling a young person to remain living with their former foster carers i.e.: Staying Put

Through effective planning and by working in a multi-agency setting, the Housing Service works with the Social Worker and Young Persons Advisor to ensure that there is a planned move towards independence for each Care Leaver and that the accommodation is most suitable towards their individual needs.

7.2 Supported Lodgings: The YMCA Open Door provides a contracted service to the LAC Transitions Team, with the provision of 8 supported lodgings placements for Care Leavers.

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, there were two Care Leavers, aged 16-18 years in stable supported lodgings placement, and a further three going through the matching process. There were also three Care Leavers, aged over 18, in Supported Lodgings placements, claiming Housing Benefit.

Regular meetings are held between the LAC Transitions Team and YMCA Supported Lodgings management to ensure that the terms of the contract are being complied with. The Senior Housing Worker also attends the quarterly Supported Lodgings Steering Group and sits on the Supported Lodgings Host Approval Panel.

#### 7.3 Night-stop:

Through effective partnership working with YMCA Black County, a Service Level Agreement was entered into in September 2012 to provide a Night -stop Provision to Care Leavers. This has eliminated the need to use Bed and Breakfast as an emergency provision. 11 Care Leavers have been placed in temporary Night-stop placements during 2013-14, two of which subsequently converted into a permanent Support Lodgings Placement.

#### 7.4 Supported ( Semi-independent) Accommodation

Semi-independent accommodation offers Young People an opportunity to live more independently whilst still having other people around and receiving support to develop independent living skills and work towards their goals in education, training employment and other areas of life. The move into Semi-Independent accommodation from a care placement is planned by the Social Worker and Young Persons Advisor through the appropriate statutory meetings and in discussion with the Young Person. Once it has been agreed that the Young Person is ready a referral will be made to the Wolverhampton Young Person's Accommodation Forum (WYPAF) in accordance with Wolverhampton City Council's Homeless Young People and Care Leavers Housing Protocol.

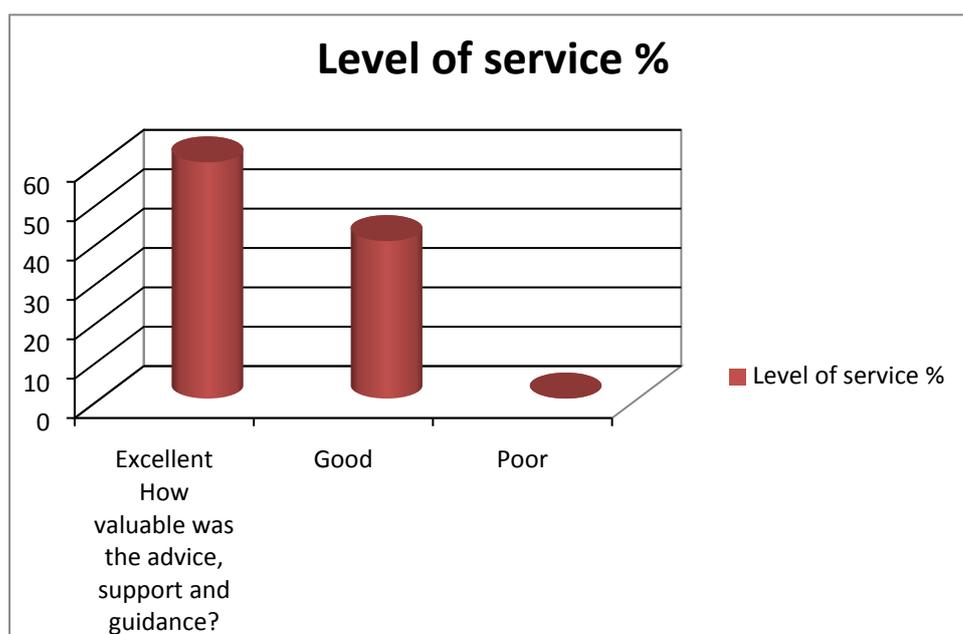
WYPAF is a multi-agency response to the housing and support needs of Young People, including Care leavers and the membership of the forum comprises of representatives of providers of supported accommodation, move on accommodation and agencies offering specialist support to Young People. The Forum is compliant with the Supporting People Framework.

The Senior Housing Worker presents the Young Person's referral at the forum and a majority decision will be made by representatives based on the needs in matching accommodation and support requirements on where the most suitable accommodation will be. 23 Care Leavers have been referred through to WYPAF for supported accommodation as part of the transition into Independence.

#### 7.5 Supported accommodation in house scheme

The supported accommodation service previously outsourced to NACRO has been managed in-house since April 2013 with the 2.5 Housing Support Workers supporting the service joining the employment of Wolverhampton City Council subject to TUPE arrangements. The positive outcomes for young people achieved and its cost effectiveness have led to plans being developed to extend the service from 6 to 10 units in the next financial year with a potential saving of £142,531.

#### 7.6 Feedback about the quality of our supported accommodation service



#### 7.7 'Inde' group

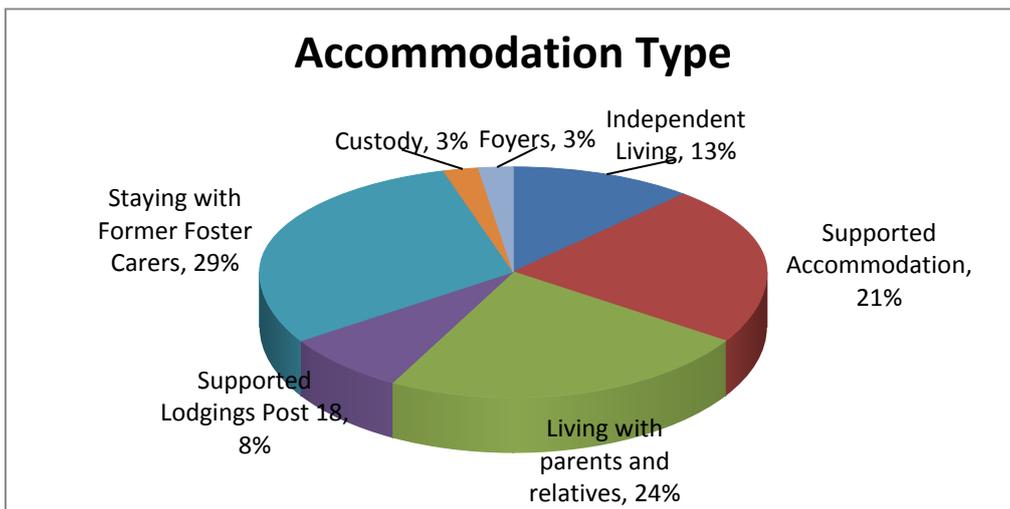
Consultation with care leavers including steering group members led to the establishment of the 'Inde' group in 2013. This informal monthly meeting provides young people thinking about moving into supported accommodation and those living in supported accommodation the opportunity to get together to share information discuss concerns and learn independent living skills. Representatives from partner agencies are invited to come along to talk about relevant topics e.g. anti-social behaviour, healthy eating, reducing risks in the home etc.

### 7.8 Move on into Independent Living

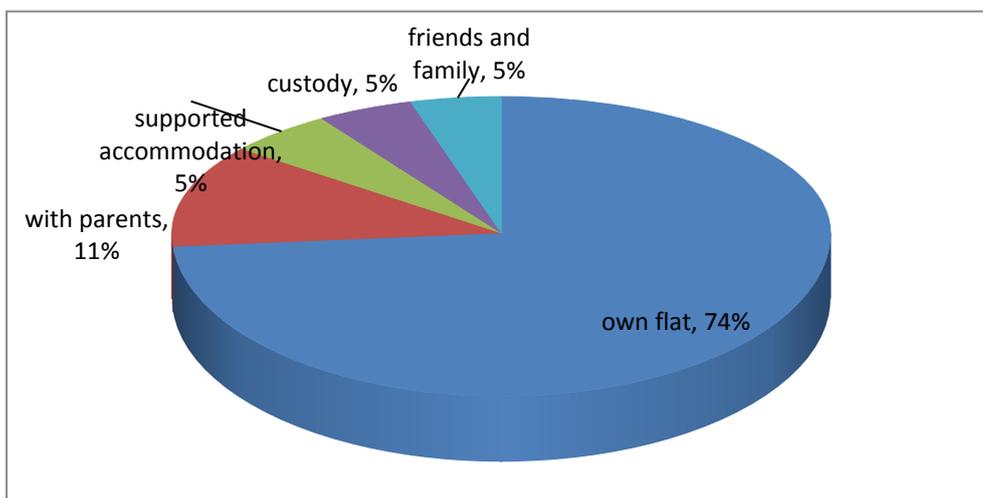
The move into independent living is planned and demonstrated in the Care Leaver's Pathway Plan. A Move On application is made and presented at the WYPAF meetings by the Senior Housing Worker. The application is supported by documentary evidence that the Young Person is ready to move on and ensures that all the necessary steps have been taken to enable the young person to take up an introductory tenancy with Wolverhampton Homes. Where appropriate, tenancy support is offered through the Tenancy Sustainment Team.

Applications accepted for Move on are referred to Wolverhampton Homes Housing Inclusion Team and processed onto Homes in the City by Wolverhampton Homes or other accommodation providers. As a Care Leaver, the Young Person's application is moved into Band 1.

### 7.9a Accommodation situation on leaving care of 40 Young People who had their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday during the year:



### 7.9b The chart below shows the accommodation situation of the 20 Care Leavers who completed the exit questionnaire in 2013-2014 aged 21 plus.



This illustrates how over the period of three years the majority of Care Leavers mature sufficiently to live independently.

