



Corporate Parenting Board

11 March 2015

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 Jasbinder 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:

Contact Carl Craney
Tel/Email Tel: 01902 555046 or carl.craney@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Address Democratic Support, Civic Centre, 2nd floor, St Peter's Square,
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 | Apologies for absence (if any) |
| 2 | Declarations of interests (if any) |
| 3 | Minutes of the previous meeting (21 January 2015) (Pages 3 - 8)
[For approval] |
| 4 | Matters arising
[To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2015] |
| 5 | Safeguarding Service Annual Report 2013/14 (Pages 9 - 24)
[To consider the annual report for the Safeguarding Service which outlines the activity of the service, the impact for children and recommendations for service improvement that will enhance young peoples experiences] |
| 6 | Performance Monitoring - Looked After Children (LAC) (Pages 25 - 34)
[To receive a monitoring report on Performance Monitoring data in respect of Looked After Children] |
| 7 | Exclusion of the public and press
[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 – items not open to the public and press

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8 | Councillors visits to establishments
[To receive details of any visits to establishments undertaken by Councillors since the last meeting] |
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Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes - 21 January 2015

Attendance

Chair Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)

Labour

Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Rita Potter

Cllr Martin Waite

Conservative

Cllr Christine Mills

Cllr Patricia Patten

Employees

Emma Bennett
Carl Craney
Louise Haughton
Alison Hinds
Helena Kucharczyk
Darren Martindale

Service Director - Children, Young People and Families
Democratic Support Officer
Social Worker
Head of Looked After Children
Business Intelligence Manager
COPE Team Manager/Virtual School Head, Community Directorate
Strategic Director - People

Linda Sanders

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence (if any)

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre and Lorraine Millard (Designated Senior Nurse Safeguarding Children, Wolverhampton City Clinical Commissioning Group).

2 Declarations of interests (if any)

No declarations of interest were made relative to items under consideration at the meeting.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting (19 November 2015)

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2014.

5 Virtual School Headteacher Report 2013/14

Darren Martindale, COPE Team Manager / Virtual School Head, presented the Virtual School Headteacher report 2013/14. The report informed the Board of the work of the Virtual School for Looked after Children (LAC) over the 2013/14 academic year and highlighted successes, learning points and areas for further development.

With regard to school admissions, Cllr Rita Potter questioned who made the selection for LAC. The COPE Team Manager / Virtual School Head advised that with In City placements LAC were treated in exactly the same way as mainstream children i.e. consideration would be given when the child was in Year 5 as to the options available and the individual child would be involved in the nomination of preferences. Similarly, in the case of In Year Transfers, support would be given including attendance at the School Admission Appeals Panel if necessary.

Cllr Mrs Christine Mills referred to those LAC who had not attained an 85% attendance at school and questioned whether this related primarily to those children in residential care and at the higher age range. The COPE Team Manager / Virtual School Head confirmed this to be the case. He also explained steps which had been taken to address unofficial exclusions where children attending Pupil Referral Units were sent home but were not marked on the Attendance Register as absent. In addressing this issue however the number of official exclusions had increased with the consequential effect on non-attendance statistics. In response to a question from Cllr Paula Brookfield he advised that non-attendance was an issue with a small group and it was being focussed on with a variety of options being made available

with a view to achieving re-engagement. It was intended to use Educational Psychologist support in future funded through the Pupil Premium.

Cllr Martin Waite enquired as to whether Education Support Officers attended Out of City Placements. The COPE Team Manager / Virtual School Head responded that with only 2.5 full time equivalent posts, the postholders concentrated on In City placements with Out of City placements being supported by the Senior Teacher Advisor and himself. He advised that the Educational Psychologists also supported LAC in Out of City placements.

Cllr Mrs Patricia Patten enquired as to whether in a case where a school was over-subscribed i.e. where applications for places exceeded the admission limit if any form of preferential treatment was available for LAC. The COPE Team Manager / Virtual School Head reported that this was the case both in terms of exceeding Infant Class limits and under Fair Access protocols.

Cllr Jasbinder Dehar welcomed the proposals for the new Personal Education Plans (PEP's) including for those children with Special Educational Needs and the 16 – 18 year groups. She questioned the support provided to children where English was an additional language. The COPE Team Manager / Virtual School Head reported that his Team worked closely with the EAL (English Additional Language) Team and on the differing teaching strategies available for use with those children.

Cllr Jasbinder Dehar sought clarification as to the work undertaken by the "Beanstalk" Volunteer Reading Help (VRH) programme. The COPE Team Manager / Virtual School Head reported that this involved a group of volunteers attending primary schools and providing 1:1 support in learning to read. This initiative had been in use in the City for some considerable time and was also used by a number of other local authorities.

With reference to Personal Education Plans (PEP's), Cllr Julie Hodgkiss reminded the Board that the Children in Care Council had expressed a wish for meetings on these to be held outside school hours if possible to avoid stigmatisation of LAC. The COPE Team Manager / Virtual School Head reported that he was addressing this matter with Designated Teachers and it had been raised at PEP training sessions with a request that the meetings be held at more appropriate times. Cllr Martin Waite suggested that there was a need to improve the attendance of Social Workers at PEP meetings and enquired whether the attendance would improve as a result of the recruitment of additional Social Workers. The COPE Team Manager / Virtual School Head advised that this would be the case and that he considered it to be critical that Social Workers attended and contributed to such meetings. The Service Director Children and Young People commented that the recruitment of additional Social workers would improve the quality of interventions and would, therefore, also reduce individual caseloads enabling greater attention to each child.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted;
2. That the COPE Team Manager / Virtual School Head and his team be congratulated on the report and the work undertaken during the 2013/14 academic year;

3. That the Children in Care Council be invited to submit comments on the report and to send representatives to a future meeting to present any comments with a view to shaping future strategic decision making and scrutiny;
4. That future reports include detailed information pertaining to participation of LAC in further and higher education.

6 Adoption Agency interim report

Louise Haughton, Senior Consultant Social Worker Adoption presented a report which updated the Board on the work of the Adoption Service from April 2014 to January 2015.

Cllr Rita Potter welcomed the success of the Adoption Service in securing the adoption of older children and sibling groups. She enquired as to whether there was a cut off age when adoption ceased to be an achievable option. The Senior Consultant Social Worker Adoption advised that this was not the case. Alison Hinds, Head of Looked After Children reported that in accordance with policy, the Council would always consider whether adoption was the most appropriate option for a particular child. Helena Kucharczyk, Business Intelligence Manager, reported that the Council was above the national average on the adoption of children of five years of age and above.

Cllr Paula Brookfield referred to the number of cases for adoption reducing by 30 – 40% and enquired whether the same numbers of Orders for Adoption were still being made. The Service Director, Children and Families reported that the number of Care Proceedings had reduced and this was also replicated nationally. Cllr Paula Brookfield questioned whether the Adoption Service was gaining adoptive parents at the loss of Foster Carers'. The Senior Consultant Social Worker Adoption advised that this was the case in certain circumstances when a Foster Parent(s) adopted the fostered child. There were cases where this happened and the Adoptive Parent continued also to foster.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted;
2. That the Senior Consultant Social Worker Adoption and her Team be thanked for the work undertaken during the period covered by the report;
3. That statistics in relation to disruptions and breakdowns in prospective adoption cases both within Wolverhampton and nationally (if available) be included within future reports.

7 Performance Monitoring - Looked After Children (LAC)

The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, drew to the attention of the Board the revised format of the report. The Senior Information Officer commented that further improvements were also being considered. The Service Director, Children and Families, referred to the summary contained within the report and invited comments on the revised format.

