

Agenda

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday, 23 February 2022, 2.00 pm
County Hall, Worcester

All County Councillors are invited to attend and participate

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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

Wednesday, 23 February 2022, 2.00 pm, 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 T Reid (Church of England)

Parent Governor Representatives (for education matters)

Mr M Hughes

Agenda

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1	Apologies and Welcome	
2	Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip	
3	Public Participation Members of the public wishing to take part should notify the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance in writing or by e-mail 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 22 February 2022). Further details are available on the Council's website. Enquiries can also be made through the telephone number/e-mail address listed in this agenda and on the website.	
4	Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting (previously circulated)	
5	Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) Joint Area Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities Revisit in Worcestershire	1 – 24
6	Worcestershire Children First Independent Fostering Service Ofsted Inspection	25 – 58
7	Work Programme	59 - 62

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

23 FEBRUARY 2022

OFSTED AND CARE QUALITY COMMISSION (CQC) JOINT AREA SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITIES REVISIT IN WORCESTERSHIRE

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education, the Director for Education, Early Years and Children with Disabilities (Worcestershire Children First (WCF)) and the Chief Executive Officer of Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on the outcomes of the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) Special Education Needs revisit in Worcestershire that took place in November 2021.
2. As a result of the findings of the 2018 SEND Local Area inspection and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) determined that a written statement of action was required because of significant areas of weakness in the effectiveness of the Local Area to identify and meet the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. HMCI determined that the local authority and CCG were jointly responsible for submitting a written statement of action to Ofsted. This was declared fit for purpose on 16 October 2018.
3. Between 1 and 3 November 2021, Ofsted and the CQC revisited the area of Worcestershire to decide whether sufficient progress has been made in addressing each of the twelve areas of weakness. The outcome of this inspection is detailed in the report letter published on 13 January 2022 (Appendix 1).
4. The area has made sufficient progress in addressing eight of the significant weaknesses identified at the initial inspection. The area has not made sufficient progress in addressing four significant weaknesses. As an outcome of the revisit inspection in November 2021, the Local Area is required by the DfE (Department for Education) and NHSE (NHS England) to produce an Accelerated Progress Plan to demonstrate how remaining areas of weaknesses will be addressed.

Background

5. Local authorities and partners must have regard to the SEND Code of Practice (January 2015) which provides statutory guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated regulations. It relates to children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabled children and young people up to the age of 25.
6. SEND Local Area inspections examine the effectiveness of the Local Area to identify special educational needs and disabilities; assess needs, provide services,

jointly commissioned where appropriate and ensure and improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The Local Area includes the local authority, clinical commissioning groups, public health, NHS England for some specialist services, early years settings, schools and further education providers.

7. The inspection visit in November 2021 found that the Local Area had made sufficient progress in eight of the twelve areas of concern including:

- Safeguarding concerns around children and young people from London boroughs housed in Worcestershire; the use of long-term part-time timetables; children taken off roll and missing education
- CCG's lack of strategic leadership in implementing the SEND reforms
- Action plan required to implement the new SEND strategy was of a poor quality
- Lack of joint commissioning arrangements
- Lack of systems to track outcomes for children and young people who have SEND in special schools, post-16 provision, young people who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) and youth offenders effectively
- Disproportionate numbers of children and young people who have SEND who had been permanently excluded from school
- Quality of the local offer was not fit for purpose
- Academic outcomes, behaviour and attendance of children and young people who have SEND were poor

8. In addition, Ofsted and CQC inspectors have considered the impact of COVID-19 on the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families as well as actions leaders took when schools were only open to some children and young people due to COVID-19 restrictions. Vulnerable children and young people with SEND were tracked and monitored, and settings were equipped with range of information technology hardware. The Local Area supported schools with test kits and extra staffing capacity. The Local Offer website reflected the latest COVID-19 advice and signposted to support services during the pandemic. Healthcare services provided a 'Well-being support guide' for children and young people and their families including additional emotional health and well-being support and mental health emergency support.

9. The Accelerated Progress Plan seeks to address the remaining four key areas of concern:

- The variation in the skills and commitment of some mainstream schools to provide effective support for children who have SEND.
- The lack of suitable specialist provision to meet the identified needs of children and young people.
- Fragile relationships with parents and carers and a lack of meaningful engagement and co-production and collaboration.
- The poor quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC Plans) and limited contributions from health and social care along with the process to check and review the quality of EHC plans.

10. These are significant and inter-related areas to make further progress on. To inform the development of the Accelerated Progress Plan; aims, actions, milestones

and measures, WCF have engaged with relevant key stakeholders for their feedback and input including educational settings, parent carers groups, and health and will continue to do work with stakeholders to monitor and feedback on progress.

11. The purpose of the Accelerated Progress Plan is to address remaining areas of weakness as stated in the outcome of the SEND Ofsted and CQC reinspection. The plan will drive a focused programme of work that will be overseen by representatives of the accountable bodies including stakeholders through the SEND Partnership Board. Each of the four action areas has a WCF and a CCG Lead officer role and partnership members including parent carer representative groups who will be progressing the actions and reporting on progress. Each action area also has a set of aims and specific measure that we will use to monitor progress and impact for children, young people and families.

12. Additionally, WCF has developed and appointed to a new post of Head of Quality Assurance, this role oversees the Quality Assurance Framework to include SEND/All Age Disability. Throughout 2021-22, the Quality Assurance approach for SEND has been developed with the introduction of a new case file audit programme and feedback mechanisms, a focus of 2022-23 will be consolidating this work to provide the key insight into the improvements in quality of EHC Plan's. The Quality Assurance Framework has three dimensions:

- Key Performance Indicators (KPI's): Analysis of business and performance information on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis – this enables WCF to understand how much it is doing and how timely it manages this work
- Feedback from Children, Young People and Families: WCF is committed to understanding the experiences of its work and services directly from children and families; WCF strives to learn from these experiences and build it into our future practice. WCF brings this learning together from compliments and complaints, but it also has a programme of quarterly feedback mechanisms to hear about children and families' experiences – this supports the understanding of the impact of the work and the difference being made
- Audit Activity: Completion of case file audits (using a peer and moderation approach) – this supports WCF to know the quality of its practice

13. The Special Education Needs/Disabilities Accelerated Progress Plan (Appendix 2) will be submitted to the DfE during February 2022. The SEND Improvement and Intervention Unit (SIU) at the Department for Education will work with NHS England to review and approve the plan. Once approved the DfE will undertake monitoring at 6 and 12 monthly intervals by a review meeting with area leaders and key stakeholders. No further inspection under the current SEND inspection framework will be carried out unless directed by the Secretary of State. A new inspection framework for Local Area SEND effectiveness is expected in 2022. Worcestershire along with all Local Areas will be scheduled to receive this inspection in accordance with the timetabling of other Local Area inspections.

14. At a local level, the SEND Improvement Board will transform to become the SEND Strategic Partnership Board (0-25 years) and will take the Strategic oversight of monitoring and reinforcing the focus of progress of the Plan (Appendix 3). This

will be carried out via bi-monthly meetings with Accelerated Action Plan leads and meeting with the SEND Board Chairs and Director of Children's Services six weekly to report on progress. Whilst there is representation of the parent carer forum and SEND Information Advice and Support Service at the Board and as part of the action areas, WCF is also securing further structured involvement with the Families in Partnership Parent Carer Forum Stakeholder Group. Families in partnership as the constituted parent carer forum funded by the DfE are the key organisation to facilitate a wider engagement and reach to other parent carer groups and parent carers and WCF looks forward to extending this reach and engagement further and for the long-term partnership and co-production with parent carers.

15. The staffing across the SEND Service for EHC Plan assessment and planning was increased for operational capacity from 2019/20 by 17 full time equivalent posts at a cost of £675,000. This capacity has not reduced during subsequent budget rounds despite budget pressures. During 2021, the service experienced some turnover of staff however recruitment has been successful, and posts have been recruited to with permanent staff and where there are vacancies, active recruitment and temporary agency staff are used to support capacity. As of January 2022, the SEND Service has 87% (53) permanent staff, 7% (4) vacancies and 7% (4) agency staff. The CCG recruited to additional capacity and has increased staffing for SEND through the Designated Clinical Officer capacity and dedicated SEND commissioner role.

Purpose of the Meeting

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

- Consider outcome and the feedback from the Joint Local Area SEND reinspection carried out by Ofsted and the CQC
- determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny, and
- agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education/Representative from the CCG.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Joint Local Area SEND reinspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission Outcome Letter

Appendix 2 – The Special Education Needs/Disabilities Accelerated Progress Plan

Appendix 3 – Governance of the Accelerated Progress Plan

Contact Points

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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:

[Ofsted/CQC Local Area SEND Inspection Handbook](#)

Agendas and Minutes of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 8 August 2018, 6 March 2019, 13 November 2019 and 16 June 2020

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

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14 December 2021

Tina Russell
Director of Children's Services,
Worcestershire County Council
Spetchley Road
Worcester
WR5 2NP

Mr Simon Trickett, Chief Executive, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical
Commissioning Group (CCG)
Sarah Wilkins and Gabrielle Stacey, Local Area Nominated Officers, Worcestershire

Dear Ms Russell and Mr Trickett

Joint area SEND revisit in Worcestershire

Between 1 and 3 November 2021, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) revisited the area of Worcestershire to decide whether sufficient progress has been made in addressing each of the areas of significant weakness detailed in the inspection report letter published on 16 May 2018.

As a result of the findings of the initial inspection and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) determined that a written statement of action was required because of significant areas of weakness in the area's practice. HMCI determined that the local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group (CCG) were jointly responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted. This was declared fit for purpose on 16 October 2018.

The area has made sufficient progress in addressing eight of the significant weaknesses identified at the initial inspection. The area has not made sufficient progress in addressing four significant weaknesses. This letter outlines our findings from the revisit.

The inspection was led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Ofsted and a Children's Services Inspector from CQC.

Inspectors spoke with children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), parents and carers, headteachers, special educational

needs coordinators (SENCOs), the parent carer forum (Families in Partnership, FiP), and local authority and National Health Service (NHS) officers. Inspectors looked at a range of information about the performance of the area in addressing the 12 significant weaknesses identified at the initial inspection, including the area's improvement plans and self-evaluation. Inspectors also looked at a sample of education, health and care (EHC) plans and evaluated the online local offer. Inspectors considered the responses to the parent and carer survey and the emails sent into Ofsted.

In reaching their judgements, inspectors took account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SEND arrangements in the area. Inspectors considered a range of information about the impact of the pandemic and explored how the area's plans and actions had been adapted as a result.

Main findings

- **The initial inspection found that there were safeguarding concerns around: children and young people from London boroughs housed in Worcestershire; the use of long-term part-time timetables; and children taken off roll and missing education.**
- Leaders have put systems in place that effectively monitor vulnerable children and young people who are placed in Worcestershire from other local authorities, including children and young people with SEND. There is a named person in the area and a single point of contact for any stakeholders who may have concerns about a child or young person or who require additional information about them.
- The systems enable leaders to monitor children and young people who are placed on, or taken off, school rolls. Leaders use this information well to check the location of children and young people. They identify children and young people who are not in education effectively and follow up their whereabouts quickly.
- If a child or young person is not in an educational setting, they are supported by the children missing in education (CME) team. The Missing Mondays forum is attended by social care, SEND, youth justice, designated clinical officer (DCO) and medical education teams, and other relevant stakeholders. The forum reviews children and young people who are not in education. They then develop and implement plans to help reintegrate them back into education. The work of the Missing Mondays forum is reducing the number of children missing education and the amount of time vulnerable children spend out of education.
- Leaders have informed schools about the appropriate use of part-time timetables. Area leaders have introduced a portal for educational settings that includes the facility to report that they are placing a child or young person on a part-time timetable. Leaders use this information to monitor the use of part-time timetables across the area. This enables them to challenge settings when they identify that a

part-time timetable is used inappropriately. However, the system does rely on settings voluntarily uploading the relevant information to the portal.

- If a pupil with an EHC plan is on a part-time timetable, the area's SEND team is notified. The team then checks the provision for the child or young person. The area is now monitoring this group of children and young people to ensure that they are receiving appropriate education provision.