## **8 Participation of Young People**

8.1 The children and young people we work with are encouraged to participate in the assessment, planning and review processes which inform the care that they receive. This includes encouraging them to chair their own meetings.

8.2 We also want to encourage Children and Young People to participate more broadly and have established a steering group and an 'Inde' group during the year to provide opportunities for care leavers to influence the development of the services provided by the team

8.3. Care Leavers leaving the service aged 21 years have completed an exit questionnaire. The analysis of the information they provided is available in a separate report.

8.4 We involved young people in every recruitment campaign.

8.5 We did advertise for an apprentice participation worker in 2013-2014 but unfortunately received a poor response and were unable to recruit to this post.

## **9 Plans for the future**

9.1 To increase the in-house supported accommodation service from 6 to 10 units.

9.2 To reconsider the development of an apprentice Participation post and/or other means of improving consultation and participation with young people.

9.3 To work with ICTS to see if a secure electronic 'filing system' can be developed to provide care leavers with easy access and safe storage of their care/pathway plan

9.4 To work with Information services to ensure that more comprehensive and reliable management Information will be available

9.5 To work with steering group to develop materials for the corporate and children's web-site so that care leavers can readily access information about their entitlements and other useful information.

9.6 To explore ways to raise the aspirations of Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

9.7 To revise policies and procedures in accordance with action plan agreed to ensure that policies reflect changes in Children and Families Act 2014.

9.8 To undertake cross service briefings/training to ensure policies and procedures relating to older LAC and Care Leavers are consistently applied

### **Conclusion**

Staff have continued to work hard throughout 2013-2014 to improve the services they provide and the outcomes for young people. The increased workload, given the rising numbers of looked after children has been challenging for managers and practitioners and has led to a delay in some areas of strategic development within the service. We do, however anticipate having the opportunity in the forthcoming year to complete some of actions which have eluded us this year.

We are looking forward in particular to the implementation of the restructure in June 2014 which does provide some additional resources for the team in key areas. The creation of the Senior Consultant role will provide additional capacity for strategic development.

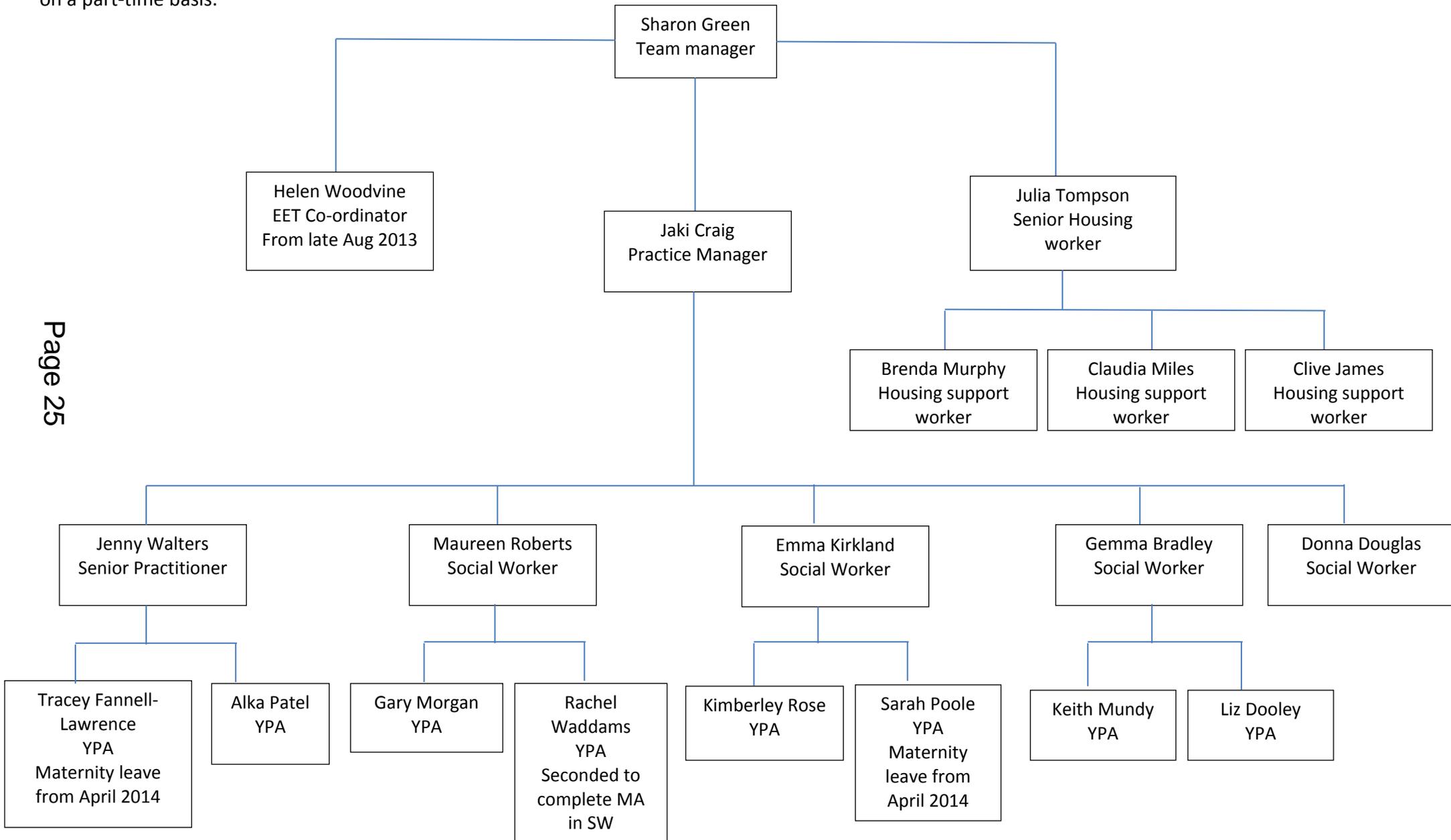
### Appendices

Appendix 1  
Team

Staffing structure chart of LAC Transitions

- A business case has been agreed to cover the seconded full time worker on a part-time basis.

# STAFFING OF LAC TRANSITIONS TEAM



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# Corporate Parenting Board

11 September 2013

<b>Report title</b>	Annual Report for Adoption	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Sarah Norman, Community	
<b>Originating service</b>	Children and Families	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Louise Haughton	Senior consultant Social worker
	Tel	01902 553070
	Email	<a href="mailto:louise.haughton@wolverhampton.gov.uk">louise.haughton@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>

## Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

That Corporate Parenting Board receive, observe and provide feedback on relation to the Adoption Team annual report.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 This report details the work of Wolverhampton City Council Adoption Service in the year April 2013 to March 2014.

The report also aims to give updated information in relation to adoption both nationally and locally. It includes legislative and practice changes, and how these have impacted on those affected by adoption in Wolverhampton.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The report has been completed to provide an annual update in relation to the work undertaken by Wolverhampton City Council Adoption Service.

## **4.0 Financial implications**

4.1

- 4.1 The 2013/14 Adoption team budget was £752,000. In addition, the council received an Adoption Reform Grant allocation of £1.1 million for 2013/14. A second, much smaller, grant of £249,000 has been awarded for 2014/15.

- 4.2 The Adoption Reform Grant has enabled the council to increase its staffing resources, marketing budget and capacity for interagency placements. The lack of an adoption reform grant would pose a threat to the adoption team budget and its ability to continue to improve performance.

- 4.3 The Government are currently trialling a national Adoption Support Fund which will allow adopters to access personal budgets for therapeutic services. Following the trial, which is due to end in spring 2015, it is anticipated that the Adoption Support Fund will be rolled out nationally in 2015. Local authorities would be required to contribute to the fund. As yet, no amounts have been announced.

[DK/26082014/U]

## **5.0 Legal implications**

- 5.1 The adoption service will update policies and procedures in line with new legislation and regulations. The local authority will be legally required to contribute to the adoption support fund. RB/22082014/L

## **6.0 Equalities implications**

- 6.1 An equalities analysis has not been completed at this stage however it is felt that there are equalities implications with regards to the adoption teams plan to increase the

number of prospective adopters and increase the number of children who are placed for adoption. Equality implications are addressed within the adoption team recruitment strategy.

**7.0 Environmental implications**

7.1 There are not any environmental implications.

**8.0 Human resources implications**

8.1 There are not any immediate human resource implications associated with the report.

**9.0 Corporate landlord implications**

9.1 There are no corporate landlord implications.

**10.0 Schedule of background papers**

10.1 There are no background papers attached.

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# Wolverhampton City Council



## **ANNUAL ADOPTION AGENCY REPORT APRIL 2013 – MARCH 2014**

**AUTHOR: ALISON HINDS – HEAD OF SERVICE, LAC**

## **ADOPTION PANEL REPORT 2013-2014**

### **1. Introduction**

This report details the work of Wolverhampton City Council Adoption Service in the year April 2013 to March 2014.

The report also aims to give updated information in relation to adoption both nationally and locally. It includes legislative and practice changes, and how these have impacted on those affected by adoption in Wolverhampton.

### **2. Legislation**

There have been some significant changes to regulations and further proposals for change are planned under the Adoption Reform Agenda and the Children and Families Act 2014 – this Act received Royal Assent in March 2014 and will be rolled out in 12 – 24 months

At the latter part of 2011 and beginning of 2012, the government formed an expert working group to look at Adoption Processes with a specific remit of identifying how more children can be adopted, how this can be done in a more timely way: and how more adopters can be approved in a much more timely way.

