

Wolverhampton Children and
Young People's
Self-Evaluation 2020-21
Mid year review November 2020

COVID -19

The period covered for this mid-year review is April-September 20. During this period we have responded to the impact caused by the national pandemic, Covid -19 :

- All staff have been supported to work from home since the national lockdown on 23 March.
- All children open to social care were immediately assessed to ascertain the need for ongoing face to face visits, based upon safeguarding and vulnerability
- A temporary delivery model was implemented(supported by amendments to regulations) ensuring contact was maintained with all children and families, including utilisation of virtual methods such as WhatsApp
- Face to face visits continued for children, young people and families where the outcome of assessment required this
- Performance management information was developed to supported oversight of visits including frequency and type
- As restrictions were lifted all children were seen face to face
- Vulnerable children were actively supported to attend school
- Although face to face family time was initially suspended this was reintroduced once restrictions were lifted .
- Meetings such as CiN meetings core groups , conferences and child in care reviews have been held virtually utilising TEAMS. This remains in place

ECLIPSE

A new electronic children's record has been implemented, successfully going live on 21 September .Eclipse enables the whole of the child's journey to be recorded on one system, from early intervention to children in care and care leavers . The migration of data and launch of the new system only impacted on a small number of performance reports during September.

All staff were trained virtually in its usage, and roll out has been supported by champions in each area.

The City Of Wolverhampton

The City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to ensuring children and young people have the best start in life and as such this is a central component of the Council Plan 2019-2024. There are 263,357 people who live in the City, 62,276 of these are children under the age of 18.

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

The number of children receiving formal support has decreased across all areas of Children's Social Care. This report will evidence an increase in good frontline practice, resulting in good outcomes for children. We hope the impact of this is that more families can enjoy family life independent of state intervention.

Children receiving support as at end of September 2020

575 Children and young people in care
316 Children who have a Child Protection Plan
710 Children who have a Child in Need Plan (Oct. Figure)



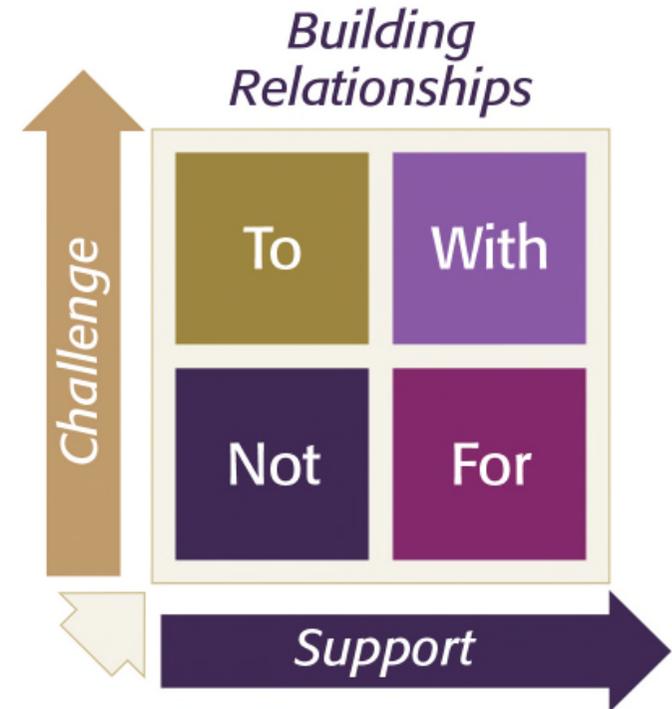
Our Values for Children Services

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

The Children and Young People's services began adopting a restorative approach to practice in November 2016. All frontline practitioners receive three days training in the approach.

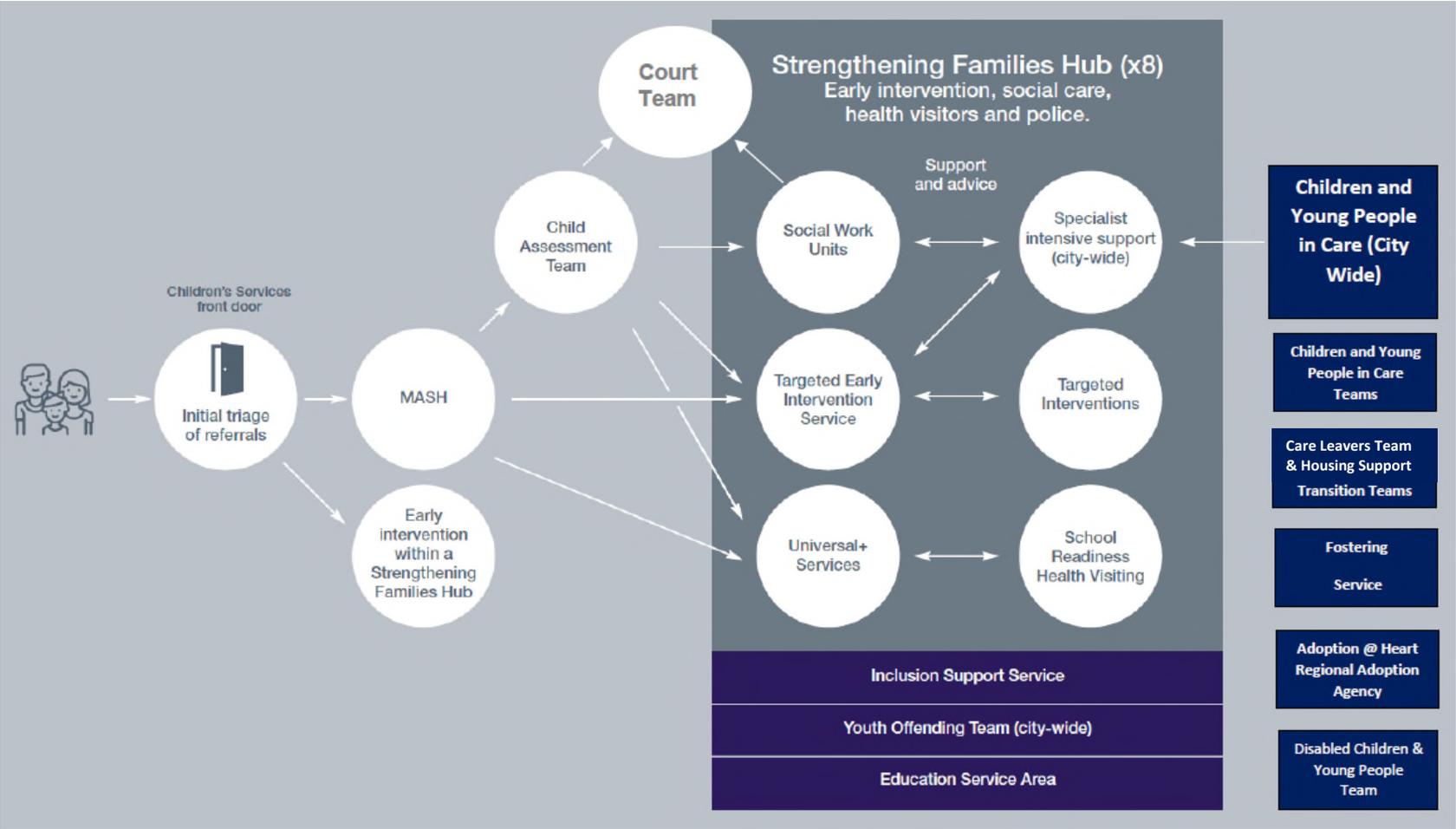
The approach emphasises the importance of building effective relationships, working with families rather than doing things to them or for them, to help families make sustainable change.

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



All new employees receive training in Restorative Practice. There are good examples of employees using the approach in family meetings to help family members understand how their actions impact on their loved ones. For some this has been effective in increasing the family's motivation to change. Many employees also use restorative solution circles to generate ideas to work creatively with children and families where they feel the plan has not been effective in supporting change.

City of Wolverhampton Children and Young People's Service Operating Model



City of Wolverhampton Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, Report published: 31 March 2017



Inspection Findings

Children's Services in Wolverhampton are Good

Children who need help and protection	Requires improvement to be good
Children looked after and achieving permanence	Good
Adoption performance	Good
Experience and progress of care leavers	Good
Leadership, management and governance	Good

Since the Inspection, an Ofsted focused visit was undertaken in September 2018. This focussed on Assessments, Children in Need and Child Protection Plans. This highlighted the following areas for development; progress against these areas is embedded within the main body of this self-assessment.

