

Agenda

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Friday, 14 September 2018, 2.00 pm
County Hall, Worcester

All County Councillors are invited to attend and participate

This document can be provided in alternative formats such as Large Print, an audio recording or Braille; it can also be emailed as a Microsoft Word attachment. Please contact Democratic Services on telephone number 01905 844963 or by emailing democraticservices@worcestershire.gov.uk

DISCLOSING INTERESTS

There are now 2 types of interests:
'Disclosable pecuniary interests' and **'other disclosable interests'**

WHAT IS A 'DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST' (DPI)?

- Any **employment**, office, trade or vocation carried on for profit or gain
- **Sponsorship** by a 3rd party of your member or election expenses
- Any **contract** for goods, services or works between the Council and you, a firm where you are a partner/director, or company in which you hold shares
- Interests in **land** in Worcestershire (including licence to occupy for a month or longer)
- **Shares** etc (with either a total nominal value above £25,000 or 1% of the total issued share capital) in companies with a place of business or land in Worcestershire.

NB Your DPIs include the interests of your spouse/partner as well as you

WHAT MUST I DO WITH A DPI?

- **Register** it within 28 days and
- **Declare** it where you have a DPI in a matter at a particular meeting
 - you must **not participate** and you **must withdraw**.

NB It is a criminal offence to participate in matters in which you have a DPI

WHAT ABOUT 'OTHER DISCLOSABLE INTERESTS'?

- No need to register them but
- You must **declare** them at a particular meeting where:
 - You/your family/person or body with whom you are associated have a **pecuniary interest** in or **close connection** with the matter under discussion.

WHAT ABOUT MEMBERSHIP OF ANOTHER AUTHORITY OR PUBLIC BODY?

You will not normally even need to declare this as an interest. The only exception is where the conflict of interest is so significant it is seen as likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest.

DO I HAVE TO WITHDRAW IF I HAVE A DISCLOSABLE INTEREST WHICH ISN'T A DPI?

Not normally. You must withdraw only if it:

- affects your **pecuniary interests** **OR** relates to a **planning or regulatory** matter
- **AND** it is seen as likely to **prejudice your judgement** of the public interest.

DON'T FORGET

- If you have a disclosable interest at a meeting you must **disclose both its existence and nature** – 'as noted/recorded' is insufficient
- **Declarations must relate to specific business** on the agenda
 - General scattergun declarations are not needed and achieve little
- Breaches of most of the **DPI provisions** are now **criminal offences** which may be referred to the police which can on conviction by a court lead to fines up to £5,000 and disqualification up to 5 years
- Formal **dispensation** in respect of interests can be sought in appropriate cases.

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Friday, 14 September 2018, 2.00 pm, County Hall, Worcester

Membership

Councillors:

Mrs F M Oborski (Chairman), Mrs J A Potter (Vice Chairman), Ms P Agar, Mr T Baker-Price, Mr R W Banks, Ms R L Dent, Mr P M McDonald, Mr S J Mackay and Ms T L Onslow

Co-opted Church Representatives (for education matters)

Bryan Allbut (Church of England)

Parent Governor Representatives (for education matters)

Vacancy

Agenda

Item No	Subject	Page No
1	Apologies and Welcome	
2	Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip	
3	Public Participation Members of the public wishing to take part should notify the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in writing or by e-mail indicating the nature and content of their proposed participation no later than 9.00am on the working day before the meeting (in this case 13 September). Enquiries can be made through the telephone number/e-mail address below.	
4	Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting (previously circulated)	
5	Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2017-18	1 - 38
6	Children's Social Care Service - Ofsted Monitoring Visit Feedback	39 - 48
7	Performance Monitoring	49 - 58
8	Update on the Use of Children's Centre Buildings	59 - 64

Agenda produced and published by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP. To obtain further information or hard copies of this agenda, please contact Alyson Grice 01905 844962/Samantha Morris 01905 844963 email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

All the above reports and supporting information can be accessed via the Council's website [here](#)

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

14 SEPTEMBER 2018

WORCESTERSHIRE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

Summary

1. Derek Benson, Independent Chair of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB), has been invited to present the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2017-18 (attached as Appendix 1).

Background

2. The Independent Chair of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board is responsible for publishing an annual report that provides a public assessment of the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements for children and young people in Worcestershire. The report also recognises achievements and is realistic about the challenges that remain.
3. The report is made publicly available through publication on the Board's website. In addition, it is formally presented to the Chief Executive and Leader of the County Council, to the Health and Well-Being Board and to Cabinet. It is sent to West Mercia's Police and Crime Commissioner, to the respective Chairs of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board and the Safer Communities Board, and it is circulated to lead officers in key partner agencies.
4. In September 2017 Derek Benson, Independent Chair, informed the Panel that whilst the Board had received assurance that strategies were in place to improve frontline practice, it could not yet be assured about the impact of these and therefore the child protection system remained a risk. The Board recognised the scale and challenge facing the local authority and remained committed to working with all partners to bring about the necessary change required to improve outcomes for children in Worcestershire.

Key points from the WSCB Annual Report 2017/18

5. During 2017/18 Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board had a particular focus on a number of priorities including:
 - Children subject to Neglect
 - Children affected by Domestic Abuse
 - Children vulnerable to or experiencing Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
 - Early Help and Thresholds
 - Key messages in respect of Voice of the Child, Professional Curiosity and Resolution of Professional Differences (Escalation Policy)
 - Critical Friends (Service Improvement Plan)

6. A Task and Finish Group was established in October 2017 to look at neglect in Worcestershire. During the year work commenced on the development of a Neglect Strategy which is to be implemented during 2018/19 with mechanisms in place for monitoring its impact on children and young people.

7. The Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy was launched towards the end of 2017 by the Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and in support of this work a new multi-agency sub group for children and young people was established, chaired by the Assistant Director (Safeguarding). The Board completed a multi-agency case file audit (MACFA) on 12 children who had been exposed to domestic abuse five or more times. It found that in nearly half of these cases the court had made a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO), providing a window of opportunity for work to be completed with victims and children, but professionals were not always aware that this was the case. The Board has since received assurance that a more robust process is now in place to ensure that this information is shared between agencies in an expedient way to maximise the opportunities to support victims and to safeguard children. One third of all social work assessments and nearly half of all Child Protection Plans had domestic abuse as a factor.

8. The Board's Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Strategic Group, led by West Mercia Police, continued to co-ordinate the implementation of the CSE Strategy 2017-19. Changes were made to operational processes and systems during the year to improve decision making about individual children, and membership of the CSE Operational Group was reviewed to ensure all key agencies were represented, including Education which was a gap identified by Ofsted in 2016. The Board noted a number of concerns in respect of CSE: the absence of an up to date multi-agency CSE Problem Profile (reported to be due to the lack of analyst capacity), difficulties experienced by West Mercia Police in sharing data with partners due to issues with migration to their new data system, and concern about the capacity of commissioned support services for young people who have experienced CSE (at the time of writing the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner were in the process of reviewing the Contract).

9. The Board is able to provide assurance that partner agencies are engaged with the CSE agenda, that Designated Safeguarding Leads in nearly all schools have received CSE training delivered by the Board (with a plan in place to target any gaps), and that children are being identified as being at risk of or experiencing CSE. Two CSE investigations were initiated during the year involving potentially high numbers of child victims or witnesses. All schools were asked by the Board to implement the WSCB Whole School Approach to Healthy Relationships in support of the CSE prevention agenda, however the Board is not yet in a position to provide assurance that it has been widely embedded. Partner agencies have been asked to complete a further CSE self-assessment against a set of practice standards developed by the Board in order to evaluate progress across the partnership. At the time of writing the findings from this audit had not been finalised, but the headlines are that all agencies have graded themselves as being in a better position than one year ago (with action plans in place to improve practice where necessary), which is encouraging.

10. A Task and Finish Group was established in October 2017 to develop the action plan required to support the implementation of the Early Help Strategy approved in September 2017, and in March 2018 it was agreed that responsibility for delivery of the action plan would transfer to the relevant sub group of the Health and Well-Being Board. The Board will, however, retain a role in monitoring the effectiveness of early help and in supporting communications to partner agencies about the Early Help Pathway. The Board is in the process of developing its own effectiveness framework for evaluating early help in

Worcestershire, to include feedback from practitioners and families, but is not in a position to provide assurance at this point in time. Through its quality assurance activity the Board is aware of examples of good practice, but is unable to draw conclusions from the relatively small sample size. As reported last year there remain questions about the effectiveness of wider universal services in the delivery of early help as there is no mechanism in place for capturing information about what is being offered to children and families other than when a service is delivered by a commissioned service. The Service Improvement Plan has identified the need for an improved robust dataset which will provide consistent and accurate information about early help provision going forward.

11. It is currently a statutory responsibility of Local Safeguarding Children Boards to publish guidance on the thresholds for making a referral to Children's Social Care. The revised Levels of Need (Thresholds) guidance was approved in September 2017 and was referenced at Learning and Improvement Briefings for practitioners held during the Autumn 2017. A survey was subsequently circulated which asked partner agencies to confirm that the Levels of Need (Thresholds) guidance had been circulated to all relevant staff and commissioned services. The Board can provide assurance that the guidance has been actively disseminated by all statutory partner agencies (reaching approximately 13,000 practitioners) and that, in addition, all agencies have confirmed that their staff know the name and contact details of their respective safeguarding lead. Questions remain about the consistent application of thresholds by practitioners and the Board will continue to evaluate this during 2018/19.

12. This year has continued to see further pressure on the Family Front Door with the number of Contacts up by 10% compared with last year. Just over one third (36%) of Contacts became Referrals to Children's Social Care. The number of looked after children increased slightly (up 4.5% compared to last year), thought to be associated with a reduction in the number of children on Child Protection Plans where the Plan had not achieved the required outcomes and children had been moved into local authority Care. The number of Child in Need Plans also reduced this year, reflecting a positive approach to reviewing cases and addressing drift and delay. Performance in respect of completion of social work Assessments within time scale continued to improve. The Board was well sighted on the Service Improvement Plan and eight Board members were nominated to act as Critical Friends to provide support and challenge to the Children's Social Care improvement work stream leads. This input was acknowledged by the Director of Children, Families and Communities to have been constructive and helpful and will continue during 2018/19. The Board was also well sighted on the Service Improvement Plan dashboard presented at each Board meeting by the Assistant Director (Safeguarding), which provided opportunity for Board members to ask questions and receive assurance on progress.

13. Audit and case review findings in previous years had indicated that practitioners did not always have an understanding of the lived experience of children and young people or use this to inform decisions. Professional curiosity was often absent and explanations from parents and carers taken at face value, sometimes leading to disguised compliance. In addition, there was evidence that practitioners were not always familiar with the WSCB policy for resolving professional differences of opinion. The Board undertook a number of initiatives to raise awareness of these key messages, including introduction of the Learning and Improvement Briefings (LIBs) at briefings for practitioners, and utilising the Board's newsletter and Practitioner Network. A subsequent survey sent out to partner agencies provided assurance that all statutory partners had disseminated the LIBs to relevant staff and commissioned services (again reaching approximately 13,000 practitioners). The Board was pleased to note positive comments made by Ofsted inspectors about the evidence of professional curiosity during one of their monitoring

visits in 2018. During the coming year the Board will continue to look for evidence of practitioners listening to the voice of the child, exercising professional curiosity and employing the Escalation Policy when professional differences of opinion cannot be easily resolved.

14. Three cases were presented during the year for consideration of a Serious Case Review (SCR) and all three were found to meet the criteria resulting in SCRs being formally commissioned by the Board. At the time of writing one Serious Case Review has been completed but not yet published while the outcome of parallel processes are awaited. Learning from these SCRs will inform the Board's Learning and Improvement communications during 2018/19.

15. During the year 25 Child Death Notifications were received, the lowest number since the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) process began in 2008. The Panel reviewed 25 deaths during the year (not necessarily the same 25 children) and modifiable factors were found to be present in 11 of the deaths. Modifiable factors included lack of parental supervision, inaction following expression of suicidal ideation, maternal obesity, smoking and incomplete evaluation of previous miscarriages. National data for 2017/18 is not yet available for comparison purposes. An analysis of all Worcestershire child deaths categorised as 'Suicide or Deliberate Self-Harm' was completed and compared with findings from a recent national study into suicides, both highlighting the importance of supporting and responding to young people who have been told of another child's suicidal thoughts or behaviours. The Panel was particularly pleased to receive information about the work undertaken by one local secondary school to support students who might find themselves in this position.

16. The Board delivered 58 training events to 1308 practitioners during 2017/18. This multi-agency training continues to be rated highly by attendees who report an improvement in knowledge and confidence after attending training events. Post-training impact evaluations and audits also demonstrate that learning is transferred into the workplace and has a positive impact on children and families. 1389 practitioners completed an e-learning course with 97% being satisfied or very satisfied that the course gave them all the information they needed. This was a significant reduction in demand compared to previous years and in March 2018 the decision was taken by the Board to cease providing e-learning from April 2019.

17. The Section 11 Audit is a self-assessment by partner agencies of the extent to which they are fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities as defined in the Children Act 2004. This year the Board conducted its Section 11 Audit using a new audit template which has been developed by a West Midlands working group. The Board can provide assurance that partner agencies continue to report good compliance with their safeguarding duties with plans in place to address any areas requiring improvement. A challenge event to be facilitated by the WSCB Independent Chair during 2018/9 will seek further assurance about the evidence provided by partner agencies to support their self-assessments.

18. There were 15 private fostering arrangements in place in 2017/18. This is lower than expected, but in line with the national picture, suggesting that there is a lack of awareness of private fostering situations or of the need to notify them to the local authority for assessment. Since the report was drafted lead practitioners with responsibility for private fostering have been identified within Children's Social Care and there are developments in place to raise awareness. The Board will continue to monitor this during the coming year.

Conclusion

19. The Board has concluded that at a strategic level there is a strong commitment to safeguarding children in Worcestershire. It has also received assurances that safeguarding arrangements are in place in partner agencies and that safeguarding responsibilities are taken seriously. In addition, the Board's contributory partners have made additional monies available following the Ofsted inspection to support improvement work despite operating within financial constraints.

20. Much of the Board's attention has this year focussed on Children's Social Care as lead agency for safeguarding children. In October 2017 Ofsted acknowledged that the local authority had taken steps to tackle its 'serious weaknesses' and was beginning to make progress to improve services for children and young people. By February 2018 Ofsted were acknowledging that 'whilst services for children in Worcestershire continue to require much work to be of a good standard, progress has been made since the last monitoring visit'. The Board is assured that robust monitoring arrangements are in place through Ofsted, the Children's Commissioner and Essex County Council (Improvement Partner) and that progress is being made by Children's Social Care through delivery of its Service Improvement Plan, whilst acknowledging that further work is required to ensure that children and young people in Worcestershire receive a consistently good standard of service. Partner agencies have a part to play in ensuring that they also respond robustly to children and families, especially where the threshold is not met for a Children's Social Care intervention but families require additional support through the provision of early help

21. From September 2019 the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board will not exist and new safeguarding partnership arrangements will be in place. The Board will, however, continue to deliver its statutory functions until the new arrangements have been established. Assurance will continue to be sought from partner agencies during the coming year as outlined in the body of this report.

Purpose of the Meeting

The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- consider the information in the report
- determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny, and
- agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children, Families and Communities

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 - Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2017/18

Specific Contact Points for this report

Alyson Grice/Samantha Morris, Overview and Scrutiny Officers 01905 844962/844963
Email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children, Families and Communities) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

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Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board

Annual Report 2017/18

Contents

Foreword by Independent Chair	4
1. Introduction to the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board	6
1.1 What is the Safeguarding Children Board?	6
1.2 Purpose of the Annual Report	6
1.3 Vision Statement	6
1.4 Mission Statement	6
1.5 WSCB Values	6
1.6 WSCB Membership & Structure	7
1.7 Business Plan	7
1.8 Administration	7
1.9 Funding	8
1.10 New Local Safeguarding Children Arrangements	8
2. Context	9
2.1 Context & Local Demographics	9
2.2 Partnership Working	10
3. Key Priorities in 2017/18	12
3.1 Children subject to Neglect	12
3.2 Children affected by Domestic Abuse	12
3.3 Children vulnerable to or experiencing Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)	13
3.4 Early Help	14
3.5 Voice of the Child, Professional Curiosity and Escalation Policy	15
3.6 Critical Friends (Service Improvement Plan)	15
3.7 Thresholds	16
4. Effectiveness, Learning and Improvement	17
4.1 Monitoring Effectiveness	17
4.2 Quantitative Data	17
4.3 Qualitative Data	18
4.4 Learning and improvement	20
4.5 Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)	21
4.6 Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and Case Reviews	22
4.7 Communications	22
4.8 Engagement with Front Line Practitioners	23
4.9 Engagement with Children, Young People and Families	23
4.10 Policies & Procedures	23
4.11 Evaluating the Effectiveness of Training	24

5. Formal Summary Statement	25
Appendix 1 - End of Year Financial Statement	27
Appendix 2 - Headlines from the Data	28
1. Contacts, Referrals & Assessments	28
2. Early Help	28
3. Children with a Child In Need Plan	28
4. Children with a Child Protection Plan	28
5. Looked After Children	29
6. Children who are Care Leavers	30
7. Children in Private Fostering	30
8. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)	30
9. Children with a Disability	30
10. Children Missing Education and Electively Home Educated Children	30
11. Children at Risk of Offending	31
12. Children and Mental Health	31
13. Missing Children	31
14. Concerns about Adults who are in Positions of Trust	31
Appendix 3 - Glossary	32



Foreword by Independent Chair

The Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board's (WSCB) Annual Report for 2017/18 provides a summary and assessment of the effectiveness of child safeguarding and the promotion of the welfare of children in Worcestershire.

The purpose of a Local Safeguarding Children Board is to co-ordinate safeguarding arrangements across agencies and to ensure these are effective. In last year's report I stated that pending changes to legislation meant that effective local partnership working had never been more important as the removal of the statutory footing for safeguarding of children in each locality would require the partners to reaffirm their commitment to collaborative working arrangements. The publication of Working Together 2018 and its associated guidance places a significant responsibility on the local authority, the police and health partners to deliver new safeguarding arrangements from 2019.

I am assured that those three key safeguarding partners, along with other important sectors and agencies, are committed to delivering effective and inclusive safeguarding arrangements for the children and young people of Worcestershire.

The Annual Report covers the local and national context, governance and accountability arrangements, priorities, achievements and learning, and concludes with a formal summary statement about the sufficiency of arrangements to ensure children are safe in Worcestershire.

As in previous years the Report will be made publicly available on the Board's website, and will be formally submitted to the Chief Executive and Leader of the County Council. It will be presented to the County Council's Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel, to the Health and Well-Being Board and to the Council's Cabinet. It will also be sent to the Police and Crime Commissioner and to key partnerships. Board members will ensure that their own agencies have access to the Report.

As was the case last year there has rightly been a focus on Children's Social Care with particular emphasis on developments around early help and the continuing delivery of wider service improvement. The exploitation of children and young people, be that Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) or in other forms such as trafficking, will remain a priority across the partnership.

Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board, its members and their colleagues, will continue its work to safeguard the children and young people of the county, and I would wish to express my appreciation to all of them for their efforts.



