



Corporate Parenting Board

23 October 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:

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

Copies of other agendas and reports are available from:

Website <http://wolverhampton.moderngov.co.uk>
email democratic.support@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Tel 01902 555043

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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 (11 September 2014) (Pages 1 - 10)
[For approval] |
| 4 | Matters arising
[To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2014] |
| 5 | Performance Monitoring - Looked After Children (LAC) (Pages 11 - 20)
[To receive a report on Performance Monitoring data in respect of Looked After Children] [To be circulated] |
| 6 | Fostering Service Annual Report (Pages 21 - 40)
[To consider the Fostering Service Annual Report 2013/14] |
| 7 | To meet representatives of Foster Carers'
[To meet with representatives of Foster Carers' and to discuss matters arising from the Annual Report together with other issues] |
| 8 | 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] |
| 9 | Councillors visits to establishments
[To receive details of any visits to establishments undertaken by Councillors since the last meeting] |

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Meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes - 11 September 2014

Attendance

Chair Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)

Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Jas Dehar
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Christine Mills
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Martin Waite

Employees

Emma Bennett	Assistant Director - Children, Young People and Families, Community Directorate
Sharon Green	Senior Consultant Social Worker, Community Directorate
Louise Haughton	Senior Consultant Social Worker, Community Directorate
Alison Hinds	Head of Looked After Children, Community Directorate
Darren Martindale	COPE Team Manager / Virtual School Head, Community Directorate
Lorraine Millard	Designated Senior Nurse Safeguarding, Wolverhampton City Clinical Commissioning Group
Carl Craney	Democratic Support Officer

Item No. *Title*

1 Apologies for absence (if any)

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Mrs Patricia Patten and Samantha Arrowsmith (Named Nurse for Looked After Children - Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust)

2 Declarations of interest (if any)

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre declared personal interests in any matters pertaining to Woodthorne School (Chair of Governors), Central Learning Partnership (Heath Park, Moseley Park and Woden Primary Schools) [Director], Catch 22 [Director], City of Wolverhampton College (Governor) and Graiseley Primary (Governor).

3 Minutes of the previous meeting (3 July 2014)

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

With reference to Minute No. 4 (Matters arising), Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre enquired as to when the access arrangements to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) would be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel. Cllr Julie Hodgkiss reported that this matter had been discussed that morning at the Agenda meeting and was scheduled to be considered at the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel on 14 January 2015.

With reference to Minute No. 6 (Performance Monitoring – Looked After Children), Cllr Paula Brookfield enquired as to the latest position with the production of a Briefing Note in relation to the age at which LAC / Care Leavers and Young Offenders on remand remained the responsibility of the local authority. Emma Bennett outlined the position and advised this was also covered within the report being presented today.

With reference to Minute No. 6 (Performance Monitoring – Looked After Children), Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre referred to the multi- agency “edge of care” meeting and as to whether any children were slipping through the net. Emma Bennett assured the Board that in the current climate it was highly unlikely that any children were overlooked and that 22 cases had been reviewed during August and September 2014. The assurance was accepted by Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre.

With reference to Minute No. 6 (Performance Monitoring – Looked After Children), Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre questioned the current position with discussions between both the Council and the Wolverhampton City Clinical Commissioning Group (WCCCG) and the WCCCG and the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust with regard to health checks for Looked After Children. Lorraine Millard reported that this issue had been discussed at a meeting held the previous day and that a division of

responsibility had been agreed. RWNHST would be responsible for undertaking health checks on those Looked After Children who lived within 20 miles of the City with the WCCCG taking responsibility for those who lived further away. A resolution to this particular issue was not easily identifiable but was being treated as a priority. As an interim measure the WCCCG would take responsibility for co-ordinating all health checks for Looked After Children until 31 March 2015 albeit that the matter was to be reviewed on a weekly basis. Alison Hinds advised that during the intervening period a long term arrangement would be identified. Lorraine Millard undertook to arrange for a Briefing Note on this matter to be circulated to Members of the Board. Cllr Paula Brookfield requested that the Board be notified as soon as the long term arrangement had been agreed. Emma Bennett reminded the Board that this issue was monitored regularly and formed part of the Performance Monitoring Information considered by the Board.

With reference to Minute No. 8 (Children in Care Council), Cllr Rita Potter enquired as to whether the Council was working in partnership with the Police and Schools in connection with safeguarding issues, especially with regard to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) . Emma Bennett reported that there were strategic and operational groups addressing CSE, that a report on this subject had been considered at the meeting of the Strategic Executive Board held the previous day where an Action Plan for Wolverhampton and the Region had been presented. The West Midlands Metropolitan Chief Executive's had commissioned Stephen Rimmer from the Home Office to undertake a piece of work across the West Midlands on this topic. She advised that in the light of the Rotherham case awareness of the issue had been highlighted to schools. The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, reported that all agencies were alert to the issue and it had been raised recently at the Children's Safeguarding Board. All agencies had identified lead officers and that Wolverhampton had a good record on joint working to identify and address the issue and was held as a national exemplar. Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre welcomed the report on the actions being taken but reminded the Board that the Council had been in a much stronger position previously to influence schools when they had been under the control of the local authority. He suggested that with the increase in number of academies and private schools that communication was more problematic. Emma Bennett advised that this was not the experience of the local authority and that the Assistant Director, Learning and Achievement was preparing for the roll out of a Communications Plan. She reminded the Board that Safeguarding was a critical element in Ofsted inspections. Cllr Paula Brookfield sought an assurance that the issue of female genital mutilation was also being addressed. Emma Bennett advised that this was included in the piece of work which had been commissioned from Stephen Rimmer.

5 **Work Programme 2014/15**

Emma Bennett presented the draft Work Programme for the 2014/15 Municipal Year. Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre enquired as to whether any other reports not currently included within the Work Programme would be presented if necessary. Cllr Paula Brookfield enquired as to whether the Board could also ask for additional reports to

be presented. The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson confirmed this to be the case in both instances.

Resolved:

That the draft Work Programme 2014/15 be approved.

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

Emma Bennett presented Performance Monitoring Information based on an extract from high level information for July and August 2014.

With reference to the information in connection with “Up to date Reviews”, Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre enquired as to whether the data related to the current month or the year to date position. Emma Bennett confirmed it to be the latter.

With reference to the information in connection with “The proportion of LAC reviews where the child was present or contributed by other means since 1 April 2014”, Cllr Julie Hodgkiss reminded the Board that at the last meeting representatives of the Children in Care Council had expressed concern with regard to these meetings being held in school time inasmuch as they were to miss lessons without choice and/or being withdrawn from a lesson highlighted their status as a Looked After Child. Darren Martindale explained that these review meetings and similar meeting in connection with Personal Education Plans were held in school time and, that every effort was made to handle the issue sensitively to ensure that LAC were not marginalised. Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre suggested that individual children should be consulted as to their preferred timing for such meetings, which, presumably could be held in lesson or lunch times. Darren Martindale undertook to include the suggestion within training to be provided to Social Workers, Designated Teachers and Independent Review Officers. It was intended that best practice would be followed in respect of this matter.

With reference to the information in connection with “LAC in permanent placements”, Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre enquired as to why no comparable information was included. Emma Bennett explained that this was a local indicator and comparable data was not available.

With reference to the information in connection with “Health Checks and Dental Checks”, Cllr Paula Brookfield enquired as to whether it would be possible to include data in respect of those LAC who opted out of these checks. Emma Bennett undertook to investigate as to whether the Carefirst system could be interrogated to this level.

With reference to the information in connection with “Placed for adoption within 18 months of entering care / Placed for adoption within 18 months of Foster Care”, Cllr Martin Waite suggested that a mean rather than median average should be used.

With reference to the information in connection with “Education, employment and training of care leavers”, Cllr Julie Hodgkiss sought clarification on the three cases listed as “NULL”. Emma Bennett explained that no status information in respect of these cases was recorded. Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre reminded the Board that year on year comparisons could not be made in relation to this information as different

cohorts were involved. The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, suggested that in the Annual Report there should be a comparison between LAC and non LAC in relation to education, employment and training.

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

7 **Looked After Children (LAC) Transitions Team - Annual Report**

Sharon Green presented the LAC Transitions Team's Annual Report 2013/14 which detailed an overview of the team's activities for the year together with a commentary of performance and plans for the future.

Cllr Paula Brookfield referred to the number of "missing children". Emma Bennett explained the difference between "missing children" and those care leavers who were no longer in contact with the local authority. Sharon Green advised that some care leavers specifically requested no further contact with the local authority once they had left care but in other cases where contact had been lost, Personal Advisers would continue to attempt to re-establish contact approximately every six months. Emma Bennett also outlined the role of the Family Support Worker.

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss asked whether the system operated by the Department for Work and Pensions to provide support to care leavers was working satisfactorily. Sharon Green acknowledged that the system was not working as well in Wolverhampton as in some other locations.

Cllr Martin Waite reported on anecdotal evidence of a Social worker encouraging a care leaver to spend the accrued savings to prevent prejudicial treatment in respect of receipt of benefits. Emma Bennett commented that a number of LAC had expressed concern in relation to the amount of money they received as savings did build up. This matter was being reviewed but was a complex issue to address to the satisfaction of all LAC.

Cllr Martin Waite also drew attention to the average amount of time per week available to Social Workers to spend with individuals. Sharon Green acknowledged that caseloads were challenging and reflected the amount of time which could be spent with individuals.

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre expressed his disappointment that paragraph 5.1 of the covering report seemed to suggest that an equalities analysis had not been undertaken. He also queried the term "Foyer" in the Annual Report. Emma Bennett assured the Board that an equalities analysis had been undertaken with regard to the new structure and explained that a "Foyer" was a housing scheme linked to educational and/or employment opportunities.

Cllr Rita Potter referred to Section 7.8 of the Annual Report and suggested that further consideration be given to the classification of Care Leavers on the housing register. Emma Bennett and Sharon Green reported on the excellent working relationships between the local authority and Wolverhampton Homes and also other Registered Social Landlords operating in the City but undertook to consider this

matter further. Alison Hinds reminded the Board of the progress with the provision of additional supported accommodation by Wolverhampton Homes.

Cllr Paula Brookfield requested further information in relation to “Night-stop”. Sharon Green explained that this was a host arrangement facilitated through YMCA Black Country which had eliminated the use of Bed and Breakfast as an emergency provision.

