

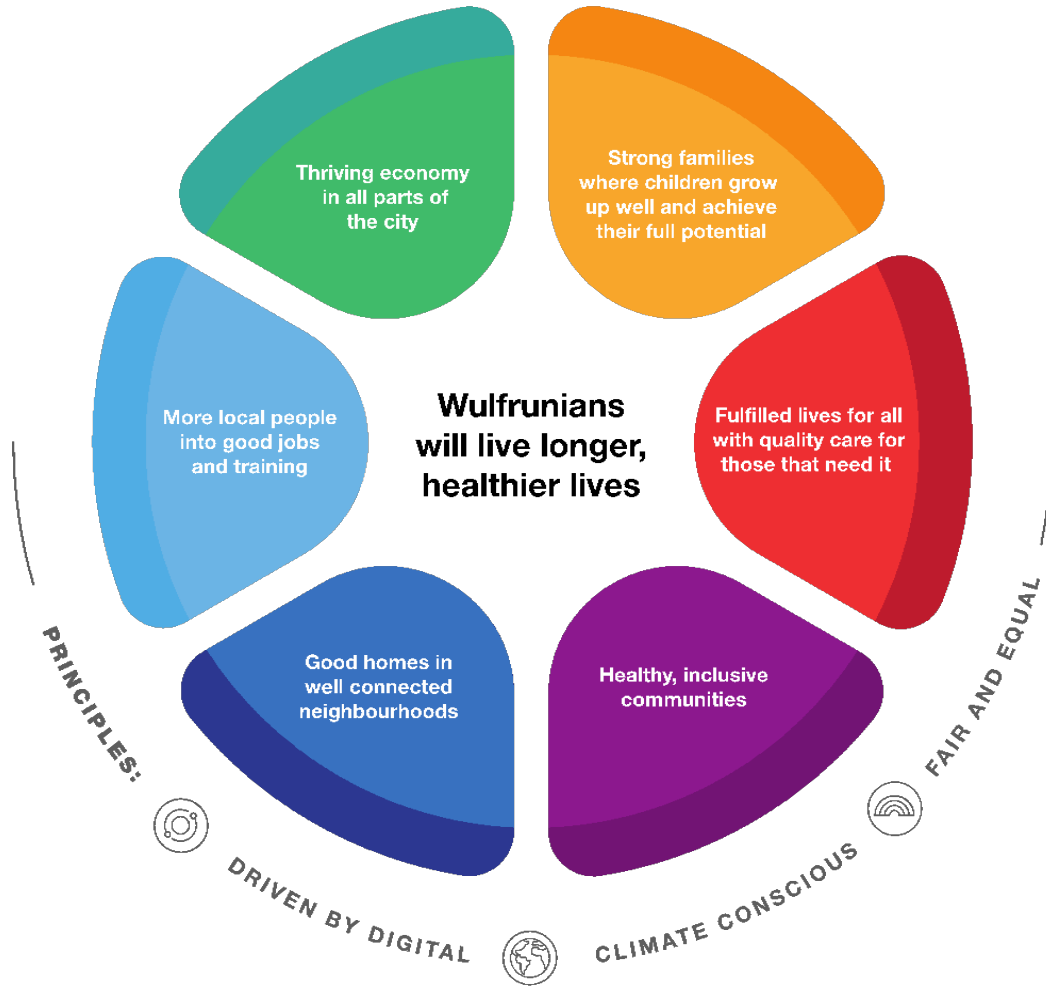
Wolverhampton Children and Young People's Self-Evaluation 2023-24

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Care

Our City, Our Plan

Strategic Council Priorities



Children & Families Plan



The City Of Wolverhampton

The City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to having strong families where children grow up well and achieve their potential this is a central component of the Our City Our Plan. There are 264,407 people who live in the City, 63,051 of these are children under the age of 18.

The City is home to people from all over the world – over one third of the population is from Minority Ethnic backgrounds 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 incrementally decreased across all areas of Children's Social Care over the last 8 years as a result of our Children's Service Transformation work. In order to achieve this, the Children's Service has embedded its early Intervention offer, and there has been a focus on relational practice making a difference through restorative practice. Additionally, robust management oversight ensures the right children receive the right level of intervention.

Children receiving support as at end of March 2023 (difference from 21/22 year end)

- 501 (-21) Children and young people in care
- 230 (-23) Children who have a Child Protection Plan
- 718 (-24) Children who have a Child in Need Plan
- 163 (-80) Children in Assessment
- 1380 (+341) Children receiving Early Help



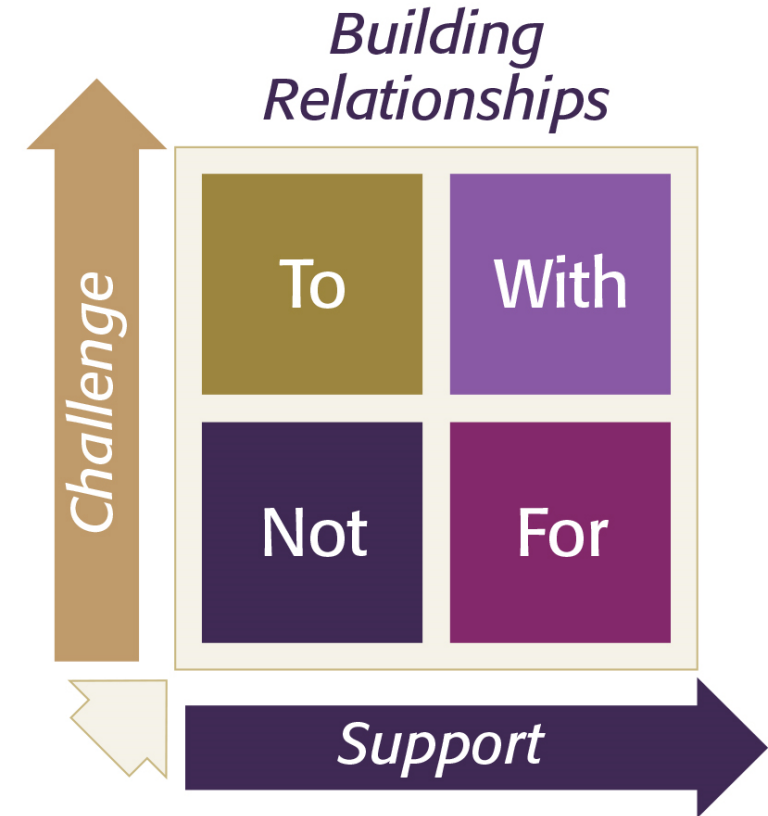
Our Values for Children's Services

- 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

Our restorative approach is firmly embedded in all our practice. All children's services' practitioners are trained in the approach, and it is being rolled out and embedded across the council and extended to our partners.

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.



There are good examples of employees using the approach to help family members understand how their actions impact on their loved ones. This has been effective in increasing families' motivation to change.

Our restorative approach to practice will continue to underpin all we do to ensure we deliver consistently high quality effective innovative services to build family strength and resilience and improve opportunity for our children and young people in the city

Where do we demonstrate excellence?



MASH 24 ensures consistency of practice at all times **and families experience the same support regardless of the time**



Work with extra familial harm through the exploitation hub and Power 2 service with young people up to the age of 25, and Creating Safety Project is unique
Ensuring our most vulnerable young people have access to specialist co-ordinated support



Audit and Quality Assurance Framework is strong
demonstrated through the progress in our Aiming for Excellence Plan and evidenced in practice



Accommodation for care leavers including House Project (CYP Now Awards Winner) **offering innovative options for care leavers to have the best transition to adulthood**



Young People's Engagement **ensuring the child's voice is at the centre of everything we do**



Placement Stability better than statistical and national averages
meaning more children living stable lives

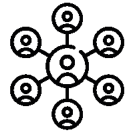


Right service, right level, right time principle which ensures our demand management is good with confident application of thresholds **demonstrated through more children remaining with their families**



Restorative Practice **embedding our culture of doing with families and not to or for families**

How is leadership & management contributing to excellence?



**Stable,
cohesive
leadership
group**



**Visible and
accessible to
the workforce**



**Drive
innovative
practice**



**Understand
practice at
all levels
which informs
priorities and
practice
development**



**Strong oversight
of performance
management
information**



**Agents for
change
through the
transformation
programme**



Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services, report published: 18 May 2022



Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Good
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Good

Ofsted conducted a short inspection between 21 March and 1 April 2022.

- The outcome offers external reassurance that the needs of children and young people in the city are being met with overall effectiveness graded as Good
- The impact of leaders on social work practice improved from Good to Outstanding
- The experience of children in need and protection improved from Requires Improvement to Good
- The experience of children in care and care leavers remained Good with some outstanding practice in supporting care leavers

Appropriate action has been undertaken and the 5 areas for improvement have been completed

Quality Assurance

Practice weeks take place three times a year with senior and operational managers undertaking "practice conversations" with practitioners, observing practice, obtaining feedback from parents, children /and young people, and carrying out dip samples of records. Workers receive immediate feedback and learning opportunities, and senior managers understand how interventions are experienced by children and families first-hand. It aligns with our restorative practice approach and supports a culture of continual learning, improvement, curiosity, and reflection. Moderation also takes place to check consistency.

As part of our Quality Assurance framework, we triangulate wider service information with our practice week audit activity and incorporate feedback from compliments and complaints, data, and young people and families ,as well as linking learning from the safeguarding service, local dip audits and DHRs / CSPRs. This helps us to identify themes and trends and to indicate where quality assurance activity should focus next.

The Aiming for Excellence Plan, (our practice improvement plan), focusses on six key areas where practice is inconsistent, and includes performance measures and information to inform our quality assurance activity. Our practice newsletter and a remedial action tracker is helping to close the feedback loop. The plan is overseen by colleagues across the service at a range of leadership tiers and is integral to our QA process. In January 2023, a full review of the areas on the Excellence Plan identified significant progress in some areas and resulted in a refresh of the plan with new areas identified or a refocus of the existing area, all informed by QA activity and data. The 2023-2024 Aiming for Excellence Plan was relaunched in February 2023.

Aiming for Excellence Plan 2023-2024 - CYP



Findings from QA / practice weeks and a review of the Excellence Plan

Some of our key areas of strength as identified through audit in practice weeks during 2022-2023

- Practitioners know the children and families they work with well.
- Direct work through the establishment of relationships is linked to sustained changes.
- Risk is identified, children are safe, and services are making a positive difference
- Evidence of strengths-based approaches and collaborative working
- Social workers feel they are receiving good, reflective supervision and direction

Evidence of improved practice – identified by the Aiming for Excellence Plan 2022-2023:

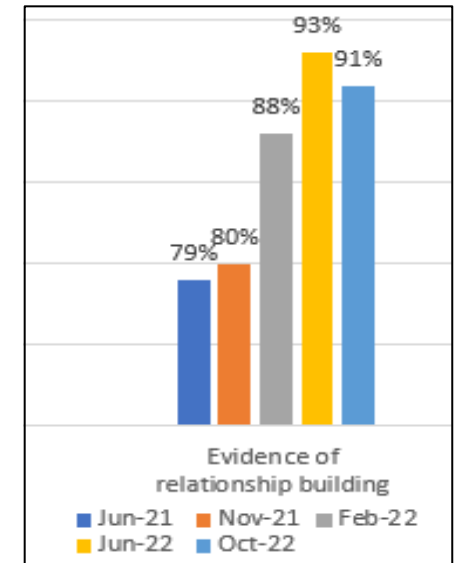
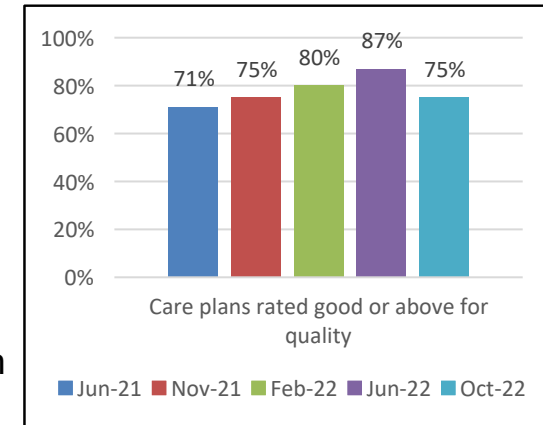
- Meaningful plans that evidence progress is now considered a consistent area of strength, as a result of actions such as refresher workshops on good care planning
- Relationship building and strengths-based practice are now areas of strength, driven by activity led by our Senior Restorative Practice lead, however use of family meetings remain an area for improvement and will be part of actions to unlock the potential of family networks
- Purposeful and succinct recordings and reflection on practice have progressed well with all actions completed. The introduction of writing “to” the child and sessions on good recording has supported this. However, timeliness of recording is a recurrent theme when triangulating data and audit activity. This is largely due to staffing challenges not practice concerns so will be overseen by CYP performance meetings

Areas for further development – identified by the Aiming for Excellence Plan 2022-2023:

- Although direct work and evidence of the voice of the child is consistently strong, the use of life journey work remains an area for further improvement, as well as ensuring assessment tools are integral to analysis, chronologies in particular