The area has made sufficient progress to improve this area of weakness.

■ **The initial inspection found that the CCG lacked strategic leadership in implementing the SEND reforms.**

- The CCG has shown increased investment and commitment in its focus on children and young people with SEND. This includes the CCG jointly chairing the SEND Improvement Board with the local authority. The focus on children and young people with SEND is now apparent within the CCG's governance structure and the increased level of staffing allocated to this area.
- The appointed lead general practitioner (GP) for SEND provides a link for all the GPs in the area. This person has provided training for GPs. This ensures that GPs, who are often the first point of contact for families and often the main contact for overseeing adult healthcare, have appropriate knowledge and information to help support their patients. The CCG is prioritising its work with children and young people with SEND and has a strategic role in leading on this agenda.
- The recruitment of the children and young people's commissioning manager and the increase in the DCO's hours have strengthened the focus on meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND. They participate in multi-agency groups and share their health expertise. Leaders and practitioners from other agencies value their input and this is beginning to inform and develop service delivery. Given that service redesign and monitoring are recent, it is too early to measure the impact that this is having on children and young people with SEND. The CCG is now jointly developing strategies and approaches to commissioning with the local healthcare provider to meet needs. The CCG is now strategically leading on implementing SEND reforms.
- The CCG ensures that children and young people with SEND are a key priority within the wider health systems regionally and nationally. For example, children and young people with SEND have been added to the local priorities for the NHS Children & Young People National Transformation Programme. The aim of this national programme is to reduce health inequalities by improving joint commissioning and collaboration across agencies. This example highlights the importance the CCG gives to identifying and commissioning services to meet the needs and improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The area has made sufficient progress to improve this area of weakness.

- **The initial inspection found that the action plan required to implement the new SEND strategy was of a poor quality.**
- The development of Worcestershire Children First has resulted in a single, centralised organisation to deliver a wide range of services in the area. Staffing is more stable, with more accessible team leaders and senior staff. The area has brought together education, health and social care services into a cohesive structure. This has enabled leaders to successfully address several of the significant weaknesses identified at the previous inspection.
- Leaders have a strong understanding of the area's strengths and further improvements that need to be made. The updated and adapted action plans and SEND strategy reflect the concerns raised in the written statement of action. Leaders have considered changes in the needs of children and young people with SEND in the local community and national guidance in the development of these improvement plans. This has ensured that the right issues are prioritised and addressed to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- Leaders are committed to ensuring that all the actions in their plans lead to long-term and sustainable improvements. They are laying secure foundations on which to build. Leaders are not prepared to make 'quick' and unsustainable changes. For example, leaders have developed a Year 9 annual review toolkit that will support young people in preparing for adulthood more effectively. They took time to design the toolkit to ensure that it will effectively support settings during annual reviews of Year 9 children and young people with SEND. The measured approach to leaders' improvement strategies, along with some delays due to staffing and organisational changes, mean that the impact of their actions is yet to be seen.
- Leaders have developed a range of quality assurance frameworks to check and monitor the impact of their actions. These frameworks have initially focused on compliance to ensure that processes are being implemented as planned. While this has led to more consistent practices, it has been at the expense of the quality of some of the outcomes. For example, while a very high proportion of EHC plans are now issued within statutory timescales, the EHC plans continue to be of a poor quality.
- Within the last year, a SEND dashboard has been further developed and implemented to monitor performance against set targets. For example, leaders use the information to monitor how well children and young people with SEND are achieving academically, and their attendance and exclusions information. The dashboard captures measurable health data, which has helped in monitoring activities such as the number of health reviews undertaken and waiting times for assessments. The local area knows that it has more work to do in developing measures that capture the effectiveness and quality of healthcare provision. This means that the area cannot fully assure itself of the quality of healthcare services for children with SEND and their families.

The area has made sufficient progress to improve this area of weakness.

- **The initial inspection found that there was a lack of joint commissioning arrangements.**
- A children and young people's joint commissioning group has been developed. It is part of the area's joint commissioning strategy. Access to services has been improved through targeted approaches and redesigned services. For example, a significant reduction in the waiting times for an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis has been achieved through targeted work within the overarching pathway. Leaders identified where they could make efficiencies through effective use of assessments and then implemented and reviewed the changes made in order to successfully reduce the waiting times for diagnosis.
- Leaders are commissioning speech and language support to address delays in children's speech, language and communication development. This support will be delivered in Reception classes in specific geographical areas. The service has been commissioned in response to the impact of COVID-19. It will address the delays in children's speech, language and communication development caused by a lack of socialising and access to early years services during the pandemic. Current joint commissioning arrangements are helping to identify children and young people's needs. The redesigning of the support across agencies is helping to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- The CCG has worked well with partners to identify and predict future needs. For example, occupational therapy and physiotherapy services have been redesigned as a result of commissioners', service leads' and practitioners' evaluations of previous arrangements. Leaders now use measurable outcomes to evaluate the impact of the services.
- Co-production (a way of working where children, families and those that provide the services work together to create a decision or a service that works for them all) with parents and carers in assessing and shaping service design is not always fully incorporated within joint commissioning. Lessons are learned through complaints, which then influence the service design. However, leaders have not consistently sought out the valuable contribution of parents, carers and children and young people to ensure that service design reflects their views and needs. This means that joint commissioning is not always reflecting the important views of those who will be using the service.
- The 0 to 19 years Starting Well Partnership provides a wide range of support in areas around Worcestershire. It incorporates the universal public health nursing service and parenting support provision provided by external agencies. These agencies run parenting groups that provide parents with support through nationally recognised programmes. This brings together early support to promote family well-being. It also prevents difficulties escalating that could possibly lead to family crisis, distress and the need for higher level intervention. Leaders are using joint commissioning to identify ways of joint working across partners to meet children and young people's needs in a holistic way.

The area has made sufficient progress to improve this area of weakness.

- **The initial inspection found that there was variation in the skills and commitment of some mainstream schools to provide effective support for children with SEND.**
- There remain significant concerns about how inclusive some mainstream schools are across the area. Parents, carers, schools, the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS) and FiP all raised, and shared examples of, practices that demonstrate that some schools are still not inclusive. Leaders are carefully monitoring inclusive practices in mainstream schools across the area. They have identified and challenged schools that are discouraging children and young people with SEND from applying for places or encouraging them to find alternative placements. Nevertheless, there is some way to go before there is a shared and collective commitment from all mainstream schools to be fully inclusive.
- However, since the previous inspection, leaders have provided mainstream schools with a range of support to develop the skills and expertise of leaders and staff. For example, regular SENCo network meetings are held. SENCos report that these meetings have been of great benefit and have supported them in developing their skills and expertise. Schools have also benefited from a series of training opportunities. A range of policies and guidance have also been developed. For example, the area's graduated response sets out guidance to help schools identify, support and review the provision for children and young people who are experiencing difficulties in education. However, training, guidance and offers of support to schools are not being consistently followed or taken up.

The area has not made sufficient progress to improve this area of weakness.

- **The initial inspection found that there was a lack of suitable specialist provision to meet the identified needs of children and young people.**
- Historically, some children and young people with SEND have not been placed in settings that appropriately meet their needs. There are many cases across the area where children and young people with SEND have been placed in specialist settings when their needs could have been met in a mainstream school. Parents and carers report that this situation has been, to some extent, exacerbated by some mainstream schools not being inclusive and encouraging them to seek a specialist placement for their child. This has led to special schools not having enough places for those children and young people with significant and complex needs. It has also led to too many children and young people being placed in settings outside Worcestershire and in independent settings. Too many children and young people are not accessing any education at all.
- Leaders know that there remain significant issues in providing all children and young people with SEND with the most appropriate specialist provision. As a result, they have undertaken a sufficiency exercise to map out future needs. They

have also reviewed the specialist provision within the area. They are in the process of developing a long-term strategic plan to ensure that sufficient and appropriate placements will be available for all children and young people from Worcestershire. However, these plans are at an early stage of development and there is still much work to be done to ensure that all children and young people with SEND are placed in the most appropriate setting to meet their varying and changing needs.

The area has not made sufficient progress to improve this area of weakness.

- **The initial inspection found that there were fragile relationships with parents and carers and a lack of meaningful engagement and co-production and collaboration.**
- Throughout the revisit, parents and carers expressed overwhelming negativity about SEND services and provision in the area. Concerns were raised about the lack of co-production and engagement with parents and carers. In some areas, such as the development of the short-breaks offer and the graduated response, FiP and parents spoke positively about how they were involved in the development of these strategies. However, co-production in other SEND provisions, especially health and social care provisions, is still at a very early stage of development. Parents and carers' concerns about the lack of consistent engagement and co-production are justified.
- Parents and carers and some schools do not have a clear enough understanding of what leaders are doing to improve the SEND provision across the area, why they are carrying out specific actions and what the eventual positive outcomes will be. Several improvement actions are still at an early stage of development. Some actions have only just been implemented, or are yet to be implemented. Currently, parents and carers and schools can see little or no improvements to the provision for children and young people with SEND. This has led to continued school, parent and carer dissatisfaction with many services and provisions for children and young people with SEND.
- During the revisit, there were some positive views expressed by parents and carers that the inspection team took into consideration.

The area has not made sufficient progress to improve this area of weakness.

- **The initial inspection found that EHC plans were of poor quality and included limited contributions from health and social care, and that the processes to check and review the quality of EHC plans were also ineffective.**

- There has been a lack of effective oversight of the quality of EHC plans. The focus on compliance and meeting 20-week statutory timelines means that leaders have not recognised the poor quality of the plans until very recently. The drive to complete new EHC assessments and plans has also led to significant delays in updating and issuing amended plans. The amended plans often do not reflect the views and aspirations of families, children and young people well enough. They are frequently based on family conversations that are years out of date. Outcomes in plans are not specific enough and this leads to ambiguity and the right support not being provided to meet children and young people's needs.
- While there have been some improvements to the education input of the plans, improvements in the contributions of social care are at a very early stage of development. The outcomes identified in many plans for social care are poor. Parents and carers and many school leaders report that communication with caseworkers is also poor and there are issues with frequent staffing changes. Many parents and carers report that the plans are difficult to understand.
- The recent increased capacity of the DCO has resulted in increased support and monitoring of the health input to the EHC plans. There has been a recent focus on training. This training is tailored to the needs of individual health professions. It aims to increase professionals' knowledge and confidence in relation to their SEND responsibilities and contributions to health reports for EHC plans. Health leaders acknowledge that they need to develop the checks on the quality of the health contributions to EHC plans. The poor quality of the health input to EHC plans means that many children and young people do not have the appropriate provision they need to improve their outcomes.
- Very recently, leaders identified that the EHC plan quality assurance framework had not been used effectively to identify weaknesses in EHC plans. They know that many EHC plans are not fit for purpose. They are already taking action to address the issues identified during the inspection. They have recently recruited additional caseworkers, and there are signs of some effective casework currently taking place. Leaders have also recognised the need to communicate the actions they are taking to improve the EHC plan process to schools and parents and carers more effectively.

The area has not made sufficient progress to improve this area of weakness.

- **The initial inspection found that there was a lack of systems to track outcomes for children and young people with SEND in special schools, post-16 provision, young people who are not in education, employment or training and youth offenders effectively.**
- In October 2018, leaders launched, and have since continually developed, the SEND data dashboard. The dashboard provides leaders with overarching headlines in relation to outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The

dashboard contains academic achievement information, wider education indicators and health information. There is more detailed assessment and monitoring information that sits beneath the dashboard to provide a greater level of information if required.

- The data from the dashboard is scrutinised at strategic board level. If the board has a concern, it requests a detailed investigation ('deep dive') to be carried out so that it can gain further information and provide challenge to leaders. This information feeds into strategic plans to drive further improvements in the area. Targets set within strategic plans are checked by leaders responsible for each area of the plan to ensure that these are aspirational.
- There are additional areas in the dashboard to track outcomes for children and young people in the youth justice system, young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), those in specialist and post-16 provision, and children looked after. For example, the progress of young people who are involved with the youth justice system is monitored through multi-agency meetings, such as the 'vulnerable learners group'. Within education, there is more detailed assessment and monitoring information contained within the dashboard. This provides leaders with additional information if required to further inform future actions to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The area has made sufficient progress to improve this area of weakness.