The Business Intelligence Manager presented the Performance Monitoring Information as at November 2014. She reported that the number of Looked after

Children had stabilised and there were indications that the number was beginning to reduce. Currently there were 781 children in care. There a slightly higher proportion of female LAC compared to the Children and Young People population in Wolverhampton generally. There was also a considerably lower proportion of LAC were from Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) backgrounds compared to the Wolverhampton Children and Young People population.

The Business Intelligence Manager referred to the good position on placement stability, the education data which contained some discrepancies when compared to the information reported earlier in the meeting, the rate of participation of LAC in reviews and the performance relating to adoptions.

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss referred to the statement in that part of the report pertaining to LAC Health – “The CCG and RWHT have indicated that they are committed to resolving the issue and work is on-going”. The Service Director, Children and Families assured the Board that these organisations were committed to addressing this issue and the CCG had allocated additional resources to deal with Out of City placements. Cllr Julie Hodgkiss requested that further information on developments be reported to a future meeting of the Board.

Cllr Paula Brookfield requested that information in relation to waiting times for LAC having access to the Children and Mental Health Service (CAMHS) be submitted to a future meeting.

Cllr Martin Waite commented that 20% of the LAC population had been placed with Foster Carers’ and enquired as to whether the Council was yet seeing the benefits from the campaign to recruit additional Foster Carers’. The Head of Looked After Children reported that the benefits of the recruitment campaign would take time to work through the system and, in any event, a child would not be moved from a stable placement to a newly recruited Foster Carer. The Service Director, Children and Families undertook to ensure that additional data was included in future reports.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted with the revised format welcomed;
2. That the developing position with LAC Health Checks be reported to a future meeting;
3. That information in relation to the waiting times for LAC having access to the Children and Mental Health Service (CAMHS) be submitted to a future meeting;
4. That information in relation to the recruitment campaign for Foster Carers’ be submitted to a future meeting.

8 **Exclusion of the public and press**

Resolved:

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 contained in paragraph 1 of the Act, namely information relating to any individual.

Part 2 – items not open to the public and press

9 **Councillors visits to establishments**

Cllr Martin Waite reported on a visit he had undertaken to Merridale Street West, Wolverhampton Residential Home on 5 December 2014.

The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson thanked Cllr Martin Waite for undertaking the visit and requested that all members of the Board endeavour to arrange to visit one of the establishments if they had not already done so.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted;
2. That the Head of Looked After Children identify those establishments which had not been the subject of a visit during the current Municipal Year and inform members of the Board accordingly.



Corporate Parenting Board

11 March 2014

Report Title	Annual report Safeguarding Service Looked After Children 2013- 2014	
Classification	Public	
Cabinet Member with Lead Responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children & Young People	
Wards Affected	All	
Accountable Strategic Director	Emma Bennett – Children and Young People	
Originating service	Wellbeing – Safeguarding & Quality	
Accountable officer(s)	Dawn Williams	Head of Service, safeguarding Children & Adults
	Mandy Lee	Safeguarding Manager – Children
	Tel	01902 55(0477)
	Email	Dawn.williams@wolverhampton.gov.uk Mandy.lee@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

Utilise this report to inform strategic planning for Wolverhampton's Looked after Children population.

Hold the Safeguarding Service to account in their delivery of services to Looked After Children

1.0 Purpose

1.1 Wolverhampton Safeguarding Service has statutory responsibility for overseeing and ratifying the care plans for Looked after Children (LAC) via the activity of the Independent Reviewing Officers. . As a result, the service is duty bound to provide the Corporate Parenting Board with an annual report that outlines the activity of the service, the impact for children and recommendations for service improvement that will enhance young people's experiences.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 reinforced and strengthened the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), enabling more effective independent oversight and scrutiny of the child's case. It has ensured that the child is able to meaningfully participate in planning for their own care and that the care plan that the local authority prepares for them is based on a thorough assessment of the individual child's needs.

2.2 In March 2010 the Government issued statutory guidance, The IRO Handbook, for Local Authorities and IROs on care planning and reviewing arrangements for LAC. The IRO Handbook states that the statutory duties of the IRO are to:

- monitor the Local Authority's performance of their functions in relation to the child's case;
- participate in any review of the child's case;
- ensure any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority;
- perform any other function which is prescribed in regulations.

2.3 The guidance became effective on April 1, 2011, as a revision to the Children Act 1989. Volume 2 of the 'Care Planning, Placement and Case Review Regulations and statutory guidance 2010'. There is an expectation that IROs are more involved with children who are looked after, not just in the Looked After Children review meeting. More contact with the child, the carers and the staff involved is also expected. This is particularly the case in matters where the IRO has concerns about the case and needs to monitor the matter between statutory reviews.

2.4 All looked after children, including children who are in an adoptive placement prior to an adoption order, are covered by the legislation. This applies to all children who are the subject of a care order (under section 31 of the Children Act 1989), or who are voluntarily accommodated for a period of more than 24 hours (section 20 of the Children Act 1989), including those described in this report as in Short Break Care, or who are placed for adoption under the Adoption and Children Act 2002. It also covers those who are compulsorily looked after, such as those remanded by the court to local authority accommodation. Since the publication of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) in December 2012, it has been the responsibility of the Local

Authority to look after all young people who are remanded into custody. These young people now require an allocated IRO and LAC reviews in their place of custody.

3.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.

3.1 The annual report provides an outline of activity covering the period 2013/14 and determines actions to be progressed in 2014/15.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 This report has no direct financial implications.

[NM/24022015/I]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 None – the annual report meets legal requirements

[TC/27022015/X]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 The Annual report recognises issues of equality for Children who access the safeguarding service and how equality is represented within the service.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 None

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 None

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

9.1 None

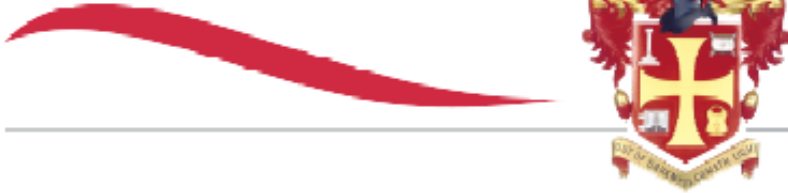
10.0 Schedule of background papers

10.1 The annual report for 2013/14 is attached. The Corporate parenting Board has received Annual reports in preceding years.

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Wolverhampton

City Council



Annual report

Safeguarding Service

Looked After Children 2013- 2014

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The IRO Handbook (issued in March 2010) is the statutory guidance for Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO) and local authorities on their functions in relation to case management and review of children in care, known as looked after children (LAC). It states that the IRO Manager (known as the Safeguarding Manager – Children, in Wolverhampton) should be responsible for the production of an annual report for the scrutiny of the members of the Corporate Parenting Board. It should also be available to the public on the Council website.
- 1.2 This report is compiled from the team's integrated report which includes the work undertaken by the Child Protection Chairs and provides an overview of the work of the Reviewing activity too.
- 1.3 This report covers the period from April 2013 – March 2014. This is the 5th annual report. The report follows the format recommended by the National IRO Managers Group and was used in the 2012 – 13 Wolverhampton report.
- 1.4 The Safeguarding Service is based at the Priory Green Building in Pendeford, Wolverhampton.
- 1.5 Dawn Williams is the Head of Safeguarding (HOS) and has overall responsibility for the IRO functions and ensures independence from the line management of cases and the allocation of resources within Children and Families Services. Nicki Pettitt remained as the interim Safeguarding Manager (Children) during the period of this report and line-managed the team on a part time basis. This involves the provision of supervision to the IROs and responsibility for the team including ensuring that reviews are held on time and that they are correctly administered. The Safeguarding Manager also manages the IROs who undertake foster care reviews. Responsibility for the service was held by Assistant Director Safeguarding, Business Support & Communities, Rob Willoughby until 26th July 2013. Emma Bennett was then the responsible Acting Assistant Director until 31 March 2014.
- 1.6 As prescribed by the national IRO Managers Group, this report will endeavour to 'highlight areas of good practice and areas which require improvement, identify emerging themes and trends, describe areas of work which the service has prioritised during the year, and will prioritise in the coming year.'
- 1.7 The IROs have a key role in assuring the quality of the case planning for those children and young people who are looked after by the local authority. The purpose of this report is to provide information on the work undertaken by the IROs in 2013 – 14 and to outline the priorities for the next year.