The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, referred to paragraph 9.5 of the Annual Report insofar as it related to useful information to be provided to care leavers. She reminded the Board that at the last meeting representatives of the Children in Care Council had made it known that information on issues such as using a washing machine and changing a fuse would be helpful. Sharon Green explained that it was intended to include links to relevant YouTube clips on the children’s website.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted;
2. That further discussions be held with Wolverhampton Homes on the most appropriate classification for care leavers on the housing register;
3. That further useful information be included on the children’s website in respect of issues such as the use of a washing machine and changing a fuse;
4. That the thanks of the Board be offered to the Transitions Team for the work undertaken during the period covered by the report.

8 **Adoptions Team - Annual Report**

Louise Haughton presented the Annual Report of the Council’s Adoption Service for the year April 2013 to March 2014. The report included information in relation to adoption both nationally and locally together with information regarding legislative and practice changes and how these had impacted on those affected by adoption in Wolverhampton.

Cllr Paula Brookfield noted the progress that had been made but referred to the “Activity Days” and enquired how children’s expectations were managed. She also enquired as to whether there was provision for concurrent fostering/adoption placements where foster parents were not quite at the stage where they were ready to adopt formally. Laura Haughton assured the Board that children’s expectations of the outcome of the “Activity Days” were handled sensitively and that no child attended more than one event. Careful preparation was also undertaken in advance of attendance. In most instances it was the Foster Carer’s who were more anxious than the children. The longer term implications for those children who were not successful at an event was of greater concern and an issue required careful handling. She confirmed that the Service had a number of concurrent carers and that the marketing of the service included provision for concurrency i.e. fostering prior to progression to adopting.

Cllr Rita Potter enquired if all groups were permitted to apply to become adoptive parents and Louise Haughton confirmed this to be the case. Cllr Martin Waite reminded the Board that this issue had been highlighted during the tenure of Michael Gove as Secretary of State for Education. Louise Haughton reported that trans –

national arrangements had always been encouraged in Wolverhampton but that this was not replicated throughout the Country.

The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, referred to Section 9 of the Annual Report and enquired as to when the further analysis would commence of the over representation of BME children compared to both the looked after children and the population of Wolverhampton as a whole. Louise Haughton explained that the figures fluctuated year on year and a decrease in the numbers was anticipated during the current year. The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, requested that an analysis over the past five years be presented. Emma Bennett suggested that the analysis should also include reference to the wider LAC population.

Cllr Paula Brookfield enquired as to the steps taken as a preventative measure in order to overcome repeat incidences of children from the same parent being taken into care. Louise Haughton outlined the programmes which were available in order to assist parents in making life choices before having a second child and post adoption support which was available to birth mothers. Alison Hinds referred to a successful bid for Lottery funding enabling work to be undertaken with Black Country and Birmingham families. Emma Bennett reported on the associated elements within the newly commissioned Sexual Health Service which was within the remit of the Public Health Service.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted;
2. That the difficulties encountered within the Adoption Service of moving to a paperless system be noted;
3. That an analysis be presented to a future meeting of the over representation of BME children compared to LAC and the population of Wolverhampton as a whole over the past five years together with information pertaining to the LAC population in that period;
4. That the thanks of the Board be offered to the staff in the Adoptions Service for the work undertaken during the period covered by the report.

9 **Corporate Parenting Pledge - Refresh**

Darren Martindale presented a report which was the starting point for a refresh of the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy which would assist the Council in fulfilling its statutory Corporate Parenting responsibilities. The refreshed document had been shortened and also had regard to the New Operating Model, the current budget position, the current LAC population, the revised staffing structures together with progress to date in delivering the current strategy including the positive outcomes. The document had been produced following the receipt of the views of the Children in Care Council albeit further consultation was required. Once the document had been approved work would commence on the refresh of the Corporate Parenting Pledge. Once appointed, the Corporate Parenting Officer would be charged with the preparation of an Action Plan to deliver the refreshed Strategy.

Cllr Martin Waite enquired as to whether there was an intention to reduce the number of communication channels faced by the LAC population with a single point of contact. Emma Bennett advised that the New Operating Model did move towards a central reference point prior to referral to the Social Work Team. Darren Martindale

referred to a presentation he had made to Ofsted last year which included reference to a LAC getting a little help from a lot of people rather than a lot of help from a few.

Cllr Paula Brookfield enquired if the New Operating Model enabled information to be shared across Teams. She also referred to the high number of LAC within the City; to the financial implications associated with this high population and with regard to the number of Out of City Placements the possible loss of contact with family, extended family and peer group. Emma Bennett confirmed that the new system did enable information sharing. She also explained that many Out of City Placements were, in fact, quite close to the City and on the steps taken to maintain relevant and appropriate contacts. With regard to rates of pay and terms and conditions, Alison Hinds reported that those offered by the Council were comparable to those offered by private fostering agencies.

Cllr Mrs Christine Mills welcomed the intention to consult further on the Strategy and the inclusion of Priority 4 "Keep siblings together and give us more contact with siblings". Darren Martindale assured the Board that the consultation would drive the contents of the Strategy.

Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre referred to the proposed service re-structure including the savings target and enquired if the savings could be delivered without care being compromised. Emma Bennett confirmed that to be the case subject a reduction in the LAC population being achieved. Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre asked as to the process adopted to review the previous Strategy. Darren Martindale explained that this had included an interrogation of data, an analysis of outcomes, consultations with Managers and Staff within the LAC Service and with LAC. The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson suggested that a quantitative analysis should be included in the 2014/15 Annual Report.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and approved for consultation purposes;
2. That the refreshed Strategy be presented to the meeting of the Board scheduled to be held on 21 January 2015 with the Action Plan being submitted to a future meeting;
3. That future Annual Reports include a quantitative analysis.

10 **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.

11 **Councillors visits to establishments**

The Board considered further the arrangements for visits to establishments to be undertaken during the current Municipal Year.

Resolved:

1. That Cllr Mrs Christine Mills will visit Brooklands on 19 September 2014;
2. That Carl Craney, Democratic Support Officer, be requested to re-circulate the email dated 25 July 2014 and attachment in connection visits to establishments.

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Wolverhampton City Council



Corporate Parenting Board – October 2014

Performance Indicators

Performance as at the end of September 2014

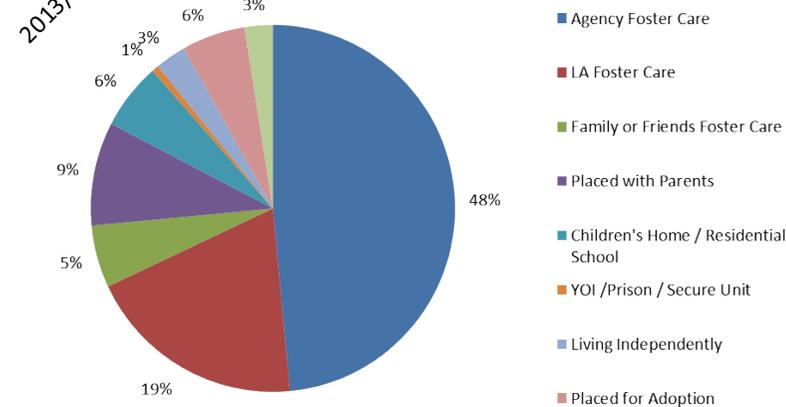
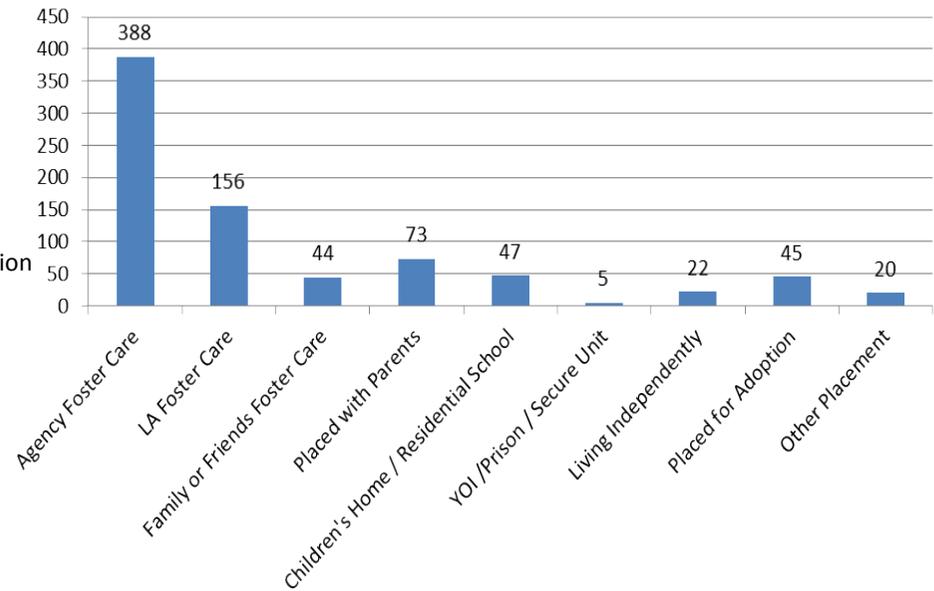
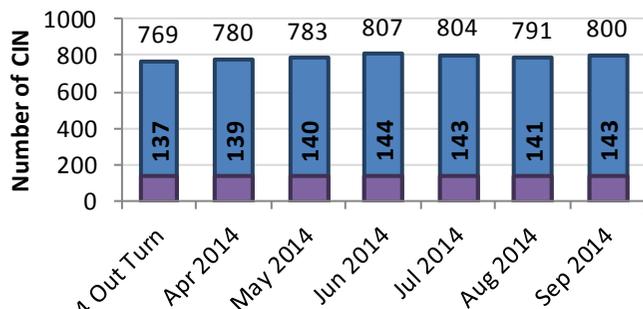
**Business Intelligence Team (Community)
Office of the Chief Executive**

All of the indicators are taken from the Looked after Children's Service Balanced Scorecard while a specific report for the Corporate Parenting Board is being developed.

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]
Corporate Parenting Board – Performance Report

4.1 - Number of Looked After Children		2013/14 Similar Councils	2013/14 Wolverhampton	September 2014 Result	Target	RAG
Number of Looked after children at the end of each month		-	769	800	0	↓

4.1 Number of Looked After Children



Analysis:

The number of LAC has increased from 769 at year outturn to 800 at the end of September but appears to have been relatively stable for the last four months remaining close to 800.

