

Agenda

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday, 6 December 2023, 2.00 pm
Lakeview room, County Hall, Worcester

All County Councillors are invited to attend and participate

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

DISCLOSING INTERESTS

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

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

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

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

WHAT MUST I DO WITH A DPI?

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

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

WHAT ABOUT 'OTHER DISCLOSABLE INTERESTS'?

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

WHAT ABOUT MEMBERSHIP OF ANOTHER AUTHORITY OR PUBLIC BODY?

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

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

Not normally. You must withdraw only if it:

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

DON'T FORGET

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

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Wednesday, 6 December 2023, 2.00 pm, County Hall, Worcester

Membership

Councillors:

Cllr David Chambers (Chairman), Cllr David Ross (Vice Chairman), Cllr Mel Allcott, Cllr Kyle Daisley, Cllr Nathan Desmond, Cllr Matt Jenkins, Cllr Jo Monk and Cllr Tony Muir and Vacancy.

Co-opted Church Representatives (for education matters)

Mr Tim Reid and Vacancy.

Parent Governor Representatives (for education matters)

Vacancy.

Agenda

Item No	Subject	Page No
1	Apologies and Welcome	
2	Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip	
3	Public Participation Members of the public wishing to take part should notify the 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 5 December 2023). 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	West Mercia Youth Justice Service	1 - 10
6	Performance and In Year Budget Monitoring	11 - 44
7	Update on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Accelerated Progress Plan	45 - 80
8	Work Programme	81 - 86

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

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

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

6 DECEMBER 2023

WEST MERCIA YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Families and the Director of Childrens Services/Chief Executive, Worcestershire Children First (WCF) has been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on developments relating to West Mercia Youth Justice Service (WMYJS).

Background

2. The report contains background information about the work, performance and joint work with Worcestershire Children First of the West Mercia Youth Justice service. The report has been requested as part of the scrutiny work programme.
3. West Mercia Youth Justice Service is a joint Local Authority Service delivering statutory youth justice services in Worcestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin. Since 2016, the Youth Justice Service has been hosted and managed on behalf of the Local Authorities by the Office of the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC). The Youth Justice Service is accountable to the WMYJS Strategic Management Board, and the Strategic Management Board is accountable to each of the Local Authorities for the delivery of youth justice services. The Strategic Management Board is currently chaired by the Director of Children Services, Worcestershire County Council.

Operational Structure of the WMYJS

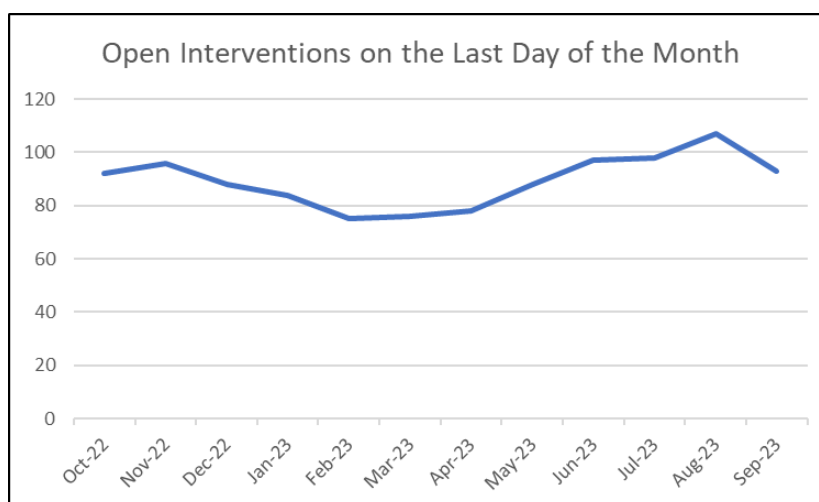
4. The West Mercia Youth Justice Service comprises four multi-agency service delivery teams, aligned to the Local Authority areas, which deliver the majority of services. The reparation service and volunteer services are co-ordinated centrally across the whole service, as are the finance and data/information functions.
5. Each area team comprises the following types of posts; Team Manager, Senior Practitioner, Youth Justice Officers and Assistant Youth Justice Officers, Education, Training and Employment Officer, Substance Misuse Officer, Victim Liaison Officer, Police Officer (secondment), Mental Health Worker (secondment) and Probation Officer (secondment).
6. The Worcestershire Team is comprised of:
 - 1 x full time equivalent (FTE) Team Manager
 - 2.5 x FTE Senior Practitioners, who support the team manager supervising staff and practice

- 5.5 FTE Youth Justice Officers who case manage high risk cases and undertake court work,
- 3.5 x FTE Assistant Youth Justice Officers who primarily case manage low and medium risk cases,
- 1 x FTE Education, Training and Employment (ETE) Officer who liaises with education service and post-16 providers to secure appropriate Education, Training and Employment (ETE) placements for children on YJS interventions,
- 0.8 FTE Substance Misuse Officer who provides drug and alcohol interventions,
- 1 x FTE Victim Liaison Officer, who contacts known victims of youth crime to provide information and offer opportunities to participate in restorative processes,
- 2 x FTE Police Officers, who act as link between WMYJS and the Police, co-ordinate the Joint Decision Making Panel (JDMP) process and assist with victim contact,
- 1 x FTE Probation Officer, who case manages high risk cases and manages the transition from youth justice to probation process for children attaining 18 years of age,
- A mental health worker who provides specialist mental health assessments and interventions and
- 0.1 FTE Speech Therapist, who advises staff working with children who have speech, language and communication needs.

7. Currently the following posts are vacant, 1.5 x FTE Senior practitioners, 3.5 x Assistant Youth Justice Officers, 0.5 x FTE ETE Officer, 1 x FTE Police Officer and 1 x FTE Mental Health Officer.

Service delivery

8. At the end of September 2023, there were 93 open interventions in the team, which was the same number as at the end of October 2022.



9. The service is responsible for the delivery of youth justice services, as defined in by Section 38 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, in short these are:

- the provision of information and reports to court to assist bail, remand and sentencing decisions,

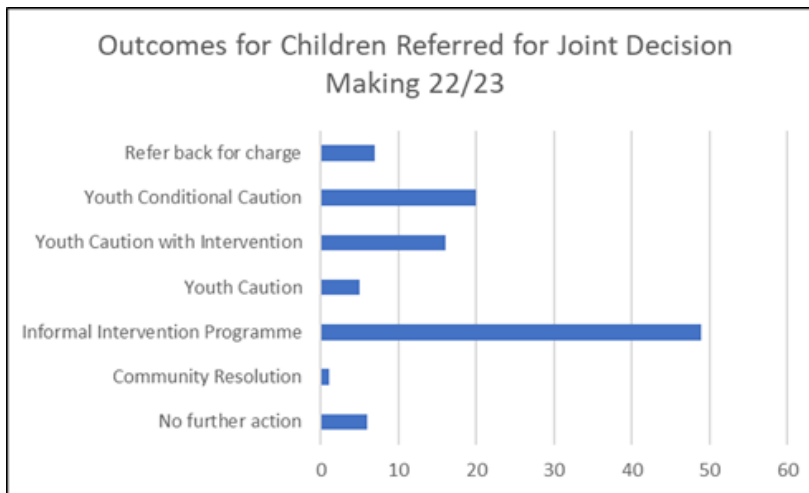
- joint decision making-with the Police-for Out of Court Disposals (Police Cautions and informal disposals to divert children from formal justice system disposals), and delivery of interventions to support these disposals,
 - the provision of Referral Orders and Youth Rehabilitation Orders and
 - the throughcare and resettlement of children subject to custodial sentences.
10. The service additionally has a responsibility to contact known victims of crimes by children to offer information and opportunities to participate in restorative justice.
11. The service is funded by a grant from the Youth Justice Board from England and Wales, which accounts for 51% of the revenue budget for the service, and from contributions from each of the statutory partner agencies. The only commissioned service is the provision of appropriate adults for children in Police custody, which is delivered by a voluntary organisation under contract.

Options, Processes and Outcomes used by Youth Justice

12. The following paragraphs set out the range of options, processes and outcomes used by youth justice when working with children and young people who have been referred into the criminal justice system.

Out of Court Disposals

13. Since 2020 decisions for out of court disposals have been made through the JDMPs). All children committing and admitting an offence are referred to the panel, unless they are excluded either due to the seriousness of the offence or other factors identified in the joint West Mercia Police and Youth Justice Service protocol and guidelines. One of the aims of the panel is to ensure that where possible those children who have committed low level offences are diverted away from the justice system and receive support for their desistance through informal disposals.
14. The panels are joint agency consisting of representatives from the Police, Youth Justice Service, Community Panel Members and Worcestershire Children First, and make the decisions based on an assessment of the child conducted by a Youth Justice Officer and information from the victim.
15. The panels have a range of options open to them ranging from, no further action to a youth conditional caution. The panel also have the option to refer the case back to the Police for consideration of a charge to court if the panel assess the case is not suitable for an out of court disposal.
16. In 2022/23, 104 Worcestershire children were referred to the JDMP, of these 104 children 56 (54%) were diverted from formal justice system sanctions. A further 41 (39%) were diverted from court through the use of Police cautions and 7 (7%) were referred back to the Police for consideration for charging to court as the panel assessed they were not suitable for an out of court disposal.



17. A follow up on children made subject to out of court disposals in the period April 2022 to September 2022, has shown that only 16% have re-offended in the year following the out of court disposal being made. This compares to an overall re-offending rate of 30% after 12 months across all justice system outcomes.
18. The most frequently occurring offence type for cases referred to the JDMP in 2022/23 is violence against the person at 59% cases, followed by public order offences, 12% and criminal damage, 9%.

Referral Orders

19. In 2022, there were 88 court orders made on Worcestershire children, of these approximately 50% were Referral Orders where the child is referred to a Community Panel, which comprises two trained community panel members, the child and their carer, the youth justice practitioner who has undertaken an assessment on the child and, if they are willing to participate, the victim of the offence. The panel agree a contract with the child which outlines the elements of the intervention plan.

Youth Rehabilitation Orders (YRO) and Custodial Sentences

20. Youth Rehabilitation Orders, this single community sentence in the youth justice system accounted for 19 (22%) of the court outcomes. There were 3 custodial sentences and the remaining 26 outcomes were either discharges or fines.
21. The number of custodial sentences, at 3, is low and represents 0.06 sentences per 1,000 youth population compared to the national rate of 0.11. In all cases where a child is at risk of receiving a custodial sentence, the court are offered a robust community-based alternative, unless there is a mandatory sentence for the offence committed. Most usually the alternative offered will be a Youth Rehabilitation Order with Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISS), a combination of an intensive intervention programme, up to 25 hours a week, combined with an electronically monitored curfew.
22. Any other requirements that can be added to a YRO, such as exclusion requirement for example, can also be added to the YRO to make the ISS programme even more robust.

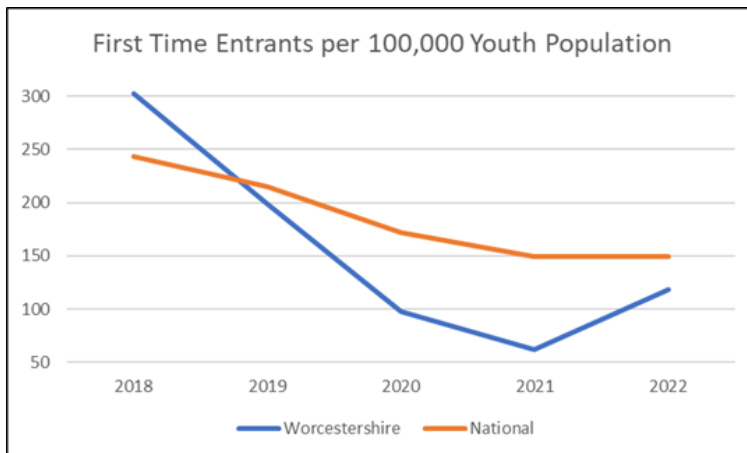
23. Currently, Worcestershire as part of the West Midlands region is piloting new ISS arrangements, which extend the length of order, and include location monitoring.
24. All interventions provided by the youth justice service, at all stages of the youth justice system are based on a comprehensive assessment of child's risks and needs and take a strengths-based approach. The youth justice service employs substance misuse officers so that drug and alcohol interventions are provided directly. In the rare cases where pharmacological interventions may be required, the service works alongside the community drug and alcohol service. In Worcestershire there are also mental health and speech therapist secondees in the team.
25. All children subject to interventions managed by the Youth Justice Service that are assessed as being high risk in terms of safeguarding, their risk to others or likelihood of re-offending have risk plans agreed and reviewed through High-Risk Panels, these panel meetings will include the WCF allocated case worker, if the child is a WCF open case.

Performance Indicators

26. Youth justice services have been subject to three main national performance indicators:
 - first time entrants to the youth justice system,
 - the use of custody and
 - reoffending.

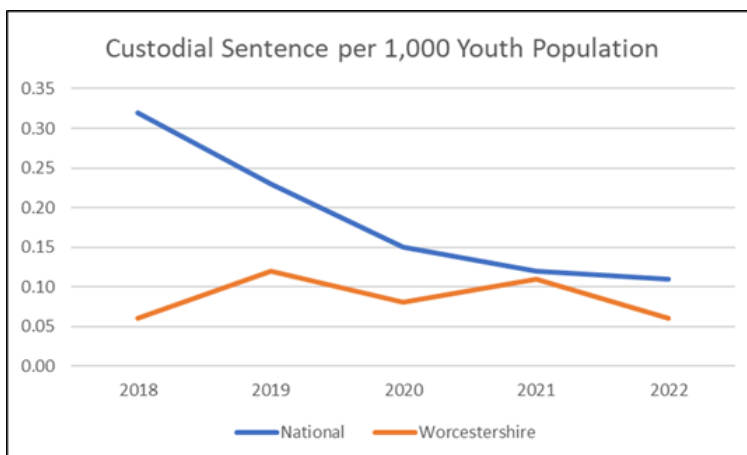
First Time entrants to the youth justice system

27. First time entrants are children who receive a first formal justice system disposal, either a caution or conviction. Nationally, the number of children entering the youth justice system for the first time has been reducing over a number of years, and this is the case in Worcestershire. In 2012 there were 314 Worcestershire children entering the youth justice system and in 2022 there were 65, a reduction of 79% over the ten-year period. There was an increase in 2022 from low numbers in 2020 and 2021, although the reasons for this are not known, it is likely that coming out of Covid-19 restrictions will be a factor contributing to this.
28. For comparison purposes first time entrant data is usually expressed as the number of first time entrants per 100,000 youth population. Since 2019 the Worcestershire rate of first time entrants has been lower than the national average. The JDMP process is the main strategy for reducing first time entrants by, where possible, diverting first offences from formal justice system sanctions, whilst addressing the child's risks and needs through the offer of interventions supporting informal disposals.



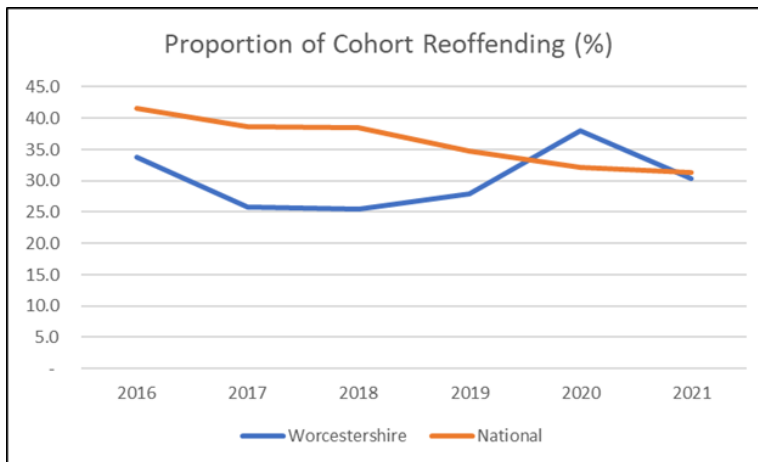
Use of Custody

29. Use of custody has been previously mentioned, where it was noted that the number of custodial sentences made on Worcestershire in 2022 was 3, representing 0.06 custodial sentences per 1,000 youth population. The graph below shows the Worcestershire rate compared to the national rate for the last five years.



Reoffending

30. The third performance measure is reoffending, this measures the proportion of children who have received a formal justice system sanction (caution or conviction) who reoffend within a 12-month period following being made subject to the sanction. For the cohort identified in 2021, followed through to December 2022, 30.4% reoffended, compared to 31.4% nationally. Apart from in 2020 the reoffending rate in Worcestershire has been below the national rate.



31. Promoting desistance from offending is the aim of the service’s work with children, interventions delivered to individual children are based on a comprehensive assessment of risks and needs using the national AssetPlus assessment and planning framework, and where children are assessed as high risk, planning is through the multi-agency high risk panel meetings.

New Performance Measures

32. Ten new performance measures are being introduced for 2023/24;

- suitable accommodation
- education, training and employment
- special educational needs and disabilities
- mental health care and emotional wellbeing
- substance misuse
- out-of-court disposals
- links to wider services
- management board attendance
- serious violence
- victims

Inspection by HMI Probation

33. In 2022, the service was subject to an inspection by HMI Probation, and the service was rated as ‘Requires Improvement’ overall. There were nine recommendations.

The West Mercia Youth Justice Service should:

1. strengthen the quality and consistency of management oversight of practice
2. develop a meaningful focus on diversity in its casework
3. make sure that case managers plan for, and respond effectively to, changing circumstances in a case
4. work effectively with partners in post-court work to keep children and other people safe.

The Youth Justice Service Management Board should:

5. make sure there is capacity at both board and YJS senior management level to fulfil its ambitions for an effective, child-first service
 6. take steps to better understand why some groups of children are overrepresented in the YJS and work to reduce this
 7. address disparities in service provision between localities and commissioned services, and ensure they are providing a consistent and effective response to identified needs
 8. work with partners to ensure out-of-court disposal decisions are proportionate and maximise opportunities for children to receive support without being criminalised
 9. work as a partnership to identify and address obstacles to the successful delivery of the YJS resettlement practice.
34. An improvement plan addressing the nine recommendations was submitted to and approved by the Inspectorate and is being progressed through nine task and finish inspection improvement workstream groups. Each recommendation has a Management Board member lead and a working group to implement the required improvements in practice. All workstreams report to the board.
35. WCF and the Youth Justice Service have been working together on recommendation 4. The working group lead is the Director of Children Services and together with work from other workstreams has achieved the following;
- Hearing the voice of a young person through their lived experience of the criminal justice system and using this to inform changes we make.
 - The development a practice standard document for WCF and WMYJS, that supports and guides professionals when children are on the cusp or entering the criminal justice system.
 - Updated information provided at Court to children and their families making it easier for children to access information through a single card with a QR code to WMYJS website.
 - A poster has been created and placed in police custody cells, to remind Children in Care and Care Leavers how to access support.
 - A new management oversight policy has been created to support with the management of risk.
 - Regular meeting occurs between WMYJS and YJS, to discuss best practise, training opportunities and any arising issues.
 - 'Journey of the child through the criminal justice system' training is provided by WMYJS to WCF.
 - Joint networking events are offered by WCF throughout the year to enhance working relationships and encourage best practise.
 - Service changes have been made in relation to hearing the voice of the victim in Court reports, where appropriate when the WMYJS is preparing a pre-sentence report, the victim of the offence is contacted and asked their views. This information can then be added to the report and can provide extra weight when requesting certain requirements, such as an exclusion requirement, prohibited activity requirement or a stand-alone restraining order, which in turn can reassure the victim and/ or the wider community that appropriate protective measures are in place.

- Learning and development activity across the service in relation to keeping children and others safe is ongoing, WMYJS staff have recently received updated training in the areas of professional curiosity and understanding and responding to a child's diversity profile. Future areas of development and training will focus on staff gaining a greater understanding of how to respond to changes to circumstances and contingency planning.