- **The initial inspection found that there were disproportionate numbers of children and young people with SEND who had been permanently excluded from school.**
- Leaders aim to prevent exclusions from occurring in the first place. Alternative provision is now used more creatively to try and avoid exclusions. For example, if a child or young person is at risk of being excluded, leaders work with schools, colleges and alternative providers to find additional support to try and reduce the likelihood of exclusion. Area leaders review exclusions and hold setting leaders to account where these are used inappropriately, or where exclusion procedures are not followed. Setting leaders say that they are well supported by the area leaders in relation to exclusions. They say that collaborative work between the area and the settings has improved. Rates of exclusion are now broadly in line with national averages.

The area has made sufficient progress to improve this area of weakness.

- **The initial inspection found that the quality of the local offer was not fit for purpose.**
- Leaders have made considerable improvements to the online local offer. It now contains all the required information, as set out in the SEND code of practice.

Information is now more accessible and there has been a significant rise in the use of the site. Many parents and carers, schools, SENDIASS and FiP all report that the local offer now provides a wide range of guidance and signposting to support. Leaders have a long-term plan in place to ensure that the local offer is maintained and updated regularly, so that users have access to current and accurate information.

- Healthcare professionals also spoke positively about the local offer. It now provides direct links to their websites and access to appropriate information for families, parents and carers, and children and young people. Healthcare professionals report that links are used by parents and carers to contact services to seek advice and/or book appointments. Healthcare professionals believe that this has increased awareness of what their services provide and has improved the ability of parents and carers to access support.

The area has made sufficient progress to improve this area of weakness.

■ **The initial inspection found that the academic outcomes, behaviour and attendance of children and young people with SEND were poor.**

- Children and young people with EHC plans achieve positive academic outcomes. However, children and young people with SEND who do not have an EHC plan do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders are aware of this. They have identified that the quality of teaching and support for children and young people with SEND in some mainstream schools is not as good as it could be. Leaders have plans and systems in place to address this through a process of monitoring and support in mainstream primary and secondary schools.
- The proportion of young people in key stages 4 and 5 in education, employment and training is in line with national figures, and in some instances above national figures. Leaders have developed effective partnerships with post-16 provisions, which enables young people with SEND to continue with their education. For example, the area has forged close relationships with two mainstream further education colleges. The number of young people who are NEET is reducing.
- Leaders recognise that they are not ambitious enough about the number of young people who progress into higher education. They know that there is more to be done to raise young people's aspirations and knowledge of the routes into higher education.
- Area leaders are aware that there is more work to be done to increase the number of apprenticeships. They are working on changing young people's and parents' and carers' views of apprenticeships, so that apprenticeships are seen in a more positive light. Leaders are also seeking to increase the variety of apprenticeship pathways. The number of supported internships is increasing, and this is helping young people to gain access to employment. Leaders are keen to develop this further.

- The area has plans and systems in place so that attendance becomes 'everyone's business', including educational settings and families. There is a commitment to improving the attendance of all children and young people with SEND. Specific personnel have been appointed to support the attendance strategy. The attendance plans are in the early days of being rolled out and so it is too early to see the impact of this work.

The area has made sufficient progress to improve this area of weakness.

During the inspection, we considered the impact of COVID-19 on the lived experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families. We also considered the actions leaders took when schools were only open to some children and young people due to COVID-19 restrictions. Leaders had clear systems in place to track and monitor vulnerable children and young people, including those with SEND, during this time. Leaders provided additional support to schools, for example by providing schools with a range of information technology hardware. They also provided schools with test kits and additional staffing capacity to carry out tests as they reopened. Leaders updated the local offer with COVID-19 advice and links to support services throughout the pandemic. Healthcare services provided a 'Well-being support guide' for children and young people and their families. This set out a range of services to support families, including additional emotional health and well-being support and mental health emergency support.

The area has made sufficient progress in addressing eight of the 12 significant weaknesses identified at the initial inspection. As not all the significant weaknesses have improved, it is for DfE and NHS England to determine the next steps. Ofsted and CQC will not carry out any further revisit unless directed to do so by the Secretary of State.

Yours sincerely

Ann Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted	Care Quality Commission
James McNeillie Regional Director, West Midlands	Victoria Watkins Deputy Chief Inspector, Primary Medical Services, Children Health and Justice
Ann Pritchard HMI Lead Inspector	Tessa Valpy CQC Inspector
Wayne Simner HMI Inspector	

cc: Department for Education
Clinical commissioning group
Director of Public Health for the area
Department of Health
NHS England

Worcestershire Local Area SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (SEND APP) 2022-2023 Project Sponsors: DCS and CEO of WCF; Chief Executive, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Business Lead: Director of All Age Disability (0-25) Programme Lead: Early Help Partnership Development Officer					
KEY CONCERN WORKSTREAMS	ACTIONS/ACTIVITY				
1: THE VARIATION IN THE SKILLS AND COMMITMENT OF SOME MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE SEND <i>LEAD WCF AND HEALTH:</i> Assistant Director Education Quality (WCF), Lead for Children and Maternity (CCG) Membership: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Parent carer forum (FiP) and WAC and stakeholder groupsSchool Phases (First and Primary, Middle, Secondary and High – for LA maintained and Academies)Special SchoolsDesignated Clinical Officer, CCGLeading Educational Improvement Professional, WCFOperational Manager SENDIASS, WCC	1. Share outcomes of SEND inspection and Accelerated Action Plan with Head Teachers, Leader of Academy Schools and Trusts and Regional School Commissioners Office at online event (s) and identify and agree additional actions needed to strengthen SEND support in educational settings.	2. Review and increase attendance of mainstream Headteachers at 0-25 SEND & All Age Disability Partnership Board to represent phases of education to ensure representation from all phases of education.	3. Provide training, support and challenge to schools on outcomes for children and ensure this is incorporated within their Early Help and Graduated Response offer.	4. Increase the focus on sharing good practice in mainstream schools through the Locality SEND Hubs, e-library and good practice showcase events. Develop Terms of Reference for the Locality SEND Hubs and embed them in practice inc evaluation of their impact.	5. Work with special schools, Alternative Providers, mainstream schools and Mainstream Autism Bases to agree the approach to sector led improvements and the commissioning of outreach.
	6. Identify and engage mainstream schools who are not accessing training and development focused on SEND to understand the impact on their inclusion practices and agree what or how support and development opportunities are accessed.	7. Refresh our guidance and support offer to mainstream schools regarding effective transition between educational settings (including from Early Years settings).	8. Produce guidance on curriculum, aspirations and opportunities in Further Education colleges and mainstream and special schools to increase the number of children and young people with SEND who go onto higher education.	9. Develop annual SEND audit tool and process for mainstream schools to support increased numbers of schools eligible for Inclusion Quality Mark.	
	OUTCOME/PROGRESS MEASURES				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of schools/Trusts attending events to share outcomes of SEND inspection and Accelerated Progress Plan% of mainstream SENCos attending training/ networks virtually or face to face	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Quarterly qualitative survey from SENCos on effectiveness of the training, networks and Locality SEND Hub supportImpact on inclusion of the outreach offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of completed (cumulative) school improvement SEND reviews (maintained schools)Attainment and progress data for children and young people receiving SEND support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">% of children young people remaining in mainstream settings following transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of mainstream schools achieving Inclusion Quality Mark
2: THE LACK OF SUITABLE SPECIALIST PROVISION TO MEET THE IDENTIFIED NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE <i>LEAD WCF AND HEALTH:</i> SEND Group Manager (WCF), Lead for Children and Maternity, (CCG) Membership: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Parent carer forum (FiP) and WAC and stakeholder groupsSufficiency & Place Planning Group Manager (WFC)Special SchoolSpecialist Provision ForumEarly Years and Childcare Strategy Manager (WCF)	ACTIONS/ACTIVITY				
	1. Improve our communication to all stakeholders of the decision-making process for placements at special schools.	2. Publish and implement our SEND provision plan which outlines our approach to the development of specialist placements for children and young people with EHC Plans for school age.	3. Ensure that there is an effective Early Years offer to enable children with additional needs to enter mainstream educational provision whatever possible.	4. Review and improve the assessment and decision making for Early Years children in special school, for effective use of specialist provision.	5. Review what is additional and specialist provision in Special Schools outside of the mainstream setting to meet children and young people’s needs.
	OUTCOME/PROGRESS MEASURES				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">% of new EHC Plans that are placed in mainstream schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">% of children and young people who have been identified to need a specialist setting in Worcestershire and who have been allocated a place	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of out of county/ independent placements and % of new children and young people going to into independent provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">% of Early Years settings with first time EHC Plans and % of first time EHC Plans in mainstream settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of children and young people with EHC Plans with deferment for a transition to a school place	

