

Children and Young People's Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy 2021-2024

Children on the Edge of Care, Children and Young People in Care, Care Leavers and aspects of Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs

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COUNCIL



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Produced by CYP Commissioning Team in conjunction
with the Children's Services Leadership Team



Introduction

This Strategy serves as a single plan that covers requirements for the Children in Care Sufficiency Duty and the Children in Care Strategy.

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is legally defined as 'in care' by a local authority if he or she:

- Is provided with accommodation for a continuous period for more than 24hours under S.20 (voluntary agreement with parent or with the young person if he/she is over 16 years old)
- Is subject to a care order (made by the Family Court); or
- Is subject to a Police Protection Order, Emergency Protection Order or Remand
- Is subject to a placement order (pre-adoption)
- Within this document we will refer to young people who meet these criteria as 'children in care' (CiC).

The City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to improving the outcomes and life chances of the children and young people in our care. The Sufficiency Strategy uses placement data, feedback from our operational teams and market intelligence to inform our market management activity.



The Sufficiency Strategy is a statutory requirement set out in Section 22G of the Children's Act 1989 (see Annex 1 for full wording) which requires local authorities to take strategic action in respect of those children they look after and for whom it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation within their local authority area. In those circumstances, section 22G requires local authorities, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for those children that meets their needs and is within their local authority area.

The Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy ensures that the Council:

- Supports and maintains a range of services that meet the needs of children in care and those who, without support, might be accommodated.
- Works with partners to ensure that only the children and young people who need to come into care are accommodated.
- Supports the market to deliver appropriate placements within the Local Authority area.
- Has the appropriate mechanisms in place for the commissioning of appropriate placements and additional support outside of the local area, where the child's needs require this.

A key element of this strategy is the Council's desire to develop new models and improve placement stability.

This Strategy is linked to the Wolverhampton's following plans:

- Corporate Parenting Strategy 2016-18 presents how we intend to improve the outcomes for our children and young people in care, those who are adopted and care leavers. It lists the actions that are to be completed during this period.
- Care Leavers Strategy 2016-18 sets out how we will improve outcomes for this vulnerable group through improving pathway planning for all children in care and embedding the Barnardo's Care Leaver's Pathway.

The strategy is set out over nine sections

It brings together:

2. Our vision
4. Information and analysis
5. Our approach

The strategy also includes:

6. 'The voice of our children and young people'
7. Strategic Commissioning
8. Risk-based Contract Management; and
9. Governance.

The City of Wolverhampton Council will listening to the voice of children and young people, and this will be at the heart of what we do as we drive forwards the implementation of this strategy and a supplementary document will be produced identifying what is important to our Young People.

Vision

Early Intervention, Specialist support services, and Restorative practice are our approaches to supporting people at the right time at the right level and to help us strengthen families where children are at risk.

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. 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 (Restorative Practice) has contributed to year on year reductions in the number of looked after children.

We strive to ensure that there is a continuum of services to address the various and complex needs of children and families so that these families are supported to care for their own children and prevent unnecessary entry into care or repeat admissions.

This includes the services below and we continue to explore further innovative ideas:

- Intensive Family Support
- Restorative Practice
- Family Group Conferencing
- Edge of Care Services

The aim of any intervention is to achieve stability, improve parenting and family functioning in a way that keeps each child safe and allows that child to develop. Where this is not possible, we seek to provide high quality substitute care within family settings as near as possible to the child's home to maintain links with birth parents and their communities.

We are proud of our children and young people in Wolverhampton. We want the same for the children and young people in our care as any good parent would want for their child. We want our children to be healthy and happy in childhood. We want them to feel valued for who they are and to feel loved. We want them to enjoy learning and to have a good experience of education to help them fulfil their aspirations for the future.

The following will help drive and deliver our vision:

- We work **collaboratively with families and our partners** to support and enable children and young people to be cared for within their own families, wherever possible.
- All children and families benefit from **integrated and co-ordinated services** enabling full participation in universal and mainstream services in their local communities.
- A suite of **Early Help** services are used to support children on Child Protection Plans and their families and prevent entry into care. This includes Family Support teams, Think Family Service, Family Group Conferencing, Restorative Practice, Edge of Care interventions and other locally based, targeted services.
- **Direct social work interventions** are used with families, to support those with parental responsibility to meet the needs of their children safely.
- Through robust **assessment, planning and case review**, we ensure that we only look after those children and young people for whom being in care is the only way of ensuring their safety, protection and development.
- We continue to work with those with parental responsibility to help a child in care **return home safely** wherever this is possible.
- Where children cannot be cared for by their birth parents we provide **placements in family settings**, as close to the child's home area as possible that meet each child's individual needs.
- Where children cannot return home, we aim to secure **legal and emotional permanence**, preferably through adoption, Special Guardianship, Family Arrangement Orders, or where this is not possible, Long Term Foster Care.
- As we aim to place the vast majority of children within a family setting, we always maximise the use of internal fostering resources first before using local external fostering resources. We avoid using residential care except when it is the best way of providing support to meet a child's complex therapeutic and educational needs. Children in care should be as **physically and emotionally healthy** as they can be and have access to the right health and leisure resources, opportunities for early years and statutory education and participation in further education, employment and training.
- The needs of **young people leaving care** and **those that have left care** will be assessed and these young people should receive the appropriate level of support and advice to enable the transition to adulthood. This includes 'staying put' with their foster carer, access to suitable, high quality housing and opportunities to engage in education, employment and training.
- Feedback is routinely sought from children, young people, parents and carers to **inform any decisions made** relating to service delivery to drive continuous improvement.

Corporate Parenting Pledge

“The local authority takes its responsibilities as a corporate parent very seriously. The Children in Care Council and the care leavers’ forum have been influential in shaping the way in which services are developed and delivered.”

Ofsted

The concept of Corporate Parenting was introduced by the Government in 1998 as part of a drive to improve the lives of children who are looked after by the local authority.

The Corporate Parenting responsibility was reiterated and reinforced in 2007 with the release of the White Paper Care Matters-Time for Change and the underpinning legislation, Children and Young People Act 2008. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 now compels local authorities to evidence how they meet the seven Corporate Parenting Principles as they are statutory in relation to looked after children and care leavers.

Our Pledge is:

- To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
- To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
- To take into account of the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
- To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
- To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
- For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work
- To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

In order to ensure this success for children and young people in care or leaving care, the following questions will be used to scrutinise services and support:

- What more can we do to ensure looked after children and care leavers feel listened to and their views are acted on?
- To what extent are the needs and priorities of looked after children and care leavers reflected in local strategic needs assessments, local service provision, and development plans?
- How can we collectively deliver services to looked after children and care leavers in a way that is joined-up and which supports young people to make a successful transition to adulthood?
- Are the children and young people in our care enjoying happy, fulfilled childhoods and looking forward to their adult lives, with positive foundations and stable relationships? If not, why not and what can we do to address this?
- How can we deliver services to looked after children and care leavers in a way that mirrors as far as possible the way a good parent would support their child?
- How can we deliver services in a way that recognises the unique circumstances of looked after children and care leavers?



The Corporate Parenting Board will use the above questions to monitor, evaluate and ensure the City is achieving the Corporate Parenting Principles to a high standard through an action plan. Both the Corporate Parenting Board and Strategic Group will be directed and challenged by the Children in Care Council and Care Leavers' forum (who represent the care population of Wolverhampton), to ensure that the action plan is relevant and making the differences it is designed to achieve.



Sufficiency Information & Analysis

Introduction

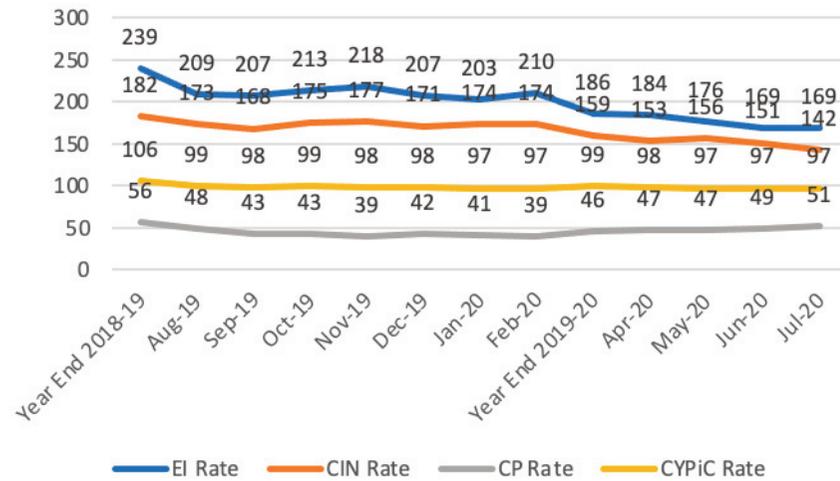
The City of Wolverhampton, like many major cities nationwide, still has many children in need or who require protection. However, the number and rate of children in care (the most intensive level in intervention) are relatively stable after several years of rapid increases and the national rank of children in care has decreased after being second-highest at one point. In August 2020, there are 582 children in care, 301 children who have a children protection plan and 733 children who are assessed as children in need.

The proportion of care leavers who are in suitable accommodation rose in 2017 to be better than the English average. The current accommodation provisions for care leavers include transitions flats, host families, the House Project, commissioned supported accommodation through block contract and regional frameworks. The number of care leavers placed with external providers has reduced from 12 in June 2019 to 4 in August 2020.

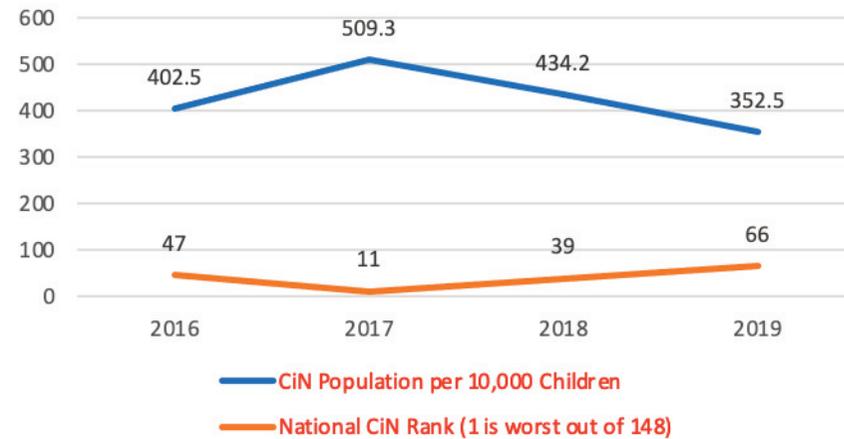
The last statutory assessment of Children's Services in the City of Wolverhampton in January 2017, OFSTED rated the local authority as being 'Good'. This was an improvement on the previous rating and can be attributed to new ways of working and commissioning, including better provision for children in care, and initiatives such as Edge of Care, Specialist Support and Family Group Conferences to prevent children at risk becoming in care. Another key innovation is the eight Strengthening Families Hubs across the City. They combine children's centres with social work teams and health visitors, to provide targeted early intervention services for families and children.

Local Trends

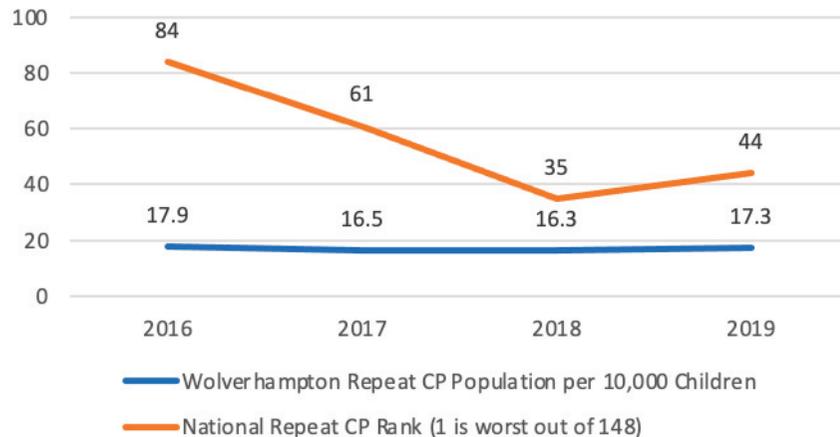
Total Early Intervention, CiN, CP and CYPiC Population as rate per 10,000 children (0-17) in Wolverhampton



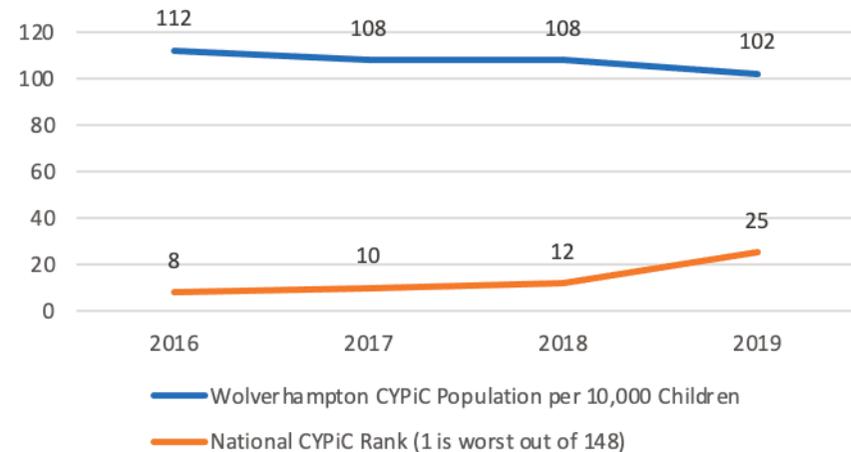
Wolverhampton CiN Rate and National Rank



Wolverhampton Repeat CP Rate and National Rank



Wolverhampton CYPiC Rate and National Rank



The rate of CYPiC per 10,000 children and number of children and young people in care have consistently reduced since 2016. Wolverhampton's national ranking has improved slightly from number 8 out of 148 local authorities in 2016 to number 25 in 2019 when number 1 was worst. Wolverhampton's rate in 2019 was the second highest in the Black Country and significantly higher than the England average.

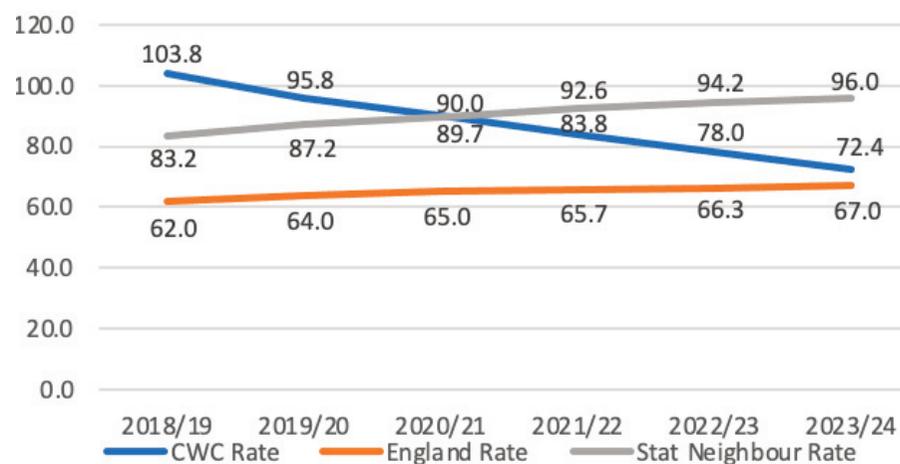
	30 June 2018	30 June 2019	30 June 2020
Total population	648	611	585

CYPiC Projections and Targets

CYPiC Team has used a model of stratification and segmentation of the CAYPIC population into groups of children most likely to leave care, with predictions based on best case, medium case, and worst-case scenarios for 2020/21.

	Starters per month	Remain in care (%)	Tracked CYPiC to exit (%)	Total end of 2020-2021 Full Year	CYPiC Rate per 10,000
Worst Case	15	75	70	602	109
Medium Case	12	75	70	575	101
Best Case	10	75	70	557	80.3

Best Estimates Against England and Stat. N'bour Projections (Rate per 10,000 children)



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CYPiC POPULATION

CYPiC Team has considered the impact of Covid-19 on families in Wolverhampton who are affected by the trio of vulnerabilities, namely alcohol/substance abuse, domestic abuse and mental health problems.

The trio of vulnerabilities have been evidenced to put children at notably greater risk of immediate harm as well as having a detrimental impact on their later life outcomes. According to the latest local area profiles of child vulnerability from the UK Children’s Commissioner Office, the City of Wolverhampton Council’s profile is detailed below.



Households where an adult has an alcohol or drug dependency

4.48% 2,750

Projected percentage of children in household Projected number of 0-17-year olds affected

Households where an adult has severe mental ill-health symptoms

13.8% 8,450

Projected percentage of children in household Projected number of 0-17-year olds affected

Households where an adult experienced domestic abuse in last year

5.88% 3,600

Projected percentage of children in household Projected number of 0-17-year olds affected

● Households where an adult has any of the above risks

18.66% 11,430

Projected percentage of children in household Projected number of 0-17-year olds affected

● Households where an adult has two or more of the above risks

4.69% 2,870

Projected percentage of children in household Projected number of 0-17-year olds affected

● Households where an adult has all three of the above risks

1.18% 730

Projected percentage of children in household Projected number of 0-17-year olds affected

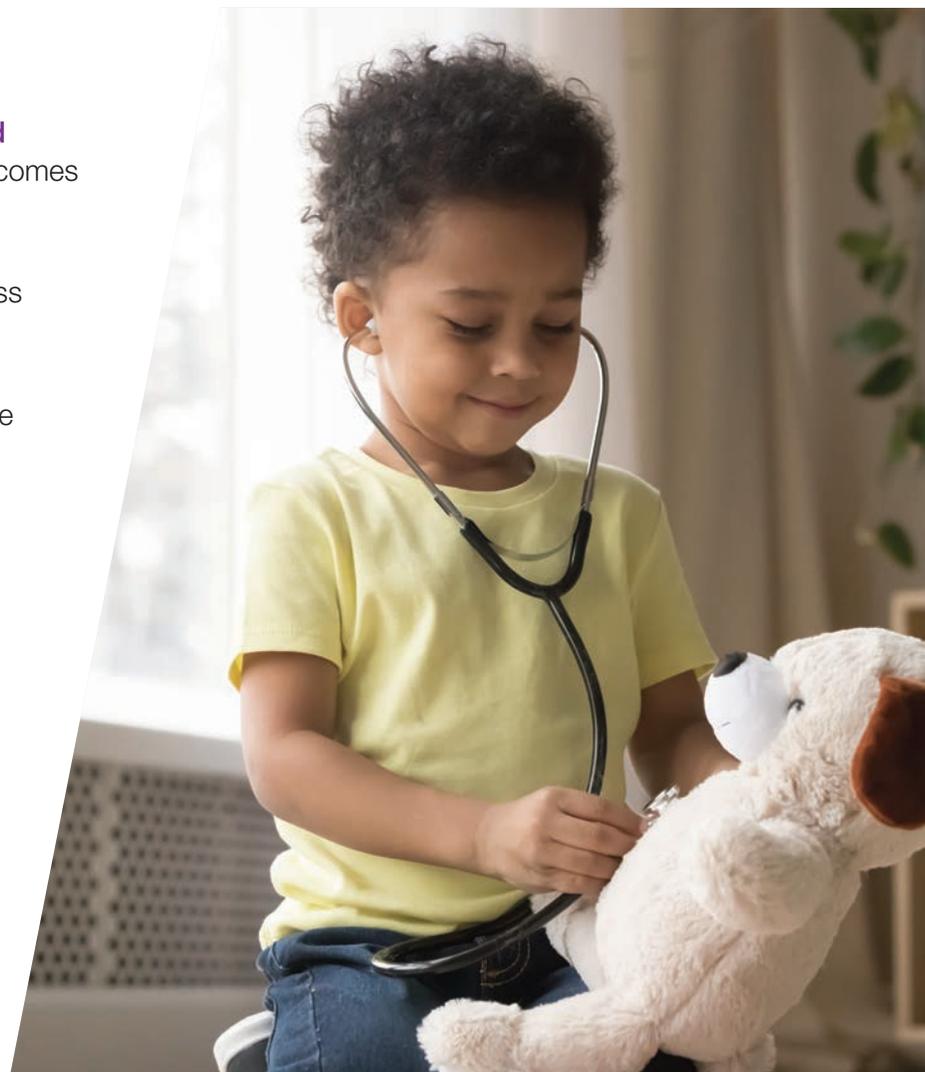
With the Covid-19 Crisis Scenario targets for children leaving care in consideration, the CYPiC numbers within the above projections would increase. At the end of 2020/21, the projected figure will be 629, which would be an increase of 43 during 2020/21.

Commissioners Response to Covid-19

Our response is underpinned by strong recovery principles:

- a. **Target recovery activity and support to where most needed** through evidence-based decisions and focusing on priority outcomes and agreed priorities.
- b. **Stabilise and accelerate the recovery for Wolverhampton's people, places and providers.** Work in partnership on business and service continuity and recovery plans
- c. **Tackle inequalities** – to help our most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens and communities overcome the negative impacts of COVID-19.
- d. **Join up and work in Partnership** – to maximise connections with partners (public services, private sector, communities, voluntary sector and citizens) to speed up recovery.
- e. **Apply our learning from COVID-19** – utilise learning and good practice to improve commissioning decisions, deepen collaboration and partnership working.

We will also ensure that all services we deliver and commission are COVID-19 secure and that the right COVID-19 safe advice and support is available to providers and other services within our communities. We want our customers, staff and communities to feel safe in accessing all the businesses, services and activities that are a normal part of their lives and to be confident that everyone has put in place the COVID-19 safe measures to do this.



5

Our Approach to Ensuring Sufficiency

Background

The Children and Young People's Service Key Priorities 2020-2021 commits to ensure children and young people get the best start in life by:

- Strengthening families where children are at risk (Enables children to remain safely within families)
- Strengthening families where children are at risk (Less children and young people become involved or remain involved in the youth justice system)
- Strengthening families where children are at risk (Children experience permanent and stable placements)
- Providing education that fulfils potential
- Building strong resilient and healthy communities

The Council has invested a range of internal and commissioned services to support these priorities, from Early Intervention to Specialist Support and suitable placements for children and young people in care.

Rebalancing Commissioning from essential to preventative

A preventative commissioning approach is the basis on which we will meet the sufficiency of provision our children and young people need within a finite financial envelope.

We think that the landscape of early help deserves more consideration if we are to avoid a scenario where the indirect consequences of family needs being picked up late, when they have become complex and chronic, more damaging to children's life chances and more costly for society as a whole.

Commissioners will use the impact of Covid-19 as a driver for increasing the work of rebalancing essential and often reactive commissioned services to earlier preventative ones. This is something we saw as a priority even before the pandemic, but a greater pace of change and focus is now required. More details on how we will work to achieve this are detailed in the Strategic Commissioning for Children and Young People' section of this strategy.

Specialist Support Services

A range of interventions are provided to young people and their families with the focus on preventing young people to enter into care and de-escalating issues which potentially may impact young people's well-beings. They include:

- Restorative Practice
- Edge of Care
- Family Group Conference
- Upper Pendeford Farm Short Break
- Barnardo's
- Power2
- K2I
- LAC Mentors
- Connecting Families

Internal services are supported by all targeted commissioned services such as the Power2 Key Workers Project and the Specialist Intensive Family Therapeutic Support Service.

Early Intervention, Children in Need and Child Protection

Eight Strengthening Families Hubs across the City provide support and activities for families with children 0-18 years. With everything from parenting support, housing, benefits, training and employment and much more to help families get the most out of family life with children.

Support include coping with difficult behaviour, routines, managing budgets, support accessing the Terrific for Twos and nursery provision, so families have time to access training or prepare for employment

The hubs also provide support in finances, stop smoking, housing, domestic violence, toilet training, health & nutrition, support for fathers, etc.

Increase internal fostering placements

The Family Values project run by the Fostering Team aims to reduce external fostering agencies and maximise placements with internal foster carers. There is also a strong recruitment focus in the Foster Families United scheme.

Fostering type	Aug 2019	Jul 2020	% Change
Agency	188	150	-20.21%
Friends and Family	82	86	+4.88%
Internal Foster Carer	177	215	+21.47%

Projected Demands on CYPIC Placements

Children's Service has focussed on reducing the number of children in care since 2014. The launch of Children's MASH in 2014 has been instrumental to this objective. At one point, Wolverhampton's rate of children in care was the second highest in England with over 800 children in care. In August 2020, 585 children are currently in the care of City of Wolverhampton Council.

The number of children in care is expected to be more in proportion to the England average by 2023. However, the Covid-19 pandemic started in 2020 inevitably would have some unforeseeable impact on vulnerable children and their families, such as unemployment, school attendance, housing, etc.

During 2020 to 2023, sufficiency will be required to provide suitable placements for children in care in the right place at the right time. The Council will continue to increase internal fostering capacity to ensure majority of children in foster care will be placed with internal foster carers. Generally, dependency on the external market of fostering, children's home and supported accommodation would continue to reduce.

Plans to reduce dependency on external care providers include:

1. Fostering

- The Family Values project run by the Fostering Team aims to reduce external fostering agencies and maximise placements with internal foster carers.
- There is also a strong recruitment focus in the Foster Families United scheme.

2. Children's Home

- The Council expects the number of children's home placements to reduce in the next 3 years when some of the young people turn 18 y.o.
- City of Wolverhampton Council will continue to be part to the West Midlands Regional Framework Contract and collaborate with the Regional Commissioning Hub.
- Step Down projects such as The Big Fostering Partnership will ensure children whose care plan is fostering will step down from residential to fostering.

3. 16-17 y.o. and Care Leavers

- The proportion of care leavers who are in suitable accommodation rose in 2017 to be better than the English average.
- The current accommodation provisions for care leavers include transitions flats, host families, the House Project, commissioned supported accommodation through block contract and regional frameworks.
- The number of care leavers placed with external providers has reduced from 12 in June 2019 to 4 in August 2020.

SUFFICIENCY FOR 2021 TO 2024

Whilst the dependency on placing children in care with external providers is expected to reduce, placement sufficiency for the following cohorts of children must be considered in the Council's Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy 2021-2024

Children in Care with Complex Needs

- This will be the main cohort of children in residential care.
- Majority of these children are open to DCYPT.
- Majority of these residential placements would be funded by EPP.

Children in Care with Complex Needs but not Health Needs

- The number of children in this cohort would remain small.
- They will require full time care in residential placements.
- Some children of this cohort may be able to step down to foster placement with robust planning, matching, transitions and support to foster carers.

Children in Need and Child Protection

The Early Intervention Offer will ensure children in need and children on the edge of care to receive targeted interventions.

Young People Leaving Prison

When young people leave prison after having served their custodial sentence, it has been a constant challenge to find suitable placement for this small cohort.

Accommodation for 16 and 17 y.o.

Young people in this cohort are often not in care but are unable to live at home with their family for a variety of reasons, such as bereavement, overcrowding, family breakdown or risk of abuse. Legally, they cannot hold any tenancy agreements with landlords due to their age. Some of these young people are placed in supported lodgings with providers such as YMCA. Children's Commissioning will work with service leads on needs analysis and how to model this service.

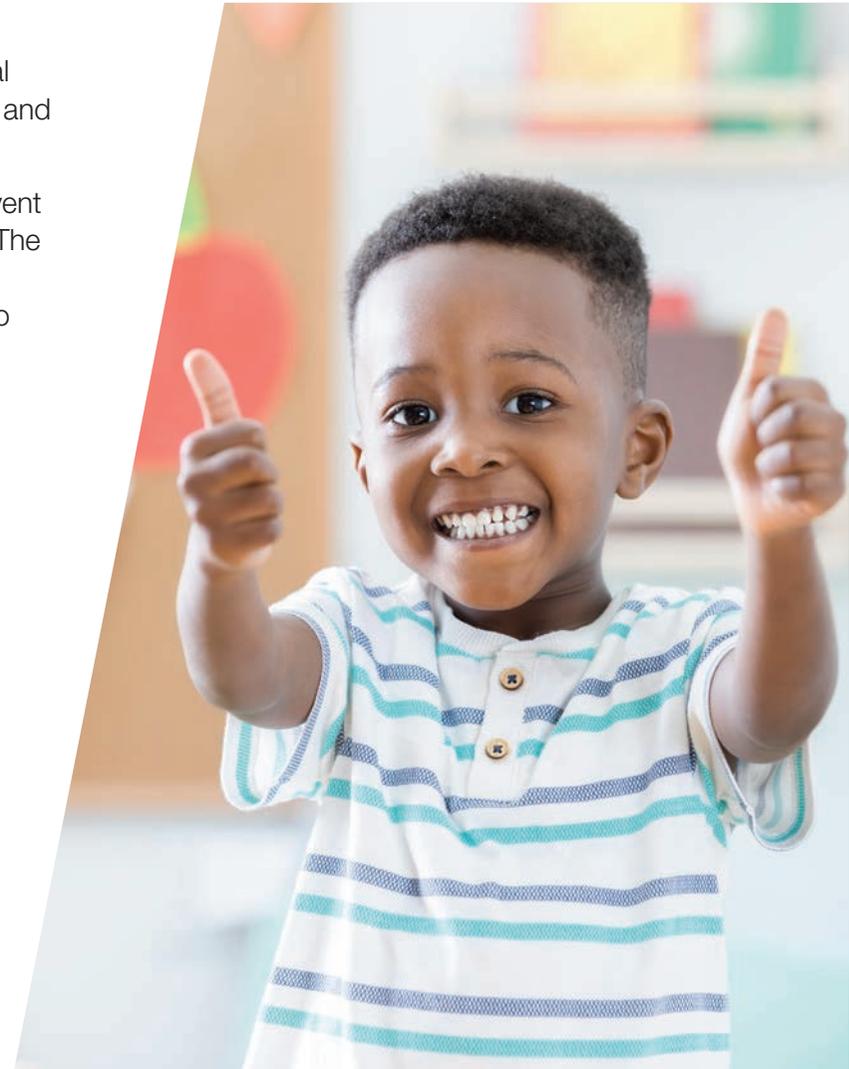
Specialist Support

Vulnerable children and their families are supported by the Council's internal specialist support and commissioned services, namely the Power2 Project and Specialist Intensive Family Therapeutic Support.

- The Power2 Project provides a multi-disciplinary team who work to prevent at-risk young people in Wolverhampton from having to come into care. The Power2 team works with up to sixty 11 to 16-year olds where there are concerns around exploitation, instability in the home environment or who demonstrate high risk-taking behaviours such as substance misuse, helping them to live safely as they progress towards adulthood. With additional funding from the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, the Power2 team will enable to extend the support to young adults who are vulnerable within the community.
- The number of families/young people supported by the Specialist Intensive Family Therapeutic Support Service will increase from sixty to ninety per annum under the new contract commencing in April 2021.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

City of Wolverhampton Council will continue to work with The Royal School Wolverhampton when the Council receives any new allocation. The working relationship between the Council and the school has been very positive.



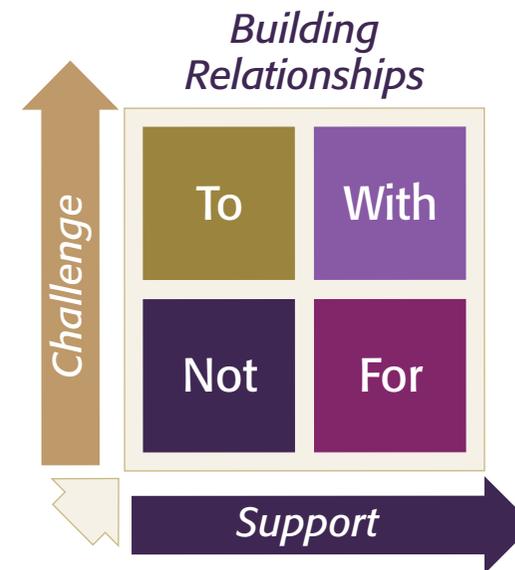
Our Values for Children Services

- 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 service 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 and helping families make sustainable change.

Restorative 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.



92 employees have participated in the three day Restorative Practice training between April 2018 and March 2019. There are examples of employees using the approach in family meetings to help family members understand their actions impact on their loved ones. For some this has been effective in increasing the families 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

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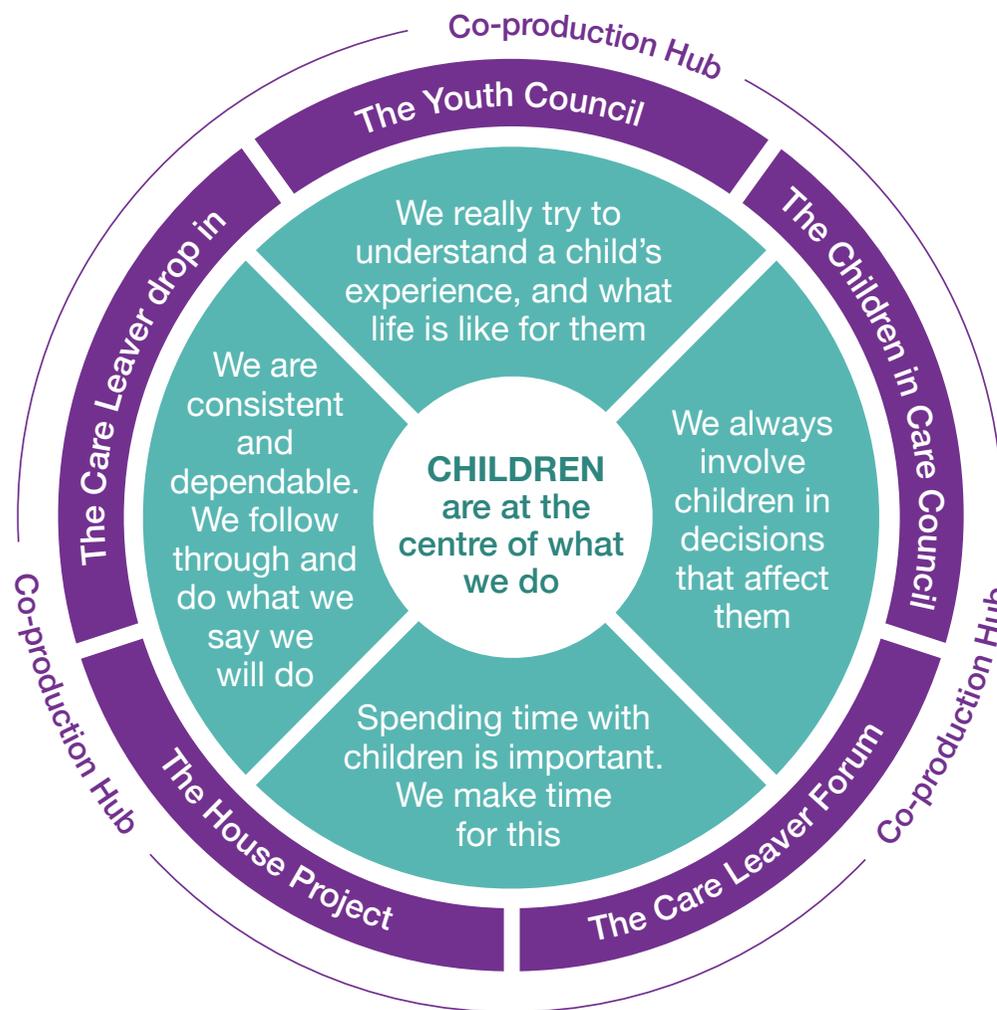
Our Children & Young People's Voices

The Children and Young People Directorate's Summary of Key Priorities 2020-21 states that the aim of our service is to work together to provide creative and seamless support to enable safety and opportunity for children, young people and their families'

These Key Priorities include the following two directly aimed at co-production with children and young people:

- 1 **Children are at the centre of what we do.**
- 2 **Establish and cement the utilisation of the co-production hub as a base for participation and co-production with children across the city.**

A further description of how these two key priorities are being implemented can be found in the following three sections.



Section One

Co-production

The following two links give an insight regarding the approach to co-production in Wolverhampton:

<http://win.wolverhampton.gov.uk/kb5/wolverhampton/directory/advice.page?id=Z0bhtBjrsZM>

https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/wolverhampton/asch/files/final_co-production_charter.pdf

The City of Wolverhampton Council has a strong history of including the views of children, young people and their families in the shaping of services and listed below are a few examples of the forums already in place that contribute to the design and finalisation of service provision on a local, regional and national basis:

Youth Council

The Youth Council is made up of young people elected by their school, community group or specialist service to contribute to the City Council's development of services that effect young people for example community engagement, health and wellbeing, children and young people and city developments. This is achieved by the inclusion of the group in the Council's scrutiny away days, two seats on the children and young people's scrutiny panel and community cohesion board.

The group meets monthly, but also meets in task groups focusing on specific issues as highlighted by their agenda or that of the councils. It leads on Make Your Mark for the City and uses the outcome to influence scrutiny planning in the council. Workshops and training is completed with the group to ensure that the young

people are well supported and skilled in tasks required of them. This group also engages in the national youth forums – two youth MPs and two Youth Crime Commissioners are elected through the group. The group holds an AGM and shares its annual reports with Council Leaders.

Children in Care Council

The Children in Care Council (CiCC) is made of young people aged 11-18 who are in care of the City Council, some living with foster carers, residential homes, friends and family carers and some living independently. These young people are nominated to become members by their social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO), foster carers or other professionals who feel that young people would benefit from the skills acquired as part of the council. CiCC is a statutory requirement as laid down by the Care Matters white paper 2007.

This group meets monthly. The young people complete induction training; interview training and some will complete the Total Respect Training. In addition to the group meeting they meet twice a year with the Corporate Parenting Board. The CiCC work plan includes all the reports sent to this board. This process is to ensure the experiences and opinions of the young people are imbedded into service delivery and development. This group attends national forums through the National Children's Board (NCB) which advises on national policy

Care Leavers Forum, Care Leavers Independent Collective

The Care Leavers Forum (Care Leaver Independent Collective, CLIC) is made up of young people who are supported by the council leaving care team known as the Transitions Team, these young people are 18 -25 (depending on their educational status) and are either living independently, living with a host or staying put with foster carers. They are recruited to the forum through advertisements on Facebook, through their Young Person's Advisors (YPA) or social worker.

The group meets monthly and has its meeting combined with a peer support element as these young people can be very isolated. The formal part of the meeting is for an hour and half where they look at policy developments and service provision and give feedback to officers. This group also takes part in the National Care Leaver Covenant and National Benchmarking Forum which feeds into national policy development for Care Leavers.

Head Start Ambassadors

HeadStart mini ambassadors are in 4 local communities Blakenhall, Low Hill, Bilston and Whitmore Reans. The young people are aged 12 to 18 and assist in the delivery of programmes and projects. Their role also includes sharing the views of young people with the professionals about the experiences of young people living in these communities.

Youth Police Crime Commissioners

Youth Commissioners represent young people across the West Midlands. They are aged 18 and under. The job of the Youth Commissioner is to advise the Police and Crime Commissioner on issues affecting them and their peers.

Each Neighbourhood Policing Area has two elected Youth Commissioners serving two-year terms.

As a Youth Commissioner you can be asked to do the following:

- Consult young people on the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan.
- Speak directly with the Police and Crime Commissioner, police officers and decision makers, raising issues affecting young people including community safety, youth justice, victim services and crime prevention.
- Engage and consult with other young people in their local communities and listen to their views.
- Hold West Midlands Police to account for the service they provide for young people.
- Build relationships with police and break down barriers that exist between officers and young people.



Youth Parliament and Youth MP's

The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) is a youth organisation in the United Kingdom, consisting of democratically elected members aged between 11 and 18.

Members meet regularly to hold debates and plan campaigns at least three times a year locally, and twice on a national level, which includes the annual debate within the Chamber of the House of Commons every November. Young people hold positions throughout the organisation's management, and it has been endorsed by the majority of the UK's political parties.

West Midlands Children in Care Council

Annual Conference to share ideas and promote the needs of Children and Young People in Care. DCS and lead members are invited to attend the event.

National Leaving Care Bench Marking Forum

This national forum is a network of over 100 local authorities promoting the development of quality leaving care services with member authorities and partner organisations through a process of benchmarking and shared learning on a national scale, to enrich outcomes for our nations care leavers.

In addition to these different groups/forums there are other co-production vehicles available such as the Young Carers Forum, the Way youth forum and the utilisation of Mystery shopping exercises.

Children and Young People's services also welcome the views and opinions of parent/carers and the following are some of the groups that provide this feedback currently (more information can be found by clicking on the hyperlinks above):

Voice 4 Parents

Voice4Parents is a well-established parent carer forum whose children have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The forum represents the views of other parents and carers and work together with the City of Wolverhampton Council, Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group and other strategic partners, to make sure the services and support available meets the needs of children, young people and their families. Voice4Parents believes that children, young people and their families are best placed to help develop and shape the services and support they receive.

The forum has been working hard to extend its reach and social media following so that more families have the opportunity to share their views and experiences and get involved. It has established links with other parent and carer groups including Wolverhampton, Walsall and surrounding areas ASD/PDA Group, Include Me Too, Give Us A Break, Let Us Play, Zebra Access, Healthwatch and Wolverhampton Parent Champions. Communication mechanisms between these groups and Voice4Parents will be facilitated by the establishment of Voice4Parents 'Community Group'.

There is a wide network of other community information groups across the city that support the work of Voice4Parents and help to share information with families.

Voice4Parents has a good working relationship with Wolverhampton Information, Advice and Support Service that champions the work of the forum with families they support.

Voice4Parents is a member of the National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) to influence regional and national SEND policies, projects and activities.

Parent Champions

Over the past few months Parent Champions (PC) have had to adapt to new ways of reaching and supporting parents in the City.

Support has been offered mainly through the telephone where PC have stayed connected through weekly conversations with vulnerable adults.

Support has extended to include:

- Care Leavers Team
- Social Services
- Health Visitors Team
- Breastfeeding Support Services
- Strengthening Families Teams / Hubs

Due to Covid19 restrictions and social distance guidelines the need to offer support remains to these identified families and individuals, and conversations prove that parents value the support available to them as often they are desperate for interaction with other families. It's proven that PC add value to local family's mental health and support groups are a vital step to reaching out to families. Parents are still eager to attend various support groups in the City, however, due to restrictions we are unable to reopen group attendance in local centres. Parent Champions are a vital link for many families and their mental wellbeing.

Information, Advice and Support Service

The Information, Advice and Support Service (IASS) is a confidential and impartial service that fulfils the statutory duty to offer information, advice and support to children and young people 0-25 with SEND and their parents/carers. Information, advice and support is on matters relating to SEND across education, health and social care.

The IASS offers an individual casework service to help navigate systems and to improve understanding and involvement with discussions and decision making. The intelligence gathered by the IASS provides valuable contribution to local strategic developments and ensures that the voice and experience of children, young people and parents/carers is at the heart of planning and development. The IASS historically provided significant support to the work of Voice4Parents Wolverhampton which has now become independent.

The IASS Advisory Group is made up of partners across education, health, and social care including representation from parents and the voluntary sector. The Chair is the Deputy Chief Executive of Changing Our Lives. The IASS Advisory Group is supported by a shadow group of young people with SEND who help to shape and support the development of the IASS in relation to children and young people. This group dovetails with #YES.

The IASS has an active social media presence which engages followers on local and national processes and developments. In May 2020, the IASS conducted a survey to find out parental experiences during lockdown. The findings can be viewed in this feedback report.



Section Two

Children and Young People's Commissioning and Procurement of Services

The following are examples of where children and young people and their families have been involved in the shape and design of services:

Emotional Mental Health & Wellbeing Services Review

An extensive consultation and communication plan was created to obtain the views of as many stakeholders as possible to ensure that we commissioned the right service, in the right place and at the right time for children, young people and their families.

A survey monkey website was developed for children, young people, their families and professionals to give their views on what Emotional Mental Health & Wellbeing services was needed in the City. 75 Parent/carers, 125 professionals and 322 Young people completed the survey monkey questionnaire re the Emotional Mental Health & Wellbeing service.

In addition, face to face focus groups were held with the Camhs Council, young people attending the interim provider of the Emotional Mental Health and Wellbeing service, Youth Council, teachers, schools nurses, parents/carers etc to ensure that everybody's views were heard and noted. Over 22 different focus groups were held.

Young people have been included in the tender evaluation process and have designed a question which has 3 parts that potential providers will have to respond to. Their question has been weighted and will form part of the overall mark and will therefore have influence on who will be awarded the contract. The professional evaluation panel will take their scores into account.

The commissioners have been most impressed by their insight and professionalism when it comes to considering what they wanted to know from potential providers.



HeadStart Places to Go and Work with Parents Commissioning

Since its conception Coproduction and the views and opinions of young people has been at the heart of HeadStart Wolverhampton. (A £10 million 5-year funding programme to improve the resilience and emotional wellbeing of children and young people aged 10 – 16 years).

Included in the successful bid for the funding was the need to commission Places to Go for children and young people and Work with Parents for Parent/Carers.

The Service Specification for both these elements of the HeadStart Programme was coproduced with children and young people and parent/carers.

Volunteers from the Parent Champions scheme were trained and took part in the evaluation process sitting on the professional panels and evaluating submitted bids. The Parent Champions also took part in moderation panels and the HeadStart staff involved in the evaluation panel were very impressed by their knowledge, opinions and life experiences that informed their views of the submitted bids.

One of the Parent Champions involved successfully obtained employment following their experience of being involved in a procurement process.

Dragons Den – HeadStart Commissioning process.

HeadStart blazed the trail in giving children and young people the reign to award pilot projects as part of the early days of HeadStart Wolverhampton.

The intention was to commission providers to deliver 3 strands of the HeadStart Programme - disengaged children and young people, working with parents and a place to go for children and young people. This was an exciting opportunity to improve the resilience of our children and young people and their parents and we were looking for innovative, dynamic methods of delivery which would result in a high level of engagement and good outcomes across the three strands.

The service specification and quote document was designed with children and young people and completed applications were considered by a 'Dragon's Den' panel of young people, supported by members of the council's Procurement and Joint Commissioning team.

Providers presented in front of 8 panels in total and the procurement officer, commissioner and representative from the HeadStart Partnership Board in attendance were most impressed with how knowledgeable and professional the children and young people on the panel were in appraising not only the completed applications but also the presentations by the providers.

This approach has since been replicated e.g. the Best of Bilston awards where young people again assessed funding applications in the next phase of the HeadStart programme.

Other areas where children and young people have been commissioned is a full day workshop on what they want to see for them as Children in Care in terms of stability. (they attended the Sufficiency Workshop with the young people at the workshop and the Care Leavers Forum meeting. They designed the tender for the tendering of the Supported Care Leavers where care leavers supported by participation evaluation question for the tender process in relation to their Service Specification.

Wolverhampton Council

The Emotional Mental Health & Wellbeing review has achieved a good Service Specification which will deliver a range of views of children, young people, parent/carers and all must be included.



Section Three

Strengthening the Voice of Children, Young People and their Families in the Commissioning Process

The development of the Coproduction Hub will provide a central focus point for commissioners to plan for the voice of children, young people and their families to be involved in all future commissioning plans and intentions.

Likewise, procurement colleagues will work with commissioners to plan that the coproduction work with children, young people and their families is scheduled into procurement timescales as well as into the governance reporting timelines within the City of Wolverhampton Council.

The Emotional Mental Health & Wellbeing review has demonstrated that to achieve a good Service Specification which will deliver a good service then the views of children, young people, parent/carers and all partners and stakeholders must be included.

Children and Young People's Feedback

It is evident from the views sought by young people that making new friends through engagement with our services, gaining confidence and having a voice have been the main highlights for those involved.

Commissioners remain committed to ensuring that the 'voice of the child' or 'end user' if the project is internal, is central to service development and that engagement will be embedded into the delivery approach and Strategic Planning at the earliest opportunity.

This will start at the pre-initiation and concept phase of all future strategies and will challenge Commissioners to think about how co-production will be addressed early on during scoping and outcomes setting.





Strategic Commissioning for Children and Young People



Our strategic approach and decision making for commissioned services will be based on evidence and data. We will work with partners and the community to ensure we build on strengths and networks that already exist, and our focus will be on prevention and targeted services that have the most impact.

We will need to work in innovative and radically different ways and to make the best use of opportunities offered by digital solutions and emerging technologies. Commissioners are looking at a number of ways to use commercial investments, utilising property assets and the provider market to enhance our services in order to improve outcomes for our children and young people.

We are tackling these challenges from a strong base. We manage our finances responsibly; our staff are engaged, committed and passionate about delivering the best possible outcomes for our communities. We work with partners who share our ambition. We recognise that within our communities there are skills, resources, relationships and networks that we can build on so that we make the most of our strengths and collective assets to make Wolverhampton the best it can be, now and for future generations.



T H E M E S

1

Collaborative Leadership

Strengthen relationships with Heads of Service and service managers, recognising they are subject experts and better understand how to meet the needs of children, young people and families – develop long term partnerships built on trust and respect rather than solely process, briefing notes and data.

Become a critical friend. As Strategic Commissioners we can approach services with fresh eyes away from the daily tasks and operational working. We will be outward facing, meet with providers and children and young people who access our services. Commissioning is not a desk based exercise.

2

Strong and effective participation and co production

We will involve services, procurement, finance, and legal as shared participants in the commissioning cycle. The Child's Voice will be a strong strand of the Commissioning Cycle.

Voice 4 Parents are a Strategic Partner and will be engaged with as such and as early as possible in any commissioning plans.

3

Creating a Vision for local provision

We will not just commission contracts and services, but have longer term plans. We will be proactive commissioners with a shared vision for 3 to 5 years time. We will identify and plan for emerging need.

4

Implementing robust joint commissioning systems and processes

Play a key role as Children and Young People's Commissioning at the Joint Commissioning Board. Work with all partners and commissioners to formalise joint commissioning arrangements and strategic plans.

5

Delivering improved value and outcomes

Systematically gather and collate performance, feedback and data – both quantitative and qualitative about services, pathways and approaches and reviewing any that are being developed at this time, for example virtual and digital innovations, to help inform decisions about whether they are effective and worth carrying on with.

6

Engaging the market and ensuring the best delivery method

Review the market – are there sufficient suppliers to meet predicted need. Develop useful communication tools for engaging with providers such as provider forums, guidance documents, market position statements and proactively shape the market in readiness for re-designing services.

7

Understanding performance of all services

Have a comprehensive performance knowledge with a Commissioning Performance Dashboard. Understand which model of delivery works best, and identify where there are gaps in provision or low performance. Value for money alongside the best outcomes, not either or.

Rebalancing Our Commissioning Model

It is our strategic aim to rebalance our commissioning model away from reactive placements to preventative services. This will take time, and the data and processes we detail in this document will need to be in place to enable us to do this.



SERVICE REVIEW WORKSHOPS

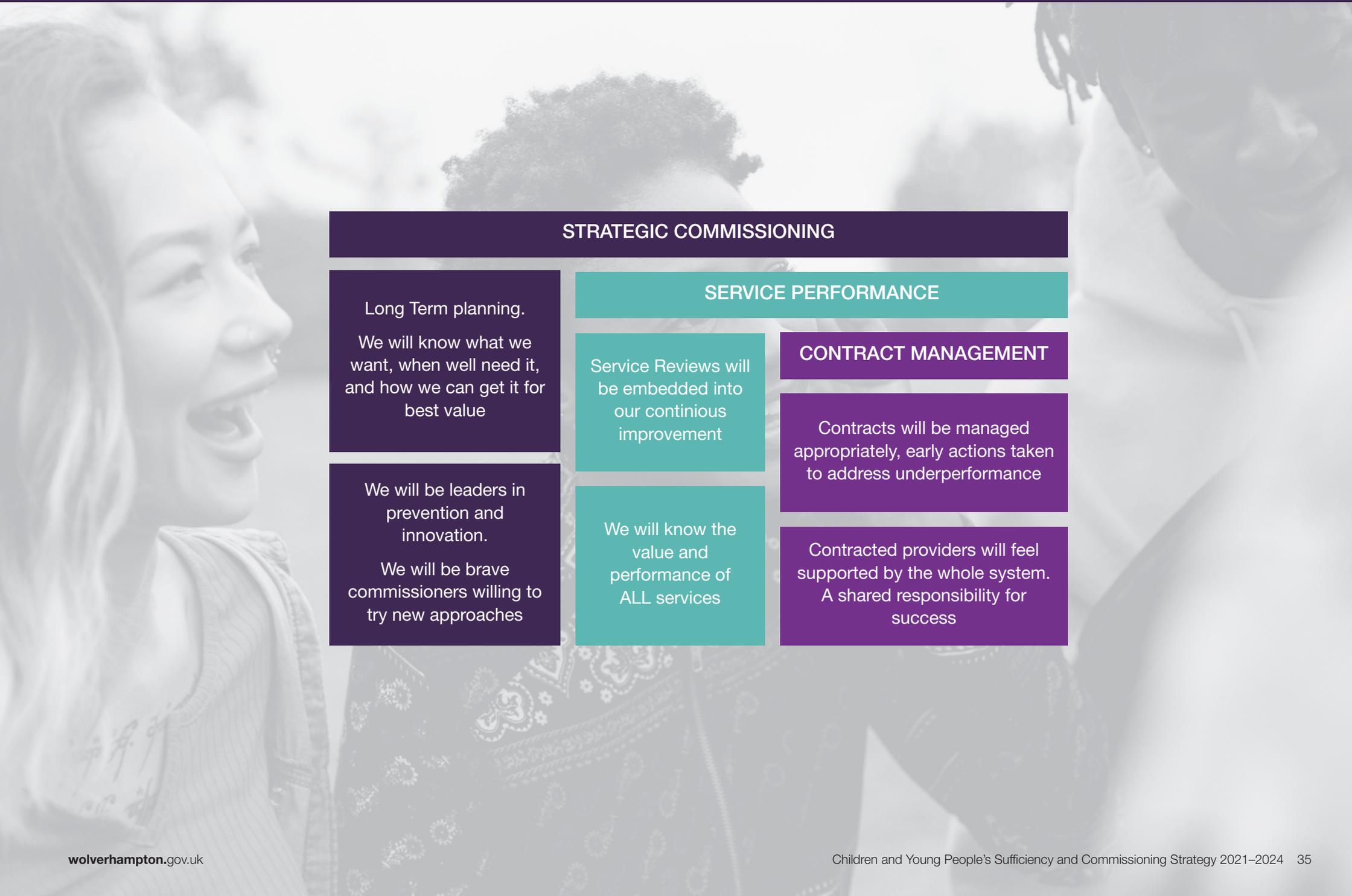
In order to make better Strategic Commissioning decisions, we have committed to having a full service review approach. These workshops will be scheduled in line with our risk based approach elsewhere. (see Risk Based Contract Management)

Workshops will move away from isolated contract and procurement decision making, where the impact on other contracts and providers is not fully understood. We will instead establish what we need and when before procurement or contract activities commence.

Workshops will;

- Present the Children and Young People's experience
- Provider(s) feedback
- All contract(s) and internal service performance
- Total budgets at service level (amalgamated from internal and contract funding)
- Market Information
- Service Teams and Frontline staff information
- Head of Service overviews and strategic plans
- Commissioning Analysis

They will establish a clear and jointly owned vision for a service over a 2 to 5 year period.



STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING

Long Term planning.
We will know what we want, when we need it, and how we can get it for best value

We will be leaders in prevention and innovation.
We will be brave commissioners willing to try new approaches

SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Service Reviews will be embedded into our continuous improvement

We will know the value and performance of ALL services

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

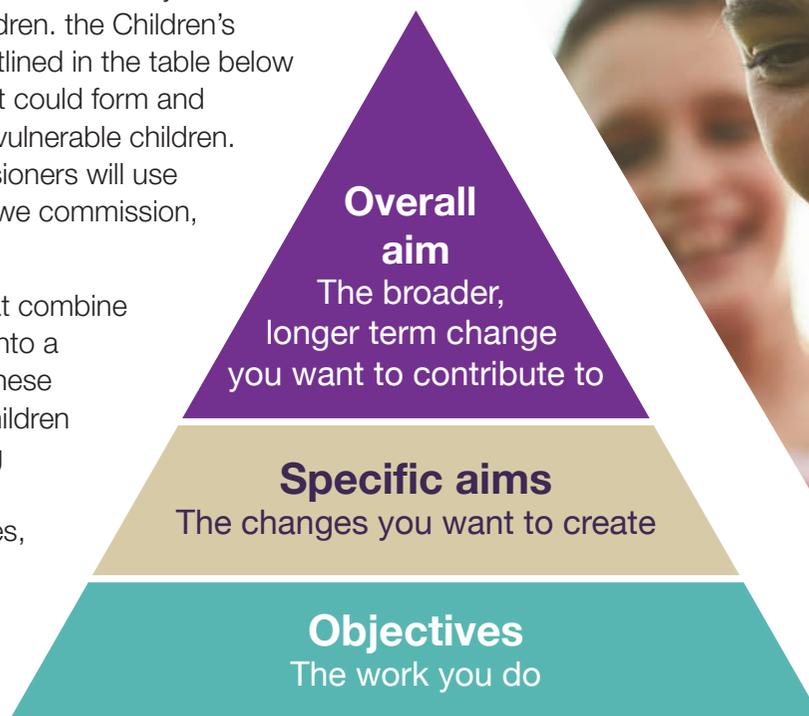
Contracts will be managed appropriately, early actions taken to address underperformance

Contracted providers will feel supported by the whole system. A shared responsibility for success

32 AREAS OF VULNERABILITY – CHILDREN’S COMMISSIONER

Given the breadth of the concept of vulnerability, there is currently no straightforward way to clearly define vulnerable children. The Children’s Commissioner’s Office have taken the approach outlined in the table below to identify specific groups of vulnerable children that could form and inform an initial working, measurable framework of vulnerable children. City of Wolverhampton Council Children’s Commissioners will use these groups to underpin the subsequent services we commission, ensuring they fit within a service framework.

Frameworks of vulnerability are ways of thinking that combine different elements or groups of vulnerable children into a single structure across broad groups of concern. These frameworks are used for working with vulnerable children and young people across different sectors including children’s services, social care, health and criminal justice. We will map the vulnerabilities to our services, and ensure that we are commissioning to meet the needs for as many vulnerable groups as possible, within a deliverable contract and available funding.



The 32 areas of vulnerability are:

- 1 Looked after children
- 2 Care Leavers
- 3 Children in Need
- 4 Adopted Children
- 5 Children who are subject to child protection plans
- 6 Children in a secure detention estate
- 7 Unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- 8 Children who are subject to a special guardianship order
- 9 Children who have SEND
- 10 Children who have mental health difficulties
- 11 Children who have physical health issues
- 12 Children who are homeless or in insecure accommodation
- 13 Children in poverty
- 14 Children in low income families
- 15 Children in 'troubled' families
- 16 Young carers
- 17 Children whose parents use substances problematically
- 18 Teenage parents
- 19 Children in non-intact families
- 20 Pre-Section 17
- 21 Undocumented children/children without legal identity
- 22 Children whose parents may have limited parenting capacity
- 23 Neet/Pre-Neet children
- 24 Excluded Children and those at the risk of exclusion
- 25 Children involved in the criminal justice system
- 26 Young People involved in gangs
- 27 Experience of childhood traumas
- 28 Victims of modern slavery or trafficking
- 29 Missing children
- 30 Absent children
- 31 Children from minority ethnic backgrounds
- 32 Children who are in a gender minority or who are lesbian, gay or bisexual



Risk Based Contract Management

CoWC recognises the value of a mixed market of internal and external services.

With proper oversight and contract management mechanisms in place this approach offers the council flexibility, supports quality, manages the market and mitigates risks of market failure or monopolies.

Through a robust commissioning and competitive procurement process, CoWC will only select and work with providers that can deliver services that meet the needs of our children and within an agreed sustainable financial envelope.

By securing good quality services from providers who want to work in partnership with CoWC the council will make the contract management process less onerous on both the council and services.

Where CoWC chooses to deliver services 'in-house' it will use contract management mechanisms with internal services to ensure their performance is aligned to the expectations and standards of the external market and regulatory bodies.

CoWC will seek to manage both internal and external services through the lenses of:

1. Risk

2. Relationships

Service Risks

The safety of our children and young people is of paramount importance to CoWC but the approach will endeavour to be proportionate, pragmatic and provide opportunities for learning and continuous improvement on both the part of the service/provider and the Council.

The following areas of risk will be considered:

- Safety of our children and young people
- Compliance/Regulation – contract, Ofsted etc.
- Service/Market failure
- Financial

The Council will have clear measures in place to flag all risks so that immediate action can be taken to address these with the service/provider.

Relationships

Although managing risks around service provision is critical to the safety and quality of life for our children and young people, the relationship between the council and the service/provider is essential to achieving this.

CoWC will work in partnership with internal services and external providers where there is a contractual relationship between them and the Council.

CoWC will facilitate quarterly forums with our services/providers to maintain partnerships, understand the challenges within the sector, and ensure quality of provision by continuously developing services that meet the needs of our children and young people.

The Council will value and respect the input of providers, seeing them as professionals who are delivering the service on behalf of CoWC. As such will seek their input and expertise as part of a multi-disciplinary approach.

Assumptions

CoWC will view internal and external providers as partners with shared outcomes and objectives. To that end a non-adversarial approach will be used and will avoid a blame culture approach.

The assumption will be that the service or provider is the delivery expert and knows how best to provide services with support from the Council and other stakeholders and partners. This will be on the basis the service/provider is delivering these to a well-designed

model and service specification that has been signed-off by all key stakeholders and partners prior to a competitive process.

However, CWC recognise the shared responsibility that Commissioning, Operational Leads and the provider have in their respective roles to ensure the success of any contract or service by working in a collaborative way to develop solutions rather than look to blame when there are issues.

The Approach and the Balanced Scorecard

Where CoWC has a contract or an SLA for a service the approach will be light-touch and consist of quarterly monitoring around a small number of targeted KPI's as well as an annual review.

CoWC will use the principles of a Balanced Scorecard approach to measure the performance of internal and external services/providers over four quadrants/legs:

- 1. Our children and young people**
- 2. Staff/Operational**
- 3. Compliance/Regulation**
- 4. Financial**

Wherever possible CWC will look to support the provider to resolve issues and work towards service improvement. Where the Council identifies significant issues a more robust approach will be applied. If necessary contractual mechanisms to end the council's relationship with a failing provider will be used.



Governance for Sufficiency and Commissioning

Children and Young People's Joint Commissioning Board

The CYP&F's Joint Commissioning Board exists to:

- Support the delivery of Transforming Children's Services & CCG commissioning priorities
- Support the delivery of the SEND Partnership Board's commissioning priorities
- Approve Joint Commissioning arrangements and shared funding from proposals submitted by relevant services and boards.
- Promote and explore opportunities for joint commissioning arrangements and work towards closer partnership arrangements
- Remove barriers and address challenges that arise across different commissioned services
- Understand each others' current and emerging pressures and seek to identify collective and co-ordinated solutions
- Understand and share Children, Young People and Parent/Carer experiences of services, and ensure their involvement in Joint Commissioning arrangements at the earliest possible stage.
- Practically align partners' commissioning cycles
- Provide a regular forum for commissioners to seek support and advice from peers and partners
- Ensure transparency between services and partners
- Development robust relations between commissioners.



Governance in commissioning

Much of our day to day work of planning, developing, overseeing the delivering and monitoring services is in partnership with operational, procurement and finance colleagues and we aim to work closely with them to ensure that we are getting what we are paying for and paying for what we need throughout the whole of the contract's duration. That's only part of the story because in addition, we must ensure that public money is spent in accordance with the principles of;

- accountability
- transparency
- probity
- focus on sustainable success

Accountability

The work of commissioners is open to scrutiny through formal local government reporting routes to local government committees such as Cabinet, Cabinet (Resources) Panel, Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel. Before decisions go through the formal decision-making process, they are also considered by appropriate internal management groups such as Strategic Executive Board and Children's Leadership Team. In addition to this there are partnership boards that bring together other stakeholders from our communities, health and education such as Health and Wellbeing Together Board, Schools Forum, SEND Partnership Board and Corporate Parenting Board. Larger value contracts may also report to a service specific board or panel for example Emotional Wellbeing Panel, Headstart Board.

Transparency

Communities must be sure that any services that are commissioned meet their needs so is important to ensure that their voice is heard. Wolverhampton actively seeks the views of community members who are directly affected by its actions, both users and non-users, through the full range of consultation approaches; surveys, face to face meetings in groups and one to ones, work with special interest groups. We also have more formal consultation routes in the Children in Care Council and Voice 4Parents.

In most cases meetings council meetings are held in public and, where people have concerns about a service, there is an open complaints procedure which is investigated outside the relevant department.



Probity

All decisions on how contracts are awarded are made in accordance with national procurement legislation and our local financial standing orders. What rules are applied depend on the value of the contract. How contracts are approved depends on the overall value. For smaller value contracts budget manager authorise the spending for others written quotes will need to be obtained, for larger values it will go out for full tender with contracts of the highest value requiring prior consideration by Cabinet (Resources) Panel;

- Tender opportunity advertised
- Tenders submitted
- Tenders evaluated
- Contract awarded
- Award reported to Cabinet (Resources) Panel and published

Focus on sustainable success

Over the term of the contract and in planning for exit or succession, we draw on data from key performance indicators contained in the specification. Although these can show the operational success of any contract, we also need to be mindful that over the three to five years a contract is in place, external influences are at play. Examples of these are new legislation, innovation in practice, technological developments, changes in strategic direction, changing market trends or changing circumstances such as COVID-19. In responding to these we need to ensure that the contract continues to be relevant in terms of:

- general satisfaction with the service
- adaptability to changing needs
- adaptability to emerging trends

To do this we also work with information on general trends, relationships with providers and service users, benchmarking with other local authorities, continuing financial viability of providers, reviews of quality assurance and statutory registration requirements and regular customer reviews.

You can get this information in large print, braille,
audio or in another language by calling 01902 551155

wolverhampton.gov.uk 01902 551155

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