

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 3 November 2022, 10.00 am, County Hall, Worcester

Membership

Councillors:

Cllr Steve Mackay (Chairman), Cllr David Chambers (Vice Chairman), Cllr Dan Boatright, Cllr Kyle Daisley, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Jo Monk, Cllr Tony Muir and Cllr David Ross

Co-opted Church Representatives (for education matters)

Mr T Reid (Church Representative - Church of England)

Parent Governor Representatives (for education matters)

Mr M Hughes (Parent Governor Representative)

Agenda Supplement

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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

3 NOVEMBER 2022

WORCESTERSHIRE CHILDREN FIRST QUALITY ASSURANCE

Summary

1. An update on the Social Care and Safeguarding Quality Assurance Framework from Worcestershire Children First (WCF) is provided for the Panel.
2. The Cabinet Member with responsibility (CMR) for Children and Families, the Chief Executive of Worcestershire Children First and the Group Manager Safeguarding Quality Assurance & Principal Social Worker have been invited to attend the meeting.

Background

3. The Social Care and Safeguarding Quality Assurance Framework was first established in 2018 and there has been continuous work to develop and consolidate this. The framework was extended to include SEND in 2021 and WCF Fostering in 2022.
4. The Quality Assurance Framework covers the following three dimensions:
 - i. Key Performance Indicators
Analysis of business and performance information on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis – this enables an understanding of how much is being achieved and how timely this work is managed.
 - ii Feedback from Children, Young People and Families
WCF is committed to understanding the experiences of their work and services directly from children and families; striving to learn from these experiences and building it into future practice. This learning is brought together from compliments and complaints, but there is also a programme of quarterly feedback mechanisms to hear about children and families' experiences which supports an understanding of the impact of the work and the difference being made.
 - iii Audit Activity
Completion of case file audits (using a peer and moderation approach) and targeted audits; each area of the service has a programme of quarterly audits which supports WCF to know the quality of its practice.
5. The Frameworks are attached at Appendix 1 (Social Care), Appendix 2 (SEND) and Appendix 3 (WCF Fostering).

6. In 2021 Ofsted undertook a focused Inspection Visit to Children's Social Care evidencing independent validation of WCF work, in respect of the WCF quality assurance framework. Ofsted said:
"The quality assurance framework is a strong area of practice, well embedded internally and across the safeguarding partnership. In particular, the audit approach is very effective. Children's case file audits are well moderated and identified actions followed through to completion, making a real time difference to improving interventions in case work. Collective learning from quality assurance activity, including extensive child and family feedback, is used well to inform service improvement".
7. The WCF SEND Framework was identified by NHS England as *"The quality assurance framework and all the supplementary info and evidence is absolutely the best I have ever seen"*. WCF have been approached to present its work at the Council for Disabled Children Regional Conference to showcase this work, this is recognition of the work and achievements of the SEND QA Framework. WCF are awaiting the fostering re-inspection for an independent view of the work in this service.

Audit

8. The Audit Programme follows a 'peer and moderation approach'; this is when two managers in the service audit the same case. One Auditor is known as the 'lead auditor' this is the 'case responsible manager'. The other Auditor is known as the 'peer auditor', whose role, in addition to the audit, is to speak with the allocated worker to gain their views, but to also seek feedback from the child, parents and/or carer. Following the two audits being completed, these are then moderated by a senior manager for the respective service. This manager will agree the key grades, learning and required actions. This approach supports joint learning, manager reflection and to ensure WCF are being consistent in 'what good looks like'.
9. Social Care and Safeguarding, Fostering and SEND have specific areas of focus within their audit templates, ensuring that these are relevant to the service. The Case File Audit programme is complimented by additional Targeted Audits, these are themed on specific areas of practice identified through learning or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), this will look at a larger sample of cases but on that specific area of practice; for example, Quality of Decision Making by Managers.
10. In all service areas Audits and Outcomes are tracked to ensure that there has been a reflective discussion between the Manager and Practitioner and to ensure that agreed actions have been completed.
11. In Social Care, 22 case file audits have been undertaken across Quarter 1 and Quarter 2; for each case there is an "overall judgement" recorded. Of the 22 audits completed year to date 41% were judged to be 'Good', 55% were judged to be 'Requires Improvement' and 4% (1 case) 'inadequate'. This year key strengths have been seen within Partnership Working and Strength and Relationship Based Practice.

12. Comparisons of the outcome grades of 2021/22 of Social Care Case File Audits show the continued sustained and improving practice in this service area, with 55% graded as good this year compared to 38% last year.
13. The audit tool also breaks down the audit into key areas of practice; these are Voice of the Child, Assessments, Plans, Management Oversight, Partnership Working, Strengths & Relationship Based Practice and Embracing Diversity.
14. A full breakdown of 2022/23 is attached at Appendix 4 (Social Care & Safeguarding Case File Audit Exec Summary).
15. WCF have undertaken an analysis report of the previous four years of Quality Assurance activity, this evidences year on year improvement, this can be found at Appendix 5 (Quality Assurance Highlight Report Four Year Analysis).
16. WCF launched the Fostering Audit programme in Quarter 1 2022/23 and the SEND Audit programme in Quarter 4 2021/22. Full reports on both services are presented to WCF Executive Leadership Team, WCF Board and are part of their respective improvement programmes.
17. The SEND Quarter 2 Quality Assurance Report at Appendix 6 and the WCF Fostering Quarter 2 Report at Appendix 7

Service User Feedback

18. Seeking the views of children and families is a key area of the Quality Assurance Programme; this supports Officers to understand how individuals experience the services. This is done through all the services and a range of activities is undertaken to do this, these include within the audits to have targeted approaches such as direct calls to parent carers to seek their views following case closure. Links and QR codes in letters are also used to enable families to access different mechanisms to share their views.
19. In Social Care, feedback is sought through case file audits, feedback calls following case closure and targeted feedback opportunities. Across Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 2022/23 Social Care have received the views of 470 families.
20. Key messages from this feedback include:
 - 95% of families (Social Care) felt the worker gave them the opportunity to share their views and opinions
 - 94% of families (Social Care) felt the worker spoke to the right people (agencies & family members) to inform the assessment and plan
 - 80% of parents reported that they felt happier as an individual/family through the work of our Supporting Families First Service
 - 99% of parents reported (Children with Disabilities Service) that the worker engaged with their child and understood their experiences
21. In WCF Fostering feedback is sought from within the case file audits and a programme of feedback calls to carers and birth parents is undertaken each quarter. To date 60 pieces of feedback have been received from parents and carers. Key areas of feedback include:

- 100% of carers felt that they had access to good quality training and resources to support them in their role
- 95% of carers felt that they were well supported by their Supervising Social Worker
- 83% of parents felt that the carer supported family time arrangements well
- 67% of parents felt that they had opportunities to share their views

22. In SEND feedback is sought within the case file audits and following the issuing of a final Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or annual review. To date, 46 families have shared their views with WCF. Key areas of feedback include:

- 78% of families felt they had opportunities to be involved & share their views within the Assessment process
- 81% of families felt they had been asked about aspirations for their child
- 78% of families felt that they were included in decisions made
- 59% of families felt that they were able to contact the case worker easily when they needed to

23. From Quarter 4 2021/22 to Quarter 2 2022/23 improvements can be seen as follows:

Question	Quarter 4 21/22	Quarter 1 22/23	Quarter 2 22/23
Did you feel you had opportunities to be involved and share your views and opinions in the assessment process?	62%	85%	100%
Have you been asked about your aspirations for your child and were these included in the plan?	70%	100%	100%
Do you feel your child had opportunities to share their views and opinions?	56%	85%	67%
Do you feel the needs of your child were fully understood and reflected in the plan?	63%	85%	100%
Do you feel the needs of your child are being met, or are being worked towards, within the provision of the plan?	76%	71%	67%
Do you feel you were included in any decisions made?	70%	71%	100%
Was it easy to contact the SEND Case Worker/Officer if you needed to?	70%	71%	50%
Do you think the professionals working with you and your child/children are working well together?	63%	85%	100%

24. WCF always strives to use feedback to inform learning. This Quarter a new Communication Framework has been launched within SEND to provide a structure to communicating with families, this sets out the expectations to support this work and is in direct response to what families have told us.

25. The team shares learning from feedback through briefings, presentations, and posters to share with the service both the difference being made to families, but

also where there is identified learning for the service. The experiences of families are considered and used when developing new Standards or approaches to work.

Voice of the Child

26. The voice of the child is sought in daily work with the children, hearing their voice on their experiences in assessments, plans and direct work, which is evidenced through individual case work. However, feedback is also sought from children and young people of their experiences of the services, to also evidence the impact and outcomes for children. This is done through a variety of mechanisms such as feedback in audits, feedback as closure, direct contact by Conference Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs), and for Children Looked After within Outreach or in respect of how they experience a placement.
27. In 2020/21 an annual voice of the child report was developed that brought together the feedback that had been received over the year. **720 children and young people** shared their experiences and the impact of the work with them.
28. From the feedback it can be seen that WCF is doing well in that:
 - The-majority of children gave positive feedback saying that they have had opportunities to share their views, wishes and feelings and that as children they feel listened to.
 - Young people said that workers were easy to talk to, they felt their views were taken seriously and they understand why they are being helped.
 - Young people gave positive feedback in respect of participating in their meetings, being able to share their views and how the meeting heard and considered them.
 - Children who gave feedback reported positively in most areas in respect of placements, including support in education, sharing their views and keeping in touch with those who are important to them.
29. There are some key messages and areas of focus for moving forward with learning, these are:
 - A small number of young people advised that they did not fully understand the outcome of their meeting, how the meeting was going to work or the IRO's specific role.
 - Not all children were always feeling included in their assessment or their plan, children were advising that they were not receiving copies of their assessments and plans. It is known that children have opportunities to share their views of the work and feel listened to, however there is a disconnect with this work and how the outcomes and involvement within assessments and plans were explained.
 - In respect of placements children shared that they were not always having opportunities to visit placements before moving there. Although usually associated with emergency moves, creative thought is needed on how this can be supported, such as virtual visits or photos.
 - There is specific learning from children's feedback about their placement experiences, for some children there is a need to improve things and ensure

these are being considered and discussed in statutory visits, Looked After Child Reviews and placement planning meetings.

- There is a continued focus on ensuring a higher level of children's feedback is gained and heard, specifically within the Early Help and Child Protection work.
30. A full breakdown of 2021/22 can be found at Appendix 8 (Voice of the Child Report).
31. This is now a Bi-Annual report; for Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 (2022/23) feedback has been received from 460 children and young people. Key messages included:
- 96% of children felt listened to by their worker (Early Help)
 - 94% of children felt that having a worker made a positive difference to them and their family (Early Help)
 - 95% of children said that they were happy with how their looked after review was held and understand the role of the IRO
 - 95% felt that they were able to contact their social worker/outreach worker or personal advisor to get help and support with their emotional wellbeing (looked after children and care leavers)
 - 92% felt included in their Pathway Plan (Care Leavers)
32. Some individual comments from the above children and young people were as follows:
- "Made me feel supported and understood"*
- "Helped solve the issues that I was struggling with and put me in a position where I feel happier than ever before"*
- "To my social worker, I want to say a big thankyou to you too, I believe you all have gone above and beyond to help me and for that I am really grateful"*
- "I have my own social tenancy and I feel safe because of where it is situated"*
33. The Voice of the Child work in Fostering has been launched this year and to date the service has heard from 28 children in WCF placements. All of these children and young people have provided feedback that carers support them with their education, keeping in touch with people who are important to them and that they can talk to the carer about anything that is worrying them. Some of their comments are shown below:
- "They are kind and friendly. They help me. They moved to a larger house so we could keep living with them long term. I feel happy and safe there"*
- "That I have somewhere to live and can go out and play"*
34. Developing the Voice of the Child work within SEND is the next focus of quality assurance activity in that service area.

Compliments & Complaints

35. In Worcestershire every complaint is looked at as an opportunity to learn; to change and develop the experiences of the individual or others using the services.
36. In Social Care and Safeguarding the Advanced Practitioners Team undertake Stage 1 complaint Investigations and responses. Firstly, this takes this work from frontline managers supporting their capacity. Secondly, the advanced practitioner brings an element of independence to the investigation and resolution as they are not operationally working or managing the case. It is ensured that all learning is shared with individual practitioners and managers and shared wider to support service learning through briefings and presentations.
37. In terms of compliments, 82 were received in 2020/21 and 92 in 2021/22. Only compliments from external parties are counted in this formal data. Compliments are received from partners, courts, as well as parents, children, and young people. Most common compliments related to engagement with children and families.
38. Quarterly reports are presented to the service that track quarter-on-quarter / year-on-year analysis of the complaints work.
39. See Quarter 1 Children's Social Care and Safeguarding at Appendix 9 (Quarter 1 2022-23 Complaints and Compliments).
40. In SEND a dedicated Complaints Officer role has been developed and appointed to in April 2022. The Complaints Officer role is to centralise the recording and tracking of complaints, to undertake the investigation and complete the responses to complainants. A quarterly Report has now been introduced evidencing the breakdown of the volume, service area, category etc. of complaints to help staff to understand the themes and focus our improvements. Moving forward quarter-on-quarter comparisons will be available to evidence the impact of this work.
41. Learning Briefings on complaints have been developed and introduced to evidence service learning and themes. Quarter 3 (22/23) will see the introduction of Quarterly Learning Sessions to the service on key themes from complaints.
42. See Quarter 1 SEND Analysis Report at Appendix 10 (2022-2023 Quarter 1 SEND Complaints Report).

Closing the Learning Loop

43. Closing the learning loop is a key attribute of our quality assurance programme; through all the activity Officers act to respond to the learning both individually and as a service.
44. At an individual level it will be ensured that direct feedback is shared with the respective practitioner and manager, supervision policies and templates are developed to include the individual discussions and reflections on learning.

45. Learning from the work is shared through newsletters, briefings, presentations, and posters – these run throughout the year and are designed to be service specific to ensure learning messages are relevant.
46. Learning is used to shape the development of Practice Standards and Procedures, for example the guidance on how in-direct family time arrangements for looked after children are tracked has been recently updated and new leaflets for families on Child in Need and Child Protection Meetings have been developed. These have been in direct response to service learning.

Purpose of the Meeting

47. The Panel is asked to:

- Consider and comment on the approach and effectiveness of WCF Quality Assurance Processes and the approach to learning
- Determine whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required
- Agree any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families

Supporting Information

Appendix 1: Social Care & Safeguarding Quality Assurance Framework
Appendix 2: SEND Quality Assurance Framework
Appendix 2a: WCF Annual Review Audit Procedure
Appendix 2b: WCF New Education, Health & Care Plan Audit Procedure
Appendix 3: WCF Fostering Quality Assurance Framework
Appendix 4: Social Care & Safeguarding Case File Audit Exec Summary
Appendix 5: Quality Assurance Highlight Report Four Year Analysis
Appendix 6: WCF SEND Quality Assurance Report Quarter 2
Appendix 7: WCF Fostering Quality Assurance Report Quarter 2
Appendix 8: Voice of the Child Report
Appendix 9: Quarter 1 22-23 Complaints & Compliments
Appendix 10: 2022-2023 Quarter 1 SEND Complaints Report

Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) 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.](#)

Worcestershire Children First

Social Care & Safeguarding Services Quality Assurance and Performance Management Framework

Introduction:

In Worcestershire we want to achieve sustainable improvement to services for children, young people, and families. This focus on improvement is a shared priority across the organisation from our Lead Member, Chief Executive and DCS through to our front-line practitioners and support staff.

This is our Social Care & Safeguarding Quality Assurance and Performance Management Framework; this is the Framework that includes our approach to Quality Assurance for Social Work Services including our Family Front Door, Child Protection & Child in Need case work, Through Care Services including Children looked after, Care Leavers, Worcestershire Children First Fostering, Adoption Services and Residential Services.

Our Vision, Mission and Values is for all children in Worcestershire to be Happy, Healthy and Safe and Worcestershire is a wonderful place for children to grow up, and this is the foundation stones of our approach to Quality Assurance in Social Care & Safeguarding.



Ofsted (2021) said of our Quality Assurance Framework

“The quality assurance framework is a strong area of practice, well embedded internally and across the safeguarding partnership. In particular, the audit approach is very effective. Children’s case file audits are well moderated and identified actions followed through to completion, making a real time difference to improving interventions in case work. Collective learning from quality assurance activity, including extensive child and family feedback, is used well to inform service improvement”



Contents:

1. Our Services
2. Our Practice Standards
3. Our Framework
4. How much are we doing - Performance Management
5. How well are we doing it – Audits
6. What difference are we making - Outcomes for Children/Young People
7. Workforce Development
8. Governance
9. Review of Framework

1. Our Services

Social Care & Safeguarding is a collection of Services for children in Worcestershire, the structure is made up of:

Early Help Family Support: Our Worcestershire Children First, Early Help Family Support teams work with both level 2 and level 3 needs where there is an identified role for a family support worker and the child / young person permanently lives in Worcestershire.

Family Front Door: This is the central point of contact for all referrals on children and young people where there is a cause of concern. The team provide information and support and manage the Triage processes and MASH case discussions.

Assessment Teams: The teams complete all new section 17 & section 47 enquiries on referrals received from the contact and referral team. They hold cases until ICPC, first CIN meeting and step down to targeted family support where identified. They will accommodate and issue proceedings in emergency cases.

Supporting Families First: The service offers multi-disciplinary support to children and families. The service aims to keep children together with their families, without the need for the child or young person to come into local authority care, where it is safe to do so. The service will provide support to parents and their children to manage risk, improve relationships and develop strengths.

Locality Safeguarding: Care planning for Children in Need and those subject to child protection and care planning including legal proceedings for children in Local Authority care; this service also includes our Multi-Disciplinary Family Safeguarding Team and our Specialist Family Support Team.

Through Care: Care Planning to permanency for children in Local Authority Care; this service also includes Children's Participation, Supervised Family Time, and the Emotional Health & Wellbeing Service for looked after children.

Care Leavers: Providing support and advice to young people leaving care, to enable them to make a successful transition to adulthood; this service also includes our Outreach Service, this team prepare young people for independent living and to provide independent living accommodation and intensive support for care leavers who need higher levels of support.

Residential & Short-Break Services: Providing a range of 52-week Ofsted regulated residential placements across Worcestershire for looked after children and young people.

Fostering & Kinship Services: Assessment of new carers, supervision of approved carers and in-house placement service. Also, kinship assessments, support, and supervision of kinship carers.

Adoption Services: This team works to ensure that every child has the right to a permanent and stable home. The primary focus of permanency planning is to prevent children drifting in care. The team supports children with care plans of adoptions, ensuring that as the corporate parent for Looked After Children, we work diligently to find permanent, safe homes for children in care in a timely manner.

Safeguarding Quality Assurance: This service includes the IRO Service that oversee the child's care plan and ensure everyone contributing to the care plan fulfils their legal obligations to the child. Also, the Independent Chairs for facilitating the multi -agency initial and review child protection conferences in line with Working Together guidance, Independent Chairs also undertake the role of the LADO, to co-ordinate complex cases where an allegation has been made against a person in a position of trust who works with children.

2. Practice Standards

Practice Standards and Procedures - it is the single point of reference for Social Workers, Social Care Workers, and Team Managers to check what is expected of them in relation to specific Social Work tasks; this includes our Practice Standards, Policies and Guidance.

Why do we need practice standards?

- So that all managers & practitioners have clear guidance on roles and responsibilities
- We have a consistent approach to our work
- There are clear expectations for staff to measure themselves against
- There is a focus on the quality of practice and not just timescales
- We are a confident professional service, respected by families and professionals that will champion and where necessary challenge others to promote children's welfare
- There is a set of standards that quality assurance work can be measured against

3. Our Framework:

Worcestershire Children First has a whole service approach to Quality Assurance, this focuses on three domains, there are:

- How much are we doing – Performance Management
- How well are we doing it – Audits
- What difference are we making – Outcomes for Children and Young People

4. How much are we doing - Performance Management:

The performance reports and datasets available to Social Care & Safeguarding Services provide a clear line of sight on practice from the Lead Member and DCS and throughout our Managers and Practitioners. We have several reports and dashboards that enable our staff to understand practice, celebrate achievements and target areas for improvement.

We want the experience of children and young people and their parents and carers to be positive. As a minimum this means doing what we say we will do in the timescales we are expected to do it.

We want to ensure that children and young people receive appropriate services to support them to achieve positive outcomes. Reports can be accessed via our Management Information Hub.

A summary of these reports:

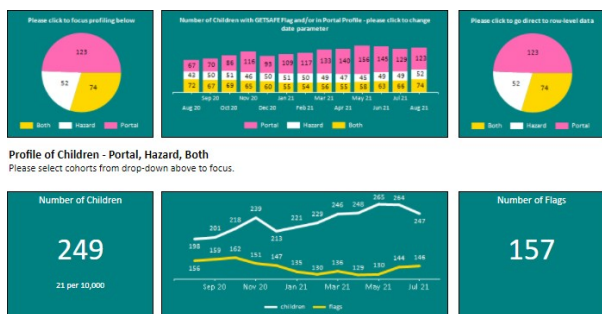
Team data/dashboards

- 'Live' data available online to team managers and workers
- Key operational data
- Tailored to specific areas
- Drill down to individual cases



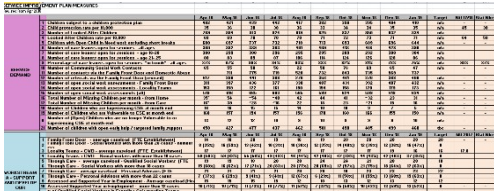
Get Safe Dashboard & Reports

- Live data available to the Get Safe Team and Managers/Workers across the service
- Key operational data, themes, and trends for children at risk or vulnerable to Exploitation
- Patterns & Performance in relation to children who go missing from home or Care
- Weekly Reporting



Business Monthly Indicators (BMI)

- Main performance indicators at overall and service level
- Designed to provide detailed view across the whole



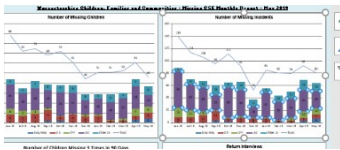
WCF Key Performance Indicators – monthly

- Small set of key performance indicators agreed with commissioners
- Focus for dialogue with commissioners



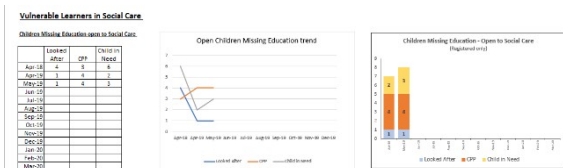
Monthly Missing and CSE Report

- Regular monitoring report
- Trend and child level data



Monthly Vulnerable Learners in Social Care Report

- Sections for Missing Education, Electively Home Educated, EHCP
- Trend and child level data



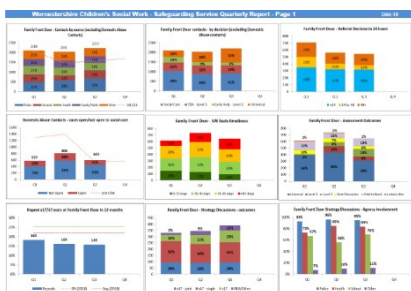
QAPP Dashboard

- Monthly & Quarterly Analysis Dashboard
- Reporting of Multi-Agency KPIs



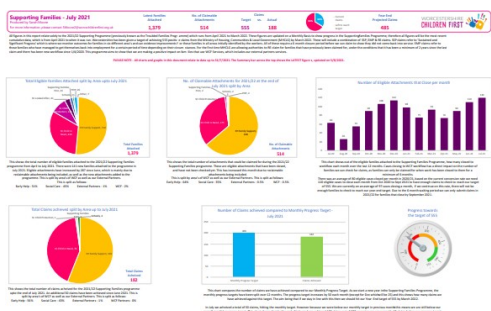
Quarterly Safeguarding Report

- Overview of performance across the service broken down by main operational areas
- Series of quarterly charts plus commentary on each main area
- Used widely within and outside WCF



Supporting Families

- Live, Monthly and Quarterly Dashboards
- Designed to provide oversight and tracking of our SF Claims and progress set against our targets



Other

- Detailed data sets covering specific areas eg. Referrals via Portal.
- Specifically, tailored data sets provided to bodies such as Corporate Parenting Board, Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Safeguarding Children Partnership.