Amended Adoption Agency Regulations issued in June 2012, which took effect in September 2012, saw a change in how decisions that children should be placed for adoption are made. This had a significant impact on the Panel process and in effect Panels were withdrawn from making such recommendations to the Decision Maker. From September 2012 decisions as to whether children should be placed for adoption go directly to the Agency Decision Maker. The only exception to this is when children's plans are not being considered as part of care proceedings, when parents are giving their consent. Children whose parents are consenting to adoption are still being considered by Panel.

In January 2013 we saw the launch of the government paper 'Further Action in Adoption – Finding More Loving Homes' which introduced the National Gateway – First 4 Adoption and amongst other initiatives. Greater opportunity for adopter led family finding was introduced. Local authorities are required to make their adoption support services publically available to adopters – The local adoption support passport.

#### **i. Adoption Reform Agenda**

The government's interest in adoption is being driven by the Adoption Reform Agenda. This year has seen an extension of government interest in adoption which has been supported by grants to local authorities to aid improvements to adoption services. The ultimate aim is to ensure adoption is a realistic

outcome for all children where appropriate by nationally increasing the number of children adopted in a more timely fashion, and increasing the number of adopters approved – again in a timelier manner.

Wolverhampton received an Adoption Reform Grant. It was agreed by Senior Officers and members that this would be spent on adoption services both internally and through Adoption in the Black Country (ABC). This increased resources and has enabled development of the service with opportunities for innovation and pilot projects.

From the statistics, included in this report, it is evident that the increased resources has enabled the Adoption Service to approve more adopters, place more children with prospective adoptive families and ultimately ensure more children are adopted in Wolverhampton.

In Wolverhampton part of the grant was utilised to extend staffing resources. This included front line staff undertaking family finding, and support to the increased number of adopters we have approved. In addition an early permanence Social Worker was recruited to carry a caseload of children who had been identified, pre-birth, that their care plan was likely to be adoption. All of these unborn children were children of parents who had previous children placed for adoption.

This Social Worker held a caseload of 5 children. Two have returned to parents on care orders and the other three have a plan of adoption. Two children were placed with their adopters within 5 months and the third is 6 months. Moving forward all of these children would have potentially been suitable to have a plan of concurrency had we had concurrent carers approved at the time of planning.

For 2014/15 it is anticipated that we will work closely with CIN/CP Service to place children in similar circumstances with approved concurrent carers.

A Social Worker was also appointed to carry a caseload of children with a plan of adoption. This post was extremely effective allowing the Social Worker to focus entirely on progressing plans for adoption. Based upon the success of this post the new LAC restructure has incorporated a children's social work team within the adoption service to manage all adoption cases post placement order.

A life journey worker was also appointed for a year to support social workers in the production of life story work for children placed for adoption. This followed an OFSTED inspection recommendation. Additional staffing resources were utilised to support 18.5 hours backfill in the adoption team to enable Senior Social Worker – Nicilda Bond to lead on development of concurrency planning; and to provide an additional Practice Manager to lead on the adoption reform agenda and utilisation of the grant.

Further financial support was provided to support prospective adopters by paying for their medicals; commissioning of After Adoption to provide Safe Base support to approved adopters with children placed, and training for social

care workers in photography skills to enhance the quality of children's profiles used for family finding.

In addition the grant has enabled the purchase of iPad's for our independent panel members to increase efficiency and decrease cost in copying/disseminating paperwork.

Finally with support of the ARG Wolverhampton has updated its CareFirst electronic recording system to include all adoption and fostering assessments and processes. This will enable enhanced monitoring of performance management and supported the move towards electronic care records.

Part B of the ARG was utilised on increased capacity for inter-agency placements, given the introduction of the equalisation of the fee which has increased to £27,000 per single placement; and to support the development of a 5<sup>th</sup> ABC team which will be documented later in the report.

## **ii. Changes to Adopter Approval**

On 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013 new Adoption Guidance was implemented with the introduction of the stage 1 and stage 2 adopter approval process. The guidance introduced reduced timescales for completion of adoption applications.

Following an adoption enquiry, enquirers may register their interest in adoption with an adoption agency. Once the adoption agency accepts the Registration of Interest, prospective adopters enter Stage One of the approval process which is expected to take two months. During this time, the prospective adopters start to contribute to the assessment by collecting information about themselves alongside undertaking Stage One on-line preparation training. Simultaneously the adoption agency will request the DBS, relevant checks and arrange for the prospective adopters to have their adoption medical.

Following completion of Stage One prospective adopters will immediately move into Stage Two of the assessment process. This stage is expected to be completed within 4 months and ends at the decision made by the agency decision maker that the prospective adopters are suitable to adopt.

Prospective adopters can ask for a deferment between Stage One and Stage Two of up to 6 months if circumstances require this. If the time lapse between Stage One and Stage Two is any greater than this the prospective adopters must start the process again at Registration of Interest.

## **iii. Preparation Training**

During this reporting period there has been major change to the way adoption preparation is delivered in order to support the guidance and regulations relating to perspective adopter approval.

In line with the reform agenda Wolverhampton along with its ABC partners has developed an on-line training module which all prospective adopters must complete in Stage One.

The preparation training has been revised and condensed to a three day training programme delivered in Stage Two of the assessment process. This training is now delivered on a monthly basis by ABC. It was previously delivered over 5 days on a bi-monthly schedule.

A subsequent module regarding fostering for adoption and concurrency is being developed and will be completed shortly.

#### **iv. Concurrent Planning/Fostering for Adoption**

An additional aspect of the reform agenda is the development of early permanency models including concurrent planning and fostering for adoption; these options enable children with a plan of adoption to be placed with their potential prospective adopters earlier than previous legislation and guidance has allowed.

Wolverhampton has developed, with the support of a partnership with Coram Adoption Agency, a concurrency model.

Fostering for Adoption arrangements have also been implemented.

During this period there have been 3 approvals of concurrent carers and one approval of fostering for adoption carers.

One child has been placed under fostering for adoption arrangements, and one placed concurrently.

This development led work will continue with Nicilda Bond continuing as the lead practitioner.

### **3. Adoption Support Services**

We continue to ensure our service reflects the Adoption Support Regulations 2005, having the equivalent of 1.5 members of staff who hold adoption support posts.

There is a dedicated part time post from the adoption team establishment which co-ordinates all of the post adoption contacts both direct and indirect.

The service facilitates the exchange of all indirect contact and also arranges many of the direct contacts. Support and guidance are offered to all parties involved including birth family members, adopted children and their adoptive parents.

Wolverhampton City Council continues to work in partnership with the other Black Country Authorities i.e. Walsall, Sandwell and Dudley to purchase adoption support packages from Adoption U.K. and After Adoption enabling us to work in partnership with these organisations. These support packages provide services to adopters, adopted children, adopted adults and birth family members.

In relation to Adoption U.K. the partnership agreement has been reviewed within this period to ensure we are purchasing an effective support package which meets the needs of approved adopters and prospective adopters.

All prospective adopters continue to receive 12 months free membership to Adoption U.K., unless they choose to opt out of this. All prospective adopters will be offered the support of a buddy (adoptive parent mentor or parent consultant) who reflects their own situation. This support will be offered either at the point of being linked to a child or at any point during placement.

All prospective adopters will be invited to attend the Adoption Support Group run by Adoption U.K. on a bi-monthly basis. Adoption U.K. are keen to ensure the success of this support group and have structured the meetings more formally to include speakers and presentations. These meetings are held at in Walsall and Halesowen. This offers adopters the opportunity of meeting with other adopters at a group run by adopters themselves. Adopters are also able to access Adoption UK training workshops.

In addition to this, the Black Country Consortium has implemented a post approval training programme. This now consists of four/five workshops each year. The workshops are available to approved adopters who are either waiting for a placement, those who have had a child placed, or those who have adopted. The workshops for this year were: Introducing Theraplay, Attachment, Helping Adopters to tell their adopted children of their adoption and background, Social Networking Implications for Adopters and Understanding the Impact of Early Trauma.

The second Black Country partnership arrangement is with the organisation After Adoption, again in conjunction with the Black Country agencies.

After Adoption continues to provide services on behalf of ABC. The first is an existing service which provides support to adopted adults, adopted children and birth relatives. The organisation supports intermediary services, counselling, and helping adopted adults to trace their birth family.

After Adoption also offers independent counselling to all birth parents where the plan is adoption for their child.

In partnership with ABC After Adoption is commissioned to deliver two cases per year of Safebase. This is a parenting programme which includes an initial MIMS assessment. The feedback from adopters who have attended is very positive.

In addition Wolverhampton has also been able to offer our adopters the opportunity to attend a “Circle of Security Programme” which helps develop good secure attachments between children and their adoptive parents. This is led by a trained member of the Adoptive Service – Dawn Deans.

Wolverhampton has also been part of a national pilot for delivery of Adopt, another ABC initiative. The second 16 week programme is due to be delivered across the summer. Nicilda Bond, adoption support social worker has been trained on the national programme and will co-facilitate this group with colleagues from Dudley and Sandwell.

The first group was received very positively by adopters who feel the model offers good practical support enabling them to utilise their understanding in the parenting of their adopted children.

The government are currently trialling a national adoption support fund which will allow adopters to access personal budgets for therapeutic services. Following the trial which is due to end Spring 2015 it is anticipated that the Adoption Support Fund will be rolled out nationally in 2015. Local authorities will be required to contribute to the fund. An amount has not yet been announced.

#### **4. Family Finding**

The data included in this report will include how the performance relating to family finding is improving. As a reflection of the national trend, Wolverhampton is considering a greater number of much younger children for adoption, many of whom are part of sibling groups to be placed together. This poses increased challenges to the team in terms of increased numbers of children with a plan of adoption.