Children at risk of criminal exploitation

36. Children at risk of or who have entered the criminal justice system, may also be at risk of criminal exploitation. Where exploitation is a concern in a child's life collaboration between Youth Justice Services, Children's Social Care and multi-agency partners is crucial as it allows for a comprehensive approach to address complex needs.
37. Within Worcestershire children under 18 years old who are vulnerable to or experiencing exploitation are referred to Get Safe. This is multi agency professionals working together in a coordinated and focused way to tackle this challenging and ever-changing form of harm and abuse to children here in Worcestershire.
38. The Worcestershire partnership includes, West Mercia Police, WCF, a range of NHS health services, Education, West Mercia Youth Justice, Housing, Probation and Early help services and our voluntary sector all working together with district councils and other support agencies.
39. The Get Safe Partnership is committed to tackling Child Exploitation and supporting victims and their families who experience this. For more information in relation to child exploitation and how to make a referral to get safe please visit [Get Safe - keeping children and young people safe from criminal exploitation | Worcestershire County Council](#)
40. It is recognised that a young person's risk to exploitation does not end when they turn 18 years old. Get There has been a collaborative piece of work undertaken by the GET SAFE partnership with a focus on understanding the needs of young people aged 16 – 25years where there is ongoing vulnerability or risk in relation to criminal exploitation. The 'Get There' approach looks specifically at what next for young people who turn 18 years old and brings together information for young people aged 16 to 25 on careers and training, relationships, money, health and wellbeing, housing and Get Safe. For more information please visit : [Get There | Worcestershire County Council](#)
41. The service works closely with the courts. The Youth Justice Service Team Manager (Worcestershire) meets yearly with youth magistrates and provides youth justice updates including performance data and, when requested, training.
42. At the last meeting with youth panel magistrates, the service provided information and training in relation to child exploitation and the national referral mechanism (NRM). WMYJS also attends wider Court user meetings. Worcestershire Youth Court takes place bi-weekly on a Wednesday and regular written feedback is requested by WMYJS, the feedback provided by the magistrates has been

overwhelmingly positive, below is the essence of the feedback that has been received between August 2023 – October 2023:

- Good Level of information provided in the Pre-Sentence Report.
- Breach report was well set out explained the difficulties the young person was having.
- Youth Justice Court officers were helpful and sensitive to the young people's needs while they are in Court.
- Proposals outlined in the reports were well set out and proportionate and assisted with sentencing.

43. The Local Authorities, and the Youth Justice Service are required to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan, in accordance with the instructions and guidance issued by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. The Youth Justice Plan for 2023/24 provides more detailed information on the work of the service and outlines the service's development plan. The plan is appended to this report.

Purpose of the Meeting

44. The Panel is asked to:

- consider and comment on the information provided on West Mercia Youth Justice Service.
- determine what further information or scrutiny is required; and
- agree any comments to highlight to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – West Mercia Youth Justice Plan 2023/24

[West-Mercia-Youth-Justice-Plan-2023-2024.pdf \(westmerciayouthjustice.org.uk\)](https://www.westmerciayouthjustice.org.uk)

Contact Points

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Debbie Stokes, Team Manager, West Mercia Youth Justice Service

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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 Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

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

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

06 DECEMBER 2023

PERFORMANCE AND 2023/24 IN YEAR BUDGET MONITORING

Summary

1. The Panel will be updated on performance and financial information for services relating to Children and Families.
2. The Cabinet Members with Responsibility (CMRs) for Children and Families, and for Education and the Chief Executive and Directors of Worcestershire Children First have been invited to attend the meeting to respond to any queries from Panel Members.

Performance Information

3. Attached at Appendix 1 is a dashboard of performance information relating to Quarter 2 (July to September 2023). It covers the indicators from the Directorate level scorecard which relate to services relevant to this Scrutiny Panel's remit.
4. The Scrutiny Panels consider this information on a quarterly basis and then report by exception to the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) any suggestions for further scrutiny or areas of concern.

Financial Information

5. The Panel also receives in-year budget information. The information provided is for Period 6 (July 2023) and is attached in the form of presentation slides at Appendix 2.
6. Appendix 3 includes the current forecast position for Home to School Transport, which is currently forecast to have a £9.5m (42%) overspend at year-end, and a dedicated slide set outlining the cost drivers behind this forecast.

Purpose of the Meeting

7. Following discussion of the information provided, the Scrutiny Panel is asked to determine:
 - any comments to highlight to the Cabinet Members at the meeting and/or to Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board at its meeting on 19 December 2023
 - whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Children and Families Performance Information Dashboard

Appendix 2 – Budget Monitoring Information (Presentation Slides) for P6 July 2023
Appendix 3 – Home to School Transport cost pressures (Presentation Slides)

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:

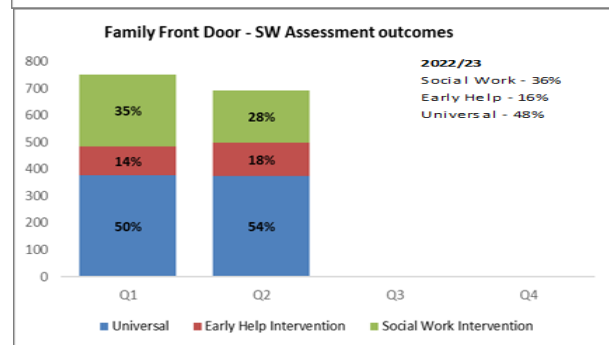
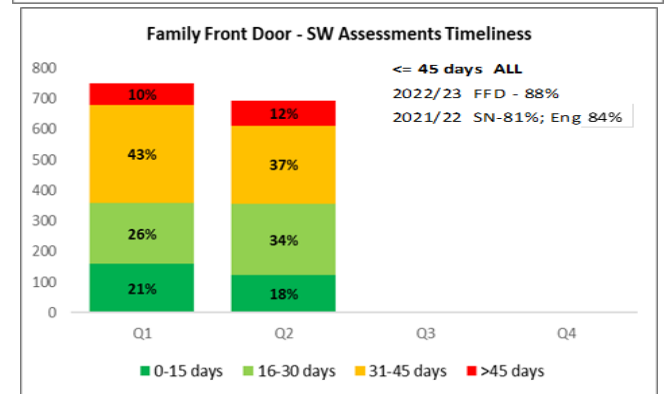
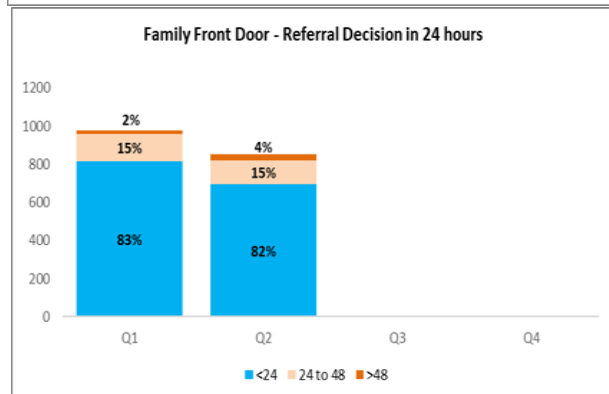
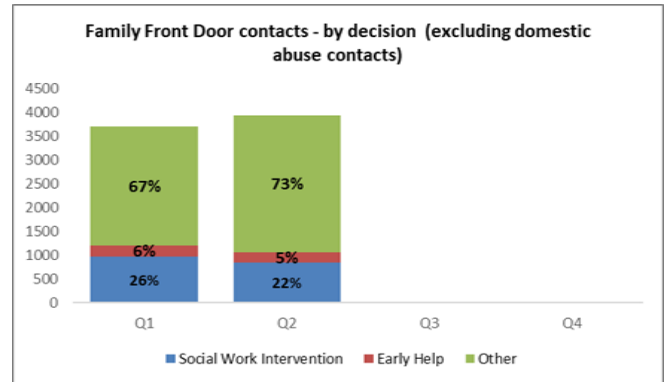
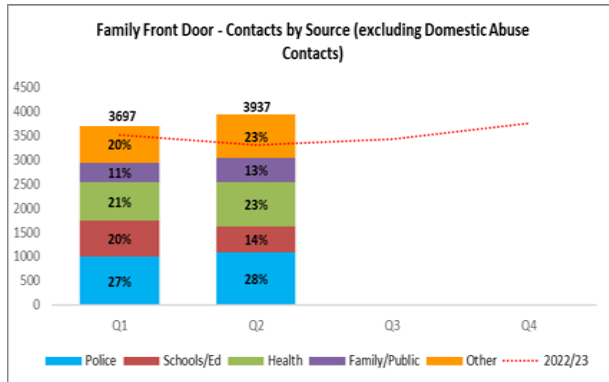
- Agendas and minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board on 27 September, 26 July, 29 March and 30 January 2023, 7 December, 29 September, 20 July and 23 March 2022
- Agendas and minutes of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 27 September, 7 July, 22 March and 17 January 2023, 3 November, 20 September, 7 July and 11 January 2022.

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

Worcestershire Children’s Social Work – Summary Data for Scrutiny Panel

2023/24 - Quarter Two

Family Front Door

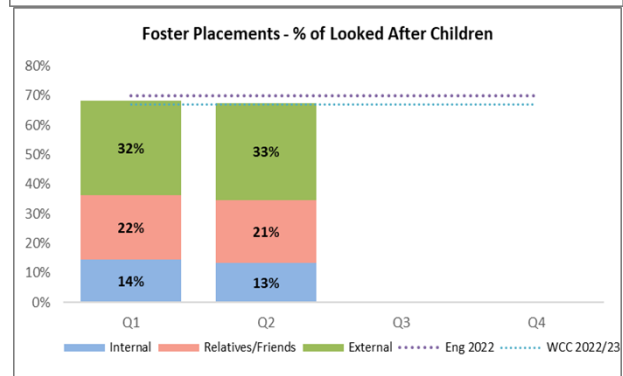
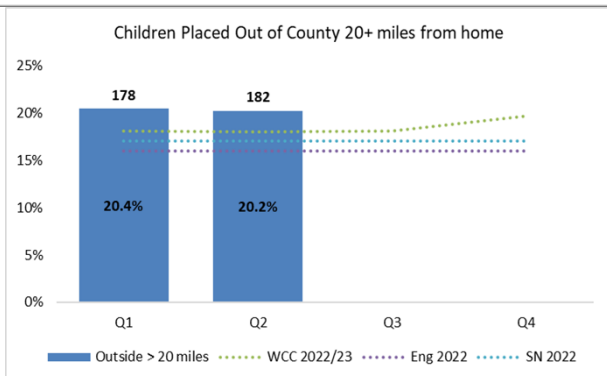
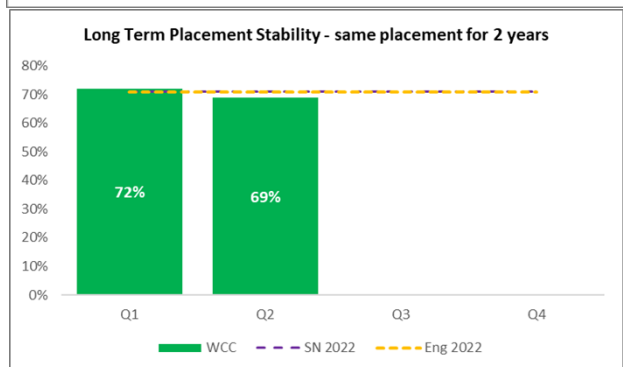
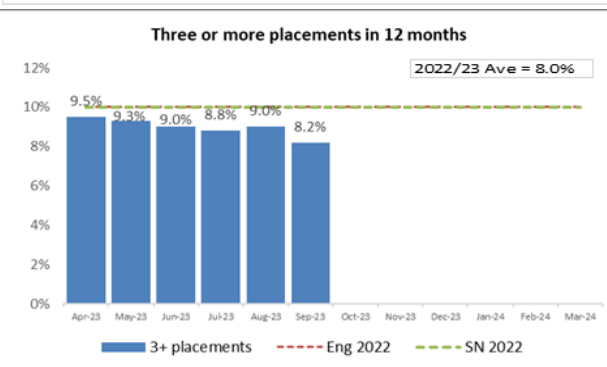
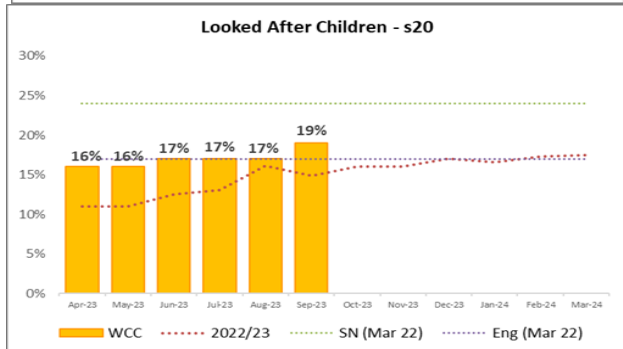
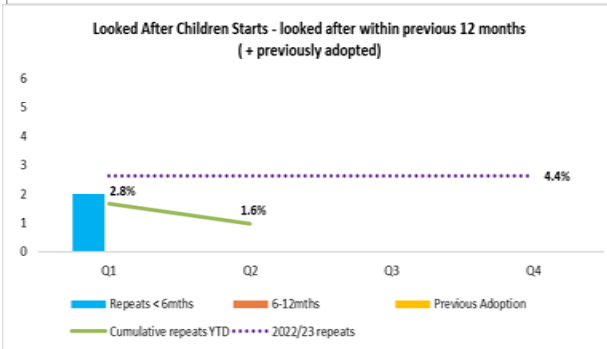
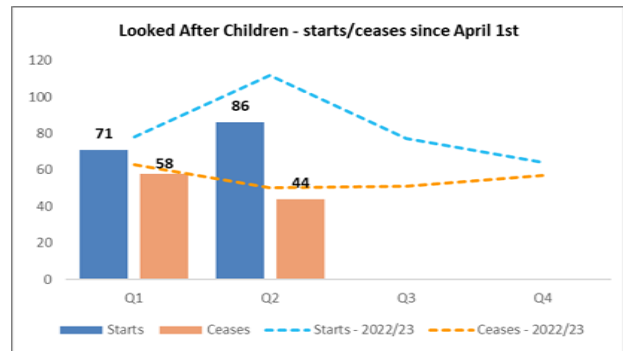
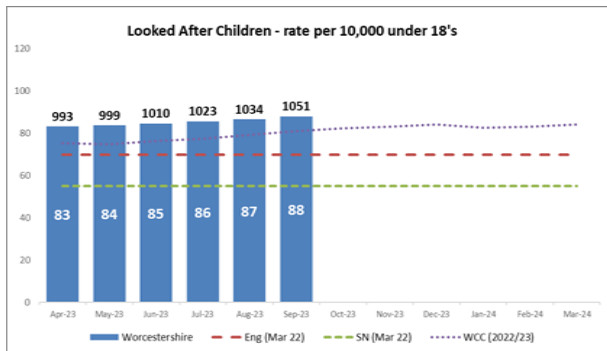


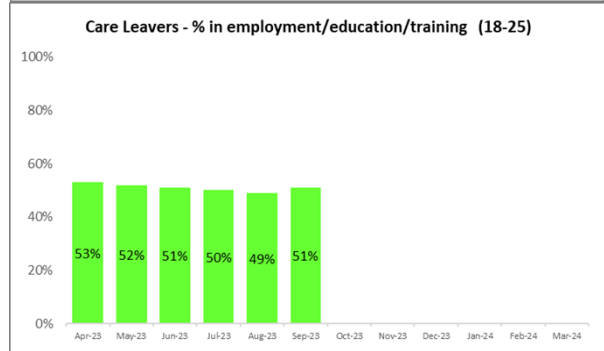
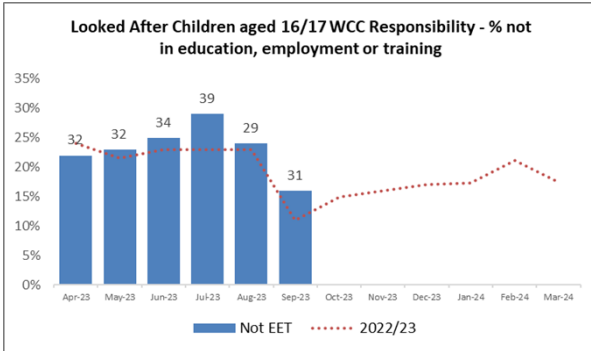
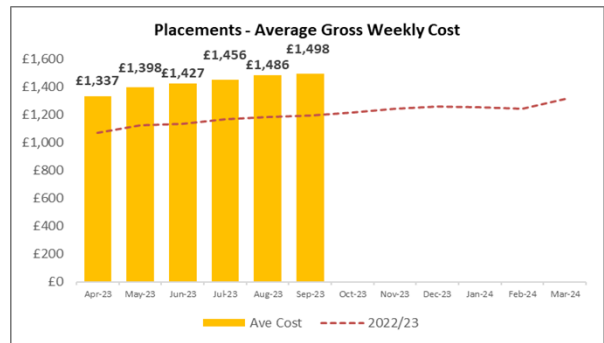
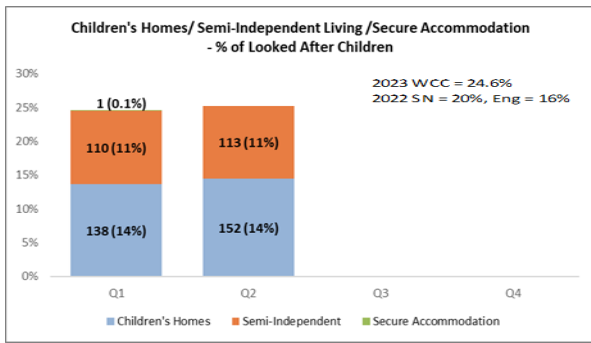
Family Front Door - Top Ten Risk Factors at End of Assessment

Relates to	Risk Factor	2023/24 YTD		2022/23		2021/22	
		Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%
Parent/Carer	Mental Health	1	37%	2	33%	2	30%
Parent/Carer	Domestic Violence	2	32%	1	35%	1	32%
Parent/Carer	Alcohol	4	19%	4	15%	4	14%
Parent/Carer	Drug	5	16%	5	14%	5	11%
Child	Mental Health	3	20%	3	18%	3	20%
Child	Abuse or neglect – 'EMOTIONAL ABUSE'	6	15%	6	13%	6	10%
Child	Abuse or neglect – 'NEGLECT'	7	12%	7	11%	11	6%
Child	Learning Disability	8	12%	9	8%	8	10%
Child	Domestic Violence	9	8%	8	10%	7	10%
Child	Self harm	10	7%	11	7%	9	8%

Percent of Assessments with "Trio of Harm" present	11%	10%	10%
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Throughcare – Looked After Children and Care Leavers

