

# Corporate Parenting Board

## 11 November 2015

**Time** 6.00 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)

#### Labour

Cllr Paula Brookfield  
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar  
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss  
Cllr Peter O'Neill  
Cllr Rita Potter  
Cllr Stephen Simkins  
Cllr Martin Waite

#### Conservative

Cllr Christine Mills

#### Liberal Democrat

Cllr Richard Whitehouse

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](mailto:carl.craney@wolverhampton.gov.uk)  
**Address** Democratic Support, Civic Centre, 1st 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               | <b>Apologies for absence (if any)</b>   |
| 2               | <b>Declarations of interests (if any)</b>   |
| 3               | <b>Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2015</b><br>[For approval]   |
| 4               | <b>Matters arising</b><br>[To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2015]   |
| 5               | <b>Schedule of outstanding matters</b> (Pages 3 - 6)<br>[To consider and comment on the summary of outstanding matters] |
| 6               | <b>IRO's Annual Report 2014/15</b> (Pages 7 - 20)<br>[To receive the IRO's Annual Report 2014/15]                       |
| 7               | <b>New Belongings</b> (Pages 21 - 38)<br>[To receive a report on the principles of the New Belongings initiative]       |
| 8               | <b>Performance Management Data</b> (Pages 39 - 48)<br>[To consider the Performance Management Data for September 2015]  |
| 9               | <b>Exclusion of the press and public</b><br>[To pass the following resolution:  |

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

## Part 2 – items not open to the public and press

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 10 | <b>Councillors visits to establishments</b><br>[To receive feedback on any visits to establishments undertaken by Councillors since the last meeting] |
|----|---|

# Corporate Parenting Board

Minutes - 30 September 2015

## Attendance

**Chair** Cllr Val Gibson (Lab)

## Labour

Cllr Paula Brookfield  
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar  
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss

Cllr Peter O'Neill  
Cllr Rita Potter  
Cllr Stephen Simkins

Cllr Martin Waite

## Conservative

Cllr Christine Mills

## Liberal Democrat

Cllr Richard Whitehouse

## Children in Care Council representatives

Alicia Blewitt	La-Myar James
Dasiante Dean	Tyrone Miller Coleman
Arron Gavin	Sean Povey
Casey Gavin	Shereen Rafferty
Kyron Hughes	Shaideen Williamson

## Employees

Emma Bennett	Service Director - Children and Young People
Carl Craney	Democratic Support Officer
Louise Haughton	Social Worker
Alison Hinds	Head of Looked After Children
Andrew Spragg	Participation Officer
Alice Vickers	Corporate Parenting Officer

*Item No.*     *Title*

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

No apologies for absence had been received.

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

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

**3        Minutes of the previous meeting (1 July 2015)**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**4        Matters arising**

With reference to Minute No. 4 (matters arising), the Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, enquired as to the present position with the review of inter alia, the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Emma Bennett, Service Director, Children and Young People, reported that the review was still work in progress. Alison Hinds, Head of Looked After Children, reported that a report on this matter would be submitted to the meeting of the Board scheduled for 6 January 2016.

With reference to Minute No. 4.2, the Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, reminded the Board that a report on outstanding matters would be submitted to all future meetings of the Board.

**5        "This is my friend"**

The Board and representatives of the Children in Care Council conducted an exercise, "This is my friend" and reported back on the outcomes.

**6        Priorities identified by the Corporate Parenting Board and the Children in Care Council**

Casey Gavin identified, on behalf of the Children in Care Council the following priorities for Looked After Children:

- Children in care having contact with siblings without supervision being provided;
- Preparing for independence;
- Out of City placements.

The Service Director, Children and Young People reported that a contact centre had been established and that the current contract was being reviewed. The Council was keen to facilitate contact between children in care and their siblings. Contact without supervision was dependent upon the ages of the children involved amongst other factors. With regard to preparing for independence, she advised that this was part of

the “New Belongings” project and undertook to circulate a copy of the latest iteration of the report to the Board. She explained that “New Belongings” was part of a Government initiative and that Wolverhampton had been selected as one of the pilot sites. An Action Plan to cover the next 12 months had been prepared and would be launched during Care Leavers week. With regard to Out of City placements she assured the Board and the representatives of the Children in Care Council that the Council was keen to reduce the number of Out of City placements and where no alternative existed to try to ensure that it was as close to Wolverhampton as possible. Circumstances did, however, sometimes dictate that there this type of placement was necessary and appropriate. She referred to a recent conference she had attended with three representatives of the Children in Care Council in connection with Looked After Children in Education. Cllr Stephen Simkins suggested that the “New Belongings” project be the topic of a future joint meeting between the Board and the Children in Care Council. Alice Vickers, Corporate Parenting Officer advised that the next joint meeting was scheduled for 30 March 2016.

Cllr Stephen Simkins enquired as to whether there was a role to play in schools to improve contact between children in care and siblings. The Corporate Parenting Officer, undertook to raise this issue at the next meeting with the Designated Teachers and to report back to a future meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the priorities identified by the Children in Care Council be noted;
2. That a copy of the latest iteration of the report on the “New Belongings” project be circulated to the Board;
3. That the “New Belongings” project be the topic of a future joint meeting between the Board and the Children in Care Council;
4. That the Corporate Parenting Officer raise the issue of the role of schools in improving contact between children in care and siblings at the next meeting with the Designated Teachers and report back on the outcome to a future meeting of the Board.

## **7 Feedback and arrangements for the next joint meeting**

Resolved:

That the “New Belongings” project be the main topic for consideration at the next joint meeting scheduled for 30 March 2016.

## **8 Adoption Agency Interim Report**

Louise Haughton, Senior Social Work Manager – Adoption, presented a report which detailed the work of the Wolverhampton City Council Adoption Service in the year April 2014 to April 2015. The report updated the Board in relation to adoption both nationally and locally and included legislative and practice changes and how these impacted on those affected by adoption in Wolverhampton.

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss referred to the Government target for the time taken with the adoption process and suggested that this should only be viewed as an aspiration with the best placement being paramount. The Senior Social Work Manager – Adoption acknowledged the point being made but commented that a balance needed to be struck as when the correct placement had been identified it should be made to

happen quickly. Cllr Peter O'Neill suggested that the Council's good practice with adoption placements, in securing 85 during 2014/15, should be made known to other Councils.

Kyron Hughes enquired if one child in a family group was adopted whether contact with siblings was still encouraged. The Senior Social Work Manager – Adoption explained that contact would not normally cease for a variety of reasons. The law now provided for siblings to apply for a Contact Order enabling contact with the adopted sibling.

La-Myar James questioned why in certain circumstances only one child in a sibling group was adopted. The Senior Social Work Manager – Adoption explained that this issue was considered during the care planning period and would depend on the needs of the individual children. Formal contact might reduce following adoption. She advised the Board that Adoption had very low rates of breakdown and offered greater stability to the child which could be better than familial contact. Social Workers would attempt to facilitate contact when appropriate.

Alicia Blewitt enquired whether the Council would provide support to adopted children in preparing for independence. The Senior Social Work Manager – Adoption advised that this support would normally be provided by the adoptive family.

Dasiante Dean asked why the numbers of successful adoptions had increased and whether the placements were of a high quality. The Senior Social Work Manager – Adoption explained that there were a lot of legacy cases which had now been dealt with and that the rate of placement had increased partially due to the high profile given nationally to adoption. She assured the Board that the quality of placements was subject to assessment by two Social Workers, a Manager and the Adoption Panel. She commented that there had been no breakdown in adoption relationships in the past three years which was a testimony in itself to the quality of the placements.

Tyrone Miller Coleman enquired whether adopted children had an allocated Social Worker. The Senior Social Work Manager Adoption advised that adopted children were not allocated a Social Worker but that adoption support was available.

Shereen Rafferty questioned why the amount of money allocated to adopted children was calculated and why it differed to that for Looked After Children. The Senior Social Work Manager Adoption advised that the Council did not receive financial support from the Council as this would be provided by the adoptive parents.

Cllr Stephen Simkins referred to the Adoption Reform Grant and asked how long this funding would be available and what plans were in place for when it was no longer available. He also questioned the resource implications associated with Regional Adoption Committees. The Senior Social Work Manager Adoption reported that the Adoption Reform Grant had ended in 2014/15 and as this had been known in advance the Council was prepared for this reduction in resources. She commented on the amount of work that had been undertaken during 2014/15 utilising this funding. The Head of Looked After Children reminded the Board that twelve additional Social Workers had been recruited with one allocated to the Adoption Service.

Cllr Stephen Simkins questioned whether any thought had been given to amalgamating the Adoption and Looked After Children Services. The Head of Looked After Children reported that some work had already been undertaken in this area and that all Looked After Children with an Adoption Plan were now the responsibility of the Adoption Service. The Service Director, Children and Young People reported on the work of the Adoption Leadership Board which had raised the profile and priority of adoption within the region. She commented that a likely next step would be the regionalisation of adoption and that a bid had been submitted by West Midlands Councils to Government for funding. The Black Country was already an exemplar of good practice. Invitations were likely to be extended to Telford and Shropshire Councils to participate in regional work.