With the government emphasis on improving the timeliness of children to be placed for adoption, this is an area which has to be given priority within the team. We are conscious of our need to improve performance in this area. To this effect we now hold bi monthly family finding meetings with individual family finders to monitor and action family finding activity. We hold adoption tracking panels with Team managers from the LAC service to monitor children’s’ progress where they have a care plan of adoption. In addition we are utilising our social care officers to support the family finding roles by producing profiles, photographs, DVD’s and following up potential links for the Consortium or Register to enable a prompt exchange of paperwork. Wolverhampton Social Care Workers in the adoption team have attended a photography course at Wolverhampton College to enhance the quality of photographs and DVD’s of our children which are used when publishing both internally and externally. In addition with the support of the adoption reform grant a new digital camera has been purchased to support the improved quality of photographs.

Wolverhampton attends all Adoption Register exchange days across England and Wales and features’ our harder to place children at those events.

In July 2013 in partnership with BAAF, ABC hosted an Adoption Activity Day. This is an event where children and approved adopters take time to enjoy each other's company having fun at a planned activity day. The event was successful and adopters, foster carers, children and social workers all enjoyed a sunny activity day. The day produced a number of links for children across the Black Country. For Wolverhampton the day secured two links for two of our children in attendance. Wolverhampton will feature six children at three activity days in 2014 facilitated by Adoption West Midlands. A further activity day is planned for 2015 in conjunction with Adoption West Midlands and BAAF.

The statistics produced in this report will evidence how increased focus on and resources in family finding has improved the number of children placed for adoption and the number of adoption orders granted.

## **5. Adoption Scorecard**

The publication of the National Scorecard in January 2014 for the period 2010/13 led to further discussions with the Department of Education given Wolverhampton's performance in it's timeliness of placing children for adoption over the period 2010/13 had not improved from the previous year.

A dedicated analysis of the scorecard was produced and was sent to the DfE along with the adoption improvement plan. A telephone conference took place in March 2013 with the DfE to discuss the position. (Appendix 1)

Although there was an acknowledgement that performance did not appear to be improving, Wolverhampton were keen to demonstrate that we were clear about where we needed to improve and how we intended to do this. In addition we were able to draw to the attention of DfE our very positive performance compared to England's averages of placing older children and those of BME backgrounds. In addition our percentage of children leaving care due to an adoption order being granted, remains high compared to many other local authorities.

The analysis demonstrated that when looking at Wolverhampton's most recent children with a placement order granted since 2011 the performance in placing those children for adoption is well below the expected target. Although Wolverhampton's scorecard performance continues to being impacted by children who have previously taken longer place due to complexity of need, we still remain optimistic in our plans of adoption and acknowledge that those children may take a little longer to place.

Wolverhampton remains focused on the positives of adoption as a permanence plan, and remains optimistic in planning adoption for children who it is acknowledged maybe regarded as hard to place.

## **6. Functions of the Adoption Team**

In addition to the functions outlined above, the Adoption Team continue to offer services in all areas of adoption with the main functions being, approval and support of prospective adopters through to adoption orders being granted, notified adoptions, voluntary relinquishments and inter country adoptions and family finding.

## **7. Regional and Local Developments**

### **i) Black Country Consortium (Adoption in the Black Country) ABC**

Wolverhampton continues to be a part of this consortium looking at joint initiatives in adoption. This consortium has continued to work collaboratively over the last twelve months.

We have continued to jointly purchase services from both Adoption U.K. and from After Adoption, as detailed above.

The original remit of ABC was to recruit adopters for older children, sibling groups and those of minority ethnic groups. However, although all promotional materials and campaigns still reflect this, enquiries are also accepted from potential adopters who fall outside this category. The enquiries are equally shared throughout the four local authorities.

During this reporting period a scoping exercise was commissioned by the ABC. This piece of work was undertaken by Core Assets and BAAF following a tendering process; with a view to considering future development of the ABC Consortium.

Having given consideration to the options available, the consortium members favoured an opportunity to expand ABC by adding a 5<sup>th</sup> partner from the voluntary adoption agency sector. At the time of writing this report, a successful bid for an innovation grant of £300, 000 has been made to Adoption Focus who will work with ABC as the fifth partner. Adoption Focus and ABC will jointly recruit, train and support prospective adopters with a view to increasing Adoption Focus adopter approval by 30 families in 2014/15. These families will have Black Country children placed with them.

In 2013/14 ABC were able to develop a 5<sup>th</sup> team with the primary focus of recruiting an extra 24 families across the Black Country, and support to the implementation of the Stage One and Stage Two approvals process.

The virtual team consisted of a Team Manager and Administrator employed on a full time basis. Assessments of prospective adopters were commissioned to be completed by independent social workers, either directly or via an agency. This resulted in an extra 22 approvals

across the Black Country with families having Black Country children placed with them.

In addition all prospective adopters are now supported via their online training in Stage One and can attend a Stage Two preparation training group run by ABC on a monthly basis. For a cost of approximately £200,000 – 22 families were approved. To have purchased these families at a minimum of £27,000 each, this would have cost £540,000 across the Black Country.

During this period ABC has continued to increase its recruitment activities and spread with new offices in Telford and Birmingham. Its marketing has become more focussed in meeting specific needs of Black Country children. The marketing strategy is based upon recruitment strategy for all 4 local authorities. The adopter referral across the consortium has increased as an average in 2013/14 by 54% compared to 2012/13.

ii) Adopt West Mids

Adopt West Mids remains a strong regional consortium, which offers mentors, training, peer learning and development, a database exchange for children and families, and regional recruitment. A new website has been developed over the last 12 months, which offers information about adoption across the region.

**8. Panel Membership**

The Panel continues to function well supported by its committed members and support staff.

The appointment of an independent professional advisor, Lorna Carr, has enabled further development not only of the adoption panel but also a permanence panel established to consider the suitability of concurrent cases. Lorna has increased panel membership with the establishment of a central list of panel members.

**9. Panel Business**

The Panel met on 18 occasions during this period. It has become increasingly apparent that in order to agenda the increased number of prospective adopter approvals and links, then two panels per month are required. This has been evident since October 2013

There are also procedures in place for convening emergency Panels when required.

For the purpose of this report I will include children's decisions in this figure even though these go straight to the Agency Decision Maker.

Recommendation that children should be placed for adoption	Rescinding of adoption plan for children	Approval of prospective adopters	De-registration of adopters	Links of children with prospective adopters	Disruption reports
85 (63)	29 (15)	30 (14)	2 (0)	49 (43)	0 (2)

Previous year in brackets

- i) The numbers of children who should be placed for adoption considered at Panel or by the Agency Decision Maker this year is 85 compared to 63 last year. The number considered was 53 boys and 32 girls.

Of the 85 children, 51 were White British and 34 were of BME backgrounds. This represents a confirmed change from the previous year's 14% were of BME background in 2011/12 last year the figure rose to 32%, and this year this figure is 59%

This is an alarming figure as it is a massive over representation of BME children compared to both the looked after children population and the population of Wolverhampton. Further analysis of this area will be undertaken.

Given it is always significantly harder to place children of BME background; this is likely to impact upon the timelines of placing children for adoption in Wolverhampton.

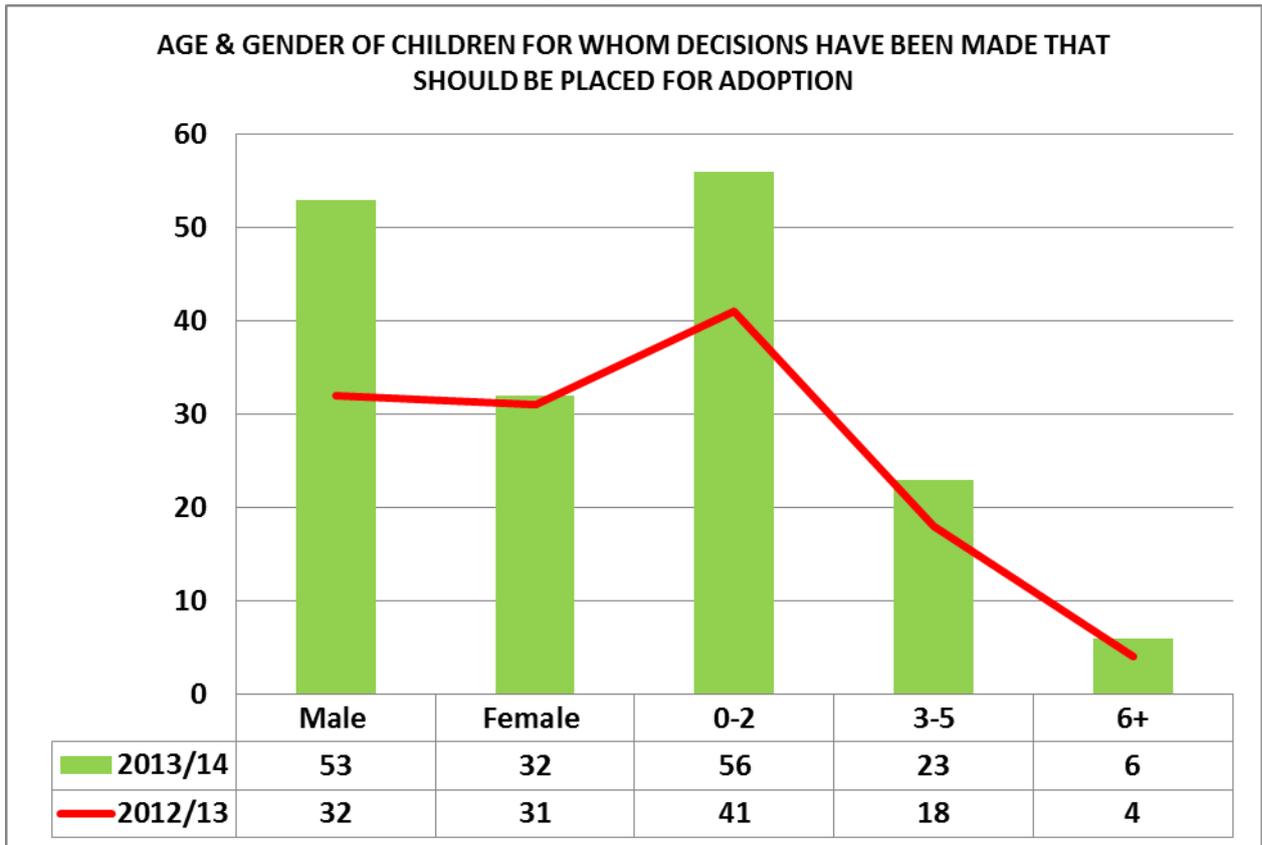
It is also helpful to look at the number of sibling groups included in this chart. 48% of the children were to be placed as part of a sibling group. This figure matches the national picture of 49%.