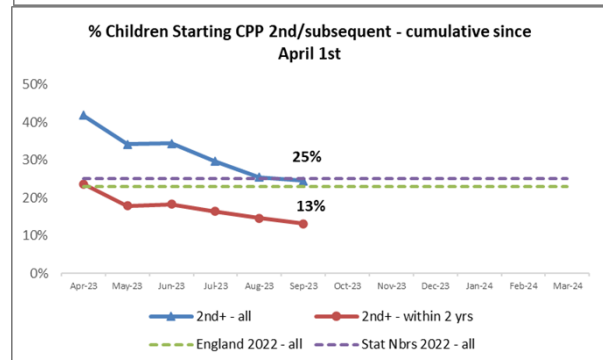
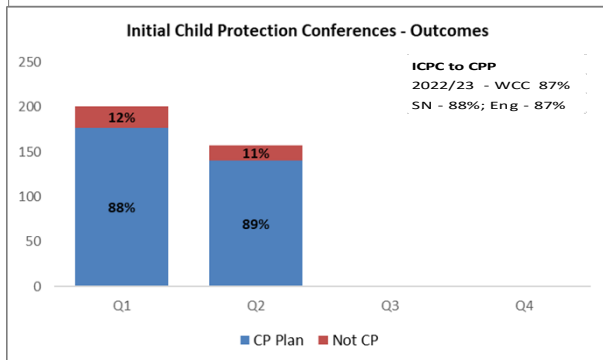
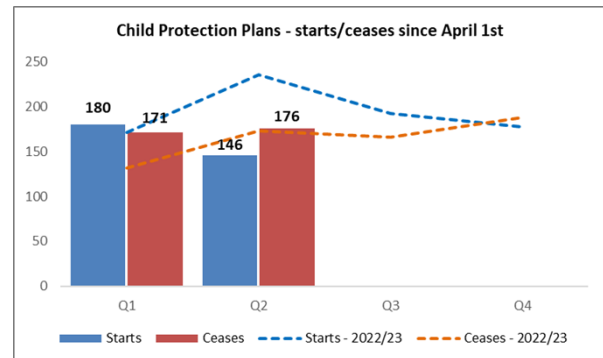
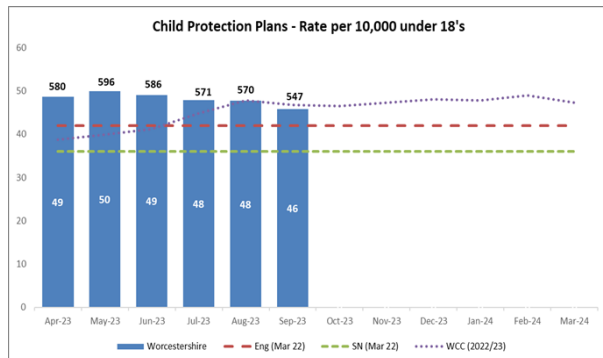




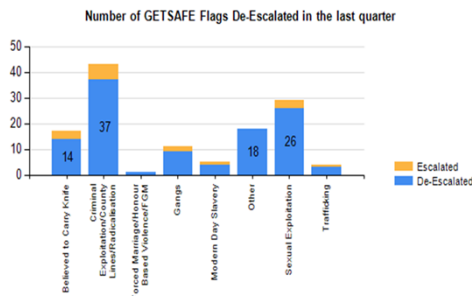
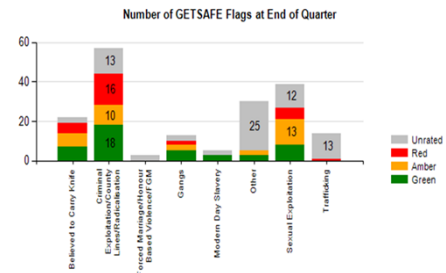
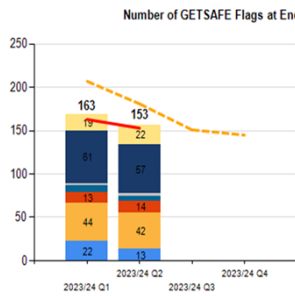
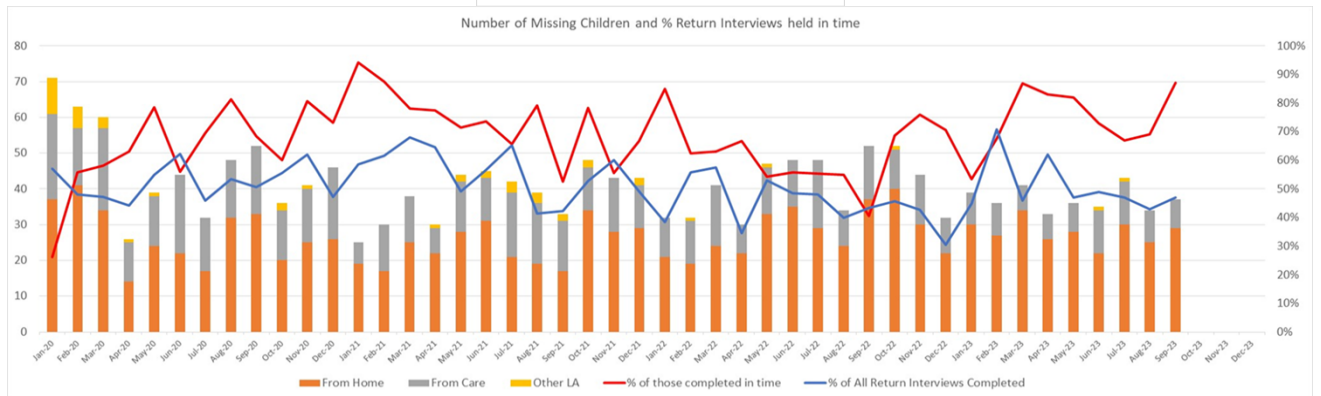
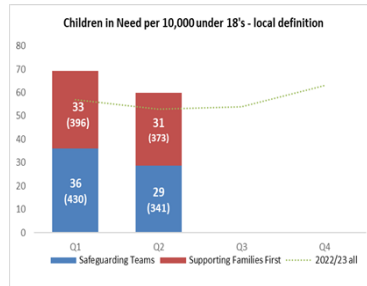
No comparator data is available for this indicator

Care Leavers 19-21 in Employment, Education or Training as at 30 Sep 2023: **48%**. Latest comparative figure for age 19-21 using national annual snapshot methodology (2021/22) - Statistical Neighbours: **54%**, England: **55%**

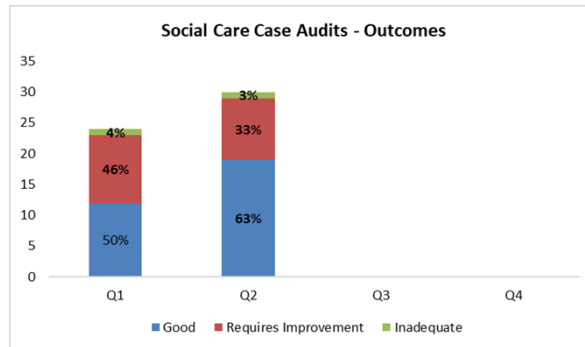
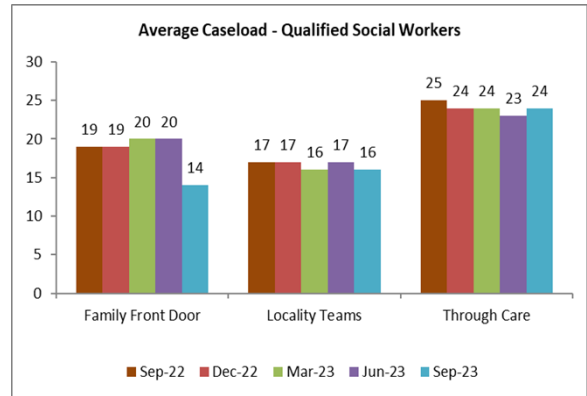
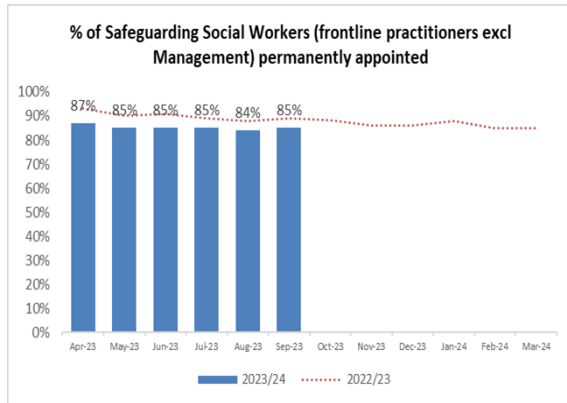
Child Protection



Children in Need

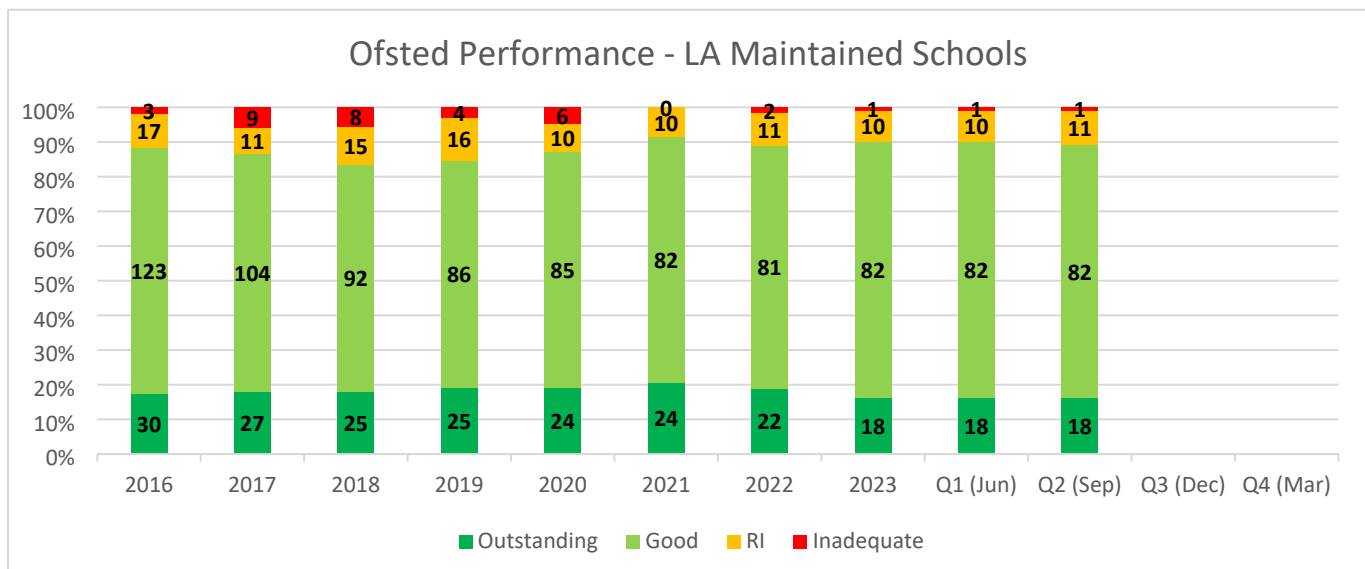
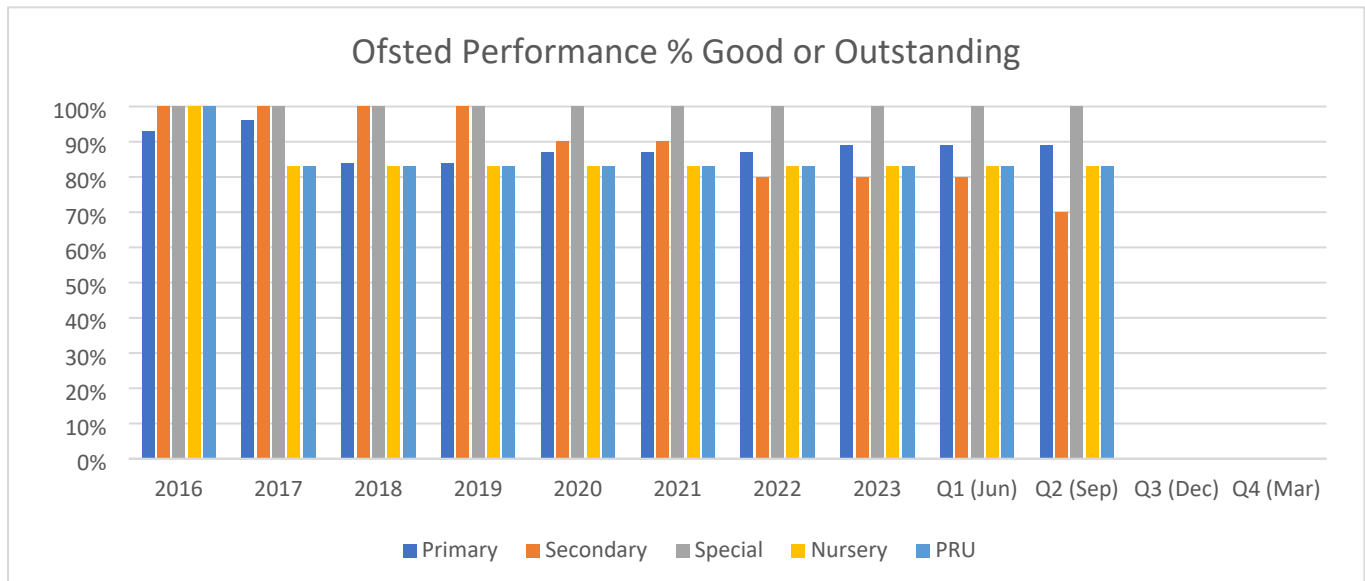


Workforce and Quality of Practice



WCF – Education and SEND data for Scrutiny Panel – Quarter 2 - Sept-2023

Ofsted Performance



Ofsted Commentary for Academic year Sept 2022 to July 2023

Since September 2022 – July 2023 there have been **79 Inspections in total (38 Maintained and 41 Academy)**

75 full school inspection reports have been published and 4 monitoring visits.

5 schools improved from previous inspection outcomes. This breaks down as; 4 schools improved from Requires Improvement to a judgment of Good, and 1 school improved from Good to Outstanding.

8 schools went from Good to Requires Improvement or Inadequate (3 of the maintained schools were RI the rest were academies) 1 school went from Outstanding to Requires Improvement

5 schools went from Outstanding to Good

2 schools retained Outstanding.

42 schools retained Good.

4 schools were monitored and were deemed to be taking effective action.

12 schools had not been previously inspected as new academies under section 5. 9 received an Ofsted judgement of Good and 2 schools received an Ofsted judgement of Requires Improvement and 1 Outstanding

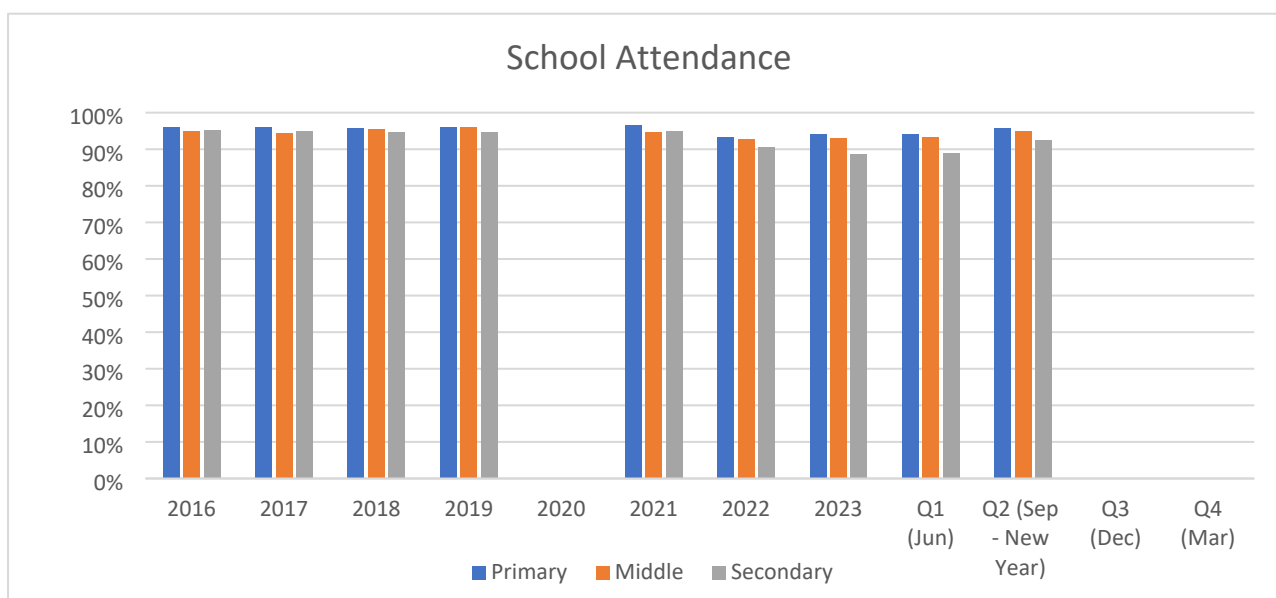
All maintained schools judged to be less than 'Good' or who are risk assessed as vulnerable before next inspection, receive intensive support from the School Improvement Team. This includes termly 'team around the school progress' meetings to provide support and challenge regarding the school's rapid improvement journey. Further support includes coaching, leadership development and learning and teaching support, as well as bespoke training packages. We have also used grant funding to support underperforming small schools who have limited capacity and therefore are at greater risk of declining.

For all maintained schools in the Ofsted window, we have been able to provide a Safeguarding Audit, an Ofsted rehearsal and an SEN Health check. Schools report that this has been incredibly useful, and we plan to continue this service. There has continued to be an intense focus on phonics, reading and curriculum during inspections. At the start of the academic year there was a lot of focus on SEN provision, but this has reduced more recently. Where schools had received intense LA support and had been inspected, 100% of reports state that the LA has provided effective support. In addition to this a significant number of Inspectors have commented on the impact of the support and guidance provided by the SI Team during verbal feedbacks.

Ofsted Commentary for Academic year Sept 2023

At the point of writing this report there have been 16 Ofsted inspections (6 Maintained and 10 Academy), 4 reports have been published. Of the published reports, 1 maintained school retained good, 1 academy moved from SM to Good, 1 academy retained RI and 1 academy went from Good to SM)

School Attendance (no data in 2020 due to Covid)



Attendance Commentary

Pre-Covid, year on year, attendance had been the same or better for each phase, this is also reflected in National data. 2021-22 showed a drop in attendance across all education phases with reports from schools demonstrating wider mental health/anxiety issues in both students and families, initially caused by the effects of the pandemic.

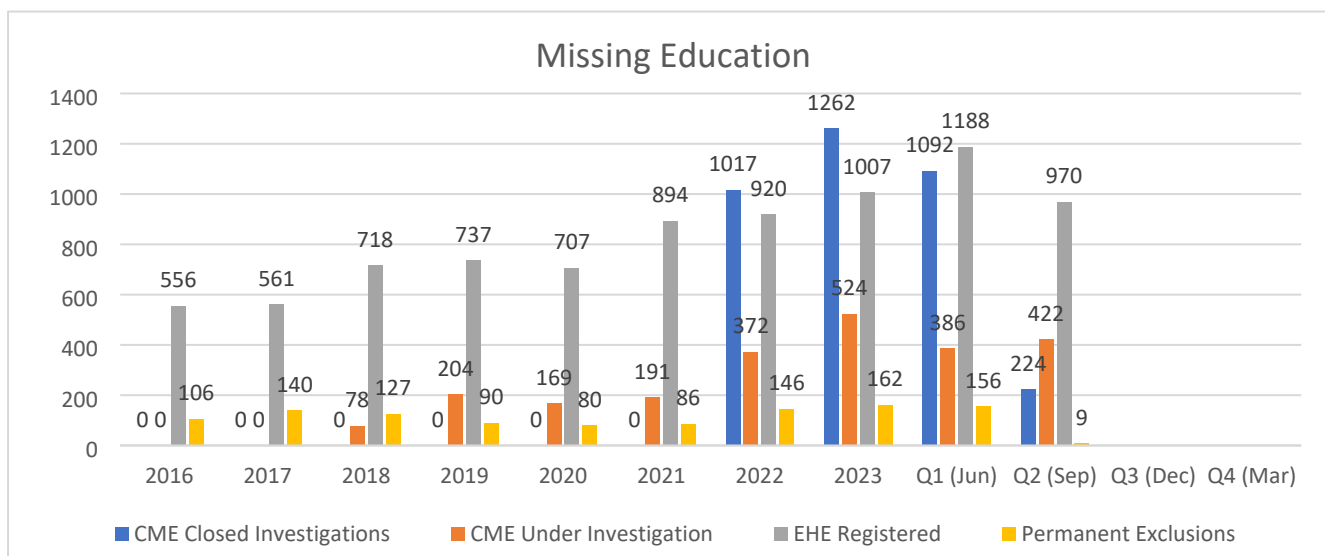
During the academic year 22-23, just under one in four children had less than 90% attendance (and were therefore classed as persistently absent). 23 of WCCs mainstream schools had less than 90% attendance. 76 schools had less than 93%. 12 of Worcestershire Special Schools and PRU's had less than 90% attendance.