Cllr Peter O'Neill referred to paragraph 3.4.6 of the report insofar as it referred to the cost of providing a placement for one child being £27,000. The Service Director, Children and Young People explained that the figure had been set under the Adoption Reform agenda. The Senior Social Work Manager Adoption reported that this cost had calculated as the average cost. Cllr Peter O'Neill enquired as to whether there was a danger of the service being privatised. The Service Director, Children and Young People reported that this was not the case but that a wider pool of placements would be made available. The Senior Social Work Manager Adoption reminded the Board that Voluntary Adoption Agencies were voluntary organisations and operated on a not for profit basis.

Cllr Jasbinder Dehar referred to paragraph 3.4.4 of the report and the apparent reduction in the number of Asian or dual heritage background being placed for adoption. The Senior Social Work Manager Adoption responded that there was no explanation available for this and that it was a completely random occurrence. The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson commented that the situation was monitored and that no trends had been identified. Cllr Richard Whitehouse reminded the Board that when dealing with small numbers percentages could be very misleading. The Service Director, Children and Young People reminded the Board of the amount of benchmarking which was undertaken and that there were no concerns in relation to this issue.

Cllr Stephen Simkins enquired as to the checks and balances in place in relation to the use of voluntary adoption agencies. The Service Director, Children and Young People reminded the Board that she had offered re-assurances previously with regard to this issue and that all adoption agencies were registered with Ofsted and subject to the Council's vetting process. The Head of Looked After Children confirmed that the vetting process was very vigorous.

Resolved:

1. That the Wolverhampton City Council Adoption Service Annual Report April 2014 to April 2015 be received and noted;
2. That the thanks of the Board be extended to the Senior Social Work Manager Adoption for the report and her work over the reporting period;
3. That A Briefing Note be prepared and circulated in connection with the levelling of interagency placement fees.

The Service Director Children and Young People presented the Performance Report for September 2015 (data as at August 2015) and responded to a number of questions.

The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, reported that permanent staff had now been recruited to nearly all Social Worker posts which had reduced the dependency on agency staff.

Cllr Peter O'Neill enquired whether there was a Governor responsible for Looked After Children on the Governing Bodies of schools and if the increase in the number of Academies would be prejudicial to the position. The Head of Looked After Children reported that the Council enjoyed a good working relationship with the Designated Teachers.

Cllr Rita Potter enquired whether care leavers continued to receive support from the Council. The Head of Looked After Children confirmed that support and advice was provided in respect of housing and education.

Casey Gavin extended an invitation to the Service Director, Children and Young People and the Head of Looked After Children to attend the next meeting of the Children in Care Council. The invitation was accepted.

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss invited the representatives of the Children in Care Council to provide feedback to the Board on their experience of attending this meeting. The Corporate Parenting Officer undertook to arrange for the minutes of the next Children in Care Council meeting to be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received and noted;
2. That the representatives of the Children in Care Council be thanked for their contributions to this meeting and for their attendance.

## 10 **Exclusion of the press and public**

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**

### 11 **Councillors visits to establishments**

Resolved:

1. That the offer of the Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, to visit Upper Pendeford Farm and to report back thereon to a future meeting be noted;
2. That the offer of Cllrs Peter O'Neill and Stephen Simkins to visit Merridale Street West and to report back thereon to a future meeting be noted.

### 12 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson reported that the Looked After Children Awards ceremony would be held on 5 February 2016 and that invitations to attend would be issued shortly.

The Chair, Cllr Val Gibson, reminded the Board that the Foster Carer Long Service Awards evening would be held on 23 October 2015.

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# Corporate Parenting Board

## 11 November 2015

<b>Report Title</b>	Summary of outstanding matters	
<b>Cabinet Member with Lead Responsibility</b>	Councillor Val Gibson Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	
<b>Wards Affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Emma Bennett – Service Director – Children and Young People	
<b>Originating service</b>	Governance	
<b>Accountable officer(s)</b>	Carl Craney Tel Email	Democratic Services Officer 01902 55(5046) carl.craney@wolverhampton.gov.uk

**Recommendations for noting:**

The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to consider and comment on the summary of outstanding matters

## 1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to appraise the Board of the current position with a variety of matters considered at previous meetings of the Corporate Parenting Board Board.

## 2.0 Background

2.1 At previous meetings of the Board the following matters were considered and details of the current position is set out in the fourth column of the table.

<u>DATE OF MEETING</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>LEAD MEMBER / OFFICER</u>	<u>CURRENT POSITION</u>
1 July 2015 and 30 September 2015	Review of Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	Emma Bennett	Report to 6 January 2016 meeting
1 July 2015	Details of casework, in terms of number of cases, of individual Social Workers	Emma Bennett	Report to 6 January 2016 meeting
1 July 2015	Academic achievements of Looked After Children and support provided to poor achievers	Darren Martindale	Report to 6 January 2016 meeting
1 July 2015 and 30 September 2015	Report back on visit to Upper Pendeford Farm	Cllr Val Gibson / Alice Vickers	Report to 11 November 2015 meeting
30 September 2015	Report on "New Belongings" project to be circulated to the Board	Emma Bennett	Report circulated on 28 October 2015 and to be considered at 30 March 2016 meeting
30 September 2015	Role of schools in improving contact between Looked After Children and their siblings – report back from meeting with	Alice Vickers	Verbal report to 11 November 2015 meeting (via matters arising from the minutes)

## Designated Teachers

30 September 2015	Briefing Note on levelling of inter-agency placement fees	Emma Bennett	Report to 6 January 2016 meeting
30 September 2015	Report back on visit to Merridale Street West	Cllrs Peter O'Neill and Stephen Simkins / Alice Vickers	11 November 2015

### **3.0 Financial implications**

3.1 None arising directly from this report. The financial implications of each matter will be detailed in the report submitted to the Board.

### **4.0 Legal implications**

4.1 None arising directly from this report. The legal implications of each matter will be detailed in the report submitted to the Board.

### **5.0 Equalities implications**

5.1 None arising directly from this report. The equalities implications of each matter will be detailed in the reports submitted to the Board

### **6.0 Environmental implications**

6.1 None arising directly from this report. The environmental implications of each matter will be detailed in the report submitted to the Board.

### **7.0 Human resources implications**

7.1 None arising directly from this report. The human resources implications of each matter will be detailed in the report submitted to the Board.

### **8.0 Corporate landlord implications**

8.1 None arising directly from this report. The corporate landlord implications of each matter will be detailed in the report submitted to the Board.

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

9.1 Minutes of previous meetings of the Board and associated reports.

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# Corporate Parenting Board

11 November 2015

<b>Report title</b>	Annual Report of the Independent Reviewing Officer Service 2014-15
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families
<b>Wards affected</b>	All
<b>Accountable director</b>	Linda Saunders- People
<b>Originating service</b>	Safeguarding and Quality
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Dawn Williams Head of Service: Safeguarding and Quality Tel 01902 550655 <a href="mailto:Dawn.williams@wolverhampton.gov.uk">Dawn.williams@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a> Mandy Lee Safeguarding Manager: Children Tel 01902 550654 <a href="mailto:Mandy.lee@wolverhampton.gov.uk">Mandy.lee@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>

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## 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 2014/15 and determines actions to be progressed in 2015/16.

**4.0 Financial implications**

4.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report. [GS/04112015/K]

**5.0 Legal implications**

5.1 None – the annual report meets legal requirements. RB/03112015/L

**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 2014/15 is attached. The Corporate parenting Board has received Annual reports in preceding years

# Wolverhampton

## City Council



## Annual report

## Safeguarding Service

## Looked After Children 2014- 2015

## **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 covers the period from April 2014 – March 2015. This is the 6th annual report. The report follows the format recommended by the National IRO Managers Group.
- 1.3 The Safeguarding Service is based at the Priory Green Building in Pendeford, Wolverhampton.
- 1.4 Dawn Williams is the Head of Safeguarding and Quality (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. Mandy Lee is the Safeguarding Manager- Children, who commenced in September 2014. Prior to that the service was managed, by Interim manager, Nicki Pettit. The management of the IRO team 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 home reviews.
- 1.5 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 2014 – 15 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 FTE IRO's. The team has been fully staffed since December 2014. Agreement was given to add an agency member of staff to the establishment in April 2013 due to the high numbers of new LAC and this has remained in place to April 2015.
- 3.2 The team has remained stable, other than the use of three agency workers, over the period, and is increasingly experienced. Two new members of staff who commenced in November and December 2014 have been well supported by all members of the team in being inducted to the role. The majority of the team have a mixed caseload of LAC and CP. 3.5 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 number of LAC has continued to be high (769 on 31/3/14, 778 on 31/3/15) and indeed had exceeded 800 during the year.
- 3.4 The IRO Handbook recommends IRO caseloads of 50 – 70 children per IRO. Despite being fully staffed and having an additional agency IRO it has not been possible to achieve this recommended caseload due to the high number 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 2014 was 103 children. On 31 March 2014 it was 106 and indeed had been as high as 111 during the year.
- 3.5 The team, including agency staff, has 9 full time IRO's and 2 half time IRO's. There are 4 men and 7 women. The team is made up of IROs from different ethnic backgrounds. (2 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. 58% white British, 21% Asian, 8% black Afro/Caribbean, 11% mixed heritage and 2% other.