5. How well are we doing it – Audits:

This section describes our audit arrangements. These arrangements are intended to ensure that the standards are being met and positive outcomes are being achieved for children and young people.

5.1 Case File Audits

In Worcestershire we undertake a quarterly programme of Case File Audits, Safeguarding Quality Assurance identify the case sample for Audits using Annex A, audits are then allocated to managers across the service, below details how this process works in each specific area of our business.

Early Help, Social Work & Social Care Teams: Our Early Help, Family Front Door, Assessment Teams, Locality Safeguarding, Through Care and Care Leavers Service undertake monthly peer/moderated Case File Audits. This provides an overview of the quality of case work and supports issue specific analysis. Audits are structured around our Practice Standards which are informed by legislation, regulation and local policies and procedures. The audit specifically focuses on:

- Voice of the Child
- Assessments
- Plans
- Management Oversight
- Partnership Working
- Strengths & Relationship Based Practice
- Embracing Diversity

The Audit Tool includes an Action Plan which is followed up by the Case Responsible Team Leader and it is available via the Practice Standards web page.

The audit is conducted by two auditors, the first auditor is the case responsible Team Manager – they are known as the Lead Auditor. The second auditor is known as the Peer Auditor and will be another Team Manager within the specific service area. The Peer Auditor is encouraged to seek the views of the child or young person and their parent or carer(s) when completing a Case File Audit unless this is not possible. The Peer Auditor also have a case discussion with the allocated worker to gain their views on the child's circumstances and our involvement.

Cases for audit are selected by the Safeguarding Quality Assurance Service and are circulated to the relevant managers and group managers on the 1st of each month.

These audits are Moderated by the Group Managers once completed to agree the final grades and learning. Team Manager record on a case note the review of the audit and that audit actions are completed & learning shared with the relevant practitioners. The outcome of an audit is recorded in the Quality Assurance Form on Liquid Logic by Safeguarding Quality Assurance.

The Advanced Social Work Practitioners Team reviews cases eight weeks after the audit is moderated to ensure actions are completed and will footprint this on the child's file,

evidencing how we have closed the loop on our individual case learning.

Learning is collated and presented in a Quarterly Quality Assurance Report, each area of the service will have a dedicated section of the report to drill-down the specific learning for that service area. This learning is also shared through Newsletters, Briefings and Learning Presentations.

Worcestershire Children First Fostering: WCF Fostering Services follow a similar approach to the Social Work Teams, they follow the peer/moderated audit process, and actions are reviewed by ASWPs at the 8-week point following the completion of an Audit. The service specific learning is shared with the service through the QA Reports, Newsletters and Presentations. Audits are saved within a Specific Form within Liquid Logic on the Foster Carers Record.

In these audits, the Peer Auditor will seek the views of the Fostering Social Worker and will also seek Service User Feedback from Foster/Kinship Carers; the questions are specific to the Fostering Service. The Audits are also specific to the Fostering Service and Regulations, the Audits specifically look at:

Voice of the Child
Support & Supervision to the Carer
Safer Caring Plans & Risk Assessments
Quality of Matching
Approval, Annual Reviews, Panel & ADM
Management Oversight

These audits also include opportunities to hear feedback from children in placement, the carer and the birth family experience and views on the care their child receives.

Residential & Shortbreaks Services: Residential & Shortbreaks Services undertake monthly Case File Audits, these do not follow a peer process, however, all audits are undertaken by a peer manager within the Residential Service. These Audits have a similar learning process to ensure this is shared with the service, the Audits look specifically at:

- Voice of the Child
- Care Planning & Quality of Plans
- Management Oversight
- Partnership Working

Audits also include a visit and observation of the Residential Setting, a meeting with the child's allocated key worker and wherever possible, feedback from the child or young person the Audit is specifically considering. Audits are saved on a specific form on the Child's Record.

Adoption Services: We are now introducing a peer/moderated audit procedure for our Permanency Planning & Support Team and children with Plans of Adoption or who are placed with Adoptive Parents. The audits follow the same procedure, however, are saved within the Adoption Audit Form on Liquid Logic, feedback is sought from the Adoptive Parents and discussions are held with the Adoption Service, there is learning for both the Adoption Service and Social Work Team. The Audits specifically look at:

- Voice of the Child / Child's Adoption Journey
- Timeliness in Permanency Planning

- Quality of the CPR
- The Matching Process
- The quality & timeliness of Life Story Work
- Management Oversight

5.2 Targeted Audits:

Targeted Audits look at specific areas of practice and impact. Topics for targeted audits are identified by relevant Group Managers/Assistant Directors linked to issues being identified through supervision, complaints, or Service Dashboard indicators. All Targeted Audits outcomes and learning are recorded on the Targeted Audit Template and sent to Safeguarding Quality Assurance; these are saved centrally, and the learning captured within the Quarterly Quality Assurance Report. Group Managers are responsible for ensuring the targeted learning is disseminated with their Team Manager Group to embed learning.

5.3 Multi-Agency Audits:

Partnership working is key to positive outcomes to children and families and connecting our learning through the Safeguarding System supports our learning & development as a partnership.

We undertake Multi-Agency Audits across our Services; these are lead through our Quality Assurance Practice & Procedures (QAPP) Group of the Safeguarding Partnership. These feed direct learning into our services and to share learning across agencies, this is through Learning Briefings and Partnership Newsletters, learning is also fed into Partnership Training provided by the Local Safeguarding Children’s Partnership. QAPP is mandated to:

- Multi-agency Audit Programme
- Multi-agency Learning and Development Programme
- Monitoring of Multi-Agency Key Performance Indicators
- Inter-Agency Policy and Procedures

Multi-Agency Audits are also undertaken throughout Family Front Door Leadership Group and Get Safe Partnership. Learning from audits is shared via the Safeguarding Partnership Newsletters & Resources at: [WSCP Learning & Development - Worcestershire Safeguarding Boards \(safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk\)](http://safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk)

5.4 Safeguarding Quality Assurance

- **Mid-Way Audits:** Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Chairs undertake monthly Mid-Way Audits. Midway Audits are completed on children’s case records and are recorded directly into the Mid-Way Audit Form on Liquid Logic. Mid-Way Audits include Service User Feedback from the child, parent and/or carer. An alert is sent to the case responsible Team Manager to acknowledge the audit being completed and to complete any required actions. Learning from Mid-Way Audits is captured within the Quarterly Quality Assurance Report. Mid-Way Audits also specifically ask questions on the IRO/CP Chair footprint and engagement – enabling the Quality Assurance of Safeguarding Quality Assurance.

- **DRPs:** Independent Reviewing Officers have a central role to provide support and challenge to the people involved in the life of a child or young person who is looked after by Worcestershire Children First to make sure that they are well and safely cared for, and that their wishes and feelings are always considered.

The Dispute Resolution Process allows IROs to resolve disputes at the earliest opportunity through a process of escalation to the Team Manager and ultimately the Director. In all circumstances any concerns should be resolved with the responsible Social Worker or Team Manager. DRPs are monitored and are an indicator that of measure of the independence of the role and its focus on achieving the best services for children in care.

- **Targeted Audits:** Practice Managers undertake Quarterly Targeted Audits on the Quality of Practice of Independent Chairs and Independent Reviewing Officers, including Practice Observations. Audits are also identified for completion through KPI Analysis and Learning from feedback & complaints.

Learning from SQA Quality Assurance Activity is shared through the Quarterly QA Reports, Newsletters and Learning Presentations.

6. What difference are we making - Outcomes for Children/Young People:

This section describes our approach to gathering the views and experiences of children and young people and their parents and carers, so we can understand the impact of our services, areas of practice to celebrate and areas for improvement.

6.1 There is a range of activity to gather views from children and their families, these are:

- Feedback within Case File Audits
- Feedback within the Assessment/Case Closure feedback calls
- Targeted Feedback Reports
- Mid-Way Audits
- End of Placement Feedback
- Have Your Say – virtual feedback opportunities

Findings and Learning from Service User Feedback is reported within the bi-annual Quality Assurance Reports & Voice of the Child Reports.

6.2 Worcestershire Webstar

We want to know if the work we do with children and their families is making a positive difference to them feeling happy, healthy, and safe. We have developed Worcestershire WebStar to engage with families and enable them to tell us their view about certain areas in their lives, we will do this with both children and their parents. We will do this at the beginning of our work and again at the end, for some families we may also do this at a mid-way review.

Findings will feature in our quarterly reporting & Voice of the Child Reports, learning is shared through Newsletters and Learning Presentations.

6.3 Learning from Compliments and Complaints:

It is a requirement of Children's Act 1989 and National Health Service Act 1990 for local authorities to establish a procedure for representations for complaints, compliments, or comments. The statutory complaints procedure can be used by service users, carers, or their representatives. Compliments are accepted from external sources. This includes service users, parents, carers, and other organisations. To promote identification of good practice IROs/CP Chairs can formally record a Practice Acknowledgement on a child's record for good practice using – they record this using the Practice Acknowledgement form and an alert is sent to the Team Manager.

An explanation of the process for compliments, comments and complaints including the three stage complaints procedure is available on the Council's website, the guidance can be read here: [Children's Social Care - Make a Compliment, Comment or a Complaint | Worcestershire County Council](#)

The Consumer Relations Officer offers help and advice to staff about the process through training sessions. Advice to staff about the handling of complaints is provided when/if required.

Advocacy services are available to support Children and Young People wishing to make a complaint – this service is commissioned by WCF and is provided by Coram Voice.

Information is collated from complaints and compliments for Quarterly and Annual Reports. Specific learning is shared through the Principal Social Worker Newsletter and issues relating to individual staff capability or competency will be taken up by the relevant line manager through supervision or when necessary other formal processes. Complaints are tracked jointly between Senior Managers and CRU in a joint tracker.

7. Workforce Development

Our workforce is our most valuable-asset in successfully delivering services that make a positive difference for our families in Worcestershire. We strive to be the 'employer of choice' for children's services staff, and we approach this through a culture that values the impact that our staff have in improving children's lives. We have high expectations and have created the conditions where professional expertise is valued and can flourish.

As a company our overall aim is to build a workforce with the personal and collective resilience to drive us forward in these challenging times, to develop our staff, give them clear career pathways, and provide them with the leadership, skills, and knowledge they need now and, in the future, to deliver excellent services to the children, young people and families in Worcestershire.

We are delighted to see that Worcestershire is ranked 1st in the region and 12th nationally in a survey completed by social workers against the refreshed 2020 employer standards, in the review commissioned by the Local Government Association in 2021. Our Workforce Vision ensures that, as a service, we continue to have strong front-line management and that we

have the capacity and ability to flex in response to changes that are inevitable, whilst keeping a good level of stability and quality. Our strategy will be managed and monitored through our WCF Workforce Board and is supported by financial investment and through staff feedback and performance reviews.

Our Workforce Strategy has five key priorities, they are:

- Health & Wellbeing
- Recruitment & Retention
- Diversity & Culture
- Leadership & Management
- Building Skills for the Future

8. Governance

There are a range of Governance Structures over Early Help Quality Assurance in Worcestershire Children First, these are:

8.1 Ofsted

Ofsted is the regulatory body that has responsibility for the inspection of our:

- Children's Homes
- Fostering and Adoption Service
- Private Fostering Arrangements
- Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children's Services, including Services to Care Leavers

These inspections will consider key aspects of a child's journey through the social care system, focusing on the experiences of the child or young person and the effectiveness of the help and protection they are offered. The inspections are intended to identify areas of strength and for further development.

8.2 Self-Evaluation Framework

Worcestershire is committed to the production of an annual self-assessment as part of its learning cycle. This process enables the organisation to understand the progress being made over a 12-month period and to inform its annual business planning cycle. Our Self Evaluation Cycle will commence in April and the final report will be produced in September each year.

8.3 Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Partnership

The Partnership has a crucial role in understanding multi-agency practice and quality assuring this; the Quality Assurance Practice & Procedures Group (QAPP) takes this responsibility and reports directly to the Executive Group of the Partnership. Link to the Partnership: [WSCP - Worcestershire Safeguarding Boards \(safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk\)](http://WSCP - Worcestershire Safeguarding Boards (safeguardingworcestershire.org.uk))

QAPP evaluate the effectiveness of Early Help through the monitoring of multi-agency KPIs, Multi-Agency Auditing Activity and feedback from children & families, but also partner agencies across the Safeguarding system.

8.4 Overview and Scrutiny

The role of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is to provide challenge to support service improvement and sustaining this improvement. The group forms part of the governance arrangements within the Council and receives performance information via a Dashboard on the key information to enable it to provide support and challenge.

8.5 Corporate Parenting Board

Data is generally provided to the Corporate Parenting Board as part of thematic reports presented by managers. This allows the Board to look in more detail at specific aspects of the Council's work with looked after children, with context and analysis included as part of the report.

For example, the Independent Reviewing Officer's annual report includes information on looked after children and information about the timeliness and participation in reviews. Other areas where thematic reports have been or will be presented include Care Leavers, Placements, Virtual School, and Adoption/Fostering which will include the relevant data sets.

8.6 Worcestershire Children First Board:

As a wholly owned Council Company, WCF has a contractual relationship with Worcestershire County Council to provide statutory children's services.

These contractual arrangements, between Council and Company, are overseen by a Quarterly Review Board and a Performance and Commissioning Group to ensure contract compliance, within the terms of reference of the Company Board (appendix 1)

Our contractual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as shown in appendix 1 hold WCF to account for delivering social care, early help and education services. Similarly, we monitor support from 'buy back' services through Support Service Agreements (SSA's)*. The formalities are managed day to day by WCC's Commissioning and Partnership Management function, working positively and proactively with WCF's Resources Directorate. The relationship is based on partnership, support, challenge, evidence, and achievement of outcomes. During the COVID-19 pandemic the contract performance arrangements were paused recognising that services needed to prioritise the emergency response, however regular performance and financial updates are provided to the Council and elected members. There has been a continued, strong, effective working relationship between WCC and WCF which goes far beyond the formal contractual monitoring arrangements, and these add the most value to improving outcomes for children and young people.

The WCF board consists of 12 Executive and Non-Executive Directors with a wealth of public sector expertise in supporting families and communities. Executive Directors are those employed by WCF to lead and manage delivery functions and teams, whilst Non-Executive Directors do not have responsibility for day-to-day operations but provide input and challenge via Board meetings and sub-board meetings throughout the year.

To maintain rigour, WCF's internal governance takes the form of monthly WCF Board meetings (with an Annual General Meeting and every third Board meeting held in public when conditions allow). Additionally, there are two subgroups reporting into the Board of Directors focusing on improvement of services.

The Quality Assurance Board

The Quality Assurance Board typically meets four times a year (or more frequently if required) and oversees the quality and performance of our front-line services in improving outcomes for children. This includes actively seeking the views and opinions of children and young people on the impact our interventions have had on their lives and how we continuously learn and improve to be even better.

The Risk Governance and Audit Board

The Risk Governance and Audit Board typically meets three times a year (or more frequently if required) and maintains an oversight of our governance, risk management, internal control, and value for money framework. This Board ensures strategic compliance, management, and performance of WCF as a whole with an unwavering focus on children and young people at the heart of our Company's purpose. Internally, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), who are responsible on a day-to-day basis for running the business, meet regularly to ensure service improvement continues with momentum, and to ensure all areas of WCF have strategic oversight. Regular reporting and monitoring impacts positively on outcomes for children and young people and is the core and demonstrable Company purpose. Their ambition for Worcestershire Children First is to be rated as 'Good' in provision of services.

9. Review of the Framework:

This Framework will be reviewed on an annual basis and amended accordingly.

Tina Russell
Chief Executive WCF & DCS

Date: February 2022

Worcestershire Children First

Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) Service Quality Assurance and Performance Management Framework

Introduction:

In Worcestershire we want to achieve sustainable improvement to services for children, young people and families. This focus on improvement is a shared priority across the organisation from our Lead Member, Chief Executive and DCS through to our front-line practitioners and support staff. This is our Quality Assurance and Performance Management Framework to support our services to children & families in Worcestershire.

Our Vision, Mission and Values is for all children in Worcestershire to be Happy, Healthy and Safe and Worcestershire is a wonderful place for children to grow up, a key element of this is Good Education for All; and this is the foundation stones of our approach to Quality Assurance in SEND Services.



The Structure of Worcestershire Children First can be found here:
[About Worcestershire Children First \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Structure of All Age Disability Service:
[Education & Early Help Structure \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Contents:

1. Our Framework
2. Practice Standards
3. How much are we doing - Performance Management
4. How well are we doing it – Audits
5. What difference are we making - Outcomes for Children/Young People
6. Workforce Development
7. Governance
8. Review of Framework

1. Our Framework:

In Worcestershire we want our Quality Assurance Framework to:

- ensure children and young people benefit from **consistent high-quality** Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)
- ensure **compliance** with primary legislation and statutory regulations
- drive **consistently high-quality practice** across the local area
- improve **the experiences** of children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers
- improve **outcomes** for children and young people with SEND

This document describes the three domains of quality assurance activity and how we bring together the learning from all to drive improvement in what we do. Our Quality Assurance and Performance Management Framework bring together the key processes and activities that contribute to our development as a learning organisation. There are three core principles within the framework, they are:

- How much we are doing – Performance Management
- How well are we doing it - Audits
- What difference are we making – Outcomes for children/young people

2. Practice Standards:

In Worcestershire, we want our services for children with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities to achieve against the following Practice Standards:

- The plan clearly records the views, interests and aspirations of the child, young person, their parents, and carers and these are (a) fully represented within the plan and (b) inform the outcome of the plan
- Plans are clear, concise, understandable, accessible and outcomes are SMART. In addition, they should be aspirational, person centred and identify prior attainment
- Plans are holistic, all agencies involved with the child, young person, their parents and carers have contributed to the plan within timescales
- Plans are focussed on individual special educational needs and not medical diagnosis, highlight strengths and capabilities as well as the need for support or intervention
- Plans specify the provision required and how education, health and care services will work together to meet the child or young person's needs and support the achievement of the agreed outcomes, including transition planning

The Council for Disabled children has developed examples of good practice for EHCPs, and

they can be found at:

[Education, Health and Care Plans: Examples of good practice | Council For Disabled Children](#)

3. How much are we doing - Performance Management:

The performance reports and datasets available to SEND Services provide a clear line of sight on practice from the Lead Member & DCS and throughout our Education structure. We use data across the local area to build a clear and shared understanding of what we do, how we do it and the children and young people that we are supporting.

We want the experience of children and young people and their parents and carers to be positive. As a minimum this means doing what we say we will do in the timescales we are expected to do it.

We want to ensure that children and young people receive appropriate services to support them to achieve positive outcomes.

We have several reports and dashboards that enable our managers and leaders to understand practice, celebrate achievements and target areas for improvement. Performance information will be reviewed and addressed through regular Performance Meetings chaired by the Director of the All-Age Disability Service.

4. How well are we doing it – Audits:

This section describes our audit arrangements. These arrangements are intended to ensure that the EHCP assessment and review processes produce high-quality EHCPs and that they make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people.

Audits:

Audits are one of the most important elements of an effective Quality Assurance Framework that demonstrate compliance with Practice Standards. Audits enable us to know if we are delivering services to a high standard, and if not, we will take remedial action.

SEND will undertake a quarterly programme of case file audits using a Moderated/Peer Audit methodology, each quarter audits will be undertaken that are a combination of both new EHCPs and Annual Reviews. Cases for audit are selected either at random or from specific data reports/trends. The Quality Assurance Officer will circulate to the relevant managers and group managers on the 1st of each month.

The following documents at appendix 2(a) and 2(b) describe the roles & responsibilities and the approach to our Audits

Audit Reports will be produced Quarterly and will analysis quarter on quarter data to evidence the impact of our improvement activity.

Learning briefings will be developed out of the Quarterly Audit Programme.

The whole Service learns from audits:

- Messages from audits are feedback to the individual casework officer and their manager for any necessary actions to be taken and/or recognition of good practice;

within the Audits, learning for partners may also be identified and how best to share this can be reflected and agreed by the Audit Moderator

- On a quarterly basis, learning from audits is brought together with an analysis of Service User Feedback, through a quarterly Quality Assurance Report prepared by the Quality Assurance Service
- This learning is disseminated across the whole Service through SEND Management Meetings, Newsletters and End to End Leadership presentations, in addition to feedback to professional teams contributing advice to the need's assessment process

5. What difference are we making - Outcomes for Children/Young People:

This section describes our approach to gathering the views and experiences of children and young people and their parents and carers, so we can understand the impact of our services, areas of practice to celebrate and areas for improvement.

5.1 Audit Feedback:

As part of the Audit, we will seek feedback from both the parent/carer, and wherever possible, from the child/young person on the quality of our work. This will form a crucial element of our Auditing Work as this will be triangulated directly from the child and family's experiences of our service and the services of those around the child in the plan.

Findings and Learning from Service User Feedback is reported within the Quarterly Quality Assurance Reports.

5.2 Survey Feedback:

Following the completion of a Final EHCP or Annual Review, a link to an electronic survey will be sent to families/carers to hear their feedback the questions will be the same as the Audit feedback and will enable a wider sample of feedback and more opportunities for families to share their views with us.

Again, Findings and Learning from this Feedback will be reported within the Quarterly Quality Assurance Reports.

5.3 Learning from Compliments and Complaints:

It is a requirement of Children's Act 1989 and National Health Service Act 1990 for local authorities to establish a procedure for representations for complaints, compliments, or comments. The statutory complaints procedure can be used by service users, carers, or their representatives.

Compliments are accepted from external sources. This includes service users, parents, carers, and other organisations.