Of these children there were:-

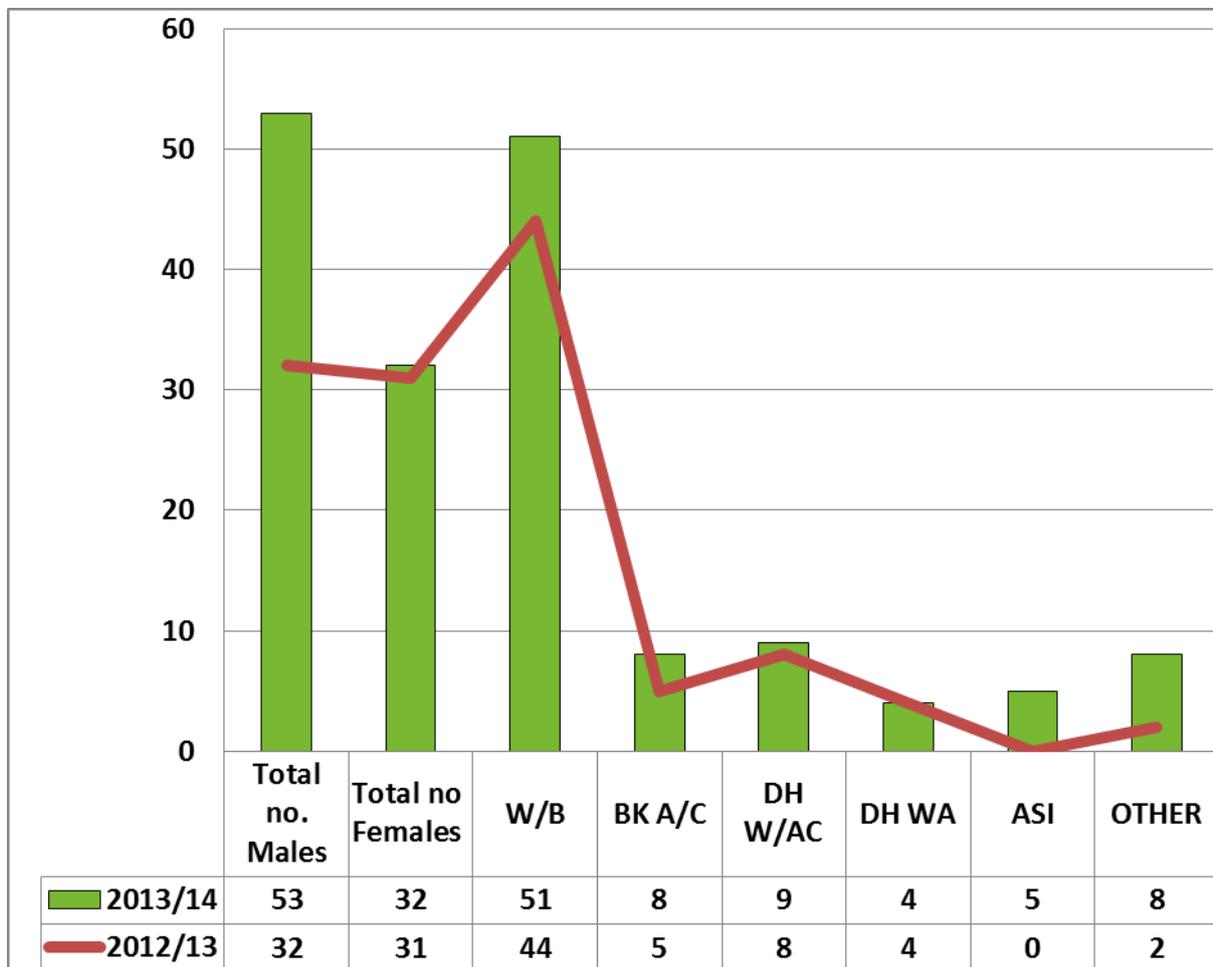
- 1 sibling group of 4
- 3 sibling groups of 3
- 14 sibling groups of 2

In addition a significantly larger group of children have had their plans changed from adoption this year compared to last reporting period. These children are children for whom the local authority has not been able to secure an adoption placement and an alternative plan of permanence has been agreed. This cohort is made up predominantly of older children, many of whom are to be placed as a sibling group, the majority of which are male children. For all children significant family finding has taken place prior to considering a change of plan and for the majority of those children a change of plan to permanent fostering will enable children to be placed on a permanent fostering with their current carers.

**Recommendations that children should be placed for adoption**  
**Total = 85**



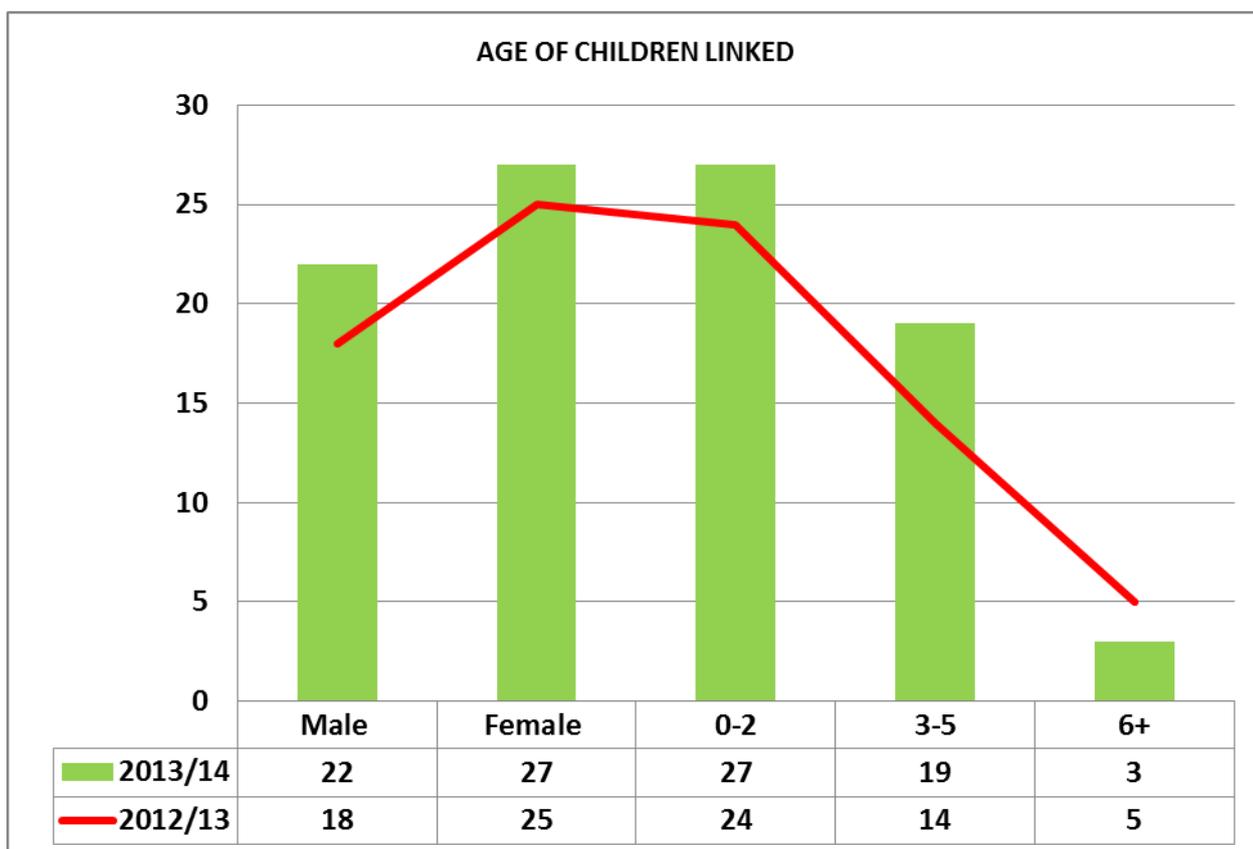
**ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN FOR WHOM A DECISION HAS BEEN MADE  
THAT SHOULD BE PLACED FOR ADOPTION**



ii) Children linked to prospective adopters

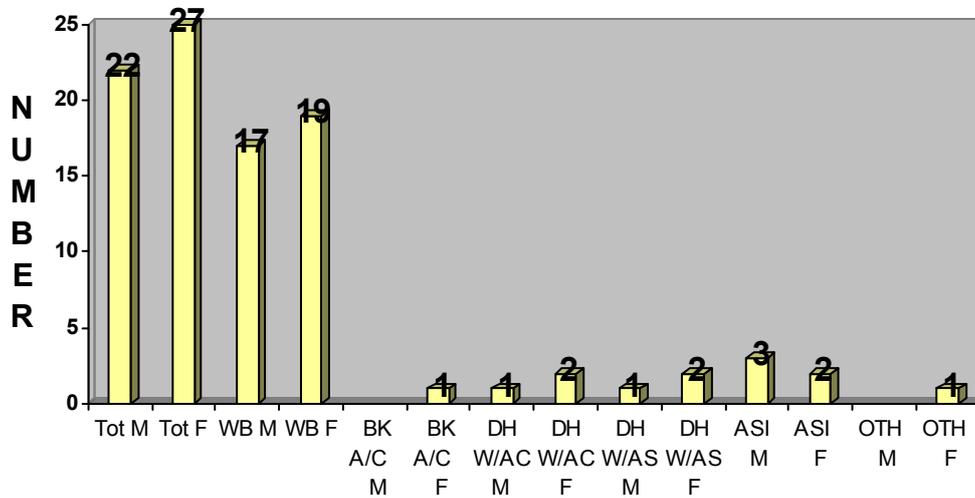
Panel recommended that 49 children should be linked to prospective adopters during the period, all of which were ratified by the Decision Maker. This is an increase from 43 children the previous year, and 20 children the year before that.