Derek Benson

Independent Chair: August 2018

Assurance Statement

Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board assurance statement for 2017/18:

Assurance provided	1. Robust monitoring arrangements are in place through Ofsted, the Children’s Commissioner and Essex County Council (Improvement Partner) and progress is being made by Children’s Social Care through delivery of its Service Improvement Plan
	2. There is increased engagement with schools at both strategic and operational levels in terms of welfare and safeguarding issues generally, and with decision making in respect of individual children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation
	3. There is good engagement across the partnership with the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) agenda and Designated Safeguarding Leads in virtually all schools have received the Board’s CSE training
	4. The Section 11 Audit demonstrates that there is good compliance reported by partner agencies with plans in place to address any required improvements in the delivery of safeguarding duties
	5. There is a robust approach to the co-ordination of services for children and families affected by domestic abuse by the Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and there there is good linkage with WSCB

Assurance not yet provided	1. No up to date CSE problem profile for Worcestershire
	2. Low levels of awareness across the partnership of private fostering and the duty to notify the local authority
	3. Difficulties with accessing data from West Mercia Police to support trend analysis
	4. Children with disabilities receive a good service from specialist social workers, but assurance is not available about the larger cohort of other disabled children who do not meet the eligibility criteria for this service
	5. Need to consider the safeguarding needs of some groups of ‘hidden children’ identified by Ofsted in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection
	6. Need to understand better why Worcestershire’s data suggests a higher rate of Child Protection Plans due to Neglect than the England average or statistical neighbours
	7. Concern about the capacity of support services to meet the needs of children who are at risk of or have experienced sexual exploitation
	8. Awaiting evidence from the annual schools safeguarding audit (S175/157 Audit) of the extent to which schools have embedded the Whole School Approach to Healthy Relationships in support of the CSE prevention agenda
	9. We remain unsure about the effectiveness of early help delivered by the wider partnership

1. Introduction to the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB)

1.1 What is the Safeguarding Children Board?

WSCB is the key statutory body which oversees multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements across Worcestershire. Our work is governed by the statutory guidance in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015'.

Section 14 of the Children Act 2004 sets out the statutory objectives of Local Safeguarding Children Boards, which are:

- To co-ordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in their area; and
- To ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.

1.2 Purpose of the Annual Report

It is a statutory requirement for the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Board to publish an annual report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding arrangements in Worcestershire. This report relates to the preceding financial year. The report will be submitted to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the chair of the Health and Well-Being Board.

1.3 Vision Statement

All children and young people in Worcestershire are safe and thriving

1.4 Mission Statement

Working in partnership to keep all children and young people safe and thriving within an environment where safeguarding is everybody's business and intervention and support is timely and right for individuals and families.

1.5 WSCB Values

- Respect for children, young people and their families
- Making a positive difference to the lives of children and young people
- Working together in partnership
- Collective and mutual challenge between partners to keep children safe
- Involving communities at a local level
- Valuing and responding to diversity



1.6 WSCB Membership & Structure

Membership of the Local Safeguarding Children Board is statutory for a number of partners as outlined in **Working Together (2015)**. A full list of member partner agencies can be found on the WSCB website at www.worcestershire.gov.uk/safeguardingchildren

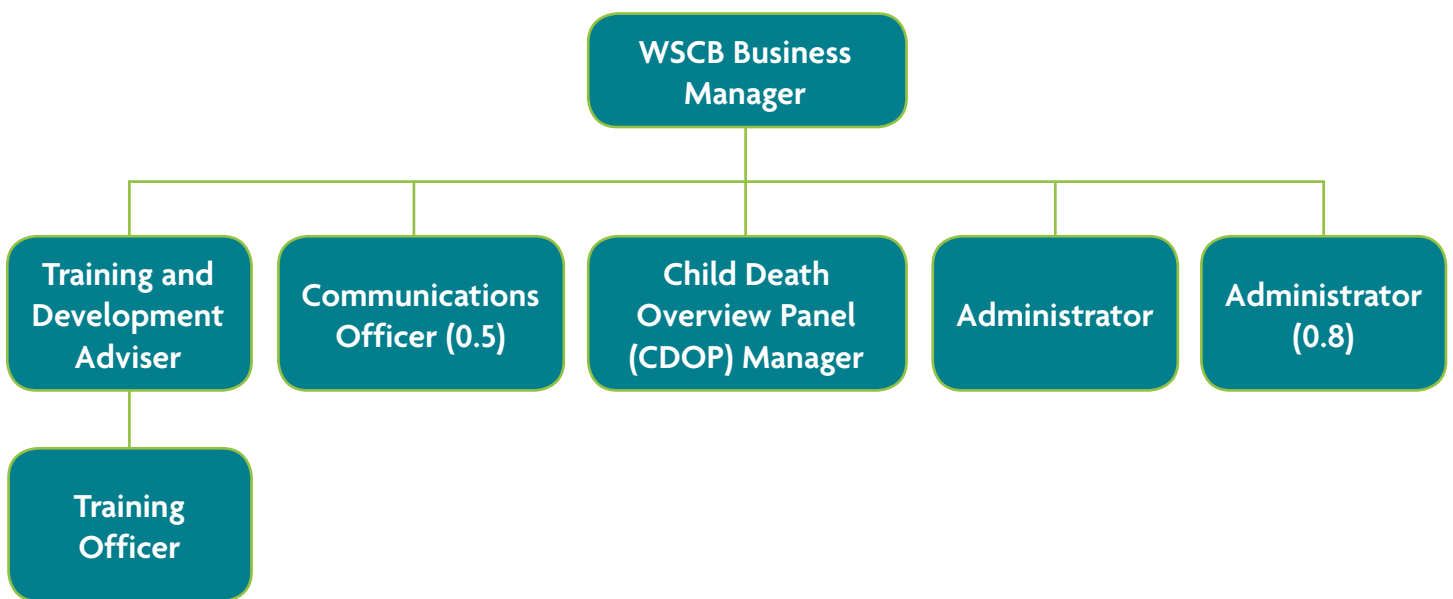
WSCB has a number of sub groups which co-ordinate the activity required for the Board to fulfil its statutory functions. The Board's structure chart is located at: www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/1998/structure_for_worcestershire_safeguarding_children_board_september_2013

1.7 Business Plan

The WSCB Business Plan for 2017/18 is located on the Board's website at: www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/4732/wscb_business_plan_2016_to_2017

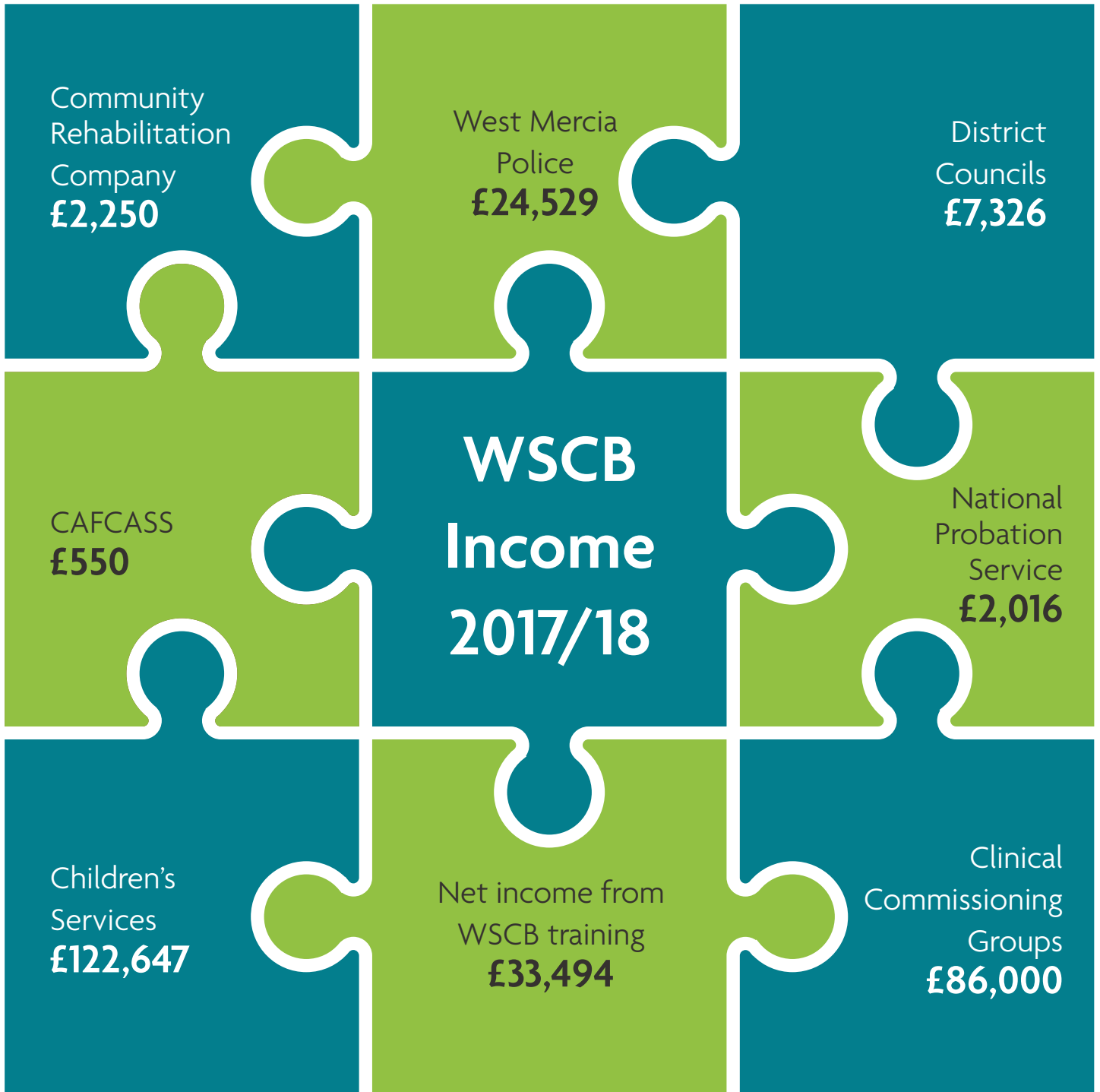
1.8 Administration

The Board's Business Unit supports the Board's functions and is comprised of the following posts:



1.9 Funding

The WSCB is funded through a combination of annual contributions made by partner agencies and income generated through the training charging policy.



1.10 New Local Safeguarding Children Arrangements

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 replaces Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) with new local safeguarding arrangements, led by the three safeguarding partners (Local Authority, Chief Officer of Police and the Clinical Commissioning Groups). LSCBs must continue to carry out all of their statutory functions, until the point at which safeguarding partnership arrangements begin to operate in a local area from 2019. Arrangements must be in place by September 2019.



2. Context

2.1 Context & Local Demographics

The largely rural county of Worcestershire is situated in the West Midlands. It has a population of 583,500 and 75% of residents live within the main towns and urban areas. According to figures released by Worcestershire County Council the county population is increasing by approximately 3,400 people per annum.

2.1.1 Age

Worcestershire has a resident population of approximately 116,100 children and young people aged 0 to 17, making up 20% of the total population. Over the next ten years trend-based projections suggest that the population of 0 to 17 year olds will increase by 5,100 (4.5%) with variations between age groups. The population of 10 to 15 year olds is projected to increase by 4.3% while the population of 16 to 17 year olds is projected to increase by 5.6%.

2.1.2 Ethnicity

10% of the population aged 0 to 17 is classified as belonging to an ethnic group other than White British. The largest group is Asian or Asian British and the next largest is children from a mixed heritage background. English is spoken as an additional language by over 6,400 school pupils (8.2%). Polish, Urdu and Punjabi are the most commonly recorded spoken community languages in the area.

2.1.3 Areas of Deprivation

The Indices of Deprivation use several measures including income, employment, education, health, barriers to housing and services, crime, and living environment. These are weighted and combined to create an overall Index of Multiple Deprivation. In Worcestershire deprivation scores vary with the highest score at 75.6 in one area of Worcester City and 2.4 in another. Most of the high deprivation areas are in the urban areas of Worcester, Wyre Forest and Redditch, with some areas of deprivation also present in the towns of Evesham, Malvern, Droitwich and Stourport. The average for the county is 17.7, ranked as 111 out of 152 Local Authority areas (1 being the most deprived).

2.1.4 Local Authority Provision

At the end of March 2017 there were a total of 695 children in need (CIN), 798 looked after children (LAC) and 415 children with Child Protection Plans. (2017 comparison figures in table below.)

Local Authority Provision	March 2017	March 2018
Children in Need Plans (A Child in Need is one that has been assessed under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 as being unlikely to maintain a reasonable level of health or development or whose health or development is likely to be impaired without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled).	795	695
Looked after Children (A child who is being looked after by the Local Authority is known as a child in care)	764	798
Child Protection Plans (Children require a Child Protection Plan if they are judged to be suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm).	526	415

2.2 Partnership Working

2.2.1 Linkages with other Strategic Boards

The Board is independent and not subordinate to, nor subsumed within, other local structures in order that it can properly provide effective scrutiny. The work of the WSCB fits within the wider context of the Worcestershire Health and Well-Being Board (HWB), the Safer Communities Board (SCB) and the Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB).

During 2017/18 the following partnership activities and work streams were advanced:

- High level protocol between WSCB and Family Justice Board (as recommended by Ofsted) has been signed off
- Work has been undertaken to develop a protocol between WSCB, Corporate Parenting Board and the WCC Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny Panel
- Twice yearly meetings of the Chairs of HWB, SCB, Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), WSAB & WSCB to consider cross-cutting issues and agree which partnership Board will lead on specific work streams
- In October 2017 Derek Benson became the Chair of the WSAB in addition to chairing the WSCB

The WSCB Independent Chair is directly accountable to the Chief Executive of Worcestershire County Council and works closely with the Director of Children’s Families and Communities, attending the Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel when available.

The Board also works closely with the Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board and Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, particularly on key issues such as substance misuse, domestic violence and parental mental health.





Links to other strategies

- Special Educational Needs and/or a Disability (SEND) Strategy which sets out partnership duties and will be delivered through an action plan to be overseen by the local authority's Children with SEND Improvement Board. www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20541/we_are_listening/1616/our_send_strategy
- Children and Young People's Plan 2017-21 which provides a framework for all agencies and organisations working with children, young people and families to make the necessary impact to improve lives. www.worcestershire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/8306/worcestershire_children_and_young_peoples_plan_booklet.pdf
- Joint Health and Well-Being Strategy 2016 – 21 which is a statement of the Health and Well-Being Board's vision and priorities based on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the views of key stakeholders. www.worcestershire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/7051/joint_health_and_well-being_strategy_2016_to_2021.pdf
- Early Help Strategy 2017 – 2020 which sets out how agencies should work together to provide additional support to children and families. www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/8802/worcestershire_early_help_strategy_2017_to_2020

3. Key Priorities in 2017/18

3.1 Children subject to Neglect

A Task and Finish Group was established in October 2017 to look at neglect in Worcestershire.

Initial analysis of the data indicates that Worcestershire has a significantly higher rate of Child Protection Plans due to neglect (34.0 per 10,000 in 2017) than the rate for both statistical neighbours (21.6 per 10,000) and England (26.3 per 10,000). 63% of all current Child Protection Plans are for neglect which is significantly higher than the national average of 48%. Nearly three quarters of new Contacts or Referrals to Children's Social Care where neglect is a factor relate to children under 10 years and the other quarter to 11-15 year olds.

Two multi-agency case file audits (MACFAs) were undertaken in 2014 and 2017 on cases where children were experiencing neglect. The findings from these audits have been revisited and compared and, together with questions raised by the data, have guided the development of a Neglect Strategy.

The draft strategy will be presented to the Board in 2018 and will include a clear definition of neglect, a pathway and a toolkit to support the development of shared understanding and language. The WSCB Neglect Strategy will be implemented during 2018/19 with mechanisms in place for monitoring its impact on children and young people.

Impact: It is anticipated that as a result of the strategy thresholds will be applied consistently and risk assessments will be undertaken in a consistent way, with interventions informed by a good understanding of the lived experience of children and young people.



3.2 Children affected by Domestic Abuse

The Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Strategy was launched towards the end of 2017 by the Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. In order to support this work a new multi-agency sub group was established during the year chaired by the Assistant Director (Safeguarding).

During the year WSCB undertook a MACFA on 12 children who had been exposed to domestic abuse five or more times. It found that in the main professionals were not aware when a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) had been put in place by the courts (5 out of 12 cases), providing a window of opportunity for work to be undertaken with victims and their children. Assurance has been provided by West Mercia Police that relevant partners will now be notified of the period of time available in which to offer support to victims and safeguard children. In support of this a series of leaflets have been produced for partners around the process and requirements for action. Worcestershire took out more DVPOs between September – December 2017 than other West Mercia force areas with 24 granted by the courts.

Approximately one third of all social work assessments have domestic abuse as a factor, and one third of all current Child in Need Plans, 45% of Child Protection Plans and 31% of Looked After Children have domestic abuse identified as a factor.

Audits were undertaken by Children's Social Care in July and December 2017 on the quality, timeliness and management of domestic abuse notifications received at the Family Front Door* and on children who were already subject of a social work plan. This was subject to further scrutiny during the Ofsted monitoring visit in January 2018. Multi-agency audit activity is being agreed as part of the Family Front Door Protocol looking at the quality of decision making and outcomes for the child, specifically identifying any repeat contacts/referrals or repeat assessments for particular scrutiny.

WSCB has been sighted on developments led by the Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence during the year.

Impact: All relevant partners are now being routinely notified of the window of opportunity to support victims and safeguard children when Domestic Violence Protection Orders are made by the court following incidents.

3.3 Children vulnerable to or experiencing Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

The Board's CSE Strategic Group, led by West Mercia Police, is responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of the CSE Strategy Action Plan 2017-19, and for providing assurance to the Board about the multi-agency response to children and young people at risk of or experiencing sexual exploitation.

An Ofsted recommendation made in 2016 was for there to be a review of the CSE Operational Group to ensure there was the right representation of partner agencies. Membership now includes representation from schools, a gap identified by Ofsted. Weekly Multi Agency Risk Reduction Strategy (MARRS) meetings have been established and replace the daily triage meetings at the Family Front Door. Schools are invited to contribute in person or via live link to these discussions.

During the year the following assurances/concerns have been noted by the Board:

- A multi-agency CSE dashboard is being developed
- An updated CSE Problem Profile is not yet available to replace the one produced by West Mercia Police in 2015 due to insufficient analytical capacity
- Feedback on their experiences of services has been provided by young people aged 16 years or older who were identified as having experienced or been at risk of to CSE in the last 12 months. This feedback will be particularly important to consider as the CSE Strategy Action Plan is refreshed to ensure that the views of young people are informing service developments going forward.
- Partners are signed-up and engaging with the CSE agenda.
- The West Mercia and Warwickshire Police 'Tell Someone' CSE communications campaign materials were widely circulated by the Board to partner agencies for them to utilise to promote CSE Awareness Day on 18 March 2018.
- The WSCB developed the Whole Schools Approach to Healthy Relationships toolkit for use in schools and set this as the standard for CSE prevention in education settings. The annual safeguarding audit to be completed by schools and colleges in 2018 will seek assurance about the extent to which the toolkit has been implemented in each school.
- Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) in all secondary and middle schools have now received face to face training on CSE. Primary schools are currently being targeted where there are gaps. This training is delivered by the WSCB Business Unit with support from colleagues in the Police and Children's Social Care. Attendees are all required to complete a CSE e-learning module prior to attending face to face training.
- A CSE conference was held at Police headquarters in July 2017 which was attended by 68 practitioners from a range of agencies and was well-received.
- There is work in progress to review the CSE Pathway to ensure it reflects current processes and a new CSE Risk Assessment Tool is to be agreed.
- The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner is now a standing member of the strategic group where concerns about the capacity of commissioned support services for victims of CSE to meet local need in Worcestershire has been raised, with assurance provided that this will be considered within the review of the Contract.

*The Family Front Door act as a point of referral and advice.

- The current CSE Action Plan requires us to consider the use of civil orders in the management of young people who are both facilitators of CSE (by introducing other young people to offenders) and also victims in their own right. Recent and current CSE investigations in Worcestershire will provide further insight and learning in respect of this particular challenge.