An explanation of the process for compliments, comments and complaints including the three stage complaints procedure is available on the Council's website, the guidance can be read here:

[Compliments and complaints | Compliments and complaints | Worcestershire County Council](#)

The Consumer Relations Officer offers help and advice to staff about the process through training sessions. Advice to staff about the handling of complaints is provided when/if required. The Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Code of Practice (2015) set

statutory guidelines and processes for resolving disagreements in relation to EHCP assessments and plans. The principle being that we aim to resolve all disagreements at the earliest opportunity. Where complaints and disagreements regarding decisions and needs follow a mediation, tribunal, or other legal process we reflect for learning and share and embed lessons across services and the system for SEND.

Children, Young People, Parents and Carers can access support, advice, and information through SENIDASS in respect of complaints through:

[Making a complaint Information - SENDIASS Worcestershire and Herefordshire \(hwsendiass.co.uk\)](http://hwsendiass.co.uk)

Information is collated from complaints and compliments for Quarterly and Annual Reports; this work is coordinated and presented by the SEND Team Manager with responsibility for Complaints and Compliments. This is shared with staff across the service to embed lessons learnt.

Issues relating to individual staff capability or competency will be taken up by the relevant line manager through supervision or when necessary other formal processes.

6. Workforce Development:

Within Worcestershire Children First we support and develop our staff through supervision, annual appraisal and a training/CPD offer. The Strategy can be read at: [Worcestershire Children First Workforce Strategy 2021 - 2024 \(sharepoint.com\)](http://sharepoint.com)

Our annual Staff Review and Development process uses the Practice Standards and the Professional Capabilities Framework to highlight good performance and identify any learning and development needs of staff. Our performance management matrix can be found at:

[Meetings and key documents Information - Worcestershire Children First \(worschildrenfirst.org.uk\)](http://worschildrenfirst.org.uk)

We will undertake an annual staff survey to hear managers and practitioners' experiences of working for Worcestershire Children First and this feedback built into our continuous improvement.

7. Governance:

Worcestershire Children First Board:

Worcestershire Children First has an established board and governance Structure, full details of this structure and our governance can be found at the WCF Business Plan here: [Meetings and key documents Information - Worcestershire Children First \(worschildrenfirst.org.uk\)](http://worschildrenfirst.org.uk)

All Age Disability (AAD) Partnership Meeting:

In Autumn 2021, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission inspected how effectively the special educational needs and disability provision is delivered in Worcestershire by the Council together with NHS Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Groups. Inspectors looked at the local information that is provided across the county on services to support children and young people and their parents and carers. They reviewed joint commissioning between health services and the Council, and the way schools support children in mainstream education. Inspectors also looked at assessments and planning for children and young people with special educational needs and disability.

Some strengths were recognised by inspectors, however, there were 4 Key Areas of Improvement which have been developed to an Accelerated Progress Plan – this has been reviewed & signed off by the DfE and we will report to them regularly.

Information on our SEND Written Statement of Action and Improvement Board can be found here:

[SEND Improvement Plan | SEND Improvement Plan | Worcestershire County Council](#)

Ofsted and CQC:

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission are both regulatory bodies that have responsibility for the inspection of SEND service and the Local Area effectiveness for SEND including education, health, and social care provision. These inspections will consider key aspects of a child's journey including identification of SEND, assessment, provision and outcomes and the quality of our approach and response to SEND. The inspections are intended to identify areas of strength and for further development.

8. Review of the Framework:

This Framework will be reviewed on an annual basis and amended accordingly.

Tina Russell
Chief Executive WCF & DCS

Date: August 2022

Worcestershire Children First

Annual Review Audit Procedure

Introduction:

This guidance runs in conjunction with our Audit Procedure for new EHCPs, this guidance specifically focuses on Audits of Annual Reviews. Each quarter a sample of both new EHCPs and Annual Review Audits will be completed.

Audits are one of the most important elements of an effective Quality Assurance Framework. Audits allow us to recognise great practice and to take-action where improvements need to be made. They are a barometer of our service improvement progress.

By undertaking an audit, we can measure the effectiveness of our involvement in the lives of children and their families against our policies and procedures. Importantly, our Audit approach gives us the opportunity to engage with the parent carer (and the child or young person where consent has been given and it is appropriate to do so) to obtain their feedback as part of the audit – this is on how the family have experienced our services.

The whole Service learns from audits:

- Messages from audits are fed back to the individual casework officer and their manager for any necessary actions to be taken and/or recognition of good practice; within the Audits, learning for partners may also be identified and how best to share this can be reflected and agreed by the Audit Moderator
- On a quarterly basis, learning from audits is brought together with an analysis of Service User Feedback, through a quarterly Quality Assurance Report prepared by the Quality Assurance Service
- This learning is disseminated across the whole Service through SEND Management Meetings, Newsletters and End to End Leadership presentations, in addition to feedback to professional teams contributing advice to the need's assessment process

Our Approach to Auditing:

- SEND Team Managers are expected to complete at least one individual Case File Audit per month using the template that has been designed for the purpose. The QA Officer for Education will allocate Audits on the 1st of each month.
- The case file audit process should follow the 'looped audit' methodology. A looped audit is conducted by two auditors; this is when two managers are allocated to undertake a full audit independently on the same case.
- Senior Managers (SEND Group Managers) will moderate case file audits and agree the findings/learning and grades. Group Managers will cross reference the Annual Review documents and the Case Record as part of their Audit Moderation to ensure Auditing have captured evidence and have graded practice proportionately and appropriately; this is in addition to their review of the Audit Documents.
- The peer auditor will seek the views of the SEND Case Worker; this is to gain a perspective of the case and the role of the SEND Team within the Annual Review.
- Once the audit is completed, the lead audit, peer audit and the moderation form will be sent to the QA Officer who saves the audits centrally and will also save to the child/young

person’s u-drive file, the QA Officer will create a sub-file in the child/young person’s record called “EHCP Audit”, this is where the Audit Documents will be saved.

- The Audit will consider the previous 6 months’ worth of practice – a selection of Annual Reviews EHCPs from the previous 6 months.
- The QA Officer will circulate the completed documents to:
 - Allocated Case Officer and Team Manager
 - The Case Responsible Group Manager
 - Those who undertook the Audit
- The case responsible Senior Officer/Team Manager is responsible for ensuring that the Audit Feedback is discussed with the Case Officer and ensuring that this is recorded in Personal Supervision. They are also responsible for ensuring that the Audit Actions have been completed.
- The Peer Auditor for the case will review the case record 8 weeks after the audit is completed to ensure that all actions have been completed and will record this in the EHCP Audit file on the child/young person’s record – this will be fed back to the QA Officer for Education to ensure the loop is closed on the learning. The QA Officer will trigger a reminder of this work being required; they will provide the Peer Auditor with the Review of Audit Actions template to ensure consistency of recorded. The QA Officer will save the final document in the child’s sub-file called “EHCP Audit”.
- Any immediate actions should be brought to the attention of the responsible Team Manager/Group Manager on the day of the Audit.

****See Appendix 1 for process flow chart.**

Annual Review Audit Template:

When a child or young person has an Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) there is an ongoing requirement for the EHC plan to be reviewed by the local authority at least annually. This is referred to as the Annual Review. The Annual Review is more than just a review meeting, it is a process that must be completed on or before the anniversary of when the EHC plan was first issued or the anniversary of the last review. An Annual Review must be undertaken in partnership with the child and their parent or the young person, and must take account of their views, wishes and feelings, including their right to request a Personal Budget.

The Audit is structured into 5 over-arching areas, each will be part of the Audit, with the Auditor giving evidence of the quality of the practice and a grade. The Audit is structured on the following thematic areas:

Child’s Needs & Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The views, interests and aspirations of the child or young person • The child or young person’s special educational needs, their health needs and social care needs • Children & young people are included within their annual review and contribute to the outcomes
Parental Consultation & Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The views and aspirations of the parents and/or carers are obtained and clear • How have they been consulted and engaged for the review • Parent Carers are able to attend, contribute and participate in the Annual Review

Quality of the Annual Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall quality of the Annual Review - how the plan has been shaped and updated • Outcomes within the plan are SMART - updates to the Plan are clear • We evidence impact and progress/outcomes for children & young people • Annual Reviews have happened at the right time and frequency for child
Partnership Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have agencies contributed to the Annual Review • The quality & timeliness of their contributions and how this has been structured into the Plan - Compliance with Statutory Timescales of the provision of Agency Advices • The right agencies have participated/contributed to the Annual Review
Management Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of Management Oversight of the Annual Review by Senior Case Worker/Team Manager - specifically of their QA of updated documents

The Auditor will review the record and the Annual Review information, the Audit Quality Standards will be used to inform the view of the Auditor of the quality of practice, this will enable them to give views on the quality of practice, identifying both strengths and areas for improvement. The Auditor will then give an overall grade on the Quality of Practice and where appropriate identify areas of learning and actions.

Child/Young Person & Family Feedback:

Feedback will be obtained on the case as part of auditing, the Parent Engagement Advisor, will contact parent carers to seek their feedback within the month of the audit and will record this, they will also seek consent to seek feedback from children and young people and wherever possible obtain this

Audit Grades:

Audits are made up of five Sections (as above), each sub-section of the Audit will be given a grade, the audit will then be given an overall grading. The gradings system is based on the Ofsted Grades of Outstanding to Inadequate. The definition of each of these Grades are:

Outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong consistent evidence in all elements • Practice is consistently of a high standard and exceptionally child centred
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of all elements • Practice is timely and evidences quality
Requires Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of most areas but some gaps or inconsistencies
Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures have not been adhered to and there are gaps in relation to practice

Quality Standards:

A good review is supported by all those working with the young person. This 'team' around the child or young person has a good understanding and knowledge of them and recognises the importance

and values the review process. Collectively has a full picture of their strengths, abilities, and challenges, along with an understanding of their hopes and aspirations.

In Worcestershire we want children & young people to experience high quality service, clear and comprehensive EHCPs & Annual Reviews that capture their needs and support their aspirations, we aspire to this using the following Quality Standards:

- The plan clearly records the views, interests and aspirations of the child, young person, their parents, and carers and these are (a) fully represented within the plan and (b) inform the outcome of the plan.
- Plans are clear, concise, understandable, accessible and outcomes are SMART. In addition, they should be aspirational, person centred and identify prior attainment.
- Plans are holistic, all agencies involved with the child, young person, their parents, and carers have contributed to the plan within timescales.
- Plans are focussed on individual special educational needs and not medical diagnoses, highlight strengths and capabilities as well as the need for support or intervention.
- Plans specify the provision required and how education, health and care services will work together to meet the child or young person's needs and support the achievement of the agreed outcomes, including transition planning.

Throughout the Audit we want to evidence (as defined by the Department for Education) that the EHCP:

- Meets the requirements of the Act, Regulations and Code of Practice
- Describes positively what the child or young person can do
- Is clear, concise, understandable, and accessible
- Is co-produced (with the family, children & young people)
- Sets SMART outcomes
- Tells the child or young person's story well and coherently

Child/Young Person's Needs & Voice:

This section of the audit relates to how we have approached hearing the child/young person's views and voice within our work. It is essential that within this Audit Section we reflect on how the child/young person's needs and voice have directly impacted on the rest of the EHCP/Annual Review and informed the plan & outcomes. For young people who are aged over the age of 16, can we evidence how the young person's capacity has been assessed and how best they contribute into their Plan.

Parental Consultation & Engagement:

This section of the audit relates to parent carers' aspirations but also how parents' views have been captured and represented through the plan, how we have engaged with the family and our communication.

How have we engaged & enabled parent carers to attend, contribute and participate in the Annual Review.

Quality of the Annual Review:

This section of the audit relates to the overall quality of the plan, how the information brought together is assessed and analysed to inform the Plan and develop SMART Outcomes.

Compliance with Statutory timescales for Annual Reviews.

The EHCP annual review is a 12-month dynamic process cumulating into the meeting that summarises:

- What has been achieved and what hasn't?

- What has been learnt about what works?
- Understand and identify adulthood destinations of employment, purposeful life, wellbeing and living arrangements
- What do we want to achieve next?
- What do we need to change and do to achieve this?

Partnership Working:

This section of the audit relates to how agencies have worked together, the quality of advice, how these have then informed the plan and SMART Outcomes.

Compliance with Statutory timescales for Agency Advice.

How partners have attended, engaged, and contributed to Annual Reviews – dynamic information sharing that is relevant to the child and their progress. What has been achieved and what are the aspirations – what support and what is needed to achieve this.

Management Oversight:

This section of the audit relates to the quality of the management oversight of the plan, such as, Is there clear management oversight/direction to a SEND Case Work Officer?

- Is there evidence of clear, effective, and timely management oversight and direction on cases, and a clearly recorded rationale for decisions being made? Management Oversight of Annual Reviews?
- Is there evidence of supervision? Quality of supervision, to include clear decision making and rational
- If there has been drift and delay with the implementation of the Annual Review, was this identified and addressed by the Manager? Was this timely and were actions agreed to address this? (Delays in Annual Reviews)

*****Refer to Appendixes 2-5 for Good Practice Examples and Guidance from the Council for Disabled Children***

Appendix 1 - Process for undertaking EHCP Audits Flowchart:

Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case selection and allocation - 1st of each month • QA Officer will identify a case sample of children & young people with an Annual Review Completed within the past 6 months from the Annual Review data set
Step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each SEND Team & Group Manager will undertake 1 audit per month; using the the audit template - this will follow the Peer/Moderation Process
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Auditor will give a grade per sub-section of the Audit • The Auditor will give an overall grade, rational and provide key actions
Step 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Auditor to submit completed audit to QA Officer - Lisa Richards • The audit is to be completed and submitted by the last working day of the month
Step 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audits will be allocated to a Senior Manager for Moderation who will confirm key learning, actions and grade - moderations are due back 5 working days after initial submission date • Senior Manager to submit final audit back to QA Officer - Lisa Richards

Step 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Audit Documents (Lead, Peer & Moderation) will be sent to the responsible Team Manager to discuss the learning with the Case Officer and record in supervision • Any required Actions to be completed within 8-Weeks; the Peer Auditor will review after 8 weeks to ensure Actions have been completed
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Appendix 2 - Good Practice Examples:

The Council for Disabled children has developed examples of good practice for EHCPs, and they can be found at:

[Education, Health and Care Plans: Examples of good practice | Council For Disabled Children](#)

Appendix 3 – Fact Sheet on Annual Reviews:

[ARfactsheets.general.cleancopy.FINAL_0.pdf \(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk\)](#)

Appendix 4 – Timetable for Annual Reviews:

[ARtimetable.cleancopy.final.pdf \(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk\)](#)

Appendix 5 – Case Study: How Good Preparation Supports Effective Annual Reviews:

[AR.Casestudy3updated_0.pdf \(councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk\)](#)

Worcestershire Children First

New Education, Health & Care Plan Audit Procedure

Introduction:

Audits are one of the most important elements of an effective Quality Assurance Framework. Audits allow us to recognise great practice and to take-action where improvements need to be made. They are a barometer of our service improvement progress.

By undertaking an audit, we can measure the effectiveness of our involvement in the lives of children and their families against our policies and procedures. Importantly, our Audit approach gives us the opportunity to engage with the parent carer (and the child or young person where consent has been given and it is appropriate to do so) to obtain their feedback as part of the audit – this is on how the family have experienced our services.

The whole Service learns from audits:

- Messages from audits are fed back to the individual casework officer and their manager for any necessary actions to be taken and/or recognition of good practice; within the Audits, learning for partners may also be identified and how best to share this can be reflected and agreed by the Audit Moderator
- On a quarterly basis, learning from audits is brought together with an analysis of Service User Feedback, through a quarterly Quality Assurance Report prepared by the Quality Assurance Service
- This learning is disseminated across the whole Service through SEND Management Meetings, Newsletters and End to End Leadership presentations, in addition to feedback to professional teams contributing advice to the need's assessment process

Our Approach to Auditing:

- SEND Team Managers are expected to complete at least one individual Case File Audit per month using the template that has been designed for the purpose. The QA Officer for Education will allocate Audits on the 1st of each month.
- The case file audit process should follow the 'looped audit' methodology. A looped audit is conducted by two auditors; this is when two managers are allocated to undertake a full audit independently on the same case.
- Senior Managers (SEND Group Managers) will moderate case file audits and agree the findings/learning and grades. Group Managers will cross reference the EHCP and Case Record as part of their Audit Moderation to ensure Auditing have captured evidence and have graded practice proportionately and appropriately; this is in addition to their review of the Audit Documents.
- The peer auditor will seek the views of the SEND Case Worker; this is to gain a perspective of the case and the role of the SEND Team.
- Once the audit is completed, the lead audit, peer audit and the moderation form will be sent to the QA Officer who saves the audits centrally and will also save to the child/young person's u-drive file, the QA Officer will create a sub-file in the child/young person's record called "EHCP Audit", this is where the Audit Documents will be saved.
- The Audit will consider the previous 6 months' worth of practice – a selection of new EHCPs from the previous 6 months.
- The QA Officer will circulate the completed documents to:
 - Allocated Case Officer and Team Manager
 - The Case Responsible Group Manager

- Those who undertook the Audit
- The case responsible Senior Officer/Team Manager is responsible for ensuring that the Audit Feedback is discussed with the Case Officer and ensuring that this is recorded in Personal Supervision. They are also responsible for ensuring that the Audit Actions have been completed.
- The Peer Auditor for the case will review the case record 8 weeks after the audit is completed to ensure that all actions have been completed and will record this in the EHCP Audit file on the child/young person’s record – this will be fed back to the QA Officer for Education to ensure the loop is closed on the learning. The QA Officer will trigger a reminder of this work being required; they will provide the Peer Auditor with the Review of Audit Actions template to ensure consistency of recorded. The QA Officer will save the final document in the child’s sub-file called “EHCP Audit”.
- Any immediate actions should be brought to the attention of the responsible Team Manager/Group Manager on the day of the Audit.

See Appendix 1 for process flow chart.

Audit Template:

The Audit is structured into 5 over-arching areas, each will be part of the Audit, with the Auditor giving evidence of the quality of the practice and a grade. The Audit is structured on the following thematic areas:

Child’s Need & Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The views, interests and aspirations of the child or young person ● The child or young person’s special educational needs, their health needs and social care needs
Parental Consultation & Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The views and aspirations of the parents and/or carers ● How have they been consulted and engaged
Quality of the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The overall quality of the EHCP; compliance of the Case Officer completing the Draft Plan, sharing with the family and the finalising of the plan in statutory timescales ● The overall 'readability' of the plan. Is it well written without errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar? Has full use been made of advices received?
Quality of the Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The outcomes are written in SMART style and structure ● The outcomes are up to date
Partnership Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How have agencies contributed to the EHCP ● The quality & timeliness of the Advice and how this has been structured into the Plan - Compliance with Statutory Timescales of the provision of Agency Advices
Management Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evidence of Management Oversight of the EHCP by Senior Case Worker/Team Manager - specifically of their QA of draft and Final Plans

The Auditor will review the record and the EHCP, the Audit Quality Standards will be used to inform the view of the Auditor of the quality of practice, this will enable them to give views on the quality of practice, identifying both strengths and areas for improvement. The Auditor will then give an overall grade on the Quality of Practice and where appropriate identify areas of learning and actions.

Child/Young Person & Family Feedback:

Feedback will be obtained on the case as part of auditing, the Parent Engagement Advisor, will contact parent carers to seek their feedback within the month of the audit and will record this, they will also seek consent to seek feedback from children and young people and wherever possible obtain this

Audit Grades:

Audits are made up of five Sections (as above), each sub-section of the Audit will be given a grade, the audit will then be given an overall grading. The gradings system is based on the Ofsted Grades of Outstanding to Inadequate. The definition of each of these Grades are:

Outstanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong consistent evidence in all elements • Practice is consistently of a high standard and exceptionally child centred
Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of all elements • Practice is timely and evidences quality
Requires Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of most areas but some gaps or inconsistencies
Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures have not been adhered to and there are gaps in relation to practice

Quality Standards:

In Worcestershire we want children & young people to experience high quality service, clear and comprehensive EHCPs that capture their needs and support their aspirations, we aspire to this using the following Quality Standards:

- The plan clearly records the views, interests and aspirations of the child, young person, their parents, and carers and these are (a) fully represented within the plan and (b) inform the outcome of the plan.
- Plans are clear, concise, understandable, accessible and outcomes are SMART. In addition, they should be aspirational, person centred and identify prior attainment.
- Plans are holistic, all agencies involved with the child, young person, their parents, and carers have contributed to the plan within timescales.
- Plans are focussed on individual special educational needs and not medical diagnoses, highlight strengths and capabilities as well as the need for support or intervention.
- Plans specify the provision required and how education, health and care services will work together to meet the child or young person’s needs and support the achievement of the agreed outcomes, including transition planning.

Throughout the Audit we want to evidence (as defined by the Department for Education) that the EHCP:

- Meets the requirements of the Act, Regulations and Code of Practice
- Describes positively way the child or young person can do
- Is clear, concise, understandable, and accessible
- Is co-produced (with the family, children & young people)
- Sets SMART outcomes
- Tells the child or young person’s story well and coherently

Child/Young Person’s Needs & Voice:

This section of the audit relates to sections A (child/young person’s profile), B (Special educational Needs), C (Health Needs) and D (Social Care Needs) of the EHCP; this also relates to how we have approached hearing the child/young person’s views and voice within our work. It is essential that within this Audit Section we reflect on how the child/young person’s needs and voice have directly

impacted on the rest of the EHCP and informed the plan & outcomes. For young people who are aged over the age of 16, can we evidence how the young person’s capacity has been assessed and how best they contribute into their Plan.

Parental Consultation & Engagement:

This section of the audit relates to section A (child/young person’s profile) – specifically in respect of parent carers’ aspirations but also how parents’ views have been captured and represented through the plan, how we have engaged with the family and our communication.

Quality of the Plan & Outcomes:

This section of the audit relates to sections E (outcomes), F (Special Education Provision), G (Health Provision), H1/H2 (Social Care Provision), I (Placement) and J (Personal Budget); this relates to the overall quality of the plan, how the information brought together is assessed and analysed to inform the Plan and develop SMART Outcomes.

Compliance with Statutory timescales for draft and final plans and sharing these with families.

Partnership Working:

This section of the audit relates to how agencies have worked together, the quality of advice, how these have then informed the plan and SMART Outcomes.

Compliance with Statutory timescales for Agency Advice.

Management Oversight:

This section of the audit relates to the quality of the management oversight of the plan, such as, Is there clear management oversight/direction at the point of allocation to a SEND Case Work Officer?

- Is there evidence of clear, effective, and timely management oversight and direction on cases, and a clearly recorded rationale for decisions being made? Management Oversight of EHCPs prior to sharing draft versions and sign-off.
- Is there evidence of supervision? Quality of supervision, to include clear decision making and rational
- If there has been drift and delay with the implementation of the assessment & plan, was this identified and addressed by the Manager? Was this timely and were actions agreed to address this? (Delays in EHCP Assessment, Annual Reviews)

See Appendix 2 for Good Practice Examples of EHCPs. Good practice examples will be added to as these are identified through the auditing process.