Although early in the academic year, 2023-2024, compared to 2022/23, is showing similar levels of persistent and severe absence (below 50% attendance) Attendance at the Primary phase has shown a small improvement.

The DfE 'Working together to Improve School Attendance' guidance requires schools, LA's and all partners/agencies to prioritise and focus resource to support attendance. During 2023-24 WCFs offer to all Worcestershire schools will

include strategic attendance advisory support from Education Engagement Officers, an enhanced training offer to support school staff CPD, as well as helpline support enabling access by all parents/carers, professionals and schools. There are a number of focused attendance projects at school and district level focused on removing barriers to attending school.

Missing Education



Children Missing Education

The Q2 data continues to illustrate a high level of reported CME in Worcestershire as expected for this period, as school mobility in September annually peaks. 224 CME cases were closed during Q2 with CME officers successfully supporting and confirming a return to education in each case. Continued efforts to encourage schools, partners, external agencies, and the public to utilise the centralised reporting mechanisms to enable the LA to uphold its statutory duties to identify, track, monitor and support CME are evident within this data.

Q2 data also shows 422 CME cases remain under investigation. CME cases continue to remain more complex in nature impacting the longevity of required CME officer casework and safeguarding support. A continued increase in CME reporting for 2023-2024 is expected, as schools continue to ensure their adherence to DfE guidance for CME.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

The number of EHE pupils in Worcestershire currently stands at 945, and we have seen a steady decrease since Q1 reporting. Of these, 150 cases are registered as GRT EHE. This term we have deployed an Education Engagement Officer to focus on our GRT EHE families and have seen an increase in cases wishing to return to school. EHE families continue to be supported through the EHE process and we continue to support any EHE pupils who may wish to return to school. We are still experiencing cases of Year 11 students electing to home educate however the number of Y11 students being removed to EHE during the Autumn term has decreased significantly compared to the same period in 22/23. This can be attributed to the level of scrutiny via the triage process, with challenge offered to Schools if this is deemed inappropriate.

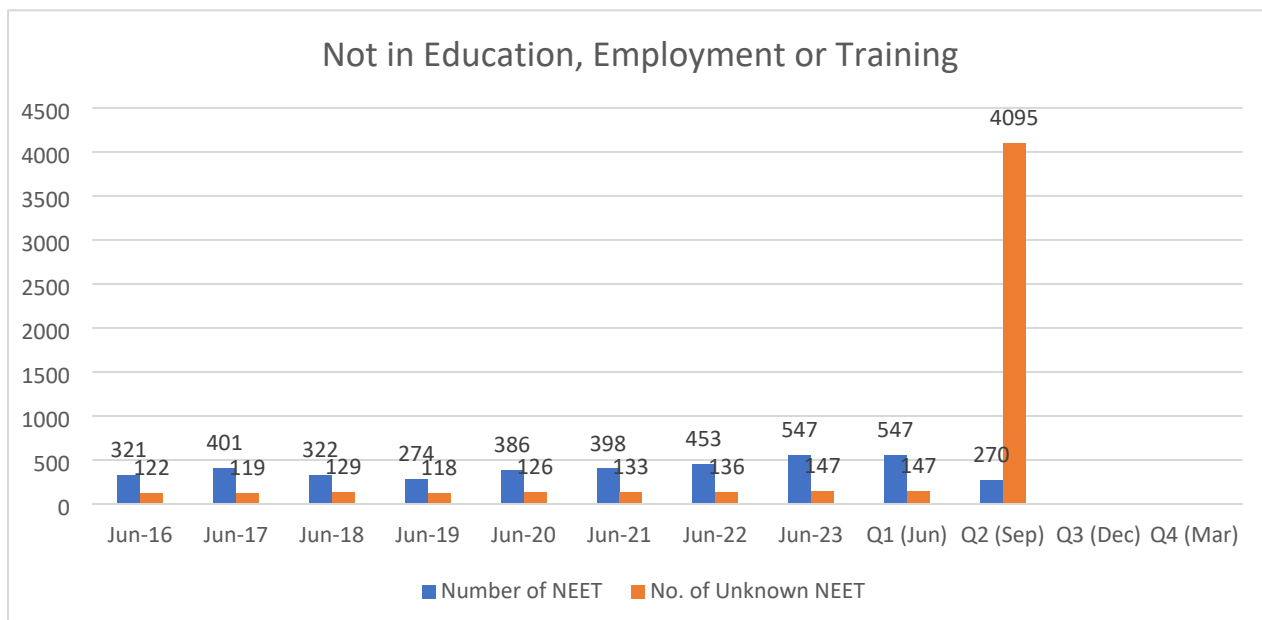
The Ofsted ILAC's inspection (May 2023) reported "There are appropriate systems in place to locate and monitor children who are missing education or who are electively home educated. Suitable education placements are identified for those children who are missing education."

Exclusions

The number of permanent exclusions for the full academic year 2022-23 was 162. Of these 13 were in primary schools, 11 in Middle, 128 Secondary and 10 in Special Schools. We have prevented 34 permanent exclusions through our recent work with schools who are now starting to contact the team at the point of a decision being made. Q2 data suggests a slight decrease in the number of permanent exclusions in comparison to the same period for 22/23. We have been working on a preventative model which focuses on intervention and close working with schools which may have had an impact on the drop in permanent exclusion figures. We are currently in the process

of recruiting an Education Engagement Officer to focus on inclusion, who will continue to offer support to Schools and families to take action at the earliest point possible when notified of a permanent exclusion. We have developed strong working relationships with our alternative provides, to ensure timely placements of those students becoming subject to a permanent exclusion. Updated Exclusion guidance has allowed us to encourage schools to make decisions more jointly and we are working closely with Social Care to ensure the education engagement is factored into the child’s plan.

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

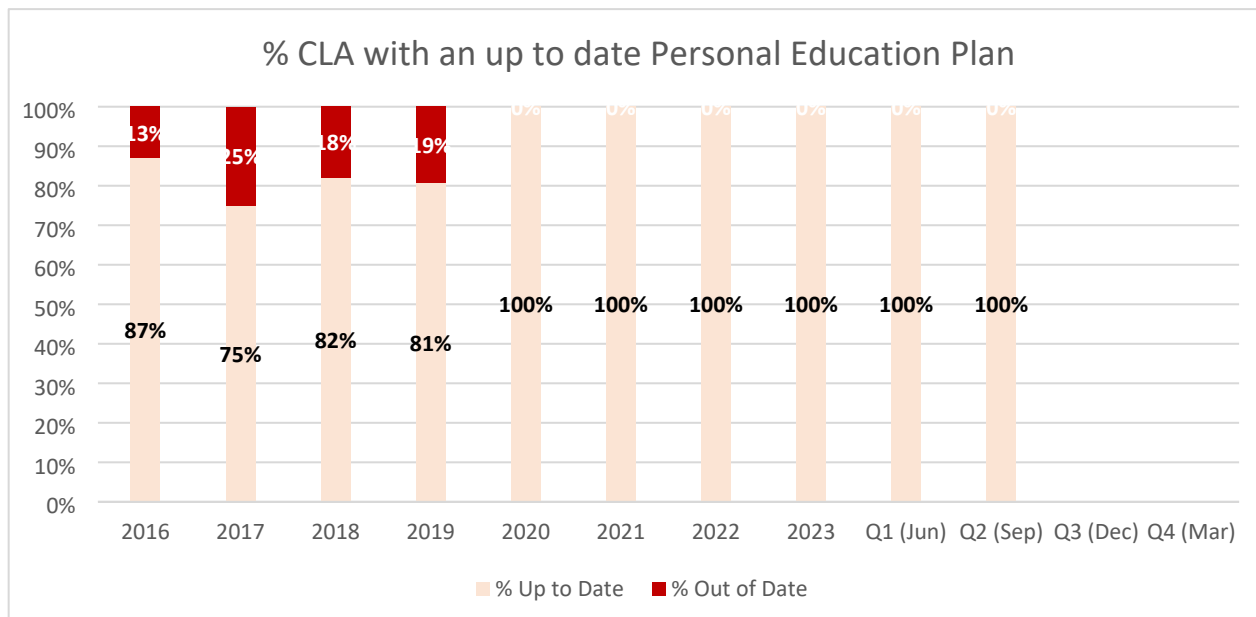


NEET

Pre-Covid, NEET figures had been falling year on year through a focus of resources by the NEET team and a multi-agency approach to identify and remove barriers to participation where possible. The first Covid lockdown had an immediate impact on figures with a significant rise in June 2020. This has continued through 2021 and the 2021/22 academic year. 2022/23 has seen a further increase in NEET to some of the highest levels on record and this is due to a number of reasons: a decreasing pool of provision for employment /training opportunities due to ESF funding changes; the continued impact on young people from mental health issues exacerbated by the pandemic's periods of lockdown and isolation; a noticeable increase in parents not encouraging their children to access post 16 learning/opportunities; whilst 16+ learning providers themselves are reporting increasing numbers of young people not ready for college due to behaviour and immaturity. Early indications are suggesting that 23/24 is likely to show a further increase in NEET on 22/23 figures and it is unclear whether expected additional funding options for training opportunities (available from April 2024) will be able to have an impact on the figures this academic year. The WCF NEET team and WCC Employment and Skills staff are collaborating to understand these trends and to support and minimise this issue where possible. Many other LAs are experiencing similar increases.

Please note: September Unknown Peak - Due to young people moving provision in September, there are a large number of unknowns that until WCF establishes what is happening are flagged as 'unknown status'. This means at the beginning of each academic year the unknown figure remains high and is at its peak in September. This peak is understood by the DFE and Ofsted and as the month-on-month data shows, reduces throughout the year.

Children Looked After



Children Looked After

Pre-School and Statutory School Age Personal Education Plans (PEPs)

All CLA from Pre-School to Year 11 (in and out of county) receive three Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings each year, organised, facilitated and chaired by WCF Virtual School Learning Advocates. These are undertaken via Microsoft Teams or face to face, dependent on the needs of the CLA and the context. The school/setting's Designated Teacher (DT) and Social Worker (in consultation with the carer) are expected to upload relevant information to the PEP prior to the meeting and to attend the meeting. This enables effective conversations, focusing on the implementation and evaluation of strategies to specifically meet the needs of individual CLA. Additional contacts are made throughout the term with the DT and other partners and stakeholders, for instance in complex cases or when transitions are imminent.

In September 2023 the Virtual School transferred the ePEP system to Liquid Logic, in line with Social Care and SEND colleagues, to ensure more efficient and joined-up working.

There is an improving quality of information in the PEP document due to professional development for Designated Teachers and Social Care colleagues, clarity of information and expectations from WVS and support / guidance. Quality has been accelerated by the introduction in January 2023 of a PEP Quality Assurance system, generating a Red, Amber or Green rating for DTs.

PEP Process

- PEP completion – 3 PEPs completed per year:
 - 100%
- PEPs completed on time:
 - 100%
- PEPs quality-assured:
 - 100%

WVS continue to maintain 100% of PEP/PPP completion, all signed off and quality assured on a termly basis for all CLA, meeting WVS's statutory requirement. This includes children from the age of 2 to 18 years. In the 2018/19 academic year 81% Children Looked After (CLA) had an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP). During the 2019/20 academic year 100% of CLA had an up-to-date PEP. This 100% completion rate has been sustained ever since.

PEP RAG Ratings

In order to robustly monitor and improve the quality of PEPs, in Summer 2022-23 WVS implemented a quality assurance (RAG rating) system using a consistent framework within the ePEP system. All stakeholders were updated via comprehensive training, newsletters and emails.

As a result, quality ratings have improved on all counts. For Summer Term 2022-23 (2nd wave of RAG rated PEPs):

- 888 PEPs completed from EYFS to Post 16:
 - 91.1% Green (809 PEPs, from 354 settings)
 - 7.3% Amber (65 PEPs, from 53 settings)
 - 1.6% Red (14 PEPs, from 12 settings)

Social Care sections of the PEP will be formally RAG rated in the next phase of the roll out (Spring Term 2023).

Post 16 Personal Progression Plans (PPPs)

All Year 12 & 13 CLA have a scheduled PPP, which is the Post-16 equivalent of a PEP. The rate of PPP completion each term is 100%.

PPPs are facilitated by WVS Post 16 Learning Advocates. The Designated Practitioner/Teacher (DT) and Social Worker (in consultation with the carer) upload relevant information to the PPP prior to the meeting and attend the meeting/consultation call. PPP support for students in FE Colleges has been enhanced over 2021-22 (Oct-March), 2022-23 and 2023-24 by WVS being successful in bidding to take part in The Pupil Premium Plus (PP+) Post-16 Pilot, which responds to the need for additional financial support by testing proof of concept of extending PP+ support to looked-after children and care leavers in general FE colleges.

Pupils Causing Concern

There are regular meetings with partners including schools, WCF's Education Engagement teams, Admissions and Social Care to discuss pupils causing concern, such as those at risk of CME, on less than 25 hours of education and those where there is a delay in placing in school provision. Specific protocols are in place for each type of concern. Pupil progress is formally reviewed in monthly supervision meetings with Learning Advocates, focussing on pupils who are not making expected progress against their own challenging targets. These discussions result in the review of individual plans of action for CLA.

Quality Assurance

In January 2023 Worcestershire Virtual School significantly improved the quality assurance of PEPs by introducing a RAG rating using a consistent moderation framework (see previous section). This has improved the quality of PEPs and given DTs clear, practical guidance on producing a high-quality document for the benefit of our children. RAG ratings also provide quality assurance feedback which prompts actions from identified parties in education and social care.

Autumn 2022-23 saw the introduction of a protocol for evaluating and acting upon any schools/settings of concern (including a new CLA/CSW Quality Assurance Audit). The audit is carried out with any school/setting of concern, whether concerns are raised by Ofsted, carers, partners or the virtual school itself. The associated Audit tool is also available to settings who wish to carry out a self-evaluation to improve their provision for our cohorts.

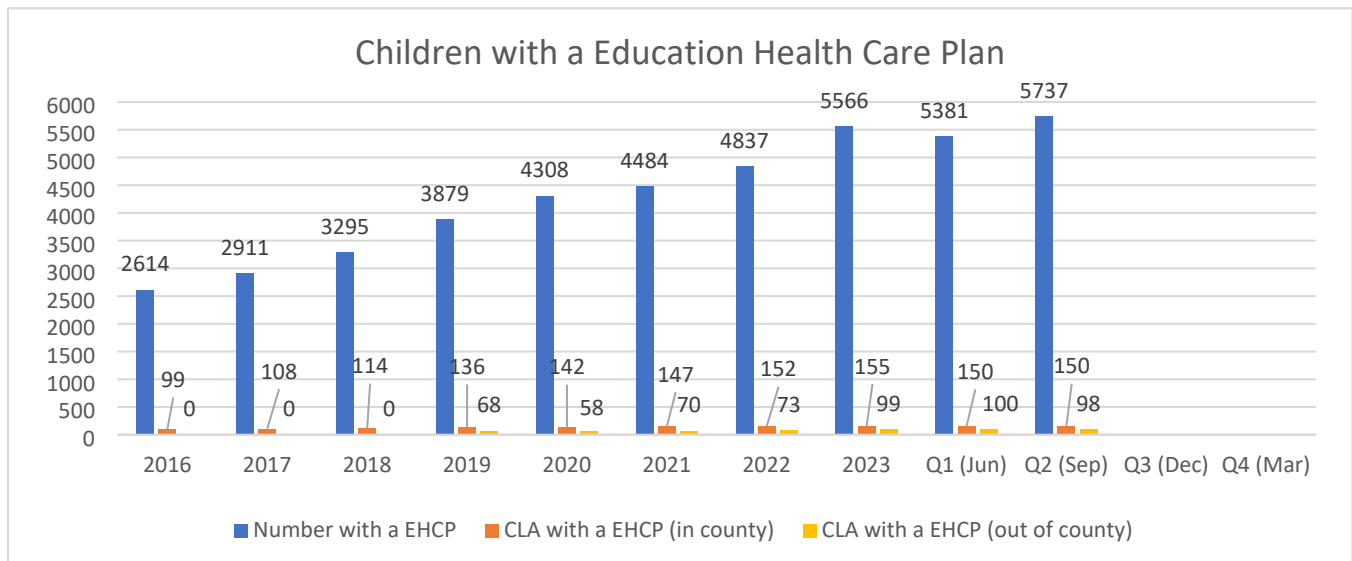
The Virtual School Headteacher and Deputy attend PEP/PPP meetings on a regular basis to offer support, advice and guidance to WVS Learning Advocates and to monitor the quality of the interaction.

Worcestershire Virtual School produces a termly Self Evaluation Form (capturing progress against Key Performance Indicators), culminating in a statutory Annual Report. These are quality assured by leaders within WCF and by the Virtual School Governing Board, which meets half termly.

Complimenting these, since September 2022 each strand of the Virtual School's strategic work (such as Safeguarding, SEND, etc) has a detailed 'A3 Plan' to capture the 'current state' and 'preferred future' with objectives

to reach this future state. A3 Plans are owned by the relevant strategic lead. These are regularly scrutinised by the Virtual School Headteacher, Deputy and linked governors to monitor progress and measure impact.

Children with SEND



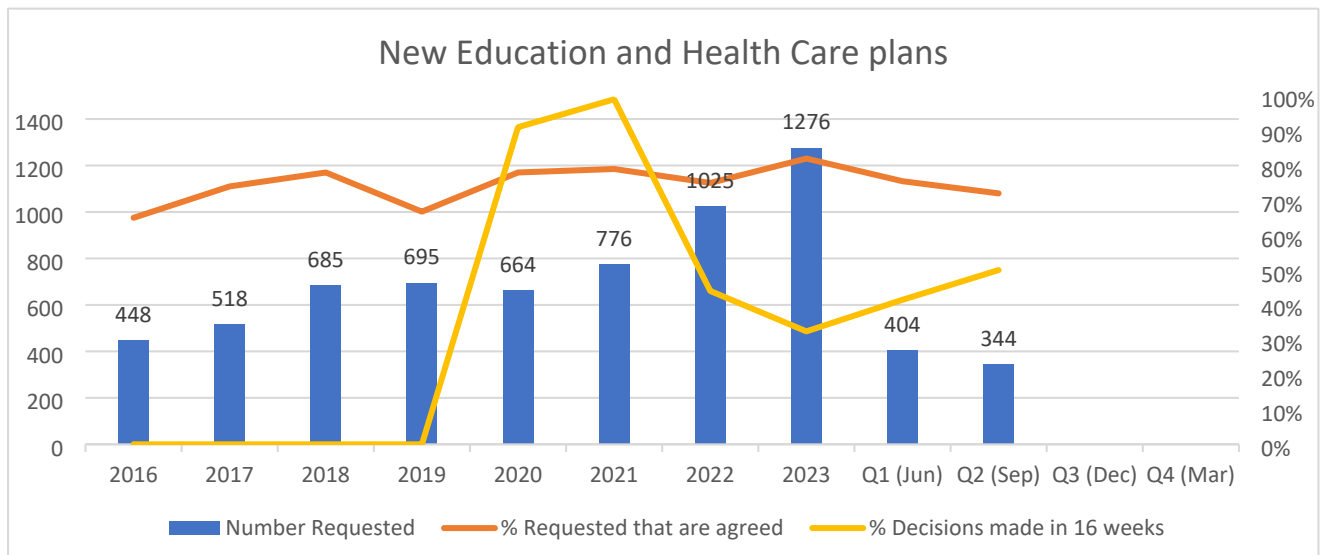
Children with SEND Commentary

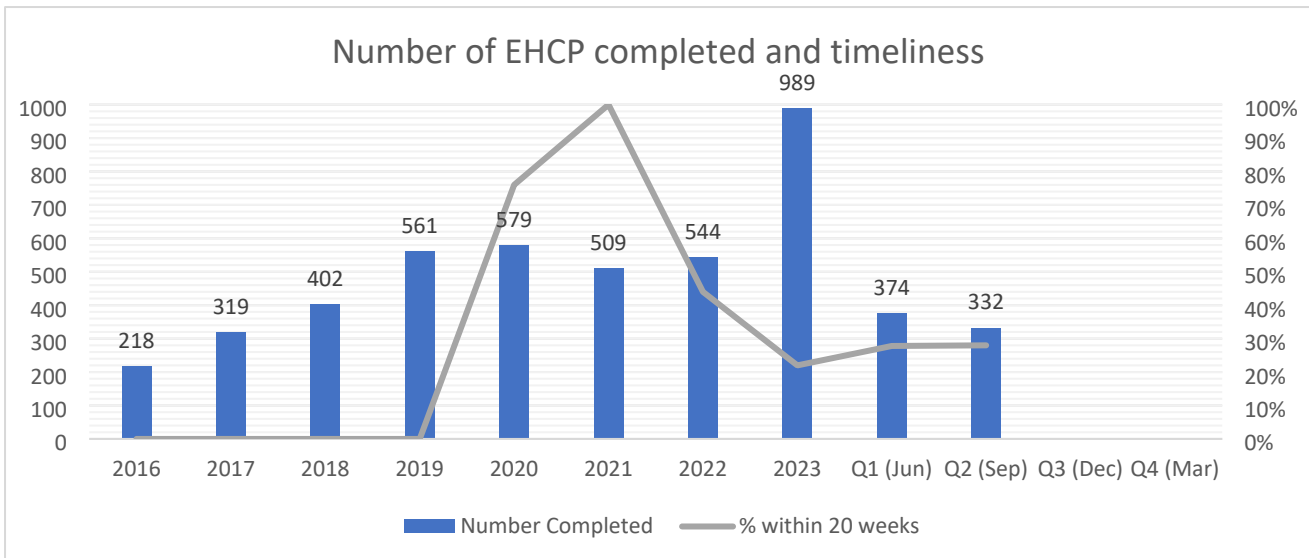
Commentary for Number of EHCP's

The overall number of EHCPs in Worcester continues to increase year on year. This is in line with what is being seen nationally. We continue to see increased requests for Education, Health and Care Plan Needs Assessments.