The WSCB has agreed that CSE will remain a strategic priority in 2018/19 and has agreed to extend the remit of its CSE sub group to include other forms of exploitation.

Referrals about CSE are being made by partner agencies and a number of investigations have been undertaken during the year involving multiple perpetrators who are known to each other.

Partner agencies are aware of the expectations on them in respect of sexual exploitation and there has been a high level of engagement with audits providing assurance that partner agencies are engaged with the CSE agenda.

It is hoped that by October 2018 Designated Safeguarding Leads in all primary and first schools will have completed the online and face to face training. WSCB holds a number of CSE training courses throughout the year to ensure those new in post can also access the training. The schools safeguarding audit (SI75/157 Audit) will provide further assurance in 2018.

Impact: Decisions about risks to individual children and young people are now being made with the benefit of information from schools, awareness has increased across the partnership and CSE is being identified in Worcestershire.

3.4 Early Help

A Task and Finish Group was established in October 2017 to develop the action plan required to support implementation of the WSCB Early Help Strategy approved in September 2017.

Work completed or in progress:

- Seminar held on 9 November 2017 to consider the future model with Partners
- Development of short Early Help Assessment and Plan with associated guidance notes for practitioners
- Drafting of practice guidance on Consent
- Development of a Communications Strategy and website
- A Workforce Development Strategy is being produced
- Development of a WSCB framework for monitoring effectiveness of early help
- Partnership events – Designated Safeguarding Leads network and locality events
- Connecting Families Strategic Group agreed use of funds to support roll out of Signs of Safety to partner agencies

There are clear linkages between early help and the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and in March 2018 it was agreed that responsibility for delivery of the Early Help Action Plan would transfer to the relevant sub-group of the Health and Well-Being Board.

Impact: Further Action 2018/19

- Clarify the future governance arrangements for the delivery of the Early Help Strategy action plan
- Work with partner agencies to raise awareness of their role in delivering early intervention and prevention
- Assurance to be provided to WSCB through its early help effectiveness framework to be overseen by the Monitoring Effectiveness Group (MEG) sub-group of the WSCB

3.5 Voice of the Child, Professional Curiosity and Escalation Policy: Resolution of Professional Differences

MACFA and case review findings in previous years had indicated that practitioners did not always have an understanding of the lived experience of children and young people, or use this to inform decisions about them. Professional curiosity was often absent and indicators of risk not being identified, or explanations from parents and carers taken at face value sometimes leading to disguised compliance.

Learning and Improvement Briefings were developed on the Voice of the Child and Professional Curiosity. Drama students at a local high school produced a DVD which was used to support the Voice of the Child message from a young people's perspective. The DVD was played at Information and Guidance events held to promote the Learning and Improvement Briefings and disseminate the key messages.

The Briefings have also been promoted via the WSCB's newsletter and strategic leads across the partnership have been asked to ensure that links to Learning and Improvement Briefings have been disseminated to all relevant staff. A survey was circulated in May 2018 requesting feedback on action taken to provide assurance to the Board that its key messages have been widely communicated.

Policies and procedures are being reviewed to ensure that they provide appropriate guidance in respect of the Voice of the Child and this work will continue into 2018/19.

Key messages are included in the multi-agency training delivered by the WSCB.

Impact: All statutory partner agencies completed the survey in addition to a number of early years settings and schools. The WSCB can provide assurance that all partner agencies have actively disseminated to practitioners and relevant commissioned services the links to the two Learning and Improvement Briefings and to the Escalation Policy: Resolution of Professional Disagreements. Dissemination has been achieved using a variety of methods. The percentage of early years settings and schools to complete the survey is relatively small (26% and 18% respectively) but still valid. Further assurance will be obtained from the schools safeguarding audit (S175/157 Audit).

The total number of practitioners across the partnership who have received the links to the Learning and Improvement Briefings and the Escalation Policy is approximately 13,000. The impact on practice will continue to be evaluated through the WSCB's MACFA programme during 2018/19.

3.6 Critical Friends (Service Improvement Plan)

In March 2017 eight Board members were nominated to act as 'Critical Friends' to provide support and challenge to Children's Social Care as part of its improvement journey. The role of the Critical Friend was defined as:

A Critical Friend can be defined as a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critiques of a person's work as a friend. A Critical Friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work.

The nominated Critical Friend met with the relevant work stream lead and, where appropriate, the Assistant Director (Safeguarding), on a regular basis to review progress against the Service Improvement Plan, identify blockages and agree the actions to be completed to provide a solution.



Since the Service Improvement Plan was put in place there have been three monitoring Visits from Ofsted and Essex County Council has been engaged by the Council to act as its 'Improvement Partner'. As a result of the progress identified by Ofsted, Essex CC and the Critical Friends, the Service Improvement Plan is currently being refreshed.

The WSCB is to receive a presentation on the revised plan in June 2018 after which a decision will be made about the process for engaging with the Critical Friends going forward.

Impact: The Board has received assurance that these arrangements have proved beneficial to Children's Social Care and have contributed to the development of effective partnership working, as well as service improvement.

3.7 Thresholds

The final version of the Levels of Need (Thresholds) guidance was approved by the Board in September 2017. The guidance was referenced at the Board's Information and Guidance events held during Autumn 2017.

Letters were sent to strategic leads in April 2018 to formally request that the link to the Levels of Need guidance be disseminated again to all relevant staff and a survey was subsequently circulated to seek assurance that this had been achieved. All statutory partners completed the survey in addition to a number of early years settings and schools. Further assurance will be obtained from schools via the annual schools safeguarding audit (S175/157 Audit).

A decision was taken during the year that awareness of the thresholds guidance would be raised using a communications strategy rather than through face to face training. The appropriateness of referrals being made to Children's Social Care by partner agencies will be assessed by an audit taking place in July 2018.

Impact: The WSCB can provide assurance that all partner agencies have actively disseminated to practitioners and relevant commissioned services the link to the Levels of Need (Thresholds) guidance. In addition, all agencies confirmed that their staff know the name and contact details of the safeguarding lead to whom they should go to for advice about the action to be taken in respect of a specific child.

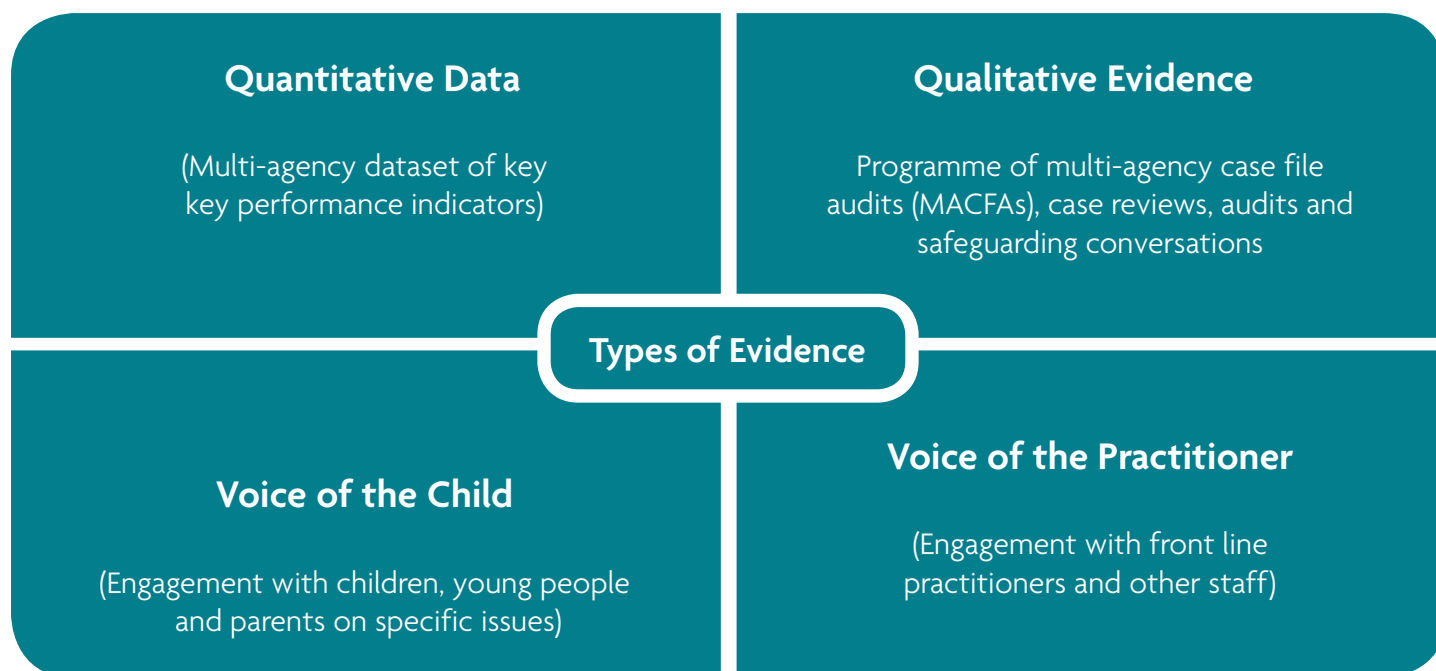
The total number of practitioners across the partnership who have received the link to the Levels of Need (Thresholds) guidance is approximately 13,000. The WSCB will continue to evaluate whether practitioners appropriately apply the thresholds for accessing services from Children's Social Care during 2018/19.



4. Effectiveness, Learning and Improvement

4.1 Monitoring Effectiveness

The WSCB evidence base for monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements in Worcestershire for children and young people during this period has included a combination of:



4.2 Quantitative Data

The Board maintains a multi-agency dataset of high level key performance indicators which it scrutinises to identify areas of performance which require further interrogation.

The Family Front Door receives all initial Contacts in order to evaluate whether a Referral should be made to Children's Social Care. A particular focus has been on the demand for Children's Social Care services and the need for targeting services at the right children and families. As partner agencies develop their understanding of the threshold for making a Referral it is anticipated that the number of Contacts which result in no further action should reduce.

Key headlines¹ from the 2017/18 data:

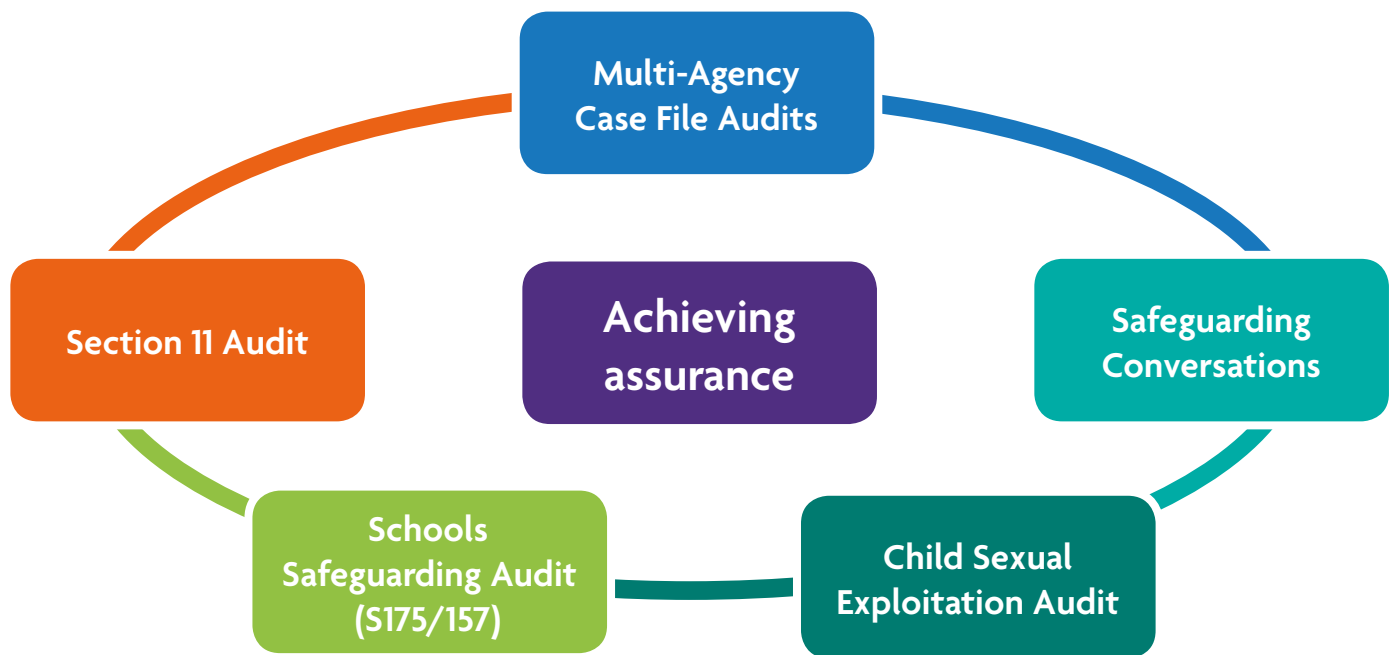
- ↑ 10,000 Contacts to the Family Front Door, an increase of 10% compared to last year
- ↑ Number of looked after children has increased from 764 last year to 798
- ↓ Number of open Section 17 assessments has reduced from 1035 to 386
- ↓ Number of Section 17 assessments completed has reduced from 5188 last year to 4953
- ↓ Number of open Section 47 (child protection) assessments has reduced from 195 last year to 90
- ↓ Number of open Child in Need Plans has reduced from 795 last year to 695
- ↓ Number of open Child Protection Plans has reduced from 526 last year to 415
- ↓ Percentage of Contacts that became Referrals has remained steady at 36% (37% last year)

Further detail and analysis is available in Appendix 2.

¹ Following acceptance of a referral by the local authority children's social care, a social worker should lead a multi-agency assessment under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Local authorities have a duty to ascertain the child's wishes and feelings and take account of them when planning the provision of services.

4.3 Qualitative Data

In 2017/18 the following quality assurance audits were completed:



4.3.1 Section 11 Audit (statutory partners)

The Section 11 Audit is a self-assessment by partner agencies of the extent to which they are fulfilling their safeguarding responsibilities as defined in the Children Act 2004. The S11 Audit provides assurance that safeguarding arrangements are in place across the WSCB partnership or, where improvements are required, plans are in place to address them. WSCB conducts a full S11 audit on a bi-annual basis. This year the Board utilised a new audit template devised by a working party from across the West Midlands.

The audit found that good compliance was reported by agencies, and that clear plans are in place to address any areas that require improvement. A challenge event is planned for the Autumn 2018, to be facilitated by the Independent Chair of the Board, where further assurance will be sought from partner agencies about the evidence provided to support their self-assessments.

4.3.2 Child Sexual Exploitation Audit

The CSE self-assessment tool and guidance was published on the WSCB website to enable all agencies to assess themselves against the standards established by the Board. Partner agencies have been asked to update the self-assessment submitted in 2016 to enable the WSCB to evaluate what progress has been made across the partnership in responding to children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation. A small number of schools and GP practices who determined that they required improvement in 2016 were asked to repeat the audit by outlining progress made against their action plan.

4.3.3 Section 175/157 Audit (safeguarding audit for schools and colleges)

Under the Education Act 2002 (Section 175/157) schools must “make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children”. This audit evidenced a high level of safeguarding activity across the education settings in Worcestershire. The return rate was 73% and from those schools who returned the audit:

96% report that staff are familiar with ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’ and have been issued with the school’s safeguarding policy

94% confirmed that they are aware of and utilise the WSCB inter-agency guidance

This is a high level of compliance achieved across the settings, however the Board requires the return rate to be 100% and action will be put in place over the next year to support schools to achieve this.

4.3.4 Multi-Agency Case File Audits

Multi-Agency Case File Audits (MACFAs) are in-depth audits of a small sample of cases facilitated by an independent Auditor commissioned by the Board. This year MACFA themes have reflected the Board's strategic priority groups of children and all have been undertaken previously to provide opportunity to assess improvements in practice. This year the audits have reviewed a larger number of children than in previous years: 24 cases (12 boys, 12 girls). A Learning and Improvement Briefing has been published which summarises the key aspects of learning from the MACFAs. The Briefing can be found here: www.worcestershire.gov.uk/landiresources

Any child protection issues identified by the review process are immediately picked up by the relevant agency and actioned. Learning is taken back to individual agencies to inform practice and is also included in multi-agency core training delivered by the Board.

The MACFA panel has invited individual schools to participate in the process and this has enabled better understanding of the child's lived experience for all partner agencies.

This year four audits were undertaken on: Children with Disabilities, Neglect, Domestic Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation.

4.3.5 Safeguarding Conversations

Safeguarding Conversations are a process developed by WSCB where Board members meet with frontline practitioners to discuss how performance and practice issues impact upon the delivery of a multi-agency plan and subsequent outcomes for a child or young person. Two Safeguarding Conversations were held during the year and four Board members, including the Director of Children, Families and Communities, were involved in the discussions.

The Safeguarding Conversations were based on Neglect and Domestic Abuse in line with WSCB priorities. Whilst this is a reflective learning process, action will be taken immediately if safeguarding issues are identified to ensure children are safeguarded and receive appropriate services.

4.3.6 Single Agency Inspections

Children's Social Care

Since the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) inspection of Children's Social Care by Ofsted in October 2016 the Board has received regular updates from the Director of Children, Families and Communities regarding progress against the Service Improvement Plan (SIP).

The Children's Commissioner, Trevor Doughty, has provided support and the local authority has appointed Essex County Council as its Improvement Partner. In addition, Ofsted have continued to monitor progress through quarterly monitoring visits. As a result of feedback received from Ofsted monitoring visits, Essex Diagnostics and the local authority's own Quality Assurance and Performance Information, the Service Improvement Plan has been updated to focus on a refreshed set of priorities.

At the same time, having been judged inadequate by Ofsted and placed under direction by the Department for Education, the business case for an Alternative Delivery Model has been developed. This was presented to Cabinet on 29 March 2018 and there was a unanimous decision to develop a wholly-owned Council company to deliver Children's Social Care services. The new Company will be implemented from October 2019.

The revised Service Improvement work streams are:

- Support and develop the workforce;
- Promote social care best practice;
- Build quality assurance processes;
- Listen to the Voice of the Child;
- Enhance multi-agency partnerships;
- Deliver effective Through Care.

A key part of the Service Improvement Plan has been the creation of a new Children’s Social Care Operating Model and the implementation of the Signs of Safety approach to practice. The new structure was created in order to ensure that resources are being used most effectively, that there is sufficient management capacity to provide good oversight and supervision, and to ensure that caseloads for social workers are manageable. This enables them to build good relationships with children and young people and the journey for the child through services to be as coordinated and as seamless as possible.