Appendix 1 - Process for undertaking EHCP Audits Flowchart:

Step 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case selection and allocation - 1st of each month • QA Officer will identify a case sample of children & young people with an EHCP issued within the past 6 months from the EHCP data set
Step 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each SEND Team & Group Manager will undertake 1 audit per month; using the the audit template - this will follow the Peer/Moderation Process
Step 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Auditor will give a grade per sub-section of the Audit • The Auditor will give an overall grade, rational and provide key actions

Step 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Auditor to submit completed audit to QA Officer - Lisa Richards • The audit is to be completed and submitted by the last working day of the month
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Step 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Audit Documents (Lead, Peer & Moderation) will be sent to the responsible Team Manager to discuss the learning with the Case Officer and record in supervision • Any required Actions to be completed within 8-Weeks; the Peer Auditor will review after 8 weeks to ensure Actions have been completed

Appendix 2 - Good Practice Examples:

The Council for Disabled children has developed examples of good practice for EHCPs, and they can be found at:

[Education, Health and Care Plans: Examples of good practice | Council For Disabled Children](#)

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Worcestershire Children First Fostering

Quality Assurance and Performance Management Framework

Introduction:

In Worcestershire we want to achieve sustainable improvement to services for children, young people, their families, and carers. This focus on improvement is a shared priority across the organisation from our Lead Member, Chief Executive and DCS through to our front-line practitioners and support staff.

This is our WCFF Quality Assurance and Performance Management Framework; this is the Framework that includes our approach to Performance Information, Auditing and Service User Feedback.

The aims of WCFF are derived from WCF’s vision for Children’s Services in Worcestershire, "to make a positive impact on the lives of our children and young people aged 0 to 25years, and their families, by providing outstanding, innovative, child and young people-focused services where practice and practitioners flourish and we maximise life opportunities for all, or more simply put **“to ensure children are happy, healthy and safe”**. This is the foundation stones of our approach to Quality Assurance.





Contents:

1. Worcestershire Children First Fostering
2. Our Practice Standards & Procedures
3. Our Framework
4. How much are we doing - Performance Management
5. How well are we doing it – Audits
6. What difference are we making - Outcomes for Children/Young People
7. Workforce Development
8. Governance
9. Review of Framework

1. Worcestershire Children First Fostering

- Worcestershire Children's First (WCF) is an independent not for profit company which is wholly owned by Worcestershire County Council (WCC). Worcestershire Children First Fostering Agency (WCFF) sits within the company as an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA).
- WCFF offers placements for children who are looked after by WCF on behalf of the Local Authority, WCC.
- WCFF provides fostering placements including family and friends foster placements for looked after children and young people which safeguard and promote their welfare and enhances their life chances.
- The Statement of Purpose will detail the aims and objectives of WCFF, set out its quality assurance mechanisms and the range of services provided to children, foster carers and family and friends carers.
- The Statement of Purpose includes details of the staffing and organisational structure, management arrangements and complaints procedures.
- The Statement of Purpose has been prepared in accordance with Regulation 3 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and is based on Standard 16 of The National Minimum Standards for Fostering 2011. It is subject to formal approval by the Director of Children's Services, WCF.

2. Practice Standards & Procedures

Practice Standards and Procedures - it is the single point of reference for Social Workers, Social Care Workers and Team Managers to check what is expected of them in relation to specific Social Work tasks; this includes our Practice Standards, Policies and Guidance.

Why do we need practice standards?

- So that all managers & practitioners have clear guidance on roles and responsibilities
- We have a consistent approach to our work
- There are clear expectations for staff to measure themselves against
- There is a focus on the quality of practice and not just timescales
- We are a confident professional service, respected by families and professionals that will champion and where necessary challenge others to promote children's welfare
- There is a set of standards that quality assurance work can be measured against

Our procedures can be read at: [Foster and kinship carers important documents | Foster and kinship carers important documents | Worcestershire County Council](#)

3. Our Framework:

Worcestershire Children First Fostering has a whole service approach to Quality Assurance, this focuses on three domains, there are:

1. How much we are doing – Performance management
2. How well we are doing it – Audits
3. What difference we are making – Outcomes for children and young people

4. How much are we doing - Performance Management:

The performance reports and datasets available to Worcestershire Children First Fostering provide a clear line of sight on practice from the Lead Member and DCS and throughout our Managers and Practitioners. We have several reports and dashboards that enable our staff to understand practice, celebrate achievements and target areas for improvement. We want the experience of children and young people and their carers to be positive. As a minimum this means doing what we say we will do in the timescales we are expected to do it.

Key Performance Indicators

Measure	In time / Completed	Out of time / Not Completed	Percentage	Indicator
Support Visits in Time	-	-		
Unannounced Visits in Time	211	24	86	●
Annual Review in Time	185	60	75	●
Latest Formal Supervision in last 12 weeks	166	79	67	●
Latest Management Supervision in last 12 weeks	217	28	88	●
Training Support & Development	181	64	73	●
Covid-19 KIT Call in last 4 weeks	29	216	11	●
Notification received within 1 day in last 6 months	80	64	55	●

We want to ensure that children and young people receive appropriate services to support them to achieve positive outcomes. A summary of these reports:

<p>Foster Carer Register</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Live' data available of both Mainstream & Kinship Carers in line with The Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (31) 	<p>Foster Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key data of children placed within WCF Placements
<p>Foster Carer Dashboard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Main performance indicators at overall and service & team level 	<p>Foster Carer Recruitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key indicators in respect of enquiries, assessments, reg 24 placements

5. How well are we doing it – Audits:

This section describes our audit arrangements. These arrangements are intended to ensure that the standards are being met and positive outcomes are being achieved for children and young people.

5.1 Case File Audits

WCF Fostering Services undertake a quarterly programme of Case File Audits, cases for audit are identified by the Quality Assurance Service using the Foster Carer Register and are circulated to the relevant managers and senior managers on the 1st of each month.

The audit is conducted by two auditors, the first auditor is the case responsible Team Manager – they are known as the Lead Auditor. The second auditor is known as the Peer Auditor and will be another Team Manager within the service. The Peer Auditor is encouraged to seek the views of the child or young person, their birth parent and their foster carer(s) when completing a Case File Audit unless this is not possible. The Peer Auditor also have a case discussion with the Supervising Social Worker to gain their views on the child's circumstances and our involvement.



In these audits, the Peer Auditor will seek the views of the Fostering Social Worker and will also seek Service User Feedback from Foster/Kinship Carers; the questions are specific to the Fostering Service. The Audits are also specific to the Fostering Service and Regulations, the Audits specifically look at:

- Voice of the Child
- Support & Supervision to the Carer
- Safer Caring Plans & Risk Assessments
- Quality of Matching
- Approval, Annual Reviews, Panel & ADM
- Management Oversight

The Audit Tool includes an Action Plan which is followed up by the Case Responsible Team Leader to ensure any recommendations are completed, the manager is also responsible for sharing the outcome learning with the allocated worker. These audits are Moderated by the Senior Managers in the Fostering once completed to agree the final grades and learning. The outcome of an audit is recorded in the Fostering Audit Form on Liquid Logic Carers Record by Safeguarding Quality Assurance.

The Advanced Social Work Practitioners Team reviews cases eight weeks after the audit is moderated to ensure actions are completed and will footprint this on the carers file, evidencing how we have closed the loop on our individual case learning.

Learning is collated and presented in a Quarterly Quality Assurance Report; this learning is also shared through Newsletters, Briefings and Learning Presentations.

5.2 Targeted Audits:

Targeted Audits look at specific areas of practice and impact. Topics for targeted audits are identified by relevant Group Managers/Assistant Directors linked to issues being identified through supervision, complaints, or Service Dashboard indicators. All Targeted Audits outcomes and learning are recorded on the Targeted Audit Template and sent to Safeguarding Quality Assurance; these are saved centrally, and the learning captured within the Quarterly Quality Assurance Report. Group Managers are responsible for ensuring the targeted learning is disseminated with their Team Manager Group to embed learning.

6. What difference are we making - Outcomes for Children/Young People:

This section describes our approach to gathering the views and experiences of children and young people and their parents and carers, so we can understand the impact of our services, areas of practice to celebrate and areas for improvement.

6.1 Audits

The peer auditor will contact the Foster Carers, Birth Parents, and child/young person in placement, and seek their feedback using the questions within the audit template – this is pulled into Quarterly Feedback reports.

6.2 Targeted Feedback

We seek feedback from children, young people, birth parents and carers through a quarterly programme of feedback.



Children & Young People:

Fostering & Kinship Social Workers seek feedback from children & young people in WCF Placements throughout the year, however, they use specific feedback forms at the point of the Annual Review. Our Annual Review Forms have been updated to seek additional feedback from children & young people. Social Workers will obtain this feedback and once completed will upload to Liquid Logic/Annual Review Documents following normal process. However, the specific feedback questions will be also inputted into a Survey Form...this will enable us to produce quarterly reports of strengths and areas of focus/improvement on the service and how children experience our services and care. Other examples of direct work will be included in the quarterly reports...demonstrating the wider direct work undertaken.

Mainstream & Kinship Carers:

Across each month, BSOs/Admin in the Fostering & Kinship Service will contact carers to seek their feedback on their experiences of our services, the BSO/Admin will record this on the Foster Carers Record using the Form "[Foster Carer Service User Feedback](#)" and will use section 1 to record the carers views. There is a minimum requirement of each BSO/Admin seeking 2 pieces of feedback each across a month from Carers. The form will ask whether this is a mainstream or kinship placement, to enable us to identify themes for the different cohort of carers.

Birth Parents:

Across each month, BSOs/Admin in the Fostering & Kinship Service will contact birth parents to seek their feedback on their experiences of our services and the care our placements provide to their children, the BSO/Admin will record this on the Foster Carers Record using the Form "[Foster Carer Service User Feedback](#)" and will use section 2 to record the parent's views. There is a minimum requirement of each BSO/Admin seeking 2 pieces of feedback each across a month from parents. The form will ask whether this is a mainstream or kinship placement, to enable us to identify themes for the different cohort of carers.

6.3 Learning from Compliments and Complaints:

It is a requirement of Children's Act 1989 and National Health Service Act 1990 for local authorities to establish a procedure for representations for complaints, compliments, or comments. The statutory complaints procedure can be used by service users, carers, or their representatives. Compliments are accepted from external sources. This includes service users, parents, carers, and other organisations. Guidance on WCF Complaints Procedures can be found at: [Foster and kinship carers important documents | Foster and kinship carers important documents | Worcestershire County Council](#)

The link to make a Complaint can be found here:

[Children's Social Care - Make a Compliment, Comment or a Complaint | Worcestershire County Council](#)

The Consumer Relations Officer offers help and advice to staff about the process through training sessions. Advice to staff about the handling of complaints is provided when/if required.

Advocacy services are available to support Children and Young People wishing to make a complaint – this service is commissioned by WCF and is provided by Coram Voice.

Information is collated from complaints and compliments for Quarterly and Annual Reports with an overview by the Registered Manager.

Specific learning is shared through the Principal Social Worker Newsletter and issues relating to individual staff capability or competency will be taken up by the relevant line manager through

supervision or when necessary other formal processes. Complaints are tracked jointly between Senior Managers and CRU in a joint tracker.

7. Workforce Development

Our workforce is our most valuable-asset in successfully delivering services that make a positive difference for our families in Worcestershire. We strive to be the ‘employer of choice’ for children’s services staff, and we approach this through a culture that values the impact that our staff have in improving children’s lives. We have high expectations and have created the conditions where professional expertise is valued and can flourish.

As a company our overall aim is to build a workforce with the personal and collective resilience to drive us forward in these challenging times, to develop our staff, give them clear career pathways, and provide them with the leadership, skills, and knowledge they need now and, in the future, to deliver excellent services to the children, young people their families & carers in Worcestershire.

Our Workforce Vision ensures that, as a service, we continue to have strong front-line management and that we have the capacity and ability to flex in response to changes that are inevitable, whilst keeping a good level of stability and quality. Our strategy will be managed and monitored through our WCF Workforce Board and is supported by financial investment and through staff feedback and performance reviews. Our Workforce Strategy has five key priorities, they are:

- Health & Wellbeing
- Recruitment & Retention
- Diversity & Culture
- Leadership & Management
- Building Skills for the Future

8. Governance

There are a range of Governance Structures over Early Help Quality Assurance in Worcestershire Children First, these are:

8.1 WCF Fostering Improvement

Following the 2021 Inspection of WCFF, a robust Improvement Plan has been developed and implemented to improve services in-line with the recommendations.

8.2 Ofsted

Ofsted is the regulatory body that has responsibility for the inspection of Worcestershire Children First Fostering.

These inspections will consider key aspects of a child’s journey through the social care system, focusing on the experiences of the child or young person and the effectiveness of the help and protection they are offered. The inspections are intended to identify areas of strength and for further development.

8.3 Self-Evaluation Framework

Worcestershire is committed to the production of an annual self-assessment as part of its learning cycle. This process enables the organisation to understand the progress being made over a 12-month period and to inform its annual business planning cycle. Our Self Evaluation Cycle will commence in April and the final report will be produced in September each year.



8.4 Overview and Scrutiny

The role of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is to provide challenge to support service improvement and sustaining this improvement. The group forms part of the governance arrangements within the Council and receives performance information via a Dashboard on the key information to enable it to provide support and challenge.

8.4 Corporate Parenting Board

Data is generally provided to the Corporate Parenting Board as part of thematic reports presented by managers. This allows the Board to look in more detail at specific aspects of the Council's work with looked after children, with context and analysis included as part of the report.

8.5 Worcestershire Children First Board:

As a wholly owned Council Company, WCF has a contractual relationship with Worcestershire County Council to provide statutory children's services. These contractual arrangements, between Council and Company, are overseen by a Quarterly Review Board and a Performance and Commissioning Group to ensure contract compliance, within the terms of reference of the Company Board.

The WCF board consists of 12 Executive and Non-Executive Directors with a wealth of public sector expertise in supporting families and communities. Executive Directors are those employed by WCF to lead and manage delivery functions and teams, whilst Non-Executive Directors do not have responsibility for day-to-day operations but provide input and challenge via Board meetings and sub-board meetings throughout the year. To maintain rigour, WCF's internal governance takes the form of monthly WCF Board meetings (with an Annual General Meeting and every third Board meeting held in public when conditions allow). Additionally, there are two subgroups reporting into the Board of Directors focusing on improvement of services.

9. Review of the Framework:

This Framework will be reviewed on an annual basis and amended accordingly.

Tina Russell
Chief Executive WCF & DCS

Date: May 2022

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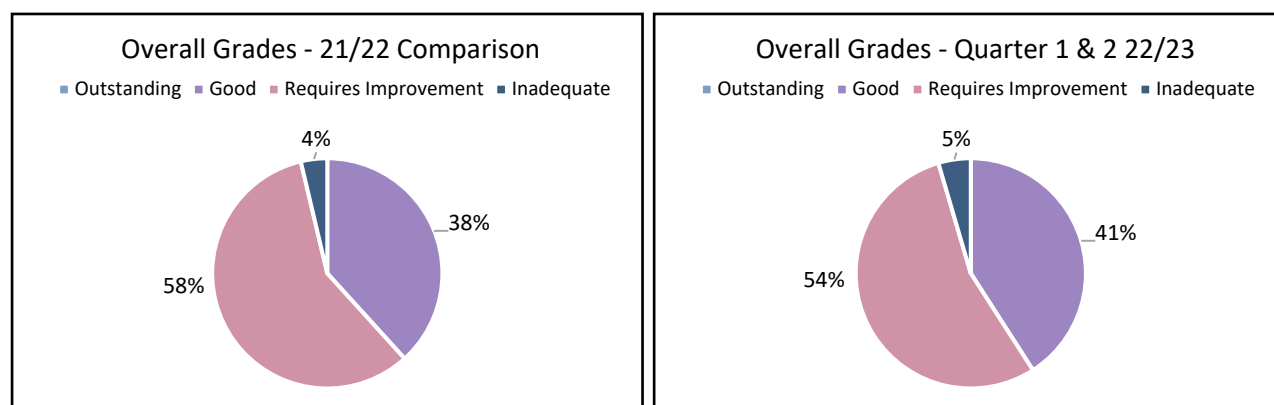
Worcestershire Children First – Social Care & Safeguarding Case File Audits Executive Summary

Social Care & Safeguarding has an embedded Case File Audit Programme for each service area inline with our Quality Assurance Framework; this is an effective system of learning and Ofsted (2021) said *“The quality assurance framework is a strong area of practice, well embedded internally and across the safeguarding partnership. In particular, the audit approach is very effective. Children’s case file audits are well moderated and identified actions followed through to completion, making a real time difference to improving interventions in case work”*.

Across Quarter 1 we undertook a range of targeted audits on specific areas of practice, in total we audited **258 children’s experiences across 14 audits**. This approach meant we did not undertake case file audits as normal each month to enable the capacity for these service wide targeted audits; however, our case file audit programme has so far completed **22 Case File Audits across June & July 2022**. This summary report provides an executive summary of these outcomes.

Overall Audit Grades:

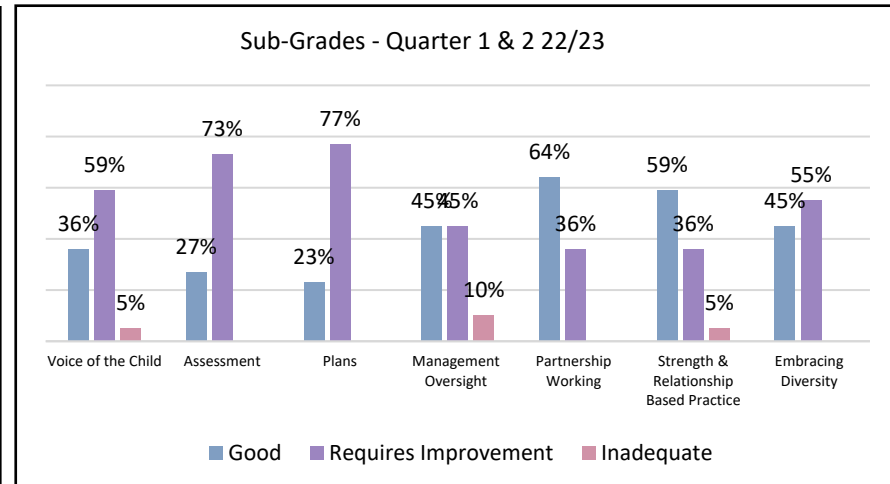
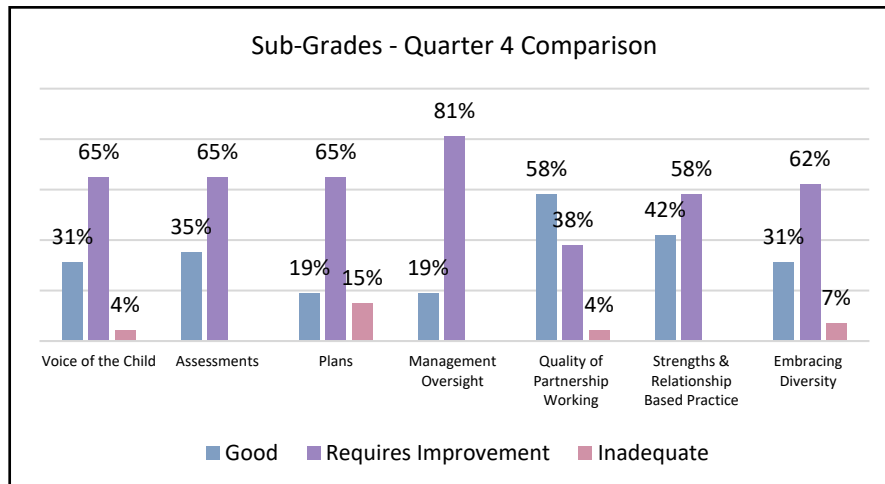
Across Quarter 1/Quarter 2 to date, **22 case file audits** have been completed, using the peer/moderation approach, each case file audit includes 3 pieces of audit activity, in total this equates to **66 individual pieces of Auditing Activity**.



We see the-majority of case work graded Good or Requires Improvement totally at 96%, with 41% judged to be Good - 1 case had an overall Judgement of Inadequate; when we compare end of year audit grades, we see a small reduction in Requires Improvement and an increase in Good as we move into 2022/2023

Sub-Section Grades:

Our audits are broken down into seven key areas of Practice, the following graphs demonstrate the current sub-section outcomes with previous end of year comparison. When we compare Quarter 4 Sub-Grades to our cumulative sub-grades for Quarter 1 & 2; we see an **increase in Good Judgements** in Voice of the Child, Quality of Plans, Management Oversight, Partnership Working, Strengths-base practice and Embracing Diversity; evidencing learning into practice from our Auditing Work.



What have we done this in response to learning to improve practice during the Quarter?

Learning from Quality Assurance forms a key part of our Auditing and Feedback Programmes, over the last few months we have undertaken the following actions and activities to support us to develop our Practice.

Learning Briefings & Newsletters

We have produced and disseminated across the service various briefings and newsletters; they are:

1. Three Principal Social Worker Newsletters
2. Learning from Complaints, Feedback, Disruptions & VoC Briefing
3. QAPP Progress Update (multi-agency practice)
4. Learning from Audits Briefing
5. Assessment & Analysis Briefing
6. CPD & Training Briefing

Presentation

On the 14th of July 2022 we presented to our Social Care & Safeguarding End-to-End Leadership Event a learning from Practice Presentation to include learning from complaints, family feedback, experiences of Care Leavers, Voice of the Child, and Learning from Disruptions.

Developments to Practice Standards, Guidance & Procedures

1. Guidance on managing emails & data breaches
2. Guidance on supporting birth families where a child has been adopted (Connexions)
3. What Good Looks Like for Social Care Contributions to EHCPs/Annual Reviews
4. Link to Adults Position of Trust Policy & Procedure
5. Updated our Transfer Protocol – specifically for Care Leavers and SFF
6. Reviewed & updated our Step-up & Step-Down Procedure

Developments to Liquid Logic/Documents

1. Development of our Strategy Discussion Record to ensure we capture all agencies views on the Voice of the Child
2. Development of our Section 47 Record to ensure we include rational within Management Decision if we are recommending a Repeat CP Plan is put in place
3. Introduced new Case Note Type to evidence we have distributed Strategy Discussion Records

4. Updated our Practitioner Supervision Record to include specific section on learning & reflection from Quality Assurance & Complaints etc.
5. Updated our Case Supervision Record to include review of new information on an open case

Quality Assurance Highlight Report – Four Year Analysis

This summary report reflects on the Quality Assurance activity/audit programme for the last four years. Quality Assurance is a core aspect of our activity in Social Care & Safeguarding, being clear on what we are doing well alongside areas for focus & improvement – this helps us know ourselves well. Our Quality Assurance Framework is built system wide, meaning we have focus on managers/leaders undertaking regular audit activity through Case File Audits, Mid-Way Audits and Targeted Audits. Our Framework:

1. How much are we doing? KPI's
2. How well are we doing? Audits
3. What is the impact of our work? Feedback

Our Framework is robust and reflects on three core areas of Practice, this report will reflect on Learning from our Peer/Moderated Case File Audits, please see separate reports on Voice of the Child and KPI Analysis.