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

#### **Quantitative information regarding the LAC population**

- 3.7 The gender and age of the LAC in Wolverhampton is as follows (last years in brackets): Female 349/45% (343/45%) Male 429/55% (426/55%) Age: under 5 –203/26% (224/29%) 5 - 9 year olds 203/26% (192/25%) 10 – 15 year olds 260/33% (247/32%) and 16-17 year olds 109/14% (106/14%). 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 492/63% (394/51%) Interim Care Order 81/10% (118/15%) Placement Order 119/15% (123/16%) Section 20 – 82/11% (113/17%) Remand 4 (1). This shows an increase in the number of children subject to full Care Orders, but less becoming subject to Interim Care Orders and a decrease in the number of children subject to S20. This suggests a high number of children have remained in care and have not moved on to permanent alternatives.

#### **4. Qualitative information about the IRO service**

- 4.1 Under the provisions of the *Review of Children's Cases Regulations (1991)*<sup>3</sup> 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 91.1 of all LAC in 2014/15 were reviewed in line with statutory timescales (91.6 in 2013/14). This is a very slight decrease on the previous year, but still excellent performance, given the high numbers of looked after children. This should improve as caseloads reduce in 2015/16.

- 4.4 A total of 1832 (1558) Looked after Children (LAC) reviews took place in the relevant period. This was an increase of 274 reviews held compared to last year. This will in part will be due to the increase in the number of looked after children, but may also relate the introduction of the 26 week care proceeding timescales, which can mean that additional reviews are requested to fit with the courts timetable, rather than the usual Statutory timescale.
- 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 2014, the figure in Wolverhampton was 92.5% for the previous year. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 it was 98%, which is a good improvement. This is a positive figure considering the higher number of reviews held. The figure will need to be maintained, however, the focus now needs to move towards ensuring the quality of that participation
- 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.

- 4.11 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 8 children were reviewed by IROs under the Short Break Statutory Guidance (Section 20(4) of the Children Act 1989) in 2014 – 15 (10 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 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 plan is,
  - Quality of contribution by the child/ young person and other attendees, to review,
  - 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. In 2014-15, RAG ratings were issued in relation to 2098 LAC reviews. 1832 were awarded Green ratings (87%), 222 were awarded Amber ratings (11%) and 44 were awarded Red ratings (2%).
- 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 Children's Social Care manager responds to the IRO in all red and amber cases. There have been some difficulties due to the complexity of the system, and the turnover of Children's Social Care managers in that last year, which have impacted on the effectiveness of this system. A revised system is under development, which should simplify the process.

- 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. Four notifications were awarded in 2014-15. Since April 2015 the IRO service have been working to improve the use of the awards, and have introduced a notification of 'Good Practice' in addition so that the service can capture a greater range of good work and bring it to the attention of managers. This will be reported on in 2015-16.

## **6. Conduct of the organisation in relation to Case Management**

- 6.1 During 2014 - 15 a number of formal dispute resolution protocols were implemented in Wolverhampton, but none went beyond stage 1. The RAG system is 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.

## **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 ability to monitor the progress of cases where some areas of shortfall have been identified.

## **8. Review of last year's priority areas for improvement and action**

- 8.1 ***Aim for full implementation of the IRO handbook.*** 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 envisaged that with increased staffing in the team and reducing numbers of LAC there will be improvements in this area. As of September

2015, 3 additional agency IRO's have been appointed, which has meant that the picture for 2015-16 will be much improved.

8.2 **Monthly reporting of key information to be provided to the IRO service.** There continues to be 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 remains a priority for 2015 – 16.

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

Completed and an additional award for recognising Good Practice has now been introduced.

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

Work has been undertaken with the IRO service to review consistency and quality of recording practice and guidance provided regarding expectations. Clearly high workloads will inevitably impact on the level of detail and the rigour applied to the process. A priority for 2015-16 will be increased quality assurance of the IRO's records.

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

The IRO Post qualifying module delivered by Birmingham University is now well established. Four IRO's undertook the course in 2014-15.

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

A review has been undertaken and the need for increased resources for the IRO service has been identified. In addition for temporary agency IRO support referred to in the report, a temporary 2 year fixed term IRO post has been established (not yet filled). The Foster Home

Review service has been reviewed and 0.5 Foster Home Reviewing Officer post will be diverted to the IRO role for a 2 year period.

While most IRO's continue to also act as Child Protection Conference Chairs, the service is moving towards increased specialisation, whereby, while those staff will not work exclusively in either the LAC or CP field, they will have either a predominantly CP or LAC caseload and with that an expectation that they provide a service development role in that specialism.

## **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. Increased staffing in 2015-16 and reducing numbers of LAC should enable full implementation.
- 9.2 Monthly reporting of key information to be provided to the IRO 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
- 9.3 Develop Quality Standards for IRO records against which IRO performance can be monitored.
- 9.4 Revised Quality Assurance and RAG rating process to be implemented and incorporated in to the LAC Review procedure.
- 9.5 Complete a service self-assessment using the National Association of Independent Reviewing Officers Toolkit and develop action plan to address any identified shortfall.
- 9.6 Improve capacity of the service to report on IRO challenge to the delivery of the Who Cares Trust Five entitlements for Looked After Children and Five entitlements for Care Leavers

## **10. Conclusion.**

- 10.1 This report has highlighted the work of the IROs in Wolverhampton from April 2014 to March 2015 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 2015 to 31 March 2016.

This report is PUBLIC  
[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]



# Corporate Parenting Board

## 11 November 2015

<b>Report title</b>	New Belongings
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Families
<b>Wards affected</b>	All
<b>Accountable director</b>	Linda Sanders, Community
<b>Originating service</b>	Looked after Children's Service
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Alison Hinds Head of Looked After Children 01902 553035
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Emma Bennet & Cllr Val Gibson People leadership Team Place Leadership Team SEB

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

The Corporate Parenting Board is recommended to:

1. Support the implementation of the New Belongings Project across Wolverhampton City Council.

### **Recommendations for Reviewing, commenting and feedback:**

The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to note:

1. The New Belongings Action Plan

## **1.0 Purpose**

1. New Belongings aims to:
  - embed the principles of the Care Leavers Charter
  - join up services to care leavers, as outlined in the Access All Areas report. This report calls on central government departments to improve the support they offer to young people as they leave the care system and in their early years after leaving care. It examines how working across government is essential to improving the support care leavers receive and removing obstacles to their progress.
  - bring in the energy of local communities to support care leavers.
  
- 1.2 Historically Wolverhampton's Looked after Children's (LAC) Transitions Team has struggled to raise the profile of young people leaving care. It is hoped that this project will raise all Council employees/services and partners' awareness of care leavers, the issues they face, and the aspirations that the Wolverhampton City Council has for them.
  
- 1.3 The participation that other councils have had with this project has been very successful in highlighting the needs of their care leavers and identifying appropriate support services. As a result there has been an overall improvement in service delivery and improved outcomes for care leavers, an example of this is the Ofsted feedback provided to Trafford Council. It was noted that the New Belongings project contributed to the outstanding rating received by Trafford Council as participation in the project highlighted areas for improvement within the service, support the Local Authority to tailor its services to support care leavers enabling care leavers achieve better outcomes.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 New Belongings has been an innovative and ambitious initiative aiming to raise expectation and aspiration for care leavers. The project ran from May 2013 to October 2014 in nine Local Authority areas and has shown how attention to the care leavers' voice and a commitment to improving services can begin to create radical shifts in culture and belief.
  
- 2.2 The inspiration for New Belongings came from the care leavers group who meet regularly with the Minister for Children and was the third in a series of initiatives which produced and bring the principles and concepts of Access All Areas and the Charter for Care Leavers down to a local level. The aim is to embed these into local services and

communities and reduce the sense of long term isolation often expressed by care leavers.