Of the 49 children linked at panel, 12 were to be placed as part of sibling groups of 2.

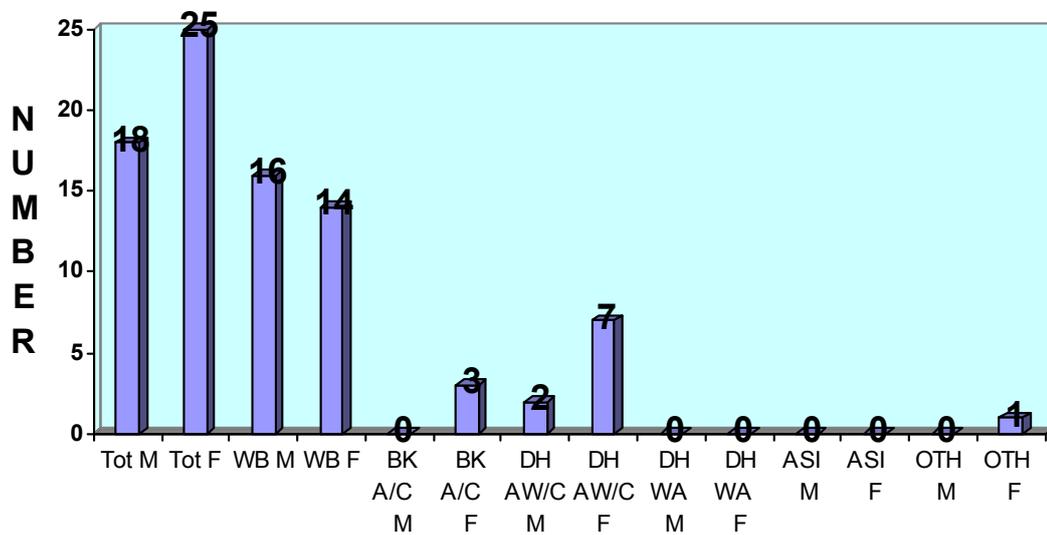


When considering the ethnicity of the children LINKED, 13 of the 43 children were of BME background. This equates to 30% of our children, evidencing that we are performing well in placing BME children.

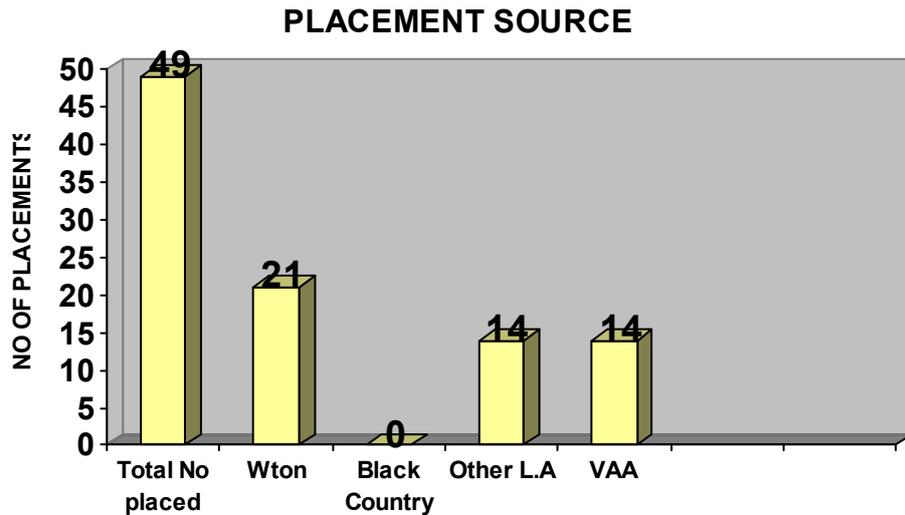
### GENDER AND ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN LINKED



### GENDER AND ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN LINKED

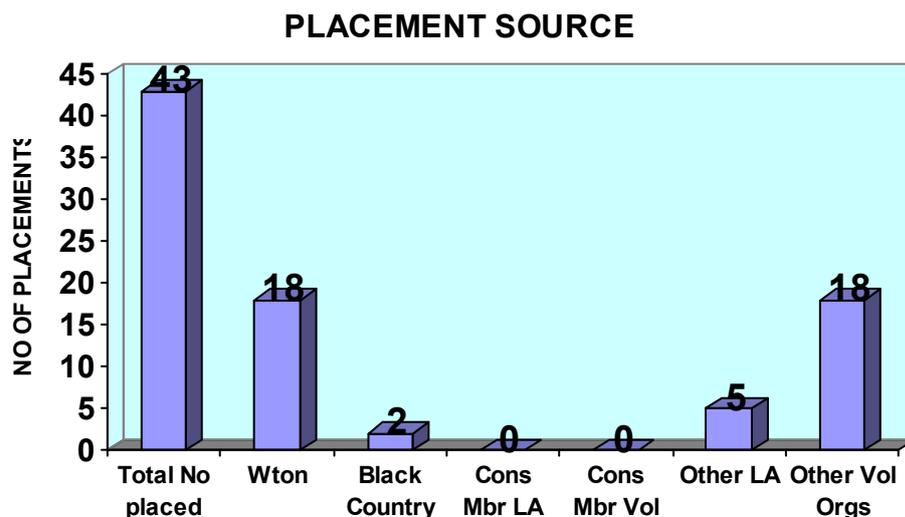


This year has seen an equalisation of the inter-agency fees meaning that all adoption agencies charge the same for providing a prospective adoption placement. For one child the cost is £27,000. The increased resources from the ARG has supported opportunities for increased inter-agency placements.



**APPROVING AGENCY 2013-14**

**COMPARISON GRAPH FROM PREVIOUS REPORTING PERIOD BELOW**



**APPROVING AGENCY 2012-13**

**iii) Approval of prospective adopters**

There were 30 approvals of prospective adoptive families during this period, including 3 approvals of concurrent carers. This is an increase of over 100% compared to the previous reporting period.

Our priority remains to assess prospective adopters who can meet the diverse needs of the children of Wolverhampton has waiting. However, as an adoption agency Wolverhampton is very aware of the children nationally that have a plan of adoption, and given the introduction of the equalisation of the inter agency fee to £27,000 for a single placement, with available resources, for approval, Wolverhampton may be able to offer prospective adoptive

families to other Local Authority's children bringing in additional resources to support the placement of Wolverhampton children.

ABC continues to experience a growth in numbers of enquiries and subsequent referrals. The number of referrals are exceeding projected figures showing the continued success of ABC (see Annex – Adoption in the Black Country end of year figures April 2013 – March 2014).

**10. Number of children adopted and timeliness of children placed for adoption**

There were 50 children adopted in this period, an increase from 35 last year and 20 the year before.

As part of the OFSTED Inspection Framework adoption agencies are required to report on the timeliness of children placed for adoption i.e. of those children adopted during this year – how many were placed with prospective adopters within 12 months of the ADM decision that they should be placed for adoption.

The target for this indicator is 75%. Wolverhampton is continuing to aim to ensure that this target is attained and have had an improvement plan in place to support this action. This year 68% of children adopted were placed with prospective adopters within 12 months of their decision that they should be placed for adoption, an improvement from 49% last year. When analysing the data, it remains apparent that Wolverhampton continues to be successful in placing harder to place children and it has to be acknowledged that this may take a while longer, but the outcome for the children is positive. Of the cohort of 50 children adopted during this period, 36% of the children were of BME backgrounds, compared to 29% last year.

What is also worthy to note is that 71% of children who have been adopted between January 2014 and March 2014 were placed within 12 months of the ADM decision. Of the four children whose timescales were well above the 12 month target in this period, 3 were of BME backgrounds, 2 were placed as a sibling group with their foster carers, 1 child had very complex needs and one had significant mental health complexities in her background.

Although Wolverhampton is keen to ensure we continue to improve performance so that children are placed in a timely fashion it has to be acknowledged that these four children would be expected to take a little longer to secure adoptive placements for.

**11. Complaints**

There have been no complaints received by Panel during this period.

## **12. Adoption Inspection**

The Adoption Service was inspected by Ofsted in October 2012. The inspectors were impressed with the overall improvements to the service in Wolverhampton and rated the local authority as Good.