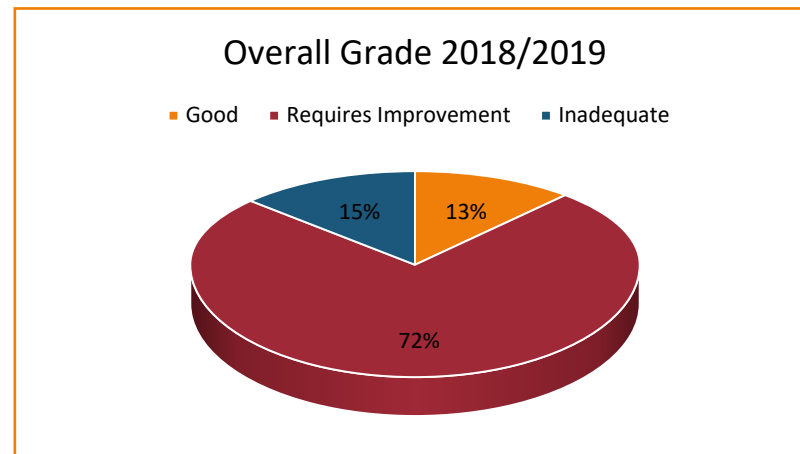
In July 2021, Ofsted completed their ILACs Focused Visit they told us

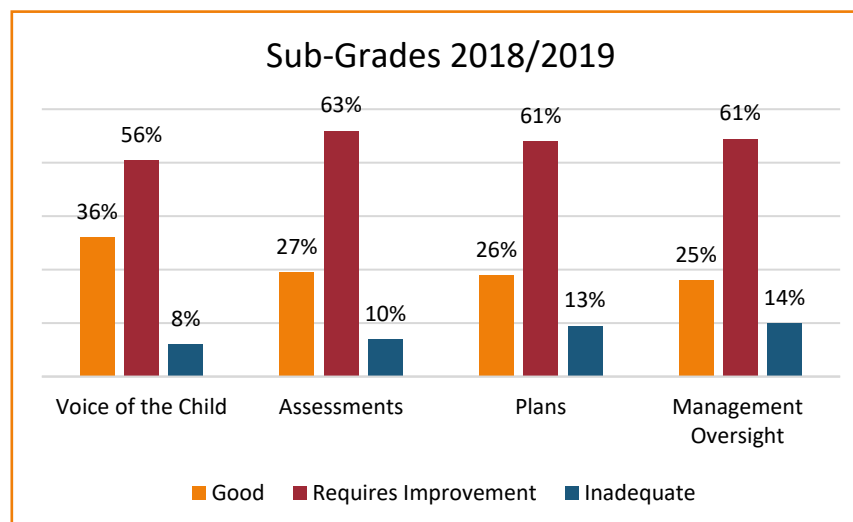
“Leaders have established a positive culture of commitment to continuous improvement across this service area, supported by particularly strong quality assurance arrangements”



Audit Outcomes 2018/2019

In the year 2018/2019 we undertook Case-File Audits on 145 children's experiences, a breakdown of the total audit outcomes

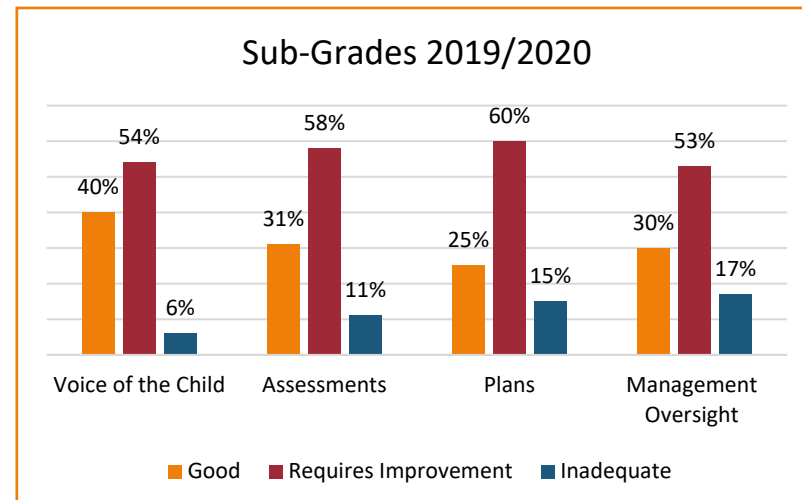
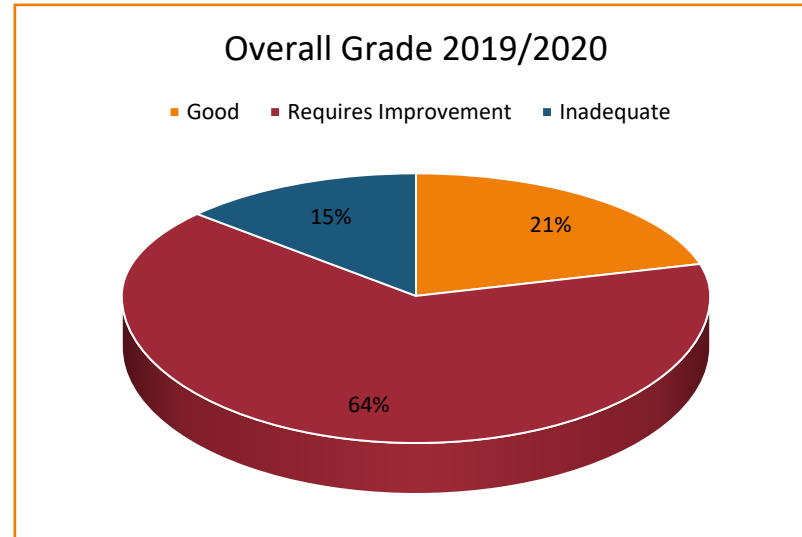




The year 2018/2019 we established our Quality Assurance Framework and introduced for all Team Managers and Group Managers undertaking peer/moderated case file audits. Across the year a total of 145 case file audits were undertaken, each audit includes 3 elements, the lead audit, peer audit and the moderation, this means we undertook **435 pieces of audit activity for this cohort of children**. Requires Improvement was the highest overall and sub-grade for all areas, the overall Good Judgement, was the smallest category of overall grades. **Voice of the child** was identified strength with this being the highest area judged to be Good throughout the audits.

Audit Outcomes 2019/2020

In the year 2019/2020 we undertook Case-File Audits on 149 children’s experiences, a breakdown of the total audit outcomes



As we move into the year 2019/2020, we continue to embed and our approach to Quality Assurance and consolidate our audit programme. In this year we **sustain the volume of audits being completed**, in total we completed 447 pieces of audit work for this cohort of children. We see an **increase of our audits**

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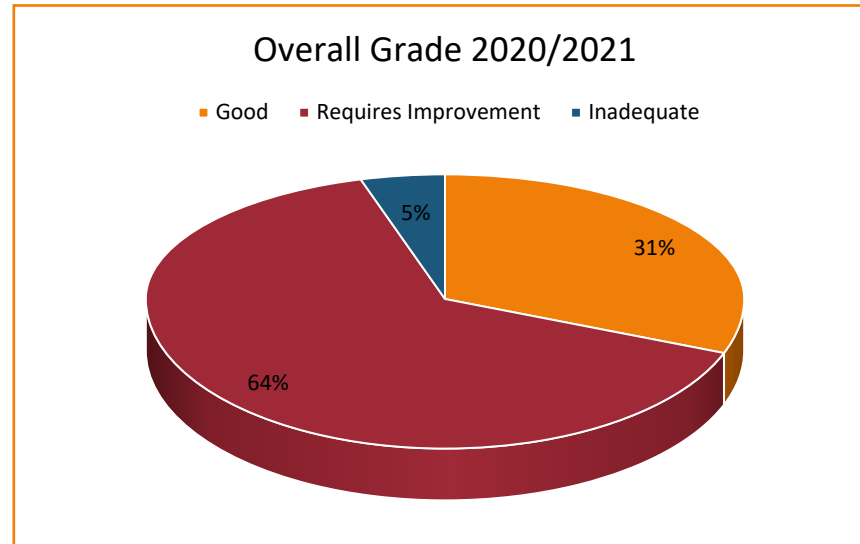
Judged to be Good and an **increase in Voice of the Child and Assessments judged to be Good**. Although we see a small decrease in Plans and Management oversight judged to be Good, we also see this reduction in Inadequate grades and the increase in Requires Improvement.

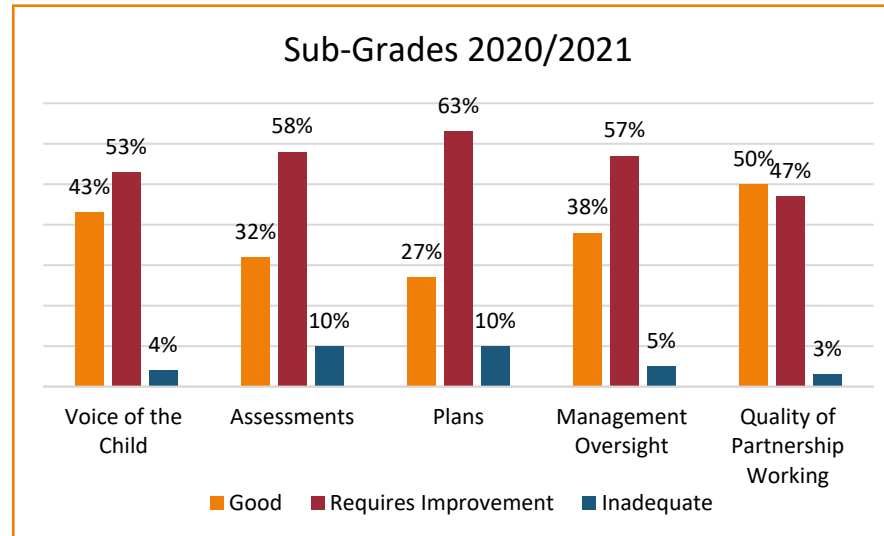
In June 2019, Ofsted completed their ILACs inspection of our services they told us *“The local authority has implemented a quality assurance system and has established a range of performance information, allowing senior managers to better understand its practice. Auditing of work is undertaken on a regular basis and is strengthened by a moderation system that gives the local authority a clear understanding of practice compliance”*.



Audit Outcomes 2020/2021

In the year 2020/2021 we undertook Case-File Audits on 204 children's experiences, a breakdown of the total audit outcomes



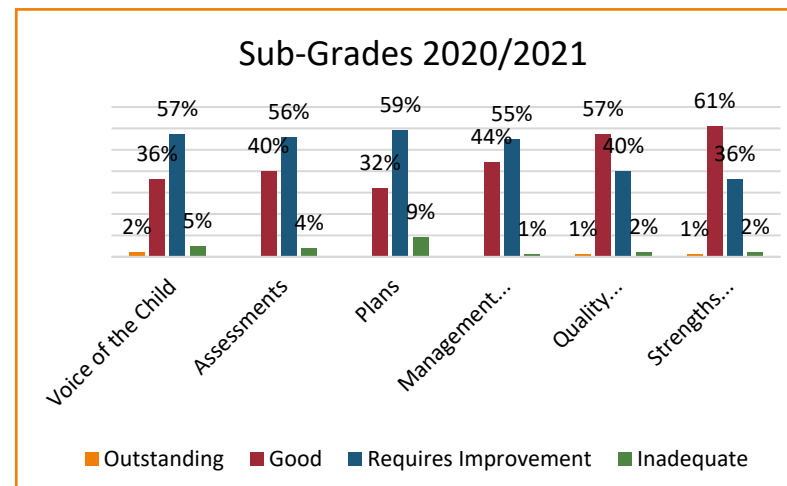
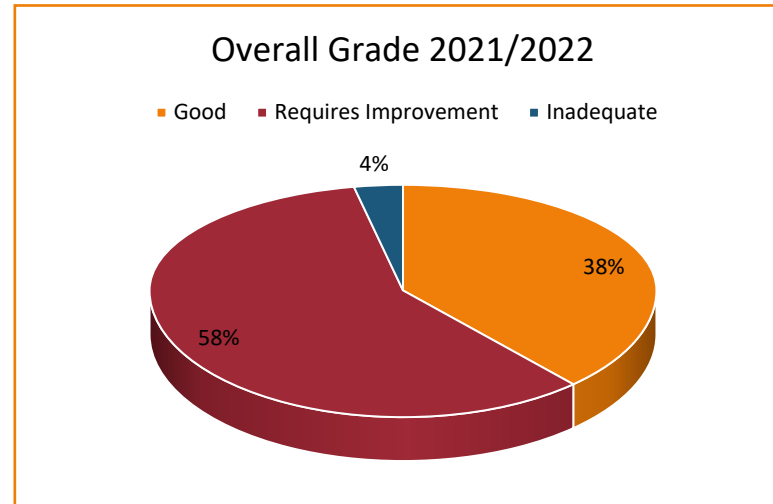


Through this year we **continued our focus and priority of quality assurance**, we have seen a significant increase in the number of case file **audits completed totalling 204, this is an increase of 36%**, when considering the triangulation of the lead, peer & moderation, this totals 612 pieces of audit activity. In this year not only have we seen an increase in the volume of audits completed, the number **judged to be Good, this increased by 10%** and when considering this Grade 2 years ago, this is an increase of 14%. We have seen **all areas increase in Good Grades**. We introduced a fifth element to our audits this year by including **partnership working, 50% of audits judged this to be Good** and this is identified as a key strength. All areas have seen a reduction in audits graded Inadequate, overall, this accounts for 5% of all Audits.

In addition to the above, in Quarter 3 of this year we introduced audit programmes for WCF Fostering and our Residential Homes, across Quarter 3 & 4 a total of **27 Audits** were completed for these services. **82% were judged to be Good** with 18% judged to be Requires Improvement.

Audit Outcomes 2021/2022

In the year 2021/2022 we undertook Case-File Audits on 162 children’s experiences, a breakdown of the total audit outcomes



In this year we have remained committed to a business as usual and a priority focus of strong quality assurance systems across Social Care & Safeguarding. We completed a total of 162 peer/moderated Case File Audits across the year, although this is a reduction on the previous year, this remains an increase from 2018, 2019 and 2020 – using our peer/moderated approach this equated to 486 pieces of Audit Activity.

We have continued to an **increase in Good Cases** and a reduction in Requires Improvement and Inadequate; in total **38% of audits had a Good Outcome** – this is a 7% increase from the previous 12 months but a **25% increase from 3 years ago**. We have seen an increase in Good Judgements within Assessments, Plans, Management Oversight and Quality of Partnership Working – our first full year of Strengths Based Practice Judgements evidenced this as area of significant strength with 61% graded Good. We have seen a small reduction in those cases judged Good for Voice of the Child.



Key Messages

This summary report highlights the overall progress from Audits across the past four years of our Quality Assurance work, this has demonstrated how we have consolidated our approach to Quality Assurance, year on year, increasing the volume of Auditing Activity. In total across the four years, we audited 687 children's experiences.

Each year we have seen an increase in our overall Judgements being Graded Good, with **38% totalling Good** in the year 2021/2022, we have seen this judgement increase year-on-year and in comparison, to **2018 this has increased by 25%**. We have started to see sub-graded areas of Outstanding Practice this year with judgements in Voice of the Child, Partnership Working and Strengths & Relationship Based Practice.

We continue to see an incremental **reduction in cases with an Inadequate Judgement** and this has reduced by 11% since 2018.

We see **strengths in Partnership Working** (57% judged Good) and **Strengths Based Practice** (61% judged Good) within our practice – evidencing the embedding of our Signs of Safety Practice Model and how we work with a child's network, including professionals, to inform our work and families plans.

Last year we identified Plans as an area of focus – we are pleased to see this area has increased in Good and reduced in Inadequate and Requires Improvement Grades – however, this remains a focus and priority for us to continue to improve. Voice of the Child has seen a small reduction in Good Grades this year and this remains a key priority in ensuring we hear children's experiences – however, we do know from our Voice of the Child Reports that children do feel listened to and heard by our practitioners.

We see very small numbers of case work judged Inadequate – however this remains a relentless focus to ensure our practice continues to sustain and improve.

Our learning is shared through Quarterly Focused Audit Reports that share the key highlight learning per service area, this is supported through Newsletters, End to End Leadership Meetings and Service Events. Individual case learning is also discussed between managers and practitioners. Our ASWP now also review cases 8 weeks following the completion of an audit to ensure actions have been completed.

In our 2021 Ofsted Focused Visit, they told us *"The quality assurance framework is a strong area of practice, well embedded internally and across the safeguarding*



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partnership. In particular, the audit approach is very effective. Children’s case file audits are well moderated and identified actions followed through to completion, making a real time difference to improving interventions in case work. Collective learning from quality assurance activity, including extensive child and family feedback, is used well to inform service improvement” – this is independent validation of the strength of our Quality Assurance Framework and programme.

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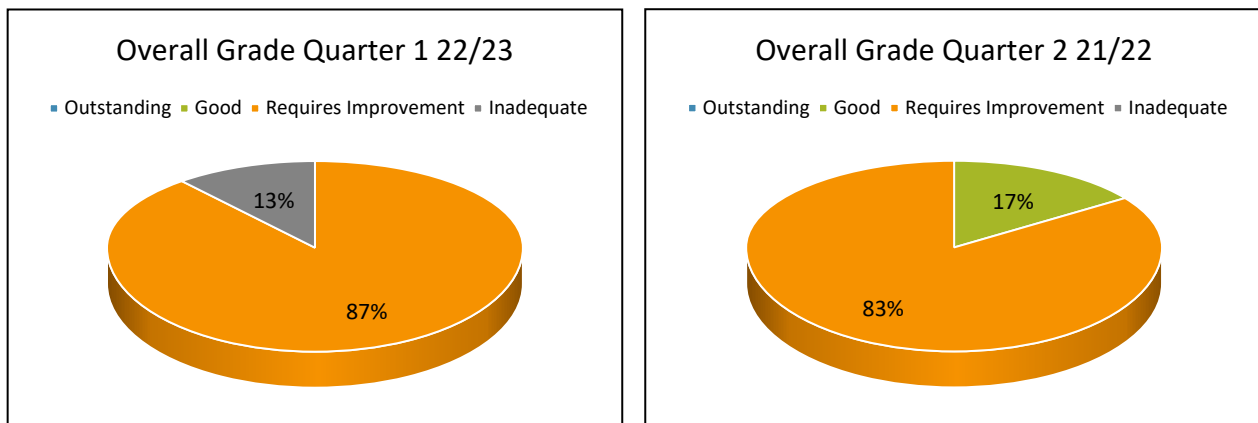
Worcestershire Children First – SEND Services Quality Assurance Programme: Quarter 2 22/23 Report

This is the Quarter 2 22/23 Quality Assurance Report, for WCF SEND Services, presenting key learning and findings from our Peer/Moderated Case File Audits and Service User Feedback opportunities. Our QA Programme launched formally in Quarter 4 (21/22), and this was our baseline findings, this report will give quarter on quarter comparisons, to evidence changes in practice.

This Quarter our WCF SEND QA Framework & Programme was noted as *“[The quality assurance framework and all the supplementary info and evidence is absolutely the best I have ever seen](#)”* by SEND Senior Manager for NHS England and WCF have been asked by the Council for Disabled Children to present our Framework and the impact of learning to a Regional SEND Conference in November 2022 based on the recognition of effectiveness of the programme.

Audits:

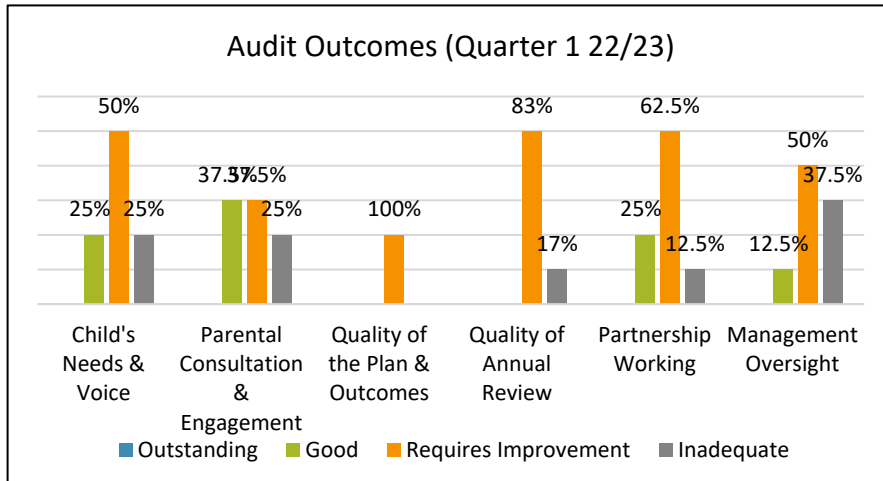
We have now run the programme over three consecutive quarters. In total we have completed 26 Case File Audits, using our Peer/Moderated approach, this equates to 78 pieces of Audit activity by SEND Team & Group Managers.



Our baseline was “inadequate” was 8% in qtr4 (21/22) 13% in Qtr 1 (22/23) and 0 quarter 2 (22/23) In this last quarter we can also see the identification of some cases with “good” outcome.

6 Case File Audits were undertaken this Quarter, with our peer/moderation approach this is 18 pieces of Individual QA Activity.

Breaking down the audit outcome into the audited section we can also see improvements as detailed below.



Improvements:

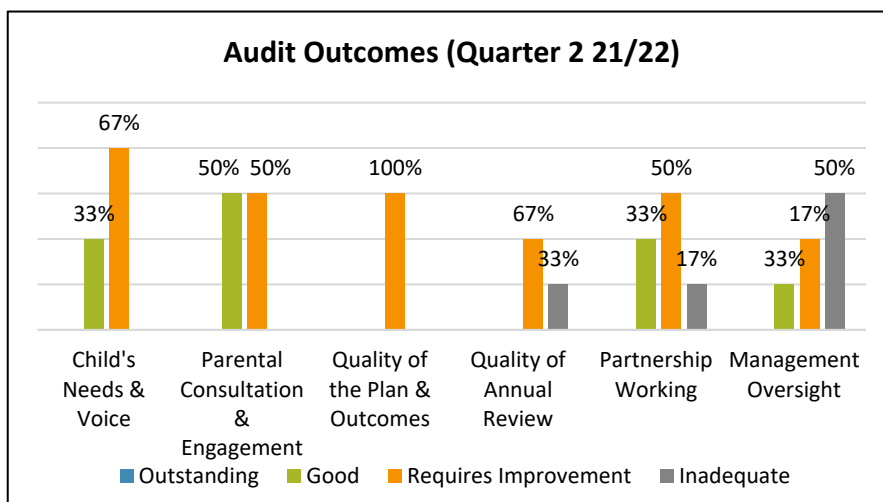
In quarter 2 we see increases in “good” judgements in;

- Child’s Needs & Voice,
- Parental Consultation,
- Partnership Working
- Management Oversight.