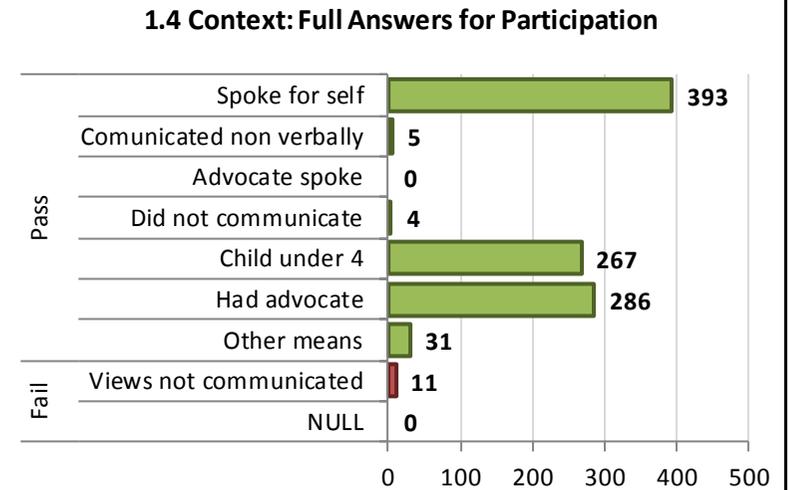
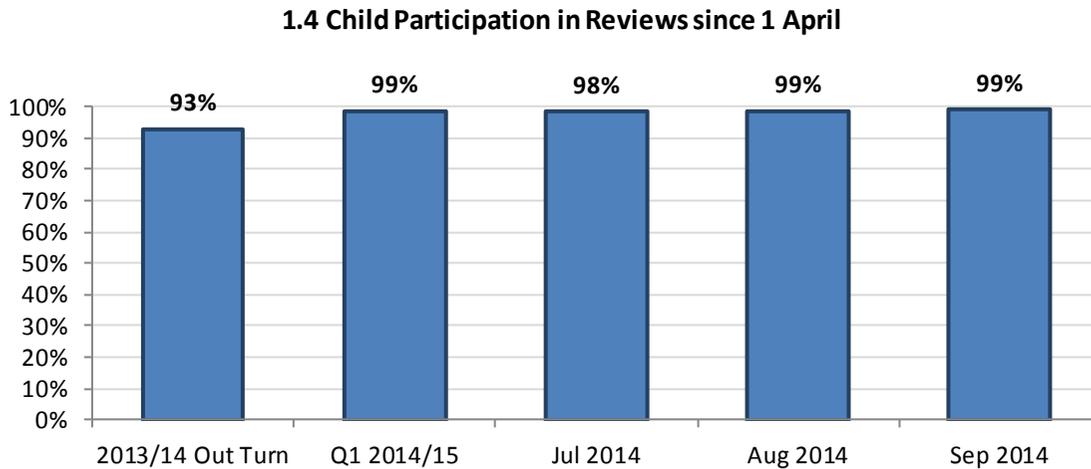
4.4 - LAC with up to date Assessments		2013/14 Similar Councils	2013/14 Wolverhampton	September 2014 Result	Target	RAG																				
The proportion of current LAC whose most recent assessment was authorised in the previous 6 months		-	95%	95%	-	↓																				
Page 13.4 4.4	<p>4.4 Proportion of Assessments up to Date</p> <table border="1"> <caption>4.4 Proportion of Assessments up to Date</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Period</th> <th>Proportion</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2013/14 Out Turn</td> <td>95%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q1 2014/15</td> <td>95%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jul 2014</td> <td>96%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Aug 2014</td> <td>97%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sep 2014</td> <td>95%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Period	Proportion	2013/14 Out Turn	95%	Q1 2014/15	95%	Jul 2014	96%	Aug 2014	97%	Sep 2014	95%	<p>4.4 Context: Number of Assessments up to Date</p> <table border="1"> <caption>4.4 Context: Number of Assessments up to Date</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>759</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fail</td> <td>42</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No Assessment</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Category	Count	Pass	759	Fail	42	No Assessment	2
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<p>Analysis: The proportion of LAC whose most recent assessment was authorised in the last 6 months has fallen from 97% in August to 95% in September but remains the same as the year out turn result of 95%. The list of cases where there is no up to date assessment has been shared with LAC managers.</p>																										

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]
Corporate Parenting Board – Performance Report

1.3: Up to date Reviews		2012/13 Similar Councils	2012/13 Wolverhampton	September 2014 Result	Target	RAG																													
<p>The proportion of current LAC whose reviews have all been up to date since 1 April 2013. One strike and out rule is used. First Review is within 20 working days. Second review within 3 months. Third and subsequent reviews every 6 months.</p>		-	92%	95%	-	↑																													
<p style="text-align: center;">1.3 Proportion of LAC with all Reviews up to Date since 1 April</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Data for 1.3 Proportion of LAC with all Reviews up to Date since 1 April</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Period</th> <th>Proportion (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2013/14 Out Turn</td> <td>92%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q1 2014/15</td> <td>96%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jul 2014</td> <td>96%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Aug 2014</td> <td>96%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sep 2014</td> <td>95%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Period	Proportion (%)	2013/14 Out Turn	92%	Q1 2014/15	96%	Jul 2014	96%	Aug 2014	96%	Sep 2014	95%	<p style="text-align: center;">1.2 Context: Number of Reviews up to Date - 1 Strike and Out</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Data for 1.2 Context: Number of Reviews up to Date - 1 Strike and Out</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>95%</td> <td>751</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fail</td> <td>5%</td> <td>38</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Category	Percentage	Count	Pass	95%	751	Fail	5%	38	<p style="text-align: center;">1.2 Context: Number of Reviews up to Date - All since 1 April</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Data for 1.2 Context: Number of Reviews up to Date - All since 1 April</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>96%</td> <td>963</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fail</td> <td>4%</td> <td>38</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Category	Percentage	Count	Pass	96%	963	Fail	4%	38
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Fail	5%	38																																	
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<p>Analysis: This indicator counts up to date CLA review meetings. At the end of September 95% of LAC have had all of their reviews completed on time since 01/04/2014. 38 LAC have had at least one review that was completed outside of timescales. 1001 reviews have been conducted so far this year. Of these just 38 (3.8%) have been completed outside of timescales.</p>																																			
<p>Management Comments: This is positive performance in this area, particularly in the context of high LAC numbers and increasing IRO caseloads.</p>																																			

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]
Corporate Parenting Board – Performance Report

1.4: Participation of LAC in Reviews	2012/13 Similar Councils	2012/13 Wolverhampton	September 2014 Result	Target	RAG
The proportion of LAC reviews where the child was present or contributed by other means since 1 April 2013	-	93%	99%	-	↑



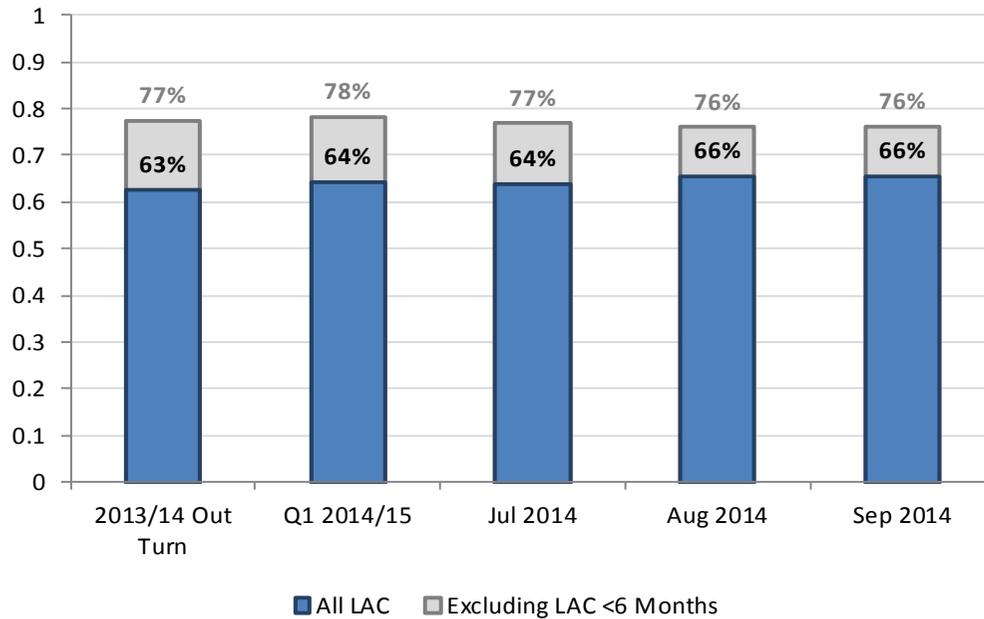
Analysis:

Performance in this area continues to be really positive with 99% of children participating in their review, having an advocate speak on their behalf or are under the age of 4. Details of the 11 cases where the child's view was not communicated will be explored further to understand the reasons why.

2.2: Length of LAC Placements	2012/13 Similar Councils	2012/13 Wolverhampton	September 2014 Result	Target	RAG
The proportion of current LAC who have been in their current placement for at least 6 months	-	63%	66%	-	↑

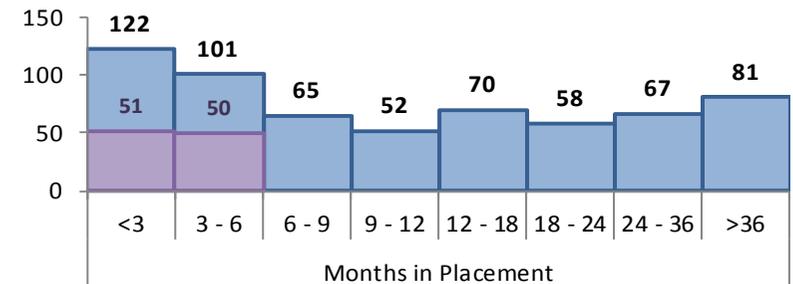
Page 16.2

2.2: LAC in Placements 6 months +

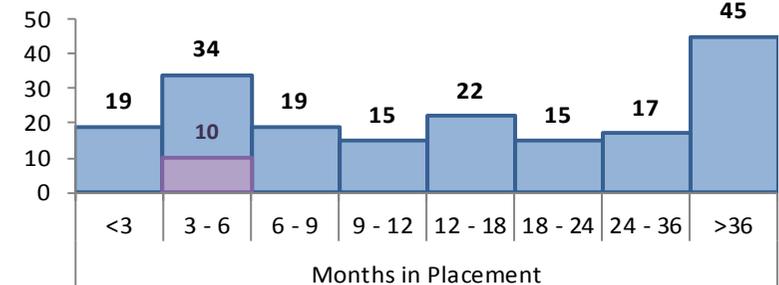


The smaller purple figure is: Of which have been LAC <6 months

2.2 Context: Time in Placement - Not placed with Adopters



2.2 Context: Time in Placement - Placed with Adopters



Analysis:

76% of children who have been looked after for at least 6 months have been in their current placement for 6 months or more. This is really positive and shows that generally looked after children in Wolverhampton benefit from stable placements.