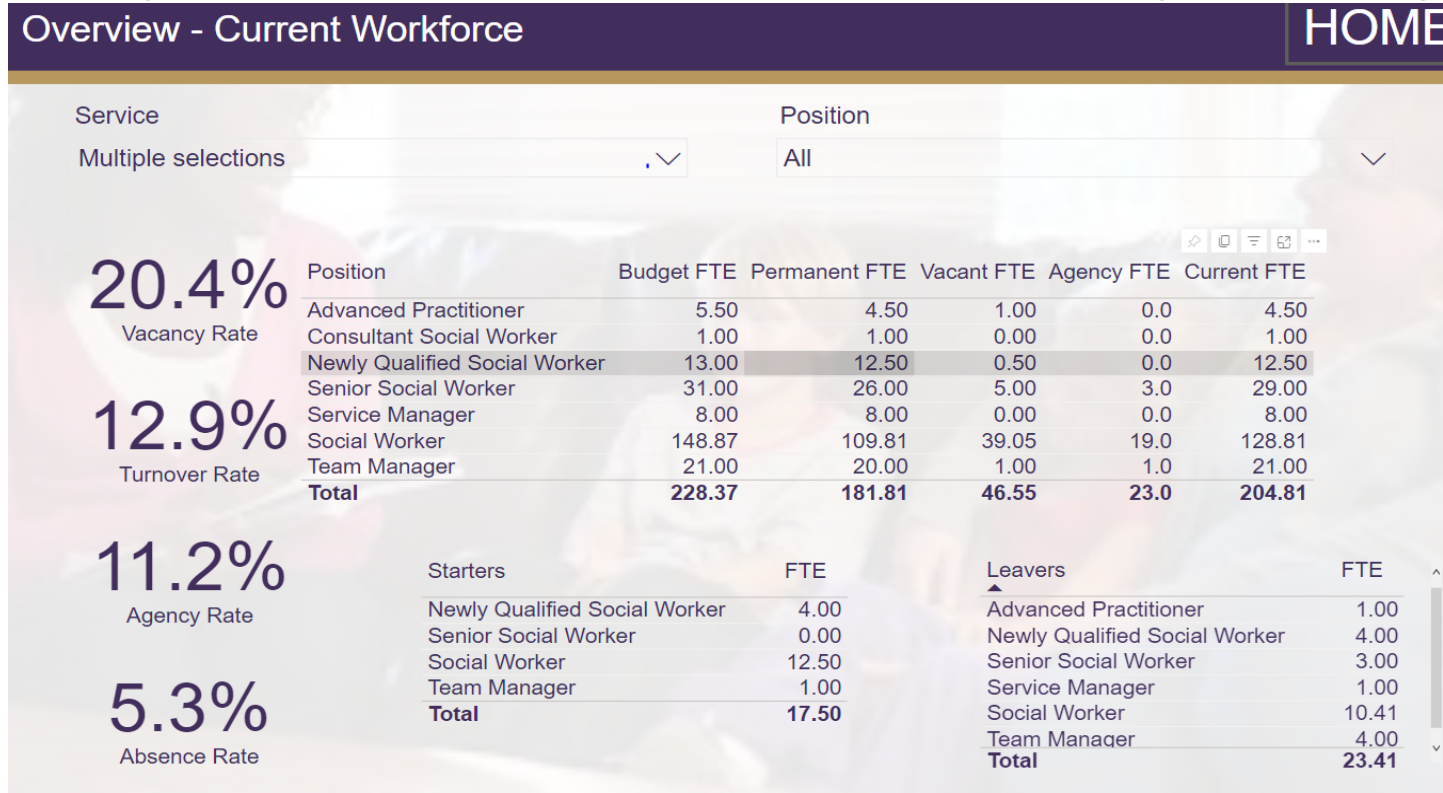
New Key Actions include:

- Working groups to explore barriers/issues in using assessment tools / chronologies and identify solutions
- Review policy around timeframe for family meetings to remove this as a possible barrier
- Review approach to life journey work and how we work with children to understand and be proud of their uniqueness



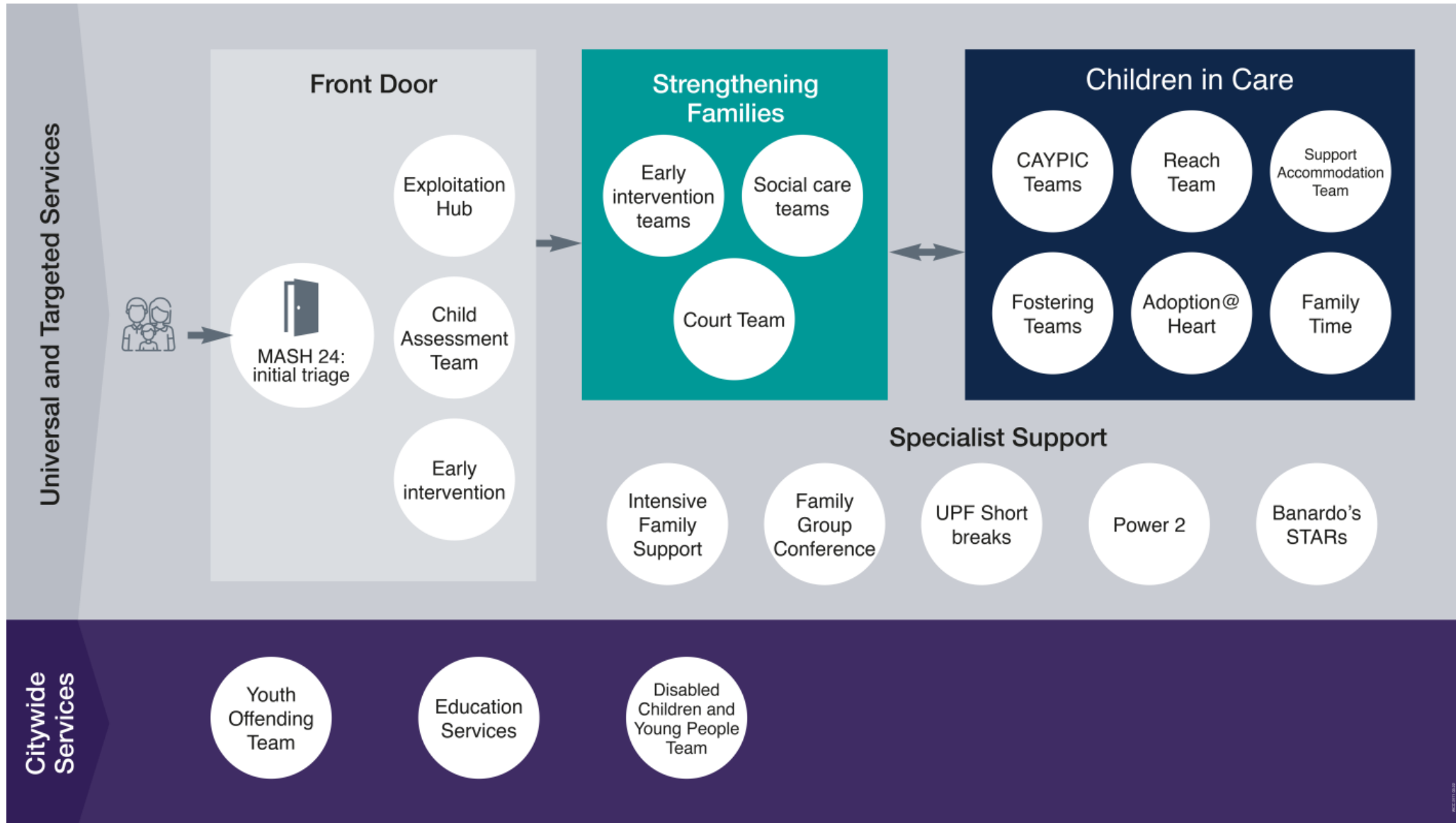
Workforce

Wolverhampton’s children’s social work vacancy rate now stands at 20.4% which is an increase from the October 2022 figure of 17.2% and is slightly above the 2022 national vacancy rate of 20%, but just below the regional average of 21%. This remains a significant improvement compared to March 2019 when 28% of children’s social work posts locally were unfilled. A number of vacancies in Children’s Services are currently secondments caused by parental leave and additional roles or projects such as the Social Workers in School (SWIS) project. Secondments are opportunities for progression and are therefore an important element of the local retention strategy. Turnover remains lower than national and regional averages and is currently 12.9% (national rate was 17.1% in 2022; 16.4% regionally). The number of true remaining vacancies currently is 20 (excluding the Peripatetic Team). We continue to take a strong approach to recruitment and retention and some additional actions that have taken place in recent months includes rebranding to promote CWC as an employer of choice, agreement to reimburse SWE fees and blue light card, increased number of social work apprenticeships from 2023 and creation of a new progression opportunity (Child Protection Lead Practitioner) to support the Strengthening Families service, where most workforce challenges and vacancies are being experienced. Attendance at a recruitment fair has also resulted in a high number of applications for the current NQSW campaign and we are also putting in place sponsorship to support a number of our final year international students to apply for our ASYE programme as a trial. We have also been successful in converting a number of agency social workers into permanent employees.



*Data as at 30/03/2023

City of Wolverhampton Children's Service Operating Model



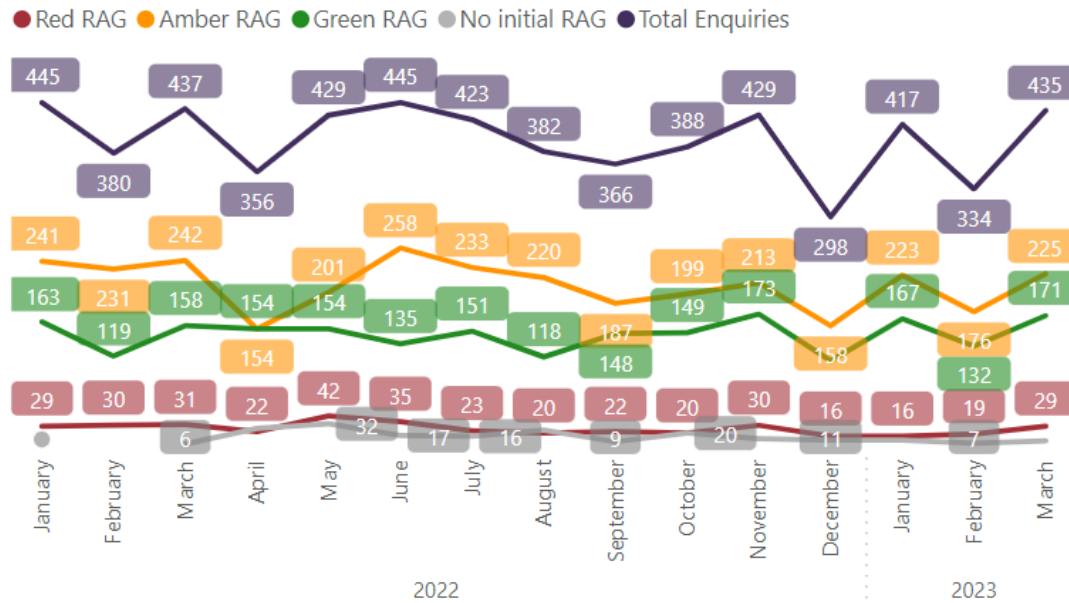
Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub: MASH24

The MASH24 was launched in June 2021 offering consistency of practice and response over 24 hours negating the need for an Emergency Duty team. MASH24 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.

The Children's MASH service ensures that all referrals are triaged by 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.

MASH have taken steps to become very visible within other agencies to help and discuss the contact process. Visits have been made to health services, including the 0-19 service, midwives, and mental health services. DSL events take 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. MASH have been working closely with the Early Intervention teams 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. Education champions support this practice.

MASH Enquiries



Data for the 2022-23 year shows the number of MASH enquiries ranging from 298 to 445 received within a month. The average number of MASH enquiries received per month for the year is 387.

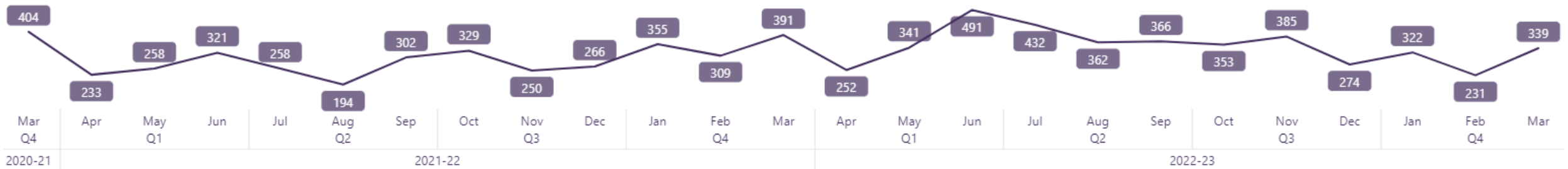
435 enquiries were received in March 23, remaining consistent with the number of enquiries received in March 22.

Referrals

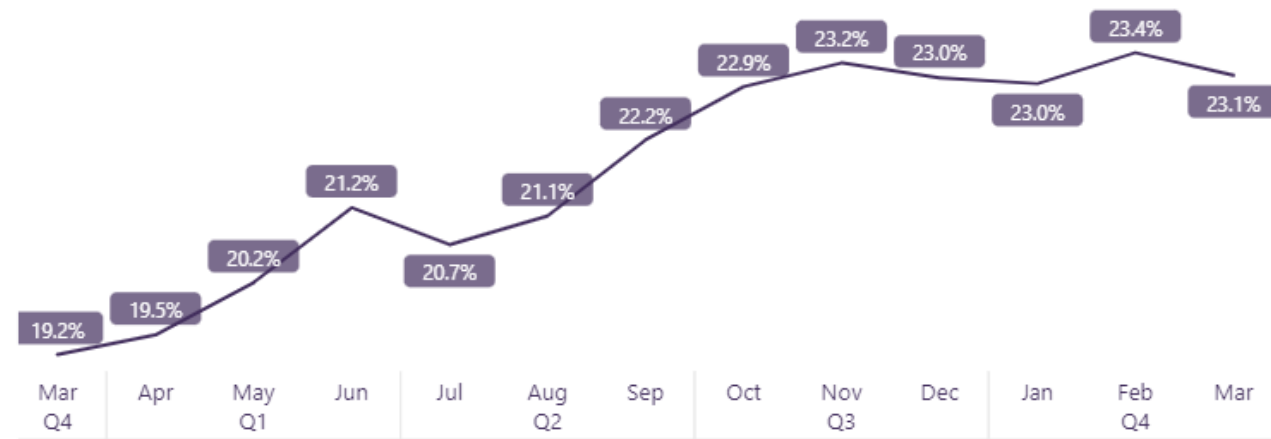
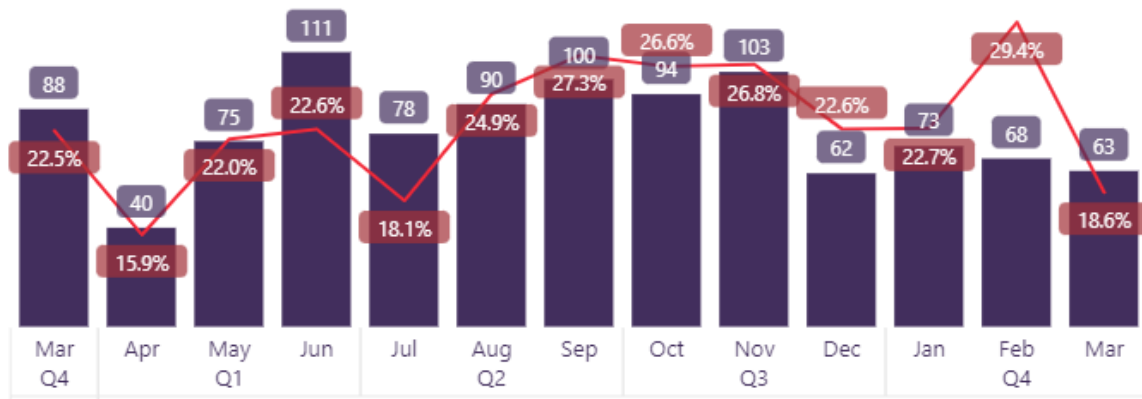
The referral rate per 10,000 for the last 12 months at the end of March 2023 was 657.9 which is above the latest published figure for our statistical neighbours (608.27), West Midlands (502.70), and England (537.70). The peak in referrals this year occurred in June 2022 with 491 referrals in the month, this is the most referrals received in a month over the last 2 years. We have since seen a reduction in the number of referrals remaining consistent with the number of referrals received in the same period last year. At the end of March 23, the percentage of repeat referrals (rolling 12 month) was 23.1%, a notable increase from the percentage reported for the 21/22 year (19.2%). Statistical neighbours had a re-referral rate of 20.16% and the West Midlands rate is 19.10%.