The analysis of children and young people with additional needs, identified as Children looked After (CLA) in and out of county, subject to a Child Protection Plan (CPP), Children in Need (CIN) and Early Help (EH) continues to remain consistent.

EHCP's requested and timeliness.





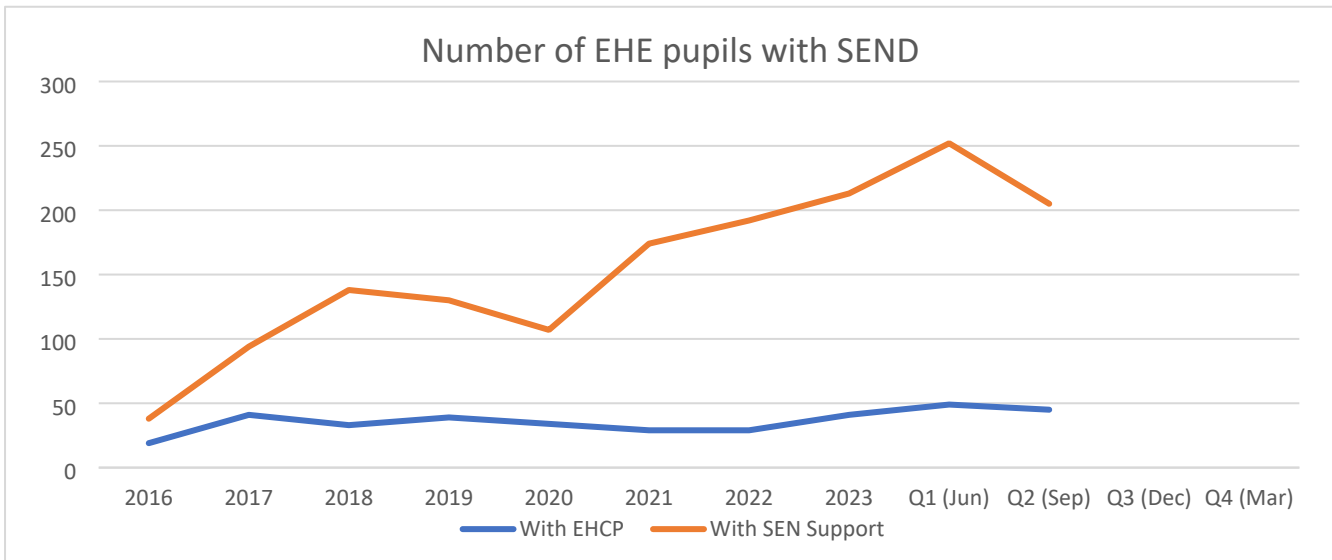
Commentary for EHCP's requested and timeliness.

As reported the number of EHC needs assessments requested continues to increase. There continue to be challenges in terms of timeliness as a result of the increased demand particularly in respect of Educational Psychologist and Health advice. To meet the demand, we are still having to use Locum Educational Psychologists. Capacity in the system continues to be a challenge. We have however seen an increase in the health advice that is received within timescales. This is a key area of focus for the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and continues to be monitored.

We have seen a reduction of our decision to assess, which is being monitored. For context the England average for assessment refusals was 21.9% in 2022. For 2022, Worcestershire refusal to assess was at 18.1%

We have, as can be seen made an improvement in terms of the 16 week and 20-week timescale.

Elective Home Educated Children with SEND



Commentary for Elective Home Educated Children with SEND

We have seen a slight decrease in the number of children with an EHCP who are electively home educated (EHE). As can be seen, the number of children that are EHE with SEN support remains consistent. The EHE Team continues to work alongside SEND services to ensure any students subject to an EHCP are prioritised and there is joint working when a parent makes the decision to home educate their child.

Appendix 2 - Budget Monitoring 2023/24 – Forecast Outturn Period 6

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

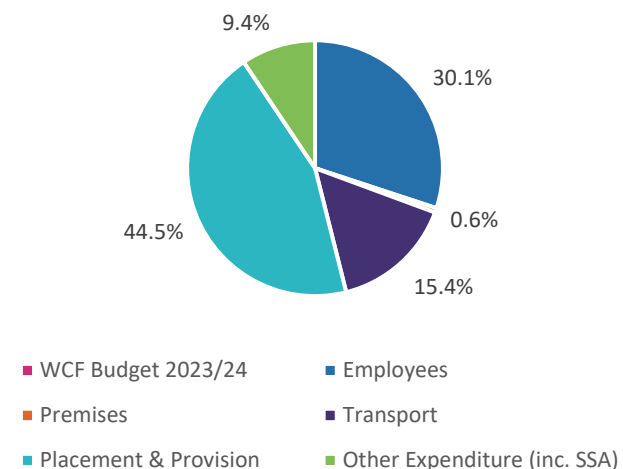
06th December 2023

WCF Budget Overview 2023/24

- The full-year WCF expenditure budget at P6 was £148m of which over half is the 'demand led' budgets of Placements and Home to School Transport.

WCF Budget 2023/24	
	£m
Employees	44.602
Premises	0.848
Transport	22.920
Placement & Provision	66.036
Other Expenditure (inc. SSA)	13.966
Gross Expenditure	148.372
Sales, Fees and Charges	-2.570
Contract Price	145.802

WCF Budget Expenditure by Type 2023/24



- At budget setting, it was acknowledged that there were risk areas within the WCF budget, particularly demand-led services such as Home to School Transport and Placements for Looked After Children.
- As a precaution, the Council assigned a £2m risk reserve to mitigate potential overspends

Forecast Outturn 2023/24 - £28.6m forecast overspend

WCF Budget Monitoring 2023/24 Period 6	Latest Budget	YTD	Full-year Projection	Variance	Variance
	£000	£000	£000	£000	%
WCF Management & Board	935	433	891	-44	-4.71%
Training	184	34	164	-20	-10.87%
Resources Teams	4,003	1,506	3,475	-528	-13.19%
Support Service Payments	7,479	1,870	7,479	0	0.00%
Resources Total	12,601	3,842	12,009	-592	-4.70%
CSC Safeguarding Services	10,003	4,595	10,776	773	7.73%
Integrated Family Front Door	4,666	2,254	4,578	-88	-1.89%
Placements & Provision	66,036	42,609	84,803	18,767	28.42%
Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board	94	17	94	0	0.00%
CSC Through Care	5,979	2,728	6,222	243	4.06%
Early Interventions (ex. Targeted Family Supp)	5,434	2,312	5,039	-395	-7.27%
Social Care Total	92,212	54,514	111,512	19,300	20.93%
AAD Staffing	7,091	3,354	7,025	-66	-0.93%
AAD Short Breaks	3,092	1,038	3,265	173	5.60%
AAD Placements & Packages	2,311	1,367	2,649	338	14.63%
All Age Disability Total	12,494	5,759	12,939	445	3.56%
Sufficiency & Safeguarding	550	151	540	-10	-1.82%
Quality and Improvement	1,337	459	1,164	-173	-12.94%
Vulnerable learners	3,624	1,410	3,732	108	2.98%
Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Place Planning Total	5,511	2,020	5,436	-75	-1.36%
Home to School Transport	22,477	10,930	31,977	9,500	42.27%
Home to School Transport Total	22,477	10,930	31,977	9,500	42.27%
Youth Offending Services	507	127	507	0	0.00%
Youth Offending Services Total	507	127	507	0	0.00%
WCF TOTAL	145,802	77,191	174,380	28,578	19.60%

Resources Directorate is projecting increased banking interest income due to current rates of interest, which is £540k of the £592k variance. The remaining variance is due to holding staffing vacancies where possible.

Social Care placements are forecast to be overspent by £18.8, due to increases in both numbers and costs since budget setting. The current number of placements is 1,049, an 5.6% rise from the 993 this time last year. However it is inflation on placements costs that is the main driver for the current overspend, where average placement costs have increased by 25% since the same period last year. Our robust commissioning and management approach have resulted in cost avoidances which limited price increases however, this is more challenging in the current economic environment.

In other Social Care areas, increased volume of Court Fees and costs of agency cover are causing a small overspend forecast., although there are underspends emerging in some teams due to vacancy holding.

In the All-Age Disability Service, staffing teams are broadly on budget, however there are pressures due to high placement costs of CWD Domiciliary Care Packages, and an increase in requests for Short Breaks.

There is a small forecast underspend in EEYIPP due to holding vacancies and amending forecast use of specific grant income.

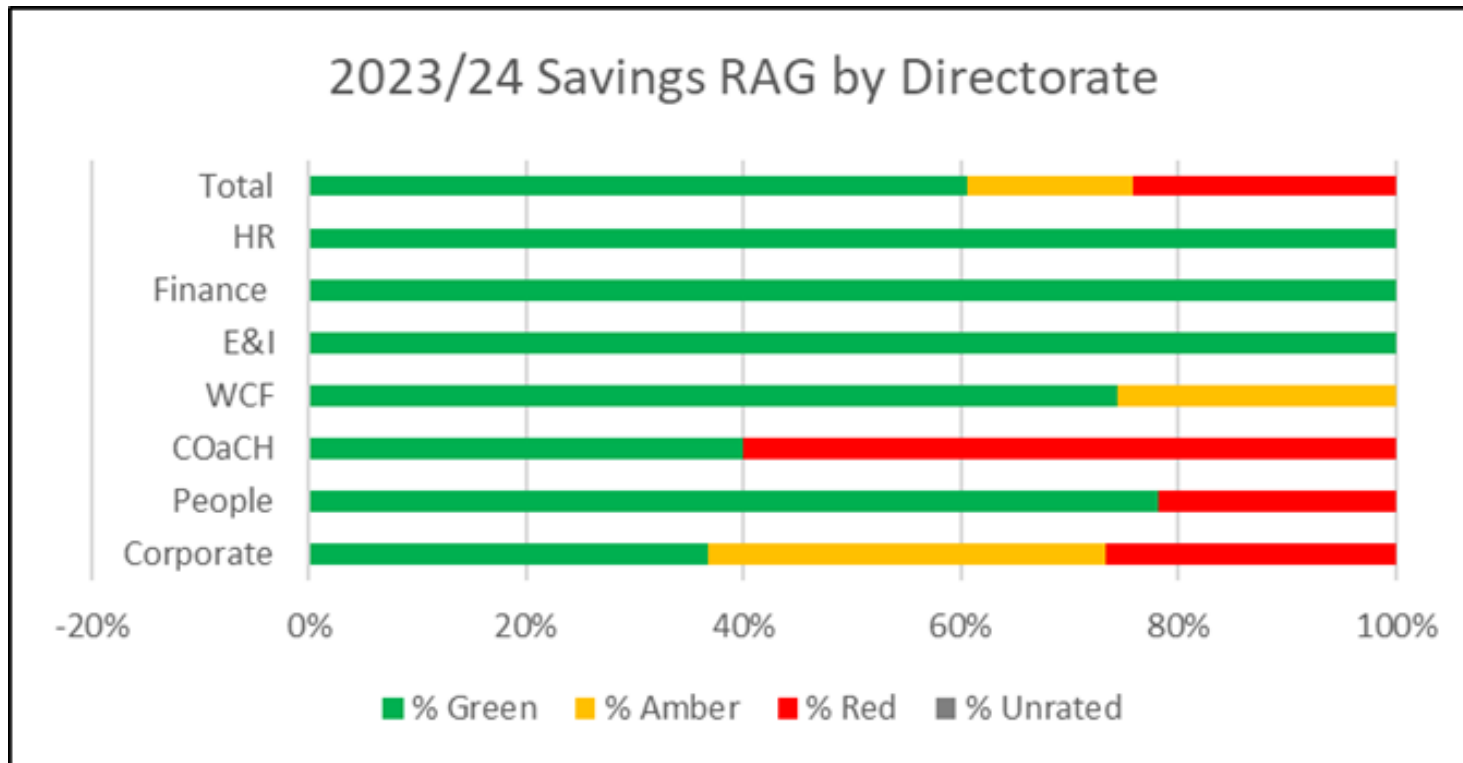
Home to School Transport is £9.5m overspent, due to increased provider costs. This is a big increase from the £6m overspend previously reported, and the change is down to new requests for the September term. From P7, the HTST budget is moving out of WCF and into WCC.

Forecast Outturn 2023/24 – Mitigating actions

WCF Board have been notified of the forecast overspend. Whilst it is the case that the market and demand pressures in the services that are driving our overspend are likely to continue for some time, the Service must make efforts to reduce the projection as much as possible. This includes (but is not limited to):

- a) Ensuring achievement of planned 2023/24 savings
- b) Holding vacancies wherever possible
- c) Additional scrutiny over use of agency staff to cover vacancies and absence
- d) Seeking to maximise external income
- e) Challenging all non-staffing spend
- f) Continuing our robust commissioning and management approach to children's placements

Progress on Savings delivery 2023/24



WCF had directorate-specific savings of £1.3m accounted for in the 2023/24 budget. The Company is on track to deliver these savings by year-end.

On top of this, there are also the WCF allocations of the vacancy factor saving (show here under 'Corporate', which WCF is forecasting will be fully achieved).

Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2023/24

DSG year-end position as at P6 is an overspend of £8.1m with a cumulative deficit of £28.4m at the end of 2023/24, the deficit position at the end of 2024/25 is predicted to be around £37.9m:

2023/24 Budget Monitoring Period 6 - September 2023	Current Budget	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Variance
DSG Blocks	£000	£000	£000	%
Schools	129,735	129,735	0	0.0%
High Needs	74,692	82,836	8,144	10.9%
Early Years	36,265	36,265	0	0.0%
Central	3,333	3,333	0	0.0%
DSG	244,025	252,169	8,144	

Summary Position for Dedicated Schools Grant	
	£m
Accumulated Deficit 1 April 2023	20.3
High Needs Deficit 2023/24	8.1
Projected Early Years and Schools Block	0.0
Savings on Other Blocks	0.0
Accumulated Deficit 31 March 2024	28.4
Projected Early Years and Schools Block	-0.5
Projected High Needs Shortfall 2024/25	10.0
Projected Accumulated Deficit 31 March 2025	37.9

- DSG allocations are forecast to continue to rise, but at a level below current growth in demand and inflation. The DfE have indicated that High Needs will increase by 4.3% for 2024/25. This would make the Worcestershire High Needs block £77.9m – far below even the current year spend.
- Currently the deficit sits as a negative unusable reserve on the balance sheet permitted via a statutory instrument. There is a temporary statutory override to ringfence DSG deficits from councils' wider financial position in their statutory accounts. The Council has not set aside any of its own resources, for example as an earmarked reserve, to specifically offset this accumulating deficit at this point. The High Needs deficit will impact on the council's future financial sustainability once the override ends on 31 March 2026. This is not a Worcestershire County Council issue in isolation and is a major concern amongst local authorities nationally.



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Any questions?

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Appendix 3 – Home to School Transport Cost Pressures

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

06th December 2023

- As at Period 6, Home to School Transport is forecast to spend £31.977m against a budget of £22.477m. This is an overspend of £9.5m (42%)
- For context, 2022/23 outturn for this budget was £24.844m. If the current forecast is accurate, year-on-year spend will have increased by 29%
- There are almost 11,500 pupils currently transported by the service, of which around 1,900 are pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEND)
- The following slide shows a breakdown of pupil numbers and an estimated average cost per year for each category

Home to School Transport – Baseline Data

Key Area of Eligibility	Forecast £m	Pupil Numbers	Cost per pupil (£000)
SEND – Transport provided on Need Grounds	7.0	753	9
SEND – Transport provided on Distance (statutory duty)	6.0	708	8
SEND – 19-25 Transport provided on Need Grounds	1.2	91	13
SEND – 16-19 Transport provided on Need Grounds	0.9	122	7
SEND – 16-19 provided on distance (statutory duty)	0.9	179	5
SEND Total	16.0	1,853	
Mainstream – statutory HTST policy (nearest school or designated)	4.7	5,413	1
Mainstream – unavailable routes	.25	1,651	2
Pupil Referral Unit	1.5	129	12
Mainstream – Severn Card, post 16	1.2	1,080	1
Mainstream – Severn Card, under 16	0.5	690	1
Remainder – e.g. low income, appeals, redesignation	5.4	669	8
Total HTST	31.9	11,485	



Home to School Transport – Demand and Cost

Cost Drivers behind increasing spend include:

Increase in children with EHCP:

3728 (2019)

5566 (2023)

49% increase

Page 38 Increase in children with EHCP using HTST

1527 (2019)

2049 (2023)