The Children’s Commissioner visited on 8-9 May 2017 and published his findings at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/645624/Worcestershire-Report_of_the_Commissioner_for_Childrens_Services.pdf

Ofsted monitoring visits were undertaken on 22-24 May 2017, 12-13 September 2017 and 30-31 January 2018. Letters confirming their findings are published on the Ofsted website and can be found at: <https://reports.beta.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80584>

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Services

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission undertook a Joint Local Area SEND inspection in Worcestershire between 5-9 March 2018 to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the special educational needs and disability (SEND) reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

The findings of the inspection are summarised in the published letter located at: https://files.api.beta.ofsted.gov.uk/80584__1.PDF

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

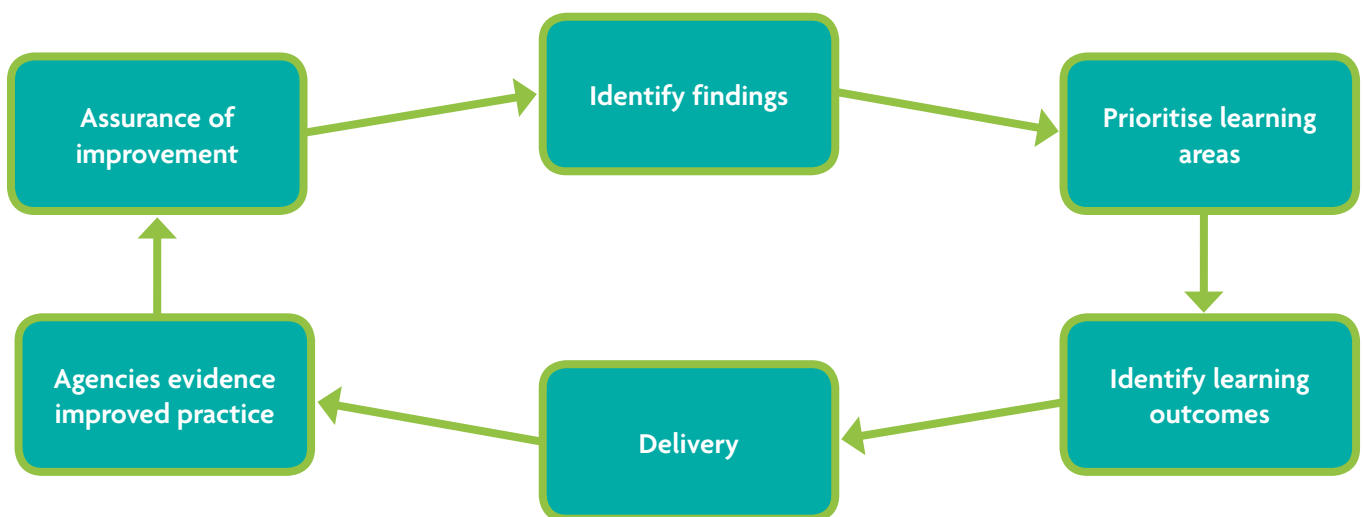
On 17 January 2018 the Care Quality Commission (CQC) published its report on the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust following their inspection in November 2017. The inspection assessed the core services of urgent and emergency care and medical care at the Alexandra and Worcestershire Royal Hospitals. The Trust has been in special measures since December 2015.

www.cqc.org.uk/provider/RWP

4.4 Learning and Improvement Framework

The WSCB Learning and Improvement Framework consolidates learning from a range of activities including:

- Child Death Reviews
- Serious Case Reviews and Case Reviews
- Multi Agency Case File Audits (MACFAs)
- Safeguarding Conversations
- Domestic Homicide Reviews and Safeguarding Adults Reviews (where appropriate)





4.5 Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

The Child Death Overview Panel has a statutory responsibility to collect and analyse information about the deaths of all children who live in Worcestershire to identify any safety and welfare matters along with wider public health concerns. The Panel analyses the collated information to classify each death, identify any 'modifiable factors' that may have contributed to the death of the child and make recommendations regarding interventions to reduce the risk of similar deaths. Although there may only be a small number of deaths from a particular cause in a given year, cumulative data and liaison with other CDOPs in the West Midlands may reveal trends and common factors

During 2017/18 Worcestershire CDOP received Notification of 25 Child Deaths; the lowest since CDOP processes began in 2008. Although this is very encouraging, we should not attach too much significance to a single year's figures.

CDOP and its sub-groups met on 9 occasions and undertook 25 Child Death Reviews. Modifiable Factors were present in 11 of the deaths and included lack of parental supervision, inaction following expression of suicidal ideation, maternal obesity, smoking and also possible incomplete evaluation of previous miscarriages.

Other issues coming to Panel included several incidents relating to hospital care, questions relating to teenage suicide along with the review and implementation of the West Mercia SUDIC (Sudden Unexpected Deaths in Infants and Children) Policy.

A thorough analysis of Child Death Reviews categorised as 'Suicide or Deliberate Self-Harm' was carried out by the Clinical Commissioning Group and it was reassuring to learn that Worcestershire data was not out of step with other parts of the country. It was also very helpful to receive and then to disseminate details of care support that one particular school had developed for pupils.

The Panel Chairman and Manager also participated extensively in consideration of plans for the implementation of the new child death arrangements (as detailed in Working Together 2018) and presented suggested modifications (particularly relevant to Worcestershire) to the December meetings of CDOP and then to WSCB.

Attention has been given to managing the backlog of Child Death Notifications received, especially those managed through the Rapid Response process, to ensure that Child Death Reviews are completed as promptly as post-death processes permit.

4.6 Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and Case Reviews

The Serious Case Review Group considers cases which have been identified by partner agencies to decide whether the criteria for a SCR are met. During the year 3 cases were considered and all were found to meet the criteria, resulting in SCRs being formally commissioned by the Board. At the time of writing one Serious Case Review had been completed but not yet published awaiting the outcome of parallel processes (such as inquests, criminal proceedings or other formal review processes). As part of the SCR process learning events were held with practitioners to inform the process and the findings. Learning from all three SCRs will inform the Board's Learning and Improvement communications during 2017/18.

If the criteria for a SCR are not met, consideration is given to conducting a case review. No case reviews were initiated during the year. The learning from one completed case review initiated during 2016/17, 'Annabel', was presented at six Information and Guidance sessions for practitioners and included in a [Learning and Improvement Briefing](#).

4.7 Communications

During the year WSCB has undertaken a wide range of communication activities to raise the profile of the Board, promote engagement and strengthen existing means of communication with members of the public, parents and carers, children and young people, and practitioners from all agencies.

Website

The WSCB website contains a broad spectrum of information and guidance on safeguarding subjects and links directly to the West Midlands Safeguarding Children Procedures. It also contains policies, links to statutory guidance, legislation and helpful websites. Data shows that there were 48,000 unique page views on the website during the year which demonstrates a high level of usage. During the year plans have been developed to commission a joint website with the Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board to provide a joint safeguarding resource, particularly important in respect of cross cutting issues such as Transition, Domestic Abuse, Mental Capacity Act and Exploitation, as well as supporting the 'Think Family' approach.

WSCB Newsletter

The newsletter, Safeguarding Matters, continues to be circulated quarterly. It contains news and information from WSCB as well as relevant updates from our partners. It provides a range of articles about local and national issues relevant to safeguarding children, as well as links to websites and documents. The newsletter is well received by practitioners. www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20377/safeguarding_children/208/about_the_safeguarding_children_board/6

Events & Awareness Days

WSCB has issued communications for E-Safety Week and CSE Awareness Day. This has included a comprehensive communications plan, materials and ideas for how partners can contribute to publicity for the events. Collaboration between WSCB and West Mercia Police (WMP) took place for the CSE Awareness Day. WSCB promoted the 'Tell Someone' website and developed a PowerPoint presentation for partners use from the campaign materials by kind permission of WMP.

Learning and Improvement Briefings (LIBs)

The Board's Learning and Improvement briefings have been added to with briefings on: Voice of the Child; Professional Curiosity; and Learning from a Case Review. As well as being available on the WSCB website and cascaded via safeguarding leads the briefings were disseminated at information and guidance briefings involving over 300 local practitioners. The Learning and Improvement Briefings have been particularly well received as indicated by the following feedback from a Manager of an Integrated Safeguarding Team:

"Please keep producing these really useful mechanisms for feedback and learning to staff"

Further information and examples of WSCB communications can be located on the WSCB website at:

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20380/safeguarding_children_information_for_professionals/482/learning_and_improvement/3.

4.8 Engagement with Front Line Practitioners

Practitioner Network

Now in its thirteenth year the WSCB Practitioner Network is the interface between safeguarding practice and safeguarding strategy. The network provides the Board with a practitioner's view of the reality of safeguarding children and young people in Worcestershire. Practitioners meet quarterly and represent a wide variety of organisations involved with safeguarding. The network is a dynamic process, not only serving to promote best practice, but also operating as a conduit to convey views and concerns back to the Board.

This forum is used to disseminate learning and to take feedback from practitioners on a range of specific issues. In 2017/18 the Practitioner Network was consulted on relevant policies and Learning and Improvement Briefings, including Levels of Need (Thresholds) guidance, Voice of the Child, Professional Curiosity and the Domestic Abuse Training Pathway.

Specific presentations were made to the Practitioner Network on:

- SEND Information, Advice and Support Service
- Royal Mail Blues Programme¹
- Domestic Abuse
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
- Signs of Safety
- Step Up/Step Down procedures

4.9 Engagement with Children, Young people and Families

WSCB has worked alongside other agencies this year and obtained feedback from domestic abuse victims, early help service users, and families as part of the case review and Serious Case Review processes.

The Board's Business Unit has recruited a social work student from the University of Worcester to support its work around engagement with young people and to bring a young person's perspective and challenge to discussions.

This year the Board commissioned a local school to produce a DVD about how young people perceive professionals. The DVD was shown to over 300 people at WSCB Information and Guidance Briefings and published on the WSCB [website](#).

4.10 Policies & Procedures

On 1 April 2017 the [West Midlands Safeguarding Children Procedures](#) went live. These are online inter-agency procedures shared across nine of the fourteen Local Safeguarding Children Boards in the West Midlands. They were developed by an independent Provider, Phew Design Limited, who have been commissioned to host and maintain the procedures up to March 2020.



¹ The Blues programme, funded by Royal Mail, is a preventative course aimed for people aged 15-18 years-old who are suffering from, or who are at risk of developing a mental health disorder



4.11 Evaluating the Effectiveness of Training

WSCB delivered 58 multi-agency training events in 2017/18 to 1308 people. There is good attendance at multi-agency training by schools, Children's Services and the Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust. Some agencies use single agency training which research suggests is less effective at promoting multi-agency working. The WSCB Training Pathway can be found at:

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/4352/worcestershire_safeguarding_children_board_training_pathway_2014_to_2017

WSCB multi-agency training is rated extremely highly in terms of the content and style of delivery. The training content is regularly reviewed to ensure that current knowledge from MACFAs, case reviews and Serious Case Reviews is reflected. Learners report that their knowledge and confidence have improved after attending the training events. The Board seeks to demonstrate that this knowledge and confidence has impacted on practice by conducting post-training impact evaluations and audits, and partner agencies are asked to ensure that they follow the WSCB Framework for Evaluation (www.worcestershire.gov.uk/downloads/file/4354/framework_for_evaluation)

During the year impact evaluations were conducted three months after the training on a range of courses including CSE and core safeguarding training. The results highlight the increase in skills and knowledge from attending training and provide assurance that those who responded were able to demonstrate how learning had been transferred into the workplace and had impacted on children and their families.

1389 practitioners completed an e-learning course and 97% of these were satisfied or very satisfied that the course gave them all the information they needed. This represents a significant reduction in the number of licences used compared to previous years and in March 2018 the Board agreed that it will no longer broker e-learning after 2018/19. It will therefore be important to signpost partner agencies to alternative e-learning providers going forward..

Ofsted (2017) reported that: 'The board takes a robust approach to evaluating training. A comprehensive training evaluation... identifies that attendees rate WSCB multi-agency training highly, and that their knowledge and confidence improve as a result'.

The annual report prepared by the Board's Workforce Development Group is available at: www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20380/safeguarding_children_information_for_professionals/897/safeguarding_children_training

5. Formal Summary Statement

Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board has a responsibility to form an annual overall judgment on safeguarding arrangements and their effectiveness. Based on the learning from the Board's quality assurance activity and giving consideration to inspection findings during the year, it can make the following formal summary statement in respect of 2017/18:

Engagement with the work of WSCB has remained strong, evidenced by Board members chairing sub-groups and ensuring actions are completed to implement the Business Plan. Attendance at Board meetings remains good and response to audits is generally positive, although this year it has been necessary to escalate a number of slow responses to audits to ensure compliance. There have been changes to Board membership which have continued to challenge continuity and pace in some key aspects of the Board's work, most notably in respect of the development work around early help. Contributory partners have, despite competing financial demands, provided additional funding this year to support partnership initiatives following the Ofsted inspection. There remains evidence of a strong multi-agency commitment to learning and improvement across the WSCB partnership.

From September 2019 Local Safeguarding Children Boards will no longer exist in their current form and during the coming year the key safeguarding partners will be developing an alternative framework and governance for fulfilling the statutory functions set out in Working Together 2018 which is due to be published in June 2018.

A strategic objective for 2018/19 is to develop and publish details of the new safeguarding partnership arrangements to replace WSCB



Last year's annual report cited Ofsted's conclusions. From their 2016 inspection it was acknowledged by inspectors, and recognised by the WSCB, that the new Children's Social Care senior leadership team was starting to provide the 'focus and drive' required to drive through the necessary improvements.

As would be expected, much of the Board's attention has this year focused on Children's Social Care. The Service Improvement Board has been replaced by the Quarterly Performance Review Meetings which are chaired by Essex County Council. The Board's direct support and challenge role has come from the nominated Board members who have acted as Critical Friends in respect of the eight improvement areas in the Safeguarding Improvement Plan. This has worked better in some areas than others, but it has been particularly constructive in relation to the developments around early help. The Critical Friend role will continue into 2018/19 following a review. The Board has received regular updates from the Director of Children, Families and Communities and the Assistant Director (Safeguarding) has provided commentary and analysis regarding performance information at Board meetings. This, along with sight of the Ofsted findings summarised in their published letters, has formed the basis of the Board's scrutiny of developments in Children's Social Care during the year.

In October 2017 Ofsted acknowledged that the local authority had taken steps to tackle its 'serious weaknesses' and was beginning to make progress to improve services for children and young people. By February 2018 Ofsted were acknowledging that 'whilst services for children in Worcestershire continue to require much work to be of a good standard, progress has been made since the last monitoring visit'.

WSCB will continue to seek assurance about practice and service improvements within Children's Social Care through the Critical Friend role and through receipt of updates from senior managers over the coming year.

A key part of the Service Improvement Plan has been the creation of a new operating model for Children's Social Care and the implementation of the Signs of Safety approach to practice. In addition, this year saw the development of a **business case** for an Alternative Delivery Model for Children's Social Care and a decision made by Cabinet on 29 March 2018 to develop a wholly-owned Council company for future delivery of Children's Social Care services to be implemented in October 2019. The Board will consider the implications of the new delivery model for children, young people and their families and any identified risks to safeguarding as the detail unfolds.

In other areas, the Board is assured that partner agencies are engaged with the CSE agenda and that virtually all schools have received CSE training delivered by the Board. It is encouraging that young people at risk of sexual exploitation are now being identified and during the year two significant CSE investigations have been initiated involving large numbers of potential child victims or witnesses. Whilst our understanding of CSE is developing, of concern is the lack of an updated CSE Problem Profile which reflects the emerging patterns of offending in Worcestershire. Work has been undertaken to ensure that support services for young people at risk of CSE are sufficiently flexible and resilient to meet need. Assurance will not be available about the embedding of the Whole School Approach to Healthy Relationships framework until next year's Section 175 audit is completed.

Work has been undertaken over the last few months to foster relationships with schools where there has been a gap previously. Schools are now more actively engaged in decision making about children at the Family Front Door which, in turn, leads to improved communication between partner agencies. Since the recruitment by the local authority of a new Education Safeguarding Adviser there is also much improved representation from education on the Board's sub groups and improved communication with schools about safeguarding issues.

The Board is particularly encouraged by the positive contribution made by partner agencies to multi-agency working, in particular the role of Police and Health in supporting the developing processes for early screening and decision making within the Family Front Door.

As of March 2018 WSCB concludes that progress has undoubtedly been made, however there is still some way to go to reach the necessary level of assurance that all children are receiving the right services at the right time.



Appendix 1 - End of Year Financial Statement

	WSCB Core Budget	Training Delivery	SCR (ringfenced)	Partnership Fund (ringfenced)	Total
Expenditure					
Salaries*	164,474				164,474
Independent Chair	16,503				16,503
Serious Case Reviews and Case Reviews			10,225		10,225
Performance Resources	21,933				21,933
Administration and business costs	21,131				21,131
Training Expenditure (excluding salaries)		23,195			23,195
E-Academy (E-learning)		17,086			17,086
Partnership Fund Expenditure				0	
Total Expenditure	224,041	40,281	10,225	0	274,547

Income					
Agency Contributions					
WCC - 50%	-122,647				-122,647
Health - 35%	-86,000				-86,000
Police - 10%	-24,529				-24,529
National Probation Service - 0.9%	-2,016				-2,016
Community Rehabilitation Company - 0.9%	-2,250				-2,250
CAFCASS - 0.4%	-550				-550
District councils - 2.5%	-7,326				-7,326
Core training, Early Years and GP		-56,275			-56,275
Income from E-Learning		-17,500			-17,500
Serious Case Review Income					
Partnership Fund Income				-39,200	-39,200
Total income	-245,318	-73,775		-39,200	-358,293
Net Expenditure	-21,277	-33,494	10,225	-39,200	-83,746
Holding account b/f as at 1st April 2017	-12,510	-37,780	-37,585		-87,875
Holding account as 31st March 2018	-33,787	-71,274	-27,360	-39,200	

* Savings of £40,000 have been made against long-term sickness absence by the WSCB Training Officer

Appendix 2 - Headlines from the Data¹

1. Contacts, Referrals & Assessments

The Family Front Door receives all initial Contacts to answer questions about children or to receive reports or child protection concerns. Management decisions on Contacts are consistent with 98% now dealt with within 72 hours.

- There were just over 10,000 Contacts to the Family Front Door in the full year, an increase of 10% on last year². Percentages of Contacts by source are: Police 51%, Schools 14%, Health 12%, Individual 6%, Local Authority Services 5%, Others 12%.
- Percentages of Contacts by outcome are: Children's Social Care Referral 36%, Early Help 8%, No further action to Children's Social Care 55%.
- Repeat referrals within 12 months have increased slightly to 22% (last year was 20%).
- There were approximately 5,000 Social Work Assessments (including repeat assessments) completed with the following outcomes: 73% case closed to Children's Social Care (these include those that have stepped down to Early Help and Targeted Family Support), 14% went on to Child in Need Plans, 12% forwarded to a Section 47 Assessment, and 1% became a Looked After Child.
- Percentage of Social Work Assessments completed within time scale increased to 73% (last year was 68%), with February and March at 85% indicating an improving trend.

2. Early Help

Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can be provided to a child and family by a single agency or a group of agencies working together, particularly when a child or family has multiple and complex needs. All families can access universal services, whatever their level of need.

- Within the 2018 Service Improvement Plan is the need for an improved robust dataset that will provide consistent and accurate early help information. This is currently work in progress.

3. Children with a Child In Need Plan

A Child in Need (CIN) is one that has been assessed under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 as being unlikely to maintain a reasonable level of health or development or whose health or development is likely to be impaired without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled.

- The number of children with open CIN Plans has reduced to 695 (last year was 795) which reflects focused work undertaken to review cases that had been drifting without intervention. However in year 2018/19 the number of CIN Plans is increasing in line with the service approach to support families using non-oppressive practice where possible and to ensure that there is a consistent application of the Child Protection threshold for intervention

4. Children with a Child Protection Plan

Children require a Child Protection Plan if they are judged to be suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm. An Initial Child Protection Conference will be convened within 15 days of a Strategy Meeting³ to plan how to safeguard the child. If the Child Protection Conference considers that the child is at continuing risk of significant harm they will be made subject to a Child Protection Plan.

¹ There were a number of changes made to the data collection methods in 2017/18 to ensure better monitoring of performance. This will have impacted on the data provided.

² This includes a number of Domestic Abuse incidents which were included in the data set for a short period of time in 2017/18

³ A strategy meeting is held to share information and agree the conduct and timing of any investigation.

Children with a Child Protection Plan are considered to be in need of protection from either neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse or emotional abuse, or a combination of these. The Plan details the main concerns for the child, what action will be taken to reduce those concerns and by whom, and how professionals and the family and child will know when progress is being made.