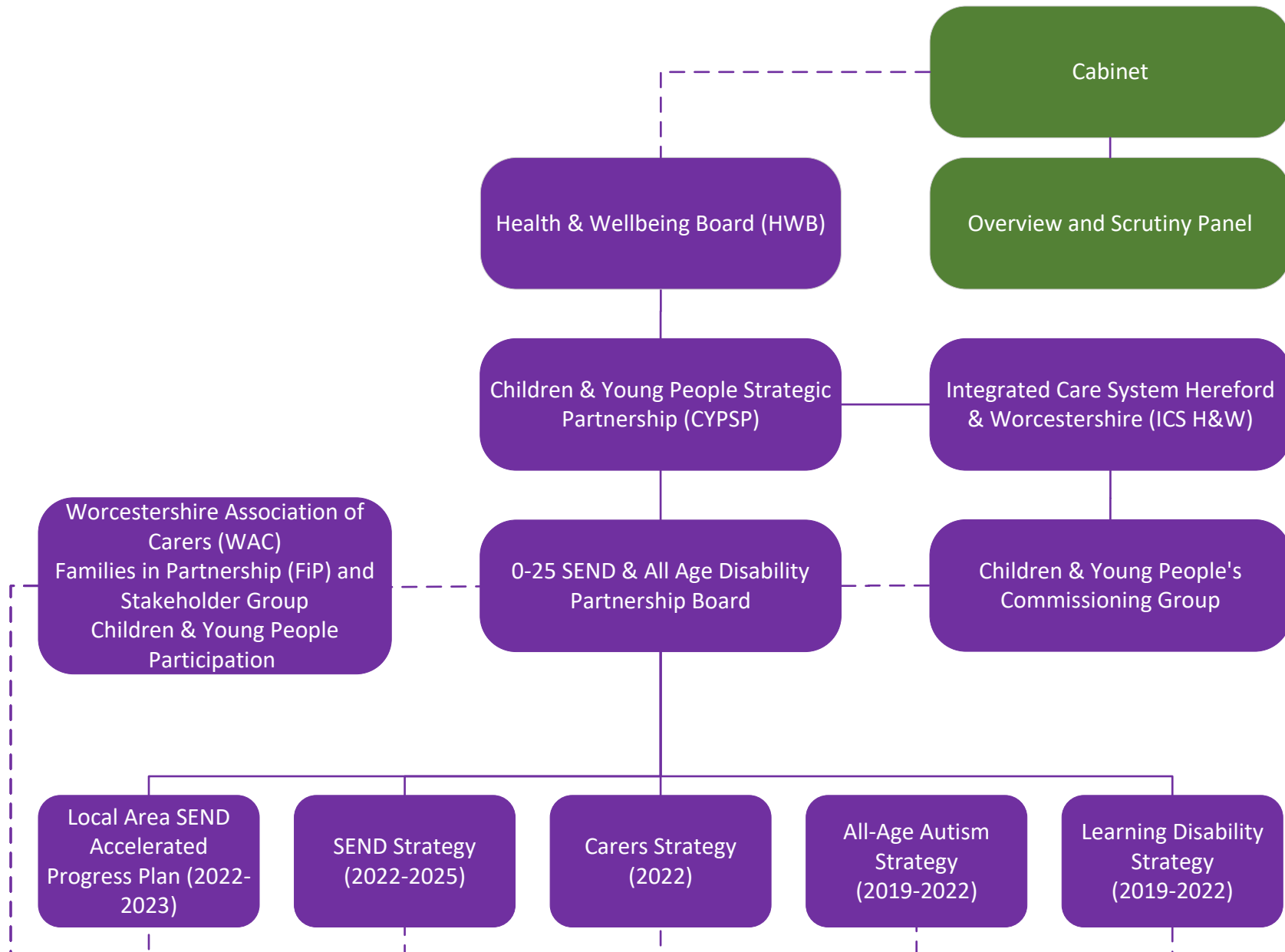
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Placement and Resources Manager (WCF)Operational Manager SENDIASS (WCC)					
3: FRAGILE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS AND CARERS AND A LACK OF MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT AND CO-PRODUCTION AND COLLABORATION LEAD WCF AND HEALTH: Children with Disabilities Group Manager (WCF), Lead for Children and Maternity (CCG) Membership: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Parent carer forum (FiP) and WAC and stakeholder groups)Quality Assurance Education and Early Help Officer (WCF)Service user by experience x2Operational Manager SENDIASS (WCC)Parent Engagement Advisor (WCF)YP participation Officer (WCF)Principal Educational Psychologist (WCF)Assistant Head of Service Mental Health & Learning Disabilities (WCC)Management Information Analyst (WCF)Associate Director for CYP& Families & Specialist Primary Care (HWHCT)Senior Manager for SEND (CCG)	ACTIONS/ACTIVITY				
	1. Agree an approach with Families in Partnership to ensure that coproduction and engagement opportunities includes a wider range of parent carer advocates and support groups in Worcestershire.	2. Further develop the SEND data dashboard to include a focus on the findings of case audits and user feedback to ensure there is a focus on families' experience of the SEND system in Worcestershire.	3. Review where, when and how parents access the information that is available to them with regards to the support offer and process for identification, assessment, decision making and role of SENDIASS.	4. Coproduce and publish information about how decisions about educational placements for children and young people with SEND are made.	5. Collate and review number of opportunities parents/carers have to feedback their experiences across education, health and social care and ensure regular analysis of how this information is used to inform service development.
	6. Embed approaches to parent carer engagement across mainstream schools, commissioning Families in Partnership to lead on this work.	7. Develop mandatory coproduction e-learning module for staff including WCF and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust.	8. 0-25 SEND & All Age Disability Partnership Board to monitor all changes to SEND service delivery policy and provision across Health, Education and Social Care to ensure consistent approach to coproduction.	9. Provide information about how WCF challenge concerns about inclusive practice in schools with educational settings and parent carers. How WCF escalate decision making and take action where demonstrable progress is not evident, agree additional steps required in order to strengthen this approach. Parent carers to have an understanding of what support is available to schools.	10. Pilot of Person Centred Planning for Educational Psychology assessments to develop relationships and engagement with parents requesting new EHC Plan assessments.
	OUTCOME/PROGRESS MEASURES				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of parent/carers representatives and groups actively involved in SEND coproduction activity in WorcestershireNumber of service delivery, policy and provision changes across social care, health and education that include coproduction with parents carersNumber of metrics included in SEND data dashboard related to families experience of the SEND system in Worcestershire	<ul style="list-style-type: none">% of parents/carers who agree that their child’s SEND is understood by schools and services% of parents/carers accessing SENDIASS and satisfaction rates around effectiveness of the service (SENDIASS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">% of parents/carers who feedback they have been involved in decisions about placement during the Education Health Care Needs Assessment process% of parents/carers who believe they had positive experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of schools supported by Families in Partnership during parent/carers engagement project% parents/carers who feedback positive changes in schools as a result of involvement in the parent/carers engagement project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">% of staff including WCF and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust who have completed e-learning moduleNumber of schools where inclusive practices have been challenged	

4: THE POOR QUALITY OF EHCPS AND LIMITED CONTRIBUTIONS FROM HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE ALONG WITH THE PROCESS TO CHECK AND REVIEW THE QUALITY OF EHC PLANS LEAD WCF AND HEALTH: <i>SEND Group Manager (WCF), Senior Manager for SEND (CCG)</i> Membership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Parent carer forum (FiP) and WAC and stakeholder groups</i><i>Children with Disabilities Team Group Manager (WCF)</i><i>Children with Disabilities Team Manager (WCF)</i><i>Designated Clinical Officer (CCG)</i><i>Service Lead for Paediatric Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy (HWHCT)</i><i>Speech and Language Therapist (HWHCT)</i><i>CAMHS</i><i>SEND case workers</i><i>SEND Senior case worker</i><i>ASWP Adult SC</i><i>Further Education Partners</i><i>Principal Educational Psychologist (WCF)</i><i>Quality Assurance and Performance Group Manager (WCF)</i><i>YP engagement officer (WCF)</i><i>SEND Manager (WCF)</i><i>Learning and Development Manager ICT Training Co-ordination (WCC)</i><i>Assistant Head of Service Mental Health & Learning Disabilities (WCC)</i><i>Operational Manager SENDIASS (WCC)</i>	ACTIONS/ACTIVITY				
	1.Improve the quality of advice provided from across the partnership agencies to the EHC assessment and review process.	2. Undertake and complete a sample of the early implementation of the new year 9 onwards annual review guidance and toolkit and make amendments as needed to inform full implementation. Use this review mechanism to identify those open to the tri-partite agencies to identify best practice and make amendments.	3. Using any appropriate learning from Year 9 review guidance undertake review and impro year 8 and below.	4. Using agency support complete the backlog of outstanding EHC reviews to bring them all up to date within the cycle timescale.	5. Review the process for ongoing EHC amendments to ensure timeliness and to prevent a repeat of backlog.
	6. Introduction of learning reports on quantitative and qualitative data and them to inform service improvements on quality, timeliness and service user experience.	7. Build on and develop Quality Assurance programme for the EHC assessment and review process to monitor KPI measures, quality audit outcomes and service user feedback.	8. Learning briefing/newsletters for SEND Staff on the key learning and feedback from EHC audits.	9. Seven-Step Guide on key learning for partner agencies.	10. Enabling and ensuring that partner agencies are accessing the generic e-learning modules for advice givers including that the advice giver can understand what should be ordinarily available in mainstream provision.
	11. Develop specific training for each agency for staff to provide quality advice.	12. Training for caseworkers to improve EHC plan writing and agency advice givers to improve plan writing.	13. Devise and deliver training to all schools, Early Years settings and Post 16 colleges focusing on good practice in annual reviews including person centred planning and the contributions made by children and young people.	14. Agree a prioritisation of plans that are open to the tri partite partnership under All Age Disability (Prioritise phased transfer).	
	OUTCOME/PROGRESS MEASURES				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Progressive increase in reported good of assessment to outcomes as measured in the Quality assurance auditParent carer satisfaction including communication and their involvement in assessment and production of the EHC planChildren and young people’s satisfaction of their involvement in assessment and production of the EHC planPercentage of Audits judged to be Good or Outstanding (Quarter on Quarter KPI%)Evidence in each quarterly report shows progress made against identified areas for improvement				

GLOSSARY			
AP – Alternative Provision	DCS – Director of Children Services	HWHCT - Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust	SIB - SEND Improvement Board
APP - Accelerated Progress Plan	EHC - Education & Health Care	KPIs - Key Impact Indicators	WAC - Worcestershire Association of Carers
ASWP - Advanced Social Work Practitioner	EHCNA - Education Health Care Needs Assessment	MAT - Multi Academy Trust	WCC - Worcestershire County Council
CAMHS - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services	EHCP - Education & Health Care Plans	SENCo - Special Educational Needs Coordinator	WCF - Worcestershire Children First
CCG - Clinical Commissioning Group	EY – Early Years	SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	YP - Young Person(s)
CEO - Chief Executive Officers	FE - Further Education	SENDIASS - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Services	
CYP - Children & Young People	FiP - Families in Partnership	SC – Social Care	

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Worcestershire Local Area's SEND Accelerated Progress Plan Governance Model



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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

23 FEBRUARY 2022

WORCESTERSHIRE CHILDREN FIRST INDEPENDENT FOSTERING SERVICE OFSTED INSPECTION

Summary

1. The Panel is to be provided with a report on the Worcestershire Children First (WCF) first independent Fostering Inspection Report which was carried out between 20-24 September 2021 (attached at Appendix 1).
2. Overall, the Inspection judgement given was “Requires Improvement to be Good”. The inspection of fostering services is reviewed in three key areas, and each is graded independently with an overall judgment reached.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account:	requires improvement to be good
How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate

3. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families and the Chief Executive/Director of Children’s Services have been invited to attend the meeting.

Background

4. WCF Independent Fostering Agency (WCFF) is an independent Fostering Agency and was registered on 1 October 2019. The Fostering services were previously part of Worcestershire County Council, however when WCF was formed, the fostering services were required to form as an independent Fostering Agency and as such are subject to separate Ofsted inspection.
5. During Ofsted Inspections, WCFF as an Independent Fostering Agency must meet the requirements of the Fostering Regulations 2011, and the Fostering National Minimum Standards (NMS) 2011. Ofsted use recommendations to indicate where practice can improve, and these are always related to the relevant NMS and regulation/s mentioned. The recent Inspection identified 9 Requirements, and 4 Recommendations that need to be addressed for WCFF to improve.

6. WCFF offers emergency, short and long-term foster care placement to children in care. The carers include mainstream carers and connected persons otherwise known as kinship.

7. The agency provides placements to children in the care of Worcestershire County Council (the Council)/WCF only.

8. To address the requirements and recommendations raised in Ofsted's inspection report, a Fostering Service Improvement Plan has been developed. The Level 1 "plan on a page" (is attached at Appendix 2) and has a more detailed document – the Level 2 Plan sitting below it (at Appendix 3) which outlines milestone activity and measures.

8. There will be a presentation on the SIP at the meeting, (attached at Appendix 4).

9. The SIP is overseen by the Assistant Director - Permanency – Care Proceedings, Fostering & Adoption (Responsible Individual) and Interim Group Manager (Registered Manager).

10. There are 7 workstreams in the action plan:

- Safer Caring Plans and Risk Assessments
- Notifiable Events
- Quality Assurance & Performance
- Safer Recruitment/Foster Carer-Workforce Development
- Voice of the Child and Views and experience of parents
- Foster Care Recruitment, Assessment & Support, and Voice of Foster Carers
- Approval and Matching of Foster Carers

11. A Fostering Team Manager has been identified as a Lead for each Workstream and all workstreams have a membership to include children, young people, carers and staff.

12. Progress and activity are being tracked during the monthly WCFF Fostering Service Managers meeting, where any issues/risks will be escalated as required and managed to ensure outcomes and deadlines are met.

13. Progress reports on each of these workstreams are made to WCF Executive under the monthly executive business planning programme and to WCF Board meetings on a quarterly basis.

14. The action plan was completed on 30 November 2021 and was presented by the Fostering Team to all services on 8 December 2021 and to Corporate Parenting Board on 1 February 2022.

15. The Fostering plan is not submitted or agreed by Ofsted. The next Ofsted inspection will review recommendations from its last inspection as a primary focus but not exclusive focus.

16. A summary of progress since the Inspection can be seen in the table below. All other actions within the Fostering Improvement Plan are in progress.

Workstream	Completed
WS1: Safer Caring Plans & Risk Assessments	Safer Caring Plans and Risk Assessments data added to the WCFF Performance Dashboard.
WS2: Notifiable Events	Audit completed of active allegations against carers/Schedule 7 events. WCFF current schedule 6/7 notifiable events policy and forms reviewed and updated.
WS3: Fostering Information & Performance Dashboard	Statement of Purpose updated and published. Foster Care Register developed and embedded Complaints and Compliments Policy updated and published. Complaints and Compliments Tracker developed and embedded.
WS4: Safer Recruitment, Foster Carers & Workforce Development	Safer Recruitment: Audit of all existing WCFF staff HR files to identify gaps/missing information completed. WCFF Safer Recruitment Policy and guidance agreed for implementation.
WS5: Voice of the Child	Quarterly meetings arranged with Who Cares We Care Forum to positively engage with Children and Young People. Practice Standard implemented for Fostering SW to complete regular Direct Work sessions with Children in foster care placements.
WS6: Foster Carer Recruitment, Assessment & Support	Reviewed all marketing and promotional materials hard copies and online. Reviewed current assessment process focusing on the journey of the Foster Carer. WCFF Recruitment Strategy launched. Launched Carer Ambassador Scheme to support Foster Carer's, incorporating the Voice of the Carer.
WS7: Approval & Matching Foster Carers	WCFF Carer Agreement updated and launched. Review the ADM Process completed. ADMs invited to upcoming Fostering Panel as opportunity to observe and learn.