34% increase

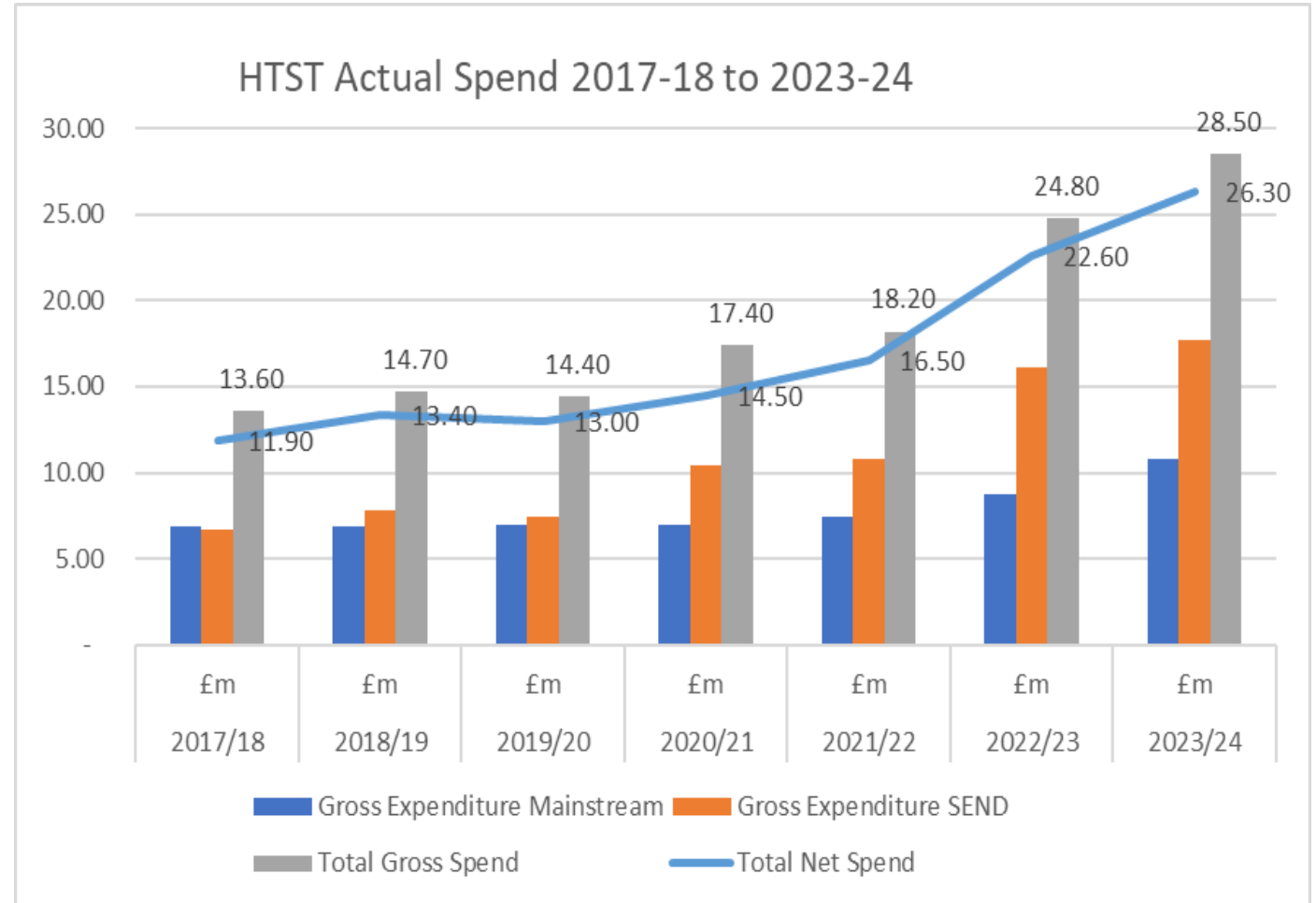
Increase in mainstream pupils

6295 (2019)

9143 (2023)

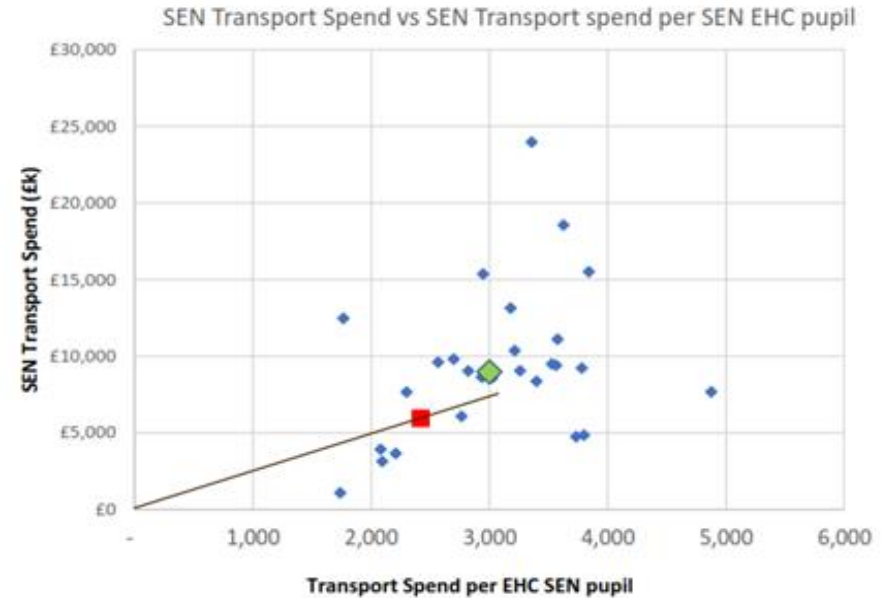
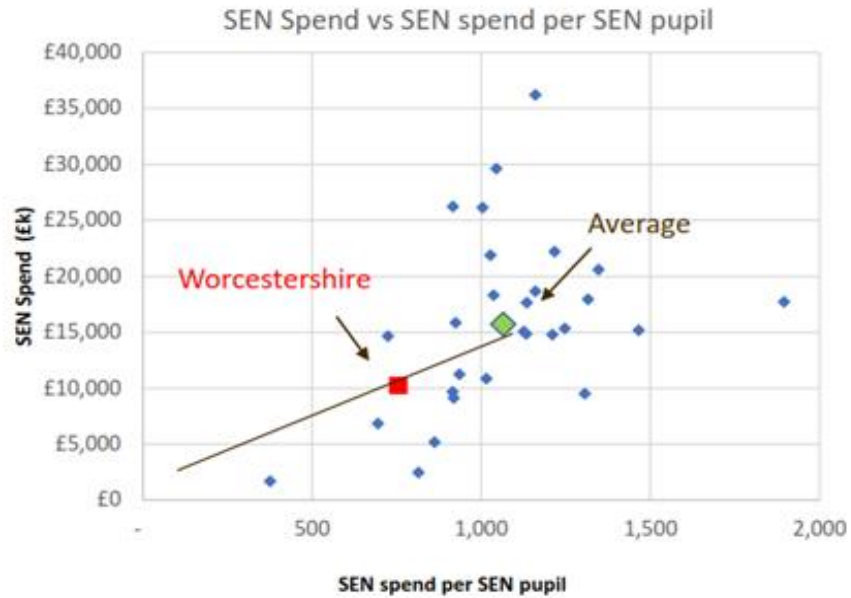
45% increase

(12% increase last year)



Home to School Transport – Initial Review Findings (SEND)

The total costs and transport costs are significantly below average. Costs per pupil are well below average. If costs per SEN pupil were average, total costs would be c£4m higher. If transport costs per EHC SEN were average, transport costs would be c£2m higher.



Home to School Transport – Demand vs Supply Analysis

Demand 1: Number of Children in Worcestershire
Demand 2: Children and Families 2014 Act

Supply 1: location of schools
Supply 2: the provision of transport
Supply 3: the provision of places looking at the whole system

Home to School Transport – Demand 1

Worcestershire County Council's public report on the 2021 census data, available on the Council website at the following link – [2021 Census data](#) – stated the following:

The number of children in Worcestershire is increasing, but the increase is not as pronounced as is being seen nationally. This has potential consequences for school and nursery provision, access to health care, GP services and dentists, family support services and housing. There are over 117,900 children living in Worcestershire, with numbers increasing by 2.6% since the 2011 census. Increases in numbers of children over the past ten years are notable in Bromsgrove and Wychavon and are **particularly high across the county in the 5-10 age group.**

Home to School Transport – Demand 2

Below are themes of the 2014 Act which illustrate the difficulty for Local Authorities in approaching SEND placements (and associated transport requirements) from a cost-centric perspective:

Efficient education means providing for each child or young person a suitable, appropriate education in terms of their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they **may** have.

The only reason the local authority can refuse the request is if:

- The setting is unsuitable for the age, ability, aptitude or special educational needs (“SEN”) of the child or young person; or
- The attendance of the child or young person would be incompatible with the provision of efficient education for others; or
- The attendance of the child or young person would be incompatible with the efficient use of resources.

Home to School Transport – Next Steps

- Given the pressures that we know about from the **demand** side, focus of Home to School Transport review will focus on **supply**.
- This will include commissioning and contract management arrangements
- Focus is how to lower our average cost to be closer to our West Midlands neighbours
- Further update to Scrutiny in the new year



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Any questions?

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

6 DECEMBER 2023

UPDATE ON THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) ACCELERATED PROGRESS PLAN

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and the Director of All Age Disability have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on the progress being made against the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (APP).
2. The Panel are asked to review and comment on the Department for Education/National Health Service England (DfE/NHSE) feedback on the progress being made.

Background

3. Worcestershire SEND services were subject to a joint DfE/NHSE inspection in 2018. As a result of this inspection 12 areas for improvement were identified.
4. Worcestershire Children First SEND services are part of the All-Age Disability Services. The redesign of services saw SEND, Young Adults and Children with Disabilities brought together under one service and under one Director in Children's services. This re-design was agreed by Cabinet in February 2022.

Update on the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan

5. The November 2021 reinspection of SEND services identified that progress had been made in addressing eight of the significant weaknesses identified at the initial inspection and four areas for improvement remained outstanding. An outcome of this revisit inspection was that the Local Area was required by the DfE and NHSE to produce an APP to demonstrate how the remaining areas of weaknesses would be addressed.
6. The APP sought to address the four remaining areas of weakness as follows:
 - 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.

7. The APP is subject to review by DfE/NHSE. Reviews have taken place in September 2022 (*Outcome letter attached at Appendix 1*) and April 2023 (*Outcome letter attached at Appendix 2*). The last update report to this Panel took place May 2023 and focussed on the outcome of these reviews.
8. The most recent DfE/NHSE review of the APP took place in September 2023 . (The presentation to that review can be found in Appendix 3 and the associated Outcome letter at Appendix 4).
9. The outcome letter from the September 2023 review noted positively "*The evidence provided, alongside the feedback from partners, demonstrated the range of actions in place to continue and accelerate improvement.*"
10. The review also noted specifically in relation to workstream 1 that "*Both in your documentation and during this progress review, it is the view of the DfE and NHSE that you have now been able to demonstrate clear and sustained progress for Workstream 1: 'The variation in the skills and commitment of some mainstream schools to provide effective support for children with SEND'*."
11. As a result of the above review findings this workstream has been removed from the formal APP and from formal external monitoring.
12. After each APP review, the plan is revised to reflect feedback, strengthen any areas required to improve progress and remove areas where progress has been achieved. Areas removed are taken into business-as-usual work.
13. The revised APP therefore now focuses on the three remaining workstreams. The workstreams are:
 - The lack of suitable specialist provision to meet the identified needs of children and young people.
 - Improving the fragile relationships with parents and carers and a lack of meaningful engagement and co-production and collaboration.
 - Improving the quality of EHC plans and increasing contributions from health and social care. The initial visit noted that the processes to check and review the quality of EHC plans were also ineffective.
14. The recent revised draft APP, attached at Appendix 5, is the plan on a page which reflects membership of the work streams, aims, objectives and outcomes measures. The next external DfE /NHSE review will take place in April 2024.
15. Worcestershire are due for their full SEND inspection, and it is expected to take place at any point between now and Spring 2024.

Purpose of the Meeting

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

- Consider and comment on the information provided in respect of the outcome of the latest review of the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan
- determine what further information or scrutiny is required; and
- agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 - Outcome letter of 6-month APP Review

Appendix 2 - Outcome letter of the 12-month APP Review

Appendix 3 - Presentation submission for the 18-month Review

Appendix 4 - Outcome letter of the 18-month APP Review

Appendix 5 - Draft APP Revised version September 2023

Contact Points

Mel Barnett, Director for All Age Disability

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Background Papers

Agendas and Minutes of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 8 August 2018, 6 March 2019, 13 November 2019, 16 June 2020, 23 February 2022, 3 November 2022, 23 May 2023.

[Agendas and Minutes for Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel are available on the Council's website here](#)

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

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Tina Russell, Director of Children's Services, Worcestershire Children First
Simon Trickett, Chief Executive / STP ICS Lead Herefordshire & Worcestershire ICB

10 October 2022

SIX MONTH PROGRESS REVIEW AGAINST YOUR ACCELERATED PROGRESS PLAN (APP)

Dear Ms Russell and Mr Trickett,

Thank you for meeting with Department for Education (DfE) SEND and NHS England (NHSE) officials on 22 September 2022 to review the progress you have made against your APP over the last six months.

We are grateful for the contributions from all partners. It was clear that the local area is beginning to make sustainable improvements to SEND services and to the lives of children and young people.

The evidence provided, including (but not limited to) progress reports from each of the workstreams, feedback from the parent carer forum (PCF), your accountability and governance structure and the presentation you shared at the meeting, alongside feedback from partners, demonstrated the range of actions you have taken to accelerate improvement.

We are grateful to parent representatives and the schools' representative for confirming that they are included on every work stream, and it is felt that there has been a positive shift in working relationships between WCF and partners.

Progress is being made in your APP and it is encouraging that:

- Over one hundred schools have attended inclusion events.
- Oversight, tracking, and action plans are now in place for children and young people (CYP) awaiting specialist provision and those with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) not at school and with no school named.
- You had held a roundtable event and have established task and finish groups to inform your local sufficiency plan.
- In relation to sufficiency planning, you said you will be applying for a free school and expanding your existing Resource Provision.
- You are planning to improve the Early Years offer which will include a review of joint Health and WCF processes.
- You have developed a co-produced communication framework, although it was acknowledged that improvements being made need to be embedded and impact demonstrated.
- You have developed a Quality Assurance and Performance Management framework to audit and capture the family experience.
- You are focusing on carrying out a Preparation for Adult (PFA) audit.
- You are progressing work on data management and analysis along with the development of the digital SENCO/practical toolkit.

The overall progress made to date by accessing local intelligence, supports the local area in identifying challenges and the needs of the population. The area has understood that self-evaluation and a shared response to solution focused outcomes needs to include the voice of young people and parents.

We will continue to monitor the APP and meet with you in 6 months for an update on:

- How you are engaging those schools who have not yet been involved with the inclusion events.
- The work being undertaken to demonstrate that changes are embedded, and for the outcomes of these changes to be captured through case studies and scenarios.
- The actions being taken to address the processes around the oversight, tracking and action plans in place for children and young people awaiting specialist provision and/or for those with an EHCP not at a school and/or no school named.
- The impact of your local sufficiency plan.
- Evidence that the voice of children and young people is heard as the area develops pathways, provision, and services.
- Ensuring that the scope of the newsletters inform, celebrate, and hear the voice of the CYP, parent and carers and professionals.
- The impact of the actions taken to support improvements and whether the engagement tool kit could be used to gather evidence of impact.
- The work being undertaken to capture the overarching difference the service operating procedure (SOP) and audits have achieved on the lived experience of children, young people and families with SEND.
- Whether contributions from health and social care are improving and how this can be evidenced.

Your next six-month review meeting will be scheduled to take place in **April 2023**. In the meantime, the SEND and NHSE Advisers, Pat Tate and Debbie Ward and Deanne Michie as your DfE Case Lead will continue to provide you with support and challenge. If you have any questions or need any further support, please contact any of them in the first instance.

We are copying this letter to Simon Geraghty, (Leader of the Council), Mel Barnett (WCF Director, All Age Disability), Andre Imich (DfE Lead Professional Adviser), Pat Tate, (DfE Adviser), Deanne Michie (DfE Case Lead), Lorraine Mulroney (National Specialist Advisor- SEND, NHSE), Nick Harrison (NHSE Senior Programme Manager, Children, Young People & SEND), and Deborah Ward (NHSE Adviser).

Yours sincerely,

K. Moore

Katie Moore, Regional Lead
Team Leader, Vulnerable Childrens Unit, DfE



Tina Russell, Director of Children's Services, Worcestershire Children First
Simon Trickett, Chief Executive, Integrated Care System (ICS) Lead Herefordshire &
Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB)

19 April 2023

Dear Tina and Simon,

**Re: TWELVE MONTH PROGRESS REVIEW AGAINST YOUR ACCELERATED
PROGRESS PLAN (APP)**

Thank you for meeting with DfE SEND and NHS England officials on 29 March 2023 to review the progress you have made against your APP over the last six months.

We are particularly grateful for the contributions from your Parent Carer Forum (PCF) and school representatives. It was clear that a vast amount of work has taken place. The local area has a tangible commitment from stakeholders, willing to build more inclusive cultures to improve its SEND services for the children and young people in Worcestershire.

The evidence provided, alongside the feedback from partners, demonstrated the range of actions in place to continue and accelerate improvement. These included:

- Clear articulation of the positive cultural change being experienced in schools.
- The increased staffing in the Local Authority (LA) of Educational Psychologists and case workers, along with the increased workforce in health services such as, special school nursing and therapy services.
- That the ICS is addressing quality and timeliness through improved systems and improved parental engagement and feedback.
- The positive work being undertaken to address the weakness around the lack of suitable specialist provision to meet the identified needs of children and young people. This includes the development of mainstream autism provision and the approval of a 120-place special free school.
- The establishment of trackers, audits, and reviews to capture and analyse data and feedback.
- The co-produced "Engaging with Parent Carers for school's toolkit" provides a practical handbook with links to further information and resources. Monitoring and evaluation of its implementation will provide further learning in this key area.
- The re-launch of the SENco network.

The LA has clearly demonstrated its willing to engage in offers of support which includes:

- Its inclusion of the Delivering Better Value (DBV) project.
- Securing support through the RISE consortium to review and improve the preparing for adulthood agenda.
- Accessing the regional RISE EHC training and support package.

In relation to the work around co-production, over the last twelve months there has been an increase in parental representation across the various workstreams and participation in engagement events, to shape service delivery. We heard from the PCF an increasingly positive view of the area, which is beginning to filter through to other parents. We understand Worcestershire Children First (WCF) will continue to work closely with the PCF to establish clear targets around increased membership, better parental representation, and community engagement.

In September 2022, school representatives felt they were included in the work streams, and it was recognised that there had been a positive shift in working relationships between WCF and partners. These relationships were reaffirmed by the work being led by schools in partnership such as, the Wyre Forest Project, improving engagement with local GPs and the regularly held Headteacher briefings.

As the improvement work continues, we would like to see further evidence of:

- How the local area is embedding the changes into its policies and processes. Further work is needed to build on the early signs of impact and improved outcomes along with a clear understanding of how these improvements will be evidenced and sustained.
- The processes being used to facilitate and coordinate the gathering of education, health, and social care advice to secure good EHC plans. Attention needs to be given to join up approaches across the partnership, evidence the impact of actions undertaken, and how these will be sustained.
- How the local area continues to develop and embed monitoring and evaluation systems to demonstrate oversight, actions, and impact on the experience of children and young people who receive SEN support or have an Education, Health and Care plans (EHCP).
- The work being undertaken to develop the leadership of SEND and inclusion. The improvement work should reflect an inclusive culture in all learning environments. The evidence could be captured by showing how many schools are engaging in the school inclusion project, particularly those where engagement has been problematic.
- Building on the work which has already taken place through the production of “You Tube” videos and sessions developed to close the gap in early years settings.

- Engagement with children and young people with SEND to allow for their voices to be heard.
- How the school's toolkit is being developed to reflect a multiagency approach across all services to demonstrate how they all work with CYP and families.
- The risk register being used to ensure sustainability of improved practise going forward.
- Partnership led communication, such as newsletters, to showcase the multi-agency work being undertaken to give confidence to the wider community.

At your next review meeting, I would like to hear of continued evidence of the further developments outlined above. Your next six-month review meeting will take place in September 2023.

In the meantime, SEND and NHS England Advisers, Pat Tate, and Debbie Ward, along with Deanne Michie as your DfE Case Lead, will continue to provide you with support and challenge. If you have any questions or need any further support, please contact either party in the first instance.

We are copying this letter to Simon Geraghty, Leader of the Council, to Mel Barnett (Director of All Age Disabilities (0-25)), Andre Imich (DfE Lead Professional Adviser), Pat Tate (DfE Adviser), Lorraine Mulroney (National Specialist Advisor-SEND, NHS England), Deborah Ward (NHS England Adviser), Nicola Wesley (NHSE) and Deanne Michie (DfE Case Lead).