1. In locality team hubs, many assessments did not sufficiently describe the changes and emerging needs being experienced by children and families.
2. Plans were not sufficiently effective in reducing needs. They did not adapt to changing circumstances. Actions to address children's unmet needs were not sufficiently clear or specific, nor did they include achievable actions and outcomes.
3. Social workers in some locality teams experienced excessively high caseloads.
4. While supervision was regular in locality team hubs, and social workers valued the support they received, supervision was not being used effectively to improve practice. Supervision was not sufficiently detailed or reflective.

Children and Young people get the best start in life Plan on a page for 2020-2021

Strengthening families where children are at risk (Enables children to remain safely within families)

- Increase the use and engagement with family group conferencing to prevent family breakdown and reduce reliance on services.
- To embed regular reviews of family time arrangements ~~in order to~~ ensure family time is meaningful and a positive experience for young people
- Embed the new in-house children's home (Key to Inspiration) to reduce the number of young people in external residentials and improve placement stability for children in care.
- Implement the contextual safeguarding action plan across the city ~~in order to~~ improve safeguarding responses across the partnership where risks are extra-familial
- Establish and cement the utilisation of the co-production hub as a base for participation and co-production with children across the city. To include the Youth Council, the Children in Care Council, the Care Leaver Forum, The House Project and the care leaver drop in.
- Ensure all children in care have an understanding of their heritage and identity
- Embedding of Regional Adoption Agency Adoption@ Heart
- Increase the opportunities for children and young people to be supported outside of the relationship with their social worker
- Improve timeliness of completion and submission of social care advice for EHCP assessments for children in care, and children open to the Disabled Children and Young People's team
- Review the Domestic Violence Perpetrators' Programme and consider the development of an in-house programme that will support both male and female perpetrators
- Ensure assessment, planning, support and interventions are of good quality and demonstrates improved outcomes for children, taking into consideration any issues that arise from protected characteristics by implementing the practice improvement plan.
- Embed a learning culture within the service to ensure practitioners and managers seek support when facing difficulties and a greater level of consistency of practice at all levels.

Strengthening families where children are at risk (Less children and young people become involved or remain involved in the youth justice system)

- Continue to embed trauma informed practice across the Youth Offending Team to support young people effected by trauma.
- Continue to develop a non-statutory 'prevention' offer within the YOT to reduce the number of first-time entrants into the youth justice system.
- Embed the Child First, Offender second approach in community referral order panels to reduce the criminalisation of children and young people in care and care leavers.

Strengthening families where children are at risk (Children experience permanent and stable placements)

- Embed and evaluate the practice and interventions in the Power2 team
- Support the sufficiency of suitable placements for children in care
- Embedding an extended choice of housing options or young people in care and care leavers, including an internal supported lodgings programme and The House Project

Education that fulfils potential

- Further increase the range and number of opportunities for care leavers aged 16-25 to be in education employment or training (EET)
- Oversee and coordinate delivery of the Culture of Belonging Programme to promote educational engagement of vulnerable learners
- Raising attainment and improving educational outcomes for children and young people in care, with a specific focus on Key Stage 4
- Increase the use of Early Help Assessments for children where there are issues relating to attendance or behaviour at school

Strong resilient and healthy communities

- The universal, early help and targeted support offer is developed and communicated well to partners to ensure children and families receive effective early help by the right service at the right time.
- Support children and families at the earliest opportunity bringing in relevant and appropriate services where required. Risk is responded to appropriately and proportionately.
- Whole service review of approach to working with domestic abuse, approach to include how we are working with victim's and the use of written agreements
- Review the success of the freedom programme and consider how male victims of abuse can be supported.
- All Children who are involved with Strengthening Families [Early Intervention or Social Care] to have their needs understood and met in terms of culture, background, religion, sexual orientation, nationality and immigration status and disability
- Increase skill and strengthen practice around transitional safeguarding ~~in order to~~ build resilience for young people approaching adulthood
- Promote awareness and understanding of autism and neurodiversity and improve skills of professionals working with people with autism across the city, as part of the city's autism strategy.
- Establish mental health support team for schools.
- Develop and implement a pathway to improve support for emotionally-based school non-attendance.
- Improve the identification, assessment and planning in relation to SEN for children requiring SEN Support, so that there is greater consistency and more effective planning across agencies.

Quality Assurance

Audit Period	O	G	Total	RI	I	Total	Overall total
2018-2019	3	37	40 (40%)	43	17	60 (60%)	100
Sept 2019 (audits)	2	9	11 (40%)	15	1	16 (60%)	27
Sept 2019 (dips)	7	19	26 (65%)	11	3	14 (35%)	40
Sept 2019 (obs)	2	8	10 (91%)	0	1	1 (9%)	11
Dec 2019 (audits)	5	19	24 (64%)	12	1	13 (36%)	37
Dec 2019 (obs)	3	18	21 (91%)	2	0	2 (9%)	23
Dec 2019 (dips)	2	21	23 (62%)	14	0	14 (38%)	37
Feb 2020 (audits)	1	22	23 (85%)	4	0	4 (15%)	27
Feb 2020 (obs)	2	6	8 (100%)	0	0	0	8
June 2020 (audits)	2	10	12 (66.5%)	6	0	6 (33.5%)	18

Trajectory	Improving the number of good/outstanding audits.	The number of inadequate and RI audits is also decreasing.
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The Children and Young People's service has significantly improved the way in which audit is undertaken across the service. Practice weeks have been introduced since September 2018. We review the model after each practice week to ensure we are getting the best from it. All senior managers including the Director of Children's Services now spend four days over two weeks undertaking; audits alongside practitioners, observing visits, meetings and practice, and spending time with teams. This provides workers with immediate feedback, allows managers to understand how interventions are experienced by children and families first-hand, and increases the visibility of senior managers. During June 2020 we undertook pilot practice days virtually owing to Covid-19 restrictions. This was well received by the workforce and will inform future practice weeks whilst we are in the pandemic.

Quality Assurance

Key areas of strength include; social workers know their children and families well and can easily tell their stories and the purpose of our work with them, with good relationships evident. There is continued evidence of the use of strengths-based approaches. Timely permanence planning is starting early, and collaborative working between partner agencies remains strong. Child protection planning is working well with appropriate use of strengthening family and edge of care support. Children in care are experiencing increased placement stability and are participating in their reviews and planning. They are supported well in education with the appropriate use of PEPs. Care leavers have a range of support available to them and outcomes in terms of EET, and accommodation is good.

Green shoots include; overall, planning is good, but more work is needed to ensure needs and outcomes are clear, SMART, are child focussed and include the voice of the child. Performance data indicates planning is effective however, planning documents need strengthening. Evidencing the work we are doing with children needs to be improved to ensure all direct work is recorded and incorporated into plans. There is some evidence that management oversight could be better evidenced in some records.

Areas for development include; more evidence of the use of specialist assessment tools (although this is starting to improve) is required, family meetings are to be routinely implemented. Ensure all children and young people have an up to date and good quality chronology on file. Explore using other agencies to engage families/children and young people.

A Practice Improvement Plan is now in place for all social work teams. The plan is reviewed regularly at a range of leadership tiers including team managers meetings and the Children's Leadership Performance meeting.

Workforce

The City of Wolverhampton Council is bucking the national trend in the recruitment and retention of children's social workers. In Wolverhampton, the picture is positive, and the numbers of permanent social workers is heading in the right direction. Wolverhampton's vacancy rate now stands at just 15.8%. . This marks a significant improvement on March 2019 when 28% of children's social work posts locally were unfilled.



School exclusions

The rate of permanent exclusion from schools in Wolverhampton has been significantly higher than the national average since 2015/6. In response to this and to more broadly promote educational engagement of vulnerable learners, we have developed the Culture of Belonging Programme, following extensive engagement with all stakeholders. This is a whole system approach which focuses on three key areas: supporting more inclusive schools; having a clear pathway to multiagency support; and ensuring there is a positive alternative for children who need it.

The Inclusion Team work closely with schools and alternative providers in the city, along with School Admissions and other key partners, to ensure that permanently excluded pupils are referred to alternative provision in a timely manner. Transitions between schools and alternative providers are supported throughout the process and excluded children, and their parents/carers, are enabled to express their wishes and feelings throughout. We have invested in increasing capacity within this team so that it can undertake more preventative work and work more closely with Strengthening Families teams. We have worked with schools to establish the Inclusion Support and Alternative Provision Panel, where pupils at risk of disengagement or exclusion are discussed and support is available, including school-to-school support, support LA services and outreach, or alternative provision.

Permanent exclusions numbers have fallen year-on-year since 2016/17, and when schools were closed in March 2020, we were at a lower level than the equivalent point of previous years.

Since 2018 there has been an increase in the proportion exclusions due to reasons related to drug, alcohol and banned items, and a reduction in exclusions due to persistent disruptive behaviour.