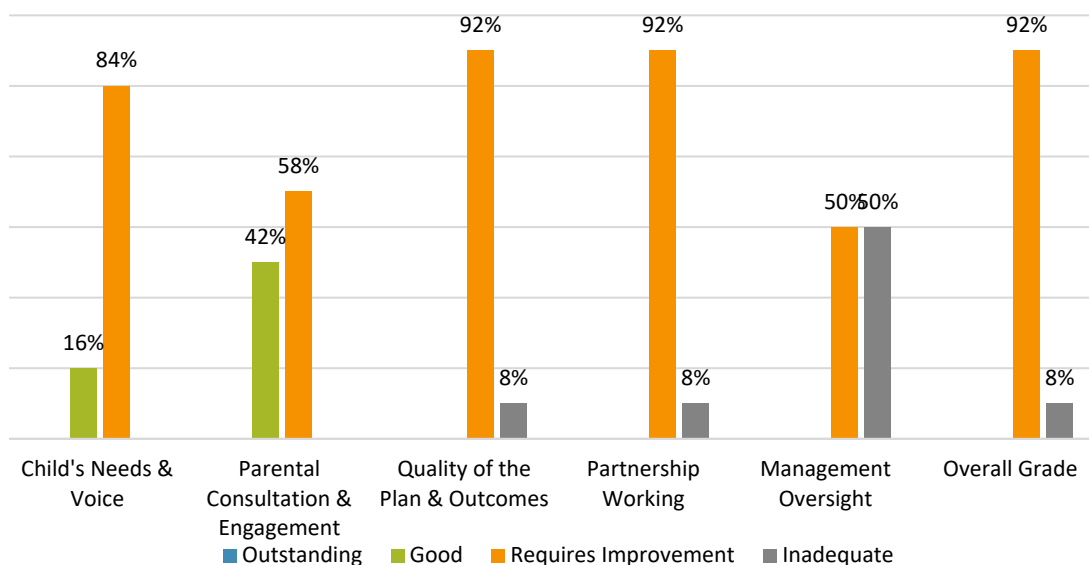
Areas of focus:

Quality of Annual Reviews – increase in RI and decreased in Inadequate but this remains a key focus of all staff and partner through our APP Workstream 4 Plan.

Management Oversight remain a weakness with an increase this qtr in those judged “inadequate” through it is positive to see an increase in those judged good. We are fused on getting a constancy in quality



Audit Outcomes Qtr 4 21/22 - Base Line



What's Working Well?

- Children's views being represented into Plans and use of first-person language enabling plans to be more personal
- Aspirations of young people being included in Plans
- Educational Psychologist Advice included wishes & feelings of children & young people
- Examples of Voice of the Child being weaved into various areas of EHCPs
- Examples of trusted adults working to gain children's views for Plans & Annual Reviews
- Evidence of parental views included in the Family Conversation and into EHCPs
- Examples of Case Work Officers pulling parental views into Plans
- Family Conversation used to inform Plans
- Parent Carer Views captured in Annual Reviews
- Examples of Good Practice where what young people want to achieve is present with outcomes of how we will achieve this
- Examples of reflection of needs of children & young people and their impact
- Examples of strengths and challenges well evidenced
- Evidence of outcomes being relevant to need
- Outcomes written by Educational Psychologists are good quality
- Wide range of professional advice sought to support EHCPs – examples of Case Work Officers weaving these together into plans
- Evidence of working relationships and liaison with the Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) where there are late reports from Health and their support in progressing this

Areas of Focus & Learning?

- To further develop the Child's Voice using a variety of different tools and approaches
- Capture the child's views on their needs and/or diagnosis to evidence impact
- Ensuring Case Work Officers consistently bring the child's views, wishes and feelings into Plans and promoting best practice for Schools and Colleges doing so in Annual Reviews
- Ensuring that Parent Carers/Families are updated at regular intervals through the Assessment and Plan Writing stages to ensure they are aware of progress and what is being achieved

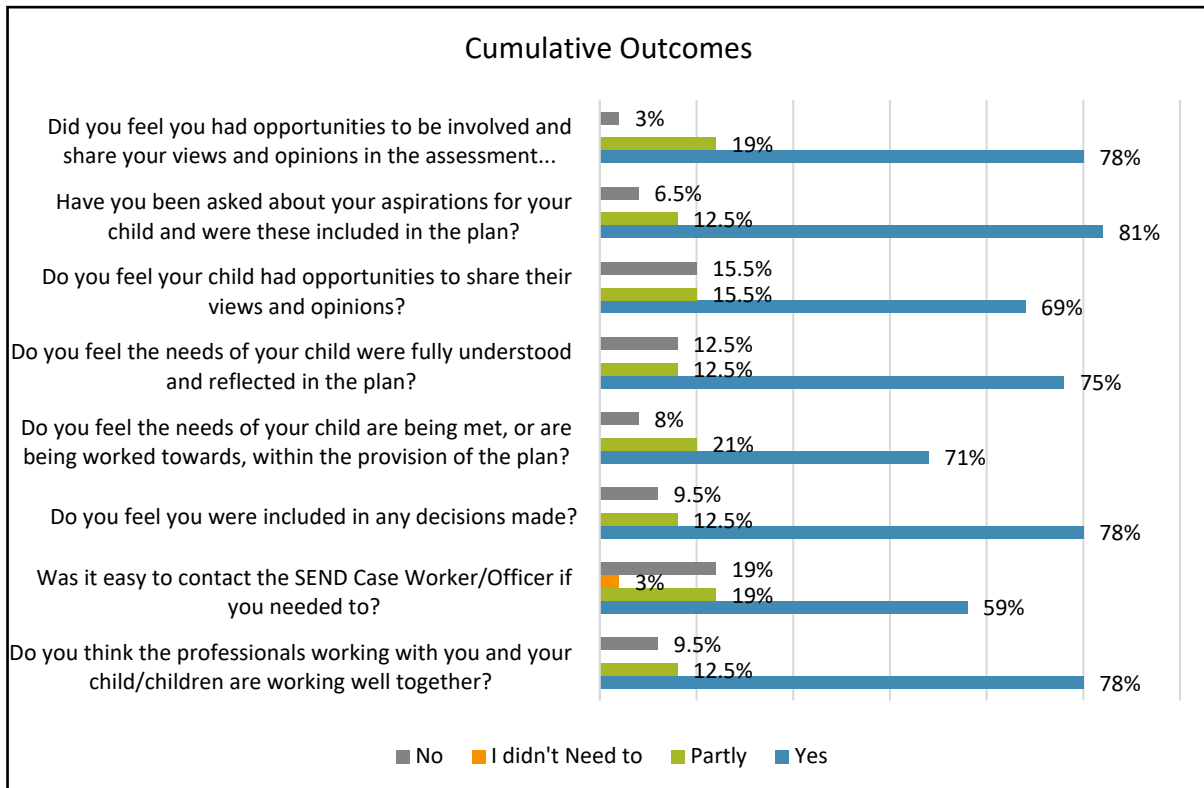
- Ensure partners develop the quality of Outcomes within Advice for EHCPs as this will support Case Work Officers in writing plans
- Ensuring all key Health Agencies provide advice – for example CAMHS did not provide advice although were involved; some Health Information not consistently within Advice and is identified through other agencies
- Development of the Promoting Independent in PFA Outcomes
- Ensuring Plans are Quality Checked for inaccuracies, spelling mistakes
- Outcomes to be further developed to ensure they are consistently SMART – timescales and reviews
- Ensuring all agencies are invited, attend/contribute to Annual Reviews
- Development of Annual Reviews to evidence measuring impact of outcomes for children & young people
- Ensure Annual Reviews are timely, and that Schools ensure families receive paperwork consistently and in a timely manner

Closing the Learning Loop

- Individual case feedback discussion between the manager and case officer – reflected and evidenced within supervision
- Briefing on lessons learnt for internal staff and partners to be published for staff and partners
- Feedback session with all SEND Group & Team Managers
- Review individual audit actions within 8 weeks of audits being completed to evidence individual case learning

Feedback on the Quality of our Services – Education, Health & Care Plans

Understanding the experiences of families is a key element of our Quality Assurance approach & framework – this helps us understand the impact of our practice and the difference we are making to children, young people, and parents’ lives; the below feedback is from families where a new EHCP has been made – 32 families have given feedback to date



We can see in all areas most families do report positively, key strengths are particularly families feeling they have opportunities to share their views, are asked about their aspirations and are included in decisions that are made. The key area where families report yes less is in respect of being able to contact the Case Work Officer allocated to their child. The below graph evidences the quarter-on-quarter improvements/outcomes.

Question	Quarter 4 21/22	Quarter 1 22/23	Quarter 2 22/23
Did you feel you had opportunities to be involved and share your views and opinions in the assessment process?	62%	85%	100%
Have you been asked about your aspirations for your child and were these included in the plan?	70%	100%	100%
Do you feel your child had opportunities to share their views and opinions?	56%	85%	67%
Do you feel the needs of your child were fully understood and reflected in the plan?	63%	85%	100%
Do you feel the needs of your child are being met, or are being worked towards, within the provision of the plan?	76%	71%	67%
Do you feel you were included in any decisions made?	70%	71%	100%
Was it easy to contact the SEND Case Worker/Officer if you needed to?	70%	71%	50%
Do you think the professionals working with you and your child/children are working well together?	63%	85%	100%

Feedback on the Quality of our Services – Annual Reviews

In Quarter 1 we introduced feedback from families in respect of how they experience Annual Reviews, all families receive an Annual Review Outcome Letter, within this there is a link and QR code for them to follow to complete a short online survey regarding their experiences, we also ask families at the point of Case File Audits when it focuses on an Annual Review. 14 families have given us feedback so far, they told us...

	Yes	Partly	I didn't Need to	No
Have you received a copy of the updated EHCP/Annual Review Documents?	71%	N/A	N/A	29%
If changes needed to be made to the EHCP, have these happened within 20 days of the review?	50%	N/A	14%	36%
Was it easy to contact the SEND Case Worker/Officer if you needed to?	29%	N/A	14%	57%
Do you feel you were included in any decisions made?	86%	7%	N/A	7%
Did you feel that you were given the opportunity to include your thoughts about preparing for the future?	71%	N/A	N/A	29%
Do you feel the needs of your child were fully understood and reflected in the review?	79%	7%	N/A	14%
Do you feel your child had opportunities to share their views and opinions?	93%	N/A	N/A	7%
Have you been asked about your aspirations for your child, and these were included in the review?	93%	N/A	N/A	7%
Did you feel you had opportunities to be involved and share you views and opinions in review process?	93%	N/A	N/A	7%
Did the right agencies attend and/or contribute to the review?	50%	14%	N/A	36%
Did you receive the relevant paperwork two weeks before the annual review?	71%	N/A	N/A	29%
Were you invited to an annual review for your child?	79%	N/A	N/A	21%

We see **most families have opportunities to involved within the review**, being asked about aspirations, and being included in decision made; however, there are **still too many that don't** and there is a range of feedback where we need focus on ensuring we have **timely and consistent communication** and outcomes. **However this is an improving picture**; below evidence quarter on quarter improvements.

Question	Quarter 1 22/23	Quarter 2 22/23
Have you received a copy of the updated EHCP/Annual Review documents?	73%	80%
If changes needed to be made to the EHCP, have these happened in timescales?	55%	40%
Was it easy to contact the SEND Case Worker if you needed to?	27%	40%
Do you feel you were included in any decisions made?	82%	100%
Did you feel that you were given the opportunity to include your thoughts about preparing for the future?	73%	80%
Do you feel the needs of your child were fully understood & reflected in the review?	73%	100%
Do you feel your child had opportunities to share their views and opinions?	73%	60%
Have you been asked about aspirations for your child, and these were included in the review?	91%	100%
Did you feel you had opportunities to be involved and share your views?	91%	100%
Did the right agencies attend/contribute to the review?	55%	40%
Did you receive the relevant paperwork two-weeks before the review?	64%	80%
Were you invited to an Annual Review for your child?	73%	100%

Quarter 2 – 22/23 Quotes from families from our Audits and Feedback Questionnaires

“It’s been much easier this time, I went through this with my older child, and it took years of fighting to get somewhere. I’ll be honest I was dreading it this time, I was exhausted by the whole process last time, but this time it turned out to be good. When I came to do it, I didn’t want to, but I thought no I must do it for my son, and it’s been a largely positive experience”

“The agencies involved all work well together; we are fortunate that the pre-school and school have put the things in place that Grace needed. In the beginning they would go through me to sort things out, but now OT etc and the school liaise together and do what’s needed - they let me know, but I don’t have to be involved all the time and I’m happy with that. Getting the EHCP was a paper exercise to ensure that the support Grace needs continues and that it’s updated when needed”



“It's a very detailed process which was well handled. I had plenty of opportunities to discuss Harrison's' needs at length and we had lots of contact with the lady writing the plan. I was able to give my views and my wishes for the future – 100%. Harrison was very much included, part of the process and his views included. The whole thing was generally well executed - there wasn't anything that stood out or that I would change. His needs are being met and college are supporting him, we are-able to move forwards”

“Everything has been handled better than we could have hoped. Thank you for all the help. Very grateful for all the hard work put in to help Reggie and us”

Worcestershire Children First Fostering Quality Assurance Programme Quarter 2 22/23 Report

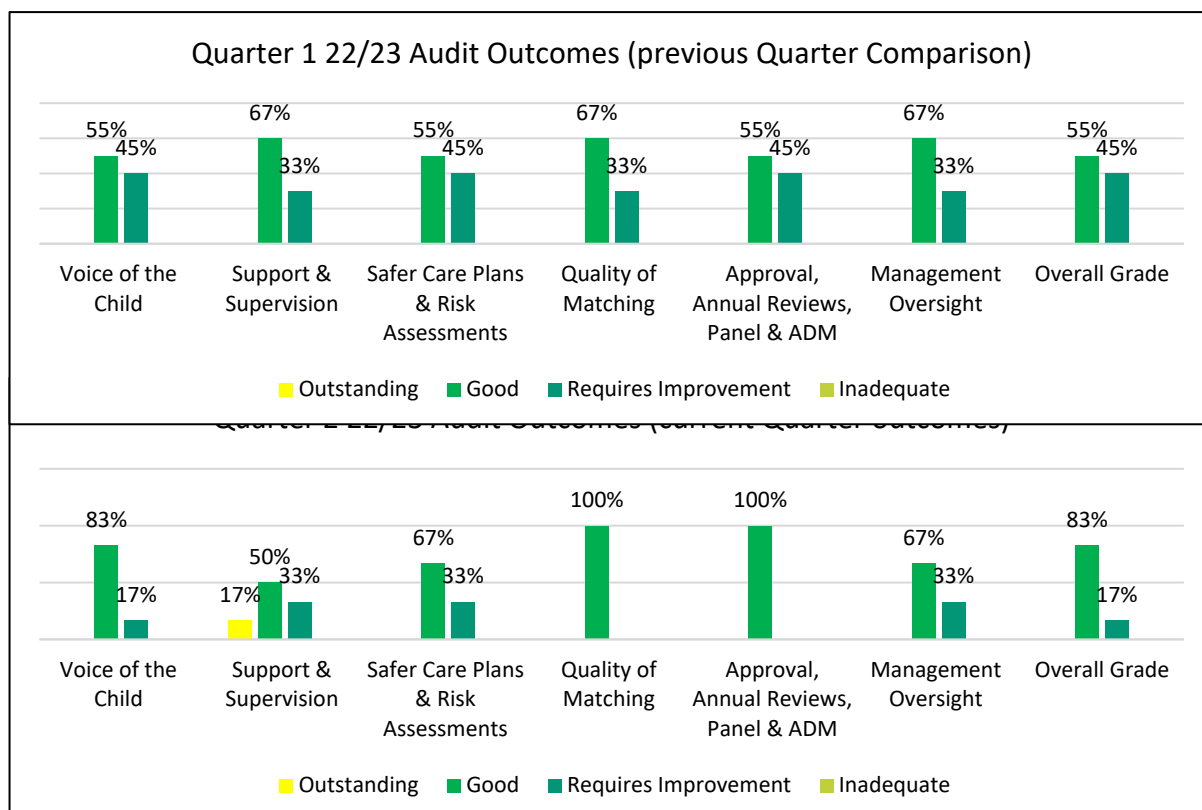
Our WCF Fostering Quality Assurance Framework focuses on three key strands, Audits, Service User Feedback and Key Performance Indicators; this report focuses on our learning from Audit Activity and feedback from children, parents & carers – we focus on learning and feedback from Quarter 2 22/23. This is our second Quarterly Report therefore we will be able to present Quarter on Quarter comparisons.

In this Quarter we presented the learning from the previous Audit Period to the WCF Management Team for reflection and dissemination to the wider service, we also ran two Audit Workshops on completing Audits, WCF Fostering Managers were invited to attend these sessions.

Audits:

Our Audit Programme consists of Monthly Peer/Moderated Case File Audits; each month a selection of cases is identified open to WCF Fostering, each case is allocated to two managers, both managers independently audit the case record and a senior manager in WCF moderates the audit – this supports the identification and consistent application of what good looks like, learning and outcome grades.

Six audits were completed this Quarter; we evidence improvements in Good practice throughout.



What is working well?

- Supervision has a focus & reflection on the Voice of the Child
- Visits evidence opportunities for children & young people in placement to speak to Supervising Social Workers
- Voice of the Child is evidenced as connected into Assessments and Carer Reviews
- Evidence of examples of responding to children’s wishes and feelings
- Carer Supervision is timely and recorded consistently
- Case Summaries evidenced as present on records
- When need increases, visits to carers and households increase to match this
- When cases transfer between workers, there are planned handovers between workers
- Evidence of Placement Meetings taken place and reflecting on key issues such as Delegated Authority
- Risk Assessments in place and when new concerns are identified these are updated
- Evidence of Kinship Placements are matched to need
- Review Paperwork for Annual Reviews in place and timely, ADM Decision making recorded
- Regular Management Supervision & Footprint is evident on file and is taken place regularly

Areas for learning & focus?

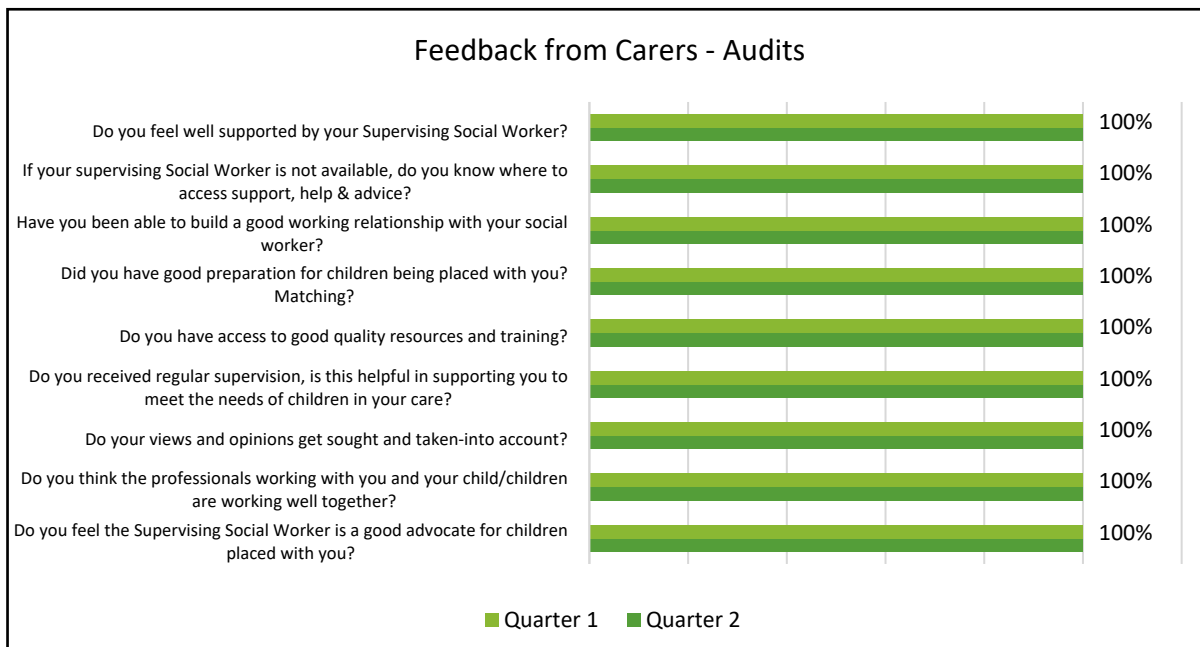
- Ensure that when children & young people raise concerns that we share and work with Children’s Social Workers and connect with IROs
- When children discuss Family Time or wishing for this to increase, ensure we follow this up or support children to understand the decisions and plans in place
- Ensure we reflect, and when required challenge, carers regarding both carers being present to meetings, supervisions & appointments
- Ensure we follow up and update training records and address any gaps with carers regarding training needs and standards
- Kinship Carer supervision to reflect on wider family connections and relationships
- Ensure Supervising Social Workers follow up actions with other workers/agencies when needs are identified in Carer Supervision
- Ensure that concerns within Risk Assessments & Plans are followed up – how we evidence change/de-escalation
- Ensure if concerns are identified (such as in Health & Safety Checks) we follow these up and evidence this has taken place
- Ensure we undertake our unannounced visits consistently
- Weekly Logs from Carers are not consistent in quality, ensure we address this directly
- Ensure we gain feedback from Social Workers, IROs, Family & Partner Agencies for Panel & Reviews – what can the service do differently
- Team Managers to follow up and/or evidence this follow up with C&F Team Managers when addressing any concerns

Next Steps?

1. Presentation of the over-arching findings & report to the WCFE Management Team – 17th October 2022
2. Dissemination of the findings and report to all WCFE Teams, lead by the respective Team Managers
3. Ensure that Team Managers have met with each Social Worker where an audit has taken place to reflect on individual audit learning
4. Learning for Auditors – the Quality of Matching does not present in Audits as being explored

in the same depth as other areas and this needs to be developed; recommendation the service undertake a focused Audit on the Quality of Matching

Experiences of our Carers



In Audits 5 carers gave us feedback, in comparison to the previous quarter we see all carers reporting positively on their experiences.



This Quarter we have introduced feedback calls to carers on their experiences, 22 carers gave feedback using this process this quarter, and the majority reported positives, access to resources and training is a key strength. The areas of greater focus are on matching preparation and how professionals are working together.

