

Agenda

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Friday, 16 July 2021, 10.00 am
County Hall, Worcester

All County Councillors are invited to attend and participate

This document can be provided in alternative formats such as Large Print, an audio recording or Braille; it can also be emailed as a Microsoft Word attachment. Please contact Scrutiny on telephone number 01905 844965 or by emailing scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

DISCLOSING INTERESTS

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

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

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

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

WHAT MUST I DO WITH A DPI?

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

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

WHAT ABOUT 'OTHER DISCLOSABLE INTERESTS'?

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

WHAT ABOUT MEMBERSHIP OF ANOTHER AUTHORITY OR PUBLIC BODY?

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

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

Not normally. You must withdraw only if it:

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

DON'T FORGET

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

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Friday, 16 July 2021, 10.00 am, County Hall, Worcester

Membership

Councillors:

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

Co-opted Church Representatives (for education matters)

Mr B Allbut (Church of England)

Parent Governor Representatives (for education matters)

Mr M Hughes

Agenda

Item No	Subject	Page No
1	Apologies and Welcome	
2	Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip	
3	<p>Public Participation</p> <p>Members of the public wishing to take part should notify the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance in writing or by email indicating both the nature and content of their proposed participation no later than 9.00am on the working day before the meeting (in this case 15 July 2021). Enquiries can be made through the telephone number/email address listed below.</p> <p>Please note that due to Covid requirements, places at the meeting are limited. All members of the public who wish to attend the meeting should register by e-mail with the officer below and places will be allocated on a first come first served basis.</p> <p>Attendees at the meeting will be required to sign that they have either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had Covid-19 in the last 6 months, or • Received two Covid-19 vaccinations, or • Had a negative lateral flow test in the 48 Hours prior to the meeting. 	
4	Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting (previously circulated)	

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

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

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8	Supporting Families First - Year One Evaluation and Future Development Plans	59 - 80

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

16 JULY 2021

WORCESTERSHIRE CHILDREN FIRST – SOCIAL CARE PLACEMENTS SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families and the Director of Children's Services have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on developments relating to Worcestershire Children First (WCF) Social Care Placements Sufficiency Strategy.

Background

2. The Worcestershire Children First Sufficiency Strategy 2021 – 2023 (Appendix 1) sets out the aims and objectives to meet our sufficiency duties and our vision on the placement experience for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
3. On 24 June 2021 Cabinet received the WCF Sufficiency Strategy and a report that considered recommendations for future use of children's homes and semi-independent accommodation in line with the strategy, representing predicted demand and best use of the residential provision for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.
4. Cabinet agreed to the recommendations.
5. Full background and previous reports and decisions can be found within the Cabinet report.

Purpose of the Meeting

6. The Scrutiny Panel is asked to:
 - Consider the Worcestershire Children First Sufficiency Strategy 2021-2023 and the recommendations approved at Cabinet and as priority areas of focus in the Worcestershire Children First Business Plan for 2021/22;
 - Agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families and the Director of Children's Services; and
 - Determine whether any future scrutiny is required.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 - Worcestershire Children First Sufficiency Strategy 2021-2023

Appendix 2 – Presentation on WCF Sufficiency Strategy

[Weblink to Appendix 1 \(see item 4 of 24 June Cabinet Agenda\)](#)

Contact Points

Alyson Grice/Alison Spall, Overview and Scrutiny Officers Tel: 01905 844962/846607

Email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children’s Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- [Agenda and Minutes of Cabinet held on 24th June 2021](#)

All agendas and minutes are available on the Council’s website: [weblink to agendas and minutes](#)



Worcestershire Children First Sufficiency Strategy

**January
2021 -
2023**

This strategy sets out the aims and objectives to meet our sufficiency duties and our vision on the placement experience for Looked After Children, Care Leavers and those on the Edge of Care

Contents

- 1. Introduction**
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- 3. Principles underpinning our Sufficiency Strategy**
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 - 5.1 Covid impact**
 - 5.2 Demographics**
 - 5.3 Risk and Needs leading to care**
- 6. Key Performance Indicators – Local, Statistical and National Performance**
- 7. Children placed out of County**
- 8. Current Service Provision analysis and Sufficiency Strategy**
 - 8.1 Fostering**
 - 8.2 Residential Provision**
 - 8.3 Semi- Independent Supported accommodation**
- 9. Permanency**
 - 9.1 Adoption**
 - 9.2 Special Guardianship**
- 10. Children with Disabilities and Additional Needs**
- 11. Edge of Care – Strengthening Families First**
- 12. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children**
- 13. Commissioning Approach to Placements**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The ‘Sufficiency -Statutory Guidance on securing sufficient accommodation for looked after children,’ seeks to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people by providing guidance on the implementation of section 22G of the Children Act 1989. The statutory guidance sets out the requirements Local Authorities must take steps to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation within the authority’s area which meets the needs of children that the Local Authority are looking after, their care leavers and whose circumstances are such that it would be consistent with their welfare for them to be provided with accommodation that is in the Local Authority’s area.
- 1.2 This strategic action and vision requires effective partnership between the WCF acting on behalf of WCC Local Authority and its partners. Each local authority has a duty, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004 Act to make arrangements to promote co-operation with its relevant partners with a view to improving the wellbeing of children in the authority’s area. Each of the statutory ‘relevant partners’ is also required to co-operate with the local authority in making those arrangements. The duty on local authorities to secure sufficient accommodation for children in care set out in the sufficiency guidance should be undertaken within the context of these planning and co-operation duties.
- 1.3 Whilst the sufficiency duty applies in respect of all looked after children, it recognises the importance of earlier, preventive action with those who are on the ‘edge of care’ to support children and families so that fewer children become looked after.
- 1.4 The sufficiency guidance is issued as part of a suite of statutory guidance documents which, together with the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (‘the Regulations’), set out how local authorities should carry out the full range of responsibilities in relation to care planning, placement and review for looked after children.

2. Vision and Values – Worcestershire Children First

Our vision for all children and young people is for them to be **Happy Healthy and Safe**. We work to ensure we keep children at the heart of all we do, we value the experience of family life for them, we recognise and drive for good education for all and when necessary we act to protect them from harm

Vision, Mission and Values



3. The Principles of Permanency that underpin our Sufficiency Strategy

Based on our value of family life our priority is to support children and young people to achieve permanency in the care of their birth parents. Living in parental care that is safe, stable and nurturing is the best way to promote a child's welfare and outcomes. Through our Strengthening Families First strength based multi-disciplinary team we will offer children, young people and their parents a wide range of intensive support to manage crisis and prevent family breakdown enabling them to build on their strengths resourcefulness and resilience as a family

When children are received into the care of their local authority their placement experience is key to their overall outcomes as a Looked After Child and or Care Leaver. Our aim is to give Children and Young People the best placements in order for them to thrive in a loving, stable, and secure environment and, where possible, for those children to return to their own families if it is safe to do so.

3.1 Our sufficiency strategy is based on the following principles for provision of placements:

- When children and young people cannot remain in parental care, we want them to have a choice of where they live. Our sufficiency strategy seeks to create enough provision to provide that choice and our social care practice will ensure the views and wishes of the child and young person are heard and taken into account.

- Where children and young people cannot remain within their immediate family, the first consideration will be to support a “connected person” to care for them and our strategy focuses on the quality of assessment training and support to those carers often referred to as “Kinship” carers.
- Where children cannot remain with parents or in the care of a connected person, we will continue our “value of family life” and seek to provide a placement that is a “family experience” and as such provide them with Foster Carer who can meet their needs. placement, the preference being with in-house local foster carers.
- Unless there is a good reason why not, siblings should be placed together.
- A small number of children and young people may have needs such that a residential placement is the preferred choice of placement to meet their needs. This may be either because of the complexity of their needs or because previous experience has resulted in the young person finding the intensity of living within a family too difficult for the time being. We want to have access to local residential provision that is able to meet the often challenging and high risk needs of young people.
- When a child is placed within a residential setting, consideration should be given at all stages in care planning to whether the child can return to a family care experience.
- When determining the right placement for a child in care we will, subject to a risk assessment and interests of the child's safety, seek to place the child locally within Worcestershire and as close as possible and appropriate to their family and community. This will help us maintain for them an appropriate level of contact with family and friends.
- Whenever a placement is made, all efforts must be made to minimise the disruption to the child's education, whatever the child's age, but particularly at Key Stage 4. In addition to this and in accordance with the statutory guidance for Local Authorities on Promoting the Educational Achievement of Looked After Children, if the placement could involve a change of education provision then the Virtual School Head Teacher must be consulted prior to the placement being made.

3.2 This strategy is underpinned and supported by a suite of WCF and stakeholder strategies and policies, including:

- *Worcestershire Children First Business plan 21/22*
- *WCF Strengthening Families First services*
- *WCF Safeguarding Families project*
- *Worcestershire Children First Early Help and Family Support offer*
- *West Mercia Police Early Help Strategy*
- *Children and Young People Strategic Partnership plan in association with Health and Well-Being Board and ICS priorities*

- *Worcestershire Children First Independent Fostering Agency business plan*
- *Worcestershire Adoption Agency and Adoption Central England (ACE) strategic plan*
- *Worcestershire Council Corporate Parenting Strategy*
- *Worcestershire Children's First Permanency Policy*

4. Our Improvement Journey

October 2016 Ofsted undertook a full Childrens Social Care Safeguarding Inspection and Worcestershire were found to be "Inadequate" in delivering its services to children young people.

The latest Ofsted inspection took place under the Inspection of Local Authority Childrens services (ILAC) July 19.

The findings from that inspection said of **Children in Care and Care Leavers:**

- *Decisions made for children to come into care are appropriate and where necessary immediate action is taken to safeguard children*
- *Assessments for children in our care are timely, comprehensive and care plans are appropriate and Care plans for are comprehensive, up to date and reflect the needs of children well*
- *Effective parallel planning for young children ensure they achieve timely permanency*
- *Majority of children in care are settled, are in placements that meet their needs and are making progress*
- *Looked After Child reviews are well chaired by IRO's, Records are written in a supportive meaningful way and in most cases IRO's are active in ensuring quality and timeliness is identified and addressed.*
- *Assessments of Foster Carers are timely, thorough and analytical.*
- *Supervising social workers understand the needs of the children and help foster carers to develop their skills necessary to meet those needs.*
- *Planning for children with a plan of Adoption is a strength. ACE and the local authority work effectively to identify where Adoption is an appropriate permanence plan early and then family find without delay*
- *Personal Advisors build positive relationships with young people and they know them well. They are aspirational for their young people and consistently encourage them to achieve in education and employment*
- *All care leavers have a PA to the age of 21 and the LA ensure they offer services, and are in contact, with most up to the age of 25 years*
- *Pathway Plans are detailed, up to date and have clear actions and timescales. Good participation from young people in completing their own plans and our "plan on a page" provide a good straightforward overview*
- *Access to support across the districts is positive and helps maintain contact and reduce isolation for these young people*
- *Most Care Leavers live in suitable accommodation and our Outreach services engage young people in independent skills course that is effective in increasing confidence and enables them to progress through stages to independent living*

- *Care planning for sibling groups is done in the best interests of children. Siblings are placed together when it is in their interests*
- *Children in care “benefit” from supervised family time with parents, siblings, and family*
- *Children and Young People in care are making good educational progress and this is effectively monitored by social workers and schools through Personal Education Plans*
- *Long term stability for most children has improved as a result of proactive management and service development to introduce “consolidation” meetings*

Our journey of improvement continues and our WCF Social Care and Safeguarding Business Plan 21/22 sets out the priorities for improvement and development of services to children in care and care leavers.

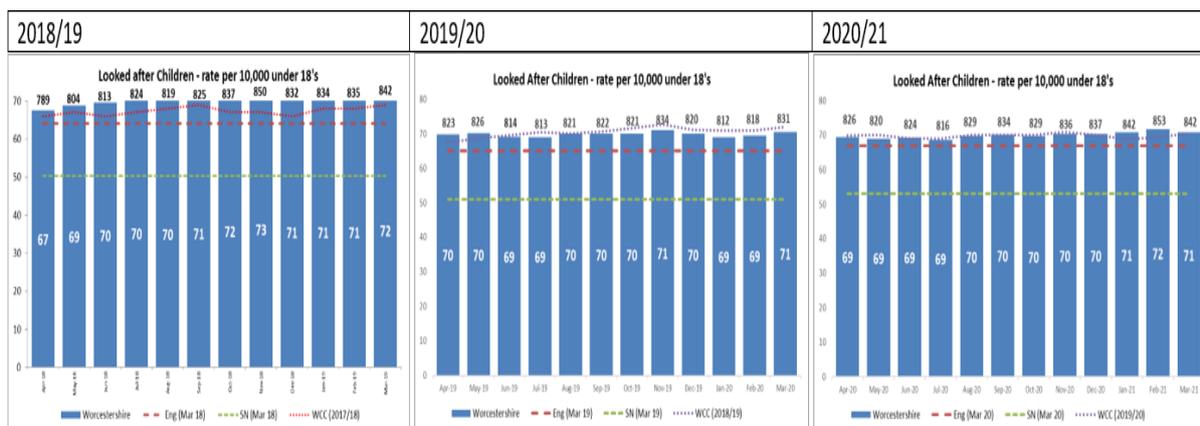
Social Care and Safeguarding Directorate Priorities 2021/22

WCF Values				
Valuing family life	Good education for all	Children at our heart	Protecting children from harm	
Early Help and Children in Need	Services to Children in Need Developing models and approaches of multi-disciplinary working to reduce risks to children and effectively meet their needs in family care and the community	Early Help Review Partnership Working Right Service Right Time	Get Safe Supporting and Protecting children and young adults from exploitation	Positive Outcomes Project Investing in our future social workers. Student delivering a contextual safeguarding approach with partners
Children in Need of Protection	Worcestershire Safeguarding Families Project Positive and timely outcome for children at risk of significant harm and care proceedings	PAUSE Preventing repeated removal of babies from parental care	Domestic Abuse Supporting & Protecting children living with DA harm	Timeliness & Sustainability in Permanency Supporting permanency carers: SGO/LTF/Adoption

Looked After Children, Young People and Care Leavers	SUFFICIENCY		Emotional and Health and Well-Being Looked After Children & Care Leavers	External Residential Care: Developing partnerships with private providers and stakeholders
	Foster Carers: Meeting demand and complexities of care for older children			
	Transition from care: Semi Independent Support & Housing for Care Leavers			
	Developing the quality and purpose of Residential Care to young people			

Knowing ourselves Impact Independent Validation	Review and Evaluation of the Children's Safeguarding Arrangement	Ofsted Focused Visits and Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services	Inspection of WCF Independent Fostering Agency Children's Homes	Registration of Adoption Central England (ACE)	Quality Assurance Framework • Key Performance Indicators • Service User Feedback • Audit
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5. Needs Analysis : Looked After Children and Care Leavers



The number of children in care continues to be above statistical neighbours and England averages. However the total number of children in care has now been relatively consistent for 3 years as shown in the tables above.

This is because for new entries into care we have lower rates with 18.5 per 10k children entering into care during 19/20 compared to 20.9 and 27.2 SN/Eng. rates.

Looked After Children - Starts and Ceases

Number (Rate per 10k)		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Starts	Worcestershire	281 (23.8)	243 (20.4)	220 (18.5)
	SN Ave	309 (19.8)	308 (19.6)	293 (20.9)
	England	32,190 (26.9)	31,680 (27.8)	30,970 (27.2)
Ceases	Worcestershire	255 (21.6)	207 (17.4)	235 (19.8)
	SN Ave	264 (16.9)	289 (18.4)	271 (18.7)
	England	30,050 (25.1)	29,460 (25.8)	29,590 (25.9)

Based on the latest available data we also have better than average performance against our Statistical Neighbours for children leaving care, at 19.8 per 10k compared to SN at 18.7 so we should be narrowing the gap between ourselves and our SN as we see the impacts of our edge of care and permanency planning which have been effective in some other authorities earlier.

It is essential to see the 20/21 data as a year impacted by the Covid pandemic which effected the timeliness of our permanency planning and supporting for young people to exit care.

5.1 Our Covid Journey 20/21

Our demand for children services rose through the pandemic. Whilst many understand these pressures at the “front door” we know as an “End to End” service these demands and the impact of Covid19 affected our whole system and the journey for children and young people through it.

We experienced a long term the increased demand in “Contacts” seeking information and early help, we also saw an increase in the need for social work assessments as we undertook assessments to identify harm and “Hidden Harm”.

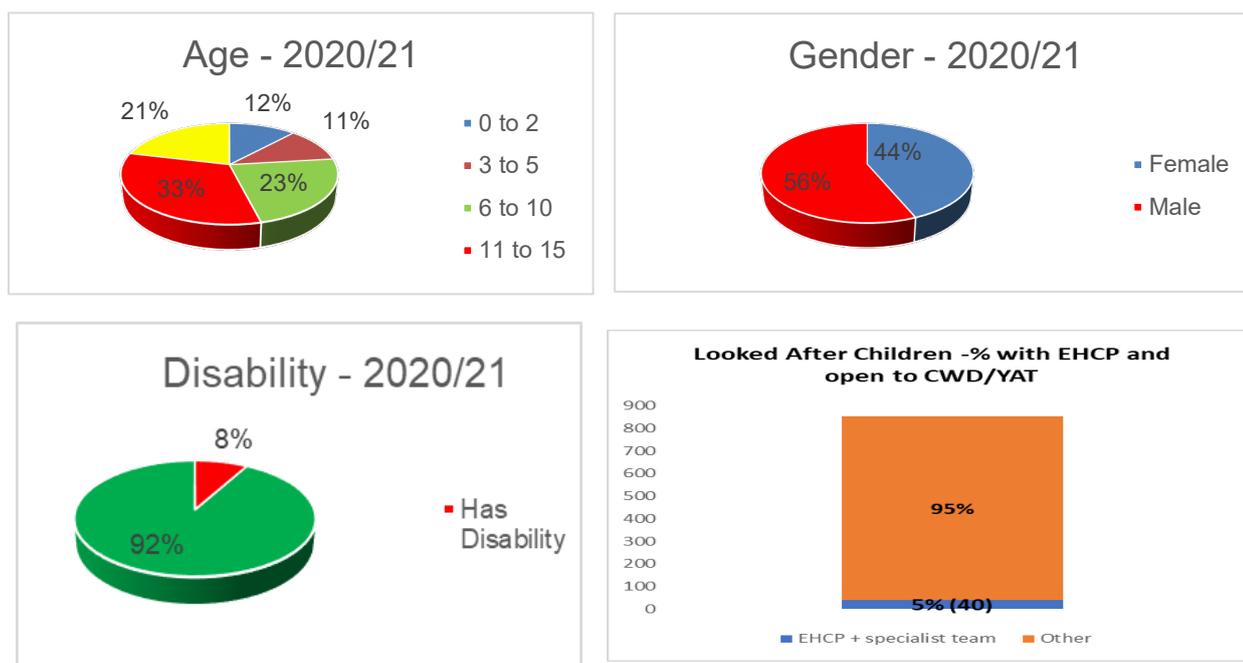
We had an associated rise in the number of Children in Need and in those subject to child protection as we were prevented from safely closing cases due to additional pressure families were experiencing and the context of reduced support for example, access to school, family and early help in the community.