Action taken: 20% of repeat referrals (July-Sept 2022) were dip sampled. This amounted to 60 dips in total. In terms of findings, across all dips there were no issues found of premature close or poor quality/incomplete work that led to a repeat referral. All families had only one additional cycle of repeat help. There has also been a review of the data sets used as KPI's for repeat referral, this was updated and implemented following February's 2023 CYP performance meeting and had an immediate impact on reduction of % of repeat referral for the month of March. A pilot has also been implemented with revised processes in MASH and strengthening of consent discussions.

Referrals to social care within the month



Repeat Referrals Repeat Referral %



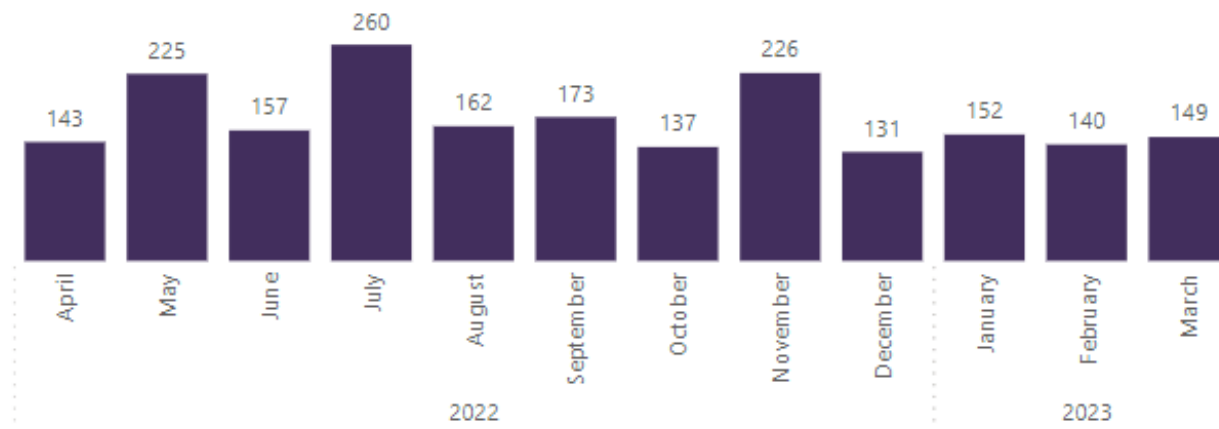
Supporting families through Early Intervention

Early Intervention (EI) services are offered through eight locality-based family hubs. At the end of March 2023, 1380 children were being supported by Strengthening Families workers, an increase of 341 when compared to 21/22 year end. Early Intervention is currently working with 180 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 'Supporting Families' factors that are impacting.

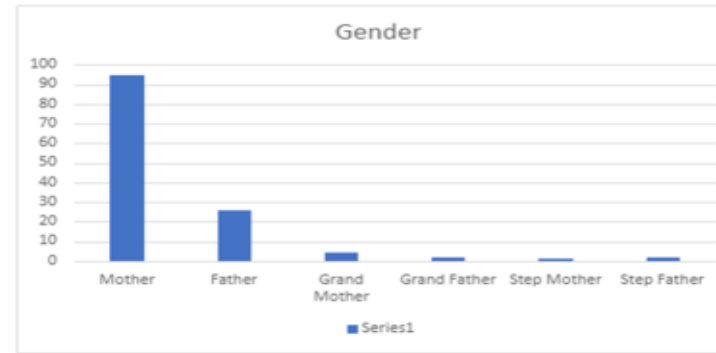
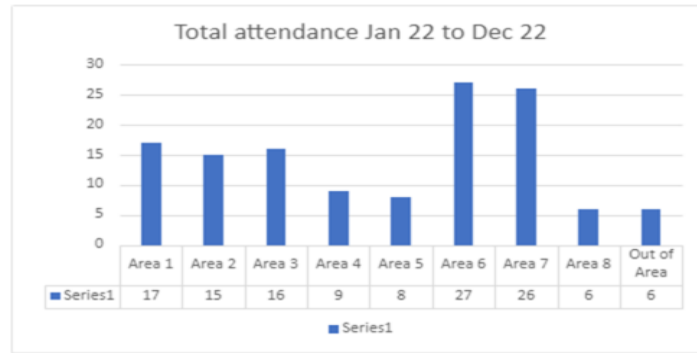
Both audit activity and performance data indicate that Strengthening Families workers make a difference. At the end of an intervention and period of working with us most families are closed because sustained progress has been achieved. 4.8% of Early Help closures in the 2022-23 year resulted in a step up to social work locality teams, a reduction in comparison to the 6.5% seen during 2021/22. This demonstrates we are working with families at the right level and early interventions are making a difference to outcomes.

2022/23 has seen an average of 171 referrals to Early Intervention per month, a reduction from the average of 190 seen during 2021/22.

Number of children with completed referrals with outcome 'EI' by month



Early Intervention achievements, building family strength and resilience



- The Journey of Change data chart shows the breakdown of face-to-face attendance and family members across the city.

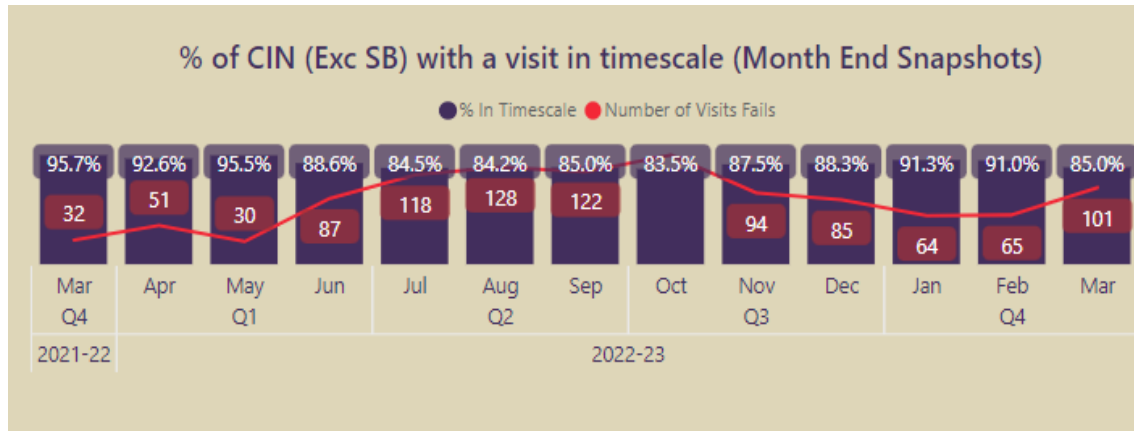
- The Journey of Change Parenting Programme has been delivered across the city both virtually through our Universal online modules and Targeted face to face offer reaching over 622 families. Data indicates that we are starting to see more extended family members accessing the programme from the previous year.
- To date, we have trained over 20 practitioners in educational establishments to allow them to offer Journey of Change to their parents. In addition, we also now have 4 Family Learning Workers that will help to further embed our offer.
- Our recently launched Parenting Website has seen over 400 families access information and support.
- Our wider parenting offer over the last year has seen the introduction of Reducing Parental Conflict. 47 Professionals have been trained in Level 1 and 2 Reducing Parental Conflict awareness and workshops on the RPC Toolkit. In addition, there have been 5 designated SPOCS who have achieved level 3.
- A Reducing Parental Conflict eLearning module has now been designed and is live for any professional to access on the learning Hub . Further Partnership Training is planned for the year ahead.

Family Hubs Delivery

- As one of 75 areas in England benefiting from the Government's investment in the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme, Wolverhampton is establishing eight Family Hubs across the city, at the locations of the existing Strengthening Families Hubs, as places of integration for local partners who can develop a shared approach to working with families and their children aged 0–19 years (up to 25 for SEND) – where families can access a range of connected services in the community.
- Low Hill and Dove were launched as Family Hubs site on 9th May 2023 and there are clear opening milestones for a further 5 hubs.
- Core services will be offered from the Hubs that incorporate a first 1001 days pathway- to improve coordination of interdisciplinary services to promote timely access to support for the most vulnerable families. Via Partnership Agreements the following services will be provided; Antenatal/Postnatal Care & Support, New Birth Registrations, Infant Feeding, Child Development Clinics & Support, Perinatal Mental Health Support, Stay & Play Sessions, Parenting Programmes. Additionally, Housing Services, Benefits & Welfare Rights Advice, Positive Activities, Targeted and Specialist Support, Domestic Abuse Support, Adult Education, Financial Wellbeing Services, Young Carer Support and Child Protection Case Conferences will be part of an enhanced offer.
- Revised opening hours and the development of outreach sites and a virtual offer will increase access and availability outside of traditional delivery patterns and bring the voluntary sector in as equal partners.
- Locality Partnership Boards have been established consisting of senior representatives from all local partners – both statutory and the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and will identify priorities for the communities underpinned by locality JSNA and intelligence, develop the local offer and evaluate the impact of early help services on outcomes for children and young people.
- Integrated Leadership Teams (ILT) are being developed consisting of operational managers from all key local partner agencies working with families and will operate each of the hubs with the aim of streamlining and developing joint plans and evidence-based practice in response to their understanding of local need.
- Forums for each family hub are in development where parents and carers, young people and other community members will provide feedback and design and develop services to help improve their lives and their community. Parents and carers will be an integral part of each ILT.
- An Organisational Development Lead will work across the partnership to coordinate delivery of a multi-agency, graduated training offer that encompasses an I Thrive approach from signposting through to delivery of research-based programmes and ensures there is a consistent relational approach embedded across all sectors working with children and families.

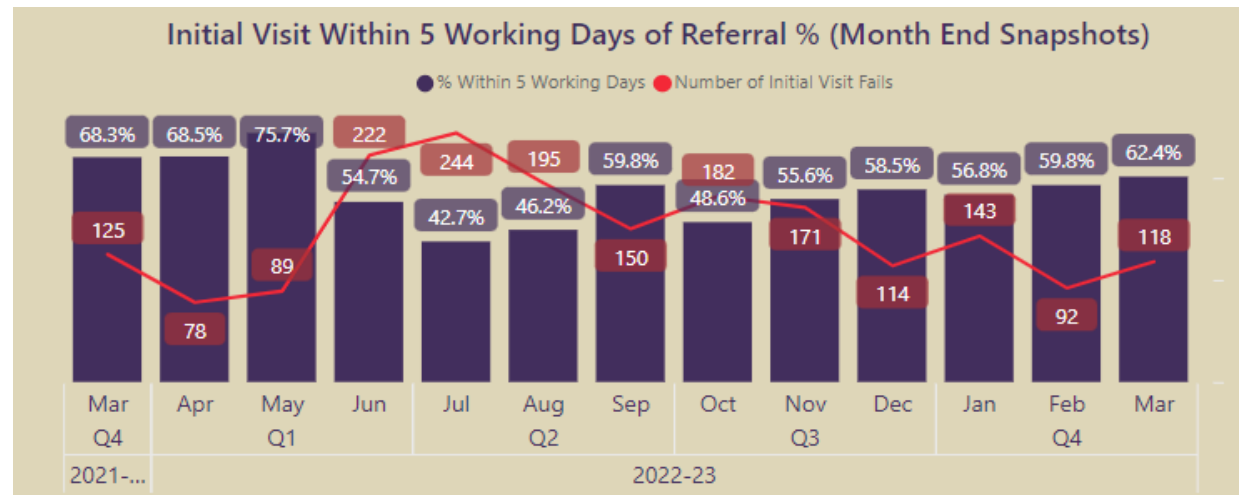
Working with our Children in Need

As at the end of March 2023, there were 718 children open as CiN with 85% of children having a visit within the expected timescale, this is a reduction of 10.7% when compared to the percentage seen at the end of March 2022. In Wolverhampton visits are set to take place at a minimum of once a month with some children seen more frequently as per their CiN plan. The service has responded well and ensured that there is a concerted effort to get visits recorded for all children in a timelier way. We are satisfied that children and families are being seen appropriately.