Management Comments:

Work is ongoing to develop an indicator which specifically looks at whether those LAC who have a plan of permanence are placed in permanent placements.

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]
Corporate Parenting Board – Performance Report

3.1: Health Checks 3.2: Dental Checks		2012/13 Similar Councils	2012/13 Wolverhampton	September 2014 Result	Target	RAG	
3.1	The proportion of LAC who have had a Health check within the last 12 months. Only includes LAC who have been in care at least 12 months.	SS	-	86%	82%	-	↓
3.2	The proportion of LAC who have had a Dental check within the last 12 months. Only includes LAC who have been in care at least 12 months.	SS	-	90%	86%	-	↓

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3.1 Up to Date Health Checks

Period	Percentage
2013/14 Out Turn	86%
Q1 2014/15	81%
Jul 2014	86%
Aug 2014	85%
Sep 2014	82%

3.2 Up to Date Dental Checks

Period	Percentage
2013/14 Out Turn	90%
Q1 2014/15	86%
Jul 2014	88%
Aug 2014	88%
Sep 2014	86%

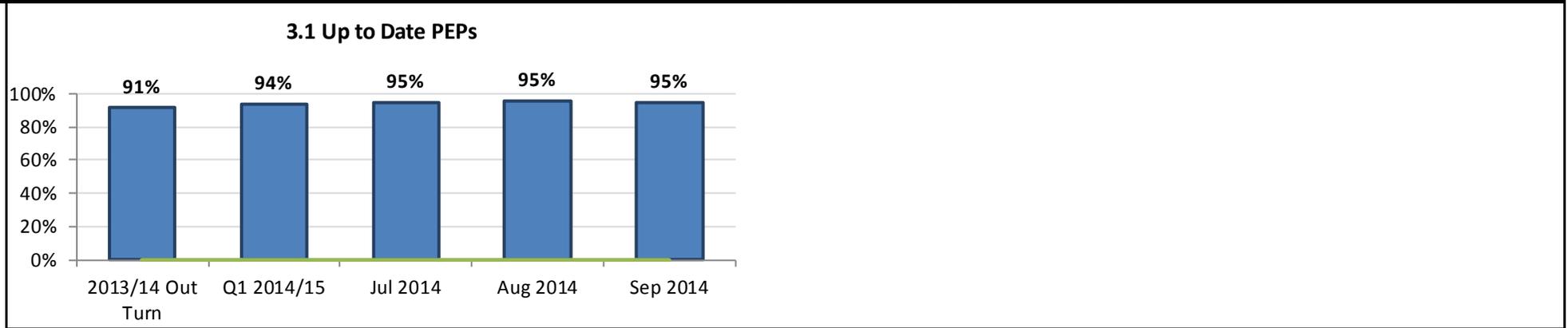
Analysis:
The percentage of children with up to date health checks improved slightly in July and August but has fallen again in September. The percentage of children with up to date Dental checks has also fallen.

Management Comments:
The pressure on health services and funding issues is contributing to the fall in performance in this area. The CCG and RWHT have indicated that they are committed to resolving the issue and work is ongoing.

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]
Corporate Parenting Board – Performance Report

3.3: PEPs up to Date 3.4: School Attendance		2012/13 Similar Councils	2012/13 Wolverhampton	September 2014 Result	Target	RAG
3.3	The proportion of LAC who have had a PEP within the last 12 months. Only includes LAC who have been in care at least 12 months. SS	-	91%	95%	-	↑
3.4	Average School Attendance	-	-	-	85%	-

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Analysis:

The proportion of LAC with an up to date PEP has improved and is now at 95% which is the best result for some time. This is positive given the increase in LAC numbers. Work is currently being undertaken to develop more detailed reporting about LAC education and to develop robust ways of reporting on LAC attendance.

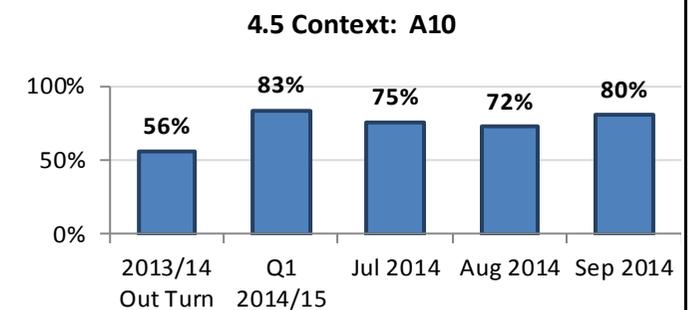
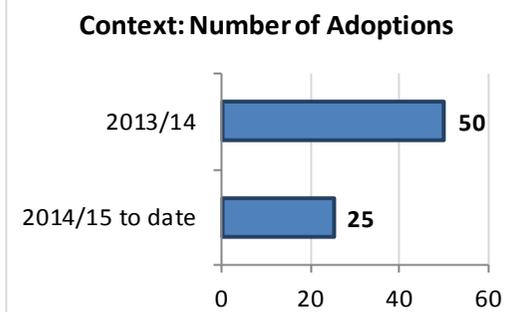
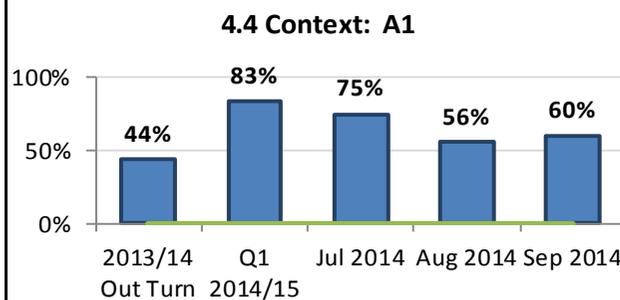
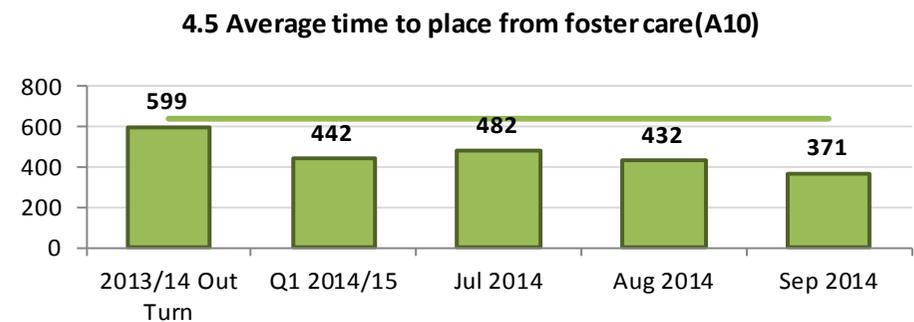
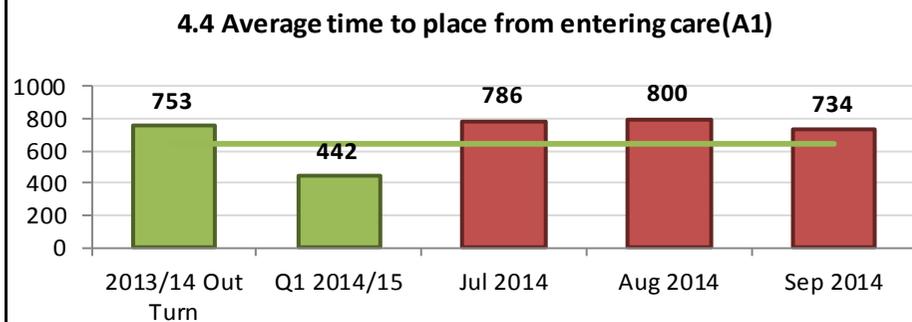
Management Comments:

Following the identification of a reduction in the quality of PEPs the PEP form has been redesigned and the policy reviewed to take into account changes to Pupil Premium and attainment and progress measures.

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]
Corporate Parenting Board – Performance Report

4.4: Placed for adoption within 18 months of entering care 4.5: Placed for adoption within 18 months of Foster Care		2012/13 Similar Councils	2012/13 Wolverhampton	September 2014 Result	Target	RAG
4.4	Children placed for adoption within 18 months of entering care (Adoption Scorecard A1)	-	753	734	640	R ↑
4.5	Children placed for adoption within 18 months of entering care with Foster Carers (Adoption Scorecard A10)	-	599	371	640	G ↑

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Analysis:

For 14/15 the national target for the timeliness of adoptions has reduced from 21 months to 18 months. 60% of the children adopted so far in 2014/15 have been adopted within 18 months of entering care, rising to 80% when foster carer adoptions are taken into account. The average number of days is higher than the 18 month target but is showing an improvement on the 2013/14 out-turn. Small numbers make this indicator volatile.

5.4: Education, employment & training of care leavers		2012/13 Similar Councils	2012/13 Wolverhampton	September 2014 Result	Target	RAG																															
The proportion of the care leavers cohort in employment between three months before and one month after their 19th birthday.		-	39%	69%	-	↑																															
<p>5.4: Education, employment & training of care leavers</p> <table border="1"> <caption>5.4: Education, employment & training of care leavers</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Period</th> <th>Proportion (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2013/14 Out Turn</td> <td>39%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q1 2014/15</td> <td>67%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jul 2014</td> <td>72%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Aug 2014</td> <td>69%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sep 2014</td> <td>69%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Period	Proportion (%)	2013/14 Out Turn	39%	Q1 2014/15	67%	Jul 2014	72%	Aug 2014	69%	Sep 2014	69%	<p>5.4 Context: Number EET Statuses</p> <table border="1"> <caption>5.4 Context: Number EET Statuses</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Status</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>F1 Full-time Higher Ed</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F2 - Full-time Not Higher Ed</td> <td>12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>F3 - Full-time Training/Employ</td> <td>12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P3 - Part-time Training/Employ</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>G4 NALM - Illness / Disability</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>G5 NEET - Other Reasons</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>G6 - Pregnant / young mother</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>G7 - Custody</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NULL</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Status	Count	F1 Full-time Higher Ed	1	F2 - Full-time Not Higher Ed	12	F3 - Full-time Training/Employ	12	P3 - Part-time Training/Employ	0	G4 NALM - Illness / Disability	1	G5 NEET - Other Reasons	6	G6 - Pregnant / young mother	1	G7 - Custody	0	NULL	3
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<p>Analysis: Performance in this area has improved considerably compared with the 2013/14 out-turn. Work is continuing to ensure that the correct data can be accurately captured.</p>																																					



Corporate Parenting Board

23 October 2014

Report title	Wolverhampton Fostering Annual Report From April 2013 to March 2014	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Sarah Norman, Community	
Originating service	Community, Children, Young People and Families / Looked After Children	
Accountable employee(s)	Daphne Atkinson Tel Email	Senior Consultant Social Worker 01902 553070 daphne.atkinson@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Recommendations for noting:

The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to note and receive the Fostering Annual Report for 2013/2014.