The initial lockdown created issues for our care planning in courts and through to permanency and we saw the associated rise in Looked After Children numbers.

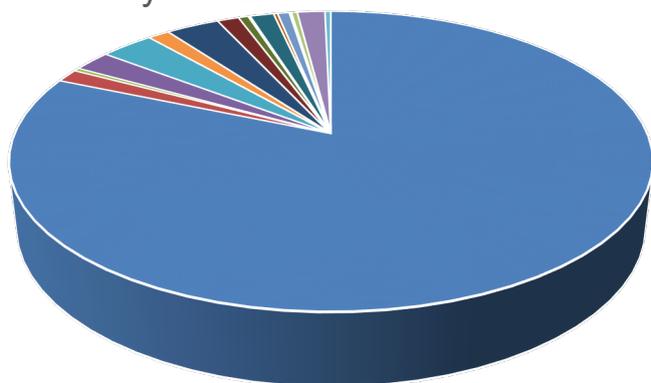
During the second half of the year we progressed focused work and communications to families and parents on early help, we challenged the “professional anxiety” culture and through our WCF early support we found ways to support parents to effectively and efficiently “problem solve”.

The use of Strengthening Families First enabled us to support parents to address and manage risk and the impact of Covid continuing to prevent care where it was safe to do so and we also worked closely with the courts to progress our care proceedings and addressed delays in our ability to achieve permanency for children exiting the care system. The outcome being at the end of year we have 842 children in care a rise of only ten since end of year 19/20.

5.2 Demographics of our Looked After Children



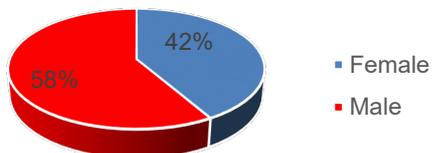
Ethnicity 2020/21



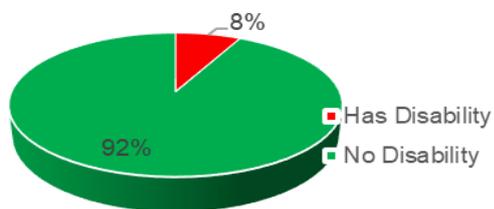
- A1 - White British
- A3 - Any other White background
- A4 - Traveller or Irish Heritage
- A5 - Gypsy / Roma
- B1 - White and Black Caribbean
- B2 - White and Black African
- B3 - White and Asian
- B4 - Any other mixed background
- C2 - Pakistani
- C3 - Bangladeshi
- C4 - Any other Asian background
- D1 - Caribbean
- D2 - African
- D3 - Any other Black background
- E1 - Chinese
- E2 - Any other ethnic group
- E4 - Information not yet obtained

Care Leavers aged 18-21 Years

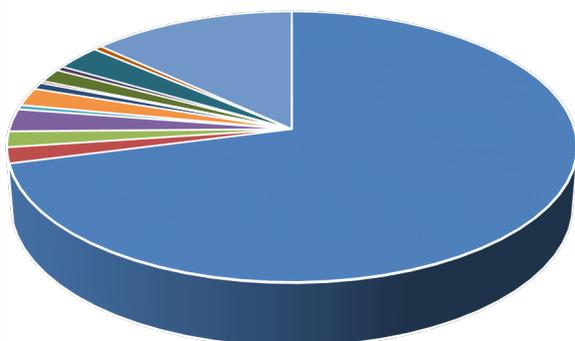
Gender - Age 18-21 - 2020/21



Disability - Age 18-21 - 2020/21



Ethnicity - Age 18-21 - 2020/21

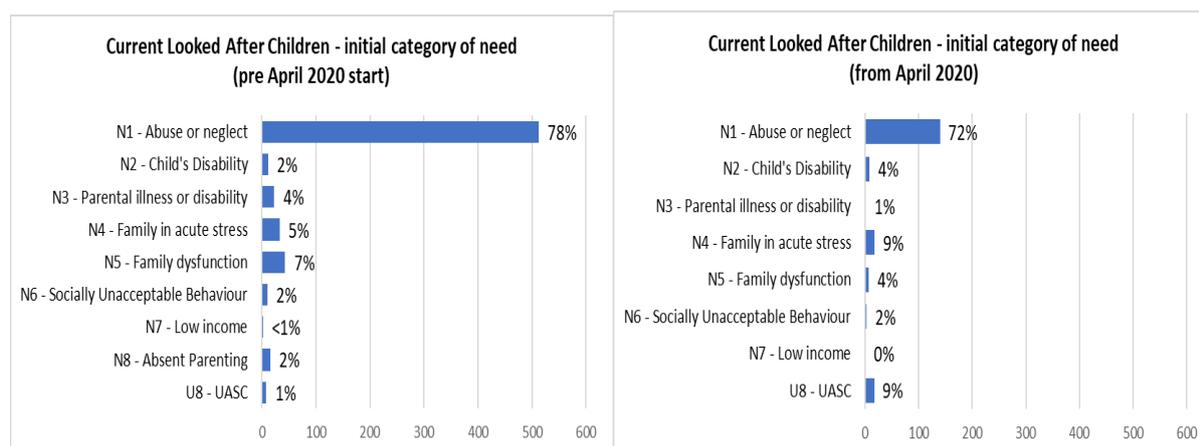


- A1 - White British
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- B1 - White and Black Caribbean
- B3 - White and Asian
- B4 - Any other mixed background
- C2 - Pakistani
- C3 - Bangladeshi
- C4 - Any other Asian background
- D1 - Caribbean
- D2 - African

5.3 Risk and Need leading to Care.

Comparing category of need pre and post April 20 we can see a reduction in those experiencing abuse and neglect and “family dysfunction”, evidence of our edge of care support and increase in those in “acute stress” which is a factor in managing risk and supporting children at home “only where it is safe to do so”

Rise in children with disabilities and Unaccompanied children also feature and are addressed within our sufficiency strategy.



6. Key Performance indicators

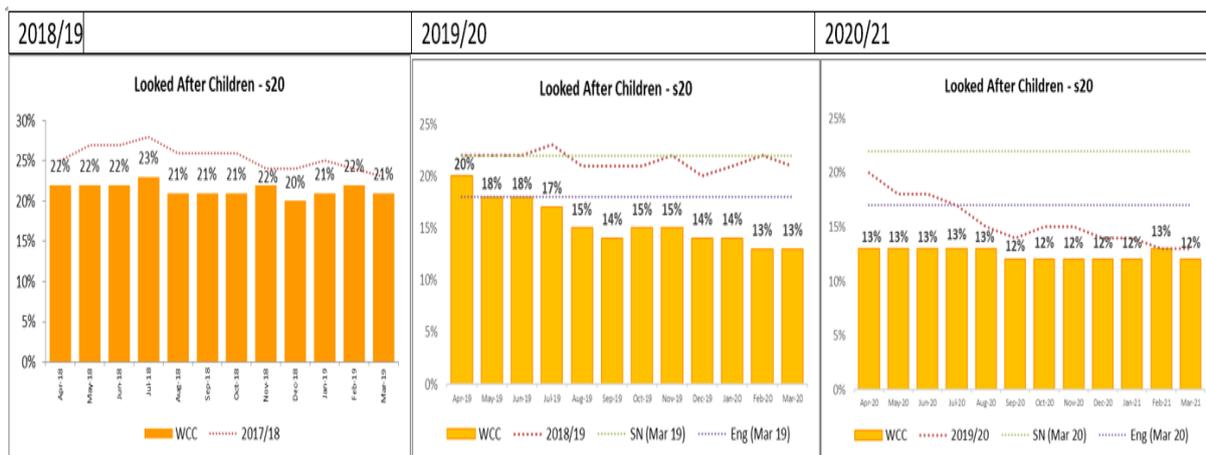
Whilst it is important for us to draw analysis and trends to forecast our future care population, we must be mindful of the significant improvement journey and the change of culture and practice we have worked through since 2016, using data pre 18/19 would risk giving a false base line on which to understand needs and demands.

Therefore, we are using data of 18/19 and 19/20 to understand our demand and permanency practice. In addition we need to note the impact of the Covid pandemic 20/21 and the period of national lockdown and unprecedented pressure demand and changes in working practices.

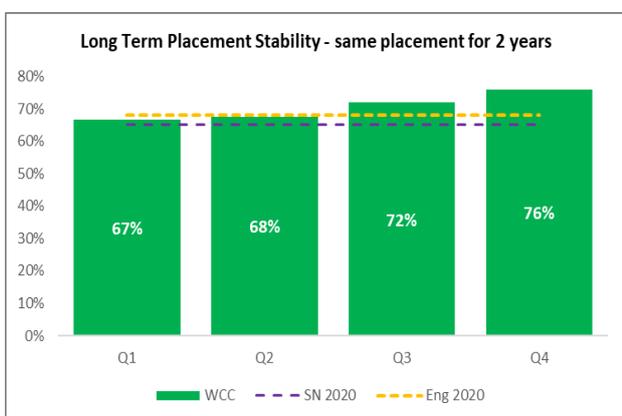
The below 20/21 key performance indicators are used to inform our sufficiency planning.

S20 Care

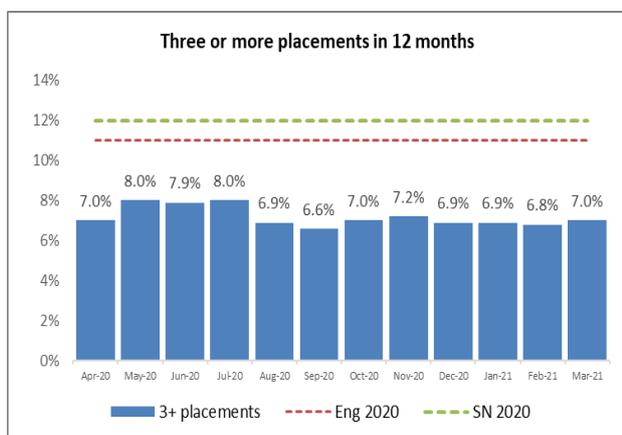
A large number of children who come into care under a voluntary order are likely to return home – we have seen this group as a stable % of our Looked After Child for 2 years where we have remained below SN and England averages reflecting effective work in supporting children to remain in family care managing risk in the community.



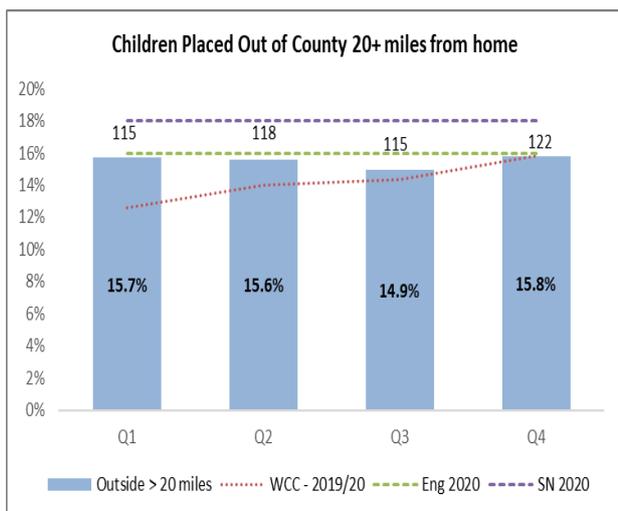
However, in 20/21 we have seen the number of “new” S20 children rise from 35% to 49%. When we analyse the cause for S20 we can see the correlation with increased pressure and negative impact on parenting skills coming from the pandemic, Mental Health, Domestic Abuse and Substance Misuse. A notable proportion are also children with ADHD and Autism causing family breakdown when parents are no longer able to manage the challenging behaviours of their children often associated with them growing older and physically bigger. Our business planning is developing the strengthening families first model to children in need on the edge of care but also edge of Child Protection in an effort to intervene and make positive changes earlier.



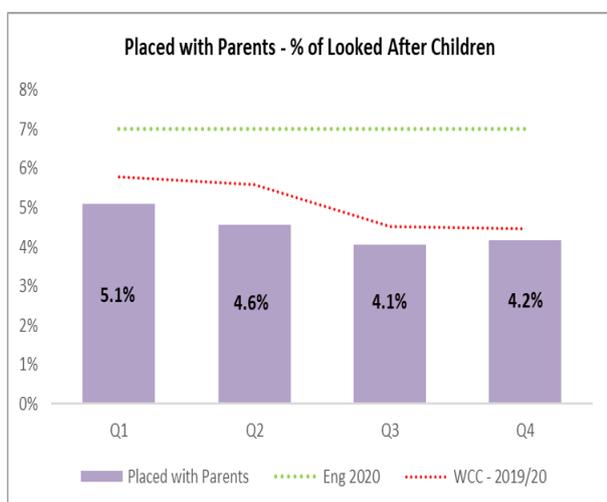
Long term placement stability - Here we can see a continually improving picture of us attaining placement stability for children in long term care with **72% of children staying stable in their placement for over 2 years above the Eng. avg. of 69%.**



Placement stability with children in three or more placements within 12 months - In this indicator we can also see sustained good performance over 19/20 and 20/21 with WCF having significantly better performance to that of our statistical neighbours and England averages.

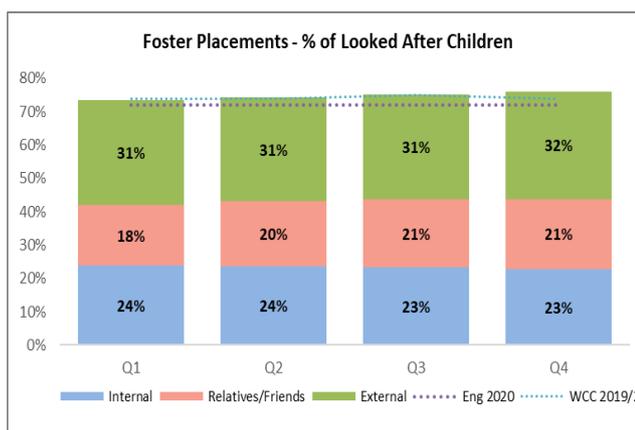


We can also see a stable number of children being **placed more than 20 miles from home** at 15% maintaining us below Eng. Avg. of 16% and well below SN at approx. 18% as we strive to identify local placements for our children in care through internal and externally commissioned placements local to Worcestershire.



Children Placed with Parents in Care Orders. This chart shows a sustained positive performance reducing the number of children placed at home with parents on care orders. WCF placing less children than that of our statistical neighbours and the England averages. It is important to note the new Public Law Review recommendations released March 21 make it clear that placements with parent’s children subject care orders should not be permanency care plans save the most exceptional circumstances.

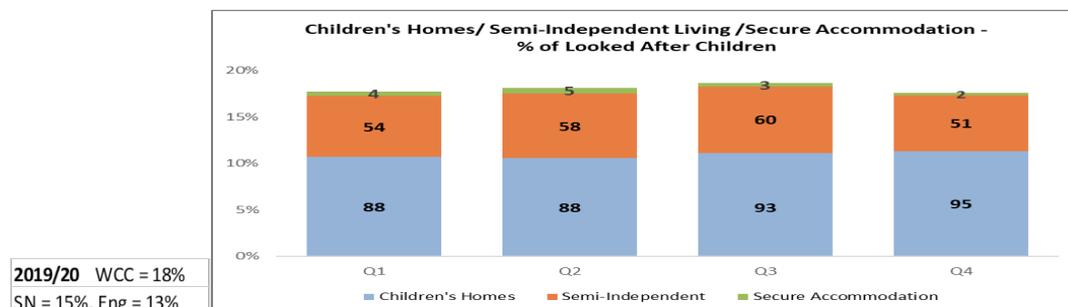
Children placed in foster care placements – The KPI chart identifies good performance in the rising number of those places with connected persons in line with our commitment to place children with connected people but there is a drop of children placed in our Worcestershire Children First Independent Fostering Agency.



Whilst our overall cohort of children experiencing a foster care placement (mainstream and connected person) performance is above that of the England averages but we need to do more to ensure our own provision is meeting needs. We know the challenges are finding carers willing and able to care for older young people aged 10+ and sibling groups.

Children placed in Residential Care, Semi-Independent living or Secure

As a collective group at 18% for 20/21 we are above the England and SN averages this in our area. It is essential this cohort is broken down to understand our needs and inform our strategy.



Secure Accommodation

Whilst national comparison is not available, we do know there has been national rise in the demand for Secure provision and this is reflected in our own care young people. During the past three years we have seen a slight drop with 8 young people experiencing a secure placement in 18/19 and 6 in year 19/20 and 6 in 20/21. These are our most complex young people where mental health and violence presents such significant harm to themselves or others that secure is necessary to provide containment giving a period of stability as a basis for engagement. Secure provision is not our preferred placement for young people and experience show us that outcome from secure are very limited for young people.

It is notable that meeting the threshold for secure and despite extensive searches has not always resulted in the young person being placed in that type of arrangement. We have some case examples where due to the absence of secure placement we have managed the risks via a Deprivation of Liberty Orders issued by the courts and through risk management plans in other residential provision and we have seen positive outcomes achieved for some of these young people.

As part of our strategy we are feeding our experiences of Secure placement and the impact and outcome for children into our regional work on the development of a Safe Base in the west midlands. The West Midlands Safe Centre development is a priority for the regional business planning 21/22 and WCF are one of three LA/Trusts leading on this for the region.

Children's Homes Residential

Our data on the use of residential care shows us to be above average at 12% of our Looked After Children population in residential care compared to the last available data of 8% in children's homes in England (March 2019).