2. Purpose of service and legal context

2.1 The arrangements for the statutory reviews of children in care, known as looked after children (LAC) in Wolverhampton, were amended and updated by Section 118 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The Act introduced the new statutory role of the Independent Reviewing Officer. In September 2004, local authorities were required to appoint Independent Reviewing Officers with the remit of:

- chairing the authority's LAC reviews
- monitoring the authority's review of the care plan
- and where necessary, referring cases to the Children and Families Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) to take legal action as a last resort if the failure to implement the care plan might be considered to breach the child's human rights.

In addition, there is an expectation that the IROs will quality assure the local authority's care planning for children in care.

2.2 Legislation for the reviewing of LAC cases is supported by detailed guidance which has been taken into account in making arrangements in Wolverhampton. The guidance includes Every Child Matters, Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and Statutory guidance, the IRO Handbook.

Looked After Children:

2.3 The Children and Young Persons Act 2008 reinforced and strengthened the role of the IRO, enabling more effective independent oversight and scrutiny of the child's case. It has ensured that the child is able to meaningfully participate in planning for their own care and that the care plan that the local authority prepares for them is based on a thorough assessment of the individual child's needs.

2.4 In March 2010 the Government issued new statutory guidance, The IRO Handbook, for Local Authorities and IROs on care planning and reviewing arrangements for LAC. The IRO Handbook states that the statutory duties of the IRO are to:

- monitor the Local Authority's performance of their functions in relation to the child's case;
- participate in any review of the child's case;
- ensure any ascertained wishes and feelings of the child concerning the case are given due consideration by the appropriate authority;
- perform any other function which is prescribed in regulations.

2.5 Since April 2011 there has been an expectation that IROs are more involved with children who are looked after, not just in the LAC review meeting itself. More contact with the child, the carers, and the staff involved is expected. This is particularly the case in matters where the IRO has concerns about the case and needs to monitor the matter between statutory reviews.

2.6 All looked after children, including children who are in an adoptive placement prior to an adoption order, are covered by the legislation. This applies to all children who are the

subject of a care order (under section 31 of the Children Act 1989), or who are voluntarily accommodated for a period of more than 24 hours (section 20 of the Children Act 1989), including those described in this report as in Short Break Care, or who are placed for adoption under the Adoption and Children Act 2002. It also covers those who are compulsorily looked after such as those remanded by the court to local authority accommodation. Since the publication of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO) in December 2012, it has been the responsibility of the Local Authority to look after all young people who are remanded into custody. These young people now require an allocated IRO and LAC reviews in their place of custody.

3. Quantitative information about the service

- 3.1 The Service has an establishment of 9 IRO's. Agreement was given to add an agency member of staff to the establishment in April 2013 due to the high numbers of new LAC. One permanent vacancy was covered by agency worker until a new permanent IRO was recruited in July 2013. Another member of staff was on long term sick, and then retired. That vacancy was yet to be filled in March 2014 and was being covered by an additional agency member of staff. In summary, the team compliment is currently 9 IROs plus 1 additional temporary IRO Post
- 3.2 The team has remained stable, other than the use of three agency workers, over the period, and is increasingly experienced. The new member of staff received a good induction which was supported by all members of the team. The majority of the team have a mixed caseload of LAC and CP. Two of the permanent IROs only hold LAC cases. The makeup of caseloads is regularly reviewed.
- 3.3 The persistent increase in the number of looked after children over the last two years has not allowed the service to fulfil all of its functions as outlined in the IRO handbook. The rate of increase in LAC in the period of this report has accelerated beyond that seen in the previous year. On 31 March 2012 there were **575** LAC in Wolverhampton. On 31 March 2013 the figure had increased to **657**. On 31st March 2014 the figure was **769**.
- 3.4 The Annual Report 2011-12 had hoped to maintain caseloads of 60 – 70 children per IRO when the service is fully staffed. Despite an increase in the numbers of IROs this has not been possible due to increasing numbers of children requiring reviews. The average caseload (including LAC, children on a CP plan, and those receiving care through short breaks (S20) on 31 March 2013 was 92 children. On 31 March 2014 it was 103. This is a significant increase.
- 3.5 The team, including agency staff, has 9 full time IRO's and 2 half time IRO's. There are 3 men and 8 women. The team is made up of IROs from different ethnic backgrounds. (4 black/Asian, 1 black Afro/Caribbean/mixed heritage and 6 white British.) This adequately reflects the children we are serving. The looked after children of Wolverhampton were

from the following backgrounds on 31.3.13. 67% white British, 4% Asian, 10% black Afro/Caribbean, 13% mixed heritage and 6% other.

- 3.6 The service also has 1.5 Independent Foster Home Reviewing Officers who are responsible for chairing Foster Carer reviews.

Quantative information regarding the LAC population & CP population

- 3.7 The gender and age of the LAC in Wolverhampton is as follows (last years in brackets): Female 343/45% (299/46%) Male 426/55% (358/54%) Age: under 5 – 224/29% (216/33%) 5 -7 year olds 113/15% (101/15%) 8 – 11 year olds 156/20% (118/18%) 12 – 16 year olds 229/30% (189/29%) and 17 year olds 47/6% (33/5%). The proportions remain fairly consistent year to year.
- 3.8 The legal status of the looked after children is as follows (last years in brackets): Care Order 394/51% (302/46%) Interim Care Order 118/15% (150/23%) Placement Order 123/16% (114/17%) Section 20 – 133/17% (85/13%) Remand 1 (2). This shows an increase in the number of children subject to S20 rather than care proceedings (interim care orders).

4. Qualitative information about the IRO service

- 4.1 Under the provisions of the *Review of Children's Cases Regulations (1991)*³ local authorities are required to review the case of any child who is Looked After or provided with accommodation as follows:
- First review must take place within 28 days of the date upon which the child begins to be looked after or provided with accommodation;
 - Second review must be carried out no later than 3 months after the first review; and
 - Subsequent reviews shall be carried out not more than 6 months after the date of the previous review.
- 4.2 The date of the next review should be brought forward:
- If there is an unplanned change of placement or other substantial changes to the care plan.
 - If the IRO has specific concerns about a child and directs that the review be brought forward.
 - Any request from the child or parent(s) for a review to be brought forward should be given serious consideration.
- 4.3 91.6% of all LAC in 2013/14 were reviewed in line with statutory timescales. This is an improvement on the previous year when the figure was 88.1%. This is a significant improvement, particularly when the number of reviews and children in care have increased so dramatically. It is important to thank the IROs for their hard work in improving this statistic. A target of 95% was set and although this was not reached,

things are moving in the right direction. This improvement needs to be maintained and improved upon in 2014 – 15.