1.0 Purpose

To enable the Corporate Parenting Panel to have a clear understanding of the work undertaken by the Fostering Service

2.0 Background

2.1 The Fostering Service annual report, which is attached, highlights the work of the Fostering Service for the period April 2013 to March 2014. Under the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, the Fostering Service must provide the executive side of the Council with written activities of the Fostering Service.

3.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.

3.1 Staff and foster carers highly value the Fostering Service and are well motivated and committed to providing good quality care to children and young people. Staff work well together and network closely with other professionals and agencies to provide therapeutic, educational and health support to children. Foster carers, family and friend carers, permanent, respite all demonstrate a strong commitment to children and young people and their role as foster carers. Young people tell us that they feel safe and well cared for in foster placements.

3.2 The report shows improvements in the recruitment (since its return to Wolverhampton from Five Rivers) of foster carers through targeted marketing activity. Whilst there has been a significant increase in the number of enquiries, the conversion rate has remained low. Of most significance is the total figure for mainstream carers, with an increase in approvals (23 compared with 8 previous years). The service is striving to meet targets to increase the number of local foster placements for Wolverhampton children, which will help to reduce the reliance on expensive Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements. There are 200 fostering households offering 366 placements. Of the 783 children in care in Wolverhampton in March 2014, 215 children were placed in internal foster placements, including family and friend placements.

3.3 The Fostering Service is helped in supporting carers and children through partnerships with The Education Service and Health. The Fostering Service commissions the services of an independent organisation to provide support to carers through training, workshops, support groups and individual work with carers. Within Children's Services, there are effective working relationships between the Looked After Children's Teams, and Locality teams.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 The approved budget for 2013/2014 for the Fostering Service was £4.5 million.

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

[NM/14102014/R]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 Under the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, which came into effect on 1 April 2011, the Fostering Service must provide the executive side of the Council with written reports on the activities of the Fostering Service. [TC/15102014/D]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 We want to have continuous improvements in securing local foster placements, placements for children from all backgrounds including those of ethnic minority communities, and disabled children and their families, to ensure equality of access to services for all Wolverhampton children who are Looked After by the local authority.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 There are no identified environmental implications.

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 There are no known Human resources implications

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

9.1 There are no known Corporate landlord implications.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

10.1 There are no other reports or documents that are relevant to this subject matter

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Wolverhampton City Council



ANNUAL FOSTERING REPORT APRIL 2013 – MARCH 2014

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides a description of the structure, aims and duties of the Wolverhampton fostering service and details the performance of the service over the last 12 months.
- 1.2 The fostering service is located within the Children, Young People & Families Service of Wolverhampton City Council. The service provides a variety of foster placements for children in care. The fostering team recruits, assesses and support a range of fostering arrangements including Relatives and Friends (Connected Persons) foster carers where children and young people are placed by the local authority within their family network. The fostering service also assesses and monitors private fostering arrangements.
- 1.3 The activities of the service are governed by the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, National Minimum Standards 2011 and are regularly inspected by Ofsted. The last Ofsted inspection of the service in 2012 found the service to be 'Good', with no requirements to improve.

2. **The Fostering Service comprises of the following:**

- **Recruitment, Initial Assessments, Training, and Assessment of Foster Carers –** The service have responsibility for marketing, recruitment, training and assessing activities. The service undertakes the assessments of mainstream foster carers.
- **Support and Development –** The service has responsibility for providing supervision support and post approval training to all temporary, family and friends and permanent carers. The assessments of existing foster carers who wish to consider permanent placements for children who are in their care are also undertaken within the service.
- One unqualified worker within the service undertakes the role of Family Finding for Permanency – working closely with social workers in identifying permanent situations for children who are requiring permanent placements with foster families.
- The senior practitioner post within the service takes the lead responsibilities for supporting shared care-short term breaks foster carer arrangements.
- Fostering Support workers - provide focused support to children and foster carers, to promote placement stability by offering various programmes of supportive intervention.
- **Family and Friends (Connected Persons) –** The service is responsible for the Viability and Form C assessment, training, and support of Family and Friends (Connected Persons), foster carers. This is a much pressurised area of work as most of the work undertaken is governed by the 26 weeks care planning process.
- **Private Fostering –** This is a regulated area of work and is inspected by OSFTED. The last Inspection was in 2010. The service assess, train and support Private Foster carers.
- **Post Approval Training of Foster Carers -** Approximately 90 different courses are provided to our foster carers each year The Fostering Training co-ordinator sources and supports the training programme for foster carers. The training Co-ordinator and Workforce Development Officer (The workforce development officer, although not directly sitting in the Fostering Team is part of our training group) works closely with the Fostering training co-ordinator in supporting, planning, and commissioning of training and development, both for the team and foster carers.

- **Independent Reviewing Officers** - There are two Independent Reviewing officers who undertake all reviews of foster carers and are involved in aspects of service development. They are managed within the Safeguarding Service.
- **Social work staffing** - The Fostering Service enjoys a full complement of 12.3 full time equivalent qualified social worker posts, and 4 full time equivalent unqualified posts.
- **Staff training** - There is a wide range of training and development offered to staff throughout the year. This includes staff briefings and Looked After Children conferences. All staff are subject to individual Appraisal meetings.

3. **The aims of Wolverhampton Fostering Service are to:**

- Provide a quality foster care service to all children looked after by Wolverhampton City Council.
- Provide looked after children in foster care with a positive experience of family life, which promotes their physical, emotional, developmental well-being, and happiness in an environment in or close to their community.
- Work in partnership with partners across The Children and Young People's Service as well as with health and education to achieve best outcomes for children and young people in foster placements.
- To work in partnership with our carers to enable them to provide warm safe and caring family environment, so that children emotional health and development is promoted.
- To work in partnership with foster carers so that they understand the importance of working and co-operating with schools to ensure access to available opportunities to promote children's attendance and academic achievements.

4. **Advertising and Media Coverage**

4.1 The Recruitment and Assessment of foster carers returned to Wolverhampton Fostering service in 2013, following the de-commissioning of arrangements with Five Rivers. Through good partnership working with marketing and communications colleagues we have engaged in a programme of advertising in order to recruit foster cares, which has focused on three priority areas.

- Maintaining market /brand presence within the area of Wolverhampton
- Obtaining quality rather than quantity enquiries
- Recruitment of foster carers for children and young people of all ages.

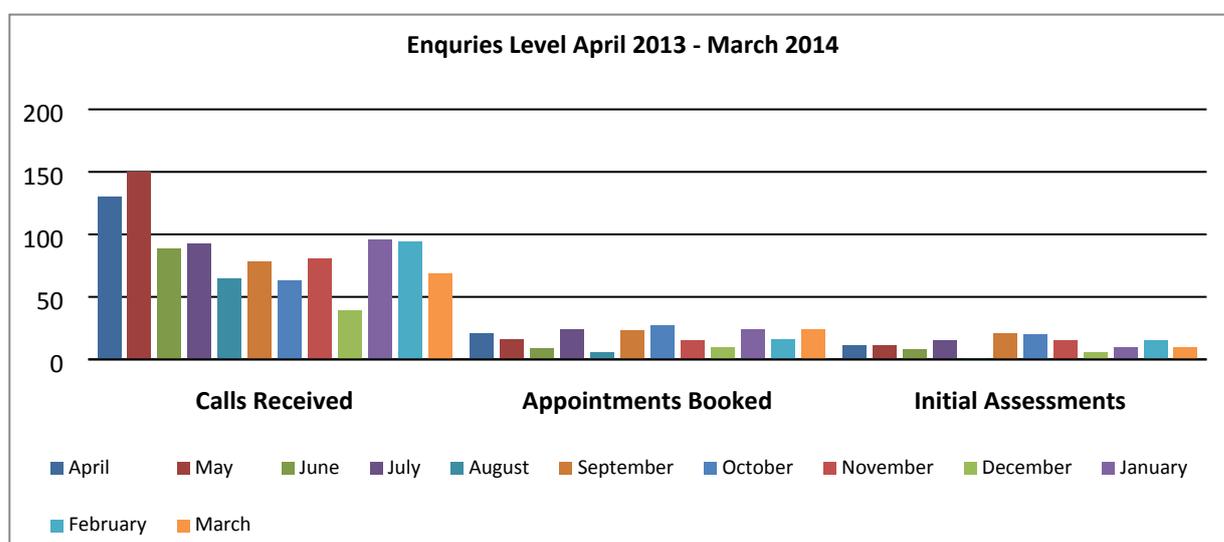
4.2 Our target was to provide 25 new foster carers within this review period. The marketing recruitment activity included updating of the key messages about fostering for Wolverhampton, stalls at various locations within the city, talking to the public, leafleting public venues, open information sessions, articles and adverts in the press, radio interviews, posters at prominent location's within the city centre, fostering logos and posters at council buildings including the railway station and Wolverhampton fostering messages logo on all signature pages throughout the council for all council employees. Information about recruitment of foster carers for Wolverhampton was also sent out to all Wolverhampton council payers in their yearly council tax notice.

4.3 FM Radio or Free Radio advertising has taken place from April 2013. This has consisted of a generic advert on a rolling basis, specific on- going adverts prior to each recruitment event and some additional short ‘filler’ adverts. Advertisements have been placed in local papers. In addition on several occasions there were articles featuring stories relating to foster carers living in the area. Foster carers have also given interviews on radio and to specialist magazines, and they have uploaded their videos on U-tube, Facebook and the council web page.