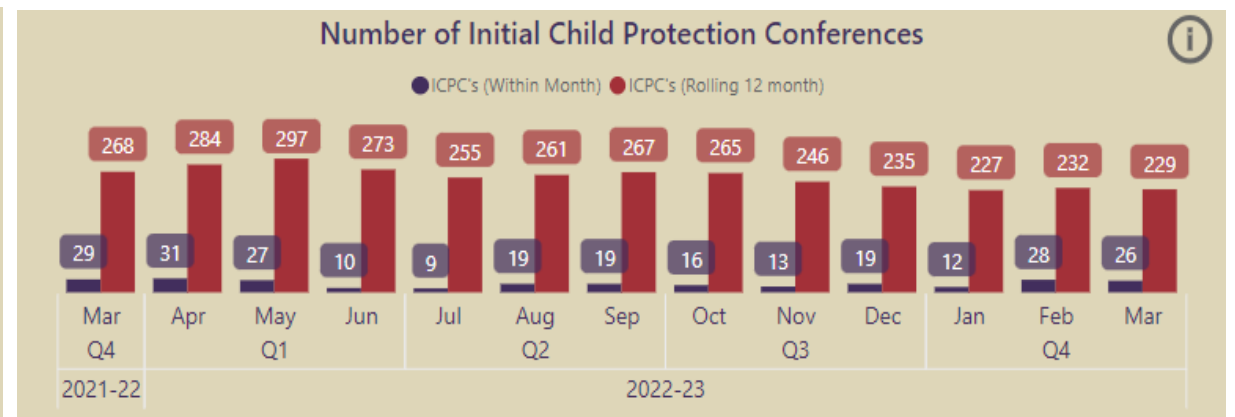
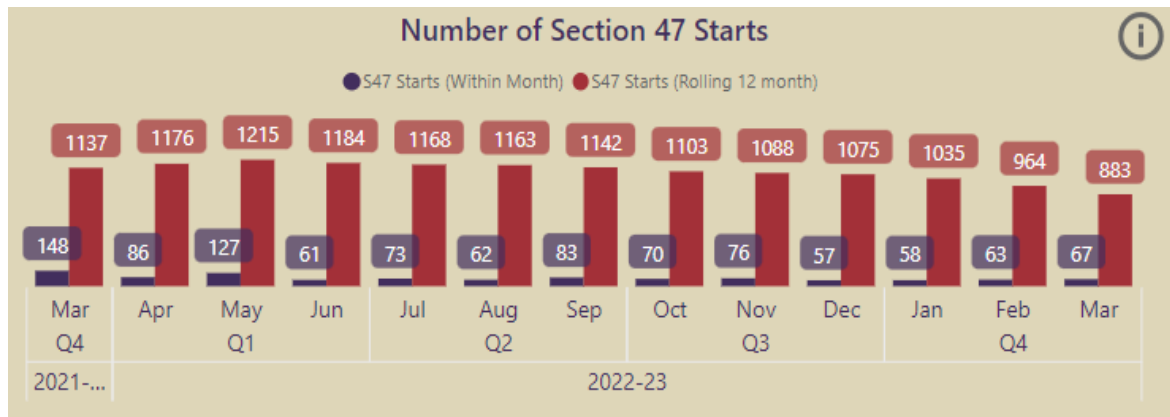
Performance data and QA activity indicates that social workers alongside partners achieve positive outcomes with families through CiN planning. Most CiN plans are closed within 12 months of starting as improvements have been achieved and risks have reduced for children. We have seen a dip in performance with regard to visits in this area and in visits to children subject to CP planning due to social work capacity pressure due to vacancies in Strengthening Families teams. We are confident that this has not impacted on the safety and outcomes for children. For all children where visits are delayed there is rigorous management oversight. For most children the delay is in recording rather than children being seen.

The service believes it is important to see children quickly once a referral has been accepted in order to ensure children are safe and to enable support to be delivered in a timely manner. This reduces the risk of needs and concerns escalating. Performance has been fairly consistent in relation to the number of children who are seen within 5 days of referral over the year and most new children are seen within 7 days. An assessment of their circumstances is usually completed within 10 days and where a CiN plan is required the first meeting is completed within 4 weeks.

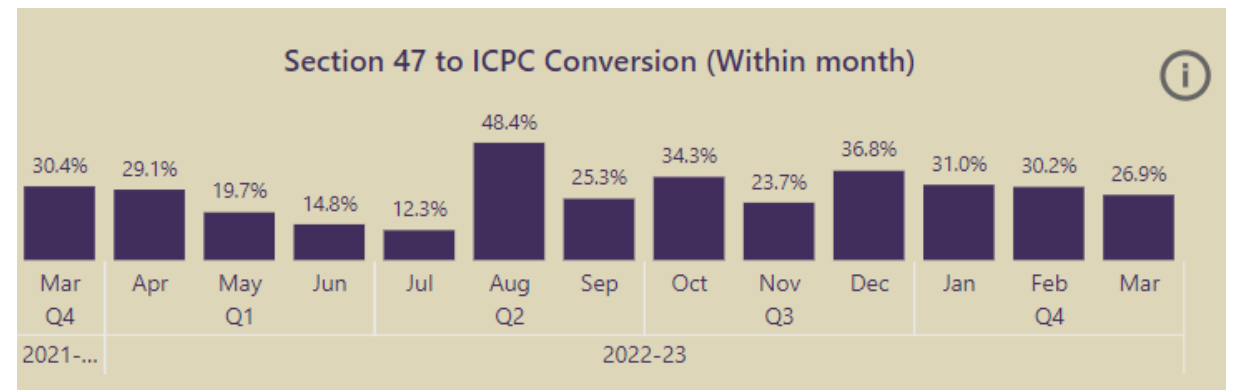


Child Protection Investigations

Where child protection concerns are raised investigations are undertaken in a timely manner and child protection procedures adhered to well. The number of Section 47 investigations in the rolling 12-month period saw a decrease from 1137 at 2021/22-year end to 883 at the end of March 23. We have seen a month-on-month reduction from May 22's figure of 1215, where this was higher than the year end figure for 21/22. 27% of Section 47 enquiries completed within the 2022-23 year resulted in an ICPC. This change in performance is a response to embedding a more restorative approach at our front door, and coincides with a change in manager.



When undertaking a section 47 enquiry social workers can access responsive support services from Early Help, Housing, Drug and Alcohol services, the Exploitation Hub and Domestic Abuse services. As a result, risks have often decreased before the end of the enquiry, negating the need for an ICPC.



Safeguarding our Children in Need of Protection

There were 230 children subject of a child protection plan at the end of March 2023. The safeguarding manager monitors child protection decisions and is confident that threshold is being applied appropriately. The proportion of young people becoming subject of a child protection plan over the rolling 12-month period that are repeats within 2 years has reduced from 9.7% at the end of March 22 to 8.1% at the end March 23. In the main, families are sustaining the changes made whilst children have been subject to child protection planning. The majority of children subject to repeat child protection planning is due to their experience of neglect and/or domestic abuse. A strategic partnership approach to understanding the impact of neglect on children led to the development of the WeCAN toolkit to support the identification of neglect its use is now embedded across the partnership.



Services such as Intensive Family Support, Power2 (a multi-professional service to support teenagers at risk of multiple factors) and Partnering Families (a health service to support new parents who have previously had children removed from their care) are well utilised and help children to remain safely within their birth families.

At the end of the 2022/23 year, 84.3% of children and young people on a Child Protection plan had a visit in timescale, this is significantly lower than the previous year with 99.6% in timescale at the end of 21/22. Similarly in this area there is a concerted effort being made to ensure recording is being done in a timely way.



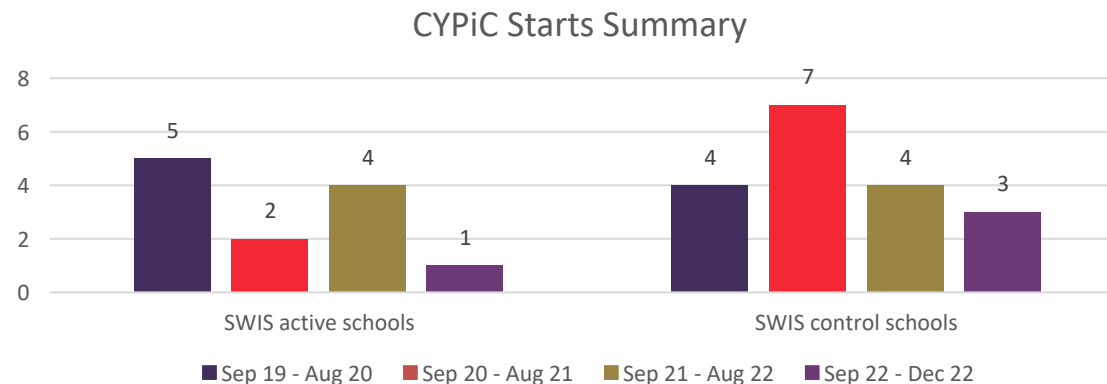
Repeat CP ever has reduced from 21.1% to 18.9% and the percentage of repeat CP in the past two years has reduced from 9.7% to 8.1%.

Working with schools to support children and their families at the earliest opportunity

The Wolverhampton Social Workers in Schools (SWIS) project started in November 20 funded by Department for Education (DfE) is part of a larger scale evaluation (21 local authorities and around 300 schools across England).

CYPiC Starts Summary

Cohort	Sep 19 - Aug 20	Sep 20 - Aug 21	Sep 21 - Aug 22	Sep 22 - Dec 22
SWIS active schools	5	2	4	1
SWIS control schools	4	7	4	3



Five social workers are based within the school environment of five active schools to develop early relationships and a partnership approach with school staff, young people and their families. Overtime this involvement has grown to include wider community by implementing the resilience pathway

The social workers work with young people supported by Child in Need, Child Protection planning and in assessment. Social workers complete the majority of Section 47's and start working with families from initial point of referral. However, their knowledge of the school and existing family relationships often enables them to hold informal discussions before any referral is made, and where necessary signpost to early help or community services if appropriate.

The SWIS team have been able to work closely with children and families and other professionals to help families improve their circumstances and reduce concerns about children's wellbeing and safety. This has also enabled social workers to gain insight into how schools operate and the structures that govern them as well as enabling schools to gain an understanding of social care thresholds and criteria.

Feedback from all schools is very positive, with one Head Teacher saying that she can't imagine not having a social worker, and another saying that he would like more than one. Schools have reported a greater understanding of the social work role and feel that communication is much better. Schools have benefited from joint training opportunities and participating in solution circles with social workers and strengthening families workers. School have been able to develop their early help offer further and are feeling more equipped to support children and young people at the earliest opportunity.

Training to up skill school staff delivered by the SWIS project has included Restorative practice, exploitation, equalities, getting it right and trauma informed practice.

Workshops for young people include sessions about healthy relationships, social media, harmful sexual behaviour, resilience and self-esteem ,and emotional wellbeing. This has been supported by micro-commissioning initiatives.

Our partnership approach to tackling violence and exploitation

In order to improve how we work together to identify and protect young people at risk of or experiencing exploitation in all its forms, we have redesigned our whole system to ensure that support is joined-up and effective. This has included a revised threshold document to clearly identify the extra familial risks associated with exploitation and an updated exploitation screening tool to ensure it supports the identification of all forms of exploitation. Training via a suite of online modules is also available to all staff across the safeguarding partnership.

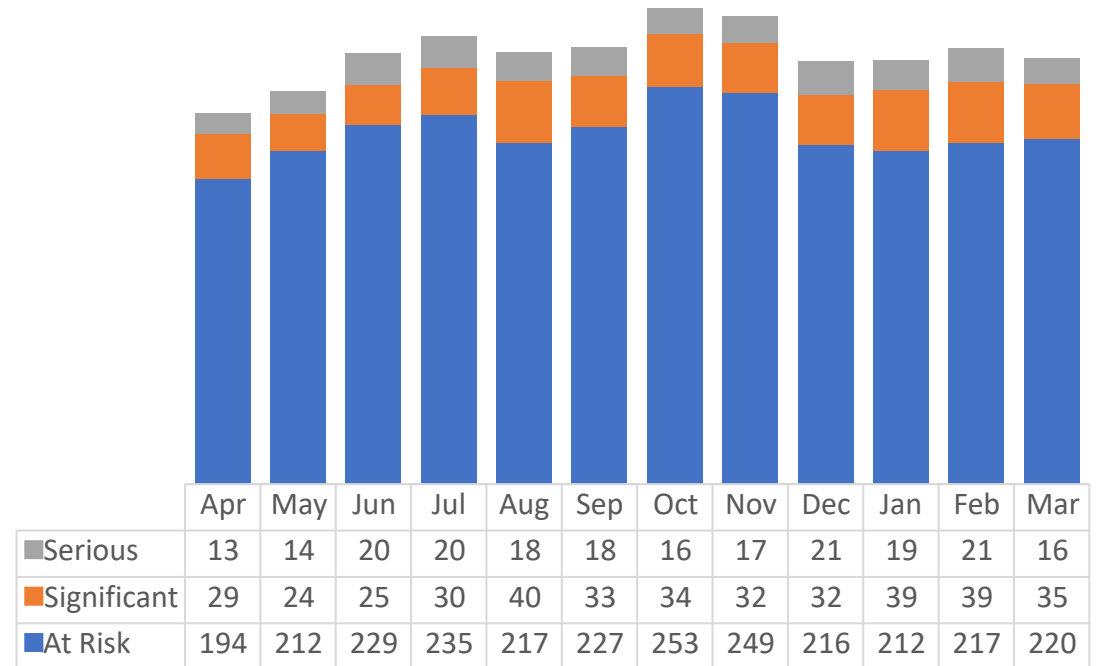
We deliver a strong effective all age Partnership Missing and Exploitation Hub. All referrals supported by a completed screening tool are risk assessed within the MASH, including information and intelligence from the Partnership Missing and Exploitation Hub. All young people identified at risk (even where risks are low) receive support from either Early Intervention or Social Care. Daily partnership briefings are being held to discuss all young people and vulnerable adults at risk of exploitation.