Due to change in inspection framework the Adoption Agency will no longer be inspected separately, but as part of a Children's Services Inspection. A separate rating will be issued, as part of this overall inspection.

## **13. Summary of further developments**

- i) The iPad's for all independent panel members have been purchased and are currently being set up with the appropriate programmes. It is anticipated that panel will be paperless by July 2014.
- ii) The LAC Service will be implementing a restructure in June 2014. The Adoption Service will deliver its services across three social work units each managed by a Consultant Social Worker. The service will be managed by a Senior Consultant Social Worker. A significant change in delivering this new model is that social work units will hold case responsibility for all children with a plan for adoption post the making of a Placement Order. It is envisaged this model will culture to support the improvements planned.

Alison Hinds  
Head of Service (LAC)

June 2014

Updated by  
Louise Haughton  
Interim Senior Consultant

August 2014



# Corporate Parenting Board

## 11 September 2014

<b>Report title</b>	Corporate Parenting Strategy Refresh 2014
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families
<b>Wards affected</b>	All
<b>Accountable director</b>	Sarah Norman, Community
<b>Originating service</b>	Looked after Children's Service
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Darren Martindale: COPE Team manager / Virtual School Head 01902 551039
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Emma Bennet & Cllr Gibson

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### Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Approve the proposed work programme for 2014/15.

#### 1.0 Purpose

1.1 To update the council's Corporate Parenting Strategy, which outlines how the council will fulfill its statutory Corporate Parenting Responsibilities.

#### 2.0 Background

2.1 Wolverhampton City Council and its Partners have a legal and moral duty towards all of its Looked after Children and Care-leavers to offer them the kind of support a good parent would provide.<sup>1</sup> The Corporate Parenting Strategy outlines how the council will

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<sup>1</sup> Children Act 1989, Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, Every Child Matters 2003 & Children

ensure that we act as good Corporate Parents by ensuring the active engagement of all service departments of Wolverhampton City Council, Elected Members and Partners, at a strategic level. The original strategy was written in 2010 and needed to be updated to take into account various changes, including service restructure, and to reflect on the progress made against previous priorities as well as new and ongoing consultation with service users.

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

#### **3.1 Wolverhampton City Council Corporate Parenting Council Strategy**

##### **Foreword**

There are very few responsibilities and duties which are undertaken by the Council and its partners which are more important or pose a greater challenge than that of Corporate Parenting. Wolverhampton City Council takes these duties very seriously and has high aspirations for all of our children who are looked after. We recognise that a whole Council response is required to respond to their need with a coordinated and concerted approach towards developing policies, initiatives, services and budget priorities. In pursuance of this we are encouraged as Councillors, Officers and Partner Agencies to consider the following three questions:

*Is this good enough for my child?*

*Would this have been good enough for me as a child?*

*Is this the best that we can achieve?*

Wolverhampton City Council must work positively with its partner agencies, providing the platforms and levels of excellence to ask all our partners to share our ambitions for Looked after Children. This Corporate Parenting Strategy forms both our statement of intent and vision for the next three years and includes our Pledge to all Looked after Children.

Signed.....  
Lead Member for CYP

Signed.....  
Director of Children and Young People

#### **Corporate Parenting Strategy Aims**

Wolverhampton Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy for Looked after Children demonstrates the Council's commitment to furthering the life chances of every child and young person in its care. It aims to improve their outcomes, narrowing the gap between them and their peers, by providing effective support which enables them to reach their full potential. The overall aim of

the Strategy is to reinforce the corporate responsibility of the whole Council and its partner agencies through commitment to the development of policies, initiatives, services and budget prioritising. This Strategy requires the active engagement of all service departments of Wolverhampton City Council, Elected Members and Partners.

### **What is Corporate Parenting?**

“As the Corporate Parent of children in care we have a special responsibility for their well-being. Like any good parent, it should put its own children first. That means being a powerful advocate for them to receive the best of everything and helping them to make a success of their lives<sup>2</sup>” (DFES 2006)

The concept of Corporate Parenting was introduced by the Government in 1998 as part of a drive to improve the lives of children who are looked after by the local authority. The Corporate Parenting responsibility was reiterated and reinforced in 2007 with the release of the White Paper Care Matters-Time for Change and the underpinning legislation, Children and Young People Act 2008.

Wolverhampton City Council and its Partners have a legal and moral duty towards all of its Looked after Children and Care-leavers to offer them the kind of support a good parent would provide. Importantly, Wolverhampton City Council's Corporate Parenting responsibility can not be implemented by services targeted at children alone. It emphasises the collective responsibility of the Local Authority to achieve good parenting including services such as housing, regeneration and leisure. It is also important to note that every elected member of the Council has the specific responsibility of acting as a corporate parent.

Corporate Parenting is different from ‘ordinary’ parenting, in that the focus is not necessarily on forming personal relationships with individual children. Corporate Parenting is about prioritising and championing Looked after Children and this will look very different in different areas of the authority. Below are examples of what Corporate Parenting could look like across Wolverhampton City Council.

- Communications & PR: Prioritising news stories about Looked after Children which help to breakdown stigma of what a Looked after Child is both in the authority and also with the wider public.
- Library services: Provide all Looked after Children with their own library card when they come into care which can follow them around their placements.
- Planning: Consideration of Corporate Parenting responsibilities when a new children’s home is being proposed.
- Procurement: Building into all contracts that any companies working for WCC or Partners that they will offer Work Experience to Looked after Children or prioritise Care Leavers in apprenticeship roles.
- Culture & Leisure Services: To offer specific initiatives to Looked after Children and carers, including free or discounted entrance to venues such as theatres, art galleries, swimming pools etc.
- Housing: A designated link in housing for fostering services.
- ICT Services: Offer ICT support sessions to Looked after Children and their carers.

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<sup>2</sup> Putting Corporate Parenting into Practice, NCB 2008

## **What is the role of our Partners**

Whilst this is a Wolverhampton City Council Strategy it is vital that we recognise the importance of our Partners in the statutory, private and third sector. Wolverhampton City Council alone can not meet the needs of Looked after Children and Care Leavers and needs to work effectively with partners to demonstrate our Corporate Parenting responsibilities. Whilst this strategy is a Wolverhampton City Council document it is hoped that it will be adopted by our Partners and the resultant Action Plan is held across all the sectors.

## **Who are our Looked after Children?**

As Corporate Parents it is important for everyone to have a clear and accurate picture of who our Looked after Children are in order to be able to plan and commission services to best meet their needs. At 31 March 2014:

- 783 children are being looked after by the Local Authority (a rate of 139 per 10,000 children). This is an increase from 660 (119 per 10,000 children) at 31 March 2013; equivalent to an 18.6% increase.
- 58 (8%) live in residential children's homes, of whom approximately 43% live out of the authority area.
- 3 live in residential special schools, all of whom live out of the authority area.
- 547 (79%) live with foster families, of whom 70.8% live out of the authority area.
- 55 children live with parents or persons with parental responsibility.
- 3 children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- 106 (13.5%) of looked after children have a decision that they should be adopted; with 32 (30%) of those children currently being placed with their adoptive parents.
- 51% of LAC are in placements that are outside of Wolverhampton

The term 'looked after' is applied to any child whom the Authority is providing accommodation for where they are subject to care orders (Section 31) or where children are accommodated through a voluntary agreement and parents consent.(Section 20). Disabled children who receive a regular series of short breaks are also classed as looked after for those periods of time when they are in their short break accommodation. This strategy refers to all children and young people looked after by Wolverhampton City Council regardless of the route taken in to care and their legal status.

Looked after Children are recognised as among the most vulnerable children in our society. Children become looked after for a wide range of reasons, many will have been affected by distressing and traumatic life experiences including physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect. Some may come into care because of the illness or death of a parent, others may have a disability or complex needs. It is important to note that only a tiny minority of the children looked after is because of their anti-social or offending behaviour, the figure is approximately 2% nationally<sup>3</sup> (DCSF).

It is also important to note that disabled children and those from some ethnic minorities are often over-represented in the care system. As a result of their experiences and coming into the care system, children may experience disrupted education and multiple care placements; they may have difficulties with their social and emotional well being and lack stable relationships in their life. However placement stability is improving in Wolverhampton: 12% of Wolverhampton's LAC have had 3 placements or more, which is an improvement of 25% for 2012/13.

It is important that we recognise that as Corporate Parents we have a responsibility to our care leavers too. In February 2014 42% of carer leavers were in education, employment or training between three months before and one month after their 19th birthday. Again this has improved since 2012/13, for which the outturn was 30%.

### **Service Restructure**

Against this backdrop, the Council faces a significant budgetary challenge: the latest forecasts are that spending as a whole must be reduced by as much as £123.0 million over the medium term period 2014/15 to 2018/19. The Community Directorate is already committed to savings targets with a value of £36.2 million over the the medium term period 2014/15 to 2018/19, and will need to make even further savings if the Council is to reduce its growing budget deficit.

In the face of the financial pressures of our rising Looked After Children (LAC) numbers, the Council has committed substantial Invest to Save financial resources to its Children in Need/Child Protection (CIN/CP) and LAC services to meet additional placement costs, reduce caseloads and undertake targeted intervention work with families to prevent children coming into care.

The restructuring of Children's Services and the introduction of the New Operating Model (NOM) from April 2014 involves several strands of substantial organisational change. These are being carefully managed. It is hoped the developments in co-ordinated integrated working and emphasis on early intervention that characterise the NOM will enable substantial long term savings to be made as well as bringing about an improvement in the quality and efficiency of help available to vulnerable families when and where they need it.