Purpose of the Meeting

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

- Note the outcome of the WCFF Fostering Service full Ofsted Inspection completed between 20-24 September 2021, and the Worcestershire Children First Fostering Improvement Plan development and progress;

- Consider whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families; and
- Whether any further information or Scrutiny is required.

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Worcestershire Children First Fostering Ofsted Inspection Report 20 to 24 September 2021 ([Link to Ofsted Full Report](#))
- Appendix 2 - WCFF Independent Fostering Agency Improvement Level One Plan 2021- 22
- Appendix 3 - WCFF Independent Fostering Agency Improvement Level Two Plan 2021 - 22
- Appendix 4 – WCFF Presentation on Service Improvement Plan 2021-22

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

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

Worcestershire Children First Fostering

Worcestershire Children First

Worcestershire County Hall Campus, Spetchley Road, Worcester, Worcestershire
WR5 2NP

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this independent fostering agency

The independent fostering agency was registered on 1 October 2019. The agency was formerly part of Worcestershire County Council, which is now Worcestershire Children First. The agency offers mainstream short- and long-term, emergency and connected persons or kinship placements. The agency provides placements to children placed by Worcestershire Children First only. At the time of this inspection, there were 121 mainstream foster carers and 136 connected persons carers. There were 356 children placed with the fostering agency.

There is a permanent registered manager in post. She is a qualified social worker. She was not in day-to-day charge of the fostering agency during the inspection.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

We last visited this setting on 16 and 17 December 2020 to carry out a assurance visit. The report is published on the Ofsted website.

Inspection dates: 20 to 24 September 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account	requires improvement to be good
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How well children and young people are helped and protected	requires improvement to be good
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The effectiveness of leaders and managers	inadequate
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The independent fostering agency is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: not applicable

Overall judgement at last inspection: not applicable

Enforcement action since last inspection: not applicable

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

This is the first inspection of the fostering agency since it was established in October 2019. Managers have not yet adapted to operating as a fostering agency. This has an impact on the quality of care that children receive. Specifically, there is a lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the staff who work for the fostering agency. Fundamentally, agency staff do not advocate for children or foster carers to progress issues relating to the child's care plan, as they believe that this is the role of the child's social worker. This lack of partnership working has resulted in unnecessary delays for children in areas such as health or family visits.

Managers have made some positive links with wider professionals. The virtual school provides foster carers with access to a range of training and resources. This supports foster carers' understanding of education issues for the children in their care. However, this approach is not consistent. For example, managers have yet to develop links with health professionals to assist foster carers in managing children's health needs.

Managers do not ensure that sufficient attention is given to the matching of children and foster carers. Records lack detail. As a result, it is not clear why foster carers are considered able to meet children's needs or how gaps will be addressed.

Children's long-term care is supported into adulthood through staying put arrangements. This ensures that children experience stability as they move through this important stage of their life.

Foster carers' experience of support and supervision from the fostering agency is mixed. Some foster carers feel well supported by staff, through training and regular supervision. However, some foster carers feel that the fostering agency's communication is poor and that they do not receive support that is beneficial to them or the children. This leaves some foster carers feeling isolated.

The fostering agency has some children placed with foster carers at distance. Managers do not give sufficient attention to the planning of these arrangements. In particular, a lack of thought to long-term support needs means that the agency is unable to respond quickly at times of crisis. This leaves foster carers vulnerable during challenging times.

Managers were not aware of many of the issues arising during this inspection. In part, this is due to a lack of service-specific consultation with children or foster carers. Because of this lack of insight, managers are without the information that they need to strengthen and develop the service.

Children receive a children's guide to the service when they come to live with foster carers. This document is not up to date and as a result the information given to children about advocacy and support services is inaccurate.

Despite the shortfalls identified, children are making progress. This is because of the care and commitment of their foster carers, who ensure that children make progress in all areas of their life. Children feel part of their foster family. They are happy and settled, they enjoy a range of activities and have positive experiences of family life.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Since the monitoring visit in December 2020, managers have overseen an audit of safe care plans and risk assessments for children. However, this has not yet gone far enough. As a result, these plans remain inconsistent in quality and content. This leaves foster carers without up-to-date information to enable them to keep children safe.

Foster carers have access to a range of training. This includes training to support their understanding of a range of safeguarding themes. There continues to be a group of foster carers who do not access this training. Managers have plans to address this, supported by a specific staff member who has oversight of training and development for foster carers. As a result, this is an improving picture.

Managers have established strong systems for working in partnership with the designated officer in the case of an allegation against staff or foster carers. This means that concerns are shared in a timely way. However, once the designated officer has concluded their involvement, managers do not have clear systems in place to follow up on these matters. This means managers are not clear that all tasks have been concluded. This confusion has the potential to place children at risk of harm.

Managers do not have oversight of unannounced visits to foster carers. A lack of monitoring of this element of practice means that managers do not know when these visits last occurred. This omission fails to promote a safeguarding culture within the fostering agency.

There continue to be omissions in the safe recruitment of staff. Managers do not have clear oversight of recruitment arrangements. In addition, the use of a number of different recording systems means that the agency does not have access to their own recruitment records. Because of this, managers do not know that all staff employed by the fostering agency are safe to work with children.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate

Managers rely heavily on systems established during the previous operating model of the fostering service. This significantly restricts managers' oversight of the

fostering service at all levels. For this reason, four of the requirements raised at the assurance visit have not been met. Many of the findings of this inspection were not known to managers previously. In addition, managers were unable to provide inspectors with basic service data. As a result of the findings of this inspection, senior managers have reviewed the service. This is aimed at supporting the necessary improvements. The outcome has included implementing increased management capacity and changing some management roles and responsibilities in order to begin to address the shortfalls identified.

Managers have yet to implement fundamental regulatory systems. For example, the fostering agency does not have a foster carer register. Managers began development of this during the inspection. In addition, managers have not ensured that the foster carer agreement complies with regulation. These basic omissions further demonstrate that managers do not fully understand the requirements of operating a regulated service.

Managers do not undertake a comprehensive review following a placement disruption, complaint or an allegation against a foster carer. This means managers do not understand emerging trends or have plans to respond to these.

The arrangements for managers to review and understand the quality of care provided are still in development. For example, despite the improvements made to the arrangements for foster carer training, managers have yet to undertake any evaluation of the impact of these. This further restricts managers' understanding of the fostering service.

Managers have still not implemented a system that enables them to consistently monitor serious incidents or report these to Ofsted in a timely way. These systemic omissions prevent Ofsted from having the necessary oversight of the fostering agency.

Staff feel well supported by managers and have manageable caseloads. Staff receive regular supervision that enables them to reflect on their practice. However, managers have not ensured that all staff have received the training that they require. For example, managers do not know which staff have had training in undertaking assessments or supervising foster carers. This is despite staff undertaking these tasks. This means staff are without the essential skills and knowledge that they require for their specialist role.

The agency has received nine complaints since the assurance visit in Dec 2020. These have all been investigated independently to ensure impartiality in this process. However, management oversight of complaints is not consistent and records do not include details of all of the complaints. This lack of complete information prevents managers from reviewing and learning from these matters.

Managers have yet to develop a recruitment strategy for the fostering service. This is despite managers knowing that the agency is unable to meet the sufficiency needs

of Worcestershire Children First. The recent introduction of a specialist recruitment officer is aimed at improving this area of the service.

Managers ensure that the assessments of prospective foster carers are sufficiently detailed. This enables the fostering panel to make a recommendation of suitability.

Managers have failed to identify some omissions in the agency decision-maker processes. The fostering service currently has 13 agency decision-makers who are employed by Worcestershire Children First. This group works on a rotating basis to consider panel matters. However, there have been some occasions when decisions have not been made or communicated in a timely manner. In addition, the agency decision-makers do not consistently observe panel or contribute to panel chair appraisal. Managers have plans to address these omissions.

Managers have not provided Ofsted with a current statement of purpose. This leaves the regulator without accurate information about the service that is provided.

What does the independent fostering agency need to do to improve?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions that the registered person(s) must take to meet the Care Standards Act 2000, Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards. The registered person(s) must comply within the given timescales.

Requirement	Due date
<p>The fostering service provider must compile a written statement in relation to the fostering service ("the statement of purpose") which consists of—</p> <p>a statement of the aims and objectives of the fostering service, and</p> <p>a statement as to the services and facilities (including any parent and child arrangements) provided by the fostering service.</p> <p>(Regulation 3 (1)(a)(b))</p> <p>This refers specifically to managers ensuring that the statement of purpose is up to date and is an accurate reflection of the fostering service.</p>	28 November 2021
<p>The registered provider and the registered manager must, having regard to—</p> <p>the size of the fostering agency, its statement of purpose, and the numbers and needs of the children placed by the fostering agency, and</p> <p>the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children placed by the fostering agency,</p> <p>carry on or manage the fostering agency (as the case may be) with sufficient care, competence and skill.</p> <p>(Regulation 8 (1)(a)(b))</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p> <p>This refers specifically to ensuring that the agency's systems for review and monitoring are accurate, to enable sufficient management oversight.</p>	28 November 2021

<p>Also, to ensuring that the managers implement processes to support them in learning from disruptions or allegations.</p> <p>Also, to ensuring that agency processes support agency decision-maker decisions being made and communicated in a timely way.</p> <p>Also, to ensuring that the agency advocates for foster carers and children and that staff understand their roles and responsibilities in this respect.</p>	
<p>The registered person in respect of an independent fostering agency must ensure that—</p> <p>the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times. (Regulation 11 (a))</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p> <p>This refers specifically to ensuring the safer caring plans and risk assessments contain all relevant information and are updated to reflect changing needs and risks. Also, that children's plans and risk assessments contain clear strategies to support foster carers in managing risk.</p> <p>Also, to ensuring that the fostering service has systems in place to follow up allegations against foster carers after the designated officer has concluded their process.</p>	28 November 2021
<p>The registered person must ensure that a written record is made of any complaint or representation, the action taken in response to it, and the outcome of the investigation. (Regulation 18 (4))</p> <p>This specifically refers to ensuring that managers hold an accurate, up-to-date record of complaints.</p>	28 November 2021
<p>The fostering service provider must not—</p> <p>employ a person to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so, or</p> <p>allow a person to whom paragraph (2) applies, to work for the purposes of the fostering service unless that person is fit to do so.</p>	28 November 2021

<p>This paragraph applies to any person who is employed, other than by the fostering service provider, in a position in which that person may in the course of their duties have regular contact with children placed by the fostering service.</p> <p>For the purposes of paragraph (1), a person is not fit to work for the purposes of a fostering service unless that person—</p> <p>is of integrity and good character,</p> <p>has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for the work they are to perform,</p> <p>is physically and mentally fit for the work they are to perform,</p> <p>and full and satisfactory information is available in relation to that person in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 1. (Regulation 20 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3)(a)(b)(c))</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p> <p>This refers specifically to ensuring that full recruitment checks are undertaken by the fostering service for staff and panel members and that the fostering service has access to these records.</p>	
<p>If a fostering service provider decide to approve X as a foster parent they must—</p> <p>give X notice in writing specifying any terms on which the approval is given, and</p> <p>enter into a written agreement with X covering the matters specified in Schedule 5 (the "foster care agreement"). (Regulation 27 (5)(a)(b))</p> <p>This specifically refers to ensuring that the foster carer agreement provided to foster carers by the fostering service meets regulation.</p>	28 November 2021
<p>The fostering service provider must maintain a register (a "register of foster parents") and enter in it the following particulars in relation to each foster parent—</p>	28 November 2021