Yours sincerely,

K. Moore

Katie Moore
Regional Lead
West Midlands Vulnerable Children's Unit

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DfE 18 Month Review: 27th September 2023



Key concern 1: The variation in skills and commitment of some mainstream schools to provide effective support for children who have SEND: **Lisa Bradbury, Lead Educational Improvement Professional (WCF), Maria Hardy, Lead for Children and Maternity (ICB)**

Key concern 2: The lack of suitable **specialist provision** to meet the identified needs of children and young people: **Sarah Wilkins, Director for Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Education Place Planning (WCF), Maria Hardy, Lead for Children and Maternity (ICB)**

Key concern 3: The voice of parents/carers and children and young people: **Daniela Carson, Children with Disabilities Group Manager, Maree Munn, Participation and Engagement Officer, Families in Partnership**

Key concern 4: The poor quality of EHCPs and limited contribution from health and social care including the process to check and review the quality of EHC plans: **Melanie Barnett, Director of All Age Disability (0-25), Louise Adams, Senior Manager for SEND (ICB)**

Quality Assurance: KPIs, feedback from children, young people and their families (including complaints and compliments) and audit activity

Key Concern 1: Approach for 2023-24

Key Concern 1

The variation in skills and commitment of some mainstream schools to provide effective support for children who have SEND

- Engage stakeholders in building more inclusive cultures
- Address the variation by designing mechanisms to:
 - monitor and evaluate the quality of provision
 - support and challenge ineffective practice
 - broker and deliver high quality training
 - share and accredit good practice
 - build capacity by supporting potential improvement projects and programmes

Key Concern 1: Key Outcomes

Increased the % of mainstream SENCOs attending termly network meetings:

- 47% - 114 Schools
- (include MAT info cascading 71% - 173 Schools)

Increased the % of New EHC Plans that are placed in mainstream schools:

- Worcs = 62.8% National = 72.8% (2021/22)
- Worcs = 63.3% National = 71.2 (2022/23)

Increased no. of schools achieving IQM:

- 26 schools now have IQM
- 8 schools to be assessed in Autumn term
- 5 new schools registered

Improved EHCP attendance % (mainstream schools):

- Worcs Schools: 2021/22 = 84.6%
- Worcs Schools: 2022/23 = 86%

Engagement with EEF SEND programme continued:

- 38 schools have developed an Inclusion Plan and continued support provided for implementation

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Increase in the number of schools engaged in TIAAS and TDDLs programmes:

- No data as yet for 2023/24
- 51% (114) of all schools have TIS practitioner
- 2 cohorts per year – 10% increase
- TDDL Programme launched: 42 schools July 23

Improve on the number of schools with a positive Ofsted statement relating to SEND (2023/24) New KPI:

- 2022/23 data (70 reports published, 67 referred to SEND provision. 57 (81%) described positive practices and 10 schools requiring development provided with additional support
- As of September 2023, 83% of published Ofsted reports describe positive SEND practice

Worcs Association of Secondary Heads (WASH) snapshot Inclusion survey 27 responses

- 100% had made changes to be more inclusive and provided examples
- 7 were utilising additional specialist teaching
- 6 had created dedicated SMEH or autism facilities
- 3 had adopted a new approach to transitions

Professional Assessment Outcomes

GLD (Good Level of Development):

- 5% rise in children with SEND achieving GLD. (National 1% rise)
- Outcomes of children in Worcestershire with SEND for GLD are 9% above National (20%)

KS1 Phonics:

Worcs Schools perform higher than the National

	National	All Schools
2021/22	38%	45%
2022/23	42%	46%

KS1 Reading/Writing/Maths:

Worcs schools performing above National

	National	Worcs Schools
RWM Comb 2022	15%	17%
RWM Comb 2023	16%	19%

KS2 Reading/Writing/Maths:

Worcs schools improving but not yet at National

	National	Worcs Schools
RWM Comb 2022	18%	16%
RWM Comb 2023	20%	19%

Key Concern 1: Next Steps



Key Concern 1

- Integration with SEND Inclusion strategy
- Continue to develop and embed monitoring and evaluation systems
- Re-focus on key issues identified including transition (DBV) and Pupil Voice
- Locality hubs development

Key Concern 2: Approach for 2023-24

Key Concern 2

The lack of suitable specialist provision to meet the identified needs of children and young people

- Further develop the annual place planning commissioning cycle for school places to systematically and regularly collect and analyse child need and place level data to inform short, medium and long term needs
- Use this for forecasting and creating additional places as needed and prioritise commissioning of new provision and collaborations for medium and long term planning
- Joint commissioning approach includes schools and settings, NHS partners, finance and commissioning to effectively deploy resources to meet need
- With parent carer involvement develop the Local Offer descriptions of provision for children and young people

Key Concern 2: Key Outcomes

<p>New school for children with autism - build and commissioning of provider is on track</p>	<p>AP Free School Wave bid - WCF and a local Academy Trust have taken part in stage 2 interview for a new secondary AP provision for Wyre Forest District</p>	<p>Special School places increased for 2023 academic year by 123 across 4 schools</p>
<p>Tudor Grange Treetops MAB increased secondary places for 2023 academic year by 25 places</p>	<p>Christopher Whitehead Language College MAB opened for 12 secondary places for 2023 academic year</p>	<p>Post 16 in county specialist places – successful award to HoW College, Pershore College and Kidderminster College – 52 places from 2024</p>
<p>Increase in new health provision linked directly to schools – improves place delivery and support for specific needs</p>	<p>Unity Academy School (AP) has opened for Sept 2023. 60 places support capacity – SEND commissioning to support children who need a different approach</p>	<p>5 mainstream schools and 1 special school have had further accessibility works completed to support availability of provision for SEND children</p>

Key Concern 2: Next Steps

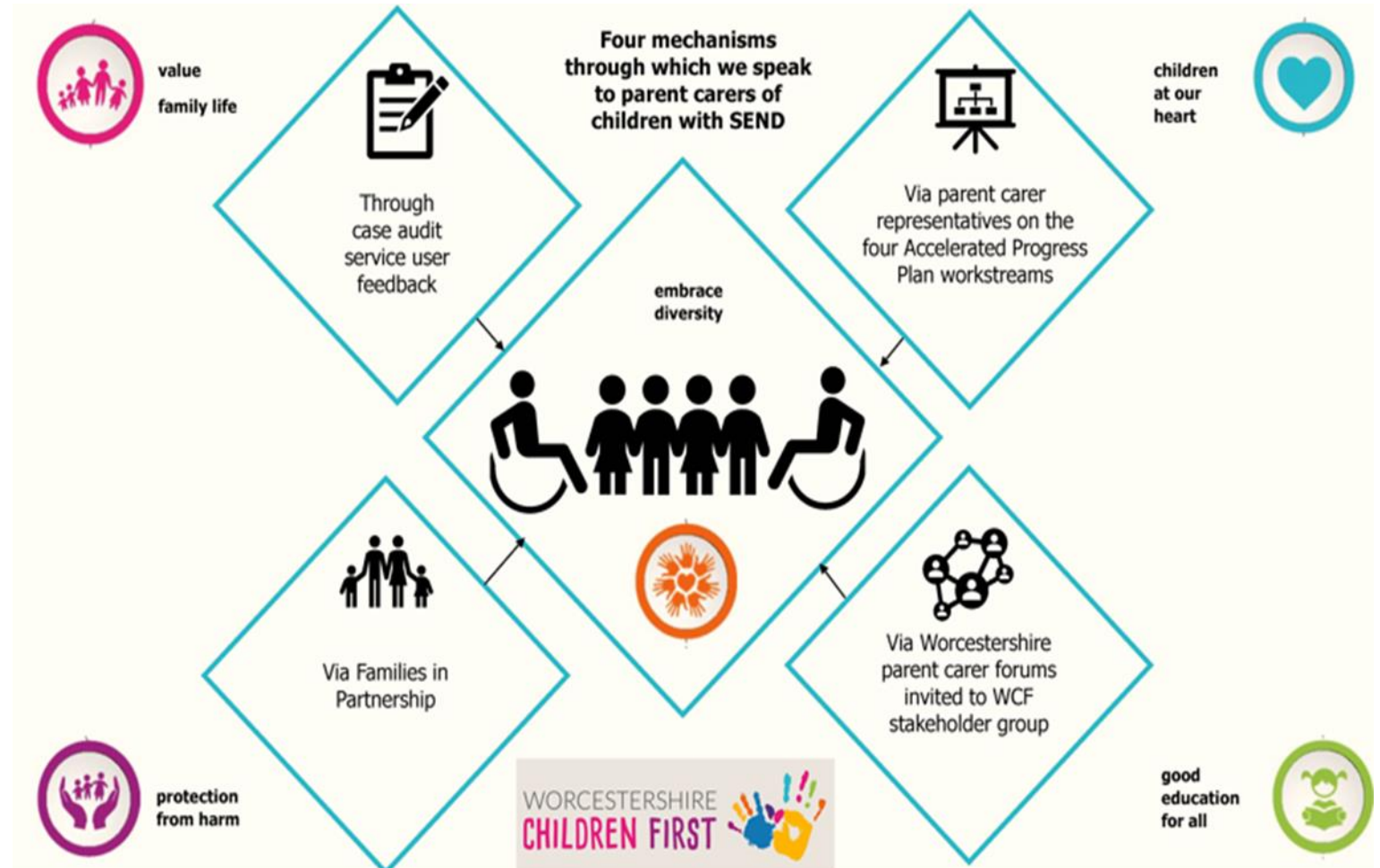
Key Concern 2

- Reception 2024 place planning underway – child level identification for assessment and need
- Post 16 specialist places – successful award to HoW College, Pershore College and Kidderminster College – 52 places from 2024
- 7 further mainstream accessibility projects planned for 2023/24
- Early Years enhanced provision – tender is open for South Worcestershire District – plan for up to 60 places from 2024
- Complete improvements for curriculum access and accommodation for Medical Education Provision and develop the outreach impact
- Further collaborate with mainstream development of SEND resource provision
- Finalise SEND provision plan for 2024- 2026

Key Concern 3: Approach for 2023-24

Key Concern 3 The voice of parent/carers and children and young people

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Key Concern 3: Key Outcomes

Parent/carer toolkit evaluation questionnaire and programme designed which is being implemented by FIP

Local Offer re-designed, in consultation with parents. Content updated digital design walk through completed - October 2023 this will go live

Quarterly report provided by SENDIASS. **10% of contacts come from young people and 80% from family members, with most contacts regarding EHCP'S. We will continue to use these reports to identify common themes/areas for development**

Families In Partnership developed KPIs evidencing work with wider communities and impact of their interventions/work with WCF

Joint Assessment Meetings being used to inform all Early Years new assessments for entry into reception September 2023

Mandatory co-production training completed by 54 members of staff a further 25 have started the training modules

New EHCP feedback data 2023/24 (66)
 80% of parent/carers felt involved and share views and opinions in assessment process
 86% felt plans were aspirational
 39% said it was not easy to contact their SEND case worker
 48% felt agencies were not working well together.
 Challenge and change in the Assessment Team this year

Since July 2021 when our feedback programme went live, we have heard from 132 families on their EHCP experiences for either new or review EHCP

Annual Review EHCP feedback data 2023/24 (22)
 95% felt their children plans were aspirational
 16/22 had their paper work and felt the right agencies attended their child's review
 18/22 felt they were included in decisions made
 18/22 reported - easy to contact their case worker
 82% (18) reported changes to EHCP were made in a timely way

Key Concern 3: Next Steps

Key Concern 3

- To reach a wider audience of parent/carers with children who have a broader spectrum of needs
- Development of a listening forum with health, education and social care
- Continuation of JAM implementation across all age EHCP'S
- Develop a process to ensure closing the loop on feedback coming from and back to FIP to ensure information is actively going back out into the wider community
- Continued focus on obtaining the voice of children and young pe

Key Concern 4: Approach for 2023-24

Key Concern 4

The poor quality of EHCP's and limited contributions from health and social care, along with the process to check and review EHCP's

- Work with the Research and Improvement for SEND Excellence (RISE) to develop our Preparation for Adulthood
- Participation in Delivering Better Value (DBV)
- Quality Assurance and Audit programme
- DCO reviewing health advice in draft EHCP
- Service User Feedback
- Learning and Development Programme
- Review of Pre School processes
- Embedding and further developing the Case Management System
- Focus on supported internship opportunities

Key Concern 4: Key Outcomes

<p>Increased the % of statutory advices for EHCNA submitted within 6 weeks of requests from 44% December 2021 to 53% as of July 2023</p>	<p>DFN Project Search Programme commenced on 6th September with 8 Young People starting their internship at Worcester Hospital</p>	<p>Decreased the number of SEND Tribunals initiated by 29% from 91 in 2021/22 to 63 in 2022/23</p>
<p>Parent Portal has been implemented which supports communication with parents through the EHCNA and EHCP process</p>	<p>New processes developed for pre-school children 93% of pre-school children with an EHCP had in school placement for September 2023</p>	<p>Staff attendance at IPSEA training to ensure understanding of the law relevant to their role</p>
<p>% of EHCP decisions being made in 16 weeks has increased from 12% in December 2021 to 39% as of July 2023</p>	<p>EHCPs issued within 20 weeks has increased from 17% in December 2021 to 27% as of July 2023, which is not yet in line with National figure of 49.1%</p>	<p>Programme of Multi Agency Audits is in place from March 2023</p>

Key Concern 4: Next Steps



Key Concern 4

- Continue to develop our approach to gathering the voice of Children and Young People.
- Continue to develop and improve the quality of advice and plans.
- Implementation of the Joint Assessment Meeting Process (JAM) for children that will enter their reception year in September 2024.
- Continue to improve timeliness for 16 and 20 weeks.
- Commence DBV programme of work.
- Participation in SEND and APP Change Partnership Programme
- Further development of Employment Opportunities through the Worcestershire SEND Employment Forum.

Quality Assurance: Approach for 2023-24

SEND quality assurance:

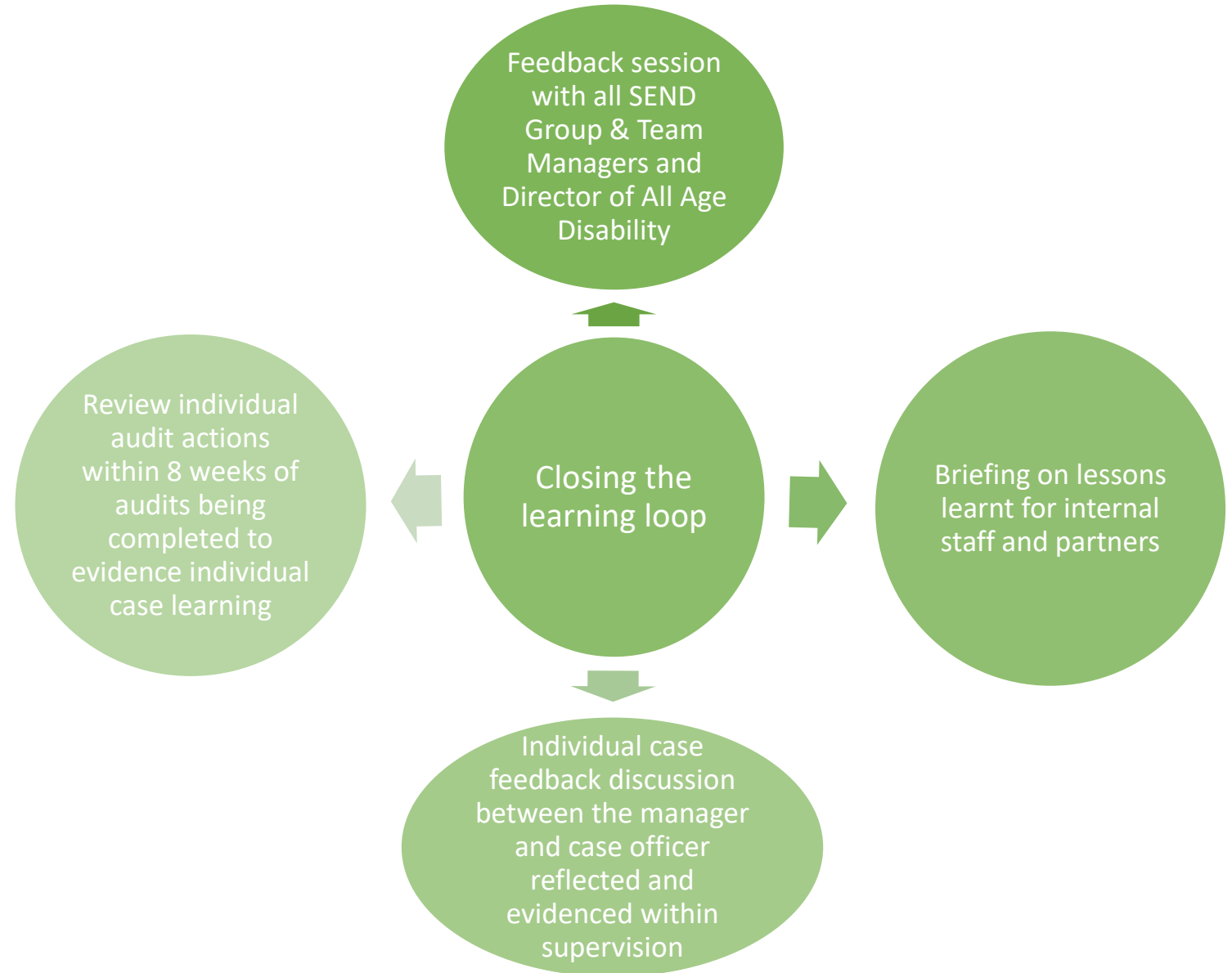
- KPIs
- Feedback from children, young people and families
- Audit activity

- Worcestershire Children First have developed a SEND Quality Assurance programme to identify emerging themes, strengths and areas for improvement
- Our SEND Quality Assurance Framework has three dimensions:
 - Key Performance Indicators
 - Feedback from Children, Young People and Families
 - Audit Activity
- We also complete multi-agency Quality Assurance activity, where regular multi-agency auditing, feedback and KPI analysis is undertaken
- We have a dedicated SEND complaints officer to investigate and respond to Stage1 complaints and to analyse complaints at all stages, to identify key themes and learnings

Quality Assurance: Key Outcomes

Closing the learning loop from SEND Quality Assurance Activity is key to ensure we improve our services.

We undertake the following activities to support our learning journey:



Quality Assurance: Key Outcomes (cont'd)

<p>SEND complaints showed an improvement in five areas in Q1 2023/24</p>	<p>The area of greatest improvement is the number of complaints on dissatisfaction with decision making which has reduced by half during Q1 2023/24, down from 29 to 14 individual complaints</p>	<p>Dissatisfaction with communication continued to be the highest area of complaint, however there was a reduction from 63 individual complaint points in Q4 2022/23 to 58 in Q1 2023/24</p>
<p>Whole-service developments include starting a phone surgery, with casework officers having allocated times each week to return phone calls, to ensure communication is timelier and to manage parental expectations of when responses will be received</p>	<p>For all complaint points that were Upheld or Partially Upheld, actions were given to SEND Services in response to the learning from the complaint. These actions were followed up by the SEND Complaints Officer, to ensure we close the loop on completed complaints within the agreed timescales</p>	<p>To better inform parent carers of the Placement Panel process new terms of reference has been published, in collaboration with parent carers.</p>
<p>Compliments relating to collaborative working highlights the impact of services working together and with schools and families to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people. This has remained the highest area of practice for compliments.</p>	<p>In March 2023 developed a pilot of multi-agency auditing within SEND to audit the quality of advices received</p> <p>Following this pilot, we have established a process for multi-agency auditing the quality of advices received –</p> <p>Outcome reports Sept – Mar 24</p>	<p>Commencement of WCF audit programme Q4 2021/22, 46 full case file audits completed to date Equates to 138 pieces of auditing activity</p> <p>Developing our baseline</p> <p>Cumulative: 20% Good / 69% RI / 12% Inad. 2023/24 less sub areas Good but no sub areas graded inadequate</p>

Quality assurance: Next Steps

SEND Quality Assurance

- Work will continue by the SEND Complaints Officer to monitor closing the loop on complaints and following up with SEND Services, to ensure actions are completed in agreed timescales
- Service users will be contacted at random to request feedback and to help measure the impact of the placement panel process terms of reference changes
- During the next quarter, our focus will continue to be around implementing the case work officer phone surgery and reviewing its impact on communication levels with parent carers
- We will continue close collaboration with colleagues in health services to address delays in EHCNA advice.