### **Key Legislation & Local Policies**

- Children Act 1989
- Quality Protects 1998
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

- Every Child Matters 2003 & Children Act 2004
- Care Matters 2007 & Children Act 2008 –
- Wolverhampton City Council Corporate Parenting Policy 2007
- Integrated Placement Strategy, Securing Sufficient Accommodation for Looked after Children 2010.
- Statutory guidance on promoting the educational achievement of looked after children - Department for Education 2014
- In 2014, Wolverhampton will publish its Children, Young People and Families Plan (2014 – 24): the 10 year framework gives scope to improve the health, well-being and cohesiveness of families and the vision is ‘Healthy, Happy Families’: The four priorities are to:
  1. Reduce the harm caused by child poverty
  2. Increase achievement and involvement in education, training and employment
  3. Make families stronger (LAC/Toxic Trio)
  4. Improve the health of CYP and their families (infant mortality/childhood obesity/Toxic Trio)
- Looked after Children Service Action Plan 2014
- CAMHS strategy for Looked after Children

### **Elected Members and Governance**

Elected Members have a specific responsibility for children and young people who are looked after. The DFES in 2003 published guidance for all councillors about how to be a good corporate parent, *If This Were My Child*<sup>4</sup> states:

- Councillors have a clear responsibility to ensure that the services being provided to children in their care are of the highest quality.
- Councillors have no greater responsibility than when they act as corporate parent.
- Councillors’ role is crucial not just in drawing up policies, but in setting standards and seeing that they are met.
- Councillors should be involved in the setting of a vision and strategic objectives for looked after children and young people.

While all Members have a duty to ensure that the Council fulfils its responsibilities to its Looked after Children, Members who are appointed to the Corporate Parenting Panel have a specific responsibility to oversee this area of Council responsibilities. In Wolverhampton City Council the Lead Member for Children and Young People chairs the cross-party Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP), the chair of the local Foster Care Association and two members of the Children in Care Council also sit on this panel. The CPP is currently a

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<sup>4</sup> If this were my child, A councillors guide to being a good corporate parent, DFES 2003

regulatory panel with scrutiny being carried out by the Children and Young people Scrutiny panel.

Officers from across Wolverhampton City Council and its Partner Agencies are represented and held accountable at a senior level through the Corporate Parenting Strategic Officers Group. This Group has a responsibility for leadership, vision and implementation of the strategy. Themed Corporate Parenting Operational Officers Groups will be formed to move forward the action plan resulting from this strategy. The Children in Care Council will have responsibility for monitoring the Young Person's action plan that results from this Strategy and are consulted on each of the key service area reports on LAC, providing a response to accompany each report so that the views LAC are captured as well as those of elected members at CPP meetings (this is a new initiative for 2014).

### **The participation of Looked after Children in Corporate Parenting**

It is essential that the voices of Looked after Children are heard and considered in the shaping of services that support them. Planning how to meet the needs of Looked after Children has to be an endeavour based upon their full and active engagement and participation both on an individual and group basis

Wolverhampton City Council has a robust Children in Care Council which meets regularly and considers Council and Partner developments and offers an accessible reference group. The Participation Officer and Assistant Corporate Parenting Officer, who was the former Chair of the Children in Care Council, are driving forward developments. These include plans to create sub groups to meet the wider needs of the population including those with a disability, younger LAC and asylum seeker young people. Young people from the Children in Care Council attend certain Corporate Parenting Panel meetings and therefore have a direct link with the Elected Members. The plan for 2014/15 is that the new chair of the Children in Care Council will sit on Wolverhampton's Council wider Youth Council to ensure Looked after Children's views are represented. Feedback and evaluation of the from 150 children and young people during 2013/14

### **Progress to Date (July 2014)**

#### **Corporate Parenting Strategic Priorities 2011-2013**

The 2011-13 strategy was informed by consultation with a group of Looked after Children aged between 11-17 years from a variety of different placement types. Four key priorities were identified, relating to both Looked after Children and Care Leavers and actions were developed to address these priorities

#### **Priority One**

*"Have services understand us better."*

#### **Progress to date:**

- Total Respect Training has been delivered to 110 council employees within CYP&F in 2014, including staff from operational to senior management level. In addition, staff from 50 external providers have been trained and another 20 are booked onto courses in the near

future. This is still a priority however; Total Respect needs to continue to be rolled out to a wider audience, to include schools (see consultation below) and the training itself needs to be updated. This is addressed in the 2014/15 LAC Participation Work Plan.

- Since commencing in post the Designated Senior Nurse has raised the profile of LAC within Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group (WCCG) in order to raise the awareness of the needs of LAC in order to ensure appropriate provision of services.
- The Virtual School Head (VSH) provides regular training to designated teachers on the needs of LAC and is also working closely with Ofsted Lead Inspectors to raise their awareness; a presentation on LAC was delivered at the Ofsted regional meeting in June 2014.

### **Priority Two**

*“Focus on the positive things we do”*

#### **Progress to date:**

- The LAC awards ceremony has been a very successful annual event. Planning is currently underway for the 2015 ceremony. This remains a priority and we will continue to find new and creative ways to recognise and celebrate our young people. For example the Virtual School Head will be introducing awards for excellent school attendance in the 2014/15 academic year.

### **Priority Three**

*“Help us to make achievements”*

#### **Progress to date:**

- While LAC still underachieve significantly in comparison with their peers and therefore this area is still a priority, achievement is showing significant improvement:
  - 24% of all Wolverhampton LAC achieved 5+ GCSEs at grades A-C including maths and English in 2013 – a major improvement on previous years
  - English and maths levels have improved at all other key assessment stages (Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2) between 2010 and 2014
  - Levels of progress have improved significantly, for instance at KS2: 100% of LAC in Wolverhampton schools made the expected level of progress in reading in 2014 compared to 77.8% in 2010 while writing improved by 22.5% and maths by 44.7%

The introduction of the now statutory role of the Virtual School head (VSH) and Pupil Premium + for LAC will help to ensure that the best available educational support is provided to all LAC of statutory school age in a timely manner. Social workers must now consult with the VSH prior to any change to a school placement for a Looked after Child, which should improve educational stability, and PEP forms for pre-school and post-16 age eanges will be introduced in the 2014/15 academic year. The relevant council policies have been updated to reflect these and other changes.

*“Help us to spend time with children who aren’t in care”*

- This remains a priority and an area for further action

### **Priority Four**

*“Keep siblings together & give us more contact with siblings.”*

*“Let us make choices about school.”*

*“Give us more information and support about sexual health.”*

**Progress to date:**

- Siblings are kept together wherever possible, however this is still an issue to be addressed
- This has been addressed through increased participation in LAC reviews and an increasing focus on the quality of PEP meetings. The participation of LAC in their PEP meetings remains an area for further improvement, however the views of LAC are considered as carefully as possible when choosing schools and the increased involvement of the VSH in changes of school placement will help to strengthen this further
- The Designated Senior Nurse for LAC has reported increased engagement of LAC and Care Leavers with sexual health services to support their sexual health and relationship needs and reduced conception rates regarding LAC and Care Leavers under 18yrs.

**Corporate Parenting Strategic Priorities 2014-16**

In 2014 The Children in Care Council (CiCC) were consulted on whether the above priorities, as reflected in both the previous strategy and the council’s Pledge to LAC and Care Leavers, were still current and whether there were new or additional issues which needed to be prioritised. The CiCC felt that both needed to be updated, highlighting the following issues in the areas of education, Total Respect Training and leaving care:

*“Review the age for apprenticeships and try to make them available for care leavers beyond 18”*

*“Promote Total Respect to other Corporate Parents and look at the possibility of teachers attending the training.”*

*“Make work placements and apprenticeships more appropriate for Looked after Children”*

*“Promote independent skills from an early age and ensure that foster carers and residential staff are equipped with the correct training regarding independence.”*

*“Develop an independence programme/Leaving Care pack with the help of Looked after Children and Care Leavers”*

*“Ensure that Young People leave care with a good understanding of their life history and support those who need help with finding help with their birth families.”*

*“Provide ongoing support for Young People who need it and review the Leaving Care Charter.”*

It is clear from both the outcomes described above previous priorities should remain as Corporate Parenting Strategic priorities for 2014-16, as there is still progress to be made in these areas, despite some notable successes. However it is also evident from recent consultation that additional focus is required in two priority areas:

- Maximise access to work experience and apprenticeship opportunities for LAC and Care Leavers

- Strengthen care leavers' preparation for independence, teaching independence skills from an earlier age and increasing access to life story work

Following the planned recruitment of a new Corporate Parenting Officer in the Autumn of 2014, a new Corporate Parenting Action Plan will be created to outline how the council and its partners will respond to the above strategic priorities. With a focussed action plan for 2014-16 we will continue to move forward, despite the considerable challenges faced by Wolverhampton and all local authorities, in our role as a Corporate Parents.

#### **4.0 Financial implications**

- 4.1 This report has no financial implications.

[NM/03092014/G]

#### **5.0 Legal implications**

- 5.1 The relevant legislation is set out in the body of this report. There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report. RB/03092014/H

#### **6.0 Equalities implications**

- 6.1 This plan aims to significantly improve equality of opportunity for LAC, who are a very disadvantaged group. No other groups will experience any loss of opportunity as a result of this plan, and mechanisms for impact assessment are built in to the processes described.

#### **7.0 Environmental implications**

- 7.1 There are no environmental implications

#### **8.0 Human resources implications**

- 8.1 All of the proposed developments can be made within existing resources

#### **9.0 Corporate landlord implications**

- 9.1 There are no corporate landlord implications

#### **10.0 Schedule of background papers**

10.1 There are no background papers

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