- 2.3 New Belongings was needed to create a culture change in delivery of services for care leavers to address the continuing over-representation of this group in all the statistics of disadvantage and social exclusion including adult prisoners and mental health service users, and chronically lower paid or unemployed.
- 2.4 Wolverhampton have been successful in their bid to partake in New Belongings. Our care leaver survey has been completed which has informed our action plan in regards to improving overall service delivery for Wolverhampton care leavers.
- 2.5 To meet the New Belongings' criteria Wolverhampton City Council must;
- Sign up to the Government's Care Leavers' Charter
  - Have the personal support of the Chief Executive Officer/Managing Director, who will ensure co-operation across the Local Authority and its partners to achieve the priorities of the project. The Local Authority must have a commitment to meeting with the New Belongings Team at the mid-point of the project to review the project's progress
  - Have the personal support of the leader, who will engage with local groups and businesses that can offer opportunities and personal support to care leavers
  - Have a commitment to create a Care Leaver Forum which has real voice and influence
  - Have commitment to develop a basic plan for the project, reflecting the care leavers' survey and the Government's care leavers' strategy that will be delivered by a designated project lead, supported by sufficient resources including the Young Person Advisors. The Project Plan needs to be approved and support given to the action plan for embedding into the Transition Service. The Project is time-limited for 12 months and will be reported back to the Department for Education (DFE) and the Care Leavers' Foundation
- 2.7 It is hoped that by participating as an authority we will be able to set the foundation for an effective relationship between the Local Authority and our care leavers so that trust between the two can be further developed.
- 2.8 We expect that the combined efforts of the above points will decrease barriers for care leavers in the community, providing them with increased support and by engaging the abilities of the whole of the Local Authority, its key service partners, and the wider community. Creating an action plan that reflects the priorities that the Local Authority and its care leavers consider important to them, for example, increased participation, on-going education, training and employment opportunities, housing options and access to health and wellbeing services via our local services and partners, will raise the profile of care leavers. This should promote aspirations and opportunities for our care leavers so that they can be encouraged, supported and empowered to achieve better outcomes for their future. Breaking down these barriers will automatically improve our care leavers' experience of transition from childhood to adult life.

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

A care leaver survey has been carried out with Wolverhampton care leavers. The response rate for this was 16%, which was similar to other Local Authorities. The analysis of these results showed some common themes on what improvements are required from the Transition Team;

- Preparation of young people for independence – cooking and budgeting in particular
- Explanation of the roles within the team and options post 16/18
- Not answering the telephone
- Constant change of social worker
- Lack of apprenticeship and job opportunities
- Lack of involvement in participation
- Lack of involving young people in decision making
- Exceeded rate that young people are leaving care

3.2 The Action Plan (Appendix One) was formulated collating the information from the care leaver survey. This project will be evaluated independently by DfE to analyse and assess if the Action Plan and partnership process has led to improvements in services. It will identify positive outcomes/recommendations for dissemination to other Local Authorities.

3.3 In order to achieve the above, a Wolverhampton care leavers' forum will be established to lead on the project and the findings from the survey. The forum will ensure that Wolverhampton's care leavers are consulted on a regular basis regarding the New Belongings project and plans/changes for the LAC Transition Service. This forum will be used as a way of gathering care leavers' views on changes and service delivery, with the aim of making improvements which will further support young people to reach their potential and achieve their aspirations.

3.4 Quarterly meetings are being held with other Local Authorities within the Black Country cluster. These meetings are supported by the National Project Manager and a dedicated care leaver who is attached to each Local Authority to offer support and guidance throughout the project.

3.5 The project has been launched within Wolverhampton in our annual care leavers' week 26-31 October 2015. This will be followed by a Black Country cluster launch in December 2015.

3.6 There will also be networking events across the country with all other local authorities that are part of the project. The first one has recently taken place in October 2015 and the second is scheduled for March 2016.

#### **4.0 Financial implications**

4.1 The Council will not attract any additional funding for the New Belongings Project.

4.2 Any costs associated with the implementation of the project will be contained within existing approved budgets within the Children and Young People's Service area.

[NM/02112015/B]

#### **5.0 Legal implications**

5.1 The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3 Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers places a statutory duty upon the Local Authority to ensure that looked after children and care leavers receive good quality advice alongside guidance and support, through the care planning and pathway planning process. This will support them to make informed choices regarding their future and allow them to make continuing progress in education, training and employment to ensure that they are empowered to reach their aspirations.

[JN/02112015/N]

#### **6.0 Equalities implications**

6.1 Wolverhampton is a very diverse city with its demographics clearly documented nationally. The city suffers from high levels of child poverty, deprivation and worklessness. The number of issues that face the inner city authority increase and budgets decrease. It is therefore necessary to think differently when dealing with the most vulnerable young people in society.

6.2 There are 226 Care Leavers (16+) within Wolverhampton . The Transition Service works closely with all children's social work teams , with the disability team and adult services.

#### **7.0 Environmental implications**

7.1 There are no known environmental implications of the report or its proposals.

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

8.1 There are no implications for Human Resources.

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

9.1 The report has no known implications for the Council's property portfolio.

**10.0 Schedule of background papers**

10.1 New Belongings Action Plan

**10.0 Appendix**

10.1 New Belongings Action Plan

## Action Plan Template (2015/16)

Directorate/Service Area:

CYP/Looked after Children

Accountable Officer for Plan:

Laura Wood

What?

Who?

Why?

When?

With What?

So What?

Action/Activity	Responsible Officer	Anticipated Outcome/Result	Timescales		Resources (£££)	Performance Measures
			Target Date	Milestones		
<b>Increase communication and participation with care leavers</b>						
Create and distribute a Care Leavers' charter via leaflet, face book and e-mail.	Laura Wood, Alice Vickers and Clare Bishop	Promote positive relationships with Wolverhampton Care Leavers'	01.09.15	Consultation with the Children in Care Council	Reprographics	Survey from Care Leavers' Forum at the beginning and the end of the project about LAC Transitions communication with Care Leavers.
				Formulate a Care Leaver Charter Consult with Care Leavers at Care Leaver Forum		Produce leaflet to be launched in Care Leaver week.
Establish a Care Leavers Forum	Laura Wood, Alice Vickers and Clare Bishop	Encourage care leavers to have a 'voice' regarding service provision and	11.09.15	10 young people identified to join the group as a result of the Care Leaver	Reprographics to advertise Activities Food and	Register of attendees.  Evaluation of Care Leavers' Forum by

		resources.		<p>Survey June 2015.</p> <p>Meeting dates and venue communicated to young people via face book website and young person's advisors.</p> <p>Terms of reference established and presented to Corporate parenting Board.</p>	Drink	<p>young people after three months.</p> <p>Care Leavers' Survey 2016</p> <p><b>October 2015 Update:</b> First Care Leavers forum took place on the 16/09/15 they have agreed to meet monthly at Redlion Street (Youth Council Venue)</p>
<p>Create and develop a Quarterly Newsletter which will be distributed via face book, e-mail and text.</p>	<p>LAC Apprentice supported by Alice Vickers.</p>	<p>Keep young people updated regarding service changes in provision, staffing and telephone numbers.</p>	<p>30.10.15</p>	<p>Recruit an apprentice.</p> <p>Discuss with care leaver forum what information they feel would be useful.</p> <p>Create a newsletter.</p>	<p>Reprographics to advertise Activities Food and Drink</p>	<p>Survey from Care Leavers' Forum at the beginning and the end of the project about LAC Transitions communication with Care Leavers.</p> <p>Care Leavers' Survey 2016</p> <p><b>October 2015 Update:</b> Assistant Corporate Parenting Officer has been recruited, awaiting HR checks before start date can be agreed</p>

Page 37	Develop use of social media to access care leavers.	Clare Bishop and DUTY worker	Increase daily contact with young people. Promote activities/events in the service and community	31.10.15	Utilise face book home page.  Encourage young people to add to the page via information pack, care leaver forum and newsletter.  LAC Apprentice to work with Ian Fegan to create a LAC TRANSITION web page for care leavers.		Survey from Care Leavers' Forum at the beginning and the end of the project about LAC Transitions communication with Care Leavers.  Care Leavers' Survey 2016
							<b>October 2015 Update:</b> Assistant Corporate Parenting Officer has been recruited, awaiting HR checks before start date can be agreed
	12 monthly care leavers survey	Laura Wood and Alice Vickers	Encourage care leavers to have a 'voice' regarding service provision Assess if service provision is improving, re-evaluate services strengths and areas for improvement	30.06.15	First survey completed.	Postage Incentive – prize draw	Compare Care Leavers' Survey from June 2015 to June 2016.  <b>October 2015 Update:</b> The Initial survey was sent out and we received 16% of Care Leavers responded

<p>Young People to be represented in focus groups/steering groups/national benchmarking forum/staff recruitment panel/changes in to policy</p>	<p>Laura Wood and Alice Vickers</p>	<p>Wolverhampton care leavers to be represented at a local and national level</p>	<p>30.09.15</p>	<p>Young people nominated by social worker and young person's advisor.  Meet with young person to explain role.  Support young person to attend.</p>	<p>Incentives for young people</p>	<p>Care Leavers Survey Care Leavers Forum Outcome Star  <b>October 2015 Update:</b> Care Leavers forum Members attended West Midlands Cluster event in Dudley 1809/15</p>
<p><b>Introduction of Outcome Star</b></p>						
<p>Introduction of Outcome Star Assessment</p>	<p>Laura Wood</p>	<p>In-depth assessments which allow for self assessment and young person advisor assessments in regards to all aspects of the Pathway Plan and/or an area which a young person particularly struggles with/is vulnerable to.  Outcome Star to</p>	<p>31.12.15</p>	<p>Agreement for LAC Transition to be a 12 month pilot for outcome star in the LAC service area.  Staff to be fully trained.  Outcome star embedded in workers practice.  Review of assessments at six</p>	<p>Training of staff</p>	<p>Evaluation of outcome star by workers.  Statistical analysis of outcomes at the end of the pilot compared to the starting date.</p>

		improving. Specific support plans targeting issues raised in outcome star assessment.		months point to gauge if outcomes for care leavers are improving.		<b>October 2015 Update:</b> Pilot of Outcome star has been started with the Care Leavers Forum on 16/09/15 Training has been Highlighted for transitions Team awaiting date
<b>Increase support for care leavers in regards to their independence skills</b>						
Page 20 Mandatory training for foster carers and supervising social workers regarding LAC TRANSITIONS and use of the Getting Ready for Adult Life	Training officer in the Foster Team team.	Foster carers have an understanding of how to support and prepare young people for independence. Foster carers understanding housing options post 18	30.11. 2015	Meeting with the foster team manager to discuss what training is needed.  Consultation with foster carers and young people regarding what training is needed.  Produce workshop.  Deliver workshop.	Reprographics  Staffing	Outcome Star  Evaluation Forms  Pathway Plans  Foster Carers supervision