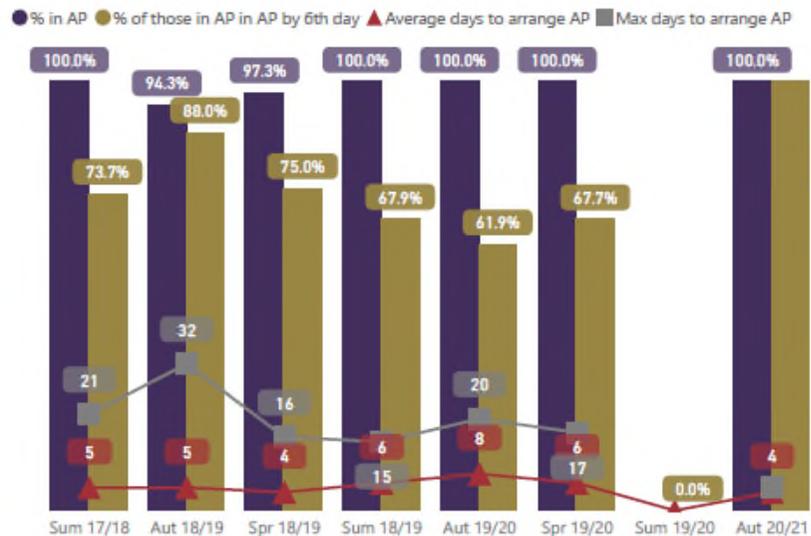
The bottom table shows numbers and impact of exclusion prevention meetings (EPM) held, by academic year. The use of EPMs has increased and show a high degree of success, with 92% of those in 2019/20 who had one not being excluded within 3 months.

Indicator	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Primary (exc. Withdrawn/Overtured/Pending)	22	18	15	0
Secondary (exc. Withdrawn/Overtured/Pending)	104	100	64	4
Special/PRU (exc. Withdrawn/Overtured/Pending)	1	1	2	0
X-City	9	12	2	0
Pending Permanent Exclusions		3		
Withdrawn/Overtured	2/5	4/1	2/0	0/0
Average number of Days taken to arrange Provision	6	5	8	6
Fixed Period Exclusions	2464	3015	1645	164

Exclusion prevention meetings	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Meetings Held	79	105	74	4
% Meetings that did not result in Permanent Exclusion within 3 months	84%	87%	92%	100%
% Meetings but still resulted in Permanent Exclusion within 3 months	16%	13%	8%	0%
% Permanent Exclusions with no meeting within 3 months	91%	89%	93%	100%

All permanently excluded pupils are offered alternative provision, as shown in the graph below. The % of pupils offered provision by the 6th day of a permanent exclusion dropped from Autumn 2018 to Autumn 2019. This was largely due to the closure of one AP provider in the city. Since then we have worked with PRUs and other providers to improve timeliness of placing excluded pupils.

Statutory Timeliness for Permanent Exclusions



Children Missing Education and Electively Home Educated

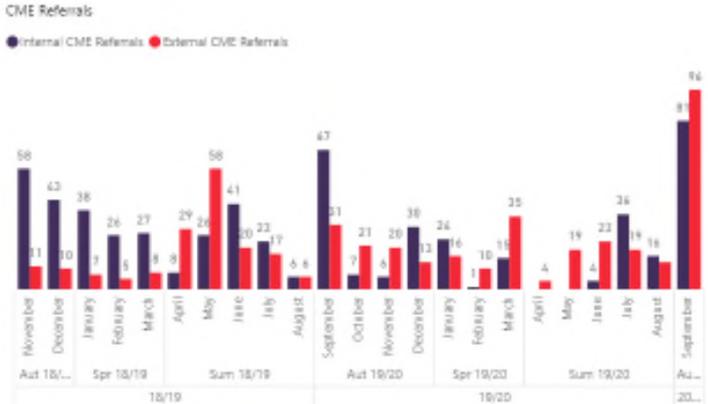
The Attendance Team conduct investigations into all children who are reported as missing from education (CME) in a timely and efficient manner. The bar graph below relates to children who have applied to a Wolverhampton school but have not started at the school after 4 weeks. School admissions are monitored and supported for these children and School Attendance Orders (SAOs) are issued where appropriate. The Attendance Team have robust systems in place to monitor CME, conducting lateral checks, making home visits where appropriate, and liaising with key partner agencies. A sharp rise in CME investigations in September 2020 was largely due to a significant number Eastern European families who returned to Eastern Europe over the summer period (likely to be linked to COVID19). It is not considered to be linked to the rise in EHE.

Since schools reopened to all pupils in September 2020 there has been a significant rise in parents electing to home educate their children. The attendance team is offering advice support and challenge to all parents who make an enquiry about EHE. Additional Education Welfare Officers have been appointed to ensure additional monitoring and support is available to EHE families and for any other attendance issues that are related to Covid-19 Where we have concerns that the decision to home educate is not a positive one for the child, we will challenge schools.

One of the aims of the Culture of Belonging Programme is to reduce the number of pupils leaving school to become home educated. We continue to when this happens, so that if there is a need for support, challenge or advice this is available before a child is off-registered.

A pathway has been developed to identify and support children with emotionally-based reasons for non-attendance at school.

The graphs below illustrate the numbers and outcomes of internal CME investigations by school term, and numbers of children who are EHE by calendar month.



Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

The City of Wolverhampton MASH continues to perform well. It consists of children and adult social care, early intervention, Police, Wolverhampton Homes, Recovery Near You, Probation Service, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, Black Country Partnership Foundation Trust and Education representation. Since March 2020 the MASH has continued to work virtually. Partners in the MASH are all working well as a team remotely.

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

Between March 2020 and August 2020 there were an average of 255 contacts into MASH, this is a reduction in the average number of contacts when compared to the same period the previous year (Avg. 299). This reduction is likely to have been significantly affected by Covid-19 Pandemic. September has seen an increase to 369 which is higher than the same month the previous year (320), this increase is to be expected in September but also indicates that contacts are resuming after the reduction in the summer. Since April the largest number of contact into the MASH has been from the Police (26%), this is partly due to the closure of schools prior to the summer holidays.

MASH have taken steps to become very visible within other agencies to help and discuss the contact process. Visits have been made to health service, including the 0-19 year old service, midwives, mental health services. DSL events have taken place on a quarterly basis, and meetings regularly take place with Wolverhampton Homes Police and Recovery Near You. This has helped to build positive relationships whereby threshold conversations can happen as required. Circular review systems are in place to consider any contacts which are not accepted to ensure that the family receive the right help at the right time.

MASH have been working closely with the Early Intervention teams and the Early Help Navigators to help ensure that there is support in place for partner agencies completing the Early Help Assessment to build confidence not only in the computer systems, but also in talking to parents and offering support. An Early Help Navigator for Health has been appointed to extend this good practice.



Early Intervention

Early Intervention services are offered through eight locality based strengthening family hubs. At the end of August 2020 1051 children were being supported by Strengthening Families workers. Figures at the end of August also demonstrate that families receive support from a Strengthening Families' worker for between 52 – 153 days, this is consistent with the differing needs of the families. Early Intervention is currently working with 304 children that are open to statutory social work services at Child in Need, child protection and public law proceedings threshold; providing targeted interventions, direct work with children and young people, supporting victims and child witnesses of Domestic Abuse, and addressing 'Troubled Families' factors that are impacting such as worklessness or school attendance.

The reduction in the number of children open to Early Intervention across the year is due to a combination of factors including; roll out of Early help training for partners, the appointment of early help navigators and a reduction of referrals in March due the Covid 19 pandemic. There has been a reduction in the number EI referrals in the past twelve months (Avg. 273 per month) when compared with the previous year. (Avg. 367 per month).

An online parenting programme was developed and utilised as part of our early intervention support to families during the lockdown months. This enabled families to access parenting support as and when and formed part of our Stay Safe Be Kind Covid-19 support for vulnerable families in the City.

Parent Champions: is a volunteer, peer to peer model that informs and engages disadvantaged families at the earliest possible point that have not previously engaged with early support services. This is a universal offer overseen by Strengthening Families and identified within the Early Help Strategy. There are currently 65 Parent Champions (PC) who have been trained, 14 of whom are currently active. The main support areas offered are:

- Stay and Play group
- support group for parents
- support parents on a 1:1 basis
- home learning activities
- support SEND activities
- A nominated PC sits on the Voice4Parents board
- support to care leavers who are parents

Freedom programme: delivered within the Strengthening Families Hubs

The Freedom Programme examines the impact of attitudes and beliefs on the actions of abusive men and the responses of victims and survivors. The aim is to help them to make sense of and understand what has happened to them. The Freedom Programme also describes in detail how children are affected by being exposed to this kind of abuse and very importantly how their lives are improved when the abuse is removed.