Our history of poor permanency planning (prior to our Ofsted improvement journey) and use of residential care as a long term care option for younger children has led to us having a high proportion of young people in what has become long term stable

residential provision and until these young people transition to independent living our numbers are likely to be higher than the average.

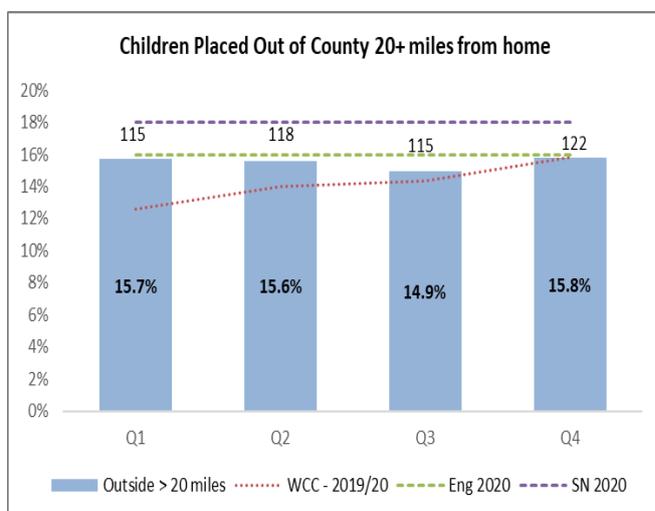
Semi Independent Supported Living

Last recorded data shows 5.8% of Worcestershire’s young people reside in semi-independent provision compared to a 4% England average. Historically WCF identified poor preparation for independence for 16 – 18 year olds in residential care and there has been an inherent need to ensure this cohort of young people are afforded every opportunity, with sustained support, to meaningfully prepare for independence and successfully engage with external provision in partnership with Housing. The danger otherwise is that they will ‘fall off a cliff edge’.

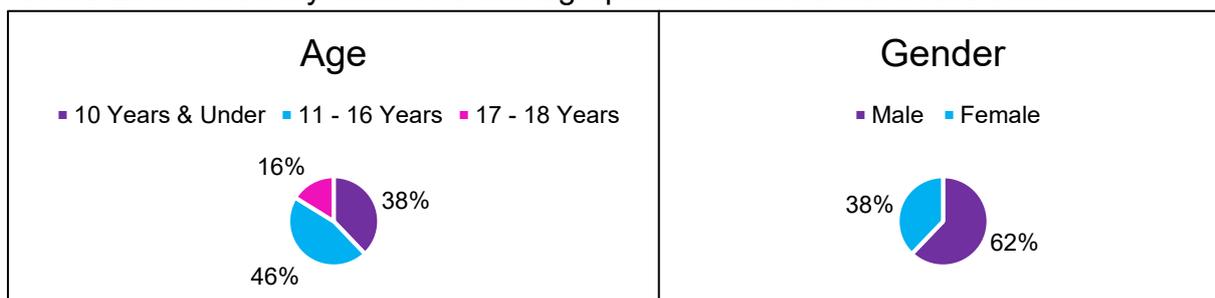
We believe with the right support some young people can thrive in semi-independent living who would otherwise experience multi residential placement breakdown and we have many case examples of good outcomes for young people in this provision. Therefore our own higher than England average is not a negative KPI and should be seen in the context of the quality of provision and outcome for these young people.

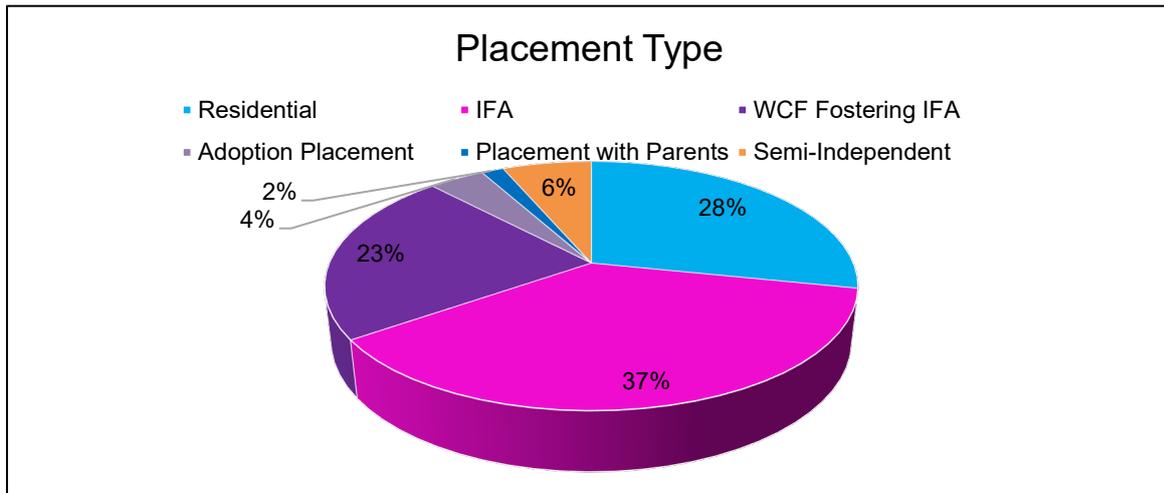
7. Children placed out of County

Here we can see sustained reductions in the number of children placed more than 20 miles from home. WCF attaining a better performer than as statistical neighbours and the England averages.



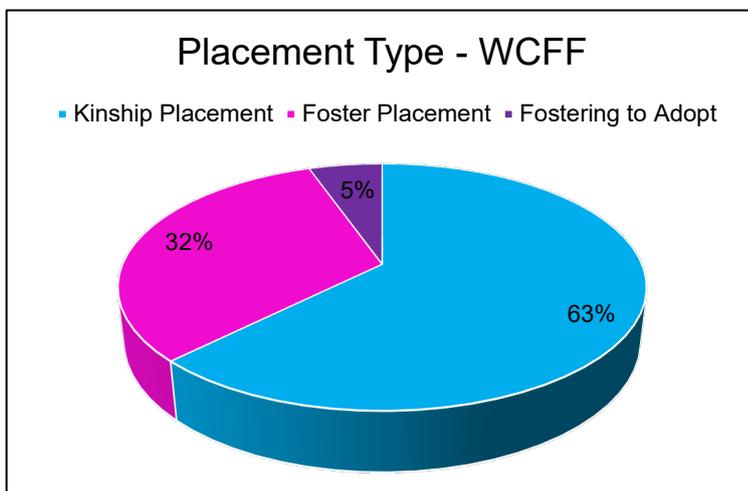
A detailed review of our children and young people placed out of county undertaken in 2021 confirmed that 248 children of our looked after population are placed outside of the Local Authority area. The demographics of those children are below.





Our demographic reporting tells us that the majority of children placed outside of the Worcestershire area are male and between the age of 11-16 years old. In terms of placement type Independent Fostering Placements are the most used, followed by Residential and then our own Worcestershire Children First IFA.

The 70 children in a residential placement also include some specialist placements such as, 2 children in a secure placement, 1 NHS/Health Care Placement, 4 in Residential Schools and 1 child in a mother & baby placement (March 21 data).



The children placed outside of the Worcestershire area but are in WCF Fostering Placements (56 children) are broken down by placement type in this chart, which shows the majority 63% (35 children) are with Kinship Carers.

Overall, this shows many of our Out of County children are placed for permanency and or with connected persons but also highlights the challenge we have in meeting needs for children through our internal WCF fostering provision.

8 Service Provision analysis and Sufficiency Strategy

The broad headline of priority development in placements for children and young people in care are set out in the 21/22 Social Care & Safeguarding Business Plan.

Looked After Children, Young People and Care Leavers	SUFFICIENCY		Emotional and Health and Well-Being Looked After Children & Care Leavers	External Residential Care: Developing partnerships with private providers and stakeholders
	Foster Carers: Meeting demand and complexities of care for older children			
	Transition from care: Semi Independent Support & Housing for Care Leavers			
Developing the quality and purpose of Residential Care to young people				

8.1 Fostering – Meeting Demand

Worcestershire Children First registered its own Independent Fostering Agency in September 2020. The service underwent an assurance inspection October 20.

WCF's vision and values are that children should be placed in a local family care arrangement wherever possible as long as it is safe to do so.

Of our children and young people in foster care approximately 44% are placed in "internal" WCF foster carer arrangements (23% with our mainstream WCF foster carers and 21% with family and friend connected persons, often known as "kinship", carers).



Data analysis tells us that 18% of the demand for residential placements derives from foster placement breakdown, equating to 17 new residential placements instigated in the last year. Only one of those children resided in a kinship care arrangement, 12 in an External Independent Fostering arrangement and 4 from in-house mainstream breakdowns.

The age breakdown of our children in foster care shows us that 57% of children aged 11-15 and 41% of those aged 6-10 years in foster care are in the care of external providers

It is evident, that despite national challenges, that more must be done to successfully recruit and retain our own foster carers and to provide them with an offer that enables them to care for children and young people needing care and to sustain that care until a permanency care arrangement is made.

Our business plan is focussed in instigating measures now to develop an all-encompassing and targeted support ‘Offer’ to both retain existing carers and attract new local carers for our children.

- Broadly this will include the development of ‘buddy carers’ who will be able to support foster carers and children placed with them in providing planned and regular respite, maintaining contact with the carers and our children to build trusting and meaningful relationships, and be on hand should unplanned situations arise where enhanced support may be required. This applies equally to Worcestershire’s mainstream foster carers and kinship foster carers. Buddy carers will also be identified to offer our children in residential care the opportunity to experience family care arrangements as part of a young person ‘step down’ to foster care plan wherever appropriate.
- The support strategy will also incorporate enhanced training to carers to develop their understanding and ability to respond and manage the often-complex needs of our looked after children, particularly those within the 10 – 17-year age range. This will be enhanced, in collaboration with Health partners, in undertaking physical and emotional health and wellbeing assessments at the onset of their care experience and potential need for specialist support. Their emotional wellbeing will thereafter be regularly reviewed with further updated assessments.
- The remit of the Integrated Service for Looked After Children (a team staffed jointly between WCF and the CCG) is being reviewed to afford direct support, guidance, strategies and learning to carers and the children placed with them.
- There is a recognition of the importance of working alongside external partners to provide high quality stable provision, enhancing WCF’s placement offer where necessary. One element of that is the sustained success of Consolidation Meetings where challenges within placements are openly discussed with partners and carers and additional support identified, in order to avoid potential placement breakdown. In 20/21 approximately 85% of foster placement arrangements were maintained as a consequence of this approach. We see this more successful in our own in house provision and we will re-focus support and challenge to external foster care providers.

8.2 Residential Provision

There will always be a need to accommodate some children in residential homes in order to respond to their needs and manage risk safely and appropriately.

Children who are received into care often have extremely complex behaviours including self-harm, targeted and indiscriminate violence, child sexual exploitation, county lines and the ongoing damaging effect of parental mental health, domestic abuse, and substance abuse.

A family care experience isn't always the right thing for every young person. It is very much dependant on their past experience of family breakdown and or their foster care and or placement breakdown experiences.

Once a young person is residing in a residential setting their continued residence is influenced by the stability and outcomes they are experiencing in their placement and the level of independent living skills that will determine their need for continued residential care.

Age March '21	No. of CYP
<10	1
10	5
11	1
12	6
13	13
14	11
15	17
16	21
17	17
18	1
TOTAL	93

When looking at the age breakdown of our children in residential care we can see that 25 children (27%) are aged 10 – 13 years their individual care plans will be looking to step them down in a family care arrangement as soon as is possible taking into account their emotional health and wellbeing and ensuring stability of care and relationship attachments are formed to ensure any step down is a successful and sustainable move.

There are approximately 44% (41 young people) aged 13 -15 currently in residential care. 25 of the 93 young people residing in Children's Homes have already been residing in their residential placement for over 2 years. 41% are aged 16+ and are likely to need support as they transition into care leavers and independent living

Demand for Residential Care

Our deep dive analysis on the use of residential care tells us that during 20/21 95 children have required a new residential placement in year. This is artificially high as 8 children have required a new residential placement due to closure of Greenhill Lodge.

However, of the 95, 70% of the demand for a new residential care placement has come from children already in the care system. (42% from a breakdown of existing residential placements and 19% due to breakdowns in foster care placements)

28% of our children placed in a new residential care placement made during 20/21 is because of family breakdowns. Of those a smaller but important cohort are young people with disabilities that most frequently come into care later at stage when it becomes too difficult for parents to manage their needs and behaviours at home.

This demand analysis for residential care tells us that we need to:

- Support and develop our foster care provision to be able to meet the complex and challenging needs of children now entering care
- Support and challenge existing residential placement providers to meet the need of children in their care and give them greater stability
- Consider alternative ways for supporting families for children with additional needs to remain at home in family care.

WCF currently own four children's homes and two short break units:

- The Riddings - Pershore, 4 bed residential home for children and young people with ESB aged 10-18 years
- Oak House - Worcester, 3 bed plus a 1 bed flatlet residential home (WCF suspended registration January 20 – Closed no residents)
- Vale Lodge - Evesham, 4 bed residential home for children and young people with disabilities aged 10-18years
- Green Hill Lodge - Worcester, 8 bed residential home (Ofsted removed registration July 20 – Closed no residents)
- Moule Close - Kidderminster, 4 bed short breaks unit for children with disabilities aged 5-18 years
- Providence Road - Bromsgrove, 6 bed short breaks unit for children with disabilities aged 5-18 years

Whilst from a sufficiency perspective WCF recognises the ongoing need for residential provision and that being 'local' is a priority and we are committed to retaining the existing open resources.

Maintaining this small in house provision will not meet demand in the forthcoming year.

However, creating further mainstream residential provision is unnecessary in the context of our own WCF longer term vision and strategy. In our view that creating more in-house children's homes would risk beds being unused and/or a culture of practice resuming where there is less determined focus and effort in supporting families and managing risk in the family and foster care provision.

Therefore, our sufficiency strategy is to develop ways to create a mixed resource of internal provision alongside collaboration and commissioning provision with neighbouring Local authorities and local private providers.

The Cabinet Report (June 21) sets out the strategy for development of our internal residential services.

8.3 Semi-Independent Supported Accommodation

Historically WCF identified poor preparation for independence for 16 – 18 year olds in residential care settings, both internal and external and there has been an inherent need to ensure this cohort of young people are afforded every opportunity, with sustained support, to meaningfully prepare for independence and successfully engage

with external provision in partnership with Housing. The danger otherwise is that they will 'fall off a cliff edge'.

Semi Independent living arrangements are not subject to registration or Ofsted inspection and it is known that quality is variable.

There is recognition from the DfE following their consultation, *"that much external provision is of poor quality, often in undesirable 'hot spot' areas where young people are easily targeted for exploitation"*

The use of this provision has been the subject of a Dfe working party review. September 21 new regulation will be implemented that will make it unlawful to place a child of 16 years or under in a semi-independent living arrangement.

As Corporate Parents we need to ensure our young people and care leavers have the best possible support to promote their welfare and protect them from harm. We can do this best through internal and local provision

We currently have 72 young people in Supported Living arrangements. Non are under 16.

Of the current cohort of Looked After Children there are approximately 38 young people are aged 16/17 years residing in Children's Homes. For this group of young people, the most likely route out of care is to step down to semi-independent living dependant on their level of needs and independent skills.

This group of young people are our future Care Leavers who we will support until the age of 25 under the Care Leavers legislation.

WCF owns internal provision with a capacity of 46 beds in total and provides good quality internal resource which is well supported via the Outreach Team who also support our young people in external provision's.

As part of our 2019/20 sufficiency strategy Hillview and Rivendell were developed as semi-independent plus accommodations and since opening in January 2019 and April 2019 respectively, the approach of supported living plus in these semi-independent provisions has been well received and led to generally positive outcomes.

Both accommodation settings were given a 'plus' status in recognition of young people aged 16 years residing in the properties and as such additional staffing and overnight staff were allocated. Residents have the opportunity to experience this as a step down from the 24/7 children's home experience and as such test out their independent living skills whilst having daily contact and support with staff.

Demand for semi-independent provision continues to rise as our cohort of children in care become older and we know from our own young people's experiences that for some 16/17 year olds the Children's Homes setting is too challenging for them to make good progress and semi-independent supported living with individual wrap around support has proven to be a successful path to independence for many.

At Quarter 4, the projection is that approximately 100 young people will leave care between the age of 16 – 18 years over the 2021/22 year; a significant proportion will need and chose semi-independent support.

WCF aspires to support its young people locally and within quality provision and as part of this next sufficiency strategy we will:

- Refurbish existing provision to ensure high quality accommodation is maintained
- Develop practice standards to sit alongside our Statement of Purpose providing Quality Assurance and Service user feedback as measures of outcomes for young people
- Develop a new resource converting an ex Children’s Home (subject to Cabinet approval June 21)
- Develop further semi-independent supported provision in collaboration with private landlords and District Council.

9 Permanency

Permanence should always be the plan for a child’s upbringing, and it underpins all our interventions with children, their families and their carer’s. The route to permanence will be different for each individual child and WCF are committed in ensuring the range of options available are well considered and well supported to marry an individual child’s needs with their wishes being understood and taken into account. Adoption and Special Guardianship are two primary routes to permanency.

9.1 Adoption - Worcestershire Children First registered its Independent Adoption Agency March 21 and at the time of writing that registration is in process. WCF Adoption services are part of a RAA “Adoption Central England (ACE) ACE provides Adoption services to five LA including Warwickshire, Solihull, Coventry and Herefordshire.

Adoptions as end reason				
	Number	% of ceasing to be Looked After		
	Worcs	Worcs	SN	England
2018-19	45	22%	14%	12%
2019-20	33	14%	12%	12%
2020-21	21	13%		

We see a reduction in the number of children having Adoption as a permanence outcome and this is reflected nationally, and our latest data still compares favourably.

Through the development of Permanency Team within WCF we have developed effective ways of working with our Adoption Agency ACE to coordinate the work required for assessing, matching and placing a child for Adoption with that required of recruitment, assessment and matching of Adopters.