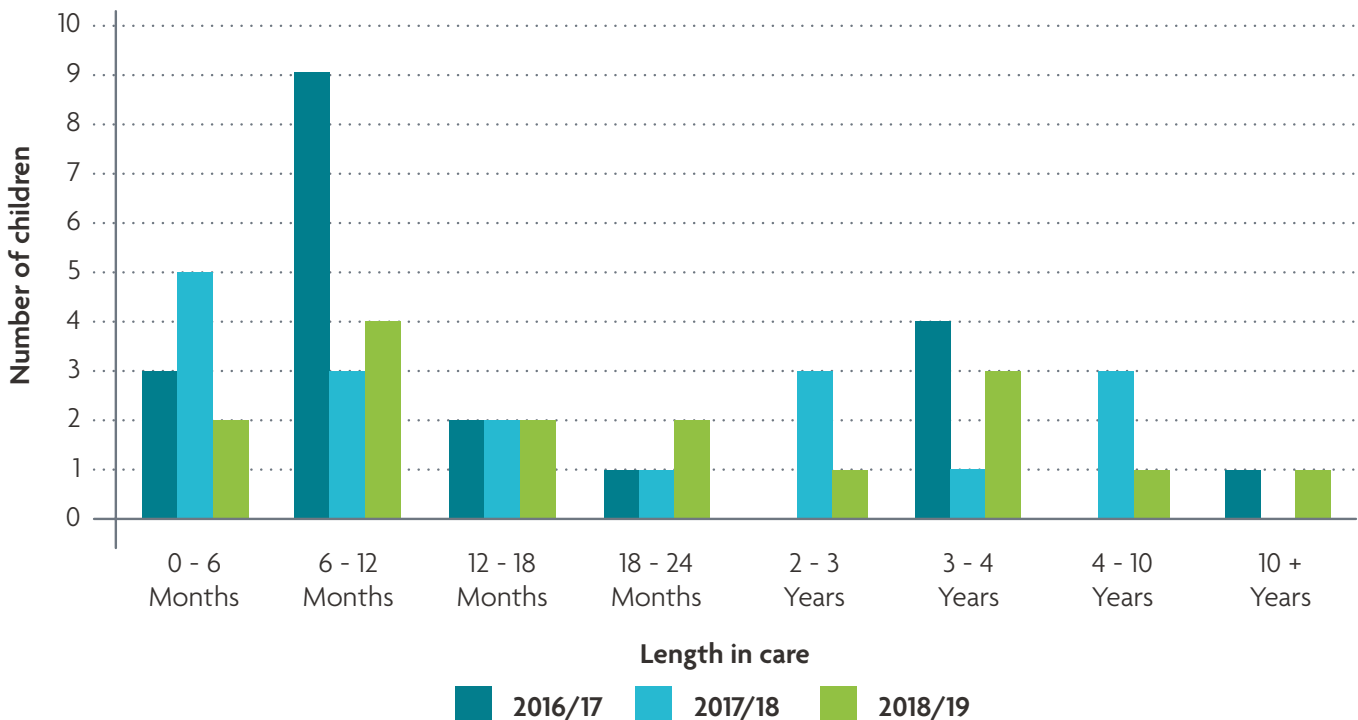
- Number of children with a Child Protection Plan has reduced to 415 (last year was 526). This reduction reflects the post Ofsted safeguarding work undertaken to improve assessments of risk and minimise drift and delay in case work.
- Number of children subject to a Child Protection Plan for longer than 18 months has reduced to 7 (last year was 19)
- The rate of Child Protection Plans per 10,000 has reduced to 36 (last year was 45, national rate was 43)
- Initial Child Protection Conference timeliness improved significantly to 75% (last year was 49%).
- Review Child Protection Conference timeliness improved to 95% (last year was 92%)

5. Looked After Children

A child who is being looked after by the Local Authority is known as a child in care.

- The number of looked after children has increased to 798 (last year was 764). This increase is linked to the fact that for 23% of children whose Child Protection Plan ended it had been necessary to place them in local authority Care due to outcomes not being achieved on the Plan. On average 23% of children ceasing to be on a Child Protection Plan have become Looked After and 70% because the threshold for significant harm is no longer met.
- A new Edge of Care panel process and offer was introduced in May 2017 and at the end of the year this offer has supported 76 children to stay out of care. Edge of Care development is in the Service Improvement Plan.
- The number of new entrants to the care system in 2017/18 is lower than 2016/17 although the overall entry rate is higher than statistical neighbours and the national average
- There have been significant numbers of children and young people who have been in care for many years without a Permanency Plan which would remove their status as a looked after child, e.g. adoption. Practice has improved in this area by the addressing of drift and delay in permanency planning. The data shows increasing numbers of children now achieving permanency within 12 months of being received into care and a rise in those moving out after 18 months - 3 years.

Time children had been in care when they left care system



- The rate of looked after children per 10,000 has increased to 69 (last year was 66, national average was 62).

6. Children who are Care Leavers

As a care leaver, you can get Care Leaver Team service support from the age of 16 until 25 years

- There are currently 382 care leavers, of whom 88% are classed as 'in touch' with the service, 89% are known to be in suitable accommodation, for the majority of the others accommodation arrangements are not known.

7. Children in Private Fostering

A privately fostered child is defined as a child under the age of 16 (18 if disabled) who is cared for and provided with accommodation by someone other than the parent, a parent who is not the biological parent but has parental responsibility, a close relative such as a brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandparent or step parent. A child who is looked after in their own home by an adult is not considered to be privately fostered.

- There were 15 private fostering arrangements in place in 2017/18 (last year was 9). 66% of fostering visits were within timescale.

The Board has been informed that the number of privately fostered children is lower than expected, in line with the national picture, suggesting that there is a lack of awareness of private fostering situations or of the need to notify them to the local authority. Since the report was drafted lead practitioners with responsibility for privately fostered children have been identified within Children's Social Care and there are developments in place to continue to raise awareness of what constitutes private fostering and the duty on professionals to notify the local authority of these children.

8. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children are children who have travelled to the UK alone, or become separated from anyone with parental and/or care responsibilities for them. Children seek asylum because they have a genuine need for protection and are in search of safety. Under sections 17 and 20 of the Children Act 1989 local authorities have a duty to provide support to these children.

- 13 children were accepted as UASC during the year, all aged from 14-17 years. The total now placed in Worcestershire is 24, 17 of which are in foster care and 7 in semi-independent accommodation.

9. Children with a Disability

The Children with Disabilities Team offers services to those children and young people requiring additional resources in respect of their disability, where the disability has a profound impact on the child or young person's life. Other services available are those provided by health, education, play and youth services, as well as community resources provided by voluntary agencies.

- The number of children allocated to the Children with Disabilities Team remained steady at 413, with 298 being subject to a Short Breaks Plan, 67 on a Child in Need Plan, 30 being looked after and 5 on a Child Protection Plan.

10. Children Missing Education & Electively Home Educated

A child missing education is a school-age child who is not on the roll of a school, not placed in alternative provision by the local authority, and who is not receiving a suitable education at home. Parents have the right to educate their children at home as long as they provide an education that is suitable for their child's needs and aptitudes. There is a requirement on local authorities to annually monitor the suitability of education provided to children educated at home. Schools have to inform their local authority if a child is removed from roll to be electively home educated (EHE) and the guidance has extended this requirement to academies and independent schools.

- The number of children registered as missing education has remained steady at approximately 130, with 90 of these still under current enquiry
- The number of children being electively home educated has increased to 694 (last year was 507). Both of these are a key focus for the County Council and a CME & EHE strategy is under development

11. Children at Risk of Offending

The Youth Justice Service aims to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people under the age of 18 by providing a variety of interventions and support. These can include preventative provisions and diversionary activities, so that young people can have more fulfilling lives, families are strengthened, and communities feel safer and more harmonious.

- There has been a decrease in both the number of children charged and detained by the police, as well as those held in police custody overnight for four hours or more.

12. Children and Mental Health

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provides support to children and families where the young person is experiencing significant mental health difficulties. The team includes psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, mental health nurses, family therapists and therapeutic social workers.

- Referrals have remained constant for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service in 2017/18 at 200 per month. The numbers on waiting lists for an initial appointment has remained steady at 293, whilst waiting times have increased slightly from 5.1 weeks in 2016/17 to 5.7 weeks this year.

13. Missing Children

The aim is to reduce the incidence of all children and young people going missing and if they do, to reduce the risk of them suffering harm and recover them to safety as soon as possible. We do this through partnership working, information sharing, problem solving and performance management. A child or young person will be categorised as 'Missing' when their whereabouts cannot be established and/or the circumstances are out of character and the context suggests the person is subject of a crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

- Fewer children are going missing compared to last year. However, there has been an increase in missing children incidents, now averaging 100 per month (last year was 80). 36% of these were children missing from local authority Care, compared to 64% missing from home.
- Percentage of return interviews held within 72 hours of the child being located decreased to 34% from 49% last year, however since the recruitment in February 2018 of three missing children officers performance has started to improve and this trend is expected to continue into next year.

14. Concerns about Adults who are in Positions of Trust

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) provides advice and manages the process for responding to concerns about adults who are in positions of trust because they work with children or young people. There is now a referral form in place which enables more transparency, accountability and ability to track cases. There is a need to implement a system which captures 'low level advice' via telephone calls so that patterns and trends can be identified.

The Board has received assurance during the year about the effectiveness of the LADO arrangements and supported the initiative to improve the quality of intelligence to strengthen the service provided going forward.

- Number of meetings held was 177 (last year 247)
- There have been 43 cases where the outcome was substantiated (data not held last year)
- Percentage of cases closed within 3 months was 60%

Appendix 3 - Glossary

CAFCASS	Children and Families Court Advisory and Support Service
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CDOP	Child Death Overview Panel
CiN	Child in Need
CME	Children Missing Education
CPC	Child Protection Conference
CPP	Child Protection Plan
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CRC	Community Rehabilitation Company
CSC	Children's Social Care
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
EH	Early Help
EHE	Elective Home Education
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HWB	Health and Well-Being Board
ICPC	Initial Child Protection Conference
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
LAC	Looked After Child
LGA	Local Government Association
MACFA	Multi Agency Case File Audit
MASH	Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
MEG	Monitoring Effectiveness Group
NPS	National Probation Service
QAG	Quality Assurance Group
SCR	Serious Case Review
SEND	Special Educational Needs & Disabilities
SUDIC	Sudden Unexpected Deaths in Infants and Children
WCC	Worcestershire County Council
WFADA & SV	Worcestershire Forum Against Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
WMP	West Mercia Police
WSAB	Worcestershire Safeguarding Adults Board
WSCB	Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board
YJS	Youth Justice Service

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

14 SEPTEMBER 2018

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICE – OFSTED MONITORING VISIT FEEDBACK

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families and the Assistant Director Safeguarding Services (Children's Social Care) have been invited to the meeting to provide an update on the outcome of Ofsted's fifth Monitoring Visit of the Council's children's safeguarding services, which took place on 11 and 12 July and focused on Child Protection and Child in Need.

Background

2. On 24 January 2017, Ofsted published their report entitled 'Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers; and Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board'.

3. The overall judgement for Worcestershire was 'inadequate'. Following the Ofsted judgement, an eight-point Service Improvement Plan (SIP) was developed by Children, Families and Communities Leadership Team to cover all of the recommendations made by Ofsted.

4. As a result of this judgement, Ofsted put in place a series of Monitoring Visits to track the Council's progress. To date there have been five such visits in May 2017, September 2017, January 2018, April 2018 and July 2018. The result of the first visit was not published but Ofsted concluded that the Local Authority was not making the expected progress to improve services for children and young people. In the following two visits, however, Ofsted noted that progress was being made.

Feedback from Ofsted Monitoring Visit – No.5

5. Ofsted conducted their fifth Monitoring Visit on 11 and 12 July 2018, with the focus being on the Child Protection and Child in Need. Andy Waugh, Senior Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) from Ofsted, led the inspection, working alongside fellow Ofsted inspectors, Alison Smale (HMI) and John Roughton (HMI). This was the third monitoring visit that Andy Waugh has been involved in in Worcestershire. Andy is also leading the next visit in October.

6. Ofsted published their letter outlining the results of the visit on 3 August 2018. The purpose of each letter following an Ofsted Monitoring Visit is to outline the outcome of the visit. There are no judgements made, but instead a statement summarising the direction of travel. A copy of the letter is attached at Appendix 1.

Next Steps

7. The next Ofsted Monitoring Visit (No. 6) is currently scheduled to take place on 2 and 3 October 2018 and will be likely to focus on the work of our Family Front Door and Partnership activity.
8. The Service Improvement Plan (SIP) was refreshed in April 2018 to reflect work completed to date and ensure priorities remained focused. Monitoring of the SIP is done through monthly Children, Families and Communities Leadership Team (CFCLT) meetings chaired by Catherine Driscoll, Director of Children, Families and Communities, as well as in monthly meetings with Service Leads chaired by Tina Russell, Assistant Director for Safeguarding. Bi-annual feedback is also provided to the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) and the Worcestershire Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel. A high level version of the plan is attached at Appendix 2.
9. Our Improvement Partnership programme of work with Essex County Council has also been updated and includes the following:
 - Fostering Team visit to Essex – 11 and 12 September 2018
 - Partnership workshop and Early Help follow up – 12 September 2018
 - Early Help visit to Essex – 24 October 2018
 - Edge of Care visit to Essex – 30 October 2018
10. CFCLT will continue to lead the delivery of the SIP and ensure positive momentum is maintained whilst the implementation phase of the Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) is underway in parallel.

Purpose of the Meeting

11. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:
 - consider the information in the report and the presentation to be provided on the day
 - determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny, and
 - agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Ofsted Monitoring Visit Outcome Letter
- Appendix 2 – Service Improvement Plan 2018-19

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

Worcestershire County Council 01905 763763
Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Specific Contact Points for this report

Alyson Grice/Samantha Morris, Overview and Scrutiny Officers 01905 844962/844963

Email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children, Families and Communities) the following background papers relate to the subject matter of this report:

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)

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3 August 2018

Dr Catherine Driscoll
Worcestershire
Spetchley Road
Worcester
WR5 2YA

Dear Dr Driscoll

Monitoring visit of Worcestershire children's services

This letter summarises the findings of the monitoring visit to Worcestershire children's services on 11 July 2018. The visit was the fifth monitoring visit since the local authority was judged inadequate in November 2016. The visit was carried out by Andrew Waugh and John Roughton, Her Majesty's Inspectors and Lee-Anne Farach, Ofsted Inspector.

Overall, the local authority is making satisfactory progress to improve services for its children and young people. Good progress is being made in the areas of assessment and quality assurance. Progress in other areas, such as planning for children, is more variable and requires further focused work.

Areas covered by the visit

During the course of this visit, inspectors reviewed the progress made in the area of children subject to child protection and child in need assessments and plans. Inspectors considered whether assessments identify children's needs appropriately, and whether children's plans are effectively supporting progress in order to meet needs and reduce the risks that children may be subject to.

The visit considered a range of evidence, including tracking of children's cases and sampling electronic case records and supervision notes. In addition, we spoke to a range of staff, including managers and social workers.

Overview

The local authority's senior leaders and elected members have a realistic understanding of progress that has been made. They are aware that much work remains to be done in some areas to ensure that children receive good services. For example, management review and challenge of children's plans require prompt action to ensure that outcomes are measurable and are achieved in a timely way.

Political interest and investment in children's social care services remain high priorities, providing the additional resources required for senior managers to implement change. For example, the local authority has implemented a strong recruitment strategy that offers good financial and practical support to new social work staff. As a result, and since the last monitoring visit, the authority has been successful in recruiting a large number of social workers.

Management structures have been enhanced and social workers' caseloads have been reduced. The role and use of advanced social work practitioners are helping to further embed a culture of reflection and learning. Children are now experiencing more stability, with fewer changes of social worker, and this enables them to build positive relationships.

It is clear that the morale of both managers and social workers is positive, which is reflected in an overall increase in confidence, resulting in some creative, resourceful and reflective practice. This is a positive trajectory of change. The local authority continues to provide agency workers with the same opportunities as their permanent colleagues, which is beneficial to the overall quality of practice.

Findings and evaluation of progress

Based on the evidence gathered during the visit, we identified areas of strength, areas where improvement has already started to be evident and some areas where significant work remains to be made.

The local authority has invested significantly in a strength-based model of intervention for working with children and families. All staff have received the basic training, with more detailed training to follow. Inspectors saw evidence that in some parts of the service, the model is being used effectively in casework and supervision. However, it is not yet consistently implemented across the service. The model is soon to be 'rolled out' to partners, underpinned by a financial investment from these partners to support the training.

The local authority has developed a whole-system approach to quality assurance, with several avenues for checking user experience being explored, including manager peer audits that are also moderated independently. Service user feedback forms part of the audit, with group managers ensuring that actions identified are completed. In addition, thematic audits are used to further enhance social work practice and develop services. Inspectors found the audits of these cases and the children's circumstances accurately reflect the quality of social work practice that was seen. This demonstrates that managers can accurately identify good standards of work and are challenging themselves appropriately.

Social workers reported that supervision was regular and reflective, increasingly using a strength-based approach. However, this was not fully reflected by what inspectors saw in practice. Some supervision is not timely and supervision records do not consistently evidence what actions are needed sufficiently clearly. Furthermore, the result of actions is not always followed through by supervisors. In some cases,

management oversight is inconsistent and lacks challenge to drift and delay. Informal decision-making processes are relied on too frequently and are not recorded on children's records. There is no evidence that supervision is effectively driving plans for children.

Assessments that have commenced in the last eight months are consistently of a good quality and are an area in which practice has improved. Family history is routinely considered, along with the effective use of chronologies. The child's voice is regularly evidenced and informs planning. In the majority of cases seen, there is evidence that social workers are completing direct work. However, this better practice is not present in all cases. Management oversight with a clear synopsis and rationale for further intervention is evident in all cases. Some cases also evidenced that managers are challenging recommendations made by social workers. This demonstrates that managers have a clear understanding of the work completed by social workers and that the right actions and services are in place to improve children's outcomes.

For children in need where cases have been open longer than six months, the local authority is aware that there is a legacy of drift and delay and is completing a review of all children in need cases. Some child in need assessments are not being updated when required and this results in plans that are not fully informed or are out of date. In the majority of these cases, partner agencies are consulted during the completion of assessments but in some, key professionals, for example health professionals, are not consulted. When professional views are sought, it is not always clear what their views are regarding the presenting concerns and what should happen next. This results in assessments not being fully informed and the outcomes not addressing the needs of children.

Planning for children continues to be an area of practice that requires further improvement. Plans for children are not always focused on their needs, and there is a lack of clarity about what needs to be achieved to ensure positive outcomes. Better plans are child focused and evidence improved outcomes for children. Plans for some children in need evidence too much drift and delay and a lack of progress in improving outcomes. Where a plan is not achieving desired outcomes, there is little evidence of challenge and there are no contingency plans in place to take account of this. The impact of multi-agency working in progressing child protection and child in need plans is too variable and does not routinely improve outcomes for children. It is not clear who is monitoring the progress of plans between reviews. This means that children are potentially left in situations of risk for too long.