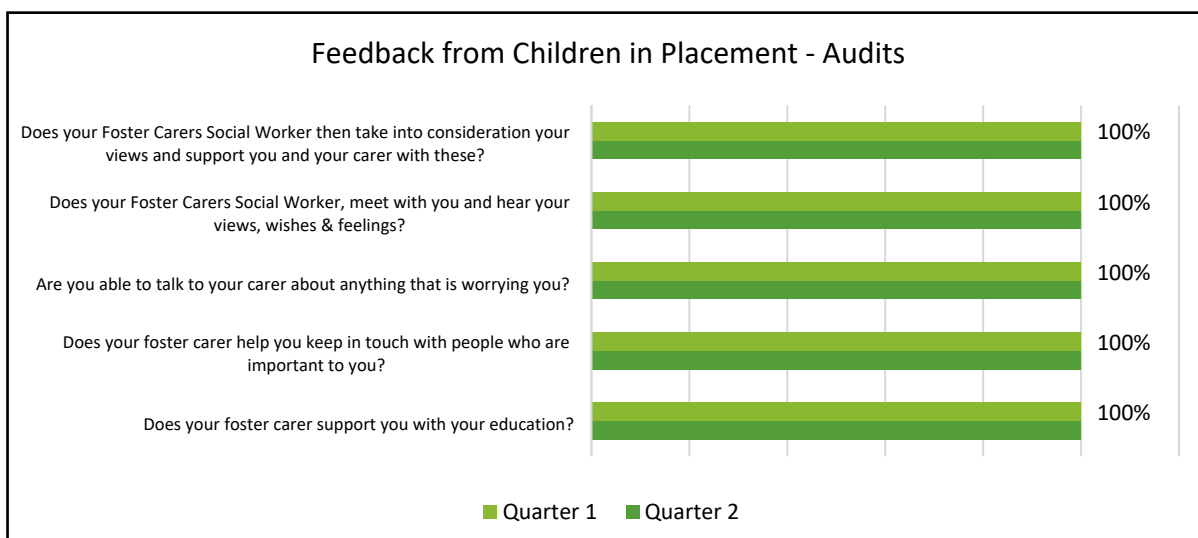
“Ours case was slightly different as we had a fortnight's transition to get to know the children. We felt supported throughout the process”

“The Training Hub has been useful as it has allowed us to request training that we feel would be helpful and we can undertake training at a time to suit us”

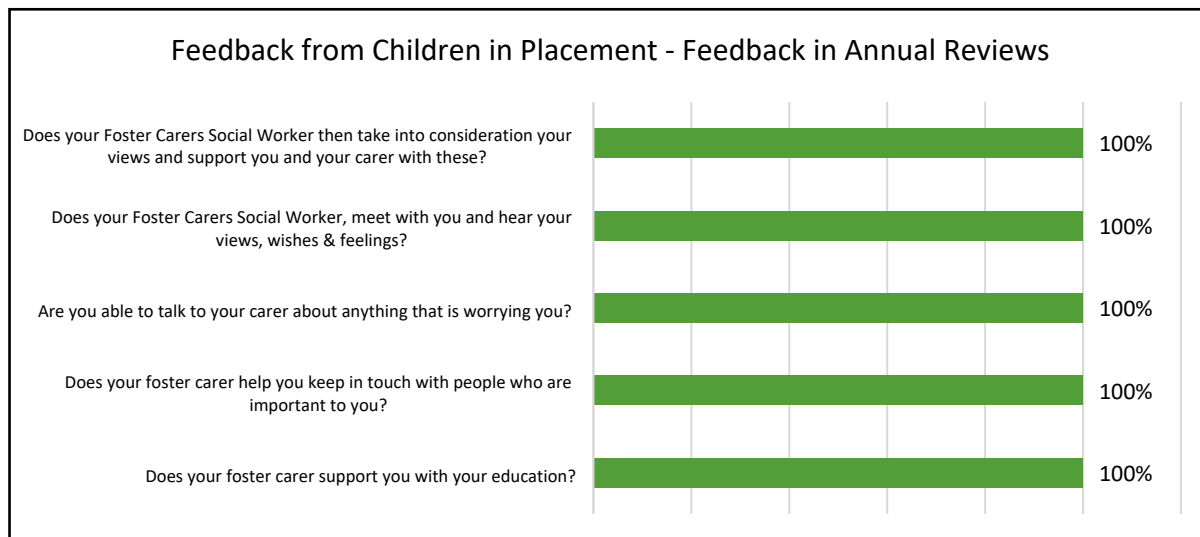
“SSW has been with us for nearly 5 years, and she has been brilliant. Any issues have been dealt with appropriately”

“SSW is always responsive to calls and text messages”

Experiences of Children & Young People in our Placements



In Audits 6 children gave us feedback, in comparison to the previous quarter we see again consistent and positive feedback.



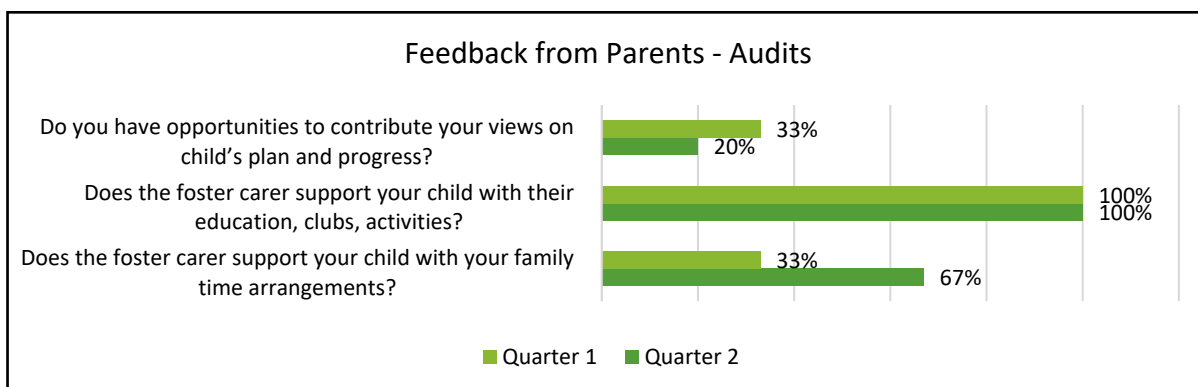
In Quarter 2 we have introduced additional questions within our children’s feedback for Carer Annual Reviews to help us capture how they are supported and experience WCF Placements – in this period 24 children gave us feedback and there was consistently positive feedback from children & young people.

“That I have somewhere to live and can go out and play”

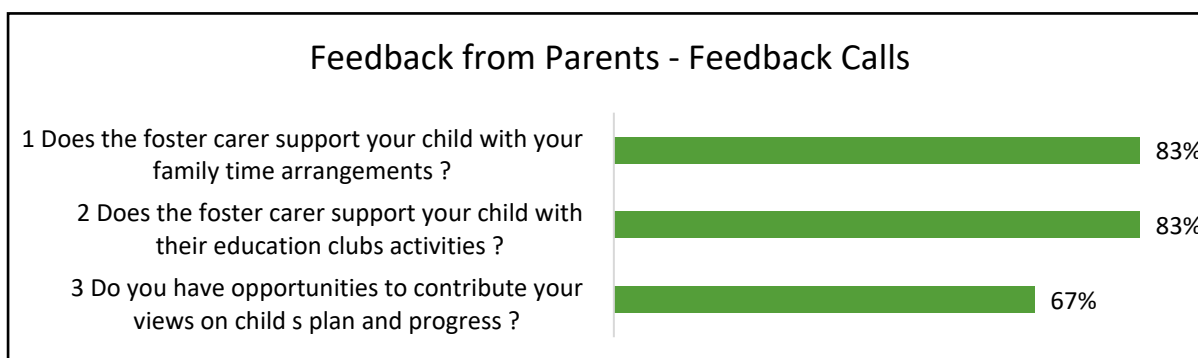
“J said he is very happy living with his carers J and A and would not change anything”

“They are kind and friendly. They help me. They moved to a larger house so we could keep living with them long term. I feel happy and safe there”

Experiences of Birth Parents of WCF Fostering



In Audits 5 parents gave us feedback, in comparison to the previous quarter we see consistency and improvement for carer support to children and supporting family time, however, birth parent feedback on being able to contribute their views remains low.



This Quarter we have introduced feedback calls to birth parents on their experiences, 12 parents gave feedback using this process this quarter, this graph is their feedback and the majority reported positives, this is an improvement in areas identified from Audits in the previous Quarter.



“My son is only 7 months old, but he is developing well, and the carer is doing everything she can”

“Birth mum said that her daughter seemed more positive with the foster carer, she seemed a lot more-happier than in the previous placement”

“L explained that she attends the children's reviews and there is one this Wednesday and she goes to the PEP's and is commenting today for the foster carers review”

Summary of Feedback:

- Across the audits we gained 74 pieces of individual feedback (27 carers, 30 children and 17 birth parents).
- We need to continue to focus on ensuring this is business as usual, this is a significant increase from the previous quarter where we saw 16 pieces of feedback.
- We see positives reported from children in placement, carers, and parents on how they experience WCF Fostering and is evidence of the impact of the improvement work from the past 12 months. Parents feeling able to contribute their views is an area of focus.

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Voice of the Child

October 2021 – March 2022

Summary Report

This summary report is the findings and feedback from Children & Young People between October 2021 & March 2022. We seek the voice of the child in our daily work with the children, hearing their voice on their experiences in our assessments, plans and direct work, this is evidenced through individual case work.

However, we also seek feedback from children and young people of their experiences of our services, what we are doing well and areas for focus or improvement. We do this through a variety of mechanisms. This report will capture feedback & experiences from children who are in need of help and protection and children who are looked after and care leavers; **in total we had feedback from 509 children & young people** (an increase from 412 in the previous reporting period) on their experiences of our services across the different mechanisms. Overview of the mechanisms feedback was received:

Children supported through Early Help	109 children through closure feedback & WebStar
Children in Need of Help & Protection	64 children through WebStar and Case File & Mid-Way Audits
Children looked after & Care Leavers	336 children through Audits, Mind of My Own, Targeted Feedback by Care Leavers and Outreach and End of Placement Feedback

Our Key Messages

- Throughout the reporting period we have heard from 509 children & young people on their experiences and the impact of our work with them.
- WebStar continues to be used and evidenced the impact of our work through children supported through Early Help or Children in Need.
- We have developed a new virtual tool called “Have Your Say” this will go live in April 2022 and is a new opportunity for children and young people to share their views.
- We will share the key themes and learning through a Voice of the Child Briefing across our teams and services.
- We have seen an increase in the volume of feedback from children and young people across our services.
- Most children gave positive feedback telling us that they have had opportunities to share their views, wishes and feeling and that children feel listened to – this is a consistent message across our services.
- Feedback demonstrates relationship-based practice in practitioners’ approach – building on our strengths and relationship-based model of practice.
- We will continue to promote and focus the use of WebStar to understand the impact of our services.
- Although the-majority of children and young people share positive experiences; we want to build upon these and that these experiences are for all children & young people.
- Children & Young People do continue to tell us they are not consistently having copies of their plan and/or assessment and this remains a key priority of ensuring this is shared with them.

Children supported through Early Help



109 children & young people gave us feedback on our Early Help Family Support Service, this is the Worcestershire Children First Early Help offer; this was through feedback at closure and Worcestershire WebStar.

What is the impact of our services?

Worcestershire Webstar is a tool used with children & young people; this tool helps us understand their progress but also the impact of our interventions. This directly links to our vision, mission, and values for children in Worcestershire to be happy, healthy & safe. In this period **44 children & young people completed mid/final scores**, this told us...

- 52% said they felt happier
- 32% said they felt safer
- 45% said they felt healthier

How do children experience our work with them?

37 children, aged 5-12, gave us feedback, they told us **92% felt listened to** – an increase from 89%. **100% felt their wishes and feelings were heard** and **86% felt they understood their plan** and increase from 75%.

28 young people, aged 13-18, gave us their feedback, **100% felt the family support worker gave them opportunities to share their views and opinions & felt listened to** – this is consistent feedback from the previous set of feedback. **93% felt included in their assessment and/or plan**, this is a reduction of 3% from the previous report and **89% felt the Early Help service made a positive difference to their family**.

Overall, the feedback from the previous 6 months has sustained or improved, there is 1 area where we see a small reduction of young people not feeling included of 3% and this is a focus to ensure we sustain our positive work in this area.

“He helped with my anxiety and other problems”

“She made easier talking about feelings at home”

“You’ve helped mum, you gave us chores to do which if it helps mum, it helps me too”

“Talked to mum and dad about me having a phone safely, now I have one and I know how to use it safely and what the rules are for me having a phone”

“Julie has helped my mum, and helped Mum and Dad set rules so I can start going out again”

“I felt listened to. She gave me some good ideas. I liked the breathing exercises”

Children in Need of Help & Protection

What is the impact of our services?

Worcestershire Webstar is a tool used with children & young people; this tool helps us understand their progress but also the impact of our interventions. This directly links to our vision, mission, and values for children in Worcestershire to be happy, healthy & safe. Across the year **52 children & young people completed mid/final scores**, this told us...

- 54% said they felt happier
- 37% said they felt safer
- 46% said they felt healthier

How do children experience our work with them?

Across audits **12 children** gave us feedback on their experiences.

91% felt their worker gave them opportunities to share their views and opinions, this is an increase from 86%. 92% of young people felt listened, 78% felt included in their plan, 89% felt the Social Worker spoke to all the right people in their plan, 75% felt it was the right plan for them and **89% felt the work had made a positive difference to them and their family.**

There has been a targeted piece of work on young people’s experiences of feeling safe and exploitation and the launch of GET THERE.

“They have been really nice to me, and they helped me. They helped me with my family”

“She is kind, speaks to us one by one”

“She was really nice, and I liked speaking to her”

“She listens to me. I really like her”

“I just want to say thank you for everything you’ve done for me and how much you’ve helped me. I don’t think i will ever find anyone that has helped me as much as you have. Even in my darkest days I would still want to see you as I know you can help me. I appreciate everything you’ve done for me, and you will be missed so much by both me mum and my sister. I did have a little cry when you left today as i really do appreciate you so much”



Looked after Children & Young People

How do children experience our work with them?

In audits **42 children** gave us feedback, 98% of children & young people who gave us feedback **told us that they felt safe where they live**, 90% were happy with how their CLA Review was chaired by their IRO, 80% felt listened to and 94% understood the role of the IRO.

The IRO Service undertook a targeted feedback survey with young people, **132 gave us their feedback**, they told us 97% said review meetings recognised what was going well for them, 85% said they had opportunities to speak to their IRO before their review, the-majority of children who said they did not, said they had the opportunity but chose not to speak to their IRO. 85% felt they understood the role of the IRO and 76% understood their plan. There are strengths and the-majority of children and young people gave positive feedback – however there is more work to ensure this is the experience for all children.

Mind of My Own is a digital app which support's children to contact their Social Worker or Independent Reviewing Officer; this also helps children share their views. Across this period, we received **28 'statements'**, most children used the app to share views for their Foster Carers Review.

How do children & young people experience placements?

Following the end of placements, IROs contact children and young people to seek their views on their experience of the previous placement, across the period **30 children and young people** gave us feedback.

77% told us that they were able to visit the new placement before the moved – this is an improvement from 55%, some children who did not have this opportunity were linked to urgent/emergency placements – the learning is being creative on how we create these opportunities, such as through photos, calls & virtual visits – this is similar learning from the previous report.

80% reported to being happy in placement, 79% reported they were supported with their education, 78% reported they were supported to keep in touch with those important to them and 71% reported they were able to share their worries with the carers; we have seen all areas of children's feedback improve in these key areas.

Most children who gave feedback scored highly with 3/5 or above, for some children their experiences are scored lower, and these are areas of focus for us as part of looked after reviews, statutory visits, and PEPs – it is important that we have this focus on our work with children and young people in such placements and set this out clear expectations with Placement Planning Meetings on how such needs are met.

"They listened to that I wanted to not change school & this has stayed the same as I go to Nunnery Wood in Worcester but live in Redditch"

"She listened to me really well and understood what i wanted and helped me get what I want"

"My IRO brought me and my siblings a letter that told me about her role so that I understood. I have kept my letter. My IRO is funny and kind"

"I don't like online meetings, but this is not the reason that I don't attend, I just can't be bothered with it, my foster carers tell me what was discussed "

Experiences of our Care Leavers

The Care Leavers Service has an established a new feedback mechanism to hear about the experiences of young adults they are working with, and this will be reported on in future reports, however, within this reporting period they undertook a **targeted survey with Young Adults working with Personal Advisors, 88 gave their feedback and views.**

92% felt listened to and understood by their PA, 86% felt included in their Pathway Planning, however, 64% said they had received a copy of their plan. 83% said that it was easy to contact their PA.

The feedback received evidence's relationship-based practice for our Care Leavers in respect of feeling listened to and understood, there is some development work to ensure all young adults have copied of their Plan.

Our **Outreach Service** supports looked after young people and care leavers in independent living placements, targeted feedback has been sought on the support they receive, **16 pieces of feedback** were given between October - December. 68% said they felt listened to, 62% the workers were easy to talk to and 81% felt respected by staff.

“Contact me regularly but doesn't overly make contact, feels just right”

“Helped with funding for my flat and helped get me my flat, helped with furniture. But since then, she hasn't been very helpful”

“My workers helped me get into college and I now play football too at college and have made new friends. I also attend the gym often. My workers have helped me with any appointments, and I have a new bike”

“I got my own property, Lisa helped sort this and how to bid and sorted out problems with Platform”



"I don't think I need as many visits as I am getting. I feel 1 face to face and a few phone calls would be fine as I'm often not here but also feel confident in living independently"

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Children's Social Care Statutory Comments, Compliments and Complaints Procedure**Quarter 1 1st April – 30th June 2022**

This summary report brings together the key quantitative data and analysis from Quarter 1 Social Care & Safeguarding Compliments and Complaints.

Complaints Received

	Q1 22/23	Q4 21/22	Q3 21/22	Q2 21/22	Q1 21-22
Through Care Team (including Placements & Sufficiency)	14	17	6	9	5
CwD	4	2	2	4	4
Family Front Door	8	18	12	11	10
Fostering & Kinship	1	0	1	2	5
Safeguarding Area	26	23	20	25	21
Support Services/Targeted Family Support	1	4	3	1	2
QA and Independent review	5	-	-	-	-
Total	59	64	44	52	47

There has been a rise in complaints in comparison to Q1 of 21/22, but a reduction since Q4.

It is positive that there is a notable decline in complaints received for the Family Front Door since Q3. Most other areas remain consistent.

Compliments Received

	Q1 22/23	Q4 21/22	Q3 21/22	Q2 21/22	Q1 21/22
Through Care Team	3	-	4	2	-
CwD	1	1	-	3	-
Targeted Early Help/support services	1	3	3	1	2
Family Front Door	1	2	8	-	5
Fostering & Kinship	-	-	-	2	-
Safeguarding Area	8	9	4	11	9
QA & Independent Review	2	3	2	-	3
Total	16	18	25	19	20

Nature of Complaints Received

The nature of complaints is higher than the complaints received as although the complaint is logged once, in some instances there is more than one primary concern within a complaint.

	Staff attitude and behaviour	Decision making	Communication	Quality/timeliness of social work assessment	Practice non-compliant with legislation/procedure	Lack of or delay in providing an assessed service	Total
Family Front Door	10	7	7	17	2	4	47
CWD/Short Breaks/Resid	3	-	-	-	-	2	5
Through Care Team	3	14	17	1	1	7	43
Safeguarding Area	5	10	12	6	2	3	38
Fostering	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Targeted Family Support/Support Services	3	-	1	-	1	1	6
QA & Independent Review	1	3	11	-	-	6	21
Total	25	34	48	24	6	23	160

Stage 1 Outcomes by Nature & %

Nature	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	Discontinued	Withdrawn	No Finding
Decision making	4 (2.47%)	1(0.62%)	27 (16.67%)	1 (0.62%)	1 (0.62%)	-
Communication	9 (5.56%)	7 (4.32%)	32 (19.75%)	1 (0.62%)	-	-
Staff Attitude/Behaviour	-	3 (1.85%)	19 (11.73%)	2 (1.23%)	1 (0.62%)	1 (0.62%)

Lack or delay in providing assessed service	6 (3.7%)	4 (2.47%)	13 (8.02%)	-	-	-
Discrimination	-	-	-	-	-	-
Practice non-compliant	2 (1.23%)	-	3 (1.85%)	-	1 (0.62%)	-
Quality/Timeliness	3 (1.85%)	1 (0.62%)	18 (11.11%)	2 (1.23%)	-	-
Total & %	24 (14.81%)	16 (9.88%)	112 (69.14%)	6 (3.7%)	3 (1.85%)	1 (0.62%)

Current Stage of Open Complaints

	Stage 1	Stage 2
Through Care	2	2
Targeted Family Support/Support Services	-	-
CWD	1	1
Family Front Door	1	1
Safeguarding	6	3
Fostering and Kinship	1	-
QA & Independent Review	1	-
Total	12	7

*Some complaints have been brought forward from the previous quarter, as they remained unresolved.

Stage 2 Outcomes by nature and %

Nature	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not upheld
Decision making	-	1 (14.3%)	1 (14.3%)
General lack of communication	1 (14.3%)	1 (14.3%)	-
Quality/timeliness of SW assessment	-	1 (14.3%)	-

Lack or Delay in providing an assessed service	-	1 (14.3%)	-
Practice non compliant with legislation/procedure	-	-	1 (14.3%)
Total	1 (14.3%)	4 (57.2%)	2 (28.6%)

- Three of the stage 2 outcomes were the same as the stage 1 response. 2 being not upheld at both stages and the other being partially upheld at both stages.
- 3 were not upheld at stage 1, but all partially upheld at stage 2.
- 1 was partially upheld at stage 1 but upheld at stage 2.

Stage 1 Response times

Stage 1 complaints should be responded to within a statutory 10-day timescale, although this can be extended to 20 days if necessary.

Stage 1 responses are consistently being responded to within the extended timescale of 20 working days (91% - a slight drop from Q4 21/22 of 94.23%).

4 responses were outside of the 20 working days, although it is worth noting that on 3 of these, each was only 1 day over timescale.

Some complaints that were responded to during this period may have been received earlier.

	2021/22 Response within 10 days	2022/23 Response within 10 days	2021/22 Response within 20 days	2022/23 Response within 20 days	2021/22 More than 20 days	2022/23 More than 20 days
CwD	-	1	1	1	-	-
Family Front Door	2	2	11	7	1	1
Fostering & Kinship	-	-	1		-	-
Safeguarding	5	2	20	12	-	1
Through Care	1	1	6	9	2	1
Targeted Family Support/Support Services	2	-	-	2	-	-
QA and Independent Review	-		-	3	-	-
Total	10 (19.23%)	6 (14%)	39 (75%)	33 (77%)	3 (5.77%)	4 (9%)

Stage 2 Response times

Service Area	Response within 65 working days	Response in more than 65 working days
Safeguarding	-	1
Through Care	1	1
Fostering and Kinship	1	-
Family Front Door	1	-
Supporting Families First	2	-
Total	5 (71%)	2 (29%)

Stage 2 investigations should be completed within 25 working days. However, this may be impractical in some cases and where it is not possible to complete within 25 working days, Stage 2 may be extended to 65 working days.