In the last 12 months there have been 916 women who have engaged with and completed the Freedom programme. The table below breaks this down by locality cross the City.

Future planning: Given the success of engagement with the Freedom programme the service is exploring the introduction of a domestic abuse programme for male victims of domestic abuse.

No face-to-face programmes have been delivered during this period due to the restrictions implemented due to Covid-19

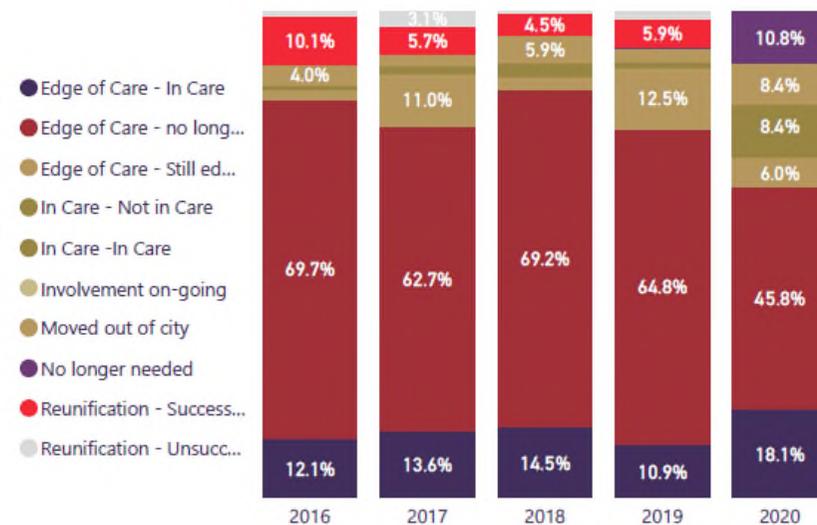
Locality	01.04.19. - 31.03.20.	
	One Count	All Sessions
1	27	117
2	19	58
3	47	151
4	16	74
5	31	145
6	11	65
7	22	110
8	36	196
Total	209	916

Specialist Support

The Specialist Support service continues to enable children to remain safely at home through a range of services that help families repair relationships, find solutions to the issues that are affecting children, develop safe, effective boundaries and support parents and carers to make significant lifestyle changes. The service focuses on good quality direct interventions with the city's most vulnerable children and families. The service offers Family Group Conferencing and mediation which forms part of our early intervention and edge of care offer.

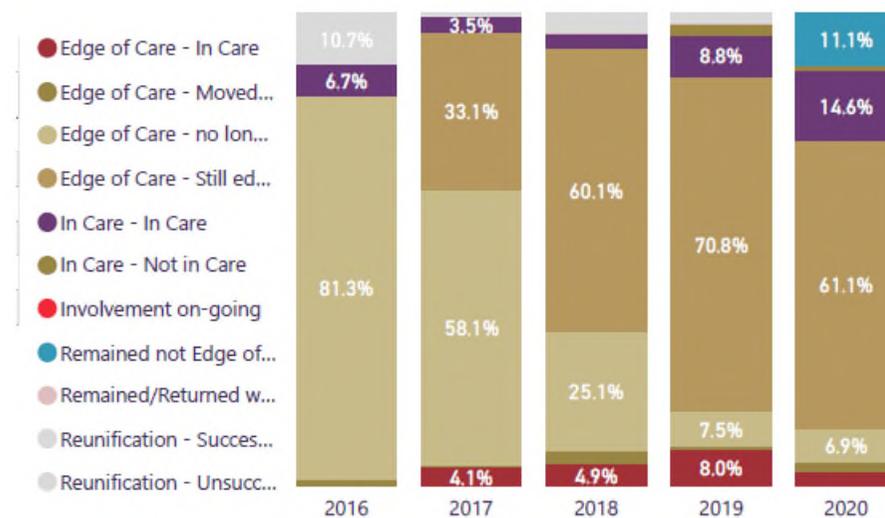
Intensive Family Support

Destination at the point of IFS Case Closure



Family Group Conferencing

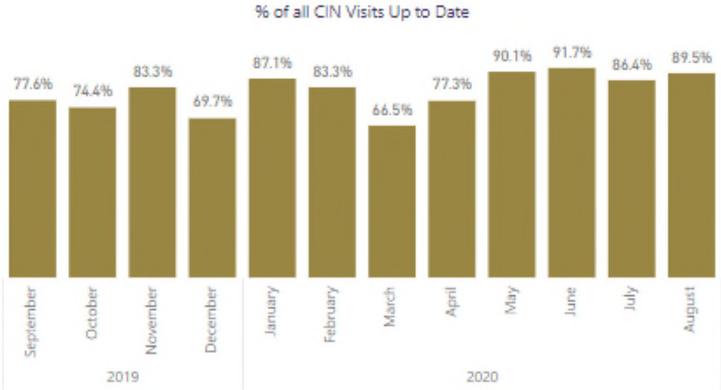
Destination at the point of FGC Case Closure



Children in Need

As at the end of October 2020 there were 704 children subject to CiN planning.(we were unable to accurately report on September's figure due to migration to Eclipse). 90% of children had a visit within the expected times scales as at the end of August which are set at a minimum of once a month. Some children were seen more frequently as per their CiN plan.

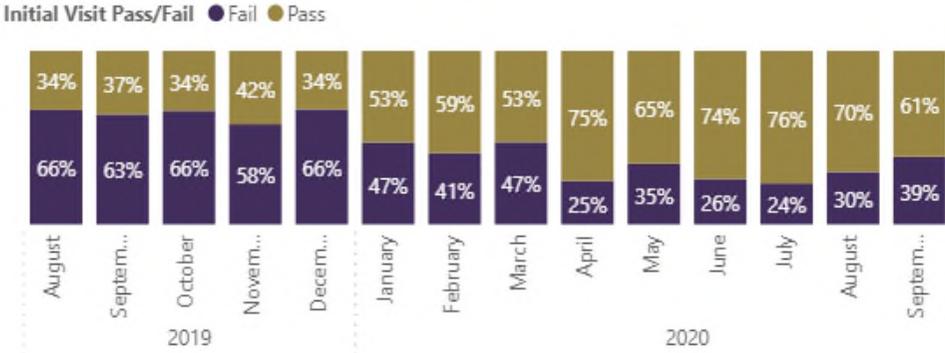
84% of assessments are completed within 45 days.



There was a decline in relation to CiN visits in March as teams transitioned into a different way of working due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Since that point performance has improved and we are more confident children are being seen regularly according to the frequency of their plan

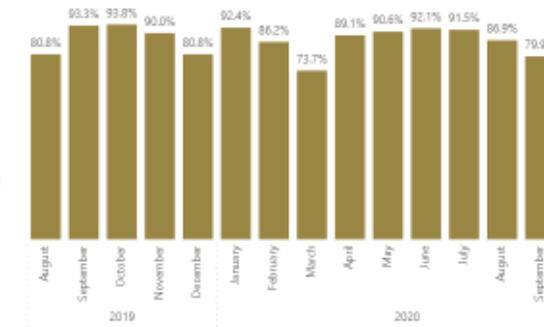
There has been steady improvement in the number of children who are seen within 5 days of referral over the summer, however this has decreased during the system migration period. This remains an area of performance which is monitored closely

Initial Visit (Visit within 5 working days of referrals form start)



The number of children subject of a child protection plan was 316 in September 2020. The Safeguarding manager monitors child protection decisions and is confident that threshold is being applied appropriately. The number of child protection cases that are repeats within 2 years over the rolling 12 month period has slightly increased to 15% from 14% at the start of the year. In the main families are sustaining the changes made whilst children have been subject to child protection planning. An analysis of the children who have become subject to repeat child protection planning within two years has taken place. This found that in the majority of cases children were subject to repeat child protection planning due to their experience of neglect and/or domestic abuse. A strategic partnership approach to understanding the impact of neglect on children is being developed, alongside a review of our response to supporting children and families experiencing domestic abuse.