- 4.4 A total of 1558 (1224) Looked after Children (LAC) reviews took place in the relevant period. This was an increase of 334 reviews held compared to last year.
- 4.5 An IRO is allocated to all LAC within 24 hours of the Safeguarding Service being informed of that child's entry into care. Written information about the IRO and the reviewing service is shared with the child prior to their first review, in the form of child friendly postcard type information booklets. Children can make direct contact with their IRO's mobile phone by calling, by text or by email.
- 4.6 The majority of sibling groups, whether placed together or not, are allocated to the same IRO. This ensures consistency of information exchange, oversight of care planning and decision-making, including sibling contact, and is particularly of benefit when children have different social workers.
- 4.7 The involvement of children in their own reviews is regarded as an essential part of the process. *'A key task for the IRO will be to ensure that the review processes, and particularly review meetings, remain child and family centred'* (IRO Guidance, Adoption and Children Act 2002.) The IRO has an important role in ensuring that the child:
- can make a meaningful contribution to their review;
 - speaks for themselves if they are able and willing to do so; and where this is not possible that their views are conveyed by someone else on their behalf or by an appropriate medium; and
 - has been given the opportunity to make a written contribution to the meeting, particularly if they have chosen not to attend or are unable to attend for some other reason.
- 4.8 The recorded achievement in this area of activity is also a measure of local authority performance, although no longer a national performance indicator. (PAF C63, Participation in Reviews.) At 31 March 2012, the figure in Wolverhampton was 90.2% for the previous year. On 31st March 2013 it was 92.5%, which is a slight improvement. This is a positive figure considering the higher number of reviews held. The figure will need to continue to improve, and the target is 95% for 2013 – 14.
- 4.9 Children aged 7 and over receive a written invitation to their review meeting along with the consultation document inviting their contribution to the review. The IRO is required to speak with the child alone prior to the first review and before every subsequent review (regulation 36). The requirement for direct contact with the child extends to observation of babies and younger children.
- 4.10 During 2013 – 14 one of the IROs has been undertaking the task of considering improved ways of gaining participation from children in their LAC reviews. Her work will be available for comment in the next annual report.

- 4.11 The Independent Reviewing Officers Guidance, Adoption and Children Act 2002, states that *'The IRO has an important role in ensuring that all parties to the review are able to make an effective contribution.'* In order to assist in this aim, age appropriate consultation papers continue to be sent to the child/young person, and to parents and carers, prior to a review. The child's consultation paper provides the IRO with a comprehensive picture of the child's feelings about the various aspects of their care and the services he/she is receiving, and assists the IRO in ensuring the child's voice is heard. This is also a way of ensuring that parental contributions are taken into account by the IRO, particularly if they are unable or unwilling to attend the review. IRO's are also increasingly speaking with parents outside of the review meeting, if their presence is not in the best interests of the child, to ensure they can represent their reviews both in the meeting and in the record of the meeting.
- 4.12 10 children were reviewed by IROs under the Short Break Statutory Guidance (Section 20(4) of the Children Act 1989) in 2013 - 14.

5. Conduct of the organisation in relation to the review

- 5.1 From August 2013 new quality assurance questions were asked of IROs following LAC reviews. This was to enable more detailed quality assurance information and data to be collected from CareFirst (CF), the electronic database used. It was hoped that this report would include the more detailed information, including the following:
- Quality of preparation for review/conference by social worker, including report preparation, preparation of the child/young person and sign off by manager,
 - Quality of care planning, including how up to date the care / protection plan is,
 - Quality of contribution by the child/ young person and other attendees, to review/conference,
 - Quality of management decision making on key issues affecting young people (care placements/school placements/funding issues)

At the time of writing this report these details are not available from the Business Information Team.

- 5.2 The RAG system, in respect of the Lac reviews and associated activities, has been used consistently in Wolverhampton since August 2014. Forms are completed on the CareFirst database before the review record is completed. This report is unable to draw on this new quantitative and qualitative information, for the same reasons at outlined in the paragraph above.

- 5.3 A notification is automatically sent to the responsible social workers and team manager, and ensures they are alerted to the status (red, amber or green) of the child's plan. It identifies any concerns the IRO has about a child or their CP plan, and should be a clear and valuable part of the quality assurance of the Local Authority's work which is provided by the IRO. There is an expectation that the responsible manager responds to the IRO in all red and amber cases, and it is here that further development is required.
- 5.4 The IROs complete a Recognition of Excellent Practice notification when there is evidence of exceptionally high quality practice underpinning all aspects of the case intervention. These are not currently counted centrally a change to this practice is envisaged in Summer 2014.

6. Conduct of the organisation in relation to Case Management

- 6.1 During 2013 - 14 a number of formal dispute resolution protocols were implemented in Wolverhampton, but none went beyond stage 1. The RAG system is now an early alert system for identifying and raising issues with care planning for children and young people and if this does not achieve the required improvements in an appropriate timescale, the resolution protocol is implemented. This system has been more consistently applied than was the case in the previous years.
- 6.2 Those cases that have been issued a red RAG tend to be highlighted as concerning due to drift in care planning and keys tasks not being undertaken. This is often because of changes of social worker.
- 6.3 An area of future development is regular reporting from CareFirst to the IRO manager on the number of Red and Amber RAGs given each month. This is reliant on information being available via the Business Intelligence Team.

7. Resource issues

- 7.1 The increase in the number of LAC, and the number of LAC reviews over the last year has put a strain on the IRO service, on placements and on the social work teams. This increase and its impact will need to be monitored over the next 12 months.
- 7.2 The increasing LAC caseloads of IROs has an impact on their availability for chairing conferences.

8. Review of last year's priority areas for improvement and action – LAC FOCUS

- 8.1 The areas for future development that were identified in the 2012 - 13 Annual Report are updated as follows:
1. *Implementation of a new Quality Assurance system for the unit, to include CP as well as LAC cases.*

- The new RAG system was modified and launched as part of the implementation of new forms and reporting on CF in August 2013. All children are now given a Red Amber or Green rating after every review or conference. All IROs are doing this. There have been some issues with the return of timely responses on Red and Amber RAGs by the social work managers, and high turnover of staff in that area has led to some confusion about the expectations. The Safeguarding Manager (Children) has visited teams and sent clarification emails to the relevant teams. This remains an area for improvement. The new system has made additional work for the IROs but has the potential of providing improved information. The lack of electronic collation of information from the Business Intelligence Team has meant that this data has not been readily available.
2. *Continue to improve the communication between the fieldwork services and the IRO admin team when a child becomes looked after or if an ICPC is agreed. This will improve the timeliness of ICPC and LAC reviews and will enable improved communication before the review, to plan participation and meetings with the child/ren.*
- There has been some improvement in this area, but it continues to be an area that requires the full attention and persistence of the teams administrative staff.
3. *Young people will increasingly be invited to lead their own reviews. There is a plan to increase the involvement of children and young people in the planning for the review, including deciding who should be present and where it is held. This will be supported by guidance for the young person.*
- The increase in the number of LAC and a high number of reviews held has had an impact on the quality of work being undertaken directly with children. There is anecdotal evidence to show that children do feel more involved in their reviews, but IROs report difficulty in finding time to spend additional time with children to develop this area as was hoped. Time has been afforded to one IRO to lead this work and 2014/2015 should see significant improvement.
4. *RAGs for LAC to be completed in 100% of cases from July 2013.*
- This has been in place, and achieved, since August 2013.
5. *Increased use of information from CareFirst in improving service delivery, data collection and practice development.*
- Capacity within the Business Information Team has made regular reporting and regular communication a challenge for the safeguarding service, who continue to manually count in a number of areas.

6. *Implementation of Safeguarding Service Standards which are supported by policy and procedure specific to the service area.*
 - The service has created a number of policies and procedures to support IRO practice and business administration activity. These are available to staff electronically and are hosted on a specific Intranet page accessible to staff within the service. When members of the service identify shortfalls in policy /procedure they are responsible for highlighting these to their manager.