In our latest in section ILAC July 19 Ofsted said

'Planning for children with a plan for adoption is a strength. Since February 2018 Worcestershire's adoption service has been provided through a regional adoption agency, Adoption Central England (ACE). A high proportion of children are leaving care without delay to join new adoptive families. Children are identified at an early stage at the Achieving Early Permanence Panel and are linked to family finders. Seven young children have benefitted from foster for adoption placement in the last year. There is effective use of the adoption support fund and there have been no placement disruptions on the last 12 months' (July 2019)

In our care planning processes consideration of Adoption is given at the earliest stage and we have had success in foster to Adopt making 20 placements 20/21.

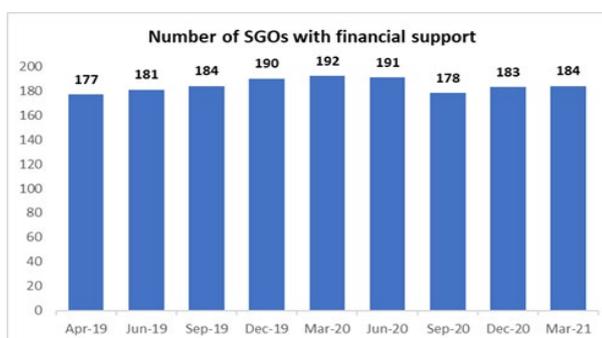
9.2 Special Guardianship

An alternative option for permanency is Special Guardianship which can offer a child the security, safety, and stability they need and deserve without absolute severance from the birth family, as is often the case with adoption.

Since 2010 there has been a rise in the percentage of Special Guardianship Orders within family care proceedings and a decline in Placement Orders and adoption.

Special Guardianship can in many ways be interlinked given kinship carers for children often have an established relationship with a child.

	Number		% of ceasing to be Looked After	
	Worcs	Worcs	SN	England
2018-19	15	7%	10%	13%
2019-20	20	8%	11%	13%
2020-21	4	2%		



In our business plan 21/22 we are working together to review our Special Guardianship offer and support. The focus of the review is to:

- Increase awareness and improve preparation in becoming a Special Guardianship carer with the development of preparation training and guidance.
- Review the offer of supervised family time support often a key challenge for prospective SGO carers
- Ensure access to advice and support is promoted for Special Guardianship carers, included as part of the Core Support Offer but with additional bespoke training for their specific position in any family network.
- Ensure Special Guardianship families have access to therapeutic services in accordance with assessed needs.
- Review the financial support offer.

10 Children with Disabilities and Additional Needs

We currently have 38 children looked after who are open with Children with Disabilities services.

Over the past five years we have seen a consistent number of new children with disabilities entering care at approx. 3-5 each year. There are a range of admission reasons that include child protection issues where proceedings are invoked and a child with a disability is admitted to care as part of a sibling group, admissions to care at or close to birth where parental care cannot meet level of complex need and admission to residential social and or educational provision to meet complex educational/care needs.

The number of children entering care due to family breakdown and where parents are unable to meet the needs of the children show a main cohort of those aged 13 - 15 when entering care, the majority entering residential care.

We have a shortage of foster care provision for this older age group which we need to address but we also need to develop our support services to their birth families.

Assessment evidences this older age group hit a time when parents are no longer able to manage high level needs of physically challenging behaviours in their children and risk to parents and siblings cause family breakdown.

Our work with WCC to build a 0-25 disability service that focuses on supporting family care, early planning for transitions and supported independence to ensure only where it is unavoidable should a child with a disability experience an unplanned reception into care is a priority in our business planning 22/22.

11. Edge of Care – Strengthening Families First

WCF's mission is to support children & young people to be happy, healthy and safe, and one of our company's values is to 'value family life' by supporting and empowering parents to care for their children well. The Supporting Families First (SFF) team have become integral to how we support families at the earliest time and at the lowest levels, supporting and challenging parents to exercise their parental responsibilities and care for their children well.

Placing children at the heart of what we do, valuing family life, seeking good educational outcomes wherever possible by working with families and partner agencies are all key priorities of the team. Our key aim is to strengthen families, to ensure children can remain living safely at home where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

SFF went live in January 2020 and over the last 12 months has shown excellent results in preventing care and repeat care episodes. SFF have been actively involved with

135 children since its launch, seeing a steady increase of referrals quarter on quarter as the team has been embedded within the wider service.

Overall Sustainability of Outcomes of SFF Intervention

Supporting Families First have an overall success rate of 91% in the prevention of care having actively worked with 135 children since January 2020.

- Q4 19/20 reported a 98% success rate when working actively with 51 children.
- Q1 20/21 reported a 95% success rate whilst working actively with 77 children.
- Q2, 20/21 reports a 97% success rate whilst working with 95 children.
- Quarter 3 reports a 95% success rate whilst working with 102 children.

The SFF success rate has not dropped below 95% each quarter, and 90% overall with regards to prevention of care statistics and indicates that SFF provide the right intervention at the right time, thereby preventing unnecessary admissions into care.

This evaluation report clearly evidences the positive results that the SFF approach has had on the prevention of care for young people who are 10 and over during 2020/21. Over quarters 1/2 in 19/20 there were 45 young people (aged 11+) newly accommodated representing 38% of the newly accommodated cohort, for the same period (Qtr. 1/2 2020/21), this was 30 young people (36%). This is a reducing figure and is reflective of the SFF care prevention work that is targeted at this age group.

Next steps:

Worcestershire Childrens Firsts' company value is to "value family life" and in this we seek to support families at the earliest opportunity and at the lowest levels, whilst supporting and challenging parents to exercise their parental responsibility. Our improvement journey has taken us through the challenges of managing risk and professional anxiety and this work must continue with a focus on the role of social workers in assessing risk and supporting the multi-disciplinary partnership to manage risk in the family and community.

One of the priority areas within our business planning in 2021/22 will be our Children in Need development work. Children in Need are the cohort of children between child protection and early help. The SFF multi-disciplined approach will be key to this development, as it will support our continued work with partners to ensure that there is access to effective early help support, that is delivered both in the context of ACES informed practice and Contextual Safeguarding and are the basis for evidence based service development in 2021/22.

12. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Care Leavers

The Number of unaccompanied children looked after as at 31/03/2021 is 25 a decrease from 31 as at 31/03/2020. However, we have seen more unaccompanied

young people entering care this year 20/21, with 15 new young people, compared to 12 entering care last year. The overall reduction is a reflection of the young people leaving care as Looked After children and becoming unaccompanied Care Leavers.

The number of Current Care Leavers open for services, who are now not Looked After, and were previously UASC as at 12/04/2021 is 59

Age	Age as at 31/3/20	Age as at 31/3/21
13		1
14	1	2
15	2	3
16	8	4
17	20	15
TOTAL	31	25

Our greatest demand for placement for UASC is for semi-independent supported living given the age.

At the time of writing Worcestershire has no political sign up to the National Transfer scheme although we are engaged with the regional rota being piloted on a voluntary basis.

13. Commissioning approach to Placements

The below summarises the key areas of current and future commissioning intentions with the strategy.

All Age Disability - As part of the All Age disability programme development with Adult Social Care and the Young Adults teamwork is underway to look at the need for residential provision within the context of community an overnight short breaks and family support

Regional Framework – Worcestershire will remain part of the West Midlands 14 LA’s commissioning arrangements under the framework for foster care and residential care

Internal Residential Provision – We will retain our current in house provisions for children with social, emotional and behavioural needs and those with disabilities.

Private and Local Authority Providers of Children’s Homes – We will reach out to Worcestershire based providers and the neighbouring West Midlands authorities who are delivering and developing their own in house residential provision to commission placements as required meeting the individual needs of a child or young person locally. If necessary, we will continue to look beyond the region for specialist placements.

Internal Semi-Independent Living – We will invest in capacity growth and material improvements in our internal semi-independent provision supporting young people to step down from residential care and experience a semi-independent supported living arrangement locally.

Secure Safe Base – Worcestershire will continue to work with the West Midlands group bid to the DfE for a new regional Safe Base Secure estate.

Worcestershire Children First Sufficiency Strategy 2021

Tina Russell Scrutiny July 2021

The legislation and requirements of a sufficiency strategy

- Children Act 1989 – statutory guidance on requirements of LA to provide accommodation for its children in care and care leavers.
 - Local to the area
 - Meet the needs of the child or young person
 - Range and Choice
- Part of the wider corporate parenting responsibilities – strategic planning / Commission/ engagement with partners in “duty to cooperate” CA 2004
- Measured through KPI’s for outcomes for children
- “reasonably practicable” - specialist / secure
- Ofsted measure quality of our strategic planning through the experiences and outcomes for the child in service inspections
- Individual children’s homes have separate Ofsted inspections
- Currently supported semi independent accommodation is unregistered – under 16 unlawful (Sept 21) and new “standard” and “monitoring” under consultation

Principles that
underpin our
sufficiency planning
Value Family life / Good
education / Safe from
Harm/ Children at the
heart

- Local – close to family and limited disruption with education
- Provide a “family life” experience
- Prevent care where possible and support birth parents
- Place with “Connected family and friends” or Foster Care
- Use residential care short term – plan toward family care
- Use “care” as a step to permanency for a child for all
- Recognise and meet needs of young people – support them into independence
- Use short breaks overnight and community to promote “shared care”

Our journey of improvement

- 2016 inadequate – poor assessments, poor care and permanency planning , poor outcomes
- “Outstanding” children's homes – long term stable children in care
- 2018/19 – development of culture of practice – value family life /risk management and edge of care / improvement in permanency planning
- July 2019 – ILAC – sufficiency
 - Decision making for new care is appropriate
 - Assessment and care planning comprehensive and reflective of children needs
 - Majority of children are settled and in placements that meet their need
 - Stability has improved through consolidation meetings within fostering
 - Permanency care planning is good – Adoption is a strength
 - Most Care Leavers live in suitable accommodation
- Business Planning 2021 – priority
- Focused visits July 2021 ? ILAC 2022/23 – sustained improvement

Informing our sufficiency strategy – Looked After Children

- Demographics – Age Gender Ethnicity and Disability
- Risks and needs leading to care – Abuse & Neglect 72% with an increase CWD and UASC 2020
- 56% of young people in care are aged 6 -15yrs – A priority for Foster Care experiences
- 57% (11-15yrs) and 41% (6-10yrs) are in external foster care
- 44% (13-15yrs) currently in residential care. 27% have been in residential care for over 2yrs.
- 73% still subject to permanency planning
- 70% of demand for residential care come from placement breakdowns

Informing our sufficiency strategy – Care Leavers

- Over 100 young people 16-18 will leave care 21/22 – many will need and choose semi independent supported living
- Supported living Care is under significant scrutiny and development – regulation and standards by Dfe
- 46 internal bed capacity with wrap around outreach – (full)
- 9 beds “supported living plus” (five beds at Hill View)
- Internal cost less (£723 – 5 costing over £1000) and quality is better
- We need more internal provision to meet demand – quality and outcomes!

Our strategy in brief !

Expansion of Supporting Families First – care prevention

Foster Care recruitment – supporting and creation of “buddy carers” to meet needs of children coming into care, stepping down and to sustain stability

Review Special Guardianship offer to add capacity to permanency option as an exit from care

Convert Oak House to supported living – consider other properties from existing capital investment

Refurbishment and development of standards for our semi independent estate

Maintain current in house provision at Ridding's / Vale – both meeting needs and have good Ofsted judgements

Close Hill View – Design, size and location impacting negatively on outcomes for young people and risk – fire setting / drug use and current investigation re sexual exploitation

Maintain and expand relations with regional framework and local providers

West Midlands bid for a new secure estate

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 16 JULY 2021

PERFORMANCE AND 2020/21 YEAR-END BUDGET MONITORING

Summary

1. The Panel will be updated on performance and financial information for services relating to Children and Families.
2. The Cabinet Members with Responsibility (CMR) for Children and Families, and Education and the Director of Children's Services have been invited to attend the meeting to respond to any queries from Panel Members.

Performance Information

3. The Corporate Balanced Scorecard is the means of understanding progress against the Council's Corporate Plan. The Scorecard contains a range of indicators linked to key priorities and themes. Many measures are long-term and may be affected by a wide range of factors, some of which are outside the direct control of the Council.
4. The Corporate Balanced Scorecard for each Directorate is reported to Cabinet and is also available on the Council's website [here](#)
5. Attached at Appendix 1 is a dashboard of performance information relating to Quarter 4 (January to March 2021) with sections covering children's social care, education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
6. The intention is for the Scrutiny Panels to consider this information on a quarterly basis and then report by exception to the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board any suggestions for further scrutiny or areas of concern.

Financial Information

7. In addition to regular performance information, the Panel also receives in-year budget information. The information provided is the year-end financial outturn for 2020/21 (ie the actual end of year financial performance) and can be found in the form of presentation slides at Appendix 2.

Purpose of the Meeting

8. Following discussion of the information provided, the Scrutiny Panel is asked to determine:

- any comments to highlight to the Cabinet Members at the meeting and/or to the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board at its meeting on 21 July 2021
- whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Children and Families Dashboard

Appendix 2 – 2020/21 Financial Outturn information (Presentation Slides)

Contact Points

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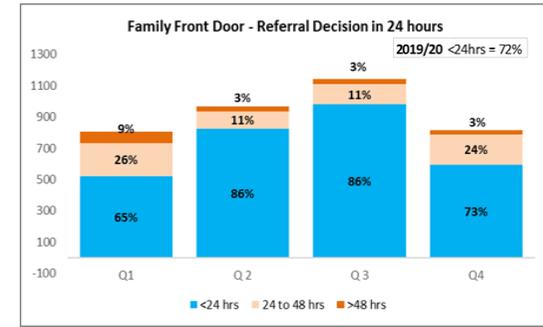
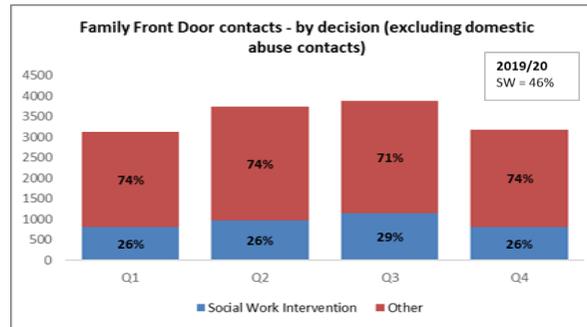
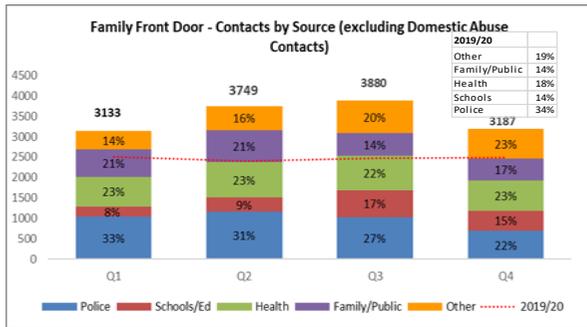
Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director of Legal and Governance) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

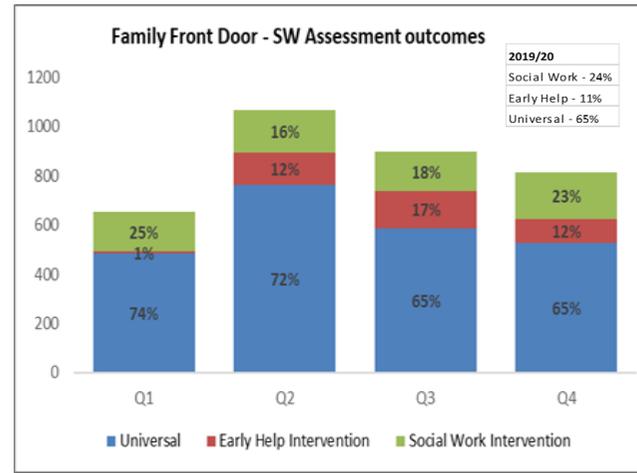
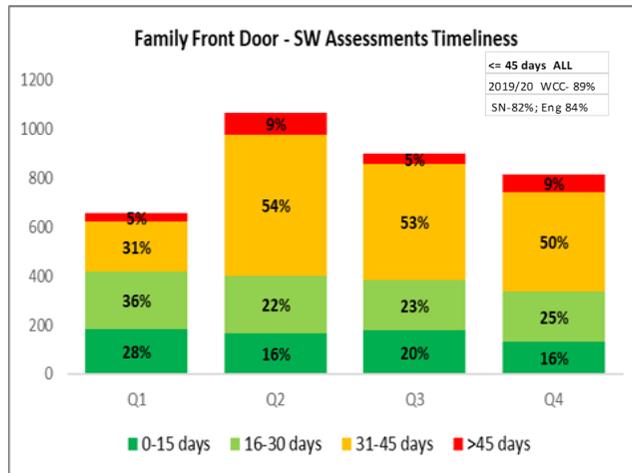
- Agenda and minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board - 3 February 2021 and 23 September 2020 and 22 July 2020.
- Agenda and minutes of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 1 February 2021, 13 November, 8 September and 17 July 2020

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

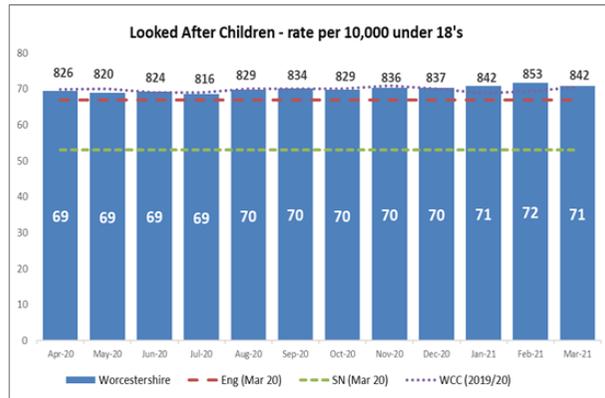
Family Front Door



Figures rebased in line with amended definition of 'Domestic Abuse contacts'