CP Visit Timescales



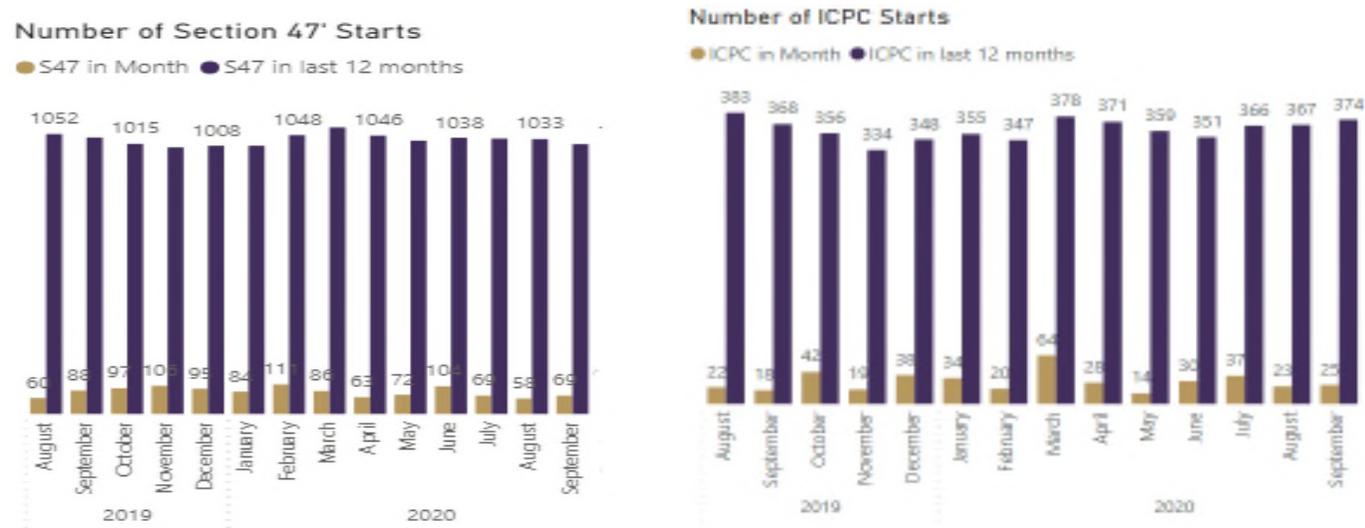
Timeliness of child protection visits remains an area of focus. Although there has been a reduction in the performance social workers and managers and it is expected that the performance information will show an improvement in this area

Core groups take place regularly and have continued to be well attended, by partners utilising virtual meetings in TE from their care) are well utilised and help children to remain safely within their birth families.

ing place but due to inaccurate use of new form utilised to record these visits, some have been showing as out of timescale. Guidance has been issued to all s needs to be consistent across all strengthening family teams.

ce to support teenagers at risk of multiple factors) and Partnering Families (a health service to support new parents who have previously had children removed

Child Protection Investigations



Where child protection concerns are raised investigations are undertaken in a timely manner and child protection procedures adhered to well. The number of child protection investigations has decreased in the 12-month rolling period. As of September 2020, 38% of investigations completed within the year result in an ICPC. It is important for children and families that concerns are addressed in a safe and proportionate manner. A range of work is being undertaken to ensure this is the case, including work with partners within the MASH and peer challenge of S47's between Team Managers to increase challenge and learning. Following a dip in conversion rates, a DIP sample was completed of S47's undertaken in the MASH and strengthening family teams. The outcome of this was that we were reassured that the section 47's completed were largely felt to be appropriate.

Child Exploitation

In Wolverhampton Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is overseen by the Safeguarding Service however, it is recognised as a child protection issue and is not treated as a stand-alone, or a specialist issue. This enables the workforce to be more confident in identifying and responding to CSE as it is part of everyday practice.

Local CSE Figures

Quarter	No of YP	At Risk	Significant	Serious
Apr-June 18	139	122	15	2
Jul-Sept – 18	140	122	17	1
Oct-Dec 18	131	7	12	2
Jan- Mar 19	132	116	10	6
Apr-Jun 19	99	78	14	7
Jul-Sept 19	98	83	8	7
Oct – Dec 19	92	73	14	5
Jan – Mar 20	86	71	8	7
Apr – Jun 20	124	107	13	4
Jul – Sep 20	146	132	10	4

Professionals in Wolverhampton continue to identify young people at risk of CSE and provide preventative intervention through MASE, direct intervention or support from voluntary/specialised services.

In the last quarter, 90% were identified as being at low risk and therefore are supported in their understanding of risk through preventative intervention undertaken via early help, voluntary services and Child in Need (CIN) services; this is in keeping with statistical data from others in the combined authority area. The remaining 7% are significant risk and 3% at serious risk, young people who are deemed significant to serious risk are in receipt of specialist support usually via Children's Social Care and/or Intensive Family Support; these young people are also subject of a discreet Multi-agency Sexual Exploitation plan which seeks to protect and reduce their risk. Where risks increase despite intervention plans, alternative protection options are explored; for example, the use of civil injunctions and other disruption tactics. Where there are a number of perpetrators and/or locations identified of concern disruption will be discussed and implemented through the CSE Missing Operational Group and through complex strategy meetings.

Disruption activity is of the utmost importance. Investigations for individual victims continue, recognising frameworks/orders which can support victims such as the Child Abduction Warning Notices and the National Referral Mechanism for young people trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Missing

The number of missing episodes has increased steadily over the last few months, due to the police changing their processes regarding missing and absent classification.



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

The number of missing episodes followed up with a missing return interview is monitored on a monthly basis. Whilst not all of these are completed within the 72 hour timescale, there remains a commitment to always persist in engaging with young people. As a result of this, on average most missing return interviews are completed within 5 days of the young person's return unless the meeting was declined. When interviews were not completed within the 72 hour timescale, this was mainly due to the young person not being able to be contacted, or because the young person had gone missing again.

Tackling Violence and Exploitation

Wolverhampton has taken the bold stance of committing to a fresh approach to address issues of violence and exploitation (V&E) in the city, as set out in our strategy. The ever-evolving landscape of exploitation requires a more flexible and agile approach across partners and a commitment to tackle violence and exploitation in its entirety. A review of our local response to exploitation and contextual safeguarding in 2019 clearly identified opportunities to improve how we work together to identify and protect young people at risk of or experiencing exploitation in all its forms.

The complex and exploitative world of Organised Crime Groups (OCGs), which are often driven by money, power or control, leaves the door open for adults or children to be enticed or coerced into situations they then struggle to remove themselves from. As a result, they can become victim to multiple forms of exploitation and in response, we have redesigned our whole system to ensure that the support that they receive is joined-up and effective.

This has included revising our threshold document to clearly identify the extra familial risks associated with exploitation and updated our exploitation screening tool to ensure it supports the identification of all forms of exploitation. All referrals supported by a completed screening tool will be risk assessed within the MASH, including information and intelligence from the newly established Partnership Exploitation and Missing Hub.

Our multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding young people at serious and significant risk of exploitation have been extended from responding to sexual exploitation, to ensuring young people experiencing all forms of exploitation are afforded the same level of support and protection. Similarly, the strategic Criminal Exploitation and Missing Operational Group now has a remit to disrupt perpetrators and locations involved in all forms of exploitation.

We have produced a comprehensive set of training modules which have been made available to all staff across the safeguarding partnership. The new working arrangements as outlined above will be in place in February 2021 and in readiness, a number of workshops are being held during December 2019 and January 2020 to brief safeguarding leads across agencies.

Power2 – Supporting Vulnerable Adolescents

The Power2 team was established in December 2019 as a pilot project funded for 2 years to work with young people at risk of exploitation. It is a Multi-disciplinary team with social workers, speech and language therapists, education psychologists and keyworker support commissioned from the voluntary sector. Young people and their families will receive an intensive service for between 6 and 12 months using trauma informed practice, taking adverse childhood experiences into account (ACEs)

Power2 work with :

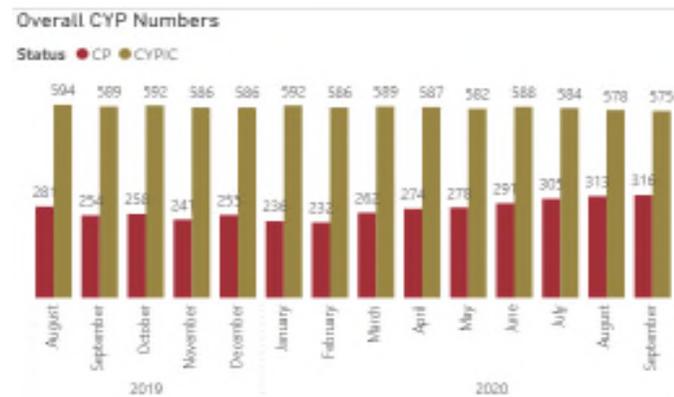
- Young people aged between 11 and 17 years of age who are at risk of exploitation;
- Young people where there are current or recent escalation in high risk-taking behaviours;
- Young people where there has been support and interventions implemented to decrease risk, which have not proved effective.

Power2 has recently expanded its offer to vulnerable young people aged 18-25. This expanded offer is a pilot with multi-agency funding secured until March 2021 when impact will be reviewed. Early indications of positive outcomes.