<p>name, address, date of birth and sex of each foster parent and, in the case of a local authority fostering service, of each person with whom it has placed a child under regulation 24 or regulation 25A of the Care Planning Regulations,</p> <p>the date of approval and of each review of approval (as the case may be), and</p> <p>the current terms of approval (if any). (Regulation 31 (a)(b)(c))</p> <p>This refers specifically to ensuring that the agency has a register of foster parents.</p>	
<p>The registered person must maintain a system for—</p> <p>monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals, and</p> <p>improving the quality of foster care provided by the fostering agency.</p> <p>The registered person must provide the Chief Inspector with a written report in respect of any review conducted for the purposes of paragraph (1) and, on request, to any local authority.</p> <p>The system referred to in paragraph (1) must provide for consultation with foster parents, children placed with foster parents, and their placing authority (unless, in the case of a fostering agency which is a voluntary organisation, it is also the placing authority). (Regulation 35 (1)(a)(b) (2) (3))</p> <p>This refers specifically to implementing systems within the fostering service that enable consultation with children about the care that they receive.</p>	28 November 2021
<p>If any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 7 takes place in relation to a fostering agency, the registered person must without delay notify the persons or bodies indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 36 (1))</p> <p>This requirement was made at the last inspection and is restated.</p>	28 November 2021

<p>This refers specifically to ensuring that matters listed under schedule 7 are notified to Ofsted and that, when matters have concluded, an update is also provided to the regulator.</p>	
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Recommendations

- The registered person should ensure that fostering service devises and implements an effective strategy to ensure sufficient foster carers to be responsive to current and predicted future demands on the service. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', page 28, paragraph 13.1)
- The registered person should ensure that the matching processes in the fostering service clearly demonstrate how the foster carer will meet the child's assessed needs and that the impact of the placement on existing household members has been considered. Where gaps are identified the fostering service should define what training, resources or support will be implemented to support the foster carers in meeting the child's needs. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', page 32, paragraph 15.1)
- The registered person should ensure that the children's guide is up to date and accurate. This includes ensuring that names and contact details for external bodies are correct. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', page 33, paragraph 16.4)
- The registered person should ensure that, where foster carers live at a distance from the fostering service, there is clear planning undertaken before the placement is made to ensure that the foster carers support needs can be met and the fostering services' regulatory responsibilities can be adhered to. ('Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards', page 42, paragraph 21.1)

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 and the national minimum standards.

Independent fostering agency details

Unique reference number: 2549696

Registered provider: Worcestershire Children First

Registered provider address: County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP

Responsible individual: Adam Johnston

Registered manager: Laurie-Mo Gullachsen

Telephone number: 01905 763763

Email address: enquiries@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

Inspectors

Tracey Coglan Greig, Social Care Inspector

Suzanne Young, Social Care Inspector

Anne Daly, Social Care Inspector

Sarah Berry, Social Care Inspector

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**Worcestershire Children First
Independent Fostering Agency Improvement Level One Plan 2021 -2022**

Requirements - Fostering Service Regulations

Recommendations - National Minimum Standards

<i>Regulation 3.1:</i> Statement of purpose and children's guide	<i>Regulation 27:</i> Foster Carer approval and agreement meet regulation.	<i>Standard 13:</i> Recruiting and assessing foster carers who can meet the needs of looked after children
<i>Regulation 8.1:</i> Registered person – general requirements	<i>Regulation 31:</i> Register of Foster Carers	
<i>Regulation 11 (a):</i> the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times.	<i>Regulation 35:</i> Review and monitoring of quality of care. Voice of the Child. Consultation with Child about the care they receive.	<i>Standard 15:</i> Matching the child with a placement that meets their assessed needs
<i>Regulation 18.4:</i> A written record is made of any complaint or representation, the action taken in response to it, and the outcome of the investigation.		<i>Standard 16:</i> Statement of purpose and children's guide
<i>Regulation 20:</i> Safer Recruitment of Staff and Panel Members	<i>Regulation 36:</i> Notable events. Notification, management, and updates.	<i>Standard 21:</i> Supervision and support of foster carers

Fostering Improvement Workstreams

Improvement & Business Sponsor: Assistant Director - Permanency - Care Proceedings, Fostering & Adoption

<i>Workstream 1</i>	<i>Workstream 2</i>	<i>Workstream 3</i>	<i>Workstream 4</i>	<i>Workstream 5</i>	<i>Workstream 6</i>	<i>Workstream 7</i>
SAFER CARING PLANS & RISK ASSESSMENT <i>(Reg 11, 36 & Std 15)</i>	NOTIFIABLE EVENTS <i>(Reg 11, 36)</i>	QUALITY ASSRANCE AND PERFORMANCE <i>(Reg 3.1, 8.1, 18.4, 31 & Std 16)</i>	SAFER RECRUITMENT/FOSTER CARER -WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT <i>(Reg 20)</i>	VOICE OF THE CHILD & VIEWS AND EXPERIENCE OF PARENTS <i>(Reg 35)</i>	FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT & SUPPORT AND THE VOICE OF FOSTER CARERS <i>(Std 13, 21)</i>	APPROVAL/MATCHING FOSTER CARERS <i>(Reg 27 & Std 15)</i>
LEAD: Team Manager Manager: Team Manager Membership: Independent Reviewing Officer, Children and Young People, Foster Carers, Learning and Development	LEAD: Team Manager Manager: Team Manager/ Group Manager Membership: Local Authority Designated Officer, Emergency Duty Team Manager, Business Analyst	LEAD: Team Manager Manager: Team Managers Membership: Independent Reviewing Officer, Children and Young People	LEAD: Interim Group Manager/L&D Advisor/L&D Manager/Fostering Panel Manager Membership: Foster Carer, Through Care Services, Learning and Development Team, Worcestershire Children First Comms Team	LEAD: Team Manager Manager: Team Manager/Recruitment & Retention Officer/Interim Group Manager/Fostering Panel Manager Membership: Children and Young People, Independent Reviewing Officer, Foster Carer, Looked After Children Team Manager, Fostering Social Worker	LEAD: Recruitment & Retention Officer/Team Manager Manager: Team Manager Membership: Foster Carer, Children and Young People, Worcestershire Children First Comm)	LEAD: Team Manager/ Fostering Panel Manager Manager: Team Manager Membership: APPROVALS: Panel Chair and Vice, Chair, Panel Members, Panel Adviser, Agency Decision Maker, Team Managers MATCHING: Team Managers, Children and Families Social Worker

Workstream Membership

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children & Young People Foster Carers Independent Reviewing Officer WCF Safeguarding Social Workers WCF IFA Social Workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WCF Business Team/Liquid Logic WCF Management Information WCF Communications Team WCC Learning & Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WCC HR Operational & Delivery Team/Social Work Opportunities Virtual School Headteacher SEND and Vulnerable Learners Fostering Panel Chair & Fostering panel
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Cross Cutting Themes

Safeguarding	Quality Assurance	Communication	Performance and Monitoring
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Worcestershire Children First Fostering Independent Fostering Agency Improvement Level Two Plan 2021 -2022 Improvement and Business Sponsor: Assistant Director - Permanency - Care Proceedings, Fostering & Adoption							
WORKSTREAMS	ACTIONS/ACTIVITY						OUTCOME/PROGRESS MEASURES
WS1: SAFER CARING PLANS AND RISK ASSESSMENT <i>Workstream Lead: Team Manager</i> <i>Manager: Team Manager</i> <i>Membership: Independent Reviewing Officer, Children and Young People, Foster Carers, Learning and Development</i>	Audit of Safer Caring Plans and Risk Assessments by each Team Manager to assure risks are identified, mitigated, and reviewed. Feb 22	Work with the WCF Development Team to add the Safer Caring Plans and Risk Assessments data to the WCFF Performance Dashboard to allow greater scrutiny, review, and monitoring by Team Managers. Feb 22 - Completed	Review and refresh the Safer Caring Plans and Risk Assessment template, develop Practice Guidance and cascade to WCFF via workshop. Feb - Mar 22	Develop module and deliver mandatory Core Offer Safer Caring and Risk Assessment Workshop Training to all WCFF SW staff. Mar - Apr 22	Through the Monthly Audit Programme and Annual Review ensure that; <ul style="list-style-type: none">every Child and Young Person has a Safer Caring Plan and Risk Assessment in place which contains all the relevant information and are updated to reflect changing needs and risks.every Safer Caring Plan and Risk Assessment contains clear strategies to support Foster Carers in managing risk.		
WS2: NOTIFIABLE EVENTS <i>Workstream Lead: Team Manager</i> <i>Manager: Team Manager/ Group Manager</i> <i>Membership: Local Authority Designated Officer, Emergency Duty Team Manager, Business Analyst</i>	Audit of active allegations against carers/Schedule 7 events by WCFF Team Managers to ensure compliance and completion of identified actions. Nov 21 - Completed	Review WCFF Agency’s current schedule 6/7 notifiable events policy and forms. Dec 21 - Completed	Audit of Local Authority Designated Officer referrals, allegations against Foster Carers, and notifications within the past 12 months by WCFF Team Managers. Identify patterns and trends, recommendations for leaning and service development. Cascade learning to WCFF/WCF. Feb - Mar 22	Update Practice Guidance for Schedule 6/7 in the Fostering handbook and cascade new guidance to WCFF staff and Foster Carers. Mar 22	Develop and embed a Targeted Audit Form of notifiable incidents that can be used as a Quality Assurance tool to capture learning from allegations, complaints, and notifications. Apr 22	Develop process in Liquid Logic to enable effective management of all Notifiable Incidents, Allegations and complaints made against Foster Carers, with Managers signing off the Form and the Registered Manager has final oversight of all outcomes and incidents. May 22	Through the Monthly Audit Programme, Annual Review and Targeted Audits ensure that; <ul style="list-style-type: none">All Schedule 7 events that are required to be reported to Ofsted are in line with Reg 36Registered Managers will have the ability to audit and monitor notifiable events via Liquid LogicRecommendations and actions are recorded in an auditable manner and the Registered Manager to have final signoff.
WS3: FOSTERING INFORMATION/PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD <i>Workstream Lead: Team Manager</i> <i>Manager: Team Managers</i> <i>Membership: Independent Reviewing Officer, Children and Young People</i>	Review and update WCFF Agency Statement of Purpose and Children’s Guide. Establish a WCFF Agency Foster Care Register. Dec 21 - Completed	Refresh and Update the WCFF Agency Complaints Policy and establish a WCFF Agency Complaints Tracker and process of Review. Dec 21 - Completed	Audit all care placement breakdowns and planned terminations, and review patterns and trends, to identify learning and Service development. Mar 22	Review, update and embed WCFF Agency Performance Dashboard, inclusive of Liquid Logic Reporting Function. Mar 22	Further develop and launch WCFF Agency Quality Assurance Framework. Apr 22	Monitor the matters set out in Sch. 6, improving the quality of foster care provided by WCFF Agency and complete the Reg. 35 Report. Apr 22	Reports to Ofsted and WCF Board WCFF Complaints Tracker and Outcomes Report Programme of Audit Activity – Quarterly Reports Monthly KPI Monitoring
WS4: SAFER RECRUITMENT - FOSTER CARER - WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT <i>Workstream Lead: Interim Group Manager/L&D Advisor/L&D Manager/Fostering Panel Manager</i> <i>Membership: Foster Carer, Through Care Services, Learning and Development Team, Worcestershire Children First Comms Team</i>	Audit staff HR records Jan 22 - Completed Undertake retrospective Safer Recruitment Checks and Risk Assessments in line with the Safer Recruitment Procedure. Feb 22	Develop and embed a new WCFF Agency Safer Recruitment Guidance and Checklist for Team Managers. Jan 22 - Completed Develop and deliver Safer Recruitment training module to Team Managers. Feb 22	Review and evaluate the impact of Foster Carer training to understand the quality of care provided to children and develop an escalation Policy for tackling Non-Completion of required training by foster carers. Feb - Mar 22	Develop a comprehensive Training Matrix of mandatory and optional training requirements for all staff and Foster Carers, and design and embed training tracker to capture all training completed by staff and Foster Carers, including management specific training. Mar 22	Undertake gap analysis of Foster Carer training needs through annual reviews and feedback from Fostering Panel and develop a marketing strategy to promote the Foster Carer Training Offer through social media campaigns, articles in the Foster Carer newsletter and via Foster Carer Forums. Start Date Apr 22	Team Managers to complete a training gap analysis of specialist fostering training for all WCFF staff. Develop and commission specialist Fostering training core offer for all WCFF SW’s. e.g., Fostering Regulations and Fostering NMS, undertaking assessments and supervising Foster Carers. Apr 22	Team Managers will have oversight of all training completed and planned by Social Workers and can plan future training needs across the Service, for individual members of the Team and Foster Carers. Social Workers to have oversight of training of Foster Carers. Increased number of Foster Carers completing training in the mandatory timeframes to ensure they have the tools and approaches needed to support a child in their care. Skilled staff greater understanding of the children we look after and how we support them. Numbers of Foster Carers taken through training escalation process.