Unfortunately, 2 of the stage 2 responses were outside of the timescale. 1 was due to what would seem to be unavoidable delays due to staff sickness and a bereavement that impacted the IP.

In the other late response, the IO details in her report that delays were caused by lack of responses from some staff and sick leave.

Stage 3 Response time for Quarter 1

There was 1 stage 3 review panel held in Q1.

In the original stage 2 response, the complaint points were not upheld. The panel agreed with the findings and conclusions of the stage 2 investigation.

An additional recommendation was made by the panel. They advised that WCF give careful consideration as to how assessments are sent to parents and carers, suggesting that these types of documents could be sent Recorded Delivery or Signed for Mail or secure email to ensure that the recipient receives them.

This stage 3 panel was held in the 30-working day timescale.

WCF Analysis of the Complaints data & trends:

- In Quarter 4 we saw an increase in Complaints received, as we move into Quarter 1 these have begun to reduce, although remain higher than this period 12-months ago. Although the Complaints received increase, it is important to note 9 Complaint Points were discontinued or withdrawn from Complainants.
- Our compliments have reduced slightly from the previous period but remain within an average mean.
- Although some complaints do go to Stage 2, currently 7 are open at Stage 2 and in this period 2 Stage 2 Complaints concluded; given our overall number of Stage 1 complaints, this is a relatively small number of complainants wishing their complaint to progress to an independent Stage 2 Investigation. In Children's Social Care our Stage 1 Investigations are completed by Advanced Practitioners and therefore are independent of the Social Work Teams, this brings a level of independence on how families experience these investigations. This does demonstrate that overall families are content with the quality of investigations, outcomes, and proposed resolutions.
- Communication is the highest volume of complaint points; however, they are equally the highest complaint point where a not upheld finding is made.
- Overall, just under 70% of Stage 1 Complaints are not upheld – evidencing quality of practice completed and demonstrated, whereas 14% were upheld. Our Stage 2 Investigations found 1 Complaint Point upheld.
- 91% of Stage 1 investigations were completed in timescale, 4 Stage 1 Complaints were outside of the maximum 20 working days
- Of our Stage 2 Investigations 71% were completed in timescale and 1 had an upheld outcome. 29% (2 cases) the investigations were out of timescale; one was due to delays with the Independent Person due to ill health & bereavement and the other was due to a delay in a member of staff supplying written information – we have agreed to ensure any delays are raised with the Business Manager and the Head of Quality Assurance copied in to ensure delays are identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity.
- 1 Stage 3 Panel was held in this Quarter, they agreed with the outcomes of the investigation and action of the Local Authority – this complaint was not upheld.

Compliments in Quarter 1:

We have received a range of compliments from children, young people and families...these can be read in this document but examples also include:

A SW from the Safeguarding North East Team 5 received a card from a parent giving positive feedback on his engagement with the family – “We want you to know how truly grateful we are for the help, support and wonderful energy you have shared with us!”

A PA for Care Leavers Team North received from a compliment from a Young Person that she had been working with – “D is the best PA he has ever had, she is always there for him, does what she says she will do, will challenge him when needed and will be persistent in engaged with him when he is being evasive”

Learning and Service Improvement in Quarter 1:

WCF take learning from Complaints seriously and we have recorded the following service learning and improvement following complaints determined during Quarter 1:

- We have updated our Supervision Recording Template to include a specific recording section to evidence reflective discussion from learning from complaints, audits, and feedback.
- We undertook a learning from practice presentation to our End-to-End Leadership, including all senior and team managers, advanced practitioners, IROs and Conference Chairs.
- We have promoted our Complaints Practice Standards & Guidance and where we centrally save our learning reports as a central repository.
- We have written and disseminated a learning briefing to all staff to include service specific complaint learning.

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2022-2023 Quarter 1 SEND Complaints Report

This report covers the months of April-June 2022 and provides details about the complaints received by SEND Services during this period. These complaints come under several categories, in line with Worcestershire County Council’s complaint process. They are Stage 1, Stage 2, LGO and Informal. Stage 1 complaints are investigated and responded to by the SEND Complaints Officer, a role which began in April 2022. At Stage 2, an Independent Investigating Officer is assigned from CRU and at Stage 3 these are referred to the Local Government Ombudsman. Informal complaints can take the form of direct contact from parent carers, MP or Councillor enquiries or concerns raised by other professionals, such as schools. These are investigated by the SEND Complaints Officer.

In this report, an overview is provided of the total number of complaints received at each stage, key themes within these and learning points for SEND Services.

As of Quarter 1 22/23 we have appointment a new Complaints Officer for SEND Services, this is a central point of contact for families and staff, and they oversee the tracking of Complaints, Investigating and Responding to Complaints and following up Action Points.

Contents

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Action Points	12
Conclusion	12

Stage 1

In Quarter 1, we received 13 Stage 1 complaints. These can be broken down into Service Area, SEND Area of Need and Complaint Points, as shown in the tables below.

Area Teams

Service Area	Number of Complaints	Percentage of Complaints
Assessment Team	0	-
North Team	6	46%
South Team	3	23%
Post-16 Team	4	31%
Review and Monitoring Team	0	-

Table 1: Total number of Stage 1 complaints by area team.

Key Points:

The North Team had the greatest number of complaints, at 6. However, 2 of these cases overlapped with the Assessment Team as parents were dissatisfied with timescales or reports used when assessing for an EHCP; as the child had been allocated to North, they were recorded as complaints for this team. This data will be used as a comparative measure in Quarter 2, to determine if there is a theme. Over the year, data will be collected to see if there are specific times where Area Teams receive more complaints, for example at around transition times or Phase Transfer.

SEND Area of Need

SEND Primary Area of Need	Number of Complaints	Percentage of Complaints
Social, Emotional and Mental Health	4	31%
Communication and Interaction – Speech, Communication and Language Needs	1	8%
Communication and Interaction – Autism	3	23%
Physical Disability/Sensory	3	23%
Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities	0	-
Cognition and Learning	0	-
No listed SEND	2	15%

Table 2: Total number of Stage 1 complaints by Primary SEND need.

Key Points:

The SEND Primary Area of Need that occurred in complaints for Quarter 1 was Social Emotional and Mental Health, at 4. The Primary Area of Need is that which is listed on the ONE System. This data will be used in subsequent quarters to determine if there is a pattern with the children and young people's families who raise formal complaints, and if their complaint points create a theme to be learnt from.

Individual Complaint Points

Complaint Categories	Number of Complaint Points	Percentage of Overall Complaint Points
Dissatisfaction with decision making/school placement	3	7%
Dissatisfaction with timelines or content of communication	25	57%
EHCP not being implemented	7	16%
Standard of service	5	11%
Transport (relating to SEND)	0	-
Detail/clarity on mainstream offer	0	-
Case responsibility during transition between education providers	0	-
Request for EHC Needs Assessment or other statutory correspondence (not a complaint)	0	-
Other (not a complaint)	4	9%

Table 3: Summary of all Stage 1 complaint points, by category.

Key Points:

This table summarises the total number of each complaint point. As many formal complaints contain multiple complaint points, these numbers are higher than the total number of Stage 1 complaints, at 44. The category with the most complaint points was ‘Dissatisfaction with timelines or content of communication’, at 25 complaint points.

The main issues with regards to this complaint point was around SEND Services keeping families updated of any progress or delays in their children’s cases and replying to parent carer enquiries in a timely manner. They have arisen from staffing shortages within SEND Services and delayed EHC Needs Assessments due to reports from professionals not being ready.

Complaints in Quarter 1 around communication included: informing families of cancelled meetings; changes in Casework Officer; ensuring a robust handover takes place before and after meetings if a different SEND representative needs to attend; a detailed handover of cases from SEND Managers if cases transfer to a new Casework Officer; supporting families with transition to Post-16 prior to Phase Transfer taking place; informing families of consultation responses; telling families about delays in the EHC Needs Assessment process; and keeping families informed throughout the EHC Needs Assessment.

Outcomes of Complaints

Complaint Category	Number of Complaint Points	Upheld	Partially Upheld	Not Upheld	No finding
Dissatisfaction with decision making/school placement	3	0	0	3	0
Dissatisfaction with timelines or content of communication	25	13	8	2	2
EHCP not being implemented	7	4	2	1	0
Standard of service	5	1	1	3	0
Transport (relating to SEND)	0	0	0	0	0
Detail/clarity on mainstream offer	0	0	0	0	0
Case responsibility during transition between education providers	0	0	0	0	0
Request for EHC Needs Assessment or other statutory correspondence (not a complaint)	0	0	0	0	0
Other (not a complaint)	4	0	0	0	4
Total	44	18	11	9	6
Percentage Total of Outcomes	-	41%	25%	20%	14%

Table 4: Summary of all Stage 1 complaint points and their outcomes.

Key Points:

Of the 44 complaint points, 18 were upheld, 11 were partially upheld and 9 were not upheld. Where possible, we have tried to avoid No Finding; for those that no finding could be found, this was due a duplication in complaint points from the complainant, or the enquiry point being raised about a school, so these concerns would need to be raised with the individual settings in line with their own complaints policy. The total number of each outcome can be found in the table below. In Quarter 2 we will focus on ensuring we do not have reputative Complaint Points, to reduce those with No Finding.

Outcome	Number	Percentage of All Outcomes
Upheld	18	41%
Partially Upheld	11	25%
Not Upheld	9	20%
No Finding	6	14%

Table 5: Summary of all Stage 1 complaint outcomes.

Key Points:

For all complaint points that were Upheld or Partially Upheld, actions were given to SEND Services in response to the learning from the complaint. These actions were followed up by the SEND Complaints Officer, to ensure we close the loop on completed complaints.

Response times

Response Time	Total Number of Complaints	Percentage of All Complaints
0-10 Days	4	31%
11-20 Days	6	46%
20+ Days	3	23%

Table 6: Summary of response times for Stage 1 complaints.

Overall, since the start of the Complaints Officer role on 25th April 2022, all Stage 1 complaint responses were written within the 20-day timescale. On one occasion, the response was completed and sent to admin on Day 20 but was not sent out to the complainant until Day 22. This has been counted within the 20+ Day category and has been taken as a learning point to ensure the Complaints Officer follows up with admin that responses have been both emailed and posted out to complainants. The remaining 2 in the 20+ Day category were complaints within Quarter 1 but were before the start of the Complaints Officer role.

Learning from Stage 1 Complaints

From the Stage 1 responses, there have been strengths in individual Casework Officers working closely with families and schools to ensure EHCPs are being upheld. They have held implementation meetings and requested Individual Provision Maps from schools to cross-reference with the EHCP and ensure provision is being given to children. These Casework Officers have communicated regularly with parents and phoned them frequently to keep them updated with their child's case, to try and alleviate their anxieties.

In some cases, Casework Officers have worked hard to support schools in finding alternative provision for children, if they are still on roll but unable to attend. This strength needs to be taken on a case-by-case basis and in the context of formal complaints, as there have been occasions where this has not always been true, as some children have been without provision for periods of time.

57% of all Stage 1 complaint points were around quality of communication and meeting statutory timelines in the EHCP process. This highlights a significant area of development, whereby SEND Managers ensure Casework Officers are regularly communicating with their active cases, and in any case respond to enquiries within five working days. Parents have commented that they would like to be kept updated with delays and would appreciate holding emails, so that they know they have been listened to and that somebody is looking into their enquiries for them. Complaints have been based

around parents feeling they have needed to ‘chase’ for responses, with some feeling ignored by the Local Authority.

An approach based around forming positive working relationships with families is needed, to build their trust in the Local Authority and to alleviate any anxieties that they may have. It has been acknowledged that this can be difficult with large caseloads but communicating with active cases could help to reduce the number of formal complaints we receive, this would also support relationship-based practice and outcomes for children and families. Furthermore, logging phone conversations and following up discussions with an email would not only provide a paper trail, but it would also help other SEND staff picking up the case to understand exactly what is happening with each child. The move to Liquidlogic in the coming months will help with this.

Some aspects of complaints have highlighted areas where communication has not always been clear, leading to misunderstandings from parents. SEND staff must ensure they fully explain any decisions and respond to all enquiry points from parents or send a holding email if they need to speak with other professionals to be able to do this. It is then imperative that they respond to parents with this information and offer to speak with them over the phone to clarify the points.

Several complaint points in this category have been around SEND Services not meeting statutory timescales in the EHCP process. This includes the EHC Needs Assessment process, with parents not being informed of a decision to issue an EHCP within the 16-week deadline, and not issuing Amendment Notices and final EHCPs following Annual Reviews of existing cases. Delays in the EHC Needs Assessment process are sometimes due to the shortage of Educational Psychologists; while parents are anxious about these delays, often informing them of them helps them to know their child’s case has not been forgotten about. A key learning point here is for Casework Officers to ensure Amendment Notices are issued within 4 weeks of an Annual Review, and a final EHCP within 8 weeks of that, in line with the SEND Regulations 2014.

Some learning can and has been actioned at an individual or Area Team level. However, for whole-service actions and learning, it has been raised that there needs to be a monthly system for doing this. Moving forward, the SEND Complaints Officer will produce a monthly bulletin, to provide the director for All Age Disability and the SEND Group Managers with actions that need to be disseminated to all staff in one, clear message.

Stage 2

Of the 13 Stage 1 complaints, 5 requested to progress to Stage 2. 4 were declined, by CRU, and 1 was accepted, which will be assigned an Investigating Officer soon. A Stage 2 request was also accepted from a previous Quarter 4 complaint, bringing the total of complaints requested at Stage 2 to 6. This is currently being considered by Consumer Relations. The number of requests declined at Stage 2, by CRU, is that they have agreed that the quality, outcomes, and resolutions of Stage 1 complaints is robust and thoroughly addresses complainants' concerns – therefore does not meet criteria for a Stage 2 Investigation – these are when Complaint Points have been upheld and our resolutions agree clear actions & timescales.

There is currently 1 existing Stage 2 complaint in progress, and we are waiting on the outcome of this from the Investigating Officer.

LGO

1 family has requested an LGO investigation following the complaints process during Quarter 1. This was accepted and the investigation is ongoing. During Quarter 1, we also received the outcome for 1 LGO investigation. As part of this outcome, Worcestershire Children First will review the procedures for when students with EHCPs transfer to Worcestershire from another Local Authority. This review is currently underway, and we anticipate the outcome in September 2022.

As part of this LGO outcome, there were 4 actions for Worcestershire Children First; these actions have been completed – not all actions were completed as timely as they could have been, the new Complaints Tracker identifies actions and timescales to ensure we are easily able to identify required actions and ensure follow up.

Informal Complaints

In Quarter 1, we received 39 informal complaints. Of these, 17 were sent through the Director of Children’s Services or Director of All Age Disability, 12 were MP or Councillor enquiries, and 10 came through SEND Services or were sent directly to the SEND Complaints Officer.

24 informal complaints were responded to within 0-5 working days, and 9 were responded to within 6-10 working days. 4 were responded to outside of 10 working days, with these delays being due to: gaining consent to share information with CAMHS; the complaint being passed through different Worcestershire Children First directors and requiring information from them; parents adding to the complaint; and, on one occasion, the complaint being dealt with directly by SEND Services, who were trying to arrange a meeting with the parent. 2 complaints were ongoing at the end of Quarter 1; 1 had been answered within 7 days but parents were not satisfied with the response and the communication is ongoing. The second was due by 13th July 2022 but the SEND Manager has been on Annual Leave and a decision about the child’s school placement is needed before the response can be sent.

The following table demonstrates the number of complaints for each category. Unlike formal complaints, informal complaints are not separated into individual complaint points and so this will only reflect the total number of complaints for each category.

Complaint Categories	Number of Complaint Points	Percentage of Overall Complaint Points
Dissatisfaction with decision making/school placement	10	25%
Dissatisfaction with timelines or content of communication	12 (1 related to CME Team)	31%
EHCP not being implemented	2	5%
Standard of service	9	23%
Transport (relating to SEND)	0	-
Detail/clarity on mainstream offer	0	-
Case responsibility during transition between education providers	0	-
Request for EHC Needs Assessment or other statutory correspondence (not a complaint)	1	3%
Other (not a complaint)	4	10%
No reason listed	1	3%

Table 7: Summary of all informal complaint points, by category.

Key Points:

As with Stage 1 complaints, the category of complaint with the highest number is timelines and communication. Towards the end of Quarter 1, there was an increase in informal complaints around the delays in allocating an Educational Psychologist as part of the EHC Needs Assessment process. Due to these delays, there has been an increase in cases exceeding the 16-week timescale for deciding if a child requires and EHCP.

Learning from Informal Complaints

Following an informal complaint; there have been many occasions of SEND Services acting quickly to resolve issues and support families. This has included issuing EHCPs quickly after receiving an informal complaint and contacting parents to provide them with more information.

A high proportion of informal complaints have focused on families feeling they have not been kept updated with the EHC Needs Assessment process, particularly with delays in gaining professional advice. As with Stage 1 complaints, SEND Managers will need to ensure Casework Officer are regularly contacting their open cases and respond within five working days to any enquiries that come through. Open and transparent channels of communication need to take place to keep parents informed of any updates or delays in their children's cases. Letters have been altered to state that there are delays in the EP service, although many parents still feel SEND Services should reach a decision about if their child requires and EHCP within the 16-week timescales. Further communication is needed with parents, to clearly explain that as the EHC Needs Assessment is a statutory process, an EP assessment is required and that the process cannot be completed without this.

Several complaints around Standard of Service have involved children and young people under a Section 19. There is sometimes an overlap with the Children Missing Education Team, if an EHC Needs Assessment is still underway. Once a child has an EHCP, SEND Services are responsible for ensuring suitable alternative provision is in place for that child if they are unable to attend school. If a child is on roll at school, the school must provide this alternative provision using the funding they receive for that child. SEND Services must then have an overview of this provision and must hold schools accountable to ensure they are meeting need. However, it has been highlighted through some informal complaints that this has not always happened, and children have not been in school or alternative provision or SEND have not always supported schools in finding this alternative provision. Moving forward, SEND Managers need to ensure Casework Officers are regularly monitoring Section 19 provision if a child is on roll in school but unable to attend, to fulfil the Section 19 duty. If a child is not on roll, the Casework Officer must source suitable alternative provision to help re-engage the child or young person and meet their needs as stated in their EHCP.

As previously mentioned, this needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis, as there has also been evidence of good practice in this area, with individual Casework Officers holding schools accountable for sourcing suitable alternative provision.

Compliments

During Quarter 1, we received 21 compliments. 11 of these came from parent carers, and 10 were from other professionals. These professionals ranged from school staff, health colleagues and from other professional teams within Worcestershire Children First.

<i>Just wanted to say a HUGE THANK YOU for your efforts in getting L's EHCP finalised and at long last a new direction in sight. New beginnings and opportunities await.</i>	<i>Parent</i>
<i>I spoke to a lovely lady yesterday who was really really helpful...</i>	<i>Parent</i>
<i>Thank you for the update. I really appreciate how you have kept me in the loop so far.</i>	<i>Parent</i>
<i>Brilliant, thank you so much for your help Y!</i>	<i>SENDCO, The Coppice Primary School</i>
<i>Thanks so much for all your hard work...massively appreciated as always</i>	<i>Deputy Head/SENCO, The Beacon PRU</i>
<i>Again thank you to you and Y for your help in getting A the EHCP. It's been a long and at times confusing processes!</i>	<i>Parent</i>
<i>That is fantastic news! I am so please for D and mum as I know they really wanted X school. Many thanks for all support in moving this forward.</i>	<i>Assistant Head/SENCO, King Charles I School</i>
<i>Just want to say thanks ever so much for following that up so quickly...I really appreciate your help...</i>	<i>Teacher, Early Years Language Class</i>
<i>He is doing AMAZING at his new placement – we could not be happier</i>	<i>Parent</i>
<i>Many, many thanks for your hard work. I genuinely appreciate it. It all sounds like a very positive and much needed step for G.</i>	<i>Parent</i>
<i>That's amazing news, thank you for letting me know.</i>	<i>Parent</i>
<i>Thanks Y (and thank you wider team for being brilliant and so patient with all the chasing you do)</i>	<i>DCO for SEND, NHS Hereford and Worcestershire CCG</i>
<i>I just wanted to thank you personally for all you have done to promptly help us resolve our situation with the recent referral we have been trying to push through . It is much appreciated as I cannot begin to imagine the admin workload challenges you face at this stage in the year.</i>	<i>Speech and Language Unit Manager/Teacher, Upton-Upon-Severn CofE Primary and Pre-School</i>

<i>You have been most kind. I cannot thank you enough</i>	<i>Parent</i>
<i>Further to your most recent email, firstly I want to thank you...thank you for listening to my daughter's case.</i>	<i>Parent</i>
<i>Thank you for your swift response.</i>	<i>Social Worker; Herefordshire Local Authority</i>
<i>Thank you too, it's really great to work together towards supporting a young person to reach their full potential.</i>	<i>Deputy Head/DSL/SENCO, Nurture Learning</i>
<i>Thank you for letting me know about this and I'm grateful for your help, it's nice to receive some good news.</i>	<i>Deputy Headteacher, Beaconside Primary and Nursery School</i>
<i>A big Thank you</i>	<i>Speech and Language Therapist (NHS)</i>
<i>Thank you so very much for all your help Y. I'm so relieved and happy with the result. Very much appreciated from us as a family for all yours and X's work.</i>	<i>Parent</i>
<i>A compliment for CME as part of a multi-agency approach: Thank you for your time today. I just want to say that in 10 plus years of SEND meetings...with schools and professionals I have never felt so supported...It's refreshing when schools and professionals listen, accept and understand. I wish all SEND meetings were like this. I really do appreciate and value your support...it is important to me that when people get it right that's recognised as much as poor practice is (which sadly I have experienced more than I should) it really takes so much stress out of advocating for X to feel heard. It means a lot to know X is being supported.</i>	<i>Parent</i>

Action Points

To close the loop with these complaints, the following actions will be completed.

Action	Responsible Person	When
Present Quarter 1 report to SEND Management Team	SEND Complaints Officer	First SLT meeting in August
Dissemination of Quarter 1 report to SEND Casework teams through Team Meetings	SEND Complaints Officer	Attending Area Team meetings in August
Development of a monthly Complaints Key Messages Bulletin	SEND Complaints Officer	Week commencing 25 th July
Development and dissemination of a case study on key learning	SEND Complaints Officer	Finalise case study week commencing 25 th July Disseminate in Area Team meetings in August

Table 8: Summary of actions from Quarter 1 complaints with completion timescales.

The SEND Complaints Officer will follow up with SEND Managers and Area Teams to ensure these learning points are actioned and will ask for evidence of this.

Conclusion

Through the compilation of SEND complaints and compliments, there has been evidence of individual Casework Officers communicating well with stakeholders and finding suitable provision for children. Going forward, more work needs to be done to improve the overall quality of the communication with families from a whole-service perspective, and ensuring they are kept updated with any progress or delays in their children’s cases. Communication needs to be clear and concise, with clear processes in place for all SEND staff to follow. This will ensure a consistent and robust approach is taken with all families and will help to build trust in the service.