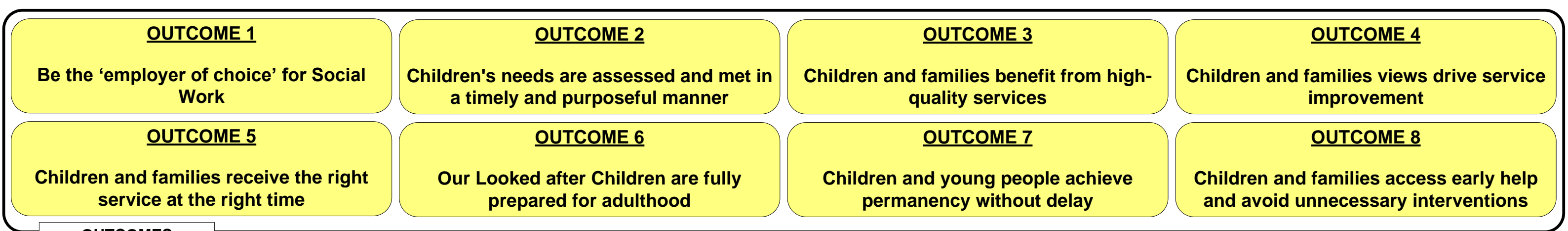
The local authority is currently in the process of changing its model of social work practice. It is introducing a strength-based model and this has been received favourably by some social workers, who report that it benefits their practice. However, some cases evidenced inconsistent practice because social workers are using a range of different assessment templates. In some cases, the strength-based assessment template is not fully used, with significant amounts of information being put into the recommendations and rationale box.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for your positive engagement throughout this monitoring visit.

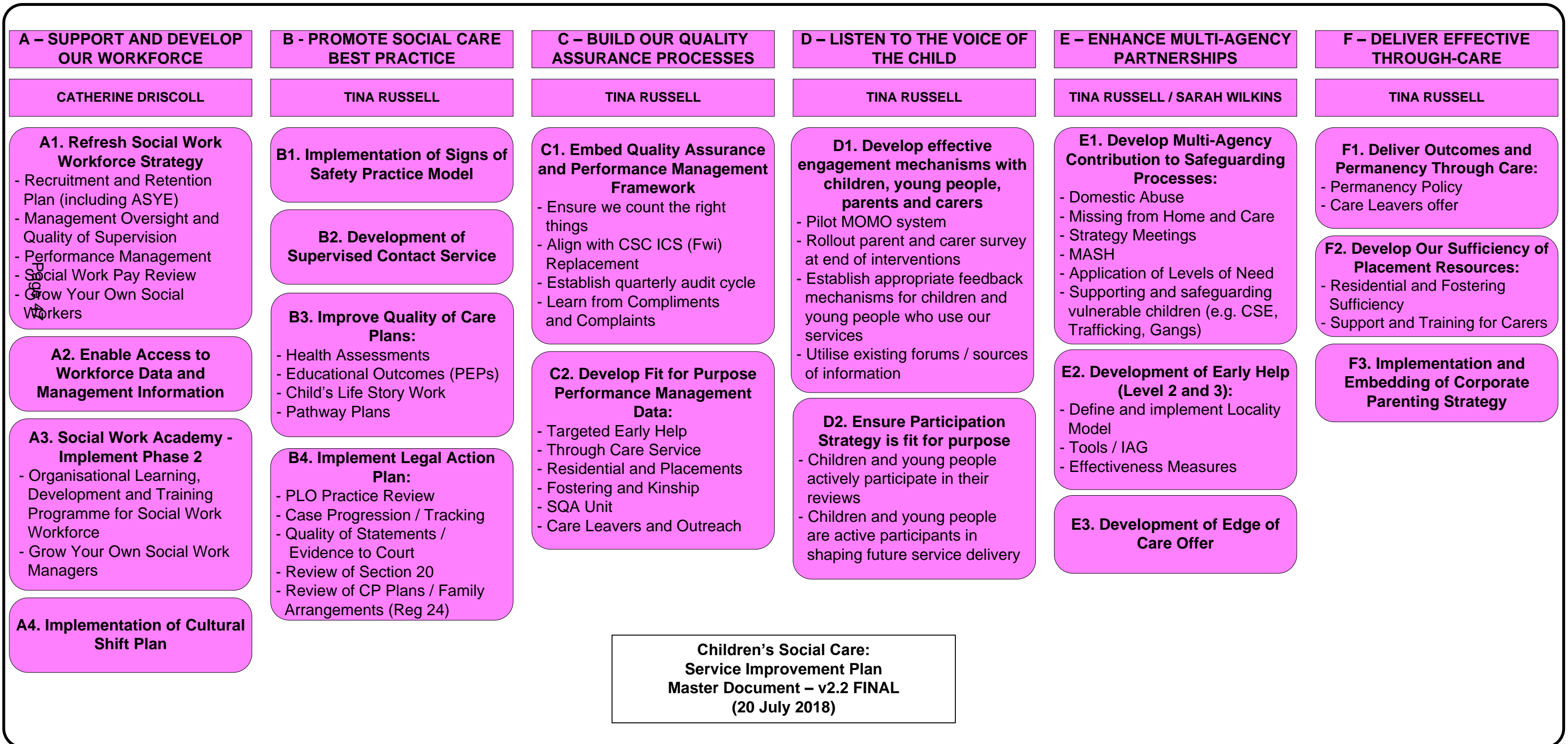
I am copying this letter to the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andy Waugh
Her Majesty's Inspector

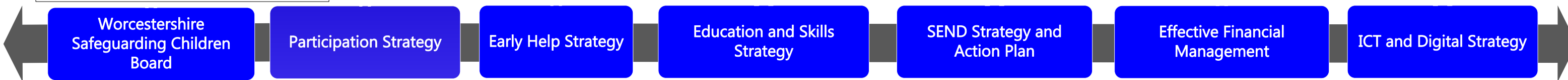


OUTCOMES



**Children's Social Care:
Service Improvement Plan
Master Document – v2.2 FINAL
(20 July 2018)**

WORKSTREAMS AND PROJECTS



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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

14 SEPTEMBER 2018

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Summary

1. The Chairman of the Panel has requested performance monitoring data for children's social care and has been provided with a data set for 2018/19 Q1 which is attached at Appendix 1.

Background

2. Performance information provides an overview of activity levels within the service, trends and emerging patterns of need that help identify where performance is improving and where further investigation or targeted improvement action is required.

Performance Data

3. Data has been provided for:

- Family Front Door Social Work Assessments Timeliness
- Family Front Door Assessment Outcomes
- Child Protection Plans – Rate per 10,000 under 18's
- Child Protection Plans – starts and ceases since April 1st
- Children in Need per 10,000 under 18's – Local definition Safeguarding Teams
- Open Cases - Main Categories at Quarter End
- Children Missing from Home in Month
- Children Missing from WCC Care in Month
- Missing from Home – Return Interview Timeliness
- Missing from WCC Care – Return Interview Timeliness
- Child Sexual Exploitation – Numbers at Month End
- Looked After Children – Rate per 10,000 under 18's
- Looked After Children – Starts/Ceases since April 1st
- Time Children had been in Care when they left the Care System
- Looked After Children Reviews – Attendance/Participation 4+
- Three or more placements in 12 months
- Looked After Children Reviews – Timeliness
- Type of Placement Costs
- Placement Type – Comparison with National Picture

4. Commentary has also been provided by way of analysis.

Purpose of the Meeting

5. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- consider the data provided
- agree whether any other detail is required for the Panel to carry out its performance monitoring role
- agree the frequency that the Panel will receive the data
- determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny, and
- agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Performance Monitoring Data for 2018/19 Q1

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

Worcestershire County Council 01905 763763

Worcestershire Hub: 01905 765765

Specific Contact Points for this report

Alyson Grice/Samantha Morris, Overview and Scrutiny Officers 01905 844962/844963

Email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)

ANALYSIS

Analysis - Family Front Door

Work to address consistent application of threshold of SWA both with in managers through targeted audit and with partners case by case and through partnership locality events continues - we are seeing some reduction in assessment resulting in NFA (this includes step downs) This work is fundamentally linked to the development of the Targeted Early Help services.

We continue to see good practice in SWA timeliness sustained now for 9mths post work completed at the FFD to clear backlogs. Case load pressures and high reliance on agency staff at FFD continue to be a challenge but a recent recruitment of 2 more permanent Team Managers takes us to 4/6 permanent manager in Assessment teams and a dedicated Group Manager for theses team moved into post June 18.

Agency contribution to strategy discussions is not good enough and Police contribution are a Fwi compliance issues constantly addressed with the turn over of managers. In the 0-19 re-commissioning of HV/Sch Nurses a dedicated Health professional representation at FFD has been identified.

Data for 2017/18 as produced for the West Midlands Benchmarking Group

Source of Referral	Number	%
Individual	329	7
Schools	792	18
Education services	51	1
Health services	608	13
Housing	64	1
LA Services	404	9
Police	1690	37
Other Legal Agency	203	4
Other	216	5
Anonymous	157	3
Unknown	3	0

In 2017/18 there were just under 2000 children and young people assessed by Family Front Door teams following a referral where there was no further action by social care following the assessment. In relation to these assessments, in the preceding 12 months,

- In 17% - there was at least one previous referral for the child/young person
- In 27% - there was at least one previous contact (i.e. not resulting in referral).

Analysis - Child Protection

April 2016 Child Protection (CP) figures stood at 37 per 10,000 rising to 46 by April 17. This significant rise in year reflecting the post Ofsted safeguarding work to address both poor quality assessment of risk and drift and delay in case work. Figures are now reducing. The number of children subject to CP relates to the number of Children In Need (CIN) and Numbers of Children in Care. Our social work approach is to ensure through CIN we can offer support and assistance to a family early but also to take proactive safeguarding action within CP/PLO where there is no timely/sustained change for a child. As such we expect to see a rise in our CIN and a reduction in CP.

Repeat Child Protection. Whilst data showing increase through 16/17 was expected due to service improvement work in quality of assessments /intervention this isn't reducing consistently and we identified a large number being removed from at plan at first review. This led us to audit to understand our work. For repeats within 2years the audit identified too many children removed from CP at first review due to Child/YP moving to alternative parent/family or the primary risk person moving out. In such situations we have seen breakdown and risk re-presented. We have challenged professionals "over optimism" in these cases and analysis of monthly CP outcome dated evidences this is improving from an average of 30% removal at first review through 17/18 down to 17% in qtr. 1 of 18/19. For repeats over 2years audit has shown appropriate decision making in the need for a repeated plan with the history now clearly being taken into account (a previous concern in our SIF) and or a new concern having been identified. Improved practice in our work should reflect a decrease in repeat CP in both categories through the year. (NB January 19 we will be 2 years post the start of our improvement plan)

What we want to know is how successful the child and family think our CP intervention is and we are now asking this question. Data on repeat CP and understanding feedback from Children/Young People and parents on the effectiveness of a CP intervention is priority for work us in 18/19/. Monthly service User feedback (Qtr. 1 18/19) shows positive increase in the % of parents reporting the SW explained well the concern prior to conference from 76 % April 18 up to 95% June 18 and positive reports from professionals reporting that the child's voice is understood in assessment in 82% up to 88% cases and conference being child focused from 59% up to 92% in June 18 (this month co-insides with implementation of SoS approach in ICPC. However the same report identifies key concerns for our practice with parents reporting a CP plan has made a positive difference to their lives from 59% April down to 28% June and professionals reporting plans reflecting the needs of a child from 83% down to 77% in June 18. We clearly need to ensure the SoS approach is resulting in clear outcome focused and not strengths and danger statements

Analysis - Children in Need

Our Children in Need represent 33.3% of cases open in locality safeguarding; this is an increase from 32% in April 17 with a corresponding reduction in the representation of those subject to Child Protection from 28% down to 23%. This is reflective of the service approach to support families at the lowest level safe to do so resulting in an increase in CIN as a % of the open cases in the service. Work to ensure CIN plans do not drift continues to be a challenge with instability in the workforce and competing demands of priorities. Data shows an increase in CIN open for more than 6months from 28% in Qtr. 4 up to 33% in Qtr. 1 of this year.

Analysis - Missing Children

March 18 saw the appointment into post of three Missing Children Officers with responsibility for undertaking our welfare return interviews for children missing from home and care. Data reporting has been reviewed and we will review trend data to see impact. We have seen a reduction in the number of children missing from Home and Care from 17/18 annual trend data. Line managed by the Practice Lead for CSE quarterly reports on "push / pull" factors will now be produced by this team the addition "push pull" factors and links to CSE will be triangulated through the management and CSE operational group.

Feedback from social workers about the impact on the quality of welfare return interviews done independently of them is positive.

Re: Impact of new Missing Officers at the FFD Team Manager quote:

In relation to FG who was missing regularly, Jo was very supportive, she had a relationship with the child when it came from the FFD and was able to undertake the missing interviews much more freely than we could. We had another young person placed on residential in wales and he has had a number of missing episodes. The missing officer, Val, built a good rapport with him and again completed the interviews in a much more timely way given the availability of the allocated social workers. Alice Gillett Team Manager.

Analysis -Child Sexual Exploitation

The WSCB approval has been given to extend the remit of the CSE Strategy / Steering group to include other forms of exploitation including; Gangs, HBV, County Lines, Forced Marriage and Trafficking. A refreshed ToR is in development. This will be our "Get Safe" team. The Get Safe team will bring together operational experts in supporting Targeted Early Help and Social Workers in identifying risk across these areas of harm. CSE problem profile has been updated as priority and was presented to CSE strategic Group July 18

Analysis - Looked After Children

Whilst we haven't got England averages or SN data for 17/18 our own three year data shows post Ofsted an increase in children being received into care, (practice safeguarding on children at risk drifting in Child Protection and Pre proceedings, then a reduction trend year to date. For those leaving care a sharper increase post Ofsted reflecting the work to progress children's cases that had drifted but reducing care leaver numbers year to date now that this back log has been addressed and children are moving out in a more timely way in line with more effective care planning to permanency.

Looking only at total population there appears to be an increasing Looked After Child population but in actual fact when analysed in this additional detail shows a trend of a reducing Looked After Child population.

Looked after Children with 3+ Moves in 12 months at 31/07/2018, broken down by Placement End Reason

Placement End Reason	Total	%
Carer requests placement end due to child's behaviour	103	37%
Change to/Implementation of Care Plan	79	28%
Child requests placement end	30	11%
Carer requests placement end other than due to child's behaviour	23	8%
Responsible/Area authority requests placement end	17	6%
Standards of Care concern	9	3%
Allegation (s47)	6	2%
Resignation/closure of provision	4	1%
Interim internal holiday cottage	3	1%
Returned to secure accommodation	1	0%
Change in the status of a placement only	1	0%
Living with family	1	0%
Transferred to another hospital	1	0%
End of secure care	1	0%
Hospital Assessment	1	0%
Total	280	

Analysis - Looked After Children (continued)

Looked After Children - number of allocated workers 23 March 2018

No. of Allocated Workers	Number of Children	% of Children
1	242	30%
2	169	21%
3	173	22%
4	99	12%
5	55	7%
6	36	5%
7	15	2%
8	4	1%
9	2	0%
Total	795	100%

The above is taken from a report which looks at number of allocated workers for children currently looked after:

(a) since period of care started

(b) where the worker is still open or ended on or after 1 Feb 2016 i.e. just over the last two years.