<p>Increase training flat provision.</p> <p>Work in partnership with Local Housing Provider to source an extra flat.</p>	<p>LAC TRANSITIONS team independence steering group /Housing Team/YPA's</p>	<p>Care Leavers given the opportunity to demonstrate their independence skills and have a 'taster' of adult life in a supported environment using the Getting Ready for Adult Life pack and making it mine booklet.</p>	<p>30.10.15</p>	<p>Meeting with Local Housing Provider.</p> <p>Source extra flat.</p> <p>Notify the team and young people – start referral process.</p>	<p>Staffing</p>	<p>Number of young people occupying the provision.</p> <p>Outcomes achieved for example what accommodation do they 'move on' to.</p> <p>How many move on placements are successful, compare to young people who do not utilise the training flat.</p> <p><b>October 2015 Update:</b> Alice meeting with Housing on 2/11/15 to look at provision, Wolverhampton Homes attending Senior Officers group for Corporate Parenting</p>
<p align="center"><b>Reduce number of care leavers who are NEET</b></p>						
<p>Weekly NEET surgery</p>	<p>Helen Woodvine/YPA</p>	<p>Increase in 18+ engaged in EET. NEET figures are</p>	<p>11.09.15</p>	<p>EET worker to distribute date/time/venue to workers.</p> <p>Advertise via face</p>	<p>Staffing Reprographics</p>	<p>Record attendance % of 18+ CL engaged in EET (148 cohort)</p>

				book. NEET figure to reduce to 20%		<b>October 2015 Update:</b> Weekly EET drop-ins have begun on Friday Afternoons
To increase the apprenticeship and work experience opportunities within the local Authority to Care Leavers	Helen Woodvine/Alicie Vickers	Increase in 18+ engaged in EET	June 2015	The senior officer's corporate parenting group are continuing to work with partners and external agencies to promote care leavers within the community.  All service contracts have to provide 10% support to care leavers for example traineeships, work experience and apprenticeships	Staffing Reprographics	% Care Leavers in EET

**October 2015 Update:**  
EET action planning meetings are tackling this agenda in monthly meetings Key outcomes to date are the inclusion of LAC and CL in Procurement contract of £170000 effecting 10% of the score. CL and LAC specific features in the WV skills model of delivery for Council Work experiences, apprenticeships, traineeships and internships. Packages of support for employers, educator, and trainers are now being developed ready for the young people taking up these opportunities and Prepare to work support directory for LAC and CL is also being devised.

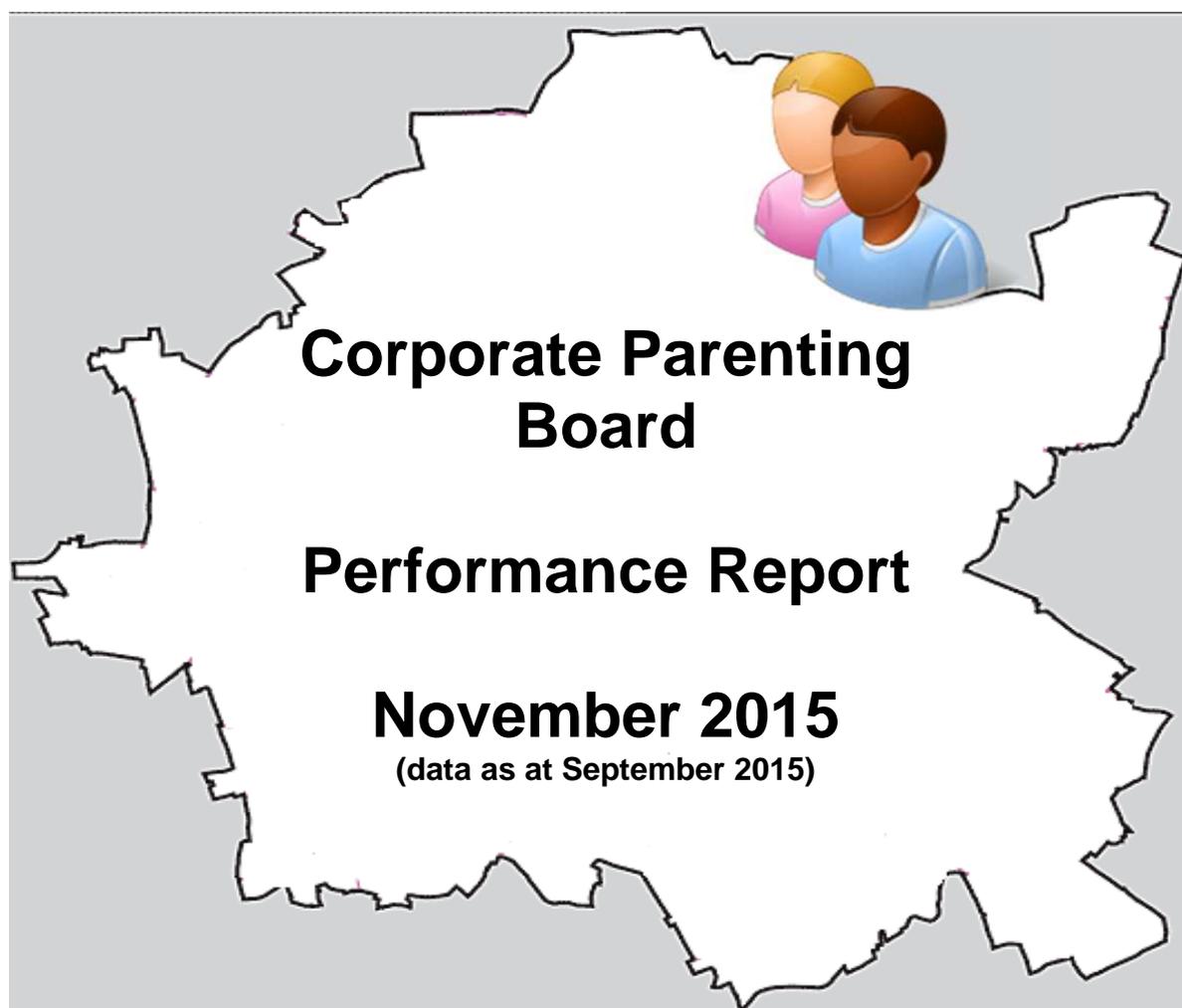
<p>Increase EET opportunities for LAC &amp; care leavers by utilising Youth Employment Initiative( YEI) Grant 2015-2018</p>	<p>Helen Woodvine/Darren Martindale</p>	<p>Improved EET opportunities for LAC &amp; Care Leavers &amp; partner engagement</p>	<p>May 2015</p>	<p>The skills and learning manager/Education Enterprise have secured funding under the Youth and Employment Initiative to deliver customised provision to address NEET for the most disadvantaged/vulnerable young people from the ages of 16 up to 29.</p>	<p>Staffing Reprographics</p>	<p>Outcome of grant bid, EET figures, partner engagement</p>
						<p><b>October 2015 Update:</b> This is an agenda item for the next EET action group as the sum and application of the YEI grant has not yet been finalised</p>
<p><b>Increase health and leisure opportunities for care leavers</b></p>						
<p>Discounted leisure passes/membership for care leavers</p>	<p>Laura Wood/Clare Bishop</p>	<p>Reduced boredom for care leavers Increased physical fitness</p>	<p>30.09.2015</p>	<p>Meet with local leisure centre to discuss discounted passes.  Launch at care leaver week.</p>	<p>Staffing Reprographics</p>	<p>Outcome star</p>
						<p><b>October 2015 Update:</b> Work attempted with both WV Active and Youthzone, still awaiting outcome</p>

<p>Drop in health service</p>	<p>Laura Wood /Sam Arrowsmith, Named LAC Nurse</p>	<p>Increase physical and emotional health</p>	<p>30.09.2015</p>	<p>Meet with LAC nurse to discuss potential 'drop in' sessions.  Organise date/time/venue  Make young people aware.</p>	<p>Staffing  Reprographics</p>	<p>Measure % of young people with in date LAC medicals in June 2016 compared to June 2015.  Care Leavers Survey June 2016.  <b>October 2015 Update:</b> This has been added the Health LAC steering group action plan and discussion have begun with Sam Arrowsmith and Fiona Brennan.</p>
<p>LAC Transition allotment plot</p>	<p>Clare Bishop</p>	<p>Reduced boredom for care leavers Increased physical fitness</p>	<p>30.09.2015</p>	<p>Launch at care leaver week</p>	<p>Staffing</p>	<p>Outcome star  Care Leaver Survey 2016  <b>October 2015 Update:</b> Allotment sourced by Clare, forum setting up programme</p>
<p><b>Improve partnership with services that support the most vulnerable group of care leavers</b></p>						