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Department
for Education

Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Tina Russell, Director of Children's Services, Worcestershire Children First

Simon Trickett, Chief Executive, Integrated Care System (ICS) Lead Herefordshire & Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB)

1 November 2023

Dear Tina and Simon,

Re: EIGHTEEN MONTH PROGRESS REVIEW AGAINST YOUR ACCELERATED PROGRESS PLAN (APP)

Thank you for meeting with the Department for Education (DfE) SEND and NHS England officials on 27 September 2023 to review the progress you have made against your APP over the last eighteen months.

We are particularly grateful for the contributions from Families in Partnership (FiP), your Parent Carer Forum (PCF), along with school representatives. The local area partnership is committed and willing to establish more inclusive cultures to improve SEND services for the children and young people in Worcestershire.

The evidence provided, alongside the feedback from partners, demonstrated the range of actions in place to continue and accelerate improvement.

These included:

- The new processes which have been developed for pre-school children.
- Staff attendance at the Independent Provider for Special Education Advice (IPSEA) training to ensure understanding of the law relevant to their role.
- The establishment of a commissioning cycle to review sufficiency in Worcestershire which is now mature and complete. In your evaluation you recognised and acknowledged that, due to the need for further capital development, it will take time for the full impact of those changes to be felt by families in Worcestershire.
- The establishment of Community Resource Centres which provide holistic support to families.

- The Internship Programme, launched in September 2023, which is currently supporting eight young people and will support a further two Internships in 2024.
- FIP have demonstrated they now have clear actions that will support and enable parents and carers of SEND children to actively engage in strategic decision making, planning, commissioning, and service evaluation.

The Local Authority has clearly demonstrated its ongoing willingness to engage in offers of support.

These include:

- The Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme.
- Support through the RISE consortium.

Worcestershire Children First has also been identified as one of the Local Authorities in the West Midlands Change Programme Partnership (CPP), to develop, test and refine the flagship reforms set out in the SEND Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan.

Both in your documentation and during this progress review, it is the view of the DfE and NHSE that you have now been able to demonstrate clear and sustained progress for Workstream 1: *'The variation in the skills and commitment of some mainstream schools to provide effective support for children with SEND'*.

This means that we no longer need to continue with formal monitoring of this Workstream, for the following reasons:

- The launch of two programmes to promote inclusive practice, the active monitoring of "cold spots" and schools causing concern.
- The establishment of a robust framework to evaluate and monitor inclusive practice in Worcestershire schools, ensuring action is taken when concerns are raised. There is now a strong leadership team in place across the partnership who work closely with the wider community to ensure children and young people are receiving effective support in mainstream schools.
- There is now a toolkit in place to support schools to engage with parents and carers which has been co-produced by FiP.
- Clearer communication and engagement with the SENCo network is supporting inclusion in mainstream schools.
- There is training and support being provided in all schools. There are implementation plans with schools explaining how their inclusion offer can be improved, focusing on the use of teaching assistants and continuing professional development for mainstream teachers to improve pedagogy.
- The initial outcomes of assessments and the quality of education is showing an upward trajectory.

- We heard from the school representative, about cultural change in schools, and the openness of schools to participate, particularly with the Change Programme agenda, complimenting some of the work already being undertaken.
- Representations from the ICB have stated that there is support in place to enable schools to feel confident about inclusion and the management of familiar conditions.

I know that this positive result comes as the result of a great deal of commitment and hard work on the part of the Local Authority, the ICB, families and front-line staff across education, health, and social care. Please do continue with these efforts and build on the successes you have already achieved.

Your 24-month APP review to look at the three remaining workstreams will take place in April 2024. The workstreams are:

- *The lack of suitable specialist provision to meet the identified needs of children and young people.*
- *Improving the fragile relationships with parents and carers and a lack of meaningful engagement and co-production and collaboration.*
- *Improving the quality of EHC plans and increasing contributions from health and social care. The initial visit noted that the processes to check and review the quality of EHC plans were also ineffective.*

At this meeting, we would like to see further evidence of:

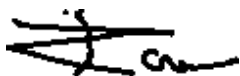
- The development of your capital plans to strengthen the range of specialist provision to meet the identified needs of children and young people. We note that you have stated this is a longer-term plan in your overall improvement journey.
- The development of FiP, and ongoing work with other parental groups to support parent carer participation.
- That the local area partnership can evidence that children and young people are engaged operationally and strategically in co-production and multi-agency working.
- That continued improvement of the assess and review function (that links with health and social care) can be evidenced to demonstrate oversight, actions, and impact on the experience of children and young people who receive SEN support or have an Education, Health, and Care plans (EHCP).
- Continued improvement on pre-school processes through the Joint Assessment meetings to support the transition from nursery to primary school.

In the meantime, the NHS England Adviser, Debbie Ward, along with Deanne Brownley as your DfE Case Lead, will continue to provide you with support and challenge. If you have any questions or need any further support, please contact either party in the first

instance.

We are copying this letter to Simon Geraghty (Leader of the Council), Mel Barnett (Director of All Age Disabilities 0-25), Andre Imich (DfE Lead Professional Adviser), Lorraine Mulronev (National Specialist Advisor-SEND, NHS England), Nick Harrison (NHSE), Deborah Ward (NHSE Adviser), and Deanne Brownley (DfE Case Lead).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Coneron', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Richard Coneron

Head of Vulnerable Children's Unit
West Midlands Regions Group

Worcestershire Local Area - SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (SEND APP) 2023-2024, Revision September 2023

Project Sponsors: Director of Children's and Chief Executive Officer of Worcestershire Children First (WCF); Chief Executive Officer, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB)

Business Lead: Director of All Age Disability (0-25 years)

Worcestershire's Vision for SEND

"In Worcestershire we want all children and young people with special educational needs and / or disabilities to be truly seen and respected as individuals and to be the best they can be."

SEND Strategy 2023 -2026

Key Concern Workstreams

1. The lack of suitable specialist provision to meet the identified needs of children and young people	2. The voice of parent/carers and children and young people	3. The poor quality of EHCPs and limited contributions from health and social care including the process to check and review the quality of EHC plans
<p>LEAD WCF AND HEALTH: Sarah Wilkins, Director of Education, Maria Hardy, Lead for Children and Maternity (ICB)</p> <p>Membership: Families in Partnership (FiP), School Phase Leads including FE, Specialist Schools, Worcestershire Children First, ICB, Health & Care Trust, SENDIASS Management Information Analyst (WCF) Group Manager for Place Planning and Sufficiency (WCF) SEND Group Managers (WCF)</p>	<p>LEAD WCF AND HEALTH: Daniela Carson, Children with Disabilities Group Manager (WCF), Families in partnership (FiP)</p> <p>Membership: Service user by experience x2, Young Person Participation Officer (WCF), Young Adults Team (WCF) Starting Well Lead (HWHCT), SENDIASS, Lead for Children and Maternity (ICB)</p> <p>Reference groups: Parent carer stakeholder group Children and Young People reference group Regency School</p>	<p>LEAD WCF AND HEALTH: Melanie Barnett, Director of All Age Disability (0-25) (WCF), Louise Adams, Senior Manager for SEND (ICB)</p> <p>Membership: Families in Partnership (FiP), SEND Group Managers (WCF), CWD Team Managers (WCF), Complaints Officer (WCF), SENCO, Quality Assurance (WCF), Principal Education Psychologist (WCF) Adult Commissioning (WCC), SENDIASS Clinical Services Manager (HWHCT) Designated Clinical Officer (ICB) Further Education Partners (HOW College)</p>

Aims (updated April 2023)

Page 77

- Build on the early signs of impact and improved outcomes and develop a clear understanding of how these improvements will be evidenced and sustained.
- Join up approaches across the partnership to secure good EHC plans and evidence the impact of actions undertaken and how these will be sustained.
- Continue to develop and embed monitoring and evaluation systems to demonstrate oversight, actions, and impact on the experience of children and young people who receive SEN support or have an Education, Health and Care plan. (EHCP)
- Continue to develop the leadership of SEND and inclusion, reflecting an inclusive culture in all learning environments. Capture evidence to show how many schools are engaging in the school inclusion project, particularly those where engagement has been problematic
- Build on the work which has already taken place through the production of You Tube videos to close the gap in early years settings.
- Improve engagement with children and young people with SEND to allow for their voices to be heard.
- Develop the school's toolkit to reflect a multiagency approach across all services to demonstrate how they all work with CYP and families.
- Maintain the risk register to ensure sustainability of improved practise going forward.
- Showcase the multi-agency work being undertaken through partnership lead communication

Outcome measure

Specialist Provision	Parents and Carers	Quality of Education and Health Care Plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the % of CYP with an EHCP returning to mainstream school • Bring the number of CYP where there is agreement of need for a specialist setting in Worcestershire in line with statistical neighbours • Decrease the number of CYP awaiting a specialist placement in Worcestershire who are not on a school roll • Reduce the number of children who receive education out of county • Increase the number of Early years EHCP's that have been finalised by the end of the Spring Term where the family receive confirmation of their Reception Year placement before the end of May. • Increase in specific health service alignment or provision linked to enhanced and specialist education provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of service delivery, policy and provision developments across All Age Disability that include co production with CYP and parent carers • Achieve targets for the % of WCF staff who have completed co-production e-learning module • Positive feedback from parent carers experience for new EHCPs • A positive improvement is seen in annual EHCP review quality assurance service user feedback • A positive improvement is seen in new EHCP quality assurance service user feedback • Positive feedback received for children and young people about their experience of the EHCP review process • Positive feedback from CYP about how they experience supported learning in their education setting. • SENDIASS service user feedback • FiP parent carer engagement and satisfaction measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased percentage of Audits judged to be Good or Outstanding for both new and annual review for EHCPs ▪ % of WCF SEND and health staff who have completed IPSEA training relevant to role ▪ Number of WCF staff (excluding SEND) and health partners who have completed the SEND mandatory training ▪ Increase % EHCP requests where review decision is made within 6 weeks. Target above national ▪ Increase the % of EHCP decisions made in 16 weeks (Minus Exceptions). Target above national ▪ Increase the % of new EHCPs issued within 20 weeks (Minus Exceptions). Target above national ▪ Increase the % of Statutory Advice Reports (all types) for EHCP Needs Assessment submitted within 6 weeks of request sent ▪ Decrease number of SEND tribunals initiated

Worcestershire Local Area - SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (SEND APP) 2023-2024

Project Sponsors: Director of Children’s and Chief Executive Officer of Worcestershire Children First (WCF); Chief Executive Officer, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB)

Business Lead: Director of All Age Disability (0-25 years)

Level 2 Action plan

Key Concern Workstream	Actions/Activity							
<p>1. The lack of suitable specialist provision to meet the identified needs of children and young people</p> <p><i>LEAD WCF AND HEALTH: Sarah Wilkins, Director for Education, Early Years, Inclusion and Education Place Planning (WCF), Maria Hardy (Lead for Children and Maternity, ICB)</i></p>	<p>Apply the redesigned Pre-School Forum processes from Sept 2023 to identify pre-school children for support, the relevant assessment and planning for provision for reception year 2024 placements. Update the provision planning cycle to reflect learning and changes from 2023</p>	<p>Develop the Local Offer to describe enhanced and specialist education provision and include parent carers and young person voice in developing this information</p>	<p>Develop clear methods for effective early identification of phase transfer or when a change in provision is requested and use this for in year provision planning and future sufficiency planning.</p>	<p>Have a clearer understanding of reasons for use of independent specialist provision by categorising CYP provision into SEND areas of need and those with additional vulnerabilities. Monitor out of county placements by specific need or sufficiency as a need for placement and planned return points. Use this data to inform and plan for long term planning and to inform commissioning cycle and sufficiency planning.</p>	<p>ICS commissioning reviews and health transformation plan ensure the right level of health provision is available or linked to enhanced and specialist provision: Language Unit reviews, Mainstream Autism Base monitoring, Alternative Provision developments</p>	<p>Collaborate to develop our post 16 offer including supported internships to ensure the education and employment local offer provides clarity and confidence of opportunity for young people and families when making placement choices</p>		
<p>2. The voice of parent/carers and children and young people</p> <p><i>LEAD WCF AND FiP: Daniela Carson, Children with Disabilities Group Manager (WCF), Families in partnership (FiP)</i></p> <p>Page 78</p>	<p>SENDIASS to provide quarterly report evidencing engagement with parent/carers, service user experiences and feedback, Regarding the quality and timeliness of support being offered to them through SENDIASS and any identified themes</p>	<p>Families in Partnership to ensure their representation at partnership board and on all workstreams to facilitate coproduction and engagement throughout the APP.</p> <p>Families in Partnership to develop their action plan and measures to reach out to a broader range of families with experiences to share and shape co-production</p>	<p>FiP to evaluate the impact of the parent/carer toolkit</p>	<p>Provide regular opportunities for parent and carers and children and young people to feedback on the accessibility, effectiveness, and quality of services available to them in Worcestershire’s Early Help offer to SEND children and feed this back into 0-25 partnership board to inform service improvement and development including joint commissioning.</p>	<p>Develop the local offer and how we use this to support engagement, publish information and communicate the wider community</p>	<p>Utilise evidence from the JAM project to increase parental engagement in the EHCP process</p>	<p>Development of CYP listening forums along with health colleagues; to include a number of YP reference groups of different abilities who can feedback on their experiences, ensuring involvement of non-verbal pupils</p>	<p>Provide regular opportunities for parent and carers and children and young people to feedback on the accessibility, effectiveness, and quality of services available to them in Worcestershire’s Early Help offer to SEND children and feed this back into 0-25 partnership board to inform service improvement and development including joint commissioning.</p>
<p>3. The poor quality of EHCPs and limited contributions from health and social care including the process to check and review the quality of EHC plans</p> <p><i>LEAD WCF AND HEALTH: Melanie Barnett, Director of All Age Disability (0-25) (WCF), Louise Adams, Senior Manager for SEND (ICB)</i></p>	<p>Promote the understanding and application of the graduated response so those involved in supporting children and young people are aware of what is ordinarily available in mainstream education to improve the quality of requests for statutory assessments and the quality of EHC plans.</p>	<p>Continue to further develop collaborative and partnership working to ensure a consistently high quality of advice that provides specificity towards individual pupil outcomes and is measurable via EHC audits and service user feedback.</p>	<p>Through audit and service user feedback ensure that needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way.</p> <p>This should include the identification of strengths and aspirations.</p>	<p>Focus on the monitoring of timeliness of completion of EHCP new and annual reviews and the quality of input from relevant agencies.</p> <p>Reflect, identify, and develop best practice via internal audit and service user feedback.</p>	<p>Through monthly audit and service user feedback of new and amended EHCP’s, ensure that identified health needs are supported by appropriate provision within the plan</p>	<p>Review and consider SEND workforce development opportunities using learning from audits, service user feedback, compliments and complaints to build on skills, confidence and understanding with all stakeholders in the Local Area.</p>		

AAD Partnership Board and Workstream Summary

AAD Partnership Board

0-25 SEND & All Age Disability (AAD) Deep Dive Board

Chair: Tina Russell, Director of Children’s and Chief Executive Officer of Worcestershire Children First (WCF)

Focus: Deep dive on monitoring progress and outcomes

Meet alternate months

All Age Disability (AAD) Strategy Forum

Chair: Mari Gay, (ICB)

Focus: Wider 0-25 AAD agenda and wider SEND performance issues

Meet alternate months

APP Workstream Leads Forum

Chair: Tina Russell, Director of Children’s and Chief Executive Officer of Worcestershire Children First (WCF)

Focus: APP workstream leads forum to monitor progress against APP

Meet 6 weekly

Management Information Analyst (WCF) provides outcome measures via a data dashboard

Workstream 1

Specialist Provision

Lead WCF and

HEALTH: Sarah Wilkins, Director of Education

Maria Hardy, Lead for Children and Maternity (ICB)

Workstream 2

Parents and Carers

Lead WCF and FiP:

Daniela Carson, Children with Disabilities Group Manager (WCF)

Families in partnership (FiP)

Workstream 3

Quality of Education and Health Care Plans

HEALTH: Melanie Barnett, Director of All Age Disability (0-25) (WCF)

Louise Adams, Senior Manager for SEND (ICB)

Carer’s strategy

LEAD WCC: Sarah Rothwell, Commissioning Manager, Carers

Learning Disability Strategy

LEAD WCC: Fran Kelsey, Lead Commissioner, Learning and Development

SEND Strategy

LEAD WCF: Melanie Barnett, Director of All Age Disability (0-25)

Autism Strategy

LEAD WCC: Fran Kelsey, Lead Commissioner, Learning and Development

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

6 DECEMBER 2023

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. 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
3. The Work Programme (attached at Appendix 1) is part of the Council's rolling Annual Scrutiny Work Programme which was discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) on 28 April 2023 and agreed by Council on 18 May 2023.

Dates of Future Meetings

- 10 January 2024 at 10am
- 21 March 2024 at 10am
- 22 May 2024 at 10am
- 4 July 2024 at 10am
- 25 September 2024 at 10am
- 18 November 2024 at 10am

Purpose of the Meeting

4. The Panel is asked to consider the 2023/24 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 2023/24

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 (Monitoring Officer)) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

[Agenda and Minutes for Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board on 28 April 2023](#)

[Agenda for Council on 18 May 2023](#)

All Agendas and Minutes are available on the Council's website [weblink to Agendas and Minutes](#)

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting	Issue for Scrutiny	Date of Last Report	Notes/Follow-up Action
6 December 2023	Youth Justice		Chairman agreed item be added to Work Programme – April 2023
	Performance (Q2 July to September) and In-Year Budget Monitoring		
	Update on the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Accelerated Progress Plan	3 November 2022 24 May 2023	
10 January 2024	Scrutiny of 2024/25 Budget		
	Attendance		Requested by Panel 23 March 2023. Focus of item revised by Chairman in November 2023. <i>(previously referred to in wider terms of ‘Children Missing Education’)</i>
	Vaping		Chairman agreed item be added to Work Programme - November 2023
21 March 2024	Performance (Q3 October to December) and In-Year Budget Monitoring		
	Annual Update on Educational Performance Outcomes	22 March 2023	
	Nursery Provision and Wrap around Care		Following Budget announcement March 2023. Chairman agreed in November 2023 that the item be added to March Panel.
22 May 2024			

4 July 2024	WSCP Annual Safeguarding Report Performance (Q4 January - March) and Year End Budget Monitoring		
25 September 2024	Performance (Q1 April to June) and In-Year Budget Monitoring		
18 November 2024	Performance (Q2 July to September) and In-Year Budget Monitoring		
Possible Future Items			
TBC	Home to School Transport Review outcome		Chairman agreed item be added to Work Programme – February 2023
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	Update on the Assessment Pathway for children who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)		Requested by Panel 11 January 2022
TBC	Delivery Model for Medical Education Provision – Update	16 March 2021	
TBC	Autism provision and the availability of places within education settings		Requested by Panel 10 May 2022
TBC	Worcestershire Strategy for Children and Young People with SEND (All Age Disability Strategy)	6 July 2023	Further update requested in 12 months
TBC	SEND – Outcome of Full Inspection		To be available for March or May 2024.
TBC	Integrated Care System Autism Strategy Development	6 July 2023	Further update requested once draft strategy available (est October 2023)
TBC	Worcestershire Learning Disability Strategy 2023-2028	6 July 2023	Further update requested in due course

TBC	Delivery of the All-Age Carers Strategy	6 July 2023	Further update requested in due course
Standing Items			
March	Education Performance outcomes		Annually
July	WSCP Annual Safeguarding Report		Annually
November/January	Budget Scrutiny		Annually
March/July/September/November	Quarterly Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring		Quarterly

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