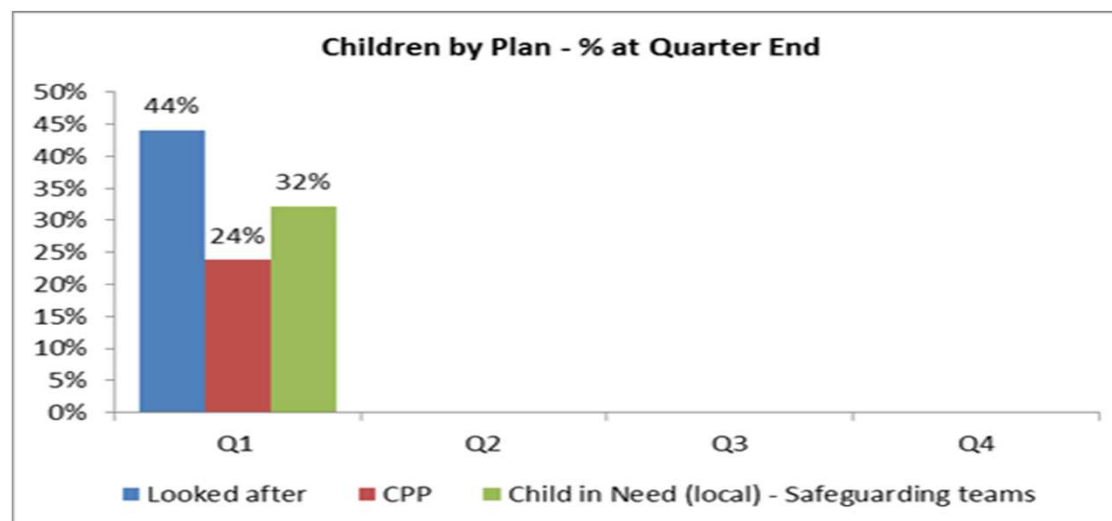
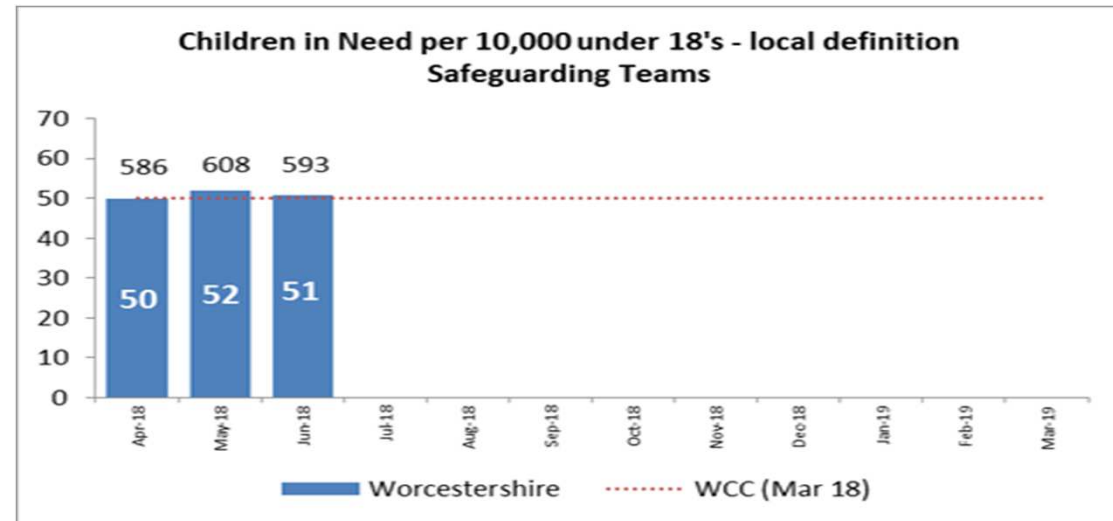
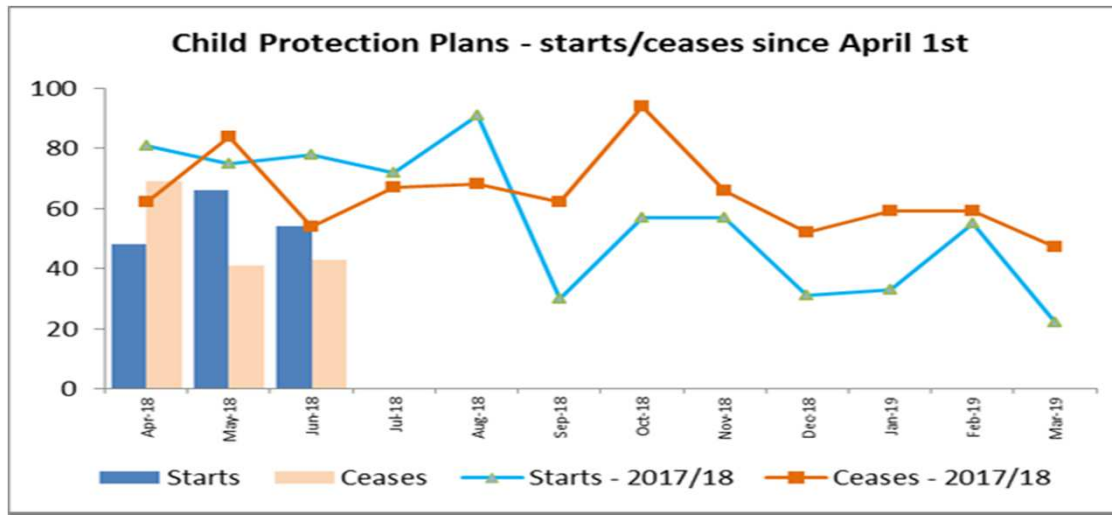
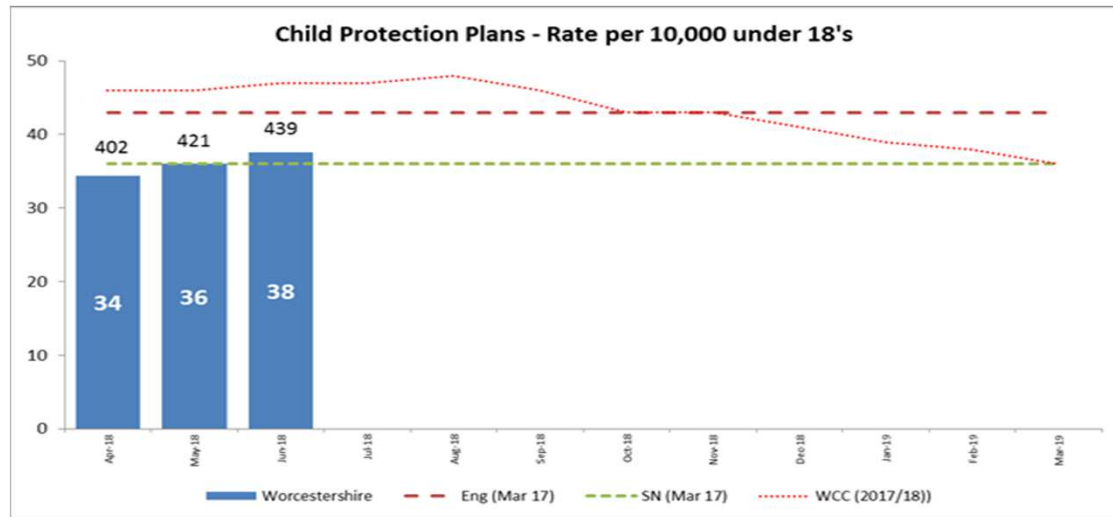
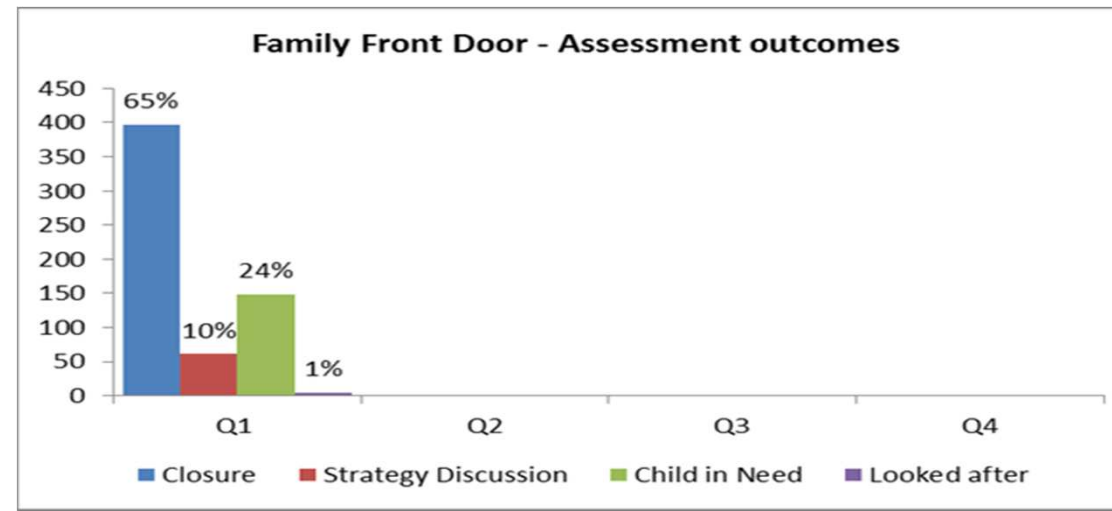
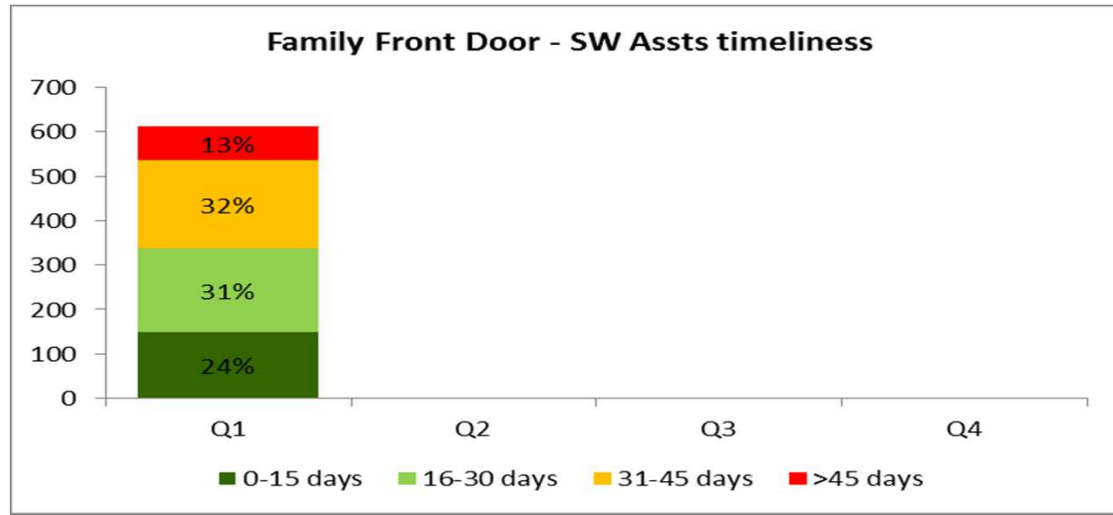
The Children's Commissioner has been undertaking some work on this nationally. Her headline figure was that nationally 1 in 4 Looked After Children have multiple changes of worker during a year but that there is wide variation. The figures outlined in table 3 were calculated over a period of 2 years, whereas the national figures are calculated over 1 year. We would therefore expect the WCC figures to be higher.

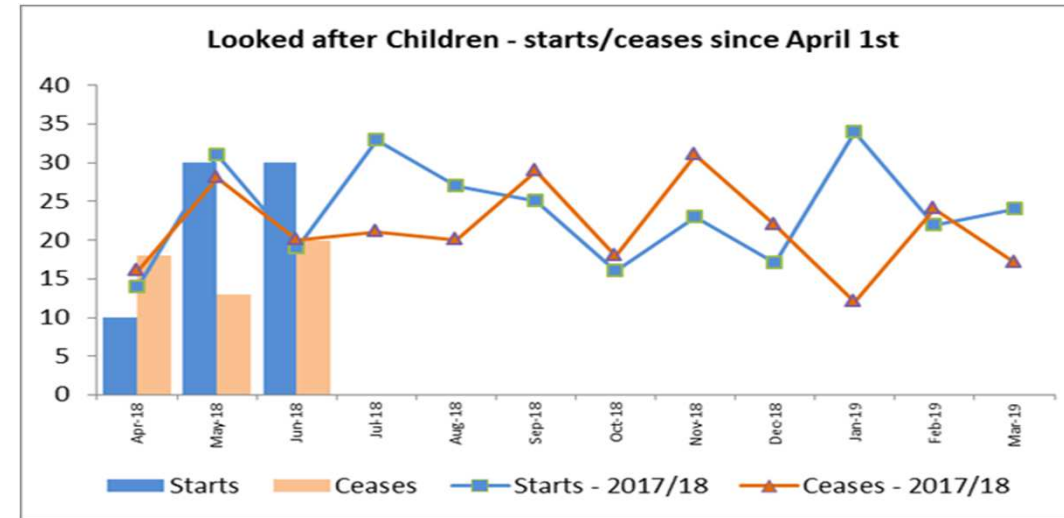
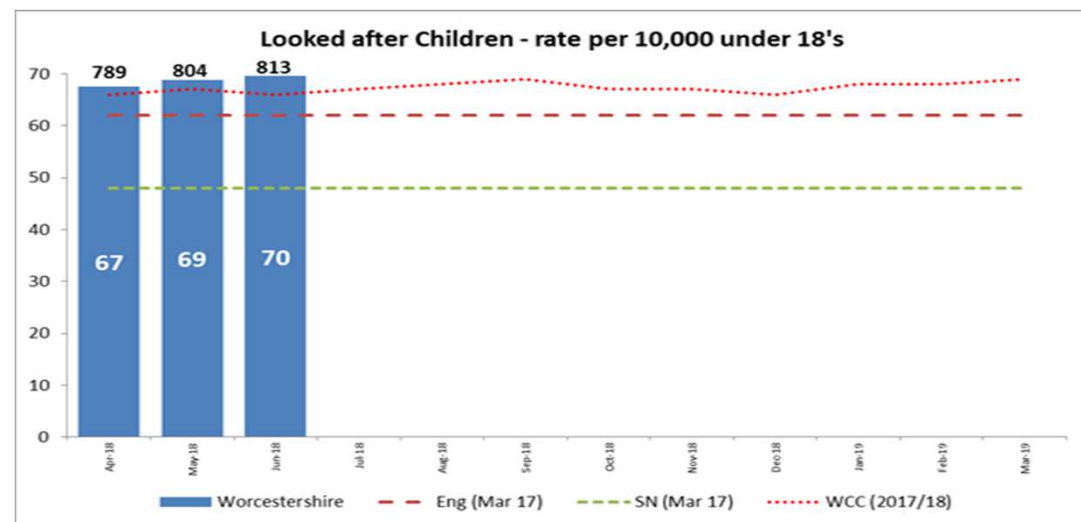
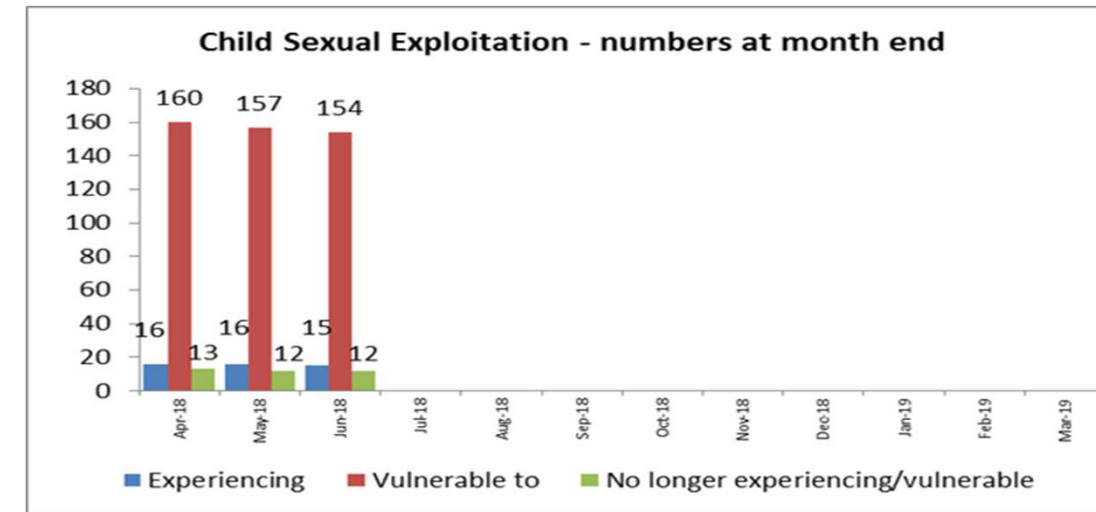
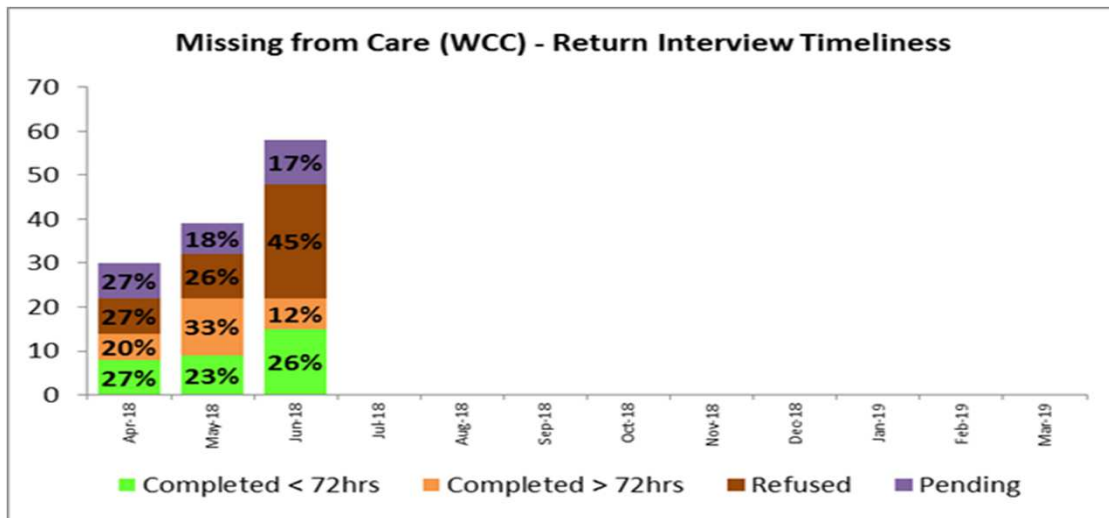
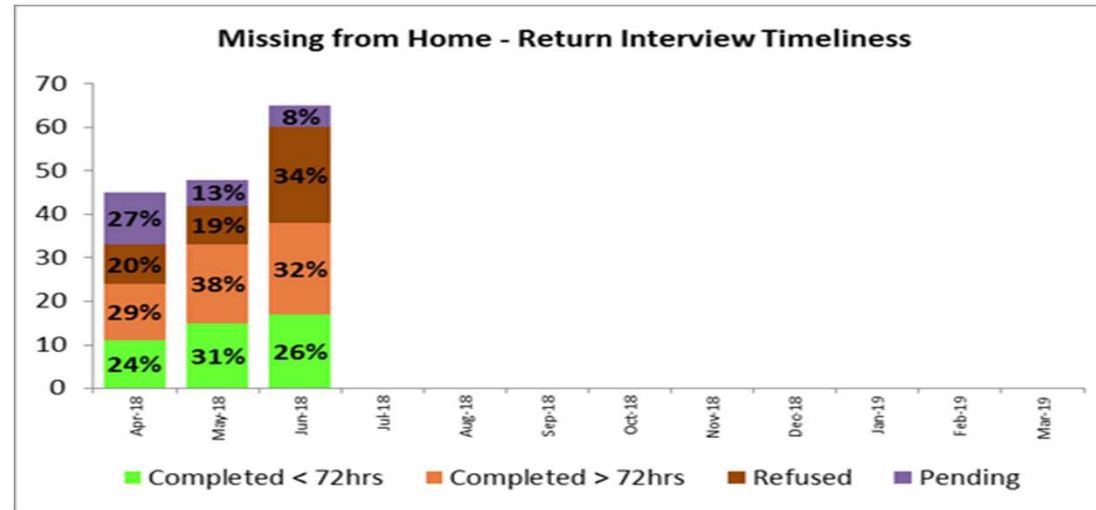
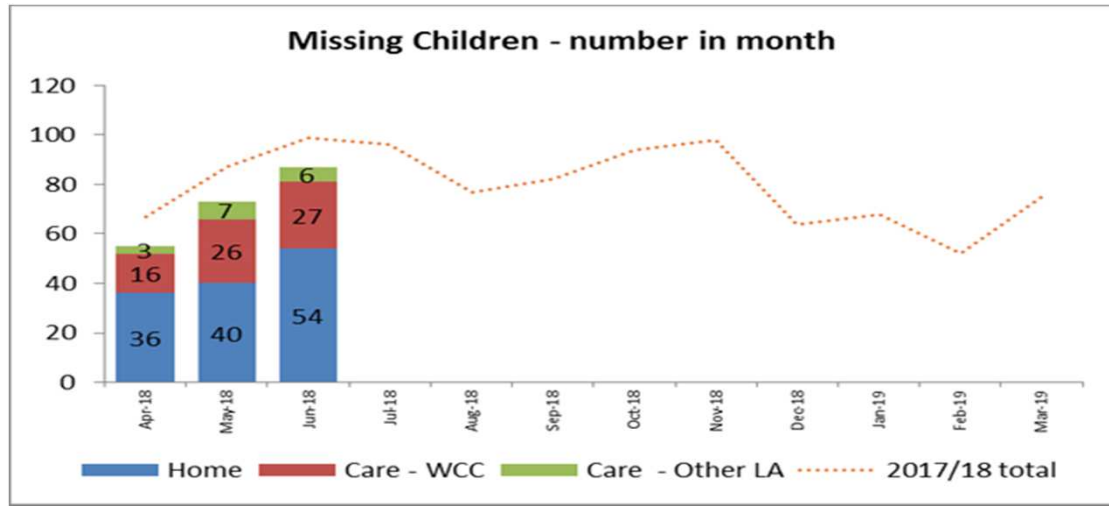
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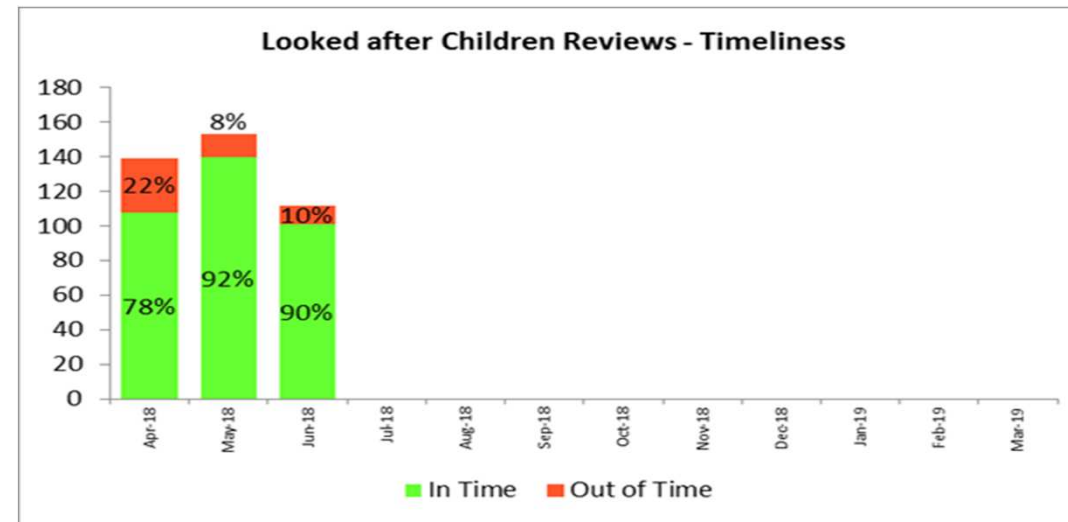
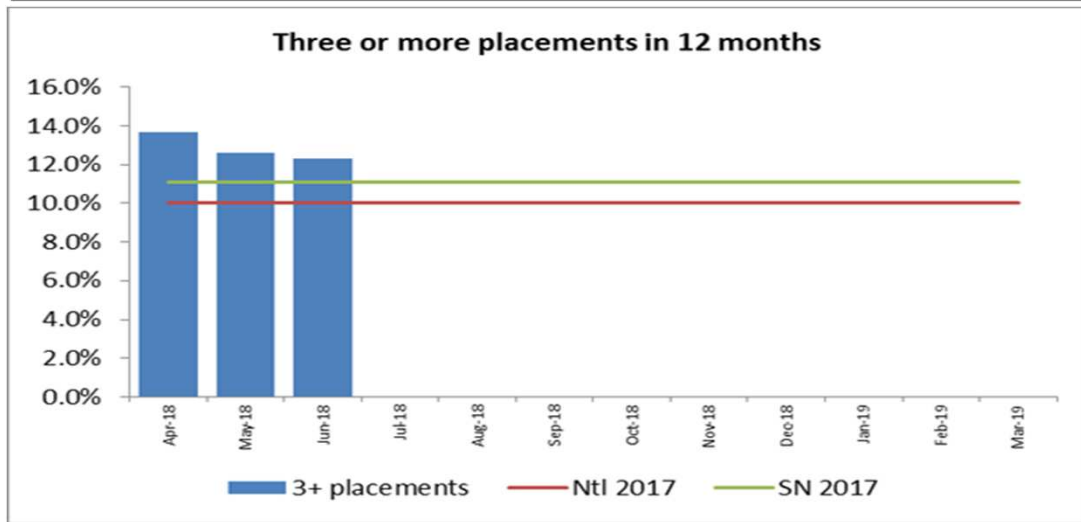
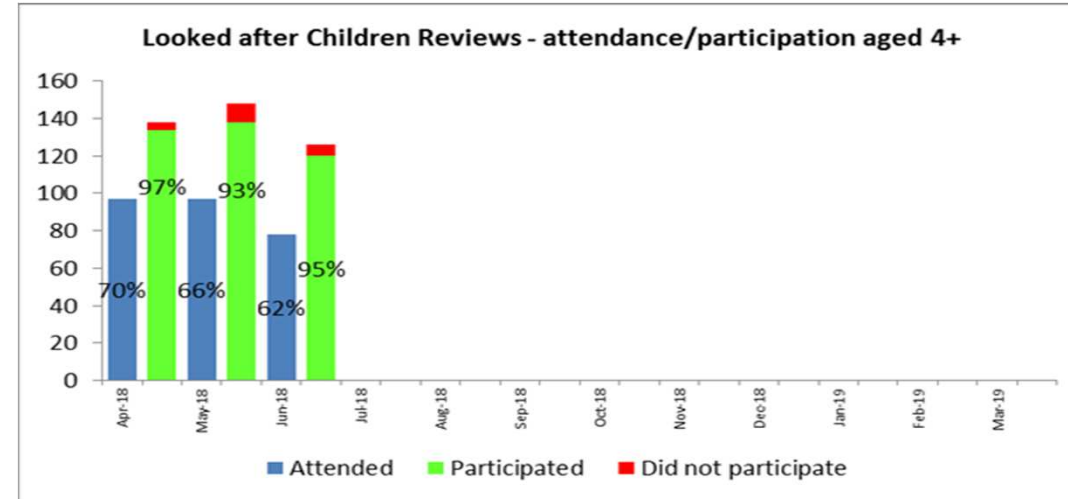
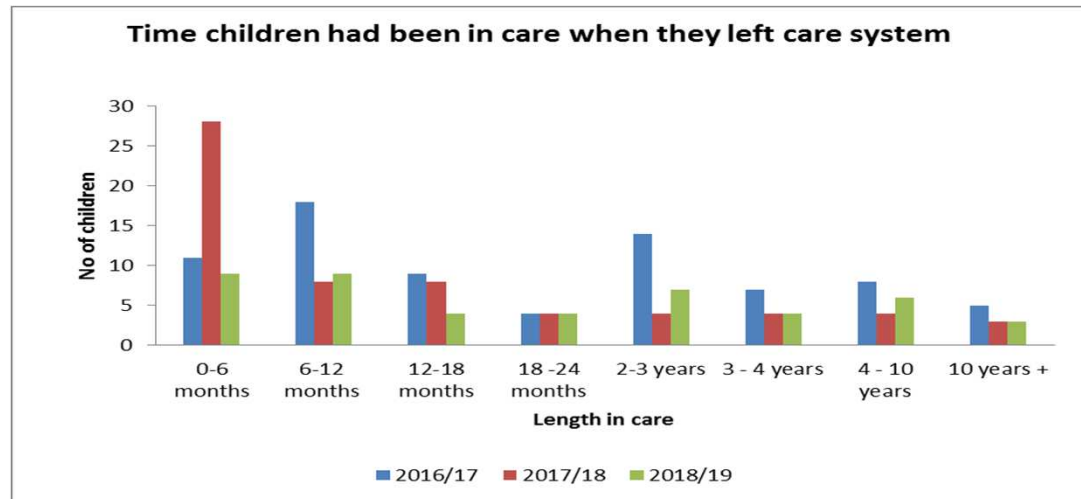
The table below shows post Ofsted data on Children achieving permanency with a positive trend and increase in the number of children leaving care and achieving permanency in a more timely way i.e. within 12 months and a reduction in 17/18 of those where it took up to 2 years to achieve a permanency plan outside of LA care.