<p>WS5: VOICE OF THE CHILD</p> <p>Workstream Lead: Team Manager Manager: <i>Team Manager/Recruitment & Retention Officer/Interim Group Manager/Fostering Panel Manager</i></p> <p>Membership: <i>Children and Young People, Independent Reviewing Officer, Foster Carer, Looked After Children Team Manager, Fostering Social Worker</i></p>	<p>Set up quarterly engagement meetings with Who Cares We Care Forum to enable sharing of views and feedback from C&YP about how they would like to be supported in their placements, generate ideas, and look at ways of how they would like WCFF Agency to positively engage with them.</p> <p>Jan 22 - Completed</p>	<p>Review, refine and promote Annual Survey to collect Children and Young People’s views and feedback to enable us to measure improvement, inform service planning and development.</p> <p>Mar 22</p>	<p>Consult and engage with C&YP who Looked after Children in the development and launch of a WCFF C&YP Quarterly Newsletter.</p> <p>Mar - Apr 22</p>	<p>Review and update WCFF Quality Assurance Framework. This will include looped and themed audit activity, focusing on quality of assessments and the Voice of the Child.</p> <p>Apr 22</p>	<p>Implement Practice Standard in Direct Work with Children in foster care placements, ensuring that Fostering SW’s complete 1 session of Direct Work every 12 weeks with children in WCFF placements, focusing on day to day lived experience and quality of care in placement for C&YP. This activity will feed into the Foster Care Annual Review.</p> <p>Develop WCFF Direct Work case note in Fostering Liquid Logic Pathway.</p> <p>Record feedback, observation, and the feelings of children from Fostering Social Worker reviews. These should be made at least every 12 weeks.</p> <p>Apr 22</p>	<p>Themed audit and looped audit activity.</p> <p>C&YP feedback to Foster Carer Annual Reviews.</p> <p>Complaints/Complements received from C&YP.</p> <p>C&YP feedback from WCFF engagement sessions.</p>	
<p>WS6: FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT</p> <p>Workstream Lead: <i>Recruitment & Retention Officer/Team Manager</i> Manager: <i>Team Manager</i></p> <p>Membership: <i>Foster Carer, Children and Young People, Worcestershire Children First Comm)</i></p>	<p>Undertake review of all marketing, promotional and information resources including online and social media presence.</p> <p>Dec 21 - Completed</p>	<p>Review the current assessment process ensuring the focus is on the Carer journey as well as managing the realistic expectations of WCFF Agency, regards to support, supervision, and training.</p> <p>Dec 21 - Completed</p>	<p>Complete and Launch the WCFF Recruitment Strategy.</p> <p>Dec 21/Jan 22 - Completed</p>	<p>Develop and Launch the Carer Ambassador Scheme to support Foster Carer’s, incorporating the Voice of the Carer into the Service Improvement Plans.</p> <p>Jan 22 - Completed</p>	<p>Establish face to face annual support groups for Approved Foster Carers.</p> <p>Embed the Buddy Foster Carer Scheme.</p> <p>Launch Mar 22</p>	<p>Improved engagement through analysis of recruitment/performance and online activity.</p> <p>Increase number of enquiries to the Service.</p> <p>Succinct and quality assured assessment process and in timescales.</p> <p>Evidence of a positive experience when engaging with the Service through feedback.</p>	
<p>WS7: APPROVAL/MATCHING FOSTER CARERS</p> <p>Workstream Lead: <i>Team Manager/ Fostering Panel Manager</i> Manager: <i>Team Manager</i></p> <p>Membership: APPROVALS: <i>Panel Chair and Vice, Chair, Panel Members, Panel Adviser, Agency Decision Maker, Team Managers</i> MATCHING: <i>Team Managers, Children and Families Social Worker</i></p>	<p>Review the ADM Process to ensure process is robust and timely ensuring effective time management for Panel.</p> <p>As part of induction Programme ADMS to attend and observation of Fostering Panel at least annually.</p> <p>Jan 22 - Completed</p>	<p>Develop on-line WCFF ADM Induction Programme for all new AMDs to improve their understanding of the approval process, legal framework, and documentation.</p> <p>Jan - May 22</p>	<p>Review and update WCFF Carer Agreement in accordance with Sch. 5. Develop process of issuing WCFF Carer Agreement and managing returns.</p> <p>Jan 22 - Completed</p>	<p>Undertake a targeted Fostering Panel recruitment campaign to appoint a more sustainable and diverse panel.</p> <p>Undertake gap analysis of Panel Members training needs and design and embed Training Tracker to capture all training completed by Panel Members.</p> <p>Feb - Mar 22</p>	<p>Review and refresh the existing Matching Form to assist with better collaborative working between child’s Social Worker and WCFF Agency, thereby ensuring the Child’s needs are fully met and evidenced.</p> <p>Mar 22</p>	<p>Identify and strengthen support offer available to both in County and out of County Foster Carers through, matching them with “Buddies”, providing specific training, regular contact with Fostering Social Workers etc.</p> <p>Produce guidance for Social Workers and develop checklist.</p> <p>Mar 22</p>	<p>ADM completing feedback in relation to the quality of the work they receive and opportunities for improvement in relation to the Q & A role of panel.</p> <p>Every ADM to observe a panel annually.</p> <p>Dip sample a case monthly looking at ADM rationale, collecting and collating feedback from panel members regarding the ADM rationale.</p> <p>Panel Member to have undertaken all training identified to ensure they are able to fulfil their role.</p> <p>Diverse membership of Panel Members.</p> <p>Forward plan of cases to be managed effectively to ensure effective time management at Panel.</p> <p>Foster Carer Feedback to evidence they are receiving the support they need.</p>

**WORCESTERSHIRE CHILDREN
FIRST FOSTERING:
SERVICE IMPROVEMENT
PLAN 2021-2022**

**Children & Families Overview
and Scrutiny Panel
23 February 2022**



WCFF Background

- WCFF was registered as an Independent Fostering Agency on the 1st October 2019.
- Ofsted carried out an Assurance Visit between 16-17 December 2020, where no serious or widespread concerns identified.
- During these Inspections, WCFF as an Independent fostering agency must meet the requirements of the Fostering Regulations 2011, and the Fostering National Minimum Standards 2011.
- If we do not, Ofsted identify clearly what must be done by setting out requirements, compliance or enforcement action.
- Ofsted use recommendations to indicate where practice can improve, and these are always related to the relevant NMS and regulation/s mentioned above.

WCF Independent Fostering Service Ofsted Inspection 20-24 September 2021

Ofsted carried out a full Inspection of Worcestershire Children First Fostering between 20-24 September 2021.

- Overall, the Inspection judgement given was “Requires Improvement to be Good”
- The inspection of fostering services is reviewed in three key areas, and each is graded independently with an overall judgment reached.

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account:

requires improvement to be good

How well children and young people are helped and protected

requires improvement to be good

The effectiveness of leaders and managers

inadequate

WCFF IMPROVEMENT PLAN: Plan on a Page - Level 1

Worcestershire Children First Independent Fostering Agency Improvement Level One Plan 2021 -2022						
Requirements - Fostering Service Regulations				Recommendations - National Minimum Standards		
Regulation 3.1: Statement of purpose and children’s guide		Regulation 27: Foster Carer approval and agreement meet regulation.		Standard 13: Recruiting and assessing foster carers who can meet the needs of looked after children		
Regulation 8.1: Registered person – general requirements		Regulation 31: Register of Foster Carers				
Regulation 11 (a): the welfare of children placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and promoted at all times.		Regulation 35: Review and monitoring of quality of care. Voice of the Child. Consultation with Child about the care they receive. Regulation 36: Notable events. Notification, management, and updates.		Standard 15: Matching the child with a placement that meets their assessed needs		
Regulation 18.4: A written record is made of any complaint or representation, the action taken in response to it, and the outcome of the investigation.				Standard 16: Statement of purpose and children’s guide		
Regulation 20: Safer Recruitment of Staff and Panel Members				Standard 21: Supervision and support of foster carers		
Fostering Improvement Workstreams Improvement & Business Sponsor: Assistant Director - Permanency - Care Proceedings, Fostering & Adoption						
Workstream 1	Workstream 2	Workstream 3	Workstream 4	Workstream 5	Workstream 6	Workstream 7
SAFER CARING PLANS & RISK ASSESSMENT (Reg 11, 36 & Std 15)	NOTIFIABLE EVENTS (Reg 11, 36)	QUALITY ASSRANCE AND PERFORMANCE (Reg 3.1, 8.1, 18.4, 31 & Std 16)	SAFER RECRUITMENT/FOSTER CARER -WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (Reg 20)	VOICE OF THE CHILD & VIEWS AND EXPERIENCE OF PARENTS (Reg 35)	FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT & SUPPORT AND THE VOICE OF FOSTER CARERS (Std 13, 21)	APPROVAL/MATCHING FOSTER CARERS (Reg 27 & Std 15)
LEAD: Team Manager Manager: Team Manager Membership: Independent Reviewing Officer, Children and Young People, Foster Carers, Learning and Development	LEAD: Team Manager Manager: Team Manager/ Group Manager Membership: Local Authority Designated Officer, Emergency Duty Team Manager, Business Analyst	LEAD: Team Manager Manager: Team Managers Membership: Independent Reviewing Officer, Children and Young People	LEAD: Interim Group Manager/L&D Advisor/L&D Manager/Fostering Panel Manager Membership: Foster Carer, Through Care Services, Learning and Development Team, Worcestershire Children First Comms Team	LEAD: Team Manager Manager: Team Manager/Recruitment & Retention Officer/Interim Group Manager/Fostering Panel Manager Membership: Children and Young People, Independent Reviewing Officer, Foster Carer, Looked After Children Team Manager, Fostering Social Worker	LEAD: Recruitment & Retention Officer/Team Manager Manager: Team Manager Membership: Foster Carer, Children and Young People, Worcestershire Children First Comm)	LEAD: Team Manager/ Fostering Panel Manager Manager: Team Manager Membership: APPROVALS: Panel Chair and Vice, Chair, Panel Members, Panel Adviser, Agency Decision Maker, Team Managers MATCHING: Team Managers, Children and Families Social Worker
Workstream Membership						
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children & Young People• Foster Carers• Independent Reviewing Officer• WCF Safeguarding Social Workers• WCF IFA Social Workers		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WCF Business Team/Liquid Logic• WCF Management Information• WCF Communications Team• WCC Learning & Development		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WCC HR Operational & Delivery Team/Social Work Opportunities• Virtual School Headteacher• SEND and Vulnerable Learners• Fostering Panel Chair & Fostering panel		
Cross Cutting Themes						
Safeguarding		Quality Assurance		Communication		Performance and Monitoring

WS1: SAFER CARING PLANS & RISK ASSESSMENT - ACTIONS/ACTIVITY

Workstream Lead: **Team Manager**

Regulation: **11, 36**

Standards: **15**

Audit of Safer Caring Plans and Risk Assessments by each Team Manager to assure risks are identified, mitigated, and reviewed.

Feb 22

Review and refresh the Safer Caring Plans and Risk Assessment template, develop Practice Guidance and cascade to WCFF via workshop.

Feb - Mar 22

Work with the WCF Development Team to add the Safer Caring Plans and Risk Assessments data to the WCFF Performance Dashboard to allow greater scrutiny, review, and monitoring by Team Managers.