- Reduction in CSE risk
- Reduction in number/ length of missing episodes
- Step down from child protection to child in need
- No further offending behaviour

Children and Young People in Care

There is a clear vision that is shared across the Children and Young People in Care service which is focused on achieving permanence and stability for children. The number of children in care in Wolverhampton has historically been considerably higher than comparator authorities, over the last ten years. The rate increased annually from 2009 until 2014, reaching 807 at its peak. In May 2014, the Families R First Programme was introduced which put greater emphasis on tackling problems within the family unit and offering support at an earlier stage, preventing the need for children and young people to become looked after. This work, together with the co-location of early intervention and statutory social work teams and the introduction of a relational and strength-based practice framework has contributed to year-on-year reductions in the number of children in care. The number as at the end of September 2020 is 575. Due to the system migration in September, we could not report accurate CiN and Early Intervention numbers at month end, however as at the end of October these were 710 CiN on a plan, 73 CiN in assessment and 943 open to Early Intervention.



Robust decision-making processes are in place to ensure that when children cannot be cared for at home, their entry into care is planned appropriately ensuring there is a care plan in place that focuses on achieving permanence in a timely manner. Following the admissions to care process, care planning is subject to additional oversight through the Head of Service Permanence Oversight Panel. The effectiveness of care planning had been evidenced by good timeliness in proceedings and improved timeliness for children with a plan of adoption. However during this period we have seen a detrimental impact on care proceedings court due to the impact of covid19 on the functioning of the Court.

Placements for Children and Young People in Care

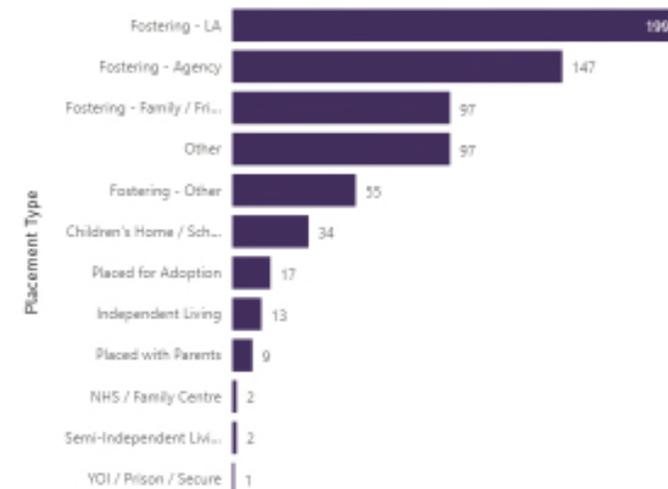
In Wolverhampton we believe that wherever possible children should live with families in or close to our city. The Family Values project focusses on increasing the number of internal fostering households, and improving the offer of support to increase the retention of foster carers. The foster carers support has been enhanced by the introduction of therapeutic training, peer support for foster carers through Fostering Families United the use of buddies, and restorative practice training. The ambition is to increase the net gain of fostering households approved by the City of Wolverhampton by 81 households by 2021/22.

Mainstream foster carer approvals have increased year on year since the start of the Family Values programme. In 2019/2020 59 new foster carers were approved, with 27 of these mainstream carers and 34 family and friend carers approvals. We had an overall net gain of 27 carers and met our Family Values target for net gain. This enables us to place many more of our children with our own internal carers. The gap of placements of children in external placements and those in internal continues to widen.

Last year 126 more children in care were placed with our own internal foster carers than at the start of the Family Values project than three years ago.

The timeliness of approvals of foster carers has also improved with the average time of 147 days. Last year we approved the largest number of foster carers in the shortest amount of days in the last four years.

CYPiC Placements



Placement stability

- Improving placement stability remains a key priority. Stability is now in line with statistical neighbours and national averages . In September 2020 76% of children in care had been in the same placement for two years and the percentage of children with three or more placements in the past 12 months had decreased from 14% to 9%. In order to achieve better placement stability, plans include:
- Key 2 Inspiration which opened in June 2019 .This is a local authority short term children's home
- Fostering Families United is a support mechanism that offers foster carers a community of support and access to therapeutic advice. It was launched in May 2019. The aim is to support the stability of placements . Foster carers work together in small teams supported by an experienced foster carer team leader
- Foster carers have found the support invaluable and this has enabled them to care for children with some complex care histories. Due to the success of the pilot team, there are now 3 Fostering Families United Teams in place with a plan to continue to expand this delivery model to all carers
- A therapeutic training programme is being delivered to all foster carers . Fostering staff have all been trained in this model to ensure consistency of support, advice and consultation.
- Children placed in foster care have continued to experience strong secure foster placements during Covid-19 pandemic with foster carers showing strong resilience and support to our children in care

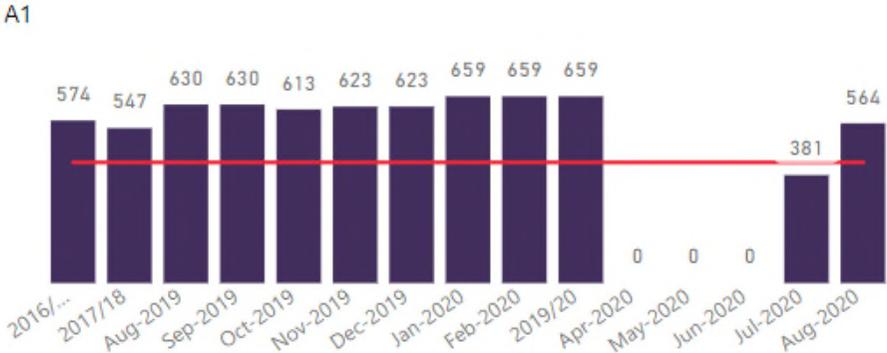
Regional Adoption Agency - Adoption@Heart

From 1 April 2019 the City of Wolverhampton, Walsall and Dudley local authorities and Sandwell Children’s Trust began delivering their adoption services as one adoption agency, Adoption@Heart (A@H). The overriding factors that influenced the four agencies to work together to form a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) were: historic relationships, partnership arrangements already in place and geography. A@H is hosted by the City of Wolverhampton Council.

We are currently unable to report adoption information at the end of September due to the system migration. At the end of August 2020 there had been 6 Adoption Orders granted for children formerly in care.

Overall timeliness compares positively against 2019/20 for A1 (564 days from 659 days), and A2 (208 days from 306), A10 also compares favourably (363 days from 386). Wolverhampton continues to be appropriately optimistic when planning for adoption for children who are unable to live with their birth family. This includes children who may be regarded as harder to place and hence may take longer to identify a suitable adoptive family. The reduction in Adoption Orders granted is a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of courts. The court are now starting to issue hearing dates for adoption applications .

During Covid-19 we have continued to place children with their adoptive families following robust risk assessments .Six of these placements have been made in a fostering for adoption capacity. This is a positive position allowing children to be placed with their potential adoptive family much earlier.



Adoption@Heart – Year One 2019-20

- A@H approved 51 prospective adopters in its first year.
- 127 children from across the Black Country were matched to adopters.
- 46 of these were Wolverhampton children.
- The timeliness of placing some children for adoption in this year was affected by the launch of Adoption@Heart. This was to be expected as part of the forming of a single agency. As processes and relationships develop the performance of Adoption@Heart will continue to improve.

March- September 2020

- 16 Wolverhampton children have been placed with their adopters
- Of these 16, 6 were early permanence placements placed under fostering to adopt arrangements
- It is positive to note that despite restrictions experienced through the lock down period children have continued to move into their adoptive families with introductions planned creatively, and subject to risk assessments

The Health and wellbeing of Children and Young people in Care

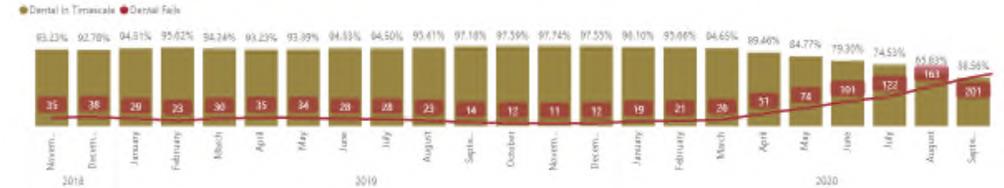
Children and Young People in care have regular health and dental checks. All new children into care have Health Passports which have been established with the support of partners in the CCG, ensuring health information is readily available to children and their carers.

The percentage of both review health assessments and dentals completed in timescales has seen a dip since the beginning of 2020. We continue to work closely with health colleagues to ensure we have strong systems in place to avoid delay in completion. More recently the performance has been impacted by the migration to Eclipse .