Duration of care at point of exit	16/17	17/18	Analysis
0-12 months	36%	47%	Rise in achieving permanency out of care within 12 months
12-24 months	25%	20%	Reduction in those leaving in two years is a reflection of addressing a backlog of drift and delay cases in the system
2 years plus	39%	32%	In usual circs this figure would be heavily influenced by the older age young people attaining 18yrs in our case we have had proactive work on drift and delay and poor Aspirational permanency planning

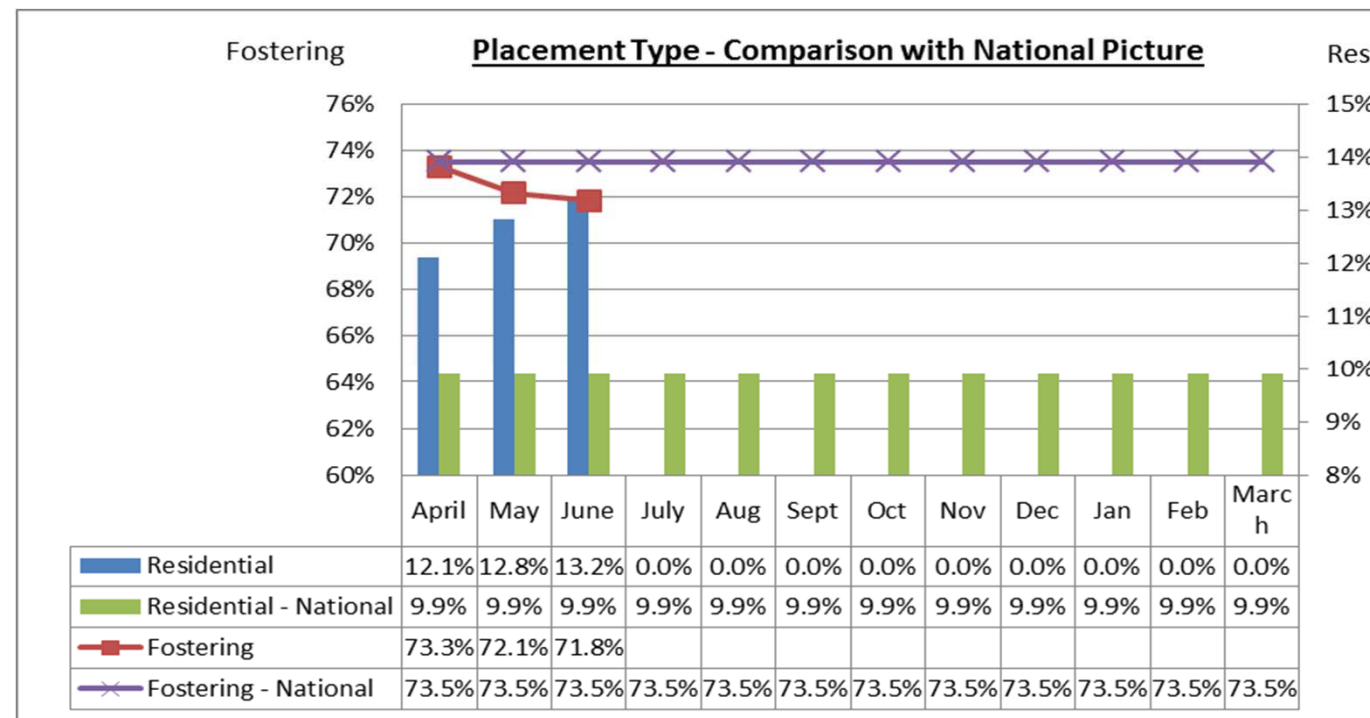
Our data show an increasing trend in the use of residential care to meet the need of children in our care and a decreasing use of foster care both being out of line with national averages. The services are working on an Edge of Care and Sufficiency strategy to review how we meet the needs of our existing and incoming children and young people in need of care to promote their welfare and protect them from harm







Type of placement - Costs	Ave Unit Cost £ / Week	Number
Agency Residential *Note 1	3,418	76
Secure Units	0	0
In-house Residential		
Downsell Road	2,509	5
CWD Homes	2,480	7
EBD Homes	2,743	16
IFA	789	232
In-house Fostering	477	188
Kinship Fostering	379	162
Placement Plus	900	5
External Supported Living	839	23
Internal Supported Living	148	21
Internal Supported Living -Complex	1,079	5
Safe Base / Supported Lodging	333	15
Student Accommodation	66	2
Staying Put Arrangements	79	30
Hillview Short Breaks	2,447	1
TOTAL Number of Placements	465	788



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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 14 SEPTEMBER 2018

UPDATE ON THE USE OF CHILDREN'S CENTRE BUILDINGS

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families, and the Assistant Director for Early Help and Commissioning have been invited to the meeting to further update the Panel on the use of Children's Centre buildings and the related delivery of early childhood and early help services.
2. This report contains an update on the position of change to children's centres nationally, a detailed summary of provision at each centre in Worcestershire (Appendix 1) and a summary of the numbers using the centres that are run by the Council's commissioned services.

Background and purpose of the report

3. Members will be aware of the decisions taken in 2016 to transfer the leases of a number of Children's Centre buildings to schools and childcare providers, and the continued use of the buildings that were not transferred for the provision of services by the Parenting and Family Support service (formerly known as Early Help services). The proposals in 2016 formed part of wider decisions, including the reduction of funding and redesign of early help services, and were informed by the need for additional funded nursery places.
4. In March 2017 and February 2018 the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel received progress updates on these changes and requested further information relating to the use of the buildings and provision of related early help services.
5. A children's centre is defined as a place or a group of places:
 - which is managed by or on behalf of, or under arrangements with, the local authority with a view to securing that early childhood services in the local authority's area are made available in an integrated way;
 - through which early childhood services are made available (either by providing the services on site, or by providing advice and assistance on gaining access to services elsewhere); and
 - at which activities for young children are provided.
6. Early childhood services are defined as:
 - early years provision (early education and childcare);

- social services functions of the local authority relating to young children, parents and prospective parents;
- health services relating to young children, parents and prospective parents;
- training and employment services to assist parents or prospective parents;
- information and advice services for parents and prospective parents.

7. Local authorities must ensure there are sufficient children's centres, so far as reasonably practicable, to meet local need (Childcare Act 2006).

8. This report provides the additional information requested by the Panel, together with additional background information relating to a recent national study of the operation of Children's Centres in England. Additionally consideration is given to other implications on the use Children's Centre buildings including; the potential impact of the transfer of Children's Social Work Services to the wholly owned company Worcestershire Children First, and the re-commissioning of a 0-19 prevention and early intervention services, on the use of Children's Centre buildings going forward.

Children's Centres – the national picture

9. A recent [report by The Sutton Trust and Oxford University](#) looked at new research investigating what has happened to Children's Centres across England since changes to national policy and reductions in national funding levels; which services are being retained and what new initiatives are being developed in order to comply with a local authority's duty to deliver early intervention services for families with children aged 0-5 years.

10. The report notes that nationally funding allocated by Local Authorities to Children's Centres has been reduced by 48% and this level of funding reduction has been reflected in Worcestershire resulting in service restructures.

11. The Sutton Trust report highlights a drop in attendance at Children's Centres nationally of 14% between 2009 and October 2017. In Worcestershire, recorded numbers of families and children using the Centres remained consistent until the service changes in 2016 outlined above. A comparison of attendance in centres where comparative data is available shows an overall reduction of 45% in the number of children attending centres and a 20% reduction in parents/carers attending.

12. It is important to note that the whilst Children's Centre buildings do continue to provide a range of early childhood services, additionally activities and support is provided through a range of other community venues. For example children's centre staff work in partnership to support early learning and activity sessions for families from The Hive in Worcester City. As well as supplying resources, the staff member responsible for supporting access to funded childcare places is available to answer questions and inform parents on their eligibility to apply for places. Comments from parents include "The Hive is so easy to get to, I come here regularly" and "This is a great activity for my child to prepare for school".

13. The Sutton report also states that some local authorities have closed as many as 50% of their Centres and six authorities have closed 70% of their Centres. Worcestershire is maintaining early childhood services in all Council owned centres with a continued focus on the provision of early years' services and the targeting of services to those most in need of support. One building (3% of total provision) previously leased by an Early Help provider from a private landlord did close in 2017, on the expiry of the lease, and service delivery moved to other community buildings in the area.

14. Ofsted inspections of Children's Centres nationally were suspended in 2013 and in August 2018 the Department for Education confirmed there are no current plans to review or consult on the future of children's centres. Instead, the government is to focus on implementing its social mobility action plan, which launched in December 2017 to improve early years provision in disadvantaged areas. The government will also focus on its early years social mobility peer review programme which is being designed to share good practice and inform the strategy for closing the development gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. The findings are also expected to inform a review of consultation of Children's Centre's in the future.

Position statement and summary of changes since December 2016

15. A detailed summary of each Children's Centre building in Worcestershire is included as Appendix 1 to this report showing who the centre is leased to, the provision at the centre in 2016 and current provision, and comparative 'footfall' figures where these are available. 'Footfall' is the number of individual visits to a centre and has traditionally been recorded by Children's Centre/Early Help providers. Since 2016 the centres that are run by schools and childcare providers are not required to measure usage in this way and therefore a full comparison of numbers using centres is not available. Details of childcare/nursery places available on the site of each centre are also included where this is relevant.

16. The table below summarises the lease arrangements for all centres (September 2018)

Children's Centre managed/occupied by:	Number of buildings
Parenting and Family Support providers	10
Schools	15
Childcare providers	5
Worcestershire County Council pending decision on transfer arrangements	2

17. The centres that are pending decision are Woodlands at Woodrow Primary. It is expected that the transfer will proceed Autumn term, 2018. The second centre is Bluebell at Perry Wood in Worcester where a decision was taken earlier this year by the school not to proceed with the transfer of the centre to the school. The centre remains open and consideration is being given to its future use and lease arrangements.

18. The focus of this programme of change remains the optimisation of the future use of all Children's Centre buildings, the integration of prevention and intervention services ensuring that services are delivered, where possible, in or close to the communities that need them. The centres currently leased to Parenting and Family Support providers, and those centres where there is capacity to host additional services, continue to be a consideration in the development of the model of delivery for early childhood services and is included in the property workstream for the transfer to Worcestershire Children First, the commissioning of 0-19 prevention and intervention service and development of locally delivered maternity services.

19. As noted above 'footfall' figures are recorded by Parenting and Family Support providers and a summary is contained in the table below showing footfall in 2016 (prior to reductions in funding and targeting of these services) and in 2018 where centres continue to be run by them. Changes in usage figures reflect not only the services delivered by the providers but also whether health services (health visiting and antenatal clinics and speech and language drop-ins) and other activity sessions continue to be delivered at the centre by other agencies and are not a reflection of the total number of families engaged with early childhood services.

Children's Centres	2016		2017	
	Children	Carers	Children	Carers
Pear Tree (Bromsgrove)	2204	2225	2939	4087
Holly Trees (Redditch)	2803	5723	2882	5231
Brookside & Half Crown Wood (Wyre Forest)	6753	10335	3308	7267
Tudor Way, Saffron, Buttercup (Worcester)	11058	17167	4440	13563
WANDS & Blossom Vale (Wychavon)	7105	7533	2192	3211
Sunshine (Malvern)	2388	4604	1873	4696
TOTAL	32311	47587	17634 <small>(45% reduction)</small>	38055 <small>(20% reduction)</small>

20. The Children's Centres managed by the Parenting and Family Support Providers deliver a range of services (detailed in Appendix 1) including providing advice and guidance on a number of issues including assisting parents in finding and accessing childcare and nursery provision

21. Currently 71% of eligible disadvantaged 2 year olds in Worcestershire access their free nursery place which is equal to the national average. Additionally, 96% of three and four year olds are in nursery places and the new 30 hours offer has had an excellent take up with many children's centres now being used to meet this extra demand. These include those situated at Franche in Kidderminster, Charford First School in Bromsgrove and Stourport Primary in Stourport. Robust marketing strategies by the Parenting and Family Support providers, using social media and advertising to promote services in their area, means that families and professionals are kept informed of services that are available.

22. During school holidays, many term time activities cease to run at centres but in some cases additional services are introduced to support working families and to provide continuity for children. Each of the commissioned providers arrange and promote activities organised in their local area. These include day trips, sport clubs, and activity schemes amongst others. Most health services including ante natal and health visitor led groups continue to run through the holidays at designated children's centres, as well as targeted groups. Parenting courses continue but with reduced frequency as children are out of school and many people are on holiday.

Delivery of outcomes and narrowing the gap

23. The core purpose of children's centres is to improve outcomes for young children and their families and reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in: child development and school readiness; parenting aspirations and parenting skills; and child and family health and life chances.

24. Early indications (August 2018) suggest that 71% of children in Worcestershire's state schools achieved a good level of development at the end of reception in 2018, a key performance indicator and a reflection of the combined impact of early childhood services including those delivered at or from Children's Centres. This figure indicates a slight improvement compared to 2017 and places the county as a whole in line with national performance.

25. Approximately half of Worcestershire children who were eligible for free school meals (an indicator of deprivation) achieved a good level of development in 2018 compared to almost three quarters of their peers in the county. Both groups appear to have improved slightly compared to 2017.

26. Historically, the gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers has been wider in Worcestershire than nationally and this trend is likely to continue in 2018. In 2016 and 2017, only 49% of Worcestershire's FSM eligible pupils achieved a good level of development compared to 54% and 56% respectively at national level.

Conclusion

27. In conclusion, the information contained in this report and the outline of provision contained in Appendix 1 demonstrates that Children's Centres continue to be used for their original purpose. Recorded footfall has fallen but centres continue to support delivery of a range of services including those delivered by Parenting and Family Support providers, Targeted Family Support provision (now managed directly by the Council but delivered from a number of centres) a range of health provision and increased childcare/nursery provision. Officers and partners continue to work to maximise the use of these buildings and to ensure that each building continues to deliver early childhood services and relevant outcomes for families, and is used effectively as part of the overall model of delivery of a range of provision in Worcestershire.

Purpose of the Meeting

28. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- Consider the information in the update
- Determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny, and
- Agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children, Families and Communities.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Detailed summary of each Children's Centre building in Worcestershire (to follow)

Contact Point

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Report by the Sutton Trust and Oxford University, [Stop Start: Survival, decline or closure? Children's centres in England, 2018](#)
- Agendas and minutes for the meetings of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 13 March 2017 and 7 February 2018

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)