Positive impact since the launch of the Partnership Missing and Exploitation Hub :

- Daily briefings are attended by Police, Children and Adult social care, YOT, Missing Return Officer, Early Intervention, Education, Community Safety Partnership, Health and the Violence Reduction Unit, third sector
- In 2022/23, 3504 discussions have taken place, 402 screening tools have been completed for children and 68 for adults, all seeing an increase from 2021/22 where there were 3137 discussions and 352 screening tools for children and 28 for adults.
- Review of missing young people is embedded into the daily briefings leading to more effective disruption
- Timely response to concerns from a wide range of professionals
- Co-ordinated information sharing/ intelligence gathering – developing a profile of activity across the city to inform prevention and disruption activity

Our Response to Exploitation

- The Partnership Missing and Exploitation Hub has resulted in an enhanced co-ordinated response to all forms of exploitation. There has been an increase in the identification of those at risk since 2021. This is because of increased awareness and better co-ordination across the partnership. The identification of adults at risk of exploitation has also increased, with more multi-agency exploitation screening tools being completed and resulting in Adult exploitation meetings.
- At the end of March 2023, the breakdown of types of exploitation young people are known to be at risk of/involved with include: 137 Child Sexual exploitation (CSE), 140 Child Criminal Exploitation/Gangs (CCE), 27 county Lines (CL) and 11 Modern Slavery (MS) – *young people can experience more than one type of exploitation.*
- In total there were 51 people open to MACE/Adult Exploitation meetings at the end of March 2023 ,40 young people and 11 adults.
- Emerging operational themes and areas of concern are escalated to the Child Exploitation and Missing Operational Group (CEMOG) and exploitation remains a priority for the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Partnership.



Supporting our Vulnerable Adolescents at Risk of Exploitation

The Power2 team work with young people at risk of exploitation and engaged in high risk-taking behaviours. The team is multi-disciplinary with social workers (children and adults), speech and language therapist, educational psychologist, substance misuse worker, play/ drama therapist and keyworker support commissioned from the voluntary sector. Young people and their families receive an intensive service for 6-12 months, using trauma informed practice to take adverse childhood experiences into account (ACEs).

Power2 work with :

- Young people aged between 11 and 25 years of age who are at risk of exploitation;
- Young people where there is 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;
- Young people transitioning into adulthood who would not ordinarily meet the adult social care criteria for support.

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
- Re-engagement in education, employment or training
- Reduction in self harm
- Improved mental health



Our response to children who are missing



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

Across the year the number of missing incidents peaked in October and November 2022 reaching 130 incidents in November, however this figure dropped in the following month to 69 where it remained consistent to the level seen throughout most of the year. The average missing incident per month 2022/23 is 82 which is higher than the average number of missing incidents for 2021/22 which was 71 per month. All missing episodes are now discussed in the daily briefing.



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. Due to the consistently higher number of missing episodes, we have added additional resource to support work around missing and focus on increasing the number of return interviews completed within 72 hours. This additional resource has been in place by October 2022 ensuring more children who have had a missing episode are seen within 72 .

Strengthening families through specialist support services

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 offer includes:

- Intensive Family Support, provided by strengthening family workers
- Families Working Together team that promotes family meetings, family group conferencing and mediation
- Short break offer which forms part of our early intervention and edge of care offer.

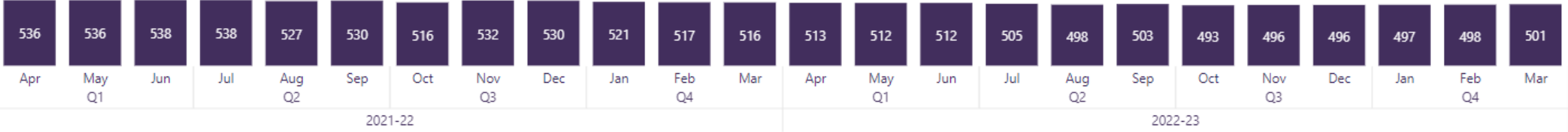
Sustained Outcomes 12 months after intervention

A key aim of specialist support is to provide sustained outcomes for families on the edge of care, prevent re-referrals and family and or placement breakdowns. By tracking social care status (across Specialist Support services) after support/work is completed this shows that 81% of young people's social care status had either stepped down/closed/improved (58%) or remained the same (23%) after 12 months.

Children and Young People in Care

There is a clear vision that is shared across the Children and Young People in Care(CYPIC) service which is focused on achieving permanence and stability for children. There is now greater emphasis on tackling issues within the family unit and offering support at an earlier stage, preventing the need for children and young people to enter care. 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 total number of CYPIC at the end of March 2023 is 501, 79.5 per 10,000 (0-17 population), which has reduced from 522 CYPiC (82.8 per 10,000) at the end of March 2022.

Number of Children and Young People in Care (Month End Snapshots)



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 early permanence in a timely manner. The effectiveness of care planning had been evidenced by good timeliness in proceedings and improved timeliness for children with a plan of adoption.

Stability for our 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 focussed on increasing the number of internal fostering households, and improving the offer of support to increase the retention of foster parents.



In 2022/2023, 18 new foster parents were approved, 6 of these were family and friends and 12 mainstream foster parents, however, Wolverhampton saw an overall net loss of 13 carers with a number of long standing foster parents retiring from the role.

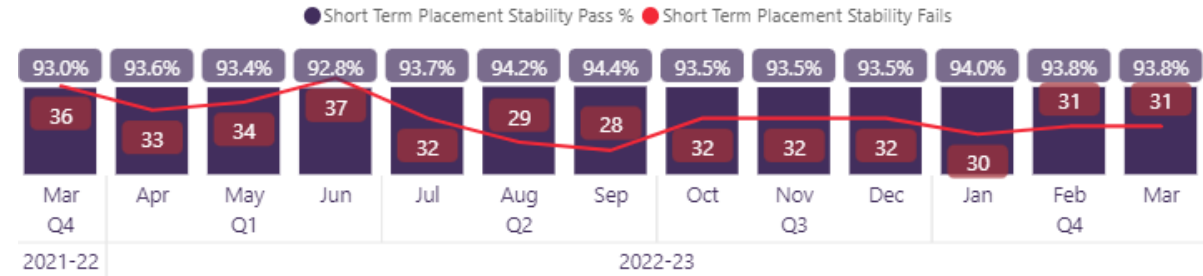
The gap between internal and agency placements has continued to grow over the past 12 months. Currently, Wolverhampton has 89 more internal placements than agency. This is the widest gap seen throughout the year. At the end of March 23, there were 378 children placed in foster homes with 78 of these children placed with family and friends. This position supports our priority to enable more children to live within a family environment close to home.

Supporting our foster parents to provide stable placements enabling positive outcomes for children and young people in care

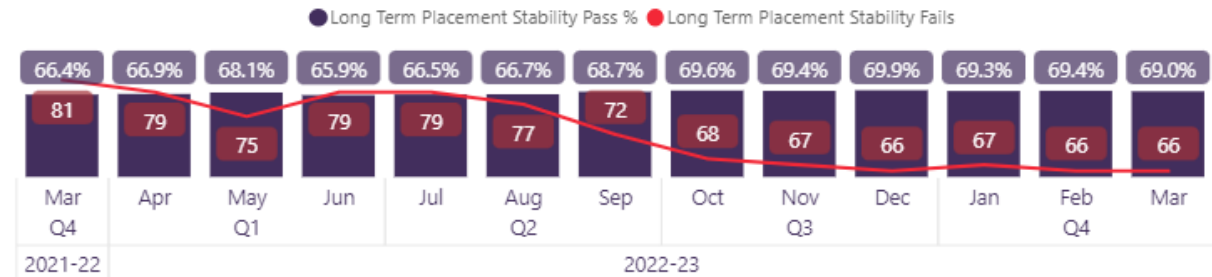
Placement stability percentages remain higher than regional, statistical neighbours and national averages. The table below shows the latest published comparator data:

Area	Long Term Placement Stability	Short Term Placement Stability
Wolverhampton	75.0%	94.0%
West Midlands	71.0%	91.0%
Statistical Neighbours	70.6%	90.7%
England	71.0%	90.0%

% of CYPIC with less than 3 placements in the last 12 months



% of CYPIC living in same placement for at least 2 years



. In order to achieve even better placement stability, plans include:

- Fostering Families United - Foster parents work together in small teams supported by their supervising social worker.
- A therapeutic training programme delivered to all foster parents.
- Fostering social workers have also all been trained in this model to ensure consistency of support, advice and consultation. The training is now being delivered to children’s social workers in order that this consistent approach to parenting can be embedded across the service. Regular support sessions continue to take place for foster parents and staff to discuss and reflect on their experiences.

Achieving permanence through adoption

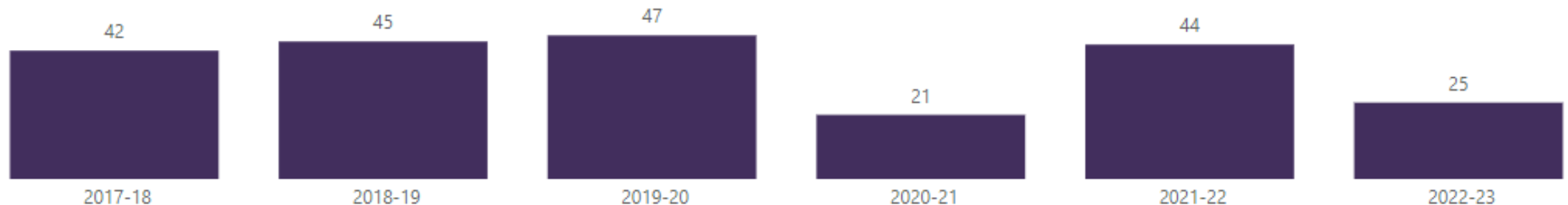
Adoption@Heart (A@H) enables adoption services delivered through our strong partnership approach, across the Black Country

Timeliness in 2022/2023 has improved across the groups. A1 has decreased to 509 days from 514 at the end of March 22. A10 has decreased from 514 to 508 days and A2 has also decreased to 184 from 189 days at the end of March 22, although all still remain above target.

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.

A reduction in Adoption Orders granted in 2020/21 was a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure and backlog in the courts. 25 adoption orders have been granted in 2022/23 at the end of March compared to 44 last year. There have been 9 children placed with their adopters, at same point in 2021/22 a total of 36 children had been placed. We are working closely with A@H to ensure children are matched and placed in a timelier way to increase the number of children placed through interagency placements if required.

Number of Adoptions



A@H has approved 42 adopters across 2022/23. There are a further 87 families in the process of stage 1 and 51 families currently in stage 2, plus an additional 26 approved and available to be linked with a child.

Achieving good health and wellbeing for our children and young people in care

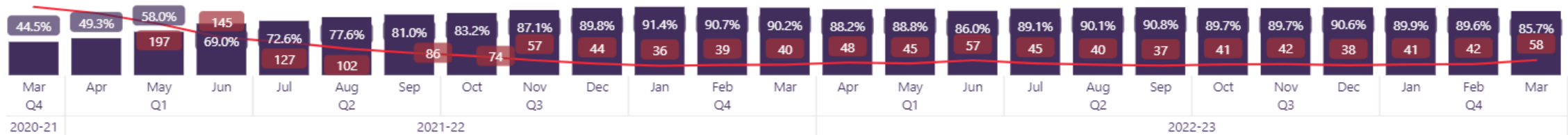
Physical Health

The health and wellbeing of CYPiC is a priority. All new children into care have Health Passport.

In 22/23, the proportion of children in care with a dental check in timescale reached 90.8% in September 22 and has remained consistent throughout the remainder of the 22/23 year. The proportion of children in care with a review health assessment in timescale has increased to over 90% in Q4, with a reduction in the number of fails from the start of the 22/23 year.

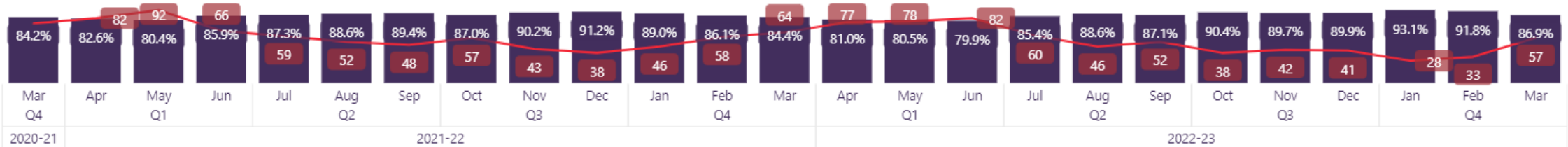
% of CYPiC with a dental in timescale (Month End Snapshots)

● % In Timescale ● Dental Fails



% of CYPiC with a review health assessment in timescale (Month End Snapshots)

● % In Timescale ● Review Health Fails



All CYPiC have health assessments unless they have refused to attend. We continue to work closely with health colleagues to ensure we have strong systems in place to avoid delay in completion. Further work continues to help us improve timeliness of initial health assessments.

Supporting Good Emotional Health and Wellbeing for Children and Young People in Care

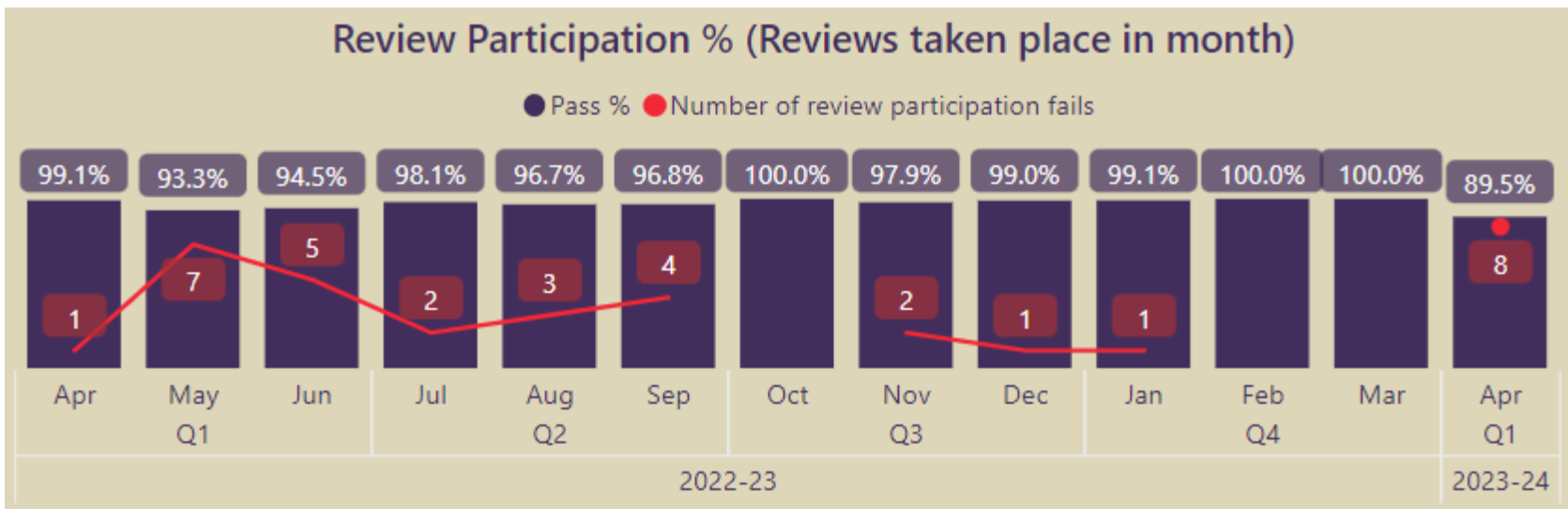
At the end of March 2022, the average SDQ score for Wolverhampton was 13.7, seeing an improvement on the average score for the previous year. This score is considered 'normal' and shows Wolverhampton positively in comparison to statistical and national comparators and evidences yearly improvement since 2016. For 2020/21 Wolverhampton was ranked as the 54th best performing authority for this indicator. This helps us to understand and meet the needs of all our children and young people in care.