Feb 22 - Completed

Develop module and deliver mandatory Core Offer Safer Caring and Risk Assessment Workshop Training to all WCFF SW staff.

Mar - Apr 22

Outcome/Progress Measure

Through the Monthly Audit Programme and Annual Review ensure that;

- every Child and Young Person has a Safer Caring Plan and Risk Assessment in place which contains all the relevant information and are updated to reflect changing needs and risks.
- every Safer Caring Plan and Risk Assessment contains clear strategies to support Foster Carers in managing risk.

WS2: NOTIFIABLE EVENTS - ACTIONS/ACTIVITY

Workstream Lead: **Team Manager**

Regulation: **11, 36**

Audit of active allegations against carers/Schedule 7 events by WCFF Team Managers to ensure compliance and completion of identified actions.
Nov 21 - Completed

Review WCFF Agency's current schedule 6/7 notifiable events policy and forms.
Dec 21 - Completed

Audit of Local Authority Designated Officer referrals, allegations against Foster Carers, and notifications within the past 12 months by WCFF Team Managers. Identify patterns and trends, recommendations for leaning and service development. Cascade learning to WCFF/WCF.
Feb - Mar 22

Outcome/Progress Measure

Through the Monthly Audit Programme, Annual Review and Targeted Audits ensure that;

- All Schedule 7 events that are required to be reported to Ofsted are in line with Reg 36
- Registered Managers will have the ability to audit and monitor notifiable events via Liquid Logic
- Recommendations and actions are recorded in an auditable manner and the Registered Manager to have final signoff.

Update Practice Guidance for Schedule 6/7 in the Fostering handbook and cascade new guidance to WCFF staff and Foster Carers.
Mar 22

Develop and embed a Targeted Audit Form of notifiable incidents that can be used as a Quality Assurance tool to capture learning from allegations, complaints, and notifications.
Apr 22

Develop process in Liquid Logic to enable effective management of all Notifiable Incidents, Allegations and complaints made against Foster Carers, with Managers signing off the Form and the Registered Manager has final oversight of all outcomes and incidents.
May 22

WS3: FOSTERING INFORMATION/PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD - ACTIONS/ACTIVITY

Workstream Lead: **Team Manager**

Regulation: **3.1, 8.1, 18.4, 31**

Standard: **16**

Review and update
WCFF Agency
Statement of Purpose
and Children's Guide.

Establish a WCFF
Agency Foster Care
Register.

Dec 21 - Completed

Refresh and Update
the WCFF Agency
Complaints Policy and
establish a WCFF
Agency Complaints
Tracker and process of
Review.

Dec 21 - Completed

Further develop and
launch WCFF Agency
Quality Assurance
Framework.

Apr 22

Audit all care placement
breakdowns and
planned terminations,
and review patterns and
trends, to identify
learning and Service
development.

Mar 22

Review, update and
embed WCFF Agency
Performance
Dashboard, inclusive
of Liquid Logic
Reporting Function.

Mar 22

Monitor the matters
set out in Sch. 6,
improving the quality
of foster care provided
by WCFF Agency and
complete the Reg. 35
Report.

Apr 22

Outcome/Progress Measure

Reports to Ofsted and WCF Board

WCFF Complaints Tracker and
Outcomes
Report

Programme of Audit Activity –
Quarterly Reports

Monthly KPI Monitoring

WS4: SAFER RECRUITMENT, FOSTER CARER & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS/ACTIVITY

Workstream Lead: **Team Manager (Interim Registered Mgr)**

Regulation: **20**

Audit staff HR records
Jan 22 - Completed

Develop and embed a new
WCFF Agency Safer
Recruitment Guidance and
Checklist for Team Managers.
Jan 22 - Completed

Review and evaluate the
impact of Foster Carer
training to understand
the quality of care
provided to children and
develop an escalation
Policy for tackling Non-
Completion of required
training by foster carers.
Feb - Mar 22

Outcome/Progress Measure

Team Managers will have oversight of all training completed and planned by Social Workers and can plan future training needs across the Service, for individual members of the Team and Foster Carers.

Social Workers to have oversight of training of Foster Carers.

Increased number of Foster Carers completing training in the mandatory timeframes to ensure they have the tools and approaches needed to support a child in their care.

Skilled staff greater understanding of the children we look after and how we support them.

Numbers of Foster Carers taken through training escalation process.

Undertake retrospective
Safer Recruitment
Checks and Risk
Assessments in line with
the Safer Recruitment
Procedure.
Feb 22

Develop and deliver Safer
Recruitment training module
to Team Managers.
Feb 22

Team Managers to
complete a training gap
analysis of specialist
fostering training for all
WCFF staff. Develop and
commission specialist
Fostering training core offer
for all WCFF SW's. e.g.,
Fostering Regulations and
Fostering NMS, undertaking
assessments and
supervising Foster Carers.
Apr 22

Undertake gap analysis of
Foster Carer training needs
through annual reviews and
feedback from Fostering Panel
and develop a marketing
strategy to promote the Foster
Carer Training Offer through
social media campaigns,
articles in the Foster Carer
newsletter and via Foster Carer
Forums.
Start Date Apr 22

Develop a comprehensive
Training Matrix of
mandatory and optional
training requirements for
all staff and Foster Carers,
and design and embed
training tracker to capture
all training completed by
staff and Foster Carers,
including management
specific training.
Mar 22

WS5: VOICE OF THE CHILD - ACTIONS/ACTIVITY

Workstream Lead: **Team Manager**

Regulation: **3.5**

Set up quarterly engagement meetings with Who Cares We Care Forum to enable sharing of views and feedback from C&YP about how they would like to be supported in their placements, generate ideas, and look at ways of how they would like WCFF Agency to positively engage with them.

Jan 22 - Completed

Review and update WCFF Quality Assurance Framework. This will include looped and themed audit activity, focusing on quality of assessments and the Voice of the Child.

Apr 22

Review, refine and promote Annual Survey to collect Children and Young People's views and feedback to enable us to measure improvement, inform service planning and development.

Mar 22

Consult and engage with C&YP who Looked after Children in the development and launch of a WCFF C&YP Quarterly Newsletter.

Mar - Apr 22

Implement Practice Standard in Direct Work with Children in foster care placements, ensuring that Fostering SW's complete 1 session of Direct Work every 12 weeks with children in WCFF placements, focusing on day to day lived experience and quality of care in placement for C&YP. This activity will feed into the Foster Care Annual Review.

Develop WCFF Direct Work case note in Fostering Liquid Logic Pathway.

Record feedback, observation, and the feelings of children from Fostering Social Worker reviews. These should be made at least every 12 weeks.

Apr 22

Outcome/Progress Measure

Themed audit and looped audit activity.

C&YP feedback to Foster Carer Annual Reviews.

Complaints/Complements received from C&YP.

C&YP feedback from WCFF engagement sessions.

WS6: FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT & SUPPORT - ACTIONS/ACTIVITY

Workstream Lead: Recruitment & Retention Officer /Team Manager

Standard: **13, 21**

Undertake review of all marketing, promotional and information resources including online and social media presence.
Dec 21 - Completed

Review the current assessment process ensuring the focus is on the Carer journey as well as managing the realistic expectations of WCFF Agency, regards to support, supervision, and training.
Dec 21 - Completed

Complete and Launch the WCFF Recruitment Strategy.
Dec 21/Jan 22 - Completed

Outcome/Progress Measure

Improved engagement through analysis of recruitment/performance and online activity.

Increase number of enquiries to the Service.

Succinct and quality assured assessment process and in timescales.

Evidence of a positive experience when engaging with the Service through feedback.

Develop and Launch the Carer Ambassador Scheme to support Foster Carer's, incorporating the Voice of the Carer into the Service Improvement Plans.
Jan 22 - Completed

Establish face to face annual support groups for Approved Foster Carers.

Embed the Buddy Foster Carer Scheme.
Launch Mar 22

WS7: APPROVAL/MATCHING FOSTER CARERS - ACTIONS/ACTIVITY

Workstream Lead: **Team Manager/Fostering Panel Manager**

Regulation: **11, 36**

Standards: **15**

Review the ADM Process to ensure process is robust and timely ensuring effective time management for Panel.

As part of induction Programme ADMS to attend and observation of Fostering Panel at least annually.

Jan 22 - Completed

Develop on-line WCFF ADM Induction Programme for all new AMDs to improve their understanding of the approval process, legal framework, and documentation.

Jan - May 22

Review and update WCFF Carer Agreement in accordance with Sch. 5.
Develop process of issuing WCFF Carer Agreement and managing returns.

Jan 22 - Completed

Undertake a targeted Fostering Panel recruitment campaign to appoint a more sustainable and diverse panel.

Undertake gap analysis of Panel Members training needs and design and embed Training Tracker to capture all training completed by Panel Members.

Feb - Mar 22

Review and refresh the existing Matching Form to assist with better collaborative working between child's Social Worker and WCFF Agency, thereby ensuring the Child's needs are fully met and evidenced.

Mar 22

Identify and strengthen support offer available to both in County and out of County Foster Carers through, matching them with "Buddies", providing specific training, regular contact with Fostering Social Workers etc.

Produce guidance for Social Workers and develop checklist.

Mar 22

Outcome/Progress Measure

ADM completing feedback in relation to the quality of the work they receive and opportunities for improvement in relation to the Q & A role of panel.

Every ADM to observe a panel annually.

Dip sample a case monthly looking at ADM rationale, collecting and collating feedback from panel members regarding the ADM rationale.

Panel Member to have undertaken all training identified to ensure they are able to fulfil their role.

Diverse membership of Panel Members.

Forward plan of cases to be managed effectively to ensure effective time management at Panel.

Foster Carer Feedback to evidence they are receiving the support they need.

Any Questions?



Photos of Planned Monthly Activities

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 23 FEBRUARY 2022

WORK PROGRAMME

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 2020/21 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 current Work Programme was agreed by OSPB on 21 July and was approved by Council on 9 September 2021.

Dates of Future Meetings

- 10 March 2022 at 10am
- 10 May 2022 at 2pm
- 7 July 2022 at 10am
- 20 September 2022 at 2pm
- 3 November 2022 at 10am

Purpose of the Meeting

6. The Panel is asked to consider the 2021/22 Work Programme and agree whether it would like to make any amendments. The Panel will wish to 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 2021/22

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 for Council on 9 September 2021
- Agenda and Minutes of OSPB on 21 July 2021

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

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting	Issue for Scrutiny	Date of Last Report	Notes/Follow-up Action
23 February 2022	Feedback on Joint area SEND revisit in Worcestershire (November 2021)	16 June 2020	
	Feedback following Ofsted Inspection of Fostering Service		
10 March 2022	Education Covid Recovery - impact on Educational Outcomes 2021 including Apprenticeships		
	Delivery Model for Medical Education Provision – Update	16 March 2021	
	Performance (Q3 October to December) and In-Year Budget Monitoring		
10 May 2022	Update on GET SAFE		To include the experience of young people who have experienced the service
Possible Future Items			
7 July 2022	Performance (Q4 January to March) and Year End Budget Monitoring		
20 September 2022	Performance (Q1 April to June) and In-Year Budget Monitoring		
3 November 2022	Performance (Q2 July to September) and In-Year Budget Monitoring		
TBC	Future of Youth Work in Worcestershire (was Positive Activities)		

TBC	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
TBC	Current organisation of Education within the County (2 tier/3 tier)		Requested by Panel 16 July 2021 To be considered when further KS2 data available
TBC	Vulnerable Learners (to include children missing education, Elective Home Education, Young People not in education, employment of training (NEETS), exclusions and alternative provision)		To remain on the work programme (Requested 12 Nov 2021). More up to date data requested
TBC	Update on the Assessment Pathway for children who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).		Requested by Panel 11 January 2022
TBC	All Age Disability (0-25) Service (ongoing Scrutiny of the transformation of the Service)	11 January 2021	(Jointly with Adult Care and Well Being O&S Panel) To provide feedback on consultation, timeline, KPIs. Consideration for reporting to be alternated between the two Panels.
Standing Items			
March	Education Performance outcomes		Annually
July	WSCP Annual Safeguarding Report		Annually
November/January	Budget Scrutiny		
March/July/September/November	Quarterly Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring		