

City of Wolverhampton Council Wolverhampton Children's Services

Self-Assessment of services for
children in need of help and
protection, children looked after
and care leavers.

'Our Story'



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Approvals

Version	Name	Role	Date of issue
6.4	Emma Bennett	Service Director	11.12.15
6.4	Linda Sanders/PLT	Strategic Director	14.12.15
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INTRODUCTION FROM THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

Wolverhampton Children's Services has made good progress over the past 2 years which has been driven through strong political and managerial leadership. There is a clear political and corporate commitment to improving services and outcomes for children, young people and families.

The Council is facing significant financial challenges over the next 5 years. Despite this there has been continued investment in Children's Services, demonstrating our corporate commitment to supporting the most vulnerable. In order to support the corporate financial position, we will continue to develop more effective and efficient ways of delivering services. The introduction of the People Directorate has put us in a good position to work across children and adult services, focusing on all ages and ensuring smooth transitions and a whole family approach.

During 2014/15, a number of changes were successfully implemented which has safely reduced the numbers of Looked After Children (LAC). These included the implementation of a new operating model; the development and implementation of the Families r First Programme; and the successful completion of Phase One of the Troubled Families Programme.

In 2015/16 work moved from improvement to transformation and a Transforming Children's Board was established to manage the delivery of key projects within Children's Services. The programme is driven by a number of key financial, legislative and Government-led initiatives, strategies and plans. The Board oversees a range of projects including the implementation of the new early intervention and prevention model; the implementation of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub; the continued focused analysis and work on existing Looked After Children to ensure only the right children come into the system and when they do that permanency is secured for them in a timely manner; the review and transformation of child and adolescent mental health and emotional wellbeing services including Headstart; and the development of a 16+ Strategy in order to improve the support and options available to increase the engagement of young people in education, employment and training.

Work to date has been successful in reducing Looked After Children from 778 in 2014/15 to 638 in August 2016, whilst Children's Services budget outturn for 2015/16 had a £3.6m underspend in addition to £3m savings already having been achieved.

The current stage of the change process will ensure whole system transformation to deliver accelerated and sustainable improvements from Early Help through to Child Protection and Looked After Children and ensure a whole family approach.

Early Intervention and Specialist Support Services have recently been transformed, strongly aligned to the delivery of the Corporate Plan, helping to deliver the objective of 'Strengthening Families where Children are at Risk'. The service aims to work with families to achieve positive and sustainable outcomes; facilitate close working with partners; and to build employees' confidence and skills and empower them to work creatively and innovatively with families. This will enable robust early identification of children and families,

ensuring that all children receive contact with universal provision and the development of joint ante/post natal pathways which include Mental Health.

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for children and young people was established on 5th January 2016. Fortnightly multi-agency dip sampling informs the development of practice and provides robust quality assurance of the referral process and response to safeguarding enquiries. The MASH will be extended to respond to safeguarding referrals for adults with care and support needs from August 2016 and will ultimately facilitate a whole family approach. The multi-agency domestic violence screening process has recently been reviewed and an action plan is in place to ensure that it provides a timely and effective response to Police reports of domestic violence where children are associated with the household which is firmly aligned with the MASH.

Wolverhampton has a proactive approach to permanency and where appropriate, continues to seek to increase the number of Adoption Orders and to improve timeliness. Significant progress has been made placing those aged five years or older and Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) children.

There are a number of key local thematic priorities including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Domestic Violence (DV), Radicalisation, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Forced Marriage. The Safer Wolverhampton Partnership (SWP) has made an increased investment in both Violence Against Women and Girls and gangs/youth violence commissioned services. SWP has funded an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) to work directly with Children's Social Care, providing case management support to victims of DV at an earlier point via Child Protection Teams and increase confidence across teams in identifying and responding to it.

CSE is a key local priority and pathways for reporting and recording are currently being reviewed in order to ensure that they are robust and there is a good understanding across professionals of how to identify and respond. We are also working to ensure that we make best use of a range of council services including Regulatory Services and Taxi Licensing. The CSE and Missing Operational Group provides a well-structured approach to identification of risk; and risk management across the entire CSE landscape. This is supported by an effective Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) Meeting process.

The Local Authority has a strong vision for school improvement. The City of Wolverhampton Education Board meets regularly bringing together the Strategic Directors for People and Place and the Director of Education to oversee and drive a joint approach to improving education, training and skills across the City.

The importance of a stable and skilled work force is clearly recognised and a concerted and focused effort on recruitment and retention has seen a significant reduction in the use of agency staff. We are working hard to retain a competent workforce at all levels and are working with neighbouring authorities to try and address some of the broader, regional recruitment issues. The People Social Work Development Board has been established and puts us in a good position to retain and attract experienced staff; continue to provide training and development opportunities; and integrate the standards of social work development and practice within the common goals of the wider Adults and Children's workforce.

There is a strong commitment to sector led improvement and continuous learning. Findings from Serious Case Reviews, Domestic Homicide Reviews and complaints are used to improve services. We have made progress in improving the quality of assessments, encouraging reflective practice and in tackling care planning drift and this continues to be a key area for focus. The improvement work is underpinned by a comprehensive approach to case file audit and self-evaluation which is invaluable in identifying where further work is required. There is a continued focus on casework and making sure that case recording clearly reflects and records the voice of the child. In order to support this, improvements have been made to the CareFirst System.

There is local commitment from all partners for the collective ambition to secure sustainable improvements across Children's Services and to improve outcomes for children and young people. The Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children's Board provides a challenging and supportive role in ensuring that the children's safeguarding system is robust and effective. They do this by challenging agencies both individually and collectively and holding them to account for delivering actions.

We are confident that with the political, corporate and managerial leadership that is in place, together with the excellent partnership working relationships in Wolverhampton, we will deliver the service transformation and quality of practice which is required to improve the experiences and outcomes for children, young people and families.

1. THE WOLVERHAMPTON CONTEXT

- 1.1 Wolverhampton has a population of 254,406 (mid-year 2015 estimate) and is proud of the diversity that this encompasses, with 35.5% of its residents from BME communities. Population projections show that the balance of the population is likely to change significantly over the next couple of decades, with an increase in the number of children and older people; and fewer working age people.
- 1.2 The population is predicted to grow by 8.9% by 2037, to 273,300, with the aged 19 or below cohort expected to increase by 7%. Decreasing mortality rates and longer life expectancies point to a steadily aging population. There is expected to be a 44.7% increase in the number of older people (aged 65+), to 59,900 residents. In 2011 the population density of Wolverhampton had increased to 36 people per hectare (PPH), compared to 34 PPH in 2001¹.
- 1.3 Life expectancy is lower than the England average and Wolverhampton ranks 20 out of 326 Local Authority areas in the Indices of Deprivation 2010.
- 1.4 As of January 2016, the local unemployment rate (Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) Claimants) is significantly higher than that for the wider West Midlands region. It is also higher than the local Black Country average (Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton) and more than double the national unemployment rate². Wolverhampton has the fifth highest JSA claimant rate, at 4.0%, of all 326 English Local Authorities and the fifth highest youth unemployment claimant rate at 5.9%, of all 326 Local Authorities.
- 1.5 The median annual income of Wolverhampton residents is £23,908; and despite being the second highest in the Black Country; it is 12.6% less than the national average income.

2.0 *Outcome from Former Ofsted Inspections*

- 2.1 Inspection of Wolverhampton's safeguarding arrangements for the protection of children took place in June 2011. The local authority was judged to be '**Adequate**'.
- 2.2 Inspection of Wolverhampton's services for Looked After Children, took place in June 2011. The overall effectiveness of services for looked after children, was judged to be '**Good**'.
- 2.3 Inspection of Wolverhampton's Fostering Services took place in March 2012. The overall effectiveness of the service was judged to be '**Good**'.
- 2.4 Inspection of Wolverhampton's Adoption Services took place in October 2012. The overall quality of the adoption service was judged to be '**Good**'.
- 2.5 **Upper Pendeford Farm (SC378153)**: The purpose of Upper Pendeford has now changed to become a short break provision as such the home was subject to variation on the 12th April by Ofsted and received registration on the 18th April 2016. The home has been operational since this date. Prior to this variation, the last full inspection was undertaken in May 2015 and followed up by an interim inspection on

¹ [2001 & 2011 Census](#)

² [Unemployment Briefing](#)

³ Mid-year population estimates 2014

the 28th January 2016 when the overall effectiveness of the establishment was judged to be '**Good**'.

- 2.6 **Private/Independent Children's Homes:** In addition to the Homes operated by the local authority there are 9 children's homes operated by private/independent providers; where overall effectiveness at the last full inspection (as shown in the Ofsted update for May 2016) was judged to be:

Good	Requires Improvement
5	4

- 2.7 Since the last Ofsted Inspection in June 2011, 5 Serious Incident Notifications have been submitted to Ofsted and 3 Serious Case Reviews have been completed and a further 2 have been commissioned.

3. Management

- 3.1 The Strategic Director People joined Wolverhampton on 16th January 2015. Whilst the Strategic Director People has the overall DCS/DASS and Public Health responsibility, the Director of Education has direct accountability for schools and educational attainment. This structure has been introduced by the Council to improve the supportive but challenging school improvement required for Wolverhampton, whilst continuing to build on the wider Council skills and regeneration agenda. An Education Board has been established as part of the Assurance Process in terms of Education within the wider Children's Services.

- 3.2 The People Directorate is currently comprised of four service delivery areas:

- Children and Young People
- Mental Health and Disability (includes the 0 – 25 All Age Disability Team and EDT)
- Older People; and
- Public Health and Well-Being (includes Community Safety and Community Cohesion)

- 3.3 Each service area is led by a Service Director who in turn, manages a number of Heads of Service. The Head of Safeguarding, Quality and Performance is directly line managed by the Strategic Director, People. This structure has recently been reviewed and a revised structure will be in place by October 2016 replacing the current Mental Health and Disability and Older People service areas with one Adults Service area.

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- Principal Social Worker

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- Mental Health Assessment and Care Management
- Emergency Duty Team
- Special Educational Needs
- Commissioning - All Age Disability and Mental Health
- Provision - All Age Disability and Mental Health
- Headstart Programme

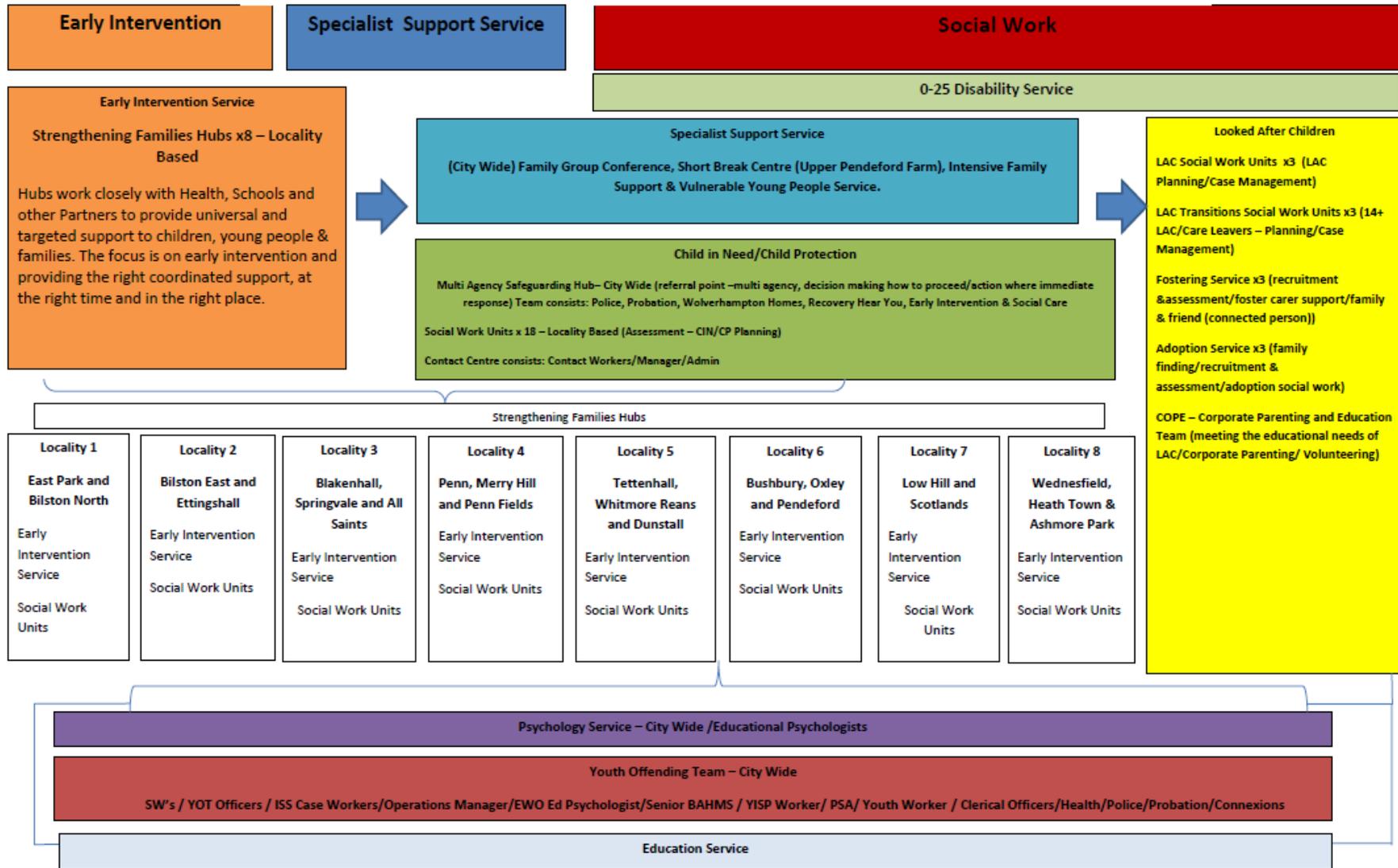
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- Management of allegations in respect of People in Positions of Trust
- Looked after Children reviews
- Child Protection Conferences
- Foster home Reviews
- Missing Children
- Child sexual Exploitation
- Trafficked Children
- Child Employment
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
- Funerals and Property
- Court of Protection
- Quality Assurance
- Practice Improvement
- Children and Adults Safeguarding Boards

WOLVERHAMPTON CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICE MODEL



4. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 4.1 A total of 58,167³ children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Wolverhampton. This is approximately 22.9% of the total population in the area.
- 4.2 Approximately 31.5% of the local authority's children and young people (aged 0 – 17) are living in poverty⁴; this rises to 50% in 10 Lower Super Output Areas. This is higher than the national average.
- 4.3 The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
- Primary schools (including reception) - 20.5% (the national average is 14.5%)
 - Secondary schools (including Academies) -19.7% (the national average is 13.2%)
- 4.4 Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 41.6% of all children living in the area compared with 21.5% in England⁵. Approximately 42.7% of children aged 5-17 are from a minority ethnic group compared with 24% in England. The largest minority ethnic group of children and young people in the area are Asian Indian (born in the UK).
- 4.5 The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:
- Primary schools - 27.2% (the national average is 20.1%)
 - Secondary schools - 22.5% (the national average is 15.7%)

5. *Health*

- 5.1 The health and wellbeing of children in Wolverhampton is generally worse than the England average.
- Wolverhampton currently has an Infant Mortality rate of 6.4 per 1,000 (2012-14) compared to 4.0 per 1,000 for England and Wales. Over the past 20 years there has been a 30% reduction in the average infant mortality rate for England and Wales, whereas in Wolverhampton the local infant mortality rate has largely remained static over this period. Despite a slight fall in the rate in 2012-14 Wolverhampton remains one of the Local Authorities with highest rates of infant mortality in England and Wales.
 - Analysis by Wolverhampton Public Health found that smoking during pregnancy was a key risk factor for infant deaths within the city with the risk of infant death increasing by 54% for those mothers who smoked. A multi-agency working group convened in May 2014 to address this area of major concern. This group involves Health and Children's Services and an action plan has been developed in order to carry out focused work to address this issue. A key early success of this group is the increased use of Carbon Monoxide testing kits for pregnant women enabling more women to be referred to stop smoking services.
- 5.2 The Child Mortality⁶ rate (1 – 17 years) is 15.8 per 100,000 (the national average is 12.0). This is similar to the national average and equates to the death of 26 children between 2012 and 2014.

³ Mid-year population estimates 2014

⁴ [Wolverhampton's Child Strategy 2013-2018](#)

⁵ [Census 2011](#)

⁶ [Wolverhampton Child Health Profile, March 2016](#)

5.3 Children in Wolverhampton have statistically significant worse than average levels of obesity⁷:

- In 2015/2016 the rate of Obesity for children aged 4-5 years is 12.2% (the national average in 2014/15 was 12.3%);
- In 2015/2016 the rate of Obesity for children aged 10–11 years is 26.8% (the national average in 2014/15 was 19.1%);

5.4 By Year 6, 40% of young people in Wolverhampton are overweight or obese and in response we are taking a whole systems approach across a range of partners to respond to this. We are mid-way through the implementation of a three year action plan which takes a life-course approach. Activity includes:

- The development of a coherent weight management pathway for children aged 2-18 with referral mechanisms into a range of age appropriate services and interventions providing healthy lifestyle advice such as:
 - One Family (a programme targeting parents aged 2 to 4 as identified by Health visitors and other professionals).
 - Hearty Lives (a programme providing one to one intensive family support in the home for 2-18 year olds identified by Social Care which includes cooking on a budget, food labelling and healthy eating).
 - Five Star Families (a family based programme held within community settings teaching physical activity, healthy lifestyle principles and practical opportunities to cook).
 - Weight Watcher Programme referrals for children aged 16+
- Food labelling in schools enabling pupils to make informed choices within the dining- hall.
- Review of the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) in schools providing better communication to parents regarding their children's weights and appropriate signposting and support and purchase of new measuring systems for all schools across the City.

5.5 The current rate of under 18 conceptions age 15 to 17 years (2014) in Wolverhampton is 29.6 per 1,000 which is a 6% reduction in the previously reported rate of 31.5 per 1,000 (2013). Although the rate of under 18 conceptions has remained significantly higher than the England average (currently 22.8 per 1,000), there has been a consistent reduction in the rate of under 18 conceptions in Wolverhampton since 2007. Overall, there has been a 52% reduction in the under 18 conception rate from 61.1 per 1,000 reported in 2007 which equates to a decrease in the number of conceptions from 301 to 137 over the past 7 years.

6. **Education**

6.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council's vision is to create an education system that promotes the very highest standards for all children and young people, closes the attainment gap and allows every pupil to reach their full potential. The Council celebrates school autonomy and supports school leaders and teachers in leading city-wide collaboration and school improvement. Educational standards across the city are improving rapidly. The sustainability of this upward trend is a key priority in order to ensure that children and young people have the skills and confidence they

⁷ [Wolverhampton Child Health Profile, March 2016](#)

need to reach their aspirational potential to support the longer term development and prosperity of the city.

- 6.2 There are 40,798 pupils on roll in 110 schools. 84 of these schools are maintained by the local authority, the rest are made up of academies or free schools. 58 (59%) of the Primary and Secondary schools in Wolverhampton are in the most deprived quintile nationally as defined by Ofsted. There are no Wolverhampton schools classed as being in the least deprived category. 22% of pupils are eligible for free school meals and 24% have English as an additional language, this is against national figures of 15.2% and 15% respectively. 18% of pupils have Special Educational Needs against a national average of 15%.
- 6.3 The City's schools have been on a rapid improvement journey over the last two years. Primary School Ofsted outcomes in December 2013 were the worst in the country when the Local Authority was rated 152nd out of 152 – the current rating is 135th and we are rapidly rising up the table – with 81% of Primary schools currently rated as good or better (July 2016). Secondary Schools have been on a similar journey with the Local Authority being rated as 108th in the country in December 2014 and this year being rated joint 81st and receiving the accolade of being in the top 20% of most improved authorities in the country, with only Solihull above Wolverhampton in the West Midlands.
- 6.4 The City has 83% of all schools currently rated as good or better (July 2016) and the ambition is that by September 2018, 95% of schools in the city will be rated good or better when inspected.
- 6.5 The Education Directorate encompasses the School Standards Service which provides challenge and support to all schools across the City in order to ensure that all schools are judged to be good or better by Ofsted. The School Planning and Resources Service leads on strategic planning to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet demand in the city and that there is fair access for all, a co-ordinated admissions scheme across the City, a fair access protocol and the provision and commissioning of home to school transport.
- 6.6 The School Planning and Resources Service also works with a wide range of partners to maximise available funding and resources to support school improvement activity, maintain quality learning environments, including monitoring of the deployment and usage of Dedicated Schools Grant. The Service promotes wider opportunities for children and young people and co-ordinates the marketing of a wide range of directly delivered early help and school improvement services focused on improving educational and other outcomes.

6.7 *Education Performance of Looked After Children*

- 6.7.1 The educational attainment of Wolverhampton's Looked after Children shows significant improvement in recent years and in both 2014 and 2015 it was generally above national averages at all Key Stages.
- 6.7.2 In 2015, for example, over 20% of eligible LAC achieved 5+ GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and Maths, an improvement on 16% in 2014. These outcomes were above the national average by 4% and 6% respectively. Comparisons between LAC attending Wolverhampton schools and all pupils in the city in both 2014 and 2015 revealed that the LAC cohort were making significantly better progress than their peers, these and other outcomes are captured in the VSH Annual Reports for 2013/14 and 2014/15.

- 12 LAC/care leavers are currently in higher education (HE). A further 5 are expected to enter HE in September 2016, totalling 17 LAC/care leavers in HE and maintaining positive previous performance
- 90% of eligible LAC in year 12/13 are in EET excluding those not available to the labour market (NALM), 89% including NALM
- 67% of care leavers in year 12/13 are currently in EET (excluding NALM). This is in line with national averages
- In 2015, 74% of the year 13 cohort (both LAC and care leavers) achieved qualifications and 25% achieved A-level or equivalent. Only 13% of this cohort were NEET at December 2015

6.7.3 Academic outcomes for LAC in 2016 are currently being collated however the following outcomes are currently available, presenting a very positive picture:

6.7.4 **Key Stage 4:** In 2015, 20% of eligible LAC achieved 5 or more good GCSEs including Maths and English. This was well above the national average of 16% for the third consecutive year. 52% of all pupils in Wolverhampton schools achieved this GCSE benchmark in 2015.

6.7.5 **Key Stage 2:** Wolverhampton schools only - % achieving the age-related expected level in teacher assessments:

- 63% in reading – the same % as for all pupils in Wolverhampton
- 81% in writing – 7% higher than all pupils in Wolverhampton
- 69% in maths – the same % as for all pupils in Wolverhampton
- 63% in reading, writing & maths – 11% higher than all Wolverhampton pupils and 10% higher than the national figure for all pupils (science was also 69% for Wolverhampton LAC)

6.7.6 **Key Stage 1** – Wolverhampton schools only - % achieving the age-related expected level in teacher assessments:

- 46% in reading, 46% in writing
- 77% in maths – 6% higher than all pupils in Wolverhampton
- 38% in reading, writing and maths (77% in science)
- 67% in the year 1 phonics check (79% of all pupils achieved the expected level)

6.7.7 **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)** – Wolverhampton settings only:

- 50% were assessed as at a 'good stage of development' in reading, writing and number (our highest ever % for LAC at EYFS and 17% higher than 2015)
- 42% were assessed as at a 'good stage of development' across all areas

6.7.8 The out of city results are not available until the National Pupil Database has been populated which will be some point in the Autumn Term. This will be reported in the Virtual School Head Annual Report 2015/16.

6.7.9 EYFS, whilst showing signs of improvement, is still a priority and reading and writing at Key Stage 1 will also be prioritised for additional support in the 2016/17 LAC Attainment Improvement Plan. Further outcomes will be collated and captured in the 2016 Virtual School Head (VSH) Annual Report in Autumn 2016.

7. Post-16

7.1 A review of post 16 priorities was recently undertaken which included the need to address issues around the quality and breadth of alternative provision for vulnerable learners, including Young Offenders, Looked After Children and SEND learners. This has led to the development of a quality assurance framework which will be trialled during 2016/17 across all Wolverhampton commissioners of 14-25 alternative provision. A new strategic plan has also been produced: *City of Wolverhampton's Commitment to Young People* which has significant outcomes including:

- A coherent, sufficient and high quality local learning offer and learning opportunities
- Clear and flexible learning pathways for young people provided through schools, colleges, work-based learning providers and in other settings
- Effective transition for all learners, including SEND, which provides quality CEIAG to identify appropriate pathways and signposting and guidance to access additional support; ensures provision is in place; ensures access to the provision and identifies potential progression from the offer
- High quality, coordinated and impartial information, advice and guidance that builds on prior attainment and provide access to appropriate progression routes;
- Effective individual support provided to ensure the retention or re-engagement of disaffected and vulnerable young people in education and training; enables progression into sustainable employment or to ensure a positive contribution to local economic communities (eg SEND learners*)
- Effective individual support for all young people at points of transition, particularly LDD and the most vulnerable young people to enable them to secure progression to further learning and employment
- High levels of satisfaction from young people with the provision, support and information, advice and guidance

7.2 Post 16 Participation rates for Wolverhampton April – July 2016

	April	May	June	July
NEET adjusted	4.1	4.1	3.9	3.9
Not Known	11.0	10.6	9.0	7.4
In learning	83.1	83.4	84.9	86.5

7.3 A significant improvement has been achieved in tracking not knowns since April.

September Offer - To meet the requirements of the Offer - the September Offer is a commitment to offer, by the end of September, a suitable place in post-16 education or training to all young people in the year they reach compulsory education age.
Achievement 2015:

- 99.9% of the Year 11 received an offer. This was higher than the Black Country, the West Midlands and the England average
- 98.5% of Year 12 received an offer. This was higher than the Black Country, the West Midlands and the England average.
- Youth Employment Initiative: Black Country Impact Project

7.4 Black Country partners successfully bid for European Social Fund (ESF) and Youth Employment Initiative Funding from the Department for Work and Pensions. £51m has been allocated to support the sustainable integration into the labour market of young people (aged 16-29), not in education, employment or training (NEET). This

will be done by supporting them into the “Journey to Employment” so that those furthest from the job market can gain the skills that will bring them closer to the job market. Programme delivery will run from June 2016 to December 2018. This supports a shared designated worker across the Looked after Children Transitions Team and the Youth Offending Team who engages with young people who are NEET. They will provide intensive person centred support with a solutions focused approach, sourcing bespoke individualised user led provision to address barriers to education, employment and training throughout their journey to a positive outcome and supporting them once an outcome has been achieved. The designated Key Worker began working with both services on 8th August 2016.

7.5 *Improving Education, Employment and Training for Vulnerable Groups*

7.5.1 The Connexions Service provides early intervention and targeted services for young people aged 16-19 years. For those young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities the service provides specialist information advice and guidance for young people from 13-25 years.

7.5.2 The Connexions service directly supports the work in the City to enable young people to develop the skills to get and keep work. Progress and impact is monitored and measured by the number of young people supported to gain education employment or training and a reduction in the number in the City who are Not in Education, Employment or Training.

7.6 *Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)*

7.6.1 Connexions have been particularly successful in ensuring that the percentage of young people who are NEET has continued to fall year on year. Personal Advisers have worked across the City to provide intensive support for those vulnerable within the labour market. Current performance is good - 2.8% against a target of 3.9%. Nationally, NEET figures have been reducing however, this needs to be set against the increase in Not Known that is occurring across England. This is a current focus for the service locally. The service is delivered as close as possible to the localities across the City whilst still preserving service delivery through a city centre shop.

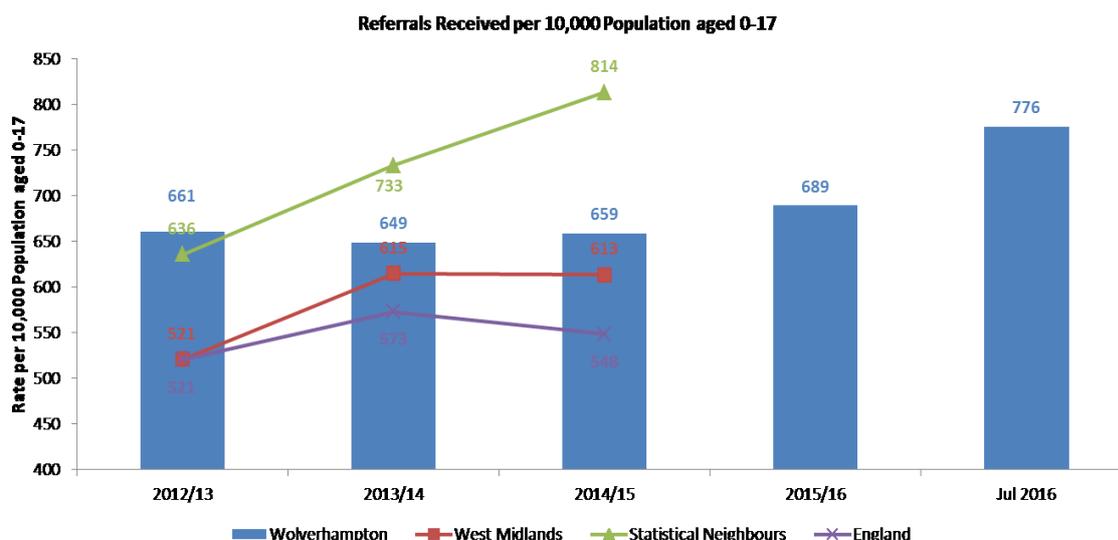
7.6.2 A team of multi-skilled Personal Advisers focus on discrete areas of the City which are coterminous with the Strengthening Families Hubs. The team includes Personal Advisers working through drop in sessions at the City Centre and in the local community through community and youth centres where available, and home visiting where whole family issues can be identified in relation to the young person. Personal Advisers work intensively with the most vulnerable such as teenage mums, SEN/LDD, young offenders, substance misuse, care leavers and new arrivals.

8. *Social Care - Performance*

8.1 4010 referrals were received in the 12 months up to March 2016 – a 5.5% increase on the number received in 2014/15. Prior to 2015/16 the number of referrals had remained relatively static over the past four years fluctuating by just 4.5%, the increase in referrals co-incides with the introduction of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and will continue to be monitored.

8.2 Referrals per 10,000 population have not seen the dramatic rise that has been evidenced among statistical neighbours. Repeat referral rates are lower than comparator groups whereas the percentage of referrals leading to assessment is higher than comparator groups. This indicates that thresholds are being applied

appropriately and referrals dealt with effectively the first time leading to Children and Young People receiving help that is proportionate to the identified risk.



Repeat Referrals

July 2016 – 22.9%
Mar 2016 – 21.2%

2014/15 (2013/14)

Wolverhampton – 21.2% (26.9%)
West Midlands – 23.0% (20.7%)
Statistical Neighbours – 24.0% (21.8%)
England – 24.0% (23.4%)

Referrals Leading to Assessment

July 2016 – 90.8%
Mar 2016 – 95.6%

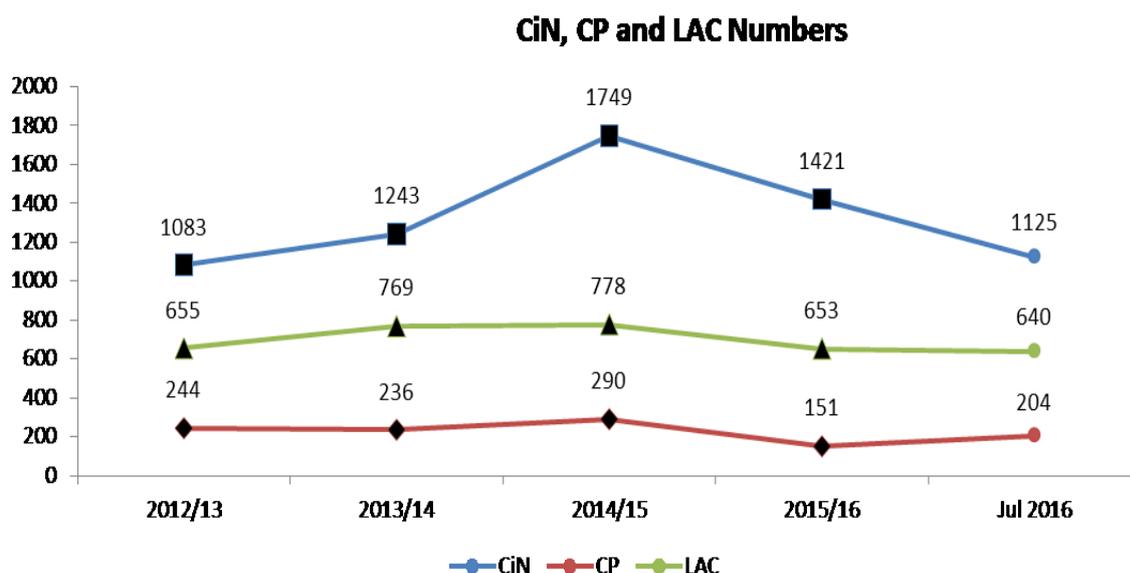
2014/15 (2013/14)

Wolverhampton – 92.4% (87.1%)
West Midlands – 89.3% (85.5%)
Statistical Neighbours – 88.7% (92.2%)
England – 86.2% (85.9%)

8.3 It should be noted that there was an error in the officially reported referrals figure for 2013/14 due to new recording processes. The figure shown here is the locally corrected figure and is what should have been reported. This reporting error has also had an impact on the percentage of re-referrals. The figure shown here is the adjusted local figure rather than the published figure.

8.4 **Numbers of children in need of specialist social care services** - Between March 2012 and March 2014 there was a 35% increase in the number of Looked After Children (LAC) and by the end of 2013/14 Wolverhampton had the second highest rate of LAC in the country. Throughout 2014/15 numbers stabilised and throughout 2015/16, the number of LAC has fallen steadily. Following the initial reduction in LAC numbers, there was a spike in both Children in Need (CiN) and Child Protection (CP) numbers. However, this was not a continuing trend and both numbers fell in 2015/16.

8.5 CiN numbers shown here are those children open to social care excluding LAC and CP

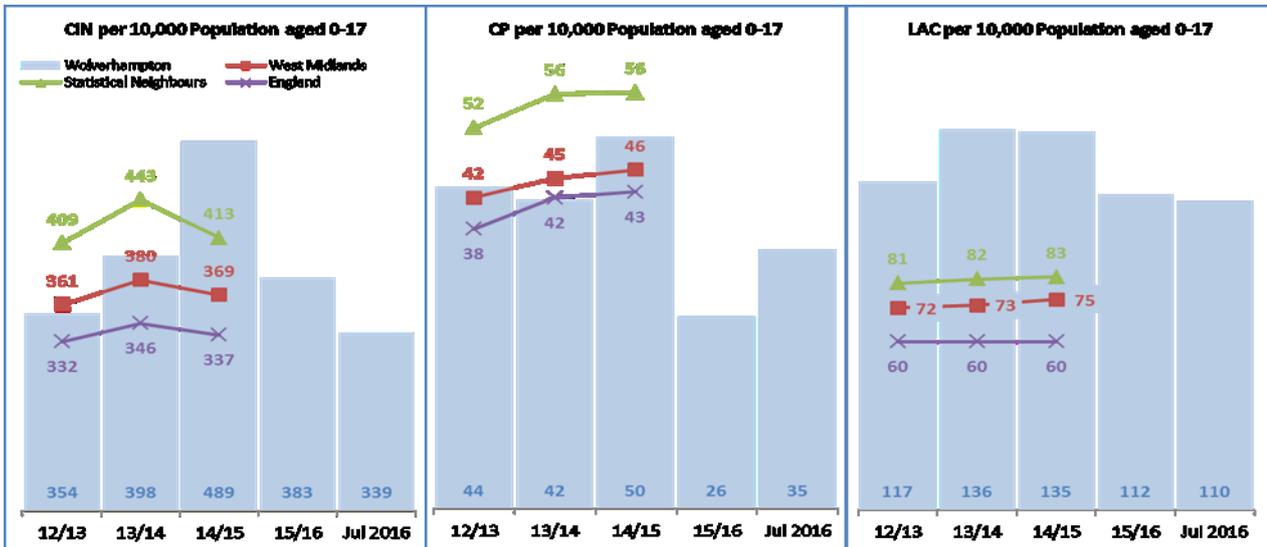


8.6 At the end of March the overall CiN rate (including LAC and CP) had reduced to lower than the Wolverhampton 2013/14 out-turn and lower than statistical neighbours, and the CP rate is the lowest it has been for 4 years and is significantly lower than comparators. Whilst the LAC rate remains higher than comparators, it is the lowest it has been for three years.

8.7 Due to the historical high LAC numbers there is an imbalance between the numbers of CiN, CP and LAC when compared with statistical neighbours, West Midlands and England. The average split between CP and LAC amongst comparators is 40% CP and 60% LAC. In Wolverhampton it is currently 24% CP vs 76% LAC. This trend continues as work is ongoing to safely de-escalate children from LAC, CP and CiN.

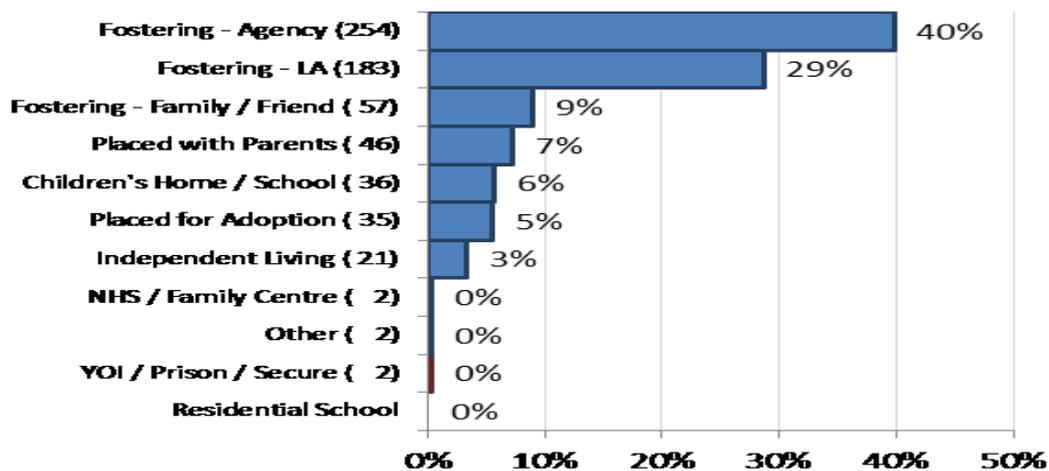
8.8 Wolverhampton Children’s Services has and continues to be on a journey of improvement which is strongly led by managers at all levels in order to bring about effective and sustainable change at an appropriate pace. The reduction in the number of Children and Young People subject to LAC planning has been brought about by concerted management action to challenge the threshold for admission to care and address drift and delay across CIN/CP and LAC leading to more children and young people receiving the right service at the right time, resulting in improved outcomes.

8.9 Overall, the number of children with social care intervention continues to reduce, evidencing children, young people and families are offered help when needs or concerns are first identified. This has been achieved through early intervention and statutory child protection work being clearly and effectively differentiated. The work to prevent children coming into Social Care is continuing with the reconfigured Early Intervention Service, the introduction of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and the continued focus on ensuring that only the right children and young people are in the social care system.



8.10 **LAC Placements** - In March 2014, Wolverhampton had 78% of LAC placed in foster care compared with 75% amongst statistical neighbours and England as a whole (2015 comparator figures are not yet available). This had fallen slightly to 74% at the end of March 2015 and again to 71% at the end of February 2016. However, this is offset by an increase in the percentage of children placed for adoption and a slight increase in the percentage in independent living. The Fostering Service is developing a specialist Fostering Team to offer local fostering placements for children and young people with complex needs. This sits alongside the action plans to recruit local foster carers to provide stable placements for children and young people to access local opportunities and maintain links with their local community and family.

LAC Placements - July 2016



8.11 **LAC Placement Stability** - At the end of March 2016, 69.8% of children who had been in care for more than two and a half years had been in the same placement for two years or more, maintaining and improving slightly on the 2015 result of 69.0%. This was slightly better than regional and national performance in 2014/15 of 68% and considerably better than the performance of statistical neighbours which was 66.8%.

8.12 At the end of July 2016, 77% of children who had been looked after for more than two years and 70% of children who had been looked after for less than two years have had fewer than three placements in the last two years. Overall, 45% of all

children have had fewer than three placements since they became looked after. This shows that children are more likely to experience placement moves in the first two years.

- 8.13 There has been some fall in local placement stability over the past 12 months however this is likely to be linked to the reducing LAC numbers as many of the revocations have been around stable 'placed with parents' placements, which will have had a direct impact on local stability measures. Despite this, the data continues to show that LAC in Wolverhampton generally experience stable placements ensuring children and young people only experience placement moves in accordance with their care plans or when they are at risk of harm or are being harmed.

9. **Adoption**

- 9.1 Wolverhampton Adoption Team continues to achieve good outcomes for children requiring adoption and is demonstrating good adoption outcomes for children who would be regarded as harder to place. Wolverhampton's success in placing older children, and children of BME background is above the average for England.

- 9.2 Despite a significant improvement in performance for 2012-2015 Wolverhampton remain rated 'double red' for the A1 and A2 indicators:

- **A1 Indicator** - 734 days (decrease of 138 days from 2011-2014) against a target of 487 days (247 days over target)
- **A2 Indicator** – 263 days (decrease of 31 days from 2011-2014) against a target of 121 days (142 days over target)

- 9.3 Initial, unvalidated results for 2016:

- **A1 Indicator** - 671 days (decrease of 63 days from 2012-2015) against a target of 426 days (245 days over target)
- **A2 Indicator** – 293 days (increase of 30 days from 2011-2015) against a target of 121 days (172 days over target)

- 9.4 Despite Wolverhampton's results for 2012-2015 remaining 'double red' and 2013-2016 likely to also be double red in the two key indicators, performance in other areas remains good and Wolverhampton continues to make improvements in adoption outcomes for looked after children. Results for 2013-2016 and 2015/16 are currently being analysed, however, for 2012-2015 the following key performance indicators demonstrate this improved performance by the service despite the 'double red' rating:

- Adoptions have increased by almost 30% in 2012-2015 to 137 in comparison to 106 in 2011-2014. This is also an increase of 80% from 2010-2013 where just 76 adoptions occurred.
- In 2012-2015 the timeliness of adopted children who are placed with their adoptive families (Indicator A1) improved substantially from 872 days to 734 days. 2014/15 as a single year saw a significant improvement with the average number of days decreasing to 616 days from 747 days in 2013/14.
- Wolverhampton's performance against the A10 indicator is 489 days which is the same as the England average and an improvement of 34 days.
- In the year 2014/15 alone 51 children were adopted in Wolverhampton, this was a slight increase on 2013/14 which itself was a record performance.
- 22% of children who left care in the period 2012-2015 were adopted compared with 19% in 2011-2014. This is against a national average of 16%.

- Wolverhampton has continued good performance for A6 Indicator. In 2012-2015 15% of black and minority ethnic children leaving care were adopted, significantly higher than the England average of 9%.
- Wolverhampton continues to pursue adoption for what would be regarded as harder to place children including those aged five years or older (Indicator A7). In 2012-15, 8% of children aged over 5 leaving care were adopted compared the national average of 5% in the same period.

10. Complaints

- 10.1 The overall number of children social care complaints received for 2015/16 was 128, compared to 152 in 2014/15; this is a reduction of 24 over the year.
- 10.2 The Complaint Regulations provides an opportunity for children/young people to raise issues of concern without those matters being treated as formal complaints, as long as they are speedily and effectively addressed. These are referred to as Informal complaints: 39 were received during 2015/16. No particular service area received a disproportionate number of complaints during 2015/16.
- 10.3 During 2015/16 Children Services received 128 complaints, 58 were responded to and concluded satisfactorily within the initial ten day statutory timescale. A further 39 were responded to within 20 days, with 23 falling outside of 20 days. The average number of days to respond and close all complaints over the year 2015/16 was 13 days. This is a positive position and a clear indication of the importance placed on responding speedily and effectively to complaints. The 'main issues' of complaint include communication and information (47 complaints); quality of service (36 complaints); and disagreement with policy and procedures (17 complaints).
- 10.4 Although 128 complaints were registered in 2015/16; 120 of those were concluded by 31 March 2016; of which 39 were upheld; 48 complaints were partially upheld; and 33 complaints were not upheld.
- 10.5 Young people have been directly involved in the design and development of complaint publicity material ensuring that they are easily understood. We will continue to work with young people to ensure increased access to the complaint process through emerging technical means including social network sights, safely and securely. All young people wishing to discuss making a complaint or seeking to make a complaint are offered the support of Advocacy, provided by the Black Country Advocacy Service. A quarterly meeting takes place involving the Manager of the Wolverhampton Black Country Advocacy Service, with Children Services Senior Managers, Managers, and Complaints Manager to discuss complaint activity and matters arising.
- 10.6 Children and Young People Services are committed to learning from customer feedback and require the completion of a learning log/implementation plan from each complaint investigated. Where complaints highlight that things have gone wrong, managers are required to identify any remedial and improvement action.

Case Example: *A recent complaint was made via an advocate that the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group had delayed a referral to the Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). As a result, there has been changes to local policies and practices around referring Looked After Children to CAHMS. The referral process has been reviewed and amended to ensure the process is robust. Staff have been briefed on the new process. In addition, this has also led to a review of the Policy relating to Health Assessments for Looked After Children to ensure a robust process for reviewing and considering referrals to other services.*

11. Safeguarding and Performance and Quality

- 11.1 The Safeguarding Service is managed by the Strategic Director, People. The Service plays a key role in ensuring the provision of an effective Independent Reviewing/Chair Service which oversees care and safeguarding planning for children. An Electronic Quality Assurance Tool is used and sits within Care First. The tool has ensured operational managers are aware of issues identified, have the opportunity to address them with their staff and feedback to the IRO. Work is on-going to continue to improve Child Protection Conferences, ensuring they are child centred and outcome focused.
- 11.2 There has been a key focus on ensuring that children's records contain accurate, relevant and up to date information to support effective care planning. This has led to LAC decisions being included on Statutory Records which has improved the quality of children's records. Ensuring the voice of the child is evident in assessments and reports to LAC reviews and ensuring that children and young people are supported to participate in reviews is a priority. Independent Reviewing Officers speak with children and young people in advance of LAC reviews to agree who should attend, when and where the review will be held and what will be discussed. Children and young people are actively encouraged to take the lead in their review and a number of children have chaired their own review. Where a young person requires the support of an advocate to ensure their views, wishes and feelings are heard, one is provided.

Case Example: *A 14 year old girl (Child A) who has been in care for 5 years is considered to be a potential witness to alleged historical abuse of her now 18 year old sister which is being investigated. Child A may also be a potential victim in her own right. The Police commissioned an eminent psychologist to assist them with their enquiries and to evaluate Child A's competence as a witness and the psychologist observed that Child A has a learning disability and a mental disorder.*

The Independent Reviewing Officer has been Child A's allocated IRO for 5 years and has a good knowledge of her circumstances and her needs. The IRO was recently informed that LAC Transitions Team, based on Child A's presentation, were seeking to obtain a worker for Child A from the Disabled Children & Young People's Team, so that she could be better supported now and later, at transition into adulthood. The IRO was copied into correspondence suggesting that Child A did not meet the criteria for allocation to the Disabled Children & Young People's Team.

The IRO was of the view that support from this service would be vital for Child A and felt it appropriate to advocate for her on her behalf. The IRO recalled the psychologist's findings (which were linked to the criminal proceedings) and furnished the Disabled Children & Young People's Team with a copy of the report, together with an observation that it was clear that Child A did have a Learning Disability as highlighted in the report. The Disabled Children & Young People's Team responded by agreeing to send a worker to Child A's next Review. This demonstrates how the IRO was effective in advocating on the child's behalf.

- 11.3 The management of allegations processes are clear and consistent across Wolverhampton and the Designated Officer (DO) role has been promoted effectively. The DO has been actively involved in the delivery of multi-agency and single agency training / awareness raising to promote the role and extend professionals' understanding in terms of management of allegations. This has led to an improved working knowledge from partner agencies which in turn promotes more timely responses to safeguarding concerns.

12. Quality Assurance

12.1 Wolverhampton has a Quality Assurance Framework that supports the development and improvement of services that strengthen families and improve outcomes for vulnerable children. The Quality Assurance Framework set out all of the activity that relates to quality assurance across children's services. This includes the role of supervision and appraisal, complaints and compliments, performance management information, participation and feedback from children, young people, parents and carers, serious case reviews, table top reviews, staff feedback, statutory inspections and case file audits. The Quality Assurance framework is led by the work of the Principal Social Worker.

12.2 Wolverhampton operates an on-going case file audit schedule. The purpose of audit is to retrospectively examine practice against service standards, policy and regulation and take remedial action where required. Audits have taken place on a monthly basis and the tool has been updated in the last 12 months to focus on quality of practice and outcomes for children that are aligned with Ofsted descriptors. Between March 2016 and end of August 2016, 82 cases were audited. The following judgements were made;

Outstanding	1
Good	31
Requires improvement	41
Inadequate	9

12.3 In October 2015, a self-evaluation process was implemented and now takes place every quarter. This process mirrors elements of an Ofsted inspection. 20 cases are audited, selected in line with the Ofsted criteria, and the case file audit process set up ahead of the inspection is tested including involvement of early intervention services and partner agencies. Alongside this, focus groups are held with frontline practitioners to provide support and preparation ahead of the inspection. The findings of the self-evaluation is summarised in a report which is presented to senior managers and the Transforming Children's Services Board.

12.4 In addition to this monthly audit schedule, Heads of Service undertake local 'dip sampling' audits on a regular basis on specific areas of practice including management oversight, case supervision, LAC or CP visits, quality of Strategy meetings, pathway plans for care leavers, to name a few. These are local to the service area and are undertaken in order to drive the quality of practice and ensure compliance with local procedures and legislation.

12.5 Wolverhampton's commitment to understanding our strengths and areas of development is evidenced in our recent commissioning of Ingson (independent company recognised by DfE as Improvement Partners) to independently audit 210 case files throughout Social Care to provide further rigour and challenge in helping to understand the 'so what' question and where further improvements are required. In response to both audits, action plans were produced to ensure that swift and effective action is taken in response to the findings.

12.6 Through this audit process we have identified some key areas of strength including:

- Good application of threshold and taking historical issues into account in decision making
- Working in partnership with parents, carers and partners
- Voice of the child

12.7 The areas of development, which are being addressed through action plans, include:

- Management oversight and rationale for decision making
- Timeliness and analysis of assessments

12.8 In April 2016, Wolverhampton participated in the West Midlands Sector Led Improvement 'Auditing the Audit' Peer Challenge. This involved 3 Peer Auditors from other West Midlands Local Authorities, who followed a peer challenge process based on the LGA methodology in order to review Wolverhampton's auditing process. 10 audits were reviewed alongside 2 focus groups of managers and practitioners over the 2.5 day process. Feedback has led to the development of an action plan to review and make changes to the audit processes and tools. This includes:

- Strengthening the audit process via improved feedback loop processes
- Ensuring the audit process includes practice self-evaluation
- Improving the quality of auditing via training briefings in June and embedding this through service led audit champions
- Ensuring greater service user voice in the Audit process

12.9 The auditing process has been revised in line with the Essex Model. This model take a three tiered approach in which the social worker completes a short feedback form capturing what they feel the strengths and weaknesses are within the case; the first line manager then audits the file and makes contact with the family or young person to obtain feedback. The initial audit, the service users and social work feedback is then passed to another manager who audits the file independently. In Wolverhampton it is expected that the second audit would be undertaken by senior members of the auditing team and senior social work managers.

12.10 This process will add a layer of depth to the auditing process and provide a wealth of qualitative information around the lived experience of the child or young person and their family or carers. This model will be implemented in September 2016 following a pilot in August 2016.

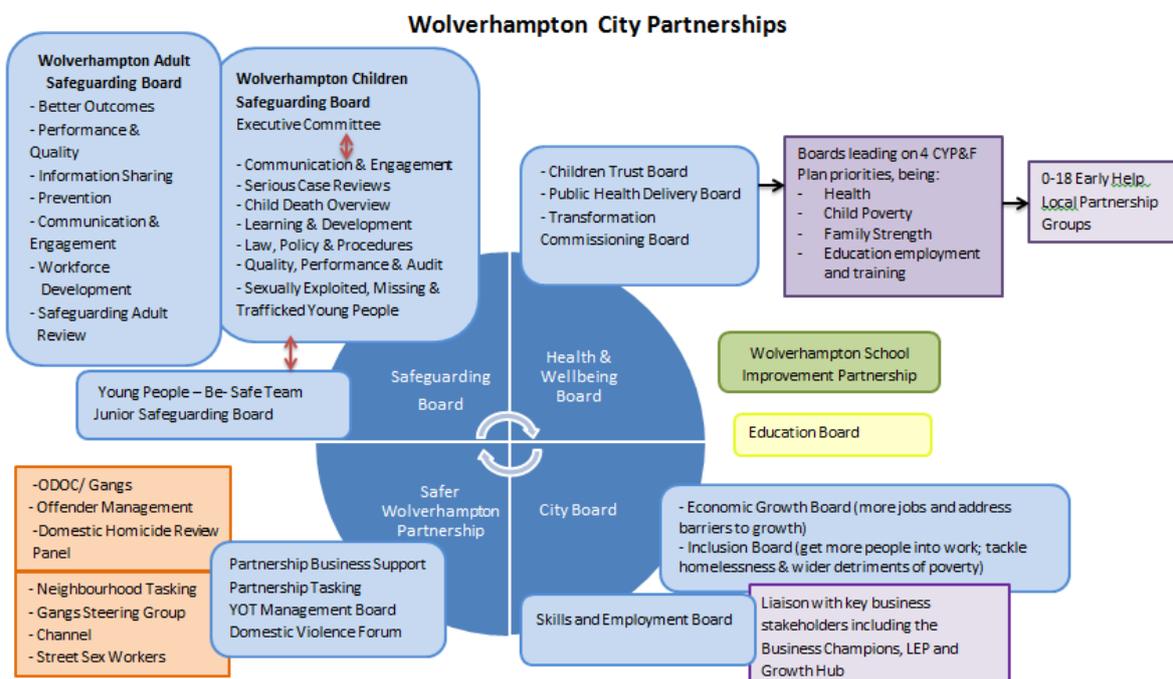
13. Workforce

13.1 The Joint Adults and Children's Social Work Development Board and the Children and Young People Workforce Development Group signed off their 2015/16 workforce development strategies and delivery plans as completed or on track for continuation where there are identified key priority areas for further development. These have been included in their 2016/17 strategies and delivery plans which are designed to support business priorities for 2016/17 in line with Corporate Plan requirements.

13.2 The Transformation of Children's Services has paved the way for the redesign of services and a review of the capacity and capability requirements of the children's workforce which has included the introduction of priority training across Social Care, Early Help and going forward YOT. This includes a bespoke 'foundation' training course facilitated by Child and Family Foundation Training designed to support and enhance practice in assessment, analysis including risk and outcome based care planning. There is a third day specifically for Social Workers that focuses on permanency planning. Currently 77 Social Workers and 73 Early Help professionals have been trained in the programme and early indications observed by the Principal Social Worker and through case file audits is that there is clear evidence that practice is improving. Further cohorts are being procured to ensure that the whole children's workforce are trained in this model of practice to ensure consistency and a quality and sustainable development programme will be included in the probation period for new employees in the future.

- 13.3 This programme will be complimented by a Restorative Practice Model which is currently in procurement. It is a high support, high challenge evidence based relationship model designed to support practitioners in achieving the best outcomes for children and young people. This model will also be rolled out across the whole children and young people workforce, beginning in October with senior managers and will use a range of methodologies. An impact assessment will be undertaken and monitored as the model is rolled out.
- 13.4 The Principal Social Worker is pivotal to ensuring that there is good joined up practice across the Children and Young People's Workforce. She is a member of both Boards and works closely with the Workforce Development Lead, managers and practitioners to shape the workforce strategies and develop and monitor the delivery plans. She leads on the delivery of quarterly social work briefings for practitioners and IRO's and is very involved in promoting the development of all Newly Qualified Social Workers through the ASYE programme and practitioners and managers through the planned activities in the Social Work Development Strategy.
- 13.5 In addition, as the Principal Social Worker role spans Children's and Adults, the post has a significant role in embedding a whole family approach across the social care workforce. Wolverhampton held its first joint social work conference with Adult Services for all social work practitioners and managers in March 2016 which was very successful and it is intended as part of the plan that this will be an annual conference with guest speakers.

14. Partnership Working



- 14.1 In Wolverhampton, there is a well-established culture of effective partnership working at both an operational and strategic level. This is reflected in the extensive strategic partnership framework which has recently been signed off by Partnership Board chairs during summer 2016.
- 14.2 The Children's Trust and Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) promote effective partnership working to ensure that effective systems are in place to

protect and safeguard children, young people and families. The Board actively challenges agencies individually and collectively and promotes continuous learning and improvement across the partnerships. A performance framework is in place to monitor progress against the City's Children, Young People and Families 10 year plan which supports appropriate identification and challenge around areas that require improvement.

- 14.3 Evidence of this can be seen in the recent development of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which went live in January 2016 and the joint working with Health partners in the delivery of Early Help Services. There is also a strong partnership commitment to identifying and responding to child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and working together to respond to domestic violence.
- 14.4 Work is well underway in the production of a new model for the provision of emotional health and wellbeing services. The new model aligns CAMHS Specialist Services more closely with the Strengthening Families Hubs, meaning that children, young people and their families will be able to receive support closer to home and that providers are able to work in a more joined up way. Specialist Teams will continue to deliver to some of the most vulnerable groups of children and young people including Looked After Children, Children in Need, Youth Offending Service and crisis and home treatment. CAMHS Link Workers will be employed to work closely with the HeadStart Programme and ensure that children and young people who need specialist services can access these quickly. These Link Workers will also assist children and young people transition into community based services as specialist support is no longer required.

KEY JUDGEMENT 1 - The experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection

Children & young people who are, or who are likely to be, at risk of harm or who are the subject of concern are identified and protected. Help is provided early in the emergence of a problem and is well co-ordinated and recorded through multi-agency arrangements. Thresholds between early help and statutory child protection work are appropriate, understood and operate effectively. Records of action and decision are clear and up to date. Children and young people are listened to and heard. Social workers build effective relationships with them and their families in order to assess the likelihood of and capacity for change. Risk is well understood, managed and regularly reviewed. Children and young people experience timely and effective multi-agency help and protection through risk-based assessment, authoritative practice, planning and review that secures change.

THE COUNCIL'S SELF EVALUATION OF THIS JUDGEMENT IS "Requires Improvement"

Strengths:

- Implementation of a targeted early intervention model in order to reduce the escalation of children and families into specialist services
- Increased use of Early Help Assessments, ensuring that the right support is provided at the earliest opportunity
- Introduction of the use of Outcomes Star to facilitate outcome focused assessments leading to improved service delivery based on evidenced need
- Increasing resources to support and mentor managers and to ensure caseloads are manageable
- Implementation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, to facilitate timely and appropriate safeguarding responses
- Interventions for young people on the cusp of the Youth Justice system to prevent their escalation into the system and signpost their needs
- Robust pathway for YOT stepdown into Strengthening Families Hubs where there are unmet needs to prevent further re-offending and ensure whole family needs are addressed
- Well established 0-25 Disability Service which facilitates early and effective transition and provides a range of support for carers, to enable them to continue caring
- Developed and implemented the role out of new CareFirst exemplars to support accurate recording and effective practice
- Competency Based Supervision Framework in place which when fully implemented will clearly set the standards and expectations for effective management and supervision across Social Care
- Robust quality assurance framework underpinning continuous improvements in practice.
- A strong local offer, co-produced with parents and carers, which provides clear information and advice on services and support available for children with disabilities.

Development Areas:

- Redefine the targeted Early Help offer and strengthen knowledge & understanding of local needs to assist in identifying families who require targeted EH
- Implement Eclipse (new ICT system) to ensure effective oversight, co-ordination and management of Early Help Assessment to be used across agencies
- Continued focus on management and supervision arrangements ensuring Social Workers are well supported and individual cases are effectively managed and supported through reflective practice, ensuring the right decisions at the right time
- Extend case file audit process in order to regularly monitor and improve practice within Early Intervention Services

- Improve universal contact with families through integration of health professionals and the development of a single record
- To effectively extend the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) to include vulnerable adults as part of a whole family approach
- To increase the participation of children and young people in Child Protection Case Conferences where appropriate
- Embed the effective management of step up and step down pathways to ensure that cases are supported at the right level of need
- Roll out training
- Embed the Neglect Strategy and Toolkit across the children's workforce in order to ensure early identification of neglect and its impact on children and young people
- Continue to review Social Work configuration in order to improve responsiveness and ensure manageable caseloads and continuous review and management oversight of referral and re-referral data to ensure cases are being closed appropriately and effectively
- Implement the Public Law Improvement Plan to improve performance and improve the quality and timeliness of pre-proceedings work
- Improve the offer for carers in response to both Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 ensuring where appropriate they receive proportionate and timely assessments of their needs
- Embedding the use of practice tools in relation to addressing and reducing risks associated with DV, Substance Misuse, CSE, FGM and Neglect
- Embed the pathways to identify, record and safeguard children at risk of CSE
- To ensure MASE action plans are SMART and outcome focused and embedded within the overarching care planning process
- To improve case work to reduce the number of frequent missing
- Review and revise the domestic violence multi-agency screening process to ensure effective information sharing and assessment where children are living in households with domestic violence
- To strengthen safeguarding procedures to ensure children who are home educated are safeguarded appropriately
- To implement the SEND Strategy to ensure that disabled children and young people and children with additional needs also get the same life chances as children who do not have a disability

15. Early Intervention

- 15.1 Early identification and intervention are key priorities for Wolverhampton and safeguarding partners. The services have recently undergone fundamental transformation in order to ensure that there is a focus on children and families with the greatest need; to improve the effectiveness of interventions and to provide a robust approach to evidencing outcomes. A new 0-18 Strengthening Families Model, based on 8 locality hubs, has been developed working with whole families and an emphasis on outreach.
- 15.2 There are strong working relationships between Health and Social Care which has led to the co-location of Social Workers and Health Visitors. Further integration is planned with Health for December 2016 via the implementation of a single 0-5 Case Record which will avoid duplication and support better information sharing. There are also plans in place for a Police Officer to be co-located in each Hub which is currently being rolled out.

Case Example: *B is a 10 year old male previously a Looked After Child who has recently been returned home. There was a history of neglect, poor parenting and physical abuse, resulting in a criminal charge for father. B was frequently absconding from the family home and being picked up by police, he was found in various locations across the city. B was reporting he did not want to be home and wanted to be returned to his foster placement. He was a vulnerable young person who was subject to a Child Protection plan. A Joint visit was conducted with Social worker/Police whereby Police led discussion with mother and B about managing missing episodes safely which included: returning mobile phone so B can make contact and be traced. Police and Social worker have had a discussion with B regarding the consequences of false reporting as he has been known to contact the Police with the purpose of seeking attention. Following this intervention between Social Care and Police there have been no subsequent reports of J missing.*

- 15.3 An Early Intervention team has been developed as part of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub which supports social care in making threshold decisions to ensure families receive the right support at the right level at the right time. This has led to an increase in the number of referrals being work flowed to Early Help for follow up. From 1st January 2016 – 11th August 2016, there were 1427 MASH referrals to Early Help.
- 15.4 All Strengthening Families Workers in the Early Intervention locality teams have been trained in the use of Outcome Star and following a recent review, further training has been delivered and early indications are that the tool is being used more effectively, demonstrating a change in the workers challenge of families and more effective management oversight.
- 15.5 In the period April 2015 to March 2016, 1828 cases were closed due to the required outcomes being secured or as a result of an Early Help Assessment being completed with no identified need (inclusive of Ante-natal and New Birth Assessments). 1200 families (1883 Inc. New Birth and Ante-Natal allocations) are currently in receipt of support from Early Intervention. This is an increase compared to the same period in 2014/15 showing that families are being identified earlier and worked with at the right time and right level.

Case Example: *Young male 'J' age 15 years - a referral came directly from the MASH to Early Intervention requesting support for mother who was struggling to manage J's behaviour; J was not in education and is reported to be a regular cannabis user. Integrated assessment and response between Strengthening Family Worker (SFW) and Police identified various risks attached to J including violence, involvement in gang culture within the locality and drug dealing. Mother struggles to fully safeguard J as he often goes missing which she does not report to the Police. As a result of integrated working and following a Joint visit between SFW and Police to initiate the Early Help Assessment, two days after the initial visit mother reported an assault on older sibling by J, and J who had gone missing. This was the first time mother has reported any incidents to Police. A Professionals meeting convened to identify and respond to the immediate risks to J which could lead to potential family breakdown and J has been identified as meeting troubled family criteria and continues to be managed through a Team Around the Family.*

- 15.6 The Early Intervention Protocol⁸ supports regular meetings between Health and staff from Early Intervention and ensures that all children receive contact with universal provision, enabling identification of issues at the earliest opportunity. There have been 720 notifications from Health in the period April 2015 – March 16. As a result of early intervention protocols and assessment 647 of these have closed with no requirement for support. 73 cases have converted into Early Intervention open cases, demonstrating that early help assessments supported by Early Intervention practices, lead to the earliest identification of need.

Case Example: *The Pathway to Support project is a one off government funded initiative (LGA grant of £789,000). It assists agencies providing services to adults in relation to domestic violence, mental health, learning disabilities and substance misuse, where there are children in the family that would benefit from low level support. The project will map the process from service provision to support, train key staff in the new process and provide funding for agencies to access a community support worker to provide low level, buddy support to the family. The project will interface with the Early Help Assessment. The outcome of the project is to enable families to stay together preventing the need for alternative care, to enable families to thrive and work together to manage difficulty and crisis and to enable children and young people to receive support at the earliest possible time. The success of the outcomes will provide evidence to support future investment in the scheme. The project has provided resources to enable mothers who repeatedly have babies removed from their care to access a befriending and counselling service as well as long acting reversible contraception in partnership with health.*

- 15.7 Representation of Early Intervention at Barnardo's Domestic Violence Joint Screening meetings has resulted in an increased number of referrals to the service. Between April and July 2016, 72 cases (21% of total) were directed to Early Intervention for support. In addition, 13 cases were directed to Early Intervention to work jointly with partners including Haven Refuge, Health and Recovery Near You. In comparison, 36 (10% of Total) cases required MASH assessment. This demonstrates that Early Intervention are responding early to incidents of reported domestic violence with the intention of preventing escalation or the need for social care assessment.
- 15.8 The use of Early Help Assessments is embedding with a key focus on extending the range of agencies who act as the Lead Professional particularly in the voluntary sector. The majority of schools have had staff trained in the use of Early Help Assessments (EHAs) and work is continuing to ensure that all schools have benefited from training.
- 15.9 Tackling disadvantage is a key target of Early Intervention and supported through the roll out of the free nursery entitlement for 2 year olds. Improvement in take up continues to be underpinned by an improvement plan. This has led to take up as of Summer 2016 of 71% against a 70% target.
- 15.10 In addition to this, Phase 1 of the Troubled Families Programme has been successfully completed with 810 families being turned around. Phase 2 commenced on 1st April 2015 and an Outcome Plan has been produced⁹. To date 603 families have been identified and are being worked with and 12 payment by results have been claimed. It is estimated that when the next payment by result window opens in September 2016 that a further 60 families will have been turned around. The Troubled Families whole family approach has been embedded into the Children's

⁸ [Early Intervention Protocol](#)

⁹ Troubled Families Outcome Plan Sept 2015

Services redesign. Multi-agency governance for the programme is provided via the Strengthening Families Board to ensure there is support across the partnership to drive the programme forward and influence transformation across public services.

16. Neglect

- 16.1 The Neglect Strategy was endorsed by the WSCB on 16th January 2016. Training will be rolled out along with further elements around whole family approach and working with larger sibling groups together in October 2016. Workers will then attend Train the Trainer in order to ensure there is the capacity to continue with the training as part of the WSCB training programme.
- 16.2 The Child Neglect Tool will be used by professionals locally to assist in identifying and assessing children who are at risk of neglect. It is to be used when there is concern that the quality of care of a child suggests that their needs are being neglected. It will enable professionals to reflect on the child's circumstances and place the concerns into context, identifying strengths and resources within the family. The Tool will be used to inform decision-making, assessments and planning. It will also be used in one to one's with managers or in supervision.

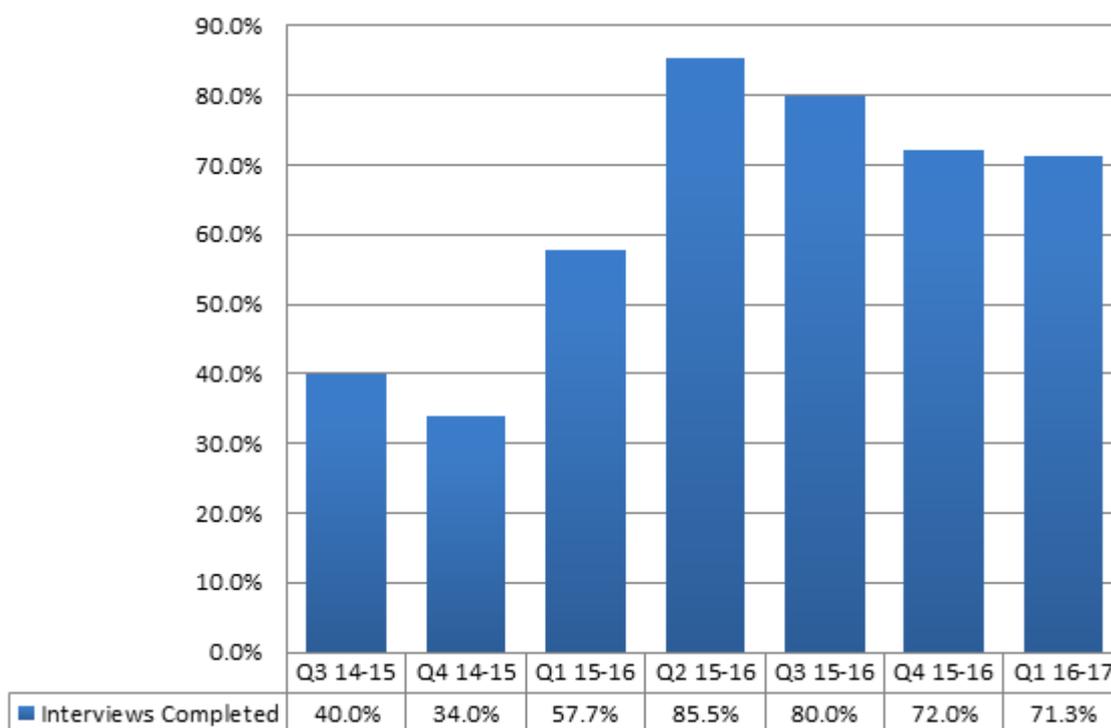
17. Specialist Support Service

- 17.1 In August 2016, the Specialist Support Service was established which is designed to target children and young people who are on a trajectory towards care by providing new and innovative services which will give them improved chances of growing up safely at home and within their communities. The service is providing intensive wrap around support and where required, respite and task focused, time limited crisis intervention designed to build resilience and strengthen families. Significant evidence has been gathered through file audits and data analysis in order to understand the current LAC population. This is being used to inform the type and level of interventions that are developed and commissioned. A framework for therapeutic services is now in place and local policy to support the process to access services has been agreed.
- 17.2 Since April 2016, the Intensive Family Support Team have had referrals for 60 families (84 children) Additional out of hours support is provided to the Emergency Duty Team by Family Support Workers from across the city with the aim of supporting crisis intervention and reducing the likelihood of family breakdown.
- 17.3 Upper Pendeford Farm is providing a short-breaks facility for young people on the edge of care age 10 and over. Work is ongoing with professionals to increase the occupancy rate and to increase the use for planned short breaks. The short break plan paperwork is currently being amended to bring it in line with care planning. Since Upper Pendeford Farm opened in April 2016, they have provided 28 short breaks and supported 21 young people.
- 17.4 A performance framework for the new Specialist Support Service is currently being developed in order to fully understand and monitor impact.

18. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)/Missing from Home or Care

- 18.1 The Vulnerable Young Person Risk Co-ordinator is a new role which has been introduced as part of the development of the Specialist Support Service. The role Chairs all Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meetings and works closely with the WSCB CSE Co-ordinator to develop an accurate picture of CSE issues across the City.

- 18.2 The CSE Co-ordinator is responsible for the development of the city-wide CSE Strategy and ensuring that agencies across the Safeguarding Partnership are sufficiently equipped to identify and respond to CSE. The role has oversight of all investigations, cross border issues, partnership working and leads on the Wolverhampton CSE profile.
- 18.3 There is a clear policy and process embedded around ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people in the city (and LAC placed out of city) who return from a missing episode. All return interviews are conducted by the Vulnerable Young Person’s Team within 72 hours of the child and young person returning. Social Workers will undertake the return interview for out of city placements over 20 miles. As part of the return interview, the CSE screening tool will always be completed to ensure consideration is given to missing young people being at risk of CSE¹⁰¹¹¹²
- 18.4 The chart below shows the improvement since the process for completing Return Interviews was changed in quarter 1 2015:



Case Example: *During an arranged missing return interview a disclosure from a young person regarding an incident involving an older male gave call for concern. A CSE tool was completed as per the established process followed by a discussion with the case holder in Strengthening Families to gain more insight into any other concerns. After all information had been compiled, the Missing Return Officer was able to further discuss with the Public Protection Unit (PPU) the issues which warranted a request to MASH for a Social Worker to complete a National Working Group (NWG) Assessment. This culminated in a Strategy discussion with the Social Work Unit Manager and Sergeant from the PPU which deemed a Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meeting needed to take place to assess needs and develop the necessary disruption and support plan.'*

¹⁰ Return Missing Policy

¹¹ CSE Screening Tool

¹² NWG CSE RA

- 18.5 The CSE screening tool will also be used for those persistently absent from school or excluded and all LAC over 10 years. All copies of the CSE screening tool will be sent to the CSE Co-ordinator in order to ensure build a comprehensive picture of risk around victims, offenders and locations. Where the screening tool indicates a serious or significant risk, there will be a referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub.
- 18.6 The Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Operational Group (CMOG) is well established and attracts good representation and input from a range of partnership agencies. In addition, there are robust Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) meetings in place which ensure that high risk individuals are closely case managed and supported by the right professionals and appropriate interventions are put in place.
- 18.7 Work is ongoing to ensure that the CSE Strategy and local pathways are embedded in local practice and findings from regular dip sampling and case file audits are used to ensure CSE is consistently being identified and responded to.

19. Domestic Violence and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

- 19.1 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a strategic priority for the city. A new VAWG strategy 2016-19 was approved in 2016. This covers domestic and sexual violence, honour based violence (HBV), forced marriage (FM) and female genital mutilation (FGM). From these, it is widely acknowledged that a key focus for future delivery is needed on the more hidden and significantly under-reported crimes of Honour Based Violence and Female Genital Mutilation from general awareness raising, multi-agency training for front-line practitioners, coordination of city-wide responses and targeted engagement of communities where there is a heightened risk. This approach is being supported regionally, with efforts to raise awareness through Operation Sentinel, a communications campaign driven by West Midlands Police over the last 2 years.
- 19.2 In relation to FGM specifically, guidance was issued to schools before the start of the summer holidays in 2015 on being alert to the signs that young girls might be at risk of FGM and following the publication of the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel report "Tackling Female Genital Mutilation in the West Midlands, a FGM taskforce has been formed to take forward the recommendations from this report which will provide a steer on best practice and shared learning across the West Midlands.
- 19.3 Domestic Abuse Services in Wolverhampton are currently being reviewed and re-commissioned. The main focus of current services is on providing specialist support and there is very little universal provision/early help available at present. The contracts for housing support services have recently been extended until the end of June 2017. There are big gaps in provision for children, male victims and perpetrators. The review has looked at: accommodation based support; floating support; perpetrator services; target hardening; and counselling therapeutic support.
- 19.4 The domestic violence multi-agency screening process takes place twice a week and focuses on police reports of domestic violence crimes and non crimes where there are children associated with the household. This process has recently been reviewed and an action plan and revised operating framework has been developed to ensure that there are robust governance and monitoring arrangements in place.
- 19.5 The self-evaluation peer audit process which took place on 1st and 2nd August 2016 focused on the theme of domestic violence, reviewing case files from Social Care

and Early Intervention. The effectiveness of the audit was affected by the initial sampling as approximately a fifth of the case files were not sufficiently DV focused however, irrespective of this, the audit identified a need for practice, in DV situations, to be better understood across the work force. The process identified a number of areas of training that the workforce would benefit from including:

- Using the safer Lives assessment
- Understanding the DV pathway
- Understanding MARAC and how to refer
- The Role of the IDVA
- Working with Perpetrators of DV
- Managing the DV risk
- DV in same sex relationships
- The impact of Culture/Race on DV
- Recording DV as a risk factor

19.6 An operational action has been developed which focuses on improving practice in response to domestic violence.

20. Supported Accommodation Services for Vulnerable Young People

20.1 Wolverhampton has a comprehensive model of supported accommodation services for vulnerable young people, including young people on the edge of care and care leavers. There are at least 132 places of supported accommodation available at any one time, including 35 places specifically for care leavers. The services provided include supported accommodation for young people with high, medium and low levels of need, supported lodgings, Nightstop and Daystop. Referrals and allocations to services are co-ordinated by Wolverhampton Young Person's Accommodation Forum to ensure that young people receive the service that is most appropriate for them and move on in a timely manner. In addition, City of Wolverhampton Council is part of a sub-regional supported accommodation framework, enabling access to a wide range of supported accommodation services for 16 and 17 year olds on a spot purchase basis. A strategic review of supported accommodation has recently been undertaken. The review led to a series of recommendations that aims to ensure that the model of housing support services for this group remains comprehensive, co-ordinated and effective and that mechanisms for addressing any challenges that arise in the future remain in place.

20.2 An expression of interest has been submitted to the Department for Education Innovation Fund. The proposal is designed to address transition issues for the most vulnerable 16/17 year olds who often have multiple placement breakdowns and make poor decisions that have lifelong implications. It involves working with a range of partners to deliver bespoke, holistic packages of services to four of the most vulnerable 16/17 year olds at any one time while living in a cluster of supported accommodation. Services and opportunities would include ASDAN accreditation; apprenticeships; counselling and therapeutic support; telecare; and innovative uses of technology such as on-line GP consultations, video diaries and specialist apps for supporting young people with their individual support needs. Wolverhampton will know if they have got through to the next stage of the bid process in September 2016.

Case Example: *Young people aged 16 and 17 who present to the council as homeless are subject to the Wolverhampton Joint Working Protocol. The protocol ensures that the young person is assessed appropriately and that their accommodation and support needs are identified and met. A joint homeless 16/17 year old protocol officer works within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub to ensure that homeless 16/17 year olds who present as homeless are assessed and any identified needs are addressed.*

21. Children in Need / Child Protection

- 21.1 Within the Child Protection Service there are 17 social work units, managed by nine Social Work Unit Managers, geographically co located across 8 locality areas. The Social Work Unit Managers are accountable to four Senior Social Work Managers.
- 21.2 The Service is integrated with professional staff from Early Help and community health services based within 8 Strengthening Families Hubs. This enables joined up working opportunities and greater seamlessness in the escalation and de-escalation of individual cases.
- 21.3 The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub provides the first point of contact and referral for agencies and professionals to Children's Social Care and Early Help Services. The Social Care Referral Policy¹³ ensures that all children and young people referred to Children's Social Care receive a timely and appropriate initial response. Where threshold for Social Care support is not met a referral is passed immediately to Early Help, in accordance with the Joint Working Protocol and the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children's Board Thresholds to Support Policy¹⁴.
- 21.4 The introduction of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub in January 2016 has further strengthened the screening and assessment process. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub consists of the Police, Social Care, Early Help, Wolverhampton Homes, Recovery Near You, Probation, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust and Black Country Partnership Foundation Trust. It is already enabling agencies to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of responses to safeguarding referrals by providing access to real time partnership information and facilitating speedier understanding of levels of risk. This has been achieved through a significant piece of joint partnership working. The MASH was extended to include safeguarding adults at the end of August 2016 and further work is ongoing to ensure a whole family approach.

MASH Case Examples:

Referral concerning drug dealing in a house – Police information quickly identified that there was a sex offender living in the property who was Father to an unborn and Uncle to 3 children living in the house. Action was swiftly taken to safeguard the children.

Referral outlining some low level/low risk concerns. Additional information from the Police indicated that the father had 217 Intelligence Logs against him predominantly around drug dealing and drug use. Action was taken to support/safeguard the children.

Referral concerning mum's mental health – Social Care had no information on the system regarding the family. Police information identified that they were missing from another Local Authority where they were on the Child Protection Register. This enabled the family to be located and action to be taken.

- 21.5 The Emergency Duty Team provides a single point of contact to access Children's and Adult's Social Care Services out of hours. This service is managed within the Disability and Mental Health Service area. They work closely with day time services in order to ensure a joined up approach. In addition, there is always a Manager from Children's Services on call out of hours to provide advice and support. Discussions are currently taking place with other Local Authorities in the Black Country to explore

¹³ [Social Care Referral Policy](#)

¹⁴ [WSCB Thresholds of Support Policy](#)

the development of a Black Country-wide Service which will enable a more resilient workforce and service and will facilitate better multi-agency relationships particularly in relation to partner agencies.

- 21.6 Significant work has taken place over the last 12 months in order to reduce the number of Looked After Children, Child Protection and Children in Need in Wolverhampton. Historically, there has been risk aversion in the system and a lack of scrutiny and challenge. This has improved since the introduction of the Admission to Care Panel alongside regular, good quality supervision and management of staff. Early Help is now an integral part of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and has led to more appropriate and robust step up and step down processes. It has also allowed for interventions to be put in place at a much earlier stage, providing support at the right time and reducing the risk of escalation. The social work structure has been additionally resourced to reduce caseloads of front line managers and equalise allocation across the social work teams. In addition, 6 Advanced Practitioners have been appointed to work across teams to improve the quality of management and practice. A competency based supervision model/policy was approved by the People Workforce Development Board on 2nd August 2016 which clearly sets out the standards and expectations in terms of management and supervision.
- 21.7 There is ongoing work supported by the Social Work development and training and the Quality Assurance Framework including auditing and self-evaluation processes. The review of CareFirst exemplars has amended the plan template to support more outcome focused care plans.
- 21.8 Ingson, a DfE Improvement Partner, have been commissioned to undertake a review of CiN cases where neglect features at the end of August 2016. This will focus on accuracy of recording; voice of the child; management of sibling groups and whether they are appropriately managed by a Care Plan.

Case Example: *There is on-going work with Legal Services in order to improve understanding of the Public Law outline process, improve the timeliness of court applications and timeliness and quality of pre-proceedings work. An electronic ledger has been introduced which has improved the timeliness of court proceedings performance which stood at 80% in June 2016 within the 26 week timescales and monthly scrutiny meetings also take place to discuss cases that have been in the system for 15 weeks or more to prevent delay. All Children's Social Workers were provided mandatory training in court skills. The DCS is a member of the Regional Inner Board and the Service Director is co-chair of the Family Justice Board.*

- 21.9 Social work visits to children subject of CP/CiN plans fulfil a range of critical roles and functions to enable the child's circumstances to be observed and monitored particularly if the visits are unannounced. Visits are carried out at least once a month but social worker visits may well be set at a higher frequency as set out in the Child Protection Plan. Performance for visiting children subject of CP plan as of 10th August 2016 is 91% and for CiN, as of 17th July, 74%.

22. All Age Disability Service

- 22.1 The Disabled Children and Young People's Team (0-25yrs) comprises a Service Manager, Advanced Social Work Practitioners with operational responsibility for experienced social workers, social care workers and a Carer's Support Officer. A Social Worker from the team is now co-located in the MASH to ensure that all enquiries and referrals where children have additional or special needs are dealt with effectively in one place. The service, which comprises two teams working with

disabled children, young adults and families from 0-25 and 25+, provides the infrastructure to facilitate new ways of working. The Local Authority, together with partner agencies, works to encourage and support families to build resilience, adopting a solution-focused approach to resolving difficulties as they arise. Following a recent directorate level review, services for 0-25 will be transferring to Children and Young People Services from September 2016 however, a family based approach will still be at the core of how services operate.

- 22.2 An extensive Transition Project has facilitated key stakeholders including Connexions, Health, Education, post-16 Education providers, Social Care (Children and Adults) and finance to work in partnership to deliver a more robust framework to support a seamless experience of transition. There is an emphasis on working with both housing and care providers to look at supported and independent living to ensure that residential options are only considered when every alternative has been exhausted. Bringing together all of the social workers engaged in working with young people is key as they prepare for 'transition' into adulthood to ensuring a consistent, skilled and timely social work response. Improving the experience of transition for young people with additional needs is key to improving outcomes. Robust planning from age 14 years, Year 9, is essential to ensure effective transition. Transition workers attend Year 9 reviews in both mainstream schools and special schools to identify early those young people that may require social care support into adulthood. Social Workers with specialist knowledge and experience of the impact of physical/learning disability and mental health are co-located with Safeguarding and Children's Social Work colleagues. This promotes closer working links with colleagues across Children's Services to the benefit of disabled children, young people and their families and provides continuity into adulthood¹⁵.
- 22.3 A Local Offer has been co-produced with partners to implement a single Education, Health and Care Plan (EHC). A review and audit of the EHC processes has been undertaken with stakeholders which has resulted in a refresh of the document to ensure its primary focus addresses the identified and specific needs of the individual child and young person, in line with the principle of the SEND reforms.
- 22.4 Pathways are being developed to support tripartite decision making involving Social Care, Health and Education. These include joint meetings to agree Education, Health and Care Plans and College placements (residential/day). The Transitional Funding Panel discusses the physical and mental health needs of young people (aged 14+ years), to ensure that appropriately skilled and experienced professionals are working together with the young person to identify goals, aspirations and agree appropriate funding streams.

¹⁵ All Age Disability Strategy

KEY JUDGEMENT 2 - The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence

Decisions about children and young people becoming looked after are made using high quality assessments about the risk of harm or actual harm to them and the likelihood of change in their family. Thresholds are clear and applied appropriately. Children and young people are listened to by social workers who know them well. Adults working with children and young people help them to understand and manage their early childhood experiences, to progress well and achieve educationally and to influence decisions about their future. They return home with the support they need and when it is safe for them. If this is not possible, they live in stable placements where they are helped to build positive relationships and maintain contact with their family and friends where this remains in their best interests. Care plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that the child or young person's current and developing needs continue to be met. Permanent homes and families are found for children and young people without unnecessary delay. Their needs are met and they live with their brothers and sisters if that is assessed as being in their best interests. They do not experience placement moves unless they are part of a planned return home or in accordance with plans for their future. Their education is not disrupted unless it is in their best interests and plans for their schooling provide any extra help they need to make up time and learning that has been missed. They develop safe and secure relationships with adults that persist over time. When support is needed, children, young people and families are able to access it for as long as it is needed, throughout their childhood and beyond.

THE COUNCIL'S SELF EVALUATION OF THIS JUDGEMENT IS "Good"

Strengths:

- Successfully and safely reduced LAC numbers by 124 during 2015/16
- Effective partnership arrangements and an improved understanding of thresholds for children and young people becoming/remaining Looked After
- Established robust processes to prevent drift in care planning
- Effective oversight of individual care plans through timely reviews
- Involvement of children and young people in reviews to ensure they understand and are actively involved in their care planning
- Successfully reduced the number of placements with parent arrangements enabling children and young people a right to a private family life
- Role of IRO increasingly contributing to managing quality of Social Work
- Redesign of the PEP proforma including Early Years and 16+ to ensure educational plans are specific to the child's age and development – 87% of LAC in Years 1-11 had an up to date PEP, 53% of LAC in Early Years and 80% of LAC in years 12 and 13.
- Effective use of Pupil Premium to improve attendance and attainment
- Implementation of LAC Attainment Improvement Plan leading to an increase in attainment levels
- Robust Foster Carer Support leading to good placement stability
- Dedicated and committed Foster Carers who act as Champions for the Service
- Dedicated LAC CAMHS Team
- Strong Children in Care Council which has a direct impact on local policy development and recruitment
- Corporate Parenting Strategy fully supported by the Local Authority and partner agencies
- Virtual school working with LAC and Young Offenders to raise aspirations that has led to an increase in the number of Care Leavers in higher education

Development Areas:

- Ensure targeted, intensive and evidence based support is available to ensure children and young people remain safely at home
- Continue to safely reduce numbers of LAC to ensure the right children are in care at the right time
- Ensure the child's voice is heard and understood and informs individual care planning
- Improve the quality of life journey work for all LAC which enables children to understand their past and use this to help them make sense of their future and successfully transition into adulthood
- Challenging and supporting schools to provide the best education for children and young people and improve school attendance
- Targeted support to raise attainment in key stage 4 and training for carers to support children reaching their academic potential
- Ensure that young people get swift access to appropriate education provision and reduce delay between school place allocation and the date of admission
- Increase internal Foster Carers including specialist, emergency, remand and short break to increase placement numbers and stability leading to improved outcomes for children and young people
- Increase the number of applications for Special Guardianship Orders to improve stability and outcomes through permanency
- Increase awareness and reporting of Private Fostering to ensure children and young people are safeguarded
- Improve case work to reduce the number of children and young people missing from care
- Deliver the Corporate Parenting Strategy & Action Plan
- Increase the use of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire in order to ensure the emotional health and wellbeing needs of LAC are met
- Work with health colleagues to ensure that LAC Health Plans are SMART and effectively address identified needs.

23. Looked After Children (LAC)

- 23.1 There is a clear vision that is shared across the LAC Units which is focused on achieving permanence and stability for children. There has been a reduction in LAC from 778 in 2014/15 to 638 as at 8th August 2016. The target for 2016/17 is between 550-580. Care Planning is tightly monitored to prevent drift and ensure actions identified are undertaken within agreed timescales. 6 weekly meetings are held across the 3 LAC Units which involve all staff to ensure that there are consistent approaches to supporting children and young people. Weekly dip sampling audits to ensure consistent practice have had a direct impact on care planning.

Case Example: *Progress has been made revoking Care Orders of children placed home under the Placement with Parents' Regulations, where the support and monitoring via a Care Order is no longer required. As of July 2016, there are 46 children placed at home, this includes 8 since April 2016 that have moved from foster care to being placed back at home and 4 that are placed with parents on ICO's. There are 17 planned revocations by September 2016.*

- 23.2 All placements with parents are subject to revocation plans from the outset. Where children have been matched with foster carers, viable Care Orders will be revoked in favour of Special Guardianship Orders.
- 23.3 Work has taken place to ensure that all LAC have a comprehensive annual assessment of their needs which supports child centred outcome focused planning. As at end of July 2016, 98% of LAC had an updated assessment that

supports the current care plan. Positive feedback has been received from IRO's in terms of the quality of assessments ensuring changing needs are identified.

- 23.4 Social work visits to children subject of LAC plans fulfil a range of critical roles and functions to enable the child's circumstances to be observed and monitored. Visits are carried out at least once every 6 weeks or once every 12 weeks in a stable placement, but social worker visits may well be set at a higher frequency as set out within the Looked After Plan. Performance for visiting children subject of LAC plan is as at end of July 2016 - 79%.
- 23.5 The health needs of LAC are regularly monitored via Review Health Assessments with 85% of LAC having up to date medicals, and 86% having up to date dentals, at the end of July 2016. Close working relationships with partners at the Royal Wolverhampton Trust and the CCG, and refined processes continue to contribute to improved performance in this area.

24. Sufficiency Strategy

- 24.1 The current Sufficiency Strategy is now in its final year of implementation and has to date made significant progress in meeting a number of its objectives. At the end March 2016, the number of LAC in residential placements had reduced by 32% compared to the end of March 2014. This has contributed to an increased proportion of looked after children being placed in family settings. In addition, as of August 2016 there are 252 children in Independent Fostering Arrangements compared to 264 in April 2016.
- 24.2 Regional and sub-regional framework agreements for residential and foster care have been reviewed and renewed and the Sufficiency Strategy Implementation Plan has recently been extended to include Specialist Support Services.
- 24.3 New services have been commissioned to support both prevention of admission to care e.g. the establishment of a short break residential service and to promote placement stability e.g. the introduction Safe Haven which is a specialist intensive support service to work with young people who have complex needs in order to avoid placement breakdown, achieve permanence and help them in transition to adulthood.
- 24.4 Work is currently underway to develop a new Sufficiency Strategy for the next three years. A programme of work, which has an increased emphasis on engaging service users is currently being implemented with the aim of having the new strategy signed off and in place by April 2017.

25. Education of LAC

- 25.1 The Corporate Parenting & Education Team (COPE) is committed to improving educational outcomes for Looked after Children, in the model of the "virtual school". Under the management of the Virtual School Head (VSH), COPE's priorities include ensuring that appropriate education is arranged for all LAC and young people known to the Youth Offending Team in a timely manner, monitoring and improving attainment and attendance, delivering learning and behavioural support, auditing and improving Personal Education Plans (PEPs), providing training and advice, challenging exclusions and strengthening transition arrangements.
- 25.2 The roles in COPE are designed to facilitate flexible and responsive support at strategic, advisory and operational levels. The Virtual School Head is the strategic lead, a Teacher Advisor provides support and challenge to schools and partners and Education Support Officers (2.5 FTE) deliver a combination of direct pupil support

and advisory work with schools. Data support is provided by a dedicated Data Officer (.5 FTE). Timely access to expert consultations, advice and interventions for LAC with complex needs is provided by 3 Educational / Counselling Psychologists (1.5 FTE). Several team members contribute to a programme of training for schools, carers and social workers, as well as supporting the PEP process and auditing the quality of PEPs.

- 25.3 To support the permanent education-related posts in COPE, Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) has been utilised to fund 2 Assistant Educational Psychologists (.8 FTE). These focus specifically on raising attainment at Key Stage 4 by supporting pupils in year 11 who are at risk of underachieving. Monitoring and improving the achievement of LAC and Care Leavers at 16+ is also a key priority for the Virtual School Head, and to this end a full-time Education, Employment & Training (EET) Co-ordinator has been recruited in partnership with the Transitions Team.
- 25.4 The VSH manages the Pupil Premium Grant for LAC, allocating most of the funding directly to schools and monitoring its use via the PEP process and other methods. An element of PPG funding is retained to support special projects and additional support, including training in attachment awareness for Designated Teachers, “Beanstalk” - Volunteer Reading Help for pupils at Key stage 1 and 2 – and “Aspire2Uni” or “A2U”. This is an innovative partnership project with the University of Wolverhampton, the Creating Chances Trust and virtual school teams in Sandwell and Walsall which aims to raise aspirations for LAC and increase the numbers of Care Leavers in higher education. A2U provides workshops, visits and special events at the University for LAC and their carers, high-quality work experience opportunities and a mentoring programme for year 7/8 pupils with the potential to eventually access FE/HE.

Case Example: *A LAC in his first year at 6th form needed to find a work placement relevant to his course, and was unable to find a quality placement. The VSH liaised with ‘Creating Chances’, a partner in the Aspire2Uni programme, and a high-quality placement was arranged with the Knowledge Transfer Partnership at the University of Wolverhampton Science Park. The student had a fantastic experience and the organisation were very impressed with the student, offering an excellent reference if needed in the future.*

- 25.5 PPG has also supported additional training and resourcing for COPE’s Education Support Workers and Educational Psychologists. “Catch-up Literacy” and the “Turnabout” programme, for example, are intervention programmes designed to address identified learning needs at KS1, KS2 and KS3, while a range of assessment tools are supporting the work of COPE psychologists.

Case Example: *COPE delivered ‘Turnabout’ to pupil A in school for one half-term; social worker reported that “his foster carer is amazed by the difference she has seen in his understanding and concentration. She states that [the Education worker] has built a really positive rapport with pupil A and he enjoys the sessions with her.”*

- 25.6 The LAC Attainment Improvement Plan outlines how these improved outcomes are supported by COPE and its partners. This has included a number of developments in policy and procedure including:

- redesign of the Personal Education Plan (PEP) proforma to enable closer scrutiny of progress and provision and clearer accountability. This has supported the improvements in attainment for LAC as outlined above. An electronic PEP is currently in development and is expected to be in place in the Autumn 2016

- introduction of the 16+ and Early Years PEPs, enabling far greater scrutiny of education and support for these cohorts. As a result, 90% of eligible children in Years 12 and 13 were in Education, Employment or Training (EET) at July 2016 and EYFS outcomes are improving steadily as outlined above
- introduction of a post-16 Learners Support Agreement, which to date has been signed by two major stakeholders (Wolverhampton College and NOVA)
- updates to the PEP and Pupil Premium policies to reflect and support higher expectations on schools and the local authority, to raise the attainment of LAC
- a new policy on the use of boarding schools for vulnerable children
- a new framework for the work of COPE which has raised the standard that we expect of ourselves and outlines how we challenge and support schools. COPE's delivery of the "Turnabout" intervention has supported clear improvements in attainment for LAC at KS2 in particular, as outlined above.
- extension of the VSH role to include YOT and young people in the Criminal Justice system. A Model School Policy for LAC has been extended to include both cohorts and shared with senior leaders in schools, prior to launch in Autumn 2016. The Virtual School Head is putting a series of additional measures in place to support stronger partnership arrangements between YOT, schools and other stakeholders to promote improved educational outcomes for young offenders as well as LAC.

25.7 COPE work closely with schools and specifically their Designated Teachers. This includes training and advice to schools and schools governing bodies to enable them to understand, prioritise and meet the needs of LAC in school.

Case Example: *Training conference on Attachment and Trauma for Designated Teachers in January 2015. This was followed up with four locality-based workshops for Designated Teachers in "Emotion Coaching", a practical strategy for managing negative behaviour within schools which is firmly rooted in an understanding of attachment and promoting resilience. Further INSET and on-going support was then delivered for specific schools which had either requested this input or had been identified by COPE (in partnership with School Standards) as a priority for this training. The Educational Psychology Service were also trained to deliver "Emotion Coaching" training, helping to promote a common approach toward supporting vulnerable pupils in Wolverhampton schools.*

26. Fostering

- 26.1 The Fostering Service consists of a motivated, committed and stable workforce made up of qualified staff experienced in fostering. There are good working relationships with Children's Social Workers and a real focus on the needs of both the child/young person and the Foster Carer.
- 26.2 Wolverhampton has a well-established, dedicated group of Foster Carers who are very supportive and committed to providing a supportive and caring environment for children. There are 15 Fostering Champions who support the recruitment and training of new Foster Carers. The Foster Carers benefit from excellent support which includes 24 hour support, buddy support from experienced foster carers, training, newsletters, and regular meetings. All Foster Carers are members of Foster Talk which provides additional opportunity for independent advice and support. The support offered enhances the positive working relationships Foster Carers have with the City of Wolverhampton Council. Foster carers also benefit from on going access to special offers and discounts from retail providers and leisure facilities.

Case Example: *A well-established programme of support is delivered to foster carers by trained and accredited facilitators within the Fostering Team. All carers are encouraged to attend KEEP training, and more recently the service is now offering KEEP SAFE for carers who are caring for, or wish to care for older children (12-17 years old). There are 89 foster carers who have completed the KEEP training (including, 8 Connected Carers who have attended KEEP Safe and KEEP Standard training, with 2 Connected Carers nominated as KEEP Champions). The feedback from carers attending the courses is extremely positive, and the learning and support is contributing to placement stability.*

- 26.3 Whilst there have been recent increases in the numbers of approvals of internal Foster Carers, with 20 fostering households approved in 2015/16, there has been a renewed drive to further increase the number of approvals, enabling more LAC children to live with local foster families approved by Wolverhampton. These include carers providing a foster placement for sibling groups. It is anticipated that 30 fostering households will be approved in 2016/17. In addition, following Cabinet Approval in October 2015, revised fees and allowances were introduced in January 2016. The revised fee structure recognises foster carer skill and experience and it is anticipated this will support the recruitment of new carers, together with assisting in retaining existing foster carers. Wolverhampton are also working with ImPower in order to explore opportunities for further improvement and transformation.
- 26.4 The assessment process has been streamlined which has enabled assessments to be completed in a timely fashion providing a better service to those applying to foster. In April 2016 there were 26 Foster care applicants in stage 1 assessment. The average number of days taken to approve foster carers is 174 which is below the target of 244 days.
- 26.5 Stage 2 of the assessment process is provided by an external agency. During this time, foster carers in assessment remain allocated to a social worker within the Fostering Team to ensure they remain connected to Wolverhampton.
- 26.6 There is an action plan in place to increase awareness and reporting of private fostering arrangements. Extensive marketing and awareness has been rolled out within the local authority and across the city, using revised/re-branded materials. This has not yet led to an increase. There will also be a refreshed focus from the WSCB as agreed at their Board away day in April 2016.
- 26.7 The Family and Friends Unit are working closely with children's allocated social workers to support early initial viability assessment of potential Family and Friends (Connected persons) Carers, enhancing opportunities for children to be placed within their own network of family or friends where appropriate. All full Connected Person assessments are completed by the Family and Friends Team in line with court timescales. The progression of well supported Special Guardianship Orders is a priority for this unit offering legal stability for children within their placements. SGO assessment and support plans are completed by the social workers within the Connected Persons Team. At the end of 2016, there were 59 LAC (9%) placed with friends and family compared with 57 (7%) in March 2015.
- 26.7 The Connected Person's team train prospective connected carers with Skills to Foster Training and have developed a training module for Special Guardians. Post SGO and Connected Person training is also delivered by the Connected Person's Team. The Connected Person's Team support and supervise a caseload of complex Connected Person placements with the view to support and stabilise towards permanency via a Special Guardianship Order. The Connected Person's Team also

provide support groups and regular Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) workshops for Connected Persons in order to support the completion of their post-approval training programme.

- 26.8 During 2015/16, 24 SGOs were granted, 12 of these were for looked after children. The target for 2016/17 is 25 Connected/SGO carers. An action plan was approved by the Children's Services Management Team on 23rd June 2016 which focuses on increasing numbers and a working group has been established to drive this forward. In addition, a family meetings policy has been agreed which will mean a family meeting will take place within 10 days of a referral to Early Help and/or Social Care. SGO workshops took place on 12th and 15th July 2016 with Social Care staff. Monthly surgeries to discuss practice and specific cases are being held by the SGO Worker. SGO leaflets and written information have been updated and SGO will be considered in all viability assessments.

27. Corporate Parenting

- 27.1 The Corporate Parenting Board is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and amongst other things is responsible for overseeing the delivery and impact of the Corporate Parenting Strategy¹⁶. The Strategy has been produced to ensure all services are focused on improving the outcomes for Looked After Children. It seeks to narrow the gap between LAC and their peers by providing effective support which enables them to reach their full potential. The Strategy reinforces the corporate responsibility of the whole Council and its partner agencies and focuses on a range of areas. Care leavers and LAC now feature in the council delivery of work experience, traineeships, apprenticeships and internships. Packages of support are being developed for managers and educators to support young people. Supporting the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy is a Corporate Parenting Officers group – this is made up of senior officers from across the Council and its partners in order to ensure the plan is progressed in a timely manner.

Case Example: *A mandatory e-learning module has been developed for all council employees including Councillors, to understand the support they can offer LAC and care leavers as Corporate Parents.*

28. Participation

- 28.1 Participation of children and young people across the City is an essential contributory factor to the development of services delivered to children. This is underpinned by the Participation Strategy, which will be presented for approval by Cabinet on 14th September 2016. The Strategy sets out clear standards of participation for children and young people to ensure that it is not tokenistic and remains relevant. Once the Strategy has been formally approved, information leaflets will be disseminated to internal and external partners for professionals to be clear of their role in ensuring the voice of children and young people is represented in their service developments. In addition, there will be a programme of awareness raising for children and young people in understanding their role and the opportunities available to them in engaging in formal participation and consultative groups.
- 28.2 The City of Wolverhampton has a strong Children in Care Council (CiCC) who meet monthly. They represent the views of LAC and influence the Corporate Parenting

¹⁶ [Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015-16](#)

strategic priorities each year. These priorities are incorporated in the Corporate Parenting Action Plan, which is monitored and progressed not only by the CiCC, but also by the Corporate Parenting Senior Officers Group and Corporate Parenting Board.

- 28.3 Two members of the CiCC are members of the Youth Council. This ensures the needs of LAC are considered across the City. Two members of the Youth Council are members of the Children's Scrutiny Panel, ensuring children's voices are a key part of decision making.
- 28.4 The youth council has 31 members. There are 2 members of the Youth Council who have been elected by the Youth Police Council Commissioners (YPCC) and 2 Youth MPs. The YPCC's work with, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Police Officers and key decision makers. Their role is to be the voice of young people, through actively engaging and consulting with other young people in their local communities and ensuring that their concerns and priorities are used to influence and inform the planning and priority setting of the PCC. They carry out their duties on a voluntary basis.
- 28.5 The Care Leavers Forum (CLF) meets on a monthly basis. This is a re-established group who contribute their views to the development of the Transitions Service and areas of support for Care Leavers in Wolverhampton. The Care Leavers Forum is setting up as a charity to be able to fund raise for further opportunities to support other Care Leavers. An allotment has been secured and young people are being encouraged to participate in activities associated with this project as an example.
- 28.6 Both the CLF and the CiCC attend the Corporate Parenting Board twice a year. The Lead Member for Children in Wolverhampton along with senior managers also attends CiCC meetings periodically throughout the year. This creates a synergy in the sharing of ideas and it ensures, for all parties, that children's voices influence the delivery of services. All reports presented to the Corporate Parenting Board are scrutinised by the CiCC in advance of presentation, and the CiCC's views are incorporated into all reports.
- 28.7 Both the CiCC and the CLF have been heavily involved in the development of the website www.wolverhamptonlac.co.uk and Facebook page www.facebook.com/lacey.childs.7 to promote the use of social media to increase opportunities for communicating with children and young people and ensuring they feel connected and informed.
- 28.8 The City of Wolverhampton is in the process of implementing the MOMO App designed to provide young people with an easy to use tool to communicate their thoughts and feelings on their care. This was directly a result of a request from a number of looked after children who saw it being used in another Local Authority during a regional Corporate Parenting event. Wolverhampton are looking to offer this resource not only to LAC, but in the longer term, to include CIN/CP and YOT.

Case Example: *Young people are trained in delivering Total Respect training with the aim of delivering this to all staff employed who work with children and those in partner agencies. There are currently a team of 7 young people trained. In 2015/2016 these young people trained over 43 council staff, 9 councillors and 70 professionals from partner organisations (including YMCA and Wolverhampton University). Additionally young people from the CiCC and CLF support the recruitment of staff through young people panels and form an important part of the selection process and have 50% of the scoring.*

KEY JUDGEMENT 3 - Adoption Performance

Suitable adoptive families are identified without delay for all children for whom adoption is in their best interests. The recruitment and assessment arrangements are aligned with national systems and enable potential adopters to consider and to be considered for a wide range of children for whom they may provide a home. Children are able to develop safe and secure relationships with their adoptive family that persist over time. When support is needed, children, young people, families and carers are able to access it for as long as it is needed, throughout their childhood and beyond.

THE COUNCIL'S SELF EVALUATION OF THIS JUDGEMENT IS "Good"

Strengths:

- Strong adopter recruitment through the Adoption in the Black Country Consortium
- Proactive family finding process leading to an increase in adoptions for those harder to place
- Family finders are allocated early in order to identify families for children at the earliest opportunity
- Family finders feature children at activity days, national and local exchange days as well as utilising all traditional family finding activities
- Children are placed within 4 months of a Placement Order being granted (other than those where Foster Carers want to adopt)
- Positive and effective use of Adoption Reform Grant leading to an increase in approvals and a reduction in time taken to place children for adoption
- Comprehensive and effective pre and post support adoption packages contributing to low break down rates
- Consistent and effective preparation work with all older children to ensure low breakdown rates
- Adoption support consultations provided for adopters of all older children and larger sibling groups
- Adoption support plans are robust and Wolverhampton is committed to providing specialist therapeutic support where an adoption support assessment identifies this as a need
- Life story work is completed to an improving standard utilising the Joy Rees approach which allows children to understand their past so they can make sense of their future forever family

Development Areas:

- Leading the development of the Regional Adoption Agency across the Black Country, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin in response to the National Adoption Reform Agenda
- Continuing to improve timeliness of placing children for adoption and focusing on those harder to adopt enabling an ambition of permanency across the LAC population
- Improving the timeliness of prospective adopter assessments in order to ensure sufficiency and meet the needs of the LAC population
- Continue to have close links with CIN/CP/LAC/IRO services to promote opportunity for early permanence where there is no other option
- To regularly review adoption support packages to provide a responsive service to children pre and post adoption order
- To consistently use feedback to improve services leading to sustainable permanency
- Improve adopter's connectedness to the agency throughout their assessment process to enhance adopter support, improve matching and lead to a stable placement

29. Adoption

- 29.1 The Adoption Service consists of three specialist social work units:
- Recruitment and Assessment Unit - Recruiting, Assessing and Supporting adopters to the point of Adoption Order
 - Family Finding and Adoption Support Unit - Early Matching, Family Finding, Moving On / Transition Work, training and post adoption support
 - Children's Unit - Looked After Children cases from the point of Placement Order to progress the plan of adoption
- 29.2 The service structure places all of the professionals involved in placing children for adoption in a co-located team. As a result, there has been improved efficiency and collaborative work and we are able to place children more quickly and effectively.
- 29.3 Wolverhampton Adoption Service is also part of a consortium Adoption in the Black Country (ABC). ABC is a collaborative approach to the delivery of adoption services across Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley and Sandwell. The partnership has developed over a number of years and has expanded to incorporate a 5th partner, Adoption Focus, a Voluntary Adoption Agency. This collaborative approach and pooled resources has enabled ABC to recruit and train adoptive parents collectively.
- 29.4 ABC supports joint family finding activities including: activity days meet the children events; and more recently has seen the appointment of a Permanency Co-ordinator to support placing children with ABC families. It enables children to be placed locally without the risk of being placed in the local authority in which they were born. There are significant advantages for children and families as adoption support can be delivered locally by teams that know the children and families.
- 29.5 We have continued to embed the Stage One and Stage Two adoption process. Wolverhampton is actively progressing more timely processing in Stage 1. Prospective adopters complete Stage One on-line training provided by ABC consortium. Three day Adoption Preparation training takes place monthly and is also co-ordinated within the consortium. Wolverhampton commissions Prospective Adopter Reports from an Independent Agency. This has facilitated more timely assessments within Stage two of the process where a worker is able to dedicate time and flexibility to complete the assessment swiftly. An allocated Wolverhampton social worker maintains contact via visiting throughout the assessment process. There is a focus on early matching if an assessment is progressing positively.
- 29.6 For those approved in 2015/16, the average time in Stage one was 80 days against a target of 61 days. The average time in Stage two was 254 days against a target of 122, meaning the average time to be approved was 254 days against a target of 197 days.
- 29.7 The Adoption team ensure that the provision of support services reflects the Adoption Support Regulations 2005. The Adoption Support Fund is being used locally to pay for therapeutic services such as complex assessment i.e. Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service Assessment; multi-disciplinary assessment including education and health; cognitive and neuropsychological assessment; other mental health assessments; therapeutic parenting courses; dyadic developmental psychotherapy; non-violent resistance; therapy; filial therapy; art therapy; dance therapy; and drama therapy.
- 29.8 It is anticipated that 30 adopters will be approved in 2016/17 compared to 18 in 2015/16. As at August 2016, the Adoption Team had approved 12 adopters. Two

approved Inter Country Adoptions last year and there are six cases in the process of approval/placement. There are 7 Step-Parent adoptions outstanding and there were 8 Foster Carers who adopted children in their care and 4 Foster 2 Adopt/concurrency placements compared to 18 in 2015/16.

- 29.9 In Wolverhampton adoption is regarded a positive permanence option. In 2014/15 Wolverhampton placed 67 children for adoption, many of whom would be regarded as harder to place. Bi-monthly family finding meetings with individual family finders take place to monitor and action family finding activity. Social Care Workers complete profiles, photographs and DVDs as soon as the local authority has a possible plan of adoption. Social Care workers also follow up potential links from the Consortium, the Adoption Register or Adoption Links to enable a prompt exchange of paperwork. All these activities promote opportunities for children to be placed with in their adoptive families as soon as is possible.

Case Example: *Wolverhampton has increased the number of Adoption Orders granted year on year over the last 4 years, with 62 children adopted in 2015/16. Improvements are being made with regard to timeliness. Wolverhampton continues to pursue adoption for children who would be considered as harder to place. In 15/16 Wolverhampton children were successfully adopted; 14 children of BME ethnicity, 17 children over 5 years of age and 14 sibling groups.*

- 29.10 Wolverhampton remains committed to supporting foster carers to adopt children who have been in their care for a significant amount of time and where this is in the child's best interests. Wolverhampton is ensuring using the fast-track route in order to ensure that the foster carers are suitably prepared, assessed and supported throughout the child's life.
- 29.11 Early permanence options including fostering to adoption and concurrency placements are considered as part of permanency planning, with these options being utilised where appropriate. Approval of prospective adopters who are willing to consider early permanence options is a priority for ABC and Adoption Focus, with targeted marketing campaigns being utilised. During 2015-2016, there was only 1 adoption disruption and there has been none to date during 2016/17.
- 29.12 The development of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) which incorporates ABC, Adoption Focus, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin is currently being progressed as an early adopter.. Following a successful submission of an Expression of Interest to the Department of Education (DfE), this development is being financially supported by the DfE. Led by Wolverhampton, Phase 1 of the project has included the development of the scope of the RAA, agreement about activities that will fall under the RAA and an initial options appraisal of the potential delivery vehicle for the RAA. Phase 2 is now underway and although the project has been slowed down on DfE's request the project remains committed and on target for implementation by April 2018.

KEY JUDGEMENT 4 - The experiences and progress of care leavers

Young people leaving care and preparing to leave care receive support and help to assist them in making a successful transition to adulthood. Plans for them to leave care are effective and address their individual needs. They are safe and feel safe, particularly where they live. Young people acquire the necessary level of skill and emotional resilience to successfully move towards independence. They are able to successfully access education, employment, training and safe housing. They enjoy stable and enduring relationships with staff and carers who meet their needs.

THE COUNCIL'S SELF EVALUATION OF THIS JUDGEMENT IS "Requires Improvement"

Strengths:

- Co-location of Social Workers, Family Support Workers, Personal Advisors, Housing Support Workers and Education, Employment and Training Officers to facilitate effective multi-agency responses
- Mainstreaming the principles of the New Belongings Project leading to improved outcomes for care leavers
- Extra supported housing provision and hours leading to increased placement stability and choice of suitable accommodation
- Training Flat to evidentially assess need and match this with the right level of support leading to improved stability and effective outcomes for young people
- Early planning between Social Care and Housing in order to ensure appropriate move-on provision for young people leaving care
- Effectively implemented the revised Staying Put Policy, ensuring where appropriate young people can remain in their chosen placement
- Strong Care Leaver Forum which consults with care leavers regarding service delivery and change
- Increasing the number of vulnerable 16+ engaged in education, employment and training
- Good range of mechanisms for regular communication with care leavers including the use of social media and newsletters
- Robust and regular support offer for care leavers including weekly drop-in sessions
- Strong collaboration with The Way Youth Zone in order to ensure the health and wellbeing of care leavers is prioritised
- Corporate commitment to prioritising improved outcomes for care leavers underpinned by the Care Leavers' Charter
- We know the location of all of our care leavers, for non-engaging young people we allocate a family support worker who proactively tries to re-engage them back into the service

Development Areas:

- Improving the quality and timeliness of pathway plans and statutory visits
- Improving the quality and timeliness of transition for young people transferring into adult services in order to ensure needs are identified and effectively met, including safeguarding
- Further developing multi-agency working to reduce numbers of LAC who offend
- Continuing to work with housing providers to ensure suitable accommodation is available in accordance with needs of the young person
- Working with Health Partners in order to improve the health offer for care leavers including the development of a Health Passport
- Providing training and support for professionals, carers and young people on preparation into adulthood ensuring that young people have appropriate life skills to successfully live independently

- Ensuring young people have the opportunity to contribute to and participate in community activities in order to build resilience, a sense of belonging and reduce isolation.

30. Care Leavers

- 30.1 Co-location of Social Workers, Young People’s Advisors, Family support Workers, Housing Team and an Education, Employment and Training co-ordinator facilitates excellent joint working arrangements to support young people through transition. All young people are allocated a Personal Adviser prior to transition, to support transition planning and the development of a needs led Pathway Plan. There are good transition arrangements in place for young people accessing post-18 services. Young people are aware of their entitlements. Updated information leaflets and booklets are incorporated into a post 16 Transition Pack, and the information is on the Care Leavers’ Facebook page and LAC website. The team are committed to increasing partnership working with young people and empowering them to develop confidence and achieve their aspirations.
- 30.2 Wolverhampton was an active participant of the New Belongings Project 2015/2016 and the principles of this continue to be embedded within mainstream service delivery. Care leavers are now more prepared for independence; they have an increased choice of accommodation provision, increased support from partner agencies and increased opportunities for EET. The service has worked hard to increase the participation levels with care leavers by seeking their views annually via a survey and setting up a Care Leavers’ Forum. The service will be piloting the Momo app from October 2016 which will further support young people in contacting their workers more readily to provide feedback regarding the service which they receive.
- 30.3 The young people involved in the forum are in the process of setting up their own charity with the aim of fund raising to enable further opportunities for positive activities and care leaver engagement. Additional feedback in relation to the service is gathered from post 21 interviews with all care Leavers who wish to engage with this offer. Care Leavers’ views continue to influence the development of the service.
- 30.4 A weekly drop in service, held at The Way (youth zone), offers opportunity for support and advice from a housing worker, EET worker, health worker and family support worker to ensure that young people’s holistic needs are being met. The membership charge, for Care Leavers who wish to join The Way, has been funded by the Transitions team. This enables young people to participate in positive activities, increase their social circle, reducing feelings of isolation. In addition we have a LAC transition allotment plot which supports young people with self sustainable skills and promotes a healthy lifestyle. We celebrate Care Leaver week and put together a full programme of activities.
- 30.5 Initiatives such as increasing the capacity of the education, employment and training co-ordinator, and the recruitment of a key worker and young person’s advisor to support the hard to reach NEET young people, has increased the number of young people accessing education, employment and training. This has resulted in a reduction of NEET young people from 40% to 21%. To support the increase in the number of 16+ year olds who are actively engaged in education, employment and training a Personal Education Plan (PEP) for non-eligible young people has also been introduced. The number of young people accessing higher education and university provision has increased. There are now 12 young people attending university with further six young people planning to attend in 2016. Young people are supported whilst at university and the support will be monitored with the introduction

of a post-18 higher education PEP. The Corporate Parenting Strategy is supporting the development of opportunities for work experience, traineeships and apprenticeships within the Council and with partners. We will be introducing a multi-agency NEET panel in October 2016 which will further target and support young people without an EET provision.

- 30.6 In recognition of the positive outcomes for young people aged 16-18 who live in accommodation provided by Wolverhampton Homes, supported by housing support workers within the LAC Transitions Team, further opportunities have been developed including an increase in provision to 27 flats. The overall outcomes for young people who enter these properties are good with the majority of young people going on to maintain their own tenancies post 18 which we continue to track to ensure adequate support is in place. At the end of May 2016, 83% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation compared with 81% in March 2015. This is in line with the national average and higher than the regional figure of 75%.
- 30.7 One of the properties is utilised as a training flat predominantly to support young people in their preparation for independent living. It offers young people an opportunity, for a short time, to experience independent living with support. Thirty young people have been referred to the scheme which has been beneficial in assessing the independence level of care leavers, allowing a more accurate assessment of their need. In addition, two of the properties are used as “crash pads” to ensure that, when required, we can accommodate our young people appropriately in a crisis situation. These are a short term provision of one or two evenings whilst the team support the young people to find alternative accommodation that appropriately meets their needs. We will be having a dedicated housing support worker providing daily support to these provisions and completing daily living assessments underpinned by the getting ready for adult life pack.
- 30.8 There is a plan to further expand this housing provision to 33 flats by the end of 2016 with the support services operating from 8am – 8pm weekdays and 10am - 5pm at the weekends. Bespoke packages of support will be provided ranging from 8 to 30 hours per week, outside of core hours where required, will be offered to young people.

Case Example: *There is a key focus on improving the quality and timeliness of Pathway Plans and Statutory Visits for Care Leavers, this is audited by regular dip sampling to ensure quality of statutory interventions, including statutory visits, care plans, pathway plans and personal education plans are of a high standard. The LAC Transitions Team is piloting the Outcome Star in line with pathway plan reviews from May 2016, with the aim of being able to measure progress identify areas of strength and development when working with Care Leavers. Implementation of this tool will support young people to analyse their current circumstances and reflect upon the improvement they are making, raising their self-esteem and supporting future aspirations.*

31. Youth Offending Team

- 31.1 Wolverhampton Youth Offending Team (YOT) plays an integrated role in Children's Services. The HMIP Full Joint Inspection Report which was published in February 2016 outlines an excellent level of performance achieving the maximum four stars in respect of 'Reducing Reoffending', 'Protecting the Public', 'Ensuring the sentence is served' and 'Interventions to Reduce Reoffending'. The YOT achieved three stars for 'Protecting Children and Young People' and 'Governance and

Partnerships'. Overall, this is the highest achieving Full Joint Inspection in the last three years within England and Wales.

- 31.2 Notwithstanding this level of performance, there is a YOT Inspection Improvement Action Plan that is regularly reviewed and RAG rated at the partnership YOT Management Board. A significant area of development relates to improvement in the engagement levels of YOT young people in Education, Training and Employment and as a result the responsibility of the Virtual School has been extended to include young offenders. A dedicated CAMHS worker is being appointed to join the multiagency team. Both these improvement drives will assist achieving better outcomes for children and young people.
- 31.3 The 2015 National Standards Audit in respect of preventative services demonstrated high quality services in respect of early crime prevention work. The YOT strives to maintain a positive and constructive context of activity for young people including the use of 'The Way' Youth Zone and a Bikeability Project. There is a pilot intervention being developed to address social media and internet grooming. June 2016 saw the commencement of a workshop afternoon for young people on the cusp of the Youth Justice system made the subject of a Community Resolution, the intention being to stop their escalation into the Youth Justice system and address the increase in First time Entrants to the Youth Justice system.
- 31.4 17% of the YOT caseload is LAC and there is strong joint working to improve outcomes. LAC and YOT work closely together and there are established step up and step down policies with Children's Services and key partner organisations. During 2015/16, Wolverhampton YOT worked with 300 young offenders which is a 5% increase on 2014/15. In addition, the YOT completed 412 'Out of Court Disposals' which is an 8% increase on 2014/15. Key priorities for 2016/17 can be found in the Youth Justice Plan 2015-17¹⁷ and the accompanying Action Plan which includes the post Inspection targets.

¹⁷ Youth Justice Plan 2015 - 2017

KEY JUDGEMENT 5 - Leadership, Management and Governance

Leadership, management and governance arrangements comply with statutory guidance and together establish an effective strategy and good quality services for children, young people and their families. There is a clear and up to date strategy for commissioning and developing services delivered by a suitably qualified and experienced workforce that meets the needs of local children, young people and families. The Director of Children's Services (DCS), the lead Elected Member and the Senior Management Team have a comprehensive knowledge about what is happening at the 'front line' to enable them to discharge their responsibilities effectively. They know and understand the difference that help, care and protection are making. They oversee systematic performance management and monitoring that demonstrate rigorous and timely action in response to service deficiencies or new demands. The local authority works with partners to deliver early help, protection children and young people, improve educational attainment and narrow the gap for the children looked after and care leavers. It acts as a strong and effective corporate parent for children looked after and those leaving or who have left care. Leaders, both professional and political, drive continuous improvement so that the local authority is consistently effective as the lead agency for the protection and care of children and young people and as a corporate parent. Partnerships are supported by transparent and rigorous governance between the local authority and key statutory, private and voluntary organisations. Shared priorities are clear and resourced. There is effective engagement with the relevant local partnerships including the Health and Wellbeing Board. The DCS works closely with the LSCB Chair and the Chief Executive holds the LSCB Chair to account for the effectiveness of the LSCB.

THE COUNCIL'S SELF EVALUATION OF THIS JUDGEMENT IS "Good"

Strengths:

- Strong Corporate and Political commitment to supporting services to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people
- Strong and positive relationships with Councillors that has led to additional resources being put into Children's social care
- Strong, stable and permanent Children's Services Management Team that has driven significant improvement over the past 2 years
- Managerial grip on identifying and driving forward transformation, enabling improved outcomes for children and young people
- Service improvement underpinned by performance information
- Established and effective partnership working including a well-established Safeguarding Children's Board and Children's Trust Board
- Good corporate ownership and understanding of safeguarding and corporate parenting across the whole of the Council
- Robust Quality Assurance team that measures practice and improves outcomes
- Three stars awarded by HMIP in February 2016 to recognise the developments in the YOT Management Board
- A consistent culture of CYP participation and feedback that ensures their views are heard and understood, leading to improved service delivery

Development Areas:

- Moving from improvement to transformation, whilst operating in an environment of reduced resources
- Further realising the potential of the People Directorate in promoting a whole family approach

- Developing and implementing a single Quality Assurance Framework which meets the needs of adults and children in order to improve practice standards across Adults and Children Services
- Embedding a culture of self-evaluation across Adults and Children Services and regular dip sampling to ensure practice is meeting statutory requirements
- Ensuring that the corporate transformation programme supports the delivery of the Transforming Children's Services Programme
- Establishing a stable workforce and reduce reliance on agency staff
- Ensuring that all staff in Children's Services have access to appropriate training and development opportunities to ensure they are skilled to fulfil their statutory duties and responsibilities
- Implementation of an Integrated Partnership Protocol ensuring all strategic partnership boards work together to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of people living in Wolverhampton

32. The Council

- 32.1 The City Strategy outlines a shared partnership vision for Wolverhampton and its goal of 'prosperity for all' will be achieved through the close collaboration of partners in: encouraging enterprise; empowering people and communities and re-invigorating the city. A shared commitment to undertake early intervention is one of the five priorities within its 'empowering people and communities' theme.
- 32.2 Wolverhampton's Corporate Plan¹⁸ confirms the Council's commitment to vulnerable families; and sets out the way in which the Council intends to develop and improve its services. It focuses on a combination of those issues that matter the most to local people, the national priorities set by Central Government and the unique challenges arising from the changing social, economic and environmental contexts within Wolverhampton.
- 32.3 The City of Wolverhampton Council has identified significant budget reductions in excess of £175 million over the last six financial years. The extent of the financial challenge over the medium term continues to represent the most significant that the Council has ever faced. The projected budget deficit over the medium term to 2019/20 is £54.6 million, with £22.2 million in 2017/18. It is important to note that this projected budget deficit assumes the achievement of budget reduction proposals amounting to £37.4 million over the four year period to 2019/20. Despite this, there is a strong commitment to invest in evidence based, effective early intervention and prevention services for children, young people and families.
- 32.4 The Council has a strong commitment to and good understanding of its safeguarding and corporate parenting responsibilities. The guidance to support¹⁹ this has recently been updated whilst a recent eLearning tool has been developed regarding Corporate Parenting and will become mandatory for relevant frontline employees, including managers and Councillors. The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People meets weekly with the Strategic Director (People) and Service Director (Children and Young People) which promotes robust scrutiny and challenge. There is a strong CYP scrutiny panel that has oversight and scrutiny of key developments and decisions relating to Children & Young People. Over the last 12 months this has included fostering fees and allowances, school improvement and the Early Intervention Redesign. The Youth Council are active members of the scrutiny panel. Regular safeguarding update meetings take place with the Lead Member, Managing

¹⁸ [Corporate Plan 2015-16](#)

¹⁹ [Councillors' Guide for Safeguarding CYP](#)

Director and Leader of the Council which focuses on performance and the effectiveness of service provision.

32.5 The People Directorate was created in 2014 and is led by a Strategic Director, a role that incorporates the statutory responsibilities for, and is designated as, the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and the Director of Adult Services (DASS). The Strategic Director also has responsibility for Public Health. The Directorate works to ensure that services are developed in a way that focuses on supporting and enabling the most vulnerable and having a person/family centre approach to everything that we do.

32.6 The People Directorate Leadership Team is committed to innovation and striving to better target resources ensuring that they have a direct impact on improving outcomes across Children, Young People and Adult Services. The Corporate Plan has recently been refreshed to reflect 2016/19 priorities and includes the following outcomes for People:

- **People live longer, healthier lives**
 - Promoting and enabling healthy lifestyles – *Tackling lifestyle issues will improve quality of life, reduce the time spent with illness and have a positive effect on life expectancy in the city*
 - Promoting independence for older people – *Older people in the city are able to live full and active lives, with support where necessary to promote independence and choice*
 - Promoting independence for people with disabilities – *Vulnerable people are able to live independently and have choice and control over their lives*
- **Adults and children are supported in times of need**
 - Safeguarding people in vulnerable situations – *vulnerable people in the city will have the support and protection they need to improve their life chances and ensure they feel safe in the community*
 - Strengthening families where children are at risk – *targeting effective early help and support will strengthen families, keep children and young people safe and improve their life chances*
- **People and Communities achieve their full potential**
 - Challenging and supporting schools to provide the best education for children and young people – *Raising expectations, securing swift school improvement and ensuring there are sufficient school places and resources to support children's learning are essential to providing the best education for our young people*
 - Enabling communities to support themselves – *Supporting communities to develop local support will build resilience in the city*
 - Keeping the city safe – *A safe city creates a stable economic climate and a vibrant night-time economy which in turn improves the experience of residents, workers and visitors*

33. Children's Transformation

33.1 During 2014/15 a range of improvements were implemented including the co-location of early help and social care; the development and implementation of the Families r First Programme; and the successful completion of Phase One of the Troubled Families Programme.

33.2 In 2015/16 the change process was widened to ensure whole system transformation to deliver accelerated and sustainable improvements from Early Help through to

Child Protection and Looked After Children, whilst ensuring a whole family approach. The re-design of Early Intervention, introduction of the Specialist Support Service, implementation of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and continued scrutiny of the LAC population has significantly contributed to a safe reduction in looked after children and in addition, a £3.6m underspend on top of savings of £3m.

33.3 Due to the range of projects currently underway within the People Directorate and the need to ensure that there is a system-wide approach to transformation, a Children's Transformation Programme has been developed which is managed and overseen by the Transforming Children's Services Board. The Programme has been developed in order to ensure accelerated and sustainable improvements across the system ensuring that children and families receive the right services at the right time and outcomes are improved. The projects overseen by the Transforming Children's Services Board include:

- The implementation of the new Early Intervention and prevention model.
- Additional resourcing of a new targeted and flexible Intensive Specialist Support service in order to enhance further support to prevent children becoming looked after.
- The implementation of a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in order to ensure child protection and vulnerable adults referrals are managed by a multi-agency team that shares information at the earliest point and support multi-agency decision making.
- The continued focussed analysis and work on existing LAC in order to ensure only the right children come into the system and when they do that permanency is secured for them in a timely manner.
- The review and transformation of child and adolescent mental health and emotional wellbeing services including Headstart.
- The development of a 16+ strategy in order to improve the support and options available to increase the engagement of young people in education, employment and training.
- The continued delivery of the SEND reform agenda.
- The delivery of the Children's Services strategic improvement plan.

34. Resources and Commissioning

34.1 In Wolverhampton we are very focused on delivering the right outcomes at the right cost to ensure that we provide good value for money with our commissioning and contracting arrangements.

34.2 Balancing Cost and Quality - "paying for what we need and getting what we pay for" is a project that is looking at the placements (both residential and fostering) that our Looked After Children are in. The project is making sure that we know what we need in terms of service provision both at a collective and an individual level, and who can provide for that need. This will give us a better understanding of both need and the market and will provide fit for purpose business intelligence. Improved matching and scrutiny of placements will result in a reduction in unnecessary placement spend. This together with robust scrutiny and monitoring of external placements has led to a successful reduction in the use of external placements and consequently financial savings. In April 2015, there were 772 Looked After Children. Of those, as of 20th June 2016, 213 have exited care, 234 are in cheaper placements, 84 are in more expensive placements and 241 are in placements which cost the same as on 1st April 2015.

- 34.3 This work is strongly linked to the Sufficiency Strategy which has an outcomes based action plan covering the main themes of residential, fostering, edge of care etc. Progress on the action plan is on track and the 2015-2016 report is providing valuable business intelligence for the refresh of the Strategy due next year.
- 34.4 Work is on-going developing the new Regional Adoption Agency in partnership with our Black Country authority colleagues and Telford and Shropshire. This will deliver a consistent and locally responsive service across the geographic footprint of the 6 LAs. Wolverhampton is the lead for DfE funded early adopter project.
- 34.5 We have submitted a bid to the innovation fund established by the DfE linked to their focus area of 'rethinking transitions to adulthood for young people in the social care system'. The proposal involves setting up a 24 hour supported accommodation based service that enables young people to gain ASDAN accreditation and which makes innovative use of telecare.
- 34.6 We are currently consulting on the outcome of a strategic review of services for people at risk of violence and abuse which is proposing the redesign of accommodation based services, floating support and advocacy services, perpetrator services and target hardening (safer homes) services.
- 34.7 We have identified that our specialist services need access to therapeutic support for families earlier and at a lower tier. The current commissioned CAMHS service is not able to offer the intensity of support we are looking to procure. Our commissioning intention is for an Early Intervention Framework which will be used primarily by the Strengthening Families Hubs, in addition we are also looking to procure a single provider for our specialist support service. A key element for the externally commissioned service is to respond to support requests within 5 working days and to be proactive in accessing families, rather than expecting families to attend. Market warming is currently underway and spot purchasing of specialist support will start shortly with the tender going out in the Autumn.

35. CAMHS Transformation

- 35.1 The CAMHS Transformation is a jointly led programme between the CCG and the Local Authority to review and develop a tier less whole system of support for children and young people in relation to addressing emotional wellbeing and mental wellbeing. The programme is well underway with the establishment of an appropriate governance process through a specifically established partnership Board. This Board has 5 Task and Finish Groups to manage the activities associated with the planning and implementation of change. Stakeholder events have been held to inform the design of the new service provision. The Board has also examined and is looking to apply the learning obtained from the consultations and programme implementation of the HeadStart programme. Through the CAMHS Transformation Partnership Board, a model and vision has been approved, and a comprehensive mapping exercise is almost complete. The next step will be to develop a specification describing the new services.

36. Wolverhampton Children's Trust

- 36.1 The Children's Trust Board is the key body responsible for the strategic planning of services and providing the direction and vision for improving outcomes and protecting children and young people in the city. This is set out in the Children, Young People & Families Plan (2015-25).

36.2 The purpose of the Children, Young People & Families Plan (2015 – 25)²⁰ is to clearly identify what agencies will do to enable children, young people and families in Wolverhampton to live healthy, safe and happy lives. An essential component of the plan is tracking progress and measuring success; and when the plan was developed a number of overarching outcomes and measures were identified including:

- Reducing the harm caused by child poverty
- Increasing achievement and involvement in education, training and employment
- Making families stronger
- Improving the health of children, young people and families

37. Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children’s Board (WSCB)

37.1 The Chair of the WSCB has been in post since February 2013, he is also Chair of the Safeguarding Adult Board.

37.2 The Board has approved and published the Annual Report²¹. This clearly identifies the current position, future direction and priorities for the Board.

37.3 During the last 12 months there has been increased financial commitment from agencies on the Board which will enable to Board to increase its staffing capacity in relation to SCR and CDOP functions, as well as training, quality assurance and performance management to ensure that the Board can effectively discharge its key statutory functions.

37.4 Agencies on the Board work well together and there is robust challenge and individuals/organisations are held to account on delivering actions. The Executive Group brings together Sub-Committee Chairs and Chairs of other key strategic partnerships in order to ensure that work to safeguard and protect children and young people in Wolverhampton is clear, consistent and joined up. A Joint Protocol has been produced and approved by the Chairs which outlines how the various Partnership Boards will work together.

37.5 In Wolverhampton, Section 11 Audits are undertaken on a bi-annual basis with one being underway currently. In line with the Education Act 2002, Schools are responsible for completing the Section 175 self-assessment audit which they utilise to monitor and improve their safeguarding arrangements against the national guidance ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’. In September 2015 the WSCB received a report confirming schools’ completion of the audit and it is envisaged that assurance will be sought from schools on a bi-annual basis via survey monkey. Under revised arrangements, the next survey planned for December 2016 and will be extended to all educational establishments, including free schools, academies independent schools and FE establishment under the section 157 arrangements for non-maintained educational providers. .

37.6 The Board has a themed schedule of quarterly multi-agency case file audits. There is a robust process which outlines expectations from partners, how audits are concluded and what will happen with the findings. In line with Working Together 2015, the WSCB has a quality assurance framework in place this is implemented by the Quality & Performance Committee.

37.7 2016 has seen the publication of one Serious Case Review (SCRs) with a second SCR completed and awaiting a decision from the National Panel to publish a

²⁰ [Children, Young People and Families Plan 2015-25](#)

²¹ [WSCB Annual Report 2014-15](#)

redacted report in order to protect the identity of the children concerned. It is envisaged that this report will be released for publication towards the end of September 2016. WSCB has commissioned a further SCR which commenced in May 2016 and is now well underway. We are expecting to be in a position to conclude to publication by the end of December 2016.

- 37.8 The Serious Case Review Sub-Committee ensures that the learning from all regional and local SCRs is considered and where appropriate, actions are included in single agency and multi-agency action plans which are monitored at each Sub-Committee meeting.
- 37.9 There are a number of key thematic priorities including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), domestic violence, radicalisation, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Forced Marriage. The Board works closely with other strategic partnership boards in order to ensure that there is a focus on offenders, victims and vulnerable locations and links are in place with other thematic areas of development and service provision such as tackling gangs and youth violence and anti-social behaviour. Joint working protocols are in the process of being devised to formalise these relationships which have been strengthened in recent years.
- 37.10 Where provision relates to children and young people, approaches are jointly developed across partnerships and teams. Work is continuing to fully integrated systems to improve access to Safer Wolverhampton Partnership (SWP) specialist commissioned services. In addition, the SWP has made an increased investment in both Violence Against Women and Girls and gangs/youth violence commissioned services. SWP has funded a new Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) to work directly with Children's Social Care, providing case management support to victims of DV at an earlier point via Early Help and CIN/CP Teams and increase confidence across teams in identifying and responding to DV.
- 37.11 Whilst Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) by definition relate to adult victims, these are undertaken in line with the SCR process and include safeguarding representation to identify improved practice across Children's Services where there are children or young people within the family. A successful joint SCR/DHR and Safeguarding Adults Review joint learning event took place in March 2016 to increase the awareness and understanding of these shared processes and disseminate learning across partners.
- 37.12 SWP has been working with both Adult and Children Safeguarding Boards to embed Prevent as an extension of safeguarding practice. This work has been further underpinned by the introduction of the new Prevent duty under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. A bank of multi-agency trainers has been established to deliver training to partners and provide targeted support for roll out in schools. This includes a programme of training which is being rolled out across Children's Social Care and Early Help teams and there is well established involvement of Children's Social Care and Children's Safeguarding on the Channel Panel.
- 37.13 Board Partners have increased their funding to establish a CSE Co-ordinator who has responsibility for developing and implementing the CSE Strategy. Robust systems are now in place and the regional CSE Framework²² is being robustly applied in Wolverhampton. The CSE Strategy²³ clearly outlines how we will work together to prevent, identify and respond to both victims and perpetrators.

²² [CSE Regional Framework 2015](#)

²³ [CSE Strategy](#)

Implementation of the Strategy is monitored by the Sexual Exploitation, Missing and Trafficked Sub-Committee.

- 37.14 The Board undertook a self-assessment of its effectiveness in April 2016 as part of its annual development day programme. The purpose of this exercise was to establish the effectiveness of the Board using the Ofsted Framework and the statutory guidance Working Together (2015), this resulted in a self assessed judgement of 'good'. The outcome and findings from this exercise have informed the development of the Board Improvement Action Plan.

Self-Assessment Document Index

Page	Footnote	Title	Summary
6	1	2001 and 2011 census	Website with information, statistics, and research about the city and its areas.
6	2	Unemployment briefing	Monthly briefing providing details of unemployment statistics for Wolverhampton.
10	3	Mid-year population estimate 2014	Website illustrating dataset of the estimated population by broad age each year since 2001 for smaller areas in Wolverhampton.
10	4	Wolverhampton's Child Poverty Strategy 2013-2018	Reducing Child Poverty is a key priority for Wolverhampton Partnerships' City Strategy 2011-26 whose overall goal is to ensure prosperity for all by creating opportunities that encourage enterprise, empower people and re-invigorate our city. Its planned result is to reduce poverty to no more than 10% of families living in poverty by 2026.
10	5	Census 2011	Census data.
10	6 & 7	Wolverhampton Child Health Profile	This profile provides a snapshot of child health in this area. It is designed to help the local authority and health services improve the health and wellbeing of children and tackle health inequalities.
28	8	Early Intervention Protocol	This protocol should be seen as an integral part of ensuring that Early Intervention Meetings facilitate effective lines of communication between agencies to identify and support vulnerable families.
29	9	Troubled Families Outcomes Plan Sept 2015	Wolverhampton Expanded Programme Outcome Plan detailing strategic goals and strategic outcomes.
31	10	Return Missing Policy	The purpose of this Policy is to outline the responsibilities of Children & Young People's Services when children and young people in the City go missing to ensure their safety and wellbeing.
31	11	CSE Screening Tool	This Tool has been developed to enable the identification of children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation.
31	12	NWG CSE RA	This form allows exploration of some of the vulnerabilities and indicators present in a child or young person that might be at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation. It is intended to assist in the consideration of what the risk might be to the young person and about what to do with the information.
31	13	Social Care Referral Policy	The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that all children and young people referred to a Social Care receive a timely and appropriate Service dependent on their assessed and identified need.
35	14	WSCB Thresholds of Support Policy	Its purpose is to assist everyone involved in making decisions about the most appropriate support to provide to children, young people and their families in relation to different levels of need. It also clarifies how different levels of support can be accessed as a new threshold of need is reached.
37	15	All Age Disability	The aim of the All Age Disability Strategy is to

		Strategy 2013-16	recognise the diversity of disabled people and their aspirations, and to ensure that all disabled children, young people and adults are able to live active and fulfilling lives.
44	16	Corporate Parenting Strategy 2015-16	This Corporate Parenting Strategy forms both our statement of intent and vision for the next three years and includes our Pledge to all Looked after Children.
52	17	Youth Justice Plan 2015-2017	This plan sets out how Youth Justice Services are provided and resourced in Wolverhampton which has a strong track record of delivery and improvement against government targets.
54	18	Corporate Plan 2015-16	City of Wolverhampton Council Corporate Plan.
54	19	Councillors' Guide for Safeguarding CYP	This guidance note has been developed for Councillors to enable them to raise awareness of safeguarding, hold council executives and their partners to account, provide account to constituents for what has been done and ask questions about the outcomes of safeguarding.
57	20	Children, Young People and Families Plan 2015-25	The purpose of this plan is to set out what Children's Trust Partners will do so that Children, Young People and Families in Wolverhampton can live happy, healthy lives.
60	21	WSCB Annual Report 2014-15	This report provides an insight in to the work of Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB). It highlights the main achievements in safeguarding Wolverhampton's children and young people, and identifies the priority areas for improvement.
59	22	CSE Regional Framework 2015	This document sets out the regional framework for safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children and young people from Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) across the West Midlands Metropolitan Area.
59	23	CSE Strategy	This document sets out the strategy for Safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children from Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) in Wolverhampton. It sets out how through our partnerships we should assess, challenge and provide an enhanced, effective service to reduce the harm and threats posed to children and young people from CSE.