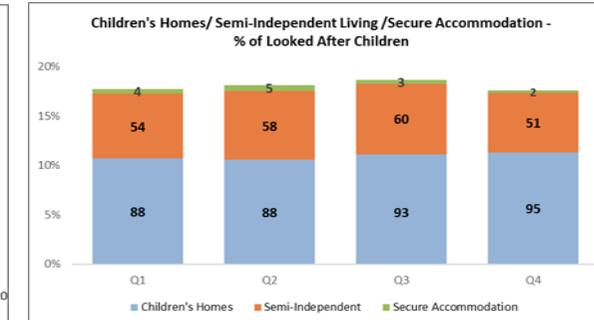
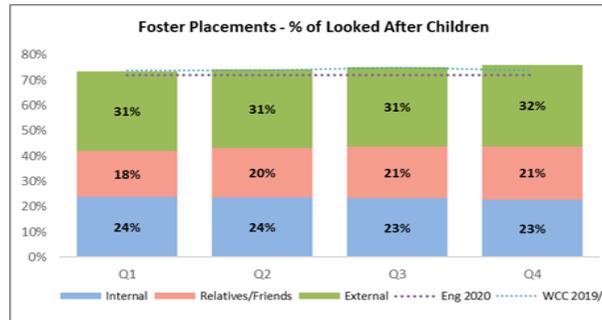
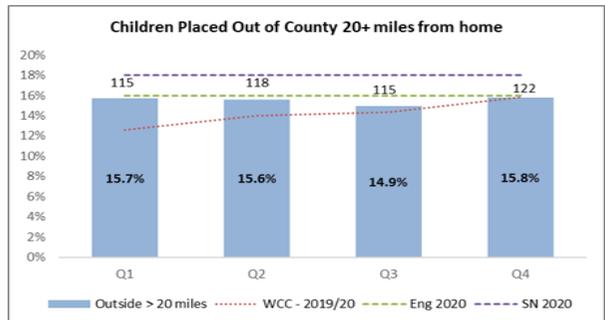
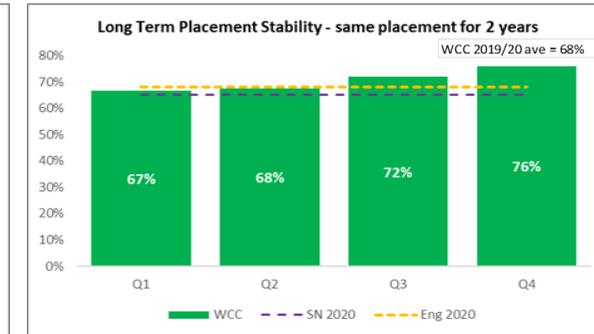
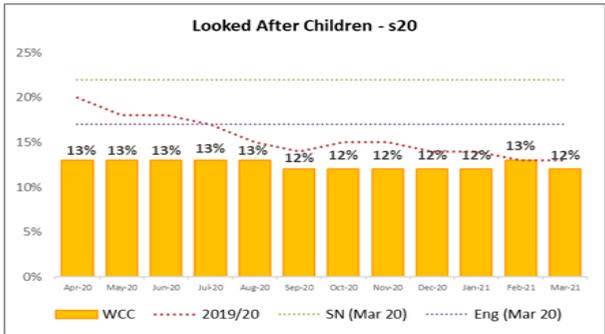
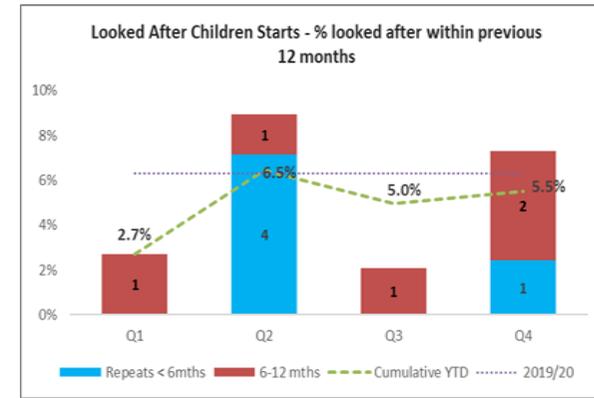
Through Care - Looked After Children and Care Leavers

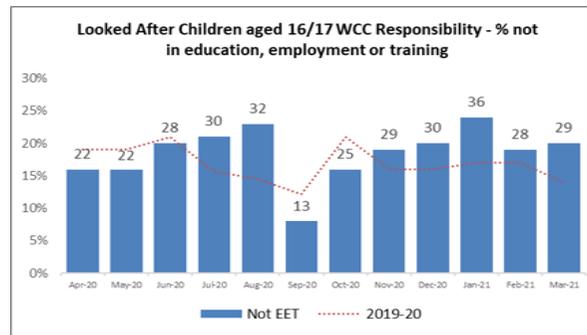
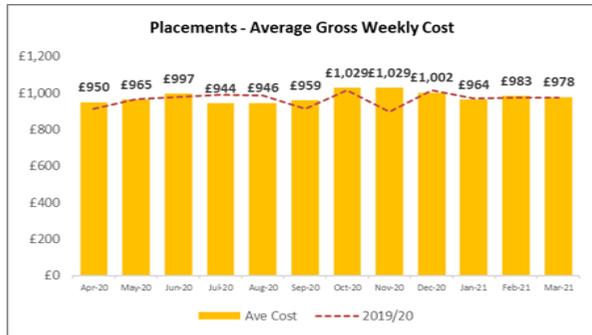


Looked After Children - Starts and Ceases

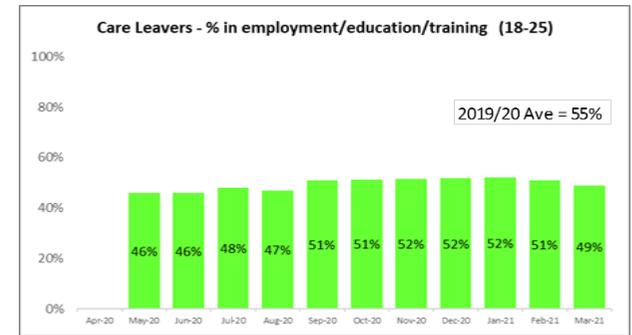
		Number (Rate per 10k)		
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Starts	Worcestershire	281 (23.8)	243 (20.4)	220 (18.5)
	SN Ave	309 (19.8)	308 (19.6)	293 (20.9)
	England	32,190 (26.9)	31,680 (27.8)	30,970 (27.2)
Ceases	Worcestershire	255 (21.6)	207 (17.4)	235 (19.8)
	SN Ave	264 (16.9)	289 (18.4)	271 (18.7)
	England	30,050 (25.1)	29,460 (25.8)	29,590 (25.9)

		2019/20			
		Q1 2020/21	Q2 2020/21	Q3 2020/21	Q4 2020/21
Starts	Number	3,150	25	23.9	24.3
West Midlands	Rate per 10k	24.9	25	23.9	24.3
Worcestershire	Rate per 10k	18.5	17.3	16.9	16



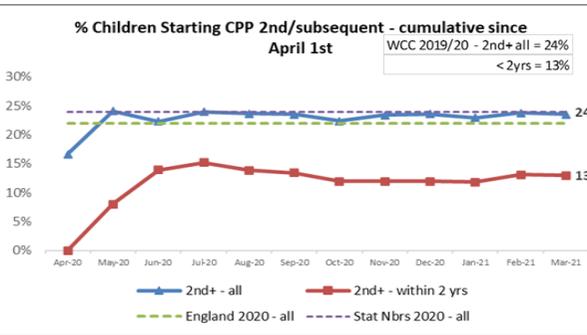
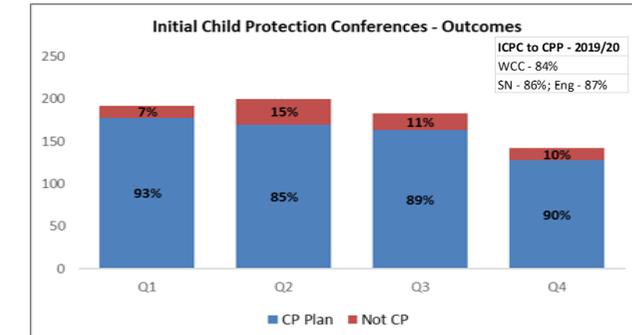
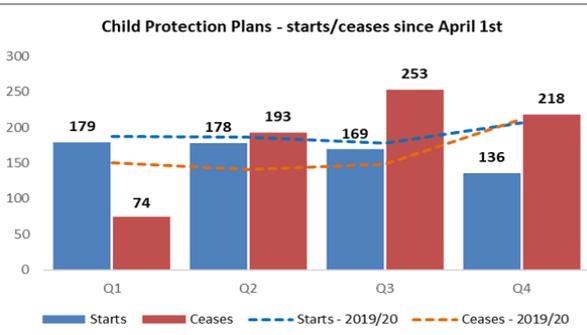
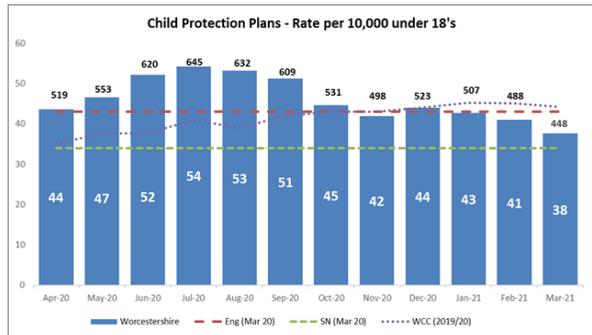


No comparator data is available for this indicator

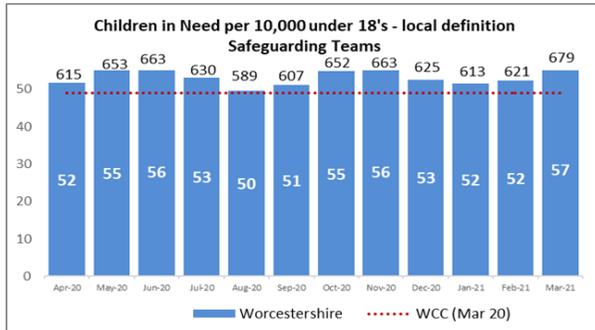


Care Leavers 19-21 in Employment, Education or Training as at 31 Mar 2021: **51%**. Latest comparative figure for age 19-21 using national annual snapshot methodology (2019/20) - Statistical Neighbours: 54%, England: 53%

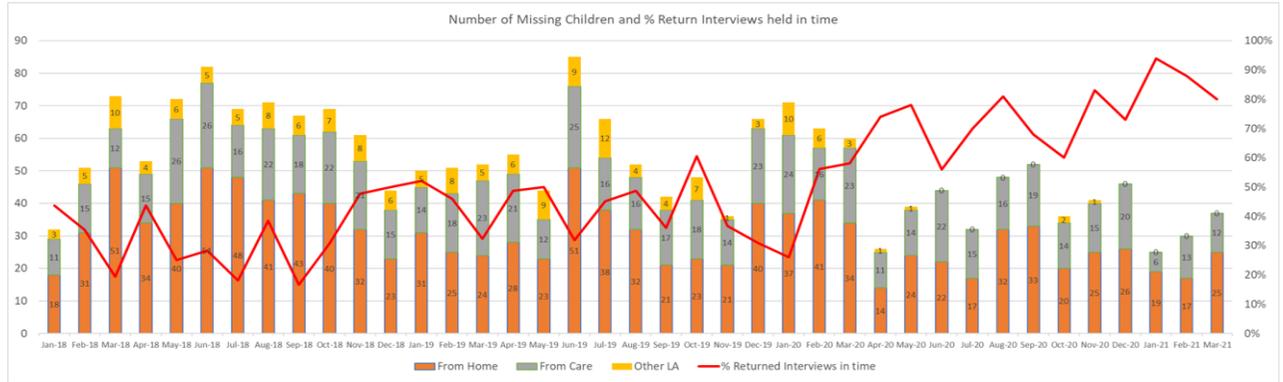
Child Protection



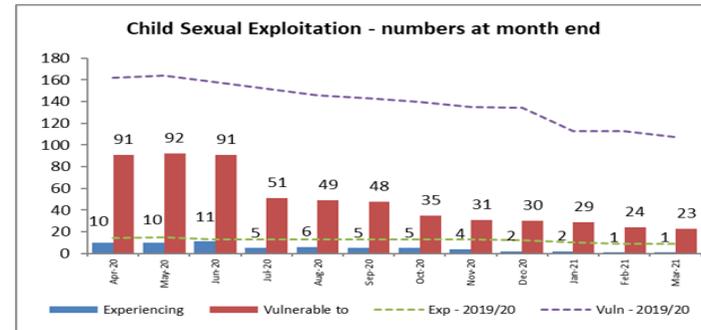
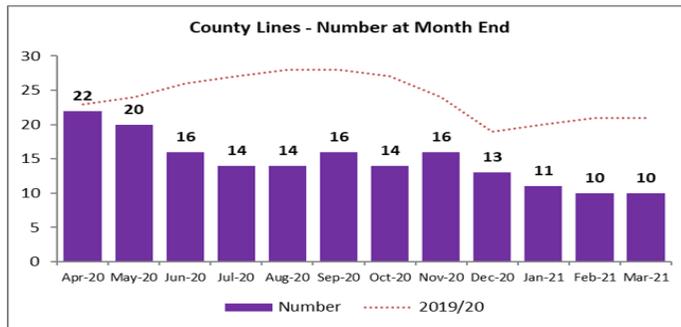
Children In Need



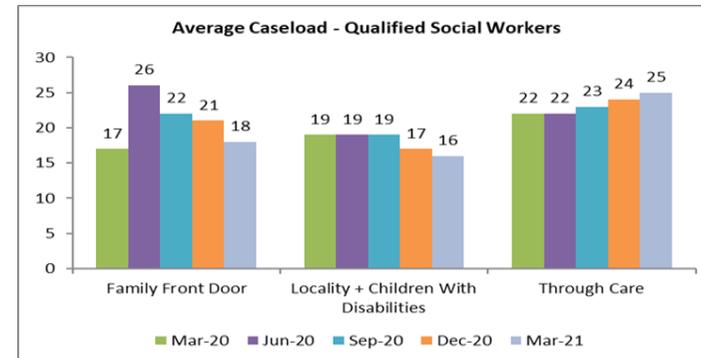
Child in Need Census (wide definition) - rate per 10,000 at 31 March 2020 - WCC= 27.5; Statistical Neighbours = 291; England = 324

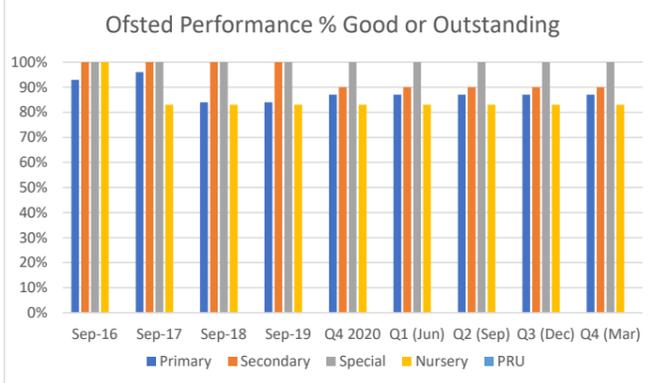


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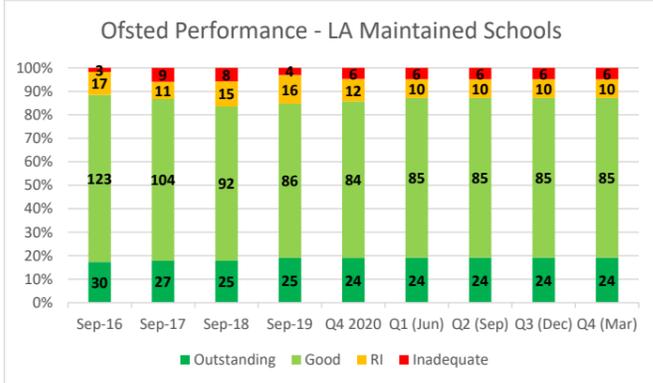
Staffing





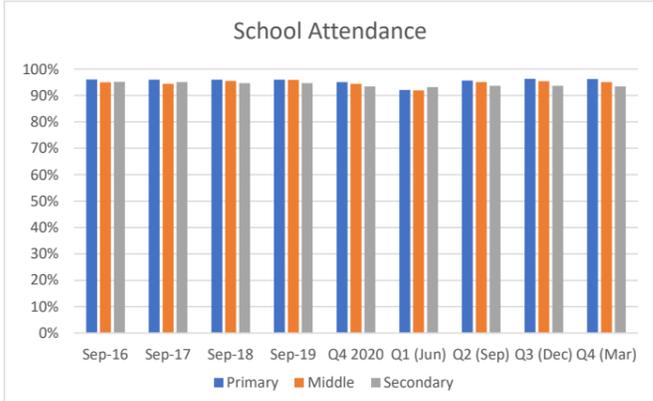
Ofsted Performance - % Good or Outstanding - All Schools by phase

	Sep-16	Sep-17	Sep-18	Sep-19	Q4 2020	Q1 (Jun)	Q2 (Sep)	Q3 (Dec)	Q4 (Mar)
Primary	89%	88%	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%
Secondary	93%	96%	84%	84%	87%	87%	87%	87%	87%
Special	100%	100%	100%	100%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%
Nursery	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
PRU	100%	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%	83%
All Worcs. England	90%	90%	86%	84%	84%	84%	84%	84%	84%
	89%	89%	84%	86%	86%	86%	86%	86%	86%



Ofsted grades - LA Maintained Schools

	Sep-16	Sep-17	Sep-18	Sep-19	Q4 2020	Q1 (Jun)	Q2 (Sep)	Q3 (Dec)	Q4 (Mar)
Outstanding	30	27	25	25	24	24	24	24	24
Good	123	104	92	86	84	85	85	85	85
RI	17	11	15	16	12	10	10	10	10
Inadequate	3	9	8	4	6	6	6	6	6
Total	173	151	140	131	126	125	125	125	125
% O & G	88.4%	86.8%	83.6%	84.7%	85.7%	87.2%	87.2%	87.2%	87.2%



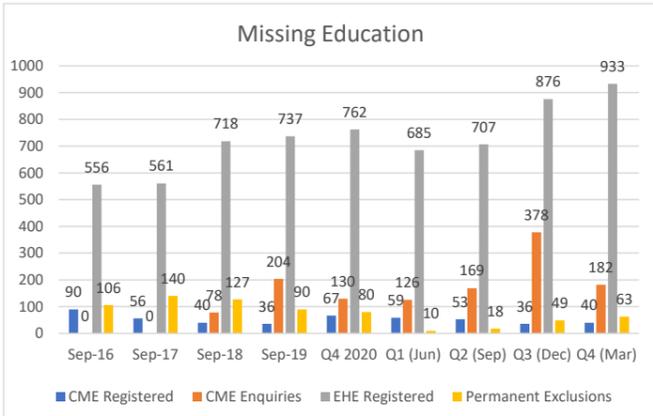
Ofsted grades - Free Schools and Academies