<p>Statistical information regarding how many care leavers fall into the following vulnerable groups;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Offender/Custody</li> <li>• Expectant/young parents</li> <li>• Disability</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Page 45</b></p>	<p>Laura Wood</p>	<p>An awareness of which care leaver's fall into the most vulnerable groups, in order to offer them appropriate support.</p>	<p>31.01.15</p>	<p>Collect statistics from workers case loads.</p>	<p>Staff</p>	<p>% of young people in these groups.</p> <p>Outcome Star assessments.</p> <p>LAC/Care Leavers in custody to have an EET destination and suitable accommodation prior to release</p> <p>On-going engagement &amp; performance data</p> <p>Data regarding LAC parents</p>
		<p>Improved working partnership between Transitions, YOT, COPE, Probation to monitor &amp; support LAC/CL who are in custody.</p> <p>Strong working relationships with nurse in partnership/sexual health services/locality and edge of care team to provide adequate support to teenage parents/families</p>		<p>Meet with other teams that support vulnerable groups to ensure support levels are correct.</p> <p>Review policies and procedures.</p> <p>Agree approached used when supporting young people in vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Implementation of a care leaver risk panel.</p>		<p><b>October 2015 Update:</b> Meeting planned with Strategic leads on 6/11/15 to move this action forward</p>
<p>Ensure that all Care Leavers who are NALM G4 through Disability who are available for employment, education and training access to engage with EET</p>	<p>EET worker</p>	<p>Improved EET engagement for NALM G4 cohort</p>	<p>May 2015</p>	<p>June 2016</p>		<p>Monthly data from BIT Outcome Star</p>
						<p><b>October 2015 Update:</b> Meeting planned with Strategic leads on</p>

						6/11/15 to move this action forward
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CITY OF  
WOLVERHAMPTON  
COUNCIL



## Key Points to Note

### Redesign and further development

This report for the Corporate Parenting Board continues to be developed. Provisional 2014/15 out-turn figures have been amended where updated information is available. Please note that these have not yet been validated by the statutory returns to the Department for Education and as such may be subject to change. Average caseload data for LAC teams has been added along with the number of social workers current LAC have had in the past 12 months. Demographic data has also been updated.

### Demographics

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

The number of Looked After Children has seen a continued decrease in September although considerable further reduction is required to bring Wolverhampton in line with our comparators.

### Placements

In-house Foster Carers trend data shows that numbers of children placed with in-house foster carers remains relatively stable, however due to the decrease in overall LAC numbers, the percentage is increasing.

The proportion of LAC placed more than 20 miles from home, has decreased significantly in September from 17% to 14%. This result brings us to better than the comparator average.

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

### Assessments and Reviews

The average number of cases held by social workers in the LAC teams has been added into the report. These are the teams that generally deal with children who have been LAC for 15 months plus and averages at around 23 cases per worker. More detailed work is currently being undertaken around caseloads.

The number of social workers that LAC have had in the past 12 months has also been added and shows that almost 50% of children who have been looked after for more than 12 months have had 3 or more social workers in the past year. However, positively, this is reducing.

Assessments and Reviews of Looked After Children in Wolverhampton remain generally up to date however the percentage of children that participated in their reviews continues to fall significantly from 98% at the end of 2014/15 to 91% at the end of September. The reasons for this are being investigated.

### 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 compared with last years out-turn - 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. **Please note** - small numbers can also adversely affect this indicator.

## Health

The percentage of children with up to date dental checks fell from 90% at the end of 2013/14 to 81% provisionally at the end of 14/15. However, performance in 2015 continues to improve and is at 86% at the end of September. This result is higher than the 60% of children in the general Wolverhampton population that have seen a dentist in the past 2 years which is falling.

The percentage of health checks that are up to date has fallen to 82% at the end of September and in line with the provisional year end out-turn of 82%.

## Leaving Care

**Adoption** - Performance against adoption timescales continues to improve in some areas 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 shows that there are currently 87 children with a plan of adoption, 69 of which have placement orders or are currently placed for adoption. Of the 52 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.

52 children were adopted in 14/15 and 25 have been adopted so far in 15/16. This is extremely positive.

**Care Leavers** - The percentage of Care Leavers in Employment Education and Training cohort has changed to include all children and young adults who turn 16 to 21 in the year. Previously this was only those aged 19 to 21.

The result has therefore improved from 43% for 19-21 year olds to 52% of 16 to 21 year olds in education, employment or training.

Work continues in this area to ensure that education, employment and training information is recorded and updated.

## Demographics



57658 children aged 0-17 live in Wolverhampton  
22.8% of the total population

ONS 2014 mid-year estimate

48.8% of the CYP population and 44.2% of LAC are male



51.2% of the CYP population and 55.8% of LAC are female

41.6% of the CYP population and 34.9% of LAC are BME

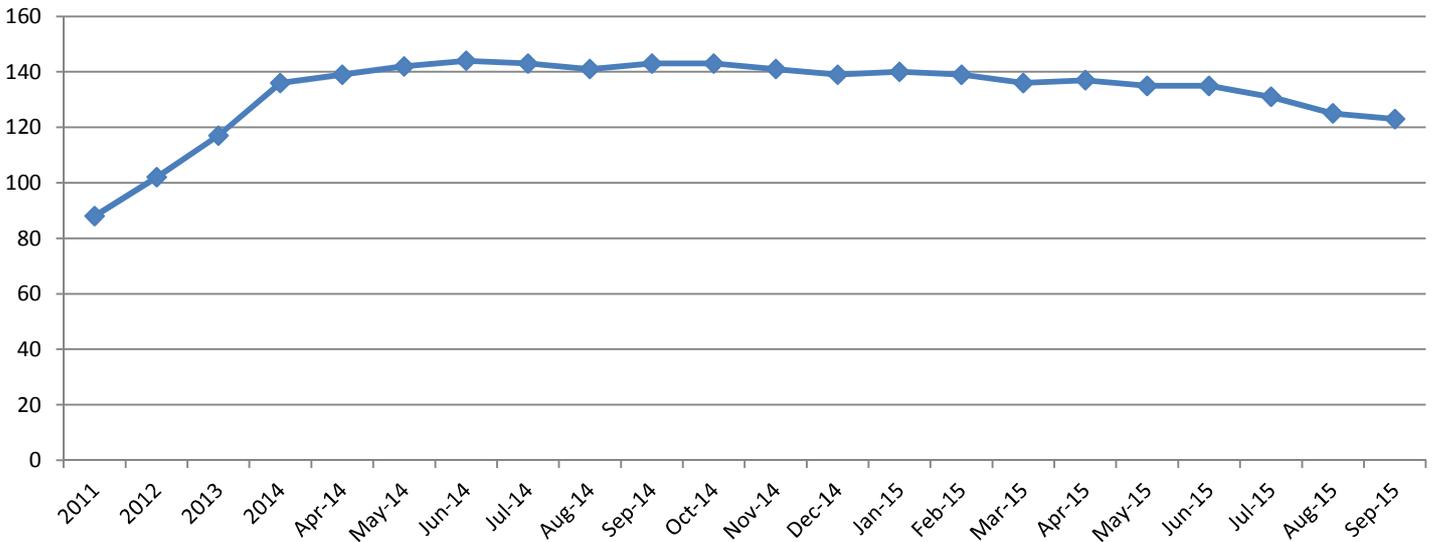
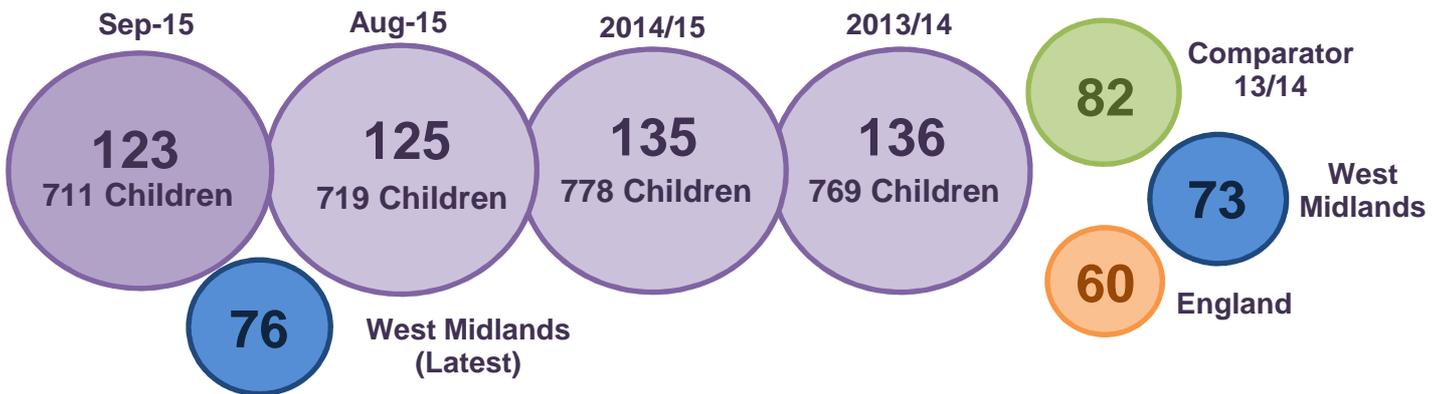