Review Health Assessment Timescales



CYPIC Dental Timescales



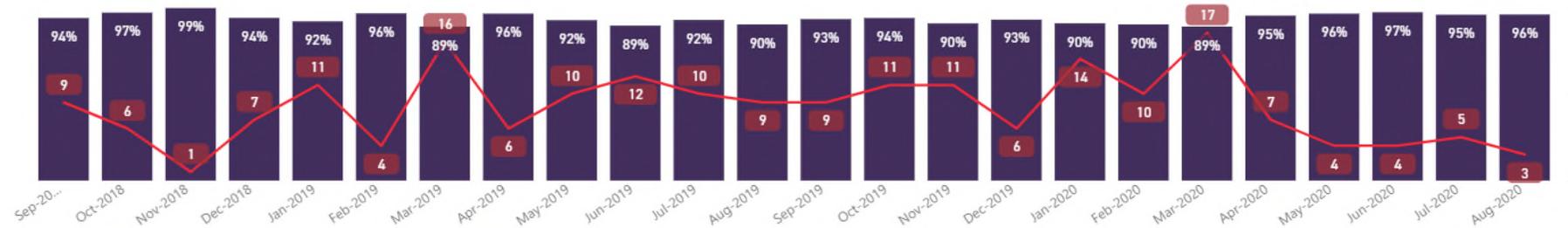
The 2018/19 SDQ score of 13.7 gives Wolverhampton an average of ‘normal’. This score shows Wolverhampton positively in comparison to statistical and national comparators. Wolverhampton is ranked as the 50th best performing authority in this area. Further to this, the percentage of children and young people who completed the questionnaire in 2019/20 increased to 99% with one unable to due to medical issues.

Emotional and Behavioural Wellbeing - SDQ average scores	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Provisional)
Wolverhampton	12.6	12.3	13.2	14.2	14.4	13.7	13.7	13.6
West Midlands	13.7	13.5	13.5	14.1	13.9	13.7	14.3	
Statistical Neighbours	14.77	14.51	14.52	15.16	14.26	14.3	14.7	
England	14	13.9	13.9	14	14.1	14.2	14.2	

How we work with Children and Young People in Care

CYPIC Participation

● CYPIC Review Passes ● CYPIC Review Fails



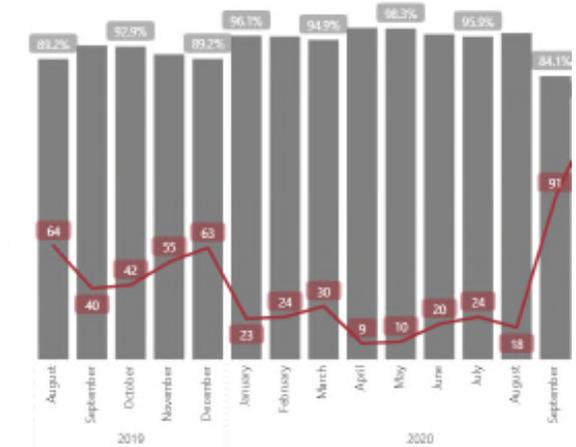
Social work visits to children and young people in care fulfil a range of critical roles and functions to enable the child’s circumstances to be observed and monitored. Visits are carried out at least once every 6 weeks or once every 12 weeks if in a stable placement.

During the year the vast majority of children received visits from their social workers within statutory timescales. As with CP visits, there has been a reduction in the percentage for September, this has been affected by the migration to the new system. Visits have been taking place but due to the new form to record these visits, some have been showing as out of timescale where a box has not been selected. Audits have identified some evidence of excellent relationship building and direct work.

There is strong evidence of children contributing to their plans, and as at August 2020 96% of children participated in their Children and Young People in Care review, the majority of children participated by speaking for themselves and some children chaired their own review.

Visits in Timescale

● Visits ● Visits Fails



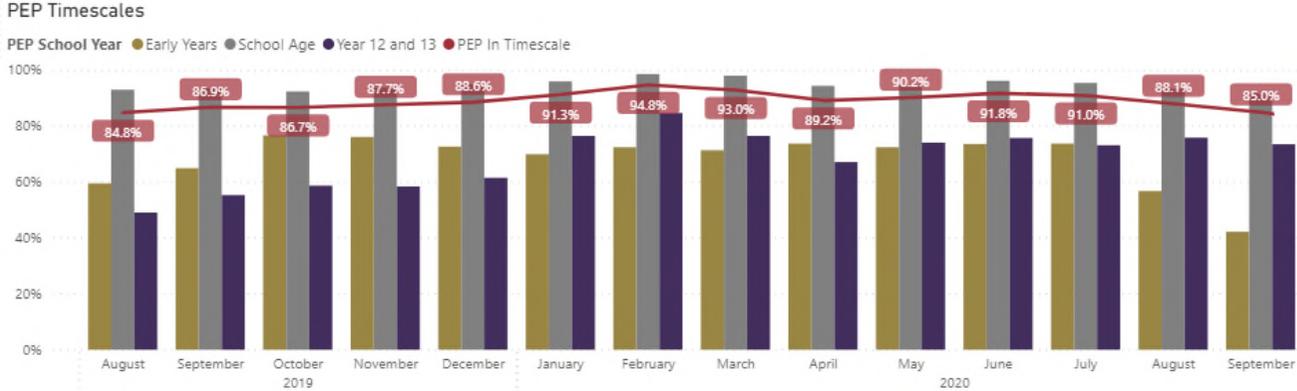
Impact of work with Children and Young People in Care

Audits of files suggest that the work undertaken by social workers alongside other professionals and strategic activity is contributing to improved outcomes for children and young people. Children and young people in care are achieving educationally. Outcomes for the whole cohort at KS1 – 4 are broadly in line with national and regional averages, though KS1 and KS2 data are not available from the summer term due to assessments not being completed by schools. At GCSE, however, outcomes improved significantly for children and young people in care in 2020 - 25% of eligible children in the cohort achieved grade 4 or above in both English and maths. We feel that this improvement is due to grades being based on teacher assessments rather than exams.

School attendance is high with low levels of persistent absence. No children and young people in care were permanently excluded from school in the 2019/20 academic year.

Six Wolverhampton care leavers graduated from university in 2020, including one who achieved a first-class honours degree and three achieved upper second class (2.1) honours. We currently have 26 care leavers in higher education.

Percentage of Children with a Personal Education Plan

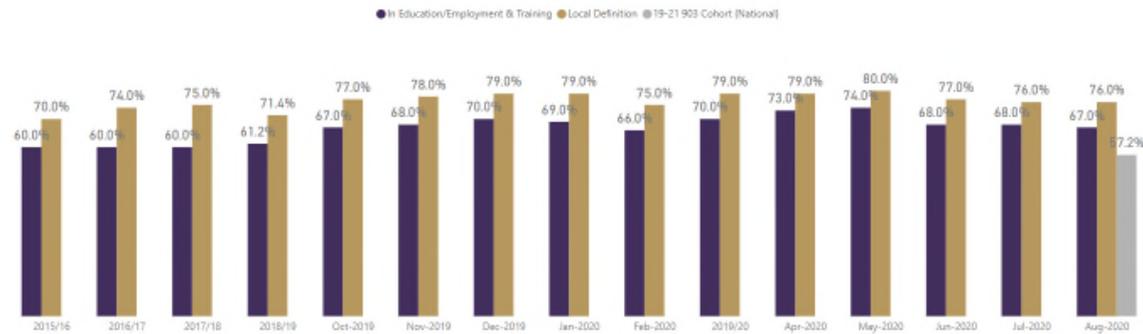


The pupil premium is used effectively to ensure children are achieving. Regular Personal Education Plans (PEP's) are in place for the majority of children and the recently developed Electronic PEP will support a detailed understanding of progress that children are making in schools as well as identifying areas that require additional support.

Children and Young People in Care - Transitions

The City of Wolverhampton Council's (CWC) Reach teams' key purpose is to improve the life chances and achieve the best outcomes for young people in care aged 14-18 years and care leavers up to 25, by ensuring they have support to achieve their aspirations, meet their health, education, training and accommodation needs.

Co-location of social workers, young people's advisors, family support workers, housing team and an education, employment and training (EET) co-ordinator, facilitates excellent joint working arrangements to support young people through transition. All young people are allocated a personal advisor prior to transition, to support transition planning and the development of a needs led pathway plan. There are good transition arrangements in place for young people accessing pre and post-18 services. Young people are aware of their entitlements as detailed in the Local Offer for Care Leavers, Reach. Updated information leaflets and booklets are incorporated into a post-16 transition pack, and the information is on the care leavers' Facebook page and CYPiC website. The team are committed to increasing partnership working with young people and empowering them to develop confidence and achieve their aspirations.