	Sep-16	Sep-17	Sep-18	Sep-19	Q4 2020	Q1 (Jun)	Q2 (Sep)	Q3 (Dec)	Q4 (Mar)
Outstanding	17	21	22	20	17	17	17	17	17
Good	43	62	66	73	77	77	77	77	77
RI	2	2	6	8	9	10	10	10	10
Inadequate	1	2	9	11	13	14	14	14	14
Total	63	87	103	112	116	118	118	118	118
% O & G	95.2%	95.4%	85.4%	83.0%	81.0%	79.7%	79.7%	79.7%	79.7%

School Attendance

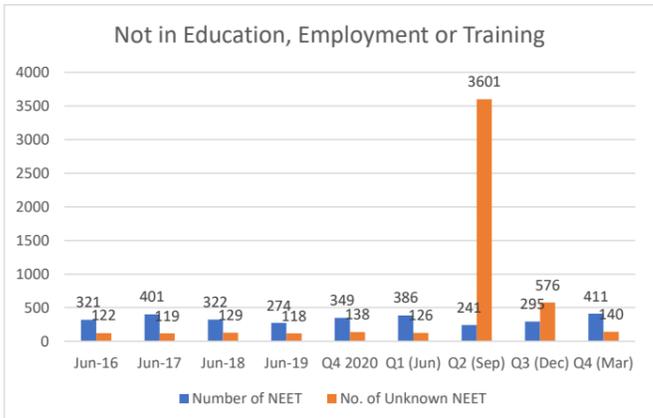
	Sep-16	Sep-17	Sep-18	Sep-19	Q4 2020	Q1 (Jun)	Q2 (Sep)	Q3 (Dec)	Q4 (Mar)
Primary	96.1%	96.0%	96.0%	96.0%	95.1%	92.1%	95.7%	96.3%	96.2%
Middle	95.0%	94.4%	95.5%	96.0%	94.4%	91.9%	95.1%	95.4%	95.1%
Secondary	95.2%	95.1%	94.7%	94.7%	93.4%	93.1%	93.7%	93.7%	93.4%
PRU	n/a	n/a	n/a		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	77.0%
Special Schools	n/a	n/a	n/a		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	76.0%

National	Sep-16	Sep-17	Sep-18	Sep-19
Primary	96.0%	96.0%	95.8%	96.0%
Secondary	94.8%	94.6%	94.5%	94.5%



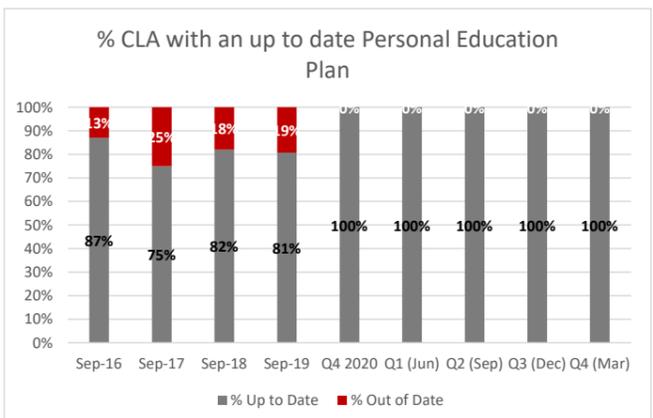
Missing Education

	Sep-16	Sep-17	Sep-18	Sep-19	Q4 2020	Q1 (Jun)	Q2 (Sep)	Q3 (Dec)	Q4 (Mar)
CME Enquiries	n/a	n/a	78	204	130	126	169	378	182
CME Registered	90	56	40	36	67	59	53	36	40
CME Closed	52	52	150	262	1070	1344	182	514	1157
EHE Registered	556	561	718	737	762	685	707	876	933
Permanent Exclusions	106	140	127	90	80	10	18	49	63



Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET - 16 to 18 Year olds)

	Jun-16	Jun-17	Jun-18	Jun-19	Q4 2020	Q1 (Jun)	Q2 (Sep)	Q3 (Dec)	Q4 (Mar)
Number of NEET	321	401	322	274	349	386	241	295	411
No. of Unknown NEET	122	119	129	118	138	126	3601	576	140



% School age Looked After Children with an up to date Personal Education Plan

	Sep-16	Sep-17	Sep-18	Sep-19	Q4 2020	Q1 (Jun)	Q2 (Sep)	Q3 (Dec)	Q4 (Mar)
% Up to Date	87%	75%	82%	81%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
% Out of Date	13%	25%	18%	19%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Commentary This commentary relates to Mar 2021 End

Due to Covid no Ofsted inspections have been undertaken between March 2020 and 2021. Hence the outcomes remain largely unchanged since reporting from this date.

There were 18 Ofsted visits in the Autumn term but these do not result in a judgement, and so have no impact on the data.

Monitoring inspections of schools judged inadequate and some schools judged as 'requires improvement' commenced 18 January during the Spring term.

All the six schools that received visits in the Spring term were judged to be taking effective action.

A full programme of routine inspections will not start until later in 2021.

Commentary This commentary relates to Mar 2021 End

Year on year, attendance has previously been the same or better for each phase and this is also reflected in National figures. The Q1 2020 figures are showing a drop due to the pandemic but by Q2 the figures had improved greatly due to wider school-reopening, supported by WCF, and are close to pre-pandemic levels. This improvement has continued into Q3 but Q4 has seen a slight drop due to the lockdown at the beginning of the year and an increase in disengagement and mental health issues after the March re-opening of schools. Please note: figures are based on attendance codes not on whether a student was physically in school during lockdown.

Commentary This commentary related to Mar 2021 End

There were 40 children/YP registered as CME at the end of March 2021. Each continues to be supported by a CME caseworker to ensure educational provision is successfully secured and is monitored through the multi-agency Missing Monday Group.

CME enquiries remain high in Q4 following an unprecedented peak in Q3 as more pupils were expected to return to educational provisions following lockdowns and as mobility restrictions eased. Schools and external agencies are continually encouraged to use the centralised hub to provide details for the LA to track, monitor and action CME. The success of this and diligence of casework follow up to ensure the LA's statutory duties are being fulfilled is demonstrable as 1157 CME cases have been successfully supported and closed during Q4.

Commentary This commentary relates to Mar 2021 End

September Unknown Peak - Due to young people moving through education in September, there are a large number of unknowns that need to be tracked. Until these individuals are identified, the unknown figure remains high and is at its peak in September. This peak is understood by the DFE. This year we have received college lists earlier and have the NEET team making phone calls to quickly identify those young people who might be NEET. Although there has been a further increase in NEET from 2020, caused by the pandemic, it has been far smaller than anticipated and the team continue to minimise this increase as much as possible by working with stakeholders and identifying and removing barriers to participation where possible. There is still an expectation the NEET figure could rise further in the next academic year due to the pandemic impact of disengagement and mental health issues.

Commentary This commentary relates to March 2021 End**Statutory School Age Personal Education Plan**

All pupils in Reception Year to Year 11 receive three Personal Education Plan (PEP) contacts from a PEP Co/Area Learning Advocate each year. This supports our CLA who attend school both in and out of Worcestershire. The (PEP) meeting is undertaken via Microsoft Teams or face to face, this is dependent on the needs of the CLA and the context. The Designated Teacher (DT) and Social Worker (in consultation with the carer) are expected to upload relevant information to the (PEP) **prior to the meeting** and attend the meeting/consultation call. This enables effective conversations, focusing on evaluation of strategies to specifically meet the needs of individual CLA and methods of monitoring outcomes to measure success. Additional contacts are made throughout the term, with the DT, where transitions are imminent, complexity of situation or those identified as a result of (VS) pupil progress meetings. **There is a high rate of (PEP) completion each term (100%)**. All (PEP) meetings (currently virtual) scheduled to take place are completed. There is an improving quality of information in the (PEP) document due to: professional development for Designated Teachers and Social Care colleagues, clarity of information and expectations from the Virtual School (VS) and support / guidance offered by (VS) staff which impacts on the quality of information shared in the (PEP) process.

Post 16 (PEP) completion

Post 16 (PEPs) are completed by social workers and are 'signed off' by (VS). The completion rate and quality still requires significant improvement. The (VS), in partnership with social care, is currently piloting a new PEP 'Personal Progression Plan (PPP)'. (PPPs) will be facilitated by the (VS) from September 2021. Two new Post 16 Learning Advocates due to join the (VS) team in readiness for the new academic year.

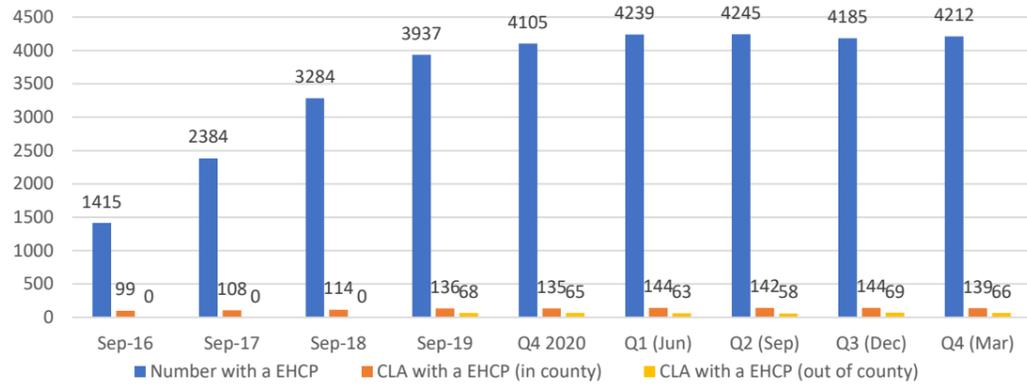
Pupils Causing Concern

There are regular meetings with Social Care to discuss pupils at risk of CME, less than 25 hours of education and those where there is a delay in placing in school provision. Half termly pupil progress meetings are held within the (VS), these focus on pupils who are not making progress against their own challenging targets and those who have a negative approach to their learning. The discussions result in individual plans of action for prioritised CLA.

Quality Assurance

Half termly quality assurance activities focus on specific groups of CLA or themes, these reflect the priorities within the Virtual School Improvement Plan.

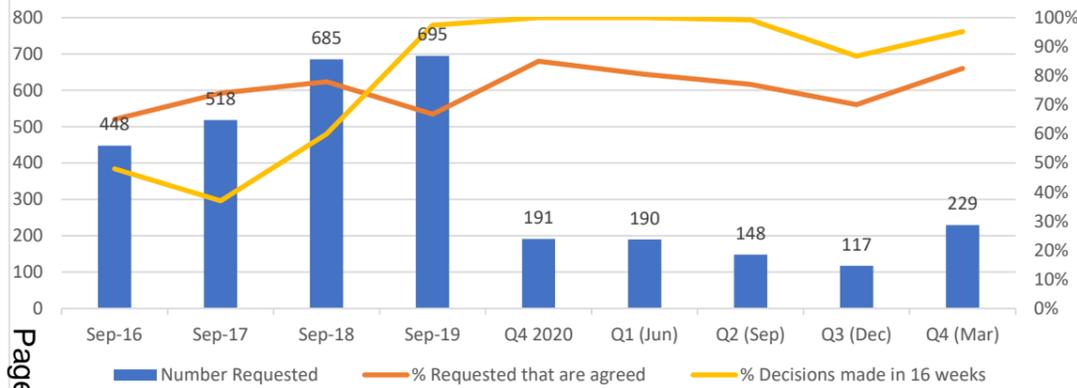
Children with a Education Health Care Plan



Children with a Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)

	Sep-16	Sep-17	Sep-18	Sep-19	Q4 2020	Q1 (Jun)	Q2 (Sep)	Q3 (Dec)	Q4 (Mar)
Number with a EHCP	1415	2384	3284	3937	4105	4239	4245	4185	4212
CLA with a EHCP (in county)	99	108	114	136	135	144	142	144	139
CLA with a EHCP (out of county)	n/a	n/a	n/a	68	65	63	58	69	66
CIN with a EHCP	n/a	n/a	n/a	74	103	88	113	89	72
CPP with a EHCP	n/a	n/a	n/a	16	17	18	22	20	17
EH plans with a EHCP	n/a	n/a	n/a	43	60	0	0	37	29

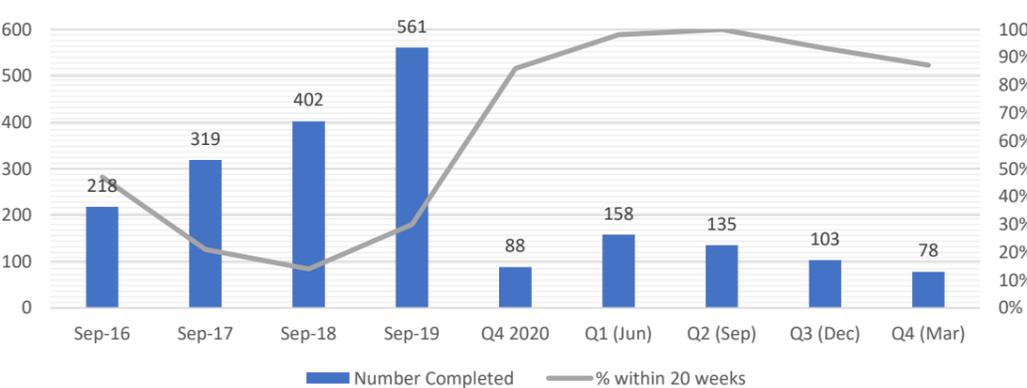
New Education and Health Care plans



New Education and Health Care Plans (Statutory Timescales including exceptions)

	Sep-16	Sep-17	Sep-18	Sep-19	Q4 2020	Q1 (Jun)	Q2 (Sep)	Q3 (Dec)	Q4 (Mar)
Number Requested	448	518	685	695	191	190	148	117	229
% Requested that are agreed	65%	74%	78%	67%	85%	81%	77%	70%	83%
% Decisions made in 16 weeks	48%	37%	60%	97%	100%	100%	99%	87%	95%

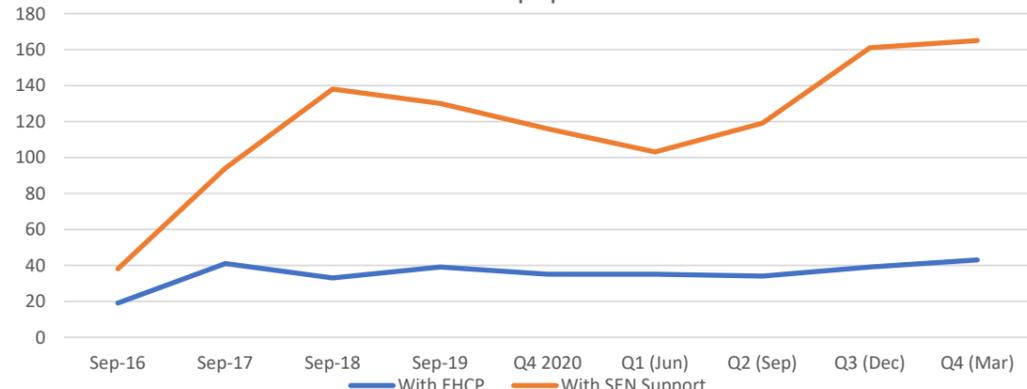
Number of EHCP completed and timeliness



Number of EHCPs completed and % within 20 weeks (Statutory Timescales including exceptions)

	Sep-16	Sep-17	Sep-18	Sep-19	Q4 2020	Q1 (Jun)	Q2 (Sep)	Q3 (Dec)	Q4 (Mar)
Number Completed	218	319	402	561	88	158	135	103	78
% within 20 weeks	47%	21%	14%	30%	86%	98%	100%	93%	87%

Number of EHE pupils with SEND



Number of EHE pupils with SEND

	Sep-16	Sep-17	Sep-18	Sep-19	Q4 2020	Q1 (Jun)	Q2 (Sep)	Q3 (Dec)	Q4 (Mar)
With EHCP	19	41	33	39	35	35	34	39	43
With SEN Support	38	94	138	130	116	103	119	161	165

Commentary This commentary relates to March 2021 End

The number of CYP with an EHCP has increased Worcestershire in the last quarter as we would have expected due to the general trend of increasing number of EHCPs. This may decrease in the next quarter due to children and young people moving out of education and into for example employment and higher education (plans are not needed for either).

The number of requests of assessment has increased as expected following the end of lockdown restrictions which has meant that schools have been able to implement a graduated response and where needed may a request for assessment. Decision making about whether an EHCP is required within 16 weeks has increased in the last quarter to 95%.

Excellent improvements in performance have been made over the last two years resulting in 100% of EHCPs being completed with 20 weeks within quarter 2. Strategic developments in the team are now focused on annual reviews and the quality of EHCPs. In the last quarter this compliance has reduced to 87% , which remains a high level of performance however, due to difficulties in obtaining educational psychology advice this figure has dropped. Actions have been taken to mitigate for any further risk with successful recruitment to vacant positions.

Commentary This commentary relates to March 2021 End

The number of children with an EHCP who are EHE has slightly increased in the last quarter. This parallels the national picture and increases in the number of families generally who are choosing to home educate. Discussions with families indicate that many families choosing to home educate remain anxious about a return to school as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic . Others have enjoyed the experience of home educating during the summer months and found this to be a positive experience for their children.

Appendix 2 –Budget Monitoring 2020/21 Outturn

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

16th July 2021

DSG year-end position was an overspend of £0.25m:

2020/21 Budget Monitoring Outturn - March 2021	Budget	Outturn	Variance	Variance
	£000	£000	£000	%
Schools DSG Block	126,528	124,386	(2,142)	-1.7%
High Needs DSG Block	51,863	55,828	3,965	7.6%
Early Years DSG Block	35,963	35,007	(957)	-2.7%
Central DSG Block	3,515	3,422	(94)	-2.7%
Other School Grants	0	(525)	(525)	0.0%
DSG Expenditure	217,869	218,117	248	
DSG Grant	(217,869)	(217,869)	0	0.0%
DSG transfer from Reserves	0	(248)	(248)	0.0%
DSG including Grant Income	(0)	0	0	

- Key pressures remain as previously reported to panel – specifically Out of County provision and Post-16 provision in the High Needs block. Worcestershire High Needs pressures are in line with known national picture.
- It should be noted that the £3.2m underspend on the Schools and Early Years blocks is due to a timing difference of pupil growth income received and distributed and is likely to be used early in 2021/22
- Overspend is ‘carried forward’, essentially increasing the deficit balance on the DSG reserve, which at some point needs to be paid back. The deficit balance at the start of the year was £6.2m. Deficit at end of 2020/21 is £6.5m, which will be carried forward against future DSG income. Working closely with County Council’s Network and SCT to ask Government to urgently address an issue which has grown to become the single biggest budgetary concern for local authorities. WCC’s deficit is forecast to be £14.7m at the end of March 2022.