Emotional and Behavioural Wellbeing - SDQ average scores	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Wolverhampton	14.4	13.7	13.7	13.4	13.4	13.7
West Midlands	13.9	13.7	14.3	14.2	13.3	13.3
Statistical Neighbours	14.26	14.3	14.7	14.5	14.0	14.0
England	14.1	14.2	14.2	14.1	13.7	13.8

Access to emotional health and wellbeing services is one of our Care Leavers Independent Collective's priorities for 2022/23, to ensure young people are equipped with skills to cope with adversity and to engage with available support. As such our Corporate Parenting Strategy 2022-25 makes commitments to support CYPIC and Care Leavers' health and emotional well-being and resilience. We have recently agreed to commission "Ask Jan" an emotional wellbeing offer and App for Care Leavers 19 and above. CYPIC and Care Leavers up to the age of 19 have access to Kooth.

A commissioned family therapeutic service to support the specialist therapeutic needs of children young people and their families is in place. This service not only strengthens the support to children and families to enable them to continue living together but also offers therapeutic services to children in care and care leavers. The service has been operational since May 2021 and complements the services offered by the universal emotional wellbeing services and CAMHS.

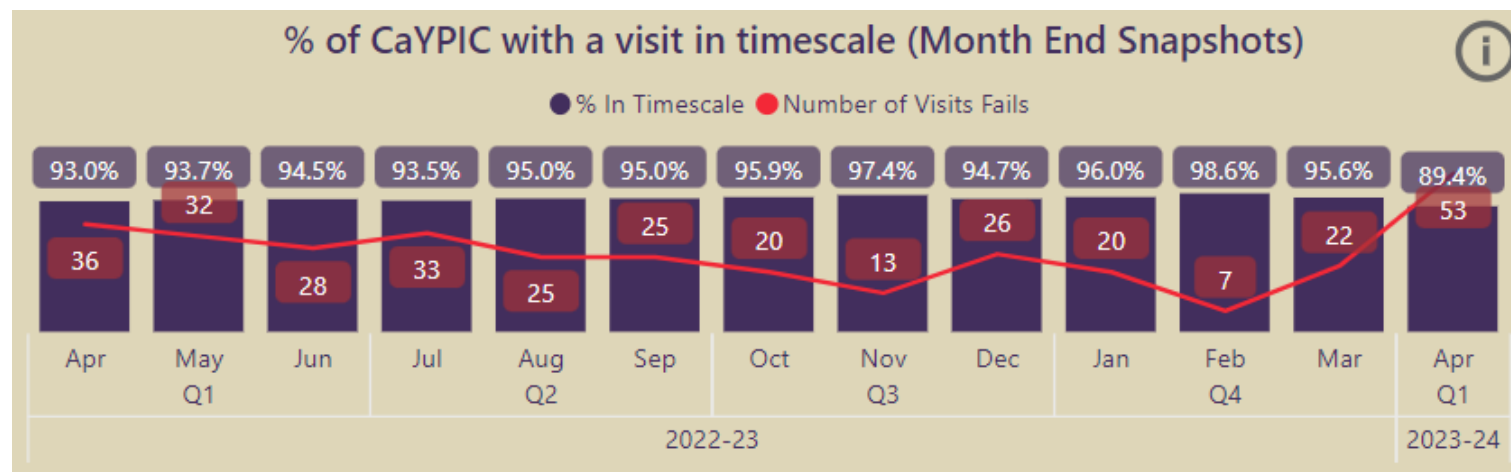
Working with Children and Young People in Care to Achieve positive Outcomes



There is strong evidence of children contributing to their plans and participating in their Children and Young People in Care reviews. Children participate in their review by either speaking for themselves or chairing their own review.

Social work visits to Children and Young People in Care fulfil a range of critical roles and functions not least to build and maintain relationships with children but also 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 in a stable placement.

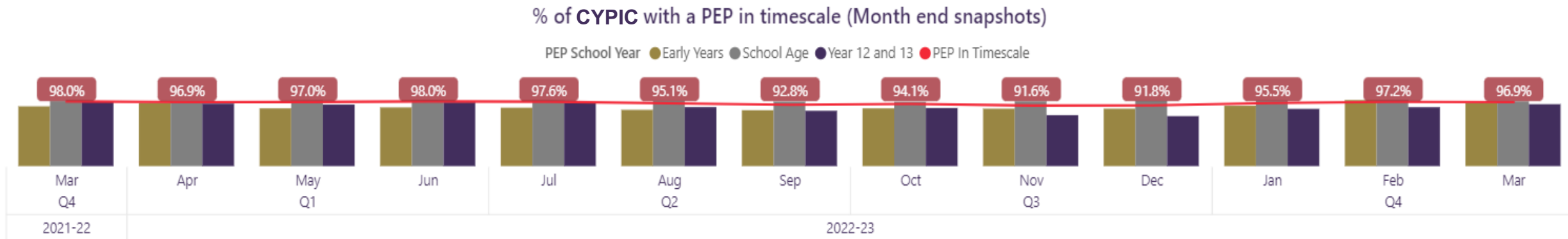
During the year the vast majority of children received visits from their social workers within statutory timescales. Audits have continued to identify evidence of excellent relationship building and direct work, also noted by Ofsted.



Impact of our work with Children and Young People in Care

The work undertaken by social workers alongside the Virtual School and other professionals, as well as strategic activity is contributing to improved education and employment outcomes for children and young people. At GCSE, 19% of eligible children in the cohort achieved grade 4 or above in both English and Maths in 2022. While not as high as it was in 2020 and 2021 (when pupils were not required to sit exams), it is higher than the two previous years. No children and young people in care were permanently excluded from school in 2021-22, and suspensions have significantly reduced for this cohort.

Nine Wolverhampton care leavers graduated from university in 2022, six of whom achieved a 2:1 honours degree, while seven started university courses. 25 of our Care Leavers currently attend university with a further 2 taking a break from studies for a year due to becoming new parents. The number of care leavers accessing university has increased year on year.



The pupil premium is used effectively to ensure children are achieving well. Personal Education Plans (PEP's) completion rates are high, and the Eclipse Electronic PEP is supporting a detailed understanding of progress that children are making in schools as well as identifying areas that require additional support.

Extension to the role of the virtual school head

Utilising funding allocated for this purpose to increase staffing – a restructure of virtual school management and a new dedicated school improvement advisor (SIA) for children with a social worker. Key developments in this area include:

- Close partnerships between Education/the Virtual School and Children’s Social Care are resulting in focussed support and intervention for children with CIN and CP plans. The SIA sits on the secondary Inclusion Support & Alternative Provision Panel. Although the SIA role is essentially strategic and advisory, over 40 young people have been referred for 1:1 advice and guidance
- Data on school attendance, as well as SEND, is now produced and reviewed on a monthly basis for this cohort and shared with social work teams. Exclusions data is currently being added to the report
- The SIA has worked with Independent Reviewing Officers to review CIN and CP plans and identify additional questions to be asked of colleagues in schools during case conferences, to give a true reflection of the child’s current school experience and progress
- Schools educating the highest proportions of vulnerable children have been identified, using the council’s vulnerability matrix, and support is being offered to over 35 primary, secondary special school and PRUs : trauma and attachment training, signposting to specialist programmes through partner agencies such as VRU, and advice on individual cases. Training on meeting the educational needs of children with a social worker has been delivered to school governors, early career teachers, new head teachers, SENCOs, designated safeguarding leads and designated teachers in schools
- Schools have been supported to review their trauma-informed practice using a detailed audit tool and 20 schools now have action plans with clear targets in this area. Several schools (approx.15) have set the development of their trauma-informed practices as a school priority and committed to accessing whole school training in this area from either the Virtual School or other partner organisations

Growing our EET Team

It was recognised that some vulnerable groups would benefit from more bespoke support and coordination, to help them into positive education, employment, training (EET) destinations. Therefore, we have created two SEND EET advisors and one EET Advisor for children who are, or have been subject to, CIN or CP planning. The advisors all started in their new positions in April 2023 and are utilising the council’s vulnerability matrix to identify young people who are in need of a more targeted support. Now part of the Virtual School Team, under the line-management of the EET Coordinator for Children and Young People in Care, they are working closely with the school improvement advisor for children with a social worker, Connexions, schools and other key partners. Data reports have been created to give greater understanding of the size and characteristics of each cohort.

In addition to this identified cohort, referrals will be received from Connexions, SENSTART and social care, for young people experiencing complex barriers to EET and who require additional support.

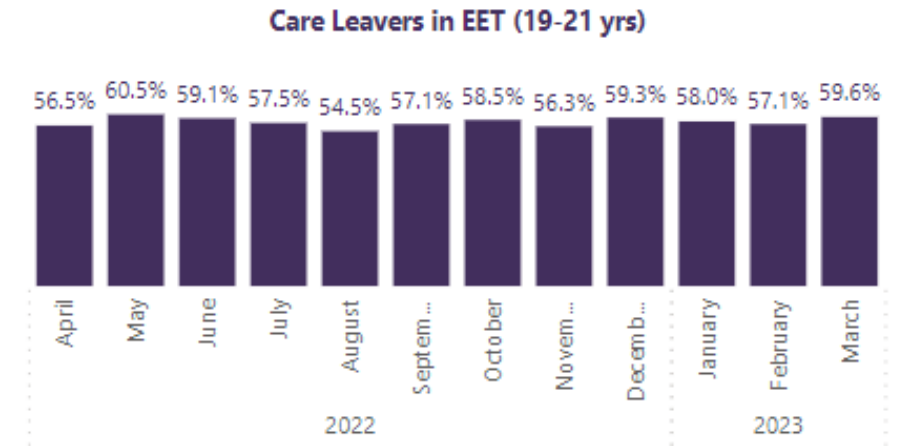
Supporting positive outcomes for Care Leavers

Social workers, young people's advisors, family support workers, CYPiC mentors, housing support workers, and an education, employment and training (EET) co-ordinator, EET advisor and 2 care experienced apprentices facilitate excellent joint working arrangements to support young people into independence. Young people are aware of their entitlements as detailed in the Local Offer for Care Leavers - Reach. Key information leaflets and booklets are incorporated into a post-16 independence pack, and the information is on the care leavers' Facebook page and CYPiC website. The teams are committed to increasing partnership working with young people and empowering them to develop confidence and achieve their aspirations; this has been enhanced this year with the launch of the capacity to co-produce pathway plans with young people within Eclipse. The Reach Offer has been revised and improved to increase support to care leavers evidencing strong relationships across the council and with partner agencies.

In our recent Ofsted inspection services to care leavers were described as outstanding.

The majority of our care leavers are remaining open to us post 21 as young people want to benefit from ongoing support from their YPA. We have expanded the number of YPA's to reflect this and expanded to two teams.

Engagement in a variety of EET opportunities available is given a high priority within the service. Young people have priority interviews for apprenticeships within the council and now care leavers can apply at the internal application stage. The offer of apprenticeships has now been extended for those up to 25 years of age. The council offers 10 inclusive apprenticeship opportunities and is working towards an employment pathway framework and supported internships. There is also a work experience pathway in place for care leavers aged 18 to 25 within the council. The number of apprenticeships within CYPiC Service has increased from two to five over the last two years and senior managers have committed to continue to increase this number across Children's Services. In addition, Reconomy, our House Project private company partner, offer five apprenticeship positions for care leavers. The proportion of Care Leavers in EET at the end of March 23 is 59.6%, remaining consistent with the percentage seen at the same point last year.



Housing options to support children in care and care leavers

Care leavers have a choice of accommodation provision including; Supported accommodation provision managed by Green Square Accord Housing, Wolverhampton Homes accommodation supported by our own Housing Support Service, Staying Put (over 18), Independent Accommodation (over 18) and local quality assured and monitored Supported Accommodation provisions. Additionally, up to 10 young people per year are supported into their own accommodation by our Local House Project.

The Housing Support Service has access to up to 33 Wolverhampton Homes flats, 2 crash pads and 2 training flats. Each young person has a designated housing support worker (HSW) who remains with them throughout their time in the service. Support hours vary, with a maximum of 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 2022 and March 2023, 5 young people have moved into independent living, all of which are still maintaining their tenancy 6 months on. We currently have 7 UASC's living in our Housing Support Service. The service has seen an increase in young people accessing the service with 13 moving into the service during the same period. 27 young people have been part of the House Project with 17 now living independently and 10 living in accommodation appropriate to their needs. Our Cohort 5 is well underway with 8 young people in attendance.

Our Supported Lodgings Service has 3 hosts. There are currently 36 (an increase from 30 in September 2022) young people in Staying Put, with a further 3 already agreed and 5 being considered. This is lower than previous, but this is due to the agreements running to their natural end and young people moving into their own accommodation or remaining with their Staying Put Carers. From April 2022 to present, there have been 77 referrals for Mentoring Support.