The variety of EET opportunities available and take up of these are given a high priority within the service. Both internal and external partners work closely together to facilitate individual opportunities for young people. Young people have priority interviews for apprenticeships within the council, and the offer of apprenticeships has now been extended up to 20 years of age. CWC now offer 5 ring fenced apprenticeship posts for care leavers. The multi-agency EET panel enables maximisation of opportunity for young people who are not engaging. The numbers of young people in EET at the end of 2020 increased to 70% with our local definition in EET at 79%, both indicators continuing to improve throughout the year a real positive for care leavers in the city.

Children and Young People in Care - Housing options

Care leavers have a choice of accommodation provision including; supported lodgings, YMCA Social Inclusion pathway with a range of supported accommodation provisions dependent on needs, Children and Young People in care Transitions Housing Support Service including training flats, Staying Put (over 18), Independent Accommodation (over 18) and local quality assured and monitored Supported Accommodation provisions. The housing support service has up to 33 flats, two crash pads and two training flats. Each young person living in one of these homes has a designated housing support worker (HSW) who remains with them throughout their time in the service. Support hours vary, but are to a maximum 30 hours per week, as the young person progresses, the number of hours decrease. The HSW draws up an individual support plan for each young person.

Between April 2019 and March 2020, 11 young people moved into independence living in a flat with a bespoke package of support from the housing support team. Ten of these young people have maintained their tenancy for at least 6 months. The other young person is an Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker who desperately wanted to live in his own flat. Despite support, this did not work for him and he returned to The Royal School as a boarder.

Currently, the percentage of young people in suitable accommodation is 91%.

House Project

In addition, the Children and Young People's Supported Accommodation Service launched a Local House Project in October 2019, working in partnership with care leavers , the National House Project and Reconomy , a local business partner, and Wolverhampton Homes . This project takes a ground-breaking approach through its commitment to young people's ownership to enable young people leaving care to achieve successful independence. The House Project was co-designed with young people from the start, and works on cooperative principles through which adults and young people in, and leaving care ,work together to refurbish properties that become their homes, developing a long-term community of support. Ten young people formed cohort one with seven out of the ten young people who are either living in their own accommodation or have been allocated their own property. One member of the group is now a member of the National Care Leaver's Movement representing the local and national voice of care leavers. The young people for cohort two are now being identified.

An internal Supported Lodgings Service is currently in development . This will complement the varied range of accommodation options available to children and young people in care.

Participation of Children in Care Council and Care leavers Forum

Children in Care Council (CiCC) has had 17 members in this period with 7 males and 10 Females. Care leavers Forum (CLF) has had 9 members with 3 male and 6 female. Both groups meet fortnightly.

Success for CiCC in 2019/2020 includes:

- The Vice Chair of the CiCC recognised as Young Citizen of the Year
- All members attended the regional CiC Conference in Sandwell
- Presented a workshop with Strategic Senior Executive Board, outlining Co-Production
- 2 members of CiCC represented on the City's Youth Council
- 2 additional members of CiCC trained as Total Respect Train the trainers
- CiCC co-produced the CiC website
- CiCC hosted their first CiC Conference at The Way
- CiCC attended a 3 day residential with members from the other Wolverhampton Youth Voice groups
- CiCC consulted and coproduced the city Youth Engagement Strategy (# YES) and Co-Production Charter

Success for CLF in 2019/2020

- CLF reviewed the Reach Local Offer for Care Leavers
- CLF contributed to the recruitment process for the Step into Social Work Program
- Attendance at National Care Leavers Benchmarking Forum Conferences throughout the year.
- CLF created and presented a Pitch to the National House Project, securing the project for the City
- CLF have secured 3 paid positions within the Council
- CLF delivered Total Respect Training to the Council's Private Sector Partners for the House Project Recomony
- A CLF member is a board member of the House Project Steering Group
- 2 CLF members sit on the Care Leavers Offer Steering Group
- A CLF member volunteered and gained leadership skills while support the Wolverhampton Youth Voice 3 day residential
- CLF hosted a launch for the Council's partnership with Volunteering Matters, Grandmentor Program

CiCC and CLF jointly in this period; co-produced guides on how to use Microsoft Teams for engaging in meetings with their social workers and IROs in preparation for Covid lockdown. The attendance at the Christmas party was raised from 8 Care Leavers in 2018 to 56 in 2019, through promotion and planning of activities. 4 UASC young people adapted and delivered a UASC version of Total Respect to 40 professionals from social care, health and education. The CiCC and CLF presented and facilitated a workshop with professionals as part of the review of the council's Sufficiency Strategy. The CiCC and the CLF also contributed to and attended the launch of the Youth Engagement Strategy (#YES) .

Corporate Parenting

The Council believes it is important to invest in children and young people in care and demonstrate this through:

The Corporate Parenting Strategy is supported by the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board (CPPB) chaired by the Council's Deputy Chief Executive. At the beginning of the municipal year, a workshop facilitated by members of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and the Care Leavers Forum (CLIC) with members of the board established a 12-month plan which focused on the seven principles set out within the legislation.

Here are some of our significant events and achievements that we have worked on with children in care and care leavers this year:

- The annual 'I awards' event which celebrates the achievements of children in care.
- A week-long range of events to support and celebrate the annual Care Leavers Week
- Annual Christmas Party
- A joint training and agreed pathway of support for care leavers has been developed with the Skills and Transition Team.
- The CiCC and CLF meet twice a year with the CPPB and the Corporate Parenting Board
- The launch of a new Children in Care and Care Leavers Website
- A Corporate Parenting Social Value Group launched with Private Sector Organisations to support opportunities for care leavers

The Reach Local Offer for care leavers offer was reviewed in September 2020. It includes;

- Care Leavers exempt from paying Council Tax until the age of 25 if they live in the City of Wolverhampton
- Care leavers having guaranteed interviews for apprenticeships within the Council
- <http://www.wolveschildrenincare.com/>

Summary of achievements in 2019-2020

- Integration of the Education and Children and Young People directorates, enabling a whole system approach to supporting children and young people and providing opportunities for closer working relationships between social care and education settings.
- Social work caseloads continue to stay at a manageable level
- Power 2 team established to work with young people at risk of exploitation
- Development of the Culture of Belonging programme to improve children's inclusion in schools
- Wolverhampton achieved its target of 'turning around' 2890 families as part of the Troubled Families programme.
- The Court Team is enabling greater continuity for children subject to proceedings and improved pre-proceedings work. Timeliness has improved for children who have been subject to pre-proceedings work.
- Establishment of the Youth Engagement Strategy, #YES, through co-production with children young people and their families across the city

Summary of achievements in 2019-2020

- Increase in % of care leavers engaged in EET
- Increase in number of foster carers approved by CWC and increase in the number of children placed in internal fostering placements
- Improvement in long and short term placement stability measures for children in care placements
- Improved support offer to families who have no recourse to public funding has resulted in families achieving an immigration outcome earlier and therefore enabled children to achieve a sense of permanence and have access to services earlier where they are given right to remain.
- Multi agency emotional well being support service available specifically for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people up to age 25
- Launch of a Local House Project working with 10 care leavers in cohort one
- With support of young people and the House Project a co-production hub has been secured, providing a venue for young people to call their own, accommodating the House Project , a drop in for care leavers, The Reach Café, and a base for co-production with children and young people.

Key improvements for 2020-2021

The Children and Young People directorate has a detailed strategic plan that outlines work to be undertaken in 2020-21 that will further strengthen the quality and impact of work with children, young people and their families. The key improvements for 2020-2021 are:

- Continue to improve workforce retention in order to provide children with greater consistency and establish a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, who are fully equipped to help children and families achieve positive outcomes
- Embed 'Practice Weeks' as part of the quality assurance framework to ensure senior managers have a clear reflection of the quality of frontline practice
- Continue to focus on the quality of practice delivered through a practice improvement plan. This includes improving assessment analysis and planning, improving the quality of direct work to strengthen the voice of the child and ensuring restorative practice is imbedded within supervision, promoting a focus on the impact of interventions on the lived experience of children and explicitly provide opportunity for critical reflection
- Ensure children in care in care have availability to good quality life story that meets their needs
- Review and refresh our targeted 'earliest' early help offer.

Key improvements for 2020-2021

- Implement Eclipse, a single child's record system. This will bring together recording systems for early intervention and statutory social work and enable practitioners to record the experience and journey of the child on one system
- Work with partners to implement the outcomes of the contextual safeguarding review to further safeguard children and young people at risk of exploitation
- Continue to improving placement stability including embedding of 'Fostering Families United'
- Continue to embed the Regional Adoption Agency, Adoption@Heart
- Continue to embed Restorative Practice across Children's Services
- Implement an emotional wellbeing service for children in the city
- Embed further opportunities for co production with children in the city
- Achieve an allocated target of 'turning around' 484 families as part of the extended Troubled Families Programme
- Further improve the quality of assessment, support and planning for children in need of support.

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