At year-end, WCF outturned with an underspend before Corporation Tax of £590k. The surplus amounts to 0.5% of budgeted income. The final position is shown below by both expenditure type and by service.

Corporation tax has been assessed internally and by tax advisors KPMG to be £23k, meaning that the post-tax surplus transferred to the Retained Earning account is £567k.

	Latest Budget £000	Actual £000	Variance £000	Variance %	Change since last month £000
Contract Income	117,407	117,407	0	0.00%	0
Government Grants	0	0	0	0.00%	0
Interest	0	5	5	0.00%	1
Covid-19 Costs from WCC	0	931	931	0.00%	199
Sales, Fees and Charges	1,324	1,394	69	5.25%	-311
Total Income	118,732	119,736	1,005	0.85%	-111
<i>less expenditure</i>					
Employees	41,871	38,437	-3,434	-8.20%	-1,131
Premises	737	756	19	2.58%	151
Transport	15,999	15,873	-126	-0.79%	-170
Supplies & Services	15,109	14,274	-836	-5.53%	244
Third Party Payments	45,016	49,807	4,791	10.64%	929
Transfer Payments	0	0	0	0.00%	0
Education Payments	0	0	0	0.00%	0
Reserves	0	0	0	0.00%	0
Support Services	0	0	0	0.00%	0
Total Expenditure	118,732	119,146	415	0.35%	22
Projected Surplus/(Deficit) before Corporation Tax	0	590	590		-186

Close working with WCC ensured that WCF was able to identify COVID-specific costs and allocate them against the WCC COVID grant. The total expenditure against the grant from WCF was £931k.

Outturn by Service WCF

	Latest Budget £000	Actual £000	Variance £000	Variance %	Change since last month £000
WCF Management & Board	678	639	-39	-5.74%	-12
Training	194	156	-38	-19.67%	-4
Resources Teams	3,526	3,088	-437	-12.40%	-166
Support Service Payments	7,324	7,324	0	0.00%	0
Resources	11,721	11,206	-514	-4.39%	-182
CSC Safeguarding Services	15,382	14,644	-738	-4.80%	-360
Integrated Family Front Door	4,559	4,149	-410	-9.00%	-6
Placements & Provision	50,093	53,288	3,195	6.38%	1,128
Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board	86	86	0	0.00%	0
CSC Through Care	4,105	3,893	-212	-5.17%	-67
CSC Targeted Family Support	1,734	1,490	-244	-14.07%	-1
Social Care	75,959	77,549	1,591	2.09%	692
Sufficiency & Safeguarding	460	451	-9	-1.94%	0
Quality and Improvement	1,553	1,275	-278	-17.88%	-156
Early Help & Partnership	2,906	2,891	-15	-0.52%	192
SEND & Vulnerable learners	6,887	6,480	-408	-5.92%	-162
Education and Early Help	11,806	11,096	-709	-6.01%	-126
Home to School Transport	17,415	17,415	0	0.00%	0
Home to School Transport	17,415	17,415	0	0.00%	0
Youth Offending Services	507	481	-27	-5.28%	0
Youth Offending Services	507	481	-27	-5.28%	0
TOTAL	117,407	117,748	340	0.29%	382
Contract Income	117,407	117,407	0	0.00%	0
Covid Costs from Council	0	931	931	0.00%	199
Projected Surplus/(Deficit) before Corporation Tax	0	590	590		-184

Resources Directorate underspent due to several posts held vacant for a number of months ahead of a Directorate restructure.

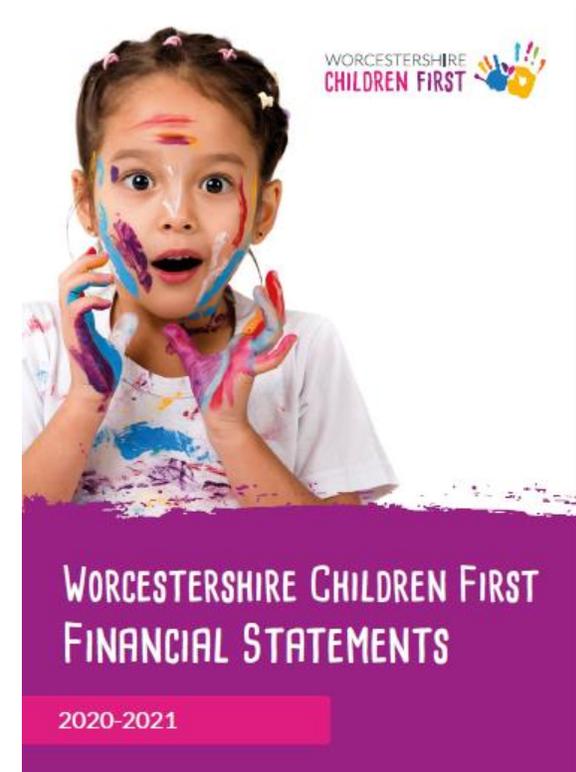
Social Care Service placements were overspent due to being demand led and to the high cost of some of these places. Variations can cause significant changes in the projection from month to month. The success of other Social Care areas in terms of budgetary control (by holding vacancies where possible) meant that the specific Placements Risk Reserve (held in WCC) was not required in 2020/21.

The underspend in the Education and Early Help Directorate was driven by instances where posts are budgeted at top of scale, but occupied by newer appointments that are not yet at top of scale and savings on reduced travel costs.

Home to School Transport outturned to budget. Additional costs in this area relating to COVID were coded directly to a WCC grant specifically for this purpose.

- WCF external audit was complete at the end of June – by our Auditors Grant Thornton.
- Accounts prepared under FRS102.
- WCF Risk, Governance and Audit Board reviewed accounts and audit report in detail at end of June.
- Unmodified audit opinion – clean bill of health.
- Included as part of council's group financial statements.

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Any questions?

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

16 JULY 2021

WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

Summary

1. From time to time the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel will review its work programme and consider which issues should be investigated as a priority.

Background

2. Worcestershire County Council has a rolling annual Work Programme for Overview and Scrutiny. The suggested 2021/22 Work Programme has been developed by taking into account issues still to be completed from 2020/21, the views of Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members and the findings of the budget scrutiny process.
3. Suggested issues have been prioritised using scrutiny feasibility criteria in order to ensure that topics are selected subjectively and the 'added value' of a review is considered right from the beginning.
4. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is responsible for scrutiny of:
 - Children's Social Care and Families
 - Public Health relating to Families
 - Education and Skills
5. The overall scrutiny work programme will be discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) on 21 July 2021 and agreed by Council on 9 September 2021.

Dates of 2021 Meetings

- 22 September at 2pm
- 12 November at 10am

Purpose of the Meeting

6. The Panel is asked to:
 - Consider the 2020/21 Work Programme (attached at Appendix 1) and agree whether it would like to make any amendments in preparation for the OSPB's review of the overall scrutiny work programme on 21 July 2021.
 - Retain the flexibility to take into account any urgent issues which may arise.

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2020/21

Contact Points

Alyson Grice/ Alison Spall, Overview and Scrutiny Officers, Tel: 01905 844962 / 846607
Email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance), the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- [Agenda and Minutes of Council on 10 September 2020](#)
- [Agenda and Minutes of OSPB on 22 July 2020](#)

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel Work Plan (September 2020 - September 2021)

Date of Meeting	Issue for Scrutiny	Date of Last Report	Notes/ Follow-up Action
16 Jul 2021	Supporting Families First - Year One Evaluation and future development plans Including update on Family Safeguarding Innovation Project and impact of Covid-19 on the team	17 July 2020	
16 Jul 2021	Worcestershire Children First - Social Care Placements Sufficiency Strategy	11 January 2019	Cabinet considered on 24 June 2021
16 Jul 2021	Review of the Scrutiny Work Programme		For consideration at July OSPB and to be agreed at September Council
16 Jul 2021	Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring (Q4 and financial outturn)	29 January 2021	
22 Sep 2021	Positive Activities		
22 Sep 2021	Early Help Family Support (including Universal Early Help, Integrated Wellbeing, Here2Help (relating to families) and Children's Centres		
22 Sep 2021	Update on 0 -19 Starting Well Partnership	15 November 2020	Panel requested an update in 12 months (Nov 2020)
22 Sep 2021	Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring (Q1/period 3)		
12 Nov 2021	Vulnerable Learners (which includes children missing education, Elective Home Education, Young people not in education, employment or training (NEETS)).		Consider Vulnerable Learners Report before deciding if a Task Group is required on a specific area.

12 Nov 2021	Update on Get Safe Initiative		
12 Nov 2021	Update on the implementation of the Business Case for the Assessment Pathway for Children and Young People who may have Autism	15 November 2020	Panel requested an update in 12 months (Nov 2021)
12 Nov 2021	Scrutiny of 2022/23 Budget		
12 Nov 2021	Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring (Q2/period 6)		
January 2022	All Age Disability Strategy		To be considered jointly with the Adult Care and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Panel
January 2022	Scrutiny of 2022/23 Budget		
January 2022	Update on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Improvement	16 June 2020	Ofsted/Care Quality Commission (CQC) re-visit delayed – now expected June/July 2021
March 2022	Education Covid Recovery - impact on Educational Outcomes 2021		
March 2022	Delivery Model for Medical Education Provision – Update	16 March 2021	
March 2022	Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring (Q3 and period 9)		
May 2022	Impact of child poverty		Requested at Panel meeting 13 November 2019 (refer to Worcester City Task Group Report)
July 2022	Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report	16 March 2021	

July 2022	Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring (Q4 and financial outturn)		
Between 30 Sep 2020 and 30 Sep 2021	Ofsted Inspecting local authority children's services (ILACS) Inspection – Feedback from focused visit post July 2021	11 September 2019	ILACS inspection due post July 2022
Between 30 Sep 2020 and 30 Sep 2021	Standing Item: Children's Social Care (CSC) Performance and Education Performance outcomes		
Between 30 Sep 2020 and 30 Sep 2021	Standing Item: Performance and In-year Budget Monitoring		
Between 30 Sep 2020 and 30 Sep 2021	Standing Item: Annual Safeguarding Report		
Between 30 Sep 2020 and 30 Sep 2021	Standing Item: Budget Scrutiny Process		

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 16 JULY 2021

SUPPORTING FAMILIES FIRST – YEAR ONE EVALUATION AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families and the Director of Children's Services have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on the year one evaluation and future development plans of Supporting Families First.

Background

2. The Supporting Families First Team was launched Jan 2020. The key aim has been to strengthen families and to ensure children can remain living safely at home where it is safe and appropriate to do so. In its first 12 months of operation, the edge of care model has shown excellent results in preventing care and repeat care episodes. Further information on the evaluation of the first year of the service's impact can be found in Appendix 1.

3. The Worcestershire Children First Sufficiency Strategy 2021 – 2023 (Appendix 2) sets out the aims and objectives to meet our sufficiency duties and our vision on the placement experience for Looked After Children, Care Leavers, and those on the Edge of Care.

4. On the 24 June 2021 Cabinet received and approved the Sufficiency Strategy.

5. The service has supported multi-disciplinary partnerships to address the wide range of needs presented by children, young people and their parents and to work together to manage professional anxiety and risk in the family and community. This approach will be developed to the way we work with children in need and those on the edge of child protection in 2021/22.

Purpose of the Meeting

6. The Panel is asked to:
- Note the success and expansion of the Edge of Care service established in January 2020 as Supporting Families First;
 - Agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families and the Director of Children's Services; and
 - Determine whether any further scrutiny is required.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Supporting Families First Final Evaluation Report 2021

Appendix 2 – Worcestershire Children First Sufficiency Strategy 2021-2023 (paper copy included in the Agenda for Panel Members only - see Appendix 1 to item 5)

[Weblink to Appendix 2](#)

Appendix 3 – Presentation on Supporting Families First Year One Evaluation

Contact Points

Alyson Grice/Alison Spall, Overview and Scrutiny Officers Tel: 01905 844962/846607

Email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children's Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- [Agenda and Minutes of Cabinet held on 24th June 2021](#)
- [Agenda and Minutes for Cabinet 18 October 2018 Children at the Edge of Care and Children's Homes](#)

All Minutes and Agendas are available on the Council's website at: [web-link to agendas and minutes](#)



Supporting Families First

Final Evaluation Report

January 2021

WCF's mission is to support children & young people to be happy, healthy and safe, and one of our company's values is to 'value family life' by supporting and empowering parents to care for their children well. The Supporting Families First (SFF) team have become integral to how we support families at the earliest time and at the lowest levels, supporting and challenging parents to exercise their parental responsibilities and care for their children well.

Placing children at the heart of what we do, valuing family life, seeking good educational outcomes wherever possible by working with families and partner agencies are all key priorities of the team. Our key aim is to strengthen families, to ensure children can remain living safely at home where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

SFF went live in January 2020 and over the last 12 months has shown excellent results in preventing care and repeat care episodes. SFF have been actively involved with 135 children since its launch, seeing a steady increase of referrals quarter on quarter as the team has been embedded within the wider service.

Staffing

The SFF team offers a wide range of specialist supports to children and their parents/carers from staff who are employed by Worcestershire Children First under a one service approach. The posts within the team were all successfully recruited to, and preferred candidates in post by August 2020. A Practice Manager is responsible for overseeing the service. A permanent Clinical Lead was appointed in December 2020, providing the service with stable Clinical leadership and supporting the longer-term vision of the team.

The team is made up of 3 Pods:

- **3 Advanced Social Work Practitioners** who highly skilled, experienced social workers who create and coordinate plans for families and provide supervision and co-ordination for the staff within their Pod.
- A **Clinical Lead** and **3 Emotional Health & Well-Being Practitioners** provide cognitive behavioral therapy plans which provide families the skills to link emotions and behaviours.
- **2 Outreach Workers (in each Pod)** provide the most intensive support to our families, focusing on building relationships and keep the plan alive for our families, within the team and with our partners.
- **1 Substance Misuse Workers (in each Pod)** provide direct one to one support to children and or parents that focus on abstinence & harm reduction, providing a link to community resources that provide substance misuse support/Cranstoun.
- **1 Youth Mentors (in each Pod)** support young people to develop their interests and hobbies, using activity to build relationships in the family, providing practical support to access clubs and activities. Mentors will have knowledge of community resources for Children & Adults.

At the heart of everything we do

- 1 **Money Mentor** predominantly works with parents providing debt management advice. They review household bills with parents and strengthen skills to understand and manage family finances. Provides a link to housing services & courts regarding Evictions.

In December 2020 three staff made the decision to leave the team for personal reasons; 1 Outreach worker, 1 Substance Misuses worker and 1 administrative assistant.

The Outreach & Substance misuse vacancies were advertised on the 29th of December 20 with a closing date in January and planned interview dates in February 2021. The administrative post will be recruited to pending the evaluation of service needs.

Cohort of children within SFF

Through the work with children and their parents/carers the SFF team have aspired to develop practical skills in families which allows parents and their children to manage risk and familial tensions within their households, which in turn helps to improve relationships within the family and develop upon existing strengths. The service predominantly supports families where the child is subject to a Child in Need plan or Child protection plan, and the young person is aged 10 to 18 years of age, providing support to families over an 18-week timeframe using the Worcestershire Webstar to create plans for families. The approach is:

- Strengths based
- Identifies and manages risk
- Family Solution focused – utilising the range of skills and experience across the team, to support parents and families to create solutions
- Sustainable – with clear exit plans and ongoing strategies for sustained change, and good lines of communication

Demography of Children involved with SFF during Year 1

Age	Less than 10	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
%	2%	3%	9%	7%	11%	13%	19%	22%	13%	1%

Gender identification:	%	Nationality	%	Religion	%
Female	49	British	93	No Religion	7
Male	50	Polish	1	unknown	83
Other	1	Unknown	6	Christian	10

Ethnicity of Children involved with SFF

Ethnicity	%
White and Asian	1
Any other mixed background	1

At the heart of everything we do

White British	85
Any other White background	4
Traveller or Irish Heritage	1
Gypsy / Roma	2
White and Black Caribbean	1
White and Black African	1
Any other mixed background	1
Any other ethnic group	1
Unknown	2%

Development of Worcestershire WebStar:

SFF Webstar Forms went live in Liquid Logic on the 1st July 2020. Quarter 2 2020/2021 is the first quarter which reports directly from the new Webstar Dashboard within Liquid Logic.