58.4% of the CYP population and 65.1% of LAC are white

Inner circle represents the LAC population, the outer circle is the CYP population

## Looked After Children Population

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



# Placements

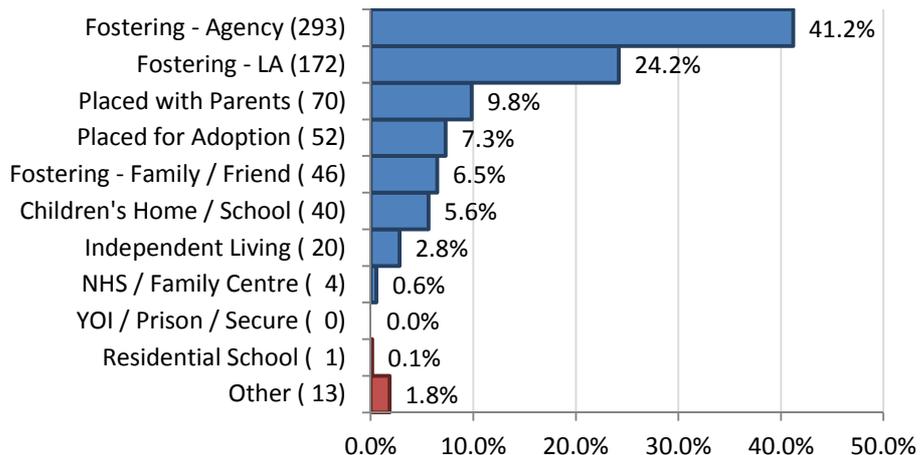


**% LAC Placed 20 miles + from home**

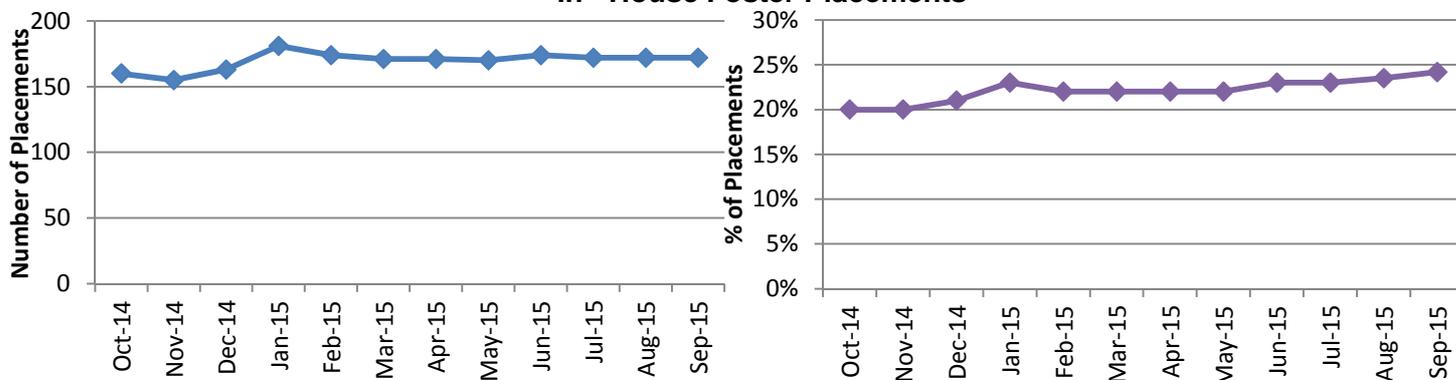


2014/15 Out-turn = 16% 2013/14  
Out-turn = 13% 2013/14  
Comparator = 15% 2013/14  
England = 13%

**LAC Placements at 30/09/15**



**In - House Foster Placements**



The proportion of LAC Placed with in-house foster carers is increasing due to decreases in other placements however, the number of in-house foster care placements remains static at 172

## Placement Stability

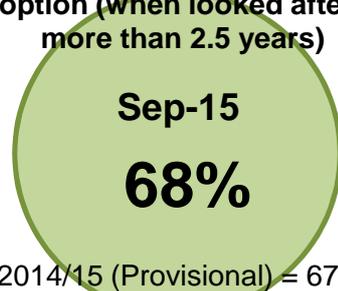


**LAC with fewer than 3 placements in the last 12 months**



2014/15 (Provisional) = 88%  
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 looked after for more than 2.5 years)**



2014/15 (Provisional) = 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



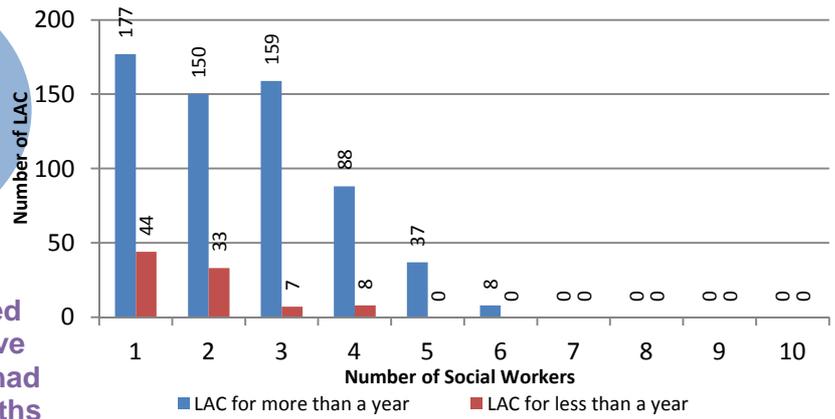
**Average caseload of LAC social workers**

**23**

47% of young people who have been looked after for more than a year and 16% who have been looked after for less than a year have had 3 or more social workers in the past 12 months

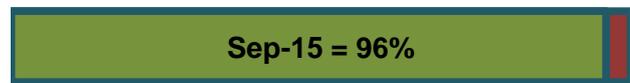
This is an improving picture

**Number of Social Workers LAC have had in the past 12 months**



## Looked After Children with up to date assessments

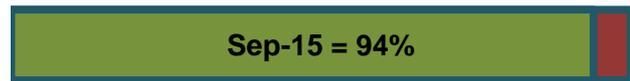
An up to date assessments is one that has been authorised within the last 6 months.



2014/05 Out-turn (Provisional) = 96%  
2013/14 Out-turn = 95%

## Looked After Children whose reviews have been completed on time

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



2014/05 Out-turn (Provisional) = 91%  
2013/14 Out-turn = 92%

91% of LAC had all of their reviews completed on time between 01st April 2014 - 31st March 2015. 1760 reviews were completed in the year and 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

**91%**

Sep-15

There has been some decline in LAC participation in reviews. This is being looked into in order to understand the reason for the drop in performance

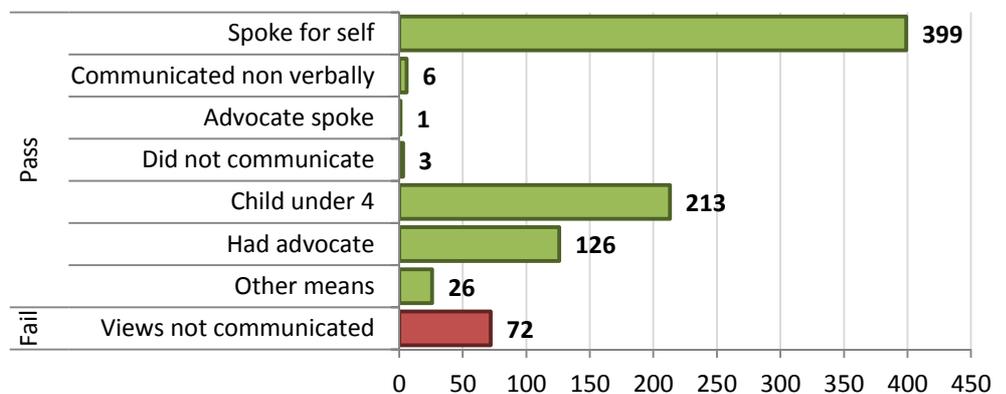
**98%**

2014/15 Out-turn (Provisional)

**93%**

2013/14 Out-turn

**Participation in Reviews**



## Education



KS2 Level 4	Maths	Reading	Writing	Reading, Writing and Maths	GCSEs	5+ GCSE A* - C inc Eng & Maths
Wolverhampton LAC 2014	74%	78%	81%	70%		16.00%
Wolverhampton	86%	88%	84%	79%		45.90%
Wolves LAC 2013	67%	44%	50%	39%		25.80%
West Midlands 2014	60%	69%	61%	50%		13.70%
Statistical Neighbours 2014	60%	68%	54%	45%		17.65%
England 2014	61%	68%	59%	48%		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 level 4 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.