7. *The development of a training pathway for the IROs to ensure IROs are competent and confident in their role.*
 - A bespoke IRO module which has been developed by the Heads of Safeguarding across the region alongside Birmingham University. Four IROs joined the course in January 2014. An in-house training pathway has been developed and work continues with the workforce development service to put this into action.

8. *Utilisation of the CAFCASS / IRO Protocol to improve links with the court arena.*
 - Some meetings have been held and more are planned. The IROs report improving relationships with CAFCASS with whom they regularly liaise in respect of individual children,

9. *To improve management oversight of IRO activity including greater challenge and feedback.*
 - This remains an on-going issue and was limited during the timeframe due to limited management capacity.

10. *To develop and implement a consistent approach to the chairing & recording of LAC reviews.*
 - The new CareFirst forms have had a positive impact in regards to this aim. Development work has been undertaken in this area via team meetings and individual supervision. Improvements have been noted but it remains an area for continuing development.

11. *To develop a service evaluation/action plan as a result of the forthcoming Ofsted publication 'IRO Taking up the Challenge' due in May 2013.*
 - This was completed in July 2013.

9. Priority areas for improvement and action in the IRO service in the coming year.

9.1 ***Aim for full implementation of the IRO handbook.*** The 2012-13 Annual Report recommended that the IRO handbook be implemented in the service. As was the case last year, the size of caseloads and significant increase in the number of LAC reviews has made full implementation of the IRO handbook impossible. Despite this the IROs report that they remain committed to meeting as many children as possible between reviews. It remains a hope that with increased staffing in the team and reducing numbers of LAC there will be improvements in this area.

9.2 ***Monthly reporting of key information to be provided to the IRO service.*** There is very limited regular reporting available to the service. The new CF forms ensure that the child's views, wishes and feelings are better recorded, that an improved section for explicitly recording the views of parents and carers would be implemented and that there would be improved information on the views of parents and carers on the service they have received from the local authority. This has not yet been available to the Safeguarding Service. It remains a priority for improved and more regular reporting to the Safeguarding service in respect of:

- Timeliness of reviews/conferences
- Participation
- Quality assurance information
- RAG ratings and timeliness of responses

Participation information is still currently collected manually by staff in the IRO unit, although it should be available from careFirst.

Ensuring that reports are regularly available to the Safeguarding Service from CF is a priority for 2014 – 15.

9.3 ***Centralised recording of the number of Recognition of Excellent Practice notifications to be held and updated.***

9.4 ***A review to be quality to be undertaken - the exceptionally high number of reviews held may impact on good quality practice.***

9.5 ***Training pathway for IROs to be reviewed and implemented.***

9.6 ***A whole service review to be progressed to ensure resources reflect the required capacity for delivery of a robust service.***

10. Conclusion.

- 10.1 This report has highlighted the work of the IROs in Wolverhampton from April 2013 to March 2014 and is an update on the last annual report.
- 10.2 The service needs to increasingly evidence, through the enhanced quality assurance role and consistent recording of RAGs, that they are an effective service with a culture of intervening and challenging when there is drift and delay or issues effecting children's human rights and/or their safety.
- 10.3 The next report will cover the period from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

A large white outline of the city of Wolverhampton is centered on a grey background. In the top right corner of the map, there are two stylized human figures: a woman with blonde hair in a pink top and a man with dark hair in a blue top.

**Corporate Parenting
Board**

Performance Report

March 2015
(data as at January 2015)

Key Points to Note

Redesign and further development

This report for the Corporate Parenting Board continues to be developed. For this report, the % of LAC placed more than 20 miles from home, trend data for in-house foster carers and the adoption's pipeline have been added. Further information about LAC education and adoptions will be added in future reports.

Demographics

Please note: There was an error in the gender figures in the last report. These have now been corrected.

Almost 7% more LAC are female compared to the CYP population in Wolverhampton generally.

A considerably lower proportion of LAC are from BME backgrounds compared to the Wolverhampton CYP population.

The number of Looked After Children shows a small but positive decrease. Numbers have been stable at around the 800 mark now since May 2014 demonstrating the impact that the Families R First programme is beginning to have. **As at 03/03/2015 the number of LAC had fallen further to 780 or 137 per 10,000 population (this is just 11 more than at 31st March 2014 but is now the same rate per 10,000 due to population changes).**

Placements

In-house Foster Carers trend data has been added to the report and shows a positive increase in the number and percentage of LAC placements that are with in-house foster carers.

There has been a slight increase in the proportion of LAC placed more than 20 miles from home, however, this is still in line with our comparators.

The three indicators that look at placement stability continue to show positive results and demonstrate that Looked After Children in Wolverhampton generally benefit from stable placements.

Work is being undertaken as part of the Families R First programme around understanding the proportion of LAC in different placement types compared with the proportion of total cost of those placement types.

Assessments and Reviews

Assessments and Reviews of Looked After Children in Wolverhampton remain generally up to date with 98% of children participating in their reviews. Of those that participated 40% spoke for themselves. This is extremely positive and shows that the voice of the child is being heard in Wolverhampton.

Education

The 2014 KS2 results show that Wolverhampton LAC are performing better in 2014 than in 2013. Performance is also considerably better than for LAC in statistical neighbouring authorities, the West Midlands and England overall across Maths, Reading and Writing.

There is just a 9% gap between the performance of LAC at KS2 and the wider Wolverhampton population. This is incredibly positive.

GCSE performance is less positive - however, it should be noted that there has been a change in how this statistic is calculated at a national level this year which has impacted negatively on results in general. There is also some discrepancy between nationally published figures and locally held results. This is being investigated.

Please note - small numbers can also adversely affect this indicator.

Health

The percentage of children with up to date dental checks continues to fall from 90% at year end to 74% in January 2015. This result is still higher than the 65.2% of children in the general Wolverhampton population that have seen a dentist in the past 2 years.

The fall in the percentage of up to date health checks appears to have stabilised with 78% up to date at the end of January. Some of the issue appears to be with children being placed out of area. The pressure on health services and funding issues has also contributed to the fall in performance in this area. The CCG and RWHT have indicated that they are committed to resolving the issue and the CCG have agreed to recruit a LAC designated nurse to help address this issue. While this recruitment takes place, RWHT have agreed to undertake some of the health checks for LAC placed out of area. The situation will continue to be closely monitored by the local authority via monthly meetings with the CCG.

Leaving Care

Adoption - Performance against adoption timescales continues to improve however, overall performance remains below national expectations. The 'Adoption Scorecard' was published in mid-December and detailed analysis has been undertaken. Wolverhampton remains 'double red' in the two key indicators which focus on the timeliness of adoption, however, continue to perform better than national averages when it comes to adopting 'hard to place' children such as those over the age of 5 and those from BME backgrounds.

The adoption pipeline has been added to the report and this shows that there are currently 98 children with a plan of adoption, 80 of which have placement orders or are currently placed for adoption. Of the 44 that are placed for adoption, a number have been in their placements for some time which is inflating the average number of days. The placements and plans for some of these children are currently being reviewed and not all of the children will be adopted.

40 children have been adopted this year, as at the end of January which is extremely positive.

Care Leavers - The percentage of Care Leavers in Employment Education and Training was worse than statistical neighbours, West Midlands and England averages, although improvements have been made in 2014 and performance is now considerably better than at year end and higher than comparators.

Demographics



56849 children aged 0-17 live in Wolverhampton
22.6% of the total population

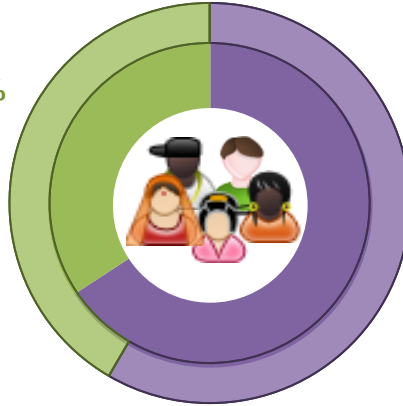


48.8% of the CYP population and 55.7% of LAC are



51.2% of the CYP population and 44.3% of LAC are male

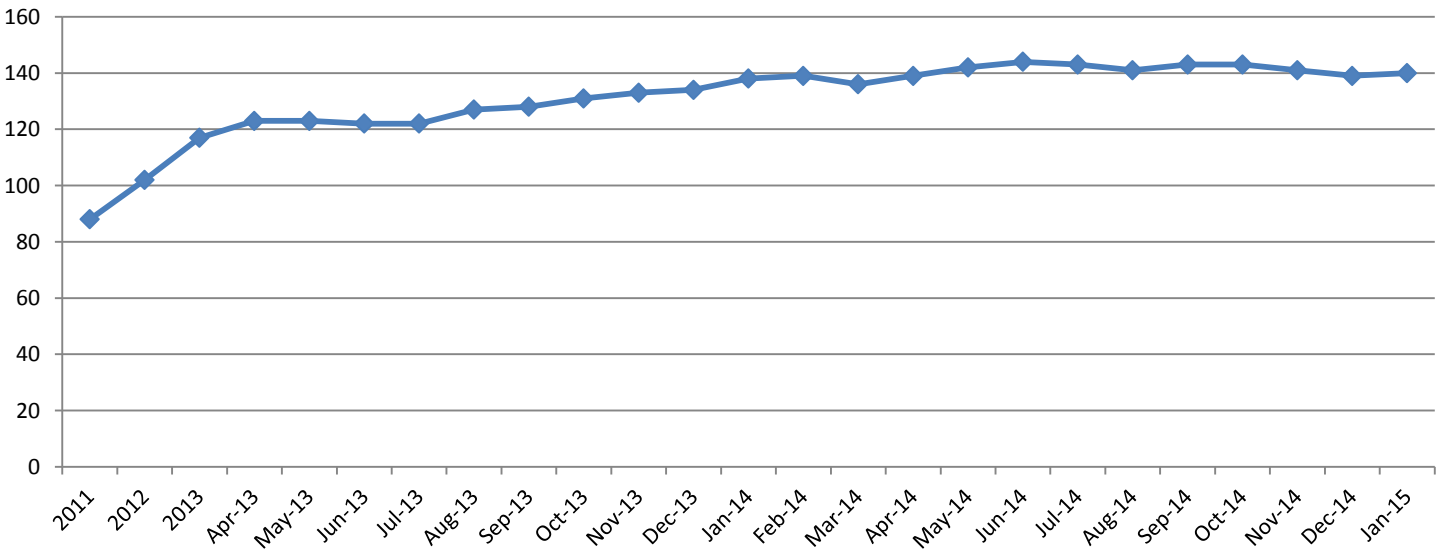
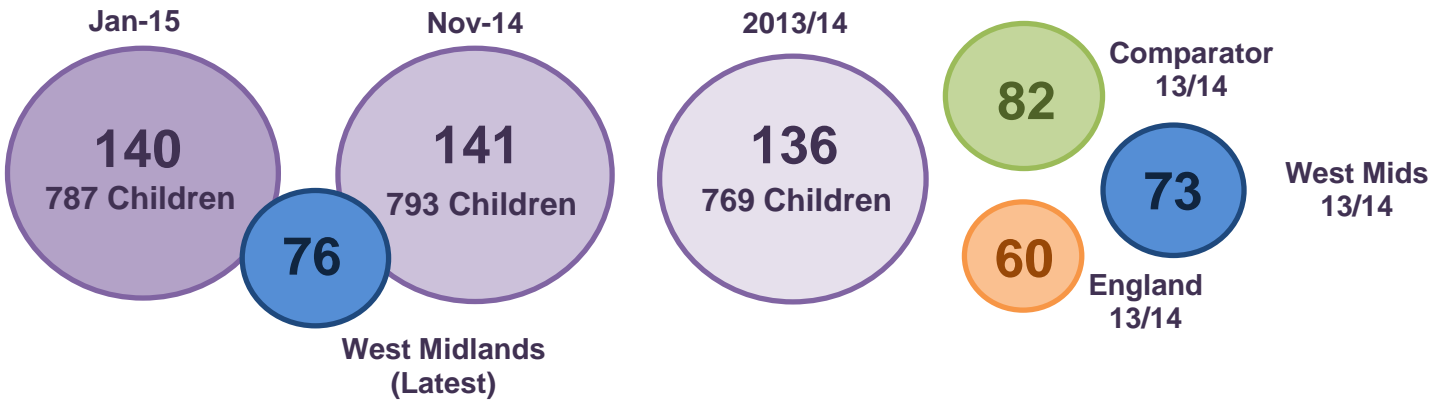
41.6% of the CYP population and 34.2% of LAC are BME



58.4% of the CYP population and 65.8% of LAC are white

Looked After Children Population

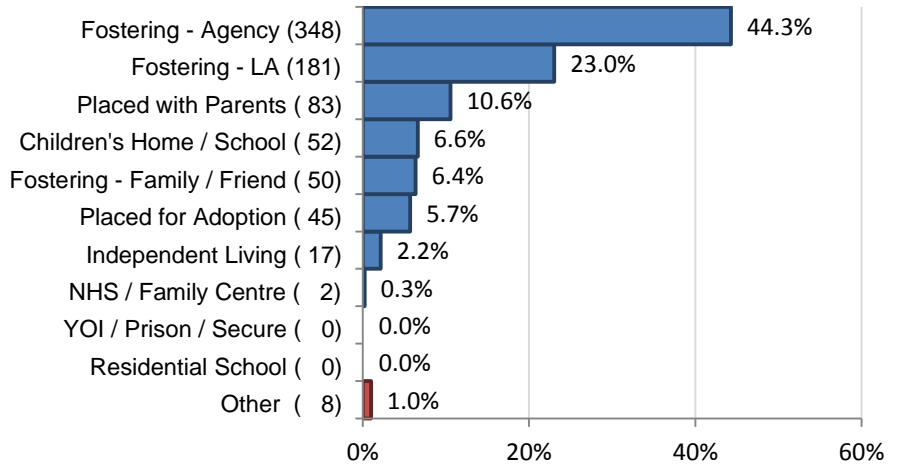
Rate of LAC per 10,000 population aged 0-17



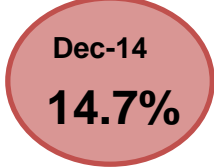
Placements



LAC Placements at 31/01/2015

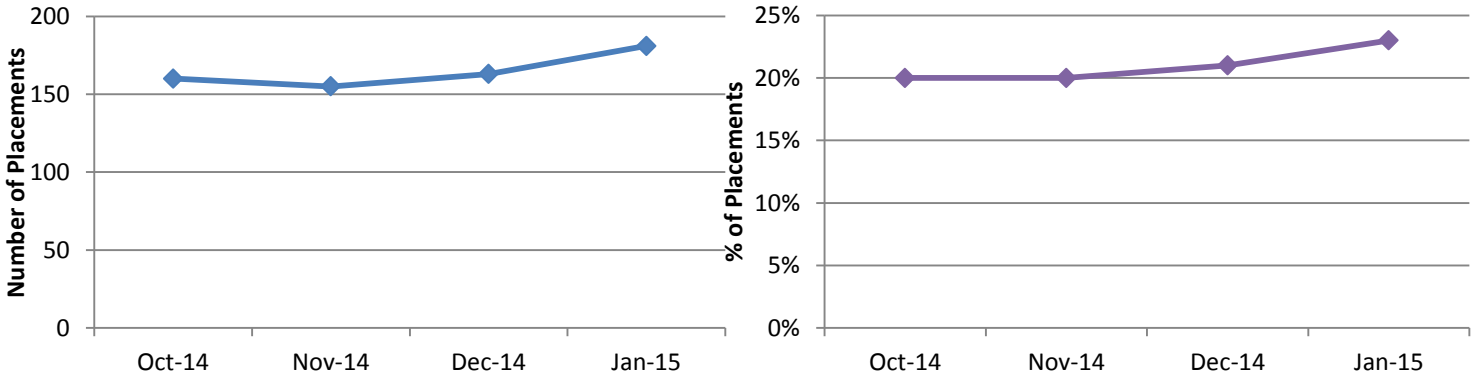


% LAC Placed 20 miles + from home



2013/14 Out-turn = 13%
2013/14 Comparator = 15%
2013/14 England = 13%

In - House Foster Placements

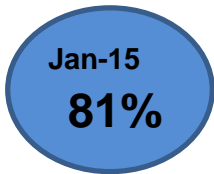


The proportion of LAC Placed with in-house foster carers is increasing demonstrating that the drive to recruit internal foster carers is beginning to yield results

Placement Stability

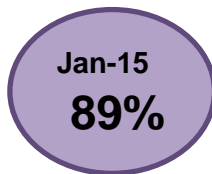


LAC in current placement for 6 months + (when looked after for more than 6 months)



2013/14 Out-turn = 77%

LAC with fewer than 3 placements in the last 12 months



2013/14 Out-turn = 88%
2013/14 Comparator = 89%
2013/14 England = 89%

% of children in same placement for 2 years or more or placed for adoption (when)



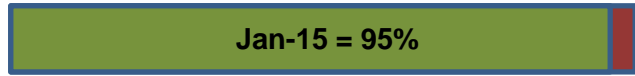
West Midlands (Latest) = 67%
2013/14 Out-turn = 67%
2013/14 Comparator = 67%
2013/14 England = 67%

Performance shows that Looked After Children in Wolverhampton benefit from largely stable packages.

Assessments & Reviews

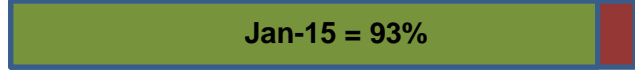


Looked After Children with up to date assessments



2013/14 Out-turn = 95%

Looked After Children with up to date reviews



2013/14 Out-turn = 92%

First Review is within 20 working days. Second review within 3 months. Third and subsequent reviews every 6 months

93% of LAC have had all of their reviews completed on time since 01st April 2014. 1540 reviews have been completed in the year. Of these 96% were completed within timescales.

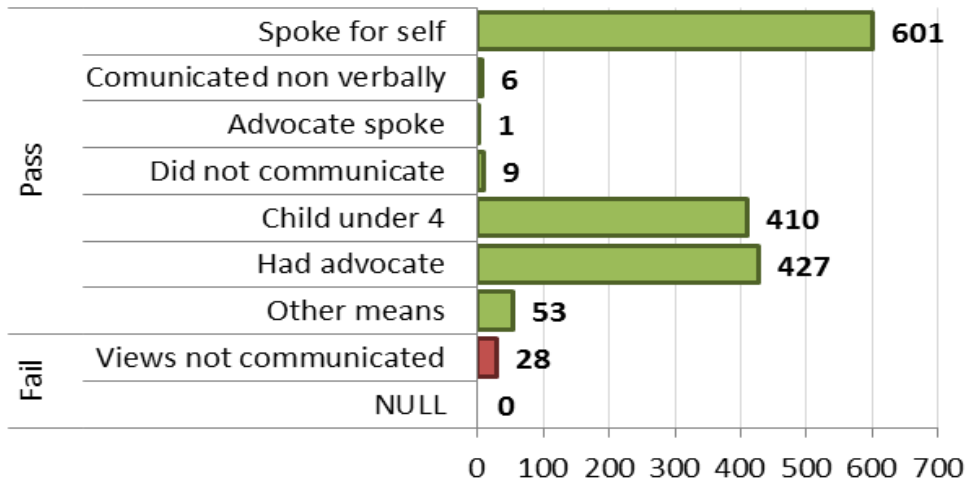
The proportion of LAC reviews where the child was present or contributed by other means since 1 April

98%

Jan-15

This is really positive and shows that the voice of the child is being heard.

1.4 Context: Full Answers for Participation



Education



KS2 Level 4	Maths	Reading	Writing	Reading, Writing and Maths	GCSEs	5+ GCSE A* - C	5+ GCSE A* - C inc Eng & Maths
Wolverhampton LAC 2014	74%	78%	81%	70%		15.80%	17.00%
Wolverhampton	86%	88%	84%	79%		57.60%	45.90%
Wolves LAC 2013	67%	44%	50%	39%		48.40%	25.80%
West Midlands 2014	60%	69%	61%	50%		18.10%	13.70%
Statistical Neighbours 2014	60%	68%	54%	45%		19.33%	17.65%
England 2014	61%	68%	59%	48%		16.30%	12.00%

PLEASE NOTE: Small numbers in the cohort reaching each key stage can cause results to be volatile making comparison difficult.

National results show that looked after children reaching KS2 in 2014 performed better than in 2013 and better than LAC in the West Midlands, statistical comparator authorities and England overall. However, performance in GCSE's was worse across the board.

There is some discrepancies when nationally published data is compared with locally held data. This is being investigated and detailed analysis around LAC education and attainment is being undertaken but could be due to change in definitions.

The proportion eligible
LAC with an up to date
Personal Education
Plan (PEP)



93%

Jan-15

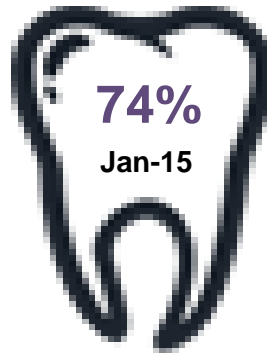
FURTHER DEVELOPMENT: Absentee and exclusion data to be included. Local reporting around this is being developed and will be available for future reports. National comparator data for 2014 has not yet been published.

LAC Health



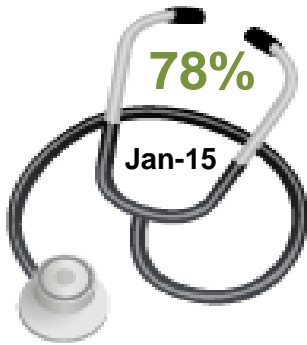
65.2% of children in the
Wolverhampton Local Authority
Area have seen a dentist in the last
two years

Dental Checks



2013/14 Out-turn
= 90%

Health Checks



2013/14 Out-turn
= 86%

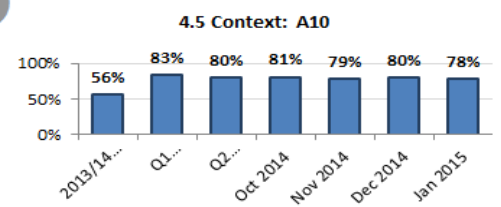
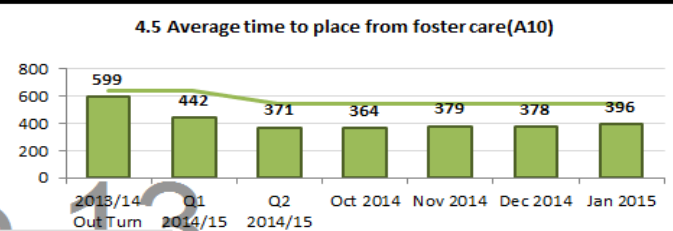
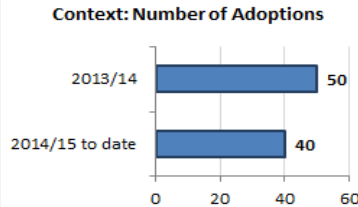
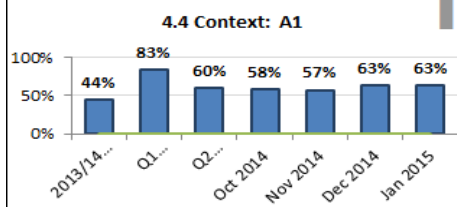
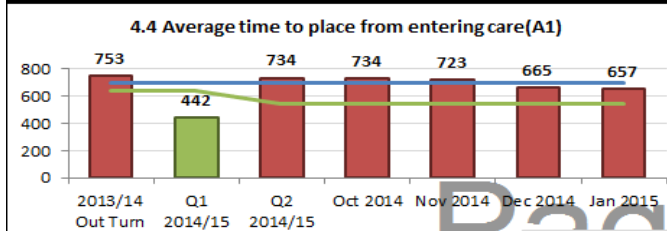
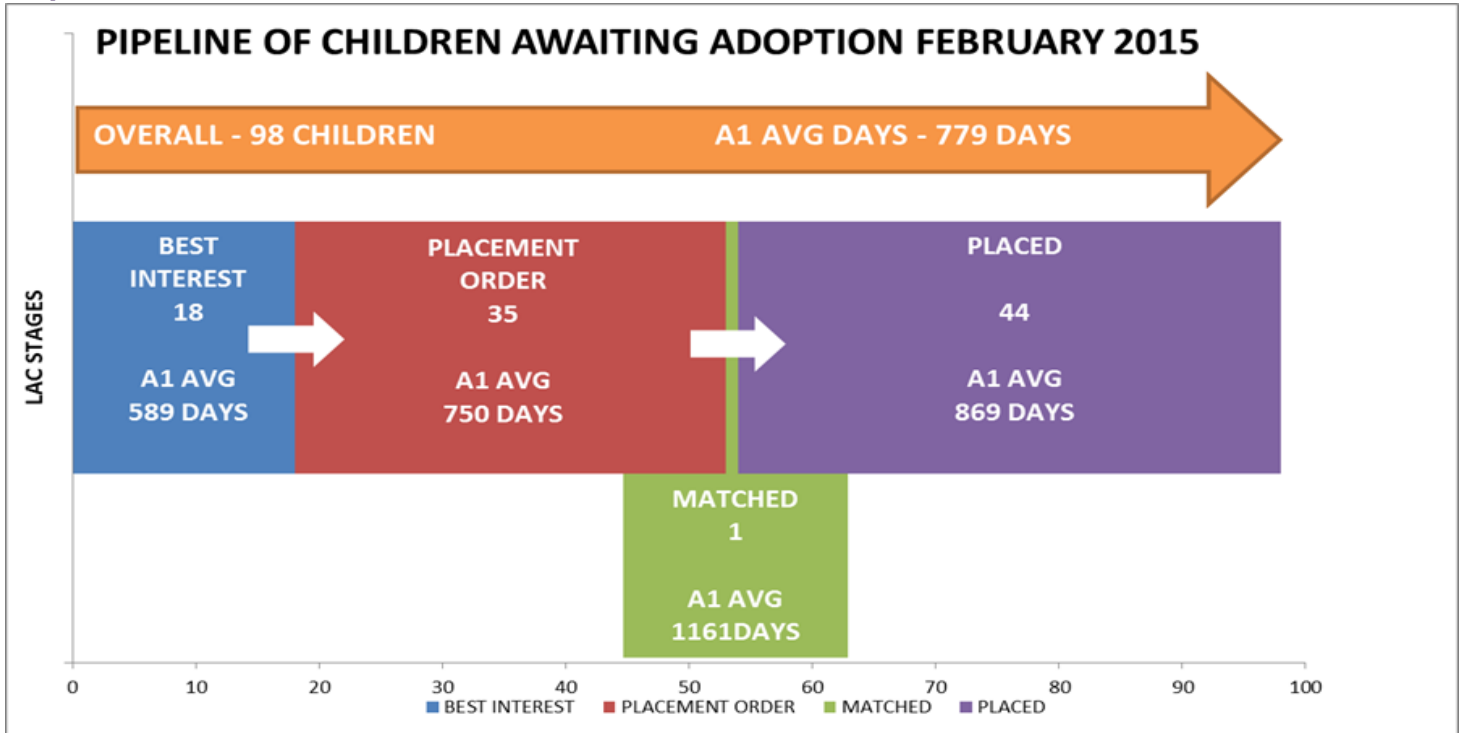
Children placed out of area and the
pressure on health services and funding
issues is contributing to the fall in
performance in this area

An action plan for addressing this issue
has been agreed with the CCG and RWT.

Leaving Care



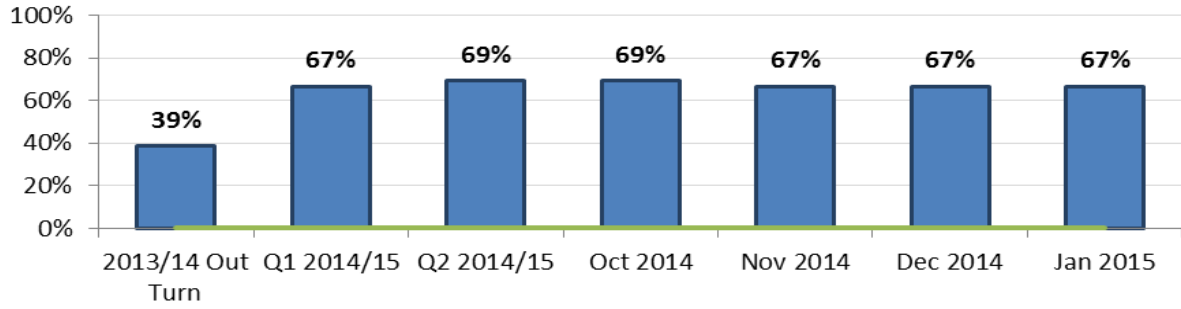
Adoptions



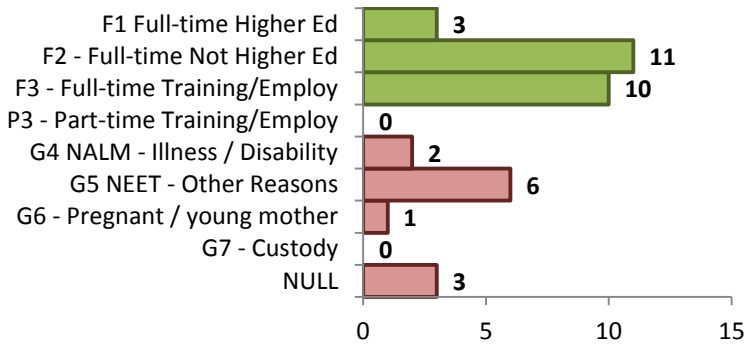
The adoption scorecards for 2013 were published just before Christmas. Wolverhampton were once again rated 'double red' in the two key indicators, however, performance around adopting hard to place children including those over the age of 5 and from BME backgrounds continues to be better than performance nationally. Detailed analysis of the results has been undertaken and is available.

Care Leavers

5.4: Education, employment & training of care leavers



5.4 Context: Number EET Statuses



National published figure for Wolverhampton is 31% not 39% - discrepancy is being investigated.

**West Mids - 41%
Statistical Neighbours - 40%
England - 45%**