Due to this wide-ranging offer of accommodation options the percentage of young people in suitable accommodation is at 93%



THE
HOUSE PROJECT
Wolverhampton

Support for our UASC

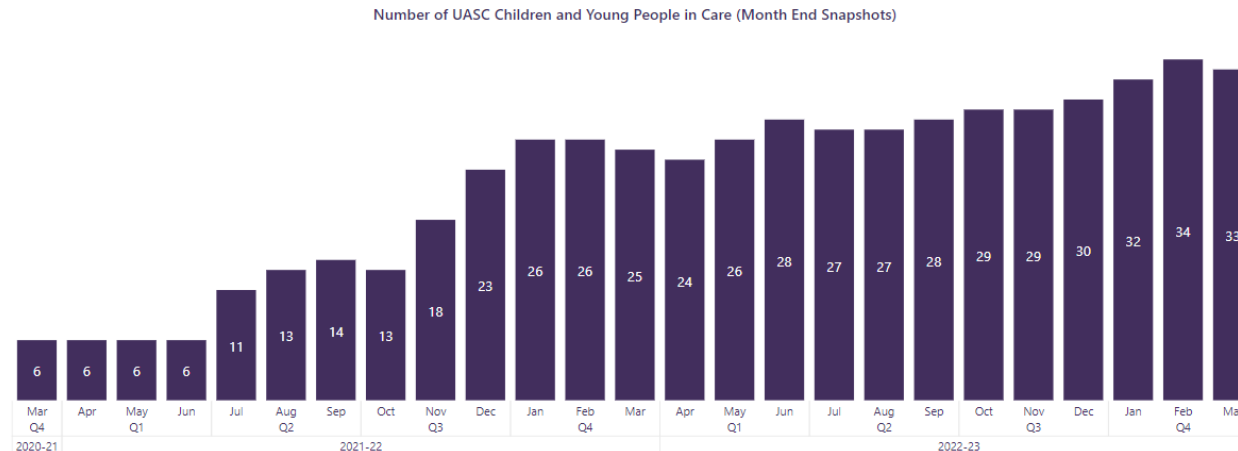
As of end of March 2023, we now support 33 UASC who are CYPiC and 28 UASC care leavers. This has increased from the end of the previous year where we were supporting 25 UASC CYPiC and 22 Care leavers

The Royal Wolverhampton School is a free school with additional boarding facilities and has worked with 13 UASC since 2015, having supported three UASC to transition to University. The Royal is a diverse and multi-racial school serving both the city of Wolverhampton and local areas and international countries. The Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC) work in close partnership with the Royal School. Where possible and appropriate, we place our young people at this school

Monthly UASC Health and Wellbeing panel, chaired by CYPiC Service Manager and consists of the RMC, Senior social worker, CAMHS and CYPiC named nurses. The panel reviews the health and wellbeing needs of all UASC. We have developed a UASC training package for all social workers Four sessions have been delivered this year. Coram have also commissioned age assessment training and Wolverhampton social workers are routinely attending so we can increase our pool of social workers who are age-assessed trained. Social worker and YPA's regularly attend UASC training via the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership to help support their knowledge and expertise

We have a UASC champion who sits within the Reach leaving care team as a Young Person Advisor (YPA). We have also funded an additional YPA post from UASC funding ,to support with securing immigration status for our young people. In addition the Grand Mentor scheme extends to our UASC

The Refugee & Migrant Centre provide invaluable support to our young people as a universal service but additionally have provided case work, mentoring, legal advice and support, ESOL courses, group work and support our UASC with everyday living, education, health and wellbeing and immigration advice and support



Our strong corporate parenting approach

The Council believes it is important to invest in children and young people in care - the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Care Leaver Independent Collective (CLIC) have co-produced our Corporate Parenting Strategy (March 2022). The implementation of the strategy is supported by the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board (CPPB) chaired by the Council's Deputy Chief Executive. The CiCC and CLIC both produce an annual survey, the outcomes of which are used to inform the Corporate Parenting Action plan.

Some of our significant achievements that we have worked on with children in care and care leavers this year include:

- Effective utilisation of the Oasis Co-Production Hub including the launch of the Reach Café, allowing care leavers a weekly safe space to drop in, meet with staff and get a variety of support options available to them
- Continue to promote and extend the reach of our Total Respect training to ensure effective training is provided to new internal staff, Councillors, and partner agencies
- Achieved in conjunction with the Black Country ICB “Free Prescriptions” Offer for care leavers in the city and a dedicated transitions nurse
- A range of bespoke work experience opportunities within the local authority and wider partnerships are supported through our internal system and through the CPPB
- An active and well attended Care Leavers Week, 24th October – 28th October 2022 where a total of 12 activities took place across the City. A total of 63 young people took part, with over 100 attendances at activities across the week. One of the highest attendances recorded for City of Wolverhampton Council
- Christmas 2022 saw the development of the first Amazon Wish List . Over 700 donations of presents, gifts, food and gift vouchers were received in one of the biggest donations ever seen in Wolverhampton
- The I Awards took place on January 27th 2023, with over 450 nominations received. The event was sponsored by Local Businesses and Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Members

Participation and co-production with our Children in Care Council and Care leavers Forum

Achievements for CiCC in 2022/23 include:

- Presented Total Respect at the wider Inclusion conference
- Planning the co-produced annual I Awards for 2023
- Presented to the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board Children in Care Annual Survey.
- Reflected on the annual survey to see what can be done differently to increase responses for the next annual survey including having an age cap of 17 years.
- Developed a Child in Care of the Month Award to promote the positive and inspirational developments of children in care
- CiCC members highlighted as Fostering Champions for this year Foster Carer Conference
- Contributed to the Foster Carer Handbook

Achievements for CLIC in 2022/2023 include:

- Presented the I Awards 2022
- Working with the Reach Team to secure additional funding for an Education, Employment and Training Coordinator for Care Leavers
- Securing funding from the ICB for free prescriptions for Care Leavers
- Developing support for care leavers with health colleagues
- Planning the co-design of Care Leavers' Week for 2022
- Chair of CLIC winner of Young Citizen of the Year 2022
- Presenting the challenges for care leavers to the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board.

Both groups are working collectively on refreshing their Total Respect training and recruitment process for children's staff. They are also collaborating with the Head of Children's Commissioning on the Council's Sufficiency Strategy.

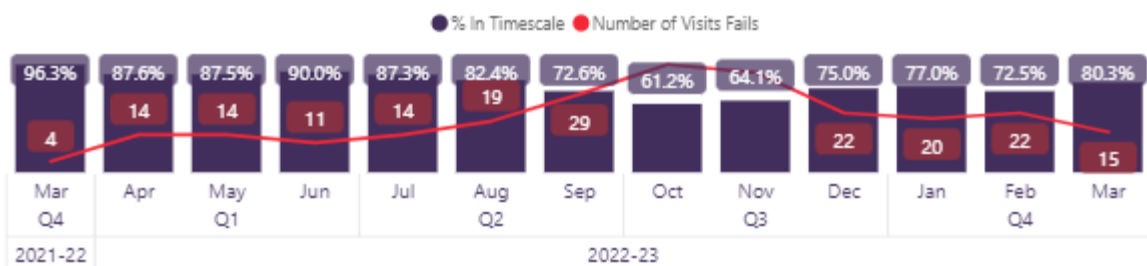
In addition they are working in partnership on the Stable Home, Built On Love Consultation, both regionally and locally.

The CiCC and CLIC continue support the HY5 (SEND youth forum) to develop their own Total Respect training so they can influence professionals about what is like to live in the city with SEND, as the CiCC and CLIC have been able to do with sharing what it is like to be care experienced.

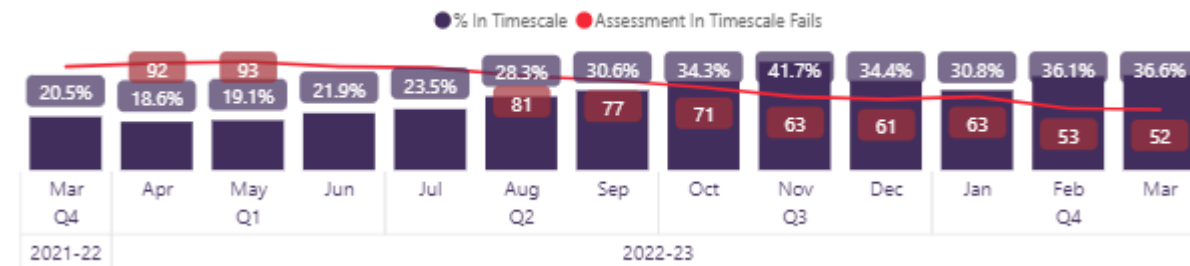
Supporting our children and young people with disabilities

- The establishment of a Designated Social Care Officer ensures that the needs of our SEND children are promoted at the earliest opportunity, with champions being established across the service. Only when it is assessed that specialist support is required to a child with a disability will a worker from the Disabled Children and Young Person's (DCYP) team be allocated
- Young people up to the age of 25 allocated to DCYP team are successfully supported on their journey to adulthood and benefit from social work support during this crucial transition period. A strong partnership working approach between adult and children's social care, and health supports the needs of our most complex young people
- Through Voice4Parents, the views of parents of our SEND children are integral to ensuring we are responsive in our service provision and planning
- During the year, children generally received visits from their social workers within statutory timescales. However, there were significant dips in performance from September 2022 to February 2023 (during which time the team had 3 different Team Managers). A permanent Team Manager started in February 2023, and we have seen an increase in timeliness since this time. The decline in assessments undertaken since September 2021 also reflects this pattern and challenges within the team. There is now an improvement plan in place to ensure performance improves and is maintained
- Despite dips in performance, support to children with disabilities through the DCYP team is strong and we are confident we understand their needs and know them well. Ofsted recognised the whole family approach to support children, their carers and wider family's needs

% of CIN (Exc SB) with a visit in timescale (Month End Snapshots) - DCYPT

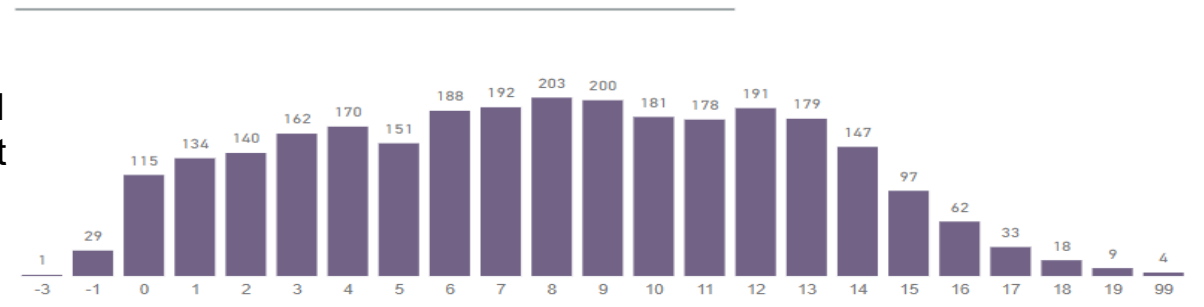


% of CIN with an assessment in timescale (Month End Snapshots) - DCYPT



Supporting our SEND children and young people in education

EHCPs by NCY



There are 2778 children and young people with an EHCP in Wolverhampton. The highest primary need being Social, Emotional Mental Health accounting for 22.5% and ASD being the 2nd highest primary need of 20.2%

In 2021 SEND SEF highlighted a range of areas of developments which informed the current Culture of Inclusion Programme. The programme continues to be monitored through the SEND Board with monthly highlight reports showing key milestones and progress. In September 2021 the SEND Inspection highlighted six areas of significant weakness, whilst these areas were already highlighted within the Culture of Inclusion Programme a Written Statement of Action was produced and signed off in March 2022. Both the SEF and WSOA have been aligned to ensure all actions are responded to and monitored through the SEND Board

To support the identification of vulnerable learners, a 'Vulnerability Matrix' has been developed across our IT systems in Children's Social Care and Education, for services to be able to track the involvement of teams (both past and current) to help monitor support needs.

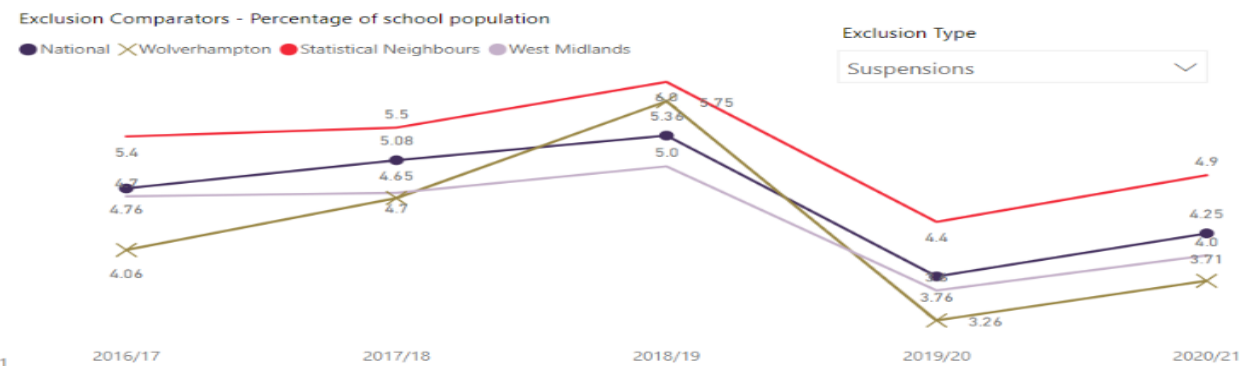
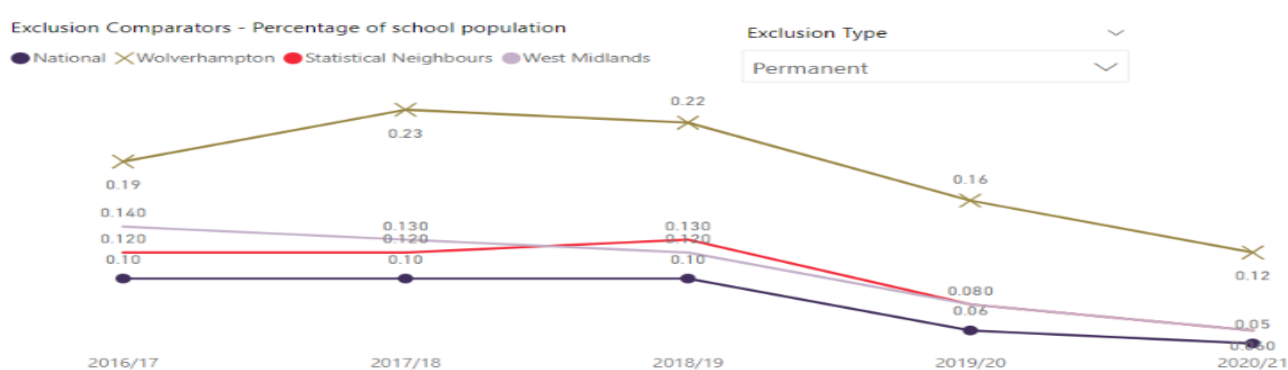
Social Care SEND champions have been introduced within social care teams to support understanding of SEND services and the SEND Code of Practice across social care and early help. To support the development of the WSOA various posts have been created across Education and Children's Social Care to enable the strategic and operational developments around SEND, including a Designated Social Care Officer, Local Offer Post and QA officers

Supporting inclusion of all children in school

We received 109 referrals to the Primary and Secondary Inclusion Support and Alternative Provision Panel (ISAPP) from September 2022 to end of April 2023, to access additional support for children and young people rather than opting for suspension or exclusion. This includes access to preventative placements and/or pre-exclusion meetings. Of 55 pre-exclusion meetings, only 6 young people went on to be permanently excluded. We have also provided a Graduated Response Framework to schools that launched in September 2022 this has helped to reduce the number of referrals for exclusions.