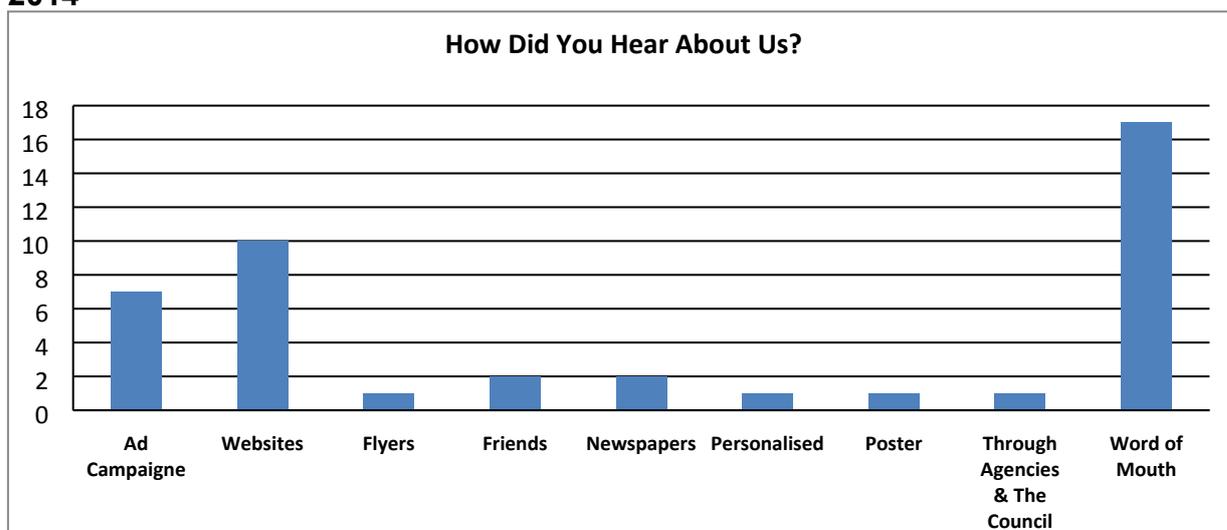
5. Recruitment Performance 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2014

Wolverhampton City Council call centre, City Direct, manages all the initial enquiries about fostering for Wolverhampton. The service received a large volume of fostering enquiries some were then converted into Initial assessments.

The table below illustrates the level of enquiry, appointments and initial assessments from April 2013- March 2014



The table below illustrates the enquiries by source of marketing methods 2013 – 2014



5.1 The most effective marketing methods in terms of generation of enquiries continue by a significant margin to be the internet and word of mouth through family and friends.

5.2 We have experienced a higher than usual cancel out ratio at the enquiry stage. Between the enquiry and the initial visit - 85 % drop out. At this stage the applicants would have received more detailed information about fostering and have an opportunity to hear from existing foster carer and possibly an informal discussion with staff, providing further clarity about the fostering task and criteria.

6. Preparation and assessment Courses

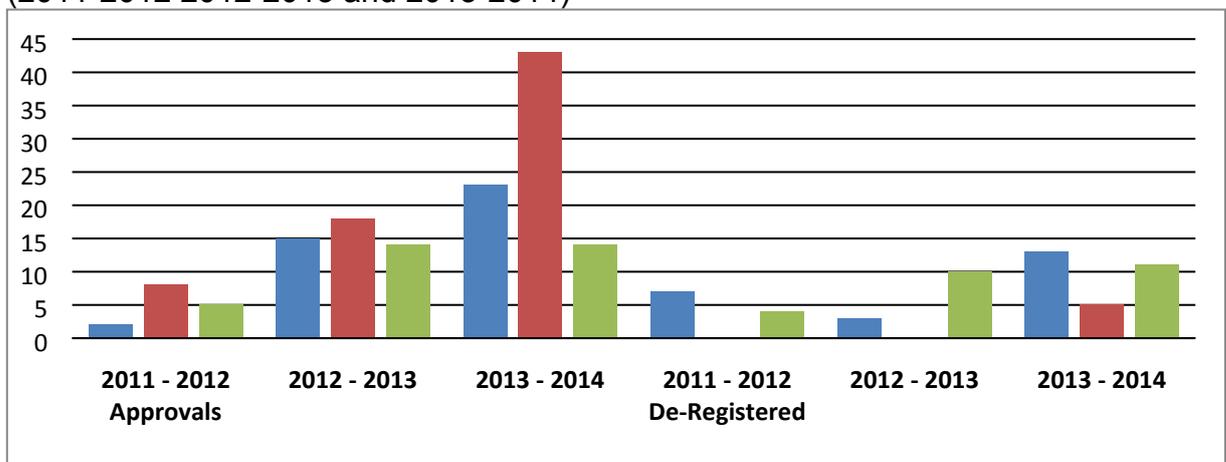
6.1 The preparation and assessment course follows the “Skills to Foster” programme, devised by the Fostering Network. Wolverhampton continues to be part of the Black Country Consortium, along with Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall. These authorities work in partnership to jointly facilitate preparation courses for fostering at a minimum of 12 times per year. Each Local Authority is committed to hosting a minimum of 3 courses. The training is evenly spread over the course of the year, and held at different times i.e. evenings, weekends or during the day. This offers maximum flexibility to enable applicants to attend at a time most convenient to themselves.

6.2 We have facilitated 5 ‘Skills to Foster’ pre-assessment preparation courses whereby a total of 43 households have attended with 23 progressing to full assessments. However between the initial visit and preparation training course, 62% drop out. In the main the fostering team will rule applicants out at this stage. There are a range of reasons for ruling applicants out at this stage. these may be related to their living conditions, the needs of their own children, or lack of initial understanding of the challenges fostering may present or, for example, the realisation that they will not be able to work full time and foster, or, they may have been advised by the social workers to delay their application, having visited their home and gathered personal information that may indicate that they are unsuitable or it is not the right time for them to foster.

6.3 Approved Foster Carers Activity as at the 31/3/14

Mainstream or Short term foster carers, care for children and young people on a short term basis, until permanent plans are made for them. Therefore children and young people could be in placement for a few days, a few months or 2 / 3 years depending on the circumstances of their individual situations. The recruitment of carers as outlined above is in the main to recruit foster carers to care for this group of children

The table below illustrates the number of foster carers Approval for the last three years (2011-2012 2012-2013 and 2013-2014)

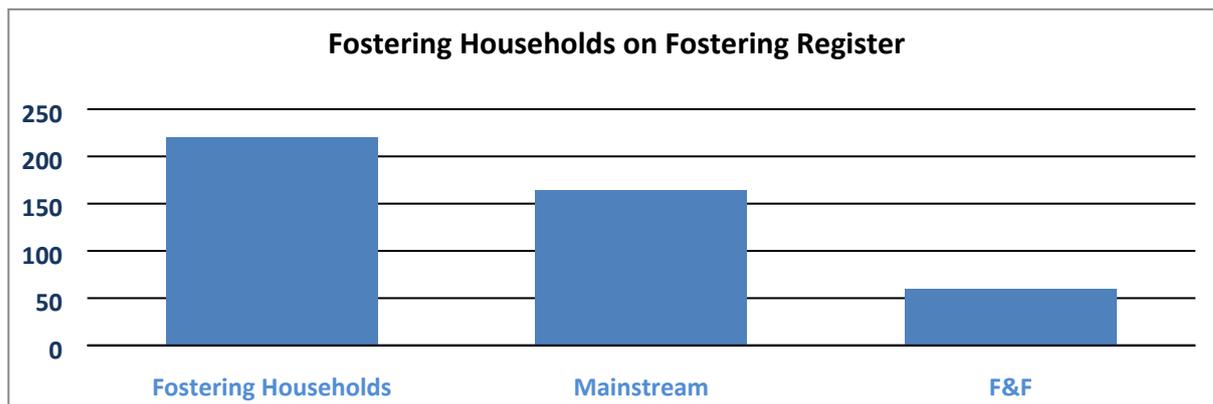


6.4 The most significant figure is the continued net increase of 10 Mainstream households, providing capacity for an additional 15 placements. In the last two years there has been a net gain of 22 mainstream fostering households, providing an additional 37 placements. There also continued a net gain of family and friends’ carers

although we expect this to decrease, due in part to the conversion of some of the households to Special Guardianship Orders (SGO). The majority of the new foster carers live in Wolverhampton, or within 6- 10 miles radius of the city. Amongst these there were two foster carers transferring from independent fostering agencies.

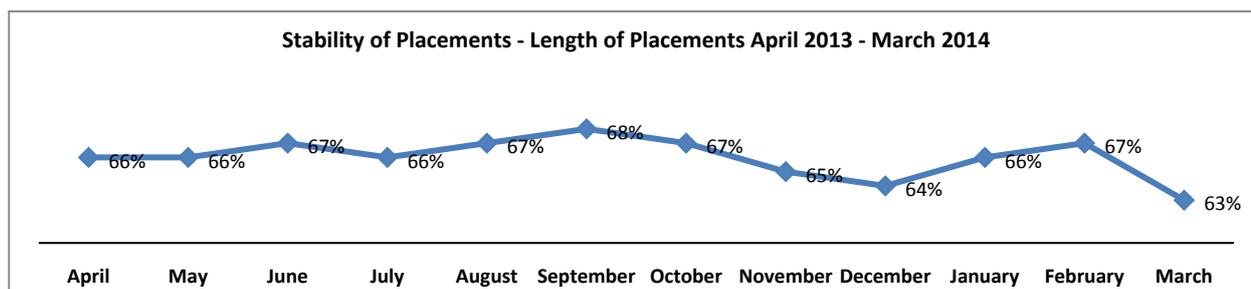
- 6.5 The challenges faced in terms of achieving the target for approval this year have in part been due to issues out of the service control. For example, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks were taking an average of three months to be returned. The DBS process and procedures sets out an expectation that checks will be returned within 60 days and it was not possible to chase or follow up enquires until after this time. Similar issues have arisen in respect of Agency Medical Adviser reports which have also been delayed due to an overall increase across all the services. These two issues resulted in a delay of foster care applications otherwise ready to be presented to Panel, but had to be put back.
- 6.6 The most recent 'Department of Education Recruitment and Retention of carers survey' (2012-2013), shows that rather than a national shortage, the problem appears to be local shortages of foster carers in particular parts of the country where there are particularly difficulties in carers being able to accommodate more than one and siblings groups of children. The survey also states that nationally, in the same period there were 7,400 foster carers recruited but 4,800 were lost. Further, nationally 13% of foster carers resign or their approvals are terminated each year. The survey noted that although pay is not generally stated as a motivator, Independent Fostering agencies with higher payments tended to have fewer recruitment problems.
- 6.7 The number of children requiring fostering placements has continued to rise. This significant increase puts a lot of pressure on placement availability and this puts additional pressure on current placements. In order to match the needs of children it has been necessary to place some children with Independent Fostering Agencies. During the review period there were 730 Looked After Children, of these, 260 children were in Internal Foster placements (including Friends and Family), 60 were in Friends and Family Placements, making total internal foster placements (including Friends and Family) of 320. There are over 300 Looked After Children in Independent Fostering Agency placements. The target is to reduce this number of IFA placements.
- 6.8 This is partly to be achieved by preventing further external placements through the use of local placements and to implement exit plans for a cohort of children whose care plans are either return home or permanence away from the birth family.
- 6.9 Of the children placed in IFA'S during this period, the reasons for having to utilize an external resource were for sibling groups of 2 + children who needed to be placed together or children aged 12 years and over with complex needs and children who were deemed to be at risk if placed locally and placements for parent and child assessments.

The table below illustrates the number of fostering household in 2013-2014



6.10 The above households numbers (164) are not the maximum number of Placements available, although some fostering households are approved and registered for one child as they only have one bedroom, on occasion if it is considered to be appropriate they are able to provide placements for two children from a sibling group, if it is appropriate for the children to share a bedroom. We do not allow children who are unrelated to share a bedroom.

6.11 The table below illustrates the stability of placements for this review period



6.12 Interestingly, a recent survey showed that Wolverhampton is in the top 10 of fostering services for high occupancy rate at 78%. It also highlighted that the West Midlands had the most static foster carer numbers with 3% mainstream foster carer gain. Sufficiency.org.uk (2013).

7 Permanency through long term fostering

7.1 Within the quorate group mentioned above, there are internal fostering households who provide foster care for looked after children on a permanent basis. These carers make a commitment to care for a particular child offering permanency until the child reaches the age of independence. These carers often go onto choose to provide supported lodgings in order for young people to remain in the household post 18 years. If young people do move on, long term carers are matched to another child or young person.

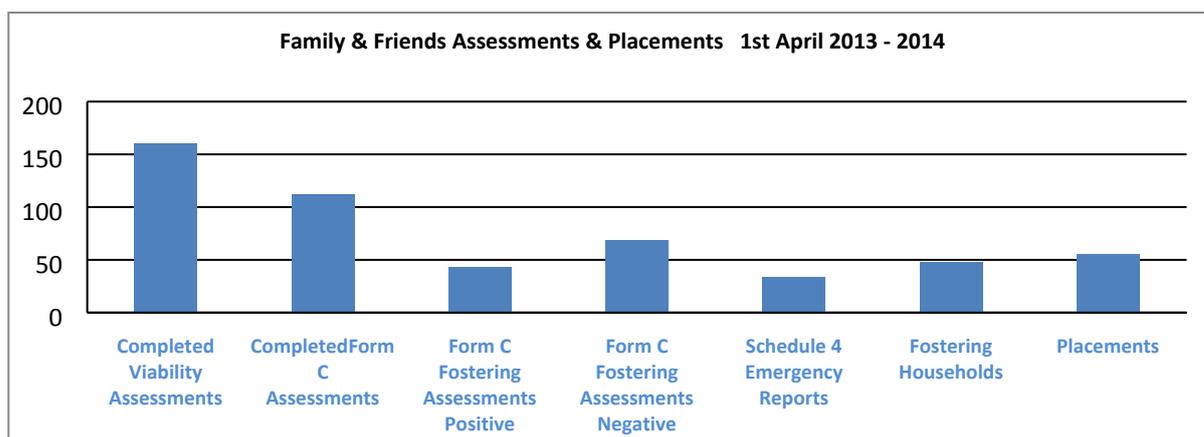
7.2 The fostering service secured 37 matches, a total of 52 permanent placements for children for whom the care plan is permanency, some of whom may not have been able to continue into permanency within their current placement arrangements, or who are in an external provision and wished to remain with their foster placements.

- 7.3 There were (9) foster carers who returned to fostering following a period of dormancy (taking a break) during this review period.
- 7.4 There were (13) fostering households who were de-registered this period, the reasons for de-registration are varied, carers retiring some of whom have been dormant for two years or more (7), no space /family commitments (5), moved away (1).
- 7.5 There were (9) fostering households who have adopted or acquired Special Guardianship Orders during the review period.
- 7.6 There are (7) carers who remain on our dormancy list who may return to fostering at some time in the future. Of this number there are 3 carers who have chosen to provide supported lodgings to the young people in their care in order that they are able to continue to live in the fostering household post 18. All of these carers will return to fostering at some stage. 4 carers simply have no space but may in the future; they wish to remain registered foster carers for Wolverhampton.
- 7.7 The service strives to maintain the highest standards of care to children and will challenge poor child care practice. This action has an impact on the foster placement resources reducing the number of placements available for varying period of time. There were 14 fostering households that have been subject to investigations due to concerns about safeguarding or, standards of care provided to children formerly in placement. This ranges from carer's management of behaviour, health and safety in the fostering household, failure to comply with the requirements of the fostering regulations, through to child protection concerns. Some of these carers have returned to our active list and 3 were de- registered.

8.0 Family and Friends Carers (Connected Persons)

- 8.1 2013-2014 has been a challenging year for a number of reasons. The increase in instructions from Court for Connected Person's assessments has placed pressure on allocation of work. Unlike most other assessments it is not possible to predict the demand and as assessments have to be completed within the time demands of the Court this work can be very challenging to resource. The introduction of the two stage assessment process for applications to foster has also been demanding but is now embedded in practice and the service is working hard to ensure that the required timescales are met.
- 8.2 This group of foster carers are not recruited as described above; they put themselves forward to care for children from within their family network. They are assessed by the service as to their suitability to provide a placement for a particular child or children in care. Family and Friends care is also governed by the fostering regulations 2011. They account for 60 fostering households providing 65 placements. We continue to see a marked increase in referrals for these assessments and the work undertaken between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014 is illustrated in the graph below.

8.3 The graph below illustrate the work of Family and Friends for 2013-2014



8.4 This group of carers can present challenges for the service in that they do not always willingly comply with the fostering requirements i.e. training or keeping records. They see their role differently to that of our recruited carers, some of our Family and Friends carers are the grand-parents of the children placed. These aspects continue to be a challenge which is being addressed by providing clearer information at the point of placement about expectations and that they sign up to this at an earlier stage of the process.

9.0 Short Breaks (Shared Care) Respite Foster Carers

9.1 There are now 3 approved short break foster carers providing respite placements for disabled children. These are foster carers who due to work commitments or family commitments are unable to provide a full time fostering resource. They will only provide care to children or young people, usually disabled children who need a temporary placement for a week end or a week during school holidays. The respite carers are teachers, or social workers who work full time. They offer a regular break to parents and carers who have children who may have challenging behaviours or a disability so that they can have a break.

10.0 Post Approval supervision, support and reviewing

10.1 All Wolverhampton foster carers have a named supervising social worker who visits them weekly for four weeks upon approval, then monthly, to monitor their care of children and young people and provide support. Our focus is placement stability, reducing placement moves and improving outcomes for children. With this in mind all our foster carers have direct access to local partners in health and education who also provide them with advice and support. Because we know that our foster carers provide foster placements for children and young people who present challenges and, or have a range of complex needs, we support our carers to meet these challenges. We have behaviour management programme in place such as validated parenting programme (KEEP) and Pillars of Parenting (POP) to our carers who have children 7-12 years old in placement

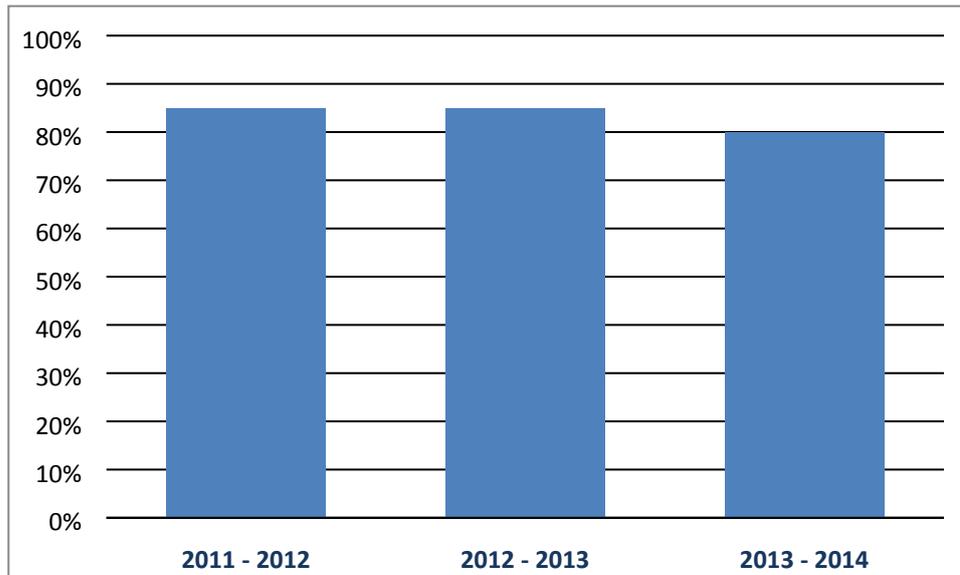
10.2 Wolverhampton has commissioned Heantun Child Care services to provide a range of support services to our foster carers. These include:

- 24/7-365 days advice and guidance outside of office hours,
- dedicated buddy to all newly approved foster carers for a period of six months,
- a variety of activities
- a quarterly newsletter

- assisting in recruitment activity
- participating with the service in developing and reviewing policies and procedures
- facilitating carer training
- running coffee mornings and support groups
- involvement in regular communication meetings with the service
- a range of support groups and forums.

- 10.3 All Wolverhampton carers have access to 7 nights paid respite arrangements each year. As well as the regular fostering arrangements there are also 8 approved temporary foster carers who also provide short term foster carers with regular respite placements. In addition respite carers may offer a regular break to carers who may have challenging placements in order that they can have a break.
- 10.4 Foster carers are reviewed on an annual basis (with the exception of newly approved carers who are reviewed six months following their approval) by Independent Reviewing Officers. Social workers and children are given the opportunity to have an input into this process. This will involve the carer meeting with the independent reviewing officer. The reviewing officer will discuss the activity of a foster carer to ensure the carer continues to be suitable to act as a foster carer, and the household is a suitable premise. The reviewing officer will seek the views of the foster carer, the foster child (subject to the child's age and understanding) the child's social worker, the Supervising Social Worker, the Workforce Development Officer and any other relevant and appropriate person. The review is also an opportunity for the carer to review the service and support given to the children who are placed.
- 10.5 The reviews are considered by the fostering panel (first review or after an allegation, major change in circumstances etc. or change in terms of approval). Over this period, 94% of reviews have been held within the timescales. This rate is an increase from 88% from the previous year. The reviewing officers are timely in chairing the reviews.
- 10.6 The Fostering Service Regulations, 2011, indicate at least one unannounced visit is undertaken to each fostering household each year; this allows the opportunity for the supervising social worker to have an unplanned visit to the foster carer's home and to identify any areas of concerns, especially those of health and safety for the foster carer, the child, and social worker.
- 10.7 The recent Independent Fostering Reviewing Officers report for 2013-14 shows a slight dip in completion rate of these visits for this period. This area is been addressed by the relevant staff and we expect to see improvements during the course of the next review period.

10.8 The graph below illustrates the completion rate of unannounced visit



11.0 Foster carers Learning and Development

11.1 The fostering service learning and development coordinator takes a lead on all learning and development for our carers. Foster carers learning and development is based on the requirements of the fostering standards, and the analysis of foster carers personal development plan and previous training evaluations and outcomes. Training is very important in order for foster carers to manage the challenges being presented by children and young people. Carers usually complete all of the core/ mandatory training within 12 months of their approval. We have recently considered a range of methods through which to support our carers learning. We are promoting a more individualised learning programme, which focuses on further development of their knowledge and experience in areas of their interest and areas specific to the needs of the child or young person in placement. We recognise the diverse range of our carers learning styles and have encouraged a wide range of learning methods i.e. focused reading, observations, opportunities for on line learning and supporting carers to access training together with social worker i.e. Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB).

11.2 At the end of March 2013 94% of mainstream foster carers, and Family and Friends, Shared Care foster carers have successfully completed the Training Support, and Development Standards (TSDS). Newly approved foster carers are been supported to achieve the completion of the standards within the required twelve months of their approval.

12.0 Fostering Panel

12.1 Wolverhampton fostering service has a fostering panel that considers and makes recommendations to the agency decision maker about, the applications of all prospective foster carers, the re-approval of existing foster carers, and the review of the approval of foster carers first reviews and whenever asked to do so by the fostering service. The panel also have a quality assurance role. The work of the panel is governed by the Fostering Services Regulations 2011; it has been a busy period for the fostering panel, with a steady flow of foster carer approvals and the departure of a number of carers. There has been a significant increase in the number of placements made with family and friend foster carers. Foster carer first annual reviews have been

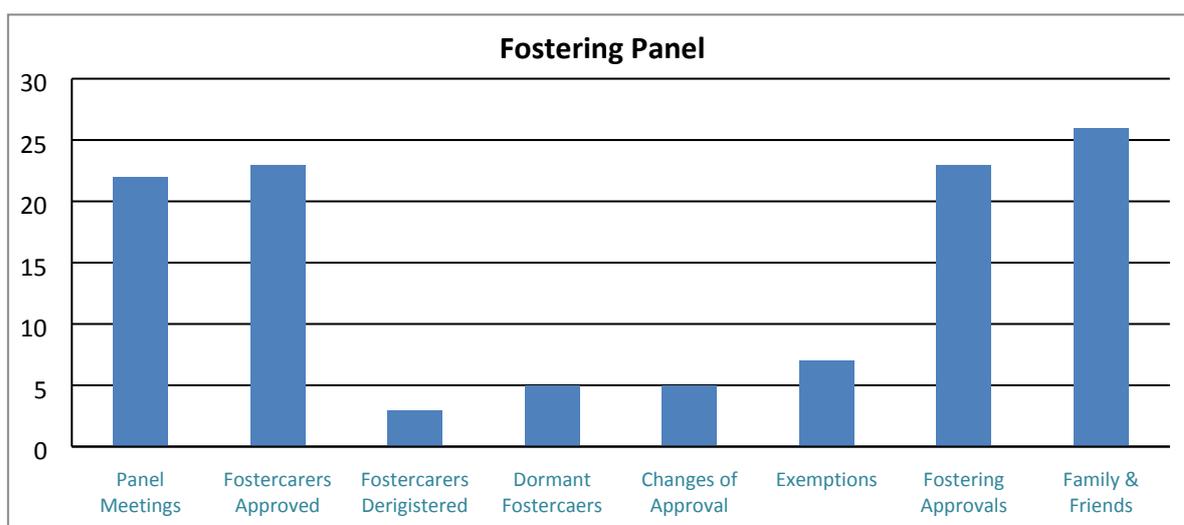
presented to panel, as have reviews requesting change of approval, and reviews following concerns or allegations, and permanency decisions for children.

12.2 In line with good practice, we have an independent chair, three departmental members and three independent panel members, two with fostering experience, one previous foster carer. We are required to maintain a central list of people able to sit at panel when needed to ensure the panel is quorate and to provide professional advice as required. We have a central list that includes suitable independent members, as well as a Wolverhampton councillor, legal and medical advice is available if required. It is not a statutory requirement for a legal advisor to sit on panel, panel have accessed legal advice in relation to applicant foster carers where the recommendation of the Fostering Panel has been to make a Qualifying Determination recommendation.

12.3 Emma Bennett continues to act as the agency decision maker. In Emma’s absence, Steve Cox, Deputy Head of Service, Looked After Children will act in this role.

12.4 The fostering panel meets twice each month, and over the review period have had 22 meetings in order to meet the demands of the service. There were 151 matters heard comprising of: 31 children had their best interest decisions agreed, 23 fostering applications were approved. 3 foster carers were de-registered due to safeguarding concerns, 5 Dormant foster carers were deregistered, 27 first and subsequent review of foster carers were heard, 5 changes of approval category, 7 exemptions to the usual fostering limit, and 26 Family and Friends matters The fostering panel is very ably managed by the Panel Advisor.

12.5 The diagram is an illustration of the work of the fostering panel for the review period 2013-2014



12.6 There are two business meetings and two training events each year. Individual panel members are able to access the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Board training as required. Each panel member is appraised each year by the panel chair and there are regular feedback meetings between the panel chair, the panel advisor and agency decision maker.

13.0 Complaints decision made

- 13.1 There were 3 referrals to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM), the regulatory body which hears appeals from fostering applicants and existing foster carers who were not recommended for approval or continuation of their approval by the panel and agency decision maker.
- 13.2 To support the work of the panel, we continue to recruit panel members for our central list from education and health.
- 13.3 Complaints (Foster carers)
There were 3 complaints/allegations which resulted in 2 de- registrations of foster carers.
- 13.4 Complaints about the service
There were 6 complaints, these included the length of time it has taken to conclude investigations, delays related to payments, service changes and complaints about social workers. In the main the complaints about social workers have been related to social workers challenging standards of practice. The service reviews complaints, learns from them and makes adjustments and improvements.

14.0 Private fostering (PF)

- 14.1 Private Fostering is governed by the Private Fostering Regulations 2009 and the services to Private Fostering arrangements are regularly inspected by Ofsted. The last inspection was 2009. Where a child or young person is not related to their care givers, are under the age of 16 years and live in the household of their care giver for a period of 28 days or more, this is considered to be a private fostering arrangement. The responsibility for private fostering transferred to the fostering team in 2012, when it was agreed that the work was more akin to that of the Fostering Service.
- 14.2 The Duty and Assessment service completes the child in need assessment and the assessment of the suitability of the private foster carer is completed by the fostering team. All private fostering arrangements have an allocated supervising social worker who visits to monitor the arrangement and provide advice and support to private foster carers. Private foster carers have access to our in house foster carers training i.e. Safe care and first aid behaviour management etc.
- 14.3 Under the Private Fostering Regulations the fostering service is required to raise awareness about private fostering amongst the public and professional groups. The targeting of professionals to assist in identifying children who may be in a private fostering arrangement continues to be the focus of the Fostering Service.
- 14.4 The service also worked closely with the marketing and communications team, who has produced publicity materials for raising awareness and booklet for professionals have been updated.
- 14.5 There were 13 referrals to Children Services during 2013-14. However a number of these were not converted to a private fostering arrangement for the following reasons:
- Young people reaching the age of 16 years.
 - Young people returning to other family members.
 - Disqualification of the arrangement due to the criteria for Private Fostering being compromised.
 - The placement did not meet Fostering Regulations.
 - One carer obtained Special Guardianship Order for the young person

- The Foster Carers had a number of issues that caused concern for both the Fostering Social Worker and also the Child's Social Worker

15.0 Summary

- 15.1 Overall the work of the Fostering Service has increased significantly and brought with it the challenge of meeting the individual demands of the various timescales in different parts of the service. In addition to recruiting and supporting foster carers, the team works with adoption when placing children in adoption placements, life appreciation events and introductions of children into adoptive placements.
- 15.2 The future will bring challenges in terms of changes to the management team as there are two Consultant Social work posts vacant, which will bring challenges in the stability of the team.
- 15.3 We will continue to embed the new Children services reorganisation (New Working Model), whereby the fostering service functions are now provided by three social work units. One unit focus on Recruitment and Assessment of mainstream foster carers, one unit provides support to all of our approved foster carers, and the other serves Family and Friends (Connected persons). The restructuring of the service will enhance our capacity to focus on the respective areas

16.0. Future Service Development/Challenges for the next year

- Continue to work to embed the new Children's Services structure, whereby the fostering service functions are now provided by three social work units.
- To recruit 35 foster households in 2015, including specialist carers to meet our placement needs
- To work with the Fostering Network Project which will help us to develop and improve our recruitment performance.
- Contribute to the reduction in the numbers of children who are looked after through increase in the numbers of permanence orders secured (Special Guardianship and Residence Orders). This will also be supported through the re-launch of the permanence strategy, including the amended permanence financial support policy.
- Reduce the numbers of children placed in external foster care placements. This will be achieved by increasing internal capacity by creating additional new placements (for new and existing carers) and "stretching" existing carers in terms of numbers of children placed, age and complexity of need.
- To continue to focus on recruitment for sibling groups and teenagers providing placements for more challenging children/ young people.
- Set up a specialist foster placement scheme (specialist carers).
- Re-introduce plans for the 'introduce a carer' scheme as we know that word of mouth is a successful recruitment strategy, our carers will receive a financial reward when one of the people they introduce is approved at the fostering panel.
- To utilise technology to reach a larger audience
- To reduce the number of applicant fall-outs at each of the recruitment stages we intent to research to ascertain the reasons why people expressed an initial interest in fostering but then did not pursue their application.
- To recruit carers for parent and child assessment placements
- Over the last year we have not been able to recruit the numbers of fostering households needed. We have introduced a 0 – 18 approval category to achieve greater placement choices.

- To introduce a fee structure that will engage and reward foster carers for the work they do.

Key Improvements

- We aim to increase the number of Family and Friends carers progressing to application for Special Guardianships and Residence Orders
- Encourage the take up of all carers attending training and completing the Training & Development Standards.
- To develop “Specialist Foster Service” to cater for the effects of the emotional impact of trauma for children and young people, to aid children’s placement stability and the development of resilience for looked after children.
- To work with the Black Country Consortium to further the training of Wolverhampton Staff and Foster Carer for KEEP Safe training and KEEP for 3-6 year olds.
- To source appropriate relevant training for Specialist Foster Carers to enhance foster carer Learning and Development