Detailed analysis of LAC educational performance was presented to the Panel via the Virtual School Head teacher report 2014. Please note that there is some discrepancies when nationally published data is compared with locally held data - it is the local data that is presented here.

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



**91%**  
2013/14 Out-turn

**89%**  
2014/15 Out-turn  
(Provisional)

**77%**  
PEPS (Years 1 -11)  
- Sep-15

**53%**  
PEPS (Years 12 and 13)  
- Sep-15

### LAC Absence from School - 2014 (taken from nationally published data)

\* Children looked after for 12 months or more

#### Unauthorised Absence \*

**1.2%**

West Midlands - 0.90%  
Statistical Neighbours - 0.97%  
England - 1.00%

#### Overall Absence \*

**4.0%**

West Midlands - 3.70%  
Statistical Neighbours - 3.69%

#### LAC Persistent Absence

**5.0%**

West Midlands - 4.20%  
Statistical Neighbours - 4.58%  
England - 4.70%

Absence rates are improving, however, they remain slightly higher than comparators.

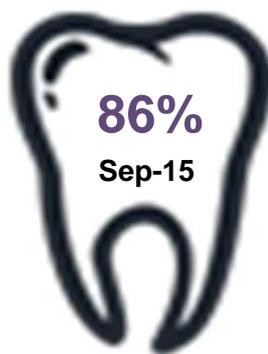
**FURTHER DEVELOPMENT:** Work is continuing to develop a detailed, local, virtual schools report. As that work progresses, further information will be reported here.

## LAC Health



60% of children in the  
Wolverhampton Local Authority  
Area have seen a dentist in the last  
two years

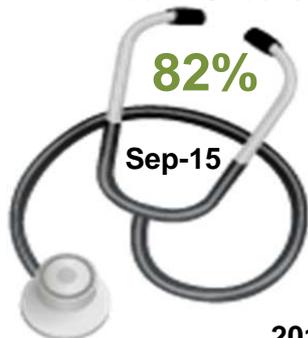
### Dental Checks



2014/15 Out-turn  
(Provisional) = 81%

2013/14 Out-turn = 90%

### Health Checks



2014/15 Out-turn  
(Provisional) = 82%

2013/14 Out-turn = 86%

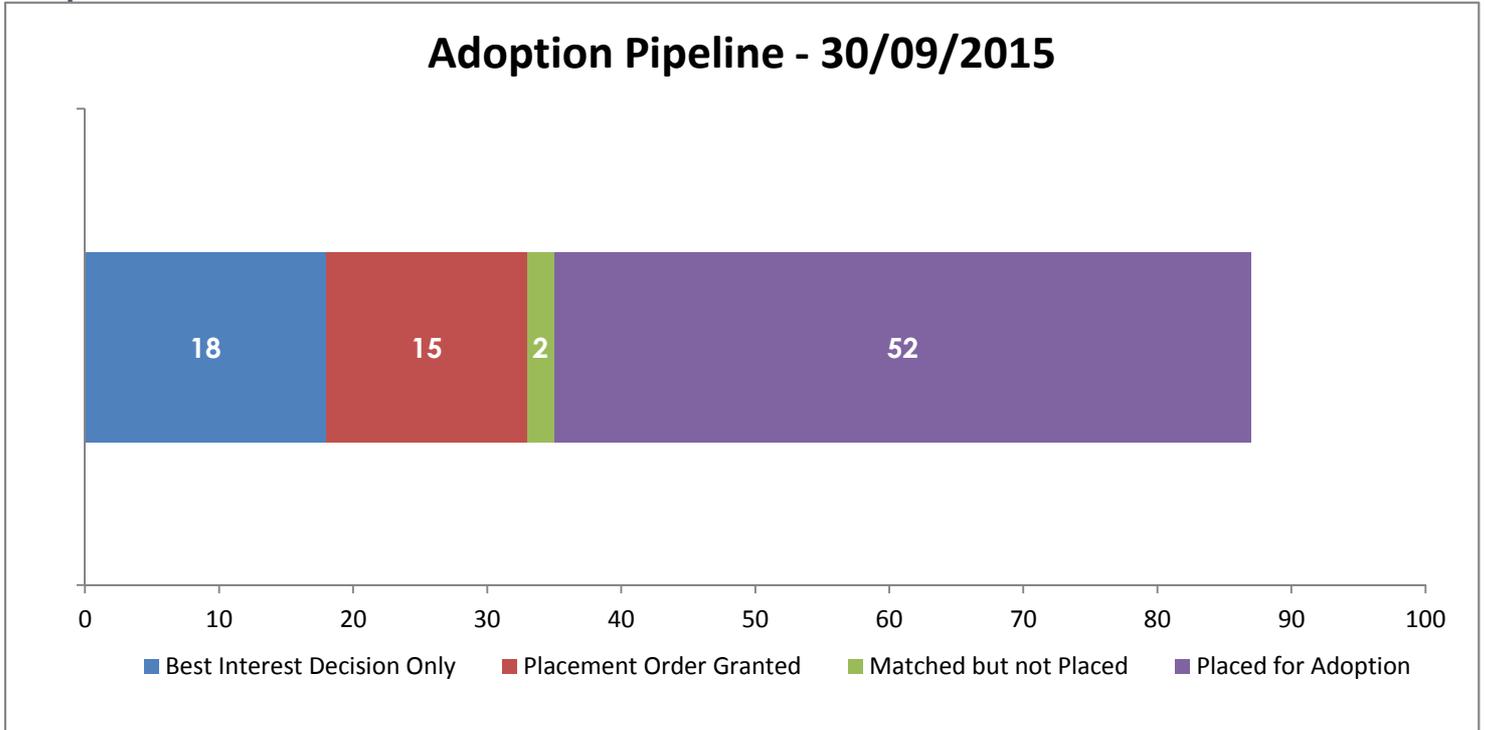
Performance in this area is increasing as  
a result of improved working with the  
CCG and RWT

# Leaving Care



Children Adopted	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 (Provisional)	2015/16 (So far)
	35	50	52	25

## Adoptions



### Adoption Scorecard Results (2011 - 2014)

The adoption scorecard is calculated using results and performance over a three year period

**A1 - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family**

**872 Days**  
38% adopted in

Statistical Neighbours - 665 (46%)  
England - 628 (51%)

**A2 - Average time between receiving court authority to place and finding a match**

**294 Days**

Statistical Neighbours - 242  
England - 217

**A10 - Average time between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family (stopped at point of fostering for foster carers adoptions)**

**522 Days**

Statistical Neighbours - 539  
England - 525

#### Single year performance (2014/15 - provisional)

**A1** - 619 days with 64% of children adopted within timescales  
**A2** - 196 days  
**A10** - 410 days

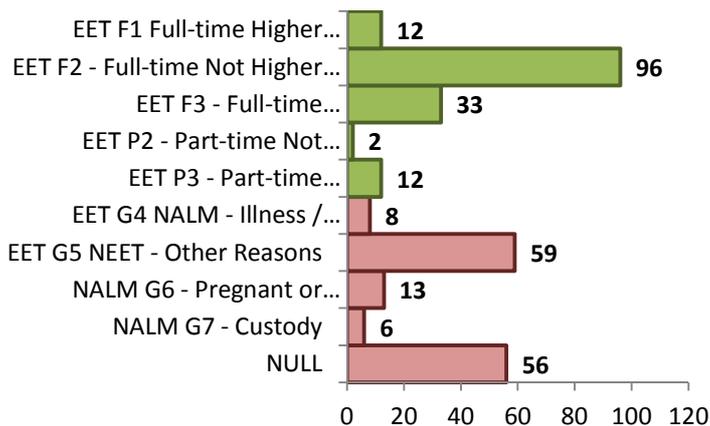
#### Single year performance (2015/16 as at September)

**A1** - 585 days with 64% of children adopted within timescales  
**A2** - 204 days

The adoption scorecards for 2013/14 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

Care Leavers EET Statuses



Care Leavers in Education, Employment and Training 2013/14

Wolverhampton - 31%  
West Mids - 41%  
Statistical Neighbours - 40%  
England - 45%

Provisional 2014/15 - 43%

The percentage of children and care leavers in EET has improved significantly due to a change in the cohort which now measures 16-21 year olds (previously 19-21 year olds). The current result is an improvement to 52% of 16 to 21 year olds in education, employment or training. No comparator data is currently available based on the new cohort.

The previous cohort of 19 to 21 year olds remains at 43% EET which is the same as year out turn.

**Further Development:** *Locally care leavers reporting is being re-developed. As part of the national changes reporting of care leavers now includes all children and young adults who have turned 16 to 21 in the reporting year. The chart above reflects the new cohort. This change, along with an increased focus by social workers and managers has resulted in an improved result.*