Education services are developing an Alternative Provision Framework that incorporates the new SEND & AP framework improvement plan. This will enable schools and settings to access a wider range of educational support options for children and young people needing short term placements relevant to their needs including SEN support. We have launched a new Emotional Based Non-Attendance Pathway due to an increase of referrals relating to anxiety and low attendance. There have been 34 referrals for this pathway so far. The Inclusion Team attends the Exploitation Hub daily briefing to identify vulnerability risks so that additional support can be put in place to prevent exclusion or to consider placements. Where required the team will also work with social care and the police to consider whole school approaches to reduce the risk of exclusion.

We are currently developing ISAPP's role to enable schools to have a more proactive and accessible resource around further therapeutic and resilience support offers, and transition support for pupils for integration into mainstream schools

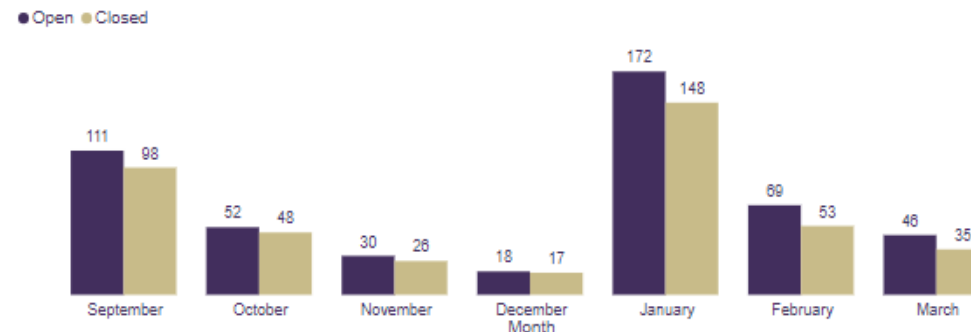


Children Missing Education and Electively Home Educated

Current Position for Children Missing Education (CME):

- 499 internal enquiries and 499 external enquiries have been received from schools for CME support from September 2022 to March 2023, of which the whereabouts were identified for 226 children and young people
- The CME tracking systems have been updated since the ILACS in March 2022 to enable the tracking of children and young people for a minimum of 3 months to ascertain their whereabouts, then added to the lost pupils' database. Where agencies have concern, the children will remain open and attempts made to continue to track until advised by Police, Social Care, HMRC, or NHS and risk assessed as deemed fit for closure.
- Referral process has been made more accessible via the development on an online referral form for both internal and external referrals (professional and public).

Open and Closed by Month

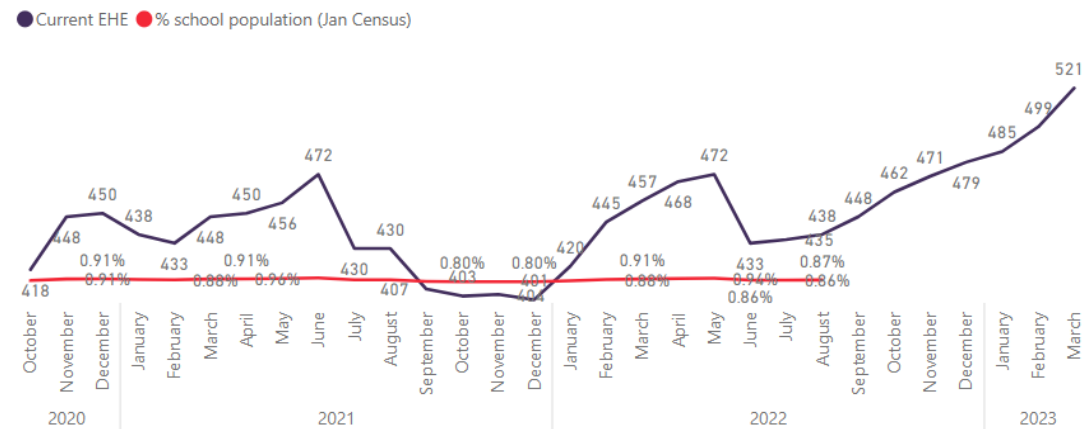


*Internal enquiries

Current Position for Elective Home Education (EHE):

- 529 children and young people are registered as EHE within the City.
- The Gold KIT Award has been awarded to 2 EHE staff by the Education Otherwise Association as a quality mark to reflect the collective experiences of EHE families reflecting the quality of support they have received.
- In the last 12 months over 90% of EHE families have been in contact and shared information around their EHE
- 3-way meetings take place as a preventative approach to support families and schools where families express an interest to deregister their child from school

End of month EHE Numbers



Supporting positive EET outcomes. Wolves at Work: Skills, Jobs, Careers

- The council's Skills Service includes two specialist teams: Supported Employment (SET) and IPS Substance Misuse Employment Support
- SET works with residents aged 16 and over with disabilities, helping them into sustainable employment, and it also leads on Supported Internships (SIs), looking to at least double the number of SIs across the city over the next two years from 9 to 18
- The wider Wolves at Work team offers employment and skills support to residents aged 16+, with significant targeted support to the 16 to 24 cohort
- Between April 2022 and March 2023, 292 residents were supported into work, aged 16 to 24
- The council manages a city centre Youth Employment Hub, a partnership project with DWP, which provides a youth-friendly venue for young people seeking help to find work. In its first year, the Youth Hub worked with 394 young people, 29% of whom secured employment
- The council's Connexions team play an active role in supporting our vulnerable young people. There are Careers Advisors in every city High School, AP, special schools and college
- Every young person in care or known to a social worker or with SEND has 121 Careers IAG with a Careers Advisor and their own careers action plan
- Connexions also track the participation of all 16 to 18 year olds in the city, supporting those who are at risk of NEET or who are NEET
- As a result of this intensive work the city has been in the top quintile in the country for low levels of NEET and Not Known for the past 3 years, performing better than national, regional and statistical neighbours
- In qtr 4 2023, the level of NEETs was 3%, and 14% for young people with SEND
- Wolverhampton is a pro-active member of the Black Country Careers Hub, with Enterprise Co-ordinators working with all schools and colleges. The city schools perform above national levels against all 8 Gatsby benchmarks (the blueprint for careers activity)
- The city council is also a Cornerstone employer for the Black Country Careers Hub, pro-actively engaging with schools, e.g. social work practitioners going into our secondary schools to promote jobs and careers within social care

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential Achievements for 2022/23:

- We have worked with our voluntary and community partners in the city to deliver support to our most vulnerable households through the Financial Wellbeing Strategy supported by the Household Support Fund (HSF), and Holidays Activity Fund (HAF). Over 47,702 individual awards made to households with children in 2022/23 through the HSF to the value of £2.6 million
- The Holiday and Food Activity (HAF) programme which delivers in the main holidays to children eligible for FSM has been extended to children with SEND and those known to social care in the half term holidays. In Summer 2022 3107 children attended and in December 1951 children attended supported by 33 providers . This provision has been extended to support all children during the half term holidays and saw 2400 children attending in the February half term
- Working within our strong Wolverhampton partnership we have supported our newly migrated families temporarily living in Wolverhampton ensuring they receive the right level of support
- An internal and an external independent review of MASH 24 commissioned by Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together highlighted consistently good practice and strong application of threshold to safeguard children
- We have embedded a more integrated offer across Children's and Adult services to enable our families to thrive including development of one front door which is in pilot phase and integrates accessibility to services through our newly developed Family Hubs
- We have developed improved ease of access to a range of services for children and families through the development of the Family Hubs ,publishing our Start for Life Offer and establishing our Parent Carer Panels

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential Achievements for 2022/23:

- As part of our Strengthening Families approach our Supporting Families Programme achieved the target 453 families in sustaining change in 2022/2023
- We have embedded the expansion of the use of Family Group Conferencing to strengthen opportunities for children to live within their families
- We have continued to embed Restorative Practice across Children's Services looking particularly at developing restorative approaches to child protection conferences and extending training to partners enhancing consistency of our strength based relational approach to practice to support positive outcomes for children and their families
- We have embedded the Social workers in Schools project for a further year with a positive local evaluation which has informed potential future evidence based practice
- Reduced reoffending rates for young people remains spectacular, alongside a reduction in custodial sentences and numbers of young people on Remand
- We have extended our pilot project "Back on Track" diverting young people from criminality as early as possible
- We have established a Creating Safety project within the Youth Justice Service to add additional support young people at risk of exploitation

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential

Achievements for 2022/23 continued:

- We have strengthened opportunities for co-production with children in the city particularly for those open to the Strengthening Family service to ensure children's voices shape our service planning
- We have developed social care support to our SEND children through the strategic lead of our Designated Social Care officer (DCSO), now a dedicated post, our SEND champions across Childrens Services and our specialist case worker in IASS ensuring children's need are met
- We have expanded our support to, and opportunities for our most vulnerable young people to access a range of EET opportunities, including children in care, care leavers children with SEND, children who are or have been children in need or subject to child protection planning, and young people known to our Youth Justice Service
- We have established key priorities and key performance indicators in our Children's Equalities action plan to ensure delivery of inclusive services that tackle inequalities which some children and young people face
- We have embedded the Culture of Inclusion Programme to support the inclusion and educational engagement of vulnerable learners supported by the extended role of the Virtual School Head
- We have established our co-production hub, 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

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential,

Achievements for 2022/23 continued:

- We have monitored the impact of our recruitment campaign, extended the Foster Families United model, and developed additional benefits offered to foster carers – especially those caring for older and more complex children. Marketing material has been refreshed; the emergency carer policy has included incentivisation to take children in emergency. All foster carers have also received £650 to support the cost-of-living crisis
- We have strengthened even further the stability of our foster homes and improved education outcomes for children and young people in care
- We have improved the consistency of the quality of PEPs supporting the educational outcomes of our children in care by strengthening the training in place and applying a more stringent QA process to support our understanding of quality of PEPS
- The oversight of children in care's health needs including dental health has significantly improved
- We have strengthened even further our Local Offer for care leavers to help us work with our care leavers to achieve independence as they enter adulthood
- Reflective discussions, regular supervisions and management oversight are consistently recorded on children's records (noted by Ofsted)
- Consistently good quality records are kept for children with the voice of children and young people being strong throughout all records, underpinned by strong analytical evidence-based assessments and plans that are SMART and child centred (noted by Ofsted)
- Social workers spend meaningful time with children and build positive relationships. Creative direct work with children enables them to understand their experiences (noted by Ofsted)

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential

Priorities for 2023/24:

1. As a strong stable experienced leadership team we know ourselves well. We are confident in our approach, open to challenge and ongoing learning and development of ourselves and the services we deliver to children and young people and their families in the city. As a service we continue to be supported to prioritise the need to improve outcomes for children and young people in the city supported by our senior and political leaders.
2. We will continue on our journey of aiming for excellence in social work practice utilising our QA framework to support our understanding of ourselves.
3. Our restorative approach to practice ,including our focus on language, will continue to underpin all we do to ensure we deliver consistently high quality effective innovative services to build family strength and resilience and improve opportunity for our children and young people in the city.
4. We will continue on our journey of transformation of children's services enabling opportunities for creativity and innovation in practice improving outcomes for our children and families. Transformational projects include; the opening of two small family homes for children in care ensuring all internal residential provision for children in the city is of a high standard, the piloting of a multi agency team aimed at preventing future family breakdown with the anticipated impact of reducing the number of children repeatedly moved from the care of their parents, the implementation of a staying close project for care leavers, the development of Family Hub delivery across the city to support the Start for Life offer and enhance accessibility of support and opportunities to work with children at the earliest stage ,and the implementation of a Families front door.

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential,

Priorities for 2023/24 continued:

5. We will adapt our service delivery to ensure our children young people and families can access the services they need at the earliest opportunity to strengthen and enrich all children's experience of childhood and family life, to enable to grow into happy strong resilient young adults

To do this we will:

- ensure improved accessibility of help and support through a family's front door and family hubs
- work with families to offer a range of options for family help as a DfE pathfinder authority
- utilise and expand our prevention programmes in our youth justice service to continue to divert young people away from the criminal justice system
- ensure our children and young people can be educated and supported in the school environment that is most suited to them and receive appropriate support to achieve their potential as they move into adulthood
- ensure the safety and well being of our children and young people to include ongoing robust safeguarding to include those at risk of extra familial harm

Strong Families Where Children Can Grow up Well and Achieve Their Full Potential, Priorities for 2023/24 continued:

- ensure the sufficiency of foster homes and suitable family options where children are not able to live with their birth parents
- ensure that where a young person is not able to live within a family we provide good quality alternative provision through appropriately registered internal and external children's homes and supported accommodation
- develop the knowledge and skills of the workforce to support young people with SEND and care leavers to successfully transition into young independent adults

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