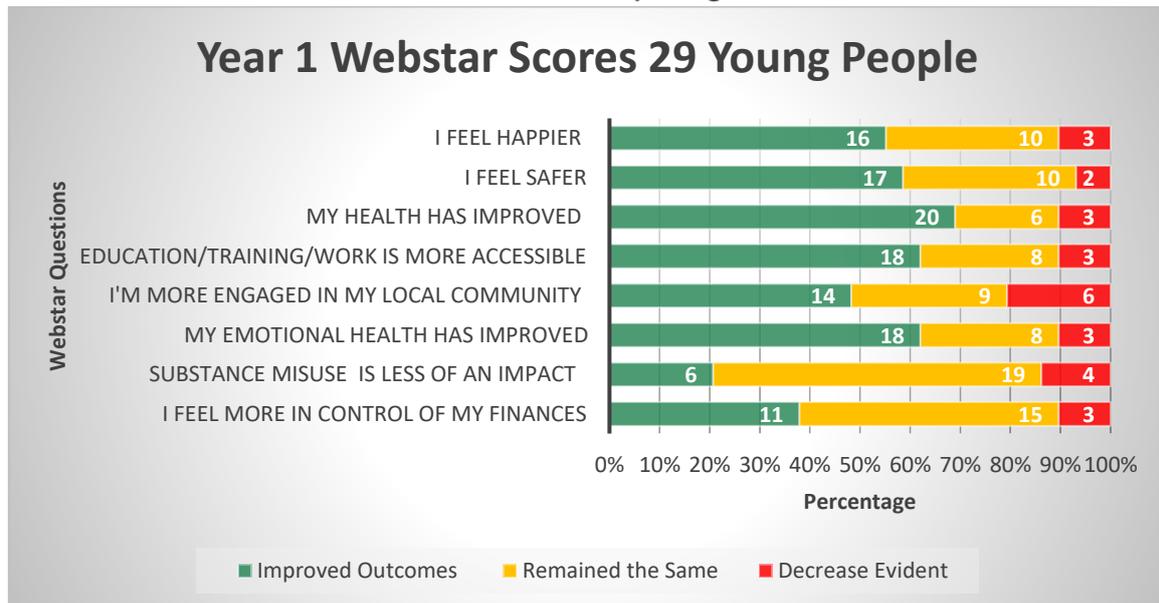


The Webstar focuses on 8 key questions which are scaled between 0-10. Children and parents are asked individually to talk to us about how they feel and where they would score themselves in terms of their;

- Happiness, Health and Safety
- Education, Work and Community Engagement
- Emotional Health & Well-Being
- Substance Misuse and Finances

Webstar feedback is gathered during SFF interventions with families, and it helps inform the Young Person's plan, measures the impact of the intervention with the children and their families, and captures the improvements made in their lives.

Webstar Scoring for Children



During the course of the SFF first year 384 Webstars have been completed. 234 Webstars have been completed with Adults, and 150 have been completed with children at different stages throughout SFF intervention. 29 Closure Webstars have been completed with children, and 41 Closure Webstars have been completed with Parents.

We have developed data from the 29 closure Webstars for children.

55% of Children were happier as a result of intervention.

Where we saw a decrease in terms of happy in children, the scores still remained relatively high, for e.g. from 10 to 9, or from 5 to 4. This is believed to be due to the initial score provided by some young person likely to not be a true reflection of what they are thinking, as they may not feel in a safe space to share their true feelings as the relationships are still new and developing. Of the 10 children where scores remained the same through intervention, 9 of those children scored 8 and above at the end of SFF involvement. However, one young person's score remained 5 as they had experienced the death of their Mother whilst Supporting Families First were involved.

59% of children felt safer.

Of the two children who felt less safe;

- Once score decreased from 10 to 9
- The other from 9 to 6, impacted by community objection to a crime committed.

69% of children said they felt healthier.

62% felt more engaged in education.

48% felt more connected in their communities.

62% of children were Emotionally healthier.

Of the 3 children that reported a decrease in their emotional wellbeing; 1 score moved from 7 to 6, 1 from 7 to 5, and 1 from 9 to 8.

21% of children said substance use was less of an impact whilst 66% of children told us Substance use was not impacting on their lives.

The Webstar now contains a section relating to substance misuse which asks children and parents when completing the Webstar if the substance use, they are referring to relates to them personally, to one or both parents and the whole family. It is hoped by doing so that we will capture data that will inform our intervention, identify training needs for staff, but most importantly allow us to direct our support to where it is most needed.

38% of children said finances had improved at home. For most children this remained static.

The Worcestershire Webstar is 7 months into development, and it has been successfully piloted within Supporting Families First, and we are now seeing positive progress and impact of our services and interventions with families

Sustainable Outcomes - Tracking the Original Cohort of Children.

There are 51 children in the Original Cohort who at the 'Go Live' date in January 2020 were not Looked After Children. This cohort of children has been tracked and reported on in each quarter report to provide evidence of care prevention sustainability within those families.

84% of the Original Cohort remain in the care of their families which equates to 43 out of 51 children.

8 children from this cohort have been accommodated since the launch and are now Looked after Children.

19 children (37%) of the Original Cohort have been stepped down to closure as a result of Supporting Families First Intervention.

17 Closure Webstars have been completed with children from the original cohort. Of these:

71% (12 children) say that they are happier, with 3 children staying the same, and 2 decreasing.

82% (14 children) say that they feel safer, 2 children remained the same, and 2 children say they feel less safe. Of the two children who felt less safe: 1 score decreased from 10 to 9, and the other from 9 to 6; this score was impacted on by community objection to a crime they had committed.

Experience of Children, Young People and Parents

At the heart of everything we do

SFF seek the views of children and families in many different ways, they complete Webstars with Children and parents at different stages of their intervention, they capture children's views via direct work, and both children and parents' views with CIN Meetings, and at the point of closure. Views are also captured during any case audit activity. In terms of capturing children's views, the Outreach Workers are key as they are often the main representative of the team to use direct work sessions and visits as an opportunity to sense check with families, particularly children on how they are experiencing the SFF service; this feedback has been positive.

Parents & Carers Said; "You have been amazing, really supportive and you are the best thing that has come out of the children being on a CP plan as your support has helped her to sort things out and get everything on track"

"I can't thank you enough for the changes that have happened since your involvement. I want to thank you all for your support".

I just want to say a big thank you. You were the only one who helped over the last few months. Nothing was too much trouble and you always helped us. Thank you.

"Thanks for your laidback approach when you were here. It is unusual for B to engage in a group discussion!".

WCF Group Manager said: Thank you both so much for stepping up and supporting F and his family – You have been instrumental in promoting his welfare and I'm really pleased to see such good practice – keep up the good work.

Young People Said;

"I would like to thank everyone for what they've done for me."

I'm happier living on my own, it's given me, and Nan space and we get on much better now" (young person who was supported to access housing)

'It was good to have someone to talk to about me and how I felt'

**Professionals Said.
Youth Offending Team.**

"Luke is very passionate, cares a lot and has gone out of his way to do the best for D.

D has named Luke as someone in his network he would go to if there was problems'

Senior Mental Health practitioner CAMHS. (SH)

"Since Supporting Families First became involved with your encouragement, S has engaged with me. Your support package is very positive and has improved communication all round".

Preventative Outcomes – Cost Avoidance

Supporting Families First has a key priority in preventing care where safe and appropriate to do so.

To date the service has a 91% care prevention success rate. The SFF intervention has supported, empowered and challenged parents to exercise their parental responsibility and has assisted them in identifying supports within their own families, and ultimately to care for their children well.

The care prevention percentage is developed by looking at the accumulative number of children receiving support since our launch which is 135 children. Supporting Families First has recommended and had agreement for 12 children to become looked after during the pilot, meaning 122 children have been prevented from becoming looked after.

Of these 12 children: 4 were placed in External Foster Care, 6 were placed in External Residential Care and 2 were placed in Supportive Living. The weekly cost of accommodating these 12 children is £36,203.87.

The average weekly cost for an external residential placement is £3017, the monthly cost for one young person from the SFF cohort is £12,068. The average cost of a three month stay in an external provision is £36,204 for each young person.

For example, children who are 15 years old make up 19% of the SFF cohort. The average care period for a 15-year-old young person in 20/21 is 11 months. This equates to a cost avoidance of £331,870 for each young person of this age where Care is prevented.

It is important to note that these figures do not include any costs for the additional specialist social work services that are incurred in the assessment and care planning process, and it is also essential to consider not only the financial benefits but emotional health and wellbeing benefits that is achieved by SFF intervention who are able to offer the right support at the right time to prevent a family breakdown.

Wider Service Development

The SSF Money Mentor has developed a financial support directory for Care Leavers and will be providing training to Team Managers and Social Workers on how to improve the financial outcome for Care Leavers.

The Worcestershire Webstar is now being used within the new Worcestershire Family Safeguarding Pilot which is a new way of working and went live in November 2020. This project recognises the increased risk factors for children aged 10 and under, who are assessed as at risk of harm from the trio of vulnerabilities, mental ill health, domestic abuse and alcohol or substance misuse. In addition, the Webstar is currently being rolled out across our Locality safeguarding Teams for use with our Children in Need; the SFF Practice Manager is supporting this through staff briefings.

Overall Sustainability of Outcomes of SFF Intervention

Supporting Families First have an overall success rate of 91% in the prevention of care having actively worked with 135 children since January 2020.

- Q4 19/20 reported a 98% success rate when working actively with 51 children.
- Q1 20/21 reported a 95% success rate whilst working actively with 77 children.
- Q2, 20/21 reports a 97% success rate whilst working with 95 children.
- Quarter 3 reports a 95% success rate whilst working with 102 children.

The SFF success rate has not dropped below 95% each quarter, and 90% overall with regards to prevention of care statistics and indicates that SFF provide the right intervention at the right time, thereby preventing unnecessary admissions into care.

This evaluation report clearly evidences the positive results that the SFF approach has had on the prevention of care for young people who are 10 and over during 2020/21. Over quarters 1/2 in 19/20 there were 45 young people (aged 11+) newly accommodated representing 38% of the newly accommodated cohort, for the same period (Qtr. 1/2 2020/21), this was 30 young people (36%). This is a reducing figure and is reflective of the SFF care prevention work that is targeted at this age group.

Next steps:

Worcestershire Childrens Firsts' company value is to "value family life" and in this we seek to support families at the earliest opportunity and at the lowest levels, whilst supporting and challenging parents to exercise their parental responsibility. Our improvement journey has taken us through the challenges of managing risk and professional anxiety and this work must continue with a focus on the role of social workers in assessing risk and supporting the multi-disciplinary partnership to manage risk in the family and community.

One of the priority areas within our business planning in 2021/22 will be our Children in Need development work. Children in Need are the cohort of children between child protection and early help. The SFF multi-disciplined approach will be key to this development, as it will support our continued work with partners to ensure that there is access to effective early help support, that is delivered both in the context of ACES informed practice and Contextual Safeguarding and are the basis for evidence based service development in 2021/22.

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Value Family Life

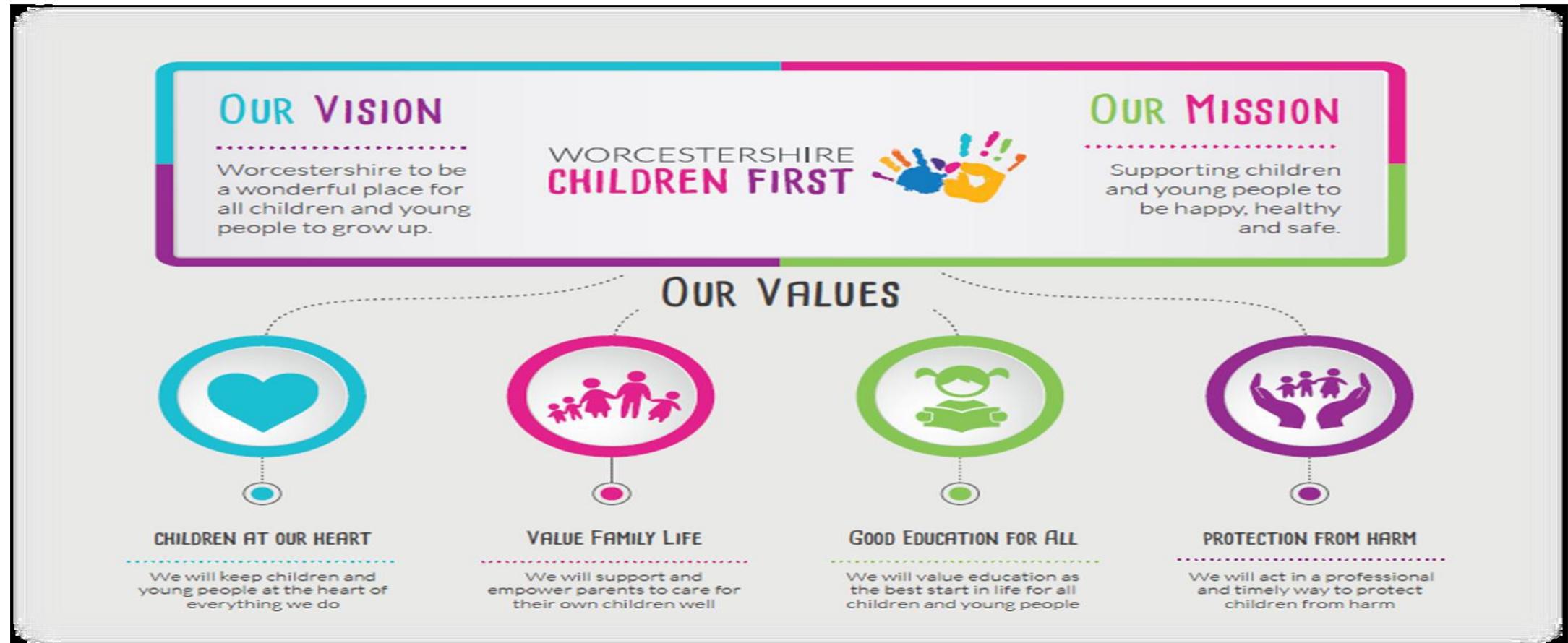


Children at our heart

The development of the Supporting Families First Team is part of the wider vision of Worcestershire Children First.

Placing children at the heart of what we do, valuing family life, seeking good educational outcomes wherever possible by working with families and partner agencies are all key priorities of the team.

Our key aim is to strengthen families, to ensure children can remain living safely at home where it is safe and appropriate to do so.



Meet the Front-Line Team

The service consists of 3 multi-disciplinary Pods covering the North East, North West & Southern areas of Worcestershire

An Advanced Social Work Practitioner who is highly skilled and experienced social worker who holds responsibility for the co-ordination of support and creating plans.

Outreach Workers who provides the most intensive support to our families, focusing on relationships with children families & ensuring the plan moves forward.

Substance Misuse Workers who provides direct one to one support to children/parents or the whole family that focus on abstinence & harm reduction.

A Clinical Lead & 3 Emotional Health & Well-Being Practitioners who deliver cognitive behavioral therapy support to children and their parents.

Youth Mentors who support young people to develop their interests and hobbies, using activity to build relationships in the family and accessing clubs and activities on local communities.

Money Mentor who predominantly works with parents providing debt management advice, reviewing household bills and practical support to deal with courts/housing services/bailiffs/debt management companies.

Supporting Families First Year 1

- The Pilot year ended in January 2021 after our launch on the 20th of January 2020.
- We supported families on a Child in Need basis or where young people were subject to a Child Protection Plan in our pilot year with an age range of 10-18 years.
- We supported 135 children in our pilot year with a gender split of 49% female, 50% male and 1% who did not identify with a gender.
- The Supporting Families First service continues to offer individualised support to both children & their parents.

How did we measure success.

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- Supporting Families Firsts key priorities are strengthening families and preventing young people from becoming looked after.
- During the pilot year the Supporting Families First team supported 135 children deemed to be on the "Edge of Care".
- Of those 135 children Supporting Families First recommended and sought agreement for 12 children to Become Looked After.
- This equates to an overall care prevention success rate of 91%.
- We tracked our original cohort of 51 Children who were open to the service at launch date in January 20 to monitor sustainability within our intervention.
- 84% of this original cohort had been prevented from Becoming Looked After, evidencing that families feel more able to manage familial conflict.
- 19 of those children remained closed to social care at the end of Year 1. (37%)

Supporting Families First Team Year 1

- Within our Pilot Year we developed the Worcestershire Webstar, a direct work tool, used to successfully create collaborative plans with children & families.
- The Webstar is underpinned by the vision/values & mission statement of WCF
- We created and launched the Webstar dashboard on the 1st of July 2020 to provide evidence of our interventions outcomes.
- The Worcestershire Webstar is now used within the wider Safeguarding services of WCF after a roll out programme in Feb/April 21. This included briefing events to all frontline Social Work practitioners/managers and admin support.
- We completed 384 Webstars in Year 1 , 234 with Adults & 150 Webstars were completed with children and young people.

What did we learn from the Webstar in our first year.

- 59% of children and 50% of adults felt safer as a result of Supporting Families First Intervention.
- 69% of children felt healthier.
- 62 % of children were more engaged in their Education.
- Within the pilot period 55 % of children and 56 % of adults said they were happier upon ending of our involvement.
- 48% of children were more connected to their communities.
- 54% of adults & 62% of children felt emotionally healthier at point of closure.
- 21% of children said substance use was less of an impact whilst 66% of children told us Substance use was not impacting on their lives.
- 38% of children said finances had improved at home. For most children this remained static.

What are the comparable measures we used.

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- We reviewed the newly accommodated statistics from 19/20 (pre SFF) and compared them with the 20/21 statistics (post SFF).
- Over quarters 1/2 in 19/20 there were 45 young people (aged 11+) newly accommodated, for the same period (Qtr. 1/2 2020/21), this was 30 young people.
- This is a reducing figure and is reflective of the SFF care prevention work that was targeted at this age group.



What our partners said.

Cranstoun: Drug & Alcohol Service:

“We can really see the merit in the work you are doing with Mum. There has been reduction in her alcohol usage by 70% since your involvement”.

Senior Mental Health practitioner CAMHS

“Since Supporting Families First became involved with your encouragement, S has engaged with me. Your support package is very positive and has improved communication all round”.

Police, Chief Inspector 3425:

“I wanted to ring you personally to say a big thank for all the work you did yesterday. You went over and above your duties and we appreciate the support under such difficult circumstances”

WCF Group Manager said: Thank you both so much for stepping up and supporting F and his family – You have been instrumental in promoting his welfare and I’m really pleased to see such good practice – keep up the good work.

Youth Offending Team.

“Luke (Youth Mentor) is very passionate, cares a lot and has gone out of his way to do the best for D. D has named Luke as someone in his network he would go to if there was problems”

What are our children & families are telling us:

- “Now my Mum has support she is calmer, and I have people to talk to and it’s helped me to open up about how I am feeling” (Child)
- “ I don’t feel the workers are ticking things off a list, they are very family orientated, they are focusing on what works for us”. (Mother)
- “I would like to say a special thank you to Mark (Money Mentor). I can’t thank Mark enough for his support and that his interaction and relationship building with T ‘has opened up a lot of trust’. Mark is a gem. (Father)
- “Something that has been helpful for me and my husband is we didn't feel judged. It is not a normal thing to do to say you cannot manage anymore and want your child accommodated. We did feel they were kind to us and didn't add to our feelings of guilt.”
- “It was good to have someone to talk to about me and how I felt” (Child)
- “You have been amazing, really supportive and you are the best thing that has come out of the children being on a CP plan as your support has helped us to sort things out and get everything on track” (Mother)